



CRYSTAL LAKE PARK DISTRICT
CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MGT

CRYSTAL LAKE PARK DISTRICT | CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Crystal Lake Park District is seeking an inspiring, visible, and politically savvy Executive Director to lead one of the state's premier park and recreation systems. As chief executive officer of this Illinois Distinguished Accredited agency, the Executive Director will guide a complex, mission-driven organization that touches the lives of more than 50,000 residents every day. This is a rare opportunity for a leader who wants to make a generational impact on a diverse and dynamic community, champion parks, recreation, nature and equity as essential public services, build strong relationships with staff, residents, partners and elected officials, while providing stable leadership over the long term.

ABOUT CRYSTAL LAKE PARK DISTRICT

The Crystal Lake Park District was established in 1921 through a grassroots community effort aimed at preserving public access to Crystal Lake and its beach. At a time when private ownership threatened to restrict access to the lake, local residents came together to ensure the shoreline would remain a shared community resource. One of the District's earliest and most significant developments was the construction of a large bath house in 1925, reflecting early plans to support public recreation and lake use. Even in its formative years, the District demonstrated a forward-thinking vision, with additional facilities and improvements already underway by the mid-1920s.

Today, the Crystal Lake Park District encompasses a majority of the City of Crystal Lake and Village of Lakewood, a small portion of the Village of Lake in the Hills, and portions of unincorporated property. The Crystal Lake Park District is a separate unit of local government, representing approximately five percent of a resident's property tax bill. The District provides park and recreation services to approximately 50,700 residents and maintains a system of 42 parks spanning more than 1,400 acres. Its diverse facilities include the Nature Center, Main and West Beaches, Colonel Palmer House, Lippold Family Golf Center, Boncosky Softball Complex at Lippold Park, Grand Oaks Recreation and Active Adult Center, the Racket Club, Barlina House Preschool, and numerous picnic shelters. In addition, the District maintains miles of bike and hiking trails enjoyed year-round and offers more than 1,000 programs annually. Seasonal brochures highlight these programs and special events, ensuring recreational opportunities remain accessible and engaging for participants of all ages.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Crystal Lake Park District is an independent special district created to provide parks and recreation services for all residents of Crystal Lake, Illinois. The Park District manages an extensive portfolio of neighborhood and community parks; recreation center; nature and conservation areas; dog park; trails and greenways; beaches and boat launch; golf center and sports complexes; racquet club; and specialty facilities such as the historic Colonel Palmer House. It operates with a substantial operating and capital budget funded primarily through dedicated property taxes, program revenues, grants and partnerships, and is governed by a seven-member elected Board of Commissioners. The agency was recognized with the Distinguished Parks & Recreation Accreditation by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) and the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) and will be going through this process again.

Mission

The Mission of the Crystal Lake Park District is to enrich all lives through Recreation, Parks and Nature

Vision

To create welcoming, vibrant and valued spaces that connect our community to recreation, nature and each other.





CRYSTAL LAKE PARK DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

Encompassing 1,400 acres, the network includes 42 parks that range from neighborhood green spaces to large community and regional destinations. Together, these assets form a dynamic park and recreation system that enhances quality of life, supports environmental stewardship, and creates inclusive spaces where people of all ages and abilities can connect, play, and thrive.

- Workforce: 78 full-time employees and over 400 part-time and seasonal employees
- System footprint 1,400 acres
- Parks 42
- Playgrounds 26
- Recreation Center 1
- Trails 9 miles
- Golf Center 1
- Administrative Center 1
- Dog Park 1
- Beaches 2
- Boat Launch 2
- Boat House 1
- Nature Center 1
- Tennis Courts 19 (with pickleball overlay 3)
- Pickleball Courts 16
- Basketball Courts 15
- Baseball Fields 14
- Softball Fields 13
- Football Fields 3
- Soccer Fields 20
- Disc Golf 1

IDEAL CANDIDATE

Crystal Lake Park District is seeking a proven, community-facing leader to guide this award winning, diverse agency. While parks and recreation experience is strongly preferred, the Board will also consider accomplished leaders from other public, nonprofit or mission-driven organizations who have successfully led operations of similar scale and complexity.

The ideal candidate is:

- An experienced executive leader with a record of success leading complex organizations through change, growth, and public scrutiny
- Skilled in supervising senior executives and leading diverse teams
- Comfortable and effective in highly visible roles, including public presentations, media interactions, and large community meetings
- Experienced working productively with a governing board, elected officials, and community stakeholders in politically complex environments
- Committed to equitable access to parks, programs, and investment across all parts of the community, including authentic engagement in historically under-served areas of the community
- A strong listener and clear communicator who is calm under pressure and capable of navigating controversy with steady judgment
- Provide data driven support for recommendations and decision making
- Committed to the Crystal Lake Park District by providing long-term, stable leadership



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Based on the Crystal Lake Park District's current strategic direction, the next Executive Director will have an opportunity to continue the implementation of the District's Comprehensive Master Plan adopted in 2023. Objectives in the plan include:



- Improve existing park assets to meet community expectations
- Expand offerings at existing parks to better serve the community
- Address underserved areas and demographics within the District
- Evaluate additional indoor space offerings and expansion
- Preserve and improve existing relationships
- Continuing emphasis on environmental preservation and ecology
- Expand and improve program and event offerings
- Guide staff through newly developed cost recovery model
- Lead the District through the process of Illinois Distinguished Parks & Recreation Accreditation

STRATEGIC MOMENTUM

The Executive Director will inherit a system with a strong strategic framework and professional staff. In recent years, Crystal Lake Park District has in place a Comprehensive Master Plan adopted in 2023 that will be completed in 2028. Key initiatives of the Plan include:

- Playground replacement schedule
- Shelter renovations and amenities upgrades
- Master Plans for Lippold and Veterans Acres Parks
- Improvements for Canterbury Park, Main Beach and West Beach
- ADA improvements throughout the District
- Conduct field and court assessments
- Evaluate property acquisitions
- Conduct a facility feasibility study for a new aquatic and fitness center
- Evaluate Maintenance facility improvements
- Improve communication with the community
- Establish natural areas improvement plan



THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director serves as Crystal Lake Park District's chief executive officer, reporting to the Board of Commissioners and bearing overall responsibility for the leadership, management and performance of the agency. The Executive Director will lead a complex, multi-disciplinary, state-accredited parks and recreation system; collaborate closely with a seven-member Board, municipal leaders and community stakeholders; and serve as a highly visible and accessible presence across the community by regularly attending events, visiting sites and engaging directly with residents and staff.

- Lead and coordinate a workforce of more than 500 full- and part-time staff, ensuring effective staffing, performance management, and operational continuity
- Navigate complex and sometimes controversial issues with integrity, transparency and sound judgment
- Champion equity in access to parks, programs and investment in all parts of Crystal Lake
- Lead and support a strong executive team and workforce grounded in accountability, collaboration and customer service
- Serve as chief steward of public resources, including operating and capital budgets, tax rates, grants and major capital projects
- Advance long-range plans that strengthen parks, programs, conservation, facilities and trail connectivity



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide agency-wide leadership, strategic direction, and organizational alignment
- Build and maintain productive relationships with the Commission, community partners, and local leadership
- Ensure exceptional operational performance across parks, facilities, programs, conservation, golf, and trails
- Lead budgeting, capital planning, revenue strategy, and stewardship of public funds
- Strengthen workforce development, performance systems, and leadership accountability
- Communicate effectively in public forums, media settings, and community meetings
- Support and advance long-range plans that strengthen service quality, resilience, and sustainability
- Serve as the District's representative on the Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association Board

CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS

- Bachelor's degree required, advanced degree in public administration, business, parks and recreation, planning, or a related field preferred
- Minimum 10 years' experience in public parks and recreation, municipal government, or a nonprofit organization
- Significant senior-level leadership experience in a park district, municipal agency, or comparable public or nonprofit organization
- Demonstrated expertise with budgeting, capital planning, personnel management, and strategic planning
- Strong communication, interpersonal, and public engagement skills
- Knowledge of Illinois park district law governance practices and labor relations is highly desirable
- Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) or Executive (CPRE) is preferred
- Ability to work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends, to attend meetings, events, and site visits throughout the District



SALARY AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$179,000 to \$229,000, depending on qualifications and experience. Crystal Lake Park District offers a comprehensive benefits package, including a defined benefit pension plan and other competitive benefits.

HOW TO APPLY

Highly qualified candidates should apply online by Friday, May 1, 2026. Please submit a resume, cover letter, and contact information for five professional references www.GovHRJobs.com. For questions or additional information, contact Joe DeLuce, Senior Consultant, at 217-714-2333 or jdeluce@mgt.us, or Margaret Resnick, Consultant, at 847-971-1655 or mresnick@mgt.us.

MGT