



City of Omaha
Jean Stothert, Mayor

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(Omaha, NE) – After a 24-year career with the Parks and Recreation Department, Parks Director Brook Bench has resigned and Mayor Jean Stothert has reluctantly accepted his resignation.

“Brook loves every city park like it’s his own backyard,” said Mayor Stothert. “From small neighborhood parks and playgrounds to our largest parks, Brook has led a transformation of our park system that provides recreation, leisure and sports opportunities for everyone.”

Bench’s experience ranges from his first job mowing the Warren Swigart Golf Course in 1996, to automotive equipment operator, including snow plows, public events foreman and coordinator at the Civic Auditorium, and park maintenance manager. In 2011, he became Acting Director and in 2013 Mayor Stothert promoted Bench to Director of Parks, Recreation and Public Property.

He manages more than 250 city parks, 18 swimming pools, 11 splashgrounds, eight public golf courses, 13 community centers, 150 miles of walking and biking trails, the Hummel Park Nature Center and the Harry A. Koch Trap and Skeet Range.

Bench has worked with Mayor Stothert and donors to invest in one-of-a-kind improvements at existing parks, and open new parks.

“Brook’s relationships with Omaha foundations and donors have created incredible opportunities to create beautiful and unique public spaces. I am grateful for his vision, dedication, and friendship. We will miss him greatly,” said Mayor Stothert.

Bench also expanded summer day camp programs, adding Adams Park, Zorinsky and Hanscom to the popular Hummel Day Camp. More than 4,000 elementary age students enjoy the annual camps.

“This job is about creating fun,” said Bench. “I get to see families and children enjoying our parks, pools, camps and programs every day. I am so grateful to Mayor Stothert for the opportunity to create new and better public spaces.”

Bench worked with Mayor Stothert to create the Way to Work program in 2019, a partnership between the City of Omaha and the Salvation Army that offers job training to help persons experiencing homelessness learn new skills and prepare for employment. Participants work for the Omaha Parks Department.

In 2016, Bench created the annual Memorial Park Veterans Shine On holiday lights display and ceremony to recognize area veterans. Bench is a veteran of the United States Coast Guard.

He is a member of the Riverfront Revitalization Committee, Omaha Zoological Society Board of Directors, Omaha by Design, the City of Omaha Parks and Recreation Board and the Omaha Parks Foundation.

In 2011, he was a member of the Unified Command that worked to mitigate flood damage to city parks and public property, and develop restoration plans.

Bench plans to leave the Parks Department later this summer. He will lead a new philanthropic organization committed to park development.

Mayor Stothert will name an interim director and begin a search for a permanent director.

New parks and improvements since 2013 include:

- Pacific Preserve Pollinator Park at 162nd & Pacific - opened 2018
- Miguel Keith Park and Soccer complex at 29th & Y – opened 2018
- Dewey Park Dog Park - opened in 2019
- Flanagan Park – opened in 2019
- Restoration of the monuments at Memorial Park (2018) and relocation of the Marine Medallion, the Heartland Airborne Memorial and Victory '95 from Heartland of America Park to Memorial Park(2020)
- Miller Park renovations including playground, golf course improvements, trails, splashground, soccer wall and performance pavilion and dog park
- Hanscom Park renovation and dog park
- Levi Carter Park renovations including new pavilion and splashground
- Tranquility Park sports complex
- Benson Park
- Zorinsky Park
- Standing Bear Park, playground and floating trail
- Cunningham Park
- Adams Park