

## BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

### 1.1 METHODOLOGY

PROS Consulting and Great Neck Park District (“GNPD” or “District”) identified operating metrics to benchmark against comparable parks and recreation agencies. The goal of the analysis is to evaluate how GNPD is positioned among peer agencies, as it applies to efficiency and effectiveness practices. The benchmark assessment is organized into specific categories based on peer agency responses to targeted questions that lend an encompassing view of each system’s operating metrics as compared to the District.

Information used in this analysis was obtained directly from each participating benchmark agency, when available, and supplemental data was collected from agency / municipality websites, Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR), and information available through the National Recreation and Park Association’s (NRPA) Park Metrics Database. Due to differences in how each system collects, maintains, and reports data, variances may exist. These variations can impact the per capita and percentage allocations, and the overall comparison must be viewed with this in mind. The benchmark data collection for all systems was complete as of June 2019, and it is possible that information in this report may have changed since the original collection date. The information sought was a combination of operating metrics that factor budgets, staffing levels, and inventories. In some instances, the information was not tracked or not available.

The table below lists each benchmark agency in the study, arranged by total population served, and reveals key characteristics of each jurisdiction. Peer agencies represent broad geographical coverage from coast to coast, and those selected have demographic and organizational characteristics similar to GNPD. It should also be noted that GNPD is unique within the State of New York. It was necessary to search for comparable agencies across the country due to the difficulty comparing the District to New York agencies. The Town of North Hempstead was included due to demographics and location, but the populations are vastly different. For all agencies examined, Great Neck represents the benchmark median for total population (33,396), but has the highest population density (4,861 residents per sq. mi.) due to a relatively small jurisdiction size (6.87 sq. mi.).

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Population	Jurisdiction Size (Sq. Mi.)	Population per Sq. Mi.
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	NY	Town	231,085	53.51	4,319
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	CA	City	70,667	19.45	3,633
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	CT	Town	62,782	67.20	934
Great Neck Park District	NY	Special District	33,396	6.87	4,861
Northbrook Park District	IL	Special District	33,170	17.25	1,923
Southlake Parks & Recreation	TX	City	29,580	21.88	1,352
Winnetka Park District	IL	Special District	15,000	4.80	3,125

## 1.2 BENCHMARK COMPARISON

### 1.2.1 PARK ACRES

The following table provides a general overview of each system's park acreage, including acres of ballfields, and expresses the key performance metric of total acres per 1,000 residents. GNPD ranks near the bottom of the benchmark for number of park sites (18) and total acres owned or managed (260) among its peers. Further dissecting park acreage, Great Neck represents the median for percentage of ballfield acreage (5%). Assessing level of service for park acres, GNPD is also below the benchmark and NRPA medians with 7.79 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

Agency	Population	Total Park Sites	Total Acres Owned or Managed	Ballfield Acres	Ballfield Acres as % of Total	Total Acres per 1,000 Residents
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	22	3,250	n/a	n/a	45.99
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	62,782	76	1,888	68.0	4%	30.07
Southlake Parks & Recreation	29,580	29	570	n/a	n/a	19.27
Winnetka Park District	15,000	26	245	18.2	7%	16.35
Northbrook Park District	33,170	23	511	34.3	7%	15.41
<b>Great Neck Park District</b>	<b>33,396</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7.79</b>
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	231,085	52	885	46.0	5%	3.83
<i>NRPA Median 2016-2018 = 10.1 Acres per 1,000 Residents</i>						

### 1.2.2 TRAIL MILES

The information below reveals the service levels for trails within each system. By comparing total trail mileage to the population of the service area, the level of service provided to the community can be determined, which is expressed as trail miles for every 1,000 residents. GNPD represents the benchmark median for total trail mileage (5.5 total miles), but has the second highest trail mileage per capita (0.16 miles per 1,000) among benchmark agencies. This level of service for trail mileage falls below the national best practice of 0.25-0.5 of trail miles per 1,000 residents. Understandably, trail miles per 1,000 residents is a challenge for these densely populated communities as many may not have the opportunity to create pathways along roads. Therefore, trail miles may be limited to within parks.

Agency	Population	Total Trail Miles	Trail Miles per 1,000 Residents
Southlake Parks & Recreation	29,580	7.0	0.24
<b>Great Neck Park District</b>	<b>33,396</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>0.16</b>
Winnetka Park District	15,000	2.3	0.15
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	7.0	0.10
Northbrook Park District	33,170	0.7	0.02
<i>Best practice = 0.25-0.5 trail mile per 1,000 residents</i>			

Note: Trail mileage was not available for Greenwich and North Hempstead.

### 1.2.3 STAFFING

This section compares levels of staffing for each system by comparing full-time equivalents (FTEs) to total population. Total FTEs per 10,000 residents is a key performance metric that assesses how well each system is equipped, in terms of human resources, to serve its jurisdiction. In general, agencies participating in the benchmark study are very well staffed, and all but one are well above the national median of 8.3 FTEs per 10,000 residents. Among peer agencies, GNPD is just above the median for staffing relative to the population served, with 47.37 FTEs per 10,000 residents.

Agency	Population	Total FTEs	FTEs per 10,000 Residents
Winnetka Park District	15,000	123	82.21
Northbrook Park District	33,170	159	47.94
<b>Great Neck Park District</b>	<b>33,396</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>47.37</b>
Southlake Parks & Recreation	29,580	115	38.80
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	62,782	178	28.39
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	120	16.99
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	231,085	177	7.64
<i>NRPA Median 2016-2018 = 8.3 FTEs per 10,000 Residents</i>			

### 1.2.4 OPERATING EXPENSE PER CAPITA

Agencies participating in the benchmark study are spending on parks and recreation operations at a substantial rate. Dividing the annual operational budget by each service area's population allows for a comparison of how much each agency is spending on a per resident basis. GNPD ranks third among peer agencies for both total operating expense (~\$18 M) and expense per resident (\$547.87), and is well above the NRPA median of \$78.69 per resident.

Agency	Population	Total Operating Expense	Operating Expense per Resident
Winnetka Park District	15,000	\$ 10,435,624	\$ 695.71
Northbrook Park District	33,170	\$ 18,635,747	\$ 561.83
<b>Great Neck Park District</b>	<b>33,396</b>	<b>\$ 18,296,697</b>	<b>\$ 547.87</b>
Southlake Parks & Recreation	29,580	\$ 9,117,899	\$ 308.25
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	\$ 16,565,429	\$ 234.42
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	62,782	\$ 13,110,154	\$ 208.82
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	231,085	\$ 22,516,313	\$ 97.44
<i>NRPA Median 2016-2018 = \$78.69 Operating Expense per Resident</i>			

### 1.2.5 DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENDITURES

The table below compares the distribution of expenditures for each agency across personnel, benefits, operations, capital, and other expenses. The median distribution for all agencies reporting to the NRPA database is also provided for additional perspective. GNPD is spending a lower percentage on operations and has the highest percentage of other expenses related to debt / bond payments.

Agency	Personnel	Benefits	Operations	Capital Expense not in CIP	Other
Great Neck Park District	43%	18%	22%	4%	13%
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	82%	0%	15%	0%	3%
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	49%	23%	28%	0%	0%
Northbrook Park District	42%	12%	34%	0%	12%
Southlake Parks & Recreation	47%		48%	5%	0%
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	38%	14%	47%	1%	0%
Winnetka Park District	46%	28%	26%	0%	0%
<b>NRPA Median 2016-2018</b>	<b>55%</b>		<b>38%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>

### 1.2.6 CONTRACT SERVICES

GNPD was also interested in understanding to what extent peer agencies were contracting out services and maintenance as part of the benchmark study. Comparing total contracted services to the total operational expense reveals that GNPD has one of the lowest percentages among peer agencies reporting figures, with only 2% of operational expenditures tied to contracted services.

Agency	Total Contracted Services	Total Operating Expense	Contracted Service as % of Operations
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	\$ 1,019,107	\$ 13,110,154	8%
Winnetka Park District	\$ 356,255	\$ 10,435,624	3%
Great Neck Park District	\$ 278,000	\$ 18,296,697	2%
Northbrook Park District	\$ 274,738	\$ 18,635,747	1%

Note: North Hempstead, Southlake, and Walnut Creek contracted services figures were not available.

### 1.2.7 DEBT / BONDS PRINCIPAL INTEREST

The benchmark study also evaluated whether each agency is currently paying down principal and interest from debt and/or bonds. Only two agencies reported debt / bond obligations, which included Winnetka and Northbrook with annual payments of \$831,518 and \$2,082,248, respectively. GNPD is currently paying the most in debt / bonds among peer agencies, paying \$2,333,436 annually.

### 1.2.8 REVENUE PER CAPITA

By comparing each agency's annual non-tax revenue to the population, the annual revenue generated on a per resident basis can be determined. Similar to the analysis of operating expenditures, benchmark agencies demonstrate very high levels of earned income. Although GNPD's \$162 of revenue generated per resident represents the benchmark median, this level of earned income is significantly higher than the national median of \$20 of revenue per resident.

Agency	Population	Total Non-Tax Revenue	Revenue per Resident
Winnetka Park District	15,000	\$ 6,344,325	\$ 422.96
Northbrook Park District	33,170	\$ 10,070,421	\$ 303.60
Southlake Parks & Recreation	29,580	\$ 4,830,224	\$ 163.29
Great Neck Park District	33,396	\$ 5,418,000	\$ 162.23
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	\$ 11,371,024	\$ 160.91
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	62,782	\$ 7,036,192	\$ 112.07
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	231,085	\$ 8,870,233	\$ 38.39
<i>NRPA Median 2016-2018 = \$20.11 Revenue per Resident</i>			

### 1.2.9 BALLFIELD REVENUE

This study also sought to examine how effective each agencies' ballfields are in terms of generating revenue by comparing income from ballfield use to the total ballfield acreage. Compared to its peers, GNPD is earning a significantly lower level with only \$734.75 of revenue per ballfield acre.

Peer agencies were also asked to share their pricing philosophy as to whether they charge different user fees for groups using ballfields. GNPD's limited revenue from ballfields is largely due to it being the only agency reporting no differential pricing based on the type of group (i.e., non-profit, public, private) and it is the lone agency that does not collect fees for resident use of ballfields. Peer agencies reporting information typically provide a discounted rate for residents and non-profit groups for ballfield use.

Agency	Ballfield Acres Managed	Ballfield Revenues	Revenue per Ballfield Acre
Winnetka Park District	18	\$ 172,000	\$ 9,450.55
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	46	\$ 415,984	\$ 9,043.14
Northbrook Park District	34	\$ 193,367	\$ 5,645.75
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	68	\$ 152,868	\$ 2,248.06
Great Neck Park District	14	\$ 10,000	\$ 734.75
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	n/a	\$ 250,000	n/a

### 1.2.10 FEE-BASED PARKING

Currently, GNPD manages three commuter parking areas comprised of 377 total spaces, with total revenue totaling \$361,900 in 2018. Many of the benchmark agencies also manage fee-based parking areas, including:

- North Hempstead - over 3,000 total spots with revenue of \$275,855
- Winnetka - doesn't manage directly, but has 60 total spots that generate \$27,000
- Greenwich - non-residents pay park entrance fees at beaches totaling \$207,165 YTD in 2019
- Walnut Creek - separate City-run Parking Enterprise for garages and meters

### 1.2.11 SPONSORSHIP REVENUE

As seen below, each peer agency provided information on sponsorship opportunities provided and the amount of revenue generated from sponsorships. Sponsorship revenues were then compared to the total non-tax revenue for each agency to determine the percentage of total earned income attributed to sponsorships. GNPD currently offers tree plaques and dasher boards, which were two of the most common forms of scholarship opportunities provided by peer agencies. The total revenue generated by sponsorships accounts for 0.22% of non-tax revenue, which is just below the benchmark median. Peer agencies earning higher levels of sponsorship revenues are typically doing so by offering opportunities for special events and sports.

Agency	Sponsorship Types	Total Sponsorship Revenues	Total Non-Tax Revenues	Sponsorships as % of Non-Tax Revenue
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	Movies Under the Stars, Regional Arts Association	\$ 358,000	\$ 11,371,024	3.15%
Winnetka Park District	Events, tree/brick/bench program, dasher board	\$ 57,050	\$ 6,344,325	0.90%
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	Youth scholarship, memorial bench, sports	\$ 42,000	\$ 7,036,192	0.60%
<b>Great Neck Park District</b>	<b>Tree plaque, dasher board</b>	<b>\$ 11,850</b>	<b>\$ 5,418,000</b>	<b>0.22%</b>
Northbrook Park District	Tree plaque, memorial bench	\$ 9,200	\$ 10,070,421	0.09%
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	Memorial bench	\$ 1,100	\$ 8,870,233	0.01%

Note: Southlake sponsorship information was not available.

### 1.2.12 OPERATIONAL COST RECOVERY

Operational cost recovery is a key performance indicator, arrived at by dividing total non-tax revenue by total operating expense. This measures how well each Agency's revenue generation covers the total cost of operations. Overall, agencies participating in the benchmark study exhibit high rates of cost recovery, with the top performers achieving industry best practice levels. Although GNPD has the lowest cost recovery rate among peer agencies, its 30% operational cost recovery is above the NRPA median (27%).

Agency	Total Non-Tax Revenue	Total Operating Expense	Operational Cost Recovery
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	\$ 11,371,024	\$ 16,565,429	69%
Winnetka Park District	\$ 6,344,325	\$ 10,435,624	61%
Northbrook Park District	\$ 10,070,421	\$ 18,635,747	54%
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	\$ 7,036,192	\$ 13,110,154	54%
Southlake Parks & Recreation	\$ 4,830,224	\$ 9,117,899	53%
North Hempstead Parks & Recreation	\$ 8,870,233	\$ 22,516,313	39%
<b>Great Neck Park District</b>	<b>\$ 5,418,000</b>	<b>\$ 18,296,697</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>NRPA Median 2016-2018 = 27% Cost Recovery</b>			

### 1.2.13 MARKETING

Marketing budgets for parks and recreation agencies are typically less than the private sector, but the industry is beginning to realize the value of investing in marketing and the potential return on investment (ROI) that can be achieved. Compared to peers reporting figures, GNPD ranks near the bottom for total marketing expense (\$69,858), marketing spending per resident (\$2.09), and total FTEs dedicated to marketing (0.5).

Agency	Population	Total Marketing Expense	Marketing Dollars per Capita	FTE's Dedicated to Marketing
Northbrook Park District	33,170	533,337	\$ 16.08	3.0
Winnetka Park District	15,000	129,682	\$ 8.65	2.5
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	605,248	\$ 8.56	2.8
Great Neck Park District	33,396	69,858	\$ 2.09	0.5
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	62,782	4,950	\$ 0.08	-

Note: Marketing expense and/or dedicated FTEs were not available for Greenwich, North Hempstead, & Southlake.

### 1.2.14 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

This portion assesses program participation for each agency by comparing total program participations to the population of each service area to determine the average participation rate per resident. Program activity is measured in participations (versus participants), which accounts for each time a resident participates in a program and allows for multiple participations per individual. Walnut Creek is the clear benchmark leader for participation per resident due to a significantly high number of participations from its specialized performance venues and aquatic facilities. GNPD has the second highest participation rate (1.26 per resident) among benchmark agencies, which highlights the District's ability to connect with the community through its various recreation programs and services.

Agency	Population	Total Program Participations	Participations per Resident
Walnut Creek Arts + Recreation	70,667	772,231	10.93
Great Neck Park District	33,396	41,954	1.26
Winnetka Park District	15,000	18,109	1.21
Northbrook Park District	33,170	16,871	0.51
Southlake Parks & Recreation	29,580	8,751	0.30
Greenwich Parks & Recreation	62,782	3,458	0.06

Note: North Hempstead participations were not available at time of study.

### 1.2.15 ONLINE REGISTRATIONS

GNPD recently implemented a new online registration system that has resulted in a much higher rate of online program registrations, increasing from 25% in 2018 to 60% year-to-date in 2019. The new software will also allow for facility rentals and field permits to be booked online in the near future. District services that are not available for online reservation include commuter parking passes / permits, marina mooring rental, and ice rental.

Benchmark agencies are typically generating between 40%-50% of program registrations online. Walnut Creek has the highest percentage of all agencies, with 66% of program registrations occurring online. Most peer agencies are limited or do not provide online capabilities for user groups to reserve facilities or book field permits. According to peer agency responses, examples of services that are **not** available for online reservation include (combined responses from all agencies, in no particular order):

- Pass registration
- Facility rentals / registrations
- Mooring permits
- Dog Park Membership
- Before/After School and Preschool
- Private Lessons
- Tennis (limited)
- Picnic Rentals
- Tennis Court Reservations
- Ice Rental
- Field Rentals
- Special event permits

### 1.2.16 FREQUENCY OF PARK BOARD MEETINGS

GNPD was also interested in understanding how each peer agency's park board meetings are structured. The District currently has a Board of Commissioners comprised of three elected officials that meet for total of six scheduled public meetings per month. This is much more frequent than all peer agencies that provided responses, which indicated park boards only conduct one to two public meetings per month.

### 1.3 SUMMARY OF BENCHMARK FINDINGS

As a whole, the peer agencies selected are high performing park systems which allowed GNPD to benchmark itself against best practice agencies across the country. For any given performance indicator, most (if not all) benchmark agencies far exceed the national median set forth by the NRPA. Specific areas where study participants perform to an exceptional level include: level of service for park acreage, staffing levels, operational spending, earned income, and cost recovery levels.

The benchmark comparison validated the strong performance of GNPD in many areas, such as staffing levels, operational spending per capita, earned income per resident, and program participation. These strengths demonstrate a strong local market presence for GNPD and the District is engaging the community to a high level.

The benchmark study also uncovered some limitations and opportunities for GNPD. The level of service for park acreage and trail miles are two areas where GNPD falls below the benchmark median and/or national best practices. This is largely attributed to Great Neck being an established community that is has development constraints due to high density and the availability of land. As there is limited availability of new greenspace, it could be more feasible to enhance the system through increased trail connectivity and accessibility of existing park sites. While GNPD is achieving a cost recovery level just above the national median, it ranks last among peer agencies for this key performance indicator. The District is generating strong non-tax revenue, but it is making much less revenue from its ballfields than peer agencies and there could be an opportunity to revamp its pricing philosophy for ballfield rentals and permits. Peer comparisons also indicate room for improvement in generating additional revenue through sponsorship opportunities for special events and sports. Another contributing factor to its cost recovery level is the large amount of bond / debt expense incurred by GNPD, which is much higher relative to its peers.

The benchmark analysis reveals that GNPD is a solid park system that is comparable to some of the better systems across the US. The perspective gained through the peer comparison is valuable in identifying areas for improvement and establishing strategic goals to pursue. GNPD should use this analysis as a baseline comparison that provides key performance indicators (KPIs) to be tracked and measures over time.