Report to the Community 2015

CITY OF DES MOINES
PARKS AND RECREATION
Our Department:

> Parks

The Parks Division is responsible for maintaining all the facilities and grounds within the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department. This includes all park buildings, playgrounds, sport courts, pools and aquatic centers, wading pools, spraygrounds, mowed turf, prairie areas, woodlands, litter and trash removal, and snow removal. Also included are trails, both paved and nature, municipal cemeteries, landscaped areas, flowerbeds, trees and the city greenhouse. Additionally, the Parks Division maintains municipal buildings for Police, Public Works, Fleet Services, City Hall, Armory and the Municipal Service Center.

> Planning and Development

Park Improvement Planning Division plans, budgets, and implements improvement projects that facilitate safe use of parks, recreation and trail facilities while creating inviting spaces for the use and enjoyment by visitors and citizens of Des Moines to Live Well, Play Hard and Protect the Earth. The function of the Park Improvement Planning Division is to manage the Park Improvement section of the City’s Capital Improvement Program by supervising and implementing construction and planning projects. This is accomplished by the staff functioning with the knowledge and expertise in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and engineering.

> Recreation

Des Moines Recreation strives to create experiences that appeal to the widest variety of residents. Des Moines Recreation looks to offer activities that enhance what exists but is always seeking to showcases sports, aquatics, volunteer opportunities, and the natural environment in ways they have not been seen before. We aspire to serve not only our regular participants but we look to create excitement for first time users as well. Des Moines Recreation offers a wide range of programs to match people’s diverse interests, using our top rate facilities conveniently located for all who participate. Des Moines Recreation is focused on excellence in leisure activities as part of a larger commitment to health, wellness, and the overall betterment of people’s lives.

> Administration

The administration division is responsible for the overall operation and management of the parks and recreation department. This includes the front line customer service over the phones, online and in person at the Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center and the marketing and promotion of department facilities and programs. We are also responsible for the safety of the department’s permanent and seasonal team members while ensuring a fun and safe environment for the park and open space system’s users. The administration division is also responsible for managing the department’s operating budgets and creating partnerships with other organizations and being a direct liaison to the Friends of Des Moines Parks.

> Photo Credit

Cover and Winner of the Photo Contest (Travis Hanson-Pollock)
Financials Section Introduction Page (Kris Gaspari)
Facilities Section Introduction Page (Mirza Kudic)
Numbers Section Introduction Page (Dianne Kobberdahl)
Milestones Section Introduction Page (Michael Leland)
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Looking Ahead to 2016
Parks and Recreation Administration Office
1551 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway
Des Moines, IA 50317

(515) 237-1386
www.dmparks.org
parks@dmgov.org

Text Message Notifications
Text any of the following keywords to 84483 to sign up for updates on:
DSMEvents, DMPools, DSMSports, DSMTrails
While the Report to the Community is a retrospective over the past year, our team is continually looking forward at the next program, next project and the next opportunity. The nature of our business is perpetual motion, and it is our job to keep the city moving.

We moved ourselves forward in terms of national credibility in 2015 when we were named a finalist in the NRPA Class II category, which includes cities with a population of 150,001 to 400,000, on our very first submission for the National Gold Medal Awards in Parks and Recreation. While we were not selected, every member of our team was proud to be considered part of this elite list. It has been made into a cliché that it is "an honor just to be nominated" but in this case, it truly is.

While Des Moines saw some of the worst flooding in recent years, it brought out the best in its citizens. Nearly 150 volunteers helped city staff get Gray’s Lake open for the long Independence Day weekend. In fact, this year our volunteer program reached some of its highest totals since its inception in 2009.

Entering into progressive partnerships allowed our team to improve service delivery, expand program offerings as well as maximize limited budget resources including:

- Expansion of joint athletic leagues with Des Moines Public Schools
- Relocation of the Des Moines Police Boxing Club to Pioneer Columbus Community Center, officers based in park and recreation facilities and a motorcycle trail patrol unit
- Collaboration with Polk County to improve facilities at Sheridan and Martin Luther King Jr. Parks

New facilities such as the Glendale Wildflower Scattering Garden and new programs have enabled our team to embrace industry trends.

On behalf of the dedicated 80 full-time and over 200 seasonal employees who have made it their mission to help Des Moines Live Well, Play Hard and Protect the Earth each and every day, I would like to thank our Mayor, City Council, City Manager, appointed Park and Recreation board and the citizens for their support.

Respectfully,

Benjamin R. Page
Director of Parks and Recreation
City of Des Moines
2015 Mayor and Council

T.M. Franklin Cownie
Mayor

Bill Gray
Ward I

Robert L. (Bob) Mahaffey
Ward II

Christine Hensley
Ward III

Joe Gatto
Ward IV

Christopher Coleman
At Large

Skip Moore
At Large
An appointed Park and Recreation board meets monthly. This 15-member panel advises City Council and oversees planning and administration of city parks, cemeteries, recreation centers, aquatic centers, and various programs.

Susan R. Noland  
Chair

Jon D. Cahill  
Board Member
Heather Anderson  
Board Member
Paula J. Feltner  
Board Member
Kimberley Boggus  
Board Member
Victoria Facto  
Board Member
Sammy F. Pugh  
Board Member
Cynde Fanter  
Board Member

Loyd W. Ogle  
Board Member
George Davis  
Board Member
Vincent J. Scavo  
Board Member
Andrea Woodard  
Board Member
Connie Boesen  
Board Member
Jeffrey C. Clubb  
Board Member
Chelsea Lepley  
Board Member

I often explain to others what a great city Des Moines is, by noting the quality of the park and recreation locations, facilities, and amenities that Des Moines has to offer. From Gray’s Lake to community gardens and the Botanical Center to softball leagues, the Parks and Recreation Department offers so much for Des Moines residents to enjoy.

Whenever I have family, friends, or business associates visit Des Moines from other cities and states, they are amazed at the quality and character of our park and recreational facilities, including the Rotary Riverwalk Park, Western Gateway Park and the John & Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park. We take visitors to the Botanical Center, Blank Park Zoo, and Brenton Skating Plaza, all of which are managed by the Department.

I’m so proud to be able to show the quality of the character of this City, and much of that is demonstrated through the dedicated visioning, planning, and daily work of the department’s staff in managing these amenities.

> Mel Pins, President, Somerset Neighborhood Association. Chair, City of Des Moines Zoning Board of Adjustment
Citizens Cemetery Advisory Committee
- Patrick Beeman
- Benjamin Bell, Jr.
- Archie Cook
- George Davis
- Max Knauer
- Carlton Peterson
- Ferol Wegner

Citizen Golf Advisory Committee
- Russ Bitterman
- Rodd Bullard
- Rex Coble
- Paula Feltner
- Susan Hanke
- Richard Hodges
- Adam Leach
- Coleen Monahan
- Sam Pugh
- Stephen Vilmain

Rose Garden
- Sarah Hill
- Leslie Hunter
- Miles Mills
- Ed Pagliai
- Delores Pagliai
- Matt Rosen
- Scott Wallace

Trails and Greenways
- Linda Appelgate
- Jeff Cook
- Mark Courter
- Vicki Facto
- Alan Foster
- Carol George
- Tamra Jurgemeyer
- Peter Knapp
- Tim Lane
- Bailey Mader
- Chris McCarthy
- Ginger Soelberg
- Scott Sumpter
- Rick Swalwell
- Penny Thompson

Urban Conservation Advisory Committee
- Doug Adamson
- Scott Atzen
- Brian Bakke
- Chuck Becker
- Jane Clark
- Marian Gelb
- Kimberly Hansen
- Teresa Jenson
- Loren Lown
- Susan Noland
- Scott Ralston
- Tom Rosburg
- Dave Silver
- Keith Summerville
- Jennifer Welch
- Andrea Woodward
The mission of the Friends of Des Moines Parks is to preserve, protect, improve, and promote the use of Des Moines’ parks, greenways, and recreational programs for the benefit of all neighborhoods and citizens. To learn more about this group or to join, visit their website friendsofdmparks.org.
FINANCIALS
FY2016 Property Taxes

Des Moines Public Schools 38.66%
City of Des Moines 35.49%
Polk County 15.33%
Hospital 6.74%
DMACC 1.42%
DART 1.69%
State of Iowa 0.01%
Polk County Extension 0.09%
Polk County Assessor 0.59%

FY2016 Adopted City of Des Moines General Fund

General Fund By Department

$157,235,211

Police 38%
Parks & Recreation 10%
Public Works <1%
City Manager 2%
Engineering 5%
Information Technology 3%
Human Resources 1%
Finance 7%
Library 3%
Community Legal Development 2%
Other 1%
Fire 23%
Service Line Expenditures $15,547,176

Service Line Revenues $4,534,933

There is no greater way to improve the quality of life for residents of Des Moines than investing in our parks and trails. It’s good for families, it’s good for neighborhoods, and it brings economic vitality to a community. Parks and trails play a large role in deciding where families want to raise their children and is a contributing factor in growing jobs and our neighborhoods. We can’t have one without investing in the other.

> State Senator Matt McCoy
(D-Des Moines)
FY2016 City of Des Moines $608 Million Budget By Fund

$157,235,211
General
25%
Police, Fire, Parks, Library Administration & Central Services

$110,803,338
Special Revenue
18%
Road Use Tax, Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID), Police Grant, Community Development Grants & Tax Increment Funds (TIF)

$109,046,748
Enterprise
18%
Parking, Sanitary, Solid Waste Storm Water, Housing & Golf

$94,632,697
Capital
16%
Bridges, Streets, Buildings, Sewers, Sidewalks, Parks & Traffic Control

$92,957,987
Debt
15%
Health, Fleet, Forestry, Telephone, Radio Maintenance, Repair, Replacement & Stores

$42,843,897
Internal Service
7%

$2,400
Expendable Trust
<1%

2015 Report to the Community
The parks and recreation programs provide a range of values to residents, businesses and the local government. Many of these values are often overlooked and rarely quantified. The purpose of this effort is to quantify the benefits received due to the operation of Des Moines Parks and Recreation.

**REVENUE PRODUCING FACTORS FOR CITY GOVERNMENT**
Property values within 500 feet of parks have an increased property value of over $1.1 million in tax receipts to the City of Des Moines.

The City of Des Moines collects an additional $1 million in tax receipts from a sample of tourism activities that are held in parks, trails, festivals and sporting events, which are operated by the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department.

**WEALTH INCREASING FACTORS FOR CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES**
Homes in close proximity to parks have an increased value of $45 million dollars.

A sample of tourism activities held in the City of Des Moines parks, trails, festivals and sporting venues bring more than $12 million of revenue to the citizens and businesses.

**COST SAVING FACTORS TO CITIZENS**
A sample of seven fitness and recreational programs provided by the Des Moines Department of Parks and Recreation save an estimated $210,845 in direct use spending. Direct use value refers to the difference between the public and private costs for a recreational service.

Citizens who engage in fitness and exercise programs provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation are conservatively estimated to save $19 million in health savings and medical costs.

The Department of Parks and Recreation provides opportunities for volunteers and donations resulting in what is referred to as community cohesion. The value is estimated to be $1.2 million (volunteer labor and donations).

**COST SAVING FACTORS FOR CITY GOVERNMENT**
Of the parks and open space areas within the city’s integrated sewer system (20% of the total system is integrated) area, the cost savings for water treatment, and operations and maintenance is estimated to be $398,832 per year. The cost savings is calculated based on only 863 of the 5,481 acres (15%) of parks within the City of Des Moines.

Due to the presence of parks and open space in floodplains, the City saves an estimated $1.7 million in flood protection benefits.
THE ECONOMIC IMPACT
BY THE NUMBERS

PROPERTY VALUE
$1.1 million
annually in property taxes can be collected from single family houses within 500 feet of parks.

TOURISM
$1 million is collected in tax receipts from various tourism activities that are held in parks, trails, festivals and sporting events.

$2.1 million tax revenue
$21 million event income
$19 million savings
700 jobs

HEALTH
Des Moines Park and Recreation users are estimated to save $19,472,194 in health care costs.

TRAILS
Projected economic impact of Des Moines trails was just over $15 million.

JOB CREATION
29 festival & events + 220 sporting events + 214 trails = 700 JOBS

PROGRAMS
Festival and Sporting events produce between $1.7 to $2.3 million; and $11.2 to $18.9 million respectively.

$155,854 Stormwater management saves the city annually in direct water treatment costs.

$575,999 volunteer dollars A total of 3,193 volunteers account for more than 24,000 volunteer hours for the city.
An average home in Des Moines with $104,100 assessed value pays $123 towards Parks and Recreation.

For $123 a year, residents have access to these Parks and Recreation & Municipal Facilities:
THAT’S NOT ALL

$123 ALSO GETS YOU ACCESS TO GREAT LANDMARKS

$123 ALSO GETS YOU ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES MANAGED BY CONTRACT/LEASE

THERE’S STILL MORE
There are five pools and aquatic centers open to residents from May until September. Season swim passes are available for individuals and families. During the month of April, purchase a swim pass and save $5 to $20. Private party rentals are an option at all of our aquatic facilities, making them a unique option for your next birthday party or special event. Family Swim Nights are held monthly and Doggie Dives are held the last day of the pool season as a great opportunity for dogs and their owners.

There are 10 traditional wading pools, 4 splash pools, six spraygrounds and two fountains operating in Des Moines parks free of charge. Our wading pool season extends from the first full week in June through mid-August. The days and hours of operation vary by facility. These water facilities are specifically aimed at children ages 10 and under.

The wading pools are dispersed throughout the city and offer supervised water play. It is a great opportunity for children to meet other children, have fun, and build water confidence. Parental supervision is required.

A splash pool is a splash pad with standing water and spray feature; offering water play. Splash pools are staffed; however, parental supervision is strongly encouraged.

A sprayground is a splash pad with spray features without standing water. Spraygrounds offer unsupervised water play. Staff is not provided at spraygrounds or fountains, parental supervision is required.

“While reminiscing about growing up in Des Moines, we came to the realization of how important the Des Moines Parks system has been in our life.

We both learned to swim at Birdland Pool and then spent numerous winter evenings ice skating on Birdland Lagoon and warming in the Birdland shelter. The shelter has been recently renamed the Ding Darling Shelter.

Bill says his love of orange soda came from Cattell Grade school class picnics in Union Park and Pam remembers summer days at the Union Park wading pool. The crafting activities at the shelter were always a fun way to spend a summer afternoon.

Having met in the spring of 1964, there were several long walks and talks through Union Park after a second date at Riverview Park.

As a young married couple, we enjoyed the original “Art in the Park” and music concerts in Greenwood Park. The sledding at Waveland Golf Course was always an adventure.

The Heritage Carrousel at Union Park is a wonderful addition to the park. It brings back the sounds and memories of childhood and delights children of all ages.

In our retirement, we have enjoyed our time volunteering with the Parks Area Foundation. There has been a combined effort by many individuals to bring a great City Park and performance venue into existence. We are currently working on fundraising for the soon to be redeveloped Riverview Park and the Riviera Performance Stage. We continue to thank the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department for helping to provide a beautiful setting for a lifetime of experiences and memories.

> Bill and Pam Thompson
The Municipal Buildings division is dedicated to providing an attractive, clean, accessible, safe and sustainable environment. Municipal Buildings facilitates the City of Des Moines in providing and maintaining essential services that meet the needs of the citizens of Des Moines while maintaining a minimal environmental impact. All efforts of the team are service-based and excellent customer service is an essential component of all department actions.

In addition to the repair and maintenance of all parks facilities, the team performs all heavy equipment work including grade work, heavy equipment support, demolition work and assisting other horticulture staff prepping the earth for seed. The management and maintenance of all municipal buildings is also the responsibility of the Building Services Division. The staff of 27 maintains 501,623 square feet of office space across the city including the Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center, City Hall, the Des Moines Police Station and the Armory.
The City’s seven municipal cemeteries are large, historic and embrace the cultural diversity of our community. Comprising nearly 10% of the City’s parkland, the cemeteries’ 353 acres contain more than 172,900 interments in below and above ground spaces and niches. Through volunteer support, private contributions, increased focus on revenue and efficiencies, the municipal cemeteries are evolving to exceed consumer’s demands.

First plotted in 1848, Woodland was a cemetery before Des Moines became the state capitol. Laurel Hill Cemetery opened its gates in 1907 in the rolling hills of Des Moines’ east side, just south of the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Glendale has served Des Moines since 1904. Originally, part of the massive Waveland Park, the year 1900 saw this parkland divided into the beautiful Waveland Golf Course, with the remaining gently rolling hills and dales becoming Glendale Cemetery. Elm Grove, Oak Grove, Sims and St. Ambrose were acquired when their previous owners were financially unable to maintain the cemeteries.

The business model has shifted focus on consumer demand for non-traditional burial services. One significant project is the new Wildflower Scattering Garden at the Glendale Cemetery. This new cremation scattering area option is the first in the area. Since over 50% of Iowans select this burial service, this offering looks to increase revenue in the coming years.

Increased beautification efforts such as tree plantings, statues, and garden beds have been supported largely by private contributions. The amenities when combined with the care of the grounds and existing assets truly have an impact on where residents choose as a final resting space.

The cemetery database search site, cemeterysearch.dmgov.org, was introduced in 2014, providing the public the convenience of researching grave locations from any computer or mobile device. The site averages 1,323 searches a month.

Volunteers make an important difference to our cemeteries. They have installed 16 bluebird boxes throughout Woodland/St. Ambrose Cemetery and are monitoring the locations for bluebirds. Abigail Adams Chapter of DAR raised enough money to install 49 markers on the unmarked pioneer infants’ graves at Woodland Cemetery. Adopt-A-Block volunteers provide many hours as cemetery stewards helping maintain the grounds of the cemeteries.

Historic Woodland Cemetery is a gold thread in the fabric of Des Moines. In 1899, a section of Woodland Cemetery was set aside as “Baby Hill.” In six years, 536 infants and toddlers were buried there - 7 or 8 babies every month. Little wooden crosses deteriorated over time, until 500 of those graves were left unmarked.

We are honored to pick up the baton passed by Gerald LaBlanc. Cemetery staff are very responsive. Whenever asked, they’ve promptly provided records and direction. Des Moines Parks and Recreation does the heavy lifting - organizing bids, identifying plots, building foundations, installing the stones, and restoring the lawns. Our task is to raise the money to pay for the tiny stones. We appreciate the folks who facilitate preserving one of Des Moines’ historic treasures.”

Today, Abigail Adams Chapter of DAR is working to provide permanent markers for those babies’ graves. Many of the women who founded our chapter in 1893, and other early DAR members, rest in Woodland. Strong, active women who helped build Des Moines. We memorialize them by preserving community heritage for all those who visit to explore our history and search for family lineage.

The Des Moines Founder’s Club purchased and planted over 40 trees. Volunteers filled sunken graves and raised headstones in two infants’ sections at Glendale Cemetery. Volunteers from Voya Financial has taken on the project of recording headstones at Des Moines Cemeteries, so far they have done eight blocks at Woodland Cemetery. Finally, the Citizen Cemetery Advisory Committee provides valuable strategic leadership to build on one of the communities treasured assets.

Laura Kozin, Regent
Daughters of the American Revolution
Des Moines has two multi-use community centers, located on opposite sides of the city to serve residents. These centers provide a place to learn, play, socialize, collaborate and belong.

> **Pioneer Columbus Community Center**
Just minutes from downtown, the center serves as a neighborhood hub for people of all ages and hosts numerous recreation programs, weddings, receptions, birthday parties, funerals, showers and meetings throughout the year.

> **Robert L. Scott Four Mile Community Center**
The center has an active weight room, a strong aerobics program, a well-attended senior walking club and is the nucleus for our youth basketball program.

Both community centers are available for rentals, provide congregate meal sites for seniors aged 60 and over, warming and/or cooling centers during inclement weather, and host a number of Camp Fire and neighborhood meetings throughout the year. These facilities also host numerous youth and adult league sports throughout the year.

“I love to come to Four Mile Community Center because the environment is so peaceful. The staff is so friendly and filled with positive energy. My days start in a positive direction because of their kindness.

These centers are important for our city. Four Mile has activities for the elderly and the young, which strengthens the community. Community Centers should be a safe learning environment for all and Four Mile provides that. Thanks to everyone that makes this possible.”

> Cortez Miller
Nearly 2,100 permits were sold for use at Des Moines off-leash dog park facilities in 2015. Annual permits are required and are available for purchase for just $20 at the City Clerk’s office in City Hall. The permit is good for all locations.

Dog park ambassadors are always needed at each park. Volunteer ambassadors help keep the parks safe by ensuring all patrons have their permit visible while using the facility, informing users of the facility rules and requirements and more. If you are interested in becoming a dog park ambassador, please email parksvolunteer@dmgov.org or call 515-237-1386.

Dog Parks

- Reno Memorial Dog Park
  3.5 acres of fenced area for all dogs

- Ewing Dog Park
  8.5 acres of fenced area for all dogs, one-acre fenced area for dogs 20 pounds or less

- Riverwalk Dog Park
  4.0 acres of fenced area for all dogs
All three City of Des Moines public golf courses, A.H. Blank, Bright Grandview and Waveland have affordable rates and vary in course design, ranging from tree placement and sand traps to green size, which offers golfers a different experience each round.

> **A.H. Blank Golf Course**

Located at SW 9th and County Line Road, first opened in 1971 as a nine hole course, it then expanded to 18 in 1985. This course can be challenging as water and sand come into play on many of the holes, especially the front nine. Throughout the 6,700 yard course there are 31 sand traps and 10 water holes. Blank’s clubhouse features a full service deli, pro shop and banquet room. The course also has a driving range. Blank has a miniature golf course available for groups, parties or just individual fun.

> **Bright Grandview Golf Course**

Located at 2401 East 29th Street, was built in 1902, making it one of the oldest courses in the country. Bright Grandview has a total yardage of 5,422 yards. Bright Grandview’s clubhouse, new in 2012, has a full bar and grill, pro shop and banquet room.

> **Waveland Golf Course**

Located at 4908 University Avenue, is the oldest municipal golf course west of the Mississippi River, built in 1901. The entire course, which measures just over 6,500 yards, is on wooded hillsides surrounded by mature trees. Waveland also has a putting green available for practice. Golfers say this is the most difficult of the City’s three public golf courses. Waveland’s clubhouse is a vintage 1940’s red brick building, complete with a pro shop, banquet hall, full bar, concession counter and excellent food. The Waveland clubhouse was built in 1936 as a WPA project.

Commonalities of all three courses include **Fat Joe’s Pizza**, **GPS systems** in carts at Waveland and Blank and **free sledding** during the winter months. Besides being utilized for the **corporate outings**, tournaments and every day rounds of golf, all three clubhouses can be rented for your **wedding**, **birthday party** or **holiday get together**. For more information about any Des Moines public golf courses, please visit dmparks.org
Des Moines Parks and Recreation owns and operates a 15,000 square foot greenhouse located at 2501 SE Maury. The vast majority of the labor needed for plant production is supplied by volunteers who donate thousands of hours to produce the annuals used to beautify the city. To volunteer, email parksvolunteer@dmgov.org.
The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the management of 76 parks across Des Moines. Besides the special features found in some of the signature parks (Ewing, Union, Greenwood, Gray’s Lake and John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park) patrons can enjoy a variety of amenities such as:

- Basketball Courts
- Soccer Fields
- Softball Fields
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Courts
- BMX Track
- Concessions
- Boat and Bicycle Rentals
- Disc Golf Courses
- Enclosed and Open-Air Shelters
- Fishing Ponds
- Picnic Areas with Tables and Grills
- Playgrounds
- Natural Playscape
- Sledding Hills
- Skate Park
- Soapbox Derby Track

When my beloved dog Malibu passed away in August of 2014, I knew I had to do more than the typical memorial. He loved going to Riley Park, our neighborhood park, where we had made many lifelong friends. Even on Malibu’s last days when he could barely walk, he attempted to make it to the park. The day before he passed, he made it to the corner, enough to say he made it. Many nearby dog owners consider Riley Park “our” dog park but it currently lacks a pet fountain, so that seemed like the perfect way to memorialize Malibu! Parks and Recreation staff assisted me with the process of getting the fountain ordered and installed. I love that so many dogs are now able to enjoy a cold drink during their walk or play time in the park in Malibu’s memory.

Although I thought the process was going to be complicated, it was very easy and Des Moines Parks and Recreation is very much interested in ideas to improve the park.

> Tracy Struble

Gray’s Lake Park is the city’s best-known and most-visited recreation area. The park has unique qualities and features that prove to be popular regardless of time of day or season of the year. The iconic 1,400 foot long Krudenier Trail Pedestrian Bridge over the lake is the park’s most distinguishing feature. Even more dramatic at night, the bridge comes to life as a rainbow of colors light up its 16-foot-wide pathway and reflects off the dichroic glass panel railings. The 1.9-mile walk around Gray’s Lake is known as “doing the loop” for some residents it is a daily ritual that even trail repairs and flooding won’t interrupt.
Dispersed throughout the city, our department provides nine enclosed shelters and 27 open air shelters available for reservation as well as 11 “first come, first serve” shelters. These facilities offer users the perfect location for birthdays, family reunions, baby showers, neighborhood meetings, meal sites and much more.

Just wanted to drop a line to say thanks to everyone there for maintaining such a nice facility. My family had a great time and it was due in large part to having such a good place to hold our gathering. Both staff members that stopped by were professional and very kind. If you could pass on our thanks to any appropriate folks we’d really appreciate it. We’ll definitely be using this shelter again for our family functions in the future. Thank you!

> Adam & Andrea Mumm
> **Greater Des Moines Softball Complex**

This complex is the premier facility in the area for adult softball play. Each year this site hosts the district and state Amateur Softball Association tournaments. In past years national tournaments such as the North American Fastpitch Association, World Championships and the Senior Slow Pitch World Series have been held at the facility.

In addition, Des Moines Parks and Recreation’s adult softball leagues, consisting of nearly 400 teams, schedules nearly 2,500 league games yearly at this location.

The complex has four irrigated turf fields, all of which are lighted. All fields have scoreboards and bleacher seating. Other complex amenities include: a new playground, concession stand, maintenance facility and parking lot to accommodate up to 200 vehicles.

> **James W. Cownie Soccer Park**

Cownie Soccer Park is the home field for Grandview College, Drake University, and local high schools including Roosevelt, Lincoln, East, Carlisle and Des Moines Christian. This renowned facility hosts many of the state’s most prestigious soccer events including the boys and girls high school state soccer tournaments, Menace Midwest Invitational, “Just for Girls” Spring Tournament and more. In addition, the complex has hosted the US Youth Soccer national tournament including Region II Championships and The Presidents Cup Tournament.

Cownie amenities include 12 irrigated turf fields, four of which are lit and have scoreboards. Field nine at the complex is considered championship level and consists of 2,000 seat bleachers, a press box and a video platform. The facility also has a 1,200-vehicle parking lot, concession stand, playground, and maintenance facility.

> **James W. Cownie Baseball Park**

This park is one of the top baseball facilities in the area and hosts many local and national United States Specialty Sports Association tournaments. Each summer, this site hosts South Des Moines Little League with over 500 youth playing nearly 300 games.

The complex consists of eight irrigated turf youth fields, two of which are lit. All fields have scoreboards, and covered bleacher seating. Other complex amenities include a playground, batting cages, concession stand, new maintenance building and parking lots to accommodate up to 250 vehicles.
The 60 miles of paved multi-use and 18 soft surface nature trails are the most popular and most used amenities in the park system. Trails offer users a way to connect to places, nature, friends and culture.

Trails aren’t just for exercise; numerous riders utilize trails for their daily commute. By reducing the number of cars on the road, those who bike reduce pollution and fossil fuel use. The result is cleaner air and healthier lungs for everyone.

Thank you for replacing and improving the section of trail between the Des Moines Botanical Garden and the Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge. It is used by many local walkers, runners and cyclists—not to mention the many tourists who use it as they visit some of our iconic locations in that area. It is now wide, smooth and as attractive as the surrounding sights and portions of the trail.

I am proud to live in a city that values alternative transportation and maintains its trails so well. I am happy to have my tax dollars spent in this way. Thank you to everyone involved, including the countless crew members I saw working on the project day after day.

> Maryann Mori
2015

NATURAL RESOURCES

90,000  Annuals Grown for the Neighborhood Flower Program
75,000  Plants Grown for Parks, City Facilities and Recreational Complexes
109,100 Plants Grown for Fleur Drive Medians and Water Works Park
29,000  Plants Grown for the Downtown Streetscapes, Containers and Planting Beds
100    Acres of the Park System Burnt Under our Prescribed Fire Program
3,000  Native Plants Grown in the City’s Greenhouse for use in the Park System

ATTENDANCE

7,431  Participants in Our Recreational Programs
3,352  Enjoyed Yoga Outdoors
2,241  Learned to Swim
7,458  Attended Special Events
85,622 Used One of our 10 Free Wading Pools
107,161 Visited One of our Five Pools/Aquatic Centers
2,100  Dog Park Permits Sold
97,921 Utilized our Two Community Centers

MARKETING

9,000  Number of Calls Taken Each Year
6,281  Facebook Likes
2,094  Twitter Followers
767    Instagram Followers
809,016 Website Pageviews
305,183 Website Visits
## COMMUNITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,081</td>
<td>Shelters and Other Facilities Rented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,561</td>
<td>Boats Rented at Gray’s Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>563</td>
<td>Internments at The Seven Cemeteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87,903</td>
<td>Rounds of Golf Played at our Three Public Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601</td>
<td>GRASP Cards Issued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>862</td>
<td>Permits Issued for use of our Parks, Trails, Athletic Fields and Open Spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>407</td>
<td>Graffiti Incidents Managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>325</td>
<td>Days of the Year our Team Programmed Games, Practices or Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000,000+</td>
<td>Gallons of Water Prepared and Chemically Balanced at the Municipal Pools for the 2015 Swim Season</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## VOLUNTEERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,193</td>
<td>Individuals Volunteered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24,967</td>
<td>Hours of Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$575,999</td>
<td>Value of Volunteer Time Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Volunteers Transplanted 325,000 Annual Plants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## HOURS WORKED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>194,762</td>
<td>Total Departmental Personnel Hours for The Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,246</td>
<td>Work Orders Were Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42,479</td>
<td>Parks Maintenance/Repairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16,936</td>
<td>Cemetery Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,796</td>
<td>Litter/Trash Removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33,946</td>
<td>Aquatics Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Pool Assigned Staff - Guards, Cashiers, Swim Lessons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MILESTONES
• Des Moines Parks and Recreation received the “Outstanding Diversity Achievement” award from United States Tennis Association, which is given to an organization that has championed the cause for diversity both on and off the tennis court.

• The Wellmark Foundation Community Kickstarter Grant Program awarded $10,000 towards the purchase of exercise equipment at Pioneer Columbus Community Center.

• The bluebird box program expanded as two new trails were added to the park system. There were 14 boxes placed at Glendale Cemetery that produced 42 bluebird fledglings. The second trail, installed at the Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center, produced 15 bluebird fledglings. In total, there are four parks with bluebird Box trails and 82 baby bluebirds that fledged in 2015, compared to 15 fledglings in 2014.

• In conjunction with the national conservation movement, the Monarch butterfly programming expanded. The Plant.Grow.Fly partnership with the Blank Park Zoo continued with programs in the spring. Over 125 Monarchs were captured, tagged and released during Des Moines Parks and Recreation-sponsored tagging events in the fall. New areas of native plants and flowers were planted in our parks to provide habitat for Monarch butterflies.

• Burke Park was chosen as this year’s Rebuilding Together site based on both their desire to work in Capitol Park neighborhood and the overall opportunity offered at this historically significant park. There were seven separate work areas, including enhancements to the playground, volleyball court, shelter, new park furniture, trees and concrete. The generous support of Meredith and Rebuilding Together resulted in the hard-cost of donated materials combined with 412 volunteer hours valued at over $66,000.

Meredith Corporation and the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department have transformed parks and neighborhoods through 14 annual Rebuilding Together work days. Great parks bring people out of their homes and into their communities. They offer camaraderie and exercise for kids and adults alike – and we are proud to be part of that. We have also collaborated to create and beautify the Meredith Trail, and enhance Gray’s Lake Park. As a result of our efforts, native plantings attract birds and other wildlife, and provide a serene environment for anyone who wants to experience the peace of nature in an urban setting. Congratulations to the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department for its strong leadership in developing our city’s parks. We are pleased to be a partner in this important work.

> Mell Meredith
• Parks and Trails were closed during eight different high water events in 2015 with the largest coming before the Independence Day holiday when the Raccoon River reached its third highest recorded crest. This caused many facilities along the Raccoon River to close, including Gray’s Lake Park. To ensure the park would be open for the busy holiday weekend volunteers were called upon for the first time for flood clean up. **Approximately 148 volunteers donated more than 663 hours (valued more than $15,300)** to help get Gray’s Lake open by clearing mud off the trails, cleaning park equipment, removing debris from the grass, washing down the concession area, cleaning up native beds, removing contaminated wood chips, mulching trees, cleaning bridge lights and handrails and more.

• In following the City’s efforts to be more sustainable, the lighting on four iconic bridges were converted to LED lights:
  > George Washington Carver Bridge
  > East 6th Street Pedestrian Bridge near the Botanical Garden across I-235
  > 40th Street Pedestrian Bridge across I-235
  > 44th Street Pedestrian Bridge across I-235

• For the first time since 2007, a Parks and Recreation Citizen Satisfaction survey was completed by over 800 residents.

• New trail segments were added at Martin Luther King Jr. Park and MacRae Park.

• A new nature trail at Grandview Park and a new trail segment at Greenwood Ashworth Park were installed.

• The landscape around Franklin Avenue Library was converted to native plants, flowers and grasses to reduce maintenance costs and improve habitat.

• New roofs were added to Pioneer Columbus and Four Mile Community Centers.

• Glendale Cemetery storm water grading project was completed.

• The forestry mulcher has removed invasive species from approximately 75 acres across the park system. This machine simplifies the process of mulching the removed materials on site. Since its acquisition, the machine has been utilized in the following parks and open space areas:
  > Ewing Park
  > Neal Smith Trail
  > MacRae Park
  > Birdland Park
  > Prospect Park
  > Pioneer Park
  > Waveland Golf Course
  > James W. Cownie Baseball Park

• Approximately 50 acres of historic oak woodland and savanna restoration has begun in Greenwood, Ashworth, MacRae, Ewing, Pioneer and Grandview Parks. Additional efforts will be undertaken to improve the ecology of these landscapes by utilizing prescribed fire, additional invasive species removal and seeding of native plants and grasses where necessary.

• Began establishment of five acres of new prairie in MacRae Park.

• Finished dredging of Greenwood Pond and began establishment of fish structures and shoreline restoration.
**New Programs for 2015**

- Music Camp Program
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Youth Tennis

Earth Day Trash Bash was held Friday, April 24. In 2015, there were 1,300 registered volunteers at approximately 50 project locations, who removed over 70,000 pounds of litter, tires and recyclables.

For the first time in program history, all seven cemeteries were adopted by volunteer stewards. In the month of July, there were more cremations than full interments - first time ever.

Program participation was increased for wading pools by 3%, youth basketball by 14%, the “Superhero-Princess Run” by 50% and Flag Football by 50%.

Liquid chlorine replaced pulsar pellets at all five swimming pools and aquatic centers, providing an estimated $12,000 in savings.

James W. Cownie Soccer Complex hosted the Iowa Boys and Girls High School State Soccer tournament and secured the Girls High School State Soccer Tournament for the next five years.

Des Moines was once again named a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community by The League of American Bicyclists.

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I would like to take the time and thank everyone who made the flag football program possible. It was a great experience. My son Day’Shawn was born prematurely and due to his airway problems we never thought we would ever see the day he would get to play any sports. Coach Matt always did his best with working with Day’Shawn who knew nothing about how to play. He always made my son feel like a true part of the team. He would say it doesn’t matter if we win or lose today go out there and play your best. I really appreciate all the work that went into making this program possible. We had a wonderful experience with our first year of sports and couldn’t have hoped for a better program. We look forward to many more great experiences with the flag football program!

> Michelle Ramirez

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I was asked why I volunteer at the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department? Having recently become curious about the history of Polk County area where my wife and I live, I had been excitedly investigating early Des Moines history. Gradually being exposed to the current activities of Parks and Recreation, learning the many varied land areas being managed, along with the historical local family names involved; it was an easy transition for me to realize the contribution I might make to the historical perspective of Des Moines from “The Fort” to the present. Given a personal desire to be helpful for something larger, blended with how every single person in the Parks Department has been wonderfully receptive towards me, personally, and our projects together – and the summation is, now I hope to live long enough to help document the complete history of outdoor public spaces and parks in Des Moines.

> Steve Nelson-Vaux
• The National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project had the highest turnout to date of nearly 100 volunteers. Over three days, participants surveyed/counted at 27 locations across Des Moines. Data from the project shows that 5.7 million trail trips were taken in 2015 and the Kruidenier Trail remains the most popular trail segment in the system.

• For the first time, James W. Cownie was the host facility of the USA Rugby Club 7s National Championship.

• A video produced with a drone captured aerial footage of a variety of facilities was viewed over 2,000 times on YouTube.

• Our Father Daughter Dance moved to The Science Center of Iowa to increase the value of the experience for our guests. The event had the highest number of ticket pre-sales since the dance began and attendance increased by 200 guests from the previous year.

2015 Volunteer Award Winners

> Tim Lane, Lifetime Achievement Award
> Steve Nelson-Vaux, Volunteer of the Year
> VOYA and Clear Channel Outdoor, Corporate Groups of the Year
> ALPP, Volunteer Group of the Year
> Julie Hempel, Volunteer Supervisor of the Year
> Westwood Neighborhood Association, Iowa Geocachers Organization and Steve Miller-Special Volunteer Award
> Cynde Fanter, Friend of the Year Award

“We found the grounds to be impeccable. The fields were fast, perfect for 7s. The stadium was filled with a nice crowd, replicating what might be expected for higher level play.”

> Jules McCoy, American Rugby Pro Training Center – Founder and Head Coach
2015 was another great year for the Des Moines Parks And Recreation. We are excited for what 2016 will bring, as we continue to move forward. Below is a list of projects our team will be working on in the coming year:

- Renovation of the Neal Smith Trail from Riverview Park north to the city limits
- Installation of a gravel trail connection from the Inter-Urban Bridge to Riverview Park
- Rehabilitation of the SW 5th Street (Jackson Avenue) Bridge
- Construction of a trail connection from Birdland Marina to Ding Darling Shelter House
- Remodeling of the MacRae Park Shelter House
- Completion of the Greenwood Falls sprayground at Greenwood Park
- Stage construction at Riverview Park
- Construction of Drake Rowing Boathouse at Prospect Park
- Community Center enhancements at Pioneer Columbus and Four Mile
- Exterior restoration of the Glendale Abbey
- Construction of new roads in Pioneer Park
- Installation of High Ropes Course at Ewing Park
- Becky Zallek Disc Golf Course at Prospect Park
- Des Moines Police Boxing Club moving to Pioneer Columbus Community Center
- Spring youth soccer program
- Refurbishing of slides at pools and aquatic facilities