



PARKS & RECREATION

Cuyahoga Falls

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Improving the way we Live, Work and Play in Cuyahoga Falls!



CITY OF
Cuyahoga Falls

MAYOR DON WALTERS

January, 2021



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE NEED FOR A PLAN

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio has a well-established legacy of providing quality parks and recreation to the community. Recognizable throughout the region for its offerings – fitness at The Natatorium, classes at Quirk Cultural Center, Mobile Rec programs in the parks – Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has a strong foundation of service. Because there are multiple agencies within and near Cuyahoga Falls (Summit Metro Parks, Ohio State Parks & Watercraft, and the National Park Service) that offer residents a wide variety of opportunities, this Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan is intended in part to clarify the department's responsibilities for bringing parks, facilities, and recreational choices to the community. This Continuous Improvement Plan is a guiding document meant to instill focus, establish priorities, and inspire action over the next five to ten years.

This plan clarifies and affirms Parks and Recreation as the local provider of signature facilities, programming experiences, and excellent recreation opportunities. While public input gathered for this Continuous Improvement Plan indicates demand for nature access and trails, those offerings better align with the missions of Summit Metro Parks and the National Park Service. This distinction is critical to ensure that services are not duplicated between the different agencies and that each operates efficiently – thereby providing the best benefit and service to residents.

While deferred maintenance, changing community needs, development goals, and operational feasibility taken altogether are reason enough for producing a future-forward plan, 2020 has ushered in an unprecedented layer of change and challenge.

The COVID-19 pandemic that began with fervor in early March in the United States has maintained its stronghold on communications, procedures, and everyday routine across all sectors of the economy. Besides impacting daily life, the effects of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic are shaping the future of communities in ways as yet impossible to fully understand.

Even before the pandemic began in the U.S., clear reporting existed on the value of parks and recreation. As civic spaces, parks act as operational hubs for efforts to address chronic issues like physical inactivity, poor health, and access to nutrition. Just by living close to a park, an individual is more likely to have higher activity levels. Having even a simple connection to nature – like a small Neighborhood Park with healthy tree canopy – can relieve stress, improve mental health, and provide opportunities for interpersonal interaction.¹ Parks are part of hyper-local civic infrastructure, needed now more than ever, where citizens practice the “art of association” and do the work of knitting communities together.²

What has newly emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic is the vital role parks and recreation has played – and will continue to play – in the country's recovery. Six months into the pandemic, the National Recreation and Park Association published an extensive discussion of the myriad ways parks and recreation is both effected by and affecting the outcome of the pandemic.³ Budget cuts, canceled programming, over-crowded spaces, once-vibrant facilities shuttered to protect against the spread; communities across the nation are still feeling these stings.⁴ But agencies are also adapting and finding creative funding solutions,⁵ boldly stepping into the critical work of bridging inequity, safeguarding

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, “Health and Wellness,” <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/health-wellness/>, (December, 10 2019).

² American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020)

³ Dolesh, Richard J. How Parks and Recreation Will Change Forever. NRPA. (July 2020). <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/august/how-parks-and-recreation-will-change-forever/>

⁴ Roth, Kevin. How COVID-19 Impacts Parks and Recreation Funding. NRPA. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/may/how-covid-19-impacts-park-and-recreation-funding/>. Accessed November 2020.

⁵ McCormick, Kathleen. Room to Roam: The Pandemic Has Underscored the Need for More Urban Parks; So What Comes Next? Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. <https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/2020-10-room-roam-pandemic-urban-parks-what-comes-next>. (October 7, 2020). Accessed November 2020.

physical and mental health, and ensuring access. For example, Cuyahoga Falls adjusted its strategy for the signature Mobile Rec program by utilizing online social platforms, incorporating virtual activities, and offering supplies giveaways to provide children and families a way to stay physically fit and creatively engaged during what was a strenuous summer for most.

This type of flexibility exemplifies the substance of the recommendations in this Continuous Improvement Plan. While it is impossible to decipher a single “correct” path into the post-pandemic future, this plan underscores the need for responsive action, elevated experiences, and reinforced civic infrastructure. While the economic impact of COVID-19 manifests, there will be temptations to recover costs and cut spending. The Continuous Improvement Plan maps the beginning of multi-dimensional recovery where Parks and Recreation is not only important but essential for building a strong, vibrant Cuyahoga Falls.⁶

EXISTING CONDITIONS OF PARKS AND RECREATION IN CUYAHOGA FALLS

For many residents, parks are primary entry points for interacting with the natural environment; as COVID-19 has made abundantly clear, equity issues persist and can in part be remedied through fair, inclusive access to open park spaces and quality facilities. For all residents, parks provide a variety of passive and active outdoor recreational opportunities and close access improves community health and wellness. As mentioned previously, Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation services are a critical thread in the city's civic fabric and will be crucial for pandemic recovery.

In Cuyahoga Falls, the city maintains 576 acres of parkland at about 30 parks, including 10 Neighborhood Parks, two (2) Community Parks, and one (1) Regional Park, Water Works Park. The city also offers Special Use Parks and Facilities, such as The Natatorium and Brookledge Golf Club, and two (2) passive open space properties. Parks and Recreation also oversees park space at seven (7) schools in the community. Residents can enjoy access to several Summit Metro Parks and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park located either within or near Cuyahoga Falls.

Demographic and Benchmarking Analysis

A strong, proactive approach to department operations requires knowledge and understanding of community demographics. The findings of this Continuous Improvement Plan (Chapter 2) show the population has remained stable and will see limited growth; the community is diversifying racially and ethnically with a declining White population and growing Black, Asian, and Hispanic populations; and growth of the senior population (65+) has outpaced children (under 18) in the city. Though there is no certain way to prepare for changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding past trends and projected changes will help identify present demand for parks and recreation and be useful for anticipating future need.

The analysis of existing conditions includes a benchmark comparison to 59 similar agencies using the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics database. The benchmarking shows that Cuyahoga Falls' offerings are more extensive than other agencies. Despite the wide array of offerings, Parks and Recreation typically recovers most of its operating costs, well above the benchmarks (88% vs. 45%). Due to the pandemic, however, it may be years before the department is able to return to that level of cost recovery.

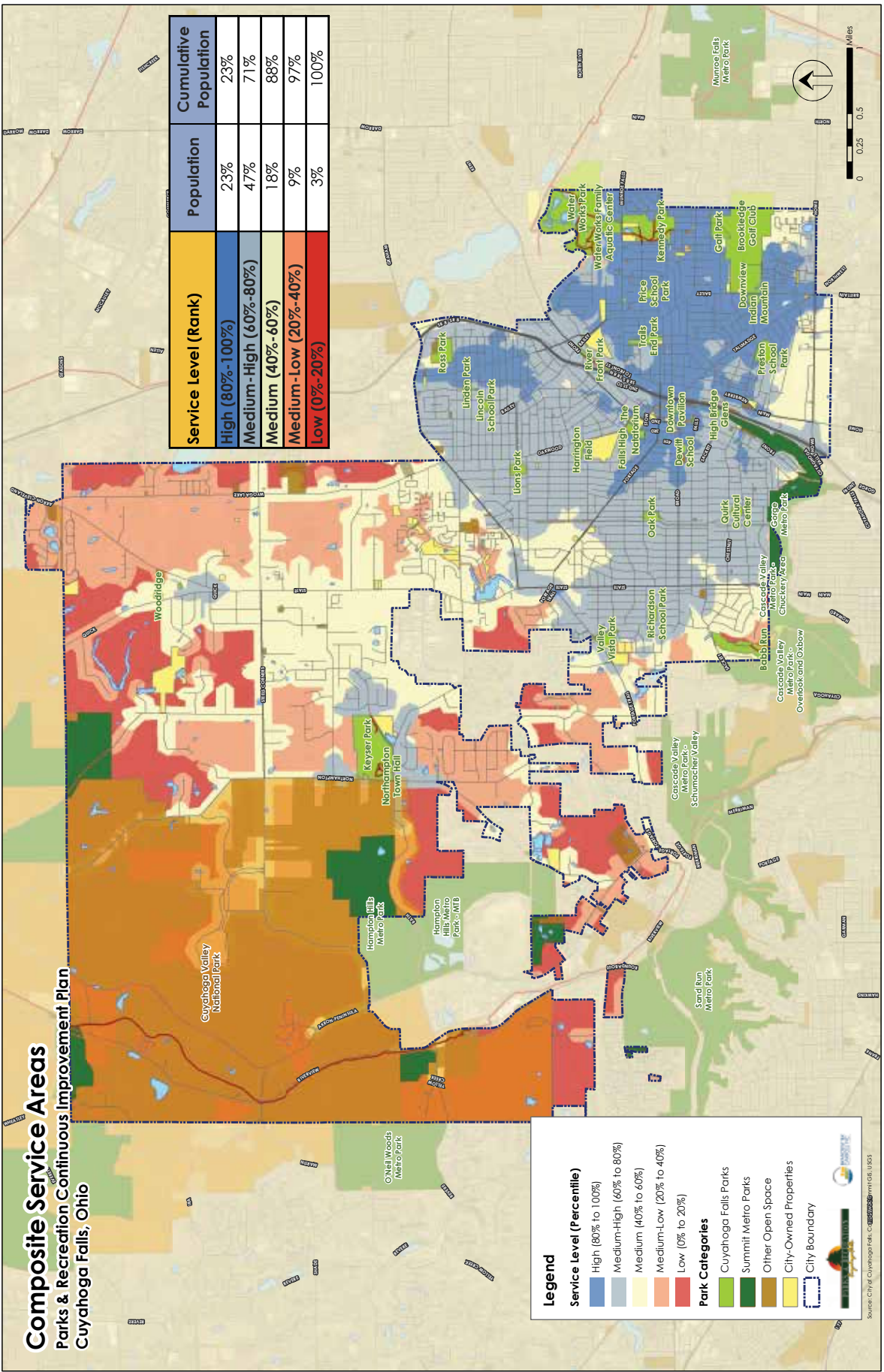
As of 2019, capital expenditures for Cuyahoga Falls are well below the benchmarks at only \$18 per capita, compared to \$34. Capital improvements will be needed to maintain desired service levels, especially as post-pandemic shifts in demand place added stress on existing resources.

Service Area Analysis (Gaps)

Maps of service areas for various parks and facilities were used to identify “Service Gaps” or underserved areas within Cuyahoga Falls. The planning consultant also created maps to illustrate levels of access to various park categories and facilities. The analysis indicated that two thirds of residents (66%) live within walking distance of a park, and 70% live within a short drive to a larger park.

Lastly, a composite service areas map (see next page) shows the overall level of service for parks (four types) and facilities (16 types), in turn revealing spaces of need and opportunity. Dark shades of blue indicate high service levels while red areas show the areas with the lowest level of service to parks and facilities. Seventy-one percent (71%) of Cuyahoga

⁶ Marquis, Bridget. Infrastructure That Does More: Investing in Public Spaces for a Resilient America. Strong Towns. https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/11/23/infrastructure-that-does-more-investing-in-public-spaces-for-a-resilient-america?fbclid=IwAR2Aa8OXGjUpGNv3ibIDHC-W40ic9L9QjnXvix_kgFS0CtEoi5viahqJ0bDg (November 24, 2020). Accessed December 4, 2020.



Falls lives in the highest two categories, while only 12% live in the lowest two categories combined.

Most of the community lives in the more densely developed East Sector, which coincides with where the majority of the city's parks and recreation facilities are located. The lowest levels of service are primarily in the more rural, less populated West Sector. However, there are pockets of opportunity, especially near Keyser Park. The table below shows the percentage of the population by service level.

Service Level (Rank)	Population	Cumulative Population
High (80%-100%)	23%	23%
Medium-High (60%-80%)	47%	71%
Medium (40%-60%)	18%	88%
Medium-Low (20%-40%)	9%	97%
Low (0%-20%)	3%	100%

A CITIZEN DRIVEN PLAN

To make informed decisions moving forward, Parks and Recreation needs public input in addition to statistical and performance analysis. Including resident participation in the planning process gives actual park users a means to share their individual needs, perceptions, concerns, and desires for the park system they themselves use. This Continuous Improvement Plan process used several methods to connect with the community. As the department begins to implement this plan, sustained efforts will be necessary to continuously solicit public feedback about development projects; allowing direct participation whenever possible will ensure the community feels heard and bears a sense of pride in their parks. As the community finds new balance amid the coronavirus recovery, engagement efforts should be flexible and creative, utilizing tools like on-site feedback (e.g., semi-permanent chalk or bulletin boards) and interactive online platforms (e.g., MindMixer or Mentimeter). The summary below indicates the many ways the public was involved throughout the Continuous Improvement Plan process.

Engagement Summary

- Public meetings (open house, stakeholder groups)
- Dollar voting exercise
- Statistically valid Parks and Recreation Survey (by ETC Institute)
- Web-based and handout survey
- Online engagement (powered by MindMixer)

- Open house workshops at Lions Lodge and Woodridge Elementary (February and March 2020) introduced the project and used topical and interactive stations to encourage public input contributions
- Meetings with stakeholder groups representing (July-October of 2020 via Zoom):
 - City Council
 - Staff
 - Police
 - Park Board
 - Youth Sports
 - Lacrosse
 - Swim Team
 - Partner Groups
 - DTCF
 - Metro Parks
 - National Parks
 - Lions Club
 - Library
 - Schools
 - Cuyahoga Falls Schools
 - Woodridge Schools
 - Nepali Community
- "Voting with Dollars" activity at each open house workshop
- A statistically valid needs assessment survey conducted by the ETC Institute – 437 total surveys received
- A handout and web survey – available on the Parks and Recreation webpage and in print form (in English and Spanish) at the open houses, The Natatorium, and Quirk Cultural Center – completed by 1,050 individuals (81% residents of Cuyahoga Falls)

WHAT CUYAHOGA FALLS RESIDENTS SAID

Information gathered from these public input methods was used to identify the needs of Cuyahoga Falls residents. A brief summary of the findings is described below.

Community Meetings

Most discussed topics included:

1. More programs
2. Dog parks
3. Nature programs
4. Lighting
5. Trails
6. Connectivity/trail system
7. Fitness programs
8. Restrooms

Stakeholder Groups

Most discussed topics included:

1. Improved quality of facilities
2. Increased marketing and outreach
3. Replace Quirk Cultural Center
4. Replace wading pools with splash pads
5. Wi-fi in parks
6. Continuous public engagement
7. Expanded programming
8. Improved river access/connection
9. Better ADA access
10. More partnerships

Dollar Voting

Participants at the events and the public workshop were asked how they would allocate \$1,000 among different types of parks and recreation facility improvements in Cuyahoga Falls. The responses ranked as follows:

Action (Box Title)	Total	%
Upgrade existing parks and facilities	\$13,200	26%
Renovate rental facilities and construct new Keyser lodge	\$9,600	19%
Develop new outdoor parks and recreation facilities	\$9,000	18%
Expand program offerings	\$7,400	15%
Upgrade existing athletic fields	\$6,800	13%
Other	\$4,700	9%
Total	\$50,700	100%

Statistically Valid Mail Survey

Ninety-four percent (94%) of residents visited a park in Cuyahoga Falls over the past year, and 66% of these residents visited parks more than 10 times. The Downtown Pavilion and Amphitheater,⁷ The Natatorium, and Water Works Park were the top three most visited parks and facilities (56%, 52%, and 52% respectively).

The top reasons for not using parks more often include:

- Do not know what is offered (45%)
- Do not have time (30%)
- Program times not convenient (22%)
- Fees are too high (20%)

These responses suggest that stronger communication efforts, adjusted scheduling, and updated fee structures would likely help increase resident use.

The improvements households would most like to see to existing parks included:

- Restrooms (35%)
- Natural Areas/nature parks (33%)
- Security cameras and lighting (21%)

These preferences suggest a desire for elevated support amenities and safety at sites, as well as increased access to nature. Given the proximity of Summit Metro and the National Park, strategic partnerships should be pursued to address the particular demand for nature access.

The most important parks and recreation facilities for households were (sum of top four choices):

- Natural areas/nature parks (39%)
- Community/neighborhood parks (37%)
- Paved bike trails (27%)
- Playgrounds (22%)

The results of the most important facilities were combined with the reported unmet needs to determine high (top 3) priorities for investment:

1. Natural areas/nature parks
2. Paved bike trails
3. Community/neighborhood parks

The most important parks and recreation programs for households were (sum of top four choices):

- Community and family events (37%)
- Fitness and wellness programs (36%)

⁷ Due to wording, it is likely that many of the survey respondents who selected Downtown River Boardwalk intended the Downtown Pavilion and Amphitheater as their most visited space in the city's parks system.

- Concerts/art performances (33%)
- Nature Programs (28%)
- Programs for 55+ (22%)

The results of the most important programs were combined with the reported unmet needs to determine the high (top six) priorities for investment:

1. Concerts/art performances
2. Fitness & wellness programs
3. Community & family events
4. Nature programs
5. Programs for 55+
6. Outdoor movies

Eighty-four percent (84%) of households were supportive of upgrading existing parks and facilities.

Key Findings (all methods)

Results indicate that the community desires:

- Upgrades to existing parks
- Improved river access and connection
- Improved maintenance
- Renovated facilities and lodges
- More and upgraded restrooms
- Improved marketing & communication
- Upgrades to Quirk Cultural Center
- Expanded programming
- More connectivity and pathways
- Improved access to open space/ nature
- Community garden
- Dog parks
- Added support services (Wi-Fi, shade, security, etc.)

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION IN CUYAHOGA FALLS

The Continuous Improvement Plan Steering Committee, with support from the planning team, worked to craft a strategic plan. This facet of the document solidifies the daily purpose of the agency, its guiding values, and the long view of success.

Mission

Enriching lives through dynamic community spaces and inclusive programs.

Vision

Engaging activities and public spaces that connect and enrich our entire community.

Values

Accessibility

Ensure easy, equitable access to all parks and facilities

Community Connection

Create welcoming spaces that bridge divides and engage the community

Outstanding Service

Cultivate and uphold the highest standards and maintain accountability to the community

Adaptability

Employ responsive changes, flexible solutions, and sustainable practices

Active Participation

Build spaces that foster energetic interest from staff and community

Innovation

Apply best practices and new ideas to make memorable spaces and elevated experiences

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives will guide the operations, improvements, and services in parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls over the next 5 to 10 year implementation of this plan.

Goal 1: Build From Within

Nurture high quality spaces and staff through focused investment, development, and support

Staff Development: Create a quality work environment across all staff levels that inspires and encourages

Operations & Management: Improve efficiency and quality of service by establishing clear standards of performance

Funding: Pursue alternative funding sources, including grants, to expand creative viability and build independence for the department

Maintenance: Ensure all spaces across the parks and facilities system are clean and safe for all users

Goal 2: Expand Community Connection

Ensure equitable programs and spaces through authentic outreach and inclusion of all members of the community

Equitable Inclusion: Practice authentic outreach and create opportunities for users to share in the development and daily life of parks and facilities

Marketing & Promotion: Utilize innovative and inclusive outreach methods

Partnerships: Prioritize relationship-building and information-sharing to effectively tackle collective goals across the community

Outstanding Service: Commit to providing excellent, responsive, and welcoming customer service systemwide

Goal 3: Improved Parks & Facilities

Elevate existing spaces and offerings through comprehensive upgrades and targeted efforts

Sustainability: Safeguard quality before quantity with consistent dedication to existing facilities, parks, and programs

Accessibility: Strive to meet user needs and desires for all

Facilities: Preserve signature attractions that make Cuyahoga Falls a remarkable place to live and to visit

Legacy: Safeguard the longevity of a system that has enduring attractiveness for the Cuyahoga Falls community and beyond

Goal 4: Dynamic Programming & Events

Build programs and events that are responsive to the diverse needs and desires of the community

Community Wellness: Build a foundation of health and activity through dynamic programs and quality facilities that serve users of all ages, cultures, and abilities

Adaptability: Align programs and amenities to fit the changing needs of the community and provide on-trend service to all users

Celebration: Develop programs, events, and facility features that uplift the unique resources of the community

SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Public input (Chapter 4) and a needs assessment (Chapter 5) together informed the recommendations for improvement outlined in Chapters 7 and 8. The following items are the top priorities determined by the Continuous Improvement Plan process along with regular consultation with the Steering Committee.

1. Improve maintenance, including capital maintenance and replacement, at existing parks and facilities
2. Promote and energize the Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks to better raise funds, recruit and organize volunteers, and champion the city's parks and facilities
3. Incorporate the arts community and creative solutions when upgrading and developing parks and facilities
4. Ensure ADA accessibility throughout the park system
5. Enhance user experience by upgrading and adding support features (restrooms, shade, etc.), renovating and modernizing spaces, and adding communal amenities
6. Transition select wading pools to splash pads at the end of their useful life
7. Pursue opportunities for park and facility consolidation where possible with minimal impact to service delivery
8. Continue to respond to changing needs for game courts, including growing demand of pickleball and futsal
9. Improve athletic fields throughout the city while ensuring the upgrades meet changing community demands (growing needs for multipurpose rectangular fields, cricket, etc.)
10. Investigate potential locations for additional dog parks to meet the growing demand
11. Renovate and modernize rental facilities to improve appearance and functionality (Galt Lodge, Downtown Pavilion, The Natatorium Conference and Banquet Center)
12. Remove the Swain House from Keyser Park due to safety hazards and replace it with a new lodge better suited to programs and rentals
13. Align programming to the mission; regularly assess offerings to meet community needs – especially underserved populations

-
14. Maintain the Mobile Rec program; explore alternate methods and opportunities to connect with residents during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond
 15. Utilize existing and future spaces creatively and efficiently for programming and services
 16. Uplift all staff by providing training opportunities, professional support, motivation, and just compensation
 17. Develop communications strategies to elevate marketing and promotional efforts
 18. Improve Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary and potentially partner with Summit Metro Parks for operations
 19. Continue to explore partnerships with public and private agencies to improve or maintain park and program opportunities while controlling costs

20. Coordinate with Summit Metro Parks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and others to meet community needs for nature access and education while ensuring no duplication of services

This Continuous Improvement Plan provides capital improvement recommendations for each park in Cuyahoga Falls. These recommendations with cost estimates can be found in Chapter 8.

ACTION PLAN

The Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan includes a detailed Action Plan with 144 strategies. These strategies, which can be found in Chapter 9, represent specific actions for Parks and Recreation and the City of Cuyahoga Falls to take to implement this plan.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE NEED FOR A PLAN

Recognizable throughout the region for its offerings – fitness at The Natatorium, classes at Quirk Cultural Center, Mobile Rec programs in the parks – Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has a strong foundation of service. Because there are multiple agencies within and near Cuyahoga Falls (Summit Metro Parks, Ohio State Parks & Watercraft, and the National Park Service) that offer residents a wide variety of opportunities, this Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan is meant to instill focus, establish priorities, and inspire action over a 5 to 10 year timeframe. Guided by a sixteen-member Steering Committee appointed by the city, this Continuous Improvement Plan is supported by robust data collection, and affirms Parks and Recreation as the local provider of signature facilities, programming experiences, and excellent recreation opportunities.

Situated in northeastern Ohio in the greater Akron area, Cuyahoga Falls has a population of approximately 50,000 as of 2019. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation offers over 576 acres of parkland and 28 parks and facilities, including ten (10) Neighborhood Parks, two (2) Community Parks, one (1) Regional Park, six (6) Special Use Parks, and two (2) Natural Areas/Open Space Areas. The department also manages parks at seven (7) school sites. While the size of the community is not expected to change significantly in the next five years, both the economic and demographic character of the population is changing. This impacts not only the current need but also the future demand for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls. And while public input indicates demand for nature access and trails, those offerings better align with the missions of Summit Metro Parks and the National Park Service. This plan draws this critical distinction to ensure that services are not duplicated between the different agencies and that each operates efficiently to provide the best benefit to residents.

While deferred maintenance, changing community needs, development goals, and operational feasibility are reasons enough for producing a future-forward plan, 2020 has ushered in an unprecedented layer of change and challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic that began in the country in early March has maintained its stronghold on communications, procedures, and everyday routine across all sectors of the economy. Besides impacting daily life, the effects of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic are shaping the future of communities in ways as yet impossible to fully understand. Even before the pandemic began in the U.S., clear reporting existed on the value of parks and recreation. As civic spaces, parks act as operational hubs for addressing chronic issues like physical inactivity and poor health. Having even a simple connection to nature can relieve stress, improve mental health, and provide opportunities for interpersonal interaction.¹ Parks are part of hyper-

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/health-wellness/>, (December, 10 2019).

local civic infrastructure, needed now more than ever, where citizens practice the “art of association” and do the work of knitting communities together.²

What has newly emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic is the vital role parks and recreation has played – and will continue to play – in the country's recovery. Six months into the pandemic, the National Recreation and Park Association published an extensive discussion of the myriad ways parks and recreation is both effected by and affecting the outcome of the pandemic.³ Agencies are adapting and finding creative funding solutions,⁴ boldly stepping into the critical work of bridging inequity, safeguarding physical and mental health, and ensuring access. This type of flexibility exemplifies the substance of the recommendations in this Continuous Improvement Plan. While it is impossible to decipher a single “correct” path into the post-pandemic future, this plan underscores the need for responsive action, elevated experiences, and reinforced civic infrastructure. As long-term economic impacts of COVID-19 manifest, there will be temptations to recover costs and cut spending. This Continuous Improvement Plan maps the beginning of multi-dimensional recovery where Parks and Recreation is not only important but essential for building a strong, vibrant Cuyahoga Falls.⁵

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS

Parks provide numerous benefits and services to the community. Local agencies have the responsibility to manage and provide parks and recreation so as to champion the health, safety, and welfare of the community. A continuous improvement plan is a key tool that can assist agencies and direct the management and provision of their resources. For many residents, parks provide their primary access to the natural environment and their most significant opportunities for social interaction. For all residents, parks have the potential to provide a variety of social, active, and outdoor recreational opportunities that improve quality of life and make viable, thriving communities. Most importantly, equitable access to parks and facilities ensures the health and wellness benefits from these resources are felt by the entire community.

In terms of driving economic impact, parks and recreation has incredible potential. A major study conducted on behalf of the Trust for Public Land by John L. Crompton, *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*, investigates the impact of parks and open space on property taxes. Findings indicate property values were higher for parcels located near quality parks and open spaces than for similar properties located elsewhere. Additionally, recent surveys of home buyers by the National Association of Home Builders indicate that trails, parks, and playgrounds were three of the top five amenities that home buyers desire when considering a new home purchase. Furthermore, the preliminary findings of a recent study, *The Economic Significance of Local and Regional Park Systems' Spending on the United States Economy* (conducted by the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University (GMU) for the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)) found that local and regional parks created \$140 billion in economic activity per year and supported nearly one million jobs in the United States.

In assessing overall quality of life, a community's parks and recreation system is considered a primary indicator; higher quality programming and spaces correspond to higher quality of life. To begin with, parks can play a critical role in a strategy for promoting health and tackling challenges like poor nutrition, hunger, obesity, and physical inactivity. Whether through programming or excellent amenities, park spaces can encourage physical and social activity. And proximity matters – even simply living near a park can encourage higher activity levels, and both teens and young adults with access to a variety of recreation facilities are less likely to be overweight and more likely to be in better health. Beyond impacting physical health, studies also illuminate the powerful connection between nature and improved mental wellbeing. Spending time in passive parks and natural open spaces can help relieve stress, nurture longtime respect for the environment, stimulate imagination, and restore mental balance. Parks can make tangible contributions to residents too

² American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020)

³ Dolesh, Richard J. *How Parks and Recreation Will Change Forever*. NRPA. (July 2020). <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/august/how-parks-and-recreation-will-change-forever/>

⁴ McCormick, Kathleen. *Room to Roam: The Pandemic Has Underscored the Need for More Urban Parks; So What Comes Next?* Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. <https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/2020-10-room-roam-pandemic-urban-parks-what-comes-next>. (October 7, 2020). Accessed November 2020.

⁵ Marquis, Bridget. *Infrastructure That Does More: Investing in Public Spaces for a Resilient America*. Strong Towns. https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/11/23/infrastructure-that-does-more-investing-in-public-spaces-for-a-resilient-america?fbclid=IwAR2Aa8OXGjUpGNv3ibIDHC-W40ic9L9QjnXvix_kgFS0CtEoi5vihqJ0bDg (November 24, 2020). Accessed December 4, 2020

– community gardens, often provided in partnership with or by agencies themselves, can provide residents direct access to fresh food.⁶

In addition to all of these incredible individual benefits, parks can make an invaluable contribution to collective wellbeing. As gathering places for the community and hubs of connection, parks are where multiple interests and passions can play out at once – on game courts and fields, along trails and on playgrounds, and at shelters and picnic tables – helping to cultivate community ties. While less tangible, these collective benefits increase the livability and desirability of our communities and help begin to address the sociopolitical divisions that challenge every municipality.⁷

Residents and political leadership in Cuyahoga Falls place a high value on parks and recreation. According to the Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey, 84% of residents support making upgrades to existing parks and facilities and 70% support the development of new programs (see Chapter 4 for more information). Clearly, parks and recreation services are important to the city. Through the implementation of this Continuous Improvement Plan, Cuyahoga Falls will ensure all residents can enjoy quality gathering places, excellent recreation facilities, and overall improved quality of life.

1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process consisted of four phases and regular dialogue between representatives from Cuyahoga Falls and the consultant team. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation staff appointed the plan Steering Committee – members of which included staff, community leaders, and other stakeholders – to collaborate with and guide the consultants through the planning process. As each phase concluded, documentation was submitted along with a presentation of findings. The following sections provide a summary of each phase in the process: Evaluate → Engage → Envision → Plan.

1.4 EVALUATE

The planning process launched with evaluation. This phase included gathering information on city demographics, reviewing existing data, site visits and analysis, and the first Steering Committee meeting.

1.4.1 Demographic Analysis

Using information provided by the city and other sources, the consultant team analyzed demographic and population characteristics of Cuyahoga Falls. Information included:

- Population trends and five-year population projections
- Demographic characteristics (quantity, ages, race, etc.)
- Household size and composition
- Median household income and educational attainment
- Population diversity

1.4.2 Benchmarking Analysis

Using information provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics program, Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation was compared to 59 agencies (serving populations between 20,000 and 60,000) located in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, or Wisconsin and who participated in the Park Metrics program. Comparisons between park systems covered several criteria such as parkland inventory, department functions, staffing, budgets, facilities offered, and more.

⁶ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/>, (December, 10 2019).

⁷ National Recreation and Park Association, "Social Equity," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Social-Equity/>, (December, 10 2019).

1.4.3 Inventory of Parks, Facilities, and Programs

The purpose of the parks, facilities, and programs inventory is to obtain an accurate, comprehensive assessment of the system's current state. Comparing the findings of this inventory to the desires of Cuyahoga Falls residents is a critical step in evaluating needs later in the process.

Park Classification

As a first step, parks and related sites in Cuyahoga Falls were catalogued to better evaluate the overall recreation opportunities available to the public. In this updated inventory, sites are classified as Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, Special Use Park Facilities, Natural Areas, or School Parks.

Parks, Open Space, and Facilities Inventory

The consultant team took stock of all existing parks and open space properties available in the City of Cuyahoga Falls. Site visits enabled the team to identify existing conditions and assess opportunities for improvements. As part of this analysis each property was assigned an updated park classification. A comprehensive table summarizes the amenities offered at each. Maps prepared using GIS software serve to highlight the location of all the city-owned parks and facilities plus those offered by others.

The facility inventory includes passive and active use amenities as well as resources provided by other entities in the community (e.g., the schools, Summit Metro Parks, and Cuyahoga Valley National Park).

Programs Inventory

The programs inventory described activities based on the Core Program Components:

- Broad Appeal
- Administrative Feasibility
- Coordination
- Settings and Times
- Constructive Nature
- Range of Activities

1.4.4 Needs Assessment and Identification

Level of Service Guidelines

The consultant synthesized public input, benchmarking comparisons, and existing standards to develop level of service guidelines for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation. These guidelines were defined for each park classification, recreation facility, as well as for total acreage of parkland and open space.

Geographic Distribution – Service Gap Analysis

A critical step in the process, service gaps were identified by mapping locations and access for the system's existing facilities. The maps define service areas around specific facilities and park classifications, illuminating locations within Cuyahoga Falls that lack sufficient and quality access. In addition to two (2) park service area maps (Neighborhood Parks and Community Regional Parks), 11 other maps show service areas for specific recreation facilities. Finally, the Composite Service Areas map shows the combined level of service for parks and facilities across all of Cuyahoga Falls.

1.4.5 Trends

Extending the scope of analysis further, national trends in parks and recreation services were reviewed. This exploration helped point to new possibilities, underscore existing performance, and compare at a wider scale. The analysis included changes in demand, new programming efforts, emerging technology, and user experience advancements.

1.5 ENGAGE

The public input process employed a variety of methods intended to reach not only current park users but also non-users (i.e., potential users) to determine community needs, desires, and views on the future of parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls.

1.5.1 Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Survey

A statistically valid mail survey (Mail Survey) was conducted by ETC Institute producing a total of 437 returned surveys. This portion of the public input was initiated early in the process (spring 2020). The survey was used to identify:

- Current satisfaction levels with programs and facilities
- Participation and satisfaction with current programs and events
- Parks currently used
- Needs for various facilities and programs
- Most needed facilities
- Primary actions that Cuyahoga Falls should take relating to parks, recreation, open space, trails, programs, and facilities

1.5.2 Public Workshop Open Houses

Two public workshops – one at Lions Lodge, another at Woodridge Elementary – further broadened the input collected from citizens and users. Attendees could visit a series of themed stations to talk to the planning team, to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas, and to learn more about the planning process. Additional stations provided interactive activities for attendees to place priority on improvements. Follow-up opportunities were provided at The Natatorium.

1.5.3 Stakeholder Groups

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation provided coordination support and collaboration to convene 11 conversations with over 30 special interest groups, as well as meetings with various levels of Parks and Recreation staff. These discussions helped illuminate priorities from various perspectives. Facilitation questions were prepared in advance and approved by the Steering Committee. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings were held through virtual conferencing rather than in-person.

1.5.4 Web-Based Survey

The planning consultant team prepared an additional survey in both handout and web-based formats. All residents and program users were invited to complete the survey. Additionally, visitors of The Natatorium, Quirk Cultural Center, either public workshop, or the stakeholder groups were encouraged to fill out this abbreviated opinion survey. In all, 1,050 individuals participated in the survey, eighty-one percent (81%) of whom identified as residents of Cuyahoga Falls. Results are presented and examined in Chapter 4.

1.6 ENVISION

Parks and Recreation Mission and Strategic Plan with Goals and Objectives

Following the above phases – Evaluate and Engage – Steering Committee members and Parks and Recreation staff convened to discuss the public input and overall findings. The planning consultant team facilitated a focused envisioning session to help formulate a strategic plan.

Through this open discussion and visioning, an agreed-upon vision emerged for the future of parks and recreation services in Cuyahoga Falls. This finalized Strategic Plan consists of core values, an updated mission statement, and a new vision statement, along with a series of goals and objectives for the system moving forward.

1.7 PLAN

In this final phase, a detailed action plan – informed by public and stakeholder input, data collected, service mapping, and steering committee guidance – was developed to direct Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation in their efforts moving forward.

1.7.1 Recommendations

Systemwide improvements for facilities, programs, and operations (Chapter 7) were provided to direct Parks and Recreation over a 5 to 10 year timeframe or beyond. Priorities were provided for improvements that apply to the entire system and Cuyahoga Falls as a whole, such as operations, programs, budgets, development practices, and priorities for upgrades. Long-term needs for land acquisition were also included in these recommendations. Recommendations for individual parks were also developed and are included in Chapter 8.

1.7.2 Action Plan

This portion of the process consisted of the creation of a detailed Action Plan with specific strategies for the implementation of this Continuous Improvement Plan.

The Action Plan provided specific strategies for:

- Existing Park Improvements
- New Parks and Facilities
- Natural Areas, Open Space, and Nature Education
- Outdoor Athletic Fields and Courts
- Indoor Recreation
- Programming
- Operations, Maintenance, and Promotion
- Budget and Funding
- Partnerships and Sponsorships

The strategies in this Action Plan were categorized under the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan developed during this planning process. The action steps for the implementation of the plan were categorized as short-term (0-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years), or long-term (6-10 years) strategies. Additionally, the plan identified the responsible party and potential funding source for each strategy.

Draft Continuous Improvement Plan

A draft of the *Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan* was presented to Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Staff and the Steering Committee in December 2020. The final draft was presented to the Cuyahoga Falls Park Board on January 14, 2021. After review, the document was approved by the Park Board on January 21, 2021.



2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Planning Context chapter provides a summary of factors and trends that may influence the delivery of parks and recreation services throughout the City of Cuyahoga Falls. This chapter begins with a summary of population and demographic trends in Cuyahoga Falls and concludes with a benchmarking analysis comparing parks and recreation in the City of Cuyahoga Falls with other cities throughout the United States.

2.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

An overall understanding of population trends in Cuyahoga Falls is necessary to identify current conditions and to anticipate future needs for parks and recreation services and facilities. Needs vary between demographic groups, and these needs also change over time. Each of the following demographic categories examines specific elements of the population.

2.2.1 Population Change

Figure 2.1 illustrates the population change in Cuyahoga Falls from 1980 to 2024. This table uses U.S. Census Bureau data and figures provided by Esri forecasts.¹ These numbers indicate the population of Cuyahoga Falls has stayed nearly constant after a modest increase between 1980-1990. Though slight, the data shows consistent growth in population over the decades.

2.2.2 Household Size

Table 2.1 shows the number of households in 2019 and household size from 2000 to 2024 for Cuyahoga Falls, Summit County, Ohio, and the USA. The table indicates that in Cuyahoga Falls, the average household size decreased between 2000 and 2019 but is projected to hold steady into 2024. As of 2019, the household size in Cuyahoga Falls (2.19) is much lower than Summit County (2.38) which in turn is lower than both the State of Ohio (2.43) and the USA (2.59). Household size across all geographies is expected to remain relatively stable through 2024.

¹ Esri is a company that develops geographic information system software, web GIS mapping, and geodatabase management platform

Figure 2.1: Cuyahoga Falls Population Change

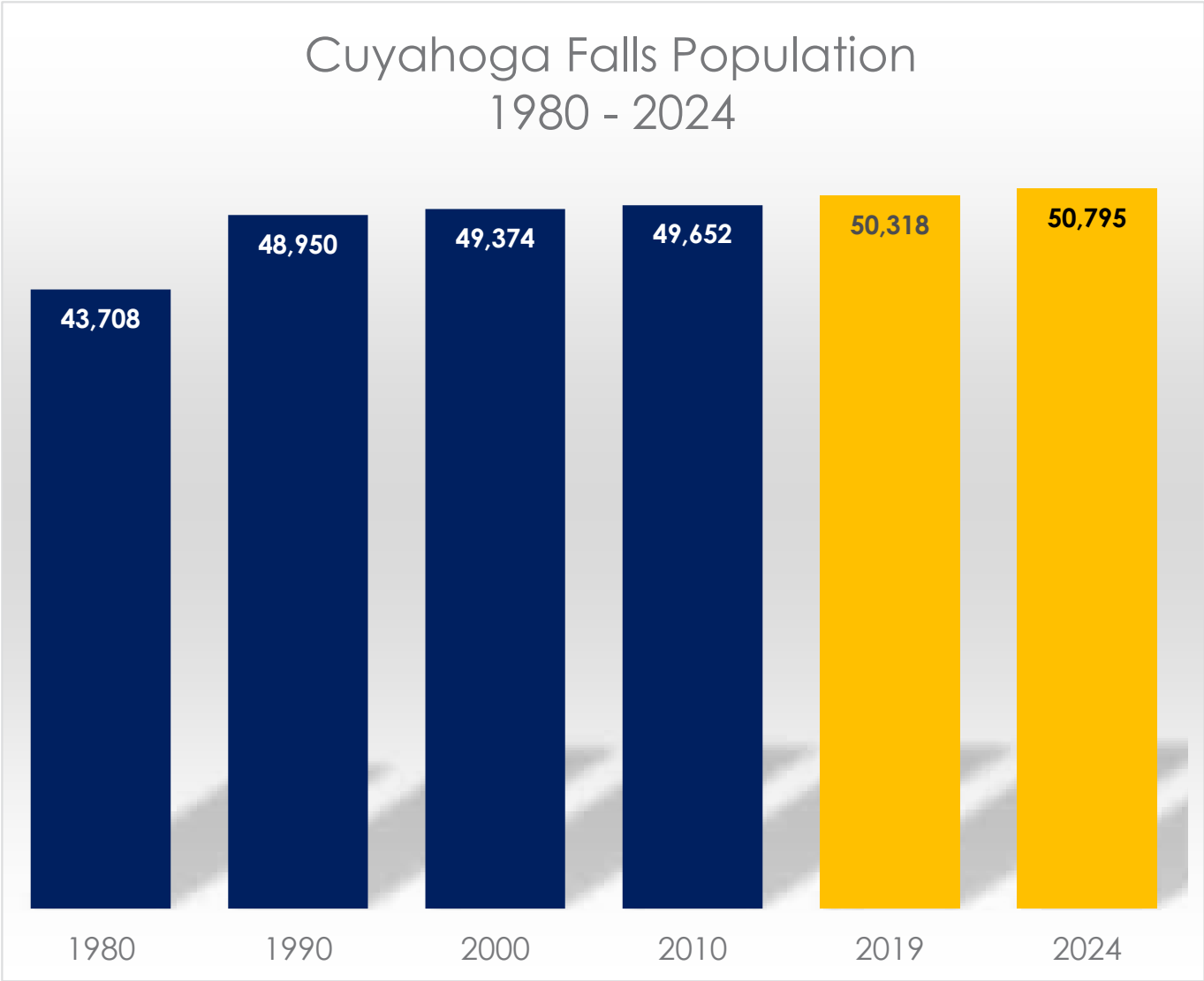


Table 2.1: Average Household Size (2000 to 2024)

	Households	Average Household Size			
	2019	2000	2010	2019	2024
USA	125,168,557	2.59	2.58	2.59	2.60
Ohio	4,729,729	2.49	2.44	2.43	2.43
Summit County	226,076	2.45	2.39	2.38	2.37
Cuyahoga Falls	22,679	2.26	2.21	2.19	2.19

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.3 Median Age

Table 2.2 shows the median age for Cuyahoga Falls, Summit County, Ohio, and the USA from 2000 through 2024. The median age in Cuyahoga Falls has increased slightly over three decades. While all geographic levels are increasing, Cuyahoga Falls has a higher median age than both the state and the country.

The 2019 median age in Cuyahoga Falls (41.4) is very comparable to the median age of Summit County but has been consistently higher than either Ohio's or the USA's median age and is projected to continue

increasing into 2024. Understanding the age makeup of Cuyahoga Falls is critical for ensuring that this Continuous Improvement Plan addresses future development and opportunity in a way that best serves the community.

Table 2.2: Median Age (2000-2024)

	2000	2010	2019	2024
USA	35.3	37.1	38.5	39.2
Ohio	36.2	38.7	40.1	40.9
Summit County	37.2	40.1	41.8	42.5
Cuyahoga Falls	37.2	39.4	41.4	42.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.4 Senior Population

Table 2.3 displays the population age 65 and over from 2000 to 2024 and shows that this age group has fluctuated somewhat as a percentage of the population but is generally increasing. Since 2010, residents 65 and over have continued representing a growing percentage of the community. A similar trend is apparent for the other geographic levels. By 2024, Cuyahoga Falls is projected to have over 21% of the total population in this age cohort. This increase Cuyahoga Falls is experiencing emphasizes the need for facilities and services for the 65+ population and should guide consideration of future development and opportunities.

Table 2.3: Population Age 65 and over (2000-2024)

	2000	2010	2019	2024
USA	12.4%	13.0%	16.4%	18.5%
Ohio	17.1%	14.1%	17.7%	20.1%
Summit County	14.1%	14.5%	18.6%	21.2%
Cuyahoga Falls	16.1%	15.3%	18.9%	21.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.5 Children

Table 2.4 presents the population under age 18 from 2000 to 2024. The table indicates that in Cuyahoga Falls the percentage of children decreased from 22.5% in 2000 to 19.1% in 2019; the percentage of the population within this age group is expected to continue decreasing through 2024 (18.7%). This trend is evident at the state, regional, and national levels. Both Cuyahoga Falls and Summit County have slightly lower percentages of children than the state or the USA. By 2024, Cuyahoga Falls (and Summit County) will have more seniors (age 65+) than children. Even so, children will continue to represent a valuable and significant percentage of the Cuyahoga Falls community and should be accommodated accordingly.

Table 2.4: Population under Age 18 (2000-2024)

	2000	2010	2019	2024
USA	25.7%	24.0%	22.0%	21.8%
Ohio	22.2%	23.7%	21.3%	21.1%
Summit County	25.0%	22.8%	20.3%	20.0%
Cuyahoga Falls	22.5%	20.9%	19.1%	18.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.6 Poverty

Table 2.5 shows the percentage of the population living below the poverty line in each of the geographic areas. The table shows that the poverty level in Cuyahoga Falls is lower than the comparisons. Both Cuyahoga Falls and Summit County are lower than the USA percentage (14.1%) at 10.0% and 13.1% respectively. The county-level poverty is somewhat higher than Cuyahoga Falls.

Table 2.5: Population Under the Poverty Line (2010-2018)

	2010	2018
USA	13.8%	14.1%
Ohio	15.8%	14.5%
Summit County	13.8%	13.1%
Cuyahoga Falls	10.2%	10.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

2.2.7 Income and Educational Attainment

The median household income in Cuyahoga Falls (\$54,668 as of 2019) has risen since 2010 and is projected to increase by 2024 (\$60,787, almost \$14,000 higher than in 2010). In all comparisons, the median household and per capita income for Cuyahoga Falls is lower than the national level despite projections of sustained increase. In contrast with household income, per capita income has more than kept pace with inflation in Cuyahoga Falls. Understanding income levels in Cuyahoga Falls will be useful for creating cost-effective solutions and accessible opportunities for all populations in the community.

Table 2.6: Household Income (2010-2024)

	2010	2010 Adjusted	2019	2024
Median Household Income				
USA	\$51,914	\$60,305	\$60,548	\$69,180
Ohio	\$47,358	\$55,013	\$54,966	\$61,801
Summit County	\$47,926	\$55,673	\$56,073	\$63,162
Cuyahoga Falls	\$47,071	\$54,679	\$54,668	\$60,787
Per Capita Income				
USA	\$27,334	\$31,752	\$33,028	\$37,585
Ohio	\$25,113	\$29,172	\$30,369	\$34,587
Summit County	\$26,676	\$30,988	\$31,801	\$36,192
Cuyahoga Falls	\$24,712	\$28,706	\$30,214	\$34,460

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts, BLS

As can be seen in Table 2.7, the rate of change in educational attainment in Cuyahoga Falls since 2010 varies between different geographies. As of 2019, 23% of residents age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree, and 11% of residents in Cuyahoga Falls age 25 or over have a master's degree or above. The percentage of Cuyahoga Falls' population with higher education is greater than Summit County, Ohio, and the USA. In contrast to Summit County, Ohio, and the USA, Cuyahoga Falls has experienced a slight increase in percentage of the population with no high school diploma, although the overall percentage is lower than the comparisons. The higher education levels in Cuyahoga Falls contrasts sharply with lower income levels compared to the other geographic levels.

Table 2.7: Educational Attainment Age 25 and Over (2010-2019)

Educational Attainment (Highest Level)	Cuyahoga Falls		Summit County		Ohio		USA	
	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019
No High School Diploma	5.2%	5.5%	10.5%	8.0%	12.6%	9.5%	14.9%	11.6%
High School/GED	30.3%	29.9%	32.8%	30.9%	35.8%	33.2%	29.0%	27.0%
Some College, No Degree	21.8%	20.3%	19.9%	19.0%	20.1%	20.0%	20.6%	20.2%
Associates Degree	10.6%	10.3%	7.7%	9.1%	7.3%	8.9%	7.5%	8.6%
Bachelors Degree	21.8%	23.0%	19.2%	20.9%	15.3%	17.5%	17.6%	20.0%
Graduate/Professional/Doctorate Degree	10.4%	11.0%	10.0%	12.0%	8.8%	10.9%	10.3%	12.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Esri forecasts

2.2.8 Growth of Population by Race

In Cuyahoga Falls (as of 2018), the Hispanic population has grown by over 230% since 2000; in fact, Black, Asian, and multi-racial populations have all increased significantly (146.4%, 101.9%, and 111% respectively). This contrasts with an overall decrease in White population in Cuyahoga Falls. These changes in the community's population might correspond to different recreation preferences, especially compared to when the parks were originally constructed. While the White population still represents the largest percentage (89.2% in 2018), minority populations are projected to continue growing (even though they are often undercounted). Engagement that reflects this diversifying population will be essential for the city's parks and recreation to meet the needs of the whole population.

Table 2.8: Population Counts and Percentages by Race (2000-2018)

Year	Total Population	White Alone		Black Alone		Asian Alone		Other Race Alone		Two or More Races		Hispanic	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2000	49,374	47,102	95.4%	918	1.9%	517	1.0%	118	0.2%	410	0.8%	309	0.6%
2018	49,317	43,967	89.2%	2,262	4.6%	1,044	2.1%	151	0.3%	866	1.8%	1,027	2.1%
# Change	-57	-3,135		1,344		527		33		456		718	
% Change	-0.1%	-6.7%		146.4%		101.9%		28.0%		111.2%		232.4%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates (2013-2018)

2.2.9 Conclusion

These demographic trends indicate aging of the population and diversification of the population of Cuyahoga Falls. These trends will shape the future of Cuyahoga Falls. The direction Cuyahoga Falls chooses for its parks and recreation will determine the availability of opportunities for residents and will help enrich the overall quality of life in the community for years to come.

2.3 BENCHMARKING COMPARISONS

One method for evaluating parks and recreation services offered in a community is to use benchmark comparisons to other communities. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics program provides a variety of data for use in benchmarking. The following analysis uses data from 59 agencies located in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, or Wisconsin (serving populations between 20,000 and 60,000) that participated in the Park Metrics program (Table 2.9). Additionally, NRPA provides an annual report² which includes national performance benchmarks, also used in this evaluation process.

Table 2.9: Benchmark Agencies

Agency	State	Year	Population	Budget
Athens Community Arts, Parks, & Rec	OH	2018	25,214	\$2,115,020
Beavercreek (City of)	OH	2019	47,000	\$2,634,044
Boardman Township Park	OH	2019	40,000	\$1,356,229
Bourbonnais Township Park District	IL	2018	39,257	\$3,220,681
Brownsburg Parks	IN	2019	27,743	\$2,015,624
Bucks County Planning Commission	PA	2018	33,108	\$12,316,125
Buffalo Grove Park District	IL	2018	41,226	\$21,400,000
Centerville-Washington Park District	OH	2018	58,000	\$3,845,000
City of Holland Parks & Recreation Department	MI	2019	33,327	\$24,094,351
Collinsville (City of) Parks and Recreation Department	IL	2019	25,579	\$2,536,672
Deerfield Township	OH	2019	38,000	\$1,098,357
Delaware (City of), Parks and Natural Resources	OH	2018	40,000	\$2,200,000

² National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), "2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review Park And Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks," <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/nrpa-agency-performance-review.pdf> (accessed December 30, 2019).

Table 2.9: Benchmark Agencies (Continued)

Agency	State	Year	Population	Budget
Downers Grove Park District	IL	2019	49,715	\$12,252,181
Dublin Parks & Recreation Department	OH	2019	48,647	\$34,150,738
East Lansing Department of Parks, Recreation & Arts	MI	2019	48,579	\$4,386,960
Elm Grove (Village of)	WI	2018	39,740	\$1,412,687
Elyria (City of)	OH	2018	53,000	\$1,634,000
Fairfield Parks and Recreation	OH	2019	44,000	\$4,502,250
Galesburg (City of)	IL	2018	31,000	\$4,759,870
Glenview Park District	IL	2018	58,183	\$25,246,208
Grove City (City of)	OH	2019	42,400	\$2,500,000
Gurnee Park District	IL	2019	30,576	\$11,228,479
Hanover Park Park District	IL	2018	38,000	\$4,665,608
Haverford Township Parks and Recreation Department	PA	2018	49,500	\$3,278,842
Highland Parks & Recreation	IN	2019	23,727	\$2,359,333
Hoffman Estates Park District	IL	2019	51,197	
Homewood-Flossmoor Park District	IL	2018	29,421	\$11,087,271
Huber (City of) Heights	OH	2019	38,019	
Independence Township Parks, Recreation & Seniors	MI	2019	36,818	\$2,972,525
Kettering Parks Rec & Cultural Arts	OH	2019	56,163	\$11,111,832
Lake in the Hills (Village of) Parks & Recreation	IL	2018	29,228	\$1,385,409
Lombard Park District	IL	2019	43,395	\$8,744,548
Mentor (City of) Parks, Recreation & Public Lands	OH	2018	47,000	\$14,500,000
Middleton Public Lands, Recreation & Forestry	WI	2018	20,472	\$2,166,243
Monroe (City of) Recreation Dept	MI	2018	20,733	\$152,886
Morton Grove Park District	IL	2019	23,270	\$5,756,000
Mt. Prospect Park District	IL	2018	56,000	\$7,000,000
Municipality of Murrysville	PA	2019	20,000	\$9,301,010
Neenah Parks & Recreation	WI	2019	25,951	\$2,592,650
Normal Parks & Recreation Department	IL	2018	54,664	\$8,117,559
Northbrook Park District	IL	2018	33,655	\$15,300,000
Novi (City of), Depof Parks Recreation and Cultural Services	MI	2019	59,911	\$2,807,263
Oak Lawn Park District	IL	2019	55,511	\$10,078,000
Oakland Township Parks	MI	2019	21,000	\$1,879,051
O'Fallon (City of) Parks & Recreation Dept	IL	2019	42,000	\$3,250,558
Oswegoland Park District	IL	2019	57,000	\$11,293,843
Park Forest (Village of) Recreation & Parks Department	IL	2019	22,200	\$3,774,003
Rock Island Parks and Recreation	IL	2018	39,116	\$6,000,000
Rolling Meadows Park District	IL	2019	24,000	\$6,680,000
Spring (Township of)	PA	2018	27,300	\$1,146,115
St. Charles Park District	IL	2018	51,205	\$17,608,933
Susquehanna Twp Parks & Recreation	PA	2018	25,054	\$480,000
Sylvania Recreation Corporation	OH	2018	50,000	\$3,300,000
Tinley Park-Park District	IL	2018	57,000	\$7,735,000
Upper Merion Township Parks and Recreation	PA	2019	30,000	\$3,586,099
Warminster Township Parks & Recreation	PA	2018	32,000	\$1,051,975
Washington Township Recreation Center	OH	2018	56,607	\$3,270,249
Westerville Parks and Recreation	OH	2019	39,737	\$10,622,843
Wilmette Park District	IL	2019	27,418	\$9,909,112

Cuyahoga Falls is not a participant in the NRPA Park Metrics program; figures were calculated based on information provided by the city. Because the data for other park systems was limited to parks and facilities managed by those agencies, only parks and facilities managed by the City of Cuyahoga Falls are included in this analysis (other agencies, schools, and private facilities were not included). The figures used in this analysis for Cuyahoga Falls were for calendar year 2019, and the figures for the comparison municipalities were those entered for 2018 and 2019.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers for 2020 will look very different than those from 2019. Parks and Recreation has been forced to close several facilities, including The Natatorium, for part of the year. When The Natatorium reopened, it and Water Works Family Aquatic Center had to operate at a reduced capacity. All part-time staff were laid off in the spring due to the pandemic. Although some have since been rehired, staffing levels have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Due to reduced revenues at signature facilities, cost recovery for 2020 (and very likely 2021 and possibly beyond), will be much lower than the 2019 levels.

The comparisons are organized into the following categories: parkland information, trail information, department functions, staffing, operating budget, capital budget, programs, and facilities. The following text details the findings of the benchmark analysis. The values presented in these comparisons are based on information reported to Park Metrics by the municipalities and may vary from actual budgets and measurements.

2.3.1 Parkland Information

Table 2.10 shows aspects of parks coverage managed by the City of Cuyahoga Falls. For instance, the city provides 11.4 acres of parkland per thousand population (higher than the benchmark (10.0) and the national median (9.9), but as a percentage of the entire jurisdiction, only 3.5% of land is parkland. What Table 2.10 does not reflect is that nearly a third of the City of Cuyahoga Falls is part of Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Table 2.10: Parkland Information

PARKLAND INFORMATION	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Acreage of Parkland			
Lower Quartile		256.7	
Median/Agency Value	574.9	377.0	N/A
Upper Quartile		516.1	
Acreage of Parkland per 1,000 Population			
Lower Quartile		6.8	2.1
Median/Agency Value	11.4	10.0	9.9
Upper Quartile		14.0	17.1
Population per Park			
Lower Quartile		1,164	1,316
Median/Agency Value	1,797	1,739	2,281
Upper Quartile		2,693	4,140
Parkland as a Percentage of Jurisdiction			
Lower Quartile		3.6%	
Median/Agency Value	3.5%	5.1%	N/A
Upper Quartile		6.9%	
Percent of Acreage Developed			
Lower Quartile		55%	
Median/Agency Value	64%	76%	N/A
Upper Quartile		96%	

The percent of acreage developed (64%) falls below the benchmark (76%), but that provides opportunities for park development while still maintaining undeveloped areas. The presence of Cuyahoga Valley National Park and several Summit Metro Parks within the city limits helps to explain why the population per park (1,797) is greater than the benchmark (1,739). Most of the population is concentrated in the southeastern portion of

the city, where most of the parks are located. Though there is more population per park and parkland itself represents a smaller portion of total land than benchmark comparisons, residents have access to national and county parkland.

Areas of opportunity for the City of Cuyahoga Falls are revealed in its total acreage of parkland (574.9) – almost 200 acres more than the benchmark comparisons - and percent of acreage developed (64%), more than 10% below the benchmarks.

2.3.2 Trail Information

The comparison of total miles of trails managed by the City of Cuyahoga Falls (Table 2.11) shows 3.3 miles of trails, compared to the benchmark median of 9.6 miles. Total trail miles per jurisdiction square mile is a measurement that controls for differences in the physical size of comparative municipalities. Cuyahoga Falls has 0.13 miles of trails per square mile of the city, lower than the benchmark median of 0.66. The trail miles per ten thousand population measurement, which controls for the population difference between the benchmark communities, shows a value of 0.7 for Cuyahoga Falls, considerably lower than the benchmark median (2.5).

Table 2.11: Trail Information

TRAILS	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark
Total Trail Miles Managed or Maintained		
Lower Quartile		5.0
Median/Agency Value	3.3	9.6
Upper Quartile		15.0
Total Trail Miles per Jurisdiction Sq. Mi.		
Lower Quartile		0.35
Median/Agency Value	0.13	0.66
Upper Quartile		1.17
Total Trail Miles per 10,000 Population		
Lower Quartile		1.4
Median/Agency Value	0.7	2.5
Upper Quartile		3.9

As with the parkland benchmarks in Table 2.10, taken on their own the benchmark comparisons suggest significant shortcoming. However, the presence of Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Summit Metro Parks (e.g., Gorge Metro Park) in the surrounding area more than offset these trail deficits. Cuyahoga Falls has an opportunity to partner with Summit Metro Parks to augment existing trails in a way that connects to these additional resources.

2.3.3 Department Functions

The list of department functions in Table 2.12 shows two things: 1) percentage of benchmark departments that conduct each service and 2) whether Cuyahoga Falls currently conducts the service. The City of Cuyahoga Falls provides most of the listed services, at least to some extent. The most notable function absent is *operate, maintain, or contract tennis center facilities*, which is provided by only 35% of benchmarks.

Table 2.12 shows how the City of Cuyahoga Falls provides several services that are only offered by fewer than half of the benchmark comparisons, including *administer community gardens*; *manage large performance outdoor amphitheaters*; *operate, maintain, or contract golf courses/indoor swim facility*; and *maintain, manage, or lease indoor performing arts center*. Since each of these facilities are already under the management and care of the city, Cuyahoga Falls is well positioned to amplify them through enriched programming and improved services.

Table 2.12: Department Functions

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
The agency...			
Operate and maintain park sites	✓	96%	96%
Provide recreation programming and services	✓	94%	93%
Operate and maintain indoor facilities	✓	85%	88%
Conduct major jurisdiction wide special events	✓	79%	77%
Operate, maintain, or manage special purpose parks and open spaces	✓	75%	72%
Operate, maintain, or contract outdoor swim facilities/water parks	✓	73%	65%

Table 2.12: Department Functions (Continued)

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
The agency...			
Operate, maintain, or manage trails, greenways, and/or blueways (TGB)	✓	71%	77%
Have budgetary responsibility for its administrative staff	✓	71%	83%
Operate and maintain non-park sites	✓	63%	65%
Include in its operating budget funding for planning and development	✓	63%	67%
Administer community gardens	✓	46%	41%
Administer or manage tournament/event quality outdoor sports complexes	✓	46%	56%
Operate, maintain, or contract tennis center facilities		35%	52%
Operate, maintain, or contract golf courses	✓	31%	33%
Operate, maintain, or contract indoor swim facility	✓	29%	31%
Manage large performance outdoor amphitheaters	✓	23%	33%
Maintain, manage or lease indoor performing arts center	✓	19%	17%
Administer or manage tournament/event quality indoor sports complexes		17%	18%
Operate, maintain, or contract tourism attractions		15%	34%
Administer or manage farmer's markets		15%	19%
Administer or manage professional or college-type stadium/arena/racetrack		4%	9%
Operate, maintain, or contract campgrounds		2%	18%
Manage or maintain fairgrounds		0%	5%

2.3.4 Staffing

Staffing metrics for Cuyahoga Falls as compared to benchmark communities are outlined in Table 2.13. The table indicates that Cuyahoga Falls employs 30 full-time employees, well above the benchmark median (18). The revenue generating facilities in Cuyahoga Falls require more full-time staff and a substantial number of part-time staff. Full-time equivalent employees amount to roughly three times the benchmark level (126.4 vs 44.6). Additionally, Cuyahoga Falls provides 25 full-time employees for every 10,000 residents, more than twice as much as the benchmark (11.6). Most of the benchmark communities do not offer these enterprise facilities and, therefore, do not have the required staff.

From a different perspective – acres of parkland per full-time employee – Cuyahoga Falls has a lower ratio than the benchmark (4.5 acres per FTE vs 8.9 FTE), indicating potentially greater quality in management and services. Again, this number is directly related to the enterprise operations in Cuyahoga Falls that are not present in the benchmark communities.

While these metrics appear to indicate that Cuyahoga Falls has substantially more staff than the benchmarks, this higher level of staff is integral to the higher level of cost recovery in the city as described in detail in the next subsection. These staff generate far more revenue for Parks and Recreation than the cost of their salaries.

While these metrics appear to indicate that Cuyahoga Falls has substantially more staff than the benchmarks, this higher level of staff is integral to the higher level of cost recovery in the city as described in detail in the next subsection. These staff generate far more revenue for Parks and Recreation than the cost of their salaries.

2.3.5 Operating Budget

Table 2.14 shows the operating budget for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation with benchmark comparisons. Due to the large discrepancy between the enterprise operations and the rest of the budget, numbers are also included to show what the budget would look like without these enterprise operations. Most of the benchmark communities lack the level of enterprise operations provided in Cuyahoga Falls. The total operating budget for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls for 2019 was \$6.1 million, above the \$3.8 million benchmark median largely because of the size of the city and the number of enterprise operations. Less than a third of the expenditures are from the general fund.

Table 2.13: Staffing

STAFFING	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Full-Time Employees			
Lower Quartile		11.3	
Median/Agency Value	30	18	N/A
Upper Quartile		40.9	
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Employees			
Lower Quartile		17.6	
Median/Agency Value	126.4	44.6	N/A
Upper Quartile		104.8	
FTE per 10,000 Population			
Lower Quartile		5.1	4.5
Median/Agency Value	25.1	11.6	8.1
Upper Quartile		24.1	14.9
Acres of Parkland per FTE			
Lower Quartile		4.2	
Median/Agency Value	4.5	8.9	N/A
Upper Quartile		23.0	

The per capita operating expenditure for the City of Cuyahoga Falls was \$121, only slightly higher than the \$106 median of benchmark municipalities, indicating that much of the difference in operating budgets is due to the size of the benchmark community populations. Without enterprise operations, the expenditures are only \$36 per capita.

The total operating expenditure per acre of parkland was \$10,628 for the City of Cuyahoga Falls. This number is lower than the benchmark median of \$12,069 despite the slightly higher per capita expenditures and staffing levels. Cuyahoga Falls' expenditures per FTE (\$48,334) are roughly half both the benchmark median (\$97,763) and the national median (\$97,063). Again, the numbers show that most of the expenditures are related to enterprise operations. Without those facilities, Cuyahoga Falls would be far behind the benchmarks.

The \$5.4 million in earned revenue is significantly higher – more than double the benchmark median (\$2.1 million). This revenue represents 88% of the Parks and Recreation budget, which is about twice as much as the median for benchmark communities. Cuyahoga Falls generated \$107 non-tax revenue per capita (2019), far above the benchmark median (\$52); this level of revenue generation is roughly five times the national median (\$21). This high level of cost recovery is due almost entirely to the presence of several income generating or (enterprise facilities), including The Natatorium, Water Works Family Aquatic Center, Brookledge Golf Club, and Downview Sports Center. These enterprise funds generate nearly all of the department revenue, and as noted previously, require significant staff to operate. Without the enterprise facilities, revenue represents only 10% of expenditures.

Table 2.14: Operating Budget

OPERATING BUDGET	Cuyahoga Falls		Benchmark	National
	Overall	w/o Enterprise		
Agency's TOTAL Operating Expenditures for the Fiscal Year				
Lower Quartile			\$2,279,667	
Median/Agency Value	\$6,110,153	\$1,835,601	\$3,845,000	N/A
Upper Quartile			\$10,350,422	
Agency's TOTAL Non-Tax Revenue for the Fiscal Year				
Lower Quartile			\$847,138	
Median/Agency Value	\$5,406,071	\$190,432	\$2,127,655	N/A
Upper Quartile			\$3,817,924	
Percentage of Total Operating Expenditures within the Following Categories*				
Personnel Services	56%	N/A	52%	54%
Operating Expenses	36%	N/A	40%	38%
Capital Expense not in CIP	5%	N/A	5%	5%
Other	4%	N/A	3%	3%
Revenue as a percentage of Total Operating Expenditures				
Lower Quartile			27%	
Median/Agency Value	88%	10%	45%	26%
Upper Quartile			59%	
Operating Expenditures per Capita				
Lower Quartile			\$63	\$46
Median/Agency Value	\$121	\$36	\$106	\$81
Upper Quartile			\$257	\$150
Operating Expenditures per Acre of Parkland*				
Lower Quartile			\$6,518	
Median/Agency Value	\$10,628	\$4,462	\$12,069	N/A
Upper Quartile			\$27,126	
Operating Expenditures per FTE				
Lower Quartile			\$71,597	\$70,329
Median/Agency Value	\$48,334	N/A	\$97,763	\$97,093
Upper Quartile			\$130,874	\$134,175
Non-Tax Revenue per Capita				
Lower Quartile			\$27	\$6
Median/Agency Value	\$107	\$4	\$52	\$21
Upper Quartile			\$115	\$50

*Average values used

[†]Enterprise acreage not included for the w/o Enterprise value

2.3.6 Capital Budget

Table 2.15 shows capital budget comparisons for the benchmark communities. These numbers indicate a capital budget of \$884,605 for Cuyahoga Falls, compared to a benchmark median of \$1.1 million. Because this plan is intended to provide direction for capital improvements for Parks and Recreation specifically, the 5-year capital budget has not yet been determined. The median of the benchmark communities is \$5 million.

The capital expenditures per capita in Cuyahoga Falls were \$18, much lower than the benchmark \$34. To match the benchmark median of \$34 per capita, the city would need to allocate roughly \$1.7 million annually for capital improvements.

The Recreation Levy Fund which provides the funds for capital improvements is primarily being used for capital maintenance and replacement rather than new facilities. However, even with this fund, the city has fallen behind on capital maintenance, and deferred maintenance is apparent throughout the system.

2.3.7 Programs

The list of program categories in Table 2.16 includes the percentage of benchmark departments that offer each type of program and whether Cuyahoga Falls provides them as well. The data in Table 2.16 is separated into two types of programs: "Activity," which cover programs intended for all users and "Out-of-School-Time Activities" which include programs targeted for specific user groups (children, seniors, etc.).

Table 2.16: Programs

PROGRAMS	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Activities			
Team sports	✓	92%	87%
Themed special events	✓	92%	88%
Fitness enhancement classes	✓	88%	82%
Health and wellness education	✓	86%	81%
Social recreation events	✓	86%	87%
Performing arts	✓	86%	64%
Individual sports	✓	80%	74%
Safety training	✓	73%	72%
Racquet sports	✓	73%	67%
Aquatics	✓	73%	71%
Visual arts	✓	71%	59%
Natural and cultural history activities	✓	71%	59%
Trips and tours		69%	63%
Martial arts	✓	67%	60%
Cultural crafts	✓	65%	61%
Golf	✓	59%	47%

Table 2.15: Capital Budget

CAPITAL BUDGET	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark
Total Capital Park Budget for Next 5-Years		
Lower Quartile		\$2,000,000
Median/Agency Value	TBD	\$5,000,000
Upper Quartile		\$7,597,407
Total Capital Budget this Fiscal Year*		
Lower Quartile		\$325,000
Median/Agency Value	\$884,605	\$1,100,000
Upper Quartile		\$3,170,000
Total Capital Costs per Capita this Fiscal Year		
Lower Quartile		\$10
Median/Agency Value	\$18	\$34
Upper Quartile		\$66

*FY 2019

Table 2.16: Programs (Continued)

PROGRAMS	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Out-of-School Time (OST) Activities			
Summer camp	✓	96%	83%
Specific senior programs	✓	80%	78%
Programs for people with disabilities	✓	65%	62%
Preschool	✓	59%	36%
Specific teen programs	✓	59%	65%
After school programs		51%	57%
Before school programs		39%	20%
Full daycare		4%	8%

Cuyahoga Falls currently offers a wide variety of programming, most of the program types offered by all benchmark communities. The most notable exception within the OST activities category is *after school programs* with 51% of benchmark agencies offering these programs. The offerings within these categories vary substantially, however. Cuyahoga Falls has robust offerings for *specific senior programs* and *programs for people with disabilities* but limited offerings for *specific teen programs*.

2.3.8 Facilities

Table 2.17 indicates how Cuyahoga Falls' facility offerings compare to benchmark communities. Types of facilities are differentiated by outdoor and indoor areas. Cuyahoga Falls offers nearly all outdoor facilities provided by benchmark communities with one exception: *multipurpose synthetic field*. However, this facility is only provided by 16% of the comparisons. Less than 50% of benchmark communities provide the same variety of facilities as Cuyahoga Falls, notably ice rink, aquatic center, driving range, and golf course.

Table 2.17: Facilities

FACILITIES	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Outdoor Activity Areas			
Playgrounds	✓	100%	94%
Basketball courts	✓	96%	87%
Tennis courts (outdoor only)	✓	96%	81%
Diamond fields: baseball - youth	✓	90%	78%
Diamond fields: softball fields - adult	✓	76%	65%
Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth	✓	74%	47%
Diamond fields: softball fields - youth	✓	70%	59%
Dog park	✓	66%	63%
Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult	✓	62%	41%
Skate park	✓	56%	38%
Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	✓	56%	65%
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	✓	54%	51%
Community gardens	✓	52%	47%
Diamond fields: baseball - adult	✓	52%	53%
Ice rink (outdoor only)	✓	50%	17%
Rectangular fields: football field	✓	46%	37%
Aquatics centers	✓	38%	N/A
Driving Range	✓	24%	N/A
Golf Course (Regulation 18-Holes)	✓	22%	N/A
Rectangular fields: lacrosse field	✓	20%	11%
Multipurpose synthetic field		16%	19%

Table 2.17: Facilities (Continued)

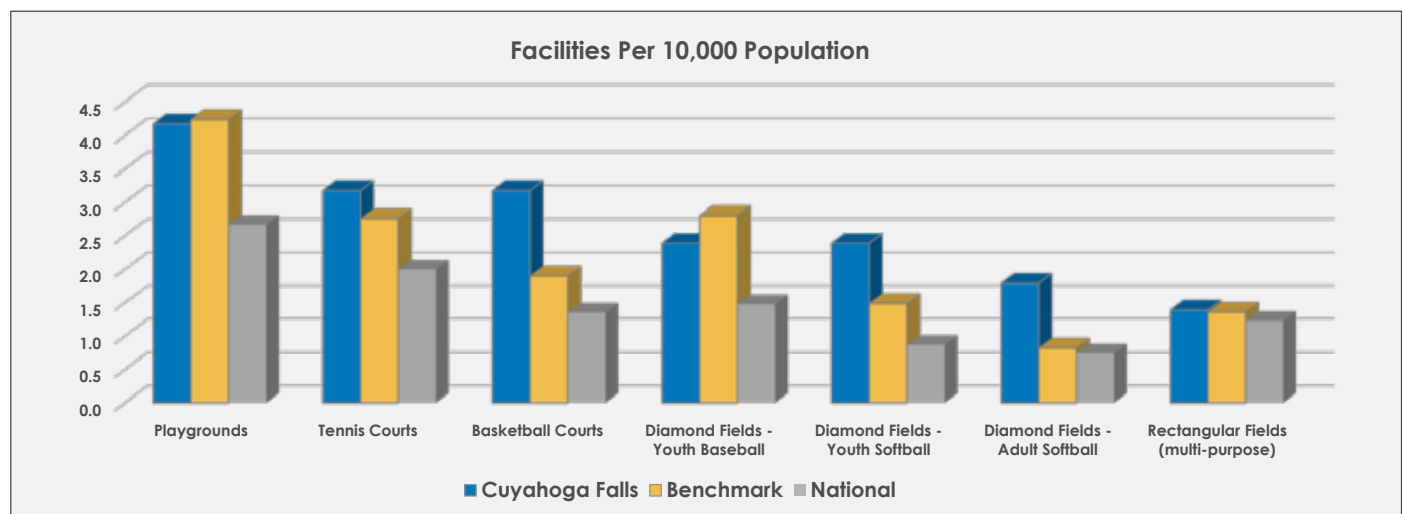
FACILITIES	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Indoor Activity Areas			
Community centers	✓	70%	60%
Recreation centers	✓	48%	61%
Senior centers		38%	41%
Performance amphitheater		30%	35%
Nature centers		28%	29%
Indoor pool designated exclusively for leisure	✓	24%	N/A
Ice rink		22%	15%
Indoor competitive swimming pool	✓	22%	N/A
Teen centers		16%	14%
Gyms	✓	12%	N/A
Fitness center	✓	10%	N/A
Indoor track	✓	4%	N/A

Of indoor facilities, Cuyahoga Falls offers over half the facilities listed (several provided by less than 30% of the benchmark communities). While only 48% of benchmark communities include *recreation centers*, Cuyahoga Falls does provide this type of facility to residents, as well as two types of indoor pools (each offered by less than 25% of the benchmarks).

Table 2.17 highlights how well Cuyahoga Falls compares to benchmark communities in terms of facilities provided. A comparison of population per facility provides a way to evaluate the existing supply of each type of amenity compared to other communities. This comparison can help identify facilities that the city might want to add in the future. Tables 2.18 and 2.19 show the numeric values for these and other facilities plus upper and lower quartile values; a lower value indicates a higher level of service. Figure 2.2³ shows facilities per 10,000 population (converted from the numbers in Table 2.18) for playgrounds, tennis courts (outdoor), basketball courts (outdoor), ballfields (youth baseball, youth softball, and adult softball diamonds), and rectangular fields.

In terms of benchmark comparisons, Cuyahoga Falls has considerably strong service ratios (facilities per 10,000 population) for the seven major active-use facility types (Table 2.18). As Table 2.18 indicates, the city exceeds benchmark medians in three different types of facility: *diamond fields* (for softball), *basketball courts*, and *tennis courts*. Playgrounds and rectangular multi-purpose fields are both provided at benchmark levels. Diamond fields (for baseball) have the lowest service ratio but still near the median.

Figure 2.2: Facilities Per 10,000 Population



³ The analysis was limited to these facilities due to availability of data for comparison departments.

Table 2.18: Population Per Facility (Outdoor)

POPULATION PER FACILITY (OUTDOOR)	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Playgrounds			
Lower Quartile		1,597	
Median/Agency Value	2,396	2,361	3,750
Upper Quartile		4,182	
Tennis Courts			
Lower Quartile		2,137	
Median/Agency Value	3,145	3,628	5,004
Upper Quartile		6,326	
Basketball Courts			
Lower Quartile		3,289	
Median/Agency Value	3,145	5,280	7,400
Upper Quartile		7,827	
Diamond Fields - Youth Baseball			
Lower Quartile		2,574	
Median/Agency Value	4,193	3,571	6,779
Upper Quartile		7,426	
Diamond Fields - Youth Softball			
Lower Quartile		3,333	
Median/Agency Value	4,193	6,731	11,511
Upper Quartile		13,709	
Diamond Fields - Adult Softball			
Lower Quartile		6,170	
Median/Agency Value	5,591	12,209	13,510
Upper Quartile		13,844	
Rectangular Fields (multi-purpose)			
Lower Quartile		2,227	
Median/Agency Value	7,188	7,372	8,150
Upper Quartile		21,402	
Multipurpose Synthetic Field			
Lower Quartile		22,314	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	38,525	49,493
Upper Quartile		49,661	
Swimming Pools			
Lower Quartile		16,828	
Median/Agency Value	50,318	27,756	35,837
Upper Quartile		41,226	
Skate Park			
Lower Quartile		24,099	
Median/Agency Value	50,318	32,164	49,500
Upper Quartile		47,434	
Dog Park			
Lower Quartile		26,465	
Median/Agency Value	25,159	39,116	45,899
Upper Quartile		47,790	
Community Gardens			
Lower Quartile		8,594	
Median/Agency Value	50,318	24,166	29,273
Upper Quartile		41,750	

Table 2.19: Population Per Facility (Indoor)

POPULATION PER FACILITY (INDOOR)	Cuyahoga Falls	Benchmark	National
Recreation Centers			
Lower Quartile		20,153	
Median/Agency Value	50,318	30,211	31,141
Upper Quartile		49,287	
Community Centers			
Lower Quartile		24,000	
Median/Agency Value	25,159	39,740	28,939
Upper Quartile		48,647	
Senior Centers			
Lower Quartile		33,655	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	47,000	60,513
Upper Quartile		51,205	
Gymnasiums			
Lower Quartile		10,072	
Median/Agency Value	16,773	27,928	N/A
Upper Quartile		42,604	
Competitive Swimming Pools			
Lower Quartile		33,327	
Median/Agency Value	50,318	48,579	N/A
Upper Quartile		51,205	
Nature Centers			
Lower Quartile		27,642	
Median/Agency Value	N/A	30,211	109,796
Upper Quartile		43,875	



INVENTORY OF PARKS, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Continuous Improvement Plan identifies existing conditions of parks and recreation facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. It begins with a description of park classifications to provide an understanding of their functions. An inventory of Cuyahoga Falls' parks and recreation facilities follows, including park locations, facilities offered, and other observations. The chapter concludes with an inventory of programs offered by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation.

3.2 PARKLAND AND RECREATION AREA CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

A parks classification system helps to evaluate the overall recreation opportunities that are available to the public. In some cases, communities may “meet the standard” in terms of acreage, but a single park may cover the provision in terms of acreage without actually providing for the entire community. A park system should be evaluated as a composite of recreation areas with each meeting a particular public need; the system should provide a combination of smaller Neighborhood Parks, larger Community and Regional Parks, and Special Use Parks.

The facilities inventory in this chapter identifies each park by its classification and lists the specific facilities it provides. Table 3.1 defines each park category by its typical size and service area, population served, typical features and facilities, and desirable characteristics. The categories and descriptions were adapted from “Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines,” published by the National Recreation and Park Association in 1987 and 1995.

3.3 INVENTORY OF CUYAHOGA FALLS PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

Residents of Cuyahoga Falls are offered a variety of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The Park and Recreation Resources Inventory (Table 3.2) provides a summary of all the offerings in Cuyahoga Falls as well as the classification for each property.

The table indicates the location of the property by park type category as defined in Table 3.1. The Existing Parks and Trails map (Figure 3.1) shows the location of each of the parks and recreation areas offered by the City of Cuyahoga Falls. The following text provides a detailed narrative summary of these facilities. Aerial photos of each park can be found in Appendix B.

Table 3.1: Park Classifications

PARK CLASSIFICATION	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	DEVELOPED ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/ FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
Local Space				
Mini Park (MP)	Size: Less than 2 acres of developed parkland; less than 3 total acres 1/2 mile service area 10-minute walk	Combined with Neighborhood Park	Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches.	Often provided in association with school facilities. Some developed as part of residential developments. May also provide open space as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where households have limited yard space.
Neighborhood Park (NP)	Size: 2-10 acres of developed parkland; 3-15 total acres ½-1.0 mile service area 10-minute walk To serve a population up to 3,000	1.2 Acre/1,000	Suited for intense development Typical facilities include athletic fields, game courts, playgrounds, drinking fountains, picnic areas/shelters, and walking paths.	Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance). May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility. May not be needed in areas served locally by larger parks.
Community Park (CP)	10-30+ acres of developed parkland; 20 or more total acres 1.0-2.0 mile service radius 5-minute drive To serve several neighborhoods with populations up to 20,000	1.5 Acres/1,000	Typical facilities include all those listed for Neighborhood Parks plus; major swimming pool, field or game court complex, major recreation or community center, etc. May include an area of natural quality for picnicking, walking, etc. May have an active or passive recreation focus or a balance of both - parks with passive focus will have a higher percentage of undeveloped land	Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational activities; or, provides one or two activities that attract users from multi-neighborhood areas. May meet Neighborhood Park needs for users within a 10-minute walk.
Special Use (SU)	Serves community-wide area	N/A (but may contribute to total open space requirement)	Area for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as plazas, major pools, riverfront park areas, golf courses, athletic complexes, indoor facilities, etc.	Area should be located to meet the specific needs of the intended use.
Open Space (OS)	N/A	N/A (but contributes to total open space requirement)	Special use areas of low or limited development. Includes undeveloped areas, urban greenspaces, and small designated natural areas. May include urban greenspaces (mowed and landscaped areas) of any size. These areas are considered developed but have predominantly passive uses, few structures, and limited impervious areas. Typical facilities include walking/hiking trails, picnic areas, gardens, and open grass areas.	Includes undeveloped properties that may be developed in the future. May also function as small Nature Parks. Educational opportunities desirable in developed or undeveloped areas.

Table 3.1: Park Classifications (Continued)

PARK CLASSIFICATION	TYPICAL SIZE and SERVICE AREA	DEVELOPED ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/ FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
Regional Space				
Regional Park (RP)	<p>Size: 50+ acres of developed parkland; 100 or more total acres</p> <p>3-5 mile service radius</p> <p>10-minute drive</p> <p>Travel time within 10 minutes (potentially longer depending on amenities)</p> <p>To serve most of the city but located regionally</p>	<p>1.1 Acres/1,000 (Developed)</p> <p>10.0 Acres/1000 (Total)</p>	<p>Large properties that contain some active recreation facilities and a large percentage of natural or geographical features. Should include both active and passive features.</p> <p>Target size of 100 or more acres with up to 50% developed for recreation. Should be located near major roads.</p> <p>Destination-oriented parks. May contain picnic areas, any of the active elements found in local space, regional aquatic facilities, and regional indoor facilities. Should connect to linear park and trail system.</p>	<p>Capable of providing a range of specific recreational facilities. May include unique natural areas of ecological interest.</p> <p>May meet smaller park needs for users within those service areas.</p> <p>May be located in rural areas but should be readily accessible to most of the city and county population. Service multiple jurisdictions. May serve population outside of the county as well.</p>
Nature Parks or Preserves (NatP)	Size as needed to protect the resource	N/A (but contributes to total open space requirement)	<p>Majority of park to remain in its natural state (less than 20% developed)</p> <p>Facilities should focus on education by use of "nature activities" and should reinforce that philosophy by offering habitat enhancement, trails, nature centers, and interpretive signage. Should also include parking and restrooms.</p>	<p>The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions. Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest.</p> <p>Typical size should be over 50 acres for management efficiency and to promote ecosystem services.</p>
State Parks (SP)	Size as needed to protect natural resources of State or regional significance	N/A	<p>Majority of park to remain in its natural state.</p> <p>The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions.</p>	<p>Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest, lakes, or other features of state or regional interest.</p> <p>Serve state-wide area or beyond.</p> <p>Size will vary based on the area required to protect the resource.</p>

3.4 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

A Neighborhood Park is a small but highly developed park located within a short (10-minute) walking or biking distance of residents with facilities such as game courts, playgrounds, picnic areas/shelters, athletic fields, and walking paths.

3.4.1 Galt Park (7.6 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Galt Park abuts the Brookledge Golf Club, just to the north. It can be accessed from Oneida Avenue via Vancouver Street and Northmoreland Boulevard.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Volleyball court
- Playground with swings (3 belt swings, 1 tot swing)
- Galt Park Lodge (rental facility with wood-burning fireplace, full kitchen, bathrooms)
- 5 picnic tables
- 5 grills
- 5 benches
- 2 parking lots – 8 marked spaces, space for approximately 20 vehicles at second lot
- Community Garden



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Lodge needs renovation
- Lack of lighting
- No accessible restrooms
- Lodge exterior needs painting
- Lack of signage
- Paved pathways need resurfacing
- Limited age 2-5 play equipment
- Swings need to be replaced
- No edging at playground

3.4.2 Harrington Field (5.4 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

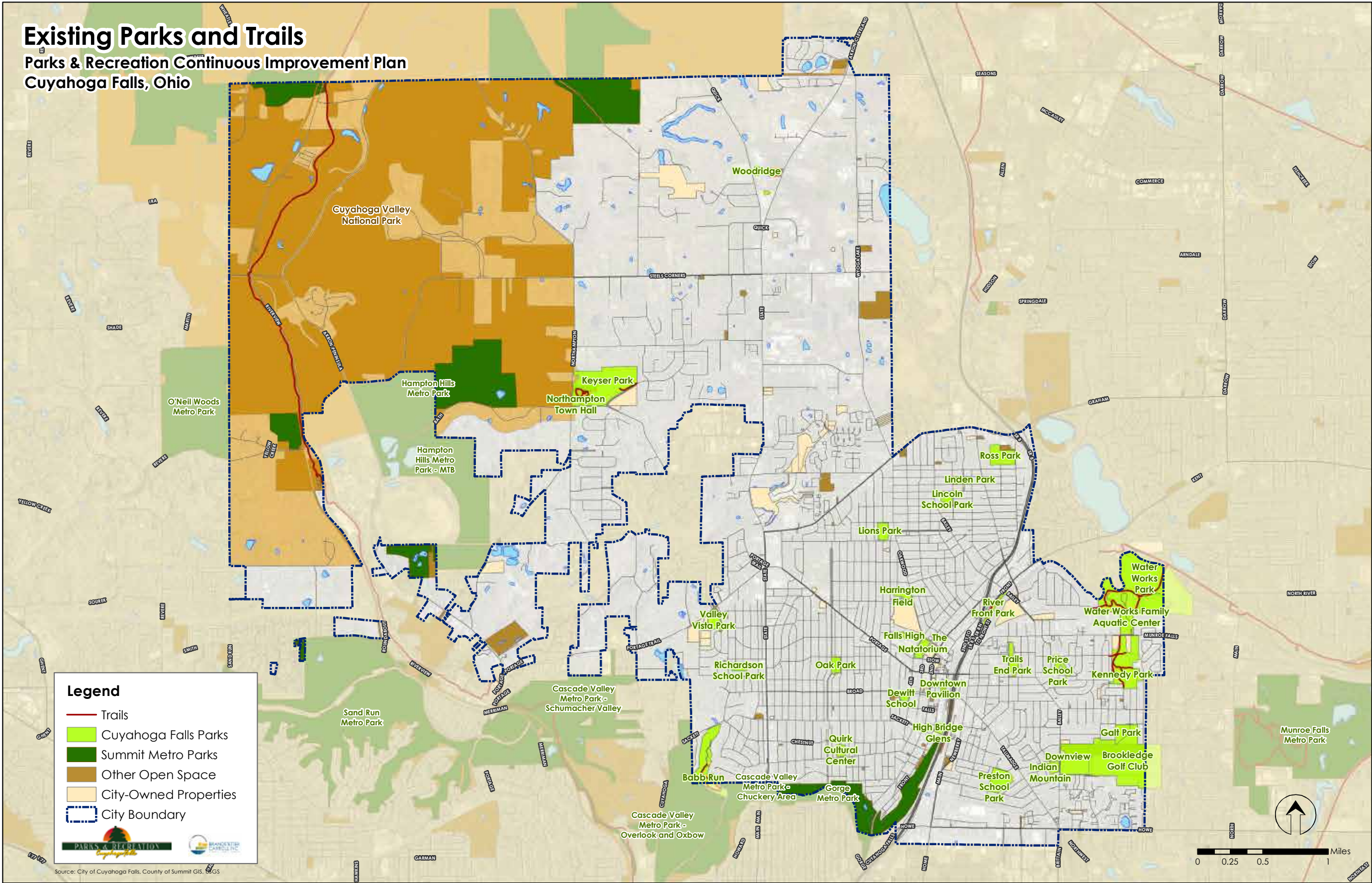
Harrington Field is located at the corner of Oakwood Avenue and Roosevelt Avenue. It sits just south of the Summit Educational Service Center.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1 diamond field
- 1 playground with swings (4 belt swings)
- Parking lot – 83 spaces (4 ADA spaces)



Figure 3.1: Existing Parks and Trails



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Fencing needs repair
- Water retention/poor drainage
- Lack of features
- Age and condition of playground,
- Lack of lighting
- Insufficient trash receptacles



3.4.3 Indian Mountain Park (4.7 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

This park is across Bailey Road from Downview Sports Center, just west of the Brookledge Golf Club. It has vehicular access from Bailey Road and pedestrian access from the neighborhood via Barnes Avenue.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Basketball court
- Playground with swings (4 belt swings, 2 tot swings)
- Wading pool
- Restroom building
- Cuyahoga Falls “Mobile Rec” stop
- Parking lot – 10 spaces



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Limited ADA accessibility
- No ADA parking spaces
- Water retention/poor drainage at basketball court
- Sidewalks are not level, buckling
- Playground surface needs replenishing
- Entrance signage is dirty; no signage at secondary entrance
- Poor condition of restroom building

3.4.4 Linden Park (3.9 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

This Neighborhood Park is located west of State Route 8 and south of Graham Road. It is bounded by Alameda and Roanoke Avenues to the north and south, Norwood and Kilarney Streets to the east and west, and is accessible on all four sides. Lincoln Elementary School is just a couple of blocks away.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Playground
- Wading pool



- Restroom building
- Volleyball poles (no net)
- Playfield/t-ball field
- Pedestrian-scale lamp lighting along street edges
- Cuyahoga Falls “Mobile Rec” stop



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Needs signage on all 4 sides (has sign on Roanoke Ave only)
- Restroom building in serious disrepair; should be replaced
- Playground and restroom building are not ADA accessible
- Street-parking only
- Playground needs permanent edging material
- Sidewalks are cracked and uneven
- No net on volleyball court
- Insufficient lighting inside park; only wading pool is lighted



3.4.5 Lions Park (6.5 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

This Neighborhood Park is west of where Oakbrook Drive and 6th Street fork and can be accessed from both Silver Lake Avenue and Monroe Ave. Houses along 8th Street abut the west edge of the park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Lions Park Lodge – rental facility accommodates up to 150 people (air-conditioned, heated, gas fireplace, full kitchen, and bathrooms) – recently improved
- 2 basketball courts
- Playground with swings (4 belt swings, 3 tot swings)
- Wading pool
- Cuyahoga Falls “Mobile Rec” stop
- Parking lot – 31 spaces (2 ADA spaces)



Park Issues:

- Basketball court surfaces have cracks
- Playground is not ADA accessible
- Park walkways need repair

3.4.6 Oak Park (5.6 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Oak Park is bounded by Jefferson Avenue, 12th Street, and 13th Street and is within the triangle formed by Broad Boulevard, State Road, and Portage Trail.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Little Free Library
- Shelter with 8 picnic tables
- Restroom building
- Corn hole
- Playground with swings (6 belt swings, 2 ADA swings, 2 tot swings)
- Music play equipment
- Basketball court
- Wading pool
- 2 parking lots – 27 spaces

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Most of the sidewalks need to be replaced
- Poor drainage in playground; surface needs replenishing
- Sidewalk access to restroom building is too narrow
- Corn hole is not ADA accessible
- Parking lots need restriping and ADA spaces
- Playground is not ADA accessible; needs more age 2-5 equipment
- Shelter/pump house roof needs repair



3.4.7 Quirk Cultural Center Park (3.8 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

This site is situated next to the Quirk Cultural Center and is accessible via Grant Avenue or Chestnut Boulevard. Residential lots along Chestnut Boulevard and 11th Street back up to the site on both the north and east side.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Basketball court
- Playground with swings
- Wading pool
- Open field area
- Cuyahoga Falls “Mobile Rec” stop
- Parking shared with Quirk Cultural Center

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Playground has limited ADA access
- No sign identifying park
- Poor condition of paved walkways
- Wading pool reaching end of useful life



3.4.8 Ross Park (16 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Ross Park is just northeast of Linden Park, bounded by State Route 8. The site is accessible via Maplecrest Avenue and Charles Street.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1 small diamond field
- 1 large diamond field
- 1 large rectangular field
- Basketball court
- Playground with swings (2 tot swings, 4 belt swings, 2 ADA swings)
- Parking lot – 96 parking spaces (4 ADA spaces)

Park Issues

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Excessive asphalt: curbs site-wide are buckling and need repair or replacing
- Walkways inside park do not connect features and are not ADA accessible
- No sidewalks connect to surrounding community
- Poor condition of ballfields – backstops are rusted and outfield fencing is too tall
- Poor condition of trailer at rectangular field
- Playground needs replacement
- Paved slab above buried water storage tank needs to be removed or repurposed
- Restroom building permanently closed due to poor condition



3.4.9 Trails End Park (7.4 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

This site is close to the Cuyahoga Falls Historical Society & Museum. It is accessible from High Street, with residential lots along Schubert Avenue abutting the east side of the park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 2 small diamond fields
- Playground with swings (2 ADA swings, 4 belt swings)
- Restroom building
- 2 storage sheds
- 2 parking lots (no ADA spaces)

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Restroom building in poor condition



- Paved walkways and parking lot in poor condition (no ADA parking spaces)
- Playground, ballfields, and dugout are not ADA accessible
- Poor drainage in playground, needs resurfacing
- Lighting on site is inadequate
- Softball dugout exterior needs new paint



3.4.10 Valley Vista Park (8.3 acres) – Neighborhood Park

Park Location

Valley Vista Park is at the intersection of Portage Trail (Extension West) and Valley Road. It can be reached from Portage Trail or from residential streets such as Parkview Drive, Highpoint Road, and Harding Road.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Basketball court
- Playground with swings (6 belt swings, 2 tot swings, 1 ADA swing)
- Wading pool
- Restroom building
- Natural wooded picnic area with grills
- Creek bed
- Parking lot – 50 parking spaces (2 ADA spaces)
- Cuyahoga Falls “Mobile Rec” stop



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Some park elements not accessible
- Restroom building in poor condition
- Parking lot surface in fair condition; no lighting
- Some playground equipment is accessible; some is outdated
- Additional lighting needed site-wide
- More trash receptacles needed
- Lacks sidewalks connecting to adjacent neighborhood – walks end at park property



3.5 COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PARKS

Community Parks are larger parks that serve multiple neighborhoods and offer a wider variety of facilities. Community Parks should be conveniently located (within approximately 5-minute drive) and easily accessible with facilities intended to occupy visitors for extended periods of time (field or game court complex, disc golf, etc.). Regional Parks are often larger with much of the acreage left undeveloped, and they generally draw users from a wider geographical area. Typically, Regional Parks will provide features and facilities appropriate for both active and passive recreation. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation offers two Community Parks and one Regional Park.

3.5.1 Kennedy Park (54.8 acres) – Community Park

Park Location

This Community Park is located across Munroe Falls Avenue from the Water Works Family Aquatic Center. It has access points from residential streets, including Center Avenue, Myrtle Avenue, Issaquah Street, and Rainier Street. The Cuyahoga Falls City School District's Schnee Learning Center sits on the east edge of the park. Kelsey Brook cuts across the western edge of the site.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 3 small diamond fields
- Large diamond field
- Large rectangular field
- Futsal court
- 2 tennis courts
- Playground with swings (6 belt)
- 0.8-mile paved path
- Creek
- Natural wooded area
- Arboretum
- 3 connections to adjacent neighborhoods
- 2 parking lots (no ADA spaces)

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Limited ADA accessibility throughout park
- All outdoor athletic fields require renovation
- Informational signs in disrepair
- Need more age 2-5 playground equipment
- No signage at secondary entrances
- Arboretum asphalt path needs to be widened and resurfaced
- Insufficient light site-wide (especially in areas further from Schnee Learning Center)
- Parking lots need striping and designated ADA spaces



3.5.2 Keyser Park (72.7 acres) – Community Park

Park Location

Keyser Park is located on the western side of Cuyahoga Falls. It is accessible from the Keyser Parkway, West Bath Road, and Northampton Road.



Existing Features & Amenities

- 3 large diamond fields (1 with 300' fences)
- Large rectangular field
- Basketball court
- 2 tennis courts (with pickleball lining)
- 2 playgrounds
- 0.5-mile paved path
- Natural wooded area
- Keyser Park Shelter (seats 32 people at picnic tables, no electricity or water)
- Dog park
- Community gardens
- Medium size shelter (at field complex)
- Restroom building
- Barn
- 3 parking lots (2 paved, one gravel) – 151 marked spaces

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Shelter at fields has no accessible walkway
- No accessible walkway to barn, community gardens, or dog park
- Swain House on site is in extremely poor condition and not accessible; unsafe to enter
- Accessibility issues in parking lots and along paved walkways
- Opportunity for path extension and connection across park
- Community garden, dog park, playgrounds, and ball fields are not accessible
- Ballfields lack lighting
- No outfield fencing in some of the fields
- Poor drainage in some of the fields
- Additional wayfinding signage needed across site
- Drinking fountains are not accessible
- Parking lots need improvement (lining, ADA spaces)



3.5.3 Water Works Park (146 acres) – Regional Park

Park Location

The Water Works Park is located behind the Water Works Family Aquatic Center. Its main entrance is accessed from Munroe Falls Avenue to the south and along the park's western edge via a pedestrian pathway to the dog park from Ruth Avenue. The Cuyahoga River passes through the north portion of the park, and many small ponds are



scattered across the site's northern wooded section. Due to the size, quality, and location of this site, the park (including the aquatic center) draw visitors from around the region.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 5 large diamond fields (1 grass infield with 320'-350' fences, 3 dirt infields with 290'-300' fences, 1 dirt infield, no outfield fence)
- 3 large rectangular fields
- 5 corn hole sets
- 2 playgrounds
- 1.3 miles of paved path
- Fishing access
- Natural wooded area
- Natural water landmarks
- Dog park
- Canoe/kayak ramp
- 5 large shelters
- Medium shelter
- 2 restroom buildings
- 5 drinking fountains
- 7 parking areas – 250 spaces (13 ADA spaces)



Park Issues & Opportunities

- Older playground equipment should be upgraded
- No accessible walkway from parking lot to playground
- Fencing around ballfields is in poor condition
- Infield grass and clay groundcover need upgrades
- Accessibility issues at all 5 ballfields
- Need more wayfinding signage site-wide
- Dog park needs expansion to improve turf conditions
- Debris catch net upstream needed to prevent blockage at ramp



3.6 NATURE PARKS & NATURAL AREAS

These sites are oriented around preserved and passive recreation in nature. They can range significantly in size and draw visitors from varying distances depending on the scale and purpose of the site. Residents of Cuyahoga Falls are situated near several county, regional, and state nature parks; Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation specifically oversees two natural areas, one devoted to wildlife protection and the other to passive enjoyment of the riverfront.

3.6.1 Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary (34.8 acres) – Nature Park

Site Location

This Nature Park is located where Chestnut Boulevard turns into Sackett Avenue. It is surrounded by residential development and has pedestrian access via Valleyview Drive at the southeast end of the site.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 0.5-mile unpaved trail (first ≈ 250' paved)
- Natural wooded area
- Picnic area with 1 table and 1 grill
- Parking lot

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Picnic area is not accessible
- No lines or ADA spaces at parking lot
- Limited features
- No drinking fountain
- Signage is inconsistent with rest of the park system
- Significant erosion along hillsides

3.6.2 River Front Park (4.8 acres) – Open Space

Site Location

This space is located along the Cuyahoga River along Front Street, near 2nd Street and Bailey Road. The Cuyahoga Falls Water Department and Electric System are both located across the river from the park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 0.2-mile paved path
- Water views
- Canoe/kayak ramp
- 1 ADA parking space
- Restroom building
- Benches along trail
- Site lighting
- Kiosk for waterfront trail

Park Issues & Opportunities

- Limited features
- Limited connectivity opportunities – bound by river and OH-8
- Canoe/kayak ramp is not ADA accessible
- Poor visibility exiting parking lot
- Paved path is in poor condition not ADA accessible
- Restroom is not accessible and too small



3.7 SPECIAL USE PARKS

Special Use Parks are areas designed for specialized or single purpose recreational activities and can include places such as plazas, aquatic centers, golf courses, sports complexes, recreation centers, and other indoor spaces.

3.7.1 Brookledge Golf Club (128.6 acres) – Golf Course

Site Location

Brookledge Golf Club is situated off Bailey Road, adjacent to Galt Park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 18-hole course
- Clubhouse
- Natural landscape
- Lake
- Parking lot – 150 parking space (9 ADA spaces)

Site Issues & Opportunities

- Clubhouse is small and has limited offerings



3.7.2 Downtown Pavilion and Splash Pad (1.7 acres) – Special Use

Site Location

This facility is located in downtown Cuyahoga Falls between Portage Trail and Broad Boulevard right along the Cuyahoga River.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Splash pad (seasonal ice-rink)
- Amphitheater
- Indoor rental space (The Pavilion)
- Outdoor plaza
- River overlook
- Sculptural art

Site Issues & Opportunities

- Stairs at The Pavilion in dangerous disrepair
- River boardwalk access closed due to safety concerns
- Seasonal ice-rink accessible ramp needs permanent upgrade
- Lack of shaded seating in plaza area



3.7.3 Downview Sports Center (20.5 acres) – Special Use

Site Location

Downview Sports Center is adjacent to the Brookledge Golf Club. It is across Bailey Road from Indian Mountain Park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 7 batting cages
- Skate park
- 18-hole mini golf course with water features
- Driving range
- Clubhouse/driving range building
- Parking lot – 73 parking spaces (2 ADA spaces)

Site Issues & Opportunities

- Clubhouse/driving range structure has some broken windows and doors off tracks
- Signage for skate park is degraded, needs to be refurbished
- Some poor drainage present in skate park
- Fencing at batting cages is rusted



3.7.4 High Bridge Glens Park (2.6 acres) – Special Use

Site Location

High Bridge Glens Park is accessible via Front Street at Prospect Avenue. It sits along the western bank of the Cuyahoga River.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Gazebo shelter with 1 picnic table
- Butterfly garden
- Paved trail & river access boardwalk
- Observation deck above-river with 2 benches
- Pedestrian-scale lighting
- Monument to site's history



3.7.5 Northampton Town Hall (1.4 acres) – Special Use

Site Location

Northampton Town Hall is located just south of Keyser Park, at the intersection of West Bath Road and Northampton Road.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Indoor rental space
- Parking lot



Building Issues & Opportunities

- Not ADA accessible
- Condition of interior is degraded, currently not rentable due to deterioration
- Restroom only in basement
- Historic structure

3.7.6 Quirk Cultural Center

Site Location

This building is located between Chestnut Boulevard (north), Grant Avenue (south), 11th Street (east), and 13th Street (west).

Existing Features & Amenities

- Classrooms
- Meeting rooms
- Rental space
- Auditorium
- Wood shop
- Pottery/ceramics studio
- Art studio
- Parking lot – 126 spaces (10 ADA spaces)



Building Issues & Opportunities

- Not ADA accessible
- Over 90 years old, needs renovation and costly repairs
- Former school
- Historic structure

3.7.7 The Natatorium (6.2 acres) – Recreation & Aquatic Center

Site Location

This community facility is located downtown between 4th and 2nd Streets along Oakwood Drive and Stow Avenue.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 3 gyms
- 3 pools
- 2 racquetball courts
- Fit Kid Circuit
- Kids' Kastle Babysitting
- Fitness Circuit
- 1/8-mile walking track
- Conference & banquet rental space
- The Power Station (locally-owned health food stand)



- 8 ADA parking spaces
- Parking lot – 429 parking spaces

Building Issues & Opportunities

- Community wing needs upgrades
- Diamond Bright needed at some pools
- Repairs needed to roof and HVAC

3.7.8 Water Works Family Aquatic Center (9.9 acres) – Aquatic Center

Site Location

Water Works Family Aquatic Center facility is located off Munroe Falls Avenue, south of the river and across from Kennedy Park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 4 waterslides
- 2 pools
- Lazy River attraction
- Pool house
- Water play features (geysers, waterfalls, water sprays)
- Concessions building
- Lockers
- Picnic tables
- Grills
- Sun & shade lounge areas
- 3 poolside cabana rental spaces
- Parking lot – 44 paved parking spaces (7 ADA spaces), parking on grass



Site Issues & Opportunities

- Pool house roof needs replacement
- Pool needs resurfacing
- Shelter damaged in storm
- Lazy river reaching end of useful life
- Parking lot needs resurfacing

3.8 SCHOOL PARKS

The City of Cuyahoga Falls has agreements with the two school districts in the city (Cuyahoga Falls City School District and Woodridge Local Schools) to maintain school grounds as public parks. The elementary schools offer residents recreation areas similar to Neighborhood or Mini Parks. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation also assists with the maintenance of the tennis courts of both school districts and residents are provided access when not in use by the schools. Though the array of features in School Parks is often more limited, and hours can sometimes be restricted, these spaces do help to alleviate residents' needs for play and open recreation.

3.8.1 Dewitt School – Mini Park

Location

This elementary school is off Broad Boulevard just west of the Cuyahoga River.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1 basketball court
- 1 playground

3.8.2 Falls High School – Special Use Park

Location

Located on 4th Street, this high school is across from The Natatorium and next to Oakwood Cemetery.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 6 tennis courts

3.8.3 Lincoln School – Neighborhood Park

Location

Lincoln Elementary is located on Bailey Road, southwest of Ross Park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1 small diamond field
- Basketball court
- Playground

3.8.4 Preston School – Neighborhood Park

Location

Located between Taylor Avenue and Loomis Avenue, Preston Elementary is centered in neighborhood blocks along Tallmadge Road.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1 small diamond field
- 1 small rectangular field
- Basketball court
- Playground

3.8.5 Elizabeth Price School – Neighborhood Park

Location

Price Elementary is between Myrtle Avenue and Center Avenue near Bailey Road. Trails End and Kennedy Park are both under half mile from the school.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1 small diamond field
- Basketball court
- Playground

3.8.6 Richardson School – Neighborhood Park

Location

Richardson Elementary is on the west side of State Street between Shaw Avenue and Marcia Boulevard.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 2 small diamond fields
- Basketball court
- Playground

3.8.7 Woodridge Campus – Mini Park

Location

Woodridge High School is in the northeast corner of Cuyahoga Falls, along Quick Road.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Playground
- 2 basketball courts
- 6 tennis courts

3.9 FACILITY SUMMARY

The table (Table 3.3) below provides a summary of the recreation facilities offered by the Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Department.

Table 3.3: Recreation Facility Summary

Athletic Fields	#	Mini Golf (Holds)	18	Large Shelters	5
Small Diamond	12	Golf (Holes)	18	Medium Shelters	4
Large Diamond	10	Driving Range	1	Gazebos/Small Shelters	2
Large Rectangular	7	Trails (Miles)	#	Support Facilities	#
Outdoor Facilities	#	Paved	2.8	Restroom Buildings	11
Playgrounds	21	Unpaved	0.5	Concessions Buildings	2
Basketball Courts	16	Passive Recreation	#	Indoor Facilities	#
Skate Parks	1	Dog Park	2	Gyms	3
Splash Pads	1	Canoe/Kayak Ramp	2	Pools	3
Wading Pools	6	Stage or Amphitheater	1	Fitness Center	1
Aquatic Centers	1	Community Garden	1	Lodge/Rental Facility	7

3.10 OTHER PARKS

These other parks are not owned or maintained by the City of Cuyahoga Falls but help meet needs for parks and recreation. The text in this section is intended to document the amenities these spaces currently provide in order to create a full inventory of all recreation amenities available within the city. If major improvements are made at Summit Metro Parks, they should coordinate with the city to provide amenities that best address the recreation needs of the community while avoiding duplication of services and amenities. Table 3.4 shows Summit Metro Parks located within or near the city limits and one park provided by the National Park Service (Cuyahoga Valley National Park). Each of these spaces contribute to the full spectrum of recreational opportunities available to residents of Cuyahoga Falls.

Table 3.4: Parks by Others

Facility Name	Agency	Playgrounds	Basketball Courts	Volleyball Courts	Tennis Courts	Boat Launch	Diamond Fields	Multipurpose Fields	Picnic Shelters	Archery Range	Lodge	Fishing	Trails (Miles)
Park by Others In or Near Cuyahoga Falls													
Cascade Valley Metro Park - Chuckery Area	Summit Metro Parks	54						2				X	2.9
Cascade Valley Metro Park - Overlook and Oxbow Area	Summit Metro Parks						4		1			X	1.7
Cascade Valley Metro Park - Schumacher Valley Area	Summit Metro Parks											X	1.0
Cuyahoga Valley National Park	National Park Service								X			X	X
Gorge Metro Park	Summit Metro Parks								1			X	6.8
Hampton Hills Metro Park	Summit Metro Parks									X			3.5
Hampton Hills Metro Park - MTB Area	Summit Metro Parks								1				7.2
Munroe Falls Metro Park	Summit Metro Parks	2	1	2	4	X		1	4			X	4.7
O'Neil Woods Metro Park	Summit Metro Parks												1.8
Sand Run Metro Park	Summit Metro Parks							2	1		X	X	15.0
Total - Other Parks		56	1	2	4	0	4	5	8	1	1	7	44.5

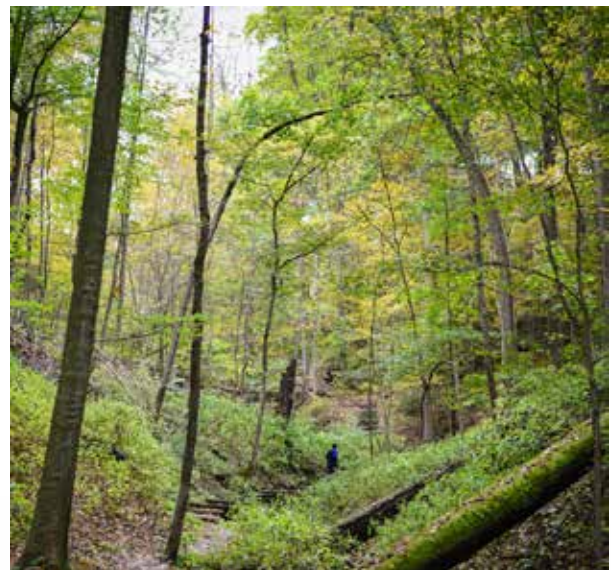
3.10.1 Cascade Valley Metro Park

Park Location

Located just south of Cuyahoga Falls' city limits, Cascade Valley Metro Park is primarily a nature park encompassing five different activity areas: Chuckery, Overlook, Oxbow, Schumacher, and Highbridge Trail. Most of the amenities available are for passive recreational use, though there are a few higher-impact amenities. It can be accessed from Cuyahoga Street.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 11.3 miles of trails
- Cross-country skiing
- Fishing access
- Soccer field
- Cricket field
- Baseball/softball field
- Sledding zones
- River views
- Picnic shelters/tables
- Restrooms



3.10.2 Hampton Hills Metro Park

Park Location

One of the largest Metro Parks, Hampton Hills is situated in the western part of Cuyahoga Falls between Akron Peninsula Road, Northampton Road, and West Bath Road. It encompasses 665 acres with premier views, natural landscapes, and geological features.

Existing Features & Amenities

- Archery range
- 3.5 miles of trails
- Mountain bike area (separate property) 7.2 miles of trails
- Picnic shelters/tables
- Restrooms

3.10.3 Munroe Falls Metro Park

Park Location

Munroe Falls is east of Cuyahoga Falls along Highway 91/ South Main Street and includes 509 acres of native flora and fauna, family-friendly lake swimming, and trails. It can be reached from South River Road.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 4.7 miles of trails
- Cross-country skiing
- Boat rental and public boat launch
- Sledding
- Snack stand
- Lake swimming
- Natural spring and wetlands area
- Basketball court
- Volleyball court
- Tennis court
- Soccer field
- Restrooms
- Picnic shelters/tables



3.10.4 O'Neil Woods Metro Park

Park Location

This Metro Park is located along Sand Run Road at the western edge of Cuyahoga Falls, past Hampton Hills.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 1.8 miles of trails
- Picnic areas
- River views
- Restrooms



3.10.5 Sand Run Metro Park

Park Location

Sand Run is located south of Cuyahoga Falls, roughly between Sand Run Road and Thurmont Road. The Sand Run Parkway cuts through the park to access Meridian Road.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 15 miles of trails including part of the 41-mile Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail
- Soccer field
- Fishing access
- Picnic areas
- Ice-skating
- Camp site
- Sledding slope



3.10.6 Gorge Metro Park

Park Location

This park is largely within the boundary of Cuyahoga Falls and sits right along the Cuyahoga River. Front Street cuts through the eastern edge of the park.

Existing Features & Amenities

- 6.8 miles of trails
- Mary Campbell Cave
- Fishing access
- Ice-skating rink
- Picnic shelters/tables
- Restroom



3.10.7 Cuyahoga Valley National Park (National Park Service)

Cuyahoga Valley National Park is not under the management of the Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation, but it is a considerable resource and attraction available to residents. The National Park Service oversees and maintains the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. As opportunities for improvements are identified in the Cuyahoga Falls parks system, reasonable consideration should be given to the existing resources residents can access at this national park.

3.11 PROGRAMS INVENTORY

Quality recreational programming is an important aspect of a vibrant and healthy community. Programs can be useful for meeting the specific needs of different groups in the community – like active adults, young children, families, or teenagers – in a way that is more creatively tailored. In fact, programs can be an essential access-point for users; offerings like fitness classes, sports leagues, cultural crafts, and camps give residents unique ways to meaningfully interact with parks in their community. When properly managed and intentionally promoted, programs are an invaluable tool for strengthening social connectivity and enhancing the livability of a community.

3.11.1 Core Program Guidelines

The Core Program Guidelines include six components used as benchmarks for determining the quality of specific activities conducted at each program location. The level of program offerings may vary in activity type, intensity, and scope depending on such factors as size of the facility, equipment availability, and the number of staff required. The core guidelines concept provides direction in the planning, scheduling, and coordination of community-based recreational activities.

When planning and developing programs and aligning efforts to these guidelines, involving community representatives, parents, participants, and advisory groups is critical for success. The discussion below provides a description of the six program core components as well as a summary of if and how well Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation is targeting these components.

Appendix C provides detailed tables with participation rates and the categories for the specific programs offered in Cuyahoga Falls. Appendix C also provides an expanded description of each broad program category (component six). It includes possible program formats, identifies the primary values served by the activity, and lists specific program examples. That list can be a helpful resource for determining and developing programs in the City of Cuyahoga Falls.

Core Program Guidelines

The summary below uses the following abbreviations after each bullet point to describe whether Cuyahoga Falls is meeting the core program components:

- Y = Yes offered by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation
- L = Limited offerings by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation
- O = Offered by partner organizations in Cuyahoga Falls
- N = No, not offered in Cuyahoga Falls

The following analysis of the six different components is based on program offerings and participation rates from the last 4 years (2016-2019).

1. Broad Appeal

Parks and community centers should have broad appeal by conducting activities and special events for people young and old and of varying needs and skill levels. Target groups for programs include:

- Preschool – (L)
- Seniors – (Y)
- Elementary School Age – (Y)
- Intergenerational – (Y)
- Teens – (Y)
- Multiple Ages – (Y)
- Adults – (Y)
- Adaptive Programs – (Y)

2. Administrative Feasibility

Activities should be administratively feasible, and the following factors should be considered as part of any program development process:

- Facility and Equipment Requirements – (Y)
- Safety – (Y)
- Cost vs. Benefits – (N)
- Specialized Instruction Requirements – (Y)

Cuyahoga Falls has not yet completed a detailed analysis of the costs of programs. This type of analysis can determine the cost of each program per participant in terms of dollars and staff time and compare those numbers to program outcomes and revenues. This type of analysis can be especially useful for evaluating partnerships with partner organizations.

3. Coordination

Program and service offerings should be of a coordinated nature within the community, thus serving to complement rather than duplicate activities already provided elsewhere by other organizations or agencies.

Cuyahoga Falls coordinates with several partner organizations to ensure complementary services. First Tee of Greater Akron is a key partner, hosting their programming at Brookledge Golf Club. Additionally, Akron Pops Orchestra and Antic Community Theatre provide residents access to the arts via their partnership with the parks and recreation department. The Cuyahoga Falls Police Department’s Explorer Program and the

Mayor's Youth Advisory Council are both unique youth-oriented programs promoted by Parks and Recreation and dependent on cross-departmental coordination.

4. Settings and Times

Activities should be conducted in a variety of settings and formats, formal and informal. Programs should also be offered at a variety of times to meet the competing schedules of residents. For example, working adults may not be able to participate in programs until the evening or on weekends. Additionally, parents with children may benefit from availability of childcare or children's programs running concurrent to their chosen activity.

Settings and formats include:

- Instructional Classes (Y)
- Progressive Skill Levels (Y)
- Drop-In (Y)
- Special Events (Y)
- Special Interest Clubs (L)
- Leagues and/or Tournaments (Y/O)
- Outings and Field Trips (Y)
- After School Programs (N)
- Camps (Y)

Cuyahoga Falls offers programs in most of the settings and formats listed above. However, Parks and Recreation does not offer *after school programs* and offers limited *special interest clubs*.

5. Constructive Nature

Programs should be constructive in nature and satisfy the creative, cultural, physical, and social desires of the participants.

6. Diverse Range of Activities

A diverse range of activities should be offered and should include a balanced mix of the following broad program categories:

- Athletics (Y & O) – Offered by Parks and Recreation and partners
- Community Events (Y)
- Creative Arts (Y)
 - Only a few programs or not consistently offered year-by-year
- Cultural Performances (L)
 - Only a few programs or not consistently offered year-by-year
- Education, Life Skills, and Fun (Y)
- Games (Y)
 - Offerings for seniors only
- Green Living/Environmental Education (N)
- Health, Fitness, and Wellness Activities (Y)
- Health and Wellness Education (N)
- Heritage and History (N)
- Nature/Outdoor Programs (N)

- Performing Arts (L)
 - Only a few programs or not consistently offered year-by-year
- Volunteer Training (L)

Of the categories listed as *not offered* (N), the parks and recreation department has offered some programming but has either not recorded participation or did not carry out the posted program.

3.11.2 Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Program Participation

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation provides a wide array of programs that are held at a variety of locations, including the department's own facilities: Brookledge Golf Club, Downview Sports Center, The Natatorium, Quirk Cultural Center, and Water Works Family Aquatic Center. Additionally, some events are held at other city locations, such as the annual summer Carnival event at Bolich Middle School and the Cuyahoga Falls Community Chorus gatherings held at Summit Christian School.

Program Participation

Table 3.5 shows the number of participants by program category from 2016-2019. These numbers include only those with users registered in the department's tracking software. No numbers were recorded for most drop-in programs and community and seasonal events.

Overall, there has been a 54% increase in participation across all offerings provided. Of all categories, those events and activities within the *Education, Life Skills, & Fun* category (cooking classes and various camps) have seen the largest increase in participation. Looking at all four years of offerings in that category, the increase corresponds to a greater number of available programs. *Creative Arts* and *Athletics* have seen the second and third greatest increases in participation; as with *Education, Life Skills, Fun*, these categories have seen additional and wider variety of offerings in recent years making it possible for more people to get involved.

Of note, *Creative Arts* programming had the largest number of listed offerings with zero participation. Of these programs, those that were utilized show growth in participation over the timespan. Considering this trend, Parks and Recreation has an opportunity to build on the community's evident interest by either promoting or fully carrying out arts-related programming.

Health, Fitness, & Wellness programs (like dance classes and gymnastics) show a decrease in participation (-33%), but this participation rate corresponds to a significantly reduced lineup of offerings in 2019. Without the wide range of options available in previous years, there were fewer opportunities to engage.

Lastly, though *Community Events* show the smallest increase (27%), these types of offerings are where participation counts are least likely to be taken. Given the steady levels of participation, Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has reason to maintain and even augment their offerings in this category.

Table 3.5: Participation Summary

Participation Summary	2016	2017	2018	2019	4-Year Total	% Change
Athletics	75	42	60	187	371	149%
Community Events	157	91	201	199	648	27%
Creative Arts	30	73	112	99	328	230%
Education, Life Skills, & Fun	14	11	71	113	209	707%
Health, Fitness, & Wellness	208	418	346	140	1377	-33%
Nature/Outdoor Programs	0	0	56	0	56	0%
Volunteer Training	0	0	0	5	5	0%
Total	484	635	846	743	2994	54%

PUBLIC INPUT



4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the processes used and the public input gathered throughout the planning process summarizing the following elements:

1. Public meetings (public workshops, stakeholder discussions, and events)
2. Dollar voting exercise
3. Statistically valid Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey (by ETC Institute)
4. Web-based and handout survey
5. Online engagement (powered by MindMixer)

The public engagement process is essential to identify the needs and preferences of Cuyahoga Falls residents. Thus, the findings of the public input process are integral to the Needs Assessment and Identification (Chapter 5) and serve as the foundation for the recommendations of this Continuous Improvement Plan.

4.2 PUBLIC MEETINGS

This section provides a summary of public meetings (public workshops, stakeholder discussions, and events) held or attended as part of the planning process. Over 300 community members were engaged in person or virtually at these meetings which were held between February and July of 2020.

4.2.1 Public Workshops

The city conducted two public workshops (open house meetings) on February 27, 2020 at Lions Lodge and March 10, 2020 at Woodridge Elementary. The primary intent of these public gatherings was to solicit community feedback regarding both the present and future of parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls. Additionally, attendees could learn more about the project process and timeline. Over 50 residents attended one of these meetings with over 100 more providing input at The Natatorium follow-up opportunity.



After signing in upon arrival (for the purpose of documenting workshop attendance), attendees were first asked to place a dot sticker on a map to indicate the area where they live. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the meeting attendees. As indicated by the map, attendees were generally well-distributed throughout Cuyahoga Falls with a greater number of attendees coming from the southeastern portion of the city (where most of the city's population lives).

At the meeting, participants were able to visit a series of themed stations where they could provide their input and also learn more about the Continuous Improvement Plan. The primary input stations were arranged around the room and encouraged dialogue about three general topics:

- Parks
- Facilities
- Programs and Events

At each station, participants were asked to share their responses to two questions: "What makes them great now?" and "What would make them better?" Attendees could also place a checkmark next to a previous comment if they agreed with it. Between both meetings, attendees provided over 200 comments and checkmarks.

A separate station invited attendees to vote on their favorite improvements using two different activities: dollar voting (see Section 4.2.3) and feature/program preference boards. After the public workshops, these preference boards were left with Cuyahoga Falls staff to setup at The Natatorium for gathering additional input.

In the following summary, the popularity of each comment is indicated by the number of times a topic was mentioned. The full text of comments can be found in Appendix D.

Parks

This station topic centered on parks, today and in the future. Improvements and upgrades to existing parks made up the largest number of comments, with suggestions like updating playground features and replacing wading pools with splash pads. Many attendees mentioned a need for more restrooms in parks and added trails. Several residents voiced a desire for disc golf.

What makes them great now?

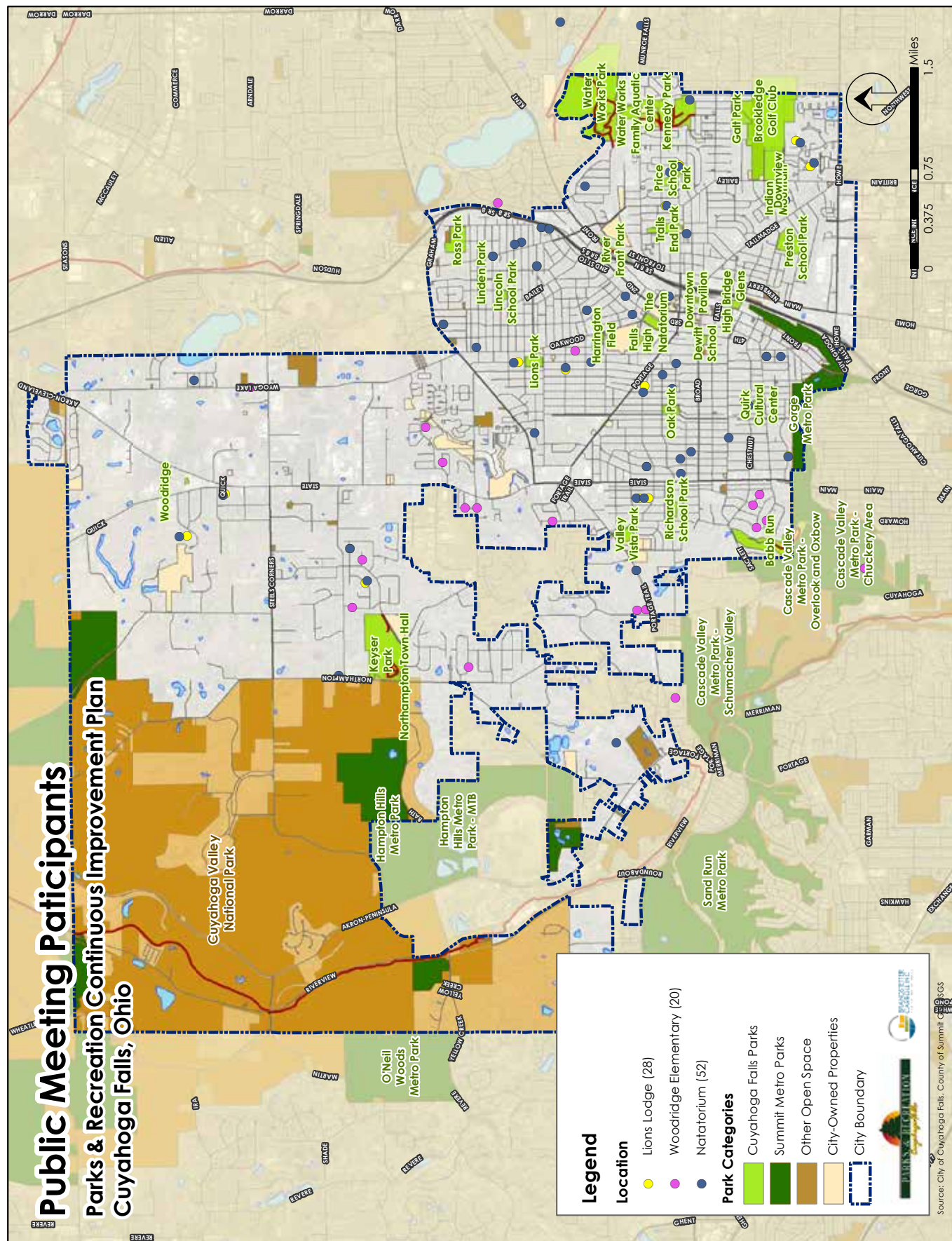
- Dog parks
- Variety of locations and amenities
- Playgrounds
- Trails

What would make them better? (# of comments in parentheses)

- Improve/upgrade existing parks (40)
- Specific park improvements (20)
- Restrooms (14)
- Trails (12)
- Disc golf (10)
- Restrooms – Year-round (7)
- Maintenance (6)
- River access/connections (6)
- Athletic fields (6)
- Aquatics (5)



Figure 4.1: Public Meeting Attendee Distribution



-
- Fishing (5)
 - Signage/wayfinding (5)
 - Splash pads (4)
 - Diamond Fields (4)

Facilities

Discussions at this station focused largely on facilities in Cuyahoga Falls, like Water Works Family Aquatic Center, The Natatorium, Downview Sports Center, and Quirk Cultural Center.

What makes Cuyahoga Falls' facilities great now?

- The Natatorium – Great!
- Quirk
- Golf
- Splash pads
- Water Works – unique, lots to do
- Well maintained
- Variety

What would make them better? (# of comments in parentheses)

- Improve/upgrade existing facilities (22)
- Aquatics (10)
- Water Works Family Aquatic Center (7)
- Maintenance (6)
- The Natatorium (6)
- Downview Sports Center (5)
- Splash Pads (3)
- Waterslides (3)

Programs and Events

At this station, attendees were encouraged to talk about programs, including sports, arts & culture, and events. More programs in general – fitness programs in particular – was the most common comment.

What makes them great now?

- Variety of offerings
- Affordability
- Adapted programs
- Arts and crafts
- Mobile Rec

What would make them better? (# of comments in parentheses)

- More programs (15)
- Better marketing/communication (4)
- Events (4)
- Better hours or times (4)
- Nature programs (3)

- Concerts (3)
- Swim programs (3)

Overall Open House Comment Summary

The list below provides a count and catalogue of responses to the question, “What would make them better?” at all stations. Each of the over 200 comments (and checkmarks) were placed into one or more categories to best illustrate what improvements attendees most desired to see in the future. The list includes both general and specific items, therefore, many of the comments correspond to multiple categories. Additionally, some comments discussed more than one of the three general topics – parks, facilities, and programs – and were categorized accordingly. Overall, the results illuminate that residents want improvements and upgrades at existing parks, improved aquatics (including splash pads), additional restrooms, and more programs.

Most Discussed Topics (# of comments in parentheses):

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| ■ Improve/upgrade existing parks or facilities (62) | ■ Better hours or program times (6) |
| ■ Specific park Improvements (33) | ■ Accessibility/ADA Improvements (6) |
| ■ Aquatics (18) | ■ River access/connections (6) |
| ■ Restrooms (16) | ■ Athletic fields (6) |
| ■ More programs (15) | ■ Better marketing/communication (6) |
| ■ Maintenance (12) | ■ Events (5) |
| ■ Trails (12) | ■ Downview Sports Center (5) |
| ■ Disc golf (10) | ■ Fishing (5) |
| ■ The Natatorium (9) | ■ Signage/wayfinding (5) |
| ■ Water Works Family Aquatic Center (8) | ■ Indoor volleyball (4) |
| ■ Splash pads (7) | ■ Diamond fields (4) |

Preference Boards

Attendees of the two Open House meetings and the follow-up input opportunity at The Natatorium were given three dot stickers to place on boards indicating their preferences for park features and programs. The first board provided a list of 15 park amenities (represented by pictures) plus an option for “Anything Else.” The second board provided a list of 15 programs (also represented by pictures) plus an option for “Anything Else.” These activities invited participants to choose the features and programs most important to them and their households. Children were also encouraged to participate. Overall, 181 community members participated in the activity for features and 186 participated for programs. Summaries of the selections are presented in Tables 4.2 and 4.3.



On the features board (Figure 4.2), *trails* received the largest number of dots, followed by *indoor recreation facilities*. All options received some support, indicating that all of these amenities are important to Cuyahoga Falls residents to varying degrees. The features presented were intentionally general, and features were combined into categories whenever possible. On the programs board (Figure 4.3), *downtown events* received the most dots, followed by *fitness classes* and *aquatic programs*.

Figure 4.2: Feature Preference Results

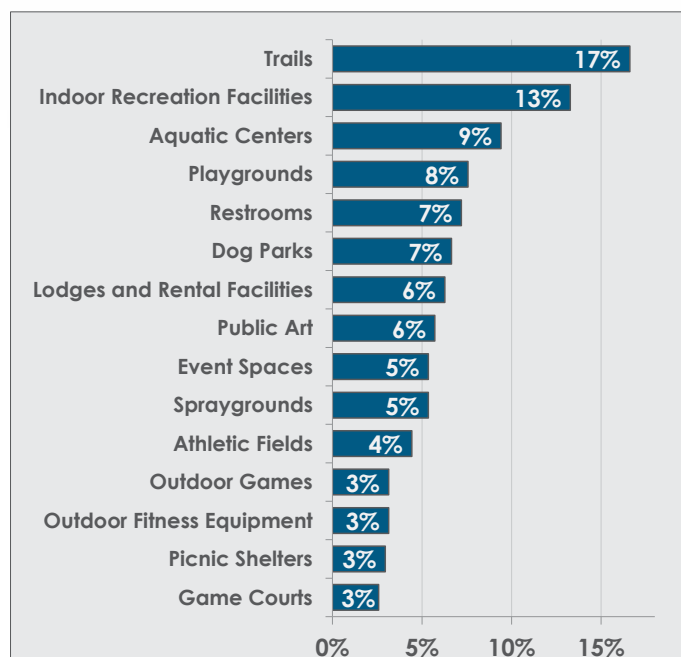
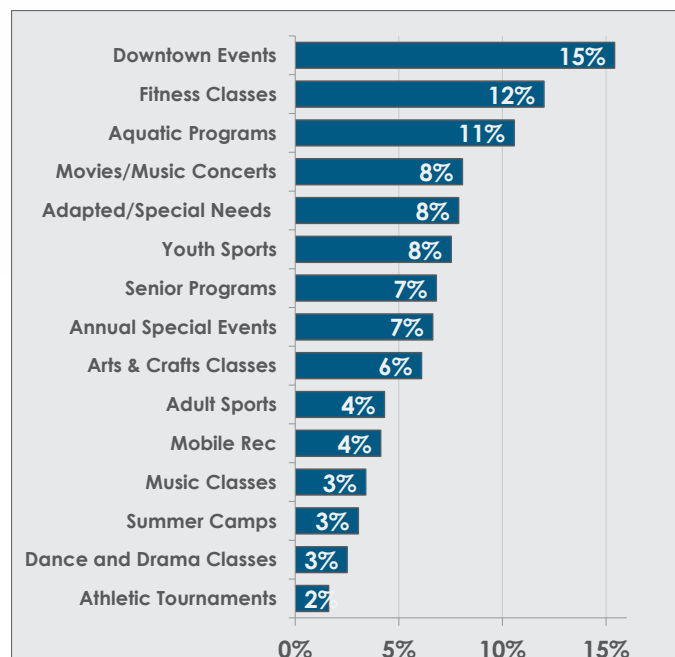


Figure 4.3: Program Preference Results



4.2.2 Stakeholder Groups

A series of stakeholder group meetings were conducted between June and July of 2020 to determine the parks and recreation priorities for various interest groups. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all stakeholder meetings were necessarily conducted through virtual conferencing (Zoom). Over 30 stakeholder groups were engaged as part of this Continuous Improvement Plan. At these meetings, stakeholders were asked a series of questions about Cuyahoga Falls parks, recreation facilities, and programs, beginning first with a discussion of strengths before moving on to a discussion of future opportunities. Summaries of the meetings with complete comments can be found in Appendix D.

The following stakeholder group meetings were held as part of this Continuous Improvement Plan:

- City Council
- Staff
- Police
- Park Board
- Youth Sports
 - Lacrosse
 - Swim Team
 - CFABA
- Northhampton Historic Society
- Partner Groups
 - DTCF
 - Summit Metro Parks
 - National Parks
 - Lions Club
 - Library
- Schools
 - Cuyahoga Falls Schools
 - Woodridge Schools

Stakeholder Top Recommendations

- Improved quality of facilities
 - Kennedy
 - Babb Run
 - Keyser
 - Restrooms
 - Sports fields
- Improve access/connection to river
- Better connectivity to parks and downtown
- Better ADA access
 - Fully accessible playground
- More partnerships
 - Facility improvements/fundraising

- Programs/events
- Cross-promotion
- Artificial turf fields
- Programs
 - Teens
 - Young adults
 - Seniors
 - More camps
- Life-long Learning
- Underserved populations
- Keep them fresh
- Increased Marketing and Outreach
- Replace Quirk
- Replace wading pools with splash pads
- Wi-Fi in parks
- Continuous public engagement – Respond to citizens’ needs

4.2.3 Dollar Voting

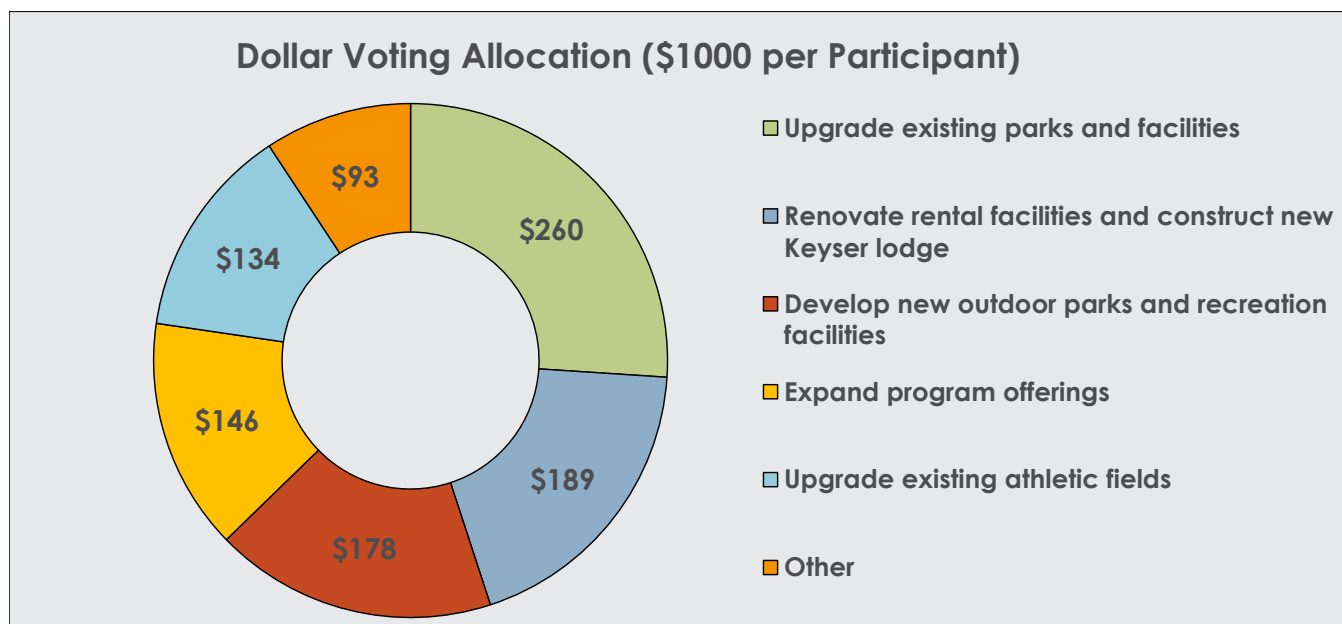
Participants at the public workshops were given the chance to “budget” \$1,000 of play money as a way to indicate their preference for how Cuyahoga Falls should allocate funds for parks and recreation (individuals placed the bills in boxes with different themes); participants could also place money into an “other” box, in order to request specific amenities or improvements not included in one of the five provided categories. Table 4.1 shows the total allocations for each of five categories (or boxes) and Figure 4.4 shows a summary of the results. The combined results for the 51 participants at all engagement events are presented below with the allocation for each park improvement category and the percentage of the total allocation.

Upgrade existing parks and facilities received the largest allocation at 26% or an average allocation of \$260. *Renovate rental facilities and construct new Keyser lodge* came in second with 19% of the total allocation (\$189 average allocation) and *develop new outdoor parks and recreation facilities* ranked third with 18% (\$178 average allocation). For “Other” improvements, participants wrote their chosen improvements with the allocation on a card which they then placed with the money into the “other” box. *Improvements at Babb Run* came out as the most valued action in the “other” box. Individual comments can be found in Appendix D.

Table 4.1: Dollar Voting Allocation by Location

Action (Box Title)	Event		Total
	Open House #1 (Lions) 2/27/2020	Open House #2 (Woodridge) 3/10/2020	
Upgrade existing parks and facilities	\$7,000 24%	\$6,200 29%	\$13,200 26%
Renovate rental facilities and construct new Keyser lodge	\$5,500 19%	\$4,100 19%	\$9,600 19%
Develop new outdoor parks and recreation facilities	\$4,200 14%	\$4,800 22%	\$9,000 18%
Expand program offerings	\$5,700 20%	\$1,700 8%	\$7,400 15%
Upgrade existing athletic fields	\$3,500 12%	\$3,300 15%	\$6,800 13%
Other	\$3,100 11%	\$1,600 7%	\$4,700 9%
Total	\$29,000	\$21,700	\$50,700

Figure 4.4: Dollar Voting Summary



4.3 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS

The following pages summarize the findings of the statistically valid survey (Mail Survey) and the web and handout survey (Web Survey). Because the Mail Survey results were collected using a statistically valid random sample, they are intended to represent the residents of Cuyahoga Falls as a whole, both users and non-users. On the other hand, the Web Survey results reflect the views of the respondents, not necessarily Cuyahoga Falls residents as a whole. The figures in this section display side-by-side the results from both surveys. Of the figures that follow, some show only the top results for a survey question; however, full results can be found in Appendices E and F.

4.3.1 Statistically Valid Survey - Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute conducted a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey (Mail Survey) in the spring of 2020 to help establish priorities for the future development of parks, trails, programs, and open space in Cuyahoga Falls. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the city and was administered by mail and web.

The Brandstetter Carroll Inc. project team worked with Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation staff and the project steering committee on the development of the survey questionnaire. Through this collaborative effort a survey was created, tailored to issues of strategic local importance, that provided a critical tool for effective planning of the future of the parks, recreation, trails, and open space in Cuyahoga Falls. The four-page survey was mailed to a random sample of households throughout Cuyahoga Falls. (Households were also provided with a web address to complete the survey online as an alternative to filling out by hand and returning by mail.)

ETC Institute had a goal of 400 survey responses to ensure statistically valid results. ETC Institute exceeded this goal with a total of 437 surveys. Based on this random sample of households, the overall results have a precision of at least +/-4.7% at the 95% level of confidence.

4.3.2 National Benchmarking

Since 1998, ETC Institute has conducted household surveys for needs assessments, feasibility studies, customer satisfaction, fees and charges comparisons, and other parks and recreation issues in more than 700 communities across all 50 states.

The results of these surveys have provided an unparalleled database of information against which to compare responses from households in client communities. This unique tool enables clients to see their results compared to national averages, assisting them in better decision making. This National Benchmarking summary is included in Appendix E with the full survey report. Select information for the benchmarking is described within this section.

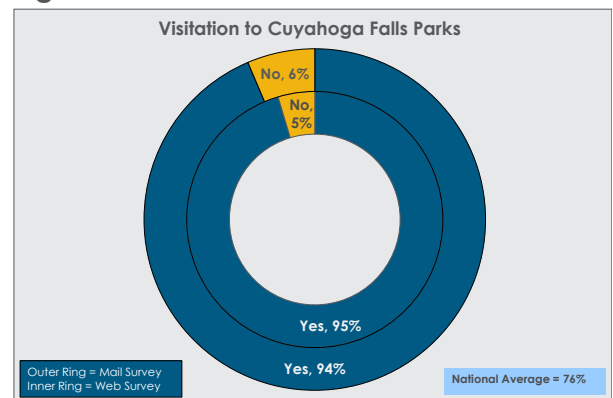
4.3.3 Web Survey - Overview and Methodology

In addition to the input-gathering outlined above, an online (and handout) survey was administered by BCI during the winter and spring of 2020. While similar to the Mail Survey, the overall length was reduced (2 pages instead of 4) for ease and improved likelihood of completion. The online version was powered by Survey Monkey; the handout version was available at all plan-related public meetings, The Natatorium, and Quirk Cultural Center. The added handout survey helped expand the total reach of engagement to include anyone who wished to share their ideas; it was available in both English and Spanish. A total of 1,050 community members participated in this survey. Eighty-one percent (81%) of those who responded said that they live within the City of Cuyahoga Falls, compared to nineteen percent (19%) who did not. The full survey report can be found in Appendix F.

4.3.4 Results - Visitation of Parks Offered in Cuyahoga Falls

Respondents to the survey were asked about their visitation to parks in Cuyahoga Falls over the last year. Figure 4.5 shows the proportion of those who reported at least one member of their household had visited a city park in the last year. According to the statistically valid Mail Survey (outer ring), **94% of households visited** parks in Cuyahoga Falls. Comparably, of those who responded in the Web Survey, 95% had visited a park. In contrast, the national average for park visitation is 76%, according to the ETC Institute benchmarking. Thus, residents in Cuyahoga Falls are considerably more likely than residents of other communities to visit parks.

Figure 4.5: Visitation

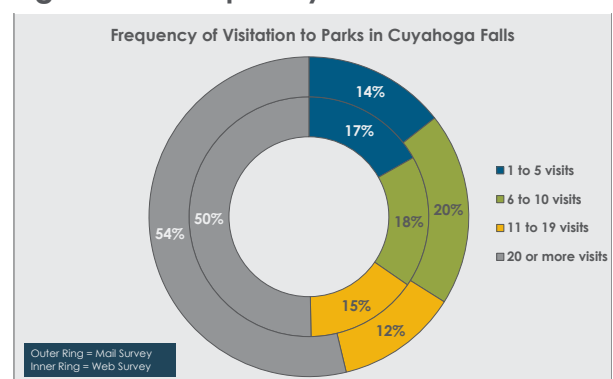


4.3.5 Results - Frequency of Visits to Parks & Recreation Facilities in Cuyahoga Falls

As a follow-up, respondent households that visited Cuyahoga Falls' parks and recreation facilities during the last year were asked how often they have visited those facilities over that time. The results are presented in Figure 4.6.

According to the statistically valid Mail Survey, households who visited the city's parks and/or recreation facilities in the last year likely visited many times. **Fifty-four percent (54%) reported visiting 20 or more times.** Other results were: 14% visited 1-5 times, 20% visited 6-10 times, and 12% visited 11-19 times. Looking at the responses cumulatively, 66% of households visited parks 11 or more times, and 86% visited parks six or more times. It is worth noting that both sets of participants (Web and Mail Survey) responded similarly, emphasizing the high rate the parks are visited in Cuyahoga Falls.

Figure 4.6: Frequency of Visitation



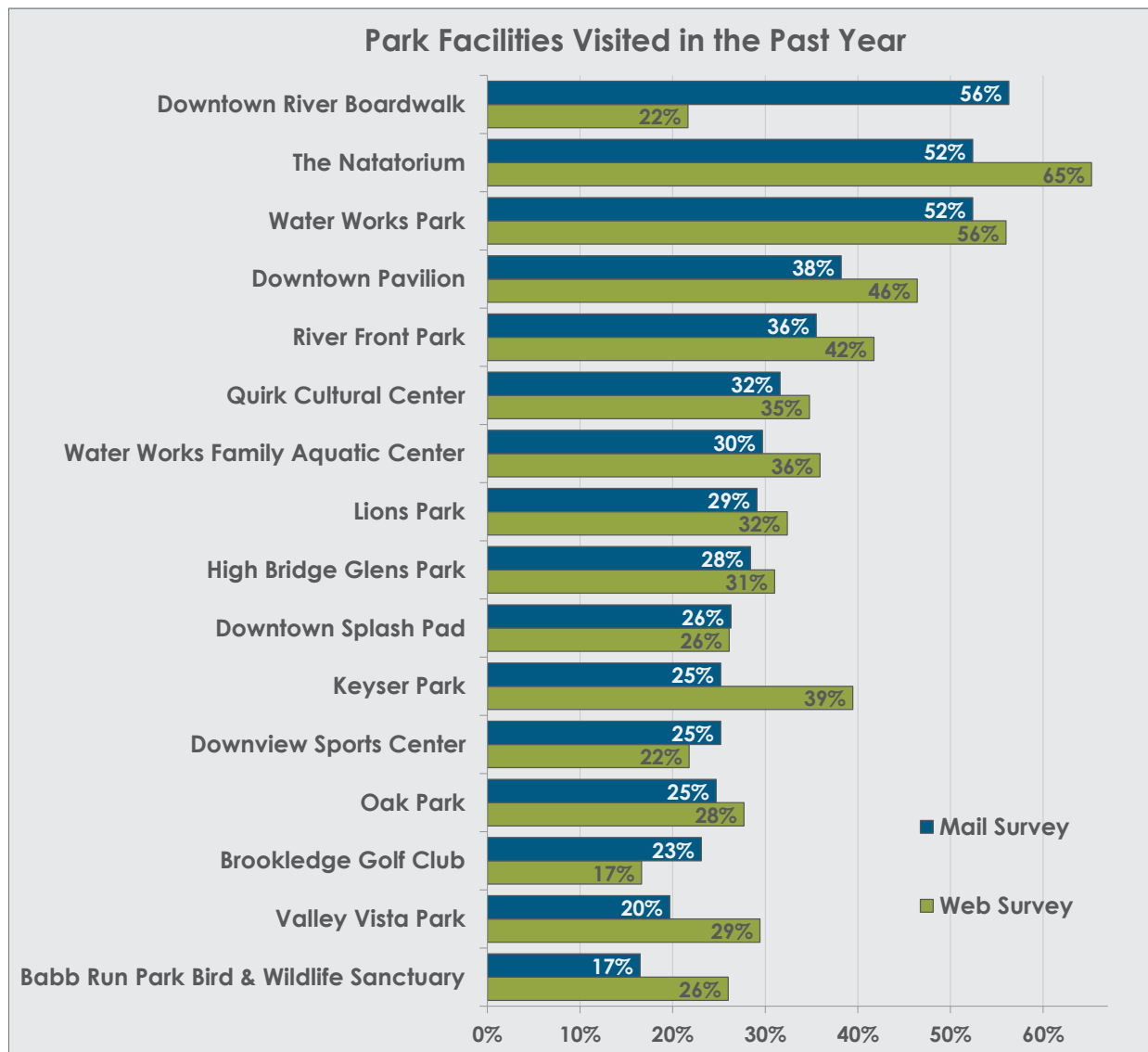
4.3.6 Results - Parks and Recreation Facilities Visited Over the Past Year

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which of the parks offered by Cuyahoga Falls their household visited over the past year. Figure 4.7 shows the percentage of respondents who have used each park or facility in the past year.

According to the Mail Survey, **56% of respondents visited the Downtown River Boardwalk¹** in the past year. The Natatorium and Water Works Park both report at 52%, a close second. The most used facilities were generally those with the widest variety of amenities, or those offering programs and hosting events. Web Survey respondents reported similar levels of usage for most parks; however, the Natatorium and Keyser Park each had the greatest discrepancy with increased use reported in the Web Survey with 65% (versus 52%) and 39% (versus 25%) respectively. Far more Mail Survey respondents indicated use of the Downtown River Boardwalk (56% versus 22%).

Also of note was the reported used of River Front Park. The results indicate that this park as the fifth most used; however, city staff report limited visitation to the park. It is likely that respondents mistook the park for one of the other parks along the river.

Figure 4.7: Parks Visited



¹ Due to wording, it is likely that a jamority of survey respondents who selected Downtown River Boardwalk or River Front Park intended the Downtown Pavilion and Amphitheater as their most visited space in the city's parks system.

4.3.7 Results - Physical Condition of Facilities Offered by Cuyahoga Falls

Respondent households were asked to rate the physical condition of facilities they visited. Figure 4.8 shows respondents' ratings of the condition of facilities in Cuyahoga Falls.

According to the Mail Survey, 60% of households who visited these facilities over the past year rated the condition of those facilities as *good*, **14% rated the condition of the facilities as excellent**, and 24% rated the condition as *fair*. Just 2% rated the facilities as *poor*. The numbers for *excellent* fall markedly below the National Average (according to the ETC Institute) of 29%.

Figure 4.8: Condition of Facilities

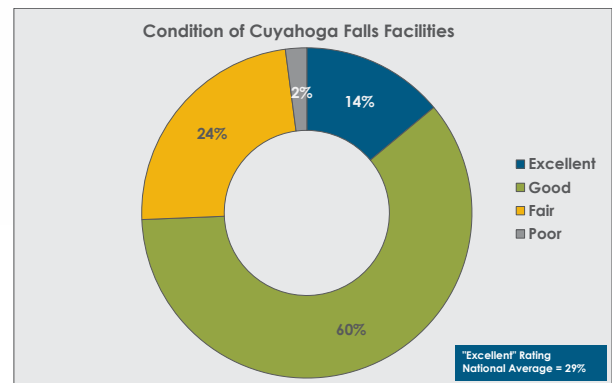
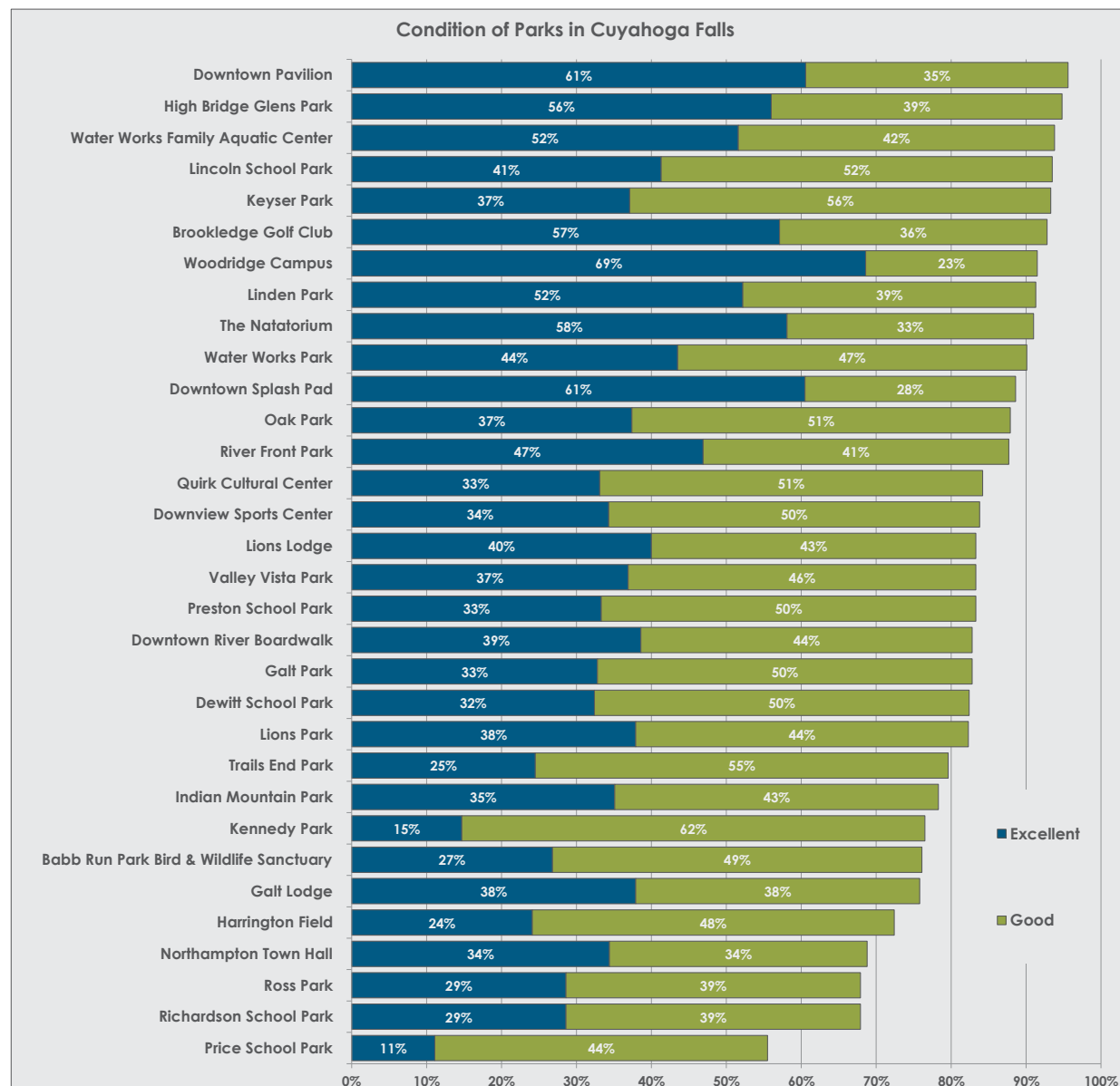


Figure 4.9 further breaks down survey responses to reveal perceptions of specific parks. Even the lowest rated park – Price School Park – has decent public perception with 55% of respondents identifying it as either *excellent* or *good*.

Figure 4.9: Physical Condition by Park



4.3.8 Results - Participation in Programs Offered by Cuyahoga Falls

Respondents were asked if any members of their household participated in programs offered by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation over the past year. These results are shown in Figure 4.10. According to the Mail Survey, thirty-three percent (33%) of Cuyahoga Falls households participated in programs offered, while 67% did not. This rate of participation matches the National Average of 33%.

4.3.9 Results - Quality of Programming

Respondents who participated in programs offered by Cuyahoga Falls were asked to rate the quality of those programs; Figure 4.11 shows the results. Forty-seven percent (47%) of households rated programs as good, **46% rated programs as excellent** — this surpasses the National Benchmark average of 33% — and 5% rated programs as fair. Web Survey respondents were more likely to rate programs as good rather than excellent, but by and large, responses between surveys were comparable.

4.3.10 Results - Upgrades to Existing Parks

Respondents were asked to identify upgrades their household would like to see to existing parks, Figure 4.12 shows responses. The **top two responses in the Mail Survey were restrooms (35%) and natural areas/nature parks (33%)**. About 20% of respondents listed three of the options - *security cameras and lighting, bike trails, and community gardens* - as priority upgrades. Seven of the ten features ranked higher in the Web Survey, most notably *restrooms* and *bike trails*. In general, the top items represent amenities that improve the overall park experience and can be included at nearly any park.

4.3.11 Results - Priorities for Improvement and Unmet Needs for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Respondents of the Mail Survey were asked to identify (from a list of 23 different types of parks and recreation facilities) if any members of their household have a need for a new facility. Figure 4.13 shows the results as well as the national average for each facility.² In the column along the right side of the chart, national averages shown in red indicate Cuyahoga Falls' need at 5% or more below the national average, black indicates less than 5% above or below the national average (or, sometimes, when comparison numbers are not available), and blue indicates household needs in Cuyahoga Falls at 5% or more above the national average.

According to the survey, **the highest percentage of Cuyahoga Falls households (63%) had a need for natural areas/nature parks**. *Community/neighborhood parks* ranked at a close second (59%). *Paved bike trails* (46%) and *community/recreation centers* (43%) were ranked by participating households as third and fourth most-needed facility. Of those facilities ranked as needed by 40% or more of survey respondents, three (*nature parks, community/neighborhood parks, and community/recreation centers*) are at least 5% above the national average demand.

In addition to outlining the community's needs in terms of new facilities, the survey also helped define where there is opportunity within the existing system (i.e., unmet needs). Respondents were asked how well their needs are currently met by facilities provided by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation. Out of these responses,

Figure 4.10: Program Participation

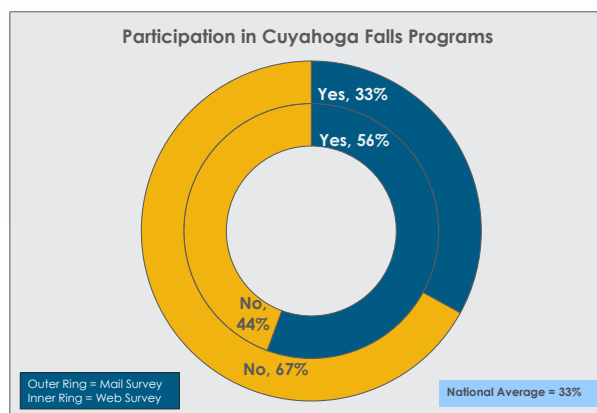
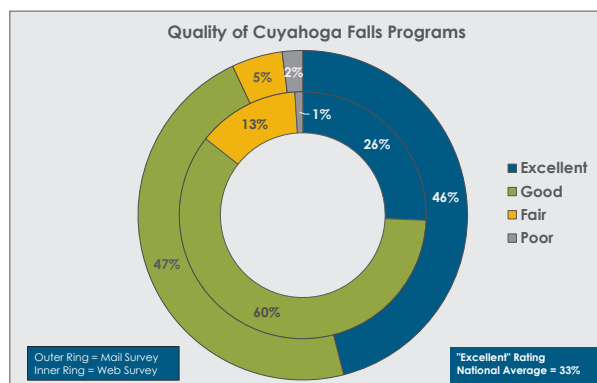
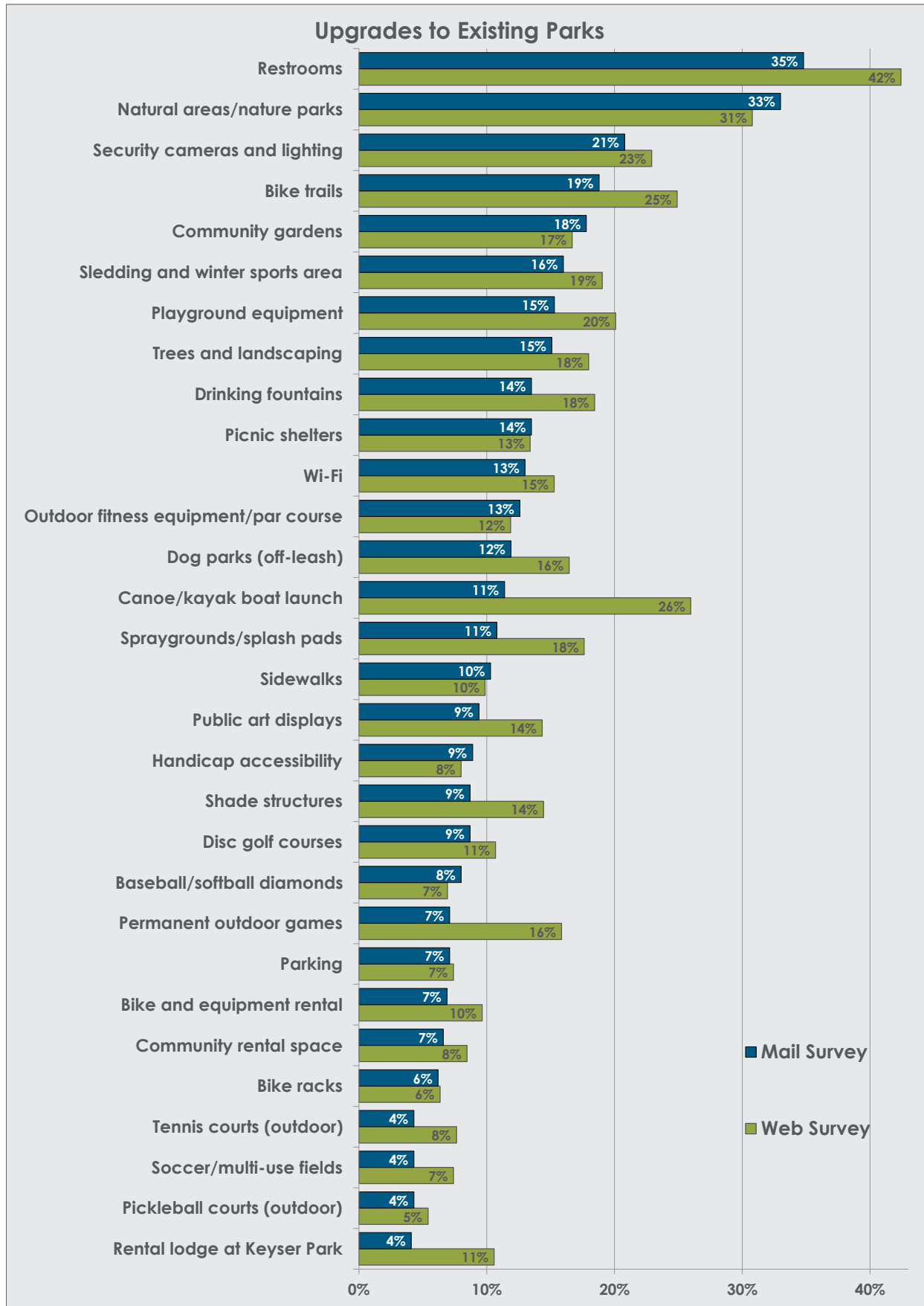


Figure 4.11: Quality of Programming



² Provided by ETC Institute (see Appendix F).

Figure 4.12: Upgrades to Existing Parks



the number of households for which needs were met at 50% or less was combined with the total number of households in Cuyahoga Falls. Figure 4.14 shows the estimated number of households with needs met at 50% or less for the listed facilities.

The order of the items in Figure 4.14 varies somewhat from the list of needed facilities (Figure 4.13). The most needed facility, *natural areas/nature parks*, still ranks in the top-three for unmet needs (almost 5,000 households) but **paved bike trails is the top-ranked unmet facility for Cuyahoga Falls households** (6,203). *Community/recreation centers* and *community/neighborhood parks* were both ranked highly for needed facilities, but as far as unmet needs in the current system for Cuyahoga Falls households, they fall lower on the list (10th and fifth, respectively). Notably, community gardens rank 11th on the list of most-needed facilities but come in third (3,691 households) of all facilities not meeting resident need. This suggests a smaller proportion of the community with needs for this facility, but those needs are not currently being met.

A third component of this section of the survey allowed participants to indicate the facilities most important to them. Figure 4.15 presents the most important facilities overall (by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices) based on participant selections. Generally, these items are similar to the results indicated in Figure 4.13 with some changes to the order of facilities. **Natural areas/nature parks ranked as the most important facility by Cuyahoga Falls households** with 39% of households selecting it as one of their top four most important facilities. **Community/neighborhood parks came in as a close second**, with 37% of households ranking it in their top four. *Paved bike trails* are retained as an important facility, with 27% of households listing it in their top four most important facilities.

The survey results provided by ETC Institute include a Priority Investment Ranking for each of the facilities that combine the level of unmet needs and the importance of facilities (see Appendix F for methodology). The results for the high and medium priority facilities can be seen in Figure 4.16.

Based on these results, the **top three facility priorities** for investment in Cuyahoga Falls are:

1. **Natural areas/nature parks**
2. **Paved bike trails**
3. **Community/neighborhood parks**

4.3.12 Results - Household Need for Programs

Mail Survey respondents were asked to identify which programs were needed by their households from a list of 18 recreation program categories. Figure 4.17 shows the results as well as the national average for each program. As indicated previously for facilities, the national averages are shown in red to indicate Cuyahoga Falls' need at 5% or more under the national average, blue to indicate Cuyahoga Falls' need at 5% or more above the national average, and black indicates within 5% above or below the national average or that comparison numbers are not available.

According to the survey, **fitness & wellness programs (adult) and concerts/art performances are both ranked equally by over 50% of households as the most needed recreation program category** in Cuyahoga Falls (52%). *Community & family events* are ranked at a close third by 48% of households. By comparison, Cuyahoga Falls households showed similar or greater need (than national level) for most of the programs in the list with lesser need for just five of the program categories.

To determine the level of unmet need, the survey asked respondents to define how well their needs are met by the current recreation programs in Cuyahoga Falls, then estimated the number of households for which needs were met at 50% or less. Based on a combination of responses and the total number of households in Cuyahoga Falls, Figures 4.18 (Mail Survey) and 4.19 (Web Survey) show the estimated number (or percentage) of households with unmet need for different programs.

The order of the items in Figure 4.18 is the same as the list of needed programs in Figure 4.17 with the top items appearing in both figures, indicating a need for the addition or expansion of these types of programs. **Fitness & wellness programs (adult) ranked first with over 12,000 households indicating unmet needs.** *Concerts/art performances* ranked a very close second, and *community & family events* rank third with roughly 11,300 households identifying unmet needs in that category. In Figure 4.19, the top programs with the greatest unmet need are nearly the same as in the results of the Mail Survey. *Nature Programs* appear at the top, with

Figure 4.13: Need for Facilities

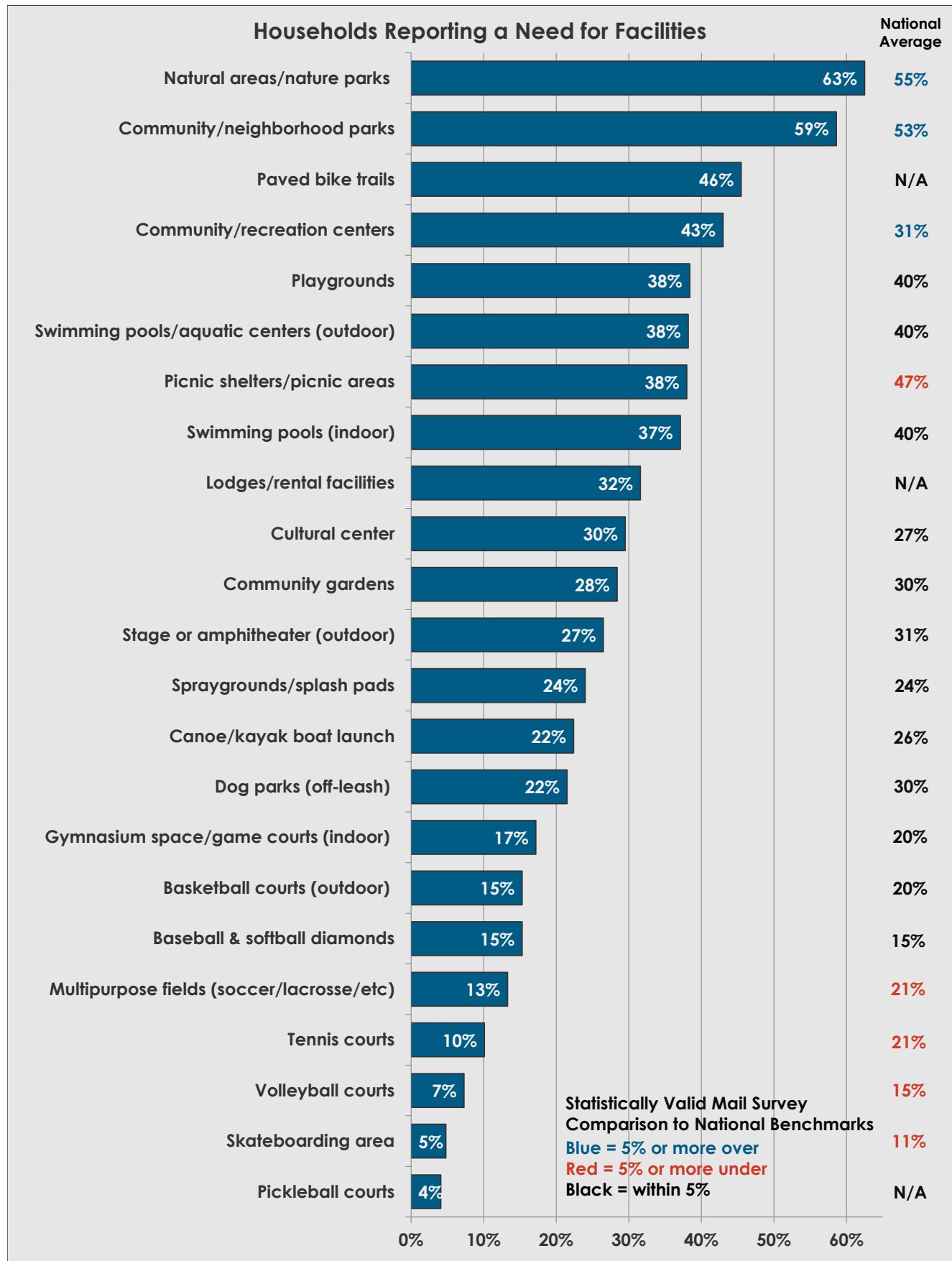


Figure 4.14: Estimated Number of Households with Unmet Facility Needs

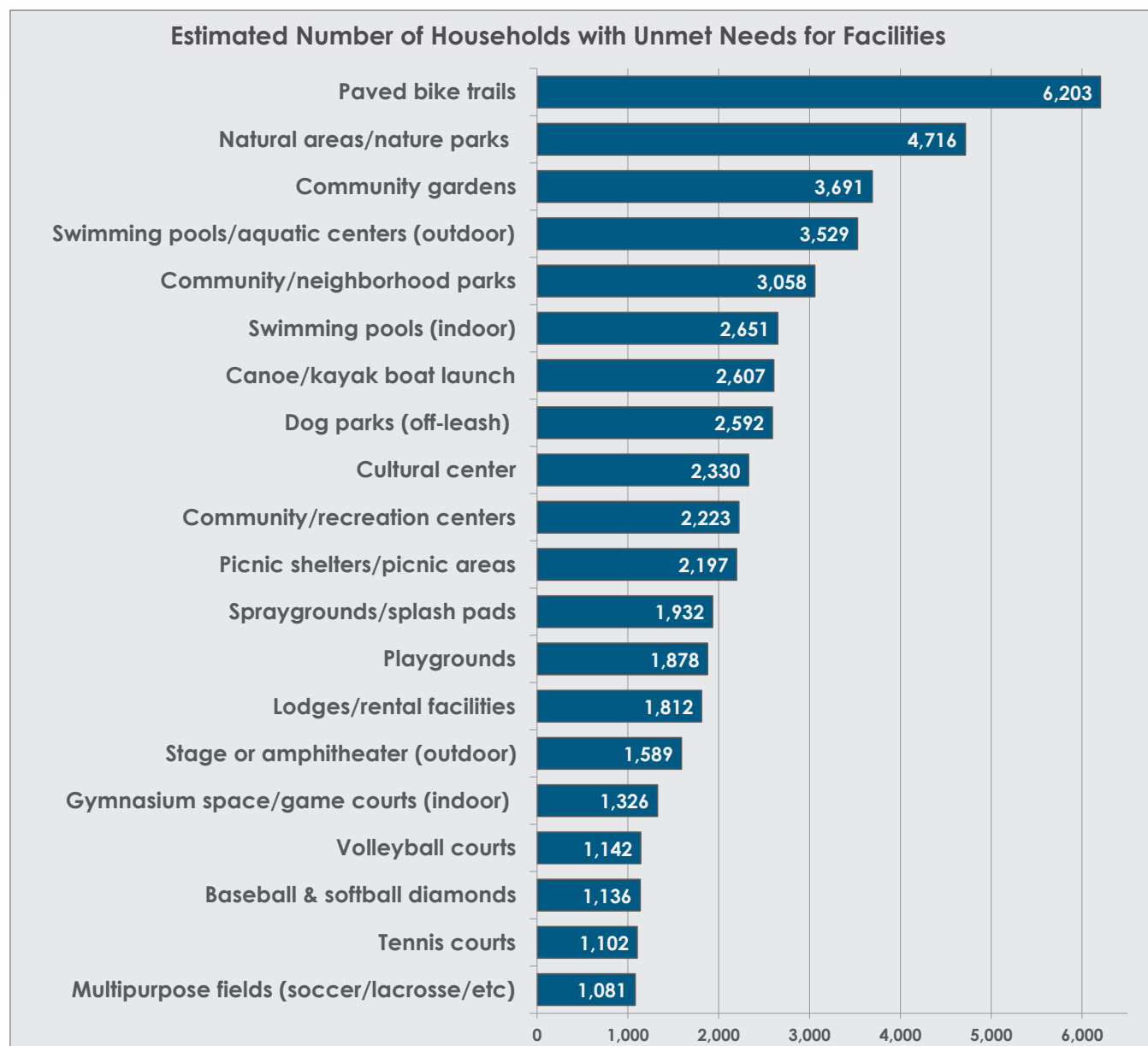


Figure 4.15: Most Important Facilities

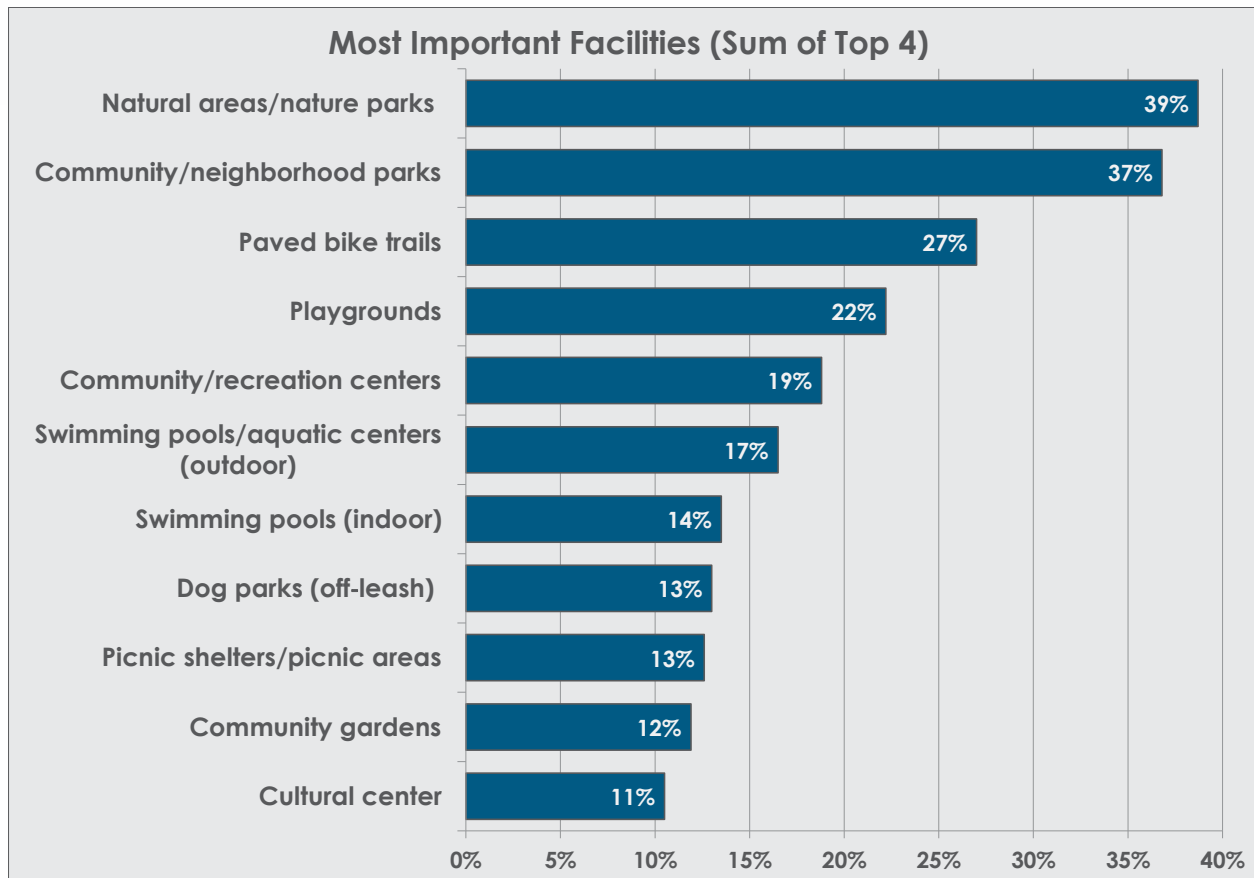


Figure 4.16: Facility Priorities for Investment

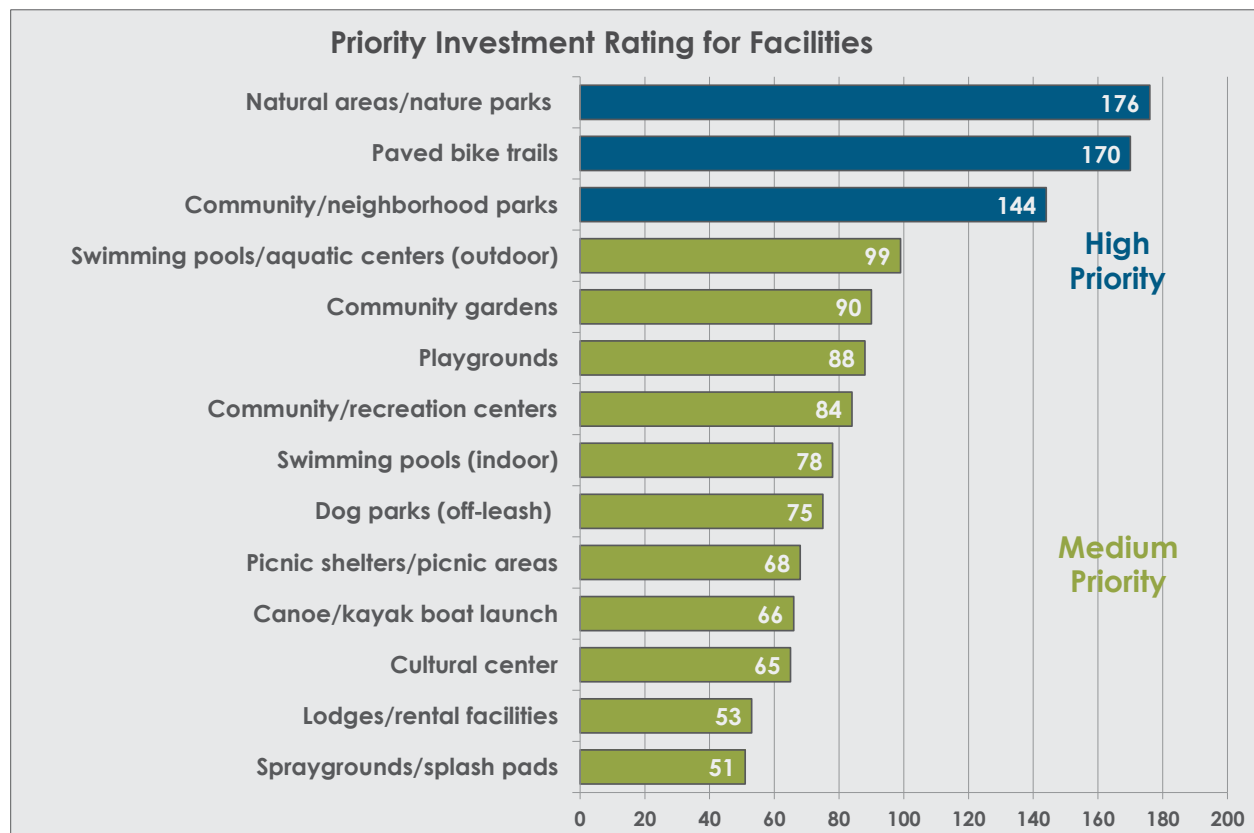


Figure 4.17: Need for Programs

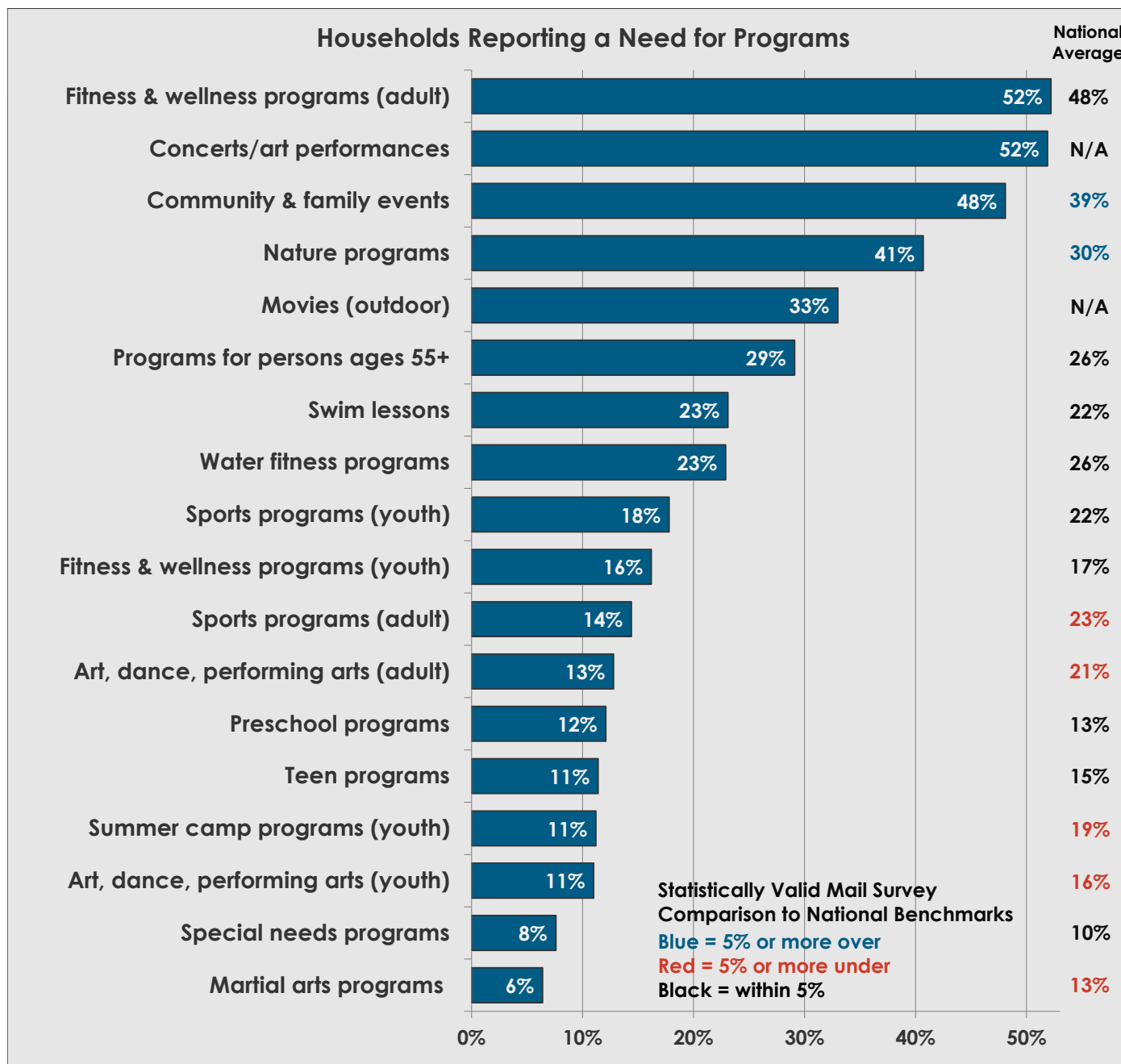


Figure 4.18: Estimated Number of Households with Unmet Program Needs (Mail Survey)

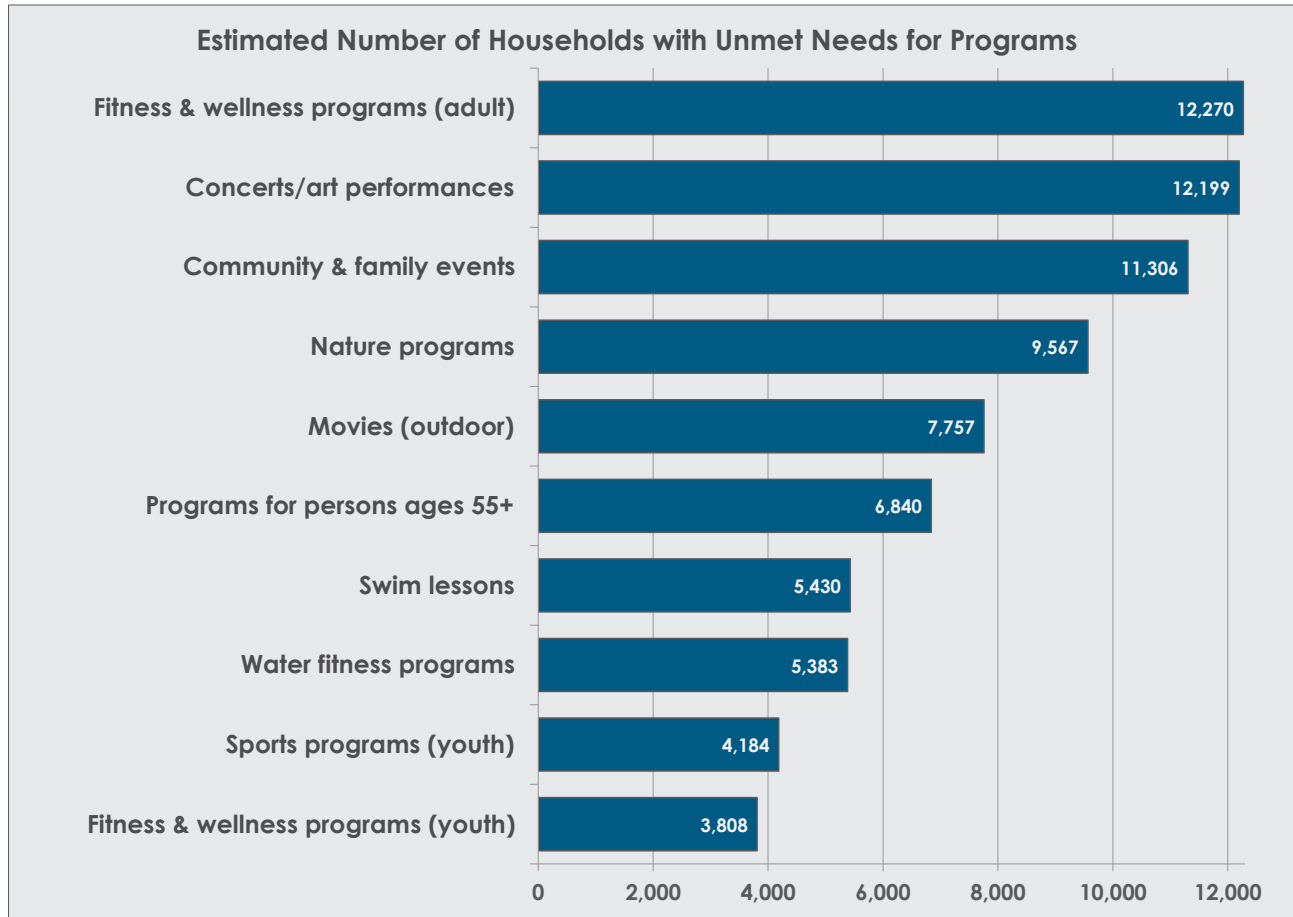
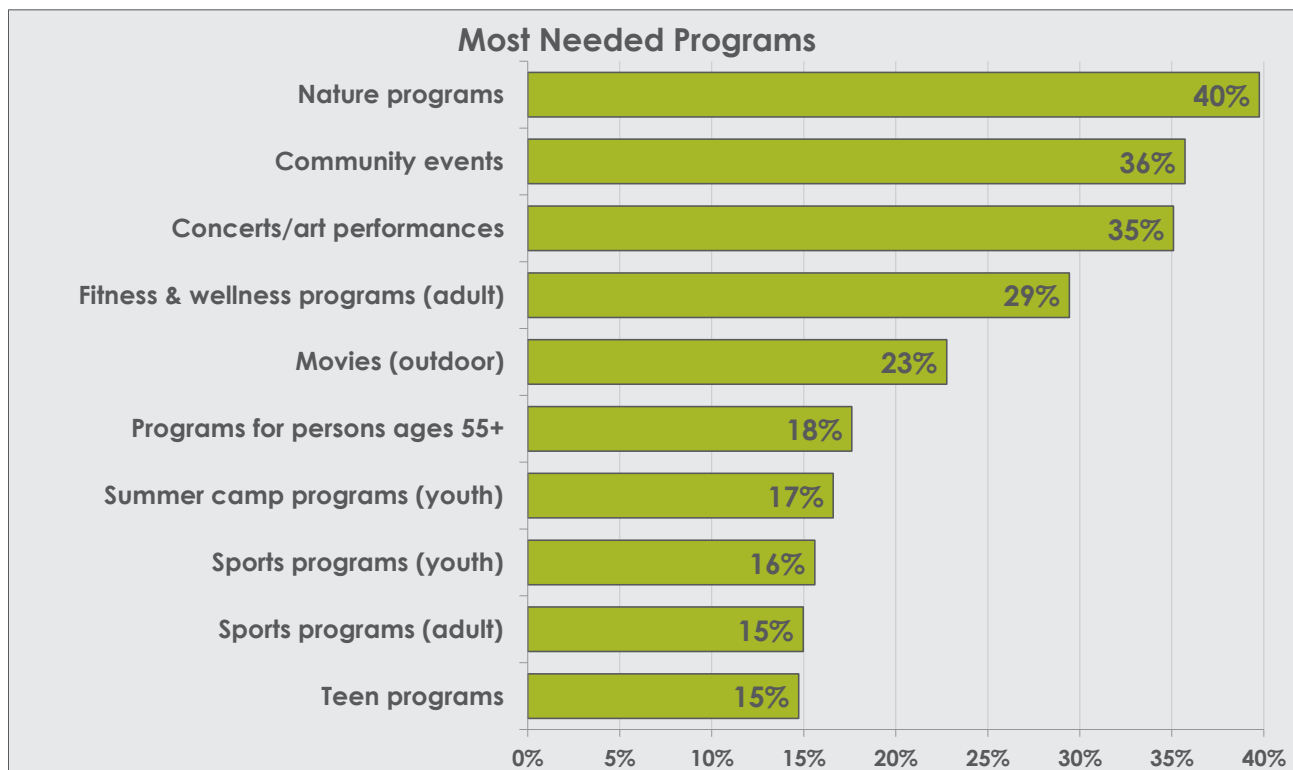


Figure 4.19: Most Needed Programs (Web Survey)



concerts/art performances and community & family events still ranking high and fitness & wellness programs (adult) still listed by almost 30% of respondents.

That three of the four categories of programming appear at the top across all ranking suggests a twofold opportunity for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation to augment existing offerings and also to create additional programs in these categories.

As with the facilities, the survey results from the ETC Institute also included a Priority Investment Ranking for programs, combining the unmet needs ranking and most important programs ranking (Figure 4.20). Figure 4.21 shows the high and medium priority facilities.

Based on these results, the **top six program priorities** for investment in Cuyahoga Falls are:

1. **Concerts/art performances**
2. **Fitness & wellness programs (adult)**
3. **Community & family events**
4. **Nature programs**
5. **Programs for persons ages 55+**
6. **Movies (outdoor)**

Figure 4.20: Most Important Programs

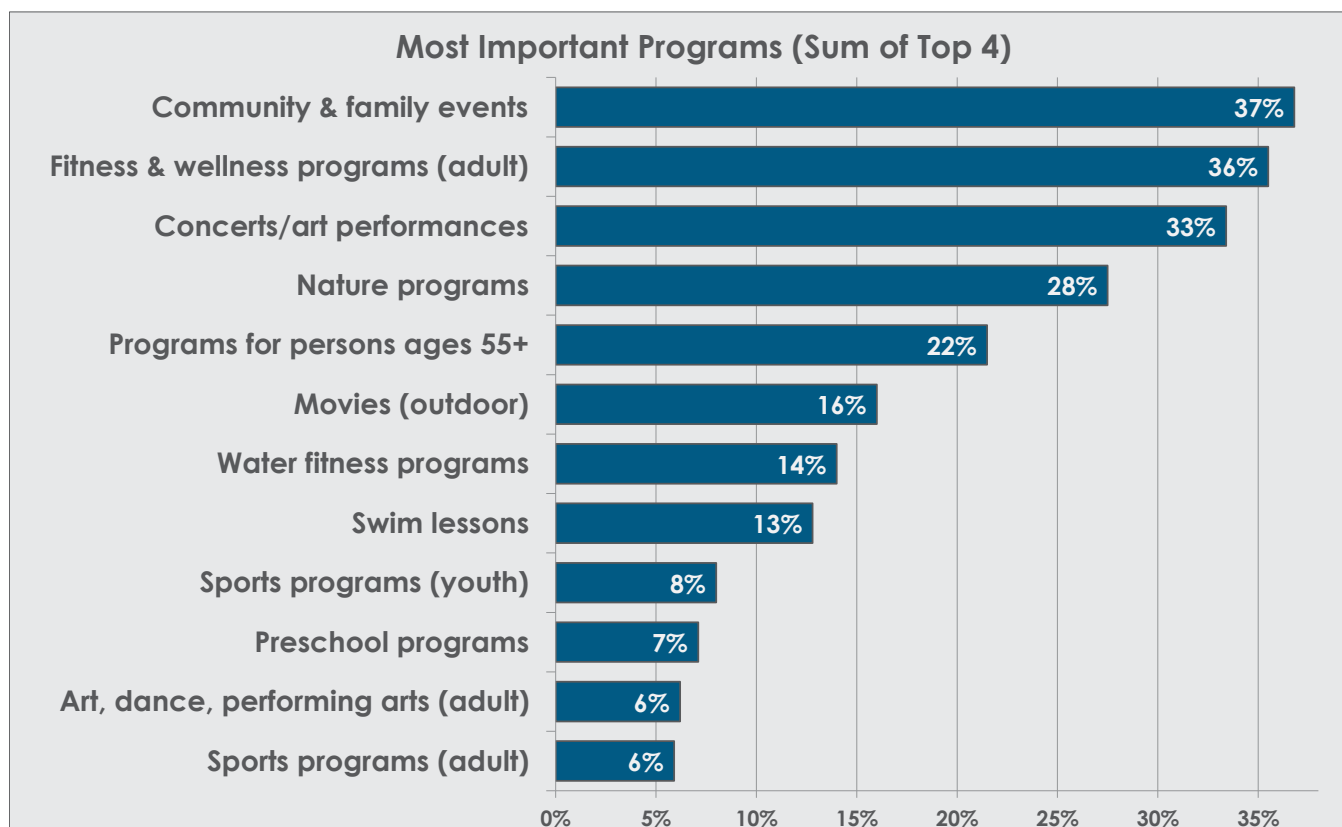
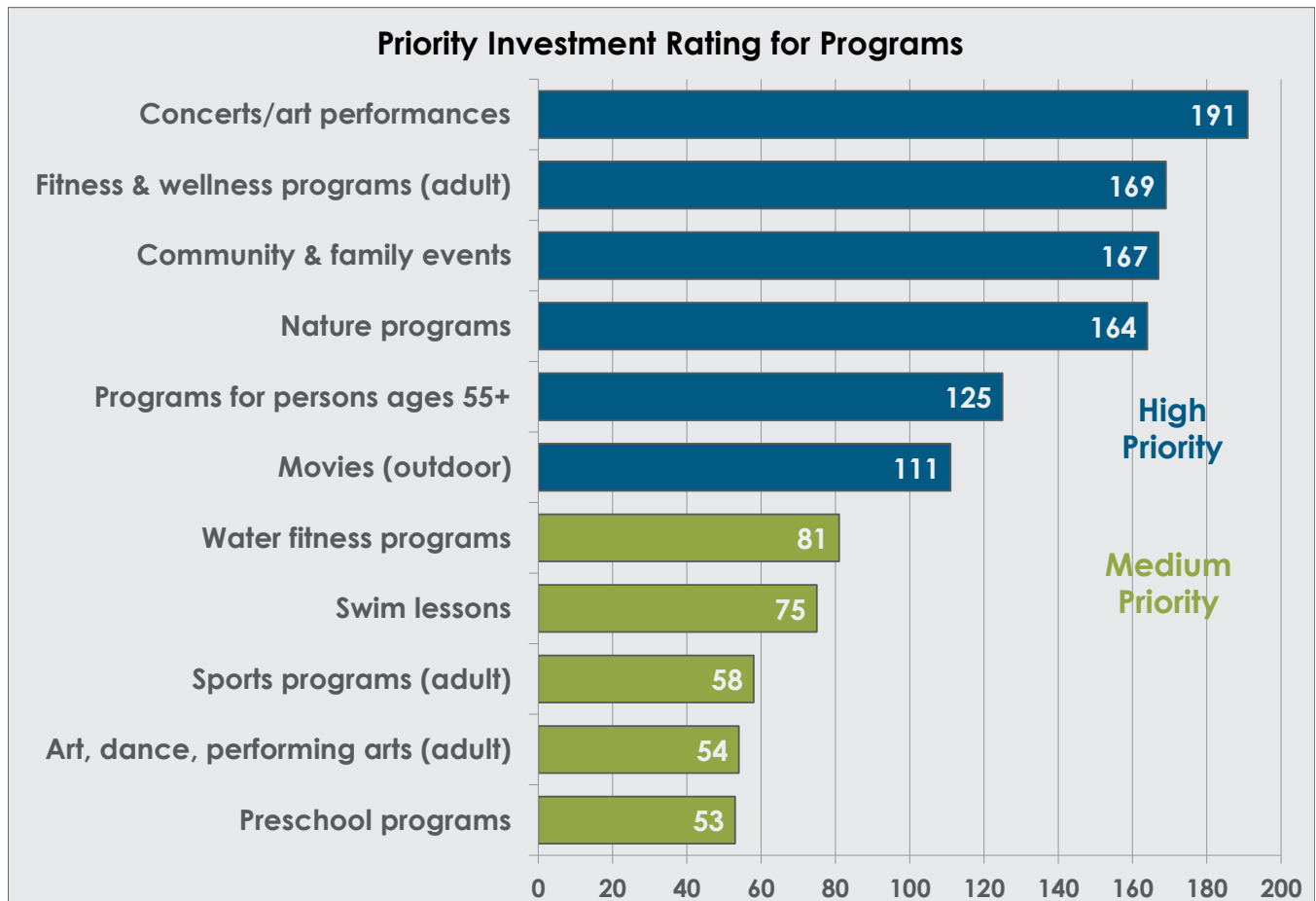


Figure 4.21: Program Priorities for Investment



4.3.13 Results - Support for Park Improvements

Participants in the Mail Survey were asked to indicate whether they were *very supportive*, *somewhat supportive*, *not supportive (or not sure)* of nine different actions Cuyahoga Falls could take to improve their parks and recreation services. The results, displayed in Figure 4.22, show the combined total of *very supportive* and *somewhat supportive* responses.

Upgrade existing parks & facilities received the highest level of support with 84% of respondents supporting this action (63% very supportive). *Provide new programs for seniors* ranked second with 74% of respondents supporting this action (47% very supportive). *Provide new programs for persons with special needs* ranked third with 72% of respondents supporting this action (44% very supportive). More than 50% of respondents were supportive of all nine actions. Such positive feedback illustrates overall support from residents for parks and recreation improvements in Cuyahoga Falls.

4.3.14 Results - Most Import Action to Take (Sum of Top 3)

Survey participants were asked to define the most important actions for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation to take to improve the quality of the system. Figure 4.23 shows the results of this question, revealing a near twofold majority that listed *upgrade existing parks and facilities* as one of their top three choices of action. **Fifty-seven percent (57%) of households requested upgrades to existing** while 28% of households listed *develop new outdoor parks & recreation facilities* (making it the second-ranked important action); thus, the clear priority for Cuyahoga Falls households is making upgrades to the parks and facilities already offered by the city. Providing *new programs for seniors* and *for youth* both came up as close third and fourth choices for most important action for improvement.

Figure 4.22: Support for Actions to Improve Parks and Recreation

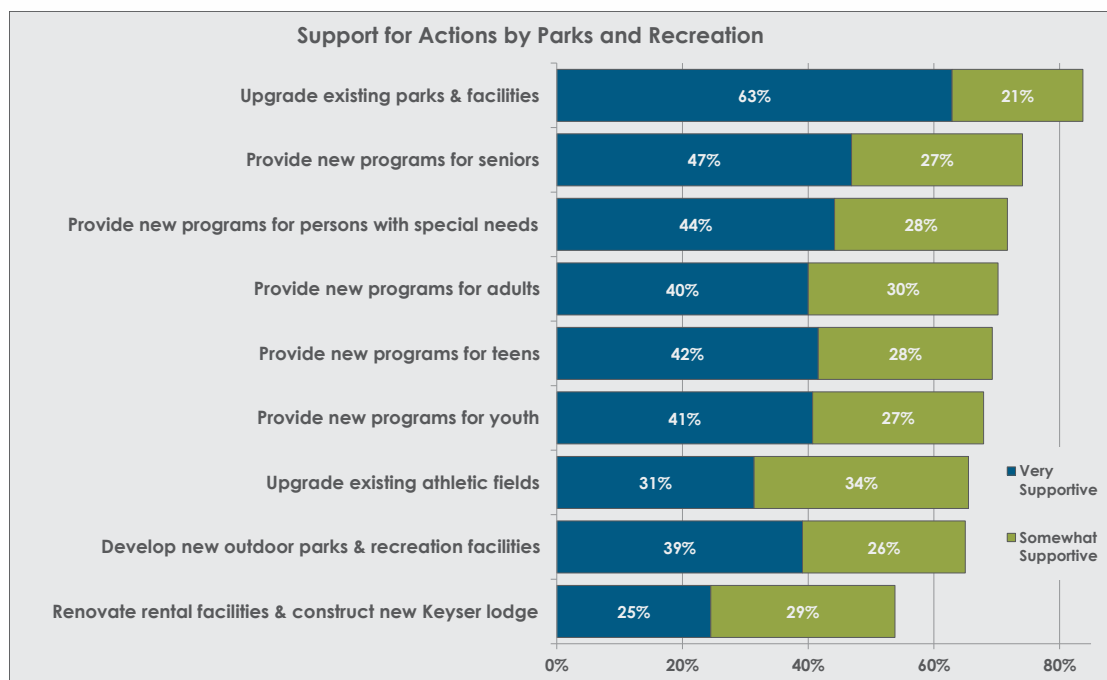
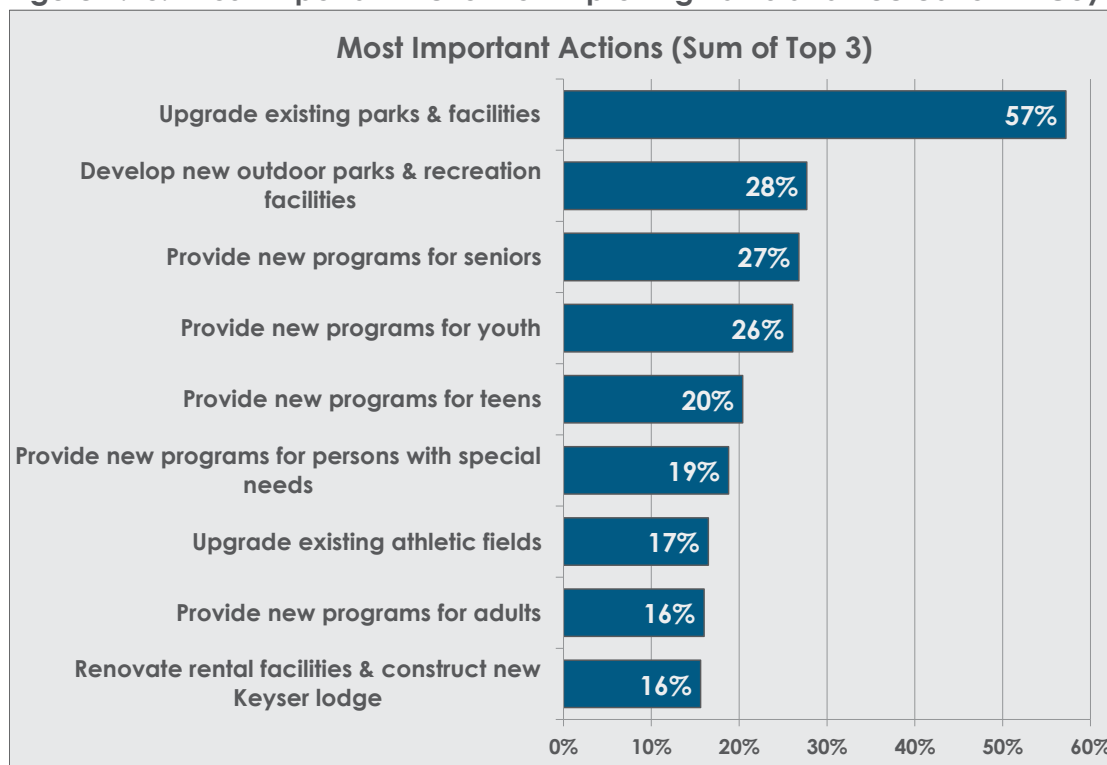


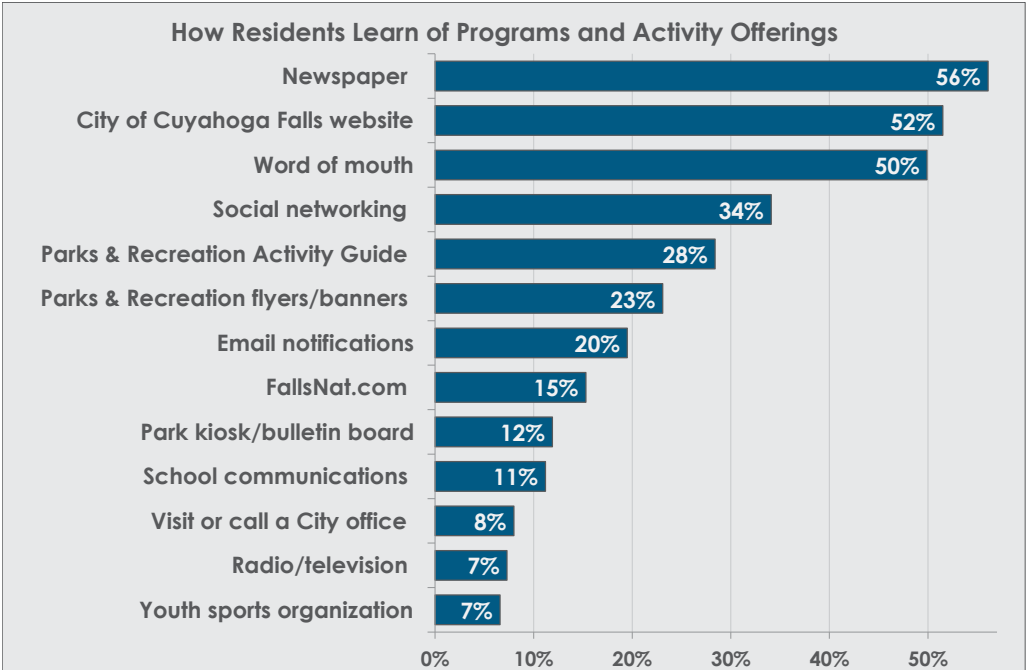
Figure 4.23: Most Important Action for Improving Parks and Recreation in Cuyahoga Falls



4.3.15 Results - Learning about Recreation or Activities in Cuyahoga Falls

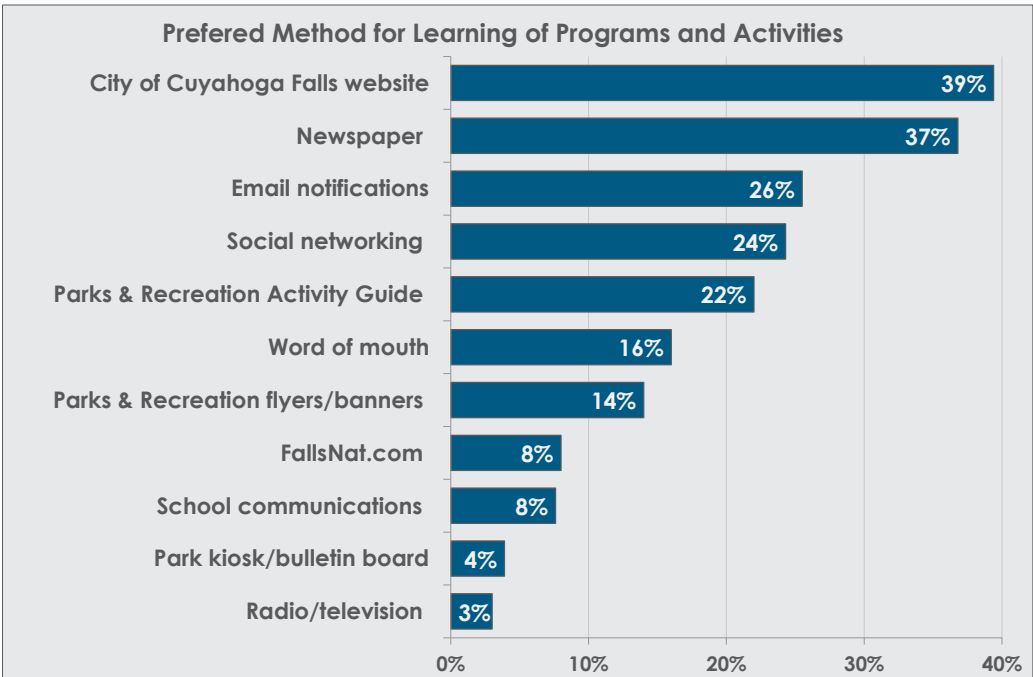
Respondents were asked to identify the ways which they learn about Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation programming and activities (Figure 4.24). **Respondents indicated the newspaper as the most common way they learn about the city's offerings** (56% of Mail Survey respondents). The city website (52% of respondents) and word of mouth (50%) were the next most common methods of staying informed. Thirty-four percent (34%) of residents use social networking to learn about program offerings.

Figure 4.24: Ways Households Learn about Recreation and Activities



As a follow-up, participants were asked how they would prefer to be notified about programs and activities (Figure 4.25) in order to understand where Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation might improve its communication efforts. *City of Cuyahoga Falls website* ranked as the top choice (39%) followed closely by *the newspaper* (37%). Only 16% selected *word of mouth* despite 50% of respondents reporting it as the method by which they currently learn about the city's programs and activities. Overall, the results of this survey question suggest a general desire to be able to stay informed via distributed publications, either online or in paper form.

Figure 4.25: Ways Households Would Like to Learn about Recreation and Activities



4.3.16 Results - Perception of Spraygrounds and Splash Pads

Given the need for and the city's interest in making upgrades to existing facilities in the park system, the survey included questions concerning spraygrounds or splash pads in order to ascertain the level of need and support for such facilities. **Figure 4.26 shows what percentage of the community visits spraygrounds or splash pads with the majority (68%) not visiting these amenities.**

While visitation is low, Figure 4.27 shows that **the community overwhelming supports the development of new spraygrounds or splashpads** in Cuyahoga Falls.

Figure 4.28 shows the overall support for transitioning existing wading pools to new splash pads. **Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondent households are in favor** of this upgrade.

In summary, while sprayground or splash pad amenities are currently underused by the community due to lack of availability, Cuyahoga Falls households actually do have a desire to utilize them and are even in favor of the city's replacement of its existing facilities (wading pools) to match the need.

4.3.17 Results - Amenities Used in a Year

To approximate the level of usage by amenity, and thereby get a clearer picture of the community's preference for the city's offerings, the Mail Survey asked participants to identify which amenities they had used in the past year (from a list of 20). Figure 4.29 breaks down the most frequently listed outdoor amenities and Figure 4.30 lists the top-used indoor amenities.

Trails and the Downtown River Boardwalk were both ranked top-used by 56% of participant households. Playgrounds come in at a somewhat distant third with 35% of households having used one in the last year.

In terms of **most used indoor amenities, walking track came in at the top with almost forty percent (39%) of households having made use of it** in the past 12 months. The *aquatics center* and the *upper fitness center* (all facilities at The Nat) came up second, listed by 31% of households. Given that there are a few amenities listed by less than 15% of households, including *basketball* and *racquetball courts*, the city should consider the popularity and maintenance levels of these before upgrading or replacing them.

4.3.18 Reasons Preventing Use of Parks, Recreation Facilities, Trails, and Programs More Often

Respondents to both surveys were asked to select barriers to their households' use of parks, recreation facilities, trails, and programs from a list of 16 options. Figure 4.31 shows the results. According to the Mail Survey, the number one reason was that households *do not know what is offered* (45%). According to the National Benchmarking, this reason is often at the top of the list, but Cuyahoga Fall' response rate to this option was above the national average of 35%. The second most common reason was *do not have time*

Figure 4.26: Visitation to Spray or Splash Amenities

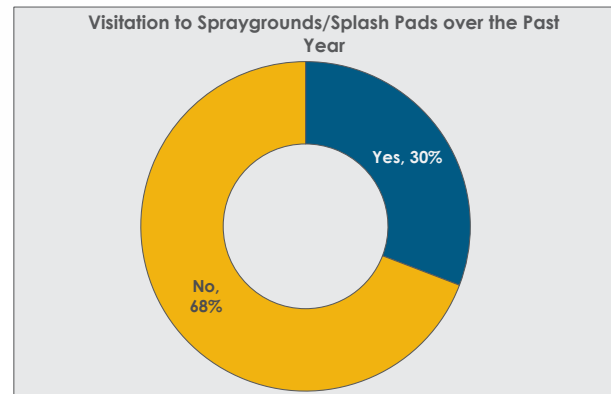


Figure 4.27: Support for New Spray and Splash Amenities

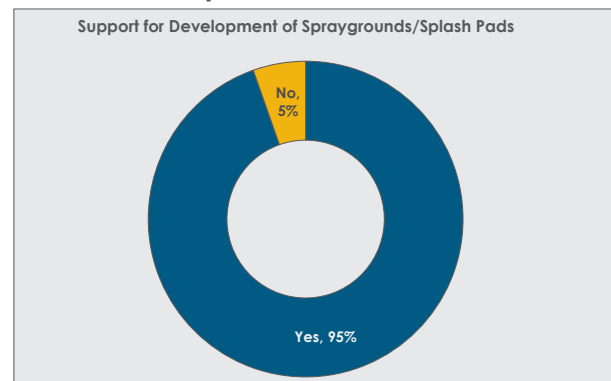
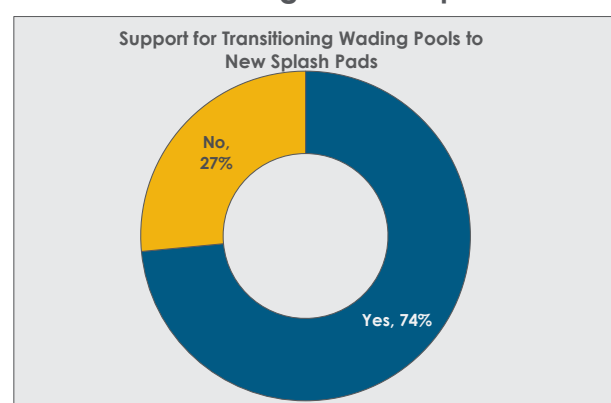


Figure 4.28: Support for Transitioning Wading Pools to Splash Pads



at 30%, compared to the national average of 32%. The third ranked reason was that *program times are not convenient* (22%). Web Survey respondents were more likely to select reasons for not using parks.

Figure 4.29: Outdoor Amenities Used in the Past Year

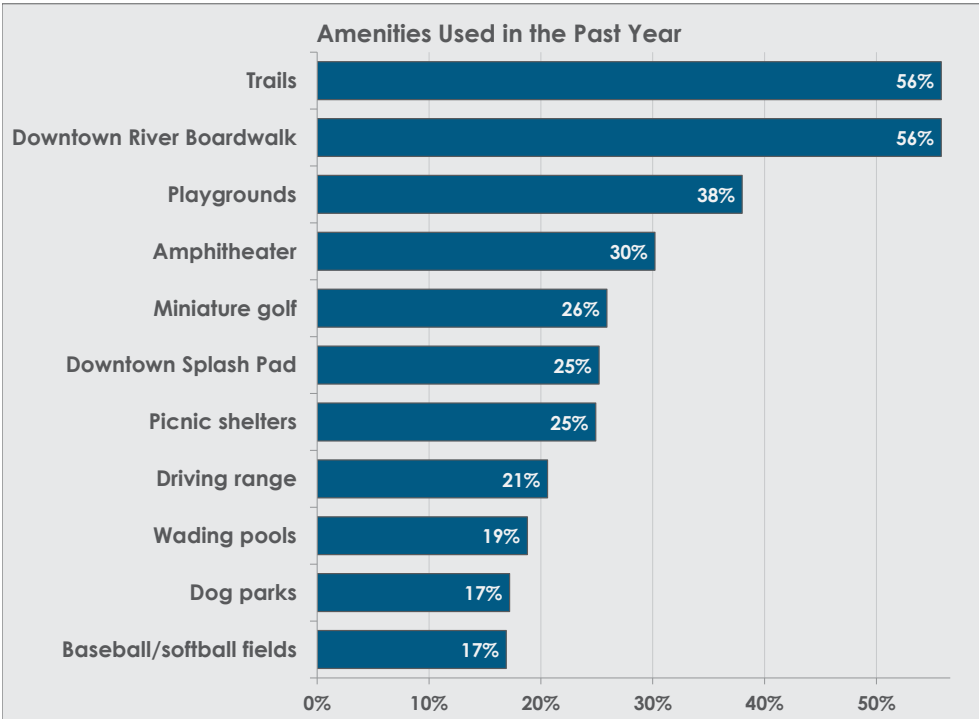


Figure 4.30: Indoor Amenities Used in the Past Year

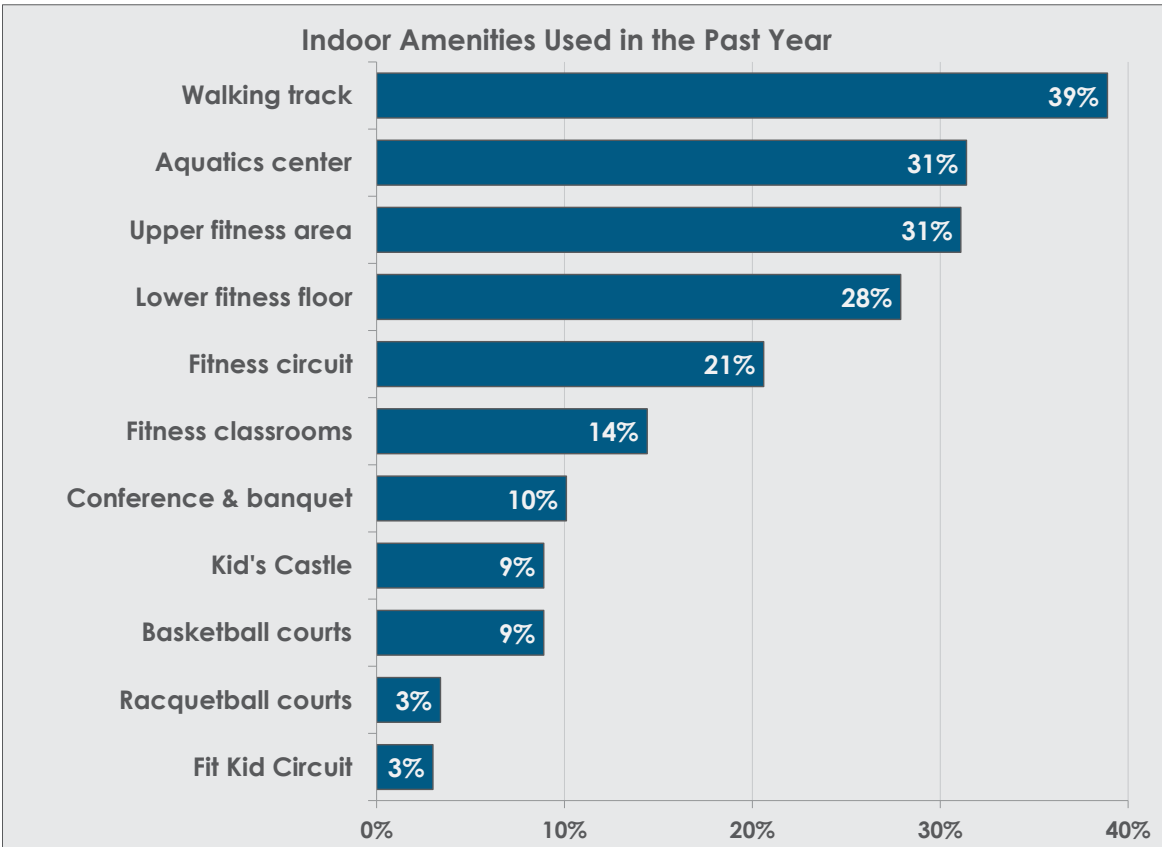
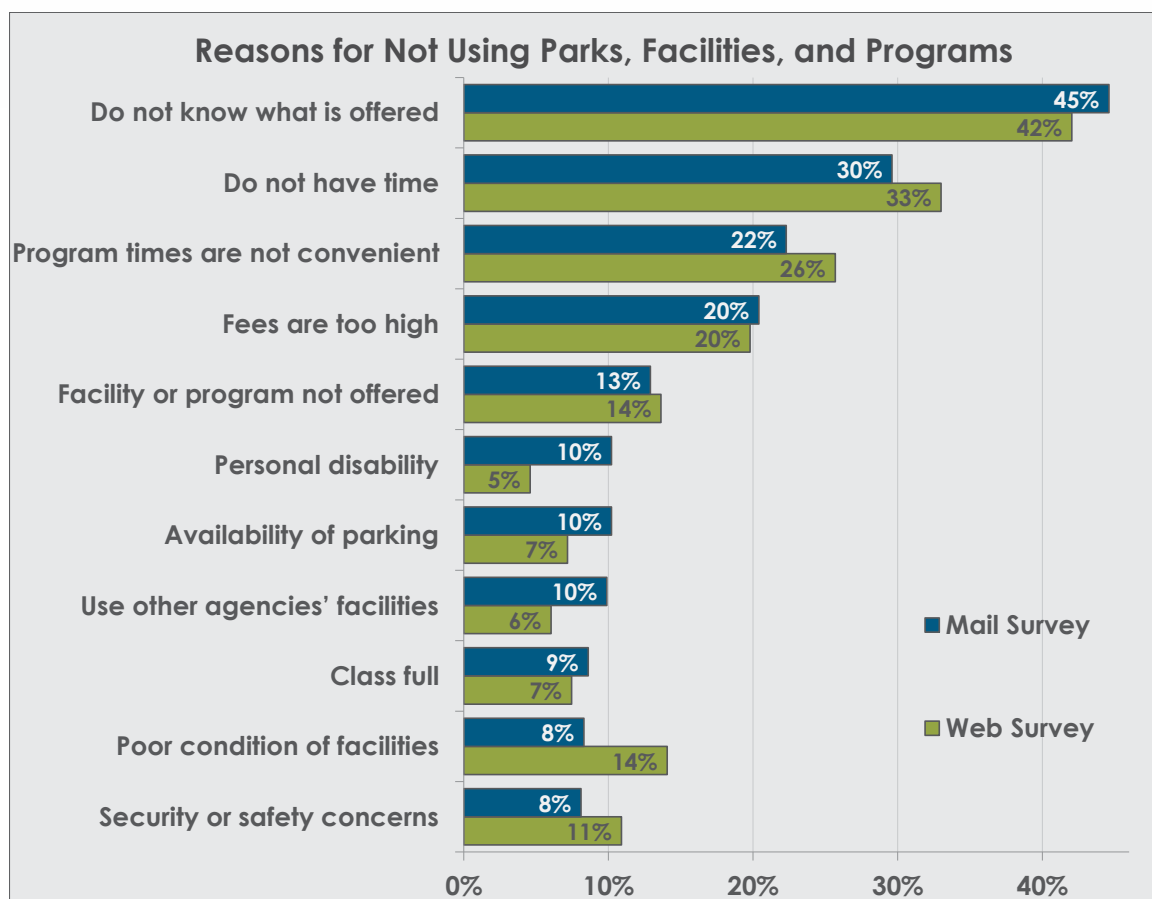


Figure 4.31: Reasons for Not Using Parks, Recreation Facilities, Trails, and Programs



4.3.19 Demographics of Survey Households

The following figures were used to verify the degree to which the demographic representation of the survey responses corresponds with that of the population of Cuyahoga Falls.

First, the distribution of age groups of respondent households was compared to the most recent population estimates.³ Figure 4.32 shows the representation by age of survey respondent household members and the estimated 2019 Cuyahoga Falls population of each age cohort (the most recent available for these age demographics).

Based on this comparison, the respondents of the Mail Survey for the most part closely aligned with the age demographics of Cuyahoga Falls. The biggest discrepancy shows in the age group 25-34, notably underrepresented in the Mail Survey, and those age 65-74 which the Mail Survey considerably overrepresented. In contrast, the Web Survey largely compensated for the Mail Survey's discrepancies in representation. It shows significantly higher response rates in participants age 25-34 and 35-44, noticeably higher response levels for individuals under 20, and lower rates of response from those 55 and older (the population more likely to participate in the Mail Survey).

Survey representation by household income of each respondent is broken down below (Figure 4.33). The Mail Survey reached well above the proportion of the population with income of \$50,000 or above; in contrast, the survey reached about half the proportion of the population with less than \$25,000 annual income. This population is consistently a challenge to reach via mail surveys and one reason alternative methods of input-gathering are used throughout the planning process.

³ 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In terms of the race & ethnicity of survey respondents, the Mail Survey accurately matched the makeup of the community in Cuyahoga Falls (Figure 4.34), according to the American Community Survey (ACS). The city is overwhelmingly white, which is reflected in the survey responses, but other races and ethnicities received proportional representation.

Figure 4.32: Household Demographics of Survey Participants

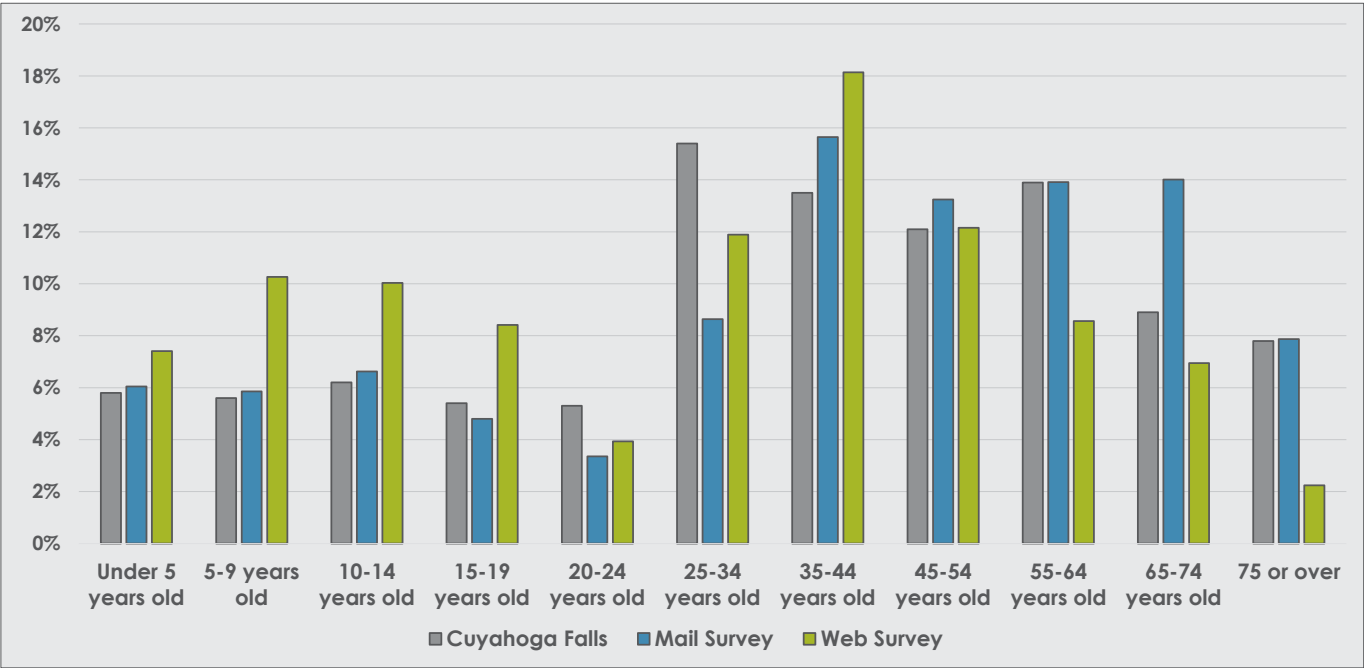


Figure 4.33: Household Income of Survey Participants

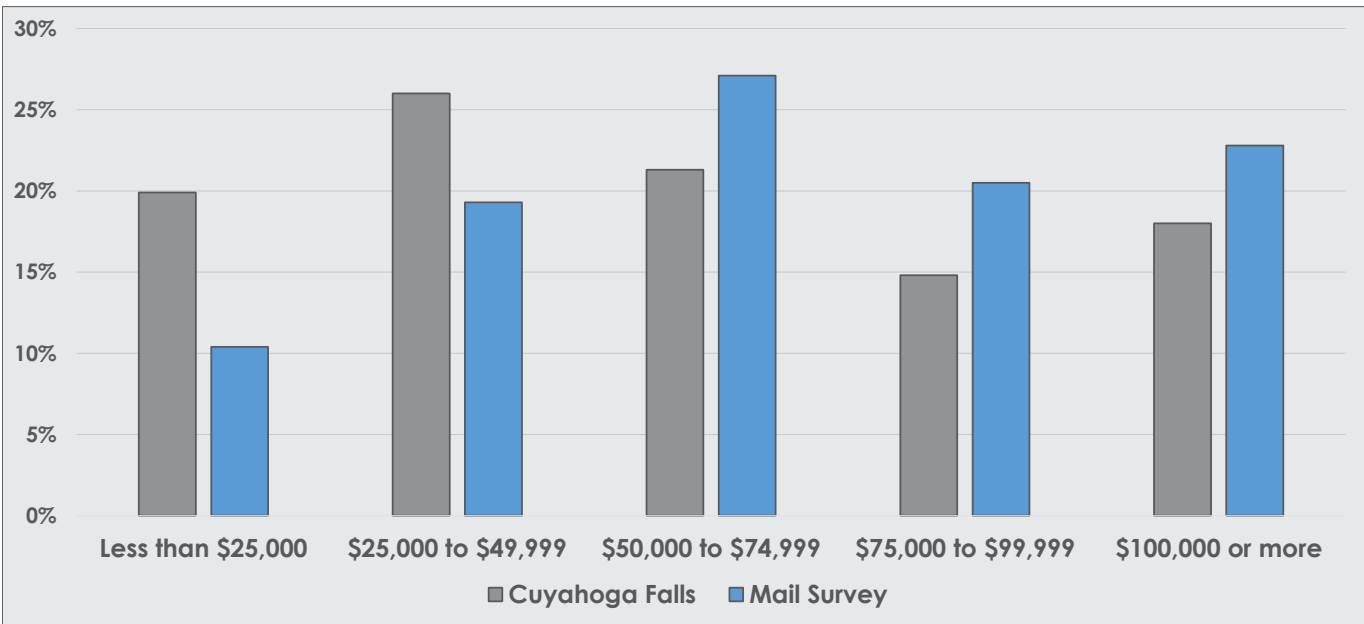
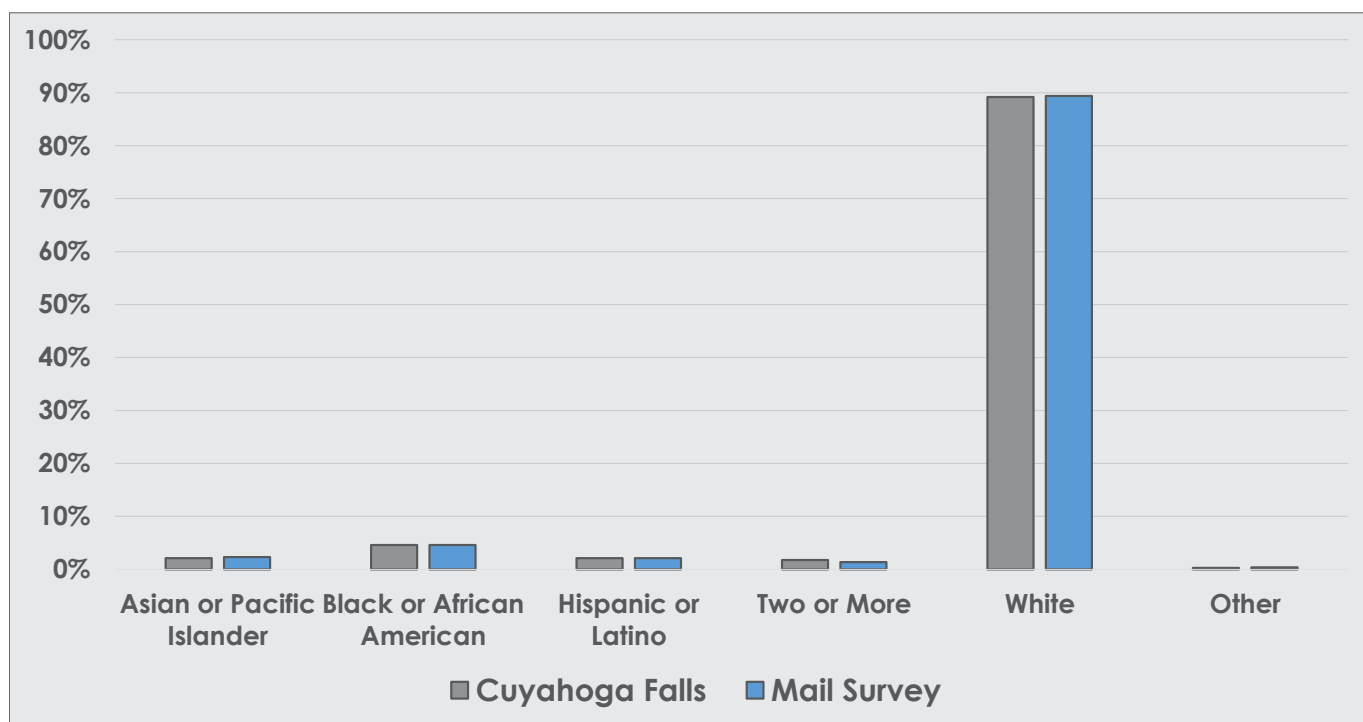


Figure 4.34: Survey Household Demographics - Race or Ethnicity



4.3.20 Distribution of Returned Surveys

The ETC Institute provides data for the location of returned surveys (to the nearest block), the results of which are shown in Figure 4.35. This figure illustrates a relatively balanced distribution of responses throughout Cuyahoga Falls considering the northwestern portion of the community is largely national parkland and sparsely populated. The response rate between the two sectors is consistent with the population distribution.

4.3.21 Survey Results by Sector

The results for the survey contained cross tabular data for the City of Cuyahoga Falls for two areas or sectors. The two sectors as identified in this analysis can be seen in Figure 4.35. This analysis of the variation between the sectors examines park visitation, most important facilities, most important programs, support for actions, and reasons for not using parks and programs.

Park Visitation

Visitation to specific facilities varied between the two sectors. Figure 4.36 shows the most visited parks and facilities for the two sectors. As would be expected, households were more likely to visit parks closer to where they live. West Sector households were notably more likely to visit Keyser Park, Babb Run Park, Valley Vista Park, and the Woodridge Campus, while East Sector households were much more likely to visit Water Works Park, Linden Park, and Kennedy Park. Households in both sectors reported high usage of The Natatorium; however, West Sector households reported more visitation to the facility despite its location in the East Sector.

Most Important Facilities

The most important facilities (sum of top four) to households (Figure 4.37) were generally consistent between the two sectors with a few notable differences. **Natural areas/nature parks ranked first in both sectors**, and *community/neighborhood parks* ranked second. *Paved bike trails* were much more important to West Sector households, and *swimming pools/aquatic centers (outdoor)* were much more important to East Sector households. These facilities still ranked as highly important in both sectors. Finally, *spraygrounds/splash pads* ranked much higher in the East Sector, and *multipurpose fields* ranked higher in the West Sector.

Survey Respondents
Parks & Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

Legend

- Survey Households
- Sector (Responses)**
 - East (280)
 - West (157)
- Park Categories**
 - Cuyahoga Falls Parks
 - Summit Metro Parks
 - Other Open Space
 - City-Owned Properties
 - City Boundary

Source: City of Cuyahoga Falls, County of Summit, Ohio

Figure 4.36: Most Visited Parks by Sector

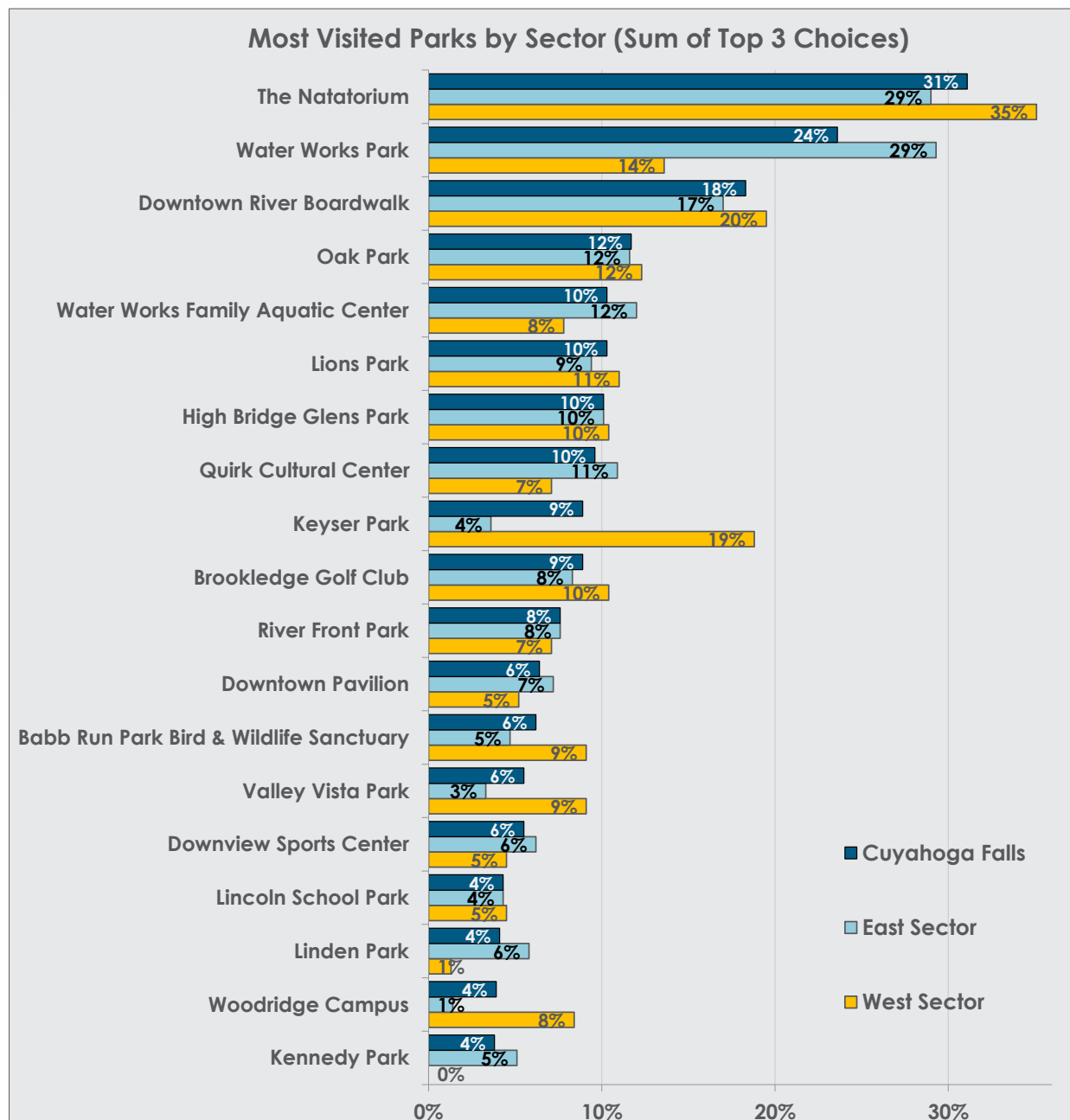
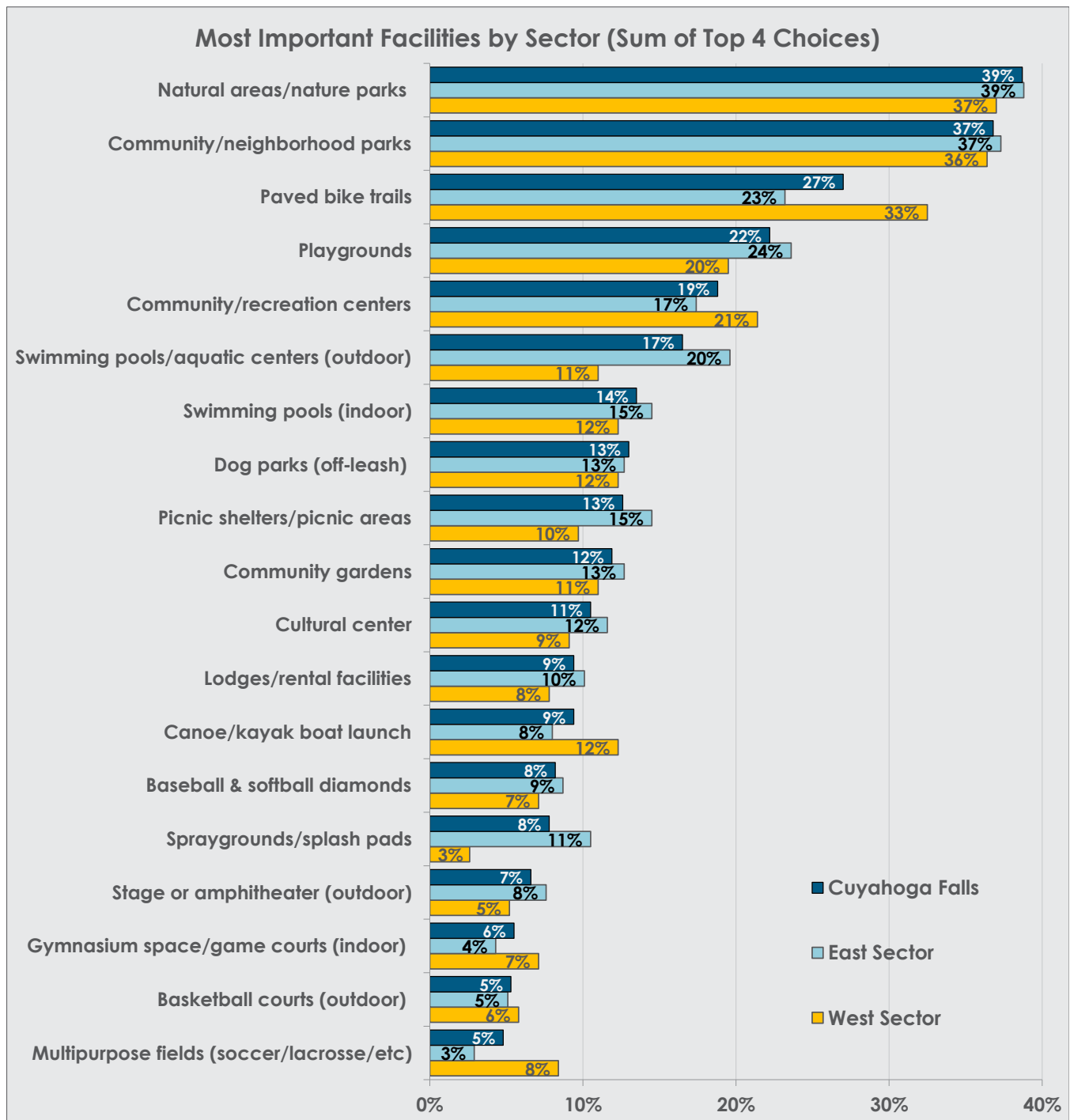


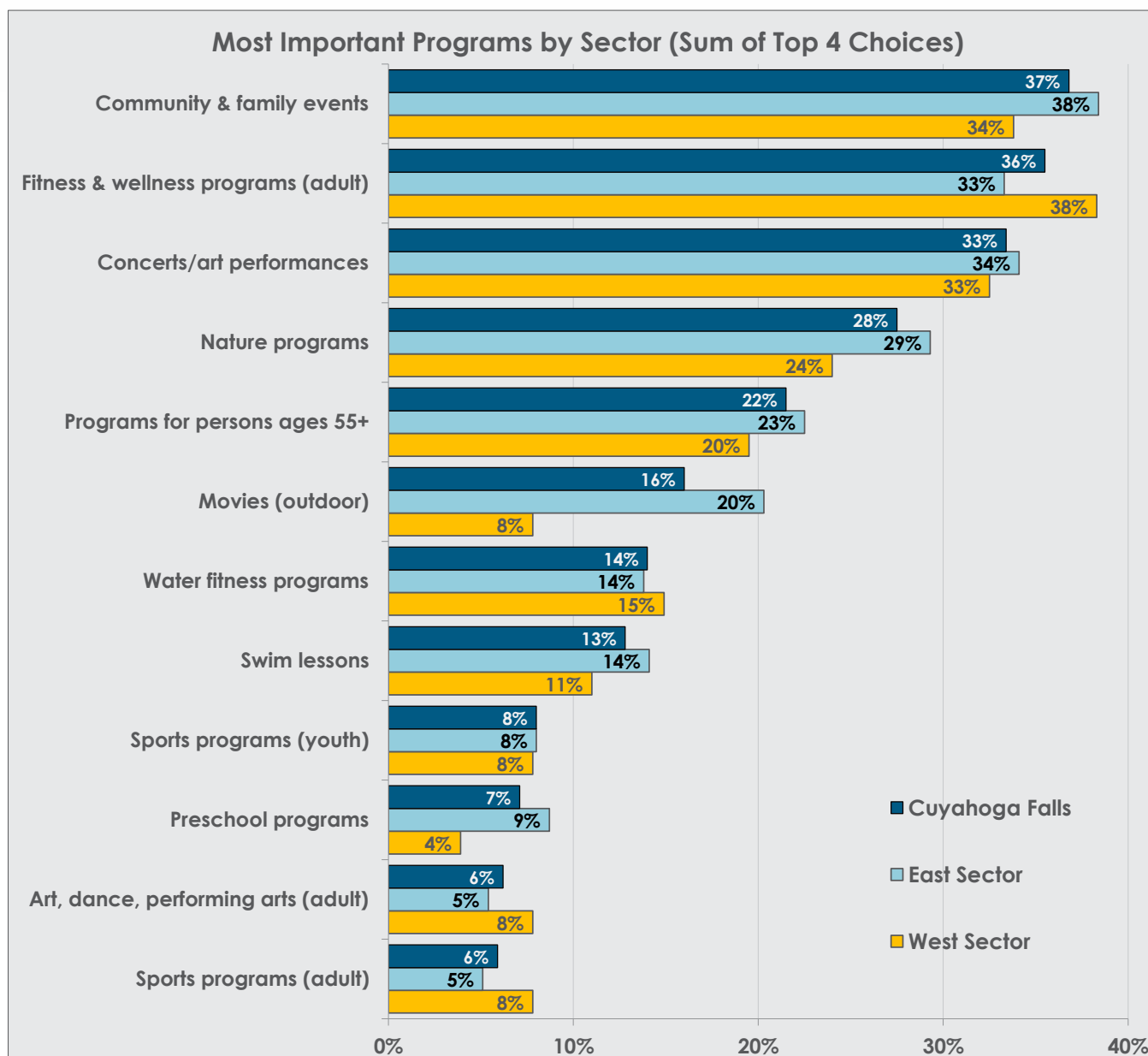
Figure 4.37: Most Important Facilities (Sum of Top 4 Choices) by Sector



Most Important Programs

The most important programs (sum of top four) to households (Figure 4.38) were similar between the two sectors. While the top three results were the same for both sectors, the East Sector favored *Community & family events*, and the West Sector favored *fitness & wellness programs (adult)*. Both sectors also indicated the importance of *concerts/art performances*, *nature programs*, and *programs for persons ages 55+*. East Sector households also placed more importance on *movies (outdoor)*.

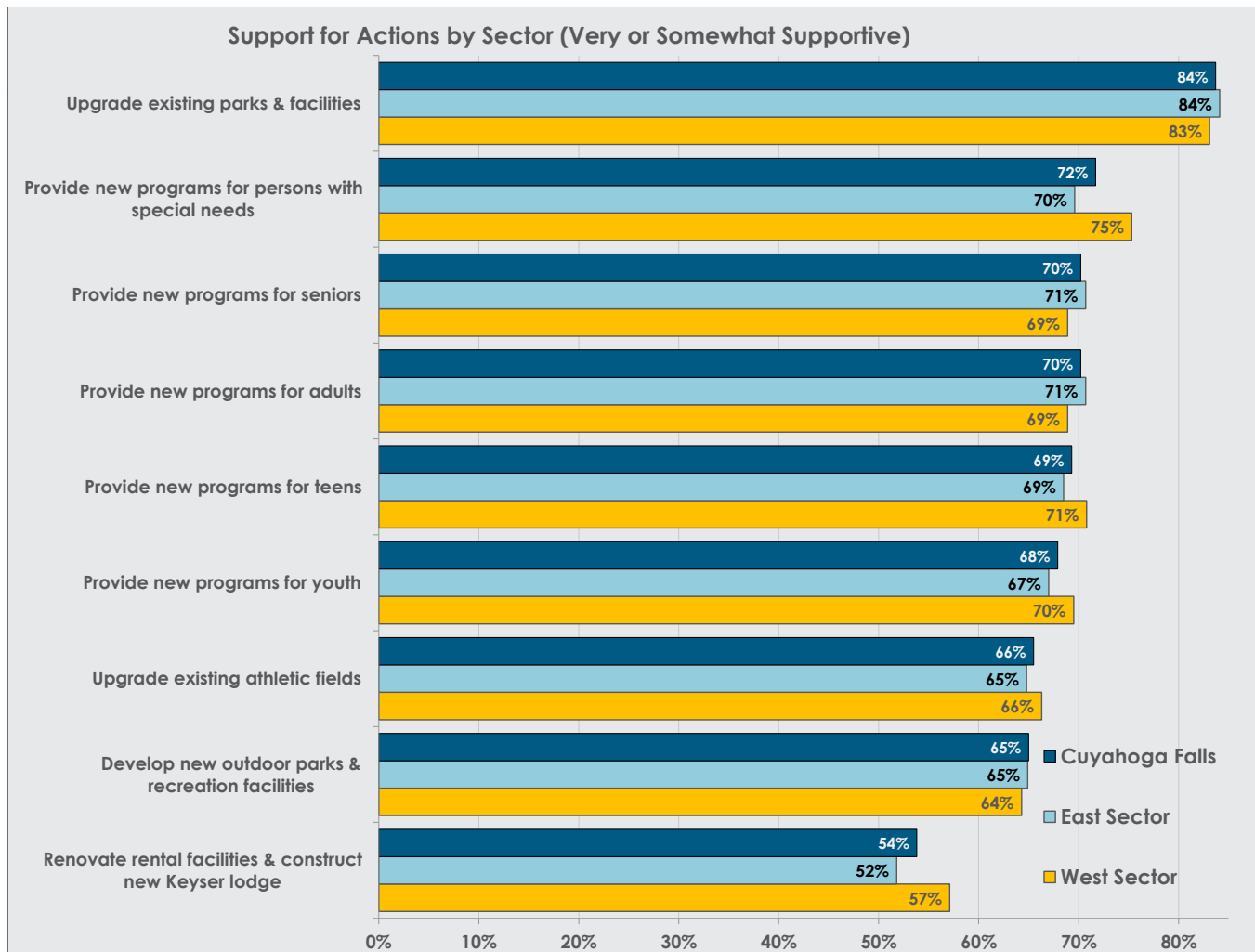
Figure 4.38: Most Important Programs by Sector



Support for Actions to Improve Parks and Recreation

Figure 4.39 shows the support for various actions to improve parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls by sector. The figure shows similar support for the actions between the two sectors overall. The most notable differences are slightly stronger support for *provide new programs for persons with special needs* and *renovate rental facilities & construct new Keyser lodge* in the West Sector. The latter result is likely due to the location of Keyser Park in the West Sector.

Figure 4.39: Support for Actions by Sector



Reasons for Not Using Facilities and Programs

Households in the two sectors generally identified the same reasons for not using Cuyahoga Falls park facilities and programs (Figure 4.40). Households in both sectors reported the top reason by far for not using parks and programs is that they *do not know what is being offered*.

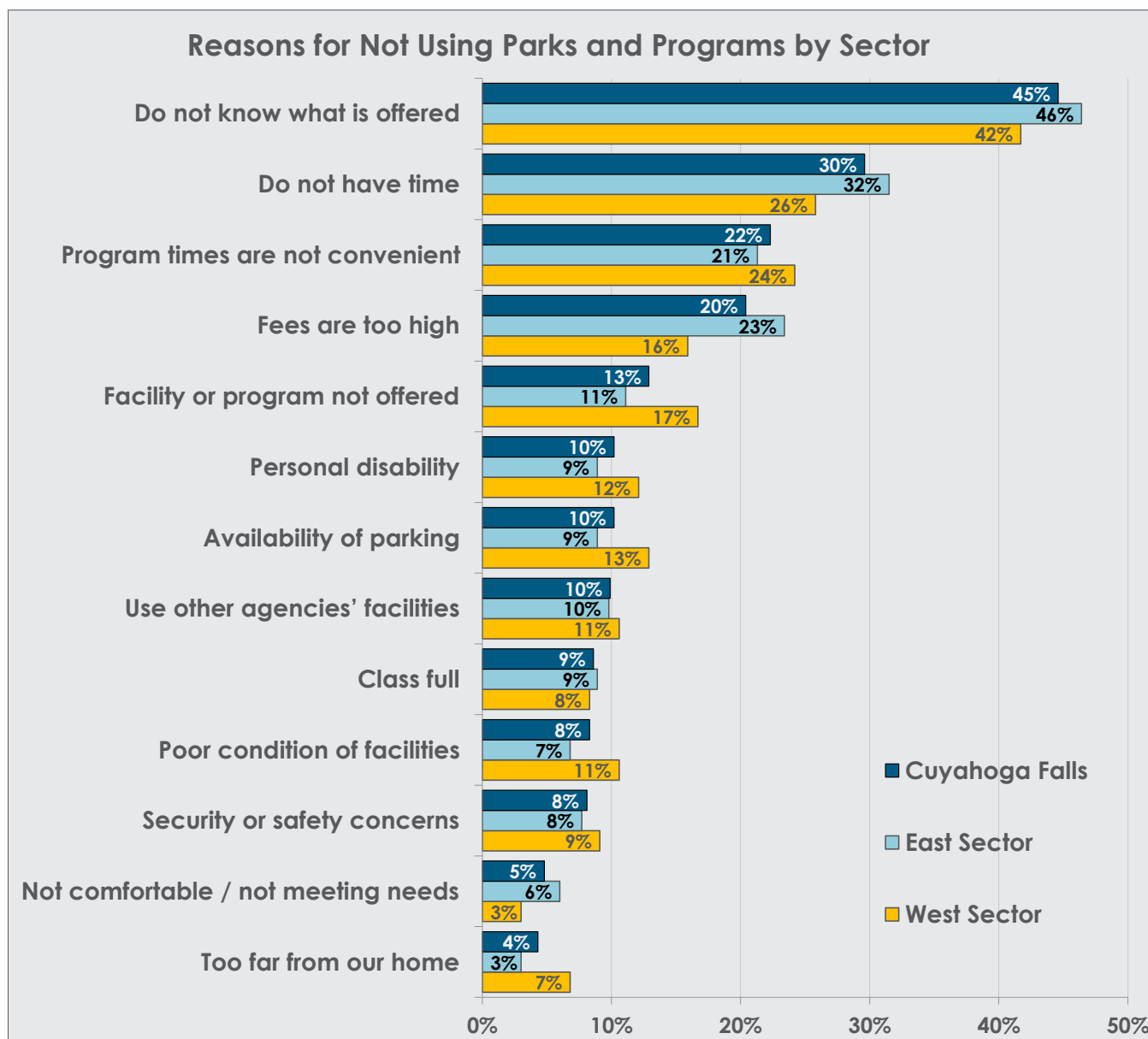
East Sector residents were more likely to indicate that they *do not have time* or that *fees are too high*. West Sector residents were more likely to indicate *facility or program not offered*, which is not surprising as there are fewer parks in the western part of Cuyahoga Falls. West Sector residents were also more likely to indicate *availability of parking* as a reason.

4.4 ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the plan's engagement phase the City of Cuyahoga Falls incorporated an online civic engagement tool, MindMixer, as a way to give residents additional opportunities for providing input. Because MindMixer is web-based individuals are able to access and interact at any time on any given day. The online platform focused exclusively on the Continuous Improvement Plan and created a space for residents to submit their ideas, provide input on priorities, engage in conversation with department leaders and others, as well as stay up to date on the plan's progress.

The MindMixer website was managed and updated by the planning consultants. "Topics" and questions posted on the platform were meant to be dynamic, and intentionally reflected public dialogue occurring in other facets of the engagement process; doing so helped ensure relevancy and inclusivity.

Figure 4.40: Reasons for Not Using Parks and Programs by Sector

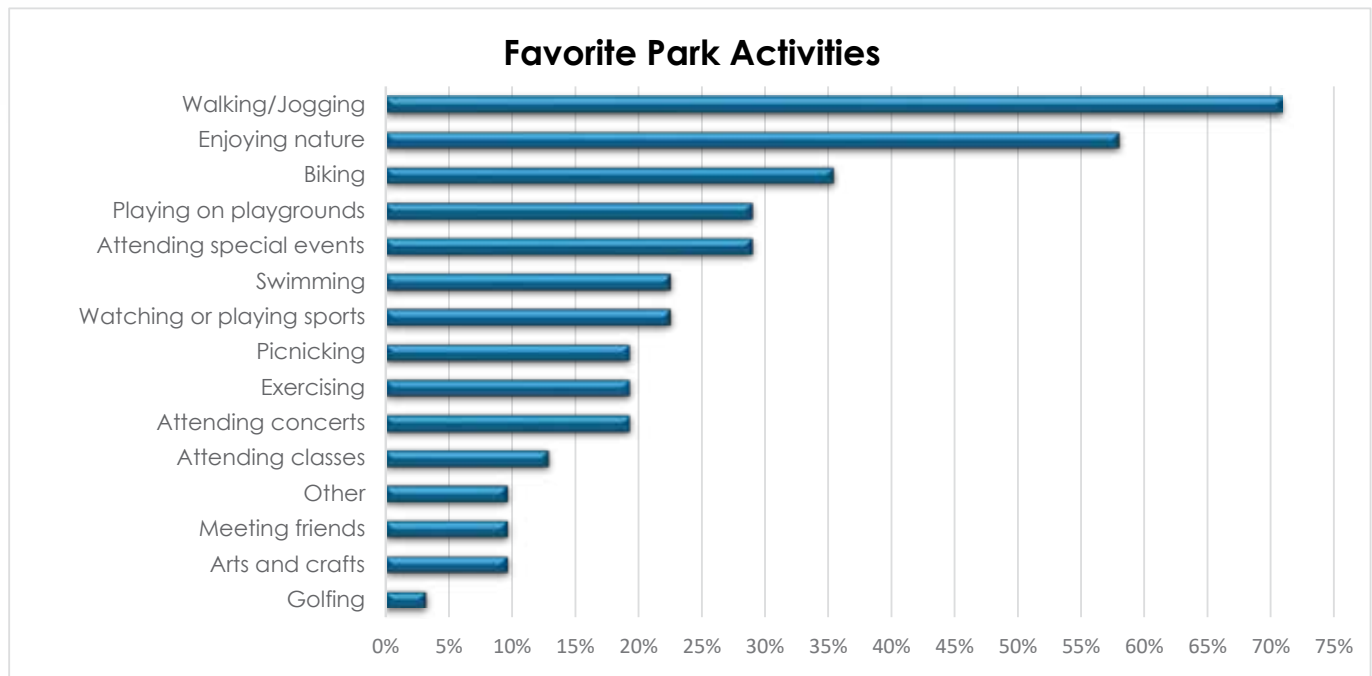


Two different types of interactions were used on the website: instant polls and open-ended questions. Over the course of the engagement period, the web-based MindMixer platform experienced a total of 85 interactions made by 45 participants with a total of 24 ideas generated. The following subsections provide a summary of the results.

4.4.1 Favorite Park Activities in Cuyahoga Falls

Visitors were asked to select their favorite activities at parks from a list (up to three). The most popular activities can be seen in Figure 4.41, based on 31 participants. The top two selections by a wide margin were *walking/jogging* (71%) and *enjoying nature* (58%), both of which are passive recreational activities that are easily enjoyed by park goers of all ages and backgrounds.

Figure 4.41: Favorite Activities at Cuyahoga Falls Parks



4.4.2 Improvements to Parks

A range of open-ended discussion prompts allowed visitors to engage over topics like how to expand opportunities for engaging with the parks system, what improvements should be made, and how to allocate \$1,000 to accomplish those park improvements. More broadly, the different “topics” encouraged participants to define their vision for the city’s future parks and recreation and share that vision with the planning team. One open-ended question on the platform was, “If You Had Magic Wand, What One Change Would You Make?”

A summary of the 12 ideas and 33 interactions with this question is provided below. These items represent the most discussed topics (by far) and are listed in the order of frequency.

- Install disc golf course
- More turf fields with lights
- Clean-up and upgrade river access
- Upgrade playgrounds
- Add winter hockey pond
- Host group hikes
- Improve trail connectivity
- More programming for teens
- Better bike access between parks and downtown
- Create outdoor adventure activities (e.g., zip line)
- Install bathroom at Babb Run
- Improve maintenance overall
- Beautify Keyser Park
- Organize co-ed adult volleyball league

Full results of the MindMixer engagement can be found in Appendix D.

4.5 CONCLUSION

A a whole, the public engagement process provided an abundance of information about the needs and desires of Cuyahoga Falls residents. While a variety of methods were used to collect data, some trends do emerge.

Comprehensive results indicate that the community desires:

- Upgrades to existing parks
 - Updated playgrounds
 - Splash pads (instead of wading pools)
 - Address accessibility issues
 - Improved signage
 - Improved security and lighting
- Improved river access and connections to city
- Improved maintenance
- Renovate rental facilities and lodges
- More and upgraded restrooms
- Improved marketing and communication
- Upgrade/replacement of Quirk Cultural Center
- Expanded programming
 - Downtown events
 - Community/family events
 - Fitness classes
 - Aquatic activities
 - Movies, concerts
 - Adapted programs
- More walking/biking trails
- Improve access to open space and natural areas
- Add pickleball courts
- New disc golf courses
- New community garden
- New dog park
- Support services like Wi-Fi on site

The word cloud image, Figure 4.42, uses font size to show how frequently a word appears in the public comments. While value is not applied to any one word – for example, whether or not residents spoke in favor of The Natatorium – the graphic is valuable because it visualizes the parks and recreation elements in Cuyahoga Falls that are most important, for better or worse, to the community. This image is provided in conclusion to reinforce the myriad comments, suggestions, and requests heard during the multifaceted public engagement phase.





NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Continuous Improvement Plan identifies and presents an assessment of needs for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls. It consists of the following elements:

1. Needs analysis, plus level of service standards and guidelines for parkland and recreation areas
2. Needs analysis, plus level of service standards for facilities
3. Geographic analysis of the distribution of parks and recreation facilities
4. Examination of recent – and relevant – trends in parks and recreation

An analysis of the level of service for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls requires various perspectives in order to tell a complete story. By one method of measurement, a particular service level might be described as adequate, but by a different method it is deficient. For example, acreage standards (i.e., measurement based on the total number of acres) are useful for determining the level at which the city is providing parkland. However, total acreage alone does not account for where park acres are located – and thus who actually has access. Therefore, it is critical to also consider the location of the city's parkland in determining the level of service.

The following information, together with the public input collected (Chapter 4), make up the foundation for recommendations in this plan (Chapter 7). Additionally, analysis throughout this chapter makes significant use of the demographic and benchmarking data from Chapter 2.

5.2 NEEDS, STANDARDS, AND GUIDELINES FOR CUYAHOGA FALLS' PARKLAND AND RECREATION AREAS

The Service Level Standards provided here are meant to describe achievable targets (e.g., specific acreage totals and service goals) that can realistically be met over the implementation timeline of this plan. Guidelines are offered to cover more general goals of improvement, acquisition, and maintenance. These standards and guidelines are meant for both developed parkland and total open space in the system. Tailored specifically for Cuyahoga Falls, they are intended to be obtainable but also ambitious enough to inspire the Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Department in its continuing work of improving the quality of life for residents.

Parkland is generally either developed or undeveloped. Developed acres include features such as athletic fields and courts, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and any mowed areas, while undeveloped acres are those in their natural state, including woodlands, prairies, wetlands, without developed features. When acquired and maintained at a beneficial ratio (specific to the locality) both types of park acre can have a tremendous positive impact on the human population and the environment.

5.2.1 Level of Service Standards for Developed Acres

Chapter 3 described the different classifications of parks and recreational areas (in general, these are consistent with the National Recreation and Park Association criteria but do include some modifications to match local circumstances) and provided an overview of facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. That inventory – combined with an examination of existing conditions and a thorough analysis of public input – assists with accurately defining the Level of Service Standards (acres per thousand population) for each park classification located in Cuyahoga Falls.

The chart that follows – Service Level Standards by Park Classification (Table 5.1) – offers a breakdown of the needs (or target acres) for each type of park in Cuyahoga Falls. This table includes only properties offered by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation. Also, the standards refer to developed acres only; because these acres represent the improved land with amenities, they are the best basis for drawing a comparison between available features.

Table 5.1: Service Level Standards for Developed Acreage by Park Classification

Park Classification	Existing Developed Acres	Existing Developed Acres per 1000 Population	Target Acres per 1000 Population	2019 Developed Acres Target	2019 Surplus (+) Deficit (-)	2024 Developed Acres Target	2024 Surplus (+) Deficit (-)
Neighborhood	61.8	1.2	1.2	60.4	1.4	61.0	0.8
Community	78.2	1.6	1.5	75.5	2.7	76.2	2.0
Regional	57.5	1.1	1.1	55.3	2.2	55.9	1.6
Special Use	139.4	2.8	2.8	140.9	-1.5	140.9	-1.5
School Parks	27.9	0.6	0.5	25.2	2.7	25.4	2.5
Total	364.8	7.2	7.1	357.3	7.5	359.3	5.5

1. See Chapter 2 for population estimates

2. Does not include parks by others

Table 5.1 identifies the current developed park acreage for Cuyahoga Falls and estimates future need based on projected population change through 2024 (see Chapter 2). While the population count is not projected to change much, there will be significant shifts in racial makeup (see Chapter 2) as the city diversifies considerably. Existing acreage per 1000 population is shown in Table 5.1 to be well within the targets looking forward. Taken together, this data indicates that Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation should focus less on acquisition and development of new land and far more on realigning facilities and programs and upgrading existing spaces to accommodate the community's changing needs.

5.2.2 Guidelines for Open Space

Park systems provide invaluable benefits to public health,¹ economies,² local environment and ecology,³ community social fabric, and overall quality of life.⁴ Beyond an individual park's developed acreage, any given park system includes additional undeveloped open space and natural areas. These acres, while easily overlooked, have tremendous potential to benefit the community. Undeveloped open space, or even acres that are lightly developed as parks, can positively impact an entire community through improvements to air and water quality, increased biodiversity, wildlife habitat protection, noise reduction, reduction of erosion, and protection of water resources.⁵

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Parks, Trails, and Health Resources. cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/parks_resources.htm

² WeConservePA. (2012). The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation: A Guide. Pennsylvania Land Trust Association.

³ John L. Crompton (2008). Empirical Evidence of the Contributions of Park and Conservation Lands to Environmental Sustainability: The Key to repositioning the Parks Field. *World Leisure Journal*, 50(3), 154-172

⁴ John L. Crompton (2008). Empirical Evidence of the Contributions of Leisure Services to Alleviating Social Problems: A Key to Repositioning the Leisure Services Field. *World Leisure Journal*, 50(4), 243-258.

⁵ F.D.B. (2007). The economic benefits of land conservation. San Francisco, CA: The Trust for Public Land.

Setting acreage targets – aiming for a certain number of parkland acres overall – is one way of achieving a desired level of open space. Target acreage can be a useful way for evaluating the progress of open space acquisition, but effective conservation requires more intentional acquisitions based on a specific resource and where it is found. In other words, looking at open space acquisitions through a conservation lens, the amount of land preserved depends on aspects of that particular resource not just on the number of acres. Land preservation in general has many benefits, such as increased quality of life for residents and elevated property values. In order for these benefits to be shared equitably – benefits typically are higher the closer the proximity – open space should be looked at from a holistic perspective taking into additional consideration natural resources and distribution. What follows is an examination of the current state of open space in Cuyahoga Falls.

Methods of Measurement

There are two common metrics for measuring the level of service of open space: acres per population and percentage of total area. Both are provided below to serve as guidelines for evaluating and measuring open space available in Cuyahoga Falls. Table 5.2 identifies total acres of parks and open space acreage, both developed and undeveloped, in Cuyahoga Falls.⁶ The table shows inventory targets based on 12 acres per 1000 population and 4% of the total acreage in the city. The 12 acres per 1000 is a slight increase from the current 11.5 value for Cuyahoga Falls, while the 4% of total area number is a slight increase from 3.5%.

The values were chosen because Cuyahoga Falls is close to the median for both values, but public input indicates that Cuyahoga Falls still has needs for open space acquisition. The service area mapping provided later in this chapter (Sections 5.4 and 5.5) shows some areas where service could be improved. Land owned by other agencies, including city and state parks, is shown for reference only. This land is not included in the recommendations because the city has no control over it, and parks by others were not included in the benchmark comparisons.

Although land by others was not included in the benchmarks, most communities do not have a National Park. As a result, land by other agencies represents nearly a quarter of the overall land in the Cuyahoga Falls, likely much more than in other communities. Several Metro Parks are also located just outside of the city boundary. The target guidelines for Cuyahoga Falls are set at only modest increases because of the presence of this other parkland. **Any future acquisitions should be focused on meeting specific needs for parks and facilities or expanding the land area of existing parks.**

Acres per Population

Using the target of 12 acres per 1,000 population, Cuyahoga Falls has an open space deficit (as of 2019) of about 27 acres which will continue as a deficit into 2024 (about 33 acres). The target is meant as a feasible goal but is dependent on the availability of land and will likely extend beyond a system time frame.

Percentage of Total City Area

The percentage of total area is not tied to population which means it can potentially represent a longer-term, more flexible objective. Cuyahoga Falls parks currently represent 3.5% of the land in the city with Summit Metro Parks providing another 2.7 % and National Parks providing 21.2%. As noted above, Table 5.2 includes targets for the city based on this 4% of total area goal. This target would require the acquisition of roughly 87 additional acres, well above the number indicated by the acres per population metric and representing a longer-term target.

Table 5.2: Open Space Guidelines

Open Space Category	Existing Acres	Existing Acres Per 1000	12 Acres per 1000 Population				Existing % Preserved	4% of Area	
			2019 Target Acres	2019 Surplus/ Deficit	2024 Target Acres	2024 Surplus/ Deficit		Target Acres	Surplus/ Deficit
Cuyahoga Falls Parks	576.6	11.5	603.8	-27.2	609.5	-32.9	3.5%	663.5	-86.9
Parks by Others									
Summit Metro Parks	453.0	9.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.7%	N/A	N/A
National Parks	3,520.6	70.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	21.2%	N/A	N/A
Cuyahoga Falls Total	4,550.2	90.4	603.8	-27.2	609.5	-32.9	27.4%	663.5	-86.9

1. See Chapter 2 for population estimates

⁶ These totals do include some structures, but these features represent a relatively small percentage of the total acreage.

5.3 FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS AND LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Like the recommendations for parkland described previously, level of service standards for individual park facilities are useful for determining the quantity of recreation facilities needed in the community, both at present and in the future. These standards emerge through examination of the benchmarking (Chapter 2) and the public input findings (Chapter 4); common industry standards and guidelines are also taken into consideration. Table 5.3 details the facilities by type and compares the available supply with the amount needed to meet the targets identified in the table.

5.3.1 Facility Level of Service Rationale

The following text provides the basis for the per population targets for each of the facilities in Table 5.3. Each section breaks down individual elements by describing how the per population targets compare to the existing per population supply and makes justifications for any recommended change. Changes based on population are shown for 2024 but increase only slightly due to limited projected growth. As with previous elements in this chapter, the following analysis combines benchmarking data (Chapter 2) with public input (Chapter 4).

Outdoor Recreation Areas

- Playgrounds – Set at benchmark, similar to current
- Picnic Pavilions/Shelters – Set at increase due to demand and current distribution
- Skate Park – Set at (1), current level and similar to benchmark
- Amphitheaters – Set at increase of (1) for better distribution
- Dog Park – Set at current level, already above benchmark
- Community Gardens – Set at benchmark, increase of (1) to meet increasing demand
- Swimming pools – Set at current level
- Splash Pads – Set at increase due to demand and trends

Outdoor Fields & Courts

- Youth Baseball Fields – Set at current, slightly below benchmark
- Youth Softball Fields – Set at current, above benchmark
- Adult Softball Fields – Set at twice the benchmark, just below current level, trends indicate decreasing demand
- Multipurpose Fields – Set at increase due to demand and trends
- Basketball Courts – Set at current, well above benchmark
- Tennis Courts – Set at current, slightly above benchmark
- Pickleball Courts – Set at increase, none currently, trends indicate growth

Indoor Areas

- Recreation Center – Set at current (1)
- Community Center – Set at current (2), well above benchmark
- Gymnasiums – Set at current (3), well above benchmark
- Senior Centers – Set at (0), needs should be met at The Natatorium and Quirk Cultural Center

Table 5.3: Facility Level of Service Standards

Facility	Per Population Target	Existing per Population	Existing Total Supply	2019 Target	2019 Surplus / Deficit	2024 Target	2024 Surplus / Deficit
Outdoor Recreation Areas							
Playgrounds	2,360	2,396	21	21.3	-0.3	21.5	-0.5
Picnic Pavilions/Shelters	4,000	5,591	9	12.6	-3.6	12.7	-3.7
Skate Park	50,000	50,318	1	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
Amphitheaters	25,000	50,318	1	2.0	-1.0	2.0	-1.0
Dog Park	13,000	25,159	2	3.9	-1.9	3.9	-1.9
Community Gardens	25,000	50,318	1	2.0	-1.0	2.0	-1.0
Swimming Pools	50,000	50,318	1	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
Splash Pads	10,000	50,318	1	5.0	-4.0	5.1	-4.1
Outdoor Fields & Courts							
Youth Baseball Fields	4,200	4,193	12	12.0	0.0	12.1	-0.1
Youth Softball Fields	4,200	4,193	12	12.0	0.0	12.1	-0.1
Adult Softball Fields	6,000	5,591	9	8.4	0.6	8.5	0.5
Multipurpose Fields	6,000	7,188	7	8.4	-1.4	8.5	-1.5
Basketball Courts	3,150	3,145	16	16.0	0.0	16.1	-0.1
Tennis Courts	3,200	3,145	16	15.7	0.3	15.9	0.1
Pickleball Courts	10,000	N/A	0	5.0	-5.0	5.1	-5.1
Indoor Areas							
Recreation Centers	50,000	50,318	1	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
Community Centers	25,000	25,159	2	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0
Gymnasiums	16,000	16,773	3	3.1	-0.1	3.2	-0.2
Senior Centers	42,000	N/A	0	1.2	-1.2	1.2	-1.2

1. See Chapter 2 for population estimates and benchmarking

5.3.2 Facility Level of Service Standards

The values in Table 5.3 illustrate potential need for various facilities. The largest current facility deficits (as of 2019) are for pickleball courts, splash pads, and picnic pavilions/shelters. Other facilities with deficits are amphitheaters, dog parks, community gardens, multipurpose fields, and senior centers. Cuyahoga Falls has low need for indoor facilities due to existing facilities, Quirk Cultural Center, and The Natatorium.

While values in Table 5.3 highlight what additional facilities are needed to adequately meet the demand, they do not indicate where in Cuyahoga Falls these new facilities should be located. The next sections (5.4 and 5.5) help illuminate gaps in service and thus potential locations for new facilities.

5.4 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

The spatial distribution of parks throughout Cuyahoga Falls is important to consider; residents are better able and more willing to utilize facilities that are close to their homes. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show existing parks with service areas for various park classifications. The methodology for this analysis (and the facility analysis in Section 5.5) can be found in Appendix A. These service areas do not necessarily represent all users of the parks; some users are willing to travel greater distances than those described in the figures. In general, however, the most frequent users live within the areas indicated and usage rates tend to decline sharply when residents have greater travel times.

A 10-minute walking distance represents about a half mile range and is a commonly used measurement for the walkability of an area as most residents can easily travel this distance without a car. The Trust for Public Land, NRPA, and the Urban Land Institute have all joined forces to develop the “10-minute Walk Campaign”

which strives for healthy, walkable communities and easy access to greenspace for everyone in the country. As part of the multi-pronged campaign, cities commit to ensuring that by 2050 all residents will have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. Mayors throughout the country have already taken the pledge, and more continue to do so. Several mayors throughout Ohio have already committed: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Lima, Medina, Montpelier, Richwood, Sharonville, Toledo, and Wilmington.⁷

Across the whole city, about 70% of residents are within a 10-minute walk to a park. Nine out of ten residents (91%) in the East Sector have a Neighborhood Park within a 10-minute walk. The City of Cuyahoga Falls includes both densely populated areas (East) and more suburban and rural areas (West). Cuyahoga Valley National Park covers a large land area in the northwest, where residents are further spread out and do not have as good access to city parks. Those in the southeast area have greater access to active-use Neighborhood and Community Parks.

Figure 5.1 shows the areas in Cuyahoga Falls where residents are within a 10-minute walk from either a Neighborhood Park (in light green; includes Mini, Community, and Regional Parks) or a Nature Park (yellow; includes Summit Metro Parks and Open Space Parks).

Figure 5.2 shows where residents are within set drivetimes (5- and 10-minutes) from Community and Regional Parks plus Summit Metro Parks and the National Park. Light green (Community and Regional) and yellow-green (Metro Parks or NPS) indicate 5-minute drivetime; yellow (Regional and Metro/NPS) indicates 10-minute drivetime. These maps help to identify service gaps where neighborhoods and residents have low access to parks.

About 40% of residents can reach a Community or Regional Park within a 5-minute drive, and another 30% can reach a Metro Park or National Park for a total of 70% of residents within a 5-minute drive of these larger parks. Nearly the entire city is within a 10-minute drive of one of these parks.

5.5 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF FACILITIES

This portion of the needs analysis focuses on the distribution of facilities provided by Cuyahoga Falls for use by residents. Service areas for these key facilities within Cuyahoga Falls are illustrated in Figures 5.3 through 5.13. As with the geographic distribution of parks, both drive and walk times are used for defining service areas. (Light green indicates areas within 10-minute walking distance, and bright yellow shows 5-minute driving distance.)

Larger and unique facilities are intended to serve greater populations; typically, residents are willing to travel longer distances to access these amenities. In contrast, smaller and more common facilities usually serve more localized (smaller) populations and are more often within walking distance. The following sections outline the overall need for facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. Though portions of the city are highlighted that are located outside of facility service areas, a new facility is not necessarily recommended for these areas.

⁷ <https://10minutewalk.org/>

Neighborhood Park Service Areas

Parks & Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

Legend

10-Minute Walk Service Areas

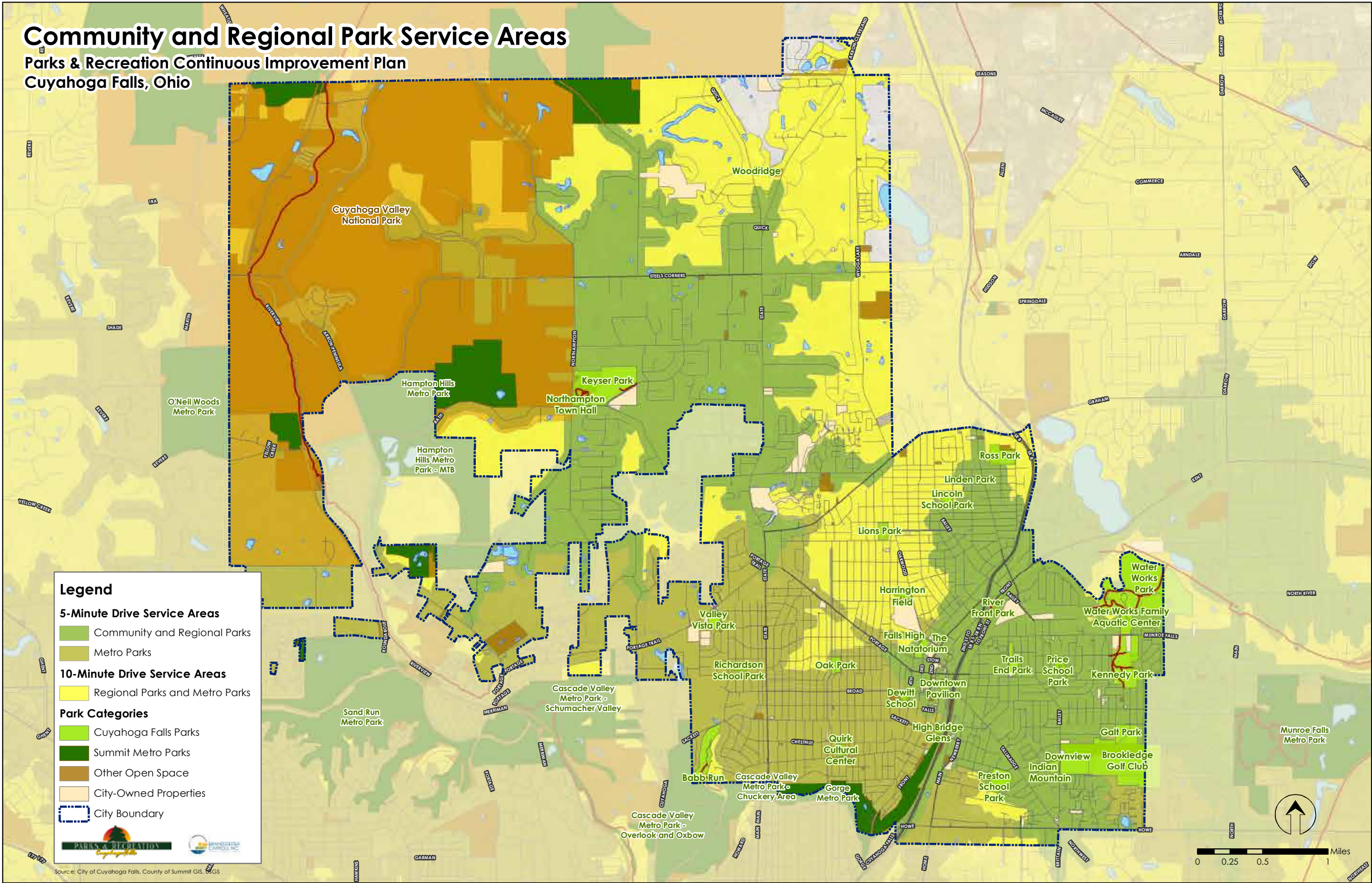
- Neighborhood Park (Including Mini, Community, and Regional Parks)
- Nature Park, Open Space, or Metro Park

Park Categories

- Cuyahoga Falls Parks
- Summit Metro Parks
- Other Open Space
- City-Owned Properties
- City Boundary

Source: City of Cuyahoga Falls, County of Summit GIS, ESRI

Figure 5.2: Community and Regional Park Service Areas



5.5.1 Playgrounds

Figure 5.3 shows the service areas (10-minute walk and 5-minute drive) for playgrounds in Cuyahoga Falls. The city offers playgrounds at 19 different parks, including six (6) school sites, plus two (2) parks by others (Cascade Valley Metro Park and Munroe Falls Metro Park) are nearby but outside of the city. As with the parks themselves, playgrounds are concentrated in the East where most of the area is within a 10-minute walk to a park; there are a couple of pockets of 10-minute walking access in the north portion of the West Sector, around Woodridge Campus and Keyser Park. Nearly all of the city is within a 5-minute drive to a playground.

5.5.2 Basketball Courts (Outdoor)

Figure 5.4 displays service areas for outdoor basketball courts measured by a 10-minute walk and a 5-minute drive. Cuyahoga Falls offers basketball courts in eight parks and maintains courts at six school properties. One other site, Munroe Falls Metro Park, also has a basketball court. The map shows that the existing basketball courts are located at almost the same distribution as playgrounds but with slightly less area within 10-minute walk.

5.5.3 Tennis Courts

Figure 5.5 highlights access to tennis courts in Cuyahoga Falls. There are small areas of 10-minute walking access in both sectors: around Woodridge and Keyser in the West Sector and near The Natatorium and Kennedy Park in the East Sector. Much of the city is within a 5-minute drive to a tennis court. Schools in the city provide additional tennis court facilities to residents. Given that Valley Vista Park is outside the range of even a 5-minute drive, consideration of additional courts might be given to that area.

5.5.4 Picnic Shelters

Figure 5.6 depicts the service areas for picnic shelters across the city, considerably different than either playground or basketball court distribution. Only three Cuyahoga Falls parks provide picnic shelters (large and medium shelters). More are provided by either Metro Parks or Cuyahoga Valley National Park, both in and near the city. Areas within a 10-minute walk of a shelter are limited and centered around Oak Park, Water Works Park, and Keyser Park. Most of the city is within a 5-minute drive; however, gaps exist in the southeast (near Indian Mountain and Linden parks) and in the north near the Woodridge Campus.

5.5.5 Diamond Fields

Cuyahoga Falls' diamond ballfield service areas are illustrated in Figure 5.7 with distances defined by 10-minute walk and 5-minute drivetimes (light green and yellow, respectively). As evident in the figure, Cuyahoga Falls residents in the more populated areas have decent walking access to diamond ballfields; north of Bath Road, service is limited mostly to driving with the area near the Woodridge Campus and Wyoga Lake beyond the limits of even this level of access. Ten city parks have diamond fields (small and/or large), including four School Parks. One Summit Metro Park (Cascade Valley – Overlook and Oxbow Area) offers a diamond field near Cuyahoga Falls. As with other facilities, the coverage corresponds to the general distribution of the city's population.

5.5.6 Multipurpose (Rectangular) Fields

Figure 5.8 displays the service areas for multipurpose rectangular fields in Cuyahoga Falls. Four city parks include multipurpose rectangular playing fields with one school in the city providing fields. Three Metro Parks near Cuyahoga Falls also offer fields. The service areas for multipurpose rectangular fields are less comprehensive than those for diamond fields. Even the more populous part of the community (East) has limited 10-minute walking access with much of the West Sector also beyond a 5-minute drive.

5.5.7 Aquatic Service Areas

Figure 5.9 shows the service areas for aquatic facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. Because the city provides a range of opportunities for aquatic recreation, the map depicts additional access levels: light blue shows 10-minute walking distance to any facility, while light green and yellow show areas within 5- and 10-minute drivetime

to an Aquatic Center (Water Works). Like the other facilities, Cuyahoga Falls residents in the more densely populous areas (East Sector) have excellent access with many living within a 10-minute walk from an aquatic facility. However, for the most part, the remaining community (West Sector) is beyond a 10-minute drive to Water Works Family Aquatic Center. No aquatic facilities are located in the less densely populated western portion of the city.

5.5.8 Trails or Walking Paths

Figure 5.10 show service areas across the city for trails at least 0.5 mile in length with the same access (10-minute walk and 5-minute drive) as the other amenities. While much of the area south of Bath Road has access, only a few small areas are actually within walking distance of a trail. Much like the other facilities, the more suburban and rural parts of Cuyahoga Falls have comparably less access; households here are 5-minutes or more by car from a trail.

In total, Cuyahoga Falls has three Community and Regional Parks (Kennedy, Keyser, and Water Works) with trails or internal pathways and one Nature Park (Babb Run). However, Cuyahoga Falls as a community is situated in the midst of several Summit Metro Parks and a National Park. Ten parks by others together provide nearly 50 miles of trails to Cuyahoga Falls residents.

The greatest service need for trails concerns creating pathways through and connections between existing parks in the system. Public input emphasizes a desire for walkable connections to the parks and paths within the parks themselves. Overall connectivity in the community is a partnership opportunity with Summit Metro Parks.

5.5.9 Rental Facilities

Figure 5.11 shows the 5-minute driving distance service areas for rental facilities provided by Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation. As with many of the other amenities previously described, the most populous part of the city is well within a 5-minute drive of a rental facility. While access is good, many of these facilities are in need of upgrades and improved maintenance. The West Sector, albeit less populous and generally higher income, has no access within 5-minute drive.

5.5.10 Mobile Rec Stops

The Mobile Rec program is Parks and Recreation's signature mobile recreation program that brings activities, crafts, and fun to Cuyahoga Falls residents at the parks. Figure 5.12 shows the extent of the program's service. There is significant walkable access (10-minutes) in the East Sector with all of the East Sector and much of the West Sector (excluding the National Park) within a 5-minute drive of a Mobile Rec Stop. There is also a pocket of walkable access around Woodridge but minimal to no access near Keyser Park. Any expansion or updates to Mobile Rec Stops should consider the opportunity for increased engagement at this West Sector park.

5.5.11 Dog Parks

Service Areas for dog parks are outlined in Figure 5.13. Cuyahoga Falls residents have access to two dog parks, one at Keyser Park and the other at Water Works Park. There is considerable area across the city that is beyond a 5-minute drive to a dog park. There is likely need for improved service in the East Sector where development is more dense and there is greater population. A location near downtown, along the river, or an existing park in the East Sector would help address demand.

Figure 5.3: Playground Service Areas

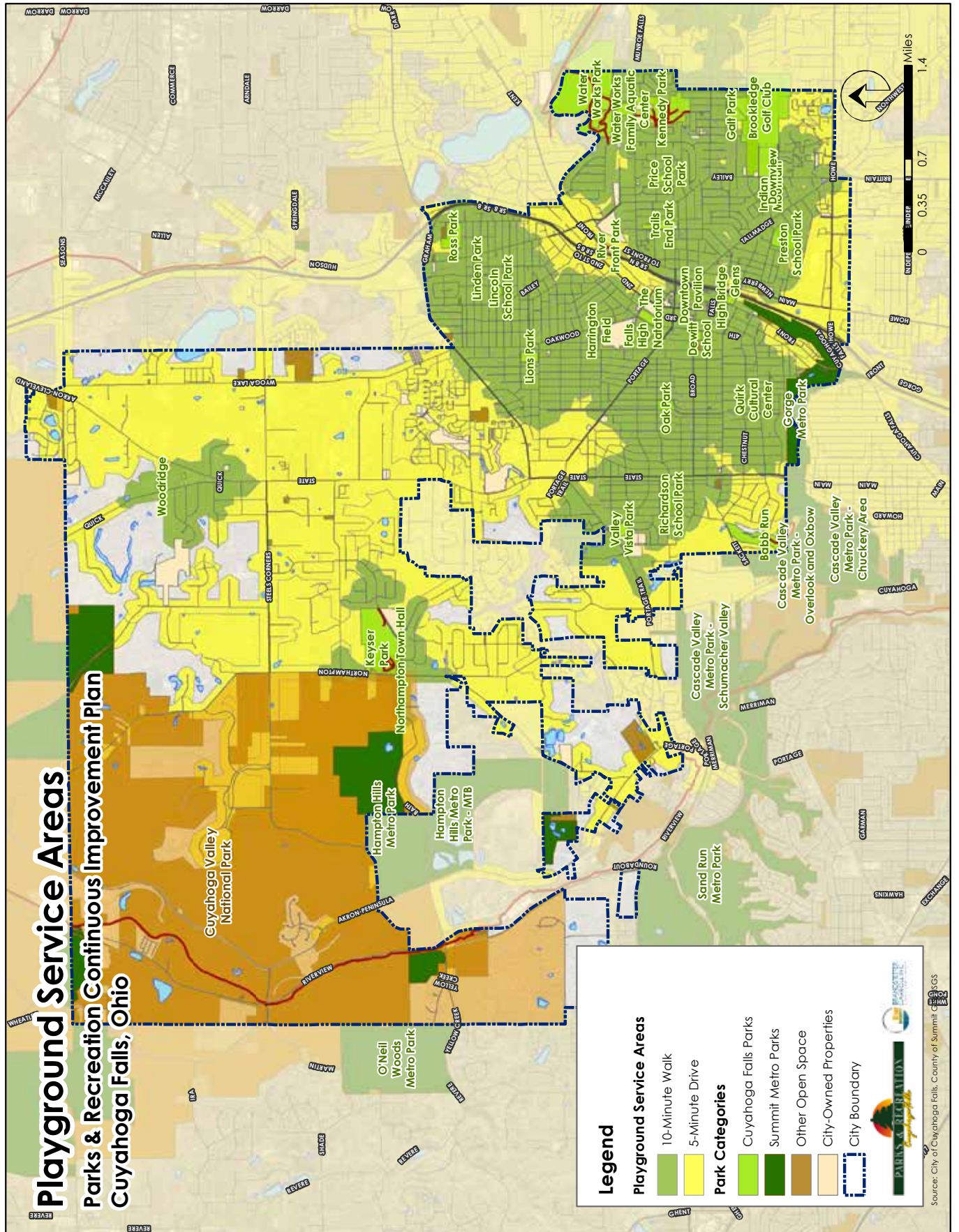


Figure 5.4: Outdoor Basketball Court Service Areas

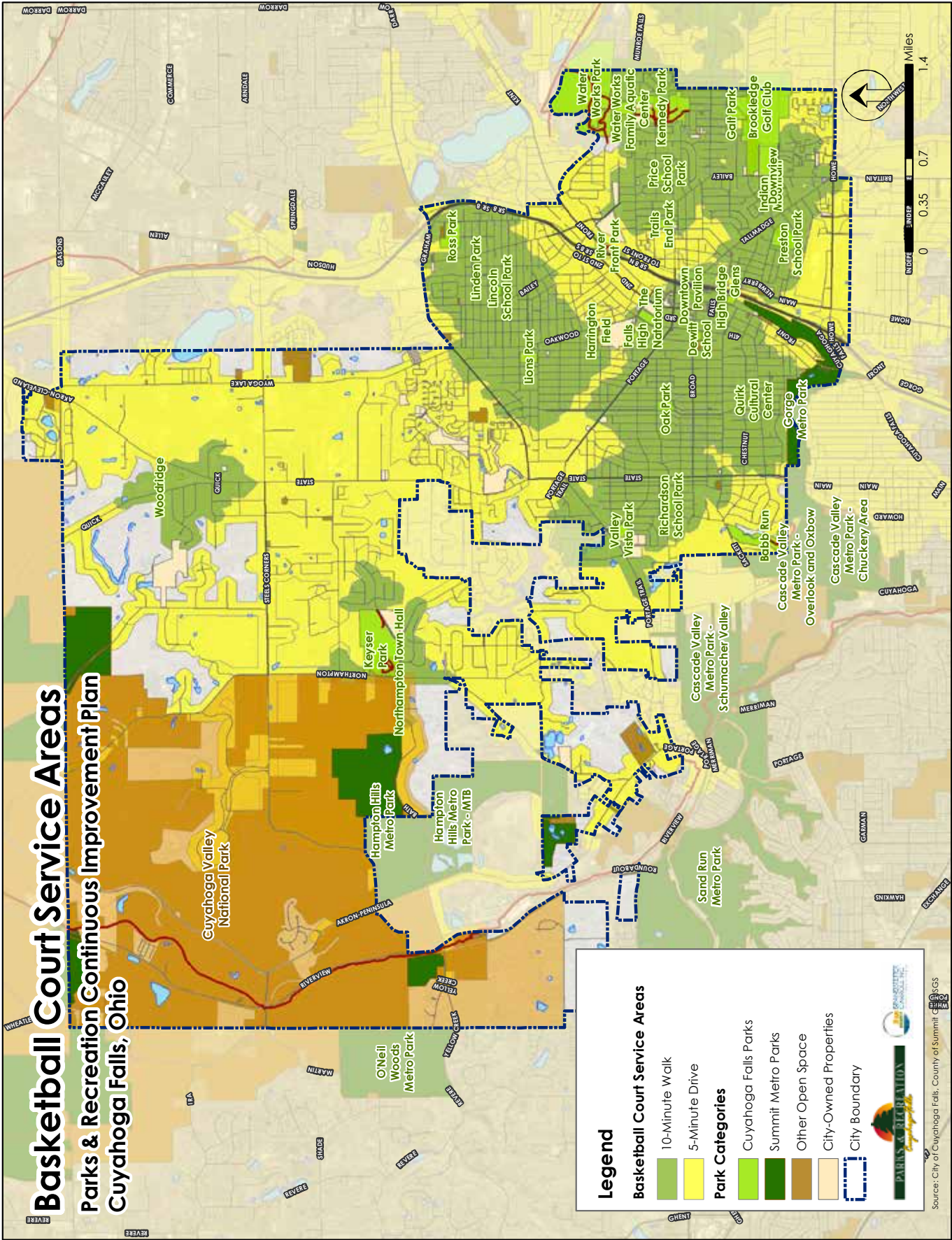


Figure 5.5: Tennis Court Service Areas

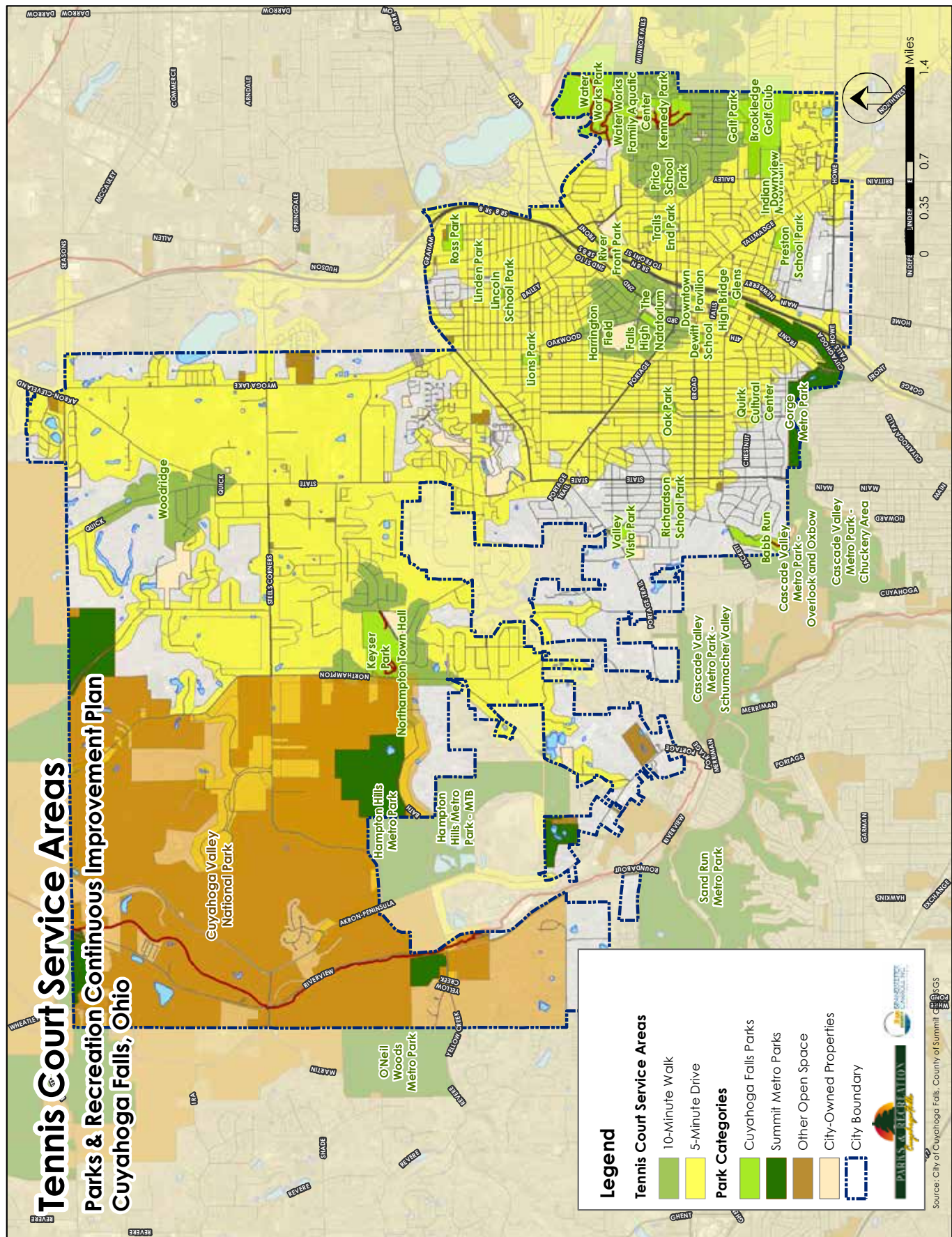


Figure 5.6: Picnic Shelter Service Areas

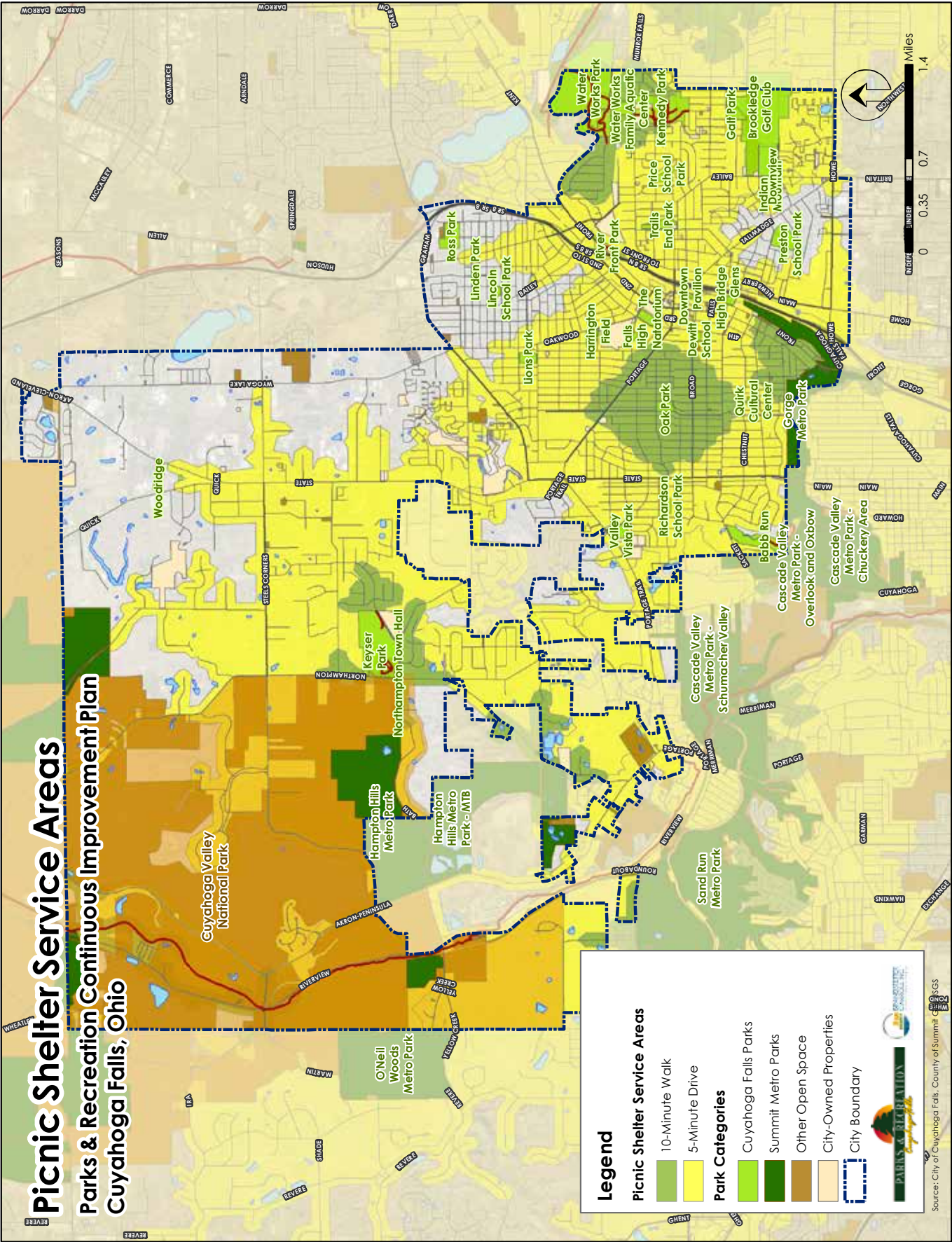


Figure 5.7: Diamond Field Service Areas

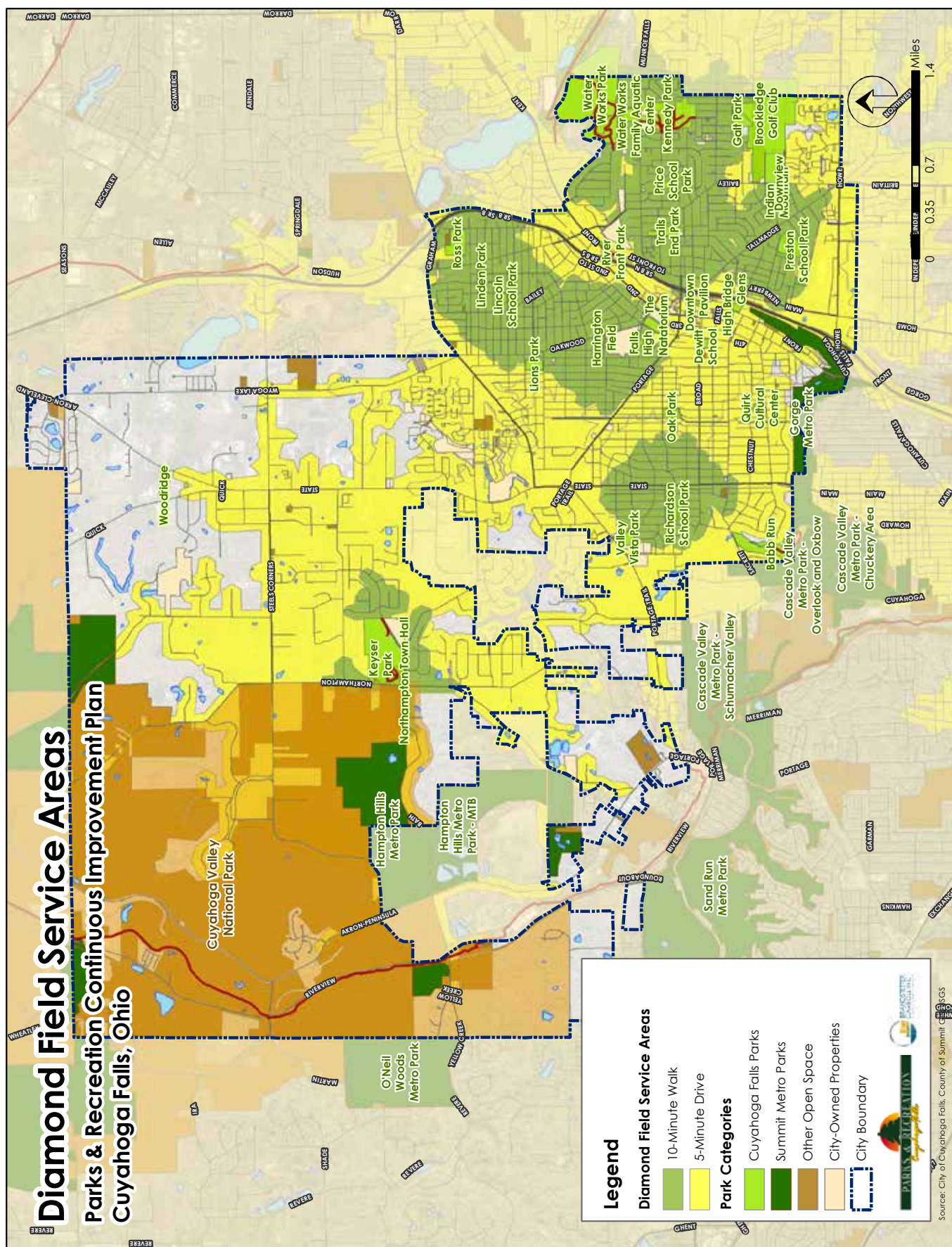


Figure 5.8: Multipurpose Field Service Areas

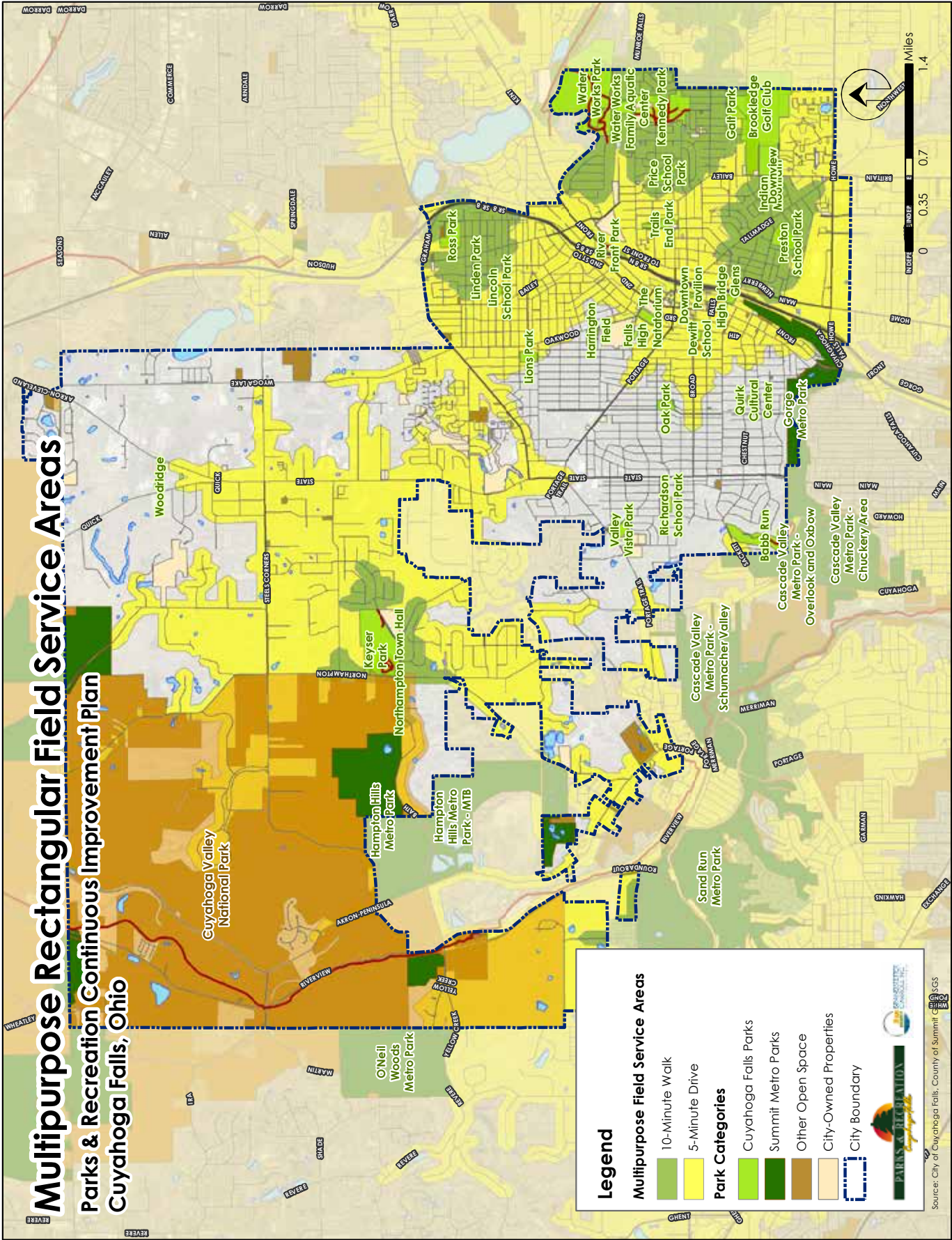
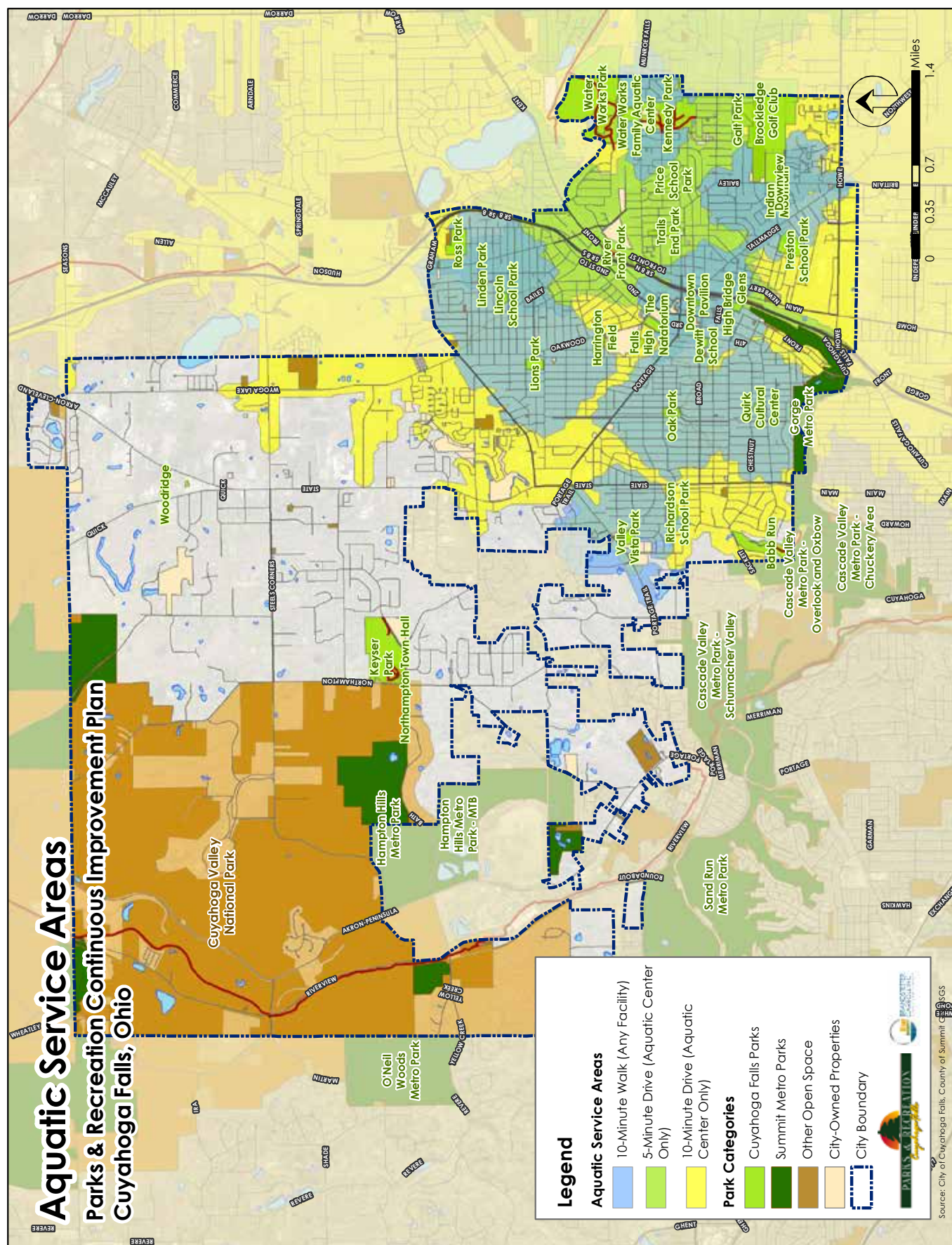


Figure 5.9: Aquatic Service Areas



Trail Service Areas

Parks & Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

Legend

Trail Service Areas (>0.5 Miles)

- 10-Minute Walk
- 5-Minute Drive

Park Categories

- Cuyahoga Falls Parks
- Summit Metro Parks
- Other Open Space
- City-Owned Properties
- City Boundary

Source: City of Cuyahoga Falls, County of Summit

Figure 5.11: Rental Facility Service Areas

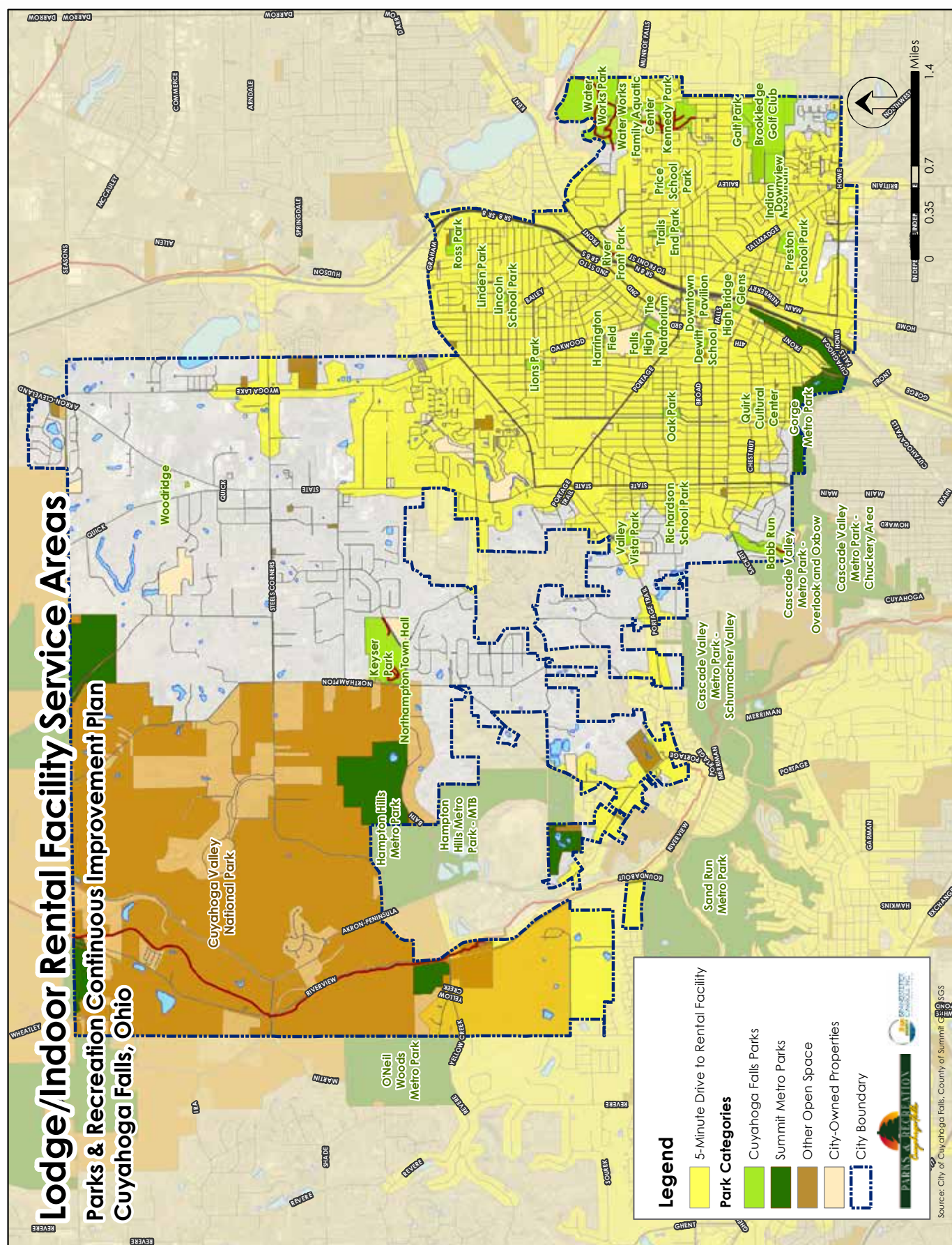


Figure 5.12: Mobile Rec Stop Service Areas

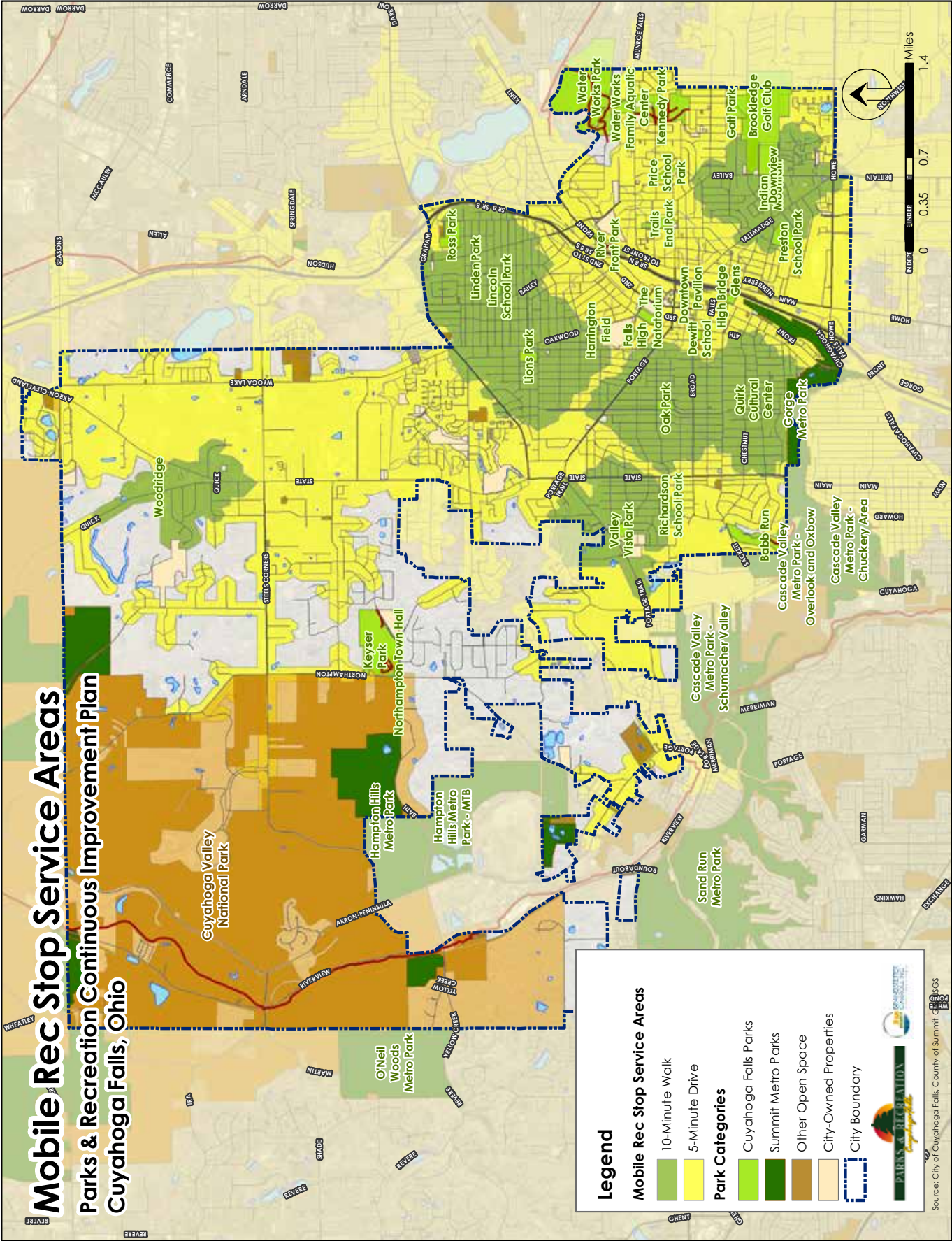
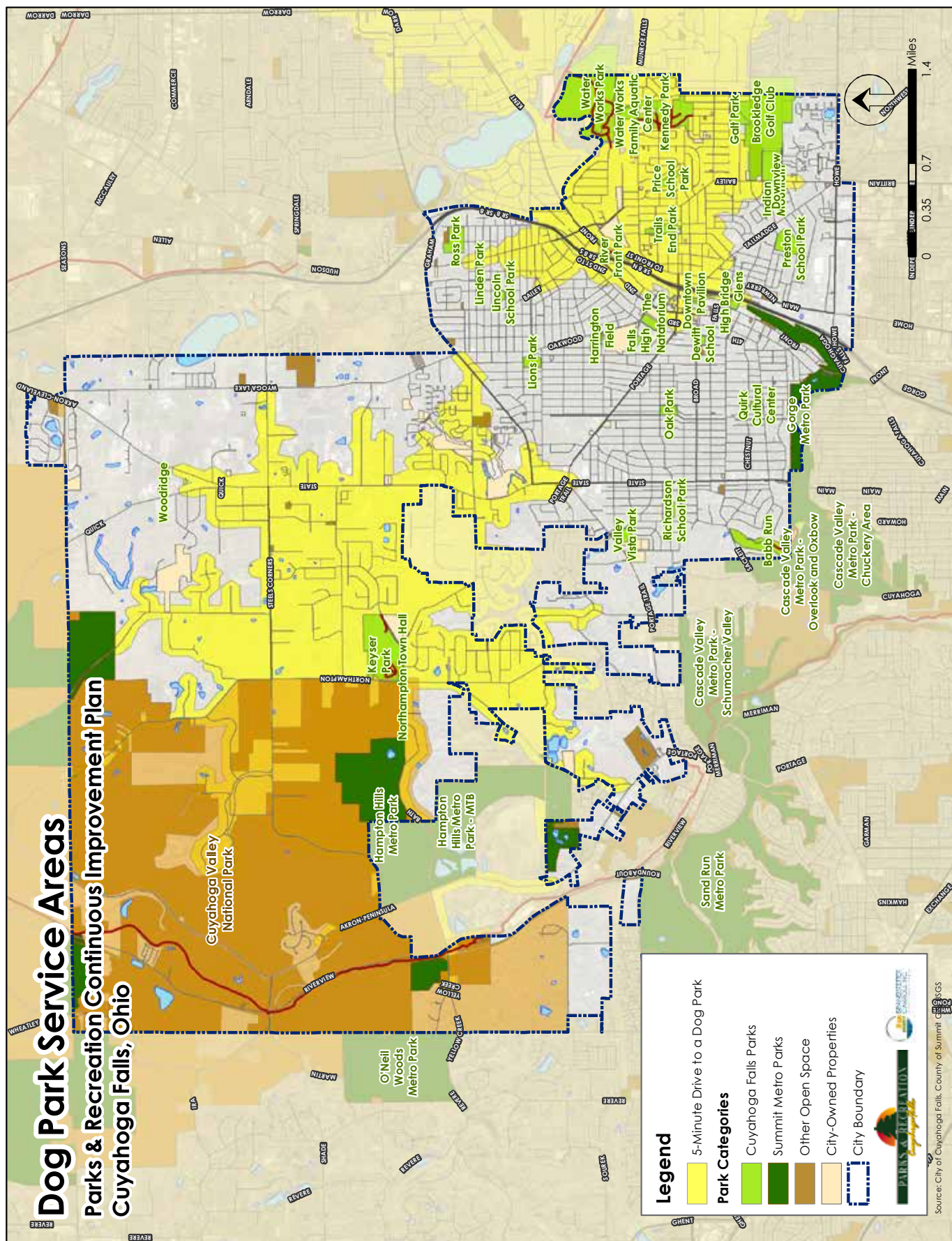


Figure 5.13: Dog Park Service Areas



5.6 COMPOSITE GEOGRAPHIC PARK SERVICE AREAS

While the preceding text outlines the level of access to parks and facilities by geographic distribution and type, a composite analysis provides a more robust depiction of the level of service residents experience across the city. Service areas for four (4) park classifications and 16 facilities were assigned scores based on distance from the amenity (e.g., 5-minute drive vs. 10-minute walk), then GIS software (ArcGIS) was used to produce an overlay map with a combined score for all areas of Cuyahoga Falls. Figure 5.14 shows the composite service areas for the city based on this multi-layered level of access analysis. A more detailed description of the methodology can be found in Appendix A.

In the figure, blue indicates a higher level of service for parks and facilities per location (the deeper the shade, the better), while red areas have the lowest level of service (similarly, the deeper the red, the lower the service level). For example, a resident living within one of the dark blue areas would more likely be within a short walk to park and/or most of the facilities previously described (e.g., ballfields and picnic shelters).

As shown in Figure 5.14, the highest composite level of service is anchored in the southeastern corner (East Sector) of the city. As the individual facility service level maps indicated, high and medium-high access areas correspond to the more densely populated parts of the community; most of the city's population (71%) is within these high/medium-high zones. Only 12% of the city have medium-low to low service levels.

Table 5.4 reinforces those numbers with greater detail. While only 30% of the entire city land area is within high to medium-high levels of service, over 70% of the community resides in that area. From a different angle, the median household income is highest where service levels are lowest; the households with greatest access to the city's parks and recreation resources are those most likely to need them.

Looking at population change, however, the growth is expected only in those areas with medium to medium-low service currently (27% of the population in 41% of the city's total area.) This shift in population moving forward will need to be incorporated as development and upgrades are considered.

Table 5.4: Population by Composite Service Area

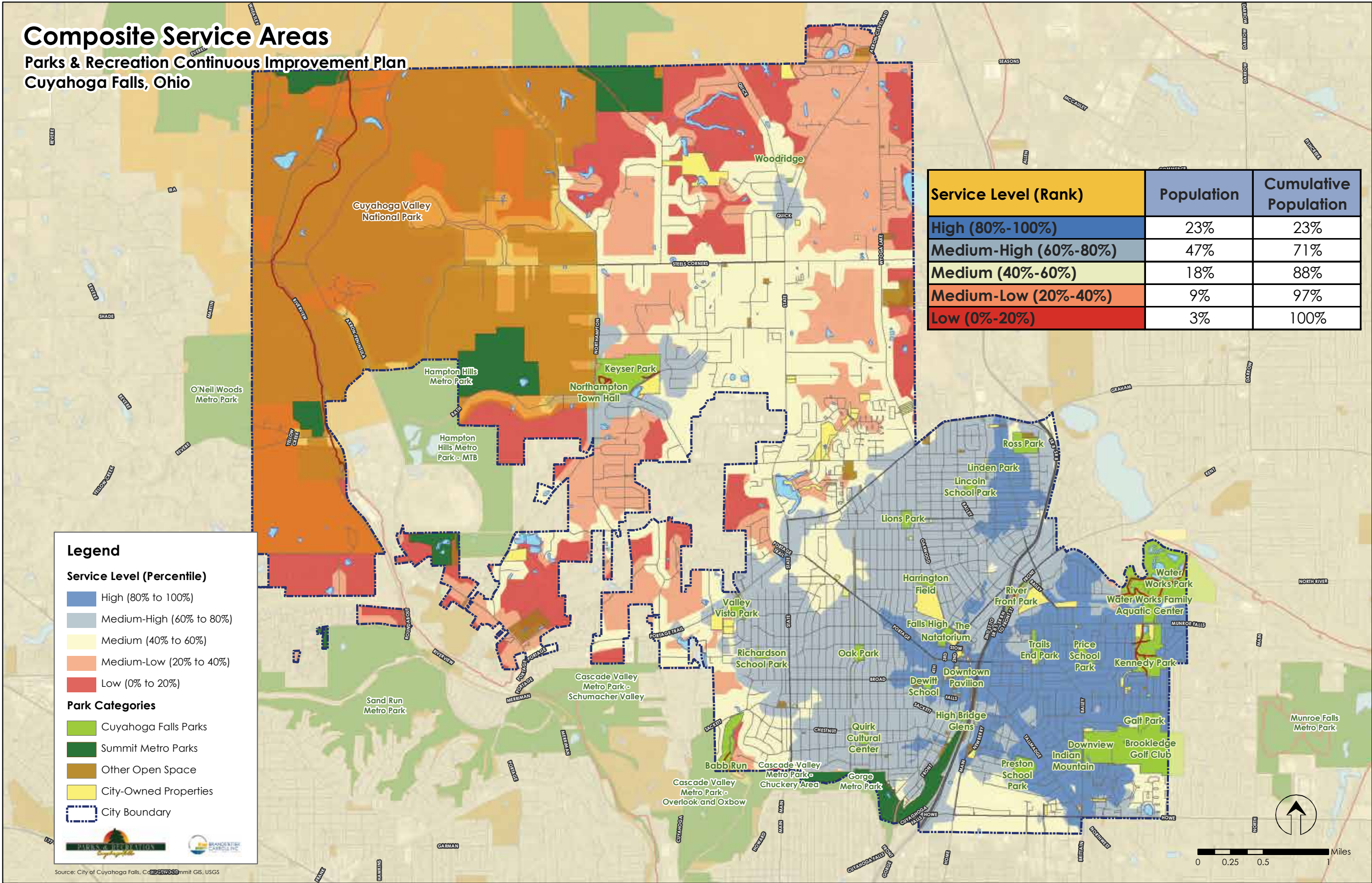
Service Level (Rank)	Proportion at Composite Service Level				Median Household Income	Annual Population Change	Median Age
	Population	Cumulative Population	Area	Cumulative Area			
High (80%-100%)	23%	23%	10%	10%	\$54,456	-0.09%	40.4
Medium-High (60%-80%)	47%	71%	19%	29%	\$57,613	-0.06%	40.7
Medium (40%-60%)	18%	88%	21%	50%	\$62,984	0.59%	44.1
Medium-Low (20%-40%)	9%	97%	20%	70%	\$69,730	1.00%	40.9
Low (0%-20%)	3%	100%	30%	100%	\$64,427	0.01%	47.4

5.7 TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

The following text analyzes national trends in recreation, including types of activities and their associated facilities. It begins with a look at participation rates for various activities – using data from the Sport and Fitness Industry Association – and then provides a deeper dive into the latest trends (relevant to Cuyahoga Falls) occurring in programming and facilities across the nation.

There will be different emphasis and considerations particular to Cuyahoga Falls but also an exploration of overall patterns. Looking through a broader lens can provide insight into the origin and trajectory of more localized preferences. Understanding how trends in fitness, recreation, athletics, and cultural resources reflect in the parks and recreation industry illuminates present conditions and future possibilities in Cuyahoga Falls. Equipped with industry context Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation can better sustain, expand, and realign its existing offerings.

Figure 5.14: Composite Park Service Areas



5.7.1 COVID-19 - Impacts for Parks and Recreation

Though the first impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt in the U.S. in early 2020, the nation continues to bear the tide of change, uncertainty, and strain. While every lasting effect is impossible to predict, two things are already clear: 1) parks and recreation agencies throughout the country have been hit by myriad measures to slow the spread of infection, and 2) agencies around the country are playing – and will continue to play – a vital role in the recovery.

Already, agencies across the country are pressed with financial strain because of the coronavirus pandemic,⁸ and people everywhere are living out the effects of having (or not having) access to open space and parks.⁹ As the coronavirus pandemic blazes an uncharted trail through communities in 2020, public parks and open space are providing respite, solace, and connection. Parks are helping people cope, and they will help communities recover.¹⁰

In fact, parks have experienced some of the highest levels of use during the pandemic. That visitation has increased during these times emphasizes that parks are essential infrastructure to communities.⁹ In Cuyahoga Falls, Brookledge Golf Club, in particular, has experienced increased use because golf is an outdoor activity that lends itself well to physical distancing.

When in the early stages of the pandemic agencies around the country were asked to cancel in-person programs, close facilities, and limit services, agencies were faced with many hard choices. In the months since, many agencies have blended creativity, technology, and flexible staff power to provide a new kind of service to their communities. In Cuyahoga Falls, the Parks and Recreation Mobile Rec program was reimagined and adapted to the limitations of COVID-19 protocols; by bringing supplies directly to residents and providing companion activities posted online, the department acted in a time of uncertainty.

Tactics include abundant use of signage to communicate physical-distancing guidelines and tips for safely enjoying amenities, spray-painting or otherwise demarcating 6-feet of separation in gathering areas, partially closing vehicle pathways to create more space for pedestrians and bicyclists, and other measures.

This same creative adaptability is much-needed moving forward into a post-pandemic future. Agencies should utilize online social platforms, virtual classes and activities, scheduled nature visits where necessary, physically-distanced programming, and other strategies to ensure access to quality services. Families, seniors, youth, and everyone in between will continue to seek social connection, desire healthy habits, and crave the benefits of time in nature. Parks and Recreation has been given an opportunity out of the COVID-19 crisis to explore, evaluate, and realign to better meet these needs. While the economic impact of COVID-19 continues to unfold, there will be temptations to increase costs and cut spending. Parks and Recreation is a critical player in a multi-dimensional recovery¹¹ and must be centered as an invaluable resource to the community.



Photo Credit: CDC July 2020

⁸ Roth, Kevin. How COVID-19 Impacts Parks and Recreation Funding. NRPA. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/may/how-covid-19-impacts-park-and-recreation-funding/>. Accessed November 2020.

⁹ McCormick, Kathleen. Room to Roam: The Pandemic Has Underscored the Need for More Urban Parks; So What Comes Next? Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. <https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/2020-10-room-roam-pandemic-urban-parks-what-comes-next>. Accessed November 2020.

¹⁰ A Trust for Public Land Special Report: Parks and the Pandemic. <https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/Parks%20and%20Pandemic%20-%20TPL%20special%20report.pdf>

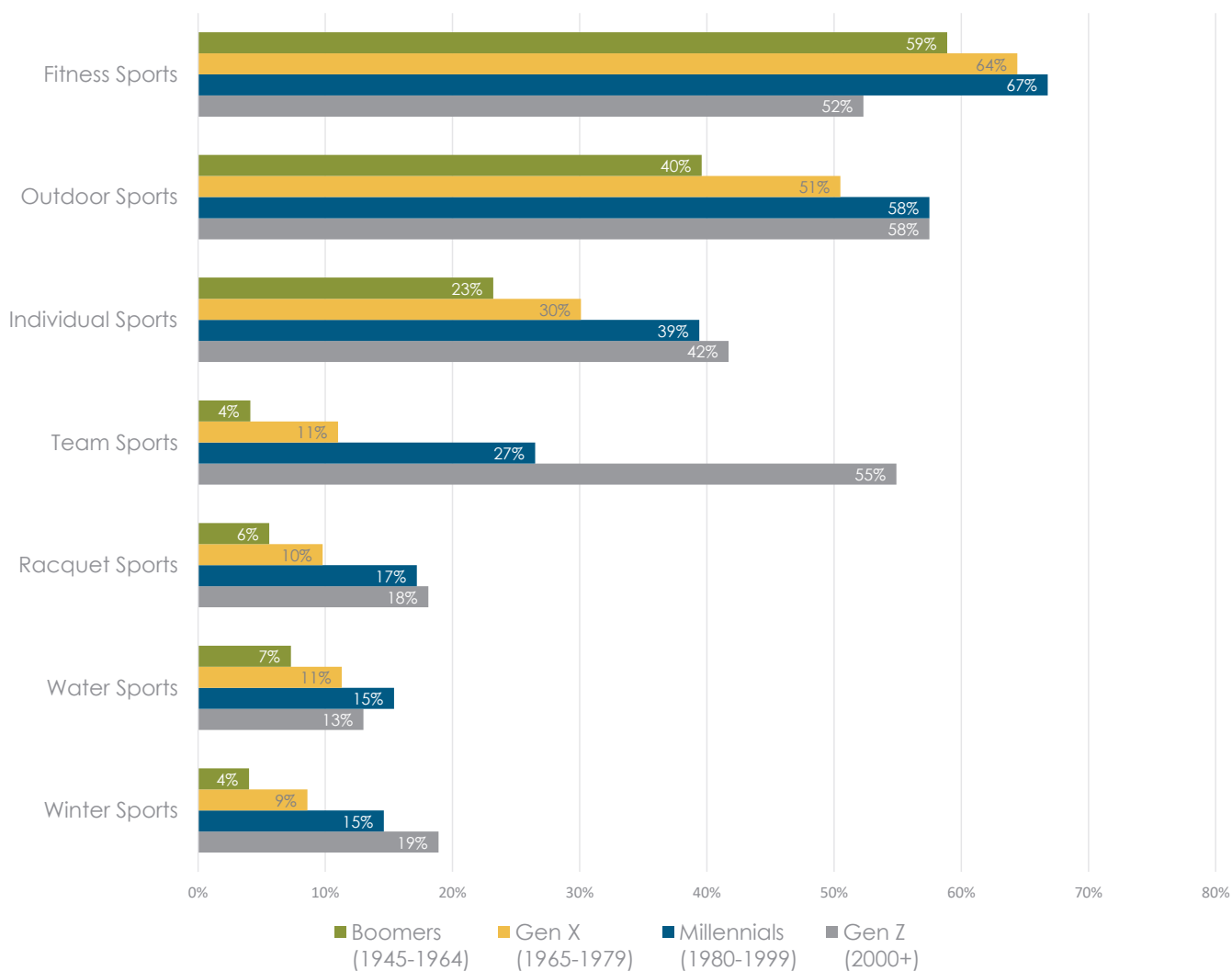
¹¹ Marquis, Bridget. Infrastructure That Does More: Investing in Public Spaces for a Resilient America. Strong Towns. https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/11/23/infrastructure-that-does-more-investing-in-public-spaces-for-a-resilient-america?fbclid=IwAR2Aa8OXGjUpGNv3ibIDHC-W40ic9L9QjnXvix_kgFSocTfEoi5vihqJ0bDg (November 24, 2020). Accessed December 4, 2020.

5.7.2 Trends in Recreation Participation

On an annual basis, the Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) conducts a survey¹² of individuals and households throughout the United States to determine participation in a variety of sports and fitness activities. By using a weighting technique, the survey produces results reflective of the total U.S. population age 6 and older; the 2018 sample consisted of 20,069 online interviews of households. The following text examines the findings of this SFIA report and connects relevant data to generate insights about Cuyahoga Falls.

Figure 5.15 shows the difference in participation rates between generations for seven types of sports. The youngest generation (Gen Z) had the highest participation rates for Individual Sports (e.g., archery, skateboarding, golfing, etc.), Team Sports (e.g., baseball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, etc.), and Outdoor Sports (e.g., hiking, trail running, bicycling, etc.). With each generation, participation rates dropped as age increased. While the other three generational groups had the highest participation rates in Fitness Sports (e.g., barre, weight-training, kettlebells, etc.), Gen Z had the lowest participation. The remaining three types of sports (Racquet, Winter, and Water Sports) have similar trends, Millennial's and Gen Z representing the highest levels of participation.

Figure 5.15: Participation Rates by Generation



¹² The 2019 Topline Report for the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) is produced through the partnership of the Physical Activity Council (PAC), a collaboration of eight of the major trade associations in U.S. sports, fitness, and leisure industries.

With high percentages of Cuyahoga Falls residents in the older two generations – and these numbers only increasing – demand for fitness sports programming is likely to increase into the future. Even though participation diminishes with age, outdoor sports remain popular with all age groups (40% of Boomers take advantage of outdoor fitness activities). Team sports are far more popular with the youngest generation (55% Gen Z and only 4% Boomers).

Table 5.5 displays the 5-year participation rates for 55 different sports and fitness activities. This table also shows the 5-year annual growth rate and highlights which activities show either significant growth or decline in participation rates. The fastest growing sports are highlighted in blue; *stand up paddling*, *cardio tennis*, *bicycling* (BMX), *pickleball*, and *trail running* show the fastest rate of growth over the last five years.

Walking for fitness, *treadmill*, *free weights* (hand weights), *running/jogging*, *hiking* (day-hikes) have the largest number of participants. *Walking for fitness* has by far the greatest number of participants (over 100 million participants nationally) and *hiking* is growing nearly 7% annually even with already high participation (nearly 50 million). Three of the top five activities are oriented around trails and pathways (bicycling too, ranked six). It is no surprise these facilities are in such high demand; Cuyahoga Falls residents are not unusual in expressing their strong interest in these activities.

Table 5.5: Nationwide Five-Year History of Selected Sports Participation (2013-2018)

Sport/Fitness Activity	Category	Participants (In Thousands)						5-Year Average Annual Growth
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Adventure Racing	Individual Sports	2,095	2,368	2,864	2,999	2,529	2,215	2.1%
Aquatic Exercise	Aerobic Activities	8,483	9,122	8,226	10,575	10,459	10,518	4.6%
Archery	Individual Sports	7,647	8,435	8,378	7,903	7,769	7,654	0.2%
Badminton	Racquet Sports	7,150	7,176	7,198	7,354	6,430	6,337	-2.2%
Baseball	Team Sports	13,284	13,152	13,711	14,760	15,642	15,877	3.7%
Basketball	Team Sports	23,669	23,067	23,410	22,343	23,401	24,225	0.5%
Bicycling (BMX)	Outdoor Activities	2,168	2,350	2,690	3,104	3,413	3,439	9.8%
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)	Outdoor Activities	8,542	8,044	8,316	8,615	8,609	8,690	0.4%
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	Outdoor Activities	40,888	39,725	38,280	38,365	38,866	39,041	-0.9%
Birdwatching (>¼ Mile from Home)	Outdoor Activities	14,152	13,179	13,093	11,589	12,296	12,344	-2.5%
Cardio Tennis	Racquet Sports	1,539	1,617	1,821	2,125	2,223	2,499	10.3%
Cheerleading	Team Sports	3,235	3,456	3,608	4,029	3,816	3,841	3.7%
Elliptical Motion Trainer	Aerobic Activities	30,410	31,826	32,321	32,218	32,283	33,238	1.8%
Fishing (Fly)	Outdoor Activities	5,878	5,842	6,089	6,456	6,791	6,939	3.4%
Fishing (Freshwater)	Outdoor Activities	37,796	37,821	37,682	38,121	38,346	38,998	-0.4%
Football (Flag)	Team Sports	5,610	5,508	5,829	6,173	6,551	6,572	3.3%
Football (Tackle)	Team Sports	6,165	5,978	6,222	5,481	5,224	5,157	-3.1%
Free Weights (Hand Weights)	Strength	58,267	56,124	54,716	51,513	5,217	51,291	-2.5%
Gymnastics	Team Sports	4,972	4,621	4,679	5,381	4,805	4,770	2.5%
High Impact/Intensity & Training	Aerobic Activities	17,323	19,746	20,464	21,390	21,476	21,611	4.6%
Hiking (Day)	Outdoor Activities	34,378	36,222	37,232	42,128	44,900	47,860	6.9%
Ice Hockey	Team Sports	2,393	2,421	2,546	2,697	2,544	2,447	4.9%
Ice Skating	Individual Sports	10,679	10,649	10,485	10,315	9,998	9,721	-1.9%
Kayaking (Recreational)	Water Sports	8,716	8,855	9,499	10,017	10,533	11,017	4.8%
Kayaking (White Water)	Water Sports	2,146	2,351	2,518	2,552	2,500	2,562	3.7%
Lacrosse	Team Sports	1,813	2,011	2,094	2,090	2,171	2,098	3.1%
Martial Arts	Individual Sports	5,314	5,364	5,507	5,745	5,838	5,821	1.8%
Mixed Martial Arts for Fitness	Individual Sports	2,255	2,455	2,612	2,446	2,376	2,365	1.1%
Pickleball	Racquet Sports	N/A	2,462	2,506	2,815	3,132	3,301	9.7%*
Pilates Training	Conditioning	8,069	8,504	8,594	8,893	9,047	9,084	2.4%
Racquetball	Racquet Sports	3,824	3,594	3,883	3,579	3,526	3,480	-1.7%
Roller Hockey	Team Sports	1,298	1,736	1,907	1,929	1,834	1,734	6.9%
Rugby	Team Sports	1,183	1,276	1,349	1,550	1,621	1,560	5.9%
Running/Jogging	Aerobic Activities	54,188	51,127	48,496	47,384	50,770	49,459	-1.7%
Scuba Diving	Water Sports	3,174	3,145	3,274	3,111	2,874	2,849	-2.1%
Skateboarding	Individual Sports	6,350	6,582	6,436	6,442	6,382	6,500	0.5%

Table 5.5: Nationwide Five-Year History of Selected Sports Participation (2013-2018) (Continued)

Sport/Fitness Activity	Category	Participants (In Thousands)						5-Year Average Annual Growth
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Soccer (Outdoor)	Team Sports	12,726	12,592	12,646	11,932	11,924	11,405	-2.1%
Softball (Fast Pitch)	Team Sports	2,498	2,424	2,460	2,467	2,309	2,303	-1.6%
Softball (Slow-Pitch)	Team Sports	6,868	7,077	7,114	7,690	7,283	7,386	1.6%
Stand Up Paddling	Water Sports	1,993	2,751	3,020	3,220	3,325	3,453	12.3%
Stationary Cycling	Aerobic Activities	35,293	35,693	35,553	36,118	36,035	36,668	0.8%
Swimming for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	26,354	25,304	26,319	26,601	27,135	27,575	0.9%
Swimming on a Team	Team Sports	2,638	2,710	2,892	3,369	3,007	3,045	3.3%
Table Tennis	Racquet Sports	17,079	16,385	16,565	16,568	16,041	15,592	-1.8%
Tai Chi	Conditioning	3,469	3,446	3,651	3,706	3,787	3,761	1.7%
Tennis	Racquet Sports	17,678	17,904	17,963	18,079	17,683	17,841	0.2%
Trail Running	Individual Sports	6,792	7,531	8,139	8,582	9,149	10,010	8.1%
Treadmill	Aerobic Activities	48,166	50,241	50,398	51,872	52,966	53,737	2.2%
Triathlon (Traditional/Road)	Individual Sports	2,262	2,203	2,498	2,374	2,162	2,168	-0.6%
Ultimate Frisbee	Team Sports	5,077	4,530	4,409	3,673	3,126	2,710	-11.7%
Volleyball (Beach/Sand)	Team Sports	4,769	4,651	4,785	5,489	4,947	4,770	0.3%
Volleyball (Court)	Team Sports	6,433	6,304	6,423	6,216	6,317	6,317	-0.3%
Walking for Fitness	Aerobic Activities	117,351	112,583	109,829	107,895	110,805	111,001	-1.1%
Weight/Resistance Machines	Strength	36,267	35,841	35,310	35,768	36,291	36,372	0.1%
Yoga	Conditioning	24,310	25,262	25,289	26,268	27,354	28,745	3.4%

*Based on reduced time period. SFIA has not yet collected five years of participation for Pickleball.

Legend

	>3% Increase
	1-3% Increase
	Minimal Change
	1-3% Decrease
	>3% Decrease

5.7.3 Aging Communities

Throughout the United States and in Cuyahoga Falls, the median age of the population is increasing (currently 41.4 in Cuyahoga Falls and 38.5 in the USA). The number of persons in the age group 65 and over is growing rapidly. Census data indicates that the percentage of the Cuyahoga Falls population age 65 and older was just over 15% in 2010 but is expected to increase to about 21% by 2024 (see Chapter 2).

The relative health of these individuals is better than ever before, and they desire more active recreation than their predecessors. Senior centers are shifting from a focus on activities like card games to more active programming such as fitness activities and outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and nature programs.

While the aging population should inspire parks and recreation agencies to invest more in activities, programs, and facilities for older users such as walking trails, fishing areas, community gardens, and cultural and nature education programs, many of these more involved and nature-oriented activities are appealing to all generations.

The big picture data is certainly mirrored at the local level in Cuyahoga Falls. The surveys and other forms of public engagement (see Chapter 4) show community support for expanding programs and facilities to accommodate residents age 50 and older. While Cuyahoga Falls does not have a senior center, these increasing programming needs can be met between The Natatorium and Quirk Cultural Center.



Photo: The Conversation (2017) "Why Communities Should Be Designing Parks for Older Adults"

5.7.4 Universal Access

Many park systems are developing unique facilities that are designed to go well beyond the minimum requirement for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Parks system administrators are uniquely positioned to set the best example for inclusivity. By creating an environment that is totally accessible to persons of all ages and abilities, parks and recreation agencies are changing the landscape not just physically but also culturally and in terms of mental health.

Some simple examples of physical treatments that go beyond the basic ADA requirements: textured edging on trails help to make the facilities more accessible for the visually impaired; fragrant plants and sensory gardens, as well as interactive displays provide a more hands-on approach to education and engagement; including therapeutic textures, ground-level features, and mobility-enhancing elements like ramps or bridges in playground equipment ensures all children – including those who are differently-abled – have space to play.

Universal access extends beyond the physical to include interpretive signage, buildings, and all programs. Providing barrier-free parks is an essential part of the process for any park improvement.

5.7.5 Fitness and Wellness

Both state and federal level agencies have placed strong emphasis on improving the health and fitness of individuals throughout the United States. Many local-level parks and recreation departments are building on this message.

Fitness facilities no longer have to be confined to indoor spaces; modern equipment exists that can be installed outdoors. Including outdoor fitness equipment in Neighborhood and Community Parks can serve as an alternative with added benefits of being outdoors. Cuyahoga Falls has no such amenities to date. As the largest unmet need for programming (see Chapter 4) is for *fitness and wellness classes (adult)*, installing outdoor equipment like this would be a step towards expanding opportunity and access. Parks and Recreation could utilize this equipment for targeted fitness classes.

Additionally — and perhaps most importantly — partnerships are key. Many agencies collaborate with community health providers to offer fitness facilities and programs. The health benefits that can be provided by parks extend to mental health benefits as studies indicate that a connection to nature can relieve stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and improves mental health.¹³

5.7.6 Technology

The use of technology is becoming increasingly common in parks and recreation. Many parks users want to remain connected while visiting parks and expect instant access to information about facilities and programs at those parks. They also want to be able to register for the events and programs they discover on their mobile device. Technology, when applied intentionally, can be a tool to enhance park experience. Considering the extent to which technology is part of many user experiences across sectors, it is likely going to be an element necessary to keep people — especially youth — engaged.



Photo: Ann Arbor's Gallup Universal Access Park (2017)



Photo: Kennesaw, GA Parks and Recreation Wellness

¹³ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/>, (April 8, 2019)

The use of technology in parks has many advantages. Wi-Fi access in parks enables users to stay connected via social media or other online activities and to interact more directly with staff. Installing device-charging benches gives people a place to keep those devices powered-up. Developing park-specific apps can inform visitors of opportunities at individual sites or system-wide. QR codes are yet another technological tool that visitors can use for quick access to information (e.g., tree and other plant identification, trail maps, park history and cultural context, park hours, etc.).



Photo: mycountyparks.org, Denison, IA

Employing technology in parks can supply helpful information for internal agency operations as well. For example, Wi-Fi hotspots record the number of connections or searches to create a picture of visitation trends.¹⁴ Or, beacon counters can detect cellphone signals to help determine the number of users in an area.¹⁵ Sensors along paths can distinguish between walkers, runners, and cyclists, as well as numbers for visitation frequency. Collectively, this type of data can describe information about popular visitation times, success of new features, and other descriptors.

Finally, social media is a means for interaction between parks users, parks staff, and the park itself. When visitors post to social web platforms, they assist with park promotion and help to encourage future use. Parks agencies and staff have employed social media as a “crowd-sourced, data-gathering tool” for things like monitoring wildlife or vegetation, reporting invasive species, and identifying condition of trails.⁵

5.7.7 Geocaching

Geocaching is a technology-based activity that has been growing in popularity since the early 2000s when GPS technology improved significantly. Participants travel to local parks and open spaces to hunt for objects previously hidden by others using a set of coordinates and a digital GPS device (typically on a smart phone). Once found, participants generally exchange the now-discovered item for a new item, guaranteeing future use of the same geocache. The search can have varying levels of complexity — one cache leads to another or a puzzle must be completed.¹⁶



Photo: NRPA

Geocaches are already present in Cuyahoga Falls parks (e.g., Trails End and River Front) as well as Summit Metro Parks and Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Opportunities may exist for the department to promote and encourage this activity further by creating the department’s own caches or even organizing geocaching campaigns/events.

5.7.8 Environmental Education

There is a nationally expressed need for expanded environmental education; parks and recreation agencies have a considerable role to play in addressing this demand. Environmental education centers throughout the country are having great success as communities are seeking out better access to engage with and learn from their natural environment. Potential subjects include natural processes, resource management, and wildlife habitats.

¹⁴ National Recreation and Park Association, “Parks Using Technology to Engage and Inspire,” <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/may/parks-using-technology-to-engage-and-inspire/>. (May 1, 2017)

¹⁵ Dolesh, R. J. (2019, January). Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2019. Parks & Recreation.

¹⁶ National Recreation and Park Association, “How to Leverage Geocaching to Promote Park and Recreation Events,” <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/october/how-to-leverage-geocaching-to-promote-park-and-recreation-events/>. (October 5, 2017)

Environmental education cultivates understanding of the benefits of natural habitats and open spaces (including those in and near the City of Cuyahoga Falls). Many park departments develop outreach strategies to bring environmental curriculum into schools. Not only does outreach promote and encourage greater use and appreciation of local parks in the community, it creates opportunity for collaboration between organizations, institutions, and advocacy groups. It also helps instill a lasting connection to the natural world.

Forty-one percent (41%) of households reported an unmet need for *nature programs* (see Chapter 4). Nature education is something that engage all ages and abilities; nature-oriented programs are an effective way to create space for intergenerational encounters. Creating environmental education opportunities that appeal to the community involves considering formats like guided hikes, camps, community events, field trips, or special-interest classes and topics such as habitat restoration, wildlife identification, or invasive species removal.

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation is uniquely positioned to build partnerships and collaborate with Summit Metro Parks to provide such programming within the city, possibly at Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary. The National Parks Service and Ohio State Parks and Watercraft (ODNR) are also potential partners. Given the diversity of natural areas within and surrounding the city, there is room for developing and expanding programming that both celebrates and utilizes these spaces.

5.7.9 Birdwatching (or Birding)

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, nearly 50 million Americans participate in birdwatching (as of 2011) or about 20% of the population. The most common form of birding is watching birds near one's home; however, 38% of birders, or 18 million people, participate in birding away from the home. Participants in birdwatching tend to be older and more highly educated than the general population.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report also includes an analysis of the economic impact of birdwatching activities. Birdwatchers direct substantial amounts of dollars into the economy because of trip-related (\$15 million) and equipment expenditures (\$26 million). The report finds that the birding industry, including indirect effects resulting from the multiplier effect, generates over \$100 billion annually throughout the United States and supports 666,000 jobs. These expenditures lead to an additional \$6 million in state tax revenues and \$7 million in federal tax revenues.¹⁷

Cuyahoga Falls residents interested in bird-watching likely already use park space to some extent. Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary is an incredible treasure for this type of pastime. More formal programs, developed and conducted in partnership with more nature-focused agencies like Summit Metro Parks or ODNR, could



Photo: Rain Garden Reserve in Cuyahoga Falls



Photo: National Park Service, Environmental Education at Mammoth Cave, KY



Photo: USFWS

¹⁷ Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis, Addendum to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013.

help expand interest, educate residents about species, and increase overall interest in natural areas within and around Cuyahoga Falls.

5.7.10 Environmental Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Many communities utilize parks as examples of best management practices (BMPs) to serve as models for minimizing environmental impacts and maximizing the sustainability of both park sites and operations. Parks and recreation departments are in great positions to lead in the implementation of these practices because they are typically among the largest landowners (if not the largest) in their jurisdictions. To assist in the implementation of these practices, some park departments establish manuals detailing the BMPs which are generally divided into categories.¹⁸ Some potential categories include (with examples):

- Site Selection (which properties to acquire and protect)
- Design (strategies for management of stormwater, water quality, riparian/wetland buffers; use of vegetation; choice of building materials)
- Construction (controlling of pollutants, soil restoration, recycling of construction materials)
- Operation and Maintenance (practices for water conservation, use of organics, weed control, composting, energy use, etc.)
- Programs and Special Events (consider carrying capacity of facility, provide recycling receptacles)

5.7.11 Trails and Connectivity

Demand for trails, trail linkages, and pathways that connect parks, open spaces, and other destination sites (like downtown districts) has been growing all over the U.S., including in Cuyahoga Falls. Wherever surveys have been conducted, there is a high level of demand for connectivity. Communities with existing and extensive trail systems express pride and continued desire to build trails between neighborhoods and develop pathways to schools, shopping areas, other community attractions, and neighborhoods. Livable communities where residents report a high quality of life generally have robust trail systems and reliable connectivity that support active, engaged lifestyles.



Photo credit: Jeff Carson, Dandy Horseman Magazine

The expressed need for trails, including all types of walkable connections, was clearly conveyed through the public input process. Summit Metro Parks, ODNR, and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park all provide critical access to trails in the region. The city's role is to ensure walkable and bikeable connectivity via safe sidewalk and path extensions and to coordinate with others for trail development and expansion.

5.7.12 Nature Play Areas

Many parks and recreation agencies are placing increased emphasis on the availability of nature play areas and programming for children. The Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) recently released a document titled *Nature Play & Learning Places* which provides a series of national guidelines for the creation of places for children to interact with nature. The guidelines are meant to support communities in providing opportunities for children to learn about their natural environment and to develop healthy active habits. The guidelines also encourage incorporating natural materials like plants, stones, water, fallen trees, etc. to augment sensory experience and facilitate tactile play. According to the guidelines, a nature play or learning place is:



Nature Play Structure (Silver Falls State Park – Oregon)

¹⁸ Environmental Best Management Practices Manual. City of Fort Collins Parks and Recreation. 2011.

“A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.”¹⁹

The following are examples of nature play features.

Natural Play Structures

Permanent play structures can be constructed from natural materials such as logs and rocks. The guidelines recommend engaging local children to generate ideas. It is best to use indigenous (native) materials in the design to ensure longevity.

Multipurpose Lawns

Multipurpose lawns, depending on size, can support a wide variety of activities and events. These lawns can be utilized for programmed and unprogrammed play for both large and small groups.

Meadows and Woodlands

Meadows or fields of native grasses, flowers, and non-woody plants provide ecosystems where children – and even their caretakers – can explore and observe wildlife, especially insects and birds. These landscapes stimulate curiosity and offer dynamic learning moments in ways that a carefully managed lawn cannot.

Woodlands also offer diverse ecosystems similarly prime for creating quality educational and play experiences. Visitors can witness natural processes like seasonal change, photosynthesis, and animal behavior.

Vegetable Gardens

Hands-on garden beds give visitors opportunities to participate in the growth of vegetables, herbs, and other edible plants, not to mention the benefit of tasting fresh produce. Children can discover different kinds of fresh food, learn more about what it takes to grow from seed, and better understand the source of the food they eat.



Photo: Charleston Parks Conservancy

Aquatics

Existing natural streams, ponds, wetlands, and marshes give children and others a chance to witness the dynamic cycles of water, weather, and the geology of a place. If not present naturally, these elements can be constructed to replicate these phenomena. Children can have multi-sensory interactions and even encounter new types of living creatures.

Gathering and Performance Structures

It is a vital role of parks to give community space to gather. These structures — decks, patios, or gazebos — encourage social interaction and can be utilized for programming. To accommodate performances, these spaces can include things like stages, campfire circles, and amphitheater seating. These settings are also useful for team-building and group presentations.²⁰

Opportunities in Cuyahoga Falls

Cuyahoga Falls has many natural areas provided by other agencies, as well as two under the city's maintenance.



¹⁹ Moore, R. (2014). Nature Play & Learning Places. Creating and managing places where children engage with nature. Raleigh, NC: Natural Learning Initiative and Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation. Version 1.6. (pages vii, 5, 7-8, 51, 65, 71-83).

²⁰ Moore, R. (2014). Nature Play & Learning Places. Creating and managing places where children engage with nature. Raleigh, NC: Natural Learning Initiative and Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation. Version 1.6. (pages vii, 5, 7-8, 51, 65, 71-83).

Existing nature play spaces, like the facility at Penitentiary Glen in Kirtland, OH (Lake Metro Parks), provide a regional example of what elements – play campsites, shallow ponds, climbing logs, low mounds for rolling, etc. – could be added in Cuyahoga Falls. Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary is the most obvious location for this type of amenity within the Cuyahoga Falls park system; however, elements can be incorporated into any park or play space.

5.7.13 Mountain Bike and BMX Facilities

Off-road bicycling activities are growing in popularity, although they still represent a relatively small percentage of all bicycling activities. Modern mountain biking originated in the 1970s in California with a group of enthusiasts who modified existing bikes for off-road use. These cyclists organized first downhill races which they called “Repack.” This name referred to the need to “repack” the brakes with fresh grease after each race due to the excessive heat from braking during the descent.²¹

During the early years of mountain biking, enthusiasts used single-track trails intended for hiking as bikes were not specifically forbidden from using these trails. However, as the sport gained in popularity, bikes have been banned from most hiking trails, and single-track trails designed specifically for mountain bikes have been established.²² More recently, a new style of trail called a “flow trail” has appeared which provides more predictable surfaces, banked turns, and a lack of obstacles. These trails require little peddling and minimal braking that appeal to a wider variety of users, including families. These trails can be designed to allow beginners to bypass any more technical trails.²³

Another trend in off-road bicycle facilities is the pump track. These tracks, which began to appear in the 2000s, are looping tracks that can be ridden continuously without the need to pedal. A user's speed is dependent on “pumping” the terrain transitions of the track. A pump track requires approximately 50' by 50' of space (minimum) and generally feature a series of rollers and steeply bermed corners.²⁴ Unlike many of the other off-road facilities, pump tracks are usable by both mountain bike and BMX riders.



Photo credit: Jason Myers/TPL
Pump Track

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation do not currently manage a mountain bike trail (MTB) but there are numerous trail facilities around the area, including just outside of the city at Hampton Hills Metro Park. Moving forward, the city could cultivate coordinated promotion with nearby agencies, acting as activity and recreation liaison to the many resources available to MTB enthusiasts, amateur and expert alike, in the area.

5.7.14 Splash Pads or Spraygrounds

Splash pads or spraygrounds are a growing trend in aquatics. Many agencies around the country are replacing wading pools at larger aquatic facilities with these more accessible water attractions; however, they can also be built as new standalone wet playgrounds. When compared to pools, spraygrounds have several benefits. No standing water means lifeguards are not needed which reduces operating costs significantly; in most instances, spraygrounds recirculate water. When built conscientiously, spraygrounds and splash pads achieve significantly better accessibility.

²¹ Marin Museum of Bicycling, “Mountain Biking History,” <http://mmbhof.org/mtn-bike-hall-of-fame/history/>, (April 8, 2019).

²² Singletracks, “Visiting the Birthplace of Mountain Biking: Marin County, California,” <http://www.singletracks.com/blog/mtb-trails/visiting-the-birthplace-of-mountain-biking-marin-county-california/>, (April 8, 2019).

²³ IMBA, “Flow Trails,” <https://www.imba.com/model-trails/flow-trails>, (April 15, 2016).

²⁴ Adventure Sports Journal, “Pumpin’: An Introduction to the World of Pump Tracks,” <http://adventuresportsjournal.com/pumpin-an-introduction-to-the-world-of-pump-tracks/>, (April 8, 2019).

Cuyahoga Falls currently offers wading pools at several locations, but there is just one splash pad (Downtown Pavilion). Many stakeholders indicated desire to transition the wading pools to splash pads. This action should be implemented, especially given public support for the transition (see Chapter 4), the condition of some of the wading pools, and the need for streamlined operations systemwide.



5.7.15 Dog Parks

Dog parks are in ever-increasing demand throughout the country. These spaces help to improve the interaction skills of dogs while also providing social opportunities for dog owners. Quality dog parks require careful planning and a fairly extensive operating budget to ensure adequate maintenance and upkeep.

Optimally, a dog park is at least three acres in size and includes three separate areas: one for large dogs, one for small dogs, and a rotating unused area to allow for regeneration of turf. Some dog parks include an additional area for agility and training. Many dog parks are larger, reaching well over 10 acres in size. Typical quality amenities include shade, seating, water (for both human and animal), and restrooms.



Photo: Northbrook Dog Park, Northbrook, IL

Cuyahoga Falls currently offers two dog parks, one at Keyser Park and the other at Water Works Park. Public input suggests a moderate unmet demand for these canine-friendly spaces. The existing conditions at River Front Park lends significant potential for reimagined community space; adding a dog park there, while somewhat small, would help activate and reinvigorate the park. Given its location, River Front would offer a more centralized facility for residents to come from many parts of the city.

5.7.16 Disc Golf

Disc golf, formalized in the 1970s, is similar to traditional golf in many ways. The disc, or Frisbee, is thrown from a tee toward a hole which is most commonly in the form of a “Pole Hole.” The player makes consecutive throws from the location of the landing of the previous throw until the disc lands in the basket or Pole Hole. Disc golf differs from traditional golf in some important ways: green fees are rarely required and only an inexpensive flying disc is needed to play. Disc golf appeals to a wide range of participants of all ages as well as those with disabilities, and the game can be played year-round. Courses also require much less land than traditional golf (as little as five acres for a 9-hole course). The sport continues to grow in popularity and courses are available at many parks around the country.

Cuyahoga Falls does not currently offer any disc golf courses, and the closest courses are located in Hudson and Kent. Because these facilities can utilize land unsuitable for other amenities, they can be developed in almost any park. Quality courses can host tournaments, which can potentially bring visitors to Cuyahoga Falls as disc golfers play year-round and are known to travel to access challenging courses.

5.7.17 Creative Placemaking

The Trust for Public Land – a nonprofit organization with a mission to bring high-quality parks within a 10-minute walk of every person in the U.S. – is a leading champion of creative placemaking as a strategy for affecting change. Creative placemaking is a collaborative, community-based process that captures the power of art, vibrancy of local heritage, and potential of place to build memorable spaces rooted in culture and local identity. Parks and recreation agencies around the nation offer community connection in physical and social forms; creative-placemaking is just another tool for ensuring successful parks that equitably reflect the people who use them.²⁵ Many agencies partner with local entities (like other government departments, nonprofits, schools, places of worship, art institutions, and other groups) to put in place opportunities for resident-led installations, programs, and events.

Creative-placemaking can take countless forms. It may look like an outdoor sculpture walk at the center of a Neighborhood Park featuring resident and local artists' work. It might be an annual arts performance downtown that showcases immigrant and refugee cultures in the community. It can also be as low-profile as a pollinator garden, including interpretive signage about the plants chosen and why. Whatever it may look like, it is essential that the community be inclusively integrated into every phase: ideation, selection (of artist(s), piece(s), feature(s), etc.), installation, activation, and long-term care.

When parks and recreation agencies prioritize local traditions, cultural identities, and native resources, making sure these are reflected in program and facility offerings, users will be more likely to participate and do their part to sustain the system. A reciprocal relationship forms, where community engages with parks and recreation to the extent that parks and recreation seeks to provide place-based resources.

At the beginning of 2020, the City of Cuyahoga Falls approved a Public Arts Master Plan. That document provides a foundation for Parks and Recreation to build up from in terms of creative placemaking. Among many other action items, the Public Art Master Plan discusses the following Parks and Recreation related items:

- "Front Street Placemaking" – coordinated efforts to revitalize an historic corridor
- "River Totems" in locations like High Bridge Glens Park, the amphitheater downtown, River Front Park, and Water Works Park
- Community-led public art projects at Kennedy Park and Valley Vista Park
- Additional art-centered development at Keyser Park

As the Public Arts Master Plan states, the people's input resounds: the parks are the heart of the community. Given how recent this plan effort and adoption is, there is incredible opportunity to build on its momentum. While significant effort is required to execute the multi-agency partnerships necessary to bring creative placemaking to life, the enduring benefits would be felt by community and agency members alike.



Photo: Billiter Studio's Creative Placemaking in the Madisonville Neighborhood of Cincinnati (2015)



²⁵ Trust for Public Land, Creative Placemaking, <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/creative-placemaking>

A recent example is the “We the People” photo display at Hight Bridge Glens Park in the Fall of 2020 in which an artist photographed and documented stories of 25 refugees from foreign countries who live in Northeast Ohio.

5.7.18 Drones

Since the late 2000s, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has increased tremendously. Used for both military and civilian purposes, these devices are having a considerable impact on parks and recreation agencies nationwide. A contentious activity, tensions exist around safety, privacy, and environmental impact, as well as applications (professional and recreational) like habitat and wildlife monitoring, photography, and map-making.

Popularity of drones is only growing, but regulations at the federal, state, and local levels have been slow to prevent, mitigate, or manage negative impacts. Many cities have enacted no-fly zones and other restrictions which means UAV-users – licensed or not – have limited available spaces. These restrictions have led drone pilots to look to parks and public open space for flying opportunities.



Photo: NRPA 2018

Requiring permits (day or seasonal) and designating fly areas with set times for flying are tactics agencies are using. These measures help legitimize UAV use and maintain safe park spaces; permitting is also a potential revenue opportunity. Since drone use is only increasing, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) offers useful insight into the future of drone-use in parks:

“...Park agencies will face increasing public pressure to look at allowing hobbyist flights and commercial-use drones in parks... By creating stronger guidelines and policies about how to fly drones in parks instead of adopting blanket restrictions, parks can give people an outlet and place to fly recreationally. New programming and events can be planned around drones, bringing in visitors and related businesses that benefit the parks...Keep it focused on safety and respect for all parties. Acceptance will protect the public and park resources and enable an exciting new form of recreation to take place.”²⁶

Cuyahoga Falls Parks does not have a designated location for launching drones and lacks an official policy for flying them in the parks. As their popularity continues to increase, the city will want to either designate such an area or clearly communicate areas provided by others. Also, formulating and posting a policy for (or against) drone use within the park system will proactively address the rising trend.

5.7.19 Esports

Esports (Electronic Sports) refers to organized, multiplayer video-gaming events. A growing genre since the early 2000s, esports around the world are generating remarkable revenue (industry growth expected to reach \$1.8 billion by 2022)²⁷ and gaining a foothold both in professional sports and in college athletics. Tournaments reliably attract significant crowds, in turn opening up an uncharted avenue in the spectator sport economy. The majority of athletes and viewers are between age 18 and 34, and the games themselves are geared towards either multiplayer or individual competition. Newzoo’s 2018 *Global Esports Market Report* projects an estimated audience of more



Photo: Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau
Esports facility (2018)

²⁶ Wootton, Courtney; Bradley, Michael J.; Ray Neal NRPA. Drones in Parks: It's All About Perspective. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/december/drones-in-parks-its-all-about-perspective/>

²⁷ EU Business School. The Business of eSports: 3 Things You Need to Know. 2020. web: <https://www.euruni.edu/blog/business-esports/>

than 550 million viewers by 2021. Put differently, this means esports would see a 200% growth in viewership in just five years.

According to the NRPA, esports provide a way for agencies to reach traditionally difficult-to-reach groups (per the National Alliance for Youth Sports Poll, 70% of kids stop playing sports by age 13, while 90% of kids ages 12–17 play video games). They can also help agencies address underutilized facility space, promote other programs to a new audience, and drive up revenue through rental/participant fees, membership charges, or sponsorships.

Esports may seem sedentary and, therefore, counter the mission many agencies have of promoting healthy, active lifestyles. However, there are interactive and immersive games that utilize virtual reality to get participants moving and players often experience comparable heart rates and efforts of stamina as other athletes.

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation does not currently include Esports in its programming. The Natatorium or perhaps even Quirk Cultural Center could provide potential space for initial programming. Esports Ohio²⁸ is a statewide educational nonprofit that is seeking to empower high school students through the development and support of electronic sports in Ohio communities. Partner conversations with Esports Ohio could open up a sector of recreational opportunity that would potentially reach new audiences, build overall engagement, and generate revenue for the department.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an assessment of needs for parks and recreation services in Cuyahoga Falls. The analysis indicates a variety of parks and facilities are located throughout Cuyahoga Falls; however, not all amenities are evenly distributed.

The level of service standards outlined at the start of this chapter – and developed with public input from residents of Cuyahoga Falls – provide a foundational guideline for the number of parks, open space, and recreation facilities needed in Cuyahoga Falls. Overall, there is demand for improvement at existing parks, arts and cultural programming, quality river access, community gathering and event spaces, splash pads, and more.

The geographic analysis of service areas identifies specific areas to target for investment in additional parks and recreation facilities. The mapping analysis shows higher levels of service on the higher density eastern side of the city with some limited service gaps on the more suburban and rural western side of the city. **These findings, combined with public input requesting additional programming and improved spaces, indicate that upgrades to existing facilities and streamlined operation should be the highest priorities for this Continuous Improvement Plan.**

Cuyahoga Falls is in a good position to confront many of the trends discussed in this chapter that have not yet been addressed. The aging population of Cuyahoga Falls provides additional incentive for the city to address many of these trends, including expanded fitness programming, universal access, and community events. The analyses from this chapter and the preceding chapters provide the foundation for the specific recommendations presented later in this document.

²⁸ <https://www.esportsohio.org/home>



6.1 INTRODUCTION

This Continuous Improvement Plan for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation represents a collective imagination of the future. Through the engagement process, a cohesive vision has emerged for continual, sustainable improvement. The vision, mission, and values outlined below will guide implementation of this continuous improvement plan and the future of parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls. A series of goals and objectives – included at the end of this chapter – will be instrumental in realizing the new vision and mission.

6.2 VISION

6.2.1 Purpose of a Vision

A vision describes an intended outcome. It establishes a clear finish line of accomplishments and it unifies hope. A vision should:

1. Give direction to impact
2. Help focus effort
3. Provide guidance for the long term
4. Inspire strategic action
5. Express a compelling and aspirational future
6. Articulate a motivational horizon simply and clearly

6.2.2 Proposed Vision for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation

Considering the values and input generated by the Steering Committee, as well as the six factors described above, the new vision for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation is:

Engaging activities and public spaces that connect and enrich our entire community.

6.3 MISSION

6.3.1 Purpose of a Mission

The mission statement identifies a daily purpose and an enduring reason for existence. A mission answers four questions:

1. What do you do?
2. Who do you do it for?
3. How do you do it?
4. Why do you do it?

The mission should be easy to remember and share with others. It should be the foundation of all departmental decision-making.

6.3.2 Existing Mission for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has an existing Master Plan from 1999 that includes the following mission language.

The Parks and Recreation Department is committed to:

1. *Providing excellent programs, services, and facilities*
2. *Being responsive to the community*
3. *Playing an active role in the life of the Cuyahoga Falls community*
4. *Providing responsive management of all the resources entrusted to us by the people*

6.3.3 Proposed Mission for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation

Building from the foundational mission exercise conducted with the Master Plan Steering Committee – and in consideration of the factors described above – the following is the new mission statement:

Enriching lives through dynamic community spaces and inclusive programs.

6.4 VALUES FOR CUYAHOGA FALLS PARKS AND RECREATION

6.4.1 Purpose of Values

An organization's values reflect beliefs and identify guiding principles. Values are straightforward phrases or words that should:

1. Direct staff conduct
2. Express department ideals
3. Reflect department personality
4. Complement community's aspirations
5. Communicate what is important
6. Guide efforts to enact the mission and achieve the vision
7. Ensure quality staff experience
8. Encourage positive development system-wide

6.4.2 Core Values

Core values should be unique to the department. Using insights from the Steering Committee discussions, and feedback generated through public engagement efforts, the following suggestions intend to serve the critical purpose of values (outlined above).

Accessibility – Ensure easy, equitable access to all parks and facilities

Community Connection – Create welcoming spaces that bridge divides and engage the community

Outstanding Service – Cultivate and uphold the highest standards and maintain accountability to the community

Adaptability – Employ responsive changes, flexible solutions, and sustainable practices

Active Participation – Build spaces that foster energetic interest from staff and community

Innovation – Apply best practices to make memorable spaces and elevated experiences

6.5 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

6.5.1 Function of Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives identify areas of strategic priority and provide:

1. More focused description of actions and aspirations
2. Clearly designated planning timeframe
3. Direction for investments – of time, skills, and resources
4. Clarity about what the department will and will not do

Goals – More Detailed Description of Intended Outcomes

- Overarching areas of strategic priority
- Broad, demonstrates intentions
- Outcome vs activity based
- Longer timeframe (3-5 years, or more)

Objectives – Provide Direction for Appropriate Action

- More precise descriptions of how the department seeks to address an issue
- Measured by observable metrics (e.g. “increase,” “expand,” “reduce,” “consolidate,” “improve,” “distribute,” etc.)
- Shorter timeframe (1-3 years, or more)

6.5.2 Proposed Goals and Objectives for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation

The following goals and objectives are intended to help guide improvements, operations, and services for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls over the next five to ten years.

Goal 1: Build from Within

Nurture high quality spaces and staff through focused investment, development, and support

Objective 1.1 – **Staff Development:** Create a quality work environment across all staff levels that inspires and encourages

Objective 1.2 – **Operations & Management:** Improve efficiency and quality of service by establishing clear standards of performance

Objective 1.3 – **Funding:** Pursue alternative funding sources, including grants, to expand creative viability and build independence for the department

Objective 1.4 – **Maintenance:** Ensure all spaces across the parks and facilities system are clean and safe for all users

Goal 2: Expand Community Connection

Ensure equitable programs and spaces through authentic outreach and inclusion of all members of the community

Objective 2.1 – **Equitable Inclusion:** Practice authentic outreach and create opportunities for users to share in the development and daily life of parks and facilities

Objective 2.2 – **Marketing & Promotion:** Utilize innovative and inclusive outreach methods

Objective 2.3 – **Partnerships:** Prioritize relationship-building and information-sharing to effectively tackle collective goals across the community

Objective 2.4 – **Outstanding Service:** Commit to providing excellent, responsive, and welcoming customer service systemwide

Goal 3: Improved Parks & Facilities

Elevate existing spaces and offerings through comprehensive upgrades and targeted efforts

Objective 3.1 – **Sustainability:** Safeguard quality before quantity with consistent dedication to existing facilities, parks, and programs

Objective 3.2 – **Accessibility:** Strive to meet user needs and desires for all

Objective 3.3 – **Facilities:** Preserve signature attractions that make Cuyahoga Falls a remarkable place to live and visit

Objective 3.4 – **Legacy:** Safeguard the longevity of a system that has enduring attractiveness for the Cuyahoga Falls community and beyond

Goal 4: Dynamic Programming & Events

Build programs and events that are responsive to the diverse needs and desires of the community

Objective 5.1 – **Community Wellness:** Build a foundation of health and activity through dynamic programs and quality facilities that serve users of all ages, cultures, and abilities

Objective 5.2 – **Adaptability:** Align programs and amenities to fit the changing needs of the community and provide on-trend service to all users

Objective 5.3 – **Celebration:** Develop programs, events, and facility features that uplift the unique resources of the community

6.6 STRATEGIES

Specific strategies will be identified for each objective listed above. The strategies will be discussed in Chapter 7 under categories of recommendations and will be listed in the Action Plan in Chapter 9, which also identifies a timeframe, responsible party, and potential funding source.

SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic will impact government budgets for years to come. Already, agencies across the country are facing fiscal pressures or receiving requests to cut their spending.¹ Meanwhile, in this time of public health inequity, social rupture, and economic disruption, people everywhere are living out the effects of having (or not having) access to open space and parks.² As the coronavirus pandemic blazes an uncharted trail through our communities in 2020, public parks and open space are providing respite, solace, and connection. Parks are helping people cope – and they will help communities recover.³

It is vital that local governments resist the temptation to cut services. The revelations emerging in this time of crisis will be no less true even in the future. Families, seniors, youth, and everyone in between will always need ample opportunity to connect socially, to practice healthy habits, and to enjoy all the benefits of time in nature. Parks and recreation agencies across the nation have a critical role to play in a brighter, more equitable future.

Bearing all of this in mind, the recommendations in this chapter are intended to guide the City of Cuyahoga Falls in a post-pandemic future. Because the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to be felt for many years, the following recommendations are presented with the vitality and durability of Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation at the core.

The following chapter presents observations and findings gained through the first three phases of this Continuous Improvement Plan – Evaluate, Engage, and Envision. The subsequent recommendations are divided into the following categories:

- Existing Park Improvements
- Facility Improvements
- Outdoor Athletic Fields and Courts
- Other Park Features and Improvements

¹ Roth, Kevin. How COVID-19 Impacts Parks and Recreation Funding. NRPA. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/may/how-covid-19-impacts-park-and-recreation-funding/>. Accessed November 2020.

² McCormick, Kathleen. Room to Roam: The Pandemic Has Underscored the Need for More Urban Parks; So What Comes Next? Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. <https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/2020-10-room-roam-pandemic-urban-parks-what-comes-next>. Accessed November 2020.

³ A Trust for Public Land Special Report: Parks and the Pandemic. <https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/Parks%20and%20Pandemic%20-%20TPL%20special%20report.pdf>

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- Natural Areas, Open Space, and Nature Education
 - Decommissioning and Consolidation of Parks and Facilities
 - Programming
 - Operations, Maintenance, and Promotion
 - Budget and Funding
 - Public Art
 - Partnerships and Sponsorships

Recommendations by park are provided in Chapter 8, along with detailed cost estimates for the proposed improvements.

7.2 EXISTING PARK IMPROVEMENTS

7.2.1 Observations and Analysis

Through the public input process, Cuyahoga Falls residents voiced a strong desire for improvements to existing parks. According to the Mail Survey, 84% of households support upgrades to existing parks, and this option was by far the most important action when limited to the top three actions. The option to upgrade existing parks received the highest allocation of the five options in the dollar voting exercise (26%) at public meetings. All of this points to the responsibility Cuyahoga Falls has to improve its parks and recreation services.

Sixty percent (60%) of households who visited parks over the past year rated them as good, but only 14% rated them as excellent (just 24% rated them as fair). These numbers are far below the National Benchmarking by ETC Institute which shows an average 29% excellent rating. Taking into consideration both the public assessment of the parks' condition and the high level of support for improving spaces and facilities, there is clearly public desire to have better parks.

For preferred upgrades to existing parks, restrooms is the top response in both surveys (first in both surveys). Security cameras and lighting, trees and landscaping, drinking fountains, and picnic shelters are other amenities ranking in the top 10. Residents also want better playground equipment and Wi-Fi. Many parks lack entrance signage; where there is signage already, the design and placement is inconsistent.

During the site assessments, accessibility deficiencies were noted throughout the park system. Notably, Cuyahoga Falls households were far more likely to list a disability as their reason for not visiting the parks; 10% of respondents to the Mail Survey cited their disability and accessibility issues as preventing them from utilizing the parks and facilities, compared to just 3% in the national benchmarks provided by ETC Institute.

About 70% of the population lives within a 10-minute walking distance to a Neighborhood Park, which means most residents in the city are within easy access to facilities like playgrounds. Interestingly, need for playgrounds ranked as a medium priority in the Priority Investment Ratings by ETC Institute (Mail Survey) even though the city currently offers 21 playgrounds. While the level of service is similar to the benchmark comparisons, the level of unmet demand suggests the existing playground service is inadequate, possibly due to the condition of the facilities. Physical park assessments did find that several playgrounds need improvements or updates, which reinforces the findings of the surveys.

Over two-thirds of the population (71%) live in areas with "High" or "Medium-High" service levels, with 12% living in areas with "Low" or "Medium-Low" service levels (see Composite Service Areas map, Figure 5.14). Improvements in existing parks would improve service in areas with lower service levels; even some gaps in service might be filled by adding facilities at existing parks. Certainly, there will need to be improvements made over the next 10 years just to maintain even the current level of services, especially as features reach the end of their useful life.

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has significant room for growth in terms of using technology in the parks with features like Wi-Fi hotspots, charging stations, and park apps. As noted in Chapter 5, technology can enhance park experiences as well as aid in efforts to engage youth. Beyond external user benefits, technology

can be a valuable tool for improving internal operations by collecting information about usage trends and rates of participation; even using equipment such as security cameras can help track peak visitation and pedestrian patterns. In conversations with staff, technology usage was a top recommendation.

Individual parks should have master plans finalized prior to development or redevelopment to ensure that facilities are accessible, complementary features are located appropriately, and, most importantly, desired features actually fit on the site. Planning is a critical tool for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance, making it easier to be proactive versus reactive in the face of challenges and changing circumstances.

7.2.2 Recommendations

1. Improve maintenance, including capital maintenance and replacement, at existing parks
2. Add support features throughout the park system such as security lighting, trees/landscaping, drinking fountains, and shade structures
3. Add, upgrade, or replace restrooms at heavily used parks
4. Replace outdated and deteriorated playgrounds throughout the city and include unique or themed features at each park to encourage visitation across multiple parks
 - Consider themed playground equipment and other elements such as a unique art piece, climbing rocks, sensory features, etc. which would provide enhanced marketing material and also photo opportunities for residents (attractions might also include interpretive signage)
5. Add picnic shelters throughout the park system to expand access to these facilities and to promote opportunities for community gatherings
 - Continue installing corn hole adjacent to new and existing picnic shelters
6. Work with the city's existing program to add Wi-Fi access in high traffic areas including buildings, aquatic facilities, and event spaces (e.g., picnic shelters, lodges, and sports complexes)
7. Upgrade technology in parks for patrons and staff (see Chapter 5, Technology, Subsection 5.7.5)
8. Incorporate nature play into playground development and replacement to alleviate costs and increase variety
9. Add consistent entrance signage throughout the park system, especially at secondary park entrances
10. Perform an ADA Accessibility Assessment of all facilities, programs, and communications (by an outside consultant) and develop an implementation plan
11. Improve ADA accessibility throughout the park system, including walkways to all facilities and to (and at) all spectator and seating areas
12. Prepare Park Master Plans for existing parks prior to development of new or redevelopment of existing facilities
13. Expand paved paths within existing parks that lack connectivity (e.g., Keyser, Indian Mountain) and in any future parks
14. Improve the condition of pavement at existing paved park pathways (e.g., Kennedy, Water Works, Lions)
15. Enhance connectivity between parks and adjacent neighborhoods by adding connecting pathways where possible
16. Acquire land contiguous to existing parks, if it becomes available, to allow for additional features and increase the total amount of parkland available to residents while still limiting impacts on operations and maintenance

7.3 FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

7.3.1 Observations and Analyses

Cuyahoga Falls has a wide variety of facilities that offer many unique opportunities to residents. The Natatorium is a fantastic facility that stands out among attractions provided by nearby communities. Water Works Family

Aquatic Center attracts users from all over the region. Brookledge Golf Club is a very popular course with tee times fully booked, even during the pandemic.

These facilities are among the most used elements of the park system. According to survey responses, The Natatorium was the second most used overall⁴ with over half (52%) of households reporting use over the past year. Nearly 40% of households reported visiting the Downtown Pavilion, nearly a third of households visited Quirk Cultural Center (32%) and Water Works Family Aquatic Center (30%), and about a fourth visited the downtown splash pad (26%), Downview Sports Center (25%), and Brookledge Golf Club (23%).

While they are extremely popular, many of these facilities need significant repairs and already have substantial deferred maintenance. Some respondents of the Mail Survey reported that the facilities are in good or even excellent condition, but users are not always able to see the amount of work required to keep these facilities in operation. If the city aims to safeguard these signature facilities that really define Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation, investment will be required over the next 10 years to continue providing memorable experiences to residents and the surrounding communities.

7.3.2 Aquatics

As noted above, Water Works Family Aquatic Center is one of the most popular facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. It is in need of some repairs so that it can continue to operate and generate revenue into the future. Some improvements are underway, including the pool house roof replacement and pool resurfacing. The shelter that was damaged by a recent storm is also being replaced. The lazy river is reaching the end of its useful life, so it will need replacing as well. At that time, the city should consider expanding or lengthening the lazy river; this improvement was a common request throughout the input process.

Despite the presence of the Water Works facility, outdoor swimming pools/aquatic centers ranked fourth in unmet needs in the city (approximately 3,500 households), according to the Mail Survey. They ranked as a medium priority (fourth overall) in the Priority Investment Ratings for facilities. The survey does not provide specific reasons that households needs are not being met; however, it is possible the facility does not offer specific amenities that households desire. Because the city is unlikely to invest in building another large aquatic center, addressing aquatic needs through improvements both at the existing aquatic center and by adding splash pads at other parks will be paramount.

Splash pads, such as the one at the Downtown Pavilion, are an emerging trend in aquatics across the country; they either replace wading pools at aquatic facilities or can be developed as standalone features in other park areas. They can come in any size and may be limited to jets and sprays to preserve an open plaza space when not in use, or they can include vertical interactive play features. Because splash pads do not require lifeguards or attendants, they have much lower operating costs than swimming pools.

According to the Mail Survey, households overwhelmingly support the development of new splash pads in Cuyahoga Falls. Ninety-five percent (95%) of households indicated support for adding splash pads, and 74% support for transitioning the existing wading pools to splash pads. The public support, combined with the reduced maintenance and staffing requirements, make the transition from wading pools to splash pads a smart choice. As the city moves forward to best address the community's needs for aquatics, the department will need to sustain continuous engagement and ongoing outreach.

7.3.3 Indoor Recreation and Program Spaces

The Natatorium

The Natatorium provides residents of Cuyahoga Falls with a wide variety of indoor recreation and programs. Overall, the facility is in excellent working condition, but operating a large recreation center requires ongoing capital maintenance and repairs. The Natatorium needs roof and HVAC repairs, both of which are already in progress. Diamond Brite was recently applied to portions of the aquatic center but not all water bodies; these remaining areas will need the finish in the near term. Some capital improvements needed include replacing

⁴ Due to wording, it is likely that a majority of survey respondents who selected Downtown River Boardwalk intended the Downtown Pavilion and Amphitheater as their most visited space in the city's parks system.

the rotunda skylight, upgrading the community wing (Conference and Banquet Center) to make the space more appealing as a rental facility, and adding lighting in the gym for pickleball players.

Quirk Cultural Center

Quirk Cultural Center offers popular programs and spaces for Cuyahoga Falls residents, but the facility is over 90 years old (built in 1930) and has become increasingly costly to maintain. Ultimately, the building will need to be renovated; however, the full cost is not justifiable given the unlikelihood of meeting all the needs in the community. A new building is likely beyond the 10-year horizon of this plan, so Parks and Recreation will need to continue using the building into the future. While the city should not overly invest in a building that is obsolete, some essential improvements are necessary in order to keep the facility operating. The city should continue to address interior deferred maintenance and HVAC improvements. The front parking overhang also needs repair. First floor restroom and ADA improvements are underway which will allow all users to enjoy the offerings at Quirk Cultural Center.

7.3.4 Lodges/Indoor Rental Space

Lions Lodge was recently improved and modernized, but Galt Park Lodge is in desperate need of renovation. The building is not accessible and has not seen substantial improvements since it was constructed in 1940. The restrooms are in the lower level and are not accessible. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increasing emphasis on outdoor venues. Although the pandemic will eventually end, the desire for more outdoor events is likely to last. Before the lodge is renovated, the city should consider where a rentable three-season pavilion could be developed since no such facility is currently available in Cuyahoga Falls.

The Downtown Pavilion has a great location on Front Street along the Cuyahoga River, but the facility does not meet its full potential given the building layout. The restrooms are in the basement and are only accessible using an elevator that is on the outside of the building; the elevator should be enclosed to improve user experience. The exterior stairs recently collapsed and are in the process of being repaired. Due to the large windows at the front of the building, the interior is difficult to climate control making it uncomfortable for users during events and activities. Ultimately, the building needs to be renovated to improve climate conditions and the functionality of the space.

No indoor rental space is currently available in the western portion of Cuyahoga Falls, making Keyser Park an ideal location for such a facility. Existing buildings are not sufficient; the Northampton Town Hall is in such poor condition that it is no longer suitable for rentals (even renovation would not yield the caliber of venue residents desire), and the location next to the fire station is also not optimal. The most ideal location is within the park near the barn with the park itself serving as a backdrop. The venue could host weddings and even other less formal events. According to the Mail Survey, 57% of West Sector residents support the renovation of rental facilities, including the construction of a lodge in Keyser Park. A new facility would provide much-needed indoor program space on the western side of Cuyahoga Falls.

7.3.5 Downview Sports Center

Downview Sports Center is a popular attraction in Cuyahoga Falls that draws an age group otherwise less engaged in park and recreation offerings – teenagers and young adults. Deferred maintenance has led to the need for cosmetic improvements. While the batting cages are currently being improved, the building itself needs improvements as well. These improvements will be especially important if the city hopes to expand usage of the facility. A proposal to add high-tech golf games, as seen at places such as Top Golf, would bring new users and added revenue to the facility. Such an upgrade would utilize a portion of the driving range that currently sees limited use. Another possibility for increasing usage is to incorporate winter activities by adding a designated sledding hill feature. Even installing newly branded signage for the Downview Sports Center and Brookledge Golf Club will make the site look more fresh as well as assist with promoting and marketing the facility.

7.3.6 Brookledge Golf Club

Brookledge Golf Club is a successful course that has seen heavy use before but especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the clubhouse is inadequate to support the facility because it is both too small and

does not provide offerings that encourage extended visits (and thereby greater revenue generation for the department). The renovation currently in progress should address these issues, and the new dining menu will further support getting the full benefits of the facility's potential.

7.3.7 Recommendations

1. Continue to perform capital maintenance at Water Works Family Aquatic Center to ensure that the facility continues to serve residents and visitors
2. Replace and possibly expand the lazy river at Water Works Family Aquatic Center at the end of its useful life
3. Develop splash pads throughout Cuyahoga Falls (primarily to replace wading pools) to enhance aquatic opportunities for residents
4. Continue ongoing capital maintenance and repairs at The Natatorium
5. Update the community wing of The Natatorium to create a more attractive venue for rentals and events
6. Add lighting in The Natatorium gym to better accommodate additional users, especially pickleball players
7. Continue to address interior deferred maintenance and HVAC improvements at the Quirk Cultural Center and also repair the front parking overhang
8. Renovate and modernize Galt Park Lodge or replace the facility with a three-season pavilion
9. Enclose the elevator at the Downtown Pavilion to improve the user experience and improve accessibility
10. Renovate the Downtown Pavilion to address climate control and elevate the functionality of the space
11. Develop a new lodge in Keyser Park to provide a venue for events and programs
12. Continue addressing deferred maintenance at Downview Sports Center to improve the appearance and to keep the facility operating into the future
13. Add high tech golf experience at Downview Sports Center driving range to draw more users to the facility and expand revenue opportunities
14. Consider using the hillside at the Downview Sports Center for sledding (possibly with a snow machine if analysis supports the investment)
15. Implement signage with new branding at Downview Sports Center and Brookledge Golf Club
16. Continue the renovation and expansion of the clubhouse at Brookledge Golf Club allowing the facility to expand its menu and thereby increase opportunities for revenue generation

7.4 OUTDOOR ATHLETIC FIELDS AND COURTS

7.4.1 Observations and Analyses

Compared to the benchmarks, Cuyahoga Falls provides a higher level of service for youth and adult softball fields and a slightly lower level of service for youth baseball fields, although still above the national benchmarks. The service level for multipurpose rectangular fields is similar to the benchmark comparisons. The site assessments (see Chapter 3) indicate that many of the fields need improvements, and 65% of households responding to the Mail Survey indicated support for upgrading youth athletic fields.

The 16 basketball courts offer a level of service much higher than the benchmarks (one per 3,100 people compared to a median of one per 5,300). The 16 tennis courts provide a slightly higher level of service than the benchmarks. The city has recently added pickleball and futsal courts, both of which are growing trends at parks.

7.4.2 Athletic Fields

Cuyahoga Falls has diamond fields at 10 parks, including four school parks, with most of the fields at Kennedy, Keyser, and Water Works parks. The loss of the diamond fields at Bolich Middle School has led to increased use of the fields at Kennedy Park. These fields, like many others in the system, need improvements including

new backstops, fencing, and dugouts. The fields at Trails End Park and Ross Park also need improvement. And overall, most of the fields in the system do not meet accessibility requirements.

The city has seven multipurpose rectangular fields with three at Water Works Park. The outfields of some of the diamond fields, including those at Kennedy Park, are also used as multipurpose fields. The fields generally lack the necessary accessible pathways and seating areas at the game fields. Because national trends indicate faster growth of sports that use multipurpose rectangular fields compared to those that use diamond fields, the need for these fields will likely grow. The city will need to find additional locations for these fields and possibly convert some of the diamond fields. Field needs should be monitored and reevaluated before any specific improvements are implemented.

As the makeup of the population of Cuyahoga Falls changes and the population continues diversifying, needs will shift. Already Parks and Recreation has started receiving more requests for a cricket pitch, an entirely new facility for the city's parks system. As more parks are improved and more developed, there will likely be opportunities to meet these changing needs. For example, at Ross Park the diamond field space could be reconfigured to accommodate cricket matches in the large open space. Optimizing multipurpose space will be an important tool for the city in facing limited acreage available for expansion.

7.4.3 Game Courts

Given the city's high level of service for basketball courts, it will likely be possible (even beneficial) to reduce the overall number during renovations or facility replacements. In some locations, courts could be reduced from two to one or from one to ½ court and yet still maintain a service level above the benchmarks while also reducing maintenance requirements. In other spaces, the addition of courts might be possible without increasing overall maintenance requirements.

Pickleball courts are a rising trend in parks and recreation across the country, due in part to their popularity with older residents. At the time of this report, Cuyahoga Falls does not offer any dedicated pickleball courts. There are, however, pickleball lines on the tennis courts at both Keyser and Kennedy parks. Sharing court space with tennis gives users a chance to play pickleball, but because the net height requirement is different between the two sports, any pickleball game would fall short of the national guidelines for competition. Demand for these courts is likely to grow; therefore, the city should put plans in place to develop dedicated courts to help meet this demand. Potential locations could be Kennedy Park by the existing tennis courts or Ross Park whenever it is redeveloped.

Futsal is another growing sport in parks and recreation. Often futsal courts can be developed on old tennis courts or on whatever underused paved area there might be in a park. Futsal courts give users a chance to play soccer where space is otherwise limited and can provide for a faster paced game. Cuyahoga Falls recently added a court in Kennedy Park in a large unused paved area near the playground. Based on the success of this court, the city should consider adding additional courts at other locations.

7.4.4 Recommendations

1. Consider reducing the number of basketball courts as they are renovated or replaced based on need in the individual park; consider adding courts in areas of the city where none are already present
2. Add dedicated pickleball courts at Cuyahoga Falls parks to meet the growing demand for this sport
3. Consider adding additional futsal courts as a way of utilizing underused paved surfaces and also to meet the increasing demand
4. Improve the diamond fields at Kennedy Park with new backstops, fencing, and dugouts to accommodate increased use
5. Ensure accessibility at all athletic fields and in every spectator area
6. Consider future field needs during renovation of parks and improvement of athletic fields – make fields multiuse wherever possible, but especially at smaller neighborhood parks

7.5 OTHER PARK FEATURES AND IMPROVEMENTS

7.5.1 Observations and Analyses

As discussed in Chapter 2, trends show slow population growth in Cuyahoga Falls since 1990 now settling at a fairly stable population around 50,000. The city has generally done well at keeping pace with trends but has not met all the changing needs of residents, particularly as the population ages and becomes more diverse. The median age in Cuyahoga Falls (41.4) has increased since 2000 and, like Ohio and the USA, is only expected to continue increasing.

In Cuyahoga Falls, the population age 65 and over has increased as a percentage since 2000 and is expected to exceed 21% by 2024. Over that same time period, the percentage of children is expected to decline to under 19% of the population. While educational attainment has increased in Cuyahoga Falls since 2000, income has remained about the same when adjusted for inflation. The city is diversifying, seeing the largest growth in the Hispanic population and a net loss of the White Alone population (see Chapter 2 for more discussion).

Overall, these demographic changes are reflected in changing recreation needs (as discussed previously) which the city has begun to address but has much still to do. The needs of specific groups should be addressed during any individual park master planning process. Finally, COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased use of many outdoor activities, including some of those described below.

7.5.2 Outdoor Fitness

Features that are popular with seniors or active adults were requested throughout the public input and are a trend with other parks and recreation agencies throughout the country. Popular facilities for this group include outdoor fitness equipment and pickleball courts (described in Section 7.4). Cuyahoga Falls does not currently offer any outdoor fitness equipment, but it could be integrated easily into many of the city's parks. Grouping equipment is preferred for providing a gathering space and venue for senior programming.

7.5.3 Dog Parks

As noted in Chapter 5, dog parks are a recurring request seen in parks and recreation and, while Cuyahoga Falls currently offers two dog parks, public input indicates the need for more. Dog parks were a medium priority in the Priority Investment Ratings from the Mail Survey by ETC Institute, and, as a facility, they ranked in the top ten for unmet needs (about 2,600 households). The two existing locations at Water Works and Keyser parks are on the eastern and western edges of the city, respectively. If additional dog parks are developed, centrally located sites should be prioritized to improve community-wide access and ensure more of the population is within a 5-minute drive to a dog park.

7.5.4 Disc Golf

Disc golf was requested both at the Open House meetings and through the MindMixer online engagement, pointing to marked demand for a disc golf course in Cuyahoga Falls. Disc golf is already a fast-growing recreation activity across the country (described in Chapter 5), but it has seen an explosion of use during the COVID-19 pandemic because it allows participants playing outdoors to easily distance from others. Courses can be constructed anywhere in a park, even in areas with rough terrain that is otherwise unsuitable for development. They can be constructed around existing facilities to have minimal environmental impact. Due to fervent support and popularity, local disc golf associations are often willing to donate funds and manual labor in order for additional courses to be constructed.

7.5.5 Community Gardens

Community gardens have grown in popularity even in suburban and rural areas where residents typically have large yards. In fact, Cuyahoga Falls has a large and very popular community garden located in Keyser Park on the western side of the city where lots are larger and development more spread out. Their popularity even in less dense areas corresponds to a general desire for better connection and more shared public space; people want more places to interact with others. The results of the Mail Survey support this, showing

community gardens as the third ranked unmet need with about 3,700 households expressing a desire for more of these features. Most of the population of Cuyahoga Falls is beyond a 5-minute drive to the community gardens at Keyser Park, but there is a smaller community garden at Galt Park in the Eastern Sector. More strategic promotion of these plots at Galt Park is encouraged, though if overall demand exceeds capacity at these two sites, a future additional location, potentially Kennedy Park, should be considered.

7.5.6 Outdoor Stages/Amphitheaters

Cuyahoga Falls has a large amphitheater at the Downtown Pavilion which is used to host a variety of events. However, the facility is nearly 20 years old and needs considerable improvement, including seating replacement and roof repairs. Renovation is necessary for the space to continue as an event venue (and potential source of revenue) into the future.

Even with the Downtown Pavilion, a second location on the western side of the city would allow for a balance of event locations. Some concerts are already held in Keyser Park, making it a logical location for this type of a more formal venue. An additional venue at Keyser Park could host concerts, movies, theater productions, fitness classes, and more. The facility could also be used for outdoor weddings, in conjunction with the proposed lodge. All of these uses represent potential revenue sources for the city.

7.5.7 Recommendations

1. Add outdoor fitness equipment at select parks to expand opportunities for better community health
2. Develop a dog park at River Front Park with an agility course to better activate this underutilized space and to provide a more central gathering location for dog owners
3. Evaluate the need to expand the dog park at Water Works Park, following the development of other dog parks in Cuyahoga Falls
4. Explore the development of disc golf courses in Cuyahoga Falls, potentially as a partnership with the local disc golf association (Summit DGA)
5. Seek an additional location for community gardens in the eastern portion of Cuyahoga Falls
6. Improve the existing amphitheater at the Downtown Pavilion to keep the venue available for programs and events
7. Consider developing an amphitheater at Keyser Park to provide a more formal venue on the western side of Cuyahoga Falls to be used for concerts, movies, theater productions, fitness classes, and weddings

7.6 NATURAL AREAS, OPEN SPACE, AND NATURE EDUCATION

7.6.1 Observations and Analyses

Attendees of the public workshops indicated a need for access to more natural areas and nature programs in Cuyahoga Falls. Nature programs were a high priority in the Priority Investment Ratings by ETC. According to the Mail Survey, over 40% indicated a need for nature programs (the fourth ranked program type), and most survey respondents indicated these needs were unmet (representing nearly 10,000 households). Natural areas/nature parks were ranked as the most important facility and the number one priority for investment. Natural areas/nature parks were the second ranked unmet need in the Mail Survey with over 4,700 households indicating an unmet need.

Park and recreation agencies are increasingly focusing on preservation and restoration of natural resources. Natural areas provide numerous benefits to the health and wellness of a community, including opportunities for all residents. Studies indicate that a connection to nature can relieve stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and improve mental health.⁵ Because they are typically one of the largest land owners in their jurisdictions, park and recreation departments have the opportunity to lead in the implementation of sustainability or best management practices (BMPs), efforts that can double as engagement and educational opportunities.

As noted in the trends section of Chapter 5, environmental education cultivates understanding of the benefits

⁵ National Recreation and Park Association, "Health and Wellness," <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/>, (April 17, 2020)

of natural habitats and open spaces. Nature education provides opportunities to engage all ages and abilities and provides great potential for intergenerational programming. Summit Metro Parks is an obvious partner for environmental programs, including nature classes and activities (see Section 7.12). Potential programs – which could also involve partnerships with the school districts – include community events, field trips, or classes covering habitat restoration, wildlife identification (e.g., bird watching), invasive species removal, and more.

While Summit Metro Parks and the National Park Service own the vast majority of Nature Parks and public open space in and around Cuyahoga Falls, the city offers several parks with natural areas, most notably Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary. The city has previously discussed transferring ownership of Babb Run to Summit Metro Parks, but for various reasons, Metro Parks does not want to take over ownership of the property. The city will retain ownership for the foreseeable future; however, opportunities should be explored for encouraging Metro Parks to become more involved both in the operation of and programming for the park. Features like nature play elements, a picnic shelter, expanded parking, improved trails, and a restroom, would help make Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary an attractive location for sustained partnership with Summit Metro Parks.

There are other natural areas provided by the city, such as at Water Works Park, Keyser Park, and along the riverfront. Opportunities exist to take advantage of these properties for educational purposes while also preserving natural resources. Many parks in Cuyahoga Falls contain land within the 100-year floodplain, including some acreage that has been developed or modified in some way. Opportunities for land restoration exist throughout the park system, including restoring portions of developed land to its natural state so as to reduce maintenance load and cost.

In addition to land-based natural space, public input indicated demand for more quality access to the river. Canoe/kayak launches were in the top 10 unmet needs for facilities and ranked at medium priority for improvement in the Priority Investment Ratings. Stakeholder groups reinforced this funding, expressing desire for better river access. The existing Cuyahoga River Water Trail stretches from Burton to Cleveland; a canoe/kayak launch at Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary would create an additional access point to this well-loved water trail.

7.6.2 Recommendations

1. Develop passive recreational amenities at Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary to better provide expanded nature access for Cuyahoga Falls residents and to create a centralized location for nature education classes
2. Seek opportunities to improve access to the Cuyahoga River, including adding a river access or canoe/kayak launch in Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary
3. Explore partnerships with Summit Metro Parks to add nature programming at Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary, along the Cuyahoga River and, potentially, in other parks across the city
4. Develop interpretive signage throughout the park system (this will require signage plans) to help visitors understand the natural features and history of Cuyahoga Falls parks
5. Implement conservation policies and sustainable practice guidelines for future development and management of park properties
6. Pursue opportunities for restoring natural areas within parks in ways that improve access to nature and reduce maintenance requirements
7. Elevate parks by setting examples for Best Management Practices (BMP) for stormwater detention, recycling, etc.
8. Promote conservation and sustainability efforts as they are implemented to encourage reduced levels of consumption and waste generation
9. Explore and establish partnerships to produce nature education programs within Cuyahoga Falls parks (see also Section 7.12)

7.7 DECOMMISSIONING AND CONSOLIDATION OF PARKS AND FACILITIES

7.7.1 Observations and Analyses

The recommendations in this chapter focus on park improvements to meet the changing needs for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls. However, not every improvement represents new features or facilities for the city to maintain; many of the recommended improvements replace existing features with new ones that will require less maintenance. Some changes – like replacing wading pools with splash pads – will save the city on operating costs while simultaneously increasing usage and improving services to residents.

In some cases, obsolete structures and facilities will simply be removed from the system. Structures that no longer meet programming and rental needs could be transferred to other departments or agencies who could better utilize them. Table 7.1 provides a list of items to remove, decommission, or consolidate throughout the park system with a corresponding priority level noted for each action.

Swain House

A substantial amount of resources and energy is spent maintaining this aged building in Keyser Park. The structure has deteriorated to the point where it is now a danger to the public. In addition to the safety hazard it poses, the building is an aesthetic eyesore in a prominent portion of the park, an area that has potential to serve as a hub for much needed programming and community events. Several independent assessments have each concluded the Swain House will impose greater cost to repair than to replace. Even if it were renovated, the building is not large enough to accommodate the programming and event uses needed by the community. Given all of these findings, the city will be best served by removing the Swain House. Pictures provided in Figure 7.1 detail the current conditions of the building showing the serious deterioration and illustrating the futility of spending public funds to preserve the structure.

Park Consolidation

The City of Cuyahoga Falls offers numerous parks in the more densely populated southeastern portion of the city. The city also maintains school grounds as parks, simultaneously increasing access to parks for residents and contributing to the large number of designated parks in the city. As it is, the city's parks inventory provides a high level of service for residents in the East Sector; over 90% of the East Sector population (Wards 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7) lives within a 10-minute walk to a park. However, maintaining this extensive inventory strains city resources.

The city may want to consider consolidating the number of parks in the system, especially where services overlap. Consolidation should be part of any future discussion about how people use Cuyahoga Falls parks. Park consolidation may be possible without much impact to service delivery. As the Cuyahoga Falls City School District consolidates its elementary schools, the Parks and Recreation Department may be able to consolidate park sites as well. Newberry School Park is an example of a recently eliminated park.

Table 7.1: Decommission/Consolidation and Priority

Park Name	Facility/Feature	Priority	Action
Harrington Field	Playground	High	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Indian Mountain Park	Playground	Medium	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Indian Mountain Park	Restroom	Medium	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Indian Mountain Park	Wading Pool	Low	Replace w/ Splash Pad & Reduce Maintenance
Linden Park	Wading Pool	Low	Decommission at End of Useful Life
Linden Park	Restroom	Medium	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Lions Park	Wading Pool	Low	Replace w/ Splash Pad & Reduce Maintenance

Table 7.1: Decommission/Consolidation and Priority (Continued)

Park Name	Facility/Feature	Priority	Action
Oak Park	Wading Pool	Low	Replace w/ Splash Pad & Reduce Maintenance
Quirk Cultural Center Park	Wading Pool	Low	Decommission at End of Useful Life
Ross Park	Diamond Fields	Medium	Replace & Reduce to One Field/Backstop
Ross Park	Diamond Fields	Medium	Remove Outfield Fences
Ross Park	Restroom	Medium	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Ross Park	Playground	High	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Trails End Park	Restroom	Medium	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Trails End Park	Wooded Area	Medium	Reduce Mowed Area/Maintenance
Trails End Park	Trees	Medium	Remove Dying/Unsafe Trees & Reduce Maintenance
Valley Vista Park	Wading Pool	High	Replace w/ Splash Pad & Reduce Maintenance
Valley Vista Park	Restroom	In Progress	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Valley Vista Park	Playground	High	Remove Sand Pit
Kennedy Park	Restroom	High	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Kennedy Park	Playground	High	Remove Sand Pit
Kennedy Park	Playground	High	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Keyser Park	Swain House	High	Demolish Due to Unsafe Conditions
Keyser Park	Police/Storage Building	Medium	Remove or Relocate
Keyser Park	Steel Storage Building	Medium	Remove or Relocate
Keyser Park	Playground	Medium	Remove/Replace & Reduce Maintenance
Water Works Park	Playground	High	Remove Sand Pit
River Front Park	Pathway	High	Remove Asphalt Path
Northampton Town Hall	Building	High	Transfer Operations/Maintenance to FOP
Water Works Aquatic Center	Sand Pit	High	Remove Sand Pit
School Parks	Systemwide	Medium	Reduce Number of Sites and Schools Consolidate

7.7.2 Recommendations

1. Decommission wading pools at the end of their useful life and replace a select number with splash pads, ensuring even distribution throughout the city
2. Calculate maintenance impact when replacing facilities or features to verify that replacements reduce rather than increase maintenance requirements and cost
3. Remove the Swain House from Keyser Park due to unsafe conditions thereby improving the appearance of the park and allowing the area to be redeveloped in a productive manner that addresses resident needs
4. Remove Northampton Town Hall from rental facility inventory and explore options to repurpose building for community needs
5. Pursue opportunities for park consolidation where possible with minimal to no reduction in service delivery
6. Remove sand pits from all playgrounds and replace with other lower-maintenance features

Figure 7.1: Swain House Current Conditions



7.8 PROGRAMMING

7.8.1 Observations and Analyses

Adult fitness and wellness programs were the most needed recreation program in Cuyahoga Falls according to the Mail Survey (52% of households); concerts and art programming rank a close second (also 52%). Community and family events ranked third at 48%. Each of these programs appeared in the top three for “most important” programming as well.

Adult fitness & wellness programs (e.g., yoga, Zumba, CrossFit) were the top unmet need indicated by over 12,300 households, while concerts/art performances were second (12,200 households), and community and family events third (11,300 households). Other unmet needs indicated by the survey include nature programs (9,600 households), outdoor movies (7,800 households), and programs for age 55+ (6,800 households). Many households reported also wanting swim lessons and water fitness programs. At the public meetings, residents requested more programming in general, covering activities, such as nature programs, events, and concerts.

Community/Family-Oriented Programs

Overall, Cuyahoga Falls residents indicated a desire for the kind of programs that bring community together; there was also an emphasis on Parks and Recreation offering “something for everyone.” Many of the requested programs would make use either of the Downtown Pavilion amphitheater or a potential new amphitheater at Keyser Park. However, future community events could be held in any Cuyahoga Falls park. The demand for these activities, already high, may be increased post-pandemic when large gatherings can be organized safely again.

Based on the strong desire for community events, it is important for the city to maintain, enhance, and fully fund the existing community programs. These programs provide an opportunity for the people in Cuyahoga Falls to be connected with the community. Broad-interest programming can create possibilities for gathering and interaction between different groups, even those that might not otherwise meet. One of the most popular and effective current program offerings, Mobile Rec, is a great example that should certainly be maintained.

As of this report, the department seems to serve a limited demographic. In light of community changes and the possibilities ignited by this plan, there is an opportunity to reach out to those that have not yet availed themselves of park services to discover how best to serve them. Parks and Recreation must first make an effort to identify the needs of underserved populations before they can even begin to meet those needs.

Senior Programs

As noted in Section 7.5, Cuyahoga Falls, like most of the country, has an aging population and a large percentage of residents over age 65. Given this, it is unsurprising that many survey respondents requested more senior programs. Indoor facilities in Cuyahoga Falls, like The Natatorium, can and do offer senior programming yet most households (74%) indicated support for developing new senior programs.

It is important to note that many citizens who qualify as “seniors” based on age (an arbitrary delineation) do not self-identify as seniors; they will sometimes elect not to participate in senior-targeted programs because of stigma or perception of aged people. Wherever communities advertise programs for “seniors” alone there will often be this problem. In reality, because some of the most active people in fitness and recreation are over the age of 55, it is important to separately brand and market programs geared towards active seniors (e.g., Cuyahoga Falls Active Adults). Any programs that fit into this kind of category are more likely to succeed when grouped together and marketed specifically to more active, physically sound seniors. Hospitals, health insurance providers, and grocery store chains can all serve as potential sponsors for programs and events.

Adapted Programs

Public input indicated strong support for those existing adapted programs recently relocated to the Quirk Cultural Center. Nearly three quarters of households (72%) indicated support for expansion of these programs. These programs should be ongoing and possibly expanded. Partnering with nearby communities will help to expand the variety and availability of these programs through coordinated offerings, ensuring the needs of community members are met.

Other Programming Needs

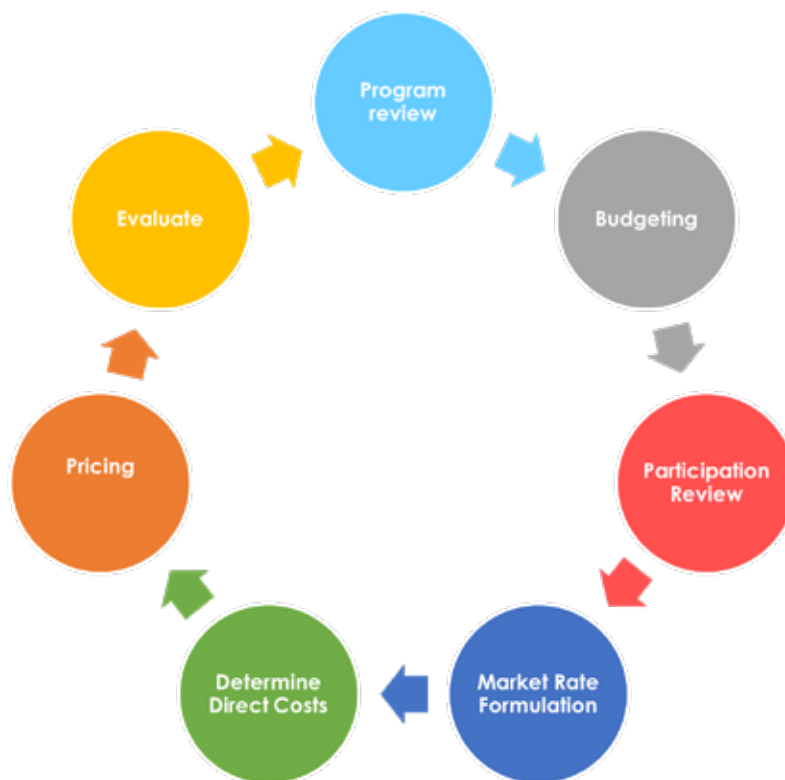
Based on feedback from the public, Parks and Recreation should reevaluate program times in an effort to align offerings with resident availability. According to the Mail Survey, the third most likely reason for not participating in programs is that times are not convenient (22% of households). Shifting the schedule strategically might open up more opportunities for residents to take advantage of all the programs the city has to offer.

Currently, Cuyahoga Falls has limited offerings for teenagers, but 70% of households support adding more teen programs. This age range is very often difficult to engage in any community but introducing programs like Esports leagues can lead to greater participation. Beyond the more competitive type activities, the city should also seek out ways to incorporate creative, performative, and cultural arts programming for those of all ages.

7.8.2 Annual Implementation Plan for Business Operations

The diagram below (Figure 7.2) illustrates the ongoing evolution of Parks and Recreation is working operations. Each cycle begins with an annual plan and ends with evaluation. Creating an annual plan allows the department to establish goals for both internal operations and external performance (i.e., programming). An annual operations plan is helpful for establishing pricing and costs, as well as for defining more specifically the ways which the agency will benefit the community; a yearly evaluation is critically important to ensure efficiency, appropriateness, and vitality. Hosting a year-end retreat for department staff is a helpful way to collectively evaluate performance and to identify goals and objectives for the coming year.

Figure 7.2: Ongoing Annual Operation Plan Diagram



This process will be especially important going into 2021 and 2022 as the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted program offerings for 2020. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation have offered the same (or similar) programming catalog yearly for many years. While the current programming has been generally popular and well-attended, there would be significant benefit to both the community and staff in refreshing the programs. Considering operations in their entirety and determining what operations the department should “Stop, Start, and Continue” is a helpful technique to successfully realign services. Considering the condition

of facilities, the success of existing programs, and how extended the current staff is, Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation would do well to expand programming offered while also decreasing facilities maintained.

The following steps are intended to guide the department in defining the purpose of its programming and the direction the agency would like to take moving forward.

Program Review

Review every program in the department for the following:

- What is the purpose of the program or activity?
- What is the program attempting to accomplish?

Using the answers to these questions, set specific goals for each program.

Budgeting

Use budget information to review actual direct costs from the previous year.

- Review part time wages, supplies, instructors' costs, etc.
- Separate the indirect costs of the full-time wages, maintenance costs, or utilities

Participation

Estimate participation based on historic data from previous years.

- Determine minimum number of participants
- Determine maximum number of participants

Determine Market Rate

Using each program's total direct cost to the annual budget, set the market rate price.

Determine Direct Costs

Prior to determining pricing, the most important step is to determine direct costs. Calculate all direct costs and then establish a percentage of cost recovery for each program.

Pricing

Based on the calculations from determining direct costs and cost recovery, set price. Calculate the market rate, and also the resident discount.

Evaluate

- Reflect on and assess the purpose of each program
- Establish a goal for participation
- Establish a goal for cost recovery

7.8.3 Recommendations

1. Be a mission driven agency; pay very close attention to the mission of Parks and Recreation
 - Ensure every action and decision always connects back to the mission
2. Establish an annual assessment process to determine if Cuyahoga Falls should stop offering a program, continue offering a program, or start a new program (Annual Implementation Plan for Business Operations – Subsection 7.8.2.)
 - Consider an annual retreat as part of this assessment
3. Evaluate program times to ensure programs are actually offered when community members can participate

-
4. Maintain, enhance, and fully fund existing community programs
 5. Identify and begin to address the needs of underserved populations through strategic outreach and inter-organizational collaboration
 6. Utilize the existing amphitheater and a future amphitheater at Keyser Park for additional and enhanced program opportunities, including events such as summer concerts, movies, and children's theater
 7. Expand program offerings to address unmet community needs including concerts/arts performances, adult fitness and wellness programs, outdoor movies, and community events
 8. Make full use of new facilities – new lodges, outdoor fitness equipment, disc golf courses, etc. – to expand opportunities
 9. Develop more age 55+ programming in light of the rapid growth of this demographic
 10. Brand and market active senior programs together under a unique category, "Cuyahoga Falls Active Adults" – offer these at The Natatorium, Keyser Park, and other parks throughout the city
 - Strategically market these programs to those seniors who are more active
 11. Evaluate demand for expanding pickleball offerings, meeting the sport's growing participation
 12. Monitor recreation trends regularly, especially concerning those growing population groups, to best serve the needs of the whole community
 13. Develop programming at Quirk Cultural Center to meet needs for more creative and cultural arts programs for both youth and adults
 14. Utilize the Core Program Guidelines in Appendix C as a source for potential program offerings
 15. Maintain the popular Mobile Rec program
 16. Seek opportunities for additional teen programs, including Esports programs

7.9 OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE, AND PROMOTION

7.9.1 Observations and Analyses

On a per population basis, Cuyahoga Falls employed more full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (25.1 per 10,000 population) than the benchmark median (11.6) in 2019. However, they spent less than half the benchmark on each of these employees (\$48,000 vs. \$98,000). Most of the staff members help operate The Natatorium, Brookledge Golf Club, Water Works Family Aquatic Center, and Downview Sports Center each of which generally brings in revenue to match or exceed operating costs. Cuyahoga Falls revenue per capita in 2019 (\$107) was more than twice the benchmark (\$52) and more than five times the national level (\$21). Combined with a cost recovery of 88% (benchmark is 45%) these numbers indicate an effective and efficient staff.

The staffing numbers and cost recovery for 2020 will not come close to matching the 2019 (or previous years) values due to facility closures, staff layoffs, and reduced usage of indoor facilities due to COVID-19. It is also unclear when or even whether usage of facilities, most notably The Natatorium, will return to pre-pandemic levels. Accordingly, operational efficiencies for the near future will become even more important. The recommendations that follow could help solidify future success for the department.

7.9.2 Structure

The City of Cuyahoga Falls is faced with challenges comparable to most American cities. Racial inequalities and racist practices, struggles to create equitable opportunities for health and wellness, social divisions and socioeconomic barriers – all of these systemic issues play out in everyday life in ways that entities like Parks and Recreation agencies have the power to directly address through seemingly insignificant but truly effective practices. Looking ahead into a new decade – and especially post-pandemic – how can parks departments enter into the work of creating positive social change? Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation is staffed by people who are open, willing, and capable of this kind of work. Systemic challenges can be met, among many ways, through activities such as community events and programs (as described above). But in addition

to these more external efforts, focused training can help staff learn ways to tackle these large issues through seemingly small but effective acts.

Thorny issues aside, staff and the department itself will benefit from continued training for leadership and cultivated growth within their respective fields. For example, the existing team can pursue appropriate certifications for overseeing parks and recreation operations, including Aquatic Facility Operator Certification (AFO) and Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). As needs arise, staff may pursue other relevant certifications. To accommodate staff seeking these credentials, Cuyahoga Falls must identify and allocate funding for professional development opportunities (e.g., conferences, training, memberships, etc.) with consideration to the licensure and requirements for certifications.

An incentive pay program for lifeguards is recommended. Offering fair, competitive wages will help attract employees even among the most common age group for lifeguards (typically the hardest to engage – teenagers). Higher wages incentivize individuals to come back annually which in turn helps cut down training costs and ensures staff with adequate experience.

The current fee structures in Cuyahoga Falls are largely considered fair and acceptable by the community and elected officials. During unprecedented financial times and the ongoing strain caused by the coronavirus pandemic, increasing program fees is not advised. Also worth considering is the lack of population growth expected in Cuyahoga Falls; this stable population will mean more stagnant tax contributions as a reflection of lower numbers of new residents.

Eventually, the city will need to consider recovery models that will enable users to pay a fair share of increased programming cost. It will be essential for the department to have a clear understanding of all costs associated with each program. This understanding is the foundation of a true “cost-recovery” strategy that the department should adhere to in the future. As part of this Continuous Improvement Plan for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation, devising cost recovery guidelines and a fee structure will be essential for implementing small but tangible improvements through incremental fee increases; in other words, achieving adequate funding gradually rather than by a dramatic increase all at once.

Because it will be more difficult to expand staffing while the community’s population remains level, any opportunities for contracting with an outside vendor or community partner to produce department programming should be considered. Collaborating externally enables existing staff to oversee more programs within an ideally smooth, streamlined process. The city needs the partnership of outside vendors and contractors to effectively expand programs and events. That said, not all programs can or should be transferred to contractors. Any contracts pursued must remain consistent and formally structured in writing with clear parameters ensuring benefits for the city and contractor both.

7.9.3 Maintenance

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has a significant backlog of deferred maintenance throughout the park system. While the department has already begun to address this maintenance, a capital maintenance and replacement plan needs to be developed. This program will require additional dedicated funding in the capital budget. Of utmost consideration is the high cost of reactive maintenance, rather than proactive action; when maintenance is deferred for too long, the cost increases exponentially each year of delay.

As the department currently operates, there is generally not enough funding to replace facilities beyond their useful life. Whatever amount is added to the budget is usually spent replacing smaller capital items, which leaves larger capital items unaddressed. All deferred maintenance should be identified and prioritized over a multi-year period. Projects should be replaced based on need. If there is not enough funding to replace items of higher value, there should be funding allocated in the Capital Fund specifically for larger capital projects. Leasing equipment is another option to consider. For example, some equipment at Brookledge Golf Course is getting old and past its useful life and could be replaced with leased equipment incurring an annual cost smaller than the cost (or hassle) of repurchasing.

Spending on smaller less prioritized capital projects simply because there is adequate funding in the annual budget should be avoided. Projects of highest priority should be funded first. Where appropriate, larger projects can be bundled and issued as a bond so as to better tackle as many as possible altogether. Additionally, creating a comprehensive preventive maintenance plan for equipment safeguards against costly repairs that

might otherwise have been avoided. Whenever items are purchased, plans for their eventual replacement must be in place.

Something else for the department to consider in terms of cost – how much mowing it is responsible for throughout the city. Some areas currently mowed could be transformed into exceptional natural areas, saving considerable cost for maintenance (see Section 7.6). Adding an educational component can help inform residents about the value of restoration – ecological and economical – and explain the intent behind the transformation. A buffer between developed areas and restored or natural areas is necessary. For example, if an area adjacent to a pathway is converted to its natural state, a mowed buffer of 10'-15' should be maintained to help with visibility and to define the restored space; this buffer can be used to display interpretive and informational signage.

Finally, maintenance requirements should be considered during the development process. Often, maintenance needs are an afterthought. If maintenance staff are consulted during development, they may be able to provide input that reduces maintenance demands. For example, if Parks and Recreation maintenance staff use a 72 inch wide lawn mower, space between vertical obstructions in grass areas should be at least that distance wherever possible. It is also important to make sure that maintenance staff have the necessary knowledge to maintain a feature or amenity prior to its development.

7.9.4 Engagement and Promotion

The public has indicated a strong desire for continuous, ongoing engagement with Parks and Recreation to make sure that their needs are heard. The city must maintain continuous public engagement throughout the implementation of this plan. Some of the specific park improvements require local resident engagement to ascertain whether needs are really being met. Any improvement project should incorporate outreach and engagement.

According to survey responses, the chief reason people do not use parks and programs is that they do not know what is offered (45%). Attendees of the public workshops and stakeholder groups expressed a desire for better promotion of facilities, programs, and events; outreach, if addressed, would help improve citizen access to information about offerings by Parks and Recreation. It is worth noting that this issue is very typical for communities across the country, but it is an issue that has manageable solutions. Creating simple marketing and branding templates will give staff a better starting point for promoting programs more easily and effectively. Following the pandemic, reengaging with even previous park and program users will be more critical than ever before.

With the development of new branding for Brookledge Golf Club and Downview Sports Center, there is a wonderful opportunity to elevate marketing and promotional efforts. Figure 7.3 outlines three elements necessary for a successful marketing campaign. The top section in the figure signifies the identity of the agency. The middle section – the visual identity and messaging platform – describes what brochures, ads, flyers, and media will look like. The bottom section provides examples for how to distribute the message. This figure is intended as a guide.

The strategic plan in Chapter 6 defines most of the top element for Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation. The middle element then defines the agency's visual identity and messaging platform. The work must be easy to implement and to modify when needed. Standard formatting should be established for all marketing and promotional efforts. Figure 7.4 represents an example of a very simple "one look" that would be easily recognizable as messaging from the department. The title and images of a standard flyer or brochure can easily be changed to reflect what the agency wants to communicate or promote.

The standard event flyer format should include:

- Pictures (at the top and middle)
- Event name (in the front banner)
- Time and location (across the middle)
- Sponsors (at the bottom)
- Brand, logo, website and social media information

Any other materials, like the brochure in Figure 7.5, should incorporate similar visual identity and messaging structure. The same visual identity should also be used for online marketing, including social media and email notifications.

Figure 7.3: Essential Marketing Communication Elements

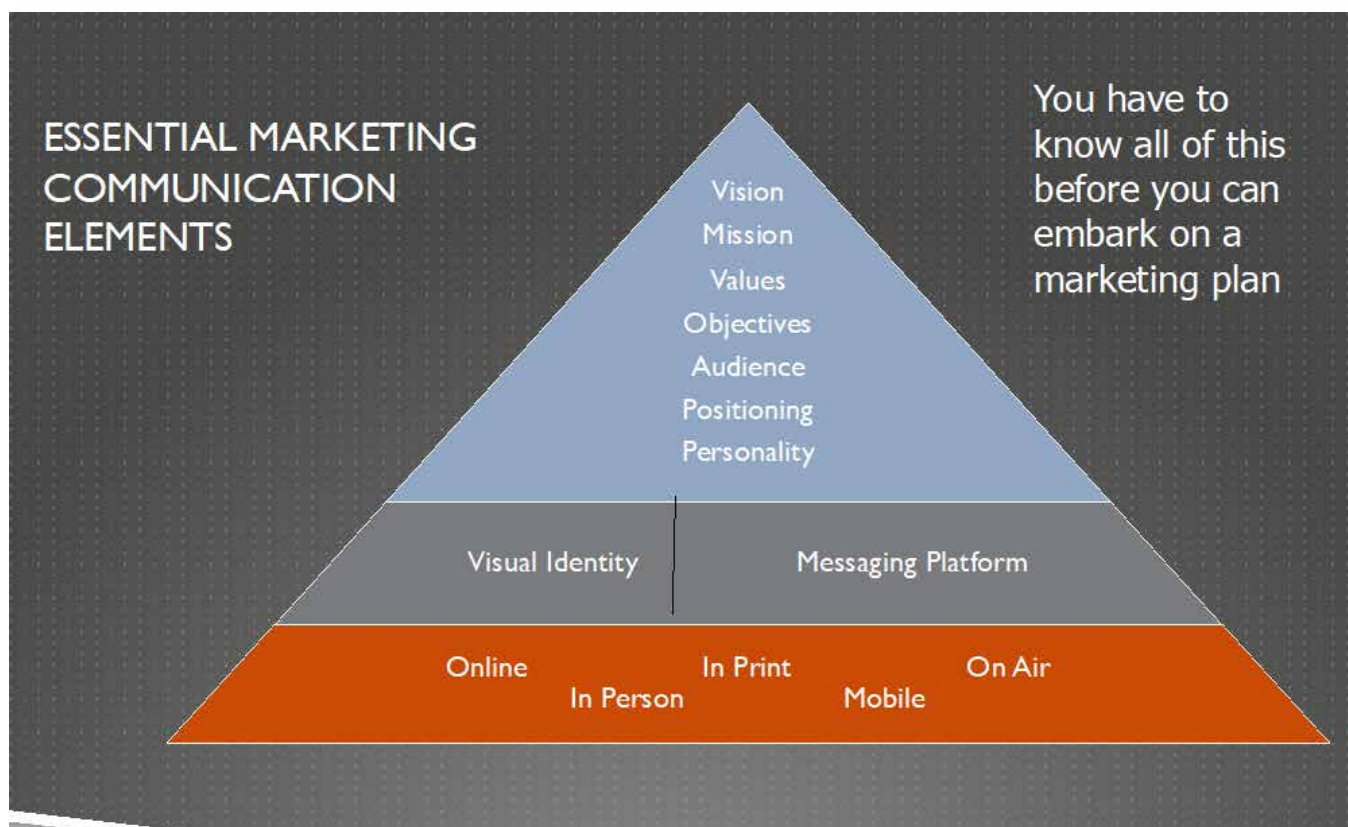


Figure 7.4: Sample Event Flyer



Figure 7.5: Sample Brochure



Expanded marketing has the potential to bring additional users to all of the revenue generating facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. In particular, there is an opportunity at Downview Sports Center to build marketing and promotion efforts to attract more users. The ratio of revenues to expenses is already very good at this facility; expenses are limited as compared to revenue collected. Expenses are fixed, meaning when more users come, profits grow exponentially. Broadening offerings at this facility will help actualize this kind of growth.

7.9.5 Recommendations

Structure

1. Improve maintenance at parks
2. Prepare an Operations Plan with Maintenance Standards
3. Develop a capital maintenance and replacement program (may require an increase in the parks and recreation capital budget comparable to other communities)
4. Increase maintenance budget to accommodate new facilities and programs
5. Consult maintenance staff during park development to help reduce maintenance requirements and ensure staff are able to adequately maintain new features
6. Consider lease options when replacing equipment to avoid the need for costly capital expenditures
7. Train staff
 - Create and implement professional and career development plans for both management and supervisory staff
 - Identify and allocate funding for critical staff development opportunities (including conferences, training, memberships, etc.) with consideration to licensure and certification requirements

-
- Encourage continued staff training for leadership and continued growth within respective fields
 - Encourage management level staff to attend professional development programs offered by state, regional, and national training organizations
 - Support staff members in pursuing Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO) and Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) certifications
8. Explore and solidify contracted partnerships with outside vendors and organizations to produce more programming
- Broadens programming without having to hire additional staff
 - Many emerging requests from the public can be provided by private vendors

Engagement and Promotion

1. Maintain continuous public engagement throughout the implementation of this plan
2. Establish a visual identity and messaging strategy for the department
3. Develop and adopt written diversity and inclusion plans using NRPA guidelines to ensure that individuals of all abilities and backgrounds and participate in programs
4. Determine standard formatting for all marketing and promotional efforts (consider samples provided above) based on this platform
5. Identify a consistent brand as it relates to color, style, logo placement, and promotional materials
 - Ensure that park signage is consistent with this branding
6. Expand marketing of programs and facilities to increase community awareness of opportunities
7. Engage neighborhoods during park improvement processes
8. Utilize this Continuous Improvement Plan to guide decision making – regularly monitor progress
9. Introduce mobile apps to enhance park user experiences
10. Celebrate the department and programming accomplishments and achievements by pursuing state and national recognition and accolades

Contracts

1. Develop working agreements with each partner (all outside groups using Cuyahoga Falls facilities) with measurable outcomes and review every two years at a minimum
2. Understand all agency costs, both indirect and direct, before entering into agreements; understand how much investment a partner will commit to collaboration
3. Never permit private or not-for-profit groups to benefit financially from Cuyahoga Falls facilities without the city receiving a share of gross revenue
4. Ensure all future contracts benefit the City of Cuyahoga Falls and its residents, in addition to the partnering vendor or contractor
5. Require city-owned properties remain available to Cuyahoga Falls residents when not in use by the lessee

7.10 BUDGET AND FUNDING

The total operating budget (see Table 2.15) for parks and recreation in Cuyahoga Falls for 2019 was \$6.1 million, providing a slightly higher per capita operating expenditure than the benchmark communities (\$121 compared to \$106). However, the department has generated far more revenue than other communities – more than twice as much per capita. The department also typically spends less per acre of parkland than the benchmark comparisons, despite having several high maintenance facilities within the system. As noted previously, generated revenue represented 88% of the Parks and Recreation budget in 2019. These numbers suggest limited room to improve cost recovery, but just a few of the city's facilities account for most of the revenue. The department could use additional methods to maintain the current level of cost recovery as programs and amenities are added to the system.

Additionally, returning to pre-pandemic cost recovery levels are far from guaranteed when facilities return to full capacity and operations in the future. Hopefully, memberships and program registration will return to 2019 levels, but it could be a couple of years before the answer to this question is even known. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation must prepare for this uncertain future.

7.10.1 Management and Budget

Budget and financial performance analysis is needed for a department of this size, but it is not currently being completed. It is important for the department to have a firm grip on the costs associated with operating any given program or facility. Simply generating more revenue will not be beneficial if costs are not simultaneously controlled. If costs are not known, it is not possible to correctly calculate cost recovery.

Instituting a cost recovery and pricing plan for all offerings (see next subsection) will help the department more efficiently tackle its budgeting. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation has a successful history of operating within its approved budget, and it is vital for Parks and Recreation to maintain its good relationship with the Finance Department as staff in both departments change.

Enterprise Fund

The Enterprise Fund (or "Leisure Times Fund"), which comprises The Natatorium, Water Works Family Aquatic Center, Brookledge Golf Club, Downview Sports Center, and Quirk Cultural Center, functions efficiently. However, placing the Quirk Cultural Center in line with the other more successful enterprises in the Leisure Times Fund shows the fund as not performing to its true potential.

To financially manage an enterprise account, only those programs or services that are intended to operate with limited tax dollars should be in the Leisure Times Fund. Quirk Cultural Center appears to have been placed in the Leisure Times Fund for some other reason. Perhaps the intention was to make the General Fund look better, but these programs perform better – at about 75% cost recovery – than the General Fund. As these programs are expected to require a subsidy, they should be placed in the General Fund.

Recreation Levy Fund

The Recreation Levy Fund is managed as well as any other parks and recreation agency operating these dollars. One significant benefit to the financing of Parks and Recreation in Cuyahoga Falls is the 0.125% of all income tax collections. This is unusual for parks departments and these unrestricted funds provide for improvements that would otherwise not be possible. Even with this fund, capital expenditures in Cuyahoga Falls are just over half of what the benchmark communities spend per capita.

7.10.2 Cost Recovery

There should be a clear understanding of the costs to put on a program or event. Once the cost is determined, the department, with the assistance of City Council and senior administration of the city, needs to determine through a business process how much of that cost should be recovered. The department should then determine fees for each program based on this assessment.

As of now, there is no department mandate establishing the percentage of costs each program should recover. While the amount can vary depending on staff and council decisions, programs and events that serve the greater need of the citizens of Cuyahoga Falls should have a higher subsidy from the community than those that provide individual benefits to participants. This exercise may require continual tweaking, but having a plan and rationale is essential for managing cost recovery.

As of 2019, the department's overall cost recovery of 88% was much higher compared to other agencies (45% in benchmark communities, 26% nationally). Enterprise operations accounted for most of this cost recovery, recovering 122% of operating costs; the General Fund recovered just 10%. Additional program offerings can and should increase the level of cost recovery for the General Fund, but more strategies are necessary to ensure the continued success of the department over the next ten years.

Consistent Pricing for Programming

Programming fees should reflect the indirect costs of putting on the program. As department costs increase, these costs need to be explained and then distributed to the contractors conducting the programming.

Creating Revenue from Events

The City of Cuyahoga Falls and its family friendly reputation lends itself to a series of community-wide events that can generate substantial revenue through entrance fees, operations, and sponsors.

Gaining Control and an Understanding of Maintenance Costs

The department should know the exact cost to maintain outdoor parks. A maintenance standard by season should be set along with the number of people required to maintain one acre of parkland. If new parkland is brought into the department, the maintenance costs should be a part of planning and development discussions; having standards in place helps with this deliberation.

Enterprise Revenue

Prior to adding features at any facilities included in the Leisure Times Fund, potential revenue should be evaluated and compared to the expected cost of operating an added feature (e.g., snow machine for sled hill).

Golf Retail

Considering the productivity of the retail operations at the golf course, most golfers do not buy materials at the pro shop. Any enterprise offering – like the pro shop – that is not a true source of revenue should be abandoned except for offering convenience items such as golf balls, tees, and golf gloves that patrons may need.

Rentals

The city reserves picnics shelters on a daily basis, but most events last two hours or less. A fee to reserve picnic shelters for half days (with an hour between reservations) would enable expanded use of existing facilities. Changing the reservation structure in this way may require emptying trash receptacles between rented sessions and other tasks to maintain the expected level of service; if city staff are unavailable, this service may be outsourced with the cost included in the rental fee.

Permits

Payment for field permits is inconsistent. Some youth athletic groups pay a fee for permitting, while others do not. There should be consistent requirements for all field permits.

7.10.3 Potential Revenue Sources

Financially sustainable parks and recreation agencies no longer rely on taxes as their only source of revenue generation. Cuyahoga Falls is no exception given that the department already recovers most of its operating costs. Thriving park systems of the future will continue developing creative methods for supporting both operational and capital needs. Cuyahoga Falls should start immediately to develop pricing policies for services (including cost recovery models) and to firm up any vendor partnership agreements.

There are numerous sources that will show ways to fund parks and recreation projects, but many of these strategies can be very hard to establish and take years to see any results. Examples of some of these ideas include maintenance endowment funds, conservation districts, license tags, transient occupancy taxes, income taxes, lease backs, real-estate transfer fees, land dedication and/or park impact fees, and park authorities. Although all of these can be explained and experimented with, three ideas could have an immediate impact on the operations of Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation.

Importance of a Parks Foundation

Energizing the existing Partnership for Parks is one tremendous opportunity Cuyahoga Falls can pursue. Founded in 2014, the Partnership for Parks Foundation is a nonprofit organization that exists to raise funds, encourage collaboration, and promote the city's parks and recreation resources. Funds generated create opportunities for capital projects and programming efforts. These funds can also serve to support volunteer recruitment and organization, introducing park ambassadors and other engaged members as part of the city's parks and recreation service. The Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks is already promoted on the city's website, and it provides a contact portal for residents and potential donors. The chief opportunity is to continue spreading the word about the Partnership and to develop new ways for the organization to uplift the city's parks, facilities, and recreation.

Volunteer Power

Park ambassadors provide directions, offer assistance, or remind visitors of park policies. They may also assist with maintenance activities, such as litter collection. The presence of ambassadors often helps visitors feel more comfortable in park spaces, and they can monitor sites to make sure people feel welcome and have good access to features of the park.

Adopt-A-Trail or Adopt-A-Park programs are other opportunities for volunteers to assist with park maintenance in Cuyahoga Falls. These programs help encourage residents to become involved in keeping their neighborhood parks clean and give new possibilities for involvement to those residents who have the interest but need a formal opportunity. Keep Cuyahoga Falls Beautiful has an "Adopt-A-Spot" program with some landscaped areas in Cuyahoga Falls Parks. There may be potential to expand this existing partnership to include other parks and trail volunteer programs.

Grants and Application for Funding

Not all grants are beneficial; most are positive, but some require more work from staff than the grant's potential benefits. Cuyahoga Falls has previously taken advantage of NatureWorks and Clean Ohio grants. The City of Cuyahoga Falls should continue to be on the lookout for grants that will enhance the park system. Applying to established foundations is often easier and has a higher acceptance rate. There are sometimes local foundations that are more amenable to giving locally. In all, grants can come from the federal government, state sources, and sometimes local entities. Indianapolis, for example, has received over \$100 million in foundation grants from the Lilly Endowment over the past 20 years for park related improvements in the city.

Example Grant Sources:

- National Recreation Trails Program
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Conservation Reserve Fund
- Community Forest and Open Space Program (Federal)
- Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Grants, (USDA)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (Federal)
- NatureWorks (Ohio)
- Clean Ohio fund (Ohio)

General Funding Sources for Parks, Recreation, and Sports Facility Operations

Below is a general list of ideas that communities have used to supplement costs of operations. Some of these may be more effective in Cuyahoga Falls than others.

- Official Drink for Parks and Recreation
- Tournament fees – if an outside vendor makes money, the city should as well
- Scoreboard sponsors
- Parking fees at events

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- Field permits when outside groups are not using the fields
 - Advertising Sales
 - Wi-Fi revenue through sponsorship, if a vendor provides the Wi-Fi
 - Cell Tower Leases
 - Privatization of various park and recreation programs and services
 - Sports Booster Clubs
 - Corporate sponsorship in exchange for advertising

7.10.4 Recommendations

Management and Budget

1. Know the value of assets (excluding land values); know where those assets are in their life cycle
2. Determine maintenance standards that include how many employees are required to maintain one acre of parkland; consider these standards when adding parkland to the system
3. Know the true costs to deliver services (direct and indirect costs) and inform users, partners, and citizens of these true costs
4. Establish and adjust fees for programs according to direct and indirect costs, as well as connection to the mission
5. Classify the agency's services according to how they align with the agency's mission
6. Stop maintaining unused features and spaces in the park system and remove them from the system
7. Know the demographics of the citizens served
8. Track population trends
9. Control labor costs
10. Transfer Quirk Cultural Center to the General Fund so that the Leisure Times Fund contains only true enterprise operations

Cost Recovery

1. Maintain or increase cost recovery at its current level (88%) or better as new features are developed, and new programs are added
2. Institute an easy to understand Cost Recovery and Pricing Plan for everything that is offered
3. Price services furthest away from the mission at full cost recovery levels
4. Analyze potential costs versus revenue before adding new features
5. Establish a fee to reserve picnic shelters for half days with an hour between reservations to allow additional use of existing facilities
6. Identify potential revenue sources at community events, including sponsorships and entry fees
7. Consider reducing or eliminating merchandise offerings at the Brookledge Golf Club pro shop if they do not provide a true source of revenue
8. Establish consistent requirements for all field permits
9. Develop a program for recruiting and scheduling volunteer park ambassadors to promote wellbeing and provide assistance at parks
10. Utilize volunteers to assist with park maintenance through efforts such as the adoption of sections of parks or trails in Cuyahoga Falls; potentially expand the partnership with Keep Cuyahoga Falls Beautiful

Fundraising

1. Find dedicated funding sources for Parks and Recreation that can be depended upon annually
2. Seek philanthropists in the community to support the agency's causes

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3. Promote and energize the Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks to better raise funds, recruit and organize volunteers, and champion the city's parks and facilities
 4. Continue seeking grants and apply to foundations for project funding that enhances the park system; be sure this is consistent with the mission of Parks and Recreation while also considering associated costs to the city

7.11 PUBLIC ART

The City of Cuyahoga Falls Public Arts Master Plan (approved in 2020) offers many place-based creative solutions for enhancing quality of life and social cohesion in the community, several of which intersect with this parks and facilities Continuous Improvement Master Plan. For instance, the Public Art Master Plan discusses installations and activations in the parks themselves and also defines the need for stronger connections to the Cuyahoga River, a river whose banks cut through a number of the city's parks. Using the guidelines and action items described in the Public Art Master Plan as a foundation, the following recommendations weave together arts and action to reinforce the cultural relevancy of the Parks and Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan.

1. Activate High Bridge Glens
 - Support coordinated "Front Street Placemaking" effort through departmental partnership, staff collaboration, and activation of physical space
2. Initiate public art open call – facilitated through city partnership or with support from a local arts advocacy group – to develop and install Historical River Markers at the following parks with river frontage:
 - High Bridge Glens
 - Downtown Pavilion, Amphitheater, and Splash Pad
 - River Front Park
 - Water Works Park
3. Pursue partnership, sponsorship, and other collaboration opportunities to implement community-led public art projects (e.g., mural, performance, sculpture, etc.) at select parks:
 - Kennedy Park
 - Valley Vista Park
4. Incorporate the arts and creative solutions into future developments and improvements at Keyser Park, involving community and local residents whenever possible

7.12 PARTNERSHIPS AND SPONSORSHIPS

7.12.1 Observations and Analyses

Partnerships and sponsorships can help reduce costs or provide revenues to help expand parks and recreation opportunities for residents, and following the pandemic, the need for successful partnerships will only increase. Stakeholder groups indicated a need for more partnerships. Cuyahoga Falls currently partners with many organizations – including sports leagues, civic groups, business groups, and more – to offer programs and events in Cuyahoga Falls. Some new facilities will likely be possible only through partnerships with other organizations to cover both capital and operating costs.

Cuyahoga Falls currently maintains a good relationship and partnership with its school district, even to the point that the city maintains and improves playgrounds and fields. Opportunities may exist to further partner with the schools to expand youth programming and to utilize facilities at elementary schools to meet growing need for field space and indoor programming. School districts and parks and recreation departments across the country partner to provide educational programs for elementary students, either at the schools or at park facilities. As noted in the previous section, all partnerships and vendor agreements should be established and maintained at a consistent level.

Given the close proximity of Summit Metro Parks and the National Park Service, it is paramount that Cuyahoga Falls define the role of Parks and Recreation both internally and externally to the community. All three agencies serve taxpayers; it is vital there be **no** duplication, especially in a time of financially stressed budgets. Nature programs are an obvious potential partnership with Summit Metro Parks. On the other hand, Cuyahoga Falls Library currently offers programming and is a great potential partner for expanding educational programs.

Many of the passive type activities are enjoyed at and within the Metro Parks system and the National Park Service. Improved coordination between Metro Parks and Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation would provide better service for residents while reducing the total number of parks the city must maintain. As previously discussed, Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary is a better fit for Summit Metro Parks, but steps must be taken to make their involvement beneficial to them. A potential first step is to include them in any park improvements. Adding collaboration with Ohio State Parks and the National Park Service could further expand service while still avoiding duplication or inefficiencies.

Hospitals and health institutions are other parks partners, and such collaboration is becoming more common across the country and help develop health and wellness programming. Hospital systems customarily provide financial resources, while parks and recreation conducts the programming. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation already partners with Western Reserve Hospital for the Rehabilitation and Wellness Center at The Natatorium. The department should explore additional possibilities for partnering with health providers.

Many stakeholders expressed desire for better access and connection to the river. Parks and Recreation plays an integral role in this effort through its facilities and programs, but other city departments and partners will help accomplish this goal more fully. Continued coordination for the removal of the remaining dams along the river, especially the Edison Dam in Gorge Metro Park, should expand opportunities to engage with the river giving people a chance to take advantage of the unique resource. Improvements to and promotion of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail will continue to connect people to these resources and bring them to Cuyahoga Falls.

7.12.2 Recommendations

1. Treat all vendors, contractors, and partners in a professional, consistent manner with a legal, signed contract containing the following:
 - Name, entity, and address
 - Obligations of each party
 - Terms of the contract
 - Price (if any, and who pays for what)
 - Representations and warranties – (insurance, who owns what)
 - Termination of the contract – when and by whom
 - Signed, witnessed, and reviewed periodically
2. Seek opportunities to expand partnerships with local organizations to improve access to recreation facilities and programs
3. Require a maintenance plan that identifies ongoing funding needs for partnership projects
4. Establish policies for accepting sponsorships and selling naming rights
5. Partner with Summit Metro Parks, the National Park Service, and others for nature education programs throughout parks in Cuyahoga Falls
6. Continue to partner with DTCF for downtown events and enhanced connection to the river
7. Partner with health care providers to promote and financially underwrite healthy lifestyles through parks and recreation
8. Partner with Cuyahoga Falls Library for educational programs and cross-promotion of community offerings



INDIVIDUAL PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes recommendations for individual park improvements including proposed new facilities and upgrades to existing parks. Each section reviews the findings explored in the park inventory (Chapter 3) and offers steps forward. These recommendations are presented as a starting point for future discussions with users, neighbors, partners, and the community at large. Before pursuing development, a deeper investigation into the capacity and potential of each of these parks will be needed to determine precise details like placement, materials used, and maintenance considerations.

This chapter also includes a suggested level of priority for each improvement recommendation; priority is based on public engagement, steering committee input, and the condition of facilities. Priorities should always be confirmed before implementation through community engagement which will be especially important as the city recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Cost estimates for each park's recommendations are located at the end of this chapter.

In addition to the following recommendations for each park across the system, five parks were selected for a more detailed design analysis. Opportunity, needs, community input, and departmental goals all informed the selection of these specific sites. The five concept plans offered are intended to support any funding or development pursuits and to guide the improvement process.

8.2 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

8.2.1 Galt Park

Background

Galt Park is adjacent to Brookledge Golf Club. It is in the East Sector, not far from downtown and in a more densely developed and populated area of the city. The park includes Galt Park Lodge, a playground, and a small area of natural, passive recreation space. Located in close proximity to other spaces in Cuyahoga Falls' parks system, Galt Park primarily needs upgrades to accessibility and beautification to help strengthen its cohesion with the rest of the system.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited ADA accessibility

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- Lodge needs renovation
 - Lack of lighting
 - No accessible restrooms
 - Lodge exterior needs painting
 - Lack of signage
 - Paved pathways need resurfacing
 - Limited age 2-5 play equipment
 - Swings need to be replaced

Improvement Recommendations

1. Renovate Galt Park Lodge or build a new 3-season pavilion with restrooms
2. Add corn hole at Galt Park Lodge or new 3-season pavilion
3. Add edging at the playground
4. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
5. Install accessible walks to all features
6. Add site lighting for security and visibility
7. Add age 2-5 playground equipment and replace swings
8. Improve marketing of the community gardens to increase participation
9. Improve roads and parking lots throughout the park, including conforming ADA spaces
10. Develop a neighborhood feature based on the preferences of the nearby residents as determined through neighborhood outreach
11. Add support amenities including Wi-Fi hotspots, landscaping, and site furnishings

8.2.2 Harrington Field

Background

Harrington Field is a small Neighborhood Park with a softball diamond and a small playground. It is adjacent to Oakwood Cemetery and not far from The Natatorium and Cuyahoga Falls High School. It is centralized near downtown and surrounded by homes which makes it an easily accessible space.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Fencing needs repair
- Water retention/poor drainage
- Lack of features
- Age and condition of playground, woodchip surface needs to be replaced
- Lack of lighting
- Insufficient trash receptacles

Improvement Recommendations

1. Improve site drainage (in progress)
2. Improve or replace perimeter fencing
3. Replace the playground with separate age 2-5 and age 5-12 equipment
4. Install accessible walks to all features
5. Improve the diamond field with new dugouts and fencing

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6. Add site lighting for security and visibility
 7. Install a half basketball court
 8. Develop a neighborhood feature based on the preferences of the nearby residents as determined through neighborhood outreach
 9. Add support amenities including trees, landscaping, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

8.2.3 Indian Mountain Park

Background

Indian Mountain Park is a Neighborhood Park located in the East Sector of Cuyahoga Falls with several family-oriented amenities such as a playground and wading pool. Its main entrance is on Baily Road across from Downview Sports Center.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited ADA accessibility
- No ADA parking spaces
- Water retention/poor drainage at basketball court
- Sidewalks are not level, buckling
- Playground surface needs replenishing
- Entrance signage is dirty; no signage at secondary entrance
- Poor condition of restroom building

Improvement Recommendations

1. Install accessible walks to all features and complete a perimeter loop
2. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
3. Resurface basketball court and improve drainage
4. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole
5. Add site lighting for security and visibility
6. Install outdoor fitness equipment
7. Replace the playground with modern and unique features for both ages 2-5 and 5-12
8. Replace restroom building
9. Develop a splash pad to replace the wading pool at the end of its useful life
10. Add support amenities including Wi-Fi hotspots, landscaping, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

8.2.4 Linden Park

Background

This Neighborhood Park is in a residential area of Cuyahoga Falls, and provides access to playground equipment, an open field, and a wading pool, among other active use facilities. It is also a Mobile Rec stop.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Needs signage on all 4 sides (has sign on Roanoke Ave only)
- Restroom building in serious disrepair; should be replaced
- Playground and restroom building are not ADA accessible
- Street-parking only
- Playground needs permanent edging material

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- Sidewalks are cracked and uneven
 - No net on volleyball court
 - Insufficient lighting inside park; only wading pool is lighted

Improvement Recommendations

1. Add site lighting for security and visibility
2. Add edging at playground
3. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole
4. Replace restroom building
5. Develop a neighborhood feature based on the preferences of the nearby residents to replace the wading pool at the end of its useful life
6. Add support amenities including landscaping, site furnishings, and entrance signage

8.2.5 Lions Park

Background

Lions Park is a Neighborhood Park with a Mobile Rec Stop and includes a number of amenities like a playground, the Lions Park Lodge, and basketball courts.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Basketball court surfaces have cracks
- Playground is not ADA accessible
- Park walkways need repair

Improvement Recommendations

1. Resurface the basketball courts
2. Build a new restroom building separate from the lodge
3. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
4. Develop a splash pad to replace the wading pool at the end of its useful life
5. Provide wayfinding to assist visitors in locating features
6. Install accessible walks to all features and complete a perimeter loop
7. Add site lighting for security and visibility
8. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole
9. Replace the playground with modern and unique features for both ages 2-5 and 5-12
10. Add support amenities including Wi-Fi hotspots, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

8.2.6 Oak Park

Background

Oak Park has a number of amenities, like playground with musical play equipment, a picnic shelter, and wading pool. It is situated west of downtown, several blocks north of Quirk Cultural Center and west of downtown.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Most of the sidewalks need to be replaced
- Poor drainage in playground; surface needs replenishing
- Sidewalk access to restroom building is too narrow

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- Corn hole is not ADA accessible
 - Parking lots need restriping and ADA spaces
 - Playground is not ADA accessible; needs more age 2-5 equipment
 - Shelter/pump house roof needs repair

Improvement Recommendations

1. Repair/paint pumphouse building and replace shelter roof (in progress)
2. Install accessible walks to all features
3. Add pickleball courts
4. Add age 2-5 playground equipment and remove sand area
5. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
6. Add site lighting for security and visibility
7. Develop a splash pad to replace the wading pool at the end of its useful life
8. Reseal and restripe the parking lot
9. Add support amenities including Wi-Fi hotspots, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

8.2.7 Quirk Cultural Center Park

Background

Located adjacent the Quirk Cultural Center, this park site is at the very southern edge of the community. It is a Mobile Rec site and, due to its proximity to the cultural center, is an opportunity for elevating the experiences of many kinds of parks users.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Playground has limited ADA access
- No sign identifying park
- Poor condition of paved walkway

Improvement Recommendations

1. Improve and ensure ADA accessibility to first floor restrooms at Quirk Cultural Center (in progress)
2. Resurface and restripe the basketball court
3. Add site lighting for security and visibility
4. Continue interior deferred maintenance improvements at Quirk Cultural Center
5. Repair the front parking overhang at Quirk Cultural Center
6. Improve HVAC at Quirk Cultural Center
7. Resurface and replace ADA walkways to provide accessible paths to all amenities
8. Install outdoor fitness equipment
9. Add age 2-5 playground equipment
10. Decommission the wading pool at end of its useful life
11. Add support amenities including site furnishings, and entrance signage

8.2.8 Ross Park

Background

Ross Park is currently an active use park with diamond fields, a basketball court, and a large rectangular field, primarily used by Cuyahoga Falls Black Tigers Football (CFBTB). It is located at the very northern edge

of the East Sector, a couple of blocks northeast of Linden Park. Due to its location and the community needs as defined in the composite service areas (Chapter 5), Ross Park is one of the Neighborhood Parks requiring deeper planning and development efforts. It is one of the five concept plans drafted for this Continuous Improvement Plan.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Excessive asphalt: curbs site-wide are buckling and need repair or replacing
- Walkways inside park do not connect features and are not ADA accessible
- No sidewalks connect to surrounding community
- Poor condition of ballfields – backstops are rusted and outfield fencing is too tall
- Poor condition of trailer at rectangular field
- Playground needs replacement
- Paved slab above buried water storage tank needs to be removed or repurposed
- Restroom building permanently closed due to poor condition

Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a Park Master Plan with the concept plan as a starting point
2. Replace the basketball court
3. Add entrance signage at multiple locations
4. Replace the playground with modern and unique features for both ages 2-5 and 5-12
5. Install accessible walks to all features and connect to adjoining neighborhoods
6. Improve the southern diamond field with new dugouts, backstop, and fencing
7. Improve remaining field space to accommodate multiple sports (soccer, cricket, etc.)
8. Add pickleball courts on the paved area above the water tank if possible (may require alternative surfacing)
9. Consider adding a futsal court on the paved area above the water tank if possible (may require alternative surfacing)
10. Add site lighting for security and visibility
11. Develop a neighborhood feature based on the preferences of the nearby residents as determined through neighborhood outreach
12. Install outdoor fitness equipment
13. Reseal and restripe the parking lot
14. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole
15. Coordinate with CFBT to improve the rectangular field, including the temporary building/trailer
16. Replace the restroom building
17. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
18. Add support amenities Wi-Fi hotspots, trees, landscaping, site furnishings, and entrance signage

Concept Plan

The concept plan for Ross Park can be seen in Figure 8.1. The 16-acre Neighborhood Park needs a combination of new facilities and replacements in order to sufficiently elevate the park's quality. In terms of replacements, the existing playground, basketball court, and restroom building all need to be changed. The existing athletic fields need various improvements (e.g., drainage, new backstops, fencing, and seating). The football field will require coordination with Cuyahoga Falls Black Tigers (CFBT) and also needs improvement/replacement of the storage building.

As for new facilities, an added cricket pitch in the east of the park, combined with the removal of outfield fences and one baseball/softball diamond, would address increased demand encountered throughout the planning process. Additionally, a futsal court and pickleball courts installed over the existing below-ground water tank would maximize functionality while at the same time cosmetically improving the site. Also, an added walkway around the eastern perimeter of the park, with new neighborhood connections at the northeastern and southwestern corners, would help meet the need for additional walkable space. The parking lot, adjacent to the football field, needs to be resurfaced and restriped, including ADA accessible spots. Additionally, a new picnic shelter with permanent corn hole is proposed next to the upgraded playground. Outdoor fitness equipment is recommended to be installed near the playground and picnic shelter. Relocation of the basketball court allows for better visibility and closer access to the restrooms.

All walkways need to be ADA compliant and must connect to all features and seating areas. Landscaping and tree plantings, particularly around the most developed portion of the park near the new restrooms, playground, and basketball court, will help beautify the space and mitigate water runoff. Site furnishings (not shown) are required to ensure accessible, quality experience throughout the park: benches, bike racks, pet waste stations, and trash receptacles. Lighting and security cameras are recommended sitewide to ensure improved safety and visibility. Entrance signage that is consistent with official branding is also needed. Lastly, it is recommended that quality Wi-Fi access be installed for visitor and departmental use.

8.2.9 Trails End Park

Background

Trails End Park is another Neighborhood Park for which a concept plan is presented, and an individual master plan is recommended. Its location east of the river and with respect to the composite service areas described earlier in this Continuous Improvement Plan (Chapter 5) make it an ideal location for intentional, strategic upgrades.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Restroom building in poor condition
- Paved walkways and parking lot in poor condition (no ADA parking spaces)
- Playground, ballfields, and dugout are not ADA accessible
- Poor drainage in playground, needs resurfacing
- Lighting on site is inadequate
- Softball dugout exterior needs new paint; overall both dugouts in good condition

Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a Park Master Plan with the concept plan as a starting point
2. Resurface and restripe the west parking lot and include marked ADA spaces
3. Add age 2-5 playground equipment
4. Install accessible walks to all features and connect to adjoining neighborhoods
5. Add site lighting for security and visibility
6. Resurface the west parking lot and restripe both parking lots with marked ADA spaces
7. Remove dying and unsafe trees throughout site and add a butterfly garden in some of the open space
8. Develop a neighborhood feature based on the preferences of the nearby residents as determined through neighborhood outreach
9. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole
10. Replace restroom building with new facility including concessions for sports leagues
11. Replace dugouts, backstops, and fencing at diamond fields
12. Add support amenities including site furnishings and secondary entrance signage
13. Replace the storage buildings near the south parking lot

Concept Plan

The concept plan for Trails End Park can be seen in Figure 8.2. At nearly eight acres, this Neighborhood Park has significant potential to be a great resource with several capital improvements. The existing playground needs additional equipment appropriate for ages two-five and new edging. Both baseball/softball diamond fields need enhancements, including new backstops, fencing, dugouts, and ADA access.

The existing parking lots need resurfacing and restriping. A new restroom building with concessions for the sports leagues is recommended to replace the existing structure. A new picnic shelter with permanent corn hole will allow for rentals and extended use of the park. Paved walkways are needed throughout the park to ensure ADA access and better connectivity to the adjoining neighborhoods.

The existing trees will need to be surveyed; selective removal of dead or unsafe trees is recommended. An area of the site is recommended to be reserved and replanted as a formal butterfly garden. The storage buildings near the south parking lot need to be replaced. Lighting sitewide will help to improve security and visibility for visitors and staff. Secondary entrance signage is needed as well. Site furnishings are recommended to ensure accessible, quality experience throughout the park: benches, bike racks, pet waste stations, and trash receptacles.

8.2.10 Valley Vista Park

Background

Valley Vista Park is easily accessible by surrounding neighborhood blocks and local streets. It features a more natural, passive use area with picnic tables and grills, as well as a wading pool, basketball court, and playground. It is also another Mobile Rec location.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Some park elements not accessible
- Restroom building in poor condition
- Parking lot surface in fair condition; no lighting
- Some playground equipment is accessible; some is outdated
- Additional lighting needed site-wide
- More trash receptacles needed
- Lacks sidewalks connecting to adjacent neighborhood – walks end at park property

Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a Park Master Plan (in progress)
2. Install ADA walkways connecting park features
3. Add paved connections to neighborhoods along Valley Rd and Harding Rd
4. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole
5. Add site lighting for security and visibility
6. Resurface and restripe west parking lot with marked ADA spaces
7. Add edging at the playground
8. Add age 2-5 playground equipment and remove sand area
9. Replace the restroom building
10. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
11. Develop a splash pad to replace the wading pool at the end of its useful life
12. Add either a 9-hole disc golf course or a dog park, based on the preferences of residents
13. Add support amenities including Wi-Fi hotspots, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

Figure 8.1: Ross Park Concept Plan



Figure 8.2: Trails End Park Concept Plan



8.3 COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PARKS

8.3.1 Kennedy Park

Background

This community park is significantly larger than the previous parks listed. Kennedy Park offers a range of experiences including access to nature via an arboretum, and more active recreational use like diamond fields and tennis courts. This site is adjacent to Water Works Family Aquatic Center along the eastern edge of the East Sector. Kennedy Park is another of the five concept plans drafted for this Continuous Improvement Plan.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited ADA accessibility throughout park
- All outdoor athletic fields require renovation
- Informational signs in disrepair
- Need more age 2-5 playground equipment
- No signage at secondary entrances
- Arboretum asphalt trail needs to be widened and resurfaced
- Insufficient light site-wide (especially in areas further from Schnee Learning Center)
- Parking lots need striping and designated ADA spaces
- Much of the park is within the 100-year floodplain

Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a Park Master Plan with the concept plan as a starting point
2. Improve and expand the existing walking path and connect to adjoining neighborhoods (in progress)
3. Install accessible walks to all features
4. Improve the diamond field with new dugouts, backstop, and fencing
5. Add site lighting for security and visibility
6. Resurface and restripe the parking lots and include marked ADA spaces
7. Replace and expand the playground to provide a barrier free experience
8. Replace restroom building with new facility including concessions for sports leagues
9. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
10. Provide wayfinding to assist visitors in locating features
11. Add interpretive signage throughout the park following the preparation of a signage plan
12. Install separate dedicated pickleball courts, if demand continues to grow, to meet needs and allow for sanctioned competitions
13. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole near the arboretum and a second shelter near the playground for gatherings and rental opportunities
14. Add butterfly/flower gardens adjacent to the arboretum for additional educational and nature viewing opportunities
15. Add bird houses throughout the arboretum area
16. Restore the creek (Kelsey Creek) to improve the appearance and enhance wildlife habitat
17. Add a privacy fence between the park area and the adjacent water plant
18. Add support amenities including drinking fountain with bottle filler, Wi-Fi hotspots, trees, landscaping, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

Concept Plan

The concept plan for Kennedy Park can be seen in Figure 8.3. This Community Park offers a wide range of experiences, including access to nature and active-use recreational facilities. Recommended capital improvements for this nearly 55-acre park encompass user experience enhancements, full accessibility sitewide, better connectivity, and new facilities. All existing baseball/softball diamond fields need significant upgrades with new backstops, fencing, dugouts, and ADA access. The large multipurpose field should be maintained and formalized as part of the improvements. The existing parking lots need to be resurfaced and restriped, including adequate and compliant ADA accessible parking.

A number of new or replaced facilities are proposed in the main activity area or near the northern parking lots. An expanded and inclusive playground, a replacement restroom building with concessions for the sports leagues, and a picnic shelter would make this area considerably more attractive and inviting for users. Three pickleball courts adjacent to the existing tennis court would allow for expansion of the sport and potential tournaments.

A second picnic shelter with permanent corn hole is proposed to the west of the main parking lot. Bird houses and a flower/butterfly garden are recommended along the western side of the park to enhance the arboretum area. Stream restoration is also needed to enhance the area. All walkways sitewide must be fully accessible and connected to all features. Additional neighborhood connections are proposed along the southern edge of the park.

New, consistently branded entrance signage will be needed at existing and added secondary entrances. Site furnishings will ensure accessible, quality experience throughout the park: benches, bike racks, pet waste stations, and trash receptacles. Wayfinding signage – as well as interpretive signage along the more natural areas of the trail – is recommended sitewide. Security cameras as well as lighting (pedestrian and street) should be installed for improved patron safety and visibility. Landscaping and tree plantings, particularly around the eastern edge of the park near the new restrooms, playground, and game courts, will help beautify the space and mitigate stormwater runoff. Despite the new development, the total amount of impervious surfaces should remain about the same due to the elimination of unnecessary pavement. Finally, it is recommended that quality Wi-Fi access be installed for visitor and departmental use.

8.3.2 Keyser Park

Background

This large Community Park is the only city park in the West Sector, near Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Keyser Park offers a community garden, several athletic amenities (i.e., fields and courts), two shelters, a natural wooded area, a dog park, and two playgrounds. Because of the park's size, existing variety of facilities, and opportunity for development, Keyser Park is another of the five concept plans prepared for this Continuous Improvement Plan.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Shelter at fields has no accessible walkway
- No accessible walkway to barn, community gardens, or dog park
- Swain House is in very poor condition and not accessible; unsafe to enter
- No indoor rental facilities
- Accessibility issues in parking lots and along paved walkways
- Opportunity for trail extension and connection across park
- Community garden, dog park, playgrounds, and ball fields are not accessible
- Ballfields lack lighting
- No outfield fencing in some of the fields
- Poor drainage in some of the fields
- Additional wayfinding signage needed across site

-
- Drinking fountains are not accessible
 - Parking lots need improvement (striping, ADA spaces)

Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a Park Master Plan with the concept plan as a starting point
2. Renovate the existing picnic shelter and add corn hole
3. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
4. Demolish the Swain House due to unsafe conditions (see pictures in Chapter 7)
5. Repair and improve the barn to better support events at the park
6. Improve diamond field with new dugouts and outfield fencing
7. Add interpretive signage throughout the park following the preparation of a signage plan
8. Add site lighting for security and visibility
9. Build a lodge near the existing barn to serve as a wedding and banquet venue
10. Install outdoor fitness equipment
11. Pave, stripe, and potentially expand the parking lots at the dog park and community gardens with ADA spaces
12. Add parking near the proposed pond, splash pad, and other activities to accommodate additional park use
13. Install walking and biking pathway between the various activity areas and existing paths within the park
14. Add a large picnic shelter with restrooms plus a smaller shelter in the playground/splash pad area for rentals and parties
15. Replace and expand the main playground to provide a barrier free experience
16. Remove the police/storage building to improve the appearance of the park and to provide additional space for park amenities
17. Install pond for fishing and to provide an attractive backdrop for the rental and event venue
18. Improve grading at the rectangular field area
19. Add a restroom building near the barn to support concerts and events
20. Formalize a sledding hill with signage and selective tree removal
21. Relocate or remove the steel storage building near Northampton Town Hall to improve the park appearance and make the proposed event venues more attractive
22. Provide wayfinding signage to assist visitors in locating features
23. Build a formal amphitheater near the barn to enhance the event space and support events at the proposed lodge
24. Install a splash pad to provide aquatic opportunities in western Cuyahoga Falls
25. Add a privacy fence between the community gardens and the lodge/events space
26. Add support amenities including drinking fountain with bottle filler, Wi-Fi hotspots, site furnishings, and entrance signage

Concept Plan

The concept plan for Keyser Park can be seen in Figure 8.4. At just under 73 acres, Keyser Park has great potential but needs significant capital improvements to achieve its full potential as a Community Park. Most significantly, the Swain House must be removed due to its seriously degraded and unsafe state. The removal of this structure will open up the area for development of much needed amenities in the western portion of Cuyahoga Falls, most importantly a new lodge that could accommodate programs, events, banquets, weddings, and more.

Several other new amenities and facilities are proposed to replace and expand experiences in this area of the park. These include a decorative pond, a new restroom building, and outdoor amphitheater with shade and seating. The existing barn structure needs evaluation and appropriate improvements to support the new features and activities in the area.

The existing playground at the southwest corner of the park needs to be fully replaced with all-access equipment appropriate for a wide range of ages, especially as the park serves such a wide area of the city. A new splash pad is recommended near the expanded playground as both features have the same user groups. A combination restroom and picnic shelter structure will be needed in the immediate vicinity to accommodate the expected increase in visitation and usage due to these new additions. This structure and a second picnic shelter in the area will provide rental opportunities.

Two buildings in this area will need to be removed or relocated to another property. They are unsightly and in poor condition, making this portion of the park less attractive to visitors. Additionally, they take up valuable real estate that is needed for park amenities that the public desires. The picnic shelter at the top of the hill near the playground and proposed splash pad needs upgrades and would benefit from the addition of corn hole. This location is more private and potentially supports different user groups from the proposed shelters near the playground and splash pad area.

Expanded, connected pathways sitewide, and still needed will ensure that all areas of the park are fully accessible and utilized. The parking lots adjacent the dog park and community gardens should be paved and striped to ensure accessibility for all visitors. A new parking lot is recommended adjacent to the proposed new pond and splash pad. The lot adjacent the existing tennis courts needs repaving as well, as does the parking lot next to the athletic fields on the other end of the park. These parking improvements will be necessary to support the added attendance at the park resulting from the proposed features.

Security cameras and lighting (pedestrian and street) are recommended to improve safety and visibility for users and staff. The existing diamond fields need improvements for ADA accessibility, and the existing rectangular fields need to be regraded. Branded entrance and wayfinding signage are needed to improve navigability and encourage sitewide usage. Lastly, while the size of the park may prohibit comprehensive internet access, Wi-Fi hotspots are recommended – particularly near high-use areas like the athletic fields, picnic shelters, the new lodge, and playground/splash pad area – for both visitor and internal use.

Figure 8.3: Kennedy Park Concept Plan



Figure 8.4: Keyser Park Concept Plan



8.3.3 Water Works Park

Background

This Regional Park is behind the Water Works Family Aquatic Center, a unique facility that draws users from well beyond Cuyahoga Falls' city limits. Water Works Park offers a dog park (one of two in Cuyahoga Falls), fishing access, a kayak/canoe launch, over one mile of trail (partnership with Summit Metro Parks), several picnic shelters, and more. Due to its size, location, and signature mix of facilities (both active and passive), Water Works Park attracts a wide range of users from the city and surrounding area.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Older playground equipment should be upgraded
- No accessible walkway from parking lot to playground
- Fencing around ballfields is in poor condition
- Infield grass and clay infields need upgrades
- Accessibility issues at all five ballfields
- Need more wayfinding signage site-wide
- Condition of turf at dog park
- Debris buildup causes blockage at canoe/kayak ramp

Improvement Recommendations

1. Install ADA walkways connecting all park features
2. Remove sand area at playground and replace with new playground equipment
3. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
4. Provide wayfinding signage to assist visitors in locating features
5. Improve infield clay at diamond fields and add dugouts
6. Add a debris catch net upstream of the boat launch to prevent blockage
7. Expand the dog park to provide more area for improved turf conditions if additional dog parks do not reduce the level of usage
8. Add interpretive signage throughout the park following the preparation of a signage plan
9. Add site lighting for security and visibility
10. Install outdoor fitness equipment
11. Resurface and restripe the parking lots throughout the park
12. Resurface the existing path and extend to the diamond field area
13. Replace Little Stone and Shady Bend shelter roofs
14. Add support amenities including Wi-Fi hotspots, site furnishings, and secondary entrance signage

8.4 NATURE PARKS & NATURAL AREAS

8.4.1 Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary

Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary is unique among Cuyahoga Falls' parks and facilities as the only site singularly devoted to nature-based passive use. At the southwestern edge of the East Sector, Babb Run is contiguous with Cascade Valley Metro Park. Due to its signature characteristics and consideration of the overall objectives of Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation, Babb Run is presented as the final concept plan prepared for this Continuous Improvement Plan. Beyond physical treatments and sitewide enhancements (see concept plan), extended dialogue with Summit Metro Parks is recommended as part of the future work of improving Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited ADA accessibility
- Picnic area is not accessible
- No lines or ADA spaces at parking lot
- Limited features
- No drinking fountains
- Signage is inconsistent with rest of the park system
- Significant erosion along hillsides

Improvement Recommendations

1. Develop a Park Master Plan with the concept plan as a starting point
2. Seek a partnership with Metro Parks for management and programming while maintaining city ownership
3. Install bird blinds for watchers and birding classes
4. Investigate opportunities to provide kayak and canoe access to the river after the removal of the Edison Dam (2024), providing another access point to the Cuyahoga River Water Trail
5. Expand the parking lot to accommodate the new and expanded features
6. Add a picnic shelter with corn hole that can also serve as an outdoor classroom
7. Add vault restroom to allow for extended visits
8. Explore the feasibility of a connection to Cascade Valley Metro Park (will require a bridge over the Cuyahoga River)
9. Add a nature play area to provide a play space for children while keeping with the natural character of the site
10. Add support amenities including drinking fountain with bottle filler, Wi-Fi hotspots, trees, landscaping, site furnishings, and entrance signage

Concept Plan

The concept plan for Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary can be seen in Figure 8.5. This nearly 35-acre Nature Park is largely surrounded by residential development. As discussed previously, a partnership with Summit Metro Parks for operation and programming of the park has the potential to serve both agencies, and these improvements will help make such a partnership more attractive to the Metro Parks.

Recommended capital improvements focus on creating improved opportunities for interaction with and appreciation of nature. A new shelter with the capacity to host nature education programming is proposed in the park's center, and a nearby nature play area will provide opportunities for children to engage with nature and play. To ensure adequate accommodation, the existing parking lot adjacent to these new facilities will need to be expanded and striped (including ADA accessible spots), and a new restroom building support longer visits and program use. A vault restroom will be required due to the lack of sewer service at the property.

A new or more formalized nature path is recommended as well extending from the proposed shelter through the north end of the park. New bird blinds are recommended along the existing loop trail in the south end of the park. As the Cuyahoga River runs along the southern edge of the park – and because public input highlighted a community demand for interaction with the water – a canoe/kayak access point is proposed just off the existing path following the removal of the Edison Dam in 2024. The possibility of connecting Babb Run to the adjacent Cascade Valley Metro Park should be explored; a quality pedestrian pathway across the river between the two parks would enhance visitation and appreciation for both parks.

Figure 8.5: Babb Run Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary Concept Plan



8.4.2 River Front Park

Background

This Linear Park provides access to the Cuyahoga River, but the condition and overall lack of other features limits use of the park. Given wider planning efforts to enhance and elevate access to the Cuyahoga River, River Front Park represents a potential opportunity to improve the community's river connection through wider use. Due to site location and limitations, creativity is necessary to activate this space.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Limited features
- Limited connectivity opportunities – bound by river and OH-8
- Canoe/kayak ramp is not ADA accessible
- Poor visibility exiting parking lot
- Paved path is in poor condition and not ADA accessible
- Restroom is not accessible and too small

Improvement Recommendations

1. Install accessible walks to all features
2. Add site lighting for security and visibility
3. Renovate restrooms with better ADA access and a paved connection to the parking lot
4. Add a security camera to improve safety and deter vandalism
5. Develop dog park with an agility course to provide a central location for this facility and to attract visitors to this underutilized park
6. Improve the safety and visibility of the entrance by reversing the entrance and exit
7. Include upgraded site furnishings, including benches and pet waste stations
8. Build a riverwalk to help the community engage with the Cuyahoga River

8.5 SPECIAL USE PARKS/FACILITIES

This section describes the recommendations for facilities in Cuyahoga Falls. More recommendations for these facilities are provided in Chapter 7 which also provides operational recommendations for these sites.

8.5.1 Brookledge Golf Club

Background

Brookledge Golf Club is situated in the southeast corner of Cuyahoga Falls, near Indian Mountain Park, Downview Sports Center, and Galt Park. Like many golf courses, the club has experienced heavy use during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most notable issue identified through site assessments was that the clubhouse is too small and has limited offerings. Expansion of the clubhouse would allow for additional revenue opportunities.

Improvement Recommendations

1. Renovate and expand the clubhouse (in progress)
2. Update signage with new branding

8.5.2 Downtown Pavilion and Splash Pad

Background

At the heart of downtown, the Pavilion and Splash Pad are popular attractions for residents and visitors alike. While compact (less than two acres), this site provides performance space at the amphitheater and signature

outdoor space for events and public gatherings. With its central location, the facility has the potential to provide expanded opportunities for community events.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Stairs at the Pavilion in dangerous disrepair
- River boardwalk access closed due to safety concerns
- Seasonal ice-rink accessible ramp needs upgrade
- Lack of shaded seating in plaza area

Improvement Recommendations

1. Replace seating at the amphitheater (in progress)
2. Repair the collapsed stairs at the Pavilion (in progress)
3. Build an enclosure for the elevators so users can reach the restrooms without going outside
4. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
5. Install movable or cantilevered shade structures and seating at the splash pad/ice rink/plaza
6. Replace and expand the river boardwalk (Citywide Project Funding)
7. Repair the amphitheater roof
8. Add site lighting for security and visibility
9. Renovate the Pavilion interior to address climate control issues and to increase the functionality of the space
10. Add support amenities Wi-Fi hotspots, site furnishings, and entrance signage

8.5.3 Downview Sports Center

Background

The Downview Sports Center offers the community a range of active use amenities including a skate park, batting cages, a mini-golf course, and a driving range. The facility generates more revenue than it costs to operate despite the deferred maintenance. The property has the potential to generate more revenue with improved appearance and expanded features such as high-tech golf games.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Clubhouse/driving range structure has some broken windows and doors off tracks
- Signage for skate park is degraded, needs to be refurbished
- Some poor drainage present in skate park
- Fencing at batting cages is rusted

Improvement Recommendations

1. Improve the appearance and functionality of the batting cages to ensure the feature continues to draw users to the facility (in progress)
2. Address and complete deferred building maintenance
3. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
4. Update signage with new branding
5. Add high-tech golf games (e.g., Top Golf) to draw more users to the facility and increase revenue
6. Resurface and restripe the parking lot
7. Consider using the hillside at the driving range for sledding (possibly with a snow machine if analysis supports the investment)
8. Add Wi-Fi hotspots

8.5.4 High Bridge Glens Park

Background

High Bridge Glens Park offers unique access over the Cuyahoga River. Due to its location downtown, even small enhancements to High Bridge Glens Park would contribute to a high-quality selection of memorable sites for resident and visitor enjoyment alike.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Aged boardwalk
- Degraded signage and inadequate wayfinding

Improvement Recommendations

1. Repair river boardwalk
2. Add entrance signage

8.5.5 Northampton Town Hall

Background

Northampton Town Hall is a facility adjacent to Keyser Park in the West Sector of the city. The facility is no longer available for rental due to the deteriorating condition of the building. Due to the condition of the facility and its lack of ADA access, the building does not currently meet the needs of Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation or residents of the western portion of the city. If the building were renovated, it would not be adequate for the desired rentals uses, programs, and events.

Improvement Recommendations

Remove Northampton Town Hall from rental facility inventory and explore options to repurpose the building to better serve community needs.

8.5.6 Quirk Cultural Center

See Quirk Cultural Center Park recommendations in Subsection 8.2.7 and Chapter 7, Section 7.3.

8.5.7 The Natatorium

Background

In the center of the most populated area of the city (the East Sector) and close to downtown Cuyahoga Falls, The Natatorium draws users both within and beyond the city limits. A unique facility, The Natatorium provides community access to aquatic facilities and programming, fitness, and rental space, among many other offerings.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Community wing needs upgrades
- Diamond Brite needed at some pools
- Repairs needed to roof and HVAC

Improvement Recommendations

1. Repair Roof and HVAC
2. Apply Diamond Brite to the remaining portions of pools
3. Replace the rotunda skylight
4. Update the community wing to create a more attractive venue for rentals and events
5. Install lighting in the gym for better visibility for pickleball players

8.5.8 Water Works Family Aquatic Center

Background

While the adjacent Water Works Park has its own set of recommendations, this regional aquatic attraction merits specific recommendations for improvements and facility upgrades. Water Works Aquatic Center needs physical enhancements to ensure excellent accessibility and to best serve both residents and the wider community.

The following issues and opportunities were identified through site assessment and public input:

- Pool house roof needs replacement
- Pool needs resurfacing
- Shelter damaged in storm
- Lazy river reaching end of useful life
- Parking lot needs resurfacing
- Patrons park on the lawn

Improvement Recommendations

1. Replace the pool house roof (in progress)
2. Resurface the pools (in progress)
3. Replace the shelter that was damaged in a recent storm
4. Add security cameras to improve safety and deter vandalism
5. Install a splash pad to replace the sand pit
6. Replace and expand the lazy river as it reaches the end of its useful life
7. Resurface, restripe, and expand the parking lot

8.6 SCHOOL PARKS

Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation manages a number of facilities and park spaces at schools by Cuyahoga Falls City School District and Woodridge Local Schools. The following recommendations are intended to ensure improved service and maintain expectations between the schools, Parks and Recreation, and the community.

8.6.1 Dewitt School Park

Improvement Recommendations

1. Resurface and restripe the half basketball courts
2. Replace the fencing at the basketball courts

8.6.2 Lincoln School Park

Improvement Recommendations

1. Install accessible walks to all features
2. Replace the playground at Franklin Ave
3. Add site lighting for security and visibility
4. Upgrade site furnishings
5. Install accessible walks to all features

8.6.3 Preston School Park

Improvement Recommendations

1. Install accessible walks to all features
2. Resurface and replace or improve fencing at former tennis courts to provide an enclosed exercise space
3. Replace playground at Taylor Ave
4. Resurface and restripe the basketball court
5. Replace backstop and fencing at diamond field
6. Add site lighting for security and visibility
7. Upgrade site furnishings
8. Develop a neighborhood feature based on the preferences of the nearby residents as determined through neighborhood outreach

8.6.4 Price School Park

Improvement Recommendations

1. Install accessible walks to all features
2. Replace the basketball court and relocate it to the new playground area
3. Add site lighting for security and visibility
4. Upgrade site furnishings
5. Replace backstop and fencing at diamond field

8.6.5 Richardson School Park

Improvement Recommendations

1. Resurface and restripe basketball court and add goals
2. Replace pavement throughout playground area
3. Install accessible walks to all features
4. Replace backstops and fencing at the diamond fields
5. Remove and replace the fencing at 26th St
6. Add site lighting for security and visibility
7. Extend pathway to improve accessibility, complete a loop, and provide connectivity
8. Upgrade site furnishings

8.6.6 Sill School

Improvement Recommendations

Coordinate with CFCSD to develop a 9-hole disc golf course

8.6.7 Woodridge Campus

Improvement Recommendations

1. Build dugouts for the softball field (in progress)
2. Construct a storywalk (in progress)

8.7 PARK IMPROVEMENT COSTS

The cost estimates for park improvements are presented in Table 8.1. These cost estimates include new park development and follow-up planning studies. The total cost for all improvements will depend on which of the recommendations are ultimately implemented. However, the total cost for the projects described in this chapter comes to about \$21 million. Land acquisition to expand existing parks is not included in these estimates.

Construction items include a 10% contingency and 12% for design, survey, and bidding. Grant opportunities exist and should be explored for many of these improvements, helping to reduce the required contributions by the City of Cuyahoga Falls. Additionally, partnerships, including fundraising, should be considered as part of any improvement, particularly those with substantial capital costs. The costs are based on the city selecting a contractor for each improvement. Use of City Staff for various projects will further reduce the overall cost to the city.

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates

Park Name		Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Neighborhood Parks						
Galt Park						
1	Pavilion (3-Season) with Restrooms or Galt Park Lodge Renovation	Short	\$370,000	\$0	\$0	\$370,000
2	Pavilion/Lodge Corn Hole	Short	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000
3	Playground Edging (Concrete)	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
4	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
5	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Medium	\$0	\$80,000	\$0	\$80,000
6	Landscaping	Medium	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
7	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
8	Parking Lot Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
9	Playground Equipment - Age 2-5 and New Swings	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
10	Road Resurfacing	Medium	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
11	Site Furnishings (Trash Receptacles/Bike Rack/Pet Waste Station)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
12	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
13	Neighborhood Determined Feature	Long	\$0	\$0	\$49,000	\$49,000
Project Total			\$415,000	\$225,000	\$49,000	\$689,000
Harrington Field						
1	Drainage Improvements	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Perimeter Fencing Improvements	Short	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
3	Playground Replacement	Short	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
4	Trees and Landscaping	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
5	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Medium	\$0	\$46,000	\$0	\$46,000
6	Diamond Field Improvements (Dugouts/Backstop/Fencing)	Medium	\$0	\$74,000	\$0	\$74,000
7	Lighting - Site/Security (Open Field Area May Have Lighting)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
8	Site Furnishings (Trash Receptacles/Benches/Bike Racks)	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
9	Basketball Half Court	Long	\$0	\$0	\$37,000	\$37,000
10	Neighborhood Determined Feature	Long	\$0	\$0	\$49,000	\$49,000
Project Total			\$165,000	\$150,000	\$86,000	\$401,000
Indian Mountain Park						
1	Entrance Signage - Secondary (2)	Short	\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000
2	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
3	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide (Improve Accessibility, Complete Perimeter Loop)	Medium	\$0	\$28,000	\$0	\$28,000
4	Basketball Court Improvements (Resurface, Improve Drainage)	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
5	Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
6	Landscaping	Medium	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
7	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
8	Outdoor Fitness Equipment	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
9	Playground Replacement	Medium	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
10	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
11	Restroom (Replacement)	Medium/Long	\$0	\$154,000	\$154,000	\$308,000
12	Splash Pad (Wading Pool Replacement)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$493,000	\$493,000
13	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Long	\$0	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000
Project Total			\$44,000	\$502,000	\$659,000	\$1,205,000

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates (Continued)

Park Name		Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
Linden Park						
1	Entrance Signage (Alameda Ave)	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
2	Landscaping	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
3	Lighting - Site/Security	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
4	Playground Edging (Concrete)	Short	\$9,000	\$0	\$0	\$9,000
5	Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
6	Restroom (Replacement)	Medium	\$0	\$308,000	\$0	\$308,000
7	Neighborhood Determined Feature (to Replace Wading Pool)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$49,000	\$49,000
8	Wading Pool Decommissioning at End of Useful Life	Long	\$0	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000
Project Total			\$33,000	\$370,000	\$61,000	\$464,000
Lions Park						
1	Basketball Court Resurfacing/Restriping (2)	Short	\$74,000	\$0	\$0	\$74,000
2	Restroom (New)	Short	\$308,000	\$0	\$0	\$308,000
3	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
4	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
5	Splash Pad (Wading Pool Replacement)	Short	\$493,000	\$0	\$0	\$493,000
6	Wayfinding Signage	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
7	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide (Resurface, Complete Perimeter Loop)	Medium	\$0	\$49,000	\$0	\$49,000
8	Entrance Signage - Secondary (Monroe Pedestrian)	Medium	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
9	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
10	Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
11	Playground Replacement	Long	\$0	\$0	\$185,000	\$185,000
12	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Long	\$0	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000
Project Total			\$930,000	\$127,000	\$197,000	\$1,254,000
Oak Park						
1	Pumphouse Building/Shelter Roof Replacement and Paint	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide (Replace and Improve Accessibility)	Short	\$51,000	\$0	\$0	\$51,000
3	Pickleball Courts (2)	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
4	Playground Equipment - Add Age 2-5, Remove Sand	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
5	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
6	Entrance Signage - Secondary (12th St)	Medium	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
7	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
8	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
9	Splash Pad (Wading Pool Replacement)	Medium	\$0	\$493,000	\$0	\$493,000
10	Parking Lot Resealing/Restriping	Long	\$0	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000
11	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Long	\$0	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000
Project Total			\$212,000	\$527,000	\$18,000	\$757,000
Quirk Cultural Center Park						
1	Quirk Cultural Center - First Floor Restroom Improvements/ADA Access	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Basketball Court Resurfacing/Restriping	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
3	Lighting - Site/Security	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
4	Quirk Cultural Center - Continue Interior Deferred Maintenance	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5	Quirk Cultural Center - Front Parking Overhang Repair	Short	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
6	Quirk Cultural Center - HVAC Improvements	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
7	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide (Replace)	Medium	\$0	\$68,000	\$0	\$68,000
8	Entrance Signage (2)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
9	Outdoor Fitness Equipment w/ Shade	Medium	\$0	\$86,000	\$0	\$86,000
10	Playground Equipment - Add Age 2-5	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
11	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
12	Wading Pool Decommissioning at End of Useful Life	Long	\$0	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000
Project Total			\$49,000	\$240,000	\$12,000	\$301,000
Ross Park - See Concept						
1	Park Master Plan	Short	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
2	Basketball Court Replacement	Short	\$74,000	\$0	\$0	\$74,000
3	Entrance Signage (2)	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
4	Playground Replacement	Short	\$185,000	\$0	\$0	\$185,000
5	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide w/ Neighborhood Connections	Short	\$86,000	\$0	\$0	\$86,000
6	Diamond Field Improvements (Backstop/Side Fencing/Benches)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
7	Field Improvements (Cricket, Etc.)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates (Continued)

Park Name		Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
8	Futsal Court - At Paved Area on Water Tank if Possible (Use Alternative Surfacing)	Medium	\$0	\$59,000	\$0	\$59,000
9	Asphalt at Water Tank - Prep for Courts, Cover Remaining Area	Medium	\$0	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000
10	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
11	Neighborhood Determined Feature	Medium	\$0	\$49,000	\$0	\$49,000
12	Outdoor Fitness Equipment	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
13	Parking Lot Resealing/Restriping	Medium	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
14	Pickleball Courts (2) - At Paved Area on Water Tank if Possible (Use Alternative Surfacing)	Medium	\$0	\$41,000	\$0	\$41,000
15	Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
16	Rectangular Field Improvements (Coordinate with CFBT)	Medium	By Others	By Others	By Others	By Others
17	Restroom (Replacement)	Medium	\$0	\$308,000	\$0	\$308,000
18	Security Cameras (2)	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
19	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations/Trash Receptacles)	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
20	Trees and Landscaping	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
21	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
Project Total			\$387,000	\$778,000	\$0	\$1,165,000
Trails End Park - See Concept						
1	Park Master Plan	Short	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,000
2	Entrance Signage - Secondary (2)	Short	\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000
3	Parking Lot (West) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Short	\$8,000	\$0	\$0	\$8,000
4	Playground Equipment - Add Age 2-5	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
5	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide (Replace and Improve Accessibility)	Short	\$136,000	\$0	\$0	\$136,000
6	Butterfly Garden	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
7	Diamond Field Improvements	Medium	\$0	\$148,000	\$0	\$148,000
8	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
9	Parking Lot (South) - Restriping	Medium	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
10	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations/Trash Receptacles)	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
11	Tree Removal (Dying/Unsafe Trees)	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
12	Neighborhood Determined Feature	Long	\$0	\$0	\$62,000	\$62,000
13	Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Long	\$0	\$0	\$62,000	\$62,000
14	Restroom (Replacement) w/ Concessions (for Sports Leagues)	Short	\$0	\$0	\$370,000	\$370,000
Project Total			\$233,000	\$221,000	\$494,000	\$948,000
Valley Vista Park						
1	Park Master Plan	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Restroom (Replacement)	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide w/ Neighborhood Connections	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
4	Entrance Signage - Secondary (2)	Short	\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000
5	Lighting - Site/Security	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
6	Parking Lot - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Short	\$71,000	\$0	\$0	\$71,000
7	Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
8	Playground Edging	Short	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000
9	Playground Equipment - Add Age 2-5, Remove Sand	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
10	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
11	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations/Trash Receptacles)	Short	\$18,000	\$0	\$0	\$18,000
12	Splash Pad (Wading Pool Replacement)	Short	\$493,000	\$0	\$0	\$493,000
13	Disc Golf Course (9 Holes) or Dog Park	Medium	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
14	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
Project Total			\$801,000	\$135,000	\$0	\$936,000
Community and Regional Parks						
Kennedy Park - See Concept						
1	Park Master Plan	Short	\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$40,000
2	Walking Path Improvements	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide/Path Expansion - Connectivity Improvements and Neighborhood Connections	Short	\$308,000	\$0	\$0	\$308,000
4	Ballfield Improvements	Short	\$296,000	\$0	\$0	\$296,000
5	Drinking Fountain with Bottle Filler	Short	\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000
6	Entrance Signage - Secondary (5)	Short	\$18,000	\$0	\$0	\$18,000
7	Lighting - Site/Security	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates (Continued)

Park Name	Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
8 Parking Lot (East) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Short	\$91,000	\$0	\$0	\$91,000
9 Picnic Shelter (Medium/Hexagonal)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
10 Playground Replacement - All Access	Short	\$246,000	\$0	\$0	\$246,000
11 Restroom (Replacement) w/ Concessions (for Sports Leagues)	Short	\$370,000	\$0	\$0	\$370,000
12 Security Cameras (4)	Short	\$74,000	\$0	\$0	\$74,000
13 Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations/Trash Receptacles)	Short	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
14 Trees and Landscaping	Short	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
15 Wayfinding Signage	Short	\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000
16 Interpretive Signage (including Signage Plan)	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
17 Parking Lot (North) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Medium	\$0	\$51,000	\$0	\$51,000
18 Pickleball Courts (3)	Medium	\$0	\$92,000	\$0	\$92,000
19 Picnic Shelter (Medium) w/ Corn Hole	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
20 Wi-Fi Hotspots	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
21 Flower/Butterfly Gardens	Long	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
Project Total		\$1,587,000	\$255,000	\$20,000	\$1,862,000
Keyser Park - See Concept					
1 Park Master Plan	Short	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
2 ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Short	\$136,000	\$0	\$0	\$136,000
3 Picnic Shelter Renovation w/ Corn Hole	Short	\$31,000	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
4 Security Cameras (4)	Short	\$74,000	\$0	\$0	\$74,000
5 Swain House - Demolish Due to Unsafe Conditions (See Pictures)	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
6 Barn Improvements	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
7 Diamond Field Improvements	Medium	\$0	\$148,000	\$0	\$148,000
8 Drinking Fountain with Bottle Filler (2) - New and Replace	Medium	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
9 Interpretive/Directional Signage (including Signage Plan)	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
10 Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
11 Lodge (Near Barn) - Wedding/Banquet Venue	Medium	\$0	\$900,000	\$0	\$900,000
12 Outdoor Fitness Equipment	Medium	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
13 Parking Lot - New (Southwest)	Medium	\$0	\$71,000	\$0	\$71,000
14 Parking Lot (Dog Park-Community Gardens) - Paving/Striping/Expand w/ADA Spaces	Medium	\$0	\$99,000	\$0	\$99,000
15 Pathway - 10' Perimeter Walking/Biking	Medium	\$0	\$296,000	\$0	\$296,000
16 Playground Replacement - All Access	Medium	\$0	\$246,000	\$0	\$246,000
17 Police/Storage Building Renovation or Removal	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
18 Pond with Outlet Control Structure	Medium	\$0	\$241,000	\$0	\$241,000
19 Rectangular Field Improvements (Regrading)	Medium	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
20 Restroom (Additional) - Near Barn	Medium	\$0	\$308,000	\$0	\$308,000
21 Restrooms/Picnic Shelter (Large) - New w/ Corn Hole - At Splash Pad)	Medium	\$0	\$308,000	\$0	\$308,000
22 Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations/Trash Receptacles)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
23 Sledding Hill	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
24 Steel Building Relocation/Removal	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
25 Wayfinding Signage	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
26 Wi-Fi Hotspots	Medium	\$0	\$49,000	\$0	\$49,000
27 Amphitheater - Near Barn	Long	\$0	\$0	\$246,000	\$246,000
28 Picnic Shelter (Medium/Hexagonal) - At Splash Pad/Playground	Long	\$0	\$0	\$37,000	\$37,000
29 Splash Pad	Long	\$0	\$0	\$493,000	\$493,000
Project Total		\$303,000	\$3,018,000	\$776,000	\$4,097,000
Water Works Park					
1 ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
2 Playground Equipment - Remove Sand, Replace w/ New Features	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
3 Security Cameras (4)	Short	\$74,000	\$0	\$0	\$74,000
4 Wayfinding/Trailhead Signage	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
5 Diamond Field Improvements (Dugouts/Fencing/Infields)	Medium	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
6 Dog Park Expansion (More Area to Improve Turf) - If Additional Dog Park not Developed	Medium	\$0	\$123,000	\$0	\$123,000
7 Entrance Signage - Secondary	Medium	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
8 Interpretive Signage (including Signage Plan)	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
9 Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$49,000	\$0	\$49,000
10 Outdoor Fitness Equipment	Medium	\$0	\$92,000	\$0	\$92,000

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates (Continued)

Park Name		Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
11	Parking Lot (Big Cuyahoga) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
12	Parking Lot (Little Stone) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Medium	\$0	\$57,000	\$0	\$57,000
13	Parking Lot (West) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Medium	\$0	\$71,000	\$0	\$71,000
14	Pathway Improvements/Expansion - Resurface Existing/Extend to Diamond Field Area	Medium	\$0	\$493,000	\$0	\$493,000
15	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
16	Parking Lot (Shade Bend) - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Long	\$0	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$96,000
17	Shelter Improvements - Roof Replacement (Little Stone, Shady Bend)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
18	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Long	\$0	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
Project Total			\$185,000	\$1,227,000	\$93,000	\$1,505,000
Nature Parks/Natural Areas						
Babb Run Park Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary - See Concept						
1	Park Master Plan	Short	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,000
2	Partnership with Metro Parks for management and programming while maintaining city ownership	Short	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Medium	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
4	Bird Blinds w/ Walking Paths (Natural)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
5	Parking Lot Expansion (to Accommodate New Features)	Medium	\$0	\$52,000	\$0	\$52,000
6	Picnic/Nature Education Shelter	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
7	Restroom (Vault)	Medium	\$0	\$185,000	\$0	\$185,000
8	Connection to Cascade Valley Metro Park (Explore Feasibility)	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
9	Kayak/Canoe Access (After Dam Removal in 2024)	Long	\$0	\$0	\$62,000	\$62,000
10	Nature Play Area	Long	\$0	\$0	\$123,000	\$123,000
Project Total			\$20,000	\$345,000	\$185,000	\$550,000
River Front Park						
1	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Short	\$9,000	\$0	\$0	\$9,000
2	Lighting - Site/Security	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
3	Restroom Improvements (Renovate and Improve ADA Access, Connection to Parking Lot)	Short	\$12,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000
4	Security Camera	Short	\$18,000	\$0	\$0	\$18,000
5	Dog Park w/ Agility Course	Short/Medium	\$77,000	\$77,000	\$0	\$154,000
6	Entrance and Parking Improvements (Reverse Entrance and Exit, Reseal, Restripe)	Medium	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0	\$6,000
7	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$0	\$36,000
8	Riverwalk	Long	TBD	TBD	\$0	TBD
Project Total			\$149,000	\$98,000	\$0	\$247,000
Special Use Parks						
Brookledge Golf Club						
1	Clubhouse Renovation and Expansion	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Signage - Update with New Branding	Short	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
Project Total			\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
Downtown Pavilion & Splash Pad						
1	Amphitheater Seating Replacement	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Stair Repair at Pavilion	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Enclosure for Elevators to Restrooms	Short	\$185,000	\$0	\$0	\$185,000
4	Entrance Signage - Downtown/Plaza	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
5	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
6	Shade and Seating at Splash Pad/Ice Rink/Plaza (Movable or Cantilevered)	Short	\$49,000	\$0	\$0	\$49,000
7	River Boardwalk Replacement/Expansion (Citywide Project Funding)	Short/Medium	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Amphitheater Roof Repair	Medium	\$0	\$16,000	\$0	\$16,000
9	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
10	Pavilion Indoor Improvements/Renovation to Improve Climate Conditions and Functionality of Space	Long	\$0	\$0	\$83,000	\$83,000
11	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Long	\$0	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
Project Total			\$277,000	\$41,000	\$108,000	\$426,000
Downview Sports Center						
1	Batting Cage Improvements	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Building Improvements - Continue Deferred Maintenance	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
4	Signage - Update with New Branding	Short	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
5	High-Tech Golf Games (e.g., Top Golf)	Medium	By Partner	By Partner	By Partner	By Partner

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates (Continued)

Park Name		Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
6	Parking Lot - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Long	\$0	\$0	\$113,000	\$113,000
7	Sledding Hill w/ Snow Machine	Long	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
8	Wi-Fi Hotspots	Long	\$0	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
Project Total			\$43,000	\$0	\$138,000	\$181,000
High Bridge Glens Park						
1	Boardwalk Repair	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Entrance Signage - Downtown/Plaza	Short	\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
Project Total			\$0	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
Northampton Town Hall						
1	Remove from Rental Facility Inventory	Short	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Project Total			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
The Natatorium						
1	Lighting in Gym for Pickleball	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2	Roof and HVAC Repairs	Ongoing	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3	Resurfacing of Remaining Pools (Diamond Brite)	Short	\$38,000	\$0	\$0	\$38,000
4	Rotunda Skylight Replacement	Short	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5	Community Wing Upgrades	Medium	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Project Total			\$38,000	\$0	\$0	\$38,000
Water Works Family Aquatic Center						
1	Pool House Roof Replacement	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Shelter Replacement (Damaged in Storm)	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Pool Resurfacing (Diamond Brite)	Short	\$370,000	\$0	\$0	\$370,000
4	Security Cameras (2)	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
5	Splash Pad to Replace Sand Pit	Short	\$493,000	\$0	\$0	\$493,000
6	Lazy River Replacement/Expansion	Medium	\$0	\$1,478,000	\$0	\$1,478,000
7	Parking Lot - Resurfacing/Restriping w/ADA Spaces	Long	\$0	\$0	\$156,000	\$156,000
Project Total			\$900,000	\$1,478,000	\$156,000	\$2,534,000
School Parks						
Dewitt School Park						
1	Basketball Half Courts Resurfacing/Restriping (2)	Medium	\$0	\$74,000	\$0	\$74,000
2	Fencing Replacement - Basketball Courts	Short	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$12,000
Project Total			\$0	\$80,000	\$6,000	\$86,000
Lincoln School Park						
1	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide	Short	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
2	Playground Replacement (Franklin Ave)	Short	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
3	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
4	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
5	Diamond Field Improvements (Backstop/Fencing Replacement)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
Project Total			\$148,000	\$55,000	\$0	\$203,000
Preston School Park						
1	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide - New and Replace Existing	Short	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
2	Former Tennis Courts - Resurface, Replace/Improve Fencing for Exercise Space	Short	\$62,000	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
3	Playground Replacement (Taylor Ave)	Short	\$123,000	\$0	\$0	\$123,000
4	Basketball Court Resurfacing/Restriping	Medium	\$0	\$74,000	\$0	\$74,000
5	Diamond Field Improvements (Backstop/Fencing Replacement)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
6	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
7	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
8	Neighborhood Determined Feature	Long	\$0	\$0	\$49,000	\$49,000
Project Total			\$210,000	\$141,000	\$49,000	\$400,000
Price School Park						
1	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide - New and Replace Existing	Short	\$43,000	\$0	\$0	\$43,000
2	Basketball Court Replacement and Relocation Near New Playground	Medium	\$0	\$74,000	\$0	\$74,000
3	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
4	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
5	Diamond Field Improvements (Backstop/Fencing Replacement)	Medium	\$0	\$31,000	\$0	\$31,000
Project Total			\$43,000	\$129,000	\$0	\$172,000
Richardson School Park						
1	Basketball Court Resurfacing/Restriping/Goals/Poles	Short	\$74,000	\$0	\$0	\$74,000
2	Pavement - Replacement at Playground Area	Short	\$79,000	\$0	\$0	\$79,000

Table 8.1: Capital Improvement Projects Cost Estimates (Continued)

Park Name		Term	0-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	Total
3	ADA Walkways - 6' Wide - New and Replace Existing Stairs	Medium	\$0	\$22,000	\$0	\$22,000
4	Diamond Field Improvements (Backstop/Fencing Replacement) - 2 Field	Medium	\$0	\$62,000	\$0	\$62,000
5	Fencing - Remove/Replace at 26th St	Medium	\$0	\$7,000	\$0	\$7,000
6	Lighting - Site/Security	Medium	\$0	\$18,000	\$0	\$18,000
7	Pathway - Extend to Complete Loop and Provide Connectivity/ADA Access	Medium	\$0	\$37,000	\$0	\$37,000
8	Site Furnishings (Benches/Bike Racks/Pet Waste Stations)	Medium	\$0	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
Project Total			\$153,000	\$158,000	\$0	\$311,000
Sill School						
1	Disc Golf Course (9 Holes) - Coordinate with CFCSD	Short	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
Project Total			\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
Woodridge Campus						
1	Softball Field Dugouts	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Storywalk	In Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Project Total			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Systemwide						
1	ADA Accessibility Assessment (Required)	Short	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$75,000
2	Maintenance Pole Barn - Improved Storage	Long	\$0	\$0	\$345,000	\$345,000
Systemwide Total			\$75,000	\$0	\$345,000	\$420,000
TOTAL PARKS			\$7,437,000	\$10,312,000	\$3,452,000	\$21,201,000
*Values include 10% contingency and 12% for design, engineering, bidding, construction administration, etc. (except non-construction items)						

ACTION PLAN

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan table on the following pages (Table 9.1) provides a detailed list of recommendations for the Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation Continuous Improvement Plan. These strategies represent specific actions for parks and recreation in the City of Cuyahoga Falls to take to implement this plan.

9.2 ACTION PLAN STRATEGIES

These strategies are listed under the four (4) goals and 15 objectives from the Strategic Plan (Chapter 6). The legend at the top of the table identifies the abbreviations used throughout the table. Checkmarks indicate the timeframe for the completion of each strategy within the time periods of 0-2 years, 3-5 years, or 6-10 years. Some strategies are indicated as "Ongoing" as they apply to all timeframes or represent more general actions that should always be considered. A total count of strategies by timeframe is located at the end of the table in the corresponding columns.

The other columns provide information regarding the implementation of each strategy. "Category" describes the type of action within the following four options: capital (capital improvements); policy (guidelines for the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Department, possibly including legislation); planning (long-term parks outlook, which includes conduction of studies); or operations. The column for "Agency" indicates who is expected to implement the strategy, usually Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation or another city department. "Funding Source" indicates how the strategy should be funded or the type of funds used (operating or capital funds).

9.3 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY RATING

The steering committee reviewed potential solutions and participated in an exercise to help verify capital improvement priorities for the Action Plan. Committee members were asked to rate each of the potential improvement projects through the engagement software Mentimeter on a scale of 0-10 with the Highest Priority (10) and Not Needed (0).

The priority ranking was used to help rank the importance of improvements but not necessarily the order in which they should be developed. Figure 9.1, located after the Action Plan, identifies the capital improvement rating based on the average of the ranking for each item. These rankings were used as part of the process for recommending priorities along with public input and analyses completed throughout this master planning process.

Table 9.1: Action Plan

ACTION PLAN - CUYAHOGA FALLS PARKS AND RECREATION CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN									
Legend of Abbreviations/Organizations									
Parks = Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation									
City = City Council, Other City Departments									
Partners = Other Organizations (foundations, businesses, schools, civic associations, state/federal grants, etc.)									
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies									
Goal 1: Build From Within									
Nurture high-quality spaces and staff through focused investment, development, and support									
Objective 1.1 – Staff Development: Create a quality work environment across all staff levels that inspires and encourages									
Strategy 1.1.1:		Encourage continued staff training for leadership and continued growth within respective fields		Ongoing		Operations		Parks	OP
Strategy 1.1.2:		Identify and allocate funding for critical staff development opportunities (including conferences, training, memberships, etc.) with consideration to licensure and certification requirements		✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.1.3:		Create and implement professional and career development strategies for both management and supervisory staff		Ongoing			Operations, Planning	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.1.4:		Encourage management level staff to attend professional development programs offered by state, regional, and national training organizations		Ongoing			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.1.5:		Consider an annual retreat for program evaluation and team building		Ongoing			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.1.6:		Support staff members in pursuing Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO) and Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) certifications		Ongoing			Operations	Parks	OP
Objective 1.2 – Operations & Management: Improve efficiency and quality of service by establishing clear standards of performance									
Strategy 1.2.1:		Formally recognize this Continuous Improvement Plan as the guiding document for park development, improvement, and operations		✓			Policy	City	N/A
Strategy 1.2.2:		Establish an implementation committee to monitor timelines, measure progress, update priorities, and ensure continued enthusiasm for Continuous Improvement Plan's goals and recommendations		✓			Policy	Parks, City	N/A
Strategy 1.2.3:		Use this Continuous Improvement Plan and the list of capital improvements (Table 8.1 of Chapter 8) as a guide for park development for the 5- to 10-year implementation timeframe – regularly monitor progress		Ongoing			Capital	Parks, City	N/A
Strategy 1.2.4:		Prepare an Operations Plan with Maintenance Standards		✓			Operations, Planning	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.2.5:		Develop a capital maintenance and replacement program (may require an increase in the parks and recreation capital budget comparable to other communities)		✓			Planning, Capital	Parks, City	CIP, OP
Strategy 1.2.6:		Determine maintenance standards that include how many employees are required to maintain one acre of parkland; consider these standards when adding parkland to the system		✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.2.7:		Know the true costs to deliver services (direct and indirect costs), and inform users, partners, and citizens of the true costs of services		Ongoing			Oper, Policy/cyations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 1.2.8:		Establish and adjust fees for programs according to direct and indirect costs, as well as connection to the mission		Ongoing			Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.9:		Classify the agency's services according to how they align with the agency's mission		Ongoing			Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.10:		Maintain or increase cost recovery at its current level (88%) or better as new features are developed, and new programs are added		Ongoing			Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.11:		Establish an annual assessment process to determine if Cuyahoga Falls should stop offering a program, continue offering a program, or start a new program (Annual Implementation Plan for Business Operations – Subsection		✓			Operations, Policy	Parks	OP
Strategy 1.2.12:		Price services furthest away from the mission at full cost recovery levels		✓			Operations, Policy	Parks, Partners	N/A

Table 9.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 1.2.13: Consider reducing or eliminating merchandise offerings at the Brookledge Golf Club pro shop if they do not provide a true source of revenue	✓			Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.14: Establish consistent requirements for all field permits	✓			Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.15: Know the demographics of the citizens served		Ongoing		Policy	Parks, City	N/A
Strategy 1.2.16: Track population trends		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.17: Control labor costs		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.18: Transfer Quirk Cultural Center to the General Fund so that the Leisure Times Fund contains only true enterprise operations	✓			Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.19: Institute an easy to understand Cost Recovery and Pricing Plan for everything that is offered	✓			Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.2.20: Know the value of assets (excluding land values); know where those assets are in their life cycle		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	N/A
Objective 1.3 – Funding: Pursue alternative funding sources, including grants, to expand creative viability and build independence for the department						
Strategy 1.3.1: Identify potential revenue sources at community events, including sponsorships and entry fees		Ongoing		Policy	Parks, City, Partners	Revenue
Strategy 1.3.2: Continue seeking grants and apply to foundations for project funding that enhances the park system; be sure grant and donation requirements are consistent with the mission of Parks and Recreation while also considering		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks, Partners	Revenue
Strategy 1.3.3: Seek philanthropists in the community to support the agency's causes		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	Revenue
Strategy 1.3.4: Promote and energize the Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks to better raise funds, recruit and organize volunteers, and champion the city's parks and facilities	✓			Operations, Policy	Parks	Revenue
Strategy 1.3.5: Establish policies for accepting sponsorships and selling naming rights	✓			Operations	Parks	Revenue
Strategy 1.3.6: Establish a fee to reserve picnic shelters for half days with an hour between reservations to allow additional use of existing facilities	✓			Policy	Parks	Revenue
Objective 1.4 – Maintenance: Ensure all spaces across the parks and facilities system are clean and safe for all users						
Strategy 1.4.1: Improve maintenance, including capital maintenance and replacement, at existing parks		Ongoing		Operations, Capital	Parks	CIP, OP
Strategy 1.4.2: Remove unused features and spaces from the park system		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 1.4.3: Utilize volunteers to assist with park maintenance through efforts such as the adoption of sections of parks in Cuyahoga Falls		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP, Partners
Strategy 1.4.4: Require a maintenance plan that identifies ongoing funding needs for partnership projects	✓			Operations	Parks	OP, Partners
Strategy 1.4.5: Continue to perform capital maintenance at Water Works Family Aquatic Center to ensure that the facility continues to serve residents and visitors	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP, OP
Strategy 1.4.6: Continue ongoing capital maintenance and repairs at The Natatorium	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP, OP
Strategy 1.4.7: Continue to address interior deferred maintenance and HVAC improvements at the Quirk Cultural Center and repair the front parking overhang	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP, OP
Strategy 1.4.8: Renovate and modernize Galt Park Lodge or replace the facility with a three-season pavilion	✓			Capital	Parks, City	CIP
Strategy 1.4.9: Increase maintenance budget to accommodate new facilities and programs		Ongoing		Operations, Capital	Parks, City	CIP

Table 9.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies		Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
		0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 1.4.10:	Continue addressing deferred maintenance at Downview Sports Center to improve the appearance and to keep the facility operating into the future	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP, OP
Goal 2: Expand Community Connection							
Ensure equitable programs and spaces through authentic outreach and inclusion of all members of the community							
Objective 2.1 – Equitable Inclusion: Practice authentic outreach and create opportunities for users to share in the development and daily life of parks and facilities							
Strategy 2.1.1:	Identify needs of underserved populations through strategic outreach and inter-organizational collaboration		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks, City	OP
Strategy 2.1.2:	Develop and adopt written diversity and inclusion plans using NRPA guidelines to ensure that individuals of all abilities and backgrounds and participate in programs						
Strategy 2.1.3:	Make full use of new facilities – new lodges, outdoor fitness equipment, disc golf courses, etc. – to expand opportunities		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP, Revenue
Strategy 2.1.4:	Maintain continuous public engagement throughout the implementation of this plan		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks, City	OP
Strategy 2.1.5:	Expand marketing of programs and facilities to increase community awareness of opportunities		Ongoing		Operations	Parks, City	OP, Revenue
Strategy 2.1.6:	Engage neighborhoods during park improvement processes		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks, City	OP
Objective 2.2 – Marketing & Promotion: Utilize innovative and inclusive outreach methods							
Strategy 2.2.1:	Establish a visual identity and messaging strategy for the department	✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 2.2.2:	Brand and market active senior programs together under a unique category, "Cuyahoga Falls Active Adults" – offer these at facilities and parks throughout the city, strategically marketing to more active seniors	✓			Operations	Parks, City	OP
Strategy 2.2.3:	Add consistent entrance signage throughout the park system, especially at secondary park entrances	✓			Operations, Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.2.4:	Implement signage with new branding at Downview Sports Center and Brookledge Golf Club	✓			Operations, Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.2.5:	Determine standard formatting for all marketing and promotional efforts based on the messaging strategy	✓			Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 2.2.6:	Identify a consistent brand as it relates to color, style, logo placement, and promotional materials	✓			Operations	Parks	CIP, OP
Strategy 2.2.7:	Ensure that park signage is consistent with the branding strategy		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	CIP, OP
Objective 2.3 – Partnerships: Prioritize relationship-building and information-sharing to effectively tackle collective goals across the community							
Strategy 2.3.1:	Treat all vendors, contractors, and partners in a professional, consistent manner with a legal, signed contract		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 2.3.2:	Seek opportunities to expand partnerships with local organizations to improve access to recreation facilities and programs		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 2.3.3:	Partner with Summit Metro Parks, the National Park Service, and others for nature education programs throughout parks in Cuyahoga Falls		Ongoing		Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 2.3.4:	Continue to partner with DTCF for downtown events and enhanced connection to the river		Ongoing		Operations, Capital	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 2.3.6:	Partner with Cuyahoga Falls Library for educational programs and cross-promotion of community offerings		Ongoing		Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 2.3.7:	Explore partnerships with Summit Metro Parks to add nature programming at Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary, along the Cuyahoga River and potentially, in other parks across the city		Ongoing		Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 2.3.8:	Explore and establish partnerships to produce nature education programs within Cuyahoga Falls parks		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP

Table 9.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 2.3.9: Develop working agreements with each partner (all outside groups using Cuyahoga Falls facilities) with measurable outcomes and review every two years at a minimum		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 2.3.10: Ensure all future contracts benefit the City of Cuyahoga Falls and its residents, in addition to the partnering vendor or contractor		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 2.3.11: Require city-owned properties remain available to Cuyahoga Falls residents when not in use by the lessee		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 2.3.12: Explore and solidify contracted partnerships with outside vendors and organizations to produce more programming		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP, Revenue
Strategy 2.3.13: Potentially expand partnership with Keep Cuyahoga Falls Beautiful	✓			Operations	Parks	N/A
Objective 2.4 – Outstanding Service: Commit to providing excellent, responsive, and welcoming customer service systemwide						
Strategy 2.4.1: Develop a program for recruiting and scheduling volunteer park ambassadors to promote wellbeing and provide assistance at parks	✓			Operations, Policy	Parks	OP
Strategy 2.4.2: Add support features throughout the park system such as security lighting, trees/landscaping, drinking fountains, and shade structures	✓	✓		Operations, Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.4.3: Upgrade technology in parks for patrons and staff (see Chapter 5, Technology, Subsection 5.7.5)		Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 2.4.4: Work with the city's existing program to add Wi-Fi access in high traffic areas including buildings, aquatic facilities, and event spaces (e.g., picnic shelters, lodges, and sports complexes)		✓		Capital	Parks, City	CIP
Strategy 2.4.5: Introduce mobile apps to enhance park user experiences		✓		Operations	Parks, City	CIP
Goal 3: Improved Parks & Facilities						
Elevate existing spaces and offerings through comprehensive upgrades and targeted efforts						
Objective 3.1 – Sustainability: Safeguard quality before quantity with consistent dedication to existing facilities, parks, and programs						
Strategy 3.1.1: Pursue opportunities for park consolidation where possible with minimal to no reduction in service delivery		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 3.1.2: Implement conservation policies and sustainable practice guidelines for future development and management of park properties		Ongoing		Policy, Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 3.1.3: Acquire land contiguous to existing parks, if it becomes available, to allow for additional features and increase the total amount of parkland available to residents while still limiting impacts on operations and maintenance		Ongoing		Policy, Capital	Parks, City	CIP
Strategy 3.1.4: Find dedicated funding sources for Parks and Recreation that can be depended upon annually	✓			Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 3.1.5: Analyze potential costs versus revenue before adding new features		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 3.1.6: Pursue opportunities for restoring natural areas within parks in ways that improve access to nature and reduce maintenance requirements		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	OP
Strategy 3.1.7: Elevate parks by setting examples for Best Management Practices (BMP), including stormwater detention, recycling, etc.		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 3.1.8: Decommission wading pools at the end of their useful life and replace a select number with splash pads, ensuring even distribution throughout the city		Ongoing		Operations, Capital	Parks	N/A
Strategy 3.1.9: Calculate maintenance impact when replacing facilities or features to verify that replacements reduce rather than increase maintenance requirements and cost		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 3.1.10: Remove the Swain House from Keyser Park due to unsafe conditions, thereby improving the appearance of the park and allowing the area to be redeveloped in a productive manner that addresses resident needs	✓			Capital, Operations	Parks, City	N/A
Strategy 3.1.11: Remove Northampton Town Hall from rental facility inventory and explore options to repurpose building for community needs	✓			Operations	Parks, City, Partners	N/A
Strategy 3.1.12: Remove sand pits from all playgrounds and replace with other lower-maintenance features	✓			Operations, Capital	Parks	CIP

Table 9.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 3.1.13: Consider reducing the number or size (reduction to half court) of basketball courts as they are renovated or replaced based on need in the individual park; consider adding courts in areas of the city where none are already		Ongoing		Capital, Operations	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.1.14: Receive a share of gross revenue whenever private or not-for-profit groups benefit financially from Cuyahoga Falls facilities		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 3.1.15: Consider lease options when replacing equipment to avoid the need for costly capital expenditures		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	CIP, OP
Strategy 3.1.16: Consult maintenance staff during park development to help reduce maintenance requirements and ensure staff are able to adequately maintain new features		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	OP
Strategy 3.1.17: Understand all agency costs, both indirect and direct, before entering into agreements; understand how much investment a partner will commit to collaboration		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Objective 3.2 – Accessibility: Strive to meet user needs and desires for all						
Strategy 3.2.1: Perform an ADA Accessibility Assessment of all facilities, programs, and communications (by an outside consultant)	✓			Policy	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.2.2: Develop an implementation plan informed by results of ADA Accessibility Assessment	✓			Policy, Operations	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.2.3: Improve the condition of pavement at existing paved park pathways (e.g., Kennedy, Water Works, Lions)	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.2.4: Enhance connectivity between parks and adjacent neighborhoods by adding connecting pathways where possible		Ongoing		Capital	Parks, City	CIP
Strategy 3.2.5: Improve ADA accessibility throughout the park system, including walkways to all facilities and at (and to) all spectator and seating areas	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.2.6: Enclose the elevator at the Downtown Pavilion to improve the user experience and improve accessibility	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.2.7: Expand paved paths within existing parks that lack connectivity (e.g., Keyser, Indian Mountain)		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.2.8: Ensure accessibility at all athletic fields and in every spectator area		Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP
Objective 3.3 – Facilities: Preserve signature attractions that make Cuyahoga Falls a remarkable place to live and to visit						
Strategy 3.3.1: Replace outdated and deteriorated playgrounds throughout the city and include unique or themed features at each park to encourage visitation across multiple parks		Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.2: Continue the renovation and expansion of the clubhouse at Brookledge Golf Club, allowing the facility to expand its menu and, thereby, increase opportunities for revenue generation	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP, Revenue
Strategy 3.3.3: Add, upgrade, or replace restrooms at heavily used parks	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.4: Add dedicated pickleball courts at Cuyahoga Falls parks to meet the growing demand for this sport	✓	✓		Capital, Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.5: Consider adding additional futsal courts as a way of utilizing underused paved surfaces and to meet the increasing demand	✓	✓		Capital, Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.6: Improve the diamond fields at Kennedy Park with new backstops, fencing, and dugouts to accommodate increased use	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.7: Develop a dog park with an agility course at River Front Park to better activate this underutilized space and to provide a more central gathering location for dog owners	✓	✓		Capital	Parks, City	CIP
Strategy 3.3.8: Explore the development of disc golf courses in Cuyahoga Falls, potentially as a partnership with the local disc golf association (Summit DGA)	✓			Capital, Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.9: Seek an additional location for community gardens in the eastern portion of Cuyahoga Falls	✓			Capital	Parks, City	N/A
Strategy 3.3.10: Incorporate nature play into playground development and replacement to alleviate costs and increase variety	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP

Table 9.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
	0-2	3-5	6-10			
Strategy 3.3.11: Add lighting in The Natatorium gym to better accommodate additional users like pickleball players	✓			Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.12: Add outdoor fitness equipment at select parks to expand opportunities for better community health		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.13: Add picnic shelters throughout the park system to expand access to these facilities and to promote opportunities for community gatherings		Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.14: Evaluate the need to expand the dog park at Water Works Park, following the development of other dog parks in Cuyahoga Falls		✓		Operations, Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.15: Consider using the hillside at Downview Sports Center for sledding (possibly with a snow machine given that opportunity analysis supports the investment)			✓	Operations, Capital	Parks, City	CIP, Revenue
Strategy 3.3.16: Add picnic shelters throughout the park system to expand access to these facilities and to promote opportunities for community gatherings		Ongoing		Capital	Parks, Ck	CIP
Strategy 3.3.17: Continue installing corn hole adjacent to new and existing picnic shelters		Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.3.18: Replace and possibly expand the lazy river at Water Works Family Aquatic Center at the end of its useful life			✓	Capital	Parks	CIP
Objective 3.4 – Legacy: Safeguard the longevity of a system that has enduring attractiveness for the Cuyahoga Falls community and beyond						
Strategy 3.4.1: Incorporate the arts and creative solutions into future developments and improvements at Keyser Park, involving community and local residents whenever possible		Ongoing		Operations, Planning	Parks, Partners	N/A
Strategy 3.4.2: Develop splash pads throughout Cuyahoga Falls (primarily to replace wading pools) to enhance aquatic opportunities for residents		Ongoing		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.4.3: Improve the existing amphitheater at the Downtown Pavilion to keep the venue available for programs and events		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.4.4: Update the community wing of The Natatorium to create a more attractive venue for rentals and events		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.4.5: Develop a new lodge in Keyser Park to provide a venue for events and programs		✓		Capital	Parks, City	CIP, Revenue
Strategy 3.4.6: Add high tech golf experience at Downview Sports Center's diving range to draw more users to the facility and expand revenue opportunities		✓		Capital	Parks	CIP, Revenue
Strategy 3.4.7: Renovate the Downtown Pavilion to address climate control and elevate the functionality of the space			✓	Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 3.4.8: Consider developing an amphitheater at Keyser Park to provide a more formal venue on the western side of Cuyahoga Falls to be used for concerts, movies, theater productions, fitness classes, and weddings			✓	Capital, Planning	Parks, City	CIP, Revenue
Goal 4: Dynamic Programming & Events						
Build programs and events that are responsive to the diverse needs and desires of the community						
Objective 4.1 – Community Wellness: Build a foundation of health and activity through dynamic programs and quality facilities that serve users of all ages, cultures, and abilities						
Strategy 4.1.1: Maintain the popular Mobile Rec program		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP
Strategy 4.1.2: Maintain, enhance, and fully fund existing community programs		Ongoing		Operations	Parks	OP, Revenue
Strategy 2.3.5: Promote and financially underwrite healthy lifestyles through partnerships with health providers		Ongoing		Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 2.2.5: Promote conservation and sustainability efforts as they are implemented to encourage reduced levels of consumption and waste generation		Ongoing		Operations, Policy	Parks	N/A
Strategy 4.1.3: Utilize the Core Program Guidelines in Appendix C as a source for potential program offerings		Ongoing		Capital, Planning	Parks	N/A

Table 9.1: Action Plan (Continued)

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies							
		Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source
		0-2	3-5	6-10			
Objective 4.2 – Adaptability: Align programs and amenities to fit the changing needs of the community and provide on-trend service to all users							
Strategy 4.2.1:	Expand program offerings to address unmet community needs including concerts/arts performances, adult fitness and wellness programs, outdoor movies, and community events	Ongoing			Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 4.2.2:	Consider future field needs during renovation of parks and improvement of athletic fields – make fields multiuse wherever possible, but especially at smaller neighborhood parks	Ongoing			Capital, Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 4.2.3:	Evaluate program times to ensure programs are actually offered when community members can participate	Ongoing			Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 4.2.4:	Develop more age 55+ programming in light of the rapid growth of this demographic	✓			Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 4.2.5:	Evaluate demand for expanding pickleball offerings, meeting the sport’s growing participation	✓			Capital, Planning	Parks	N/A
Strategy 4.2.6:	Monitor recreation trends regularly, especially concerning those growing population groups, to best serve the needs of the whole community	Ongoing			Operations	Parks	N/A
Strategy 4.2.7:	Seek opportunities for additional teen programs, including Esports programs	✓			Operations	Parks	OP
Objective 4.3 – Celebration: Develop programs, events, and facility features that uplift the unique resources of the community							
Strategy 4.3.1:	Utilize the existing amphitheater and a future amphitheater at Keyser Park for additional and enhanced program opportunities, including events such as summer concerts, movies, and children’s theater	Ongoing			Capital, Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 4.3.2:	Develop programming at Quirk Cultural Center to meet needs for more creative and cultural arts programs for both youth and adults	Ongoing			Operations	Parks, Partners	OP
Strategy 4.3.3:	Develop interpretive signage throughout the park system (will require signage plans) to help visitors understand the natural features and history of Cuyahoga Falls parks	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 4.3.4:	Develop passive recreational amenities at Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary to better provide expanded nature access for Cuyahoga Falls residents and to create a centralized location for nature education classes	✓	✓		Capital	Parks	CIP
Strategy 4.3.5:	Pursue partnership, sponsorship, and other collaboration opportunities to implement community-led public art projects (e.g., mural, performance, sculpture, etc.) at Kennedy Park & Valley Vista Park		✓	✓	Operations	Parks, City, Partners	CIP
Strategy 4.3.6:	Initiate public art open call – facilitated through city partnership or with support from a local arts advocacy group – to develop and install “Historic River Markers” at parks with river frontage		✓		Capital, Planning	Parks, City, Partners	CIP
Strategy 4.3.7:	Support coordinated “Front Street Placemaking” effort through departmental partnership, staff collaboration, and activation of physical space	Ongoing			Capital, Operations	Parks, City, Partners	CIP
Strategy 4.3.8:	Seek opportunities to improve access to the Cuyahoga River, including adding a river access or canoe/kayak launch in Babb Run Bird & Wildlife Sanctuary	Ongoing			Capital, Planning	Parks	CIP
Strategy 4.3.9:	Celebrate the department and programming accomplishments and achievements by pursuing state and national recognition and accolades	Ongoing			Capital, Planning	Parks	CIP
Totals by Timeframe		54	21	5			
Total Number of Strategies = 144							

Figure 9.1: Capital Improvement Rating

