

# 2012

# ANNUAL REPORT



*play*  
**MADISON  
PARKS**

**MADISON PARKS DIVISION**  
A DIVISION OF PUBLIC WORKS

[www.cityofmadison.com/parks](http://www.cityofmadison.com/parks)  
[www.facebook.com/cityofmadisonparks](http://www.facebook.com/cityofmadisonparks)  
Twitter: PlayMadison

# MANAGING OUR COMMUNITY'S INVESTMENTS

## Madison Parks Improved Several Parks and Facilities

**Cherokee Marsh** - An additional 3.6 acres were acquired with the help of the Natural Heritage Land Trust and stewardship funds as part of Cherokee Marsh-School Road Unit. In addition, staff worked with City Engineering to construct stormwater ponds and improve the wetland habitat in the area adjacent to this acquisition, north of Wheeler Road. Madison Parks partnered with The United States Fish and Wildlife Service to provide technical expertise, and a grant for the wetland habitat restoration project.

**Cherokee Park Playground** - Staff designed and oversaw the construction of a new playground at Cherokee Park. The old playground was removed and the area restored. The neighborhood contributed about a third of the funding for this project.

**Churchill Heights Shelter** - Staff designed and oversaw the construction of a new shelter at Churchill Heights Park.

**Door Creek Park** - The City installed culverts and a trail crossing as part of the development of the cross country ski trail system at Door Creek Park, to provide a connection to the parking area at the north end of the park.

**Esther Beach Master Plan** - Staff completed the Esther Beach Master Plan, which was adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners on October 10, 2012. This Master Plan was done as part of expansion of Esther Beach Park, which was funded in part through award of a DNR Stewardship grant for \$411,000.

**Highland Manor Open Space** - A master planning effort was conducted to plan recreational uses for the vacant right-of-way that bisects the Highland Manor neighborhood. After several meetings the master plan was approved by the Park Commission in April. In addition, a FEMA grant application was submitted for funding to construct a storm shelter that would be used as a park shelter during non-storm events. This funding has been approved and design of the new shelter will occur in 2013.

**Hoyt Park Improvements** - Staff worked with the Friends of Hoyt Park to complete numerous improvements including regrading and new asphalt at the Owen Parkway overlook, repairs to the existing stone stair cases, installation of railings, repairs to the existing stone wall near the restroom/storage building, and installation of over 2,000 native plants.

**Hudson Park** - The City of Madison completed improvements to Hudson Park. These improvements included development of a terraced seating area, a canoe/kayak boat launch and ramp, stairway access to the shoreline, and new shoreline riprap.

**Marshall/Spring Harbor Park Dredging** - Marshall Park and Spring Harbor Park boat launches were dredged in 2012. Both were dredged to a depth of 5' from summer minimum. The dredged material was trucked to Junction Ridge Park and used as fill in a park expansion area that will be a future soccer field.

The City received a grant from the State of Wisconsin Waterways Commission to offset 41% of the cost of this dredging project.

**Olive Jones Park** - The final phase of improvements for Olive Jones Park was completed this year, consisting of a new segmental retaining wall, replacement of the fencing, and replacement of the asphalt surface. The project was completed in time for the start of school at the end of August.

**Quann Tennis Courts** - The Parks Division reconstructed 6 of the 12 tennis courts at Quann Park in 2012. The original surface was ground up and recycled as gravel base and a new surface installed over the top. By grinding up the existing surface and adding more gravel base we were able to correct some slope issues and add much needed extra base under the new surface. We are hoping to re-construct the remaining 6 courts within the next few years.

# PARK IMPROVEMENTS, CONTINUED...

**Tenney Park Maintenance Bridge** - After an evaluation of the Marston Bridge, and due to the historic nature of this bridge (one of the oldest concrete span bridges in Wisconsin), staff identified the Thornton Avenue Bridge as the best option to provide vehicular access to the island. This also kept the access internal to the park. Staff hired an engineering firm to prepare plans and specifications for the new bridge in coordination with the State, Landmarks Commission, and the neighborhood association. Construction began in December, 2012 with completion in early 2013.

**Tenney Park Parking Lot** - As a continuation of the Tenney Park Shelter project, the parking lot adjacent to the shelter was redesigned and re-built. The new parking lot has the same number of parking stalls however, due to the efficient new layout, less asphalt.

**Tenney Park Tennis Court Lighting Removal/Replacement** - The lighting system at the popular tennis court was replaced. The old system was inefficient and had 12 poles. The newly installed system is more energy efficient and requires only 4 poles.

**Warner Park Parking Lot** - Staff completed the final phase of the reconstruction of the parking lot. The project began in 2010. The old layout was very inefficient with wider than normal drive aisles. The drive aisles were also oriented north/south requiring all inner parking lot movement to go in and out of the main drive aisle causing

conflicts between cars looking for parking spots and cars leaving the facility. The new design shifts traffic flow east/west and limits access to the parking lots to 3 intersections which should result in better traffic flow all around. The new design incorporates sidewalks along the main road and access walks leading to all facilities. The storm sewer system was improved as well. The original parking lot drained through storm sewers directly to the lagoons with no treatment of any kind. The new design incorporates 2 retention ponds that receive the parking lot run off before going into the lagoons.

**Westmorland Park Hockey Lights Retrofit** - The existing lighting system had 6 poles and very outdated fixtures. The new lighting design uses the 4 existing corner light poles only and the most energy efficient lighting system available in the athletic field lighting industry.

**Park Landscaping** - Staff designed and oversaw new landscaping at BB Clarke Park, Burrows Park, Door Creek Park, Giddings Park, Heritage Heights Park, James Madison Park, Monona Park, Tenney Park, Thut Park, and Warner Park. In addition, invasive plant removals were completed at Warner Park, Giddings Park, Heritage Heights Park and Tenney Park and native prairie, wetland and woodland plants were installed at BB Clarke Park, Hoyt Park, Tenney Park, and Thut Park.



# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY THROUGH PROGRAMS

## Increased Park Program Participants

An additional 65,000 people participated in the Madison Parks programs this year. Park programs and events include Groove and Glide ice skating parties, swim lessons, swim team, family hoedowns, beach parties, 'Learn To' series (kayak, ice skate, play pickleball, etc.), hayrides and campfires, Rubber Ducky River Race, Big Rig Gig, and Kid to Kid Garage Sale.

## Ride the Drive Expands to the Northside

Our signature event, Ride the Drive, opens a 5-mile loop of signature streets and creates a public promenade open to bikers, walkers, skateboarders, and roller bladers in a festival on wheels. In 2012, we hosted the downtown event that saw 20,000 people attend and the first neighborhood Ride the Drive on Madison's northside. That first neighborhood event had approximately 11,000 attendees.

## Madison Meet & Eat

Madison Parks staff coordinated the Madison Meet & Eat program, a unique event that brought Madison's food cart vendors right to a neighborhood. The program provides a great place for the community to connect and enjoy a fun night out in the company of friends and neighbors.

## Warner Park Community Recreation Center

WPCRC celebrated 14 years of serving the northside. In achieving its mission of being a gathering place, the year of 2012 was no exception to its record of quality service. Provided service to 267,757 customers, hosted 1,437 rentals for 180,000 customers, started a successful early release free open gym program for middle and high school children, hosted its own programs of two craft fairs, the Madison Audubon Art Fair, a Bat Festival, and free community Sunday Night Suppers for the Northside residents.



## Madison Parks Recognizes Partners and Volunteers

Madison Parks hosted a recognition dinner to celebrate the 2012 accomplishments and achievements of its large partner and volunteer corps.

- Volunteer of the Year - Sarah Brooks
- Volunteer Group of the Year - Friends of Cherokee Marsh
- Partner of the Year - Shelley Glover Sports Education Foundation
- Sponsor of the Year - 105.5 FM WMMM
- Spirit of Service Award - Mary Caulfield
- Volunteer and OBS Board Chair Janet Loewi received the 'Volunteer Excellence' award from the Wisconsin Federation of Museums for her work at Olbrich Botanical Gardens

# EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS THROUGH INNOVATION

## Park and Open Space Plan

Staff completed the 2012-2017 Park and Open Space Plan after a nearly two year effort involving an extensive public input process including three public input meetings, a needs assessment survey (which received over 1,500 responses), multiple meetings with the Long Range Planning Sub-Committee, and presentations to the Board of Park Commissioners, the Board of Public Works, and the Plan Commission. The plan was adopted by the City of Madison Common Council on May 15, 2012. To read this impressive document, visit: <http://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/about/parksopenspaceplan.cfm>

## Madison Parks Connects with the Local Medical Community

Madison Parks became the first local chapter of the Walk with a Doc program. Walk with a Doc aims to promote healthy lifestyles by having local doctors lead free walks in our beautiful park system. Madison Parks staff kicked off the monthly program in October, 2012 with a walk in Owen Park led by a UW bariatric surgeon. The popular monthly walks extended into the winter with some seasonal modifications: Ice Skate with a Doc, and Cross Country Ski with a Doc.

## Playground safety and innovations

In 2012, Madison Parks hired a full-time playground technician who is responsible for the maintenance, repair and the safety of Madison Parks' playgrounds. With Madison ranked #1 in the nation for number of playgrounds, this is a very important job! Madison Parks acquired a commercial quality mulcher and purchased a new Triax 2010 Surface Impact Tester. These acquisitions allowed Madison Parks to become the first parks district in the nation to create its own certified playground mulch in-house. In-house mulch processing can cut costs, recycle city trees, and increase the flexibility of a playground design. In 2012 staff worked with neighbors of the Yahara Place Park and Goodman Park to install new playgrounds with our own in-house produced wood mulch. It is innovations like the new in-house produced wood mulch and the guiding vision of the Parks and Open Space Plan that put Madison Parks in the national spotlight for local parks districts.

## Social Media

Madison Parks improved its presence on social media in 2012. By year's end, the Madison Parks Facebook page was reaching 1,500 people weekly and on Twitter (@playmadison), over 1,500 people were receiving those messages. Social media has been a powerful tool in our brand management and event marketing.



**Forest Hill Cemetery was created at the time of the Civil War. Near-by Camp Randall (today the location of University of Wisconsin football) served as a Confederate prisoner of war camp. One hundred and forty of the soldiers died and were buried at Forest Hill. In a nearby plot, 240 Union veterans were buried. Forest Hill Cemetery is one of the first U.S. National Cemeteries in Wisconsin.**

**Memorial Day Services are conducted annually for both the Union Rest and the Confederate Rest. Attendance for morning services is about 500 people followed by many thousands of visitors throughout the weekend visiting the graves of loved ones buried both recently and long ago.**

# SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

## 2012 - Weather for the Record Books!

January 2012 started out with an unseasonably warm winter with very little snow or cold temperatures. The ice rinks and ski trails were often closed. This negatively impacted the outdoor winter recreational programs.

Spring transitioned to summer very quickly in early March. The golf courses opened March 12, and parks maintenance staff started the mowing work two to three weeks ahead of average.

Then the drought began. The entire Midwest was feeling fortunate to have an early spring and great weather to participate in outdoor activities. But as the weeks progressed, and no rain came, that fortunate feeling gave way to alarm. The thousands of newly planted trees along our streets needed water, as well as the newly planted landscapes. The Parks Division had to ask our sports leagues to stay off the fields for fear of destroying the now dying grass.

The drought did allow staff to focus on more trimming and clean up jobs than a normal weather summer would have allowed. Maintenance crews spent a significant portion of the season weeding, pruning, mulching and removing invasive species. This kind of detail work created a big visual impact for our

park patrons. Staff received many thank you letters. Staff focused a significant amount of time, talent and resources on some of our major parks: Law Park, Burrows Park, Warner Park, Reindahl Park, Olbrich Park, James Madison Park, Cherokee Park, Meadow Ridge Park, Marshall Park, Elver Park, Vilas Park, Garner Park, Leopold Park and Olin Park.

The summer and fall drought led right into winter marked by heavy snowfall and cold temperatures. A blizzard in mid-December had city residents and our staff digging out for almost a week. Despite that, the outdoor ice rinks and the ski trails were open for the Christmas break. The winter of 2012-2013 was a record breaker for ice rink attendance. Thousands of people each week took advantage of the great winter recreation conditions and programs.

Maintenance staff took on additional snow removal responsibilities by adding almost 300 bus stops to their removal routes.

The weather challenges of 2012 were met by staff with innovation and a can-do attitude. The Madison Parks staff is very dedicated to providing the highest quality parks to our residents and visitors.

## Heat Wave

In addition to the drought, Madison also experienced several 100+ degree days. The positive impact of the heat wave was increased attendance at Goodman Pool in early June and July reached record levels. Goodman Pool had more 'at capacity' days in 2012 than in its six year history. However, the heat certainly can take its toll. As more people cooled down at the pool and beaches, the lifeguard staff stepped up to the challenge of the heat and large crowds day after day. We routinely received thank you letters and comments from patrons on how professionally our staff conducted themselves day after day.



# CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES

## *Conservation Parks continue to fulfill mission*

**New Boardwalk Installed** - The Operation Fresh Start summer crew installed 600 ft. of aluminum boardwalk at the North Unit of Cherokee Marsh. The crew dismantled the old wood boardwalk and salvaged the usable treated lumber. This recycled lumber was used to construct pads to serve as “footings” for the new boardwalk installation. This completes the last major phase of updating the boardwalks that allow the public to access our wetlands while protecting these sensitive natural resources.

## **Madison Community Foundation Grant Awarded**

The Madison Parks Division received an \$18,000 grant from the Madison Community Foundation to facilitate continued oak savanna restoration projects. Operation Fresh Start Conservation Crew assisted in restoration work at the North Unit of Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor, Turville Point, and Prairie Ridge Parks. The work included invasive shrub control, thinning over-represented sub-canopy trees and reducing woody debris. This grant helps fund the work to restore signature Wisconsin habitat which is extremely rare today.

## **Conservation & Operations Staff Revitalize**

**Parks** - The Madison Parks Conservation staff worked in partnership with the East and West Operations staff to work on clearing out year’s worth of overgrown invasive weeds and trees from several general parks. Staff utilized a ‘forestry mower’ to efficiently remove small tree and brush, and staff followed up with hand removal work and re-planting of native wildflowers and plants. The parks

worked on in 2012 were: Marshall, Hill Creek, Olin, Garner, Reservoir, Leopold, Goodman, Britta Parkway, Fischer Street, Burrows, Cherokee, Demetral, Olbrich, Tenney, and Warner.

## *Madison Parks Forestry Sections prepares for the future*

**Emerald Ash Borer Website**- In December, the EAB website was updated and improved for residents to find out more about EAB, what they can do, and has frequent updates on the situation in Dane County and Madison.

**Tree City USA** - The Madison Parks Forestry Section celebrated 23 years as a Tree City USA. The forestry section is responsible for 96,074 street trees. The crews planted 2,112 street trees, pruned over 13,989 trees, removed 1,379 trees, and responded to 1,921 customer service calls.

## *Olbrich Botanical Gardens keeping it Green*

**Solar Power and Organic Turf Management** - Since December 2011, Olbrich’s solar sunflower has produced 672 kWh, enough electricity to power 22 houses for one day each. There has been a carbon offset of 1,024 lbs, the equivalent produced by 12 trees. Olbrich staff have made the leap to organic turf management. In 2012 organic fertilizers, compost tea, and corn gluten were used on traditional turf areas.



**Olbrich Botanical Gardens celebrated the 10 year anniversary of the opening of the Thai Pavilion and Garden. A 10th Anniversary Art Exhibit featured works inspired by the Thai Pavilion and Gardens. Thai Fest 2012 held on Sunday September 23, featured performances by the Thai Cultural & Fine Arts Institute of Chicago, cuisine by Sa Bai Thong, Loy Krathong Demonstrations by UW-Madison Thai Student Association, and a Loy Krathong Family Activity by Olbrich Gardens Education Department. The Bolz Conservatory showcased the Flora of Tropical Thailand Exhibit from November 3, 2012 through March 24, 2013. Numerous education classes also focused on Thailand, including a photo travelogue, Tropical Gardens of Thailand to Nighttime in the Jungle – Tropical Thailand, and a series of Tropical Story and Stroll programs featuring Wild Thailand.**

# 2012 MADISON PARKS DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT

*play*  
**MADISON  
PARKS**

Madison Parks Division Administration  
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Ste. 104  
P.O. Box 2987  
Madison, WI 53701

Administration Office Hours  
Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Phone: (608) 266-4711  
Fax (608) 267-1162  
[www.cityofmadison.com/parks](http://www.cityofmadison.com/parks)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cityofmadisonparks](http://www.facebook.com/cityofmadisonparks)  
Twitter: @PlayMadison

We are proud to serve as a  
Division of the City of Madison  
Paul Soglin, Mayor  
Kevin Briski, Parks Superintendent



## Madison Parks Vision

To provide the ideal system of parks, natural resources and recreational opportunities which will enhance the quality of life for everyone.

