
INDY PARKS FOR ALL



2023 COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

MAYOR JOE HOGSETT
DIRECTOR PHYLLIS BOYD





Highland Park



Mayor Joe Hogsett

Dear Reader,

On behalf of the City of Indianapolis, I am writing to express my strong support of Indy Parks' 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan. An update of the 2017 Plan, our new master plan is a 5-year plan aimed at improving and expanding parks, facilities, programs, and services citywide.

Indy Parks' 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan is guided by community input and reflects the wants and desires of our diverse neighborhoods and communities. The proposed plan aims to address some of the most pressing needs of our parks and recreational facilities, including improving their overall condition, expanding access to diverse recreational programs, and enhancing the quality of services provided to residents. By investing in our parks and recreational facilities, we can create a more vibrant and inclusive community that offers something for everyone.

Everyone deserves safe access to quality park and recreation offerings, regardless of race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, identity, or zip code. The value of parks and what they offer affect our quality of life in many ways. Parks and greenspaces provide opportunities for improved physical and mental health, connectivity with nature, programs, and services for our communities, and a space for families, children, and individuals to gather. By expanding and improving our park system, we are creating more opportunities for residents to engage in healthy activities and build relationships with their neighbors.

The plan also includes provisions to address the specific needs of underrepresented communities, including the development of more accessible facilities and programs. Equity is a driving force for the City of Indianapolis and is foundational to our shared vision of a safe, welcoming, and thriving community. Indy Parks plays a critical role in this continued work, and our focus on equity is supported citywide by cross-departmental collaboration.

The City of Indianapolis is proud to support Indy Parks' 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan to improve and expand Indianapolis' parks, facilities, programs, and services which is a critical investment in the future of our city. By making these investments now, we can create a stronger, more vibrant, and more inclusive community that benefits us all. This plan reflects the diverse voices that make up our great city of Indianapolis and we are proud to present our vision for the future of Indy Parks and Recreation that is based on community input, as we work towards a shared vision of #IndyParksForAll.

Sincerely,

Joe Hogsett
Mayor
City of Indianapolis





Indy Parks Director,
Phyllis Boyd

In the last six years since our previous plan was adopted, Indianapolis has undergone significant change. Our population has increased steadily and is continuing to become more diverse. The global impacts of a multiyear pandemic and an ongoing fight for racial justice have changed how we value and utilize our parks and recreation system. We saw a need for parks and greenspaces increase during, and since, the pandemic, as safe spaces for physical and mental wellbeing, recreation, nature, and cultural experiences have become increasingly important. We also strengthened our organization's commitment to dismantling systemic racism by creating goals and action steps we can take as an organization to be more equitable and inclusive – both for our team and for the communities we serve. As we envision the future of our parks and recreation system, it is clear that community must be at the center to truly create #IndyParksForAll.

Indy Parks' 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan, which is an update to the 2017 Plan, serves as a blueprint to ensure our parks and greenspaces, programs, services, and amenities equitably reflect our diverse and growing community's values and needs. It analyzes where we currently are, and where we want to be in the next five years and beyond. To ensure diverse voices were heard, we worked with partners to create an inclusive community outreach process that intentionally engaged neighborhood residents, multicultural and immigrant communities, indigenous community leaders, youth and school groups, partners and stakeholders, and park users. This Plan will help us prioritize how we maintain and improve existing parks and facilities, expand our programs and services to address community needs, allocate funding and resources, continue to support and invest in our staff, tell the story of why Indy Parks matters, and invest in parks for the future. With a community-driven approach, we envision activated parks as cultural hubs, community gathering spots, and places to connect to nature through transformative, enriching experiences. Our updated mission, vision, and values, as well as the goals and strategies outlined in the Plan, will serve as a guide for staff, partners, stakeholders, and City leaders to continue developing Indy Parks over the next five years.

Indy Parks is committed to being a leader in shaping a more inclusive future for our community. I would like to thank our Indianapolis community members, Indy Parks staff, stakeholders, partners, and park users who participated in the process of developing the 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan. We also appreciate the support and dedication shown by our Indy Parks Board, City Councilors, Mayor, and Deputy Mayors. Your collective insight helped shape a strong and inspiring vision for the future of #IndyParksForAll – a parks and recreation system with high-quality, equitably distributed parks and facilities for all. It is our sincere hope that this Plan reflects what is important to you as it leads us into a healthier and more vibrant future.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Boyd
Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the many residents and community members of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indy Parks staff, partners, and stakeholders who provided extensive community input for the development of this Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan. The efforts of the community through this Plan will continue to ensure the success of Indy Parks.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1.1 INTRODUCTION



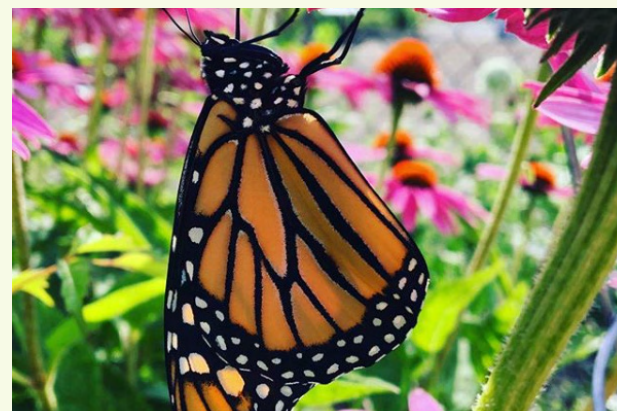
Indy Parks for All, the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan Update, is an update to the previously adopted 2017 Indy Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. It was developed to provide a vision for how the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department (Indy Parks) manages the needs and resources of residents for the next five to ten years.

The Comprehensive Master Plan will inform residents where Indy Parks is currently positioned and what the future can hold for parks, public spaces, recreation facilities, and programs in this great city. The Master Plan is a roadmap and shared vision for the future shaped by community values, unmet needs, and evolving demographics and trends.

Every great city looks to a great park system to support the quality of life for residents and to attract new residents and visitors. The park system that Indianapolis residents desire is a critical part of the public domain. This Master Plan illustrates all the positive elements of the park and recreation system and clarifies areas that need to be addressed to help make Indianapolis an even greater city for all its residents. Investing in park improvements and programs is an investment in our communities.

The following information illustrates what Indy Parks is responsible for managing. This data provides insight to the park system amenities offered to the residents in the community.

- Garfield Park, Indianapolis' first park, acquired in 1873
- Indy Parks manages 11,608 acres of park property
- Eagle Creek, Indy Parks' largest park at 4,279 acres, acquired in 1962
- 165 full-time staff who manage 214 park properties
- Operating Budget (2022 budget): \$33,387,698
- Capital spending (2022 budget): \$62,850,000



1.2 MASTER PLAN PROCESS, PURPOSE, AND GOALS

Beginning in 2022, Indy Parks began the process of updating the previously adopted 2017 Indy Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. Many changes have occurred over the last several years in the City of Indianapolis and in Marion County. Demographic growth of the region continues to enhance the need for more open space and for the protection of natural resources, which includes the need for quality parks, recreation facilities, and program services. As a nationally accredited agency, Indy Parks and Recreation seeks to update its plan every five years, thus resulting in this 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan Update. This plan builds on the 2017 plan and seeks to update the roadmap to reflect our changing community needs in a more inclusive and innovative manner, so that everyone can truly access the variety of Indy Parks' offerings in an equitable way.

PROJECT PROCESS & PURPOSE

The foundation of the Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan included many public participation processes. It was very important to engage as many community members as possible in the planning process and to encourage involvement from others who typically do not participate. The outcomes, as outlined in this plan, provide guidance for short-term and long-term goals in a financially sustainable and achievable manner. The plan represents Marion County's renewed commitment to providing a quality park and recreation system. The process of developing the Comprehensive Master Plan followed a logical planning path, as described below.



This document is not intended to be an end product. The plan is rather a means to guide the provision of parks and recreation and to advance the overall mission, vision, and racial equity goals of Indy Parks. The goal is to guide the delivery of excellent parks, trails, public facilities, activities, programs, and services that will contribute to community prosperity and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to Indianapolis.

The purpose of this plan is three-fold. First, it puts into place a systematic inventory, analysis, and assessment of the park system that helps address unmet needs, now and in the future. Second, the master plan will determine the context and provision of needs for park and recreation facilities and programs citywide. Third, it will specifically measure the effectiveness of programs and services, as well as park amenities for years to come. Ultimately, this work will guide Indy Parks in an appropriate direction for current and future programs and services and provide specific means to meet the vision, mission, and racial equity goals. This study is essentially a process of determining: "Where are we, where do we want to be, and how do we get there?"

As with any quality comprehensive planning process, the community and Indy Parks and City of Indianapolis staff were highly involved in the development of the master plan. Community engagement efforts included a diverse reach through:

- Neighborhood outreach meetings
- Multilingual and multicultural public meetings
- Stakeholder focus groups
- Key leader meetings with City leaders and partners
- Youth focus groups from schools and other youth organizations
- Outreach to communities with disabilities
- Outreach to local Native American leaders
- Church and religious group meetings
- Youth-focused surveys
- Community-wide surveys
- ADA accessible and multilingual project website: www.PlanIndyParks.com
- Staff focus groups
- Staff organizational culture survey

These strategies were used to prioritize and identify the issues that needed to be addressed in the master plan and to support the key recommendations that need to be implemented over the next five years. The master plan is a living document with many moving elements that must be achieved simultaneously.

PROJECT GOALS

To build the 2023 Comprehensive Master Plan Update, we aimed to address the expressed needs of residents for the next five years. Key goals for the creation of the plan included:

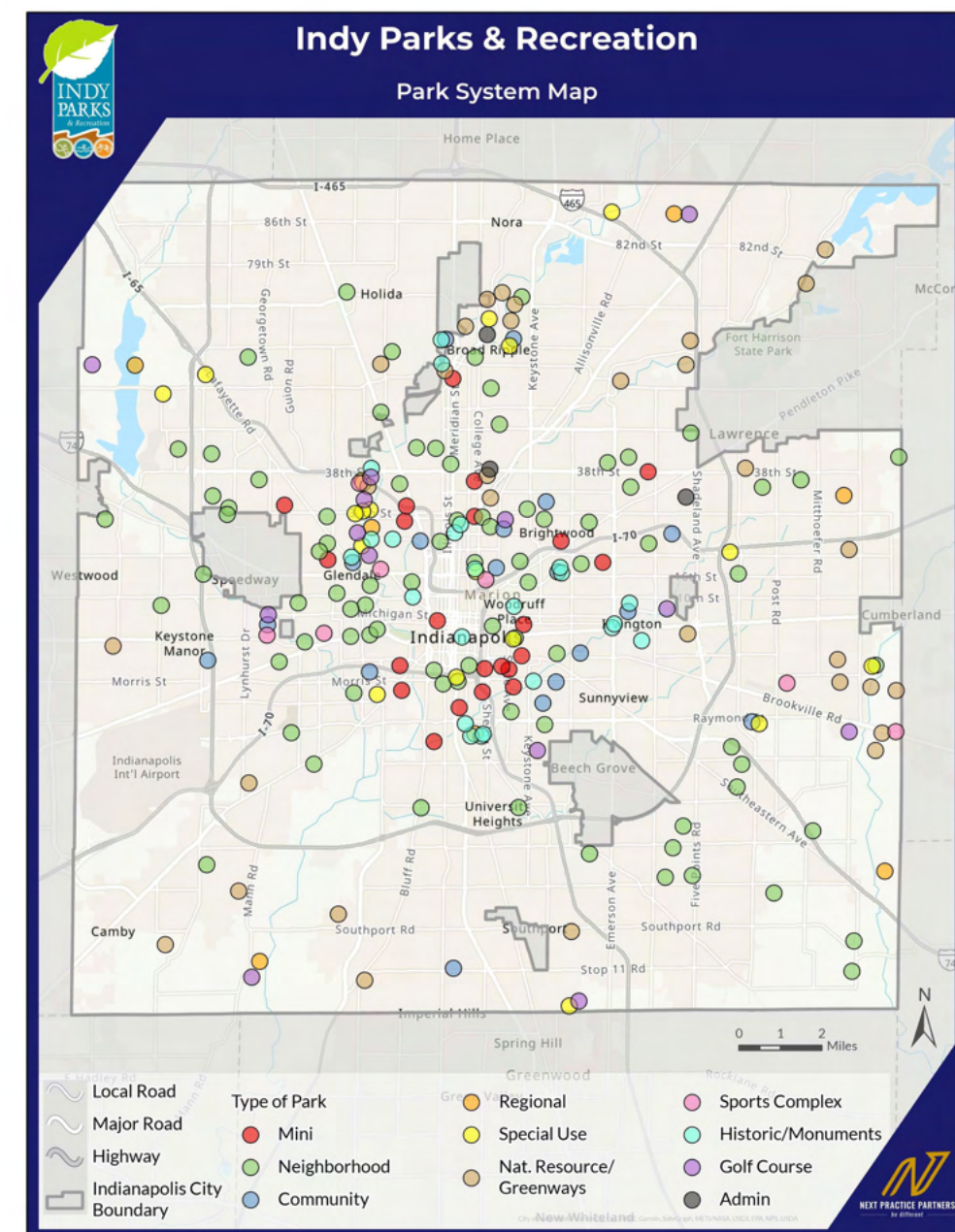
- Ensure an inclusive community outreach process to identify the community's current needs
- Learn from the best park systems around the country and measure our progress since the last plan
- Seek national reaccreditation through the Commission for the Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)
- Position the Department for future funding and partnership opportunities to continue implementation
- Have a vision that is equitable and realistic to move us forward



1.3 CURRENT PARKS MAP AND DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA

The planning area for the Master Plan includes all areas within the boundaries of Marion County. While this plan recognizes that the actual service areas of some Indy Parks' facilities, parks, and programs may extend beyond the defined boundaries of the planning area, the primary purpose of this plan is to, first and foremost, identify and address the park and recreation needs of Indianapolis residents. The Indy Parks map depicts the planning area and location of Indy Parks' sites, as well as other municipal facilities within Marion County.

The following park system map outlines the current planning area:



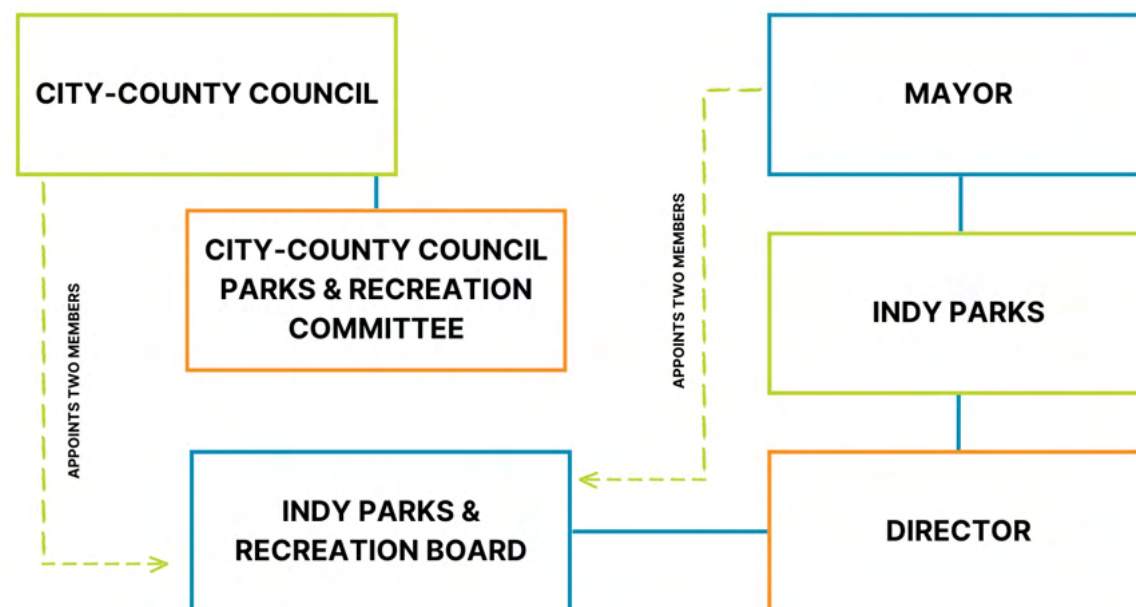
1.4 PARKS BOARD AND DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

CURRENT INDY PARKS ORGANIZATION AND BUDGET

Indy Parks provides parks, greenspaces, recreation and aquatic facilities, and programs and services throughout the City of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana. Indy Parks enforces city ordinances and state laws pertaining to parks and recreation facilities. It has the authority to levy general property taxes to acquire, operate and maintain park and recreation facilities, and it also has the power to issue General Obligation Bonds for the same purpose.

Within the Consolidated Government of Indianapolis-Marion County, the Mayor, serving as the chief executive, and the City-County Council, serving as the legislative body, are both elected by Indianapolis citizens. The Mayor oversees the city department of Indy Parks and appoints the department's Director, with the appointment then being confirmed by the City-County Council. The City-County Council also has a Parks & Recreation sub-committee that meets publicly with the Indy Parks director to discuss parks related ideas, concerns, comments, and updates. The City-County Council Parks and Recreation Committee also reviews the Parks Department's annual budget and reports back to the full council with a recommendation. The Indy Parks & Recreation Board oversees departmental policies, reviews the annual budget, approves all contracts, and advises the City and the Department on the acquisition, development, and operation of its recreation properties and facilities. The Parks Board hosts a public monthly meeting and is comprised of 5 members: Director of Indy Parks (Board Chair), 2 community members appointed by the City-County Council, and 2 community members appointed by the Mayor. The four appointed members serve renewable one-year terms.

The following diagram outlines the governing and authority structures as it relates to Indy Parks:



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

The Indy Parks organizational structure has changed since the last Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2017, restructuring some components to create a more efficient operation. Park Maintenance continues to operate under the Department of Public Works (DPW), as well as Land Stewardship and Forestry and Beautification. Although they remain as park properties, the responsibility for Greenways and Trails upkeep, maintenance, and development has been transferred to DPW who works closely with Indy Parks to support these areas. The current Park Rangers continue to operate under the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, but new ranger positions are being added under Indy Parks as more research and development goes into a ranger program that will eventually fully operate within the Parks Department.

The current organizational functions within Indy Parks are as follows:

- **Administration/Finance:** Budget Administration, Revenue Facilities, Human Resources, Payroll, Contract Administration, Auditing, Special Facilities, Lease Management, Golf Contract Management
- **Communications:** Public Information, Website Management, Customer Service, Community Outreach, Community Relations
- **Operations and Programs:** East Region, North Region, West Region, Center Region, Garfield Regional Park, Eagle Creek Regional Park, Riverside Regional Park, Aquatics, Camps and Programs, Production Arts, Environmental Education & Arts Outreach
- **Parks Planning:** Park Capital Improvements, Special Projects, Community Partnerships, Construction Administration, Property and Risk Management



INDY PARKS AND RECREATION STAFF ORGANIZATION

Indy Parks and Recreation is led by the Department Director, who is appointed by the Mayor and then confirmed by the City-County Council. The Director has an Executive Assistant and 6 other direct reports who form Indy Parks' Leadership Team: Deputy Director of Parks Planning, Deputy Director of Programs and Operations, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Strategy Officer, Chief Communications Officer, and Chief Audit and Technology Officer.

The Deputy Director of Parks Planning leads the Parks Planning Division. The Deputy Director of Parks Planning oversees a Facility Maintenance Team, Planning Team, Construction Team, Community Partnerships Team, and Risk Management Team. The Facility Maintenance Team works on park maintenance, facility repairs, and internal beautification and landscaping efforts. The Planning Team works on comprehensive master plans for the department and individual parks, potential future land acquisitions, and utilizing/maintaining parkland assets. The Construction Team oversees current and future construction and renovation jobs occurring at parks through contract management and monitoring day-to-day operations. The Community Partnerships Team works with organizations and volunteer groups who wish to partner with the department to better parks through beautification efforts, resource donations, and facility improvements. The Property and Risk Management team works on facility compliance to code and risk management policies/procedures.

The Deputy Director of Programs and Operations leads the Programs and Operations Division. Within this division are the Regional Teams, the Aquatics Team, the Production Arts Team, and the Camps and Programs Team. There are 7 Regional Teams: East, Center, North, West, Eagle Creek, Riverside, and Garfield. Each of these Regions include Community Parks with Family Centers and facility staff. Park staff plan, promote, and run park programming, as well as oversee nearby Neighborhood Parks. The Aquatics Team oversees the Department's indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities, as well as aquatics programming. The Production Arts Team manages concerts, movies, theater performances, and sound production for the Department's recorded public meetings. The Camps and Programs team oversees planning and implementation of day camps, inclusive programming, the Department's food programs, and outreach programs for fitness, arts, and environmental education.

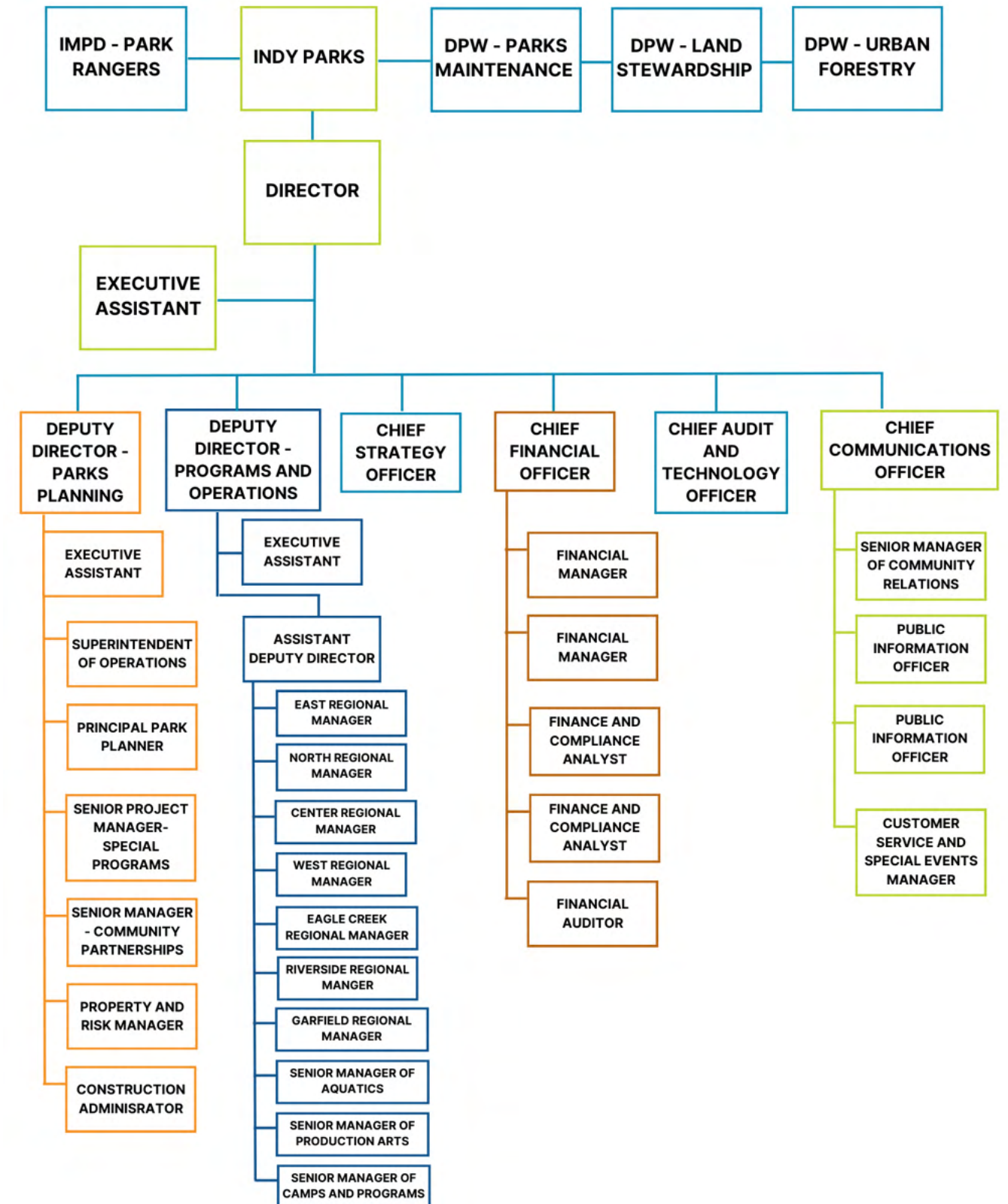
The Chief Financial Officer leads the finance division. Financial Managers, Financial Analysts, and an Accounting Coordinator oversee invoice fulfillment, utility bill payment, contracts/leases, monitor department fleet usage, capital improvement budgeting, and other resource/asset management. One Finance and Compliance Analyst oversees payroll, benefits, onboarding, and grant opportunities. The other Finance and Compliance Analyst oversees corporate leases and the department's golf course contracts.

The Chief Strategy Officer oversees opportunities for department development, implementing strategies to reach goals in the department's Comprehensive Master Plan, maintaining accreditation, and developing goals and initiatives for the organization.

The Chief Communications Officer leads the Communications division. The Senior Manager of Community Relations works on public meeting outreach and building relationships with neighborhood advocates through participation in community events. The Public Information Officers work on press releases, marketing, social media, website content, and public presentations. The Customer Service Team handles the department's customer service phone line, taking over the phone registrations, customer inquiries, and facility rentals, as well as handles special event applications and event compliance with policy.

The Chief Audit and Technology Officer is a leadership position for Audit and Technology. This position is responsible for oversight, coordination, architecture, design, and execution of Parks and Recreation technology, strategy, and audit services. This position also acts as a liaison to the City's IT department.

The current Indy Parks organizational structure is detailed below demonstrating key components and major positions:



1.5 MISSION, VISION, VALUES AND RACIAL EQUITY

INDY PARKS' MISSION, VISION AND VALUES ARE:



MISSION

To provide enriching experiences for all



VISION

Healthier lives, inspiring experiences, and vibrant communities

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES



Inclusion - We celebrate diversity and aim to remove barriers to inclusion within our organization and the communities we serve. Indy Parks welcomes all, regardless of race, age, gender, socio-economic status, ability, or identity, to connect to nature, to the community, and to themselves.



Fun - We are passionate and love what we do, celebrate the people we serve, and foster creativity, learning, connection, and authentic experiences.



Collaboration - We strive to work together as a team within our organization and continuously engage our community partners and stakeholders.



Stewardship - As stewards of our public lands, we are committed to sustainably maintaining our parks and greenspaces for future generations to enjoy. As stewards of our organization, we exist to meet the needs of the communities we serve and strengthen our organization through the care and respect of our Indy Parks team.



RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

“Indy Parks will be a leader in making Indianapolis a vibrant and healthy place to live by applying a racial equity lens to future planning that better reflects the multicultural community we serve. We are committed to providing equitable and inclusive access to programs, services, amenities, and greenspaces. We strive to identify and invest in a more equitable workplace culture by focusing on policies and practices including budget allocation, procurement, partnerships, hiring, employee training, and advancement.”

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

Everyone deserves access to safe, well-maintained, and welcoming parks and green spaces. The vision for Indy Parks For All is to provide equitable access to quality parks, green spaces, facilities, programs, and services to all park users regardless of race, age, gender, socio-economic status, ability, identity, or zip code.

Equity in parks and recreation begins with understanding how systemic racism and historic injustices have resulted in inequitable access to parks and green spaces. As a team, we are committed to learning and understanding inequities our communities have faced and working towards equal access to our parks, programs, and services. The Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan was created through an equity and inclusion lens and community-first mindset. It was critical to develop our newly adopted mission, vision, and values, as well as the goals and objectives of this Plan, through this lens.

As we continue to invest in the future of our parks, we will continue to utilize data and tools, prioritize community and staff engagement, and cross-collaborate with City departments and leaders, partners, and stakeholders through a shared vision of Indy Parks For All.



The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has established a working definition for equitable park access, which Indy Parks will use as a guide:

The just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks and green spaces, recreation facilities, as well as programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone. When people have just and fair access, our health and social well-being improve, and our communities can protect and better recover from environmental, social and economic challenges.

1.6 COMMUNITY PROFILE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this analysis is to provide the Department with insights into the community we serve and to better understand the types of parks, facilities, and programs/services that are most appropriate to equitably address the residents' needs.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

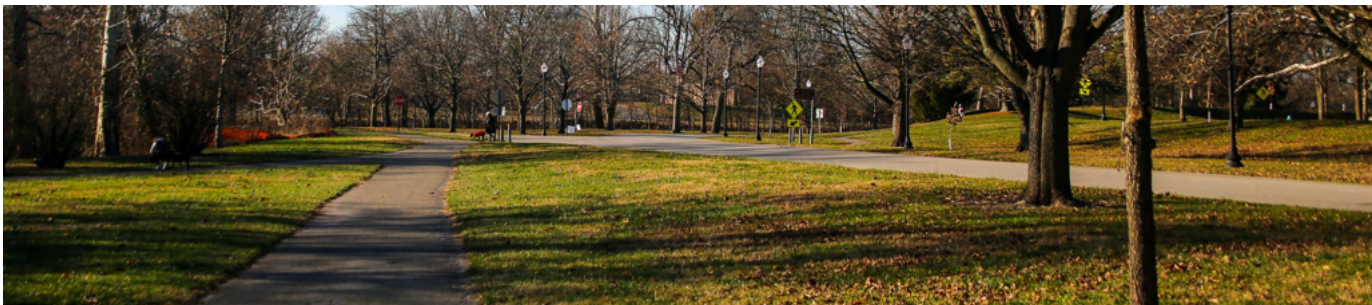
As a formal recognition, we acknowledge with respect that the land we currently occupy is the traditional territory of the Miami, Potawatomi, and Shawnee peoples. We express our honor and deep respect towards the Indigenous communities for their exceptional care of this land for generations, while enduring historical and ongoing injustices with unwavering resilience. We endeavor to work towards reconciliation, and to uphold the voices and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples as a fundamental commitment towards building equitable and inclusive communities.

10-MINUTE WALK

The Trust for Public Land firmly believes that every person residing in U.S. cities should have access to a high-quality park that is located within a 10-minute walking distance from their home. To make this vision a reality, they launched the "10-Minute Walk Program" aimed at helping cities expand access to green spaces for all. The Trust for Public Land has conducted research, which has revealed that parks that cater to a predominantly people of color demographic are, on average, only half the size of parks that primarily serve white populations. Despite their smaller size, these parks serve nearly five times as many people. Additionally, parks that primarily serve low-income households are, on average, four times smaller than parks that serve high-income households.

The current statistics indicate that only 36% of the residents of Indianapolis have a park located within a 10-minute walking distance from their homes. This percentage is significantly lower than the national average of 55%.

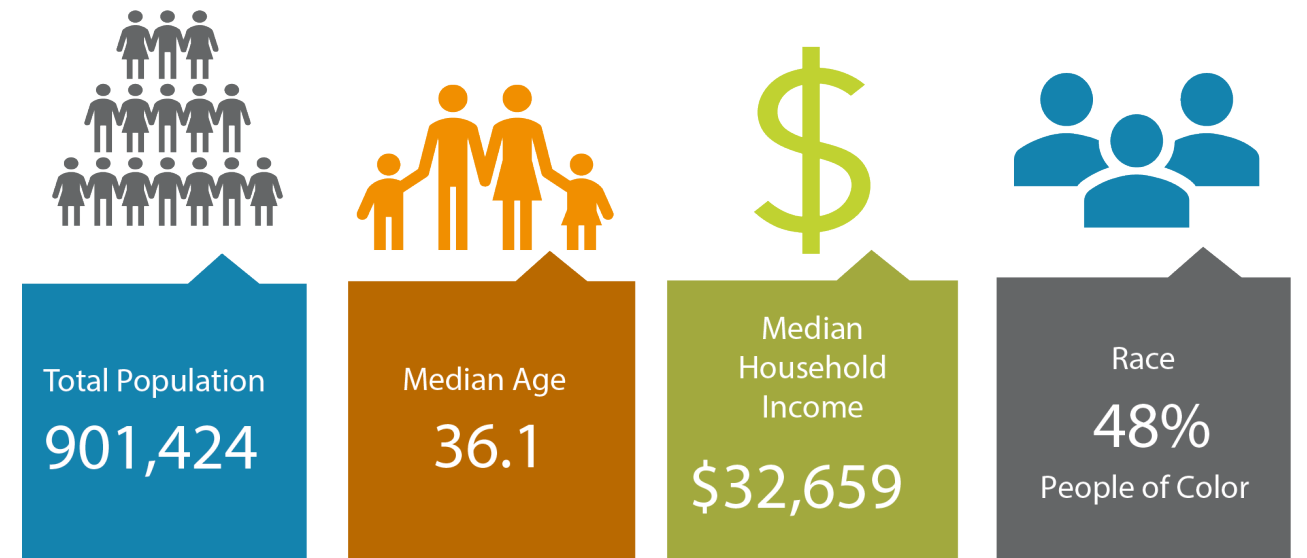
Additional information regarding the "10-Minute Walk Program" can be found at <https://www.tpl.org/>.



DEMOGRAPHICS

The Demographic Analysis is a report that examines the characteristics of the population in the City, including age segments, race, ethnicity, and income levels. It covers the entire population of the City and uses historical patterns to make future projections. However, unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the analysis could impact the validity of these projections.

The infographic below summarizes the City's population based on current estimates for 2022. Full details are provided in the Community Profile section of the report.

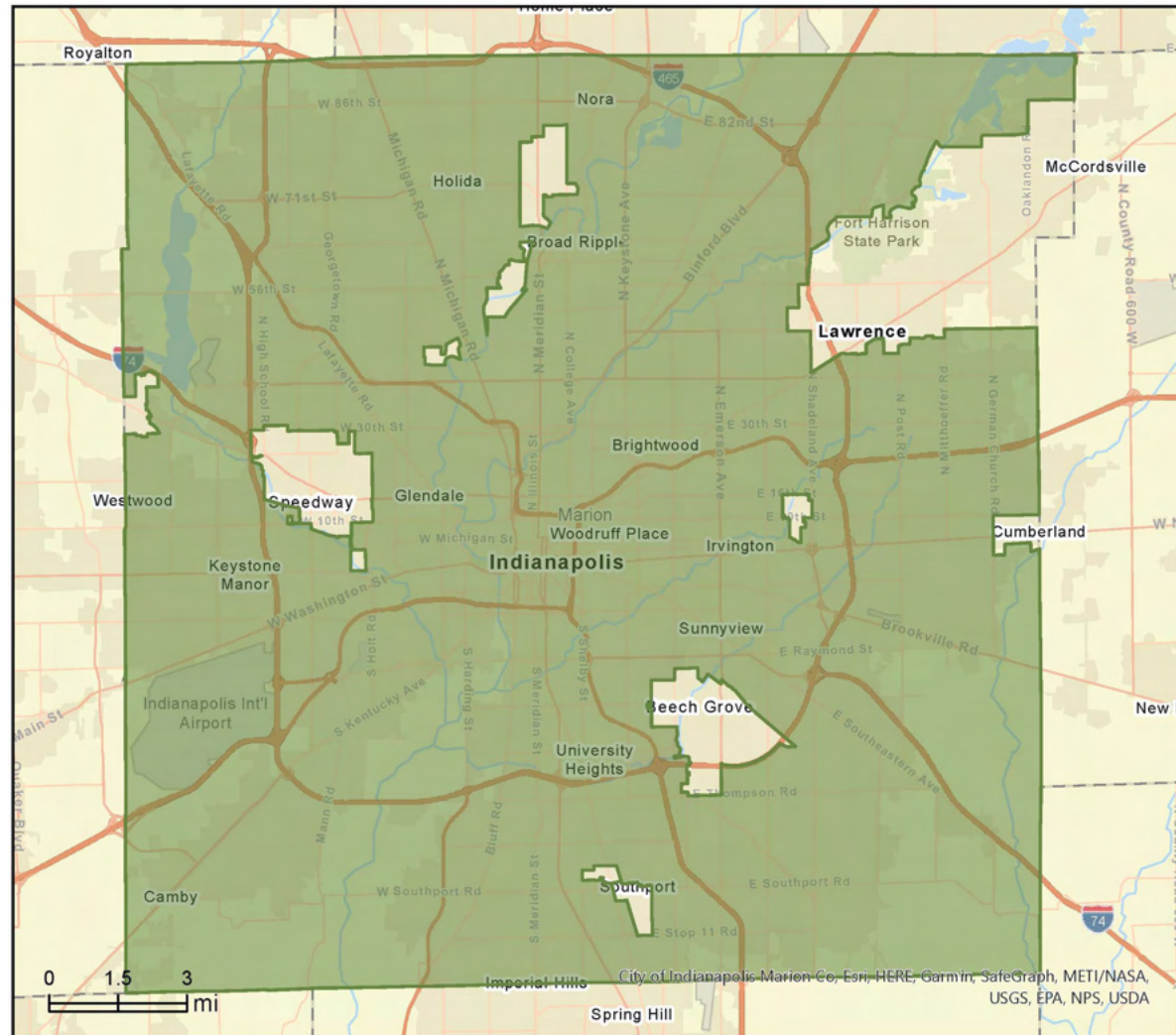


METHODOLOGY

The analysis used demographic data from two sources: the U.S. Census Bureau and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), a research and development organization specializing in Geographical Information Systems and population projections. The data was obtained in July 2022 and reflects the actual numbers reported in the 2020 Census. ESRI used this data to estimate the current population in 2022, as well as a 5-year projection for 2027. The consulting team used straight-line linear regression to forecast demographic characteristics for 10 and 15-year projections in 2032 and 2037.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS BOUNDARY

The City boundaries shown below were utilized for the demographic analysis.



KEY FINDINGS

Population growth: With a projected population of almost 1 million residents by 2037, the City must expand and develop its parks and recreation facilities by adding new parks, expanding existing facilities, and creating new programs and services to meet the diverse and growing community's needs.

Aging population: As the percentage of residents aged 55 and older is expected to increase from 27% currently to 31% by 2037, parks and recreation facilities will need to cater to the specific needs of older adults. This includes providing programs and services that promote active aging, such as senior fitness classes, social activities, and opportunities for intergenerational engagement.

Ethnic diversity: By 2032, the City is projected to have a majority population of people of color. Parks and recreation facilities will need to be inclusive and culturally sensitive to meet the needs of a growing diverse community. This includes offering programs, events and services that serve the needs and interests of different ethnic and cultural groups and ensuring that parks and facilities are accessible and welcoming to all residents.

Income disparities: With the City's per capita income and median household income being lower than the national averages, there may be residents who cannot afford to participate in certain parks and recreation programs or use certain facilities. To address this issue, the department should consider balancing access through low-cost or free programs, and financial sustainability through exploring partnerships with community organizations and providers to offer recreation opportunities for all.

Inclusion: As the City has a higher-than-average percentage of foreign-born residents, non-English speakers, and individuals with disabilities, parks and recreation facilities will need to be inclusive and accessible to meet the needs of these communities. This includes providing bilingual signage and staff, offering adaptive and inclusive programs, and ensuring that offerings are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Focusing on niche sports: The growing participation trends for pickleball and popularity of console and portable video/electronic games and Esports programs at universities suggest a growing demand for these non-traditional sporting activities within parks and recreation facilities.

Investing in additional trails and connectivity: Although hiking had a low Market Potential Index (MPI) score, there was a high level of support for additional trails and connectivity during the community input process. Investing in additional trails and connectivity could potentially increase the MPI score for hiking and make it a more popular activity.

Disparity in access to parks and green spaces: The Department should continue to prioritize the expansion and improvement in neighborhoods with predominantly people of color and low-income households, where park sizes are smaller and amenities are older; the [10-Minute Walk Program](#) and [Tree Equity Score](#) can be useful tools in helping Indy achieve this goal.

1.7 COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

Community input is one of the key elements of this plan with an intentional focus on diversity of input and maximizing inclusion. The consultant team conducted an extensive public input process to ensure that everyone who wished to share their input for the future of parks and recreation in Indianapolis had an opportunity to do so. The process included:

- Community listening sessions
- Community user groups
- Key Leader interviews
- Key stakeholder meetings
- Multilingual focus groups
- Surveys for youth and adults in English and Spanish
- Staff group discussions
- Visits to local schools

Over 2,000 individuals, from 5 continents and speaking over a dozen languages participated in the process. The findings from each stage of the public input process are summarized and highlighted in the following sections.



From the community input process, the following themes emerged. The detailed findings are shared in **Chapter 3**.

STRENGTHS

These were things that the department did well and should continue building upon.

- Dedicated and committed staff
- Doing more with less and maximizing existing resources
- Inclusion and equity focus
- Collaborative spirit
- Wide variety of offerings

OPPORTUNITIES

These were things that the department needed to focus on improving in the future.

- Diversifying programs and services
- Increased adoption of technology to enhance user experience
- Maintenance and upkeep of existing resources
- Sustainable funding for the department
- Staffing and organizational culture focus
- Safety concerns at some parks

TOP PRIORITY

These were the top priority outcomes to be achieved from the plan.

- Adequate staffing to reflect service levels
- Diverse programming and experiences
- Funding for operations and maintenance
- Increase collaboration and public / private / non-profit support
- Taking care of what exists

1.8 PROGRAM AND SERVICES ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

This assessment reviews the Department’s offerings to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities in the Department’s programs and services. The assessment also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps, staffing, volunteer and partnership opportunities, and future offerings for all.

The consulting team based these findings using data provided by the Department, website content, and staff discussions. The detailed assessment can be found in **Chapter 6 – Program and Services Assessment**.

EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREAS

The Department’s staff identified 12 core program areas that are currently being offered.

Active Adults 62+	Adaptive & Inclusive	Adult Sports	Arts, Concerts & Movies
Aquatics	Day Camps	Enrichment	Environmental Education
Health & Wellness	Outdoor Adventure	Special Events	Youth Sports

PROGRAM ANALYSIS CONCLUSION

There are a few important recommendations from this report which may change with shifts in demographics, organizational structure, and community and department priorities.

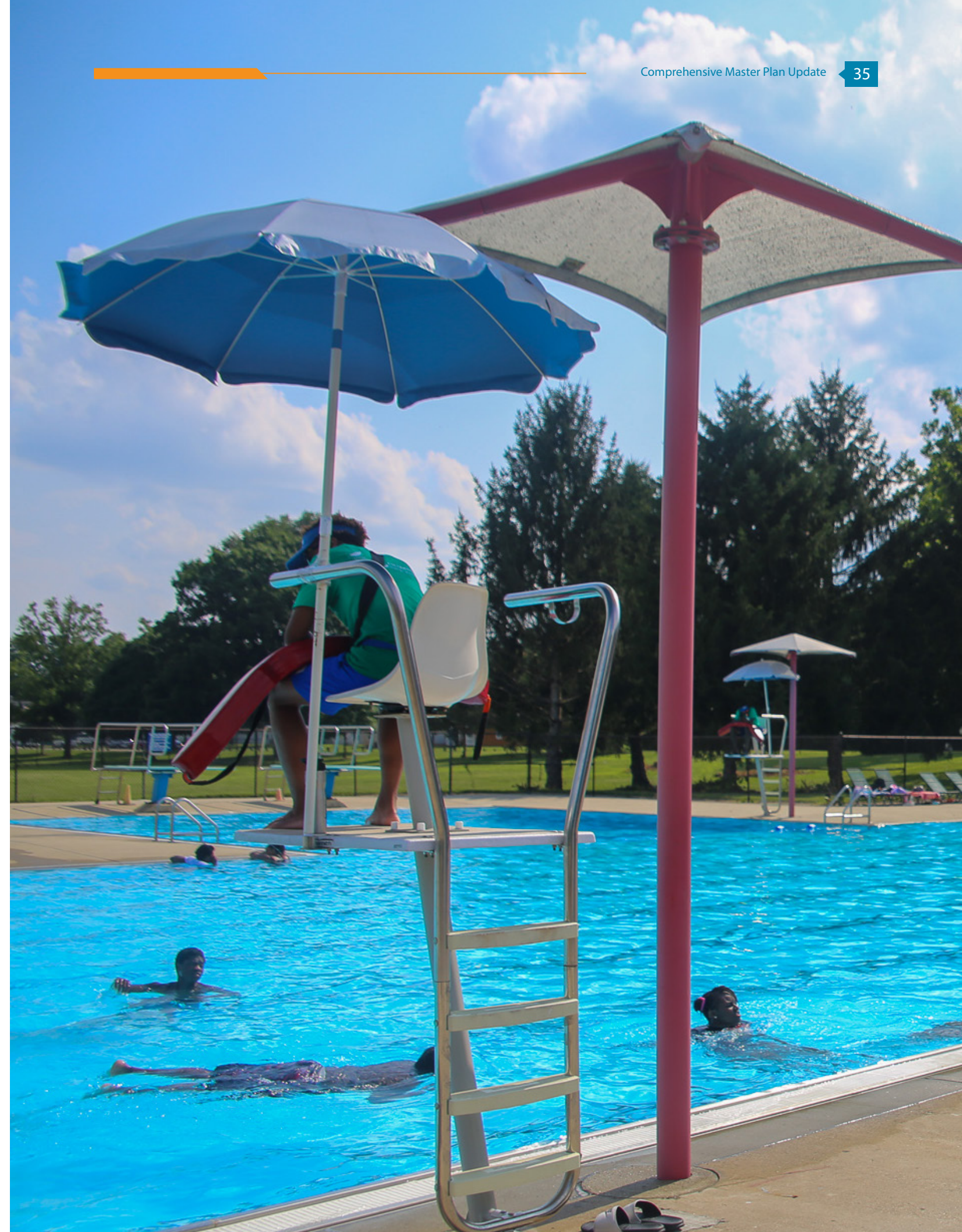
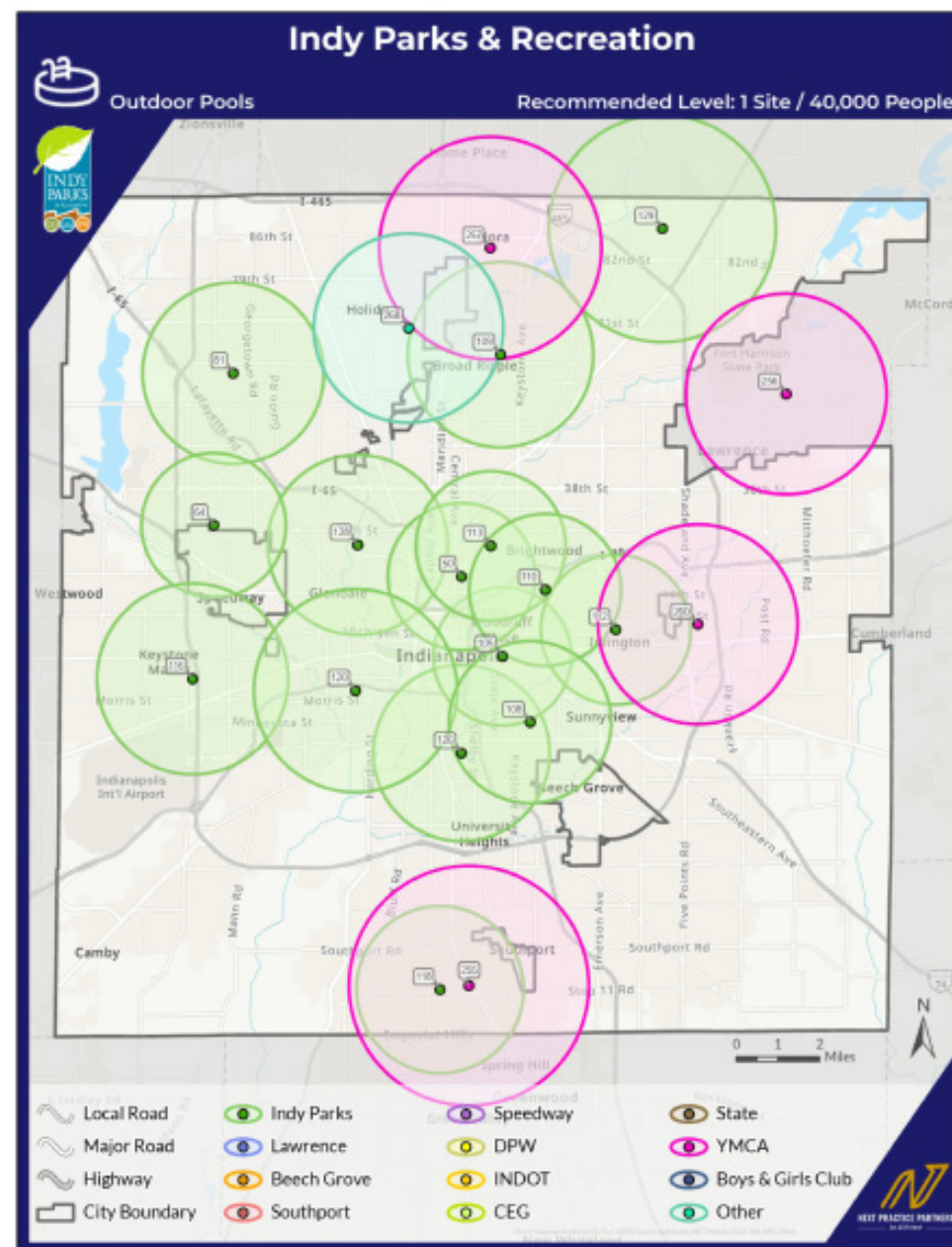
- **Age Segment Analysis:** The Department has an even distribution of age segments serving as the primary audience for core program areas.
- **Program Lifecycle:** Programs in the Beginning stages are in line with the recommended distribution of programs at 60%. There are 35% of programs in the Growth stage, which will eventually roll over into the Mature stage, helping to stabilize the overall program mix and put these programs in the recommended 40% range. Programs in the Saturation and Decline stages are within the recommended range individually, but above the 0%-10% range collectively.
- **Financial Stability:** Recommendations in this report can assist the Department with setting and meeting financial goals.
- **Marketing & Communications:** The Department is using a mix of communications and marketing strategies including the use of social media. The Department has an opportunity to solicit more community feedback through Statistically Valid surveys, focus groups, and more regular surveys.



1.9 LEVELS OF SERVICE AND EQUITY MAP SAMPLE

Service area maps display the distribution and equity of access for parks, trails, and recreation amenities citywide. This includes offerings from the city and other comparable service providers. The data is obtained from Census data and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI). The shaded areas within the Equity Maps indicate the service level (i.e., the population being served by that park type/amenity) and the different colors indicate the different service providers.

The map below depicts the distribution and gaps in service areas for outdoor pools only. The levels of recommendations and all equity maps are provided in **Chapter 5**.



1.10 MAJOR OUTCOMES AND GOALS

MAJOR OUTCOMES

The major outcomes that Indy Parks wishes to achieve from this plan include the following:

1. Build a staff culture based on inclusion and accountability
2. Increase funding and staffing
3. Ensure parks and facilities are well planned and maintained
4. Ensure programs and services address community needs & desires
5. Position parks as community resources and hubs
6. Tell the story of why Indy Parks matters

GOALS PER DIVISION



Parks & Facilities

High quality, equitably distributed parks and facilities for all



Program & Services

Meeting community needs and activating park spaces and facilities



Engagement & Outreach

Tell our story and increase awareness to maximize access and participation



Operations & Maintenance

Ensure staffing levels and maintenance standards keep up with the growing needs of the system



Finance

A financially sustainable system with dedicated funding, external partnerships, and resource support

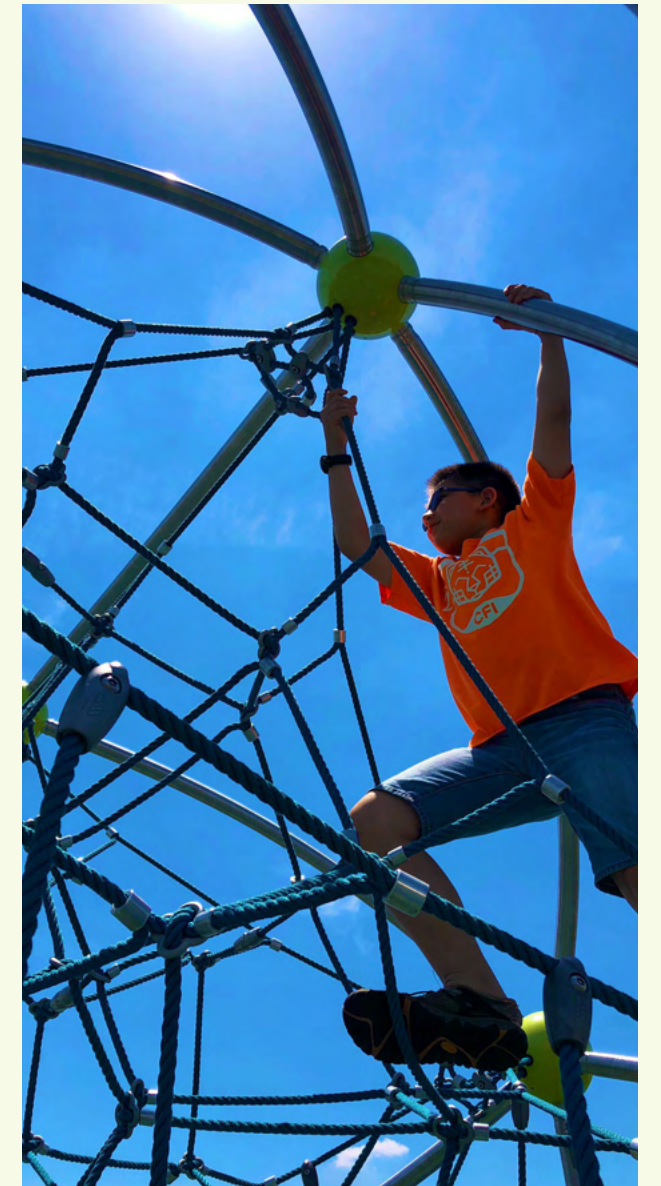


1.11 CONCLUSION

Parks and green spaces provide a host of positive benefits and outcomes and are to establishing and maintaining a healthy, vibrant city. Inclusive and equitable access to parks and recreation opportunities is critical to the future of the park system of Indianapolis. Indy Parks should continue to provide recreational opportunities, inclusive of all users, that promote physical and mental wellbeing, provide immaculate settings that create enriching experiences and cultural opportunities, and cultivate vibrant communities in a positive, supportive, and fun environment.

This Comprehensive Master Plan Update was developed to provide Indy Parks a roadmap to manage the park systems' future and equitably address unmet community needs. This planning process incorporates a comprehensive series of analyses to understand the workings of Indy Parks and integrates an intentional, inclusive community engagement process to inform key recommendations. The Master Plan includes a system-wide approach for accomplishing short-term, long-term, and ongoing action steps to achieving major outcomes, goals, and initiatives to ensure Indy Parks continues to protect the region's park assets and provides quality services, programs, and facilities to the community for many years to come.

Indy Parks will continue to inclusively invest in the future of the parks system to meet the growing needs of an evolving community that desires strong neighborhood livability with equitable access to parks, green spaces and diverse recreation opportunities. The implementation of this Comprehensive Master Plan Update will contribute to thriving, activated parks and public open spaces, shaped for the community and by the community. Indy Parks envisions a parks and recreation system with high-quality, equitably distributed parks and facilities that lead to



1.12 ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS

2

COMMUNITY PROFILE



2.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE OVERVIEW AND DEMOGRAPHICS

A key component of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (“Plan”) is a Community Profile. The purpose of this analysis is to provide the Parks and Recreation Department (“Department”) with insight into the community they serve. It also helps quantify the market in and around the City of Indianapolis (“City”) and assists in providing a better understanding of the types of parks, facilities, and programs/services that are most appropriate to equitably address the residents’ needs.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As a formal recognition, we acknowledge with respect that the land we currently occupy is the traditional territory of the Miami, Potawatomi, and Shawnee peoples. We express our honor and deep respect towards the Indigenous communities for their exceptional care of this land for generations, while enduring historical and ongoing injustices with unwavering resilience. We endeavor to work towards reconciliation, and to uphold the voices and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples as a fundamental commitment towards building equitable and inclusive communities.

HISTORY OF REDLINING

Redlining is a discriminatory practice where lenders refuse to provide loans or financial services to residents or businesses in certain areas based on their racial or ethnic composition. The practice was widespread in many American cities, including Indianapolis.

In the early 20th century, Indianapolis had a growing African American population due to the Great Migration, where Black Americans moved from the rural South to urban areas in the North and West seeking better opportunities. However, the city’s white residents and politicians were determined to keep Black residents in certain areas and restrict their access to economic opportunities.

In the 1930s, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) was established as part of the New Deal to help homeowners refinance their mortgages and prevent foreclosures during the Great Depression. The HOLC created maps of neighborhoods in many cities, including Indianapolis, to assess the risk of lending money for mortgages. The maps rated neighborhoods based on factors such as race, ethnicity, income level, and housing conditions, with the best-rated neighborhoods marked in green and the worst-rated marked in red.

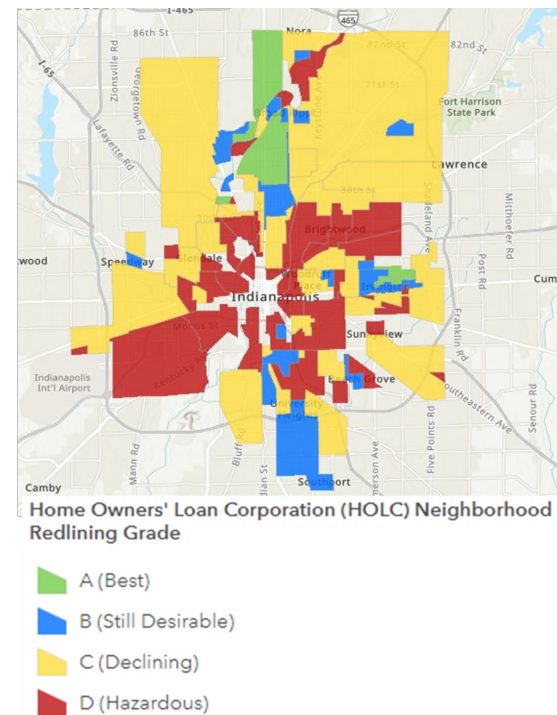


Figure 1: Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) Neighborhood Redlining Grade for Indianapolis

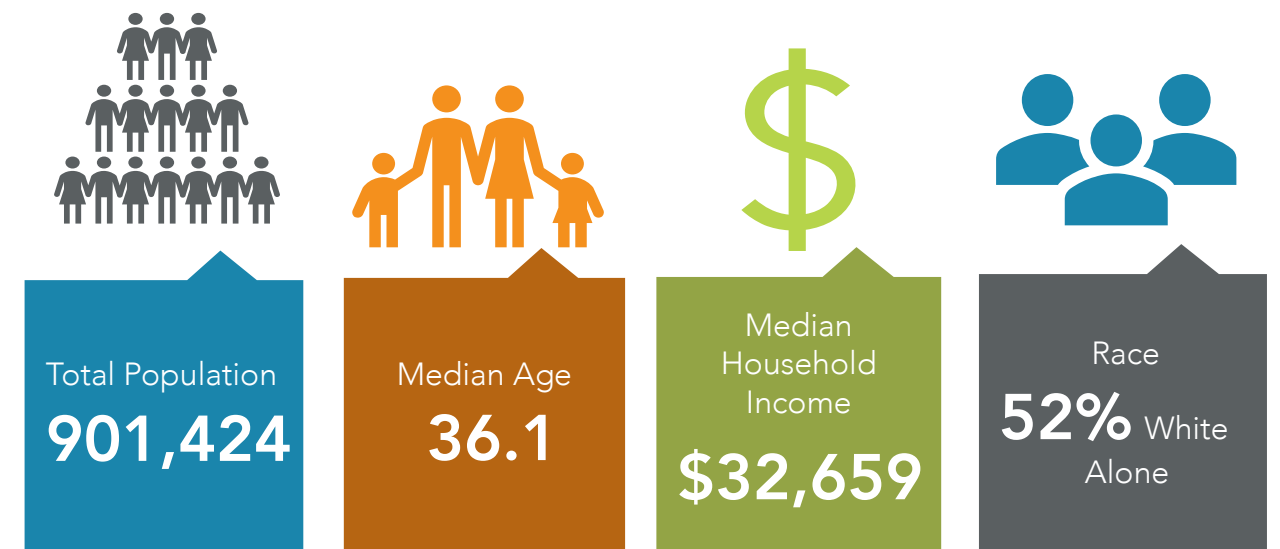
The red zones, which were usually in areas with a higher concentration of Black residents, were considered high-risk areas and were labeled as “hazardous.” As a result, banks and other lending institutions refused to provide loans or financial services to residents or businesses in these areas, effectively excluding them from homeownership and access to credit, which made it difficult to invest in homes and properties. This created a cycle of disinvestment, neglect, and poverty in these communities that persisted for decades.

The legacy of redlining in Indianapolis can still be seen today in the city’s segregated neighborhoods, persistent racial disparities in homeownership rates, and the unequal distribution of economic opportunities. The Department is committed to addressing the ongoing impact of redlining and promoting greater equity and inclusion in the city.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Demographic Analysis is a report that examines the characteristics of the population in the City, including age segments, race, ethnicity, and income levels. It covers the entire population of the City and uses historical patterns to make future projections. However, unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the analysis could impact the validity of these projections.

The infographic below summarizes the City’s population based on current estimates for 2022.

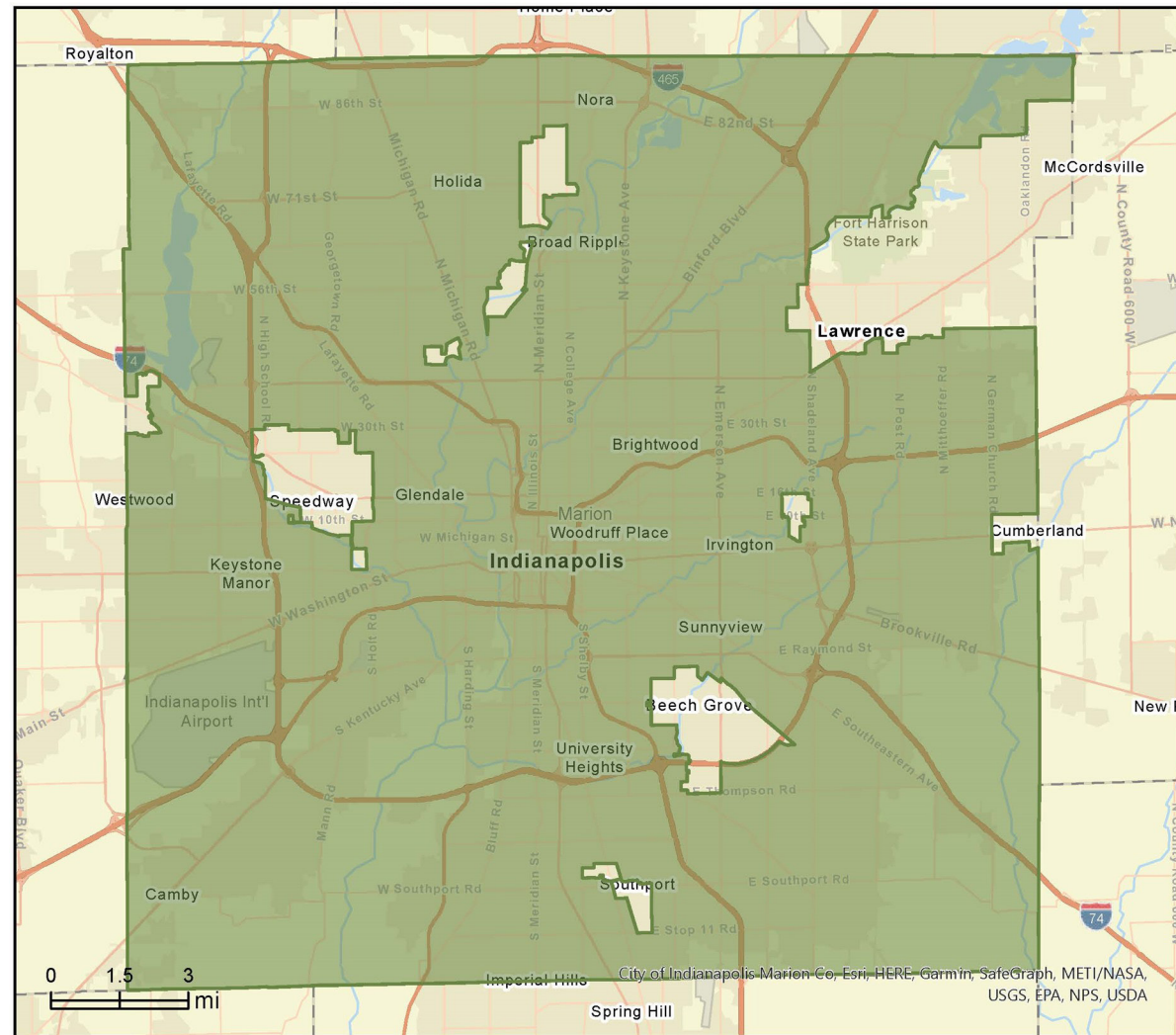


METHODOLOGY

The analysis used demographic data from two sources: the U.S. Census Bureau and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), a research and development organization specializing in Geographical Information Systems and population projections. The data was obtained in July 2022 and reflects the actual numbers reported in the 2020 Census. ESRI used this data to estimate the current population in 2022, as well as a 5-year projection for 2027. The consulting team used straight-line linear regression to forecast demographic characteristics for 10 and 15-year projections in 2032 and 2037.

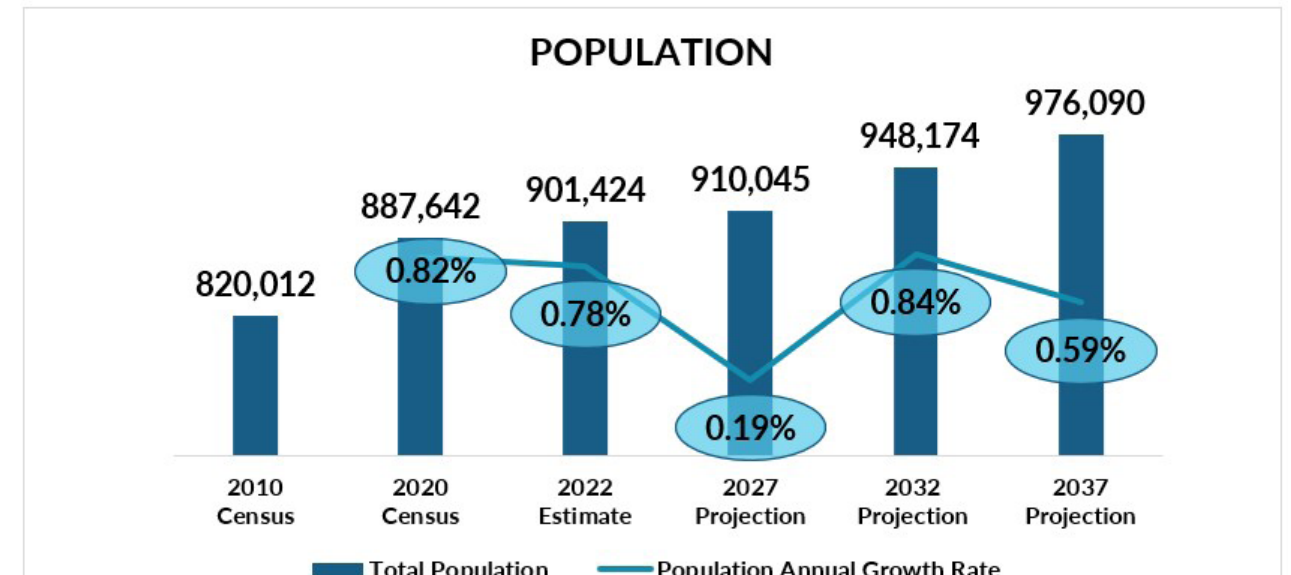
DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS BOUNDARY

The City boundaries shown below were utilized for the demographic analysis.



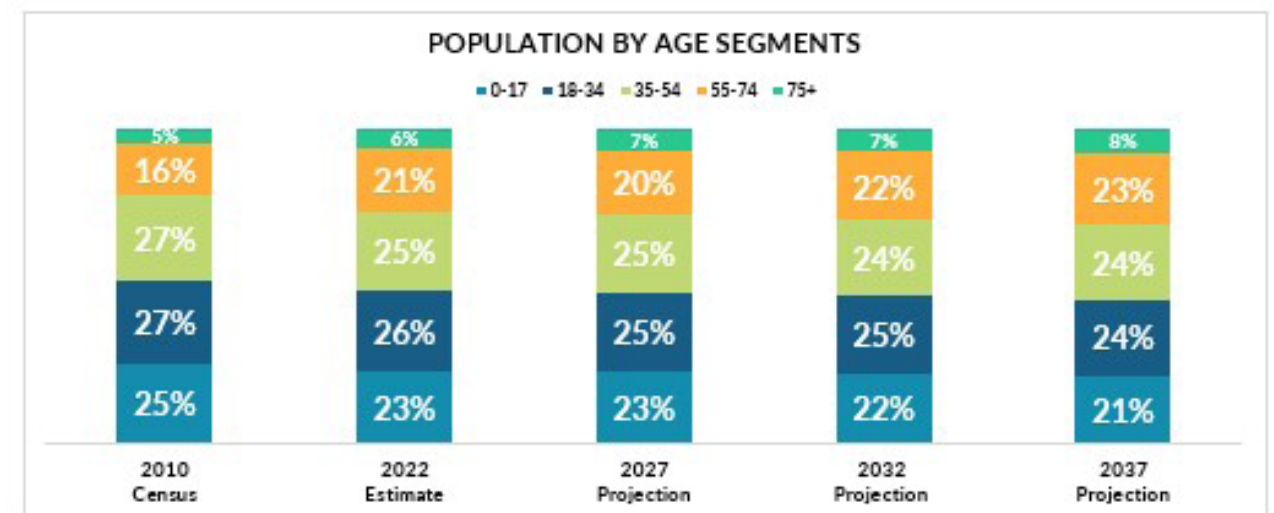
CITY POPULANCE

From 2010 to 2020, the population of the City increased steadily, with an average annual growth rate of .82%. This growth rate was higher than the national annual growth rate of 0.71% during the same period. It is projected that the City's population will continue to grow, reaching almost 1 million residents by 2037.



CITY POPULANCE

The City has a median age of 36.4, which is two and a half years younger than the national median age of 38.9. However, the population is projected to age over the next 15 years, with the percentage of residents aged 55 and older expected to increase from 27% currently to 31% by 2037.



RACE AND ETHNICITY DEFINITIONS

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below. The Census 2020 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2010 Census and earlier censuses; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time. The latest (Census 2020) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below. The Census 2020 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2010 Census and earlier censuses; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time. The latest (Census 2020) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

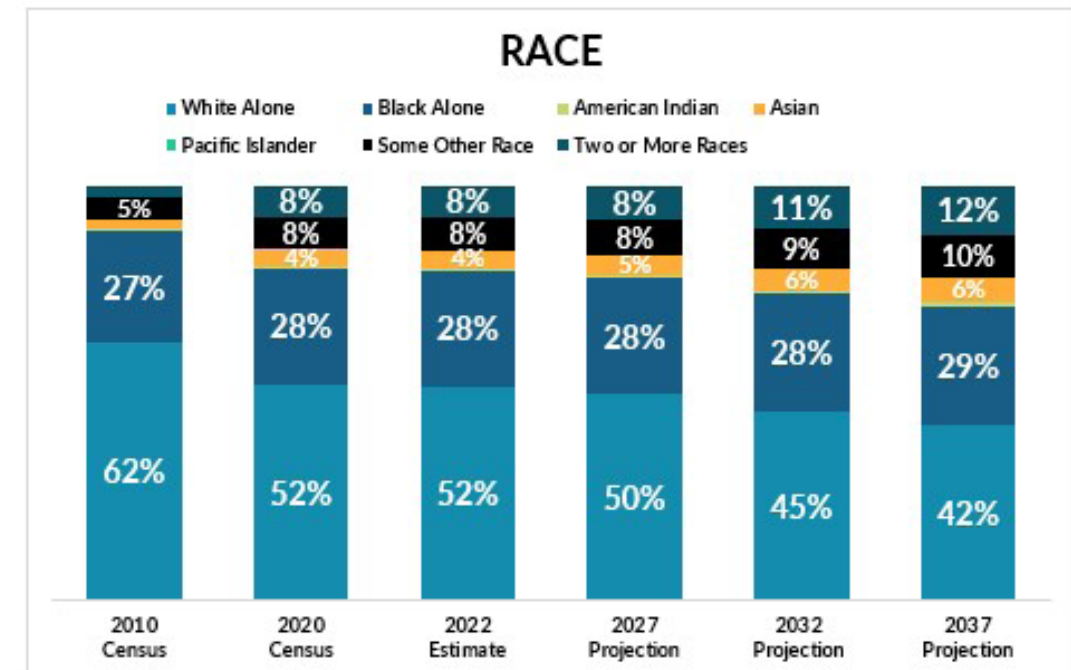
- **American Indian** – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment
- **Asian** – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam
- **Black or African American** – This includes a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands
- **White** – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa
- **Hispanic or Latino** – This is an ethnic distinction, a subset of a race as defined by the Federal Government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race

Census states that the race and ethnicity categories generally reflect social definitions in the U.S. and are not an attempt to define race and ethnicity biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. We recognize that the race and ethnicity categories include racial, ethnic, and national origins and sociocultural groups.”

Please Note: The Census Bureau defines Race as a person’s self-identification with one or more of the following social groups: White, Black, or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, or a combination of these. While Ethnicity is defined as whether a person is of Hispanic / Latino origin or not. For this reason, the Hispanic / Latino ethnicity is viewed separate from race throughout this demographic analysis.

RACE

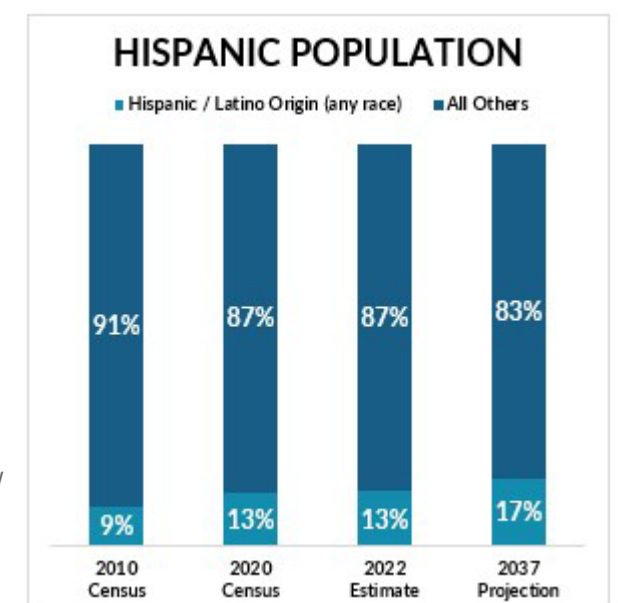
Currently, over half of the City’s population is White Alone (52%), while the largest minority group is Black Alone at 28%. However, by 2032, the City is projected to become majority-minority, meaning that the combined percentage of all non-White racial categories will surpass that of White Alone. This is because the percentage of White Alone is expected to decrease while all other racial categories are projected to grow in representation.



ETHNICITY

The City’s population was evaluated based on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, which the Census Bureau views as separate from race. It is worth noting that individuals who identify as Hispanic/Latino may also belong to any of the racial categories mentioned earlier.

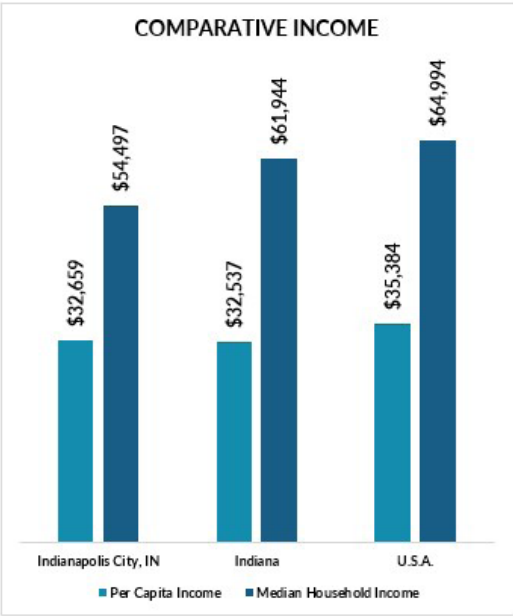
As per the current 2022 estimate, approximately 13% of the City’s population consists of people of Hispanic/Latino origin, which is notably lower than the national average of 18.9%. However, the Hispanic/Latino population has grown since the 2010 census and is projected to make up 17% of the City’s total population by 2037.



INCOME

The City’s per capita income is \$32,659, which is slightly higher than the state average of \$32,357, but lower than the national average of \$35,384. Meanwhile, the median household income for the City is \$54,497, which is lower than both the state average of \$61,944 and the national average of \$64,994.

It is important to note that per capita income refers to the income earned by an individual, while median household income is calculated based on the total income of everyone over the age of sixteen living in the same household.



AT-RISK POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The Census Bureau has identified five “at-risk” factors, and the following statistics compare how Indianapolis compares to state and national averages in these categories. Firstly, the foreign-born population in Indianapolis is at 10%, which is higher than the state’s average of 5.4%, but lower than the national average of 13.6%. Secondly, when it comes to languages spoken at home, 14.4% of Indianapolis residents speak a non-English language at home, which is higher than the state average of 8.9% but lower than the national average of 21.7%.

In terms of disability, 10.4% of the Indianapolis population lives with a disability, slightly higher than the state average of 9.9% and higher than the national average of 8.7%. Additionally, the rate of uninsured individuals in Indianapolis is 11%, which is higher than the state average of 8.9% but slightly lower than the national average of 9.8%. Finally, the poverty rate in Indianapolis is 16.4%, higher than the state average of 12.2% and the national average of 11.6%.

At Risk Population Characteristics	Foreign Born	10.0%	5.4%	13.6%
	Language other Than English Spoken at Home	14.4%	8.9%	21.7%
	With a Disability	10.4%	9.9%	8.7%
	No Health Insurance	11.0%	8.9%	9.8%
	Persons in Poverty	16.4%	12.2%	11.6%

COST OF LIVING

The cost-of-living index is a measure of how expensive it is to live in a particular area or city compared to another area or city. The index is typically calculated by comparing the prices of a basket of goods and services, such as housing, transportation, food, healthcare, and utilities, in different locations.

The national average cost-of-living index in the United States is set at 100, and the cost-of-living index for a specific city or region is typically reported as a percentage of the national average.

COST OF LIVING	Indianapolis
Overall	84.9
Grocery	93.6
Health	100.3
Housing	62.7
Utilities	90.2
Transportation	90.8
Miscellaneous	103.1

For example, if the cost-of-living index for a city is 110, it means that it is 10% more expensive to live in that city than the national average.

Indianapolis is a relatively affordable city to live in, with a score of 84.9 out of 100. This score indicates that the cost of living in Indianapolis is lower than the national average, making it a desirable location for individuals and families looking for an affordable place to call home.

One of the factors that contribute to Indianapolis’ affordability is its relatively low housing costs. Housing in Indianapolis is considered affordable, with prices well below the national average. This makes it an attractive location for individuals and families looking for an affordable place to live.

Although healthcare and miscellaneous (clothing, restaurants, entertainment, repairs, and other services) costs in Indianapolis are slightly higher than the national average, the overall cost of living in the city remains relatively affordable. Additionally, the city offers many amenities that contribute to its high quality of life, including a vibrant arts and culture scene, excellent public parks and green spaces, and a thriving sports culture.

2.2 RECREATIONAL TRENDS

The Trends Analysis offers insights into recreational trends at the national, regional, and local levels, as well as recreational interests segmented by age. This analysis utilizes data on trends sourced from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI). The trends data used in this analysis is based on participation rates that are current or historical, statistically valid survey results, or NRPA Park Metrics.

LOCAL SPORT AND LEISURE MARKET POTENTIAL

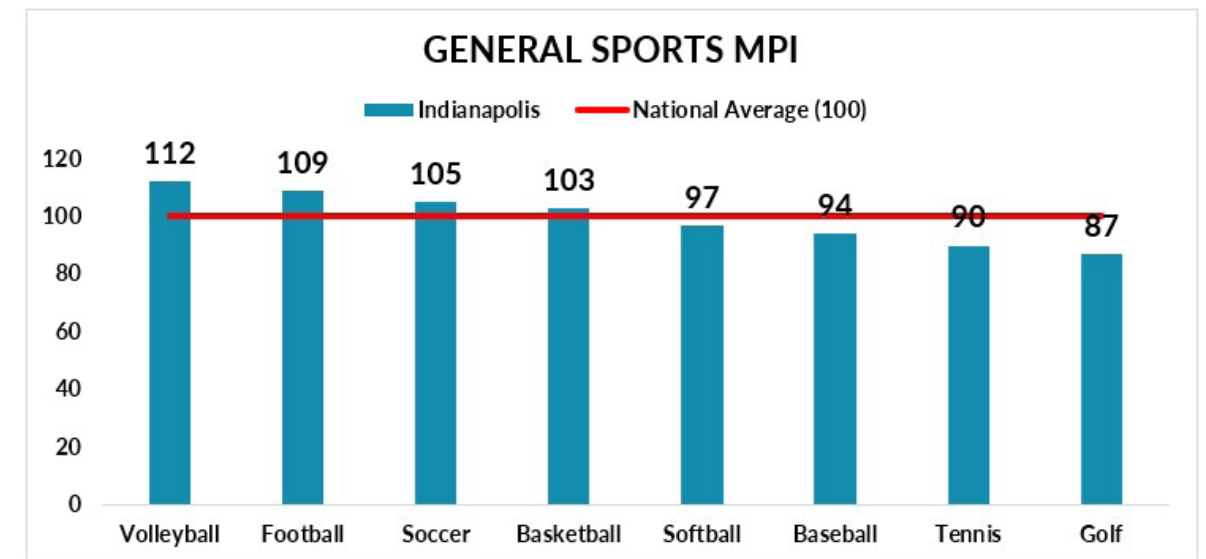
ESRI provided the following charts depicting sports and leisure market potential data for Indianapolis residents. The Market Potential Index (MPI) is utilized to measure probable demand for a product or service within defined service areas. MPI scores display the likelihood that an adult resident will partake in certain activities when compared to the national U.S. average. The national average is set at 100, so scores below 100 indicate lower-than-average participation rates, while scores above 100 indicate higher-than-average participation rates. The service area is evaluated against the national average across four categories: general sports, fitness, outdoor activity, and commercial recreation.

It is important to note that MPI metrics represent only one data point used to help determine community trends. Programmatic decisions should not be solely based on MPI metrics. The following charts compare MPI scores for 46 sport and leisure activities prevalent for residents in the City. The activities are grouped by type and listed in descending order, from highest to lowest MPI score. Index numbers of 100 or higher hold significance as they indicate a greater likelihood that residents within service areas will actively participate in those Department offerings. Conversely, below-average MPI scores suggest lower levels of participation in specific activities and may indicate a need for certain recreational spaces, amenities, and/or programs.



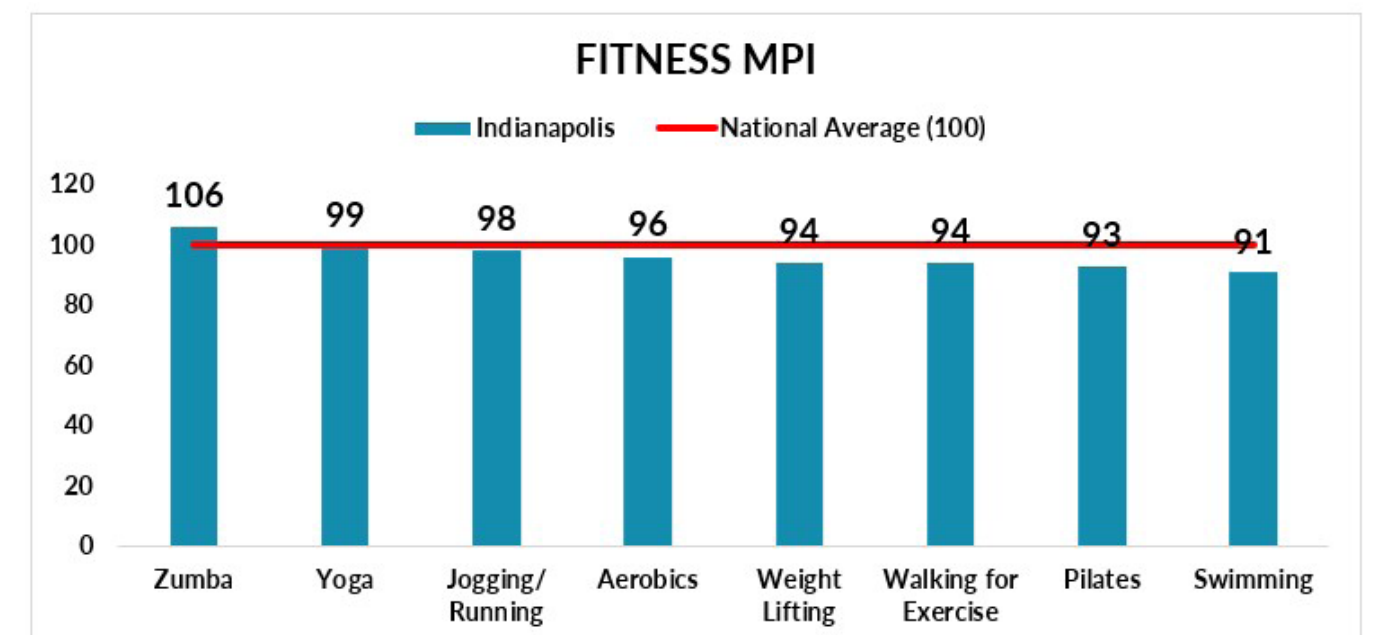
GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

Out of the eight activities listed, four of them had MPI scores above the national averages. These activities were volleyball (112), football (109), soccer (105), and basketball (103). It is also worth noting that the top six MPIs in this category were all team sports, while the remaining two activities, tennis and golf, are generally played individually.



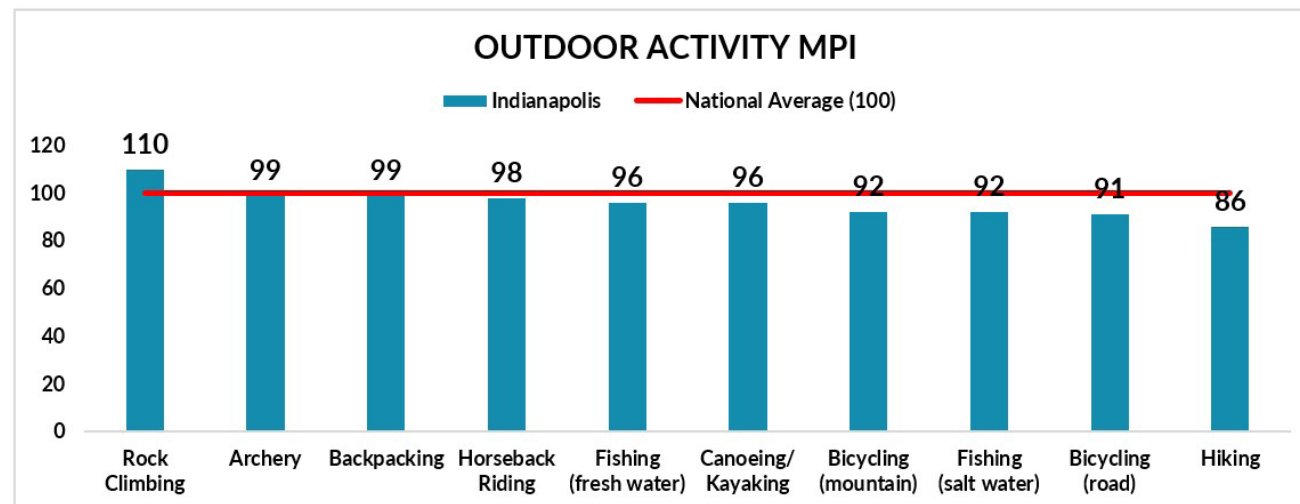
GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

Among the listed fitness activities, only Zumba (106) had an MPI score above the national average. However, all other listed activities had MPI scores that were less than 10% below the national average.



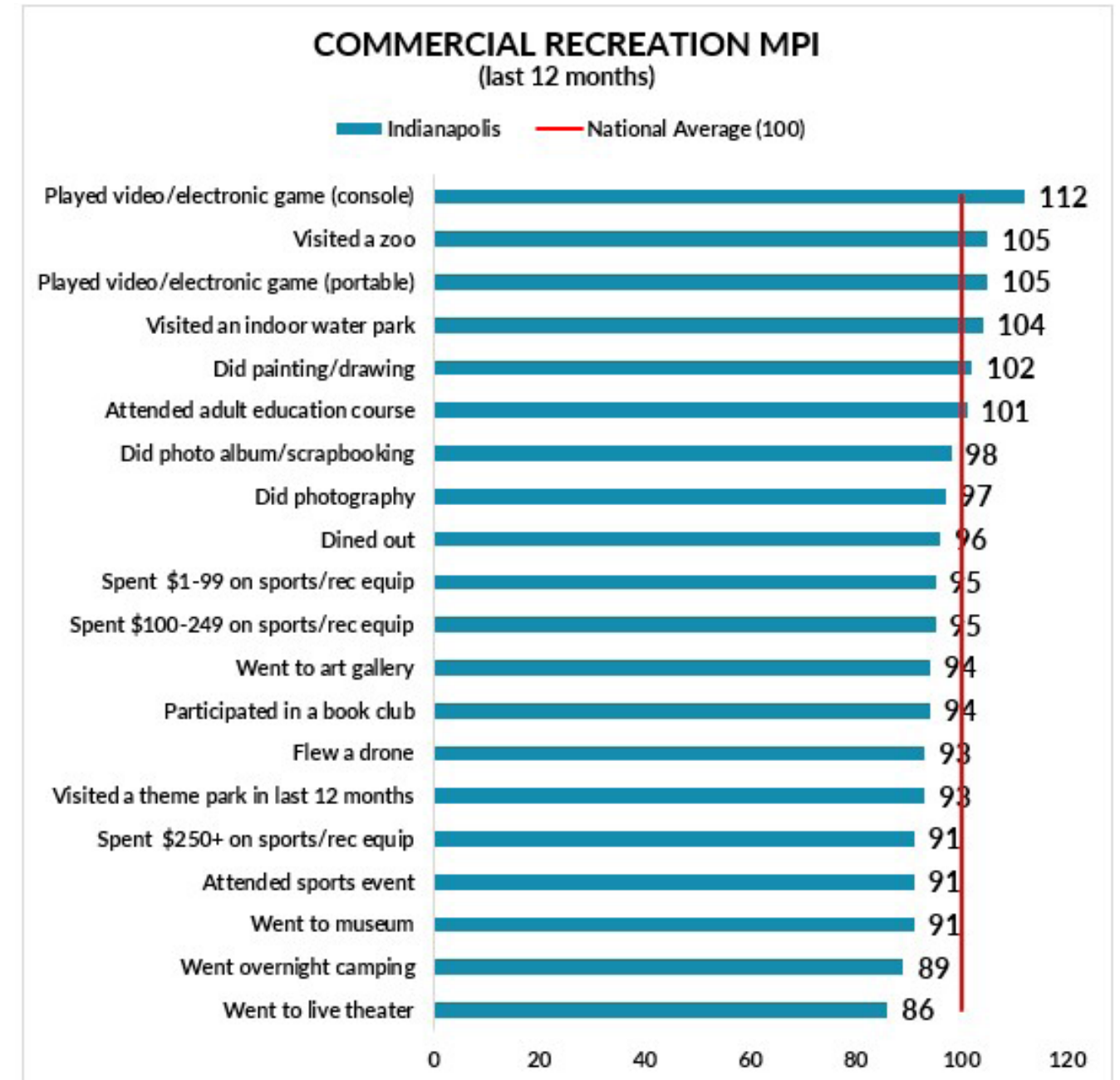
GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

Rock climbing (110) was the only outdoor activity that had an MPI score above the national average. On the other hand, hiking (86) had the lowest MPI score. However, it is worth noting that there was a high level of support for additional trails and connectivity during the community input process. This could be an indication that the MPI score for hiking has the potential to increase significantly if additional trails are made available.



COMMERCIAL RECREATION

In the category of commercial recreation, two of the top three activities were playing console video/electronic games (112) and playing portable video/electronic games (105). This, combined with the success of Butler University's Esports program, indicates that Esports programming could be a successful offering for the department.



NATIONAL TRENDS

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) utilized their Sports, Fitness & Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report 2022 to evaluate National Recreation Participatory Trends and Core vs. Casual Participation Trends. The study is based on surveys conducted by the Physical Activity Council (PAC) in 2021, which targeted all genders, ages, income levels, regions, and ethnicities to ensure statistical accuracy.



SFIA considers the sample size of 18,000 completed interviews to result in a high degree of statistical accuracy. Using a weighting technique, survey results were applied to the total U.S. population figure of 304,745,039 people (ages six and older).

The report aims to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the U.S. The study analyzed 118 different sports/activities, and categorized them into various groups including sports, fitness, outdoor activities, aquatics, and more.

CORE VS. CASUAL PARTICIPATION

SFIA further categorizes active participants as either core or casual based on their frequency of participation. Core participants have a higher frequency of participation than casual participants. The thresholds that distinguish casual from core participants may vary depending on the nature of each activity. For example, core participants engage in most fitness activities more than 50 times per year, while for sports, the threshold for core participation is typically 13 times per year.

In every activity, core participants are more committed and less likely to switch to other activities or become inactive (engage in no physical activity) than casual participants. This is why activities with more core participants tend to experience less fluctuation in participation rates than those with a larger group of casual participants.



IMPACT OF COVID-19

In 2021, approximately 232.6 million Americans ages six and over reported being active, marking a 1.3% increase from the previous year and the highest number of active Americans in the past five years. This information is illustrated in Figure 14. The rise in activity can be attributed to the flourishing of outdoor activities, the popularity of at-home fitness, and the return of team sports after a COVID-19 hiatus.

Activities such as yoga, Pilates, and kettlebell workouts remained popular, while pickleball's ease and tennis' competitiveness drew in many. Indoor climbing gained popularity, as did hiking. Waterways saw an increase in the number of stand-up paddlers, kayaks, and jet skis, while gymnastics, team swimming, court volleyball, and fast-pitch softball saw a surge in participation thanks to the Olympic games.

Water sports experienced the most significant increase in participation rates, with activities such as kayaking, stand-up paddling, and boardsailing/windsurfing contributing to a 2% increase. Outdoor sports continued to grow, with 53.9% of the U.S. population participating, which is higher than pre-pandemic levels. This rate saw a 6.2% gain from the 50.7% participation rate in 2019. Trail running was the largest contributor to this gain, with a 5.6% increase in one year and a 13.9% increase from 2019.



Fitness sports remained the most popular form of exercise for Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials, with over half of each generation participating in one type of outdoor activity. Meanwhile, Gen Z dominated team sports participation.

NATIONAL TRENDS OF PARTICIPATION LEVELS IN GENERAL SPORTS

In the United States, basketball (27.1 million), golf (25.1 million), and tennis (22.6 million) are the three most participated sports, surpassing all others in the general sports category. Baseball (15.5 million) and outdoor soccer (12.5 million) round out the top five.

The popularity of these three sports can be attributed to their ability to be played with a relatively small number of participants and their potential for outdoor play, which made them particularly attractive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Basketball's success can also be credited to its minimal equipment requirements and limited space needs, which enable it to be played as a driveway pickup game at many American homes. Meanwhile, golf's appeal spans a wide range of ages, and it is often considered a lifelong sport.



Basketball
27.1 Million



Golf
25.1 Million



Tennis
22.6 Million



Baseball
15.5 Million



Soccer
12.5 Million

In addition, the rise of target-type game venues or Golf Entertainment Venues, such as Top Golf, has boosted the popularity of golf by 72.3% over the past five years. These venues offer a new alternative to traditional golf and are helping to revitalize the sport.



FIVE-YEAR TREND

From 2016 to 2021, Pickleball saw the biggest increase in participation at 71.2%, followed by Golf-Entertainment Venues at 51.3%, and Tennis at 25.1%. Additionally, Boxing for Fitness grew by 21.4% and Competition by 20.7%. On the other hand, the five-year trend from 2016 to 2021 shows a significant decline in participation in sports like Ultimate Frisbee (-40.4%), Roller Hockey (-26.1%), Volleyball (Sand/Beach) (-23.8%), Squash (-23.5%), Slow Pitch Softball (-21.9%), and Gymnastics (-20.7%).

ONE-YEAR TREND

In the most recent year, there were some similarities to the five-year trend, with Pickleball (14.8%) and Boxing for Competition (7.3%) experiencing significant increases in participation. Other sports that saw the greatest one-year increases include Fast Pitch Softball (15.3%), Gymnastics (10.9%), and Court Volleyball (8.1%). However, some sports such as Basketball (-2.2%), Flag Football (-1.6%), Indoor Soccer (-0.6%), and Baseball (-0.5%) have shown a five-year trend increase but a one-year trend decrease. This is likely due to the growth coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic when all participation rates were low. In contrast, other team sports like Ultimate Frisbee (-5.8%), Slow Pitch Softball (-5.4%), Roller Hockey (-5%), Racquetball (-4.8%), and Beach/Sand Volleyball (-3.1%) had significant decreases in participation over the last year.



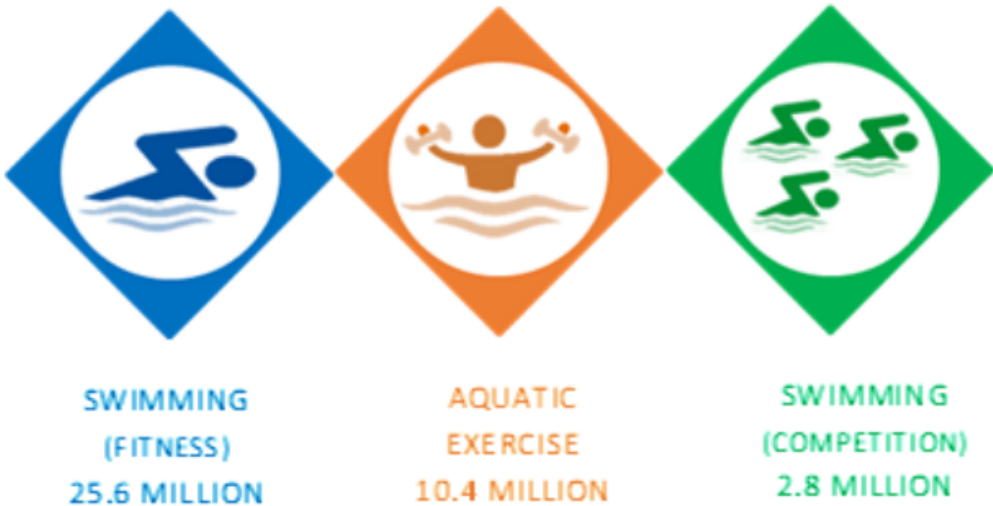
CORE VS. CASUAL PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL SPORTS

Sports like basketball, baseball, and slow pitch softball typically have more people who participate in them regularly (13 or more times per year) than those who participate casually (1-12 times per year). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most sports saw a decrease in the percentage of regular participants. On the other hand, there were notable increases in the percentage of casual participation for court volleyball, pickleball, fast pitch softball, gymnastics, and lacrosse in the past year. Please refer to Appendix A for a complete breakdown of participation levels.

National Core vs Casual Participatory Trends - Outdoor / Adventure Recreation								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2016		2020		2021		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Hiking (Day)	42,128	100%	57,808	100%	58,697	100%	39.3%	1.5%
Bicycling (Road)	38,365	100%	44,471	100%	42,775	100%	11.5%	-3.8%
<i>Casual (1-25 times)</i>	19,244	50%	23,720	53%	22,280	52%	15.8%	-6.1%
<i>Core (26+ times)</i>	19,121	50%	20,751	47%	20,495	48%	7.2%	-1.2%
Fishing (Freshwater)	38,121	100%	42,556	100%	40,853	100%	7.2%	-4.0%
<i>Casual (1-7 times)</i>	20,308	53%	24,309	57%	22,451	55%	10.6%	-7.6%
<i>Core (8+ times)</i>	17,813	47%	18,247	43%	18,403	45%	3.3%	0.9%
Camping (< 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	26,467	100%	36,082	100%	35,985	100%	36.0%	-0.3%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	15,855	100%	17,825	100%	16,371	100%	3.3%	-8.2%
<i>Casual (1-7 times)</i>	8,719	55%	11,281	63%	9,688	59%	11.1%	-14.1%
<i>Core (8+ times)</i>	7,136	45%	6,544	37%	6,683	41%	-6.3%	2.1%
Fishing (Saltwater)	12,266	100%	14,527	100%	13,790	100%	12.4%	-5.1%
<i>Casual (1-7 times)</i>	7,198	59%	9,109	63%	8,543	62%	18.7%	-6.2%
<i>Core (8+ times)</i>	5,068	41%	5,418	37%	5,246	38%	3.5%	-3.2%
Birdwatching (> 1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	11,589	100%	15,228	100%	14,815	100%	27.8%	-2.7%
Backpacking Overnight	10,151	100%	10,746	100%	10,306	100%	1.5%	-4.1%
Bicycling (Mountain)	8,615	100%	8,998	100%	8,693	100%	0.9%	-3.4%
<i>Casual (1-12 times)</i>	4,273	50%	4,803	53%	4,517	52%	5.7%	-6.0%
<i>Core (13+ times)</i>	4,342	50%	4,194	47%	4,176	48%	-3.8%	-0.4%
Archery	7,903	100%	7,249	100%	7,342	100%	-7.1%	1.3%
<i>Casual (1-25 times)</i>	6,650	84%	6,102	84%	6,054	82%	-9.0%	-0.8%
<i>Core (26+ times)</i>	1,253	16%	1,147	16%	1,288	18%	2.8%	12.3%
Fishing (Fly)	6,456	100%	7,753	100%	7,458	100%	15.5%	-3.8%
<i>Casual (1-7 times)</i>	4,183	65%	5,020	65%	4,762	64%	13.8%	-5.1%
<i>Core (8+ times)</i>	2,273	35%	2,733	35%	2,696	36%	18.6%	-1.4%
Skateboarding	6,442	100%	8,872	100%	8,747	100%	35.8%	-1.4%
<i>Casual (1-25 times)</i>	3,955	61%	6,315	71%	6,181	71%	56.3%	-2.1%
<i>Core (26+ times)</i>	2,487	39%	2,557	29%	2,566	29%	3.2%	0.4%
Climbing (Indoor)	-	n/a	5,535	100%	5,684	100%	n/a	2.7%
Roller Skating (In-Line)	5,381	100%	4,892	100%	4,940	100%	-8.2%	1.0%
<i>Casual (1-12 times)</i>	3,861	72%	3,466	71%	3,525	71%	-8.7%	1.7%
<i>Core (13+ times)</i>	1,520	28%	1,425	29%	1,415	29%	-6.9%	-0.7%
Bicycling (BMX)	3,104	100%	3,880	100%	3,861	100%	24.4%	-0.5%
<i>Casual (1-12 times)</i>	1,760	57%	2,532	65%	2,466	64%	40.1%	-2.6%
<i>Core (13+ times)</i>	1,344	43%	1,348	35%	1,396	36%	3.9%	3.6%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,790	100%	2,456	100%	2,374	100%	-14.9%	-3.3%
Climbing (Sport/Boulder)	-	n/a	2,290	100%	2,301	100%	n/a	0.5%
Adventure Racing	2,999	100%	1,966	100%	1,826	100%	-39.1%	-7.1%
<i>Casual (1 times)</i>	1,081	36%	328	17%	312	17%	-71.1%	-4.9%
<i>Core (2+ times)</i>	1,918	64%	1,638	83%	1,514	83%	-21.1%	-7.6%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over								
Participation Growth/Decline	Large Increase (greater than 25%)		Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)		Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)		Large Decrease (less than -25%)	
Core vs Casual Distribution	Mostly Core Participants (greater than 75%)		More Core Participants (56-74%)		Evenly Divided (45-55% Core and Casual)		More Casual Participants (56-74%)	
							Mostly Casual Participants (greater than 75%)	

NATIONAL TRENDS OF PARTICIPATION LEVELS IN AQUATICS

Swimming is considered a physical activity that people can enjoy throughout their entire lives. This is likely why it remains so popular. Even though most aquatic facilities were closed at some point due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fitness Swimming had the highest participation rate (25.6 million) among aquatic activities in 2021.



FIVE-YEAR TREND

When we look at the five-year trend from 2016 to 2021, we can see that none of the activities have experienced an increase in participation. This is likely because people did not have access to facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although both Fitness Swimming and Aquatic Exercise experienced a slight decrease in participation, with -3.7% and -1.7% respectively, Competitive Swimming suffered a significant decline of -16.2%.

ONE-YEAR TREND

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many aquatic facilities had to shut down for a certain period. As a result, there were declines in Aquatic Exercise (-5.1%), which had the largest decrease, and Fitness Swimming (-0.2%). However, there was an increase in participation in Competitive Swimming of 8%.

CORE VS. CASUAL TRENDS IN AQUATICS

Over the past five years, only Aquatic Exercise has experienced an increase in casual participation (1-49 times per year). However, all aquatic activities have seen a decrease in core participation (50+ times per year) during the same period, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The significant decreases in all types of participation over the last year have further reinforced this trend. Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown of core vs. casual participation.

National Participatory Trends - Aquatics					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2016	2020	2021	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Swimming (Fitness)	26,601	25,666	25,620	-3.7%	-0.2%
Aquatic Exercise	10,575	10,954	10,400	-1.7%	-5.1%
Swimming (Competition)	3,369	2,615	2,824	-16.2%	8.0%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

NATIONAL TRENDS OF PARTICIPATION IN WATER SPORTS/ ACTIVITIES

In 2021, the most popular water sports and activities based on total participants were Recreational Kayaking (13.3 million), Canoeing (9.2 million), and Snorkeling (7.3 million). However, it’s important to note that participation in water activities can vary depending on regional, seasonal, and environmental factors. For instance, regions with more water access and warmer climates tend to have higher participation rates in water activities than regions with long winter seasons or limited water access. Therefore, when analyzing trends in water sports and activities, it’s crucial to consider environmental barriers that can significantly impact water activity participation.



FIVE-YEAR TREND

Between 2016 and 2021, Recreational Kayaking (33.3%), Surfing (24%), and Stand-Up Paddling (16.1%) experienced the fastest growth in participation among water activities. White Water Kayaking (1.4%) was the only other activity that saw an increase in participation. On the other hand, Boardsailing/Windsurfing (-25.3%), Scuba Diving (-20.4%), Water Skiing (-17.4%), Sea Kayaking (-17.2%), Snorkeling (-16.1%), and Sailing (-15.4%) were the water activities that declined most rapidly in participation during the same period.

ONE-YEAR TREND

Recreational Kayaking (2.7%) and Stand-Up Paddling (1.7%) were the only water activities that showed growth over both the last five years and the most recent year. Conversely, Surfing (-8.9%), Snorkeling (-5.3%), Scuba Diving (-4.3%), and Canoeing (-4.1%) were the activities that experienced the largest decreases in participation during the most recent year.

CORE VS. CASUAL TRENDS IN WATER SPORTS/ACTIVITIES

As previously mentioned, regional, seasonal, and environmental limitations may affect the participation rate of water sports and activities. These factors may also explain why all water-based activities have significantly more casual participants than core participants. This is because the frequency of activities may be restricted by external factors. The high number of casual users is likely why most water sports/ activities have seen a decline in participation in recent years. For a detailed breakdown of core vs. casual participation, please refer to Appendix A

National Participatory Trends - Water Sports / Activities					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2016	2020	2021	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Kayaking (Recreational)	10,017	13,002	13,351	33.3%	2.7%
Canoeing	10,046	9,595	9,199	-8.4%	-4.1%
Snorkeling	8,717	7,729	7,316	-16.1%	-5.3%
Jet Skiing	5,783	4,900	5,062	-12.5%	3.3%
Sailing	4,095	3,486	3,463	-15.4%	-0.7%
Stand-Up Paddling	3,220	3,675	3,739	16.1%	1.7%
Rafting	3,428	3,474	3,383	-1.3%	-2.6%
Water Skiing	3,700	3,050	3,058	-17.4%	0.3%
Surfing	2,793	3,800	3,463	24.0%	-8.9%
Wakeboarding	2,912	2,754	2,674	-8.2%	-2.9%
Scuba Diving	3,111	2,588	2,476	-20.4%	-4.3%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	3,124	2,508	2,587	-17.2%	3.1%
Kayaking (White Water)	2,552	2,605	2,587	1.4%	-0.7%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,737	1,268	1,297	-25.3%	2.3%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

10-MINUTE WALK

The Trust for Public Land firmly believes that every person residing in U.S. cities should have access to a high-quality park that is located within a 10-minute walking distance from their home. To make this vision a reality, they launched the “10-Minute Walk Program” aimed at helping cities expand access to green spaces for all. The Trust for Public Land has conducted research, which has revealed that parks that cater to a predominantly people of color demographic are, on average, only half the size of parks that primarily serve white populations. Despite their smaller size, these parks serve nearly five times as many people. Additionally, parks that primarily serve low-income households are, on average, four times smaller than parks that serve high-income households.

The current statistics indicate that only 36% of the residents of Indianapolis have a park located within a 10-minute walking distance from their homes. This percentage is significantly lower than the national average of 55%.

Additional information regarding the “10-Minute Walk Program” can be found at <https://www.tpl.org/>.

36%
of Indianapolis residents
live within a
10-minute walk
of a park

National average is 55%

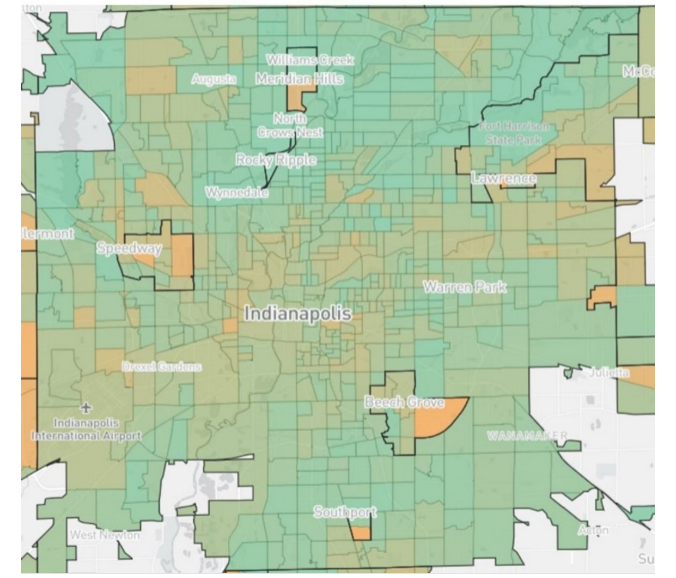


TREE EQUITY

Tree Equity Score is a method used by cities to evaluate how effectively they are providing fair access to tree canopy coverage for all residents. This score uses a combination of factors, such as the need for tree canopy coverage and the priority for planting trees in urban neighborhoods (which are defined by Census Block Groups). It is based on data related to tree canopy coverage, climate, demographics, and socioeconomics.

The score is calculated at the neighborhood (block group) level and then aggregated to the municipal level to provide an overall assessment of the city's performance in delivering equitable tree canopy coverage.

Tree Equity Score: 84

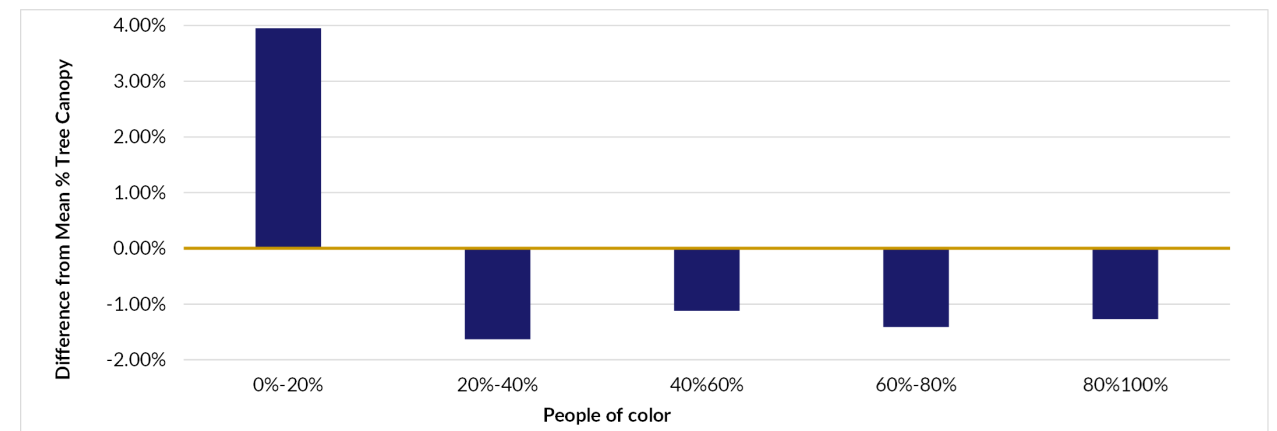


Indianapolis currently has a tree equity score of 84. Of the 577 block groups in Indianapolis:

- **33 have a tree equity score of 100**
- **470 have a tree equity score over 75**
- **1 has a score under 50 (46)**

Neighborhoods with larger percentages of people of color living within them tend to have lower tree equity scores, meaning they have less tree canopy cover. According to Figure 19, block groups with 0-20% people of color have a tree canopy percentage 4% higher than the citywide mean canopy percentage. However, all block groups with over 20% people of color have tree canopy percentages lower than the city average.

Additional information regarding tree equity can be found at <https://www.treeequityscore.org/>.



2.3 COMMUNITY PROFILE KEY FINDINGS

- **Population growth:** With a projected population of almost 1 million residents by 2037, the City must expand and develop its parks and recreation facilities by adding new parks, expanding existing facilities, and creating new programs and services to meet the diverse and growing community's needs.
- **Aging population:** As the percentage of residents aged 55 and older is expected to increase from 27% currently to 31% by 2037, parks and recreation facilities will need to cater to the specific needs of older adults. This includes providing programs and services that promote active aging, such as senior fitness classes, social activities, and opportunities for intergenerational engagement.
- **Ethnic diversity:** With the City projected to become majority-minority by 2032, parks and recreation facilities will need to be inclusive and culturally sensitive to meet the needs of a diverse community. This includes offering programs, events and services that serve the needs and interests of different ethnic and cultural groups and ensuring that parks and facilities are accessible and welcoming to all residents.
- **Income disparities:** With the City's per capita income and median household income lower than the national averages, there may be residents who cannot afford to participate in certain parks and recreation programs or use certain facilities. To address this issue, the department should consider balancing access through low-cost or free programs, and financial sustainability through exploring partnerships with community organizations and providers to offer recreation opportunities for all.
- **At-risk populations:** As the City has a higher-than-average percentage of foreign-born residents, non-English speakers, and individuals with disabilities, parks and recreation facilities will need to be inclusive and accessible to meet the needs of these at-risk populations. This includes providing bilingual signage and staff, offering adaptive and inclusive programs, and ensuring that offerings are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- **Focusing on niche sports:** The growing participation trends for pickleball and popularity of console and portable video/electronic games and Esports programs at universities suggest a growing demand for these non-traditional sporting activities parks and recreation facilities.
- **Investing in additional trails and connectivity:** Although hiking had a low MPI score, there was a high level of support for additional trails and connectivity during the community input process. Investing in additional trails and connectivity could potentially increase the MPI score for hiking and make it a more popular activity.
- **Disparity in access to parks and green spaces:** The department should continue to prioritize the expansion and improvement in neighborhoods with predominantly people of color and low-income households, where park sizes are smaller and amenities are older; the 10-Minute Walk Program and Tree Equity Score and can be a useful tools in helping cities achieve this goal.



2.4 BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The Consulting team and staff identified parks and recreation agencies comparable to the department to assess the department's performance against them. The benchmark assessment was based on data collected by the consulting team for each agency, and the data was categorized accordingly.

The data used in the analysis was obtained from various sources, including agency/municipality websites, Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR), budgets, and the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) Park Metrics Database. It is important to note that each agency collects, maintains, and reports data differently, and there are variations that impact reporting and per capita and percentage allocations. The benchmark data collection for all systems was completed in March 2023, but the information in this report may have changed since then.

The operating metrics that were sought included budgets, staffing levels, and inventories, but some of this information was not available or tracked. The table below shows each benchmark agency that was part of the study, and they were chosen because they had similar demographic and/or organizational characteristics as Indy Parks and Recreation and most were nationally accredited through the Commission for the Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and / or had won the National Recreation and Park Association's Gold Medal.



OVERVIEW

Environmental System's Research Institute (ESRI) 2022 population estimates indicate that Indy Parks and Recreation department serves a population of 910,045, placing them in the middle of the seven benchmarked agencies. Additionally, Indy Parks and Recreation is one of the five agencies that currently holds CAPRA accreditation.

Agency	Population	Current CAPRA Accreditation (Year First Accredited)	NRPA Gold Medal Winner (Years won)
Indy Parks and Recreation	910,045	Yes (2003)	No
Austin Parks and Recreation	964,177	Yes (2007)	Yes (1968 & 2004)
Dallas Park and Recreation	1,288,457	Yes (2016)	Yes (1985)
Columbus Recreation and Parks	906,528	No	Yes (1969)
Nashville Park and Recreation	678,851	No	Yes (1976)
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation	1,122,276	Yes (2009)	Yes (2012)
Louisville Parks and Recreation	628,594	Yes (2007)	No

While Indianapolis and Louisville were the two benchmarked agencies that have not yet won a Gold Medal, Dallas, Columbus, and Nashville's Gold Medals were all won over 37 years ago, highlighting the competitiveness of the award and the challenges of maintaining a high level of excellence in parks and recreation services.

PARKLAND

Indy Parks and Recreation ranks lowest among compared agencies, providing 12.21 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. However, it still exceeds the national median of 10.3 acres for agencies serving over 250,000 residents.

Agency	Acres per 1,000
Nashville Park and Recreation	22.29
Louisville Parks and Recreation	20.95
Austin Parks and Recreation	20.67
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation	18.71
Dallas Park and Recreation	15.61
Columbus Recreation and Parks	14.89
Indy Parks and Recreation	12.21

2022 NRPA Park Metrics	All Agencies	More than 250,000
Median	10.4	10.3
Lower Quartile	5.1	5.4
Upper Quartile	18.2	17.5

10-MINUTE WALK

Indy Parks and Recreation ranks last with only 36% of the population having access to a park within a 10-minute walk. Dallas, Columbus, and Austin have the highest percentages, with 73%, 71%, and 70% of their populations within a 10-minute walk, respectively. Nashville, Louisville, and Mecklenburg County fall below the 50% mark, with 46%, 39%, and 38%, respectively.

Agency	10-Min Walk
Dallas Park and Recreation	73%
Columbus Recreation and Parks	71%
Austin Parks and Recreation	70%
Nashville Park and Recreation	46%
Louisville Parks and Recreation	39%
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation	38%
Indv Parks and Recreation	36%

STAFFING

Indy Parks and Recreation ranked lowest among benchmarked agencies with 3.36 full-time equivalents (FTEs) per 10,000 residents. This figure also falls below the national median for agencies serving more than 250,000 residents.

Agency	FTE per 10,000
Nashville Park and Recreation	9.97
Austin Parks and Recreation	7.88
Dallas Park and Recreation	6.22
Louisville Parks and Recreation	4.22
Columbus Recreation and Parks	4.03
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation	4.01
Indv Parks and Recreation	3.36

2022 NRPA Park Metrics	All Agencies	More than 250,000
Median	8.9	5.5
Lower Quartile	4.7	2.1
Upper Quartile	15.4	8.2

BUDGET

Indy Parks and Recreation ranked sixth among seven benchmarked agencies in operating expenses per capita at \$43.49. Although below the national median for agencies serving more than 250,000 residents, this represents a 68% increase since the 2016 Indy Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan (\$25.93).

Agency	Operating Expenses per Capita
Austin Parks and Recreation	\$ 133.01
Nashville Park and Recreation	\$ 85.67
Dallas Park and Recreation	\$ 74.95
Columbus Recreation and Parks	\$ 64.35
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation	\$ 52.72
Indv Parks and Recreation	\$ 43.49
Louisville Parks and Recreation	\$ 42.29

2022 NRPA Park Metrics	All Agencies	More than 250,000
Median	\$ 93.01	\$ 54.92
Lower Quartile	\$ 51.40	\$ 24.37
Upper Quartile	\$ 171.48	\$ 85.23

When looking at operating expenses on a per acre basis, Indy Parks and Recreation ranks fifth out of the seven benchmarked agencies with an expense of \$3,561.82 per acre. Louisville and Mecklenburg County have the lowest expenses per acre, with \$2,019.09 and \$2,817.31, respectively. Austin has the highest expense per acre, with \$6,433.28, followed by Dallas and Columbus with \$4,800.26 and \$4,320.99, respectively.

Agency	Operating Expense per Acre
Austin Parks and Recreation	\$ 6,433.28
Dallas Park and Recreation	\$ 4,800.26
Columbus Recreation and Parks	\$ 4,320.99
Nashville Park and Recreation	\$ 3,843.00
Indv Parks and Recreation	\$ 3,561.82
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation	\$ 2,817.31
Louisville Parks and Recreation	\$ 2,019.09

2022 NRPA Park Metrics	All Agencies	More than 250,000
Median	7.823	3.959
Lower Quartile	3.648	1.590
Upper Quartile	18.379	9.269

CONCLUSION

Based on the collected data, the following observations can be made for Indy Parks and Recreation:

- **Staffing levels are below par:** Indy Parks and Recreation has the lowest FTE per 10,000 residents (3.36) among the listed cities. This directly impacts the staff’s ability to be responsive to community needs, affects the quality of the customer experience in the parks, programs and services and often limits the extent of offerings the department can provide.
- **Operating expenses are low:** While it’s encouraging to see the growth in operating expenses per capita (\$26 in 2017 to \$43.49 in 2022), it is inadequate to keep up with increasing costs and need. Investing more in staffing, training, maintenance and upkeep, and programming will contribute to safer and better park experience and higher resident satisfaction.
- **NRPA Gold Medal is a goal to strive for:** Indianapolis has not yet won an NRPA Gold Medal, while many other cities on the list have. Striving for this recognition, by focusing on exceptional experiences and quality of offerings, would demonstrate a commitment to excellence in park management and could serve as a motivator for continuous improvement.
- **Benchmark and collaborate with other cities:** Engage in benchmarking and knowledge sharing with other cities listed, focusing on shared practices and successful initiatives. This can help identify areas for improvement and drive innovation in park management and programming.

2.5 CULTURAL LEGACY

Maintaining the physical amenities of 214 park properties continues to be a challenge for Indy Parks. With limited City funding designated towards maintenance, Indy Parks has relied on the Indianapolis Department of Public Works, under a Memorandum of Understanding, to maintain outdoor facilities. Maintenance of buildings and structures is performed by an Indy Parks Facility Maintenance team. In 2022, a Preventive Maintenance Policy was established and is included in the Indy Parks Policy and Procedures Manual. The policy establishes types of inspections to be conducted, frequency of inspections, and responsibility for conducting inspections.

To continue to understand the conditions of park facilities, several studies have recently been commissioned or conducted by Indy Parks. These include a Golf Course Study, Sports Courts Evaluation (condition assessment of all tennis, basketball, and sports courts), Playground Assessment (condition assessment and ranking of condition of all Indy Parks playgrounds, and Indy Parks is currently conducting an Aquatics Facility Master Plan, which includes a condition assessment of each indoor and outdoor Aquatic Center pool and splash pad. Information contained within these studies has helped to determine funding needs and development priorities such as:

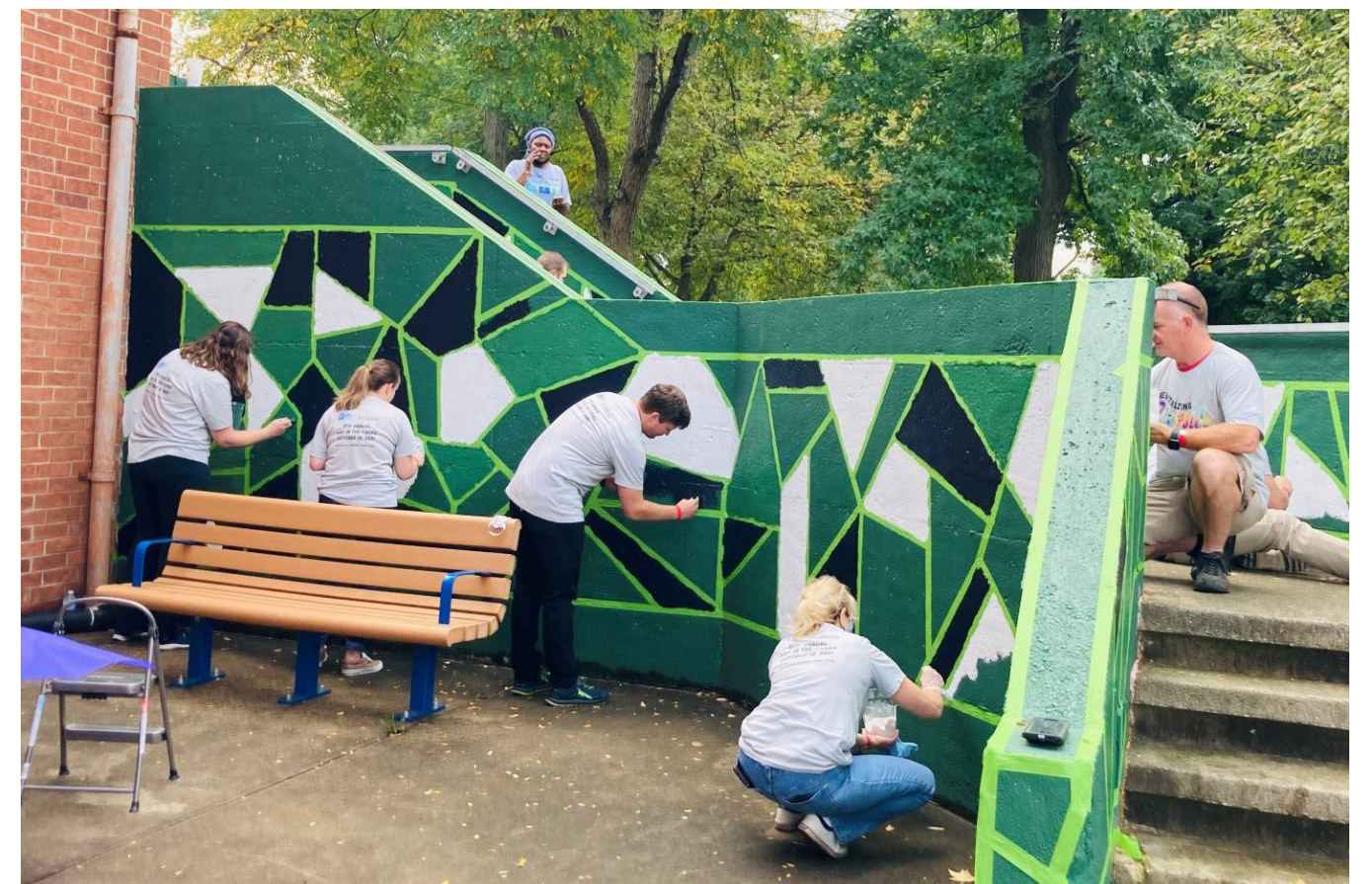
- **Riverside Golf Course Closure** - The Golf Course Study revealed that many factors, including recurrent flooding, made operation of the Riverside Golf Course an economic and maintenance challenge. In 2019, the Indy Parks Board approved closure of the Golf Course and allowed for the property to become a future nature and adventure park.
- The Playground Assessment information, combined with demographic criteria, led to the selection of 28 of the worst condition playgrounds within the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods to be selected for replacement through the federal American Relief Plan Act funding.
- The Sports Courts Evaluation has been used to identify priority of renovation projects conducted by both Indy Parks and other partners, such as AES, through the Parks Alliance of Indianapolis.

Additionally, Indy Parks' Planning Division has incorporated specific design standards for facility replacements that include materials and designs that discourage damage from vandalism and graffiti, require less maintenance and upkeep, and have a record of long-lasting performance. Examples include:

- **Playground Surfacing** - Indy Parks is now specifying poured-in-place or artificial turf surfacing for new playgrounds. This surfacing is safer for children and is easily maintained and repaired. Maintenance crews will no longer need to frequently replace wood mulch on new playgrounds and can use this time for other needed maintenance activities.
- Specifying manufactured restroom facilities are now standard for new and replacement outdoor restrooms. These buildings have been found to be more resistant to vandalism and easier to clean and maintain.

The Indianapolis Park System has benefitted greatly by investment in park facilities by Federal and State grant funding, philanthropic gifts, and corporate partnerships to supplement the capital improvement fund and allow for a wide array of improvements to occur above and beyond the city budget. Examples include:

- **ARPA** - American Rescue Plan Act Funding of \$16.5 million was granted for improvements to playgrounds, sport courts, and shelters in 28 parks.
- **LWCF** - Land and Water Conservation Funds were granted for improvements to Frank O'Bannon Park and Rev. Charles Williams Park.
- **LILLY ENDOWMENT** - An \$80 million gift will make improvements to 43 parks throughout the Indy Parks system. Project selection considered locations spread out across the city that have deferred maintenance needs, locations within economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, park sites that have Friends groups as support partners or have master planned new facilities with extensive public participation and support.
- **CITIZENS ENERGY GROUP (CEG) - SHARING THE DREAM** - Recent investment of about \$3 million by CEG has improved indoor facilities at Thatcher Family Center, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park Bathhouse, Frederick Douglass Park, Watkins Park, and Ellenberger Park.
- **AES** - Working through the Parks Alliance of Indianapolis, AES has made day of service improvements to outdoor facilities in Riverside Regional Park.



The White River Vision Plan, a community-driven plan by Hamilton County and Marion County, explores the potential of the White River to enhance the regions ecology, livability, and economic vitality. Indy Parks, a participating member, has embraced the plan's vision and has several key park locations along the river that are highlighted within the plan. A master plan for Broad Ripple Park was completed and a new Family Center, facing the river, has been constructed and is providing new recreation opportunities to the public. Riverside Regional Park, located along the White River, was also recently master planned. Planned improvements now completed or underway include the Taggart Memorial Amphitheatre, the Riverside Promenade Trail, and the Riverside Adventure Park. Indy Parks is working with public and private partners to implement improvements to the historic Belmont Beach area near 16th and White River, and the recommendation for a Nature Center in Southwestway Park is receiving attention from potential funding groups.

Several historic and culturally significant features within the Indy Parks system have received long awaited investment in renovations and upgrades, including:

- **Taggart Memorial** - The Taggart Memorial was built in 1930 to honor Mayor Thomas Taggart, whose vision made possible the purchase of property that became Riverside Regional Park. For many years, the structure was on the Indiana Historic Landmark's endangered building list. Thanks to a \$10 million gift from the Lilly Endowment, the memorial structure has been completely renovated, and the facility has been repurposed into a performance venue with the addition of a stage, support buildings, and amphitheater seating. The Taggart is now host to a diverse and multicultural variety of public performances and is home to Indy Shakes.
- **The Landmark for Peace (Kennedy-King Memorial Site)** - This memorial, located in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park, was designated by Congress as a National Historic Landmark in 2018. This memorial marks the site of a speech given by Senator Robert Kennedy on April 4, 1968, the day Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The speech, encouraging a non-violent response to the tragedy, was credited with keeping Indianapolis calm while violence erupted in many other cities. A memorial exhibit is on display at the Kennedy-King Park Center and further development of the memorial is continuing.
- **Riverside Promenade** - The Promenade is an enhanced trail located along Riverside Drive (the eastern edge of Riverside Park) between 16th St and 30th St. The trail will feature 7 nodes with seating areas and interpretive panels that explore the history and culture of the Riverside Neighborhood and Park. The trail is expected to be completed in 2023.
- **The Garfield Park Confederate Prisoner of War Monument** was a large granite monument that sat at the south entrance of Garfield Park in Indianapolis for nearly a century. In response to public sentiment that confederate monuments do not belong in public parks, the monument was dismantled and removed from Garfield Park in 2020.



Since 2017, Indy Parks has continued to acquire property following procedures outlined in the Parkland Acquisition section of the Policy and Procedures Manual. Many acquisitions are properties adjacent to existing parks, increasing space for new amenities to occur, while being easier to maintain than separate parcels. The following park acquisitions, park renaming, and major facility developments have occurred in recent years:

2015 - 2020

- Pennsy Trail Property Acquisition is completed.

2016

- 61st & Broadway Park is renamed Dan Wakefield Park.

2017

- Commons Park at 2204 E. New York St. is purchased and the playground is developed.
- Douglass Park is renamed Frederick Douglass Park.
- Mentor Park: 3.88 acres at 4515 S. High School Road are acquired.
- Riverside Regional Park Master Plan is completed.

2018

- Broad Ripple Park Master Plan is completed.
- Wes Montgomery Park: 6 parcels on east side of current park are acquired and added to park.
- Washington Park: 4 parcels on Laney Street are acquired and added to park.
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park: 2 parcels on south side are acquired and added to park.
- Whispering Hills Golf Course: 27 acres at 2609 Senour Road are acquired and added to property.

2019

- South Street Square Park: 315 E. South St. is added to park system and is owned and maintained by Eli Lilly and Co.
- Riverside Golf Course is closed, and planning for Riverside Adventure Park is initiated.

2020

- In March 2020, lockdown restrictions are enacted in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Family Centers close, playgrounds are roped off, and basketball goals are removed to restrict close contact interactions and to prevent the spread of the virus. During this time, many residents enjoy Indy Parks' outdoor spaces and experience a new appreciation for parks and natural areas.

2021

- Grassy Creek Regional Park: additional property is acquired for park expansion, and construction of new Nature Center is initiated in 2022.
- Taggart Memorial in Riverside Regional Park is renovated, and the performance venue is completed and open to the public with new programming and special events.

2022

- Eagle Creek Park: 9 acres at 90251 W. 42nd St. are acquired and added to park.
- High School Road and B&O Trail: 3 acres at 1605 N. High School Road are acquired.
- Circle City Forward Funding (through City of Indianapolis): \$45 million for Frederick Douglass Park Family Center, Riverside Regional Park, Grassy Creek Regional Park, and Krannert Park.
- American Rescue Plan Act Funding (Federal Funding): \$16.5 million for playgrounds, shelters, and sports courts in 28 parks.

2023

- Broad Ripple Park Family Center, a partnership between Indy Parks and Community Health, opens to the public in January 2023.
- Riverside Promenade, a cultural interpretive trail along Riverside Drive, is completed in Riverside Regional Park.
- Lilly Endowment: A historic gift of \$80 million is granted to Indy Parks for improvements in 43 parks, prioritizing parks in underrepresented areas.
- Bethel Park was renamed Stanley Strader Park after former City-County Councilor and southside community advocate Stanley Strader.



2.6 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

INTERACTION WITH ARTS, HISTORICAL, AND OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS COMMUNITY GROUPS

Indy Parks interacts with many arts, historical, and community organizations throughout Marion County. The following pages outline examples of these partnerships, as well as potential partnerships the Department should consider in the future. Each partner’s relationship is followed by the specific park where they interact with Indy Parks.

Please note that the examples below are not a comprehensive list, as Indy Parks is continuously engaging and adding new partnerships.

TYPES OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Capital Improvements and Annual Corporate Giving Partners:

- Lilly Endowment
- AES Indiana
- Citizens Energy Group
- Pacers Sports & Entertainment

Development and fundraising partner:

- Parks Alliance

Examples of “Friends of” Groups who fundraise to help with park amenities, improvements and/or programs, as well as provide community input on park planning projects include the following larger parks with family centers:

- Broad Ripple Park
- Eagle Creek Park
- Ellenberger Park
- Frederick Douglass Park
- Garfield Park
- Holliday Park
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park
- Southeastway Park.

Examples of active Neighborhood Groups and Park Advisory Councils who provide input and conduct outreach within their communities to assist with park planning, programming, and/or beautification projects and events include:

- Christian Park Neighborhood Association Board
- Garfield Park Neighborhood Association
- Frank Young Park
- Friends of Lacy Park
- Kennedy King Memorial Initiative
- Mapleton Fall Creek Neighborhood Association
- Riverside Park Foundation
- Town Run Park Advisory Council
- West Indy Neighborhood Congress (W.I.N.C.)
- Windsor Village Advisory Council

Park Improvement Donations and Volunteers:

- **Health & Wellness Organizations:** IU Health, Community Health, Marion County Public Health Dept., CICOA, United Way of Central Indiana, The Finish Line Youth Foundation
- **Construction & Building Trades Companies:** Bowen Engineering Inc., FA Wilhelm Construction, Shiel Sexton, Walsh Construction, Power & Sons Construction
- **Property Management, Realtors, and Others:** BOMA Indiana Property Management, Colliers Property Management, Renovia Painting, ONiT Painting, Ottos Parking Marking, Sherwin Williams, Premier Power & Electric, MIBOR
- **Community Development Corporations:** S.E.N.D., Mapleton Fall Creek CDC
- **Other Trades:** Allison Transmissions, Rolls-Royce North America, Cummins, Verizon, Indy Bar Association Foundation
- **Faith Organizations:** E 91st St. Christian Church, The Creek, Church of Nazarene
- **Sports Organizations:** Indy Inline Hockey League, Soccer Indiana

Beautification Project Partners:

- Keep Indianapolis Beautiful
- TeenWorks Indy
- MLK Youth Center
- Groundwork Indy
- SKO Law Firm
- Audubon Society of Indiana
- Fall Creek Garden Club
- Garden & Grow Non-Profit
- Orchid Club of Indiana
- Garfield Master Gardeners
- Indy Bonsai Club
- Friends of Irvington Circle Park
- Irvington Garden Club

Beautification Project Partners:

These are usually managed by the Director of Indy Parks and the Deputy Director of Planning, in addition to other key City staff to ensure all legal and maintenance agreements adhere to City policies and procedures. Examples include the new Broad Ripple Family Center sharing space with private partner Community Health, and the Rhodius Park Family Center sharing space with the IPS William Penn School #49. These types of partnerships typically involve the following types of documents:

- Lease Agreements
- Management and/or Operating Agreements
- Maintenance Agreements
- Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs)
- Or a combination of these and/or other appropriate agreements

Program Partners:

- Local Schools and Universities
- Pride Academy
- ArtMix
- Peace Learning Center
- Pride Academy
- Girl Scouts
- Boy Scouts
- IN Dept. of Natural Resources
- IN Dept. of Environmental Management
- Sycamore Land Trust
- Indy Zoo
- Indiana State Museum
- Arts Council of Indianapolis
- IN Flycasters
- Indianapolis Public Library (Various Branches)
- Southside Beekeepers Club
- Marion County Public Health Dept.
- Hoosier Wildlife Rescue
- Indy in Motion
- Sea Scope, Inc.
- Freewheelin' Bikes
- Nine13 Sports
- Storytelling Arts of Indiana
- Indianapolis Hiking Club
- True North Orienteering
- Central IN Folk Music & Mountain Dulcimer Society
- Garfield Shakespeare Company
- Indianapolis Hiking Club
- Central Indiana Beekeepers Association
- Indianapolis Modern Quilt Guild
- Hoosier Herpetological Society
- Indy Alley Cats Disc Golf League
- Central IN Wilderness Club
- Hoosier Canoe Club
- Laughing Squares Square Dancing Club
- National Junior Tennis League
- South Indy Youth Hockey
- Indiana Photographic Society
- Indy Police Athletic League (PAL Club)
- Total Package Hockey
- Tri-State Spartans Hockey
- Sycamore Ice Skating Club
- IN Disabled Hockey, Inc.
- Adams Towing 40 & Over Basketball League
- Hoosier Mountain Bike Association

Food Program Partners:

- IN Dept. Of Education
- Verizon
- Second Helpings Free Meals Program
- Gleaners Food Services
- Marion Co. Public Health Department
- Diabetes Impact Project (DIP-IN)
- Humana



INDY PARKS PARTNERSHIPS TO CONSIDER IN THE FUTURE

- Larger, National Sports Organizations, such as Indiana Sports Corps, The Finish Line Youth Foundation, USA Swimming
- Employment and Job Training Organizations
- Medical, Fitness, Health & Wellness Companies, such as Eskenazi Health Foundation, Franciscan Health, Managed Health Services (MHS) Indiana
- IndyHumane Society
- Indy Synchro, Inc. (Synchronized Swimming)
- Indy Aquatic Masters
- Local Museums and Cultural Institutions, such as Eiteljorg Museum, Newfields, Indiana Historical Society, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
- Girls Inc.
- Growing Places Indy
- Expand Indy Urban Acres Programming beyond their farm to family centers on the eastside
- Law Firms and Real Estate Agencies for Adopt-A-Park program to help improve landscaping
- More Construction or Trades Companies to help with capital improvements to all parks



PARTNERSHIP POLICY

This Partnership Policy is designed to guide the process for Indy Parks in their desire to partner with private, non-profit, or other governmental entities for improvements to park facilities and/or programs that may occur on Indy Parks owned or leased property in the form of donated goods and/or services. Types of partnerships may include program or service partners, beautification/park improvement partners, and funders.

Indy Parks would like to identify for-profit, non-profit, and governmental entities that are interested in proposing to partner with them to develop recreation facilities and/or programs. A major component in exploring any potential partnership will be to identify additional collaborating partners that may help provide a synergistic working relationship in terms of resources, community contributions, knowledge, and ensure that the needs of the community are being equitably met. These partnerships should be mutually beneficial for all proposing partners including Indy Parks, and particularly beneficial for the residents of Indianapolis.

GUIDING PROCEDURES

Indy Parks has developed partnerships over many years that have helped to support the management of parks and recreation facilities and programs services, while also providing educational and recreation opportunities for the residents of Indianapolis. The recommended policy will promote fairness and equity within existing and future partnerships and helping staff to navigate partnerships. Partnership principles recommended by Indy Parks and Recreation for existing and future partnerships to work effectively are as follows:

- All partnerships will require a working agreement with measurable outcomes that hold each partner accountable to the outcomes desired and to each other and will be evaluated on a yearly basis.
- Each partner will outline their level of investment in the partnership as it applies to money, people, time, equipment, and/or the amount of capital investment they will make in the partnership for the coming year.
- All partnerships will be reviewed and approved by Senior Park Management Staff and/or the Indy Parks Partnership Committee and describe the partnership's goals, outcomes, and benefits as they align with Indy Parks' mission, vision, and racial equity goals.
- All partnerships will track direct and indirect costs associated with the partnership investment to demonstrate the level of equity each partner is investing, to ensure the partnership is mutually beneficial – and that the parks are not discounting more than the benefit the partner is providing.
- At the end of each year's partnership term, a summary report is due back to the Indy Parks representative summarizing the outcomes of the partnership, along with required receipts for donated goods/services, volunteer tracking paperwork, and a completed evaluation to determine how equitable the partnership remains.

- Each partner will create a partnership culture that focuses on planning together on a yearly basis, (or as appropriate); communicating monthly (or quarterly) on how the partnership is working; and discuss what improvements need to be made before renewing the following year's agreement.
- If conflicts arise between partners, the Indy Parks Director, along with the partner's highest-ranking officer, will meet to resolve the partnership issue. It should be resolved at the highest-level or the partnership will be dissolved.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- Increased visibility
- Increase in services and programs
- Tax dollars spent on services are maximized through collaboration
- Public believes in and supports the role of Indy Parks in partnerships
- Promotes a positive image
- Public involvement enriches their understanding of Indy Parks
- Engaged public enhances current and future development of programs and facilities
- Provides alternatives for manpower, recreation sites, financial resources, equipment, supplies, materials, etc. for a more comprehensive system
- Shared vision and goals
- Allow us the opportunity to make a vision a reality
- Reach more people, provide more services, reduce expenditures, and generate more revenue
- Eliminate duplication of efforts, strengthen communities, and achieve greater outcomes
- In exchange for the partner offering the above types of ADDED VALUE for a park, the types of incentives we can potentially provide in exchange include the following:
 - Promote their organization through various Indy Parks marketing channels (social media, website, e-newsletters) and through onsite signage and distribution of fliers at the family centers
 - Discount or waive facility or field use for their organization
 - Discount or waive event or program registration fees
 - Discount or waive swim or fitness type pass



THE PARTNERING PROCESS

There are multifaceted types of partnerships as outlined previously and therefore not a “one-size-fits-all” procedure, but some of the common steps include:

- Indy Parks staff and partners proposing to partner with Indy Parks discuss shared goals and needs to determine what type of partnership is mutually beneficial.
- Depending upon the TYPE of partnership, there is usually a written Preliminary Proposal draft generated mutually by the Partner and Indy Parks Staff that outlines what each party is contributing, including the goal, benefits to community, the value of donated goods and services, and agreement to provide all necessary quotes, receipts, and volunteer logs when applicable.
- If initial review of a Preliminary Proposal yields interest and appears to be mutually beneficial based on Indy Parks’ mission, goals, and selection criteria, an Indy Parks staff person or appointed representative will be assigned to work with potential partners.
- In the case of “Trade Partnerships” (where the partner benefits from discount on park facility use in exchange for providing goods and/or services), there is a “Partnership Agreement” form filled out by the respective park manager(s) and then sent to the Partnership Committee for approval, prior to both parties signing and implementing the partnership and issuing their discounted use permit.
- The Indy Parks representative is available to answer questions related to the creation of an initial proposal, and after initial interest has been indicated, will work with the proposing partner to create a checklist of what actions need to take place next. Each project will have different requirements, and larger capital improvement projects might have distinctive planning and design review approvals, Right of Entry Agreements, and support issues needing addressed. The Indy Parks representative will facilitate the process of determining how the partnership will address these issues. This representative can also facilitate approvals and input from any involved Indy Parks staff member, providing guidance for the partners as to necessary steps.
- An additional focus at this point will be determining whether this project is appropriate for additional collaborative partnering, and whether this project should prompt Indy Parks to seek a Request for Proposal (RFP) from competing or collaborating organizations. Request for Proposal (RFP) Trigger: In order to reduce concerns of unfair private competition, if a proposed project involves partnering with a private “for profit” entity and a dollar amount greater than \$5,000, and Indy Parks has not already undergone a public process for solicitation of that particular type of partnership, then Indy Parks will request Partnership Proposals from other interested private entities for identical and/or complementary facilities, programs, or services through a formal RFP process. A selection of appropriate partners will be part of the process.
- For larger projects involving capital investments, a formal proposal from the partners for their desired development project will need to be presented for the Indy Parks official development review processes and approvals. The project may require approval by the legal counsel of the City.

- Depending on project complexity and anticipated benefits, responsibilities for all action points are negotiable, within the framework established by law, to assure the most efficient and mutually beneficial outcome. Some projects may require that all technical and professional expertise and staff resources come from outside the Indy Parks staff, while some projects may proceed most efficiently if Indy Parks contributes staff resources to the partnership.
- The partnership must cover the costs the partnership incurs, regardless of how the partnered project is staffed, and reflect those costs in its project proposal and budget. The proposal for the partnered project should also discuss how staffing and expertise will be provided and what documents will be produced. If Indy Parks staff resources are to be used by the partnership, those costs should be allocated to the partnered project and balanced against the partner’s investment, to ensure Indy Parks is benefitting at equal or more value from the partner.
- Proposed partnership agreements might include oversight of the development of the partnership, concept plans and project master plans, environmental assessments, architectural designs, development and design review, project management, construction documents, inspections, contracting, monitoring, etc. Provision to fund the costs and for reimbursing Indy Parks for its costs incurred in creating the partnership, facilitating the project’s passage through the development review processes, and completing the required documents should be considered.
- If all is approved, the formal partnership begins. Indy Parks is committed to upholding its responsibilities to partners from the initiation through the continuation of a partnership. Evaluation will be an integral component of all partnerships. The agreements should outline who is responsible for evaluation, the types of measures used, and detail what will occur should the evaluations reveal partners are not meeting their partnership obligations.



2.7 PLANNING CONTEXT

The context of this planning process is influenced by a great many efforts and initiatives that are currently underway in the City of Indianapolis. These efforts, which are led by government agencies, grassroots organizations, private companies, or nonprofit entities, will have an impact on the future direction of Indy Parks, both system-wide and at the neighborhood level. It is important for Indy Parks to continue to participate in these efforts in order to ensure that parks and recreation issues are included in decision making, that Indy Parks continue to play a role in the betterment of the community and that we share in the financial resources that are brought to support these various initiatives. These efforts also contribute to how decisions are made and funding is secured for park investments. They include:

- Input from the community, which drives implementation of programs and amenities in parks
- Individual Park Development Plans
- Marion County Land Use Plan
- City of Indianapolis' Cultural Equity Plan
- Thrive Indianapolis Plan
- White River Vision Plan
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Circle City Forward Initiative
- Lilly Endowment Grant
- American Rescue Plan Act



2.8 ACCESSIBILITY

STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY

Indy Parks and Recreation is a fully inclusive agency. We encourage everyone to use our parks and to participate in our programs. If you or a family member have special needs and would like to participate in a program or use a facility, Indy Parks would be happy to address your needs. Please indicate on the registration form or call Customer Service (317-327-7275), if any accommodations are necessary. Specific program-related questions and accommodations can be directed to park staff or the Therapeutic Recreation Manager (317-327-7208) who oversees adaptive and inclusion programming for Indy Parks.

The City of Indianapolis' Office of Disability Affairs is committed to making all programs and services accessible to all people. As a division within the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Office of Disability Affairs promotes the participation of persons with disabilities, so that all citizens can live, work, and enjoy our City. The Office of Disability Affairs can be reached at 317-327-4000.



ACCESSIBILITY AND DESIGN

The City of Indianapolis proudly engages in a continues self-assessment process in order to maintain and enhance accessibility for residents and visitors with disabilities and seniors, as programs and infrastructure evolve. This practice has been the norm over the course of many mayoral administrations in recognition of the dynamic nature of inclusive design, construction, planning, and programming.

The purpose of a transition plan is to provide a first step in a municipality's self-evaluation process. The City of Indianapolis is well beyond this first phase and regularly updates its transition/accessibility implementation plans through its capital improvement planning process. The Office of Disability Affairs partners with city departments and articulates the City's philosophy and inclusive approach with contractors throughout the design and construction process. The City of Indianapolis recognizes the dynamic nature of inclusive design construction planning and programming and values the participation of all community members. As accessibility implementation plans must be continually evaluated and updated, the City of Indianapolis' most recent transition/accessibility implementation plan was developed in 2016.

Indy Parks is sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities. The Department's philosophy is to create an environment that is the least restrictive possible. In doing this, we can improve the quality of life for all people within our community.

Indy Parks and Recreation is committed to helping people with disabilities participate at their optimal level of independence. We strive to provide services that focus on leisure-related skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

The promotion of programs that improve social skills, self-awareness, and leisure skill development is also a key area of interest within our department. We do not want our participants to be involved in programs that just take up time. Our programs are designed and delivered with the intention of eliciting positive change in the individual. For example, in Rhodius Park, a therapeutic and sensory room was developed and opened in 2018. The sensory room is a space that is geared to support the community and schools who have individuals with sensory preferences and needs. Individuals can use the space and equipment to help improve sensory input and cognitive skills and build their small and large motor skills. It is also used as a calming space for individuals who may have a difficult time with behaviors.

To support its wide range of events and programs, Indy Parks is making continuous improvements to its existing facilities. From bathhouse renovations and picnic shelter construction to newer built playscapes, each of these projects is undertaken with accessibility in mind. Staff and hired professionals keep abreast of changes in the law and design practice to provide the best possible facilities for all. All construction, whether new or renovations, within the parks system is planned to meet ADA requirements, with the goal of all parks meeting all of our community's needs.

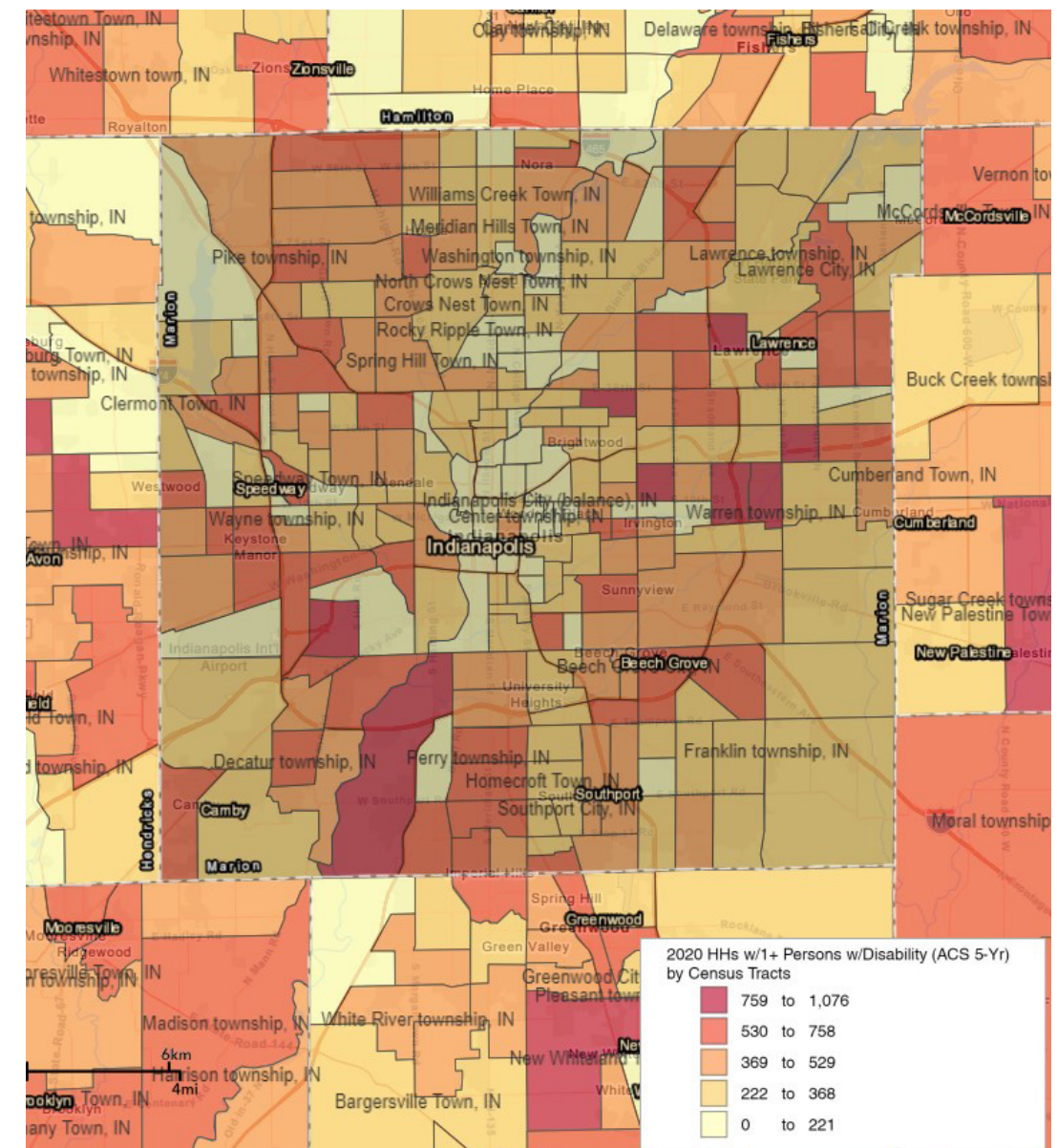


ACCESSIBILITY HEAT MAP

The heat map depicts the distribution of the number of households with at least one person with a disability. Darker shaded areas indicate a higher number of households with disabilities, whereas lighter shaded areas indicate a lower number of households.

Indy Parks will continue to strive to provide customers with disabilities full access to programs, services, and facilities. Any new facility renovations and new developments will conform to ADA guidelines. When looking at areas with a higher number of households with disabilities, the Department will consider adding accessible playscapes, facilities, and adaptive and inclusive programs.

The heat map used for the analysis was obtained from ESRI, and all data was acquired in 2023. (ESRI, 2023)



COMPLIANCE SHEET

ASSURANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE WITH:

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT OF 1968 (As Amended);

SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (As Amended);

AND TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990 (As Amended)

The Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation (Applicant) has read the guidelines for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act Of 1968 (As Amended); Section 504 Of The Rehabilitation Act Of 1973 (As Amended); and Title II Of The Americans With Disabilities Act Of 1990 (As Amended) and will comply with the applicable requirements of these Acts.

SIGNATURE



APPLICANT PRESIDENT

Phyllis Boyd, Director

(President's printed name)

SIGNATURE



SECRETARY

Caroline Cross

(Secretary's printed name)





3

COMMUNITY INPUT



3.1 COMMUNITY INPUT OVERVIEW

The consultant team conducted an extensive public input process to ensure that everyone who wished to share their input for the future of parks and recreation in Indianapolis had an opportunity to do so. This comprehensive approach will aid in establishing a better understanding of the current state of the Department and determining priorities for the future. The process included:

- Community listening sessions
- Community user groups
- Visits to local schools
- Key Leader interviews
- Key stakeholder meetings
- Multilingual focus groups
- Staff group discussions
- Surveys for youth and adults in English and Spanish
- ADA Accessible and multilingual project website

Over 2,000 individuals, from 5 continents and speaking over a dozen languages participated in the process. The findings from each stage of the public input process are summarized and highlighted in the following sections.



3.2 KEY LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Key stakeholder and focus group interviews play a significant role in community involvement by establishing priorities for direction, enhancements, management, and planning of future offerings. These interviews allow the department to learn what users value, their concerns, and unmet needs that the department could address. They involved representatives from:

REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS

- Arts Council of Indianapolis
- Binford Redevelopment and Growth
- Boy Scouts of America
- Butler University
- Christian Park Neighborhood Association
- Common Place
- Eagle Creek Park Foundation
- Friends of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park
- Friends of Garfield Park
- Holliday Park Foundation
- Indiana Arts Commission
- Indiana Sports Corp
- Indiana Statehouse
- Indianapolis City-County Council
- Indianapolis Cultural Trail
- Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development
- Indianapolis Department of Public Works
- Indianapolis Deputy Mayors
- Indianapolis Office of Diversity & Equity
- Indianapolis Office of Land Stewardship
- Indianapolis Office of the Mayor
- Indianapolis Planning Division
- Indianapolis Safety Association
- Indiana University Health
- Indy Parks and Recreation Board
- Keep Indianapolis Beautiful
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- Martin University
- Miami Nation of Indians of the State of Indiana
- Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
- Mountain Bike Development
- Pacers Sports and Entertainment
- Robey Park Advisory Council
- The Parks Alliance of Indianapolis
- Towne Run Trail Park Advisory Council
- Visit Indy
- West Indy Neighborhood Congress
- Windsor Village Advisory Council



Three primary questions were asked across all groups to spark conversations and gather information.

- What are the strengths of the Parks & Recreation System?
- What are the opportunities for improvement?
- What is the top priority that should be addressed through this planning process?

STRENGTHS

Key stakeholder and focus group interviews revealed numerous strengths of the department. Among the most frequently mentioned were the department's staff, their focus on equity and inclusion, focus on health, spirit of partnership, and the wide range of available offerings.

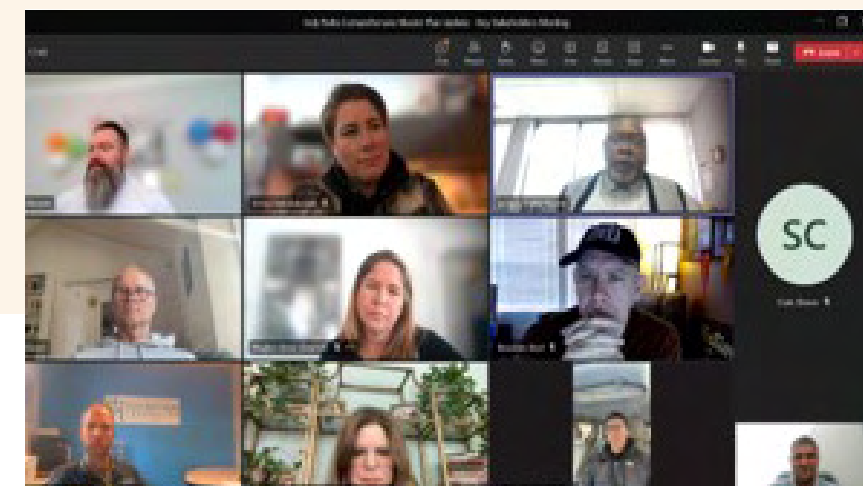
- **Dedicated staff:** The staff is passionate, devoted, and resourceful. They leverage available resources and maximize available dollars to provide opportunities in the neighborhoods. They are committed to serving the community, and they get a lot done with very little. The department has done a commendable job in trying to balance growing active recreation and preserving natural resources.
- **Inclusion and equity focus:** The department is intentional about showcasing the importance of parks, investing in them wisely, and providing equitable access to the community regardless of socioeconomic status. There is a wealth of programming opportunities that cater to everyone, including regional residents, and different parks have different identities that cater to diverse needs.
- **Health promotion:** The department's offerings promote and provide significant physical and mental health, with the mental health benefits often underreported. The pandemic magnified the impact of parks on the community's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. The Health Center at Broad Ripple Park is a great start, and more such opportunities should be pursued.
- **Spirit of partnership:** The staff partners with multiple stakeholders and user groups citywide, ranging from the Friends Groups to local nonprofits / foundations and other City Departments. The City leadership is continuing to invest in the parks and supportive of growing the impact of the park system.
- **Variety of offerings:** The department offers a wide variety of programming, from meals to events to after-school programs and even warming centers, serving a broad range of community needs. The parks themselves offer a diversity of spaces and offerings, including large and small parks, signature parks, passive and active options, nature and athletic options, family centers/facilities, and playgrounds. It does feel as if there is something for everyone.



OPPORTUNITIES

Several opportunities for improvement were identified during these meetings. These include securing sustained funding, addressing equity and accessibility issues, improving park maintenance, expanding community programming, and fostering partnerships with other providers.

- **Funding and resource allocation:** The most consistent opportunity cited in the meetings was the need for increased funding for the, evidently resourced, department. Stakeholders recognized the funding limitations and the ability to grow funding using only general fund support. Consequently, they cited a need to explore and secure sustainable funding for park operations and capital projects, with discussions about alternative funding sources such as bonds, sales tax, impact fees, and corporate philanthropy.
- **Equity and accessibility:** There is a need to continue addressing issues related to equity, accessibility, and reducing barriers to participation, especially for marginalized communities. The community continues to diversify and it is important for the department to meet the diverse needs through its staff, communications and overall offerings.
- **Maintenance and upkeep:** The maintenance of parks is a significant concern, with an emphasis on the need for additional resources for upkeep and addressing issues like invasive species management and lack of communication between departments. Additionally, stakeholders expressed proactive concerns about ensuring the adequate upkeep and maintenance of the upcoming capital development and improvement projects in the park system.
- **Community programming and engagement:** There is a need for increased community programming around culture and arts, promoting fitness and wellness, mental health and violence prevention, addressing food insecurity, and creating opportunities for outdoor recreation and community socialization.
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** Stakeholders shared the need to explore opportunities to maximize partnerships with other providers in the community to help expand programming and reduce duplication of services.



TOP PRIORITY

Key stakeholder and focus group interviews identified their top priority outcome from this plan update. These included:

- **Maintenance and funding:** To ensure the longevity and quality of parks, there needs to be a plan for funding and maintenance. This includes dedicated funding for day-to-day operations and maintenance, and a plan for maintenance and upkeep of park infrastructure. There is also a need for adequate staffing to ensure parks are well-managed.
- **Equity in access and investment:** Respondents cited the need to ensure that parks are accessible to all and that investments in parks are equitable. This includes addressing park inequities, interconnectivity of parks, and prioritizing the role parks play in at-risk communities. Stakeholders wanted to see increased funding for parkland acquisition and elevating existing infrastructure along with increased public and private support for operations.
- **Collaborative offerings:** Collaborative offerings to help activate parks and spaces and offering services where people are. Facilitating relationships between companies and neighborhood-based assets can make parks a driving factor in where people choose to live.
- **Community culture and history hubs:** Parks should be seen as centers of the community that offer alternate places for health and wellness, sports and recreation and preserving and sharing the culture and history. In addition, showcasing the investment in parks and commitment to neighborhoods can help change public perception of how the city values parks.
- **Enhancing and expanding existing assets:** There is a need to protect and enhance existing park assets, including parks in underserved neighborhoods, more aquatics and water features, larger health, fitness and wellness centers, and outdoor adventure and nature-based offerings. Schools and parks could increase collaboration to promote community wellness and offer a one-stop shop for all park offerings.

3.3 STAFF INTERVIEWS

STRENGTHS

The consultant team also engaged with the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department's staff to gain an internal perspective on key strengths, opportunities, and priorities. These conversations provided insight into what staff values, their concerns, and the direction they would like the Department to take.

- **Do well with few resources:** The department has a track record of doing well with limited resources, which is evidenced by their ability to provide unique experiences across the system, creativity in programming, and affordable access for all.
- **More focus on equity in offerings:** The department is increasing its focus towards equity and inclusion in the planning and programming, which is evidenced by their emphasis on community engagement, outreach, and programming. The recently implemented a race/equity index has also helped to identify equitable investments in underserved parks systemwide.
- **Staff engagement, knowledge, and dedication:** The park department has a staff that is engaged, knowledgeable, and dedicated. They are passionate about their work and care deeply about the community. They appreciate the recent pay equity study that increased compensation and helped with morale and are consistently collaborative and willing to help each other.
- **Unique offerings:** The park department provides unique offerings, from scholarship programs for youth to food programming and even warming/cooling centers. They continue to strive to improve their offerings and to meet the community's needs.



OPPORTUNITIES

Staff interviews and focus groups identified several opportunities for the department, including the need for culture improvement, sustainable funding for parks, technology utilization, customer feedback and marketing, and staffing levels and succession planning.

- **Organizational Culture Improvement:** Staff cited the ongoing progress and the need to continue improving the department culture, including communication between teams and staff training and development.
- **Sustainable Funding for Parks:** The department needs a sustainable funding plan for capital improvement and maintenance, and staff would like to explore opportunities for new funding sources including partnerships and sponsorships.
- **Technology Utilization:** Staff cited the desire to utilize technology to a greater degree, including the use of safety cameras, Salesforce Marketing CRM tools, apps for community feedback, automation and artificial intelligence to support operations, marketing and communications, and Wi-Fi in all parks and facilities.
- **Customer Feedback and Marketing:** There are opportunities to expand the collection of ongoing program customer feedback, increase funding for marketing and social media outreach, and to grow the paid media budget. Also, the department can utilize benchmark marketing information from other agencies and send information to people through other ways.
- **Staffing Levels and Succession Planning:** The department needs to address staffing levels and turnover, recruitment and retention, and invest in an environment where people want to stay. There is also a need for succession planning and training on trends in the field, as well as equitable distribution of learning/conference opportunities. Additionally, there should be a focus on improving staff compensation and updating job descriptions to more accurately reflect the roles undertaken by staff.

TOP PRIORITY

Key priorities from staff interviews and focus groups for the department include maintaining/improving facilities, environmental sustainability, communication/internal processes, inclusion/diversity, and a people focus.

- **Maintaining and improving park facilities:** The plan needs to ensure that all the new developments that will be finished by 2025 are properly maintained and brought up to code. Increasing gym spaces and adding more indoor recreation opportunities and outdoor sports fields are also priorities.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Parks should be a leader for environmental sustainability initiatives in Indianapolis. There is an increased focus on conservation and stewardship and future design and operations should incorporate environmentally sustainable designs and principles.
- **Improved communication and internal processes:** Improved communication across all levels, unifying and adaptable roadmap, less bureaucracy and more simplified processes, and timely response and action at all levels are key.
- **Increase staffing and focus on inclusion and diversity:** The Department needs to be fully staffed with all vacant positions filled to accomplish what the department says they are going to do. More park rangers are required for enforcement/public safety. Inclusive communication to diverse audiences is necessary, with bilingual staff, maps and literature desired and an overall focus on welcoming experiences so that park users reflect the community.
- **Vision and people focus:** The plan needs to balance pragmatics and idealists for planning and prioritize the most important things that are doable and what the staff can really focus on. An actionable guide for how to operate and prioritize for the next 5 years is necessary. A great park system is an activated one, and the organizational culture needs to support that with a Yes mindset explicitly communicated.

3.4 MULTILINGUAL FOCUS GROUPS

The Consulting Team partnered with the Immigrant Welcome Center to hold three focus groups specifically for non-native English speakers. These meetings comprised of individuals from four continents speaking multiple languages and were supported by interpreters and community members to build comfort and trust for the participants. The purpose of these focus groups was to identify program needs, barriers to participation and ways in which the department could serve the unmet needs of the community. Below are the top strengths, opportunities, and priorities as identified by these focus groups.

STRENGTHS

- **Access to nature:** The parks provide free access to nature and have a variety of trees, water features, and winding trails. People feel safe and have varied experiences in each park.
- **Programming opportunities and amenities:** The parks offer a variety of programming for cultural events, concerts, farmers' markets, and playgrounds for multiple ages and fitness equipment at various locations.
- **Family-friendly environment:** The parks offer open spaces for community events and gatherings. They are great places for families to spend time together and for the diverse community groups to feel like a part of the Indy community.
- **Safe and accessible:** The parks are easily accessible and are located throughout the city. Respondents cited certain parks they went to as safe and inviting.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Safety:** Individuals reported feeling unsafe and isolated in certain parks, with concerns about the proximity of railroad tracks and the need for more security and call boxes. There are also issues with rusty equipment and edges that could harm children, as well as a need for better lighting at night.
- **Maintenance and aesthetics:** There are opportunities for improvements in maintenance, including more frequent cleaning of bathrooms, trash removal, and regulation of alcohol use. In addition, aesthetic upgrades such as more flowers, landscape improvements, and visually appealing pavilions are needed to enhance the park experience.
- **Programming:** There is a need for more diverse programming, including cultural events, arts and crafts, and outdoor fitness options for adults. Programs for both kids and elders, such as exercise and reading groups, should also be offered. Communication and marketing efforts should be improved through social media, flyers, and partnerships with libraries and international food stores.
- **Cultural experiences:** Parks should be designed as cultural hubs with diverse food options and programs that celebrate different languages, histories, clothes, and food. Opportunities for interactive learning and storytelling about immigrants and their heritage, history, and culture should also be incorporated to make the parks a place of belonging for all.
- **Accessibility and user-friendliness:** Parks should be accessible and user-friendly for everyone, including those with disabilities. Additionally, online booking with a calendar for all who book the rooms can improve the user experience.

TOP PRIORITIES

- **Improved amenities:** The common opportunity cited was the need for improved amenities, such as more seating, cleaner bathrooms, and more drinking fountains. Some also suggested adding call boxes for emergencies and increasing mobility options for older populations.
- **Increased safety:** Another common priority was increasing safety, particularly through more safety lighting in parks and along trails. Some also suggested installing WiFi throughout all parks to improve safety and communication.
- **Programming and events:** The need for more diverse programming and events was also highlighted, particularly those that celebrate food, culture, and music. There were also suggestions to host events specifically for young professionals and create spaces for women in specific cultures.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** The desire for accessibility and inclusion was cited as an opportunity, particularly with rubberized surfaces on playgrounds and creating programs that cater to different languages and age groups.
- **Marketing and awareness:** The need for better marketing and awareness was also mentioned. They would like the department to further promote internship programs for high school and college students and inform the public about improvements and master plans.

3.5 NEIGHBORHOOD LISTENING SESSIONS

The Engaging Solutions Team partnered with The Learning Tree to host and facilitate 12 two-hour workshop style neighborhood listening sessions, which were open to all but specifically targeted communities served by selected parks. Participants included community members and representatives from the Central Indiana Community Foundation Ambassador program.

Each focus group consisted of private individual questionnaires as well as open dialogue and discussion, aimed at gathering feedback on park perception, usage, inclusion, future programming ideas, collaborations, and ways to keep community involvement in growth. The Learning Tree captured pertinent information from these meetings, and their key findings are summarized below.

- Safety:** Participants in the focus groups identified safety as the top priority. The need for improved safety measures in certain parks was emphasized, but participants called for non-traditional approaches. Merely increasing police patrols was not seen as the solution. The general upkeep of the parks was identified as a factor that impacted the perceived safety and physical security of visitors. Safety of playground equipment and bathrooms were also major concerns raised during the sessions. Participants questioned whether the equipment was safe and usable, and expressed worries about the state of the bathrooms.
- Usefulness:** Participants emphasized the importance of programming to increase park usage. However, many parks lacked programming options, according to the feedback. Additionally, participants expressed difficulty in reaching out to parks staff or not receiving a response when attempting to communicate. Cleanliness and safety of park bathrooms were also frequently cited concerns. Some bathrooms were locked during park hours, and those that were open were often found to be unclean and lacked essential supplies like toilet paper and soap. Parents noted that poor bathroom conditions could hinder their ability to stay at the park with their children for extended periods.
- Accountability:** During the Crooked Creek focus group, participants expressed that Holliday Park was the only park in their area receiving attention. They described the other parks in the area as dangerous with equipment that was falling apart and unusable. Participants felt that the parks in their black/brown neighborhoods lacked working equipment, facilities, and programming, while the white/ richer areas had better equipment, programming, and maintenance.

Participants suggested embracing the culture of the communities at the parks, such as organizing a BBQ cookoff that teaches cooking in the Crown Hill area or continuing to let the Sunday car shows go on in Riverside Park. They also called for transparency about where park funding comes from and how it is allocated across the city.

Additionally, the Boner Center group brought up the lack of dog parks in black/brown neighborhoods and questioned why the park system assumed that these communities did not want dog parks. They suggested utilizing unused space in parks such as Watkins Park, Riverside Park, Brookside Park, Garfield Park, Frederick Douglass Park, and Ellenberger Park to provide green space for people to enjoy with their pets.

SOME OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDED OUTCOMES INCLUDED:

- Conduct community conversations at each park to obtain resident input on programming, catering to individual neighborhood preferences.
- Develop a Community Parks Ambassador program to enhance communication between residents and Indy Parks, including questioning park policies and curating community involvement.
- Establish a resident-led advisory team to hold Indy Parks accountable for equitable upgrades in underserved parks.
- Encourage park managers and staff to engage in community development, getting to know the community and neighbors.
- Ensure that park equipment is usable and safe for public use. Upgrade or replace broken or dangerous equipment.
- Foster collaborative programming initiatives.
- Hold focus groups to address safety issues in Indy Parks, identifying unsafe parks, equipment, and facilities.
- Host community festivals at various parks, such as Black Joy, Lantern Festivals, or Jazz in the Park, to encourage community engagement and enjoyment of park amenities.
- Organize tournaments across multiple parks to engage residents and teach new games.
- Provide space for “human development” through community-led schools, such as classes taught by certified or community teachers.



3.6 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

FOCUS GROUPS

The Consulting Team tried to involve young people in their research on recreation program and facility needs. They conducted focus groups at schools and created an online survey tailored to youth to give them a platform to share their opinions.

- Students were focused on improving the parks not just for themselves but also for the community, elders, and people with disabilities.
- The students wanted to see more mental awareness programs to help those in need, including the homeless and those with family issues.
- Students wanted parks with more interactive experiences.
- Students suggested a variety of amenities and programs, including sports, art clubs, environmental programs, and more.
- Most students tended to go to the park with friends or family and only when their friends go.
- Cost was the most mentioned barrier to program participation.
- Students suggested several improvements for park safety, including more rules, tracking systems for children, and more safety measures during bad weather.
- More food options and a variety of amenities, such as trampoline parks and basketball courts, were suggested.
- Students suggested programs and amenities to better cater to people with disabilities, including universally accessible playgrounds and shelters for the homeless.
- Students expressed a desire for less trash and more cleaning, but also suggested community pick-up events to solve this issue.
- Most students spent a lot of time on TikTok and were not familiar with many programs or camps.

YOUTH SURVEY

The consulting team conducted an online survey using SurveyMonkey, specifically for youth to understand their characteristics, preferences, and satisfaction levels with the city’s parks, programs and facilities. The survey was available in English and Spanish for five weeks from January to February 2023, and received 561 responses. The following are the key findings from the survey, with full results available in Appendices.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Visitation:** 80% of respondents visited Indy Parks during the past 12 months.
- **Frequently Visited:** The most frequently visited facilities were playgrounds (72%), basketball courts (47%), and nature/walking and biking trails (both 39%).
- **Conditions Ratings:** 70% of respondents rated the physical condition of Indy Parks facilities as either excellent or good.
- **Facility / Amenity Needs:** The facilities/ amenities that respondents had the highest need for were playground equipment (63%), walking trails (60%), and outdoor swimming pools/water parks (55%).
- **Most Important Facility / Amenities:** The four most important facilities/amenities to respondents were indoor basketball/ volleyball courts (42%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (26%), indoor swimming pools/leisure pools (24%), and indoor sports complex (baseball, soccer, etc.) (23%).
- **Most Important Programs:** The four most important programs to respondents were outdoor adventure (38%), youth sports (35%), after school (32%), and youth summer camp (28%).
- **Program Participation:** Only 26% of respondents participated in any programs offered by Indy Parks during the past 12 months.
- **Preferred Ways of Communication:** The most preferred ways to learn about Indy Parks programs and activities were social media (54%), visiting a park or facility (51%), and word of mouth (46%).
- **Barriers to Participation:** The reasons that deterred respondents from using Indy Parks, recreation facilities or programs more often included being too busy (41%), not knowing what is being offered (30%), and facilities being too far from where they live (27%).

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The majority of respondents were 12 years old or younger (66%).
- Gender identity was roughly evenly split between male and female, with a slightly higher percentage identifying as male (45% male vs. 44% female).
- A small percentage of respondents identified as non-binary (3%) or preferred to self-describe (3%).
- 24% of respondents or their household members identified as Hispanic or Latin ancestry.
- The most common race/ethnicity reported was White/Caucasian (48%), followed by African American/ Black (23%) and Some Other Race (13%).

3.7 COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

The consultant team used SurveyMonkey, an online community survey tool, to gather information on the characteristics, preferences, and satisfaction levels of Indianapolis residents. The survey was conducted over a two-month period, from January to March 2023, and garnered a total of 1,208 responses in English and Spanish combined. The findings from the survey, presented below, provide a summary of the key insights gained, with the full results available in Appendices.

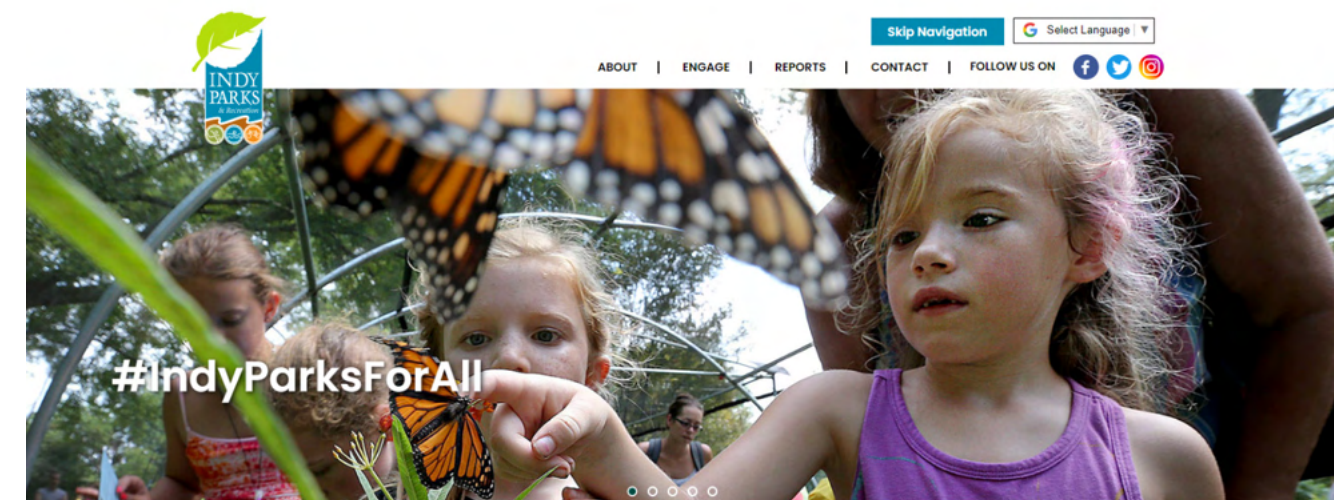
KEY FINDINGS

- **Visitation:** Majority of respondents (98%) have visited Indy Parks during the past 12 months.
- **Frequently Visited:** The most frequently used facilities are nature trails (69%) and walking/ biking trails (68%).
- **Conditions Ratings:** Most respondents rate the physical condition of Indy Parks as good (51%) or fair (35%).
- **Program Participation:** Only 36% of respondents have participated in any programs offered by Indy Parks over the past 12 months.
- **Common Sources of Information:** Visiting a park or facility (62%), social media (56%) and the Indy Parks website (53%) are the most commonly used sources for learning about Indy Parks programs and activities.
- **Most Important Facility / Amenities:** The most important facilities/amenities to respondents are walking trails (48%), natural areas (38%), large regional parks (35%), and large community parks (28%).
- **Most Important Programs:** The most important programs to respondents are adult fitness and wellness (48%), nature education (37%), and outdoor adventure (34%).
- **Barriers to Participation:** The biggest deterrents to using Indy Parks more often are lack of knowledge about what is being offered (45%) and poorly maintained facilities (39%).
- **Preferred Actions for Improvement:** The most preferred actions for improving Indy Parks are developing new trails that connect to existing trails (92%), improving existing paved walking and biking trails (89%), and acquiring new park land (84%).
- **Allocation of Spending:** If given an additional \$100 to allocate among various categories, respondents would allocate the most amount of money towards upgrading and developing new walking, biking, and nature trails (\$40.89), followed by maintaining/upgrading existing indoor facilities (\$29.33) and existing outdoor facilities (\$24.94).

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 57% of the respondents have 0-17 year-old members in their household, while 34% have 18-34 year-old members, 46% have 35-54 year-old members, 31% have 55-74 year-old members, and only 9% have 75+ year-old members.
- 57% of the respondents identified themselves as female, 35% as male, 6% preferred not to answer, and 1% identified as non-binary.
- Only 6% of the respondents or members of their household have Hispanic or Latin ancestry, while 94% do not.
- The majority of the respondents (77%) identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 12% identified as African American/Black, 2% as Asian, 1% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, and less than 1% as Native Hawaiian of Pacific Islander or Some Other Race. 10% of the respondents preferred not to answer.

3.8 PLANNING WEBSITE



The consulting team redesigned the project website www.planindyparks.com to be multilingual, ADA accessible and mobile friendly. This was used to share previous planning documents, provide ongoing plan updates, promote opportunities for community engagement and to share input via the open-ended comment option on the home page. Pictured to the right are the website analytics during the planning process.

