



GreenPlay Principal, Pat O’Toole, on Building Relationships

By Alaina Brandenburger

For GreenPlay Principal Pat O’Toole, building relationships with clients is an intrinsic part of the job. One such relationship that he has cultivated over the years is with Tony Finlay, current Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Hutchinson, KS. Pat first worked with Tony on a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the City of Grandview, MO, which was later followed by a Citywide Trails Master Plan.

Following Finlay’s move to Hutchinson, KS, he hired GreenPlay and Pat as part of a project team to develop a combined Healthy Communities study

with a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which has been funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield Kansas. Hutchinson is unique in that recreational activities are conducted by the Hutchinson Recreation Commission funding through the schools. The City owns all of the parks and recreational facilities. Part of the focus of this master plan was to align the Recreation Commission with the Parks and Facilities Department. To date, Pat and Tony have collaborated in some capacity on seven projects in the past ten years.

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This experience is not unique to Hutchinson. Pat has a knack for building relationships with clients, and much of that is achieved through keeping in touch. He says, “I like to follow up to see how the plan is working for the client. I keep reminders to set up regular touch points, checking in with clients to see how their plan is working. I have also had past clients call me to pick my brain about an issue that they may be facing in their department.” These touch points allow Pat to determine what is working with



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the plan, and to help the client find solutions to implementation areas that may not be working as well. His past clients appreciate his willingness to go above and beyond to find solutions. However, Pat does not only connect with clients to discuss business. He also reaches out to them via social media platforms like LinkedIn and at various industry conferences. He and his past clients share a passion for the parks and recreation field, and these outlets allow them to connect and discuss their communities and other developments in the industry that might be pertinent for a community. While developing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

for Hutchinson, Pat was re-introduced to a softball complex in which he had played in the 1980s. "For me, it was like stepping back in time. The field looked exactly the same as it had when I played there." This unique insight and his knowledge of current standards allowed Pat to see the potential in this venue. Rather than tearing it down and replacing it, he envisioned renovations, including shortening the outfield fence distances and adding some unique concession ideas. Pat saw the potential for creating a youth sports complex from an adult softball complex that may be able to serve some need for youth tournaments in the region.

Situations like these are what keeps clients returning to GreenPlay. Rather than completing the plan and moving on, our consultants are available to help clients when they may be facing obstacles. For Pat, the process is about creating heroes within their communities by helping them identify their challenges and coming up with strategies to address them. He does it not only because it is his job, but also because he enjoys using his experience to help people tackle the challenges within their departments, and because he cares.