

Promises Made, Promises Kept

With the passage of the current park levy in 2016, the park board promised to utilize the funds to keep the parks open and safe for families, improve facilities, improve parking, add rest rooms, and provide trash cans and benches. The park district has kept those promises over the past four years. The following major projects have been accomplished since 2016.

Pine Hill Park

- Parking lot improvements at Sauers Farm
- ADA rest room at Sauers Farm
- Playground at Sauers Farm
- Picnic pavilion at Sauers Farm
- Swing set at Crall Woods

Audubon Wetlands

- Boardwalk providing access to the park replacing a failing structure
- Picnic pavilion with scenic view

Byers Woods

- Fully-accessible 1.1 mile trail providing access to fishing areas
- Playground
- Picnic pavilion
- ADA rest room

Freer Field

- Expanded and paved parking lot
- New building coming in 2021 with program space, rest rooms, park district office space, and an open-air picnic pavilion

Fire Company Nature Park

- Paved entry drive and parking lot
- Exterior improvement to the building including a new roof and exterior staining

Black Fork

- Paved parking lot
- Picnic pavilion

Hurdle Waterfowl Park

- New stone parking lot to improve access to the park

Carpenter and Cool Springs

- Picnic Pavilions

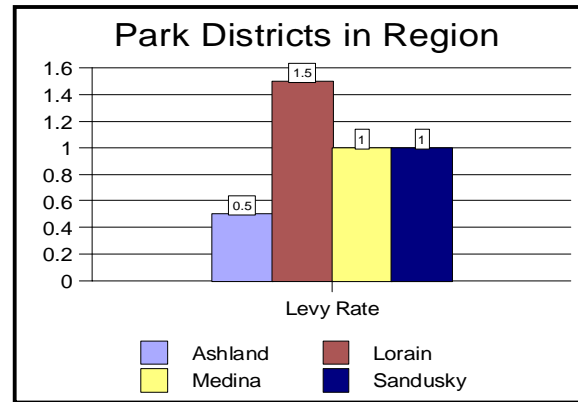
Other Improvements

- Picnic tables and benches were added throughout the park district.
- Trash cans were added and are maintained on a regular basis.
- Site maps were created and installed to help park visitors with site orientation.

- Access and inclusion have been improved with the addition of an accessible fishing areas and adaptive swing sets.
- The website received an overdue update.
- A grant from the Clean Ohio Fund allowed the park district to acquire land from Ashland County Commissioners to create Tom Kruse Wildlife Conservation Park adjoining Byers Woods Park.

How Do We Compare?

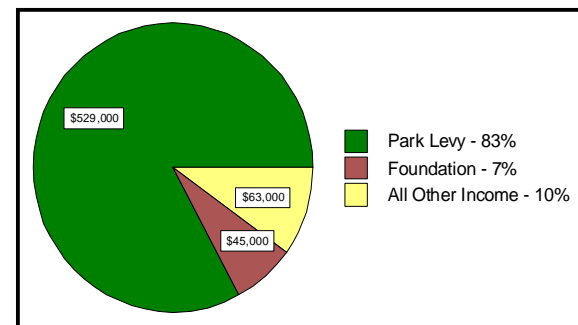
Ashland County Parks operates with a much lower budget than other park districts in the region. Funding for area park districts is shown below.



How Are Our Parks Funded?

Funding for our park district comes from a number of sources. Income from the current levy represents the largest source of funding. Additional funds come from a small endowment for the park district, a small endowment for Pine Hill park, and fees collected by the park district.

As demonstrated in the following chart, 83% of our park district's income comes from the current ½ mill park levy.



This new boardwalk at Audubon Wetlands was made possible by funds provided by the park levy. It replaced a failing structure that is the only access to the park.

Our Ashland County Parks Today

Ashland County Park District is a political subdivision that encompasses over 2,000 acres of beautiful public lands. Forests, meadows, fishing ponds, canoe and kayak access points, playgrounds, picnic pavilions, paved trails, and nature trails enhance your outdoor experiences.

Follow the signs to the park nearest you.

- Audubon Wetlands
- Black Fork Bottoms Hunting Area
- Byers Woods
- Carpenter Nature Preserve
- Cooke Family Wildlife Conservation Park
- Cool Springs Wildlife Conservation Park
- Esbenshade Wetlands
- Fire Company Nature Park
- Freer Field
- Gilliom-Cherp Nature Park
- Hopkins Landing
- Hurdle Waterfowl Park
- Pine Hill - Crall Woods
- Pine Hill - Sauers Farm
- River Walk Natural Area
- Sprinkle's Serenity
- Tom Kruse Wildlife Conservation Park
- Tupelo Bottoms



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Ashland County Park District Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Continuing the Progress



Park Commissioners
 Robert DeSanto
 David McClure
 Tom Kruse

A Message From Your Board of Park Commissioners



(Left to Right) Dave McClure, Bob DeSanto and Tom Kruse

Over the past few months, the number of Ashland County residents enjoying time with nature has been obvious. Parking lots full of cars and trails being used as a respite from home isolation are common sights in the park district.

Four years ago, Ashland County voters approved the first levy to support the county park district. This 1/2 mill levy has provided much needed funding to assist with the development and care of the parks. The levy was approved for five years beginning in 2016. It expires at the end of this year.

While costing residents just over \$17 per \$100,000 of valuation a year (about 5¢ per day), the levy has generated over \$500,000 annually. The park commissioners followed a strategic plan utilizing the funds to make capital improvements throughout the park district (see additional information provided). Sorely needed equipment was acquired and three employees were hired to assist the volunteer corps with the operation and maintenance of the parks.

To continue improving and maintaining this great community asset, the board of park commissioners is placing a renewal of the 1/2 mill levy on the November ballot. This renewal is **not a new tax** and will continue to generate much-needed revenue for the park district.

The board deeply appreciates the support of Ashland County residents in its mission to save open spaces while providing multiple recreation opportunities for the benefit of our community. These benefits include many forms of recreation including hiking, fishing, bird watching, bicycling, hunting, and picnicking. If you have any questions, please contact the park office at the number provided.

Park Commissioners Robert DeSanto, David McClure, and Tom Kruse



Volunteers play a key role in the success of the park district.

Continuing the Progress Park Improvements

By allocating 65% of the funding for capital projects, the park district will invest most of the funds generated by a renewal levy for improvements at our parks. The following items have been identified as high priority for the funding that will be collected from 2022 to 2026.

- **Paved walking trails** - Three additional miles of paved trails will provide access to nature for people of all abilities to enjoy.
- **Playgrounds** - Three additional playgrounds will be added. These improvements make visiting the park even better for our youngest visitors.
- **Rest Rooms** - Additional rest rooms will be added to several park sites. This is one of the most requested improvements in the park district.
- **Park Entrances and parking** - With increased use, there is a need to add and improve access to park sites. Paired with paved trails, these improvements add access for people of all abilities and decrease maintenance costs.
- **Picnic Pavilions/Areas** - Three additional sites will be targeted for picnic pavilions and picnic areas to give small groups a place to gather for outdoor picnic meals.
- **Add Canoe/Kayak Access to the Mohican River** - A small site will be targeted for a public canoe/kayak launch on the Mohican River. This much-needed public access should prove very popular.

Staffing

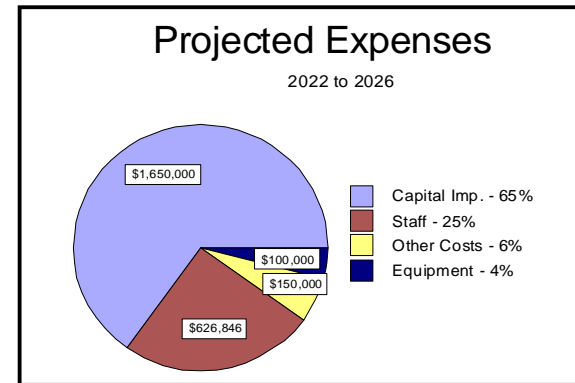
Just 25% of funding will be utilized for staff expenses. The park district relies heavily on its corps of dedicated volunteers for park maintenance.

Other Costs

Paper, gasoline, electricity, propane for heat, water, lumber, etc. are needed. Six percent of funding will be used for these expenses.

Equipment

Taking care of the many parks requires mowers and other equipment. Four percent of funding will be used for equipment needs.



Project Everyone Rides



The park district takes great pride in its efforts to make enjoyment of nature available to all. The everyone rides project and Me Too Adventure Club were established to give people with limited mobility a chance to enjoy nature using paved trails and the equipment shown above. Work will continue to provide access to programs and nature for this segment of our population.



The park district will continue to develop new program opportunities for people of all ages.



Improvements in the parks are done with the intention to make the enjoyment of nature easier for everyone.

This strategic plan guides our path toward excellence to keep Ashland County one of the world's best places to live, work, and play.