

# Appendix F: Case Studies and Best Practices

---

## **Introduction**

### **Research Conducted Prior to Public Workshops**

ACP contacted 41 communities with characteristics similar to Shaker Heights: first suburbs with a population size between 30,000 and 40,000 and located within large metropolitan areas in the Midwest. The purpose of the investigation was to identify how these communities dealt with providing recreation services to their residents. More specifically, queries with Park and Recreation staff focused on facilities sharing and the extent to which these communities rely on single, multi-purpose recreation facilities.

Twenty-eight of the 41 communities responded to our inquiries. Each of the 28 communities is engaged in some type of facilities sharing with local school districts. Only one of the cities contacted is engaged in a limited form of multi-municipal cooperation. Westlake, Ohio, shares Tri-City Park with two other cities. A summary of the Westlake, Ohio case is summarized below.

## **Multi-Municipal Cooperation**

### **1. Westlake, Ohio**

- Westlake is located 13 miles west of Cleveland and, as of the 2000 Census, had a population of 31,719.
- Westlake has an agreement with 2 neighboring communities (Fairview Park and Rocky River) to share Tri-City Park, which overlaps the borders of the three communities.
- Rocky River holds the largest piece of land but each city helps with maintenance and capital improvements.
- Westlake mows the fields and Rocky River maintains the ball fields. When capital improvements need to take place, such as new or improved restrooms, each city contributes 1/3 of the cost.
- When planning activities for each summer, representatives from each community hold a meeting to discuss when each community will use the baseball and soccer fields on what days. Typically, each city uses the fields two days a week. Field usage on the seventh day depends upon demand.

## **Introduction**

### **Research Conducted as a Result of Public Workshops**

## **Best Practices**

After the first Public Workshop, ACP began to look at best practices in the areas identified by the participants.

Information is being compiled on the following topics:

- Greenways and Trails
- Skate Parks
- Resurfacing of Fields
- Multi-use facilities

To the extent that it is possible, we will continue investigate best practices in communities that are similar in size and character with Shaker Heights.

ACP interviewed five cities/school districts in Ohio that are currently engaged in multi-use facilities sharing agreements. It was found that, in general, an agreement of this sort states that the school can use the recreational facility during the school day while the community can use it during off hours, on weekends, and the summer. Of the five cities/school districts interviewed, the two with the most successful facilities sharing agreements were Wooster and

Mason because there is a high demand for use of the recreational facility and the facility is shared with few or no conflicts. Each city built a new high school and passed a levy in order to build the new school and recreational facility. In the case of Mason, the facility also includes art studios and an auditorium that is used by the school as well as the community.

One city (Greenwood, Indiana) and one district (South Suburban Recreation District in Colorado) were interviewed regarding greenways and trails. While on a different scale, both entities aim to create connected, looping trails in the cities as well as in more traditional recreational areas and sought input from the community. The trails planners in the South Suburban Recreation District have been working together for more than 20 years to ensure contiguous paths throughout the area.

## **Multi-use Facilities**

### **5. Wooster**

- The City of Wooster has a population of 24,811 (2000 Census) and is located 34 miles from Akron.
- In spring 1991, the Rubbermaid Foundation offered the Wooster School District land to build a new high school with the stipulation that a bond issue needed to be passed to build the school. The \$32 million bond issue passed that fall.
- A \$1.2 million natatorium was planned as part of the new high school and a Volunteer Committee was formed to raise \$2.2 million to enhance it. The total cost to build the facility was \$3.4 million.
  - As a three party agreement, the 50-meter by 25-yard pool and natatorium is owned by the Wooster School District and managed by the YMCA with support and assistance from the City of Wooster.
  - A Steering Committee has been formed to maintain communication and resolve disputes among the partners. Each partner has two voting representatives with one at large member.
  - The City of Wooster has no financial stake in the natatorium but offers programs regularly with a rental fee paid to the YMCA. The school pays the YMCA \$100,000 each year for its use of the natatorium.
- A \$700,000 Auxiliary Gym was planned as part of the new high school and a Volunteer Committee was formed to raise \$2.2 million so that it could be a Field house. The total cost to build the facility was \$2.9 million. Each partner has a financial stake in an enterprise fund that operates the Field house.
  - The 55,000 square foot Field house is owned and managed by the Wooster School District. The City of Wooster and YMCA are contractually committed to a minimum number of court hour rentals.
  - A Steering Committee has been formed to maintain communication and resolve disputes among the partners and to advise the school board on pertinent matters. Each partner has two voting representatives with one at large member.
  - The City of Wooster and YMCA must combine programming that equates to 2,900 court hours. The City of Wooster uses 2,600 hours, around 50% of total usage.
  - The Field house has four multipurpose courts for basketball, tennis, volleyball, gymnastics, soccer, and a six-lane 200-meter walking/jogging track. Additionally, a floor to ceiling mechanical curtain surrounds a lacrosse court and, when it has been raised, a 70-yard indoor field court is created.
- The new high school and recreational facilities opened in fall 1994.

### **6. Mason**

- The City of Mason has a population of 22,016 (2000 Census) and is located 22 miles north of Cincinnati.
- The Mason Community Center is operated by the City of Mason and was built by the Mason City School District. The 150,000 square foot community center opened in March 2003 and the high school opened in September 2002. The old high school is now the middle school.

- The high school and Community Center were built adjacent to the old high school's stadium by the school district on city-owned land. A \$71.9 million bond levy passed in 2000 and it is estimated that the co-located recreational facility saved \$11-12 million.
- The community center cost \$20-21 million to build and serves the City of Mason and the Mason City School District. The City charges \$450 per family to use it and this fee goes to maintaining the facility.
- The Community Center includes leisure and competition pools, a 4,000 square foot fitness center, a 1,800 weight room, a gymnasium and field house, a 1/8 mile long track, an auditorium that seats up to 1,200 people, and an activity room. The facility also has a café, an arts and crafts studio, and meeting rooms for the public to use.
- The Community Center is used by the high school during the day and the public during off hours.
- The only issue is space for basketball and because more and more people want to use the community center.

### **7. Cincinnati Public Schools**

- In 2002, the Cincinnati Board of Education approved a \$985 million Facilities Master Plan to bring all school facilities in the district up-to-date. The plan was created jointly by Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) and the Ohio School Facilities Commission and was broken into four segments. The State of Ohio contributed 23% of the plan's total eligible cost, state and local resources funded part of the first segment, and a \$4.6 million bond issue passed in 2003 completed funding for the plan.
- Facilities improvement funds (23% of the financing for the plan) are contributed by the State up to a certain percentage so that a school will have minimum standard of adequate facilities. If a school wants to improve a facility beyond that, the funding has to come from other sources.
- As part of the master plan, CPS is encouraging all schools being built or renovated to include a community learning center and is engaging the community to be a part of the process. As a result, community-learning centers will be built through a sustained community engagement process with a vision, mission, partnerships, implementation, and accountability, among others.
- A community-learning center can be anything a neighborhood or community wants such as a comprehensive wellness program, a recreational facility, or an after-school program.

### **8. City of Twinsburg and Schools**

- The City of Twinsburg has a population of 17,006 (2000 Census) and is located 18 miles from Akron.
- A new high school with a fitness center was built in 1999. The school cost \$23 million to build. The fitness center cost \$12 million and was paid for by the city.
- The fitness center includes a 5,000 square foot weight room; a 40,000 square foot field house with basketball courts, indoor batting cages and a 1/8 mile track; and a 326,000 gallon indoor swimming pool.
- The fitness center was submitted twice as a levy on its own and was voted down but approved when a high school was added to the levy.
- The fitness center is open all day (5:30am – 9:00pm) for use by the high school and the public and managed by the City.
- As part of the agreement, the school pays the City for use of the fitness center. According to Jim Seikel, Director of Parks and Recreation of Twinsburg, this type of agreement has not worked very well because the high school does not have the money to use the facility. Therefore, the high school primarily uses its own facilities.

### **9. Warrensville Heights**

- Warrensville Heights has a population of 15,109 (2000 Census) and is located 11 miles from Cleveland.

- A \$26 million levy passed in 1990 to upgrade all schools in the district. As part of this levy the high school received a new science wing and a new athletic wing that opened in December 2003.
- The new wing is used by the school during school hours and by the recreation department during off hours and the summer. It contains an indoor pool, a track, a weight room with treadmills and stationary bicycles, and a gymnasium.

## **Greenways and Trails**

### **10. Greenwood, Indiana**

- Greenwood has a population of 36,037 (2000 Census) and is located 15 miles south of Indianapolis.
- Greenwood completed a master plan for trails and greenways for 2002 to 2006 with a community involvement component that included public hearings and a distribution of surveys.
- The projected cost to complete the plan is nearly \$2 million.
- The main idea of the plan is to create connectivity of trails and greenways and to locate them within the city, according to the Executive Director of Greenwood's Parks and Recreation Department.
- Initial projects have centered on connecting small areas to already completed large areas whether that is with asphalt or gravel.

### **11. South Suburban Parks and Recreation**

- The South Suburban Parks and Recreation District is a special district with an elected board that serves seven municipalities and four school districts near the Denver, Colorado area.
- Over the past 28 years, greenways and trails planners have coordinated efforts to ensure that trails are contiguous and, as a result, 112 miles of trails run throughout the district.
- A public participation planning process takes place for park development, playground renovation, and trail development.
- The annual district budget is \$64 million with \$600,000 devoted to annual trails/shelters.
- Projects in the district are managed and funded through the South Suburban Park Foundation, a 501(c)3 entity. The district works with the foundation to apply to local governments for construction of trails and other projects.
- Trails are also funded through a state trails group in Colorado, the state lottery, private donations, a portion of property taxes, and in the past a \$2 million matching grant from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- An inexpensive way to cover walking paths is to use crushed granite or limestone (or whatever material is naturally found in the area), which is a byproduct of construction and can be purchased usually at low cost.

## Introduction

### Research Conducted on Synthetic Turf Fields

Improving Shaker Heights City and School fields were ranked as a high priority with Shaker residents. In the public meetings, both the desire to improve natural grass fields and potentially install synthetic turf on a field were expressed. As a result, the City of Shaker Heights Planning Department contacted 5 nearby municipalities to discuss their implementation of synthetic turf fields. Of the five cities contacted, the City spoke with three. In addition, a number of near by cities responded to questions and emails about natural grass turf maintenance and user fees to support field maintenance. The key points regarding both synthetic turf and natural grass are outlined below.

### Summary Synthetic Fields Best Practices

In the three cities we spoke with the synthetic field was located at a school field, included some type of collaboration (City/Schools, Schools/Parents), and the school maintains the field and charges for its use.

## Synthetic Fields

### 1. Rocky River, Ohio

Rocky River has 1 synthetic field that has been installed in the last 6 months (mid-2004). The field is installed on the High School Football Field. The funding was paid 40% by the Schools, 40% by the City, and 20% by funds raised by the parents. The field cost approximately \$750,000, however, the project did go over budget approximately \$100,000 due to some soil problems. Additional funds (not included in the \$750,000) were spent on a landscape architect to draw up the field specifications. The School handled all aspects of contracting for the fields and the installation though the City was aware of the process. The School maintains the fields on a regular basis and has found cost savings in maintenance. The City has a lease agreement with the Schools to use the field. The City pays the Schools approximately \$30,000 a year for use and the lease agreement outlines the number of hours and usage terms for the City. The priority of use of the field is the Schools, then the City and then other organizations. There have been no problems with the field or any environmental or health issues associated with the installation or use of the field.

### 2. Brunswick, Ohio

Brunswick has 1 synthetic field that has been installed for the last year and a half. The field is installed on the High School Football Field. The funding was paid 100% by the schools through a one year capital expenditure. The field cost approximately \$750,000, however, the project did go over budget approximately \$20,000 due to some soft areas on the field that needed to be addressed. The School handled all aspects of contracting for the field and installation. Before building a synthetic field, they had considered building a new stadium for soccer, however, they found the costs for the synthetic field and the new stadium were about the same and the natural grass on the fields limited their use, even with the extra dedicated soccer field. The School maintains the fields on a regular basis and has found cost savings in maintenance. The Schools charge for use of the field. The cost of use of the field depends on the type and location of the organization. Costs charged for the field include use of the scoreboard, press box, and clean up. The City is charged for use of the field. In district vs. out of district, non-profits vs. for profit organizations are charged different fees. The School estimates they made \$7,000 to \$10,000 in the one and a half years they have had the field. The priority of use of the field is the Schools, then the City or in District organizations and then other organizations. There have been no problems with the field or any environmental or health issues associated with the installation or use of the field.

### 3. Chardon, Ohio

Chardon has 1 synthetic field that has been installed for two years. The field is installed on the High School Football Field. The funding was paid for by fundraising and contributions from parents and the community. The School handled all aspects of contracting for the fields and the installation. The School maintains the fields on a regular basis and has found cost savings in maintenance. The Schools charge \$125 an hour for all non-school organizations to use the field

The field is used seven days a week, but mostly by the school. They do send notices to parents notifying them of possible heat conditions on the field. There have been no problems with the field or any environmental or health issues associated with the installation or use of the field.

### **Research Conducted on Natural Grass Turf Fields**

The City of Shaker Heights Community Life Department contacted nearby municipalities to discuss their maintenance and scheduling of their natural grass/turf fields. We asked questions about the number and types of fields they have, the frequency of maintenance, and scheduling priorities. In addition, through the Ohio Parks and Recreation Connection List serve, a number of Cities responded to the City's questions about sharing fields with schools and charging fees for the use of fields by Association or other "non-City" or "non-school" organizations. In general, most cities are not charging for field use, however, some are looking into fees to help support maintenance. Almost all cities limit the use of the field to city and/or school district use only, or help maintain field conditions by only scheduling one type of sport per field.

### **Natural Grass Fields**

#### **1. Broadview Heights, Ohio**

Broadview Heights has 11 fields (7 baseball, 4 soccer). They maintain the fields regularly after games and consider their fields in good to excellent condition. Maintenance procedures include aerification and top dressing when the budget permits. They do believe their fields are overused and there is some concern about availability of fields for use in the future. The community also believes fields are over used, but are satisfied because the field conditions are excellent. Soccer fields are for Broadview Heights programs only though associations have asked to use them. Baseball fields are rented off season or holiday weekends when nothing is scheduled. Cost for fields is \$50 for non-profit groups and \$75 for for-profit groups. Resting fields is impossible, however, fields are roated by age group to help with the healing process. Priority for field use is: City programs first, City Travel second, and Rentals last. Athletic programs are run by the City and registration fees to do not cover the cost of maintenance, however, there has been some discussion about raising fees to help with maintenance. School fields are used sometimes, and the City maintains school fields when they use the, the Schools maintain the school fields when they use them.

#### **2. Mayfield Village, Ohio**

Mayfield Heights has 6 fields (2 soccer, 4 softball). They maintain the fields daily (1-2 staff for 1-3 hours a day) during the seasons in use. They consider their fields to be in excellent condition and not overused, though, they think it would be good to have an additional soccer field for rotation. They have a master calendar for scheduling and schedule certain days for adult and youth sports. They field use is restricted to recreation department and school district use.

#### **3. Cleveland Heights, Ohio**

Cleveland Heights has 5 ballfields (for softball and baseball use only), an all purpose field at Denison Park (for soccer, lacrosse, field hockey used primarily by the highschool), and an all purpose field at Forest Hill Park and Caledona. On the softball/baseball fields, they maintain their fields daily and consider their fields in excellent condition. The Denison Park field is used mainly by and quality kept high for school use. The fields at Forest Hill Park and Caledon are considered in poor condition, however, they hope to reconstruct the Forest Hill Park field with a newly passed levy. For all types of fields, priority is given Cleveland Heights Parks and Recreation programs, scholastic games, and Cleveland Heights residents. Fees are changed for participants in Cleveland Heights programs. Adult leagues and programs pay for field usage.

**4. Wickliffe, Ohio**

The city has 3 soccer fields and few baseball fields. The City's service department maintains all the fields although the fields are used by both City and league programs. There is some sharing of school baseball fields and the High School varsity baseball and softball play at a City park.

**5. Dover, Ohio**

The City of Dover does share facilities with the Schools, including fields and gyms. The School does not charge the City for the use of the gyms, and the Schools only pay any over time charges that might occur for field maintenance after the Schools use the fields. Outsiders are charged for both using the fields (\$50.00 per day) and for the School gyms (\$20.00 for 1 ½ hours).

**6. Green, Ohio**

The City of Green does use School fields in the summer for baseball and soccer and they maintain the school fields during the summer through the City's operating budget. The schools maintain their fields during the school year. A shared usage agreement outlines the responsibilities and terms of use for each entity. The City does charge fees to outside organizations based on weekend or daily use. The Youth Sport Organizations provide the City a donation of \$1,000.00 a year for use of fields.

**7. Brecksville, Ohio**

The City of Brecksville does not use any school fields for recreation programs. They do charge a rental fee to outside associations that use their baseball and soccer fields. The fee is \$25.00 per use (defined as a 2 hour time period). In addition to charging, the City only recognizes certain organizations for regular game scheduling and usage on City fields. They require that these organizations maintain a 51% Brecksville resident membership and limit the number of games/practices that they are able to schedule.