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# INDY PARKS FOR ALL

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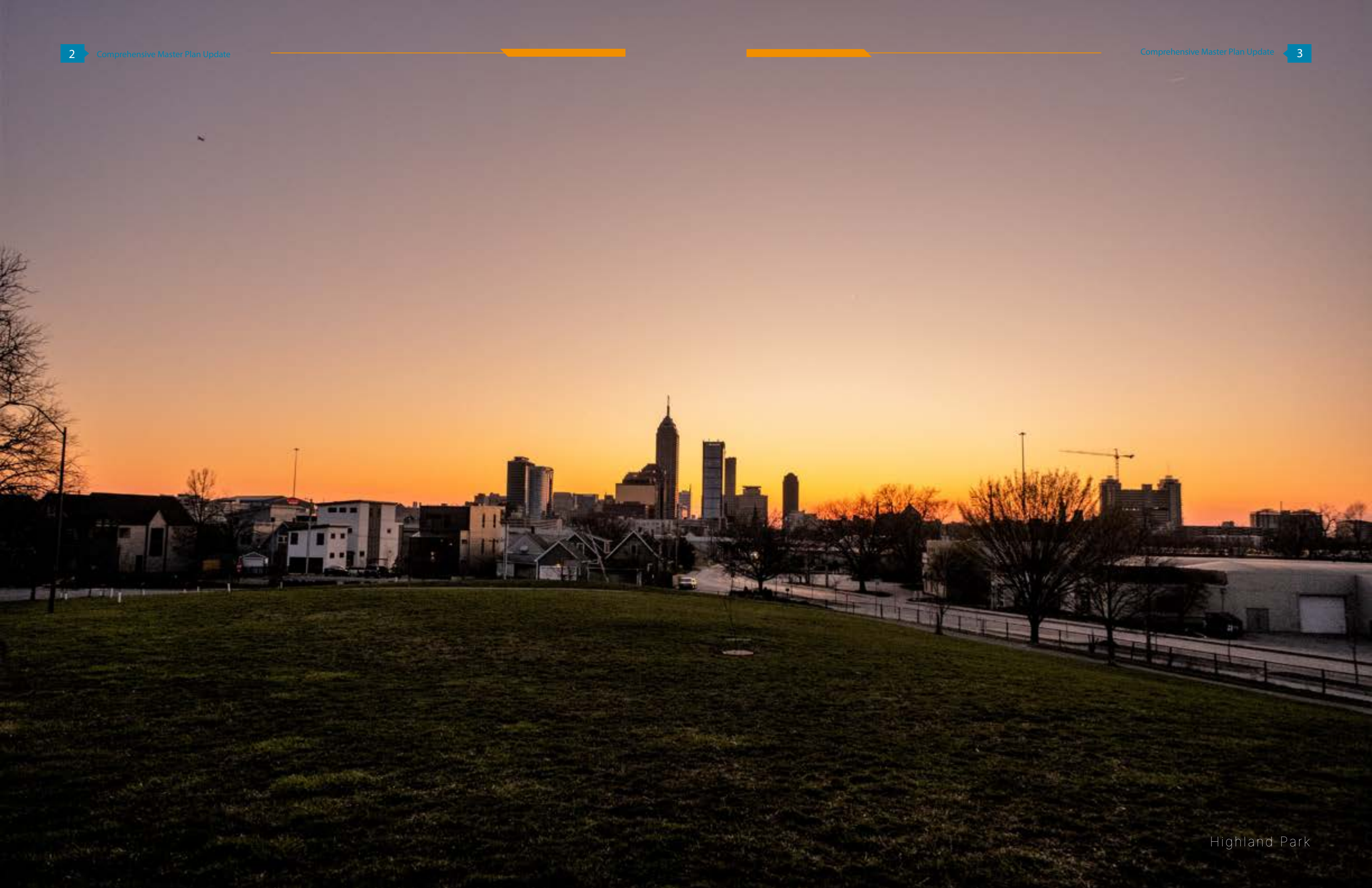
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## 2023 COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

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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 Parks 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  
Indy Parks and Recreation



# 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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# 1

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





# 1.1 INTRODUCTION



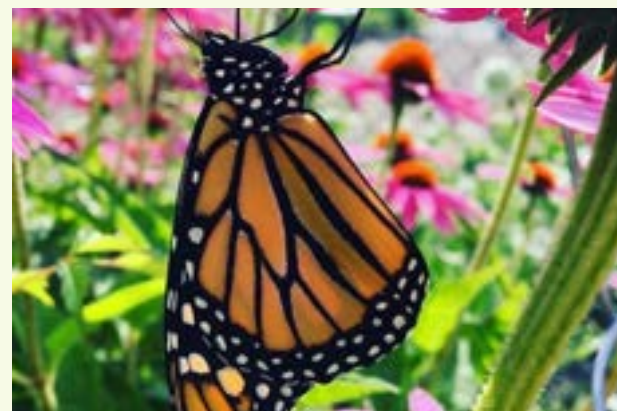
Indy Parks for All, the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan Update, is an update to the previously adopted 2017 Indy Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. It was developed to provide a vision for how the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department (Indy Parks) manages the needs and resources 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](http://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:





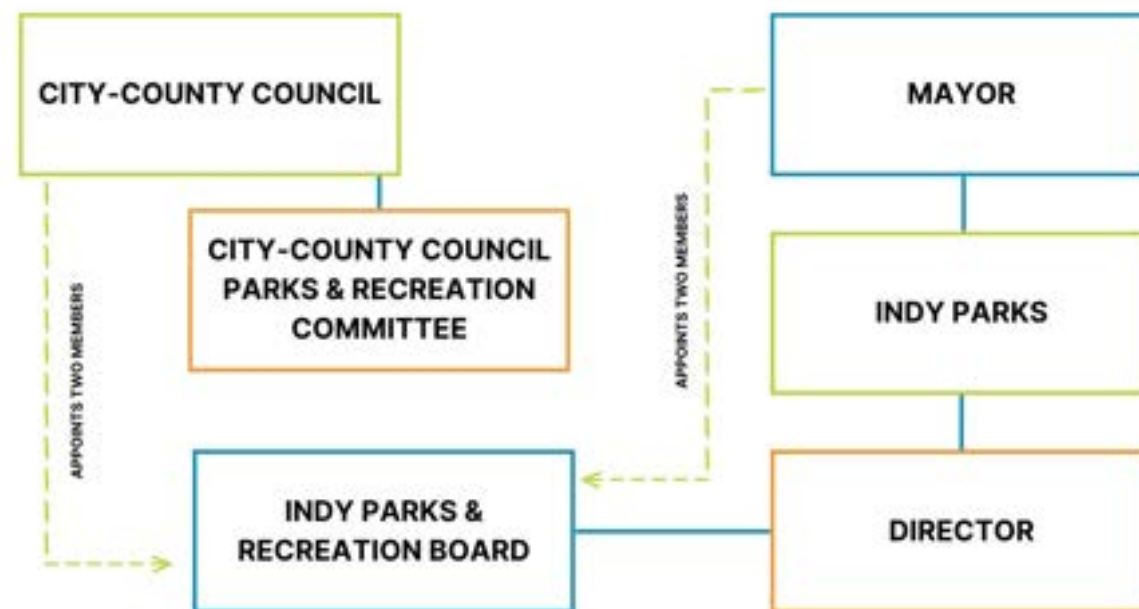
# 1.4 PARKS BOARD AND DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

## 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 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.

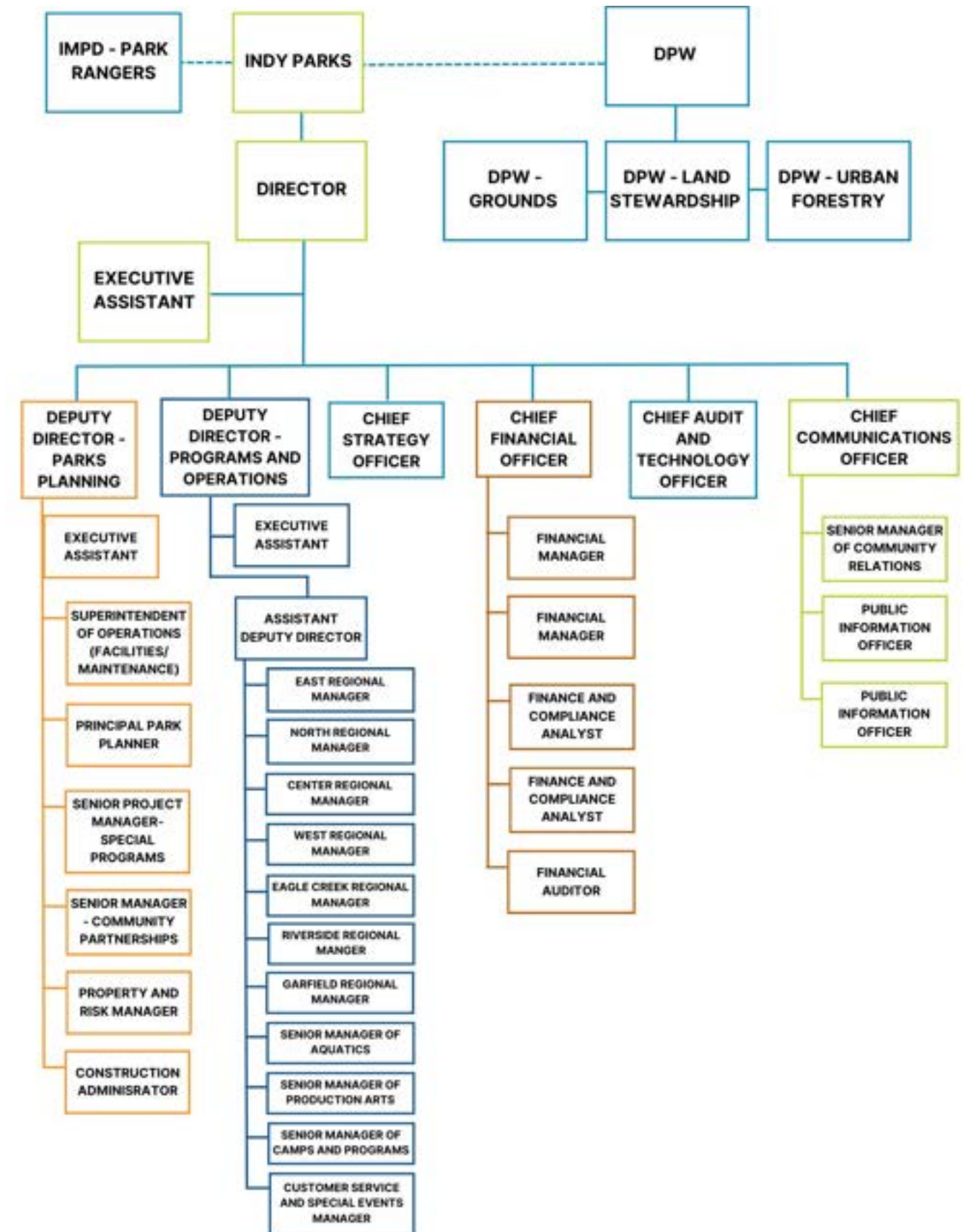
**The Chief Communications Officer** leads the Communications division. The Senior Manager of Community Relations works on public meeting outreach and building relationships with neighborhood advocates through participation in community events. The Public Information Officers work on press releases, marketing, social media, website content, and public presentations.

**The 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 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 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 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%.

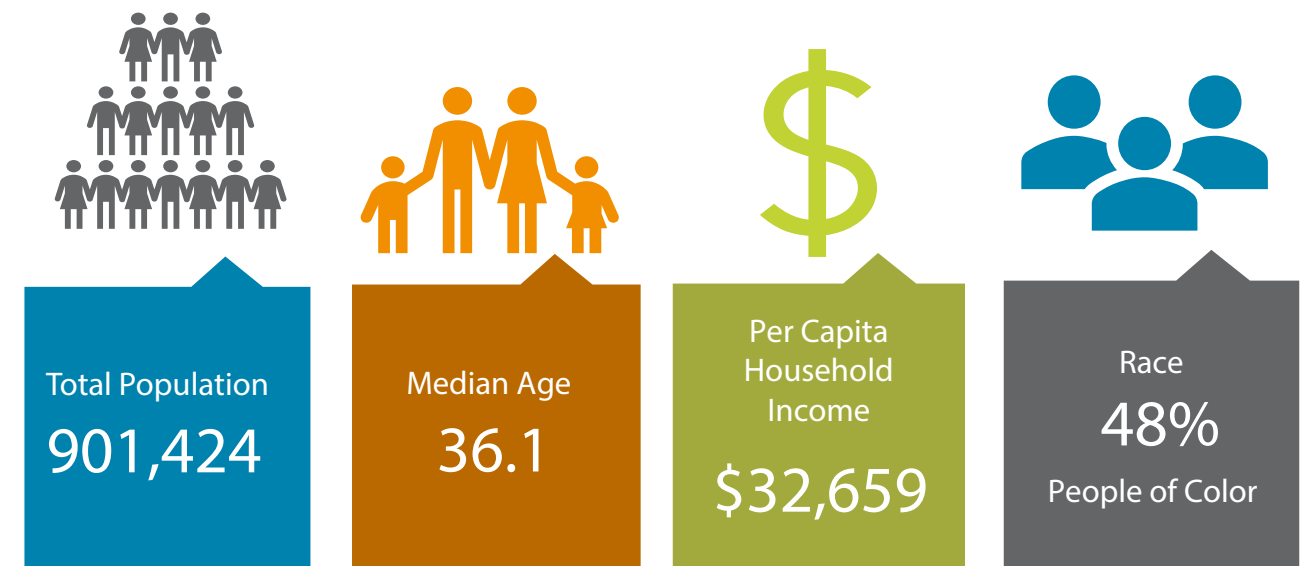
Additional information regarding the "10-Minute Walk Program" can be found at <https://www.tpl.org/>.



### 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.



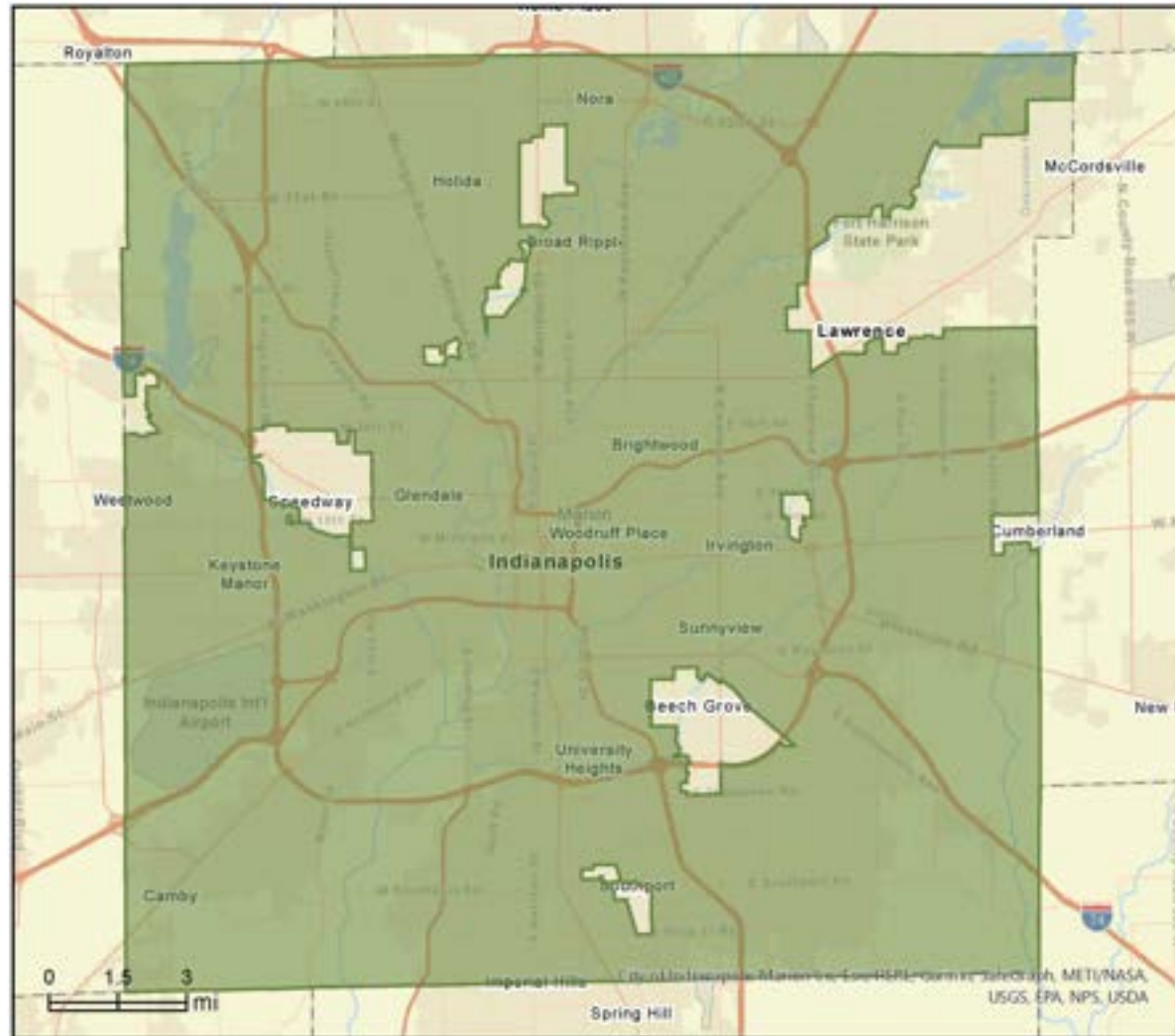


## METHODOLOGY

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.

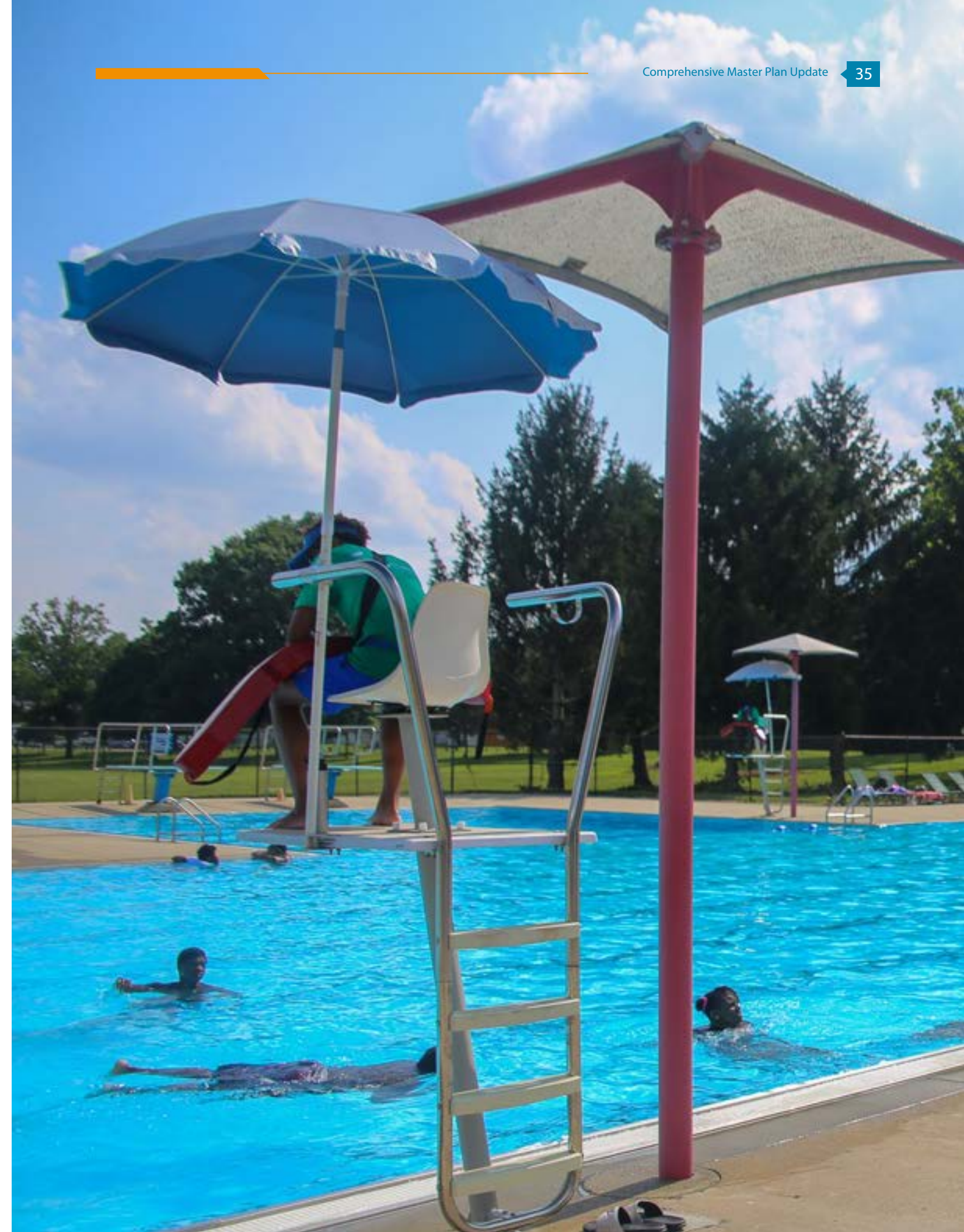
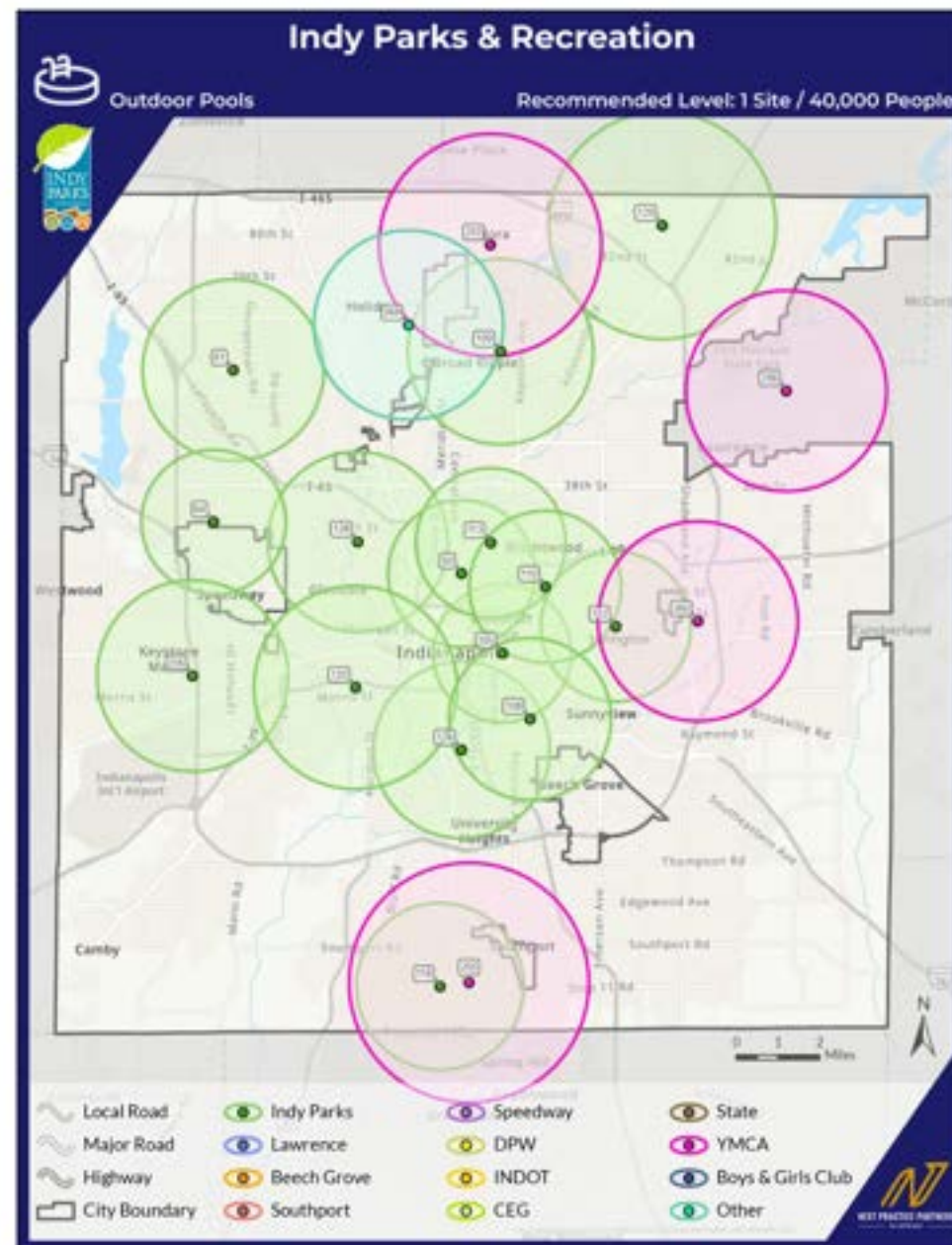




## 1.9 LEVELS OF SERVICE AND EQUITY MAP SAMPLE

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

	<b>Parks &amp; Facilities</b>	High quality, equitably distributed parks and facilities for all
	<b>Program &amp; Services</b>	Meeting community needs and activating park spaces and facilities
	<b>Engagement &amp; Outreach</b>	Tell our story and increase awareness to maximize access and participation
	<b>Operations &amp; Maintenance</b>	Ensure staffing levels and maintenance standards keep up with the growing needs of the system
	<b>Finance</b>	A financially sustainable system with dedicated funding, external partnerships, and resource support



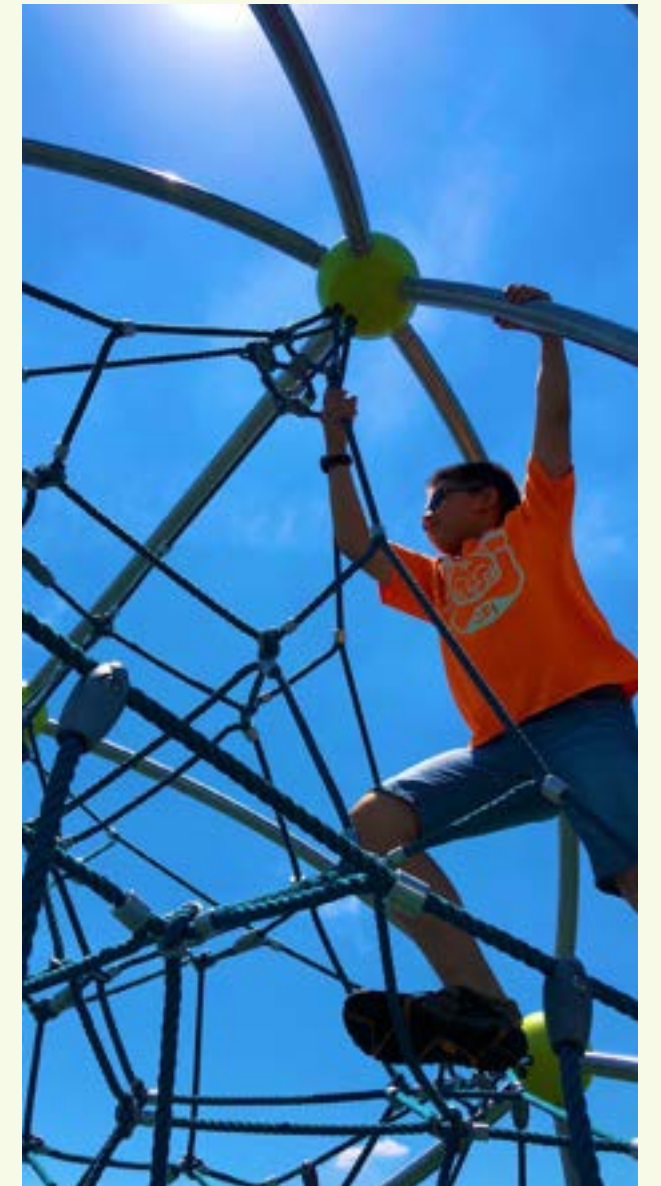




## 1.11 CONCLUSION

Parks and greenspaces provide a host of positive benefits and outcomes and are essential 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 **Indy Parks for All**.



## 1.12 ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION No. 15, 2023

Consolidated City of Indianapolis  
Board of Parks and Recreation

### A RESOLUTION FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF THE 2023 INDY PARKS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Department of Parks and Recreation (hereinafter "Department") has created the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan (hereinafter "Plan"), which includes the Department's updated mission, vision, values, benchmarks, and goals for the future:

"The Comprehensive Master Plan will inform residents where Indy Parks is currently positioned and what the future can hold for parks, public spaces, recreations 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."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board approves the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan and further authorizes the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation to implement the Plan for and on behalf of the Department.

### THE CONSOLIDATED CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

DATE: 7/18/23

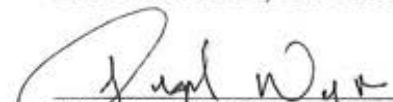
  
PHYLLIS BOYD, Board Chairperson

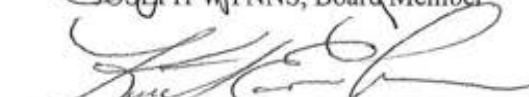
  
ADAM WICKER, Corporation Counsel

  
LARRY BATES, Board Member

  
CAROLINE CROSS, Interim Board Secretary

**ABSENT** cc  
ANDREA SCOTT, Board Member

  
JOSEPH WYNN, Board Member

  
KIRSTEN EAMON-SHINE, Board Member





**METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
OF MARION COUNTY, INDIANA**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-P-015**

RESOLUTION 2023-P-015, amending a segment of the Comprehensive or Master Plan of Marion County, Indiana, the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan.

Be it resolved that, pursuant to I.C. 36-7-4, the Metropolitan Development Commission of Marion County, Indiana, hereby amends the Comprehensive or Master Plan for Marion County, Indiana, by the adoption of the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan, a copy of which is on file and available for inspection during normal business hours in the office of the Department of Metropolitan Development, as an amendment to the Comprehensive or Master Plan of Marion County, Indiana.

Be it further resolved that the Secretary of the Metropolitan Development Commission is directed to certify copies of this Resolution 2023-P-015 amending the Comprehensive or Master Plan of Marion County, Indiana, the 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan.

Be it further resolved that the Director of the Department of Metropolitan Development is directed to mail or deliver certified copies of this Resolution 2023-P-015, to the Mayor of the City of Indianapolis, the City-County Council of Indianapolis and Marion County, the Board of Commissioners of Marion County, Indiana and to the legislative authorities of the incorporated cities and towns of Marion County, Indiana that are directly affected by this plan: Beech Grove, Lawrence, Southport, Speedway, Clermont, Crows Nest, Cumberland, Highwoods, Homecroft, Meridian Hills, North Crows Nest, Rocky Ripple, Spring Hill, Warren Park, Williams Creek, and Wynnedale. The Director shall also file one (1) summary of the plan in the office of the Recorder of Marion County.

DATE: August 16, 2023

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM  
AND ADEQUACY THIS 8<sup>th</sup> DAY  
OF AUGUST, 2023

Christopher Steinmetz  
Senior Counseling Attorney

METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION OF MARION COUNTY,  
INDIANA

John J. Dillon III, President

**METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
OF MARION COUNTY, INDIANA**

STATE OF INDIANA )  
 ) SS:

COUNTY OF MARION )

**CERTIFICATION**

I, Vincent Ash, Secretary of the Metropolitan Development Commission of Marion County, Indiana, do hereby certify that the attached Resolution 2023-P-015 AMENDING A SEGMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE OR MASTER PLAN OF MARION COUNTY, INDIANA – 2023 Indy Parks Comprehensive Master Plan – is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Metropolitan Development Commission of Marion County, Indiana, following a public hearing at a meeting of said commission on August 16, 2023, and that the original of said resolution is on file of record in the office of the Department of Metropolitan Development of Marion County, Indiana.

Witness my hand and official seal of the Metropolitan Development Commission of Marion County, Indiana this 16th day of August 2023.

Vincent Ash, Secretary  
Metropolitan Development Commission  
of Marion County, Indiana



# 2

# COMMUNITY PROFILE





## 2.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE OVERVIEW AND DEMOGRAPHICS

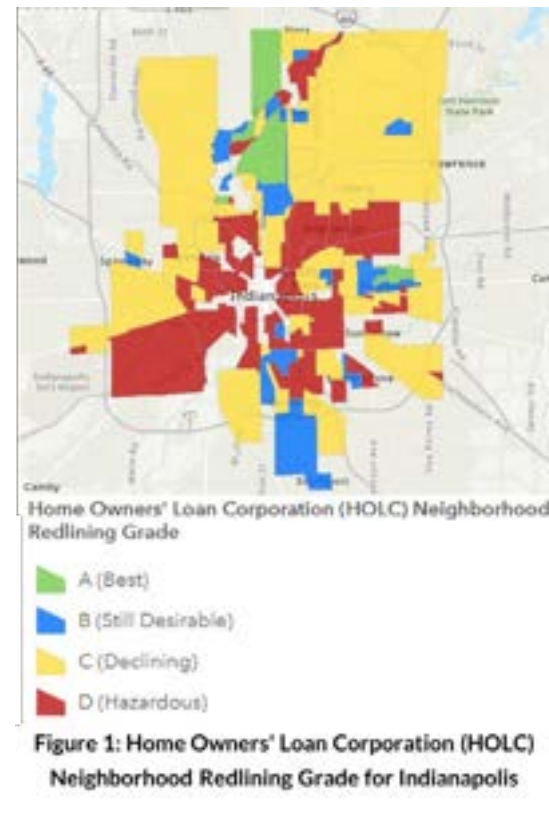
A key component of this plan is the community profile which provides the Department with insights into the community being served. Additionally, it also helps provide a better understanding of the types of parks, facilities, and programs/services that are most appropriate to equitably address the residents' needs.

### 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.



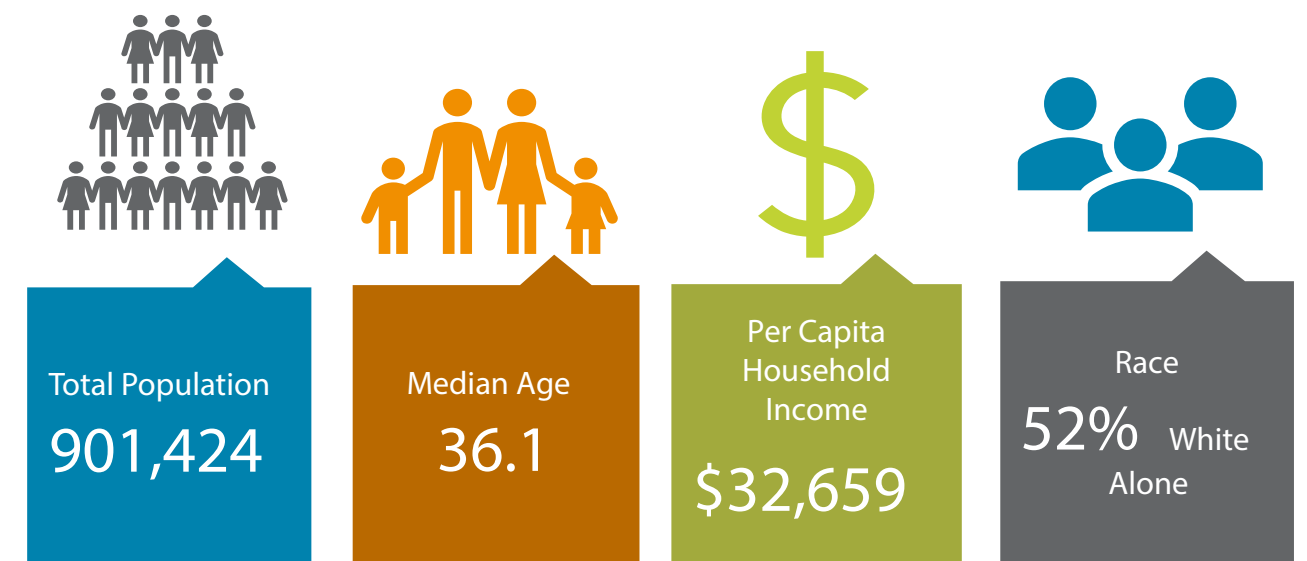
The red zones, which were usually in areas with a higher concentration of Black residents, were considered high-risk areas and were labeled as "hazardous." As a result, banks and other lending institutions refused to provide loans or financial services to residents or businesses in these areas, effectively 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 continues to persist.

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 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.



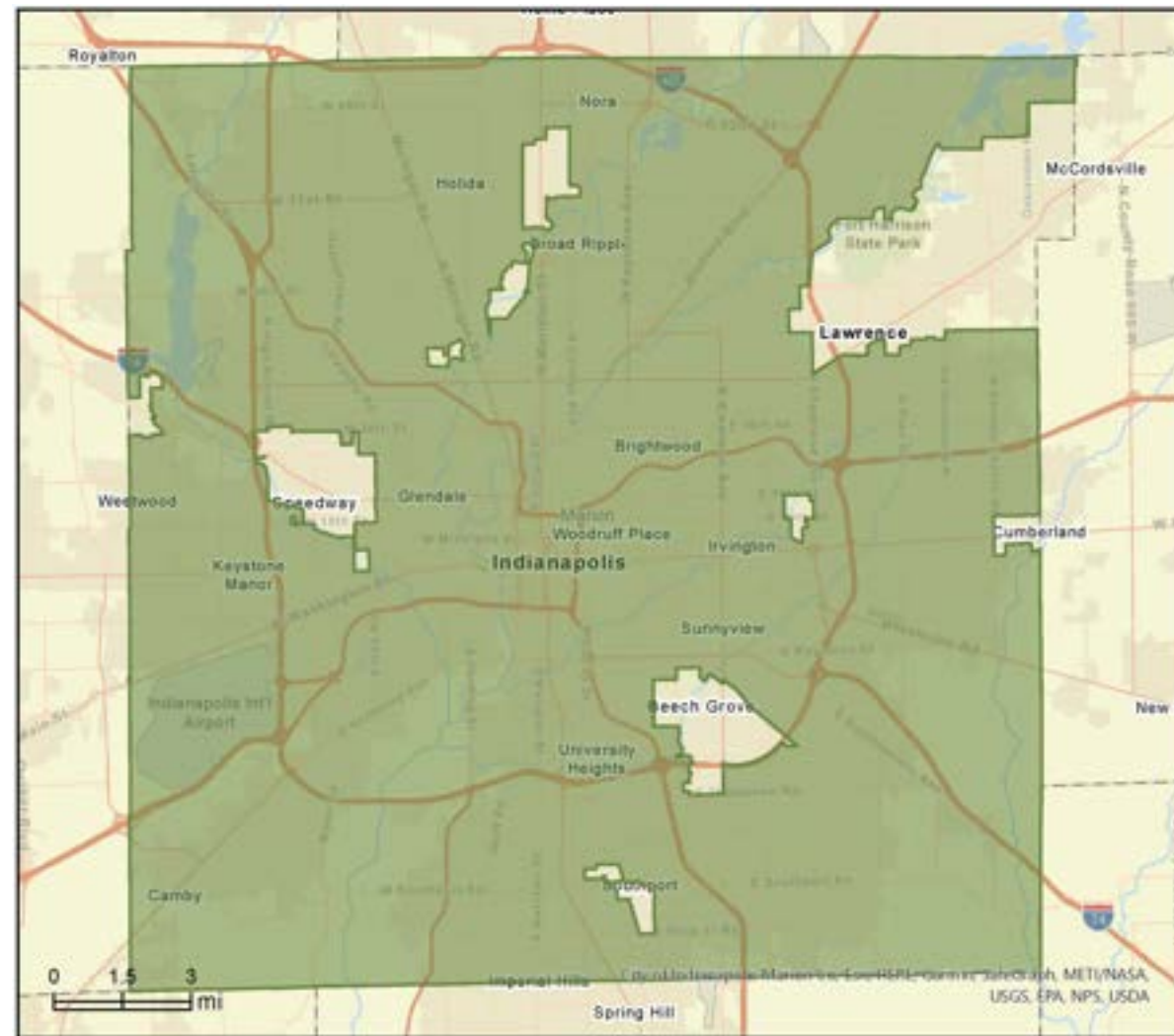


## METHODOLOGY

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.

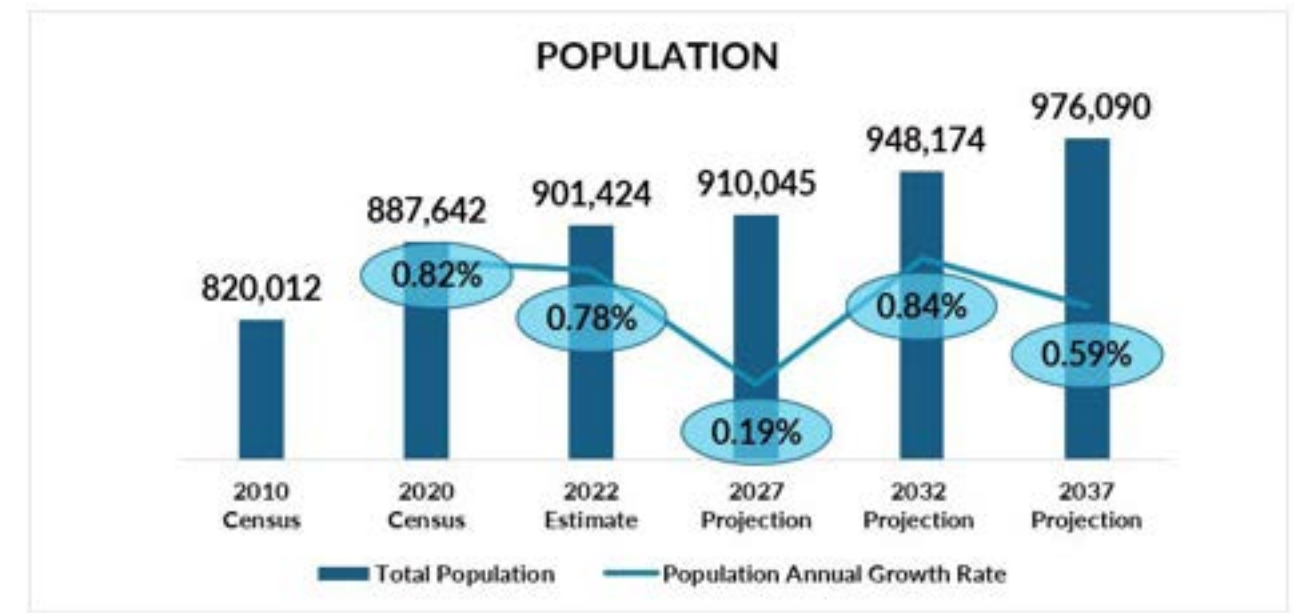
## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS BOUNDARY

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



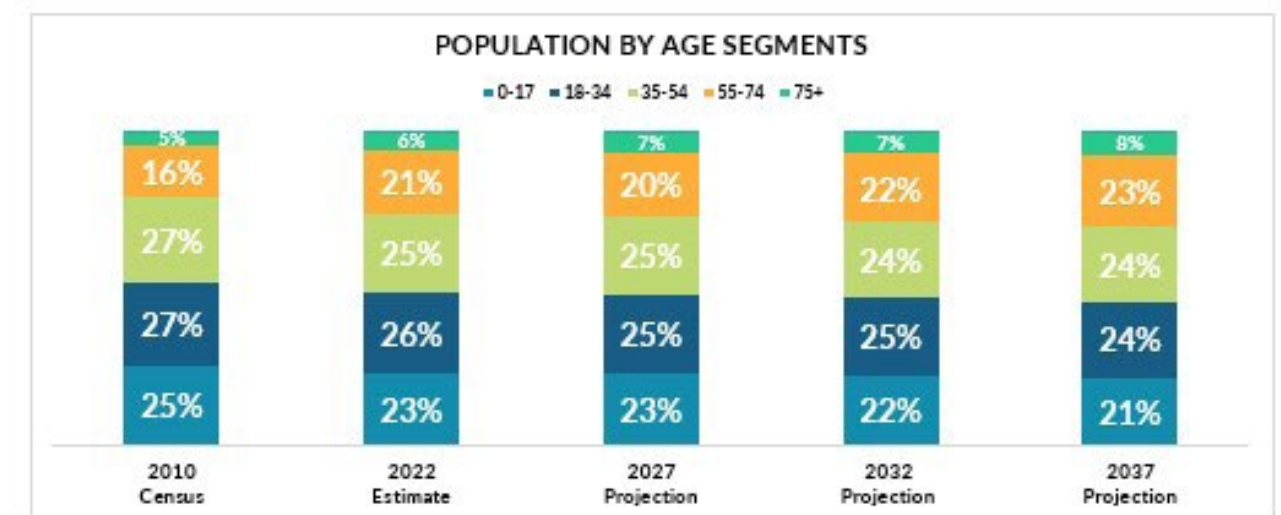
## CITY POPULANCE

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.

- **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

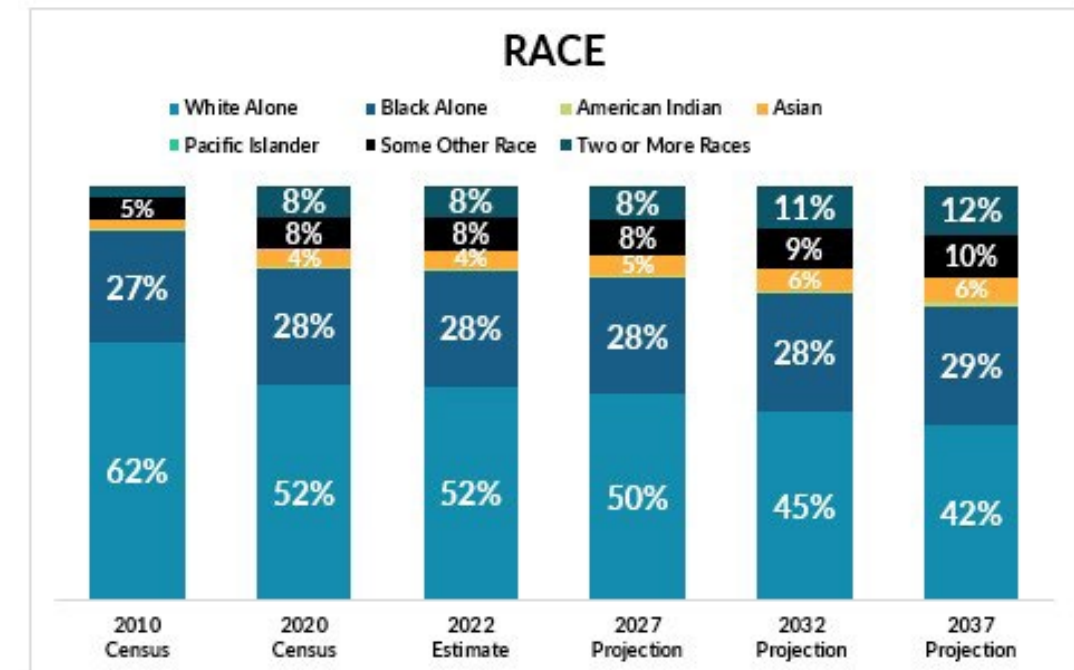
Census states that the race and ethnicity categories generally reflect social definitions in the U.S. and are not an attempt to define race and ethnicity biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. We recognize that the race and ethnicity categories include racial, ethnic, and national origins and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

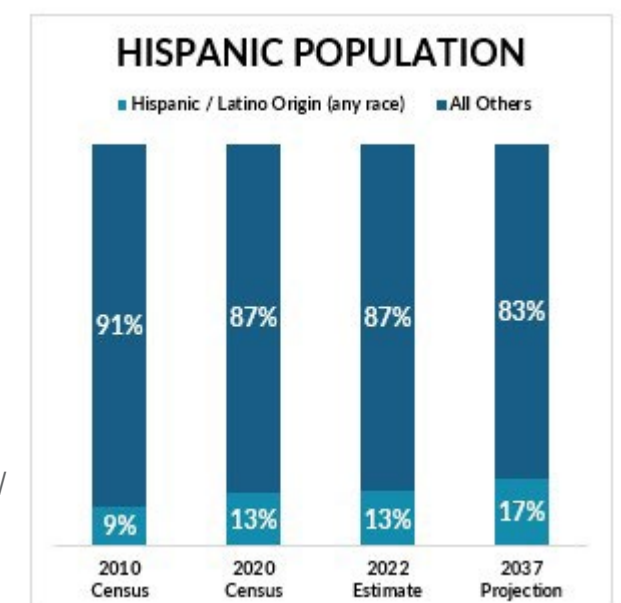
Currently, over half of the City's population is White Alone (52%), while the largest minority group is Black Alone at 28%. However, by 2032, the City is projected to become majority-minority, meaning that the combined percentage of all non-White racial categories will surpass that of White Alone. This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

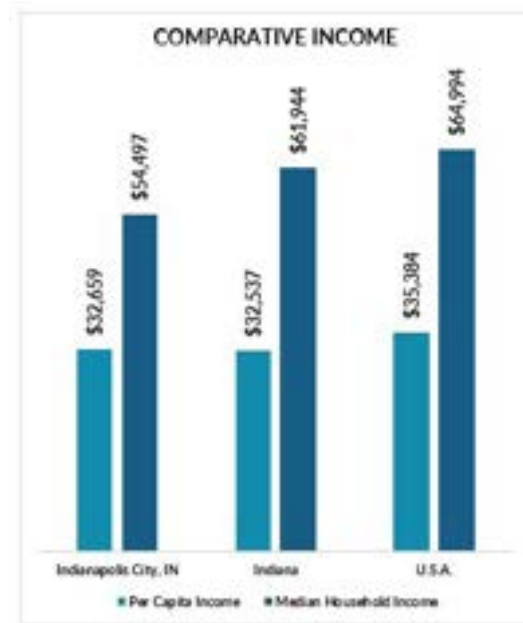




## INCOME

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 price 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

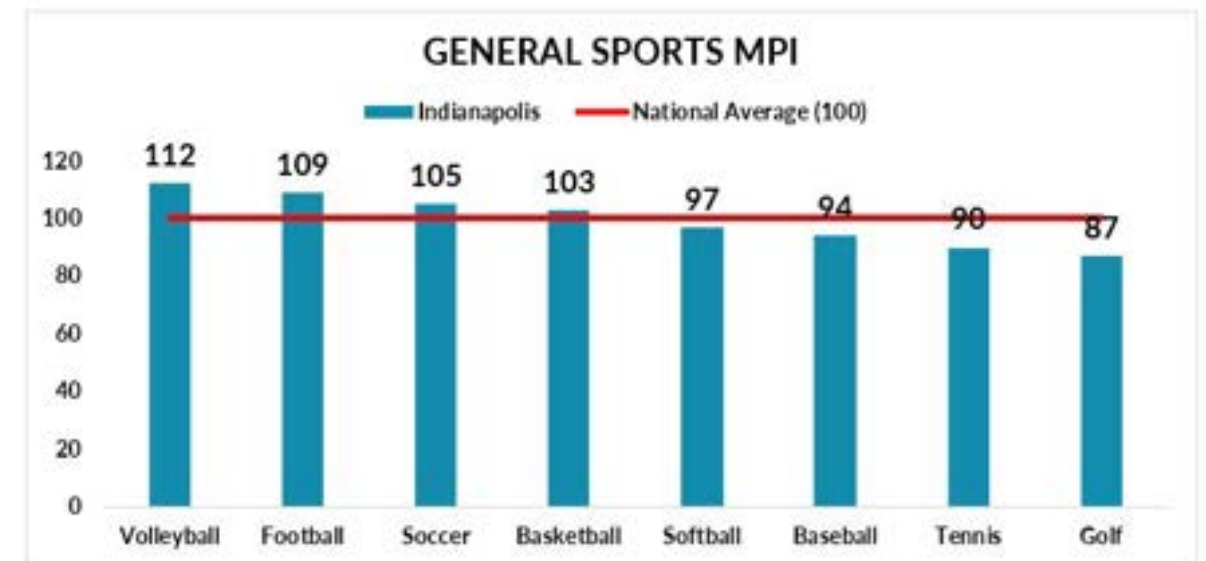
ESRI provided the following charts depicting sports and leisure market potential data for Indianapolis residents. The Market Potential Index (MPI) is utilized to measure probable demand for a product or service within defined service areas. MPI scores display the likelihood that an adult resident will 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.



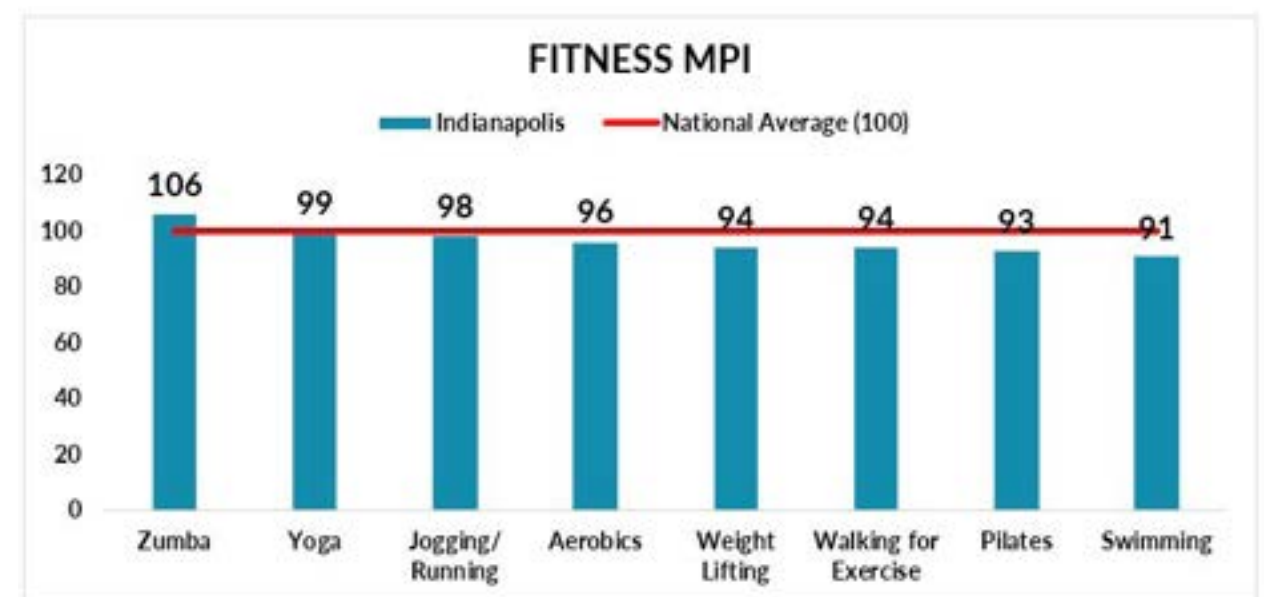
### GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

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

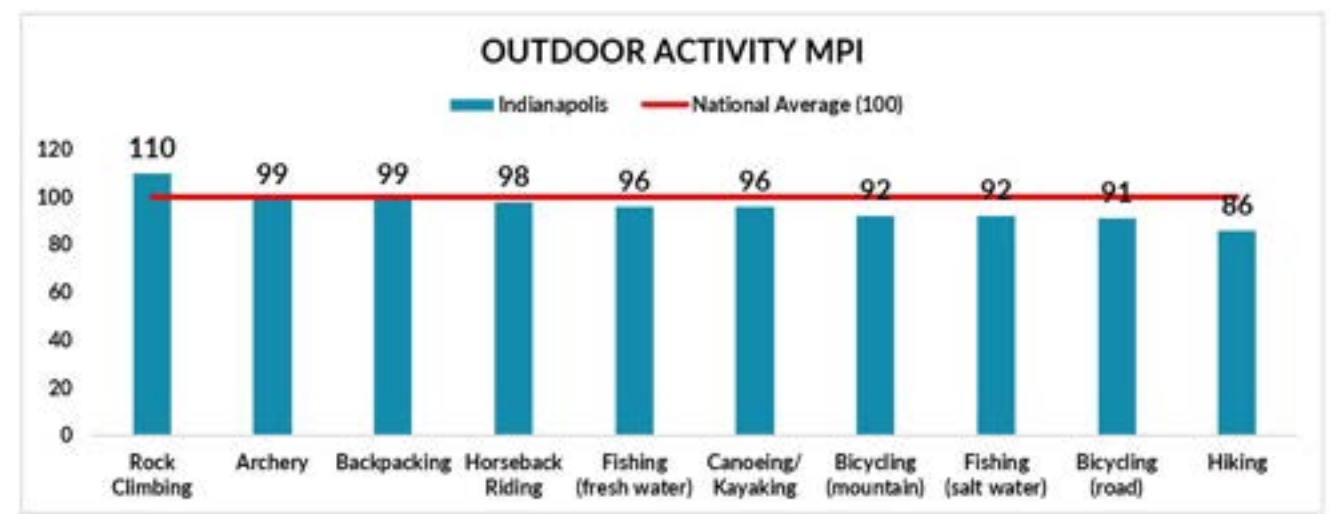
Among the listed fitness activities, only Zumba (106) had an MPI score above the national average. However, all other listed activities had MPI scores that were less than 10% below the national average.





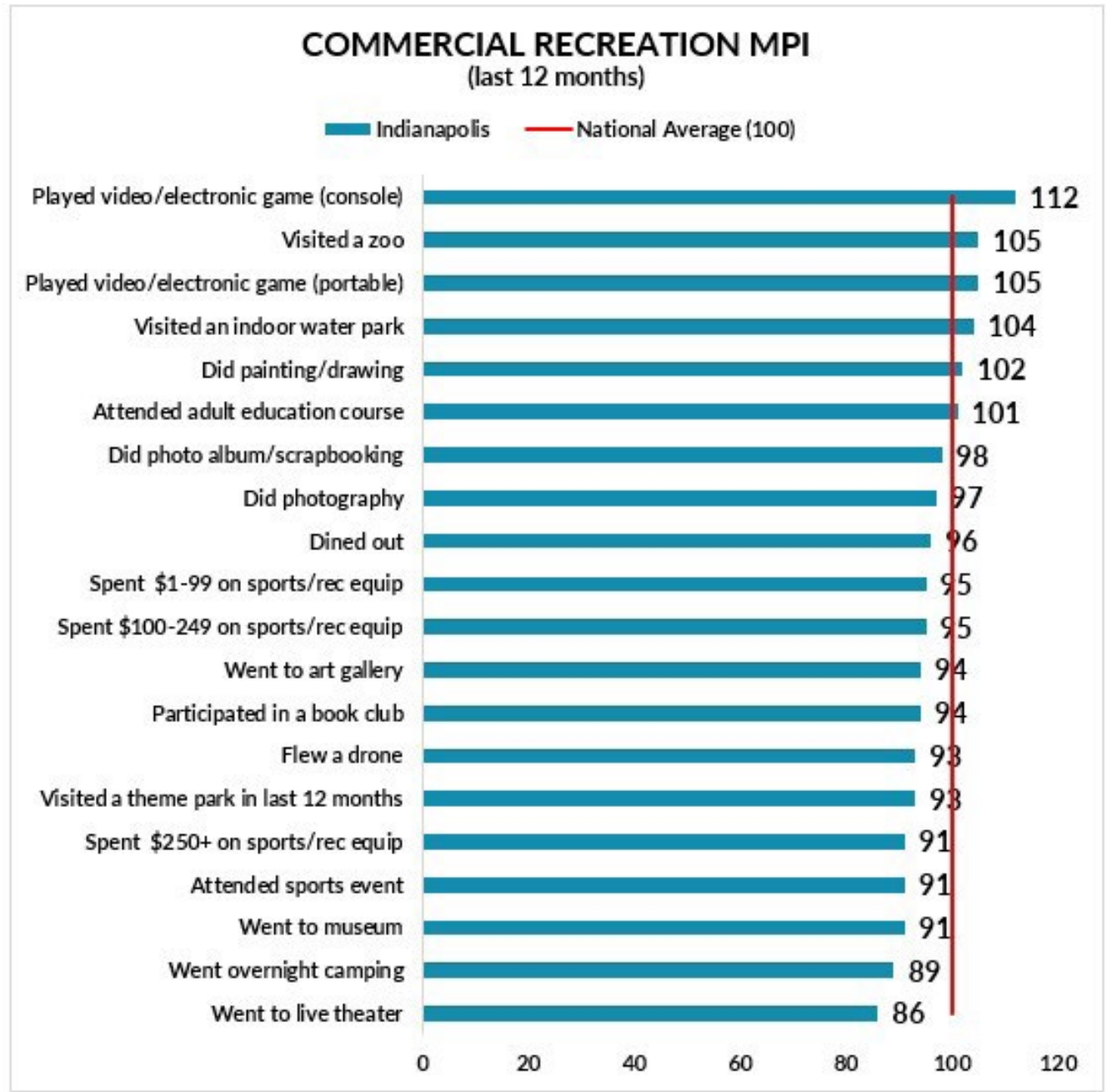
## GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

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 below. 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.





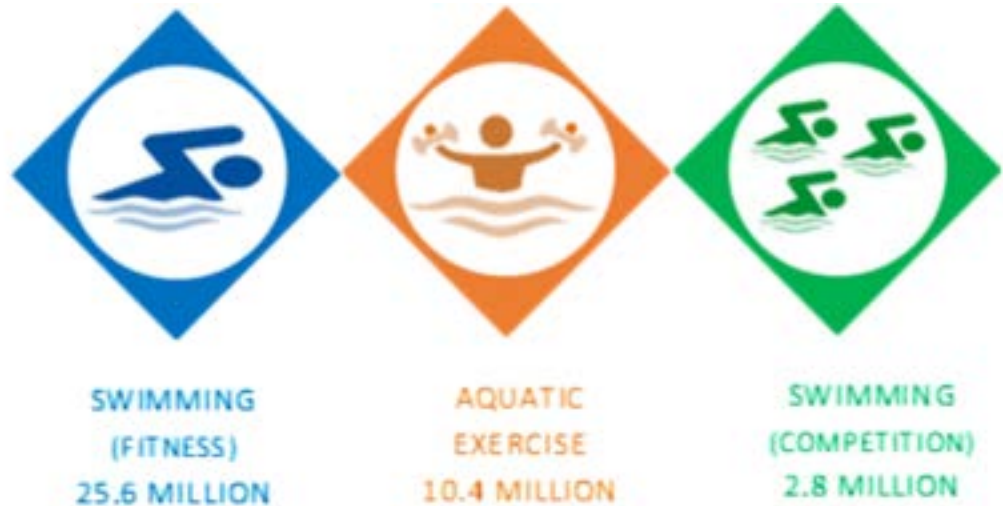
## CORE VS. CASUAL PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL SPORTS

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 Appendices 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. The Appendices provide 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 Appendices.

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

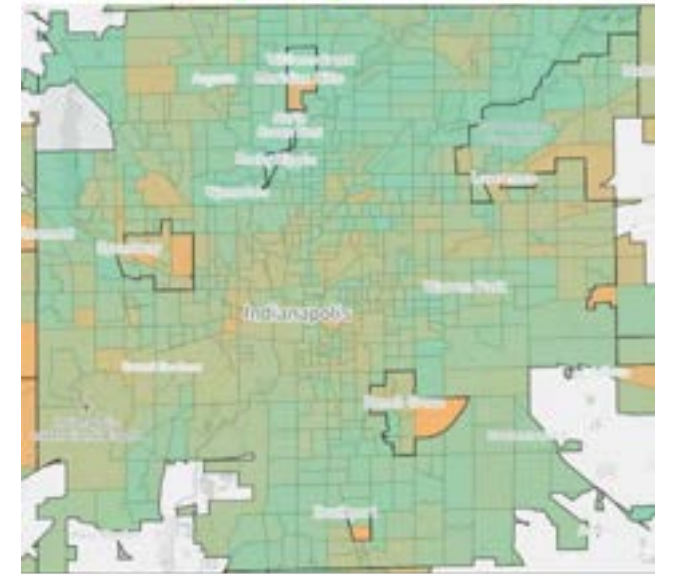
National average is 55%

## 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

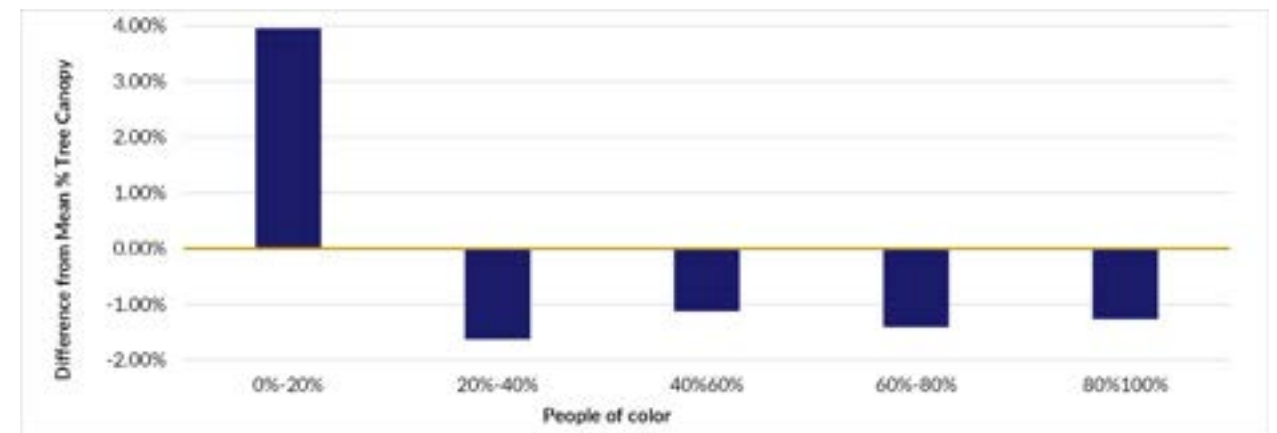


Indianapolis currently has a tree equity score of 84. Of the 577 block groups in Indianapolis:

- **33 have a tree equity score of 100**
- **437 have a tree equity score between 75-99**
- **106 have a tree equity score between 51-74**
- **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 the chart below, the 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:** 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 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.





## 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%
Indy 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
Indy 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
Indy 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
Indy 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 experiences 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 conditions 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:

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** funding of \$17.3 million was granted for improvements to playgrounds, sport courts, and shelters in 28 parks.
- **Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF)** were granted for improvements to Frank O'Bannon Park and Rev. Charles Williams Park.
- **Lilly Endowment Inc.** - An \$80 million gift will make improvements to 42 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)** - Recent investment of around \$3 million by CEG through the Sharing the Dream program has improved indoor facilities at Thatcher Family Center, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park Bathhouse, Frederick Douglass Park, Watkins Park, and Ellenberger Park.
- **AES Indiana** - Working through the Parks Alliance of Indianapolis, AES has made day of service improvements to outdoor facilities in Riverside Regional Park and Washington 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** - This 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 the park.
- Washington Park: 4 parcels on Laney Street are acquired and added to the park.
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park: 2 parcels on south side are acquired and added to the park.
- Whispering Hills Golf Course: 27 acres at 2609 Senour Road are acquired and added to the 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): \$17.3 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 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.

### 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 to 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 help 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 members of the public enhance 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.





## TYPES OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

Development and Fundraising Partner

- The Parks Alliance of Indianapolis

Capital Improvements and Annual Corporate Giving Partners:

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

Advisory Councils, “Friends Of” Groups, or Neighborhood Associations:

• Christian Park Neighborhood Association	• Garfield Park Neighborhood Association
• Eagle Creek Park Foundation	• Holliday Park Foundation
• Fletcher Place Neighborhood Association	• Kennedy King Memorial Initiative
• Friends of Broad Ripple Park	• Mapleton Fall Creek Neighborhood Association
• Friends of Brookside and Spades Parks	• Reverend Charles R. Williams Park Advisory Council
• Friends of Douglass Park Advisory Council	• Riverside Park Foundation
• Friends of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park	• Robey Park Advisory Council
• Friends of Ellenberger Park	• Stanley Strader Park (formerly known as Bethel Park) Advisory Council
• Friends of Frank Young Park	• Towne Run Trail Park Advisory Council
• Friends of Garfield Park	• West Indy Neighborhood Congress (W.I.N.C.)
• Friends of Lt. Jr. Grade Graham Edward Martin Park	• Windsor Village Advisory Council
• Friends of Marrott Woods Nature Preserve	
• Friends of Skiles Test Park	
• Friends of Southeastway Park	



### Park Improvement Donations and Volunteers:

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

### Beautification Project Partners:

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

### Stakeholder and Shared Land Use Partnerships:

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 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:**

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

**Food Program Partners:**

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

**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





## 2.7 PLANNING CONTEXT

The context of this planning process is influenced by 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:

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



## 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 continuous 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.

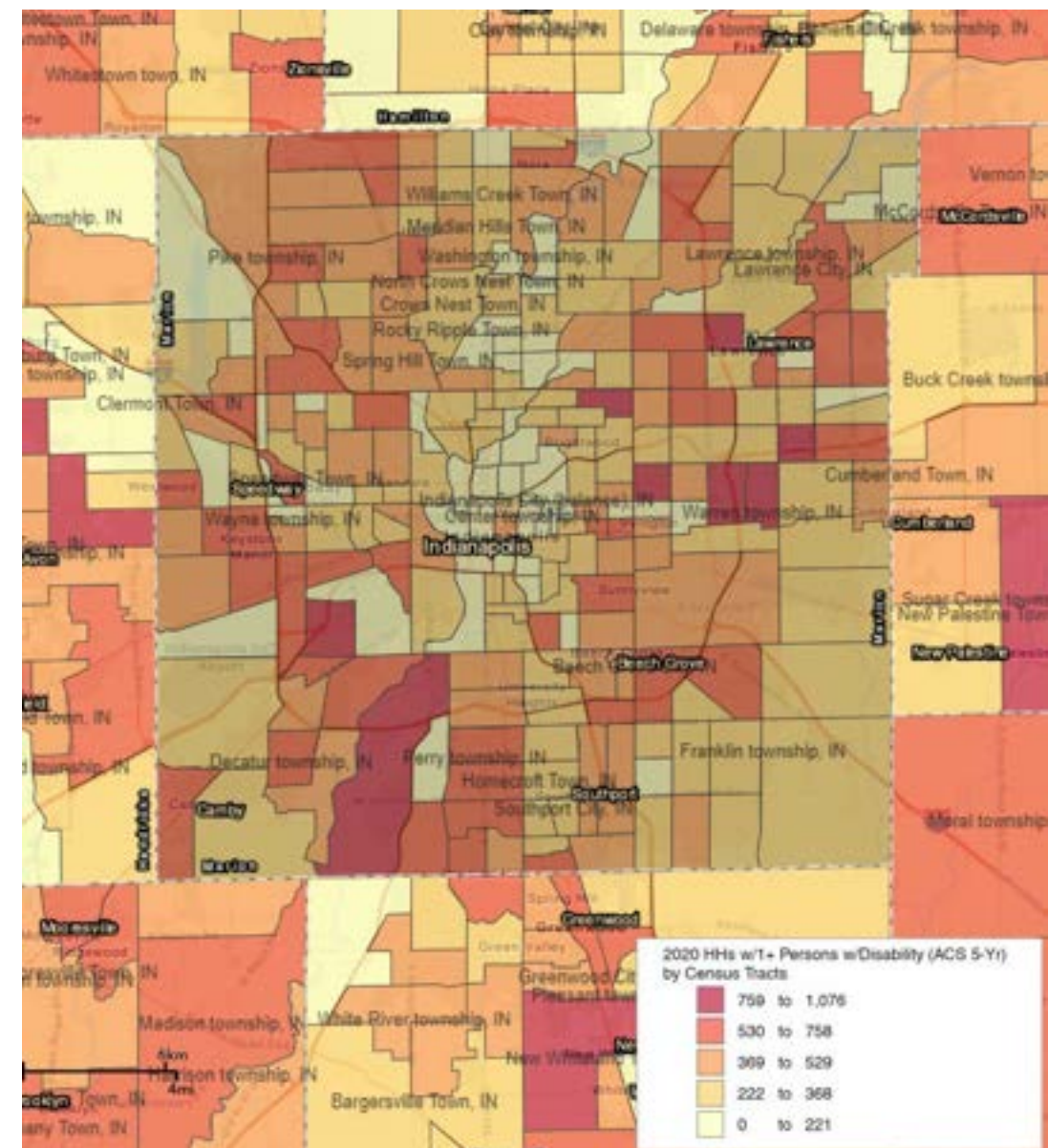


## ACCESSIBILITY HEAT MAP

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 consulting 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.

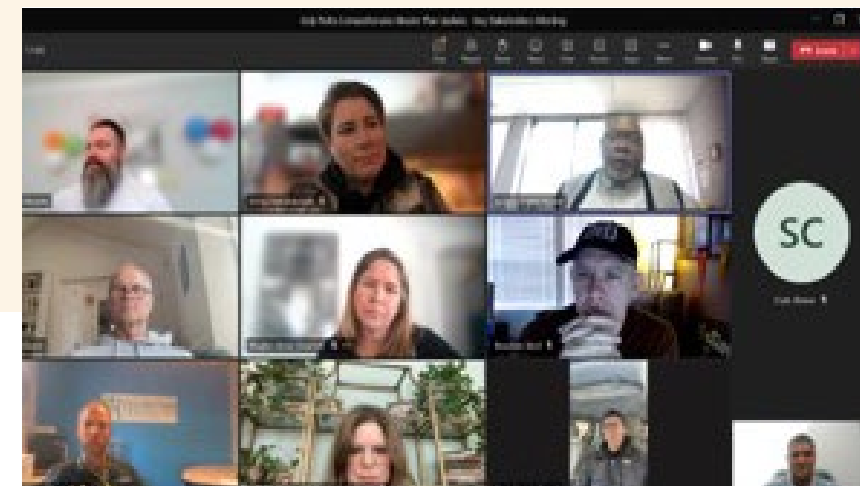
- **Dedicated staff:** The staff is passionate, devoted, and resourceful. They leverage available resources and maximize available dollars to provide opportunities in the neighborhoods. They are committed to serving the community, and they get a lot done with very little. The department has done a commendable 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 Community 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 is supportive of growing the impact of the park system.
- **Variety of offerings:** The Department offers a wide variety of programming, from free meals to events to after-school programs, and even cooling/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 Indianapolis 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 involved 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 conducted over a two-month period, from January to March 2023, and garnered a total of 561 responses in both English and Spanish combined. 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 consulting 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



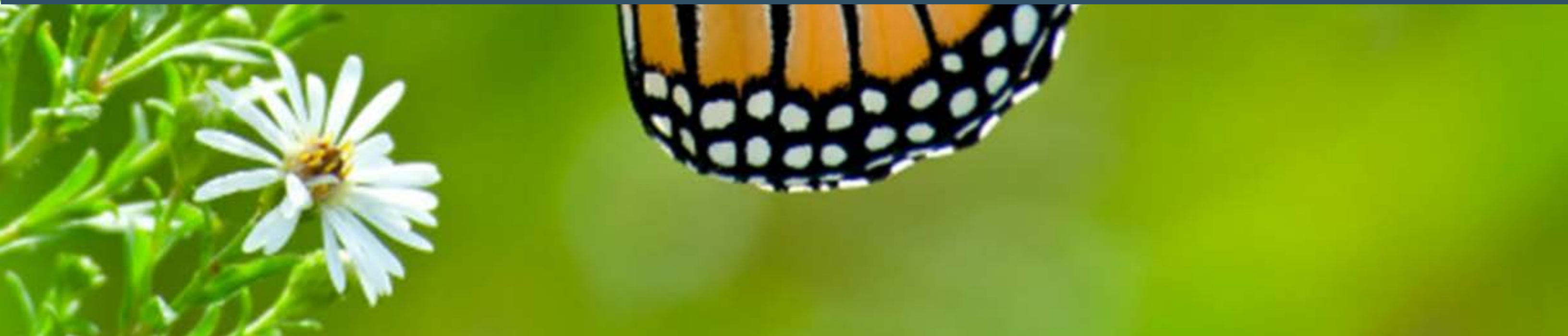
The consulting team redesigned the project website [www.planindyparks.com](http://www.planindyparks.com) to be multilingual, ADA accessible and mobile friendly. This was used to share previous planning documents, provide ongoing plan updates, promote opportunities for community engagement and to share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





# 4

## NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE





## 4.1 NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE

This section describes the managed natural areas in Indianapolis Parks and Greenways and the restorative management in relation to recreation, quality of life, and ecosystem services provided.

### WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF LAND STEWARDSHIP IN INDIANAPOLIS?

The Office of Land Stewardship is housed under the Department of Public Works and maintains a partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation. Funding for Land Stewardship comes from the City's annual operating budget as well as through fees assessed as part of the City's stormwater program. Land Stewardship also works with funds from grants and a variety of organizations. Land Stewardship's partners include Purdue University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Butler University, and the Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society. Across 37 properties, the Office of Land Stewardship manages 2,018 acres of park natural areas and green infrastructure installations that filter stormwater runoff. This work helps preserve critical wildlife habitat, provide passive recreation opportunities, protect air quality, and address stormwater issues related to water quality.

#### LAND STEWARDSHIP'S MISSION AND VISION



## MISSION

**Land Stewardship protects and manages natural habitats for people, wildlife, clean air, and clean water.**



## VISION

**The Office of Land Stewardship will protect, manage, restore, and expand natural areas in Indianapolis in order to increase the ecological services they provide, improve the natural landscape for wildlife and passive recreation, and foster a conservation ethic to inspire current and future generations to value these special places.**



## STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL AREAS

Parks departments around the world are looked upon to protect and manage natural areas. Natural areas help mitigate pollution generated by the developed landscape. These natural systems can improve the air and the water quality in our rivers and streams. The City of Indianapolis – Marion County has been actively managing natural areas in parks and greenways for thirty years, thus doing a great service to the local community and to furthering global initiatives in natural resource protection.

Indianapolis is fortunate to have many natural areas in the park system. Some of these areas have endangered, threatened or rare species of plants and animals and several ecosystem types are listed as state significant and globally rare. Proper planning and proactive management of these natural areas will help ensure the greatest ecosystem service benefits to the community.



Raymond Park

The natural areas in parks and greenways are categorized by three main land cover types, followed by subcategories:

#### Woodlands

- Old second growth
- Disturbed woods
- Woody successional

#### Open Natural Area

- Herbaceous to early woody successional
- Prairie/pollinator meadows
- Reforestation
- Wetland – sedge meadow
- Native plant landscaping
- Green Infrastructure (rain gardens, etc.)
- Former agriculture/fallow field

#### Water

- Open wetlands (constructed/natural)
- Streams and rivers
- Reservoirs and ponds



View from Eagle's Crest Woods Nature Preserve





## THE FUNCTION OF NATURAL AREAS - THE CRITICAL NATURE OF OUR WORK

### ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

There is more to natural areas than picturesque landscapes or a place to picnic. Natural areas perform important functions for us. These ecosystem services include stormwater management and other water quality benefits, clean air to breathe, removal and storage of carbon dioxide, and providing space with aesthetic, healthful, and recreational value. When human activity eliminates natural areas, these ecosystem services are disrupted, often severely. It then becomes the job of engineers, planners, and designers to figure out how to simulate those services in the built landscape. Human-made solutions rarely perform as well as the natural systems in providing these services.

### STORMWATER QUALITY

Stormwater, the volume of water in a rain event, is a serious problem for many communities. Before natural areas were settled and developed, about 50% of the rain that fell was absorbed by the soil and recharged the groundwater. Today that number is closer to 15% due to impervious surfaces such as buildings, pavement, and compacted soils. Rain that was once captured in forests and wetlands now falls on roofs, roads, and parking lots. All of that extra water has to be engineered off the landscape so every storm doesn't result in widespread flooding. These man-made solutions can result in pollution as rainwater often runs over contaminated surfaces and drains into waterways. Because much of our drinking water comes from surface sources like rivers and reservoirs, water treatment plants incur greater costs to make water clean for drinking. Surprisingly, sediment is the number one pollutant of rivers, lakes, and streams in Indiana. Native vegetation with deep root systems holds the soil in place, reducing erosion and keeping our streams cleaner. Land Stewardship uses native plants in their restoration work and rain gardens, which allows for greater infiltration of stormwater into the ground and helps protect water quality in our watershed.

### AIR QUALITY

A mature tree can absorb 10 pounds of air pollution every year and more than a ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime. Unfortunately, forest-clearing and increased vehicle use has resulted in more air pollution and greater carbon dioxide emissions - just one gallon of gas creates about 20 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>! Communities where natural areas have been reduced or are absent are seeking ways to clean the air and sequester carbon dioxide. Indianapolis parks are part of the solution by providing 6,522 acres of tree canopy, which makes up 60% of the land cover in parks. These trees remove 410,139 pounds of air pollutants annually with a monetary benefit of \$1,475,387. In addition, they sequester 53,299,942 pounds of carbon with a monetary benefit of \$967,679. This is a combined value of \$2,443,066 every year - all from the tree canopy in Indianapolis parks!

### BIODIVERSITY

Natural areas are equally important for the survival of most of our native plants and animals. While some animals have adapted to the built environment, most wildlife need a different community; one that includes a diversity of trees, shrubs, wildflowers, insects, and other organisms. A single oak tree may support as many as 500 butterfly and moth species. Butterfly and moth larvae support bird populations, birds spread wildflower seeds, wildflowers support pollinators, and pollinators are necessary for ecosystem health and human food production. As human development removes this kind of native asset and replaces it with exotic species of trees such as Callery pear, there is an exponential loss of wildlife that native plants support. Everything is connected and interdependent! We are committed to protecting Indianapolis' natural areas in order to provide habitat and community for our native flora and fauna. Indianapolis is home to about 50 rare, threatened, or endangered animals and 9 rare, threatened, or endangered plants. Land Stewardship has protected over 2,000 acres of habitat for them to date.

### PASSING ON A CONSERVATION ETHIC

Forest cover in Indiana has increased since the 1960s, but that isn't the case in Indianapolis. Development pressure continues to threaten the remaining natural areas, and it's hard to reverse the trend of lost woodlands in Marion County. The Office of Land Stewardship works to engage volunteers and educate the public about the inherent value of our local natural areas. Awareness of these treasured areas is their best defense.

## LAND STEWARDSHIP – ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION MANAGEMENT

Today's natural plant communities are isolated fragments lacking the stability of larger ecosystems and thus very susceptible to degradation.

One negative impact of this fragmentation is biological pollution in the form of non-native plant and animal species, many of which invade and displace native plant communities. The healthiest natural areas are those that support a diverse population of native plants and animals. Much of the living environment, in natural areas that provide habitat for native animals, insects and other organisms, is reduced when exotic plants invade and take over their space. When this happens, the natural diversity, or biodiversity of an ecosystem is compromised.

**Ecological restoration** is the process of assisting the recovery of a natural area that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed - the Office of Land Stewardship's primary focus.



## WETLAND RESTORATION – BEFORE AND AFTER



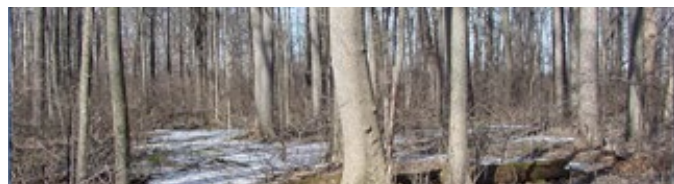
Raymond Park – Weedy Non-native Old Field



15 years later, Native Shrub Sedge Meadow



The restored open wetland was at one time wooded as shown in the background and photo to the right.



Eagle Creek Park – Weedy Non-native Old Field



20 years later, Fen Wetland – Sedge Meadow

# Habitat Restoration Complex

## Restoration in Progress

**What's happening here?**  
Before European settlement, this area was forested with a mix of wetland and dry forests. Farming and other settlement activity cleared the land and drained portions of the site. Non-native trees and shrubs moved into the area once its agricultural days had passed. Today, this restoration project is working to return the site to a mixture of habitats by removing drainage networks, managing non-native plants, and planting native species. In time, this mixture of landscape types will be representative of important and rare habitats in central Indiana.

**What are the target species?**  
Land Stewardship is managing this habitat mosaic to help support vulnerable populations of grassland, shrubland, and woodland wildlife, including birds, frogs, salamanders, turtles, and snakes. These species evolved in natural communities with specific plants that provide the necessary resources for the wildlife on this site.

**What is the value of habitat?**  
Natural areas like this are valuable for plants and animals. The habitats being restored here support biodiversity and also provide important benefits for human communities, too.

The roots of native plants can extend **10 FEET OR MORE** into the soil, creating masses of channels to hold and filter stormwater.

Up to **1/2** of **ALL THE AMERICAN BIRD SPECIES** use wetland habitats.

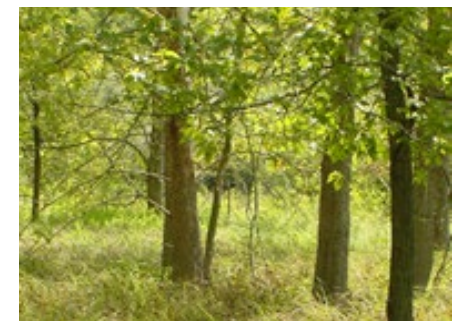
More than **60,000** **ARBORES** grow in Indianapolis annually from over 40 states and 15 countries.

**Enjoy this special place!**

**What habitat types will be part of the restoration?**  
What you see here today will change over time. The seven habitat types shown in this table are the target communities that will eventually dominate the area. The map below is a rendering of the site 30 years into the future. It includes woodlands, grasslands, and several types of open and wooded wetlands. The Office of Land Stewardship will actively manage this site to maintain a rich habitat mosaic.

KEY	HABITAT TYPE
1	PONDIC WETLAND
2	SEDGE MEADOW WETLAND
3	GRASSLANDS
4	SUCCESIONAL FOREST
5	PLATWOODS WETLANDS
6	CESTING PLATWOODS
7	SURGE CANE WETLAND

**You Are Here**



On a global basis the two great destroyers of biodiversity are, first, habitat destruction and, second, invasion by exotic species (E.O. Wilson). Managing invasive species is at the center of what Land Stewardship does, as invasives have a negative impact on species of special concern, pollinators, and water quality. Non-native, invasive species are plants or animals whose introduction to an ecosystem causes environmental or economic harm. They can enter the landscape as a result of development, poor land management, accidental release, or escape from cultivation. Unfortunately, once invasive species get established, they can cause an ecosystem to deteriorate and outcompete native species, reducing the diversity of plants and animals. Land Stewardship and its contractors manage over 70 different invasive species today. Management of invasive species creates better habitat for native flora and fauna. And healthy habitats allow for increased infiltration of stormwater, reducing runoff and erosion, which improves water quality. Invasive species management also gives us an opportunity to get volunteers involved in our work, and many Indianapolis residents want to help improve the environment. We use our restoration efforts to educate people about ecosystems and how all the components work together.



### OVER 70 PLANTS ARE KNOWN TO BE INVASIVE IN MARION COUNTY. COMMON EXAMPLES ARE:

- Bush honeysuckle spp.
- Wintercreeper vine
- Oriental bittersweet vine
- Japanese stilt grass
- Burning bush
- Garlic mustard
- Tree-of-heaven
- Siberian elm
- Callery pear (Bradford pear)

Successful natural area management requires an active invasive plant control program. This is an integral part of the ecological restoration management.

**Marott Woods Nature Preserve** – Was partly invaded by bush honeysuckle and has over 15 years pf restoration using contractual labor (Eco Logic LLC) and volunteers - series of photos showing restoration.



The Marott Woods Nature Preserve management continues with the older-second growth woodland being the priority.

The remnant forests are a primary management focus. These parcels are listed as globally rare and/or state significant. The adjoining buffer areas are also important restoration zones to expand habitat and bufer the core remnant forests from invasive plants which can dominate previously cleared sites with a history of farming or residential land use. Remnant forests support rare, endangered and threatened species of plants and animals. Nature enthusiasts take advantage of the opportunity to experience ephemeral wildflowers and stands of older trees in these areas.



Eagle Creek Park – Spring Pond Nature Preserve



The invasive species control efforts rely on professional broad cover mapping (Eco Logic LLC). To the left is just one example of several map layers showing woody invasives in the Spring Pond Nature Preserve.



Some of the largest ecological restoration sites are implemented on land formerly in agriculture. Reforestation and wetland restoration practices have converted hundreds of acres to native plant communities. Although not an original ecosystem in Marion County, prairie plantings can have an important role. Prairie offers insect pollinator and bird habitat in addition to providing air and water quality benefits and carbon sequestration. These transition areas are very active wildlife habitats where park visitors can enjoy an interesting mix of plants, birds and insects. Nature photography and birding are common activities.



## NATURAL AREAS AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

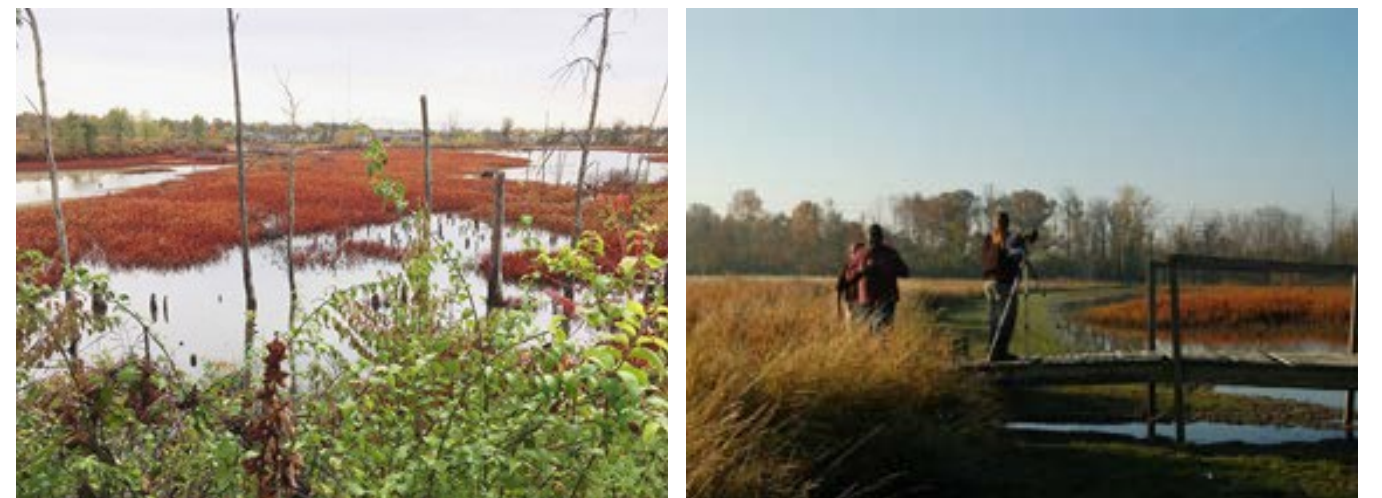
The value of natural areas in Indianapolis parks has been demonstrated through recognition of the ecosystem services they provide. The benefits of natural areas are becoming better known today and Land Stewardship believes our parks deserve greater recognition and value for all they offer the Indianapolis community. Ongoing research and modeling practices are employed to calculate in dollars the benefits of these services provided by natural landcovers. The better an area is managed, the more of these natural service benefits they provide. Natural area and land management goals can influence the following ecosystem services:

### Ability of the land cover to provide critical public service

- **Water related**
  - Stormwater capture and flood attenuation
  - Groundwater aquifer recharge
  - Non-point source pollution reduction
- **Conditioning of the air**
  - Reduction of ozone
  - Reduce heat island effect
  - Increase carbon sequestration
- **Natural heritage related**
  - Wildlife habitat
  - Biodiversity preservation
- **Other environmental**
  - Noise abatement,
  - Positive mental and physical health benefits of green space
  - Violent crime reduction

## STORMWATER CAPTURE AND STORAGE – VALUING NATURAL AREAS AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Office of Land Stewardship doesn't just manage large natural areas. Curbside bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure elements are also part of our work. Efforts to address the increasing problems caused by stormwater involve several different approaches. Agricultural fields and turf grass have been converted to native habitats like woodlands and wetlands, which manage a large volume of stormwater naturally. We also protect existing natural areas which are already performing this task. In our forests, big trees that make up the canopy intercept around 60,000 gallons of stormwater per acre every year. That's a \$2.2 million value annually and doesn't include the understory trees, shrubs, vines, herbaceous layer, and soil, all of which have an enormous effect on rainwater interception. Soil alone holds about 27,000 gallons of stormwater per acre on an annual basis. Land Stewardship manages over 1500 acres of woodlands and manages 43 acres forested and open wetlands. Wetlands can be described as nature's kidneys, acting like sponges to hold and release water in order to prevent damaging flows. Our wetlands can store up to an estimated 64,500,000 gallons of stormwater annually, filtering up to 95% of sediments and treating environmental pollutants.



Grassy Creek Regional Park, 42 - acre Open Wetland



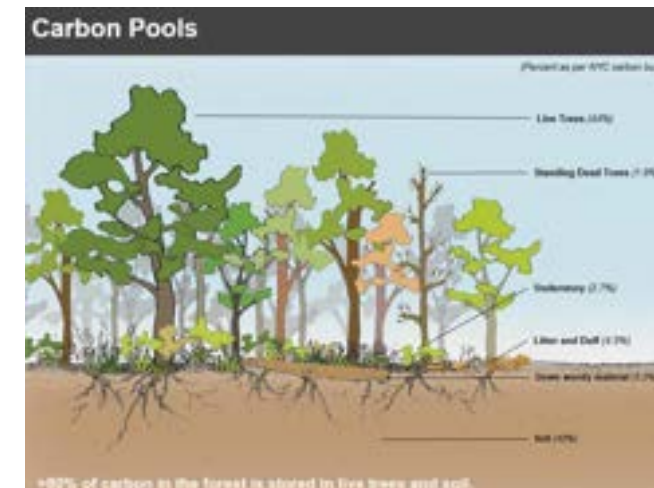
## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure elements such as rain gardens and bioswales also divert rainwater from storm sewers and waterways and put it back into the ground. Rain gardens can filter some 30,000 gallons of stormwater per year per acre. The DPW - Office of Land Stewardship maintains 58 rain gardens in Indianapolis totaling 90,469 square feet. Providing natural ways to reduce stormwater runoff has additional benefits for water quality in Indianapolis and communities downstream. Water running off roofs, yards, streets, and parking lots picks up large quantities of pollutants, even during small rain events. All these contaminants are quickly flushed into our surface waters, the drinking water source for 90% of Indianapolis. The more stormwater that soaks into the ground, the fewer pollutants enter our waterways, and that means cleaner water for drinking and recreation. This provides further protection to our watershed by reducing flooding and contributing to better water quality.



## CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Natural areas have an impact on factors that contribute to the continued warming of our climate past historic norms. Trees not only exchange carbon for oxygen, but the very biological material that makes up a woodland, grassland, or wetland stores carbon indefinitely within its biomass. Some studies show that while turf grass may sequester 800 pounds of carbon per acre every year, native forests are storing at least twice that amount. An older forest may sequester nearly 5 times as much carbon, and wetlands and floodplains may be even more effective. Our properties also provide many benefits to air quality with forested areas alone absorbing around 5,292 tons of carbon dioxide every year and 420 tons of air pollutants. Forests, wetlands, and prairies also help clean the air and cool the environment. Trees have a big impact by lowering the ambient air temperature. Ongoing studies are being conducted in our forests. The study below was from a grant in coordination with the New York City – Natural Areas Conservancy. In 2022 a temperature study was conducted in our forests using sensors to determine the correlation between forest health and temperature reduction.



**Live Tree Carbon Stock - Top 10 Plots**

Top 10 plots in Indianapolis by Mg C ha-1 stored:

Plot	Mg C ha-1	Community Type	Park
1	817.78	Upland forest	Eagle Creek West
2	339.69	Upland forest	Marion
3	287.24	Flatwoods	Eagle Creek East
4	235.57	Flatwoods	Eagle Creek East
5	193.46	Upland forest	Eagle Creek West
6	184.33	Upland forest	Eagle Creek West
7	155.42	Shrub/Flats/pond	Marion
8	144.81	Floodplain	Southside
9	130.87	Upland forest	Eagle Creek West
10	124.75	Upland forest	Eagle Creek West

The Office of Land Stewardship currently manages about 2,000 acres of natural area which offset the effects of climate change in Indianapolis. Restoring land to native flora from turf, agriculture, or other uses has another big benefit for the climate. Turf is mowed many times throughout the growing season, and agricultural fields require the repeated use of gas-powered machinery. The link between fuel combustion and climate change is well established and the Office of Land Stewardship is converting as much land as possible to uses that require less gas for maintenance. To date, we have transitioned nearly 720 acres from turf or agriculture to native woodlands, prairies, and wetlands. That amounts to roughly 1.2-2.8 million pounds of carbon that is no longer entering the atmosphere every year.





Paul Ruster Park - Turf to Prairie Habitat



Holliday Park - Shady Turf to Woodland Habitat (Summer & Fall flowers)



Raymond Park - Turf to Sedge Meadow Prairie

## POLLINATOR PROTECTION

There are many threats to pollinator species (think bees, butterflies, and moths), and the loss of habitat from development or invasive species ranks near the top. No organization is doing more to reverse this trend in Indianapolis than Land Stewardship. Not only do the areas we protect offer invaluable habitat for pollinators, but we are also converting fallow landscapes to species-rich pollinator plantings and enhancing edge habitat with native flora that supports pollinator populations. Visit one of our wetlands or prairies in the summer, and you will see an amazing array of butterflies, beetles, hummingbirds, and bees. Or journey deep into the woods and discover how our native oak trees support a diversity of beneficial insects!



Pollinators at work (clockwise from top left): tiger swallowtail butterfly, ruby-throated hummingbird, honeybee, and hummingbird clearwing moth.



## SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Indianapolis is home to a number of species of plants and wildlife classified as rare, threatened, or endangered. These include the Kirtland's snake, Henslow's sparrow, Northern leopard frog, and American ginseng, all of which depend on higher quality natural areas with minimal disturbance. Much of what we do is converting landscapes to native flora and protecting our remaining natural areas is aimed at preserving the conditions these species need to survive. Consider, 43% of threatened or endangered plants and animals in the U.S. live in or depend on wetlands. We are working hard to restore these conditions, as well as those found in our native forests and grasslands, to preserve as many species as possible.

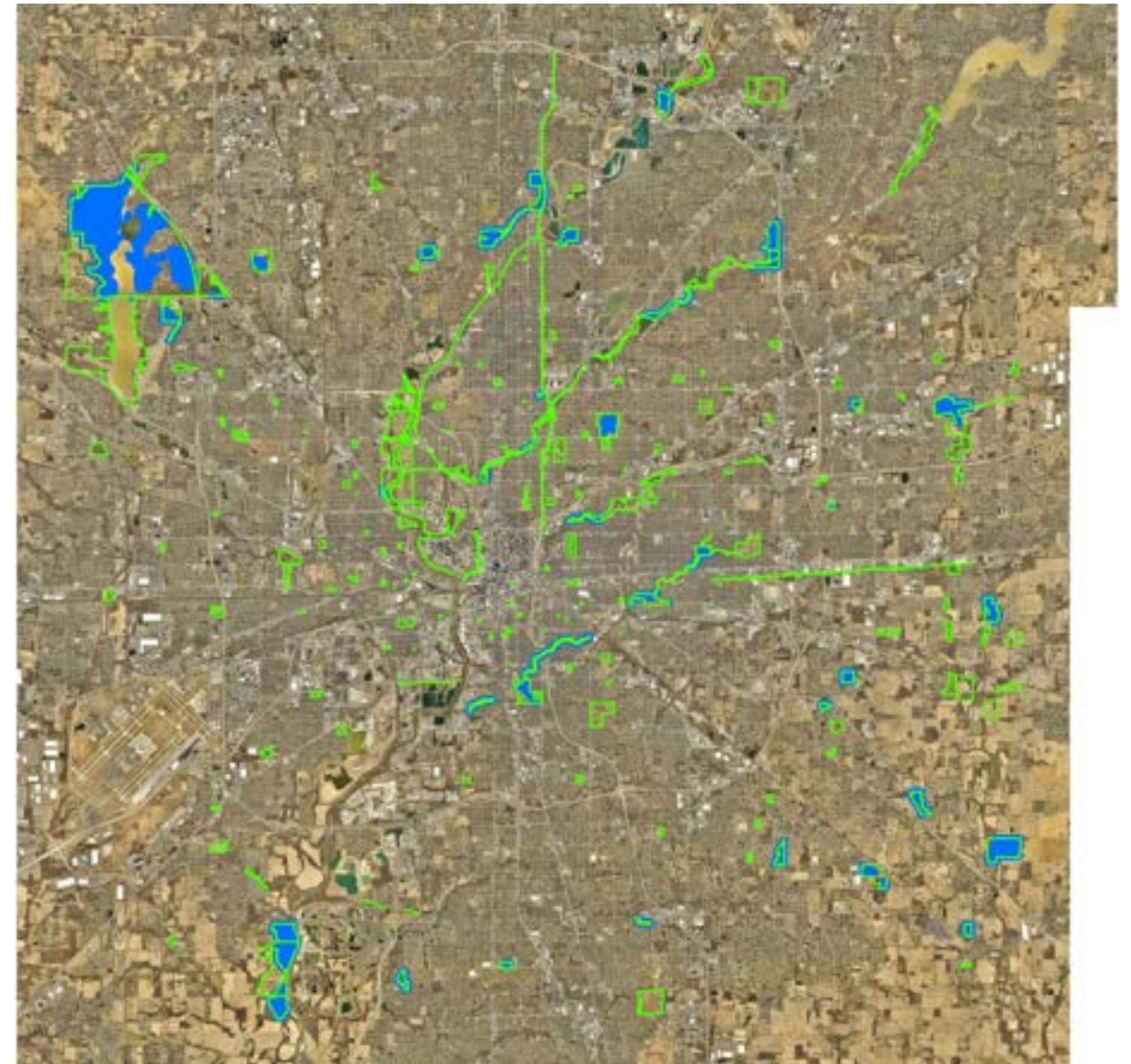


Photo courtesy of Jim Horton

Species of special concern (clockwise from top left): Cerulean warbler, goldenseal, Northern leopard frog, and Kirtland's snake.

## PROJECT TRACKING

A geographic information system (GIS) and global positioning system devices (GPS) are two types of tools used to monitor progress and develop management plans. Daily reporting is also essential as crews work in various natural areas nearly every day. The relative size and distribution of the park areas under Land Stewardship management are shown on the map below. The blue highlighted areas receive cyclical management every 1-3 years. The main emphasis is on invasive species control and natural area regeneration.



**2022 Ecological Restoration: Active Management – 17% of the Parkland**

**Green** – Indianapolis Parks and Greenways (11,608 acres)

**Blue** – Land Stewardship Service Areas (37 park locations, 2018 acres)



## LAND STEWARDSHIP – PROGRESS OVER 30 YEARS

The first restoration in Indianapolis parks started in an old agricultural field at Eagle Creek Park in the spring of 1992. School students planted acorns in a 13-acre field in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. From this small start, Land Stewardship's management areas have grown to 2,018 acres in 37 parks today.

A closer look at the numbers shows that Land Stewardship:

- Increased wetlands from 2.5 acres to 44 acres
- Increased planted prairies from 12 acres to 300 acres
- Increased woodland restoration from 160 acres to 1526 acres
- Increased the number of invasive plant species managed from a few to 70
- Converted more than 735 acres from turf and agriculture to native plant communities

### How Natural Areas Are Managed

- **Adaptive Management**
  - Establish conservation targets
  - Short & long-term goals
  - Broad level mapping & monitoring of managed areas
  - Wildlife management & research
  - Review & update management plans
- **Invasive Species Control**
  - Herbicide application
  - Fecon machine
- **Native Plantings**
  - Grasses, sedges, & wildflower plugs
  - Containerized shrubs and trees
  - Dormant season seeding



Photo courtesy of Jim Horton



## RECREATION IN NATURAL SETTINGS

It is essential that recreational use be planned for the varying types and conditions of natural areas. Planned recreational use per land type is also a necessity so there is compatibility among the different active and passive user groups.

The majority of surveyed respondents (within a group polled by the IDNR – Division of Outdoor Recreation) prefer self-directed, passive, recreational opportunities such as walking, hiking and jogging. In response to this need, Indianapolis places much emphasis on managing a proportional quantity of the park land for passive recreation. Natural areas are particularly suited for passive recreation.

Numerous studies show that passive recreation in natural areas has many health benefits such as reducing stress and blood pressure. Activities like hiking, birdwatching, and nature observation are increasingly popular ways to experience the natural environment and connect to the landscape. Indianapolis parks provide residents and visitors access to some of the highest-quality passive recreation in the region. Natural areas are essential for a healthy community.

Properly managed natural areas can provide many types of recreation opportunities to park users. Planned recreational use (individuals or groups) broadly fits into two categories relating to natural area land cover:

### Passive

- Walking, hiking, jogging, running
- Relaxation, contemplation
- Nature observation and education
- Forest Bathing (spiritual renewal)

### Active

- Sports related (mountain biking, marathons, disc golf, outdoor adventure events, cross country skiing)
- Other (challenge/teams initiative course, fitness course, canoeing – sailing, geocaching)

Natural areas in parks and greenways were classified by GIS analysis which is paired with the recommended recreational uses. These are general outlines. Variables in site size, topography and restoration management goals help determine the capacity for quality, sustainable, recreation opportunities.

Passive and active recreation activities for the various land cover categories (approved on a site-by-site basis only):

### Woodland - Old-second growth

- Walking, hiking, jogging, running
- Relaxation and contemplation
- Nature observation and education

### Woodland – Disturbed woods

- Walking, hiking, jogging, running
- Relaxation and contemplation
- Nature observation and education
- Sports related (mountain biking, marathons, disc golf, outdoor adventure events)
- Other – Geocaching, orienteering

### Open Natural Area

- Walking, hiking, jogging or running
- Relaxation and contemplation
- Nature observation and education
- Sports related (mountain biking, marathons, disc golf, outdoor adventure events)
- Other – Geocaching, orienteering

### Water

- Streams and Rivers
- Canoeing/Kayaking/Motorboat related
- Fishing
- Nature observation and education
- **Open Wetlands - constructed and natural**
  - Nature observation and education
- **Reservoir/Ponds**
  - Canoeing/Kayaking/Sailing
  - Fishing
  - Nature observation and education



The majority of uses recommended for natural areas are forms of passive and self-directed recreation. However, active recreation activities are also welcomed in natural areas. Careful planning is required so people can enjoy the varied recreation that occurs in natural surroundings. Quiet and uncrowded surroundings allow park visitors to move at their own pace and listen to birds and other sounds of nature. Natural areas that have an active recreation use are generally less well-suited for walking and nature observation since more attention has to be directed to being safe (e.g., stepping off the trail to let fast moving bikes past).

Conversely, if too many hikers were to use mountain bike trails in times of heavy use, this would interfere with the mountain bike recreational experience. Sports events are sometimes planned and held within natural areas and during that time activities like bird watching or a family walk with children, the elderly or their pets are not recommended.

Planning for adequate space and separation for the various forms of recreation is an ongoing challenge. The amount of available park land is lagging because of the growing population and increasing demand for outdoor activities.

### PLANNED ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION 2022 – 2025

Expansion of the ecological restoration program for the next five years is priority based. It often comes down to what do we (citizens/park users) have to lose or what does the community has to gain. In the “lose” category are core habitats associated with remnant forest fragments large enough to support rare endangered, threatened or species of concern. These higher quality natural areas, once they become degraded due to lack of management, become very difficult to restore to past ecological integrity/function. Second, restorations on large agricultural areas that are managed as reforestation plots, wetland sites or prairie habitat are a medium priority. One such area is the 56-acre prairie/successional area at Eagle Creek Park converted from agriculture fields. This area now has the Henslow’s sparrow, a state endangered bird, breeding on site. Lastly are the small “turf to native” plant conversions and linear greenway sites that incorporate riparian enhancements to provide pollinator habitat while also having a positive effect on ecosystem service delivery like clean air and water.

### PRIORITIES FOR PARK NATURAL AREAS ECOLOGICALLY MANAGED

Since it’s inception in 1993 Indy Land Stewardship initially started with a 6-acre reforestation project at Eagle Creek Park. Nearly 30 years later the area under ecological management has grown to 2018 acres, or 17% of the total area managed as public land by the city (11,608 acres). The priority has always been to protect the biological diversity of the highest quality natural areas. These irreplaceable forested tracts are relics of what was once the great Eastern Deciduous Forest expanse. These protected areas host naturally occurring wildflowers, shrubs and understory species that support endangered rare and threatened wildlife - those natural areas are ranked (DNR) globally rare and threatened. Other priorities are large areas formerly cleared for a variety of reasons including agriculture, but once restored to natural plant communities can also provide critical habitat and other ecosystem services like stormwater management and enhanced opportunity for passive recreation (birding, nature photography...). The land area under ecological management is directly proportional to the budget apportioned to Indy Land Stewardship from the storm utility fund. Even though grant opportunities have afforded many of the initial funding support, without the hardwired annual budget for invasive species control and other stressors the gains in biotic diversity will recede without cyclical maintenance. Below are the numbers for the types of land area managed, as tracked in the GIS.

### PARK LAND AREA ECOLOGICALLY MANAGED – INDY LAND STEWARDSHIP

- **Woods:** 1526.0 Acres
- **Wetlands:** 44.0 Acres
- **Wildflower Meadows Habitat:** 321.0 Acres
- **Native Plant Landscaping:** 0.3 Acres
- **Reforestation:** 124.0 Acres
- **Green Infrastructure:** 2.7 Acres
- **GRAND TOTAL:** 2018 Acres

### PARK LANDCOVER INVENTORY

The landcover tracking is done with a GIS by hand digitizing polygons over high-resolution aerial photography. Many different types of park features are included, some of which are trails, creeks/rivers/ponds/reservoirs, buildings/roads, woods and turf, playgrounds and even sand traps in golf courses and much more. The digitizing work is relatively accurate but there is a margin of error. Currently there are well over 6,000 individual shapes for the many categories/subcategories. There is a time lag when new aeriels become available, then time is taken by a dedicated Indy Land Stewardship staff to update the changes in the GIS landcover layer. The future updates yet to compile the acreage are shown as “Other”.

Below are the approximant land area numbers for the landcover types under traditional management; mowing of turf, rough or finish cut, but also many areas are not under direct cyclical management such as wooded tracts unless something is turned in as a problem – i.e., trees that are deemed hazardous next to trails, a road or building, or the report of rubbish illegally dumped. Citizens wanting to report problems on park land are instructed to report RequestIndy or the Mayor’s Action Center, or the Park Manager.

- Woods:** 2166 Acres
- Turf:** 2023 Acres
- Water:** 1850 Acres
- Golf Courses:** 1782 Acres
- Open Vegetative (non-turf):** 1052 Acres
- Impervious Surfaces:** 474 Acres
- Wetlands:** 44 Acres
- Athletic / Playgrounds...:** 47 Acres
- Gardens / Landscaping:** 33 Acres
- Other:** 119 Acres
- GRAND TOTAL:** 9590 Acres





FUTURE EXPANSION OF NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT

It is difficult to predict where grants and other funding will be successful but potential expansion of ecological restoration should be based on priority. Care must be taken to not relax the management of existing natural areas when taking on more locations in parks and greenways. The sustainability of efforts, as ecological restoration is extended beyond the 17% of parks and greenways currently managed, needs to consider the following:

- A long-term budget for to maintain/expand restorative management to maximize the benefit for people and wildlife
- Design parks to include the recreational space for the most popular use (where appropriate), passive recreation - ecological restoration enhances that use
- Extend traditional park maintenance operations to include invasive species control to previously unmanaged areas to increase public access and help protect core managed natural areas.
- Introduction of new revenue streams - carbon market program (in-progress), etc.
- Quality of life, biosphere sustainability and enhanced recreation are directly related to natural landcover, a keystone need for present and future funding investment.

CONCLUSION

The City of Indianapolis - Marion County, Department of Parks and Recreation and Department of Public Works continues to support natural area restoration across the county. While much work is left to be done, the Land Stewardship office, the City's many support staff, skilled ecological restoration contractors and planning consultants all work to improve the recreational experience in Indianapolis.

Protecting and managing natural areas increases the quality of life by providing an enriched passive and active recreational opportunity. Natural areas and the natural system are providing the only source of clean water and air. As this plan reaches maturity in 2027, more wildlife and habitats will be available for the growing generation of recreational users. Thank you to the City of Indianapolis, DPW - Division of Stormwater and all the partners and funding organizations that make ecological restoration work possible.

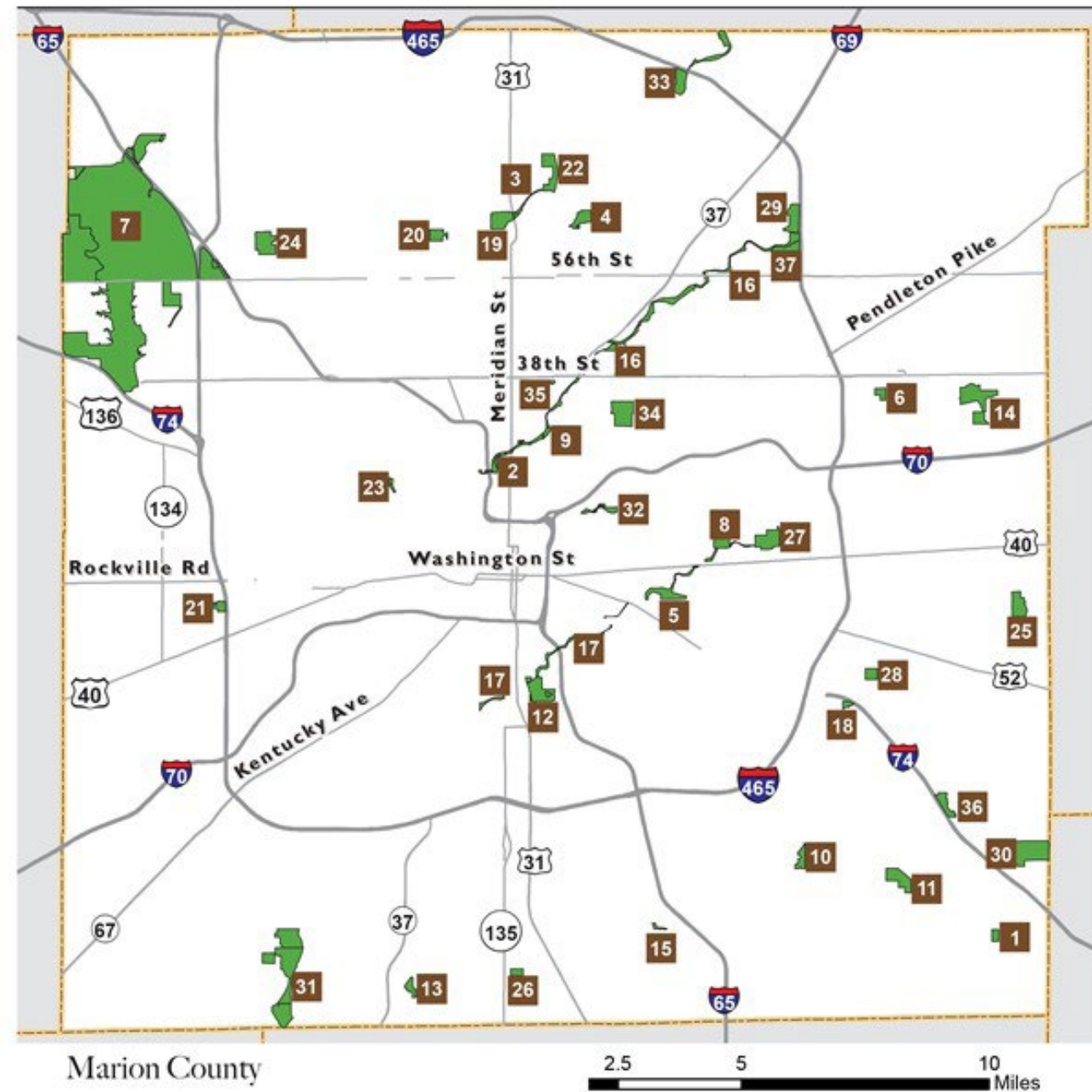
Office of Land Stewardship  
Property Features  
WWW.INDY.GOV/LANDSTEWARDSHIP

☐ seasonal

	Features				Ecotypes					
Property Name (year acquired) and Location	Trails	Bathrooms	Parking	Handicap Accessible	Upland Forest	Forested Wetland	Open Wetland	Open Space (Turf)	Grassland (Prairie)	Water
Acton Park (2004), 7400 Acton Rd										
Barton Park (2046), 2334 N Capital Ave										
Bickman Educational Trail Park (2005), 6399 N Meridian St										
Broad Ripple Park (1946), 1500 Broad Ripple Ave										
Christian Park (1921), 4125 English Ave										
Dubarry Park (1967), 3698 Dubarry Rd										
Eagle Creek Park (1962), 7940 W 56th St										
Ellenberger Park (1911), 5301 E St. Clair St										
Fall Creek & 30th Park (1910), 2525 E Fall Creek Pkwy N Dr										
Five Points & Edgewood Park (2011), 5250 Five Points Rd										
Franklin Township Community Park (1970), 8801 E Edgewood Ave										
Garfield Park (1873), 2450 S Shelby St										
Glenns Valley Nature Park (1991), 8015 Bluff Rd										
Grassy Creek Regional Park (1971), 30510 E 30th St										
Gray Park (1999), Southport Rd & Sherman Dr										
Greenway - Fall Creek (1909-2000)										
Greenway - Pleasant Run										
Hamover North Park (2006), 7731 Sebastian Pl										
Holiday Park (1916), 6349 Spring Hill Rd										
Juan Solomon Park (1971), 6100 Grandview Dr										
Kramm Park (1972), 605 S High School Rd										
Marrett Park (1943), 7250 N College Ave										
Municipal Gardens Memorial Grove (1908), 1831 N Lafayette Rd										
Northwestway Park (1957), 5253 W 62nd St										
Paul Butler Park (1970), 11300 E Prospect St										
Perry Park (1901), 451 E Shop St										
Pleasant Run Golf Course (1922), 601 N Arlington Ave										
Raymond Park (1971), 8300 Raymond St										
Skiles Test Nature Park (1974), 6828 Fall Creek Rd										
Southeastway Park (1961), 5624 S Carroll Rd										
Southeastway Park (1961), 8400 S Main Rd										
Spades Park (1898), 5800 Nowland Ave										
Town Run Trail Park South (2000), 5325 E 96th St										
Washington Park (1923), 8130 E 30th St										
Watson Road Bird Preserve (1925), 900 Watson Rd										
Wolf Run Park (2013), 50050 E Thompson Rd										
Woolfens Gardens (1909), 6800 E Fall Creek Pkwy N Dr										



## Land Stewardship Managed Areas



**Legend**

- Managed Parks
- Property ID Number



## Office of Land Stewardship Property Location Key

- |                                                             |                                                             |                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Acton Park<br>7400 Acton Rd                              | 14. Grassy Creek Regional Park<br>10510 E 30th St           | 28. Raymond Park<br>8300 Raymond St                 |
| 2. Barton Park<br>2334 N Capital Ave                        | 15. Gray Park<br>Southport Rd & Sherman Dr                  | 29. Skiles Test Nature Park<br>6828 Fall Creek Rd   |
| 3. Blickman Educational Trail Park<br>6399 N Meridian St    | 16. Greenway - Fall Creek                                   | 30. Southeastway Park<br>5624 S Carroll Rd          |
| 4. Broad Ripple Park<br>1500 Broad Ripple Ave               | 17. Greenway - Pleasant Run                                 | 31. Southwestway Park<br>8400 S Mann Rd             |
| 5. Christian Park<br>4125 English Ave                       | 18. Hanover North Park<br>7731 Sebastian Place              | 32. Spades Park<br>1800 Nowland Ave                 |
| 6. Dubarry Park<br>3698 Dubarry Rd                          | 19. Holliday Park<br>6349 Spring Mill Rd                    | 33. Town Run Trail Park South<br>5325 E 96th St     |
| 7. Eagle Creek Park<br>7840 W 56th St                       | 20. Juan Solomon Park<br>6100 Grandview Dr                  | 34. Washington Park<br>3130 E 30th St               |
| 8. Ellenberger Park<br>5301 E St. Clair St                  | 21. Krannert Park<br>605 S High School Rd                   | 35. Watson Road Bird Preserve<br>900 Watson Rd      |
| 9. Fall Creek & 30th Park<br>2925 E Fall Creek Pkwy NDr     | 22. Marott Park<br>7350 N College Ave                       | 36. Wolf Run Park<br>10050 E Thompson Rd            |
| 10. Five Points & Edgewood Park<br>5750 Five Points Rd      | 23. Municipal Gardens Memorial Grove<br>1831 N Lafayette Rd | 37. Woollens Gardens<br>6800 E Fall Creek Pkwy N Dr |
| 11. Franklin Township Community Park<br>8801 E Edgewood Ave | 24. Northwestway Park<br>5253 W 62nd St                     |                                                     |
| 12. Garfield Park<br>2450 S Shelby St                       | 25. Paul Ruster Park<br>11300 E Prospect St                 |                                                     |
| 13. Glens Valley Nature Park<br>8015 Bluff Rd               | 26. Perry Park<br>451 E Stop 11                             |                                                     |
|                                                             | 27. Pleasant Run Golf Course<br>601 N Arlington Ave         |                                                     |





## 4.2 INDY LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN

### FORWARD – INDY LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN

This plan is in use currently as a template for land acquisition for Indy Parks with tracts added by willing sellers to expand parks and greenways. Land parcels acquired in 2022 at Grassy Creek Regional Park were denoted in this plan as key to fulfill the needs of for the growing community before buildout anticipated before 2050 in the City of Indianapolis – Marion County.

The maps associated with this plan and its adoption, will be incorporated in The Comprehensive Plan for Indianapolis and Marion County, approved by the Metropolitan Development Commission. The plan is considered draft and subject to change as more information becomes available.

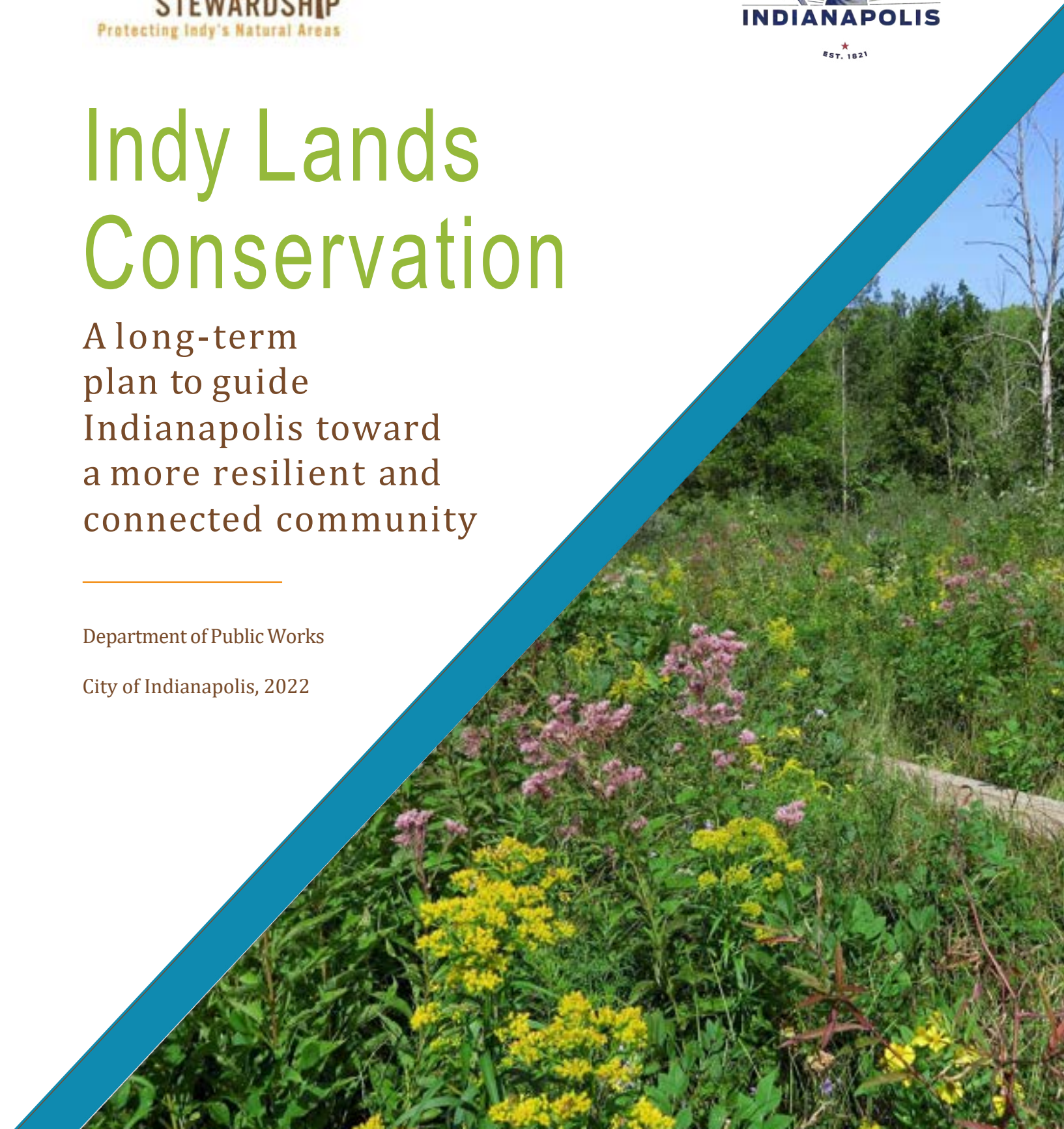


# Indy Lands Conservation

A long-term  
plan to guide  
Indianapolis toward  
a more resilient and  
connected community

Department of Public Works

City of Indianapolis, 2022





# Purpose Statement

This plan represents an ambitious vision. The effort to provide the City of Indianapolis with park and natural areas proportional to its population will involve the conservation of more than 6000 acres. As such, its achievement is beyond the scope of the Office of Land Stewardship, and the plan’s future necessarily involves the support of the city’s larger, planning-oriented departments. This document can be used internally to guide the future development of property in Marion County in a manner that prioritizes the conservation of the most critical areas identified herein. This document is currently targeted for use by the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Metropolitan Development.

# Acknowledgements

The Office of Land Stewardship thanks Eco Logic Restoration and Empower Results for their work in assembling this plan and helping build support for it. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Metropolitan Development, and Department of Public Works for their assistance and contributions to its development.

[www.indy.gov/landstewardship](http://www.indy.gov/landstewardship)



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Guiding Principles  
Primary Goals

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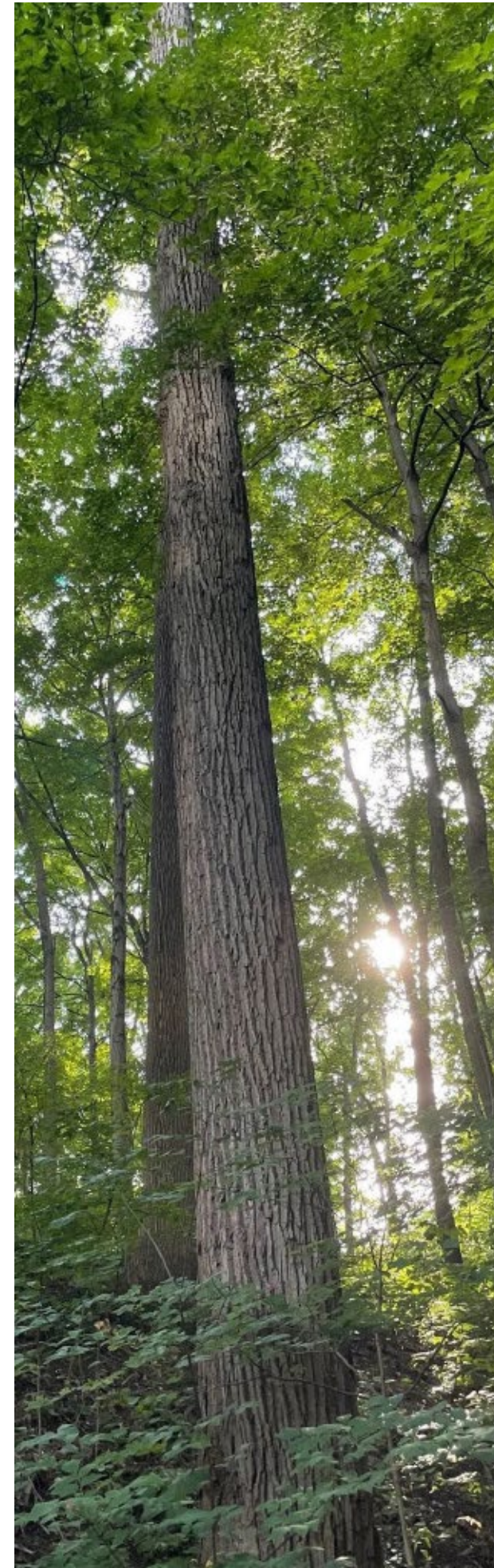
Highlights  
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## Part 3: Strategy & Alignment

Major Plan Alignments  
Related General Initiatives  
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## 1

# Introduction

Purpose  
Guiding Principles  
Primary Goals

## Introduction

### Purpose

As the city of Indianapolis continues to grow in the coming decades, plans must be made to secure the lands necessary for recreation, preservation of greenspace and existing natural areas, tree mitigation, wetland restoration, and carbon sequestration. These features will determine the quality of life available to the city's future residents as well its ability to adapt to the conditions presented by a changing climate.

This plan, developed by the Indianapolis Office of Land Stewardship, is a first step in guiding the land conservation process necessary to secure a healthy future. It lays out a parcel-level conceptual plan designed to accomplish a critical set of goals. The goals grow out of a set of guiding principles that address the most pressing concerns for the city within the scope of the Office of Land Stewardship's work.

### Guiding Principles

1. Respond to population pressures
2. Address lack of recreational properties
3. Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
4. Create communities where people want to live, and nature thrives
5. Improve climate change resiliency and stormwater management
6. Showcase a vision that inspires action

### Primary Goals

1. Provide a strategic blueprint for expansion of the park system throughout Marion County
2. Connect and expand the existing greenways to facilitate increased bicycle and pedestrian commerce
3. Conserve remaining woodlands and other natural areas to preserve our natural heritage and support wildlife habitat and biodiversity corridors
4. Conserve large blocks of floodplain lands suitable for reforestation to improve air quality, reduce flooding, provide for tree mitigation and carbon sequestration, and increase the overall canopy cover in the county. Reforestation of these conservation areas will be a key component of an eventual plan to make Indianapolis a carbon-neutral city
5. Provide lands for suitable for wetland restoration, storm water management, and flood mitigation
6. Provide for additional opportunities for people to connect to nature including additional interpretive centers, naturalist services, and integrated nature-based curriculum with Indianapolis Public Schools in areas with lower green space density
7. Engage the development in community ecosystem service-oriented planning and design

The parcels included in this plan connect to each other and to existing infrastructure to provide a blueprint for bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the county and to surrounding communities. Additional benefits of these conservation areas include the incorporation of the current and restored native plant communities into the city's green infrastructure plan to provide storm water infiltration, floodwater storage, and stormwater treatment.



# Introduction

This plan will also be a major component of the city's efforts to address climate change. First, it will be focused along existing drainages to preserve the floodways that will carry the storm water from ever-increasing extreme rainfall events that will be exacerbated by continuing development and the resulting increases in runoff. Preservation of these floodways will prevent the construction of vulnerable development and infrastructure that will be under increasing threat in a changing climate. Secondly, reforestation and restoration of wetland hydrology will increase carbon storage in both living plant material, as well as soil carbon in the saturated environment of restored wetlands. Finally, the preserved and restored canopy cover will help address the urban heat island which will be exacerbated by both an enlarging metropolitan footprint and increasing temperatures resulting from climate change.

This plan will also provide a critical link to nature for the citizens of central Indiana and especially the school children of Indianapolis, helping create and bolster connections to the natural

systems that make life possible. Further, learning about the biodiversity contained within these natural systems will foster respect and appreciation for the organisms that make up our natural communities. Several projects recommended in this plan carry the potential for new nature centers that could serve as classrooms to provide a custom nature-based curriculum developed for Indianapolis area students.

Many areas of the county have inadequate recreational properties to serve the growing population. By creating communities connected to nature and each other, this plan will address the need to provide the amenities that attract and maintain the vibrant workforce necessary to remain economically competitive. By showcasing the vision laid out by this plan, the city will both inspire the public support necessary to bring it to fruition and signal the business community that Indianapolis is committed to the 21st century economic development strategy of creating a community that is attractive to a talented workforce.



## 2

## Plan Overview

Highlights  
Project Areas



# Plan Overview

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

This ambitious plan utilizes individual parcels based on the degree to which they meet the goals outlined in the introduction. However, it is not intended to be viewed as a strict acquisition guide but, rather, as a framework for a conservation and resiliency vision. While some of these parcels represent irreplaceable remnant natural areas, there will be many alternative acquisition solutions to bring the longer corridors to fruition where exact parcels cannot be acquired, or easements cannot be secured. As a vision, it presents an opportunity to transform the city for the 21st Century, a Kessler-level legacy plan to create the needed **ACCESSIBILITY**, the desired **ENVIRONMENT**, and the critical **SYSTEMS** for the city to address the challenges of the future.

# Plan Overview

## Highlights

- **11 Project Areas** ranging from small additions to existing parks to long corridors of over 1,000 acres along streams
- These 11 projects total **around 6,670 acres** (67% of the 10,000 acre Open Space Plan goal)
- **Southwestway Park** becomes a large regional park on the order of magnitude of Eagle Creek Park
- **Connections are made to communities** inside and outside of Marion County such as Zionsville, Mooresville, Speedway, and Beech Grove
- Long corridors along Grassy Creek and Buck Creek will secure **parklands on the city's less developed east side** in anticipation of future growth.

The projects are ordered with the largest opportunities first. These projects may serve as priorities to jumpstart the overall effort with highly visible and impactful outcomes.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process





# Southwestway Park Expansion

## Overview

This expansion will turn Southwestway Park into a large regional park like Eagle Creek Park in scale. The expansion could include a new interpretive center focusing on the ecology of White River and the unique glacial and fluvial geomorphology of the park.

## Project Goals

- Includes a large acreage of agricultural fields suitable for reforestation, tree mitigation, and carbon sequestration. Low floodplain fields are also suitable for wetland mitigation.
- Provides ample land for an expanded trail system including a connection along White River to other Greenway trails and other amenities including athletic fields near Mann Road
- Provides access for paddling along a significant frontage of White River
- Includes large gravel pit lakes adapted to provide additional fishing and boating opportunities
- Includes a northwestern appendage that contains a greenway connection to large residential areas
- Includes a southwestern appendage that connects to the county line near Mooresville
- Additional oxbows on the east side of the river provide an opportunity to make a loop trail for local residents on the east side of White River

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

# Buck and Grassy Creek Greenway, Part 1

## Overview

This system of properties will connect several parks in the Buck Creek Watershed and create a network of trails for the rapidly growing southeastern section of the county. Gravel pit lakes could eventually be incorporated into the park to provide paddling and fishing opportunities.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Provides recreational opportunities and connectivity in a rapidly growing residential area of southeast Marion County by creating greenway connections between Wolf Run Park, Paul Ruster Park, Southeastway Park, and the town of Acton
- Acquisition of floodplain fields provides opportunities for tree mitigation, wetland restoration, stormwater management, and carbon sequestration
- Preserves remaining high-quality woodlands along Buck Creek and Wolf Run



## Buck and Grassy Creek Greenway, Part 2

### Overview

This greenway will connect the Grassy Creek area on the East Side, providing recreational opportunities and amenities to an underserved area. A greenway path that connects north to Pendleton Pike could be part of the plan. To the south, it will connect to the Buck Creek Greenway described above. An interpretive nature center, including a classroom geared toward elementary age children, could be developed at the site along with a curriculum developed in conjunction with Indianapolis Public Schools for introducing youth to different aspects of the natural world on a regular basis. Farmland in the project area could be preserved for community gardens and larger-scale community-supported agriculture.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

### Project Goals

- Provides a north-south greenway connection through the east side of Marion County
- Includes a potential nature center location to establish a focus on environmental education for K-12 students
- Provides acquisition of floodplain agricultural fields suitable for tree mitigation, wetland restoration, stormwater management, and carbon sequestration
- Provides upland agricultural fields for potential community-supported agriculture

## Upper Eagle Creek Park and Greenway

### Overview

These conservation areas will connect Eagle Creek Park north to the Boone County line where they will connect to the Zionsville trail system. This will further expand the recreational impact of Eagle Creek Park and improve the environmental quality of the corridor along Eagle Creek through reforestation.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

### Project Goals

- Includes floodplain agricultural fields suitable for tree mitigation, wetland restoration, and carbon sequestration
- Provides opportunities for agritourism (adjacent to Trader's Point Creamery)
- Includes URJ Goldman Union Camp Institute Lands if they become available
- Protects Eagle Creek Reservoir water quality (part of Indianapolis' drinking water supply)
- Expands greenway system



# Eastside Flatwoods Park

## Overview

This park incorporates the largest remaining unprotected flatwoods in Marion County. This high-quality woodland is an excellent representation of one of the dominant historic plant communities of Marion County. An interpretive trail and boardwalk could be routed through this seasonally wet woodland.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Adjacent agricultural fields provide reforestation opportunities for tree mitigation and carbon credits and enhance the ecologic footprint of the existing flatwoods. They also provide opportunities for ball field or play areas
- Areas of wetland soils are suitable for forested wetland restoration and thus stormwater management

# Davis Creek Park

## Overview

This stream corridor starts near the intersection of I-465 and I-70 on the southwest side of Indianapolis. It will serve as much needed greenspace in this industrial area and will provide recreational opportunities for residents isolated by interstate highway corridors.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Provides space for loop trail
- Provides land for reforestation
- Provides a connection to areas outside of the I-465 corridor through Southwestway Park



# Lick Creek Greenway

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Overview

This greenway will connect the southeast side with White River through easements and conservation of corridor properties. It will connect to Southwestway Park along White River on the southwest side of the city, following Lick Creek to the East Side where it will connect to the National Road Trail in the Irvington area.

## Project Goals

- Provides multiple new greenway connections
- Includes existing community and athletic parks
- Connects the Beech Grove Community into the Indianapolis Greenways system
- Preserves urban woodlands in the Beech Grove area

# Little Eagle Creek Greenway

## Overview

This suburban corridor will connect Northwestway Park along Little Eagle Creek to the Eagle Creek Greenway just south of Speedway. It will provide recreational opportunities for disadvantaged and underserved neighborhoods on the west side of Indianapolis while connecting the Town of Speedway to the Indianapolis Greenway System.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Connects Northwestway Park to Eagle Creek Greenway along Little Eagle Creek
- Connects the town of Speedway to the Indy Greenways system
- Connects residential, commercial, and retail districts on the west side (Lafayette Square area)
- Provides access to the Indy Greenways system to communities on the west side
- Provides connections and recreational opportunities to disadvantaged communities on the west side of Indianapolis



# Raymond Park Flatwoods Addition

## Overview

Conservation of this high-quality flatwoods across the street from Raymond Park Middle School will add to the significance of the existing flatwoods in the park and protect critical natural infrastructure.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Preserves a high-quality flatwoods and sustains its stormwater capacity
- Provides an opportunity to expand the existing loop trail across the street

# Sodalis Connections

## Overview

This area of woodland and agricultural fields could be connected through the airport mitigation grounds to Sodalis Nature Park to make a longer trail for walking and nature observation easily accessible to Mooresville and Plainfield residents and well as those who reside in the southwest corner of Marion County.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Primitive park with a parking lot and trailhead for passive recreation such as hiking and birdwatching
- Agriculture fields could be reforested to expand the habitat and ecosystem service impacts of the airport mitigation grounds and Sodalis Nature Park



# Krannert Addition

## Overview

This partially wooded property across High School Road from Krannert Park will provide an opportunity for nature study and the placement of a fitness trail in this dense residential area.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Expands the size of Krannert Park
- Provides an opportunity for passive recreation
- Preserves much needed canopy for climate change mitigation efforts

## Overview

Many ..... expand the ecological impact of Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park and the Upper Fall Creek corridor which includes Woollen's Gardens Nature Preserve, Upper Fall Creek Park, and Skiles Test Park. Some of the facilities on site may be able to be repurposed to service outdoor education for the nearby Lawrence Township Schools.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Project Goals

- Increases the preserved land in the Fall Creek Corridor and provides connectivity between existing parks and preserves
- Provides additional recreational land on the growing northeast side
- May serve as an outdoor learning facility for local schools





## Strategy & Alignment

Major Plan Alignments  
Related General Initiatives  
Priority Overlays

## Strategy & Alignment

### Major Plan Alignments

There are many existing City of Indianapolis plans and initiatives that align with the implementation of this land conservation plan. Indeed, it can serve as a tactical strategy for achieving and even exceeding both specific goals and general aims established in these related plans, initiatives, and standards. Additional alignments may be uncovered as this plan is incorporated into other planning processes.

### THRIVE

Indy's Plan for Community Resilience + Sustainability (2019). Objectives met or exceeded under this plan:

- NR:1A: proactive removal of invasive species in parks along greenways (ongoing)
- NR:1B: increase green spaces to improve stormwater infiltration and ensure appropriate ongoing maintenance (ongoing)
- NR:1D: plant 30,000 additional native trees by 2025 to increase canopy, reduce runoff and mitigate against the urban heat (exceeded)

### White River Vision Plan

The White River Vision Plan identified Southwestway Park as a key focus area for improving access to and education about the river and the systems that support it. This plan provides a number of considerable improvements and

opportunities in addition to nearly 950 new acres.

- Large Areas of agricultural land are slated for reforestation with custom woody plant lists for each soil group
- Gravel pit lakes become recreational lakes for boating and fishing
- Outwash soils underlain by sand and gravel may be used for regional bioretention and groundwater recharge
- New public facility areas can include a nature center focused on the White River, picnic areas, athletic fields, pond fishing, playgrounds, and educational pollinator wildflower plantings
- Potential partnership with private enterprises and local utilities to expand existing solar generation

### Commission on Environmental Sustainability

This conservation plan will address goals related to pollution reduction, open space protection, and green amenities for underserved communities as noted in the Commission's 2020 recommendations.

### Greenways Master Plan

Rough estimates of the mileage for the six stream corridor parks are below. These estimates include the length of the stream corridor and the connectors. They do not include potential trail facilities noted in each of the property descriptions below.

- Grassy-Buck Creek: 19.4 miles
- Lick Creek: 13.6 miles
- Little Eagle Creek: 8.1 miles
- Upper Eagle Creek: 3.72 miles
- Southwestway: 10.21 miles
- Davis Creek: 3.51 miles

### Open Space Plan

Indianapolis – Marion County Parks & Recreation



# Strategy & Alignment

## Related Initiatives

### Stormwater

- Indianapolis Stormwater Program
- Work that complements City NPDES MS4 requirements
  - Public Education & Involvement Metrics
  - Pollution load reduction estimates
  - Post-Construction BMP maintenance

### Public Space

- Public Space Vision: "...increase the amount of park land/open space by 10,000 acres so that a minimum of the total acres of Marion County is 10% park land/open space by 2030."
- Supplement Parks & Recreation Department minimum standards (12 acres per 1000 residents)

### Indy Moves Plan

Supports Greenways and Active Transportation capitol project categories

### Circle City Forward (Trails and Greenways)

Supports efforts on Grassy Creek Trail as well as additional greenway connections

### Climate Commitment

Restoration of floodplains and upland forests supports the city's many climate commitments, including:

- Climate Mayors
- Global Covenant of Mayors for

### Climate & Energy

- America Is All In
- U.S. Conference of Mayors: Climate Protection Agreement
- U.N. Race to Zero & Climate Ambition Alliance
- World Health Organization Health & Climate Change Urban Profile
- Thrive climate-related objectives noted above

### CAPRA Standards, National Recreation and Park Association

- "...provides quality assurance and quality improvement of accredited park and recreation agencies by providing agencies with a management system of best practices."
- City first accredited in 2003; next review is underconsideration for 2023
- Natural areas and expanded bike and pedestrian facilities contribute to quality of life and best practices standards
- Supports CAPRA Three Pillars: Health and Wellness, Equity, and Conservation

### Mayors Monarch Pledge

- The City's commitment to local initiatives that protect our pollinators
- Supported by habitat restoration and maintenance

## Priority Overlays

As stated, this plan's purpose is to help the City of Indianapolis conserve open lands and restore areas that can help contribute to stormwater management, build climate resiliency, and provide a host of other benefits both environmental and social.

Using available data, the following map set show where overlaps occur for floodplains, existing and future greenway expansion, brownfields, vacant lots, and equity factors.

# Social Vulnerability

The Thrive Indianapolis plan noted that, "(n)ational assessments of climate risk have repeatedly demonstrated that those who are the most vulnerable will be the ones most impacted by a changing climate" (Thrive Indianapolis, 2019, p. 18). In response, the City developed this Social Vulnerability data to illustrate which areas of the city are most in need of capital improvements to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. As discussed throughout, many of the measures that can assist in this process are carried forward by this conservation plan. The following map set helps explicate which of the proposed project areas address some of the factors that define social vulnerability, such as vulnerability to extreme temperatures and flooding, as well as support for no-vehicle households (i.e. greenway connections).

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



# Southwestway Park Expansion

As noted, an expanded Southwestway Park brings significant additions of floodplain acreage, which carries a variety of benefits: stormwater runoff storage, new tree canopy to aid in climate resiliency and habitat creation, and space for new new recreational opportunities. The park expansion also sits at the confluence of potential greenway extensions and can connect to the existing trail network within the current boundaries of Southwestway Park.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

# Buck and Grassy Creek Greenway, Part 1

Buck Creek (shown here) and Grassy Creek (below) are part of a common drainage system, and the preservation of the floodplain in this system offers a unique opportunity to build regional stormwater detention capacity, particularly on this less developed portion of the corridor (Grassy Creek to the north is more densely developed). Furthermore, the linear nature of this area can support considerable growth to the city’s greenway system as well as connect several existing park spaces into a common and continuous amenity.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



# Buck and Grassy Creek Greenway, Part 2

As with Buck Creek, the Grassy Creek section of this project area can establish a more robust drainage field, host additional greenway mileage, and connect existing park spaces. This includes bicycle and pedestrian connections to Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park near the northernmost point of the proposed conservation area. Furthermore, as seen in the Social Vulnerability map above, this project provides access to natural areas and park facilities to underserved communities.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

# Upper Eagle Creek Park and Greenway

Conserving the area north of Eagle Creek Park protects significant floodplain and the riparian zone surrounding Eagle Creek before it reaches the reservoir. This helps safeguard a major source of the city’s drinking water while improving stormwater capacity, expanding habitat, and supporting the city’s greenway infrastructure.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



# Eastside Flatwoods Park

This park will preserve the largest unprotected high-quality flatwoods remaining in Marion County. This pristine natural area contains several wetland depressions that store storm water and provide amphibian breeding habitat.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

# Davis Creek Park

Davis Creek Park would help build riparian buffers around smaller streams in order to lessen the impact of stormwater runoff. The proximity of this project area to the proposed Southwestway Park Expansion presents an opportunity to further expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The western portion of this conservation area is also listed as an abandoned property.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



# Lick Creek Greenway

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

The Lick Creek Greenway already exists in the City’s plans for expansion. This plan illustrates additional benefits of that expansion: floodplain acquisition and its associated stormwater benefits and some habitat restoration.

# Little Eagle Creek Greenway

Like Grassy Creek, this linear area provides access to park facilities in an underserved community. While not part of current plans for greenway expansion, the additional benefits of conserving this area could provide the basis for its consideration.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



# Raymond Park Flatwoods Addition

This remnant flatwoods will complement the high-quality flatwoods contained within Raymond Park. The depressional wetlands in this woodlot will continue to provide storm water storage.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

# Sodalis Connections

The park will expand upon an ecologically significant restoration and natural area associated with the Indianapolis Airport Mitigation Area and Sodalis Nature Park in neighboring Hendricks County. A nature trail could connect these properties to provide recreation for the residents of southwestern Marion County as well as for Mooresville and Plainfield residents.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



# Krannert Addition

This small park is in an underserved area of west-central Marion County. This additional acreage would enlarge the park and provide space for a short fitness trail.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

# Scout Camp at Fall Creek

This project area is well-situated to make a major greenway connection to Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park as well as protect valuable riparian buffer and wildlife habitat.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



## 4

## Impacts &amp; Vision

## Impacts &amp; Vision

## Impacts

Calculating the impacts of natural areas is an inexact science, and there are few models that provide a clear picture of the ecosystem services provided by Midwestern woodlands, floodplains, wetlands, and prairies.

That said, simply looking at a few of the acquisitions proposed in this plan provides a glimpse of the potential environmental benefits provided by the reforestation possible at those sites.

- **Southwestway reforestation:** 947 acres
- **Lick Creek Corridor reforestation:** 859 acres
- **Eagle Creek Extension reforestation:** 85 acres

Altogether, this provides 822,585 new trees (435 trees per acres).

These numbers can be further refined into floodplain and upland acreage

- Southwestway - 477 floodplain, 470 upland
- Buck/Grassy Creek - 289 floodplain, 570 Upland
- Upper Eagle Creek - 84 floodplain, 1 upland





# Impacts & Vision

## Vision - Purdue University Student Work

This is an ambitious, legacy-oriented plan, similar in scale to the Kessler Plan or the Sheridan Plan before that. Its purpose is to create the needed ACCESSIBILITY, the desired ENVIRONMENT, and the critical SYSTEMS that can help Indianapolis become a more resilient, connected, and attractive place to call home.

The implementation of this plan presents of myriad of exciting possibilities, some of which were explored when Land Stewardship was given the opportunity to work with students in the Landscape Architecture program at Purdue University. The analysis and visioning documents these students produced can be accessed via a Dropbox maintained by the Office of Land Stewardship. Together they provide a compelling picture of the environment that can grow from this plan.

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process



## Leadership & Funding



# Leadership & Funding

## Leadership

This plan was initiated by the Office of Land Stewardship and its contractors with Eco Logic Restoration Services. As a long-term (30+ year horizon) plan with relevance to the ongoing work of several City offices, it is expected that this conservation plan will eventually find adoption into larger City planning efforts. Parcel prioritization, funding negotiations, and other high-level management issues would become the domain of the office into which the plan is eventually adopted. The Department of Metropolitan Development, Department of Parks and Recreation, and Department of Public Works are all potential options for taking over the leadership of this plan.

## Funding

The lands outlined in this plan may be acquired through a variety of established land acquisition strategies, including donations, new development commitments, fair market purchase, bargain sales, life estates, conservation easements, and trail easements. In some cases, more than one of these strategies may be utilized on a single parcel of land, such as, first, the acquisition of a trail easement to facilitate connectivity followed by the eventual acquisition of the entire property for public usage or private, protected open space. Cooperation with the development community will be essential.

Additional funding may be available through a variety of programs, including

but not limited to:

Map(s) and document pending internal review and public process

## Conclusion

This plan is ambitious, will require incremental progress, and may take decades to complete. However, it is critical to the improvement of quality of life by providing the recreational land and non-motorized infrastructure that will make Indianapolis a more desirable community for all generations. This plan will be a crucial component of the 21st century economic development philosophy which seeks to create communities where people want to live and as a strategy for attracting and keeping employers that are seeking a vibrant workforce.

This plan is a necessary step to ensure Indianapolis has the resources to be a competitive and successful community in coming decades. It will exemplify the fact that environmental preservation is not only compatible with economic prosperity, it's an essential component of a successful economic strategy.

Finally, strategic land conservation is a cornerstone to maintaining a healthy and safe environmental future. The increasing urban sprawl, congestion, pollution, and risks associated with climate change need to be mitigated by protecting and restoring functional ecosystems for recreation and improved environmental quality. The parcels and areas identified in this plan were selected to ensure a safe and healthy future for Indianapolis, and the conservation goals of this plan should be pursued with urgency.



Department of Public Works  
City of Indianapolis, 2022



# 5

## LEVEL OF SERVICE AND EQUITY MAPPING



# 5.1 LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

Level of Service (LOS) standards matrix is an update to the framework developed as a part of the 2017 Comprehensive Master Plan. It documents the current and anticipated inventory for the City of Indianapolis and other providers who own, maintain or operate parkland, greenways, and amenities serving the community. These providers include the Indianapolis Department of Public Works, City of Lawrence, City of Beech Grove, City of Southport, Town of Speedway, Indiana Department of Transportation, Citizens Energy Group, State of Indiana, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, and others.

These recommendations are developed using National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines, recreation activity participation rates reported by the Sports and Facility Industry Association data for activities that occur in the United States and the Indianapolis area, community and stakeholder input, findings from the surveys and staff, and consulting team’s input. This information allowed recommendations to be customized to the city’s population.

These recommendations should be viewed as a guide to be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the situation and needs of the community. By applying these recommendations to the local population, gaps and surpluses in park and facility/amenity types are revealed and can support future capital investment decisions.

Based on this methodology, it is recommended that the City will need to add (in addition to what is currently under development) the following park acres, trail miles, and amenities in the next five years:

- 235 acres of Neighborhood Parks
  - 122 acres of Community Parks
  - 315 acres of Sports Complex Sites
  - 599 acres of Natural Resource Areas
  - 80 acres of Greenway / Boulevards
  - 89 miles of Paved and Unpaved Trails
  - 32 Picnic Shelters
  - 23 Basketball Courts
  - 29 Pickleball Courts
- 20 Rectangular Sports Fields
  - 5 Sand Volleyball Courts
  - 43 Playgrounds
  - 7 Off Leash Dog Parks
  - 6 Skate Parks
  - 2 Spray Pads
  - 3 Outdoor Pools
  - 576,898 SF of Indoor Recreation / Aquatic Center Space



Indianapolis-Marion County Park and Recreation Level of Service Standards

	2023 Inventory			Recommended Service Levels		2023 Needs		2028 Needs	
	Total Inventory	Current Service Level based upon population	Revised for Local Service Area	Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed	Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed	Meet Standard/ Need Exists	Additional Facilities/ Amenities Needed
PARK TYPES:									
Mini Parks	22.82	0.02 acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Neighborhood Parks	1,419.05	1.55 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	183	Need Exists	235	Need Exists	235
Community Parks	823.42	0.90 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	92	Need Exists	122	Need Exists	122
Regional Parks	5,447.09	5.95 acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Special Use Sites	507.66	0.55 acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Sports Complex	157.96	0.17 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	300	Need Exists	315	Need Exists	315
Golf Courses	1,790.35	1.96 acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Natural Resource Area	818.51	0.89 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	554	Need Exists	599	Need Exists	599
Historical and Cultural Features	2,303.71	2.52 acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Greenway/Boulevard	393.03	0.43 acres per	1,000	Need Exists	65	Need Exists	80	Need Exists	80
Total Park Acres	13,683.61	14.95 acres per	1,000						
OUTDOOR AMENITIES:									
Picnic Shelters	178.00	1.00 site per	5,142	Need Exists	25	Need Exists	32	Need Exists	32
Rectangular Fields	190.40	1.00 field per	4,807	Need Exists	13	Need Exists	20	Need Exists	20
Diamond Fields	150.00	1.00 field per	6,102	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Pickleball Courts	46.80	1.00 court per	19,558	Need Exists	26	Need Exists	29	Need Exists	29
Basketball Courts (Full and Half Courts)	112.00	1.00 court per	8,173	Need Exists	19	Need Exists	23	Need Exists	23
Tennis Courts	115.40	1.00 court per	7,932	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-	Meets Standard	-
Playgrounds	146.00	1.00 site per	6,269	Need Exists	37	Need Exists	43	Need Exists	43
Sand Volleyball	14.00	1.00 site per	65,381	Need Exists	4	Need Exists	5	Need Exists	5
Off Leash Dog Parks	9.00	1.00 site per	101,703	Need Exists	6	Need Exists	7	Need Exists	7
Skate Park	3.00	1.00 site per	305,110	Need Exists	6	Need Exists	6	Need Exists	6
Trails (Greenways and Soft Surfaces)	289.44	0.32 miles per	1,000	Need Exists	77	Need Exists	89	Need Exists	89
Spraypads	25.00	1.00 site per	36,613	Need Exists	1	Need Exists	2	Need Exists	2
Outdoor Pools	21.00	1.00 site per	43,587	Need Exists	2	Need Exists	3	Need Exists	3
INDOOR AMENITIES:									
Recreation/Aquatic Centers (Square Feet)	1,313,752	1.44 SF per person		Need Exists	516,910	Need Exists	576,898	Need Exists	576,898
					Square Feet		Square Feet		Square Feet



## 5.2 EQUITY MAPPING

Equity maps provide a visual depiction of the service area by mapping the level of service recommendations for each park and amenity type. These can provide a range of benefits for parks and recreation master planning processes, including:

- **Identifying disparities:** Equity mapping can help to identify disparities in access to parks and recreation resources across different demographic groups and geographic areas. This information can be used to inform planning decisions and prioritize investments in underserved communities.
- **Supporting data-driven decision making:** By providing data and evidence on park access and other relevant factors, equity mapping can help to support data-driven decision making in the master planning process. This can help to ensure that planning decisions are based on objective evidence and are responsive to the community's needs.
- **Engaging with the community:** Equity mapping can help to engage with community members and organizations in the planning process and can help to ensure that planning decisions are informed by local concerns and priorities. This can help to build trust and support for the planning process and promote more equitable outcomes.
- **Supporting grant applications:** Equity mapping can be a valuable tool for supporting grant applications for parks and recreation projects. By providing data and evidence of disparities in access to parks and recreation resources, equity mapping can help to demonstrate the need for investment in underserved communities.
- **Promoting equity and social justice:** Ultimately, equity mapping can help to promote equity and social justice in the parks and recreation planning process. By identifying disparities in access to parks and recreation resources and prioritizing investments in underserved communities, equity mapping can help to ensure that all members of the Indianapolis community have equitable access to the benefits of parks and recreation.



For this process, equity maps were developed for each of the following major assets:

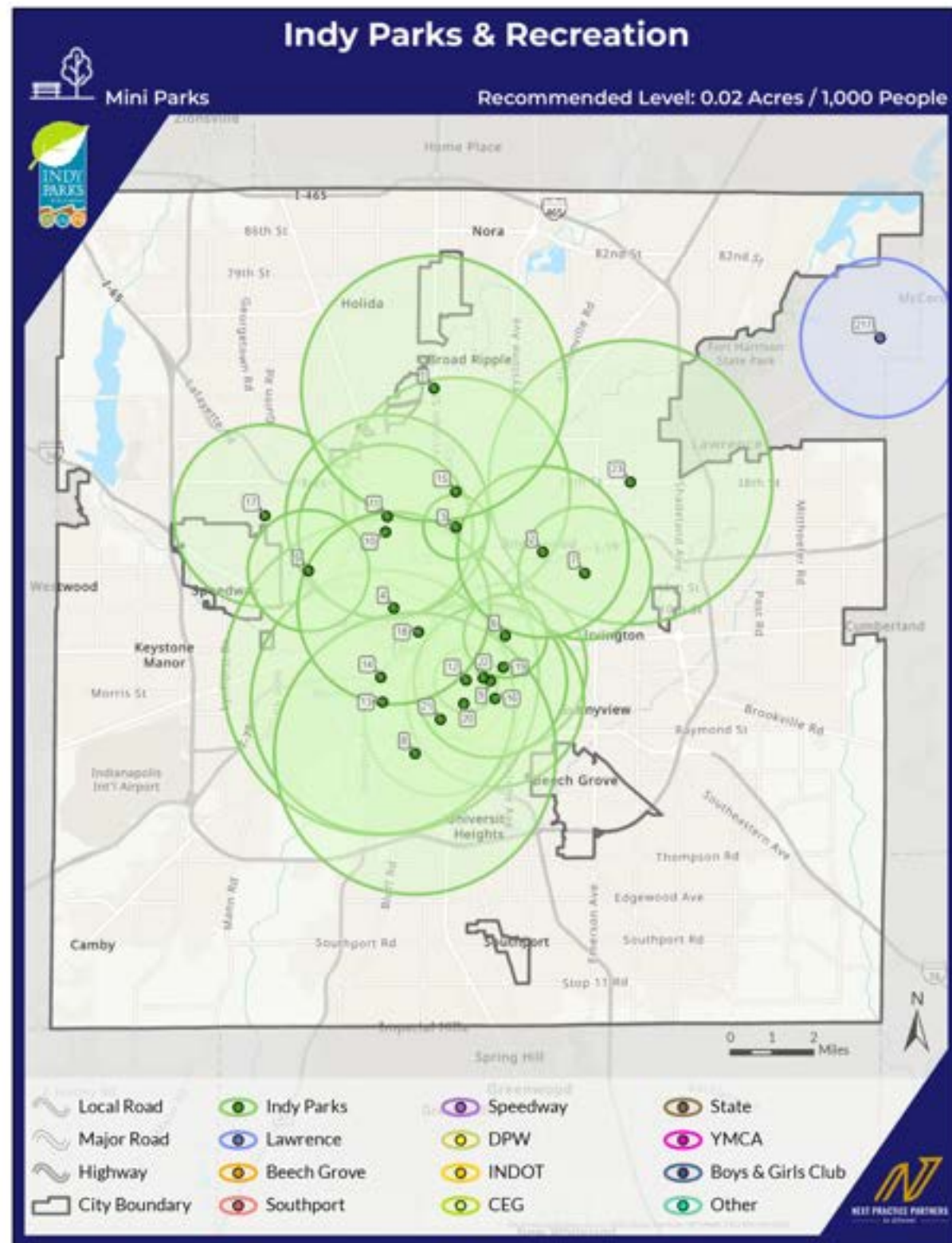
- |                                        |                                             |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| • Mini Parks                           | • Playgrounds                               |
| • Neighborhood Parks                   | • Basketball Courts                         |
| • Community Parks                      | • Diamond Fields                            |
| • Regional Parks                       | • Rectangular Fields                        |
| • Special Use Sites                    | • Pickleball Courts                         |
| • Sports Complex                       | • Sand Volleyball Courts                    |
| • Golf Courses                         | • Tennis Courts                             |
| • Natural Resource Area                | • Off Leash Dog Parks                       |
| • Historical and Cultural Features     | • Skate Parks                               |
| • Greenway / Boulevard                 | • Spray Pads                                |
| • Trails (Greenways and Soft Surfaces) | • Outdoor Pools                             |
| • Picnic Shelters                      | • Indoor Recreation / Aquatic Centers Space |

The shaded rings in the Equity Maps indicate the service level (i.e. the population being served by a specific park type/facility/amenity) and the center of the ring indicates the site location. The ring extends out from the center based on the service reach of a particular park, facility, or amenity based on the population density thus showcasing the gaps or overlaps in access for each park or amenity type and enabling more data driven decision making.

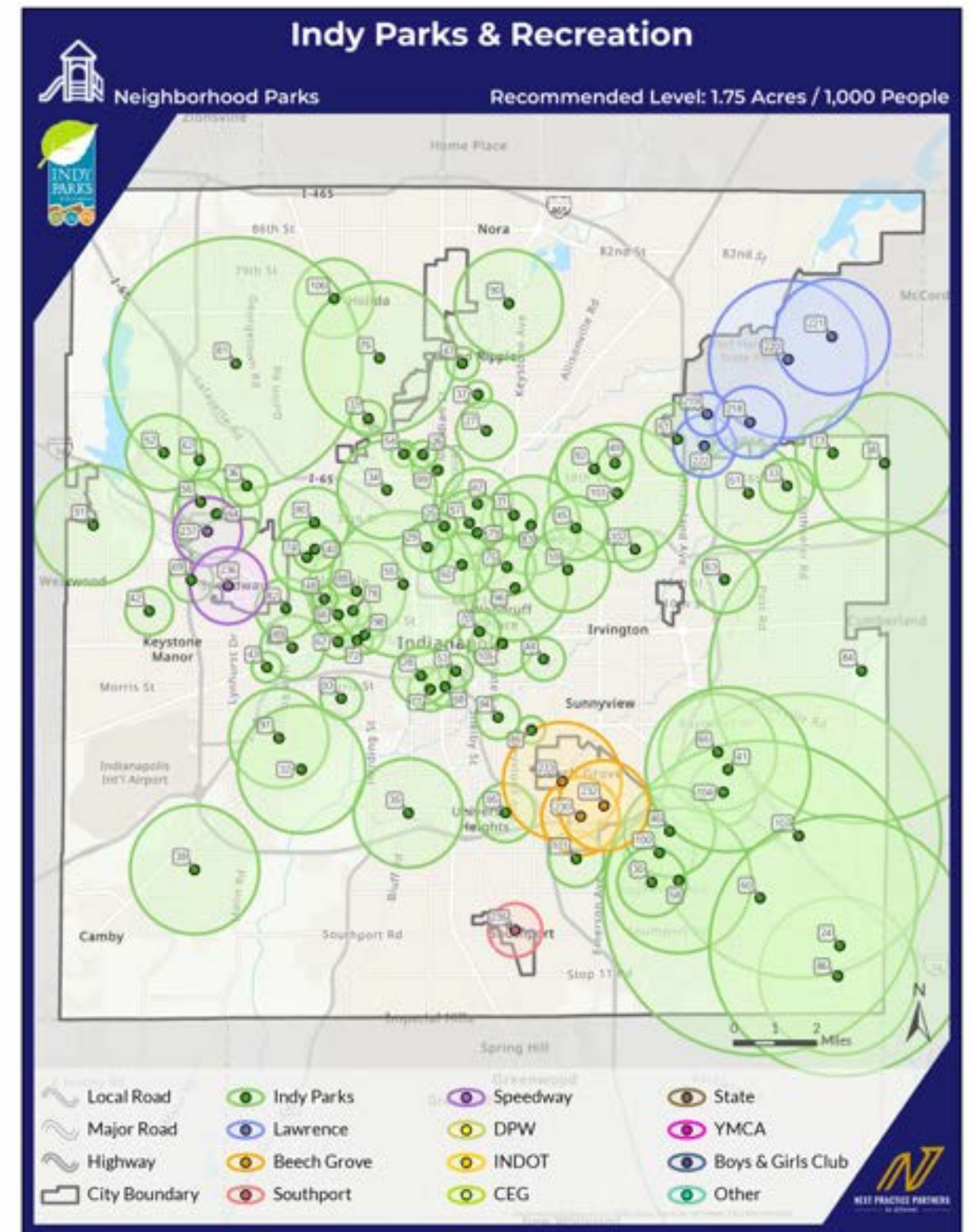




## MINI PARKS

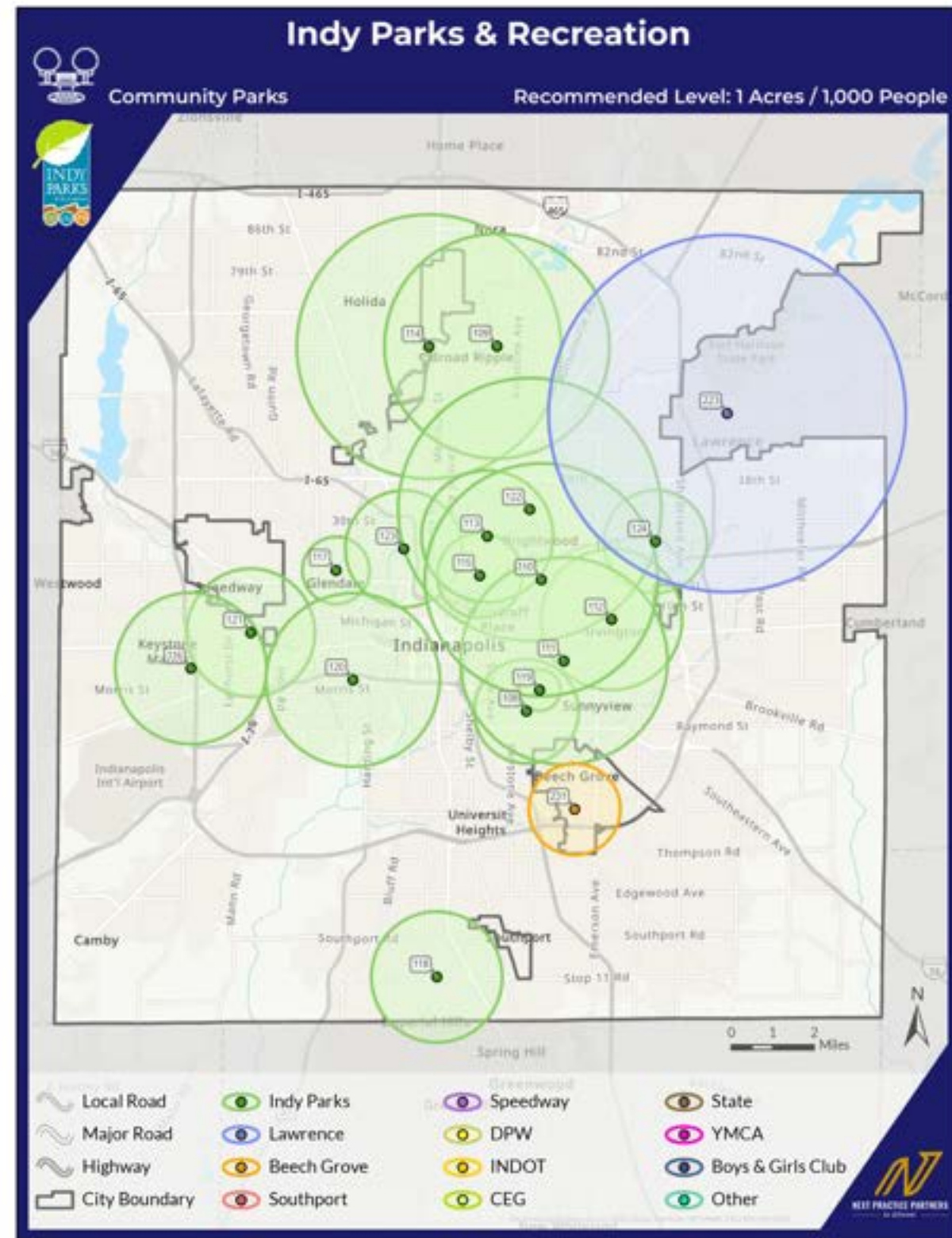


## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

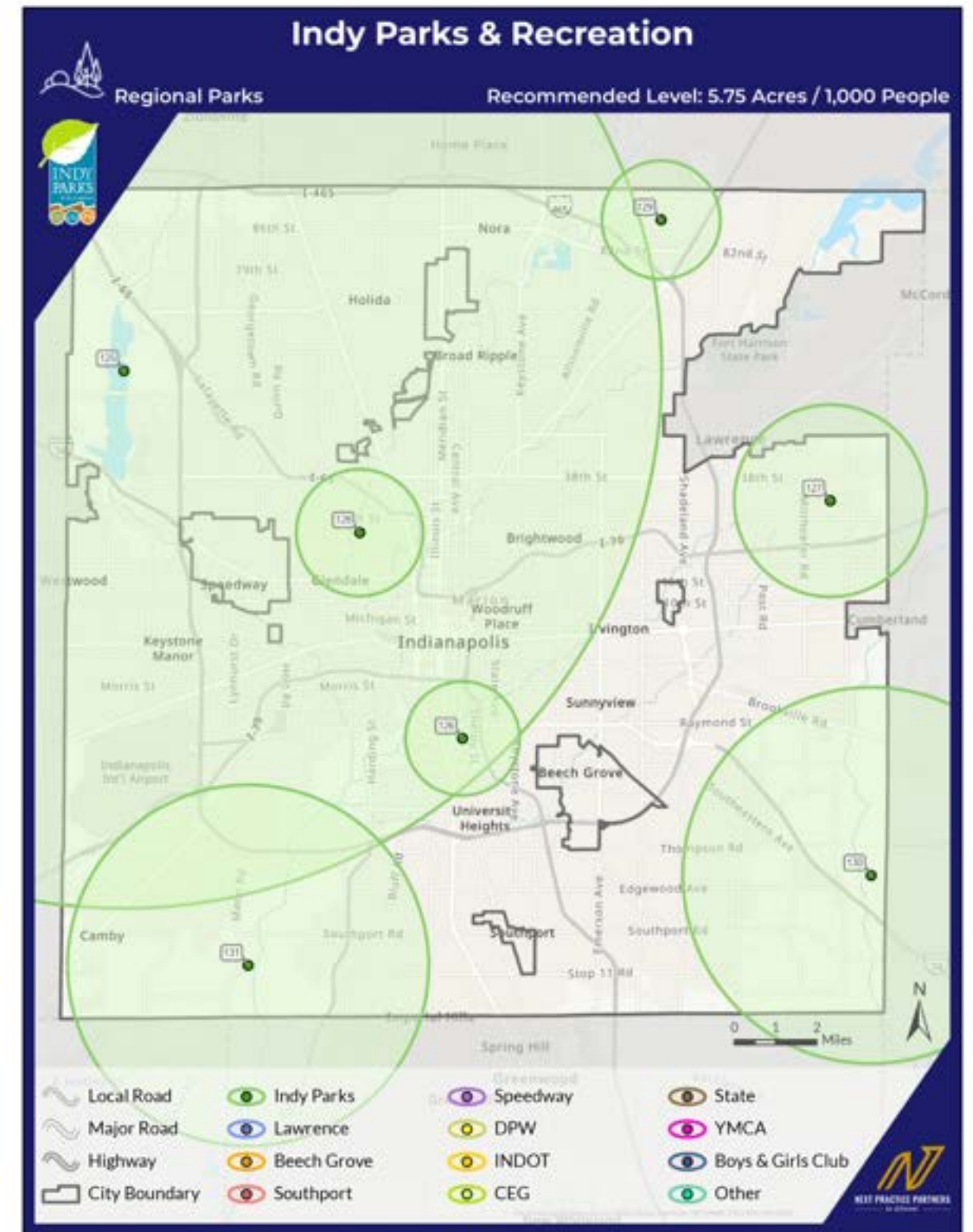




## COMMUNITY PARKS

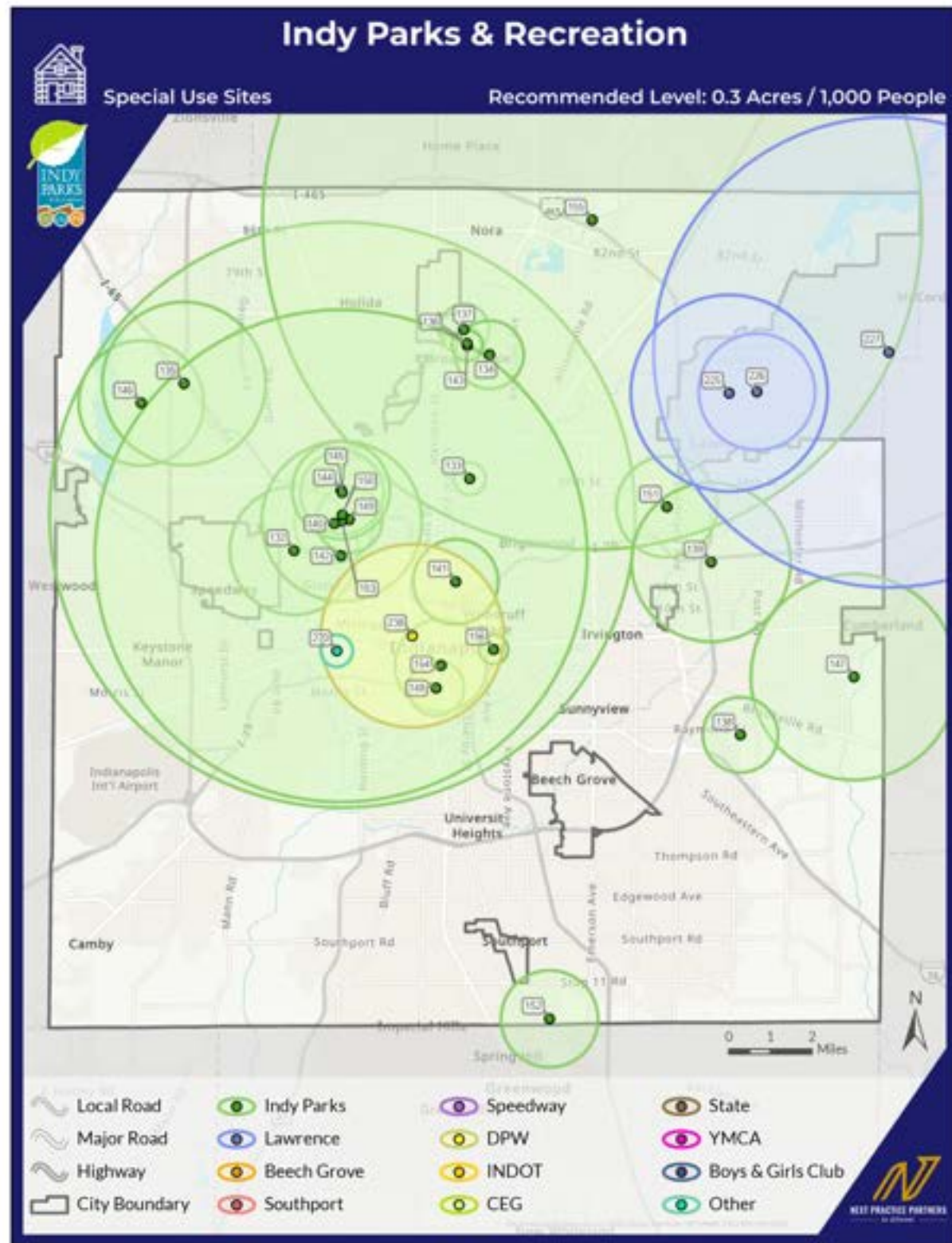


## REGIONAL PARKS

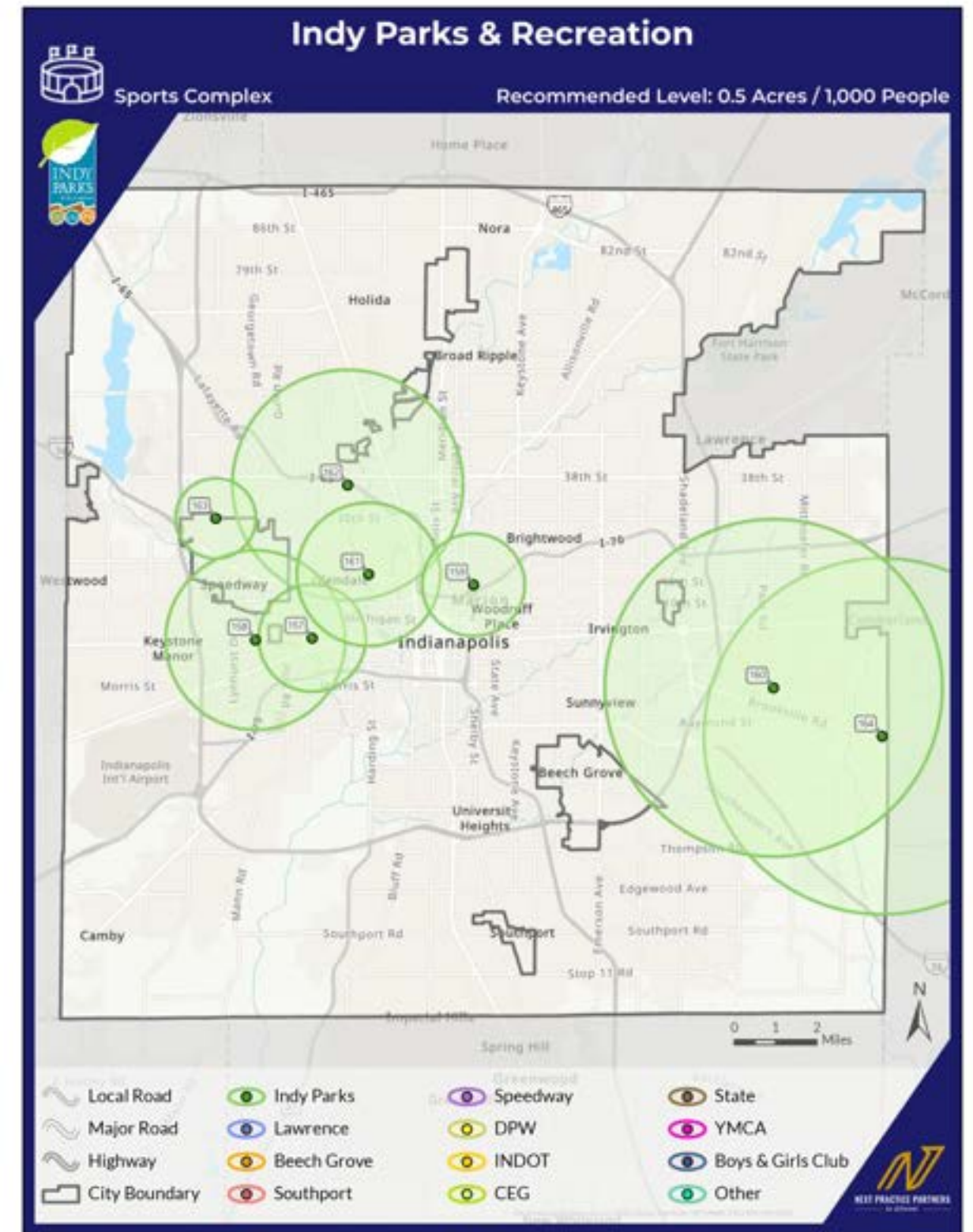




## SPECIAL USE SITES

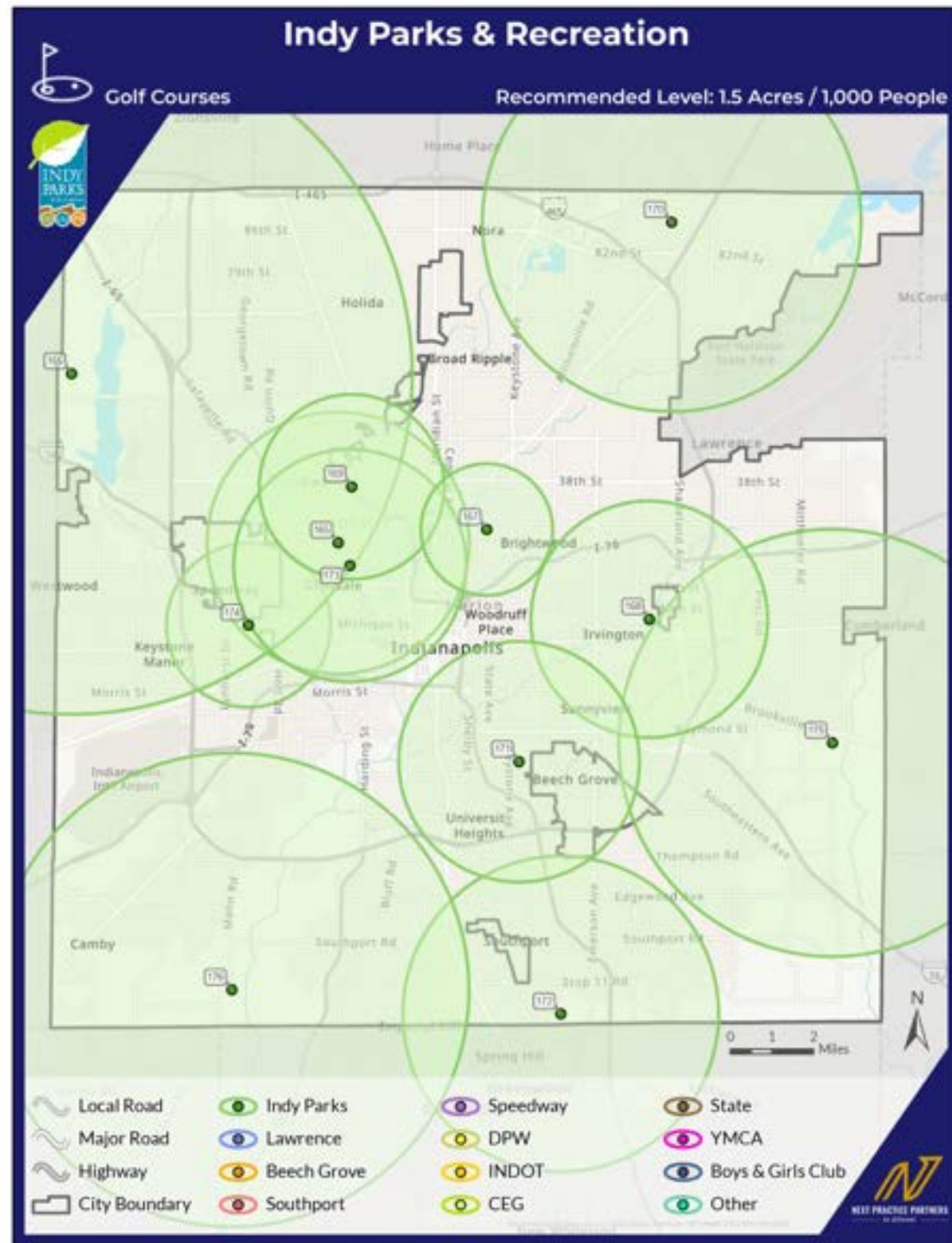


## SPORTS COMPLEX

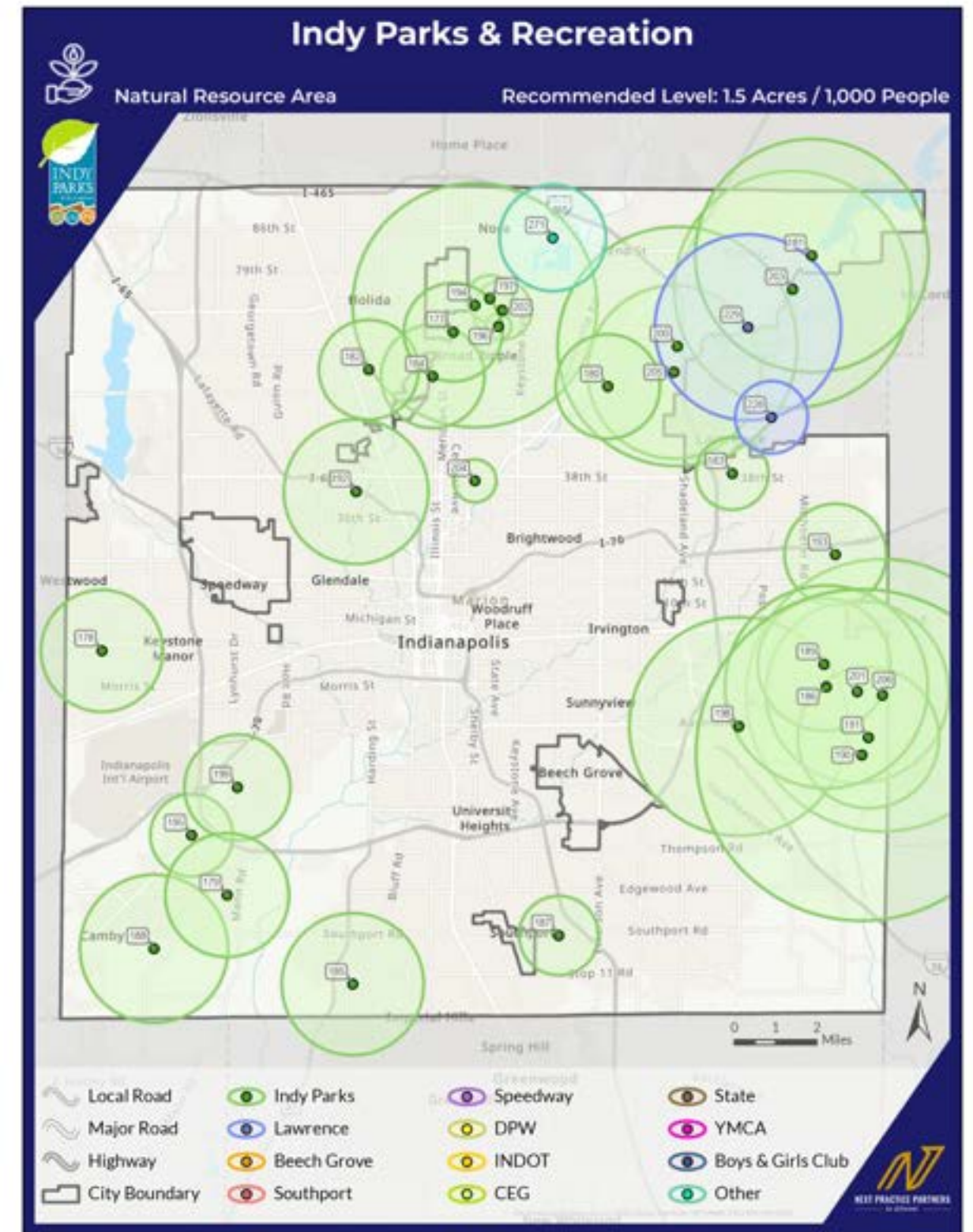




## GOLF COURSES

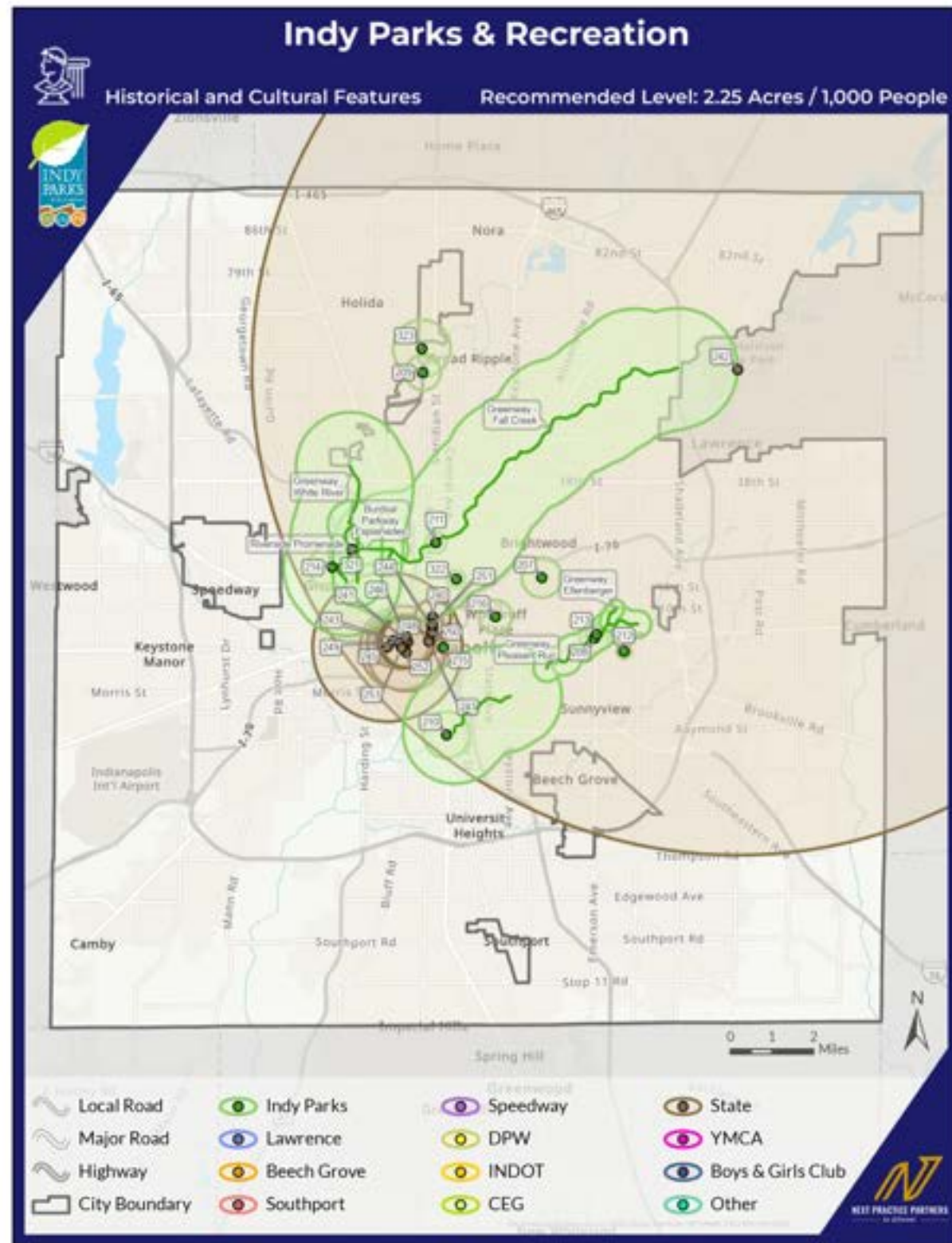


## NATURAL RESOURCE AREA

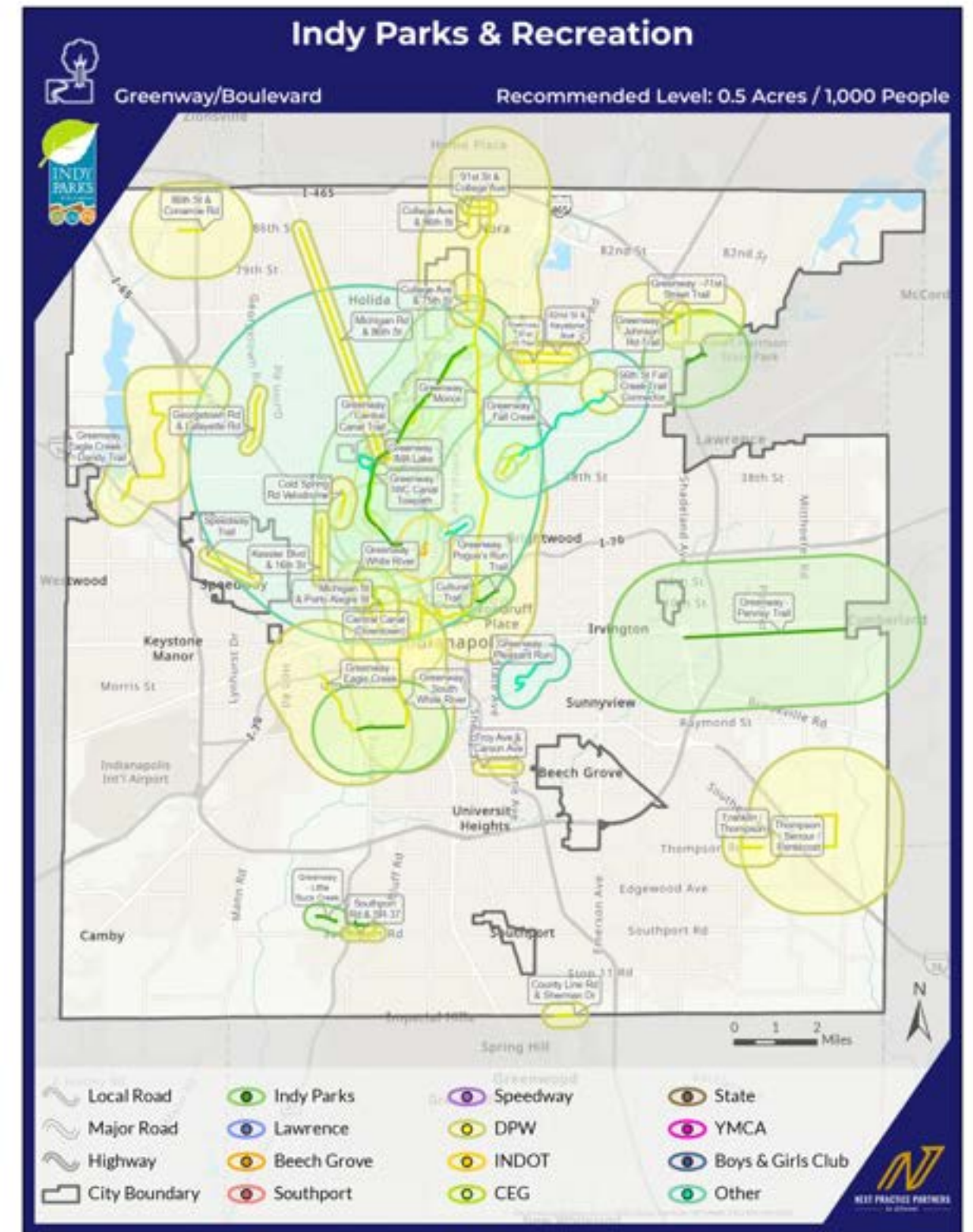




## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

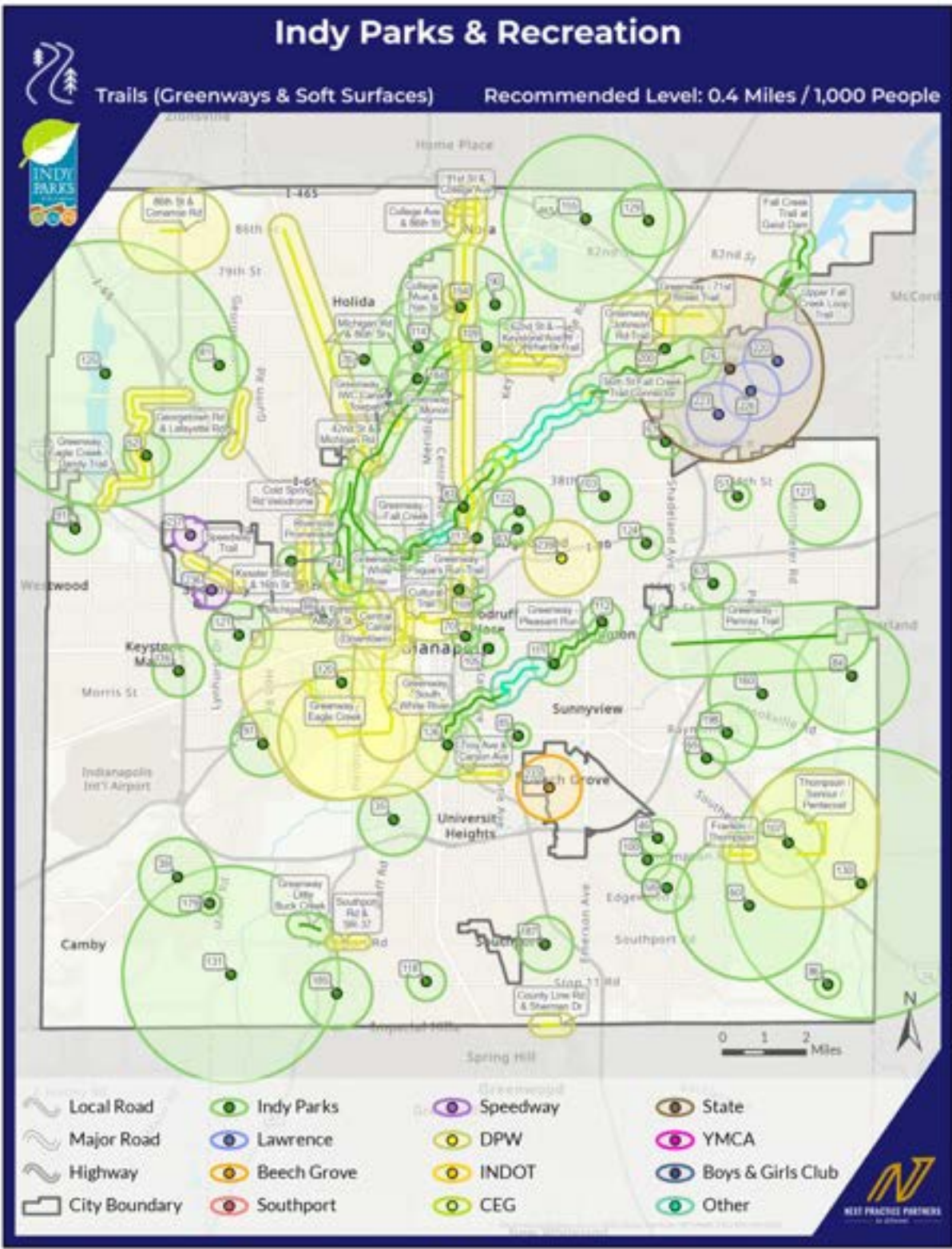


## GREENWAY / BOULEVARD

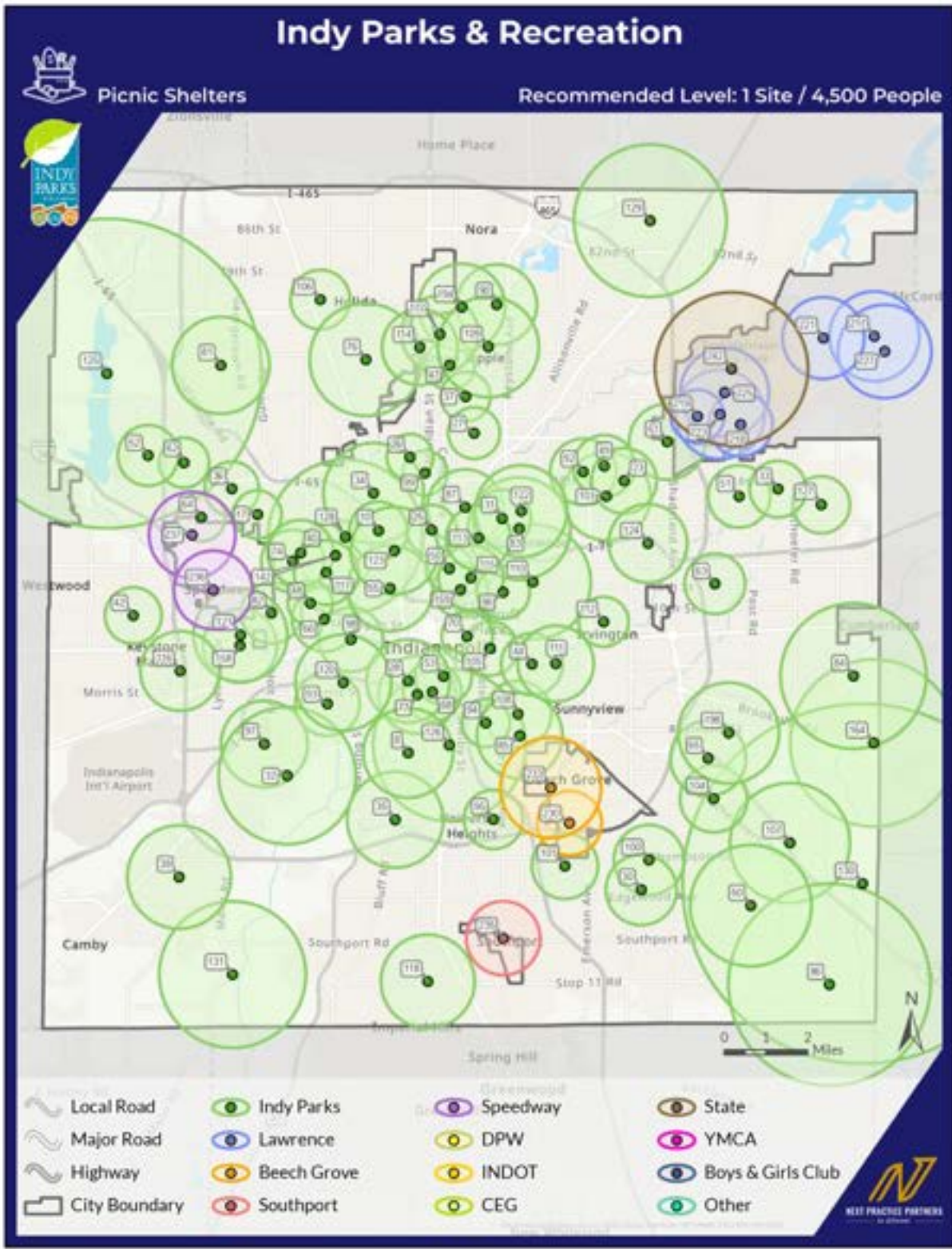




TRAILS (GREENWAYS AND SOFT SURFACES)

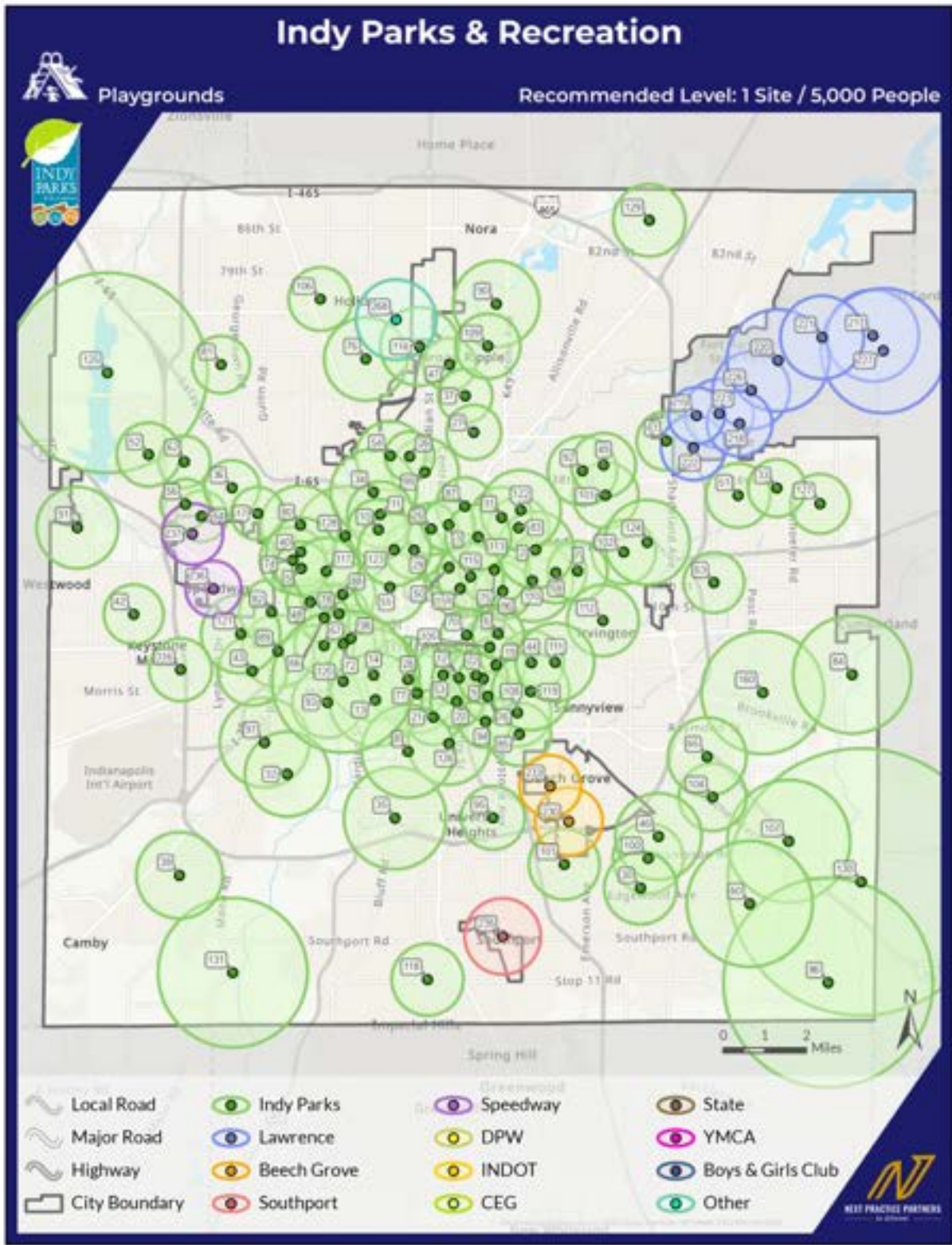


PICNIC SHELTERS

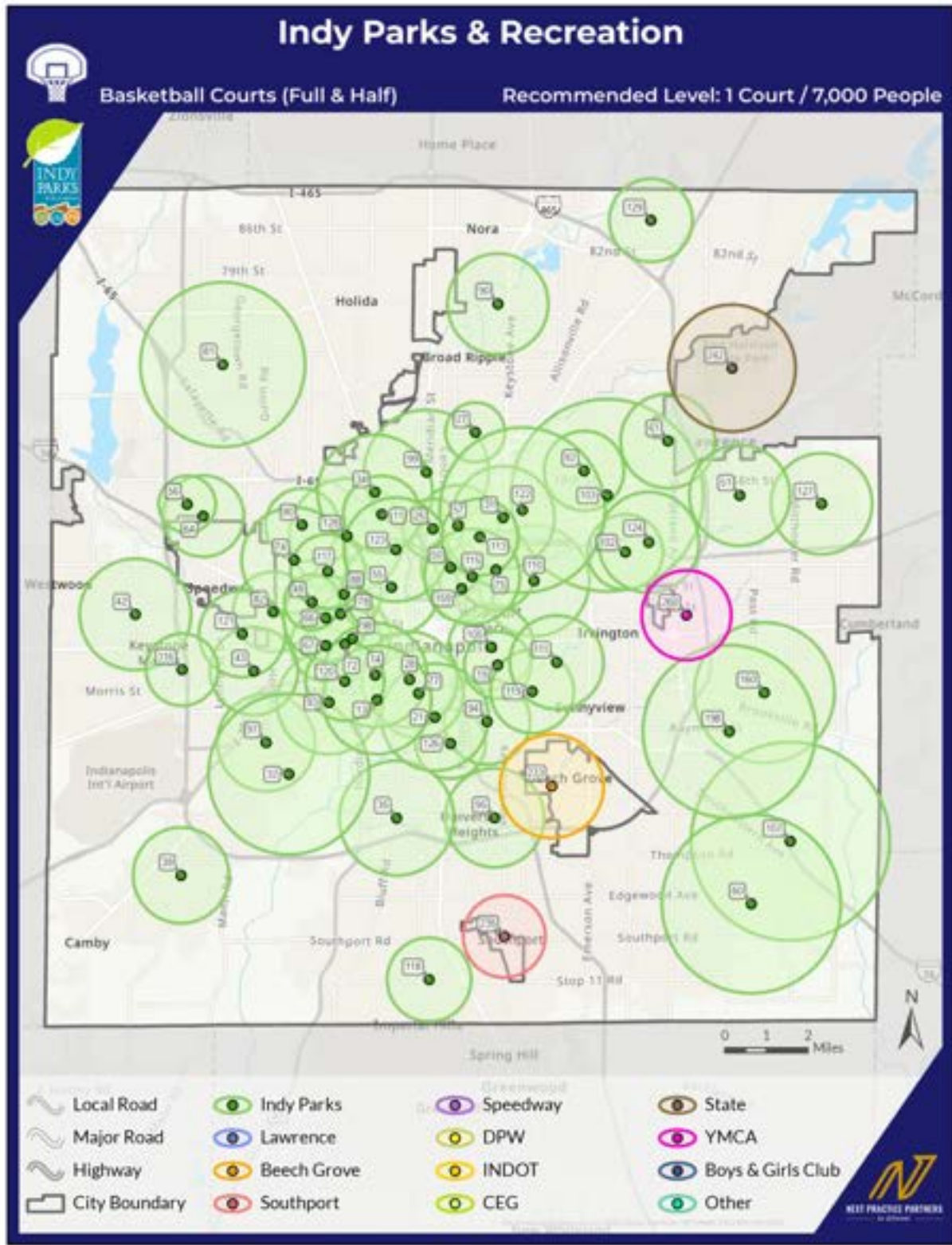




PLAYGROUNDS

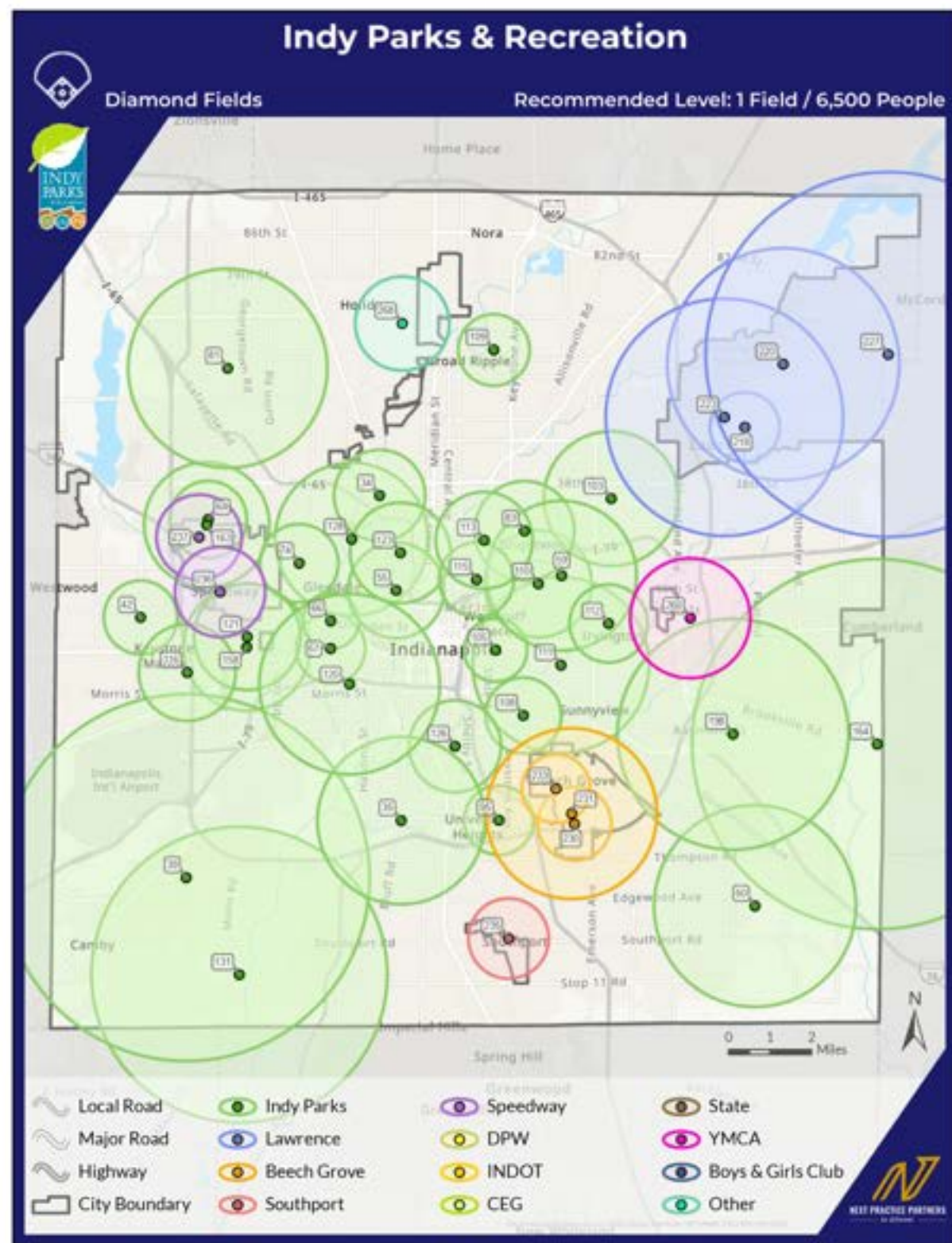


BASKETBALL COURTS

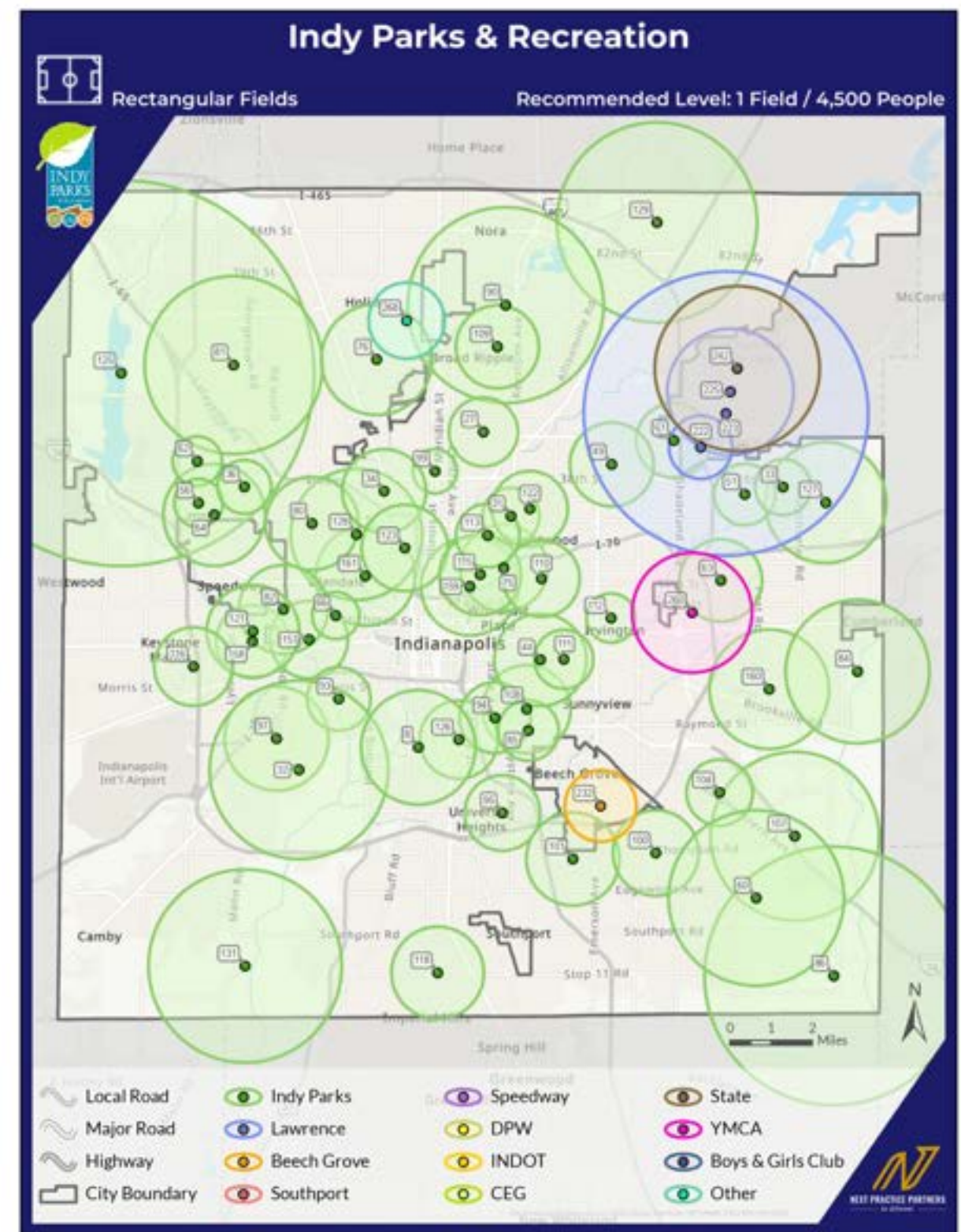




## DIAMOND FIELDS

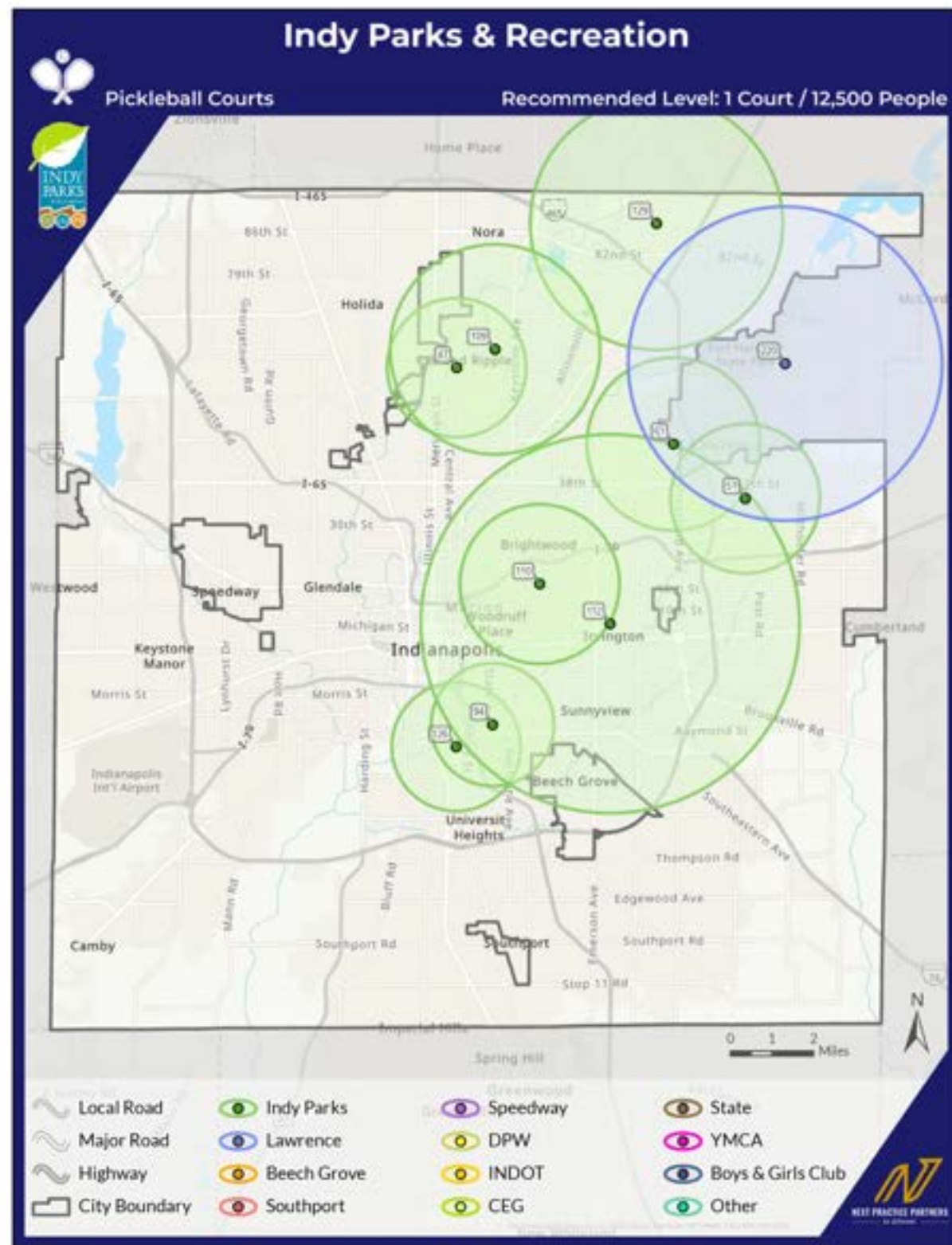


## RECTANGULAR FIELDS

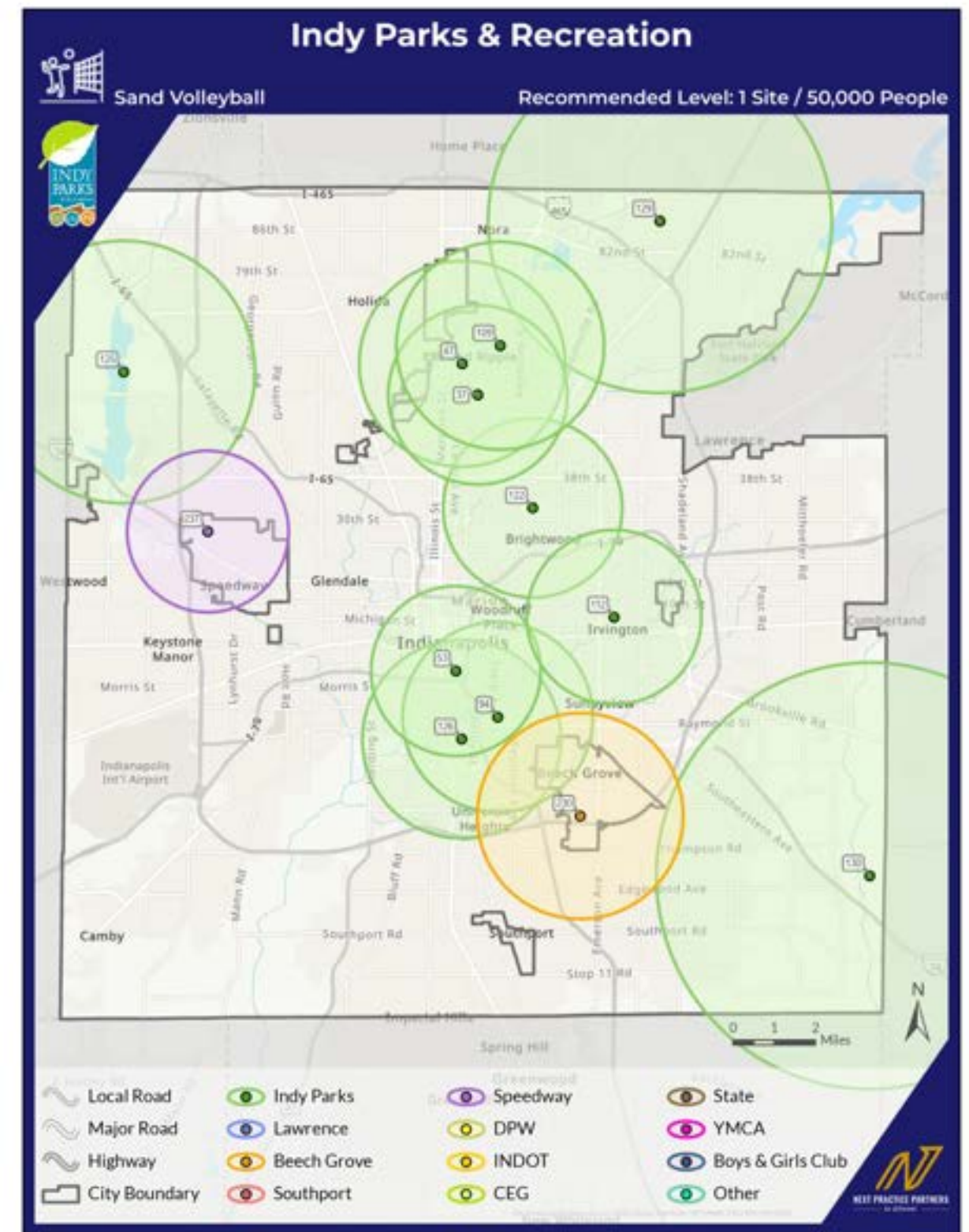




## PICKLEBALL COURTS

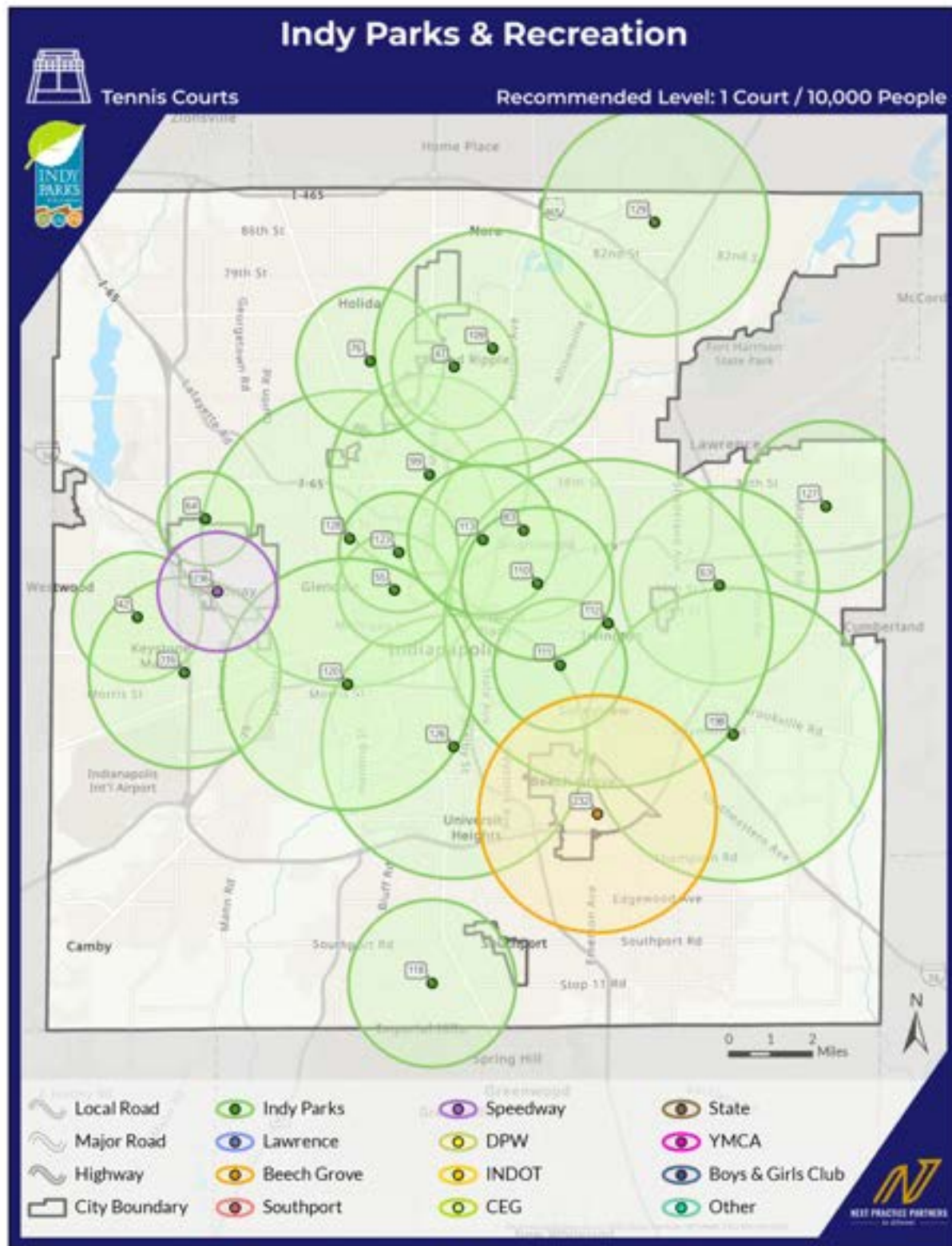


## SAND VOLLEYBALL COURTS

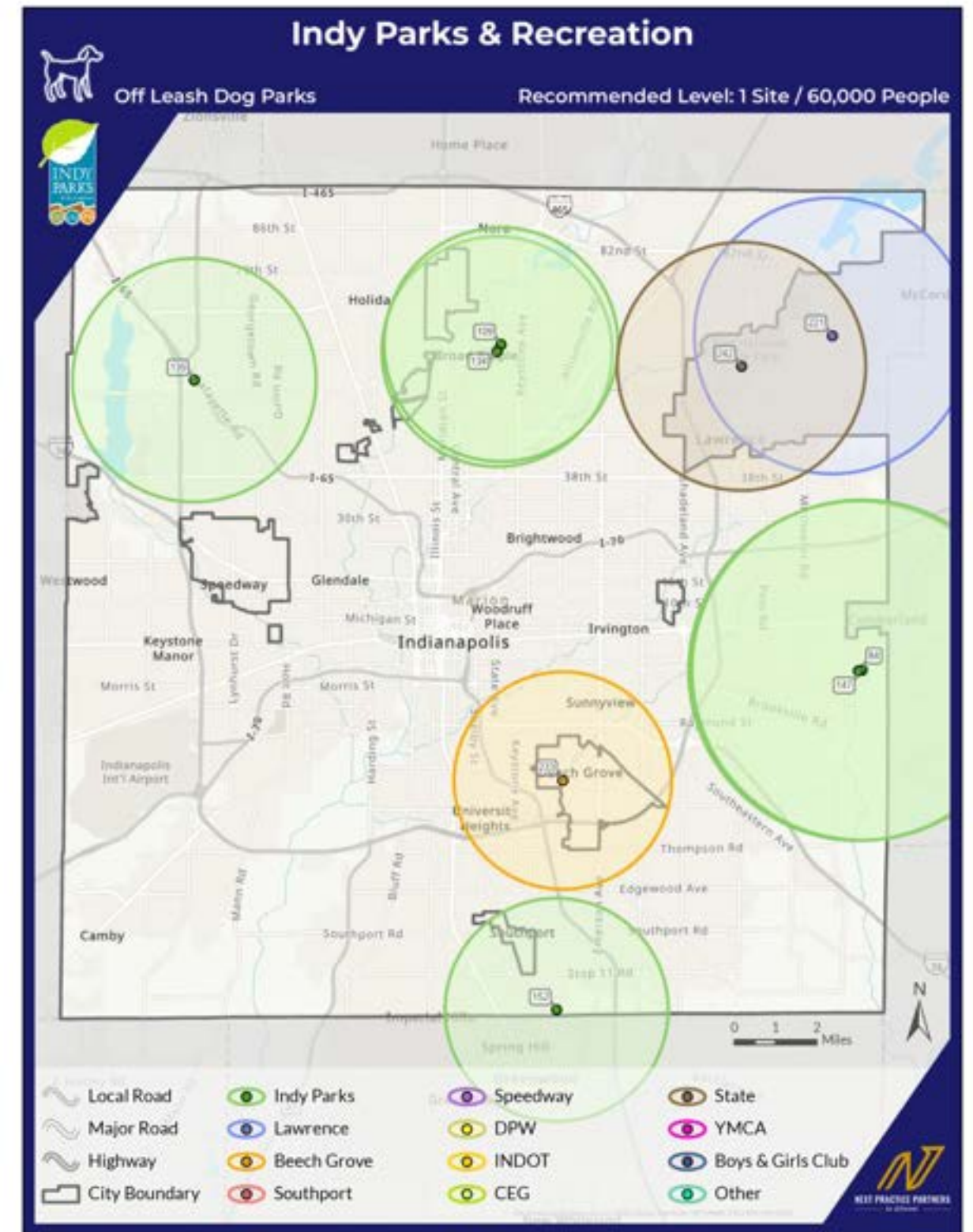




## TENNIS COURTS

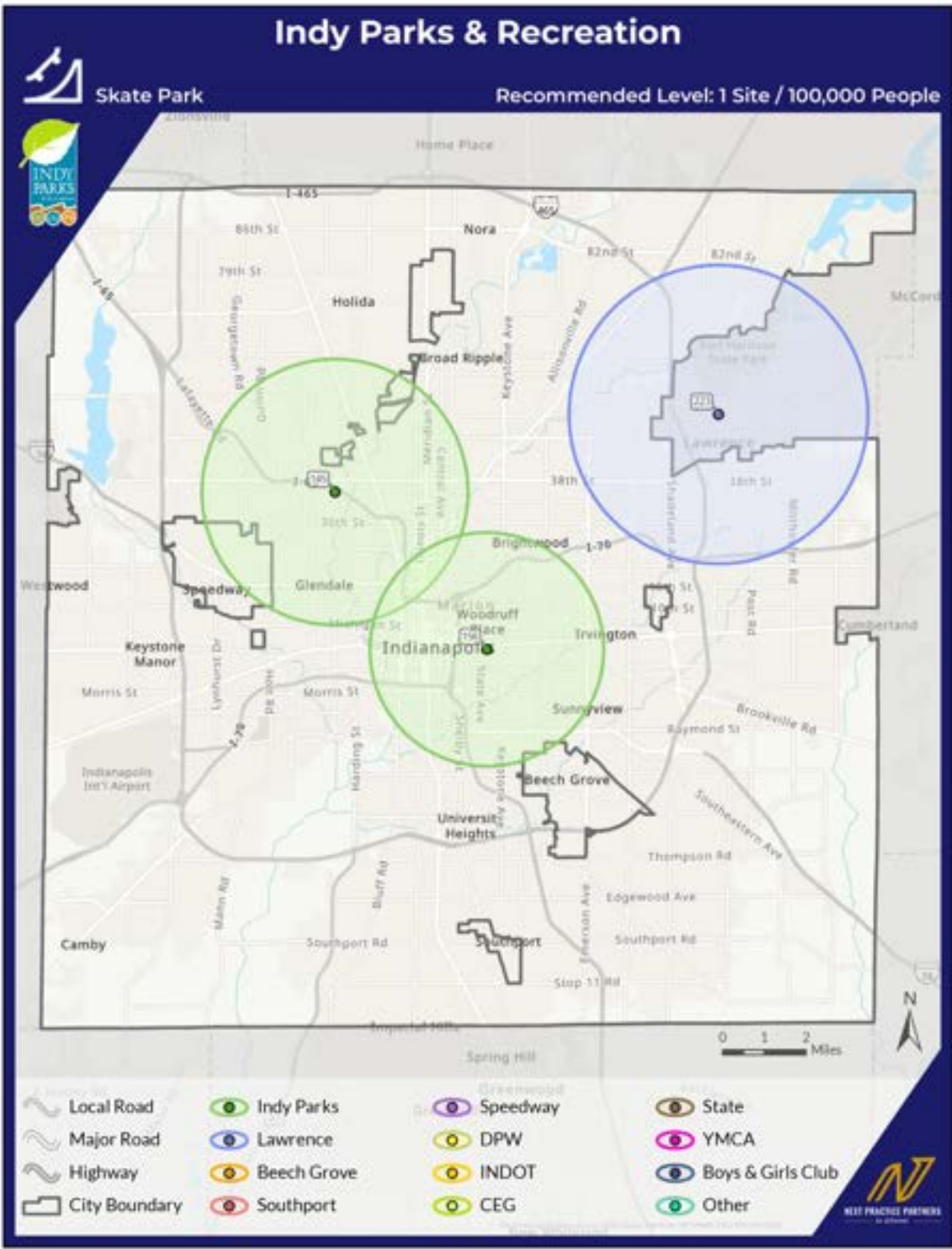


## OFF LEASH DOG PARKS

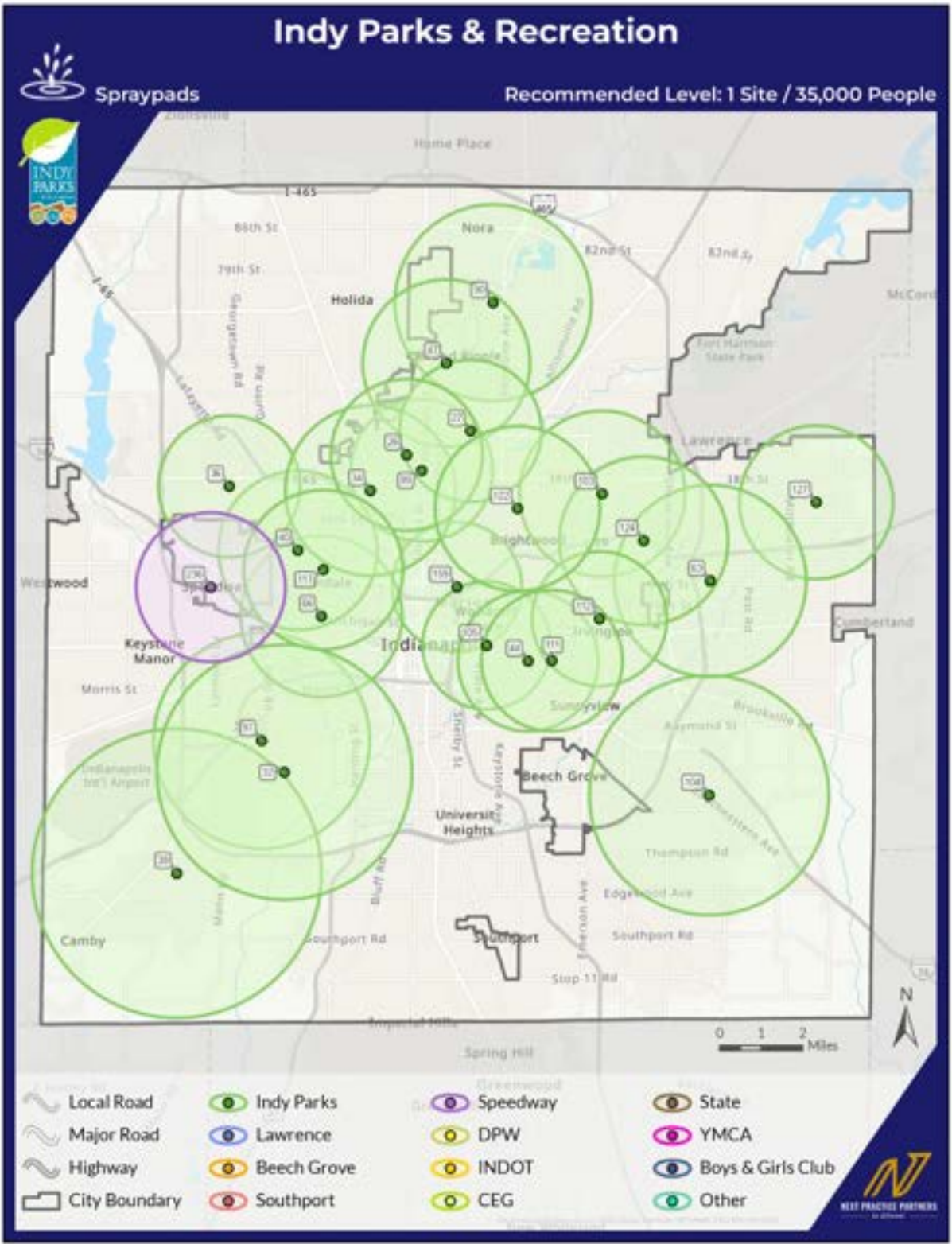




SKATE PARKS

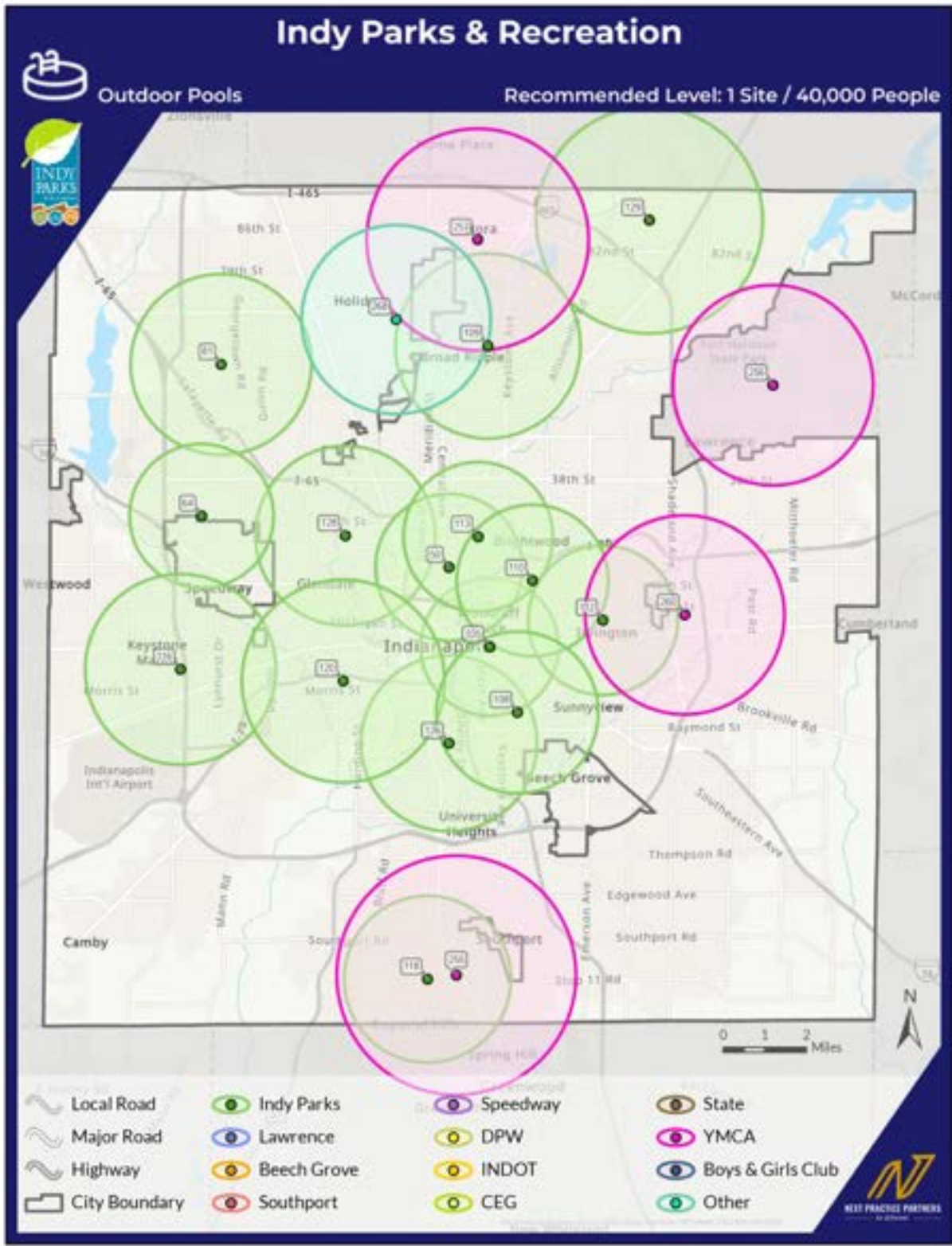


SPRAY PADS

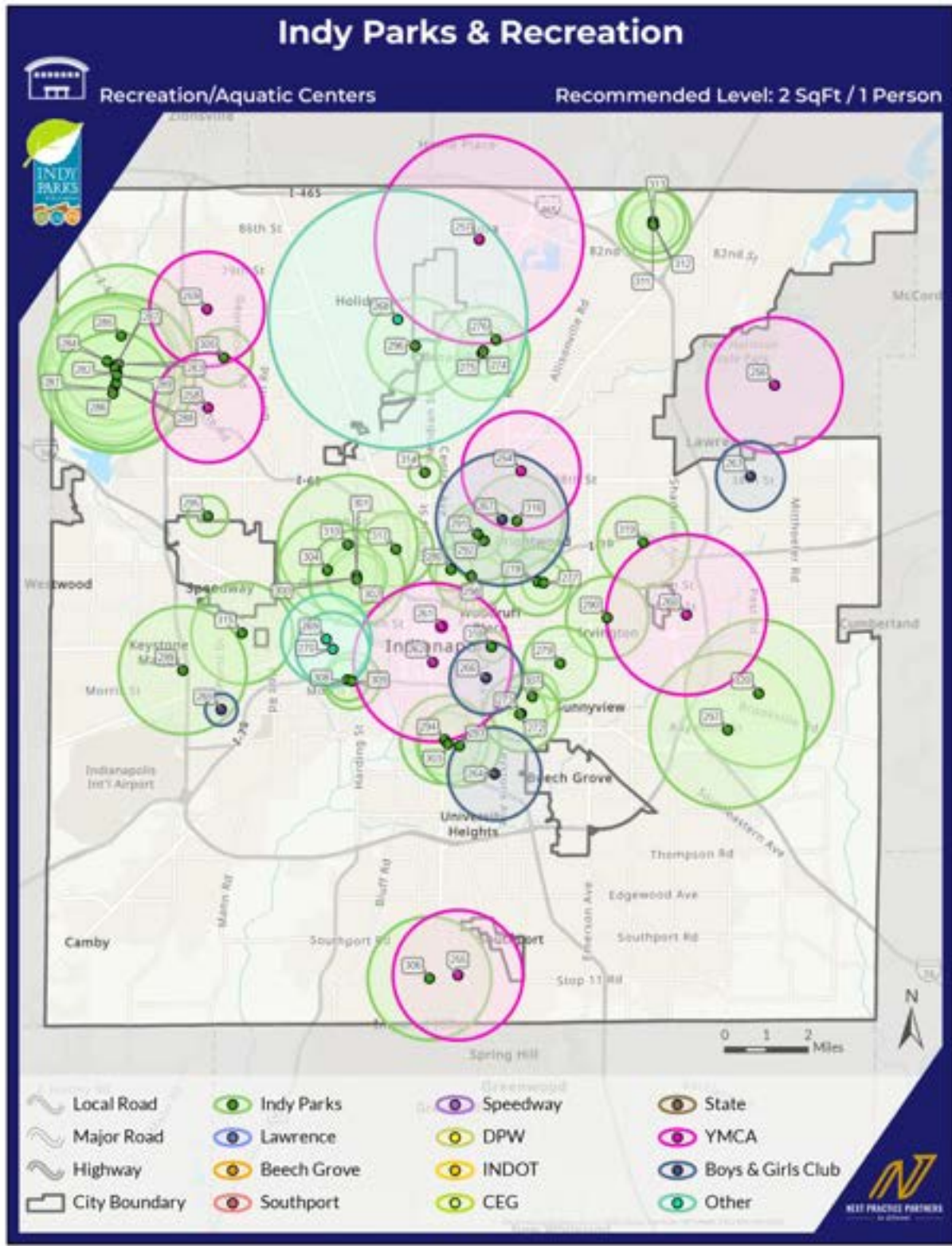




OUTDOOR POOLS



INDOOR RECREATION / AQUATIC CENTERS





# 6

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ASSESSMENT





# 6.1 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

This assessment offers an in-depth perspective of the Department’s offerings and helps to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities in the Department’s programs and services. The assessment also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, staffing, volunteer and partnership opportunities, and future programs and services for residents and visitors.

The consulting team based these findings and comments on a review of information provided by the Department including program descriptions, financial data, website content, and staff discussions.

## FRAMEWORK

The mission of the Department is “to provide enriching experiences for all”. The Department works to achieve this mission through its commitment to equity and inclusion which focuses the Department’s efforts on planning to ensure amenities and services reflect the multicultural community it serves.

Additionally, the Department oversees and operates various programs, facilities, and outdoor amenities including family centers, pools, trails, golf courses, day camps, after school programs, and a host of special events that are offered to all.



# 6.2 PROGRAM AREAS

The identification of core program areas helps to establish a focused approach to achieve the Department’s mission. Core program areas assist Department staff, policy makers, and the public, focus on what is important to the community. Program areas are considered as core if they meet most of the following criteria:

- The program area has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.
- The program area consumes a relatively large portion (5% or more) of the agency’s overall budget.
- The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- The program area has wide demographic appeal.
- There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program area’s offerings.
- There is full-time staff responsible for the program area.
- There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.
- The Department controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.

## 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



## CORE PROGRAM AREA DESCRIPTIONS AND GOALS



### ACTIVE ADULTS 62+

**Description:** Fitness, wellness, enrichment, arts, and sports programs specifically targeted for active adults over the age of 62 years old.

**Goals:** Provide fitness, leisure, and social activities to senior adults to encourage an active lifestyle, promote physical and mental well-being, and discourage isolation. Provide low impact programs at low or no cost.



### ADAPTIVE & INCLUSIVE

**Description:** Fitness, wellness, enrichment, arts, and sports programs adapted to ensure that individuals with different abilities have equal access to programs and recreational activities.

**Goals:** Provide proper staff training, program support, and accommodations to maximize participation opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities. Encourage independence and confidence. Teach life skills.



### ADULT SPORTS

**Description:** Competitive and recreational sports programs for adults 18 and older.

**Goals:** Encourage an active lifestyle by providing space for competitive and social playing opportunities for adults in a variety of sports. Provide both traditional and non-traditional sport opportunities.



### ARTS, CONCERTS & MOVIES

**Description:** Art programs and classes in various mediums including performing arts, painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing and photography.

**Goals:** Establish a sustainable concert series in a variety of genres. Offer arts for all ages in a range of mediums. Provide entertainment through movies, performing arts and outreach.



### AQUATICS

**Description:** Fitness, recreation, competitive, and leisure activities taking place in a body of water.

**Goals:** Provide quality year-round aquatic programming including swim lessons, aerobics, swim team and other recreational activities. Promote and encourage swimming and water safety as a key life skill.



### DAY CAMPS

**Description:** Structured activities for preschoolers, school aged kids, and teens providing a variety of organized recreation, art, environmental education, enrichment, and science activities.

**Goals:** Provide safe and fun summer experiences for youth. Provide a variety of activities to encourage participants to try new things. Encourage appreciation of the natural environment.



### ENRICHMENT

**Description:** Programs, classes, and activities with an educational value-added component designed to support or enhance life skills and academic success.

**Goals:** Provide programs that teach and enhance life skills and academic success.



### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

**Description:** Programs and classes that aim to teach those of all ages more about their environment, develop environmental stewardship, and learn how to appreciate the natural world around them.

**Goals:** Provide a wide range of programs that inspire an appreciation of natural environments. Increase public awareness in environmental stewardship. Improve access to programs.



### HEALTH & WELLNESS

**Description:** Classes and programs focusing on strengthening participants' physical, emotional, spiritual, and social health.

**Goals:** Provide a wide range of programs and activities to promote a healthier lifestyle. Work with health care partners to offer more programs with a focus on emotional and social well-being.



### OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

**Description:** Outdoor activities, usually encouraging physical challenge. Outdoor activities may take place on land, in water, and in the air, some may be winter focused.

**Goals:** Promote health and wellness through outdoor physical activity. Identify partnership opportunities to increase offerings.



### SPECIAL EVENTS

**Description:** One time or short-term recreation, leisure, social or cultural events celebrating a specific occasion.

**Goals:** Provide park space to host community organized special events. Increase cultural events. Plan events to highlight parks' value. Use partnerships to offer more diverse events.



### YOUTH SPORTS

**Description:** Competitive and recreational sports programs for youth ages 17 and under.

**Goals:** Encourage active lifestyles by providing competitive and social athletics opportunities. Provide traditional and non-traditional sports opportunities. Teach good sportsmanship, teamwork, and cooperation.



AGE SEGMENT ANALYSIS

The Age Segment analysis helps to identify where services are spread among age groups within each core program area.

The chart below shows each core program area and the most prominent age segments they serve. Recognizing that many core program areas serve multiple age segments, markets are identified using a “P” to notate Primary and an “S” to indicate Secondary.

AGES SERVED						
For each Core Program Area, please identify which age segments are served by placing a 'P' if it is a Primary Market or an 'S' if it is a Secondary Market.						
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18+)	Senior (62+)	All Ages Programs
Active Adults 62+				S	P	
Adaptive & Inclusion	S	P	P	P	S	P
Adult Sports				P	S	
Arts, Concerts, & Movies	P	P	P	P	P	P
Aquatics	P	P	P	P	P	P
Day Camps	S	P	S	S		
Enrichment	P	P	P	S	S	
Environmental Education	P	P	P	P	P	P
Health & Wellness	P	P	P	P	P	P
Outdoor Adventure		S	P	P		
Special Events	P	P	P	P	P	P
Youth Sports	P	P	P			

The Age Segment Analysis shows an even distribution of core program areas that target each age demographic as the primary audience.

Staff should continue to monitor demographic shifts and program offerings to ensure that the needs of each age group are being met. It is recommended that staff perform an annual age segment alignment to ensure target audience reflect the community’s demographics and also tailor future offerings to community needs.

When establishing a new program, it is essential to develop a plan the includes the target age segment, the messaging, identification of the marketing method(s), creation of the marketing campaign, and defining the indicators for measuring success prior to allocating resources towards a specific effort.

PROGRAM LIFECYCLE

A Program Lifecycle Analysis reviewed each program offered for the stage of growth or decline. This informs strategic decisions about the overall program mix managed by the agency to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are “fresh” and that relatively few programs if any, need to be discontinued. This analysis is based on both quantitative data and staff members’ knowledge of their program areas. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Department’s programs. These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff members.

Lifecycle Stage	Description	Actual Program Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New program; modest participation	11%	60%	50-60% total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	14%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent population growth	35%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	26%	26%	40% total
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	5%	14%	0-10% total
Decline	Decline participation	8%		

The Lifecycle Analysis shows that 60% of programs fall within the beginning stages (Introduction, Take-Off, & Growth), 26% fall within the mature stage, and 14% of programs are within the Saturation (5%) and Decline (8%) stages. It is recommended to have at least 40% of programs in the mature stage as this stage provides stability in the program mix. Having 35% of programs in the Growth stage is promising, as these programs will eventually roll over into the Mature stage which will level out the foundation of the overall program mix.

Staff should complete a Program Lifecycle Analysis annually and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. The Department could also include annual performance measures for each core program area to track participation growth, customer retention, and percentage of new programs as an incentive for innovation and alignment with community trends.

The Department should explore ways to reposition or replace programs that are saturated or in decline due to lack of interest with new opportunities based on community needs and trends beginning with those indicated in the Online Community Surveys (General & Youth).



PROGRAM SERVICES CLASSIFICATION

Program Services Classification Analysis informs how each program serves the overall organizational mission, the goals and objectives of each core program area, and the balance of funding via tax dollars and user fees and charges. A program’s classification can help determine the most appropriate management, funding, and marketing strategies.

Program classifications are based on the degree to which the program provides a public benefit versus a private benefit. **Public** benefit can be described as everyone receiving the same level of benefit with equal access, whereas **private** benefit can be described as the user receiving exclusive benefit above what a general taxpayer receives for their personal benefit.

For this exercise, the Department classified programs based on three categories: **Essential Services**, **Important Services**, and **Value-Added Services**. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. The following graphic describes each of the three program classifications.

Essential Services

- City Must Provide;** if it protects assets & infrastructure, is expected and supported, is a sound investment of public funds, is a broad public benefit, there is a negative impact if not provided, is part of the mission, and needs almost complete subsidy.

Important Services

- City Should Provide;** if it expands & enhances core services, is broadly supported & used, has conditional public support, there is an economic / social / environmental outcome to the community, has community importance, and needs moderate subsidy.

Value-Added Services

- City May Provide;** it adds value to community, it supports Core & Important Services, it is supported by community, it generates income, has an individual benefit, can be supported by user fees, it enhances the community, and requires little to no subsidy.

With assistance from staff, all recreation programs offered by the Department were classified into three categories. The results presented in the following table represent the current classification of recreation program services. Programs should be assigned ranges for cost recovery goals within those overall categories. A full program list organized by core program areas can be found in the Appendices.

Program Classification			
Factors	Essential	Important	Value-Added
Public interest; Legal Mandate; Mission Alignment	High public expectation	High public expectation	High individual and interest group expectation
Financial Sustainability	Free, nominal or fee tailored to public needs, Requires public funding	Fees cover some direct costs, Requires a balance of public funding and a cost recovery target	Fees cover most direct and indirect costs, Some public funding as appropriate
Benefits (health, safety, protection of assets, etc.)	Substantial public benefit (negative consequence if not provided)	Public and individual benefit	Primarily individual benefit
Competition in the Market	Limited or no alternative providers	Alternative providers unable to meet demand or need	Alternative providers readily available
Access	Open access by all	Open access Limited access to specific users	Limited access to specific users
Recommended Cost Recovery Goal	0 - 50%	50% - 75%	75% - 100%+
Program Distribution	32%	42%	26%

COST-OF-SERVICE & COST RECOVERY

While the Department is not focused on cost recovery from programs, recommendations in this report can assist the Department with setting and meeting financial goals to maintain financial stability. Cost recovery targets should at least be identified for each core program area, and for specific programs or events when realistic. The previously identified core program areas would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics including administrative costs. Theoretically, staff should review how programs are grouped for similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to determine if current practices still meet desired outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

1. Classify all programs and services based on the individual or community benefit they provide (as completed in the previous section).

2. Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis to calculate the full cost of each program.

3. Establish a cost recovery percentage, through Department policy, for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps and adjust program prices accordingly.



## UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST-OF-SERVICE

A Cost-of-Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (i.e., program-specific) and indirect (i.e., comprehensive, including administrative overhead) costs. Completing a Cost-of-Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program, but it also provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs. The diagram below illustrates the common types of costs that must be accounted for in a Cost-of-Service Analysis.



The methodology for determining the total Cost-of-Service involves calculating the total cost for the activity, program, or service, then calculating the total revenue earned for that activity. Costs (and revenue) can also be derived on a per-unit basis. Program or activity units may include:

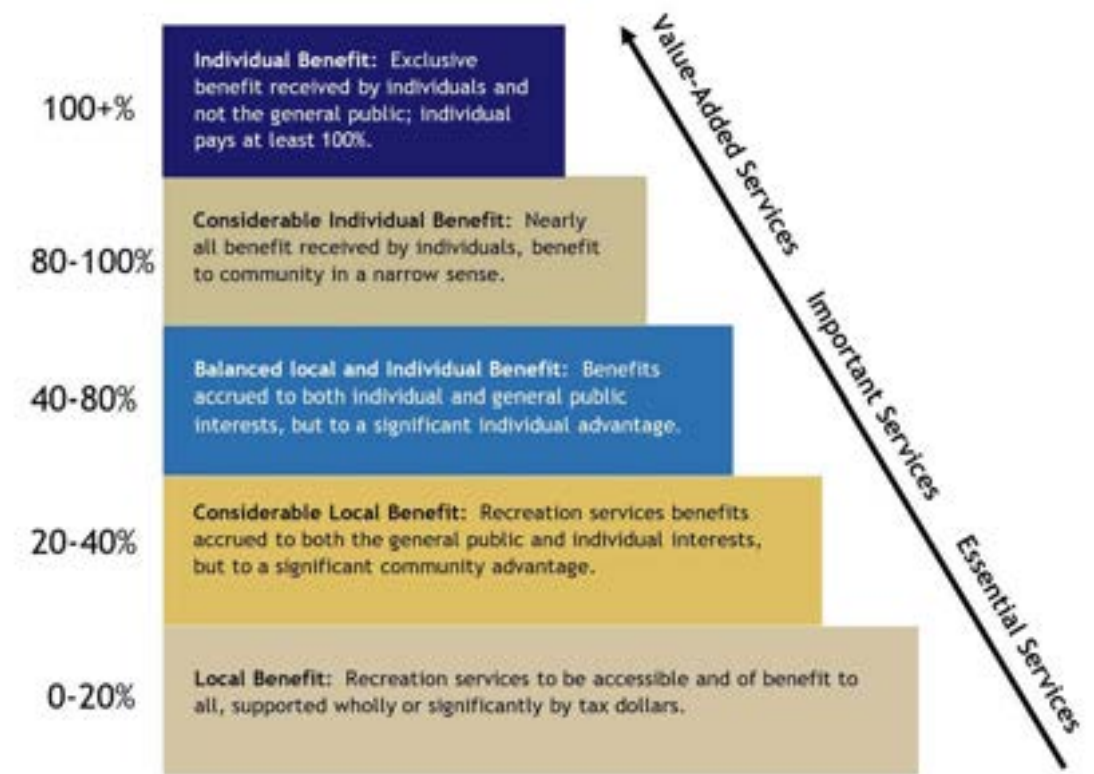
- Number of participants
- Number of tasks performed
- Number of consumable units
- Number of service calls
- Number of events
- Required time for offering program/service

Cost recovery goals are established once Cost-of-Service totals have been calculated. Program staff should be trained on the process of conducting a Cost-of-Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken on a regular basis.

## CURRENT COST RECOVERY

Who benefits from a program or service is one of the key factors in determining pricing. As services become more individualized, higher levels of cost recovery are appropriate and expected. The pricing model, illustrated below, graphically depicts this concept. As the level of benefit to the individual increases, so does the level of anticipated cost recovery for that service.

Note: The Department does not currently track cost recovery.





## PRICING

Pricing strategies are one mechanism agencies can use to influence cost recovery. The figure below details pricing methods currently in place by each core program area and additional areas for strategies to implement over time.

PRICING STRATEGIES										
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Family / Household Status	Residency	Weekday / Weekend	Prime / Non-Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Active Adults 62+	X									
Adaptive & Inclusion	X							X	X	X
Adult Sports	X							X	X	
Arts, Concerts, & Movies	X						X	X	X	
Aquatics	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Day Camps	X	X					X	X	X	X
Enrichment	X	X				X	X		X	
Environmental Education	X	X				X	X		X	X
Health & Wellness	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Outdoor Adventure	X	X					X		X	X
Special Events	X	X	X	X						
Youth Sports	X					X	X		X	X

Staff should monitor the effectiveness of the various pricing strategies they employ and adjust as necessary. It is also important to continue monitoring yearly for competitors and similar service providers (i.e., similar providers) as found in the Appendices.

The Department is using a variety of strategies for pricing, with the most popular ones being 'by age segment' and 'by cost recovery goals'.

## PROGRAM STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department staff should conduct an annual evaluation of individual programs and the overall program mix. Evaluations can be done seasonally in batches at key times throughout the year, or annually as a whole.

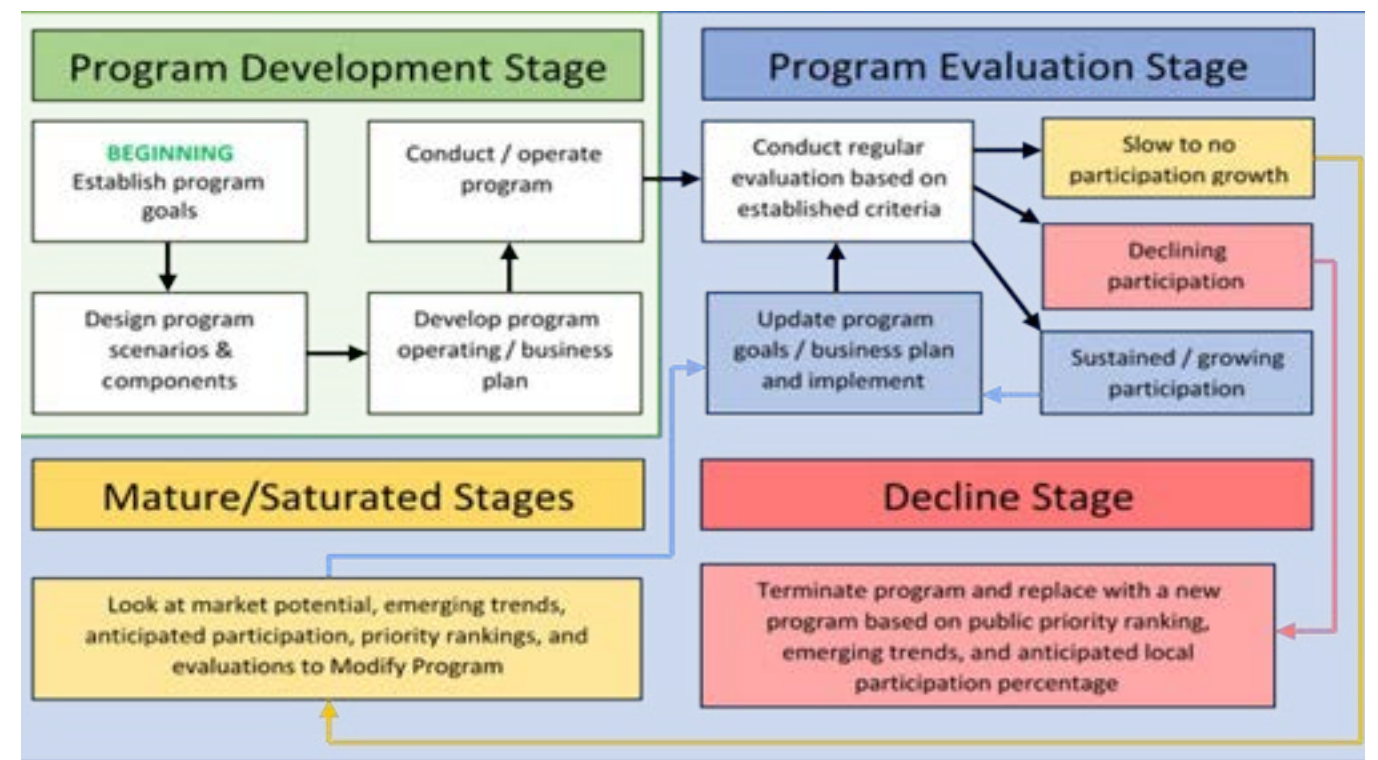
The primary goal is to evaluate all programs on at least a yearly basis. Mini Business Plans, Program Development & Decision-Making Matrix, and the Program Evaluation Cycle, are all examples of tools that can be used in the evaluation process.

## MINI BUSINESS PLANS

The consulting team recommends creating Mini Business Plans (2-3 pages) for each core program area that is updated on a yearly basis. These plans should evaluate the core program areas based on meeting the outcomes desired for participants, cost recovery, percentage of the market and business controls, Cost-of-Service, pricing strategy for the next year, and marketing strategies that are to be implemented. If developed regularly and consistently, they can be effective tools for budget construction and justification processes in addition to marketing and communication tools. See the Appendices for a template.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION CYCLE (WITH LIFECYCLE STAGES)

Using the Age Segment and Lifecycle Analysis and other established criteria, program staff should evaluate programs on an annual basis to determine the program mix. This can be incorporated into the Program Operating/Business Plan process. A diagram of the program evaluation cycle and program lifecycle is found below. During the beginning stages, program staff should establish program goals, design program scenarios, and components, and develop the program operating/business plan. Regular program evaluations will help determine the future of a program.



If participation levels are still growing, continue to provide the program. When participation growth is slowing (or non-existent) or competition increases, staff should look at modifying the program to maintain customer interest. When program participation is consistently declining, staff should terminate the program and replace it with a new program based on the public's priority ranking and/or in activity areas that are trending nationally/regionally/locally, while taking into consideration the anticipated local participation percentage.



## 6.3 CURRENT MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

### OVERVIEW

The Department uses a variety of marketing strategies combining traditional (flyers and brochures) with modern (social media) strategies to advance its message when promoting activities. Below is a list of specific strategies currently used by the Department:

- Direct mail
- Email blasts and/or listserv
- Flyers/brochures
- In-facility signage
- Newsletters (print & online)
- Paid advertisements
- Program Guides (online and printed at some locations)
- Public service announcements (PSAs) – Local Channel 16
- QR Codes
- Radio (paid or free)
- Road sign marquees
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube)
- TV (paid or free)
- Website that is also smart/mobile phone enabled

Effective communication strategies require striking an appropriate balance between the content and the volume of messaging while utilizing the “right” methods of delivery. The Department has a broad distribution of delivery methods for promoting programs. It is imperative to continue updating the marketing plan annually to provide information based on community needs, demographics, and recreation trends.

An effective marketing plan must build upon and integrate with supporting plans and directly coordinate with organization priorities. The plan should also provide specific guidance as to how the Department’s identity and brand is to be consistently portrayed across the multiple methods and deliverables used for communication.

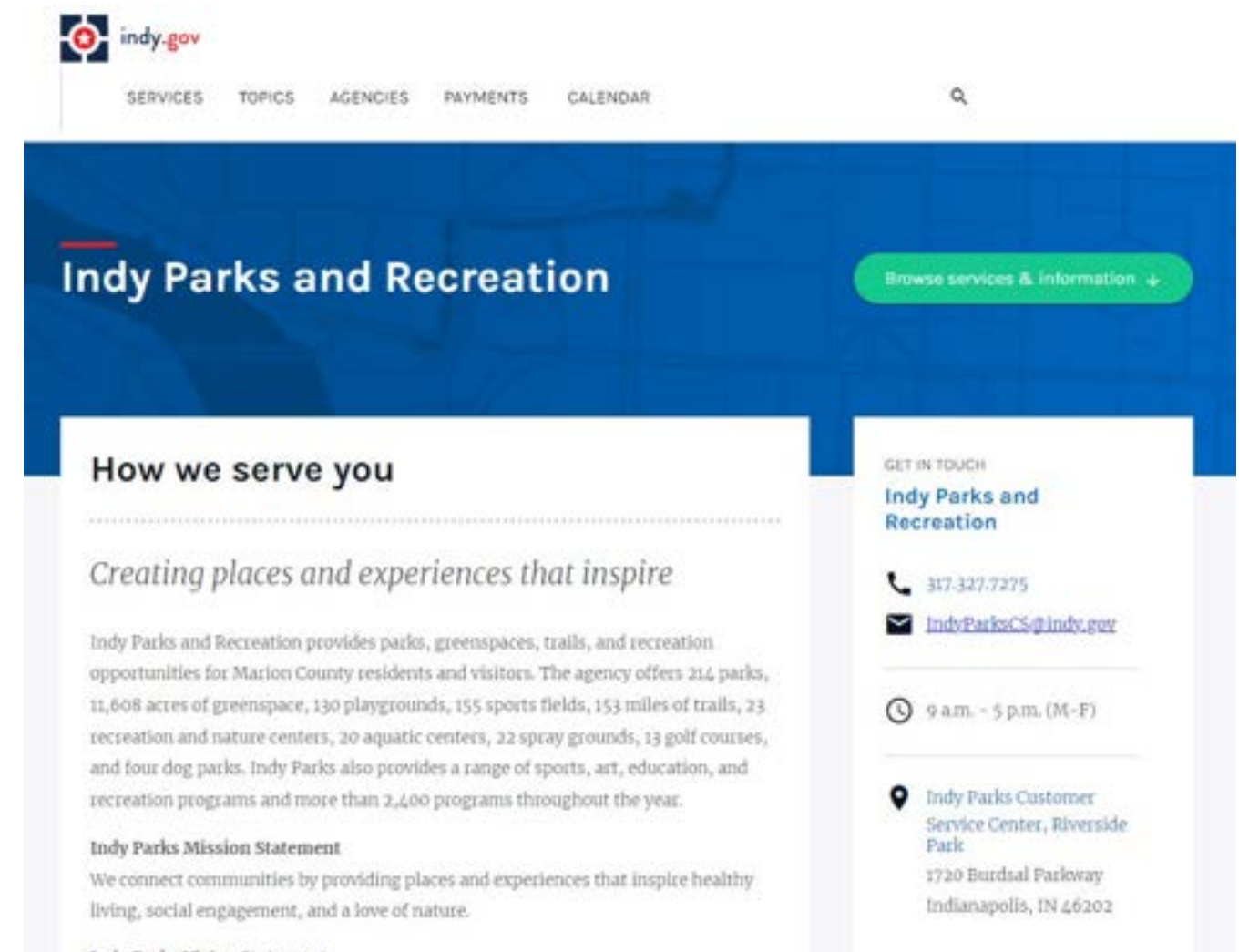
Communication should also be a two-way street between the Department and the community. The Department currently receives formal feedback from “Post-event” and “In-Facility, in park, or on-site” surveys. Other strategies that can be used include:

- Crowdsourcing tools (HappiFeet, Social Pinpoint, etc.)
- Focus groups
- Lost customer/user surveys
- Non-customer/non-user surveys
- Pre-program surveys
- Regular/recurring user surveys
- Statistically valid surveys



### DEPARTMENT WEBSITE

The Department website <https://www.indy.gov/agency/departments-of-parks-and-recreation> is assessed based on the current version and the consulting team recognizes that the site is undergoing a redesign process at the time of this assessment.



Overall, the website is plain, lacks visually appealing characteristics indicative of parks and recreation agency website and is not easy to navigate. Finding information requires visitors to scroll through various page components and make frequent use of the search bar to find information.



## SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

The Department uses various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn to connect with the community. Below is a quick analysis of the Department's engagement for each platform. The information below is based on information pulled in March 2023.



**@IndyParksAndRec**  
38,000 followers  
Avg. 20 posts per week

- Daily postings on average (multiple times per day on some days)
- Great mixture of informative photos and those highlighting community participation
- Minimal engagement from community – very few comments and shares



**@IndyParks**  
16,900 followers  
Avg. 20 posts per week

- Similar posts as on Facebook – mostly informative
- High engagement/views on reels
- Uses the “link in bio” feature that allows users to navigate to jobs page, website, and summer camps



**@IndyParksAndRec**  
17,700 followers  
Avg. 20 posts per week

- Similar posts to Facebook and Instagram – informative in nature
- Low engagement from followers, but high visibility based on view counts available on each post

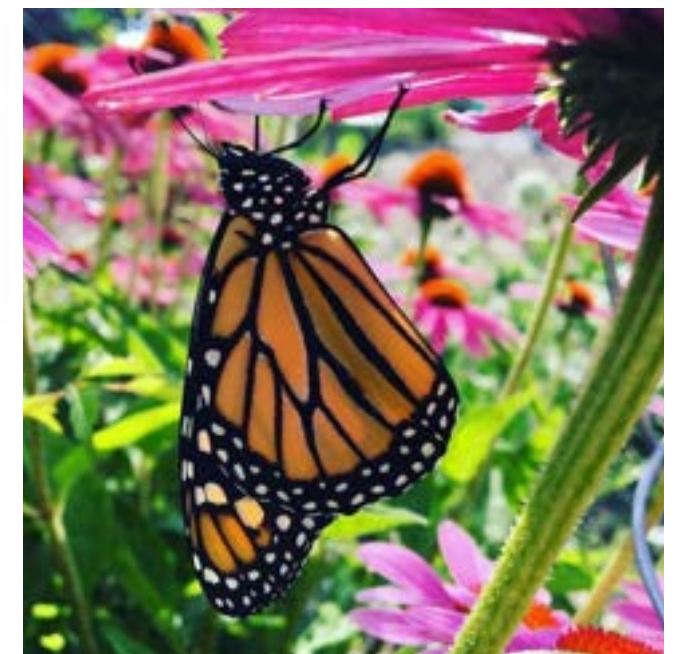
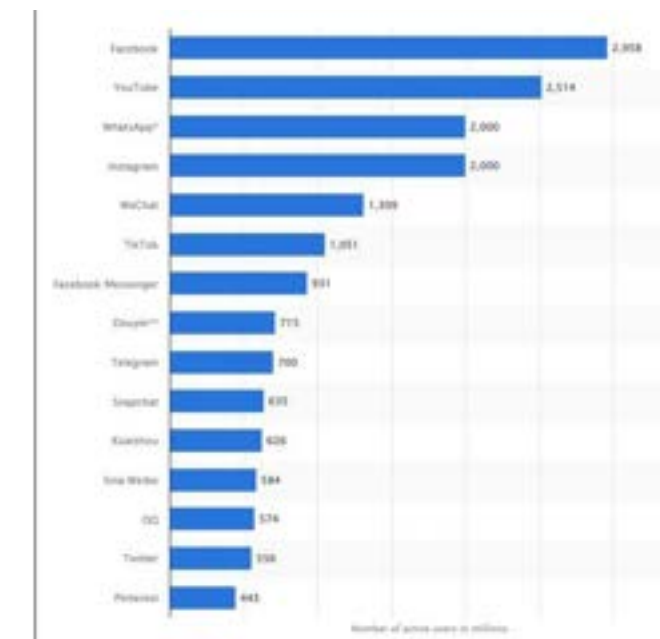
## SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET USERS

Over the last decade, social media has become one of the country's fastest growing trends. In 2008, only 10% of the U.S. population used social media. Today, we see an estimated 82% of the country using some form of social media. With such a large percentage of the population using online media platforms in their daily lives, it is essential for the Department to continue taking advantage of these marketing opportunities while staying on top of social trends and new applications. Social media can be a useful and affordable tool to reach current and potentially new system users.



## SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

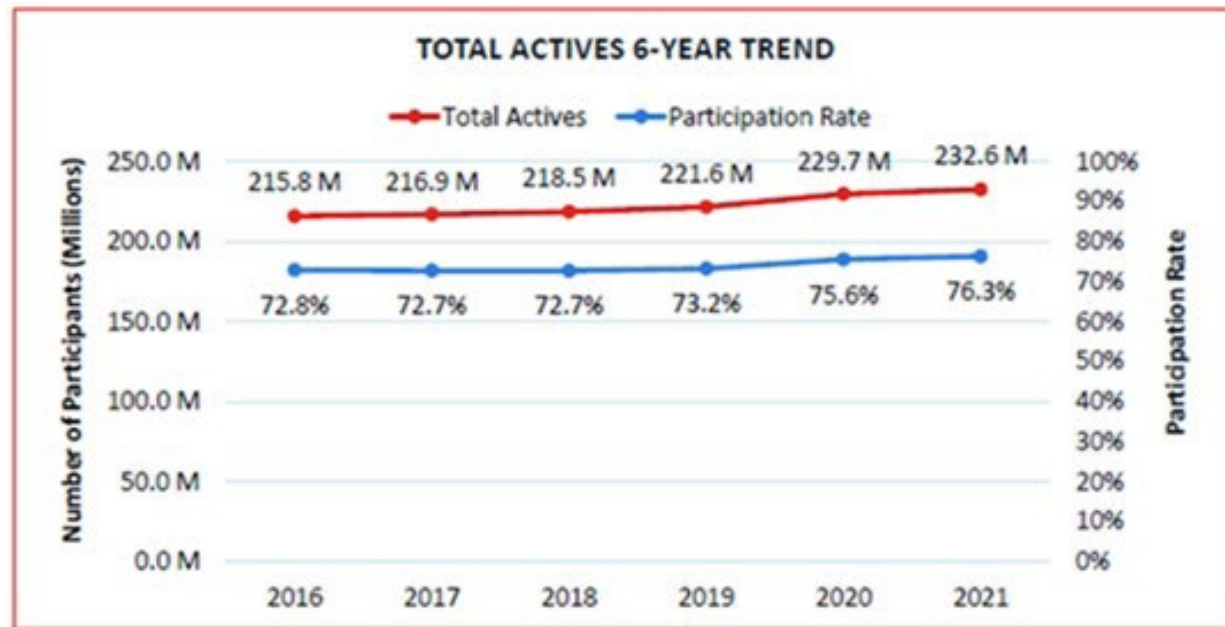
The graph below depicts the most frequently used social media platforms worldwide. As of January 2023, Facebook continued to dominate the market as the most highly trafficked social media platform, with an estimated 3 million visitors per month.





## MEDIUMS USED TO ACCESS THE INTERNET

The below image, taken from Statista.com, depicts the number of internet users worldwide, the average time per day spent using the internet worldwide, and the age demographic with the largest segment of internet users.



## SOCIAL MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department has a large reach across its social media platforms indicating a strong foundation for disseminating information to various demographics if used properly. The key to using social media is to move followers from awareness to action providing opportunities for greater user engagement. This can be done by:

- Allowing controlled 'user generated content' by encouraging users to send in their pictures from special events or programs.
- Leveraging the website to obtain customer feedback for programs, parks & facilities, and customer service.
- Conducting an annual website strategy workshop with the staff to identify ways and means that the website can support the Department's Social Media Trends.
- Determine social media engagement trends through the inaugural Next Practice Partners' social media rankings report – [www.benextpractice.com/npp-2022-social-media-engagement-rankings.html](http://www.benextpractice.com/npp-2022-social-media-engagement-rankings.html).
- Identifying popular social media platforms for different age segments and posting in alignment with the trends on that platform.
- Better engaging on LinkedIn to promote your organizational culture and employment opportunities.
- Using a content calendar to set posting schedules on all platforms that is unique to the trends on that site.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regularly reviewing and adjusting the Department's marketing plan including the components and strategies identified in this report.
- Establishing priority segments to target in terms of new program/service development and communication tactics.
- Establishing and regularly reviewing performance measures for marketing; performance measures can be tracked through customer surveys as well as some web-based metrics.
- Leveraging relationships with partners to enhance marketing efforts through cross-promotion that include defined measurable outcomes.





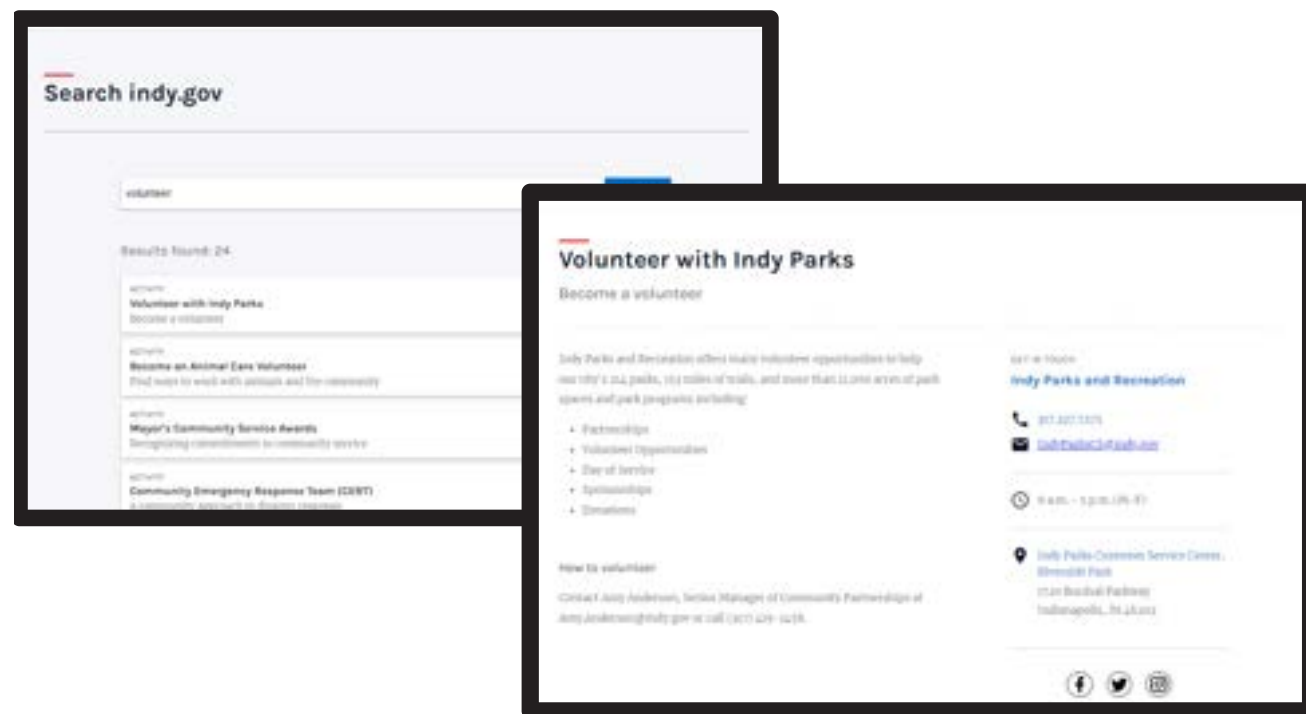
## 6.4 VOLUNTEER AND PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Public parks and recreation agencies' effectiveness rests on their ability to seek out and maintain productive and meaningful partnerships with both community organizations and individuals to deliver quality and seamless services to their residents. These relationships should be mutually beneficial to each party to better meet overall community needs and expand the positive impact of the agency's mission. Effective partnerships and meaningful volunteerism are key strategy areas for the Department to meet the needs of the community in the years to come.

### CURRENT VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

When managed with respect and used strategically, volunteers can serve as the primary advocates for the Department and its offerings.

The Department's volunteer opportunities are listed about midway through the webpage via an info button. Visitors can also type "volunteer" into the search bar located in the top right-hand corner of the homepage to be redirected to a link that takes them to a volunteer information page.



Once on the page, visitors are provided a brief overview of the Department's amenities, a short list of ways volunteers can help, and contact information.

### CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS

The Department leverages partnerships to enhance programs and activities. Some of the current partners are:

- [Indy Arts Council](#)
- [Indy Urban Acres](#)
- [Indianapolis Greenways](#)
- [Marion County Public Health Department](#)
- [Nine13sports \(summer camp\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(free meals\)](#)

Partnerships support the facilitation of programs and sponsorships of community events. As with tracking of volunteer hours, tracking partnerships helps show organizational impact and how well staff can leverage resources.

The following recommended partnership principles will promote fairness and equity within the existing and future partnerships while helping staff to manage potential internal and external conflicts. Certain partnership principles must be adopted by the Department for existing and future partnerships to work effectively. These partnership principles are as follows:

- All partnerships require a working agreement with measurable outcomes and will be evaluated on a regular basis. This should include reports to the agency on the performance and outcomes of the partnership including an annual review to determine renewal potential.
- All partnerships should track costs associated with the partnership investment to demonstrate the shared level of equity.
- All partnerships should maintain a culture that focuses on collaborative planning on a regular basis, regular communications, and annual reporting on performance and outcomes to determine renewal potential and opportunities to strengthen the partnership.

Additional partnerships can be pursued and developed with other public, private, and non-profit entities and there are recommended standard practices that can be applied to these partnerships.

### VOLUNTEER AND PARTNERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

The consulting team recommends that the Department do the following:

- Establish formal volunteer and partnership policies and agreements following the recommended practices in the previous section and in the Appendices.
- Track volunteer and partnership metrics (monetary support and hours) on a consistent basis.
- Establish and track measurable outcomes for each partnership.
- Create a volunteer handbook and make it, and a volunteer application, available online.
- Outline the volunteer process online to minimize staff time answering frequently asked questions.

A complete list of volunteer recommendations and recommended practices can be found the Appendices.

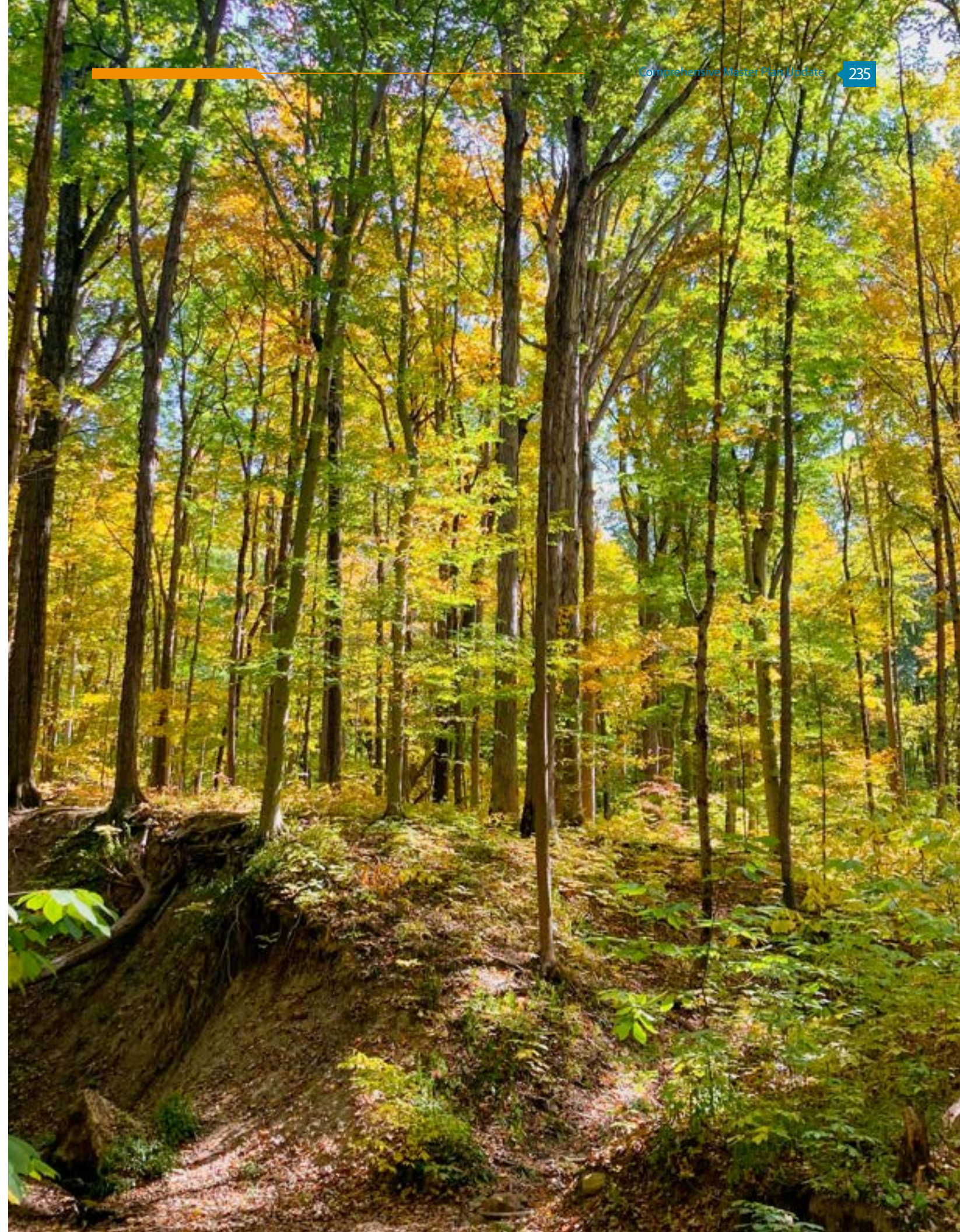


## 6.5 PROGRAM ANALYSIS KEY FINDINGS

The consulting team has highlighted a few important recommendations from this report. These recommendations may change with any shifts in demographics, Department structure, and community and Department priorities. Below are a few areas that stood out in this analysis.

- **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, which will help 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.

- **Volunteers:** The Department has an opportunity to enhance its volunteer program by increasing visibility about opportunities on the webpage, creating a volunteer handbook, and streamlining the process in a way that allows potential volunteers to gather important information, apply to volunteer, and view the handbook by putting this information online while decreasing the amount of time staff dedicates to answering frequently asked questions.
- **Partnerships:** The Department works with several partners to enhance programs. It would be beneficial to develop a formal partnership program that includes measurable, mutually beneficial, outcomes for each partner, annual evaluation, and a database to track





# 7

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND FUNDING PLAN



# 7.1 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

One of the primary responsibilities of Indy Parks administration is to preserve and protect existing park system assets. The priorities and action schedule outlined in this section detail the projection of physical improvements to the park system for the 2023-2027 scheduled project activities. The community engagement process for this Plan found that community members desire high-quality, well-maintained, and equitably distributed parks and facilities. With this in mind, a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will need to provide necessary funding for the ongoing capital maintenance or replacement of existing assets, outlined in the following tables. The recommendation of completion of a comprehensive CIP should be developed and implemented as a working document, updated at least annually to reflect actual revenue collections, refined cost projections, and potential changes in community or park system needs.

The total cost of capital improvement needs for the system far exceed the revenue projections from current funding streams. This Capital Improvement Plan is based on critical needs that have an allocation of \$5.8M annually for the next five years. Indy Parks uses data, tools, and resources to make informed, equitable decisions to invest in new and upgraded parks, facilities, and assets. The Combined Race-Income Index tools and maps, developed using census data combining median household income and race demographics of Indianapolis, helped to identify an equitable true needs assessment to inform where investments are most needed.



In addition to the annual CIP budget, Indy Parks has received the following grants, marking a historic investment in the parks system through grants and external funding sources:

## Lilly Endowment Grant

In late 2022, the Lilly Endowment granted \$80 million towards improvements across 42 parks in the Indy Parks system. The parks selected for funding were prioritized for upgrades based on community input, an equity lens, and likely impact due to usage rates. The equity lens was informed by a recent assessment of park amenity conditions and a vulnerability index determined by census blocks associated with a particular park. The community engagement, project design, and construction schedule will run through 2025. The total grant award represents 14 times the annual Parks capital budget.

## Circle City Forward Initiative

In February 2021, Mayor Joe Hogsett announced a \$45 million investment into Indy Parks facilities through the Circle City Forward initiative. The plan set aside \$20 million for Frederick Douglass Park's new family center, \$11 million for upgrades to Riverside Regional Park, and \$7 million for both Grassy Greek Park and Krannert Park. In addition to the Circle City Forward Initiative, the City has established funding priorities for park investments, committing an additional \$67 million in funds dedicated to parks projects. The City is also leveraging an additional \$862 million in Department of Public Works and Department of Metropolitan Development funds for various infrastructure and development projects within a half-mile of the parks.

## American Rescue Plan Act

Announced by Mayor Joe Hogsett in October 2021, Indy Parks will use \$17.3 million in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to transform its playgrounds. 28 playgrounds in 26 parks have been selected as part of this project.

The following pages outline the 2023-2027 capital needs that have been identified to support the Plan. Each of the park improvement projects detail the project number, project name, description, activity (e.g. planning, design, construction, land acquisition, or miscellaneous), the anticipated local CIP cost amount, and other funding amounts.





## 7.2 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### 2023

Project Number	Project Name	Description	Activities				Local CIP Cost Amount
			Planning	Design	Construction	Miscellaneous	
2023 Anticipated Project Costs							
Aquatic/Pools							
PA-17-063	Andrew Ramsey Splash Pad Renovation	Renovate Splash Pad with new amenities and mechanical components.			X		\$ 526,834
PA-21-011	Windsor Village Splash Pad Chemical Storage [JOC]	Install Chemical Storage Equipment and Enclosure to Automate Splash Pad Usage.			X		\$ 131,248
PA-21-011	Windsor Village Fencing [JOC]	Remove Concrete Barriers and Install New Fencing by Chemical Storage Enclosure			X		\$ 18,732
Buildings							
PA-23-XXX	Eagle Creek Earth Discovery Center [JOC]	Paint, Caulk, and Replace Damage Facia Boards			X		\$ 75,000
PA-22-011	Southeastway Park Nature Center [JOC]	Replace Entrance Steps and Railing			X		\$ 125,000
PA-23-XXX	Krannert Family Center CO#2	Additional cost for changes Oct-Feb			X		\$ 200,000
PA-23-XXX	GPAC Canopy Repair [JOC]	Repair fascia boards and structural members			X		\$ 63,288
PA-22-012	Thatcher Park Family Center	Building Interior and Exterior Repairs - Design and Phase 1 Construction		X	X		\$ 270,000
PA-22-012	Thatcher Park Family Center	Install Gym Curtain Like Broad Ripple		X	X		\$ 30,000
PA-23-XXX	Frederick Douglass - FF&E	Furniture Consultant to assist with procuring furniture for new center		X	X		\$ 19,230
Facilities							
PA-23-XXX	Roof Drain Repairs [JOC]	Reconfigure roof drains and flashing at Ellenberger locker room			X		\$ 17,004
PA-23-XXX	Roof Drain Repairs [JOC]	Reconfigure roof drains and flashing at Ranger station			X		\$ 30,000
PA-23-XXX	Park Courts Color Coating	Parks Alliance Funding Riverside Tennis Courts, Gardner, Canyon Basketball			X		\$ 132,702
PA-23-XXX	Parking Lots Striping and Wheel Stops [JOC]	Sealcoat, stripe and add wheel stops to Kuntz	X	X			\$ 58,400
PA-23-XXX	Parking Lots Striping and Wheel Stops [JOC]	Sealcoat, stripe and add wheel stops to IWSP	X	X			\$ 93,900
PA-23-XXX	Parking Lots Striping and Wheel Stops [JOC]	Sealcoat, stripe and add wheel stops to Northwestway and others as budget allows	X	X			\$ 159,500
PA-23-XXX	Park Facilities - HVAC Various Buildings	HVAC Replacements - Unforeseen Breakdowns	X	X			\$ 89,089
PA-23-XXX	Garfield Conservatory Swamp Coolers	Replace Duct work on 7 Swamp Coolers			X		\$ 24,682
PA-23-XXX	Thatcher Dehumidification Unit	Replace water coil for pool unit	X	X			\$ 20,263
PA-23-XXX	Park Facilities - Public Safety Upgrades	Install Security Cameras, HVAC Controls & Locks	X	X			\$ 51,500
PA-23-XXX	Thatcher Family Center Testing	Keramida to test various materials in the basement				x	\$ 2,230
PA-23-XXX	Security Cameras	Perry, Gustafson and Windsor Village demo projects with Johnson Controls				x	\$ 71,250
PA-23-XXX	Krannert Family Center	Sonitrol security for renovated Family Center				x	\$ 6,703
PA-23-XXX	Indy Urban Acres Power	Upgrade power service line to 200A				x	\$ 10,186
PA-23-XXX	Garfield Arts Window Shades	Add shades to windows at Arts Center Gallery				x	\$ 19,000
PA-23-XXX	Exterior Lighting Upgrades	Replace exterior lighting with LED at various facility locations				x	\$ 78,482

Project Number	Project Name	Description	Activities				Local CIP Cost Amount
			Planning	Design	Construction	Miscellaneous	
Sitework							
PA-23-XXX	Forest Management Activities	Planned and Emergency Tree Maintenance Activities	X				\$ 200,000
PA-23-XXX	Landscape Management Activities	Planned Landscape Beautification and Ecologic Restoration Activities	X				\$ 200,000
PA-23-XXX	Washington Park Invasive Removals	Ecologic clearing and invasive removals around Washington Park	X				\$ 50,000
PA-23-XXX	Whispering Hills Monitoring	Replace damaged sampling well	X				\$ 6,860
PA-22-014	Wes Montgomery Basketball Court Pavilion	Cover four basketball courts, color coated and stiped			X		\$ 1,064,000
PA-23-XXX	Wes Montgomery Splash Pad & Site Improvements	Site Improvements for Wes Montgomery Anniversary Celebration			X		\$ 200,000
PA-22-XXX	Bethel Park Football Fields	Design field, parking and shelter			X		\$ 767,298
PA-22-XXX	Rev Charles Williams CO#1	Additional cost for drainage permit changes			X		\$ 186,961
PA-22-XXX	Riverside Promenade CO#2	Remove trees along Burdsal, repave parking areas, add connection to Colts course			X		\$ 85,000
PA-22-XXX	Krannert Water Line CO#1	Add fire hydrant and additional thrust blocks per CIG inspector			X		\$ 16,380
PA-18-124	Eagle Creek Dog Park - Improvements	Install Dog Park Water Meter			X		\$ 25,000
PA-23-XXX	Smock Dog Park [JOC]	Install Donated Kiosk at Dog Park Entrance			X		\$ 28,459
PA-23-XXX	Chuck Klein Parking Lot Lights [JOC]	Add permanent power to dog park gates			X		\$ 137,363
PA-23-XXX	Eagle Creek Dog Park Fence - CO#1	Add lights to parking lot			X		\$ 2,302
PA-23-XXX	Krannert Water Line [JOC]	Change gates from 8' to 10' for mowing requirements			X		\$ 50,000
PA-23-XXX	Kuntz Bleacher Demo [JOC]	Upsize water line for code requirements			X		\$ 123,309
PA-23-XXX	Riverside Adventure Park	Demolish and remove concrete bleachers			X		\$ 37,480
PA-23-XXX	Mayor's Garden Waterline	Tree removals for project			X		\$ 34,000
PA-23-XXX	Eagle Creek Entrances	Install new water line at Tibbs Mayor's Garden			X		\$ 14,127
PA-23-XXX	Bethel Park Football Fields	CHA add service for additional survey & geotech work	X				\$ 4,500
PA-23-XXX	Charles Williams Park	Browning Day add service for electrical engineer		X			\$ 10,840
PA-23-XXX	Eagle Creek Beach	Browning Day add service for additional engineering required			X		\$ 42,050
PA-23-XXX	Monon Caboose	Repair undermined sidewalk collapse			X		\$ 40,000
Playgrounds							
PA-23-XXX	Stout Field Recumbent Cycle	Demo and clean up site after caboose is removed			X		\$ 6,743
PA-23-XXX	Purchase Grilles	Purchase replacement grills for various parks				X	\$ 17,920
Studies & Plans							
PA-23-XXX	Riverside & Coffin Site Plan	Site Plan Refinement & Analysis for RFP Proposals	X				\$ 102,700
2023 Anticipated Project Costs							\$5,800,000



2024

Project Number	Project Name	Description	Activities				Local CIP Cost Amount
			Planning	Design	Construction	Miscellaneous	
2024 Projects							
Aquatic/Pools							
PA-24-XXX	Aquatic Facilities	Replace Pumps, Chemical Controls, Pool Features, Unforeseen Breakdowns, & Bathhouse Upgrades	X	X	X		\$ 250,000
PA-24-XXX	Pool Upgrades	Review pool liners, gutters, walls to get ahead of future issues			X		\$ 150,000
PA-24-XXX	Rhodius Pool Liner	Install new PVC pool liner			X		\$ 180,000
PA-24-XXX	Pool Slides Gel Coating	Gel Coat and Repair Pool Slides			X		\$ 75,000
Buildings							
PA-24-XXX	Brookside Family Plaza Restoration	Restore Brookside Family Center Historic Plaza		X			\$ 500,000
PA-24-XXX	Facility Upgrades	Refurbish locker rooms at various park facilities - Garfield	X	X	X		\$ 150,000
PA-24-XXX	Thatcher Park Family Center Structural Renovation	Renovate Structural Walls, Gym Windows and Paint the Exterior			X		\$ 1,225,000
PA-24-XXX	Design New Parks Maintenance Building	Design a new Park Maintenance Building to Replace Existing Facility	X	X			\$ 125,000
Facilities							
PA-24-XXX	Facility Upgrades	Roof Replacements, Electrical & Plumbing Upgrades etc.			X		\$ 250,000
PA-24-XXX	Park Courts Color Coating	Color Coat, stripe and crack fill various hardcourts			X		\$ 300,000
PA-24-XXX	Parking Lots, Drives and Pedestrian Bridges	Resurfacing & Replacements of Existing Vehicle Hard Surface and Bridges	X	X	X		\$ 300,000
PA-24-XXX	Parking Lots Striping and Wheel Stops [JOC]	Sealcoat, stripe and add wheel stops to Wes Montgomery and others as budget allows			X		\$ 27,300
PA-24-XXX	Parking Lots Striping and Wheel Stops [JOC]	Sealcoat, stripe and add wheel stops to Grassy Creek and others as budget allows			X		\$ 62,000
PA-24-XXX	Park Facilities - HVAC Various Buildings	HVAC Replacements - Unforeseen Breakdowns	X	X	X		\$ 150,000
PA-24-XXX	Park Facilities - Public Safety Upgrades	Install Security Cameras, HVAC Controls & Locks	X	X	X		\$ 120,700
Sitework							
PA-24-XXX	Forest Management Activities	Planned and Emergency Tree Maintenance Activities	X		X		\$ 300,000
PA-24-XXX	Landscape Management Activities	Planned Landscape Beautification and Ecologic Restoration Activities	X		X		\$ 300,000
PA-24-XXX	Dog Park Shade Structures [JOC]	Install Shade Structures			X		\$ 75,000
PA-24-XXX	Eagle Creek Admin Wall Repairs	Rebuild Retainer Wall at Admin Building			X		\$ 100,000
PA-24-XXX	Garfield Park Bean Creek Embankment Stabilization	Mitigate Eroded Embankment & Drainage Structure		X	X		\$ 200,000
PA-24-XXX	Northwestway Park Basketball Court Renovation	Construct two new courts at Northwestway Park using existing parking lot near 64th street			X		\$ 190,000
PA-24-XXX	Wes Montgomery Roller Skating Platform	Design Roller Skating Platform	X	X			\$ 500,000
PA-24-XXX	Riverside Park - Lake Indy Docks	Repair and Install Docks			X		\$ 20,000
Playgrounds							
PA-24-XXX	Park Playground Renovation	Replace Playground Equipment with Modern Multi-Generational Play Features, Synthetic Play Surface and Concrete Walkways		X	X		\$ 650,000
2024 Anticipated Project Costs							\$5,800,000

2025

Project Number	Project Name	Description	Activities				Local CIP Cost Amount
			Planning	Design	Construction	Miscellaneous	
2025 Projects							
Aquatic/ Pools							
PA-25-XXXX	Aquatic Facilities	Replace Pumps, Chemical Controls, Pool Features, Unforeseen Breakdowns & Bathhouse Upgrades	X	X	X		\$ 150,000
Buildings							
PA-25-XXXX	New Parks Maintenance Building	Construct a new Park Maintenance Building to Replace Existing Facility		X	X		\$ 2,367,500
PA-25-XXXX	Brookside Family Plaza Restoration	Restore Brookside Family Center Historic Plaza			X		\$ 1,500,000
Facilities							
PA-25-XXXX	Facility Upgrades	Roof Replacements, Electrical & Plumbing Upgrades etc.	X		X		\$ 200,000
PA-25-XXXX	Parking Lots, Drives and Pedestrian Bridges	Resurfacing & Replacements of Existing Vehicle Hard Surface and Bridges	X	X	X		\$ 282,500
PA-25-XXXX	Park Facilities - HVAC Various Buildings	HVAC Replacements - Unforeseen Breakdowns	X	X	X		\$ 200,000
PA-25-XXXX	Park Facilities - Public Safety Upgrades	Install Security Cameras, HVAC Controls & Locks	X	X	X		\$ 150,000
Sitework							
PA-25-XXXX	Forest Management Activities	Planned and Emergency Tree Maintenance Activities	X		X		\$ 250,000
PA-25-XXXX	Landscape Management Activities	Planned Landscape Beautification and Ecologic Restoration Activities	X		X		\$ 250,000
Playgrounds							
PA-25-XXXX	Park Playground Renovation	Replace Playground Equipment with Modern Multi-Generational Play Features, Synthetic Play Surface and Concrete Walkways		X	X		\$ 450,000
2025 Anticipated Project Costs							\$5,800,000



2026

Project Number	Project Name	Description	Activities				Local CIP Cost Amount
			Planning	Design	Construction	Miscellaneous	
2026 Projects							
Aquatic/Pools							
PA-26-XXX	Aquatic Facilities	Replace Pumps, Chemical Controls, Pool Features, Unforeseen Breakdowns & Bathhouse Upgrades	X	X	X		\$ 300,000
PA-26-XXX	Garfield Park Aquatics	Replace Pool - Slides		X	X		\$ 373,795
Buildings							
PA-21-001	Eagle Creek Lilly Lake Restroom	Renovate Lilly Lake Restroom Interior and Exterior		X	X		\$ 275,000
Facilities							
PA-26-XXX	Park Courts Color Coating	Color Coat, stripe and crack fill various hardcourts			X		\$ 150,000
PA-26-XXX	Parking Lots, Drives and Pedestrian Bridges	Resurfacing & Replacements of Existing Vehicle Hard Surface and Bridges	X	X	X		\$ 300,000
PA-26-XXX	Park Facilities - HVAC Various Buildings	HVAC Replacements - Unforeseen Breakdowns	X	X	X		\$ 250,000
Sitework							
PA-26-XXX	Forest Management Activities	Planned and Emergency Tree Maintenance Activities	X		X		\$ 300,000
PA-26-XXX	Landscape Management Activities	Planned Landscape Beautification and Ecologic Restoration Activities	X		X		\$ 300,000
PA-26-XXX	Central Green Fencing	Installation of new fencing and solar scoreboard at Central Green Sport Field.			X		\$ 225,000
PA-26-XXX	Wes Montgomery Roller Skating Platform	Construct Roller Skating Platform			X		\$ 750,000
PA-26-XXX	Rev. Motel Sanders Park	Sitework Complete Field and Park Facility Development		X	X		\$ 1,435,000
Playgrounds							
PA-26-XXX	Park Playground Renovation	Replace Playground Equipment with Modern Multi-Generational Play Features, Synthetic Play Surface and Concrete Walkways		X	X		\$ 941,205
2026 Anticipated Project Costs							\$5,800,000

2027

Project Number	Project Name	Description	Activities				Local CIP Cost Amount
			Planning	Design	Construction	Miscellaneous	
2027 Projects							
Aquatic/Pools							
PA-27-XXX	Aquatic Facilities	Replace Pumps, Chemical Controls, Pool Features, Unforeseen Breakdowns & Bathhouse Upgrades	X	X	X		\$ 300,000
Buildings							
PA-27-XXX	Southeastway Nature Center Renovation	Renovate Nature Center		X	X		\$ 3,000,000
Facilities							
PA-27-XXX	Facility Upgrades	Roof Replacements, Electrical & Plumbing Upgrades etc.	X		X		\$ 200,000
PA-27-XXX	Parking Lots, Drives and Pedestrian Bridges	Resurfacing & Replacements of Existing Vehicle Hard Surface and Bridges	X	X	X		\$ 150,000
PA-27-XXX	Park Facilities - HVAC Various Buildings	HVAC Replacements - Unforeseen Breakdowns	X	X	X		\$ 100,000
PA-27-XXX	Park Facilities - Public Safety Upgrades	Install Security Cameras, HVAC Controls & Locks	X	X	X		\$ 50,000
Sitework							
PA-27-XXX	Forest Management Activities	Planned and Emergency Tree Maintenance Activities	X		X		\$ 300,000
PA-27-XXX	Landscape Management Activities	Planned Landscape Beatification and Ecologic Restoration Activities	X		X		\$ 300,000
PA-27-XXX	Eagle Creek Ornithology Building Embankment Erosion	Restore Eroded Embankment		X	X		\$ 1,100,000
Playgrounds							
PA-27-XXX	Park Playground Renovation	Replace Playground Equipment with Modern Multi-Generational Play Features, Synthetic Play Surface and Concrete Walkways		X	X		\$ 300,000
2027 Anticipated Project Costs							\$5,800,000



# 7.3 OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

## FINANCIAL PLAN

In order to financially plan for the future, Indy Parks and Recreation’s financial strategies are informed by previous budgets. The Financial Plan below details the operating sources and expenditures, revenues, and staffing funds for fiscal year ending in 2017 through the adopted budget of 2023. Years 2017 through 2021 reflect actual spend and revenue amounts. Years 2022 and 2023 reflect budgeted amounts.

## OPERATING SOURCES AND EXPENDITURES

FUND	Actual Spend 2017	Actual Spend 2018	Actual Spend 2019	Actual Spend 2020	Actual Spend 2021	Adopted Budget 2022	Revised Budget 2022	Adopted Budget 2023
CONSOLIDATED COUNTY FUND	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,300,000
PARKS GENERAL FUND	\$ 24,964,514	\$ 24,776,357	\$ 26,138,850	\$ 29,107,600	\$ 33,181,717	\$ 30,438,447	\$ 32,518,447	\$ 30,420,857
FEDERAL GRANTS FUND	\$ 1,364,540	\$ 1,301,705	\$ 1,069,408	\$ 1,168,370	\$ 761,054	\$ 3,099,251	\$ 3,099,251	\$ 1,997,337
CITY CUMULATIVE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND	\$ 4,260,256	\$ 4,293,652	\$ 4,573,414	\$ 4,599,919	\$ 4,597,692	\$ 4,600,000	\$ 4,600,000	\$ 5,862,000
	\$ 31,589,310	\$ 31,371,714	\$ 32,781,672	\$ 35,975,889	\$ 39,640,463	\$ 39,237,698	\$ 41,317,698	\$ 39,580,194

\*Inclusive of generally appropriated operating and capital funds

## STAFFING

FUND	Actual Spend 2017	Actual Spend 2018	Actual Spend 2019	Actual Spend 2020	Actual Spend 2021	Adopted Budget 2022	Revised Budget 2022	Adopted Budget 2023
Personal Service Costs	\$ 14,911,974	\$ 14,722,379	\$ 15,247,952	\$ 16,386,532	\$ 16,732,421	\$ 18,088,276	\$ 17,788,276	\$ 18,833,602
Council Authorized Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	254.00	254.30	267.84	267.84	267.84	275.00	275.00	306.30

\*Inclusive of generally appropriated operating and capital funds

\*FTE count grew in 2023 to fully account for the transition of Capital, Planning and Facility Maintenance functions and staff from Department of Public Works to Department of Parks and Recreation. FTE also accounts for new FTE at Broad Ripple, Frederick Douglass, and Grassy Creek Family Centers

## REVENUES

FUND	Actual Revenue 2017	Actual Revenue 2018	Actual Revenue 2019	Actual Revenue 2020	Actual Revenue 2021	Adopted Revenue 2022	Adopted Budget 2023
PARKS GENERAL FUND	4,602,538	4,553,416	4,224,829	2,790,228	4,357,069	4,567,340	5,009,439
FEDERAL GRANTS FUND	1,558,052	1,048,015	1,153,059	792,912	794,862	3,099,251	1,997,337

\*Inclusive of generally appropriated operating and capital funds



## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

To help park and recreation agencies achieve financial sustainability, the following sustainability principles have been developed as part of Indy Parks' Comprehensive Master Plan. In order to professionally manage the business elements of a park and recreation agency, either public or private, there are areas of emphasis in which the park and recreation leader must be proficient. These areas include the following:

- **Fundraising**
- **Cost Recovery**
- **Partnering**
- **Government Finance**
- **Enterprise Management**
- **Operational Management**

This is a series of recommended practices for Indy Parks.

No two park and recreation agencies are alike. Their differences stem from how they are governed to how they are funded and operated. The purpose is to assist Indy Parks and Recreation Managers to identify the things that they will need to address to ensure financial sustainability for their agency.

If an agency clearly is familiar with how they resolve these important issues, the future sustainability of their agency will be successful.

### FUNDRAISING

- Continue to partner with friends groups and foundations to help raise money for the system or a specific park.
- Find philanthropists in your community that will support under-resourced parks and have them invest in expanding access to parks, programs, and services through a foundation or friends group established for this purpose.

### COST RECOVERY

- Include senior management staff on all design decisions. Have landscape designers and facility architects to outline the maintenance costs on all parks and facilities they design to ensure their design is aligned with your maintenance operating budget.
- Know the true costs to deliver program services, maintain parks, trails, and facilities, both direct and indirect costs so that the true cost of services can be determined on a unit cost basis.
- Classify the agency's services based on core essential, important, and value-added criteria, then price services that are furthest away from your mission at higher cost recovery levels.

### PARTNERING

- Never allow the private or a not-for-profit group to make money from your facilities without you receiving a share of the gross revenue. Make sure your split covers your true costs and then the revenue desired based on an operating pro-forma from the event they are creating in your park or recreation facility.
- Explore partnerships or private services where you do not have the capital dollars to staff, operate or maintain the facility, park or service that you own to a competitive level.
- Have working, signed agreements with all types of partners to include (public/private, public/not for profit, and public/public partners). This requires separate operational policies on each type of partnership that is established.
- Do not partner with any single group unless you have your own direct and indirect costs determined. Understand the equitable investment the partner or partners are putting into the relationship.
- All partnerships must have working agreements with measurable outcomes. They are to be reviewed at least every two years as a means to hold each other accountable.
- Ask the private sector to develop team building days in your parks and facilities by creating cleanup and fix up days. This builds community support and it will overnight enhance your park or facility to a much higher level and it gives the corporate partner a selling point to their value in the community.
- Determine sponsorship opportunities and levels of sponsorships for your parks system every five years. Use a private sponsorship contractor who knows the value of sponsorships for a percentage of the total amount raised instead of doing it yourself.





## GOVERNMENT FINANCE

- Know the value of your park system less land value for what your assets are worth and where those assets are in their life cycle. This will allow you to determine where capital improvements need to be made and the cost benefit of those improvements to the system.
- Find dedicated funding sources you can count on annually to support your operational and capital needs.
- Develop a Business Development division within your department or agency to pursue grants, establish effective partnerships, create earned income, and develop business plans with staff managing revenue producing facilities to maximize your earned income capability.
- Set up business enterprise systems for revenue producing facilities and programs.
- Develop a cost benefit analysis on all capital improvement projects prior to developing these parks or facility sites to determine if it is financially feasible.
- Reviewing your current financing options sometimes create big savings. Agencies need to have access to cheap capital and refinance if necessary to free up needed debt service capabilities.
- Understand the real details of “Capital.” What are the carrying costs of land, facilities, and equipment?

## ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT

- Design parks and recreation facilities for efficiency, productivity, and to produce revenue that will offset operational costs at a predetermined cost recovery goal.
- Develop an annual revenue plan for your agency.
- Budget for marketing and branding of revenue producing facilities at 3-5% of total costs.
- Study and understand market strategies that will make a measurable difference and improve the economic positioning of the program or facility you are targeting.
- Track user analytics to understand who and how often the system is being used by patrons.
- Understand concession management, what it takes to make it worth the time and investment for you to provide the service versus an outside contractor.

## OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Manage by standards and track costs to implement each type of standard.
- Train staff, regularly, on business principals, cost recovery, cost of service, and customer service.
- Understand the size of the market for core programs and facilities and how much of the market your agency controls.
- Know the demographics of your users to determine their needs and capability of supporting program and capital costs.
- Track employee costs of similar sized park systems. Understand the wages and benefits for all positions every five years to understand how competitive your wages are with other systems. Judge if you are below an acceptable level with or above the standard desired for wages and benefits.
- Employ the right people for the right job, for the right pay, to achieve the right outcome and benefit to the agency. Learn and apply the correct functionality and desired productivity of key positions.
- Reward employees for efficiency and productivity.
- Train staff to understand the management strategies of their supervisors as one way to prepare them for positions at the next level of responsibility.
- Properly train staff in business management of concession operations.
- Develop sustainable performance outcomes to hold all divisions accountable.
- Understand all available revenue sources used by parks and recreation agencies within a given region, state or on a national level that applies best to your local operation.





## FUNDING AND REVENUE STRATEGIES

Park and Recreation systems across the United States today should learn to develop a clear understanding of how to manage revenue options to support parks and recreation services in a municipality-based system on the limited availability of tax dollars.

Indy Parks needs to re-establish a GAPS office to go after grants, alliances, partnerships, and sponsorships, including earned income opportunities. This office should also help write business plans for recreation centers, aquatic centers, and core program areas.

## FUNDING SOURCES FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS AND OPERATING COSTS

The following financial options outline opportunities for Indy Parks to consider in supporting the recommended capital improvements outlined in the Master Plan as well as operational costs associated with managing the system for the future. Many of these funding sources may not be allowed now by the City/County or have never been used but could be pursued through legislative means should Indy Parks see the value in pursuing these funding sources. The following sources have been included in the 2017 Comprehensive Master Plan and the Department should continue to pursue these to ensure long term financial sustainability.

- **General Obligation Bond:** A general obligation bond is a municipal bond secured by a taxing authority such as the Capital Improvement Board or DPW to improve public assets that benefits the municipal agency involved that oversee some of the parks and recreation facilities in the city. Parks help frame the city's image and benefit a wide range of users and updating these parks will benefit the community as a whole and stabilize neighborhoods and other areas of the county.
- **Governmental Funding Programs:** A variety of funding sources are available from federal and state government for park-related projects. For example, the **Land and Water Conservation Fund** is a program which can provide capital funds to state and local governments to acquire, develop, and improve outdoor recreation areas. **Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** funds are used to support open space related improvements including redevelopment and new development of parks and recreation facilities. Transportation Enhancement Funds can be used for trail and related green space development. **AmeriCorps Grants** can be used to fund support for park maintenance. These examples are outlined below:
  - **CDBG (Community Development Block Grants):** These funds are used by many cities and counties to enhance parks. These funds should be used to support the re-development of major facilities based on its location in the City or County and what it will do to enhance the neighborhood and schools surrounding the park which is the purpose for CDBG monies. Indianapolis is focusing on redevelopment of neighborhoods and should seek out these funds as redevelopment occurs for neighborhood parks.

- **AmeriCorps Grants** should be pursued by the Parks Division to support park maintenance and cleanup of drainage areas where trails are located and small neighborhood parks in the City and the County.
- **Federal Housing Grants** can also help support parks near federal housing areas and should be pursued if appropriate.
- **Conservation Reserve Program:** The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), through its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, provides payments to farm owners and operators to place highly erodible or environmentally sensitive landscapes into a 10-15-year conservation contract. The participant, in return for annual payments during this period, agrees to implement a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district for converting sensitive lands to less intensive uses. Individuals, associations, corporations, estates, trusts, cities, counties, and other entities are eligible for this program. Funds from this program can be used to fund the maintenance of open space and non-public-use greenways along bodies of water and ridgelines.
- **The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP):** USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.
- **Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (WFPO) Program:** The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding to state and local agencies or nonprofit organizations authorized to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed improvements involving less than 250,000 acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to improve watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50-percent local match for public recreation and fish and wildlife projects.
- **Urban and Community Forestry Program:** The USDA provides small grants of up to \$10,000 to communities for the purchase of trees to plant along city streets, greenways, and parks. To qualify for this program, a community must pledge to develop a street-tree inventory, a municipal tree ordinance, a tree commission, committee or department, and an urban forestry-management plan.
- **Economic Development Grants for Public Works and Development of Facilities:** The U. S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), provides grants to states, counties, and cities designated as redevelopment areas by EDA for public works projects that can include developing trails and greenway facilities. There is a 30-percent local match required, except in severely distressed areas where federal contribution can reach 80 percent.



- **National Recreational Trails Program:** These grants are available to government and nonprofit agencies for the building of a trail or piece of a trail. It is a reimbursement grant program and requires a 20% local match.
- **National Endowment for the Arts Grants:** The National Endowment for the Arts provides grants to states and local agencies, individuals, and nonprofit organizations for projects that incorporate arts projects, urban design, historic preservation, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and other community improvement activities.
- **Recreation and Park Impact Fees:** The city could implement recreation impact fees if the city wanted to pursue these funds from developers.
- **Internal Park Improvement Fund:** This funding source is created from a percentage of the overall park admissions to attractions such as sport complexes, golf courses, Eagle Creek Park, Garfield Park, or special events in a park and would allow a percentage usually in the 3-5% of gross revenues to be dedicated to the park or recreation facility for existing and future capital improvements. This funding source is used for sports complexes, aquatic parks, regional parks, and fee based parks. This type of user fee does not require voter approval but is set up in a dedicated fund to support the existing park for future capital, maintenance and improvements.
- **Tax Increment Finance District:** Commonly used for financing redevelopment projects. A Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) involves the issuance of tax-exempt bonds to pay front-end infrastructure and eligible development costs in partnership with private developers that are considered quality of life improvements. As redevelopment occurs in the city or county, the “tax increment” resulting from redevelopment projects is used to retire the debt issued to fund the eligible redevelopment costs. The public portion of the redevelopment project funds itself using the additional taxes generated by the project. TIFs can be used to fund park improvements and development as an essential infrastructure cost.
- **Developer Cash-in-Lieu of meeting the Open Space Requirement:** Ordinances requiring the dedication of open space within developments to meet the park and recreation needs of the new residents often have provisions allowing cash contribution to substitute for the land requirement.
- **Facility Authority:** A Facility Authority is sometimes used by park and recreation agencies to improve a specific park or develop a specific improvement such as a stadium, large recreation center, large aquatic center, or sports venue for competitive events. Repayment of bonds to fund the project usually comes from a sales tax in the form of food and beverage. A facility Authority could oversee improvements for the large facilities; such as an aquatic center and sports field complex.

- **Utility Lease Fee:** Utility lease fees have been used to support parks in the form of utility companies supporting a park from utility easements, storm water runoff, and paying for development rights below the ground. This funding source is derived from fees on property own by the city/county based on measures such as the amount of impervious surfacing, as well as fees from utility companies having access through the park. It is used by many cities and counties to acquire and develop greenways and other open space resources that provide improvements in the park or development of trails. Improvements can include trails, drainage areas, and retention ponds that serve multiple purposes such as recreation, environmental protection, and storm water management. This could be a source for the utilities to make a contribution to support the parks and trails in the future.
- **Transient Occupancy Tax:** This funding source is used by many cities and counties to fund improvements to parks from hotels that benefit from the parks in the form of sporting events where participants stay in hotels when they use city or county owned sports complexes or competitive facilities. The Transient Occupancy Taxes are typically set at 3-5% on the value of a hotel room a 1% sales tax that can be dedicated for park and recreation improvement purposes as well. Because of the value that parks could provide in the way of events, sports, entertainment and cultural events hotels in the area that benefit could be set up with a portion of their occupancy funds going to support park and recreation related improvements. This funding source should be implemented progressively by other communities as the city/county increases the number of events it sponsors or develops. Tracking the economic value back to the hotels is important to build trust with the hotel business community.
- **Food and Beverage Tax:** This 1/8% sales tax is currently used by other cities and counties in Indiana and requires voter approval. These dollars can come from the local community as well as visitors to the city and county to help pay for a bond to finance future park and recreation related improvements. Food and beverage taxes are very well accepted in most Midwest communities.
- **Accumulated Building Funds:** In Indiana under code 36-10-3 cities and counties can establish a Cumulative Building fund for Indy Parks. These funds can provide money for building, remodeling and repairing park and recreation facilities. In addition the city and counties can purchase land with these funds for park and recreation purposes. The Cumulative Building Fund must be proposed by a Park Board and then approved by the city or county council in order to levy the tax. The Cumulative Building Fund can provide capital funds that are best utilized for improvements to existing park and recreation amenities and facilities in the system.
- **Capital Improvement Fee:** A capital improvement fee can be added to an admission fee to a recreation facility or park attraction to help pay back the cost of developing the facility or attraction. This fee is usually applied to golf courses, aquatic facilities, recreation centers, stadiums, amphitheaters, and special use facilities such as sports complexes. The funds generated can be used either to pay back the cost of the capital improvement on a revenue bond that was used to develop the facility. Capital improvement fees normally are \$5 per person for playing on the improved site or can be collected as a parking fee or admission fee.



- **Lease Back:** Lease backs are a source of capital funding in which a private sector entity, such as a development company, buys the park land site, or leases the park land, and develops a facility such as a park, recreation attraction, recreation center, pool, or sports complex; and leases the facility back to the municipality to pay off the capital costs over a 20 to 30 year period. This approach takes advantage of the efficiencies of private sector development while relieving the burden on the municipality to raise upfront capital funds. This funding source is typically used for recreation and aquatic type facilities, stadiums, civic buildings, and fire stations.
- **Capital Improvement Fund Purpose:** The purpose of the Park and Recreation Capital Improvement Fund is to allow for the collection of fees, donations, and revenue from vending machines, and to allow for depositing those fees, donations, revenues from vending machines in the fund for the purpose of future land acquisition or specific capital improvements as may be deemed necessary by the Board for future improvement or expansion of the Parks Department.
- **Partnerships:** Indy Parks has an enormous amount of partnerships in place. Continue to establish policies for public/public partnerships, public/not-for-private partnerships, and public/private partnerships. Establish with measurable outcomes for each partner involved.

## FUNDING SOURCES FOR OPERATIONAL DOLLARS

- **Land Leases/Concessions:** Land leases and concessions are public/private partnerships in which the municipality provides land, or space, for private commercial operations that will enhance the park and recreational experience in exchange for payments to help reduce operating costs.
- **Admission to the Park:** Many park and recreation systems in the United States have admission fees on a per car, per bike, and per person basis to access a park that can be used to help support operational costs. This would really only apply to regional parks or special use sports complexes in city if it is considered. This fee may be useful for large events and festivals that have the capability to be set up as a fee based park at least on weekends. This is not unusual for city/county parks to have fees to access regional parks to support the operations. Indy Parks uses this system now at Eagle Creek Park.
- **Parking Fee:** Many parks that do not charge an admission fee will charge a parking fee. This funding source could work for helping to support special events, festivals, and tournaments.
- **User Fees:** User fees are fees paid by a user of recreational facilities or programs to offset the costs of services provided by the department in operating a park, a recreation facility or in delivering programs and services.

- **Corporate Naming Rights:** In this arrangement, corporations invest in the right to name an event, facility, or product within a park in exchange for an annual fee, typically over a ten-year period. The cost of the naming right is based on the impression points the facility or event will receive from the newspapers, TV, websites, and visitors or users to the park. Naming rights for park and recreation facilities are typically attached to sports complexes, amphitheaters, recreation centers, aquatic facilities, stadiums, and events. Naming rights are a good use of outside revenue for parks, recreation facilities or special attractions in the city/county.
- **Corporate Sponsorships:** Corporations can also underwrite a portion or all of the cost of an event, program, or activity based on their name being associated with the service. Sponsorships typically are title sponsors, presenting sponsors, associate sponsors, product sponsors, or in-kind sponsors. Many agencies seek corporate support for these types of activities. Advertising sales on sports complexes, scoreboards, gym floors, trash cans, playgrounds, in locker rooms, at dog parks, along trails, flower pots, and as part of special events held in the city/county to help support operational costs have been an acceptable practice in parks and recreation systems for a long time.
- **Maintenance Fund:** This is a fund dedicated exclusively for a park's maintenance, funded by a percentage of user fees from programs, events, and rentals, which is dedicated to protect the asset where the activity is occurring.
- **Park and Recreation Revenue Revolving Fund:** This is a dedicated fund to be used for park purposes only that is replenished on an ongoing basis from various funding sources such as grants, sponsorships, advertising, program user fees, and rental fees within the park system. Indy Parks could established a revolving fund supported by all of the funding sources identified in this section and kept separate from the tax general fund.
- **Permit Fees:** This fee is incorporated for photography permits and exclusive reservations for picnic shelters, sports fields, special events that are provided by Indy Parks for competition tournaments held in the city/county by other organizations who make a profit off of Indy Parks owned facilities.
- **Tipping Fees:** Some park systems get tipping fees collected at city/county owned landfills and are redirected back to their parks systems to help pay for the cost of litter pick up in city and county parks.
- **Land Leases:** Many communities across the United States have allowed land leases for commercial retail operations along trails as a source of funding. Explore retail operations that support the needs of recreation users of the trails. This includes coffee shops, grill and food concessions, small restaurants, ice cream shops, bicycle shops, farmers markets and small local business. Land leases could provide revenue to maintain the trails and/or to be used for in-kind matching.
- **Sale of Development Rights below the Ground:** Some public agencies have sold their development rights next to greenways below the ground for fiber optic lines and utility lines for gas and electric on a lineal foot basis.



## PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES

- **Business/Citizen Donations:** Individual donations from corporations and citizens can be sought to support specific improvements and amenities.
- **Private Foundation Funds:** Nonprofit community foundations can be strong sources of support for the Department and should be pursued for specific park and recreation amenities.
- **Nonprofit Organizations:** Nonprofit organizations can provide support for green space and parks in various ways.
- **Friends Organization:** This type of nonprofit is devoted to supporting a specific park. These Friends Groups are a major funding source for parks in the United States and could be considered for Indy Parks.
- **Floodway Funding Sources:** Many cities and counties have used floodway funding sources to support development and operations of green spaces.
- **Local Private-Sector Funding:** Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for development of Greenspaces or Kessler Park and Boulevard Systems through one or more of the following methods:
  - Donations of cash to a specific Kessler Park and Boulevard Systems segment.
  - Donations of services by large corporations to reduce the cost of green space implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a specific green space.
  - Reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support green space implementation and can supply essential products for facility development.
- **Adopt-A-Foot Program:** These are typically small grant programs that fund new construction, repair/renovation, maps, trail brochures, facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment) as well as provide maintenance support. The Adopt-A-Foot program is in the form of contributions that range from \$2,640 to \$26,400 over a five-year period.
- **State Water Management Funds:** Funds established to protect or improve water quality could apply to a park project if a strong link exists between the development of a green space and the adjacent/nearby water quality. Possible uses of these funds include the purchase of critical strips of land along rivers and streams for protection, which could then also be used for green spaces; develop educational materials, displays; or for storm water management.
- **Estate Donations:** Wills, estates, and trusts may be also dedicated to the appropriate agency for use in developing, and/or operating, the parks system.

## VOLUNTEER SOURCES

- **Adopt-an-Area of a Park:** In this approach local neighborhood groups or businesses make a volunteer commitment to maintaining a specific area of a park. Adopt-an-area of a park arrangements are particularly well-suited for the department.
- **Adopt-a-Trail:** This is similar to Adopt-a-Park but involves sponsorship of a segment of a trail (e.g., one mile) for maintenance purposes.
- **Days of Service:** In this approach local neighborhood groups or businesses make a volunteer commitment to help with park improvement and beautification projects and/or help with event production types of projects. This requires planning and coordination with the Community Partnership Manager and Park Managers to determine what materials, supplies, and tools the partner can help source, which helps in deciding which park projects are the best match considering each group's unique skill sets, size of groups, time commitment, and budget.
- **Trade with User Groups:** Recurring groups who frequently use the park are good partners to make partnership agreements with that involve discounts or trades, in exchange for their donation of time, resources, and expertise. These types of partners are already invested and want the park spaces they use to be properly maintained or want to see more diverse program offerings. The partner typically receives a discount on using a park facility or space, in exchange for providing mutually agreed upon goods and/or services that benefit the larger park community. Many of these involve volunteer hours that help with cleaning and maintenance of park spaces or providing free program offerings to the public.
- **Community Service Workers:** Community service workers are assigned by the court to pay off some of their sentence through maintenance activities in parks, such as picking up litter, removing graffiti, and assisting in painting or cleanup activities. Most workers are assigned 30 to 60 hours of work. This requires working with the sheriff's department to help supervise and manage community service workers.

## VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE AND SMALL-SCALE DONATION PROGRAMS

- **Sponsors:** Donations can be received both from individuals and businesses. Sponsorships help underwrite costs for numerous amenities and programs and must be well-planned and organized, with design standards approved by the planning department. Associated costs should be established for each amenity or event sponsored. Sponsors could get recognition through marketing efforts such as onsite signage, social media recognition, or press announcements, depending on the value of the sponsorship. Examples include: sports courts; park benches and picnic areas; arts, entertainment & music programs; health & wellness programs; and fitness/sporting events.
- **Volunteer Work:** Community volunteers may help with park beautification and improvement through "Days of Service," as well as assist with fundraisers. Organizations that are easily mobilized for volunteer work include the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; schools; churches and fraternal/sorority organizations.



## GRANTS THROUGH PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS

Many communities have solicited funding from a variety of private foundations and other conservation-minded benefactors. Some of these grants include:

- **Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation:** Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation has annual grant opportunities to support sports-related equipment and supplies in under-resourced neighborhoods.
- **REI Cooperative Action Fund:** Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI) Cooperative Action Fund directly supports organizations promoting justice, equity, and belonging in the outdoors to strengthen the health and well-being of people and communities.
- **World Wildlife Fund:** World Wildlife Fund offers a number of grants including Reforestation Grants, Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Grants, and the Russell E. Train Education for Nature Program.
- **PeopleForBikes Industry Community Grant Program:** The PeopleForBikes Industry Community Grant Program provides funding for projects that make bicycling better in communities across the U.S. Since 1999, PeopleForBikes has awarded more than 400 grants to nonprofit organizations and local governments in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Their investments total more than \$3.5 million and have leveraged \$775 million in public and private funding for bike-related projects nationwide.
- **The Skatepark Project Grants:** The Skatepark Project is dedicated to promoting the construction of new, quality skateparks located in underserved communities throughout the United States. The Skatepark Project primarily supports projects that can demonstrate a strong grassroots commitment, particularly in the form of planning and/or fundraising by local skateboarders and other community groups. Priority is given to projects that are designed to increase equity in underserved areas, are built from concrete by experienced skatepark contractors and include local skaters in the planning, fundraising and design process. Grants of \$1,000 to \$300,000 are provided to nonprofit organizations and state or local agencies, including public school systems, and public projects.
- **United States Tennis Association (USTA) Facility Services Program:** The USTA offers business development, advocacy, technical, and financial support to improve or construct tennis facilities across the country. In addition, each applicant will be appointed a project consultant from the USTA national staff who will deliver personalized support and service.
- **The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation Grant Program:** Municipal entities, local nonprofits and public schools are eligible to apply to support the planting of fruitful trees and plants to alleviate hunger, combat global warming, strengthen communities, and improve the surrounding environment. Trees can be planted at community gardens, city and state parks, low-income neighborhoods, Native American reservations, schools, and other locations where they will serve the greater community. The Foundation provides high-quality trees and shrubs, equipment, on-site orchard design expertise and oversight, horticultural workshops, and aftercare training and manuals.

- **Waste Management Charitable Giving:** Waste Management offers charitable gifts to promote civic pride, economic development, and revitalization. Waste Management primarily supports environmental initiatives, including promoting parklands and green spaces for people to enjoy and play, and environmental education initiatives targeted at middle and high school students. Eligible entities include 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and public organizations.
- **Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative:** The Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative accepts applications quarterly from nonprofit or tax exempt groups (clubs and associations), public riding areas (local, state and federal), outdoor enthusiast associations, and land conservation organizations, and communities with an interest in protecting, improving, expanding, and/or maintaining access for safe, responsible and sustainable use by motorized off-road vehicles. The Initiative has contributed more than \$3.5 million in funding and equipment across more than 300 projects during the past 10 years to assist outdoor recreationists working to protect, and improve access to public land and educate the public on its safe, sustainable recreational use.

## PARKS AND RECREATION ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

The following funding sources can provide revenue opportunities for Indy Parks, but it will take a dedicated staff person to investigate and pursue the source and manage for the future. The following are funding sources that can be developed for the City.

- **Community Forest and Open Space Program:** Eligible lands for grants funded under this program are private forests that are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75% forested.
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program-fund:** This source is for transportation projects that improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. Projects can include bicycle and pedestrian projects, trails, links to communities, bike rack facilities.
- **Community Facilities Grant and Loan Program-Grant Program:** This source is established to assist communities with grant and loan funding for the expansion, renovation, and/or remodeling of former school facilities or existing surplus government facilities that have an existing, or future, community use. Facilities may be space for community gatherings and functions, recreational athletic facilities for community members, particularly youth. These include space for non-for-profit offices, childcare, community education, theater, senior centers, youth centers, and after school programs.
- **American Hiking Society:** Fund on a national basis for promoting and protecting foot trails and the hiking experience.
- **The Helen R. Buck Foundation:** This foundation provides funding for playground equipment and recreation activities.
- **Deupree Family Foundation:** The Deupree Family Foundation provides grants for recreation, parks/ playgrounds, and children/youth, on a national basis. This foundation supports building/renovation, equipment, general/operating support, program development, and seed money.



- **The John P. Ellbogen Foundation:** Children/youth services grants as well as support for capital campaigns, general/operating support, and program development.
- **Economic Development Grants for Public Works and Development of Facilities:** The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), provides grants to states, counties, and cities designated as redevelopment areas by EDA for public works projects that can include developing trails, and greenway facilities.

## OPERATIONAL FUNDING COSTS OPPORTUNITIES

The Department has numerous revenue sources to draw from to support operational and management costs that include long term capital replacement costs. The following are funding options to consider in operations of the system.

- **Concessions:** Concessions can be leased out to a private operator for a percentage of gross profits.
- **Parking Fees:** During major special events, the park system could charge a \$5 parking fee for special events in the parks.
- **Field Permits:** The district can issue recreational use permits for activities, practice, or games. Permits should cover the operational cost of each field and management costs. If a private operator desires to rent the site for a sporting tournament for private gain, the district should provide a permit fee plus a percentage of gross from the event for the exclusive use of the fields.
- **Admission Fee:** An admission fee to an event in the park can be utilized.
- **Walking and Running Event Fees:** Event fees for walking and running events in the park can be assessed to cover safety staff managing the event in the park.
- **Food and Equipment Sponsors:** Official drink and food sponsors can be utilized for the district. Each official drink and food sponsor pays back to the district a set percentage of gross. Likewise official equipment sponsors work well for trucks, mowers, and tractors.
- **Advertising Revenue:** Advertising revenue can come from the sale of ads on banners in the parks. The advertising could include trashcans, trail markers, visitor pull trailers, tee boxes, scorecards, and in restrooms.
- **Wi-Fi Revenue:** The district can set up a Wi-Fi area whereby a Wi-Fi vendor is able to sell the advertising on the Wi-Fi access banner to local businesses targeting the users of the site.
- **Program Fees:** Program fees to support existing programs can be employed in the form of lessons, clinics, camps, life skill programs, and wellness and fitness. These types program help support the operations of the park and recreation system as a whole.

- **Special Event Sponsors:** Special events provide a great venue for special events sponsors as it applies to a concert, stage, entertainment, and safety.
- **Room Reservations:** Rental of rooms in the park system can gain operational revenues from these amenities.
- **Special Fundraiser:** Many agencies hold special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects to be dedicated to a facility or district as a whole.
- **Catering:** The Department has many sites that set up well to have high, medium, and low level caterers on contract that groups can use.





# 8

# STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



# 8.1 MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

## 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.

# 8.2 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

## 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 matter

## 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 partnership and resource support

## TIMELINE

The timeline is measured by Short Term: Up to 5 Years, Long Term: Beyond 5 Years, and On-going



## PARKS AND FACILITIES



## GOAL

High quality, equitably distributed parks and facilities



## ACTION ITEMS

## SHORT TERM

- Collaborate on the City of Indianapolis Greenways Plan
- Evaluate facility and space utilization through effective programs and partnerships with the community

## LONG TERM

- Achieve a minimum and equitable land acquisition goal in each township
- Tie the parks system to Plan 2020 initiatives, Neighborhood Quality of Life Plans, Great Places 2020, Promise Zone, 16 Tech, etc

## ON-GOING

- Enhance neighborhood parks to support revitalization and livability
- Ensure that all ages are represented in the park with appropriate amenities
- Seek a balance between developed and undeveloped open space
- Develop park master plans or development plan to maximize the park's use and impact on the community or neighborhood
- Repurpose underutilized amenities with newer relevant ones for all core program areas
- Customize facility and park offerings to the demographics of the people served
- Create amenities to highlight historic and cultural interpretation and implement public art amenities
- Improve key recreation facilities each year
- Explore partnerships for future sports facility development to target more sports tourism through parks and recreation facilities in Marion County

## PROGRAM AND SERVICES



## GOAL

Meeting community needs and activating park spaces and facilities



## ACTION ITEMS

## ON-GOING

- Evaluate the program offerings in the 12 core program areas to ensure Indy Parks is meeting the recreation needs of Indianapolis residents
- Identify diverse and evolving community needs
- Implement a township-level approach to achieve a level of service standard for recreation programs
- Develop new programs for active adults 62+ and older, expand adult sports, outdoor adventure, fitness and wellness, family, arts and culture programs, and outdoor education programs
- Increase program capacity to activate spaces
- Increase interpretation and education of natural resources in parks
- Increase education of historic, cultural, and artistic resources in parks
- Cultivate outdoor adventure program partnerships to provide opportunities for all
- Evaluate program services and costs based on service classifications, cost of service, and race-income index tools
- Create equitable program partnerships systemwide
- Strategically expand services, such as food program and water safety, equitably across Marion County to meet resident needs



## ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH



## GOAL

**Tell our story and increase awareness to maximize access and participation**



## ACTION ITEMS

## SHORT TERM

- Update existing website to a responsive design, ADA accessible website
- Launch a collaborative campaign to communicate the value of parks and trails to the City

## ON-GOING

- Increase resident awareness of and participation in Indy Parks
- Update the communications and marketing plan
- Dedicate increased resources for community engagement and outreach to a wider demographic
- Incorporate technology, analytics, and data-based decision making into marketing practices
- Increase community relations efforts by meeting the community where they gather and utilizing resources through neighborhood engagement, MNAs, OMWBD, friends groups, advisory groups, etc.
- Tie parks, recreation facilities, and programs to health and wellness, food deserts, and public safety

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE



## GOAL

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



## ACTION ITEMS

## SHORT TERM

- Update the asset maintenance lifecycle report
- Develop an amenity replacement schedule

## ON-GOING

- Actively connect and collaborate with other City Departments and initiatives (such as DMD (facilities/amenities), OPHS (programs/services), DPW (facility/amenity maintenance))
- Work closely with the Department of Public Works, Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, AmeriCorps, youth programs like TeenWorks, corporate volunteers, and more to support park maintenance and beautification
- Develop maintenance standards to guide maintenance practices
- Institute demonstrated management practices and measure performance in park and recreation services based on National Recreation and Park Association's Recommended Practices
- Increase volunteer support
- Review and update risk management policies, and train staff on risk management procedures
- Establish dedicated goals for staff training and professional development for staff at all levels, include trainings related to equity & inclusion, customer service, specialized skill development, and opportunities through national and regional park & recreation organizations
- Collaborate with staff on improved communication, transparency, and internal processes, setting clear goals and expectations, and improving systems for consistency and accountability



## FINANCE



## GOAL

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



## ACTION ITEMS

## SHORT TERM

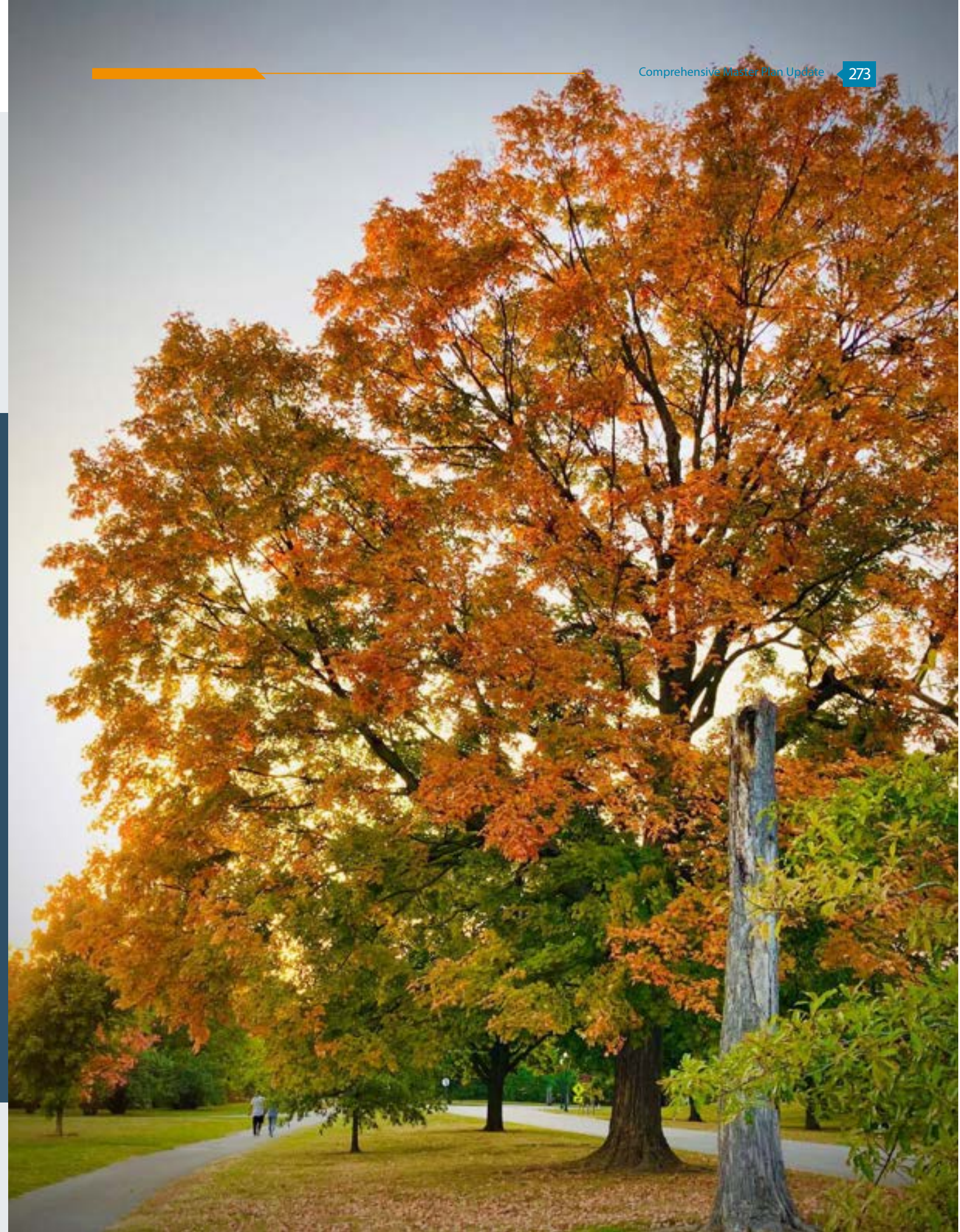
- Develop an new income strategy through grants, alliances, partnerships, and sponsorships

## LONG TERM

- Meet per capita funding goal

## ON-GOING

- Develop creative financing options for the department
- Seek a dedicated funding source to support operations and maintenance standards
- Engage with advisory groups, foundations, and volunteer groups to support recreation facilities/parks programs
- Develop stronger partnerships for facilities to raise more operational and capital dollars for the system
- Collaborate to track the economic impact of parks and trails to the city





# 9

# CONCLUSION



## 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, 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, greenspaces, 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 **Indy Parks for All**.







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