

# Our Parks. Your Parks. Great Parks.

**2021 ANNUAL REPORT**



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## Inspiration & Impact



Thank you for the opportunity to share some amazing stories of Great Parks' impact in our community as part of the 2021 Annual Report. As a conservation leader in Hamilton County, we are proud to protect 17,769 acres of parks and natural habitats for the benefit of residents and generations to come.

The defining moment for your Great Parks in 2021 was Hamilton County voters electing to support the 0.95 mill 10-year tax levy on November 2. With this decision, Great Parks will move ahead with the project priorities identified in the critical infrastructure needs and master plan park improvements. We look forward to providing even more exceptional experiences for our community who have demonstrated the need for parks and outdoor spaces.

As you read through the enclosed narratives and reflect on the images and visuals, I hope you are inspired to be a part of what your parks have to offer. On behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners, thank you for continuing to champion your Great Parks, and we look forward to seeing you in 2022!

*Todd Palmeter, Chief Executive Officer*



**Left to right:** Marcus Thompson, Caren Laverty, Joseph C. Seta, Stacey DeGraffenreid, William J. Burwinkel



**Board of Park Commissioners** serve without compensation and are appointed by the Judge of Probate Court, the Honorable Judge Ralph E. Winkler.



# Community by the Numbers

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**17,769**

acres of land protected

Great Parks acquired a 22-acre parcel in Westwood, creating your **22nd park**.

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**4.9 MILLION**

people cultivated  
memorable experiences

The community continued to demonstrate that **outdoor spaces and wellness are important** to them.

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**1.2 MILLION**

guests explored our trails

Whether a daily favorite or a new trek, guests enjoyed discovering Great Parks' **78 miles of trails**.

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# 22 acres of green space for residents to enjoy





## Expanding Community Throughout Cincinnati

In August, Great Parks celebrated its commitment to serving thriving and diverse communities within the City of Cincinnati through its acquisition of the former home site of the James N. Gamble family. This urban preserve, located in the community of Westwood, is being transformed into the newest Great Park, with 22 acres of green space for residents to enjoy.



This acquisition was made possible through the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation fund and the local match provided in-kind by the Greenacres Foundation. It supports Great Parks' Comprehensive Master Plan priority to expand park access to all users by providing nature-based resources in areas that are currently underserved.

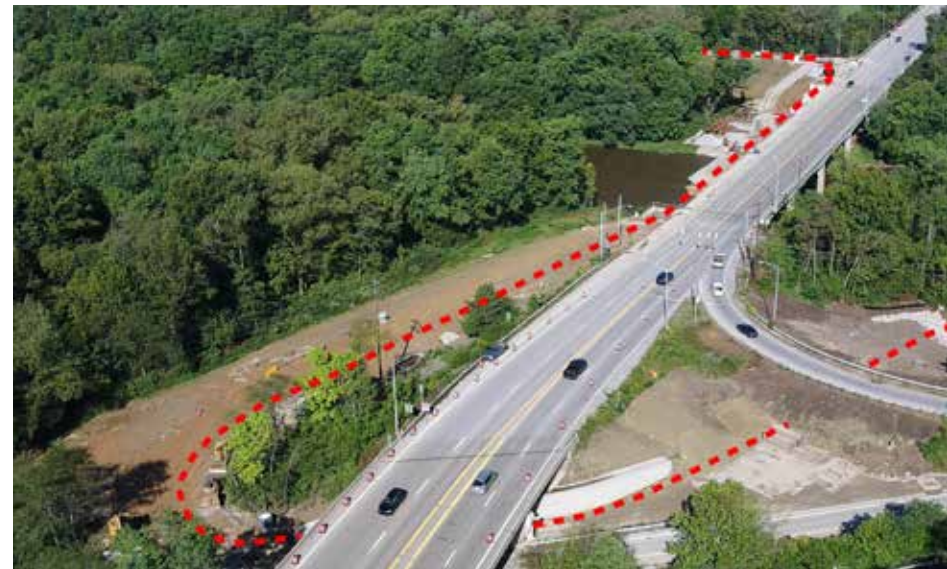


## Bridging Community with Expanded Trails

The Beechmont Bridge Connector represents a major step forward for regional trails in Cincinnati, Hamilton County and southwest Ohio. It will allow trail users to continue from the Little Miami Scenic Trail to the Ohio River Trail safely and without disruption.

**This connector trail will extend the Ohio to Erie Trail to more than 80 miles.**

Great Parks partnered with the City of Cincinnati, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and Anderson Township, among others, to make this long-planned project become a reality. Great Parks secured funding for the \$7.9 million project through the state capital improvements fund and the federal Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Program fund through the OKI Regional Council of Governments. Great Parks funded the local match, a total of 27% of the project costs, through capital project funds.















## Enhancing Community Through Sustainability

In August, Great Parks hosted its first Urban Farming Festival, an event focused on combining sustainable living with community flavor. Hosted at Great Parks Nature Center at The Summit in Roselawn, this free event connected residents to nature through hands-on activities, art and music, seed-planting, meeting farm animals, and recycling relay races. Exhibits highlighted sustainability practices for urban environments, such as raising goats and chickens and growing sunflowers.

Many community members tried yoga for the first time, or left the event with their very first houseplant.

The event was made possible thanks to the support of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the Roselawn Community Council, and our partnership with New Prospect Baptist Church.







A band of five musicians is performing on a raised wooden stage. The stage is set up outdoors with large speakers on either side. The musicians are wearing casual clothing, and one member is wearing a white shirt with 'PORTO RICO' printed on it. The background is a solid orange color.

# Hispanic Heritage Festival

## Celebrating Community and Embracing Diversity

Great Parks was very excited to celebrate the diversity in our community by hosting our inaugural Hispanic Heritage Festival. Celebrating the history, culture, and achievements of Hispanic and Latin Americans, the Hispanic Heritage Festival made its debut in September at Sharon Woods. Guests enjoyed salsa dancing lessons, cultural dance demonstrations, Zumba classes, craft-making, food trucks, games, and live music.

The day's events were bilingual and hosted by local Hispanic and Latin American groups and organizations that engaged guests about their culture.

The Hispanic Heritage Festival was made possible thanks to a partnership with La Mega Media and will be the first of many culturally inspired festivals for Great Parks.





## Connecting Community Through Countywide Nature Days

In April, Great Parks partnered with Cincinnati Parks to host the 2021 City Nature Challenge. Part of an annual worldwide BioBlitz, our City Nature Challenge encouraged the public to engage with their natural environment in a new way: by contributing to conservation research through documenting plants and animals in their local park, neighborhood, or even their backyards. Sightings included the Prothonotary Warbler and the Rough Green Snake, two Ohio species of concern.

**Hamilton County citizen scientists made more than 3,000 observations during the 2021 City Nature Challenge.**

This event was part of an international citizen science initiative started by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the California Academy of Sciences. City Nature Challenge supports Great Parks' Comprehensive Master Plan priorities of adding programming for diverse audiences and focusing on partnerships.















## Strengthening Community Through Partnerships

Partnerships help create strong communities, and one of Great Parks' most celebrated partnerships is with ArtsWave, the Cincinnati region's arts council. Together, the two agencies introduced Enjoy the Arts @ Parks, a series of free outdoor performances and concerts during summer and fall.

Great Parks hosted six performances, showcasing some of Cincinnati's best and most diverse performers and arts organizations. This included The Cincy Brass, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, Bi-Okoto Drum & Dance, and Madcap Puppets. Macy's, a consistent supporter of arts programming for over a decade, sponsored the Enjoy the Arts @ Parks series.





## Optimizing Community Through Accessibility

Getting out on the water became easier, safer, and more enjoyable for park guests of all abilities in the summer of 2021, with a new accessible canoe and kayak launch installed in Winton Woods. This new launch provides full access to Winton Lake thanks to its unique transfer system, which allows individuals with a physical restriction to board watercraft unassisted.

Since opening to the public, many people have launched their personal kayaks, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards. Additionally, nearly **2,000 rentals** offered those without a watercraft an opportunity to enjoy the experience.

The launch was funded through grants from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources NatureWorks Program, the Hatton Foundation, REI Co-Op, and Great Parks Forever, the philanthropic partner of Great Parks of Hamilton County. The opening of this launch supports Great Parks' Comprehensive Master Plan priority of expanding access for all users.















**1,561**  
long-term volunteers  
and community groups



**27,098**  
hours served

## Building Community Together as One

Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, 2021 was a very successful year. These passionate individuals and teams worked diligently behind the scenes and alongside our staff to achieve success and further the mission and vision of Great Parks. Together, volunteers have created a more stable and sustainable organization and a more diverse workforce. They've also made a significant impact in our community.

**This year alone, volunteers removed 1,022 bags of litter, 133 bags of recycling, and 40 tires from parks and waterways.**

Volunteers didn't stop there – they walked, monitored, and improved 105 miles of trail by removing water bars and installing other sustainable measures. They also removed 29 acres of invasive plants, making room for native plants that provide better food sources and overall habitat for native wildlife.





Great Parks Forever, the philanthropic partner for Great Parks of Hamilton County, plays an active role in the success of our parks. Together, we translate an early conservation promise into everyday experiences and lasting legacies.

In 2021, donors to Great Parks Forever generously invested in the park district's greatest needs and specifically in amenities such as the canoe and kayak launch, land acquisition, nature education, a new music garden, and reforestation.

Great Parks Forever launched two new programs last year. The new Trails Fund became a popular way to give for walkers, runners, hikers, cyclists, and horseback riders. This new fund was featured at the Root Ball, Great Parks Forever's gala held in October.

**In total, donors invested more than \$88,000 in the Trails Fund.**

More than 50 donors became the inaugural class of Parks Heroes in 2021. A Parks Hero pledges at least \$10 per month for one year.

There are many ways to invest in Great Parks Forever, including an IRA qualified charitable distribution, giving through a donor-advised fund, stock gifts, and planned giving. More information is available at [GreatParksForever.org/legacies](https://GreatParksForever.org/legacies).



# Awards & Recognitions



Great Parks Green Team Powered by Groundwork Ohio River Valley – 2021 Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Awards of Excellence, First Place in Management Innovation



Winton Woods Accessible Canoe & Kayak Launch – 2021 Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Awards of Excellence, Third Place in Capital Improvement Projects Up to \$1 Million



Urban Farming Festival – 2021 Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Awards of Excellence, Third Place in Environmental & Interpretive Programs & Events



Adopt-A-Class – 2020/2021 Community Group Adopter of the Year award



Government Finance Officers Association – Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting



Mike Deiters, PGA Golf Professional – Golf Digest's Best Teachers in Your State, Best Teachers in Ohio



Sarah Kent, Outreach Manager, Nature Center at The Summit – National Association for Interpretation Region 4: Great Lakes 2021 Award winner



Sarah Kent, Outreach Manager, Nature Center at The Summit – *Parks & Recreation* magazine and National Recreation and Park Association Young Professional Network, 30 Under 30 for 2022 award winner



Rachel Messerschmitt, Chief of Guests Experiences – 2021 *Cincinnati Business Courier* Forty Under 40 award winner



Matt Starr, PGA Golf Professional – 2021 Golf Range Association of America, Top 100 Growth of the Game Teaching Professional



Dennis Wells, PGA Golf Professional – 2021 Southern Ohio PGA Player Development Award winner

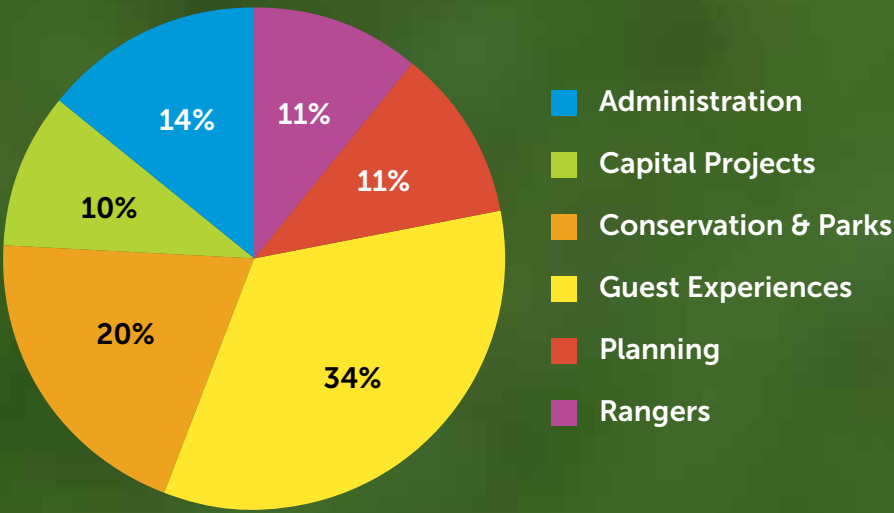


Eric Estridge, The Vineyard Golf Course Superintendent – Class A Membership Status, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America



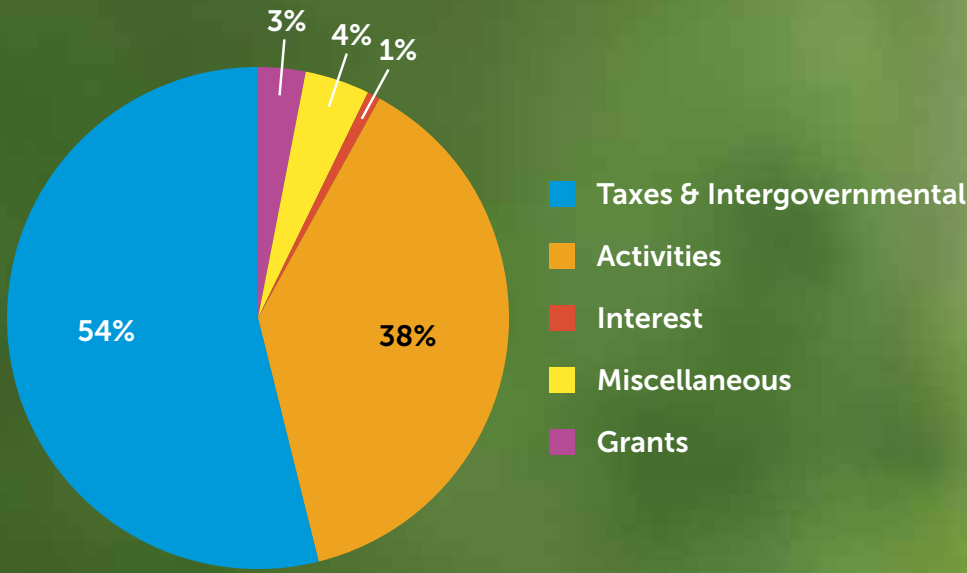
# 2021 Financials

Expenses



Total Expenses: \$33,575,380

Revenue



Total Revenues: \$37,863,526









**Great Parks of Hamilton County**

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**2021 Board of Park Commissioners**

William J. Burwinkel    Joseph C. Seta  
Stacey DeGraffenreid    Marcus Thompson  
Caren Laverty

**Chief Executive Officer**

Todd Palmeter



Printed 4/22  
on recycled paper