



OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT

Human Structure & Operations • Marketing Tactics • Management Tactics • Human Resources Tactics

Human Structure & Operations

Unlike other portions of this plan, the Operations & Management section, as well as Finance, speaks in terms of possibilities and options. Because management situations change rapidly, it would be inappropriate to assign detailed courses of action beyond fulfilling the park district's mission statement. Rather, the elements presented in this part of the plan are intended to be taken generally and serve as a guide for aiding future actions. Many of the items provided are options that Trumbull County MetroParks may employ in the future as resources become available.

For a detailed outline of the park district's current human structure and its operations, please refer to the MetroParks System Profile chapter of this plan. The following outlines various options to help strengthen the Trumbull County MetroParks so that the organization can fully implement the development plans mentioned earlier. The items were derived as a result of consulting with the public and park district work sessions. Focus is needed on the Park District's marketing tactics, as many area citizens remain unaware of Trumbull County MetroParks and what it has to offer them. Management tactics address enhancements to the every-day operations of the park district; however, these items are based upon current conditions and are subject to change. Finally, the Human Resources Tactics section explains the human structure needs in order to accomplish the necessary park district operations.

Marketing Tactics

Much of the public is aware of the parklands made available by MetroParks, but not the park district itself. Throughout the planning process, several citizens expressed surprise that Trumbull

Operations & Management

- Marketing Tactics could include providing additional park district events, signage improvements, enhanced media coverage, advertising from sponsors, and improved internet presence.
- Management Tactics could comprise of codifying existing park rules, placing notification signage up at parks so that visitors can better report any problems, and the development of management committees to monitor financing, press relations, events coordination, real estate acquisition, and to review the park district's master plan.
- In regards to Human Resources, Trumbull County MetroParks is in need of park employees and a director to coordinate the park district's operations.
- Trumbull County MetroParks will continue collaborating with other agencies and volunteers in working to build a stronger and improved park system for area residents.

County even had a MetroParks system. Because many are unaware of the Park District's existence, they miss out on visiting the other parks available to them. The confusion is due in part to a lack of marketing, as MetroParks has been strongly focused on building its system over the past few years. This section of Management & Operations seeks to offer options that the park district may employ in the future to reach out to the public.

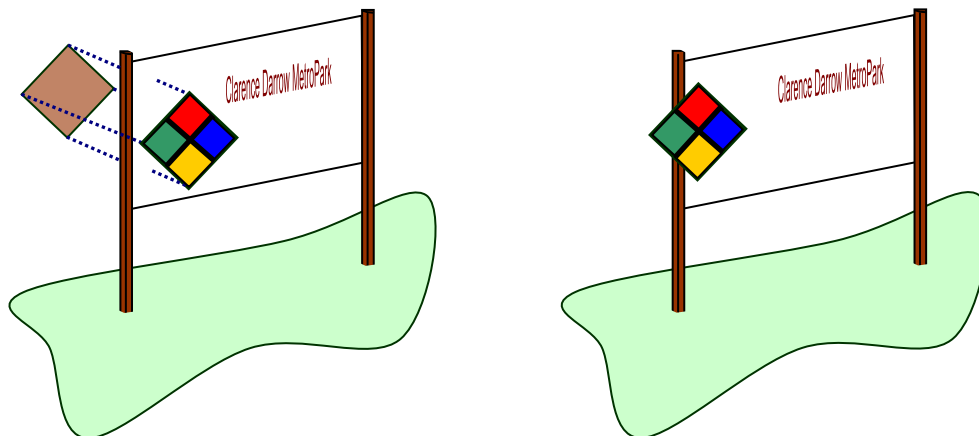


Events

Although mentioned earlier, it is important to note that events are vital forces in driving attention to the park district. MetroParks' first annual MetroParks day in the spring of 2008 attracted newspaper articles and camera crews to Canoe City, allowing many residents in Trumbull County to know for the first time about the recreational opportunities available in their area. Continuing the annual MetroParks day would only provide the park district with a way to increase public awareness.

Signage Improvement & MetroParks Logo Attachments

MetroParks' signs adequately display the names of its open parks; however there is a lack in uniformity in how the MetroParks organization is exhibited. Three-dimensional signs are very attractive alternatives utilized by many neighboring park districts. However, an inexpensive alternative may be to create two-dimensional or even three-dimensional MetroParks logo signs which could be attached to the existing signs. Allowing a corner of the logo to stick out beyond the side of an existing sign could also catch more attention.



Press Releases

MetroParks could make a commitment to produce and send out press releases more frequently. At the present time, MetroParks distributes only a few press releases each year outside of its board meeting announcements. Whether to elaborate upon an upcoming event or progress being made on a park project, press releases increase the public's exposure to MetroParks and also work to enhance its online presence.

Website

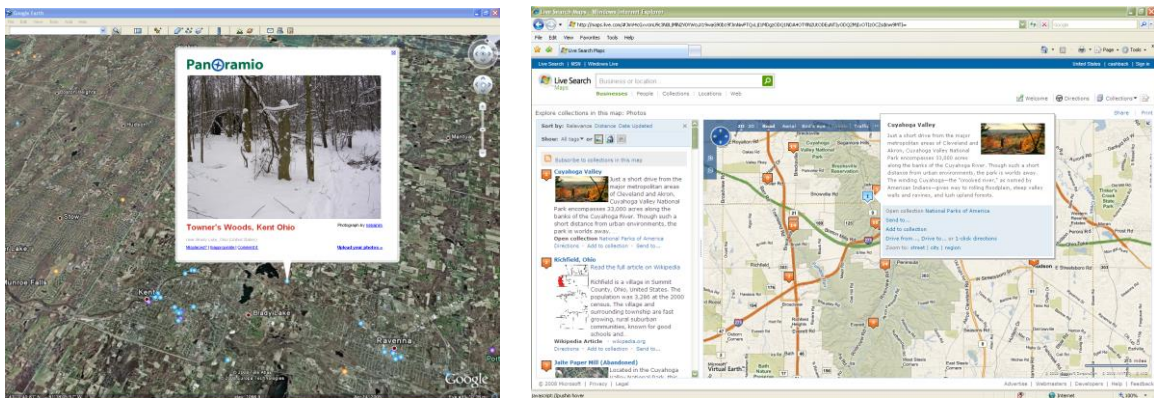
The current MetroParks offers extensive information for the public about its parks and events on its website at www.metroparks.co.trumbull.oh.us/. While the website appears in the top rankings of major search engine results with the proper key words, such as Trumbull and MetroParks, a simpler website address could improve ease of access and provide a solid marketing point. With little expense, MetroParks could purchase a simpler website address and configure it to automatically forward to its existing website. Also,



the cropping and re-sampling of pictures, also known as condensing, can dramatically improve webpage download speeds. There is also the opportunity to enhance certain pages with photographic banners or flash animation. Additionally, MetroParks could provide condition alerts along land and water trails, online citizen comment cards, and a photo book where visitors can submit photographs.

Internet

A growing number of people use the Internet to find activities and learn about new places. Outside of its website and a few mentions in other websites, however, MetroParks has little online presence. The park district could tap into popular resources such as online mapping applications and user-created content sites in order to reach more citizens and potential visitors. For instance, tags could be placed on the popular mapping websites that not only display pictures of existing parks, but also provide content and links that could drive more traffic to its official website and provide people with more information. Presently, there is no cost for adding these enhancements.



Screenshots of Google Earth / Portage Park District (Left) and Microsoft Live Maps / Cuyahoga Valley

MetroParks Supporter Signs

Among park districts, another successful avenue to attaining public recognition is the distribution of signs to supporters and donors. MetroParks could provide area businesses that provide funds or services plaques or mounted posters thanking them for their support of the park district. Quite often, businesses will place such plaques in public place, which not only serves to express a concern for public recreation and conservation, but also to help advertise parks.

Management Tactics

The day-to-day operations of the park district are presently managed by the park district's independent contractors in collaboration with park commissioners. All executive decisions are made at monthly board meetings with all key park district participants present. The following ideas and suggestions regarding the park district's operations were the result of the planning process. Because of the complexity in managing the park district, these items are meant to serve as a reference only and are considered options that Trumbull County MetroParks may employ in the future management of its parklands.



Land Acquisition

MetroParks may re-evaluate the current acceptance of land donations. In the past, the park district has acquired a few small and unusable parcels of land. At the time, Trumbull County MetroParks was a small organization and took land donations as an opportunity to grow. In its current position, however, it may be necessary to accept only larger pieces of land, as these are easier to manage. Exceptions, of course, would have to be made in the case of land donations made for trail development, expanding existing parks, or otherwise accepting a donation where future contiguous parkland growth is anticipated.

Acknowledgements & Awards

Trumbull County MetroParks can not place a price tag on its most precious asset, volunteers and the good will of its supporters. In order to demonstrate its thanks and appreciation to those who provide the park district with sweat equity and financial capital, Trumbull County MetroParks may provide certificates to those who perform outstanding service. Additionally, the park district may provide awards to individuals and businesses who work to provide a safer and cleaner environment for Trumbull County residents across several different categories.

Management Committees

MetroParks may investigate the possibility of establishing committees to study and make recommendations on key issues. Such committees could include a Finance & Policy Committee, a Public Relations Committee, and an Events & Programs Committee. Each committee would likely have no more than two board members and no less than two members. All committee participants would be involved in researching and performing tasks related to their committee focus. For instance, a Public Relations Committee would prepare press releases and place calls to local media with appropriate approval from the Board of Park Commissioners. Additionally, a Plan Review Committee would work to coordinate MetroParks affairs with the park district's comprehensive plan. Also, a Real Estate Procurement Committee could streamline the work that needs to be completed in acquiring new real estate.

Reporting Problems

In the past the park district has received helpful telephone calls from individuals reporting fallen trees along the Western Reserve Greenway or alerting park employees to vandalized equipment. MetroParks is able to act upon these predicaments rather quickly. However, because of the park district's land area in relation to its limited human resources, reporting of problems by visitors is crucial to keeping parks free of trouble. In the future, MetroParks will consider adding telephone numbers to park signs and kiosks asking visitors to report any problems, hazards, and issues needing maintenance. Additionally, a webpage could be created for submitting alerts. Such an Internet-based park reporting system could allow park visitors and workers to report and keep track of conditions along various portions of the land trails, river trails, and park properties in general. Alternatively, the reporting webpage could direct comments and alerts to park administrators to manage.



Notification Signage

As a critical element of security, MetroParks may incorporate signage at all of its open parks outlining the existing park rules. Signage could also provide phone numbers as well as a website address for reporting any problems.

Rule Codification

As with any park district, Trumbull County MetroParks post rules for visitors in order to preserve the integrity of the environment, preservation of equipment, and to protect the safety of patrons. Not unlike neighboring park districts, the regulations address hours of operation, pets, and preservation of wildlife. They also prohibit the use of alcohol, motorized vehicles, and littering. However, MetroParks' rules have not been codified, making enforcement more difficult even when help is offered by local police agencies. By codifying its list of regulations, MetroParks will be able to better protect parks and visitors from harm.

ATV Enforcement

Although ATVs provide an important form of recreation for many people, improper use of the vehicles as well as trespassing incur tremendous environmental and economic costs for MetroParks and presents a safety hazard to its other visitors. Most MetroParks' properties contain agreements with other agencies that prohibit the usage of ATVs. Unlawful ATV usage has been particularly problematic on the Western Reserve Greenway, even despite warnings from members of the Bike Patrol. Therefore, MetroParks may enact an enforcement program that will confiscate unauthorized ATVs from trails and parklands. The project could perhaps be financed in part by selling the seized vehicles at auction.

Attain Credit Card

Trumbull County MetroParks' operations have become increasingly complex over the past several years. Owning a credit card or debit card could be very helpful when ordering supplies, covering the cost of travel, or attaining services. The convenience of a credit card would free the park district's volunteers and independent contractors from the burden of personally purchasing goods or services on behalf of the Trumbull County MetroParks and waiting for reimbursement. Additionally, certain businesses only take credit cards as a means of payment.

Comprehensive Plan Updates

The 2009 Trumbull County MetroParks Comprehensive Plan is a living document meant to be continually updated and edited as situations change and new ideas and opportunities surface. At a minimum, MetroParks will revisit this plan once per year to make any necessary corrections and additions. Additionally, the plan provides a stand-alone development guide for each of Trumbull County MetroParks' properties that should be edited as the itemized projects are completed, changed, deleted, or new projects added. In order to easily make necessary adjustments, the digital text version of this plan has been provided to the park district for future editing.



Human Resources Tactics

Much of what the park district can accomplish in the future will be based upon its human resources. While MetroParks has a strong volunteer base and a network of partnering organization, time constraints of each limit how fast the park district can grow and develop. Therefore, the organization's human structure was analyzed throughout the planning process. The following are options that the park district may utilize in the future, pending available funding and resources.

Hire Executive Staff

Adding an executive staff person to the Trumbull County MetroParks organization is perhaps the most important aspect of accomplishing many of the park district's goals. With an executive staff person, decision-making will move faster, providing the park district with the ability to perform tasks quicker than present and significantly adding to its working capacity. Initially, the ideal executive staff person would be an individual able to tackle a dynamic work load and have the strong writing and communication skills that are necessary for project management, grant writing, and public engagement.

Hire Park District Employees

Even with an executive staff person, many of the park district's up-coming projects as well as day-to-day operations present a significant workload that would be greatly benefited by park district employees, or additional independent contractors. Additional labor capacity may be required for landscaping, trail maintenance, nature trail creation, sign construction, community outreach, and event hosting. An executive staff person would lead the paid workers in embarking upon and completing park district projects.

Collaboration With Other Agencies

There are many agencies striving for the same goals as MetroParks, whether environmental groups or water recreation enthusiasts. Local nature groups encourage the survivability of endangered bird species while others advocate for the well-being of particular rivers and streams. Additionally, MetroParks can benefit from partnering with the Trumbull Soil and Water Conservation District. Its environmental education department assists with various educational activities and provides guest speakers and experts. Other groups, such as Northeast Ohio Community Alternative Program, are able to provide support and labor for projects. MetroParks will work to identify and routinely collaborate with those agencies whom with it shares common missions, such as local environmental associations and community service support.

Create Resource Directory

A directory of park district resources could include contact information for volunteers, partnering agencies, neighboring park districts, and assisting organizations and corporations. Such a directory would help the park district in coordinating projects with the most experienced experts and interested volunteers. Sections of such a directory have already been collected as part of this plan.