FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

2016 – 2026
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

March 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

World-class cities and counties have world-class parks, trails, natural areas and park related attractions. They are an integral part of the community's fabric. They provide residents with recreation resources and access to natural environments. They include amenities and facilities that promote the use of parks, trails, waterways, and special interest attractions that demonstrate a high quality of life for citizens of the region. World-class cities and counties understand that parks, trails, quality natural areas and park related amenities are not an afterthought, but are key to creating an active and vibrant community—one that retains and attracts people to live there.

Five Rivers MetroParks (FRMP) features many of these world-class elements. The park system includes a variety of nature parks and conservation areas, community and urban parks, an extensive system of trails, and unique facilities, such as the 2nd Street Market and Adventure Central. Programs and services focus on nature education, outdoor recreation and conservation that provide diverse opportunities to connect with nature and enjoy active, outdoor lifestyles.

In January 2015, FRMP began the process of developing a 10-year Comprehensive Master Plan for the park system. The Board of Park Commissioners and staff recognize that a quality park system is critical to local prosperity, community livability and the health and wellbeing of residents. FRMP is widely respected by the community as a best practices government agency in the region, the State of Ohio, and the United States for maintaining a consistent standard of excellence for residents of Montgomery County and visitors to the area. Throughout the community input process, residents and leaders consistently stated that they value the park

system and the benefits it provides to the county and region. This support mirrors a recent study conducted by the National Recreation and Park Association, which concluded that 83% of Americans personally benefit from local parks. In addition, 92% of Americans say their communities benefit from local parks, and four out of five people agree that local parks are worth the tax dollars spent on them.

This Comprehensive Master Plan is designed to support FRMP's efforts in continuing to protect natural areas, and provide world-class, innovative and well-balanced parks, facilities, trails, amenities and attractions as the region continues to grow.

1.2 PROJECT PROCESS

The Comprehensive Master Plan study incorporated a series of discovery and analysis of the park system in order to provide FRMP community-driven direction for the future. During the past year, the consulting team worked with FRMP to engage the community and staff in an extensive public participation process that included various public meetings, focus groups with users and non-users of the park system, interviews with community leaders, intercept surveys, on-line surveys and a statistically valid survey of county residents. The outcomes of these important connection points are outlined in this plan and include short-term and long-term goals to accomplish in a financially sustainable manner. The following page depicts additional detail regarding the logical study sequence and planning path for developing the plan.

Vision and Mission – The vision describes what the organization aspires to be and the mission defines how the organization will work towards achieving the vision. They both serve as the guide for communicating the rationale for the organization's existence.

Community & Staff Input and Statistically Valid Survey – This series of touchpoints with the community provided a beacon of understanding toward the expressed needs of the people who are served by the FRMP.

Demographic and Trend Analysis – The collection and resulting assessment of regional demographics provided insight to the research team with an understanding of the ages, ethnicity, race and economic characteristics of the residents in the service area.

Parks, Facilities & Program Needs Analysis – A comprehensive study of existing agency assets supplied insight to the quality of these existing assets and programs to ensure consistency of their presentation and diversity of program offerings. Equally as important, the work provided the study team an understanding of the potential for new parks, facilities and programs that might be added to the agency's portfolio of offerings to fill any service gaps that exist.

Operational & Maintenance Analysis – Current organization practices were analyzed through discussions with staff and an analysis of existing operational conditions. The findings were then combined with and adjusted to desired operational philosophy and other approaches recommended in the plan.

Financial and Capital Improvement Strategy – These studies provided insight to how recommended improvements of existing facilities and parks could be funded, along with any new development and acquisition in the future.

Implementation Plan – The Comprehensive Master Plan's recommendations were developed and specific goals, objectives, initiatives, tactics, and measurements were identified to accomplish those recommendations over the next ten years. The implementation plan will be reviewed and updated annually and will serve as a working document and guide to the organization.

As indicated earlier, one purpose of the extensive public involvement process was conducted to refine community values and issues leading to FRMP's vision for the park system. The Community Values ModelTM was used as a guide and served as the foundation of the Comprehensive Master Plan study. The Community Values ModelTM is an innovative process approach to gather comprehensive public input and insight from key community leaders, stakeholders, general public, users, non-users and staff to define the overall guiding principles and values of the community when considering the delivery of parks, conservation areas, recreation facilities and program services.

The Community Values Model™ was used as the basis for developing or reaffirming the vision, mission and community values-strategic objectives. The strategic objectives address six unique areas of parks, natural resources and recreation planning.

Community / Mandates Priorities	Standards	Levels of Services	Financial / Revenue	Partnerships	Governance / Organization
Safety & Health / Wellness	Land and Open Space	Levels of Service Delivery	Funding Mechanisms to Support Operations & Capital	Public / Public	Design / Align Organization to Support Vision and Values to Community
Principles of Community	Facilities	Core Services		Public / Not-for-Profit	
Mandatory Elements for Facilities, Programs & Services	Programs	Role in Delivery vs. Other Service Providers		Public / Private	
	Maintenance				

1.3 PURPOSE, VISION, MISSION, AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

1.3.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of Five Rivers MetroParks is to protect natural areas, parks and river corridors, and promote the conservation and use of these lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people of the region.

1.3.2 VISION STATEMENT

The vision presents Five Rivers MetroParks desire for the future:

"Five Rivers MetroParks is the conservation leader of a vital, active, nature based community."

1.3.3 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement is how Five Rivers MetroParks will implement its vision:

"Protect the region's natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature."

1.3.4 ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The organizational values that the Five Rivers MetroParks incorporates into its daily operations include the following:

- Collaboration…working together
- Commitment…dedicated to service beyond self
- Community…unified in our efforts
- Excellence…expect high quality performance and service
- Fun…love what we do and celebrate it
- Diversity…support differences and inclusiveness
- Fiscal Responsibility…stewards of entrusted funds
- Innovation…challenge the status quo
- Integrity…require honest and ethical decision-making
- Professional Growth…challenge staff to learn
- Respect…revere each other and those we serve
- Sustainability…create capacity to endure and thrive

1.3.5 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, INITIATIVES AND TACTICS, AND MEASUREMENTS

Goals confirm the vision and mission. Objectives indicate how that goal will be accomplished. Initiatives and tactics demonstrate what processes will be used to fulfill the objectives. Measurements tell the team what is expected, why it is important, who is involved, when it is going to occur and which attributes are important.

1.4 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4.1 COMMUNITY VISION FOR LAND MANAGEMENT

"Our vision is to serve as stewards of the land we manage to provide clean air and water, protect wildlife habitats, connect people to nature, create a sense of regional identity and sense of place and promote active life styles."

GOAL:

Create Great Parks!

OBJECTIVES:

- Complete a network of open space corridors and trails in Montgomery County that connect population centers to regional parks and open space areas. The trails would ideally link with regional trails and interconnect all Montgomery County trail systems.
- Establish the highest level of safety and standards based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and the Sustainable Trails Initiatives (STI) criteria along trails.
- Ensure healthy biodiversity.
- Establish the plan for the next levy period.
- Create destination parks, trails, waterways, open space, natural areas and amenities that connect the community to nature and active lifestyles.
- Promote responsible and sustainable stewardship on greenway corridors and trails to preserve rivers, streams, and natural areas within the County and adjacent lands.

1.4.2 COMMUNITY VISION FOR PARKS AND FACILITIES

"Our vision is to develop world class recreational, educational and signature parks and facilities that create a sense of place and provide opportunities to learn about nature, conservation, cultural heritage, gardening, sustainable living, local food and healthy lifestyles that make living in Montgomery County the best place to live, work, and play."

GOAL:

Create great educational and recreation amenities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop individual business plans for each signature park and facility.
- Develop health and wellness opportunities in each park facility managed by FRMP.
- Incorporate ADA improvements in parks and recreation facilities per FRMP's ADA Transition Plan.
- Consider program themes with park and facility updates to maximize use and value.
- Provide opportunities throughout the FRMP service area that can host special events.
- Evaluate the need to develop more camping in existing MetroParks to support community interest.
- Make basic amenity improvements in all MetroParks to maximize the use and value to residents and visitors.
- Continue to expand trails and greenways to connect to FRMP in areas of the county that has service gaps.
- Establish facility/infrastructure design and maintenance standards to uphold the quality of user experiences and fiscal sustainability.

1.4.3 COMMUNITY VISION FOR PROGRAMMING

"Our vision is to broaden programs to appeal to diverse users and offer opportunities for new and inclusive experiences that increase the value of FRMP to the community. We offer programs in conservation and nature education, cultural history, local foods and gardening, sustainable living, outdoor recreation, health and wellness and community-wide special events."

GOAL:

Engage the community.

OBJECTIVES:

- Incorporate consistent program guiding principles into all programs developed by FRMP.
- Continue to grow the agency's marketing and outreach to target current and potential users through additional mediums and Web 2.0 technology.
- Continue to strengthen the volunteer system that builds advocacy and support for FRMP and in all parks, facilities, programs and services across the system.
- Initiate selected special events within the FRMP system for regional economic impact.
- Ensure that the integrated program plan for the entire FRMP system aligns programs with market demand and addresses the needs of the areas and populations that have service gaps.
- Continue to develop a culture of exceptional customer service.
- Develop business plans for all signature parks, facilities and key program areas to maximize their efficiency and productivity.
- Continue programming the use of trails, waterways and greenways for all users including walkers, runners, paddlers, bicyclists, families and all age groups.

1.4.4 COMMUNITY VISION FOR OPERATIONS AND STAFFING

"Our vision is to develop systems, policies and procedures that reduce bureaucracy and make it easy for staff in the field to manage their respective functions to achieve the outcomes that the community desires."

GOAL:

Empower and prepare our team.

OBJECTIVES:

- Incorporate Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) standards into the agency and monitor CAPRA and its implementation plan. Update policies and procedures on an annual basis. Ensure that they create maximum flexibility for the staff in the field to do its work in a timely manner.
- Develop leaders through effective training and mentoring.
- Encourage creativity and innovation.
- Create measurable outcomes by creating and tracking metrics to achieve goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Master Plan.

1.4.5 COMMUNITY VISION FOR FINANCING

"Our vision is to ensure long-term financial sustainability and provide well documented, accurate and timely financial information that meets all the local, state and federal requirements for effective and transparent reporting and supports the financial principles determined in the Strategic Plan."

GOAL:

Model fiscal responsibility and integrity.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a long-term financial plan that is consistent with the goals and objectives of FRMP and support the initiatives and strategies as reflected in FRMP approved plans. Agency goals and objectives, which affect operating funds and capital improvements, need to be consistent with fund availability and financial projections.
- Management of the operating budget for budgeting purposes will be at a cost/profit center level so that each program and function is reviewed annually for revenue projections and expenditure needs.
- Develop and implement a capital improvement plan for FRMP.

1.4.6 CONCLUSION

The Comprehensive Master Plan was developed to provide the organization a roadmap for the future using knowledge gained from an excellent legacy of history and current day practices. The planning process incorporated a comprehensive series of discovery and analysis strategies to understand the workings of the organization and included a strong community engagement process.

The Comprehensive Master Plan includes a system-wide approach for accomplishing short and long-term goals, initiatives, tactics, and measurements to ensure FRMP continues to protect the region's natural heritage and provides world-class services, programs, parks, and facilities to the community for many years to come.

The following chapters provide additional details regarding the community and staff engagement processes, analysis, results and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

"DISCOVERY"

In this section of the plan, titled "Discovery", the consulting team evaluated nine different assessment tools to evaluate FRMP. This included the following:

- Key leadership and focus group meetings
- Public forums
- On-line surveys
- Statistically valid surveys
- Trend analysis
- Benchmark analysis
- Park and facility site assessments
- Outdoor education and recreation program assessment
- Financial assessment

2.1 KEY LEADERSHIP AND FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Interaction with the community is a critical function of the master planning process. The community touch-points take place through stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings. This important exercise helps the consulting team establish confidence with the various meeting participants, the board and staff of the agency. It serves as an important and critical part of the community needs assessment process and the ultimate development of the Comprehensive Master Plan.

These sessions encourage participants to identify the issues, opportunities, and challenges facing FRMP now and in the future. By engaging community leaders through individual interviews, small group discussions or focus group settings, the process ensures that the Comprehensive Master Plan is built on a community-driven and collaborative process.

In February 2015, the planning team conducted a series of 15 individual or small group interviews plus 17 focus group meetings that ultimately included over 100 community leaders and stakeholders. Questions for these discussions focused on strengths of the system; opportunities FRMP needs to pursue; desired facilities or services; FRMP's ability to communicate to residents; funding alternatives; and desired outcomes for this plan.

The following sections summarize the questions asked of participants and the resulting answers provided from the interviews and focus group sessions. At the beginning of each discussion, participants were told that their individual responses would not be attributed to them specifically in order to allow for more freedom and comfort in providing constructive feedback. To that end, the responses from participants are listed in summary form. The most common or shared responses are listed first, and each list proceeds in descending order of frequency of answers.

Note: It is important to note that the summary input is a reflection of the responses provided by the attendees and not a consultant recommendation or a statement of fact. Thus, what one respondent might consider to be a strength might very well be an area for improvement for another.

2.1.1 PERCEPTION OF CURRENT PARK AND RECREATION CONDITIONS

ON A SCALE OF 1-5 (1 BEING EXCELLENT AND 5 BEING POOR), HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF PARKS AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY FRMP, AND WHY?

The vast majority of respondents rated the quality of parks and services as either "excellent" or "good" (numerically 1 or 2) and cited the following reasons:

- The number, variety, and quality of amenities and facilities make FRMP a jewel of the county
- Excellent programming available to residents throughout the year, including a number of youth programs
- Wide variety of experiences through parks and program offerings provided by FRMP
- Parks and facilities are well maintained, clean, and aesthetically pleasing
- FRMP staff is top-notch and considered to be very responsive, friendly, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic, while delivering great customer service with a professional demeanor
- Parks are easily accessible, with locations in close proximity to all neighborhoods within the county
- FRMP exhibits a spirit of collaboration and partnerships as evidenced by the relationships with a variety of schools, local universities, health/wellness organizations, local businesses and non-profits
- A forward thinking approach exists in furthering the mission through land acquisition and conservation efforts
- Good community outreach and environmental education programs
- The environmental sustainability and conservation philosophy is a strength and is increasingly supported by the community
- FRMP is perceived as a regional leader for outdoor adventure experiences
- FRMP is perceived to be fiscally responsible

When evaluating existing parks and services, focus group participants identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- FRMP has recently eliminated some long-running, popular programs and special events, with no fair warning or explanation to the user base
- Community outreach and education opportunities are much more prominent for youth population. Adults/seniors are underserved in these areas
- Immigrant population is growing, and they are utilizing the parks as gathering spaces, but FRMP is not engaging these groups through its programming
- Children are using the parks less and less, and FRMP must find a way to get this core group involved in more outdoor recreation
- Marketing efforts could be improved, as many segments of the community are unaware of FRMP offerings. There is some general confusion of the FRMP brand identity
- FRMP is missing the mark on millennials/young professionals who rely heavily on social media and apps. Addressing communications with immigrant population could be improved through the use of multilingual marketing strategies

WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION PROVIDED BY FRMP?

- Conservation was the single most important function mentioned. Greenspace within the service area is very valuable, and FRMP must provide an optimal balance of land acquisition and preservation of existing land to ensure future generations have access to outdoor recreation and natural spaces
- Another frequently mentioned function is FRMP's role in providing opportunities for the community to access and enjoy clean and inviting parks, open space and natural areas with a wide variety of recreation activities and experiences
- FRMP serves as the interface between residents and nature. It is the responsibility of FRMP to connect people to the outdoors and encourage good stewardship of natural resources. FRMP needs to be a leader in building advocacy for preservation of nature through nature education offerings and community outreach
- Providing outdoor recreation opportunities for all residents is another key role of FRMP. It is important to provide a variety of experiences that meet the needs of the entire community
- FRMP must continue to be strategic in identifying land to acquire. Consider "land banks" for future development or for transactions of land that is better suited to the future needs of the community
- Outdoor recreation spaces need to offer an adequate balance of passive and active opportunities. Providing greenspaces that are open for interpretation of the user is just as important as programmable spaces where the intended uses are well defined
- Accessibility of parks for users and connectivity of parks and facilities through a comprehensive trail system is also considered very important among respondents
- Participants also indicated that FRMP must provide a safe environment for users of the system to engage in recreation
- It is important to create and maintain great places for community events, activities, and festivals, particularly downtown
- To provide a good, solid, and reliable customer service ethic is critical throughout the organization
- Finding ways to strategically align with the mission of partner organizations is central to the function and future of the agency

ON A SCALE OF 1-5 WITH 1 BEING EXCELLENT AND 5 BEING POOR, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE FRMP PARKS, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES IN MEETING THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS?

On average, participants rated the quality of FRMP parks, facilities, and services as "good" (2, numerically), with all reported responses falling within the 1-3 range.

The most frequent reasoning for positive responses were as follows:

- FRMP does a great job of meeting community needs. Parks, facilities, and services offered through FRMP have something for everyone. There are a nice variety of experiences available to residents
- Comparatively, the FRMP service area is much better than surrounding communities based on existing inventory and programming. FRMP is viewed as a statewide leader in outdoor recreation
- The system is heavily used, which is an indication that FRMP is meeting the needs of the public and adapting to changing public demands over time. The amount of use and activity suggests the agency is meeting the community's needs, but definitive evidence is not apparent
- FRMP has a reputation for providing high-quality parks while remaining fiscally responsible

Although the overall perception of FRMP is positive, respondents identified the following areas of improvement for parks, facilities, and services:

- There is a need for more ADA compliance throughout the system, especially pertaining to trail accessibility
- While the existing trail system is good, there is a lack of access to trails for multi-modal transportation in urban areas. Connections to city parks are limited
- The marketing efforts of FRMP could be greatly improved. There is a large portion of the local population that is not aware of departmental offerings. FRMP is not fully utilizing available technologies
- The FRMP brand is easily confused with other parks and recreation organizations within the county. The inability to distinguish between various agencies operating within the county causes confusion among residents in terms of quality standards for parks, facilities, and trails
- FRMP has been phasing out many of its special events and festivals and the general public has been given no explanation why this is happening. This is even more troubling to residents because they recently supported a levy for FRMP
- FRMP needs more engaging and attractive activities. Their offerings are growing stale amid increasing competition for similar providers. FRMP needs to move beyond average and traditional programs and services
- FRMP could do a better job of providing amenities and programming that cater to smaller, special interest groups that are currently underserved

2.1.2 PERCEPTIONS OF ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ARE THERE ANY SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY THAT NEED TO BE BETTER SERVED BY FRMP? IF SO, WHO AND WHY?

- There needs to be more activities or amenities that cater to the economically disadvantaged people in the community. The urban core of the service area could be better served by FRMP. Urban areas with lower household earning capabilities are limited because some activities are cost prohibitive
- On a related note, inner city children are not utilizing parks and facilities due to the lack of available transportation and safe access to recreation spaces. There is also a lack of connectivity between the city and suburbs via adequate trail linkages
- The rapidly growing immigrant population is widely underserved even though they are highly visible in the parks, which they use as communal gathering spots. These groups are not aware of FRMP offerings outside of their local parks. There is an opportunity to engage the immigrant population through multilingual marketing and programs/amenities that cater to the unique cultural interests present within a given demographic
- There is significant potential to increase exposure by engaging corporations and local businesses into partnerships. This can be accomplished by encouraging the use of FRMP assets for company retreats and offering incentives for employees to use local parks and facilities
- People struggling with wellness issues could be served more. This can cut across all age segments, income levels, and geographic regions
- A deficiency in use of parks and facilities among young, school-aged children is prevalent within the system. FRMP must find creative ways to attract children and parents to the parks to engage in more active lifestyles
- Focus group responses suggest that the older segment of the population is currently underserved. There is a need for more programs for the seniors and improvements in ADA accessibility
- There needs to be a greater effort to provide services to people that need outdoor therapeutic and adaptive recreation
- Another population segment that FRMP needs to serve is millennials/young professionals. Many believe this is due to the lack of marketing efforts targeting these individuals through the use of social media
- Amenities utilized by special interest groups (e.g., paddle courses, disc golf, community gardens) need to be added to FRMP's existing program and facility inventory. Future additions of these specialized features would greatly improve the service coverage of the local community
- There is an issue in our area with "east" versus "west." It will be important to balance the access and equity with what is provided. There does not seem to be many parks in the western part of Dayton and Montgomery County

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW FRMP CAN INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE SERVICES AND AMENITIES IT PROVIDES TO THE COMMUNITY AND TO BUSINESSES?

- Consensus among participants indicate there is a strong need to improve the utilization of technology in marketing efforts and enhance its digital and social media presence
- While the Facebook page is considered very useful, there is room for improvement, as many respondents suggested that social media is mostly used to react to past events versus promoting upcoming activity
- FRMP needs to build a dedicated app for smart phones to take advantage of push notifications and capture the young adult population that is more responsive to digital marketing

- The FRMP website is considered a great resource. User-friendly features from a navigation standpoint could be improved. There needs to be a version that is compatible with mobile devices
- Many respondents indicated a need to strengthen partnerships with schools to attract local youth to the parks. Introducing youth to FRMP sites builds advocacy that spills over onto the parents and increases the likelihood that families will visit parks and facilities. FRMP could help offset the cost of field trips for local schools and collaborate with the school district on campaigns (e.g., No Child Left Inside) to promote active recreation among students to create lifelong users of the system
- There is also a strong opportunity to collaborate with similar agencies within the area, such as the City of Dayton Parks. This type of cross-promotion can increase awareness for FRMP by introducing new users to the system
- Respondents that have had access to the Parkways publication cite it as a very valuable resource for upcoming programs and events. Many residents do not receive the brochure. The process for signing up takes up to six months to receive a copy. Many respondents feel it would be useful to disseminate the information available in Parkways on to the agency's Facebook page
- Capitalizing on the draw of community events (e.g., food/wine festivals, flower sales, etc.) is another strong opportunity to promote FRMP offerings. Recent cutbacks of such events significantly reduces that potential
- Due to the influx in the Hispanic population to the service area, and the limited reach of FRMP to this user group, developing multi-lingual marketing efforts needs to be a priority. Some believe that the distribution of bilingual flyers to students about upcoming FRMP programs and events would allow the department's marketing efforts to effectively reach Hispanic households that have been difficult to connect with in the past
- Seeking corporate partnerships and collaborating with local businesses (e.g., incentivizing park usage among employees) is another significant opportunity to increase awareness and strengthen the existing user base
- FRMP would also benefit by partnering more with the city and promoting parks at events hosted at the convention center. Ideally, FRMP parks and facilities could be an attractive destination for tourism in the Dayton area

WHAT ROLE DO YOU BELIEVE FRMP PLAYS IN THE REGION'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WHY?

- All focus groups and virtually every stakeholder identified FRMP as a key player in the economic development strategies within the City of Dayton, and greater Montgomery County
- FRMP is a key contributor to the quality of life for existing/potential residents and businesses
- Recent trends show that proximity to parks, greenspaces, and trails are a primary factor considered when buying a home. The assets provided by FRMP have helped increase property values in the area
- FRMP offerings play a big role in attracting businesses to the area. Greenspaces and recreation opportunities bring businesses to the area. Once businesses are established, they use FRMP assets as a selling point to solicit quality talent
- FRMP is also important in attracting tourism dollars to the area by creating destinations and hosting major community events, such as concerts
- As the area continues to develop, more and more emphasis has been placed on the riverfront for attracting residents, businesses, and tourists. FRMP will continue to be crucial in developing and maintaining the natural resources and recreation opportunities along the river
- Due to its substantial impact on economic development, FRMP must strengthen partnerships and remain actively engaged with agencies and organizations that drive economic growth (e.g., Convention and Visitors Bureau, real estate agencies, Dayton Development Coalition, etc.)

2.1.3 VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES/CHALLENGES FACING THE FRMP IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS?

At least one of the following three themes was mentioned in every stakeholder interview and focus group meetings, and in most instances, all three were included as a top concern:

- The most important challenge facing FRMP in the near future centers on how it will be funded. General expectation is that support from the tax levy will continue to diminish over time and subsidy for government agencies will endure further cutbacks. It will be increasingly important for FRMP to operate in a financially sustainable manner. This will require a functional model for funding, reliable earned income sources, development of alternative funding sources, strong partnerships, utilization of volunteers, and adhering to optimal levels of cost recovery
- In order to achieve financial sustainability, FRMP must be capable of maintaining the quality of its existing resources without over extending itself. Moving into the future, FRMP must understand, and adhere to, the appropriate balance between acquiring new assets and maintaining existing ones
- Equity of access is another pressing issue FRMP will inevitably be faced with over the next five years. FRMP must ensure that its offerings are in line with the needs and interests of the community and those offerings are inclusive for all user groups throughout the service area. FRMP must embrace the changing demographics to ensure there is something for everyone, regardless of age, race, and earning ability

Some of the other issues and challenges raised for discussion include:

- Conserving open space and protecting sensitive natural resource areas
- Finding the best way to serve as an economic driver in the community by working with local businesses and by hosting events
- Offering environmental education and outdoor recreation programming
- Developing and expanding partnership networks to offer additional programming and facilities
- Enhancing connectivity and alternative transportation options
- Addressing health and wellness challenges in the community
- Ensure that agency staff stay on the cutting edge of park and recreation management through the right training and professional development
- Building and maintaining community trust
- Finding ways to engage all members of the community through innovative marketing and communication efforts

TEN YEARS FROM NOW, WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIONS THAT YOU HOPE FRMP WOULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED?

- Connectivity was mentioned in nearly every focus group as a desired outcome from this master plan. Residents would like to see the interconnection of all trails and greenways within the current system and the expansion of the existing infrastructure and extensions that connect to neighboring systems
- Increased awareness and advocacy for conservation of green spaces was another desired outcome highlighted in focus group meetings. Residents believe FRMP must be a leader in environmental sustainability and education to ensure a legacy of positive environmental impact for future generations
- Financial sustainability must be a defining characteristic of FRMP in years to come. As the dedicated funding from the tax levy reduces, FRMP must be increasingly sustainable through efficient operations and reliable funding sources

- FRMP must have a positive impact on health and wellness for residents. Increased per capita use of the system and broader segment appeal, especially among youth and minority groups, are key factors toward enhancing the quality of life for all residents within Montgomery County
- FRMP must remain committed to system continuous improvement. Enhancements to parks, facilities, and programs over time. Inclusion of underserved groups and continued tracking of demographic shifts and recreation trends are critical to the future success of FRMP. In addition, further development of assets that tie into the economic development of the city can yield significant return on investment
- Maximizing partnerships, both public/private and with other government agencies, is another desired outcome. FRMP would greatly benefit from strong partnerships with local businesses to leverage funding for more sustainable operations. FRMP needs to aim for better coordination among other government agencies and surrounding jurisdictions to function more cohesively
- Focus group respondents hope that the planning process will aide in fortifying the FRMP brand and establish defining characteristics for the agency that make it easily identifiable within the community

2.1.4 FUNDING, ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE: PERCEPTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE FRMP PRIORITIES SHOULD BE IN UTILIZING THE TAX DOLLARS IT RECEIVES?

- Maintaining existing assets / quality over quantity
- Programming
- Safety
- Connectivity of trails
- Staff
- Land banking
- Partnerships for shared costs

BEYOND THE TAX SUPPORTED FUNDING, WHAT OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR FINANCING FRMP AND WHAT SHOULD THOSE SOURCES FUND?

- Partnerships
- Sponsorships/naming rights
- Fundraisers
- Fee-based programs
- Permits/licenses
- Private/in-kind donations
- Rental fees
- Foundation/endowment
- Federal/state grants
- Differential pricing
- Lease agreements
- Memberships
- Trusts
- Crowdfunding

2.1.5 OTHER IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS THAT WE HAVE NOT ASKED YOU, BUT SHOULD ASK THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

- What is FRMP doing that it should not be doing?
- If you aren't using FRMP, why not? Are you using another provider?
- Who are the other agencies and organizations that FRMP needs to partner with?
- How should FRMP's tax dollars be spent? How should FRMP prioritize its budget?
- Is the process of appointing three board members by a probate judge the right thing? Does governance suffer because of it?
- Is the expense for security systems and having their own police department justified, or could they partner with local police departments? Is it beneficial to conduct cost-benefit analysis?
- What would people be willing to do for FRMP to keep it great?
- Comment regarding public engagement: There should be engagement and surveys of adjacent counties
- Comment regarding public engagement: Make sure things are multi-lingual

2.2 STAFF FOCUS GROUP - POLICY NEEDS AND KEY OUTCOMES

2.2.1 POLICY NEEDS

As part of the kickoff for the comprehensive master planning process, the consultant team conducted a series of interviews with various FRMP staff members to develop an understanding from the employees' perspectives, and identify outcomes desired, current issues within the system, and what goals the plan should achieve. The staff identified the following policies in need of enhancements:

- Stronger policy on rental agreements with special event providers and other user groups
- Ensure pricing policy is better understood and utilized by staff
- Update policy and procedures manual
- Develop an earned income policy
- Update financial policies and include staff training
- Review and update as needed the land management policy
- Memorandum of Understanding with the MetroParks Foundation which defines FRMP's and the Foundation's responsibilities

2.2.2 MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOME

Staff members were each asked about their most important outcomes, key facility issues and vision for the agency. Following are summarized opportunities:

MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOME

- A set time frame and priority for all the recommendations in the Comprehensive Master Plan
- A clear identity for each MetroPark, such as Possum Creek and Carriage Hill MetroParks
- Determine the community's vision for the system
- Continue to strengthen or build relationships with owners to whom FRMP leases properties
- Address the large capital improvements that are needed and where it needs to be completed in order of magnitude
- Horticulture standards and use of native plants in the future

- Determine the vision for River Run and how will it impact staffing and resources
- Develop areas around Wesleyan MetroParks and other urban parks and connections to the trail system
- Look at maintenance standards in place and where improvements are needed
- Have a holistic plan for the park land in the Germantown and Twin Creek areas
- Evaluate the sensitivity of the properties we own through a green printing process
- Complete a master plan for each park site
- Communicate to staff when FRMP purchases a property, explain how and why we bought the property
- Develop an equestrian trail plan as part of the Comprehensive Master Plan
- Determine the type of parks needed for the future to attract different ethnic groups
- Determine the future direction of the Island MetroPark band shell and what to do with it
- Utilize the Comprehensive Master Plan to recommend staffing levels and how the organizational structure will look for the future
- Establish key roles and responsibilities for each area of the system

KEY FACILITY ISSUES

- Staffing levels at park sites and how to maintain those levels
- Infrastructure and equipment needs updated in some parks
- Need to know more about inter-department scheduling when we activate a park (marketing, versus programming versus maintenance scheduling)
- Greater definition of staffing level needs for parks and facilities
- Water obligations and the future of irrigation or a different approach to how we manage watering plant materials
- Additional marketing for sites like Wesleyan MetroPark to encourage more use
- Need more discussion and communication with community on how to use parks and facilities, as well as parking locations and access
- Need greater definition of what users desire and effectiveness of signage. Many times, people use their GPS device and it takes them to a maintenance facility
- Better utilization of park volunteers
- Conflicts between user groups, runners, bikers, dog walkers, etc.
- Natural issues and how to deal with flooding, non-native species in our parks

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- Independent programming
- Self-directed activities
- Connections for bikeways and trails
- Ensure the direction we are going does not limit the use of parks, i.e. need to define amenities and services that should be included in the 90% versus 10% park land
- Establish a clear vision and defined priorities that the entire agency can follow
- Educate people on how to use the parks and gardens for education purposes
- Use the Comprehensive Master Plan to set defined recommendations and a work plan to complete them
- Family engagement, such as a child playing and parents are exercising
- Diversification of funding resources

- Add new amenities and update existing ones
- Update the literature on education materials
- Tell our story more effectively
- Determine how we align to national trends and incorporate into the Comprehensive Master Plan
- Site master plans for all park locations
- Enhance the interaction between the other rivers and trails agencies in the region

2.3 PUBLIC FORUM

On April 21 and 22, 2015, two public forums were conducted at Cox Arboretum and at FRMP headquarters downtown. Many methods for publicizing these workshops were used including print press releases, email blasts, social media outlets, FRMP website, and word of mouth.

All public meetings followed a consistent format of educating the community and soliciting public input and their vision for the future. This included information on the planning process and demographic shifts in Montgomery County and nation-wide trends. The crowd-sourcing project website (www.metroparks.org/plan) was revealed to the audience. They were encouraged to visit and participate in the online survey and follow the plan's progression through posted technical reports and meeting times/locations.

Residents were also asked to identify system-wide strengths, opportunities and the single highest priority outcome of the Comprehensive Master Plan. The following summarizes and highlights the results of each public meeting.

COX ARBORETUM (APRIL 21, 2015)

Location: Cox Arboretum; 6733 Springboro Pike, Dayton, OH

Key Discussion Points from the Workshop

- Strengths:
  - Number and size of parks
  - Improvements to infrastructure and safety at Eastwood MetroPark
  - Midwest Outdoor Experience
  - Diversity of activities for different age segment and level of experience (passive versus active)
  - Wide range of volunteer opportunities
  - The abundance of hiking trails
  - FRMP have amenities and destination parks that are economic drivers for the city
  - FRMP staff
  - Park maintenance staff and parks are clean and well maintained
  - Safe Parks
- Opportunities:
  - Additional opportunities to fish at Cox Arboretum more than just once a year
  - Conserve and protect additional greenspace
  - Construct a kid's mountain bike area
  - Connect Germantown and Twin Creek MetroPark
  - Construct a rock climbing area like the one in Columbus, OH.
  - Construct a slack line area
  - Additional primitive camping along rivers and trails
  - Continue to offer broad age segment appeal of amenities and program offerings
  - Continue to ensure sites are accessible (ADA)
  - Build backcountry shelters
- Top Priority:
  - Preserve Greenspace
  - Communication and Marketing efforts
    - Offerings, priorities of the agency, Master Plan outcomes, newly constructed trails and amenities
  - Additional youth outdoor recreation opportunities
  - Monitor fish when lake is restocked at Possum Creek MetroPark
  - Additional nature play areas
  - Invasive species control

2.3.2 FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS HEADQUARTERS (APRIL 22, 2015)

Location: Downtown Headquarters (409 E. Monument Ave., Dayton, OH)

Key Discussion Points

- Strengths:
  - Lunchtime music at Riverscape MetroPark
  - The children's garden
  - Parks are clean and well maintained
  - Multiple program and event opportunities
  - Community support
  - Parks are amazing
  - Nature play areas (e.g. Wegerzyn)
  - Riverscape MetroPark and river trails
  - Customer Service
- Opportunities
  - Additional tent camping
    - Offer an easier online way to make reservations
  - Bike share location in Wright-Dunbar Village
  - Accessibility of parks (sidewalks, entrances, transit connections, audible/tactile features)
  - Alternate formats for trail maps (large print, brail)
  - Additional amenities for handicapped children and adults
  - Use billboards to promote parks
  - Information about trail destinations
  - Scooters for seniors to use trails/paths
  - Annual pass for a fee to enter parks
  - Consistency of signage across providers
  - Additional trash cans system wide
  - Offer FRMP merchandise for sale to help promote awareness
  - Offer emergency whistles and call boxes at parks and trails
  - Offer a YouTube video that features all the parks and their offerings to help create better awareness
  - Communication can be improved
  - Offer events at different parks to raise awareness (e.g. 5k running events, scavenger hunts)
- Highest Priority
  - Adventure parks
  - Additional camping experiences
  - Additional unique features (e.g. climbing)
  - Buses that connect to trails and parks
  - Incentive for visiting all parks

2.4 COMMUNITY ON-LINE / INTERCEPT SURVEY

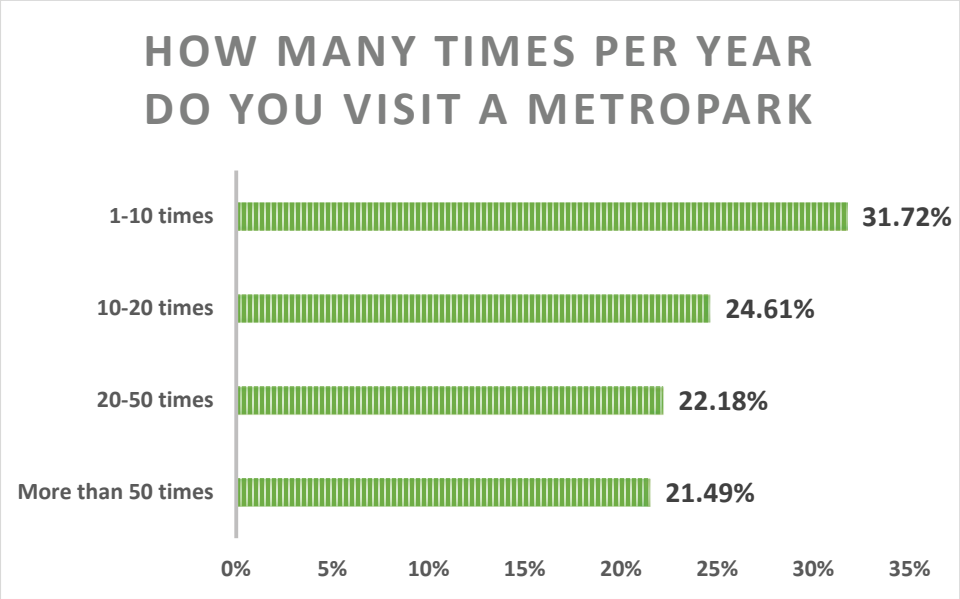
As a part of the expansive community outreach process undertaken for the Comprehensive Master Plan, FRMP staff and the PROS Consulting team conducted a series of intercept surveys at various places in the service area. This was also complemented by a number of online surveys administered through www.surveymonkey.com.

This process yielded 582 completed responses from a wide cross-section of community members. Questions ranged in scope from park visitation, most frequently visited parks, elements within the system most liked and important to the respondents, and the quality of offerings.

The following pages report the results of the combined responses of the intercept and the online surveys completed. While these are not statistically valid, they provide a good insight into the sentiment of the community. As observed from the results, respondents are frequent participants in the FRMP's offerings and rate the overall quality of offerings favorably.

2.4.1 HOW MANY TIMES PER YEAR DO YOU VISIT A METROPARK?

Over 40% of all respondents visit a MetroPark more than 20 times a year. 25% visit a MetroPark 10-20 times a year while 32% respondents visit a MetroPark 1-10 times a year. These are above average visitation numbers with almost two out of every three respondents visiting a MetroPark at least 10 times a year and speaks to the frequent visitation and utilization of FRMP's' offerings.



2.4.2 WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE METROPARK OR FACILITY?

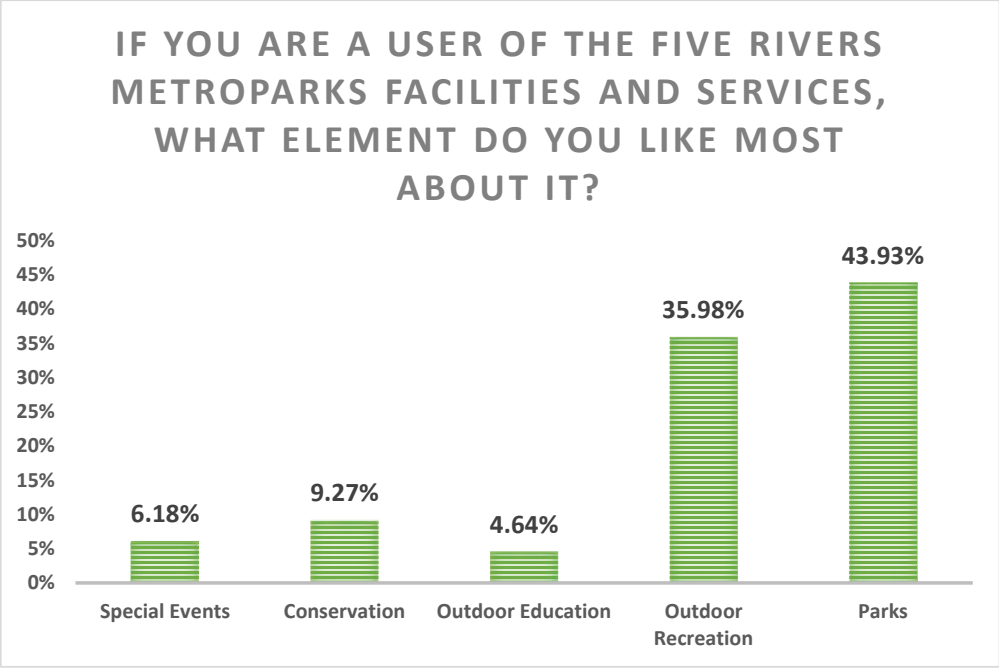
This question was an open-ended question, where respondents were able to write in their own response. The following word cloud represents the top 50 words and/or phrases that were mentioned the most *(a word cloud is an image composed of words, in which the size of each word indicates its frequency or importance)*.

The chart shows a breakdown of the top words or phrases and the number of occurrences within question 2.

Name	Occurrences	
	Number	Percent
Germantown	70	13.65%
Cox Arboretum	57	11.09%
RiverScape	57	11.09%
Sugarcreek	48	9.36%
Englewood	40	7.80%
Taylorsville	35	6.82%
All of Them/No Favorite	34	6.61%
Metro Park	32	6.24%
Eastwood	31	6.04%
Twin Creek	30	5.85%
Trails/ Bike Paths	29	5.64%
Island Park	23	4.48%
Wegerzyn Gardens	23	4.48%
Carriage Hill	19	3.70%
Possum Creek	16	3.12%
Aullwood Gardens	14	2.73%
Hills & Dales	11	2.14%
Second Street Market	4	0.78%

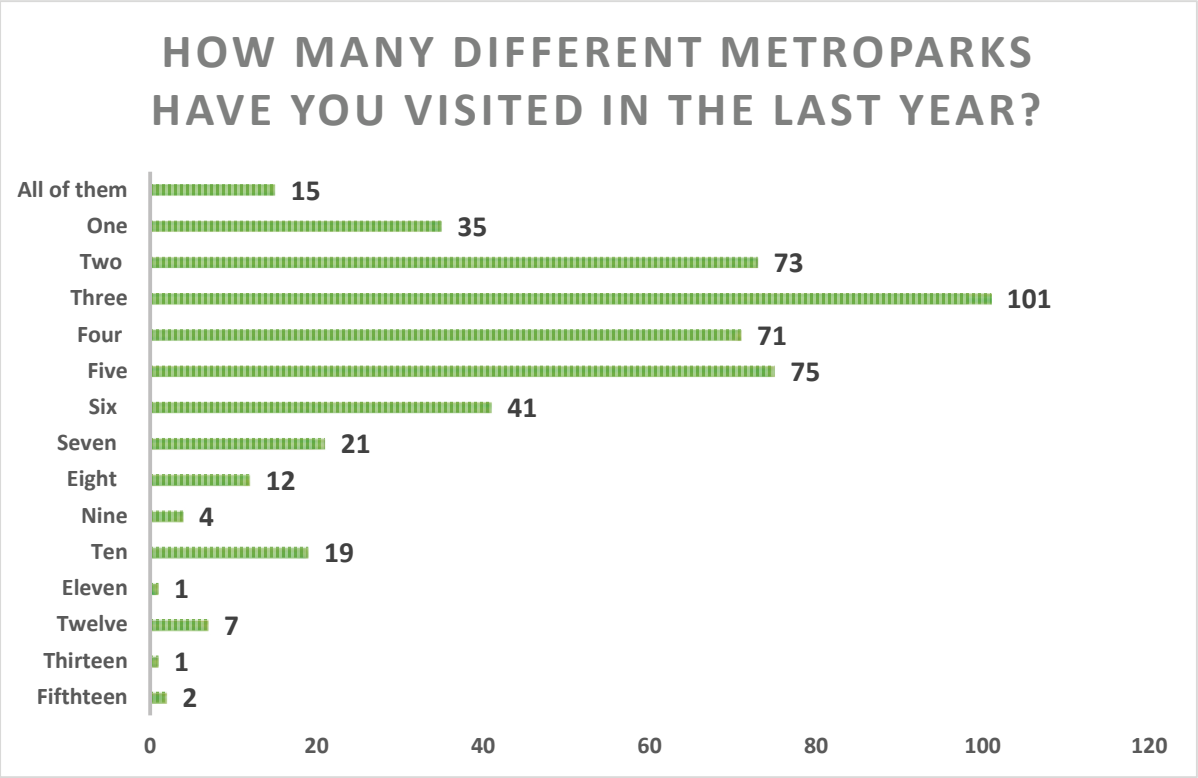
2.4.3 IF YOU ARE A USER OF THE FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS FACILITIES AND SERVICES, WHAT ELEMENT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT IT?

Nearly 80% respondents chose parks (44%) or outdoor recreation (36%) as the elements they like the most about the system.



2.4.4 HOW MANY DIFFERENT METROPARKS HAVE YOU VISITED IN THE LAST YEAR?

This question was open ended where each respondent was able to type in any number that represents how many different MetroParks they have visited in the last year. The majority of respondents have visited two to five different MetroParks in the last year. Three parks was the most selected answer with 101 respondents followed by five parks (75 respondents) and two parks (703 respondents).



2.4.5 ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, WITH 5 BEING MOST IMPORTANT, PLEASE RATE HOW IMPORTANT THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF THE FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS FACILITIES AND SERVICES ARE TO YOU PERSONALLY.

For this question, each respondent ranked each option on its importance on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important.

The top three most important options are hiking/walking trails (70%), preserving additional greenspace (54%), and maintaining parks at the current level (59%).

Options	1	2	3	4	5 Most Important
Hiking/walking trails	1.62%	1.08%	8.83%	18.56%	69.91%
Preserving additional greenspace	2.15%	1.80%	8.80%	22.98%	64.27%
Maintaining parks at the current level	1.62%	1.44%	9.35%	28.96%	58.63%
Outdoor recreation programs (i.e. cycling, paddling, back-packing, fishing)	3.22%	4.47%	15.03%	23.97%	53.31%
Walking and/or biking connections to access MetroParks	3.96%	4.32%	11.89%	28.65%	51.17%
Providing more opportunities to connect children with nature	3.80%	4.16%	15.55%	28.21%	48.28%
Paved bike trails	5.42%	7.59%	15.73%	23.51%	47.74%
Safety/ranger patrol	3.64%	5.82%	20.00%	26.36%	44.18%
Play places for children	5.91%	8.42%	16.31%	28.67%	40.68%
Upgrading parks to provide new/enhanced amenities	1.99%	6.16%	21.01%	30.43%	40.40%
Environmental educational programs	2.33%	5.56%	22.76%	29.75%	39.61%
Educational programs on living a sustainable lifestyle	3.96%	7.57%	23.24%	28.90%	36.94%
Special events (i.e. Midwest Outdoor Experience)	5.29%	7.12%	23.54%	30.84%	33.21%
Interpretive signage/maps/mobile technology	4.95%	11.01%	27.52%	28.26%	28.26%

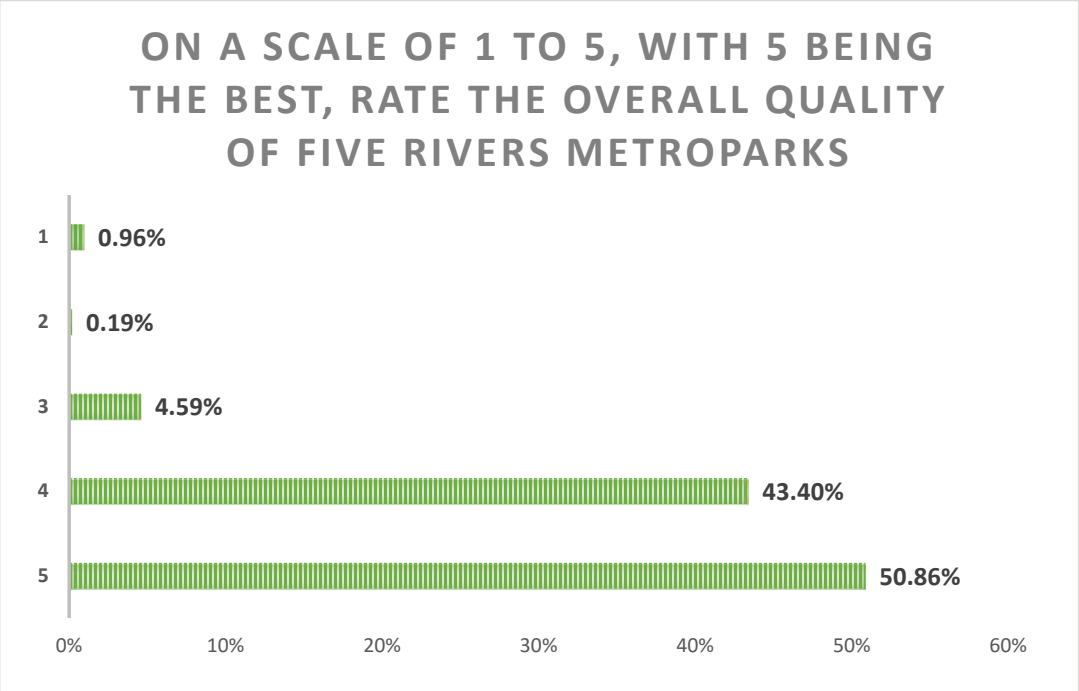
2.4.6 PLEASE RANK YOUR TOP THREE PRIORITIES.

Respondents were asked to rank their top three choices from the previous question selections. The top three choices are preserving additional greenspace (49%), hiking/walking trails (45%), and outdoor recreation programs (40%).

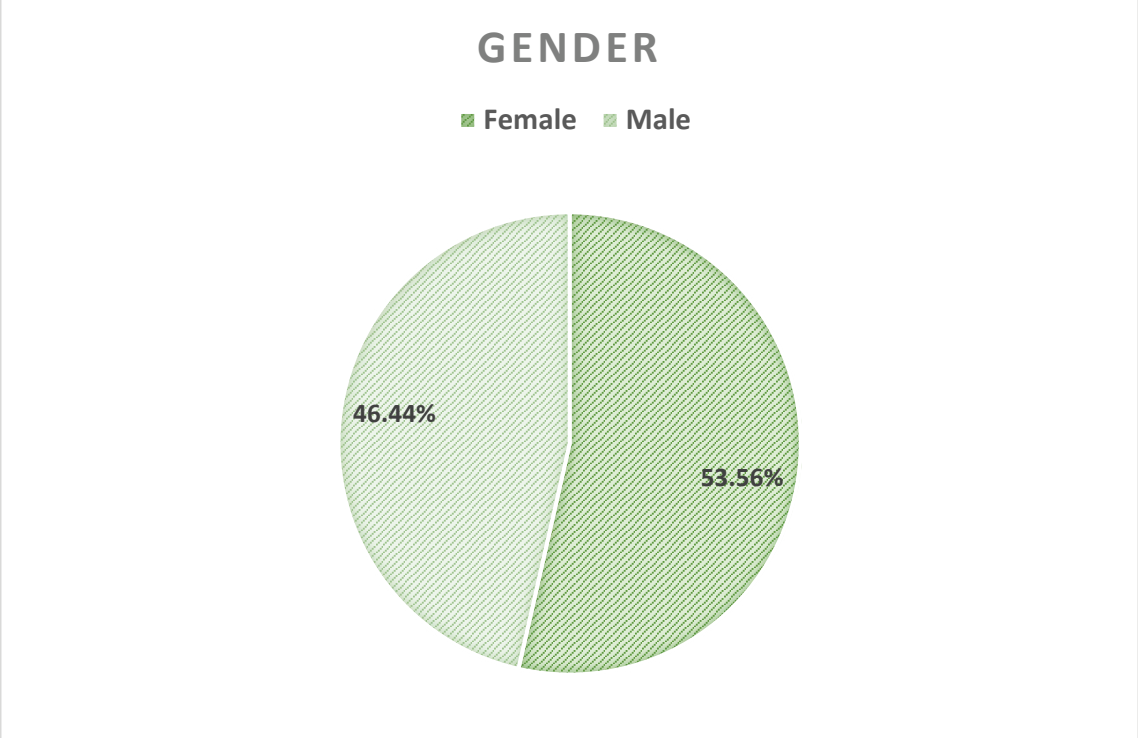
Options	Top Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice
Preserving additional greenspace	48.84%	27.33%	23.84%
Hiking/walking trails	44.88%	30.73%	24.39%
Outdoor recreation programs (i.e. cycling, paddling, backpacking, fishing)	39.83%	30.51%	29.66%
Paved bike trails	37.50%	40.00%	22.50%
Upgrading parks to provide new/enhanced amenities	30.65%	40.32%	29.03%
Providing more opportunities to connect children with nature	28.40%	35.80%	35.80%
Safety/ranger patrol	26.23%	26.23%	47.54%
Maintaining parks at the current level	24.35%	40.00%	35.65%
Environmental educational programs	22.22%	27.78%	50.00%
Play places for children	22.22%	47.22%	30.56%
Special events (i.e. Midwest Outdoor Experience)	21.43%	23.81%	54.76%
Interpretive signage/maps/mobile technology	21.43%	50.00%	28.57%
Educational programs on living a sustainable lifestyle	19.51%	41.46%	39.02%
Walking and/or biking connections to access MetroParks	19.48%	28.57%	51.95%

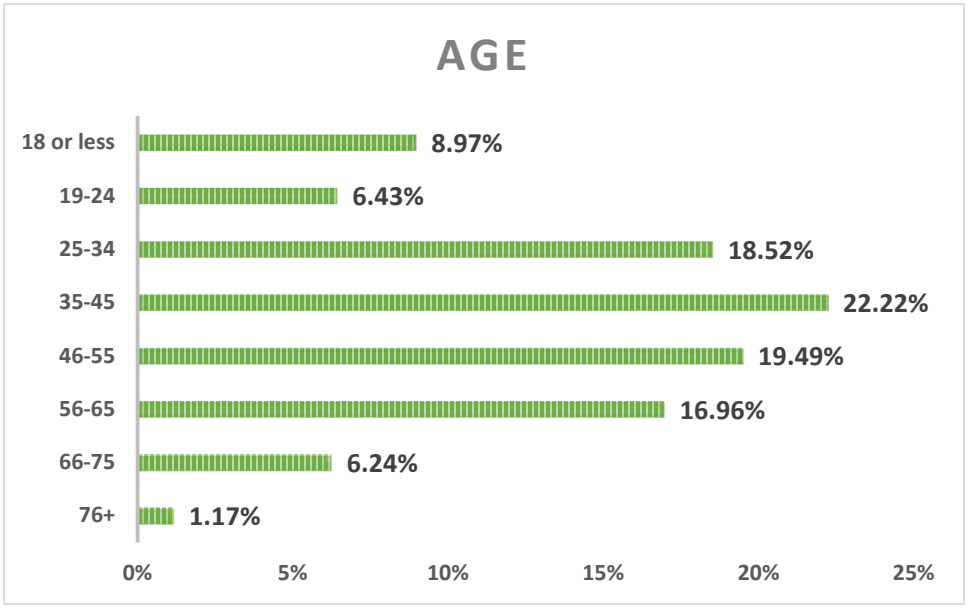
2.4.7 ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, WITH 5 BEING THE BEST, RATE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

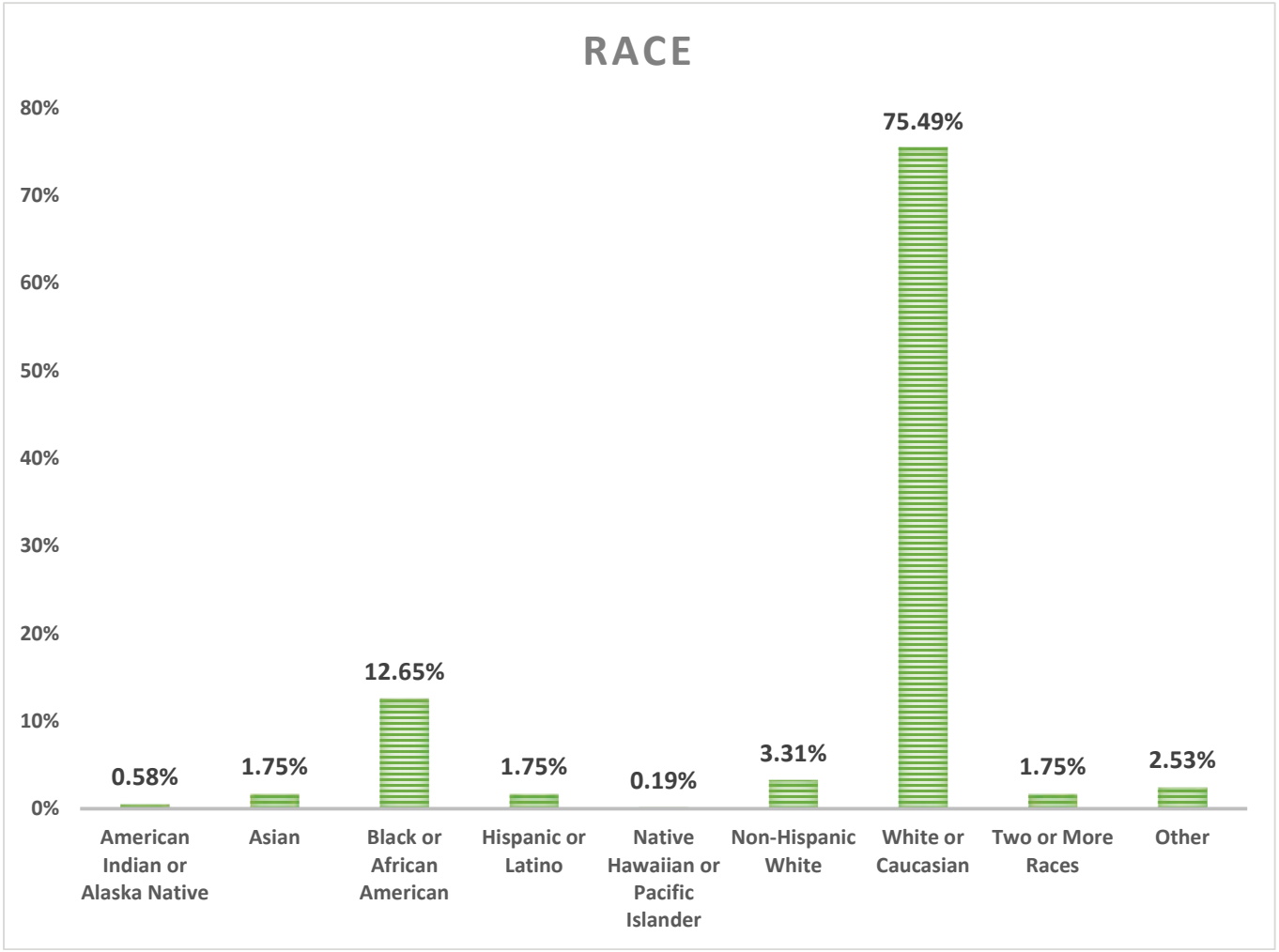
Ninety-four percent of all respondents rate the overall quality of FRMP a 4 or 5, with 5 being the best, which is on par with best practice numbers nationwide. Less than 1.5% rated the system a 2 or less which is very encouraging and is reflective of the high quality offerings provided by FRMP.



2.4.8 DEMOGRAPHICS



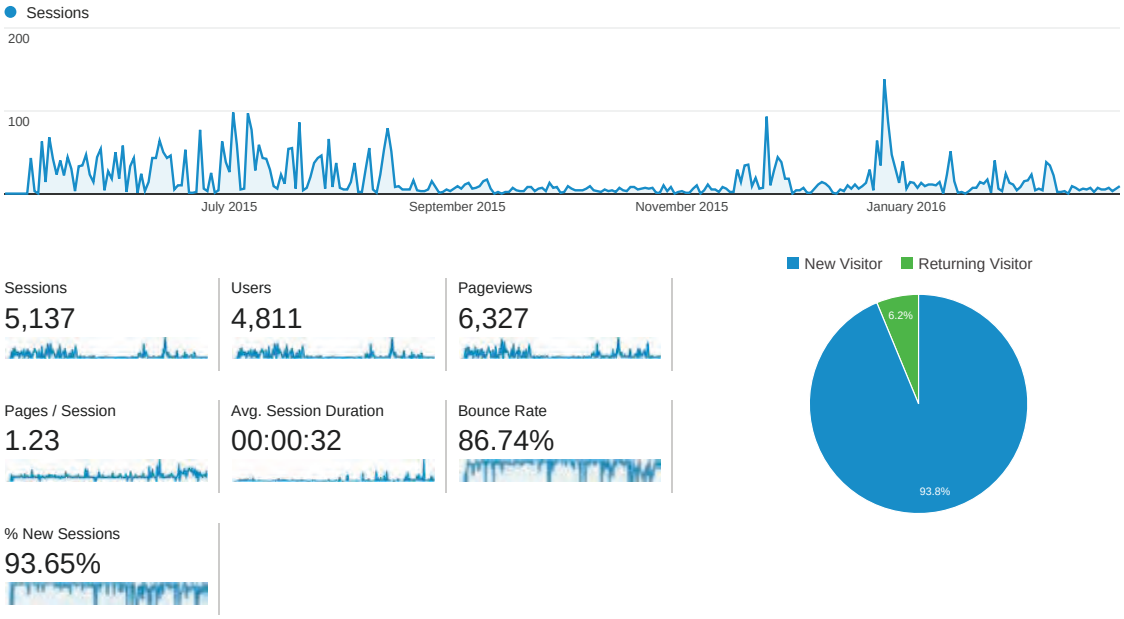

AGE
18 or less
19-24
25-34
35-45
46-55
56-65
66-75
76+
8.97%
6.43%
18.52%
22.22%
19.49%
16.96%
6.24%
1.17%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%


RACE
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
0.58%
1.75%
12.65%
1.75%
0.19%
3.31%
75.49%
1.75%
2.53%
American Indian or Alaska Native
Asian
Black or African American
Hispanic or Latino
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
Non-Hispanic White
White or Caucasian
Two or More Races
Other

2.5 CROWDSOURCING PROJECT WEBSITE

For the purposes of maintaining open communication and ongoing public input, a new website (***planmetroparks.org***) was established for the project. The site includes background information on FRMP and the PROS team, a planning process outline and timeline; links to technical reports and survey results, access to the online (SurveyMonkey) community survey and crowdsourcing questions, a listing of key events and announcements and contact information. The website was equipped to track visitation statistics, as well as the soliciting user feedback through a series of four crowdsourcing questions. Following completion of the Comprehensive Master Plan, this website can be continued with periodic updates and maintenance.

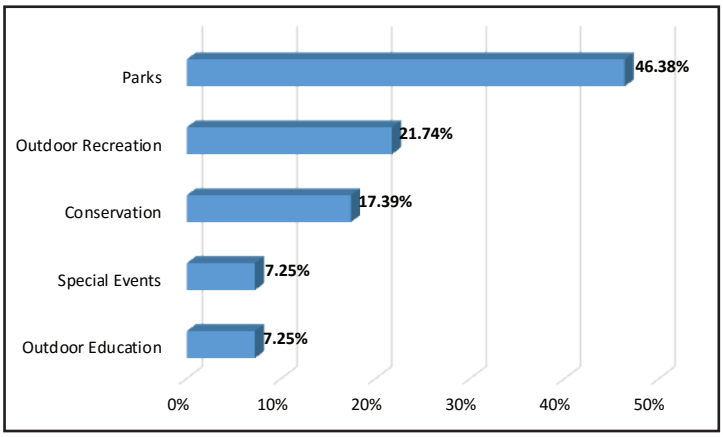
During the 8-month period since the website was launched, it has drawn over 4,800 users with over 6,300 page views, which speaks highly to the extent of outreach the website has been able to achieve. The site's success helps contribute to a greater community engagement in this planning process. Below is a snapshot of the dashboard analytics for visitation to the site, as of February 28, 2016.



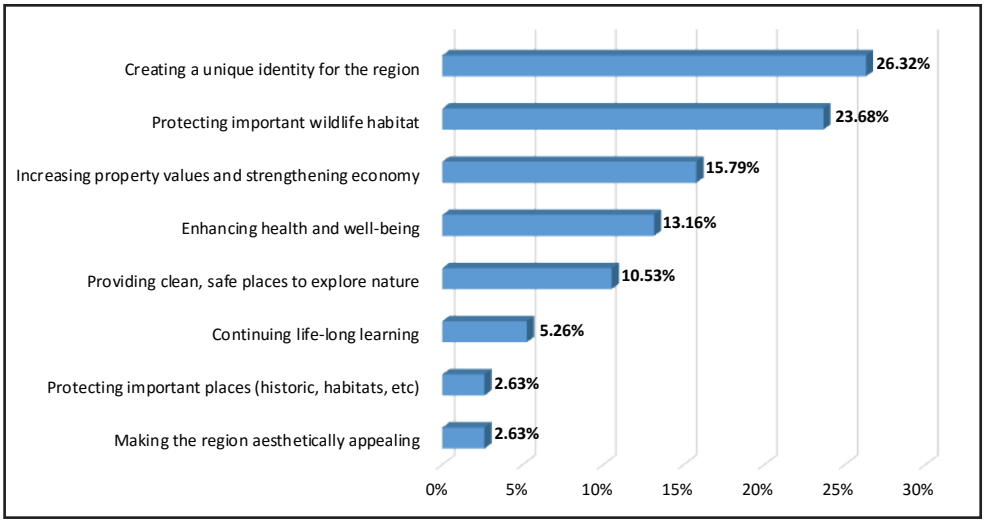
2.5.1 CROWDSOURCING QUESTION RESULTS

As mentioned previously, the project website provided a platform for enhanced feedback through a rotation of four crowdsourcing questions. These questions served as another layer of community input that allowed participant's opinions to be heard without the same time commitment required through the other mediums utilized in the planning process. The following graphs describe the responses solicited through the project website.

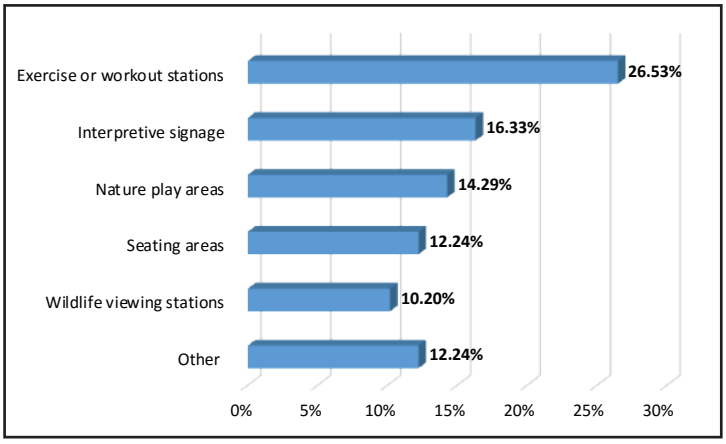
QUESTION 1 – WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS FACILITIES AND SERVICES DO YOU LIKE THE MOST?



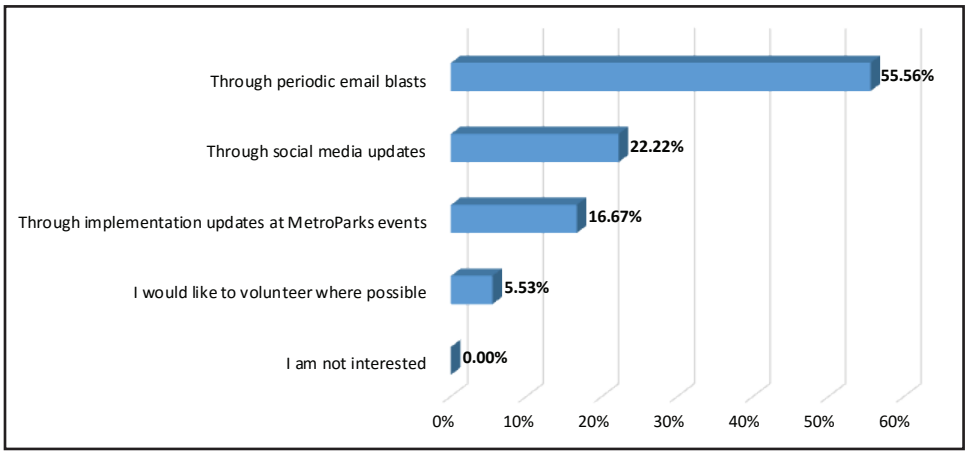
QUESTION 2 – WHICH BENEFIT OF THE PARKS, TRAILS, AND OPEN SPACE IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?



QUESTION 3 – APPROXIMATELY 74% OF HOUSEHOLDS INDICATED A NEED FOR NATURE AND HIKING TRAILS. WHAT AMENITIES ALONG THE TRAILS WOULD MAKE NATURE OR HIKING TRAILS A BETTER EXPERIENCE FOR YOU?



QUESTION 4 – HOW WOULD YOU WANT TO BE INFORMED/INVOLVED IN THE PLAN'S SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION?



2.6 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

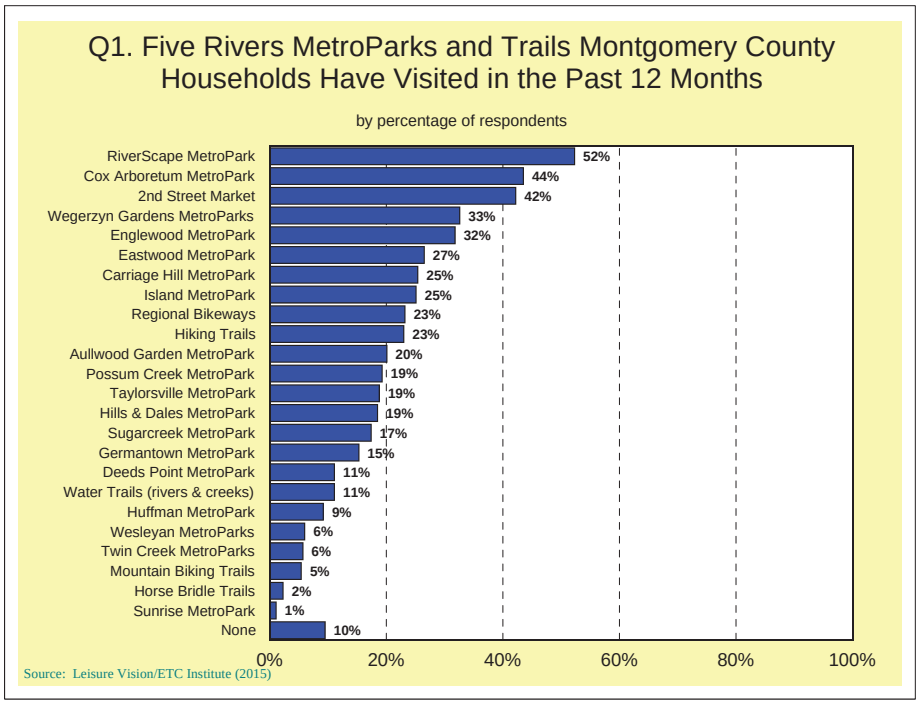
ETC Institute conducted a Community Needs Assessment Survey for FRMP during the summer of 2015. Survey results will guide the decisions to establish priorities for the future improvement of the many parks and conservation areas, as well as the need for possible future expansion. The survey was mailed to a random sample of households of Montgomery County residents. An option to complete the survey online was also available to residents who had that preference. Once the surveys were mailed, resident households who received the survey were contacted by phone. Those who indicated that they had not returned the survey by mail were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to collect a total of 800 completed surveys. A total of 8,000 surveys were mailed to a random sample of households throughout Montgomery County. A total of 812 households completed and returned the survey. The results for the sample of 812 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision rate of at least +/- 3.4%.

The following illustrations summarize major survey findings.

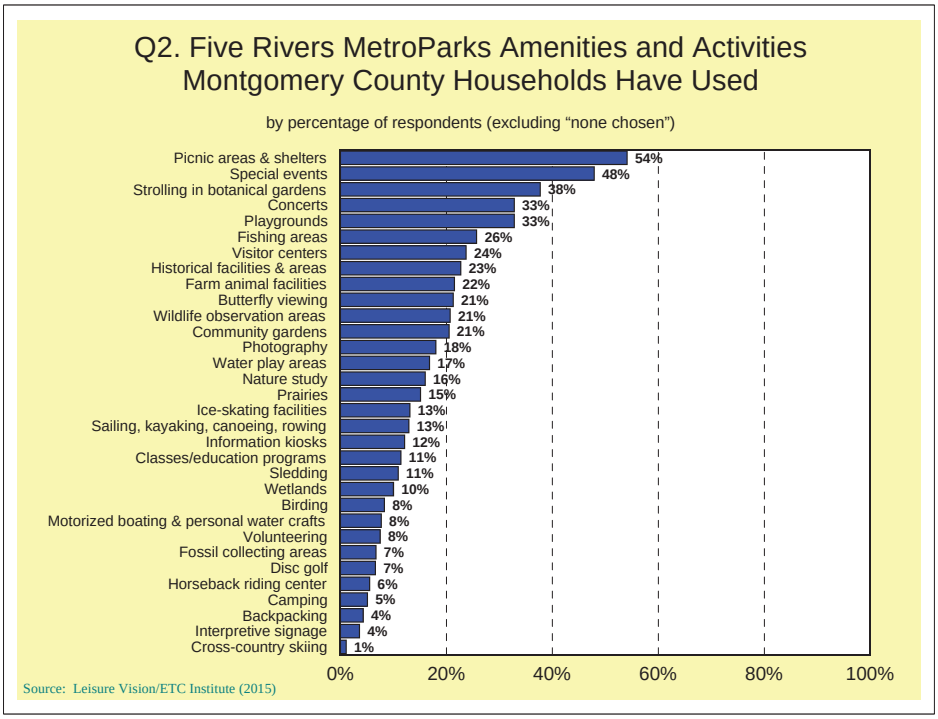
2.6.1 PARK AND TRAIL USAGE

Fifty-two percent (52%) of households have visited RiverScape MetroPark over the past year. Other parks and trails visited include: Cox Arboretum MetroPark (44%), 2nd Street Market (42%), Wegerzyn Gardens MetroParks (33%), and Englewood MetroPark (32%).



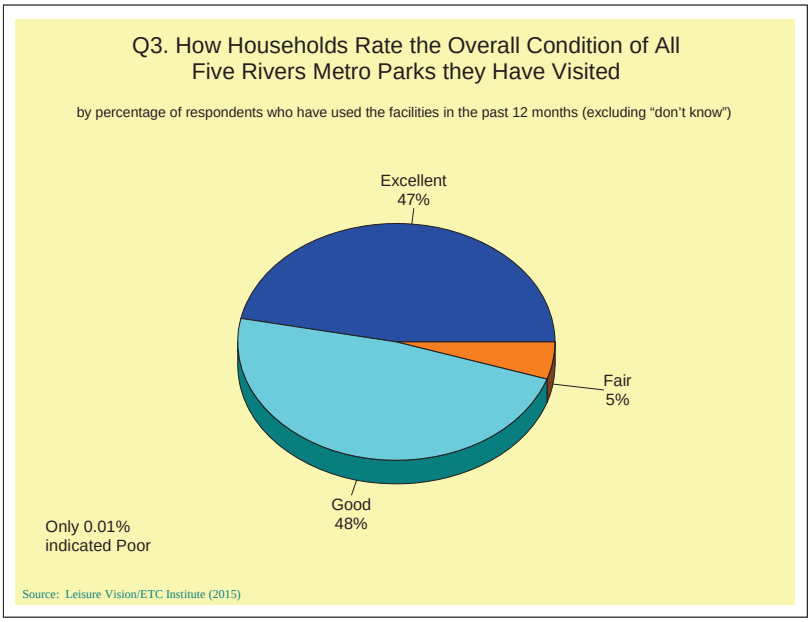
2.6.2 AMENITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Fifty-four percent (54%) of households have used picnic areas and shelters. Other amenities and activities of Five Rivers MetroParks households have used include: Special events (48%), strolling in botanical gardens (38%), concerts (33%), and playgrounds (33%).



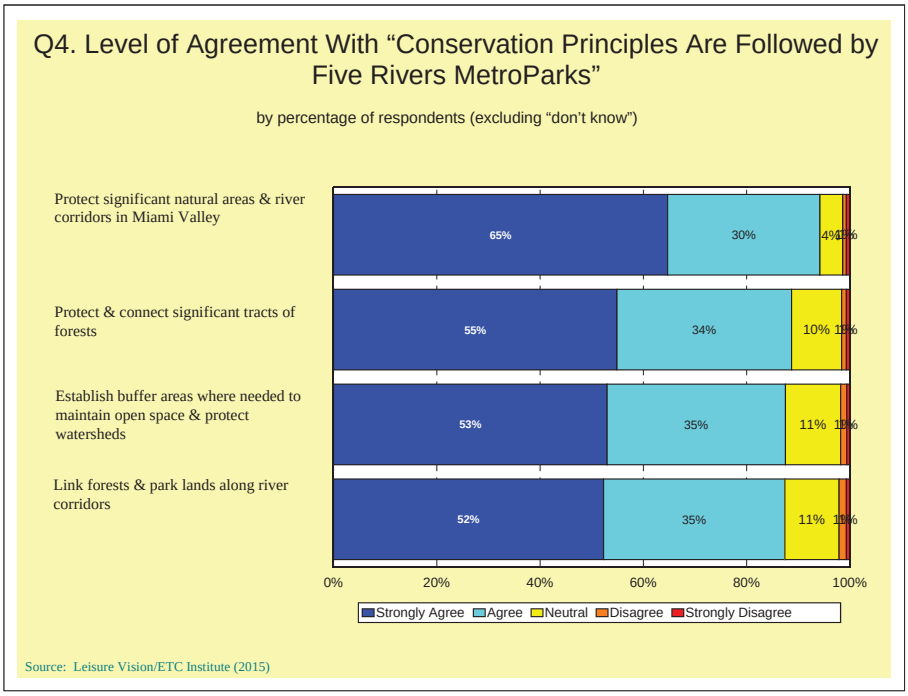
2.6.3 RATING OF FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Based on the percentage of households who visited parks or trails over the past year, excluding does not know, 47% of households rate the overall condition as excellent. Other ratings include: Good (48%) and Fair (5%).



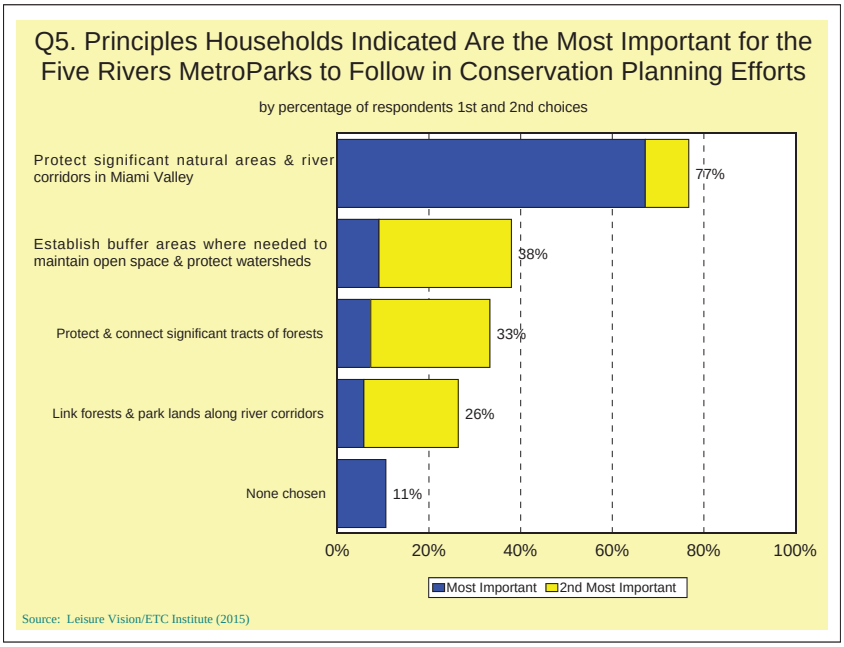
2.6.4 AGREEMENT WITH CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES FOLLOWED BY FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Based on the percentage of respondent households who indicated their levels of agreement as either "strongly agree" or "agree", 95% agree with the statement, protect significant natural areas and river corridors in the Miami Valley. Other similar levels of agreement include: Protect and connect significant tracts of forests (89%), establish buffer areas where needed to maintain open space and protect watersheds (88%), and link forests and park lands along river corridors (87%).



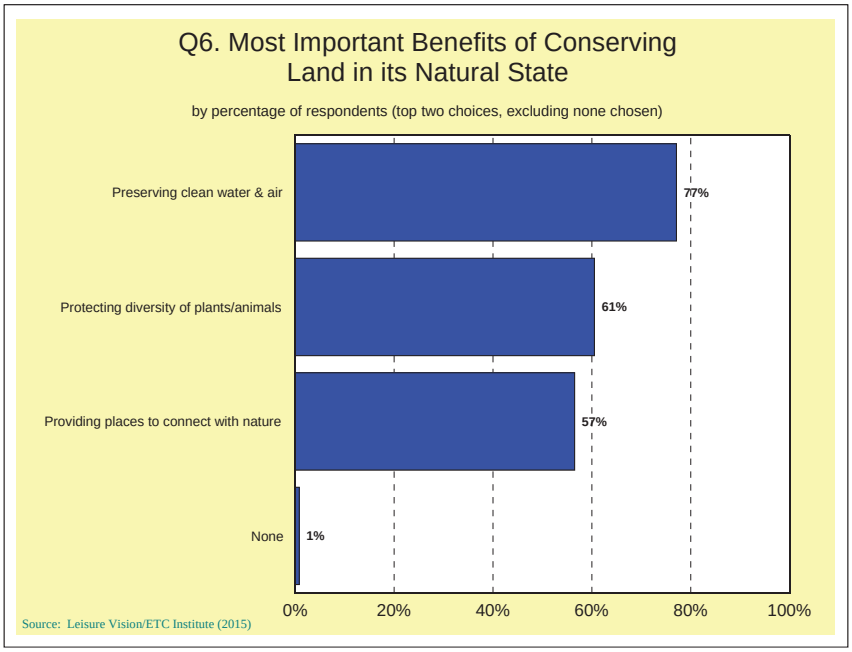
2.6.5 MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES FOR FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS TO FOLLOW

Based on the sum of respondents top two choices, 77% indicated that the most important principle is protect significant natural areas and river corridors in the Miami Valley. Other most important principles include: Establish buffer areas where needed to maintain open space (38%) and protect watersheds and protect and connect significant tracts of forests (33%).



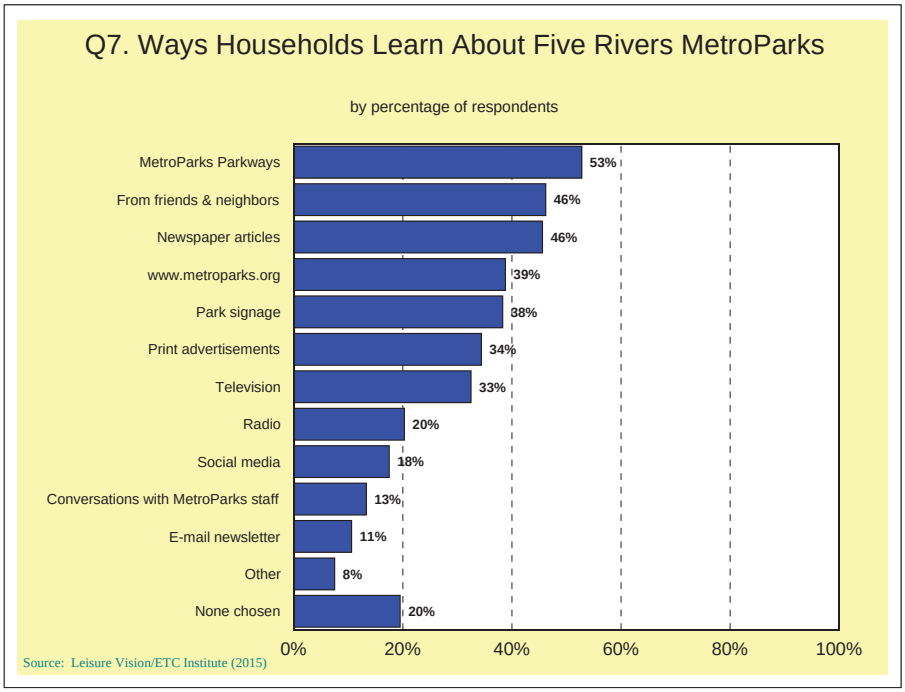
2.6.6 MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF CONSERVING LAND IN ITS NATURAL STATE

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of households indicated the most important benefit is to preserve clean water and air. Other most important benefits include: Protecting diversity of plants and animals (61%) and providing places to connect with nature (57%).



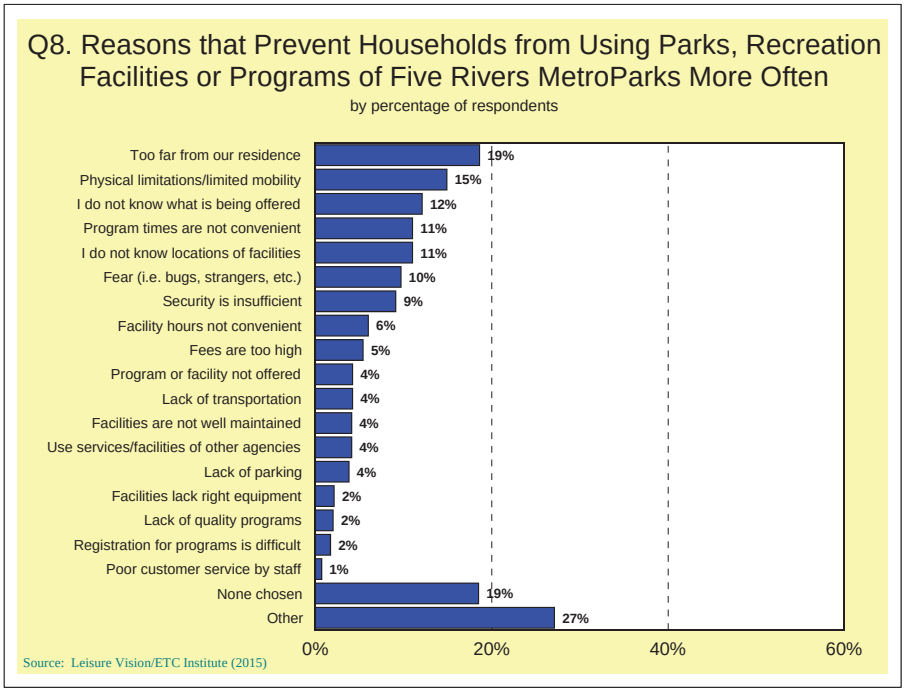
2.6.7 WAYS HOUSEHOLDS LEARN ABOUT FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Fifty-three percent (53%) of households learn about Five Rivers MetroParks through MetroParks Parkways. Other ways include: From friends and neighbors (46%), newspaper articles (46%), www.metroparks.org (39%), park signage (38%), print advertisements (34%), and television (33%).



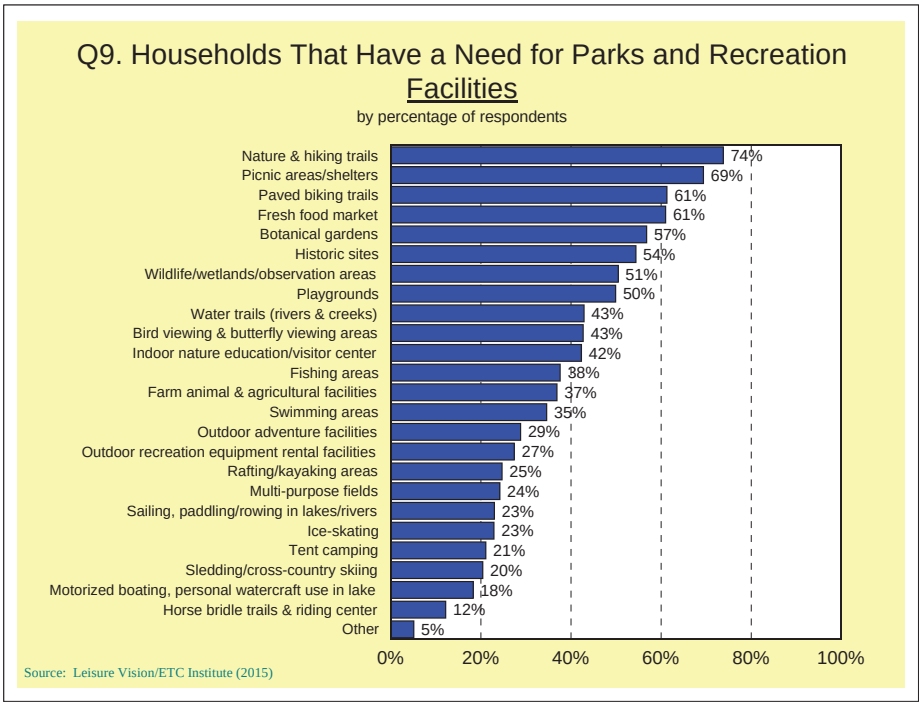
2.6.8 REASONS PREVENTING THE USE OF FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

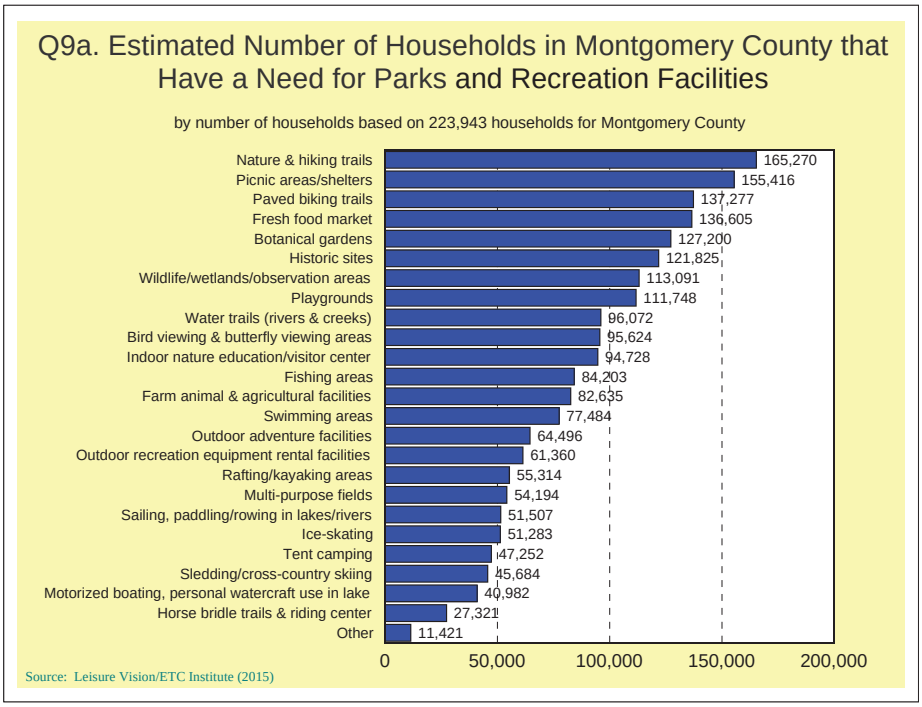
Nineteen percent (19%) of households are prevented from using Five Rivers MetroParks more often because they are too far from their residence: Other reasons include: Physical limitations/limited mobility (15%), I do not know what is being offered (12%), program times are not convenient (11%), I do not know locations of facilities (11%), fear (10%), and security is insufficient (9%).



2.6.9 FACILITY NEEDS

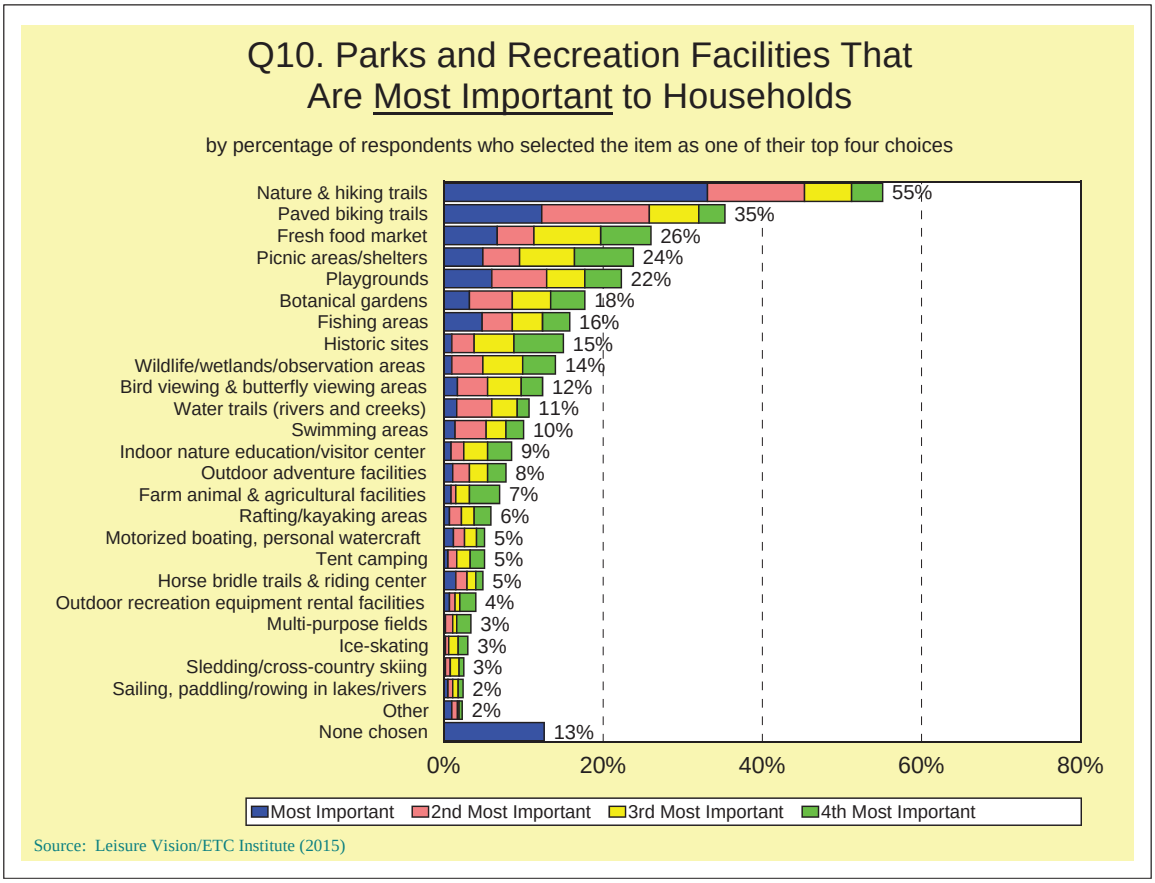
Seventy-four percent (74%) or 165,270 households indicated a need for nature and hiking trails. Other facility needs include: Picnic areas and shelters (69% or 155,416 households), paved biking trails (61% or 137,277), fresh food market (61% or 136,605 households), botanical gardens (57% or 127,200 households), historic sites (54% or 121,825 households), wildlife/wetlands/observation areas (51% or 113,091 households), and playgrounds (50% or 111,748 households).





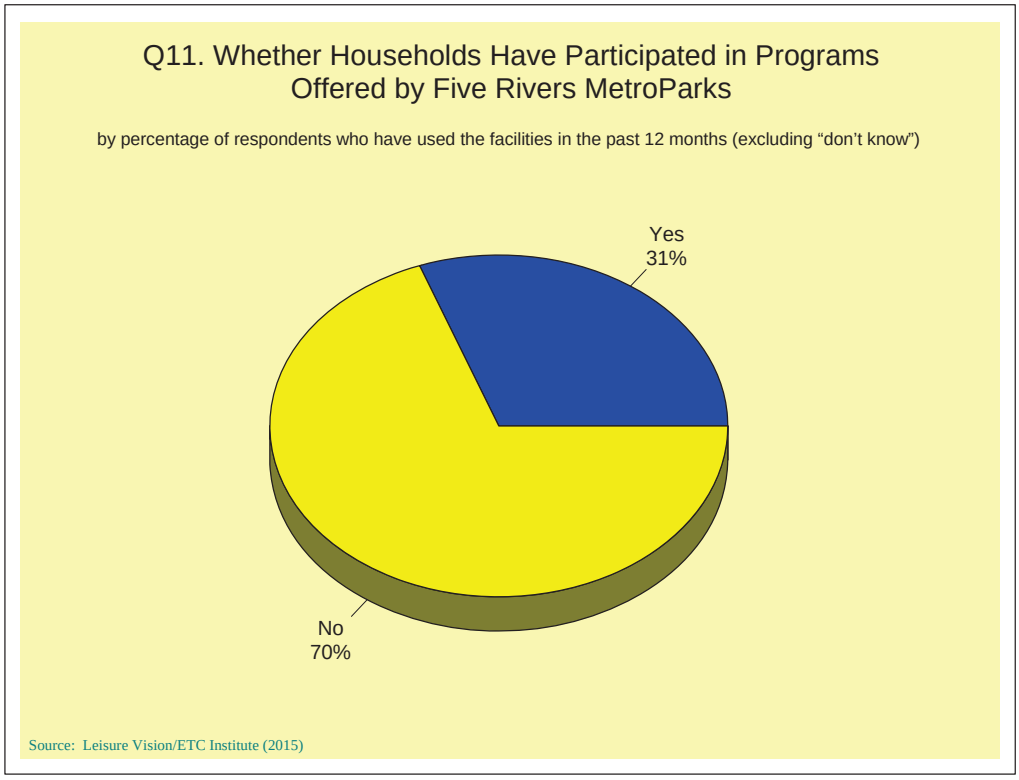
2.6.10 MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES

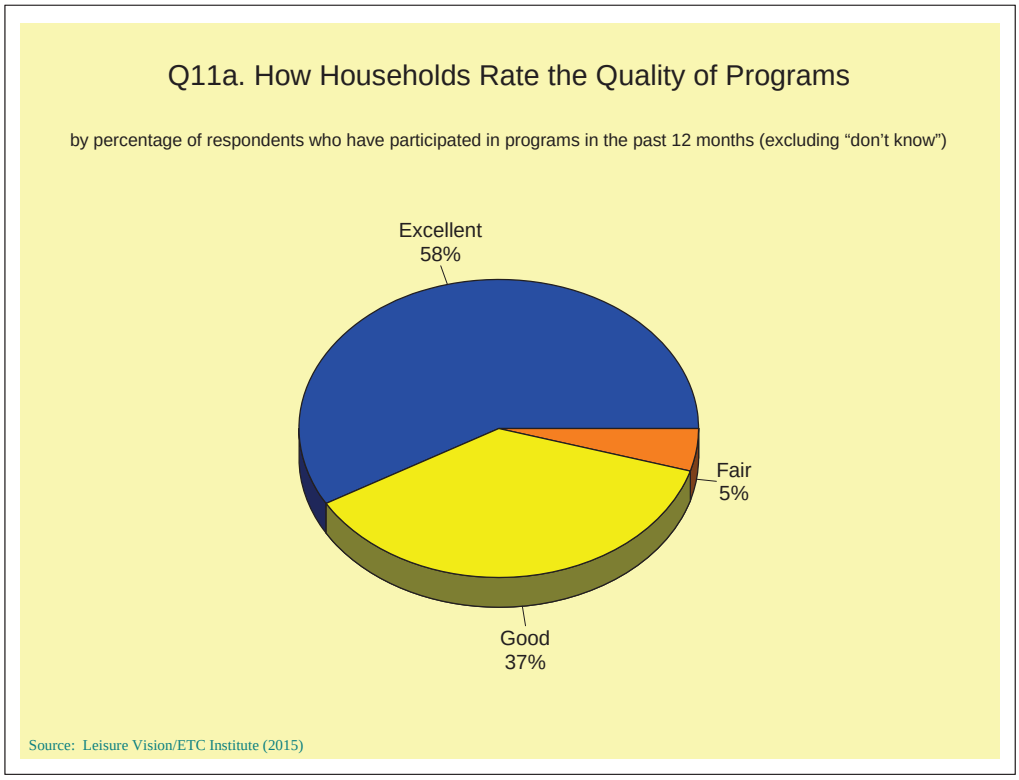
Based on the sum of households top four choices, 55% indicated that nature and hiking trails was the most important facility. Other most important facilities include: Paved biking trails (35%), fresh food market (26%), picnic areas and shelters (24%), and playgrounds (22%).



2.6.11 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND RATING

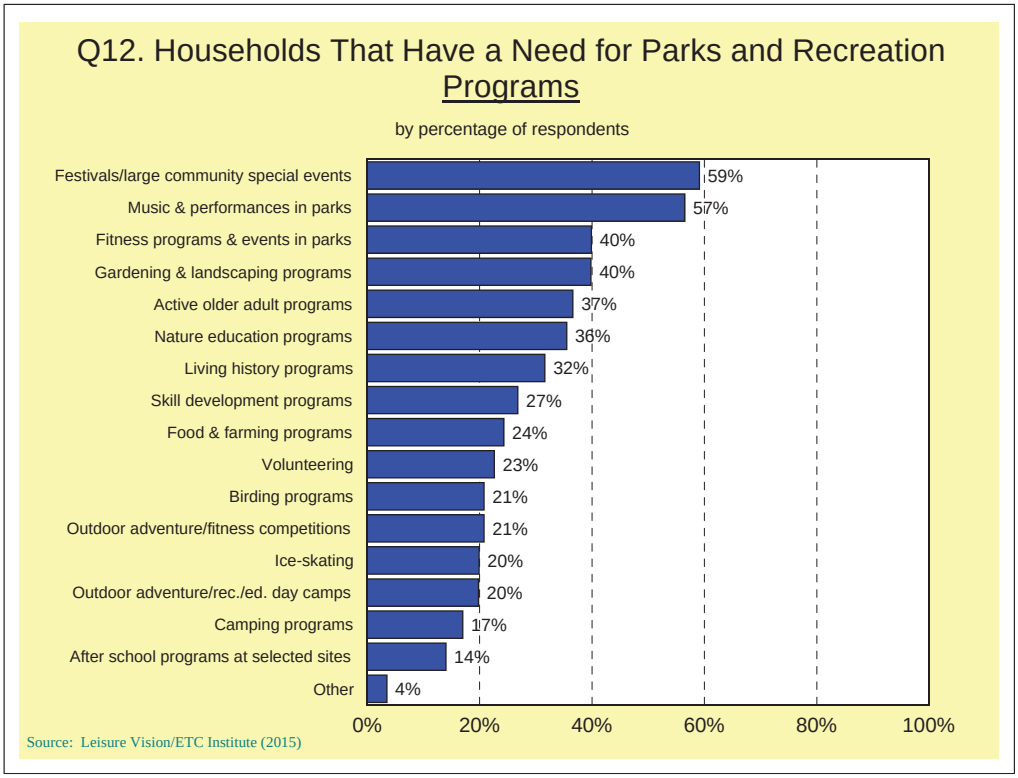
Thirty-one percent (31%) of households indicated that they had participated in programs offered by Five Rivers MetroParks over the past year. Of households who have participated in programs, 95% of households rate the overall quality as either excellent or good, and only 5% rate the quality as "fair".

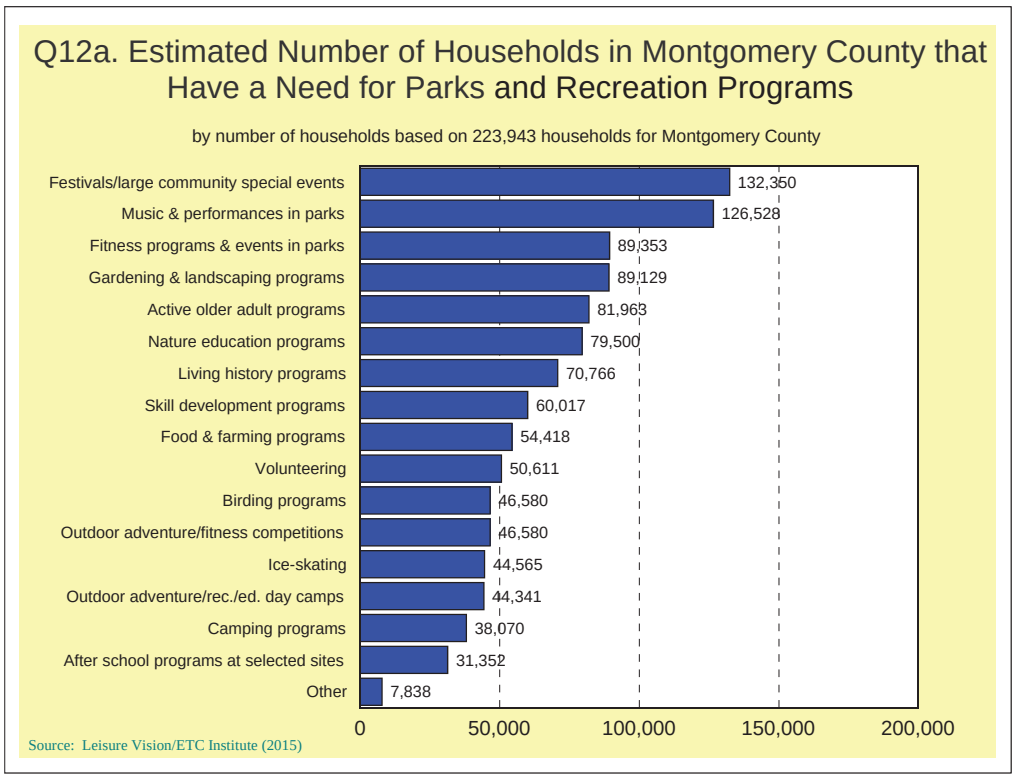




2.6.12 PROGRAM NEEDS

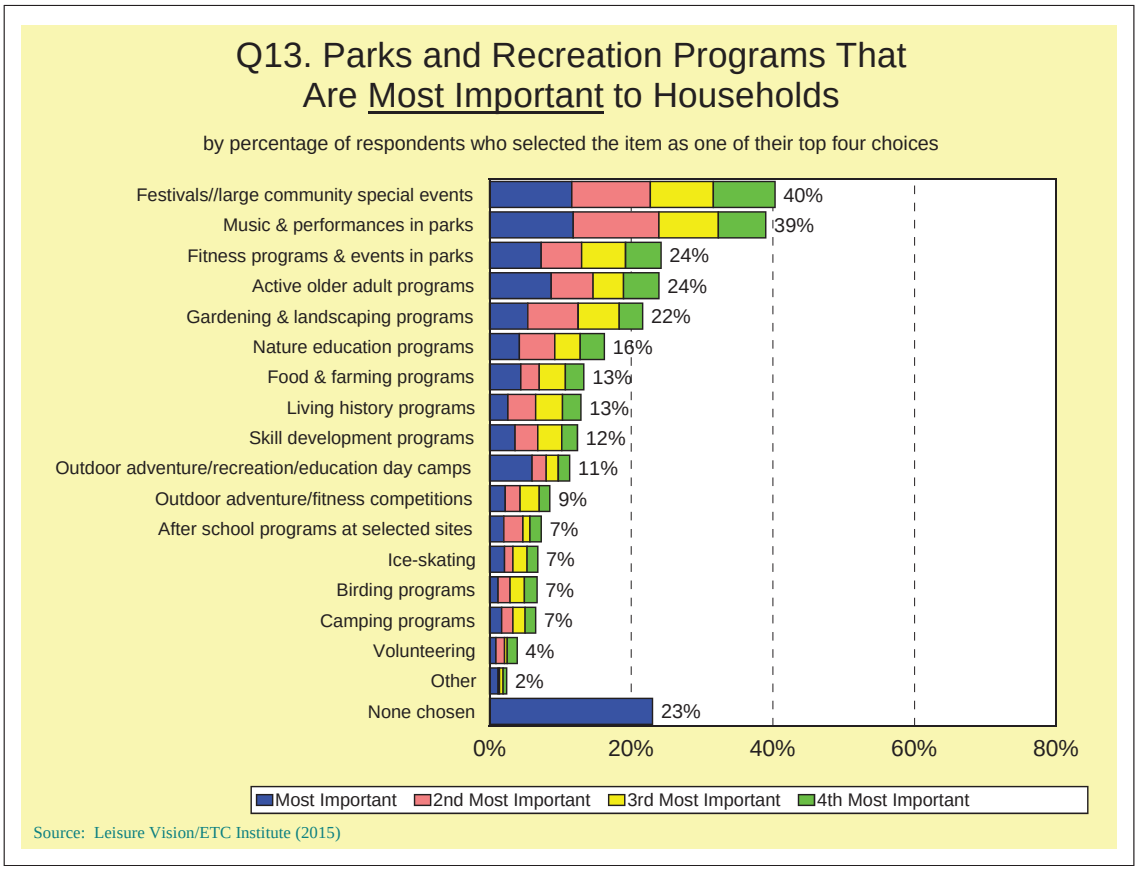
Fifty-nine percent (59%) or 132,350 households indicated they have a need for festivals/large community special events. Other program needs include: Music and performance in parks (57% or 126,528 households), fitness programs and events in parks (40% or 89,353 households), and gardening and landscaping programs (40% or 89,129 households).





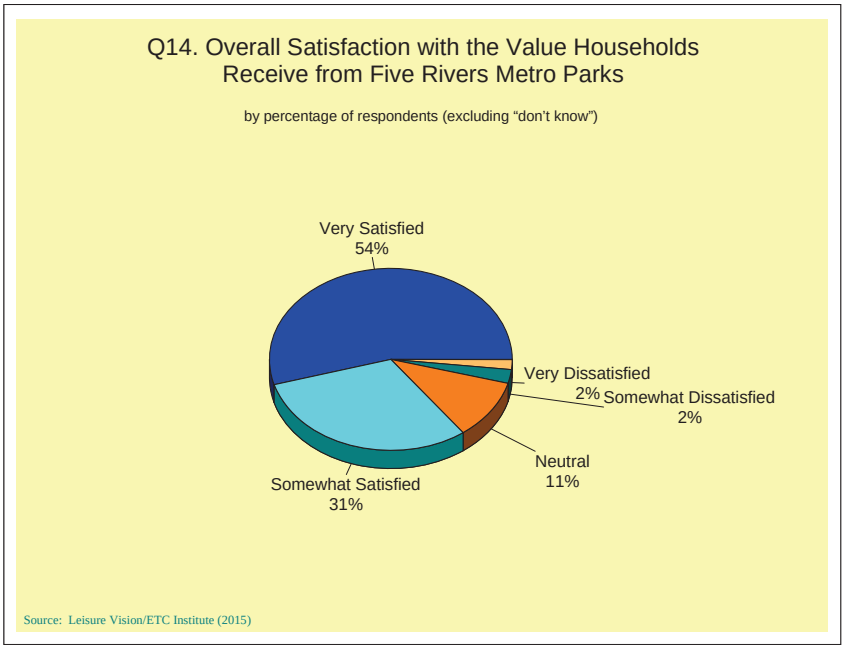
2.6.13 MOST IMPORTANT PROGRAMS

Based on the sum of households top four choices, 40% indicated that festivals/large community special events was the most important to their household. Other most important programs include: Music and performances in parks (39%), fitness programs and event in parks (24%), active older adult programs (24%), and gardening and landscaping programs (22%).



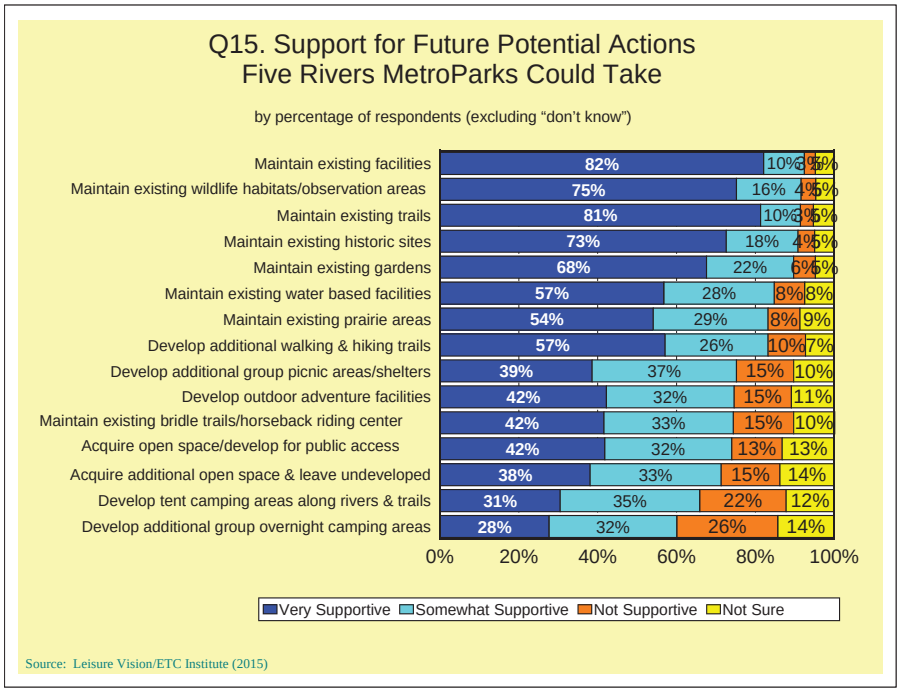
2.6.14 SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL VALUE RECEIVED

Eighty-five percent (85%) of households were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the overall value their households receives from Five Rivers MetroParks. Other levels of satisfaction include: Neutral (11%), somewhat dissatisfied (2%), and very dissatisfied (2%).



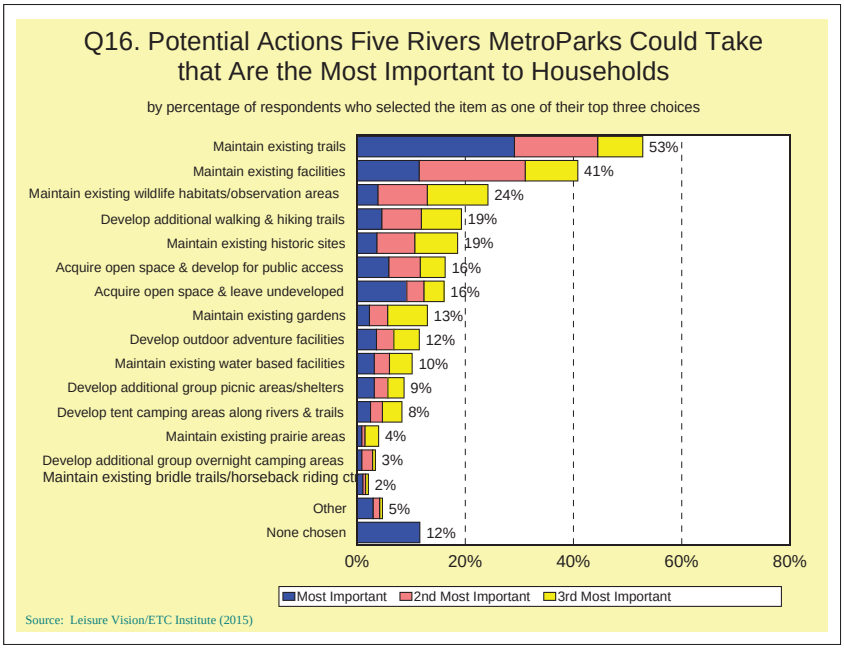
2.6.15 LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Based on the percentage of households who indicated "very supportive" or "supportive" of potential actions, 92% indicated they support Five Rivers MetroParks to maintain existing facilities. Other similar levels of support include: Maintain existing wildlife habitats and observation areas (91%), maintain existing trails (91%), maintain existing historic sites (91%), and maintain existing gardens (90%).



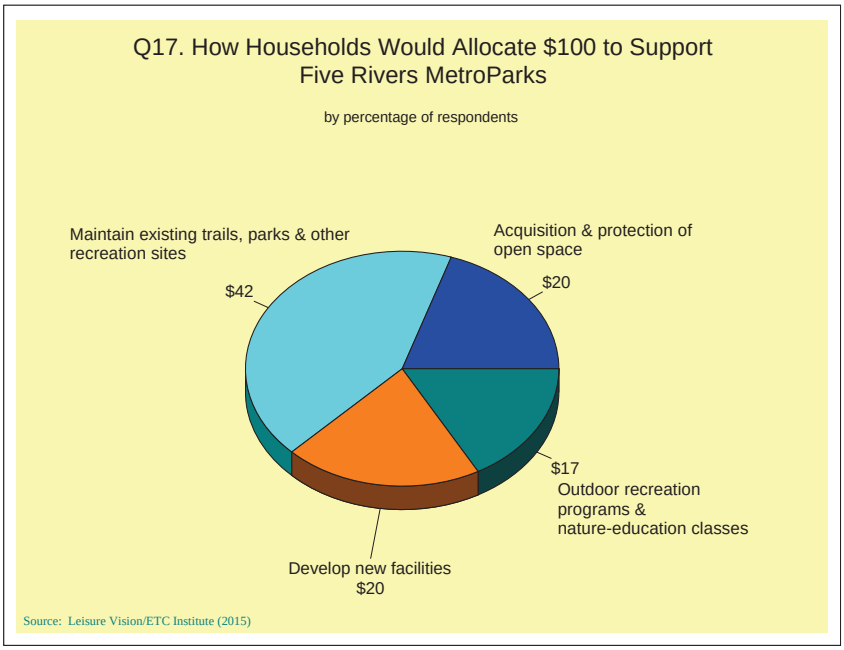
2.6.16 POTENTIAL ACTIONS MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

Based on the sum of households top three choices, 53% indicated maintain existing trails was the most important. Other most important actions include: Maintain existing facilities (41%), maintain existing wildlife habitats and observation areas (24%), develop additional walking and hiking trails (19%), and maintain existing historic sites (19%).



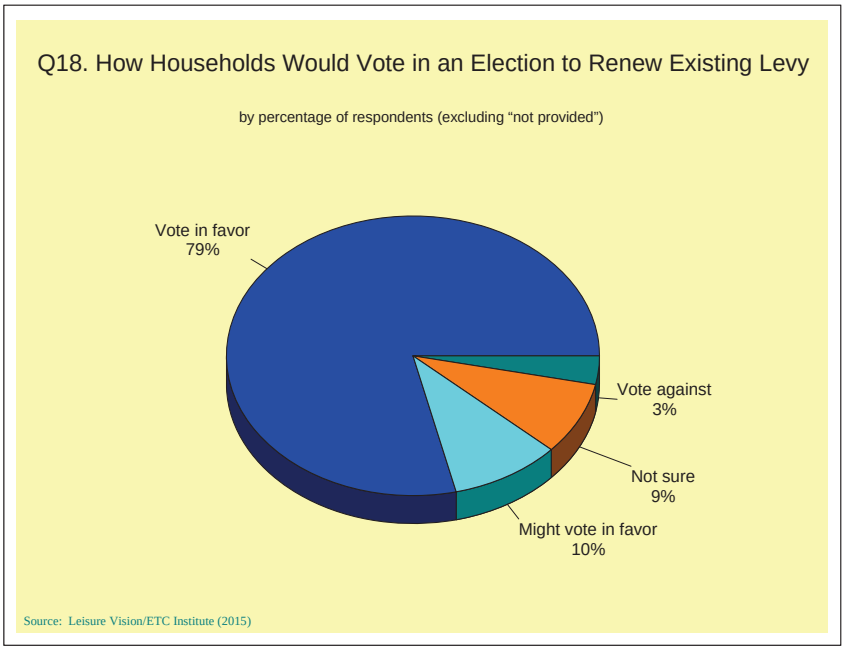
2.6.17 HOW HOUSEHOLDS WOULD ALLOCATE $100 TO SUPPORT FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Households would allocate ($42.00) to maintain existing trails, parks and other recreation sites. Other amounts households would allocate include: Develop new facilities ($20.00), acquisition and protection of open space ($20.00), and outdoor recreation programs and nature-education classes ($17.00).



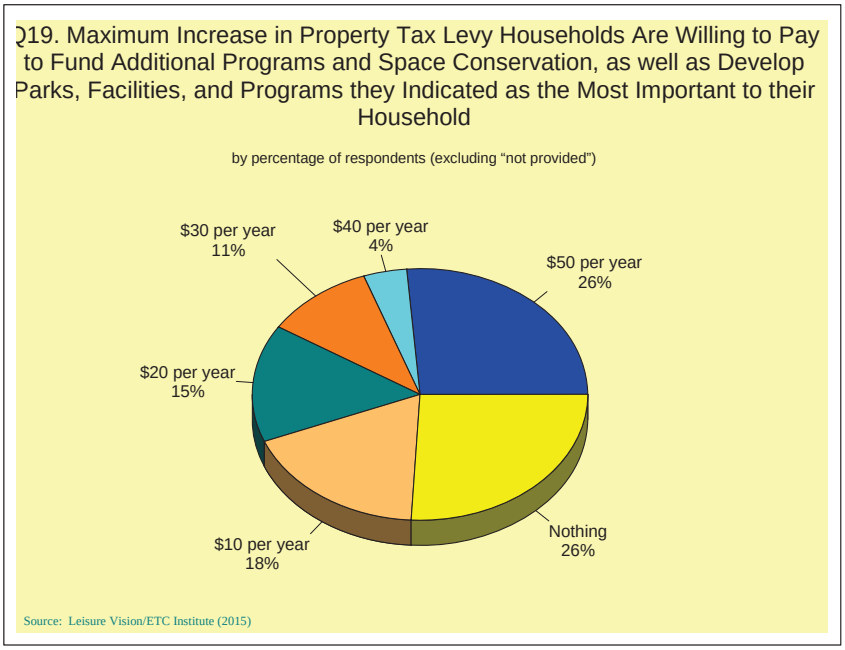
2.6.18 HOW RESIDENTS WOULD VOTE TO RENEW THE TAX LEVY

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of households indicated they would vote in favor. Ten percent (10%) of households indicated might vote in favor, 9% of households indicated not sure, and 3% vote against.



2.6.19 MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF INCREASE IN A PROPERTY TAX LEVY HOUSEHOLDS ARE WILLING TO PAY TO FUND ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS AND SPACE CONSERVATION, AS WELL AS DEVELOP PARKS, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS MOST IMPORTANT TO THEIR HOUSEHOLD

Twenty-six percent (26%) of residents indicated they would be willing to pay a maximum of $50 per year. Other amounts include: Nothing (26%), $10 per year (18%), $20 per year (15%), $30 per year (11%), and $40 per year (4%).



2.7 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Demographic analysis provides an understanding of the population within Montgomery County, Ohio. This analysis reflects the total population, and its key characteristics such as age segments, income levels, race, and ethnicity.

It is important to note that future projections are all based on historical patterns and unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the projections. Changes could have a significant bearing on the validity of the final projections.

2.7.1 DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The total population of the Montgomery County has recently experienced a slight decline of approximately 1.17% from 535,153 in 2010 to 528,989 in 2014. The current estimated population is projected to fall to 525,614 in 2019, and continue to drop downward to 514,605 by 2029.

According to U.S. Census reports, the total number of households in the target area has remained relatively unchanged, only decreasing slightly by roughly 0.57%, from 223,943 in 2010 to 222,682 in 2014. The County's total households are expected to continue to decline to 219,240 households by 2029.

Montgomery County's median household income ($41,173) and per capita income ($24,547) are both below the state and national averages.

Based on the 2010 Census, the population of the target area is slightly higher (39.9 years) than the median age of the U.S. (37.2 years). Projections show that by 2029 the county will experience an aging trend, as the 55+ age group increases to represent just above 38% of the total population.

The estimated 2014 population of Montgomery County is predominantly White Alone (73.40%), with Black Alone (20.78%) representing the largest minority. Future projections show that by 2029 the overall composition of the population will stay relatively unchanged. Forecasts of the target area through 2029 expect a very slight decrease in the White Alone population (71.17%) as well as the Black Alone population (20.49%).

2.7.2 METHODOLOGY

Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in February 2015 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2010 Censuses, and estimates for 2014 and 2019 as obtained by ESRI. Straight line linear regression was utilized for projected 2024 and 2029 demographics. Montgomery County was utilized as the demographic analysis boundary shown in Figure 1.

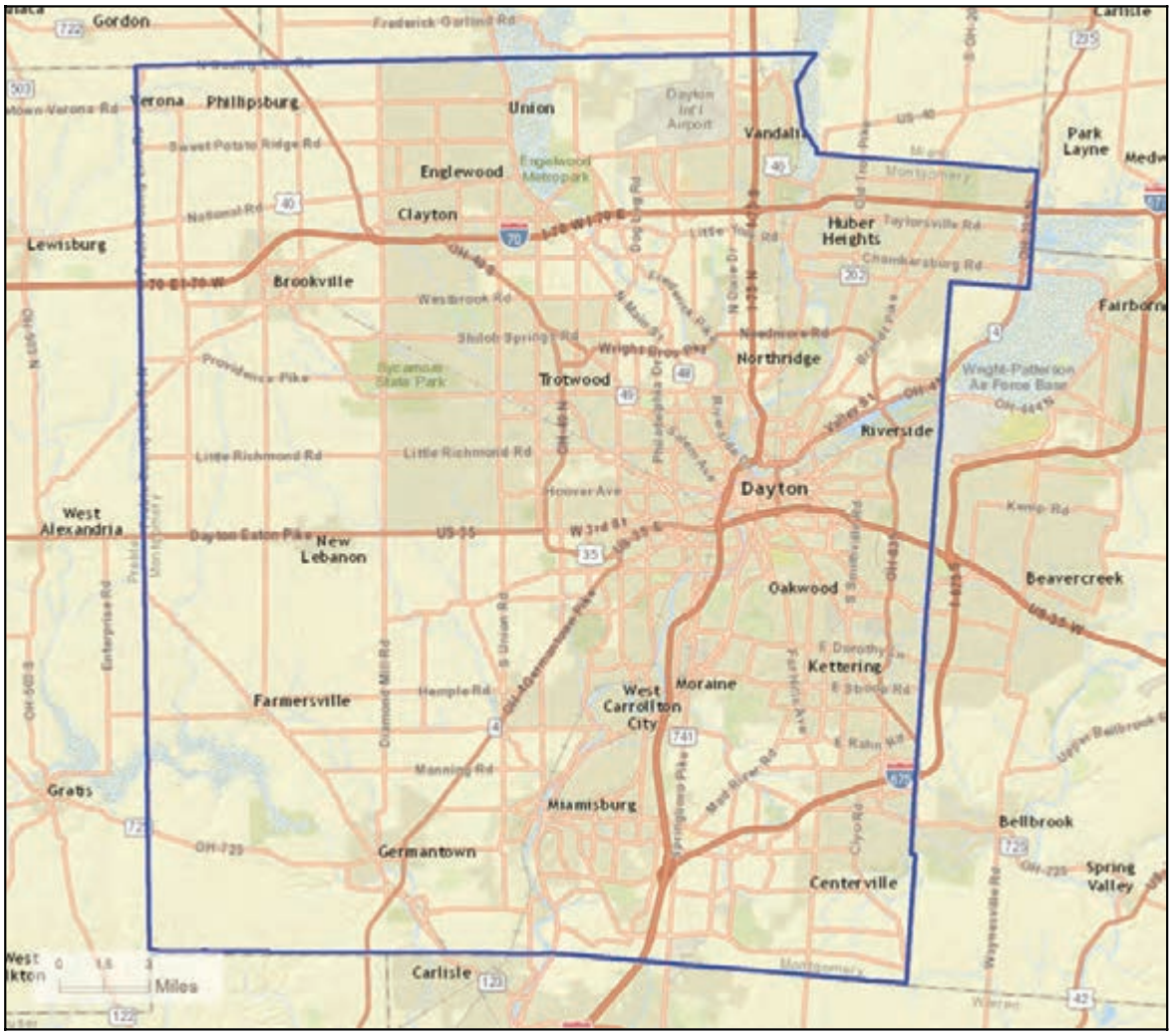


Figure 1- Montgomery County Boundaries

RACE AND ETHNICITY DEFINTIONS

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below. The Census 2010 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2000 Census and earlier censuses; caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time. The latest (Census 2010) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

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

2.7.3 MONTGOMERY COUNTY POPULACE

POPULATION

The county's population has observed a slight, but steady, decrease in recent years and is currently estimated at 528,989 individuals. Projecting ahead, the total population is expected to continue to gradually decline at a minimal rate over the next 15 years, approximately 2.8%. Based on predictions through 2029, the County is expected to have just below 515,000 residents living within 219,240 households. See Figure 2.

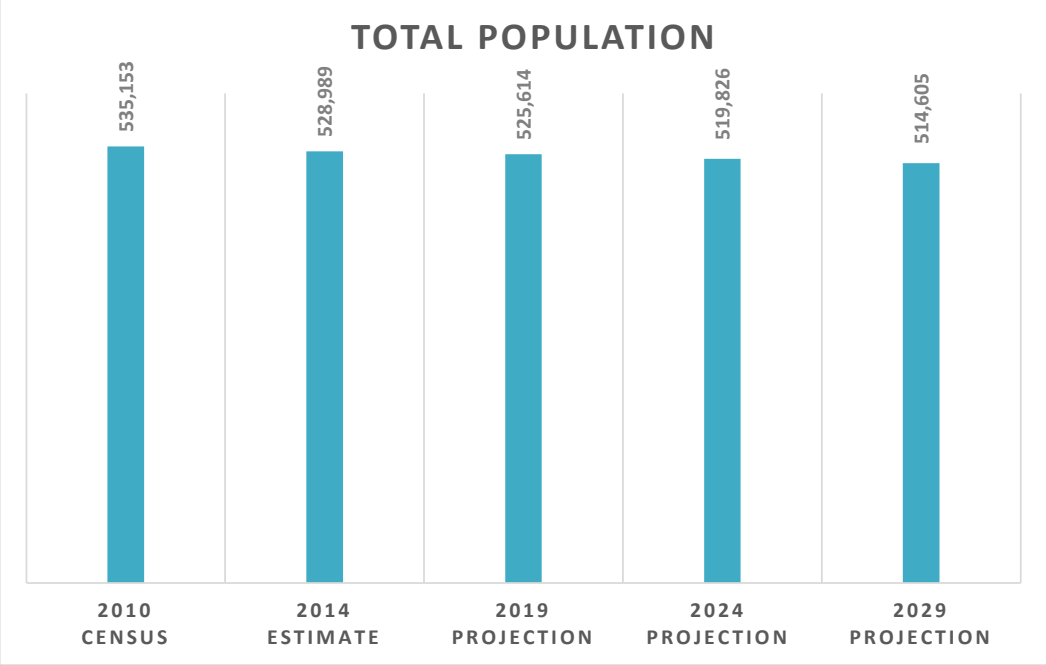


Figure 2-Total Population

AGE SEGMENT

Evaluating the distribution by age segments, the selected area is relatively evenly distributed among the four major age segments; with the older two segments having slightly higher percentages.

Over time, the overall composition of the population is projected to undergo an aging trend. While the younger three age segments are expected to experience decreases in population, the 55+ age segment is projected to increase up to 38.3% of Montgomery's total population. This is predominantly due to the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. See Figure 3.

FRMP currently offers a vast number of programs for all age groups, focused mainly on youth, teens, and the 18+ categories. The department could look into adding more core programs that are specifically dedicated to the senior population. This is even more essential now as the 55+ segments approaches nearly 40% of the county's total population in the next 15 years. Also, given the differences in how the active adults (55+) participate in recreation pursuits, the trend is moving toward having two to three different segments of older adults.

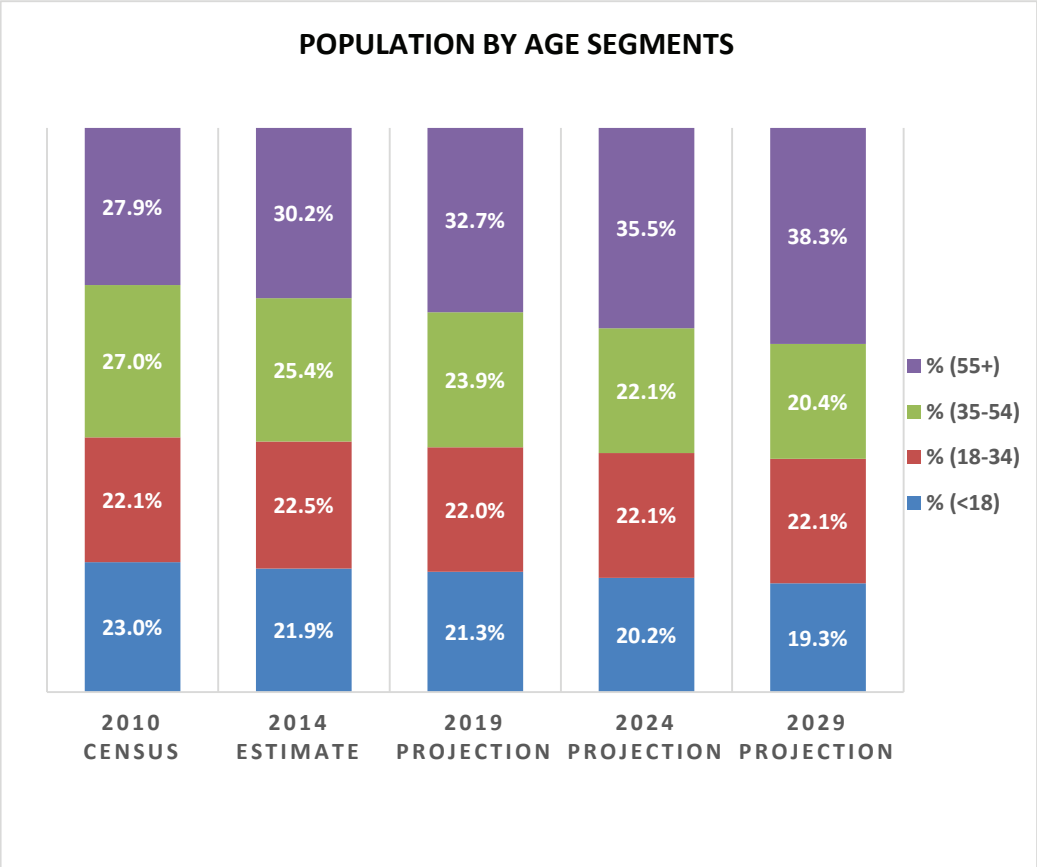


Figure 3-Population Age by Segments

RACE AND ETHNICITY

When analyzing race, the county's current population it is predominately White Alone. The 2014 estimate shows that 73.40% of the population falls into the White Alone category, while Black Alone (20.78%) represents the largest minority. Predictions for 2029 expect the population by race to remain relatively unchanged, with just a slight decrease among the White Alone and Black Alone categories. These decreases are mostly due to the increase in the Two or More Races segment. See Figure 4.

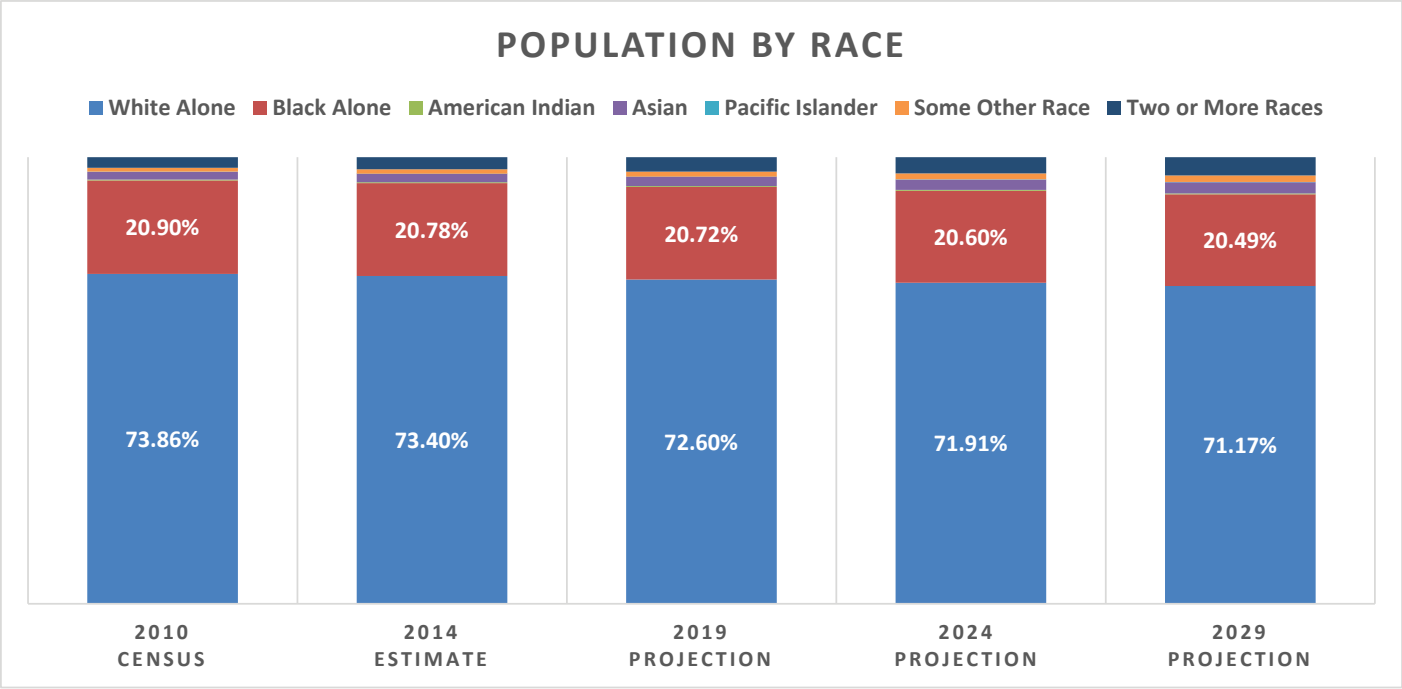


Figure 4- Population by Race

HOUSEHOLDS AND INCOME

As observed in Figure 5, the county's median household income is 17.3% lower than the state's average ($48,308) and nearly 29% below the national average ($53,046). The per capita income for Montgomery County is relatively close to the state ($26,046) and national ($28,051) averages; 6.1% and 14.27% (respectively) less.

Household income is below the state and national averages and is a strong indicator that disposable income is very limited. Residents of Montgomery County may spend less on recreation activities than the average U.S. citizen.

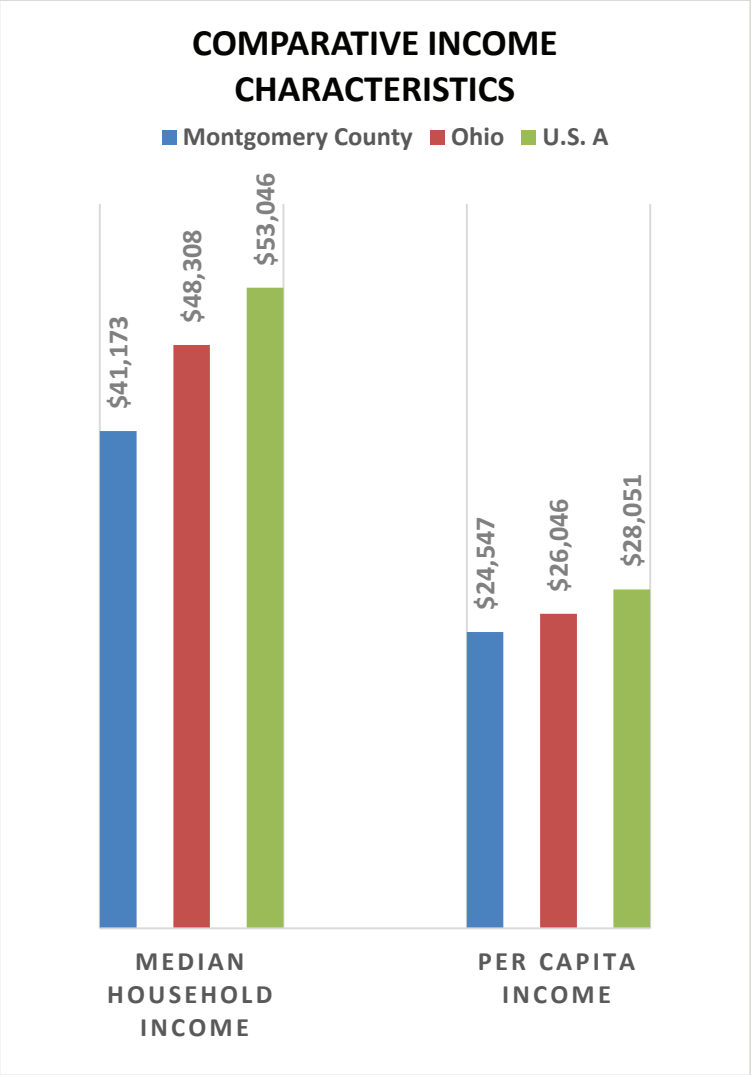


Figure 5- Comparative Income Characteristics

2.8 TRENDS ANALYSIS

Information released by Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) 2015 Study of Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Participation reveals that the most popular sport and recreation activities include: fitness walking, running/jogging, treadmill, free weights and road bicycling. Most of these activities appeal to young and mature participants, can be done in most environments, are enjoyed regardless of level of skill, and have minimal economic barriers to entry. These popular activities also have appeal because of the social values to the participant. For example, although fitness activities are mainly self-directed, people enjoy walking and biking with other individuals because it can offer a degree of camaraderie.

Fitness walking has remained the most popular activity of the past decade by a large margin, in terms of total participants. Walking participation during the latest year data was available (2014), reported over 112 million Americans had walked for fitness at least once.

In the past year, the estimated number of "inactives" in America has increased 3%, from 80.2 million in 2013 to 82.7 million in 2014. According to the Physical Activity Council, an "inactive" is defined as an individual that doesn't take part in any "active" sport. Although inactivity was up in 2014, the 209 million "actives" seem to be participating more often and in multiple activities.

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report 2014 was utilized to evaluate national sport and fitness participatory trends. SFIA is the number one source for sport and fitness research. The study is based on survey findings by the Physical Activity Council through online interviews carried out in January and February of 2015 from nearly 11,000 individuals and households. Not all trend activities are part of the mission of FRMP, but those that are, the readers of this master plan will concur that FRMP is a leader in providing the outdoor recreation consistent with the latest trends.

2.8.1 NATIONAL TRENDS IN GENERAL FITNESS

National participatory trends in fitness have experienced growth in recent years. Many of these activities have become popular due to an increased interest among people to improve their health by engaging in an active lifestyle. These activities also have very few barriers to entry, which provides a variety of activities that are relatively inexpensive and can be performed by nearly anyone with no time restrictions.

The most popular fitness activity by far is fitness walking, which had over 112.5 million participants in 2013, which was a 2.9% increase from the previous year. Other leading fitness activities based on number of participants include running/jogging (51 million), treadmill (50 million), hand weights (42 million), and weight/resistant machines (36 million).

Over the last five years, the activities that grew most rapidly were off-road triathlons (up 123%), road triathlons (up 92%), trail running (up 55%), high impact aerobics (55% increase), and yoga (up 33%). Most recently, from 2013-2014, the largest gains in participation were high impact aerobics (14% increase), trail running (up 11%), and barre (up 10%).

This data identified in sections 2.2.1 through 2.2.5 will be helpful when constructing a program plan that could be implemented by FRMP given the significant facilities that lend themselves favorably to these activities. These include fitness walking, running, yoga in the parks, and triathlons.

National Participatory Trends - General Fitness

Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2009	2013	2014	13-14	09-14
Fitness Walking	110,882	117,351	112,583	-4.1%	1.5%
Running/Jogging	42,511	54,188	51,127	-5.6%	20.3%
Treadmill	50,395	48,166	50,241	4.3%	-0.3%
Free Weights (Hand Weights)	N/A	43,164	41,670	-3.5%	N/A
Weight/Resistant Machines	39,075	36,267	35,841	-1.2%	-8.3%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent/Upright)	36,215	35,247	35,693	1.3%	-1.4%
Stretching	36,299	36,202	35,624	-1.6%	-1.9%
Free Weights (Dumbells)	N/A	32,209	30,767	-4.5%	N/A
Elliptical Motion Trainer	25,903	27,119	28,025	3.3%	8.2%
Free Weights (Barbells)	26,595	25,641	25,623	-0.1%	-3.7%
Yoga	18,934	24,310	25,262	3.9%	33.4%
Calisthenics/Bodyweight Exercise	N/A	N/A	22,390	N/A	N/A
Aerobics (High Impact)	12,771	17,323	19,746	14.0%	54.6%
Stair Climbing Machine	13,653	12,642	13,216	4.5%	-3.2%
Pilates Training	8,770	8,069	8,504	5.4%	-3.0%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	6,762	8,309	8,449	1.7%	24.9%
Trail Running	4,845	6,792	7,531	10.9%	55.4%
Cross-Training	N/A	6,911	6,774	-2.0%	N/A
Cardio Kickboxing	5,500	6,311	6,747	6.9%	22.7%
Martial Arts	6,643	5,314	5,364	0.9%	-19.3%
Boxing for Fitness	N/A	5,251	5,113	-2.6%	N/A
Tai Chi	3,315	3,469	3,446	-0.7%	4.0%
Barre	N/A	2,901	3,200	10.3%	N/A
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	1,148	2,262	2,203	-2.6%	91.9%
Triathlon (Non-Traditional/Off Road)	634	1,390	1,411	1.5%	122.6%

NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over

Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)

2.8.2 NATIONAL TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Results from the Participation Report demonstrate increased popularity among Americans in numerous outdoor recreation activities. Much like the general fitness activities, these activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually or with a group, and are not limited by time restraints. In 2014, the most popular activities in the outdoor recreation category include road bicycling (40 million), day hiking (36 million), and camping within ¼ mile of vehicle/home (29 million). Over the last year, adventure racing (up 13%), backpacking overnight (up 11.4%), and BMX bicycling (up 8.4%) experienced the largest gains in participants. These all have some application to FRMP.

From 2009-2014, outdoor recreation activities that have undergone large increases were adventure racing (up 135.6%), backpacking overnight (up 30.2%), and BMX bicycling (up 26.5%). Over the same time frame, activities declining most rapidly were in-line roller skating (down 32.2%), camping within ¼ mile of home/vehicle (down 15.7%), and recreational vehicle camping (down 13.8%).

National Participatory Trends - Outdoor Recreation					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2009	2013	2014	13-14	09-14
Bicycling (Road)	39,127	40,888	39,725	-2.8%	1.5%
Hiking (Day)	32,542	34,378	36,222	5.4%	11.3%
Camping (< 1/4 Mile of Vehicle/Home)	34,012	29,269	28,660	-2.1%	-15.7%
Wildlife Viewing (>1/4 Mile of Home/Vehicle)	22,702	21,359	21,110	-1.2%	-7.0%
Camping (Recreational Vehicle)	16,977	14,556	14,633	0.5%	-13.8%
Birdwatching (>1/4 mile of Vehicle/Home)	13,847	14,152	13,179	-6.9%	-4.8%
Backpacking Overnight	7,757	9,069	10,101	11.4%	30.2%
Bicycling (Mountain)	7,367	8,542	8,044	-5.8%	9.2%
Skateboarding	7,580	6,350	6,582	3.7%	-13.2%
Roller Skating, In-Line	8,942	6,129	6,061	-1.1%	-32.2%
Climbing (Sport/Indoor/Boulder)	4,541	4,745	4,536	-4.4%	-0.1%
Climbing (Traditional/Ice/Mountaineering)	2,062	2,319	2,457	6.0%	19.2%
Adventure Racing	1,005	2,095	2,368	13.0%	135.6%
Bicycling (BMX)	1,858	2,168	2,350	8.4%	26.5%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

2.8.3 NATIONAL TRENDS IN WATER SPORTS / ACTIVITIES

The most popular water sports / activities based on total participants in 2014 were canoeing (10 million), recreational kayaking (8.9 million), and snorkeling (8.8 million). In the most recent year, activities experiencing the greatest increase in participation included stand-up paddling (up 38%), boardsailing / windsurfing (up 18%), and white water kayaking (up 9.6%).

Over the last five years, white water kayaking (up 80%), sea / touring kayaking (up 64%), recreational kayaking (up 42.2%), and boardsailing / windsurfing (up 28.2%) all experienced large gains in participation. From 2009-2014, activities declining most rapidly were water skiing (down 23.4%), jet skiing (down 18.2%), and rafting (down 15.7%).

National Participatory Trends - Water Sports / Activities					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2009	2013	2014	13-14	09-14
Canoeing	9,997	10,153	10,044	-1.1%	0.5%
Kayaking (Recreational)	6,226	8,716	8,855	1.6%	42.2%
Snorkeling	9,827	8,700	8,752	0.6%	-10.9%
Jet Skiing	7,770	6,413	6,355	-0.9%	-18.2%
Water Skiing	5,228	4,202	4,007	-4.6%	-23.4%
Sailing	4,284	3,915	3,924	0.2%	-8.4%
Rafting	4,485	3,836	3,781	-1.4%	-15.7%
Scuba Diving	2,970	3,174	3,145	-0.9%	5.9%
Wakeboarding	3,561	3,316	3,125	-5.8%	-12.2%
Kayaking (Sea/Touring)	1,776	2,694	2,912	8.1%	64.0%
Stand-Up Paddling	N/A	1,993	2,751	38.0%	N/A
Surfing	2,505	2,658	2,721	2.4%	8.6%
Kayaking (White Water)	1,306	2,146	2,351	9.6%	80.0%
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,218	1,324	1,562	18.0%	28.2%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0%to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0%to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

2.8.4 NATIONAL TRENDS IN WINTER SPORTS

Assessing participation in snow sports, we find strong growth in the most recent year, as all activities in the category increased from 2013-2014. The most popular winter sports in 2014 were alpine / downhill skiing (8.6 million), snowboarding (6.8 million), and freestyle skiing (4.6 million). Telemarking (up 26.3%), snowshoeing (up 16.2%), and freestyle skiing (up 13.9%) reported the strongest participation growth in the last year.

Analyzing the five year trends, freestyle skiing (up 54.7%), telemarking (up 47.6%), and snowshoeing (up 2%) were the three activities that experienced growth. On the other hand, alpine / downhill skiing (down 20.8%), snowboarding (down 8.6%), and cross-country skiing (down 8.1%) all reported a decline in participation from 2009-2014.

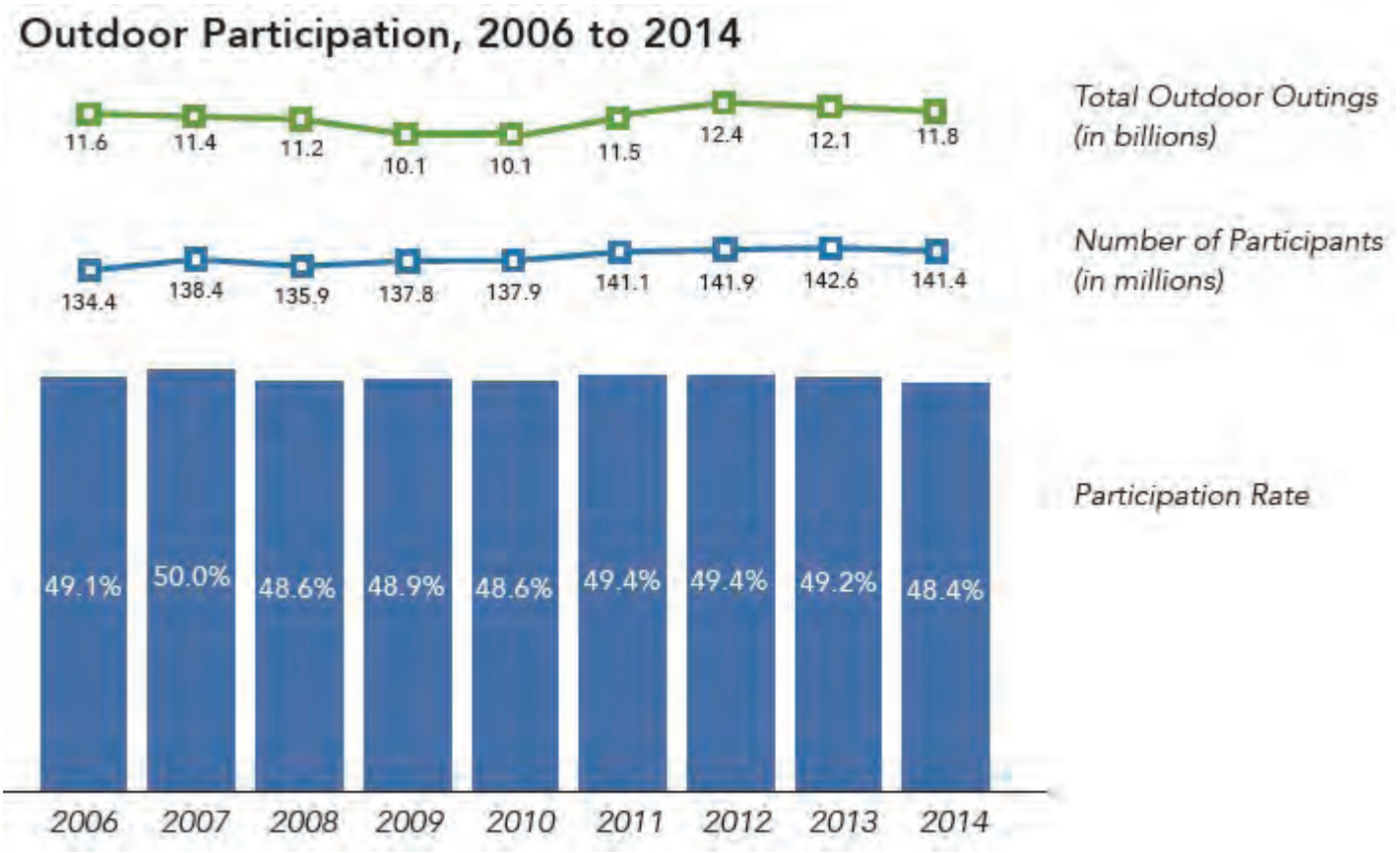
National Participatory Trends - Winter Sports					
Activity	Participation Levels			% Change	
	2009	2013	2014	13-14	09-14
Skiing (Alpine/Downhill)	10,919	8,044	8,649	7.5%	-20.8%
Snowboarding	7,421	6,418	6,785	5.7%	-8.6%
Skiing (Freestyle)	2,950	4,007	4,564	13.9%	54.7%
Skiing (Cross-Country)	4,157	3,377	3,820	13.1%	-8.1%
Snowshoeing	3,431	3,012	3,501	16.2%	2.0%
Telemarking (Downhill)	1,482	1,732	2,188	26.3%	47.6%
NOTE: Participation figures are in 000's for the US population ages 6 and over					
Legend:	Large Increase (greater than 25%)	Moderate Increase (0% to 25%)	Moderate Decrease (0% to -25%)	Large Decrease (less than -25%)	

2.8.5 OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Every year, the Outdoor Foundation publishes the Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report, which is a special report that provides a snapshot of participation in outdoor activities among Americans. The information analyzed for this report is derived from a nationwide survey conducted by the Physical Activity Council that received nearly 11,000 responses from households and individuals for 2014. These are the same survey results utilized for the SFIA's 2015 Study of Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Participation Report, except that results are narrowed to only analyze activities taking place outdoors.

Survey results show that nearly half (48.4%) of all Americans participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2014, which represents 141.4 million participants totaling 11.8 billion outdoor outings. This was a slight drop from 2013 figures, which resulted in the lowest participation rate since the report began in 2006. The following chart describes the total number of outdoor outings, number of participants, and participation rates for outdoor activities since 2006.

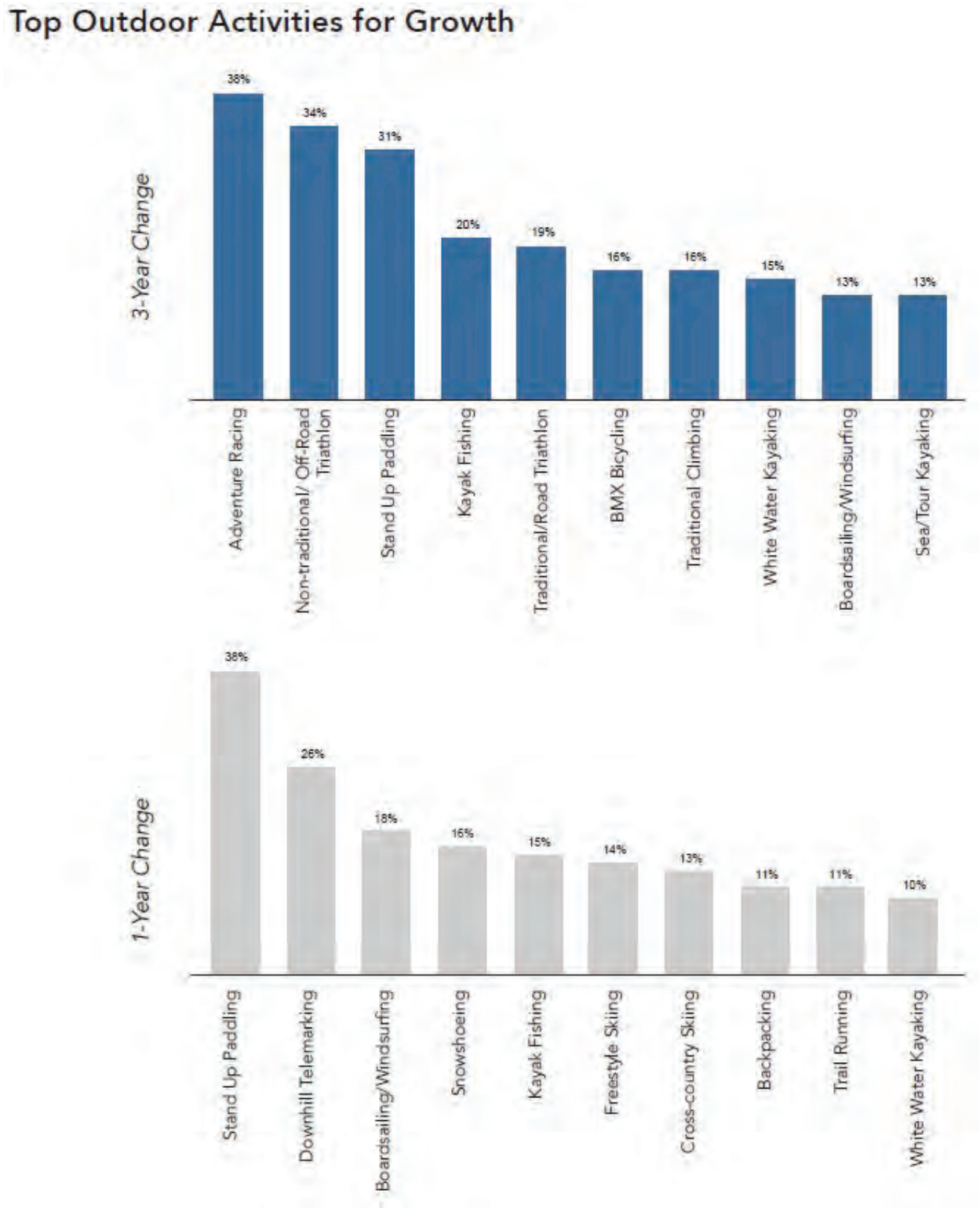
Even with a slight decline in participation rate, FRMP can still expect to see a high number of visitors participating in outdoor outings.



Source: Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2015

The top outdoor activities in terms of participation over the last three years are racing activities and water sports. The most recent year has experienced strong growth from water and snow sports/activities.

We need to distinguish between youth / young adult (ages 6-24) and adult (ages 25+) participation in outdoor activities. Data from the following study shows the top five most popular outdoor activities by participation rate and the top five favorite outdoor activities by participation frequency for youth / young adult and adult age segments.



Youth/young adult participants were reported to have engaged in 4.4 billion outdoor outings in 2014, which equates to 108.4 average outings per participant. The charts below describe the most popular (rate) and favorite (frequency) outdoor activities for youth ages 6-24.

Most Popular Youth Outdoor Activities (ages 6-24)		
Activity	% of Youth	Total Youth Participants
Running, Jogging, Trail Running	25.6%	20.7 million
Bicycling (Road, Mountain, BMX)	21.2%	17.2 million
Camping (Car, Backyard, RV)	18.5%	15.0 million
Fishing (Fresh, Salt, Fly)	18.0%	14.6 million
Hiking	12.8%	10.4 million

Favorite Youth Outdoor Activities (ages 6-24)		
Activity	Avg. Outings per Participant	Total Youth Outings
Running, Jogging, Trail Running	87.2	1.8 billion
Bicycling (Road, Mountain, BMX)	67.2	1.2 billion
Skateboarding	52.8	245.7 million
Surfing	23.4	25.8 million
Birdwatching	22.9	61.9 million

**Source: Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2015*

Adult participants were reported to have engaged in 7.4 billion outdoor outings in 2014, which equates to 73.3 average outings per participant. The charts below describe the most popular (rate) and favorite (frequency) outdoor activities for adults over the age of-24.

Most Popular Adult Outdoor Activities (ages 25+)		
Activity	% of Adults	Total Adult Participants
Running, Jogging, Trail Running	15.8%	33.0 million
Fishing (Fresh, Salt, Fly)	15.0%	31.4 million
Bicycling (Road, Mountain, BMX)	12.8%	26.8 million
Hiking	12.4%	25.9 million
Camping (Car, Backyard, RV)	12.2%	25.5 million

Favorite Adult Outdoor Activities (ages 25+)		
Activity	Avg. Outings per Participant	Total Adult Outings
Running, Jogging, Trail Running	79.5	2.6 billion
Bicycling (Road, Mountain, BMX)	54.3	1.5 billion
Birdwatching	39.1	409.7 million
Wildlife Viewing	28.0	450.1 million
Hunting	23.3	245.6 million

**Source: Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2015*

2.8.6 LOCAL SPORT AND MARKET POTENTIAL

The Market Potential Index (MPI) report measures the probable demand for a product or service in Montgomery County. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident of the target area will participate in certain activities when compared to the US National average. The national average is 100, therefore numbers below 100 would represent a lower than average participation rate, and numbers above 100 would represent higher than average participation rate. The county is compared to the national average in outdoor activity.

Overall, the county demonstrates below average market potential index (MPI) numbers; in outdoor activities. Fresh water fishing, canoeing/kayaking, and power boating were activities that had MPI numbers greater than 100.

The activities are listed in descending order, from highest to lowest number of estimated participants amongst the county's residents. High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate that there is a greater potential that residents of the service area will actively participate in programs offered by FRMP.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MARKET POTENTIAL

Local Participatory Trends - Outdoor Activity				
Activity	Estimated Participants	% of Population		MPI
		Montgomery County	USA	
Fishing (fresh water)	55,338	13.4%	12.4%	**108**
Bicycling (road)	40,044	9.7%	9.8%	**99**
Hiking	38,137	9.2%	10.0%	**92**
Canoeing/kayaking	23,101	5.6%	5.4%	**104**
Boating (power)	22,503	5.4%	5.2%	**103**
Fishing (salt water)	16,329	4.0%	4.1%	**98**
Bicycling (mountain)	15,919	3.9%	4.1%	**96**
Backpacking	11,429	2.8%	3.0%	**94**
Horseback riding	9,284	2.2%	2.4%	**92**

2.9 BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

2.9.1 INTRODUCTION

PROS Consulting, along with FRMP, identified operating metrics to be benchmarked against comparable industry-leading park and recreation systems across the country. The complexity in this analysis was to ensure there is a direct comparison through a methodology of statistics and ratios in order to provide objective information that is relevant and accurate, as best as possible.

It must be noted that the benchmark analysis is only an indicator based on the information provided; however, the consulting team and FRMP worked closely with participating benchmark agencies to obtain the most credible information and organize the data in a consistent and comparable format. The information sought was a combination of operating metrics and information on budgets, staffing, inventories, programming, marketing methods, and user participation. In some instances, the information was not tracked or reported. The attributes considered for selection in this benchmark study included:

- Jurisdiction population / size
- Regional system / special district
- NRPA Gold Medal winner or finalist
- CAPRA accreditation
- System focused on outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation

Careful attention was paid to incorporate a mix of systems that are comparable industry leaders and they include the following agencies:

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Jurisdiction Size (sq. mi.)	Population	NRPA Gold Medal	CAPRA Accredited (Year)
Five Rivers MetroParks	**OH**	**Special District**	**462**	**535,846**	**-**	**No**
Cleveland MetroParks	OH	Special District	485	1,265,111	Winner 1994, 2001, 2007 Finalist 2015	2013
East Bay Regional Park District	CA	Special District	1,450	2,600,000	-	No
Lake County Forest Preserve	IL	Special District	470	703,462	Winner 1999	No
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	MI	County	907	1,237,868	-	No
Toledo MetroParks	OH	Special District	341	435,286	-	2013

Due to differences in how each system collects, maintains, and reports data, variances exist. These variations have an impact on the per capita and percentage allocations; hence, the overall comparison must be viewed with this in mind. In addition, there may be some portions where the data provided by the benchmarked systems was incomplete or unavailable.

The benchmark data collection for all systems was obtained in October through December of 2015. While it is possible that there may have been changes or updates in the data provided, to ensure consistency only the original figures obtained at that time have been used in the benchmark. The goal is to evaluate how FRMP is positioned among peer agencies as it applies to efficiency and effectiveness practices through data that offers an encompassing view of each system's operations.

2.9.2 COMPARISON OF SERVICE AREA, INVENTORIES, AND OPERATIONS

GENERAL COMPARISON OF SERVICE AREA

This section provides a general overview of each system within the benchmark analysis. The table below describes the jurisdiction size, population, and density, as well as comparing the total annual program participants to the population for each system.

Agency	Jurisdiction Size (sq. mi.)	Population	Population per Square Mile	Annual Program Participants	Program Participants per Population
Five Rivers MetroParks*	**462**	**535,846**	**1,161**	**253,290**	**47%**
Cleveland MetroParks	485	1,265,111	2,608	245,658	19%
East Bay Regional Park District	1,450	2,600,000	1,793	198,586	8%
Lake County Forest Preserve	470	703,462	1,497	82,035	12%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	907	1,237,868	1,365	134,977	11%
Toledo MetroParks	341	435,286	1,277	81,783	19%

*Note: Only 32,250 of FRMP's total participants were from registration-based programs

In terms of land area, all the benchmark agencies are comparable in size, except for Oakland County Parks and Recreation and East Bay Regional Park District. The population served for each agency spans a wide range, from 435,286 on the low end to a maximum of 2.6 million people. Analyzing population density reveals that most jurisdictions report between 1,100-1,800 people per square mile, except Cleveland as an outlier with more than 2,600 people per square mile. When comparing annual program participants to each jurisdiction's population, agencies are generating anywhere from 8%-19% program participation per capita; however, FRMP reports exemplary participation, as it reports the most total program participants, at a rate of 47% of the population. FRMP ranks at, or near, the bottom of benchmark agencies for jurisdiction size, but is the outright leader when comparing program participation to the population.

SYSTEM ACREAGES AND TRAIL MILES

This section compares the total acreage and total trail miles managed by each agency. These totals are further dissected to identify the percentage of developed acres and current level of service per 1,000 population for park acres and trail miles.

System	Population of Jurisdiction	Total Acres Owned or Managed by System	Total Developed Acres	Percentage of Developed Acres	Total Park Acres Per 1,000 Pop.	Total Trail Miles	Trail Miles per 1,000 Pop.	Total Annual Program Participants	Program Participants per Capita
Five Rivers MetroParks	**535,846**	**15,833**	**1,077**	**7%**	**29.55**	**155.18**	**0.29**	**253,290**	**0.47**
Cleveland MetroParks	1,265,111	23,079	2,750	12%	18.24	305.00	0.24	245,658	0.19
East Bay Regional Park District	2,600,000	119,000	N/A	N/A	45.77	1,250.00	0.48	198,586	0.08
Lake County Forest Preserve	703,462	30,328	4,600	15%	43.11	172.25	0.24	82,035	0.12
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	1,237,868	6,701	2,385	36%	5.41	69.00	0.06	134,977	0.11
Toledo MetroParks	435,286	11,957	441	4%	27.47	150.00	0.34	81,783	0.19

*Note: East Bay did not provide total developed acreage

Most agencies report between 15,000-30,000 total acres owned or managed, but East Bay is a clear anomaly with nearly 120,000 acres within its system. Due to the nature of the agencies in this study, it is no surprise that the majority of acres owned or managed within each system are undeveloped, as no agency reports developed acres above 36% of their total. Comparing acres to each service area's population shows that most agencies provide between 25-45 acres for every 1,000 people. FRMP falls mid to low among benchmark agencies in total acreage (15,833), percentage of developed acres (7%), and park acres per 1,000 population (29.55).

Assessing trail miles for each agency, most agencies provide between 150-175 total miles of trail, with Cleveland (305 miles) and East Bay (1,250 miles) reporting trail miles well in excess of the other agencies in the benchmark. The benchmark agencies, except for Oakland County, are providing adequate level of service for trail miles per 1,000 population, as the ideal range for trails is between 0.25-0.5 miles per 1,000 people. FRMP ranks third in the benchmark when comparing trail miles to the service area population, with nearly 0.3 miles per 1,000 people.

PARK INVENTORY BY TYPE

The table below details the quantity and acreage for each park type based on NRPA's park classifications (excluding mini parks). In analyzing each system's inventory, FRMP demonstrates the widest variety of park types, which provides a nice mix of greenspace usage. Natural Resource Areas, Greenways, and Special Use Parks stand out as the primary park types being offered by the benchmark agencies.

Agency	Neighborhood Parks		Community Parks		Large Urban Parks		Natural Resource Areas		Greenways		Special Use Parks	
	QTY	Acres	QTY	Acres	QTY	Acres	QTY	Acres	QTY	Acres	QTY	Acres
Five Rivers MetroParks	**2**	**28**	**4**	**137**	**3**	**187**	**18**	**15,471**	**3**	**276**	**1**	**2**
Cleveland MetroParks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23,079	-	-	-	-
East Bay Regional Park District	-	-	-	-	-	-	42	70,000	31	-	23	12,000
Lake County Forest Preserve	-	-	1	18	1	86	46	22,370	13	7,691	7	600
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	5,882	-	-	5	819
Toledo MetroParks	-	-	2	55	10	7,522	38	2,146	6	2,524	1	174

TRAIL INVENTORY BY TYPE

This section further explains the types of trails that are provided by each system. The tables below delineate between paved and soft trail miles, as well as expressing mileages for specialized usage. Although FRMP is the bottom half in total trail miles, the organization does display a good balance and variety of trail offerings. One area FRMP excels in is providing water trails, as the 42 miles is second only to East Bay, which has, by far, the largest overall inventory in the benchmark study.

Agency	Paved Trail Miles	Soft / Non-paved Trail Miles	Nature / Hiking / Backpacking Trail Miles	Equine Trail Miles	Mountain Bike / BMX Trail Miles	Total Trail Miles
Five Rivers MetroParks	**42**	**114**	**75**	**30**	**9**	**155**
Cleveland MetroParks	110	196	80	95	21	**305**
East Bay Regional Park District	160	1,090	1,090	1,075	980	**1,250**
Lake County Forest Preserve	7	162	172	43	-	**172**
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	8	61	1	17	7	**69**
Toledo MetroParks	40	110	83	22	-	**150**

Agency	Does your agency have water trails adjacent, or inside, park boundaries? If so, how many miles are accessible for public use?
Five Rivers MetroParks	Yes, 42 miles in Montgomery County
Cleveland MetroParks	Yes, 1.35 miles
East Bay Regional Park District	Yes, 100 miles
Lake County Forest Preserve	Yes, 35 miles
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	No
Toledo MetroParks	Yes, 26 miles

OPERATING BUDGET AND COST RECOVERY

This portion of the study covers the annual budget expenses, earned income, and cost recovery levels. Budget items in this section include the most recent figures available for operating expenses and the two-year average for capital spending for each agency. Non-tax revenues and operating expenses are compared to the population of each jurisdiction to determine the revenue / cost per capita. The operational cost recovery is arrived at by dividing total non-tax revenue by total operating expense. Cost recovery is a critical performance indicator that measures how well each agency's revenue generation covers the total operating costs.

System	Jurisdiction Population	Total Non-Tax Revenues	Total Operating Expenses	Capital Budget*	Revenue Per Capita	Operating Expense Per Capita	Operating Cost Recovery
Five Rivers MetroParks	**535,846**	**$ 1,005,404**	**$ 19,922,710**	**$ 3,334,042**	**$ 1.88**	**$ 37.18**	**5.05%**
Cleveland MetroParks	1,265,111	$ 17,725,000	$ 84,182,489	$ 15,060,451	$ 14.01	$ 66.54	21.06%
East Bay Regional Park District	2,600,000	$ 12,459,807	$ 104,026,356	$ 135,638,489	$ 4.79	$ 40.01	11.98%
Lake County Forest Preserve	703,462	$ 6,781,654	$ 28,230,205	$ 49,612,441	$ 9.64	$ 40.13	24.02%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	1,237,868	$ 9,164,323	$ 22,860,692	$ 2,014,392	$ 7.40	$ 18.47	40.09%
Toledo MetroParks	435,286	$ 491,746	$ 11,501,979	$ 6,258,750	$ 1.13	$ 26.42	4.28%

*Note: Capital Budget is two year average (2013-2014)

It comes as no surprise that the two largest systems, Cleveland and East Bay, are reporting revenue and expense figures that top the benchmark study. By assessing revenues and expenses on a per capita basis, we are able compare the benchmark agencies on a level playing field. The per capita figures reveal that Cleveland is the clear leader in revenue generation, with $14 in spending per resident, while Oakland County leads the benchmark in keeping down its operating costs at an expense of $18 per person. At 40% operating cost recovery, Oakland County reported the most favorable balance between revenues and expenditures, followed by Lake County and Cleveland, with cost recovery levels of 24% and 21%, respectively. Over the last two years, East Bay has outpaced the capital spending of all other benchmark agencies combined by a significant margin.

Comparatively, FRMP demonstrates a very low level of revenue generation at $1.88 per resident, while doing a good job of controlling operating costs at $37.18 of expense per capita. The disparity in revenues and expenditures for FRMP lends itself to the second lowest cost recovery level (5.05%) of all benchmark agencies, which could be largely attributed to the low level of registration-based program participation described in the programming overview later in the benchmark analysis. FRMP's average capital budget from 2013-2014 is well below most benchmark agencies, which may indicate a need to increase investment in its capital improvements for the park system.

NON-TAX REVENUE SOURCES

This section describes how each system generates non-tax revenues. Comparatively, FRMP generates strong revenue from facility rentals and other, which includes wetland mitigation bank sales, training fees, sale of livestock, and equipment rental. FRMP is not as successful in generating fees and charges related to programming and concessions/retail item revenues.

System	Source of Non-Tax Revenues						
	Facility Entry Fees / Memberships	Program Fees / Charges	Facility Rentals	Facility / Property Leases	Concessions / Resale Items	Sale of Real Property	Other
Five Rivers MetroParks	9.58%	12.57%	32.38%	7.64%	0.74%	0.00%	37.09%
Cleveland MetroParks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
East Bay Regional Park District*	78.96%		14.38%			-	6.66%
Lake County Forest Preserve	9.60%	53.00%	8.30%	13.80%	15.80%	0.10%	-
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	25.00%	2.00%	38.00%	1.00%	6.00%	-	28.00%
Toledo MetroParks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Note: East Bay Regioinal PD reported Facility Entry Fees/Memberships and Program Fees/Charges as a combined figure.
*Note: East Bay Regioinal PD reported Facility Rentals, Facility/Property Leases, and Concessions/Resale Items as a combined figure.
*Note: Cleveland and Toledo did not provide figures for revenue sources

OPERATING FUND SOURCES

This section shows how each system sources its operating funds. While an established general fund is important to funding operations, organizations should strive to find alternative sources of financial support. FRMP generally draws from a variety of sources, which helps limit its reliance on the General Fund.

System	Source of Operating Funds					
	Jurisdiction General Fund (Specify)	Agency Fees and Charges	Sponsorship/ Endowment	Grants	Donations	Other
Five Rivers MetroParks	75.88% (Property Taxes)	4.60%	0.20%	8.30%	3.96%	7.05%
Cleveland MetroParks*	64.6% (Property Taxes)	23.80%	9.20%			2.40%
East Bay Regional Park District	100.00%	-	-	-	-	-
Lake County Forest Preserve	83.3% (Property & Replacement)	14.20%	-	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	56.00% (Property Taxes)	41.00%	-	9.00%	-	3.00%
Toledo MetroParks	81.8% (Property Taxes)	2.50%	0.10%	3.60%	1.80%	10.20%

*Note: Cleveland MetroParks reported Sponsorship/Endowment, Grants, and Donations as a combined figure.

DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENDITURES

This section reveals how expenditures for each system are allocated. Overall, FRMP demonstrates a favorable distribution of expenditures that are on pace with the benchmark norms. Areas of interest for the organization include above average spending on administrative tasks and programs, but minimal spending dedicated to executive staff when compared to the benchmark agencies, which, as a group, averaged 2.5% of expenditures attributed to executive staff. It should be noted that FRMP's significant spending dedicated to "Other" is primarily attributed to Law Enforcement.

System	Distribution of Expenditures						
	Exec Staff	Admin	Operations	Programs	Maint	Plan / Dev	Other
Five Rivers MetroParks	1.48%	26.73%	37.60%	13.87%	-	5.12%	15.20%
Cleveland MetroParks	2.40%	14.70%	70.20%	5.30%	-	1.90%	5.50%
East Bay Regional Park District*	2.35%	7.66%	53.26%			4.55%	32.17%
Lake County Forest Preserve	3.60%	23.60%	19.20%	6.90%	31.20%	4.80%	10.70%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	2.00%	23.00%	45.00%	5.00%	9.00%	2.00%	13.00%
Toledo MetroParks	2.29%	22.93%	25.26%	4.24%	-	15.89%	29.39%

*Note: East Bay Regioinal PD reported Operations, Programs, and Maintenance as a combined figure.

CAPITAL BUDGET SOURCES

The following reveals the sources from which each system's capital budget is derived. FRMP is doing a good job of not overdrawing from a single source, but it should make a concerted effort to constantly explore new alternatives for funding capital improvements in the future.

System	Source of Capital Budget							
	Local General Fund (Tax Supported)	Local Dedicated Fund (Non-General Funds)	General Obligation Bonds	State Grants / Funding	Federal Grants / Funding	Private Grants / Funding	Gifts / Endowment	Other
Five Rivers MetroParks	33.05%	-	-	38.94%	8.17%	-	7.71%	12.13%
Cleveland MetroParks*	73.00%	-	-	27.00%				-
East Bay Regional Park District	-	-	-	35.94%	46.04%	0.52%	7.35%	10.16%
Lake County Forest Preserve	3.50%	18.60%	64.40%	2.70%	3.60%	-	2.70%	8.00%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	-	100.00%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Toledo MetroParks	100.00%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Note: Cleveland MetroParks reported State, Federal, and Private Grants/Funding and Gifts/Endowment as a combined figure.

STAFFING

Below is a breakdown of the staffing structure for each system that provides a count of employees by type, total volunteers and volunteer hours, and describes how each agency sources law enforcement services. FRMP ranks near the middle for total number of full-time and part-time employees, and staffing levels are above that of benchmark agencies that are comparable in size (e.g. Lake County and Toledo). The agency also has a very impressive volunteer pool, with nearly 7,000 full-time and episodic volunteers; however, FRMP ranks next to last in annual volunteer hours, which may identify an opportunity for improvement considering the untapped potential for volunteers based on the size of the pool. All agencies in the benchmark study utilize in-house law enforcement services.

System	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees	Seasonal Employees	Volunteer Pool	Annual Volunteer Hours	Law Enforcement Services
Five Rivers MetroParks	156	54	40	1,490 FT / 5,500 Episodic	30,869	In-House
Cleveland MetroParks	608	131	800	2,195 FT / 3,642 Episodic	127,088	In-House
East Bay Regional Park District	671	9	92	17,996	126,027	In-House
Lake County Forest Preserve	131	33	280	300	39,000	In-House
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	76	626*	n/a	1,164	26,035	In-House
Toledo MetroParks	107	7	83	3,370	47,750	In-House

*Note: Oakland County part-time employees includes seasonal workers

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTES)

This section assesses levels of staffing as a performance measure for each system by comparing full-time equivalents (FTE's) to total population and program participants to help quantify how well current staffing meets the demand for each service area. Each FTE equates to a total of 2,080 annual hours of work, and total FTE's are derived by taking total hours contributed by all full-time and part-time staff members and dividing by the annual workload for a single FTE (2,080 hours).

When comparing FTE's to the overall population of each service area, FRMP rises near the top of the study, with 0.36 FTE's per 1,000 residents. FRMP's ratio is favorable due to the limited size of the population being served, and it appears the current level of staffing provides adequate coverage for the service area's population.

System	Total FTE	Population	Total FTE per 1,000 Pop.
Five Rivers MetroParks	195	535,846	0.36
Cleveland MetroParks	943	1,265,111	0.75
East Bay Regional Park District	741	2,600,000	0.28
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	703,462	0.39
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	1,237,868	0.13
Toledo MetroParks	145	435,286	0.33

2.9.3 OVERVIEW OF MARKETING

MARKETING BUDGETS

This portion of the study reveals the marketing budget of each agency over the last three years and provides the average dollar amount spent over that period. It also shows how much of the marketing budget for each agency is sourced from the general fund. FRMP is consistent in its spending for marketing from year to year, and has actually been able to slightly reduce its expenditures for this category each year, which might indicate that the organization is becoming more efficient in its marketing efforts over time. It should be noted that both East Bay and Lake County's marketing budgets are disproportionate to the size of their service area when compared to the other benchmark agencies.

System	Marketing Budget				
	2013	2014	2015	3-Year Average	% of Marketing Budget from General Fund
Five Rivers MetroParks	$ 607,774	$ 579,548	$ 578,118	$ 588,480	100%
Cleveland MetroParks	$ 600,263	$ 875,517	$ 907,043	$ 794,274	55%
East Bay Regional Park District	$ 65,000	$ 77,700	$ 70,000	$ 70,900	100%
Lake County Forest Preserve	$ 1,162,490	$ 1,135,220	$ 1,079,080	$ 1,125,597	100%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%
Toledo MetroParks	$ 376,170	$ 502,460	$ 490,300	$ 456,310	100%

*Note: Oakland County marketing budget figures were unavailable

MARKETING METHODS

This section describes how each agency allocates its marketing budget across a variety of channels. In analyzing the distribution of spending, FRMP utilizes the most diverse lineup of marketing methods to promote its offerings; however, it may be beneficial for the organization to distribute some of the money spent on the program guide to test the effectiveness of other marketing mediums in driving user participation. FRMP's current spending is heavily focused on the Program Guide, Other (includes supplies and materials), and Print Ads.

System	Annual Spending on Media (2014)									
	Print Ads	Radio Ads	TV Ads	Outdoor Ads / Billboards	Program Guide	Digital / Banner Ads	Social Media	Website Content Management	E-Marketing (e-mail, newsletter, etc.)	Other
Five Rivers MetroParks	14.00%	7.00%	4.00%	0.50%	45.00%	3.00%	1.00%	0.00%	1.00%	25.00%
Cleveland MetroParks	5.00%	37.00%	38.00%	6.00%	-	7.00%	-	-	-	7.00%
East Bay Regional Park District	40.20%	23.80%	6.40%	-	-	5.10%	5.20%	-	-	19.30%
Lake County Forest Preserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Toledo MetroParks	44.56%	-	47.36%	-	-	7.81%				

*Note: Lake County and Oakland County information was unavailable

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

The table below provides a snapshot of each agency's social media presence by showing the total number of followers/subscribers for each agency. The six social media platforms currently utilized by FRMP are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, and YouTube. Cleveland MetroParks is the clear benchmark leader in terms of platforms used and total number of followers/subscribers. As eluded to in the footnote below, Cleveland is also doing a great job of using non-traditional and trending social media outlets. An area of opportunity identified from this information could be to establish a LinkedIn account to lure talented employees and volunteers. Overall, FRMP appears to have a strong social media following across a variety of popular platforms, which greatly enhances the reach of the agency to its users in a very cost effective manner.

System	Followers/Subscribers by Social Media Platform					
	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Flickr	Pinterest	YouTube
Five Rivers MetroParks	28,000	6,743	1,106	420	411	113
Cleveland MetroParks*	93,363	44,284	9,134	-	749	377
East Bay Regional Park District	22,160	10,500	1,617	-	-	-
Lake County Forest Preserve	**	**	**	**	-	**
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	12,573	5,025	-	-	-	-
Toledo MetroParks	22,800	320 (new)	6,000	-	430 (new)	-

*Note: Cleveland MetroParks also utilizes LinkedIn (3,396), Vine (1,449), Periscope (988), Google+ (790), and Snapchat (114)

**Note: Lake County FP uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, and YouTube, but didn't report number of followers

MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This section describes the amount of human resources that each agency uses to maintain its social media accounts. One opportunity identified when comparing to other benchmark agencies, is to incorporate better management of social media marketing by reducing the number of staff members to improve efficiency, as most agencies tend to have one employee dedicated to social media.

System	Social Media Staff
Five Rivers MetroParks	Four full-time staff combine for a total of 7 hours per week
Cleveland MetroParks	One full-time employee
East Bay Regional Park District	One staff member for an average of 5 hours per week
Lake County Forest Preserve	3 staff hours per week
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	Not available
Toledo MetroParks	10 staff hours per week

2.9.4 PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

The table below provides a detailed description of the program participation for FRMP in 2015, in terms of total participants, total programs, average user fees, and subsidy levels. This information is further categorized by program area (i.e. outdoor recreation / adventure, special / community events, conservation / nature) and by type of program (i.e. public, registration-based, inreach, outreach, and volunteer). The following is clarification for the table below:

- Public programs include all activities that the public can participate in and are advertised in Parkways.
- Registration-based public programs are included in the first column, and include the number of people registered for a program.
- Inreach are special programs that are for a specific group like a school group or special interest group where the program occurs at FRMP's location, but is not open to the public.
- Outreach is similar to inreach, except that FRMP staff provides programs at locations requested by the community.
- Volunteer programs provide the public opportunities to learn how to support FRMP parks, by serving as park guides, work volunteers, interpreters, etc.

2015 Five Rivers Program Participation						
	Public Programs	Registration-based Public Programs	Inreach/Private Programs	Outreach/In the community	Volunteer***	Total
Outdoor Recreation/Adventure*	33,719	21,094	882	4,709	344	60,748
Special/Community Events	207,203**	1,150	50	0	135	208,538
Conservation/Nature	12,368	10,006	32,687	12,513	3,166	70,740
Total Participants	253,290	32,250	33,619	17,222	3,645	340,026
Total Programs	966	735	883	248	469	3,382
Ave Fee/Participant	$ 16.18	$ 18.51	$ 0.29	$ -	$ -	$ 8.31
% Free	74%	66%	99%	100%	100%	68%

*Includes MOX, skating, horseback riding, ranger programming for fishing and cycling

** Includes RiverScape Festivals (big 5)

***Episodic programs for volunteer participation, not ongoing teams of volunteer work – they were not advertised as programs in parkways, rather organized by volunteer coordinators as needed or for community groups seeking work.

PROGRAM LIFECYCLE AND PRICING

This section details the number of programs entering and exiting the program mix, the average program fee per participant and family, and information on scholarships and free services. The majority of benchmark agencies show growth in their program curriculum, as the numbers of programs in the introduction stage of the lifecycle are outweighing those being retired. FRMP reports the second highest average fee per participant, which is more than double the benchmark median for average fee. FRMP is one of only two agencies that have no programs paid by scholarships, but it falls in the middle of the pack with 68% of programs/services being offered free of charge. Agencies reporting higher operational cost recovery levels (i.e. Oakland County, Lake County, and Cleveland) tend to rely less on program fees to generate revenue with a greater contribution coming from facility fees and rentals.

System	New Programs Introduced in 2014	Programs Retired in 2014	Avg. Fee per Participant	Avg. Fee per Family	Avg. # of Programs Paid by Scholarship	% of Programs / Services Offered Free of Charge
Five Rivers MetroParks	37	12	$ 8.31	$ 2.50	0	68%
Cleveland MetroParks	25	20	-	free	20	92%
East Bay Regional Park District	136	54	$ 8.67	-	71	75%
Lake County Forest Preserve	6	3	$ 4.00	-	200	10%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	-	-	$ 4.00	-	0	-
Toledo MetroParks	25%	25%	$ 3.00	$ 12.00	44	15%

*NOTE: Cleveland MetroParks does charge some fees that weren't captured in the benchmark study.

PARTICIPATION BY PROGRAM AREA

This section describes the distribution of 2014 program participation in the Outdoor Connection Department's core program areas only (does not include Equestrian, Ranger Community Relations or Conservation in Action programs). Outdoor Connections has a nice balance in participation between the five program areas; however, when assessing these percentages one must keep in mind the low number of overall program participants reported by the agency.

System	Participation by Program Area					
Five Rivers MetroParks	Outdoor Connections - Recreation (29%)	Outdoor Connections - Urban Vibrancy (20%)	Outdoor Connections - Adventure Central (20%)	Outdoor Connections - Nature & Conservation (12%)	Outdoor Connections - Community Ecology & Cultivation (10%)	
Cleveland MetroParks	Nature & Conservation (95%)	Recreation (5%)	-	-	-	-
East Bay Regional Park District	Curriculum-Based School Programs (62%) Outdoor Recreation Skills (2%)	Nature Exploration & Conservation (11%) Hiking (1%)	Cultural History (6%) Day Camps (1%)	Farming & Farm Animals (3%) Miscellaneous (9%)	Volunteer Opportunities (3%)	Special Events (2%)
Lake County Forest Preserve	Environmental School Field Trips (23%)	History School Field Trips (7%)	Environmental Public Programs (8%)	History Public Programs (2%)	Special Events (11%)	Other (47%)
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	Mobile Recreation (56%)	Bus Trips (19%)	Community-Wide Special Events (10%)	Wint Nature Center (10%) / Red Oaks Nature Center (1%)	Adaptive (4%)	Nature Education (1%)
Toledo MetroParks*	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Note: Toledo MetroParks did not provide a break down of participation by program area

PARTICIPATION AND SUBSIDY BY PROGRAM TYPE

As part of the benchmark analysis, FRMP was specifically interested in understanding annual participation and subsidy levels for three types of programs: outdoor recreation/adventure, special/community events, and conservation/nature. While FRMP reports benchmark-leading participation in outdoor recreation/adventure and special events, it has low annual participation in conservation / nature programs when compared to benchmark systems. In comparison, FRMP trails most agencies in level of subsidy, as only Oakland County and Lake County report a lower percentage of subsidization across the various program types.

System	Outdoor Recreation / Adventure		Special / Community Events		Conservation / Nature	
	Annual Participants	Average Subsidy Level	Annual Participants	Average Subsidy Level	Annual Participants	Average Subsidy Level
Five Rivers MetroParks	33,719	62%	207,203	74%	12,368	80%
Cleveland MetroParks	11,443	86%	234,215	75%	29,158	98%
East Bay Regional Park District	4,328	93%	110,822	95%	96,541	99%
Lake County Forest Preserve	500	25%	9,156	50%	41,500	75%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	-	-	12,963	54%	15,688	6%
Toledo MetroParks	865	90%	28,000	85-100%	7,500	90%

*NOTE: FRMP participation figures were updated with 2015 figures, while all other agencies reflect 2014 figures.

2.10 PARK AND FACILITY SITE ASSESSMENT

In April 2015, the PROS team performed an assessment of FRMP's parks, conservation areas and facilities. This assessment establishes a base-line understanding and "snapshot" of the existing conditions of the parks and amenities in the system, and support the foundation, or reference point, from which recommendations of the Comprehensive Master Plan can be developed.

2.10.1 METHODOLOGY

The PROS team visited twenty-six (26) of the MetroParks, conservation areas, and facilities that included the following:

- Aullwood Garden MetroPark
- Carriage Hill MetroPark
- Cox Arboretum MetroPark
- Deeds Point MetroPark
- Eastwood MetroPark
- Englewood MetroPark
- Germantown MetroPark
- Hills & Dales MetroPark
- Huffman MetroPark
- Island MetroPark
- Possum Creek MetroPark
- RiverScape MetroPark
- Sugarcreek MetroPark
- Sunrise MetroPark
- Taylorsville MetroPark
- Twin Creek MetroPark
- Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark
- Wesleyan MetroPark
- 2nd St. Market
- Medlar Conservation Area
- Needmore Conservation Area
- Shoup Mill Conservation Area
- Upper Twin Conservation Area
- Woodman Fen Conservation Area
- Central Zone Operations
- Ranger Headquarters

During each site visit, the PROS team made observations regarding park access, the site's comfort and image and uses. Each individual park and facility assessment can be found in Appendix C.

2.10.2 SYSTEM SUMMARY

STRENGTHS

- The park spaces are impressive and well thought out in many ways
- FRMP has parks that serve the urban, developed context and the rural, undeveloped context
- The system does not appear to have any urgent critical flaws
- The system benefits from a strong and coherent land management plan
- The system has an excellent natural resources strategy
- Some parks, such as Hills & Dales and Cox Arboretum, have been designed and redesigned to a very high standard
- Graphic and signage standards create a strong sense of unified identity for the system
- Each park has a clearly thought out identity for marketing purposes as it applies to signage graphics and sign presentation
- The differentiation between parks and conservation areas seems useful to manage visitor expectations, focused management efforts and assure variety
- There is a wide variety of contexts and experiences available throughout the system
- Water is a strong, clear unifying theme throughout. The story is interesting and the water's physical presence is compelling
- The system is strong on land resources, conservation mission, and trail development

WEAKNESSES

- The system lacks design and management consistency that can be reinforced by site, landscape, and architectural design
- The system as a whole lacks an overarching physical and programmatic vision
- Some individual sites are isolated and not connected to the rest of the system
- There is no clear classification of parks: some are high design (Cox, Wegerzyn, Hills & Dales, Aullwood), others mid-range (Wesleyan, Possum Creek), and the others nature/rustic parks. A classified system needs to have design standards to unify them
- Parking lots are not designed to be the necessary gateways to sites
- Water access points are not designed to be the focal points
- Overall the system seems to be adult driven
- There are some geographic deficiencies in service that is provided to the community, such as the northwest
- Facilities sometimes seem unintentionally located, with no place making site and landscape design
- The river confluence is undervalued as a focal point of the system
- Pedestrian, bike, transit and equestrian access to the parks from the surrounding neighborhoods and streets could be improved
- The Miami Conservancy District relationship is not interpreted, in that it does not offer interpretive signage that outlines the value of resources they manage; it is taken for granted by residents but unrecognized to the outsider
- Despite the fact that dams and impoundments are part of the origin of the park system, their utilitarian nature sometimes detracts from contemporary park use
- MetroParks' boundaries need improved marking in some cases and reduction in encroachments in others
- Sometimes the natural areas are observed as a backdrop to other programs instead of focal points

OPPORTUNITIES

- FRMP has an opportunity to begin a major generational transition (MetroParks 2.0) based on the recent changes (e.g. RiverScape)
- FRMP needs to continue to support the promotion of an integrated web of regional open space- including FRMP, City of Dayton, and other systems through participation in Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission's (MVRPC's) regional open space planning efforts
- River corridors offer additional opportunities to connect open space
- Sycamore State Park, located in the northwest area of the region is an opportunity for potential partnerships, acquisition, collaborative development, connection, or joint marketing
- Named trails within parks could enhance their identity and connection to place
- Additional camping areas are needed throughout the system
- Managers tend to center on their sites first and the system second
- Need to incorporate "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design" (CPTED) standards into parks maintenance
- Consider dawn-to-dusk hours to promote additional use
- Explore additional multi-use trails throughout the system
- Other systems such as green and complete streets, boulevard and parkway treatments and open space easements could help to close some of the gaps and provide systemic connectivity currently lacking
- "Big Design" may be needed to counterbalance the overpowering "Big Engineering" image of water management. Big Design is high level of improvement (i.e. Riverscape MetroPark is high design, which means many amenities, floral arrangements, high visual impact, etc.). Big Engineering refers to a site that requires a lot of effort and monetary contributions (i.e. hydraulic design) to make a major impact
- In certain cases, remnant farm fields within parks could be left to express the heritage of that use and to assist with interpretation. The system is big enough, and the framework strong enough, to consider a major landscape design program to increase the rooted sense of place, identity, and recreational amenity
- FRMP needs to consider a clear and strong public art and memorial policy to celebrate art in parks while preventing unwanted art intrusion
- Expanded donor involvement could help the implementation of necessary improvements
- FRMP needs to continue to expand and improve visitor experience
- FRMP has an opportunity to become much more physically appealing and more experientially interesting
- Improve pedestrian, bike, transit, and equestrian access to the parks from the surrounding neighborhoods and streets

THREATS

- As the community grows and urbanizes, the image of certain parks within rural/agricultural contexts will shift and require design "hardening" to assure an image of stewardship. This is achieved by connecting people to nature in a stronger way than just trails and other "soft" infrastructure. Incorporating and expanding shelters, parking lots, restrooms, play areas, etc., "harden" the footprint of a site to allow for larger spaces and more permanency within the sites (e.g. "hard" infrastructure) to assure an image of stewardship. As a park gets stronger, there is a need to "harden" its design.

2.10.3 CONSERVATION OVERVIEW

STRENGTHS

- The differentiation between parks and conservation areas seems useful to manage visitor expectations, focused management areas and assure variety
- System has an excellent natural resources strategy
- The system benefits from a strong and coherent land management plan

WEAKNESSES

- The conservation relationship is not interpreted and may be taken for granted by residents, but unusual to the outsider
- FRMP is defined by water, but it needs to be integrated better with conservation and park related experiences

OPPORTUNITIES

- "Big Design" may be needed to counterbalance the overpowering "Big Engineering" image of water management
- In certain instances, remnant farm fields within parks could be left to express the heritage of the that use
- As the community grows and urbanizes, the image of parks within rural/agriculture contexts will shift and require design "hardening" to assure an image of stewardship
- Natural resource management plans need to be updated with each park site master plan so they are not in competition with each other
- Highlighting natural resource protection, stewardship and managed access needs to be made a priority of the Comprehensive Master Plan, so the community appreciates the value of the protected resources

2.11 PARK TYPOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHICAL MAPPING

FRMP currently uses two park classifications: MetroParks and Conservation Areas. Conservation Areas are differentiated by their focus on protecting natural resources and their limited public access. However, MetroParks encompass a broad range of parks that vary dramatically in character.

In this plan, a new park typology is proposed that more finely differentiates FRMP properties by setting and level of service. This typology gives FRMP a language for talking about the intended vision for each park, both internally and with the public. The typology has three broad groups:

2.11.1 URBAN METROPARKS

This park type has the greatest focus on park services. Because of their location in urban environments, these parks have the highest level of access, the most built amenities, and the highest degree of connectivity with other parks. Urban MetroParks are further divided into Urban Resource Parks, which are centered on unique urban resources such as the 2nd Street Market, and Urban Community Parks, which are parks that, because of their proximity, work as a closely connected system. Urban Resource Parks are typically located in the heart of the urban core, while Urban Community Parks are typically located in urban and inner ring suburban locations.

2.11.2 METROPARKS

This park type provides a blend of park services and conservation, with some areas that are highly accessible and others that are less accessible. MetroParks are further divided into Community Parks, which offer a variety of experiences but require more resources; and Nature Parks, which offer the greatest variety of experiences and provide the best blend of ecosystem and human systems. Community Parks are typically located in suburban locations, while Nature Parks are typically located at the fringes of suburban areas and in rural areas.

2.11.3 CONSERVATION METROPARKS

This park type provides greatest focus on conservation and the lowest level of access. Conservation MetroParks are further divided into Conservation Community Parks, which are centered on unique natural resources and have directed public access, and Conservation Areas exist solely to preserve or restore natural resources and have very limited public access. Conservation Community Parks and Conservation Areas may be located in any context, depending on the location of natural resources to be protected.

2.11.4 FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS- EXISTING TYPOLOGY

URBAN RESOURCE PARK

- RiverScape MetroPark
- Second Street Market

URBAN COMMUNITY PARK

- Deeds Point MetroPark
- Island MetroPark
- Sunrise MetroPark
- Wesleyan MetroPark
- Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark

COMMUNITY PARK

- Aullwood Garden MetroPark
- Cox Arboretum MetroPark
- Eastwood MetroPark
- Hills and Dales MetroPark

NATURE PARK

- Carriage Hill MetroPark
- Englewood MetroPark
- Germantown MetroPark
- Huffman MetroPark
- Possum Creek MetroPark
- Sugarcreek MetroPark
- Taylorsville MetroPark
- Twin Creek MetroPark

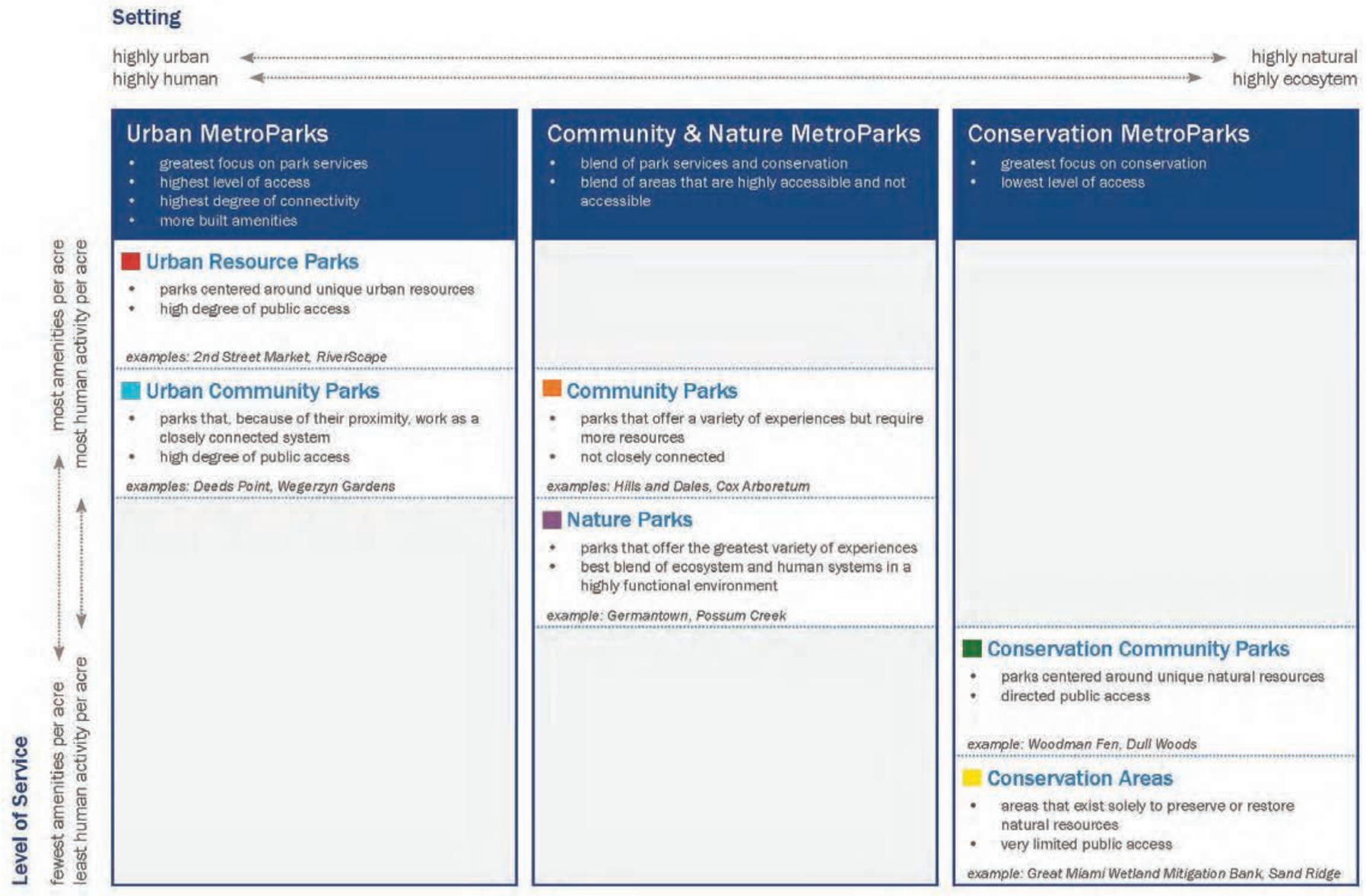
CONSERVATION COMMUNITY PARK

- Dull Woods
- Medlar Conservation Area
- Woodman Fen Conservation Area

CONSERVATION AREA

- Mitigation Bank Conservation Area
- Needmore Conservation Area
- Pigeye Conservation Area
- River Ridge Conservation Area
- Shoup Mill Conservation Area
- Sandridge Prairie Conservation Area
- Shiloh Woods Conservation Area
- Upper Twin Conservation Area

Park Typology



Five Rivers MetroParks Typology of Parks and Conservation Areas

LEGEND

- Neighborhood Entrance
- Community Entrance
- Regional Entrance

Influence

- Neighborhood Park- 1 Mile Influence
- Community Park - 5 Mile Influence
- Regional Park - 15 Mile Influence

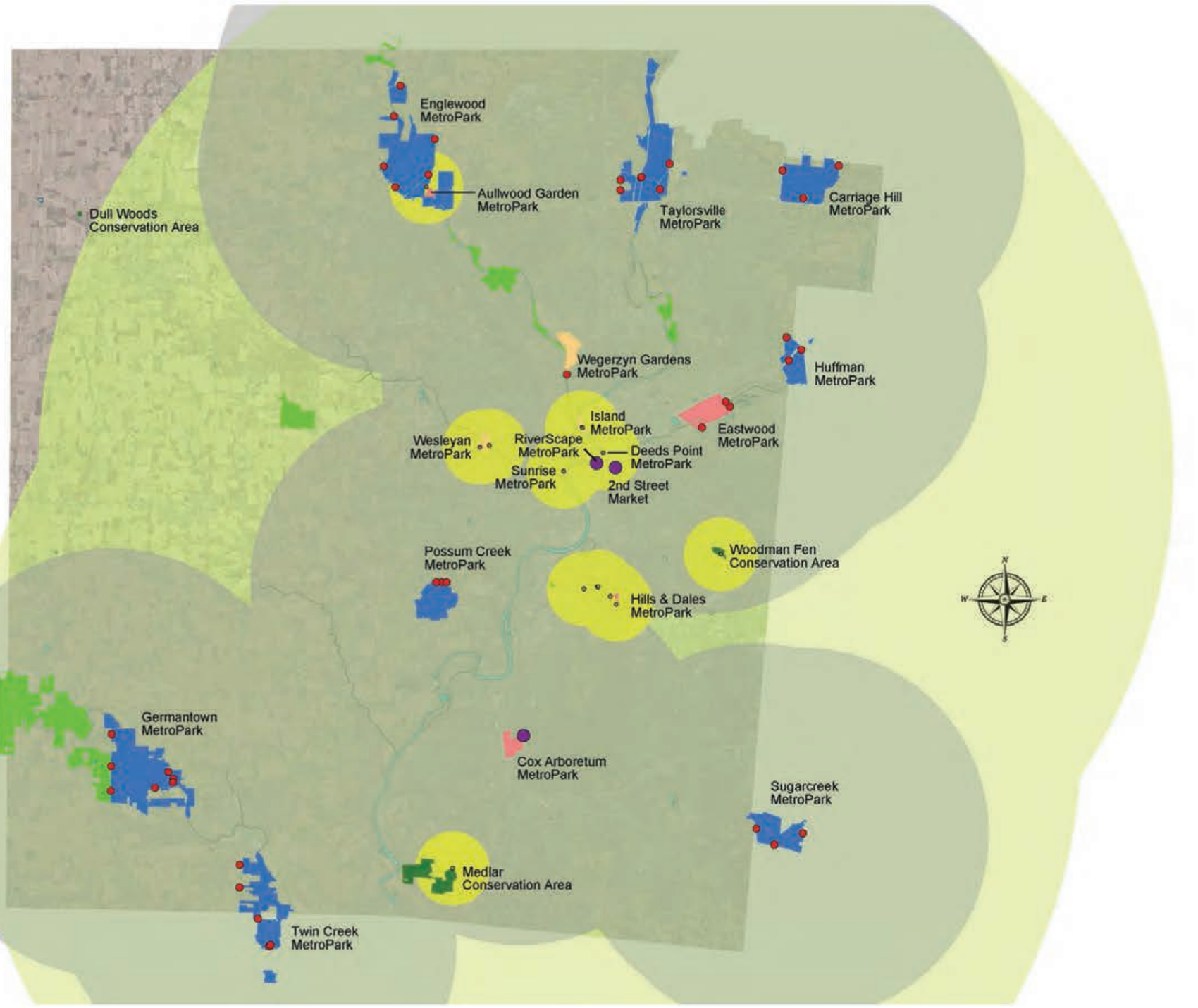
Park Typology

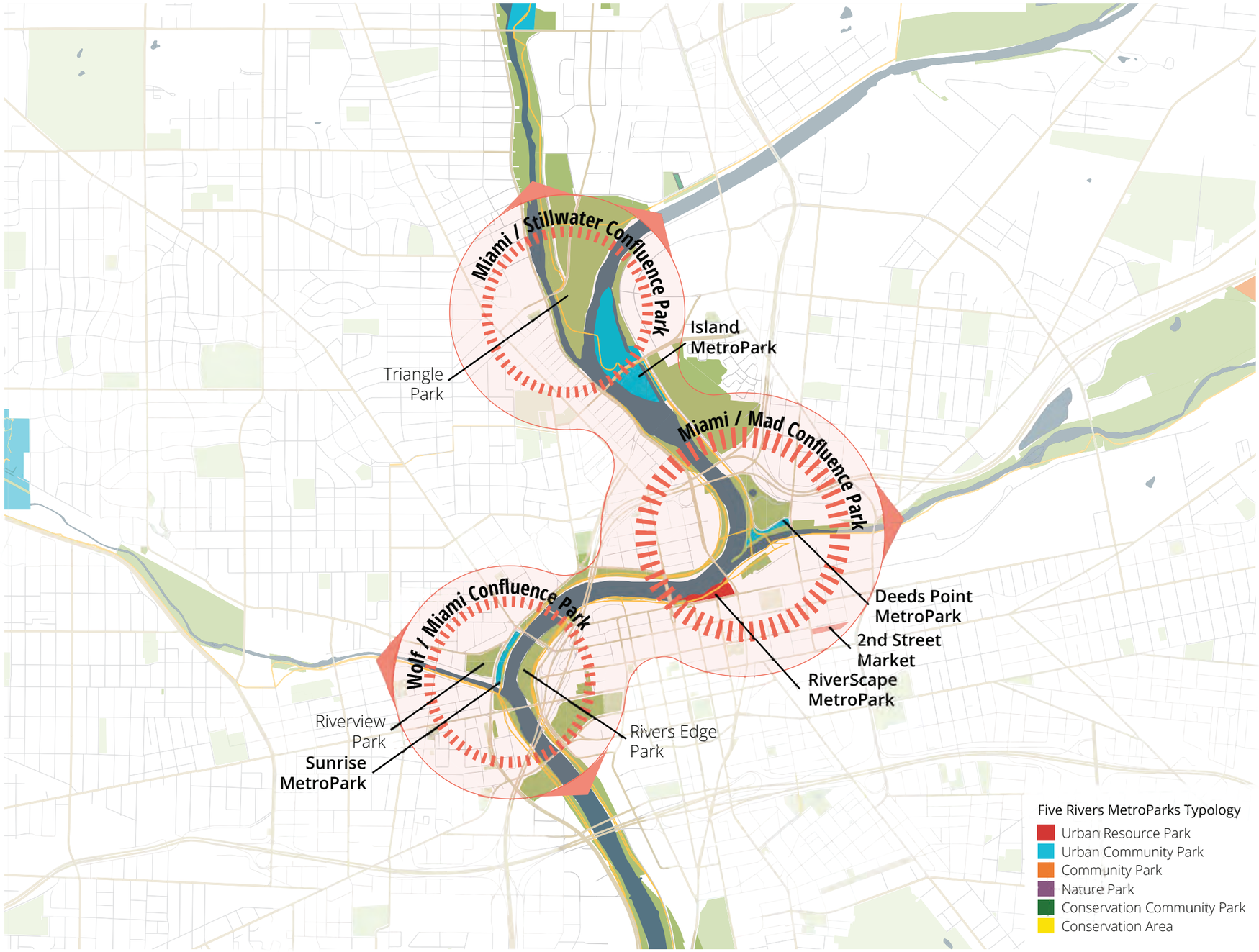
- Urban Resource Park
- Urban Community Park
- Community Park
- Nature Park
- Conservation Community Park
- Conservation Area

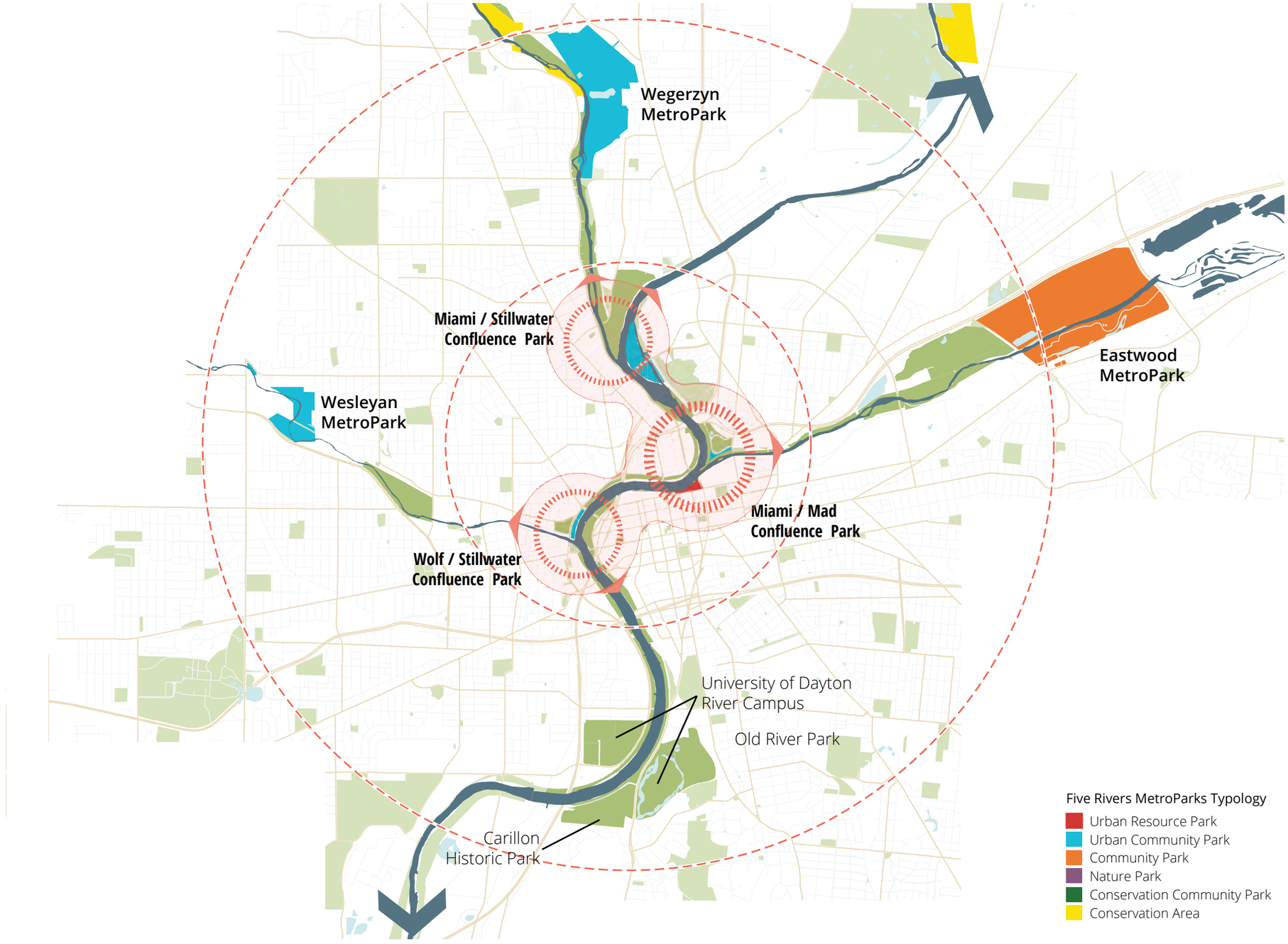
Scale

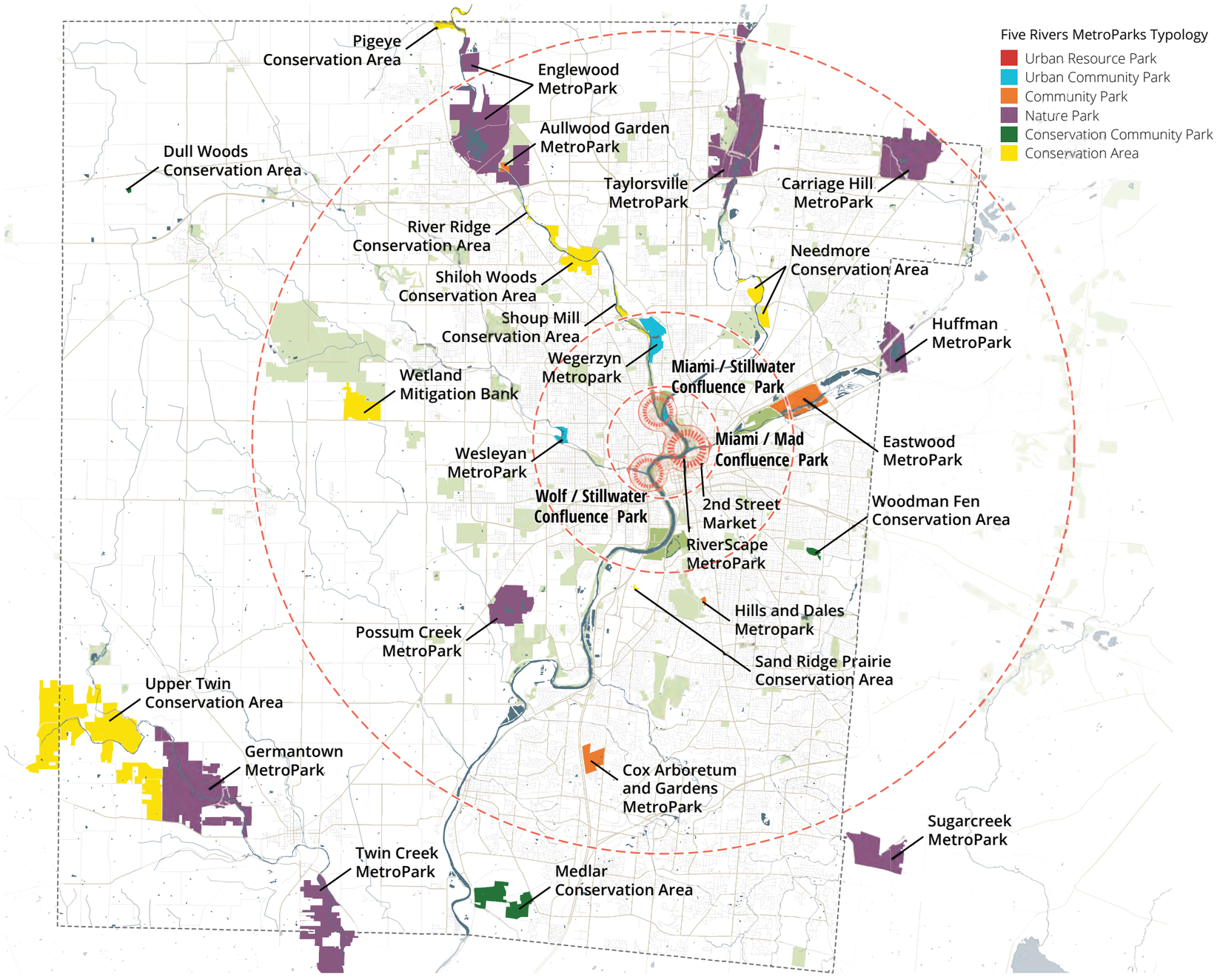
8,000 4,000 0 8,000 16,000 24,000 32,000

February 26, 2016




Miami / Stillwater Confluence Park
Island MetroPark
Triangle Park
Miami / Mad Confluence Park
Deeds Point MetroPark
2nd Street Market
RiverScape MetroPark
Wolf / Miami Confluence Park
Riverview Park
Sunrise MetroPark
Rivers Edge Park
Five Rivers MetroParks Typology
Urban Resource Park
Urban Community Park
Community Park
Nature Park
Conservation Community Park
Conservation Area


Wegerzyn
MetroPark
Miami / Stillwater
Confluence Park
Wesleyan
MetroPark
Eastwood
MetroPark
Miami / Mad
Confluence Park
Wolf / Stillwater
Confluence Park
University of Dayton
River Campus
Old River Park
Carillon
Historic Park
Five Rivers MetroParks Typology
Urban Resource Park
Urban Community Park
Community Park
Nature Park
Conservation Community Park
Conservation Area


Five Rivers MetroParks Typology
Urban Resource Park
Urban Community Park
Community Park
Nature Park
Conservation Community Park
Conservation Area
Pigeye Conservation Area
Englewood MetroPark
Aullwood Garden MetroPark
Dull Woods Conservation Area
Taylorsville MetroPark
Carriage Hill MetroPark
River Ridge Conservation Area
Needmore Conservation Area
Shiloh Woods Conservation Area
Shoup Mill Conservation Area
Huffman MetroPark
Wegerzyn Metropark
Miami / Stillwater Confluence Park
Wetland Mitigation Bank
Miami / Mad Confluence Park
Eastwood MetroPark
Wesleyan MetroPark
Wolf / Stillwater Confluence Park
2nd Street Market
Woodman Fen Conservation Area
RiverScape MetroPark
Hills and Dales Metropark
Possum Creek MetroPark
Sand Ridge Prairie Conservation Area
Upper Twin Conservation Area
Germantown MetroPark
Cox Arboretum and Gardens MetroPark
Sugarcreek MetroPark
Twin Creek MetroPark
Medlar Conservation Area

Park Guidelines

Design

Systemwide Design Language

Use consistent design throughout the MetroParks system.

Entry, wayfinding, and other signage; materials; and design language should be consistent from one park to another. Having a consistent design language helps identify a park as being part of the Five Rivers system and helps users feel more comfortable visiting parks they are unfamiliar with.

Design Vocabulary

Ensure the vocabulary of design is appropriate for the scale and materials of the landscape and existing infrastructure.

Particularly in larger parks, landscape and architectural design elements should respond to the scale and aesthetic of its context and be used to counter large existing infrastructure (e.g., dams and levees).

Context

Mixed Use

Ensure a mix of uses around urban parks.

Surrounding land use diversity is a defining characteristic of urban parks. A mix of uses expands a park's user base—particularly at street intersections where people are traveling in multiple directions—and encourages activity through a longer part of the day.

Building Frontage / Entrances

Ensure that buildings adjacent to urban parks and across the street from urban parks have frontages that face the park. Where possible, create entrances to the buildings from the park frontage.

Buildings with active ground floor uses that front on an urban park help frame the space and provide "eyes on the park." Such visibility from adjacent uses ensures a more secure environment. Building entrances adjacent to an urban park provide parks a built-in user base. In addition, proximity to parks is correlated with higher property values—benefiting property owners and the County in higher tax revenue.

Streetscape Enhancements

Surround urban parks with enhanced streetscapes.

The pedestrian realm surrounding an urban park should be treated as an extension of the park. Sidewalks and walkways should connect surrounding roads to parks. Trees, planters, rain gardens, and other features buffer park users from the impacts of vehicular traffic and parking and increase the noticeability of parks from the street.

Access & Connectivity

Seamless Open Space

Ensure seamless connections between Five Rivers MetroParks and other adjacent open space.

Park users do not typically perceive differences between ownership, but they do perceive differences in experiences and missing connections. Barriers and breaks in access limit attractiveness and viability. Regional ecosystems also do not observe jurisdictional boundaries and must be thought of as integrated, functional systems.

Trail System Connections

Ensure that parks are seamlessly connected to the County's land and water trail networks.

Pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian, and water trail users can become park users. Parks can serve as trail heads, trail destinations, or locations to stop and rest along a trail. They may also host critical trail links, leading to a more connected system.

Transit System Connections

Ensure that parks are connected to existing transit.

As with trails, transit users can become park users and vice versa. Particular types of parks, such as urban resource parks, may relate directly to a transit stop, providing a sense of place and spaces to welcome and send off visitors.

Continuous Waterfront Trail

Provide a continuous, publicly-accessible waterfront trail

Waterfronts are a highly sought amenity because water itself is a special draw and because they can provide tranquil respite. Water is also a defining characteristic of the Five Rivers MetroParks system and Montgomery County. Therefore, providing a continuous, publicly-accessible waterfront trail should be a priority. Visibility of the water and opportunities to get close to the water's edge enhance appeal.

Water Access

Provide locations for accessing rivers, lakes, and other water bodies.

Unlike a continuous waterfront trail, direct access to the water itself does not need to be continuous. However, points of access should be clearly marked and easy to reach with associated equipment.

Safe Pedestrian Access

Ensure that there are sidewalks and safe pedestrian crossings to access parks.

Sidewalks and safe crossings, whether at intersections or mid-block, encourage access and allow pedestrians to feel comfortable that they are protected.

Wayfinding

Gateways

Create gateway features at major entrances to parks.

Gateway features clearly indicate major park entrances and signal to visitors that they are welcome to enter. Architectural, landscape, art, and/or signage features may be used to indicate a gateway to a park. The placement and design of gateway features can guide users to use specific routes through parks, helping to improve park safety.

Visitor Facilities

Provide areas for facilities that support the use of parks.

In order for parks to function optimally, it may be necessary to include facilities to support other park uses. Supporting facilities may include restrooms, parking areas, or information kiosks.

Clear Trail Hierarchy

Ensure trails within parks are classified and clearly signed.

Trails have widespread appeal. Particularly within larger parks that have multiple trails, signage is important. Along trails and at visitor kiosks, trail routes should be clearly marked and categorized by length and difficulty so that users can choose trail experiences that meet their available time frames and skill levels.

Zones / Features

Natural System Preservation and Enhancement Zones

Define areas that focus on the preservation and interpretation of natural systems.

Natural environments, including habitat areas, woodlands, and stream corridors are part of the region's heritage. Defining zones that preserve these environments as separate from intensive use zones can help preserve those spaces.

Intensive Use Zones

Design spaces that can accommodate intensive use.

Parks may attract large numbers of users due to unique physical characteristics, experiences available, the density of their surroundings, their integration into pedestrian and bicycle travel routes, and their use as event and gathering spaces. This high level of usage can impact the integrity of the space. Areas that are expected to be heavily used—for example, near park entrances or gathering spaces—should be designed to accommodate that use, perhaps incorporating more hardscape areas or more resilient landscape plantings.

Programmable Gathering Spaces

Provide flexible open spaces that can be used as gathering spaces.

Parks often serve as community gathering spaces, from small get-togethers to large events. Areas should be designed to be flexible enough to accommodate these events while serving as space for informal play, picnicking, or other uses between events. These spaces may include both paved and soft surfaces.

Recreation Areas

Provide areas that are specifically designed for recreation.

It is important to have designated areas for recreation, where people can enjoy a park in a way that is managed to protect natural resources. Recreation areas may include areas for sitting, picnicking, fishing, or camping.

Nature Play Spaces

Provide areas that are specifically designed as play spaces.

Designated play spaces should be provided to cater to adults as well as children. These spaces may require fixed amenities.

Cultural Features

Preserve and interpret features that have cultural significance.

Cultural features may include buildings, landscapes, or locations that have local, regional, state, or federal importance. Interpreting these features provides an opportunity for users to connect or re-connect with history or traditions.

Viewsheds

Capitalize on unique views.

Parks should be designed to capitalize on views of their surroundings, whether views of natural landscapes, the built environment, or contrasts between the two. Particular attention should be paid to topography, taking advantage of changes in elevation to enhance views.

Identity Features

Incorporate features that can lend an identity to a park.

Existing natural features or infrastructure can define a park's identity if highlighted and interpreted effectively. Built architectural, landscape, art, and/or signage features may also contribute to a park's identity.

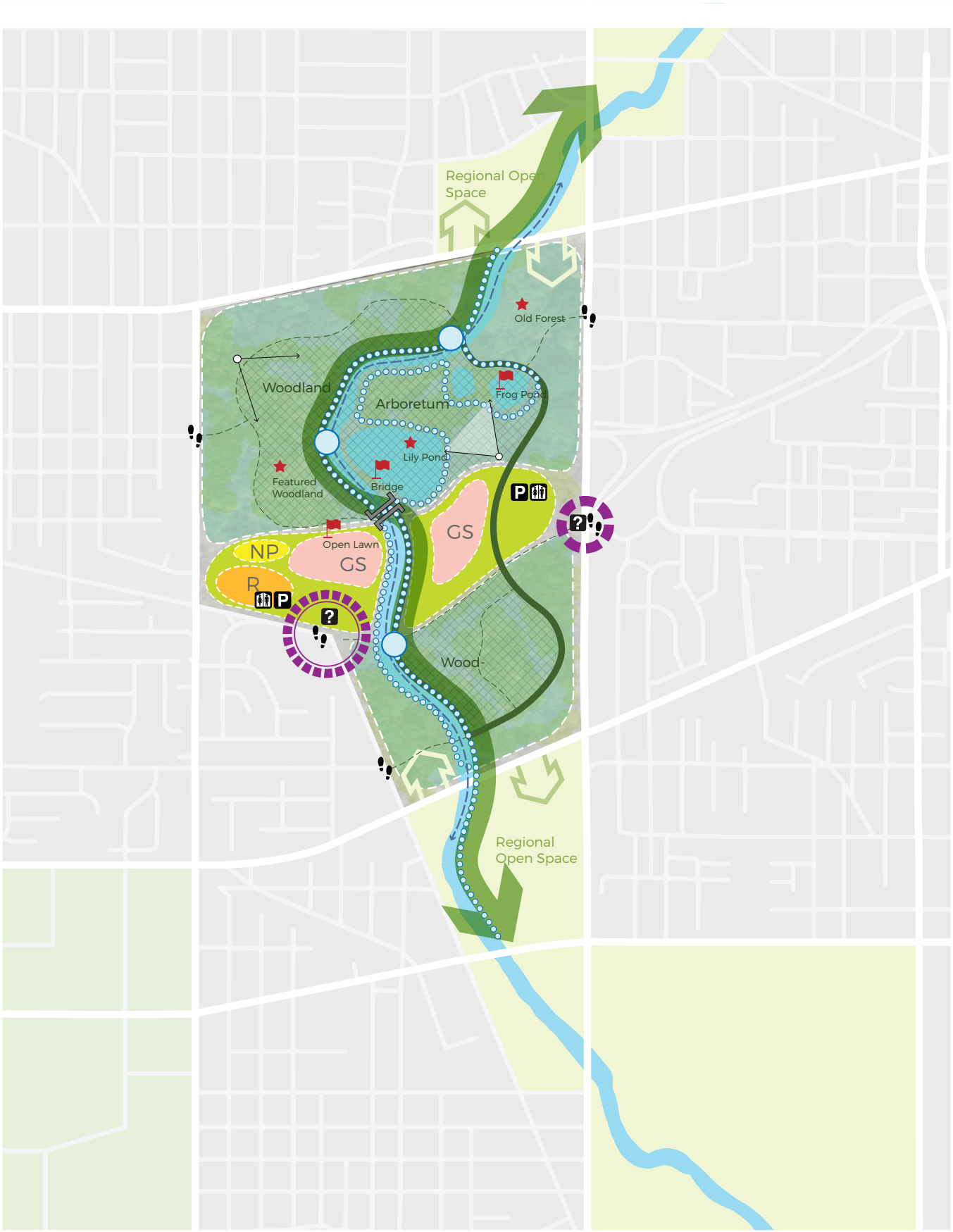
Managed Landscape Areas

Incorporate elements and practices that enhance the function and of natural systems.

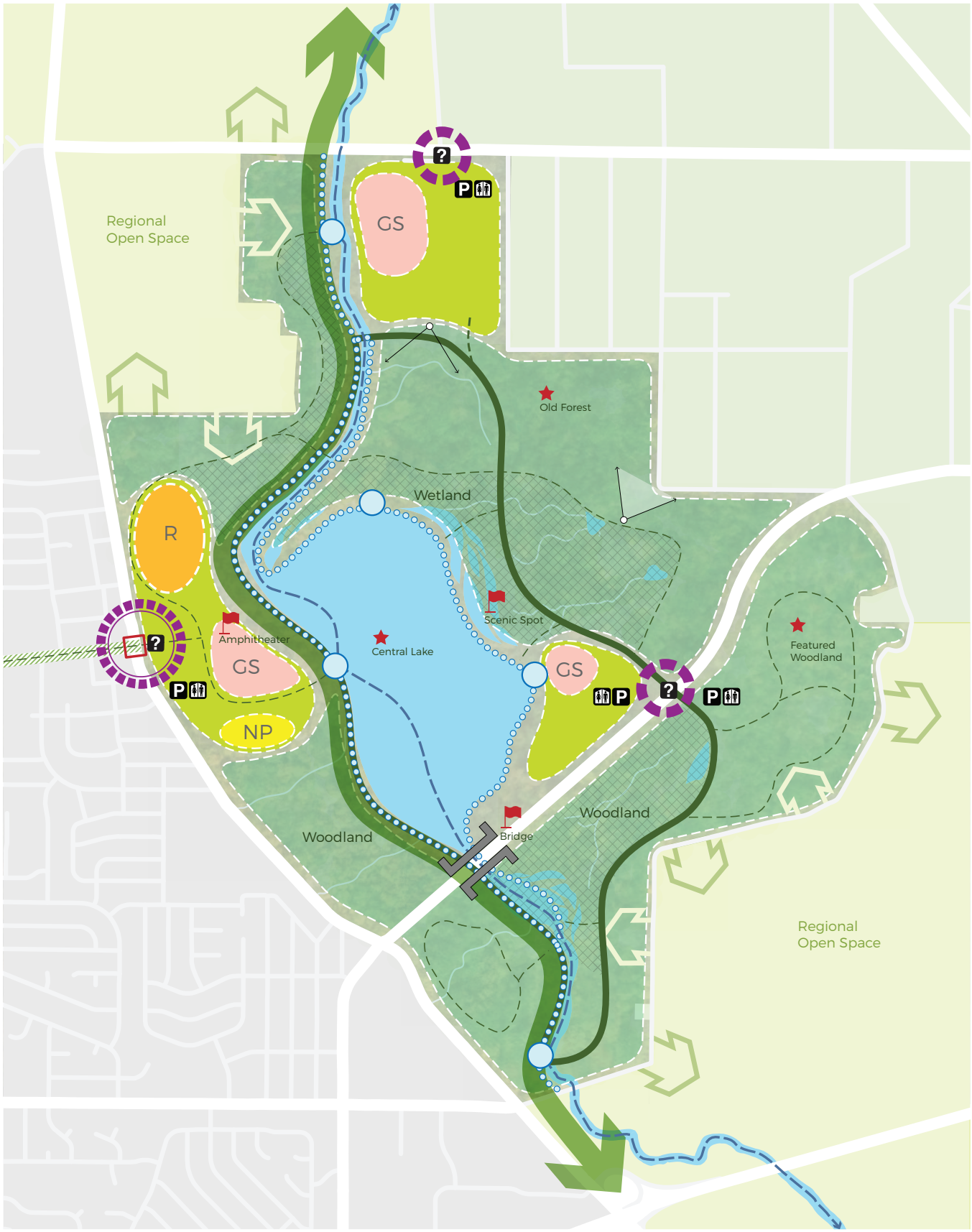
Incorporating best stormwater management practices, enhancing existing ecosystems, providing habitat, removing invasive species, planting diverse landscapes, and interpreting these efforts can maximize the function of natural systems and create a healthy, dynamic environment.

PARK GUIDELINES | Urban Resource Parks

PARK GUIDELINES | Urban Community Parks

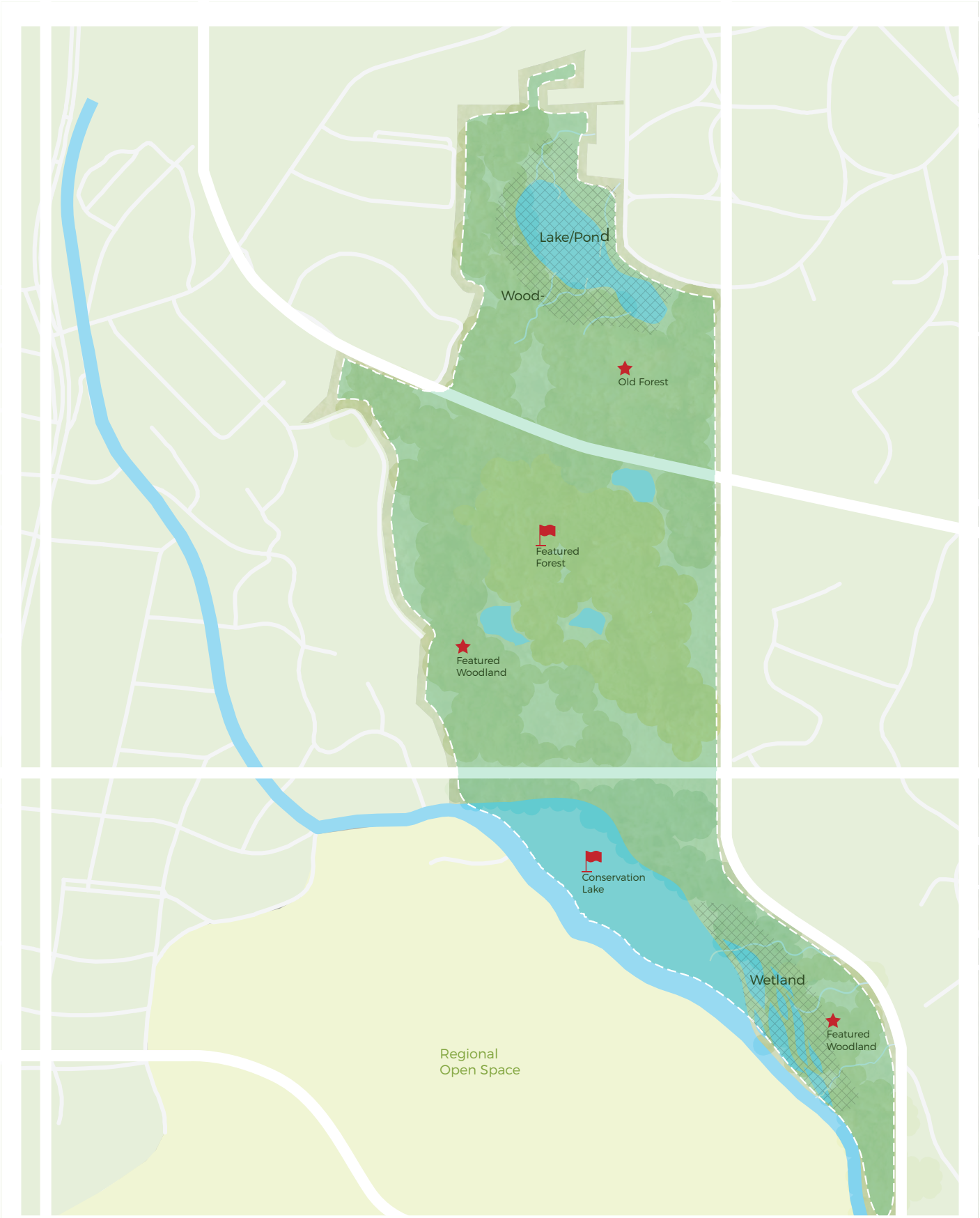


PARK GUIDELINES | Community Parks



PARK GUIDELINES | Nature Parks

PARK GUIDELINES | Conservation Community Parks



PARK GUIDELINES | Conservation Areas

2.12 OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

As part of the planning process, PROS Consulting performed an assessment of the programs and services offered by FRMP. The assessment offers an in-depth perspective of offerings and helps identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities regarding programming for residents in parks and recreation facilities. The program assessment also assists in identifying core program areas, evaluating lifecycle stages for individual programs, analyzing age segment distribution, developing cost recovery strategies, assessing partnerships and use of volunteers, and examining the effectiveness of marketing methods and channels for user feedback.

The consulting team based these program findings and comments from a review of information provided by FRMP, including program descriptions, participation statistics, financial data, website content, public survey, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and discussions with staff. The assessment identified key program issues and areas for improvement, and provided suggested strategies in developing future programs and services for residents and meeting program goals.

2.12.1 FRAMEWORK

FRMP's programming efforts have focused primarily on development of program participants' skills using a progression model that creates independent park users who are advocates within the community. This organizational strategy takes an integrated approach, encouraging culture change in the community to connect people to nature and produce independent, confident enthusiasts of the park system.

DEFINITION OF CORE PROGRAM AREA

It is important to identify Core Program Areas based on current and future needs to create a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community.

A Core Program Area categorizes ***specific yet similar programs and facilities into groups*** *that support FRMP's mission to connect people to nature through outdoor experiences in complementary ways, such as providing similar participant experiences that can be managed to the same set of outcomes.*

In order to be considered as a Core Program Area, a majority of the following best practices criteria should be met:

1. Has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community
2. Consumes a relatively large portion (5% or more) of the FRMP's overall operating budget
3. Offered most or all seasons of the year
4. Has wide demographic appeal
5. Has a tiered level of skill development opportunities
6. Full-time staff oversees a program area
7. Facilities/amenities are designed specifically to support a program area
8. The agency controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market

This is a best practice benchmark for helping to determine whether a program area is "Core".

Note: Within each ***Core Program Area*** there are individual programs that include the following classifications: *Essential* (formerly "Core-Essential"), *Important*, and *Value-Added*. It is important to make a distinction between a ***Core Program Area*** and an ***Essential*** program. A ***Core Program Area*** will most likely contain individual programs from each of these three classifications. While an ***Essential*** program in and of itself might meet the criteria above, as an individual program, it may not.

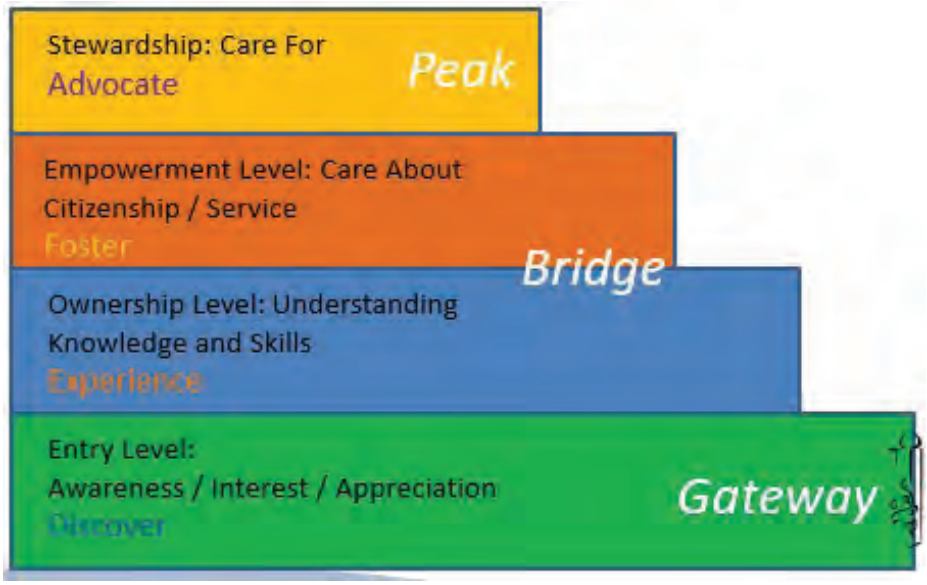
SKILL PROGRESSION STRATEGY

Typically, each Core Program Area uses a skill-progression model similar to the one shown in the adjacent graphic as a basis for developing, implementing, and analyzing program success. In addition, Program Managers have identified Core Program Area goals that support the larger organizational strategy.

Programming is a part of the overall community engagement strategy of changing community culture to connect people to nature, including the skill-progression model, and behavior change goals. In addition to programming, these strategies include interpretation, visitor experience/engagement, inreach/outreach, self-directed services and activities, and volunteer coordination. Typically, each of these addresses the ideal outcome of the skill-progression model: independent users and park advocates.

Two key outcomes of the skill-progression strategy are to get more people into parks and connect people to nature. Currently, FRMP strives to offer programming in every park, but some parks have more programming than others. Program Managers work with Park Managers to "activate space" – efficiently utilizing park spaces, facilities, and infrastructure – and identify ways to monitor and measure visitor use and engagement. Similarly, community inreach and outreach programs can infuse nature-based strategies into other organizations, and leverage FRMP expertise and strengths to have a broader community impact.

Evaluating individual programs associated with Core Program Areas based upon community feedback and established outcomes will help staff make strategic decisions in the development and implementation of FRMP's Program Plan.



Source: Stewardship Education Best Practices Planning Guide, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

2.12.2 EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREAS

In consultation with FRMP staff, eight Core Program Areas were identified and are listed below:

1. Youth Development
2. Community Ecology
3. Conservation & Nature
4. Urban Vibrancy
5. Outdoor Recreation
6. Equestrian
7. Law Enforcement Community Relations
8. Conservation in Action

Inreach, Outreach and Interpretation methods are included in all Core Program Areas.

Defined within each Core Program Area is a brief description, identification of goals, explanation of skill progression, and names of a few individual programs as examples. This is a high-level summary of each Core Program Area, and is not meant to be all-inclusive of the work accomplished in each.

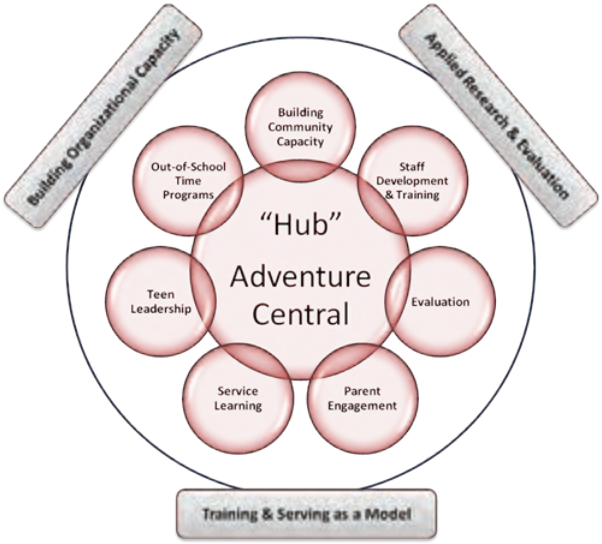
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Program Area Description

The Adventure Central youth education center, which is offered in partnership between FRMP and Ohio State University Extension, is focused on delivering out-of-school time programs to promote positive youth development for urban school-age youth and their families with an emphasis on nature, science and healthy lifestyles.

Program Area Goals

- Positive youth development through long-term contact with adult staff and volunteers
- Fun, learning activities with a focus on nature science, literacy, healthy lifestyles, and computer technology
- Working in partnership with community resources and volunteers
- Connecting youth and their families with nature
- Developing life skills in youth
- Activities with parents and families
- Improved academic behavior
- Youth have ownership of program



Program Area Progression

The Hub Model shown above depicts the areas of priority for Adventure Central and how those programs are delivered to meet goals by leveraging the connection with a land-grant university to broaden impact. As participants progress, youth and their families develop a greater connection with nature, and youth grow to be caring, competent and contributing members of the community. Their participation takes place over a significant duration (multiple years), frequency (up to 150 days per year) and intensity (multiple hours per day) of time to maximize developmental outcomes of the program. While participants engage in a broad range of learning and skill development through program participation, the progression is more focused on long-term developmental outcomes rather than a specific skill progression, which is addressed through monthly themes in the annual program plan. The ultimate example of this program progression is demonstrated as a youth participant transitions to a teen leader, and then becomes a contributing citizen as a staff member and/or parent to the next generation of citizens.

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; could include traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Activity Night, Parent/Family Programs

Experience/Bridge: After School, Day Camp, Teen/Older Youth Outings, Residential Overnight Camp

Foster/Peak: JET (Job Experience and Training) Teen Summer Work Program, Service Learning

COMMUNITY ECOLOGY

Program Area Description

Community Ecology programs extend FRMP's mission into neighborhoods and empowers participants to adopt a conservation lifestyle at home. Programming in this area features sustainable landscapes, sustainable food, and sustainable living. All are areas that participants can build skills and be more conservation-minded at home or in the community. The idea is that sustainable homes connect and support the habitat and biodiversity that FRMP protects and manages. Programs are developed using a skill progression model that moves residents through different skill levels in each topical area (landscapes, food & living).

Program Area Goals

- Value and protect biodiversity
- Adopt sustainable practices
- Understand environmental issues and current events
- Explore and understand backyard ecology
- Participate in community stewardship
- Appreciate historical and cultural assets

Program Area Progression

Program participants are empowered to bring conservation home. Programs build a foundation starting with sparking curiosity and advancing to volunteering and encouraging family and friends to adopt conservation behaviors. Participants are first made aware of how their actions can protect the environment and then build the skills to make an impact on the environment in their own home. Programming helps participants recognize their role in a healthy environment.

- **Discover Level: Demonstrations, Spontaneous Engagement and Self-Directed Media:** Spark curiosity, introduce concepts, and help people discover.
- **Experience Level: Introductory Programs:** Get people started. Provide foundational knowledge, skills and understanding. Introduce people to FRMP and how it relates to their interests.
- **Foster Level: Intermediate Programs:** Hone foundational skills and build knowledge. Gain a better understanding of how things work.
- **Foster Level: Specialty Programs:** Dig deeper into special topic, help master skills, and become an expert.
- **Advocate Level: Volunteers and Advocates:** Living History Interpreters, Garden Tour Guides, Master Recyclers, Gardeners and Farmers, Community Garden Coordinators.

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; could include traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Interpretation, Spontaneous Visitor Interaction (Daily Living History and Farming Demonstrations, Garden Greeter, Sheep to Shawls, Historic Butchering), Introductory Adult Workshops (Green Living Discussions at the Market, Adult Try-it Programs), Youth and Family Programming (Basic Gardening for Kids, Farm to Preschool), Large Programs/Events (Community Garden Bike Tour, Prairie Serenade)

Experience/Bridge: Adult & Youth Specialty Workshops (Food Preparation, Compost Kitchen, Historic bread baking, Start a Community Garden Youth Garden Club, City Beets: A Farm to Market Program)

Foster/Peak: Adult Service Learning (Cultural Heritage Skills and Master Recycler), Green Schoolyards, Community Gardens, Heritage Interpreter Training

CONSERVATION AND NATURE

Program Area Description

Conservation & Nature programs focus on connecting people to nature, and helping them find a home in nature through FRMP parks and facilities. Programs provide participants a deeper understanding of their local ecosystem, what FRMP is doing to protect it, and how they can make a difference in the environment. This program area is focused on developing Nature Enthusiasts, who actively explore and understand local habitats, and Conservation Advocates, who get involved with FRMPs conservation practices and encourage their friends to protect nature. Programming is developed using the skill progression model.

Program Area Goals

- Appreciation and protection of biodiversity
- Understanding people-plant-animal-land interactions
- Protecting our natural resources
- Conservation in the community
- Recognition and support of FRMP's conservation practices

Program Area Progression

The public is engaged in the skill progression model through the areas of Park Interpretation, Park Program Engagement, Park Inreach Engagement, and Community Advocacy and Outreach Engagement. Programming often leverages community partners including libraries, schools and health care to introduce new audiences to outdoor and conservation lifestyles. Adult Nature programs build advocates, creating a culture of conservation by providing a social setting where participants can share their excitement of nature together. Youth programs use experiences in conservation and social networks of family and friends to inspire children to be advocates among their peers.

For some visitors, driving their own experiences makes them more likely to adopt new behaviors and connect to nature in a more personal way. Visitor-driven experiences provoke curiosity and allow visitors to have the ownership to develop their experience. Providing both experiences appeal to a wider audience at different levels of skill progression.

- **Discover Level:** Walks, high capacity programs, outreach, demonstrations and self-directed interpretation introduce participants to nature and conservation, provoke curiosity and build a foundation for a lifelong relationship with nature.
- **Experience Level:** Workshops and hands on programs give participants the knowledge and skills to explore nature deeper.
- **Foster Level:** Citizen Science and programs that highlight and integrate conservation practices and research give participants a chance to be part of the conservation field both within FRMP and nationally.
- **Advocate Level:** Volunteer and teacher trainings, grassroots partner committees and family programs that empower participants to bring friends and family into the conservation and nature lifestyle.

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; could include traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Conservation Kids Green- Discover, Adult Nature Walks, Butterfly House, Nature at Night, Roving Live Animal Programs, Classroom Visits

Experience/Bridge: Conservation Kids Blue – Act, Conservation Kids Orange – Share, Adult Environmental Workshop, Teacher's Night Out

Foster/Peak: Conservation Kids Yellow – Protect, Self-Directed Park Experiences, Get Outside Book Club

URBAN VIBRANCY

Program Area Description

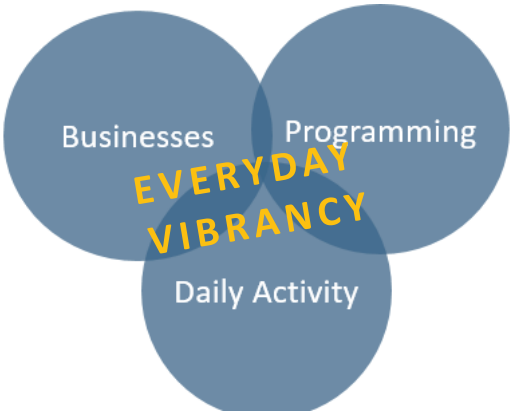
Urban Vibrancy programs engage the community by providing premier downtown programs that offer outdoor entertainment and active lifestyle options, which add to the vitality, economic revitalization, and sense of place for downtown.

Program Area Goals

- Encourage daily activities and events at RiverScape MetroPark
- Connect people to the outdoors by offering outdoor alternatives to traditionally indoor activities
- Support community organizations groups in offering of outdoor activities and events

Program Area Progression

This particular Core Program Area does not have a program area progression.



Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Skating, Music Series (Pickin' in the Park, Big Band, R&B), Music @ Lunch, Outdoor Fitness, Grass Roots Enrichment, Legacy Events (Hispanic Heritage Festival, Celtic Festival, Taste of Miami Valley, Lights in Flight, etc.), Special Permit/Organized Activities (5ks, Bike Rides, Kayak Programs, etc.), Saturday eScape (staff-led programs)

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Program Area Description

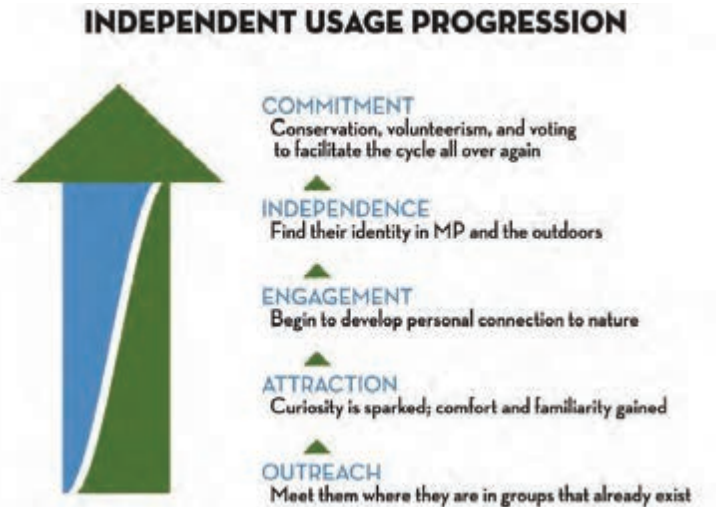
Nature based recreation programming connects people to nature through skill based programming, outreach, facility use, and guides them from "access to advocacy." Outdoor Recreation Programs are designed to meet people at their particular skill level, whether the experienced adventurer, the budding weekend warrior, or the novice outdoor adventurer.

Program Area Goals

- Connect the community to nature
- Drive public awareness to the broader outdoor community
- Engage new audiences
- Energize the base
- Engage with community partners to create a stronger, more vibrant community
- Create increased skills for the community in outdoor adventure recreation and produce independent users

Program Area Progression

Programming leads participants through a progression to create independent, competent enthusiasts who have a conservation ethos: without conservation, there is nowhere to recreate, and through outdoor recreation, people are connected to nature. The Independent Usage Progression Model is shown in the graphic below.



Each program component feeds the other, with events serving as a gateway or attraction component to other resources. Outdoor events are typically experiential in nature and aim to inspire participants to adopt a healthy, active outdoor lifestyle. The events are also an opportunity to bring together the public, businesses, volunteers, advocacy groups and clubs all in one space.

Various MetroParks, facilities, and access are essential to this strategy and include: MoMBA, Twin Valley Trail, Mad River Run, RiverScape River Run, Nation's Largest Paved Trail Network, new and existing river and lake access, Ohio Water Trails, Disc Golf, Front-country and Backcountry Camping, Blueway/Greenway Access, and Sustainable Hiking Trails. The outdoor recreation facilities support program engagement as well as independent use.

- **Discover:** demonstrations and outreach, help to spark curiosity and help people discover access. Try Kayaking, Discover Backpacking, Access Tours, Midwest Outdoor Experience.
- **Experience:** Introductory level skill development and engagement to provide foundational knowledge, skills and understanding. Skill development classes at level 1 and 2.
- **Foster:** Intermediate skill base and independent use that help to master skills– and completion of the highest skill development within the progression, Twin Valley Backpack trail, Paddling 3, rescue clinics, certification courses.
- **Advocate:** Volunteers who commit their help in FRMP parks and community members who advocate for recreation amenities or skills. Volunteer trail builders, League Cycling Instructors who certify others, Kayak Instructors who certify others, MetroParks Volunteer Patrol.

Individual Program Examples
(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Discover Backpacking, Try Kayaking, Bike to Work Day Pancake Breakfast, Turkey Trot Expo, Midwest Outdoor Experience

Experience/Bridge: Fly Fishing 1 & 2, Smart Cycling 1 & 2, Teen Paddling Camp, River Rescue Knots, University of Dayton Rivers Institute Float

Foster/Peak: Twin Valley Trail Backpacking Trip, American Canoe Association Kayak Certification, Leave No Trace Trainer Course

EQUESTRIAN

Program Area Description
Carriage Hill MetroPark Riding Center (CHRC) is a public equestrian riding facility within FRMP. CHRC provides safe, affordable horseback riding programs, which teach proper horsemanship skills for the beginner to intermediate rider.

Equestrian programs focus on proper horsemanship skills, developing a connection to animals, creating opportunities for outdoor recreation, creating opportunities for family activities, increasing fitness and developing core body strength and building confidence.

Program Area Goals

- Create opportunities for people to experience the woods and trails at Carriage Hill on horseback
- Teach people, especially children to be empathetic
- Build youth developmental assets- service to others (youth volunteers), positive adult-youth relationships (intergenerational volunteers; youth participants have adult role models), and positive peer influence

Program Area Progression
Trail rides allow users to experience horses, usually for the first time, and as an introduction to horseback riding. From the trail rides, customers can register for summer camps or horseback riding lessons to receive more in-depth information, knowledge, and instruction about horses and horsemanship skills. The lessons and camps are offered in progressive levels. The goal of the lessons is to provide safe, correct horseback riding instruction to the beginner through intermediate rider of any age, and we have repeat customers to continue through the levels over the years. The goal of the camp is more to create young horse enthusiasts, in a safe setting, where they learn to care for horses, receive basic horseback riding instruction and could continue that instruction through lessons. The pony rides are another gateway program for children ages 2 to 8 who are not yet of age to participate in other programs, but can still experience horses in a safe, family-friendly way.

Individual Program Examples
(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Drop-in Pony Rides, Youth Summer Day Camp

Experience/Bridge: Guided Trail Rides, 8-week Riding Lessons

Foster/Peak: Volunteers (Barn Aide, Pony Rides, Trail Guides, Summer Camp), Horsemanship Training

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Program Area Description

FRMP is fortunate to have its own Law Enforcement Department. Rangers are fully certified by the State of Ohio and have all the authority of any city police officer, county sheriff, or State Trooper.

Staff is dedicated to providing a high level of service and encourages a high level of positive interaction between rangers and park visitors. To that end, staff provides programs designed to enhance the relationship between the FRMP park visitors and ranger staff.

Program Area Goals

- Maintain and improve a positive relationship with the community served and the area law enforcement staff works with on a regular basis
- Instill in rangers approachability and regular interaction with park visitors
- Build true advocates for law enforcement in general, and for FRMP and its mission specifically

Program Area Progression

Most of the programs are designed to introduce community members to the service rangers provide to FRMP and the community. Programs such as the Bike Rodeo are a Gateway for visitors, while the Explorer Program provides a more in-depth Experience for visitors. Ultimately, these programs are designed to get people interested in rangers to either volunteer as Advocates for FRMP or pursue a law enforcement or ranger position as a career.

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover:

- Bike for the Health of It
- Bike Rodeo

Experience/Bridge:

- Law Enforcement Explorer Program

Foster/Peak:

- FRMP Volunteer Patrol
- Police Cyclist Course

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Program Area Description

Conservation In Action programs help residents and their families take action to support the protection of native trees and forest ecosystems, such as tree planting, invasive plant removal, and seed collection.

Program Area Goals

- Build a personal connection with nature
- Produce advocates who help complete FRMP conservation tasks
- Create a community conservation culture
- Provide direct support to FRMP staff in completion of specific conservation activities at each park or facility

Program Area Progression

Gateway/Discover programs are designed to be educational followed by short and simple field-based projects. These programs also include educational session on specific conservation topics requested through speaker's bureau and conferences.

Experience/Bridge programs require more detailed training, as well as more intensive field work. Participants work closely with staff.

Foster/Bridge programs require significant training and investment of time as well, playing a critical role in supplementing staff resources for critical conservation projects. These also include self-directed activities in most cases.

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Go Nuts! (Nut & Seed Collection), Speaker's Bureau (University of Dayton Life Long Learning, Garden Clubs, Schools, Café Sci, State and National Conferences, Other Agencies, and Land Labs)

Experience/Bridge: Seedling Saturdays (Reforestation Tree Plantings), Pollinator Plantings, Browse Survey, Cover Mapping, Breeding Bird Surveys, Wildlife Surveys, Prescribed Burning, Fish Shocking

Foster/Peak: Tree Corps, Conservation Area Care Takers, Native Plant Gardeners, Controlled Bow Hunting, Habitat Healers

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODS

In addition to the Core Program Areas, Inreach, Outreach and Interpretation are utilized cross-departmentally, helping FRMP connect and engage with the community and bring more people to the parks.

Inreach: FRMP is contacted by the community to provide educational and recreational tours and events in parks.

Program Goals

- Introduce social and academic groups of all ages to active, healthy, conservation lifestyles and to what FRMP has to offer
- Build the next generation of conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts through youth outdoor tours and experiences
- Focus on providing both physical and emotional access for adults to conservation and recreation activities that can be done at home

Program Area Progression

While many of these programs are intended to introduce and engage community members, there are also more intensive experience and intensive skill development offerings that continue the progression from discovery through experience to foster independent users, park advocates, and volunteers.

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Self-Guided and Guided Youth Tours, Tram Tours and Walking Tours for Adults

Experience/Bridge: Inquiry Adventures Training, Natural Adventures Boxes Training, Project WILD, guided bike tour or specific skill class, Group Tree Planting, Group Seed Collecting and Sorting

Foster/Peak: Teacher's Night Out, Inquiry Adventures Kits, Natural Adventure Boxes

Outreach: FRMP staff and volunteers reach out to community partners and stakeholders to share its mission with the community and provide educational experiences.

The four types of outreach provided by the agency include:

- Booths and activities at local events
- Speakers Bureau presentations
- Classroom visits/educational programs
- Collaboration and support for community projects that support FRMP mission

Individual Program Examples

(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Booth at Dayton Dragons Game, Activity at Children's Water Festival, Speakers Bureau Presentation, Career Day Programs

Experience/Bridge: Passport to Kindergarten, Animals Need a Home, Offsite Habitat Gardening Presentation, **Mini Midwest Outdoor Experience during UD Orientation, Prairie Planting Basics**

Foster/Peak: Green Schoolyards, Community Gardening Program, DECCA Prep Mountain Biking, Natural Landscape Consultation

INTERPRETATION

Interpretation programs and facilities provide strong, relevant visitor experiences through cross-departmental involvement from staff and volunteers. Interpretation creates destinations that engage visitors with parks and nature through diverse experiences that meet the needs of different demographics and different comfort levels. It connects visitor desires with agency mission and management goals and engages visitors with each park's natural and cultural stories. Interpretation is strategic communication that goes beyond signs and considers multiple factors before interpretive products are developed.

Interpretation Goals

- Connect the stories of FRMP and individual parks with the public
- Provide ease of access for visitors to connect with parks and nature on their time
- Create a sense of place and community that is a destination
- Create opportunities for visitors to engage in an outdoor lifestyle culture by highlighting nature and recreation opportunities at individual parks
- Encourage a greater awareness and appreciation of the wondrous natural world
- Give voice to the impact of FRMP's conservation practices

Interpretation Methods

Interpretive programs and facilities provide opportunities for the visitor to engage with parks at different levels. Visitor engagement provides opportunities for curiosity to be sparked, leading to participation in interpretive programs and guided tours that provide more in-depth experiences. As visitors progress, there are opportunities for advanced skill development, leading to the goal of users becoming not only independent users of passive interpretation, but also advocates who are volunteers that lead interpretive experiences themselves.

Key parks and facilities include the Butterfly House at Cox Arboretum, Taylorsville MetroPark, Twin Valley Welcome Center (Twin Creek and Germantown), Children's Discovery Garden, Carriage Hill Farm and nature playgrounds.

Individual Program Examples
(NOT all-inclusive; including traditional programs, inreach/outreach, and self-directed activities)

Gateway/Discover: Butterfly House, Children's Discovery Garden, staff trained as Certified Interpretive Hosts (Greeters, Facility Staff, etc.), spotted signs (Wildflowers, Edibles, Pollinators, Trees at Cox Arboretum), Interpretive Kiosks

Experience/Bridge: Interpretive Programs, Guided Tours, Teacher Trainings, self-directed activities (Visitor Engagement Activities including Fossil ID Card, Cox Arboretum MetroPark Pond Map)

Foster/Peak: Volunteer Interpreters, Certified Interpretive Guide and Host Training, Monarch CSI

2.12.3 CORE PROGRAM AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

FRMP does an excellent job managing and promoting existing programs. According to community feedback, the overall quality of the education and recreation programs offered is at a high level. The PROS team urges the staff to continue maintaining that level of quality moving forward. The feedback provided from the statistically valid citizen survey indicated that the top priorities to consider for new programs include:

- Festivals/large community events
- Music and performance in parks
- Fitness programs and events
- Gardening and landscaping programs
- Active older adult programs
- Nature outdoor education programs

The national focus on wellness and healthy living through diet, nutrition and exercise illustrates the benefits of expanding health and wellness programs through outdoor activities. In light of the projected demographic shifts anticipated in the future and the unique differences in age segment needs, there may be an opportunity to partner with other agencies and/or provide separate youth health and wellness programs and adult health and wellness programs.

Repositioned Program Areas

When identifying Core Program Areas for this planning process, staff initially identified five areas offered by the Outdoor Connections Department. However, through the analysis of the organization's programs, there were additional Core Program Areas identified, such as Equestrian, Law Enforcement Community Relations, and Conservation in Action, and there may be others not identified, such as programs offered in partnership with other organizations. This could lead to inefficiencies in management – inadvertent redundancy of programming or program gaps. There are also three program areas that, while having different overall goals, are very similar to one another: Community Ecology, Conservation and Nature, and Conservation in Action.

It is recommended that FRMP re-examine the Core Program Areas, to determine whether the current delineation is most appropriate to meet FRMP goals and objectives. Reference the criteria listed in Section 2.12.1 to frame the discussion. Also, listed below are some examples of suggested questions to consider and answer as part of the analysis:

- How does this current group of Core Programs Areas relate to overall strategy of behavioral change and culture growth?
- Are there programs missing that should be considered as Core Program Areas?
- Are there individual programs that should be reorganized to fall under Core Program Area management?
- Is the community consistently asking for something FRMP is providing, but maybe is not emphasizing enough or providing?

A Core Program Area can be topical or demographic in nature, and the Core Program Areas chosen can be a combination of both. Oftentimes, a parks agency will use a combination of both if the topic and demographic are critical parts of the overall strategy. Below is an example option for repositioning Core Program Areas. Use this as a place to start the conversation, and note that reorganizing Core Program Areas should be a decision made after objectively considering the agency's overall goals and objectives.

- Conservation, Nature and Community Ecology (include Conservation in Action)
- Outdoor Adventure & Recreation (include Equestrian, Community Olympic Development Program and Bike Miami Valley)
- Health & Wellness (include Fitness and Nutrition/Healthy Foods)
- Urban Vibrancy (include Special Events and Law Enforcement Community Relations)

The PROS Consulting team has identified the potential areas of redundancy and gaps listed above. Consider these while continuing the iterative improvements to Core Program Areas.

2.12.4 COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

As part of the master planning process, ETC Institute conducted a statistically valid community survey to identify satisfaction with park and recreation facilities, identify needed park and recreation facilities and programs, and gain input from citizens that will assist FRMP in park and recreation resource allocation, budget and policy decisions. The following findings regarding park and recreation programs and facilities are important to consider in assessing community demand:

- **Program Participation**
  - Thirty-one percent (31%) of households indicated that they had participated in programs offered by FRMP over the past year.
  - Of households who have participated in programs, 95% of households rate the overall quality as either excellent or good.
- **Need for Programs**
  - Fifty-nine percent (59%) of households indicated they have a need for festivals/large community special events.
  - Other top-ranking programs that households indicated a need for include: music and performances in parks (57%), fitness programs and events in parks (40%), and gardening and landscaping programs (40%).
- **Most Important Programs**
  - Based on the sum of households top four choices, 40% indicated that festivals/large community special events was the most important to their household.
  - Other most important programs include: Music and performances in parks (39%), fitness programs and event in parks (24%), active older adult programs (24%), and gardening and landscaping programs (22%).
- **Marketing and Communication**
  - Fifty-three percent (53%) of households learn about FRMP through *MetroParks Parkways*.
  - Other ways include: From friends and neighbors (46%), newspaper articles (46%), the agency website (39%), park signage (38%), print advertisements (34%), and television (33%).

2.12.5 LIFECYCLE ANALYSIS

A Program Lifecycle Analysis involves reviewing every program identified by FRMP staff to determine the stage of growth or decline for each. This assists staff in making strategic decisions about the overall mix of programs managed by the agency to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are "fresh" and that relatively few programs, if any, need to be discontinued. This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data; rather it is based on the staffs' knowledge of their program areas.

The table below shows the percentage distribution of the various life cycle categories of FRMP's programs. These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual lifecycle stage with the total number of programs. In listing programs, staff was asked to aggregate different instances of the same program into one program. For example, Saturday Spring Yoga, Sunday Summer Yoga, and Sunrise Yoga would all be "Yoga." Therefore, the aggregated data in the table is different from the data in the Benchmarking report, which tracks each individual program instance. The following table shows the percentage distribution for each of the Cross-Departmental and Core Program Areas' 144 consolidated programs, as identified by the staff.

Lifecycle Stage	Description	Actual Program Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New program; modest participation	26%	61% total	50-60% total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	11%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent population growth	24%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	27%	27% total	30-40% total
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	9%	13% total	0-10% Total
Decline	Declining participation	4%		

Program Lifecycle Distribution

These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs listed in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed in the program worksheets provided by FRMP staff. The PROS team recognizes that while there is no statistically sound method for obtaining the percentage breakout of all programs by lifecycle stages, the overall pattern and trends are apparent in the Program Lifecycle Table.

The lifecycle stages depict a slight declining trend, with FRMP programs slightly below the recommended distribution in the Mature Stage. This could be partly due to the new programs that have been created with programmatic changes over the past few years that have not yet had time to mature. Some of the Introduction, Take-Off and Growth programs may not create the interest and participation needed to mature; however, it is important to give new programs some time to meet participation goals and cost recovery targets. Section 2.12.8 provides staff a tool to help make decisions about program mix.

Introduction, Take-off and Growth programs are an important way to add innovation into program offerings. Often, the only way to know whether a program will work is to try it. It is not expected that 100% of programs that are tried will mature. Indeed, it is healthy to have a few that do not; this helps FRMP to stay relevant and identify what trends work/don't work in its local area. It also helps to take advantage of quickly passing fads.

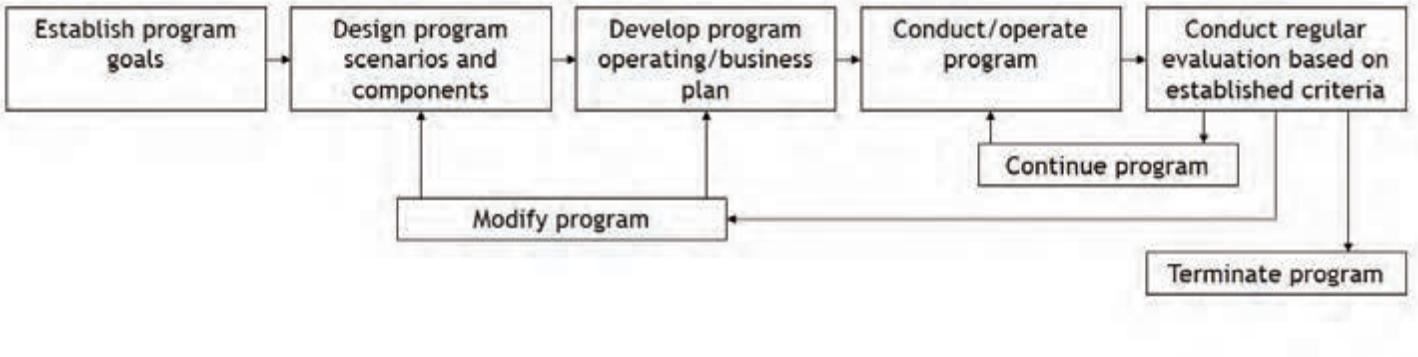
A Mature program includes participants with a long-standing, or long-term, interest in the subject. These programs help create a stable and solid base for programs and program planning. A good foundation of programs in this stage is ideal. It may be worth identifying as a team a percentage goal for the number of programs that do not mature. By doing this, the team aims to keep within that number, but is not as worried about a program "failing" and is therefore encouraged to try new things.

Thirteen percent of all programs are in the Decline and Saturation Stage, which shows that underperforming programs may be sustained for too long and that some of the existing programs may not be aligned with community needs.

If a program is in Saturation Stage, it may not necessarily need to be retired; it could be that it is a legacy program that is beloved by the community. It may be appropriate to keep some of these programs. Another consideration for FRMP is the emphasis on skill development progression. For example, Intermediate programs that produce independent users may have fewer participants with more inconsistent participation than Beginner programs. However, it is useful to look at attendance trends over time: are there fewer participants over the past few offerings, compared to FRMP's established participation goals for each program? If so, the community may be looking for a different type of skill development. Soliciting previous participants that are no longer attending programs may also provide insight to why there is a decline in participation. While there are exceptions, most programs in the Saturation and Decline Stages are ready to retire.

LIFECYCLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The PROS team recommends that the staff track program lifecycles on an annual basis to ensure there are a decreasing number of programs in the Saturated to Decline Stages, while ensuring an increased number of programs fall into the Introduction and Mature Stages. It is recommended that programs from Saturated to Decline Stages should comprise no more than 10% of the total program mix. Additionally, the bottom 5% of all poorly performing programs should be eliminated or repositioned to ensure the cycle of program innovation continues. It would also be helpful to establish performance metrics to ensure that only a set percentage of offerings are in the Decline stage, and any programs staying in that stage for two years should be repositioned or eliminated in favor of new programs.



2.12.6 AGE SEGMENT DISTRIBUTION

In addition to the lifecycle analysis, the PROS team and staff also assessed the aggregated age segment distribution of programs. This analysis is not quantitative, but is based on a subjective classification of target markets by age as identified by staff and the consulting team. Each age segment is noted as a primary (P) or secondary (S) market by Core Program Area. If few to no programs are available for that age, no designation is noted.

Despite the fact that the adult (35 and older) and senior population represent over 55% of the Montgomery County population (median age 39.9 years), the balance of age segment distribution for programs is skewed towards youth. Based on the program list provided by staff, just over half of all programming is geared towards ages 24 and younger.

Core Program Area	Preschool (5 & under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18-54)	Senior (55+)	Families
Youth Development	S	P	P	S		S
Community Ecology	P	P	S	P	S	P
Conservation & Nature	P	P	S	P	P	P
Urban Vibrancy	S	S	P	P	S	P
Outdoor Recreation	S	S	P	P	S	P
Interpretation	S	S	S	P	S	P
Equestrian	S	P	P	S	S	S
Law Enforcement	S	S	P	P	S	S
Conservation in Action		S	P	P	P	S
Inreach & Outreach	P	P	S	S	S	S

Less than a quarter of programs cater specifically to the 55+ population. The 55+ population is expected to grow to nearly 40% of total population by 2029. It would be appropriate for the staff to review the age segment distributions on an annual basis to ensure continued rebalancing among skewed categories.

Also, if possible, given the differences in how the active adults (55+) participate in recreation programs, the trend is moving toward having at least two different segments of older adults. FRMP could evaluate further splitting program offerings into 55–74 and 75 plus program segments. When determining how to prioritize youth programs versus senior programs, it is useful to look at both community surveys and current and future demographic trends. Both the surveys and demographic trends point to a greater need for senior programs and family style festivals, so these should be emphasized.

2.12.7 PROGRAM FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

Finding ways to enhance revenue year-to-year and improve service pricing strategies are a priority for FRMP. Determining cost recovery performance and using it to inform pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

1. Classify all programs and services based on the public or private benefit they provide.
2. Conduct a Cost of Service analysis to calculate the full cost of each program.
3. Establish a cost recovery percentage, through FRMP policy, for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps, and adjust program prices or cost to provide a program accordingly.

PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

Conducting a classification of services identifies how each program serves the overall organization mission, the goals and objectives of each Core Program Area, and how the program should be funded with regard to tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. How a program is classified can help to determine the most appropriate management, funding, and marketing strategies.

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

The three classifications used are Essential, Important, and Value-Added. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. The table below describes each of the three classifications in these terms.

	ESSENTIAL Programs	IMPORTANT Programs	VALUE-ADDED Programs
Public interest, Legal Mandate, Mission Alignment	• High public expectation • Legal Mandate • Mission Alignment	• High public expectation and/or • Mission Alignment	• High individual and interest group expectation
Financial Sustainability	• Free, nominal or fee tailored to public needs • Requires public funding	• Fees cover some direct costs • Requires a balance of public funding and a cost recovery target	• Fees cover most direct and indirect costs • Some public funding as appropriate
Benefits (i.e., health, safety, protection of assets).	• Substantial public benefit (negative consequence if not provided)	• Public and individual benefit	• Primarily individual benefit
Competition in the Market	• Limited or no alternative providers	• Alternative providers unable to meet demand or need	• Alternative providers readily available
Access	• Open access by all	• Open access • Limited access to specific users	• Limited access to specific users

A Core Program Area should include a mix of all three of these classifications. The classifications can help in making decisions about priorities if resources get tight, with Essential being the programs that absolutely must be kept, and so forth.

Hypothetically, if FRMP had a Core Program Area that controls an aggregated 35% of the market, the different individual programs within the Core Program Area may be at different levels of market control. For example, FRMP may have a Bike Rodeo program that no one else provides and captures 70% of the market, but the Yoga in Parks program is one of 20 offerings and it only reaches about 5% of the audience. Therefore, within a single Core Program Area, we find both an Essential and a Value-Added program.

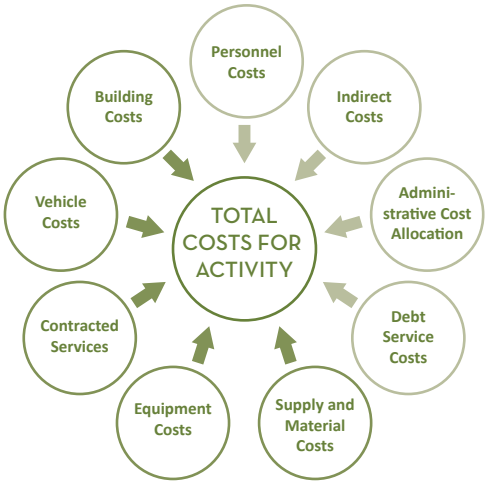
Classifications can also help determine subsidy and pricing of programs. In this previous example, FRMP would price the Bike Rodeo low and provide a subsidy (low Cost Recovery), but would expect market-based pricing with no subsidy on the Yoga in Parks program (high Cost Recovery).

For FRMP, Mission Alignment also means identifying the degree to which the program "moves the needle" toward behavioral and culture change in the community. Community survey results should also be taken into consideration when determining into which category the program falls.

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST OF SERVICE

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting needs to be created on each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these costs are identified.

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



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

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

Agencies use Cost of Service Analyses to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track Cost Recovery, as well as to benchmark different programs provided by FRMP between one another. Cost Recovery goals are established once Cost of Service totals have been calculated. FRMP began utilizing Cost of Service Analysis in 2014 and on-going training regarding the application of this analysis tool should continue on a regular basis.

PROGRAM PRICING STRATEGIES

Pricing programs should be established based on the Cost of Service Analysis, overlaid onto programs areas or specific events, and strategically adjusted according to market factors and/or policy goals.

Overall, the degree to which pricing strategies are used currently could be stronger with the exploration of additional pricing strategies to help meet cost recovery goals. Residency helps to show the benefits of paying taxes as a resident, while Weekday/Weekend and Prime/Non-prime can help you to manage and stabilize usage patterns. Staff should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various pricing strategies they employ and make adjustments as necessary within the policy frameworks that guide the overall pricing philosophies. It is also important to continue monitoring for yearly competitor and other service providers benchmarking. The fee-based matrix currently in use, while useful for ensuring that fees for similar programs from various program areas are aligning, competitor pricing comparisons should also be included in the matrix.

PROGRAM PRICING STRATEGIES

Method	Currently Used
Age Segment	Yes
Family/Household Status	No
Residency	No
Weekday/Weekend	No
Prime/Non-Prime Time	No
Group Discounts	Yes
By Location	No
By Competition (Market Rate)	Yes
By Cost Recovery Goals	Yes
By Customer's Ability to Pay	Yes

Furthermore, it is recommended that Mini Business Plans (2-3 pages) for each Core Program Area be created and updated on a regular basis. These plans should evaluate the Core Program Area based on meeting the outcomes desired for participants, Cost Recovery, percentage of the market and business controls, Cost of Service, pricing strategy for the next year, and marketing strategies that are to be implemented. If developed regularly and consistently, they can be effective tools for budget construction and justification processes outside of the marketing and communication planning process.

COST RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Currently, tracking Cost Recovery performance is limited at the individual program level. Cost Recovery targets should be identified for each Core Program Area, at least, and for specific programs or events within the Activity Sheets as much as possible or practical. The previously identified Core Program Areas and Program Classifications would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics, which would theoretically group programs with similar Cost Recovery and subsidy goals.

Targets should reflect the degree to which the program area provides a public versus private benefit. Programs providing public benefits should be subsidized more; programs providing private benefits should likely seek to recover costs and/or generate revenue for other services. Generally, programs classified as Important or Value-Added are less critical to the organization mission, and need to aim to yield a higher cost recovery rate to sustain them, leaving the limited tax-based appropriations to fund Essential programs.

Programs identified in the Important or Value-Added classifications generally represent programs that receive lower priority for tax subsidization. Important programs contribute to the organization mission, but are not essential to it; therefore, Cost Recovery for these programs should be higher. Value-added programs are not critical to the mission and minimize the use of public funding, so overall Cost Recovery for these programs should be at least at 80% to excess of 100%.

Using FRMP's current Cost Recovery Plan, staff should continue to clarify and follow definitions presented in table below to help identify cost recovery goals by Program Classification.

Category	Description	Cost Recovery	Subsidy
Essential	• Part of the organizational mission • Serves a majority of the community • "We must offer this program."	None to moderate	High to complete
Important	• Important to the community • Serves large portions of the community • "We should offer this program."	Moderate	Moderate
Value-Added	• Enhanced community offerings • Serves niche groups • "It would be nice to offer this program."	High to complete	Little to none

Cost Recovery and Subsidy Program Categories

ACCOUNTING FOR GRANTS, SPONSORSHIPS, & IN-KIND

Included in the Cost Recovery calculation is any assistance received for a program, Core Program Area, division, department, or other grouping within programming that defers the cost of providing that program beyond program fees or FRMP funding allocations. Any outside assistance is allocated to the revenue side of the balance sheet, allowing either a stronger Cost Recovery number, or the ability to decrease prices on the program, or both.

Funding that is allocated to a group of programs or a facility can either be offset to the entire group, or can be divided into units and allocated to individual programs (for example, a vehicle is allocated as a unit to offset equipment costs of a program). Often, the grant or sponsorship agreement will specify where the funding should go, so ensuring correct allocation of funding and tracking this information is essential.

Volunteer and in-kind hours should also be considered as revenue sources for the program, and should result in either increased cost recovery or decreased program costs, or both. For example, a volunteer Yoga instructor would be considered as revenue at the budgeted rate for Yoga instructors, offsetting related program cost.

2.12.8 PROGRAM DECISION-MAKING MATRIX

When developing program plans and strategies, it is useful to consider the Core Program Area and Individual Program analysis discussed in this Program Assessment. Lifecycle, Age Segment, Classification, and Cost Recovery Goal should all be tracked. This information along with the latest demographic trends and community input should be factors that lead to program decision-making. A simple, easy-to-use tool similar to the table below will help compare programs and prioritize resources using multiple data points, rather than relying solely on cost recovery. In addition, this analysis will help staff make an informed, objective case to the public when a program in decline, but beloved by a few, is retired.

Program	Core Program Area	Age Segment	Lifecycle	Classification	Cost Recovery	Other Factors
Try-it Kayaking	Outdoor Recreation					
Music @ Lunch	Urban Vibrancy					
Garden Tour	Community Ecology					

2.12.9 PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The relationship between meeting the needs of the community, achieving the agency mission, and executing service delivery is of critical importance. With an understanding of this important dynamic, the following section provides an analysis of the service system and includes building on the service foundation that already exists within the agency. Based on the PROS team's observations, FRMP's operations and program offerings are strong, but enhancements to performance management practices could yield overall improvements to the services provided to the community. This section is intended to provide resources and insight to move FRMP to a higher level of sophistication in quality management and move it into the realm of national best practices.

DEFINING PROGRAM STANDARDS

The practice of using program standards is essential for agencies desiring to perform at high levels and that aspire to be community and industry leaders. One of the most significant issues in managing a park and recreation program system includes the challenges faced with the complexity associated with thousands of service transactions, in-person and online, from multiple staff members dealing with a diverse audience at a variety of facilities within the system. Program Standards are metrics that help an agency measure performance against program goals, so that it is clear when success is achieved and where there is room for improvement. Some examples with recommended levels include:

- Customer retention – 70%+
- Customer satisfaction toward the registration system- 85%+
- Specific cleanliness ratings- 90%+
- Cost recovery rates- <20% Core Essential / 21%-80% Important / 80%+ Value-Added
- Household percentage of program participation- 45%+ / National average 34%
- Percent of programs in introduction and growth stage- 50%-60%
- Market penetration by age group- 20% minimum / 80% maximum
- Program distribution by age group- 15% minimum / 30% maximum

FRMP programming staff utilizes Activity Sheets to track programs offered to the community and measure success against Program Standards. These Activity Sheets are completed on a consistent basis and track various types of data, such as program contact hours, total number of participants, fees and non-fee programs.

Also, note that a heavy reliance on part-time, contractual, and seasonal staff in the service delivery process can create challenges to meet Program Standards. These dynamics could result in significant program and service quality variation. This issue is particularly critical for FRMP, due to the type of programming that is offered. Successful programming has been built on the subject matter expertise and certifications of full-time staff, and long-term planning is critical to ensure the most qualified staff is hired. Using part-time, seasonal, or contract staff has the potential to constrain the ability to provide sufficient quality, particularly in programs with high-risk management requirements. Furthermore, because seasonal staff is limited in the number of hours they are able to work, the ability to adequately train them and deliver programs of sufficient quality and quantity can be constrained.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEASURING PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

- Use one or several broad performance measures across all Core Program Areas, while using focused measures for specific program types. This is desirable, as long as the universal measures are reflective of core performance outcomes applicable across all programming, and that specific/specialized measures are used to track critical attributes unique to certain programs. For example, Outdoor Recreation programs may have 1-2 outcomes specific to that program area, which are different from the Community Ecology program outcomes.
- Using performance measurements in excess can create a bureaucratic process that hampers staff in tracking performance rather than benefiting from it. The FRMP Activity Sheets are quite extensive, and should be reviewed to ensure they are both practically useful and not burdensome to complete or analyze. This can be mitigated by identifying critical program outcomes, developing a limited yet comprehensive set of performance metrics, and deploying them across the agency with an emphasis on efficient measurement by staff.
- While the current Activity Sheets track revenue, the complete expenses (Cost of Service) are not consistently included on these sheets. The key to calculating accurate Cost Recovery is understanding both revenue and expense by program and/or Core Program Area.
- Another area that should be tracked is space utilization throughout FRMP. Program managers should continue to work with park managers to identify appropriate spaces in parks for programming. Working with park managers to determine whether parkland is overused or underused will create efficiencies that may lead to better cost recovery metrics for the organization.
- Because FRMP is currently undergoing a process to refine its program outcomes measurements, the program assessment should be used in helping complete the Program Plan, in addition to using results from the Logic Model development process.

2.12.10 VOLUNTEERS

FRMP has a wide variety of volunteers to help with its core programs. The website features a section dedicated to volunteerism. It provides individuals and/or organizations information on getting involved and details about volunteer opportunities with FRMP. PROS Consulting encourages FRMP to continue fostering a system-wide approach to volunteer recruitment and management. Ensuring streamlined procedures and standardized guidelines for volunteer management are critical to making volunteers an effective complement to paid personnel and a valuable asset in reducing operational costs. When managed with respect and used strategically, volunteers can also serve as the primary advocates for FRMP and its offerings.

As a key part of maintaining the desirability of volunteerism, the consultant team recommends using tactics similar to those found in frequent flier or shopper rewards programs, wherein volunteers can use their volunteer hours to obtain early registration for programs, or discounted pricing for certain programs, rentals or events, or some other FRMP function. This type of merit-based reward system can be considered the next step on the skill progression model – moving from independent user to volunteer and park advocate. Recognition for this progression, as well as rewards for milestones on hours served, etc. will help keep those independent users engaged.

Other best practices for FRMP to continue doing or consider implementing regarding managing volunteers include:

- Identify volunteer opportunities system-wide, develop job descriptions and acceptance conditions for volunteers (such as background checks)
- Develop a tracking system to quantify the number of volunteer hours according to program area and specific function and document cost savings in more detailed ways
- Develop documented volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition systems
- Involve volunteers in cross training to expose them to various FRMP functions and increase their skill. This can also increase their utility, allowing for more flexibility in making work assignments, and can increase their appreciation and understanding of FRMP
- Add steps to formally document resignation or termination of volunteers. Also, include ways to monitor and track reasons for resignation/termination

2.12.11 MARKETING AND WEBSITE

MARKETING

This section reviews FRMP's marketing and promotions as collected from program worksheets.

As stated in the program assessment worksheets provided to PROS Consulting by staff, most programs are promoted via the print and online program guide, website, flyers and brochures, social media, and word of mouth. There are also some instances of e-mail blasts, newsletters, and some radio and TV. Areas of opportunity mentioned most frequently include building a mobile-friendly website and App, as well as improving the existing website.

Given the limited marketing dollars available, PROS recommends that FRMP complete a marketing return on investment assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing methods used and tailor future spending to focus on the most effective media used. This could be done by ensuring every registrant and as many on-site users as possible are asked, 'How did you hear about us?' Tying the participant responses to marketing medium used would allow for a better understanding of spending dedicated to marketing and enable FRMP to evaluate the effectiveness of methods used.

While some program areas have already caught on, cross-promotion at special events is highly recommended. It is imperative that FRMP takes advantage of the presence of high numbers of captive audience in the special event environment to promote its other offerings, programs, facilities, and rentals. Similar cross-promotion between programs that target the same age group audiences is also highly encouraged.

WEBSITE

The current website is user-friendly and drop-down menus make it very easy to access any information desired by the user. The site is also very appeasing in terms of its layout, as the home page makes good use of the space available by displaying a nice variety of headlines, images, and links that grab the attention of the user and enhance the immediate accessibility of the site's content. The banners highlighting the key initiatives are an excellent feature, which directly drives user attention to areas of most importance. The main factor limiting the effectiveness of the site is the lack of a mobile-friendly version. The addition of a mobile site, and potentially a mobile App for FRMP should be developed due to the increased preference throughout the United States to access the web via mobile devices. The type of App should be determined based on visitor preferences, determined through stakeholder engagement, surveys, or focus groups. Functionality that other systems find useful in a mobile App is a park locator function, program finder, photo sharing feature, and customer satisfaction/ratings buttons and comment features.

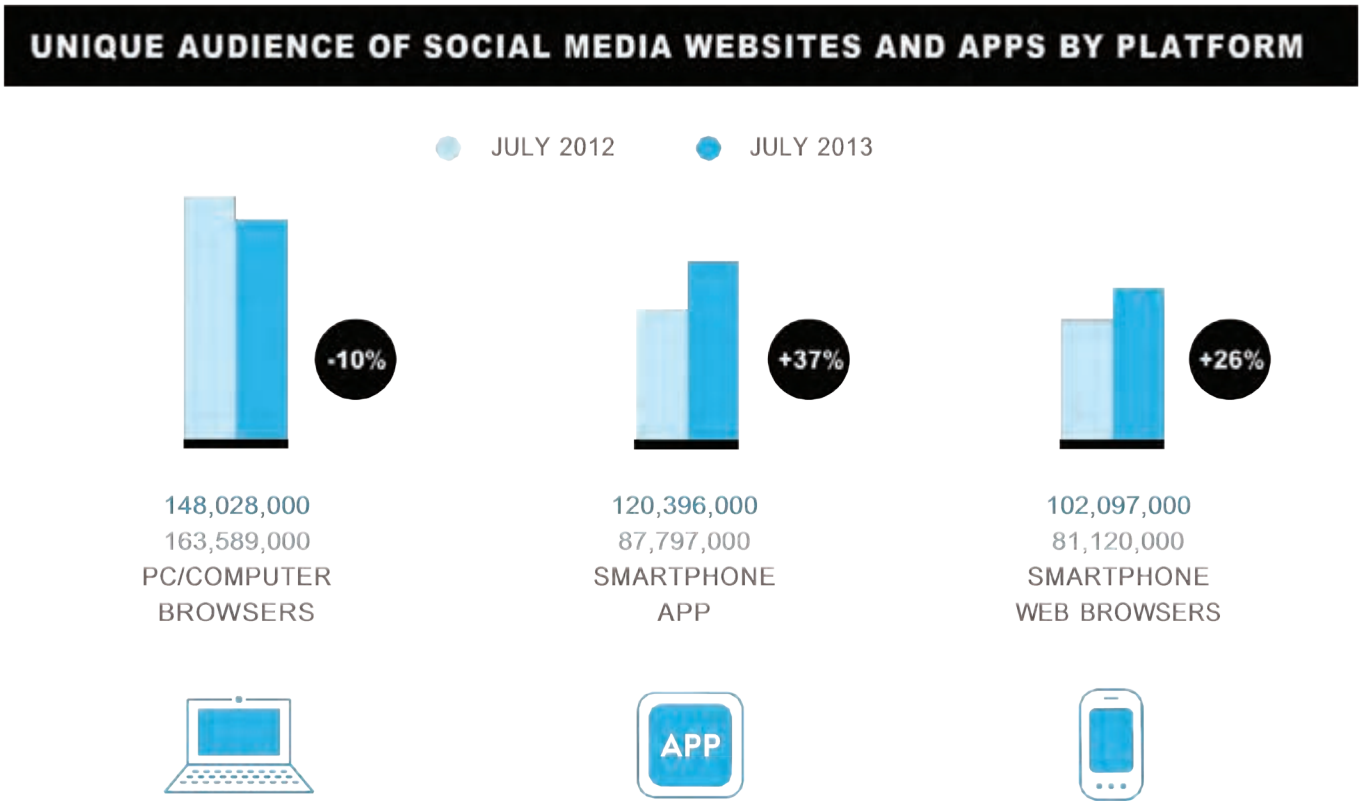
FRMP has done a good job of using a variety of Web 2.0 technology, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, and Pinterest. It will be important to continue to build social media presence with a focus on tying the various platforms together and utilizing these outlets to reach the broad user base served by FRMP. When determining a social media strategy, be aware of the time and effort required to regularly update pages while keeping consistent marketing and messaging across platforms. Be consistent about the level at which social media pages designed, such as by Core Program Areas only. The key to successful implementation of a social network is to move the participants from awareness to action and creating greater user engagement. This could be accomplished by:

- Allowing controlled “user generated content” by encouraging users to send in their pictures from the FRMP special events or programs
- Introducing Facebook-only promotions to drive greater visitation to Facebook
- Leverage the website to obtain customer feedback for programs, parks and facilities and customer service
- Expand opportunities for Crowd-sourcing
- Some resources include www.mindmixer and www.peakdemocracy.com
- Through the FRMP Foundation, provide opportunities for Donations or Crowd-funding through the website
- www.kickstarter.org / www.indiegogo.com / www.razoo.com for Crowd funding options, including printing program guides or developing marketing material
- Maximize the website’s revenue generating capabilities
- Conduct annual website strategy workshop with the staff to identify ways and means that the website can support FRMP

SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

From the February 2014 Nielsen Digital Consumer report, the following chart shows unique audience of social media websites and apps by platform. The chart illustrates that individuals are reaching for their Smartphone versus a traditional computer to access social media platforms.

The report also indicated that while Facebook remains the largest social network in both web and mobile, consumers are taking on other social media platforms such as Pinterest (triple unique users on Smartphone apps) and Instagram (nearly double the number of unique users in 2013).



2.12.12 CUSTOMER SERVICE AND FEEDBACK

Customer service is at the root of success for any organization. A true community-service organization prides itself on identifying its customers' preferences and acting in accordance to help fulfill their needs. In order to do this, an ongoing, system-wide feedback mechanism is of vital importance, as well as an extensive training initiative to educate staff on how to deliver exceptional customer service.

Currently, there is not a consistent, system-wide approach to user feedback, and the methods in place for soliciting customers' opinions are largely tied to individual program areas. FRMP must identify the most effective means for collecting customer input and ensure that these methods are incorporated into all program areas. In addition, there is a need to establish a protocol for sharing feedback results with staff and implementing the necessary changes for addressing any issues that arise.

A series of recommended "next" practices utilized by high-quality agencies, such as FRMP are the development of an integrated customer service approach from hiring to orientation, training and real-time measurement of customer feedback.

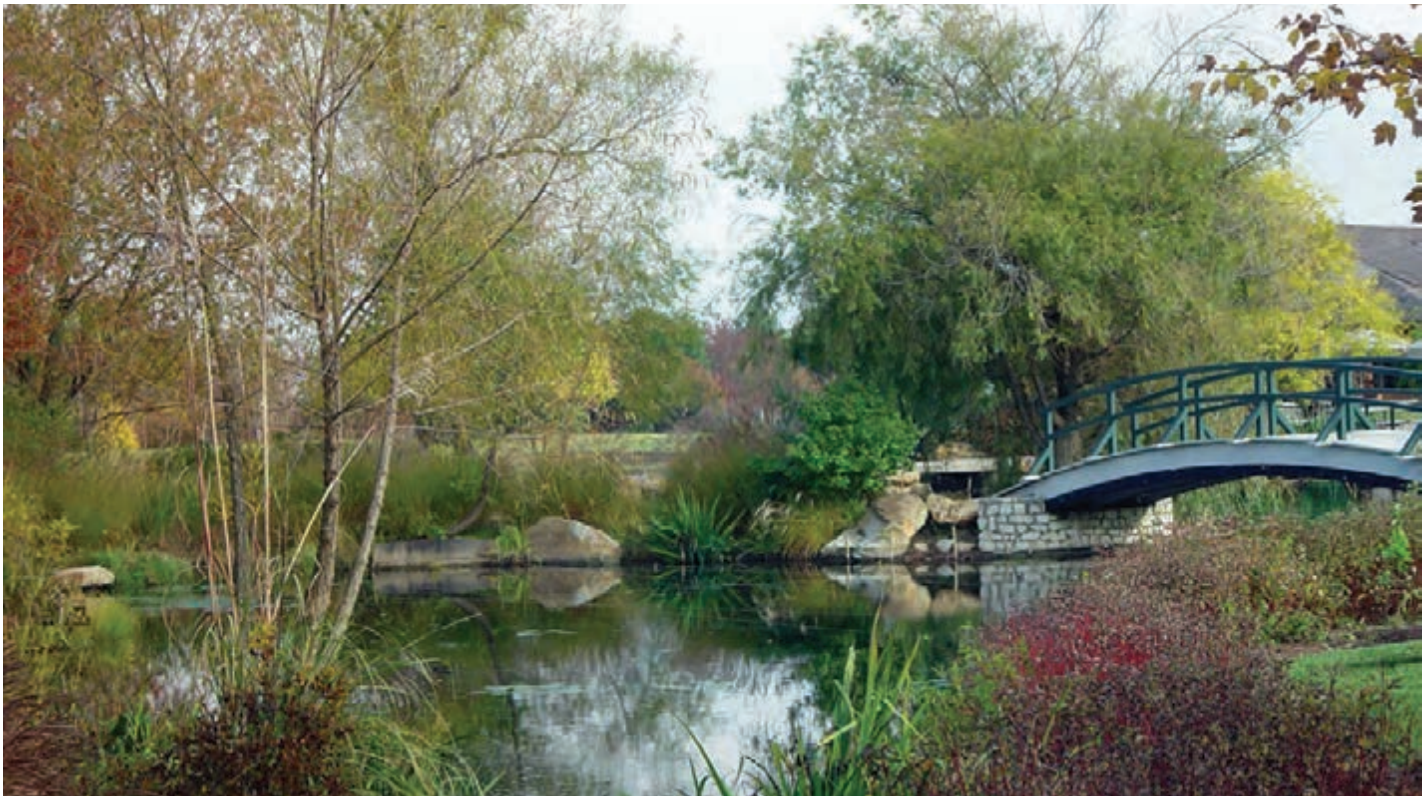
These practices include:

- Modifying and updating hiring practices to ensure new hires, including interns, are done not only based on skills and experience, but based on alignment with FRMP's values
- Develop an orientation program modeled on industry leaders such as Disney, Southwest, Zappos etc. which focuses on culture, heritage, shared values and customer service focus i.e. "Why are we here" versus 'What to do and what not to do"
- Using a combination of in-person and online opportunities for ongoing training and development focused on excellence in customer service towards internal and external customers
- Utilize a real-time customer service reporting App that could allow users of the system to share their feedback via text, pictures or video based on GPS locations with FRMP
    - Use that data to monitor trends and issues, address customer issues instantly (where possible) and establish performance indicators to define success

2.12.13 SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the program assessment process, the following recommendations are intended to build on those strengths and help close the gaps on the weaknesses.

1. Consider repositioning Core Program Areas to eliminate redundancy, close programming gaps, and best align programs with needs identified through the community survey, demographic changes, and education and recreation trends while staying consistent with the current overall strategy.
2. Regularly evaluate programs from a Lifecycle, Age Segment, and Classification standpoint to ensure innovation continues, that age preferences in the survey and demographics are met, to prioritize programs for funding, to meet Cost Recovery goals, and to strategically price programs.
3. Determine Cost of Service for each program in order to accurately calculate its Cost Recovery. Evaluate Activity Sheets to ensure they are easily used for both recording and analyzing of practical information.
4. Evaluate annually demographic trends and work with community partners and current park advocates to understand and reach more diverse park users; ensure programming is relevant to those users.
5. Work with park and facility managers to ensure efficient utilization of space across the system.
6. Identify the most effective means for collecting customer input and ensure that these methods are incorporated into all program areas. In addition, there is a need to establish a protocol for sharing feedback results with staff and implementing the necessary changes for addressing any issues that arise.
7. Develop Mini Business Plans (2-3 pages) for each Core Program Area and update on a regular basis. These plans should evaluate the Core Program Area based on meeting the outcomes desired for participants, Cost Recovery, percentage of the market and business controls, Cost of Service, pricing strategy for the next year, and marketing strategies that are to be implemented.



2.13 STAFFING ASSESSMENT

PROS Consulting conducted an analysis of staffing levels for FRMP by assessing budgeted Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) and volunteer hours through a variety of metrics and comparing them to industry best practices and similar, leading agencies from the benchmark study. The National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) PRORAGIS database was utilized for its effectiveness ratios pertaining to FTEs in order to demonstrate how FRMP compares to the industry, as a whole. Budgeted FTE levels and volunteer hours were obtained for FRMP and five other comparable agencies' 2014 data through the benchmark study process conducted in 2015. The table below describes the budgeted allocation of only FRMP FTEs by department, which has been updated to reflect 2015 number of hours.

Department	F/T Hours	P/T Hours	Seasonal Hours	Contractual Hours	Total Hours by Deparmtment	FTEs by Department
Executive Director	4,160	-	-	-	**4,160**	**2.00**
Marketing	16,640	7,540	560	-	**24,740**	**11.89**
Park Services	137,280	61,828	35,735	1,402	**236,245**	**113.58**
Planning	4,160	-	-	-	**4,160**	**2.00**
Outdoor Connections	41,600	19,604	3,416	-	**64,620**	**31.07**
Business Services	24,960	3,016	2,266	5,752	**35,994**	**17.30**
Conservation	14,560	4,524	2,800	9,831	**31,715**	**15.25**
Rangers	62,400	6,032	-	-	**68,432**	**32.90**
Development	6,240	-	-	-	**6,240**	**3.00**
Human Resources	20,800	3,016	-	-	**23,816**	**11.45**
Total	**332,800**	**105,560**	**44,777**	**16,985**	**500,122**	**240.44**

2.13.1 AGENCY WIDE

PRORAGIS EFFECTIVENESS RATIOS – AGENCY SUMMARY

As a point of comparison, the table below reveals two agency-wide ratios related to FTEs, and segments the results for nearly 400 agencies reporting figures in the PRORAGIS database. Operating expenditures per FTE is an efficiency measure, while comparing FTEs to the population describes the extent of coverage a given agency has over its jurisdiction, in terms of staffing.

	# of Agencies Reporting	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Operating Expenditures per FTE	381	$72,630	$96,621	$142,976
FTE's per 10,000 Population	393	3.9	7.7	15.0

SYSTEM-WIDE BENCHMARK COMPARISON

VOLUNTEER HOURS VERSUS PAID STAFF HOURS

Supplementing paid staff hours with volunteers is critical to the success of any agency because it helps reduce operational costs and allows for more effective use of resources across the park system. Compared to the benchmark agencies, FRMP is similar in its use of volunteers, with 8% of hours of service provided by volunteer in 2015. Best practice agencies should strive to supplement 15% of the total workforce hours with volunteers.

	FTEs	Total Hours	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Hrs as % of Total Hrs
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	500,122	41,958	8%
Cleveland MetroParks	943	1,961,440	127,088	6%
East Bay Regional Park District	741	1,541,176	126,027	8%
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	565,614	39,000	7%
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	345,280	26,035	8%
Toledo MetroParks	145	301,600	47,750	16%

FTES PER POPULATION

The table below describes how well each agency is equipped to provide services to the local population. FRMP reports ratios that fall in the upper-middle of benchmark agencies; however, these figures are in line with the lower quartile for this category based on the PRORAGIS effectiveness ratios.

	FTEs	Population	FTE per 1,000 Pop	FTE per 10,000 Pop
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	535,846	0.45	4.49
Cleveland MetroParks	943	1,265,111	0.75	7.45
East Bay Regional Park District	741	2,600,000	0.29	2.85
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	703,462	0.39	3.87
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	1,237,868	0.13	1.34
Toledo MetroParks	145	435,286	0.33	3.33

OPERATING EXPENSE PER FTE

This section compares operational expenditures and total FTEs to help quantify how efficiently each agency is operating. Actual operational expenditures were obtained in the benchmark study. FRMP operational expenditures reflect budgeted 2015 figures. FRMP is adequately positioned based on this metric, as operating expense per FTE falls near the middle of benchmark agencies and near the median of the effectiveness ratio breakdown from the PRORAGIS database. In analyzing this metric, agencies should aspire to have a good balance of operating expense and FTEs – numbers that are too low might suggest a surplus of staffing, while numbers that are too high could signal that employees may be stretched too thin based on the output of the organization.

	FTEs	Operational Expenditures	Operating Exp per FTE
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	$ 19,922,710	$ 82,858
Cleveland MetroParks	943	$ 84,182,489	$ 89,271
East Bay Regional Park District	741	$ 104,026,356	$ 140,386
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	$ 28,230,205	$ 103,788
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	$ 22,860,692	$ 137,715
Toledo MetroParks	145	$ 11,501,979	$ 79,324

DEVELOPED ACRES PER FTE

This operating metric is a good indicator of an agency's ability to maintain its developed acres based on its staffing levels. The park and recreation industry's best practice agencies report figures in the 15-17 range for developed acres per FTE. While FRMP's ratio falls in the middle of benchmark agencies, these numbers are fairly low compared to best practices, which might suggest that staffing may be excess of optimal levels when compared to total developed acres. These low figures can also be influenced by types of amenities and maintenance levels required for care of developed acres and/or the limited amount of developed acres.

	FTEs	Developed Acres	Developed Acres per FTE
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	1,202	5.0
Cleveland MetroParks	943	2,750	2.9
East Bay Regional Park District	741	N/A	N/A
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	4,600	16.9
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	2,385	14.4
Toledo MetroParks	145	441	3.0

Note: Developed Acres does not include easements, land used by permit or leased land that is patrolled by rangers.

NATURAL ACRES PER FTE

This section has a converse correlation to the previous section that assessed develop acres per FTE. This metric essentially quantifies how many natural acres are attributed to each FTE. Due to the need for less staff involvement in preserving natural acreage, higher ratios would be preferable here. FRMP is well positioned in natural acres per FTE when compared to benchmark agencies.

	FTEs	Natural Acres	Natural Acres per FTE
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	10,121	42.1
Cleveland MetroParks	943	20,329	21.6
East Bay Regional Park District	741	N/A	N/A
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	25,728	94.6
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	4,316	26.0
Toledo MetroParks	145	11,516	79.4

Note: Natural Acres does not include easements, land used by permit or leased land that is patrolled by rangers.

FTE PER 1,000 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The table below reveals how well each agency is able to deliver programs based on participation levels. There are two perspectives assessed in this section – with and without special event participation. The FRMP River-Scape MetroPark hosts various large special events that are provided in partnership with organizations whose volunteer hours are not reflected in the manpower support required for these events. The events typically, draw large crowds in excess of 200,000 people. Therefore, it is important to compare total participants, as well as participants excluding special events. When including total program participants, FRMP demonstrates the lowest overall FTE per 1,000 participants (0.95). However, for delivery of programs not including special events participants, FRMP falls in the middle as compared to the benchmark agencies' FTEs per 1,000 participants,

	FTEs	Program Participants	FTE per 1,000 Participants	Special Events Participants	Program Participants Less Special Events	FTE per 1,000 Participants (Excluding Special Event)
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	253,290	0.95	207,203	46,087	5.22
Cleveland MetroParks	943	245,658	3.84	234,215	11,443	82.41
East Bay Regional Park District	741	198,586	3.73	110,822	87,764	8.44
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	82,035	3.32	9,156	72,879	3.73
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	134,977	1.23	12,963	122,014	1.36
Toledo MetroParks	145	81,783	1.77	28,000	53,783	2.70

PROGRAM REVENUE PER FTE

This section describes the amount of program revenue that when evenly distributed, can be attributed to each FTE. This is a strong indicator of the revenue generating capabilities of an agency in comparison to its human resources. FRMP ranks last in overall program revenue per FTE, which can be largely attributed to the minimal program revenues and that much of the participation at FRMP parks and facilities is self-directed.

	FTEs	Program Revenue	Program Revenue per FTE
Five Rivers MetroParks (2015)	240	$ 163,789	$ 681
Cleveland MetroParks	943	N/A	N/A
East Bay Regional Park District	741	N/A	N/A
Lake County Forest Preserve	272	$ 3,594,277	$ 13,214
Oakland County Parks and Recreation	166	$ 183,286	$ 1,104
Toledo MetroParks	145	N/A	N/A

2.13.2 PROGRAM SPECIFIC RATIOS

In order to provide a more concise analysis of staffing levels, the consulting team also assessed staffing levels specific to program delivery. The Outdoor Connections Department provides the majority of programming to the community and the current budget calls for 31.07 FTEs to carry out its functions. Due to the lack of an itemized breakdown of FTEs by function from the benchmark agencies, the program specific ratios are only expressed for FRMP. All revenue, expense, program, and participation figures are from 2015, as reported in the benchmark study.

PRORAGIS EFFECTIVENESS RATIOS – PROGRAMS

There are three effectiveness ratios set forth by PRORAGIS that are directly tied to programs and programming staff. The breakdown below represent approximately 50 reporting agencies and each metric helps assess efficiency in delivering programs.

	# of Agencies Reporting	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Programs offered per FTE	54	5.1	28.7	83.4
Operating expenditures per FTE	54	$32,001	$45,184	$68,315
Fee program revenue per FTE	50	$11,288	$28,958	$48,330

PROGRAM REVENUE PER FTE

Based on the FTEs dedicated to programs and the total program revenue, FRMP is generating approximately $4,200 in revenue per FTE. This is well below what PRORAGIS defines as the lower quartile.

	FTEs	Program Revenue	Program Revenue per FTE
Outdoor Connections (2015)	31	$ 129,213	$ 4,159

PROGRAM EXPENSE PER FTE

This ratio serves as a more detailed extension of the agency-wide operating expenditures per FTE described earlier in the report and provides a more detailed understanding of how program expenses and program staffing interact. With $76,286 in program expense per FTE, FRMP reports a ratio above the upper quartile from PRORAGIS agencies. This would indicate the need for a more balanced approach between program expenditures and staffing dedicated to programs.

	FTEs	Program Expense	Program Expense per FTE
Outdoor Connections (2015)	31	$ 2,369,987	$ 76,286

FTE PER 1,000 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The following table compares programming staff to the number of program participants. The first section of the table reflects overall program participation, while the second section removes the influx of participation from special events.

`	FTEs	Program Participants	FTE per 1,000 Participants	Special Events Participants	Program Participants Less Special Events	FTE per 1,000 Participants (Excluding Special Event)
Outdoor Connections	31	253,290	0.12	207,203	46,087	0.67

PROGRAMS OFFERED PER FTE

With a total of 966 public programs offered, FRMP is delivering approximately 31 programs per program FTE. This is comparable to the median identified for agencies reporting such figures to PRORAGIS.

	FTEs	Total Public Programs	Programs Offered per FTE
Outdoor Connections (2015)	31	966	31.1

2.13.3 PARK SPECIFIC RATIOS

Delving deeper into staff productivity related to park operations, the consultant team analyzed ratios specific to Parks Services. The Parks Services Department had a total of 110 FTEs in 2015. Due to the lack of an itemized breakdown of FTEs by function from the benchmark agencies, the park specific ratios are only described for FRMP. All acreage and expenditure figures were sourced from the ancillary benchmark study, which consists of 2014 totals.

PRORAGIS EFFECTIVENESS RATIOS – PARKS

The chart below assesses results from approximately 60 reporting agencies and describes effectiveness ratios specific to park operations.

	# of Agencies Reporting	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Park operating costs per FTE	60	$74,655	$98,577	$130,900
Acres per staff FTE	62	10.5	24.5	58.8

DEVELOPED ACRE PER FTE

This metric was also included previously to encompass the agency-wide staffing, but in this section, developed acres are compared to only FTEs from Park Services. Assessing FRMP's ratio, we find the 10.6 developed acres per FTE falls just above the lower quartile of the PRORAGIS database.

	FTEs	Developed Acres	Developed Acres per FTE
Parks Services	114	1,202	10.6

PARK OPERATING COST PER FTE

The Park Services Department represents a large portion of the organization's operating budget. The table below compares operating expenditures to FTEs for only park services. When comparing its operating costs to FTEs, FRMP's ratio falls below the lower quartile of the PRORAGIS data set. FRMP should continue to evaluate its staffing assignments in comparison to the operational output of parks services.

	FTEs	Park Operating Costs	Park Operating Cost per FTE
Parks Services	114	$ 7,304,140	$ 64,309

2.14 FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

This section of the report presents the financial assessment of FRMP as a part of the comprehensive master planning process. As a key element of the Plan, PROS Consulting reviewed available information to assess the financial positioning of FRMP. The revenues, expenditures and capital funds were analyzed to identify trends and assess FRMP's financial integrity. The cost recovery for facilities, programs and services at major functional levels has been analyzed to assess the cost of service readiness.

The PROS Team reviewed the detailed cost and activity information prepared by FRMP staff. Following is a list of the cost and activity data:

- Single Audits 2009 through 2013 – Auditor of State
- Unaudited Cash Basis Annual Financial Report For Year Ending 2014 – County Auditor
- Unaudited Cash Basis Annual Financial Report for Year Ending 2015 – District staff
- Expenditure and Revenue documents for 2009 through 2015
- Program participation is based on 2014 & 2015 Activity Reports

The financial assessment is presented in two major sections. The Financial Strength Assessment includes analysis of cash, net assets, and property values supporting FRMP. The Activities Assessment includes the analysis of the FRMP operations.

2.14.1 FINANCIAL STRENGTH ASSESSMENT

The financial statements and operations reports for fiscal years ending 2009 through 2015 were analyzed to assess the financial positioning of FRMP. The information for this section is from the Single Audits by Auditor of State for 2009 through 2013 and Unaudited Cash Basis Financial Statements for 2014 and 2015 by County Auditor and FRMP staff.

The Financial Strength Assessment demonstrates FRMP's ability to provide and maintain quality services, programs, parks and facilities. The assessment reflects the excellent stewardship by the FRMP Board and staff and the commitment of the citizens of Montgomery County to provide the resources necessary for the park system.

FRMP has experienced increasing financial resources that include cash and investments for each year as reflected in Figure 6. The cash balances have increased by 33.6% in the study period. The net assets are an indicator of the capital maintenance and investment in the total system.

Fiscal Year Ending:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Cash and Investments	$ 11,267,609	$ 10,933,984	$ 13,059,651	$ 11,713,774	$ 13,426,952	$ 13,893,434	$ 15,058,590
Increase (Decrease)		-3.0%	19.4%	-10.3%	14.6%	3.5%	8.4%
Cumulative Increase (Decrease)		-3.0%	15.9%	4.0%	19.2%	23.3%	33.6%

Figure 6- Selected Financial Statement Balances- Source: FRMP Financial Statements

The statements and reports show a financially strong entity. FRMP continues to invest to maintain the system assets.

CASH RESERVES

The cash balance is compared to the total expenditures in Figure 7. Cash balances increased in relation to the total expenditures over the period. PROS recommends 60 to 90 day cash balances to protect unexpected drops in revenue or unusual and emergency expenditures. The cash balance totals are above the high target ranges for all years.

Fiscal Year Ending:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Expenditures	$ 27,348,654	$ 26,233,138	$ 21,582,619	$ 21,497,306	$ 19,585,222	$ 22,607,871	$ 21,407,078
Cash and Investments	$ 11,267,609	$ 10,933,984	$ 13,059,651	$ 11,713,774	$ 13,426,952	$ 13,893,434	$ 15,058,590
Cash as Percentage of Expenditures	41%	42%	61%	54%	69%	61%	70%
Expenditure Coverage (months)	4.9	5.0	7.3	6.5	8.2	7.4	8.4

Figure 7 – Cash Balance to Expenditures – Source: FRMP Financial Statements

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

The total revenues from all sources and total expenditures are shown in Figure 8. The revenues have exceeded the expenditures for the last three years indicating that FRMP has recovered from the significant decline in property taxes. This was a result of FRMP's strategy to generate alternative revenue and control or reduce expenses.

Fiscal Year Ending:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Revenues	$ 20,913,359	$ 25,899,513	$ 23,708,286	$ 20,151,429	$ 21,298,400	$ 23,074,354	$ 22,572,234
Expenditures	$ 27,348,654	$ 26,233,138	$ 21,582,619	$ 21,497,306	$ 19,585,222	$ 22,607,871	$ 21,407,078
Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	$ (6,435,295)	$ (333,625)	$ 2,125,667	$ (1,345,877)	$ 1,713,178	$ 466,483	$ 1,165,156

Figure 8 – Revenues and Expenditures- Source: FRMP Financial Statements

PROPERTY TAX REVENUES

Between fiscal years ending 2009 and 2015, the Taxable Property Values have decreased by 11.7% or as shown in Figure 9. The total value has stabilized since the initial decrease in valuation in 2012.

Fiscal Year Ending:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Estimated Actual Value	$ 29,416,945,535	$ 29,151,359,484	$ 28,895,847,666	$ 26,827,569,943	$ 26,595,500,746	$ 26,699,666,761	$ 25,984,715,695
Annual Percentage Change		-0.9%	-0.9%	-7.2%	-0.9%	0.4%	-2.7%
Cummulative Percentage Change		-0.9%	-1.8%	-8.8%	-9.6%	-9.2%	-11.7%

Figure 9 – Property Tax Revenue

Source: Montgomery County CAFR 2014, Years 2009 through 2014, State of Ohio, Department of Taxation for 2015

In some areas of the U.S., the mortgage markets are experiencing significant difficulty due to interest rates and foreclosures. These issues can result in flat or decreased property values, which result in flat or decreased property tax revenues.

2.14.2 ACTIVITIES ASSESSMENT

The Activities Assessment is focused on FRMP general fund operations by reviewing the revenues and expenditures. The Activities Assessment demonstrates the level of effectiveness in stewardship and management of the park system. The data used in this section is from FRMP Activity Reports.

OPERATING REVENUES

Figure 10 shows the actual revenues from traditional sources of revenue, which include property tax, local government fund, state revenue and investment income. Since 2010, FRMP has lost nearly 18% of this revenue.

Fiscal Year Ending:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Traditional Sources of Revenue	$ 17,361,105	$ 20,592,048	$ 19,881,627	$ 18,031,772	$ 17,465,438	$ 17,509,560	$ 16,920,212
Annual Percentage Change			-3.4%	-9.3%	-3.1%	0.3%	-3.4%
Cummulative Percentage Change			-3.4%	-12.4%	-15.2%	-15.0%	-17.8%

Figure 10 – Traditional Sources of Revenue- Source: FRMP Revenue and Expenditure Reports

Figure 11 reflects amounts from other sources of revenue, which include grants, user fees, rentals, permits, sponsorships and donations.

Fiscal Year Ending:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Other Sources of Revenue	$ 3,412,519	$ 3,974,715	$ 2,380,916	$ 946,466	$ 1,801,750	$ 3,046,668	$ 1,475,301
Annual Percentage Change			-40.1%	-60.2%	90.4%	69.1%	-51.6%
Cummulative Percentage Change			-40.1%	-76.2%	-54.7%	-23.3%	-62.9%

Figure 11 – Other Sources of Revenue- Source: FRMP Revenue and Expenditure Reports

Figure 12 shows the revenue trends for years ending 2013 through 2015. Similar agencies generally receive 60% of their revenues from taxes and grants with 40% of the revenues from operations, scholarship funds, and partnerships.

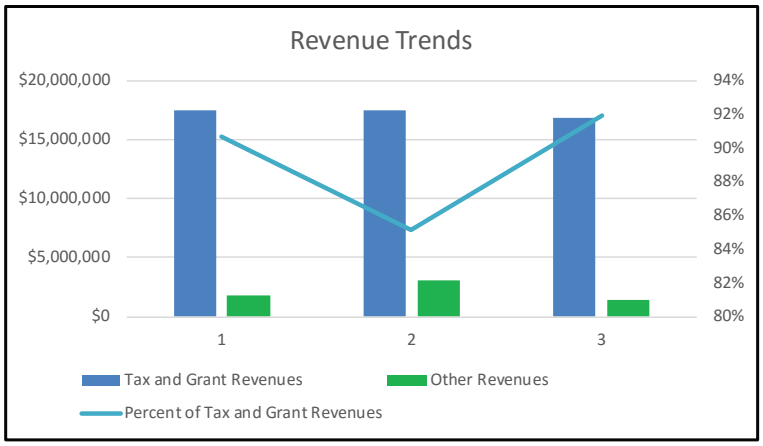


Figure 12 – Revenue Trends- Source: FRMP Revenue and Expenditure Reports

OPERATING AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

Operating and Capital expenditures are reflected in Figure 13. The amount spent on annual capital expenditures is an indication of an agency's investments and maintenance of the park system assets. FRMP spent an average of 2% annually of its park system's asset value between 2009 and 2015. The industry best practice is 4% to 6% of the system value. Based on FRMP estimated total asset value of $55.5 million, PROS anticipates that FRMP would spend between $2.2 and $3.3 million annually to maintain the facilities and equipment. FRMP asset value is based on 2014 insurance valuations. FRMP might need to consider increasing annual capital expenditure spending.

Expenditures	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Personnel	$12,295,388	$12,096,596	$12,198,001	$11,727,937	$11,526,561	$11,918,934	$12,384,878
Operating Expenditures	$14,041,755	$9,136,425	$6,386,314	$6,712,611	$5,518,330	$5,915,392	$6,125,579
Capital Expenditures	$2,427,490	$826,944	$746,605	$693,139	$526,944	$883,292	$947,630
Total	$28,764,632	$22,059,966	$19,330,920	$19,133,687	$17,571,835	$18,717,618	$19,458,087
Personnel	42.7%	54.8%	63.1%	61.3%	65.6%	63.7%	63.6%
Operating Expenditures	48.8%	41.4%	33.0%	35.1%	31.4%	31.6%	31.5%
Capital Expenditures	8.4%	3.7%	3.9%	3.6%	3.0%	4.7%	4.9%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Figure 13 – Operating and Capital Expenditures- Source: FRMP Financial Reports

COST RECOVERY

The industry best practices are 35-40% for cost recovery from revenues other than taxes for park systems. Revenues from charges and fees, external sources (grants and contributions) should be increasing consistently with operating expenditures according to FRMP's cost recovery plan and pricing policy. Figure 14 shows that FRMP's cost recovery from fees and charges is 8.0% to 17.9% of the operating expenditures. To calculate the net cost recovery from program and service fees, the tax-related revenues are subtracted from the total revenues to represent net operating revenues. The capital expenditures were subtracted from the total expenditures to represent operating expenditures. Net operating revenues were compared with operating expenditures to calculate the net cost recovery.

Fiscal Year	(1) Total Revenues	(2) FRMP Revenues	(3) Revenues Net of FRMP Revenues (1)-(2)	(4) Total Expenditures	(5) Capital Expenditures	(6) Operating Expenditures (4)-(5)	(7) Net Cost Recovery from Program and Service Fees (3)-(6)
2013	$19,260,919	$17,465,441	$1,795,478	$16,882,708	$641,065	$16,241,643	11.1%
2014	$20,556,228	$17,509,560	$3,046,668	$18,474,930	$1,428,749	$17,046,182	17.9%
2015	$18,395,513	$16,920,212	$1,475,301	$19,458,087	$947,630	$18,510,457	8.0%

Figure 14 – Cost Recovery from Fees and Charges- Source: FRMP Revenue and Expenditures Reports

FRMP is funded primarily by a dedicated property tax assessment (1.8 mills) approved by the citizens. This dedicated assessment is a commitment by the citizens to the parks, facilities, programs and services of FRMP. Prior to the recession, the stability of the tax funding allowed the lower cost recovery rates. The agency should continue to diversify its funding sources, such as increasing earned income opportunities.

2.14.3 FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FRMP is in a sound financial position with respect to operating revenues and expenditures, cash balances, fund balances and investments in capital projects. The use of operating revenues for capital renewal and replacements demonstrated that the agency is willing to maintain the system asset to the maximum potential life. Total revenues are in excess of the operating expenditures for the past three years that indicates sound financial planning with respect to financial strength. Taxable property values have stabilized and are improving.

For FRMP to maintain its financial strength, PROS recommends the following:

- Continue reviews of financial policies to assure the overall financial strength of the park system and to maintain quality programs, services, parks, facilities and equipment
- Review and update pricing guidelines and policies with pricing objectives and cost recovery percentages on a regular basis
- Increase cost recovery for programs and services that primarily benefit individuals or subgroups of the general population
- Continuation of the annual review schedules of charges for programs and services to ensure compliance with pricing policies
- Create cost recovery goals for each OCA code and business unit
- Increase capital investments to $2.2- $3.3 million annually to maintain the quality and functionality of FRMP parks, facilities and equipment

2.14.4 GLOSSARY

Financial Statements include Statement of Activities and Statement of Net Assets.

Liabilities include operating accounts payable and similar operating indebtedness of FRMP.

Expenditures include all operating expenses such as personnel, contracts, services, and capital purchases.

OCA Codes are codes used in FRMP's financial system to budget and track revenues and expenses for each between park, program area or facility.

CHAPTER THREE

"OPPORTUNITIES"

From the analysis of the current conditions of the FRMP system, "Opportunities" have been identified that will aid the organization to adjust its operations over the next several years. In this section of the Comprehensive Master Plan (CPRMP), "Opportunities" that are available to FRMP are outlined through the following assessment sections:

- Level of service standards for land and amenities
- Priority rankings for facilities and programs from the citizen survey
- Capital improvement needs and priorities
- Design principles
- Funding and revenue strategies
- Cultural and historical resources

3.1 LEVEL OF SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Level of Service Standards (LSS) are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities and amenities. LSS can and will change over time as the demographics of a community change and as FRMP continues to develop new trails, parks, facilities and amenities that address Montgomery County residents' unmet needs as outlined by the LSS.

FRMP park and facility standards were analyzed using a combination of resources. These resources included a comparison of existing amenities currently in place with the five benchmarked communities outlined in CPRMP, and the statistically valid community survey that outlined the community's unmet needs and priority rankings for park related amenities. The priority rankings were developed by PROS Consulting using a combination of community and stakeholder input, the statistically valid community survey, national trend data for Montgomery County, and National Recreation and Park Association PROGRAGIS best practice standards for parks and amenities. This information allowed the standards and recommendations to be customized for FRMP.

These standards should be viewed as a guide and coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the particular situation and needs of the community. By applying these amenity standards to the population of Montgomery County, potential gaps and surpluses in park and facility/amenity types have been identified. The detailed amenity standards are found on the following table. The standards outlined are considered conservative guidelines.

Five Rivers MetroParks Level of Service

	2015 Inventory - Developed Facilities								
Park Type	Five Rivers MetroParks Inventory	Five Rivers MetroParks Current Service Level based upon population			Recommended Service Level			Recommended Additional Facilities / Amenities	
Conservation MetroParks	3,875.30	7.33	acres per	1,000	7.32	acres per	1,000	-	**acres**
Community and Nature MetroParks	10,045.78	18.99	acres per	1,000	20.00	acres per	1,000	**534**	**acres**
Urban MetroParks	193.72	0.37	acres per	1,000	0.50	acres per	1,000	**71**	**acres**
Total Park Acres	**14,114.80**	**26.68**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**27.82**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**602**	**acres**
OUTDOOR AMENITIES:									
Reservable Picnic Shelters (Small 1-25)	6.00	1.00	site per	88,165	1.00	site per	7,500	**65**	**sites**
Reservable Picnic Shelters (Medium 26-50)	32.00	1.00	site per	16,531	1.00	site per	20,000	-	**sites**
Reservable Picnic Shelters (Large 51-100)	5.00	1.00	site per	105,798	1.00	site per	50,000	**6**	**sites**
Outdoor Pavilions (100+)	1.00	1.00	site per	528,989	1.00	site per	50,000	**10**	**sites**
Playgrounds (Nature Play) - (Connections to regional bike trails)	11.00	1.00	site per	48,090	1.00	site per	25,000	**10**	**sites**
Paved Trails (Miles)	42.00	0.08	miles per	1,000	0.10	miles per	1,000	**11**	**miles**
Soft/Non-Paved Trails (Miles)	114.00	0.22	miles per	1,000	0.25	miles per	1,000	**18**	**miles**
Nature/Hiking/Backpacking Trails (Miles)	75.00	0.14	miles per	1,000	0.20	miles per	1,000	**31**	**miles**
Equine Trails (Miles)	30.00	0.06	miles per	1,000	0.08	miles per	1,000	**12**	**miles**
Mountain Bike/BMX Trails (Miles)	9.00	0.02	miles per	1,000	0.08	miles per	1,000	**33**	**miles**

2015 Five Rivers MetroParks Estimated Population	528,989

Level of Service Benchmark Comparison

	2015 Inventory - Developed Facilities																			
Park Type	Five Rivers MetroParks Inventory	Five Rivers MetroParks Current Service Level based upon population			Cleveland MetroParks Current Service Level based upon population			East Bay Regional Park District Current Service Level based upon population			Lake County Forest Preserce Current Service Level based upon population			Oakland County Parks and Recreation Current Service Level based upon population			Toledo MetroParks Current Service Level based upon population		
Conservation MetroParks	3,875.30	7.33	acres per	1,000		acres per			acres per			acres per			acres per			acres per	
Community and Nature MetroParks	10,045.78	18.99	acres per	1,000		acres per			acres per			acres per			acres per			acres per	
Urban MetroParks	193.72	0.37	acres per	1,000		acres per			acres per			acres per			acres per			acres per	
Total Park Acres	14,114.80	26.68	acres per	1,000	18.24	acres per	1,000	45.77	acres per	1,000	43.11	acres per	1,000	5.41	acres per	1,000	27.47	acres per	1,000
OUTDOOR AMENITIES:																				
Reservable Picnic Shelters (Small 1-25)	6.00	1.00	site per	88,165	1.00	site per	-	1.00	site per	-	1.00	site per	-	1.00	site per	-	1.00	site per	145,095
Reservable Picnic Shelters (Medium 26-50)	32.00	1.00	site per	16,531	1.00	site per	210,852	1.00	site per	46,429	1.00	site per	234,487	1.00	site per	1,237,868	1.00	site per	108,822
Reservable Picnic Shelters (Large 51-100)	5.00	1.00	site per	105,798	1.00	site per	63,256	1.00	site per	72,222	1.00	site per	117,244	1.00	site per	176,838	1.00	site per	39,571
Outdoor Pavilions (100+)	1.00	1.00	site per	528,989	1.00	site per	97,316	1.00	site per	57,778	1.00	site per	31,976	1.00	site per	95,221	1.00	site per	435,286
Playgrounds (Nature Play) - (Connections to regional bike trails)	11.00	1.00	site per	48,090	1.00	site per	34,192	1.00	site per	144,444	1.00	site per	78,162	1.00	site per	88,419	1.00	site per	31,092
Paved Trails (Miles)	42.00	0.08	miles per	1,000	0.09	miles per	1,000	0.06	miles per	1,000	0.01	miles per	1,000	0.01	miles per	1,000	0.09	miles per	1,000
Soft/Non-Paved Trails (Miles)	114.00	0.22	miles per	1,000	0.15	miles per	1,000	0.42	miles per	1,000	0.23	miles per	1,000	0.05	miles per	1,000	0.25	miles per	1,000
Nature/Hiking/Backpacking Trails (Miles)	75.00	0.14	miles per	1,000	0.06	miles per	1,000	0.42	miles per	1,000	0.24	miles per	1,000	0.00	miles per	1,000	0.19	miles per	1,000
Equine Trails (Miles)	30.00	0.06	miles per	1,000	0.08	miles per	1,000	0.41	miles per	1,000	0.06	miles per	1,000	0.01	miles per	1,000	0.05	miles per	1,000
Mountain Bike/BMX Trails (Miles)	9.00	0.02	miles per	1,000	0.02	miles per	1,000	0.38	miles per	1,000	-	miles per	1,000	0.01	miles per	1,000	-	miles per	1,000

2015 Five Rivers MetroParks Estimated Population	528,989
2015 Cleveland MetroParks Estimated Population	1,265,111
2015 East Bay Regional Park District Estimated Population	2,600,000
2015 Lake County Forest Preserve Estimated Population	703,462
2015 Oakland County Parks and Recreation Estimated Population	1,237,868
2015 Toledo MetroParks Estimated Population	435,286

3.2 IMPORTANCE RANKING FOR FACILITIES AND RECREATION PROGRAMS

The purpose of the Facility and Program Priority Rankings is to provide a prioritized list of facility/ amenity needs and recreation program needs for the community served by FRMP.

This rankings model evaluated both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data includes the statistically valid community survey, which asked residents to list unmet needs and rank their importance. Qualitative data includes resident feedback obtained in community input, demographics and trends.

A weighted scoring system was used to determine the priorities for parks and recreation facilities/ amenities and recreation programs. For instance as noted below, a weighted value of 3 for the Unmet Desires means that out of a total of 100%, unmet needs make up 35% of the total score. Similarly, importance-ranking also makes up 35%, while Consultant Evaluation makes up 30% of the total score, thus totaling 100%.

This scoring system considers the following:

- Community Survey
  - Unmet needs for facilities and recreation programs – This is used as a factor from the total number of households mentioning whether they have a need for a facility/ program and the extent to which their need for facilities and recreation programs has been met. Survey participants were asked to identify this for different facilities/ amenities and recreation programs
  - Importance ranking for facilities – This is used as a factor from the importance allocated to a facility or program by the community. Each respondent was asked to identify the top four most important facilities and recreation programs
- Consultant Evaluation
  - Factor derived from the consultant's evaluation of program and facility priority based on survey results, demographics, trends and overall community input

The weighted scores were as follows:

- 70% from the statistically valid community survey results
- 30% from consultant evaluation using demographic and trends data, community focus groups and public meetings and levels of service

These weighted scores were then calculated to provide an overall score and priority ranking for the system as a whole. The results of the priority ranking were tabulated into three categories: High Priority (top third), Medium Priority (middle third) and Low Priority (bottom third).

The combined total of the weighted scores for Community Unmet Needs, Community Importance, and Consultant Evaluation is the total score based on which the Facility/Amenity and Program Priority is determined.

NOTE: The following charts color-coding reflects the upper third (green), middle third (yellow), and bottom third (blue) in terms of ranking.

As observed below, the chart depicts overall rankings for facility and amenity priorities followed by rankings for five major age segments (under 35, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+). The top five overall rankings for facilities and amenities are:

- Nature and hiking trails
- Paved biking trails
- Fresh food market
- Swimming areas
- Playgrounds

Facility / Amenity Priority Rankings	Overall Ranking	U-35	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Nature & hiking trails	1	1	1	1	1	1
Paved biking trails	2	2	3	2	2	2
Fresh food market	3	6	5	3	3	3
Swimming areas	4	3	2	4	5	10
Playgrounds	5	4	4	5	4	5
Picnic areas/shelters	6	12	7	6	6	6
Botanical gardens	7	17	11	9	8	4
Wildlife/wetlands/observation areas	8	7	8	10	7	12
Fishing areas	9	15	10	11	9	7
Historic sites	10	14	15	7	11	9
Tent camping	11	9	6	8	12	18
Outdoor adventure facilities	12	5	14	12	13	15
Water trails (rivers & creeks)	13	8	12	14	10	16
Bird viewing & butterfly viewing areas	14	16	17	16	14	8
Outdoor recreation equipment rental facilities	15	11	9	13	16	13
Farm animal & agricultural facilities	16	10	16	17	15	14
Indoor nature education/visitor center	17	18	13	15	18	11
Rafting/kayaking areas	18	13	19	18	19	19
Sailing, paddling/rowing in lakes/rivers	19	21	18	20	17	21
Motorized boating, personal watercraft use in lakes/rivers	20	22	21	19	21	17
Multi-purpose fields	21	24	20	21	22	22
Horse bridle trails & riding center	22	19	24	23	20	20
Sledding/cross-country skiing	23	20	22	24	23	23
Ice skating	24	23	23	22	24	24

The following chart depicts overall rankings for program priorities with rankings for five major age segments (under 35, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+). The top five overall rankings for programs are:

- Music and performance in parks
- Festivals/large community special events
- Active older adult programs
- Fitness programs and events in parks
- Gardening and landscaping programs

Program Priority Rankings	Overall Ranking	U-35	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Music & performances in parks	1	2	3	3	1	2
Festivals/large community special events	2	1	2	1	3	3
Active older adult programs	3	12	11	5	2	1
Fitness programs & events in parks	4	3	1	2	4	7
Gardening & landscaping programs	5	6	7	4	5	4
Living history programs	6	5	9	7	6	5
Skill development programs	7	10	4	6	7	12
Nature education programs	8	9	6	10	9	6
Food & farming programs	9	8	8	8	8	8
Outdoor adventrure/fitness competitions	10	4	10	9	10	11
Outdoor adventure/recreation/education day camps	11	7	5	11	11	9
Camping programs	12	11	13	14	13	14
After school programs at selected sites	13	13	12	12	15	13
Birding programs	14	15	15	15	12	10
Ice skating	15	14	14	13	16	16
Volunteering	16	16	16	16	14	15

3.3 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) - NEEDS, CRITERIA AND PRIORITIES

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The 2016-26 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a 10-year projection of planned physical improvements and equipment replacement to the park system. The CIP provides capital projections and a "blueprint" for spending priorities to support the desired outcomes of the 2016-2026 FRMP Comprehensive Master Plan. The goal is to invest 4-6% of total assets less land value annually into maintaining what FRMP owns. No actual expenditures are incurred until they are included in the annual budget and/or reviewed and approved by the FRMP Board of Commissioners, in accordance with applicable Ohio Revised Code and Montgomery County Purchasing Rules.

One of the core functions of the FRMP Board of Park Commissioners is to preserve and protect existing park system assets. The 2015 Community Survey, conducted as part of the 2016-2026 FRMP Comprehensive Master Planning process, found that residents expect the park system to be well maintained. In essence, the public directed FRMP to "take care of existing parks, facilities and amenities." With this mandate in mind, the CIP identifies and prioritizes necessary funding for the ongoing capital maintenance or replacement of existing assets before allocating funds for new parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, based on the FRMP's goal to achieve 20% cost recovery for the agency, capital improvements with the ability to contribute to this goal should be given priority over projects that would represent new operational costs with minimal to no offsetting revenue.

The CIP should be viewed as a working document, updated at least annually to reflect actual revenue collections, refine capital and operating cost projections, and potential changes in community or FRMP's system needs. The total costs of capital improvements outlined in this CIP far exceed the revenue projections from current funding streams. Opportunities for new revenue sources and/or partnerships to help share costs will need to be explored to accelerate capital improvements, especially during the first five years of the plan.

3.3.2 TYPES OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

For the purpose of this CIP, capital improvements currently are defined as projects that have a monetary value of at least $1,000, a useful life of at least three years, and result in the creation or renovation of a fixed asset that allows FRMP to serve the park and recreation needs of the community. Examples of capital improvements include construction, remodeling, equipment replacements, or purchase of parkland, park fixtures, buildings, vehicles, and equipment. Planning efforts associated with capital improvements, including architectural, engineering, and legal services, are also considered capital expenditures and incorporated within the CIP.

Capital improvements within this CIP are divided within two classifications:

Capital Maintenance: The improvement or replacement of existing park assets and any related planning efforts. Capital Maintenance is required to preserve the usefulness and extend the life of existing park assets and may be the result of capital replacement plans or unexpected, emergency needs.

New Project: The purchase and/or development of new FRMP, recreation facilities, and/or equipment. "Soft costs" associated with the planning and design of the park system or specific parks are also classified as a "New Project". Most New Projects are identified and designed through an extensive planning process with input from many stakeholders, including the community, user groups, elected officials, other governmental entities, partners, staff, and the FRMP Board of Commissioners.

3.3.3 PRIORITIZATION OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Continued investment in the FRMP system is critical to providing quality parks and recreation experiences for the residents of Montgomery County. Since funding for capital improvements is finite, projects should be prioritized based on the following criteria:

All Improvements: All capital improvements must support the goals and objectives of the 2016-2026 FRMP Comprehensive Master Plan as approved or amended by the Board of Commissioners.

Priority 1: Capital Maintenance and improvements for parks and facilities designed to generate operating revenue. Since the condition of these facilities has a direct impact on operational costs and revenue generation, the Capital Maintenance needs for revenue facilities receive the highest priority.

Priority 2: Capital Maintenance needs of existing FRMP parks and facilities, and equipment. The 2015 Community Survey asked residents what parks and recreation services should receive the most attention. Over 42% of respondents identified the maintenance and cleanliness of parks and trails as their highest ranking for the FRMP system.

Priority 3: New Projects enhancing existing parkland or community assets with consideration given for meeting unmet needs in the park system.

Priority 4: New Projects requiring the purchase of new parkland with consideration given for meeting unmet community needs.

The following additional criteria should also be considered in conjunction with the criteria listed above: public safety and legal requirements, protecting current investments, revenue production and external funding sources, labor and resources cost savings and strategic priorities.

3.3.4 PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

This section assesses the capital improvement projects that are currently proposed to be completed through 2026. These improvements were then categorized in a variety of ways to provide a more in depth understanding of the proposed CIP.

TOTAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BY YEAR

The table below shows the total proposed capital investment by year and provides the percentage of the total improvement dollars for each timeframe. The total capital improvements for the first several years of the plan exceed the recommended investment amount of $2.2 to $3.3 million per year (based on total asset value less land). This is to address deferred capital investments that occurred during the past five to eight years, as a result of reductions in property tax and state revenues, which in turn reduced funding for operating and capital investments.

Total Capital Improvements by Year							
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 or Later	No Timeframe	Total
Total Capital Improvements	$5,424,815	$4,419,617	$6,213,090	$9,876,250	$10,324,938	$ 436,500	$ 36,695,210
Percentage of Total	15%	12%	17%	27%	28%	1%	100%

NEW DEVELOPMENT VERSUS EXISTING RENOVATION

This section expresses the planned capital improvements in terms of new development and existing renovation / replacement for each year and shows the percentage breakdown for each. The consultant team recommends a distribution of 30% new development to 70% existing renovation / replacement, which the agency is doing a great job of hitting the mark.

Capital Improvements by Type								
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 or Later	No Timeframe	Total	%
New Development	$1,255,075	$ 870,200	$1,315,040	$1,786,550	$ 5,118,475	$ 51,500	$ 10,396,840	28.3%
Renovation / Replacement	$4,169,740	$3,549,417	$4,898,050	$8,089,700	$ 5,206,463	$ 385,000	$ 26,298,370	71.7%
Total	$5,424,815	$4,419,617	$6,213,090	$9,876,250	$10,324,938	$ 436,500	$ 36,695,210	100.0%

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BY DEPARTMENT

Below is a breakdown of proposed capital investments for each department by year, and reveals what percentage of the total CIP is attributed to each department.

Total Capital Improvements by Department								
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 or Later	No Timeframe	Total	%
Business Services	$ 469,100	$ 656,650	$ 57,000	$ 84,000	$ 245,000	$ 385,000	$ 1,896,750	5.2%
Conservation	$ 412,600	$ 100,000	$ 196,000	$ 188,000	$ 743,000		$ 1,639,600	4.5%
Outdoor Connections	$ 732,600	$ 290,400	$ 770,000	$ 895,000	$ 415,000	$ 1,500	$ 3,104,500	8.5%
Park Services	$2,393,175	$2,190,867	$4,268,390	$8,054,850	$ 8,191,938	$ 50,000	$ 25,149,220	68.5%
Planning & Project Management		$ 950,000	$ 600,000	$ 600,000	$ 570,000		$ 2,720,000	7.4%
Rangers	$1,417,340	$ 231,700	$ 321,700	$ 54,400	$ 160,000		$ 2,185,140	6.0%
Total	$5,424,815	$4,419,617	$6,213,090	$9,876,250	$10,324,938	$ 436,500	$ 36,695,210	100.0%

TOTAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BY CATEGORY

The following table categorizes the planned improvements into eight distinct areas. These are then broken down by timeframe and compared to total capital improvement dollars as a percentage.

Total Capital Improvements by Category								
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 or Later	No Timeframe	Total	%
Equipment	$2,076,575	$ 897,250	$ 824,300	$ 402,950	$ 1,423,325		$ 5,624,400	15.3%
Renovations	$1,933,100	$1,591,067	$2,810,040	$ 585,400	$ 5,503,500		$ 12,423,107	33.9%
Park & Facility Improvements	$ 99,500	$ 78,500	$ 269,500	$6,135,600	$ 364,313	$ 1,500	$ 6,948,913	18.9%
Natural Resource Management	$ 150,000	$ 50,000			$ 550,000		$ 750,000	2.0%
Amenity Improvements / Replacement	$ 550,040	$ 799,400	$1,525,250	$1,886,300	$ 1,793,800	$ 50,000	$ 6,604,790	18.0%
Interpretive / Wayfinding Signage	$ 145,000	$ 37,400	$ 707,000	$ 866,000	$ 30,000		$ 1,785,400	4.9%
Land Acquisition		$ 250,000			$ 250,000		$ 500,000	1.4%
Technology	$ 470,600	$ 716,000	$ 77,000		$ 410,000	$ 385,000	$ 2,058,600	5.6%
Total	$5,424,815	$4,419,617	$6,213,090	$9,876,250	$10,324,938	$ 436,500	$ 36,695,210	100.0%

3.3.5 RECOMMENDED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to the proposed capital improvements that are currently scheduled, the consultant team has developed a short list of new investments for FRMP to consider. These recommendations are intended to drive energy into the system and introduce new revenue earning opportunities for FRMP. The table below describes these recommended capital improvements with estimated costs and potential sources of funding to support their development.

Recommended Capital Improvements		
Description	Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Proposed Trail Improvements	$15,971,000	Economic Impact Funding or TIF / Grants / Other Providers
Add Equestrian Campground	$625,000	Area/State Equestrian Organizations
Renovate or develop one MetroPark designated as a Heart Healthy Park	$2,500,000	Naming Rights - Health Care Organizations
Add 3,500 -5,000 square feet to 2nd St Market	$875,000 - $1,250,000	Naming Rights
Develop or lease property for a Outdoor Adventure Canopy Tour	$2,000,000	Private Partnership
Develop a practice adventure park area	$400,000	Capital Funds and Fees
Add river access put-in areas with parking & restrooms (includes parking, restroom/changing area, lighting signage, etc)	$350,000 (per site)	Grants and Partnerships

3.4 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

When developing design principles for parks it is important that each park be programmed, planned, and designed to meet the needs of its service area and classification within the overall system. The term programming when used in the context of planning and developing parkland, refers to a list of uses and facilities, and does not always include staff-developed recreation programs. The program for a site can include such elements as, shelters, restrooms, trails, natural resource stewardship, open meadows, nature preserves, or interpretive areas. These types of amenities can be developed as lead or support components in a given park. The intended needs of the population served should be considered and accommodated at each park. Every park, regardless of type, needs to have an established set of outcomes. Once those outcomes are established, the parks are designed to operational and maintenance cost outcomes.

Each park classification category serves a specific purpose. The features and facilities in the park must be designed for the number of age segments the park is intended to serve, the desired length of stay deemed appropriate, and the uses it has been assigned. The recreation needs and services required differ based on the age segments that make up the community. A varying number of age segments will be accommodated with the park program depending on the classification of the park.

Example Design Principles that might be appropriate for FRMP:

- Design to Protect the Region's Natural Heritage.
- Design to Create Experiences that Inspire a Personal Connection to Nature.
- Design to promote the conservation and use of FRMP lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people in the region.
- Design to preserve and create healthy, dynamic and sustainable ecosystems and ecosystem services that are in harmony with the natural environment and at the same time compatible with a sustainable built environment.
- Design to promote and create dynamic and interactive connections and trails to and within FRMP facilities using multiple transportation modes that include a variety of amenities for a variety of users.
- Design to promote nature and/ or free range play.
- Design to promote and enhance the FRMP Interpretive Master Plan and each park's individual interpretive plan.
- Design to FRMP organizational and operational standards.
- Design based on what is desired by the community based on regular community input from surveys, focus groups and public forums.
- Design based on input, creativity and innovation of FRMP staff.
- Design for project lifecycle that includes and considers FRMP goals and objectives, revenue, operations, return on investment, value of the build and cost benefit and cost recovery goal which is determined on the front end of the process.
- Design to core programs to be provided on site and the desired capacity of the park.
- Design for partnership compatibility.
- Design to the system's level of capacity and capability.
- Design for diversity of specific population segments and number of experiences for each age group including length of stay, age segments and experiences.
- Design to the system typology to ensure each park supports and enhances the overall FRMP system.
- Design for cross promoting other regional attractions or other elements of the FRMP system.

3.5 FUNDING AND REVENUE STRATEGIES

3.5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order for FRMP to continue to achieve a strong financial position, there are areas of emphasis related to the business elements of the agency that require additional training and proficiency for staff. These areas include the following:

- Fundraising
- Partnering
- Government Finance
- Cost of Service and Cost Recovery
- Enterprise Management
- Operational Management

No two park and recreation agencies are alike. Their differences stem from how they are governed to how they are funded and operated. Because of this uniqueness, the purpose of this funding report is not to provide answers, but to assist FRMP leadership and staff in identifying skill sets and required knowledge to ensure long-term financial sustainability for the agency.

3.5.2 TOPICS OF IMPORTANCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDRAISING

- FRMP has two Foundations and a Friends Group that support specific park sites, and a Park Foundation that raises money for the entire parks system. The Development Plan created by FRMP has specific goals and objectives that align very well to the future capital needs of the agency
- Continue to identify and develop relationships with philanthropists in the community that will support the park system's vision and mission

PARTNERING

- Continue to partner with private and not-for-profit groups while continuing to evaluate the funds raised or collected from its attractions and facilities by these groups without FRMP receiving a share of the gross revenue
- Ensure staff understands true costs and then the revenue desired based on an operating pro-forma from any event that is being created or held in FRMP facilities or parks
- Have working, signed agreements with all types of partners to include (public/private, public/not for profit and public/public partners). This requires separate operational policies for each type of partnership that is established
- All partnerships need to have working agreements with measureable outcomes. These agreements are to be reviewed at least every two years to ensure each partner is accountable
- Consider privatizing services where FRMP does not have the capital and/or operating funds to operate and maintain a facility, park or service at a level of cost recovery desired
- Continue to work with the private sector to develop team building days in FRMP parks and facilities by creating cleanup and "fix up" days. This builds community support and it will enhance a park or facility to a much higher level. This gives the corporate partner an opportunity to demonstrate their value and commitment to the community
- Determine sponsorship opportunities and levels of sponsorships for FRMP every five years
- Follow the sponsorship plan and policy outlined in the FRMP Development Plan

GOVERNMENT FINANCE

- Track the value of the park system, less land value, for what the assets are worth and where those assets are in their life cycle. This will allow FRMP to determine where capital improvements need to be made and the cost benefit of those improvements to the system
- Consider asking the public for a capital improvement levy or bond, paid for from property taxes every 10 years or whenever FRMP asset lifecycles falls below 50% of useful life
- Consider establishing separate business enterprise systems for revenue producing facilities and programs such as 2nd Street Market or Riverscape MetroPark
- Develop a cost benefit analysis on all capital improvement projects prior to proceeding with these projects to determine if they are financially feasible
- Understand the real expenses of "Capital." What are the carrying costs of land, facilities, and equipment? Do not burden the system with capital projects that cost the agency more to own than the land is worth

COST RECOVERY

- Budget 4-6% of your total operating budget to support and maintain existing capital improvements and assets
- Replace revenue-producing equipment where appropriate based on level of use and the condition of equipment every 5 years to keep the user experience relevant and competitive
- Include senior management staff on all design decisions. Require that landscape designers and facility architects work closely with staff to outline maintenance costs and potential revenues (if applicable) on all parks and facilities to ensure their design is aligned with the operating and revenue budgets
- Acquire additional land along trails to establish land leases for concession operations to help support operational costs of the trail
- Identify true costs to deliver programs and maintain parks, trails and facilities- both direct and indirect costs so that true costs of services are determined on a unit cost basis
- Develop business plans on any program service or facility that costs $50,000 or more to operate per year with a goal to deliver a cost recovery goal
- Classify the agency's services based on essential, important and value added criteria and then price services that are furthest away from the agency's mission at full cost recovery levels

ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT

- Establish business enterprise budgets for revenue producing facilities and programs
- Design parks and recreation facilities for efficiency, productivity and revenue opportunities that will offset operational costs at a predetermined cost recovery goal
- When building a park or trail system, require an agreement from public officials that the trail system will receive the appropriate amount of operational funding to ensure that the facilities can be maintained once developed, to relieve undue pressure placed on the FRMP budget. This requires that the staff develops an operational impact cost for each capital improvement developed for the system
- Budget for marketing and branding of revenue producing facilities at 3-5% of total operating costs
- Understand the size of the market for core program areas and facilities and how much of the market FRMP controls. Is there opportunity to penetrate the market further?
- Study and determine market strategies that will make a measurable difference and increase the revenue capability of a program or facility targeted by FRMP
- Inform users and partners of what costs are incurred by FRMP, so they appreciate the value of a facility or service. This strategy will help to reduce entitlement

- Track user analytics to understand who and how often the park system is being used by patrons
- Continue to educate and train staff on concession management- what it takes to make it worth the time and investment for FRMP to provide the service versus an outside contractor. Don't allow special interest groups to have exclusive rights to concession operations without paying FRMP some level of gross revenue

OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Identify and consider not maintaining those amenities or structures in the FRMP system that are no longer used and remove them from the park system
- Manage by standards and track costs to implement each type of standard, whether it be programs or maintenance
- Train staff, regularly on business principals, cost recovery, cost of service and customer service
- Know the demographics of FRMP users to determine their needs and capability of supporting program and capital costs
- Track population trends. FRMP should track population trends and determine how demographic changes will affect the agency in the future
- Ensure the agency is "right sized." Always continue to evaluate its productivity levels. Have a flexible as possible workforce, so that there is little or no carrying costs once the peak seasons are over
- Hold staff accountable to cost recovery goals for programs, facilities and parks maintained with revenue to support those services. Establish a goal to increase cost recover by 2% a year until the agency reaches its overall park system cost recovery goal
- Track and compare staffing levels and costs of similar sized park systems. Analyze and update as needed the wages and benefits for all positions every five years to ensure FRMP wages are competitive with other Ohio systems. The best management practices goal should be no more than 60-65% of total operational expenses are tied to employee costs.
- Employ the right people for the right job, for the right pay, to achieve the right outcome and benefit to FRMP. Establish functional responsibilities and desired productivity for key positions in order for the agency to meet its goals and objectives
- Reward employees for efficiency and productivity
- Train staff to understand the management strategies of their supervisors as one way to prepare them for positions at the next level of responsibility
- Develop and conduct annual revenue and efficiency work sessions with FRMP staff
- Hold employees accountable to productivity standards and cost recovery levels and give them measurable outcomes to manage to and report quarterly or every six months
- Develop sustainable performance outcomes to hold all operational areas within FRMP accountable
- Understand all available revenue sources used by parks and recreation agencies are applicable to your local operation. Know the terminology and how to implement them into the FRMP system

FUNDING SOURCES FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS AND OPERATIONS

The following sources are financial options for FRMP to consider when identifying funds to support recommended capital improvements outlined in the Comprehensive Master Plan and operational costs associated with managing the agency for the future. Many of these funding sources may not currently be permitted by the state of Ohio or have never been used, but need to be pursued through legislative means should FRMP see the value in accessing these funding sources.

Governmental Funding Programs: Varieties of funding sources are available from federal and state levels of government for park-related projects. For example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been reinstated for 2016 levels at $150 million and can provide capital funds to state and local governments to acquire, develop and improve outdoor recreation areas. Transportation Enhancement Funds, such as SAFETULU funds, as well as Safe Routes to School Funds can be used for the trail improvements outlined in the master plan. SAFETULU monies require a 20% match by the participating local agency and Safe Routes to School Funds require no match by the agency. AmeriCorps Grants can be used to fund for park maintenance and programs. FRMP does use several of these funding sources for some of its operations.

Economic Development Grants for Public Works and Development of Facilities: The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), provides grants to states, counties, and cities designated as redevelopment areas by EDA for public works projects that can include developing trails and greenway facilities. There is a 30% local match required, except in severely distressed areas where the federal contribution can reach 80%.

CDBG (Community Development Block Grants): Used by many cities and counties to enhance parks. These funds could be used to support the re-development of major facilities based on its location in the city or county and what it will do to enhance the neighborhood and schools surrounding the park, which is the purpose for CDBG monies.

Federal Housing Grants: Help support parks near federal housing areas and should be pursued if appropriate.

State Water Management Funds: Funds established to protect or improve water quality could apply to a greenways/trails project if a strong link exists between the development of a greenway and the adjacent/nearby water quality. Possible uses of these funds include the purchase of critical strips of land along rivers and streams for protection, which could then be used for greenways; develop educational materials, displays; or for storm water management.

Local Option Income Tax for Parks: Helps to support park systems in Ohio, and law enforcement in parks.

Tax Increment Finance District: Commonly used for financing redevelopment projects. A Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) involves the issuance of tax-exempt bonds to pay for front-end infrastructure and eligible development costs in partnership with private developers that are considered Quality of Life improvements. As redevelopment occurs in the city or county, the "tax increment" resulting from redevelopment projects is used to retire the debt issued to fund the eligible redevelopment costs. The public portion of the redevelopment project funds itself using the additional taxes generated by the project. TIFs may be used to fund park improvements and development as an essential infrastructure cost. These funds would work well in the downtown park redevelopment and in trail development.

Utility Lease Fee: Utility lease fees have been used to support parks in the form of utility easements, storm water runoff and paying for development rights below the ground. This funding source is derived from fees on property owned by a park system and is based on measures, such as the amount of impervious surfacing and fees from utility companies having access through the park. It is used by many cities and counties to acquire and develop greenways and other open space resources that provide improvements to the park system. Improvements can include trails, drainage areas, and retention ponds that serve multiple purposes, such as recreation, environmental protection, and storm water management. This could also be a source for utility companies to make a contribution to support the parks and trails in the future. This has been very successful in Houston along its bayous and in King County Washington.

Floodway Funding Sources: Many cities and counties have used floodway funding sources to support development and operations of greenways. This funding source is used extensively in Houston, Texas, and in Cleveland, Ohio.

Transient Occupancy Tax: This funding source is used by many park systems to fund improvements as a result of hotels financially benefitting from park system special event participants lodging at their establishments. The Transient Occupancy Taxes are typically set at 3-5% on the value of a hotel room that can be dedicated for park and recreation improvement purposes as well. Because of the value that parks can provide as a result of special events, such as competitive sporting events like mud runs and river runs, and entertainment and cultural events, hotels in the area that benefit could earmark a portion of their occupancy funds to support park and recreation related improvements. This funding source could be implemented progressively by the county, as FRMP increases the number of events it sponsors or develops. Tracking the economic value back to the hotels is important to build trust with the hotel business community.

Food and Beverage Tax: This 1/8% sales tax is currently used by cities and counties and requires voter approval. These dollars can come from the local community, as well as visitors to the city and county to help pay for a bond to finance future park related improvements. Food and Beverage Taxes have been commonly accepted in most Midwest communities.

Capital Improvement Fee: A capital improvement fee can be added to an admission fee to a recreation facility or park attraction to help pay back the cost of developing the facility or attraction. This fee is usually applied to amphitheaters, golf courses, aquatic facilities, recreation centers, stadiums, and special use facilities. The funds generated can be used either to pay back the cost of the capital improvement on a revenue bond that was used to develop the facility. Capital improvement fees normally are $5 per person for playing on the improved site or can be collected as a parking fee or admission fee.

Capital Improvement Fund Purpose: The purpose of a Capital Improvement Fund is to allow for the collection of fees, donations, and revenue from vending machines, and to allow for depositing those fees, donations, revenues from vending machines in the fund for the purpose of future land acquisition or specific capital improvements as may be deemed necessary by the board for future improvement or expansion of the park system.

Park and Recreation Capital Improvement Fund: Fees are established and collected by a park agency for particular special events held on park property. Private organizations that hold their events on park property and who charge admission for the event should donate a portion of those charges to the agency's Capital Improvement Fund.

Greenway Trust Fund: Another strategy used by several park systems is the creation of a trust fund for land acquisition and facility development that is administered by a private greenway advocacy group, or by a local greenway commission. A trust fund can aid in the acquisition of large parcels of high-priority properties that may be lost if not acquired by private sector initiative. Money may be contributed to the trust fund from a variety of sources, including the municipal and county general funds, private grants, and gifts.

Local Private-Sector Funding: Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for greenway development through one or more of the following methods:

- Donations of cash to a specific greenway segment
- Donations of services by large corporations or hospitals to reduce the cost of greenway implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a specific greenway
- Reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support greenway implementation and can supply essential products for facility development

World Wildlife Fund Innovative Grants Program: This organization awards small grants to local, regional and statewide nonprofit organizations to help implement innovative strategies for the conservation of natural resources. Grants are offered to support projects that accomplish one or more of the following: (1) conserve wetlands; (2) protect endangered species; (3) preserve migratory birds; (4) conserve coastal resources; and (5) establish and sustain protected natural areas, such as greenways.

Innovative grants can help pay for the administrative costs for projects including planning, technical assistance, legal and other costs to facilitate the acquisition of critical lands; retaining consultants and other experts; and preparing visual presentations and brochures or other conservation activities. The maximum award for a single grant is $10,000.

Wetlands Reserve Program: The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides direct payments to private landowners who agree to place sensitive wetlands under permanent easements. This program can be used to fund the protection of open space and greenways within riparian corridors.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (Small Watersheds) Grants: The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding to state and local agencies or nonprofit organizations authorized to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed improvements involving less than 250,000 acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to improve watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50-percent local match for public park and recreation, and fish and wildlife projects.

National Recreational Trails Program: These grants are available to government and nonprofit agencies, for amounts ranging from $5,000 to $50,000, for the building of a trail or piece of a trail. It is a reimbursement grant program (sponsor must fund 100% of the project up front) and requires a 20% local match. This is an annual program with an application deadline at the end of January. The available funds are split such that 30% goes toward motorized trails, 30% to non-motorized trails, and 40% is discretionary for trail construction.

Design Arts Program: The National Endowment for the Arts provides grants to states and local agencies, individuals and nonprofit organizations for projects that incorporate urban design, historic preservation, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and other community improvement activities, including greenway development. Grants to organizations and agencies must be matched by a 50-percent local contribution. Agencies can receive up to $50,000.

Partnerships: FRMP already has a large number of partnerships with organizations in the community. Some have equitable agreements for how the partnership is financed and others do not. FRMP should ensure its written policies and agreements for public/public partnerships, public/not-for-private partnerships and public/private partnerships include measureable outcomes and equity for each involved partner.

FUNDING SOURCES FOR OPERATIONAL DOLLARS

Land Leases/Concessions: Land leases and concessions are public/private partnerships in which the agency provides land or space for private commercial operations that will enhance the recreation experience in exchange for payments to help reduce operating costs. These can range from food service restaurant operations, to full management of recreation type attractions. Leases usually pay back a percentage of the value of the land each year (in the 15% category) and a percentage of gross from the restaurant or attractions. They also pay sales tax and employee income tax.

Land Leases: Many communities across the United States have allowed land leases for commercial retail operations along trails as a source of funding for maintaining the trails. The communities that have used land leases look for retail operations that support the needs of recreation users of the trails. This includes coffee shops, grill and food concessions, small restaurants, ice cream shops, bicycle shops, farmers markets and small local business.

Sale of Development Rights below the Ground: Some park or public agencies have sold their development rights next to greenways below the ground for fiber optic lines and utility lines for gas and electric on a lineal foot basis. .

Admission to the Park: Many park agencies in the United States have admission fees based on a per car, bike or person basis to access a park that can be used to help support operational costs. Car costs range from $3 to $5 per car, and $2 for a bicycle or person. This would only be recommended for regional locations, if it were considered. This fee may be useful for large events and festivals that have the capability to operate as a fee based park. It is not unusual for city/county parks to charge fees to access regional parks to support the operations.

Parking Fee: Many parks agencies that do not charge an admission fee charge a parking fee. Parking rates range from $3 to $4 per day. This funding source helps support special events and festivals. For example, city and county park systems in Florida charge parking fees for beaches, sports complexes and special event sites.

User Fee: User fees are paid by a user of recreation facilities or programs to offset the costs of services provided in operating a park facility or in delivering recreation programs and services. A perception of "value" is instilled in the community for the benefits the system is provides to the user.

Corporate Naming Rights: In this arrangement, corporations invest in the right to name an event, facility, or product within a park or facility in exchange for an annual fee, typically over a multi-year period. The cost of the naming right is based on the impression points the park or facility will receive from the newspapers, TV, websites, and visitors or users to the park. Naming rights for park and recreation facilities are typically attached to amphitheaters, recreation attractions, trails and events.

Corporate Sponsorships: Corporations can also underwrite a portion or all of the cost of an event, program, or activity based on their name being associated with the service. Sponsorships typically are title sponsors, presenting sponsors, associate sponsors, product sponsors, or in-kind sponsors. Many park agencies seek corporate support for these types of activities.

Greenway Fundraising Programs: Agencies across the United States have used greenways for not-for-profit fundraisers in the form of walks, runs, bicycle races, and special events. The local managing agency usually gets $2-$5 per participants in the events to go back to support the operations and maintenance costs.

Greenway Sponsors: A sponsorship program for greenway amenities allows for smaller donations to be received from both individuals and businesses. The program must be well planned and organized, with design standards and associated costs established for each amenity. Project elements that may be funded include mile markers, call boxes, benches, trash receptacles, entry signage and bollards, and picnic areas.

Maintenance Endowment Fund: This is a fund dedicated exclusively for supporting park or facility maintenance, funded by a percentage of user fees from programs, events, and rentals and is dedicated to protecting the asset where the activity is occurring.

Permit Fees: This fee is incorporated for exclusive use, such as for picnic shelters, programs and special events held in a park or facility by other organizations. Permit fees typically include a base fee for all direct and indirect costs incurred by the park agency to provide the space on an exclusive basis, plus a percentage of the gross revenue for major special events and tournaments that generate revenue. Alcohol permits should be explored and, if determined worthwhile, added to these permits which would generate more dollars for these special use areas. Milwaukee County Parks has had great success with moveable beer gardens for special event sites and attractions in their parks.

Tipping Fees: In Michigan some park systems get tipping fees collected at county owned landfills are redirected back to their parks systems to help pay for the cost of litter pick up in county parks.

Conservation Reserve Program: The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), through its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, provides payments to farm owners and operators to place highly erodible or environmentally sensitive landscapes into a 10-15 year conservation contract. The participant, in return for annual payments during this period, agrees to implement a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district for converting sensitive lands to less intensive uses. Individuals, associations, corporations, estates, trusts, cities, counties and other entities are eligible for this program. Funds from this program can be used to fund the maintenance of open space and non-public-use greenways along bodies of water and ridgelines.

Adopt-A-Foot Program: These are typically small grant programs that fund new construction, repair/renovation, maps, trail brochures, facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment) as well as provide maintenance support. The Adopt-A-Foot program is in the form of cash contributions that range from $2,640 to $26,400 over a five-year period.

PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES

Business/Citizen Donations: Individual donations from corporations and citizens can be sought to support specific improvements and amenities. FRMP is approaching this strategy now.

Private Foundation Funds: Nonprofit community foundations can be strong sources of support and should be pursued for specific park amenities.

Estate Donations: Wills, estates, and trusts may be also dedicated to the appropriate agency for use in developing and/or operating the greenway system.

Nonprofit Organizations: Nonprofit organizations can provide support for green space and parks in various ways. Examples include: Conservancy or Friends Organizations: These park conservancy's groups are a major funding source for parks in the United States and should be considered for areas where a park system would need continued outside funding support.

Greenway Foundations: Greenway foundations raise funds for capital and operational expenses. They focus on developing and maintaining trails and green corridors. Some greenway foundations have a specific greenway trail license plate to help support the development and maintenance of trails in the cities and counties and should be explored.

Wal-Mart Foundation: This foundation supports local community and environmental activities and educational programs for children (among other things). An organization needs to work with the local store manager to discuss application. Wal-Mart Foundation only funds 501(c)3 organizations.

The John P. Ellbogen Foundation: Children/youth services grants, and support for capital campaigns, general/operating support, and program development.

VOLUNTEER SOURCES

Adopt-a-Area of a Park: Local neighborhood groups or businesses make a volunteer commitment to maintain a specific area of a park.

Adopt-a-Trail: This is similar to Adopt-a-Park, but involves sponsorship of a segment of a trail (e.g., one mile) for maintenance purposes.

Greenways Conservation Groups: Conservation groups adopt green corridors to support the operations and capital costs for specific greenway corridors. These groups raise needed money for designated greenways for capital and operations costs.

3.6 CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES: STEWARDSHIP AND INTERPRETATION

3.6.1 OVERVIEW OF FRMP CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The cultural and the historic resources of this region tell the story of the pattern of use that underlies the present condition of the parks. Each park has a unique story that has influenced its current state, and in many cases, the story is one that is interesting to tell. By understanding the comprehensive range of resources — the subsurface and surface cultural and historical features that contain the patterns of human occupation, FRMP can provide for the stewardship of these resources and use their stories and physical presence to enrich the visitor experience of park users and strengthen the identity of the region's parks, and thus its overall identity. FRMP has expanded its influence in and around Montgomery County through land acquisitions, donations, and various other land use agreements. These lands and the facilities are special places; and within them contain a wide range of stories that include natural and human built landscapes, each with a history to understand, appreciate and preserve for generations to come.

3.6.2 CURRENT CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCE PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

FRMP has developed a diverse range of cultural and historic resource plans for its individual parks and conservation areas. Annually, FRMP updates its annual habitat action plans for its conservation areas and the natural areas of each of the parks. As an example, the Germantown MetroPark's Adaptive Management Plan completed in 2016, cites the park's cultural and historic resources. The plans and documents for FRMP's culturally and historically significant resource park locations, such as Carriage Hill and Aullwood Metro Parks, provide detailed history, intentions, inventory, and operations plans that are specific to each of these unique locations. Some historic documents (e.g., Aullwood, Its Legacy and Management, 1979) are also reviewed regularly and used to guide operations at these locations. These documents provide the original intent and philosophy of the park. In addition, each MetroPark has a current operations plan that also includes the overall history of the specific park that provides context to staff responsible for managing, maintaining, and planning the park.

The Miami Conservancy District (MCD) also maintains a comprehensive archive and detailed history of each of its facilities that includes information on the 1913 flood and on the design and construction of all of its dams and levy systems. Four MetroParks, Huffman, Germantown, Taylorsville and Englewood are owned at least in part by the MCD and are managed by FRMP under a long-term lease agreement. These MCD cultural elements play a significant role in the operation and interpretation of these four parks.

At present, FRMP is completing its comprehensive district-wide interpretive plan to unify and systemize its interpretation of the unique properties it manages and maintains. This plan will be used to direct the development of park specific interpretive plans in conjunction with the preparation of each park site master plan.

FRMP also has a detailed and comprehensive historical archive that is maintained and managed by Wright State University. These documents include a wide range of items including histories, master plans, newspaper articles, newsletters, and Parkways editions to name a few. This archive is regularly updated as new materials are created and collected and keeps the original materials intact and preserved for future reference. In addition, various electronic documents related to cultural and historic management of FRMP parkland and facilities are readily accessible to staff on the internal FRMP computer drive, S Drive: Agency Archives.

3.6.3 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Prepare a district-wide Cultural and Historic Resources Plan (CHRP).
  Though the agency has various site-specific cultural and historic resource plans, a district-wide CHRP should be developed to provide an overall strategy for identification of cultural and historic resources, and standards for management and preservation of those resources, whether already existing in the park system or for potential acquisition.
- Prepare a comprehensive survey of the cultural and historic resources of the FRMP system.
  The survey should incorporate all individual park inventories and existing Miami Conservancy District elements located within FRMP, including the current condition of each element in the park and its history. The CHRP inventory will provide the basis for short, middle, and long-term management decisions.
  - Based on the survey, prepare a stewardship action plan to assure the appropriate management of the park system's cultural and historic resources. Stewardship actions may include protection, stabilization, restoration, adaptive re-use, or in certain cases where justified, demolition
- Update or develop CHRP sections in the Interpretive, Conservation, and Operations Plans as needed for each FRMP property per CHRP standards for management and preservation of cultural and historic resources.
  The cultural and historic resource sections within the interpretive, conservation, and operations plans will provide more detailed direction for each unique cultural or historical feature in the agency's park system.
- Utilize criteria to assist in the evaluation of cultural and historic resources for the agency's park system or when considering potential acquisition of new resources.
  To ensure that FRMP meets its system-wide cultural and historic resources management standards, listed below are three categories to consider in decision-making related to management, investment, disposal or acquisition of cultural and historic resources, both built and natural. Criteria to choose from under each of these categories can be found in the Cultural and Historic Resources Evaluation Template located in Appendix G.

PART A: SYSTEM CONTEXT

- Conditions and influences that affect the growth, health, progress, etc., of an environment

PART B: RESOURCE TYPE

- Prominent importance of the site, either cultural or historic

PART C: SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY

- Financial and Operational Sustainability

CHAPTER FOUR
"IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN"

4.1 PURPOSE, VISION, MISSION, AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

4.1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of Five Rivers MetroParks is to protect natural areas, parks and river corridors, and promote the conservation and use of these lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people of the region.

4.1.2 VISION STATEMENT

The vision presents Five Rivers MetroParks desire for the future:

"Five River MetroParks is the conservation leader of a vital, active, nature based community."

4.1.3 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement is how Five Rivers MetroParks will implement its vision:

"Protect the region's natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature."

4.1.4 ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The Organizational Values that MetroParks incorporate into daily operations includes the following:

- Collaboration…working together
- Commitment…dedicated to service beyond self
- Community…unified in our efforts
- Excellence…expect high quality performance and service
- Fun…love what we do and celebrate it
- Diversity…support differences and inclusiveness
- Fiscal Responsibility…stewards of entrusted funds
- Innovation…challenge the status quo
- Integrity…require honest and ethical decision-making
- Professional Growth…challenge staff to learn
- Respect…revere each other and those we serve
- Sustainability…create capacity to endure and thrive

4.1.5 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, INITIATIVES AND TACTICS, AND MEASUREMENTS

Goals confirm the vision and mission. Objectives indicate how that goal will be accomplished. Initiatives and tactics demonstrate what processes will be use to fulfill the objectives and measurements tell the team what is expected, why it is important, who is involved, when it is going to occur and which attributes are important.

4.2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2.1 COMMUNITY VISION FOR LAND MANAGEMENT

“Our vision is to serve as stewards of the land we manage to provide clean air and water, protect wildlife habitats, connect people to nature, create a sense of regional identity and sense of place and promote active life styles.”

GOAL:

Create Great Parks!

OBJECTIVES:

- Complete a network of open space corridors and trails in Montgomery County that connect population centers to regional parks and open space areas. The trails would ideally link with regional trails and inter-connect all Montgomery County trail systems.
- Establish the highest level of safety and standards based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and the Sustainable Trails Initiatives (STI) criteria along trails.
- Ensure healthy biodiversity.
- Establish the plan for the next levy period.
- Create destination parks, trails, waterways, open space, natural areas and amenities that connect the community to nature and active lifestyles.
- Promote responsible and sustainable stewardship on greenway corridors and trails to preserve rivers, streams, and natural areas within the County and adjacent lands.

4.2.2 COMMUNITY VISION FOR FACILITIES

"Our vision is to develop world class recreational, educational and signature parks and facilities that create a sense of place and provide opportunities to learn about nature, conservation, cultural heritage, gardening, sustainable living, local food and healthy lifestyles that make living in Montgomery County the best place to live, work, and play."

GOAL:

Create great educational and recreation amenities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop individual business plans for each signature park and facility.
- Develop health and wellness opportunities in each park facility managed by FRMP.
- Incorporate ADA improvements in parks and recreation facilities per FRMP's ADA Transition Plan.
- Consider program themes with park and facility updates to maximize use and value.
- Provide opportunities throughout the FRMP service area that can host special events.
- Evaluate the need to develop more camping in existing MetroParks to support community interest.
- Make basic amenity improvements in all FRMP to maximize the use and value to residents and visitors.
- Continue to expand trails and greenways to connect to FRMP in areas of the county that have service gaps.
- Establish facility/infrastructure design and maintenance standards to uphold the quality of user experiences and fiscal sustainability.

4.2.3 COMMUNITY VISION FOR PROGRAMMING

"Our vision is to broaden programs to appeal to diverse users and offer opportunities for new and inclusive experiences that increase the value of FRMP to the community. We offer programs in conservation and nature education, cultural history, local foods and gardening, sustainable living, outdoor recreation, health and wellness and community-wide special events."

GOAL:

Engage the Community

OBJECTIVES:

- Incorporate consistent program guiding principles into all programs developed by FRMP. Continue to grow the agency's marketing and outreach to target current and potential users through additional mediums and Web 2.0 technology.
- Continue to strengthen the volunteer system that builds advocacy and support for FRMP and in all parks, facilities, programs and services across the system.
- Initiate selected special events within the FRMP system for regional economic impact.
- Ensure that the integrated program plan for the entire FRMP system aligns programs provided with market demand and addresses the needs of the areas and populations that have service gaps.
- Continue to develop a culture of exceptional customer service.
- Develop business plans for all signature parks, facilities and key program areas to maximize their efficiency and productivity.
- Continue programming the use of trails, waterways and greenways for all users including walkers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, bicyclists, families and all age groups.

4.2.4 COMMUNITY VISION FOR OPERATIONS AND STAFFING

"Our vision is to develop systems, policies and procedures that reduce bureaucracy and make it easy for staff in the field to manage their respective functions to achieve the outcomes that the community desires."

GOAL:

Empower and prepare our team.

OBJECTIVES:

- Incorporate Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) standards into the agency and monitor CAPRA and its implementation plan. Update policies and procedures on an annual basis. Ensure that they create maximum flexibility for the staff in the field to do its work in a timely manner.
- Develop leaders through effective training and mentoring.
- Encourage creativity and innovation.
- Create measurable outcomes by creating and tracking metrics to achieve goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Master Plan.

4.2.5 COMMUNITY VISION FOR FINANCING

"Our vision is to ensure long-term financial sustainability and provide well documented, accurate and timely financial information that meets all the local, state and federal requirements for effective and transparent reporting and supports the financial principles determined in the Strategic Plan."

GOAL:

Model fiscal responsibility and integrity.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a long-term financial plan that is consistent with the goals and objectives of FRMP and support the initiatives and strategies as reflected in FRMP approved plans. Agency goals and objectives, which affect operating funds and capital improvements, need to be consistent with fund availability and financial projections.
- Management of the operating budget for budgeting purposes will be at a cost/profit center level so that each program and function is reviewed annually for revenue projections and expenditure needs.
- Develop and implement a capital improvement plan for FRMP.

4.3 PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES DESIRED

FRMP desires to be managed through utilizing outcomes and measurements. In order for outcomes to be measured, they need to be written and easily understood. Performance measurements are useful in determining the effectiveness of FRMP in providing parks, facilities, programs, conservation, maintenance and services. The performance measures are comprehensive and presented as elements of a "measurement tool kit" to aid FRMP in building a long-term evaluation program. Some of the recommendations outline in the Implementation and Action Plan located in Appendix A will be easier to implement than others, but collectively they provide an in-depth appraisal of programs and services and their impact on the community.

FRMP staff will be able to identify how the organization is performing when advancing specific actions to achieve the stated goals. Staff will be collecting performance data as part of the strategies, aimed at providing high quality and cost-efficient services to citizens. To that end, effectiveness measures provide valuable insight as to how well an operation is performing, and, as such, are valuable tools in determining service improvements or resource allocations to achieve a desired outcome. Thus, the goal is to focus on designing efficiency and effectiveness measures along with workload measures.

FRMP's goal is to make the performance measure Specific (targeting a specific area for improvement, telling the team exactly what is expected, why it is important, who is involved, where is it going to happen and which attributes are important); Measurable (quantify or suggest an indicator of progress); Attainable (the goal is realistic, manageable and achievable); Relevant (the goal is relevant to the staff, the Board of Commissioners and the public); and Time-bound (when the goal(s) will be achieved).

The bottom line is to make sound and best practice decisions on where and how to improve services and performance. The customer-oriented focus comprehensively addresses needs of the community and conservation, parks, recreation and education trends. The goal is to position FRMP to operate in a proactive manner versus a reactive manner, as well as move it from an effort-based culture to an outcome-based culture.

Examples of Family of Measures:

Results

1. 75% of outdoor recreation programs at minimum registration capacity
2. Identify which programs have the greatest repeat customers
3. Establish FRMP standards for collecting customer information

Or

1. Inspect all parks at least annually through a formal inspection process
2. Determine areas that need improvement
3. Identify safety-related issues for correction
4. Cost recovery goals met at established levels
5. Retention levels of users
6. Percentage of use increase
7. Customer satisfaction levels achieved by programs or experiences in parks
8. Percentage of population using parks or programs
9. Volunteer hours of total work force hours
10. Earned income as percentage of budget
11. Program and or maintenance standards met
12. Number of people that live within a ½ mile of a trail

Outputs

1. Outdoor recreation program registrants
2. Outdoor recreation program registrants who repeat enrollment
3. Per capita spending

Or

1. Number of parks maintained
2. Number of acres maintained
3. Number of acres mowed
4. Number of picnic shelters maintained
5. Number of staff trained each year on a specific component

Demands

1. Outdoor recreation program registrations available

Or

1. Number of maintenance work orders created, completed and percent complete
2. Level of standards met against the master plan recommendations
3. Timelines met for specific elements of the system

Efficiencies

1. Average taxpayer subsidy for direct costs per outdoor recreation service provided

Or

1. Document hours of litter and trash pickup, grass mowing (person-hours)
2. Percent of volunteer projects increased from previous year (at least 5%)
3. Cost per experience
4. Cost per unit such as cost per hour, cost per mile, cost per acre, and cost per square ft.
5. Equity of partnerships
6. Productivity of space
7. Number of people who register on-line
8. Classes or programs that meet the minimum to hold the program
9. Asset lifecycle levels met
10. Staff productivity, such as how much drive time is done each day
11. Utility cost as percentage of site budgets

4.4 CONCLUSION

The Comprehensive Master Plan was developed to provide the organization a roadmap for the future using knowledge gained from an excellent legacy of history and current day practices. The planning process incorporated a comprehensive series of discovery and analysis strategies to understand the workings of the organization and included a strong community engagement process.

The Comprehensive Master Plan includes a system-wide approach for accomplishing short and long-term goals, initiatives, tactics and measurements to ensure FRMP continues to protect the region's natural heritage and provides world-class services, programs, parks, and facilities to the community for many years to come.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

pros consulting INC.