



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



MISSION

The Mission of MetroParks of Butler County is to provide an exceptional park system that maximizes the community's quality of life through conservation, education and recreation.

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Park Commissioners is a three-member body appointed by Judge John M. Holcomb, presiding Judge of the Butler County Probate Court. Board members are volunteers who serve for three-year terms.

2024 BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

CYNAMON TROKHAN
President

LARRY GERSBACH
Vice President

DARYL NELSON
Member

FOR MORE INFORMATION

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY
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Hamilton, Ohio 45013

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| YourMetroParks.net

| info@YourMetroParks.net

A MESSAGE FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

As MetroParks of Butler County enters our 70th year, we continue to grow and to adapt to the needs of Butler County residents and further our conservation, education and recreation mission.

In 2023 we identified our core values – how we want to serve our residents and each other. As we’ve celebrated those individual efforts over the past two years, I would like to use our values to recognize the collective efforts of our team in 2024.



JACKIE O'CONNELL
Executive Director

Welcoming – We convened a group of advisors and held a community conversation to better address the needs of park visitors with disabilities and remove barriers to their park use. We also partnered with Inspiration Studios to create a mural at Timberman Ridge MetroPark; it's a stunning work that brings the park's new playground and picnic shelter to life.

Accountable – Our MetroParks team continues to find ways to be good stewards of your financial and natural resources by finding efficiencies and increasing our sustainability efforts. In 2024, an Environmental Protection Agency grant brought recycling bins into every MetroPark, giving park visitors a chance to decrease their environmental footprint in the parks.

Collaborative – Our intra-departmental teams have been working together to create better guest experiences, including identifying better wayfinding throughout the parks and making infrastructure enhancements to improve traffic at Voice of America MetroPark. We also renamed several MetroParks to make the parks easier to identify and to reflect the longstanding names the community uses.

Engaging – Our team has sought new partnerships to grow our reach. MetroParks expanded our educational programming to more areas throughout the county than ever before, and partnerships with the Hamilton Parks Conservancy, Hamilton City Schools and the Friends of Chrisholm brought the wonders of nature to nearly 750 children in 2024.

Already as 2025 begins, MetroParks is working on strengthening and growing our relationship with our residents and communities we serve. We are excited to work with our partners to bring the USS Cincinnati Cold War Memorial and Peace Pavilion to Voice of America MetroPark. This spring, we will begin a public input campaign to understand how you use YOUR MetroParks and what you'd like to see in the future. And, we are also excited to launch our new foundation, which will help MetroParks create unique spaces and experiences for the next 70 years.

Through initiatives like these, MetroParks will continue to bring the best outdoor experiences and parks to our residents and solidify our vision to ***awaken the explorer in everyone!***

PARKS AND REGIONAL TRAILS

ANGST NATURE PRESERVE METROPARK

Wayne Township

BICENTENNIAL COMMONS

City of Middletown

CHRISHOLM METROPARK

Madison Township

FOREST RUN METROPARK

Ross Township

FOUR MILE CREEK METROPARK

Oxford, Milford and St. Clair Townships

GILMORE PONDS METROPARK

City of Hamilton

GOVERNOR BEBB METROPARK

Morgan Township

GREAT MIAMI RIVER TRAIL

City of Middletown, Lemon and Fairfield Townships

GREEN HERON METROPARK

Ross Township

INDIAN CREEK METROPARK

Reily Township

LINE HILL MOUND METROPARK

Fairfield Township

MEADOW RIDGE METROPARK

Madison Township

RENTSCHLER FOREST METROPARK

Fairfield Township

SALAMANDER RUN METROPARK

Morgan Township

SEBALD METROPARK

Madison Township

TIMBERHILL METROPARK

Fairfield Township

TIMBERMAN RIDGE METROPARK

Ross Township

VOICE OF AMERICA METROPARK

West Chester Township





METROPARKS' OPERATING LEVY

In November 2021, voters passed a replacement operating levy at the same millage rate as MetroParks' previous levy. The levy will be in effect until December 31, 2028, and will generate approximately \$6.7 million annually.

The levy generates the same income yearly, regardless of the number of residents who move into or out of Butler County.

The recent Butler County real estate valuation did not increase MetroParks' tax revenue, as the fixed levy was in place before the property valuation was completed.

BY THE NUMBERS

1,057,055 visits

to the parks made in 2024

\$44,071,771.41

is the estimated economic impact of athletic events held at Voice of America MetroPark in 2024

MetroParks manages nearly

5,000 acres

73 miles

of owned and managed paved and natural trails

1,100 acres

of active conservation projects

OPERATIONS

Operations is MetroParks' largest division. Team members ensure that each MetroPark is welcoming, clean and safe for visitors. Staff also manage the park district's paved and natural trails, and are responsible for building and equipment maintenance, landscaping and litter control in the parks.

BY THE NUMBERS



A **\$10,000** Duke Energy Foundation grant helped remove invasive plant species at Meadow Ridge MetroPark



Operations staff spent **1,086 hours** in safety training, resulting in a safer workplace and safer parks for all



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Meadow Ridge MetroPark opened a new archery range thanks to a collaboration with Young Guns Archery and a local Eagle Scout.
- Thanks to a \$50,000 grant from Ohio EPA, 166 new recycling bins were added parkwide.
- Angst Nature Preserve MetroPark opened two new nature trails.

PROGRAMMING & EDUCATION

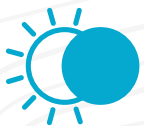
MetroParks' Programming & Education staff play a critical role in sparking love and respect for the natural world. They develop and present public programs, field trips and MetroParks' special events. The Programming & Education team also manages the farm at the Chrisholm MetroPark Historic Farmstead and the Middletown Community Gardens.

BY THE NUMBERS



213 students

attended field trips to the Chrisholm MetroPark Historic Farmstead thanks to scholarships provided by the Friends of Chrisholm



250 people

visited Timberman Ridge MetroPark for the "There Goes the Sun" eclipse party on April 8th



13,980 people

were reached by MetroParks' programming, field trips, and special events in 2024, an 11% increase from 2023



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- MetroParks partnered with Hamilton City Schools' Big Blue Food Truck and the Hamilton Parks Conservancy to bring students the wonders of nature into their own neighborhoods.
- New programs and events this year included the Winter Hike Series, Magic in the Maples and the Big Backyard Nature Bash.
- MetroParks expanded its reach with new partnerships including Fit Body Bootcamp, Young Guns Archery and the McCloskey Museum.

NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION

Natural Resources & Conservation staff are responsible for the protection of MetroParks' natural resources, invasive species removal and land restoration projects. Over 90% of MetroParks' owned and managed lands remain undeveloped. 1,100 acres are actively managed conservation areas, where natural resources protection projects are in progress.

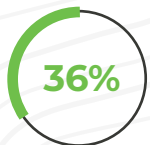
BY THE NUMBERS



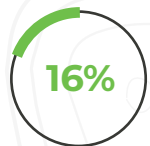
511 trees

were planted at four MetroParks in 2024

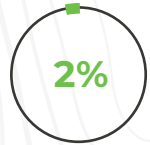
59% of staff time was spent in the following categories:



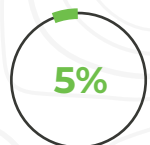
36% Invasive Plant Control



16% Restoration Projects
(Reforestation, propagation, prescribed burns)



2% Sustainability Projects
(Composting, recycling, litter)



5% Other Natural Resources Projects
(Bowhunting, wildlife management, pollinator gardens, etc.)



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- MetroParks continued ongoing restoration projects at Angst Nature Preserve, Green Heron, Line Hill Mound, Meadow Ridge, Salamander Run and Timberman Ridge MetroParks.
- The Friends of MetroParks donated a greenhouse to support the propagation of several native tree species in 2023. In 2024, 212 greenhouse-grown trees were planted at Timberman Ridge MetroPark to mitigate the spread of invasive species.
- New boot scrubbing stations were installed at eight MetroParks trailheads.

PARK PLANNING

Park Planning is responsible for MetroParks' capital improvement projects and capital replacement strategy. Park Planning also handles grant administration and managed nearly \$8.9 million in grant funding for current and future capital improvement projects.

BY THE NUMBERS



2.5 miles

of new paved and natural trails opened for hiking, biking and walking



A **\$275,000**

State Capital grant will complete the Elk Creek Connector Road into Sebald MetroPark in 2025



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Flush restrooms and picnic area improvements came to Timberman Ridge MetroPark thanks to a \$525,000 State Capital grant.
- Governor Bebb MetroPark earned a National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials award for the Dry Fork Creek stabilization and Sycamore Grove Trail projects.
- MetroParks hosted community conversations to improve park accessibility for park users with disabilities and inclusivity advocates.



VISITOR & EVENT SERVICES

Responsible for overseeing guest services for over one million park visitors annually, the Visitor & Event Services team works diligently to create memorable park experiences for all guests. The division also oversees all organizational marketing, contracted athletic tournaments and special events.

BY THE NUMBERS



102,433 visits

were made to the Great Miami River Trail



1,444 rentals

for campsites, shelters and indoor facilities, a 28% increase from 2023



MetroParks' social media reached

429,800 people

in 2024



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Two public murals were unveiled at Timberman Ridge and Voice of America MetroParks. The Timberman Ridge mural was designed and painted by Inspiration Studios, a local non-profit organization that employs artists with developmental and intellectual disabilities.
- An online ticketing platform was implemented at the Voice of America MetroPark Athletic Complex.
- MetroParks introduced a new athletic field reservation system to improve guest experiences.

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Over 400 MetroParks volunteers contributed 4,072 hours of service in 2024. Volunteers removed invasive species, planted trees, monitored trails, cared for the Chrisholm MetroPark Historic Farmstead's animals, cleaned headstones at Pioneer Church, helped at programs and special events, and much more. Thank you to everyone who made a difference last year!

BY THE NUMBERS



\$136,371

is the estimated value of volunteer service to MetroParks in 2024



Over

100 native hatchlings

were observed in bird nest boxes monitored by MetroParks volunteers



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Volunteers cleared eight acres of invasive species during Choppportunities, a new invasive plant management program.
- Trail Ambassadors hiked and biked 4,920 miles to monitor trails and promote safety.
- Monthly orientations were introduced for reoccurring volunteer opportunities.

DEVELOPMENT

Development's efforts help increase MetroParks' revenue and streamline donor relations. Development is also the point of contact for all of MetroParks' friends groups, community foundations and corporate sponsorships.

BY THE NUMBERS



MetroParks received
\$28,500
through the new Legacy
Bench and Tree Program



\$37,044.81

was raised for Gilmore Ponds
MetroPark improvements
through the Hamilton
Community Foundation

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- MetroParks unveiled its Community Grant program, which provides funding to Butler County political subdivisions and non-profits wanting to improve local public recreational initiatives.
- Hanover Township, Morgan Township, Oxford Township, Three Valley Conservation Trust and Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park all received up to \$5,000 in grant funding for parks and recreation projects in their communities.



2024 OTHER NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

IMPROVED WAYFINDING:

MetroParks constructed kiosks with trail maps and park highlights to improve guest park experiences.

INCREASED SAFETY:

The police department restructured to bolster police presence in the parks allowing officers to be more present for park guests.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:

Appointed 101, a civic engagement program for women was held at Voice of America MetroPark in collaboration with the Women's Funds of the Greater Cincinnati and Hamilton Foundations and the Northern Cincinnati and Middletown Foundations.

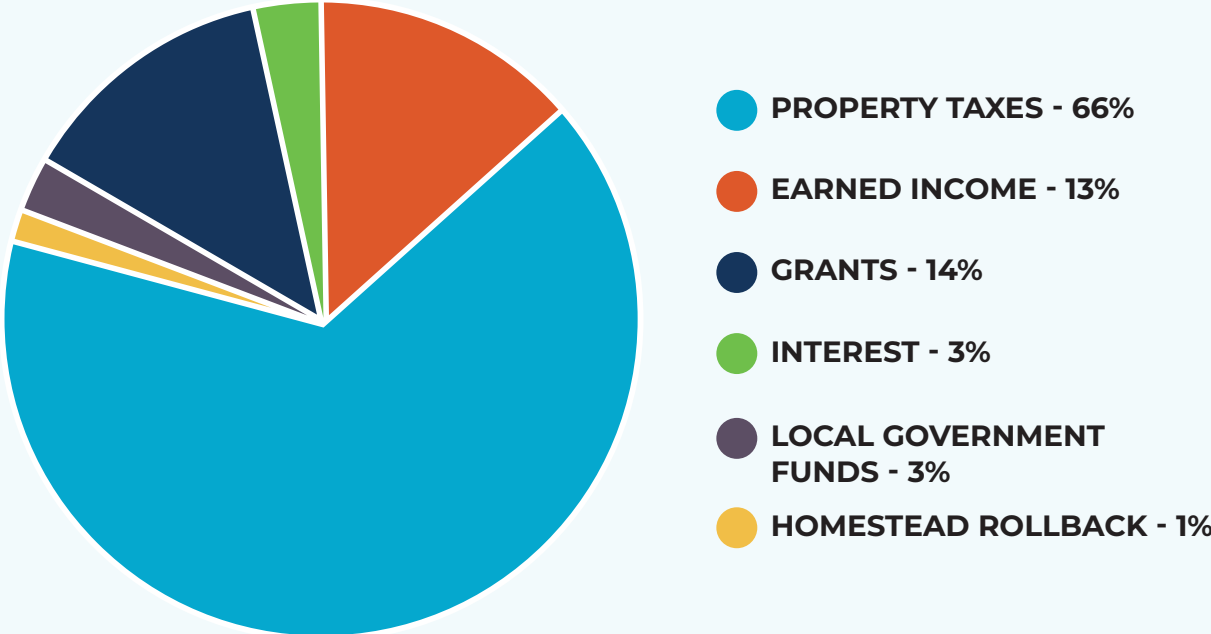
MORE EFFICIENCY:

MetroParks began work to become its own fiscal agent, which will allow for the internal management of finances and payroll and improve efficiency.

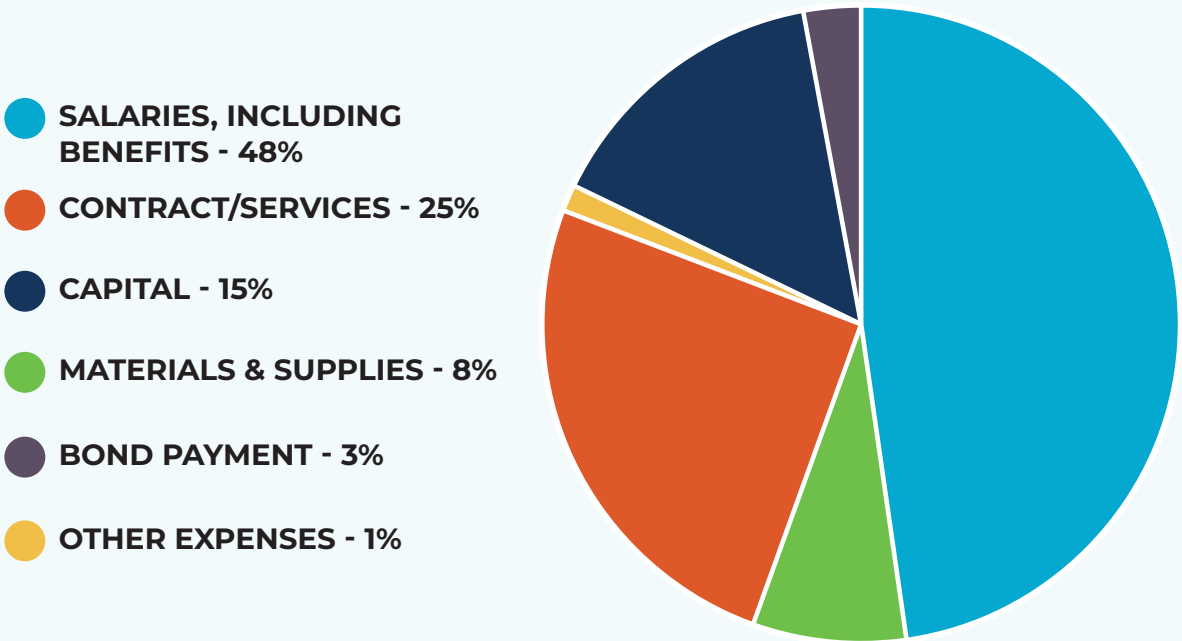


FINANCIAL REVIEW

2024 REVENUE BY SOURCE



2024 EXPENSE BY SOURCE



THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 PARTNERS

17 Strong
Arrow Adventure
Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Butler County Chapter of the Ohio Horseman's Council
Butler County 4H
Butler County Engineer's Office
Butler Soil & Water Conservation District
Christ the King Lutheran Church
Cincinnati Cricket Club
City of Fairfield
City of Hamilton
City of Middletown
Clean Ohio Fund
Envision Partnerships
Fairfield Chamber of Commerce
Fairfield Community Foundation
FC Cincinnati
Fit Body Bootcamp
Friends of Chrisholm
Friends of MetroParks
Girl Scouts of Western Ohio
Great Miami Riverway
Greater Hamilton Chamber of Commerce
Greater Oxford Community Foundation
Hamilton City Schools
Hamilton Community Foundation
Hamilton Parks Conservancy
Kemba Credit Union
Lakota Local School District
Liberty Center
Luke 5 Adventures
Miami University
Middletown Community Foundation
Midpointe Library System
Mill Creek Alliance
National Park Service
National Voice of America Museum of Broadcasting
Northern Cincinnati Foundation
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Orienteering Cincinnati
OSU Master Gardeners
Oxford Chamber of Commerce
Pioneer Church & Burial Ground
Restoration Committee
Sub Cincy
Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council
The Chamber of Commerce Serving Middletown, Monroe & Trenton
Three Valley Conservation Trust
Travel Butler County
TriState Trails
UC Health
Weather Pod
West Chester Township
West Chester/Liberty Chamber Alliance
Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation
Young Guns Archery

Scan to explore seasonal programs, sign up for MetroParks' email newsletter, learn more about employment opportunities and much more!

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@metroparks_of_butlercounty





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