

Survey Says:
**GLENVIEW
 PARK DISTRICT**
is Tops!



Written by Stacey McCarthy

The state of Illinois has a total of 340 park districts. As well as being huge tourist attractions, what makes these districts so special is that many of them have facilities that focus on sports, culture and events – facilities that often attract people who want to live in the area.

One of these districts – perhaps the largest and most active in the state – is the Glenview Park District (GPD), which serves a community of roughly 58,000. The GPD is not far from the city of Chicago and includes the villages of Glenview, Golf, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, and Skokie, as well as unincorporated areas beyond the village limits.

This district offers activities for all seasons and pretty much all interests. Residents almost take it for granted until they stop and take a moment to think about all that it has to offer.

“We are an amazing park district,” said Michele Fiore, Public Relations Specialist with the Glenview Park District. “Whether people are interested in learning about the future or discovering the past, taking up a sport or just enjoying some time outdoors, really the Glenview Park District is about all of that.”

There are many unique features to highlight in the 17.75 square miles that the GPD covers.

“We have an amazing recreation center – Park Center – which is an award-winning and state-of-the-art community and fitness center,” said Fiore. “The lobby area has a fireplace, and it’s so relaxing that you can go work out then grab a coffee at the coffee shop and catch up some reading in front of the fireplace. There’s also a pool and fitness rooms. It’s one of the most popular facilities used. In fact, the pool is used by Sam Iida, a member of the Olympic 2017 to 2018 national junior team.”



Along with the newer facilities that cater to those seeking an active lifestyle, there are also areas that appeal to families of all ages. “Wagner Historic Farm is the only one in the area, outside the major metropolitan area of Chicago, that offers a working farm, so people who live in the city can come and see what it’s like to milk a cow, to see other farm animals, and our historic farm allows people to see what farming was like in the 1920s,” said Fiore.

“We have a place called The Grove which is a historic treasure where people can walk around and go be in nature on walking paths with what you imagine what it had been like if you had not developed things – large swampy areas and big beautiful trees,” she continued. “We also have things that other park districts have like golf courses, pools, tennis courts, and of course, our ice center, which not every district has.”

The community takes much pride in all that it has to offer, and governing officials feel confident that they are doing the right things for the people they serve based on a survey conducted in 2017 which specifically examined what people wanted, what they might be missing, and what they thought of how the district was being managed. This statistically-valid,



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eight-page survey of a random selection, conducted by aQity Research & Insights, came back with a 95 percent confidence level with a margin of error of +/-4.6 percent. “The state average is about seventy-six percent, so our people here are really happy about what we are doing,” said Fiore. ▶



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To continue research into the needs of the communities it serves, district management held some open houses and met with key stakeholders, and from all of the data collected, put together a ten-year comprehensive master plan that identified the direction the district wanted to go.

Backing the master plan was an economic commitment of \$21 million for a capital replacement fund to replace assets prior to the end of their useful life. These funds will come not only from the district, but also from partnerships with the Village of Glenview, school districts, and sports organizations and from state and national grant funding.

One of the challenges that was identified in the research is that because the GPD has such a diverse population in terms of ethnicities and age, it can be hard to have programming that meets the needs of everyone. Some people felt there needed to be more programming geared towards families without children.

So for the next year and a half, the district prioritized the projects that needed attention and then held a referendum in March 2018. The \$17 million referendum would help support the establishment of an open space fund and two projects that were identified as urgent: the Glenview Community Ice Center and The Grove Interpretive Center. The total cost of all three initiatives was estimated at \$33 million.

The first project – the largest of the two – is the renovation of the ice center, which was built in 1972 and has been a hub of activity for the district. It is the second-most used facility next to Park Center and sees 174,000 visitors coming each year to figure skate, play hockey, and enjoy family time. It is also where another Olympian, speed skater Lana Gehring, got her start.

The renovation will cost \$29 million and will result in a complete overhaul, making it an ultramodern recreational center. Ground-breaking on the project took place in May 2019, and it is set to be completed in the fall of 2020.

The new design will feature green technology choices that are better for the environment, such as the addition of more windows that will bring more light in and improved airflow return on the ice. There will also be a new ice sheet, bringing the facility up to two and a half rinks.

"The ice center will have a huge impact because there is a high demand for ice time in this region and a lack of availability," said Fiore. "There are times when skaters from Glenview have to go out of district to get ice time, which costs more money because they pay out-of-district fees and spend more on gas, so now with this extra sheet, they will be helping people who need the ice time here. Parents are so excited to have the extra sheet of ice."

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Fiore went on to say that "it also gives us more ability to host tournaments and events for regional activities, so there's a lot we can offer by having that extra sheet."

The ice center will also have a full-service restaurant. People coming to watch their children in figure skating competitions or at practices can end up being there all day, so the new restaurant will give them more options for eating rather than just a snack bar or vending machines.

The second project will make improvements to the 145-acre Grove historic settlement which had become a bit dated over time. So the district allocated \$2 million to update the space and add some exciting new exhibits, including one with information about Robert Kennicott, an American naturalist and herpetologist, whose family home was on the property. This exhibit has educational information about animals that once lived in the area and incorporates some refreshed taxidermy from the original exhibits. The district is also updating the Turtle Island exhibit and incorporating interactive tunnels for children and adults.

"The interpretive center, before the construction, was dated," said Fiore. "You had all of your animals in there, and visitors would come in, and it was fun, but it was a smaller building – like being in your back yard, and this (renovation) will give it a really cool refacing."

Other improvements will include a new reception area, an employee workroom and office, and new air conditioning, heating systems, and sprinkler systems. There will also be a switch to all LED lighting. Finally, the GPD also allocated approximately \$650,000 of the funds to enhance access by improving the entrance of the parking lot to make it safer and creating new parking lot signs.

Facilities found in Glenview Park District:

- Park Center
- The Grove
- Historic Wagner Farm
- Schram Memorial Museum
- Tyler Interpretive Center at Air Station Prairie
- Glenview Park Golf Club
- Glenview Prairie Club-Golf & Paddle
- Glenview Ice Center
- Glenview Tennis Club
- Roosevelt and Flick Pools
- 26 parks and 13 school grounds



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The Glenview Park District's mission is "to build a sense of community, enhance people's lives and contribute to the enrichment of the individual, family, and the community." With all that is happening in this park district, I think it is safe to say: mission accomplished. ■

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