



Parks Master Plan

2017

Acknowledgments

■ Mayor

Mark Holland, Mayor

■ County Administrator

Doug Bach

■ Board of Commissioners

At-Large District 1 – Melissa Bynum

At-Large District 2 – Hal T. Walker

District 1 – Gayle Townsend

District 2 – Brian McKiernan

District 3 – Ann Brandau-Murguia

District 4 – Harold L. Johnson, Jr.

District 5 – Mike Kane

District 6 – Angela Markley

District 7 – Jim Walters

District 8 – Dr. Jane Winkler Philbrook

■ Board of Park Commissioners

Patricia Gates

Jessie Hall

Craig Howell

Beatrice Lee

Dr. Kelli Mather

David Mills

Mark Mohler

John McTaggart

Jeff Sachen

Ricardo Saucedo

Robert Scherzer

Erin Stryka

■ Parks and Recreation Department

Jeremy Rogers - Director

■ Prepared for:

UG Parks and Recreation Department

■ Prepared by:

Vireo

GreenPlay, LLC

RRC Associates

Builders by Design, LLC

■ With the Participation of the:

Wyandotte County & Kansas City, KS
Community



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**THE MISSION OF THE UG PARKS & RECREATION
DEPARTMENT IS TO PROVIDE CLEAN, SAFE, WELL
MAINTAINED FACILITIES FOR ALL.**

Introduction

The Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas (UG) is working hard to respond to significant forces affecting its parks system. Over the last 20 years the community as a whole has encountered dramatic changes in the way it operates and those changes have had a major impact on the parks and recreation system. The UG commissioned this update to its Parks Master Plan to establish a foundation that supports future resource allocation and investment decisions.

Department Overview

Kansas City, Kansas is the third largest city in the state of Kansas and is the county seat of Wyandotte County. In 1997, voters approved the consolidation of the City of Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County into a single Unified Government (UG). Today the UG is a very diverse and multiracial community of about 160,000 people (Census est. 2014) in an area of approximately 156-square miles.

The UG Parks and Recreation Department employs 76 full-time employees who manage over 2,500 acres of parkland with an operating budget of \$8M. The Department oversees a total of 54 parks including 47 neighborhood parks, 4 community parks, and 3 regional parks, including 2 lakes. In addition, the Department oversees 6 community centers and 3 recreation centers. The UG Parks and Recreation Department offers programs for youth and adult sports as well as programs for seniors and special needs populations.

Purpose of the Plan

The Master Plan (MP) sets a long-term vision and action plan for the park system, providing the UG with a road map for facilities and operations. This plan update includes a newly defined vision, current inventory assessment of park facilities,

analysis of its operational and service functions, prioritization of community needs, budget analysis, and funding possibilities.

An extensive part of this MP includes discussions and surveys with citizens, UG officials, stakeholders, neighborhood groups, and partners of both the City and Parks. The overarching purpose of this MP is to balance the needs and desires voiced by the community with the potential resources to realistically achieve equitable improvements over the next 5-10 years.

Planning Process

The planning process occurred in three phases over the course of a year:

Summer 2016

Summer 2017

Phase 1 Learning



- Focus group & stakeholder discussions
- Data analysis & trends
- Inventory, assessment, & analysis

Phase 2 Visioning



- Stakeholder meetings
- Community survey
- Improvement recommendations

Phase 3 Refining



- Stakeholder & public meetings
- Prioritization and budgeting
- Final master plan document

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INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE & PROCESS

The following tasks were conducted during development of the Parks MP:

Focus Group & Stakeholder Discussions:

Over 30 interviews, discussions, and meetings were facilitated by the Vireo team to learn more about Focus Group and Stakeholder views of the parks and recreation system, vision for improving specific parks, and their outlook on UG partnering and/or coordination opportunities.

Preliminary Opinion Survey:

An open-link opinion survey was conducted on-line. The link was distributed throughout the County and partnering organizations via email lists, Facebook, newsletters, and others. The survey was made available in English and Spanish. A total of 154 respondents participated.

Data Analysis & Trends:

A comprehensive review was conducted of city-wide planning documents, adopted policies, demographic data, and current recreational trends. The Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook: Tool for Planners, Parks and Recreational Professionals and Health Practitioners was used as a guide to synthesize the Vireo team's findings.

Inventory Assessment & Analysis:

54 parks including over 500 amenities were inventoried and assessed on-site and captured through GIS. Six community centers, 3 recreation centers, James P. Davis Hall, Wyandotte County Lake House, Wyandotte County Lake Marina, and Pierson Tower, also underwent a condition assessment and analysis.

GIS Park Gap Analysis Mapping:

A GIS based series of maps were made to identify gaps in service areas for parks, community centers, and swimming pools.

Recreation Program and Services Analysis:

An assessment of the participation, needs, desires, and programming management strategies and service offerings was conducted.

Park and Marina Maintenance, Operational Analysis and Staffing Needs:

An assessment was conducted on current maintenance and operations practices both in the parks and at the marina. The team also reviewed current Department staffing and assessed future needs based on recommendations in the plan.

Community Survey:

A statistically valid survey including both invite-only and open-link formats was administered to determine community demand for recreation facilities by geographic area, satisfaction with existing facilities and programs, preferences for additional facilities and programs, and key issues for the Department. A total of 4,176 mailers and an additional 2,000 reminder postcards were sent to residents w/in the County. An incentive program was included as part of the survey offering the chance to win one of five \$50 gift cards. A total of 334 invite-only (mailer) responses and an additional 268 open-link (on-line) responses were obtained.

Visioning Workshop:

A workshop was held with the Park Board and Department Leadership to evaluate the Department's Vision and Mission Statements.

Improvement Prioritization & Recommendations:

A matrix of findings was created to illustrate key priorities voiced by the community and recommendations to achieve them.

Budget Analysis:

An analysis of the Department's budget history was conducted and recommendations were made commensurate with a balance of community priorities and operational capacity.

Public Open House:

Four public open houses were held in various locations throughout the community. Survey results and Master Plan recommendations were available for public view and comment.

OVERVIEW

The ***Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook: Tool for Planners, Parks and Recreational Professionals and Health Practitioners*** from the National Park Service and Center for Disease Control and Prevention supports the integration of public health into parks and trails planning, so communities can realize a range of health benefits. Recognizing demographic and health data can be leveraged to create community profiles of potential parks, trails, and recreation users, the workbook recommends that such data sets be analyzed and referenced to improve the development of community-based parks and trails projects.

Vireo reviewed the recommended data sets and adopted policies in preparation for development of this plan. A summary of the findings is included in this chapter.

DEMOGRAPHICS

PEOPLE

According to the U.S. Census estimate for 2015:

Population Estimate: 163,369 people live in Wyandotte County and make up nearly 8% of the population in the KC Metro area. Approximately 9 out of 10 Wyandotte County residents live in Kansas City, KS (KCK).

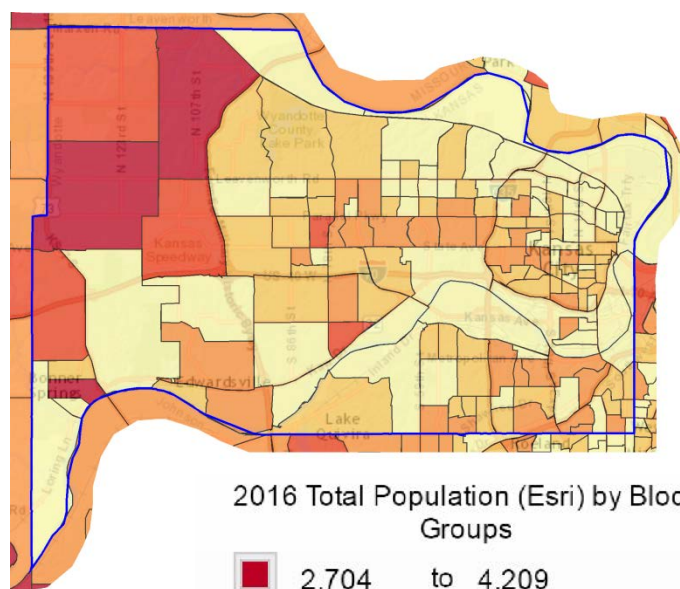
Population Trends: Overall, population growth in both Wyandotte County and KCK remained relatively flat from 2000 to 2015 in comparison to growth in the KC Metro, which increased nearly 18% during the same 15-year period.

The 2010-2014 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate indicates:

Population Distribution: Areas in Wyandotte County with the highest population counts are located in the western half of the County, Edwardsville, and south of Kaw Drive (see map on right).

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BACKGROUND REVIEW & COMMUNITY PROFILE

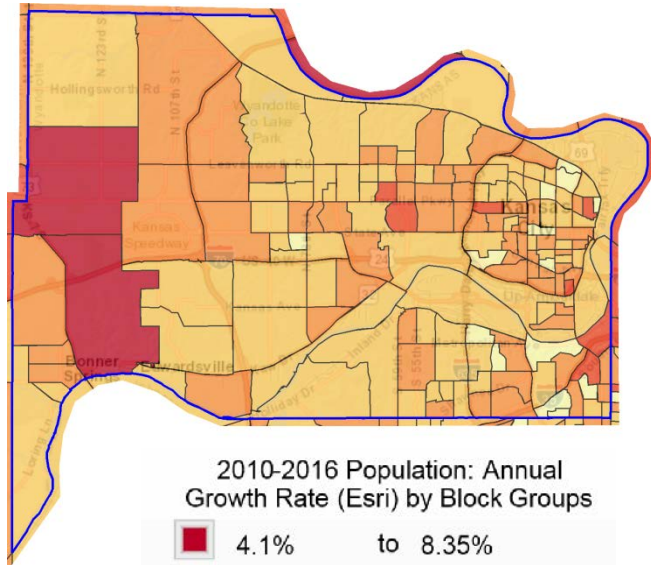


2016 Total Population (Esri) by Block Groups

| | | |
|-------|----|-------|
| 2,704 | to | 4,209 |
| 1,876 | to | 2,703 |
| 1,284 | to | 1,875 |
| 833 | to | 1,283 |
| 0 | to | 832 |

Change in Households: The number of households in Wyandotte County decreased 2% between 2000 and 2010. In comparison, the number of households decreased 4% in Kansas and nearly 5% in the KC Metro.

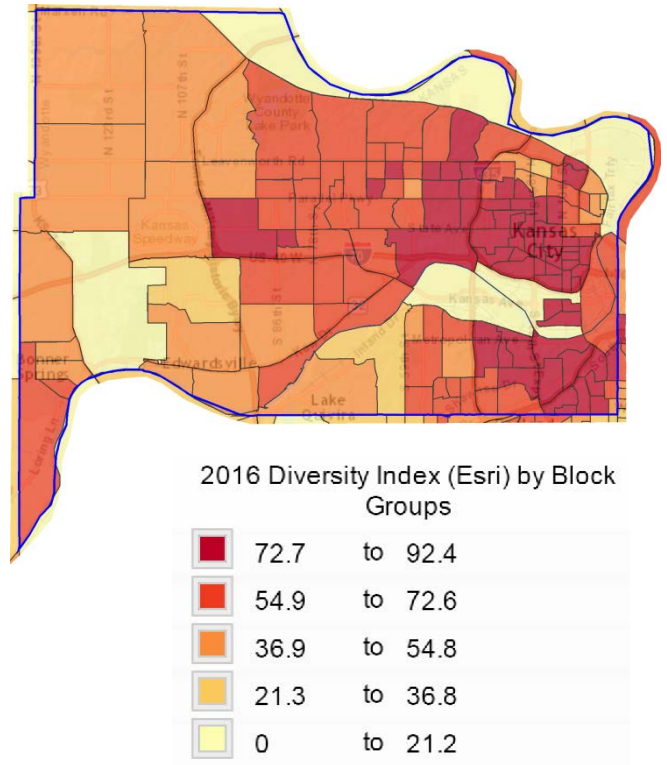
Distribution of Population Change: The areas of Wyandotte County with the greatest change in number of households are located in its western portion. The change is related to development of the Village West residential, entertainment, and retail district, which includes the Legends Shopping Center (see map below).



Gender: Wyandotte County is almost evenly split between females and males, with 51% and 49% respectively. The genders are divided in the same proportions in KCK and in the metropolitan area.

Race/Ethnicity: Approximately 57% of Wyandotte County consists of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians (less than 1%), and people of two or more races; the balance is white. The KC Metro's 2013 equity profile indicates that people of color are driving growth throughout the region. Profile projections indicate that like Wyandotte County, the majority of Jackson County, Missouri will be over 40% people of color by 2040. There may be opportunities to celebrate the cultural diversity of the County throughout the UG's parks and recreation system. Other

communities have done so via amenities, programming, and partnership creation. Below is a map which illustrates where the most racially diverse areas of the community are as indicated by the darker colored census block groups.



- **Black Population Distribution:** Most Black residents live in the northern half of Wyandotte County or south of Kaw Drive on the eastern side of the County in KCK.
- **Hispanic Population Distribution:** Most Hispanic residents live in the eastern and southern portions of Wyandotte County in KCK.
- **Asian Population Distribution:** Most Asian residents reside in the central, eastern, and southern portions of Wyandotte County in KCK.
- **American Indian Population Distribution:** Generally, most American Indian residents live along both the northern and southern side of Kaw Drive and in the western, central, and eastern

portions of the County. If Huron Park is enhanced, the UG should engage the Wyandot Nation as many Wyandot members were buried at the site after the forced migration from their homes near Upper Sandusky, Ohio during the 1800s. The Huron American Indian Cemetery was established on the western side of the park in 1843.

- **Two or More Races Population**

Distribution: Most residents of two or more races reside in the north-central and northwest portions of Wyandotte County in KCK. Others live south of Kaw Drive in KCK.

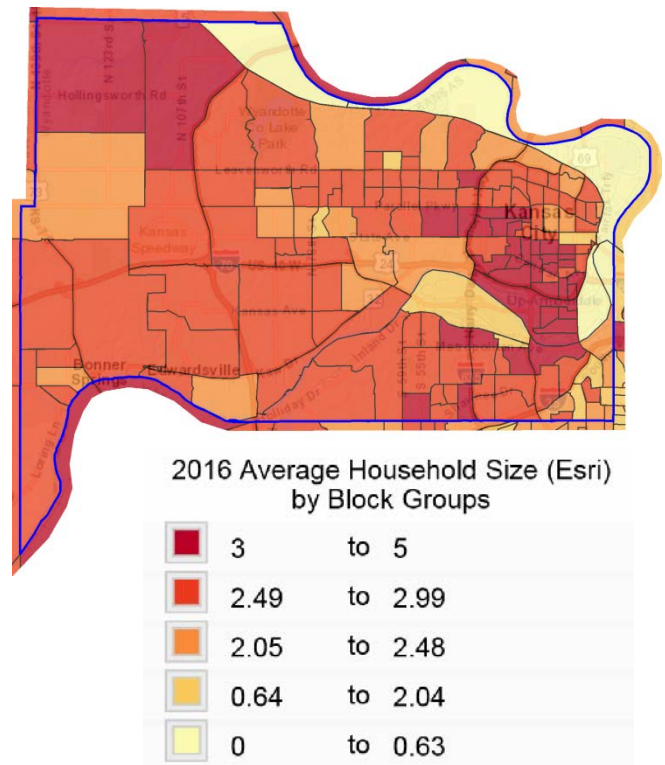
Languages: Most KC Metro residents speak English at home, including those in Wyandotte County and KCK. Spanish is the second most frequently spoken language at home. Approximately, 21% speak Spanish at home in Wyandotte County compared to 6% in the KC Metro. Given the 2040 population projections, UG parks and recreation literature should continue to be provided in both languages.

- **Primary Language Other Than English:**

Residents who speak a primary language other than English are located in the northwest, central, and east portions of Wyandotte County in KCK.

- **Language Isolation:** Language isolation is greater for residents who live in western Wyandotte County, areas along Kaw Drive, and south of the Kansas River (on the eastern side of the County). Such isolation should be considered as marketing and programming efforts are developed for parks, including but not limited to Wyandotte County Park, Kensington Park, and Jersey Creek Park, that linguistically isolated residents may use.

Average Family Size: The average Wyandotte County family consists of 2.7 people. In comparison, Kansas City's family size averages the same while the KC Metro average is lower (2.5 people per family). The difference may be related to the tradition of larger Hispanic families (3.87 people per family). Nonetheless, findings published in the article, "Hispanic Family Size in USA Shrinking," in June 2015 from the Population Research Institute suggest that second-generation Hispanics are planning smaller families¹ (see map below).

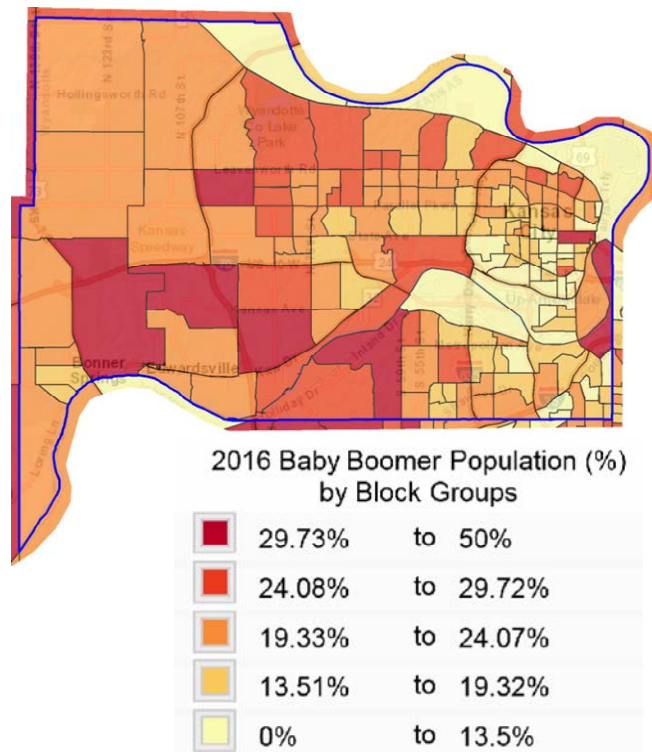


Family Status: In Wyandotte County, KCK, and across the KC Metro, married families and female-headed families are most common. Female-headed households with no husband present are the second most predominant family type.

¹ <https://www.pop.org/content/hispanic-family-size-usa-shrinking>

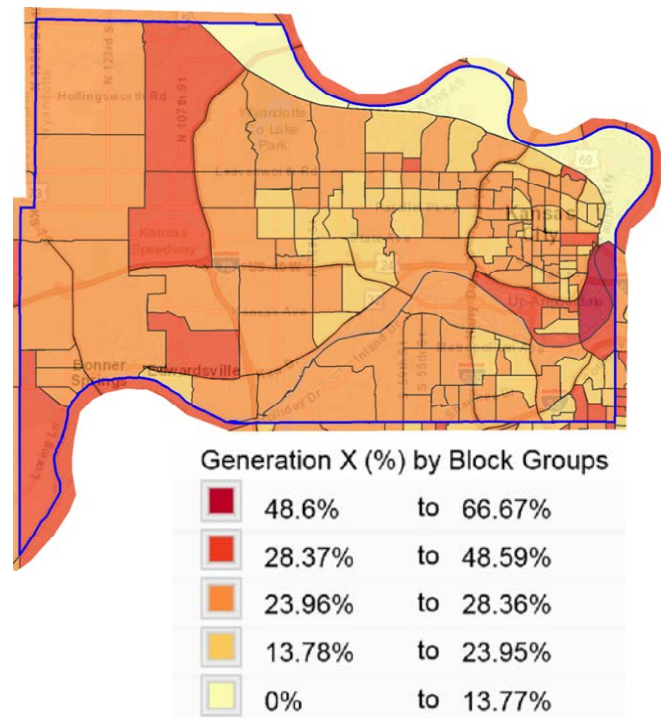
Generations: Approximately 40% of Wyandotte County residents are a combination of Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) and Generation X (born 1965-1980); another 52% are a combination of Millennials (born 1981 – 2000) and Generation Z (born 2001 or after); with matures (born 1927-1945) making up the balance. According to Dr. Jill Novak (University of Phoenix and Texas A&M University), each generation offers several characteristics²:

Baby Boomers: Baby Boomers are the first generation to believe “retirement” means enjoying life after the children have left home. Their lives are longer because they have developed hobbies and exercise regularly (see map below).

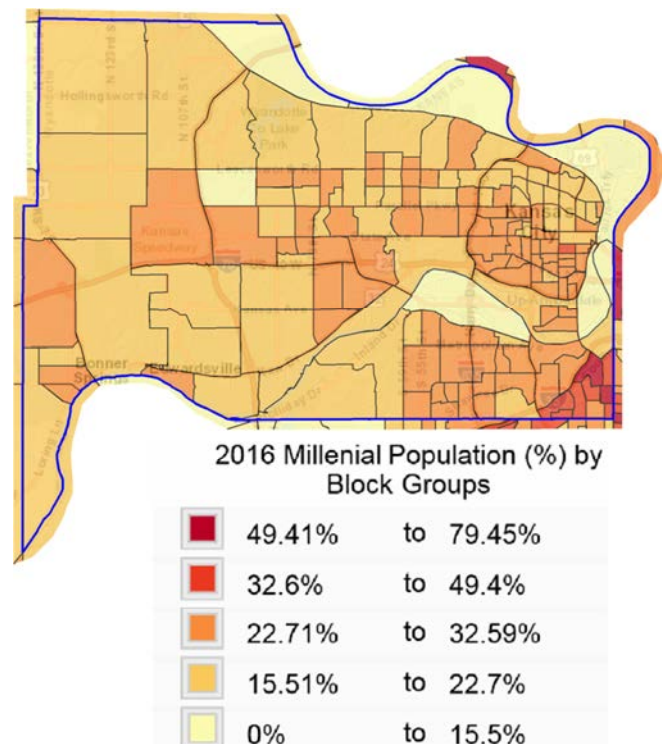


Generation Xers: They change careers frequently, often seven changes in a lifespan, and are focused on their neighborhood rather than the world. Xers are survivors as individuals, however, they want to be available for their children and develop their marriages (see map on right).

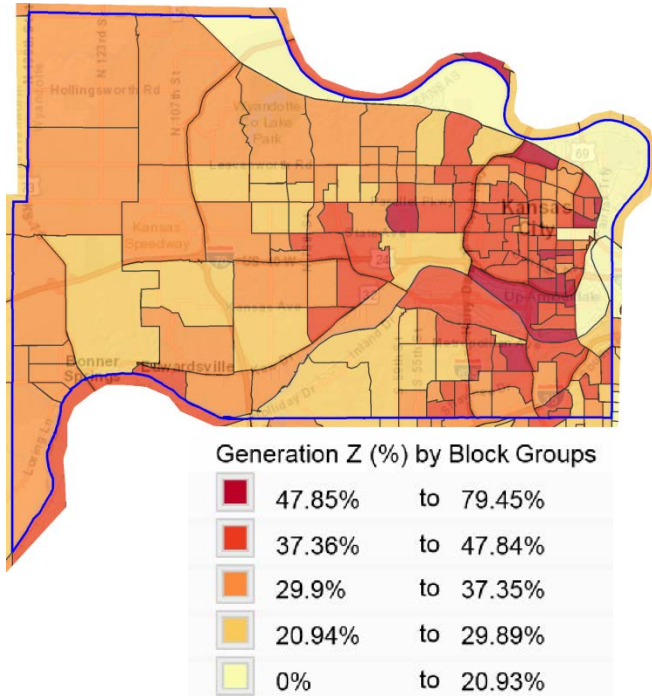
² <http://www.marketingteacher.com/the-six-living-generations-in-america/>



Millennials: Also known as Generation Y, Millennials are unfamiliar with a world that lacks computers, as they have never known such. They view the world as being accessible 24 hours a day and seven days a week. They desire quick and instant access to information and processing. Millennials typically have strong views and prefer to work in teams (see map below).



Generation Z: They are knowledgeable, savvy consumers who are inundated with brands and know how to get exactly what they want. They also have eco-fatigue, so they are tired of messaging that focuses on saving the environment (see map below).



Proportions of each of the five generations that reside in Wyandotte County are similar to those found in Kansas City and across the KC Metro. As Wyandotte County continues to grow, it will be necessary to provide parks and recreational opportunities that meet the needs of all generations while acknowledging the difference between them and their preferences. For example, the August 19, 2015 article from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) entitled “7 Ways to Make Your Parks Millennial Friendly” by Scott Hornick recommends that park planning consider the following for this population³:

- Opportunities for group activities.

³ <http://www.nrpa.org/blog/7-ways-to-make-your-parks-millennial-friendly/>

- Internet access (WI-FI).
- Broader ranges of activities within easy driving distance of one another.
- Glamping (camping that combines nature and luxury, e.g. accommodations with beautiful views).
- Badges and rewards for visiting locations and/or participating in programmed activities.
- Good workouts, including grade school games (kickball and tag for groups) that can be played in an open field, trails for walking, running, and biking, and more.
- Provisions for pets, such as cleanup stations and water access.

Most Wyandotte County Millennials reside in Edwardsville and west, east, and south of Kaw Drive in KCK. Parks that may be of interest to them include Wyandotte County Park and Lake, Edwardsville’s Parks system, Pierson Park, Rosedale Park, Jersey Creek Park, and others.

Age: The median age of Wyandotte County residents is 33. An estimated 37% are 24 years old or younger, 41% are between 25 and 54 years of age, and 22% are 55 or older. “Researchers document troubling rise in strokes in young adults, starting at age 25”, by Jennifer Breheny Wallace (*The Washington Post*, 2016) cites recently released data from the *Journal of the American Heart Association* indicating “researchers found that between 2000 and 2010, hospitalizations for ischemic stroke, the most common type, dropped nearly 20% overall — but among people ages 25 to 44, there was a sharp 44% increase in the rate”⁴. High blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, and rare conditions are among the causes. 2016 data from www.countyhealthrankings.org indicates that 38%

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/05/11/researchers-document-troubling-rise-in-strokes-in-young-adults-starting-at-age-25/>

of Wyandotte County residents are obese. The figure is higher than both the rates for Kansas and the United States as a whole. Parks planning should consider such factors, providing activities that cause residents to actively use the parks system and partnering with organizations for programming, fundraising, and promotions.

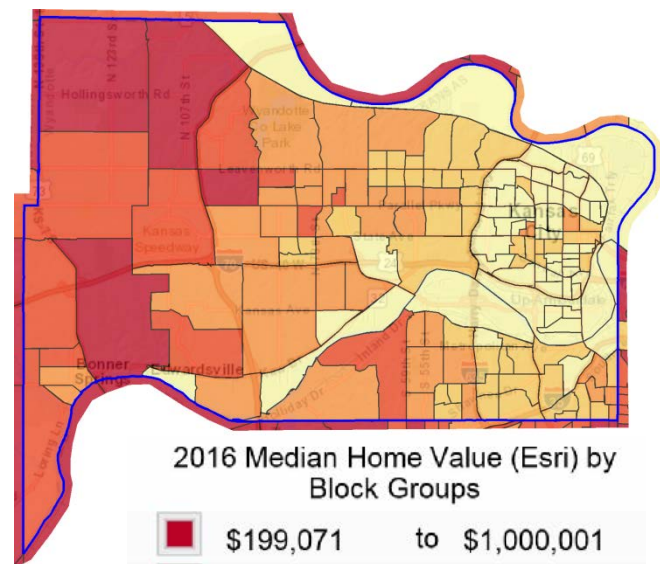
HOUSING

The 2010-2014 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate indicates:

Construction History: Home construction after 2000 decreased across the KC Metro, including in Wyandotte County and Kansas City. The 2008 recession and burst of the housing bubble likely contributed to the decrease. Housing statistics from the National Association of Realtors for 2014, 2015, and through August 2016 related to existing-home sales in the Midwest were positive. In addition, regional building permit data from the National Association of Home Builders also indicates a positive trend for single-family and multi-family home construction. Residents of new housing developments in Wyandotte County would benefit from bicycle/pedestrian connections and clear, easy entry points to the County's parks and recreation system that shorten the distance between parks and neighborhoods.

Occupancy: Nearly 60% of the occupied housing is owner-occupied in Wyandotte County and Kansas City. Approximately 66% is owner-occupied in the KC Metro overall. Regardless of housing tenure, it is important that neighborhood residents of all ages, especially senior and disabled residents, have access to the parks systems via direct and visible entry points and paths that encourage walking and biking. Entering some parks, such as Kaw Point, Jersey Creek, Rosedale, and St. Margaret's Park, is challenging.

Home Value: The median home value in Wyandotte County is \$91,400, which is more than twice the Kansas City median and about half as much as the KC Metro amount. Wyandotte County's most expensive homes are located in the western portion of the County in both Bonner Springs and Kansas City (see map below). An estimated 36% of Wyandotte County residents use 30% or more of their income to pay for housing. The federal Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) defines cost-burdened families as those who pay more than 30% of their income for housing. Encouraging the development of residential housing with smaller lot sizes could reduce development costs and thereby improve housing outcomes for residents. Pairing such housing projects with parks and recreation amenities would also improve residents' quality of life.



Home

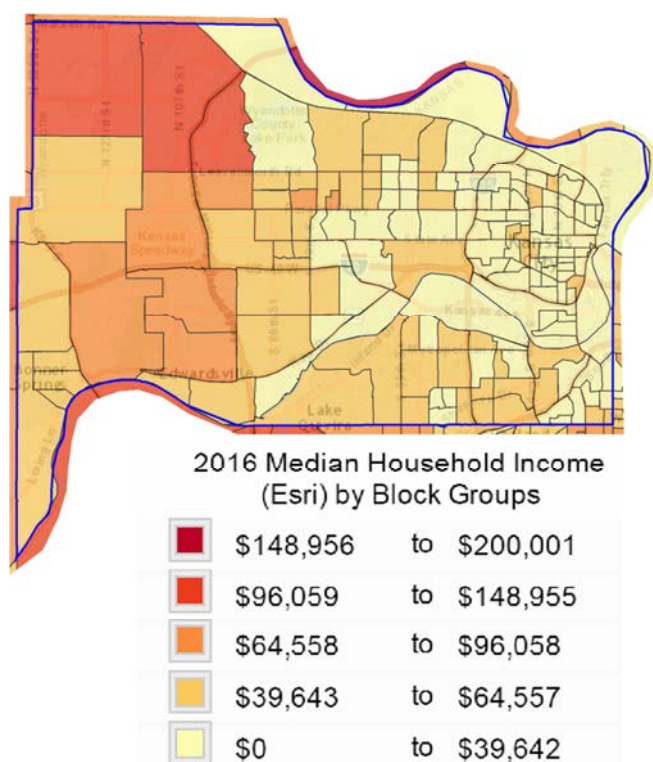
Rent: The median home rent in Wyandotte County is \$766, which is nearly identical to rent in

Kansas City (\$767). Rents are \$839 in the KC Metro. Like its most expensive home values, Wyandotte County's most expensive rents are located in the western portion of the County in Bonner Springs and Kansas City. An estimated 56% of Wyandotte County residents pay 30% or more of their income for rental housing.

ECONOMY

Data from the 2014-2010 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate shows:

Income: The median household income is \$39,326 in Wyandotte County, which is slightly higher than the Kansas City median. The median income in the KC Metro is approximately 27% higher at \$57,056 (see map below).



Wages: According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Smart Location Database Version 2.0, approximately 45% of Wyandotte County workers can be characterized as high-wage workers, meaning they earn more than \$3,333 per month. An estimated 34% are medium-wage workers (\$1,250 – 3,333 per

month) and 22% are low-wage workers (\$1,250 per month). In comparison, there are more medium-wage than high-wage workers in Kansas City.

Industrial Sectors: Education and Healthcare, Manufacturing, Scientific and Professional, and Retail Trade are among the top four industries in Wyandotte County/KCK. The University of Kansas Hospital and Medical Center, General Motors, KCK Public Schools (USD #500), and UG are the largest employers.⁵ As the County's industrial sectors change over time, UG's commitment to creating green industry and business parks may improve the health outcomes of both the human and physical environment.

TRANSPORTATION

Data from the 2014-2010 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate show:

Transportation to Work: Over 80% of Wyandotte County workers travel to work by driving alone. An estimated 14% carpool and 6% bike, walk, ride the bus or use other transit, and work from home. Only 9% of KC Metro workers carpool and 8% use alternative methods. Connecting employment, parks, and other recreational destinations with safe walking paths and bike trails may help more workers to bike or walk to work or for recreation. Increasing the visibility of existing parks and trails may also prove helpful.

Vehicles: 70% of occupied housing units in Wyandotte County have 1-2 vehicles, and 20% have three or more vehicles. The proportions are similar to those in Kansas City and the KC Metro overall. Coordination and promotional efforts connected to existing grassroots walking clubs and biking challenges may help decrease the reliance on vehicular transportation and increase

⁵

https://www.wycokck.org/InternetDept.aspx?id=25094&menu_id=1360&banner=15284

the use of alternative modes of transportation to work.

EDUCATION

Attainment: An estimated 72% of Wyandotte County residents have either attained a high school diploma, some college (no degree), or a bachelors or graduate degree. Kansas City residents have nearly identical levels of attainment as Wyandotte County. Approximately 83% of all KC Metro residents have achieved the same levels of education.

Schools: Five school districts serve Wyandotte County: KCK Public Schools Unified School District No. 500, Piper Unified School District No. 203, Turner Unified School District No. 22, Bonner Springs Unified School District No. 204, and Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas Catholic Schools.

HEALTH PROFILE

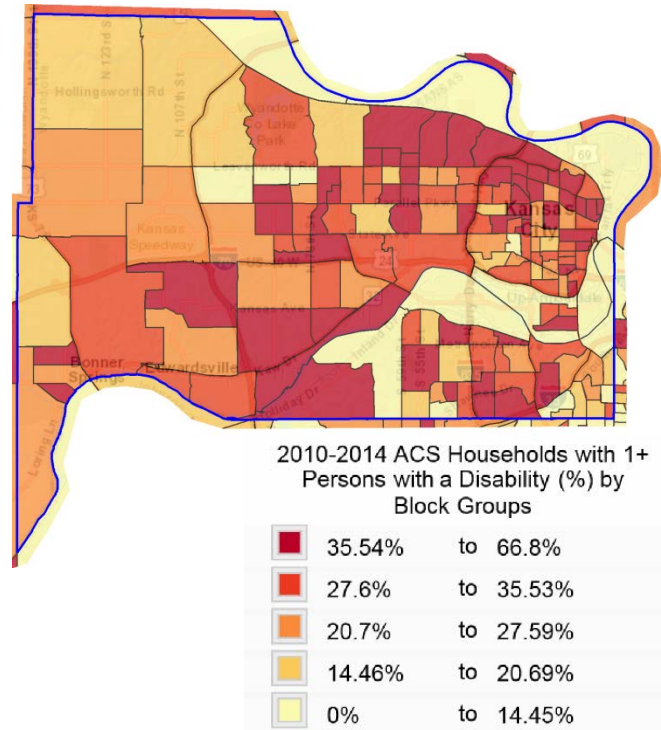
Data from the 2014-2010 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate shows:

Disabilities: The U.S. Census tabulations for disabilities in a given location “represent the number of people living with a cognitive, ambulatory or self-care difficulty who are 5 years or older. The Census defines a disability as a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering. It can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job or business.”

(https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term_Disability).

The survey provides the following information on disabilities by type and age:

- **Distribution:** Residents living with disabilities are located across Wyandotte County. The map below shows percent by block group of households having 1 or more persons with a disability. These should be focus areas for access to parks (see map below).



- **By Type:** Ambulatory and cognitive disabilities are the most common among residents in Wyandotte County, Kansas City, and the KC Metro who have disabilities. Improvements to the County’s parks and recreation system could be structured to help prevent some of the secondary conditions that can be associated with disabilities, including weight gain or obesity, lower physical activities and fitness levels, osteoporosis, increased risk of cardiovascular disease, and depression. Strategies⁶ for improvement may involve enhancing wellness, emotions, spiritual, and social health by:

⁶ <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia/en/article/300/>

- Encouraging those with disabilities to work with health professionals to identify the types of physical activity best for them.
- Ensuring safe use of exercise equipment and participation in programmed activities.
- Developing fitness and exercise programs for the disabled or modifying existing programs, e.g. Walk Wyandotte and Bike Wyandotte, so they are engaged.
- Marketing and promoting available programs that would help residents improve their health and wellness.

Additionally, as the design of parks in Wyandotte County is improved, universal access standards should be applied to improve park entry and exit points. Enhancements may also be necessary for interior and/or exterior way-finding signs that help identify parks within the UG parks and recreation system, along with the amenities within individual parks. Collaborative approaches to signage may also be possible. The Dotte Agency, Healthy Communities Wyandotte, and the Latino Health for All Coalition are currently developing signage for local walking initiatives.

- **By Age:** Of those with disabilities in Wyandotte County, more are aged 18 to 64 than in the KC Metro. However, fewer seniors (aged 65 or more) in Wyandotte County have disabilities than in the KC Metro as a whole.

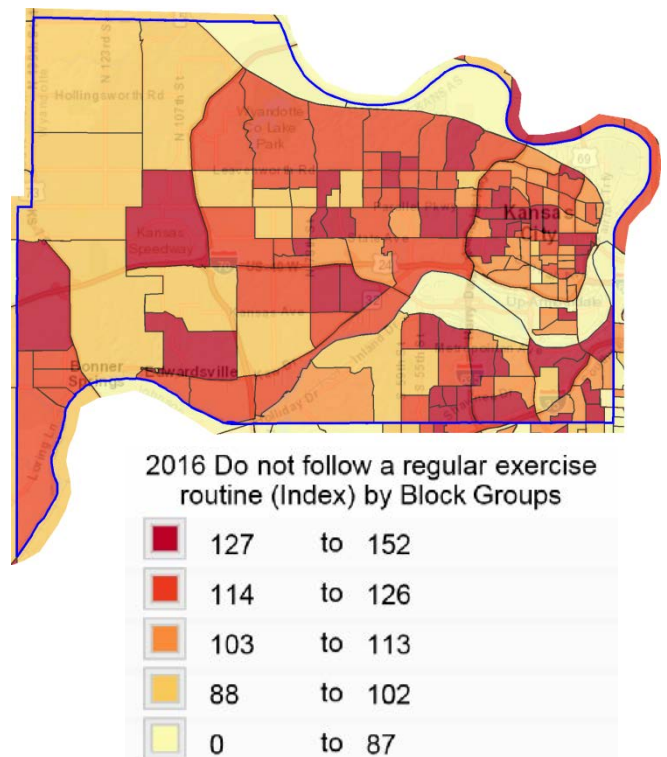
According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Physical Inactivity: An estimated 30% of Wyandotte County residents have no leisure time activity compared to 23% of Kansas and 22% of U.S. residents.

Physical Inactivity Trends: Between 2004 and 2013, adult physical inactivity in Wyandotte County was higher than that in Kansas or the United States. Efforts from the UG Public Health

Department, including Healthy Communities Wyandotte, Latino Health for All Coalition, the 20/20/20 Movement, Dotte Agency, and other community initiatives that organize and promote walking, walking groups, and overall exercise are likely to have a positive impact on future adult inactivity estimates.

The following map uses 2016 estimates by ESRI to indicate the most likely areas for physical inactivity. The map is based on a national index of 100 with values above or below 100, representing a percentage of the population more or less likely to not follow a regular exercise routine as compared to the national trend. For example, those areas in the darkest red show that people in these areas are 27 to 52% more likely to not follow a regular exercise routine.



Diabetes: In 2004, 8% of Wyandotte County adults were diagnosed with diabetes. The number increased steadily for the next seven years to 13%. According to information from the Mayo Clinic, the causes of Type I diabetes are unknown; however, genetics, environmental factors, inactivity, family history, race, age, high

blood pressure, being overweight, and other factors are contributing issues connected to Type II diabetes.

Making a commitment to maintaining a healthy lifestyle that involves daily physical activity, e.g. at neighborhood, community, and/or regional parks, via the bike and walking paths that connect the parks system and other activity centers, and/or choosing to eat healthy foods, may help manage diabetes.

Adults with Asthma: Between 2011 and 2012, an estimated 13% of Wyandotte County residents had asthma. Similar percentages of residents in Kansas and the United States also have the condition.

Adults with Asthma by Race/Ethnicity: Of the Kansans diagnosed with asthma, 31% were either Black or other races. There were slightly more with asthma in Kansas than in the United States overall.

Adults with Heart Disease: The percentage of adults with heart disease in Wyandotte County and Kansas is 5% in each location, which is slightly higher than the national percentage (4%). Information from the Mayo Clinic indicates that treatment for heart disease can involve a range of options, such as limiting alcohol consumption, quitting smoking, getting more than 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise (most days of the week), taking medications, surgery, and more.

Adults with Heart Disease by Race/Ethnicity: There are more Blacks and Whites in Kansas and the United States diagnosed with heart disease than Hispanics or people of other races.

Depression: The percentage of Kansas, Wyandotte County, and Kansas City Medicare beneficiaries with depression is 17% for each jurisdiction, which is slightly higher than the United States (16%).

The Mayo Clinic recommends a range of treatments for depression, spanning from medication to lifestyle and home remedies

(walking, jogging, swimming, and healthy eating). Providing such lifestyle options through the parks and recreation system would support improved quality of life for Wyandotte County residents.

Adult Obesity: The Body Mass Index (BMI) is the measure of body fat on an individual based on his or her height and weight. BMI categories include:

Underweight: = < 18.5;
Normal weight = 18.5 – 24.9;
Overweight = 25 – 29.9; and
Obese = 30 or greater.

Adult obesity rates in Wyandotte County continued to increase from 2004 to 2010 and began decreasing through 2012. Regardless, there are more obese adults in Wyandotte County than in Kansas or the United States as a whole. Efforts from partners in the Healthy Communities Wyandotte initiative (working together since November 2010) and others have likely contributed to the decrease and are anticipated to continue helping to reduce adult obesity in the County. Healthy Communities Wyandotte and Children's Mercy Hospital, for example, coordinate to promote the Healthy Lifestyles Initiative, which encourages healthy lifestyles and healthy weight for all with the tagline "Choose Healthy Habits for a Healthy Future – 12345 Fit-Tastic!"⁷

Smoking: An estimated 25% of Wyandotte County residents smoke cigarettes compared to 18% in Kansas and the United States. The UG Public Health Department through Healthy Communities Wyandotte is advocating for a tobacco free county, including its parks, to reduce the burden of tobacco use and nicotine addiction in the community. Doing so ensures access to clean air environments free of the harm of tobacco use, prevention of activities that trigger early addiction for youth, resources needed to quit smoking, and improved data that helps the

⁷ <http://fittastic.org/>

community understand tobacco related disparities and the burden of disease in Wyandotte County⁸.

To help promote the tobacco free agenda, the UG is conducting a number of activities including:

- Placing “Play Tobacco Free” signs within its parks.
- Coordinating free smoke-free housing lunch and learns.
- Educating the public about its Tobacco 21 policy⁹, which increases the age of sale for tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) from 18 to 21 because the majority of people who smoke begin before age 21 when the teen brain is vulnerable to addiction. **Note:** Kansas City was the first Kansas community to pass Tobacco 21 (November 2015).

Alcohol Consumption: Fewer adults in Wyandotte County who are age 18 or older drink excessively than in Kansas or the United States.

Drug Poisoning: Few people in Wyandotte County died due to drug poisoning than in Kansas or the United States overall.

Fruit/Vegetable Consumption: Approximately 84% of Wyandotte County residents eat less than five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, in comparison to 81% of Kansans and 76% of Americans. Such poor eating habits can contribute to diabetes and obesity.

- **Food Deserts:** Integrating farmers markets, urban agriculture, or community gardens that provide typical and culturally sensitive fresh fruits and vegetables into parks could help improve food access and positively change eating behaviors. Such parks, including Ruby and Clopper Parks, are located within census tracts designated as 1) potential food

desserts and/or 2) areas where the primary language spoken at home is not English.

- **Food Access:** Data from the Department of Agriculture’s Food Access Research Atlas was released during July of 2015. The Atlas “defines low access to healthy food as being far from a supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store” (<https://data.mysidewalk.com/datasets/284>). Ideally, residents would have good access to food if such stores were located less than ½-mile from their homes. However, of the people with low access to food in Wyandotte County, 62% have access at ½-mile and 38% at 1 mile. Sixty-four percent (64%) of Kansas City residents have access at ½-mile and 66% of KC Metro residents have access within the same distance.
- **Fruit/Vegetable Expenditures:** Findings from the 2014 Nielsen Site Report on fruit/vegetable expenditures indicated that Kansas City residents’ spent 12% of their food-at-home income on fruits and vegetables, which is similar to Kansas and United States residents.
- **Soda Expenditures:** Further, the 2014 Nielsen Site Report findings show that Kansas City and Kansas residents spent 5% of their total food-at-home expenditures on soda, which is slightly higher than national estimate (4%).

County Health Rankings: County health rankings are available for each county in Kansas. Rankings information is divided into two categories: Health Outcomes and Health Factors. Health Outcomes consist of measures for length of life and quality of life (poor or fair health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birth weight). Health Factors consist of health behaviors (smoking, adult obesity, physical inactivity, excessive drinking, and others), clinical care, social and economic factors (education, poverty, crime, and more), and physical

⁸ <http://www.hcwyco.org/tobacco-free-wyandotte>

⁹ <http://tobacco21.org/>

environment (air pollution, housing problems, driving alone to work, and other data sets). As of 2016, Wyandotte County ranked 101 out of the 103 counties ranked in Kansas for both Health Outcomes and Health Factors. In 2009, Wyandotte County ranked last in the state. Trend data from 2011 to 2016 indicates the County improved its ranking in three areas: physical environment, length of life, and clinical care.

Introduction

Via a year-long process that involved three rounds of community engagement, the UG and the planning team engaged Wyandotte County community members in conversations about the future of the parks and recreation system. Community engagement included: Focus Groups, Stakeholder Meetings, Public Open Houses, surveys, and project updates on social media. The outcome of the discussions were regularly shared with the UG Board of Park Commissioners, combined with additional analysis, and leveraged to help generate the recommendations for the places that community members relax, play, recreate, and exercise in Wyandotte County over the next decade and beyond. A detailed summary of meeting notes and survey results is included in Appendix B.

Focus Groups

To kick-off the master planning process, the planning team organized Focus Group discussions on August 3 and 5, 2016 to understand community members' views on the future vision for Wyandotte County's parks and recreation system, its strengths and weaknesses, potential improvements, needed programs, activities, amenities, facilities, and priorities. The discussions were open to the public and attendees represented 21 different stakeholder groups, including residents, community group representatives, programming partners, advocates, elected officials, and others.

Focus Groups commented that in the next 10 years, the parks and recreation system should be able to be described as active, accessible, vibrant, and improved. They also commented that the variety of park types and sizes are the strength of the system but maintenance, programming, and awareness-building are needed. Many also expressed a desire for programs that meet the needs of adults, seniors, families, youth, children, and an ethnically diverse

3

PUBLIC INPUT

population. They said that top priorities for the system should relate to providing adequate funding and staffing as well as resources for park maintenance and amenities.

On-line Opinion Survey

Following the Focus Groups, the planning team converted the discussion questions into an on-line opinion survey. The survey was made available in English and Spanish and distributed to community members via Livable Neighborhoods, e-mail, social media, and during Stakeholder Meetings. The survey was available from mid-August through December 31, 2016. A total of 154 people responded. Overall, many respondents were long-time UG residents of 10 years or more.

Respondents to the survey noted that Parkwood Park and Wyandotte County Lake Park were the parks they or their families used most. Some responded that additional parks were needed near them and that facilities, amenities, or programs were also needed. Survey responses to a number of questions about the Parks System are described in the following Word Maps. The most frequent responses appear largest on the maps.

| Attribute | Number of Mentions |
|-------------|--------------------|
| beautiful | 11 |
| safe/safety | 9 |
| good | 8 |
| park/parks | 8 |
| county | 5 |
| trails | 5 |
| awesome | 4 |
| clean | 4 |
| come | 4 |
| family | 4 |

| Term | Number of Mentions |
|--------------|--------------------|
| park/parks | 45 |
| people | 16 |
| trail/trails | 15 |
| space/spaces | 13 |
| lots | 12 |
| use/used | 12 |
| community | 9 |
| many | 8 |
| county | 6 |
| good | 6 |

| Amenity | Number of Mentions |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| park/parks | 48 |
| lack | 28 |
| trail/trails | 22 |
| maintenance/maintain | 20 |
| bike/biking | 12 |
| walking | 12 |
| water | 12 |
| facility/facilities | 11 |
| bathroom/bathrooms | 10 |
| enough | 8 |

Stakeholder Meetings

Because many community groups and grassroots initiatives coordinate with the UG to improve the parks and recreation system, the planning team reached out to active stakeholder groups to learn more about their views of the parks and recreation system, vision for improving specific parks, and outlook on the UG partnering and/or coordination opportunities. Twenty five such conversations were held with Livable Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Business Revitalization (NBR) groups, UG's Board of Commissioners, Public Health Department, and parks operations staff, Turner Recreation Commission, advocacy groups, and more. Common themes among the conversations included:

- Connecting the parks system via trails, culture (music, festivals, food, and ethnicity), economic or capital investment activity (residential and retail/commercial), and "safe routes to parks".
- Leveraging parks to improve human health outcomes (mental, physical, and social).
- Improving physical activity across the County via exercise initiatives, sports programs, and other efforts.
- Health-related funding opportunities that could result in additional parks improvements, including equipment, signage, and other items.
- Working directly with community members to determine the best improvements to the parks near their homes and businesses based on their desires, needs, and/or habits.
- Identifying willing and/or active partners prior to planning and implementing programs for park activities.
- Partnering to address marketing/promotions, funding, and maintenance needs as well as programming.
- Specific improvement plans for identified parks, e.g. Bethany, Jersey Creek, and several others.
- Recognizing the uniqueness of each park and opportunities to turn parks into amenities.
- Need for improved park maintenance that goes beyond mowing.

Statistically Valid Survey

Utilizing the feedback from the Focus Groups, Online Opinion Survey, and Stakeholder Meetings, and analysis of existing park and facilities conditions, the planning team developed a statistically valid survey. The survey was conducted using three primary methods:

1. A mail-back survey
2. An on-line, invitation-only web survey to further encourage response from those residents already within the defined invitation sample
3. An open-link online survey for members of the public who were not part of the invitation sample.

The analysis herein primarily focuses on responses from the statistically-valid invitation sample. The primary list source used for the mailing was a third party list purchased from Melissa Data Corp., a leading provider of data with emphasis on U.S., Canadian, and international address and phone verification as well as postal software. Use of the Melissa Data list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists.

A total of 4,176 surveys were mailed to a random sample of Wyandotte County residents in February 2017; half of recipients (2,100 residents) also received a reminder postcard. The final return of mailers was 334, resulting in a margin of error of approximately +/- 5.4

percentage points calculated for questions at 50% response. The open-link survey received an additional 268 completed responses.

The underlying data were weighted by age and ethnicity to ensure appropriate representation of Wyandotte County residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample. Using the U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the age distribution and ethnicity distribution within the invitation sample was adjusted to more closely match the 2015 demographic profile of Wyandotte County. Due to variable response rates by some segments of the population, the underlying results, while weighted to best match the overall demographics of residents, may not be completely representative of some sub-groups of the population.

Summary of Selected Findings

Focus on Improving Communication. Almost two-thirds (60%) of invitation respondents rated marketing and awareness as a “1” or a “2” on a 5-point scale where 1 is “poor” and 5 is “excellent,” indicating that improvements to existing communications could be beneficial. Water bill inserts (49%) and local media (46%) topped the list of best ways to reach invitation respondents with parks and recreation information. In addition, 39% of invitation respondents indicated that promoting active lifestyles should be focused on, so targeted communications may be warranted.

Priorities Vary Considerably by Location of Residence. Opinions and priorities among all respondents (invitation and open-link samples combined) show some differences when segmented by Wyandotte County district. These differences can generally be attributed to the slightly different demographic make-up of each of the geographic subgroups.

Open Space and Natural Areas Highly Valued.

Invitation respondents rated a variety of services related to open space and natural areas as highly important, each receiving an average rating of 3.5 or higher on a 5-point scale. In addition, 41% of invitation respondents selected protecting the environment/natural areas in their top three values for parks and recreation. Clearly, open space and natural areas should continue to be a priority.

Outdoor Recreation Programs and Community Events Top List of Program Needs.

A question about top program priorities revealed that invitation respondents were most likely to identify outdoor recreation programs (27%) and community events (25%) as the top priorities for their households.

Restrooms Renovations and Walking Trail Additions Most Desired at Existing Facilities.

In their open-ended comments, many invitation respondents requested upgrades or improvements to existing facilities. Respondents also provided only moderate ratings of condition of park amenities (average rating 3.0 on a 5-point scale), indicative of a desire for improvements. When asked specifically what improvements should be made, three-quarters (75%) of invitation respondents indicated that they desire restroom renovations, with walking trails (62%) falling closely behind.

Top Future Facility Priorities Include New Outdoor Pool, Indoor Facilities. When asked to select their top three priorities for future Wyandotte County facilities, invitation sample respondents were mostly likely to prioritize a new outdoor pool (41%) and indoor facilities such as weights, cardio machines, and pools (40%). Outdoor pools are clearly an area of need for responding households, as existing outdoor pools received an average importance rating of 3.5 on a 5-point scale, but an average needs-met rating of only 2.5 on a 5-point scale.

Existing Amenities are Highly Important, but Some Only Moderately Meet Needs.

Invitation sample respondents placed high importance on current Wyandotte County amenities, with each facility receiving a larger share of respondents rating it 'as important' than those rating it 'as unimportant'. Community parks and open spaces/natural areas were identified as the most important amenities (92% and 82% identified as important, respectively). However, when asked to rate the degree to which these facilities are meeting community needs, respondents provided somewhat lower ratings, indicating that some amenities are not adequately meeting needs. Amenities that are not meeting needs include outdoor pools (55%), on-street bikeways (56%), and dog parks (47%).

Long-Term Areas of Focus Should Include Safety/Security and Investment in Programming.

When asked to select the top three areas that Wyandotte County Parks & Recreation should focus on for the long-term, invitation respondents most commonly chose safety and security (55%) and investing in programming (47%). These priorities are further corroborated by other survey results, both quantitative and qualitative.

Open-Link Sample Respondents Are Especially Invested in Parks and Recreation, Have Different Interests Based on Demographics. Throughout the results, open-link respondents show relatively greater involvement and investment than invitation survey respondents in Wyandotte County parks and recreation. They provided lower needs-met ratings for all facilities and lower ratings for parks and recreation services, indicating a greater desire for improvements. Open-link respondents were also more likely to be supportive of all funding mechanisms. In addition, open-link respondents showed particular interest in youth, providing higher importance ratings for playgrounds, programs, and athletic courts and

fields. The emergence of this special youth interest is likely due to the dominant presence of family households (60%) in the open-link sample.

Respondents Demographic Profile

Figures 1 through 3 on the following pages illustrate the demographic profile of survey respondents. The remaining figures illustrate survey responses. Invitation and open-link samples are shown separately for a couple of reasons. First, the invitation-only sample represents those respondents who received a mailed letter and had the option to either fill it out and return in a self addressed stamped envelope or take the survey on-line by entering a unique code. Second, the invitation only sample comprises the statistically valid segment of the survey.

Open-link respondents include the public at large who completed the survey on-line and were notified or given the web-link via email, web-site, or social media. While not considered statistically valid, the open-link responses did provide additional input into the planning effort.

While the results between the two samples do vary in demographic make up and preference, it would appear that the open-link responses generally validate the statistically valid survey responses.

Figure 1 - Survey Demographic Profile: Gender, Age, and Household Status

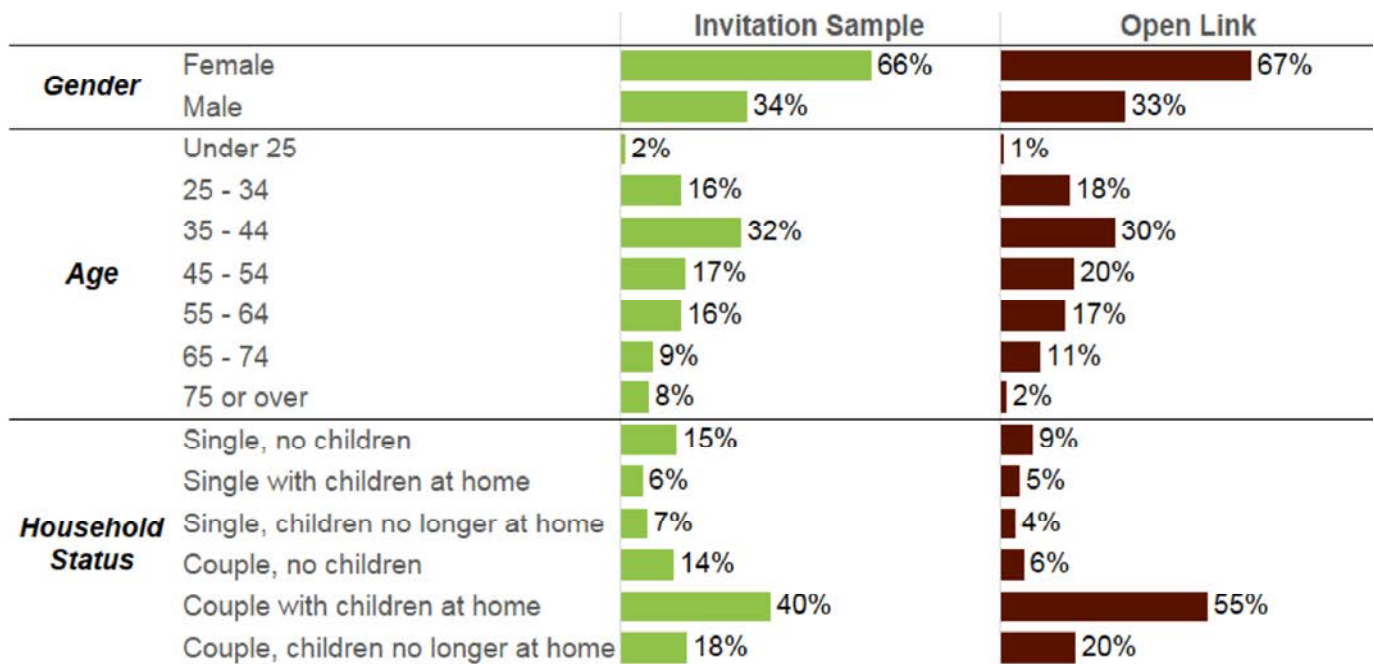


Figure 2 - Survey Demographic Profile: Household income, Race, and Ethnicity

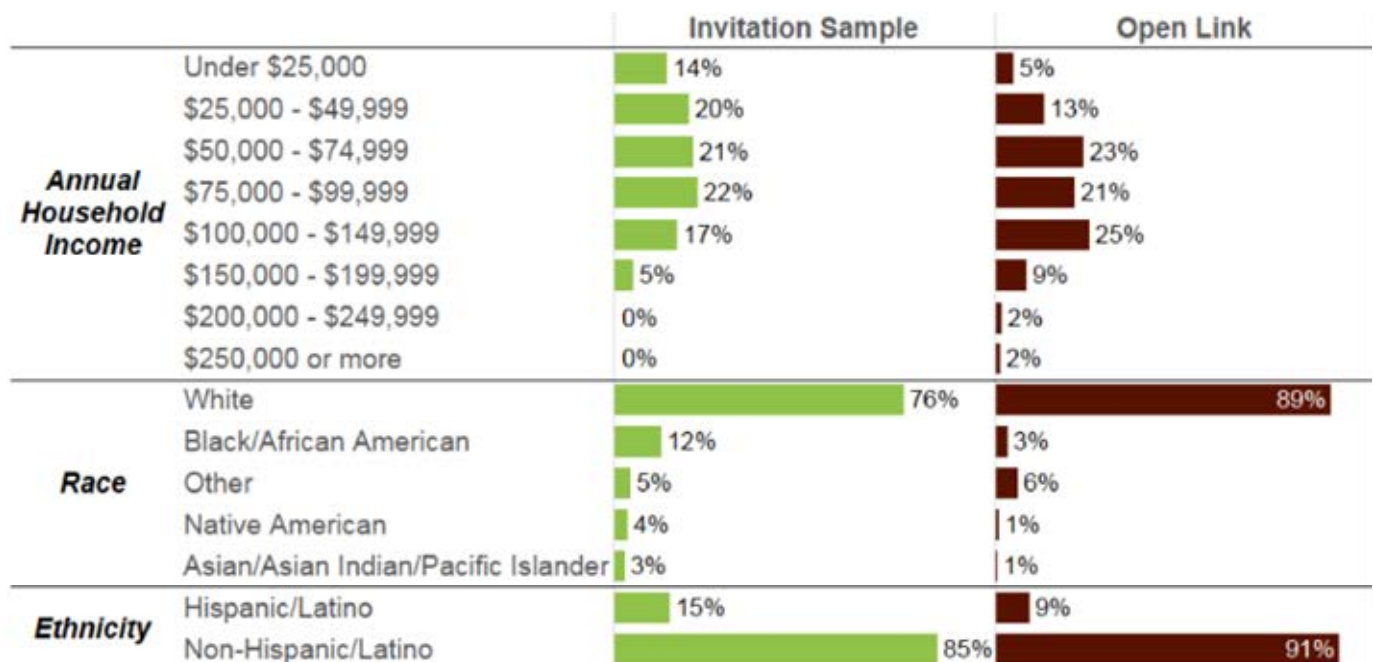
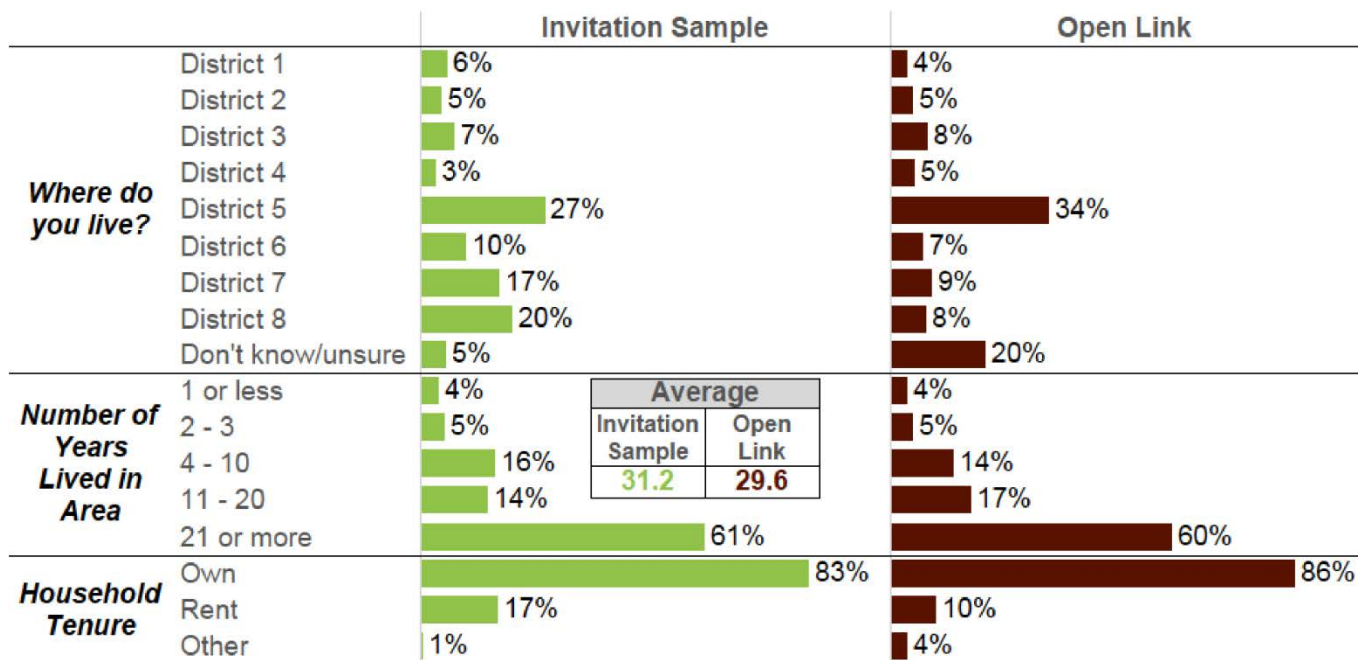


Figure 3 - Survey Residential Profile



Values & Vision

When asked to select the top three values parks and recreation should focus on, invitation respondents showed the strongest support for safety and security (55%), followed by investing in programming (47%), protecting the environment (41%), and promoting active lifestyles (39%). Figure 4 below illustrates this. The chart in Figure 5 shows how the top three

values differed by County Commission District. The darker the blue bar the higher the priority. The darker the orange bar the lower the priority. Respondents in District 1 chose investing in programming most, while District 5 respondents selected promoting active lifestyles most and District 6 respondents most often valued beautification.

Figure 4 – Top Three Areas Wyandotte County Parks & Recreation Should Focus on Long Term

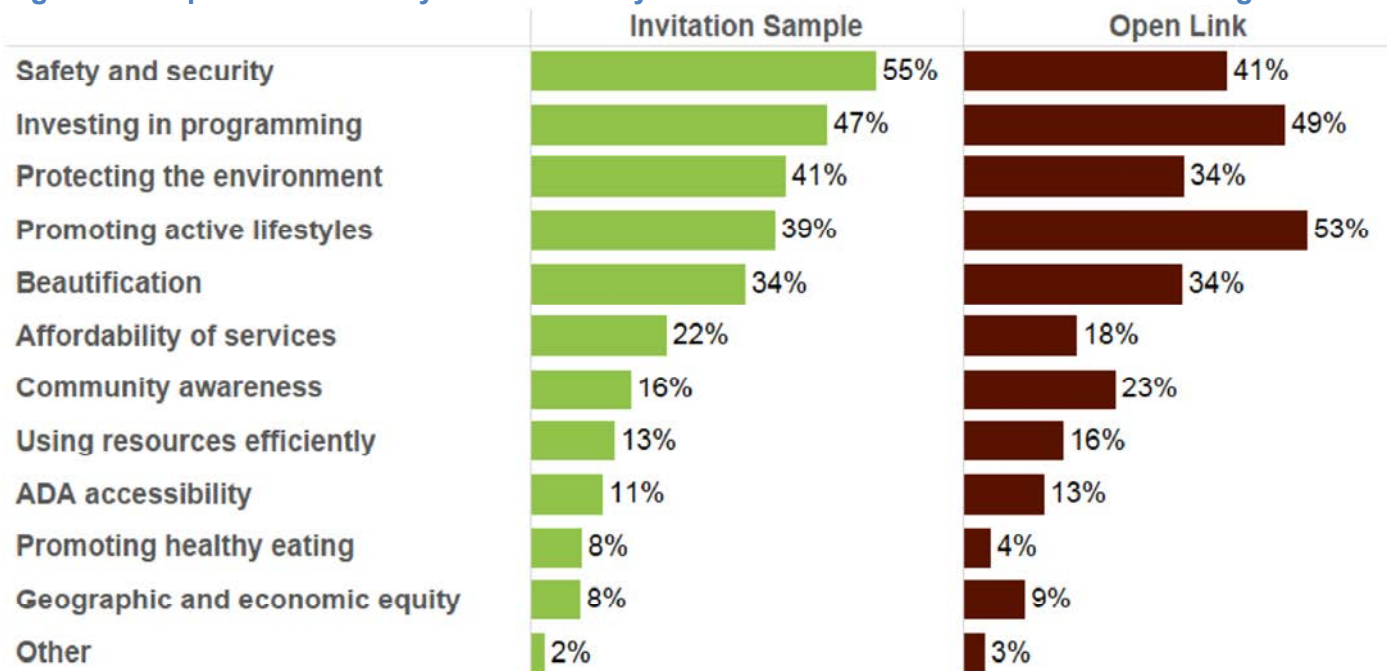
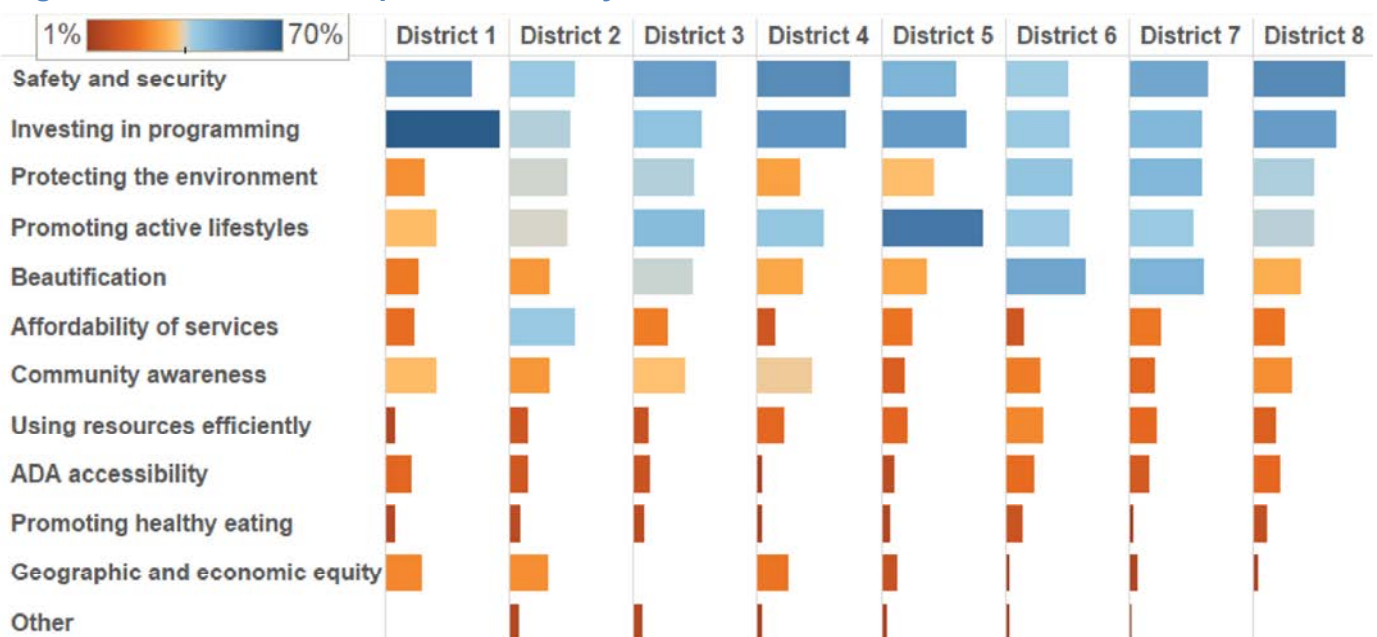


Figure 5 - Breakdown of top three values by Commission District



Importance of Existing Facilities

Community parks (92%), open spaces/natural areas (82%), and landscaping / beautification (78%) were rated the most important among invitation respondents (Figure 6). Invitation respondents indicated that most facilities meet needs, particularly picnic shelters (53%) and community parks (56%). Outdoor pools, on-street bikeways, and dog parks are not

adequately meeting needs, each receiving more “1” and “2” responses than “4” and “5” responses (Figure 7).

None of the facilities show more than 25% saying “completely met.” On average, open-link respondents provided a slightly higher importance rating for trails and levee trails, playgrounds, programs and events, outdoor athletic courts, and outdoor rectangular athletic fields.

Figure 6 - Importance of Wyandotte County Facilities to Household

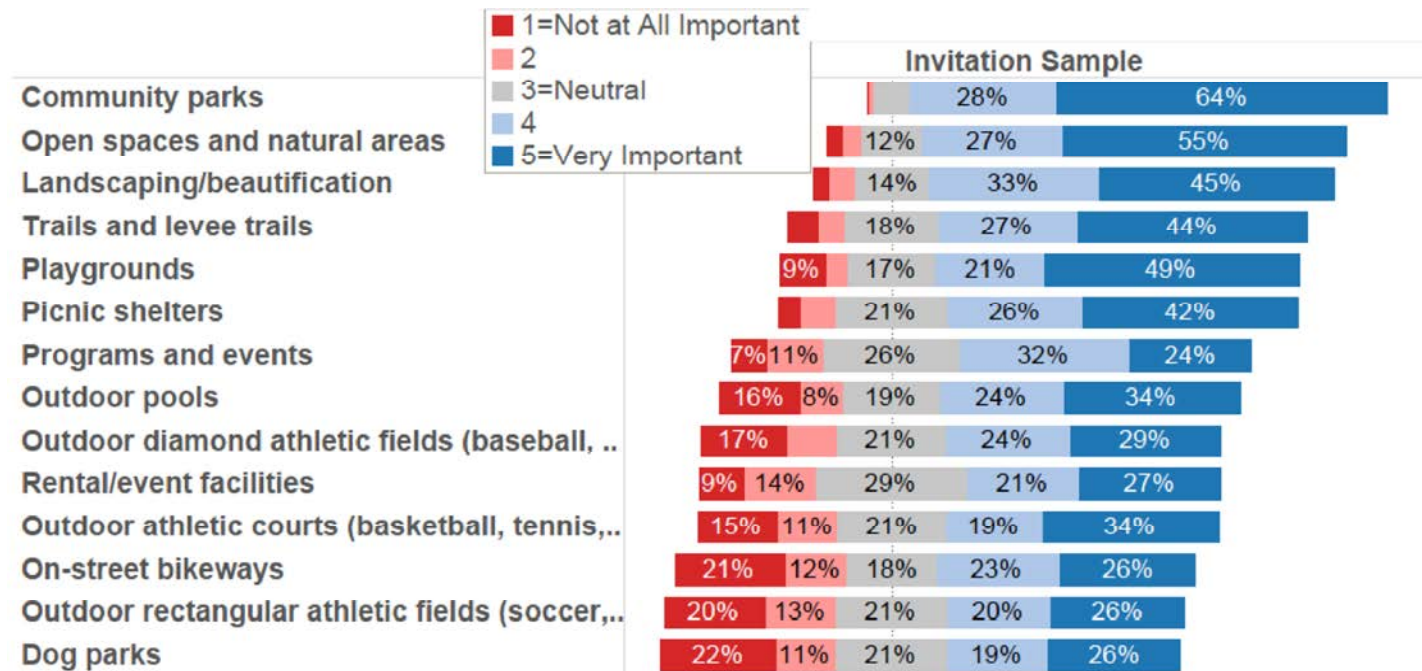
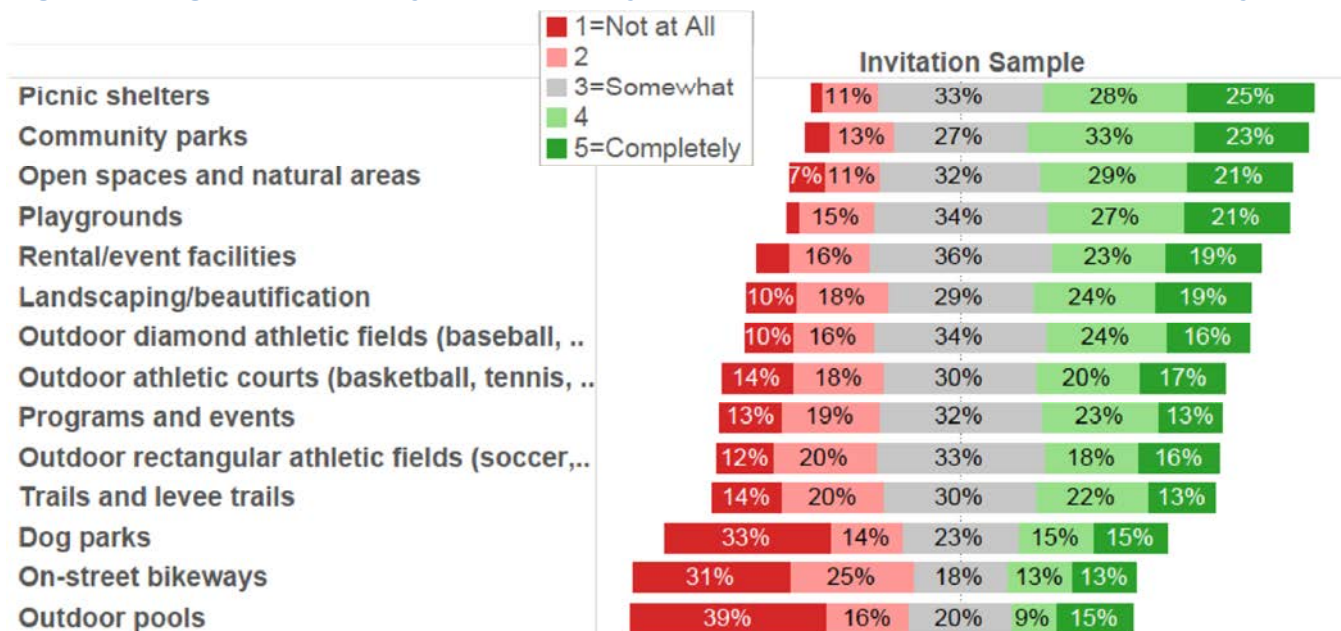


Figure 7 - Degree to which Wyandotte County Facilities meet the needs of the Community



Below is an Importance-Performance matrix that illustrates priorities based on importance and needs met. The image to the right explains how to interpret the matrix. Data gathered for Figures 6 and 7 are displayed here in a matrix format (Figure 8). From the matrix we can see that the community feels trails, programs and events, and outdoor pools are of high importance but are not currently meeting their needs. These should become priorities for the Department.

High Importance/ Low Needs Met

These are key areas for potential improvements. Improving these facilities would likely positively affect the degree to which community needs are met overall.

These “niche” facilities have a small but passionate following, so measuring participation when planning for future improvements may prove to be valuable.

Low Importance/ Low Needs Met

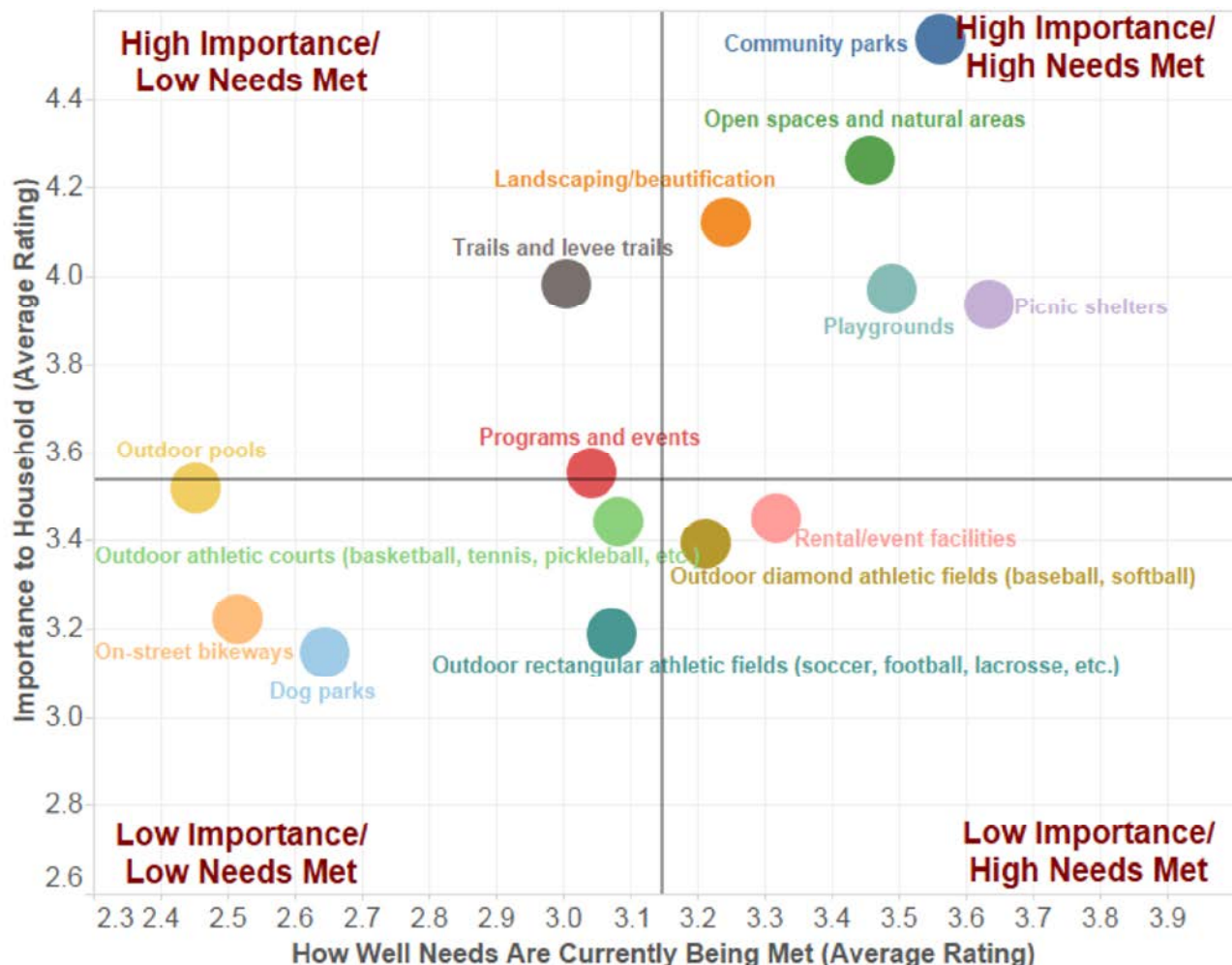
High Importance/ High Needs Met

These amenities are important to most respondents and should be maintained in the future, but are less of a priority for improvements as needs are currently being adequately met.

Current levels of support appear to be adequate. Future discussions evaluating whether the resources supporting these facilities outweigh the benefits may be constructive.

Low Importance/ High Needs Met

Figure 8: Importance – Performance Matrix



Ratings of Parks & Recreation Services

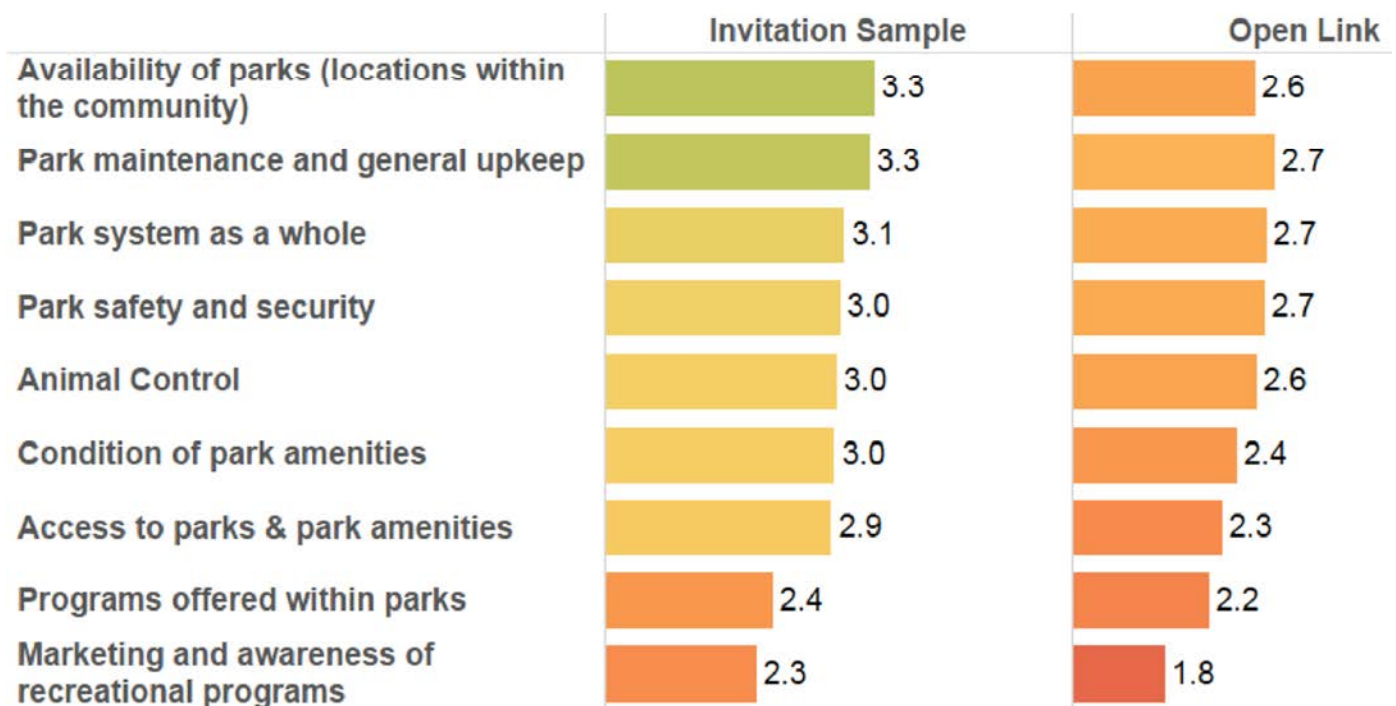
Figure 10 shows that when asked to rate parks and recreation services, invitation respondents rated the availability of parks as well as park maintenance and general upkeep highest. Marketing and awareness of recreational programs and programs offered within parks rated the lowest. Overall, ratings were generally moderate for both groups although open-link respondents provided lower ratings for all of the listed services.

On a scale of 1 to 5, the statistically valid respondent sample rated availability of parks and park maintenance as middle of road in terms of performance (average rating of 3.3 out of 5) and less than half of all respondents gave a 4 or 5 rating.

Marketing and awareness of recreational programs and programs offered within parks received a majority of “1” and “2” responses. The average rating for each of these two categories was essentially 2 out of 5.

These findings support comments that were heard during focus groups and meetings with neighborhood groups and stakeholders. Essentially, all aspects of the Parks and Recreation Department could benefit from improvement, but marketing and awareness of programs and community programs offered within parks need the most attention.

Figure 9 - Average rating by sample group



Importance of Future Facilities

Figure 10 - Figure 13 illustrate the importance of future facilities and the top three priority ratings identified by respondents. A priority breakdown is provided by sample group as well as by district.

Priorities vary considerably by location of residence which can generally be attributed to their different demographic makeup.

Figure 10 - Importance of future facilities

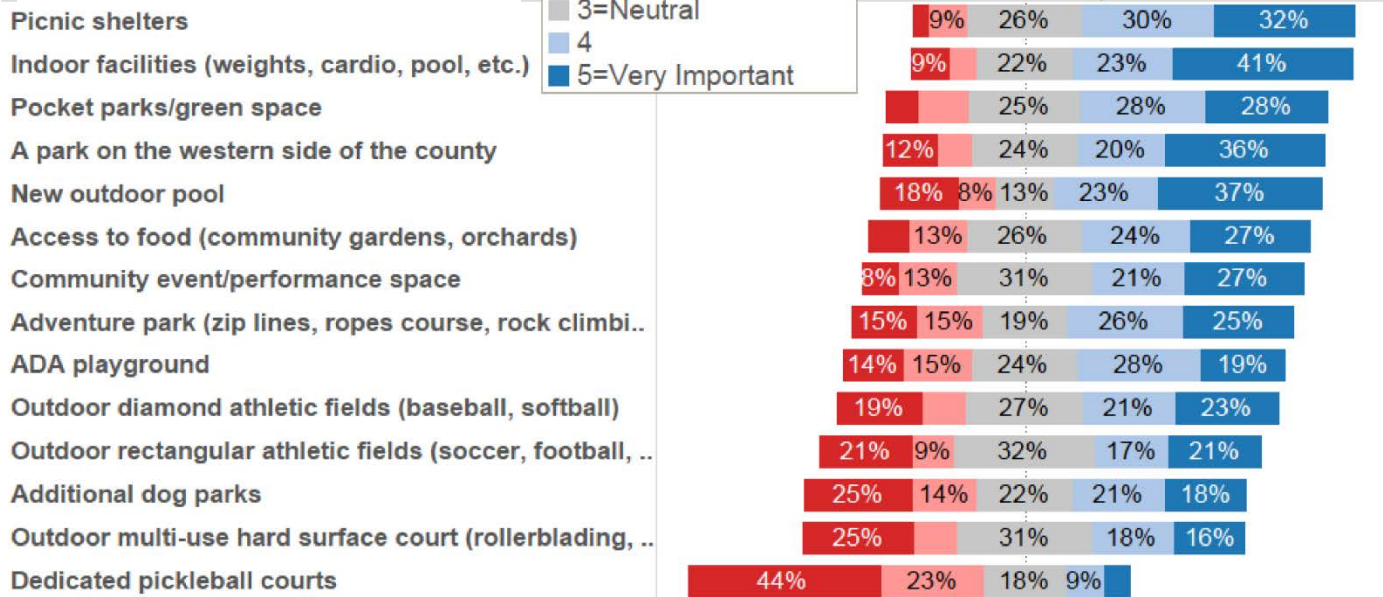


Figure 11 - Top three priority ratings

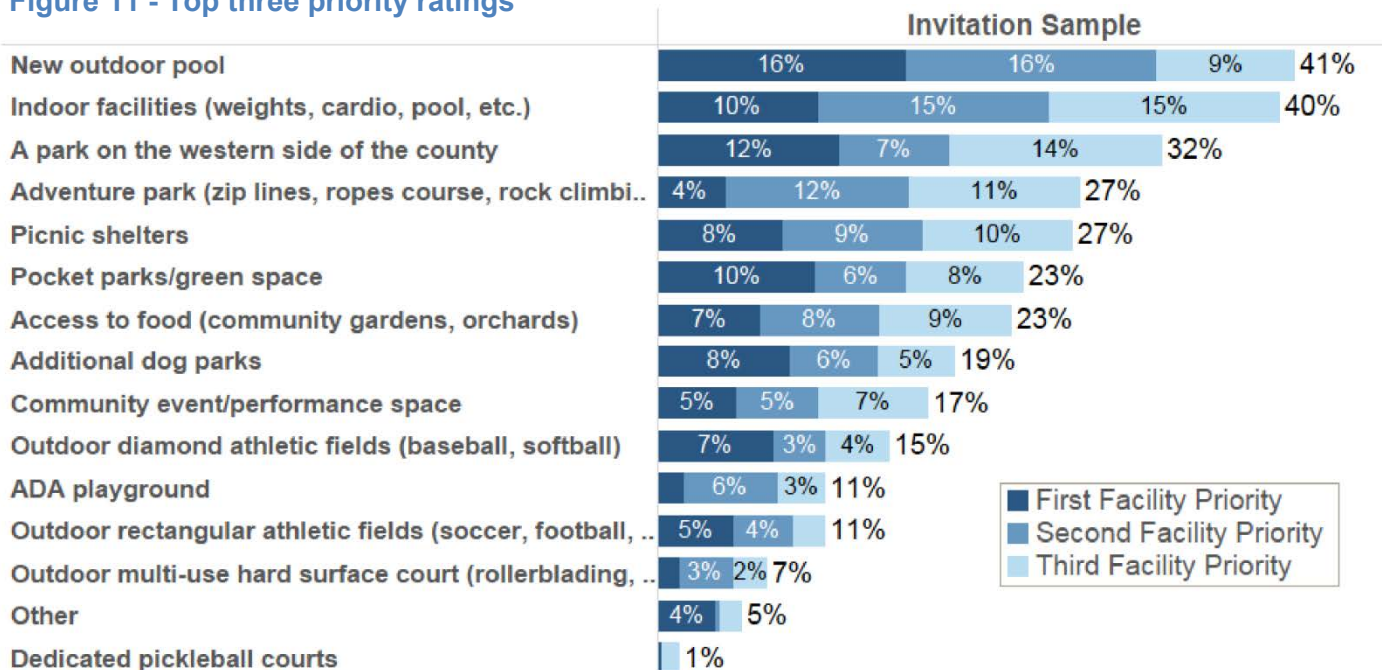


Figure 12 – Priority breakdown by sample

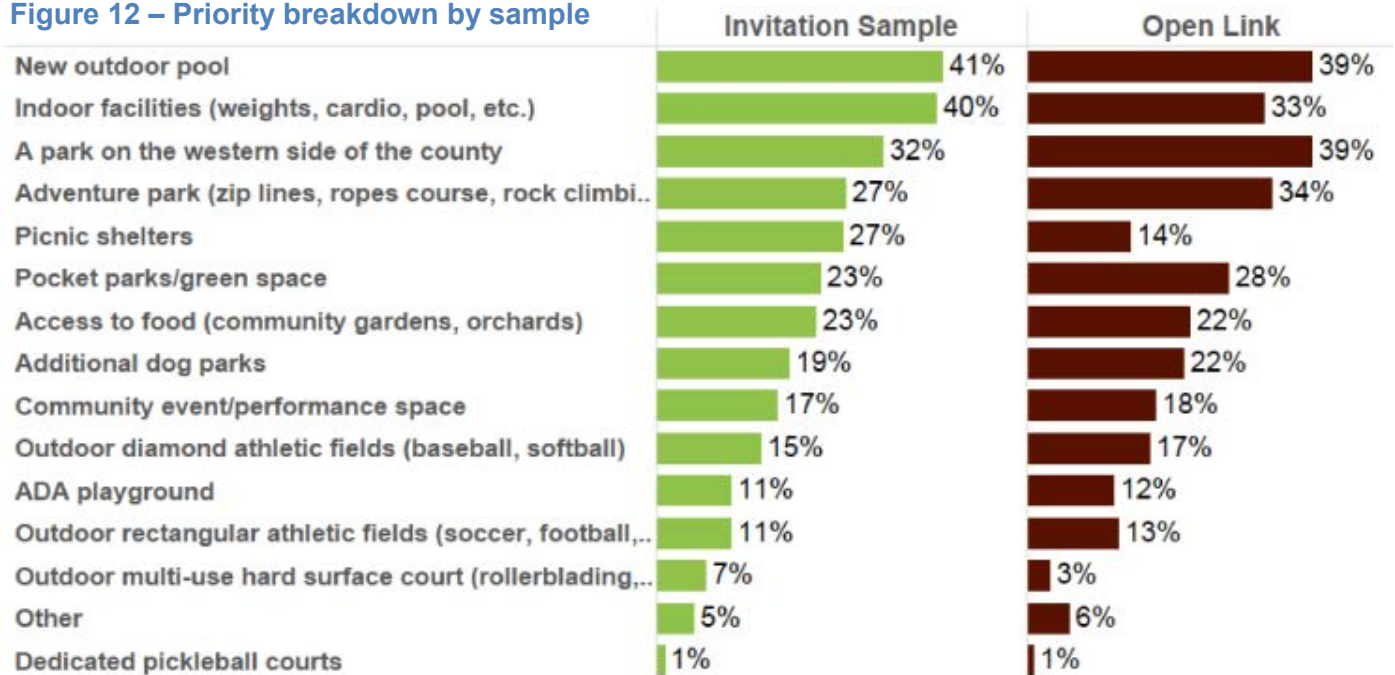
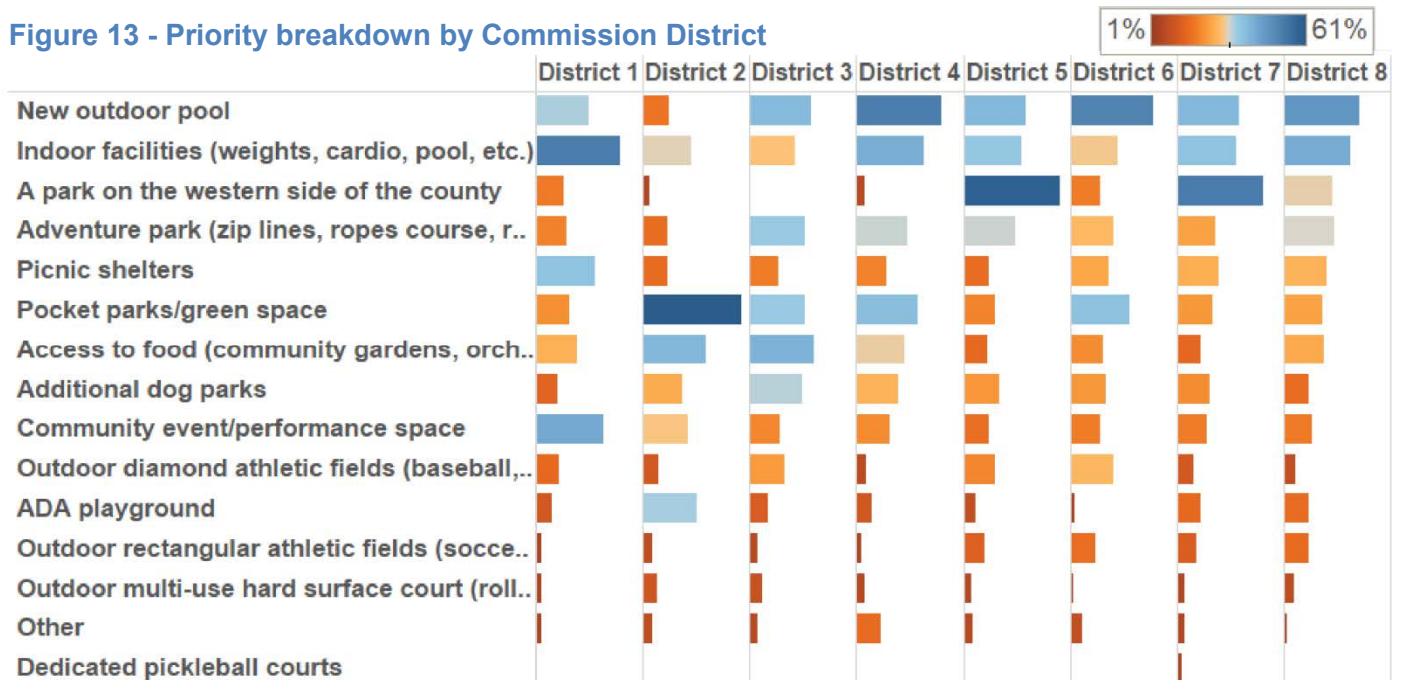


Figure 13 - Priority breakdown by Commission District



Improvements to Existing Facilities

When asked what improvements to existing facilities they would like to see, over half of invitation respondents selected restroom renovations, walking trails, lighting, and sidewalks. Respondents chose their first, second, and third priorities for improvements to

existing facilities (Figure 14).

Restroom renovations topped the list, with 37% of invitation respondents identifying it as one of their top three priorities (19% as their number one priority). Walking trails are also a priority (35%). Figure 15 shows the priorities identified by respondents in each district.

Figure 14 - Top Three priorities for improvements to existing facilities

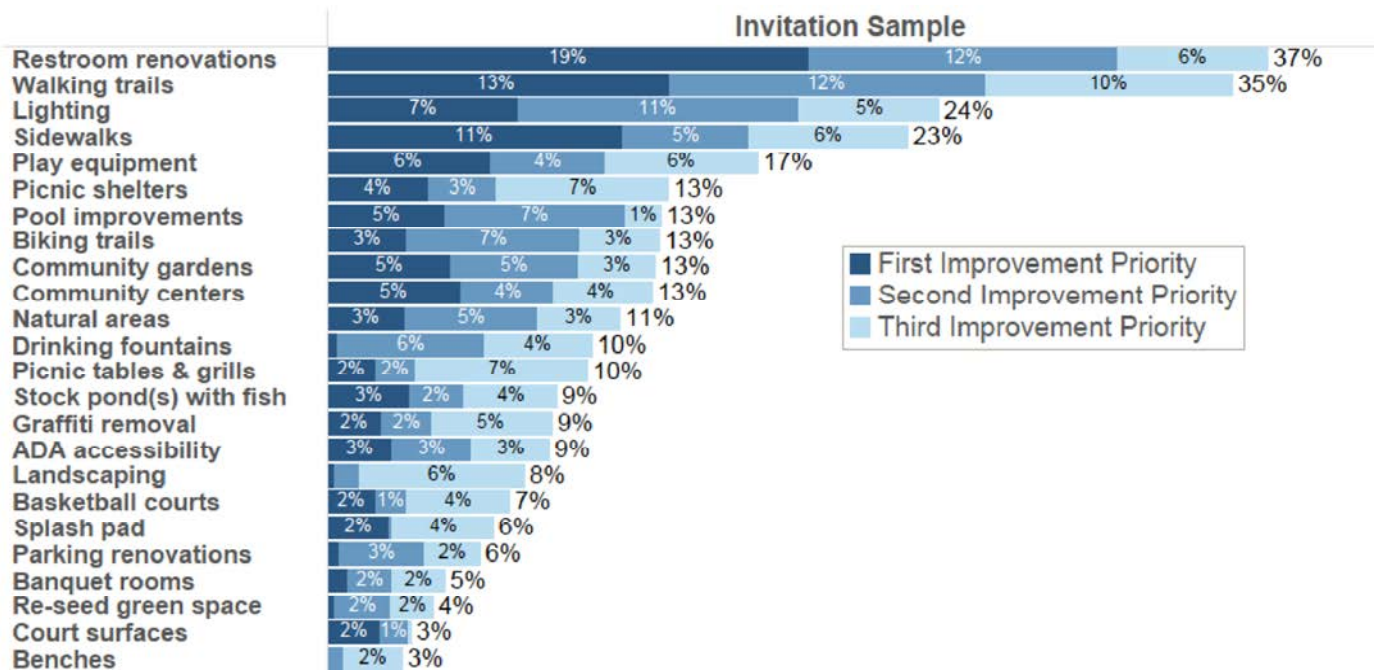
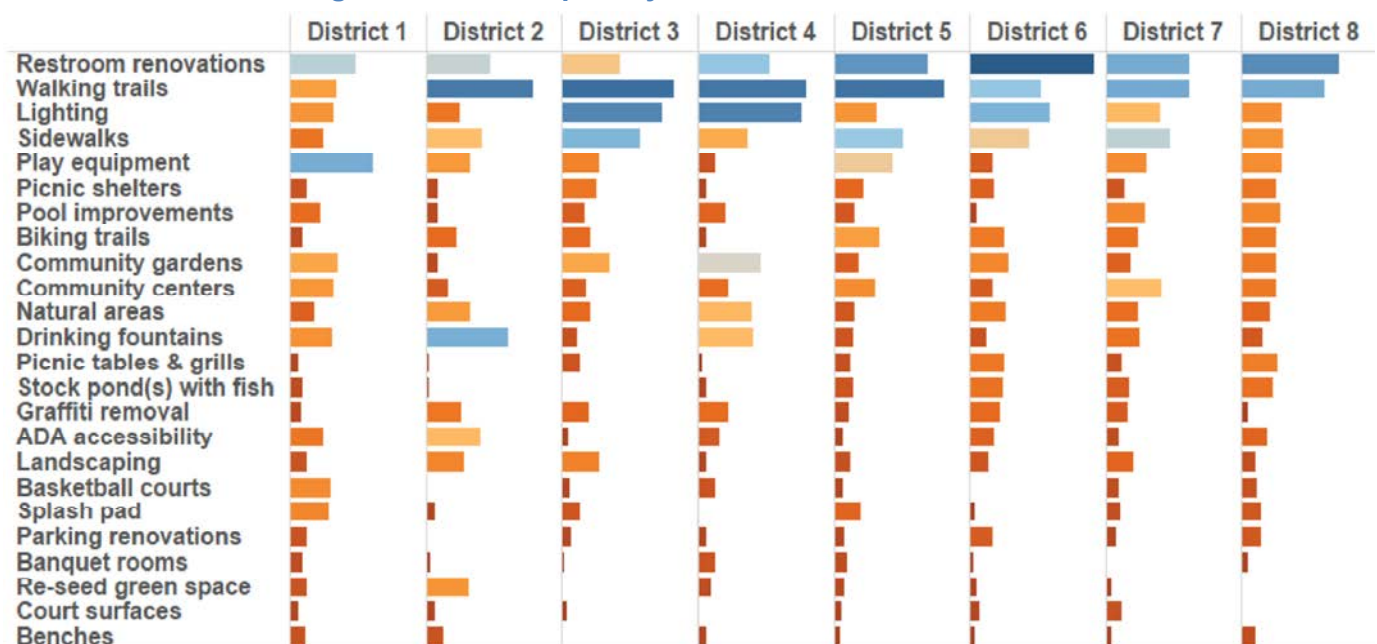


Figure 15 - Priority breakdown by Commission District. The darker the blue the higher the priority and the darker the orange the lower the priority.



Programs and Activities

Figure 16 illustrates that invitation respondents most commonly indicated that their household has a need for community events (56%), fitness classes (55%), outdoor recreation programs (49%), hobby/interest programs (47%), and swimming lessons/aquatic programs (45%).

Figure 16 - Program priorities by sample group

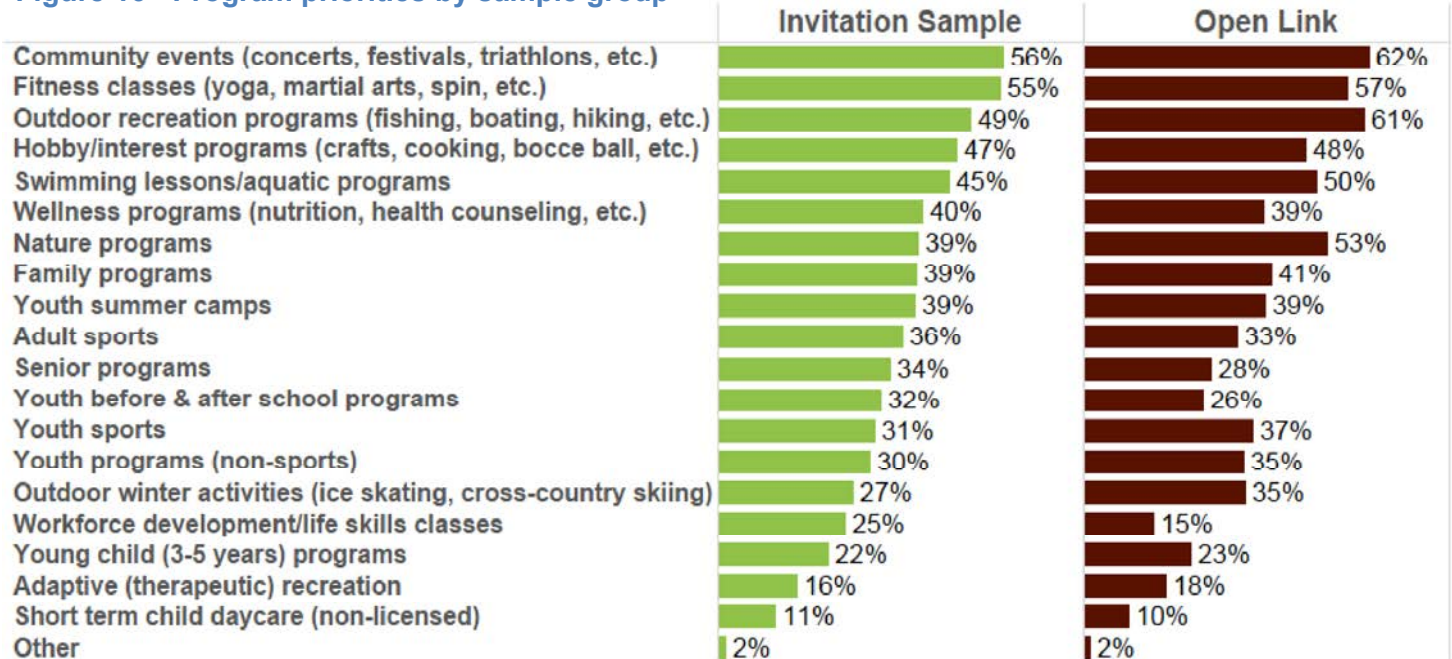
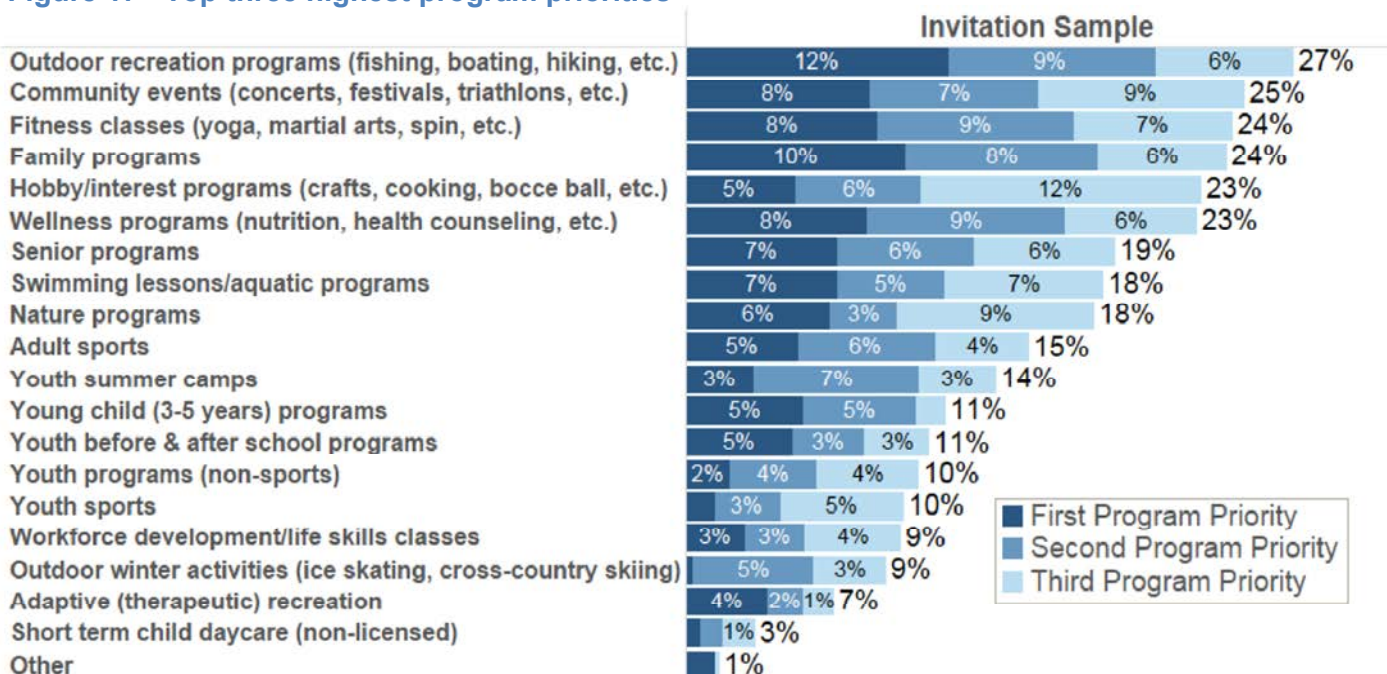


Figure 17 shows that almost one third (27%) of invitation respondents indicated that outdoor recreation programming is one of their top three priorities (12% said it is their number one priority). Other program priorities include community events (25%), fitness classes, and family programs (each 24%).

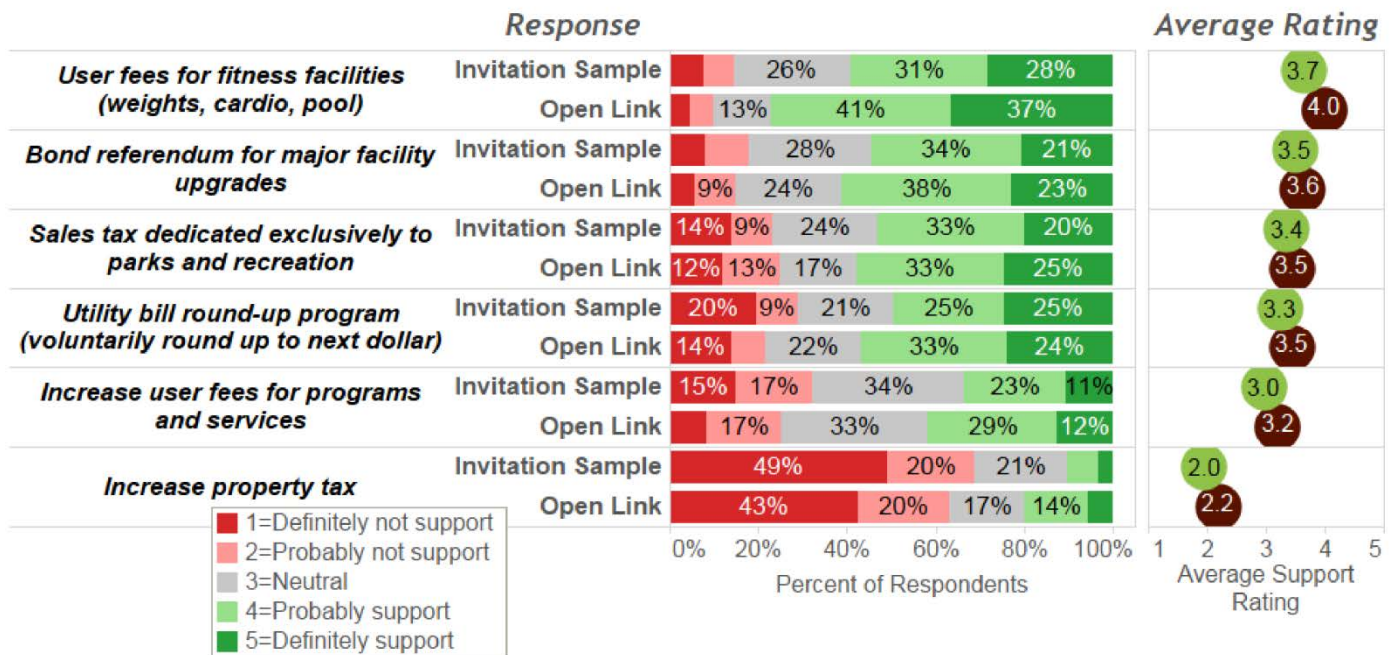
Figure 17 - Top three highest program priorities



Financial Choices / Fees

Figure 18 below shows that invitation respondents were most supportive of user fees for fitness facilities (59%) and a bond referendum (54%), but were highly opposed to an increase in property tax (69%). Ratings from open-link respondents tended to agree with those from the statistically valid sample though slightly more supportive in most cases.

Figure 18 - Willingness to support funding options for Wyandotte County Parks and Recreation offerings





INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the quality and condition of Wyandotte County parks and their associated amenities. All 54 parks were inventoried and assessed to establish a Level of Quality (LOQ) unique to Wyandotte County. First, a snapshot was taken of the County's current parkland per capita to determine how much park land Wyandotte County has in relation to its population Table 4-1. By comparison, Wyandotte County Parks and Recreation maintains over twice as much park land per 1,000 residents than other municipalities with populations between 100,000 and 250,000 people (National Recreation and Parks Association's [NRPA] 2017 Performance Review).

Table 4-1 - Park acres per 1,000 residents by Commission District compared to relevant NRPA median.

| DISTRICT | # of Parks | Park Land (Acres) | Park Acres per 1,000 Residents | NRPA Median |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | 8 | 129 | 6.47 | 7.90 |
| 2 | 16 | 51 | 2.57 | 7.90 |
| 3 | 5 | 100 | 5.19 | 7.90 |
| 4 | 13 | 228 | 11.49 | 7.90 |
| 5 | 1 | 1,800 | 91.98 | 7.90 |
| 6 | 6 | 168 | 8.70 | 7.90 |
| 7 | 3 | 379 | 19.23 | 7.90 |
| 8 | 3 | 85 | 4.30 | 7.90 |
| Total | 55 | 2,941 | 18.67 | 7.90 |

DISPERSION OF PARKS

While the amount of park land per resident comparison provides perspective on the size of the system, analysis of the dispersion of parks provides a look at the area served by parks. A Gap Analysis was conducted using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify areas of the community that may be underserved by parks (See Appendix C for maps).

4

OUTDOOR FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

More people will travel further to parks that have desirable amenities in good condition. Therefore, the service radius of a park in this study is either limited or enhanced based on performance measurements. A ¼ to ½-mile is the distance people will ordinarily walk or bike to a destination. Parks with a "Good" rating were given a ½-mile service radius, while parks with a "Fairly Good" to "Fair" rating were given a ¼-mile service radius. Parks with a "Fairly Poor" to "Poor" rating were given a service radius of 1/8-mile.

The gap analysis provides insight into accessibility and notes it is limited in some areas of Wyandotte County. This corroborates community response regarding access to parks and park amenities (see Figure 9, page 26). Districts 1, 3, and 5 show a potential shortage of neighborhood parks and should consider the following:

District 1 – Coronado Park has been troubled by crime and could better serve the community with improved design and layout.

District 3 – A neighborhood park north of I-35 between 18th St. Expressway and Hwy169 would be desirable.

District 5 - Public expressed a need for neighborhood parks in the Piper Area.

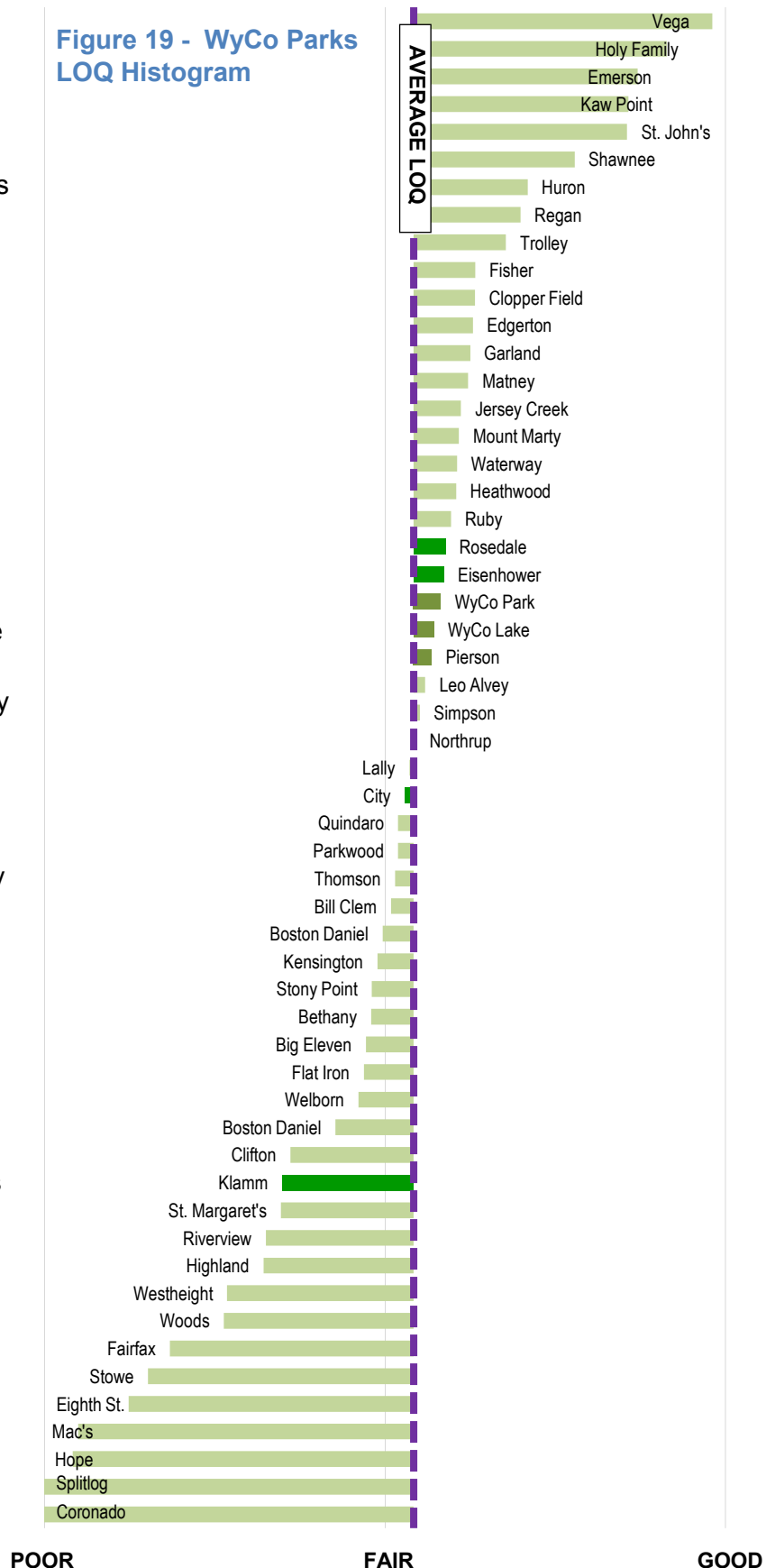
LOQ ASSESSMENT

An inventory was taken of each park and its amenities. Each park was evaluated by quality criteria assessing Accessibility, Character, Connectivity, and Usability. In addition, amenities in each park were evaluated in terms of their physical condition. The product of park qualities and the condition of amenities within each park establishes a LOQ specifically for Wyandotte County. For the purpose of this Plan, LOQ ratings are identified on each park's cut sheet within a continuum of Good, Fair, or Poor. Each rating is an expression of a park's performance compared to the park system as a whole (see Park Cut Sheets in Appendix C).

The histogram to the right (Figure 19) provides a snapshot of Wyandotte County park performance based on the above mentioned criteria. The overall LOQ of Wyandotte County parks is slightly better than Fair. The dashed purple line represents the average LOQ for Wyandotte County parks and can be better understood by visiting Bethany, Edgerton, Jersey Creek, or Thompson Parks. While most Wyandotte County parks have improvement needs to varying degrees, this assessment provides a guide for establishing priorities for future capital planning. Light green colored bars in Figure 19 represent mini parks and neighborhood parks, the brighter green represents community parks, and the dark green bars are the three regional parks.

This LOQ assessment of outdoor park facilities is in line with the invitation sample ratings of the park system overall. Open-Link respondents were more critical rating the park system as a whole 2.9 out of 5 (slightly below "Fair").

Figure 19 - WyCo Parks LOQ Histogram



ACCESSIBILITY

Comments from stakeholders and the community survey results indicate that park accessibility needs improvement. Criteria for accessibility included ADA features, connectivity of sidewalks both outside and inside the park, park signage and parking. The overall average Accessibility LOQ is slightly better than Fair as shown in Figure 20. Continued partnerships with community organizations and additional funding support from grants and capital budgets is needed to better meet the public's desire for improved accessibility in parks.

Accessibility to parks throughout Wyandotte County is largely hindered by a lack of sidewalks or trails connecting them to neighborhoods. The mission of the 20/20/20 Movement, an initiative of Healthy Communities Wyandotte, is to provide safe sidewalks to parks and improve trails for walking. One of the initiative's goals is to expand opportunities for increased physical activity, improving community health throughout Wyandotte County. This is supported by the fact that open-link respondents of the public survey rated 'Promoting Active Lifestyles' as the most important value the Parks Department should focus on for the long-term.

Efforts by the partnering organizations such as Healthy Communities Wyandotte, Infrastructure Action Team, and The 20/20/20 Movement have been moderately successful at adding trails and sidewalks to and within parks. Funding through the Parks Foundation and Center for Disease Control (CDC) grants have contributed to new walking paths, however much more is needed.

Figure 20 - Wyandotte County Parks Accessibility LOQ



RECOMMENDATIONS**EXISTING FACILITIES**

The team consistently heard throughout the public input process that the Parks Department should focus on basic facility needs. The following are the top six improvement priorities (in order of importance) out of a total of 24:

1. Restroom renovations
2. Walking trails
3. Lighting
4. Sidewalks
5. Play equipment
6. Picnic shelters

Based on the inventory assessment and public response the list below represents parks that should be priorities for improvements to restrooms, playgrounds, and shelters.

Restrooms

- Fairfax
- Heathwood
- Kensington
- Klamm
- Quindaro
- Wyandotte County lake

Picnic Shelters

- Bill Clemm
- City Park
- Garland
- Heathwood
- Quindaro
- Wyandotte County Lake

Playgrounds

- Bill Clemm
- Eisenhower
- Heathwood
- Hope
- Klamm
- Leo Alvey
- Matney
- Parkwood
- St. Margarets

FUTURE FACILITIES

Public input throughout this process revealed that the community wants future park improvements to focus on meeting their basic needs more so than adding major new things. The following five park priorities were strongly voiced by the community:

1. Safety and Security
2. Communication & Awareness
3. Improve Access to Parks (sidewalks & trails)
4. Improve the Condition of Existing Amenities
5. Recreational Program offering

When asked about specific facility needs the public responded that a new pool should be at the top of the list. Parkwood Pool is the only UG owned pool in the County. Additional priorities for specific park facilities include:

1. New pool and aquatic facilities
2. Indoor facilities (weights, cardio, pool, etc.)
3. A park on the western side of the county
4. Adventure park (zip lines, ropes course, etc.)
5. Picnic shelters
6. Pocket parks/green space
7. Access to food (gardens, orchards)

Cut sheets for each park can be found in Appendix C. Each cut sheet includes information about the park's location, neighborhood groups and community partners associated with the park, an inventory of amenities, a performance assessment, and recommendations.

The purpose of this indoor facilities assessment was to evaluate the quality and condition of Wyandotte County community / recreational centers and event facilities. A facility survey was performed for each of the following centers to determine their respective physical condition and fitness to support the programs they offer:

Argentine Community Center

Armourdale Recreation Center

Bethany Community Center

Eisenhower Recreation Center

George Meyn Community Center

John F. Kennedy Community Center

Kensington Gymnasium

Patricia D. Kane Community Center

Pierson Community Center

James P. Davis Banquet Hall

Overall, the UG Parks Department staff does their best to maintain the community centers with the resources they have available making them generally presentable to the public and functional for current uses. Partnerships with local neighborhood groups and Neighborhood Business Revitalization groups have been essential to keeping the facilities programmed and operating. Additional resources are needed to make improvements that address a variety of mechanical, technological, and cosmetic deficiencies found during this assessment. Modernization is needed to equip Wyandotte County community centers with the capacity to meet the needs of user's interests and enable the centers to be more financially sustainable.

Facility caretakers reported that participation rates in community center programs remains

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INDOOR FACILITIES ASSESSMENT



fairly steady from early spring through the summer and fall. They also reported periods of higher than usual utilization particularly at the beginning of the year when the schedule of leased activities becomes known. More regarding programming is discussed in later chapters.

Public input revealed that community centers are important and some areas of the community are underserved by them. Over half of the 812 respondents in a 2015 community survey by KU Med Center, reported they were very interested in a community center or gymnasium in the Rosedale area. Rosedale area respondents reported that they were most interested in

facilities that support the following programs: swimming lessons/aquatic programs, arts and crafts programs, exercise classes or programs, and activities for seniors. Community input also revealed that there is a desire for a community center in the Piper area.

The Armourdale Renewal Association (ARA) expressed interest and support in seeking grant money to build a new community center. The ARA has raised millions of dollars in grants and corporate sponsorships and is more than eager to work with the UG and Wyandotte County Parks and Recreation to help make this a reality for their community. Survey comments from the public noted they felt there are a large number of users at the Armourdale Recreation Center, but the facility has been ignored by capital funding to make badly needed improvements, such as ADA access. Those surveyed feel it has been ignored for the last 25 years.

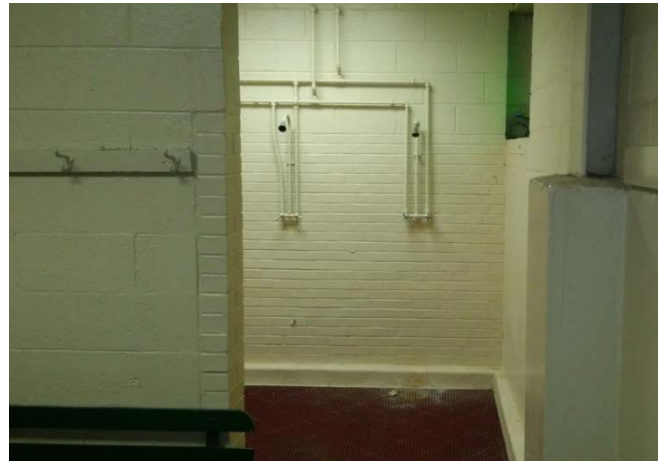
While a few appear to be in support of the proposed new center as part of the Healthy Living Campus, others voiced concern that the money could be better spent investing in the facilities they already have. Equitable dispersion of support for improvements to community centers is also important to the public.

The following are key improvement opportunities observed during on-site assessments that are generally needed at most community centers:

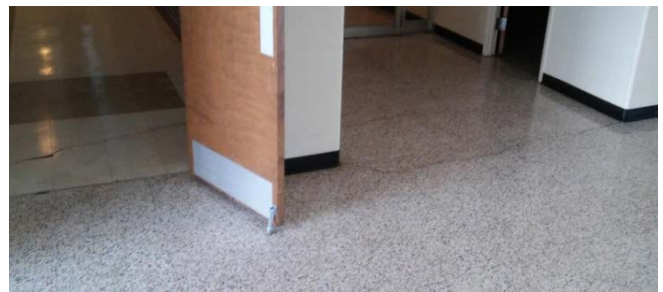
- Windows need replacement in some locations



- Shower and locker rooms need improvements



- Finish materials need updating



- Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment and systems need updating to improve efficiency



- Improved accessibility (inside and outside)
- Minor (though persistent) roof leaks were observed in several buildings



- The entry bridge to the JFK Center should be replaced and made ADA accessible



The UG publishes an *Official Guide to Parks and Recreation Services*, in which they list the schedule of activities offered for each community center and event space. Most of the activities offered have separate programs for seniors, adults and youth with some overlap of the age groups depending on the activity. The activities may or may not have an associated fee.

Typical programs common to most of the centers include:

- A variety of arts and craft-making classes
- Self-defense training
- Supplemental education opportunities

- Basketball (league play or free court time)
- Indoor soccer
- Volleyball

Amenities that would distinguish the facilities from each other, and that may serve a need specific to its patrons were also noted:

- A few centers have theatrical stages adjoining the gymnasium for theater programs



- The JFK Center has a dance studio with classes conducted by a partner studio



- Eisenhower and Pierson Centers have an exterior spray park in adjacent parks



- Several centers have exterior playground equipment



RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

The facilities appear to generally be structurally sound and have years of effective use ahead of them. Shifts in demographics will inevitably occur (aging population, birth rate, cultural shifts) as well as changes in user interests. Improvements should focus on meeting the basic needs of users, providing flexible spaces with the capacity to respond to changes in user interests, and operate in a way that matches supply to demand in a financially sustainable way. The following recommendations focus on modernizing current facilities to towards achieving these goals:

1. Make all facilities truly ADA accessible.
2. Perform maintenance improvements to roofs, windows, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment.
3. Modernize outdated facility utility systems for improved efficiency and conformance with sustainable design measures (Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting, High Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER)-rated mechanical units, motion operated plumbing).

4. Replace worn out finish materials with environmentally friendly finishes that would also brighten the interior appearance.
5. Provide free Wi-Fi at all facilities.
6. Provide accommodations for exercise and fitness activities at all facilities with the latest equipment (weights and cardio).
7. Provide rentable multi-purpose spaces complete with the latest multimedia features.

The indoor facilities assessment cut sheets for each community center that include assessments and recommendations specific to each are in Appendix D.

Findings and Update

The UG Parks Department maintains 2,900 acres of park land consisting of 54 parks that include 48 play areas; 21 turf medians, triangles, and dividers; 44 parking and vacant lots; 75 paths, walks, and steps; and 40 undeveloped paths.

The UG Parks Department is divided into three divisions: Recreation Management, Park Maintenance, and Golf Course Management. The Recreation Management Division is responsible for all recreation programming that includes youth and adult sports, recreation programs, and seasonal special events. These programs are conducted at the Department's seven community centers, numerous athletic fields, swimming pool, and parks. The Golf Course Management Division oversees the management of an 18-hole championship course with a full-service club house and a 6-hole junior golf course. The Park Maintenance Division oversees the daily maintenance, repair, and development of 3 regional parks, 4 community parks, 47 neighborhood parks, 7 recreation/community center buildings, 3 community center buildings, 3 spray parks, and 1 pool.

Public Input

Parks is the #1 priority for the community based on the following questions asked during the public engagement process:

- Importance of Existing Facilities
 - Parks 96%
- Strengths/Best Aspects of Department
 - Parks 25.32%
- Needs Improvement
 - Parks 20.13%
- Top Priority
 - Parks 37%
- Priority by District
 - Parks 16.22%
- Additional Amenities you would like to see
 - Parks 40.54%

6

MAINTENANCE, OPERATIONAL, AND STAFFING ASSESSMENT

Trails are the #2 priority for the community based on the following questions asked during the public engagement process:

- Importance of Existing Facilities
 - Trails and levee trails 80%
- Strengths/Best Aspects of Department
 - Trails 13.64%
- Needs Improvement
 - Trails 16.23%
- Top Priority
 - Trails 35%
- Priority by District
 - Trails 5.41%
- Additional Amenities you would like to see
 - Trails 10.81%

Annual Operating and Maintenance Budget (without Capital Improvement)

The annual operating and maintenance budget for the UG has dropped significantly since 2008 which has lowered the standards of maintenance for existing facilities. The table (Table 6-2) and graphs (Figure 21, Figure 22, Figure 23) on this page show the combined budget of the Parks Department Administration, Maintenance, and Recreation divisions from 2005-2017.

Table 6-2 – Parks Operating and Maintenance Budget 2005-2017

| Year | Total Annual Operating Budget | Change |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 2005 | \$4,387,311 | \$89,777 |
| 2006 | \$4,929,461 | \$542,150 |
| 2007 | \$6,317,076 | \$1,387,615 |
| 2008 | \$7,585,412 | \$1,268,336 |
| 2009 | \$5,230,564 | -\$2,354,848 |
| 2010 | \$4,916,421 | -\$314,143 |
| 2011 | \$4,902,368 | -\$14,053 |
| 2012 | \$4,986,931 | \$84,563 |
| 2013 | \$5,392,401 | \$405,470 |
| 2014 | \$5,030,426 | -\$361,975 |
| 2015 | \$5,062,598 | \$32,172 |
| 2016 | \$5,600,486 | \$537,888 |
| 2017 | \$5,973,484 | \$372,998 |

Figure 21 shows the Parks Department's operating and maintenance budget performance over the last 12 years. Note a high point in 2008 followed by major cuts. In 2009, the Parks Department's budget was cut by 45% followed by additional cuts in 2010 and 2014 as illustrated in Figure 22. More recently Parks Department's budget has been on the upswing with budget increases more commensurate with the UG's overall budget. However, when considered as a percent of the UG's total budget, Park Department's operations and maintenance budget has taken a nose dive as illustrated in Figure 23. In 2008, Parks Department Administration, Maintenance and Recreation comprised 3.25% of the UG's total operating budget compared to this year's 1.87%.



Figure 21 - Parks operating and maintenance budget history 2005-2017

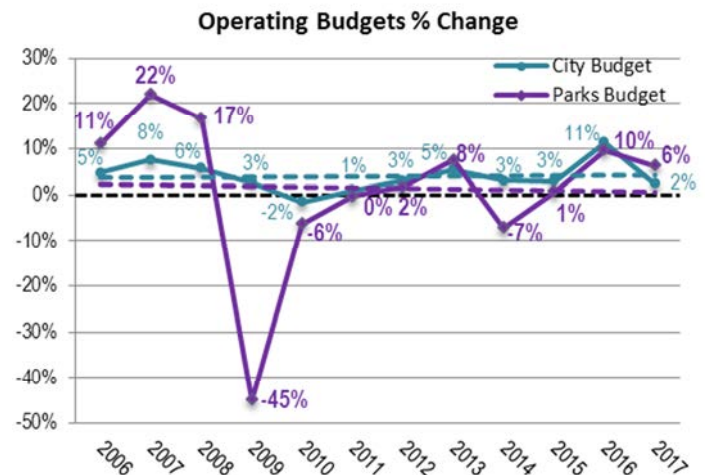


Figure 22 - Parks operating and maintenance budget annual % change 2005-2017 in comparison to the UG's overall budget.

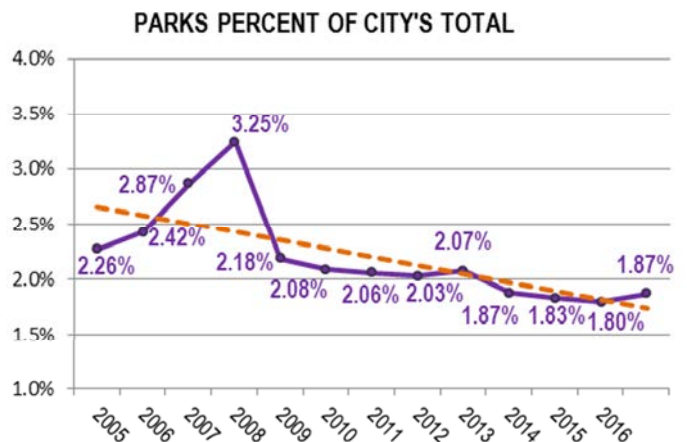


Figure 23 - Parks operating and maintenance budget as a percent to UG total 2005-2017.

Annual Operating and Maintenance Budget (with Capital Improvement)

How the UG Parks Department annual operating and maintenance budget compares with NRPA relevant comparisons is demonstrated on the following table (Table 6-3) and chart (Figure 24). The 2017 operations and maintenance budget for the UG Parks Department including capital outlay is \$7,244,480, compared to the NRPA relevant comparison of \$11,591,200 which is a shortfall of \$4,346,720.

Table 6-3 - NRPA relevant comparisons to UG Parks and Recreation Operating Budget

| | WyCo (Maint., Admin., Rec, and CMIP) | NRPA RELEVANT COMPARISONS |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| 2017 Budget | \$7,244,480 | |
| Budget by Population (100k to 250k) | \$7,244,480 | \$10,226,000 |
| Budget by Acres Maintained (1,001 to 3,500 acres) | \$7,244,480 | \$9,690,000 |
| Budget by # of Parks Maintained (Over 50) | \$7,244,480 | \$18,154,000 |
| Budget by Population per square mile (500-1500) | \$7,244,480 | \$6,851,000 |
| Budget by Region (Midwest) | \$7,244,480 | \$13,035,000 |
| | AVERAGE | \$11,591,200 |

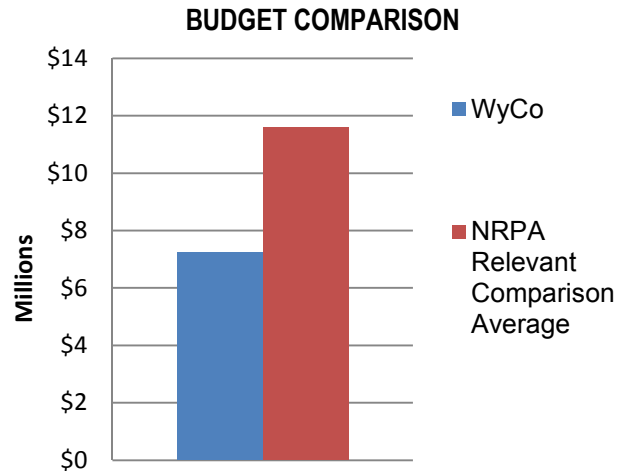


Figure 24 - Findings from the 2017 NRPA Agency Performance Review uses data from Park Metrics, NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool, from years 2014-2016.

STAFFING

How the UG Parks Department staffing of full time equivalents (FTEs) compares with NRPA relevant comparisons is demonstrated on the following table (Table 6-4) and chart (Figure 25). The total number of FTEs for the UG Parks Department was 105 in 2009 and is currently 76, compared to the NRPA relevant comparison of 111, which is a shortfall of 35 FTEs.

Table 6-4 NRPA relevant comparisons to UG Parks Staffing Levels

| | WyCo (LESS GOLF COURSE & NOXIOUS WEEDS) | NRPA RELEVANT COMPARISONS |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| FTE per 10,000 residents | 4.6 | 7.3 |
| FTE by Population (100k to 250k) | 76 | 87 |
| FTE by Acres Maintained (1,001 to 3,500) | 76 | 90.9 |
| FTE by # of parks maintained (Over 50) | 76 | 200.9 |
| FTE by population per square mile (500-1500) | 76 | 82.8 |
| FTE by region (Midwest) | 76 | 92.8 |
| | AVERAGE | 111 |

STAFFING COMPARISON

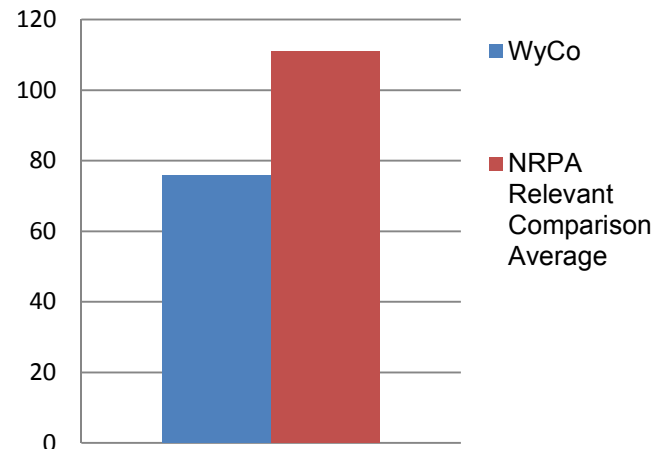


Figure 25 - Findings from the 2017 NRPA Agency Performance Review uses data from Park Metrics, NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool, from years 2014-2016.

SUMMARY

The following is a summary of and recommendations for maintenance, operations, and staffing to assist the UG Parks Department in utilizing existing resources and identifying potential new resources, including partnerships, which can help them to maintain and improve parks, facilities, and programming to meet current and future needs of the community:

- Many of the facilities are “tired” and in need of refurbishing.
- The NRPA’s agency performance benchmarking tool indicates that the UG Parks Department maintains more acres, parks, facilities and amenities with less budget and staffing resources than the NRPA’s relevant comparison average.
- The UG Parks Department has the same amount of acres, parks, facilities and amenities to maintain as it did in 2008. However, it is currently operating with a smaller budget (-\$1,611,928) and fewer staff (-35 FTEs).
- The UG Parks Department is understaffed at mid-level positions and below in Maintenance and Recreation.
- There is a lack of programming staff to be able to increase programming levels.
- Maintenance standards have suffered through the years based on the loss of resources (budget dollars and personnel), and it will only continue to get worse.
- Park Rangers are allocated for in the Sheriff’s Department budget and are understaffed for the desired coverage of facilities. Currently, there is only one ranger to cover the entire UG park system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More General Fund dollars should be appropriated to fund operations and maintenance needs, especially staffing, and to fulfill the public’s first and foremost desire, which is to fix up what you have.
- If additional General Fund dollars cannot be allocated, the UG Parks Department should seek outside funding sources such as grants to offset budget shortfalls.
- Additional partnerships within the community should be developed to ensure that the quality and quantity of facilities and services can meet the needs and desires of the public.
- Additional rangers should be hired for adequate coverage of UG park facilities to ensure public safety, which is a major concern of the community. This could be accomplished with part-time and seasonal positions to cover the highest use times.



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OVERVIEW

Wyandotte County Lake is the UG's shining gem and most popular park in the system, with 400 acres of water and a total of 1500 acres. An assessment of the lake's marina was conducted as part of this master plan to assess the condition of facilities and services provided. During the assessment a number of observations were made regarding the Boathouse and docks. Public comments in the statistically valid survey show that improvements to the lake and marina are important to the community. Additional planning and funding support is needed to capitalize on the lake's full potential.

The marina's only concessionaire is starting his 44th year at the marina and is very knowledgeable about its operations and business. He operates a Johnson Boat & Motor dealership out of the Boathouse, providing a valuable service by making repairs to patron's boats, while saving them time and money by not having to haul their boats off site.

WYANDOTE COUNTY LAKE MARINA ASSESSMENT

The concessionaire keeps the Boathouse facility open 6 days a week, 10 hrs. a day during the on-season; 5 days a week 10 hrs. a day in the off-season; closed most of November, all of December and January, and part of February.

The concessionaire estimates that roughly 25% of dock patrons are over 65 with the balance in their mid-30's and older. Approximately 10% of the boats present belong to hard core fishermen and the rest are pontoons and other types used for leisure.

BOATHOUSE

The Boathouse is the access point for boats being brought in for repair as well as people coming in to do business. As is typical with older buildings, the Boathouse is in need of a number of infrastructure and finish improvements.



Below is a list of general observations made during the assessment:

1. Water, electricity, sewer and phone service are in place. However, phone service has been inconsistent.
2. There is no computer or cell phone service to this space due to its location and wall composition. Staff and patrons must leave the building to make and receive cell phone calls/text messages.
3. The interior entrance to the “office” is fairly well lit with LED strip lights. None of the plug-in connections of those lights meet current standards.
4. The flat roof has been replaced recently; however, water stains were noticed on the walls in the office/boat repair area.
5. The refrigerator provides canned cold drinks, with candy bars and other snacks inside a glass cabinet.



6. The repair area is fairly well lit and seems to provide adequate space for work on smaller boats (those less than 20 feet long).
7. A ceiling hung heater in the repair area provides heat to the entire space. There is no air conditioning for any of the building.
8. Access to the repair area is through sliding doors and the front counter rolls out of the way, providing clear access to the repair area.
9. There is considerable storage space in the remaining part of the building.

10. There is an area designated as a snack bar/grill area at one end of the building that has been recently renovated. Currently, there is no concessionaire or UG run operation of the snack bar/grill space.
11. Lights are powered by extension cords attached alongside the electrical conduit.
12. A moveable counter between the repair and the public area provides no real physical or visual separation between these two areas.
13. The bare, rusty iron, hanging out of the walls of the outdoor eating area outside of what was the snack bar area, needs to be removed.
14. Replacement of the pergola is on the list of repairs and rehabilitation work currently being done.
15. The men's restroom in the building adjacent to the snack bar area has an odd door stop placed on the floor. This minimizes access to the restroom space. There appears to be an accessible stall inside the restroom, however wheel chair access to it is not adequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The UG needs to decide whether they want to get into staffing and operating a marina facility or soliciting proposals for an operator:** It will be hard to find a person or group who would be willing to take on the financial obligations, based on the minimal revenues the current facility generates.
 - a. Providing a long-term lease with a portion of the revenues from slip rentals may work.
 - b. If the UG should choose to operate it themselves, it is recommended they have someone shadow the current concessionaire, learn his process, and modify it to fit UG regulations.

- c. Based on a 7-day week, 10-hr day, and a 40- week season, a very rough estimate could be as high as \$150,000 (Appendix E, Exhibit 3) annually to manage and operate the marina. It will be a choice between private enterprise and government regulated employment. Both have their merits.
2. **Install new technology:** Technology issues need to be addressed quickly. New boaters and younger people in general want a minimum of good cell phone and Wi-Fi service. Currently, the lake area and the Boathouse in particular have neither. Based on the terrain this will take either a radio tower or cable.
 - a. A Request for Proposals (RFP) could be solicited to provide cellular and Wi-Fi service to the Park, at no cost, in exchange for allowing a tower to be erected on Park property. The RFP could be open ended to allow proposers to provide as much or as little service as they think would be fiscally responsible.
 3. **Increase marketing and awareness:** The lack of a presence on the internet and Facebook is an area that needs to be addressed. With that comes the ability to update patrons, provide emergency information, and advise when things change.
 4. **Update Interior:** Paint, lighting, electrical service, and HVAC are all in need of upgrading. The roof has been replaced. However, there are still locations where water is observable coming down the rock walls. The recommendation for this facility is to renovate the entire structure and open up floor space for a Marina store in conjunction with the snack bar/grill/ restaurant operation.
 5. **Make the snack bar area functional:** There is currently no equipment installed and no

concessionaire. If the UG chooses to lease the Boathouse facility, consider making it a full service store and restaurant.

DOCKS

There are six boat docks and one fishing dock on the southern shoreline near the Boathouse and four on the northern shore. According to staff, all 10 docks have been replaced within the past 5 years, providing 194 14-foot long, double slip spaces (2 boats to a slip). Below are a number of general observations made during the assessment:

1. There are no covered docks available to the public.
2. Each dock has its own entrance gate.
3. Some of the boats seen during the visit extend beyond the end of the slip space by 6 feet or more.



4. Docks are made of galvanized angle iron frame with encapsulated foam flotation. Decking and banding boards are treated wood with rubber bumpers at the corners. There is no underwater bracing. The docks are held in place by winches and concrete anchors on the water side, and connections of buried concrete and other devices on the land side. Some of the shoreline cabling is attached to metal poles that are part of the guard rail along the road edge.
5. Electricity is in place only at the entry gates. Extension cords may be run the full length of a dock to provide power for jump starting or charging boats and operating other electrical devices.
6. There is no potable water to the docks.

7. Gasoline is available at the end of a dock. However sales have been minimal, less than 2,500 gallons annually.
 8. The Concessionaire stated they have minimal issues with boats hitting other boats in the double slips. He only remembered one each from 2016 and 2015.
 9. There is a dock with benches that is specified as the fishing dock.
 10. There is a small parking area adjacent to the Boathouse and a large parking lot adjacent to the boat ramp on the northern shore.
 11. Some of the dock cables are not attached to ground anchors but to uprights of the railing along the road. While this is functional, it is not good for the railing. The cable is wearing down the metal pipes of the railing, when the pipe fails will create additional maintenance work.
 12. Some boats extend 6 feet or more beyond the end of the boat dock, which creates more stress in the highly susceptible corners and end fingers, especially when coupled with the fact there is no underwater bracing. Most dock manufacturers recommend that the entire boat be within the slip and not extend beyond the dock. The docks need to be upgraded to be sized to fit the boats in the slips, and include underwater bracing
2. **Install new boat docks:** The docks need to be either modified or replaced due to the lack of underwater bracing and the undersized dock well slips. The current docks cannot withstand the stresses of oversized boats and wave action, in an undersized slip well. Lack of underwater bracing just exacerbates the situation. This will be an expensive proposition.
 - a. Most of the boats on the lake could be accommodated by a dock with 14-foot long double well slips (24' long by 20 feet wide); a 6 foot, center walkway; 4-foot-wide fingers; heavy duty underwater bracing, and concrete decking (Exhibit 1).
 - b. Atlas Dock, located in Camdenton, Missouri provided a budget estimate of \$ 82,824. Installation would be another \$11,200; for a total budget estimate of \$94,224 (Appendix E, Exhibit 2).
 - c. Funding on an annual basis is generally problematic. Revenue bonds would be a logical solution to this problem. Revenue generated from slip rentals could be used to pay the annual bond payments for dock and Boathouse improvements.
 - d. Having all of the docks the same size makes slip assignments easier. However, having multiple slip sizes could provide an opportunity to charge based on slip length. Enforcement of offenders putting boats longer than the dock slip would take vigilance and assistance from the Sheriff's Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Thought and planning.** The UG needs to explore reconfiguration of the marina facility, with docks connected by walkways on the water and limited access ramps to the docks. Docks are subject to a variety of stress points, wave action, flotation and other Marine specific loads. Having more dock access on the southern side would encourage more Boathouse and snack bar/grill/restaurant traffic. This should entail hiring a marina design team.
3. **Modify the existing docks with longer fingers and underwater bracing:** This would need to be investigated further as the original manufacturer has been purchased by another company.
4. **Add marine grade electrical service to the docks:** This would reduce the associated hazards involved in running extension cords all along the center walkways, provide

patrons with a visible improvement to their dock and reduce perceived County liability.

5. **Add potable water on the docks:** Water on the docks is lacking, as is the electricity. It is a minimal ongoing expense but is an amenity that is generally provided at all marinas. With the docks broken up into so many areas, it may be difficult to provide this service but it should be done for as many docks as possible.
6. **Provide cover over docks:** Covered docks, while not available at this facility, are an important item. Providing covered slips assists in protecting boats, limits the potential for heat related illnesses, assists in creating a more stable dock and makes the boating experience more enjoyable. In addition, slip holders socialize with each other more, which encourages community feelings for their facility. If the County chooses to modify or improve the existing docks they may want to invest in covering a dock or two and see what kind of response they get.
7. **Review slip rates:** Review slip rates of regional marinas within 60-100 miles of the Lake and consider changing the slip rate(s) for Wyandotte County Lake. Rates should be based on any and all amenities available to the patron. Rates for county residents should be lower than non-county. Revenue should pay for the general operation of the facility and pay off any bonds needed for improvements.

This assessment revealed that there is a 5-year waiting list to get a slip on the Lake.

This would indicate two things:

- a. A lack of facilities in close proximity to residents.
- b. The current slip rates are too low.

SECURITY

1. UG ordinance infractions are occurring but nothing that raises the “we need law enforcement presence now” banner. However, a lack of an enforcement presence will become an issue as the population continues to extend into the surrounding area and “real crime” begins to creep in. Patrons will decide to take their boats and money elsewhere, if the marina area is not perceived as safe and secure.

This is not just a marina issue but a Park as a whole, issue. Park Rangers/Police serve an important Public Relations function as well as the obvious law enforcement aspect. They are the first responders to emergency situations at the nearby playground, and they can respond quickly to a sinking boat, emergency medical condition, or a simple “I ran out of gas” situation. They can also arrest individuals who may pose a danger to park patrons due to drug or alcohol abuse, theft, robbery, assault, and other illegal activities.

2. Security cameras tied to a Wi-Fi network would be beneficial for the UG in identifying issues with boats, patrons and others who may not be acting in a socially or legally acceptable manner.
3. Provide digital locks for security gates that can track marina users.
4. Consider partnership opportunities with Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWPT) for shared enforcement.





8

RECREATION PROGRAM AND SERVICES ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

Programming is part of the Recreation Management Division, which is responsible for all recreation programming that includes youth and adult sports, recreation programs, and seasonal special events. These programs are conducted at the Department's 6, community centers, 3 rec centers, numerous athletic fields, swimming pool, and parks.

This assessment was based on available registration data and public input throughout the process. In 2014 the Recreation Management Division reported the following participation numbers for recreational programs:

Adult Sports – 778 Total Participants

- 128 registered for adult soccer
- 400 registered for slow pitch softball
- 50 registered for men's fast pitch softball
- 200 registered for adult volleyball

Youth Sports – 1436 Total Participants

- 315 registered for winter basketball
- 67 registered for kickball
- 163 registered for spring soccer
- 70 registered for t-ball
- 98 registered for summer basketball
- 75 registered for flag football
- 70 registered for volleyball
- 578 registered for fall soccer

Swim Lessons – 50 Total Participants

Comm. Centers – over 5,000 Total Visitations

- 315 registered for winter basketball

Notable Special Events

- Halloween Safe Night
- Frostbite 5K
- Eagle Day
- Opening Day of Trout Fishing
- KU vs. KSU Rowing Regatta
- Easter Egg Hunt
- 4 Health for all Soccer Days
- 2 Irish Road Bowling
- Hershey Track and Field
- Kid's Fishing Derby
- Juneteenth
- 3 Disc Golf Tournaments
- Missouri River 340
- Foam Run
- Back to School Bash
- KC Blues Street Festival
- Hit & Run 5K
- 6 La Placita Events
- Christmas in July
- MoKan African Art Festival
- Blacklight Run
- Armourdale Hike and Bike Trail Grand Opening
- Dotte Trot 5K
- Silver City Day
- 10 Cross Country Events
- 11 Trail Nerd Events
- Holiday Craft Show

PUBLIC INPUT ON PROGRAMMING

Recreational programming is clearly very important to the community. The most notable concern heard throughout the public input process was in regards to marketing and awareness of programs. Web pages are not maintained with current information and registering for programs requires citizens to go to the facility where each program is being offered.

During the writing of this document the Parks Department began to address some of these concerns through the addition of registration software. Additional support is needed from the UG to give autonomy to the Department to manage its own website so that it can continue to keep the public updated about programs and upcoming events.

Statistically valid survey responses revealed the following public views on UG recreational programming:

- When asked to select the top three values that parks and recreation should focus on, both invitation and open-link participants showed strong support for investing in programming at 48%.
- Investing in programming ranked in the top three and well above the 50% mark in each of the eight Districts.
- Marketing and awareness of recreational programs and programs offered within parks ranked as the lowest rated activities for the Parks Department. Their average ratings were 2.0 and 2.3 out of 5 respectively.
- The public was asked to rank Park Department facilities and activities based on how important they are to their household as well as how well their needs are being met. The Importance-Performance Matrix (Figure 8 in Chapter 3) demonstrates that programs and events are important, but the UG is not currently meeting their needs when it comes to programming.

- Invitation respondents most commonly indicated that their household has a need for community events (56%), fitness classes (55%), outdoor recreation programs (49%), hobby/interest programs (47%), and swimming lessons/aquatic programs (45%).
- Almost one third (27%) of the invitation respondents indicated that outdoor recreation programming is one of their top three priorities (12% said it was their number one priority). Other program priorities include community events (25%), fitness classes (24%), and family programs (24%).
- When asked to name the top three program priorities for their household, the invitation respondents were more likely to view wellness programs and adult sports as priorities, the open-link respondents more frequently prioritized fitness classes, youth summer camps, and youth sports.
- The response from the invitation respondents did not support an increase of user fees for programs and services with only 34% in support and 32% not in support and 34% undecided. The open-link respondents were slightly more likely to indicate support for all the funding mechanisms.

SUMMARY

- Programs are not marketed very well, possibly due to lack of funds.
- Operating budget has been reduced significantly over the past several years (down \$1,611,928 from 2008 to 2017).
- Facilities have not been maintained properly possibly due to lack of funds. Program satisfaction is directly related to poor facility maintenance.
- The Recreation Management Division is too understaffed and under budgeted to create

the desired quantity and quality of programs typically offered by a large agency.

- A computerized registration program for tracking participation (RecTrac) has only recently been acquired and installed. Continued implementation and training is needed to make efficient use of the utility.
- With the use of RecTrac, patron registration will be easier and enable them to do so in a single location (on-line). Continued support is needed to educate the public on how it works.
- Programming ranked very low as a priority with the needs of the community during the focus groups and high in the surveys. The survey respondents want programs but are unwilling to pay for them. Overall satisfaction with Wyandotte County Parks Department recreational programming is very low.
- Minimal cost recovery for programs limits the ability to offer programs with a shrinking budget as every program offered by the Department creates a larger operating deficit.
- Extending partnerships for programming with other leisure service providers was popular with the community during the public input process rather than the Parks Department providing all of the programming. Allowing any and all willing programming partners to operate programs at Wyandotte County Park facilities is highly recommended.
- The Parks Department should only program their community and recreation centers for after school programs and drop-in activities with a skeleton supervisory staff while renting program space to other service providers to operate all the other programs at the centers and park facilities.
- Trends demonstrate that large county agencies tend to own, operate, and maintain facilities and act as a broker for the programming elements with other leisure services providers in their market area. They typically are in the facility and amenity rental business with the exception of drop-in self-directed recreational activities where there is no expectation for fees. This mode of operation is recommended for the Parks Department until market rate program user fees can cover program expense.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Parks Department should price their recreation programs at a marketable rate rather than to the lowest common denominator and develop a scholarship program for those who can't afford the programs.
- The Parks Department appears to be "dabbling" in programming and needs to either increase all the resources it takes to be a full service agency or make the decision to become a program brokering and amenity rental agency.



INTRODUCTION

Throughout this planning process it was clear that parks and recreation facilities are extremely important to UG citizens and community organizations. Parks serve a variety of user needs and are an integral utility for promoting active lifestyles and improving overall community health. The Parks Department has been challenged by budget cuts and staff reductions through the years and these partnerships are vital to the rejuvenation of UG parks and recreation. This chapter identifies key issues facing the Parks Department and provides recommendations that will enhance the overall LOQ of the park system.

DEPARTMENT

KEY ISSUE: COMMUNICATION

Findings: Communication needs to be improved on multiple levels (inter-department, intra-department, and with the public). Upper and mid-level management needs to challenge themselves to see and be seen on a regular basis and interact with staff to create a culture that is collaborative and reinforces the perception that there is opportunity for growth. The Parks Department needs to be more involved and better aware of initiatives and planning efforts by other UG agencies and partner organizations. Almost 2/3 (60%) of survey respondents rated marketing and awareness of programs and services a 1 or 2 out of 5. This was single handedly the most frequently mentioned topic from stakeholders, key leaders, and the public throughout the entire public engagement process. The Parks Department needs to have more autonomy over its website and public information outlets.



KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations:

1. Work with the UG to come to an agreement on communication protocols that allow the Parks Department to obtain control of its own website. Create a website format that establishes an identity for Parks through branding and graphic design. Make Park services, events, and facilities easy for the public to find, stay informed about and interact with on-line. Extend the on-line visibility of park news and events to social media platforms to increase the immediacy of information sharing.
2. Improve inter-departmental communications by encouraging upper to mid-level management to collaborate more with employees and share information to solve problems together. Upper and mid-level management needs to see and be seen.
3. The Parks Department needs to continue to be present at City planning meetings, partner organization meetings, and neighborhood group meetings to stay in the loop of on-going efforts related to parks.

KEY ISSUE: ACCESSIBILITY AND VISIBILITY

Finding: The office is difficult to find and needs to be relocated to a more central and densely populated area and in a facility that is more accessible to the community.

Recommendation:

- The long-term goal to relocate Parks Department Administrative offices should be consistent with the Downtown Parkway District Plan that locates them within the proposed new community center. Should support for this plan not gain traction, other alternatives should be investigated. The Craft Center at Kensington could also be a solution.

KEY ISSUE: PARTNERSHIPS

Finding: Partnerships play a vital role in UG parks. This includes partnerships with community organizations and initiatives, leisure service providers, and neighborhood groups and NBR's. Active collaboration with these groups on a routine basis will help offset challenges the Parks Department faces with budget and staffing levels.

Recommendation:

- Some partners, such as the Health Department, have access to grants for park improvements related to improving health. Others, such as the Downtown Shareholders, have the capability to seek out and write grants that could benefit parks. While these entities have benefited parks already, on-going efforts should be taken by the Parks Department to ensure these relationships continue to be fruitful and work in concert with the Parks Department's goals and master plans for each park.

FINANCIAL**KEY ISSUE: FUNDING**

Finding: Citizens, stakeholders and leaders have expressed the need for improvements to existing facilities, maintenance, and programming. Citizens also expressed the feeling that the Parks Department is not adequately funded. Over the last 10 years the Parks Department's operating budget has been significantly reduced and its staffing cut in half. The Parks Department's share of the UG's total operating budget has trended sharply downward over the last 10 years and the combined budgets of administration, maintenance and recreation is less than 2% of the UG's budget. While current staffing levels appear to match the operating budget, neither is adequate relative to the size of the system based on relevant NRPA benchmark comparisons. Additional funding is needed to adequately meet the needs voiced by citizens, key leaders, and stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- Short term (next 5 years): Increase the annual operating budget to align the Department's funding with the resources needed to manage the system by comparable national benchmarks.
- Long term (5-10 years): Reassess Department performance and the extent to which the UG feels it should operate recreational programming on its own. Should the UG decide to pursue recreational programming wholly on its own, additional funding support will be needed. Based on relevant comparison data from the NRPA for park systems of similar size and number of parks an additional annual budget increase of up to \$4 million may need to be considered.

- Determine a capital maintenance and improvement plan (CMIP) budget that the Department can rely on annually. Identify a percent of the total CMIP budget that can be allocated specifically to Parks annually and increase it incrementally over time.
- Strategize a funding campaign to rejuvenate existing park facilities. Citizens expressed the most support for funding of major park improvements through the following mechanisms (citizens rated each higher than 3.5 out of 5):
 - User fees for fitness facilities
 - Bond referendum for facility upgrades
 - Sales tax dedicated exclusively to parks

PARK FACILITIES

KEY ISSUE: SAFETY & SECURITY

Finding: Citizens and stakeholders expressed that safety and security in parks should be a top priority. Several factors play into the perceived level of safety throughout UG parks. The quality of facilities, cleanliness, lighting, police presence, department staff, and amenity types all add to the safety of parks.

Recommendations:

- Work with city police and sheriff's department to increase patrol of park areas.
- Continue to add Park Ranger Staff.
- Where appropriate add amenities that draw larger volumes of people to those parks with the most safety issues.
- Improve park image by adding or improving signage, landscaping, and lighting.

KEY ISSUE: IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES

Finding: Citizens expressed the need to take care of and improve existing park facilities. Focus on meeting basic needs first. The condition of current amenities and accessibility to parks are among the lowest ratings by citizens. Survey responses from the public indicated that restrooms, playgrounds, and shelters should be top priorities for improvements. Taking care of what you have also increases support for funding new facilities.

Recommendations:

- Create specific park master plans through individual planning efforts or alongside other neighborhood efforts to determine and prioritize improvements for each park with public support.
- Prioritize improvements by starting with bathrooms, shelters and playgrounds in the worst condition. A list of these was provided in Chapter 4.
- Work with 20/20/20 movement, Infrastructure Action Team (IAT), and Healthy Communities Wyandotte (HCW), and other health-related advocacy groups to improve accessibility. Revisit and update the 2012 Sidewalk & Trail Master Plan with emphasis on park accessibility.
- Develop a master plan design for Coronado Park and open the park for use.

KEY ISSUE: PROMOTE HEALTHY ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

Finding: Citizens indicated promoting active lifestyles as one of the top three values the Department should focus on. Parks should improve existing facilities such as trails, multi-use open green spaces and others, which facilitate

multi-generational activities and expand facilities to a larger demographic of park users.

Recommendations:

- Identify and develop new parkland on west side of county, accessible to populations there.
- Improve existing sidewalks and trails within and around parks.
- Extend existing trails where possible to improve connectivity to neighborhoods, points of interest, and other park amenities.
- Work with neighborhood groups and partnering organizations to provide facilities which support their programming needs.

COMMUNITY & REC CENTERS

KEY ISSUE: EXISTING FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Finding: Citizens have expressed that they would like to see upgrades and improvements to existing community and rec centers. Most are in need of modernization updates and improvements to tired finishes, infrastructure and utilities (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing). Citizens identified swimming pools and fitness equipment (weights, cardio, etc.) as top priorities.

Recommendations:

- Study indoor facility needs and identify improvements or build new.
- Trends demonstrate that large county agencies tend to own, operate, and maintain facilities and act as a broker for programming elements with other leisure services providers in their market area. They typically are in the facility and amenity rental business with the exception of drop-in, self-directed recreational

activities where there is no expectation for fees. This mode of operation is recommended for the Parks Department.

- The Parks Department should only program their community and recreation centers for after school programs and drop-in activities with a skeleton supervisory staff while renting program space to other service providers to operate all the other programs at the centers.
- Conduct an in depth aquatic facilities study to identify the specific types and level of aquatic facilities that are needed in varying areas of the community (e.g.- splash pads, aquatic centers, lap pools, etc..).

OPERATIONS & STAFFING

KEY ISSUE: STAFFING

Finding: Staffing levels may match the Department's budget, but additional staffing is needed considering the size of the UG's park system. On a scale of 1 to 5 citizens rate maintenance and general upkeep a 3. The Department cannot meet the needs of the public, key leaders, and community stakeholders at existing staffing levels.

Recommendations:

- Add 7 maintenance staff per year for the next 5 years.
- Continue to track work efficiency through Lucy, the newly installed work order system. Ensure all staff is trained on how to use it and do so daily. Ensure that all of the necessary data is entered on a regular basis and review efficiency reports routinely. Utilize this data weekly to strategize workloads, justify budget needs, and improve overall department performance.

KEY ISSUE: EFFICIENCY

Finding: While the Parks Operations and Maintenance has benefited in some aspects from sharing a facility with Public Works, it has suffered more than it has gained. The Department maintains facilities across a large geographic area causing both east and west divisions to drive further to their destinations on a daily basis. This is very costly to taxpayers and significantly limits the ability of staff to meet public expectations.

Recommendations:

- At a minimum, locate two maintenance divisions (east and west) closer to the areas they maintain. The west division could be located either at Wyandotte County Park or Wyandotte County Lake. Consider other suitable UG facilities in the eastern area that can house maintenance operations.
- Develop and adopt a Maintenance Management Plan with specified duties to achieve a defined level of service for each park. Such a plan would include the identification of maintenance activities and maintenance mode expectations for each park. It would also cover workload distribution, staffing requirements, and maintenance schedules on a daily, weekly, monthly basis. A schematic diagram for each park should clearly identify maintenance modes to be achieved.
- Create and implement an equipment renewal program identifying review periods for each piece of equipment. Assess equipment regularly to determine the immediacy with which replacement is needed and identify these as capital needs.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING**KEY ISSUE: PROGRAM SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Finding: The Recreation Management Division is understaffed and under budgeted to be able to create the desired quantity and quality of programs typically offered by a large agency. Minimal cost recovery for programs limits the ability to offer programs with a shrinking budget as every program offered by the Department creates a larger operating deficit. Extending partnerships for programming with other leisure service providers was popular with the community during the public input process rather than the county providing all the programming.

Recommendations:

- Focus capital improvement efforts on updating and modernizing facilities and then maintaining them, which will in turn help to improve public satisfaction with programs.
- Allow any and all willing programming partners to operate programs at Wyandotte County Park facilities.

KEY ISSUE: MARKETING & AWARENESS

Finding: 'Marketing and awareness of recreational programs' and 'Programs offered within parks' were rated very low by the public. Their average ratings were 2.0 and 2.3 out of 5 respectively. An on-line registration system was recently purchased to give citizens better access to programs and allow the Agency to better track them. Getting the word out and creating awareness of this service within the community is critical.

Recommendations:

- With the use of RecTrac, patron registration will be easier and enable them to do so in a single location (on-line).

Continued support is needed to educate the public on how it works.

- Coordinate marketing efforts with program service providers to make it easy for the public to find and register for programs. Ensure the public can go to one location on-line to get information on all programs offered at all locations.

WYANDOTTE COUNTY LAKE

This park is called out in this section due to its popularity, frequency the public mentioned it in the statistically valid survey, and its size and regional draw.

KEY ISSUE: UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

Finding: This park is by far the most popular park in the county and truly a gem. Long waiting lists for rentals and boat slips indicate that there is a great demand for its use. With more planning and forethought the park appears to have the capacity to potentially generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining, which could free up funding that could be allocated to other smaller parks. Major investment is needed to fully capitalize on its unrealized potential.

Recommendations:

- Consider major capital investments to elevate the park's capacity to meet the demand that clearly exists. Begin with improvements to facilities to modernize them, make them more accessible, and provide current technology needs. This will allow the UG to increase fees and generate revenue streams to support its on-going maintenance. Moderate discounts in pricing should be considered for Wyandotte County residents.

- Make improvements to facilities that meet patron's basic needs such as restrooms, lighting, shelters, roads, and trails.
- Provide new concessionaire and study potential marina business plans at boathouse and docks.
- Upgrade existing facilities at docks and boathouse, such as wifi and cellular services and digital record keeping.
- Modernize the lake house to accommodate overnight rental. Consider improvements to surrounding buildings to accommodate large banquets and events.
- Partner with the Visitor and Travelers Bureau to continue to expand relationships with existing and potential regional users and create events to draw more exposure.
- Continue to work with schools and educational programs to promote connecting kids to nature.