

THE ST. CHARLES PARK DISTRICT

Overview

2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the St. Charles Park District, a local governmental unit dedicated to the mission: enriching the quality of life of Park District residents through excellence in programs, parks, facilities, and services. With over 1,494 acres of park and open space land owned or managed by the Park District, and offering a variety of active and passive recreational and educational opportunities, the St. Charles Park District provides award-winning facilities and programming to its constituents and to area visitors. As a 1998 recipient and a 6 time runner-up (most recently, 2008) of the prestigious National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management presented by the National Recreation and Park Association, the St. Charles Park District has been identified as one of the “Best in the Nation” in serving a population of 20,000-50,000 residents.

The recreational, open space and natural habitat opportunities offered by the St. Charles Park District are rich and varied. From the history associated with the construction of Pottawatomie Park to the image of St. Charles as a resort community, to the modern day expansion of athletic fields and trails that appeal to the growing population of active recreation users, the Park District provides an abundance of programs and facilities designed to meet the diverse needs of Park District residents.



As trends in recreation have changed through the years, the St. Charles Park District has done well in developing exciting new facilities and programs that appeal to groups large and small. The Park District has also taken the lead in environmental education and natural resource conservation. Working with a team of dedicated environmental volunteers, the Park District provides protection and maintenance of numerous natural areas, and preserves natural habitats for the enjoyment of future generations.

The St. Charles Park District has also developed many unique and user-friendly services to offer its residents, including Park District and Teen websites, "Leisure Link", an on-line registration program, and much written material designed to inform residents of services, programs and facilities. The Park District also works closely with other governmental agencies in a collaborative manner to discuss concerns common to these agencies and develop a better understanding of the vision that ties these agencies together. This type of vision and service is what makes the St. Charles Park District an award-winning agency that residents use and appreciate.

The boundaries of the Park District generally correspond to the borders of the St. Charles Township, with the exception of the Sugar Ridge subdivision located in South Elgin. The boundaries of the Park District also include Pheasant Run Resort, Pheasant Run Trails subdivision and the northern portion of Thornwood subdivision. The area within the Park



District boundaries totals approximately 36 square miles and includes all of the City of St. Charles as well as portions of Wayne and South Elgin. Roughly 50% of the area within the Park District remains unincorporated.



The Park District, established in 1911, is governed by the Park Board, comprised of seven members elected at large by District residents. This Board formulates and adopts policies related to operation, control, improvement and planning of parks and natural areas and recreational programs and facilities within the Park District. The Park Board encourages community input, promotes and interprets programs to the public and government officials, and fulfills all statutory requirements as prescribed by law.

Departments

The Park District is made up of four departments that each play a key role in providing park and recreational facilities and services to the community. The four departments – Administration, Parks, Recreation, and Golf – work in a collaborative effort to provide services to the residents of the District.

Administration Department

The Administration Department is responsible for the overall operation of the Park District and oversees the daily activities of the entire agency. The Director is primarily responsible for administering the day-to-day operations and functions of the Park District within the policies and guidelines established by the Park Board. It is also the responsibility of the Director to function as communicator between staff and the Park Board.

Within the Administrative Department, there is a business division responsible for the fiscal and human resource operations of the District and a marketing and public relations division charged with the responsibility of keeping the public informed of all aspects of operation and the marketing and promotion of park facilities and recreation programs.

Parks Department

The Parks Department is charged with the planning, maintenance, operation and enhancement of all parks and natural areas and with the provision of environmental education programs and related services. The Parks Department maintains numerous sites including two dedicated Illinois Nature Preserves (Norris Woods and Ferson Creek Fen), James O. Breen Community Park, East Side Sports Center complex, Boy Scout Island, 11 natural areas; Hickory Knolls Discovery Center; Primrose Farm, bike and pedestrian trails, as well as numerous mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks and associated fields and equipment.



Recreation Department

The Recreation Department manages the Park District's recreational facilities and provides programs and activities designed to meet the physical, social, and cultural recreational needs of the community. The extensive programs offered by the Recreation Department are intended to serve all segments of population from preschool children to older adults. These programs include summer day camps, swimming lessons, dance, drama, music, art, youth and adult sports, gymnastics, a teen center – STC Underground, the Adult Activity Center and many other activities. The Recreation Department is also responsible for the operation of Pottawatomie Community Center, River View Miniature Golf Course, Swanson Swimming Pool and the soon to be completed Otter Cove Aquatic Park.

Golf Department

The Golf Department operates the historic Pottawatomie Golf Course, designed by the renowned golf course architect, Robert Trent Jones, Sr. On October 3, 1997, Audubon International designated Pottawatomie Golf Course as a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. It was the first nine-hole golf course, internationally, to become certified in all six Audubon categories to include: Environmental Planning; Water Conservation; Integrated Pest Management; Outreach and Education; Water Quality Management; and Wildlife and Habitat Management. The designation was renewed in February 2011. In 2010 Golf World Magazine ranked Pottawatomie Golf Course the 15th best nine-hole golf course in America.

Park District Funding

Budgets are adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners in compliance with Park District policies and State statutes. User fees and real estate taxes are the primary funding mechanisms, with interest on investments, donations, grants (federal, state and local), rentals and the sale of concessions and merchandise each contributing to the Park District's revenue stream. Land and/or cash donations are also provided to the Park District through both the City and County Land/Cash Dedication Ordinances upon development of residential areas. In the fiscal 2009/2010 budget, real estate taxes were projected to comprise 60% of the Park District's operational revenues (less debt service and capital improvements), while the remaining revenue was projected to come from user fees, admissions, rentals, sales and miscellaneous interest revenue.