

2.0 Background

2.1 Historic Perspective

The Wheaton Park District was established as a separate municipal body by the citizens of Wheaton in 1921. Land for the first park, Memorial Park, was purchased in 1921, with Southside (now Central) Park acquired in 1922. Acquisition of Northside Park began in 1927 with the initial property costing \$18,000 and continued through 1977 with a total of 75 acres. A plan was developed in 1930 to hand dig the Northside Park lagoon, and the Civilian Conservation Corp completed the project in 1935.

Arrowhead Golf Club was acquired from the Jansen family in 1982 in order “to preserve 221 acres of open space, and to serve as a major recreational space for the community.” Soon thereafter a golf course architect was hired to redesign the course. Reconstruction began in 1988 and continued for eleven years. In 2003 construction began on the new 40,000 plus square foot Arrowhead clubhouse. The new building opened Memorial Day Weekend 2006.

Through both acquisition and donation, the district increased its park acres to 94 by 1970. Today the District’s 54 parks total more than 800 acres.

Over the years, the Wheaton Park District community experienced rapid growth in both physical (land and facilities) and fiscal wealth (assessed valuation). Future growth is now limited by the lack of land available for development, and it is therefore easy to predict our financial property tax related future barring any major legislative changes in the park district code.

Contributions from numerous service and community organization have made possible many improvements in our parks. The Wheaton Jaycees have contributed to tot lots, the Rotary Club built the first accessible playground at Northside Park, Kiwanis Club provided funds and labor for Toohey Park’s Safety City, and the Cosley Foundation’s fundraising efforts.

We have also benefited from partnerships with organizations outside of the community such as the Conservation Foundation who assisted with acquisition of the Lincoln Marsh and Illinois Department of Natural Resources generous grant programs. Completion of the overpass project would not have been possible from numerous grants and contributions from private, local, state and federal sources.

Within the last couple of years, we have been able to further expand our facilities by partnering with other local agencies. Intergovernmental agreements with DuPage County have allowed us to build and manage the Skate Park and miniature golf at Clocktower Commons in addition to moving our administrative offices to the DuPage Historical Museum. We

have also continued partnerships with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County with the recent lease agreement for the forty acre Lucent property.

The Wheaton Park District has one of the finest park systems in the state and has been recognized four times during the past 20 years by the National Park and Recreation Association with the National Gold Medal for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 1984, 1990, 1996, and 2005, the Illinois Park and Recreation Association Outstanding Program Award (2008), the Illinois Park and Recreation Association's Distinguished Agency Award (1999), the National Recreation and Park Association Excellence in Aquatics Award (1992), Illinois Park and Recreation Association Outstanding Facility Award (1993) for Rice Pool and Water Park, the Daniel Flaherty Award (1990 and 1993), the U.S. Department of Interior Innovation Award (1993) for the Lincoln Marsh Wetlands Project.

Into the future, strategic partnerships with other entities from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors will serve to deepen dollars, improve services, and preserve open space for the taxpayers and residents of the Wheaton Park District.