

YOUR CITY YOUR PARKS

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT 2027 STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN UPDATE



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

The 2027 Parks Strategic Master Plan updates the 2022 plan, building on previous priorities to guide future park improvements and long-term sustainability. The updated plan incorporates community input gathered through meetings, events, and engagement activities over the past several months.

The draft plan is available for public review at www.grandrapidsmi.gov/parks. Physical copies will be available beginning Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at the Parks and Recreation Department and four public library locations (Main Branch, West Side Branch, Van Belkum Branch, Seymour Branch, and Cook Library Center).

Public comments may be provided at the December 1, 2026, hearing or submitted in writing to the Parks and Recreation Department, 1500 Scribner Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, by 4:30 p.m. on November 30, 2026. Comments may also be emailed to parkinfo@grcity.us.

For language or disability-related accommodations to participate in the hearing or public comment process, contact the Parks and Recreation Department at (616) 456-3696

This Plan was officially adopted by
the City Commission on _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge that Grand Rapids is situated on the ancestral homeland of the Anishinaabe peoples, now represented by the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians, and honor the Three Fires Confederacy of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. We recognize the histories, cultures, and enduring presence of Indigenous peoples, past, present, and future, and affirm our commitment to respectful stewardship of the land and water through continued learning, relationship-building, and care for these shared places.

THANK YOU, Grand Rapids residents, for sharing thousands of stories and ideas that made this plan a vision created by, and for, our community. The future of our city is bright because of your continued commitment to the health and sustainability of our parks.

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS
Mayor David LaGrand
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AliciaMarie Belchak, First Ward Commissioner
Lisa Knight, Second Ward Commissioner
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Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
Grand River Network
Grandville Avenue of Arts and Humanities
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUPPORT
LGROW
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

December 15, 2026

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is honored to present the 2027–2032 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan. This plan reflects the voices, priorities, and aspirations of thousands of Grand Rapids residents who continue to reaffirm that parks, natural spaces, and recreation programs are essential to our community's health, identity, and quality of life.

Over the past several years, Grand Rapids has experienced one of the most significant periods of park investment in its history. Supported by our dedicated parks millage, grants, and philanthropic funding, and shaped by robust community engagement, we have transformed neighborhood parks, strengthened connections to nature and the Grand River, expanded recreation opportunities, and elevated maintenance and accessibility across the system. These improvements represent not only capital projects, but a deeper commitment to equity, belonging, and creating spaces where every resident feels welcome.

As we step into 2027, our Department enters a new chapter. We are a dedicated and committed team that has worked to steward these investments and strengthen partnerships across the city. This Master Plan recognizes the reality of our moment. We now manage a large, highly activated, and deeply valued parks and recreation system. Our focus over the next five years must balance continued innovation with responsible stewardship, caring for what we have, ensuring long-term sustainability, and aligning our operations with the expectations and needs of our community.

Guided by community priorities, this plan outlines a clear framework for advancing health and wellness, enhancing neighborhood vitality, strengthening our connected network of parks and trails, and sustaining the long-term care of our public spaces. It embraces resilience, equity, and environmental stewardship, while emphasizing the importance of partnerships, operational excellence, and fiscal responsibility. Most importantly, it positions residents at the center of our decision-making.

This plan belongs to the people of Grand Rapids. It reflects your aspirations for safe, accessible, beautiful parks. It reflects your desire for engaging recreation programs and for places that foster connection across ages, cultures, and neighborhoods. It recognizes the need for natural spaces that support the health of our environment and our community.

I am deeply grateful to every resident, partner, staff member, and stakeholder who contributed ideas, shared experiences, and helped shape this vision. Thank you for your continued support and for your commitment to ensuring that Grand Rapids' parks remain a source of pride, joy, and connection for everyone.

With appreciation and optimism for our future,

Laura Cleypool
Director of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation

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A DECADE OF TRANSFORMATION

FROM VISION TO LASTING IMPACT

Over the past decade, Grand Rapids has undergone a remarkable period of change. Across the city, major public and private investments have reshaped how people live, work, move, gather, and play. Neighborhoods have continued to evolve, the downtown and riverfront are undergoing significant reinvestment, and growing attention to mobility, public space, environmental quality, and community health has expanded expectations for what a thriving city should provide. Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system has been an important part of that transformation.

The 2017 Parks & Rec Master Plan envisioned an ambitious public parks and recreation system, and the 2022 Master Plan Update moved that vision into action. Supported by the 2019 voter-approved parks millage, the City made significant capital investments in neighborhood parks, recreation facilities, trails, natural areas, and public spaces. The plan also placed greater emphasis on equity and access, local ecology and culture, new recreation opportunities, and major downtown and Grand River initiatives. Ongoing efforts such as the Southside Creekways Plan continue that work by exploring new connections between neighborhoods, nature, waterways, and recreation.

The transformation has been about more than physical improvements. A decade of planning, engagement, and implementation has also strengthened relationships between Parks and Recreation and the community it serves. Previous planning efforts have built lasting relationships with thousands of Grand Rapidians, making community building and trust an important part of how the system continues to evolve.

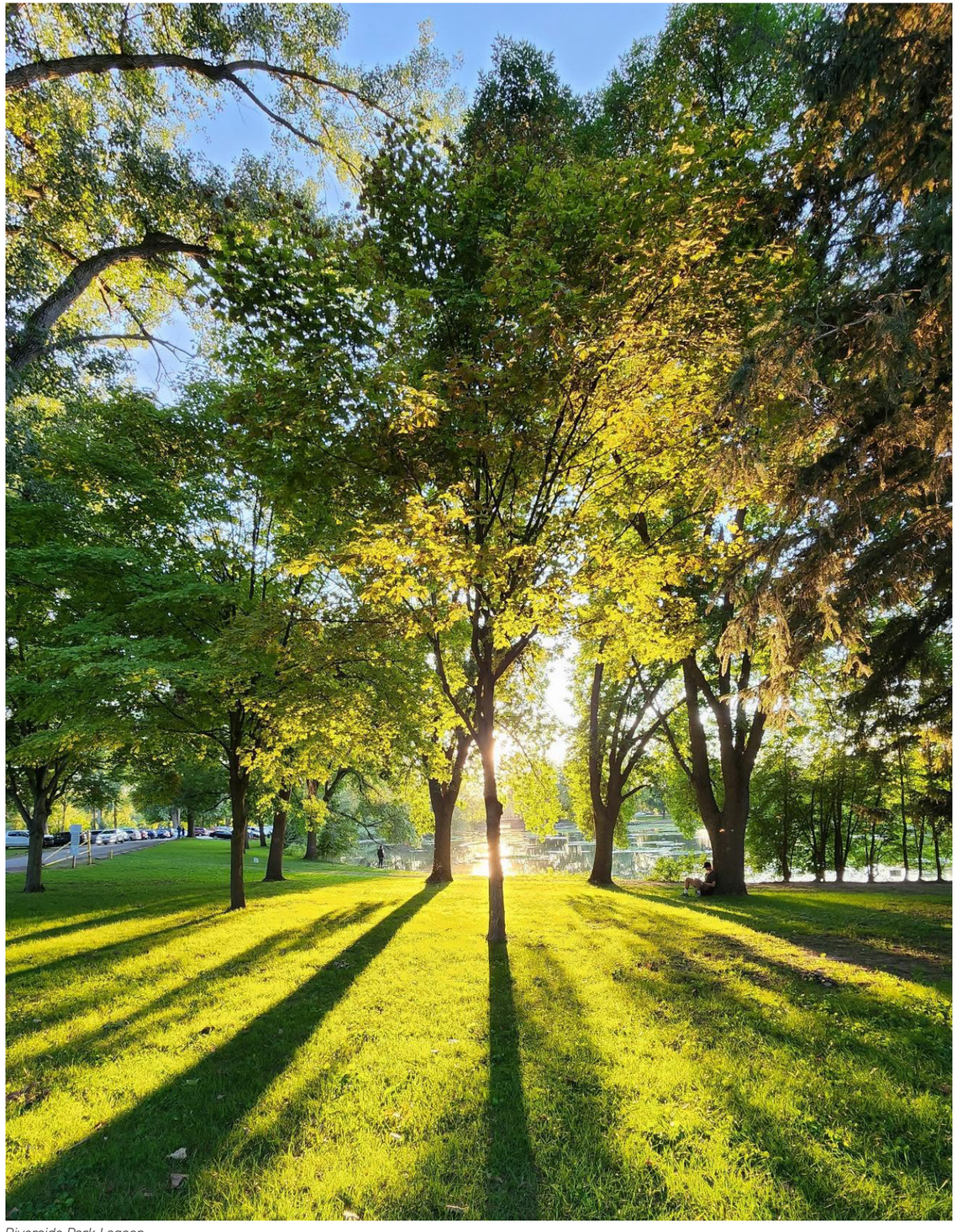
The 2027–2032 Master Plan begins from a very different place. Grand Rapids now has a stronger and more developed parks and recreation system, with more assets, programs, partnerships, and expectations to support. This plan sets the stage for the long-term sustainability of the park system while continuing to respond to changing community needs.

2017 set the vision.
2022 guided the investment.
2027–2032 will sustain and advance the system.

After a decade of transformation, the focus is not simply on what Grand Rapids builds next, but on how well the City cares for, connects, activates, and sustains the parks and recreation system it has worked so hard to create.

This Master Plan does not stand alone. It builds on a broader body of planning that is shaping how Grand Rapids grows, connects, invests equitably, and responds to a changing climate. At the City level, it connects to the Grand Rapids Strategic Plan (2025), Bridge to Our Future Community Master Plan (2024), Community Engagement Framework (2026), The Right Place Strategic Plan (2026), Grand Rapids Mobility Blueprint (ongoing), and the 2025 Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (discussed in Chapter 2), among others.

At the regional level, the Master Plan connects to The Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) Active Transportation Plan, Grand River Greenway, Lower Grand River Water Trail Development Plan provide important connections to regional trails, waterways, natural systems, recreation, arts, and culture. Together, these initiatives provide a coordinated foundation for the recommendations of this master plan and help ensure that park investments contribute to broader community and regional goals.



Riverside Park Lagoon

CITYWIDE INITIATIVES

The Master Plan builds on significant Citywide momentum around neighborhood development, the restoration and connection to the Grand River, and improved connectivity. The Plan aligns with the following recent Citywide planning efforts:

Grand Rapids Strategic Plan

The City's Strategic Plan, established in 2019 and updated in 2025, provides a roadmap for aligning City operations, investments, and partnerships with Grand Rapids' long-term vision. It is organized around six priorities: Governmental Excellence, Economic Prosperity and Affordability, Engaged and Connected Community, Health and Environment, Mobility, and Safe Community, with equity and sustainability embedded throughout

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan directly supports these priorities through equitable access to parks and recreation, connected parks and trails, inclusive programming, and improved park amenities. It also advances broader City goals for fiscal sustainability, community engagement, climate resilience, equitable mobility, placemaking, and safe and welcoming public spaces.

Bridge to Our Future Community Master Plan

Adopted in 2024, Bridge to Our Future is Grand Rapids' guide for growth and development over the next 20 years. Developed through a community-driven process, it establishes five goals: Great Neighborhoods, Vital Business Districts, a Strong Economy, Balanced Mobility, and Desirable Development Character, with equity, safety, and sustainability woven throughout.

Central to the plan is the idea of complete neighborhoods, where residents have convenient access to daily needs, employment, recreation, transportation, and open green space. It calls for development that strengthens community character and resilience and creating places that support health, connection, and belonging. Parks and open green space are an important part of this vision, ranging from neighborhood green spaces and natural areas to regional parks.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update helps advance this vision through strategies for equitable park access, connected trails, inclusive recreation, resilient landscapes, welcoming public spaces, and long-term stewardship of Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system.

"Grand Rapids aspires to build a sustainable city of inclusion, where people in all neighborhoods have the opportunity to live in safe and affordable housing, to move throughout the City in a variety of ways, to earn a living wage through meaningful job choices, and to gather together in vibrant spaces that celebrate our unique cultures and histories."

Bridge to our Future Community Master Plan Vision Statement, 2024

Community Engagement Framework

The framework is designed to make public participation more consistent, transparent, and meaningful across all departments by establishing shared values, processes, and expectations for working with residents and community partners. The framework strengthens trust, informs decision-making, and ensures community voices help shape policies, programs, and plans.

The Right Place 2026-2028 Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for strengthening the Greater Grand Rapids region through economic development, talent attraction, business growth, and community investment. The plan recognizes that a strong economy depends on creating vibrant, attractive places where people want to live, work, and visit.

The Parks and Recreation system plays a role in the plan's "Place" initiative, which commits to strengthening communities and improving infrastructure. The initiative specifically calls for maximizing community placemaking and outdoor



Community members and volunteers participating in the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Green Your Block program.

assets with placemaking projects, including park amenities and recreation improvements. By creating welcoming, connected, and activated public spaces, the Parks and Recreation system advances the broader goals of attracting residents and talent, strengthening community identity, improving quality of life, and fostering long-term community vitality.

Grand Rapids Mobility Blueprint

Currently under development by Mobile GR, the Grand Rapids Mobility Blueprint is the City's 20-year multimodal transportation plan. It will establish a long-range vision for how people move throughout the city by walking, biking, rolling, transit, driving, and shared mobility, building on existing plans such as Vital Streets and the Bicycle Action Plan. The adoption process is anticipated to begin in late 2027.

Because this plan is being developed concurrently with the Parks and Rec Master Plan, Parks and Mobile GR will coordinate where work overlaps, including trails that serve as walking and biking corridors, safe crossings and routes to parks, and connections to transit and shared mobility. Together, the plans support a connected network linking residents to parks, neighborhoods, and destinations across the city.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

GVMC Active Transportation Plan

The Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) developed the Active Transportation Plan in coordination with the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan in 2024. This plan supports a unified vision for regional active transportation. In alignment with the Active Transportation Plan, the Master Plan works to connect communities through access and mobility for enhanced economy, health, and environment.

Grand River Greenway

The Grand River Greenway is a major initiative that began in 1989 aiming to connect communities to the Grand River through an 85-mile trail and over 9,000 acres of public land. Like the Master Plan, the Grand River Greenway project supports river access and activation.

Lower Grand River Water Trail Development Plan

The Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW) has outlined a framework for safe, self-sustaining river access along Grand River. Known as the River Trail, it connects communities to the River and one another.

GRAND RAPIDS PARK INITIATIVES

Over the past five years, Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation has undertaken initiatives and planning efforts to better understand the evolving needs of the parks and recreation system. This work has explored recreation, trails, accessibility, natural resources, operations, and emerging opportunities, providing valuable direction for future investment and decision-making.

GR Outside and Nature Engagement Initiatives

GR Outside works to make outdoor experiences more accessible to Grand Rapids youth by giving schools and community organizations the resources, equipment, and support needed to get kids outside. Since 2021, the initiative has supported nature-based experiences for more than 34,000 people, with an emphasis on reducing barriers to outdoor recreation.

Through its Gear Library, GR Outside provides free access to outdoor equipment along with trip planning, camping and backpacking support, staff training, and experiences co-led by GR Outside staff. The program strengthens organizations that already have trusted relationships with youth, helping them build their own capacity to offer outdoor experiences. GR Outside also partners with Grand Rapids Public Schools to provide equipment, delivery, lesson-planning assistance, and outdoor education support, expanding opportunities for young people to learn, explore, and connect with nature.

Southside Creekways Project

The Southside Creekways Project is an ongoing, community-driven planning initiative reimagining the Silver Creek and Plaster Creek corridors as a connected trail and greenway system. The project explores opportunities to close trail gaps, improve neighborhood connections and access to natural areas, restore creek systems, and support economic and community vitality across southeast Grand Rapids. Planning and community engagement are still in progress, with resident input helping shape potential routes, priorities, and future improvements.

Grand Loop Feasibility Study and Trails Plan

In 2024, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks was awarded the Trail Accelerator Grant by the International Mountain Bike Association. This award supported a feasibility study and trails plan, which identified seven Grand Rapids parks that would help close gaps in trail access. The Master Plan and Bike Trail Study work together to improve access and recreation opportunities across the city.

Dog Park Study

Conducted in 2023, the Parks Department launched a research and planning initiative to better plan for Grand Rapids' four-legged friends and owners. This initiative works to close gaps in dog park needs and expand access in all neighborhoods.



Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. event at Sixth Street Park Grand River access on Earth Day.

CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the past five years, Grand Rapids has demonstrated the important role parks and recreation play in the health, vitality, and quality of life of the city. Supported by the 2019 voter-approved Parks Millage and public and private partnerships, the City has made substantial investments. In 2025 alone, ten park renovation projects were completed or underway, representing more than $51 million in leveraged and millage investment and involving more than 2,700 residents in design.

These investments are reshaping parks across the city. Major neighborhood projects, including the transformation of Martin Luther King Park and Community Center and rehabilitation of Sullivan Field, are expanding opportunities for recreation, gathering, and community programming. Along the Grand River, Lyon Square, Canal Park, East Riverfront Park, and the Grand River Edges Trail are revitalizing urban riverfront spaces and strengthening connections between neighborhoods, downtown, and the regional trail network.

The Parks Department has also expanded access to recreation and strengthened the parks residents use every day. Responding to continued community priorities around affordability and equitable access and supported by the millage, the City now provides free seasonal pool passes to Grand Rapids youth, with more than 15,700 passes issued in 2026. Free outdoor fitness, youth and senior recreation, river programming, and GR Outside further connect thousands of residents with recreation and nature each year. Park conditions and maintenance have also improved substantially since 2018 through increased staffing.

Together, these accomplishments reflect a parks and recreation system growing in quality, reach, and equitable access while setting the stage for its continued care and sustainability.

98
City Parks

1,702 acres
of Parks and Green Space

17 miles
of City Trails

45
Playgrounds

68
Athletic Fields

103
Sport Courts

30
Annual Recreation Programs

76
Capital Projects Since 2021

83%
of Neighbors Live Within a 10-Minute Walk of a Park

PLANNING PROCESS AND METHODS

MANAGING SUCCESS

Grand Rapids is at a pivotal moment. Investments made over the past decade have transformed the parks and recreation system, creating more amenities, more opportunities, and higher expectations for what parks can provide. The City is now responsible for a larger, more diverse, and heavily used system, while existing maintenance and reinvestment needs remain.

This Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan seeks to protect and maxime the investments we've made while strategically addressing remaining gaps and emerging opportunities. As the parks and recreation system grows, sustaining new and existing investments will require coordinated citywide support, shared responsibility across departments, strategic partnerships, and funding that recognizes the true cost of operating and maintaining a high-quality parks and recreation system.

Residents expect parks to remain safe, welcoming, accessible, and well maintained while providing recreation, nature, trails, and community connection. Operations and maintenance are now as important to the future of the parks and recreation system as capital investment.

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The 2027-2032 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan provides a five-year roadmap for Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation. Building on previous planning efforts, it responds to evolving community needs, recent investments, and expanding departmental responsibilities while maintaining eligibility for Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) recreation grant funding. The plan establishes goals, priorities, and implementation strategies to guide future investments in parks, facilities, maintenance, programming, and system improvements.

The planning process combined research, evaluation, and community engagement to assess existing conditions, identify priorities, and inform the Plan's goals, objectives, recommendations, and five-year action program. This collaborative, data-driven approach ensures strategies are responsive, realistic, and actionable.

PLANNING LENSES

This plan is guided by six planning perspectives that collectively assess the future needs of the parks and recreation system, informing the objectives of the Parks Department and defining a strategic path forward.

- **Access and Equity Based Planning**
  Examines how well the parks and recreation system serves residents across the community, including access, barriers to participation, and opportunities to address disparities.
- **Systems and Level-of-Service Planning**
  Evaluates the parks and recreation system, including the distribution, function, and level of service of facilities, programs, and amenities.
- **Asset, Operations, and Lifecycle Planning**
  Considers the condition, maintenance needs, operational requirements, and long-term stewardship of existing parks, facilities, natural resources, and infrastructure.
- **Sustainability, Resilience, and Natural Resource Planning**
  Integrates environmental stewardship, climate resilience, and sustainable management practices into park planning.
- **Community and Demand-Based Planning**
  Uses community input, participation patterns, demographics, and recreation trends to understand how residents use the system today and what they may need in the future.
- **Strategic and Implementation Planning**
  Brings the findings from each planning method together to establish clear goals, actions, and responsibilities for the next five years.

INVENTORY METHODOLOGY

The existing park system, facilities, and program offerings was examined (see Chapter 2). The park system was evaluated in three ways:

- **Quantity:** Is the amount of park space, recreation space, and amenities today appropriate for Grand Rapids?
- **Location & Distribution:** Is park space distributed well across the city? Do all areas have equitable access to the parks and recreational amenities they need?
- **Quality:** What are the defining features and characteristics of the system?

This analysis was sourced from:

- Review of the **2017 and 2022 Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plans**
- **Updated Park and Trail Inventory,** with geographic information system data provided by Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and the City of Grand Rapids
- **Updated Amenity Inventory**
- **Updated Parks accessibility review**
- **Demographic trends,** with US Census and American Community Survey data of population characteristics and trends
- **Feedback** from stakeholders, City staff, and public input verifies gaps and identifies needs

BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

As a tool to compare Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system nationally, the benchmark analysis used data from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics database, which provides standardized, self-reported operational, financial, staffing, and system metrics that enable consistent comparisons among park and recreation agencies nationwide. Agencies were selected from those with complete 2026 NRPA Park Metrics data.

Agency evaluation criteria:

- Population and demographics served
- Operating budget and scale of operations
- Park system size and service responsibilities
- Staffing levels and organizational capacity
- Industry recognition, including CAPRA accreditation and/or NRPA Gold Medal Award recognition
- Similarity to Grand Rapids as an urban park and recreation provider with a highly developed park system

The goal was not to identify agencies identical to Grand Rapids, but to establish a comparison group representing similar operational scale, complexity, and recognized practices. While these agencies provide valuable points of comparison, it is important to recognize that each community operates within a unique demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, and organizational context. Differences in community wealth, available resources, funding structures, staffing, service delivery models, and community partnerships can significantly influence agency performance and reported outcomes. As such, the benchmarking analysis is not intended to provide exact comparisons or establish universal expectations. Rather, it serves as a reference point to identify broader trends, highlight opportunities for improvement, and inform future planning and investment decisions. Benchmarking results should be considered alongside Grand Rapids' unique community characteristics, local priorities, and operational realities.

Peer Agencies

- Albemarle County, VA
- Lancaster, CA
- Reno, NV
- Rochester Hills, MI
- Sugar Land, TX

Aspirational Agencies

- Alexandria, VA
- Columbus, GA
- Greensboro, NC

See appendix for full Benchmarking Analysis.

PLANNING PROCESS AND PHASES

PHASE 1: PROJECT INITIATION

The planning process begins with a review of the 2022 Parks and Recreation Master Plan to evaluate accomplishments, identify remaining needs, and understand how conditions have changed since adoption. Existing Department, City, and regional plans and policies are also reviewed to establish a clear understanding of current priorities, initiatives, and opportunities for alignment. This phase creates a shared foundation for the planning process and confirms the key issues and opportunities that will be explored in greater detail.

PHASE 2: INVENTORY + ANALYSIS

Building upon the initial review, a comprehensive assessment of the park and recreation system is completed. This effort includes an evaluation of parks and recreation facilities, accessibility, trail and active transportation connections, recreation assets, demographics and participation trends, operations and maintenance practices, and organizational capacity. Staff and stakeholder interviews provide additional insight into system strengths, challenges, and emerging responsibilities. Together, these analyses establish a detailed understanding of existing conditions and future needs.

PHASE 3: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community engagement explores how residents experience parks and recreation services today and where opportunities for improvement exist. Through robust outreach, residents and community partners share perspectives on recreation needs, accessibility, equity, programming, and future investments. Community input is combined with technical findings to identify areas of focus for the plan.

PHASE 4: ACTION PLAN

Information gathered through the assessment and engagement phases is synthesized into a strategic framework for the next five years. Goals, objectives, and recommendations are developed to address capital improvements, recreation services, operations and maintenance, trail and mobility connections, funding strategies, partnerships, climate resilience, and long-term sustainability. Implementation scenarios, cost considerations, and funding opportunities are evaluated to create a realistic and actionable five-year program.

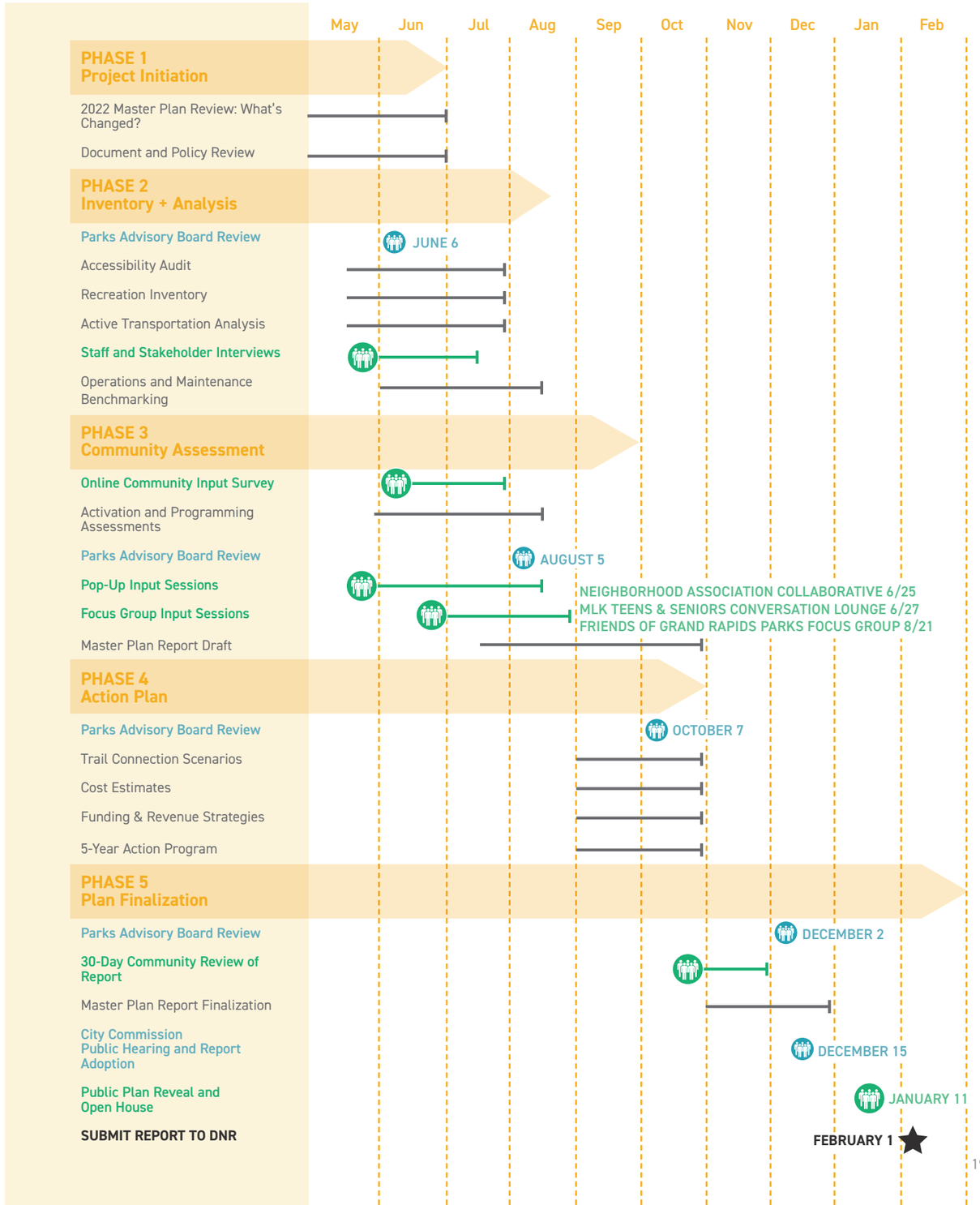
PHASE 5: PLAN FINALIZATION

The draft master plan is prepared and released for public review. Residents, stakeholders, the Parks Advisory Board, and City leadership are provided opportunities to review and comment on the proposed recommendations during a formal 30-day review period and public open house. Following revisions, the plan is finalized, adopted by the City Commission, and submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The adopted master plan will serve as the guiding framework for parks and recreation decision-making, investment, and implementation through 2032.

TIMELINE LEGEND

- Consultant Team
- Community Input
- Review

PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES: MAY 2026 - FEBRUARY 2027



PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

BUILDING ON ENGAGEMENT

The 2027 Parks Strategic Master Plan Update builds off of the extensive community engagement completed during the 2017 and 2022 master plan efforts. An estimated 1,700 residents participated in 2022 outreach opportunities.

The ideas shared by community members in 2022 continue to shape the vision for the Grand Rapids parks and recreation system. While the city has evolved over the years, the importance of welcoming, connected public green spaces has remained a community priority.

Since 2022, great strides have been made on increasing park assets and delivering new and improved opportunities that were guided directly by community voices. This includes major green infrastructure improvements at five parks and green spaces, Spanish translations implemented on all rental forms, new park signage, and marketing materials, and affordable and accessible recreation opportunities for Grand Rapids youth and families.

2022 PARKS MASTER PLAN THEMES

The following themes were derived from 2022 community feedback and remain applicable today:

- **Gathering Spaces:** Parks are a neutral ground, and can be a place where people interact with others and should have park ambassadors to provide oversight.
- **Fitness and Outdoor Recreation:** Local instructors and participants desire streamlined information and processes for renting park space and scheduling activities -- an intuitive one-stop-shop.
- **Simple Improvements:** Lighting, trash containers, benches, and dog bag dispensers were mentioned as easy wins for park spaces.
- **System Identity and Awareness:** Diversify the parks and recreation system and enhance Department communication, such as specific "theme" parks (exercise park, music park, etc.) and bilingual park maps. Additionally, neighborhood-scale maps could provide information about other amenities a short walk or ride away.
- **Events and River Activation:** More live music opportunities, family-oriented events, and recreational activities along the river.
- **Adult and Family Programming:** Provide more multi-generational activities, primarily for active adults and teens.
- **Improved Connectivity:** Promote a well-connected park system and safe network of trails to parks from adjacent city streets.
- **Four Legged Friends:** Create more dog parks and play hours.
- **Outdoor Education:** Offer more educational experiences and opportunities to connect with nature.

2027 UPDATE: FROM BROAD VISION TO EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE

The insights gathered during the 2026 outreach informed a broader examination of how equitable and inclusive practices could be integrated across planning, programming, and park operations. In response, the Master Plan update explores a diverse range of topics through community engagement to capture the diverse perspective of park users. Four key themes were used throughout community engagement sessions to assemble a broad range of input:

- **Community Needs**
- **Operations and Maintenance**
- **River Access and Equity**
- **Unique and Temporary Activation**

The following pages summarize the initial public engagement process used for the Master Plan update.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Identify trail gaps, assess sport field usage, and match parks to current demographic needs and resident priorities.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

Address upcoming maintenance funding gaps through a comprehensive analysis of system operations and financial needs.

RIVER ACCESS EQUITY

Identify obstacles to river access, waterfront programming, and connect the community to the City's greatest asset.

UNIQUE & TEMPORARY ACTIVATION

Envision unique recreational opportunities, temporary activations, art integration, and new ways to use sports fields.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

To ensure the Master Plan reflected the needs and priorities of the community, the project team implemented a diverse set of engagement strategies designed to reach residents where they live, gather, and recreate. These efforts combined broad public outreach with targeted conversations, partnerships with community organizations, and stakeholder engagement to collect meaningful feedback from a wide range of voices. Together, these strategies increased awareness of the planning process, fostered dialogue about parks, trails, and river access, and provided valuable insights to inform the future of Grand Rapids' parks, recreation, and open green spaces.

- **Pop-Up Input Sessions**
  Hosted at popular community events, these booths sparked conversations about park and trail improvements, river access and equity, and temporary programming and activation. They also provided resources to raise awareness of the park system and encouraged feedback on belonging, safety, recreation, and community needs. *Generated 460+ one-on-one conversations with residents.*
- **Mobile Refreshment Tents**
  Quick, fun engagement activities at community pools offered a streamlined version of the full pop-up booth to raise awareness of the Master Plan update and connect with teens and families. *Generated 127+ one-on-one conversations with residents.*
- **Teen & Senior Conversation Lounges**
  Targeted discussions focused on how parks, river access, and equitable community programming can better serve both teenagers and seniors in the community. *Generated 60+ one-on-one conversations with residents.*
- **Online Community Survey**
  Advertised through social media, yard signs, flyers, and pop-up engagement events, the online survey provided a remote opportunity for the community to give in-depth feedback. Open from June 16th to July 30th, the *online survey collected 1,738 responses from park users.*
- **Neighborhood Association Collaborative**
  Neighborhood Association Collaborative (NAC) representatives shared their perspectives as the daily eyes and ears of Grand Rapids neighborhoods. The discussion explored how neighborhood parks are used today, community needs and priorities, and opportunities for greater collaboration and support between Parks and neighborhood organizations.
- **City + Community Partner Discussions**
  Focused discussions with key City, Tribal, and community partners provided additional perspective on how Parks and Recreation connects with broader environmental, recreation, stewardship, cultural, and community initiatives. Discussions with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Grand River Network, the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians, and the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW) explored existing partnerships, current successes and challenges, opportunities for greater collaboration, and priorities for the next five years.

8
Events at Parks Across the City

655+
One-On-One Conversations

1,738
Online Survey Respondents

1
Community Vision



Participants of the Pop-Up Input Session at Plaster Creek Family Park during the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Insect Extravaganza share what they love about Grand Rapids Parks (above left and right), vote on park priority investments (bottom left), and share their opinions about park improvements and river access (bottom right).

POP-UP INPUT SESSIONS

460+ PARTICIPANTS

Across seven parks and community events, pop-up booths collected a nuanced feedback through one-on-one dialogues and increased public awareness of environmental and recreational initiatives in the city. Activities were designed to generate engaging discussions and learn from the community, with prompts to gauge interest on unique temporary programming or activations, identify trail gaps, access concerns, and underserved areas, investigate the community's relationship with recreation around the Grand River and associated tributaries, and collect input on pressing needs and opportunities in the parks and recreation system today. LGROW also participated in several community pop-up events, engaging participants through interactive watershed models and education about responsible watershed management.

Key Insights

Desire for **improved or updated amenities,** particularly play and sports facilities, splash pads, swings, and comfort amenities (especially shaded seating and restrooms) was the most frequent topic of conversation.

Many participants emphasized the importance of consistent **operations & maintenance,** including basic upkeep and repair of existing park amenities. Some participants explicitly stated their priority for upkeep and awareness of the existing system before adding new things.

The most desired new elements in parks were **native landscapes, bike & skate parks, and recreational river activity.**

Participants expressed a desire to **experience and interact with the Grand River and tributaries,** including water recreation, enjoying the river edges, and exploring the ecology and scenic views of the waterways. Barriers to access include lack of awareness of river recreation opportunities and lack of safe trail connections between the Grand River Greenway, tributaries, and neighborhoods, particularly across high-traffic roads.





Participant sharing what they love about Grand Rapids parks at the Lincoln Park Storytime event (above). Young anglers share their investment priorities at the Riverside Paddle Pop-Up session (below).

TEENS & SENIORS CONVERSATION LOUNGE

60+ PARTICIPANTS

The Parks Department hosted a conversation lounge at the Martin Luther King Park Community Center during the 2026 MLK Park Party to promote public awareness of the Master Plan update and to capture input from teens and seniors. The consultant team and Parks staff shared meaningful conversations with participants to understand areas for park improvements and river access equity.

The lounge provided maps for conversation to help teen and senior participants share their experience with parks. Topics surrounding park improvements were related to park repairs and maintenance, new trails or amenities, and underserved areas. These conversations helped identify specific areas for improvement within parks and trails through the lived experiences of local users.

Teens and seniors also discussed their experiences with river access. This includes how participants get to and from the river, water recreation and programming, and feelings of safety surrounding river access. Conversations revealed the attractions and barriers that influence how the community experiences the Grand River and its tributaries.

In addition, open conversations were had with participants about youth, multigenerational, and senior programming and events to help the Parks Department understand the unique perspective of teens and seniors in the community. Conversations explored the unique needs of teens and seniors while developing a foundation for multigenerational connection.

Key Insights

Many participants recognized the importance of **social cohesion among their age groups and as a multigenerational asset.**

Respondents from all age demographics highlighted the importance of **mental health support and awareness** within park settings and programming.

Participants called attention to the need for **increased park maintenance and improvements at existing parks** and green spaces, most notably Lincoln Park, Joe Taylor Park, and Garfield Park.

Conversations surrounding river access identified **little awareness of activities and access** points along the Grand River and tributaries.



Youth create art while their caretaker suggests improvements to park user comfort and access at the Conversation Lounge at MLK Community Center.

CITY-WIDE ONLINE SURVEY

1,738 RESPONDENTS

In effort to achieve citywide participation, the Parks Department shared an online survey and landing page with the community to spread awareness of the Master Plan and gather input. The survey provided a space for in-depth understanding and conversation surrounding the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation system. Community members and park users had the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences related to park use, amenities, programming, safety, and access.

Reaching 1,738 participants, the survey was shared through social media platforms, local news, yard signs, email, and the newspaper. The Parks Department established a landing page to provide respondents with Master Plan updates and information in addition to the survey. The survey reached voices representing all racial and gender identities, with respondents' age ranging from 19 to 60+.

Representative Quotes

"Grand Rapids is growing as an epicenter in Michigan for blending family city life with outdoor recreation."

"I love the natural area and playground at Plaster Creek. More parks should have natural plant areas for pollinators."

"I think I don't know the full extent of what's available from our Parks Department."

"Don't add new parks unless we can keep up with what we have."

"People respond to beauty and cleanliness... Having communities invested in their spaces through beauty, shared decisions, community spaces, leads to better results, in general."

Key Insights

72% of respondents claim trails as one of their most used park amenities, followed by walking paths and riverfront parks.

When asked about parks and recreation programming, the majority select that they are not familiar or have not used them, highlighting an opportunity for **improved awareness of programming and events.**

More natural areas, trail connections, and neighborhood park maintenance are identified as the top three improvements with the greatest positive impact.

When asked which amenities would make park users feel the safest in parks **66% chose maintained and clean park spaces,** followed by lighting.

Lack of time and awareness are the main barriers between users and park and recreation programs, followed by lack of shade or comfort amenities.



Master Plan yard signs at Lincoln Park

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION COLLABORATIVE

The Neighborhood Association Collaborative (NAC) of Grand Rapids is a group of local neighborhood association representatives who gather regularly to share resources, advocate for their respective neighborhoods, and build towards the shared vision to unite, inspire, and serve the community.

Park spaces are often the heart of the community, providing the neighborhood with a sense of identity, connection to the outdoors, and flexible space for gathering and socializing. Many communities feel a sense of pride and ownership in their parks. As the daily eyes and ears in the neighborhoods of Grand Rapids, community representatives provide valuable insights into the usage, needs, and functions of community green spaces today.

The design team, City representatives, and NAC members gathered for open dialogue to understand community priorities, needs, and opportunities for collaboration and support.

Key Insights

Enhance **environmental stewardship** by regenerating local ecology, cleaning up waterways, and expanding healthy tree canopy in parks, while integrating opportunities for environmental education and stewardship. Minimize environmental degradation and **remove invasive species.**

Maintain or replace **aging park infrastructure,** such as sports courts and trails, and ensure park amenities are updated to **meet current ADA accessibility standards.**

Provide **safe and attractive trail connections** and road crossings, linking together community parks, neighborhoods, and trails along the Grand River and tributaries, with **trail-centric development** that activates usership.

Support **diverse programming opportunities** with flexible park spaces. Community event requests include farmer's markets, art and cultural events, educational opportunities, winter activation, and community races.





NAC members share thoughtful feedback for the 2027 Master Plan (left). Creston Neighborhood Association's annual National Night Out at Briggs Park (right).

BASIC NEEDS

In 2022, the Master Plan research team identified the following themes for park users as part of community input analysis. This forms what is now identified as "Basic Needs" for users of parks and public spaces. This Master Plan builds off of the previous understanding of basic needs and adapts it to current objectives. The following are excerpts from community conversations that support the identified themes:

BELONGING

Building a sense of belonging looks different to everyone, however, conversations identified cultural diversity and inclusion as a key component. When asked about the single most important change park users would like to see in parks, one states, ***"Breaking down barriers so that everyone feels safe in parks regardless of your socioeconomic status or race. All parks should be for all people."*** Residents also identified a stronger sense of belonging through partnerships and community opportunities, one participant shared, ***"It truly makes me feel more connected to my city when I see other residents being so motivated to make a space the best it can be for their neighbors."***

RECREATION

Community members and park users identify park recreation as an asset, both through community building and health. One survey respondent recognizes recreation as catalyst for building community, ***"I think athletic fields are one of the biggest connectors for a community. People bond over sports easier than almost anything else."*** Commonly, community members recognize all forms of recreation that parks provide and the impact it has on their own health and the health of the community. One resident recalls, ***"Walking in the parks have been glorious - rest for my physical and mental health, and just for the pleasure."*** Many mention the importance of park recreation for youth development with one encouraging, ***"More disc golf courses, futsal courts, baseball fields. Those spaces would provide kids and teens opportunities to engage in healthy, social activities."***

SAFETY

Physical safety was a recurring issue and seemed to be influenced identity and lived experience. While some respondents reported feeling safe in parks, they also recognize that their experiences may differ from others because of their racial identity, gender, and socioeconomic status. One states, ***"I feel very safe, but I am a large cisgender white man. My experience isn't the only one that matters."*** Another reoccurring mention related to feelings of safety is the maintenance of parks. One park user expresses,***"When they [parks] are not taken care of and maintained, then more vandalism and nefarious activities take place in them."*** Many respondents share concerns about the impact of park maintenance on the safety of the park.

CONNECTION

Connection is both physical and perceived. One participant captures this in the statement, ***"Trail connectivity seems to be a focus that gets everyone together."*** Residents talked about how various efforts such as trail development and collaboration with local organizations increase their sense of community and connection. ***"I believe that the parks are a valuable resource for gathering and bringing communities together. Connecting with local businesses or organizations could help people to feel a greater sense of ownership of their community parks."*** Accessibility is a key component to community connection to the parks and recreation system. A resident shared, ***"It's very important to continue on this track and expand on the outdoor recreation accessibility..."***

COMMUNITY INPUT KEY TAKEAWAYS

Considering the four Basic Needs of park users, the following takeaways were identified from community engagement input and helped inform the Master Plan's objectives.

MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE
Maintain and improve existing parks, trails, and green spaces before investing in major new amenities.

ENHANCE RIVER ACCESS AND ACTIVATION
Elevate waterways as a community asset by supporting paddling, restoration, trail connections, and waterfront experiences.

SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLNESS
Parks are viewed as essential infrastructure for community health as they provide space for improving mental and physical health.

INVEST IN NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
Improve neighborhood parks to ensure that every neighborhood has access to high-quality parks and recreation opportunities.

PRIORITIZE SAFETY
Cleanliness, maintenance, lighting, visibility, and active park use are highly associated with positive park experiences and feelings of safety.

CONNECT THE PARK SYSTEM
Create safe and accessible connections between parks, neighborhoods, and waterways through bike routes, greenways, and trails.

COMMUNICATE WITH STRATEGY AND INCLUSIVITY
Amplify communication about recreation opportunities, park amenities, and events while considering Grand Rapids' diverse population.

INVEST IN YOUTH AND FAMILIES
Use recreation as a tool for family and youth development, engagement, and safety by supporting youth programs, adult leagues, and camps.

PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES
Encourage tree planting, native landscapes, habitat restoration, invasive species management, and environmental stewardship to support recreation and environmental health.

EXPAND ACCESS TO NATURE
Value parks as unique spaces to experience trees, wildlife, native landscapes, and waterways to support the community's connection with nature.

PARKS AND PROSPERITY

Community input reinforces that Grand Rapids residents view parks, trails, and natural areas as essential to their quality of life. These spaces support health, recreation, neighborhood identity, and community connection. Beyond the experiences of individual park users, these same qualities contribute to the broader appeal of Grand Rapids as a place to live, work, and invest.

A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR GRAND RAPIDS

Regional economic development and tourism organizations recognize quality of life as a defining strength of Greater Grand Rapids. In its 2026–2028 Strategic Plan, The Right Place identifies placemaking and investment in public spaces as priorities for strengthening the region's competitiveness. The plan calls for collaboration with municipalities to activate high-impact public spaces and partnerships with outdoor recreation organizations to enhance existing assets and expand recreational opportunities. Similarly, Experience Grand Rapids promotes the city's unique blend of urban amenities and accessible outdoor recreation, where parks, trails, waterways, and natural areas are within minutes of downtown.

These priorities reinforce the value of Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system as a regional asset. The Grand River, growing trail network, neighborhood parks, and recreation facilities help distinguish the city from communities competing for residents, employers, and investment. Continued investment in these assets strengthens the city's identity and supports its long-term economic vitality.

Strengthening Neighborhoods and Supporting Local Investment

The value of parks extends beyond their boundaries. Attractive, well-maintained public spaces strengthen neighborhoods, encourage social interaction, and create welcoming environments for people of all ages. Trails and greenways connect residents to employment, businesses, cultural destinations, and recreation, while investments in riverfront parks and public spaces complement nearby commercial activity and private development. Together, these improvements contribute to more complete, connected neighborhoods and reinforce Grand Rapids' reputation as an active, welcoming, and environmentally conscious community.

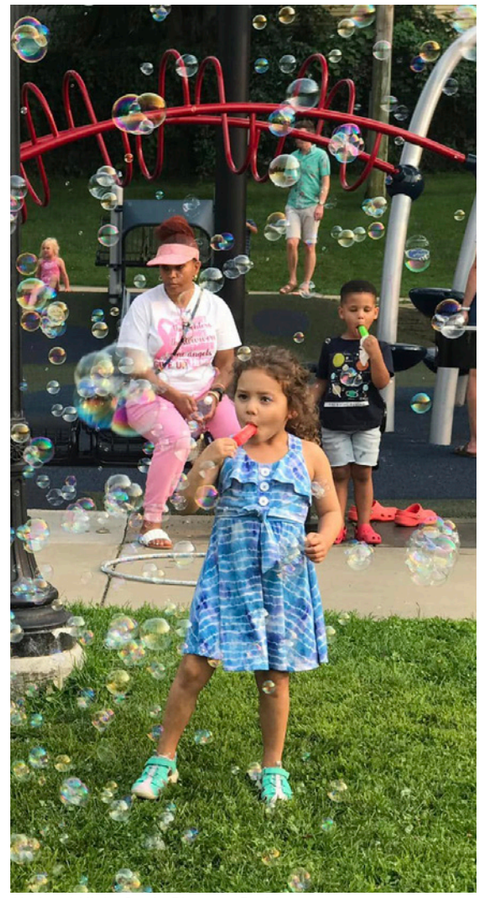
Equally important, these benefits must extend throughout Grand Rapids. Quality-of-life investments are most meaningful when residents in every neighborhood have access to safe, attractive, and well-maintained parks, regardless of income, age, ability, or where they live. Equitable investment helps ensure that the benefits of growth strengthen existing communities while supporting long-term neighborhood stability.

Sustaining a City Where People Want to Stay

As Grand Rapids continues to evolve, its parks, trails, natural areas, and recreation programs will remain among the qualities that make people want to call this city home. From neighborhood parks and community recreation to riverfront experiences and connected trails, these opportunities shape everyday life, bring people together, and foster belonging. They are part of what attracts people to Grand Rapids, but just as importantly, what makes residents want to put down roots, raise families, and stay.

Parks and natural areas also serve as essential community infrastructure, providing tree canopy, managing stormwater, supporting biodiversity, and offering places for respite during extreme heat. These environmental benefits contribute to healthier, more resilient neighborhoods while strengthening the city's ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Sustaining these benefits requires more than creating new destinations. It means caring for the parks residents already love, strengthening connections between neighborhoods, expanding recreation opportunities, and investing in the long-term health and accessibility of the entire system. These commitments will help Grand Rapids remain a place where people not only choose to live, but continue to choose to stay.
Building on these strengths begins with understanding where the parks and recreation system stands today. The following chapter examines Grand Rapids' parks, trails, facilities, recreation programs, natural resources, accessibility, and operations. This assessment recognizes the system's accomplishments while taking an honest look at its challenges, gaps, and emerging needs, establishing a foundation for thoughtful investment and long-term stewardship over the next five years and beyond.



National Night Out in Pleasant Park

2/
THE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM TODAY

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ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

The story of Grand Rapids' parks begins with the story of the city itself. Understanding the forces shaping its ecology, environment, economy, culture, and communities provides important context for the parks and recreation system. Together, these factors point to a future in which parks can go beyond recreation; they can help sustain healthy ecosystems, connect people, improve livability, and strengthen the local economy.

The natural character of Grand Rapids is rooted in its geologic history and the ecological systems that shaped the landscape long before urban development. Glacial processes, the Grand River and its rapids, and an interconnected network of waterways created a mosaic of landforms and habitats that supported exceptional biodiversity across the region.

As the city expanded, much of this ecological pattern was fragmented or obscured by development, leaving many of its defining landscape features difficult to recognize today. Even so, these natural systems continue to provide an important foundation for the parks and recreation system. By embracing and restoring these underlying landscape patterns, the parks and recreation system can strengthen ecological function while helping residents better understand and experience the city's natural heritage.

This ecological framework is organized around four distinct landscape settings—the Grand River Valley, the Tributaries, the Bluffs, and the Upland Moraine. Together, these zones provide a structure for conservation, restoration, interpretation, and future park planning, offering an opportunity to celebrate the diversity that has long defined Grand Rapids.



Phase 1 of the Grand River Restoration - September, 2026
Photo by Isaac Ritchey for MLive

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT AND HISTORY

Geological Foundations

The landscape of Grand Rapids was shaped by glacial activity during the last Ice Age. As glaciers retreated, meltwater carved the Grand River Valley, while the Bluffs and Valparaiso Moraine formed along the glacier's edge during the Crown Point Phase of the Wisconsin glaciation. Deposits of glacial till, sand, and gravel created the moraine's rolling hills and helped define the Lake Michigan basin and the St. Lawrence Seaway Continental Divide. Together, the Grand River Valley, the Bluffs, and the Upland Moraine form the geologic framework that continues to shape the city's landscape and ecological character.

Grand River: Watershed and Hydrology

Flowing approximately 260 miles from its headwaters to Lake Michigan, the Grand River is a defining natural feature of Grand Rapids and the longest river in the state. The river's rapids gave the city its name and continue to shape its identity. Its expansive watershed includes tributaries such as the Rogue, Flat, and Maple rivers, and, within Grand Rapids' city limits, Plaster Creek.

The Grand River's history is one of ruin and recovery. It was used as a sewer by 19th century loggers and 20th century manufacturers, and is still adversely impacted by numerous dams, agricultural runoff, and urban stormwater. However, since the 1960s the Grand River has made a tremendous recovery due to the efforts of community leaders, government officials, and environmental activists. Today, the wastewater treatment facility treats 40 million gallons of wastewater every day, keeping all untreated sewage out of the river [1].

Growing the momentum in 2026, the rapids restoration initiative broke ground on the Lower Reach restoration project after more than two decades of advocacy led by Grand Rapids WhiteWater and a broad coalition of public and private partners. The project will restore the historic rapids of the Grand River while supporting riverine biodiversity and strengthening the river's ecological resilience. "Today is more than a groundbreaking — it's a celebration of what happens when a community commits to a shared vision and stays with it," Mayor David LaGrand said. "Restoring the Grand River's natural rapids will strengthen our environment, expand safe access to the water and create new opportunities for residents and visitors. I'm grateful to the many partners who have worked for years to bring us to this moment." [2].

LOWER GRAND RIVER WATERSHED
Figure 2.1

Grand Rapids falls within the Lower Grand River Watershed, a sub-watershed of the Grand Watershed that extends from Jackson to Lake Michigan.

Wildlife

The Grand River is one of Michigan's longest and most ecologically diverse waterways, supporting trout and salmon populations along with 95 native fish species [3], more than 200 bird species, and approximately 50 mammal species [4]. Freshwater mussels, an often-overlooked but essential part of the ecosystem, filter up to 15 gallons of water each day, improving water quality and serving as indicators of ecosystem health. In 2024, thousands were relocated from the river restoration project area by biologists and volunteers [5]. Invasive species, including the sea lamprey, continue to threaten native fish populations. Since control efforts began, sea lamprey numbers have been reduced by about 90%, though ongoing management remains essential [6].

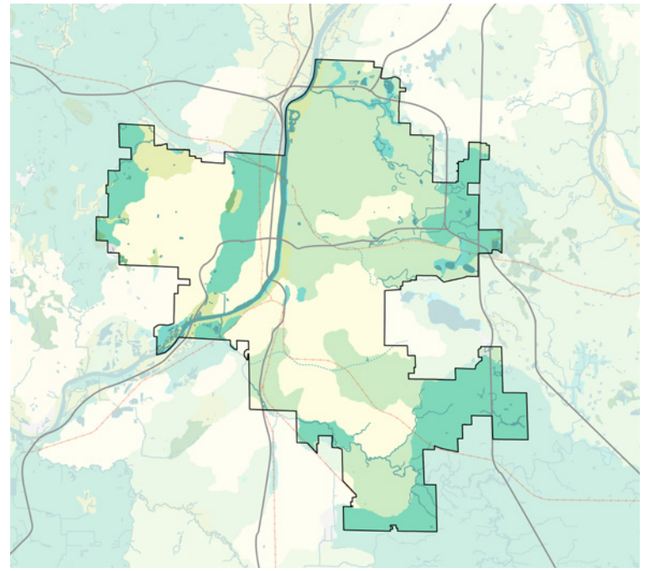
Historic Vegetation

The glacial topography and hydrology of the Grand River shaped a diverse landscape of native forests, wetlands, and grasslands that characterized the Grand Rapids region before development.

Post-Development

Urbanization contributed to significant biodiversity loss on land and in the river, increasing the spread of invasive species and degrading native ecosystems. Although a full return to pre-development conditions is unlikely, ongoing stewardship and restoration efforts are improving habitat and integrating nature-based solutions throughout the landscape.

(1) City of Grand Rapids
(2) City of Grand Rapids News, June 01, 2026.
(3) Michigan State University Extension, May 04, 2012.
(4) FOX17, May 21, 2019.
(5) GR& Riverfront.
(6) Great Lakes Fishery Commission



HISTORIC VEGETATION
Figure 2.2

5,572
square miles of drainage area in the Grand River watershed

13%
of Lake Michigan's drainage basin

107
native fish species inhabit the Grand River system

200+
bird species inhabit the watershed

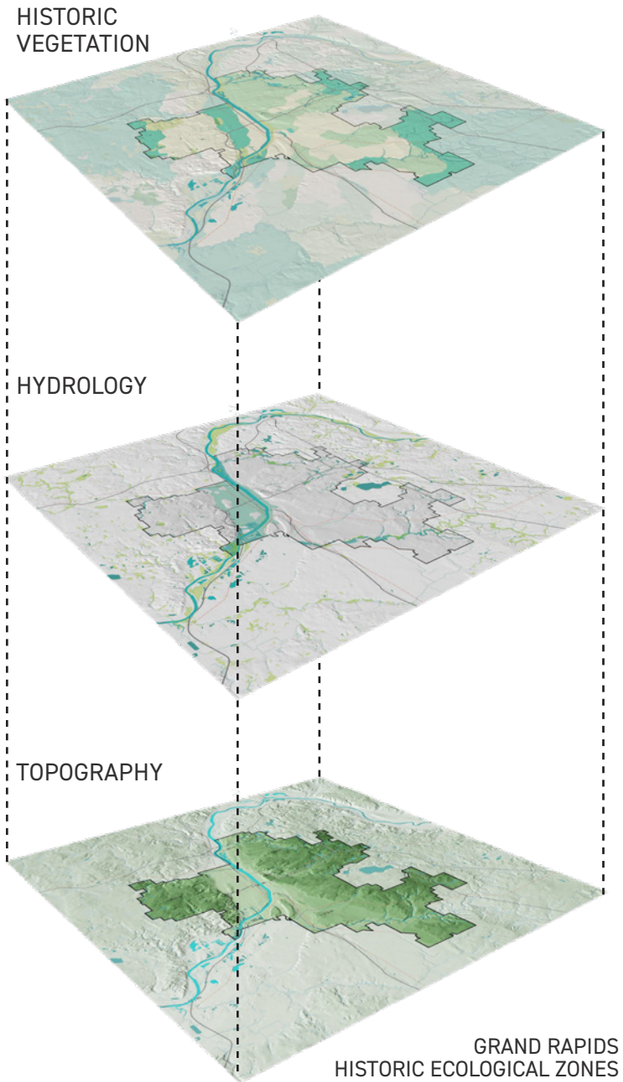
ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF THE GRAND RIVER WATERSHED
Figure 2.3

ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: REFLECTING OUR NATURAL HISTORY IN OUR PARKS

Grand Rapids' local topography, hydrology, and historic vegetation communities create a framework of four distinctive ecological zones: Grand River Valley, Bluffs, Tributaries, and Upland Moraine. These zones can be used as landscape typologies to inform and diversify the City's parks while celebrating the geology, waterways, habitats, and natural heritage of Grand Rapids.

The unique conditions of each zone can guide future park improvements, maintenance practices, planting, habitat restoration, erosion and stormwater management, and landscape design. Along the Grand River and its tributaries, this framework is especially important for creating resilient river edges that can accommodate flooding, stabilize shorelines, restore native vegetation and habitat, and protect park investments while maintaining opportunities for public access and recreation.

The Ecological Zones Framework can also serve as a tool for environmental education, connecting residents with the larger ecological and watershed systems that shape their parks. This narrative can inform interpretation, communication, and branding while reinforcing the role of parks in creating a more resilient and ecologically connected Grand Rapids.



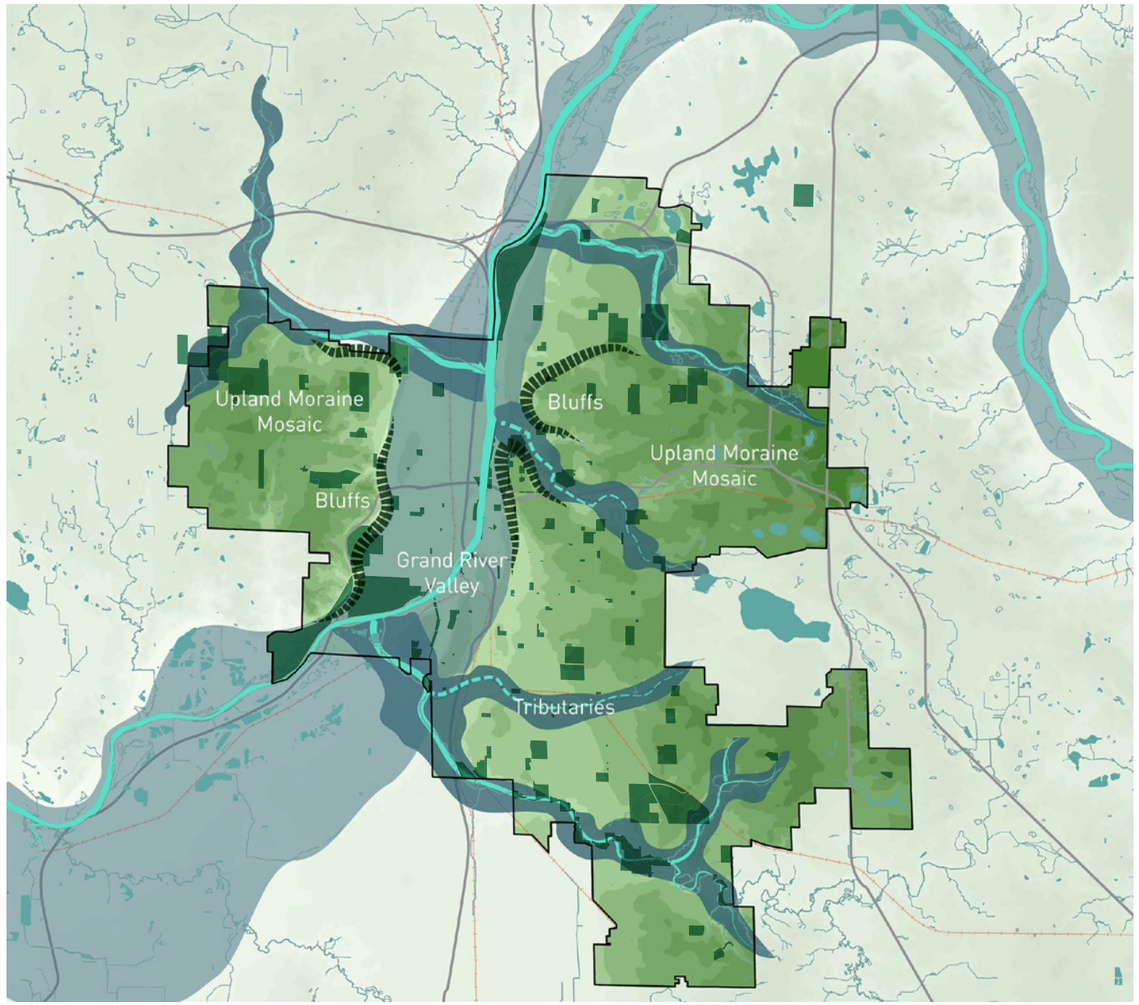
GRAND RAPIDS
HISTORIC ECOLOGICAL ZONES
Figure 2.4

LEGENDS

HISTORIC VEGETATION
- City Boundary
- Water Bodies
- Beech-Maple Forest
- Hardwood Swamp
- Oak-Hickory Forest
- Savanna/Grassland

HYDROLOGY
- City Boundary
- Water Bodies
- Wetlands
- 100-Year Floodplain
- 500-Year Floodplain
- State Highways

TOPOGRAPHY
- City Boundary
- 177-190 m
- 190-200 m
- 200-211 m
- 211-221 m
- 221-230 m
- 230-238 m
- 238-248 m
- 248-274 m



ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
Figure 2.5

LEGEND
- City Boundary
- Water Bodies / Waterways
- The Grand River Valley
- The Tributaries
- The Bluffs
- The Upland Moraine Mosaic

The Ecological Framework grounds Grand Rapids' parks in the natural systems that shaped the city, drawing from the ecological history of the landscape to strengthen connections to nature and inform the parks and recreation system's future.

GRAND RIVER VALLEY

Characteristics

The wide, low-lying floodplain along the Grand River is an ancient channel created by glacial meltwater. It is mostly level terrain with access to the Grand River.

Origin

Ancient channel created by the meltwater of the Saginaw Glacial Lobe exiting the proglacial Lake Saginaw flowing into Glacial Lake Chicago.

General Soil Conditions

Well-drained sandy soils throughout, but wet in depressions and stream channel areas.

Historic Vegetation Cover

Beech-Sugar Maple forest, Mixed Hardwood Swamp, with occurrences of Mixed Oak Savanna and Wet Prairie.

Design Implications/Opportunities

Mostly level terrain with proximity and views to the Grand River.

» Potential for flood resilience interventions for minimizing risk and restoring floodplain function.



BLUFFS

Characteristics

The Bluffs are dramatic topographic transition areas from the Grand River Valley to the rolling Upland Moraine landscape, providing viewpoints over the valley landscape.

Origin

Topographic transition from the Grand River Valley to the Valparaiso Moraine, both formed by glaciation.

General Soil Conditions

Typically well-drained to excessively drained soils with steep slopes.

Historic Vegetation Cover

Dry conditions support Black Oak Barrens, with some White Pine and White Oak.

Design Implications/Opportunities

» Views into the Grand River Valley can be capitalized through restored open savanna landscape.

» Slopes may be challenging in some locations and erosion may need to be managed.

» Vegetation should be carefully selected as soils tend to be excessively drained.



TRIBUTARIES

Characteristics

The Tributaries are small rivers and streams that drain to the Grand River, provide ecological corridors that are ideal for trail connections, and offer unique landscape qualities, distinct from their surroundings.

Origin

Smaller rivers and streams carved by drainage of the larger watershed into the Grand River.

General Soil Conditions

Moderate to well-drained along ravine slopes, poorly drained in the valleys.

Historic Vegetation Cover

Shrub Swamp/Emergent Marsh in some locations, with inclusions of unique vegetation communities.

Design Implications/Opportunities

» Potentially unique areas with distinctly different landscape qualities than the surrounding landscape.

» Stream stabilization and habitat restoration is likely needed as most drainage areas may suffer from urban stream syndrome issues.

» Tributary corridors may also be ideal for trail connections and wildlife corridors.



UPLAND MORAINE

Characteristics

Grand Rapids' landscape is part of the Valparaiso Terminal Moraine, formed by glaciation around the Lake Michigan basin. The Moraine has generally well drained soils, providing good opportunities for stormwater management.

Origin

Part of the Valparaiso Terminal Moraine formed during the last glacial period.

General Soil Conditions

Variable from Sandy, Sandy Loam, to Loam; trending respectively from dry/well-drained, to more mesic conditions.

Historic Vegetation Cover

Mosaic of Mixed Oak Savanna, Oak-Hickory Forest, and Beech-Sugar Maple Forest.

Design Implications/Opportunities

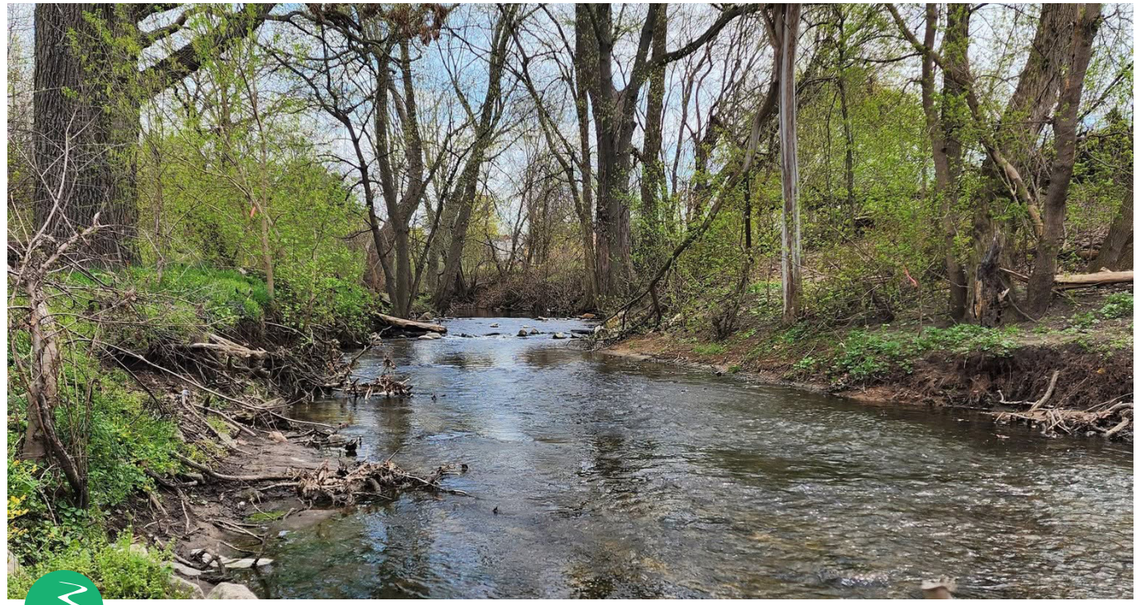
» Generally good soils and drainage.

» Sandy areas may be more drought-prone than historically loamy soils.

» Consider potential for upland stormwater management such as rain gardens and other infiltration areas.



Riverside Park
Grand River Valley Ecological Zone



Wilcox Park
Tributaries Ecological Zone



Lookout Park
Bluffs Ecological Zone



Richmond Park
Upland Moraine Ecological Zone

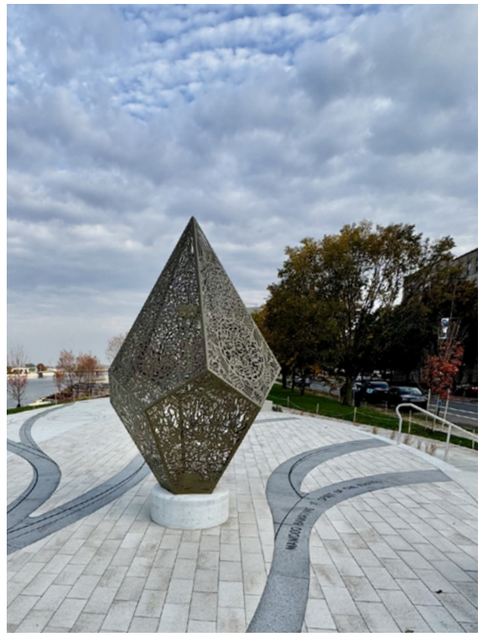
LOCAL HISTORY

FIRST PEOPLES OF GRAND RAPIDS

The history of Grand Rapids is deeply rooted in the enduring presence and stewardship of Indigenous peoples. Long before European settlement, the area known as Boweting was home to Anishinaabe communities, including the People of the Three Fires: the Ottawa (Odawa), Chippewa (Ojibwe), and Potawatomi. Centered around the Grand River (Owashtanong), these communities developed vibrant networks of travel, trade, and cultural exchange, while maintaining profound spiritual and ecological relationships with the land and water.

For generations, Indigenous knowledge and stewardship shaped the region's forests, waterways, and settlements, establishing patterns of land use and community connection that predate the city's founding. The treaties of 1821 and 1836 marked significant transitions in land ownership and governance, opening the region to increased settlement while profoundly impacting Tribal communities. Yet despite these changes, Indigenous peoples remained connected to their homelands and continued to exercise cultural traditions, maintain community ties, and advocate for their rights and sovereignty.

Today, the influence of Tribal nations remains an important part of Grand Rapids' identity. Indigenous communities continue to contribute to the cultural, social, and environmental fabric of the region, bringing valuable perspectives on stewardship, community well-being, and relationships with the natural world. Recognizing this history is not only an acknowledgment of the past, but also an affirmation that Anishinaabe peoples remain active partners in shaping the future of Grand Rapids, its parks, waterways, and public spaces.



Manidoo Bawating ("Spirit of the Rapids"), an 11-foot-tall steel sculpture honoring Anishinaabe culture and traditions, stands in its permanent home at Canal Park. Designed by the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians and artist Alan Compo in collaboration with HYBYCOZO, the sculpture is surrounded by granite inlays representing tributaries flowing into the Grand River, featuring Indigenous messages about water translated into English.



The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians Water Protectors performed a powerful Blessing of the Waters ceremony, marking the start of the Grand River restoration.

CITY DEVELOPMENT

Officially incorporated in 1850, Grand Rapids grew rapidly through its thriving lumber industry and soon emerged as a nationally recognized center for furniture manufacturing. The expansion of rail infrastructure at the turn of the 20th century strengthened regional connections, fueled economic growth, and earned the city the nickname "Furniture City."

As industrial prosperity increased, so did investment in civic infrastructure and public open green space. In 1911, the Parks and Boulevard Association was established to bring coordination and long-term vision to a park system that had previously grown through piecemeal land acquisitions. This effort reflected the broader City Beautiful Movement, which sought to improve urban quality of life through parks, boulevards, and civic design. Subsequent planning initiatives, including the 1927 City Plan, advanced these goals through proposals for expanded street networks, improved public amenities, and a riverfront esplanade that would eventually become Riverside Park.

Following World War II, the widespread adoption of the automobile reshaped development patterns throughout Grand Rapids. As growth shifted outward to the suburbs, many urban neighborhoods experienced decline. Federally funded urban renewal programs further transformed the city, resulting in the demolition of established neighborhoods and the construction of new highway infrastructure that dramatically altered the urban landscape.

Despite decades of disinvestment, Grand Rapids began a resurgence in the late 1960s, driven in part by a growing commitment to arts and culture. In 1969, the city became home to the National Endowment for the Arts' first publicly funded art project, Alexander Calder's La Grande Vitesse, which remains an iconic civic landmark. National attention followed with the presidency of Grand Rapids native Gerald R. Ford in 1974. Through the 1980s and 1990s, continued investments in cultural institutions, public spaces, and waterfront parks further strengthened the city's identity as a regional destination.

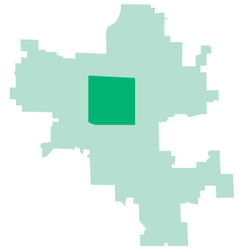
Today, Grand Rapids is widely recognized for its commitment to urban livability, cultural vitality, and quality public spaces. Ongoing investments in the public realm, economic diversification, and neighborhood development have helped attract residents, businesses, and visitors alike. The park and recreation system continues to build upon this legacy, supporting vibrant neighborhoods and enhancing the city's distinctive sense of place



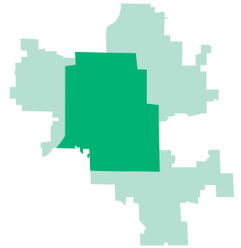




The City's early Native American settlements and industrial heritage have shaped its riverfront and identity.



1850: Original Annexation



Before 1900



Post World War I



Post World War II

GRAND RAPIDS CITY GROWTH OVER TIME
Figure 2.6

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Over the past decade, the Grand Rapids region has experienced significant economic growth. 2024-2025 has seen a cooling economy, with business leaders surveyed by Grand Valley State University and the Grand Rapids Chamber indicating a more modest anticipated employment rate of 1.5%. The city's economic stability can be attributed to strong employment in the city's core legacy industries of health care (17%) and diversified manufacturing (12%), as noted in the City's Bridge to Our Future Plan (2022). In 2025 alone, Grand Rapids saw $427.6 million in private investment activated (City of Grand Rapids EDD Annual Report). Additionally, Grand Rapids has a system of locally governed Corridor Improvement Authorities that plan for and fund improvements in commercial corridors and districts. $1.14 million in neighborhood corridor investment in 2025 was reported by the City's Economic Development Department, encouraging economic growth and vibrancy in many of the city's commercial districts.

Placemaking and quality of life improvements have the joint benefit of supporting businesses and residents. Residents are attracted to cities and neighborhoods with safe streets, parks, and cultural amenities. Businesses frequently locate in markets that are attractive to employees, to support workforce recruitment and retention. Retail businesses benefit from locating in safe and attractive destinations anchored by cultural institutions and public spaces. By supporting the efforts of its local development authorities, the City can help make Grand Rapids a destination for businesses, residents, and visitors.

#1

Growth in in privately owned establishments in Midwest metropolitan areas (2013-2023)[1]

611

New Housing Units, with 173 Affordable Units at 80% AMI or Below (2025)[2]

541

Jobs in the City of Grand Rapids: 192 new jobs committed and 349 jobs retained (2025)[2]

251% ↑

Increase in the housing price index for the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Statistical Area[1]

(1) 2025 Grand Rapids Chamber + GVSU Seidman College of Business 2025 State of the Region Report
(2) 2025 City of Grand Rapids EDD Annual Report



Community leaders break ground on East Riverfront, a new linear park and key connection of the emerging Grand River Greenway, near Acrisure Amphitheater.

THE ROLE OF PARKS

The value of the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation system can be understood and measured in terms of direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of spending. But the value created by parks goes well beyond economic impact. Cities with strong, vibrant public parks and recreation systems benefit from improved health, closer connections to nature, and a greater sense of community. This can lead to lower healthcare costs, higher property values, and higher quality of life which help attract and retain residents and businesses to the community.

Studies conducted by the Trust for Public Land, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and other researchers find Americans across all walks of life support investments in public parks and that parks and recreation system investments offer sound return on investment of public monies. The result of park and recreation expenditures on Michigan's economy is immense. The NRPA reported the shared impact of operations and capital spending by state and local park and recreation agencies in 2021 resulted in nearly $3 billion in economic activity, and more than 17,094 jobs that paid salaries, wages and benefits totaling nearly $857 million in Michigan.

While city parks departments across the U.S. have continuously learned to do more with less, the Parks Master Plan is an opportunity to think holistically about all of the benefits of the parks and recreation system. Parks and recreation systems and open green spaces build value as a function of their capacity to create benefits, which can be quantified in several ways.

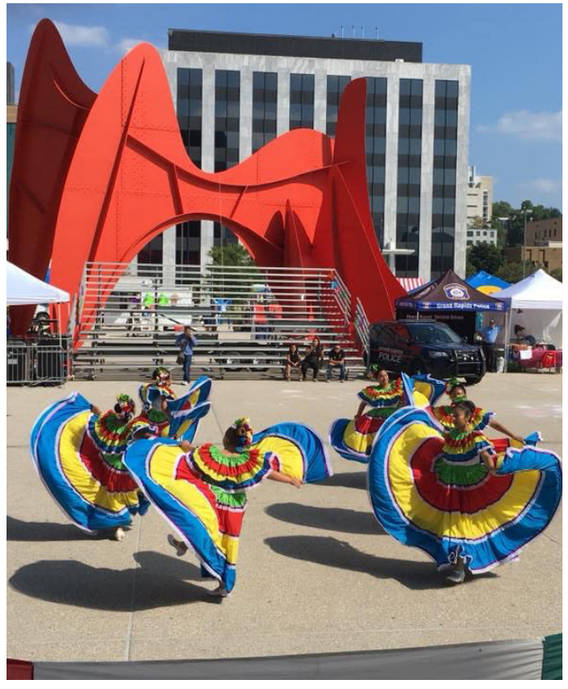
- **Real Estate Value:** Parks and trails have the ability to create both incremental and new real estate value. Great parks can raise neighboring property values by an estimated 15 percent or more, increasing city property tax revenue while also encouraging new private investment. Specifically, trail connections can encourage new development by providing a strong framework for private investments across a trail region.
- **City Brand:** Visible and active parks can build a city's identity and contribute to its branding. Successful parks represent local government and citizen commitment to public space and can give the city a unique sense of identity and familiarity. These qualities help the city attract new residents and businesses and raise its stature as a tourist destination.
- **Local Spending:** Parks can generate economic value through direct investment in the system and revenue that comes into the Parks Department then circulates through the local economy. Spending may include investments like capital improvements at parks as well as routine maintenance and upkeep, while revenue may be derived through lease payments from concessions and amusements, venue rentals, parking, and event permit fees.
- **Tourism:** Both parks and recreation facilities can serve as destinations for visitors. Tourism can create incremental value to a city through specific facility or park fees paid by out-of-region visitors and through indirect retail spending by those visitors.
- **Environment:** As part of the greater ecological system, parks can play a significant role in promoting biodiversity and mitigating the negative impacts of climate, air, and water pollution. Parks serve as areas that can encourage biodiversity, a crucial element to the overall health, sustainability, and resilience of our ecosystems. With their vegetation and tree canopy, parks also help reduce the heat island effect[1] for nearby houses by as much as 17 degrees[2], which will become increasingly important as average temperatures are projected to rise. Trees in parks and along city streets sequester carbon and remove pollutants from the air, serving as a form of filter, while open green space provides permeable surfaces to absorb and filter stormwater before reaching nearby water bodies. These environmental benefits of parks all correlate to future cost savings for the City, such as reducing the cost of managing stormwater.
- **Public Health:** The numerous health benefits of recreation and park systems are apparent, as they provide opportunities for physical activity, contact with nature, and social interaction. Park and recreation systems provide environments that encourage fitness and work to reduce the rate of obesity, a national epidemic with several related health conditions. Certain park conditions such as good maintenance, accessibility, design and lighting, and proximity to other amenities and the community can lead to increased physical activity. Physical well-being is also directly tied to human contact with nature, which is proven to lower stress, blood pressure, and cholesterol while strengthening the overall immune system. The psychological benefits of parks stem from both physical and mental exercise and the opportunities created for social interaction. Physical exercise has been proven to reduce anxiety and depression, while other open green space activities, such as gardening, yoga, and tai chi positively engage both the mind and body. Parks, similar to other institutions such as schools and churches, also encourage social interaction and thus serve as places that foster human relationships. These relationships result in stronger, more cohesive communities.
- **Public Safety:** With the proper design, parks can create safe places for youth outside of school hours, as well as improve an area's sense of safety. Converting an unused or vacant space into a park can dramatically improve an area's overall safety by conveying a sense of community investment and creating a space for social interaction. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) offers guidance on using design best practices to foster safer cities and neighborhoods.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research









CULTURE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Grand Rapids' culture is deeply rooted in creativity, community, and a strong connection to place. Widely recognized as a regional destination for arts, entertainment, food, and outdoor recreation, the city has cultivated a distinctive identity that blends urban vitality with Midwestern authenticity. Residents take pride in internationally recognized cultural assets such as ArtPrize, one of the world's largest public art competitions, as well as a thriving network of museums, music venues, galleries, theaters, and public art installations that animate streets, parks, and public spaces throughout the city.

Over the past five years, Grand Rapids has continued to strengthen its reputation as a cultural hub through significant investments in downtown public spaces, riverfront destinations, and year-round community events. Riverfront revitalization efforts, including the development of the Grand River Greenway and new public art initiatives, are transforming the Grand River into a more vibrant civic and recreational corridor. The opening of the 12,000-seat Acrisure Amphitheater and accompanying riverfront improvements further reinforce the City's commitment to creating dynamic spaces where recreation, entertainment, and community life intersect.

The city's cultural identity also reflects its diverse population and strong traditions of community celebration. Festivals, multicultural events, farmers markets, craft beverage destinations, and neighborhood gatherings contribute to a welcoming atmosphere that attracts residents and visitors alike. As the longtime home of "Beer City USA," Grand Rapids has built a nationally recognized culinary and craft beverage scene that complements its arts and recreation offerings.

These cultural strengths are reinforced by national recognition for quality of life, economic opportunity, and livability. Recent rankings have recognized Grand Rapids among the nation's fastest-growing metro areas, best cities for jobs, best-run cities, and top places for young professionals, young homeownership, and retirement.[1] These accolades reflect a community that is growing while maintaining a strong sense of identity and civic pride.

THE ROLE OF PARKS

As the city evolves, its parks and recreation system has an important role in celebrating and expressing this culture by providing inclusive public spaces, supporting community events, showcasing local art and history, and strengthening connections between people and place. Parks, trails, and riverfront spaces should continue to serve as stages for Grand Rapids' cultural life, reflecting the creativity, diversity, and community spirit that define the city.

(1) 2026 Grand Rapids Strategic Plan

Grand Rapids' population is growing in size and diversity. With these ongoing shifts, there is a unique opportunity to improve, preserve, and align the community's future needs with the parks and recreation resources that support it.



The community gathers in Lincoln Park.

GROWTH TRENDS

Michigan's population is shifting westward, with many residents migrating from the Detroit to the Grand Rapids and Traverse City metropolitan areas. According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS), Grand Rapids' population increased by approximately 4.1% from 2014 to 2024, outpacing the state by 2.2%. While the pace of population growth in the city has slowed slightly in recent years, Kent County (7.9%) and the greater Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area (15.4%) are still experiencing growth faster than the state and national rates (1.9%; 6.6%, respectively), demonstrating that this primary city is part of a strong growth area.

This trend is expected to continue over the next several years, with Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) data projecting Kent County's population to increase from 663,150 in 2024 to 763,023 by 2050. The City of Grand Rapids currently accounts for approximately 30% of Kent County's population. Assuming this proportion remains consistent, the city's population is estimated to increase by approximately 228,435 residents by 2050.

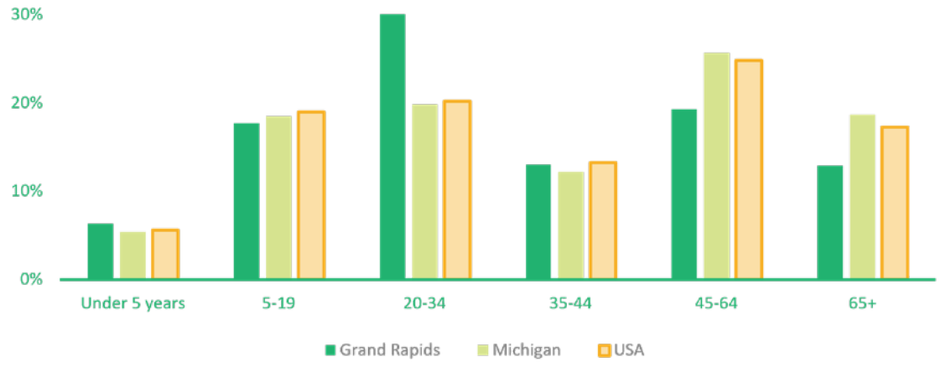
AGE STRUCTURE

Positioning the Parks Department to adequately serve a variety of age groups within the city is another crucial aspect of the Parks Master Plan. The city's population is notably younger than both the country and state. The median age in Grand Rapids is 32.2 years, compared to Michigan's 40.2, and the national median of 38.9.

Grand Rapids' age distribution indicates a population that is experiencing growth among young, middle-aged, and senior adults. Between 2014 and 2024, the city saw a 14% increase in residents ages 20 to 34 and a 17% increase in residents ages 35 to 44. Together, these age groups represent a significant portion of the city's population and suggest continued demand for recreational opportunities that appeal to young adults, families, and working-age residents.

Most cities throughout the United States are experiencing significant growth in the number of residents 65 and older. Nationally, 17.2% of the population is 65 and over. While seniors comprise a lower percentage of Grand Rapids' total population (12.9%), this age group grew by nearly 19% from 2014 to 2024 and saw the largest gains in population when compared to other cohorts. Additionally, 11.1% of all households consist of a senior living alone, highlighting the importance of parks and recreation programming as mediums for social connection and senior-wellness.

While children under age 18 comprise approximately 24% of the city's total population, Grand Rapids has experienced declines among younger children and school-age residents. From 2014 to 2024, the population under age five decreased by 17%, while the population ages 5 to 19 decreased by 10%. However, children and youth remain a key user group. Park functions that include play, sports, and youth programming are important assets to support child growth and development, and are often services attractive to families.

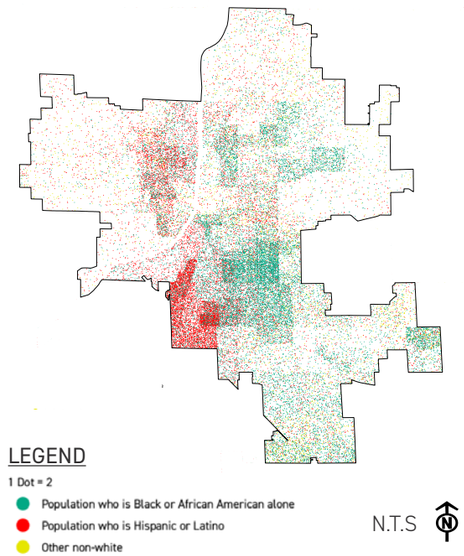


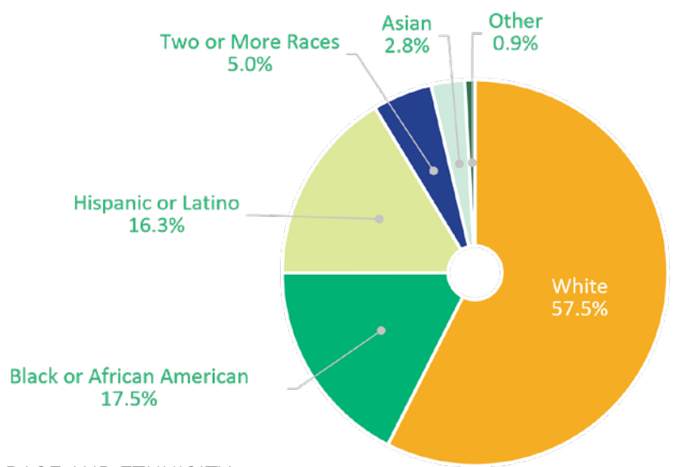
POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE
2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau
Figure 2.7

RACE & ETHNICITY

In addition to growing in size, Grand Rapids is also becoming more diverse. Currently 57.5% of the population is white; however, this percentage is projected to decrease with Hispanic, Asian, and people who identify as two or more races contributing significantly to Kent County's growth over the last decade. People who identify as Black or African American make up approximately 17.5% of the population, while the Hispanic or Latino population accounts for nearly 16.3%. These groups represent the second- and third-largest racial and ethnic populations in the City of Grand Rapids, respectively. Particularly of note, the Hispanic population in Kent County grew by 26.7% in the last 10 years (2014-2024).

RACIAL DENSITY MAP
Figure 2.8



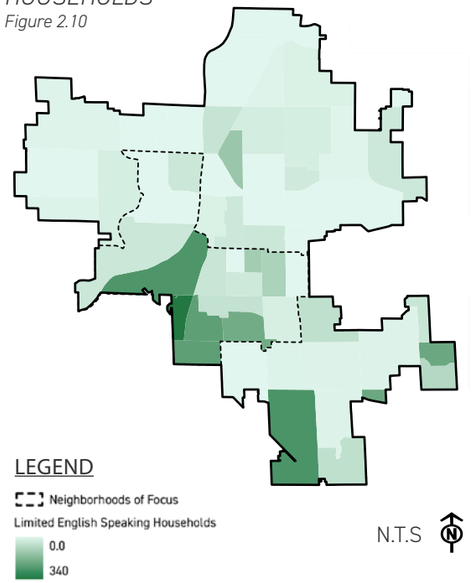


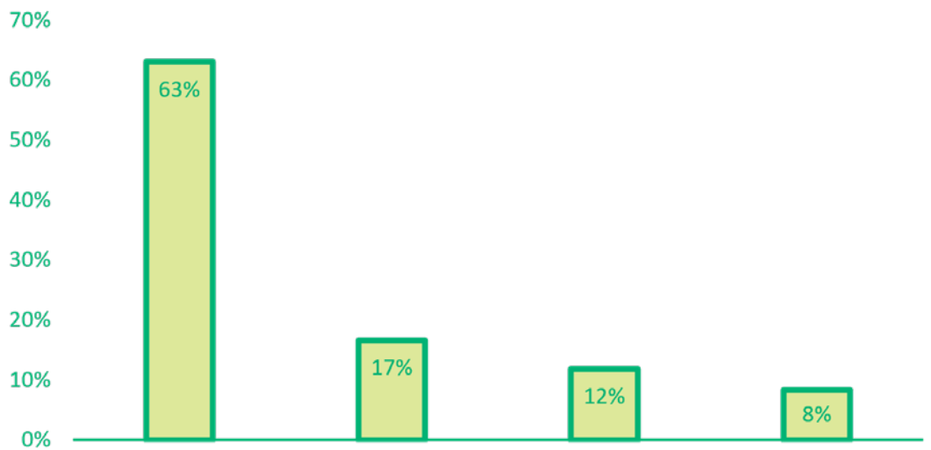
RACE AND ETHNICITY
2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates
Figure 2.9

LANGUAGE

The predominant language spoken in the City of Grand Rapids is English. Nearly 16% (n=15,553) of all households in the city are considered limited English-speaking proficiency (LEP) of which, approximately 63% are Spanish-speaking. Asian and Pacific Island language LEP households comprise a much smaller percentage of this population, but has seen a greater increase than other LEP language groups over the past decade (+2.5%). This highlights a need for bilingual signage and outreach materials to provide equitable access to recreation services, as well as enhancing a sense of community and belonging.

LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS
Figure 2.10





LIMITED ENGLISH-SPEAKING PROFICIENCY (LEP) HOUSEHOLD LANGUAGES
2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates
Figure 2.11

PARK EQUITY ANALYSIS

Parks are available for public use and enjoyment, benefitting our health, wellness, and welfare in many ways:

- Parks are a source of free and affordable spaces for all residents to recreate
- Property values increase when located within a safe 5-minute walk of parks
- Programmed parks are linked to crime reduction
- People who live near parks are more likely to exercise
- Parks and green space reduce the heat island effect by 10 degrees
- Access to safe parks and green space improves mental health
- Shade trees in parks and green spaces improve air quality

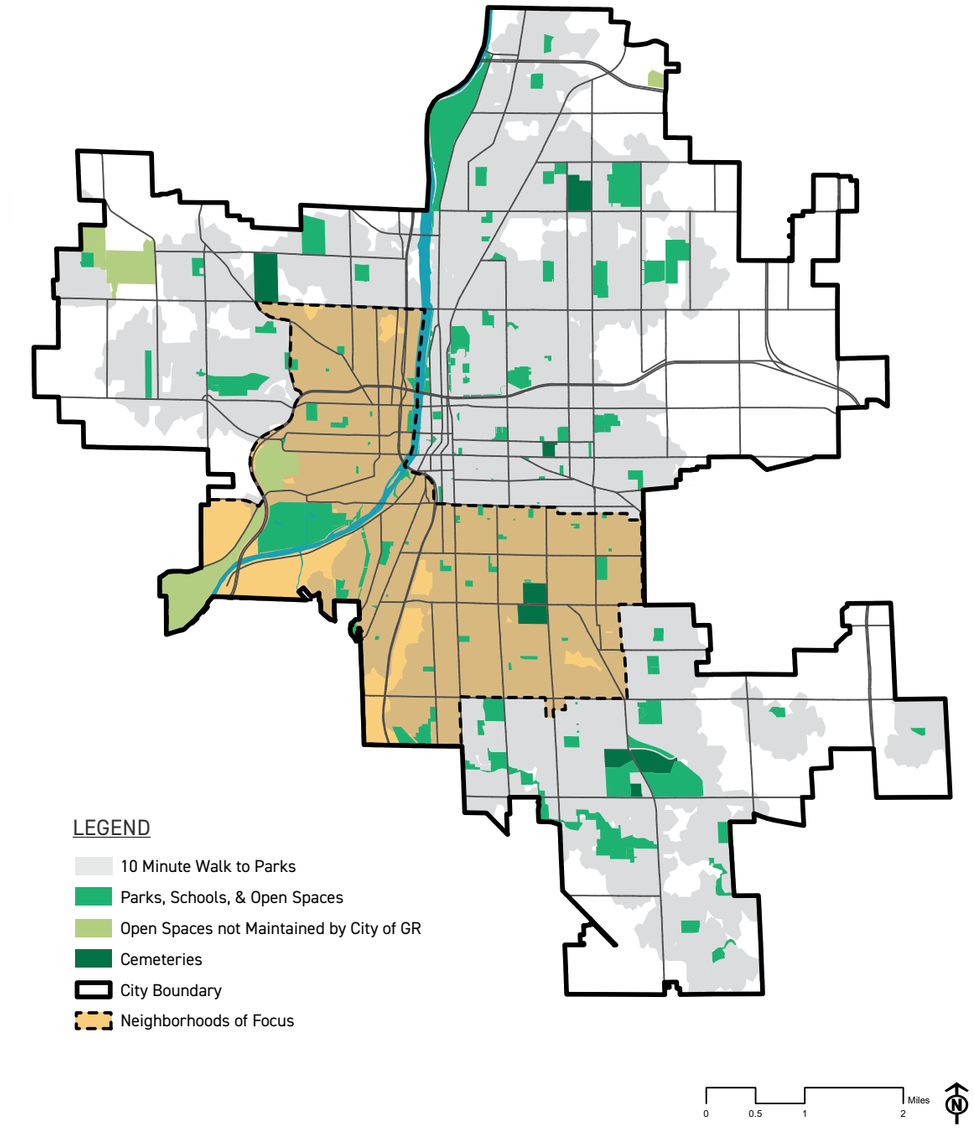
An important factor for providing equitable access to recreational spaces is analyzing the distribution of parks in relationship to high need populations. To broadly understand the people's changing needs, key demographic indicators, such as the distribution of minority populations, lower-income households, the elderly, and households with children, were studied in comparison to park locations and access.

This equity analysis also overlays the City's established Neighborhoods of Focus (NOF) boundaries to ensure equitable access to recreation. The NOF area consists of 17 census tracts, measuring at 10.7 sq miles (23.5% of city land), with higher poverty, higher unemployment, and lower rates of educational attainment than elsewhere in the city. The geographic boundary stretches across the west and southeast portions of the city, roughly John Ball Park on the city's west side to Eastown and neighborhoods south of Wealthy Street— covering a large portion of the city historically neglected from economic growth and development.

Additionally, the NOF area overlaps, in-part or in its entirety, with the following neighborhoods:

- Alger Heights
- Baxter
- Black Hills
- Downtown
- East Hills
- Eastern-Burton
- Grandville
- Heritage Hill
- John Ball Park
- Oldtown-Heartside
- Ottawa Hills
- Roosevelt Park
- Shawmut Hills
- Southeast Community
- Southeast End
- Southwest
- West Grand

NEIGHBORHOODS OF FOCUS
Figure 2.12



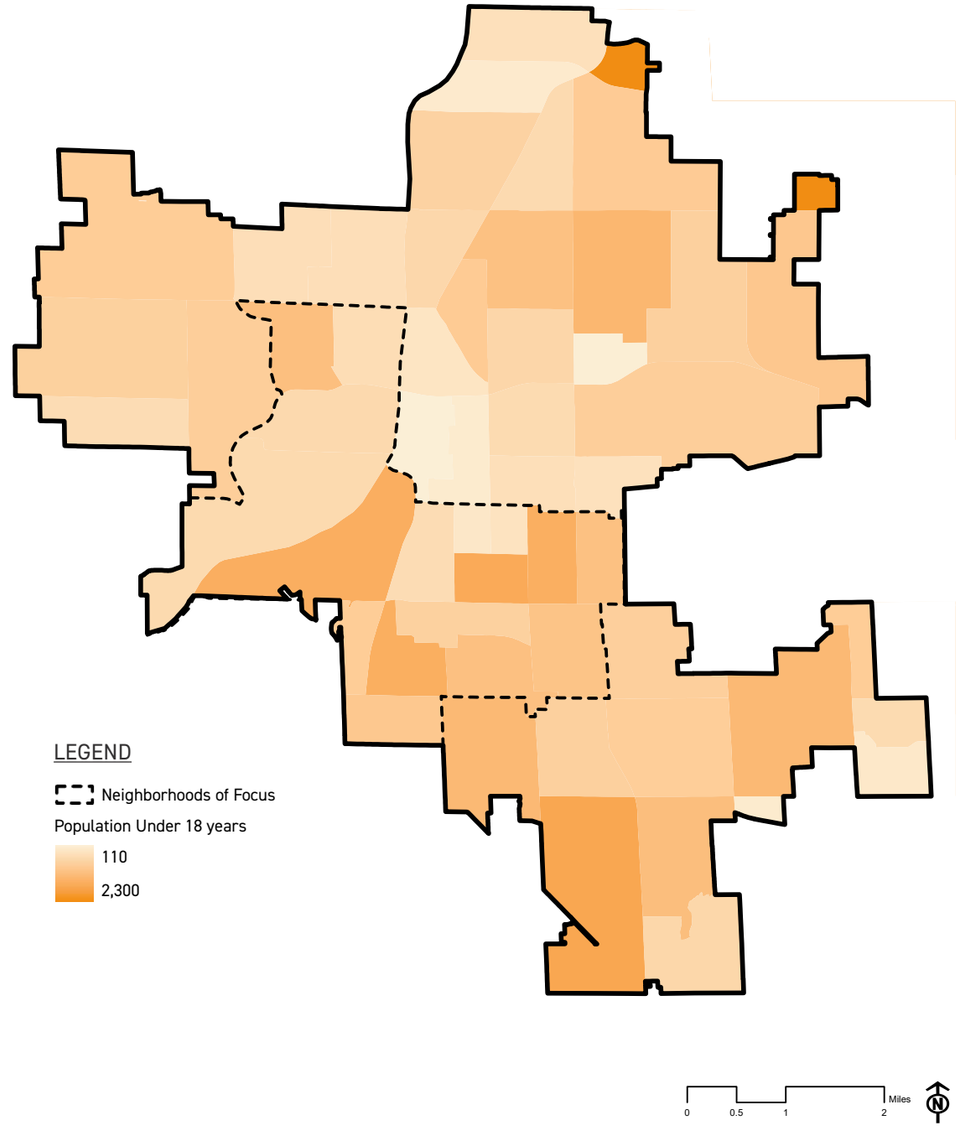
Geographically, the areas where residents have limited accessibility to parks include both less densely populated suburban areas of the city and a few central neighborhoods that also have a concentration of high need populations. According to the 2022 "Health Equity in Grand Rapids' Neighborhoods of Focus: Social Determinant of Health Report", the NOF are home to more than one-third of the city's population. While Grand Rapids does not have sharply delineated areas of concentrated need overall, there is a relatively high concentration of minority populations and households with children in this boundary.

EQUITY ANALYSIS BY AGE

More than 13,000 families reside in the NOF, with more than half including children under 18 years of age. Families with children are heavily concentrated within the central and southern NOF, including Roosevelt Park, Garfield Park, Baxter, and the Madison neighborhoods. Older adults are distributed throughout the NOF tracts, with notable clusters in neighborhoods like Garfield Park and South Hill. Mapping these clusters aids in prioritizing amenities for young adults like playground equipment or sports facilities, and amenities to support seniors, such as paved walking paths, seating areas, or universal design elements.

Among school-aged children, fewer are meeting physical activity recommendations for adolescents than historically reported. The 2024 US Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth reported that adolescents ages 12-17 years are more likely to exceed recommended recreational screen time, stating that "only one-quarter (24.1%) of high school-aged students engage in less than 3 hours per day of recreational screen time." The rise of sedentary recreation and physical inactivity among young people is cause for concern, but providing access to parks, family friendly recreational activities, and targeted programming for youth may promote healthy, active lifestyles.

POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS
Figure 2.13



EQUITY ANALYSIS BY RACE

The Neighborhoods of Focus make up about 34% of the city's population. The breakdown in those areas is 19% Black and 23% Hispanic, both higher than their makeup of the city's overall population. Black or African American populations are concentrated specifically within the Baxter, Ottawa Hills, Garfield Park and north Millbrook neighborhoods. The Hispanic population is heavily clustered in the southwest NOF tracts, which also overlaps with Spanish-speaking households. 63% of Spanish speaking households in the City of Grand Rapids are found within the NOF boundaries. Per the CDC, Black, American Indian, and Hispanic or Latino populations self-reported the highest prevalence of inactivity among Michigan adults (2017-2020), further supporting the need for equitable access to parks and recreational spaces for minority populations.

EQUITY ANALYSIS BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND TENURE

The average household size across the city is 2.38 persons, but families in NOF tend to be larger, averaging 3.14 persons. The city's housing landscape is nearly split between owner-occupied (53.5%) and renter-occupied (46.5%) units. Renter-occupied housing is heavily concentrated in the central NOF tracts (such as Heartside, Roosevelt Park, and West Grand) compared to the outer, more suburban, owner-occupied sectors of Grand Rapids. Renters in these dense, multi-family zones usually lack private backyards, which indicates a need for parks and nonmotorized infrastructure to be located near these communities. With 33.7% of residents living alone, parks serve as essential "third places" for community interaction outside of home, especially for renters where there may be limited access to open green spaces and recreation facilities.

EQUITY ANALYSIS BY INCOME

Roughly one-third of the population in the NOF boundary live below the poverty level. This disproportionate concentration of wealth is most focused amongst the youth population, with 23% of City residents under 18 living below the poverty level. Extreme financial hardship is highly clustered in the central NOF tracts south of downtown and on the near west side. Overlaying this poverty map with the park system highlights a critical need: parks located in these specific tracts must prioritize free services and receive prioritized maintenance budgets, as they serve as essential, heavily-used public lifelines.

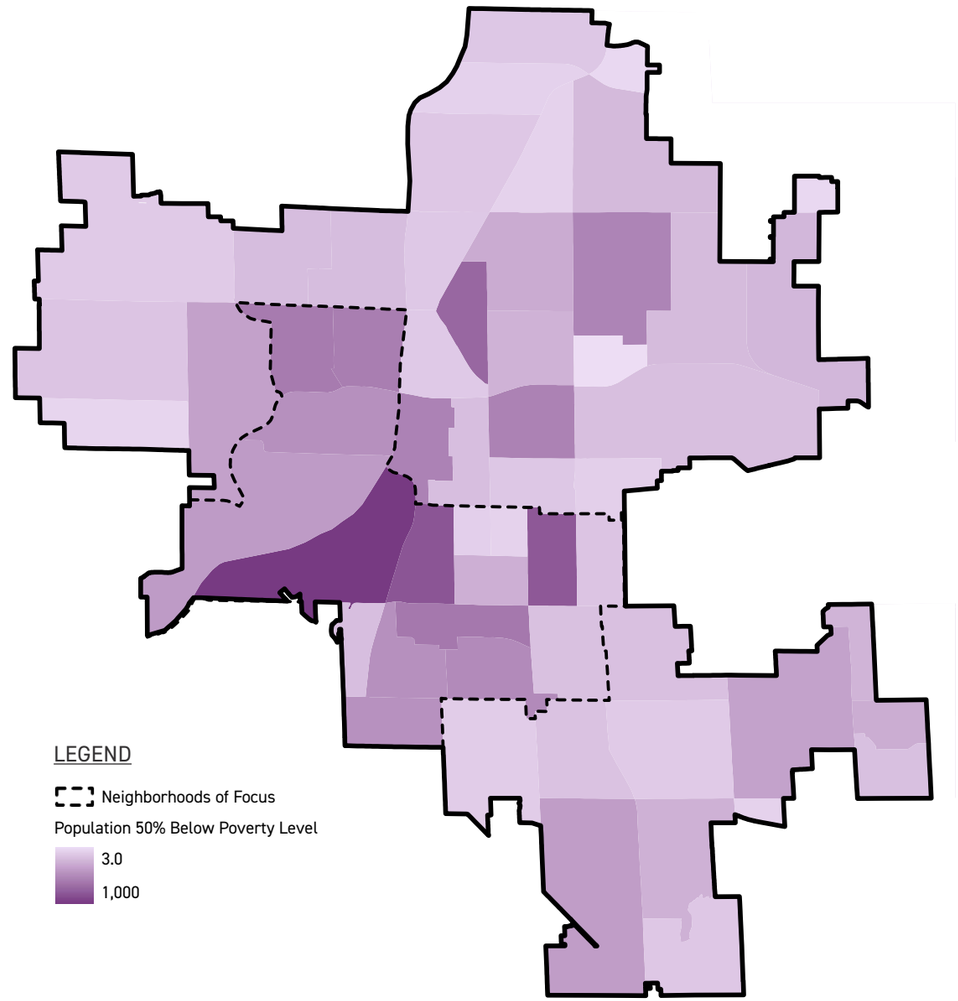
EQUITY ANALYSIS CONCLUSION

Access to quality parks and green space matters now more than ever. The Department is making strides to address inequities in the Neighborhoods of Focus. Moving forward, the Department should continue to build partnerships centered in equitable outreach and programming, prioritize micro-local business enterprise contracts, and improve recruitment and retention efforts to increase diversity of staff.



SELF-REPORTED PHYSICAL INACTIVITY AMONG MICHIGAN ADULTS *(2017-2020)*
Figure 2.14

POPULATION 50% BELOW POVERTY LEVEL
Figure 2.15



CHANGING CLIMATE

Grand Rapids residents can expect increasingly hotter summers, wetter seasons, and more extreme weather conditions. According to research published in the City of Grand Rapids 2025 Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP):

Temperatures are rising. By 2050, average temperatures are projected to increase by 3–5°F, with significantly more days above 90°F.

Precipitation patterns are changing. Annual precipitation is projected to increase, and heavy rainfall events are expected to become more frequent and intense, raising the risk of flooding and drought.

Heavy rainfall is increasing flood risk. Rainfall during the heaviest 1% of storms has already increased 52% since 1981, with heavy precipitation days projected to continue increasing through 2050.

Wildfire smoke is impacting air quality. The CAAP identifies wildfire smoke as an emerging climate hazard that can create unhealthy outdoor conditions, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Extreme weather is becoming more common. Severe storms, drought, heat, and changing seasonal conditions are increasingly impacting infrastructure, natural areas, and outdoor recreation.







CLIMATE ACTION & ADAPTATION PLAN

Published in 2025, the City of Grand Rapids' first Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) provides a community roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening community resilience, and advancing climate justice through coordinated Citywide action, policy reform, and community engagement.

Climate change is both an environmental and social challenge, with its impacts falling most heavily on marginalized communities. The CAAP prioritizes equitable solutions that reduce climate risks, protect vulnerable populations, and support a healthier community. Historical redlining, industrial development, and decades of disinvestment have left many neighborhoods of color disproportionately vulnerable to climate and environmental hazards. These communities often have fewer trees and more paved surfaces, resulting in higher temperatures, increased flooding, and stronger urban heat island effects.

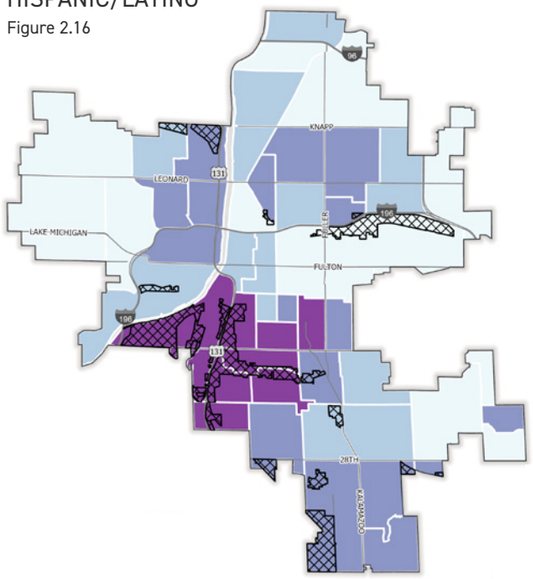
Many neighborhoods that are home to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents are situated near industrial areas, leading to greater exposure to pollution and related health impacts, including poor air quality, asthma, lead poisoning, and adverse birth outcomes. A 2019 University of Michigan report identified five of Michigan's ten most environmentally burdened census tracts in Grand Rapids, underscoring the city's significant environmental inequities. The CAAP provides useful data and mapping to help identify neighborhoods experiencing the greatest environmental and climate-related burdens and inform where future park investments may have the greatest impact.



Community focus groups gathered residents to share experiences with heat and flooding.

PERCENT OF POPULATION BLACK OR HISPANIC/LATINO

Figure 2.16



N.T.S

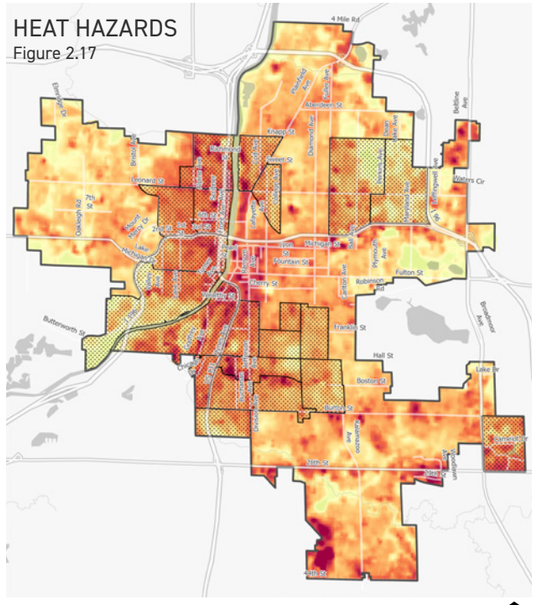
Environmental injustice occurs when marginalized communities experience disproportionate environmental harms from associated land uses without equitable access to the environmental benefits or meaningful involvement in decision making. In Grand Rapids, industrial land uses overlap with many communities of color, contributing to greater exposure to pollution and related health concerns, including poor air quality, asthma, lead poisoning, and adverse birth outcomes.

LEGEND

- 1% - 15%
- 15% - 30%
- 30% - 50%
- 50%- 89%
- Industrial Transportation
- City of Grand Rapids

HEAT HAZARDS

Figure 2.17



N.T.S

Urban heat is not experienced equally. Neighborhoods with less tree canopy and more impervious surfaces experience greater heat exposure, making shade, vegetation, and access to green space increasingly important.

LEGEND

- Grand Rapids City Boundary
- Sensitive and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations

Heat hazard

- High
- Low

Source: The City of Grand Rapids Climate Action & Adaptation Plan

The Role of Parks

The Parks & Recreation Department serves as a key implementation partner to carry out the strategies outlined in the CAAP, leveraging parks, green spaces, trees, and community partnerships to help the City achieve its climate goals. These initiatives are integrated into objectives in Chapter 3. Recent and ongoing projects demonstrate how climate resilience is being integrated throughout the park system through a variety of infrastructure, landscape, and stewardship investments. Examples of this work can be seen at parks across Grand Rapids, illustrating approaches that can be applied more broadly as the system evolves.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure: Parks throughout the system are increasingly incorporating green infrastructure to capture, store, and infiltrate stormwater. For example, Joe Taylor Park manages approximately 270,000 gallons of neighborhood stormwater through porous pavement, water storage, and irrigation reuse systems, while an underground stormwater facility in Mary Waters Park, since its implementation in 2015, has prevented more than 8 million gallons of untreated stormwater from entering the Grand River.

Flood Resilience Infrastructure: Several riverfront investments demonstrate how park design can help communities adapt to changing environmental conditions. Canal Park, currently under construction, incorporates enhanced flood protection measures, floodwall improvements, ecological restoration, and redesigned public access to improve resilience to flooding and changing river conditions.

Urban Agriculture and Community Garden Infrastructure: Parks are also serving as platforms for local food production and community stewardship. At Joe Taylor Park, Urban Agriculture Project funding supported raised garden beds, an herb garden, an urban orchard, and a native plant garden, while similar investments at Garfield Park expanded opportunities for community growing spaces.

Habitat Restoration and Biodiversity: Improvements are being implemented across the system through native plantings, pollinator habitat expansion, tree planting, and the replacement of impervious surfaces with permeable landscapes. Garfield Park and East Riverfront Park exemplify how these strategies can improve ecological function while enhancing the user experience

Sustainable Building Infrastructure: The recently completed MLK Park Community Center earned LEED Silver certification for features including irrigation-free landscaping, a 44% reduction in indoor water use, and an estimated 21% reduction in energy costs.





Above: Green infrastructure at Joe Taylor Park
Below: Garfield Park Community Garden

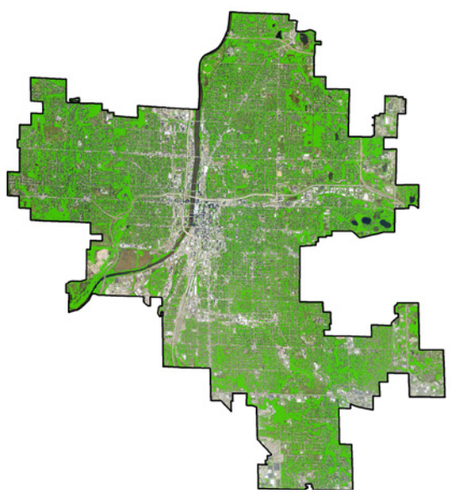
Case Study: Urban Tree Canopy

The CAAP identifies a healthy tree canopy as a powerful tool for communities to adapt to climate change through significant environmental, health, and economic benefits. Trees improve mental and physical well-being, reduce urban heat island effects by moderating temperatures, lower energy demand for heating and cooling, encourage outdoor activity, and contribute to stronger, more resilient neighborhoods.

The Parks Department continues to focus on expanding tree canopy along City streets and green spaces, emphasizing investment in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Because historically redlined and disadvantaged neighborhoods have less tree canopy and more pavement, they experience the greatest impacts of extreme heat. A fruitful partnership with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks has increased tree planting successes and community participation.

Several of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' initiatives empower, activate, and educate communities about urban forestry.

- **The Green Your Block** program provides an opportunity for residents to request free trees in their neighborhood's right-of-way, facilitating all necessary permitting, delivery, labor, and resources for ongoing care.
- The annual **Arborfest** (spring event) and **Neighborwoods** (fall event) have planted over 4,000 trees in its 11 year span, turning tree planting into a community celebration.
- **Neighborhood Forester Classes** offer free education on all things tree, from their benefits, identification, planting, pruning, and maintenance, with engaging workshops taught by Certified Arborists.
- The **Youth Green Team** creates paid seasonal work with hands-on experiences in urban forestry, professional development, and community leadership.
- Foresters and arborists are available to speak to community groups and students upon request.



2022 TREE CANOPY COVER N.T.S

Figure 2.18

With a goal of reaching 40% tree coverage city-wide, the April 2026 tree canopy now covers 37% of Grand Rapids, up from 34.6% when the City completed its first tree canopy study in 2008.

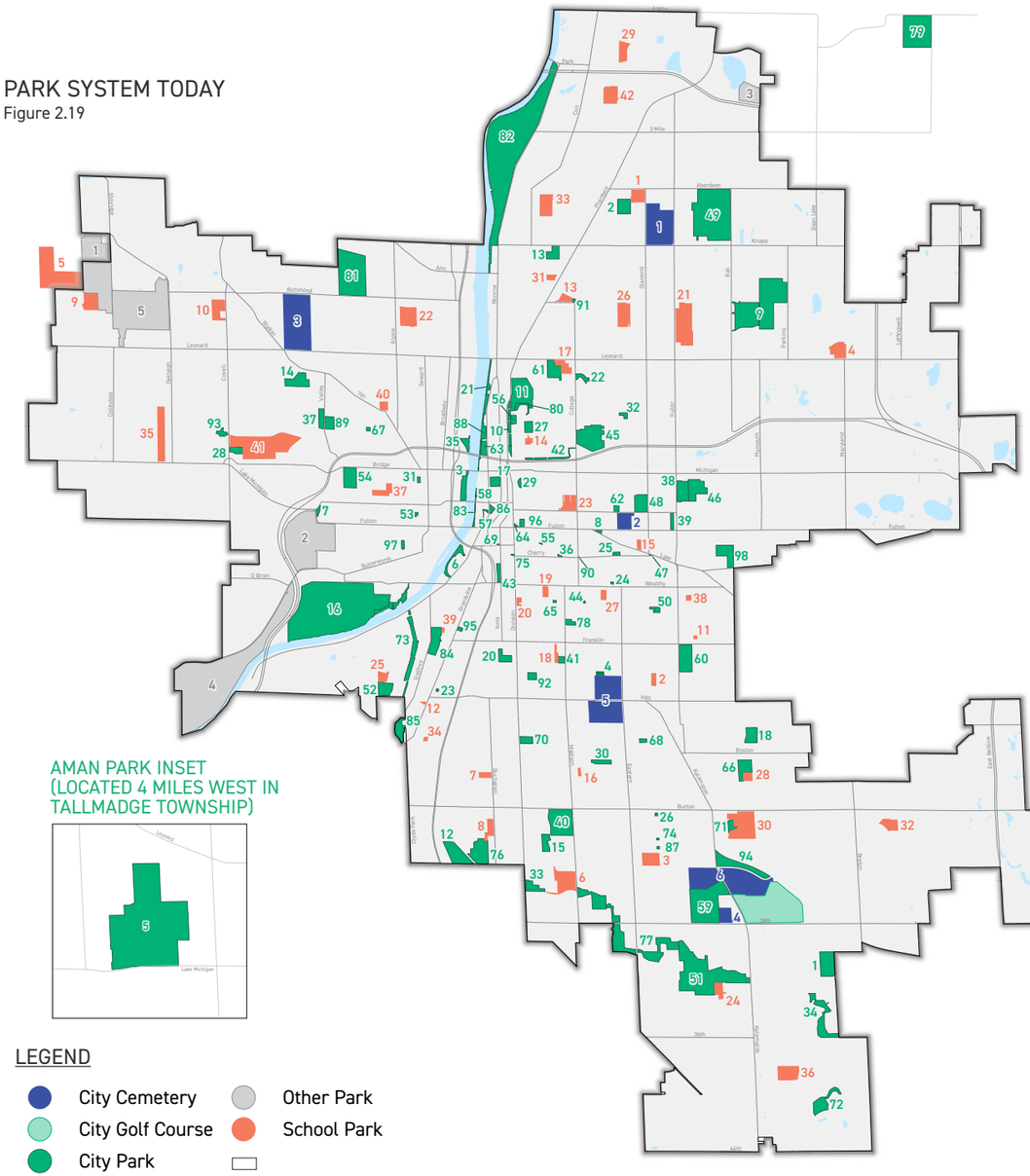




Above: Arborfest volunteers plant trees in Garfield Park Neighborhood.
Below: Members of the 2024 Youth Green Team.
Photos Courtesy of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks.

PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY

PARK SYSTEM TODAY
Figure 2.19



CITY PARKS

1 32nd Street Green Space
2 Aberdeen Park
3 Ah-Nab-Awen Park
4 Alexander Park
5 Aman Park
6 Amphitheater Pocket Park
7 Baja Park
8 Baldwin Park
9 Ball Perkins Park
10 Belknap Hillside Park
11 Belknap Park
12 Bike Park
13 Briggs Park
14 Bristol Property
15 Burton Woods Park
16 Butterworth Site
17 Calder Plaza
18 Cambridge Park
19 Camelot Park
20 Campau Park
21 Canal Street Park
22 Carrier Creek Property
23 Caulfield Park
24 Cherry Green
25 Cherry Park
26 Cheseboro Park
27 Coit Park
28 Covell Dog Park
29 Crescent Park
30 Dickinson Park
31 Douglas Park
32 Eastern Park
33 Economic Development Property #1
34 Economic Development Property #6
35 Fish Ladder Park
36 Foster Park
37 Fourth Street Woods
38 Fuller Park
39 Fulton Street Market
40 Garfield Park
41 Gerald R Ford Splashpad
42 Hastings Row
43 Heartside Park
44 Heritage Hill Park
45 Highland Park
46 Hillcrest Park
47 Hosken Park
48 Houseman Field Playground
49 Huff Park
50 Joe Taylor Park
51 Ken-O-Sha Park
52 Kensington Park
53 Lexington Park
54 Lincoln Park
55 Lincoln Place Park
56 Lookout Park
57 Louis Campau Promenade
58 Lyon Square
59 Mackay Jaycees Park
60 Martin Luther King Park
61 Mary Waters Park
62 Midtown Green Park
63 Monroe North
64 Monument Park
65 Mooney Park
66 Mulick Park
67 Nagold Park
68 Oakdale Gardens Park
69 Oakes Street Park
70 Otsego Drain Basin
71 Ottawa Hills Park
72 Oxford Place Park
73 Oxford Trail
74 Paris Park
75 Pekich Park
76 Plaster Creek Family Park
77 Plaster Creek Trail Property
78 Pleasant Park
79 Provin Trails Park
80 Reservoir Park
81 Richmond Park
82 Riverside Park
83 Riverwalk Trail Property
84 Roberto Clemente Park
85 Roosevelt Park
86 Rosa Parks Circle
87 Seymour Park
88 Sixth Street Park
89 Sullivan Field
90 Sundial Park
91 Sweet Street Park
92 Ted Rasberry Field
93 Tremont Greenspace
94 Underground
95 Unity Park
96 Veterans Memorial Park
97 Westown Commons Park
98 Wilcox Park

CITY CEMETERIES

1 Fairplains Cemetery
2 Fulton Street Cemetery
3 Greenwood Cemetery
4 Oakgrove Cemetery
5 Oakhill Cemetery
6 Woodlawn Cemetery

SCHOOL PARKS

1 Aberdeen Academy
2 Alexander Elementary School (Vacant)
3 Alger Middle School (Alger Park)
4 Beckwith Elementary School (Vacant)
5 Blandford Elementary School
6 Brookside Elementary School
7 Buchanan Elementary School
8 Burton Elementary/Middle School
9 CA Frost Environmental Science Academy
10 CA Frost Science Academy Middle High School
11 Campus Elementary School
12 Cesar E Chavez Elementary School
13 City High Middle School
14 Coit Creative Arts Academy
15 Congress Elementary School
16 Dickinson Elementary School
17 East Leonard Elementary School
18 Gerald R Ford Academic Center
19 Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center
20 Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy
21 GRPS University (Vacant)
22 Harrison Park Academy
23 Innovation Central High School
24 Ken-O-Sha Elementary School
25 Kensington School Park
26 Kent Hills Elementary School
27 Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy
28 Mulick Park Elementary School
29 North Park Montessori Academy
30 Ottawa Hills High School
31 Palmer Elementary School
32 Ridgemoor Park Montessori School
33 Riverside Middle School (Vacant)
34 Roosevelt Child Development Center
35 Shawmutt Hills Elementary School
36 Sherwood Park Global Studies Academy & Ken-O-Sha Park Elementary
37 Sibley Elementary School
38 Southeast Career Pathways
39 Southwest Elementary Academia Bilingue
40 Stocking Elementary School (Vacant)
41 Union High School
42 Wellerwood Early Childhood Center

OTHER PARKS

1 Blandford Nature Center
2 John Ball Park
3 Lamberton Lake Fen Nature Preserve
4 Millennium Park
5 The Highlands

CITY GOLF COURSE

1 Indian Trails Golf Course

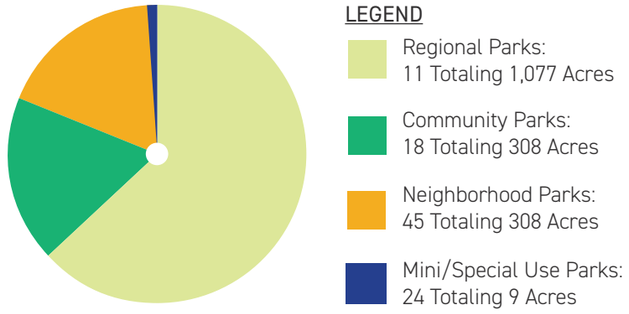
The updated park and recreation system inventory establishes a baseline understanding of the quantity, type, location, and quality of all park and recreational facilities in Grand Rapids. Starting with a list of facilities provided by the City, the project team visited each Department facility and recorded its amenities, accessibility, and condition. The on-the-ground inventory was supplemented by an aerial survey and verified against the City's GIS database. Overall, 98 parks and open green spaces, as well as joint schoolyard sites, were inventoried through this process. Refer to the appendix for the park system inventory.

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department owns approximately 2,047 total acres of land which includes parks or undeveloped space, cemeteries, and golf courses owned by the City. Of those acres, 1,702 are parks (regional, community, neighborhood, and mini parks). An additional 454 acres are joint school-park properties.

Typically, smaller open green spaces address localized needs (like a small playground or riverfront access point), while larger parks and open green spaces draw users from farther away for destination activities (like Riverside Park). The uses offered at a park vary by category. Neighborhood parks are considered the most critical for local, walkable park access and community health as these types of parks provide a range of playground amenities and recreational opportunities for residents. Community parks are larger in size and often feature a greater concentration of sports fields and other recreation amenities to meet demand for a broader area. Regional parks include the broadest range of amenities and accommodate a wide range of programming and users. They may include land set aside for preservation of natural resources or environmental significance, or for historic or cultural use. These parks often play an important economic role, helping generate revenue which can help fund the rest of the system.

The majority of Grand Rapids' Parks-owned acreage is held in eleven large regional parks totaling 1,077 acres. Forty-five neighborhood parks comprise 308 acres, eighteen community parks add 308 acres, and twenty-four mini-parks add approximately 9 acres of the system. Additionally, there are 261 acres of cemeteries and 84 acres of golf courses.

The large number of smaller parks in the system helps to improve access, but smaller parks also add disproportionately to the maintenance burden, requiring more effort to maintain because of their small size and distribution across the City. On the whole, the City's total acreage falls slightly short for the neighborhood park category, a type of park that is important for walkability, daily recreation, and access.



Grand Rapids owns 1,701.49 acres of developed and undeveloped green space (diagram excludes cemeteries, schools, and golf courses)

PARKS BY SIZE
Figure 2.20

Per NRPA guidelines, parks and recreational open green space can be categorized based on their size and general function. These categories include associated service areas for each park type that indicate a minimum standard for geographic balance and availability of each park type in the parks and recreation system.

Classifying parks ensures the entire community is served by a wide range of park and recreational activities. Service areas for park types include:

- Mini Parks: 1/4 mile or less
- Neighborhood Parks: 1/4 - 1/2 miles
- Community Parks: 1/2 to 3 miles
- Regional Parks: Varies, within a 1-hour drive

MINI PARK



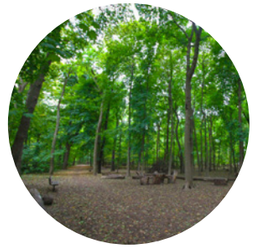
- Under 1 acre, including Lyon Square, above
- Address limited, unique, or isolated recreation needs
- Can complement neighborhood parks in dense, urban areas
- Many are clustered around Downtown and denser central neighborhoods

COMMUNITY PARK



- 10-50 acres, including MLK Park, above
- Meet broad community recreation needs
- Preserve unique landscapes and open green spaces
- Contribute to a connected system
- May contain specialized recreational facilities

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK



- 1-10 acres, including Burton Woods, above
- Focal point of a neighborhood with family activities
- Walkable for residents
- Can provide both informal active and passive recreation

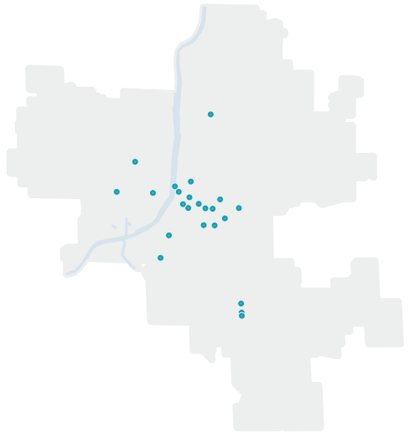
REGIONAL PARK



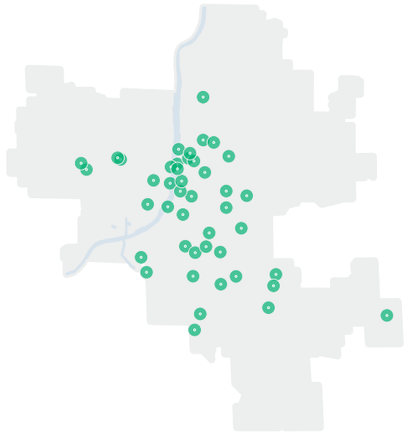
- 50+ acres, including MacKay-Jaycees Park, above
- Serve broad spectrum of regional recreation needs
- Often require partnerships and substantial funding
- Destination activities

PARK TYPE CLASSIFICATIONS
Figure 2.21

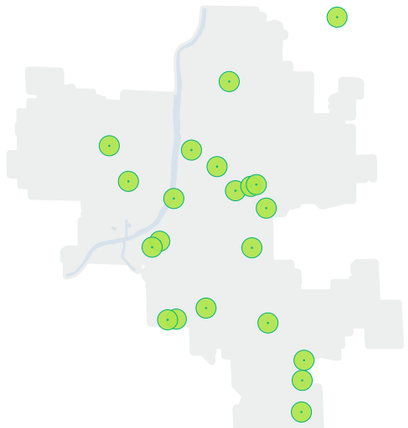
MINI PARKS:
1/4 Mile or Less Service Area



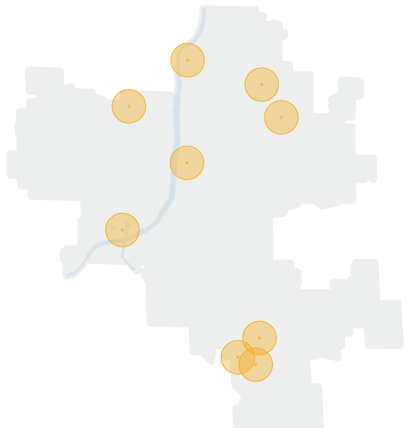
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
1/4 to 1/2 Mile Service Area



COMMUNITY PARKS:
1/2 to 3 Mile Service Area

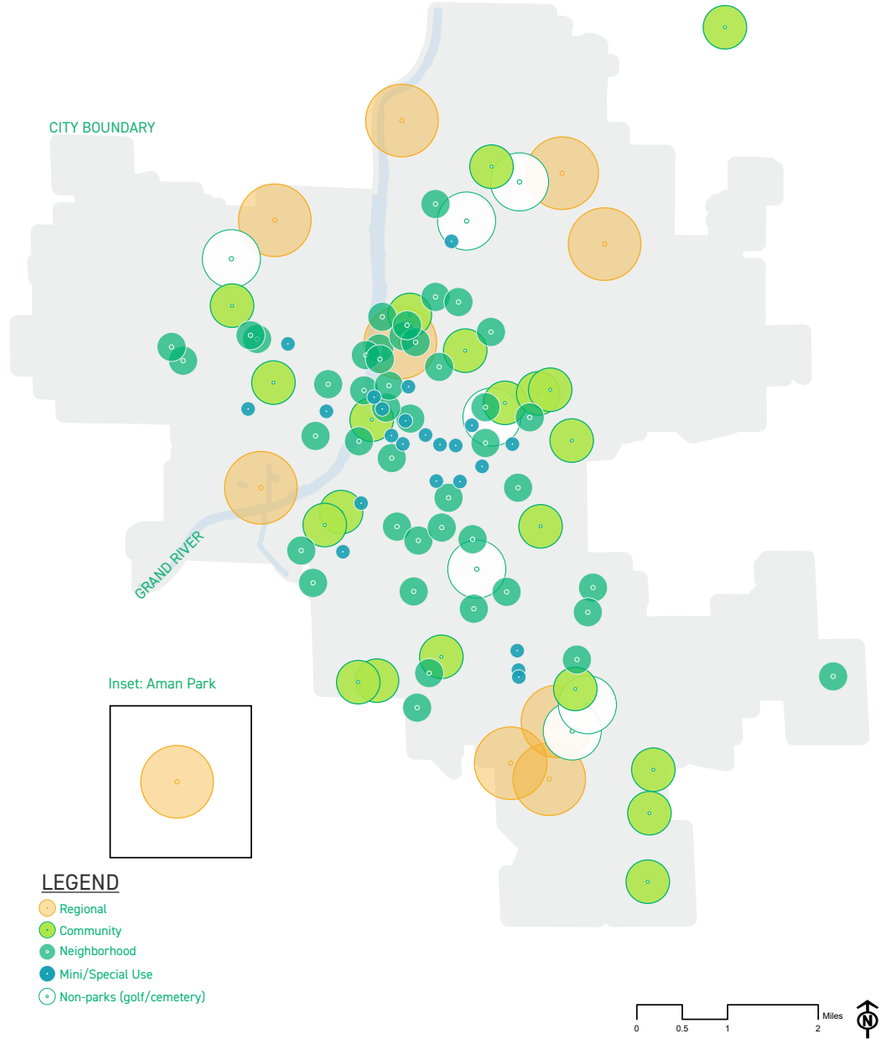


REGIONAL PARKS:
Multiple Communities Served within an hour drive



N.T.S

DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS BY CLASSIFICATION
Figure 2.22



Analysis of the geographic distribution of park facilities throughout the City reveal that while overall park coverage is good, the City should consider addressing the following:

- Mini parks and neighborhood parks are mostly clustered around the urban core and not equally distributed throughout the three wards
- The west end of Ward 1 does not have good coverage
- The east and north ends of Ward 2 do not have good coverage
- The south and east ends of Ward 3 do not have good coverage
- Ward 3, in general, has fewer parks

LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

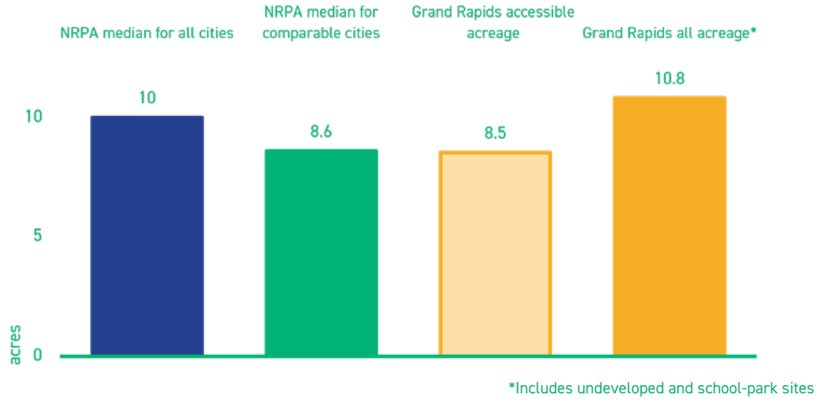
Level of Service Standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities. Standards may change over time as demographics, program life-cycles, and the needs of the community change.

Building on data from the park and recreation system inventory, Grand Rapids was compared to similar systems (cities in the range of 100,000 – 250,000 people) in the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)'s park metrics database. The NRPA database contains self-reported information from parks and recreation departments across the country. This comparison allows the project team to benchmark the level of service—in terms of park acreage and amenities per capita—between Grand Rapids and mid-sized peer cities nationally to evaluate the relative adequacy or inadequacy of the City's recreation system.

Park and Open Green Space Acreage

The analysis showed that publicly accessible park acreage per capita in Grand Rapids is slightly below comparable cities. The NRPA database demonstrated a median of 8.6 acres per 1,000 residents in similarly sized cities, while Grand Rapids measures 8.5 acres of "accessible" parkland per 1,000 residents and in Neighborhoods of Focus there are only 4.4 acres per 1,000 residents.

When all parkland acreages are considered, including undeveloped sites and school-park sites, Grand Rapids has 10.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, above the median of all cities in the NRPA database (10.0) and that of comparable cities with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 (8.6). This demonstrates an opportunity to expand park access within the Parks Department's own holdings.



PARK AND OPEN GREEN SPACE IN ACRES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS
Figure 2.23

Given the City's continuous efforts in increasing accessible park space, the gap has shrunk over the past few years. With a current population of 198,535, Grand Rapids would need an additional 14.7 acres of parkland to reach the NRPA database median of 8.6 per 1,000 residents for comparable cities, and an additional 292.7 acres to reach the median of 10.0 for all cities. To maintain an above-average ratio when all acreage is included, considering the City's approximate 4.1% population growth over the last 10 years, the Parks Department would need an additional 86.5 acres of open green space to maintain their current ratio going forward.

Per capita acreage analysis does not account for the quality of the park space available to residents. In Grand Rapids, maintenance of existing park space is of particular high concern, with upgrading existing parks and general maintenance and upkeep being top community priorities in the engagement process. This shows that in improving the level of service, the Parks Department must balance adding new acreage and maintaining/upgrading existing park spaces.

Key Benchmarking Insights:

- Grand Rapids maintains a highly developed parks and recreation system that serves a dense urban population.
- Compared to peer and aspirational agencies, Grand Rapids emphasizes developed parkland and active-use facilities over large quantities of undeveloped acreage, which requires more resources to maintain and operate.
- Compared to peer and aspirational agencies and NRPA norms, Grand Rapids is below benchmark medians for acres of parks per 1,000 residents

Grand Rapids Public Schools: Change on the Horizon

The Parks and Recreation Department currently partners with Grand Rapids Public Schools through a joint use agreement that provides shared governance of 454 acres of park and school property. This partnership dates back to 1951 and has guided the collaborative development and use of school-park facilities throughout the city.

As part of the Reimagine GRPS 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, Grand Rapids Public Schools is considering the closure or consolidation of ten school sites to combat low facility utilization and reduce deferred maintenance costs. As a result, some school-park properties may become available for sale. An internal study found that the following potential sales could critically impact residents, if not maintained as public green space:

- Beckwith: 1600 residents
- Stocking: 2100 residents
- Sherwood: 2000 residents
- North Park: 1400 residents

To prepare for this possibility, the Parks and Recreation Department finalized a Right of First Offer Agreement in Summer 2026, ensuring the City has the opportunity to evaluate and pursue acquisition of these sites.

The potential transition of former school properties presents an opportunity to preserve and enhance access to parks, green space, and recreational amenities in neighborhoods across the city. By acquiring and reinvesting in these sites, the Parks Department can help maintain park service levels while expanding community access to open green space and recreation opportunities.

PARK AMENITIES

Park amenities are the built elements within Grand Rapids' parks that support recreation, gathering, comfort, and access. From playgrounds and athletic facilities to shelters, restrooms, trails, and seating, these amenities shape how residents experience and use the parks and recreation system. As community needs and recreation preferences change, the type, condition, distribution, and accessibility of amenities should be regularly evaluated.

PARK SYSTEM AMENITIES

Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system includes a wide range of recreation and support amenities, including:

- **Athletic fields [68] and courts [103]**
- **Community and event rooms [6]**
- **Gymnasiums [3]**
- **Pavilions and picnic shelters [27 total, 25 are reservable]**
- **Playgrounds [45]**
- **Pools [3] and Splash Pads [15]**
- **Public restrooms [32]**

The number of amenities alone does not fully describe level of service. Condition, accessibility, geographic distribution, and overall quality are equally important. Community engagement reinforced this need: **among barriers to park use, the most common challenges were lack of time (33%), lack of awareness of available opportunities (28%), lack of shade or comfort amenities (20%), and distance or transportation limitations (19%).** In community conversations, aging playgrounds, outdated or closed restrooms, degraded paths, and deferred maintenance were recurring concerns.

Community engagement findings indicate that residents primarily use the park system for everyday outdoor recreation.

- Trails (72%), the most frequently used amenity by a wide margin. Walking paths (52%) and riverfront parks (46%) followed.
- Moderate use was reported for playgrounds, open lawns, splash pads, and community events, sports fields and courts, recreation programs, dog parks, and natural play areas.
- Specialized recreation amenities, including disc golf, mountain bike trails, picnic shelters, community gardens, and kayaking, serve smaller but meaningful user groups.

The combination of the benchmark analysis and public input give clear direction for the City. There is a desire for new, innovative and specialized amenities to add diversity to the system. At the same time, residents emphasized better access to parks and basic comfort amenities that make them more welcoming and usable, including shade, seating, picnic areas and shelters, accessible restrooms, and drinking fountains. The community has demonstrated additional need for more trails, access to natural areas, and gathering spaces. The community has also voiced that indoor facilities for fitness and sports are high priorities for the future.

Restrooms

Restrooms remain essential to park comfort, accessibility, and overall user experience. Recent facilities at Roberto Clemente and Ottawa Hills Parks establish a new standard for inclusive, universally accessible facilities, improved privacy and safety, durable materials, and operational efficiency. Community input reinforces the importance of clean, well-maintained, and accessible restrooms, particularly among older adults, highlighting the need for continued investment in aging facilities and consistent design standards across the park system.



Restroom facilities at Roberto Clemente Park

Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage

Directional and educational signage remain a priority for residents. While the Parks Department has improved park maps, wayfinding, and interpretive elements highlighting local history, culture, and ecology, greater awareness of park amenities and connections is needed. Since 2019, the City has worked to standardize park entry and trail signage, evaluating durability, cost, and regional consistency. Digital wayfinding tools offer additional opportunities to improve accessibility, connectivity, and public awareness across the broader park system.



Canal Park Playground Featuring Local Species Icons with Anishinaabe Names

Accessible Non-Motorized Boat Launch

Grand Rapids provides three accessible non-motorized boat launches at Riverside Park, Canal Park, and East Riverfront. These facilities expand opportunities for kayaking, canoeing, and other paddle sports while improving access to the Grand River for users of varying ages and abilities. Continued investment in accessible water access supports inclusive recreation, riverfront activation, and stronger connections between residents and the river.



Universally Accessible Kayak Launch at East Riverfront

Outdoor Fitness Stations

Outdoor fitness stations at parks such as Canal Park, Roosevelt Park, and Ottawa Hills Park provide free, accessible opportunities for exercise and physical activity. These installations offer a variety of equipment supporting strength, flexibility, balance, and cardiovascular fitness, encouraging residents of different ages and abilities to incorporate exercise into their park visits. Often located near walking paths and other recreational amenities, fitness stations expand opportunities for individual and group exercise while promoting healthy, active lifestyles without the cost of a gym membership.

TEMPORARY INSTALLATIONS

The Parks Department has worked with grass-roots organizations and other local agencies to implement temporary facilities that test success prior to making significant and permanent investments. Sometimes referred to as Tactical Urbanism, this prototyping allows for short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions that are often assessed based on user and community feedback, observed usage, and harmony with other existing and adjacent uses. This provides meaningful information when weighing the feasibility and cost benefits of more permanent amenities.

Dog Park Pilot Program

In response to the deficiencies identified in the current Parks Master Plan, the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority approved funding for the construction of a pop-up dog park at 210 Market Avenue in 2019. This pilot project was envisioned as short-term experiment, to be evaluated after a year of use. Funding and management for this 8,000 square foot pop-up dog park has continued, with DGRI maintaining and operating the facility. This space is still operated as a temporary facility, but proves that dog parks which utilize relatively small spaces are beneficial and feasible downtown.

The City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department launched a pilot enclosed dog area at Cambridge Park in August 2026 that will run through the end of April 2027. This creates a larger, designated dog park than the pop-up downtown where residents can safely exercise their dogs while allowing the City to evaluate how the space functions, is used, and fits within the park and surrounding neighborhood. The park design aligns with the recommendations of the Dog Park Study, and includes:

- Improved controlled dog play area
- Separate areas for large and small dogs
- Double-gated entry vestibules for safe entry and exit
- Six-foot chain-link fencing
- Removal of the former baseball backstop
- Revised perimeter fencing plan based on neighbor feedback
- Retention of the north and south exterior fencing
- Reuse of existing fencing materials and gates where feasible

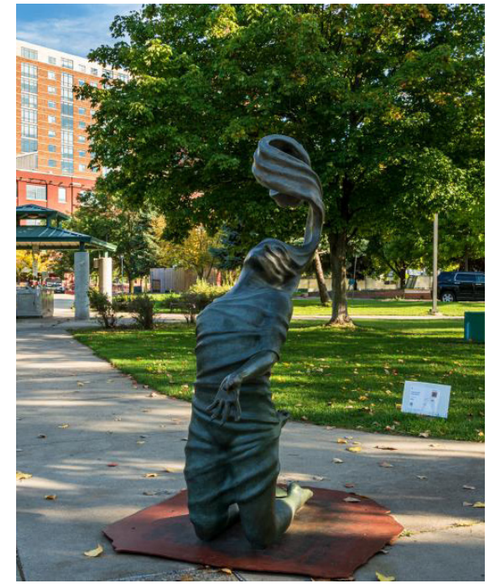
Making adjustments based on what's learned is an important part of this pilot project. The revised perimeter fencing plan, based on neighbor input prior to temporary installation, is an example of how the pilot approach allows the City to respond to community feedback and make adjustments as conditions are evaluated. During the duration of the pilot, the City will collect community feedback to better understand user experiences evaluate community feedback, park use, operations and overall performance.

Art Installations

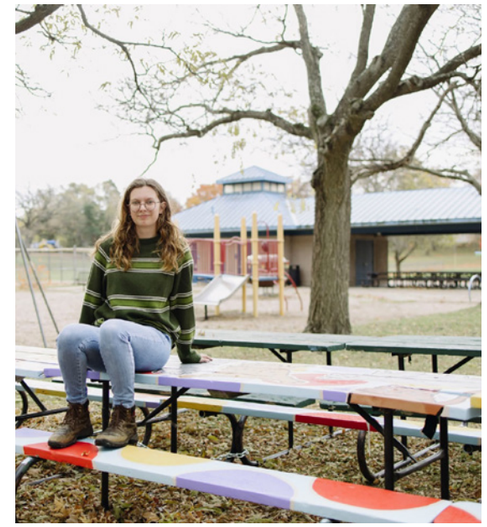
Several agencies and non-profits, including the Art Advisory Committee (AAC), Arts & Culture Collective of Grand Rapids (ACCGR), Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM), and Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) lead public art efforts throughout the city. Of particular note, the recently developed DGRI Grand River Greenway Public Art Plan (2025) and the ACCGR Arts and Culture Plan (2026) should be consulted as foundational frameworks for curating, placing, managing, and monitoring temporary and permanent art installations within City parks.

Art has always been an integral part of Grand Rapids' public space experience, and will continue to activate, elevate, educate, and bring cultural identify to City parks. ArtPrize further reinforced this connection with art, utilizing public spaces as venues that attract thousands of visitors annually. World of Winter, Return to the River, and other local art and culture-based festivals build on this momentum and bring inspiring traveling displays to downtown each year. The City has purchased many works of art that were first displayed temporarily during these and other events, and now reside in City parks. Additional pieces have also been commissioned to expand upon concepts presented by artists during these temporary or traveling displays.

Partnerships with local arts organizations, such as Lions & Rabbits Center for the Arts, have created opportunities for low-cost, high-impact beautification projects within neighborhood parks. Murals, temporary installations, and other creative placemaking initiatives have transformed underutilized spaces without requiring significant long-term investment or maintenance commitments. These flexible, community-driven projects engage local artists and residents, strengthen neighborhood identity, and bring art into everyday park experiences.



"Persist" was the Juried Vote 3D Category winner at ArtPrize 2025, displayed in Sixth Street Park.
Photo by Nick Irwin for Experience GR. Artwork: Persist by Cameron Stalheim



Lions and Rabbits supported beautification projects with murals at Aberdeen Park and Coit Park

Non-Traditional Sports & Recreation

Over the past five years, and in partnership with local stakeholders and DGRI, several less common athletic facilities have been constructed as temporary installations in City parks or on publicly owned lands.

The Grand Rapids Boulder Project was initiated in 2016 by volunteer-led movement and later collaboration with the West Michigan Chapter of the American Alpine club. In response to the call for community input during the previous Plan update, this group organized to advocate for the construction of a bouldering facility in a City park. The City constructed a temporary boulder wall at Highland Park in 2022 that is primarily operated and maintained by the Grand Rapids Boulder Project. It has been a popular feature, but the temporary nature of its construction does require regular repainting and replacement of the OSB panels, and secure anchoring for the removable handholds. Consideration of a permanent installation in the near future may be warranted.

Temporary sport courts have also been implemented in underutilized or former parking lots. This includes a painted bike polo court at 555 Monroe Avenue* with plywood dasher boards in 2021, and futsal (street soccer) courts installed in Las Canchas in 2023, a DGRI owned and operated property (250 Seward Ave. NW). Seeing a clear need for bike polo facilities, the City constructed a multi-sport court at Highland Park in 2023 that included space for bike polo, along with other compatible court uses for enhanced flexibility. Both of these projects have been successful because of partnerships with local Grand Rapids Bike Polo and The Soccer Rebellion who advocated for these projects and helped design, fundraise, and program these spaces.



The Grand Rapids Boulder Project at Highland Park.
Photo: Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

In 2020, the DDA approved funding for a skate and bike park at 555 Monroe Avenue*. Working with AGA Nation, the City constructed movable skate ramps with anticipation that they would last approximately 3 years. In response to the success of this temporary bike and skate park, upgrades and maintenance was completed in 2025 and other locations are being assessed for more permanent downtown skate facilities. Clemente DIY Skate Park is located at Roberto Clemente Park, and was created through collaboration between local skate communities. This community-built skatepark continues to evolve as new amenities are constructed through public build events.

Bike Park is a great example of multi-organization collaboration for an ever-evolving community asset. West Michigan Mountain Biking Association and Friends of Grand Rapids Parks did an online fundraising effort in 2018, raising nearly $24,000 to fund improvements including a skills loop, tot track, intermediate trail and an advanced pump track. These features were maintained in part through volunteers. In 2023, an Eagle Scout did his community service project by fundraising for a bike repair station and building a sign to provide wayfinding for the various bike features. In 2025, the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department received a MNRTF grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, including updating parking and lighting and adding a drinking fountain and picnic shelter. These improvements as well as paving the bike features are slated for construction in 2027.

**555 Monroe Avenue is a City-owned park site that is slated for use as temporary construction staging for Grand Rapids Whitewater restoration projects, and will later be developed as parkland. In the interim, it is a common place used for temporary installations and activations.*



Skate and Bike Park at 555 Monroe.



Champions of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Ring Race at Bike Park
Photo: Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

RECREATION AND PROGRAMMING

UNDERSTANDING RECREATION & PARTICIPATION

The recreation and program analysis provides an overview of the recreation opportunities currently available to the Grand Rapids community. It summarizes the range of classes, programs, and activities offered by the Parks Department, including fitness, aquatics, youth and adult recreation, and seasonal programming. The chapter also examines the role of the Grand River as a recreational resource, highlighting existing river access, paddling, rentals, events, and other activation efforts. Together, these elements provide a snapshot of how the Parks Department currently supports recreation across its parks, facilities, programs, and waterways.

Building on this understanding of existing offerings, the analysis then considers how Grand Rapids residents recreate and how local participation compares with broader national trends. Market participation data helps identify activities with strong local participation, areas where Grand Rapids differs from national patterns, and how these trends relate to the recreation opportunities already provided within the community. This benchmarking provides additional context for understanding current recreation interests and participation across Grand Rapids.

RECREATION PROGRAMS

Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation offers year-round recreation opportunities for residents of all ages, interests, and abilities. Programs include youth and adult sports, fitness and wellness classes, aquatics, summer camps, enrichment activities, and offerings for families, teens, and older adults. The MLK Park Community Center serves as a key recreation hub year-round, providing classes, open gym, pickleball, Fitness Gold, and additional opportunities for youth, adults, and older adults.

Youth participants can engage in activities such as soccer, baseball, basketball, gymnastics, dance, tennis, swimming, and Teen Zone.

Adults have access to classes including yoga, pilates, cycling, barre, strength training, pickleball, dance, and water aerobics. Free outdoor fitness classes activate neighborhood parks during warmer months.

In addition to structured programs, residents can participate in flexible recreational opportunities such as open gym, open swim, outdoor fitness, kayaking, and seasonal activities like ice skating at Rosa Parks Circle. Together, these offerings provide numerous ways for residents to stay active, build skills, connect with others, and enjoy parks and recreation throughout the year.

GR Outside

GR Outside is a Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation initiative focused on expanding year-round access to nature-based experiences for youth through schools and community organizations. The program grew out of the City's participation in the Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative and received a significant boost in 2019 when the non-profit organization, Our Community's Children, was awarded a $400,000 Outdoor Foundation Thrive Outside grant. The grant supported development of a community network and resources to connect more young people with the outdoors, including creation of the Gear Library. In 2023, Parks and Recreation absorbed the work of Thrive Outside Grand Rapids and renamed the initiative GR Outside, transitioning the program from its grant-supported beginnings into the Parks Department's broader recreation services.

Today, GR Outside works primarily through youth-focused organizations, programs, and schools rather than providing direct services to individuals. Community partners can access the GR Outside Gear Library, trip planning and risk-management assistance, camping and backpacking support, outdoor-skills and leadership training, and co-led outdoor experiences. Partners within the city can borrow equipment at no cost, helping reduce equipment and resource barriers to outdoor participation. Since 2021, the initiative has supported nature-based experiences for more than 34,000 people. Additionally, GR Outside offers unique support to Grand Rapids Public Schools by assiting teachers and staff in bringing learning outdoors by providing free gear, delivery, and lesson planning support.



Free Sled Libraries Stationed at Richmond, Mulick, and Plaster Creek Parks


Hudsons Fishing Camp Field Trip with Local Youth


Introductory Kayaking at Canal Park

Free Summer Camp

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department offers free summer day camps for City residents ages 6–12 at Garfield, MLK, and Roosevelt parks, and partner with Baxter Community Center for the Joe Taylor Park camp. Camps provide weekday opportunities for outdoor recreation, sports, arts and crafts, STEM activities, reading, games, and field trips, with free lunches and snacks each day. In 2026, the program served 321 youth, providing accessible summer recreation while supporting social, emotional, and physical development.



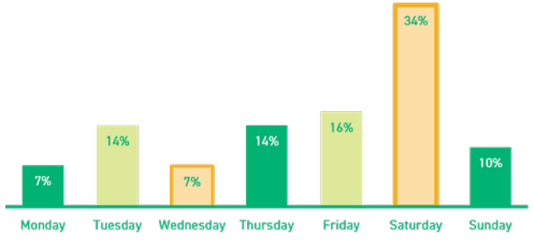
Summer Camp Program at Garfield Park

SPECIAL EVENTS

Permit data provided by the Grand Rapids Office of Special Events (OSE) was studied to better understand the usage of parks for event programming. **Estimated special event attendance in City parks has more than doubled in the past four years, with the number of permits issued for special events in these public spaces increasing by 33% between 2021 and 2025.** The largest spike in both permits for, and estimated attendance at special events in parks can be seen between 2021 and 2022 as the world emerged from the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following several years continued this upward use trajectory, indicating continued interest in utilizing public outdoor spaces for festivals, gatherings, and organized activities.

Saturdays are the most common day of the week for special events to begin (34%), followed by Fridays, Thursdays, and Tuesdays, each occurring at roughly half the frequency of Saturday events.

The top five special events in City parks with the highest estimated attendance are held on the weekend, from Friday through Sunday. Conversely, the most frequently permitted special events often activate parks mid-week, such as Tuesday Night Swing Dance at Rosa Parks Circle or the Baxter Youth Summer Program held only on week days.



FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL EVENTS AT CITY PARKS BY START DAY *(2021-2026)*
Figure 2.24



3,005 PERMITS were submitted for special events to be hosted in City Parks between January 2021 through September 2026

ESTIMATED SPECIAL EVENT ATTENDANCE AT CITY PARKS OVER TIME *(2021-2025)*
Figure 2.25







Photos courtesy of DGRI

Common types of special events in City parks include festivals, cultural events, running, walking, or racing events, sporting, and expressive speech. To a lesser degree, pop-up events, parades, weddings, and film or photography activities.

World of Winter, ArtPrize, Tuesday Night Swing Dance, and Relax at Rosa are among the most frequently permitted special events in City parks, as illustrated in the table below. These arts and culture events are primarily concentrated in downtown parks and near the highest density of residents and visitors alike. Food Truck Fridays and Parkrun are also among the most frequently permitted special events in City parks, and both are hosted at Riverside Park. Reading events by Storytime GR and the Grand Rapids Public Library have attracted an estimated 62,560 attendees over the past five years, offering family friendly and youth focused entertainment to engage residents and activate parks across the city.

Calder Plaza, Ah-Nab-Awen Park, and Riverside Park are most frequently used for high-capacity events. These three City parks host the largest, single permit events, including the Grand Rapids Fireworks, Festival of the Arts, and FoodieGR Fest. **As reference for scale, the fireworks at Ah-Nab-Awen Park have historically been permitted for 130,000 attendees for just a single evening.** Regular use of these facilities for large-scale festivals has economic and social benefits to the surrounding community. This heavy wear and added visibility also increases performance expectations, so regular and preventative maintenance within these festival spaces is critical to providing safe and enjoyable experiences for all users.

Most Frequently Permitted Special Events in City Parks (2021-2026)

Rank	Special Event	Total # of Permits	Start Days	Location(s)
1	World of Winter	201	All days	Varies, Primarily Downtown Parks
2	Parkrun	154	Saturday	Riverside Park
3	Tuesday Night Swing Dance	148	Tuesday	Ah-Nab-Awen Park, Rosa Parks Circle
4	Storytime in the Park by Storytime GR	117	Tuesday	Garfield Park, MLK Park, Lincoln Park
5	Relax at Rosa	112	Thursday	Rosa Parks Circle
6	Baxter Youth Summer Program	74	Week Days	Joe Taylor Park
7	ArtPrize	57	All days	Varies, Primarily Downtown Parks
8	Light the World	48	All days	Rosa Parks Circle
9	Food Truck Fridays	40	Friday	Riverside Park
10	Outdoor Storytime by GRPL	37	Monday	Lincoln Park, Mulick Park, Briggs Park, Roosevelt Park

MOST FREQUENTLY PERMITTED SPECIAL EVENTS IN CITY PARKS *(2021-2026)*
Figure 2.26

Special Events in City Parks with the Total Highest Estimated Attendance (2021-2026)

Rank	Special Event	Total # of Permits	Total Estimated Attendance (as specified in permit)	Location(s)	Start Days
1	Festival of the Arts	9	450,000	Calder Plaza	Friday or Saturday
2	Grand Rapids Fireworks	5	410,000	Ah-Nab-Awen Park	Saturday
3	Hispanic Festival	10	195,000	Calder Plaza	Friday, Saturday, Sunday
4	FoodieGR Fest	3	180,000	Riverside Park	Friday, Saturday, Sunday
5	Grand Rapids Pride Festival	8	120,000	Calder Plaza	Saturday, Sunday

SPECIAL EVENTS IN CITY PARKS WITH HIGHEST EST. ATTENDANCE *(2021-2026)*
Figure 2.27

EQUITY-CENTERED GRAND RIVER PROGRAMMING: WHY IT MATTERS

The Grand River is one of Grand Rapids' defining natural resources, yet proximity does not automatically translate into participation. Residents may live near a riverfront park and still face barriers to experiencing the river. While launches and trail connections improve physical access, programming and partnerships can help residents discover unfamiliar spaces, develop skills and confidence, and connect with the river.

As Grand Rapids invests in the river corridor, programming can connect infrastructure improvements with community benefit by introducing new access points, building recreation and water-safety skills, fostering environmental stewardship, and engaging neighborhoods in the river experience.

The 2023 Grand River Equity Framework provides additional direction for ensuring these investments benefit the broader community. Its goals include An Accessible River, An Inviting and Inclusive River, A Healthy River and Community, and Engaged, Supported Youth, with an emphasis on equitable connections, free and low-cost culturally relevant programming, welcoming spaces, and youth opportunities. Together with the City's Community Engagement Framework, these principles reinforce that river activation is about both physical access and creating meaningful opportunities for residents to experience the river.

A Broader Definition of Access:

An approach that considers not only whether a place can be physically reached, but whether people have the awareness, transportation, welcoming access points, equipment, skills, confidence, safety, and affordability needed to meaningfully participate and feel welcome.

Principles for Equitable River Programming

- Residents have multiple ways to experience the river, including options that do not require specialized equipment or prior skills.
- Trusted neighborhood, cultural, school, and community organizations are part of program design and delivery.
- Equipment, transportation, affordability, accessibility, language, safety, and confidence are treated as access issues.
- Programming creates pathways from first exposure to repeat participation, independent use, stewardship, and leadership.
- Success is measured by who gains access and capacity, not only by the number of City-run events.



GR Outside Annual Canoemobile Event: In partnership with Grand Rapids Public Schools and Wilderness Inquiry, the event provided 569 students with hands-on paddling experiences while building skills and knowledge in watershed ecology, river safety, and outdoor wellness.

OUTDOOR SPORT FACILITIES

While special events provide an important indicator of organized park activity, they only represent one dimension of demand on City parks. Routine recreation, organized sports programming, and informal use also contribute to patterns of park activation, utilization, and maintenance pressures. To better understand how existing facilities may be serving residents, community survey responses, youth sports programming records, and input from Parks staff were reviewed as complementary indicators of generalized use and resident values.

Several parks that are well used and experience a high degree of maintenance pressure were identified by Parks staff and include the following facilities:

- Aberdeen Park
- Belknap Park
- Garfield Park
- Ken-O-Sha Park
- Martin Luther King Park
- Ottawa Hills Park
- Roberto Clemente Park
- Wilcox Park

Specific attention was paid to outdoor athletic fields and sport courts within these popular parks. Forty-one City parks have at least one court or field facility. Athletic fields encompass large land areas and can be difficult to maintain if subjected to intense use, persistent drought, or poor drainage conditions. While most sport courts have a smaller footprint and are often made of more durable materials, they are expensive to construct and repair. The long-term viability of outdoor athletic facilities depends on balancing usage levels, recreational demand, and maintenance requirements, including whether changes in use warrant facility upgrades or conversion to other recreational amenities.

The City of Grand Rapids' youth sports programs typically occur annually from March through August. Over the last five years, between six and seven parks have been utilized annually for youth sports programs offered by the City of Grand Rapids. This has consistently included the use of MacKay-Jaycees, Huff, Aberdeen, and Martin Luther King Parks.

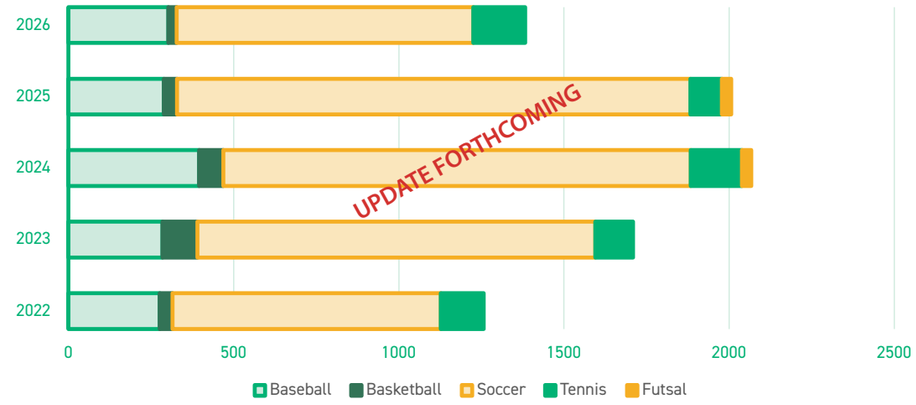
MacKay-Jaycees Park is a heavily used recreational space. It has the largest number of athletic fields (n=8), the widest variety of outdoor sport facility types (n=8), and was most frequently used in 2026 for City youth sports programs (84 days). Martin Luther King Park is also a beloved community space with a variety of recreation opportunities. One of the City's three public pools is located at Martin Luther King Park. This attractive amenity, coupled with a host of athletic spaces, brings an influx of visitors to this park every summer. The new Martin Luther King Community Center provides even more opportunity for year-round use. Baseball, basketball, soccer, and tennis youth programs have all been hosted at Martin Luther King Park over the past five years.

Soccer has consistently been the heaviest youth sports program park user, both when measured by number of days (n=139) and estimated participant visits (n=10,822) over the course of 2026. Soccer may have three to four times as many registrants as baseball, which is the next largest youth sports program. Tennis has had relatively consistent registration numbers in recent years, while basketball and futsal vary.

In terms of adult use of City-owned sport facilities, Belknap Park may lead City parks in the highest court utilization. Based on special event permit data from 2021 to 2026, Belknap Park ranked in the top ten City parks for (1) hosting the most special events and (2) for having the highest estimated special event attendance (n= 168,905). Of these special events, 75% were for pickleball related activities, such as the Beer City Open Pickleball Championships or GRPC Earth Day Open. With 21 pickleball courts constructed over roughly the last ten years through citizen driven initiatives, Belknap Park has more sport courts than any other City-owned recreation space. While these courts are relatively new today, lifecycle costs considerations are important factors when assessing potential future improvements.

Requests for new or improved disc golf courses, and to a lesser extent additional pickleball courts, emerged throughout the community engagement process. Overall, survey responses and in-person feedback emphasized a stronger desire to repair and improve existing sports facilities than to construct new fields or courts. While traditional sports remain an important part of the park system, residents also expressed interest in expanding opportunities for emerging and alternative recreational activities that serve a broader range of ages, interests, and abilities.

These findings suggest that future investments should prioritize the condition, functionality, and accessibility of existing athletic facilities before considering significant expansion. Opportunities may exist to maximize the use of current spaces through flexible court and field layouts, shared-use facilities, expanded programming, and the introduction of alternative recreational activities. Improvements to supporting amenities, such as seating, shade, lighting, and accessible pathways, can also enhance the overall user experience. This approach would allow the Parks Department to respond to evolving recreational interests while making efficient use of available parkland and capital resources.



YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM REGISTRATION
2022 - 2026
Figure 2.28

RECREATION TRENDS

Recreation trend data provides a snapshot of how Grand Rapids adults participate in recreation and how local participation compares with national patterns. This analysis uses 2026 Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Market Potential data for an estimated adult market of 158,506 residents, along with national participation data, to better understand the City's existing recreation market.

Understanding MPI

The Market Potential Index (MPI) compares Grand Rapids adult participation with national patterns. An MPI of 100 represents the national average; above 100 indicates a higher local tendency to participate and below 100 a lower tendency. MPI does not measure market size. For example, walking has an MPI of 94 but represents an estimated 49,786 adults.

Market data indicates potential demand but not equitable access or whether supply meets demand. Trends should be considered alongside program enrollment, demographics, facility access, and partner offerings.

Existing Recreation Patterns

Grand Rapids has a strong foundation of recreation, with walking for exercise as the most popular estimated activity, followed by hiking, swimming, weight lifting, overnight camping, and running. **An estimated 25,000 adults hike, 14,600 fish, 14,100 ride road bicycles, and more than 11,300 canoe or kayak.** The City currently supports these activities through its parks and trails system, natural areas, pools, river access, waterways, and affordable kayak rental opportunities.

MARKET SIGNAL	WHAT IT MEANS	PROGRAMMING RESPONSE
High participation + strong MPI	Broad demand with above-average local interest	Protect capacity and consider expansion
High participation + MPI near/below 100	Large core market even if Grand Rapids does not over-index	Maintain access; improve convenience and experience
High MPI + smaller participation base	Distinctive niche with growth potential	Pilot, partner and build participation
Strong national growth + weaker local evidence	Trend is growing, but local evidence is less compelling	Test before major investment
Lower participation + lower MPI	Limited market signal	Monitor unless equity, access or strategic goals justify service

An MPI below 100 should not automatically mean "deprioritize," and a fast-growing national trend should not automatically mean "invest." Local scale, public value, and program performance matter just as much.

MARKET DATA DECISION FRAMEWORK

Figure 2.29

Recreation Beyond Traditional Sports

Local recreation interests extend beyond fields, courts, and fitness activities. ESRI data estimates substantial participation in adult education, painting or drawing, photography, yoga, and aerobics. These activities reflect a broader recreation market that includes learning, creativity, wellness, and social participation.

Grand Rapids already provides programming that responds to portions of this broader market. For example, the 2026 Free Outdoor Fitness program provides 16 free weekly classes in parks across the city without requiring registration. Existing aquatics, recreation programs, parks, trails, and partner offerings also contribute to the range of opportunities available to residents.

How Grand Rapids Compares

MPI provides context for how Grand Rapids compares with national participation patterns, but the largest local recreation markets do not always have the highest scores. Walking, hiking, swimming, and road bicycling index slightly below average despite large participation, while several team sports and specialty fitness activities have smaller markets but above-average MPI scores.

The trends analysis shows the scale and relative strength of recreation markets but does not determine whether facilities or programs meet demand, opportunities are equitably distributed, or residents face participation barriers.

Recreation trends should therefore be considered alongside facility inventories, geographic access, program enrollment and waitlists, community input, and partner offerings. Together, these measures provide a clearer picture of what is working and where gaps or unmet demand may exist.

Detailed MPI data for recreation activities in Grand Rapids is provided in the Appendix for reference.

Existing Conditions Snapshot

- **Grand Rapids has strong recreation participation.** Walking, hiking, swimming, strength training, running, bicycling, and paddling represent sizable markets, while several team sports and specialty activities exceed national participation averages.
- **Residents generally value the recreation programming already available.** Recreation programs and fitness classes were among the highest-rated aspects of the park system during community engagement.
- **Programming needs vary by age and interest.** Adults and older adults rated recreation opportunities lower, while teens expressed interest in dedicated spaces, after-school and summer programs, active recreation, and places to gather. Older adults also expressed interest in more age-specific programming.
- **Awareness remains an important barrier to participation.** Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents identified lack of awareness as a barrier, with residents noting they do not always know what programs and resources are available and would benefit from broader communication and outreach.
- **Access to programming is also an equity consideration.** Residents emphasized quality programs and amenities across neighborhoods, along with multilingual communication, culturally responsive programming, and accessibility to support equitable participation.
- **Community interests extend beyond traditional sports.** Residents expressed interest in nature-based activities, paddling and river experiences, winter recreation, concerts and movies, birding and wildlife programs, walking groups, outdoor fitness, and other ways to recreate and gather. This aligns with market data showing substantial participation in outdoor, fitness, creative, and educational activities in addition to organized sports.

TRAILS

People use trails for a variety of recreational and transportation experiences, like walking, accessing nature, or as means to travel from one place to another. Documenting the trails within and between City parks is a priority for the Parks Department, especially as resident and visitor interest and use of these facilities grows. The trail inventory in this plan documents paved trails within the city based on available Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data and broad, institutional knowledge of City Parks staff. Some of these trails within the system have formal names, while others have yet to be identified. Detailed trail information is documented in the Parks Inventory Matrix in the Appendix. There are infrastructure and routes that are a part of the City's recreation and mobility network, but they were not studied as a part of this plan. Many parks contain internal sidewalk networks, natural surface trails, or even short paved trails that people use daily but have not yet been documented. Future plans and efforts may be able to better integrate these pieces to reveal a fuller trails and trail-related analysis.

TRAIL TYPES

Trail types can be identified by various criteria including surface type, surface condition, ownership, maintenance responsibility, and intended use or user group. This plan largely focused on trails owned and/or maintained by the City that are paved and are used by a variety of users.

FACILITY DEFINITIONS

In addition to trails, there are other nonmotorized facilities included in the inventory and are important to the development of the City's nonmotorized network. Defining these amenities can help local leaders, staff, and residents collaborate, building a network of facilities that everyone understands. The following is a brief list of definitions relevant to this plan.

Paved Trail: Off-road infrastructure used by people walking, rolling, and biking that is paved with material such as concrete or asphalt. Most are designed for two-way travel.

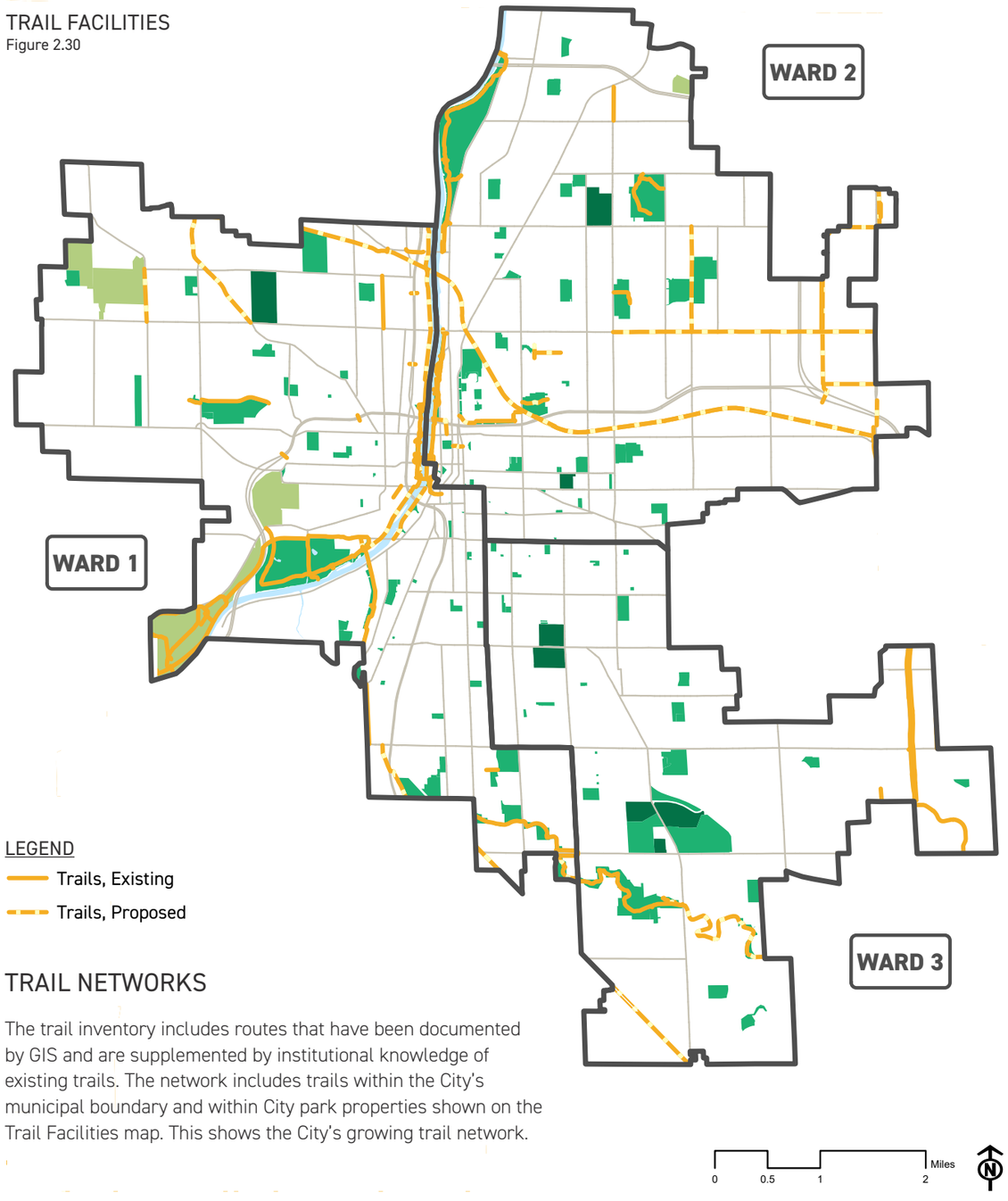
Natural Surface Trail: Off-road infrastructure that may be used by people walking, rolling, and biking that can be developed with crushed limestone, gravel, woodchips, or other materials. Trails that are less-groomed or less-maintained may also be composed of hardened dirt or grass. Most are designed for two-way travel.

Sidewalk: The portion of a street or highway right of way, beyond the curb or edge of road pavement, which is intended for use by pedestrians.

On-Street Bicycle Facility: Facility that may share space with or be next to vehicles. These include shared roadways, sometimes called sharrows or bicycle boulevards, and a variety of bike lanes that include, but are not limited to, buffered bike lanes, separated bike lanes, or raised bike lane.

Important, additional information on nonmotorized facility definitions may be found in the Southside Creekways Plan, which is located in the Appendix.

TRAIL FACILITIES
Figure 2.30



TRAIL NETWORKS

The trail inventory includes routes that have been documented by GIS and are supplemented by institutional knowledge of existing trails. The network includes trails within the City's municipal boundary and within City park properties shown on the Trail Facilities map. This shows the City's growing trail network.

Existing City Operated Trails

The Parks Department owns, maintains, and has access agreements to a number of trails across the City. Some trails are under authority of the Parks Department. Other trails have agreements for shared ownership or maintenance. This section is an inventory of existing trails with formal names.

- **Oxford Trail:** Connecting the Black Hills and Roosevelt Park neighborhoods, this paved trail is also part of the Grand River regional trail network. The trail runs through Consumers' Energy property, with planned extensions on private property through easements.
- **Plaster Creek Trail:** Running along Plaster Creek, the trail runs through neighborhoods, through Ken-O-Sha Park and the Kroc Center. Some portions of the trail are paved and others are unpaved. There are future plans to expand the trail route, provide additional amenities and programing, and pave the trail in at least some areas. Connections can be made from this trail to the Grand River, the City of Wyoming, and the City of Kentwood.
- **Riverwalk Trail:** Located along the Grand River in the heart of Downtown, the Riverwalk Trail traverses the eastern shore of the Grand River. The paved trail, which sometimes follows the City's flood wall, runs between Fulton Street and Pearl Street.
- **Hastings ROW:** Providing additional access along the south side of Hastings Street, just north of I-196, in the Belknap Lookout neighborhood, this paved trail is along a pleasant greenspace that provides views into Downtown.
- **Grand River Edges:** This paved trail runs along the Grand River through 6th Street Park, Riverside Park, and other recreational areas. Future plans include closing gaps along this trail and activating the space with education and programming.

Other Existing Trails within the City of Grand Rapids

There are several significant trails not owned or managed by the City that are an important part of the local and regional trail system within the local municipal boundaries. Residents, visitors, and business owners benefit from their existence, with some parts contributing to the recreational economic development system of Grand Rapids.

- **Kent Trails:** Owned by Kent County Parks, along with the City of Grandville and City of Wyoming, part of the Kent Trail system is within the City of Grand Rapids boundaries. Segments within the City include surface streets.
- **Paul Henry Thornapple Trail:** Owned and managed by local jurisdictions, spanning from the City of Grand Rapids to Vermontville, this regional trail is comprised of a variety of surfaces including, paved sections, crushed stone, on-road, unimproved/natural corridor.
- **Fred Meijer White Pine Trail:** With the trail's southern terminus in the City, Michigan's longest state park is owned by the Department of Natural Resources. The paved trail provides regional connections to Rockford, Cedar Springs, Big Rapids, Reed City, and Cadillac.



Oxford Trail connects the Black Hills neighborhood to Millennium Park and Kent Trails
Photo: Carbon Stories

Existing Trails Near the City of Grand Rapids

- **Grand River Greenway:** The Grand River Greenway is a network of trails that runs along the Grand River from Lake Michigan in the Grand Haven to Lowell. There are a number of notable paved trails that are part of this greenway like the Idema Explorer's Trail, the Riverwalk, the Grand River Edges Trails, and others. However, some regional plans specifically identify routes from Plainfield Township to south of the City of Lowell as the Grand River Greenway Trail. The entire trail has not yet been built and is currently under development. This visionary network also aims to connect over 30 parks across Ottawa and Kent Counties.
- **Fred Meijer Millennium Park Trails:** Adjacent to the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County's 1,400-acre park includes a network of 18 miles of paved and unpaved trails. The City maintains a trail connection to the park that also provides access to the City of Walker.

Future Trails In or Near the City of Grand Rapids

- **Indian Mill Creek:** This proposed paved trail would provide a connection between the Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail in the City of Walker to the Grand River Edges Trail in the City of Grand Rapids.
- **River to River/Interurban Trail:** With the northern terminus in Grand Rapids and running along a former interurban rail line to Kalamazoo, this future paved trail would connect several communities. The most recent planning study and conceptual alignment was completed in 2018.



The 93-mile Fred Meijer White Pine Trail begins in Grand Rapids' Riverside Park and ends in Cadillac, Michigan. Photo by Alina Albin for Experience GR.

WALKSHEDS

A review of the City's existing nonmotorized network has also been included as a part of this trail inventory. Including trails as a part of this network provides residents and visitors access to and within many of the City's parks. In addition to trails, the system includes sidewalks, signed bicycle routes, and bike lanes. Access to City parks and other recreational assets are further expanded for people biking, walking, and rolling when they can use the entire nonmotorized network.

A "walkshed" is a tool to understand the barriers people face when walking to a park from their home. Analyzing the area around a specific park that's reachable on foot for the average person helps the Parks Department understand how to make it more accessible. On average, a person can be expected to walk about ten minutes to get to a destination like a park. That's typically about a half mile in a straight line. But realistically, people navigate routes based on sidewalk availability or a natural or man-made barrier that may be obstructing a direct path. The area covered by a ten-minute walk is often much tighter than the half-mile radius would suggest.

83% of Grand Rapids residents are estimated to live within walking range to a park.

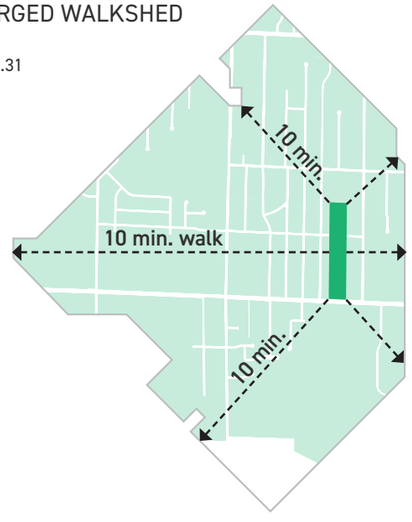
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Decennial Survey

In April 2018, Grand Rapids was one of 12 U.S. cities to receive a planning and technical assistance grant to ensure all residents had access to a high-quality park close to home through the National Recreation and Park Association's 10-minute Walk campaign.

The Parks Department continues to prioritize access to green space in under-served parts of the community and supports the creation of park spaces that keep pace with current population growth and development.

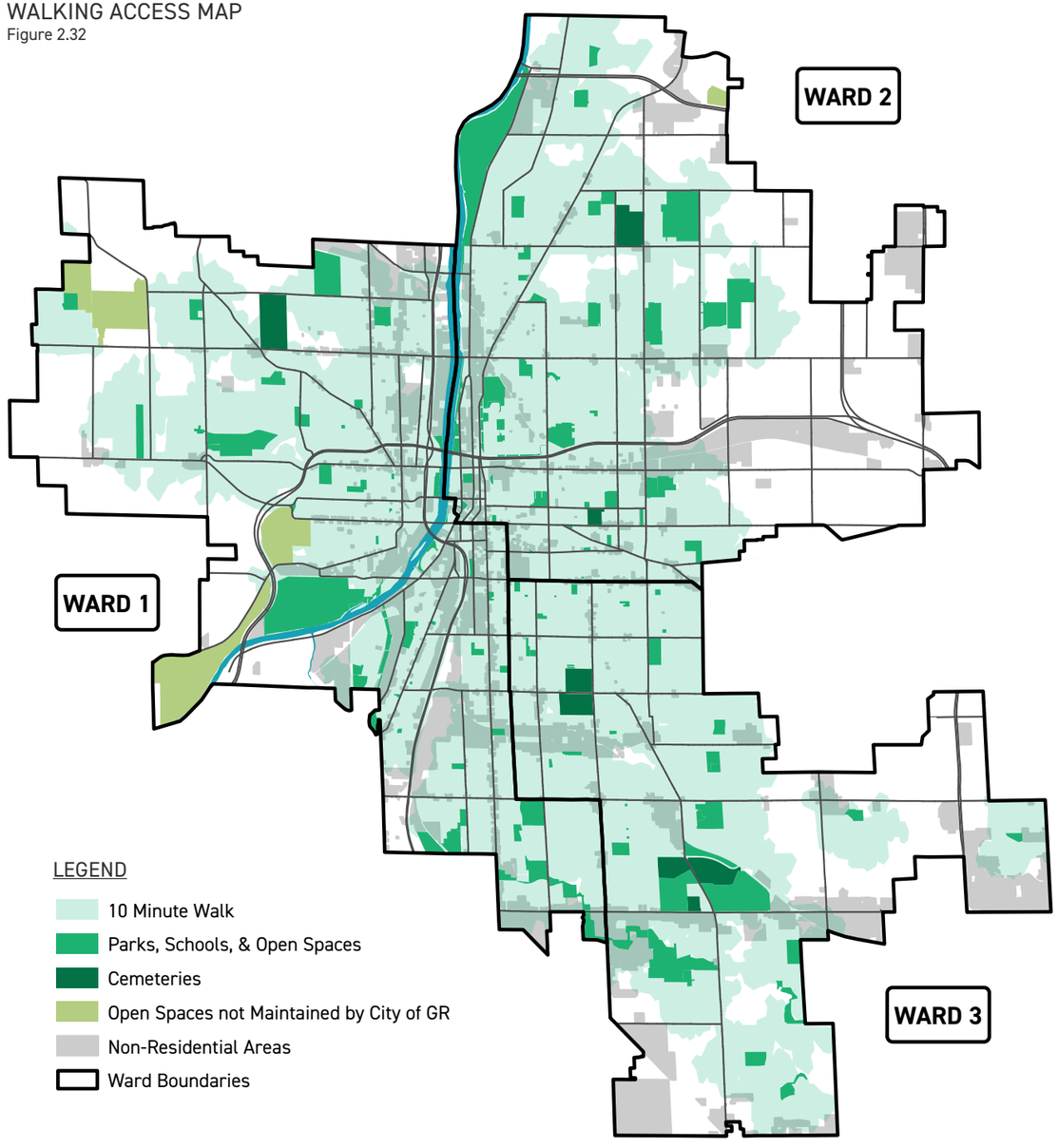
The analysis revealed that almost the entire city is located within a 15-minute drive of a regional park. However, not all residents have access to a vehicle, especially elderly and youth residents, and future efforts will consider how residents can reach regional parks by transit, walking, biking, and rolling.

ENLARGED WALKSHED MAP
Figure 2.31

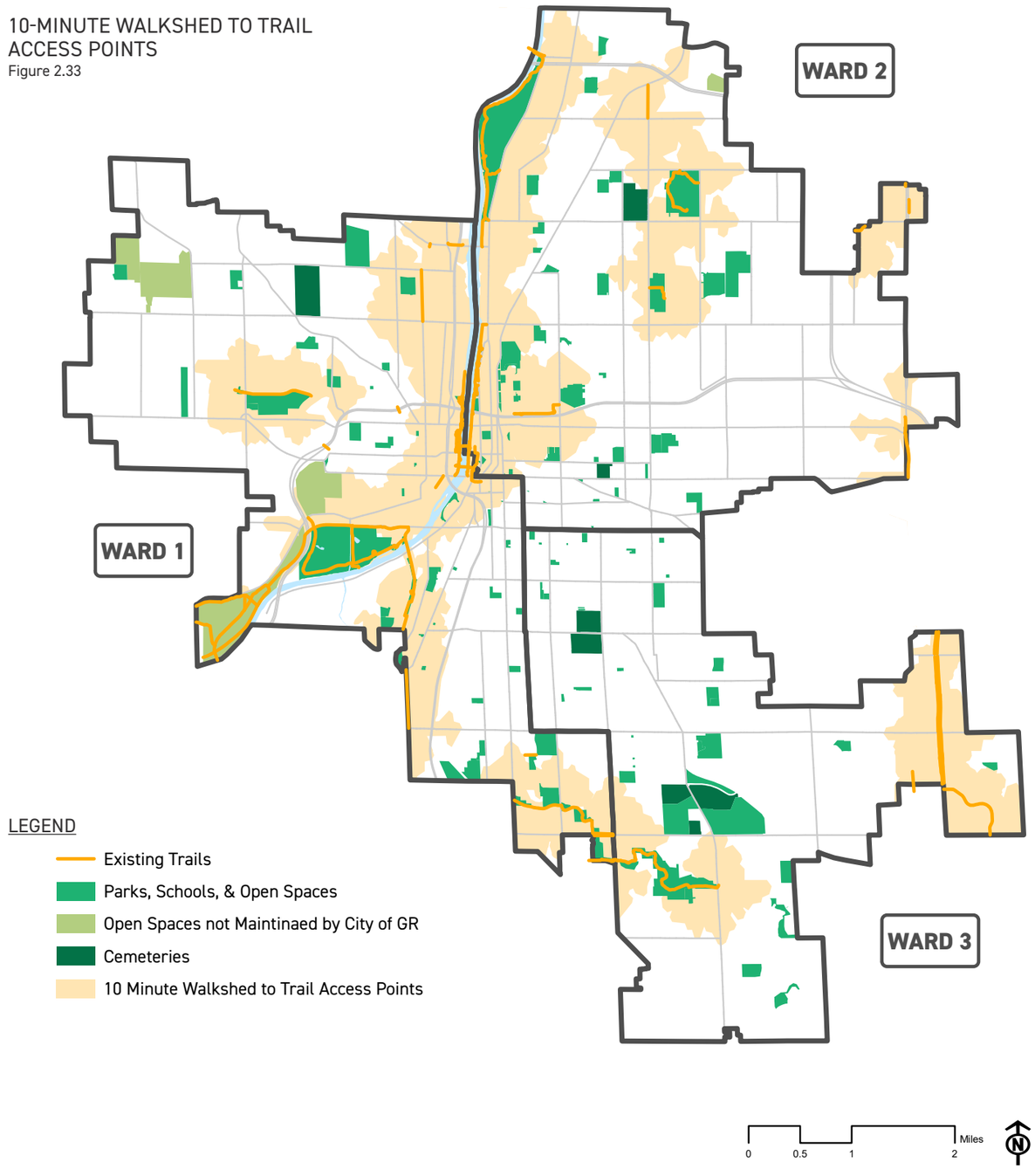


An enlarged walkshed map illustrates the area covered by a 10-minute walk based on ecological and human-made barriers.

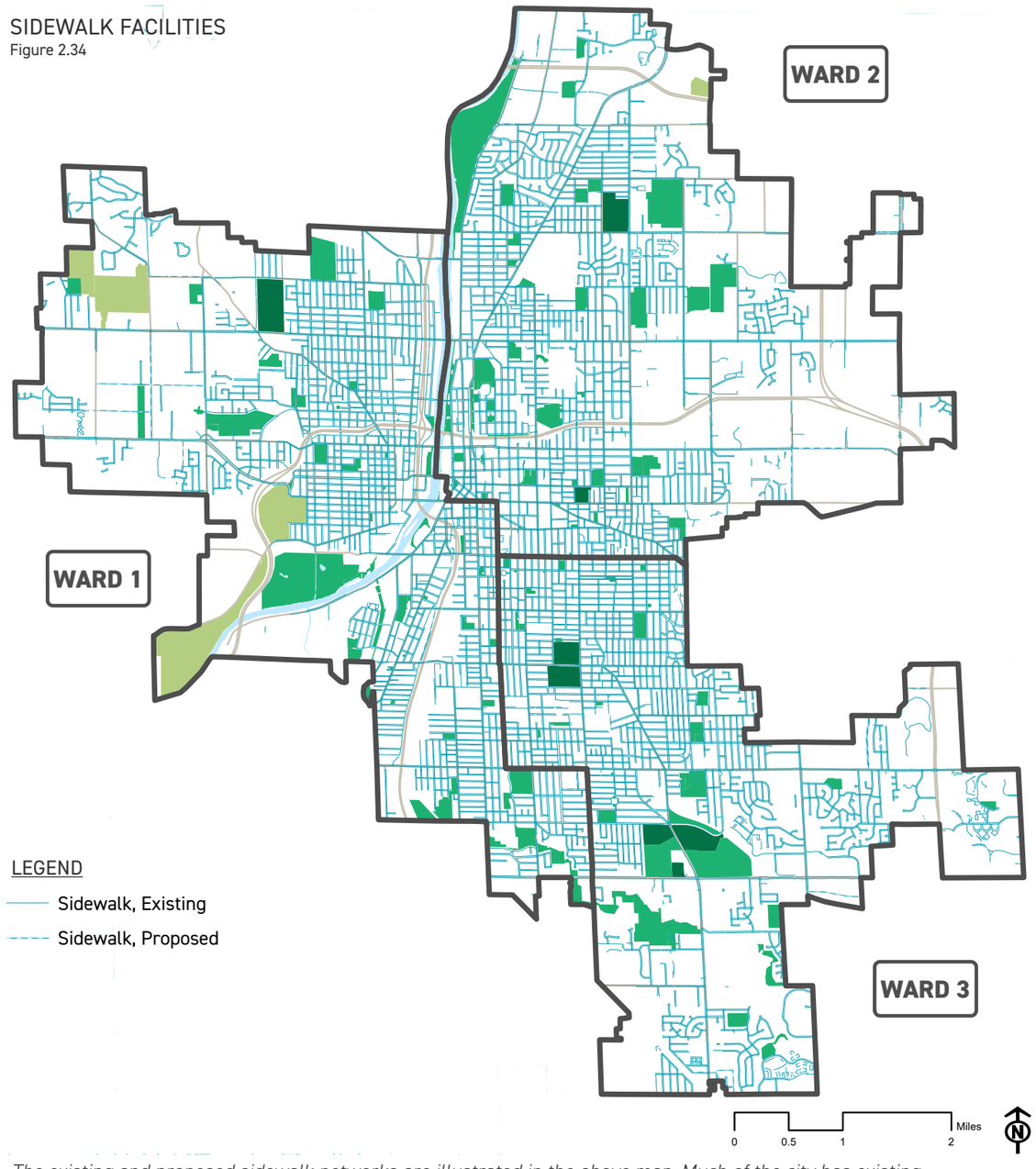
WALKING ACCESS MAP
Figure 2.32



10-MINUTE WALKSHED TO TRAIL ACCESS POINTS
Figure 2.33



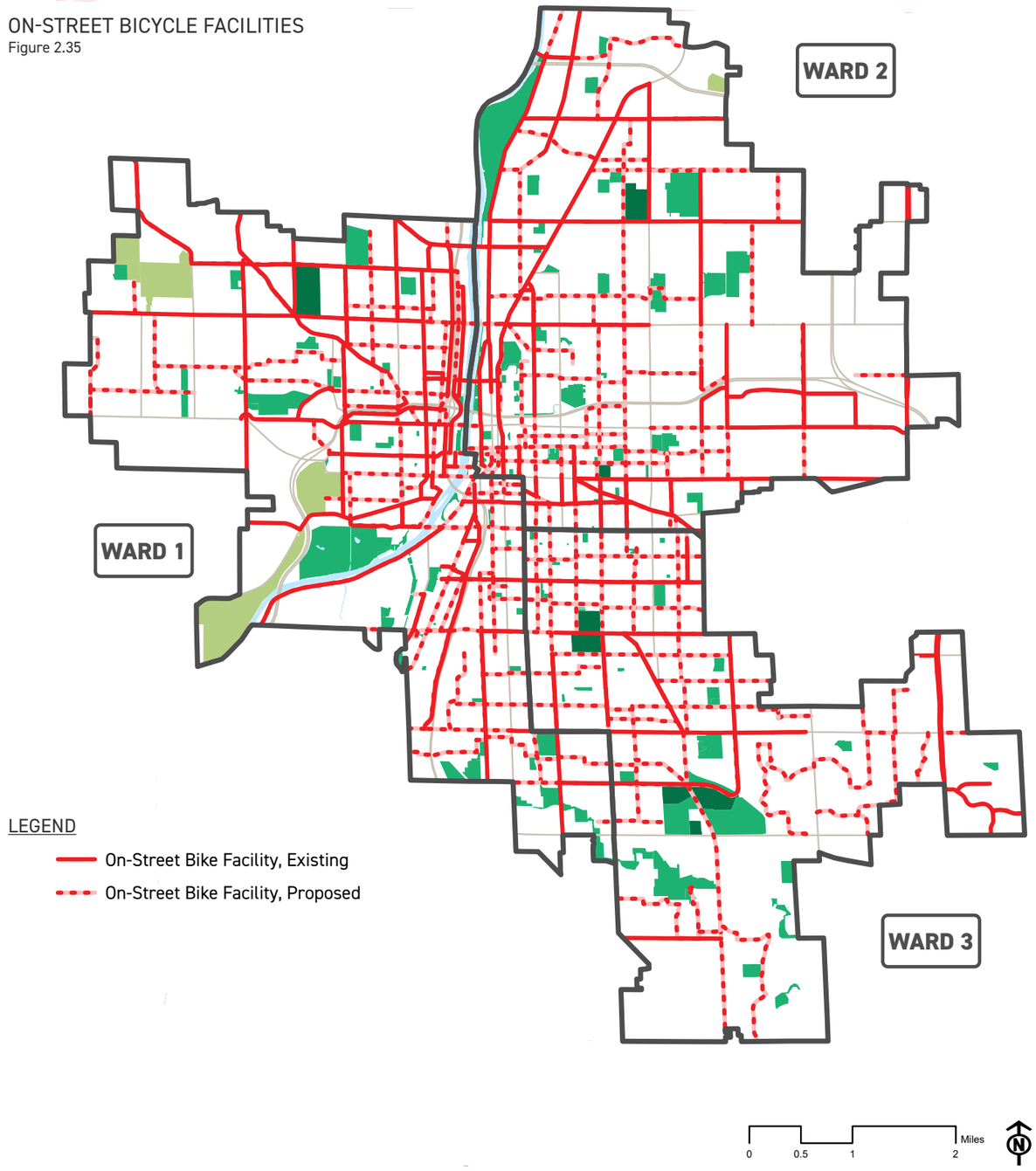
SIDEWALK FACILITIES
Figure 2.34



The existing and proposed sidewalk networks are illustrated in the above map. Much of the city has existing sidewalks and few areas have proposed sidewalks. Sidewalks provide access to parks for residents within their neighborhood. When sidewalks connect to trails, access to parks can be expanded for residents. This system map shows the access routes residents have to parks in their neighborhood.

ON-STREET BICYCLE FACILITIES

Figure 2.35



The map (left) shows the existing and proposed bicycle facilities within the city. The on-street bicycle connections include the on-street bike lanes and signed bicycle routes. Bicycle facilities show routes that residents can take to access parks that are beyond their immediate neighborhood without having to drive a car or take the bus. When bicycle facilities connect to trails, access to parks across the city grows. The map shows how existing and proposed bicycle facilities extend access routes for residents beyond neighborhood parks.

TRAIL SYSTEM BENCHMARKING

Key Insights:

- Grand Rapids maintains a meaningful trail network, with strong comparable level of service in relation to peer agencies, though trail mileage is generally more reflective of its urban environment than larger, geographically expansive benchmark agencies.
- At 40 miles, Grand Rapids' trail network is 28% larger than the NRPA norms average of 31.2 miles. The benchmark average is based on NRPA data from agencies serving jurisdictions of similar population and density and agencies with similar sized budgets, FTEs, acres to maintain, and number of parks.
- Expansion of regional trail connectivity may represent a future opportunity when compared to several benchmark communities with more extensive trail systems.
- Trail investment should continue to be evaluated not only by total miles, but also by connectivity, accessibility, and transportation value to residents.



Bike lane on Turner Avenue

TRAIL GAPS

Trails are seen as a significant part of the City's recreation amenities, and the Parks Department has a vested interest in examining the existing and proposed trail system. Using the City's existing and proposed trails GIS data, a high-level trail-to-trail gap analysis was completed. The gaps show where future potential trail routes may be located to better connect the formal paved trail system.

The Trail Gap Analysis map (right) shows the City's existing park and related properties, existing and proposed trails, notable gaps between trails, and the lack of trails in the southern part of the City. The table below provides additional information about each of the network gaps, alternative non-motorized connections that can be made, and potential barriers to implementation.

Recreation Activation Opportunities

Illustrated on the Trail Gap Analysis map are several areas with a unique set of parks and trail circumstances highlighted as "Recreation Activation Opportunities." These key locations have particular conditions surrounding differing natural features, user needs, and desire lines that may warrant future study.

A. **City Center:** Audience and trail use may be different Downtown. Consider to what degree should trails and the River be connected.

B. **Central North:** Close proximity of existing parks and proposed trails.

C. **Fuller and Fountain:** Close proximity of existing parks. Future trails may enhance recreation and mobility.

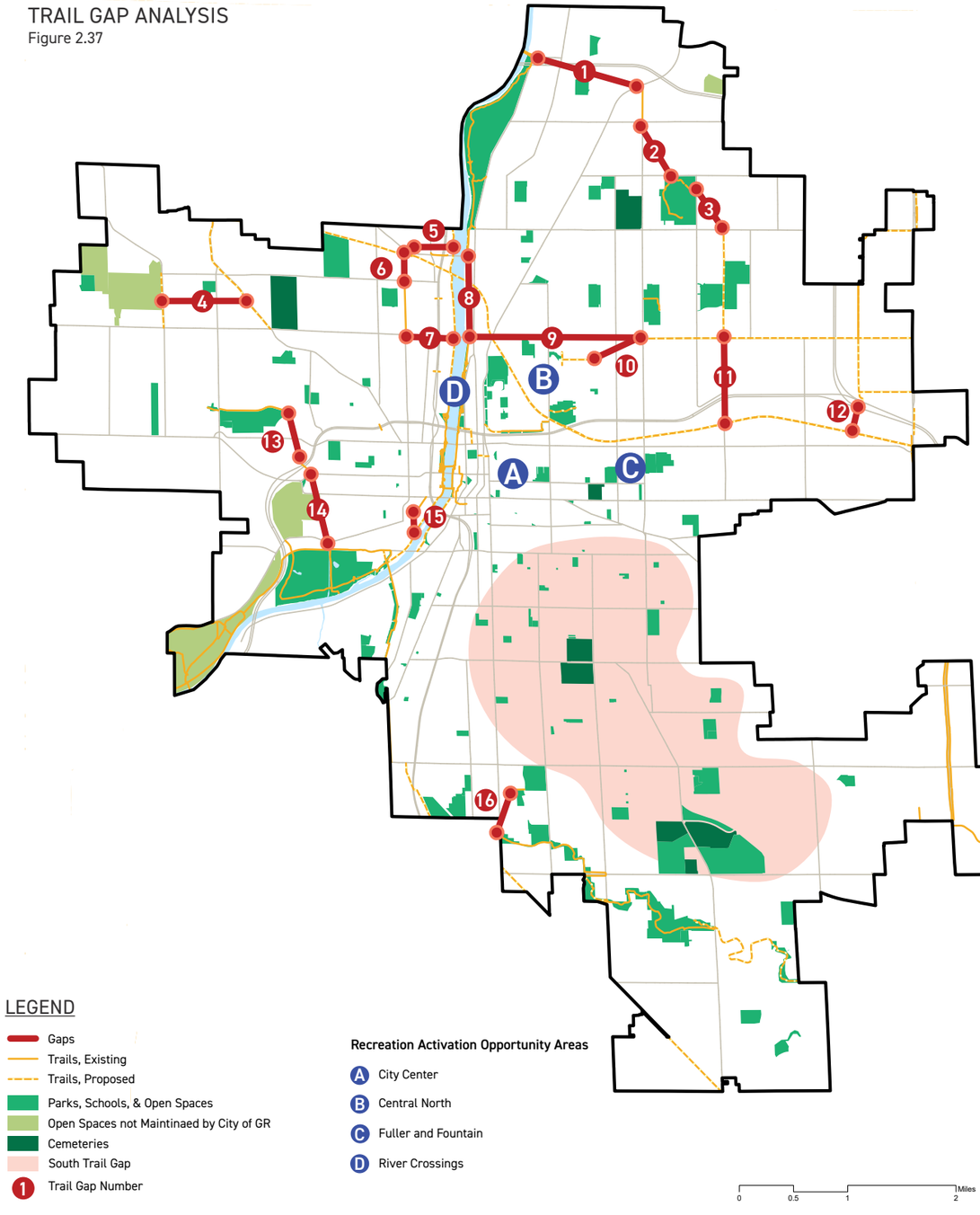
D. **River Crossings:** Identify future pedestrian and bicycle river crossings at a human-scale.

Table: Trail-to-Trail Network Gaps

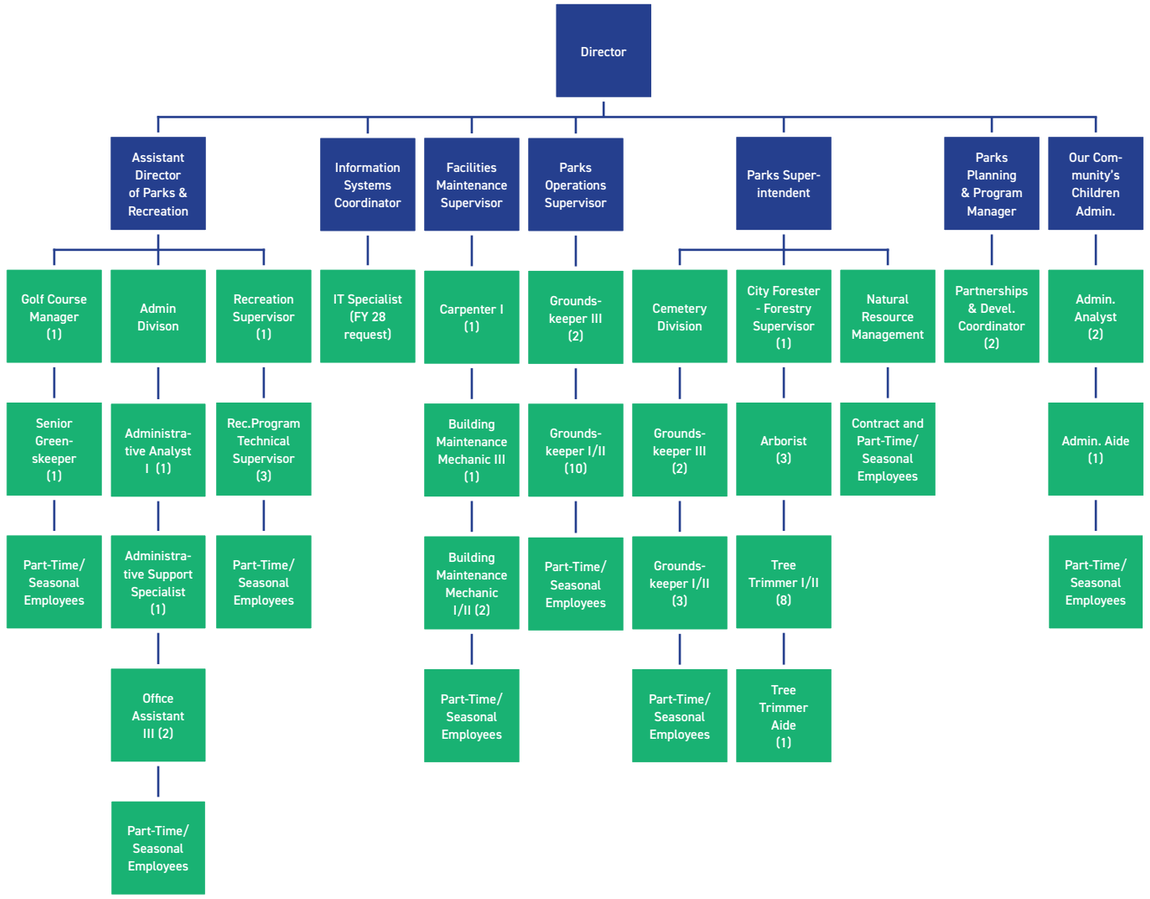
Trail Gap #	Trail alternative can be made via		Implementation Barriers
	Sidewalk Facilities	On-Street Bicycle Facilities	
1		E	Steep grade
2	E	E, P	Lack of easements, City-owned property
3	E	E, P	Lack of easements, City-owned property
4	E	E	Lack of easements, City-owned property
5	E	E	Existing facilities are confusing to user.
6	E	E	Railroad and rail yard. Crossing Indian Mill Creek.
7	E	P	Lack of easements, City-owned property
8	E	E	Lack of easements, City-owned property
9	E	P	Lack of easements, City-owned property
10	E		Maintained between City and Kent County Drain Commission along Carrier Creek.
11	E	P	Some steep grades, Highway underpass
12			Connection under I-196
13	E	P	Lack of easements, City-owned property
14	E	E	Lack of easements, City-owned property
15		E	Property owned by GVSU
16	E	P	Lack of easements, City-owned property
	E = Existing P = Proposed		

TRAIL-TO-TRAIL NETWORK GAPS
Figure 2.36

TRAIL GAP ANALYSIS
Figure 2.37



ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
Figure 2.38

THE PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Parks & Recreation Department currently includes 56 full-time employees, supported by an additional 51 seasonal/part-time employee Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs). Full-time staff are distributed across key service areas: Administration & Planning (10), Operations & Maintenance (18), Recreation (4), Forestry (13), Cemeteries (5), Golf (2), and Our Community's Children (4).

Under the leadership of the Director (new to the role in 2026), the Parks Department is organized into several functional divisions. The Assistant Director, who stepped into the role in 2026, oversees Administration, Recreation, and Golf. The Parks Planning & Program Manager, who also begin in 2026, oversees all capital projects and planning initiatives. The Parks Superintendent oversees Cemeteries, Forestry and Natural Resource Management. The Parks Facilities and Operations divisions report to the Director, reflecting their systemwide operational role. Additional Department leadership includes the Administrator of Our Community's Children, who manages youth-focused programs and interagency collaborations. The Parks Department is further supported by financial and administrative staff, an Information Systems Coordinator, and an Administrative Analyst.

Each year, the Parks Department hires a large seasonal workforce to support maintenance, pools, recreation programs, park activation, facility rentals, and summer camps. Combined, these temporary hours total approximately 51 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) and play a vital role in delivering services during peak seasons.

Resource Constraint

More than $100 million in new parks, trails, assets, and riverfront infrastructure have been added in just the past few years providing significant changes and additions to the system. These changes and additions, however, have resulted in no additional operational resources, staff, or long-term asset management support for the Parks Department, and as a result, the Department is currently operating with a meaningful level of resource constraint. Another element of importance is the need for the Department to add capacity to support the City's natural resources goals (i.e., restore ecology and build climate resilience, prepare parks for extreme weather and climate disruption, grow environmental knowledge and stewardship, reveal and reconnect communities with Grand Rapids' Tributaries).

With the already completed investments and expansions of the system, additional investments being planned for the coming years, and the Department's need to focus of natural resources, the needs and priorities of the Department have expanded to meet these new realities. These changes highlight the need for the Department to expand its capacity through long-term strategic positioning, investments, partnerships, outreach, additional staffing, and new revenues to ensure delivery of quality parks, programs, and services to Grand Rapid residents and visitors. In particular, there is a significant and immediate need to increase maintenance staffing and add natural resources staff to address the operating, maintenance, and natural resources needs of the system.

Key Benchmarking Insights:

- Grand Rapids staffing levels, against NRPA norms, are ~65% of jurisdictions of similar size and density
- Grand Rapids staffing levels, as compared to NRPA norms, are 60% of agencies that care for 1,001 to 3,500 acres
- Grand Rapids staffing levels, as compared to NRPA norms, are 33% of agencies maintaining 50 or more parks

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was established under City Commission Policy No. 1100-07, dated June 18, 1991. The Board recommends policies, rules and regulations for public use of Parks and Recreation facilities and programs; assists in evaluation of parks and recreational programs and facilities; reviews and suggests changes to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; monitors and reports annually on millage expenditures, capital investments, and pool operations. The Board is composed of nine members; 6 resident seats and 3 organizational representation seats (can be nonresidents). Three members represent one of the following organizations: Grand Rapids Public Schools, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., and Friends of Grand Rapids Parks.

Enabling Legislation

Public Act 156 of 1917 entitled Local Government, Public Recreation System; Powers of Municipality is an act authorizing Cities, Villages, Counties, Townships, and School Districts to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds. It states in Section 1 that any City, Village, County, or Township may:

1. **Operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds;**
2. **Acquire, equip, and maintain land, buildings, or other recreational facilities;**
3. **Employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants; and,**
4. **Vote and expend funds for the operation of such a system.**

PARTNERSHIPS

Parks has strategically built beneficial partnerships with other organizations which has enabled them to expand capacity for programming and outreach; explore creative space-sharing; and reduce its maintenance and operational responsibilities. Key partnerships include:

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

As a long-standing community organization supporting the Parks and Recreation system, FGRP has established a strong community of invested residents and volunteers. Initiatives such as Park Stewardship Program, Forestry Program, Green Team and Conservation Program connected citizens with opportunities to beautify and activate their neighborhood parks. The Parks Department and FGRP helped realized the success of managing 18 parks and 2,522 volunteer hours in parks in FY 2026, which in turn helped strengthen community connections to public spaces and decrease maintenance burden.

FGRP serves as a critical advocacy organization that supported the successful passage of the permanent parks millage measure in 2019. FGRP can continue to be a leading convener and organizer of resident priorities for the overall health and prosperity of Grand Rapids parks. In many cities, similar citywide non-profit park advocacy organizations serve to provide the following resources in partnership with the municipal parks department:

- Continue to advocate for citywide park policy by underwriting or developing research initiatives
- Expanding stewardship by incubating new "friends of" groups for parks citywide
- Fundraising by centralizing fundraising requests.

Key Benchmarking Insights:

It is important to recognize that volunteer participation and engagement can vary significantly between communities based on socioeconomic conditions, volunteer program structures, available funding, community partnerships, and the types of volunteer opportunities offered. Additionally, differences in how agencies recruit, manage, and report volunteer participation may influence these figures. In Grand Rapids, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks plays a significant role in coordinating volunteer opportunities and supporting community stewardship of public spaces. While the benchmarking data provides a useful reference for understanding volunteer participation across agencies, these comparisons should be interpreted within the context of each community's unique circumstances and should not be viewed as a direct measure of volunteer program effectiveness or community engagement.

- Grand Rapids has a large total number of volunteers as compared to its peers and aspirational agencies, yet the total hours volunteered and hours per volunteer are considerably less than the average of its peer and aspirational agencies.
- Grand Rapids total volunteers is 1,544, larger than that of peer and aspirational agencies with an average of 1,493 volunteers.
- Grand Rapids total hours volunteered is 2,522; average of the peer and aspirational agencies is 8,054.
- Grand Rapids hours per volunteer is 1.63, while the average of peer and aspirational agencies. is 11.

Grand Rapids Public Schools

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department maintains a longstanding partnership with Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) to expand access to recreational facilities, outdoor learning, and community programming. A Joint Use Agreement supports the shared use of approximately 432 acres of school-park space, while providing opportunities for the Department to utilize school facilities, including swimming pools, gymnasiums, and other recreational spaces. This collaboration maximizes public resources and expands access to recreation for students, families, and residents across the city.

The partnership also supports environmental education and outdoor learning through initiatives such as Green Schoolyards, which integrate nature-based play and educational experiences into school and park environments. Continued coordination between GRPS and the Parks Department can strengthen connections between schools and nearby parks, support youth recreation and after-school programming, and create additional opportunities for shared facility use. Building on this established partnership will help both organizations maximize existing investments, reduce barriers to participation, and provide more equitable access to recreation, education, and outdoor experiences throughout Grand Rapids.

Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. and Downtown Development Authority

The Parks Department maintains a strong partnership with Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) to activate downtown parks through cultural events, public art, and community programming. Signature events such as World of Winter bring temporary art installations, interactive experiences, and seasonal activities into public spaces, encouraging year-round use. DGRI also connects downtown residents and businesses with the Parks Department, helping identify community needs, coordinate programming, and promote park amenities. DGRI staff representation on the Parks Advisory Board further strengthens coordination between downtown initiatives and citywide park priorities.

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA), administered by DGRI, serves as an important funding partner for eligible capital improvements, including parks, trails, streetscapes, and riverfront public spaces. Collaboration between the Parks Department, DGRI, and the DDA helps align investments with downtown revitalization efforts, leverage funding, and advance shared priorities for accessibility, connectivity, and public space improvements. Together, these partnerships support long-term park development while ensuring downtown parks remain active, welcoming destinations that contribute to the city's cultural identity, economic vitality, and overall quality of life.

Grand Rapids-Kent County Convention/ Arena Authority

The Grand Rapids–Kent County Convention/ Arena Authority (CAA) is an important partner in supporting downtown public space improvements that complement the City's parks and recreation system. The Authority has contributed funding toward public space projects such as Lyon Square and East Riverfront, supporting improvements that enhance downtown connectivity, recreation, and access to the Grand River.

The CAA's investments complement the Parks Department's efforts to create attractive, accessible, and active public spaces that serve residents while supporting downtown tourism, cultural attractions, and economic vitality. This relationship demonstrates how collaboration between civic institutions can leverage resources and advance shared investments in Grand Rapids' downtown public realm.

Plaster Creek Stewards

Plaster Creek Stewards is an important community partner in advancing ecological restoration, environmental education, and watershed stewardship throughout Grand Rapids. While the organization's primary focus is the Plaster Creek watershed, its work extends to parks and natural areas across the city. Through its partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department, Plaster Creek Stewards supports the establishment and ongoing maintenance of native landscapes, habitat restoration, and sustainable land management practices.

Plaster Creek Stewards also works directly within City parks to engage residents, students, and community groups through hands-on environmental education, outreach, and stewardship activities. These efforts promote ecological literacy and build awareness of stormwater management, watershed health, native ecosystems, and the connections between urban land use and water quality. By using parks as outdoor classrooms and opportunities for community involvement, Plaster Creek Stewards helps foster environmental awareness and a stronger sense of responsibility for the City's natural resources.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

To fulfill the critical goal of this plan to support the long-term financial and operational sustainability of the Grand Rapids Parks system for future generations, an in-depth analysis of Department operations and management was conducted, strengthened by interviews with Department staff, analysis of Department data, and the benchmarking analysis.

The analysis found that Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation system's annual operating budget, staffing numbers, and capital budget are underfunded. The most significant investment needs are in the annual operating budget and staffing. The capital budget, while increases in funding are needed and a rehabilitation/deferred maintenance budget needs to be added, is overall in better shape than the operating budget and staffing levels.



The Grand Rapids City Forestry team taking down a hazardous Norway Maple.

OPERATING BUDGET

Examining Grand Rapids' operating budget compared to NRPA agency norms of comparable agencies and cities documents underfunding for operation and maintenance of the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation system. Grand Rapids' operating budget is 78% of the average of the comparable agencies by the combined jurisdiction's populations and density's and agency's FTEs, acres to maintain, and number of parks to maintain ($11,240,591 vs. $14,498,000).

When looking at Grand Rapids' operating budget against the average of the peer and aspirational agencies, the numbers are more striking with Grand Rapids' total operating budget 62% of the peer and aspirational agencies, operating expenses per resident at 56%, operating expenses per acre at 40%, and operating expenses per FTE at 90%, respectively, of the average of the combined peer and aspirational cities. It is important to note, with Grand Rapids' low number of FTEs, Grand Rapids' operating expenses per FTE for Grand Rapids are higher than if the staffing levels were at appropriate and comparable levels.

The current Grand Rapids operating budget, along with the staffing level, is insufficient for the delivery of quality parks, facilities, programs, and services.

Key Benchmarking Insights:

» Grand Rapids' total operating budget is 62% of the peer and aspirational agencies.

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
OpEx for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	$ 15,370,000.00	$ 11,399,433
OpEx for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	$ 14,300,000.00	
OpEx for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	$ 8,100,000.00	
OpEx for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	$ 15,640,000.00	
OpEx for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	$ 31,950,000.00	

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES OPERATING EXPENDITURES
Figure 2.39

OPERATING BUDGET COMPARISON WITH PEER & ASPIRATIONAL AGENCIES		
	Grand Rapids	Peer & Aspirational Cities Average
Population	200,000	193,061
Operating Expenditures	$11,240,591	$18,022,743
Operating Expenditures per Resident	$56.20	$101.00
Total Developed Acres	1,592	1,640
Operating Expenses per Developed Acre	$7,059.25	$17,520
Total Acres	1,670	3,046.58
Operating Expenses per Acre (Total Acres)	$6,731.62	$16,480.87
Total FTEs	82	132
Operating Expenses per FTE	$137,533	$152,596

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES OPERATING BUDGET COMPARISON
Figure 2.40

CAPITAL BUDGET

Grand Rapids' current capital budget is $2.7M while the current average capital budget for peer and aspirational agencies is $7.9M. Grand Rapids' Next 5 Years Capital Investment Plan (CIP) has $20.7M and the peer and aspirational agencies have an average Next 5 Years CIP budget of $27.6M.

Looking at NRPA data, the average Next 5 Years Capital Budget for comparable agencies is $30.85 while Grand Rapids' capital budget is $20.7M.

Analyzing where capital dollars are spent, Grand Rapids' dollars are solely focused on improvements, with no capital funds for acquisitions or new development. The average capital budget for Peer and Aspirational Agencies allocates 74% for renovations and 26% for new development.

Caring for the existing parks and recreation system and assets is critical. Capital dollars need to cover major capital investments as well as rehabilitation/deferred maintenance projects to extend the life of existing assets and improve their functionality and safety. Additionally, as the City of Grand Rapids and the parks and recreation system grow, funds also need to be allocated for new development and land acquisition.

Key Benchmarking Insights:

- Grand Rapids' current capital budget is $2.7M while the current capital budget average for peer and aspirational agencies is $7.9M.
- Grand Rapids' Next 5 Years CIP has $20.7M while the peer and aspirational agencies have an average Next 5 Years CIP budget of $27.6M.
- Looking at NRPA data, capital budgets for agencies serving jurisdictions of similar size and density have capital budgets that average $36.8M and $27M, respectively.
- Grand Rapids is solely focused on improvements with no capital funds intended for acquisitions or new development.
- Peer and Aspirational Agencies capital budget is 74% for renovations and 26% for new development.

Agency	Current Capital Budget	CIP Next 5 Years
Grand Rapids	**$ 2,715,247**	**$ 20,680,712**
Peer Agencies		
Albemarle County	$ 5,584,028	$ -
Lancaster	$ 6,420,147	$ 64,436,147
Reno	$ 11,325,000	$ 29,546,687
Rochester Hills	$ 2,342,000	$ 15,534,000
Sugar Land	$ 4,600,000	$ 13,800,000
Aspirational Agencies		
Alexandria	$ 18,708,000	$ 70,069,400
Greensboro	$ 6,306,000	$ -

**Note: Figures for Columbus were not available.*

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES CAPITAL BUDGET
Figure 2.41

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	$ 36,800,000	**$ 20,680,712**
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	$ 27,000,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	$ 24,300,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	$ 12,700,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	$ 25,200,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	$ 59,100,000	

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES CAPITAL INVESTMENTS
Figure 2.42

Agency	Current Capital Budget	Acquisition	Improvements	Other
Grand Rapids	**$ 2,715,247.00**	**0%**	**100%**	**0%**
Peer Agencies				
Lancaster	$ 6,420,147.00	0%	100%	0%
Reno	$ 11,325,000.00	0%	100%	0%
Rochester Hills	$ 2,342,000.00	0%	96%	4%
Sugar Land	$ 4,600,000.00	0%	100%	0%
Aspirational Agencies				
Alexandria	$ 18,708,000.00	2%	68%	30%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle Co, Columbus, and Greensboro were not available.*

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES CAPITAL BUDGET BREAKDOWN
Figure 2.43

REVENUE & COST RECOVERY

Grand Rapids has a limited mix of funding sources for parks and recreation operations, with 92% of current revenue coming from the General Fund (accounting for 48% of revenue) and Special Taxes and Levies (at 44%). Earned revenue accounts for just 7% of total revenues.

A key factor contributing to the City's low cost recovery through earned revenue is the Department's intentional strategy to minimize financial barriers to participation in parks and recreation services. In fact, community engagement findings showed that cost was among the least frequently cited barriers to accessing parks and recreation programs.

Key Benchmarking Insights:

- Grand Rapids is limited in diversity of funding sources for operations as it currently funds 92% budget through the General Fund (48%) and Special Tax / Levies (44%).
- Grand Rapids' 7% cost recovery is well below the 16% average among peer and aspirational agencies.
- Nationally, comparable agencies average 15–21% earned income, based on staffing levels and jurisdictions with similar population sizes and densities.
- Grand Rapids collects $4.21/resident in earned revenue (program fees, rentals, food and beverage sales, etc.) while peer and aspirational agencies collect on average $15.52/resident.
- There is opportunity to expand revenue-generating programs, events, rentals, sponsorships, and partnerships while maintaining equitable access to essential park services for residents.

Agency	Total Operating Expense	General Fund	Special Tax / Levy	Earned Revenue	Sponsors, Private Grant / Donation	Public Operating Grant	Other
Grand Rapids	**$ 11,240,591.00**	**48%**	**44%**	**7%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Peer Agencies							
Lancaster	$ 29,944,571.00	89%	3%	0%	0%	8%	0%
Reno	$ 14,078,459.00	91%	5%	2%	0%	2%	0%
Rochester Hills	$ 9,235,700.00	82%	0%	10%	0%	0%	8%
Sugar Land	$ 7,079,693.00	98%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Aspirational Agencies							
Alexandria	$ 31,163,224.00	59%	0%	4%	0%	1%	36%
Columbus	$ 12,739,535.00	95%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Greensboro	$ 33,283,998.00	88%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle County were not available.*

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES FUNDING SOURCES
Figure 2.44

Agency	Total Earned Revenue	Total Operating Expense	Cost Recovery (%)
Grand Rapids	**$ 842,426**	**$ 11,240,591**	**7%**
Peer Agencies			
Lancaster	$ 4,878,997	$ 29,944,571	16%
Reno	$ 6,219,882	$ 14,078,459	44%
Sugar Land	$ 270,000	$ 7,079,693	4%
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	$ 1,812,900	$ 31,163,224	6%
Greensboro	$ 4,008,979	$ 33,283,998	12%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle County, Rochester Hills, and Columbus were not available.*

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES COST RECOVERY
Figure 2.45

COST RECOVERY - PARK & RECREATION AGENCY BEST PRACTICES	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	21%	**7%**
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	26%	
Cost Recovery for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	30%	
Cost Recovery for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	33%	
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	26%	
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	25%	

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES COST RECOVERY BEST PRACTICES
Figure 2.46

Agency	Total Population	Total Earned Revenue	Earned Revenue per Resident
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**$ 842,426**	**$ 4.21**
Peer Agencies			
Lancaster	173,516	$ 4,878,997	$ 28.12
Reno	278,226	$ 6,219,882	$ 22.36
Sugar Land	111,026	$ 270,000	$ 2.43
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	156,800	$ 1,812,900	$ 11.56
Greensboro	307,381	$ 4,008,979	$ 13.04

**Note: Figures for Albemarle County, Rochester Hills, and Columbus were not available.*

BENCHMARKING PEER AGENCIES EARNED REVENUE
Figure 2.47

Parks Millage 101

The millage rate in local government language refers to the property tax rate. Property tax in

Michigan requires voter approval for tax increases or new taxes. In 2013, Grand Rapids voters approved a seven-year property tax to support parks, pools and playgrounds throughout the city. The seven-year tax addressed a backlog of much needed park repairs, kept pools open, and funded new investments in parks. However, the 2013 millage covered only initial phases of upgrades in many City parks. Most parks received only an initial phase of investment and would require additional improvement to best meet community goals for these spaces. When the 2013 millage expired, total expenditures were more than $20.5 million:

- $5.7 million in park improvements (26.2%),
- $10.8 million in rehabilitation and repair (49.9%)
- $4 million for pool operations (18.4%).

In 2019, voters approved a new permanent millage to help ensure adequate, ongoing funding for Grand Rapids parks, pools and playgrounds.

The permanent millage provides stable funding to keep parks maintained and updated, and keep pools and splash pads open every summer with staff and supplies to keep them safe and clean. It allows for continual capital improvements and rehabilitation for neighborhood and community parks and helps leverage supplemental outside grants and funding. Additionally, it supports free recreational programming for children in Grand Rapids, giving them more opportunities to connect with community, nature, play, and friends.

Anticipated annual parks expenditures from the millage include:

- $3.5 million for continued capital improvements and rehabilitation of the City's 98 parks ($750K is repayment of $12M 2024 bonds to accelerate various park project completions)
- $1.6 million for operations of 3 outdoor swimming pools
- $1.4 million for increased parks maintenance, allowing more parks to be maintained at a comprehensive stewardship level
- $500K to operate the new MLK Community Center
- $600K to support Free Summer Day Camp, GR Outside, Senior Wellness Programming and scholarship opportunities for recreation classes

The annual parks operating budget is $11.2 million and is funded in part by general operating fund, parks millage, and earned revenue.

$7.75/month

average homeowner cost as of 2026 for permanent Park Millage

Between direct millage revenues and more than $50 million in leveraged match funding (MNRTF, ARPA, philanthropic gifts, and DGRI partnerships), the system upgraded over 70 park sites and shifted its systemwide asset condition rating from 30% rated A/B in 2018 to over 81%.

<u>Parkland additions & expansions over the past 10+ years has included the following:</u>

- Unity Park (Roosevelt Park Neighborhood): Acquired approximately 0.77 acres (supported by Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and local match funds) to construct a dedicated neighborhood park and civic gathering space integrated with the broader Plaza Roosevelt community redevelopment.
- Otsego Drain Basin Acquisition/Conversion: Integration and public dedication of open green space and stormwater infrastructure parcels into parkland inventory for passive greenspace and ecological recreation.
- Grand River Edge & Greenway Parcels: Strategic easements and land parcel purchases along Monroe Ave NW and the industrial riverfront corridor to close gaps in the Grand River Edges Trail and expand public waterfront holdings (connecting toward Canal Park and Riverside Park).
- 32nd Street Park Parcel: Dedicated property acquisition in the southern boundary area for future neighborhood park development.

The capital program since 2016 prioritized universal accessibility, splash pads, riverfront activation, trail connectivity, and neighborhood park infrastructure with the following investments:

<u>Riverfront & Signature Parks</u>

- Canal Park ($7.5M Reconstruction): Complete transformation including bank stabilization, universal "River Story" playscape, event plaza, enclosed park pavilion, river overlooks, and a universally accessible kayak launch.
- Lyon Square Plaza ($12M Revitalization): Complete reconstruction featuring river overlooks, snowmelt paving, improved tree canopy, and direct pedestrian linkage to the Grand River trail network.
- Ah-Nab-Awen Park (in progress): Major riverfront pathway restoration, lighting improvements, and structural shoreline stabilization engineering.

Neighborhood Parks & Play Amenities

- Belknap Park: Major regional tournament pickleball complex buildout (adding dozens of dedicated courts), lighting upgrades, and current master-planned expansion (Griff's Icehouse, modern restrooms, and connectivity).
- Sullivan Field (Valley Field): Phase I and II historic grandstand stabilization, accessible spectator plazas, and ballfield drainage/turf improvements.
- Grand Rapids Bike Park: Progressive dirt pump tracks, jump lines, flow trails, parking lot reconstruction, and covered trailhead shelter.
- Highland Park: Modernized restroom facilities, trail lighting, and playground replacement.
- Houseman Field / Neighborhood Playgrounds: Community-build universal playgrounds installed across aging sites, including Dickinson, Garfield, and MacKay-Jaycees.
- Non-Motorized Trails & Greenways
- Oxford Trail: Complete trail reconstruction, bank stabilization, and off-road trail extension along the Plaster Creek corridor.
- Grand River Edges Trail (Leonard to Ann St): Off-street paved trail extension closing gaps between downtown Grand Rapids and Riverside Park.
- Plaster Creek Trail: Streambank erosion control bioengineering, resurfacing, and trail alignment upgrades connecting south-side neighborhood segments.

Community Centers, Pools & Aquatic Hubs

- Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Park: Reconstruction of the MLK pool, bathhouse modernizations, fitness equipment installations, universal playground, and construction of the new year-round community lodge and multipurpose center.
- Briggs Park: Complete pool mechanical renovation, ADA bathhouse upgrades, and playground replacement.
- Splash Pad Conversions: Neighborhood splash pads installed across the park system, including additions/upgrades at Camelot Park, Joe Taylor Park, Campau Park, Highland Park, and Roosevelt Park.



Richmond Pool



Lexington Park

These land acquisitions and capital investments have been significant in many ways – providing more parkland in a growing city, improving access to the riverfront, completing major investments to revitalize existing parks and park facilities, and expanding the park system assets. New assets have been added to the system including a bike park, universal playgrounds, trail expansions, buildings, river access points, restrooms, complex mechanical systems, and high-use public spaces

PARK MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

The Parks & Recreation Department maintains detailed operational and maintenance standards intended to provide a consistent, high level of park condition and service across the system. Standards address both routine maintenance and specialized facilities, establishing expectations for the frequency, staffing, and procedures associated with individual tasks.

The park system is organized into 10 maintenance districts, with crews assigned to each district. Within this structure, maintenance activities are tailored to the facilities and level of use at individual parks. Standards cover general grounds maintenance as well as turf and athletic fields, playgrounds, courts, trails, parking areas, restrooms, drinking fountains, splash pads and pools, irrigation systems, water features, and other specialized amenities. Park-specific standards further identify anticipated task frequency, duration, crew requirements, and procedures.

Maintenance expectations also recognize that parks require different levels of service based on their development, use, and character. Service levels range from intensive maintenance for highly developed and heavily used landscapes to more limited maintenance for natural areas and undeveloped open green spaces. Higher service levels may include more frequent litter collection, turf care, cleaning, inspections, and landscape maintenance, while lower service levels focus primarily on safety, basic functionality, and periodic care.

Across the system, core responsibilities include litter and waste removal, mowing and trimming, restroom cleaning, playground and site safety inspections, graffiti and vandalism response, repair of furnishings and amenities, tree and landscape maintenance, and identification of damaged or malfunctioning assets. Seasonal responsibilities include irrigation startup and winterization, leaf removal, snow and ice management, pool and splash pad operations, and event support. Staff are also trained in equipment use, safety procedures, park policies, and maintenance practices, with follow-up evaluation incorporated into the training process.

In addition, the Grand Rapids Parks Native Gardens Maintenance Plan was completed in 2025, thanks to a partnership with Plaster Creek Stewards. With a detailed inventory and maintenance plan for native gardens at nine park sites and general best practice guidelines, the document provides a foundation for native planting practices and care at City parks and green spaces.

Together, these standards provide a structured framework for assigning work, maintaining consistent expectations, supporting staff training, and adapting maintenance levels to the needs of individual parks and facilities.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department has made significant investments in understanding the condition, maintenance needs, and lifecycle of its park infrastructure. Through the 2025 Facility Condition Assessment completed by Bureau Veritas and the implementation of Siemens Asset Management Software (formerly Brightly), the Department has access to increasingly detailed information about the assets it manages across the park system.

These investments represent an important shift toward a more comprehensive, data-informed approach to park operations and capital planning. The assessment documents existing infrastructure conditions, anticipated asset lifespans, and future repair and replacement needs, while the asset management platform provides tools to track maintenance activities, monitor asset conditions, and support long-term planning.

The City's Strategic Operating Plan identifies expanded use of asset management technology and facility condition assessments as priorities for improving operational efficiency and informing future capital investments. Together, these resources help the Department transition from reactive maintenance toward a more proactive approach, identifying aging infrastructure, anticipating replacement needs, and prioritizing investments across the system.

2025 Facility Condition Assessment Scope

The 2025 Bureau Veritas Facility Condition Assessment evaluated 83 parks, excluding certain parks scheduled for renovation, smaller greenspaces, and recently added properties. Aman Park, located outside City limits, is tracked separately from ward-based findings, while Provin Trails, operated by Kent County Parks, was excluded.

Although the assessment does not capture every park, greenspace, or asset maintained by the Department, it establishes a valuable baseline for understanding infrastructure conditions and prioritizing future investments.

Because the number, size, and type of parks and amenities vary across the City's three wards, condition scores and investment needs should be considered within the context of assessed infrastructure rather than as direct measures of equitable investment.

2025 Facility Condition Assessment Findings

Average Park Condition Score (PCS)

The Facility Condition Assessment established standardized condition scores to compare individual amenities and overall park conditions across the system. Each amenity received an Amenity Condition Score (ACS) based on its remaining useful life and replacement value. These scores were then combined to calculate an overall Park Condition Score (PCS) for each assessed park, weighted by the replacement value of its amenities.

Scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating better overall condition and lower anticipated replacement needs. Lower scores indicate aging infrastructure and greater potential reinvestment needs.

$$\text{PCS Formula} = \frac{\text{Total Remaining Value}}{\text{Total Replacement Value}} \times 100$$

- **Ward 1 Average PCS: 52.5** (10 parks under 50)
- **Ward 2 Average PCS: 47** (15 parks under 50)
- **Ward 3 Average PCS: 59** (4 parks under 50)

Asset Replacement Values

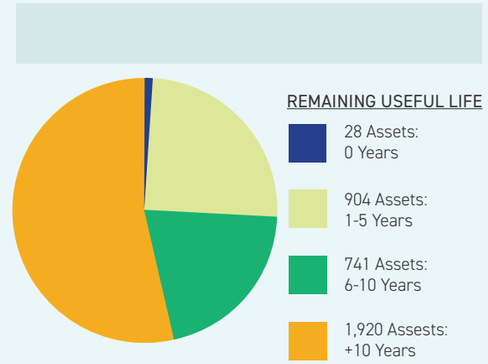
Asset Replacement Value represents the estimated cost, in current dollars, to replace existing park infrastructure with comparable assets, including playgrounds, pathways, and athletic facilities, but excluding land. It supports long-term capital planning rather than measuring deferred maintenance or immediate repair costs. **The 83 assessed parks have a combined replacement value of $53.2 million.**

- **Ward 1 Parks $16,119,965**
- **Ward 2 Parks $25,201,930**
- **Ward 3 Parks $11,318,961**
- **Aman Park $510,266**

Remaining Useful Life

The Department's Replacement Reserves Report provides comprehensive asset data, including expected lifespans, unit costs, deficiency repair estimates, and a 20-year replacement schedule. Each asset is also documented with GPS coordinates to support inventory management and long-term capital planning.

3,593 Assets in the Park System



Immediate Needs

Bureau Veritas identified key findings needing immediate action as a result of material existing or potential unsafe conditions; failed or imminent failure of mission critical building systems or components; conditions that, if not addressed, have the potential to result in, or contribute to, critical element or system failure within one year and will most probably results in a significant escalation of its remedial cost.

$8,589,600 in Immediate Needs identified for implementation between 2025-2027

- **Ward 1 Immediate Needs: $3,436,500**
- **Ward 2 Immediate Needs: $4,593,400**
- **Ward 3 Immediate Needs: $621,800**

Additional information is located in the Park, Amenity, & Accessibility Audit in the Appendix.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department uses social media, email marketing, public relations, and community outreach to promote recreation programs, park improvements, events, and engagement opportunities. In recent years, the Department has shifted toward a more coordinated, strategic approach to communications, emphasizing sustainable audience growth, program awareness, and consistent messaging across all divisions.

Beginning in 2025, the Department expanded its use of multiple communication channels, including increased media outreach, email marketing, and, in 2026, paid advertising and email retargeting. A department-wide communications calendar was also introduced in 2026 to establish regular promotional schedules for major programs, with a goal of reaching audiences through at least seven communication touchpoints across platforms.

Social Media

Social media remains a significant component of the Department's public outreach. As of October 2026, the Department had approximately 27,800 Facebook followers and 14,100 Instagram followers, representing growth of approximately 73% and 276%, respectively, since the beginning of 2022. In 2025 alone, Facebook content reached more than 1 million people, while Instagram reached approximately 387,000.

Audience data indicates a strong local following, with Grand Rapids residents accounting for approximately 39% of Facebook followers and 37% of Instagram followers. Women represent 80% of Facebook and 73% of Instagram audiences, with adults ages 25–44 comprising the largest age group on both platforms. While these platforms provide substantial visibility, their demographics also highlight opportunities to reach younger residents, older adults, and other audiences through additional communication channels.

The Department maintains an informal, approachable, and often lighthearted tone on social media, using humor, playful content, and engaging visuals to connect with residents and build a recognizable online presence. This personality helps make City communications feel more accessible and encourages interaction beyond traditional program announcements. While past viral posts contributed to significant audience growth, recent efforts have focused on balancing this engaging style with more intentional messaging that promotes recreation opportunities, park amenities, and Department initiatives.



Parks Department Social Media Promotion

Email Marketing and Public Relations

The Department maintains email marketing lists totaling approximately 17,100 subscribers, including 8,388 recreation subscribers and 1,758 community input subscribers. These targeted lists provide opportunities to communicate directly with residents about programs, events, and public participation opportunities, although several lists are currently inactive.

Public relations efforts have also expanded considerably. The Department issued 16 press releases in 2025 and at least 17 through October 2026, compared to just two in 2024. This increased outreach contributed to more than 200 media stories directly related to the Department's work in 2025, helping extend its reach beyond existing digital audiences.

Opportunities for Broader Awareness

Despite this growing communications presence, community engagement conducted for the Master Plan identified a lack of awareness as a significant barrier to participation, cited by approximately 28% of survey respondents. This reinforces the importance of the Department's shift from generating social media visibility toward communicating information that directly supports program participation and community engagement.

Building on recent progress, opportunities remain to strengthen coordination across communication channels, expand partnerships with neighborhood organizations and local media, and increase targeted outreach to populations less represented in existing digital audiences. These efforts can help ensure that residents throughout Grand Rapids are aware of and able to access the full range of parks, facilities, programs, and recreational opportunities available to them.



Press realease announcements and media presence at groundbreaking and ribbon cutting events, such as Unity Park in October 2026

3/

SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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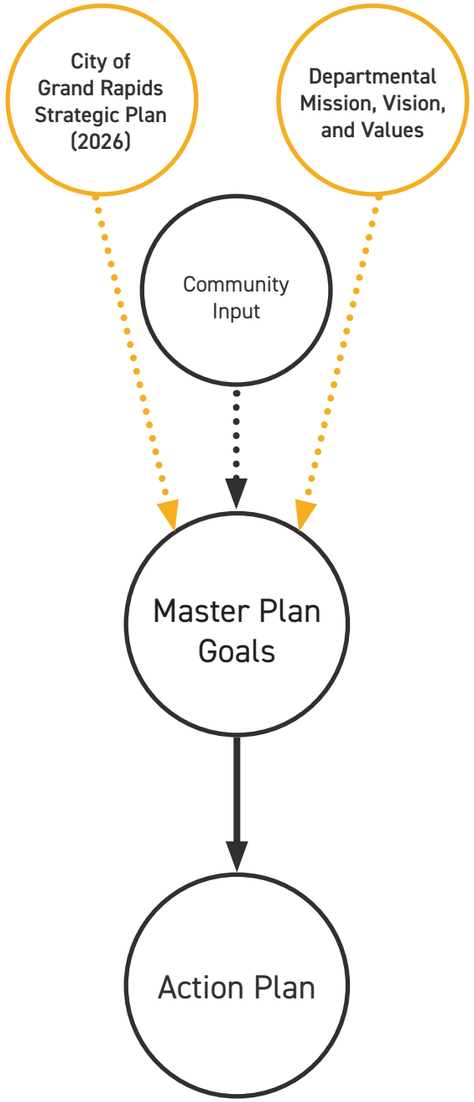
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STRATEGIC DIRECTION



Both the long-term goals of the Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Department as well as the daily operations are driven by a clear mission and vision, which guide both internal Departmental strategy and Master Plan recommendations. The development of the Department's mission, vision, guiding principles, and values, was established during the 2017 Parks Master Plan, providing new direction and momentum for the Department and has carried through to today.

The City of Grand Rapids 2026 Strategic Plan also charts a path for how the work of the Department integrates with the larger mission and vision of the City organization. Six strategic priorities – governmental excellence, economic prosperity and affordability, engaged and connected community, health and environment, mobility, and safe community – inform objectives and actions for the park and recreation system. The City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan also sets the framework for ensuring the City's value of equity is embedded within all City operations, processes, and policies.

The overall strategic direction of the City of Grand Rapids, the Parks Department, and the Parks Master Plan is also closely informed by broad community outreach efforts and consistent dialogue with residents.

MISSION

A mission statement describes the overall purpose of the Department. It creates boundaries for the Department's operations: what we do, who we do it for, and how and why we do it. It also answers the question, "what is our business?"

DEPARTMENT MISSION

To provide our community with inspirational experiences through the responsible management and collaborative stewardship of the City's natural, educational, and cultural resources.

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS MISSION

To elevate quality of life through excellent City services.

VISION

A vision statement is aspirational, forward-looking and describes an ideal future.

DEPARTMENT VISION

Creating and supporting a healthy, vibrant community through:

- Active neighborhoods
- Inclusive programs and events
- Innovation and best practices
- Exceptional services
- Embracing diversity

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS VISION

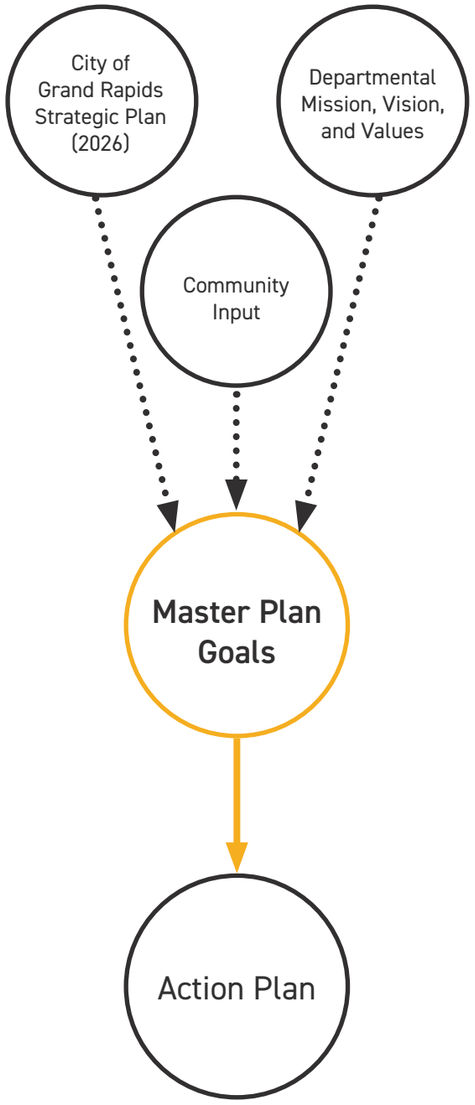
Grand Rapids will be nationally recognized as an equitable, welcoming, innovative and collaborative city with a robust economy, safe and healthy community, and the opportunity for a high quality of life for all.

VALUES

Values are internally focused and represent the way the employees of the organization work together. They help to describe the organizational culture and what we stand for.

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS VALUES

- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Customer Service
- Equity
- Innovation
- Sustainability



As a vehicle for realizing the mission, vision, and values outlined previously, the Master Plan sets out four goals for the future of the Grand Rapids park and recreation system.

MASTER PLAN GOALS

The Master Plan's goals have remained consistent for the past decade, while its objectives have evolved to address current community needs and priorities.

CONNECTED NETWORK

Create a connected network of parks, natural areas and waterways accessible to the entire Grand Rapids community.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTMENT

Create diverse experiences by drawing on community feedback, local ecology and national trends.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Expand programs and initiatives that support the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all Grand Rapidians

SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Seek innovative solutions to become more financially self-sustainable and diversify funding sources.

STRENGTHENING THE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

The objectives in this chapter, organized to fulfill each of the four goals, reflect priorities heard through the 2027–2032 Parks and Recreation Master Plan engagement process and build upon existing City plans, Department studies, and regional initiatives. As the parks and recreation system has grown and improved, so too have the resources needed to care for it. Sustaining this investment will require a Citywide commitment to the operations, maintenance, staffing, and partnerships necessary to support the parks and recreation system over the long term. With that foundation, Parks can continue to advance community health, equity, recreation, environmental resilience, placemaking, safety, and quality of life, while supporting Grand Rapids as it grows. A well-supported parks and recreation system can help the City meet the needs of a growing and changing population while strengthening the public spaces, recreational experiences, and sense of place that make Grand Rapids an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

CITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The Grand Rapids Citywide Strategic Plan provides the overarching framework. Its priorities call for equitable access to green space and recreation, inclusive programming, activation of public spaces, climate resilience, community engagement, placemaking, public safety, and responsible investment. Importantly, the Strategic Plan also emphasizes proactive asset management, innovation, partnerships, and sustainable service levels as the City continues to invest in public infrastructure.

This direction reinforces an important premise of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan: the next chapter of the Parks and Recreation system is not simply about adding more. It is about increasing the community value of the investments that Grand Rapids has built through thoughtful programming, activation, inclusive design, ecological resilience, partnerships, and strategic investment.

PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

The objectives are also informed by and aligned with other relevant initiatives, including the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP), Grand River Equity Framework, Grand River Greenway, Mobility Blueprint, Lower Grand River Water Trail Development Plan, Grand Loop Feasibility Study & Trails Plan, GVMC Active Transportation Plan, Dog Park Development Guidelines, and the ongoing Southside Creekways Project. Collectively, these efforts reinforce themes of equity, environmental stewardship, inclusive recreation, community connection, collaboration, and long-term sustainability.

Rather than duplicate recommendations already being advanced through these efforts, the objectives that follow focus on areas where Parks and Recreation can directly influence how residents experience, use, learn from, participate in, and feel represented within the parks and recreation system. Detailed recommendations related to maintenance and operations, trail connectivity, and Grand River access and engagement are addressed elsewhere in the planning process.

BASIC NEEDS

In 2022, the Master Plan research team identified **BELONGING, RECREATION, SAFETY, AND CONNECTION** as desirable themes for park users as part of community input analysis. This forms what is now identified as "Basic Needs" for users of parks and public spaces. The Master Plan builds off of the previous understanding of basic needs and applies it to the objectives in this chapter. The following are excerpts from community conversations that support the identified themes:

BELONGING

- Safety and comfort for all park users
- Cultural diversity and inclusion across park spaces and experiences
- Equitable access regardless of race, income, age, ability, or background
- Community connection among neighbors and park users
- Representation and shared ownership in the parks and recreation system

RECREATION

- Physical and mental health through active and passive recreation
- Community connection through sports and shared recreational experiences
- Variety of recreation opportunities for different interests, ages, and abilities
- Youth development through healthy, active, and social experiences
- Everyday enjoyment and well-being through access to parks and outdoor activity

SAFETY

- Physical safety and personal security throughout the parks and recreation system
- Inclusive environments where all users feel safe regardless of identity or background
- Well-maintained park spaces that support comfort and security
- Visible care and upkeep that discourage vandalism and disruptive activity
- Awareness of different lived experiences that influence perceptions of safety

CONNECTION

- Physical connectivity between parks, neighborhoods, trails, and destinations
- Accessible connections that make the parks and recreation system easier for everyone to experience
- Community gathering that brings people and neighborhoods together
- Partnerships and collaboration with local organizations and businesses
- Community ownership through stronger relationships with parks and public spaces



CONNECTED NETWORK
OF PARKS, NATURAL AREAS AND WATERWAYS

The value of a parks and recreation system extends beyond the boundaries of any single park. It grows through the connections between them.

A truly connected system links people to parks, neighborhoods to destinations, and communities to recreation, nature, waterways, and one another. Trails, sidewalks, greenways, the Grand River and its tributaries, and other connections expand the reach of individual parks and make the entire parks and recreation system easier and more enjoyable to access.

The objectives within this goal strengthen both the physical and experiential connections that bring green spaces together. Trails can link neighborhood parks, schools, recreation facilities, waterways, and other community destinations, while investments in accessibility, safe crossings, wayfinding, shade, amenities, natural areas, gathering spaces, and programming can make those connections more welcoming and useful to a broader range of residents.

The Grand River is a defining part of this network, connecting parks, trails, tributaries, neighborhoods, and regional recreation opportunities. Continued investment in the riverfront and Lower Grand River Water Trail can expand opportunities for recreation, environmental education, stewardship, and community gathering. Meaningful connection to the river, however, extends beyond physical access. Equipment, knowledge, safety, affordability, transportation, programming, and trusted community partnerships all influence whether residents can experience and enjoy the river.

As these connections grow, management and operations must grow with them. New trails, access points, amenities, programs, and partnerships bring long-term responsibilities for maintenance, staffing, safety, equipment, and coordination. Consistent maintenance standards, routine evaluation, year-round access, clearly defined partnerships, and strategic investment are essential to creating a network that remains safe, reliable, and enjoyable over time. The goal is not simply to create more connections, but to build a cohesive and sustainable network that connects residents to the full range of experiences Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system has to offer.

Objectives:

1. Connect People and Places Through Trails
2. Build a Safe and Accessible Nonmotorized Network
3. Prioritize Trail Maintenance
4. Invest in Trail User Experience
5. Build Community Capacity for River Programming
6. Advance Equitable Water Trail and Waterfront Experiences
7. Reveal and Reconnect Communities with Grand Rapids' Tributaries

Objective 1

CONNECT PEOPLE AND PLACES THROUGH TRAILS

WHAT

Develop and connect trails that link neighborhood parks, schools, recreation facilities, natural areas, open green space, and other community destinations into a citywide trail network. Prioritize filling gaps between established trails and expanding trail connectivity to trail gap areas, as identified in the Trail Gap Analysis.

WHY

Trails, greenways, and parks provide residents with active, low-cost, and low-carbon transportation options, linking popular destinations and local and regional networks.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Transportation + Mobility, Grand River | Engaged + Connected Community: Connectivity | Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Placemaking | Governmental Excellence: Collaboration

STRATEGY

1. Prioritize trail investments that address system gaps identified in the Trail Gap Analysis, especially in Neighborhoods of Focus and underserved populations, to parks, recreation, open green space, waterways, and other community amenities.
2. Implement principles and actionable steps of the Southside Creekways Plan and other initiatives that support trails as drivers of equitable economic development.
3. Create new and enhance existing trails to and along the Grand River Riverfront, Plaster Creek, and other tributaries to provide greater access to natural resources and water-based recreation.
4. Collaborate with municipal and regional partners to strengthen connections between City parks, neighboring communities, and the regional active transportation network, advancing relevant recommendations of the GVMC Active Transportation Plan, West Michigan Trails Master Plan, and Grand River Greenway.
5. Develop and celebrate locations where "greenway" and "blueway" trails intersect as destinations and places to linger.
6. Develop an updated Grand Rapids Trail Plan in partnership with Mobile GR. Coordiate with the Mobility Blueprint.



Priority Trail Connections + System Gaps

- Kalamazoo to the Ken-O-Sha Park trail system and park
- Grand River to the Midtown Neighborhood through the "Coldbrook Cut"
- Plaster Creek trail connections between Eastern Ave SE and Madison Ave SE, specifically the crossing at 28th St
- Leonard to Knapp through Ball Perkins Park
- Highland Park from the south, under I-196 and west from College Ave
- Plaster Creek Family Park to the north end of Bike Park
- Oxford Trail to Grand River Edge Trail
- Oxford Trail to the Black Hills Neighborhood
- Grand River Edges Trail to the Fuller Avenue off-street shared-use path
- Connection under I-96 for Leffingwell Avenue
- Grand River Edges Trail improvements in the downtown core
- Indian Mounds Drive trail and recreation space enhancements
- Pedestrian connection from the Belknap Neighborhood to Division Ave and the riverfront

Objective 2

BUILD A SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE NONMOTORIZED NETWORK



WHAT

Further the development of a safe and accessible trail network as part of the City's nonmotorized system that enhances bicycle recreation experiences.

WHY

Continued advancement of a local nonmotorized system furthers goals of other City initiatives including Vital Streets, the Bicycle Action Plan, Mobility Blueprint, and the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Transportation + Mobility, Green Space + Recreation, Climate Action + Adaptation | Safe Community | Governmental Excellence: Equity + Collaboration

STRATEGY

1. Use inclusive, accessible design standards for new and reconstructed trails so that residents of all ages and abilities can navigate them.
2. Elevate public awareness of City trails and trail access through increased advertisement of trail facilities and enhanced wayfinding signage at trailheads.
3. Work with City departments and partner agencies to improve trail crossings and intersections that connect people to parks and other recreational features.
4. Use a framework, like crime prevention through environmental design standards (CPTED), to develop an expected, predictable trail experience that is centered on a trail user's safety.
5. Collaborate on an Urban Bicycle Recreation Plan to address the breadth and depth of connectivity, recreation, and economic development potential to prioritize recreation opportunities related to bicycles that include (but are not limited to) mountain biking, pump tracks, social/slow bicycle rides, linear parks, and non-vehicular access to these amenities, events, and programs.
6. Explore how traditional walking, biking, and rolling trail users may be impacted by unregulated, motorized mobility devices that travel at high speeds.

Objective 3

PRIORITIZE TRAIL MAINTENANCE



WHAT

Maintain trails, in-park pathways, and related infrastructure as high-quality community assets to provide a safe, reliable, and enjoyable experience.

WHY

The community strongly supports improved maintenance of existing facilities, enhanced accessibility, and year-round use of parks.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation | Governmental Excellence: Asset Management + Sustainability | Safe Community

STRATEGY

1. Promote ecology-based maintenance of vegetated edges and surrounding natural areas, and maintain supporting amenities, signage, and lighting to ensure the network remains attractive, accessible, and reliable year-round.
2. Continue regular evaluations of trail conditions and supporting trail amenities to prioritize as-needed repairs, resurfacing, replacement, or reconstruction.
3. Foster trail maintenance stewardship and public-private-nonprofit partnerships to create community agreements and multijurisdictional operations in support of local and regionally connected trails, similar to efforts of the Grand River Network.
4. Develop a GIS inventory of trails within the parks to track maintenance, condition, surface type, and other assets.
5. Conduct safety, wayfinding, and accessibility audits at intersections, road crossings, and entrances at parks and along trails to assess existing conditions and necessary improvements in partnership with Mobile GR and Mobility Blueprint.
6. Seek collaborative opportunities between Parks and Mobile GR staff to use internal knowledge, expertise, and funds to enhance the maintenance, operations, safety, and experience of park and trail users. Set a formal interdepartmental meeting schedule.
7. Explore investment in new trail snow plowing equipment.

Objective 4

INVEST IN TRAIL USER EXPERIENCE

WHAT
Continue to maintain and expand trail facilities that are enjoyable, inviting, and surrounded by nature for recreation and transportation.

WHY
Residents strongly supported expanding trail systems and linking parks together through safe and enjoyable walking and biking networks.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Transportation + Mobility | Engaged + Connected Community: Connectivity + Community Engagement | Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Placemaking | Governmental Excellence: Equity + Collaboration

STRATEGY
1. Develop a trail network that accommodates a variety of trail user groups who have different, and sometimes competing, needs.
2. Design trails to maintain natural shade and include furnishings like rest areas, overlooks, litter receptacles, restrooms, visible safety features, and other amenities that support an inviting user experience.
3. Establish trails as greenways, or "green highways", that connect City parks and provide opportunities to experience the local ecology.
4. Create trails as destinations and welcoming places for people of all backgrounds to gather and recreate through intentional design, public art, programming, and other enhancements.
5. Support trail programming by City departments and partnering agencies that encourage residents to use trails as places for community building and cultural expression.
6. Identify areas along existing trails that would be locations for cultural, community-building, science, or other programs.
7. Promote trails as family friendly spaces that connect children to nature.
8. Install a trail wayfinding system that provides a safe, seamless, understandable experience for trail users. Further develop a coordinated, consistent, and easy to navigate regional land and water trail wayfinding system to other trails, parks, waterways and waterfront access points, landmarks, neighborhoods and other key destinations.
9. Install interpretive signage to promote education, storytelling, and connection to nature.



Left: Annual Run & Block Party; Top Right: Art Installations at Woven Works Park; Bottom Right: Community Picnic
Photos from Downtowngreenway.org

Activating the Greenway: Downtown Greenway Greensboro, North Carolina

The Downtown Greenway illustrates how investing in the trail user experience can transform a trail into a year-round destination. The Greenway regularly hosts community walks and runs, outdoor fitness classes, public art experiences, live music performances, cultural celebrations, nature-based activities, family festivals, and volunteer events that bring the corridor to life.

These experiences give users opportunities to gather with neighbors, discover local art, enjoy outdoor recreation, and experience the trail in new ways throughout the year. By pairing a high-quality trail environment with engaging programming and events, the Greenway creates a vibrant and memorable destination that attracts users far beyond those simply passing through.

Objective 5

BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR RIVER PROGRAMMING

WHAT

Parks & Recreation should serve as the backbone for collaborative river programming, creating the conditions for partners to deliver programs safely, equitably, and consistently without requiring the Department to directly provide every program.

WHY

Expanding river recreation requires more than physical access. Residents also need equipment, skills, transportation, trusted partners, and welcoming opportunities to build confidence on and around the water. A coordinated approach can reduce barriers, strengthen community partnerships, expand the range of river experiences, and grow programming sustainably without placing the full responsibility for delivery on Parks & Recreation.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Health Equity | Engaged + Connected Community: Community Engagement + Communication | Governmental Excellence: Collaboration, Equity + Sustainability | Safe Community

STRATEGY

1. Designate a City lead or cross-departmental work group for river programming coordination. Formalize the network to share calendars and resources, identify gaps, pair organizations with equipment or instructors, coordinate activation dates, connect groups to access locations, share training, establish common performance measures, and pursue joint funding. Develop a minimum data set for partner-delivered programs and define how information will be collected without creating unnecessary registration barriers. Partners that serve a similar audience should work together, not compete for participants and City resources.
2. Build on the existing GR Outside equipment lending model, focused on lending to formal partners with proper training on equipment use and care. Offer river-specific gear such as appropriately-sized personal flotation devices, fishing equipment, adaptive equipment, water-quality and environmental education kits, trailers, dry bags, and safety equipment. Consider mobile deployment so activities can occur at multiple locations.
3. Develop a train-the-trainer program for partner staff and community leaders covering water and boating safety, equipment use, paddling fundamentals, trip planning, risk management, emergency procedures, environmental interpretation, inclusive program design, adaptive-recreation basics, and equipment procedures. Over time, move from City-led to co-led to partner-led delivery where appropriate.
4. Expand the portfolio beyond traditional river activities to include art, nature exploration and outdoor classroom programs, history and storytelling, stewardship (including volunteer citizen science programming), arts and culture, wellness, youth leadership, and outdoor adventure career apprenticeships. The partnership network should prioritize formal agreements with organizations that fit these core areas.
5. Use the City's Community Engagement Framework to drive river programming.
6. Shift the City's focus increasingly toward infrastructure, safety, equipment, technical support, coordination, funding, and evaluation while a diverse network of organizations delivers recurring recreation, education, stewardship, and cultural programs.



Water Connection Camps: Friends of the White River | Indianapolis, Indiana

The five-day after-school outdoor education experience, led by Friends of the White River, is designed to connect young people with the White River through paddlesports, environmental education, leadership, and hands-on learning. Participants spend five consecutive afternoons on and around the river—building confidence, trying different types of watercraft, learning from local experts, and developing a deeper connection to the water and their community.

Objective 6

ADVANCE EQUITABLE WATER TRAIL AND WATERFRONT EXPERIENCES

WHAT

Apply equity-focused best practices to water trail programming and public waterfront experiences so that the Grand River is welcoming, relevant, and accessible to a broader range of residents.

WHY

The Grand River is one of Grand Rapids' defining natural resources, yet proximity does not automatically translate into participation. Residents may live near a riverfront park and still face barriers to experiencing the river. While launches and trail connections improve physical access, programming and partnerships can help residents discover unfamiliar spaces, develop skills and confidence, and connect with the river. As Grand Rapids invests in the river corridor, programming can connect infrastructure improvements with community benefit. The central access challenge is not simply generating more activities. It is reducing the number of steps residents must overcome before they can participate and creating a pathway that helps first-time users become repeat users, stewards, and community leaders.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Grand River, Green Space + Recreation, Water Resources | Engaged + Connected Community: Community Engagement | Governmental Excellence: Equity, Data + Collaboration | Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Placemaking

STRATEGY

1. Improve demographic tracking using GIS, engagement findings, Neighborhoods of Focus framework, and partner relationships to identify neighborhoods where programming and river access are least connected.
2. Identify priority neighborhoods and strategically pilot a partner-led program that moves participants from neighborhood-based introduction to a river experience. Bring the river closer to the priority neighborhood by introducing beginner programs in neighborhoods, schools, other parks, and community gathering spaces, then intentionally connect participants to riverfront destinations with the access point and program concept most appropriate to their community.
3. Build confidence before independent use with a structured progression for first-time users: observing the activity, trying it, building familiarity, returning with a trusted group, participating independently, and helping someone else take part. Program design should focus on creating repeat participants rather than rely on one-time exposure.
4. Make participation a social and culturally-relevant experience with a broad offering of recreational activities including fishing, walking, cycling, birding, nature photography, environmental science, festivals, arts, storytelling, stewardship, family recreation, and outdoor wellness.
5. Identify transportation and awareness solutions to reduce practical barriers by planning for factors such as transportation, parking, program costs, equipment requirements, swimming proficiency, physical accessibility, outreach, scheduling, language, unfamiliarity, and perceptions of safety or belonging. Incorporate barrier reduction into the program design from the outset.
6. Engage residents in program design and evaluation to identify participation barriers and community priorities.
7. Research successful equity-focused river and water recreation programs nationwide, with emphasis on programs successfully engage historically underrepresented communities. Apply national best practices.



ICON's Youth Adventure Education Series: Iowa Confluence Water Trails (ICON) | Des Moines, Iowa

ICON's Youth Adventure Education Series demonstrates how recreation providers can activate natural assets through engaging, low-cost programming. The initiative offers free, hands-on experiences including creek exploration, fishing instruction, outdoor story times, and river safety workshops, helping youth build confidence, environmental awareness, and a connection to local waterways while introducing families to recreation opportunities throughout the regional trail network.

Objective 7

REVEAL AND RECONNECT COMMUNITIES WITH GRAND RAPIDS' TRIBUTARIES

WHAT

Strengthen connections between residents and the creeks, tributaries, and subwatersheds that shape Grand Rapids through greater visibility, access, education, stewardship, and nature-based experiences.

WHY

The Grand River is supported by a network of smaller waterways that flow through neighborhoods across Grand Rapids, many of which are less visible, accessible, or understood by residents. The Southside Creekways Plan demonstrates how tributary corridors can connect parks, green spaces, neighborhoods, recreation, and natural systems while advancing environmental health and community ownership. Its strategies for Silver Creek and Plaster Creek can inform a broader approach to tributaries and subwatersheds throughout the city.

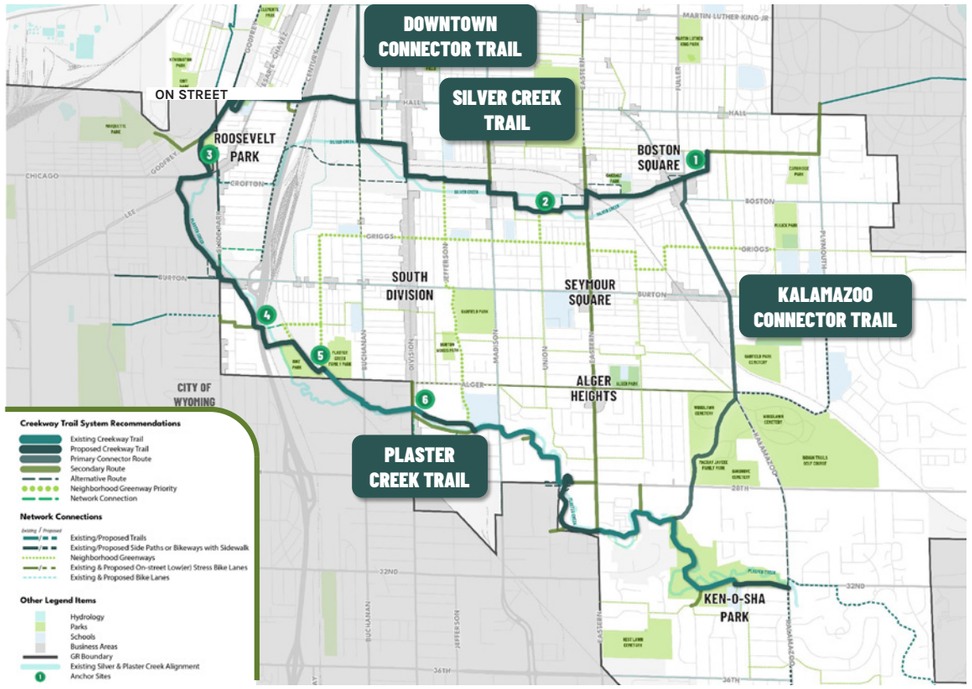
CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Water Resources, Green Space + Recreation, Climate Action + Adaptation | Engaged + Connected Community | Governmental Excellence: Equity

STRATEGY

1. Advance park-related recommendations from the Southside Creekways Plan and apply lessons from Silver and Plaster Creeks to other tributaries and subwatersheds citywide.
2. Restore and steward tributary corridors through riparian and floodplain restoration, streambank stabilization, green infrastructure, native vegetation, habitat improvements, and opportunities for residents and youth to participate in community science and hands-on stewardship.
3. Build eco-literacy around Grand Rapids' watersheds by helping residents understand water quality, stormwater, habitat, natural systems, Indigenous and cultural relationships to local waterways, and how neighborhood tributaries connect to the Grand River.
4. Strengthen partnerships with Environmental Services, LGROW, Plaster Creek Stewards, schools, neighborhood organizations, and other partners to coordinate education, restoration, stewardship, funding, and long-term care
5. Prioritize tributary investments in neighborhoods where waterways have been buried, degraded, disconnected, or historically treated as infrastructure rather than community assets, using future projects to improve both ecological conditions and residents' relationships with these systems.
6. Establish a sustainable approach to operations and maintenance of tributary-related improvements, defining responsibilities for ecological management, routine maintenance, repair and replacement, programming, and stewardship as new investments are made.

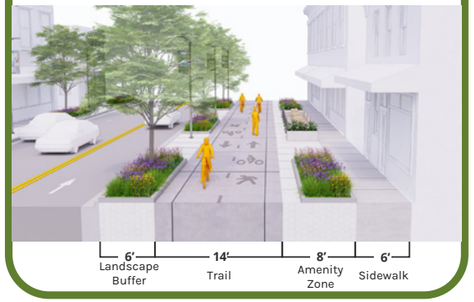
Southside Creekways:
City of Grand Rapids Parks Department

The Southside Creekways Project envisions connected trails and economic corridors that will vitalize and reconnect the community, address historic inequities, and build wealth for Southside residents and businesses.



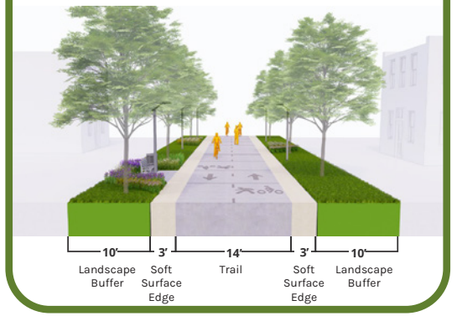
ON-STREET

These trails on commercial streets bring more foot and bicycle traffic to support local businesses while residential street trails connect residents to surrounding resources, using amenity zones to buffer trail users from vehicles.



OFF-STREET

Off-street trails make use of vacant land or larger right of ways to have trail users fully separated from the road. These trails are usually seen going through parks or in the back of large industrial buildings.





HEALTHY COMMUNITY

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Parks are essential infrastructure for a healthy community, supporting how people move, connect, recharge, and experience the outdoors throughout their lives.

Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system has an important role in supporting physical health, mental wellness, social connection, and access to nature. The objectives within this goal recognize that health and wellness look different across ages, abilities, neighborhoods, and lifestyles, and that the Parks and Recreation system should provide a range of opportunities that meet people where they are.

A healthy park system provides opportunities for both activity and restoration, responding to changing recreation interests and needs. Traditional fields, courts, and playgrounds remain important, while residents are also interested in emerging and less traditional activities, flexible spaces, outdoor fitness, winter recreation, and opportunities to try something new. These investments balance new opportunities with the community's strong desire to improve existing facilities, and consider equity, participation, and long-term viability.

As with the broader park system, management and operations are fundamental to sustaining these opportunities over time. New programs, facilities, partnerships, and recreation experiences require appropriate staffing, maintenance, resources, and long-term planning. By pairing thoughtful investment with strong partnerships and responsible stewardship of existing assets, Grand Rapids can continue to provide a parks and recreation system that supports the physical, mental, and social well-being of residents throughout their lives.

Objectives:

1. **Support Whole-Person Health and Wellness**
2. **Expand Recreation Opportunities Strategically**
3. **Support Wellness, Connection, and Recreation Across Generations**
4. **Reflect Community Identity Through Parks and Public Art**
5. **Expand Utilization of Athletic Fields and Sport Courts**
6. **Invest in Temporary and Seasonal Recreation Opportunities**
7. **Restore Ecology and Build Climate Resilience**
8. **Prepare Parks for Extreme Weather and Climate Disruption**
9. **Grow Environmental Knowledge and Stewardship**

Objective 1

SUPPORT WHOLE-PERSON HEALTH AND WELLNESS

WHAT
Use parks, recreation amenities, natural areas, and programming to support physical health, mental wellness, social connection, and opportunities for restoration.

WHY
Residents value parks as places to be active, connect with others, experience nature, and decompress. Community feedback emphasized the importance of shade and comfort, therapeutic and sensory spaces, outdoor fitness, nature-based activities, and places to gather. These needs vary across the city, reinforcing the importance of providing a range of wellness experiences that serve all citizens of Grand Rapids

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment | Engaged + Connected Community | Green Space + Recreation, Health Equity | Safe Community | Governmental Excellence: Equity + Collaboration

STRATEGY
1. Evaluate opportunities to expand wellness and introductory recreation programming incrementally, beginning with existing programs, demonstrated community interests, available staff capacity, and piloting new activities before expanding them more broadly
2. Incorporate scholarships, reduced fees, and other affordability strategies into program cost-recovery practices to help reduce financial barriers while supporting sustainable program delivery.
3. Leverage community, healthcare, recreation, and other partner organizations to expand wellness, nature-based, social, and multigenerational opportunities without requiring Parks and Recreation to directly provide all programming.
4. Support health and well-being by providing basic park amenities and access routes that promote comfort, accessibility, and mental restoration. Include shade, accessible seating, restrooms, drinking water, sensory elements, quiet spaces, opportunities to connect with nature, and convenient access to recreation through parking, transit, walking, biking, and rolling connections to activities.
5. Consider sensory needs and neurodiversity as facilities and programs are developed or updated, including opportunities for quiet spaces, sensory-friendly experiences, or designated times where appropriate.
6. Explore partnership-based health and wellness initiatives, such as a Park Prescription program, as organizational capacity, community interest, and partner resources allow.

Objective 2

EXPAND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGICALLY

WHAT
Respond to changing recreation interests and gaps in existing offerings with flexible, inclusive, and appropriately scaled recreation opportunities.

WHY
Residents expressed interest in recreation beyond traditional fields, courts, and playgrounds, including climbing, bike and skate recreation, adventure play, outdoor fitness, winter activities, and other emerging uses. At the same time, community feedback consistently emphasized improving existing facilities before adding new assets, reinforcing the need for a systemwide approach that expands recreation thoughtfully and in response to demonstrated need rather than assuming every need requires a new permanent facility.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation | Governmental Excellence: Innovation + Equity

STRATEGY
1. Periodically evaluate demographic, geographic, and programmatic gaps in recreation offerings and use findings to guide investment.
2. Adapt existing spaces for new recreation uses before creating entirely new facilities.
3. Explore less traditional recreation such as climbing and bouldering, skate and bike recreation, adventure play, uncommon sports, outdoor fitness, and winter recreation where community interest is demonstrated.
4. Favor flexible and multipurpose recreation spaces that can accommodate changing activities and interests.
5. Establish partnerships to introduce equipment lending, rentals, demonstrations, and introductory classes so residents can try activities without purchasing specialized equipment.
6. Provide a range of beginner experiences where appropriate so new activities are welcoming to people without prior experience.
7. Consider equity, participation, lifecycle implications, and long-term viability when evaluating new recreation investments.
8. Advance appropriate recommendations of the Grand Loop Feasibility Study & Trails Plan for natural-surface and bike-optimized recreation within City parks, including opportunities for beginner, intermediate, and advanced experiences, skill progression, and shared-use trails where site conditions and community needs support implementation.
9. Use the Comprehensive Dog Park Study and Dog Park Development Guidelines to test and support new facilities, explore stewardship partnerships, and improve existing dog parks.

Objective 3

SUPPORT WELLNESS, CONNECTION, AND RECREATION ACROSS GENERATIONS

WHAT

Provide recreation, wellness, social, and restorative opportunities that support older adults, teens, and families. Ensure parks offer safe, welcoming, and engaging environments for all generations by expanding accessible, low-barrier programs and creating comfortable places for people to gather, participate, and connect.

WHY

Residents across ages emphasized the importance of parks as places to be active, socialize, experience nature, and recharge. Older adults expressed a need for low-impact opportunities, comfort amenities, and intergenerational experiences. Teens asked for more spaces to gather, try new activities, and access leadership and social opportunities. Combining these needs strengthens community connection while ensuring programs and spaces serve diverse abilities, interests, and life stages.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment | Engaged + Connected Community | Green Space + Recreation, Health Equity | Safe Community | Governmental Excellence: Equity + Collaboration

STRATEGY

1. Expand low-impact and beginner-friendly recreation for older adults. Offer programs that emphasize strength, mobility, balance, and introductory activities that make it comfortable to try something new. Examples include tai chi, yoga, and other gentle fitness clinics.
2. Create recurring social programs and activities for older adults, such as Coffee and Conversation, gardening groups, outdoor games, book discussions, art, and birding which promote connection, routine, and wellness.
3. Support intergenerational outdoor opportunities. Provide activities that bring older adults, youth, and families together with nature, gardening, art, games, and learning.
4. Increase teen-friendly programs and opportunities. Offer sampler programs where teens can try new activities without long-term commitment or cost barriers.
5. Create welcoming, informal gathering areas for teens and multigenerational groups. Add group seating, shade, hammocks, swings, and social spaces that invite teens and families to gather comfortably in parks.
6. Strengthen outreach and partnerships to reach a broader cross-section of youth and older adults. Collaborate with schools, community centers, healthcare partners, cultural organizations, and senior-serving agencies to bring programs into neighborhood parks, especially those with limited access to recreation opportunities.
7. Develop a Parks and Recreation Youth Advisory Committee. Engage youth directly in shaping programs, park design ideas, and activation strategies, ensuring teen voices inform future investments and offerings.



Late Night Drip:
D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation

Local teens can cool off, hang out, and make a splash during extended pool hours. With music, games, and a fun, welcoming atmosphere, the event combines recreation and social connection with an important purpose: teaching DC youth about water safety.



55 + Nature Book Club:
Montgomery Parks

A free book club adults that combines a shared interest in literature and the outdoors. Participants gather around nature-focused reading while building social connections through discussion and activities such as trivia and book exchanges.

Objective 4

REFLECT COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH PARKS AND PUBLIC ART



WHAT

Use public art, culture, history, nature, and community participation to create parks that reflect the identities and stories of the communities they serve including the histories, traditions, and ongoing contributions of Indigenous communities.

WHY

Residents expressed interest in public art and cultural experiences, and public art can strengthen neighborhood identity, support community gathering, and make parks more distinctive. Creative and cultural experiences can also support mental and emotional well-being by providing opportunities for reflection, self-expression, connection, and a stronger sense of belonging. Public art and cultural interpretation can also help acknowledge and celebrate the diverse histories that have shaped the area, including Indigenous heritage and perspectives. The Grand River Greenway Public Art Plan provides useful principles for public art that can inform the broader parks and recreation system without duplicating its riverfront-specific recommendations.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Placemaking | Engaged + Connected Community | Governmental Excellence: Equity

STRATEGY

1. Use the Grand River Greenway Public Art Plan as a reference for artist selection, accessibility, engagement, durability, temporary and permanent installations, and long-term sustainability.
2. Continue to foster relationships with the Grand Rapids Arts Advisory Committee, local artists, cultural organizations, neighborhood groups, and other creative partners to align efforts and expand capacity.
3. Prioritize local artists and participatory projects that reflect neighborhood stories, cultural traditions, Indigenous histories, and diverse community perspectives.
4. Create opportunities for youth and community members to work alongside professional artists and connect art with nature, environmental education, and stewardship .
5. Explore sustainable funding sources, including endowments, philanthropy, grants, sponsorships, and partnerships, to support new projects and long-term care.
6. Develop a sustainable approach that considers funding and staff capacity and establishes expectations for ownership, maintenance, repair, replacement, and deaccessioning while managing expectations for the scale and pace of future installations.
7. Support the recommendations of the upcoming Arts and Culture Strategic Master Plan, led by the Arts and Culture Collective of Grand Rapids, to strategically invest in the creative ecosystem of the region.

Objective 5

EXPAND UTILIZATION OF ATHLETIC FIELDS AND SPORT COURTS



WHAT

Promote and design athletic fields and sport courts as flexible, multipurpose spaces that support a range of formal and informal recreation needs while balancing use, maintenance requirements, and long-term sustainability.

WHY

Demand for athletic spaces continues to evolve with changing community interests, demographics, and participation levels. Ensuring that fields and courts are used effectively and maintained sustainably requires a clear understanding of how often they are used, what types of play they support, and how maintenance practices and partnership structures influence availability, quality, and equity.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation | Governmental Excellence: Innovation, Sustainability + Equity | Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Placemaking

STRATEGY

1. Complete a comprehensive assessment of athletic fields and sport courts. Evaluate usage patterns, including formal and informal use, field and court conditions, maintenance needs, drainage issues, and potential conversions. Use this data to identify where improvements, re-striping, surface changes, or reconfiguration could better meet community needs.
2. Incorporate planned rest and restoration periods for natural turf surfaces to prevent overuse, maintain field quality, and extend facility lifespan.
3. Retrofit and adapt athletic spaces to meet emerging recreation needs. Modify underutilized fields and courts through re-striping, removable posts, surface improvements, or added comfort amenities. Where interest and site conditions allow, support activities such as futsal, pickleball, skate/bike recreation, bouldering, and winter sports.
4. Strengthen partnerships with leagues, clubs, and community organizations. Collaborate with organized sports partners to share scheduling data, clarify maintenance expectations, coordinate field recovery periods, and explore cost-share or volunteer maintenance models. Ensure partnerships expand capacity without creating barriers for unaffiliated youth or neighborhood players.
5. Provide scalable recreation opportunities from beginner to advanced levels. Ensure that every sport or activity includes introductory and more advanced options so residents of all ages and experience levels feel welcomed, supported, and able to participate confidently.

Objective 6

INVEST IN TEMPORARY AND SEASONAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES



WHAT

Use short-term, low-cost, and scalable recreation, programming, art, events, and temporary interventions to activate parks, test new ideas, and inform future investment.

WHY

Temporary uses and pilot programs allow Parks to respond to changing interests, introduce residents to new experiences, and evaluate ideas before committing significant resources to permanent improvements. Grand Rapids has successfully used this approach through temporary sculptures following ArtPrize, bouldering at Highland Park, and kayak rentals through GR Outside. Community engagement also showed interest in concerts, movies, cultural events, winter recreation, and other seasonal activities, creating opportunities to expand temporary activation into neighborhood parks throughout the city.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment | Green Space + Recreation | Governmental Excellence: Innovation, Collaboration + Sustainability | Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Placemaking

STRATEGY

1. Develop a coordinated approach to pop-up and temporary park activation, supported by a reusable collection of equipment that can rotate among neighborhood parks and accommodate recreation, performances, cultural events, outdoor movies, art, and community gatherings.
2. Expand winter and cold-weather recreation through temporary experiences such as sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, winter nature programs, outdoor games, seasonal art, warming areas, and equipment lending or rentals where appropriate.
3. Partner with neighborhood organizations, artists, cultural organizations, schools, nonprofits, businesses, and recreation groups to develop temporary activities that reflect community interests and expand the City's capacity to offer new experiences.
4. Establish a consistent process to evaluate temporary programs and installations based on participation, community feedback, cost, operational needs, and site compatibility to determine whether successful pilots should recur, rotate to other parks, be modified, or inform permanent investment.
5. Develop a sustainable approach that considers funding and staff capacity and establishes expectations for ownership, maintenance, repair, replacement, and deaccessioning while managing expectations for the scale and pace of future installations.

Objective 7

RESTORE ECOLOGY AND BUILD CLIMATE RESILIENCE



WHAT

Use park landscapes to strengthen ecological function and help Grand Rapids adapt to increasing heat, flooding, and other climate impacts.

WHY

Residents strongly supported more trees, native landscapes, natural areas, habitat, and climate resilience, with Ward 2 showing particularly strong interest in environmental stewardship and nature. The Climate Action and Adaptation Plan further demonstrates that climate vulnerability is not distributed evenly across Grand Rapids. Neighborhoods of Focus tend to have more impervious surface, less tree canopy, and greater exposure to heat and flooding, while industrial land uses also overlap significantly with communities of color.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Climate Action + Adaptation, Water Resources, Green Space + Recreation | Governmental Excellence: Sustainability, Equity + Innovation

STRATEGY

1. Establish a full-time Natural Resources Manager position within Parks and Recreation to lead ecological planning and stewardship, guide naturalized landscape management, coordinate restoration and climate-resilience initiatives, support staff training, and strengthen partnerships with other City departments and environmental organizations.
2. Convert appropriate underutilized turf, park edges, drainage areas, and other low-use spaces to native or naturalized landscapes, expanding pollinator and wildlife habitat while reducing maintenance resource use.
3. Prioritize ecological and climate investments where environmental vulnerability overlaps with community need, using tools such as the CAAP Heat Hazard Map, Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, and Industrial Zoning and Racial Demographic Overlay to identify opportunities for shade, vegetation, cooling landscapes, stormwater benefits, and relief from highly developed surroundings.
4. Expand the use of native, regenerative, and climate-adapted plant communities and practices, including strategies to reduce water, fuel, fertilizer, and other resource demands.
5. Establish maintenance standards and staff training for naturalized landscapes, including reduced-mow and no-mow practices and clear expectations for recreation areas, visibility, accessibility, appearance, and long-term care.
6. Use demonstration landscapes and pilot projects to build public understanding of resilient landscapes, test management approaches, and inform broader implementation across the park system.
7. Coordinate ecological and climate-resilience projects with Environmental Services, Office of Sustainability, Forestry, and other technical partners.

Objective 8

PREPARE PARKS FOR EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE DISRUPTION

WHAT
Incorporate extreme weather preparedness, climate risk reduction, and recovery into the planning and management of park landscapes and facilities.

WHY
More frequent or intense storms, precipitation, heat, and other climate impacts can damage park landscapes and infrastructure, disrupt public use, and create unexpected operating costs. The CAAP specifically calls for considering increased storm activity in landscape management and developing protocols for recovery following extreme weather events. Proactive planning can help Parks reduce risk, recover more efficiently, and protect long-term public investment.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Climate Action + Adaptation, Water Resources | Safe Community | Governmental Excellence: Asset Management, Sustainability + Collaboration

STRATEGY
1. Incorporate extreme heat, heavy precipitation, flooding, severe storms, and other anticipated climate conditions into park planning, design, rehabilitation, and asset management decisions.
2. Identify park facilities and landscapes that are particularly vulnerable to flooding, erosion, storm damage, extreme heat, or repeated weather-related failures and prioritize appropriate mitigation.
3. Develop or coordinate post-storm assessment and recovery protocols for park facilities and landscapes so hazards, closures, cleanup, and repairs can be addressed consistently following major weather events.
4. Consider resilience and expected climate conditions when selecting materials, plant communities, drainage strategies, and replacement infrastructure.
5. Coordinate with other City departments and emergency-management partners to clarify roles and responsibilities for prioritization of park closures, flood/hazard response, debris management, and reopening following significant weather events.
6. Use recurring storm damage, recovery costs, and carbon footprint as factors when determining whether vulnerable facilities should be repaired, redesigned, relocated, or replaced with more resilient alternatives.

Objective 9

GROW ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND STEWARDSHIP

WHAT
Use parks as places for environmental learning and connect residents with local organizations already working to improve watershed health, habitat, and ecological knowledge.

WHY
Residents expressed strong interest in connecting to native Grand Rapids landscapes. Common mentions include native plants, wildlife and pollinator habitats, environmental education, stewardship, and activities to connect to nature, such as forest bathing and foraging. Grand Rapids also has a strong network of local organizations already doing this work, creating an opportunity for Parks to serve as a setting and partner rather than developing all programming independently.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment | Climate Action + Adaptation, Green Space + Recreation | Engaged + Connected Community | Economic Prosperity + Affordability: Workforce Development | Governmental Excellence: Equity + Collaboration

STRATEGY
1. Invest in and strengthen nature-based education and activities across the parks and recreation system, deepening the existing relationship with Grand Rapids Public Schools, to expand opportunities for curriculum-connected outdoor learning, environmental stewardship, and recurring experiences in City parks and natural areas.
2. Develop recurring environmental learning and stewardship opportunities with LGROW, GR Outside, Plaster Creek Stewards, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, schools, and other community partners, including Watershed Days, native-plant workshops, seed collection, planting events, and other hands-on activities.
3. Expand community science opportunities such as pollinator counts, bird observations, invasive-species monitoring, and water-quality activities that allow residents and students to contribute to understanding and caring for natural resources.
4. Expand ecological monitoring and documentation across the park system to better understand how naturalized landscapes perform over time and identify where management practices should be adjusted, replicated, or reconsidered.
5. Create pathways from environmental education to employment through paid internships, seasonal positions, job shadowing, mentorship, and hands-on experience in native landscape management, habitat restoration, water quality, green stormwater infrastructure, by partnering with schools, non-profits, and workforce-development organizations.



NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTMENTS

MAINTAINING HIGH-QUALITY PARKS FOR ALL

Neighborhood Investments focuses on sustaining, optimizing, and enhancing Grand Rapids' existing parks and recreation system to ensure parks remain safe, welcoming, equitable, and responsive to community needs.

As the parks and recreation system has expanded and improved over the past decade, the Department's priority is increasingly centered on protecting and maximizing the value of those investments through ongoing stewardship, maintenance, activation, and strategic reinvestment. Future improvements emphasize caring for and enhancing existing assets, improving the park user experience, and ensuring that parks continue to meet the evolving needs of residents in every neighborhood.

Throughout the planning process, residents consistently expressed a desire for thoughtful improvements to existing neighborhood parks that enhance everyday experiences rather than major reinvestments. Community members emphasized the importance of clean, well-maintained, comfortable, and welcoming parks, with requests frequently focused on addressing deferred maintenance, improving landscaping and park furnishings, adding shade and seating, enhancing accessibility, and upgrading existing amenities. While often modest in scale, these improvements can have a significant impact on how residents experience and use their parks as vibrant, well-loved gathering places that continue to serve residents' daily needs.

While strategic growth remains important, particularly where opportunities can address inequities in park access, environmental resilience, or neighborhood service gaps, future acquisitions should be selective, data-informed, and aligned with the City's broader priorities. Land acquisition and major capital efforts must be guided by considerations such as equitable access, climate resilience, community benefit, operational feasibility, and long-term maintenance responsibilities.

Throughout this chapter, the Department embraces a pragmatic approach that balances community aspirations with operational realities. Future investments will prioritize partnerships, maximize the impact of existing resources, and carefully consider the long-term costs of operating and maintaining a high-quality parks and recreation system. Through strategic investment and stewardship, Grand Rapids can ensure its parks and recreation system remains a source of health, connection, and community pride for generations to come.

Objectives:

1. Evaluate Parkland Opportunities Selectively and Sustainably
2. Maximize Community and Environmental Benefit From Existing Lands
3. Create Safe, Comfortable, and Welcoming Parks
4. Implement the Community Engagement Guidebook
5. Activate Neighborhood Parks with High-Impact Youth Programming

Objective 1

EVALUATE PARKLAND OPPORTUNITIES SELECTIVELY AND SUSTAINABLY

WHAT

Focus on rare, high-impact acquisition opportunities that close critical access gaps, address identified service needs, and advance environmental resilience. Using a consistent, data-informed evaluation framework, prioritize land acquisitions and expansions that strengthen the park system, improve equitable access to parks and recreation opportunities, support long-term community needs, and remain sustainable to operate and maintain over time.

WHY

Establishing acquisition priorities, evaluation criteria, and decision-making tools in advance allows the City to focus resources on properties that provide meaningful benefits for residents while remaining feasible to operate and maintain over time. A proactive, data-informed approach helps ensure that acquisitions improve equity, access, and climate resilience, align with community needs and planning objectives, and support the long-term sustainability of the parks and recreation system. By identifying priority opportunities before they arise, Grand Rapids can make timely, strategic investments that maximize public value and lasting community impact.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Climate Action + Adaptation | Governmental Excellence: Equity, Collaboration + Sustainability

STRATEGY

1. Use a clear, data-informed process to evaluate potential acquisitions based on access gaps, environmental vulnerability, maintenance feasibility, and long-term cost and impact. Where properties are being considered for City acquisition, evaluate both their recreation value and environmental benefits, including opportunities to reduce impervious surfaces, increase shade, improve stormwater management, increase urban agriculture use, and preserve existing open space, using tools such as the CAAP Climate Risk & Vunerability Assessment and Urban Heat Hazard Map.
2. Coordinate with Planning, Economic Development, and GRPS to identify properties that may become available and assess their value for community benefit before disposition.
3. Prioritize opportunities only when they meaningfully improve equity, access, or climate resilience.
4. Consider the long-term operational impact of any new land, ensuring that maintenance capacity and resources align with potential expansion.
5. Maintain a dynamic priority acquisitions map to guide decision-making when strategic opportunities arise.

Objective 2

MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT FROM EXISTING LANDS

WHAT

Strengthen partnerships with GRPS and other public institutions to enhance green spaces, environmental resilience, and public use without increasing City ownership or staff burden.

WHY

School grounds and other institutional properties can provide important neighborhood green space, particularly in developed areas where opportunities to acquire new parkland are limited. The CAAP specifically identifies opportunities to work with GRPS, other schools and universities, and libraries to create resilient landscapes that improve functionality and reduce unnecessary turf. This can complement strategic park acquisition while also creating opportunities that do not require City ownership.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Climate Action + Adaptation | Governmental Excellence: Collaboration, Equity + Sustainability

STRATEGY

1. Coordinate with GRPS when significant school-site changes are planned to evaluate opportunities for shared recreation, resilient landscapes, shade, stormwater management, habitat, urban agriculture, and community use.
2. Pursue co-stewardship models that support community use without requiring additional City maintenance responsibilities.
3. Continue aligning improvements on school grounds and adjacent parks to function as complementary spaces rather than duplicative amenities.
4. Prioritize partnership projects that address environmental inequities or park service gaps in Neighborhoods of Focus.
5. Evaluate and update cost estimates for maintenance conducted with partnerships.

Objective 3

CREATE SAFE, COMFORTABLE, AND WELCOMING PARKS



WHAT

Encourage positive use of park and school green spaces with stewardship, activation, improved maintenance, visibility, amenities, and accessibility.

WHY

The experience of safety is shaped by how parks are designed, maintained, activated, and cared for over time. Residents are more likely to visit and spend time in parks that feel visible, well-maintained, easy to navigate, and actively used by people of all ages. Using a proactive approach that combines design, maintenance, community presence, and resident feedback, the Parks Department can help create environments where positive activity is encouraged through strategic investments in stewardship and activation.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Climate Action + Adaptation | Governmental Excellence: Collaboration, Equity + Sustainability

STRATEGY

1. Use CPTED principles to guide improvements in lighting, visibility, layout, and sightlines within parks.
2. Target safety investments in parks where resident feedback and data indicate higher need.
3. Strengthen partnerships with community organizations to activate underutilized park spaces and increase positive presence.
4. Provide clear, accessible pathways for residents to report safety concerns or recurring issues.
5. Evaluate safety based on the lived experiences of different park users, recognizing that perceptions of safety vary across communities and are not fully captured by incident data.

Objective 4

IMPLEMENT THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



WHAT

Utilize the City of Grand Rapids Community Engagement Framework to build trusted, ongoing relationships with residents, community organizations, and stakeholders to ensure park and recreation planning reflects community knowledge, lived experiences, and shared priorities.

WHY

Effective community engagement is more than gathering input. It is an opportunity to build trust, share knowledge, strengthen relationships, and create meaningful opportunities for participation. By proactively engaging diverse voices, clearly communicating how feedback will influence decisions, and consistently reporting back on outcomes, the City can create more responsive parks and recreation investments while fostering long-term community stewardship and trust.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Engaged + Connected Community: Communication + Community Engagement | Governmental Excellence: Customer Service + Equity

STRATEGY

1. Maintain and expand relationships with neighborhood organizations, community leaders, residents, and partner agencies before, during, and after planning initiatives to support ongoing collaboration and trust-building.
2. Design engagement opportunities that are accessible, welcoming, and responsive to community needs, reducing barriers to participation through appropriate meeting formats, locations, communication methods, and support services.
3. Continue to engage a diverse range of participants, with particular attention to populations that have historically faced barriers to civic participation or have been underrepresented in planning processes.
4. Clearly communicate the purpose of each engagement effort, the decisions being made, and the role community feedback will play in shaping outcomes.
5. Expand creative engagement methods, including storytelling, dialogue, surveys, workshops, pop-up events, and digital tools, gathering both qualitative and quantitative feedback.
6. Document engagement outcomes and regularly report back to participants on key themes, decisions, and next steps to demonstrate accountability and close the feedback loop.
7. Consistently evaluate engagement efforts and apply lessons learned to continuously improve future community engagement practices, relationships, and participant experiences.

Objective 5

ACTIVATE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS WITH HIGH-IMPACT YOUTH PROGRAMMING

WHAT
Provide reliable, small-scale programming that activates parks and meets neighborhood needs without requiring new infrastructure or large operational increases.

WHY
Community members expressed interest in having a more consistent Parks presence and simple, informal activities available in neighborhood parks during the summer. Regularly scheduled crafts, games, recreation activities, and other drop-in opportunities can give residents more reasons to visit their parks, encourage social connection, and create active, welcoming spaces.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Engaged + Connected Community: Communication + Community Engagement | Governmental Excellence: Customer Service, Collaboration + Equity

STRATEGY
1. Partner with community organizations, artists, recreation groups, and neighborhood associations to deliver recurring, small-scale activities in parks.
2. Prioritize parks with limited existing recreation options or barriers to traditional program access.
3. Use a rotating seasonal schedule to reach multiple neighborhoods efficiently with limited staff capacity.
4. Pursue grants, sponsorships, and philanthropic partnerships to support program supplies, staffing, and equipment.
5. Pilot activities at select parks and refine offerings based on participation, community feedback, and operational feasibility.





Fab Youth Philly Play Captains: Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Fab Youth Philly's Play Captains program provides paid summer employment for local teenagers who lead free, informal games and activities in neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and public spaces. Youth receive training in leadership, communication, and activity facilitation before engaging younger children through accessible, small-group recreation and creative play.

By bringing activities directly into neighborhoods, the program encourages greater use of public spaces, fosters social interaction, and strengthens connections among residents. The initiative demonstrates how modest investments in youth employment and recreational programming can activate neighborhood parks, build community relationships, and empower young people to become positive leaders in their communities.



SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

STRENGTHEN OPERATIONS, STEWARDSHIP, AND RESILIENCE ACROSS THE PARK SYSTEM

The long-term success of Grand Rapids' park system depends on the City's ability to care for and sustain the high-quality parks, facilities, trails, and natural areas that have been established over decades of investment.

As the park system grows in complexity and expectations continue to rise, the Department must ensure that maintenance practices, staffing, funding, and operational resources keep pace. Residents consistently value clean, safe, and well-maintained parks, making stewardship one of the most important investments the City can make. This chapter focuses on how the Department will protect existing assets through preventative maintenance, partnerships, and strategic asset management, helping to preserve park quality, improve the user experience, and maximize the return on past investments.

Long-term financial sustainability remains an essential component of this effort. By leveraging partnerships, pursuing grants and alternative funding sources, and carefully evaluating the long-term operational implications of new projects, the Department can maximize the impact of available resources while reducing future financial burdens. Sustainable decision-making means considering not only the cost to build new amenities, but also the ongoing costs required to operate, maintain, and eventually replace them.

Environmental stewardship is another critical element of long-term sustainability. Protecting natural resources, expanding urban tree canopy, improving ecological health, and incorporating resilient landscapes and green infrastructure can strengthen environmental outcomes while supporting community well-being and reducing maintenance demands over time.

By aligning investment decisions with operational capacity and long-term stewardship goals, Grand Rapids can protect the value of its existing park system, maintain high-quality experiences for residents, and ensure parks remain a source of health, recreation, connection, and community pride for generations to come.

Objectives:

1. Establish Consistent Park Maintenance Standards
2. Strengthen Park Maintenance Basics Through Technology
3. Prioritize Deferred Maintenance and Capital Reinvestment
4. Strengthen Communication and Awareness to Maximize Use
5. Align Organizational Capacity with Service Expectations
6. Use Best Practices and Benchmarking to Drive Continuous Improvement
7. Leverage Strategic Partnerships to Expand Capacity
8. Align Capital Investments with Lifecycle Cost Realities

Objective 1

ESTABLISH CONSISTENT PARK MAINTENANCE STANDARDS



WHAT

Establish clear systemwide standards for the everyday condition and care residents should expect when visiting a City park.

WHY

The day-to-day condition of a park strongly influences whether it feels welcoming, cared for, and worthy of continued use. As the park system has grown and improved, consistent expectations for routine care can help protect those investments and provide a reliable park experience across neighborhoods.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Governmental Excellence: Asset Management, Sustainability + Customer Service | Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation

STRATEGY

1. Establish daily and routine maintenance standards by park classification and asset type, recognizing that maintenance needs will vary among neighborhood parks, community parks, natural areas, athletic facilities, and highly programmed or heavily used spaces.
2. Coordinate and integrate existing maintenance standards and procedures into a consistent systemwide approach for caring for the physical assets of the park and recreation system.
3. Establish measurable Levels of Service (LOS) that define maintenance expectations, frequencies, and performance standards for routine park maintenance activities.
4. Develop a five-year strategy for achieving established maintenance standards that aligns increased operations and maintenance funding with staffing, equipment, contractual services, and other operating resources.
5. Incrementally increase the annual operating budget toward the recommended goal. *See Chapter 4: Making It Happen: Planning for Full System Costs for more information.*
6. Phase staffing increases alongside operating investments, using system size, park acreage, facility needs, and established service levels to evaluate staffing requirements. *See Chapter 4: Making It Happen: Planning for Full System Costs for more information.*

Objective 2

STRENGTHEN PARK MAINTENANCE BASICS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY



WHAT

Use asset data and technology to more efficiently maintain, prioritize, and improve the everyday features that make parks safe, comfortable, functional, and welcoming.

WHY

The Parks & Recreation Department now has an unprecedented level of information about the condition of its park assets. To optimize maintenance efficiencies and achieve long-term cost savings, the approach moves toward a proactive, coordinated, data-driven approach by helping staff anticipate needs, direct resources where they will have the greatest impact, extend the life of existing assets, and strengthen the basic park experience across the park system.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation, Health Equity | Safe Community | Governmental Excellence: Equity + Collaboration

STRATEGY

1. Use Siemens Asset Essentials to update and strengthen park maintenance SOPs, establishing data-informed standards for inspections, preventive maintenance, service frequencies, repair and replacement triggers, and levels of service, while connecting identified needs to annual budgeting and long-term capital planning.
2. Pilot smart maintenance technologies, including weather-based irrigation and soil-moisture monitoring, automated leak detection, waste fill-level sensors, remote facility controls, environmental sensors, and fleet tracking to reduce labor, water and energy use, and operating costs.
3. Explore autonomous and lower-emission maintenance equipment, building on the Department's use of robotic athletic-field striping and evaluating opportunities such as robotic mowing and battery-electric grounds equipment.
4. Use mobility and visitation data platforms such as PlacerAI to identify high-use parks, peak and seasonal use patterns, and changes in visitation to better align maintenance schedules, staffing, service levels, and investment with actual park use.
5. Strengthen GIS-based tree, landscape, and natural-resource management to support canopy succession planning, invasive species management, green stormwater infrastructure, and long-term monitoring of naturalized landscapes.
6. Establish performance dashboards to track asset condition, preventive versus reactive maintenance, work-order response, resource use, deferred maintenance, and the distribution and effectiveness of investment across the park system.

Objective 3

PRIORITIZE DEFERRED MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL REINVESTMENT



WHAT
Establish a consistent, data-driven process for evaluating park facilities and prioritizing reinvestment in aging or deteriorating assets.

WHY
Continued investment in new and improved parks must be balanced with the long-term care of existing facilities. Deferred maintenance can increase future costs, reduce usability, and shorten the useful life of park assets. A consistent facility evaluation system can help the City identify the most urgent needs and direct limited capital resources where they will have the greatest benefit.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Governmental Excellence: Asset Management, Sustainability + Customer Service | Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation

STRATEGY

1. Beginning in FY28, establish a dedicated Deferred Maintenance/Rehabilitation Budget within the Parks & Recreation Department's Capital Improvement Plan, allocating funding annually for investment in existing park assets.
2. Establish recurring funding categories for paths, trails and sidewalks; park and facility amenities; aquatic facilities; natural areas; community recreation facilities; playgrounds; sports facilities; lighting and below-grade infrastructure; parking lots; operations facilities; and critical repairs.
3. Evaluate and adjust funding allocations annually based on investment needs across asset categories, with inflationary increases applied each year.
4. Prioritize rehabilitation and reinvestment based on asset condition, lifecycle, safety, accessibility, level of use, equity, and operational importance.
5. Balance investment in new facilities with ongoing repair, restoration, and rehabilitation of existing amenities to extend their useful life and improve safety and functionality.
6. Increase the five-year operating and capital budget over time to better reflect the size, highly developed nature, and reinvestment needs of the park system.

See Chapter 4 Making It Happen: Planning for Full System Costs for recommended budget and staffing needs.

Objective 4

STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS TO MAXIMIZE USE



WHAT
Expand accessible, culturally responsive communication so more residents can discover and benefit from the parks, programs, and facilities that already exist.

WHY
Lack of awareness of park offerings was one of the most frequently identified barriers in the engagement process. Residents specifically noted that they often learn about programs only after talking with someone who already participates, suggesting that Parks should complement its strong social-media presence with broader and more varied communication channels

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Engaged + Connected Community: Communication + Community Engagement | Governmental Excellence: Customer Service + Equity

STRATEGY

1. Use multiple, multilingual communication channels beyond social media to reach diverse communities across the city.
2. Communicate park and program information proactively, clearly, and frequently to reduce awareness barriers.
3. Improve visibility of park amenities, events, and seasonal offerings through signage, print materials, digital tools, and neighborhood-level outreach.
4. Strengthen staff training and internal coordination so program updates, facility information, and park changes are communicated consistently.
5. Use community feedback and 311 data to identify communication gaps and tailor outreach strategies.

Objective 5

ALIGN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY WITH SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

WHAT
Evaluate and strengthen Parks & Recreation's administrative policies and practices to efficiently manage a growing park system and deliver consistent, high-quality services.

WHY
The size, complexity, programming, and use of the park system have increased over time. The Department's organizational structure, staffing levels, responsibilities, and internal processes should evolve accordingly so that existing and future assets can be effectively managed and community expectations can be met.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Governmental Excellence: Asset Management, Sustainability + Customer Service | Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation

STRATEGY
1. Address policy and planning gaps to provide a complete operational foundation for the Department's parks, facilities, natural areas, partnerships, and services, building upon existing plans, policies, and well-established maintenance procedures.
2. Develop an Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Framework, including incorporation of the Forestry Operations and Management Plan and overarching Natural Areas Management Plan, supported by standards and procedures for ecological restoration, native habitat maintenance, integrated pest management, and proactive canopy stewardship.
3. Establish a comprehensive Parkland Management Policy that provides consistent administrative, operational, conservation, and land-use guidance across developed parks, passive open green spaces, natural areas, greenways, waterfronts, and other parkland. Address stewardship levels, vegetation and canopy management, stormwater and soil conservation, permitted uses, encroachments, easements, and review of capital alterations.
4. Establish a formal Partnership Policy that provides a consistent framework for evaluating, approving, managing, and monitoring nonprofit, public, private, philanthropic, and intergovernmental partnerships. Define appropriate agreement types, roles and responsibilities, operational boundaries, long-term fiscal implications, approval processes, performance expectations, and renewal requirements.
5. Establish baseline standards for volunteer and partner-led activities, including safety, onboarding, training, task authorization, tracking, and reporting, while continuing to leverage Friends of Grand Rapids Parks for volunteer coordination and clearly defining City responsibilities and expectations.
6. Standardize ongoing staff training through an annual program covering equipment operation, safety, technical skills, maintenance practices, and specialized environmental practices, building upon existing onboarding and performance evaluation procedures.
7. Periodically review and update plans, policies, standards, and procedures to keep pace with evolving Department responsibilities, resources, and long-term stewardship needs.

Building on a Strong Foundation
The Department has established many of the plans, policies, and procedures needed to manage day-to-day park operations. Future organizational efforts should focus on filling identified gaps in natural resource management, parkland stewardship, partnership governance, and ongoing workforce development.

AREA	EXISTING FOUNDATION	PRIORITY NEED
Plans	Maintenance, trails, emergency and site planning	Natural Areas Management Plan + Forestry Operations and Management Plan
Policies	Park rules, acquisition/use, memorial and sponsorship policies	Parkland Management Policy + Partnership Policy
Standards + Procedures	Maintenance, facility, signage, Forestry Manual of Standards, onboarding + evaluation	Natural area standards + structured staff training
Partnerships + Volunteers	FGRP-led volunteer coordination	Citywide baseline standards for partner + volunteer activities

**See Appendix:*
Recommended Plans, Policies + Operational Standards for additional guidance.

Objective 6

USE BEST PRACTICES AND BENCHMARKING TO DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



WHAT
Establish an ongoing system for evaluating Parks & Recreation performance against peer agencies, industry standards, and the Department's own service goals to support informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

WHY
Consistent performance measures can help Parks & Recreation understand how effectively resources are being used, identify areas for improvement, justify future resource needs, and demonstrate accountability to City leadership and residents. National resources such as NRPA Park Metrics and CAPRA standards can provide useful context when paired with Grand Rapids-specific conditions and priorities.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Governmental Excellence: Data, Operational Excellence, Innovation, Fiscal Responsibility + Accountability

STRATEGY

1. Expand key performance indicators (KPIs) to track financial performance, staffing, operations, park provision, participation, asset condition, and service delivery over time.
2. Conduct periodic benchmarking against NRPA standards and comparable peer and aspirational park systems to understand how Grand Rapids compares with broader industry norms and communities with similar characteristics.
3. Use benchmarking and performance data to identify service gaps, resource needs, and opportunities for improvement, helping inform decisions related to staffing, operations, budgeting, capital investment, and service delivery.
4. Track performance over time and periodically update benchmarks and measures as the park system, Department priorities, available data, and industry practices evolve.

See Appendix: Parks + Recreation Benchmarking Analysis for detailed comparisons of park provision, trails, staffing, operating and capital investment, revenues, and cost recovery.

Objective 7

LEVERAGE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND CAPACITY



WHAT
Strengthen and formalize partnerships that can expand Parks & Recreation's capacity, leverage outside resources, and share operational responsibilities, improving service delivery while maintaining clear accountability for public assets.

WHY
Partnerships can bring specialized expertise, funding, volunteers, facilities, programming, and trusted community relationships to the park system. They can also serve as important operational support mechanisms, helping the Department manage increasing service expectations and a growing inventory of assets. A more strategic approach can help the City identify where partnerships can effectively supplement maintenance, programming, stewardship, fundraising, and community engagement efforts, allowing the Department to focus on management of the parks and recreation system at a high level. Clear partnership frameworks ensure external resources complement City services while maintaining accountability for public assets, safety, and long-term system stewardship.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Governmental Excellence: Collaboration, Innovation + Sustainability | Engaged + Connected Community: Community Engagement | Health + Environment: Green Space + Recreation

STRATEGY

1. Evaluate existing partnerships to understand their roles, responsibilities, costs, benefits, outcomes, and opportunities for improvement, including where partnerships effectively expand Department capacity.
2. Develop a Department-wide Partnership Policy that provides a consistent framework for evaluating, approving, managing, and monitoring nonprofit, public, private, philanthropic, and intergovernmental partnerships.
3. Establish clear roles and responsibilities that distinguish partner contributions, such as programming, volunteer coordination, fundraising, and community engagement, from core City responsibilities for public assets, safety, maintenance, and regulatory compliance.
4. Evaluate the long-term financial and operational implications of partnerships, considering both the resources a partner can provide and future City responsibilities for staffing, operations, maintenance, and capital renewal.
5. Establish consistent expectations for agreements, safety, insurance, accountability, performance monitoring, and renewal, scaled appropriately to the type and complexity of each partnership.

See Appendix: Partnership Policy Framework for additional guidance on partnership types, agreement structures, evaluation criteria, roles and responsibilities, approval processes, and performance monitoring.

Objective 8

ALIGN CAPITAL INVESTMENTS WITH LIFECYCLE COST REALITIES

WHAT

Adopt a lifecycle-based investment approach that balances capital improvements with the operating, maintenance, rehabilitation, and staffing resources needed to sustain a high-quality park system over time. Ensure that decisions about new amenities, facilities, and park expansions are informed by their full long-term costs and the Department's ability to maintain them at desired service levels.

WHY

Building new assets is only a small portion of their total lifetime cost. Over an asset's 20-year lifecycle, initial capital costs account for **20%** of its total lifetime costs while operations and maintenance costs account for **80%** of its lifetime costs, meaning that long-term operations, maintenance, and care account for the majority of park system expenses. To protect past investments and maintain high-quality parks, Grand Rapids must adopt an approach that analyzes the feasibility of future projects by estimating the long-term impacts of recreational assets in addition to their initial investment.

CITYWIDE ALIGNMENT: Governmental Excellence: Data, Operational Excellence, Innovation, Fiscal Responsibility + Accountability

STRATEGY

1. Incorporate lifecycle cost analysis into major capital project decisions.
2. Establish a dedicated funding strategy for asset rehabilitation and replacement.
3. Expand asset management practices to guide maintenance and capital planning.
4. Prioritize deferred maintenance and preventative maintenance investments.
5. Evaluate staffing and operational resources against industry service standards.
6. Assess long-term operating impacts before adding new parks, facilities, or amenities.

See Chapter 4: Making It Happen: Planning for Full System Costs for more information

The True Cost of Capital Investment: Portland Parks & Recreation, Oregon

A 2025 audit of Portland Parks & Recreation revealed the consequences of expanding park infrastructure without adequately planning for long-term maintenance and replacement. With 86% of park assets rated in poor or very poor condition and a deferred maintenance backlog exceeding $550 million, the City faced facility closures, deteriorating infrastructure, and mounting financial obligations. The audit also found that five recent capital projects added approximately $4.7 million in estimated annual lifecycle costs without identified funding sources. These challenges demonstrated how prioritizing new improvements without corresponding reinvestment in existing assets can gradually undermine the quality, safety, and reliability of an entire park system.

In response, Portland committed to developing a long-term financial sustainability plan, establishing systemwide levels of service, and improving lifecycle funding considerations for new capital projects. The Department also uses asset condition, likelihood of failure, consequences of failure, and equity to help prioritize capital maintenance investments.

Portland's experience illustrates the importance of evaluating the full cost of park ownership before committing to new improvements. For Grand Rapids, the lessons reinforce the need to balance system expansion with reinvestment in existing assets, establish sustainable maintenance funding, and integrate lifecycle cost projections into capital planning and budgeting. By incorporating these considerations early in the planning and design process, the City can make more informed investment decisions that protect public resources and sustain the quality of its park system for future generations.

Source: Parks Fiscal Management: Systemwide Goals and Sustainability Strategies Needed to Ensure Parks for Future Generations
Portland City Auditor, October 2025

5 LESSONS WORTH LEARNING:
Aligning Capital Investments with Long-Term Financial Sustainability

	PORTLAND'S EXPERIENCE	LESSONS FOR GRAND RAPIDS
1.	New parks created unfunded obligations. Eight capital projects reviewed by auditors had no identified funding for major maintenance or lifecycle replacement.	Require a lifecycle cost estimate and funding strategy as part of capital project approval.
2.	Maintenance delays resulted in closures. Columbia Pool, park shelters, playground equipment, and trail bridges were among the assets closed or removed.	Prioritize preventive maintenance and replacement before assets reach critical condition.
3.	Capital priorities lacked clear systemwide guidance. Auditors found that competing plans and priorities made it possible to justify new projects without sufficiently considering overall system needs.	Establish clear levels of service and apply consistent criteria to balance new improvements with existing needs.
4.	The maintenance backlog continued growing. Portland reported approximately $759 million in unfunded capital maintenance needs as of August 2026.	Develop a long-range reinvestment forecast and a dedicated annual rehabilitation budget.
5.	The City lacked a comprehensive financial sustainability strategy. Individual cost-saving measures were not integrated into a coordinated plan.	Connect asset management, annual operating budgets, capital planning, and long-term financial forecasts.

4/

MAKING IT HAPPEN

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PLANNING FOR FULL SYSTEM COSTS

CAPITAL VS. LIFECYCLE COST REALITIES

When considering the total cost of an asset and the funds needed to build, operate and maintain that asset, this fundamental rule needs to be understood: over a park asset's average 20-year lifecycle, initial capital costs account for **20%** of its total lifetime costs; operations and maintenance costs account for **80%** of its lifetime costs.

Operations and Maintenance funding must be sufficient to implement industry maintenance standards. Adequate funding needs to cover costs including appropriate staffing levels, materials and supplies, equipment and vehicles, maintenance facility operations costs that align with maintenance standards. Industry standards for park and building maintenance staffing are: park maintenance staff levels, using Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) data, per acre of land, at 1 FTE/32 acres and building maintenance staff per sq foot at 1 FTE/10,000 sq feet.

Deferred Maintenance/Rehabilitation funding should be included in the Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Improvement Plan. A Rehabilitation Funding Strategy needs to be developed based on lifecycle replacement costs, asset useful lives, and plans and schedules for these annual rehabilitation investments. This funding is critical for the care and upkeep of existing assets in the system to extend the life of the assets and improve their functionality and safety. Appropriate levels of day-to-day preventative maintenance practices and ongoing rehabilitation investments are critical to providing quality parks and park assets, keeping investment costs as low as possible and reducing eventual capital investment costs.

Capital Projects are needed to appropriately invest in the expanded system, invest in new parks and park assets, and complete major replacements and renovations of existing parks and park assets at the end of their lifecycle. It is critical during the planning phase of each capital project that an analysis is completed of projected costs for the next 5-10 years of operating and maintaining new amenities. It is critical for staff and elected officials to understand and plan for the needed capital, operating, maintenance costs of these investments.

Based on the benchmarking analysis, interviews with Department staff, and analysis of data provided, the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation System's annual operating budget, capital budget, and staffing need to be increased. The most significant investment needs are in the annual operating budget, deferred maintenance/ rehabilitation budget, and staffing. The most significant need in the capital budget is adding rehabilitation/deferred maintenance to the capital budget. While there are funding needs for capital, the capital budget, overall, is in better shape than the operating budget, deferred maintenance/ rehabilitation budget, and staffing levels.

80%

LIFETIME COST IN O&M

Over a 20-year assest lifecycle. Initial capital investment represents ~20% of total expenditure.

OPERATING BUDGET NEEDS

Given the highly developed nature of the Grand Rapids system and its size today, it is recommended that the operating budget be $16,500,000, in FY27 numbers. Below is a five-year strategy to reach that level of funding, allowing for gradual annual increases. It is important to note that the dollars represent FY27 numbers, and inflationary increases need to be applied in each of the five years to ensure appropriate funding levels.

Fiscal Year	Operating Budget
Current Year - FY 27	$11,399,433
Year 1 - FY28	$12,300,000
Year 2 - FY29	$13,350,000
Year 3 - FY30	$14,400,000
Year 4 - FY31	$15,450,000
Year 5 - FY32	$16,500,000

*Does not include inflationary increases, to be added each fiscal year

OPERATING BUDGET 5-YEAR STRATEGY

Figure 4.1

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE/REHABILITATION BUDGET NEEDS

Beginning in FY28, a Deferred Maintenance/Rehabilitation Budget needs to be established and included in the Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Improvement Plan, allocating dollars annually for existing park asset investments. Funding in the following categories should be allocated annually to ensure on-going and regular investments to repair or restore existing amenities to extend their life and improve their safety and functionality. The identified dollar amounts are for FY28. It is recommended that updates and adjustments be made to each funding category annually based on an annual evaluation of the investment needs across the categories, with inflationary increases applied annually.

Category	**Funding Amount***
Paths, Trails & Sidewalks	$ 325,000
Park and Facility amenities (i.e., restrooms, benches, drinking fountains, pavilions & picnic areas, dog parks, exercise fitness areas, public art)	$ 302,000
Pools & Spraypads & Spraygrounds	$ 260,000
Open Space Conservation & Forested Areas	$ 40,000
Community Recreation Centers/Teen Centers/ Senior Centers	$ 200,000
Golf	$ 65,000
Playgrounds	$ 125,000
Sports facilities (i.e., rectangular fields, diamond fields, sport courts, disc golf)	$ 115,000
Critical Repairs (i.e., unanticipated and emergency repairs/replacements)	$ 110,000
Lighting and Below Grade Infrastructure	$ 220,000
Operations Facilities	$ 65,000
Parking Lots	$ 150,000

*Inflationary increases need to be accounted for each fiscal year.

FY28 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN BUDGET

Figure 4.2

CAPITAL BUDGET NEEDS

The Next 5 Years Capital Budget for Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation is $20.7M, significantly below NPRA Norms for comparable systems and below the Peer and Aspirational agencies. Based on the built-out nature of Grand Rapids system, size of the current system, planned capital projects, and the NPRA Peer and Aspirational agency data, the following Capital Budget Recommendations are being made. It is important to note that the dollars represent FY27 numbers, and inflationary increases need to be applied in each of the five years to ensure appropriate funding levels.

Fiscal Year	Capital Budget
Next Five Years - FY 27	$20,700,000
Next Five Years - FY 28	$22,800,000
Next Five Years - FY 29	$24,000,000
Next Five Years - FY 30	$26,200,000
Next Five Years - FY 31	$28,500,000
Next Five Years - FY 32	$31,000,000

*Does not include inflationary increases, to be added each fiscal year

5-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET

Figure 4.3

STAFFING NEEDS

Given the size of the current system, number of parks in the system, and the highly developed nature of Grand Rapids system, the following staffing recommendations – overall Department full time employees (FTEs) and full-time staff dedicated to maintenance (parks, facilities and cemeteries maintenance; natural resources management; and forestry) are being made. The staffing levels and distribution of maintenance staff should be based on these national norms and best practices:

- Park maintenance staff levels per acre of land at 1 FTE/32 acres
- Building maintenance staff per sq foot at 1 FTE/10,000 sq feet.

Fiscal Year	FTEs	Dedicated Maintenance* FTEs
Current Year - FY 27	89	38
Year 1 - FY28	95	44
Year 2 - FY29	103	49
Year 3 - FY30	110	52
Year 4 - FY31	118	53
Year 5 - FY32	125	53

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

*Maintenance includes Parks, Facilities, and Cemeteries' Maintenance; Natural Resources Management; and Forestry

5-YEAR STAFFING NEEDS

Figure 4.4

EQUITY-CENTERED CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

The Equity-Centered Capital Framework is the Department's method for evaluating capital projects that restore and enhance park assets through an equity lens – by ward, emphasis on Neighborhoods of Focus, and more. The framework is one tool used to measure the potential impact of millage fund investments.

Previous Investment Framework

The 2019 evergreen Parks millage provided a solid foundation for necessary investments across the park system. Annually, millage revenue is designated to capital improvements, swimming pool operations, parks maintenance, MLK Community Center operations, and support for Free Summer Day Camp, GR Outside, Senior Wellness Programming and scholarship opportunities for recreation classes.

Capital projects, accomplished from 2022-2026 via multiple funding sources - including the 2019 millage, added over $100 million in new assets, including new trails, property acquisitions and refreshed parks. This proved a great accomplishment as well as a challenge with so many new assets to be maintained.

Grand Rapids' parks, both in number and in acreage, are not distributed evenly among wards. Neither are the types of amenities. With so much need across the system, a solid method was required to plan for future projects. If the starting point is an inequitable system, a capital framework that distributes funding based only on existing amenities will perpetuate inequitable outcomes.

Asset management remains a high priority for the Department, but it cannot be the only factor determining investments moving forward.

Embedding Equity in a New Investment Framework

While every park and every project is important, clear guidelines are necessary to direct large amounts of public infrastructure funding to areas where they will create the most benefit. The Department is living out the City's core values by focusing on racial and economic equity in project prioritization.

After the passing of the evergreen parks millage in 2019, the Department developed this Equity-Centered Capital Framework for capital investments that seeks to balance park asset needs alongside community needs using a multi-criterion scoring system.

Methodology from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was used as a starting point and adapted with metrics to fit Grand Rapids' context. By quantifying capital needs and community demographics from a combination of data sources and categories, publicly-funded investments are now targeted in a more equitable way.

While the Equity-Centered Capital Framework serves as a key lens for evaluating the potential impact of investments, it is one of several factors used to evaluate and prioritize capital projects using millage funds. Capital projects may be prioritized to address pressing needs, leverage time-sensitive partnership or philanthropic opportunities, or align with broader strategic initiatives and cross-departmental efforts that benefit the community as a whole.

CAPITAL PLAN PRIORITY SCORING: HOW IT WORKS

Each park is given an objective numerical score based on the combination of its park characteristics and community characteristics. Community characteristics scores are calculated at the neighborhood scale, and each park within a census tract will receive the same score. The community scores for large parks, such as Riverside, are calculated using the average of census tracts adjacent to the park. The park characteristic score is unique for each park based on the assets and physical needs of the individual park. For example, Belknap Park and Canal Park will receive the same community characteristic score because they lie in the same neighborhood or census tract, but they will receive different park characteristic scores based on the unique features that are physically located within each park.

Parks that rank high according to the criteria are prioritized for investment of millage capital dollars.

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

CRITERIA	*DESCRIPTION*	*SCORING*
Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty	40%+ Non-white population *AND* 30%+ Population with income below poverty line	5 – Racially/ethnically concentrated area of poverty 3 – Concentrated area of poverty *OR* <40% NW 0 – Neither
Population Density	GR average: 4,400 people per square mile Scoring: upper/middle/lower thirds	3 – 8,000+ 2 – 4,400 to 7,999 1 – 0 to 4,399
Youth Population	% of Census Tract population under 18 years old Scoring: upper/middle/lower thirds	3 – 24%+ 1 – 19.20% to 23.99% 0 - < 19.19%
Senior Population	% of Census Tract population age 65 and above Scoring: upper/middle/lower thirds	2 – 12%+ 1 – 6.70% to 11.99% 0 – <6.69%
Neighborhood Safety	Crimes against person per 1,000 residents (2013-2017) Scoring: upper/middle/lower thirds	2 – 183+ 1 – 93-182 0 - < 92
Park Access	% of Census Tract population with 10-min walk to a park Scoring: upper/middle/lower thirds	2 - < 64% 1 – 64% to 96% 0 – 96%+
	MAXIMUM POSSIBLE POINTS, COMMUNITY SCORE:	17



PARK CHARACTERISTICS *(Asset Management Plan or AMP)*

CRITERIA	*SCORING*
Park Asset Lifespan	3 – Expired before 2010 1 – Expired between 2010 and 2020 0 – Still within lifespan in 2020
Park Asset Condition of Highly Used Items • Gym/Lodge* • Pools* • Ice rink* • Restroom* • Parking lot* • Playground* • Splash pad* • Sport courts* • Lighting • Irrigation • Walking trails & sidewalks • Turf *Weighted items over $100,000	5 – Safety concern/potential removal from service due to deficiencies 4 – Functions as a result of numerous ongoing repairs 3 – Functional but could benefit from rehab or replacement 2 – Functional & reliable 1 – New or like new
ADA/Accessibility Needs	3 – Multiple safety concerns or barriers into or throughout the park for mobility devices, limited eyesight, etc. 2 – Limited safety concerns or barriers 1 – ADA features that could benefit from universal design upgrades
Green Infrastructure & Environmental Needs	½ – Reduces flooding ½ – Enhances water quality ½ – Enhances habitat, plant life, wildlife
MAXIMUM POSSIBLE POINTS, PARK SCORE:	12.5
MAXIMUM POSSIBLE POINTS, TOTAL SCORE:	29.5

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan addresses how the Parks and Recreation Department will actively work towards the goals and objectives outlined in this Master Plan. The following action plan documents the projects' scope, dedicated millage funding, ward, and their corresponding Goal (Connected Network (CN), Healthy Community (HC), Neighborhood Investments (NI), Sustainable System (SS)), Objective, and Strategy. More information about Goals, Objectives, and Strategies can be found in Chapter 3: Making It Happen.

Importantly, the analysis and recommendations of Master Plan will directly inform the Department's upcoming Strategic Operating Plan update in 2027, setting in motion the operational, funding, and management initiatives necessary to sustain the Parks and Recreation system.

PARK	DESCRIPTION
32ND STREET (FUTURE)	**Entry drive and parking, accessible nature trails, nature-based recreation, picnic and gathering areas, wetland and prairie restoration, boardwalks, and stormwater management.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $200,000 **Ward** 3 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 HC-07-S2/S3 HC-08-S1/S2
ABERDEEN	**Playground upgrades, ball field fencing, parking and roadway improvements, and tennis court rehabilitation** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $750,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 HC-02-S2 HC-05-S1/S3 SS-03-S4/S5
BELKNAP	**Bathroom Design** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $150,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4
BIKE	**Parking lot construction, accessible shelters and pathways, entrance improvements, lighting, bike amenities, and site enhancements.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $550,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** CN-01-S1 CN-02-S5 HC-01-S4 HC-02-S3 NI-03-S1
BOSTON SQUARE (FUTURE)	**Property acquisition and site development** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $400,000 **Ward** 3 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 NI-01-S1/S3/S4 NI-04-S1
DICKINSON	**Site improvements** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $50,000 **Ward** 3 **Goal-Objective-Strategy**

DOUGLAS	**Site improvements** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $300,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-O2-S2
GARFIELD	**Lodge redesign, accessibility improvements, and building enhancements** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $900,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-O1-S4
HIGHLAND	**Restroom building reconstruction, accessible trails and pathways, park connectivity, recreational amenities, and site enhacements** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $750,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** CN-O1-S1/S3 CN-O2-S3 HC-O1-S4 HC-O2-S3 NI-O3-S1
HUFF	**Boardwalk assessment and repairs, trail resurfacing, parking lot reconstruction, and potential playground expansion.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $450,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** CN-O3-S2 HC-O1-S4 SS-O3-S4/S5

LEONARD TO ANN TRAIL	**Paved Shared-use trail construction, pedestrian lighting, seating and bike amenities, landscaping, and interpretive plaza development.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $100,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** CN-O1-S1/S3 CN-O2-S1 CN-O4-S2/S9 NI-O3-S1
LINCOLN	**Lodge upgrades and accessibility improvements, playground equipment replacement, splash pad enhancements, basketball court improvements, and parking lot modifications.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $350,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-O1-S4 HC-O5-S3 SS-O3-S4/S5
MACKAY JAYCEE	**Road recirculation, parking efficiency, and dog park development** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $1,550,000 **Ward** 3 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-O1-S4 HC-O2-S2/S9
OTSEGO DRAIN BASIN	**Site master plan development; potential recreational amenities, walking paths, gathering spaces, ecological enhancements, and stormwater management improvements, pending further planning and design.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $500,000 **Other Funding Source (CIF)** $750,000 (CIF FY23-FY25) **Ward** 3 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-O7-S2/S3/S7 HC-O8-S1/S2 NI-O1-S1/S3 NI-O4-S1

PLASTER CREEK FAMILY	**Playground renovation, parking lot reconstruction and site enhacements** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $300,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 NI-04-S1/S2 SS-03-S4/S5
PLASTER CREEK TRAIL	**Erosion control** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $100,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** CN-01-S3 CN-07-S1/S5 HC-08-S2
RICHMOND	**Historic pool house renovation, locker room accessibility improvements, trail and signage enhancements, northern parking lot upgrades, sports court rehabilitation, and additional shade.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $540,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 SS-03-S4/S5 SS-04-S3 SS-08-S4
RIVERSIDE	**Roadway circulation improvements, parking optimization, and continued implementation of the site master plan.** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $1,475,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 SS-03-S4/S5

ROOSEVELT	**Lodge renovation, entry drive and parking lot reconstruction, and site enhancements** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $1,470,000 **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** CN-01-S2 CN-07-S1 HC-01-S4 NI-03-S1/S2 SS-03-S4/S5
SIGNAGE	**Park Entry signage improvements (Park ID signs)** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $50,000 **Ward** N/A **Goal-Objective-Strategy** SS-04-S1/S3
SULLIVAN	**Reconstruction complete FY27** **Other Funding Source (CIF)** $500,000 (CIF FY27) **Ward** 1 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-05-S2/S4 SS-03-S5
WILCOX	**Tennis and pickleball court improvements, ADA accessibility upgrades, potential lodge replacement, splash pad enhancements, and basketball court rehabilitation** **FY27-32 Millage Funding** $85,000 **Ward** 2 **Goal-Objective-Strategy** HC-01-S4 HC-05-S3 SS-03-S4/S5 SS-08-S1/S4

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL INITIATIVES

Ambitious, long-term projects building on previous planning efforts and community input to expand park facilities, enhance recreation, and address evolving needs. Implementation will strategically leverage park millage funding to secure grants, philanthropy, and partnerships.

OTSEGO DRAIN BASIN

The proposed Otsego Drain Basin Park would transform a newly acquired four-acre property into a welcoming neighborhood green space on Grand Rapids' southeast side. Located in an area identified by the Trust for Public Land as a Very High Priority Area for New Parks, the project represents an important opportunity to address gaps in park access and expand recreational opportunities for surrounding residents. Developed in partnership with the Kent County Drain Commission, the City's Environmental Services Department, and the community, the project would balance neighborhood recreation needs with environmental stewardship and stormwater management.

Anticipated improvements include removal of existing security fencing, site regrading, walking paths, a picnic shelter, seating, lighting, native landscaping, green infrastructure, and potentially a dog park. The final design would be shaped by community input, creating an accessible neighborhood destination that supports recreation, environmental health, and more equitable access to green space.

WARD: 1
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: HC-07-S2/S3/S7; HC-08-S1/S2; NI-01-S1/S3; NI-04-S1



PLASTER CREEK FAMILY PARK

Building on the improvements completed through the park's 2019 vision, the proposed Plaster Creek Family Park Master Plan Update would establish a renewed vision for the park and guide future investments based on community priorities. Located in the City's Third Ward, an area with limited access to parkland and green space, the project represents an important opportunity to expand recreational opportunities and improve the quality of existing park amenities. The planning process would evaluate the entire park, engage surrounding neighborhoods, and identify priority improvements that reflect community needs.

Potential investments include an enhanced playground, new or improved restroom facilities, and parking lot improvements, with the final scope determined through community engagement. Implementation would focus on the highest-priority areas, creating a more welcoming, accessible, and engaging park destination for neighborhood residents and families while supporting more equitable access to quality recreation spaces across Grand Rapids.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: HC-01-S4; NI-04-S1/S2; SS-03-S4/S5





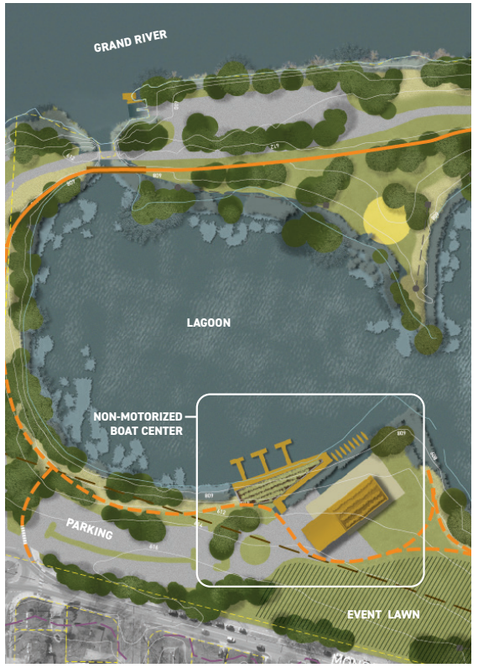
Plaster Creek Family Park Existing Conditions: Playground and Restroom Facility

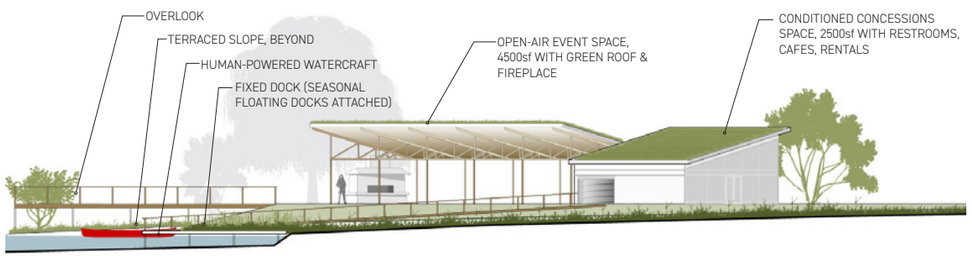
RIVERSIDE PARK NON-MOTORIZED BOAT CENTER

Identified as a Priority Park Case Study in the 2022 Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, the proposed Boathouse was envisioned as a signature riverfront destination within Riverside Park. The project would expand public access to the Grand River and create new opportunities for recreation, community gatherings, and special events.

The concept includes non-motorized boat rentals and launches, floating docks, terraced river overlooks, and a large covered event space accommodating approximately 300 people. Restrooms, concessions, and flexible gathering areas would further activate the waterfront. Designed with resilient native landscaping and green infrastructure, the project would strengthen Riverside Park's identity as a regional recreation destination while connecting more residents and visitors to the river.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S5; CN-06-S3/S4/S6; HC-03-S3; SS-07-S1; SS-08-S6





BOAT CENTER & ARRIVAL ENLARGEMENT AND SECTION

32ND STREET GREEN SPACE

Identified as a Priority Park Case Study in the 2022 Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the proposed 32nd Street SE Nature Park was envisioned as a brand-new park in the City's Third Ward, an area historically underserved by parkland and access to green space. The project would transform approximately 80 acres of undeveloped City-owned land into an accessible, ecologically rich neighborhood destination. Shaped by extensive community engagement, the concept emphasizes low-impact recreation, wildlife preservation, and opportunities to connect with nature.

Proposed improvements include walking trails, wetland boardwalks, wildlife observation areas, nature-based play, picnic shelters, and gathering spaces. Native prairie and wetland restoration, along with green stormwater infrastructure, would enhance habitat and water quality within the Plaster Creek watershed. The project represents an opportunity to address park access inequities while creating a welcoming, inclusive natural space for surrounding neighborhoods.

WARD: 3
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S3; CN-04-S2/S7; CN-07-S2/S3; HC-01-S4; HC-07-S2/S3; HC-08-S1/S2; NI-03-S5; NI-04-S1/S2/S3



EXISTING
- A OVERHEAD ELECTRIC
- B RESIDENTIAL AREA
- C INDUSTRIAL AREA

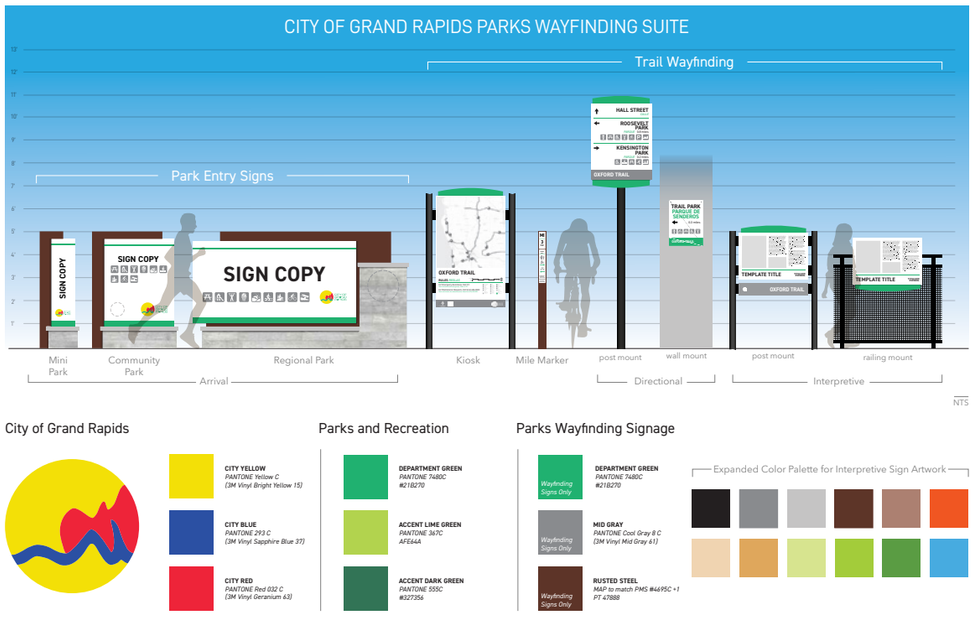
PROPOSED
- A TERRAIN PARK & NATURE TRAIL
- B UPLAND PRAIRIE RESTORATION
- C ELEVATED BOARDWALK
- D WETLAND RESTORATION & STORMWATER FILTER
- E WETLAND PAVILION
- F PAVED ACCESSIBLE TRAIL
- G NATURE-PLAY AREA
- H OPEN LAWN AREA
- I PICNIC SHELTER
- J LANDSCAPE BUFFER
- K ENTRY DRIVE & PARKING, 10 SPACES, 1 ADA
- L ENHANCED CROSSWALK
- M SEATING AREA
- N WILDLIFE OBSERVATION BLIND
- O GATE
- P PEDESTRIAN-SCALE LIGHTING

PARK SIGNAGE

A consistent, durable, and easily maintained wayfinding and interpretive signage system is imagined throughout all city parks and trails. Inspired by a community selected winning design and coordinated with regional wayfinding efforts, the city has developed a suite of standardized signage. To date, the replacement of existing park entry signs and installation of new wayfinding and interpretive signs has been integrated into other capital improvement projects, and has occurred on a relatively small scale over the past five years. There is a desire for a more comprehensive approach to park wayfinding implementation.

Proposed improvements include replacing outdated park entry signs, adding identification signage at parks without existing signs, installing wayfinding along off-street trails, and incorporating regional trail markers. Interpretive signage would highlight local history, culture, and natural features, while digital tools, including QR codes currently being implemented along the Oxford Trail, could improve navigation and accessibility. These investments would establish a more consistent signage system, strengthen connections between parks and regional trails, and increase awareness of recreational opportunities. Improved trail identification would also support emergency response and maintenance reporting, reinforce City branding, promote regional destinations, and enhance the overall visitor experience.

WARD: N/A
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-02-S2; CN-04-S8; SS-04-S3



HIGHLAND PARK

Building on previous park investments and a community-driven master planning process, the Highland Park Master Plan envisions continued improvements to one of Grand Rapids' most distinctive community parks. Shaped by neighborhood input, the plan focuses on enhancing accessibility, safety, recreation, and connections to the park's natural areas.

Proposed improvements include expanded walking trails, a pedestrian bridge over Coldbrook Creek, improved lighting, restroom facilities, and additional recreation and gathering spaces. The project would build on Highland Park's existing amenities while improving circulation, activating underutilized areas, and preserving valuable natural habitats. These investments would strengthen Highland Park as a welcoming, multi-generational destination for outdoor recreation, neighborhood connection, and access to nature.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S1/S3; CN-02-S3; HC-01-S4; HC-02-S3; NI-03-S1



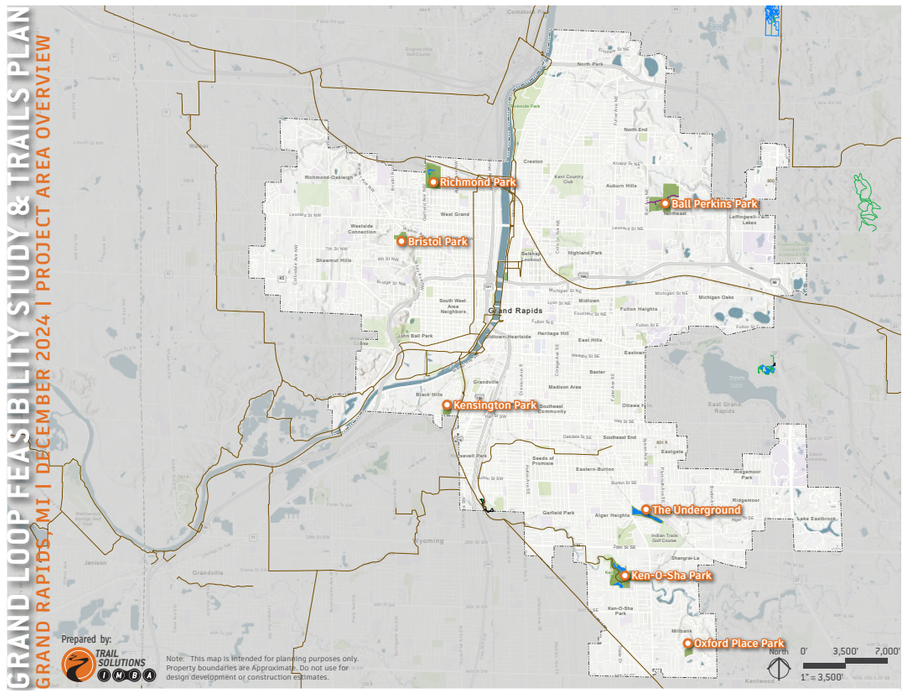
THE GRAND LOOP TRAIL NETWORK

Developed through a collaborative planning effort between Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, the City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Department, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), the Grand Loop envisions an expanded network of natural-surface trails and mountain biking opportunities throughout the city. Guided by the 2025 Grand Loop Feasibility Study & Trails Plan, the initiative aims to bring trail access within ten blocks of at least 50% of Grand Rapids residents, addressing existing gaps in outdoor recreation access.

Informed by community input and site assessments, the plan identifies opportunities for new trails and improvements to facilities across seven parks: Ball Perkins, Bristol, Ken-O-Sha, Kensington, Oxford Place, Richmond, and The Underground. Proposed improvements would accommodate a range of ages, interests, and skill levels while emphasizing sustainable trail design and environmental stewardship. Through phased implementation, the Grand Loop would strengthen neighborhood connections, expand access to adventure, and establish Grand Rapids as a destination for urban trail recreation.

WARD: ALL

GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-02-S5; CN-04-S1; HC-02-S3/S8; SS-07-S1



SOUTHSIDE CREEKWAYS - ANCHOR SITES

Envisioned as signature destinations along the Southside Creekways trail network, six proposed anchor sites would transform existing parks, underutilized land, and creek corridors into vibrant public spaces that reconnect neighborhoods and expand access to nature and recreation. Developed through an extensive community-driven planning process, the concepts include improvements at Silver Creek Wetland Park, Dickinson Park, Roosevelt Park, the US-131 Underpass, the Park-to-Park Connector, and Division Avenue Nature Park.

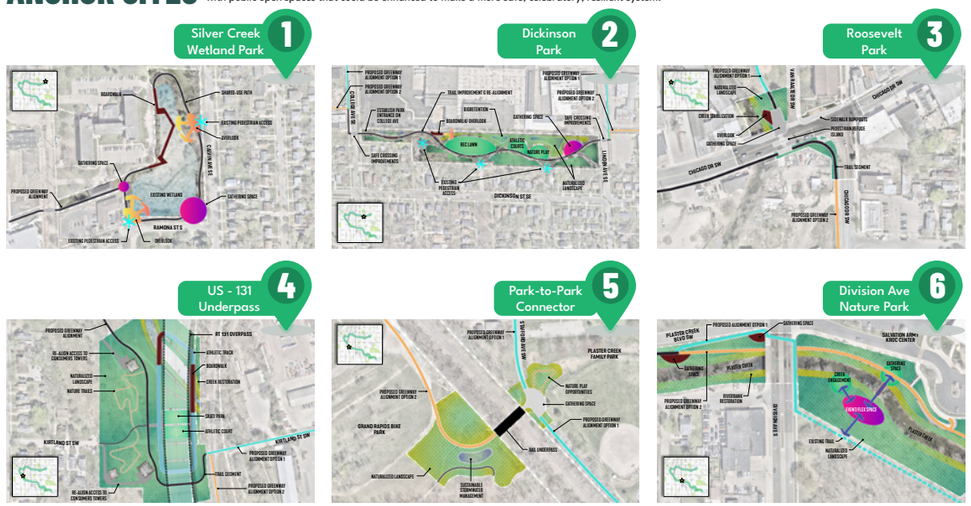
Proposed investments include new trails and boardwalks, nature-based play, gathering spaces, overlooks, recreational amenities, and ecological restoration. Together, these sites would serve as welcoming community destinations that celebrate local identity, improve environmental health, and create new opportunities for recreation and neighborhood connection. More than individual park improvements, the anchor sites represent a transformative investment in Grand Rapids' Southside, helping address historic inequities in access to quality green space while supporting community vitality and long-term neighborhood reinvestment.

WARD: 1 & 3

GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S2; CN-07-S1/S5; NI-04-S1

ANCHOR SITES

Along Southside Creekways Project are six "anchor sites," public spaces where the trail intersects with public open spaces that could be enhanced to make a more safe, celebratory, resilient system.

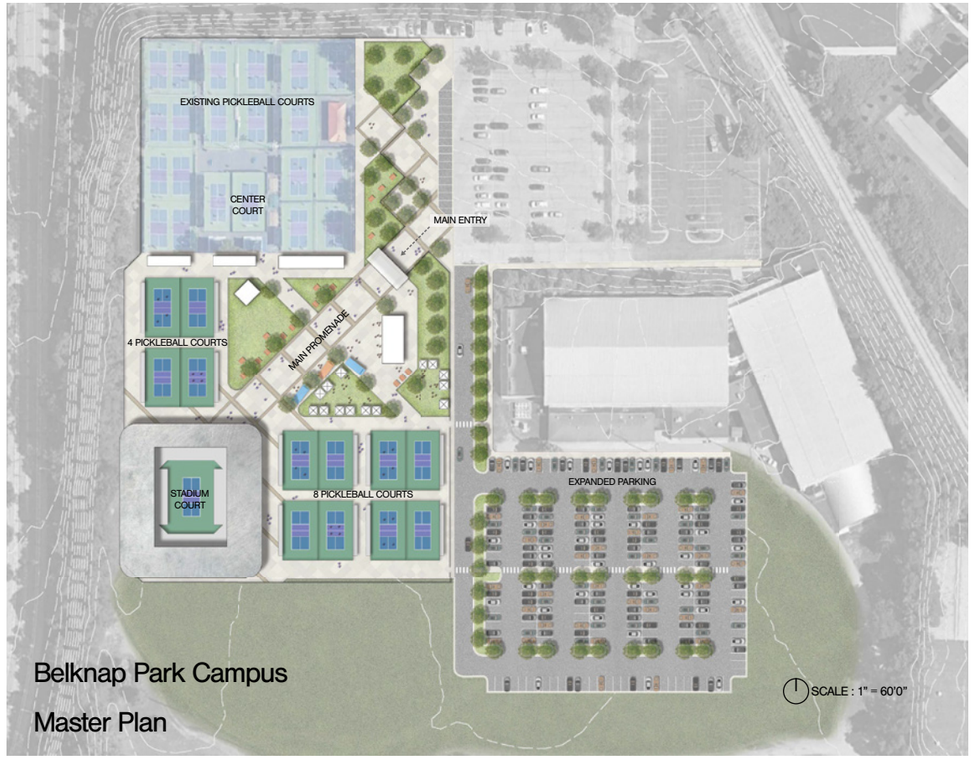


BELKNAP PARK PICKLEBALL CAMPUS EXPANSION

Envisioned as a premier pickleball destination, the proposed Belknap Park Pickleball Campus Expansion would transform the existing courts and surrounding parkland into a major recreational and tournament facility. Developed through a 2026 master planning effort, the concept builds on the success of the Beer City Open while expanding opportunities for recreation, community gatherings, and sporting events.

Proposed improvements include 12 additional pickleball courts, a 2,500-seat stadium court, expanded spectator amenities, concessions, restrooms, and additional parking. A welcoming park entrance, landscaped promenades, flexible lawns, and gathering spaces would connect the new facilities to the broader park and support festivals and everyday use. The project would strengthen Belknap Park as a community destination while elevating Grand Rapids' reputation for pickleball and sports tourism.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: HC-01-S4; HC-05-S3/S4/S5; SS-08-S1/S6



FULLER & HILLCREST PARK ATHLETIC FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

Developed through a 2026 feasibility study in partnership with Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), the proposed Fuller Park Athletic Fields Improvements envision transforming existing athletic facilities into a modern, collegiate-level sports destination. The project would enhance opportunities for baseball, softball, and potentially soccer while maximizing the recreational potential of Fuller and Hillcrest Parks.

Proposed improvements include upgraded baseball and softball fields with synthetic turf, improved field lighting, dugouts, batting cages, scoreboards, spectator seating, and supporting facilities such as press boxes, restrooms, and concessions. The study explores alternative configurations to improve field functionality, accessibility, parking, and circulation while considering existing park amenities and environmental conditions. Through strategic investment and collaboration with GRCC, the project would strengthen Grand Rapids' athletic infrastructure, support collegiate sports, and create opportunities for expanded recreational use and community partnerships.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: HC-05-S1/S3/S4/S5; SS-07-S4; SS-08-S1/S6

SITE LAYOUT
CONCEPT A

BASEBALL
Outfield expanded to 400' per NCAA requirements.

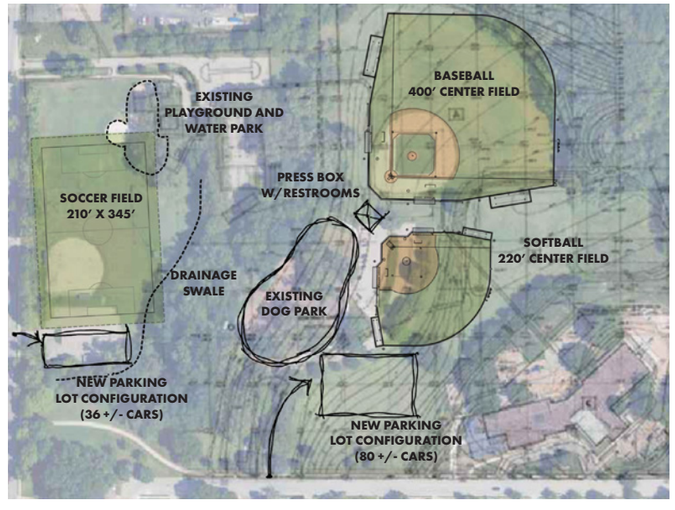
SOCCER FIELD
Based on NCAA min. requirements.
Parking lot will need to be reconfigured.
Will need to talk to the City of Grand Rapids Parks about the play area to the north.

SOFTBALL FIELD
Over existing parking lot.
City of Grand Rapids Parks would approve of relocating the parking lot.

NEW PARKING LOTS

NEW PRESS BOX
One press box for both fields.

RISK AND ROADBLOCKS
1. Drainage swale along treeline at bottom of hill.
2. Playground area in proposed soccer field.
3. City of Grand Rapids has discussed daylighting coldbrook creek east of fuller (No current plans).
4. All new parking lots.
5. Underground detention needed for new baseball and softball synthetic turf fields.
6. Extensive grading for softball field and moderate grading for baseball outfield.

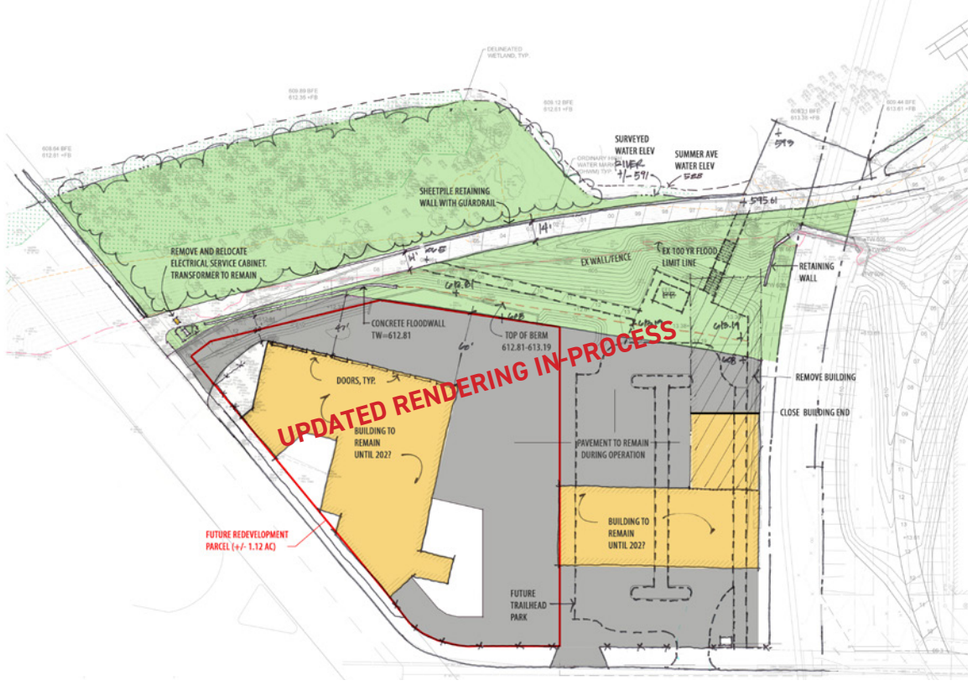


EAST RIVERFRONT: CSX TO WEALTHY STREET

Envisioned as a key investment in Grand Rapids' riverfront trail network, the East Riverfront project would improve connectivity, strengthen flood protection, and create new opportunities for recreation and redevelopment along the Grand River.

The project is planned in two phases. Phase 1 includes extending the City's Riveredge Trail, establishing a street connection to the Oxford Trail, and raising existing levees to improve flood protection and long-term resiliency. Phase 2 would involve removing a City-owned building and selling the property for private redevelopment, creating opportunities for new investment along the waterfront. A new public trailhead with parking, restrooms, and a shelter would provide amenities for trail users and improve access to the riverfront. Together, these improvements would strengthen connections within the larger Grand River Greenway, enhance public access, and support the continued transformation of the riverfront into a connected, resilient, and vibrant community destination.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S3/S4/S5; CN-06-S5; HC-01-S4; HC-04-S3; NI-03-S1



6TH STREET PARK

Originally identified as an opportunity site through the River for All initiative, 6th Street Park was further explored through a community-informed master planning process to envision a vibrant riverfront destination in downtown Grand Rapids. The plan emphasizes flood protection and resiliency, improved ecological health of the river and its edges, and stronger connections between the Grand River, surrounding neighborhoods, and the city.

Proposed improvements include a signature event and recreation hub, large event lawn, flexible programming areas, river overlooks, terraced seating, barrier-free river access, and a skate park. As part of the City's Riveredge Trail system, the park would also strengthen connections to the larger Grand River Greenway, expanding opportunities for walking, biking, and waterfront recreation. The concept incorporates Anishinaabek art and cultural elements, creating opportunities for inclusive programming and celebrating the river's cultural significance. Together, these improvements would create a resilient, welcoming waterfront destination that supports recreation, community gatherings, and year-round activation while reconnecting Grand Rapids with its river.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S3/S4; CN-04-S1; CN-06-S5; HC-01-S4; HC-04-S3



GRIFF'S ICEHOUSE EXPANSION

The Griff's IceHouse expansion at Belknap Park is a strategic investment in Grand Rapids' role as a hub for professional hockey development. The project originated after the Detroit Red Wings identified limitations with the existing practice facility used by the Grand Rapids Griffins, prompting discussions with the City and DP Fox Ventures in late 2025 about how to modernize training facilities and retain professional development operations in Grand Rapids.

The proposed expansion would significantly enhance the facility by providing updated player training, recovery, fitness, locker room, coaching, and support spaces that meet modern professional hockey standards, designed to support athlete performance and organizational needs. The City continues to work closely with the Grand Rapids Griffins and Detroit Red Wings to refine the project scope and position the project for construction, ensuring Grand Rapids remains a premier location for hockey training and development.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: HC-01-S4; HC-02-S3/S7; SS-07-S4; SS-08-S1/S6

PROGRAM LAYOUT APPROACH

NOTES :

Potential Buildable Area: 14,875 sf

Lower Level - 750 sf

Entry + Circulation

Arena Level - 7,825 sf

Program includes :

Griff's Locker Room
Wet Room
Dry Lockers
Recovery Room
Training Room
Weight Room
Equipment Room
Storage Room

Second Level - 6,300 sf

Program includes :

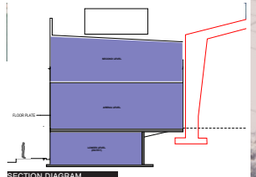
Coaches Offices
Coaches Lockers
MEP Spaces
Player Lounge
Cardio - Weight Room
Storage

Includes all of the spaces on Detroit's List

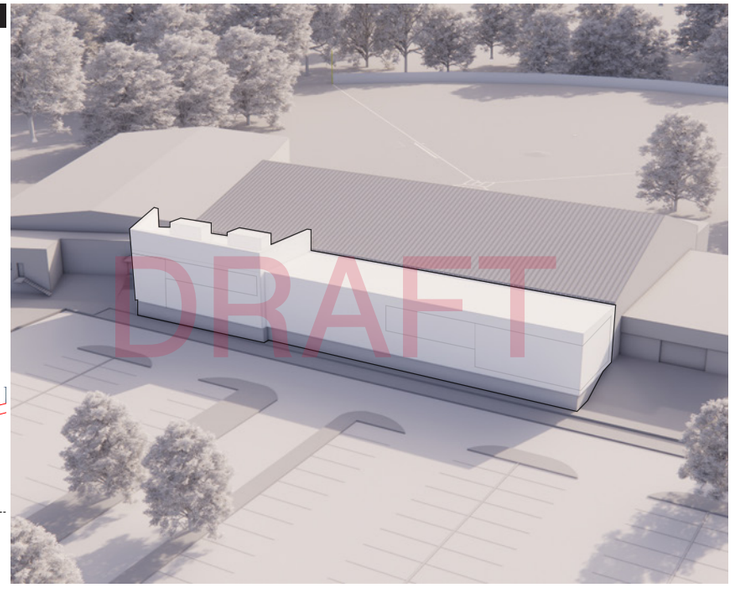
Maximizes buildable area without changes to parking lot and surrounding site

Fill is needed to make up the grade to Arena Level

3rd Stop for elevator @ Entry Area



SECTION DIAGRAM



AH-NAB-AWEN

This future project will transform Ah-Nab-Awen Park into a more welcoming and culturally meaningful destination. Replacing the existing replica burial mounds, the proposed design, guided by Tribal representatives, will provide a more authentic and engaging interpretation of Indigenous presence along the Grand River through Anishinaabek artwork, storytelling, and spaces for gathering and reflection. Three circular dance plazas, illuminated by suspended light rings, will serve as a focal point for community gatherings and reflection. Additional improvements include a year-round restroom and multipurpose building, comfortable seating, native plantings, and enhanced signage, creating a vibrant destination for learning, gathering, and everyday park use.

WARD: 2
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: HC-01-S4; HC-04-S3; HC-07-S2/S3; HC-08-S1/S2; SS-03-S4; SS 08 S6



BOSTON SQUARE COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE

As part of the Boston Square Together initiative, a community-driven planning process explored the transformation of a nine-acre site in southeast Grand Rapids into a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood destination. Through a series of public open houses and collaborative design workshops, residents identified priorities for additional green space, recreation, community gathering, and stronger connections to nature. The resulting vision integrates a new community park with surrounding housing, neighborhood businesses, and community facilities, creating a welcoming public space that reflects the needs and aspirations of the Boston Square neighborhood.

The proposed community greenspace concept includes terraced lawns for performances and community events, a four-season pavilion, public art, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and daylighting a portion of the Silver Creek corridor with native plantings. Revealing this historically buried waterway would reconnect residents with the area's watershed ecology while creating opportunities for environmental education and passive recreation. Together, these improvements would establish a vibrant neighborhood gathering place that supports recreation, cultural expression, and community connections while contributing to the broader revitalization of Boston Square.

WARD: 3
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-07-S1/S2/S3/S5; HC-01-S4; NI-01-S1/S3/S4; NI-04-S1



BUTTERWORTH SITE NATURE PARK

Originally identified as an aspirational project in the City's 2017 Parks and Recreation Five-Year Master Plan, the Butterworth Site presents an opportunity to transform a largely undeveloped former brownfield along the Grand River into a nature-focused public space emphasizing ecological restoration, environmental education, and riverfront recreation. The vision prioritizes restoring natural habitats and riverbank conditions while reconnecting the community with a historically impacted landscape.

Proposed improvements include a continuous multi-use trail connecting to the Grand River Greenway and other regional trail networks, accessible river access and kayak launches, nature-based adventure play, public art, ecological interpretation, environmental education programming, and opportunities for solar energy generation. Together, these improvements would establish a unique riverfront destination that integrates ecological recovery, outdoor recreation, and sustainable design.

WARD: 1
GOAL-OBJECTIVE-STRATEGY: CN-01-S3/S4/S5; CN-04-S3/S4HC-01-S4; CN-06-S4/S6; HC-01-S4; HC-07-S3; NI-01-S1/S3/S4; NI-04-S1



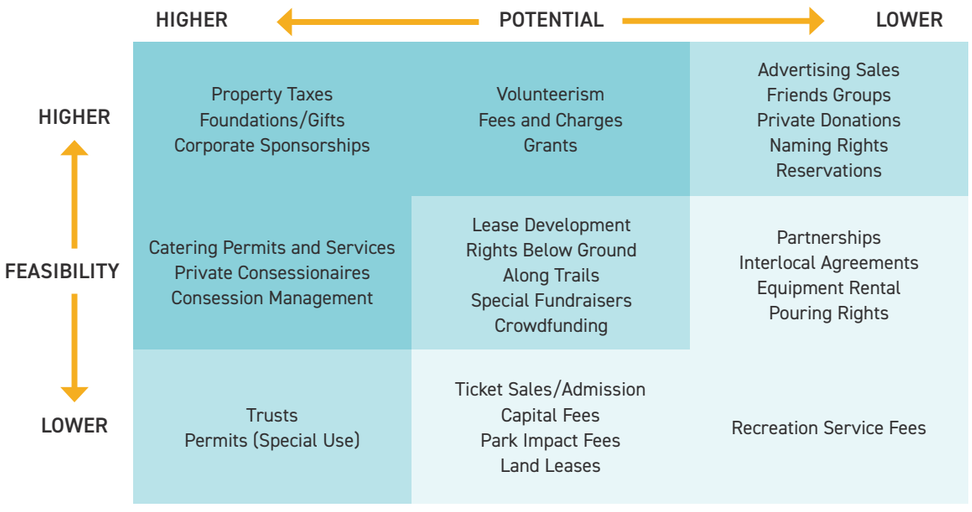
A new river corridor anchor at Butterworth

1. Site art / sculpture
2. Solar power generation
3. Continuous multi-use trail for walking, hiking, biking, rollerblading
4. Adventure playscape
5. Riverside trail signage
6. Environmental education programs
7. Accessible path to the water
8. Launch for kayaks and paddle boards, water access
9. Ecological info boards
10. Riverbank restoration planting
11. Water activities (canoe, kayak, paddleboards)

FUNDING STRATEGIES

REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

The following sources are financial options for the Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Department to explore. Some of these revenue strategies are currently employed by the City, and others would be new opportunities to support implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The recommendations serve as resources that fit a variety of projects, operational needs, or partner-specific initiatives. Many of these strategies can serve as inspirations for the Department as expands its revenue portfolio to serve a growing park system. The chart below depicts the potential and feasibility for various revenue strategies for the Department.



The various funding and revenue sources listed are identified as primary (darker in color) and secondary (lighter in color) funding sources for the Parks & Recreation Department to focus on in the upcoming five years. Given the financial condition of the City, many of the primary funding sources are private sector resources to add to property-based tax revenues. As the Department expands its revenue portfolio with the primary strategies, the secondary funding strategies can be expanded or added to the Parks and Recreation Department's toolbox.

This resource, together with the Park Equity Analysis (Chapter 2) and Equity-Centered Capital Framework (Chapter 4), are tools to leverage revenue and scholarship strategies to promote City goals of equitable access to green space and recreation.

PRIMARY FUNDING SOURCES

Property Taxes

Ad valorem taxes on real property are currently implemented by the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department through the 1.25 mills 2019 Dedicated Parks Millage and funding from the City's General Fund. These two funding sources provide 92% of the Department's revenues.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Following a significant period of expansion of the City's park system over the past 10 years, Grand Rapids should examine the City's level of General Fund support, in particular for the Department's operating budget. As park land acquisitions and major capital investments have occurred, no additional operating funds have been provided to operate and maintain the expanded park and recreation system. There are plans for additional expansion and capital investments, beyond what has occurred over the past 10 years, and these expansions and investments need to be factored into the examination of the allocation of the City's General Funds to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Foundations/Gifts

Currently, Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation utilizes this funding strategy through the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP) for conservation and forestry activities. The FGRP is a valuable organization delivering services that the current Parks and Recreation Department is unable to provide.

In addition to the contributions of the FGRP, a parks foundation or conservancy that can raise large funds for capital projects and establish operating endowments for operations and maintenance activities would go a long way to provide a large and critically important financial resources for the parks and recreation system. Once established, a parks foundation or conservancy becomes a consistent and reliable revenue resource. These dollars are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific projects, causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sales of items, etc. This funding source can be used for capital and operating costs.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation should establish a standalone Parks Foundation dedicated to helping Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation accomplish its mission through fundraising and financing capital projects and services. Grand Rapids should consider becoming a member of the National Association of Park Foundations (https://www.the-napf.org/) to identify best practices from other park and recreation agency/foundation relationships nationwide and in Michigan. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being low.

Corporate Sponsorships

This revenue-funding source allows corporations to invest in the development or enhancement of new or existing facilities in park systems. Sponsorships can be used for Parks and Recreation Department programs and events.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high with a low implementation risk. It is important to have a corporate sponsorship agreement that protects both parties and identifies the terms, including for breach and termination. It would be ideally complemented with a Grand Rapids Parks Foundation that can support the Department's needs in delivering on its mission. This funding source can be used for operations or capital.

Volunteerism

The revenue source is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist the organization in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces the organization's cost in providing the service plus it builds advocacy into the system.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP) is the provider of volunteer programs and services for the Parks and Recreation Department. FGRP has a large total number of volunteers (1,544 vs. 1,493), yet the total hours volunteered (2,522 vs. 8,054) and total hours per volunteer (1.63 vs. 11) are considerably less than the average of its peer and aspirational agencies. This provides a great opportunity to increase the total hours volunteered and the total hours per volunteer, with the following goals:

Fiscal Year	Total Hours Volunteered	Total Hours Per Volunteer
FY 26	2,522	1.63
FY 27	3,400	3.00
FY 28	4,600	5.00
FY 29	6,000	7.00
FY 30	7,400	9.00
FY 31	9,000	11.00

The value of a volunteer hour is currently at $33.74 in Michigan which can be used for in-kind dollars for matching grants. This is a form of cost containment, to stretch budget dollars farther. This funding source can be used for expanded support of operations. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being medium for the City.

Fees and Charges

Grand Rapids currently collects revenue on a limited basis from fees and charges. Earned income is a significant opportunity for the Department to improve funding levels. The Department can focus on revenue-generating recreation programs, special events, facility rentals, sponsorships, and partnerships to improve its financial performance while maintaining equitable access to core services. This opportunity to increase earned income must be integrated with a Department cost recovery policy that identifies and differentiates between core/essential, important, and value-added programs and services, drives cost recovery strategies for the Department, and ensures fees and charges do not create barriers for low- and lower-income residents from accessing the parks, programs, and services. It is recommended that the Department develop and adopt a revenue and scholarship policy that will establish a framework for establishing fees for the agency.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids should adopt a revenue and scholarship policy to establish a framework for establishing its fees and establish cost recovery goals for each program or program area. Once both are in place, Grand Rapids should annually review fees against expenditures to identify the necessary increases to meet the established cost recovery goals. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being medium for the City.

Grants

Grants can be a great funding source as part of a greater overall funding strategy for capital projects and some for specific services. For most grants are seen as an opportunity for free money, increased credibility of fiscal stewardship, increased access to valuable data, and the ability to point to past grants awarded in future applications.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids currently has $33.5 Million in grant revenue from a variety of funding sources including ARPA fund, MDNR, MEDC, and Greenway Grant Funding. As Grand Rapids continues to pursue grant funding it is important the agency understands each grants requirements. In many instances, agencies look at the pros and cons of each individual grant to understand the cost-benefit ratio. Consider the following to determine the City's potential level of success:

- The overall time commitment, level of competition
- How well the Grand Rapids project or service meets the application requirements
- Opportunity to renew the grant or will Grand Rapids provide long-term funding
- What are the reporting requirements and length of time to continue if a service continues beyond the grant funding cycle

Catering Permits & Services

This is a license to allow caterers (i.e., food trucks, non-profits, vendors) to work in the park system on a permit basis with a set fee or a percentage of food sales returning to Grand Rapids. Currently, food trucks are allowed in City parks for vendors holding a mobile food vending license through the City and a separate City Park Food Truck Permit.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Private Concessionaires

Private concessionaires are used for contracted classes. Grand Rapids should research opportunities for this revenue source periodically for viability for various operations such as contracted classes, operating recreational activities in parks and facilities. This funding source is a contract with a private business to provide services, programs, or activities with additional compensation paid to the parks and recreation agency.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Concession Management

This funding source is from retail sales or rentals of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items. There may be opportunities where Grand Rapids can contract for the service and receive a set amount of the gross percentage or the full revenue dollars that incorporates a profit after expenses.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids. Additional opportunities may be worth considering when any new recreation facilities or spaces are created or existing facilities are expanded.

SECONDARY FUNDING SOURCES

Advertising Sales

This revenue source is for the sale of tasteful and appropriate advertising on park and recreation related items such as print materials, on scoreboards, banners and other visible products or services that are consumable or permanent and exposes the product or service to many people.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The City allows this type of advertising for events, programming, and sites. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Naming Rights

The City of Grand Rapids has a Naming and Renaming of Parks and Recreational Facilities Policy that outlines procedures for individuals, community groups, or businesses to petition for naming or renaming of a park, building or major feature. The process is considered for exceptional individuals, historic events, places, and persons, and major gifts, with a prestigious, cautious process that solicits approval from the Department leadership, Parks Advisory Board, City Commission, and public hearing.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The current Grand Rapids policy has been effective and should continue to be utilized to recognize exceptional people, events, places, and major gifts. The financial implications for Grand Rapids as a funding source based on major gifts is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Friends Groups

These groups are formed to raise money typically for a single focus purpose that could include a park amenity like a playground or a specific program that will better the neighborhood or community as a whole and their special interest. The value is in the form of time, labor, funding and or capital. In Indianapolis, the major utility company each year renovates an entire community center in three days as a team building measure for the company through their labor and materials as part of a give back to the community.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

This provides a great way to build advocacy and support for the system with free labor, supplies and capital monies that benefit the community and helps build support and culture in their organization. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Private Donations

Grand Rapids utilizes this funding strategy with its tree donation program. Private Donations may also be received in the form of funds, land, facilities, recreation equipment, art, or in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Expanding this donation program and actively seeking donations can become time consuming and would eventually require an employee to oversee. This funding source can be used for operations and capital. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with a medium implementation risk.

Reservations

This revenue source comes from the right to reserve specific public property for a set amount of time. The reservation rates are usually set and apply to meeting rooms for weddings, reunions and outings, or other types of facilities for special activities.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Reservations are already in place for shelters/pavilions and meeting rooms. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being low for Grand Rapids since it is currently in use.

Lease of Development Rights Below the Ground Along Trails

Lease land for fiber optics, utilities alongside trails to support overall operations.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids has not used this as an opportunity in the past. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Special Fundraisers

Many parks and recreation agencies have special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Special fundraisers require a cost/benefit analysis on the staff time required versus the return on investment (ROI). Ideally, the Parks Foundation would conduct an annual fundraiser to help generate the maximum revenue in one large event e.g., the Parks Alliance of Indianapolis organizes an annual Mayor's Lunch for Parks supported by the entire community.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding platforms pool contributions from individuals to support specific programs or capital projects. Platforms such as Kickstarter, Indiegogo, Patronicity, and Mightycause can be effective for targeted projects with strong community or special-interest support. IOBY (In Our Backyard) is another community-focused crowdfunding platform specifically supporting local programmatic and capital projects.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

This opportunity would need to be run through a Parks Foundation that can support Grand Rapids' needs. The estimated revenues are most likely under $100,000 though this could encourage matching donations from corporate partners. Raising funds short of the goals could also impact resident's perception of government. This funding source can be used for operations or capital. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high but so is the risk.

Partnerships

Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a governmental entity, or a private business and a governmental entity. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management, based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Build partnerships and develop specific policies to manage public, private, and non-profit partnerships with best practices. To quantify the partnerships, identify the cost of service being provided by each party in the terms and define outcomes with performance measures. This funding source can be used for operations or capital. Hospitals have begun to support the development of Heart Health Trails in park systems as well as Wellness Centers inside of Community Centers to promote the value of health across the city. Many cities have a Hospital Corporation supporting some portion of the capital expense for community centers as well as a portion of funding for the operations of the facility through naming rights. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being low.

Interlocal Agreements

Contractual relationships entered into between two or more units of government and/or between a unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Such arrangements may be possible for sports complexes, recreation centers with best practices identified for all interlocal agreements. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Equipment Rental

This revenue source is available on the rental of equipment such as boats, golf carts, tables, chairs, tents, stages, bicycles, roller blades, kayaks, etc. that are used for recreation purposes.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being low for Grand Rapids since it is already used for golf cart rentals. Grand Rapids could evaluate the benefits of expanding this revenue source to other rentals. If Grand Rapids should desire to create an experience that calls for unique and/or expensive equipment, there may be an opportunity to utilize a private concessionaire to meet the need.

Pouring Rights

Some private soft drink companies execute agreements with organizations for exclusive pouring rights within their facilities. A portion of the gross sales goes back to the organization.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids does not currently implement this funding strategy. Grand Rapids may want to consider this opportunity in public facilities and gathering spaces when developed to increase sales and get a greater return on the investment. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being low for Grand Rapids.

Permits (Special Use Permits)

These special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. Currently, Grand Rapids Office of Special Events handles these special permits and retains the revenue associated with various permits (such as weddings in parks or advertisements being filmed in any public space).

Implications for Grand Rapids:

While the revenue for these special permits is currently retained by the Office of Special Events, it is recommended that revenue generated for these special permits that use parks and park facilities should be allocated to the Parks and Recreation Department to assist with the care and upkeep of these facilities and parks. The feasibility for this revenue reallocation is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Trusts

These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. Legacy gift programs allow individuals to leave a portion of their wealth to support specific park and recreation lands, facilities, or programs in the City. The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) and others annually encourage their supporters to consider such an option.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

This requires the presence of high-net-worth individuals. This is an opportunity for Grand Rapids to explore with a contract consultant. They can bequeath a portion of their wealth in the form of stocks or options to Grand Rapids through the Parks Foundation. This funding source can be used for operations or capital. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is low, with the implementation risk being medium for the City.

Ticket Sales / Admissions

This revenue source is for accessing parks and facilities for self-directed activities such as pools, ice skating rinks, special use and entertainment facilities. These user fees help off-set operational costs.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids does not utilize this funding source and would need to identify specific opportunities for implementing it. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being low for Grand Rapids.

Capital Fees

Capital fees are added to the cost of revenue producing facilities such as golf courses, pools, recreation centers, hospitality centers, and sports complexes and are lifted off after the improvement is paid off. Grand Rapids needs to assess whether any current of future special facilities where capital fee charges for admissions could help cover capital investment costs.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

This funding source could be used for improvements to current facilities or future specialty facilities. Grand Rapids should monitor for changing circumstances that could make this funding source feasible. This could also be used as part of a larger funding strategy, including various sources to develop a new facility or make capital improvements to existing facilities within the park system. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Park Impact Fees

These fees are assessed for the development of new residential properties with the proceeds to be used for parks and recreation purposes, such as land acquisitions and park site development.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Various local jurisdictions implement this funding source, gathering capital funding for park development or park improvements that can be leveraged as a match for state and federal development grants. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is high and the risk is medium.

Land Leases

Land leases are an opportunity for Grand Rapids to lease land to a private business for a commercial venue to serve park users. This can be in the form of a restaurant whereby it incorporates a land lease plus a percentage of gross back to Grand Rapids.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

This opportunity is good because it provides consistent revenue through the land lease and percentage of gross revenue but also provides sales taxes back to the City from food sales. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

Recreation Service Fees

This is a dedicated user fee, which can be established by a local ordinance or other government procedures for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities that support recreation programming. The fee can apply to all organized activities, which require a reservation of some type or other purposes, as defined by the local government. Examples of such activities include adult sports and youth sports, and special interest classes.

Implications for Grand Rapids:

Grand Rapids should monitor for changing circumstances that could make this funding source more favorable. The implementation feasibility for this funding source is medium, with the implementation risk being medium for Grand Rapids.

5/
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PARK, AMENITY, & ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

City-Owned Park Data, Amenities, DNR-accessibility ratings and Deferred Maintenance Replacement Values and Immediate Needs as determined by the Bureau Veritas study in 2025 are found in this section.

PARKS DATA AND DNR ACCESSIBILITY RATINGS

LEGEND

Classification

R	Regional Park (50+ acres)
C	Community Park (10-50 acres)
N	Neighborhood Park (1-10 acres)
M	Mini Park (<1 acre)
T	Trails

Accessibility Rating

5	The entire park was developed using the principles of universal design
4	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
3	Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines
2	Some facilities meet accessibility guidelines
1	None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
u	Undeveloped

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	Acreage	Classification	Accessibility Rating (2025)
32nd St green space	2149 32nd St SE	49508	3	17.26	C	u
Aberdeen	2230 Eastern Ave NE	49505	2	10.1	C	3
Ah Nab Awen	220 Front Ave NW	49503	1	6.14	N	3
Alexander	610 Alexander SE	49507	3	1.2	N	4
Aman	0-1859 Lake Michigan Dr NW	49534	n/a	339.1	R	u
Amphitheater Pocket Park	201 Market Ave SW	49504	1	0.6	N	4
Baja	45 John Ball Park Dr NW	49504	1	0.96	M	3
Baldwin	617 Lake Dr	49503	2	0.169	M	2
Ball Perkins	1675 Perkins Ave NE	49505	2	80.11	R	3
Belknap Hillside Park	700 Division Ave S	49503	2	1.2	R	
Belknap	30 Coldbrook NE	49503	2	24.55	C	2
Bike Park	580 Kirtland St SW	49507	1	17.34	C	2
Briggs	324 Knapp NE	49505	2	6.51	N	3
Bristol Property	960 Bristol Ave NW		1	11.88	C	
Burton Woods	2259 Everest SE	49507	1	5.81	N	u
Butterworth	600 Garfield Ave SW	49504	1	140	R	3
Calder Plaza	300 Monroe NW	49503	2	4.54	N	3
Camelot	2230 Rowland Ave SE	49546	3	5.17	N	3
Campau	51 Delaware St SW	49507	1	5.22	N	3
Canal	905 Monroe NW	49503	2	4.39	N	5
Carrier Creek	1030 College Ave NE	49505	2	6.7	N	2
Caulfield	1119 Caulfield SW	49503	1	0.32	M	3
Cherry Green	355 Charles Ave SE	49503	2	0.26	M	3
Cherry	725 Cherry SE	49503	2	1.05	N	u
Cheseboro	951 Merrit SE	49507	3	0.34	M	2
Coit	727 Coit NE	49503	2	4.16	N	3
Covell Dog Park	526 Covell Ave NW	49504	1	4.7	N	3
Crescent	301 Bostwick NE	49503	2	1.07	M	2
Dickinson	1635 Willard SE	49507	3	4.1	N	3
Douglas	301 Lexington Ave NW	49504	1	0.79	N	1
Eastern	758 Eastern Ave NE	49503	2	1.65	N	u
ED Property #1	2510 Division Ave S		1	5.98	N	u
ED Property #6	2100 32nd St SE	49508	3	16.35	C	3
Fish Ladder	624 Front NW	49503	1	3.38	N	3
Foster	343 Cherry St SE	49503	2	0.24	M	3

PARKS DATA AND DNR ACCESSIBILITY RATINGS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	Acreage	Classification	Accessibility Rating (2025)
Fulton St Market	1145 E Fulton	49503	n/a	2.43		2
Garfield	250 Burton St SE	49507	1	29.7	C	3
Gerald R Ford Splashpad	851 Madison Ave SE	49507	3	0.7	M	
Hastings ROW	Hasting Street NE and Coit Ave NE	49504	2	1.24	M	
Heartside	301 Ionia SW	49503	1	2.99	N	3
Heritage Hill	501 Paris SE	49503	3	0.18	M	2
Highland	523 Grand Ave NE	49503	2	28.02	C	3
Hillcrest	1309 Lyon NE	49503	2	13.78	C	3
Hosken	1000 Lake Dr SE	49503	2	0.06	M	3
Houseman Field Playground	162 Houseman Ave NE	49503	2	0.1	M	
Huff	1500 Aberdeen St NE	49505	2	90.27	R	3
Joe Taylor	1001 Baxter St SE	49506	3	2.06	N	3
Ken-O-Sha	3155 Kalamazoo SE	49507	3	82.15	R	2
Kensington	902 Curve St SW	49503	1	8.56	N	3
Lexington	48 Gold Ave NW	49504	1	0.46	M	3
Lincoln Park	231 Marion Ave NW	49504	1	12.69	C	3
Lincoln Place Park	235 State St SE	49503	2	0.1	M	3
Lookout	801 Fairview NE	49505	2	2.59	N	3
Louis Campau Promenade	Monroe to Campau NW	49503	2	0.38	M	2
Lyon Square	296 Lyon St NW	49503	2	0.05	M	3
MacKay-Jaycees	2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE	49507	3	53.84	R	3
Martin Luther King	1200 Franklin St SE	49506	3	16.95	C	3
Mary Waters	1042 Lafayette NE	49505	2	9.98	N	2
Midtown Green	747 Fountain NE	49505	2	1.48	N	4
Monroe North	555 Monroe Ave NW	49503	2	3.5	N	2
Monument	3 Fulton St E	49503	2	0.31	M	4
Mooney	501 Prospect Ave SE	49507	3	0.35	M	3
Nagold	999 Fourth St NW	49504	1	0.72	M	u
Oakes Street Park	67 Ionia St SE	49503	2	0.1	M	
Otsego Drain Basin	1516 Division Ave S	49507	1	4.26	N	5
Ottawa Hills	2060 Oakfield Ave SE	49506	3	2.72	N	3
Oxford Place	2013 43rd St SE	49508	3	11.65	N	2
Oxford Trail	751 Oxford St SW	49503	2	6.3	N	
Paris	943 N Ottillia SE	49507	3	0.29	M	3
Pekich	2 Cherry St SW	49503	1	0.17	M	2
Plaster Creek Family	2401 Buchanan SW	49507	1	19.21	C	u
Plaster Creek Trail	620 Madison Ave SE	49503	3			
Pleasant	620 Madison Ave SE	49503	3	2.34	N	2
Provin Trails	2900 4 Mile Road NE	49525	n/a	43.69	C	2
Reservoir	840 Livingston Ave NE	49505	2	9.46	N	2
Richmond	963 Richmond NW	49504	1	57.05	R	2
Riverside	2001 Monroe Ave NE	49505	2	186.9	R	2
Riverwalk Trail	Fulton to Leonard		n/a	0.98	M	4
Roberto Clemente	546 Rumsey SW	49507	1	12.6	C	3
Rosa Parks Circle	135 Monroe Center NW	49503	2	1.538	N	2
Seymour	942 S Ottillia SE	49507	3	0.27	M	3
Sixth Street	647 Monroe NW	49503	2	4.24	N	2
Sullivan Field	650 Valley Ave NW	49504	1	5.5	N	2
Sundial Park	501 Cherry St SE 49503	49503	2	0.005	N	
Sweet Street	459 Sweet St	49505	2	0.5	M	1
Ted Rasberry Field	1050 Sheldon SE	49507	3	3.08	N	2
Tremont Greenspace	2044 Tremont Blvd NW	49504	1	2.032	N	3
Underground	2350 Kalamazoo Ave SE		3	16.95	C	

PARKS DATA AND DNR ACCESSIBILITY RATINGS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	Acreage	Classification	Accessibility Rating (2025)
Unity Park	680 Cesar E Chavez Ave SW	49503	1	0.77	M	3
Veterans Memorial	101 E Fulton NE	49503	1	1.61	N	3
Westown Commons	752 Watson SW	49504	1	1.07	N	3
Wilcox	1561 Robinson Rd SE	49506	2	12.67	C	u

BUREAU VERITAS PCS CONDITION SCORE AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS

LEGEND

PCS Condition Score (1-100)

Formula = SUM [Remaining Value] / SUM [Renewal Value]

Immediate Needs

$	up to $20,000
$$	$20,000-$100,000
$$$	100000+

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	Immediate Needs	Deferred Maintenance Replacement Values (per Bureau Veritas)
32nd St green space	2149 32nd St SE	49508	3	n/a	$0
Aberdeen	2230 Eastern Ave NE	49505	2	$$$	$892,198
Ah Nab Awen	220 Front Ave NW	49503	1	$	$669,696
Alexander	610 Alexander SE	49507	3	n/a	$115,108
Aman	0-1859 Lake Michigan Dr NW	49534	n/a	$$	$510,266
Amphitheater Pocket Park	201 Market Ave SW	49504	1	n/a	$0.00
Baja	45 John Ball Park Dr NW	49504	1	n/a	$0

BUREAU VERITAS PCS CONDITION SCORE AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	Immediate Needs	Deferred Maintenance Replacement Values (per Bureau Veritas)
Baldwin	617 Lake Dr	49503	2	n/a	$22,616
Ball Perkins	1675 Perkins Ave NE	49505	2	$	$165,862
Belknap Hillside Park	700 Division Ave S	49503	2		
Belknap	30 Coldbrook NE	49503	2	$$	$3,655,560
Bike Park	580 Kirtland St SW	49507	1	$$$	$239,445
Briggs	324 Knapp NE	49505	2	$	$581,167
Bristol Property	**960 Bristol Ave NW**		1		
Burton Woods	2259 Everest SE	49507	1	n/a	$0
Butterworth	600 Garfield Ave SW	49504	1	n/a	$2,156,277
Calder Plaza	300 Monroe NW	49503	2	n/a	$165,900
Cambridge	1444 Gladstone	49506	3	$	$1,142,790
Camelot	2230 Rowland Ave SE	49546	3	$	$351,827
Campau	51 Delaware St SW	49507	1	$$	$212,827
Canal	905 Monroe NW	49503	2	n/a	$0
Carrier Creek	1030 College Ave NE	49505	2	n/a	$0
Caulfield	1119 Caulfield SW	49503	1	n/a	$155,026
Cherry Green	355 Charles Ave SE	49503	2	n/a	$5,784
Cherry	725 Cherry SE	49503	2	n/a	$485,913
Cheseboro	951 Merrit SE	49507	3	n/a	$0
Coit	727 Coit NE	49503	2	n/a	$488,280
Covell Dog Park	526 Covell Ave NW	49504	1	$$$	$546,413
Crescent	301 Bostwick NE	49503	2	n/a	$646,528
Dickinson	1635 Willard SE	49507	3	$$$	$300,384
Douglas	301 Lexington Ave NW	49504	1	n/a	$286,337
Eastern	758 Eastern Ave NE	49503	2	n/a	$452,436
ED Property #1	2510 Division Ave S		1		
ED Property #6	2100 32nd St SE	49508	3		
Fish Ladder	624 Front NW	49503	1	$$$	$272,978
Foster	343 Cherry St SE	49503	2	n/a	$171,828
Fourth St Woods	651 Valley Ave NW	49504	1	$	$241,988
Fuller	250 Fuller Ave NE	49503	2	$$$	$871,782
Fulton St Market	1145 E Fulton	49503	n/a	$$	$715,760
Garfield	250 Burton St SE	49507	1	$$$	$2,763,100
Gerald R Ford Splashpad	851 Madison Ave SE	49507	3	n/a	$224,680

BUREAU VERITAS PCS CONDITION SCORE AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	Immediate Needs	Deferred Maintenance Replacement Values (per Bureau Veritas)
Heartside	301 Ionia SW	49503	1	$$	$333,261
Heritage Hill	501 Paris SE	49503	3	n/a	$23,165
Highland	523 Grand Ave NE	49503	2	$$$	$2,013,100
Hillcrest	1309 Lyon NE	49503	2	$$	$1,183,119
Hosken	1000 Lake Dr SE	49503	2	n/a	$32,642
Houseman Field Playground	162 Houseman Ave NE	49503	2	n/a	$80,928
Huff	1500 Aberdeen St NE	49505	2	$$	$398,600
Joe Taylor	1001 Baxter St SE	49506	3	$	$372,440
Ken-O-Sha	3155 Kalamazoo SE	49507	3	n/a	$259,684
Kensington	902 Curve St SW	49503	1	$	$318,500
Lexington	48 Gold Ave NW	49504	1	n/a	$1,714
Lincoln Park	231 Marion Ave NW	49504	1	$$$	$745,267
Lincoln Place Park	235 State St SE	49503	2	$$	$55,900
Lookout	801 Fairview NE	49505	2	n/a	$84,442
Louis Campau Promenade	Monroe to Campau NW	49503	2	n/a	$366,554
Lyon Square	296 Lyon St NW	49503	2	n/a	$0
MacKay-Jaycees	2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE	49507	3	$$$	$4,864,000.00
Martin Luther King	1200 Franklin St SE	49506	3		
Mary Waters	1042 Lafayette NE	49505	2	$$	$506,564
Midtown Green	747 Fountain NE	49505	2	n/a	$65,142
Monroe North	555 Monroe Ave NW	49503	2	$$$	$1,001,792
Monument	3 Fulton St E	49503	2	n/a	$476,590
Mooney	501 Prospect Ave SE	49507	3	n/a	$95,392
Mulick	1632 Sylvan Ave SE	49506	3	$$	$639,761
Nagold	999 Fourth St NW	49504	1	n/a	$11,944
Oakdale Gardens Park	902 Evergreen St SE	49507	3	n/a	$0
Oakes Street Park	67 Ionia St SE	49503	2	n/a	$99,603.00
Otsego Drain Basin	1516 Division Ave S	49507	1	n/a	$0
Ottawa Hills	2060 Oakfield Ave SE	49506	3	$	$877,750
Oxford Place	2013 43rd St SE	49508	3	n/a	$0
Provin Trails	2900 4 Mile Road NE	49525	n/a	n/a	$48,406
Reservoir	840 Livingston Ave NE	49505	2	$$	$212,309
Richmond	963 Richmond NW	49504	1	$$	$1,567,666
Riverside	2001 Monroe Ave NE	49505	2	$$$	$3,760,637
Riverwalk Trail	Fulton to Leonard		n/a	$$	$166,485
Roberto Clemente	546 Rumsey SW	49507	1	$$$	$632,906
Roosevelt	739 Van Raalte SW	49503	1	$$	$581,335
Rosa Parks Circle	135 Monroe Center NW	49503	2	$$$	$975,140
Seymour	942 S Ottillia SE	49507	3	n/a	$15,604
Sixth Street	647 Monroe NW	49503	2	$$$	$1,215,829
Sullivan Field	650 Valley Ave NW	49504	1	$$$	$1,240,600
Sundial Park	501 Cherry St SE 49503	49503	2		
Sweet Street	459 Sweet St	49505	2	n/a	$153,302
Ted Rasberry Field	1050 Sheldon SE	49507	3	$	$1,003,740
Tremont Greenspace	2044 Tremont Blvd NW	49504	1	n/a	$84,093
Underground	2350 Kalamazoo Ave SE		3		
Unity Park	680 Cesar E Chavez Ave SW	49503	1	n/a	$0
Veterans Memorial	101 E Fulton NE	49503	1	$	$736,652
Westown Commons	752 Watson SW	49504	1	n/a	$626,049
Wilcox	1561 Robinson Rd SE	49506	2	$$	$941,829

BUREAU VERITAS IMMEDIATE NEEDS DETAILS

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Aberdeen	2230 Eastern Ave NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 47

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$258,600	$10,000	Environmental study, men's restroom 2025	72.9
	$17,900	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2027	84.8
	$150,100	Parking Lot Asphalt Mill and Overlay 2027	84.8
	$2,500	Tennis/Volleyball Net w/ post & anchors Replace 2027	82.8
	$2,500	Tennis/Volleyball Net w/ post & anchors Replace 2027	82.8
	$75,600	Tennis Court Seal and Stripe 2027	82.8

Ah Nab Awen	220 Front Ave NW	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 70

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$2,200	$1,100	Concrete Sidewalk Repair 2025	84.9
	$1,100	Restroom flooring Prep and Paint 2027	81.7

Alexander	610 Alexander SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 68

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Alger	921 Alger St SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 61

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Aman	O-1859 Lake Michigan Dr NW	49534	n/a	PCS Score: 53

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$30,500	$30,500	Roadway asphalt seal and stripe 2026	84.9

Baja	45 John Ball Park Dr NW	49504	Ward 1	no PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Baldwin	617 Lake Dr	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 32

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Ball Perkins	1675 Perkins Ave NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 34

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$2,800	$1,600	Natural/Non-Asphalt Trail repair 2026	83.9
	$1,200	Park bench replacement 2026	81.9

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Belknap	30 Coldbrook NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 14

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$742,000	$61,600	Asphalt Parking Lot cut & patch 2025	84.9
	$71,700	Asphalt Parking Lot Seal and Stripe 2026	84.9
	$600,300	Asphalt Parking Lot Mill and Overlay 2026	84.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table replacement 2025	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table replacement 2025	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table replacement 2026	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table replacement 2025	81.9

Bike Park	580 Kirtland St SW	49507	Ward 1	PCS Score: 35

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$155,000	$11,000	Roadway Asphalt Repair	84.9
	$144,000	Roadways in Poor Condition - Mill & Overlay 2027	84.8

Briggs	324 Knapp NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 53

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$9,200	$5,700	Lifeguard Chair Replacement 2027	83.8
	$3,500	Park Bench Replacement 2026	81.9

Burton Woods	2259 Everest SE	49507	Ward 1	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Butterworth Trail	600 Garfield Ave SW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 32

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Calder Plaza	300 Monroe NW	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 23

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Cambridge	1444 Gladstone	49506	Ward 3	PCS Score: 36

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$5,600	$5,600	Concrete, Small Areas/Sections - 2027	85.8

Camelot	2230 Rowland Ave SE	49546	Ward 3	PCS Score: 69

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$10,000	$7,200	Basketball Asphalt Pavement Seal and Stripe 2026	82.9
	$2,800	Distribution Panel Replacement 2026	81.9

BUREAU VERITAS IMMEDIATE NEEDS DETAILS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Campau	51 Delaware St SW	49507	Ward 1	PCS Score: 48

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$22,500	$3,200	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026	84.9
	$12,300	Futsal Asphalt Pavement Seal and Stripe 2026	82.9
	$3,500	Park Bench Replacement 2027	81.8
	$3,500	Park Bench Replacement 2027	81.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Canal	905 Monroe NW	49503	Ward 2	No PCS Score

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Carrier Creek	1030 College Ave NE	49505	Ward 2	No PCS Score

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Caulfield	1119 Caulfield SW	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 49

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Cherry	725 Cherry SE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 50

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Cherry Green	355 Charles Ave SE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 8

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Cheseboro	951 Merrit SE	49507	Ward 3	No PCS Score

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Coit	727 Coit NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 70

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Covell Dog Park	526 Covell Ave NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 14

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$490,800	$10,800	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026	84.9
	$480,000	ADA Ramp too steep, reconstruct 2026	63.9

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Crescent	301 Bostwick NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 45

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Dickinson	1635 Willard SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 40

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$136,000	$132,500	Playground surfacing (engineered wood fiber) not deep enough for safety, especially at swings Replace 2026	91.9
	$3,500	Park Bench Replacement 2027	81.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Douglas	301 Lexington Ave NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 53

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Eastern	758 Eastern Ave NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 62

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Fish Ladder	624 Front NW	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 41

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$133,500	$5,900	Wood Balcony Replacement 2026	88.9
	$127,600	Parking Lot Mill and Overlay 2027	84.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Foster	343 Cherry St SE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 74

Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Fourth St Woods	651 Valley Ave NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 56

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$14,000	$14,000	Play Structure Replacement 2027	82.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Fuller	250 Fuller Ave NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 33

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$544,400	$79,700	Play Structure Replacement 2027	84.8
	$87,300	Softball Parking Lot Overlay 2027	84.8
	$115,200	Basketball Court Parking Lot Overlay 2027	82.9
	$237,700	Basketball Court Asphalt Replace 2026	82.9
	$2,500	Tennis/Volleyball Net w/ post & anchors Replace 2027	82.8
	$12,000	Structural study, restroom building - Design 2025	81.9
	$10,000	Environmental study, restroom building 2025	72.9

BUREAU VERITAS IMMEDIATE NEEDS DETAILS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Fulton St Market	1145 E Fulton	49503	n/a	PCS Score: 26

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$100,900	$46,200	Parking Lot asphalt cut and patch 2025	84.9
	$54,700	Parking Lot asphalt seal and stripe 2026	84.9

Garfield	250 Burton St SE	49507	Ward 1	PCS Score: 54

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$613,100	$465,200	Parking Lot asphalt Mill and Overlay 2026	84.9
	$55,600	Parking Lot asphalt seal and stripe 2026	84.9
	$2,500	Tennis/Volleyball Net w/ post & anchors Replace 2026	82.9
	$8,600	Basketball Court asphalt seal and stripe 2026	82.9
	$8,500	Volleyball Court sand replace 2026	82.9
	$14,700	Tennis Court Seal and Stripe 2026	82.9
	$8,600	Futsol Court Seal and Stripe 2026	82.9
	$2,500	Tennis/Volleyball Net w/ post & anchors Replace 2026	82.9
	$14,700	Tennis Court Seal and Stripe 2026	82.9
	$2,800	Lodge flooring vinyl tile replace 2026	81.9
	$29,400	Gymnasium suspended ceiling tile replacement 2026	72.9

Heartside	301 Ionia SW	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 51

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$54,600	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026	81.9
	$46,200	Picnic Shelter Replacement 2026	81.9

Heritage Hill	501 Paris SE	49503	Ward 3	PCS Score: 68

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Highland	523 Grand Ave NE	49503	Ward 2	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$131,100	$19,300	Roadway asphalt cut and patch 2025	84.9
	$6,200	Roof Sheathing Replacement 2026	89.9
	$46,200	Copper Roofing Replacement 2025	89.9
	$8,400	Exterior Wall Replacement 2027	89.8
	$15,400	Structural Element Restroom Building Repair 2026	88.9
	$1,500	Restroom Building Exterior Repair 2025	88.9
	$34,100	Exterior Door Replacement 2027	81.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Hillcrest	1309 Lyon NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 25

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$1,238,000	$1,200,200	Playground Surface Replacement 2026	82.9
	$1,200	Park Bench Replacement 2026	81.9
	$1,200	Park Bench Replacement 2026	81.9
	$20,400	Fence Replacement (4' Ht.) 2026	81.9
	$15,000	Fence Replacement (6' Ht.) 2027	81.8

Houseman Field Playground	901 Fountain St NE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 95

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Hosken	1000 Lake Dr SE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 93

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Huff	1500 Aberdeen St NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 28

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$35,500	$25,500	Sidewalk Asphalt Overlay 2026	85.8
	$3,000	Boardwalk Decking Board Replacement 2026	83.8
	$7,000	Structural Study - Women's Restroom, Concession Stand 2025	81.9

Indian Trails Golf Course	2776 Kalamazoo Ave SE	49507	Ward 3	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Joe Taylor	1001 Baxter St SE	49506	Ward 3	PCS Score: 50

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$4,500	$4,500	Parking Lot Striping 2025	84.9

Ken-O-Sha	3155 Kalamazoo SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 63

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Kensington	902 Curve St SW	49503	Ward 1	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$5,900	$5,900	Aluminum Bleacher Replacement 2026	82.9

BUREAU VERITAS IMMEDIATE NEEDS DETAILS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Lexington	48 Gold Ave NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 75
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Lincoln Park	231 Marion Ave NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 38
$359,700	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$3,400	Sidewalk Asphalt Overlay 2027		85.8
	$32,300	Parking Lot Asphalt Mill and Overlay 2026		84.9
	$223,200	Basketball Court Replacement 2027		82.8
	$100,800	Basketball Court Replacement 2027		82.8
Lincoln Place Park	235 State St SE	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 30
$37,800	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$37,800	Landscaping Replacement 2026		81.8
Lookout	801 Fairview NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 78
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Louis Campau Promenade	Monroe to Campau NW	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 85
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Lyon Square	296 Lyon St NW	49503	Ward 2	No PCS Score
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
MacKay-Jaycees Family	2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 45
$213,400	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$170,200	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		84.9
	$13,300	Basketball Backboards Replacement 2026		82.9
	$2,500	Tennis Court Net Replacement 2026		82.9
	$1,200	Park Bench Replacement 2026		81.9
	$26,200	Exterior Metal Siding Maintenance Building Replacement 2026		89.9

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Martin Luther King	1200 Franklin St SE	49506	Ward 3	PCS Score: 57
$49,600	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$7,500	Basketball Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$7,500	Basketball Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$7,500	Basketball Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$7,500	Basketball Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$9,800	Electrical Distribution Panel Replacement 2026		81.9
	$9,800	Electrical Distribution Panel Concessions Building Replacement 2026		81.9
Mary Waters	1042 Lafayette NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 53
$38,600	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$4,600	Parking Lot Asphalt Cut and Patch 2025		84.9
	$5,900	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		84.9
	$21,800	Playground Surface Replacement 2026		82.9
	$4,200	Park ID Sign Replace/Install 2026		81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026		81.9
Midtown Green	747 Fountain NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 87
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Monroe North	555 Monroe Ave NW	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 35
$630,000	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$34,000	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2027		84.8
	$285,200	Parking Lot Asphalt Mill and Overlay 2027		84.8
	$277,600	Parking Lot Asphalt Mill and Overlay 2027		84.8
	$33,200	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2027		84.8
Monument	3 Fulton St E	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 51
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Mooney	501 Prospect Ave SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 70
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Mulick	1632 Sylvan Ave SE	49506	Ward 3	PCS Score: 59
$37,700	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$35,200	Basketball Court Asphalt Mill and Overlay 2026		82.8
	$2,500	Tennis Court Net Replacement 2026		82.8

BUREAU VERITAS IMMEDIATE NEEDS DETAILS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Nagold	999 Fourth St NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 86

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Oakdale Park	902 Evergreen St SE	49507	Ward 3	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Otsego Drain Basin	1516 Division Ave S	49507	Ward 1	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Ottawa Hills	2060 Oakfield Ave SE	49506	Ward 3	PCS Score: 79

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$14,400	$10,200	Basketball Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026	82.9
	$4,200	Picnic Table Replacement 2027	81.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Oxford Place	2013 43rd St SE	49508	Ward 3	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Paris	943 N Ottillia SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 51

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Pekich	2 Cherry St SW	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 68

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Plaster Creek Family	2401 Buchanan SW	49507	Ward 1	PCS Score: 33

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$29,400	$4,200	Picnic Table Replacement 2025	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026	81.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2027	81.8
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2027	81.8
	$10,500	ADA Study Entire Site Evaluate/Report 2025	63.9
	$5,600	ADA Parking Spaces Install 2025	63.9
	$2,800	Exterior Walls Restroom Building Replacement 2025	88.9

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Plaza Roosevelt	680 Grandville Ave SW	49503	Ward 1	No PCS Score

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Pleasant	620 Madison Ave SE	49503	Ward 3	PCS Score: 77

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	n/a		n/a

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Provin Trails	2900 4 Mile Road NE	49525	n/a	PCS Score: 31

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$10,300	$3,900	Parking Lot Asphalt Cut and Patch 2025	84.9
	$6,400	Vehicle Access Gate Replacement 2027	81.7

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Rasberry Field	1050 Sheldon SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 63

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$16,100	$5,600	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2027	84.7
	$10,500	ADA Study Parking Lot Evaluate/Report 2025	63.9

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Reservoir	840 Livingston Ave NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 44

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
	10300	Parking Lot Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2027	84.7
	$86,300	Parking Lot Asphalt Mill and Overlay 2027	84.7

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Richmond	963 Richmond NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 49

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$55,100	$15,900	Service Drive Asphalt Overlay 2025	85.9
	$39,200	Motor Control Center Shelter Replacement 2027	81.8

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Riverside	2001 Monroe Ave NE	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 35

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$125,200	$1,500	Moveable Practice Goal Replacement 2026	82.9
	$112,500	Playground Surface Replacement 2026	82.9
	$10,000	Electronic Scoreboard Replacement 2027	82.8
	$1,200	Park Bench Replacement 2027	81.8

Park	Location			
Riverwalk Trails	Fulton to Leonard		n/a	PCS Score: 41

	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes	Priority Score
$31,600	$28,100	Asphalt Sidewalk Overlay 2026	85.8
	$3,500	Park Bench Replacement 2026	81.8

BUREAU VERITAS IMMEDIATE NEEDS DETAILS (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Roberto Clemente	546 Rumsey SW	49507	Ward 1	PCS Score: 43
$399,500	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$399,500	Skate Park Replacement 2026		n/a
Roosevelt	739 Van Raalte SW	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 35
$20,400	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
.	$2,200	Lodge Water Heater Replacement 2026		83.9
	$2,200	Lodge Water Heater Replacement 2026		83.9
	$16,000	Lodge Superstructure Basement Structural Framing Study Evaluate/Report 2025		81.9
Rosa Parks Circle	135 Monroe Center NW	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 36
$566,600	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$33,300	Compressor Replacement 2028		54.7
	$30,800	Distribution Pump Replacement 2028		54.7
	$61,300	Chiller Replacement 2028		54.7
	$33,300	Compressor Replacement 2028		54.7
	$30,800	Distribution Pump Replacement 2028		54.7
	$10,200	Air Separator Replacement 2028		54.7
	$25,900	Electric Water Heater Replacement 2028		52.7
	$7,100	Restroom Roof Membrane Replacement 2028		57.7
	$33,300	Compressor Replacement 2028		54.7
	$30,800	Distribution Pump Replacement 2028		54.7
	$61,300	Chiller Replacement 2028		54.7
	$33,300	Compressor Replacement 2028		54.7
	$30,800	Distribution Pump Replacement 2028		54.7
	$10,200	Air Separator Replacement 2028		54.7
	$3,400	Exhaust Fan Replacement 2028		54.7
	$25,900	Water Heater Replacement 2028		52.7
	$17,400	Water Heater Replacement 2028		52.7
	$3,500	Fan Coil Unit Replacement 2028		50.7
	$84,000	Stage Lighting System Replacement 2028		50.7
Seymour	942 S Ottillia SE	49507	Ward 3	PCS Score: 45
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Sixth Street	647 Monroe NW	49503	Ward 2	PCS Score: 21
$97,800	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$87,700	Concrete Sidewalk Replacement 2026		85.9
	$8,000	Barrier-Free Accessible Hand Cycle Exercise Equipment Replacement 2026		82.9
	$2,100	Picnic Table Replacement 2026		81.9

Park	Location	Zip Code	Ward	
Sullivan Field	650 Valley Ave NW	49504	Ward 1	No PCS Score
$1,080,000	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$1,080,000	Grandstand Replacement 2027		81.7
Sweet Street	459 Sweet St	49505	Ward 2	PCS Score: 66
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Tremont Greenspace	2044 Tremont Blvd NW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 95
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Veterans Memorial	101 E Fulton NE	49503	Ward 1	PCS Score: 80
$800	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$800	Concrete Cast-in-Place Wall Repair 2025		81.9
Water Department Storage Yard Site	1529 Monroe Ave NW	49505	Ward 2	No PCS Score
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Westown Commons	752 Watson SW	49504	Ward 1	PCS Score: 51
	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	n/a			n/a
Wilcox	1561 Robinson Rd SE	49506	Ward 2	PCS Score: 52
$34,900	Immediate Needs Value	Immediate Needs Notes		Priority Score
	$7,500	Tennis Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$7,500	Tennis Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$7,500	Tennis Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$7,500	Tennis Court Asphalt Seal and Stripe 2026		82.9
	$4,900	Environmental study, Restroom Utility Room 2025		72.9

PARK AMENITIES

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
32nd Street Green Space	2149 32nd St SE	Ward 3	Community
17.26 Acres	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Aberdeen	2230 Eastern Ave NE	Ward 2	Community
10.1 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Basketball (1)	
	Picnic Shelters	Splash Pad	
	Picnic Tables	Tennis Court (6)	
	Drinking Fountain		
Ah Nab Awen	220 Front Ave NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
6.61 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Walking Path/Trails	
	Drinking Fountain	Mixed Use	
Alexander	610 Alexander SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
1.07 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Playground	
	Grills	Mixed Use	

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Aman	0-1859 Lake Michigan Dr NW	Ward: n/a	Regional
336.29 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Cross Country Skiing	
	Natural Area		
Amphitheater Pocket Park	201 Market Ave SW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
0.6 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Natural Area	Walking Path/Trails	
Baja	45 John Ball Park Dr NW	Ward 1	Mini
0.96 Acre	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Baldwin	617 Lake Dr	Ward 2	Mini
0.169 Acre	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Ball Perkins	1675 Perkins Ave NE	Ward 2	Regional
80.1 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Natural Area	
	Picnic Tables	Walking Path/Trails	
	Community Garden		

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Belknap Hillside	700 Division Ave S	Ward 2	Regional
1.2 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Undeveloped		
Belknap	30 Coldbrook NE	Ward 2	Community
25.61 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Ice Rink	
	Restrooms	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Baseball Diamond (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Pickleball (21)	
Bike Park	580 Kirtland St SW	Ward 1	Community
16.95 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Mountain Biking	
	Natural Area		
Briggs	324 Knapp NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
6.31 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Community Garden	
	Restrooms	Playground	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Shelters	Basketball (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Swimming Pool	
	Drinking Fountain	Tennis Court (1)	
	Grills		

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Bristol Property	960 Bristol Ave NW	Ward 1	Community
11.89 Acres	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Burton Woods	2259 Everest SE	Ward 1	Neighborhood
5.66 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Natural Area	Walking Path/Trails	
Butterworth Trail	600 Garfield Ave SW	Ward 1	Regional
146.3 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Natural Area	Walking Path/Trails	
	Undeveloped		
Calder Plaza	300 Monroe NW	Ward 2	Neighborhood
2.9 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Picnic Tables	
Cambridge	1444 Gladstone	Ward 3	Neighborhood
7.77 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Walking Path/Trails	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Sledding	
	Picnic Shelters	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Soccer Field (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Mixed Use	
	Grills	Dog Park	

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Camelot	2230 Rowland Ave SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
4.927 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Playground	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Shelters	Basketball (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Splash Pad	
	Grills		
Campau	51 Delaware St SW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
5.2 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Basketball (2)	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Mixed Use	
	Picnic Shelters	Splash Pad	
	Picnic Tables	Futsol Court (2)	
	Grills		
Canal	905 Monroe NW	Ward 2	Neighborhood
4.462 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Playground	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Shelters	Outdoor Exercise Equipment	
	Picnic Tables	Boat Launches	
	Drinking Fountain		
Carrier Creek	1030 College Ave NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
13.31 Acres	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Caulfield	1119 Caulfield SW	Ward 1	Mini
0.33 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Playground	
	Drinking Fountain		
Cherry Green	355 Charles Ave SE	Ward 2	Mini
	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Cherry	725 Cherry SE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
1.05 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Basketball (1)	
	Lodge Building	Splash Pad	
	Picnic Tables	Tennis Court (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Pickleball (4)	
	Playground		
Cheseboro	951 Merrit SE	Ward 3	Mini
0.341 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Playground	
Coit	727 Coit NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
4.16 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Walking Path/Trails	
	Drinking Fountain	Basketball (2)	
	Grills	Mixed Use	
	Playground		

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Covell Dog Park	526 Covell Ave NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
2.83 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Dog Park	
	Drinking Fountain		
Crescent	301 Bostwick NE	Ward 2	Mini
1 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Walking Path/Trails	
Dickinson	1635 Willard SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
4.12 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Basketball (1)	
	Grills		
Douglas	301 Lexington Ave NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
0.79 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Basketball (1)	
	Grills	Mixed Use	
	Playground		
Eastern	758 Eastern Ave NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
1.65 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Basketball (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Mixed Use	
	Playground		

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
ED Property #1	2510 Division St S	Ward 3	Regional
5.98 Acres	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
ED Property #6	2100 32nd St S	Ward 3	Regional
16.35 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Natural Area	Undeveloped	
Fish Ladder	624 Front NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
2.27 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Drinking Fountain	
	Restrooms	Boat Launches	
	Picnic Tables		
Foster	343 Cherry St SE	Ward 2	Mini
0.24 Acre	Amenities		
	Picnic Tables		
Fourth St Woods	651 Valley Ave NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
7.24 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Playground	
	Natural Area		

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Fuller	250 Fuller Ave NE	Ward 2	Community
10.33 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Restrooms	Basketball (2)	
	Picnic Shelters	Mixed Use	
	Picnic Tables	Splash Pad	
	Drinking Fountain	Volleyball Court (1)	
	Playground		
Fulton St Market	1145 E Fulton	Ward 2	Neighborhood
2.43 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Picnic Tables	
	Restrooms		
Garfield	250 Burton St SE	Ward 1	Community
29.66 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Community Garden	
	Restrooms	Gymnasium	
	Lodge Building	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Enclosed Shelterhouse w/ restroom	Basketball (2)	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Mixed Use	
	Picnic Shelters	Splash Pad	
	Picnic Tables	Volleyball Court (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Disc Golf	
	Grills	Futsol Court (2)	

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Gerald R Ford Splashpad	851 Madison Ave SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
1.24 Acres	Amenities		
	Splash Pad		
Hastings ROW	Hastings and Coit	Ward 2	Neighborhood
1.24 Acres	Amenities		
	Walking Path/Trails		
Heartside	301 Ionia SW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
2.9 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Playground	
	Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Basketball (2)	
	Drinking Fountain	Mixed Use	
	Grills	Splash Pad	
Heritage Hill	501 Paris SE	Ward 3	Mini
0.18 Acre	Amenities		
	Walking Path/Trails		

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Highland	523 Grand Ave NE	Ward 2	Community
27.92 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Sledding	
	Picnic Tables	Soccer Field (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Rugby Field	
	Grills	Mixed Use	
	Community Garden	Splash Pad	
	Natural Area	Disc Golf	
Hillcrest	1309 Lyon NE	Ward 2	Community
15.46 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Baseball Diamond (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Dog Park	
	Walking Path/Trails		
Hosken	1000 Lake Dr SE	Ward 2	Mini
0.015 Acre	Amenities		
	n/a		

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Houseman Field Playground	901 Fountain St NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
0 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Playground	Walking Path/Trails	
Huff	1500 Aberdeen St NE	Ward 2	Regional
89.6 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Grills	
	Restrooms	Natural Area	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Softball Diamond (3)	
	Drinking Fountain	Baseball Diamond (2)	
Joe Taylor	1001 Baxter St SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
2.12 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Drinking Fountain	
	Restrooms	Grills	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Community Garden	
	Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Tables	Splash Pad	
Ken-O-Sha	3155 Kalamazoo SE	Ward 3	Regional
100.15 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Walking Path/Trails	
	Natural Area	Basketball (1)	
	Playground	Mountain Biking	

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Kensington	902 Curve St SW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
11.25 Acres	Amenities: Picnic Tables, Drinking Fountain, Grills, Natural Area	Amenities: Playground, Walking Path/Trails, Soccer Field (1)	
Lexington	48 Gold Ave NW	Ward 1	Mini
0.45 Acre	Amenities: Picnic Shelters, Picnic Tables, Grills	Amenities: Playground, Mixed Use	
Lincoln Park	231 Marion Ave NW	Ward 1	Community
12.45 Acres	Amenities: Parking, Restrooms, Lodge Building, Picnic Tables, Drinking Fountain, Grills, Playground	Amenities: Walking Path/Trails, Cross Country Skiing, Basketball (2), Mixed Use, Splash Pad, Futsol Court (2)	
Lincoln Place Park	235 State St SE	Ward 2	Mini
0.11 Acre	Amenities: n/a		
Lookout	801 Fairview NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
2.6 Acres	Amenities: Picnic Tables, Walking Path/Trails	Amenities: Mixed Use	
Louis Campau Promenade	Monroe to Campau NW	Ward 2	Mini
0.36 Acre	Amenities: Walking Path/Trails	Amenities	
Lyon Square	296 Lyon St NW	Ward 2	Mini
1.1 Acres	Amenities: Drinking Fountain		
MacKay-Jaycees Family	2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE	Ward 3	Regional
57.2 Acres	Amenities: Parking, Restrooms, Reservable Picnic Shelters, Picnic Shelters, Picnic Tables, Drinking Fountain, Grills, Natural Area, Playground, Walking Path/Trails	Amenities: Cross Country Skiing, Softball Diamond (1), Baseball Diamond (3), Basketball (2), Soccer Field (2), Mixed Use (3), Tennis Court (4), Volleyball Court (4), Outdoor Exercise Equipment	

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Martin Luther King	1200 Franklin St SE	Ward 3	Community
16.94 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Walking Path/Trails	
	Lodge Building	Gymnasium	
	Enclosed Shelterhouse w/ restrooms	Baseball Diamond (1)	
	Picnic Shelters	Basketball (5)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Swimming Pool	
	Grills	Tennis Court (6)	
	Community Garden	Outdoor exercise equipment	
Mary Waters	1042 Lafayette NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
9.8 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Walking Path/Trails	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Sledding	
	Picnic Shelters	Basketball (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Splash Pad	
	Grills		
Midtown Green	747 Fountain NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
1.5 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Playground	
	Drinking Fountain	Mixed Use	
Monroe North	555 Monroe Ave NW	Ward 2	Neighborhood
3.6 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Skateboarding Features	
Monument	3 Fulton St E	Ward 2	Mini
0.05 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Drinking Fountain		
Mooney	501 Prospect Ave SE	Ward 3	Mini
0.34 Acre	Amenities		
	Playground		
Mulick	1632 Sylvan Ave SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
9.95 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Walking Path/Trails	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Sledding	
	Picnic Shelters	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Splash Pad	
	Grills	Tennis Court (3)	
Nagold	999 Fourth St NW	Ward 1	Mini
0.72 Acre	Amenities		
	Mixed Use		

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Oakdale Gardens	902 Evergreen St SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
1.25 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Community Garden	
Oakes Street	67 Ionia Ave SW	Ward 1	Mini
0.08 Acre	Amenities		
	n/a		
Otsego Drain Basin	1516 Division Ave S	Ward 1	Neighborhood
4.26 Acres	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Ottawa Hills	2060 Oakfield Ave SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
2.72 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Basketball (2)	
	Picnic Tables	Outdoor Exercise Equipment	
	Drinking Fountain		
Oxford Place	2013 43rd St SE	Ward 3	Community
11.65 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Natural Area	Undeveloped	

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Oxford Trail	751 Oxford St SW	Ward 1	Community
9.57 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Grills	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Basketball (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Outdoor Exercise Equipment	
Paris	943 N Ottillia SE	Ward 3	Mini
0.29 Acre	Amenities		
	Undeveloped		
Pekich	2 Cherry St SW	Ward 1	Mini
	Amenities		
	Drinking Fountain		
Plaster Creek Family	2401 Buchanan SW	Ward 1	Community
7.3 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Sledding	
	Restrooms	Softball Diamond (2)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Tennis Court (3)	
	Playground	Futsol Court (2)	

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Plaster Creek Trail	2550 Madison Ave SE	Ward 1	Neighborhood
141.74 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Walking Path/Trails	Cross Country Skiing	
Pleasant	620 Madison Ave SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
2.28 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Walking Path/Trails	
	Drinking Fountain	Mixed Use	
	Playground		
Provin Trails	2900 4 Mile Road NE	n/a	Community
43.75 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Cross Country Skiing	
	Walking Path/Trails	Sledding	
Reservoir	840 Livingston Ave NE	Ward 2	Neighborhood
2.82 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Picnic Tables	
Richmond	963 Richmond NW	Ward 1	Regional
57.05 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Walking Path/Trails	
	Restrooms	Sledding	
	Enclosed Shelterhouse w/ restroom	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Basketball (2)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Swimming Pool	
	Grills	Tennis Court (3)	
	Natural Area	Mountain Biking	
	Playground		

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Riverside	2001 Monroe Ave NE	Ward 2	Regional
186.9 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Walking Path/Trails	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters (3)	Softball Diamond (1)	
	Picnic Shelters	Soccer Field (8)	
	Picnic Tables	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Disc Golf	
	Grills	Boat Launches (4)	
	Natural Area		
Riverwalk Trail	Fulton to Leonard	Ward 2	Mini
0 Acres	Amenities		
	Walking Path/Trails		
Roberto Clemente	546 Rumsey SW	Ward 1	Community
11.49 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Grills	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Tables	Soccer Field (1)	
	Drinking Fountain	Skateboarding Features	

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Roosevelt	739 Van Raalte SW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
8.25 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Parking	Playground	
	Restrooms	Walking Path/Trails	
	Lodge Building	Gymnasium	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Mixed Use	
	Picnic Shelters	Splash Pad	
	Picnic Tables	Outdoor Exercise Equipment	
	Drinking Fountain		
Rosa Parks Circle	135 Monroe Center NW	Ward 2	Neighborhood
0.59 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Ice Rink	
	Drinking Fountain		
Seymour	942 S Ottillia SE	Ward 3	Mini
0.27 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	n/a		
Sixth Street	647 Monroe NW	Ward 2	Neighborhood
4.24 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Playground	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Walking Path/Trails	
	Picnic Shelters	Outdoor Exercise Equipment	
	Picnic Tables	Boat Launches	
	Drinking Fountain		

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Sullivan Field	650 Valley Ave NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
5.5 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Drinking Fountain	
	Picnic Tables	Baseball Diamond (1)	
Sundial	501 Cherry St SE	Ward 2	Mini
0.005 Acre	Amenities		
	n/a		
Sweet Street	459 Sweet St	Ward 2	Mini
0.47 Acre	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Tables	Playground	
Ted Rasberry Field	1050 Sheldon SE	Ward 3	Neighborhood
2.97 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Tables	Baseball Diamond (1)	
Tremont Greenspace	2044 Tremont Blvd NW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
	Amenities		
	Walking Path/Trails		

PARKS AMENITIES (CONTINUED)

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Underground	2350 Kalamazoo Ave SE	Ward 3	Community
16.86 Acres	Amenities		
	Mountain Biking		
Unity	680 Grandville Ave SW	Ward 1	Mini
	Amenities	Amenities	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Drinking Fountain	
	Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Tables	Walking Path/Trails	
Veterans Memorial	101 E Fulton NE	Ward 1	Neighborhood
	Amenities		
	Drinking Fountain		
Westown Commons	752 Watson SW	Ward 1	Neighborhood
1.07 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Grills	
	Picnic Shelters	Playground	
	Picnic Tables	Basketball (1)	
	Grills	Mixed Use	
	Drinking Fountain	Skateboarding Features	

Park	Location	Ward	Classification
Wilcox	1561 Robinson Rd SE	Ward 2	Community
12.68 Acres	Amenities	Amenities	
	Restrooms	Grills	
	Lodge Building	Natural Area	
	Enclosed Shelterhouse w/ restroom	Playground	
	Reservable Picnic Shelters	Mixed Use	
	Picnic Tables	Splash Pad	
	Drinking Fountain	Tennis Court (4)	

NOTICE OF THE DRAFT PLAN FOR 30 DAYS OF PUBLIC INPUT

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NOTICE OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

MINUTES FROM THE PUBLIC HEARING

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING TO PASS A RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

TRANSMITTAL LETTERS TO THE COUNTY AND REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

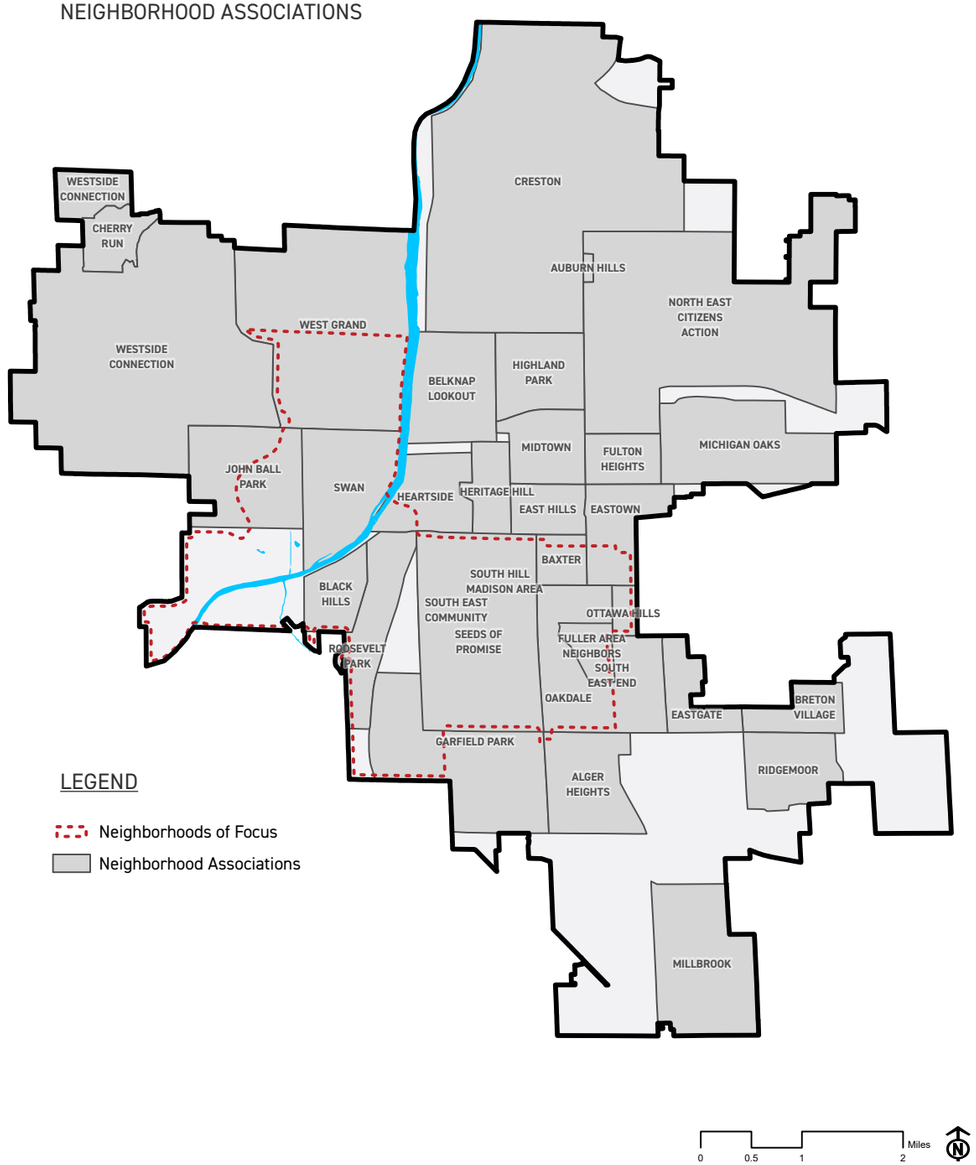
PUBLIC COMMENT

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

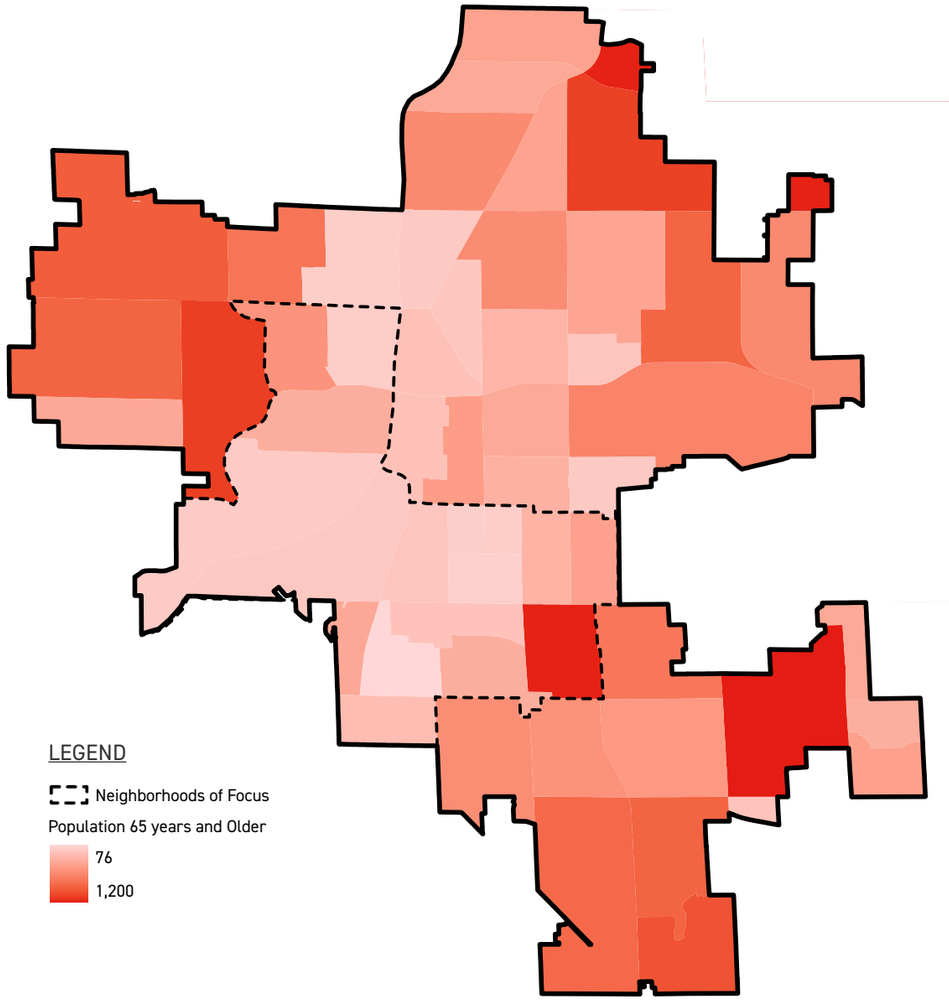
PARK DEMOGRAPHIC MAPS

Additional figures to give a broader picture of the City's demographics.

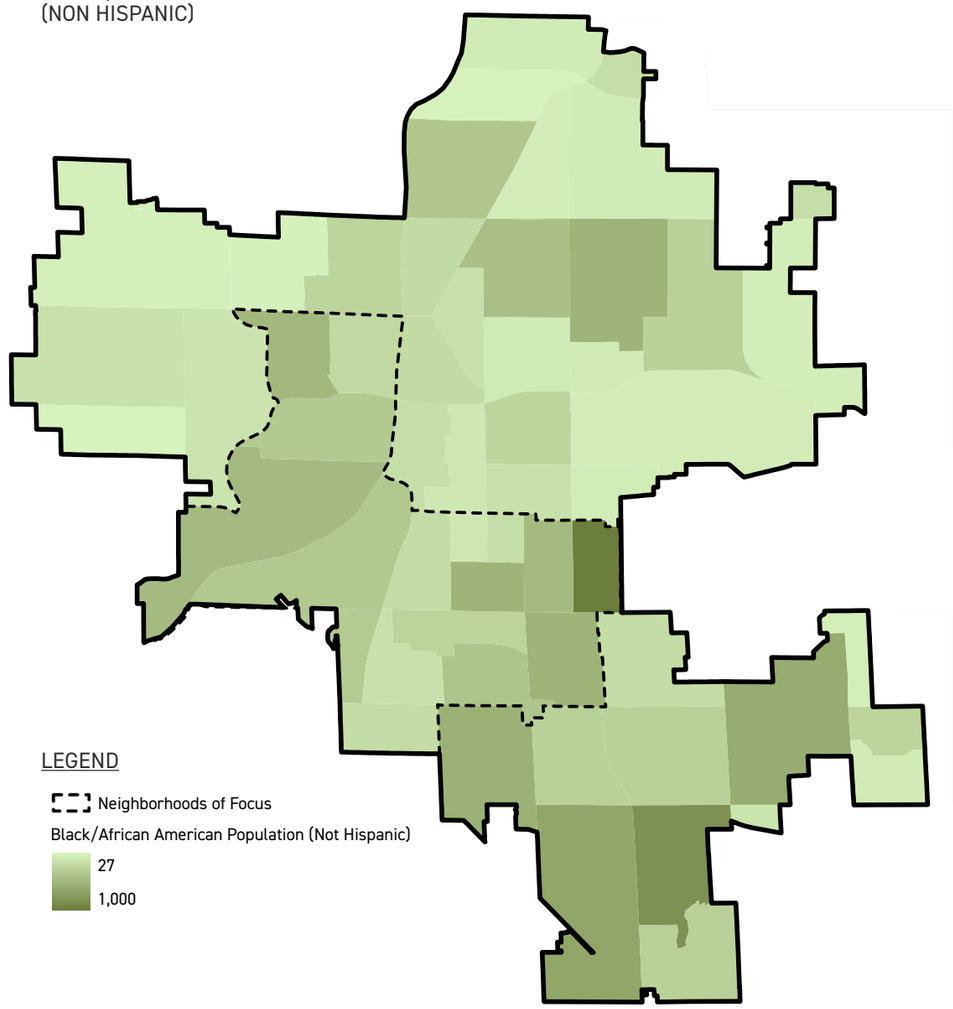
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS



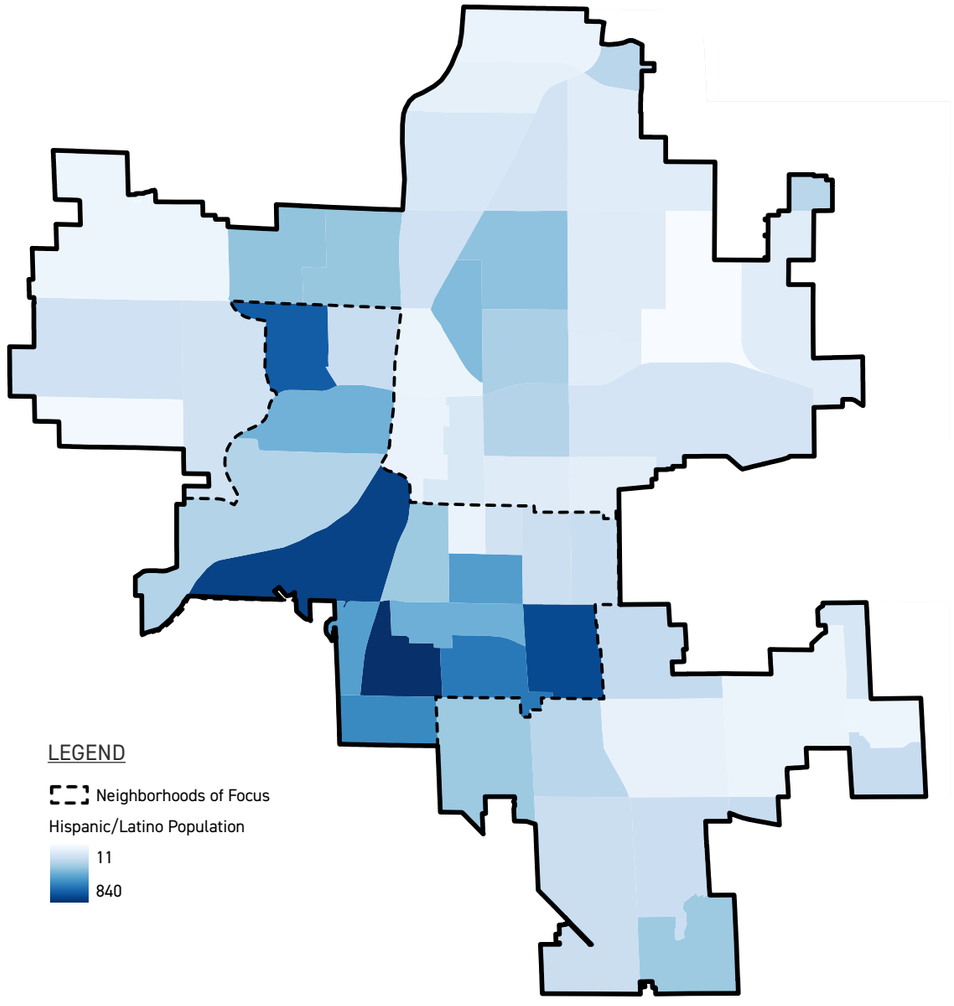
POPULATION 65 YEARS OR OLDER



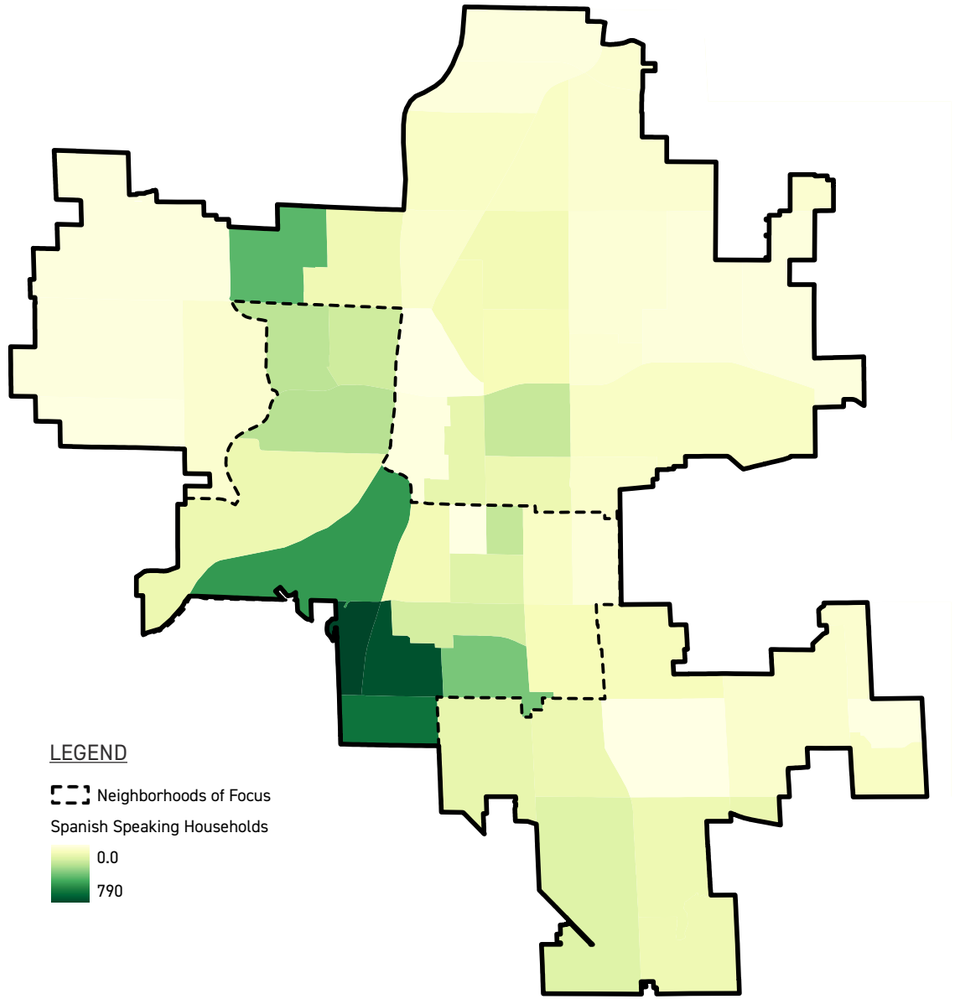
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION
(NON HISPANIC)



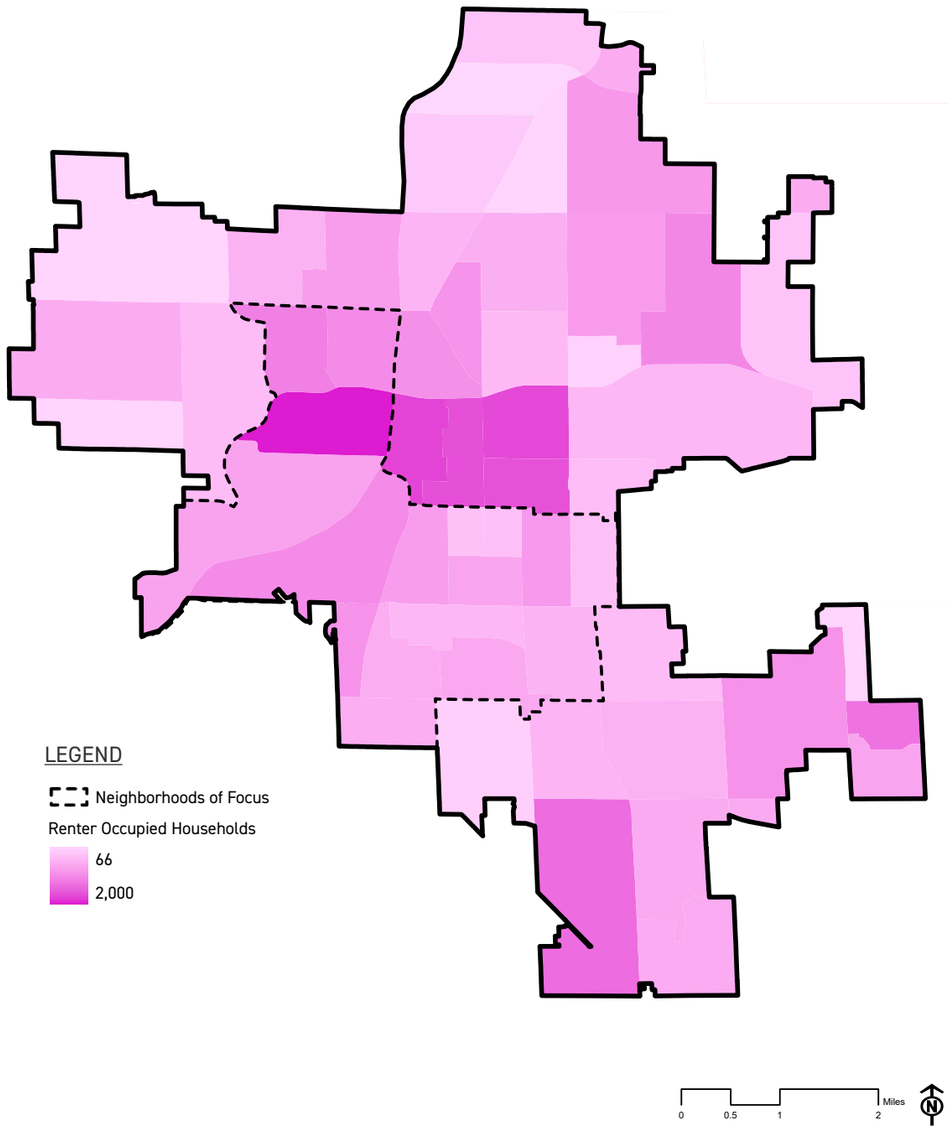
HISPANIC/LATINO POPULATION



SPANISH SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS



RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSEHOLDS



GRAND RAPIDS RECREATION TRENDS

Appendix A: National Trends in Recreation

Methodology

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA*) Sports, Fitness & Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report 2025* was utilized in evaluating the following trends:

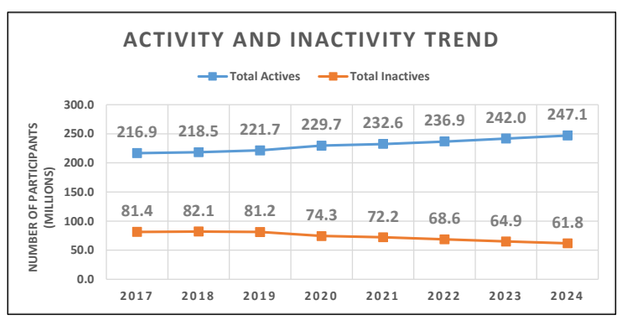
- National Recreation Participatory Trends
- Core vs. Casual Participation Trends

The study is based on findings from surveys conducted in 2024 by the Sports Marketing Surveys USA (SMS), resulting in a total of 18,000 online interviews. Surveys were administered to all genders, ages, income levels, regions, and ethnicities to allow for statistical accuracy of the national population. A sample size of 18,000 completed interviews is considered by SFIA to result in a high degree of statistical accuracy. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.32 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. Using a weighting technique, survey results are applied to the total U.S. population figure of 308,888,845 people (ages six and older).

The purpose of the report is to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the U.S. This study looked at 124 different sports/activities and subdivided them into various categories including: sports, fitness, outdoor activities, aquatics, etc.

Overall participation

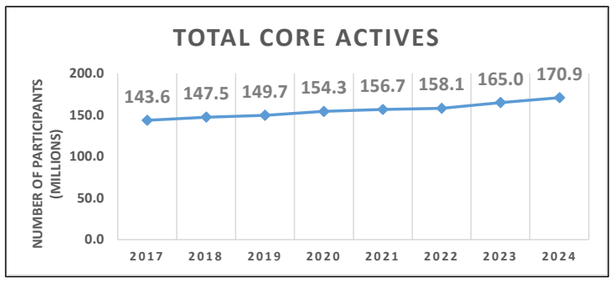
Approximately 247 million people ages six and over reported being active in 2024, which is a 2.1% increase from 2023 and the greatest number of active Americans since SFIA started reporting. This continues to be an indicator that Americans are continuing to make physical activity a priority in their lives. SFIA reported an increase in participation rates across all tracked categories from 2023 to 2024. Racquet sports exhibited the highest growth with a 9.4% increase over one year, followed by team sports, which grew by 8.1% during the same period. The chart below depicts participation levels for active and inactive (those who engage in no physical activity) Americans over the past 6 years.



CORE VS. CASUAL PARTICIPATION

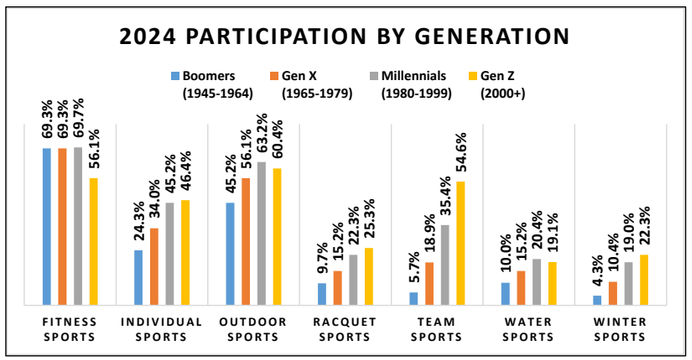
In addition to overall participation rates, SFIA further categorizes active participants as either core or casual participants based on frequency of participation. Core participants have higher participatory frequency than casual participants. The thresholds that define casual versus core participation may vary based on the nature of each individual activity. For instance, core participants engage in most fitness activities more than fifty times per year, while for sports, the threshold for core participation is typically 13 times per year.

In each activity, core participants are more committed and tend to be less likely to switch to other activities or become inactive (engage in no physical activity) than causal participants. This may also explain why activities with more core participants tend to experience less pattern shifts in participation rates than those with larger groups of casual participants. Increasing for the seventh straight year, 170.9 million people were considered CORE participants in 2024.



Participation by generation

The chart below provides an overview of the 2024 participation rates across different generations. Fitness sports remain the preferred method of exercise for Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. More than half of Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z engaged in at least one type of outdoor activity. Team sports were predominantly popular among Gen Z, while nearly a third of Gen X participated in individual sports such as golf, trail running, triathlons, and bowling.



highlights

Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing sport in America by reaching 19.8 million participants in 2024 which is a 473% growth since 2019. The growth of pickleball participants (19.8 million) has surpassed the size of outdoor soccer

participants (14.4 million) and baseball participants (17.2 million). Following the popularity of pickleball, every racquet sport except badminton and cardio tennis has also increased in total participation in 2024.

Team sports continued to grow, with 20 out of 24 seeing higher participation from 2023 to 2024. Wrestling had the biggest rise at 8.6%.

The sports featured in the 2024 Paris Olympics, such as basketball, gymnastics, swimming, track and field, skateboarding, volleyball, and wrestling, have seen substantial increases in participation. This trend highlights the impact and widespread appeal of the Olympic Games.

Class-based activities have reported their highest levels of engagement since the pandemic, with nearly all such activities demonstrating significant increases in participation. Notable growth was observed in aquatic exercise, boot camp-style training, cardio kickboxing, cross-training style workouts, barre, Pilates, tai chi, and yoga.

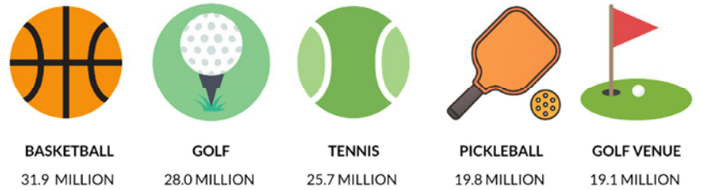
National Trends in General Sports

Participation Levels

The most participated sports in the United States are basketball (31.9 million), golf (28.0 million), and tennis (25.7 million). Pickleball (19.8 million) and playing golf at an entertainment venue (19.1 million) complete the top five.

The popularity of basketball, golf, and tennis can be attributed to their ability to be played with a small number of participants. This, combined with the possibility of being played outdoors or with proper distancing, explains their increased popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Basketball's overall success is also due to the minimal equipment required and the limited space needed for participation, making it the only traditional sport that can be played as a driveway pickup game at most American residences. Golf benefits from its appeal across a wide age segment and is considered a lifelong sport.

Additionally, there has been a significant increase (93%) in target-type game venues or golf entertainment venues over the past five years, with golf entertainment options (e.g., Top Golf) providing a new alternative to rejuvenate interest in the game.



Five-Year Trend

Since 2019, pickleball (472.5%), golf - entertainment venues (93.3%), and tennis (45.6%) have increased in participation. Additionally, basketball (28.2%), outdoor soccer (21.5%) and tackle football (18.6%) have grown in participation. According to the five-year trend from 2019-2024, the sports that are declining in participation include roller hockey (-28.6%), rugby (-20.8%), and ultimate frisbee (-10.6%).

One-Year Trend

In the past year, sports such as pickleball (45.8%), wrestling (8.6%), and tennis (8.0%) have experienced significant increases in participation. Other notable one-year increases include tackle football (7.8%), flag football (7.7%), and fast-pitch softball (7.6%).

Sports such as slow-pitch softball (5.6%) and sand/beach volleyball (3.9%) have seen moderate increases over the past year but have experienced decreases over a five-year period. This trend may be associated with the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of team program participation. Meanwhile, sports like roller hockey, rugby, ultimate frisbee, and lacrosse have continued to face declines in participation both over the past year and across five years.

Core vs. Casual Trends in general sports

General sport activities, basketball, court volleyball, baseball and slow pitch softball have a larger core participant base (participate 13+ times per year) than casual participant base (participate 1-12 times per year). Since the pandemic, core participants are slowly reaching their pre-pandemic levels.

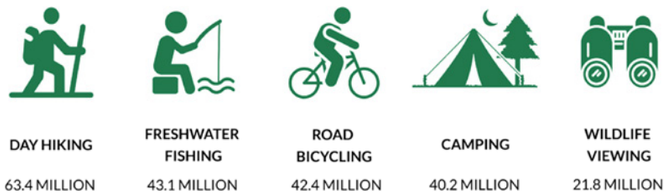
National Participatory Trends - General Sports					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2019	2023	2024	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Basketball	24,917	29,725	31,947	28.2%	7.5%
Golf (9 or 18-Hole Course)	24,271	26,565	28,097	15.8%	5.8%
Tennis	17,684	23,835	25,742	45.6%	8.0%
Pickleball	3,460	13,582	19,807	472.5%	45.8%
Golf (Entertainment Venue)	9,905	18,464	19,144	93.3%	3.7%
Baseball	15,804	16,655	17,282	9.4%	3.8%
Soccer (Outdoor)	11,913	14,074	14,473	21.5%	2.8%
Football (Flag)	6,783	7,266	7,825	15.4%	7.7%
Volleyball (Court)	6,487	6,905	7,365	13.5%	6.7%
Softball (Slow Pitch)	7,071	6,356	6,714	-5.0%	5.6%
Badminton	6,095	6,513	6,247	2.5%	-4.1%
Football (Tackle)	5,107	5,618	6,055	18.6%	7.8%
Soccer (Indoor)	5,336	5,909	5,956	11.6%	0.8%
Football (Touch)	5,171	4,949	5,178	0.1%	4.6%
Gymnastics	4,699	4,758	5,108	8.7%	7.4%
Track and Field	4,139	3,905	4,195	1.4%	7.4%
Volleyball (Sand/Beach)	4,400	3,917	4,070	-7.5%	3.9%
Cheerleading	3,752	3,797	3,918	4.4%	3.2%
Racquetball	3,453	3,550	3,637	5.3%	2.5%
Ice Hockey	2,357	2,496	2,658	12.8%	6.5%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	2,242	2,323	2,499	11.5%	7.6%
Wrestling	1,944	2,121	2,303	18.5%	8.6%
Ultimate Frisbee	2,290	2,086	2,047	-10.6%	-1.9%
Lacrosse	2,115	1,979	1,922	-9.1%	-2.9%
Squash	1,222	1,315	1,399	14.5%	6.4%
Roller Hockey	1,616	1,237	1,154	-28.6%	-6.7%
Rugby	1,392	1,112	1,102	-20.8%	-0.9%
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%)	

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2019	2023	2024	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Walking for Fitness	111,439	114,039	115,261	3.4%	1.1%
Treadmill	56,823	54,829	56,843	0.0%	3.7%
Free Weights (Dumbbells/Hand Weights)	51,450	53,858	56,253	9.3%	4.4%
Running/Jogging	50,052	48,305	51,052	2.0%	5.7%
Yoga	30,456	34,249	37,636	23.6%	9.9%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent/Upright)	37,085	32,628	33,657	-9.2%	3.2%
Weight/Resistant Machines	36,181	29,426	30,850	-14.7%	4.8%
Free Weights (Barbells)	28,379	29,333	30,550	7.7%	4.1%
Dance, Step, & Choreographed Exercise	23,957	26,241	27,058	12.9%	3.1%
Elliptical Motion/Cross-Trainer	33,056	27,062	26,665	-19.3%	-1.5%
Bodyweight Exercise	23,504	22,578	21,949	-6.6%	-2.8%
High Impact/Intensity Training	22,044	21,801	21,683	-1.6%	-0.5%
Trail Running	10,997	14,885	16,154	46.9%	8.5%
Rowing Machine	12,809	12,775	12,933	1.0%	1.2%
Pilates Training	9,243	11,862	12,889	39.4%	8.7%
Stair Climbing Machine	15,359	12,605	12,668	-17.5%	0.5%
Cross-Training Style Workout	13,542	9,404	9,655	-28.7%	2.7%
Boxing/MMA for Fitness	8,638	8,378	8,911	3.2%	6.4%
Martial Arts	6,068	6,610	6,938	14.3%	5.0%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	9,930	6,227	6,600	-33.5%	6.0%
Boot Camp Style Cross-Training	6,830	5,434	5,699	-16.6%	4.9%
Cardio Kickboxing	7,026	5,524	5,654	-19.5%	2.4%
Barre	3,665	4,294	4,365	19.1%	1.7%
Tai Chi	3,793	3,948	4,162	9.7%	5.4%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	2,001	1,738	1,732	-13.4%	-0.3%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off Road)	1,472	1,363	1,372	-6.8%	0.7%
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%)	

National Trends In Outdoor/Adventure Recreation

Participation Levels

Results from the SFIA report demonstrate rapid growth in participation regarding outdoor/adventure recreation activities. Similar to general fitness activities, these activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually, and are not as limited by time constraints. In 2024, the most popular activities, in terms of total participants include day hiking (63.4 million), freshwater fishing (43.1 million), road bicycling (42.4 million), camping (40.2 million), and wildlife viewing (21.8 million).



Five-Year Trend

From 2019-2024, camping (42.8%), skateboarding (40.4%), birdwatching (32.3%), BMX bicycling (29.4%), and day hiking (27.6%) have undergone the largest increase in participation. The five-year trend also shows that only two activities declined in participation, adventure racing (-14.2) and backpacking overnight (-6.3%).

One-Year Trend

The one-year trend shows most activities had a moderate growth in participation. The highest growth being in-line roller skating (7.3%), BMX bicycling (5.8%), sport/boulder climbing (5.1%), and camping (4.3%). Activities that underwent decreases in participation were fly fishing (-1.6), indoor climbing (-1.6) and mountain biking (-0.5%).

Core vs. Casual trends in outdoor / adventure recreation

Although most outdoor activities have experienced participation growth in the last five years. it should be noted that all outdoor activities participation, besides adventure racing, consist primarily of casual users.

National Participatory Trends - Outdoor / Adventure Recreation					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2019	2023	2024	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Hiking (Day)	49,697	61,444	63,430	27.6%	3.2%
Fishing (Freshwater)	39,185	42,605	43,185	10.2%	1.4%
Bicycling (Road)	39,388	42,243	42,470	7.8%	0.5%
Camping	28,183	38,572	40,244	42.8%	4.3%
Wildlife Viewing (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	20,040	21,118	21,899	9.3%	3.7%
Birdwatching (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	12,817	16,423	16,954	32.3%	3.2%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	15,426	16,497	16,460	6.7%	-0.2%
Fishing (Saltwater)	13,193	15,039	15,065	14.2%	0.2%
Backpacking Overnight	10,660	9,994	9,988	-6.3%	-0.1%
Skateboarding	6,610	8,923	9,280	40.4%	4.0%
Bicycling (Mountain)	8,622	9,289	9,241	7.2%	-0.5%
Fishing (Fly)	7,014	8,077	7,951	13.4%	-1.6%
Archery	7,449	7,662	7,787	4.5%	1.6%
Climbing (Indoor)	5,309	6,356	6,256	17.8%	-1.6%
Roller Skating, In-Line	4,816	5,201	5,581	15.9%	7.3%
Bicycling (BMX)	3,648	4,462	4,722	29.4%	5.8%
Climbing (Sport/Boulder)	2,183	2,544	2,674	22.5%	5.1%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,400	2,569	2,577	7.4%	0.3%
Adventure Racing	2,143	1,808	1,839	-14.2%	1.7%
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%)	

National Trends in Water Sports / Activities

Participation Level

The most popular water sports / activities based on total participants in 2024 were recreational kayaking (15.1 million), canoeing (10.1 million), snorkeling (7.6 million), jet skiing (5.9 million) and stand-up paddling (4.4 million). It should be noted that water activity participation tends to vary based on regional, seasonal, and environmental factors. A region with more water access and a warmer climate is more likely to have a higher participation rate in water activities than a region that has a long winter season or limited water access. Therefore, when assessing trends in water sports and activities, it is important to understand that fluctuations may be the result of environmental barriers which can influence water activity participation.



Five-Year Trend

In the past five years, the fastest growing water activities have been surfing (42.7%), recreational kayaking (32.9%), stand-up paddling (23.6%), and rafting (23.5%). Notably, during this period, there were no activities that experienced a decline in participation.

One-Year Trend

In 2024, wakeboarding was the only activity that saw a decrease in participation by -1.2%. Activities with the largest increases in participation were stand-up paddling (6.6%), surfing (5.9%), and rafting (4.8%).

Core VS. Casual trends in Water Sports/Activities

As mentioned previously, regional, seasonal, and environmental limiting factors may influence the participation rate of water sports and activities. These factors may also explain why all water-based activities have drastically more casual participants than core participants, since frequencies of activities may be constrained by uncontrollable factors.

National Participatory Trends - Water Sports / Activities					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2019	2023	2024	5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
Kayaking (Recreational)	11,382	14,726	15,128	32.9%	2.7%
Canoeing	8,995	9,999	10,111	12.4%	1.1%
Snorkeling	7,659	7,489	7,696	0.5%	2.8%
Jet Skiing	5,108	5,759	5,978	17.0%	3.8%
Stand-Up Paddling	3,562	4,129	4,402	23.6%	6.6%
Rafting	3,438	4,050	4,245	23.5%	4.8%
Surfing	2,964	3,993	4,230	42.7%	5.9%
Sailing	3,618	4,100	4,226	16.8%	3.1%
Water Skiing	3,203	3,133	3,218	0.5%	2.7%
Scuba Diving	2,715	3,063	3,148	15.9%	2.8%
Kayaking (White Water)	2,583	2,995	3,075	19.0%	2.7%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	2,652	2,800	2,869	8.2%	2.5%
Wakeboarding	2,729	2,844	2,810	3.0%	-1.2%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,405	1,434	1,476	5.1%	2.9%
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 Participation Trends

General Sports

National Core vs Casual Participatory Trends - General Sports								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Basketball	**24,917**	**100%**	**29,725**	**100%**	**31,947**	**100%**	**28.2%**	**7.5%**
Casual (1-12 times)	9,669	39%	14,405	48%	16,553	52%	**71.2%**	**14.9%**
Core(13+ times)	15,248	61%	15,320	52%	15,394	48%	**1.0%**	**0.5%**
Golf (9 or 18-Hole Course)	**24,271**	**100%**	**26,565**	**100%**	**28,097**	**100%**	**15.8%**	**5.8%**
Tennis	**17,684**	**100%**	**23,835**	**100%**	**25,742**	**100%**	**45.6%**	**8.0%**
Pickleball	**3,460**	**100%**	**13,582**	**100%**	**19,807**	**100%**	**472.5%**	**45.8%**
Casual (1-12 times)	2,207	64%	8,736	74%	13,594	74%	**515.9%**	**55.6%**
Core(13+ times)	1,253	36%	4,846	26%	6,213	26%	**395.8%**	**28.2%**
Golf (Entertainment Venue)	**9,905**	**100%**	**18,464**	**100%**	**19,144**	**100%**	**93.3%**	**3.7%**
Baseball	**15,804**	**100%**	**16,655**	**100%**	**17,282**	**100%**	**9.4%**	**3.8%**
Casual (1-12 times)	6,655	42%	8,934	54%	9,575	55%	**43.9%**	**7.2%**
Core (13+ times)	9,149	58%	7,722	46%	7,708	45%	**-15.8%**	**-0.2%**
Soccer (Outdoor)	**11,913**	**100%**	**14,074**	**100%**	**14,473**	**100%**	**21.5%**	**2.8%**
Casual (1-25 times)	6,864	58%	8,706	59%	8,964	59%	**30.6%**	**3.0%**
Core (26+ times)	5,050	42%	5,368	41%	5,509	41%	**9.1%**	**2.6%**
Football (Flag)	**6,783**	**100%**	**7,266**	**100%**	**7,825**	**100%**	**15.4%**	**7.7%**
Casual (1-12 times)	3,794	56%	4,624	64%	5,090	65%	**34.2%**	**10.1%**
Core(13+ times)	2,989	44%	2,642	36%	2,735	35%	**-8.5%**	**3.5%**
Core Age 6 to 17 (13+ times)	1,590	23%	1,661	22%	1,748	22%	**9.9%**	**5.2%**
Volleyball (Court)	**6,487**	**100%**	**6,905**	**100%**	**7,365**	**100%**	**13.5%**	**6.7%**
Casual (1-12 times)	2,962	46%	3,481	50%	3,846	52%	**29.8%**	**10.5%**
Core(13+ times)	3,525	54%	3,425	50%	3,519	48%	**-0.2%**	**2.7%**
Softball (Slow Pitch)	**7,071**	**100%**	**6,356**	**100%**	**6,714**	**100%**	**-5.0%**	**5.6%**
Casual (1-12 times)	3,023	43%	2,939	46%	3,340	50%	**10.5%**	**13.6%**
Core(13+ times)	4,048	57%	3,417	54%	3,374	50%	**-16.7%**	**-1.3%**
Badminton	**7,071**	**86%**	**6,356**	**102%**	**6,247**	**99%**	**-11.7%**	**-1.7%**
Casual (1-12 times)	4,338	61%	4,743	75%	4,422	71%	**1.9%**	**-6.8%**
Core(13+ times)	1,756	25%	1,771	28%	1,771	28%	**0.9%**	**0.0%**
Football (Tackle)	**5,107**	**100%**	**5,618**	**100%**	**6,055**	**100%**	**18.6%**	**7.8%**
Casual (1-25 times)	2,413	47%	3,278	58%	3,580	59%	**48.4%**	**9.2%**
Core(26+ times)	2,694	53%	2,340	42%	2,475	41%	**-8.1%**	**5.8%**
Core Age 6 to 17 (26+ times)	2,311	45%	2,130	38%	2,143	35%	**-7.3%**	**0.6%**
Soccer (Indoor)	**5,336**	**100%**	**5,618**	**100%**	**5,956**	**100%**	**11.6%**	**6.0%**
Casual (1-12 times)	2,581	48%	3,411	57%	3,407	57%	**32.0%**	**-0.1%**
Core(13+ times)	2,755	52%	2,498	43%	2,549	43%	**-7.5%**	**2.0%**
Football (Touch)	**5,171**	**100%**	**4,949**	**100%**	**5,178**	**100%**	**0.1%**	**4.6%**
Casual (1-12 times)	3,065	59%	3,301	67%	3,523	68%	**14.9%**	**6.7%**
Core(13+ times)	2,105	41%	1,648	33%	1,654	32%	**-21.4%**	**0.4%**
Gymnastics	**4,699**	**100%**	**4,758**	**100%**	**5,108**	**100%**	**8.7%**	**7.4%**
Casual (1-49 times)	3,004	64%	3,315	70%	3,580	70%	**19.2%**	**8.0%**
Core(50+ times)	1,695	36%	1,443	30%	1,528	30%	**-9.9%**	**5.9%**
Track and Field	**4,139**	**100%**	**3,905**	**100%**	**4,195**	**100%**	**1.4%**	**7.4%**
Casual (1-25 times)	2,069	50%	2,093	54%	2,445	58%	**18.2%**	**16.8%**
Core(26+ times)	2,070	50%	1,811	46%	1,750	42%	**-15.5%**	**-3.4%**
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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)		Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)		Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)			

GENERAL SPORTS (Continued)

National Core vs Casual Participatory Trends - General Sports								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Volleyball (Sand/Beach)	**4,400**	**100%**	**3,917**	**100%**	**4,070**	**100%**	**-7.5%**	**3.9%**
Casual (1-12 times)	2,907	66%	2,769	71%	3,001	74%	**3.2%**	**8.4%**
Core(13+ times)	1,493	34%	1,148	29%	1,069	26%	**-28.4%**	**-6.9%**
Cheerleading	**3,752**	**100%**	**3,797**	**100%**	**3,918**	**100%**	**4.4%**	**3.2%**
Casual (1-25 times)	1,934	52%	2,360	62%	2,405	61%	**24.4%**	**1.9%**
Core(26+ times)	1,817	48%	1,438	38%	1,513	39%	**-16.7%**	**5.2%**
Racquetball	**3,453**	**100%**	**3,550**	**100%**	**3,637**	**100%**	**5.3%**	**2.5%**
Casual (1-12 times)	2,398	69%	2,694	76%	2,737	75%	**14.1%**	**1.6%**
Core(13+ times)	1,055	31%	855	24%	900	25%	**-14.7%**	**5.3%**
Ice Hockey	**2,357**	**100%**	**2,496**	**100%**	**2,658**	**100%**	**12.8%**	**6.5%**
Casual (1-12 times)	1,040	44%	1,458	58%	1,597	60%	**53.6%**	**9.5%**
Core(13+ times)	1,317	56%	1,038	42%	1,061	40%	**-19.4%**	**2.2%**
Softball (Fast Pitch)	**2,242**	**100%**	**2,323**	**100%**	**2,499**	**100%**	**11.5%**	**7.6%**
Casual (1-25 times)	993	44%	1,123	48%	1,260	50%	**26.9%**	**12.2%**
Core(26+ times)	1,250	56%	1,201	52%	1,239	50%	**-0.9%**	**3.2%**
Wrestling	**1,944**	**100%**	**2,121**	**100%**	**2,303**	**100%**	**18.5%**	**8.6%**
Casual (1-25 times)	1,189	61%	1,589	75%	1,798	78%	**51.2%**	**13.2%**
Core(26+ times)	755	39%	532	25%	505	22%	**-33.1%**	**-5.1%**
Ultimate Frisbee	**2,290**	**100%**	**2,086**	**100%**	**2,047**	**100%**	**-10.6%**	**-1.9%**
Casual (1-12 times)	1,491	65%	1,523	67%	1,478	67%	**-0.9%**	**-3.0%**
Core(13+ times)	799	35%	563	33%	568	33%	**-28.9%**	**0.9%**
Lacrosse	**2,115**	**100%**	**1,979**	**100%**	**1,922**	**100%**	**-9.1%**	**-2.9%**
Casual (1-12 times)	1,021	48%	1,129	53%	1,000	53%	**-2.1%**	**-11.4%**
Core(13+ times)	1,094	52%	850	47%	922	47%	**-15.7%**	**8.5%**
Squash	**1,222**	**100%**	**1,315**	**100%**	**1,399**	**100%**	**14.5%**	**6.4%**
Casual (1-7 times)	747	61%	927	70%	983	70%	**31.6%**	**6.0%**
Core(8+ times)	476	39%	387	29%	416	30%	**-12.6%**	**7.5%**
Roller Hockey	**1,616**	**100%**	**1,237**	**100%**	**1,154**	**100%**	**-28.6%**	**-6.7%**
Casual (1-12 times)	1,179	73%	938	76%	887	77%	**-24.8%**	**-5.4%**
Core(13+ times)	436	27%	298	24%	267	23%	**-38.8%**	**-10.4%**
Rugby	**1,392**	**100%**	**1,112**	**100%**	**1,102**	**100%**	**-20.8%**	**-0.9%**
Casual (1-7 times)	835	60%	729	66%	728	66%	**-12.8%**	**-0.1%**
Core(8+ times)	557	40%	384	35%	373	34%	**-33.0%**	**-2.9%**
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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)		Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)		Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)			

General Fitness

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Walking for Fitness	111,439	100%	114,039	100%	115,261	100%	3.4%	1.1%
Casual (1-49 times)	36,254	33%	38,169	33%	38,945	34%	7.4%	2.0%
Core(50+ times)	75,185	67%	75,871	67%	76,316	66%	1.5%	0.6%
Treadmill	56,823	100%	54,829	100%	56,843	100%	0.0%	3.7%
Casual (1-49 times)	28,473	50%	27,991	51%	31,057	55%	9.1%	11.0%
Core(50+ times)	28,349	50%	26,837	49%	25,786	45%	-9.0%	-3.9%
Free Weights (Dumbbells/Hand Weights)	51,450	100%	53,858	100%	56,253	100%	9.3%	4.4%
Casual (1-49 times)	19,762	38%	23,238	43%	26,569	47%	34.4%	14.3%
Core(50+ times)	31,688	62%	30,619	57%	29,684	53%	-6.3%	-3.1%
Running/Jogging	50,052	100%	48,305	100%	51,052	100%	2.0%	5.7%
Casual (1-49 times)	24,972	50%	24,175	50%	27,047	53%	8.3%	11.9%
Core(50+ times)	25,081	50%	24,129	50%	24,005	47%	-4.3%	-0.5%
Yoga	30,456	100%	34,249	100%	37,636	100%	23.6%	9.9%
Casual (1-49 times)	18,953	62%	20,654	60%	23,730	63%	25.2%	14.9%
Core(50+ times)	11,503	38%	13,595	40%	13,907	37%	20.9%	2.3%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent/Upright)	37,085	100%	32,628	100%	33,657	100%	-9.2%	3.2%
Casual (1-49 times)	19,451	52%	15,901	49%	16,968	50%	-12.8%	6.7%
Core(50+ times)	17,634	48%	16,728	51%	16,689	50%	-5.4%	-0.2%
Weight/Resistant Machines	36,181	100%	29,426	100%	30,850	100%	-14.7%	4.8%
Casual (1-49 times)	14,668	41%	11,361	39%	12,882	42%	-12.2%	13.4%
Core(50+ times)	21,513	59%	18,065	61%	17,967	58%	-16.5%	-0.5%
Free Weights (Barbells)	28,379	100%	29,333	100%	30,550	100%	7.7%	4.1%
Casual (1-49 times)	11,806	42%	14,174	48%	15,553	51%	31.7%	9.7%
Core(50+ times)	16,573	58%	15,159	52%	14,996	49%	-9.5%	-1.1%
Dance, Step, & Choreographed Exercise	23,957	100%	26,241	100%	27,068	100%	13.0%	3.2%
Casual (1-49 times)	16,047	67%	18,179	69%	19,101	71%	19.0%	5.1%
Core(50+ times)	7,910	33%	8,063	31%	7,957	29%	0.6%	-1.3%
Elliptical Motion/Cross-Trainer	33,056	100%	27,062	100%	26,665	100%	-19.3%	-1.5%
Casual (1-49 times)	17,175	52%	13,898	51%	13,950	52%	-18.8%	0.4%
Core(50+ times)	15,880	48%	13,164	49%	12,716	48%	-19.9%	-3.4%
Bodyweight Exercise	23,504	100%	22,578	100%	21,949	100%	-6.6%	-2.8%
Casual (1-49 times)	9,492	40%	10,486	46%	10,145	46%	6.9%	-3.3%
Core(50+ times)	14,012	60%	12,092	54%	11,804	54%	-15.8%	-2.4%
High Impact/Intensity Training	22,044	100%	21,801	100%	21,683	100%	-1.6%	-0.5%
Casual (1-49 times)	12,380	56%	12,559	58%	12,454	57%	0.6%	-0.8%
Core(50+ times)	9,665	44%	9,242	42%	9,229	43%	-4.5%	-0.1%
Trail Running	10,997	100%	14,885	100%	16,154	100%	46.9%	8.5%
Casual (1-25 times)	8,744	80%	12,260	82%	13,453	83%	53.9%	9.7%
Core(26+ times)	2,253	20%	2,625	18%	2,701	17%	19.9%	2.9%
Rowing Machine	12,809	100%	12,775	100%	12,933	100%	1.0%	1.2%
Casual (1-49 times)	8,308	65%	8,473	66%	8,671	67%	4.4%	2.3%
Core(50+ times)	4,500	35%	4,302	34%	4,262	33%	-5.3%	-0.9%
Pilates Training	9,243	100%	11,862	100%	12,889	100%	39.4%	8.7%
Casual (1-49 times)	6,074	66%	8,805	74%	9,747	76%	60.5%	10.7%
Core(50+ times)	3,168	34%	3,057	26%	3,143	24%	-0.8%	2.8%
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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)		Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)		Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)			

General Fitness (Continued)

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness							
Activity	Participation Levels						%
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Stair Climbing Machine	15,359	100%	12,605	100%	12,668	100%	-17.5%
Casual (1-49 times)	10,059	65%	8,075	64%	8,306	66%	-17.4%
Core(50+ times)	5,301	35%	4,530	36%	4,362	34%	-17.7%
Cross-Training Style Workout	13,542	100%	9,404	100%	9,655	100%	-28.7%
Casual (1-49 times)	7,100	52%	4,391	47%	4,703	49%	-33.8%
Core(50+ times)	6,442	48%	5,013	53%	4,952	51%	-23.1%
Boxing/MMA for Fitness	8,638	100%	8,378	100%	8,911	100%	3.2%
Casual (1-12 times)	4,776	55%	5,003	60%	5,122	57%	7.2%
Core(13+ times)	3,862	45%	3,375	40%	3,789	43%	-1.9%
Martial Arts	6,068	100%	6,610	100%	6,938	100%	14.3%
Casual (1-12 times)	2,178	36%	3,481	53%	3,866	56%	77.5%
Core(13+ times)	3,890	64%	3,130	47%	3,072	44%	-21.0%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	9,930	100%	6,227	100%	6,600	100%	-33.5%
Casual (1-49 times)	6,583	66%	3,783	61%	4,112	62%	-37.5%
Core(50+ times)	3,347	34%	2,444	39%	2,487	38%	-25.7%
Boot Camp Style Cross-Training	6,830	100%	5,434	100%	5,699	100%	-16.6%
Casual (1-49 times)	4,951	72%	4,003	74%	4,263	75%	-13.9%
Core(50+ times)	1,880	28%	1,432	26%	1,436	25%	-23.6%
Cardio Kickboxing	7,026	100%	5,524	100%	5,654	100%	-19.5%
Casual (1-49 times)	4,990	71%	3,929	71%	3,992	71%	-20.0%
Core(50+ times)	2,037	29%	1,596	29%	1,663	29%	-18.4%
Barre	3,665	100%	4,294	100%	4,365	100%	19.1%
Casual (1-49 times)	2,868	78%	3,473	81%	3,554	81%	23.9%
Core(50+ times)	797	22%	821	19%	811	19%	1.8%
Tai Chi	3,793	100%	3,948	100%	4162	100%	9.7%
Casual (1-49 times)	2,379	63%	2,748	70%	2,869	69%	20.6%
Core(50+ times)	1,414	37%	1,200	30%	1,293	31%	-8.6%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	2,001	100%	1,738	100%	1,732	100%	-13.4%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off Road)	1,472	100%	1,363	100%	1,372	100%	-6.8%

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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)	Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)	Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)	

Outdoor/Adventure Recreation

National Participatory Trends - Outdoor / Adventure Recreation								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Hiking (Day)	49,697	100%	61,444	100%	63,430	100%	27.6%	3.2%
Casual (1-7 times)	37,900	76%	45,336	74%	46,464	73%	22.6%	2.5%
Core(8+ times)	11,797	24%	16,108	26%	16,966	27%	43.8%	5.3%
Fishing (Freshwater)	39,185	100%	42,605	100%	43,185	100%	10.2%	1.4%
Casual (1-7 times)	20,857	53%	23,964	56%	24,486	57%	17.4%	2.2%
Core(8+ times)	18,328	47%	18,641	44%	18,699	43%	2.0%	0.3%
Bicycling (Road)	39,388	100%	42,243	100%	42,470	100%	7.8%	0.5%
Casual (1-25 times)	20,796	53%	22,520	53%	23,141	54%	11.3%	2.8%
Core(26+ times)	18,592	47%	19,723	47%	19,330	46%	4.0%	-2.0%
Camping	28,183	100%	38,572	100%	40,244	100%	42.8%	4.3%
Casual (1-7 times)	21,031	75%	29,060	75%	30,362	75%	44.4%	4.5%
Core(8+ times)	7,153	25%	9,513	25%	9,882	25%	38.2%	3.9%
Wildlife Viewing (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	20,040	100%	21,118	100%	21,899	100%	9.3%	3.7%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	15,426	100%	16,497	100%	16,460	100%	6.7%	-0.2%
Casual (1-7 times)	8,420	55%	9,801	59%	9,886	60%	17.4%	0.9%
Core(8+ times)	7,006	45%	6,695	41%	6,574	40%	-6.2%	-1.8%
Birdwatching (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	12,817	100%	16,423	100%	16,954	100%	32.3%	3.2%
Fishing (Saltwater)	13,193	100%	15,039	100%	15,065	100%	14.2%	0.2%
Casual (1-7 times)	7,947	60%	9,904	66%	9,812	65%	23.5%	-0.9%
Core(8+ times)	5,246	40%	5,135	34%	5,253	35%	0.1%	2.3%
Backpacking Overnight	10,660	100%	9,994	100%	9,988	100%	-6.3%	-0.1%
Skateboarding	6,610	100%	8,923	100%	9,280	100%	40.4%	4.0%
Casual (1-25 times)	4,265	65%	6,504	73%	6,792	73%	59.2%	4.4%
Core(26+ times)	2,345	35%	2,418	27%	2,488	27%	6.1%	2.9%
Bicycling (Mountain)	8,622	100%	9,289	100%	9,241	100%	7.2%	-0.5%
Casual (1-12 times)	4,319	50%	5,434	58%	5,302	57%	22.8%	-2.4%
Core(13+ times)	4,302	50%	3,854	41%	3,938	43%	-8.5%	2.2%
Fishing (Fly)	7,014	100%	8,077	100%	7,951	100%	13.4%	-1.6%
Casual (1-7 times)	4,493	64%	5,417	67%	5,305	67%	18.1%	-2.1%
Core(8+ times)	2,521	36%	2,659	33%	2,646	33%	5.0%	-0.5%
Archery	7,449	100%	7,662	100%	7,787	100%	4.5%	1.6%
Casual (1-25 times)	6,309	85%	6,483	85%	6,571	84%	4.2%	1.4%
Core(26+ times)	1,140	15%	1,179	15%	1,216	16%	6.7%	3.1%
Climbing (Indoor)	5,309	100%	6,356	100%	6,256	100%	17.8%	-1.6%
Roller Skating, In-Line	4,816	100%	5,201	100%	5,581	100%	15.9%	7.3%
Casual (1-12 times)	3,474	72%	3,840	74%	4,239	76%	22.0%	10.4%
Core(13+ times)	1,342	28%	1,361	26%	1,342	24%	0.0%	-1.4%
Bicycling (BMX)	3,648	100%	4,462	100%	4,722	100%	29.4%	5.8%
Casual (1-12 times)	2,257	62%	3,130	70%	3,351	71%	48.5%	7.1%
Core(13+ times)	1,392	38%	1,332	30%	1,371	29%	-1.5%	2.9%
Climbing (Sport/Boulder)	2,183	100%	2,544	100%	2,674	100%	22.5%	5.1%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,400	100%	2,568	100%	2,577	100%	7.4%	0.4%
Adventure Racing	2,143	100%	1,808	100%	1,839	100%	-14.2%	1.7%
Casual (1 time)	549	26%	405	22%	454	25%	-17.3%	12.1%
Core(2+ times)	1,595	74%	1,403	78%	1,385	75%	-13.2%	-1.3%
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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)		Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)		Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)			

Aquatics

National Participatory Trends - Aquatics								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Swimming (Fitness)	28,219	100%	28,173	100%	29,477	100%	2.2%	7.2%
Casual (1-49 times)	19,480	69%	20,620	73%	21,813	74%	10.1%	9.5%
Core(50+ times)	8,739	31%	7,553	27%	7,664	26%	-14.6%	1.5%
Aquatic Exercise	11,189	100%	11,307	100%	11,782	100%	7.5%	5.9%
Casual (1-49 times)	8,006	72%	9,298	82%	9,711	82%	25.8%	7.8%
Core(50+ times)	3,183	28%	2,009	18%	2,070	18%	-35.8%	-2.0%
Swimming on a Team	2,822	100%	3,327	100%	3,465	100%	9.3%	14.6%
Casual (1-49 times)	1,529	54%	2,280	69%	2,495	72%	35.9%	19.0%
Core(50+ times)	1,293	46%	1,047	31%	970	28%	-23.4%	6.0%
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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)		Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)		Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)			

Water sports/activities

National Participatory Trends - Water Sports / Activities								
Activity	Participation Levels						% Change	
	2019		2023		2024		5-Year Trend	1-Year Trend
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Kayaking (Recreational)	11,382	100%	14,726	100%	15,128	100%	32.9%	2.7%
Canoeing	8,995	100%	9,999	100%	10,111	100%	12.4%	1.1%
Snorkeling	7,659	100%	7,489	100%	7,696	95%	0.5%	2.8%
Casual (1-7 times)	6,192	81%	6,086	81%	6,337	82%	2.3%	4.1%
Core(8+ times)	1,468	19%	1,403	19%	951	12%	-35.2%	-32.2%
Jet Skiing	5,108	100%	5,759	100%	5,978	100%	17.0%	3.8%
Casual (1-7 times)	3,684	72%	4,490	78%	4,664	78%	26.6%	3.9%
Core(8+ times)	1,423	28%	1,269	22%	1,314	22%	-7.7%	3.5%
Stand-Up Paddling	3,562	100%	4,129	100%	4,402	100%	23.6%	6.6%
Rafting	3,438	100%	4,050	100%	4,245	100%	23.5%	4.8%
Surfing	2,964	100%	3,993	100%	4,230	100%	42.7%	5.9%
Casual (1-7 times)	2,001	68%	2,655	66%	2,937	69%	46.8%	10.6%
Core(8+ times)	962	32%	1,338	34%	1,293	31%	34.4%	-3.4%
Sailing	3,618	100%	4,100	100%	4,226	100%	16.8%	3.1%
Casual (1-7 times)	2,477	68%	3,117	76%	3,276	78%	32.3%	5.1%
Core(8+ times)	1,141	32%	984	24%	951	23%	-16.7%	-3.4%
Water Skiing	3,203	100%	3,133	100%	3,218	100%	0.5%	2.7%
Casual (1-7 times)	2,355	74%	2,302	73%	2,408	75%	2.3%	4.6%
Core(8+ times)	847	26%	832	27%	810	25%	-4.4%	-2.6%
Scuba Diving	2,715	100%	3,063	100%	3,148	100%	15.9%	2.8%
Casual (1-7 times)	2,016	74%	2,374	78%	2,487	79%	23.4%	4.8%
Core(8+ times)	699	26%	689	22%	662	21%	-5.3%	-3.9%
Kayaking (White Water)	2,583	100%	2,995	100%	3,075	100%	19.0%	2.7%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	2,652	100%	2,800	100%	2,869	100%	8.2%	2.5%
Wakeboarding	2,729	100%	2,844	100%	2,810	100%	3.0%	-1.2%
Casual (1-7 times)	1,839	67%	2,119	75%	2,122	76%	15.4%	0.1%
Core(8+ times)	890	33%	725	25%	688	24%	-22.7%	-5.1%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,405	100%	1,434	100%	1,476	100%	5.1%	2.9%
Casual (1-7 times)	1,112	79%	1,162	81%	1,192	81%	7.2%	2.6%
Core(8+ times)	292	21%	272	19%	284	19%	-2.7%	4.4%
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:	Evenly Divided between Core and Casual Participants (45-55%)		Moderate Amount of Participants (56-74%)		Majority Amount of Participants (75% or greater)			

RECOMMENDED PLANS, POLICIES + OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

Recommended Plans, Policies + Operational Standards

Appendix Support for Organizational Capacity Recommendations

This appendix summarizes identified administrative, policy, planning, and procedural needs that support align organizational capacity with service expectations. It is intended to provide additional direction for fu operational development without prescribing final policy language.

Current State of Plans, Policies + Standards

The Parks & Recreation Department maintains a solid operational foundation for developed parks, facilit staff management. Key opportunities remain to strengthen natural resource planning, partner governan structured workforce development.

Area	Existing Foundation	Recommended Need
Plans	Site Development Plans; Maintenance Management Plan; Trails and Greenways Plan; Emergency Action Plan.	Overarching Natural A Management Plan; Ar Management Plan; sit habitat restoration an management planni
Policies	Park Rules & Regulations Enforcement; Parkland Acquisition & Use; Memorial Tree and Bench Policy; Sponsorship Policy under update.	Comprehensive Parkl Management Policy; f Partnership Policy.
Standards + Procedures	Park Maintenance Standards; Facility Maintenance Standards; Park Signage Style Guide; Employee Handbook; onboarding and performance evaluation procedures.	Natural Areas Restora formal, calendar-base training standards.
Partnerships + Volunteers	Volunteer programming and coordination are handled through Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP).	City baseline expectat volunteer safety, onb authorization, trackin alignment with munic standards.

Recommended Plans + Frameworks

Urban Forestry + Natural Resource Framework

Develop an Arbor Management Plan alongside an overarching Natural Areas Management Plan. Supplement these plans with operating procedures for ecological restoration and native habitat maintenance to support urban biodiversity, canopy health, and consistent stewardship of natural areas.

Parkland Management Policy

Develop a comprehensive Parkland Management Policy that consolidates administrative, operational, conservation, and land-use practices for developed parks, open spaces, natural areas, greenways, waterfronts, and other parkland.

Recommended Policy Elements

- **Purpose + Authority:** Define the purpose, scope, governing authority, and relationship to applicable municipal codes and state regulatory requirements.
- **Land Classification + Stewardship Tiers:** Differentiate developed amenity parks, passive open spaces, and conservation/natural areas so management intensity and stewardship priorities reflect park character and intended use.
- **Turf + Vegetation Management:** Establish guidance for mowing cycles, naturalized or unmowed areas, low-impact landscape practices, and climate-adapted native plantings.
- **Tree Canopy Stewardship:** Establish protocols for hazard evaluation, replacement practices, structural pruning, and long-term canopy succession.
- **Integrated Pest Management:** Prioritize biological, cultural, and mechanical controls and establish appropriate limitations for chemical use, particularly near waterways and sensitive natural areas.
- **Stormwater + Soil Conservation:** Address soil decompaction, aeration, organic soil amendments, and maintenance of green stormwater infrastructure such as bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces.
- **Permitted Uses + Access:** Clarify public access, operating expectations, trail etiquette, motorized vehicle restrictions, and special-use requirements.
- **Encroachments + Easements:** Establish procedures for addressing private encroachments, illegal dumping, boundary issues, unauthorized clearing, easements, and restoration responsibilities.
- **Capital Alterations:** Define review and approval procedures for permanent structural modifications, grading, utilities, and other alterations proposed by outside entities.

Partnership Policy

Establish a transparent and consistent framework for evaluating, formalizing, managing, and monitoring public, private, nonprofit, philanthropic, and intergovernmental partnerships.

Recommended Policy Elements

- **Purpose + Scope:** Define which formal working relationships are governed by the policy, including nonprofit support organizations, athletic associations, conservancies, concessionaires, school districts, and corporate or philanthropic partners.
- **Agreement Structures:** Match partnership type to an appropriate agreement, such as memoranda of understanding, facility use or intergovernmental agreements, and development or donor agreements.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Evaluate proposed partnerships for alignment with Master Plan priorities, community needs, equity considerations, and long-term public benefit.
- **Fiscal + Operational Feasibility:** Consider partner contributions alongside long-term municipal operating, maintenance, lifecycle, and capital renewal obligations.
- **Approval Process:** Establish a clear administrative review and approval process appropriate to the scale, duration, financial implications, and property interests associated with each partnership.
- **Roles + Operational Boundaries:** Clearly distinguish partner responsibilities, such as volunteer recruitment, supplemental fundraising, or event support, from core municipal responsibilities including skilled trades, structural maintenance, safety, and regulatory compliance.
- **Baseline Compliance:** Require appropriate adherence to City safety protocols, background checks where applicable, nondiscrimination requirements, insurance, and risk-management standards.
- **Performance + Renewal:** Establish regular review of partnership outcomes, performance measures, reporting requirements, renewal terms, and conditions for modification or termination.

Volunteer Governance + FGRP Coordination

Continue leveraging Friends of Grand Rapids Parks for volunteer coordination while establishing baseline City standards that ensure partner-led volunteer work remains consistent with municipal safety, maintenance, and stewardship expectations.

- Define minimum safety, onboarding, and training expectations for volunteers.
- Clarify which maintenance and stewardship tasks may be completed by volunteers and which remain City responsibilities.
- Establish task authorization and supervision requirements.
- Standardize tracking of volunteer participation, hours, work completed, and other useful performance information.
- Define regular reporting and coordination expectations between FGRP and the Department.
- Align volunteer activities with Department maintenance standards, natural resource priorities, and approved work plans.

Staff Training + Workforce Development

Build upon existing onboarding and performance evaluation procedures by establishing a structured annual training program for permanent and seasonal staff.

- Technical trade skills and equipment operation.
- Safety procedures and regulatory requirements.
- Routine park and facility maintenance practices.
- Integrated pest management and responsible material use.
- Native planting, naturalized landscape, and ecological maintenance practices.
- Tree, landscape, and natural resource stewardship as staff responsibilities evolve.
- Periodic refresher training and follow-up evaluation where appropriate.

Suggested Implementation Steps

1. Confirm Priorities: Review identified policy and planning gaps with Department leadership and staff responsible for maintenance, forestry, natural resources, recreation, and administration.

2. Develop Policy Frameworks: Prepare the Parkland Management Policy, Partnership Policy, and natural resource planning framework using the recommended elements in this appendix as a starting point.

3. Clarify FGRP Operating Expectations: Review the existing relationship with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks and document baseline volunteer safety, task authorization, tracking, and reporting expectations through the most appropriate agreement or operating attachment.

4. Establish Staff Training Program: Develop an annual training calendar tied to Department responsibilities, equipment, safety requirements, and evolving natural resource management practices.

5. Review + Adopt: Present draft plans, policies, and standards through the appropriate City review and approval process.

6. Maintain + Update: Periodically review plans, policies, agreements, and procedures as the park system, partnerships, staffing, and service expectations evolve.

Relationship to the Master Plan

These recommendations provide supporting detail for the Master Plan objective to align organizational capacity with service expectations. Final plans, policies, agreement terms, performance measures, and technical standards should be developed and adopted through the City's appropriate administrative and legal review processes.

GREEN GENTRIFICATION AND ANTI-DISPLACEMENT STRATEGIES

Green gentrification and anti-displacement strategies recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) primarily through the **Parks-Related Anti-Displacement Strategies (PRADS)** framework (developed in collaboration with urban planning researchers Alessandro Rigolon and Jon Christensen) and its **Equity and Inclusive Healthy Places** initiatives.

Because municipal park agencies do not build housing or set tax policy in isolation, NRPA emphasizes that anti-displacement requires **early, proactive, cross-sector interventions** implemented *before* or *simultaneously* with new capital investments, greenways, and park revitalizations.

1. Housing Affordability & Stability (Cross-Sector Action)

New green amenities drive up land values, putting long-term low-income renters and fixed-income homeowners at risk. NRPA advocates partnering with housing authorities, land trusts, and municipal planners to deploy:

- **Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and Land Banking:** Acquiring or banking land around future park boundaries before project announcement or groundbreaking to preserve permanent affordability.
- **Tenant & Renter Protections:** Supporting anti-eviction ordinances, right-of-first-refusal laws (enabling tenants or nonprofits to purchase buildings), just-cause eviction standards, and rent stabilization in park-adjacent zones.
- **Homeowner Tax Relief:** Advocating for property tax freezes, caps ("circuit breakers"), and home repair/weatherization grant programs to prevent legacy homeowners from being taxed out as property assessments rise.
- **Inclusionary Zoning & Density Bonuses:** Requiring or incentivizing private developers building near new parks or linear trails to include dedicated deeply affordable family housing units.

2. Economic Inclusion & Wealth Building

Park investments should generate local economic returns for existing residents rather than external commercial interests.

- Targeted Local Hiring & Living Wage Policies: Structuring park construction, landscape management, and maintenance contracts with mandatory local-hiring requirements and workforce development pipelines.
- Micro-Enterprise & Vendor Access: Creating formal vendor spaces, incubator stalls, and pop-up retail infrastructure within parks, paired with low-barrier permits and fee waivers for legacy neighborhood entrepreneurs.
- Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs): Establishing legally binding CBAs between developers/public-private partnerships and neighborhood coalitions to secure local job guarantees, public facility investments, and community funds.

3. Community-Driven Planning & Co-Governance

Displacement is also cultural and psychological; longtime residents often report feeling alienated or "policed out" of renovated spaces.

- Deep, Compensated Community Engagement: Meeting residents where they are (churches, schools, tenant associations) rather than relying solely on formal evening public hearings. Providing childcare, multilingual materials, and stipends or gift cards for participant time.
- Participatory Budgeting: Allocating capital improvement or operational funds to community-directed voting processes, letting residents prioritize specific amenities (e.g., community gardens, shaded pavilions, sports lighting).
- Cultural Affirmation and Sense of Place: Preserving neighborhood landmarks, integrating public art created by local artists, and designing spaces that accommodate established cultural uses, multi-generational gatherings, and community events rather than imposing generic designs.

4. Park Design, Scale, and Siting Tactics ("Just Green Enough")

The type and distribution of green infrastructure directly influence gentrification pressure.

- Distributed Network vs. Mega-Investments: Prioritizing smaller, distributed neighborhood pocket parks, schoolyard transformations, and tree-canopy equity across historically redlined neighborhoods rather than concentrating massive, single-site signature destinations that trigger intense speculative real estate bubbles.
- Community-Defined Amenities: Designing programming and physical assets specifically tailored to current residents' expressed recreation needs (e.g., active play, family cookouts, soccer pitches) rather than high-end commercialized concessions or boutique design features aimed at attracting tourists and regional visitors.

Summary of Agency Implementation Roles

Strategic Domain	Park Agency Direct Role	Key External Partner
Housing	Share early capital improvement pipelines and site acquisition maps.	Housing authorities, CDCs, Land Trusts
Workforce	Mandate local hiring quotas in CIP bidding and operations maintenance.	Workforce development boards, trade unions
Governance	Host co-design sessions, compensate participants, support CBAs.	Grassroots CBOs, tenant unions, civic leaders
Capital Siting	Target park-poor neighborhoods with decentralized greening projects.	City planning, public works, GIS equity teams

BENCHMARKING REPORT

The benchmark analysis was developed using the most current and complete data available through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics database. The NRPA database was selected as the primary source because it provides standardized, self-reported operational, financial, staffing, and system metrics that allow for consistent comparisons across park and recreation agencies nationwide.

The agency selection process began by identifying park and recreation departments that had submitted complete data for the 2026 NRPA Park Metrics survey cycle. Because the benchmarking effort was conducted under a compressed project schedule, priority was given to agencies with readily available and verifiable data that could be analyzed consistently within the project timeframe. As a result, the study relied on current NRPA data rather than conducting supplemental outreach to agencies whose information was not publicly available or readily accessible at the time of analysis.

After identifying agencies with complete 2026 data, a preliminary list of candidates was evaluated based on several key criteria, including:

- Jurisdiction population and service area demographics
- Agency operating budget and overall scale of operations
- Park system size, developed acreage, and service responsibilities
- Staffing levels and organizational capacity
- Recognition of operational excellence, including CAPRA accreditation and/or recent NRPA Gold Medal Award recognition
- Similarity to Grand Rapids' role as an urban park and recreation provider with a highly developed park system

The intent was not to identify agencies that were identical to Grand Rapids, but rather to assemble a group of agencies that collectively provided meaningful comparisons across system size, operational complexity, staffing, financial resources, and nationally recognized practices.

Based on this evaluation, Peer Agencies were identified as being generally aligned with Grand Rapids in terms of population served, operational scale, staffing structure, and budget characteristics, providing a reasonable basis for comparison across key performance indicators. The identified Peer Agencies are:

- Albemarle County, VA
- Lancaster, CA
- Reno, NV
- Rochester Hills, MI
- Sugar Land, TX

Aspirational Agencies were also identified because they exhibit characteristics, performance metrics, investment levels, or organizational practices that may represent future opportunities or aspirational targets for Grand Rapids. The identified Aspirational Agencies are:

- Alexandria, VA
- Columbus, GA
- Greensboro, NC

Once the preliminary benchmark list was assembled, it was reviewed with Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation leadership. Department representatives provided feedback on the proposed agencies and participated in the final selection of benchmark communities included in the analysis. This collaborative review helped ensure the final peer and aspirational group reflected both objective data considerations and local knowledge of comparable park and recreation systems.

Regarding Des Moines and Omaha

During review of the benchmarking results, questions were raised regarding the absence of Des Moines and Omaha, which had been used as benchmark communities in previous City efforts. Both agencies were evaluated during the selection process; however, neither agency had complete data available in the 2026 NRPA Park Metrics dataset at the time the analysis was conducted. Because the benchmarking methodology relied on current-year, standardized data to ensure consistency and accuracy across all comparisons, these agencies could not be included in the final analysis. Had complete 2026 data been available, they would have been considered alongside the other candidate agencies during the evaluation process.

BENCHMARK AGENCIES

Agency	State	Total Population	Land Area (Sq Mi)	Density (Pop/Sq Mi)	CAPRA
Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation	**MI**	**200,000**	**45.0**	**4,444**	**No**
Peer Agencies					
Albemarle County Parks & Recreation	VA	110,652	726.0	152	No
Lancaster Parks, Art, Recreation, & Community Services	CA	173,516	95.0	1,826	No
Reno Parks & Recreation	NV	278,226	103.0	2,701	No
Rochester Hills Parks & Natural Resources	MI	78,000	33.0	2,364	No
Sugar Land Parks & Recreation	TX	111,026	42.9	2,590	No
Aspirational Agencies					
Alexandria Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities	VA	156,800	15.0	10,453	Yes
Columbus Parks & Recreation	GA	328,883	221.0	1,488	Yes
Greensboro Parks & Recreation	NC	307,381	129.6	2,372	Yes

BENCHMARK AGENCIES PARKS

Agency	Total Pop	Total Parks	Residents per Park	Total Acres	Total Developed Acres	% Acres Developed	Total Acres per 1,000 Residents
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**90**	**2,222**	**1,670**	**1,592**	**95.4%**	**8.3**
Peer Agencies							
Albemarle County	110,652	25	4,426	6,000	3,500	58.3%	54.2
Lancaster	173,516	14	12,394	450	n/a	n/a	2.6
Reno	278,226	88	3,162	2,665	751	28.2%	9.6
Rochester Hills	78,000	27	2,889	1,192	923	77.4%	15.3
Sugar Land	111,026	27	4,112	1,174	n/a	n/a	10.6
Aspirational Agencies							
Alexandria	156,800	122	1,285	856	735	85.8%	5.5
Columbus	328,883	52	6,325	2,424	n/a	n/a	7.4
Greensboro	307,381	160	1,921	9,612	2,292	23.8%	31.3

BENCHMARK AGENCIES TRAILS

Agency	Total Population	Total Trail Miles	Trail Miles per 1,000 Residents
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**40**	**0.20**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	110,652	105	0.95
Reno	278,226	36	0.13
Rochester Hills	78,000	12	0.15
Sugar Land	111,026	35	0.32
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	156,800	23	0.15
Columbus	328,883	33	0.10
Greensboro	307,381	99	0.32

*Note: Figures for Lancaster were not available.

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES OPERATING EXPENSE PER RESIDENT

Agency	Total Pop	Total Operating Expenditures	Operating Expense per Resident
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**$ 11,240,591**	**$ 56.20**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	110,652	$ 6,656,766	$ 60.16
Lancaster	173,516	$ 29,944,571	$ 172.58
Reno	278,226	$ 14,078,459	$ 50.60
Rochester Hills	78,000	$ 9,235,700	$ 118.41
Sugar Land	111,026	$ 7,079,693	$ 63.77
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	156,800	$ 31,163,224	$ 198.75
Columbus	328,883	$ 12,739,535	$ 38.74
Greensboro	307,381	$ 33,283,998	$ 108.28

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES OPERATING EXPENSE PER DEV. ACRE

Agency	Total Developed Acres	Total Operating Expenditures	Operating Expense per Developed Acre
Grand Rapids	**1,592**	**$ 11,240,591**	**$ 7,059.25**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	3,500	$ 6,656,766	$ 1,901.93
Reno	751	$ 14,078,459	$ 18,745.53
Rochester Hills	923	$ 9,235,700	$ 10,006.18
Sugar Land	-	$ 7,079,693	#DIV/0!
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	735	$ 31,163,224	$ 42,427.81
Greensboro	2,292	$ 33,283,998	$ 14,520.55

Note: Figures for Lancaster and Columbus were not available.

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES PER ACRE

Agency	Total Acres	Total Operating Expenditures	Operating Expense per Acre
Grand Rapids	**1,670**	**$ 11,240,591**	**$ 6,731.62**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	6,000	$ 6,656,766	$ 1,109.46
Lancaster	450	$ 29,944,571	$ 66,543.49
Reno	2,665	$ 14,078,459	$ 5,283.06
Rochester Hills	1,192	$ 9,235,700	$ 7,748.07
Sugar Land	1,174	$ 7,079,693	$ 6,030.40
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	856	$ 31,163,224	$ 36,414.14
Columbus	2,424	$ 12,739,535	$ 5,255.58
Greensboro	9,612	$ 33,283,998	$ 3,462.75

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES PER FTE

Agency	Total FTEs	Total Operating Expenditures	Operating Expense per FTE
Grand Rapids	**82**	**$ 11,240,591**	**$ 137,533.23**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	30	$ 6,656,766	$ 221,892.20
Lancaster	199	$ 29,944,571	$ 150,475.23
Reno	163	$ 14,078,459	$ 86,370.91
Rochester Hills	53	$ 9,235,700	$ 174,258.49
Sugar Land	37	$ 7,079,693	$ 191,343.05
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	178	$ 31,163,224	$ 175,074.29
Columbus	149	$ 12,739,535	$ 85,500.23

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES PARKS OPERATING EXPENSE %

Agency	Total Operating Expense	Parks	Recreation	Admin	Other
Grand Rapids	**$ 11,240,591.00**	**55%**	**26%**	**12%**	**6%**
Peer Agencies					
Lancaster	$ 29,944,571.00	61%	19%	12%	9%
Reno	$ 14,078,459.00	38%	51%	11%	0%
Rochester Hills	$ 9,235,700.00	57%	7%	14%	23%
Sugar Land	$ 7,079,693.00	55%	34%	11%	0%
Aspirational Agencies					
Alexandria	$ 31,163,224.00	40%	45%	8%	7%
Columbus	$ 12,739,535.00	63%	13%	6%	18%
Greensboro	$ 33,283,998.00	54%	29%	11%	5%

*Note: Figures for Albemarle Co were not available.

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES OPERATING EXPENSE %2

Agency	Total Population	Total Trail Miles	Trail Miles per 1,000 Residents
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**40**	**0.20**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	110,652	105	0.95
Reno	278,226	36	0.13
Rochester Hills	78,000	12	0.15
Sugar Land	111,026	35	0.32
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	156,800	23	0.15
Columbus	328,883	33	0.10
Greensboro	307,381	99	0.32

*Note: Figures for Lancaster were not available.

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES BUDGET SOURCE %

Agency	Total Operating Expense	General Fund	Special Tax / Levy	Earned Revenue	Sponsors, Private Grant / Donation	Public Operating Grant	Other
Grand Rapids	**$ 11,240,591.00**	**49%**	**44%**	**7%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Peer Agencies							
Lancaster	$ 29,944,571.00	89%	3%	0%	0%	8%	0%
Reno	$ 14,078,459.00	91%	5%	2%	0%	2%	0%
Rochester Hills	$ 9,235,700.00	82%	0%	10%	0%	0%	8%
Sugar Land	$ 7,079,693.00	98%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Aspirational Agencies							
Alexandria	$ 31,163,224.00	59%	0%	4%	0%	1%	36%
Columbus	$ 12,739,535.00	95%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Greensboro	$ 33,283,998.00	88%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle County were not available.*

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES REVENUE PER RESIDENT

Agency	Total Population	Total Earned Revenue	Earned Revenue per Resident
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**$ 842,426**	**$ 4.21**
Peer Agencies			
Lancaster	173,516	$ 4,878,997	$ 28.12
Reno	278,226	$ 6,219,882	$ 22.36
Sugar Land	111,026	$ 270,000	$ 2.43
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	156,800	$ 1,812,900	$ 11.56
Greensboro	307,381	$ 4,008,979	$ 13.04

**Note: Figures for Albemarle County, Rochester Hills, and Columbus were not available.*

BENCHMARK AGENCIES COST RECOVERY

Agency	Total Earned Revenue	Total Operating Expense	Cost Recovery (%)
Grand Rapids	**$ 842,426**	**$ 11,240,591**	**7%**
Peer Agencies			
Lancaster	$ 4,878,997	$ 29,944,571	16%
Reno	$ 6,219,882	$ 14,078,459	44%
Sugar Land	$ 270,000	$ 7,079,693	4%
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	$ 1,812,900	$ 31,163,224	6%
Greensboro	$ 4,008,979	$ 33,283,998	12%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle County, Rochester Hills, and Columbus were not available.*

BENCHMARK AGENCIES CAPITAL BUDGET

Agency	Current Capital Budget	CIP Next 5 Years
Grand Rapids	**$ 2,715,247**	**$ 20,680,712**
Peer Agencies		
Albemarle County	$ 5,584,028	$ -
Lancaster	$ 6,420,147	$ 64,436,147
Reno	$ 11,325,000	$ 29,546,687
Rochester Hills	$ 2,342,000	$ 15,534,000
Sugar Land	$ 4,600,000	$ 13,800,000
Aspirational Agencies		
Alexandria	$ 18,708,000	$ 70,069,400
Greensboro	$ 6,306,000	$ -

BENCHMARK AGENCIES PARKS CIP USE %

Agency	Current Capital Budget	Acquisition	Improvements	Other
Grand Rapids	**$ 2,715,247.00**	**0%**	**100%**	**0%**
Peer Agencies				
Lancaster	$ 6,420,147.00	0%	100%	0%
Reno	$ 11,325,000.00	0%	100%	0%
Rochester Hills	$ 2,342,000.00	0%	96%	4%
Sugar Land	$ 4,600,000.00	0%	100%	0%
Aspirational Agencies				
Alexandria	$ 18,708,000.00	2%	68%	30%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle Co, Columbus, and Greensboro were not available.*

BENCHMARK AGENCIES OPERATING EXPENSE %2

Agency	Current Capital Budget	Renovation	New Development
Grand Rapids	**$ 2,715,247.00**	**100%**	**0%**
Peer Agencies			
Lancaster	$ 6,420,147.00	100%	0%
Reno	$ 11,325,000.00	98%	2%
Rochester Hills	$ 2,342,000.00	38%	62%
Sugar Land	$ 4,600,000.00	100%	0%
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	$ 18,708,000.00	31%	69%
Greensboro	$ 6,306,000.00	78%	22%

**Note: Figures for Albemarle Co and Columbus were not available.*

BENCHMARK AGENCIES FTES PER 10K RESIDENTS

Agency	Total Poulation	Total FTEs	FTEs per 10K Residents
Grand Rapids	**200,000**	**82**	**4.09**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	110,653	30	2.71
Lancaster	173,516	199	11.47
Reno	278,226	163	5.86
Rochester Hills	78,000	53	6.79
Sugar Land	111,026	37	3.33
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	156,800	178	11.35
Columbus	328,883	149	4.53
Greensboro	307,381	245	7.97

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES REVENUE PER SQUARE MILE

Agency	Total FTEs	Jurisdiction Area (sq mi)	FTEs per Sq Mi
Grand Rapids	**82**	**45.0**	**1.82**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	30	726.0	0.04
Lancaster	199	95.0	2.09
Reno	163	103.0	1.58
Rochester Hills	53	33.0	1.61
Sugar Land	37	42.9	0.86
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	178	15.0	11.87
Columbus	149	221.0	0.67
Greensboro	245	129.6	1.89

BENCHMARK AGENCIES FTE BY AREA

Agency	Total FTEs	Admin	Operations / Maintenance	Programmers	Capital Development	Other
Grand Rapids	**82**	**11%**	**50%**	**35%**	**4%**	**0%**
Peer Agencies						
Albemarle County	30	11%	74%	15%	0%	0%
Lancaster	199	10%	31%	49%	10%	0%
Reno	163	7%	48%	32%	4%	0%
Rochester Hills	53	15%	44%	6%	0%	35%
Sugar Land	3[illegible]	16%	45%	32%	7%	0%
Aspirational Agencies						
Alexandria	178	9%	40%	46%	5%	0%
Columbus	149	11%	42%	45%	2%	0%
Greensboro	245	5%	40%	5%	1%	49%

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

BENCHMARK AGENCIES VOLUNTEERS

Agency	Total Volunteers	Total Hours Volunteered	Hours per Volunteer
Grand Rapids	**2,[illegible]**	**4,625**	**2.02**
Peer Agencies			
Albemarle County	1,199	2,919	2.43
Lancaster	43	1,281	29.79
Reno	2,462	6,701	2.72
Sugar Land	99	1,810	18.28
Aspirational Agencies			
Alexandria	2,088	8,500	4.07
Columbus	20	300	15.00
Greensboro	4,537	34,865	7.68

*Note: Figures for Rochester Hills were not available.

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA ACRES PER 1K RESIDENTS

ACRES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS - PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Acres per 1,000 residents for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	8.6	8.3
Acres per 1,000 residents for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	7.8	
Acres per 1,000 residents for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	11.7	
Acres per 1,000 residents for Jurisdictions with 50 to 99 FTEs	10.2	
Acres per 1,000 residents for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	13.7	
Acres per 1,000 residents for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	10.3	

NRPA TRAIL MILES

TRAIL MILES - PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Miles of trails for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	29	40
Miles of trails for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	19	
Miles of trails for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	23	
Miles of trails for Jurisdictions with 50 to 99 FTEs	19	
Miles of trails for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	35	
Miles of trails for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	62	

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA ACRES FTES

AGENCY FTES - PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
FTEs for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	126.0 FTEs	82 FTEs
FTEs for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	123.7 FTEs	
FTEs for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	120.8 FTEs	
FTEs for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	138.2 FTEs	
FTEs for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	246.8 FTEs	

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA FTES BY AREA

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Distribution of FTEs for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	47% Ops/Main 33% Programmers 14% Admin 3% Capital 3% Other	**50% Ops/Main 35% Programmers 11% Admin 4% Capital 0% Other**
Distribution of FTEs for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	44% Ops/Main 35% Programmers 15% Admin 3% Capital 3% Other	
Distribution of FTEs for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	46% Ops/Main 34% Programmers 15% Admin 3% Capital 2% Other	
Distribution of FTEs for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	47% Ops/Main 33% Programmers 15% Admin 2% Capital 3% Other	
Distribution of FTEs for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	49% Ops/Main 32% Programmers 14% Admin 2% Capital 3% Other	
Distribution of FTEs for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	48% Ops/Main 33% Programmers 11% Admin 3% Capital 4% Other	

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA OPERATING EXPENSES

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
OpEx for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	$ 15,370,000.00	$ 11,240,591.00
OpEx for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	$ 14,300,000.00	
OpEx for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	$ 8,100,000.00	
OpEx for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	$ 15,640,000.00	
OpEx for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	$ 31,950,000.00	

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA ACRES OPERATING EXPENSE DISTRIBUTION

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Distribution of OpEx for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	39% Parks 35% Recreation 16% Admin 10% Other	55% Parks 26% Recreation 12% Admin 6% Other
Distribution of OpEx for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	36% Parks 40% Recreation 16% Admin 8% Other	
Distribution of OpEx for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	37% Parks 38% Recreation 15% Admin 10% Other	
Distribution of OpEx for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	37% Parks 38% Recreation 17% Admin 9% Other	
Distribution of OpEx for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	40% Parks 37% Recreation 14% Admin 8% Other	
Distribution of OpEx for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	42% Parks 36% Recreation 14% Admin 8% Other	

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA 5-YEAR CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	$ 36,800,000	$ 20,680,712
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	$ 27,000,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	$ 24,300,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	$ 12,700,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	$ 25,200,000	
Capital Investment next 5 Years for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	$ 59,100,000	

NRPA 5-YEAR REVENUES

PARK & RECREATION AGENCY FILTER	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Revenue Sources for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	61% General Fund 19% Earned Revenue 10% Voter Tax / Levy 5% Non-Voter Tax / Levy 2% Other 2% Operating Grants (public) 1% Sponsorship, in-kind, private grants / donations	48.4% General Fund 7.5% Earned Revenue 43.8% Voter Tax / Levy 0% Non-Voter Tax / Levy 0% Other 0% Operating Grants (public) 0.4% Sponsorship, in-kind, private grants / donations
Revenue Sources for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	67% General Fund 16% Earned Revenue 6% Voter Tax / Levy 5% Non-Voter Tax / Levy 3% Other 2% Operating Grants (public) 1% Sponsorship, in-kind, private grants / donations	
Revenue Sources for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	64% General Fund 15% Earned Revenue 9% Voter Tax / Levy 6% Non-Voter Tax / Levy 3% Other 2% Operating Grants (public) 1% Sponsorship, in-kind, private grants / donations	

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

NRPA ACRES COST RECOVERY %

COST RECOVERY - PARK & RECREATION AGENCY BEST PRACTICES	NRPA MEDIAN 2025	Grand Rapids 2025
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000	21%	7%
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with over 2,500 people per Sq Mile	26%	
Cost Recovery for Agencies with budgets between $10 to $19.9 Million	30%	
Cost Recovery for Agencies with 50 to 99 FTEs	33%	
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with 1,001 to 3,500 Acres to Maintain	26%	
Cost Recovery for Jurisdictions with 50 or More Parks to Maintain	25%	

NRPA OPERATING BUDGET PEER-ASPIRATIONAL

OPERATING BUDGET COMPARISON WITH PEER & ASPIRATIONAL AGENCIES		
	Grand Rapids	Peer & Aspirational Cities Average
Population	200,000	193,061
Operating Expenditures	$11,244,591	$18,022,743
Operating Expenditures per Resident	$56.20	$101.00
Total Developed Acres	1,592	1,640
Operating Expenses per Developed Acre	$7,059.25	$17,520
Total Acres	1,670	3,046.58
Operating Expenses per Acre (Total Acres)	$6,731.62	$16,480.87
Total FTEs	82	132
Operating Expenses per FTE	$137,533	$152,596

UPDATE FORTHCOMING

MDNR POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORTS

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR GRANT PROJECTS

ID Number	Park Project	Address	Year	Grant Type	Ward
1	Riverside	2001 Monroe Ave NE	1971	LWCF	2
2	Riverside	2001 Monroe Ave NE	1973	LWCF	2
3	Ken-O-Sha Park	3155 Kalamazoo SE	1975	LWCF	3
4	West Riverbank Park	2001 Monroe Ave NE	1976	LWCF	1
5	Butterworth Riverfront	600 Garfield Ave SW	1995	LWCF	1
6	Blandford Nature Center	1715 Hillburn Ave NW	1982	MNRTF	1
7	Jaycee Family Park	2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE	1987	MNRTF	3
8	Sesquicentennial River Edges	n/a	1988	MNRTF	2
9	Briggs: Neighborhood Playgrounds	324 Knapp NE	1989	BF	2
9	Cherry: Neighborhood Playgrounds	725 Cherry St SE	1989	BF	2
9	Dickinson: Neighborhood Playgrounds	1635 Willard SE	1989	BF	3
9	Douglas: Neighborhood Playgrounds	301 Lexington Ave NW	1989	BF	1
9	Fuller: Neighborhood Playgrounds	250 Fuller Ave NE	1989	BF	2
9	Garfield: Neighborhood Playgrounds	250 Burton St SE	1989	BF	1
9	Lincoln: Neighborhood Playgrounds	231 Marion Ave NW	1989	BF	1
9	Mary Waters: Neighborhood Playgrounds	1042 Lafayette NE	1989	BF	2
9	MLK: Neighborhood Playgrounds	1200 Franklin St SE	1989	BF	3

ID Number	Park Project	Address	Year	Grant Type	Ward
20	Cambridge Park	1444 Gladstone	2000	BF	3
21	Heartside Park	301 Ionia SW	2000	CMI	2
22	MLK Park	1200 Franklin St SE	2011	RP	3
23	Roosevelt Park	739 Van Raalte SW	2011	RP	1
24	Pleasant Park	620 Madison Ave SE	2011	MNRTF	2
25	Richmond Shelter House	963 Richmond NW	2014	RP	1
26	Huff Park	1500 Aberdeen St NE	2015	MNRTF	2
27	Monroe North	555 Monroe Ave NW	2015	MNRTF	2
28	Riverside Park Kayak Launch	2001 Monroe Ave NE 49505	2018	RP	2
29	Clemente Park	546 Rumsey SW	2018	MNRTF	1
30	Garfield Park Splash Pad	250 Burton St SE	2019	MNRTF	3
31	Ottawa Hills Park	2060 Oakfield Ave SE	2020	MNRTF	3
32	Leonard to Ann Segment 2			MNRTF	1
33	Leonard to Ann Segment 4			MNRTF	1
34	Plaza Roosevelt (Unity Park)	680 Cesar E Chavez Ave SW		MNRTF	1
35	Camelot Park	2230 Rowland Ave SE		ORLP	3
36	Bike Park	580 Kirtland St SW		MNRTF	1

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR GRANT PROJECTS (CONTINUED)

ID Number	Park Project	Address	Year	Grant Type	Ward
20	Cambridge Park	1444 Gladstone	2000	BF	3
21	Heartside Park	301 Ionia SW	2000	CMI	2
22	MLK Park	1200 Franklin St SE	2011	RP	3
23	Roosevelt Park	739 Van Raalte SW	2011	RP	1
24	Pleasant Park	620 Madison Ave SE	2011	MNRTF	2
25	Richmond Shelter House	963 Richmond NW	2014	RP	1
26	Huff Park	1500 Aberdeen St NE	2015	MNRTF	2
27	Monroe North	555 Monroe Ave NW	2015	MNRTF	2
28	Riverside Park Kayak Launch	2001 Monroe Ave NE 49505	2018	RP	2
29	Clemente Park	546 Rumsey SW	2018	MNRTF	1
30	Garfield Park Splash Pad	250 Burton St SE	2019	MNRTF	3
31	Ottawa Hills Park	2060 Oakfield Ave SE	2020	MNRTF	3
32	Leonard to Ann Segment 2			MNRTF	1
33	Leonard to Ann Segment 4			MNRTF	1
34	Plaza Roosevelt (Unity Park)	680 Cesar E Chavez Ave SW		MNRTF	1
35	Camelot Park	2230 Rowland Ave SE		ORLP	3
36	Bike Park	580 Kirtland St SW		MNRTF	1

POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORTS

Photo Index

1. Riverside Park, 1971, LWCF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

2. Riverside Park, 1973, LWCF, Ward 2

DNR Plaques	Park ID Sign
	

3. Ken-O-Sha Park, 1975, LWCF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR PROJECT PHOTO INDEX (CONTINUED)

4. West Riverbank Park, 1976, LWCF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	n/a

5. Butterworth Riverfront, 1995, LWCF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

6. Blandford Nature Center, 1982, MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

7. MacKay Jaycee Family Park, 1987, MNRTF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

8. Sesquicentennial River Edges, 1988, MNRTF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	n/a

9. Briggs: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. Cherry: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 2

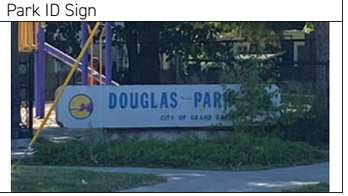
DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. Dickinson: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR PROJECT PHOTO INDEX (CONTINUED)

9. Douglas: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. Fuller: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. Garfield: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. Lincoln: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. Mary Waters: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

9. MLK: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

9. Richmond: Neighborhood Playgrounds, 1989, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR PROJECT PHOTO INDEX (CONTINUED)

10. Aberdeen Park, 1989, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

11. Huff Park, 1991, MNRTF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

12. Burton Park, 1992, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

13. Garfield Picnic Shelter, 1993, LWCF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

14. Cheseboro: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

14. Clemente: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

14. Coit: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

14. Highland: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR PROJECT PHOTO INDEX (CONTINUED)

14. Mulick: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

14. Westown Commons: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

14. Wilcox: Neighborhood Parks, 1993, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

15. Canal Avenue Park, 1994, BF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

16. Butterworth Bridge and Trail, 1995, MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	n/a

17. Plaster Creek Trail, 1995, MNRTF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

18. Riverside Park Trail, 1996, MNRTF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

19. 6th Street Bridge Park, 1998, MNRTF, Ward 2

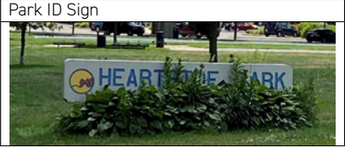
DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR PROJECT PHOTO INDEX (CONTINUED)

20. Cambridge Park, 2000, BF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

21. Heartside Park, 2000, CMI, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

22. MLK Park, 2011, RP, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	n/a

23. Roosevelt Park, 2011, RP, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

24. Pleasant Park, 2011, MNRTF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

25. Richmond Shelter House, 2014, PR, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

26. Huff Park, 2015, MNRTF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

GRAND RAPIDS MDNR PROJECT PHOTO INDEX (CONTINUED)

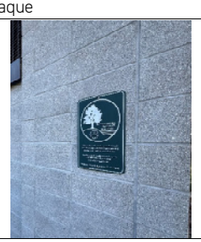
27. Monroe North, 2015, MNRTF, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

28. Riverside Park Kayak Launch, 2018, RP, Ward 2

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

29. Clemente Park, 2018, MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

30. Garfield Park Splash Pad, 2019, MNRTF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	

31. Ottawa Hills Park, 2020, MNRTF, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
	n/a

32. Leonard to Ann Segment 2, MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

33. Leonard to Ann Segment 4, MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

34. Plaza Roosevelt (Unity Park), MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	

35. Camelot Park, ORLP, Ward 3

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

36. Bike Park, MNRTF, Ward 1

DNR Plaque	Park ID Sign
n/a	n/a

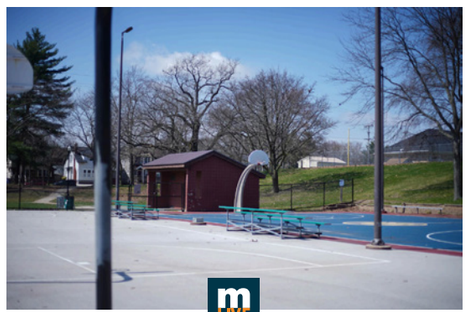
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT

GRAND RAPIDS

Your voice could transform Grand Rapids parks for the next five years — here's how to be heard

Updated: Jun. 16, 2026, 2:25 p.m. | Published: Jun. 16, 2026, 2:24 p.m.



An MLive file photo of a basketball court at Martin Luther King Park. Anntaninna Biondo | MLive.com

By Advance Local Express Desk

GRAND RAPIDS, MI -- The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is asking residents to weigh in on the future of the city's parks system through a series of public engagement opportunities this summer.

The department is developing its 2027-2032 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, which will guide future investments, improvements and programming across the city's parks, trails and recreation facilities. An online survey is available through July 6, and staff will host engagement sessions at community events and park locations throughout the summer.

"Grand Rapids residents have helped build one of the most dynamic park systems in our region, and their voices will guide its next chapter," s[illegible]ra Cleypool, parks and recreation director. "We're excited to collaborate with the comm[illegible] ensure our expanding network of parks and programs continues to welcome and inspire [illegible]."

The master plan will evaluate community needs, recreation trends, park and facility conditions, trail connectivity and equitable access to recreation. It will also examine opportunities to strengthen connections to the Grand River and local waterways.

Department staff will gather feedback at upcoming events including the MLK Park Party on June 27 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 900 Fuller Ave. SE, and at Richmond Park Pool on July 9 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1101 Richmond St. NW. Additional sessions are scheduled at Mulick Park on July 13, Briggs Park Pool on July 16, Lincoln Park on July 20, and Plaster Creek Family Park on Aug. 8.

The planning process will include neighborhood pop-up events, youth and senior focus groups, watershed and river education activities, and poolside engagement events. The department said it aims to ensure voices from across the community are represented in the final plan.

Residents can take the online survey, view upcoming engagement opportunities and sign up for project updates on the city's website.

PLAN PRESS RELEASE

City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

Online community survey available through July 6

City invites community to help shape the future of Parks and Recreation

- June 16, 2026

- Parks and Recreation (/city-news/parks-and-recreation/)

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is inviting residents to help shape the future of the city's parks, trails, recreation programs and public spaces through the development of the 2027–2032 Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan.

The master plan will serve as a roadmap for future investments, improvements and programming throughout the parks system. Building on previous planning efforts, the update will evaluate community needs, recreation trends, park and facility conditions, trail connectivity, equitable access to recreation, and opportunities to strengthen connections to the Grand River and local waterways.

The process includes neighborhood pop-up events, youth and senior focus groups, watershed and river education activities, poolside engagement events, and other opportunities designed to ensure voices from across the community are represented in the final plan. The goal is to create a shared vision for a park system that is welcoming, accessible, resilient and reflective of the needs of Grand Rapids residents.

“Grand Rapids residents have helped build one of the most dynamic park systems in our region, and their voices will guide its next chapter,” said Laura Cleypool, parks and recreation director. “We’re excited to collaborate with the community to ensure our expanding network of parks and programs continues to welcome and inspire everyone.”

Community input is a critical part of the planning process and the department encourages everyone who lives, works, learns or recreates in Grand Rapids to participate and help shape the future of the parks online or at an in-person event.

Take the Online Survey

An online community survey (https://engage.grandrapidsmi.gov/w70366) is available now through July 6. Residents of all ages are encouraged to share their experiences, priorities and ideas for the future of Grand Rapids parks and recreation facilities.

Attend a Community Engagement Event
Department staff and the planning team will be attending community events and parks throughout the summer to gather feedback directly from residents. Upcoming engagement opportunities include:

- Saturday, June 27 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the MLK Park Party (900 Fuller Ave SE)
- Thursday, July 9 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Richmond Park Pool (1101 Richmond St. NW)
- Monday, July 13 from 10 a.m. to Noon at GRPL Outdoor Storytime at Mulick Park (1632 Sylvan Ave SE)
- Thursday, July 16 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Briggs Park Pool (350 Knapp St.NE)
- Monday, July 20 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at GRPL Outdoor Storytime at Lincoln Park (231 Marion Ave NW)
- Saturday, August 8, from 9 a.m. to Noon at Friends of Grand Rapids Parks’ Insect Extravaganza! at Plaster Creek Family Park (2401 Buchanan Ave. SW

Additional community engagement opportunities will be announced throughout the summer.

Residents can learn more about the project, take the survey, view upcoming engagement opportunities and sign up for project updates by visiting the project website here (https://engage.grandrapidsmi.gov/grparks2027) .

###

Back to News Search (/city-news/)

Contact Us

311 (tel:49503%20311) or 616.456.3000 (tel:616.456.3000)

300 Monroe Avenue NW
(https://www.google.com/maps/place/300+Monroe+Ave+NW,+Grand+Rapids,+MI+49503/@42.9692626,-85.6737103,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x8819adc
85.6715216)
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
(https://www.google.com/maps/place/300+Monroe+Ave+NW,+Grand+Rapids,+MI+49503/@42.9692626,-85.6737103,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x8819adc
85.6715216) (tel:49503%20311)

Media Requests (/departments/communications/media-relations/)

Resources

Privacy Policy (/privacy-policy/)
Sitemap (/sitemap/)

Employee Intranet (https://grandrapids.sharepoint.com/sites/CoGRIntranet)

Translate

Select Language

Powered by Google Translate (https://translate.google.com)

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POP-UP INPUT SESSION GENERAL FLYER

YOUR CITY YOUR PARKS
INPUT SESSIONS
2027-2032 PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Help shape the vision for the future of parks, trails, and natural areas within your community!

¡Ayúdanos a dar forma a la visión futura de los parques, senderos y espacios naturales de tu comunidad!

JULY | *JULIO*

- 9 — **Richmond Park Pool** 11:00AM - 3:00PM
- 10 — **Riverside Park Paddle Event** 3:00PM - 5:00PM
- 14 — **Garfield Park Outdoor Storytime** 6:00PM - 8:00PM
- 21 — **Lincoln Park Outdoor Storytime** 6:00PM - 8:00PM
- 23 — **Briggs Park Pool** 1:00PM - 4:00PM

JUNE | *JUNIO*

- 27 — **MLK Party in the Park** 9:00AM - 3:00PM

AUGUST | *AGOSTO*

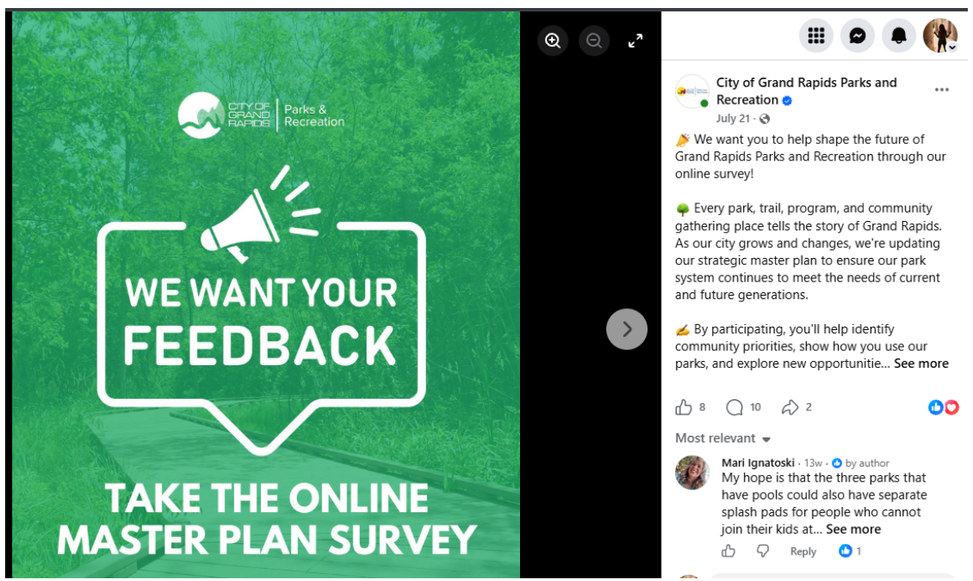
- 8 — **Plaster Creek Family Park Insect Extravaganza** 9:00AM - 12:00PM

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS | Parks & Recreation

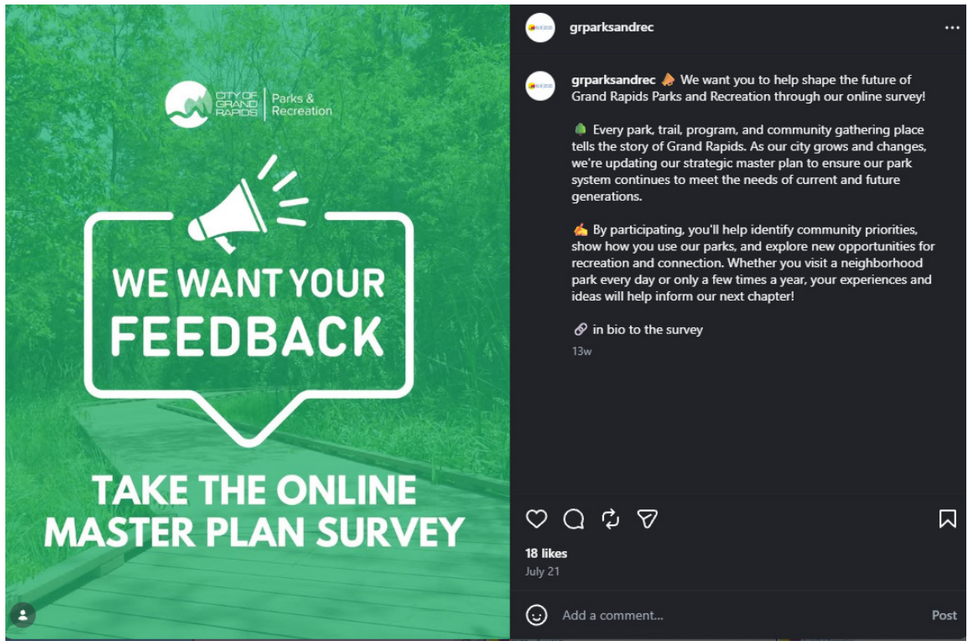
SCAN TO LEARN MORE & TAKE THE ONLINE SURVEY

ESCANEA PARA OBTENER MÁS INFORMACIÓN Y PARTICIPAR EN LA ENCUESTA EN LÍNEA

engage.grandrapidsmi.gov/grparks2027



Facebook Post from the Parks Department's page dated July 21, 2026



Instagram Post from the Parks Department's page dated July 21, 2026

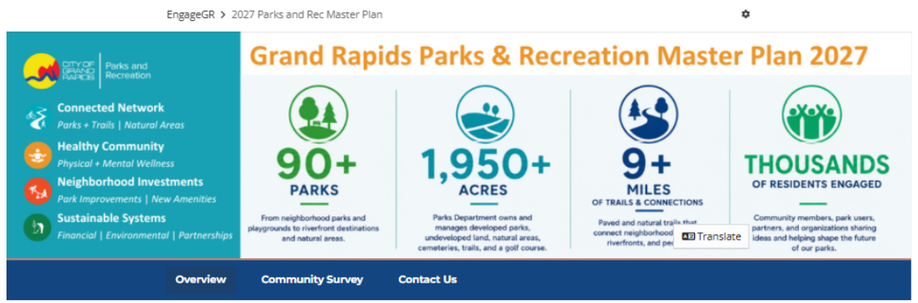


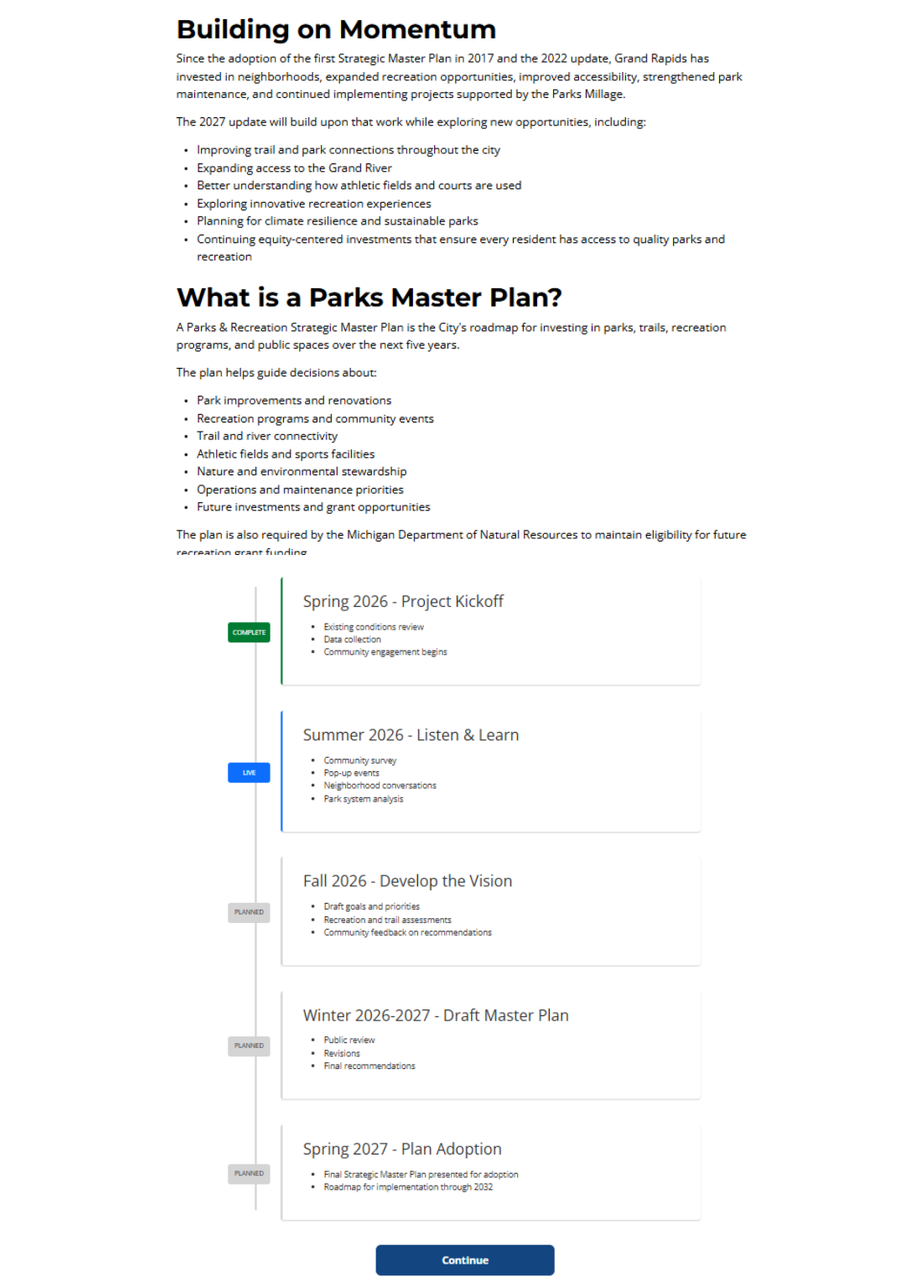
Yard signs were placed at all park enterances throughout the system from June 18, 2026 through August 8, 2026



Master Plan yard signs at Lincoln Park

MASTER PLAN WEBSITE LANDING PAGE





MLK PARK PARTY TEENS & SENIORS CONVERSATION LOUNGE EMAIL INVITE

Join the Conversation and Help Shape Grand Rapids Parks!

What do you love about Grand Rapids parks? What could make them even better? We want to hear from you!

You're invited to a special Teens/Seniors Discussion Group where you'll have the chance to share your ideas, experiences, and vision for the future of parks, trails, recreation programs, and green spaces across the city. Your feedback will play an important role in shaping the 2027–2032 Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Whether you're a regular park visitor, an occasional trail user, or someone who wishes there were more opportunities to get outside and connect with your community, your perspective matters.

Enjoy a relaxed conversation, meet fellow community members, and help us imagine what's next for Grand Rapids parks.

Bonus: Snacks and refreshments will be provided, and all participants will receive a $10 gift card to Hall Street Bakery or Good Judy's as a thank-you for their time.

Come share your voice and help create parks and recreation experiences that are welcoming, accessible, and fun for everyone!

MLK Party in the Park

Saturday, June 27th 1:00pm – 3:00pm

MLK Park Community Center

Room Name/Number

To learn more about the 2027–2032 Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan, visit https://engage.grandrapidsmi.gov/grparks2027

MLK PARK PARTY TEENS & SENIORS CONVERSATION LOUNGE POSTCARD INVITE









YOUR CITY YOUR PARKS
NEIGHBOR INPUT
2027-2032 PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Neighborhood Association Board Exercise
HEAT INDEX WORKSHEET INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for participating in the Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan update. Your input will help identify the priorities and needs of your neighborhood.

Please complete these worksheets as a board or committee. Discuss each topic together and work toward a shared response.

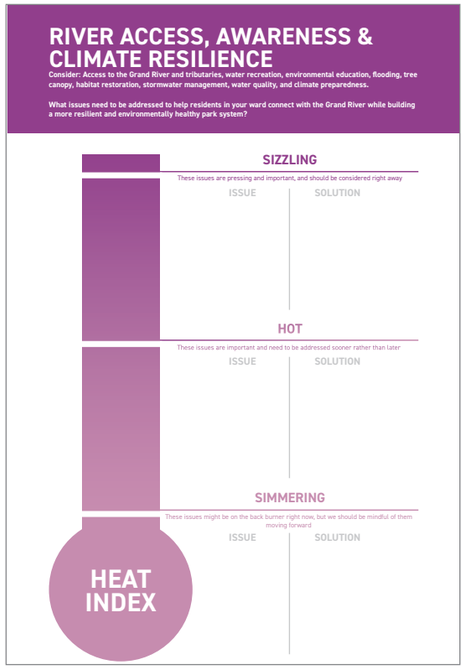
For each worksheet:

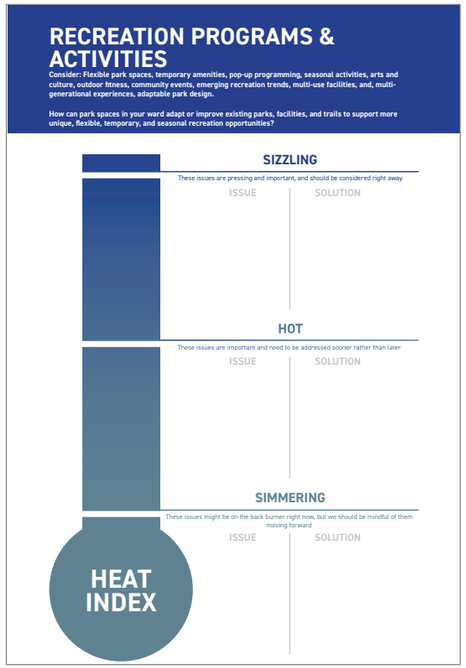
- Review the "Consider" section to guide your discussion.
- Identify up to key issues affecting your neighborhood or ward.
- Suggest a potential solution for each issue.
- Place each issue on the Heat Index based on its priority:
  - **Sizzling** – Needs immediate attention
  - **Hot** – Important to address soon
  - **Simmering** – A longer-term priority

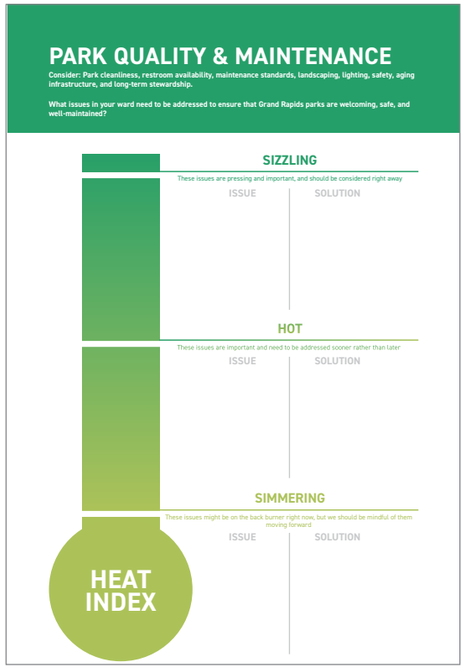
Think about your neighborhood as a whole, not just individual parks.
Please return your completed worksheets to Suzette no later than August 14.

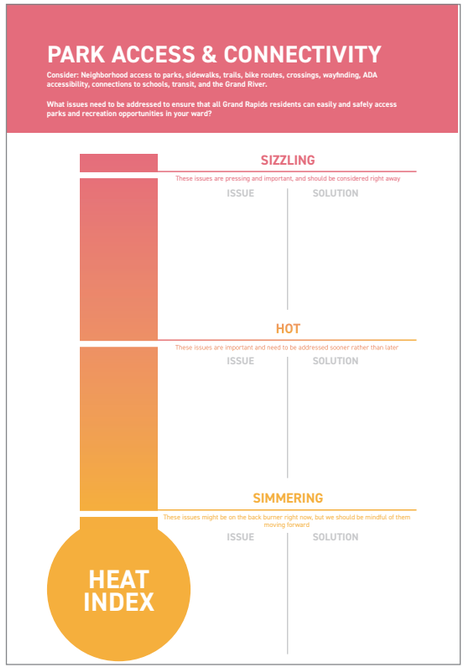
Thank you for helping shape the future of Grand Rapids parks and recreation!

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS | Parks & Recreation

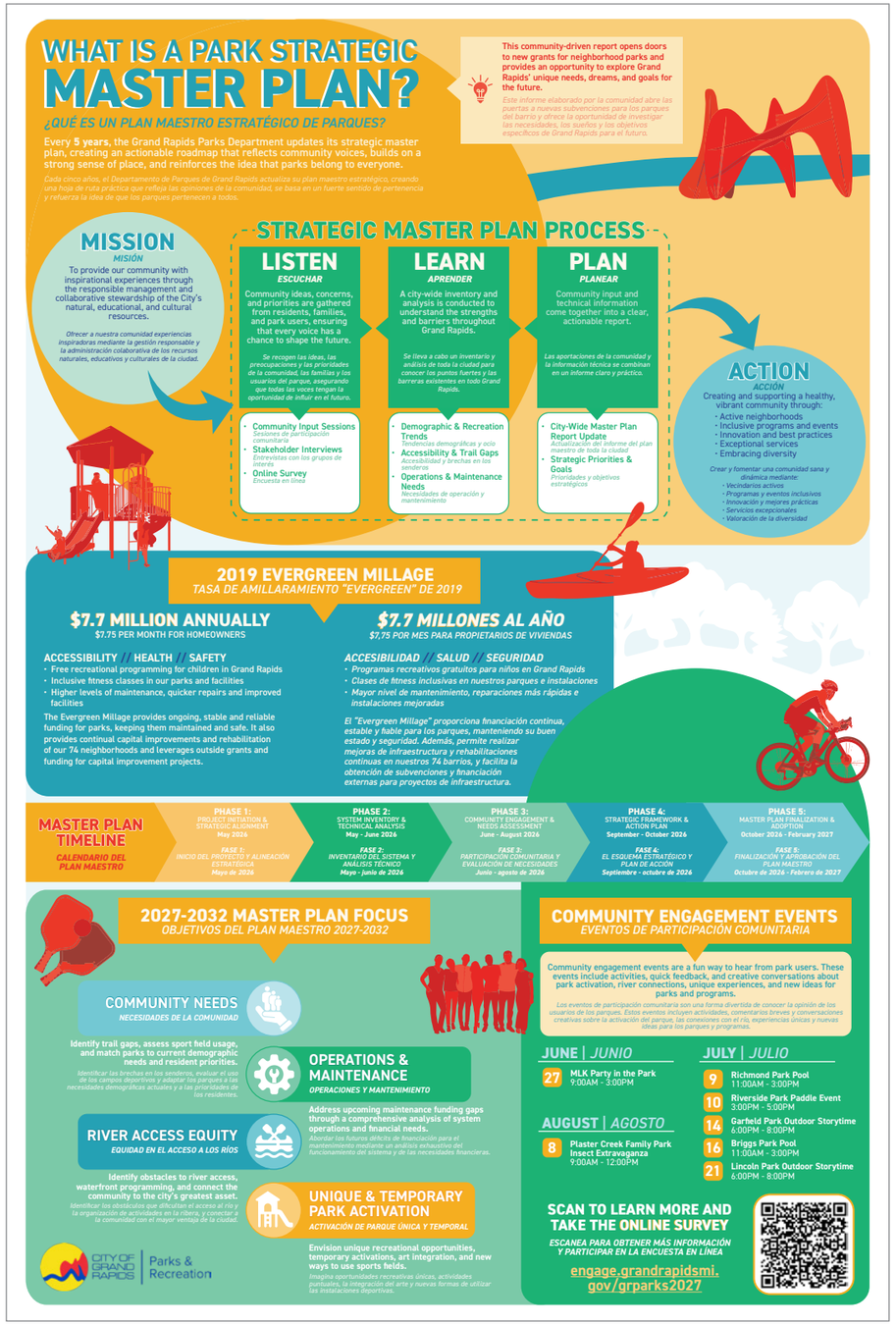




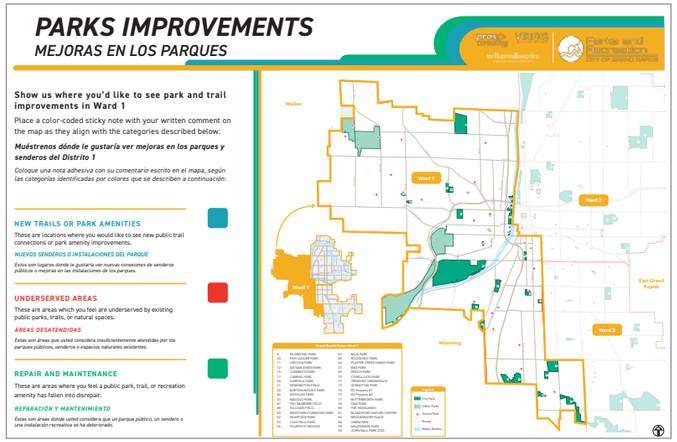


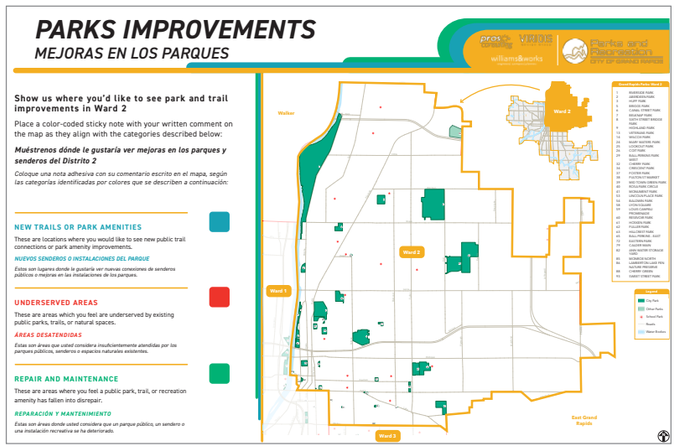


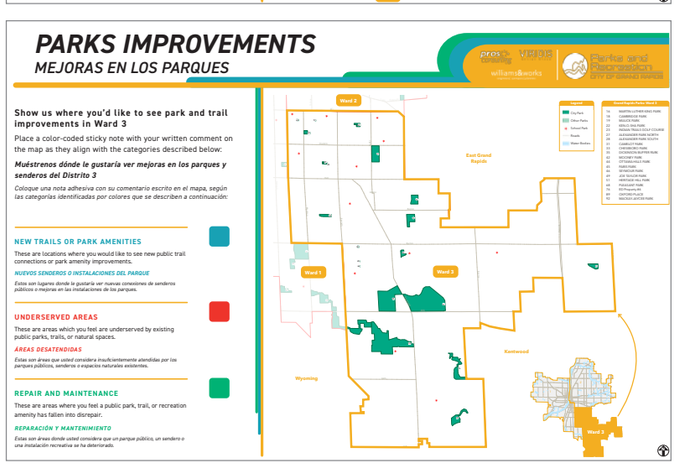
ENGAGEMENT WELCOME INFORMATION BOARD



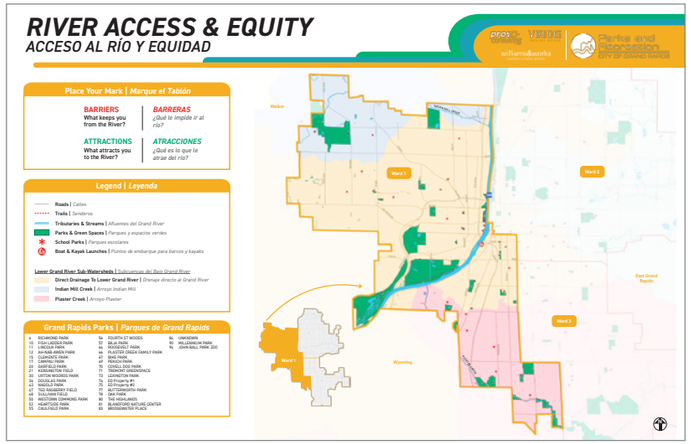
PARK IMPROVEMENT MAPS BY WARD

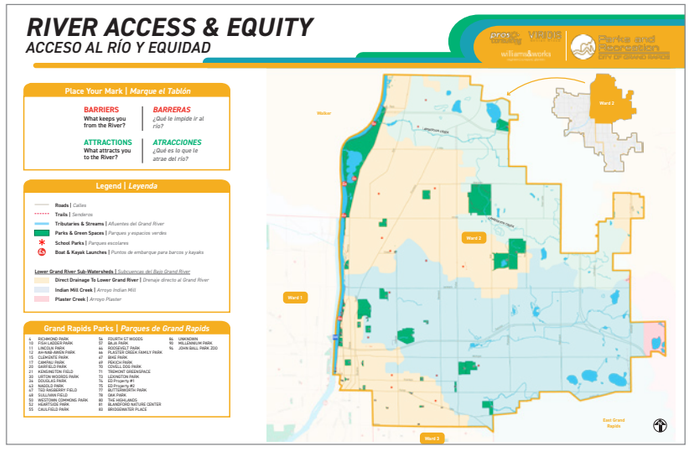


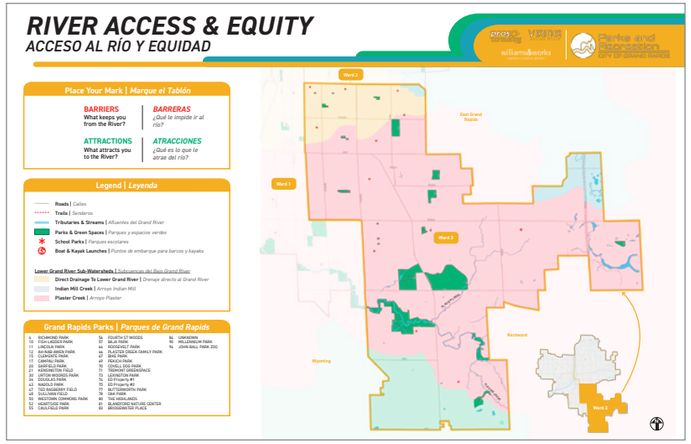




RIVER ACCESS EQUITY MAPS BY WARD







MLK PARK PARTY TEENS & SENIORS EXIT SURVEY

TEENS & SENIORS EXIT SURVEY

2027-2032 PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS | Parks & Recreation

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO AT A PARK?

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FUN ACTIVITIES AT THE GRAND RIVER?

NOT FOR ME — I DO NOT KNOW — I KNOW A LITTLE — I KNOW A LOT — I'VE PARTICIPATED

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR PARKS?

What is your age? _____

What is your neighborhood? (optional)

_____

What is your gender? (optional)

_____

Your Personal Racial Identity (optional) **(select all that apply):**

- ☐ American Indian/ Alaskan Native/ Native American/ Indigenious
- ☐ Asian (Includes Indian Sub-Continent)
- ☐ African American/ Black
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Middle Eastern or Northern African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Biracial or Multiracial
- ☐ Other: _____

Stay in Touch! Email: _____

RIVER ACCESS EQUITY CONVERSATION BOARD

RIVER ACCESS & EQUITY
ACCESO AL RÍO Y EQUIDAD

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE GRAND RIVER & CONNECTED STREAMS
Write your thoughts and experiences in the box for each of the following categories.

CUÉNTANOS SU EXPERIENCIA CON EL GRAND RIVER Y SUS ARROYOS CONECTADOS
Escriba sus pensamientos y experiencias en el recuadro correspondiente a cada una de las siguientes categorías.

City of Grand Rapids | Parks & Recreation
VIRIDIS Design Group · pros consulting
williams&works engineers | surveyors | planners

BELONGING | *PERTENENCIA*

What makes you feel welcome at Grand Rapids rivers and streams? What attracts and invites you to the water?

¿Qué le hace sentirse bienvenido en los ríos y arroyos de Grand Rapids? ¿Qué le atrae y le invita a acercarse al agua?

RECREATION | *RECREACIÓN*

What activities or events do you enjoy along our rivers and waterfronts? What would you like to see more of?

¿Qué actividades o eventos le gustan en nuestros ríos y zonas ribereñas? ¿Qué actividades le gustaría que ofrecieran más?

SAFETY | *SEGURIDAD*

What barriers or concerns deter you from visiting waterways? What would make you feel more safe & comfortable?

¿Qué obstáculos o preocupaciones le disuaden de ir al agua? ¿Qué le haría sentirse más seguro y cómodo?

CONNECTION | *CONEXIÓN*

Where in the City of Grand Rapids do you interact with rivers & creeks? Where could access improve?

¿En qué zonas de la ciudad de Grand Rapids interactúa usted con los ríos y arroyos? ¿Dónde se podría mejorar el acceso?

PARKS IMPROVEMENTS CONVERSATION BOARD

PARKS IMPROVEMENTS
MEJORAS EN LOS PARQUES

TELL US WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE PARK AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS
Write your comment in the category you feel is the best match.

CUÉNTANOS DÓNDE LE GUSTARÍA VER MEJORAS EN LOS PARQUES Y SENDEROS
Escribe su comentario en la categoría que le parezca más adecuada

City of Grand Rapids | Parks & Recreation
VIRIDIS Design Group · pros consulting
williams&works engineers | surveyors | planners

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE | *REPARACIÓN Y MANTENIMIENTO*

These are areas where you feel a public park, trail, or recreation amenity has fallen into disrepair.

Estas son las zonas en las que usted considera que un parque, un sendero o una instalación recreativa se encuentra en mal estado.

NEW TRAILS OR PARK AMENITIES | *NUEVOS SENDEROS O SERVICIOS EN EL PARQUE*

These are locations where you would like to see new public trail connections or park amenity improvements.

Estos son los lugares en los que le gustaría que se crearan nuevas conexiones entre senderos públicos o se mejoraran las instalaciones de los parques.

UNDERSERVED AREAS | *ZONAS DESATENDIDAS*

These are areas which you feel are underserved by existing public parks, trails, or natural spaces.

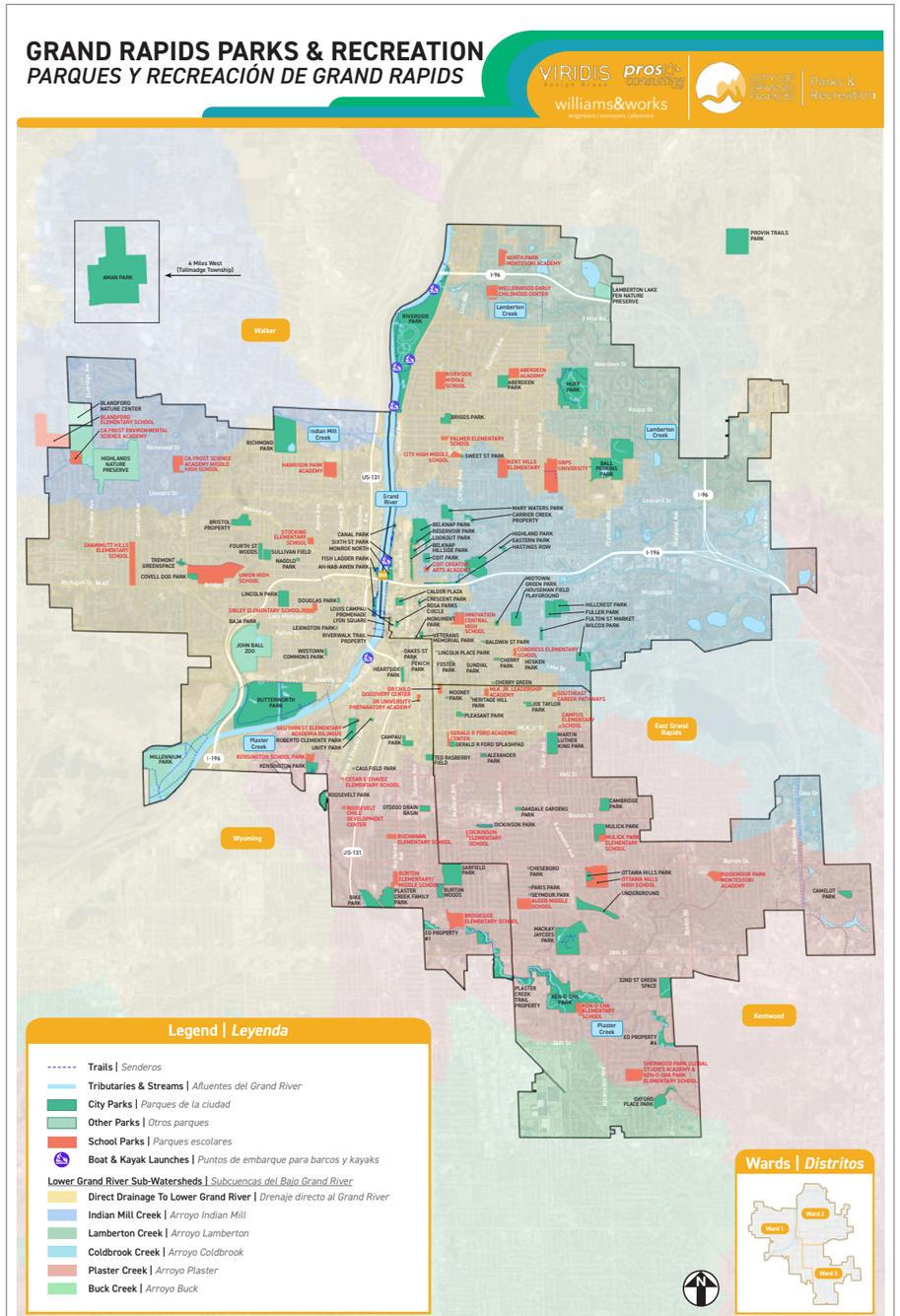
Son zonas en las que usted considera que los parques públicos, senderos o espacios naturales existentes no son suficientes para las necesidades de la población.

GENERAL COMMENTS | *COMENTARIOS GENERALES*

Not seeing a category that aligns with the topic of your comment? Place it here!

¿No encuentra una categoría que se ajuste al tema de su comentario? ¡Póngalo aquí!

PARKS, RIVERS & WATERSHED CONVERSATION MAP



INPUT SESSION EXIT SURVEY

INPUT SESSION EXIT SURVEY
2027-2032 PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS Parks & Recreation

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO AT A PARK?

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FUN ACTIVITIES AT THE GRAND RIVER?

NOT FOR ME — I DO NOT KNOW — I KNOW A LITTLE — I KNOW A LOT — I'VE PARTICIPATED

WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT IT? _____

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR PARKS?

What is your age? _____

What is your neighborhood? (optional)

_____

What is your gender? (optional)

_____

Your Personal Racial Identity (optional) **(select all that apply):**

- ☐ American Indian/ Alaskan Native/ Native American/ Indigenious
- ☐ Asian (Includes Indian Sub-Continent)
- ☐ African American/ Black
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Middle Eastern or Northern African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Biracial or Multiracial
- ☐ Other: _____

Stay in Touch! Email: _____

SURVEY HANDOUT

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS | Parks & Recreation

Help Shape the Future of Grand Rapids Parks

2027 Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Scan the QR code to take the full survey and follow project updates.

engage.grandrapidsmi.gov/grparks2027

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS | Parks & Recreation

Ayude a Dar Forma al Futuro de los Parques de Grand Rapids

Plan Maestro de Parques y Recreación 2027

Escanee el código QR para completar la encuesta y seguir las actualizaciones del proyecto.

engage.grandrapidsmi.gov/grparks2027



Community Enagagement Table Set Up (Typical)

PENNY JAR ACTIVITY

VOTE!

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN NON-TRADITIONAL OR TEMPORARY RECREATION?

¿CÓMO INVERTIRÍA EN ACTIVIDADES DE OCIO NO TRADICIONALES O TEMPORALES?

Ten (10) pennies have been placed in cups which represent park millage funds.

Take one (1) cup and distribute your ten (10) pennies into the jars of your choosing to show us your preference for investment in the following non-traditional or temporary recreational assets.

Se han colocado diez (10) centavos en vasos que representan los fondos recaudados mediante la tasa de amarillamiento para los parques.

Tome un (1) vaso y distribuya sus diez (10) centavos en los frascos que prefiera para indicarnos su preferencia de inversión en los siguientes recursos recreativos no tradicionales o temporales.

Parks and Recreation CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS





NATIVE LANDSCAPES

Native landscapes can include pollinator gardens, nature preserves, foraging forests, or wetland restoration projects. These landscapes support ecosystem benefits by providing habitat, food, stormwater management, and improved air quality for people and the planet.

Los jardines de vegetación nativa pueden incluir jardines para polinizadores, reservas naturales, bosques para la recolección de alimentos silvestres o proyectos de restauración de humedales. Estos jardines y paisajes contribuyen a los beneficios del ecosistema al proporcionar hábitat, alimento, gestión de las aguas pluviales y una mejor calidad del aire para las personas y el planeta.



Source: Grand Rapids Kids

THERAPEUTIC & SENSORY SPACES

Therapeutic recreation opportunities provide respite from over stimulation and connection to the outdoors. Healing gardens, sensory pathways, and unique features to focuses senses, like the sound amplifier at Ken-O-Sha Park, all offer ways to improve well-being.

Las actividades de ocio terapéutico ofrecen un respiro frente a la sobreestimulación y permiten conectar con la naturaleza. Los jardines terapéuticos, los senderos sensoriales y los elementos singulares que estimulan los sentidos, como el amplificador de sonido del parque Ken-O-Sha, son formas de mejorar el bienestar.



Source: Grand Rapids Chamber

OUTDOOR ART INSTALLATIONS

Outdoor art installations help activate a space enabling park visitors to support local artists simultaneously. They can be temporary or permanent, interactive, or offer stimuli, such as sight, touch, and sound.

Las instalaciones artísticas al aire libre contribuyen a darle vida a un espacio y, al mismo tiempo, permiten a los visitantes del parque apoyar a los artistas locales. Pueden ser interactivas, temporales o permanentes, y ofrecen estímulos sensoriales, como la vista, el tacto y el oído.



Source: Grand Rapids Boulder Project

BOULDERING & CLIMBING

Bouldering is a form of rock climbing that involves lower walls and more technical movements done without ropes or harnesses. It is one of the most accessible forms of climbing, as you do not need formal training or equipment to enjoy this sport!

El bouldering es una modalidad de escalada que consiste en escalar muros bajos y realizar movimientos técnicos, sin cuerdas ni arneses. Es una de las formas de escalada más accesibles, ya que no se necesita entrenamiento formal ni equipamiento para disfrutar de este deporte.



PROGRAMMING & EVENTS INFRASTRUCTURE

Stages, seating, electrical outlets, wifi, and enhanced access for entertainment equipment or food trucks in the parks could allow for a greater variety of outdoor programming and events by local organizations.

La instalación de escenarios, zonas de asientos, enchufes eléctricos, wifi y mejores accesos para materiales de entretenimiento o camiones de comida en los parques podría permitir una mayor variedad de actividades y eventos al aire libre organizados por entidades locales.



Source: The Soccer Rebellion

UNCOMMON SPORT COURTS

Athletic courts are typically designed to accommodate a particular sport. Uncommon but growing sports, like bike polo and futsal, often struggle to find adequate play space. Designated or multi-use facilities for less traditional sports can fill that need and expand interest.

Las pistas deportivas suelen diseñarse para un deporte en concreto. Los deportes menos comunes, pero en auge, como el polo en bicicleta y el fútbol sala, a menudo tienen dificultades para encontrar espacios adecuados donde practicar. Las instalaciones especílicas o polivalentes para deportes menos tradicionales pueden satisfacer esa necesidad y fomentar el interés por ellos.



OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Passive and active learning experiences, like outdoor classrooms, little libraries, interpretive signage, interactive kiosks, or guided educational events can help visitors of all ages learn more about their environment and better connect with their surroundings.

Las experiencias de aprendizaje pasivo y activo, como aulas al aire libre, pequeñas bibliotecas, paneles informativos, quioscos interactivos o actividades educativas guiadas, pueden ayudar a los visitantes de todas las edades a conocer mejor su entorno y a conectar mejor con lo que les rodea.



Source: City of Grand Rapids

OUTDOOR FITNESS

Outdoor obstacle courses, fitness parks, and workout stations along trails allow visitors to engage in physical activity while enjoying nature simultaneously. This can include exercise equipment for anyone to use or pre-registered resident fitness classes.

Los recorridos obstáculos al aire libre, los parques de fitness, y las estaciones de entrenamiento situadas a lo largo de los senderos permiten a los visitantes realizar actividad física mientras disfrutan de la naturaleza. Estas instalaciones pueden incluir equipos de ejercicio de uso libre para todo el mundo o clases de fitness para residentes que requieran inscripción previa.



BIKE & SKATE PARKS

Bike and skate parks may be separate or combined facilities that provide designated space for non-motorized, wheel-based activity. These spaces could include skate ramps, boxes or bowls, bike pump tracks, cyclecross courses, or mountain bike facilities.

Los parques para bicicletas y patinetas pueden ser instalaciones separadas o combinadas que ofrecen espacios designados para actividades sobre ruedas no motorizadas. Estos espacios pueden incluir rampas, cajas o boles para patinaje, pumptracks, circuitos de ciclocross o instalaciones para ciclismo de montaña.



RIVER ACTIVITY

Activating areas in and around local rivers and streams connects visitors to waterfront resources. River activity could manifest as waterfront trails and parks, watercraft launches, kayak or tubing rentals, fishing piers, or river overlooks.

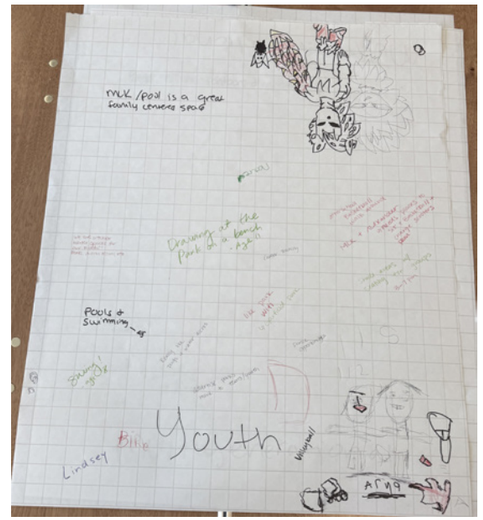
La activación de las zonas situadas en los ríos y arroyos locales y sus alrededores permite a los visitantes disfrutar de los recursos ribereños. Las actividades relacionadas con el río pueden incluir senderos y parques ribereños, rampas para embarcaciones, alquiler de kayaks o tubos inflables, muelles de pesca, o miradores con vistas al río.

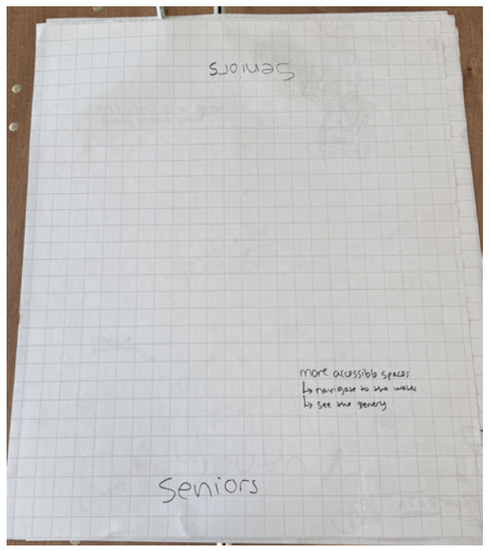
PENNY JAR ACTIVITY RESULTS

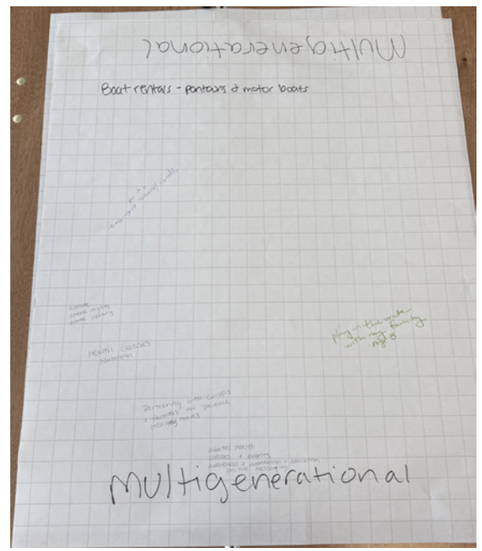
Penny Jar Activity										
Coordinating Event	**MLK Park Party**	**Houseman Playground Pop-up**	**Richmond Park Pool**	**Riverside Park Paddle**	**Garfield Park Storytime**	**Lincoln Park Storytime**	**Briggs Park Pool**	**Plaster Creek Park Insect Extravaganza**	**Total Votes per Amenity**	**Percent of Total Votes**
Bike & Skate Parks	145	97	65	5	75	69	108	114	678	12.2%
River Activity	134	68	69	15	92	60	100	114	652	11.8%
Outdoor Art Installations	129	43	52	3	83	57	85	85	537	9.7%
Bouldering & Climbing	98	49	66	0	108	62	72	105	560	10.1%
Programming & Events Infrastructure	123	43	42	2	64	46	44	67	431	7.8%
Uncommon Sports Courts	116	55	65	4	78	42	56	68	484	8.7%
Outdoor Education	100	69	39	11	48	54	50	118	489	8.8%
Outdoor Fitness	116	65	37	0	48	57	97	47	467	8.4%
Native Landscapes	138	96	65	25	79	116	64	180	763	13.8%
Therapeutic & Sensory Spaces	143	47	25	6	53	54	65	94	487	8.8%
Total Votes per Event	1242	632	525	71	728	617	741	992	**5548**	
Estimated # of participants (/10)	124	63	53	7	73	62	74	99	**555**	

MLK PARK PARTY - GENERATIONAL VENN DIAGRAM

Age Group	Response (verbatim)
Youth	Pool is a great family centered space
Youth	Drawing at the park on a bench – age 11
Youth	We love outdoor water spaces for our kiddos! Pools, swim lessons, etc.
Youth	Career training
Youth	After school basketball and walk around
Youth	MLK and Alexander need places to sit, basketball courts, and scooter chargers
Youth	Shade areas with seating for groups 3-7pm (teens)
Youth	Really like pools and water access
Youth	Like park Wi-Fi - Garfield Park
Youth	Advertise parks more to teens/ youth
Youth	Dance opportunities
Youth	Swing! – age 8
Youth	Volleyball
Youth	Nature
Youth	Bike
Youth	Pools and swimming
Multi	Boat rentals – pontoons and motor boats
Multi	Sports/ active activities -age 11
Multi	karate, game nights, game library
Multi	Health classes and nutrition
Multi	Play in the water with my family -age 8
Multi	Partnering with co-ops and farmers for produce and healthy foods
Multi	Mental health classes and events - awareness, intervention, education, positive messaging
Multi	More accessible spaces - Navigate to the water, see the scenery
Senior	Like the scenery







MLK PARK PARTY - EXIT SURVEY

Age	Neighborhood	Gender	Racial Identity	What is your favorite thing to do at a park? (verbatim)	How much do you know about fun activities at the Grand River?	How do you hear about activities?	What changes would you like to see in your parks? (verbatim)
				MLK Park Party 6/27/2026			
34		Female	African America/ Black	I like to enjoy the space and to soak in nature. I enjoy watching my nieces and nephews play and I like engaging with them.	I do not know		More outdoor Education so that the youth can step away from their phones and be present
30	Downtown	Male	African America/ Black	Play basketball and go on walks.	I've participated		More outdoor yoga
65		Female	White	Bring family, picnics, familty reunion	I know a little		More amenities, food truck events, markets. Focus on family
36	Baxter	Female	White	Swing! Take my baby and walk. Lay in the grass and sun bathe.	I know a little		Reg clean-up. Joe Taylor Park has some saftey hazards, and I'd like to participate/ support clean-ups
62	East Hills	Female	Other	Pickleball and splash pad	I know a lot		Classes -yoga, meditation, art, history
47	South East Community	Female	White	Connect with neighbors, relax in nature, enjoy a pool, walk my dogs, impromptu kickball/ pickleball, events in park, gardening at MLK, etc.	I've participated		More events, movies, more classes in the park - not just exercise - for all ages, more ways to connect and gather organically, learning and educational opportunities, culture and art based activities, social and political awareness, activities that involve developing skills -Home maintenance -Care of self -Care of belongings -Sewing, mending, etc.
				I love the swings	I do not know		I'd like more trash cans around the park to help keep it clean
44	South East Community	Male	White	Playground Basketball	I know a little		Fix existing old damaged areas MLK a hazard
11	South East Community	Female	African America/ Black	Sports - volleyball, soccer, frisbee	I do not know		Sports variety (courts + fields + nets)
37			Hispanic or Latino	Walk the trails	I know a little		Cleaning up, having the parks maintained especially Roberto Clemente!
15	South East Community	Male	Hispanic or Latino	Play basketball	I know a little		Nothing so far
21		Female	African America/ Black	I love to walk! The pool was really nice!	I've participated		I think more engagement would be nice! Letting the community know it's a resource!
15	South East Community	Male	White	Lifegaurd! Skateparks, basketball	I know a little	Word of mouth	Skatepark!
70	Shawnee Park	Female	White	Walk trails Play w/ grandkids Swing	I know a little	Word of mouth/ media	Benches in shade Play spaces for kids under 3
70		Male	African America/ Black	Take grandkids to park Bring their own chair and snack/water	I've participated	Fed fish at fish ladder	Security, more patroling
12		Female		My favorite thing is the swings	I know a little		Basketball
12		Female		Volleyball	I do not know		More sports
13		Female	African America/ Black	Play with my little sisters	I've participated		Safer things for younger kids
12		Female		Swing on the swings	I know a little		Safer stuff to do No trash
13		Female	African America/ Black	Swing on the swings	I do not know		More access to natures view and more equipment
39	South East Community	Male	African America/ Black	Enjoy the amenities, basketball courts, good playgrounds, for younger kids, exercise equipment, indoor bathrooms.	I know a lot		More activation, more summer programs for kids, day camps
37		Female	African America/ Black	Allow my kiddos to play	I know a little		More trails
73	Garfield Park	Female	African America/ Black	Greater Area (splash pad) for children. Need to have more tables or seating for parents with umbrellas to stay out of the sun while keeping an eye on the children while they have sun at the splash pads	I know a little	Festivals, Art Prize, World of Winter	More seated area, picnic tables with umbrellas to sit under while we observe and watch our children
46		Female	African America/ Black	Sit at a nice shady bench and walk the trails	I know a little		Upgraded equipment and rubber ground
11	Garfield Park	Female	African America/ Black	Draw at the park on a bench	I know a little		Splash pads are for little kids. More activities w/ water for older kids.
33	South East Community	Female	African America/ Black	Walking trails and allowing my son to play.	I know a little		More activities (walk therapy, exercising, meditation, family/ recreation
25	Downtown	Female	African America/ Black	Play on the slides with my four year old.	I know a little		More kid-friendly climbing tools. As well as slowly move away from wood chips.
72	South East Community	Male		Scenery, people watching, music at MLK, Garfield	I've participated		garfield needs improvements at lodge, attention at south end of park More input from community important
75	Baxter	Female	African America/ Black	Lunch breaks, people watching, picnics, pavillions, play w/ grandkids, take kids to basketball and tennis	I know a lot	Involvement in MP! An online	Cameras in parks, drinking at park an issue, needs to be signage in multiple languages about park rules, no dogs in splash pads, more amenities/ seating for people with disabilities, more restrooms that are accessible, more pavillions, less violence

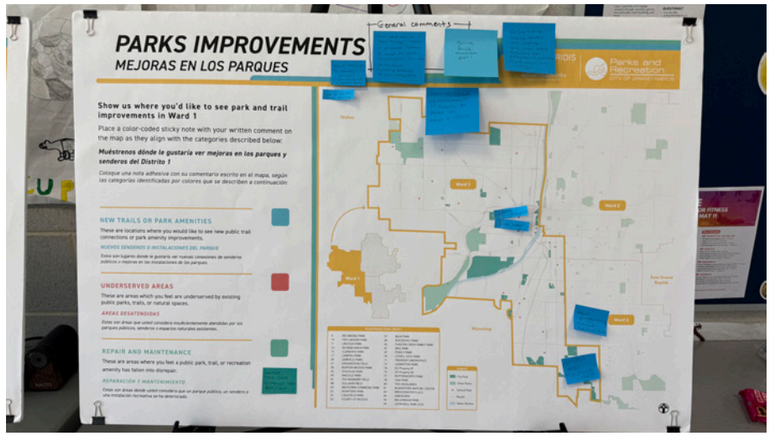
MLK PARK PARTY - CONVERSATION BOARD RESPONSES

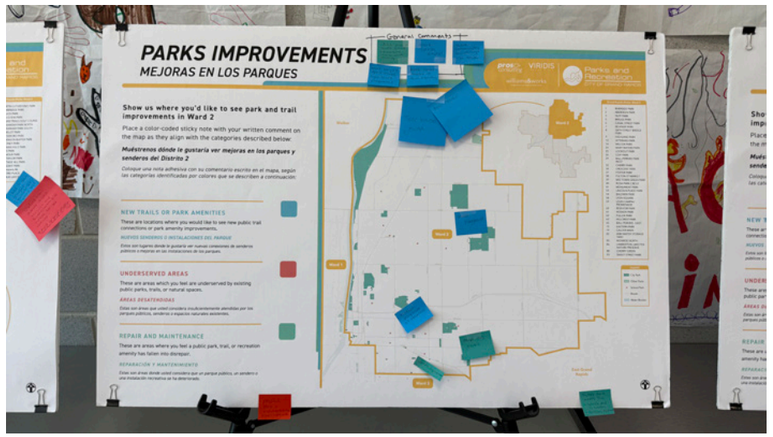
River Access & Equity Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
	MLK Park Party 6/27/2026	
Attractions	Ah-Nab-Awen likes fireworks	Ah-Nab-Awen
Barriers	Ah-Nab-Awen fireworks moved	Ah-Nab-Awen
Attractions	River-edge trail	Downtown
Attractions	More kayak opportunity and awareness	Downtown
Attractions	Under bridge area is under-utilized. Great potential to activate space an create safe access to water. Shaded and large open area. Is flood plane so items would need to be gated at times.	Wealthy-Market Bridge
Barriers	Missing connection between Garfield Park and Plaster Creek	Garfield Park - Plaster Creek
Barriers	Not feeling safe -Light at night and add benches and trash	Near Plaster Creek Park
Attractions	Fishing	Near Canal Park
Attractions	River walking	Near Sixth St Park
Attractions	Like fishing and views	Fish Ladder Park
Barriers	Safety	Near Monroe North
Barriers	More activities	Near Ken-O-Sha Park
Safety	Unknown water quality -Efforts to clean up -Education	
Connection	Creating meaningful spaces to have powerful conversations	
Connection	Physical access to downtown water is difficult -Very privatized	Downtown

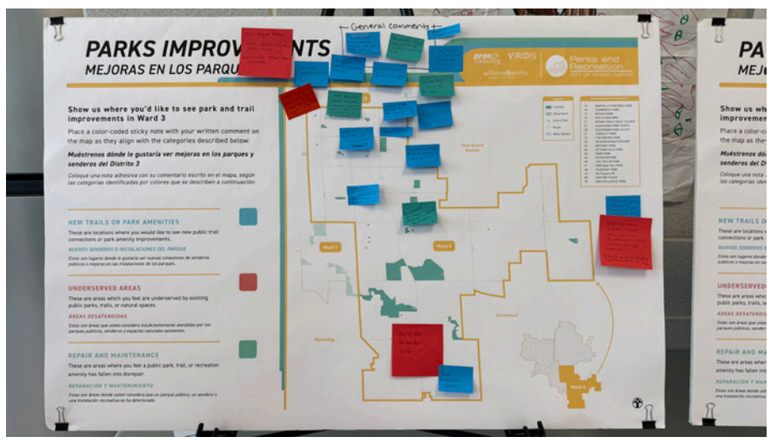
MLK PARK PARTY - CONVERSATION BOARD RESPONSES CONT.

Parks Improvements Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
MLK Park Party 6/27/2026		
General Comments	Don't need lots of new things - want to be made aware of what the city and county offers. Put them on the news! Rotating features to show amenities.	Ward 1
New Trails or Amenities	More benches in shady places! Playgrounds and splashpads	Ward 1
New Trails or Amenities	Like to electric scooter downtown	Ward 1
General Comments	more advanced advertisements of events and parks on news and radio	Ward 1
General Comments	Bring back madison pool!	Ward 1
General Comments	Enjoy hiking, biking, picnics, and camping - feel that these amenities are sufficiently available in and around the city.	Ward 1
Repair & Maintenance	Update Playground	Lincoln Park
Repair & Maintenance	Look better -age 6	Lincoln Park
New Trails or Amenities	teen programming around Garfield Park	Garfield Park
Repair & Maintenance	Garfield - New courts. Recommend indoor court	Garfield Park
New Trails or Amenities	Updated trail - more equipment	Near Garfield Park
Repair & Maintenance	All pavillions need upkeep - electricity works, power washing	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	More boys and girls clubs ages 10-17 programs	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	kids zones make it fun and exciting	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	More splash pads	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	More community buildings like MLK	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	Tree house Big one	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	Tree house	Ward 2
New Trails or Amenities	Indoor Playground	Near Huff Park
New Trails or Amenities	Treetop playscape at Highland	Highland Park
Repair & Maintenance	Fuller Park needs TLC Splash pad is broken. Grimey Equipment.	Fuller Park
New Trails or Amenities	More dog parks	Near Hillcrest Park
Repair & Maintenance	Update equipment	Near Cherry Park
New Trails or Amenities	MLK - Bigger Kitchen More youth programs after schoolphasize senior and teen programs	MLK Park & Ward 3
New Trails or Amenities	Indoor pickleball	Ward 3
New Trails or Amenities	Siggsby Park, Garfield Park	Siggsby Park & Garfield Park
General Comments	Don't add new parks unless we can keep up with what we have	Ward 3
New Trails or Amenities	Alexander Park Places to sit, outlets, basketball, WiFi	Alexander Park
New Trails or Amenities	More slides (age 5) -Harry	Ward 3
New Trails or Amenities	Toy bridges like at Ada Christian (age 5)	Ward 3
New Trails or Amenities	More community buildings	Ward 3
Repair & Maintenance	More reg clean-ups	Joe Taylor Park
Repair & Maintenance	Joe Taylor Park needs upkeep - water grass, take care of plants or rem/, broken equipment	Joe Taylor Park
Underserved Areas	Increase programs. Baxter Community Center does majority of programs. Would love more city support!	Ward 3
New Trails or Amenities	Scooter/ bike would be nice because friends have electric scooters	Near MLK Park
New Trails or Amenities	Public soccer and volleyball (bench?)	Near MLK Park
New Trails or Amenities	Soccer field	Near MLK Park
General Comments	More events Food Trucks	Near MLK Park
New Trails or Amenities	Shaded seating at MLK Pool and playground Picnic tables with umbrella	MLK Community Center
Underserved Areas	Mulick Park/ elementary access/ upgrades	Mulick Park
New Trails or Amenities	Environmental greenhouse partnership with Mulick Park Elementary	Mulick Park
New Trails or Amenities	Add a railing kayak launch at Oxford trail	Oxford Trail
Underserved Areas	Oxford trail public acces through the Butterworth site needs to be opened	Oxford Trail/ Butterworth site
Underserved Areas	Ken-O-Sha No benches Toilets	Ken-O-Sha
Repair & Maintenance	Have bathrooms open!	Ken-O-Sha

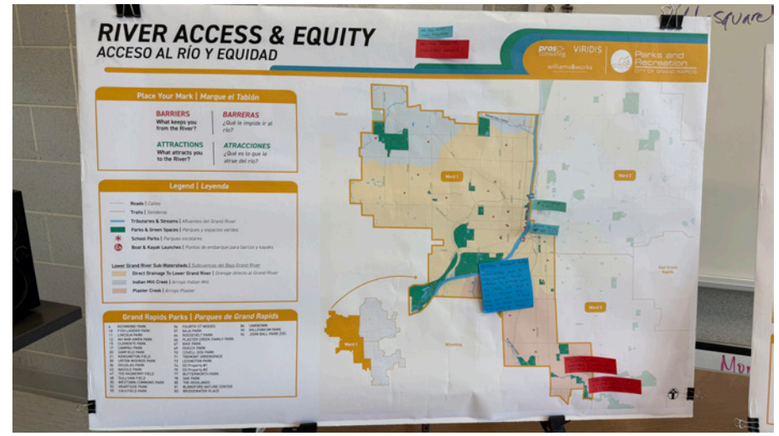
MLK PARK PARTY - PARKS IMPROVEMENTS BOARDS

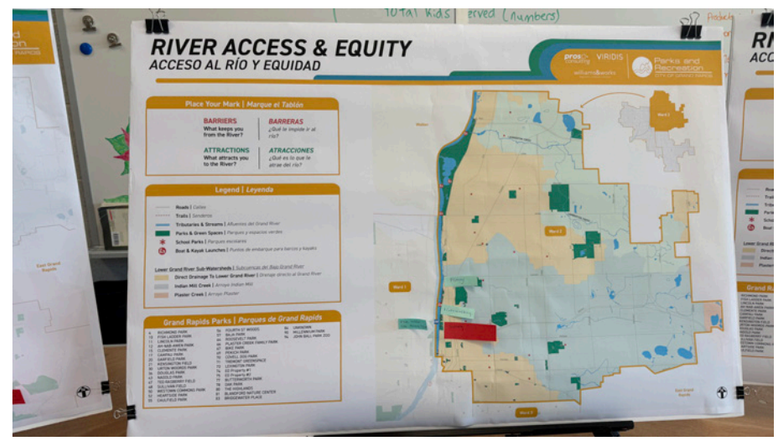


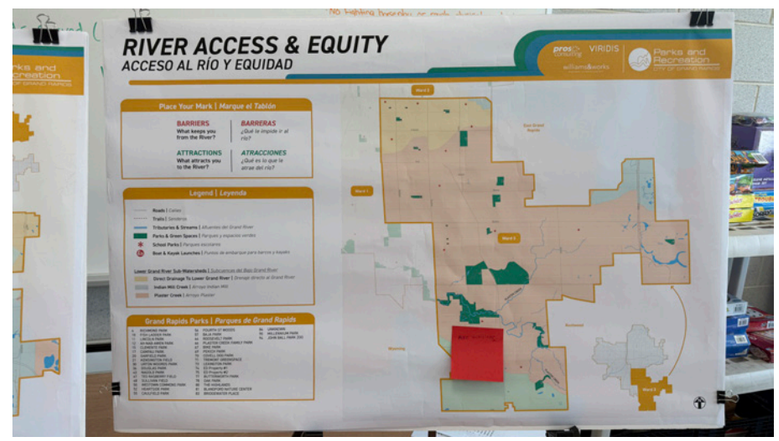




MLK PARK PARTY - RIVER ACCESS & EQUITY BOARDS







RIVERSIDE PARK PADDLE - EXIT SURVEY

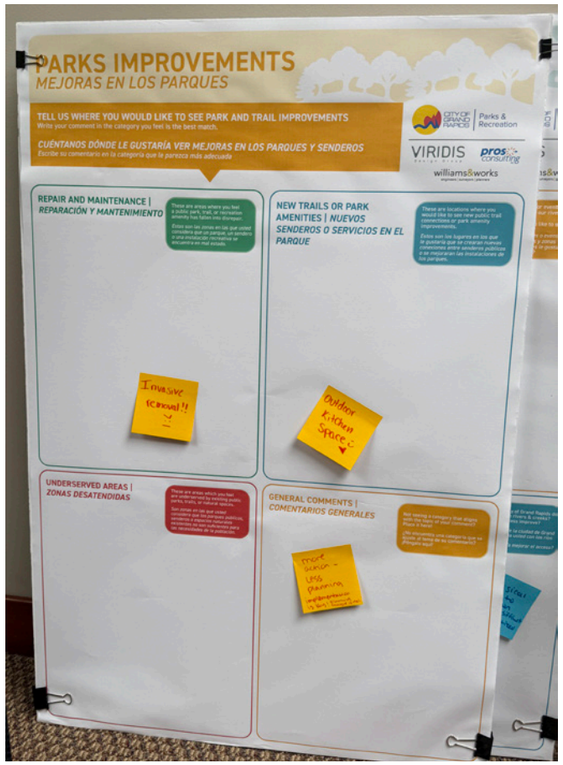
Age	Neighborhood	Gender	Racial Identity	What is your favorite thing to do at a park? (verbatim)	How much do you know about fun activities at the Grand River?	How do you hear about activities?	What changes would you like to see in your parks? (verbatim)
Riverside Paddle/ Food Truck Friday 7/10/2026							
30		Female	White	Walk the trails	I know a little		Better bathrooms
29	Highland Park	Male	White	Run, bike, food trucks!	I've participated		Lots of trash clean up!
25		Female	White	Go for bike rides + runs/walks	I know a little		More water fountains?
56		Male	Biracial or Multiracial	Food trucks	I know a lot		More lights
46		Female		Play	I know a lot		More
61		Female	White	Walking	I know a little		
56		Female	White	Take my dogs for a walk	I've participated		Honestly I think they are already great
50-65			White	Walk People watch	I do not know		More parking Bring back wading pools Tai Chi
43		Male	Hispanic or Latino	Biking	I know a little		Lighting for night biking/walking
63		Female	White	Walk Art fairs Music	I know a little		More art events
42	Creston	Male	White	Food truck Fridays, walking, sitting and relaxing, reading.	I do not know		None
50		Female	Hispanic or Latino	Special events	I know a little		More bike trails
41	Creston	Female	White	Walk my dog, eat lunch	I know a little		More native plants and flowers
33		Female	White	Food trucks, playgrounds	I know a little		More events
30	Creston		American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Relax	I know a little		Toilets, shade
29	Creston	Female	White	Walk dogs	I know a little		
23	Downtown	Female	Hispanic or Latino	Walk around and look at birds	I've participated		I'd like to seee more native plants/ buffers/ rain gardens. More outdoor games/ jungle gyms. It would be great to have more free activities that are appealing and entertain all ages.
25			American Indian/ Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latino	Walk around, bird, hammock	I've participated		I'd like to see more community gardens and maybe even an outdoor community kitchen to share meals!

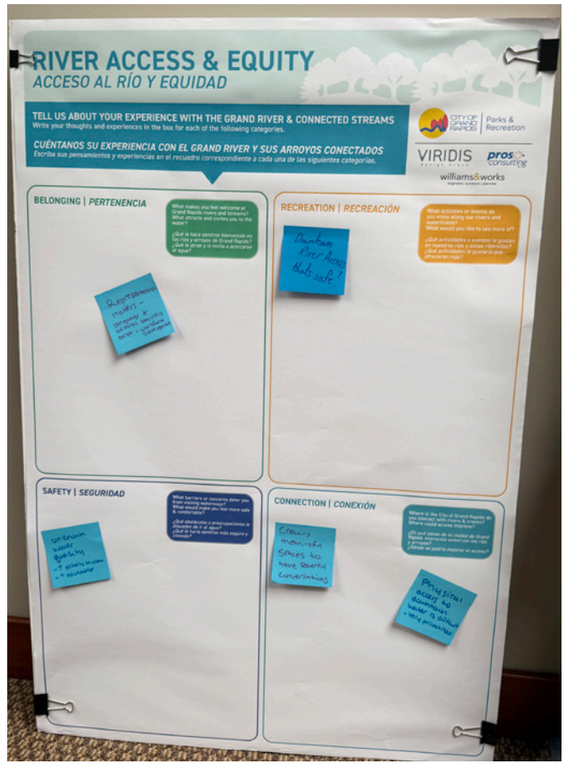
RIVERSIDE PARK PADDLE - CONVERSATION BOARDS

River Access & Equity Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Riverside Paddle 7/10/2026		
Belonging	Representation matters - language and cultureal barriers exist - workforce development	
Recreation	Downtown river access that's safe	Downtown
Safety	Unknown water quality -Efforts to clean up -Education	
Connection	Creating meaningful spaces to have powerful conversations	
Connection	Physical access to downtown water is difficult -Very privatized	Downtown

Parks Improvements Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Riverside Paddle 7/10/2026		
Repair & Maintenance	Invasive removal	
New Trails or Amenities	Outdoor kitchen space	
General Comments	More action - less planning. Implimentation is key! Planning fatigue is real.	

RIVERSIDE PARK PADDLE - CONVERSATION BOARDS





GARFIELD PARK STORYTIME - EXIT SURVEY

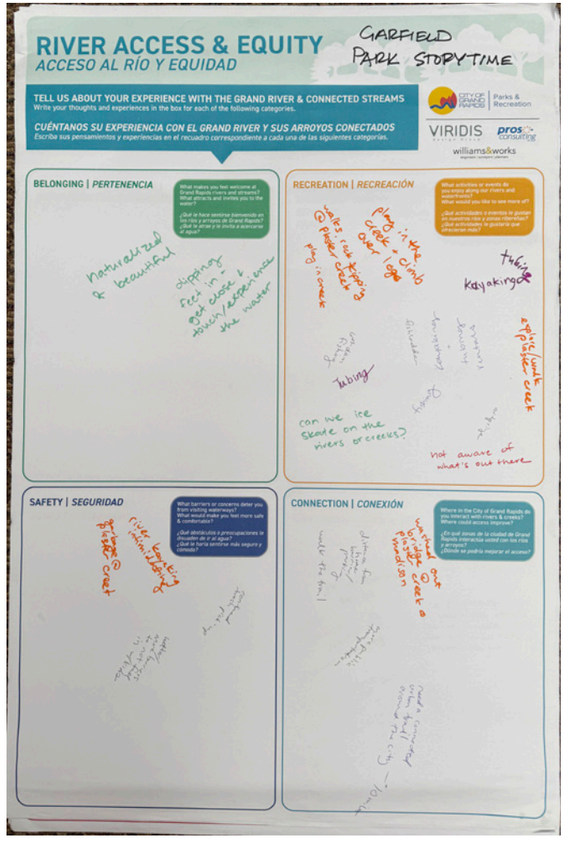
Age	Neighborhood	Gender	Racial Identity	What is your favorite thing to do at a park? (verbatim)	How much do you know about fun activities at the Grand River?	How do you hear about activities?	What changes would you like to see in your parks? (verbatim)
Garfield Storytime 7/14/2026							
35		Female	African America/ Black	Splashpads, walking trails, playgrounds.	I do not know		Bathrooms, shade, trashcans, better splashpads (upgraded), more pools.
30	Alger Heights	Female	White	Watch the kids, playground, benches	I know a little	Word of mouth	Cleaner water stations
11	Alger Heights	Male	White	Creek activities, fishing, playgrounds, natural spaces, hiking, gravel	I know a little		Natural areas, playgrounds, swings, 9 square game
44		Male	White	Swim, MLK, playground, trails.	I know a little	Being a resident/ social media	
8, 11	Grandville	Male		Swim, tag, games, playgrounds and open space.	I know a little		More open space, drinking fountain
				Go on the swings and slides	I do not know		More swings
10				Swings	Not for me		Food trucks
10	Garfield Park	Male		Soccer at Garfield	I've participated	Family	
11	Garfield Park	Male	White	Soccer at Garfield	I've participated	Art Prize	
13		Male	White	Fishing Plaster Creek and downtown	I've participated	Concerts	More ponds for fishing Wooded paths like K.O.S
13	Garfield Park	Female	White	Walk and read	I've participated	Art Prize WOW	
11		Female	African America/ Black	Games/ sports, tag, groundies	I've participated	Bike rides	Monkey bars, art class
13	Garfield Park	Male	African America/ Black	Reading	Not for me		Less trash
9	Garfield Park	Female	White	Soccer, monkey bars	I know a little		
12	Garfield Park	Female	White	Bike, swing	Not for me		More benches
14	Garfield Park	Female	White	Read, play with friend	I've participated	Food truck Fridays	Dog park at Garfield
12			White	Swings x2 with friends	Not for me		?
17		Female	African America/ Black	Walk, play/picnic with family	I've participated	Social media	Multigenerational activities
14		Male	African America/ Black	Playground with family	I know a little		Bigger playgrounds
12	Baxter	Female	African America/ Black	Swing with friends	Not for me		More swings, activate with activities

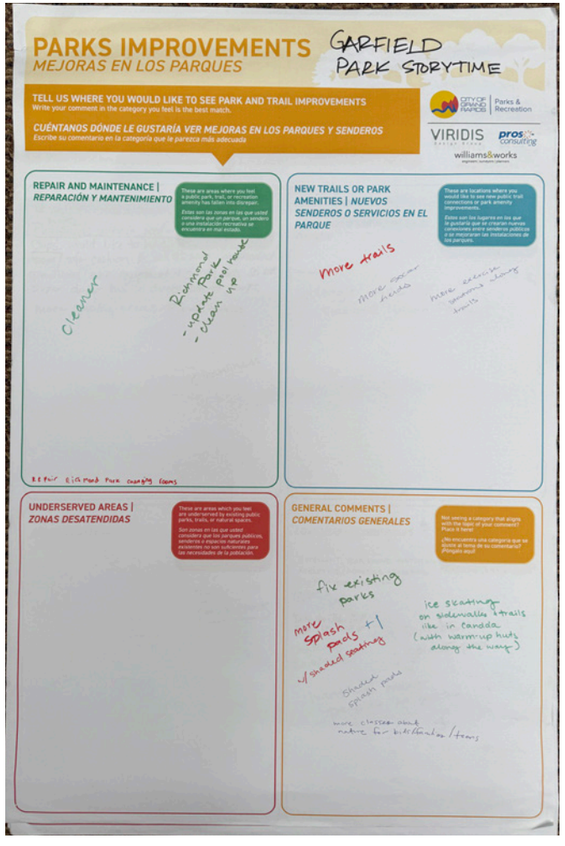
GARFIELD PARK STORYTIME - CONVERSATION BOARDS

River Access & Equity Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Garfield Storytime 7/14/2026		
Belonging	Naturalized and beautiful	
Belonging	Diping feet in- get close and touch/experience the water	
Recreation	Play in the creek and climb over logs	
Recreation	Walks, rock skipping at Plaster Creek	Plaster Creek
Recreation	Play in creek	
Recreation	Tubing	
Recreation	Kayaking	
Recreation	Tubing	
Recreation	Madison fishing	
Recreation	Fish ladder	
Recreation	Kayaking and tubing rentals	
Recreation	Fishing	
Recreation	Can we ice skate on the rivers or creeks?	
Recreation	Explore/ walk Plaster Creek	Plaster Creek
Recreation	Not aware of what's out there	
Safety	River kayaking intimidating	
Safety	Garbage at Plaster Creek	
Safety	Continued trash pick-up	
Connection	Washed out bridge at Plaster Creek and Madison	Plaster Creek + Madison
Connection	Distance from home barrier/ parking	
Connection	Walk the trail	
Connection	More public transportation	
Connection	Need a connected urban trail around the city +10 miles	City-wide

GARFIELD PARK STORYTIME - CONVERSATION BOARDS CONT.

Parks Improvements Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Garfield Storytime 7/14/2026		
Repair & Maintenance	Cleaner	
Repair & Maintenance	Richmond Park -Update pool house -Clean up	Richmond Park
Repair & Maintenance	Repaid Richmond Park changing rooms	Richmond Park
New Trails or Amenities	More trails	
New Trails or Amenities	More soccer fields	
New Trails or Amenities	More exercise stations along trails	
General Comments	Fix existing parks	
General Comments	More splash pads with shaded seating	
General Comments	Shaded splash pads	
General Comments	More classes about nature for kids/ families/ teens	



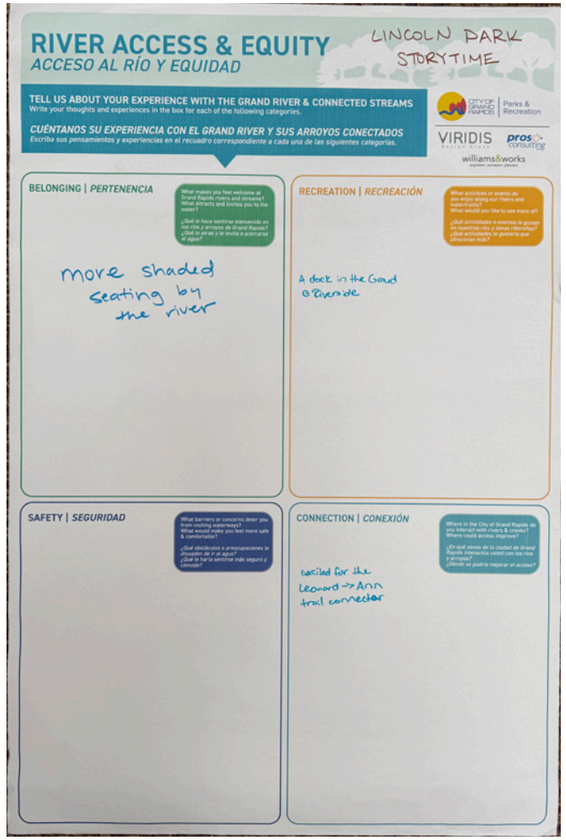


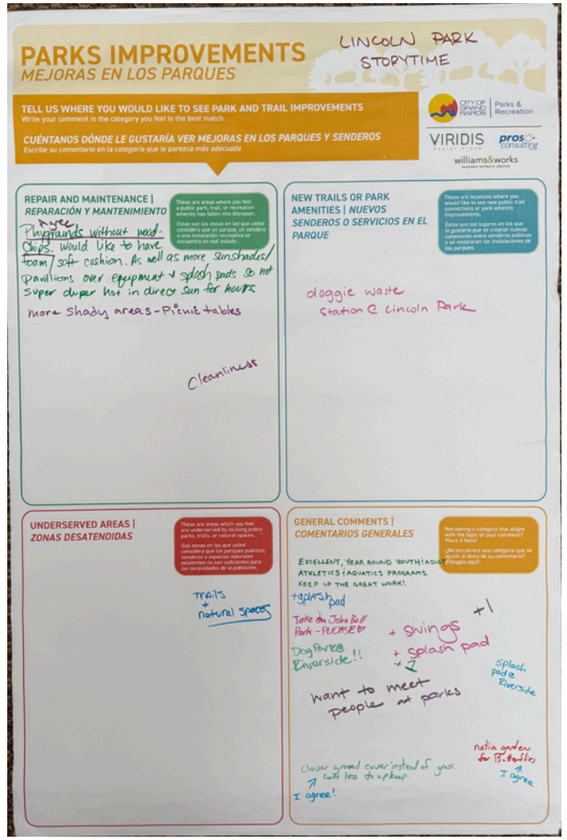
LINCOLN PARK STORYTIME - CONVERSATION BOARDS

River Access & Equity Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Lincoln Storytime 7/22/2026		
Belonging	More shaded seating by the river	Grand River
Recreation	A dock in the grand at Riverside	Riverside
Connection	Excited for the Leonard to Ann trail connector	Leonard to Ann

Parks Improvements Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Lincoln Storytime 7/14/2026		
Repair & Maintenance	Playgrounds without woodchips. Would like to have foam/ soft cushion. As well as more sunshades/ pavillions over equipment and splash pads so hot super duper hot in direct sun for hours.	
Repair & Maintenance	Agree playgrounds without woodchips. More shady areas - picnic tables	
Repair & Maintenance	Cleanliness	
New Trails or Amenities	Doggie waste station at Lincoln Park	Lincoln Park
Underserved Areas	Trails and natural spaces	
General Comments	Excellent, year-round youth and adult athletics and aquatics programs. Keep up the great work!	
General Comments	Add Splash pad	
General Comments	Take on John Ball Park -PLEASE	John Ball Park
General Comments	Dog Park at Riverside	Riverside
General Comments	Add swing	
General Comments	Add Splash pad	
General Comments	Add Splash pad	
General Comments	Add swing	
General Comments	Splash Pad at Riverside	Riverside
General Comments	Want to meet people at parks	
General Comments	Native gardens for Butterflies	
General Comments	I agree (native gardens for butterflies)	
General Comments	Clover ground cover instead of grass. Costs less to upkeep	
General Comments	I agree! (Clover ground cover instead of grass. Costs less to upkeep)	

LINCOLN PARK STORYTIME - CONVERSATION BOARDS CONT.





BRIGGS PARK POOL - EXIT SURVEY

Age	Neighborhood	Gender	Racial Identity	What is your favorite thing to do at a park? (verbatim)	How much do you know about fun activities at the Grand River?	How do you hear about activities?	What changes would you like to see in your parks? (verbatim)
Briggs Pool 7/23/2026							
12	West Grand	Female	White	Swim/ running/ ice skating/ jumping in leaf piles/ rock climbing walls, swings/ slides/ sledding/ walking trails	I know a little		New drinking fountains with better water (no rusty iron taste) More port-a-potties at parks without bathrooms.
7	West Grand	Male	White	Slides/ sledding/ ice skating/ swimming/ running/ fishing/ nature walks/ animals/ playing in the leaf piles or snow piles	I know a little		2 person swings/ bigger slides
45	West Grand	Female	White	Nature walks, picnics, slededing, swimming, fishing, boating	I know a little		More recycling options/ updated drinking fountains, access to soap or hand sanitizer in bathrooms.

PLASTER CREEK PARK - EXIT SURVEY

Age	Neighborhood	Gender	Racial Identity	What is your favorite thing to do at a park? (verbatim)	How much do you know about fun activities at the Grand River?	How do you hear about activities?	What changes would you like to see in your parks? (verbatim)
Plaster Creek Family Park 8/8/2026							
33	Highland Park	Female	White	Playgrounds, hike, explore nature	I know a little		I would love a GR park that is near water or a creek that could be designed for kids/ people to wade and explore in
61		Female	White	Walking, birding, kayaking I love the gardens and flowers	I know a little		Less pesticides, more flowers and wild areas with native plants and community garden spaces

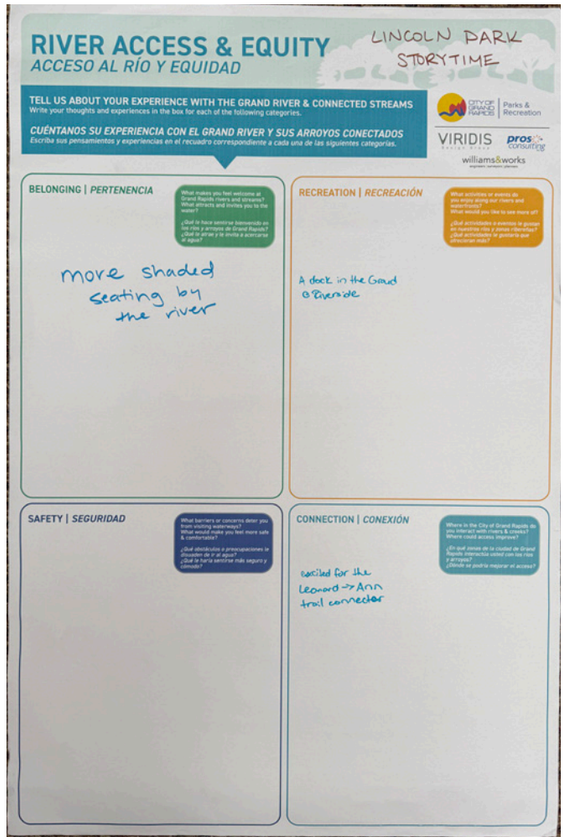
FGRP INSECT EXTRAVAGANZA - CONVERSATION BOARDS

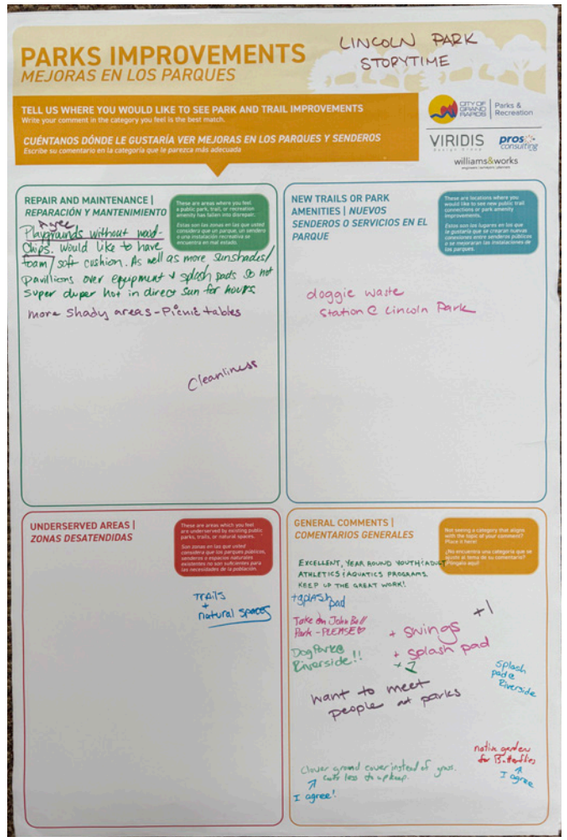
River Access & Equity Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Plaster Creek Family Park 8/8/2026		
Belonging	Accessible education	
Recreation	Splash pads	
Safety	Over-policing at Plaster Creek Everyone feels like a criminal	Plaster Creek Family Park
Connection	Birding, programming, and community	
Connection	Access to smaller water bodies isn't clear - or even knowing that they are there	
Connection	Connect Plaster Creek Family Park to the bike park with a bridge, tunnel, or arc	Plaster Creek Family Park

Parks Improvements Conversation Board Responses		
Category	**Response (verbatim)**	**Location**
Plaster Creek Family Park 8/8/2026		
Repair & Maintenance	Garfield Park bathrooms closed during busy day	Garfield Park
Repair & Maintenance	No pesticides	
Repair & Maintenance	Plaster Creek Family Park deserves better signage!	Plaster Creek Family Park
Repair & Maintenance	Maintenance of native plantings	
New Trails or Amenities	More native playscpaes More natural spaces	
New Trails or Amenities	More flexible seating and picnic tables in the open greenspace at Lincoln	Lincoln Park
New Trails or Amenities	Natural shade - especially for picnic areas	
New Trails or Amenities	Expanded meadows and native plan gardens in neighborhood park	
New Trails or Amenities	Natural shade Places to view nature up close!	
New Trails or Amenities	Bridge from PC Family park to Bike Park	Plaster Creek Family Park/ Bike Park
New Trails or Amenities	Native landscape	
New Trails or Amenities	More native plants vs. lawn areas at Lincoln Park Demonstration gardens	Lincoln Park
New Trails or Amenities	Natural habitat/ landscape protection	
Underserved Areas	I love the natural area and playground at Plaster Creek. More parks should have natural plant areas for pollinators	

FGRP INSECT EXTRAVAGANZA - CONVERSATION BOARDS CONT.

Underserved Areas	Franklin and Eastern area could use more walkable perks	Franklin and Eastern
Underserved Areas	Missing toddler play spaces	
General Comments	Family fun	
General Comments	Love the natural play area	
General Comments	Adding spaces to feed wildlife Education around the good foods for animals	
General Comments	More trees	





NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY RESPONSES

	Category	Issue (verbatim)	Solution (verbatim)	Theme
Creston	Sizzling	North Park Montessori campus being sold by GRPS	Designate as official park	GRPS Sales
		Safer bike lanes + bike parking + designated cross walks		Safe Access & Trail Connections
	Hot	Trail-centric development/activations + attractive things for trail usage		Safe Access & Trail Connections
		Riverside Park flooding + safety		Safe Access & Trail Connections
Eastown	Sizzling	Cleanliness at Wilcox + Sigsbee parks	More regular + consistent cleaning of garbage cans at Sigsbee Park (regularly overflow w/ dog poop bags Unhoused living along Coldbrook Creek leave garbage + used needles along Coldbrook Creek Trail	Basic Upkeep
		Aging infrastructure at Wilcox + Sigsbee parks	Tennis courts at Wilcox Park need to be redone w/ new nets Install pickleball courts as "extra tennis court" at Wilcox Park Bathrooms at Wilcox Park + pavilion at Wilcox Park need repair + restoration Basketball courts at Sigsbee Park need to be redone	Aging Infrastructure
		Invasive species along Coldbrook Creek		Ecological Stewardship
		Aging tree canopy	Seek advice of + listen to Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians and WMEAC	Ecological Stewardship
		Water quality of Coldbrook Creek		Ecological Stewardship
		Construction going on at Blodgett Estate threatens the water quality of Coldbrook Creek	Monitor construction to ensure that Coldbrook Creek is not damaged even further	Ecological Stewardship
		Lack of awareness surrounding the environmental degradation of the Coldbrook Creek	Environmental education	Ecological Stewardship
		Tree canopy at Sigsbee Park needs to be addressed - lack of a tree canopy in the park		Ecological Stewardship
		ADA accessibility at Wilcox Park + Sigsbee Park	Install/create ramps, trails, and sidewalks to bring Wilcox + Sigsbee Park up to ADA standards	ADA Accessibility
	Hot	Wayfinding in Wilcox Park	signs indicating where the Coldbrook Creek Trail begins and ends in Wilcox Park	Signage
		General lack of unique recreation programs and activities at both Wilcox + Sigsbee parks	Create more flexible park spaces, temporary amenities, multi-use facilities, parks and trails to support more unique, flexible, temporary, and seasonal recreation opportunities	Programming
GPNA	Sizzling	Garfield Park is divided by FAST roads without adequate, safe crossings. We have five schools and a senior living facility	More flashing beacons and stop signs	Safe Access & Trail Connections
		We need safe passage across/under the highway (US-131) to get from SE to SW	Friends of GR Parks are doing amazing work	Safe Access & Trail Connections
		There are fantastic winter sport locations in Garfield Park, but no programming	Help facilitate a "happening" in Garfield Park, ex: fat tire bike race GP, Burton Woods, Plaster Creek trail and park, Bike Park, Amazing Race Style??	Programming
		Garfield Park and Plaster Creek Park infrastructure is old - bathrooms	Send the $$ our way!	Aging Infrastructure
		Food desert	Help facilitate a farmer's market or food co-op in the S Div/Burton area	
	Hot	Other areas in town have beautiful signage	More signage directing people to Plaster Creek Trail, Dickinson Park, Plaster Creek Park	Signage
		Plaster Creek trail is eroded and has flooding issues		Ecological Stewardship
	Simmering	Garfield Park area is historically under-served	Less equality, more equity Send us resources! The focus is often on the 3rd ward when in reality much of the south side needs improvement	

	Category	Issue (verbatim)	Solution (verbatim)	Theme
JBAN	Sizzling	Need better bike routes		Safe Access & Trail Connections
		Building + bathroom at Lincoln Park is not ADA		ADA Accessibility
		We have a large space for a soccer field that could be utilized + promoted more since we have the soccer stadium being built in our neighborhood		Programming
		Would like to see more art and cultural held at our parks. Symphony and such.		Programming
		The freeway blocks our access to the Grand River. Not very many good or walkable options to cross the road to ge to the River.		Safe Access & Trail Connections
		Pavilion needs to be updated to ADA		ADA Accessibility
		Bathrooms not open at a reasonable time		Basic Upkeep
		Basketball court needs to be resurfaced		Aging Infrastructure
	Hot	Can't access the Grand River except at a few underpasses that are dark and not walker friendly		Safe Access & Trail Connections
		Need a bigger pavilion to accommodate residents all year round and if there is inclement weather		Aging Infrastructure
		More activities at the local parks like outdoor fitness and movie in the park options		Programming
		Would like to see more trees in the developed areas like Bridge St and Fulton and Butterworth specifically		Ecological Stewardship
		Not aware of any parking lot lighting or basketball court	Friends of GR parks launching stewardship program at Lincoln Park	
	Simmering	Lime bike paths that are marked to get to different parks including the zoo		Safe Access & Trail Connections
		A covered space that residents could utilize for outdoor events		Aging Infrastructure
KI	Sizzling	Keeping park area clean	More involvement from staff	Basic Upkeep
		Communication to local schools	Meet education staff - ways to work together	Programming
		Habitat restoration	Education on flooding	Ecological Stewardship
		Stormwater issues	More rapid response from the city	Basic Upkeep
		Environmental education	Education for children	Ecological Stewardship
		Keeping areas clean	Staff training	Basic Upkeep
	Hot	Activities inclusive to all groups	More communication from community	Programming
	Simmering	Safety	Community officers visible all day	Programming