

Chapter Eight: Park Operational Resources

The Parks Division has numerous responsibilities including planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining the City’s park system as well as programming and coordination of special events and registrations. Operations staff are responsible for maintenance and care of over 270 parks citywide and facilities including 82 reservable shelters (including sun shelters); approximately 500 athletic facilities such as ball diamonds, tennis courts, and athletic fields; 174 playgrounds (Madison continues to lead the country in both the number of playgrounds and beaches in cities of similar size according to the Trust for Public Land – City Park Facts 2017); and many other recreational amenities. Parks Conservation staff are responsible for managing over 1,700 acres of conservation parks. Forestry is part of the Parks Division and is responsible for street trees in public rights-of-way and overall guidance regarding park trees. The Parks Division also manages non-traditional facilities such as the State Street Mall Concourse, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Forest Hill Cemetery, four golf courses, and the Warner Park Community Recreation Center. The Parks Division is also responsible for snow plowing 65 miles of bike paths and sidewalks; snow removal at 336 bus stops; and litter pickup, mowing, and trimming of 123 acres of medians.

These responsibilities steadily increase as Madison’s population grows and new parks and facilities develop. This chapter discusses the operational resources necessary to maintain the growing City of Madison park system. Operational resources include but are not limited to the annual Operating Budget for the Parks Division and the Golf Enterprise Operating Budget; staffing is the primary expenditure of the Operating Budget and is discussed later in this chapter. Revenues generated by the Parks Division and Golf Enterprise, and the role of partnerships and volunteers in supporting the park system, are also addressed.

8.1 Parks Division Operating Expenses

The annual City of Madison Operating Budget provides resources for the staffing, supplies, services, utilities, and other operational expenses. The Parks Division’s operating budget is funded via the General Fund (primarily through the property tax levy), General Park Revenues, Other Restricted Funds, and Permanent Funds. Table 8.1 details the actual expenses from 2012-2017 for the Parks Division and what portion of the expenses were supported by revenues or the General Fund. The Parks Operating Budget has increased by 17%.

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Table 8.1: 2012-2017 Parks Division General Fund Operating Expenses

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
General Revenues	\$2,138,046	\$2,233,456	\$2,303,836	\$3,120,307	\$4,895,334	\$5,928,475
General Fund Levy Support	\$14,358,839	\$14,690,132	\$15,391,012	\$15,252,378	\$14,263,909	\$13,388,362
Total Expenditures	\$16,496,885	\$16,923,588	\$17,694,848	\$18,372,686	\$19,159,243	\$19,316,837

General Fund support for the Parks Division has remained relatively static while revenues have nearly tripled during the same six-year period. Revenues provide an important funding source to plan, develop, operate, and maintain a growing park system.

8.2 Funding the Parks Division Operating Budget

The Parks Division's Operating Budget is funded through multiple revenue sources including General Park Revenues, Other Restricted Funds, and Permanent Funds, with the General Fund providing the remaining amount needed to offset the annual expenses of the Parks Division. Each of these revenue sources are discussed in more detail below. The actual revenues received by section for the last three years are shown in Table 8.2 (in 2015 the City of Madison began using a new financial system which provided this breakdown by section).

GENERAL PARK REVENUES

General Park Revenues are generated through many mechanisms within the Parks Division. Lease/Use Agreements require annual payments as well as reimbursement of expenses such as utilities. Other revenues in this category are generated from boat launch permits; catering and concessions; facility rentals, admissions, program revenues and memberships at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Goodman Pool, and Warner Park Community Recreation Center; swim, skating, and ski lessons; cross-country ski passes; contributions and donations; ranger fees to support shelter reservations and other park uses; trade-in allowance for equipment; and State Street Mall Concourse Special Charges.

OTHER RESTRICTED FUNDS

Other Restricted Funds help to support the Parks Division Operating Budget include revenues from off-leash dog park permits and disc golf permits. Revenues from use agreements with athletic groups such as the Madison Ultimate Frisbee Association (MUFA) and the Urban Forestry Special Charge are also included under Other Restricted Funds.

Starting in 2015, the City of Madison imposed an Urban Forestry Special Charge on city parcels to offset operational costs to maintain the urban forest in the city. This special charge partially offset Forestry operational costs in 2015 and 2016, with the majority of Forestry

operational expenses offset in 2017. The fee determination is annually approved by the Common Council as adopted in MGO Sec. 4.095 and is collected as part of the municipal services bill issued monthly by the Madison Water Utility.

In 2017, Olbrich Botanical Gardens began receiving revenues from the Room Tax, authorized by state law to be used for tourism promotion and tourism development per Wis. Stat. 66.0615.

PERMANENT FUNDS

Resources identified under the Permanent Fund in the 2018 adopted Parks Operating Budget include the Olin Trust Fund and the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund. The Parks Division oversees the management of the Olin Trust Fund which has a total value of approximately \$700,000. Parks transfers approximately \$25,000 each year of the revenue from this fund for parks beautification efforts. The Parks Divisions also manages the Forest Hill Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund, which is funded with proceeds from lot sales. An annual allocation is made towards the maintenance of the cemetery from this fund. Trust and donation funds are used for appropriate projects and improvements pursuant to the terms of the donation or trust and with the Board of Park Commissioners' approval. Annually this represents approximately \$300,000 of the total revenues in the adopted budget.

Table 8.2: 2015-2017 Operating Budget Revenue Support by Section

Category	2015	2016	2017
Forestry	\$1,004,125	\$2,503,174	\$3,111,066
Olbrich Botanical Gardens	\$278,024	\$313,180	\$708,768
WPCRC	\$400,745	\$313,524	\$322,942
Aquatics	\$262,160	\$335,416	\$325,051
Other Park Revenues	\$1,175,252	\$1,430,040	\$1,460,648
Total	\$3,120,307	\$4,895,334	\$5,928,475

In addition, the Parks Division also generates revenues that help to support the General Fund. Cemetery fees generate between \$250,000 and \$300,000 annually to the General Fund. Parks Use Charges generate approximately \$600,000 in revenue for the General Fund. The sources of these revenues include shelter reservations and other associated permits, athletic field reservations, vending permits, etc.

8.3 Funding the Golf Enterprise Operating Budget

Golf is budgeted to cover all expenditures with golf course revenues and does not receive levy support. Table 8.3 details the 2012-2017 Golf Enterprise Operating Budget for the four city golf courses (Glenway, Monona, Odana Hills and Yahara Hills).

Table 8.3: 2012-2017 Golf Enterprise Operating Budget¹⁴

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Revenues	\$2,447,580	\$2,798,144	\$2,666,954	\$3,065,705	\$3,217,296	\$2,859,254
Expense	\$2,452,094	\$3,051,566	\$3,004,360	\$3,016,580	\$3,610,671	\$3,232,037
Profit (loss)	\$(4,514)	\$(253,422)	\$(337,406)	\$49,125	\$(393,375)	\$(372,783)

The 2016 Annual Report for the Golf Enterprise discusses in detail the current financial situation and provides a number of recommendations to address future infrastructure needs. Discussions are currently underway to evaluate these options.

8.4 Parks Division Staff

The Parks Division employs 180 full time employees and 370 seasonal employees who are responsible for the development, maintenance, and care of over 5,600 acres of parkland and over 270 parks. The Parks Division also manages non-traditional facilities, such as the State Street/Mall Concourse, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Goodman Pool, Forest Hill Cemetery (on the National Register of Historic Places), four golf courses, city street trees, and the Warner Park Community Recreation Center. Table 8.4 includes actual expenditures per section within the Parks Division for 2015-2017 using data from the City's new financial system.

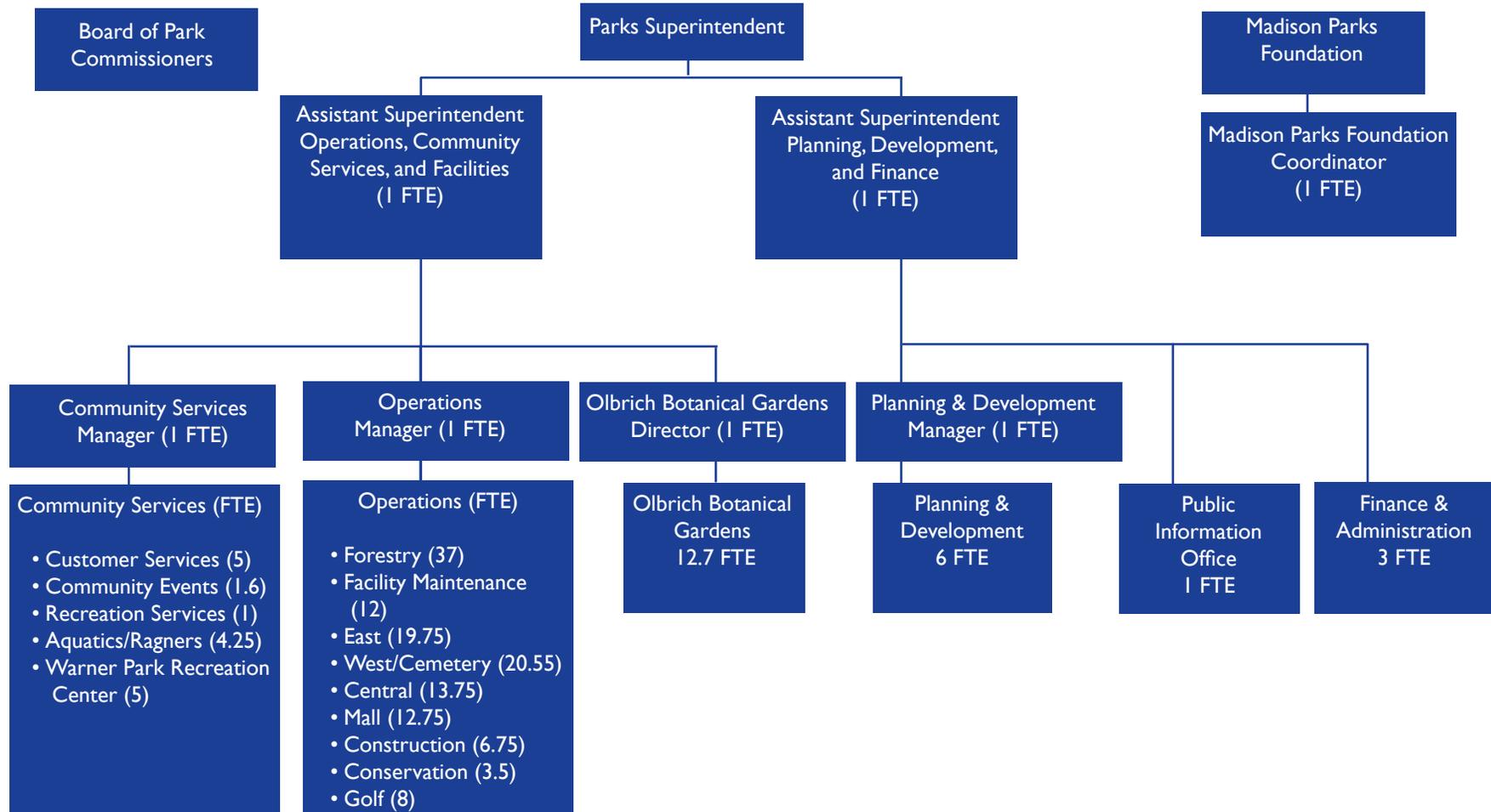
Table 8.4: 2015-2017 Parks Operating Budget by Section

Year	2015	2016	2017
Community Services	\$2,646,791	\$2,650,226	\$2,745,742
Operations	\$13,667,127	\$14,331,557	\$14,189,733
Olbrich Botanical Gardens	\$1,524,622	\$1,476,690	\$1,698,717
Planning and Development	\$534,145	\$700,770	\$682,645
Total	\$18,372,686	\$19,159,243	\$19,316,837

Figure 8.1 outlines the various branches and sections within the Parks Division. The two main areas are Operations, Community Services and Facilities; and Planning, Development, and Finance. A general description of the main responsibilities of each section follows Figure 8.1.

¹⁴ Golf expenditure authority including salaries, benefits, supplies, and services.

Figure 8.1: Parks Division Organizational Structure



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community Services coordinates all special events and festivals on public land including State Street/Capitol Mall Concourse, as well as coordinates new community event initiatives, use agreements, and schedules athletic field and shelter reservations, and processes permitting such as vending, lake access, dog park, disc golf, and public amplification. Community Services also coordinates volunteer programs and manages operations of aquatics, park rangers, Warner Park Community Recreation Center and use agreements.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Parks Finance and Administration manages payroll, purchasing, revenue billing, budgeting, and administrative policy. It also coordinates hiring procedures, human resource tasks, and employee onboarding.

OLBRICH BOTANICAL GARDENS

The Olbrich Botanical Gardens provides 16 acres of sustainable outdoor gardens and a 10,000 square foot tropical conservatory. The garden is operated as a public/private partnership between the Parks Division and the non-profit Olbrich Botanical Society. Olbrich Botanical Gardens serves more than 325,530 visitors throughout the year and provides education programming for adults and families as well as garden-related exhibitions and events.

OPERATIONS

Parks Operations is in charge of operations and maintenance of all parks, including the State Street/Capitol Mall Concourse district, and the Forestry Section. Responsibilities of Operations staff are vast and include facility construction, maintenance and repairs, shoreline cleanup and maintenance of beaches, boat ramps, docks, boathouses, and sailboat storage facilities, mowing and maintaining athletic facilities, and maintenance buildings and parking lots. Parks operation staff also maintains bike trails, bus stops, and medians.. Parks Operation staff also maintain the City's cemetery, conservation lands, four public golf courses, and several closed landfills used as parks.

As a component of the Parks Operations, the Forestry Section manages the care, installation and removal of all street trees. They provide professional tree care and planting for over 100,000 street trees along Madison's 700 miles of city streets. Forestry is also responsible for public safety by responding to broken limbs or storm damaged trees that pose a risk to the public. Plans and recommendations regarding urban forestry and specific concerns regarding Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) are not addressed in this plan. The City's EAB Task Force addresses these issues separately.

THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Park Commissioners is the policy-making and recommending body for the Parks Division and consists of seven members: five appointed citizens and two alders. Within its purview is the acquisition and/or maintenance of general recreation parks, conservation parks, botanical gardens, Warner Park Community Recreation Center, forestry, golf courses, beaches, municipal swimming pool, cemeteries, athletic fields, boulevards, greenways, and boating. The Commission participates in long range planning, needs assessments, strategic planning and level of service standards.

THE MADISON PARKS FOUNDATION

The Madison Parks Foundation is the non-profit partner of Madison Parks that acts as the fiduciary agent for contributions, grants, and donations to fund park improvements and support park programming. As the non-profit partner of Madison Parks, the Madison Parks Foundation helps the Madison community conserve, promote and enhance its parks. The Madison Parks Foundation provides an innovative opportunity to fund parks, with successes including securing more than \$300,000 for the Elver and Reindahl Splash Parks and awarding the annual Goodman Pool Swimming Scholarships.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Planning and Development oversees all aspects of park planning and development, including long range planning and policies, park master planning, design and construction of parks, and intergovernmental coordination of policies and ordinances. Planning and Development also assists with the site design approval process related to the dedication of parkland and park impact fees, including collection of park impact fees.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

The Public Information Office oversees communications by managing the Parks Division’s website, blog posts, social media, news releases, photo library, and publications such as the annual calendar, the Parks newsletter (Out & About), kiosk messaging, and promotional materials. The Public Information Office also coordinates responses to media inquiries.

8.5 Partnerships and Volunteers

Partnerships are necessary to develop the programming of facilities within Madison Parks. In the City of Madison, the Parks Division is separate from recreation programming services. Primary recreation programming is the responsibility of Madison Community and School Recreation (MSCR) run by the Madison Metropolitan School District, which has had a recreation program since 1926. MSCR provides the organization and coordination for a variety of athletic organizations that use City of Madison Park recreational facilities. MSCR typically has over 80,000 participants in its recreation programs. The primary Madison park facilities used by MSCR are softball, baseball, and kickball fields, tennis courts, and docks for pontoon rides. MSCR also uses the City of Madison Park’s Warner Park Community Recreation Center (WPCRC) for various programs ranging from fitness to art classes. The partnership between Madison Parks and MSCR provides a large portion of the recreational programming in Madison Parks.



Photo: Family Fun Night at Warner Park Community Recreation Center

In addition to MSCR, there are dozens of other organizations that program activities such as baseball, football, Ultimate Frisbee, and soccer that, combined with MSCR, add up to over 11,000 recreational programming reservations each year. Organizations such as Southside Raiders, cricket clubs and Liga Latina De Futbol connect communities and expand recreational programming to a wider audience.

In addition to recreational programming, Parks has had success with creative programming through public-private partnerships. Entities that enter into agreements/contracts with Parks for these type of uses are held to high standards and specified goals, operations, and reporting procedures. Example of these initiatives include the Wingra, Brittingham, Marshall, and Olbrich boat rentals and camps, the Mendota and Camp Randall Rowing Clubs, the Biergarten at Olbrich Park, and the Mallards Baseball Stadium at Warner Park and Breese Stevens Field.

Over the past several years Madison Parks has collaborated with the Madison Parks Foundation and has had success with programming initiatives such as the Madison Parks Foundation “Learn To” series, scholarships at Goodman Pool, and the Connecting Children to Nature program. The Madison Parks Foundation, founded in 2003 is playing a larger role in providing programming at City of Madison Parks.

MADISON PARKS AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a crucial role in maintaining our vibrant park system, contributing either on either a one-time basis or an ongoing commitment. In 2017, Madison Parks had 1,994 volunteers who provided over 30,000 hours of time towards improving and enhancing the park system. These donated hours supplement a significant amount of Parks staff time and budget, which allows Madison Parks to provide an even greater level of service to the community.

Table 8.5 summarizes some of the notable volunteer programs and events of 2016.

Table 8.5: 2016 Notable Volunteer Events

Name	Dates	Number of Parks	Number of Volunteers
Adopt Ice	Jan. & Feb.	7	25
Dog Park Cleanup	Sat., March 26	8	76
Earth Day Challenge	Sat., April 23	31	186
Flower Garden Program	May - Sept.	17	33
Ride the Drive	Sun., July 31	4	91
West Fest	Sat..Aug. 27	1	54
Pickleball Lessons	June 16 - Sept. 29	1	2
Bird & Nature Walks	Sundays, year-round	3	40

Madison Parks strives to involve individuals and organized groups such as neighborhood associations, corporations, Friends groups and other affiliated organizations to commit on an ongoing basis to a specific park or project. These sustained engagements encourage collaboration between Madison Parks’ staff and volunteers to address large scale improvements and other initiatives.

8.6 Conclusion

The City's system of parks and open spaces shall continue to meet the demands of an ever-growing population with diverse needs. Providing resources to meet these demands will require additional operational expenses to design, construct, and maintain these facilities.

Overall, there are three primary factors increasing operational expenses:

- Development of new parks and citywide development
- Historic facilities with specific requirements for maintenance
- Facilities that require higher levels of maintenance such as splash parks.

The City's adopted Neighborhood Development Plans, Intergovernmental Agreements, and the Downtown Plan identify that the number of Madison parks will grow by 25% at full build out with a combined 67 new parks identified in these plans. While development of these parks is incremental, the past several years have seen rapid growth in both new and infill development that has outpaced the increase in operational funding. Development of these parks will require additional staff to plan and design these parks, and also to maintain, schedule, and coordinate.

City-wide development also increases demand on operational resources to maintain the boulevards, bike paths, bus stops, medians, and sidewalks. In 2010, the City of Madison Streets Division, Engineering Division, and Parks Division divided maintenance of these transportation-based city facilities. Since then, the number of transportation-based facilities maintained by Madison Parks has increased, including an additional 308 bus stops, 14 acres of medians, and 20,000 linear feet of sidewalk and bike paths. As these new facilities develop, they continue to draw upon the resources in the Parks Operating Budget.

The number of historic facilities owned and maintained by the Parks Division requires significant resources to manage and maintain. Additional levels of review are required before infrastructure needs can be addressed and improvements can occur. Costs to maintain historic facilities are significantly higher than regular park facilities.

An additional draw on operational resources is development of recreational facilities that have higher maintenance demands. Park facilities such as dog parks, ice rinks, shelters with restrooms, and splash parks require higher levels of maintenance. Additionally, athletic fields for popular sports such as flag football, ultimate frisbee, and soccer require higher maintenance so they remain playable throughout the year.

In order to continue to provide existing levels of service, Madison Parks needs to evaluate how future development, as well as the increasing number of facilities effect operational resources. The location of operating facilities and staff to serve Madison's growing park system will become more of a concern as development continues along the periphery of the City. For example, currently parks on the far west side periphery, such as Thousand Oaks Park are approximately seven miles from the Madison Parks facility that houses the staff and equipment needed to maintain this park. Improvements in technology and efficiency will likely play a role in reducing staff hours, and metrics such as

Results Madison and Performance Excellence should be used to inform a comprehensive analysis of operational needs and resources.

The Golf Enterprise Operating Budget has sustained losses in most years since 2003. Additionally, the golf program has not reinvested in capital assets over the past 16 years. The City is currently reviewing the existing golf program to address the overall liquidity problem of this program. On January 10, 2018, a Financial and Operational Analysis of Course Closure and Hole Reduction was presented to the Golf Subcommittee which reviewed golf course closure options as a potential solution to the golf program's negative net income. Additionally, a restructuring analysis framework was presented to the Board of Park Commissioners on April 18, 2018 and an anticipated business plan will be presented to the Board in 2018. These supporting documents will aid in decision-making regarding future funding of the golf program.