

Legacy for Omaha

The work of the Omaha Parks Foundation will impact the community in many positive ways. It will help provide destinations that encourage wellness and a healthy lifestyle, lifting the spirits of all Omahans. It will beautify the city, making it vibrant and attractive to potential residents and companies looking to relocate. It will improve facilities and expand programming to establish Omaha's parks as a model for the rest of the country.

By encouraging philanthropic support and investment in a valued community resource, the Omaha Parks Foundation will facilitate the future of the city's parks system, offering citizens the opportunity to leave a legacy for generations to come.



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Established as a nonprofit organization in 2010, the Omaha Parks Foundation, Inc.'s mission is to bring together the resources necessary to enhance the quality of Omaha's park system. In collaboration with corporations, foundations, neighborhood associations and other volunteer groups, the Foundation helps support parks and recreation facilities owned by the City of Omaha for the benefit of all citizens and visitors.

The Omaha Parks Foundation operates independently as a private, nonprofit agency qualified as a 501(c) 3 organization under the Internal Revenue Code and registered as a charitable corporation in the State of Nebraska. The Foundation is governed by a Board of Directors.

The Omaha Parks Foundation was created to:

- inspire people across this large and complex community to bring Omaha's park system to a new level
- enhance our natural resources and open spaces
- create the highest and healthiest quality of life in the central United States, and
- preserve the beauty of the Great Plains landscape, where Omaha proudly rests.

To do this we must educate our civic, corporate and community leaders about the essential importance of parks and recreation resources. Parks and recreation activities are economic engines for Omaha. A healthy Omaha Park and Recreation department generates healthy lifestyles and promotes tourism, and all this depends on available parks, sports related attractions, festivals, and recreation programs and facilities for all ages and abilities.

The City of Omaha Parks, Recreation and Public Property department has the expertise to manage the greatest of park systems. The role of the Omaha Parks Foundation is to achieve this greatness.

"The evidence for the link between nature and human health has become so convincing that researchers have taken to using the phrase "Vitamin G" to capture nature's role as a necessary ingredient in a healthy life. Greener rooms, greener buildings, and greener neighborhoods produce healthier social behavior."

~ Dr. Frances E. Ming Kuo
University of Illinois

Omaha Parks Foundation

Parks and Recreation in Omaha

Green environments, such as parks and recreation facilities, are essential to healthy human development. People need regular, extended connections to nature in order to thrive.

Omaha has a long history of reserving green space for its citizens to enjoy a tranquil respite from urban life. In 1854, when the City of Omaha was designed, four parks were included in the plan.

Omaha has continued to place a premium on its parks, setting aside land to contribute to the beauty of the community and providing superb facilities for the city's recreational activities. Omaha's park and recreation system is envied by many communities of similar size throughout the country. Collectively, the parks system enhances the city's aesthetic appeal and overall attractiveness, and provides abundant wellness and recreational opportunities to citizens of all ages, children, teens, adults and seniors.

The Parks & Recreation Department recognizes that, along with green space, recreation is a fundamental need of individuals. The Department seeks to offer inclusive events and programs for people of all needs and walks of life. Our parks are welcoming to the young, active retirees who are young at heart, seniors, veterans and those with special needs. We not only welcome, but embrace everyone.

Today, the City of Omaha Parks & Recreation Department encompasses:

- More than 220 parks and sports fields on 10,000 plus acres
- Six large regional parks that include trails, boating, and camping
- More than 90 miles of bicycle trails
- Seven publically-owned golf courses
- 19 swimming pools and five water playgrounds
- 221 tennis courts
- 155 playgrounds
- Three publically-owned ice arenas
- A dog park
- 16 community centers, some of these are also senior centers
- Three boat marinas with a total of 362 slips
- Seven park pavilions and 14 picnic shelters that are available for rental

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning."

~ Fred Rodgers

Benefiting the Community

Research by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) documents the important benefits of parks and recreation for communities.

1. People are more likely to exercise in their leisure time, so park and recreation resources should be located in close proximity to neighborhoods, resulting in more physical activity and better health for those residents.
2. During this era of economic downturn, people are more dependent on public park and recreation services for physical activity.
3. There is a sharp increase in public park and playground use among families with children, especially those younger than six years.



Limited Budget, Growing Programs

The Parks & Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining all Department facilities and associated green space, including park roads and parking lots. However, the Department's budget has remained relatively flat over the past five years, while park acreage has increased by approximately 1,000 acres (10 percent) over the same time period.

In addition, several new facilities have been added, including the Common Ground Community Center & Pool, the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge and Plaza, Saddlebrook Community Center, Fontenelle Water Park, Zorinsky Aquatic Center, Cunningham Marina, Lawrence Youngman Park and Whitehawk Sports Fields.

Many Omaha Parks & Recreation buildings are more than 50 years old and require greater maintenance. Emergency repairs to damaged and deteriorating buildings and equipment reduce funds for general maintenance, repair and operations.

Meanwhile, the facilities are heavily utilized. From January through October 2010, there were:

- 836,212 visits to the community centers
- 346,424 visits to indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- 111,532 visits to tennis courts
- 84,686 visits to ice rinks

More than 42,700 children participated in summer programs through Hummel Park, Rec's Kids Clubhouse, and more than 4,000 seniors participated in programs at our community centers.

Rec's Kids Clubhouse is a new Parks & Recreation program that provides after school and summer programs for children in Omaha's community centers. Studies show when children and teens are not in school and are without constructive activities or adult supervision, crimes by and against children soar, including car accidents, substance abuse, and sexual assault. For every dollar spent on out of school programs, taxpayers save an average of \$6 in crime costs. Proper after-school and summer programs can reduce negative behaviors and increase positive behaviors and self-confidence.

In addition, the parks are an increasingly popular venue for community events. The number and size of events in Omaha's parks have risen dramatically in recent years: Bank of the West Memorial Park Concert, Riverfront concerts, Taste of Omaha, charity walks, health classes and many more.



How Does Omaha Compare?

	Omaha	Average
Acres of parkland as percentage of city area	12.9	8.3
Acres of parkland per 1,000 residents	21.8	12.9
Number of playgrounds per 10,000 residents	3.5	2.1
Total spending on Parks & Recreation per resident	\$44	\$93

Source: The Trust for Public Land, 2010 City Parks Facts, a comparison of the 85 largest cities in the U.S.



Omaha Parks Foundation Projects

The Omaha Parks Foundation recognizes the financial challenges of the Parks & Recreation Department, and presents an opportunity to gain support for special park projects that cannot be addressed by the city budget. The Foundation enables public-private partnerships, a hallmark of cities with premier park systems.

As it evolves, the Foundation will help fund a variety of projects in three major areas:

Community-Based Programs

The Omaha Parks Foundation helps fund quality programs that enrich the lives of children, adults and seniors at the City's parks and 16 community centers, including:

- Swimming instruction
- Citywide sports leagues for youth and adults
- Senior yoga, bridge and art classes
- Pilates, Jazzercise, Tae Kwan Do and more
- Summer and after-school programs for children through Hummel Park and Rec's Kids Clubhouse

Park Infrastructure, Revitalization & Development

The Omaha Parks Foundation supports projects to beautify and enhance the parks and park facilities, including:

- Renovating and creating youth sports fields
- Planting new trees to replace those that are damaged or diseased
- Improving park pavilions and community centers
- Rehabilitating trails, trail bridges and community parks
- Developing and maintaining public art

Neighborhood & Special Interest Parks

The Omaha Parks Foundation partners with neighborhood associations and volunteers across the city on projects for specific interest parks. Projects may include:

- Renovating neighborhood playgrounds
- Developing and maintaining dog parks
- Barrier-free parks for the physically disabled
- Building special sports fields
- Providing a variety of new recreation parks, including, skate parks, senior parks, frisbee golf parks

Opportunities for Giving

The Omaha Parks Foundation is supported by donations from individuals, other foundations, private businesses, groups, trusts, estates, and corporations.

Donations to the Omaha Parks Foundation may include gifts of:

- Cash
- Securities
- Charitable trusts
- Bequest through an estate plan or will
- Retirement fund assets
- Real estate
- Life insurance

All gifts are tax deductible in accordance with Federal and Nebraska state laws.

For more information about the Omaha Parks Foundation or how to contribute, please contact Amber Miller at 402-444-5947.

