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Park district to unveil improvement plan

By [SHEANNA SMITH](#) - The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- The Greater Huntington Park and Recreation District has a plan and is ready for action.

The park district completed its Recovery Action Plan, suggestions for changes district commissioners can implement on local parks and recreation facilities, and will present it to the public at 3 p.m. May 5 at the Veterans Memorial Field House.

The park district and the Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research began work on the plan one and a half years ago, said Jim McClelland, director/secretary of the park district.

The research center conducted a study of demographic changes in the area and surveyed the park board and citizens to determine the condition of parks and needed recreational activities, said Rich Hatcher, senior research associate from the center.

The park district and the center also held six public meetings last August.

The plan's job is to guide the park commissioners in making decisions, McClelland said. Changes to area facilities will be continuous until each goal is reached, he said.

The plan includes suggestions for the development of Harveytown Park, completion of Altizer Park and April Dawn Park in Milton, development of a skate park and a continuous trail system, said Kristy Wilburn, director of business analyses for the center.

Harveytown Park will be for the west side of Huntington what Rotary Park is for the east side, said Ron Worley of Huntington.

"I think a skate park is a great idea for kids," said Jeana Fowler of Ironton. "It will keep kids from going places they shouldn't go."

Additional suggestions include more bicycle trails, tennis courts and flowers throughout Ritter Park.

Suggestions also call for the park district to partner with neighborhood associations, local schools and gardening clubs for help, Wilburn said.

About \$83,000 of the park board's annual budget is set aside for capital improvement projects like playground construction, McClelland said. Any additional funding comes from personal trust funds or state and federal governments, he said.

"There's so little money coming in, without using grants, the park system would not be able to do all it can do," Wilburn said.

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In order to be eligible for federal aid from Urban Park and Recreation Act funds, the park board must submit a new recovery plan every five years, McClelland said. The last plan was submitted in 1991, he said.

The park district serves Cabell County and areas of Wayne County, including Spring Valley, Westmoreland and up to Ceredo, McClelland said.



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