

# Making the Grade: In-House Dashboards for a Data-Driven Culture

Presented by: Greg Stopka, Strategy and Innovation Manager and Kyle Cratty, Director of Finance and Business Operations with the Park District of Oak Park, IL

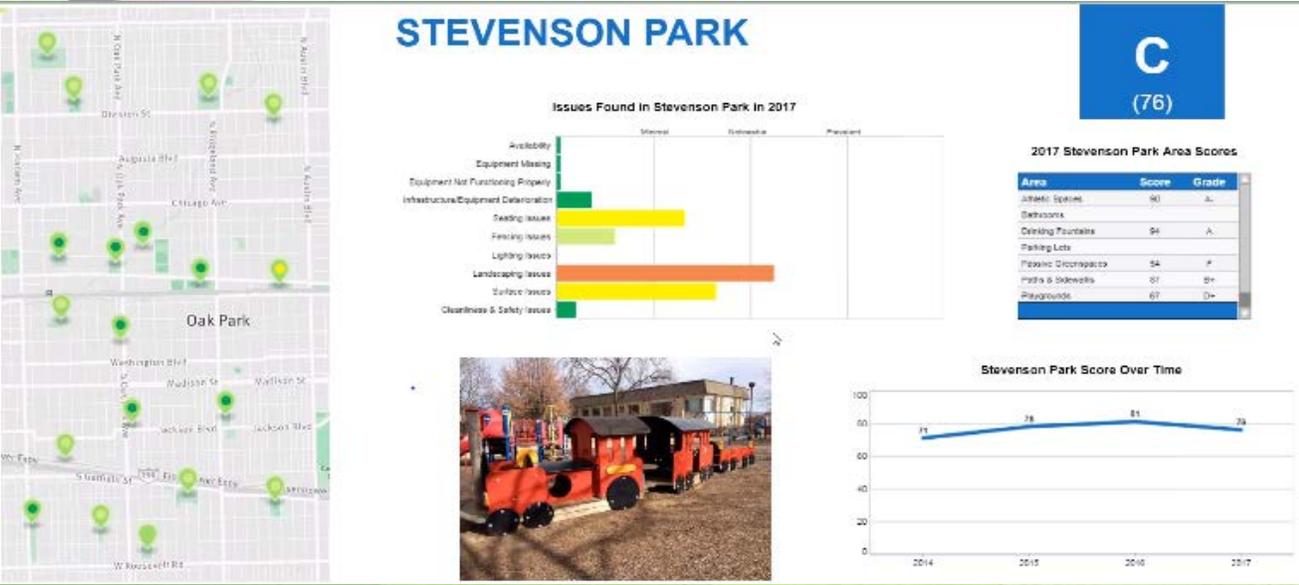
**Q: Why did the Park District of Oak Park implement report cards?**  
**A: Lacked a way to measure quality of park infrastructure and maintenance.**

Report cards allow Oak Park to communicate priorities, measure investment impact, show progress, offer accountability to the public, and guide spending. To develop, they:

- Survey all parks at least bi-annually
- Rate all features based on quality, availability, functionality, and cleanliness
- Score and weight results for key areas
- Build unique report card dashboards to communicate to different stakeholders

**Implementation Tips and Tricks**

- Invest in a survey tool
- Consider what is important to you when determining criteria to rate
- Use citizen engagement to determine the priorities and weighting for your city
- Move beyond upper management to develop data-driven culture



**Continue the conversation in your city:**

- Where could you use a report card?
- How are you engaging staff at all levels to make data part of your culture?

# Session Q and A

## **If something receives a poor score, do you grade how quickly it is repaired or improved?**

- We like to see progress and active effort to improve. If we see that quality improvements are being made, we do not penalize with scores.

## **In terms of chart appearance, how did you plan the look of the charts (interactive vs. images)?**

- They had a dashboard online of problem areas and issues, but realized that scrolling through them online wouldn't be user friendly. They changed the process and added narrative explanations into a custom report instead of just a high level dashboard. It allows both staff and public to tell the story of a certain park over time in context.

## **When someone walks into a park, is the park grade displayed like restaurant health scores?**

- Right now grades are only available in online dashboards. They've considered adding a video screen to some facilities to display some data or sustainability facts.

## **How has seeing the scores impacted the community? Do residents want to be involved in improvements if the score is lower or take pride if the score is higher?**

- They have a couple volunteer resident committees they work directly with and the committees help communicate information to the public. Members of the committees also always share specific feedback about their local park. There is room for more engagement, but they do have a meaningful level of citizen engagement now.

## **Are you experimenting with any other ways to share your story with data visualization (e.g. story maps)?**

- They are currently having conversations with marketing to figure out how to share with the public through other venues, beyond the one existing dashboard.

## **You mentioned the staff owning parks, does that reference their job duties or the data driven culture?**

- Buildings and grounds made a change a few years ago so that one staff is regularly in the same park year over year, so they have accountability to improvements there and can identify problem areas more easily.

## **Based on using this data for the CIP plan, at what point to issues indicate the need for further investment?**

- When they start getting down to B1 or C+, that's when they start questioning what about the park needs the capital investment. When they're doing a 5-year plan, they're hyper-focused on a 1-2 year range, so as scores drop they consider reallocating capital dollars to meet needs. Sometimes B- or C+ are simple maintenance issues which could be fixed quickly.

## **From your experience, do you think a consultant is necessary to implement something like this? What sort of time commitment and expertise is required?**

- In their case, the consultant was the same that helped with the comprehensive master plan, so they provided knowledge about structure specifically for their community. Greg is a dedicated resource on a daily basis to focus on data and strategy. Since the process should be as objective as possible, having a consultant to assist with the weighting and initial set-up was valuable. It's important to have a civic engagement strategy to identify what your priorities for the unique weighting in your city.

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