

Section III

What we want – Our Community and Identified Needs

III. What we want – Our Community and Identified Needs

A. Community Profile and Demographic Study

In 1997 when the Department hired a full-time Director the current population, based on 1998 census, were 19,639 residents. At that time many of the initial programs offered were based on children less than 10 years of age or 23% (4,531) of the population. The current state of youth under nine years of age (reported differently in 2003) is 21.4 % (5,975) of the population. This age group indicates a 24% increase from the previous census eight years earlier.

In 1997/1998 the competition for recreational programming within the Village included the Property Owners Association, Huntley Park District, and Crystal Lake Park District, area libraries and Youth Athletic Association, ALITH Soccer Association and Falcon football Association. These agencies/organizations were established prior to the formation of the Department. In order to coexist with these groups, the Department did not compete with their existing programs and instead, helped to promote their programs. These programs included: lunch with Santa, Easter Egg Hunt, and youth sports leagues.

Within the boundaries of the Village there are three school districts, two library districts, two fire departments, two townships and two park districts. The one area that would overlap services is those of the Lake in the Hills Parks & Recreation Department, Huntley Park District (HPD), and Crystal Lake Park District (CLPD). Due to the fact that a large percentage of the homeowners are within the HPD, many challenges exist with educating the residents that LITH Parks & Recreation Department serves all residents of Lake in the Hills and also those overlapping portion of the HPD and CLPD. In 1997 the Huntley Park District (HPD) amenities were very small with few parks and facilities. In 2003 HPD opened an aquatic park, 2004 approved the purchase of a golf course, and in 2005 expanded a recreation center and culture center. Along with this time period, the Village of Lake In the Hills expanded their residential building within the HPD boundaries and additional taxes went directly to the HPD. In the late 1990's a portion of the Village annexed into the Crystal Lake Park

District at the request of the residents in that area who additionally go to the Crystal Lake Schools. In 2002 the Village of Algonquin expanded their recreation services by opening LifeTime Fitness. This membership based fitness center hosted an indoor and outdoor aquatic facility, fitness area and opportunities for programming. Additionally, the Village of Algonquin began its' own in-house recreation programming by hiring a Recreation Supervisor. So as the Lake in the Hills Parks & Recreation Department grew so did the programs and facilities within the surrounding communities.

Much of recreation and leisure time activities that are offered are based on the use of discretionary income. Areas of competition for discretionary income includes: the LITH movie theater, shopping areas, restaurants, athletic leagues, libraries and any type of business that spending is above and beyond ones essential needs. The Parks & Recreation Departments' ability to tap into the human spirit, and provide opportunities for learning, growth and development divides the Lake in the Hills Recreation Departmental from the rest of the competition.

B. Current Trends

Based on the increase number of programs in age divisions of 10 years and younger indicates that Day Camp and preschool programs are very strong and worth offering. Youth sports in baseball and soccer continue to rise every year within the younger age groups. As facilities are added such as the lower level of the Village Hall, staff is able to attract programs during the day for stay-at-home moms. Furthermore we are able to conduct youth and adult karate, yoga and dance classes in the evenings at our own facilities which save on facility rental fees. Family activities and time with the family at parks and programmed events is still at a steady rise. The two skate parks are at a steady state of use and attendance fluctuates little in the summer season. Athletic events such as Run thru the Hills and Splish, Splash, 5K Dash have continued to grow each year. The Bark Park has been a wonderful addition to the community and the Dog Park Association seasonal activities and attendance continues to rise. The ability to capture youth and families at an early age assists in attracting these participants in the Lake in the Hills programs for a long time.

C. Community and Stakeholder Input

The Parks & Recreation Board, appointed by the Village Board, has been the essential steering group of projects that guide the Department and give feedback and recommendations. Additionally, ad-hoc committees have been formed to discuss specifically the: formation of a foundation, affiliate organization agreement and the Bark Park Owners Groups which develops programs for the Bark Park. The process in offering additional or new programs has been resident to staff based. A specific focus group designed to brainstorm and give their opinion about programming, promotions and other topics would be useful for future programming in the Department.