

P

R

T



Plainfield PARK DISTRICT 

annual report



# executive director's letter

## Our Mission

The Plainfield Park District seeks to enhance lives through equitable, accessible, and exceptional recreation opportunities for all.

## Our Vision

We aspire to be innovative, diverse, and inclusive in administration, recreation and preservation.

## Our Values

Our values center on Community, Fiscal Responsibility, Stewardship of Natural Resources, Health & Wellness, and Diversity, Equitability and Inclusiveness.

## Board of Commissioners

Bill Thoman	2025	President
Heath Wright	2027	Vice President
Syed Abedi	2025	Commissioner
Mimi Poling	2027	Commissioner
Debra Narducci	2029	Commissioner
Tracee Steele	2029	Commissioner
Nuhie Faheem	2029	Commissioner

## Dear Plainfield Park District Friends and Families:

As we reflect on another year of progress and growth, I am pleased to take this opportunity to share the critical role that Plainfield Park District continues to play in our community's well-being, happiness, and success. Amid growth, challenges and opportunities, our commitment to providing high-quality parks and recreational services has never been more important.

Parks are more than just beautiful landscapes — they are vital spaces for physical activity, social connection, and mental rejuvenation. Whether you're taking a peaceful stroll in the newly re-developed and award-winning Van Horn Woods, playing sports in the new indoor flag football or soccer leagues, or spending quality time with family and friends in any of our many park sites and facilities; our parks offer safe, welcoming environments that contribute to healthier lifestyles. As we continue to grow, it is crucial that these quality green spaces remain accessible to all, regardless of age, background, or ability.

Recreation programs help shape the lives of young people, providing safe, structured environments where they can develop life skills, learn teamwork, and discover new passions. From summer camps to sports leagues to arts classes, these programs empower individuals to unlock their full potential, while fostering a sense of community and belonging.

The health benefits of parks and recreation cannot be overstated. Studies consistently show that access

to natural spaces reduces stress, increases physical activity, and improves mental health. In a world that is increasingly fast-paced and digital, the need for spaces that encourage outdoor exploration and personal connection has never been more pressing.

Furthermore, parks and recreation programs are key to building stronger, more resilient communities. They provide a platform for civic engagement, encourage environmental stewardship, and support local economies by attracting tourism and improving property values. In times of crisis, these spaces serve as refuges where people can come together, find support, and heal.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to maintaining and improving our parks, ensuring they continue to Welcome Everyone. Whether it's through expanding access for current and future developments, offering innovative recreation programs, or engaging with local partners, we remain dedicated to making our community a better place for everyone.

None of this would be possible without the support and involvement of individuals like you. In 2025 we will embark on the establishment of a new five-year master plan (2026-2030). We invite you to share your ideas and participate in shaping the future of our parks. Stay informed and attend our community meetings. Help us ensure these vital spaces continue to thrive, and support us in advocating for the resources we need to sustain and expand these essential services.

On behalf of the entire dedicated Plainfield Park District Board and Team, I want to thank you for your continued support and passion for parks and recreation. Together, we can ensure that our parks remain vibrant, accessible, and integral to the fabric of our community.

Sincerely,

Dedicated to serving our Community,  
Executive Director Carlo Capalbo, MPA, CPRE

*Carlo J. Capalbo*



Leadership Team  
(from left to right):  
Director of Parks Joe Quinn,  
Director of Planning Bob Collins, Director of  
Recreation and Facilities Andrea Juricic, Director of  
Marketing & Community Outreach Josh Hendricks, Executive  
Director Carlo Capalbo, and Deputy Director Maureen Nugent.





For every \$1 paid in property tax by property owners in the Plainfield Park District, just 3 cents goes to the Plainfield Park District.



## Excellence in Financial Reporting

For the 18th straight year, the Plainfield Park District Finance Department's comprehensive annual financial report was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). The District first won the award in 2006.

The Park District's comprehensive annual financial report was judged by an impartial panel to "meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive 'spirit of full disclosure' to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report."

**For the 18th straight year, the Plainfield Park District Finance Department's annual financial report was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.**

A press release issued by the GFOA stated, "the Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management."

These are great honors for the Park District, as it confirms the responsible and accountable reporting of our finances," said Plainfield Park District Executive Director Carlo Capalbo. "Congratulations are in order for the finance staff as well as our auditors, Lauterbach & Amen, LLP, who worked together on the comprehensive annual financial report and achieved this prestigious award."

## Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

In addition to earning the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, the Plainfield Park District was honored with the GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the eight straight year (first award was in 2017).

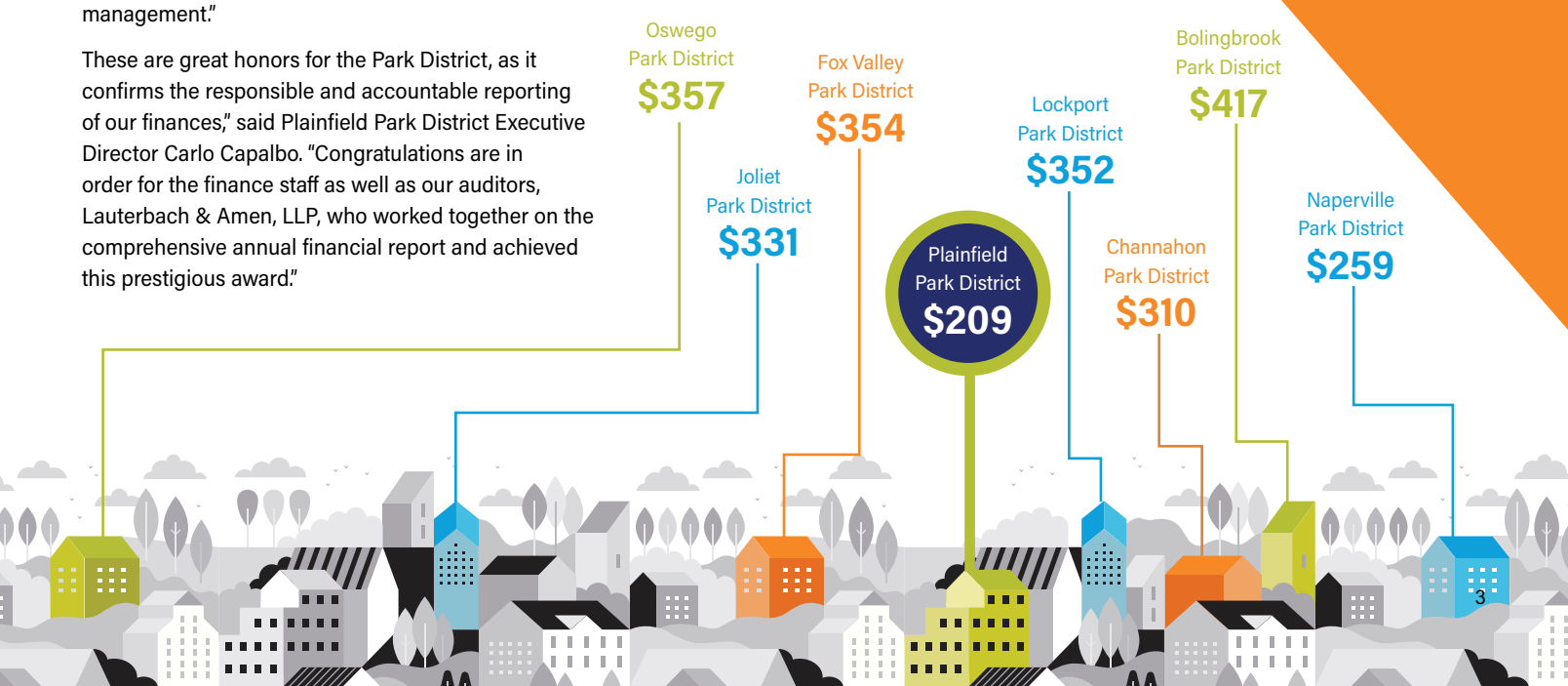
To earn recognition, budget documents must meet program criteria and excel as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communication tool.

## Property Taxes and the Park District

For every \$1 paid in property tax by property owners in the Plainfield Park District, just 3 cents goes to the Plainfield Park District, which we use to maintain over 1600 acres of land, more than 100 parks, and to fund more than 1,687 recreation programs, and put on special events through the year.

## How Do We Measure Up?

The Plainfield Park District staff works hard to provide the most recreation opportunities and park space at the lowest cost possible for our residents through advanced planning, stringent budgeting, and an ongoing eye toward process improvements. Take a look to see how far your tax dollars go compared to neighboring park districts. These numbers are the average Park District 2023 tax on a \$280,000 value home in neighboring Park Districts.



A number of projects were completed in 2024 regarding playground renovation, trail connections and development that provide lasting value and unique recreational opportunities.

## Wheatland Park Renovation and Development

The Park District was awarded an Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in the amount of \$377,500 for the development of Springs at 127th in March of 2023. Through an intergovernmental transfer, the District acquired Wheatland Community Park, which was previously owned by Wheatland Township, in May of 2023. The two properties were combined for a 9-acre park that was renovated in 2024 with the following improvements.

### Existing Park

- ▶ Playground Renovation
- ▶ Access improvements
- ▶ Shelter improvements
- ▶ Site improvements

### OSLAD Park Expansion

- ▶ Nature Play Tot Lot
- ▶ Trail Loop
- ▶ Fitness Pods
- ▶ Dog Park
- ▶ Rain Garden

## Van Horn Woods

The Plainfield Park District was awarded an OSLAD grant in 2022 in the amount of \$400,000 for the redevelopment of Van Horn Woods. The renovation was completed in 2024, with the following improvements:

- ▶ Fishing pier improvements
- ▶ Shoreline restoration
- ▶ Bridge improvements across Lily Cache Creek
- ▶ Disc golf course
- ▶ Woodland pollinator garden
- ▶ Expanded trails throughout

## Mather Woods

Mather Woods underwent invasive species removal, hazardous tree felling and brush pile burns in an effort to restore the woodland to its native state. This helps make the woods safer while also providing a better habitat for wildlife and native species to thrive. Additionally, new welcome and interpretive signage was added in 2024.

The old shelter on the east side of Mather Woods was removed, and the concrete pad was repurposed as a trail head with seating and a bike repair station.

## Normantown Equestrian Center (NTEC)

The NTEC stone driveways were in poor condition, causing drainage and maintenance problems. This site was excavated and resurfaced with a multi-layered stone base, while also clearing out and adding some drainage inlets. In addition, the paddocks were improved to correct drainage issues. The inside arena was also resurfaced to eliminate uneven surface areas.

## Trails & Parking Lots

Sealcoating and/or paving projects were performed throughout the District, including parking lots at Van Horn Woods East, Avery Preserve, and Kensington Park; and trails at Four Seasons, Electric Park West, Fort Beggs North and South, Auburn Lakes, Gene Coldwater Park, Creekside North, Olde Renwick Great Divide Trail, Tamarack Settlement (court and trails), Eaton Preserve to Seasons connection, Cumberland Park access, and other sites.



### Looking Ahead

The Plainfield Park District has a lot of plans for 2025. Scan the QR code to read what's up and coming.

## Park Improvements at Various Sites

### FOUR SEASONS

Improvements continued with a CXT restroom on the east side of the ballfield quad, and dugout expansions at Fields 2 & 3.

### PLAYGROUNDS

The playgrounds at Heritage Oaks, Cambridge Run, Caton Ridge & Caton Ridge West were renovated.

### PRAIRIE ACTIVITY & RECREATION CENTER (PARC)

The pavers around PARC were spalling and cracking. The paver material was replaced under warranty. The installation work was completed in the spring of 2024.

### ELECTRIC PARK

The shelter at Electric Park was cleaned and painted, and the roof re-shingled.

### RIVERSIDE

The edges of the canoe launch ramp were stabilized with rock outcroppings and shoreline plantings.

### QUAIL RUN

The access walk was replaced with a concrete walk, while adding a bench pad and trash can at the court. In addition, the basketball court was overlaid with new asphalt and striped and color-coated.

The playgrounds at Cambridge Run, Heritage Oaks, Caton Ridge, Caton Ridge West and Wheatland park were renovated.

## 2024 Rundown

The 2024 fiscal year saw tremendous growth across several key program areas, including summer camps, early childhood education, athletics, active adult programming, and special events. The new World of Food Trucks event debuted in May, drawing over 1,000 community members to sample diverse cuisines from 11 different food trucks. The event also featured a variety of cultural performances, celebrating the District's commitment to inclusivity and community engagement.

... tremendous growth across several key program areas, including summer camps, early childhood education, athletics, active adult programming, and special events.

## Youth Athletics and Leagues

Youth athletics continued to thrive, with an impressive 18% increase in participation. This growth was fueled by the introduction of new leagues and expanded summer camp options. Basketball saw record-breaking success for the second consecutive year, with 963 players across 100 teams participating in the 2025 league.

## Early Childhood

Enrollment in preschool remained steady, while pre-kindergarten prep classes saw an increase of over 100 participants. A new phonics program was introduced to the preschool curriculum to enhance early literacy skills.

## Ottawa Street Pool

As the aquatic season approached, lifeguards completed annual training, including hands-on exercises with the Plainfield Fire Department to prepare for real-life scenarios. Special events at the pool included themed nights, \$1 Friday Night Swims, and the third annual Tiki Bash, a Welcoming Everyone (WE) event featuring Polynesian dance demonstrations, group-led dance instruction, and a fire performer. In the fall, the locker rooms and baby pool were repainted in preparation for the next season.

## Active Adults

Active adult programming saw an outstanding 17% increase in participation, with a diverse lineup of activities, including exciting games and friendly competitions, holiday celebrations, massage and reflexology sessions, crafts, and over 42 unforgettable trips!

## Normantown Equestrian Center

Normantown Equestrian Center (NTEC) underwent significant upgrades, including new indoor arena footing and resurfaced driveways and paddocks to improve drainage. Group lessons increased by 252 participants, while 3,506 private lessons were conducted throughout the year.

## Summer Camp

Summer day camp participation continued to grow for the second year in a row, accommodating over 2,649 children. Campers enjoyed a variety of options, including traditional summer camp, as well as specialized athletic, dance, and equestrian camps.

## Special Events

The year kicked off with Noon Year's Eve, where kids celebrated with a balloon drop at noon. The annual Daddy-Daughter Dance in February sold out, featuring root beer floats, dancing, and family-friendly fun.

Spring brought the Egg Hunts at Bott Park, where children of all ages searched for hidden treats, while teens took on the challenge of the Flashlight Egg Hunt.

Summer featured Party at PARC in June, followed by the new Jammin' in June concert series at Village Green. The fall season kicked off with the Annual Autumn Family Fun Fest on an unseasonably warm day. Haunted Hayrides at Eaton Preserve sold out on Friday night, with participants braving the eerie haunted trail.

The holiday season was packed with festive events, including Grinchmas on the Green (a WE event) coinciding with the annual tree lighting ceremony, Journey to the North Pole, and Breakfast with Santa (a sold-out event).

These celebrations brought the community together, creating lasting memories for residents of all ages.



Swim Lessons  
1,165

NTEC Enrollment  
4,294

Active Adult Programming  
2,196

Daily Open Gym  
3,234

Daily Pool Passes  
6,485

Summer Camp Enrollment  
2,649

Special Event Attendance  
2,797

Athletic Classes & Leagues  
4,294

Pool Membership  
448

TRACKING SUCCESS



### Gold Medal for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management

For the second consecutive year, Plainfield Park District was named a finalist for the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management, presented by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

The Park District was one of four finalists in the Class III Category (population 75,001-150,000) for the prestigious Grand Plaque. While Plainfield was not ultimately selected as the winner, the recognition remains a significant achievement.

"It was a tremendous honor to again be in contention for the Grand Plaque," said

For the second consecutive year, Plainfield Park District was named a finalist for the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management.

Plainfield Park District Executive Director Carlo Capalbo. "This second Gold Medal finalist designation reaffirms our excellence in long-range planning, resource management, and innovative approaches to delivering top-tier park and recreation services with fiscally sound business practices."

### IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference

The Plainfield Park District had another outstanding weekend at the Annual Illinois Association of Park Districts/Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IAPD/IPRA) Soaring to New Heights Conference, held January 23-25 at the Chicago Hyatt Regency.

The Park District's Van Horn Woods, which underwent a major 2022-2024 renovation, was awarded Best Park/Facility. The project, designed by Director of Planning Bob Collins, included a new inclusive playground at Van Horn Woods East, designed to accommodate children on the autism spectrum, a 9-hole disc golf course, fitness pods, permanent fixtures at the bike park, a pollinator garden and expanded trails throughout the park.

Deputy Director Maureen Nugent received the IPRA Distinguished Member Award for the Administration & Finance Section. A longtime contributor to the section, Nugent also served on a five-member committee that provided financial oversight for the IPRA Finance Staff from 2019-2023.

The Agency Showcase celebrates outstanding communications and marketing efforts among Illinois park, recreation, and conservation agencies. This year, the Plainfield Park District marketing team excelled, earning first-, second-, and third-place finishes in the most competitive showcase to date, with 66 agencies submitting 272 entries.

The Park District's Van Horn Woods, which underwent a major 2022-2024 renovation, was awarded Best Park/Facility.

First Place - Tabletop Display: Showcased the District's Welcoming Everyone (WE) platform and core values, featuring entries across eight categories. Judges evaluated creativity, design, organization, messaging, "it" factor, and overall cohesiveness.

Second Place - Social Media Campaign: Engaged audiences with Scout the Fox, a playful mascot highlighting the District's classes, programs, parks, and facilities.

Third Place - Written Content: Reinforced the WE platform's mission through flyers and posters promoting free, seasonal WE events.

These achievements reflect the Plainfield Park District's commitment to excellence in recreation, inclusivity, and community engagement.

### NuMark Credit Union honored at Best of Best Awards Gala

In October, longtime corporate partner NuMark Credit Union was recognized as a Best Friend of Illinois Parks - Mid-sized Business by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD). Representatives from the Park District and NuMark Credit Union officially accepted the award at IAPD's Best of the Best Awards Gala on October 25 at Chevy Chase Country Club in Wheeling.

NuMark Credit Union has proudly served Chicago's southwest suburbs for over 70 years and operates 13 branches across Chicagoland, including two within the Plainfield Park District. Since 2016 - when it was previously known as NorthStar Credit Union - NuMark has been a dedicated supporter, advertising and sponsoring numerous Park District events.



For the second straight year,  
the Plainfield Park District  
was chosen BEST  
Park District.



**Bill Thoman**  
President

**Bill Thoman** was first elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2017 and reelected in 2019 and 2023. He is the Chairperson of the Governance & Accountability Committee.



**Heath Wright**  
Vice President

**Heath Wright** was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2019 and reelected in 2021. Heath is the Chairperson of the Capital & Development Committee and Co-Chair of the Governance & Accountability Committee.



**Syed Abedi**  
Commissioner

**Syed Abedi** was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2019. Syed is the Chairperson of the Recreation & Marketing Committee and Member at Large of the Capital & Development Committee.



**Colette Safford**  
Commissioner

**Colette Safford** was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2021. Colette was the chairperson of the Personnel & Policy Committee and the co-chair of the Finance & Liability Committee.



**Debra Narducci**  
Commissioner

**Debra Narducci** was appointed to the Board of Commissioners in 2022 and then elected in 2023. She is the Chairperson of the Finance & Liability Committee and Co-Chair of the Capital & Development Committee.



**Nuhie Faheem**  
Commissioner

**Nuhie Faheem** was appointed to the Board of Commissioners in 2022 and then elected in 2023. Nuhie is Chairperson of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee and Co-Chair of the Recreation & Marketing Committee.



**Tracee Steele**  
Commissioner

**Tracee Steele** was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2023. Tracee is the Chairperson to the Personnel & Policy Committee and Co-Chair to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee.

## Friends of the Plainfield Park District Foundation

The Friends of the Plainfield Park District Foundation had a banner year, raising over \$11,500 in support of the Park District. The Foundation's fundraising efforts help enhance the quality of life in the Plainfield area by preserving open space and improving recreation facilities and programs for residents of all ages.

**The Foundation raised over \$11,500 in support of the Park District.**

For the second consecutive year, Plainfield River Tubing generously donated proceeds from all trips taken on July 5 to the Foundation. This incredible act of generosity resulted in a \$4,000 donation to support the Park District's initiatives.

In the fall, the Foundation hosted its Inaugural Pints for Parks fundraiser at the Werk Force Barrel Den. The event featured Werk Force Brewery's award-winning craft beers, a catered dinner from Happy Belly's scratch kitchen, raffle baskets, and live acoustic music by singer-songwriter Seth Mercer. The evening was a resounding success, raising more than \$6,000 for Park District scholarships.

## Best of Will County

For the second straight year, the Plainfield Park District was chosen the BEST park district in the 2024 Herald-News Best of Will County Readers' Choice Awards. The Park District was honored at the Best of Will County Readers' Choice Winners Celebration held December 9 at the Jacob Henry Mansion in Joliet.

**The Foundation hosted its Inaugural Pints for Parks fundraiser at the Werk Force Barrel Den, raising over \$6,000 for Park District Scholarships.**



thank you

to our sponsors

plfdparks.org

The Plainfield Park District thanks its sponsors and advertisers for helping support the Park District's mission of enhancing lives through equitable, accessible and exceptional recreation opportunities for all.

**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

 **GreenState**  
CREDIT UNION

 **TR Miller**  
HEATING - COOLING - PLUMBING - ELECTRICAL

 **Ascension**  
Saint Joseph

 **CANLAN**  
sports™

 **Republic Bank**

 **Plainfield**  
Pet Resort

 **Anew Dental**  
& Orthodontics

*Window*  
World

 **MORAVEC**  
ORTHODONTICS

 **NUMARK**  
CREDIT UNION

 **ORTHODONTIC**  
EXPERTS

**PetButler**

 **Heartland**  
Bank and Trust  
Company  
MEMBER FDIC

**D'Arcy**

 **Plainfield**  
**PARK DISTRICT**