

**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION, YOUTH SERVICES &
EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

Creating a City of **CHOICE.**

Community Collaboration

Healthy Neighborhoods

Opportunity for All

Inclusive Innovation

Commitment to Capital Investment

Educational Excellence

Councilwoman Dr. Cecelia M. Adams, Chair

Education, Recreation & Employment Committee

Neighborhoods, Community Development & Health Committee



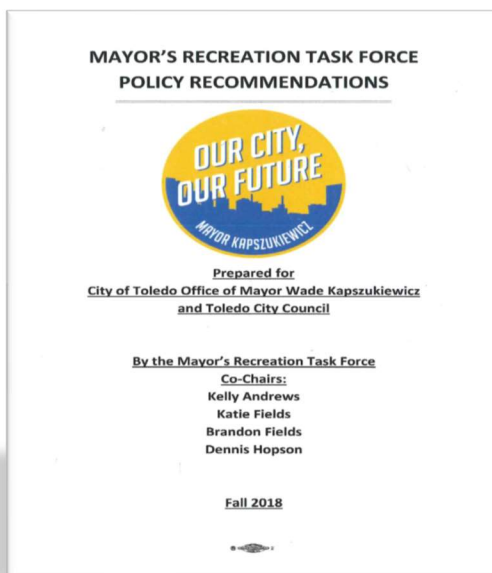
City Council

Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth Services & Educational Engagement

Creating a City of CHOICE.

Background

- Parks and Recreation



Mayor Kapszukiewicz formed the Recreation Task Force upon taking office in January of 2018. This group was tasked with evaluating recreation opportunities for all residents of the City of Toledo. The group assessed all city parks, recreational facilities and community centers and surveyed private, non-profit and school-based recreation programs. In October of 2018, the Recreation Task Force presented a report to Mayor Kapszukiewicz and City Council with its findings and specific recommendations for increasing recreational opportunities within the City and improving efficiency in terms of management and finance of a comprehensive recreational system.

The report discusses the decline in funding for parks and recreation since 2001. In 2001, funding for Parks and Recreation in Toledo was over \$6 million. The 2021 budget is at about half of that, approximately \$3.3 million for parks and recreation activities.

The Recreation Task Force Report quotes the National Recreation and Parks Association in stating, "Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic well-being of a community and region." There are numerous studies supporting the importance of a strong municipal park system to the economic development of a city, health and well-being of a community and overall improved quality of life for residents.

Additionally, a Parks and Recreation Vision Master Plan was commissioned by the City in 2013. In addition to an assessment of the city's Parks and Recreation system and a comparison to other similar Midwestern cities, the report outlined recommendations as to how parks and recreation could be "viewed as a positive economic tool for the city versus a 'spend' department with little return on investment coming back to the community." This report outlined a vision for the City of Toledo Parks and Recreation Department:

*"To enhance the quality of life for the Toledo Community and further its economic development goals to create a **community of choice** to live, work, and play now and for future generations."*

○ Youth Services

The Youth Commission was decommissioned in 2018, relegating responsibilities for youth programming at the time to a Manager of Youth and Recreation within the Department of Public Service. The Board of Community Relations and the Youth Commission were consolidated into one new single board, the Human Relations Commission. This has had the effect of establishing youth services as a low priority area for the City.

Since that time, it has become even more apparent that youth services and programming is critical to the health of the City. Youth need comprehensive pathways to success in both education and workforce development as well as relationship building and community engagement. This type of programming is critical to retention of residents, business attraction in terms of workforce preparation, and general safety and health of the city's youth.

o Education

Additionally, a high-quality educational system matters to our youth, and ultimately the quality of life and abundant survival of our City. The 2018 - 2019 District Grade on the Ohio School Report Card for Toledo City was D. Even though the Component Grade for "Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers" was C, "Progress" was D and "Graduation Rate" was D; the Component Grade for "Achievement" was F, "Gap Closing" was F and "Prepared for Success" was F. This failure to achieve excellence cannot continue if we want more families with parents or legal guardians who earn higher incomes to choose living inside the Toledo city limits instead of everywhere else around it.

Toledo City Lucas County	
District summary	
Overall grade	D
Performance index 2019	62.794
Performance index 2018	62.997
Performance index 2017	63.978
Component grades	
Achievement	F
Gap closing	F
Graduation	D
Progress	D
Improving at-risk K-3 readers	C
Prepared for success	F

Ohio Department of Education 2019 Report Card Data

City of Toledo Government must emphatically, decisively and definitively make it known that a school's failure is not just the school's problem. It's the neighborhood's problem. It's the people who live in and work in the community around the school's problem. It's the City Council's problem. It's the Mayor's problem. It's the entire City's problem.

Mayor Kapszukiewicz has recognized the importance of education to the City's overall well-being and has demonstrated his commitment to education by publicly supporting a Universal Pre-K initiative. School readiness is just one piece of the problem, however. Success in education must also include college and career preparedness and parental engagement and support. The City must demonstrate its commitment to helping close the huge achievement gap on TPS Achievement Tests and Ohio Graduation Test scores. City Council and the Administration, with collective cooperation, have an opportunity to impact the future of our public school district (TPS) so that it achieves a letter grade of "A."

Solution - Creating a City of CHOICE



This proposal is intended to support the change necessary to implement the recommendations of the Recreation Task Force and to establish a commitment to prioritizing parks, recreation, youth services and educational engagement for the health, safety and well-being of all Toledo residents. This is more than park amenities and activities. It is a framework by which the City of Toledo can become a **City of CHOICE**.

- It will put a system of **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION** on strategic planning for success in place, along with accountability measures.
- It will provide resources for programming and services necessary to maintain **HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS**.
- It will assure **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL** in workforce development and career readiness, which leads to economic development and well-being of the City.
- It calls for a focus on **INCLUSIVE INNOVATION** in terms of access to City amenities and programming.
- It requires a **COMMITMENT TO CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND MAINTENANCE** of our parks and recreation facilities; and
- It provides a City support system for the attainment of **EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**, a core component of a sustainable and vibrant City.

In other words, this will make Toledo a true **City of CHOICE** where investments are made and people want to live, work and raise a family.

The main goals of this proposal are generally to codify the recommendations of the Mayor's Recreation Task Force and to ultimately develop a plan for the City to meet or exceed state and national standards in parks and recreation, youth services and educational outcomes, supporting it through budgetary appropriation. Specifically, this program will:

- create a system where planning for and maintenance of parks and amenities are a high priority city initiative;
- improve lifelong recreational and educational opportunities for all residents.

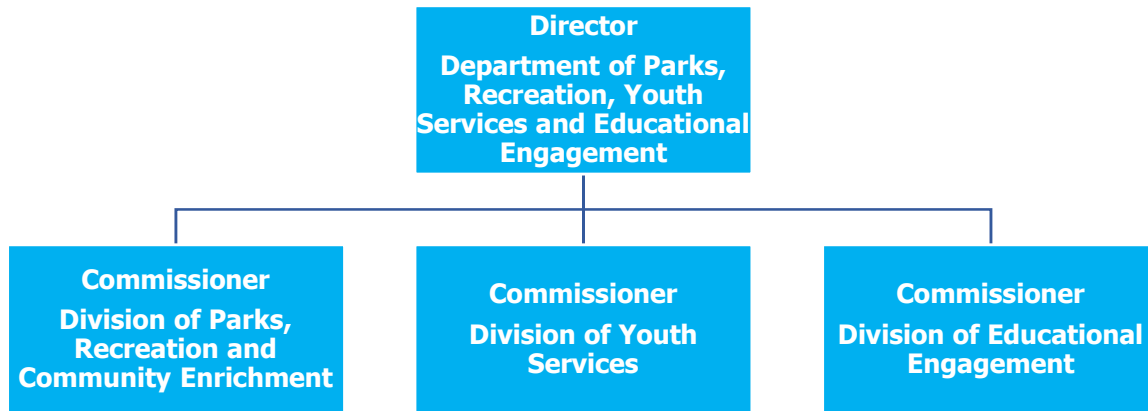
- create a robust youth services program, developing a pathway to success for all Toledo youth in terms of education/workforce development and civic engagement; and
- develop a system of community support in collaboration with educational partners to close the achievement gap in our local schools and attain educational excellence for all Toledo youth.

Creating the Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth Services and Educational Engagement

This proposal establishes a new, standalone department with executive level leadership with the responsibility of creating strategic plans for implementation of specific goals. The Department would be headed by a Director of Parks, Recreation, Youth Services and Educational Engagement. This Director would:

- Direct the operations and maintenance associated with city-owned and/or controlled parks, recreation facilities and community centers.
- Have general charge of all park improvements. This would include specifically:
 - Completing and regularly updating a capital needs assessment to identify repair, replacement, and investment needs for all parks, recreation facilities, community centers and equipment;
 - Developing a capital improvement program specifically for city-owned pools and aquatics facilities; and
 - Developing a capital improvement program to update parks and park elements to include accessible and inclusive design elements.
- Create a business development strategy to increase revenue generation for use of City facilities. This function is called for specifically in the Recreation Task Force Report.
- Have oversight of and be responsible for the effective administration of the Parks, Recreation and Community Enrichment Division, the Youth Services Division and the Educational Engagement Division.

There would be three divisions within the Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth Services and Educational Engagement, each headed up by commissioner level position.



1. Division of Parks, Recreation and Community Enrichment



This division would be established to develop, manage and operate various **community and recreation programs and activities** provided by the City, including coordinating programming with community partners as called for in the Recreation Task Force.

Programs would include such activities as: youth and adult sports programs, outreach services, special populations initiatives, aquatics, special events, cultural, educational and art programs, and senior citizen programs.

This division would be specifically responsible for:

- Developing a Comprehensive Recreation and Community Enrichment Strategy to increase recreational and community enrichment programming within the city;
- Collaborating and contracting with community partners to empower them to create and implement high quality recreational and community enrichment programs;

- Establishing a system of support for community partners with expertise in particular areas of programming, as well as those that have credibility and success with diverse populations; and
- Creating a robust volunteer program to assist with programming, events and beautification projects.

2. Division of Youth Services



This division would be established to create a robust youth services program, developing a pathway to success for all Toledo youth in terms of **education and workforce development, economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships, civic engagement, and positive contributions to the community.**

This division would be specifically responsible for:

- Developing a Comprehensive Youth Development Strategy in coordination with the Human Relations Commission;
- Developing and promoting relationships with youth services providers and area youth planning and coordinating bodies in furtherance of the Comprehensive Youth Development Strategy; and
- Developing relationships with private and public funders of youth services activities and seeking grant funding.

3. Division of Educational Engagement



This division would be established to facilitate, coordinate and promote **consistent educational policies and opportunities** among educational providers throughout the city, from pre-school through university level. This division would also be responsible for mobilizing a plan for City and community support of the educational system particularly with respect to **school readiness and universal pre-k, college and career preparedness, and parental engagement and support.**

This division would be specifically responsible for:

- Improving collaboration and greater articulation with pre-k through university level school systems to develop a city support structure for improving educational outcomes; and
- Developing a Comprehensive Educational Engagement Strategy in coordination with educational partners to include support of planning, funding and implementation of a universal pre-k program, apprenticeships, academic mentoring, tutoring and coaching programs.

Budget

The Recreation Task Force recommendations from Fall of 2018 called for an increase in Parks and Recreation funding to 2% of the General Fund in the first 18 months, and a plan to increase funding to 4% of the General Fund budget over five years. A suggested schedule of increases follows:

2021 – 2.0% of General Fund Budget

2022 – 2.5% of General Fund Budget

2023 – 3.0% of General Fund Budget

2024 – 3.5% of General Fund Budget

2025 – 4.0% of General Fund Budget

For 2021, 2.0% of the General Fund would equate to a budget for Parks and Recreation of \$5,662,371. The 2021 budget included only \$3,356,797 for parks and recreation activities.¹ This equates to approximately 1.2% of the General Fund budget and is a difference of \$2,305,574 from the recommended funding.

In order to implement the recommendations of the Recreation Task Force, **\$3,356,797** currently appropriated for Parks and Recreation in the Department of Public Service would be **reappropriated** to the Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth Services and Educational Engagement. Additionally, **\$2,305,574** would be appropriated for this Department from the unappropriated **balance of the General Fund**.

¹ This figure does not include forestry operations which are primarily funded by special assessment nor does it include the budget for mowing nuisance properties. Under this proposal, these activities and the funding for such would remain with the Department of Public Service.

Moving Forward

This plan is directly aimed at establishing Toledo as a **City of CHOICE** by revitalizing and institutionalizing the City's commitment to improving the quality of life for residents of all ages. This plan codifies the findings of the 2018 Recreation Task Force and demonstrates a true commitment to the development of a city support system of youth services and for the improvement of educational outcomes and workforce development initiatives within the City. It establishes a framework for collaborating with community partners in the areas of parks and recreation, youth services and education to establish community needs and priorities and to develop strategic plans and goals for addressing those priorities.

The creation of the Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth Services and Community Engagement along with appropriation of the necessary funding will play a significant role in the long-term stability and growth of the City.