



# Chapter eight

## Parks and Recreation

### Introduction

One of the indicators of quality of life in a City is the health of its parks and recreation system. The City of Crystal Lake is fortunate to have an excellent parks and recreation system which is administered by the Crystal Lake Park District and the City of Crystal Lake. The Crystal Lake Park District is a separate governmental entity with their own elected officials, dedicated tax rates and autonomy. The City of Crystal Lake works closely with the Park District on any projects on park property. The goal of this element is to set a framework of policies and action steps to guide programming, management and development of a parks, recreation and open space system.

### Crystal Lake Park District

The mission of the Crystal Lake Park District is “to provide a safe leisure environment along with quality programs, parks, facilities and services and to preserve and protect open land and water areas that will benefit and improve the quality of life for our residents now and in the future.” This mission is accomplished through the following:

- Provision and maintenance of 1,400 acres of park, natural areas and open spaces, including 24 playgrounds, 14 tennis courts, 14 basketball courts, 24 baseball/softball fields and 12 soccer fields.
- Provision of more than 1,100 recreation and leisure programs each year for 58,000 park district residents of all ages and abilities.
- Provision of recreational facilities for specific uses including Main and West Beaches,

Lippold Park Athletic Complex, the Nature Center, Park Place Banquet Facility, The Racket Club, Barlina House Preschool and the Colonel Palmer House.

- Cooperation with community organizations to provide a unique range of special events, including the Independence Day Fireworks, Cardboard Cup Regatta and Chili Open Golf Classic, all on Crystal Lake; the McHenry County Youth Sports Association's International Baseball Tournament at Lippold Park; and dozens of running, walking and rowing events throughout the park system.

The Crystal Lake Park District owns and maintains our namesake, Crystal Lake, a 230-acre body of water that provides boating, fishing, swimming and other aquatic activities year round. Other unique natural areas within the district are Sterne's Woods and Fen and Wingate Prairie, both of which are Illinois Nature Preserves.

### Park District Facilities

The Park District groups its facilities into five categories; Regional Parks, Special Use Parks/Facilities, Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Pocket Parks.

Regional Parks are larger than 50 acres and serve an area population that may extend beyond the City limits. The Park District lists one park as a Regional Park.

- Lippold Park. It is 310 acres and contains active areas of open space as well as protected areas such as wetlands. The park offers ball fields, a skate park, a dog park, trails, picnic shelters, disc golf course, miniature golf course, driving range, batting cages and playground.

Special Use Parks/Facilities have a smaller more defined service area. These are facilities that have a special purpose usually a single purpose. The Park District lists the following 10 parks as Special Use Parks/Facilities.

- Butternut Preserve. 15 acre wooded site with trail system and a branch of the Kishwaukee River.
- Colonel Palmer House. Historic building and 4 acres of grounds used for education, special events and demonstrations promoting the history of Crystal Lake.
- Cress Creek Property. A 2.5 acre site with trails and benches along the creek.
- Grand Oaks Recreation Center. Multi purpose recreation building used for programs including Safety Town, gymnastics, dance, self defense and other park programs.
- Hill Farm Park. 15 acre site with historic Barlina House now used for preschool. 100+ year old barn is used for storage. Site has 140 plots for community gardens.
- Park Place. A full service banquet facility providing space for special events and meetings, as well as park programs.
- Prairie Ridge Conservation Area. This is a 57 acre wooded natural area with two ponds.

- The Racket Club. A tennis club with 9 indoor and 6 outdoor courts. An enterprise facility supported wholly through membership dues, lesson and court fees.
- Sterne's Woods & Fen. A 185 acre Illinois Nature Preserve including woodland, wetland and fen. Trails connect the Prairie Trail bike path and lead to Veteran Acres Park.
- Sunset Meadows Park. A 134 acre open space located in the Crystal Lake watershed. Currently leased for agricultural use. Future development as a passive recreation area.

Community Parks are between 10 and 49 acres and serve an approximately 2 mile radius area. They provide a variety of recreational activities. The Park District list the following 12 facilities as community parks.

- Ken Bird Park. 15 acre site with playground, tennis courts, basketball court, ball field and bike path.
- Canterbury Park. 6 acre site adjacent to Canterbury Elementary School with ball fields, basketball court and playground.
- Feinberg Park. This site has a bike path, playground, tennis and basketball courts, and a sled hill on 10.5 acres.
- Fetzner Park. 22 acres with playground equipment, basketball court, ball field, picnic shelter, and bike path following the Woods Creek.
- Four Colonies Park. The 19 acre site encompasses a large pond and has recreation equipment including basketball and tennis courts, a playground ball fields, and walking trails.
- Indian Prairie Park. A sled hill, ball fields and concession stand on 12.5 acres adjacent to Indian Prairie Elementary School.
- Main Beach/Lake Park. A 27 acre park on Crystal Lake. It offers a sand beach, playground, picnic areas, band shell, concession stand, boat rental, boat launch, ball field and basketball court. A multi purpose recreation building is the site of many park programs and special events.
- Spoerl Park. Baseball field, basketball and tennis court, playground and community building on 6 acres.
- Veteran Acres Park. 140 acres of woodland, prairie and wetlands. The park offers numerous active recreation opportunities including a playground, spray park, picnic area, ball field, tennis and basketball courts, fishing, sledding hills and Nature Center with a Butterfly House. Miles of trails wind through the rolling wooded hills and the Wingate Prairie, an Illinois Nature Preserve.

- West Beach. A sand beach, fishing piers and boat launch on a 2.5 acre site. Multi-purpose building for park programs and winter warming.
- Willows Edge Park. 44 acres of paths, natural areas and fishing opportunities.
- Woods Creek Park. With a playground, bike facilities, basketball, volleyball and tennis courts, fishing pier, picnic area, and soccer fields on 40 acres, this is a very active park. A multi-purpose building provides restrooms and space for park programs.

Neighborhood parks serve a 1 mile radius area and are usually between 1 and 9 acres. They are intended to serve an immediate population that is within walking distance of the facility. The Park District lists 15 facilities as community parks.

- Asbury Park. 1.5 acres with picnic tables and playground.
- Brighton Oaks Park. Two tennis courts, basketball court, playground and picnic facilities on approximately 2 acres.
- Hampton Park. Open space for interpretive play or field use near neighborhood detention area. 3 acre site.
- Hidden Pond Bike Path. Bike path that links other paths and areas together.
- Samuel Johns Park. 8 acre site with basketball court, soccer field, and playground.
- Knaack Park. Bike bath, ball field, and playground on 6 acres.
- Ladd Park. 3.5 acres with ball field, bike facilities, picnic tables and playground.
- Lapins Park. 1.5-acre site with a playground, benches and bike rack.
- Naoki Kamijima Park. Adjacent to the lake this park houses a storage facility for the Crystal Lake Rowing Club, two piers, picnic area and playground.
- Seminary Field. 4.5 acres of passive open space with a bike path.
- State Street Lots. Undeveloped property.
- Sterling Meadows Park. A playground, basketball court and path are in this 5 acre site.
- Winding Creek Park. This park is 9 acres with a bike path and two ponds.
- Woodland Estates Park. 13.5 acres with playground, courts, ball field, and bike facilities.
- Wyndwood Park. 5 acres site that includes a playground, soccer field and tennis court.

Pocket Parks are small neighborhood parks less than an acre that serve the area immediately surrounding the park area. The Park District lists two pocket parks.

- Della Street Park. 0.25 acres with playground and open space
- North Shore Property. Open area near the lake.

The Crystal Lake Park District Master Plan provides a detailed description of these sites and future maintenance responsibility in terms of equipment and costs. The Crystal Lake Park District is an Illinois Association of Park Districts Distinguished Agency and has received statewide recognition many times for outstanding programs and facilities. Park district residents have indicated a strong desire for a community center and outdoor aquatic facility. Provision of these amenities in the near future is a priority of the park district.

## City of Crystal Lake

In 2010 the City opened Three Oaks Recreation Area. This area provides a unique recreational experience. The site is over 400 acres and offers swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, sledding, picnic areas, concession area featuring Culvers restaurant, lake house and spray park and playground. This area is owned and managed by the City. It is adjacent to many desirable properties along Route 14. Redevelopment of those properties so their uses can be symbiotic with Three Oaks is a priority.

- Lake house. This is a 4,400 square foot building that includes showers and locker room and staff offices. As part of this building is Culvers restaurant for concessions and an outdoor seating patio.
- Playground and Spray Park. The playground area contains modern equipment including slides and swings. The spray park is a collection of equipment that has a variety of water discharge areas.
- Picnic Grove. The main pavilion is a 2,000 square foot area set in the grass area overlooking the lake that has several tables and an outdoor fireplace. There are two other smaller picnic pavilions. All pavilions are available for rent.
- Lake and Beach. The lake is a reclaimed gravel mine which is fed from pristine underground streams. There is a large sand beach area and two lakes, the main lake and a smaller lake for young children.
- Trails. There are paved and gravel trails around the Three Oaks Recreational Area where people can walk or ride bikes around the site.

## Individual Recreation, Goals, Actions and Indicators

### 8.1 Crystal Lake Park District



CRYSTAL LAKE PARK DISTRICT



**Goal:**

**Preserve, protect and enhance the City’s open space and natural resources, through cooperative efforts between the City and the Crystal Lake Park District.**

Open space is often overlooked and planned as an afterthought during development. Both passive open space and active recreation uses are important to one’s quality of life and make Crystal Lake a good place to live. The Crystal Lake Park District is the most active group in the area for the acquisition and creation of active recreational areas.

Passive recreation opportunities are also important. Any type of open space helps people reconnect to nature and it should be a priority of the City to ensure that open space continues to be a development priority.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
8.1a	Support the Park District in achieving its goals.	Number of development applications and building permits approved for work in the parks.
8.1b	Coordinate City plans and ordinances with the Park District Master Plan.	The annual review of Comprehensive Plan elements to ensure synchronization between multiple documents.  Periodically review the impact fee contributions required to the Park District.
8.1c	Work with property owners or developers to add additional land to parks and open space inventory.	Number of property acquisitions or donations to the park district.  Number of property acquisitions, donations or easements to the City of Crystal Lake, MCCD, Land Conservancy, Openlands, Environmental Defenders of McHenry or other similar group.  Encourage developers to incorporate green space as part of their development plans.

## Individual Recreation, Goals, Actions and Indicators

### 8.2 City Facilities



**Goal:**

**Enhance the City’s quality of life by providing and maintaining passive and active areas of recreation.**

The City has opportunities to protect natural areas and create passive and active recreation areas, which add to the quality of life. The city’s premiere attraction is Three Oaks Recreation Area.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
8.2a	Promote Three Oaks Recreation Area as one of the City’s main attractions.	Number of annual visitors to Three Oaks. Number of events held at Three Oaks. Creation of recreational programs to meet community needs.
8.2b	Encourage the development of open space, greenways, trails, parks or other preservation easements.	Number of permanent preservation easements for landscape, tree or other open space protection. Number of new development plans that contain some type of open space protection or park type. The use of Transfer of Development Rights to preserve open space.
8.2c	Work with other organizations in their pursuit to acquire, protect, preserve or restore sites or natural features on a site (wetland, oak stand, etc.).	Number of properties acquired by other organizations (Land Conservancy, McHenry County Conservation District, Openlands, Environmental Defenders of McHenry County, etc). The number of public outreach and education activities