

# RECRUITMENT BROCHURE

Voorhees Associates, LLC is pleased to announce the recruitment and selection process for the Fox Valley Park District's Executive Director. This brochure provides background information on the Fox Valley Park District, its organization and service area. Candidates interested in applying for the position should submit their résumé and cover letter along with contact information for five work related references, by August 6 to: [resume@VoorheesAssociates.com](mailto:resume@VoorheesAssociates.com).



Additional information about the Fox Valley Park District can be found on the Park District's website: [www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org](http://www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org)

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Formal applications should be submitted to:  
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**FOX VALLEY  
PARK DISTRICT**  
Aurora, North Aurora,  
and Montgomery, Illinois

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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## PROFESSIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT

*Fox Valley Park District, Aurora, North Aurora and Montgomery, Illinois (pop. 200,000). Premier parks and recreation organization seeks dynamic, entrepreneurial leader to serve as its next Executive Director. The District was voted the 2009 National Gold Medal Award Winner for Class II (population 100,000—250,000) for excellence in park and recreation management, and in 2008 was recognized as an Illinois Distinguished Agency. The Executive Director is appointed by and reports to an appointed seven-member Board of Trustees. The Executive Director provides visionary and customer-oriented leadership to the organization's 90 full-time and 800 part-time and seasonal employees who serve more than 1.5 million guests each year. Connected by the Fox River, the communities are tied together with 22 miles of shoreline owned by the District. The District also owns and maintains 155 parks, 41 miles of trails, 25 lakes and 42 shelters, including 2,300 acres of parkland and open space. Major facilities include the Eola Community/Recreation Center and Prisco Community/Cultural Center as well as a nationally recognized 225,000-square-foot Vaughan Athletic Center, two outdoor aquatic parks, an historical theme park, a nature center and the beautiful Orchard Valley Golf Course, one of Chicago-land's top five public courses. The District has an operating budget of \$30 million and a capital budget of \$27 million. A successful 2008 \$44.8 million bond referendum is being used to*

*acquire and preserve land; develop and improve trails; and renovate neighborhood, community parks, athletic fields and historic theme park. Bachelor's degree in Business, Parks and Recreation, Public Administration, or related field required; MPA, MBA or similar advanced degree and CPRP certification desirable. Minimum of 10 years of successful experience in progressively responsible supervisory, administrative and managerial positions in the public or private business sector, in a comparable size organization with a similarly diverse cultural and socioeconomic environment. Experience in parks, recreation, conservation or leisure service administration a strong plus, but not an absolute requirement. Strong financial skills, ability to develop effective partnerships, and a commitment to community outreach very important. Salary is \$150,000 +/- annually. Residency in the District is required within a reasonable amount of time following appointment. Apply by August 6 with résumé and contact information for 5 work-related references to the District's Executive Recruitment Consultants: Heidi Voorhees and Robert Beezat, Voorhees Associates, 500 Lake Cook Rd. #350, Deerfield, IL 60015. Tel: 847/580-4246; Fax: 866/401-3100; email: [resume@voorheesassociates.com](mailto:resume@voorheesassociates.com). The Fox Valley Park District is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Minority candidates are encouraged to apply.*

# FOX VALLEY PARK DISTRICT

The Fox Valley Park District is located in the beautiful Fox River Valley approximately 40 miles west of Chicago. Serving a population of more than 200,000 residents, the Fox Valley Park District is the second largest park district in the State of Illinois and was voted the 2009 National Gold Medal Award Winner for Class II (population 100,000-250,000) for excellence in park and recreation management. In 2008, the Park District was also recognized as an Illinois Distinguished Agency. The Park District is seeking a progressive, dynamic leader to serve as its next Executive Director. The current Executive Director is retiring at the end of the year, after serving the District for nearly six years. This brochure was prepared after meetings with the seven-member governing board, senior staff members and the retiring Executive Director along with a review of materials pertaining to the Park District.

Importantly, this brochure for the Executive Director position will be used as a guide in the recruitment process, providing specific criteria by which applications will be screened and individuals selected for final interview and appointment consideration.

## PARK DISTRICT HISTORY AND GOVERNANCE

The Fox Valley Park District was organized by voter approval in 1947. It is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees. The County Board Chairmen appoint the Board in the counties that have a proportionate share of the population in the District. Currently, the Kane County Board Chairman appoints six members and the DuPage County Board Chairman appoints one member. The Fox Valley Park District Board of Trustees appoints the Executive Director and the Attorney for the Park District. The Board members serve four-year terms with the current Board appointed through 2013.

The Fox Valley Park Foundation is an IRS 501c (3) organization developed to aid the Park District in land acquisition, development, conservation and preservation and to raise funds to use for youth programs. The Foundation Board of Trustees is made up of five members of the Park District Board and four representatives from the community. The Foundation, in conjunction with staff, conducts an annual golf outing that

raises \$25,000 for The First Tee of Aurora and the Fox Valley, an organization dedicated to providing golf opportunities to children from all backgrounds.



The Fox Valley Park District is key to improving and enriching the quality of life for the Fox River Valley region. The District's visionary leadership along with a talented finance, operational, planning, recreation and administrative staff has made it one of the economic re-development engines for the area.

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## PARK DISTRICT OVERVIEW

The Fox Valley Park District service area includes the City of Aurora, the Villages of Montgomery and North Aurora, and several unincorporated areas. The service area encompasses an area of 65 square miles and is located in Kane, DuPage, Kendall and Will Counties. The City of Aurora is the second largest city in Illinois and was recently named one of America's Best Small Cities by *Money* magazine. The City of Aurora is culturally and ethnically diverse, with 52% of the city White Non-Hispanic, 33% Hispanic, and 11% African American. The Park District service area overlaps five unit School Districts. Three of the school districts are among the fastest growing in the State of Illinois, contributing to the increasing population of the District.



The Park District employs 90 full-time and 800 part-time employees who administer an operating budget of \$30 million and a capital budget of \$27 million. There are five Directors who report to the Executive Director: Director of Natural Resources, Forestry and Special Projects; Director of Parks, Recreation and Communications; Director of Finance and Administration; Director of Planning, Development and Grants; and the Chief of Park Police and Public Safety. The Park Police and Public Safety achieved recognition status in 2009-10 from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and was named 2009 Park Police Agency of the Year. The District's park operations and administrative offices are relocating in November 2010 to the Cole Administration, Park Operations and Natural Resource Center, an existing 72,000 square foot building along the Fox River and Fox River Trail. The Cole Center is currently undergoing renovations for the planned move.

The District has created an internal development program for staff members throughout the organization. The BEST (Building Excellent Service Together) Academy brings employees together for software, safety, customer service and supervisory training.

## Recreation Programs and Facilities

In 2009-10, the Park District welcomed more than 1.5 million guests to its parks and facilities with a wide variety of recreation programs. Programs offered meet the needs of the District's diverse and growing population while balancing the need to provide many programs and services at little or no cost with the need to generate program revenue.

Major facilities include the **Eola Community Center** and **Prisco Community Center**, both expanded in 2004 to accommodate the increasing demand for recreation programs. The Community Centers feature preschool rooms, indoor playgrounds, babysitting rooms, full-size gymnasiums, fitness centers, running/walking track, multi-purpose rooms, dance studios and space for gymnastics and martial arts. The Prisco Community Center also offers programs to preschool through elementary aged children as well as for teens and seniors. The Friendly Center Club meets at the Prisco Center and is the oldest active adult club in the area with over 225

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members. Prisco Center is a major conference/meeting center for businesses and community groups. The 225,000 square foot **Vaughan Athletic Center** is now in its fifth year of operation and includes a field house for multi-purpose use, nine indoor tennis courts, three indoor pools, and a large fitness and group exercise center. The three centers total more than 500,000 square feet of indoor recreation space for the Park District.



*Vaughan Athletic Center*

provide over 2,300 acres of parkland and open space. Park facilities include 88 playgrounds, 82 basketball courts, 27 outdoor tennis courts, 51 baseball fields, and 36 soccer fields. New parks are developed on an as-needed basis through needs assessment and when residential developers provide land to the District in accordance with local land-cash ordinances.

The Park District owns the 18-hole **Orchard Valley Golf Course**, one of Chicagoland's top five public golf courses, according to *Golf Digest* magazine. To address the national trend of declining rounds of golf, the Park District entered into a long-term agreement with a professional golf management company (Billy Casper Golf) to operate and maintain this exceptional golf facility and to improve financial outcomes.

In 1989, the Fox Valley Park District entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Aurora to jointly construct family aquatic centers. Two aquatic centers – **Splash Country Water Park** and **Phillips Park Family Aquatic Center** were constructed through this intergovernmental cooperation. Splash Country is home to one of the largest lazy river attractions in Illinois and features a zero depth pool, two large winding tube slides, two regulation sand volleyball courts and an enclosed water play area. Phillips Park also features a zero depth



The Park District is a member of the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association, which serves seven area park districts by providing recreation activities for residents with disabilities and inclusion services for residents with special needs. The Fox Valley Special Recreation Association's offices are located in the Vaughan Athletic Center.

### **Park Land, Facilities and Golf Course**

The Fox River runs through the center of the District, with 22 miles of river shoreline under the District's ownership. The District currently owns and maintains 155 parks, 41 miles of trails, 25 lakes, and 42 park shelters that

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pool, two drop-off slides, an enclosed body-slide, kid friendly water play areas and two regulation sand volleyball courts. The two aquatic centers are governed by an Administrative Board with representatives from the City Council, the Park District Board of Trustees and community at large.

The Park District is also proud of **Blackberry Farm**, a living history museum located on 54 scenic acres with a lake, ponds and meandering stream. The grounds contain an arbor-etum with more than 200 varieties of trees, floral displays and historic agricultural gardens. There are five museums including the Carriage House, the Farm Museum, the Early Streets Museum and the Huntoon House. The District developed a Master Plan for Blackberry Farm in 2009-2010 that will be implemented in phases beginning in the fall of 2010.

The **Red Oak Nature Center** is a natural history museum surrounded by 40 acres of woods along the

Fox River and the Fox River Trail in North Aurora. The building includes interactive natural history exhibits and the grounds include a large observation deck with views of the Fox River. The **Stuart Sports Complex**, located in Montgomery, is approximately 40% developed and offers more than 120 acres dedicated to baseball, softball and soccer fields.

### **Park District Finances**

The Park District has consistently received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and the GFOA Award for Distinguished Budget Presentation, reflecting the District's commitment to sound financial practices. In 2010, Standard and Poor's Rating Service assigned a AA+ rating and "stable outlook" to the Fox Valley Park District. The Rating Service praised the District's management practices, describing them as "strong and well embedded." The District maintains a four-year financial plan as well as a five-year capital improvement plan. The District currently exceeds its policy of maintaining four months of reserves in its general fund and playground and recreation fund and as such has received two bond rating upgrades in five years.

Currently, 49% of the District's operating revenues are supplied through the property tax. Only 5% of a resident's property tax bill is received by the Park District. In February 2008, the District was successful in passing a \$44.8 million referendum with 65.4% voter approval—the largest capital bond referendum in Illinois Park District



*Orchard Valley Golf Course*

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history since the implementation of the 1991 Tax Cap. To date, approximately 50% of the referendum funds have been expended. The funds have been used to acquire and protect land for nature areas, open space, and park and recreation purposes to improve and develop trails and to improve and renovate neighborhood, community parks and outdoor athletic fields.

## Park District Strategic Plan

The Fox Valley Park District Strategic Plan for 2009-2013 provides direction and a planned pursuit of the vision, mission, key strategies, goals and actions of the District. The following Key Strategies and Goals have been identified (the Strategic Plan also includes objectives for each goal):

### Key Strategy 1: Build Community and Customer Loyalty

**Goal A:** Provide safe, distinctive, and well-maintained parks and facilities.



**Goal B:** Provide diverse and innovative programs and events for all ages.

**Goal C:** Develop and maintain positive cooperative relationships and partnerships.

**Goal D:** Implement public information, communication and research plan.

### Key Strategy 2: Conserve Energy, Natural Resources and Promote Sustainability

**Goal A:** Acquire and preserve key natural assets.

**Goal B:** Incorporate sustainable design in planning, development, and construction.

**Goal C:** Implement a comprehensive environmentally responsible operation plan.

### Key Strategy 3: Strengthen Financial Performance

**Goal A:** Reduce reliance upon tax revenues.

**Goal B:** Maintain adequate fund balance levels and provide for long-term capital funding.

**Goal C:** Administer and improve operating budget performance.

### Key Strategy 4: Achieve Excellence in Organizational Planning, Administration and Operations

**Goal A:** Create and maintain comprehensive plans.

**Goal B:** Promote continuous improvement through innovation and technology.

**Goal C:** Improve efficiency and effectiveness.

## **Key Strategy 5: Enrich Employee Work Environment**

**Goal A:** Develop employee skills, abilities and knowledge.

**Goal B:** Maintain employee satisfaction and loyalty.

**Goal C:** Improve upon interdepartmental relationships, communication and support.

**Goal D:** Recognize employee contributions.

## **Key Strategy 6: Enhance Public and Employee Safety and Security**

**Goal A:** Provide the safest possible environment for the public and employees.

**Goal B:** Increase safety awareness throughout the District.



## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The next Executive Director can expect to work closely with the community, Board of Trustees and professional staff on a wide variety of issues and projects, some of which are highlighted below:

- Maintain high levels of use in facilities and programs to avoid increases in user fees.
- Balance the competing interests of an aging infrastructure (i.e. Phillips Park Aquatic Center) with the new park improvement projects.
- Update the 2006 community interest attitude survey to ensure the District is meeting the needs of a growing and diverse population and that the District's financial resources are used effectively and efficiently.
- Expand upon intergovernmental partnerships to most effectively use the District's and area municipalities' limited resources.
- Implement process for Board self-evaluation and development.

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## THE POSITION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The next Executive Director must possess strong leadership skills with the ability to manage and direct a large, multi-faceted organization within a complex jurisdictional environment. Successful candidates will demonstrate a business and political acumen as well as a passion for public service. Compensation for the position is \$150,000 +/- depending upon qualifications. The Park District offers an excellent benefit plan. Residency within the Park District boundaries is required within a reasonable amount of time following appointment. Minority candidates are encouraged to apply.

## CANDIDATE QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

### Education and Experience

Candidates must possess a bachelor's degree in Recreation and Parks Administration, Business, Public Administration or related field; a Master's Degree is strongly preferred and certification as a Parks and Recreation professional is desirable.

Candidates must possess ten years responsible senior level management and leadership experience in public or private sector administration, preferably in an organization of comparable size and complexity to the Fox Valley Park District. Experience in a culturally and socioeconomically diverse environment is very important.

Candidates must demonstrate strong leadership skills with a proven record of entrepreneurial leadership and innovative thinking in the development of exemplary recreational, cultural, and outdoors programs.

Candidates must have experience in the successful development of creative and sustainable partnerships with other units of government, not-for-profit organizations, and the business community to deliver parks and recreation services and programs. An understanding of the complexities, limitations, and opportunities of public/private partnerships is critical as well as the ability to represent the District's taxpayers, Board and staff interests firmly and diplomatically.

Candidates must possess strong presentation skills with the ability to convey the District's vision, mission, and needs to area elected officials, stakeholder groups, and staff.

Candidates must be effective communicators with strong negotiation skills to forge relationships with county, municipal, business and community leaders and the community at large while demonstrating an understanding and commitment to parks, recreation, and conservation.



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Candidates should have a demonstrated business acumen with the ability to balance the business side of government operations with tax-supported programs and services.

Candidates should have a background in and keen awareness and interest in urban renewal and how park, open space and recreation opportunities contribute to the positive growth, economic development and improved quality of life for the community.

Candidates should have strong fiscal experience and demonstrated success in developing large scale community capital reinvestment programs through intergovernmental cooperation, grants, privatization and referenda.

Candidates should be passionate about the preservation, protection, maintenance, and improvement of parkland systems that will support current and future generations.

Candidates should have experience in evaluating organizational structure, staffing, and operations, with a desire to maintain and enhance a highly responsive, productive, high-morale staff and workforce.



Candidates should be highly adaptable public administrators, who can openly accept and work effectively in a climate of interaction, calling for timely and impartial administrative responsiveness in a demanding environment.

Candidates should demonstrate experience in Board development activities, assisting the governing body with ongoing efforts to be as effective and efficient as possible in the exercise of their policy development and oversight responsibilities.

Candidates should be completely comfortable interacting with the media, with the ability to convey the District's message in an understandable and coherent manner.

Candidates should have broad experience and active participation in State and National park and recreation professional activities, learning opportunities for Board and staff members along with legislation that may potentially impact the District.

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## Management Style/Personal Traits

Have a passion for parks and recreation and service to the community including athletic, cultural, leisure and experiential educational activities from both an environmental and social conscious perspective.

Possess an open style, dealing with all in a professional, fair, straightforward, and responsive manner.

Be a strong advocate for the Park District, one who clearly represents the needs of the organization to the region.

Provide prompt, thorough, and fully responsive implementation and follow through on Board policy decisions and direction.

Be able to lead and motivate by personal example, encouraging high standards of performance, productivity, and ethical conduct from all District personnel.

Possess a strategic “big picture” perspective while retaining the ability to be attentive to details.

Effectively use consensus building skills in governing body relations and as often as possible in negotiations with public and private sector partners.

Possess a willingness to make courageous recommendations, gathering the necessary data and community, Board and staff support for successful implementation.



Maintain open and frequent communication with Board of Trustees, avoiding surprises and ensuring the Board has advanced notice of potentially controversial issues.

Have a management style that is situational and includes delegation of responsibility and authority while holding staff accountable for the achievement of goals and objectives. Use coaching and mentoring skills to lead a highly motivated, qualified and experienced department head and management team to high performance levels.

Be a “people person,” easy to get along with, patient, accessible, and a good listener.

Be an individual with a sincere and caring attitude toward the community and its citizens,

promoting a customer service-oriented approach by all employees.

Have a high level of community involvement, personally taking part in civic and community activities and events.

Be sincerely appreciative and trusting of the contributions of employees to the efforts of the District.

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