



DeKalb Park District Community Wide Needs Assessment and Comprehensive Master Plan

2027-2032
COMPREHENSIVE
MASTER PLAN

Board of Commissioners

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Introduction

The DeKalb Park District developed this plan, with input from the local community, the Board of Commissioners, and Park District staff, to guide park, facility, and recreation program development decisions for the next five to ten years.

Purpose

The purpose of this Master Plan Update is to:

- Assess existing parks, facilities, and programs.
- Determine community sentiment about existing services and facilities.
- Identify park, facility, and program needs.
- Define strategic and measurable goals and objectives.
- Provide an Action Plan to implement strategies over the next ten years.

Planning Process

The planning process covers four key phases:

- Analyze
- Connect
- Envision and Prioritize
- Implement

This Master Plan compiles the results of the first three phases, and the use of this document will accomplish the final phase of implementation through the Action Plan.

The process for the plan began in the summer of 2025 with an inventory and analysis of the DeKalb Park District's park and open space assets, indoor facilities, and community demographic makeup. Recreation staff

also provided insight into current services provided by the Park District. Next, staff, Board of Commissioners, and the community shared their opinions about the Park District's parks, facilities, programs, and needs in the Connect Phase.

Upon completion of the Analyze and Connect Phases, the Planning Team met to develop strategies to meet the Park District's needs. Input from the Board of Commissioners and Park District staff was used to refine and prioritize these strategies and incorporate them into the Action Plan that will guide implementation over the next ten years.

How to Use the Plan

This Master Plan document will be used by the DeKalb Park District as a guide to implement action items over the next ten years. The Action Plan in Chapter 4 is a document that should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT



Chapter One

Analyze: Inventory & Analysis

Chapter One provides a detailed inventory of parkland, open space, Park District facilities, schools, trails, and relevant adjacent land uses. Park assets are classified and quantified by standards, size, location, and amenities.

Chapter Two

Connect: Needs Assessment

Chapter Two includes national, state, and local parks and recreation trends. It also includes summaries of the community meeting, pop-up events, staff and board interviews, staff workshop, stakeholder interviews, and the statistically valid survey.

Chapter Three

Envision & Prioritize: Preferred Strategies

Chapter Three outlines the needs identified during the Analyze and Connect Phases. It provides the background of those needs, synthesizing the results from the previous phases into justification and background for future action items. Chapter Three also identifies strategies to achieve the goals identified for the next five years.

Chapter Four

Implement: Action Plan

Chapter Four places the highest priority strategies into a six-year action plan with a ten-year outlook. The Action Plan designates when strategies may occur and how to accomplish them.

Appendix

The appendix contains detailed data and supporting summaries for each of the chapters above that may be helpful in understanding the full process and background of each step.



District Profile

The DeKalb Park District (DPD) service area covers approximately 19.28 square miles of land and serves a population of about 40,000 people. Located in central DeKalb County, the Park District owns nearly 700 acres of parks, playgrounds, and sports fields.

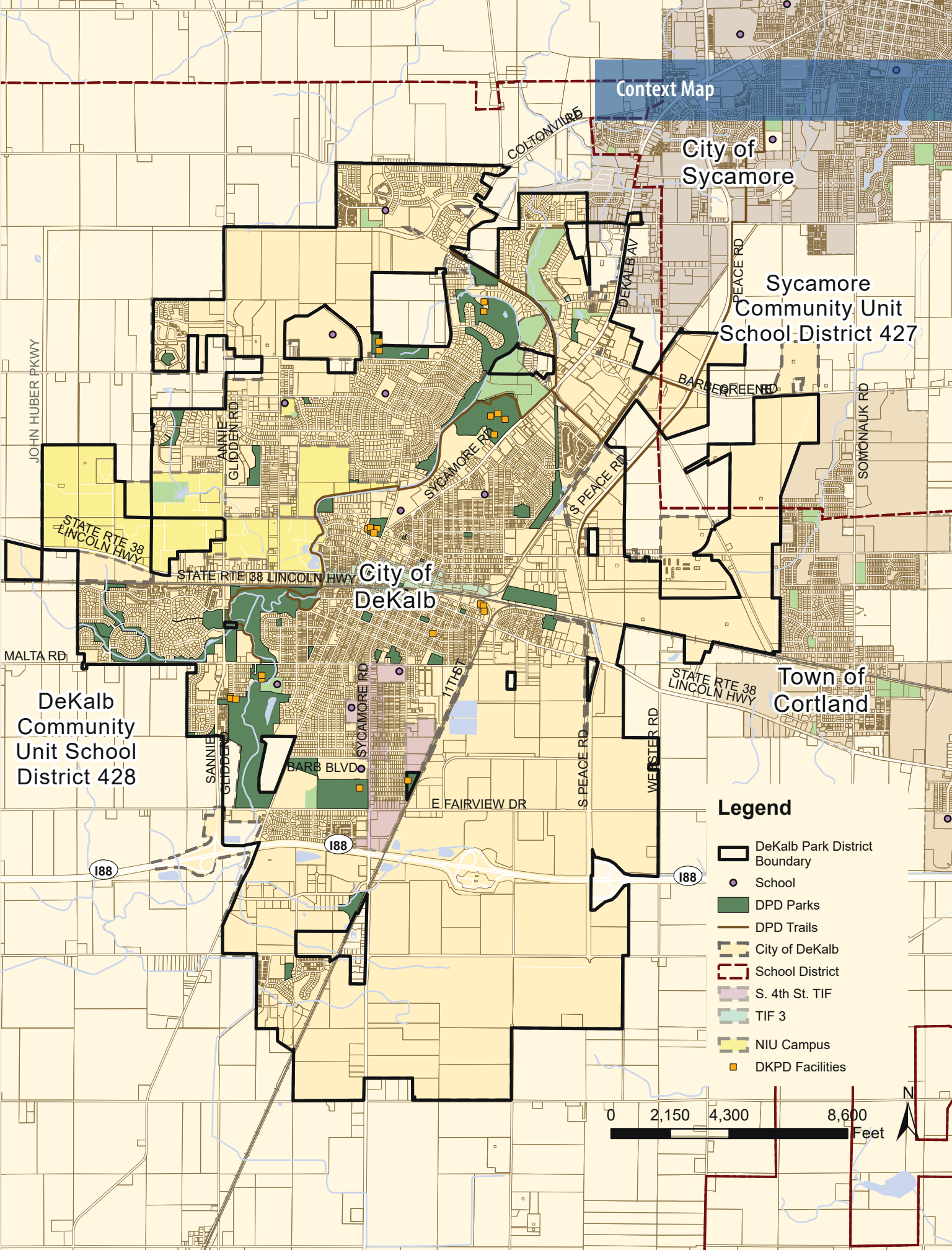
In addition to over 40 parks and playgrounds, the DeKalb Park District also manages a multitude of facilities including the Sports & Recreation Center, Hopkins Park Community Center & Pool, and a variety of support, maintenance, and smaller recreation facilities totaling approximately 207,709 square feet of indoor space.

The Park District operates within a network of overlapping jurisdictions that support governance, public services, and community development. These include the City of DeKalb, City of Sycamore, Town of Cortland, local School Districts 427, 428, and 429, the Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association (KSRA), and the DeKalb County Public Library. Pedestrian and bike trails are offered throughout the District and the surrounding county, including the DeKalb / Sycamore Bike Trail and the Great Western Trail which are regional trails that pass through District properties and fall under multiple jurisdictions. The City of DeKalb is responsible

for operating the bus service which serves the DeKalb Urbanized Area, including the Park District boundaries.

Other significant local organizations include Northern Illinois University (NIU) located on the west edge of the community, the nonprofit community development corporation Opportunity DeKalb, and the Family Service Agency of DeKalb County which offers counseling and essential services for children and seniors.

The Park District operates under the broader governance of a five-person elected board of commissioners. The District is responsible for managing the maintenance, operations, programming, and development of all parks and facilities identified within. District funding comes largely through general fund allocations, property taxes, program use fees, and donations.



Context Map

City of
Sycamore

Sycamore
Community Unit
School District 427

City of
DeKalb

DeKalb
Community
Unit School
District 428

Town of
Cortland

Legend

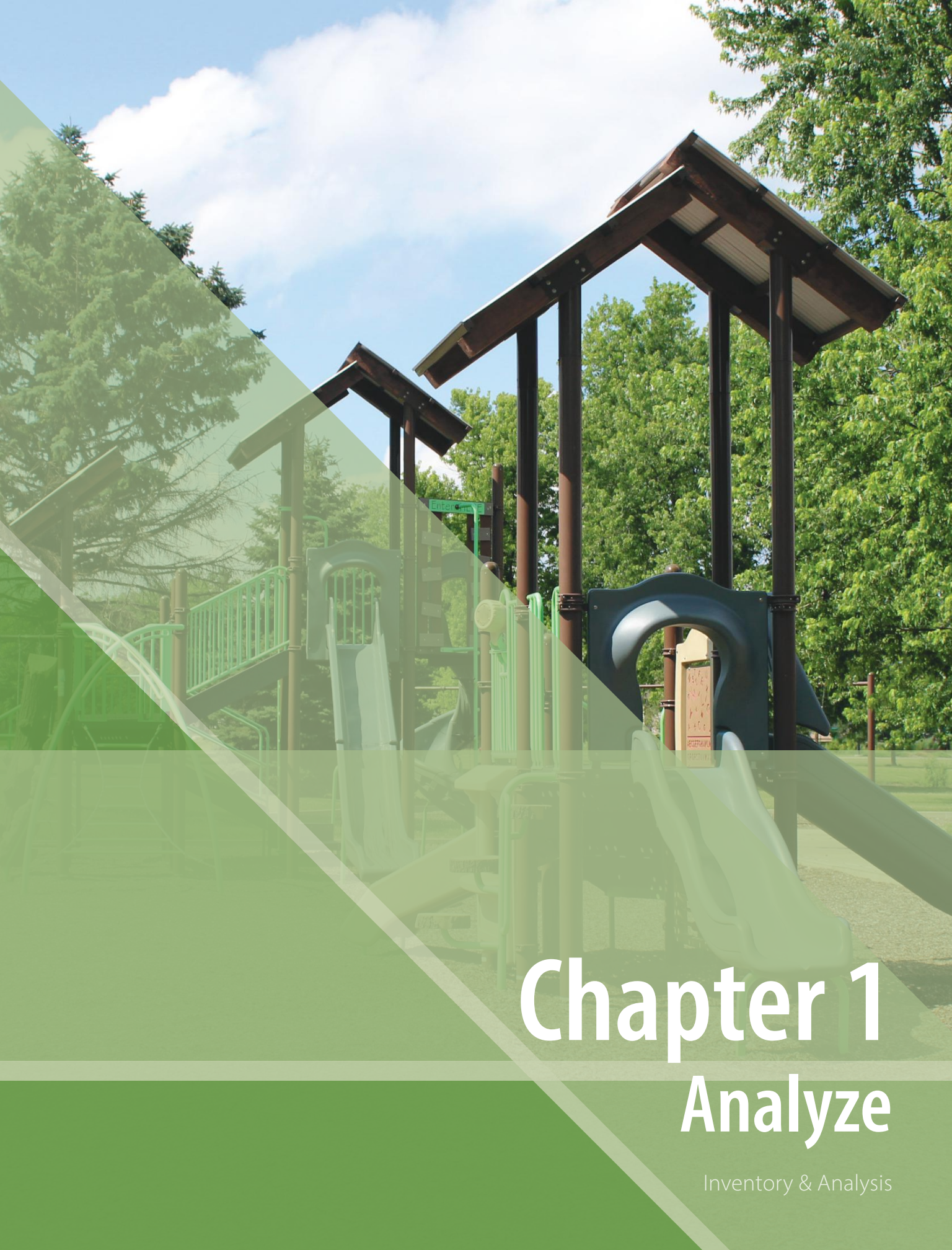
- DeKalb Park District Boundary
- School
- DPD Parks
- DPD Trails
- City of DeKalb
- School District
- S. 4th St. TIF
- TIF 3
- NIU Campus
- DKPD Facilities

0 2,150 4,300 8,600 Feet



During the comprehensive master plan process, the planning team referenced previous DeKalb Park District reports including the City of DeKalb Comprehensive Plan (2022), the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan, and individual park site and facility plans to better understand previous priorities and accomplishments. The planning team also referenced other local planning documents including zoning and land use maps and The Annie Glidden North Revitalization Plan. The revitalization plan identified a desire for continued collaboration working towards development of smaller neighborhood parks within easy walking distance of residents, refinement of parks within planned developments, and opportunity-driven development of greenways and trails throughout the community. The planning team also used GIS data from U.S. census resources, DeKalb County, and the DeKalb Park District to create the report maps.





Chapter 1

Analyze

Inventory & Analysis



Overview

The Analyze: Inventory and Analysis chapter describes and illustrates the existing conditions of the DeKalb Park District system, showing a basic understanding of the Park District's assets and programs.

Purpose

This chapter documents the inventory and analysis accomplished during the Analyze phase of the master planning process. This phase describes the context in which the Park District recreation service operates, the recreation services it provides, and the patrons who utilize the parks, natural areas, and facilities.

This chapter defines the community's demographic context and provides detailed maps of the DeKalb Park District that identify parks, open space, and other relevant land uses. It also includes the level of service analysis for parks and amenities, benchmarking the Park District's total acreage of parks and open recreation space, and comparing the number of amenities to local, state, and national benchmarks. A distribution mapping analysis of the geographic location of parks is also found in this chapter. Similar inventory and benchmarking information is also provided for the District's facilities and interior spaces. Finally, a program analysis was completed using District records and staff assessments.

This information provides insight into potential surpluses or deficiencies the Park District has in terms of parks, open space, and recreation amenities.

Chapter Outline

- Demographics
 - College Population
- Existing Conditions
 - Asset Inventory
 - Park Classifications
 - Park & Open Space Inventory Matrix
- Level of Service Analysis
 - Acreage
 - Distribution
 - Mini Park Distribution Analysis
 - Neighborhood Park Distribution Analysis
 - Community Park Distribution Analysis
 - Overall Park Distribution Analysis
 - Amenities
- Indoor Facility Inventory and Analysis
- Program Assessment

Legend

-  DeKalb Park District Boundary
-  School
-  DPD Parks
-  Lease
-  Parks by Others
-  City of DeKalb
-  Trails
-  NIU Campus
-  Pedestrian Underpass
-  DKPD Facilities



0 2,450 4,900 9,800 Feet

MINI PARKS

M8. DeKalb Square
M15. Hallgren Park
M16. Hanna Park
M22. Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park
M24. Liberty Park
M29. Memorial Park
M31. Moudy Park
M32. Oakland Park
M38. Raymond Park
M41. Shipman Park
M48. Yusunas Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

N1. Annie's Woods
N2. Boardman Park
N4. Chesebro Park
N9. Deprin Park
N12. Garden of Eden Park
N19. Huntley Park
N23. League of Women Voters Park
N25. Lions Park
N27. Mason Park/Larson Lake
N28. McCormick Park
N30. Moluf Park
N33. Overlook Park

N34. Pappas Park
N35. Prairie Creek Park
N37. Prather Park
N44. Sweet Park
N47. Wright Farm Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

C6. DeKalb Kiwanis Park
C18. Hopkins Park
C20. Katz Park
C36. Prairie Park
C46. Welsh Park-DeKalb

NATURAL AREAS

NA10. Devonaire Storm Facility
NA13. Greenwood Conservation Area
NA17. Hoger Farm
NA40. Rotary Park

SPECIAL USE

SU3. Buena Vista Golf Course
SU5. DeKalb Com. Center and Pool
SU11. Ellwood House Museum/ Ellwood Park

SU14. Haish Gymnasium
SU26. Maintenance Campus
SU39. River Heights Golf Course
SU42. Sports & Recreation Center

TRAIL

T7. DeKalb Nature Trail

UNDEVELOPED

U21. Kensington Park
U43. St. Mary's Park
U45. Veteran's Park
U49. Fairmont Dr. Lots



Demographics

The demographics review utilized the Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri) Business Analyst Online (BAO) software to gather up-to-date demographic data necessary to gain an understanding of the Park District and its context.

Summary

According to 2025 estimates, the City of DeKalb has a population of 39,387. Census population numbers from 2010 indicate the population is decreasing at an annual rate of 0.33% and is expected to continue decreasing into 2030. DeKalb's population decrease is comparable to the state's population decline of -0.27% and is counter to the national population growth rate of 0.42%.

There are an estimated 15,698 households within the City. According to the U.S. Census, a household "includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence." Out of these households, 51.14% (8,028) are families. A family is defined as a household in which one or more people are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. The average household size in DeKalb is 2.25 people. This is expected to remain consistent over the next five years.

Age Distribution

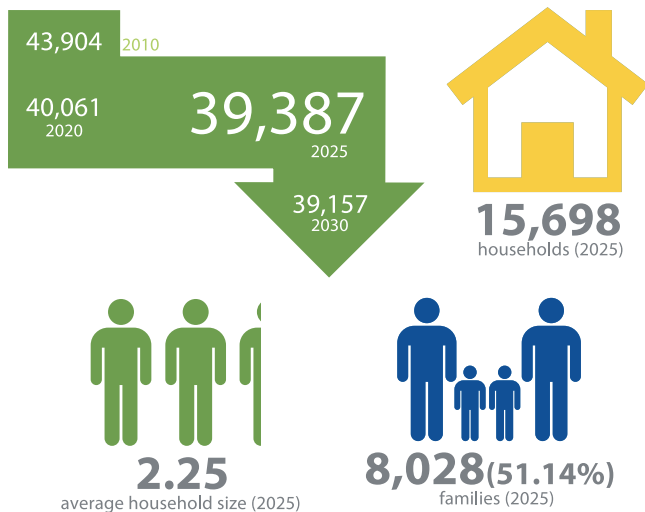
The median age of DeKalb residents is 29.2 with the population generally aging in place. According to 2025 estimates, 21.24% of the population is over the age of 55. This is projected to increase to 22.2% of the population by 2030, entirely due to growth in the 65+ age group. The increase in active adult and senior population

growth mirrors that of the state and national trends and these populations are and will continue to be a major District demographic. Additionally, there is projected growth in the 35-44 adult category and slight decline in the 0-4 preschool category, indicating that fewer young adults are settling in DeKalb and starting families.

Race and Ethnicity

According to Esri, the City of DeKalb has a diversity index of 74.9. The Diversity Index captures the racial and ethnic diversity of a geographic area in a single number (0 to 100) and allows for efficient analysis of diversity throughout the U.S. The Diversity Index is "the likelihood that two persons, selected at random from the same area, would belong to a different race or ethnic group." According to demographic estimates, 55.2% of City residents indicate their race as White. The largest minority group within the City is residents who identify as Black, representing 20.1% of the population. Additionally, 8.9% reported as "Some Other Race." 19.6% of the population identifies as Hispanic in addition to the race they reported as. "Hispanic" refers to a place of origin and is not considered race so it is reported separately. Over time, the District is expected to become more diverse with growth anticipated in all minority categories.

TOTAL POPULATION

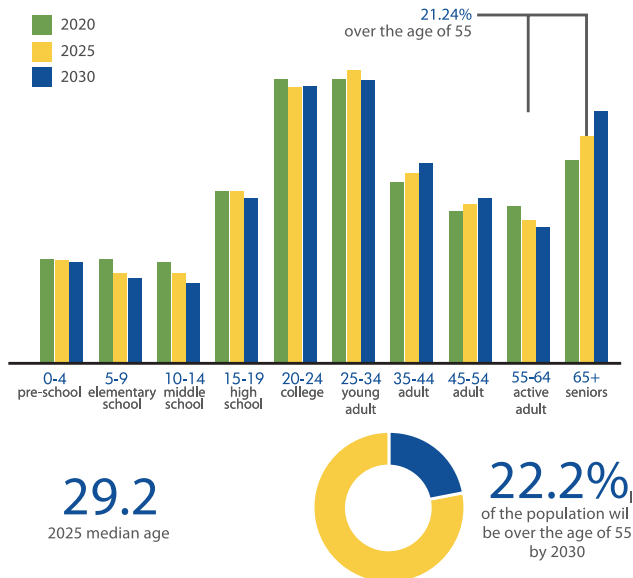


Income

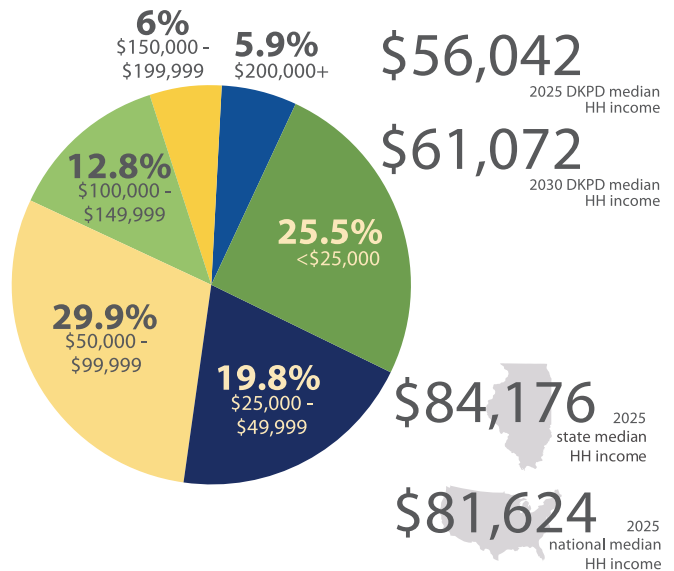
The median household income for DeKalb residents in 2025 is lower than both the state and national median. It is expected that median household income in the City will increase at a rate of about 2.3% per year, which is relatively consistent with the projected growth for the state and the nation (2.0% and 2.4%) and is expected to remain below the state and national median in 2030. Compared to state and national medians, fewer DeKalb Park District residents earn over \$100,000 (24.7%) compared to state (43.0%) and national (41.6%). About 25.5% of the City population is at or below the poverty line as defined by Illinois Legal Aid as a household that makes less than \$25,000 per year. About 4,597 (29.3%) of District households fall within the American Community Survey definition, which takes additional factors such as number of household residents and number of dependents into consideration.

Data Source: Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri)Business Analyst Online (BAO) software

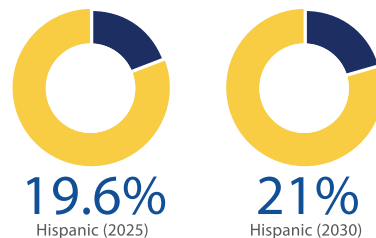
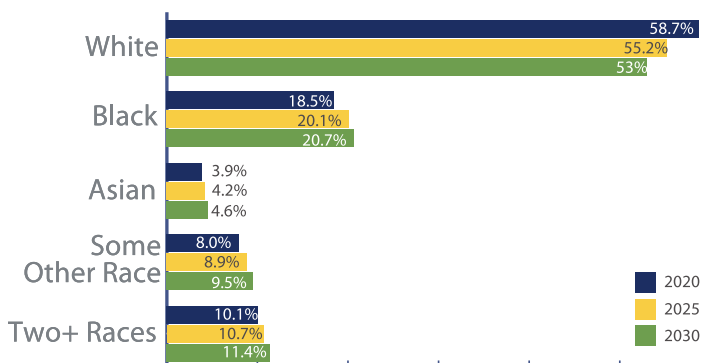
AGE DISTRIBUTION



INCOME DISTRIBUTION



RACE / ETHNICITY



*Hispanic refers to a place of origin and is not considered race so it is reported separately.

* American Indian Alone: 0.8%
** Pacific Islander Alone: 0.0%

College Population

Northern Illinois University (NIU) is centrally located along the west edge of the City of DeKalb and most of the campus is within the Park District boundary.

NIU operates independently of the City and Park District but influences the communities' population, age, income, and employment demographics.

NIU and Adjacent Areas

The area around the NIU campus consists of residential neighborhoods located to the north, east, and south. Land to the west of the campus is mostly agriculture.

NIU is about 1.20 square miles and recorded a fall 2025 enrollment of 16,078 students across its undergraduate, graduate, and law college programs. About 4,477 of these students live on campus.

The Planning Team uses Planning Areas to divide the Park District into smaller neighborhood and subcommunities. More information about Planning Areas can be found on page 34. Planning Areas (PA) 8a, 8b, 9, 10, 14, and 15 are directly adjacent to the NIU campus and include a greater population density than the rest of the District. All six adjacent planning areas are in the top half of the District's highest density areas by population, and four of the six are in the upper quartile. Each of these areas includes a mix of single-family and multiple-family residential zoning with the greatest concentration of multiple family housing located in PA 8a.

PA 8a also includes the Annie Glidden North (AGN) neighborhood which is characterized as in decline due to real and perceived concerns regarding income, access to resources, employment, and safety. The AGN neighborhood is the focus of the nonprofit Opportunity DeKalb community development corporation which developed The Annie Glidden North Revitalization Plan to guide neighborhood improvements and reinvestment.

Demographic Trends

There is a continuing and multi-year trend of NIU students living off-campus, typically but not exclusively in the AGN and University Village neighborhoods north of campus. However, due to University policy, off-campus addresses are not shared making it impossible to determine the exact population of off-campus student residents. Based on campus resident numbers it is estimated that about 11,607 enrolled students live off campus, but it is not clear how many live within the DeKalb Park District limits.

Other demographic factors commonly attributed to full- and part-time students including low-income, renter, and partial or complete unemployment status, are known conditions among non-student residents in the surrounding areas which complicates estimating student populations outside of the campus boundaries.

The following demographic indicators were used to estimate student populations. Available BAO data was applied to each Park District PA, excluding the NIU campus.

- **B1 Tapestry Segment - Dorms to Diplomas** (2025): Esri estimate of individuals in their early to mid-20s, mostly unmarried, with part-time jobs. Median household size for this segment is 2.03 and median income is \$29,081. Home ownership is 7.0% and unemployment is 7.8%. Esri describes common lifestyle patterns for this segment as socially active and active on social media, and technology-based services such as dating, gaming, and entertainment apps. They also tend to be participants and viewers of sports, and tend to purchase generic and environmentally friendly budget products.
- **Population over 3 Enrolled in Public College** (2023): ACS* estimate of population over the age of the 3 enrolled in any type of public undergraduate secondary school or graduate/professional school including colleges, universities, and other programs where credits can be earned. Public schools are determined by primary support through public funds.
- **Renter Occupied Housing Units** (2025): Esri estimate of available units (houses, apartments, mobile homes, and groups of or individual rooms) which are occupied or available to occupy by someone other than the property owner.
- **Households (HH) Below Poverty Level** (2023): ACS* estimate of households with a total income below the poverty level**.

- **Population with Income below Poverty Level** (2023): ACS* estimate of individuals whose income over the past 12-months was below the poverty level**, excluding people residing in institutional group homes, military quarters, and college dorms, and non-family household members under age 15.
- **Households (HH) with Public Assistance** (2023): ACS* estimate of households that receive local, state, and/or federal government assistance or benefits including but not limited to Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF.)

*American Community Survey (ACS) is a demographics data set provided by Esri for the United States and Puerto Rico sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. This survey is a monthly small percent sampling used to collect information about community demographics

** ACS defines poverty level as a person or household whose total income is less than the poverty threshold considering family size and composition. The poverty threshold is a national ratio which is updated annually. Incomes that equal or exceed the threshold are not considered to be in poverty. The following table is the 2023 weighted average by size of family unit. The full 2023 Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years Old is provided in the appendix.

Size of family unit	Dollars
One person	15,480
Two people	19,680
Three people	24,230
Four people	31,200
Five people	36,990
Six people	41,860
Seven people	47,670
Eight people	52,850
Nine people or more	62,900

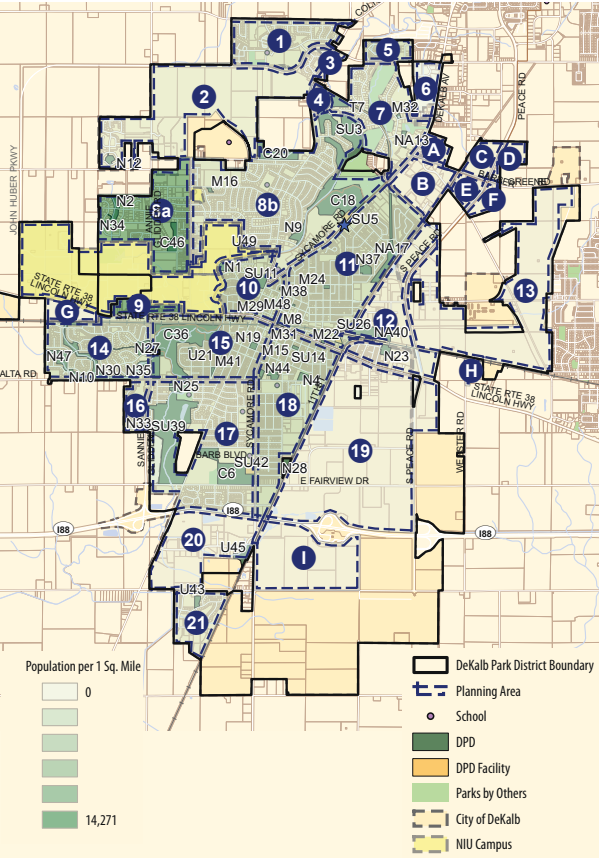
When considering demographic trends, it appears that off-campus student residences are most highly concentrated in Planning Area 8a which has the highest percent (26.32%) of B1 segment and public college enrolled residents (26.13%). PA 8b has the second highest percent of public college enrolled residents (24.94%) but 0% B1 segment population. Similarly, areas 9, 10, 14, 15, and 17 include 5.17% to 13.98% of residents enrolled in public college. Planning areas 9 and 15 are the only other areas which include B1 segment residents, 7.00% and 5.08% of their populations respectively. It is likely that there are NIU students residing in areas 8b, 9, 10, 14, 15, and 17 as well as 8a but they may include lower concentrations of the “traditional” young adult students that the B1 segment focuses on. Considering NIU information that about 22.44% of fall enrollment consisted of graduate students and 2.19% of College of Law, there is a significant portion of NIU students who may not meet the age and lifestyle characteristics of the B1 segment.

It is possible that inclusion of professional schools, alternative credit-earning sources, and other “non-traditional” education options contribute to the public college populations in these areas. There is also a possibility that some DeKalb residents who attend public colleges or fit within the B1 segment criteria may attend schools other than NIU online or as commuters while living locally, or may have a permanent DeKalb address but reside elsewhere while attending school.

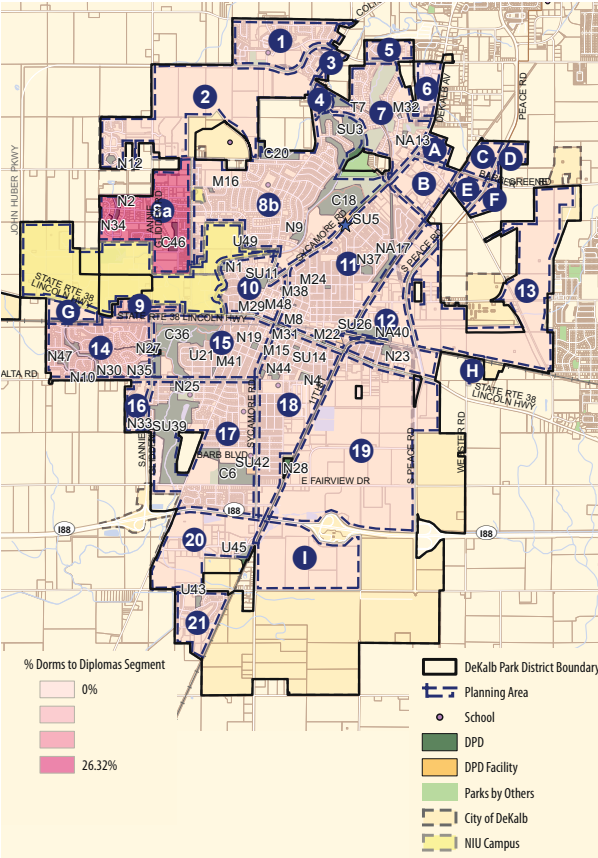
The other factors considered; rental unit concentration, household and individual poverty levels, and households receiving governmental assistance, may apply to students but are not unique to this demographic. Populations within these categories are distributed throughout the District, not limited to the areas of assumed student populations. Similarly, local knowledge, including documents prepared by Opportunity DeKalb, indicate integration of student and non-student communities, particularly in planning areas 5, 8a, and 8b.

The maps and tables on the following pages show these demographic factors across the District.

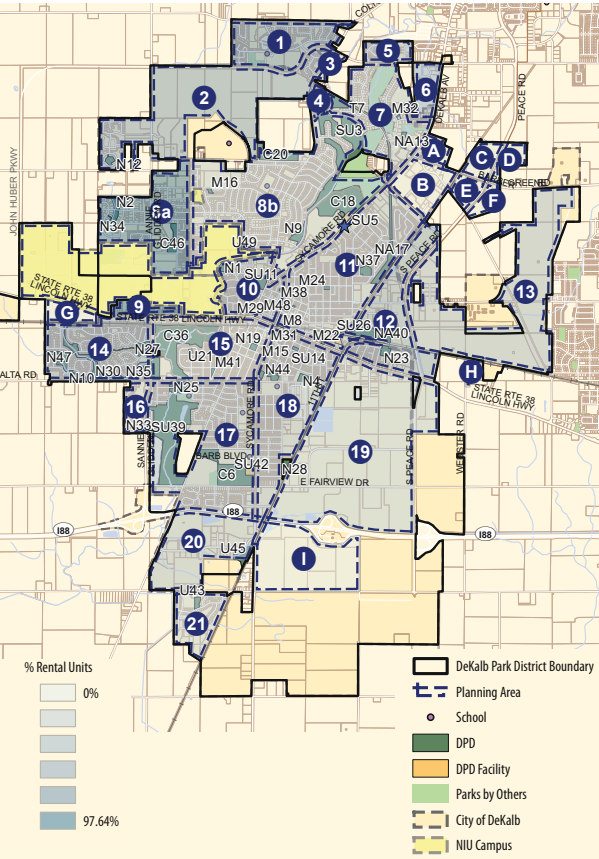
Population Density Map



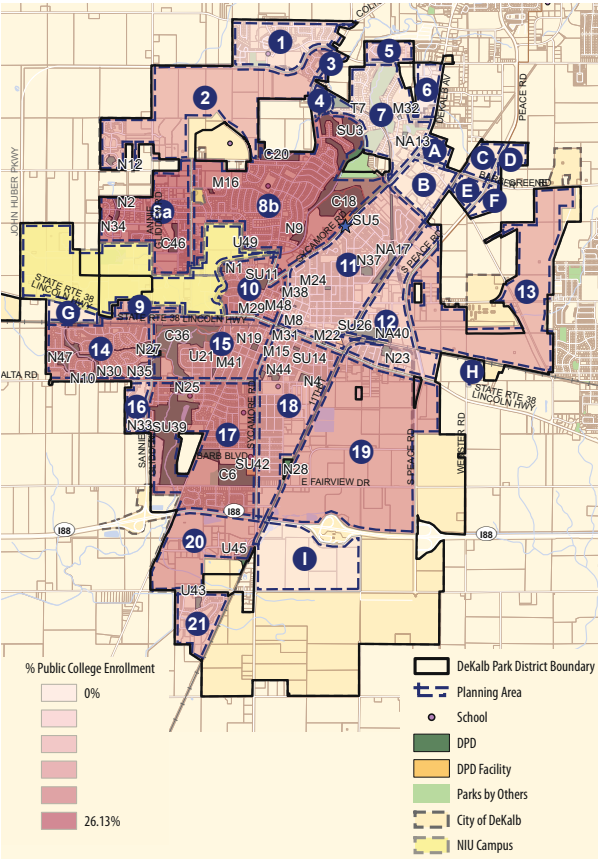
Dorms to Diplomas (B1) Segment Map



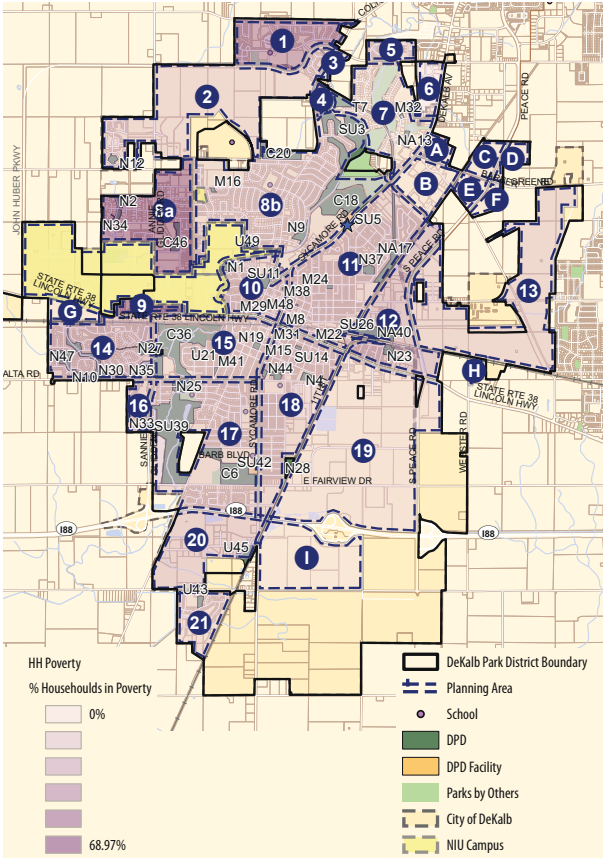
Rental Units Map



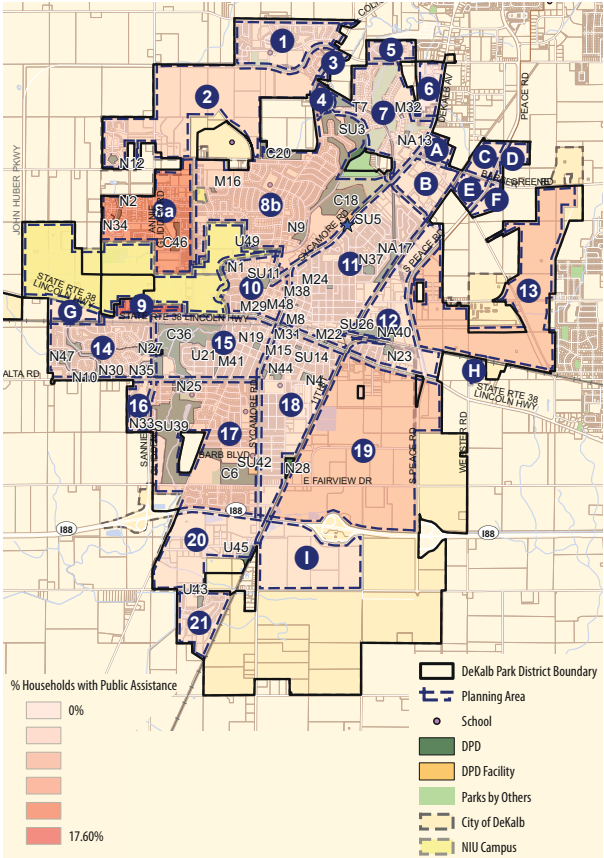
Public College Enrollment Map



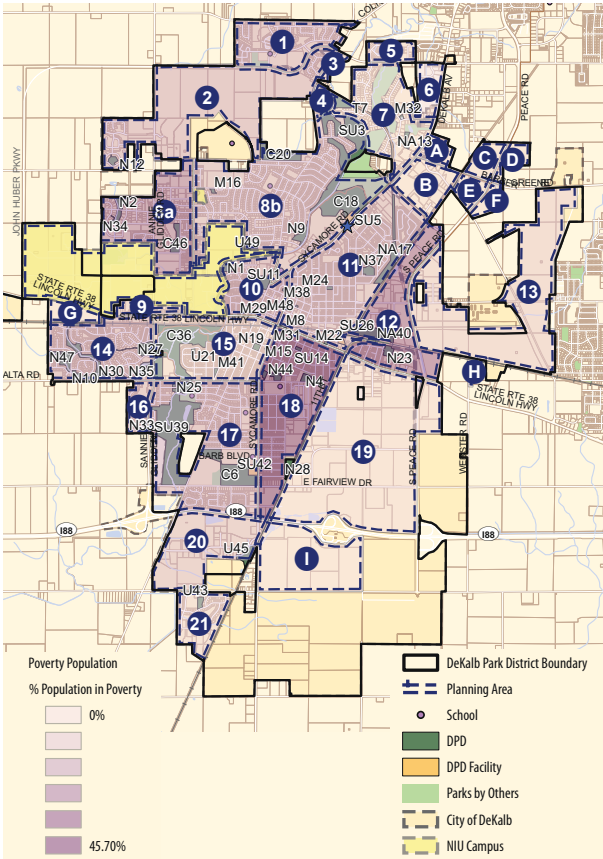
Households in Poverty Map



Household Assistance Map



Population in Poverty Map



College Population Indicators Table

Location	Population Density (population per 1 mile)	2025 Total Population	2025 Total Households
1	2,644	1,084	386
2	969	1,105	436
3	267	8	1
4	840	42	21
5	3,570	357	127
6	115	15	2
7	1,623	925	330
8a	13,239	8,076	3,477
8b	2,742	4,223	1,807
9	14,271	999	551
10	5,059	1,619	828
11	4,180	4,473	2,068
12	626	363	164
13	20	24	4
14	3,734	2,203	748
15	4,488	3,007	1,415
16	2,964	326	110
17	2,354	2,801	1,076
18	4,595	3,676	1,632
19	26	47	8
20	39	21	6
21	1,458	350	154
Total	-	35,744	15,351

2025 B1 Tapestry Population	% 2025 B1 Tapestry Population	Total 2023 Population (over 3) Enrolled in Public College	% Total 2023 Population (over 3) Enrolled in Public College
0	0.00%	16	0.61%
0	0.00%	48	4.95%
0	0.00%	5	1.88%
0	0.00%	6	0.71%
0	0.00%	35	0.98%
0	0.00%	0	0.00%
0	0.00%	0	0.00%
3,485	26.32%	3,459	26.13%
0	0.00%	684	24.94%
999	7.00%	738	5.17%
0	0.00%	616	12.18%
0	0.00%	145	3.47%
0	0.00%	16	2.56%
0	0.00%	1	4.96%
0	0.00%	316	8.46%
228	5.08%	365	8.13%
0	0.00%	56	1.89%
0	0.00%	329	13.98%
0	0.00%	331	7.20%
0	0.00%	2	7.62%
0	0.00%	3	7.71%
0	0.00%	61	4.18%
4,712	13.18%	7,232	20.23%

2025 Renter Occupied Housing Units	% 2025 Renter Occupied Housing Units
94	24.35%
253	58.03%
0	0.00%
7	33.33%
49	38.58%
1	50.00%
91	27.58%
3,269	94.02%
416	23.02%
538	97.64%
605	73.07%
918	44.39%
54	32.93%
2	50.00%
277	37.03%
776	54.84%
20	18.18%
229	21.28%
617	37.81%
3	37.50%
2	33.33%
28	18.18%
8,249	23.08%

2023 HH Below Poverty Level	% 2023 HH Below Poverty Level	2023 Population with Income below Poverty Level	% 2023 Population with Income below Poverty Level	2023 HH with Public Assistance	% 2023 HH with Public Assistance
20	5.18%	33	1.25%	25	6.48%
54	12.39%	149	15.37%	9	2.06%
0	0.00%	4	1.50%	0	0.00%
4	19.05%	5	0.60%	1	4.76%
12	9.45%	29	0.81%	0	0.00%
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
2,165	62.27%	3,994	30.17%	502	14.44%
183	10.13%	348	12.69%	51	2.82%
380	68.97%	604	4.23%	97	17.60%
388	46.86%	717	14.17%	0	0.00%
301	14.56%	718	17.18%	39	1.89%
25	15.24%	81	12.94%	0	0.00%
1	25.00%	7	34.71%	0	0.00%
98	13.10%	195	5.22%	42	5.61%
312	22.05%	660	14.71%	10	0.71%
9	8.18%	29	0.98%	0	0.00%
171	15.89%	285	12.11%	9	0.84%
220	13.48%	694	15.10%	51	3.13%
1	12.50%	12	45.70%	0	0.00%
1	16.67%	4	10.29%	0	0.00%
12	7.79%	32	2.19%	0	0.00%
4,357	12.19%	8,600	24.06%	836	2.34%



Existing Conditions

The first step in the comprehensive planning process is to understand the DeKalb Park District’s surroundings and the existing conditions of the Park District’s assets including land use and open space.

Land Use

The DeKalb Park District encompasses approximately 16.21 square miles. Single-family residential development is the predominant land use, followed by planned development industrial and existing industrial land uses. The remaining land is distributed among mixed-use developments, transportation, Northern Illinois University, and other uses.

Open Space Providers

The DeKalb Park District benefits from a variety of open space and outdoor recreation providers that complement the offerings of the District. These include conservation areas, private open spaces, and institutional properties managed by public and private school districts.

Conservation Areas

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District owns and manages open space for habitat preservation, education, and recreation throughout the County. The Forest Preserve District has partial management of the DeKalb Nature Trail. Additionally, the P.A. Nehring and County Farm Woods properties partially overlap with the DeKalb Park District’s recreation service. These serve as natural assets and provide passive recreation options for DeKalb Park District residents.

Private Open Space

There is one privately owned golf course within Park District boundaries. The Kishwaukee Country Club is a nearly 180-acre, 18-hole golf course that also includes a driving range, swimming pool, 1 tennis court, and 2 pickleball courts.

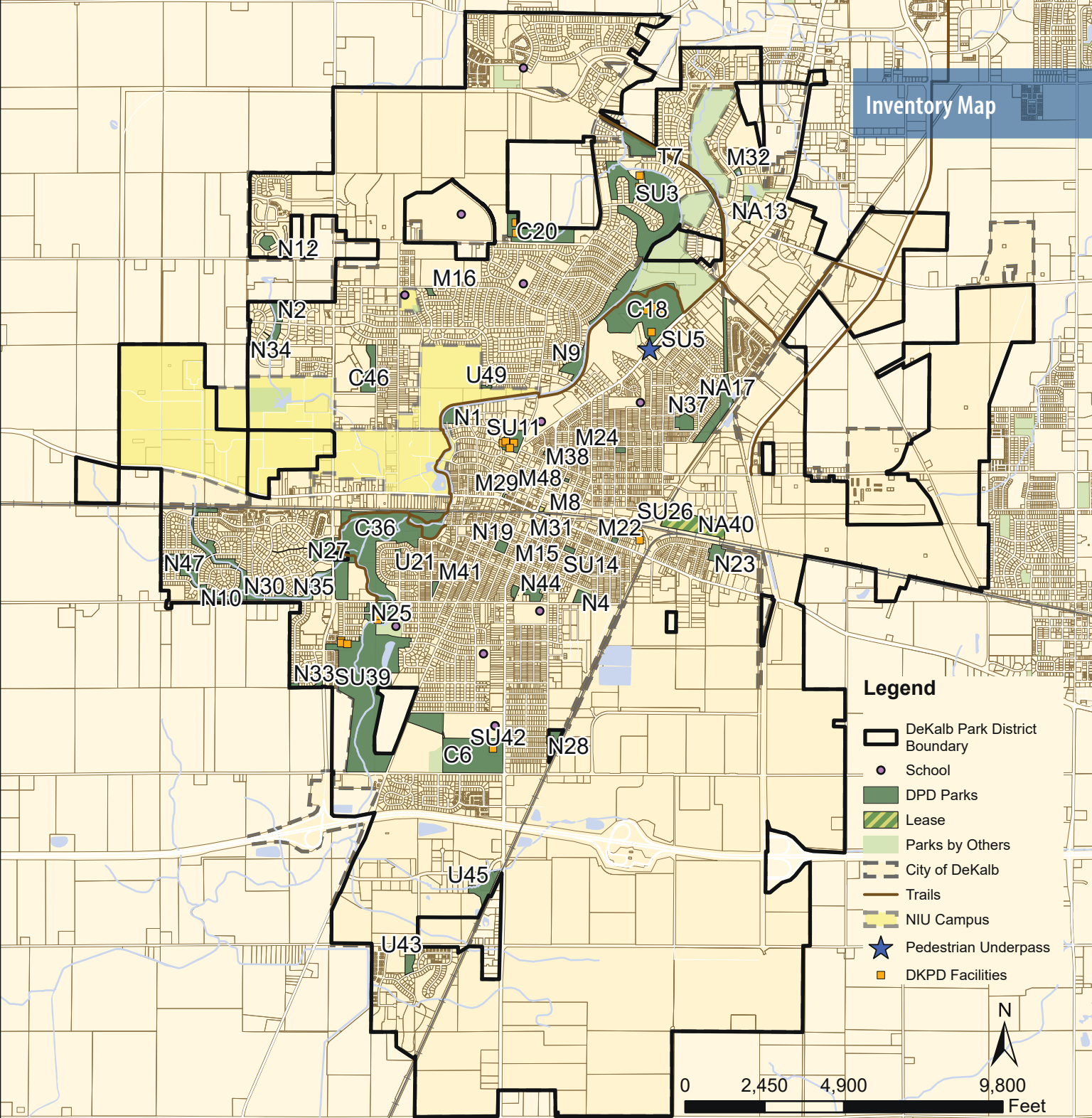
Institutional Open Space

Elementary, Middle, and High Schools and Colleges / Universities

There are seven elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one public preschool serving DeKalb Park District residents. St. Mary’s Catholic School is a private school serving grades K-8.

Additionally, Northern Illinois University is located in the west central portion of the District, providing approximately 765.2 acres of institutional land within its campus.

Inventory Map



MINI PARKS

M8. DeKalb Square
M15. Hallgren Park
M16. Hanna Park
M22. Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park
M24. Liberty Park
M29. Memorial Park
M31. Moudy Park
M32. Oakland Park
M38. Raymond Park
M41. Shipman Park
M48. Yusunas Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

N1. Annie's Woods
N2. Boardman Park
N4. Chesebro Park
N9. Deprin Park
N12. Garden of Eden Park
N19. Huntley Park
N23. League of Women Voters Park
N25. Lions Park
N27. Mason Park/Larson Lake
N28. McCormick Park
N30. Moluf Park
N33. Overlook Park

N34. Pappas Park
N35. Prairie Creek Park
N37. Prather Park
N44. Sweet Park
N47. Wright Farm Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

C6. DeKalb Kiwanis Park
C18. Hopkins Park
C20. Katz Park
C36. Prairie Park
C46. Welsh Park

NATURAL AREAS

NA10. Devonaire Storm Facility
NA13. Greenwood Conservation Area
NA17. Hoger Farm
NA40. Rotary Park

SPECIAL USE

SU3. Buena Vista Golf Course
SU5. Hopkins Park Community Center and Pool
SU11. Ellwood House Museum / Ellwood Park

SU14. Haish Gymnasium
SU26. Maintenance Campus
SU39. River Heights Golf Course
SU42. Sports & Recreation Center

TRAIL

T7. DeKalb Nature Trail

UNDEVELOPED

U21. Kensington Park
U43. St. Mary's Park
U45. Veteran's Park
U49. Fairmont Dr. Lots

Asset Inventory

As a part of the planning process, the Planning Team referenced the guidelines outlined by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) - Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines Manual.

NRPA recommends creating a park classification system to serve as a guide for organizing an agency's parks. Park, Recreation, and Greenway Classification Guidelines are expressions of the minimum amount and development of land a community should provide for different classifications or types of parks, open space, and greenways.

Mini park, neighborhood park, community park, large urban park, and sports complexes are the five classifications for parks recognized by the NRPA. Commonly, school parks serve similar functions as neighborhood parks and large urban parks and sports complexes are included in the community park category.

These categories are based on size, function, and use. Mini parks are the smallest and most limited in function, while community parks are typically the largest parks of a system and serve a variety of functions for the community. Other open space categories recognized by the NRPA are natural areas, trails, corridors or linear parks, and special use parks. Undeveloped areas are sites not yet developed for meaningful access. This category is recognized for planning purposes but is not an NRPA category.

The following park types are based on these NRPA classifications and definitions but have been modified to better represent the DeKalb Park District parks and open spaces.

Active Parks

In addition to these park classifications, NRPA provides additional recommendations based on type of park use. Mini, neighborhood, and community parks are considered active parks due to the variety and types of recreation amenities they typically provide. These active parks are designed to meet day-to-day resident recreation needs compared to the other park types which are more specialized or have more limited functions.

These classifications are vital to a comprehensive level of service analysis. In the park and open space matrix on the following pages, amenities were quantified to understand the Park District's total recreational offerings.

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

	Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Range	Park District Parks
Active Parks	Mini Park	Mini Parks meet the need for a walkable, drop-in recreation experience. Appropriate elements in these parks include playgrounds, picnic areas, and seating. These parks usually do not include parking and are used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than 0.25 mile distance from homes in a residential setting.	Between 0.14 and 1.18 acres	DeKalb Square, Hallgren Park, Hanna Park, Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park, Liberty Park, Memorial Park, Moudy Park, Oakland Park, Raymond Park, Shipman Park, Yusunas Park
	Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood Parks remain the basic unit of the park system and are generally designed for informal active and passive recreation and community gathering spaces. Elements in these parks often include playgrounds, picnic areas, sports fields and courts, and trail systems. Neighborhood Parks serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.	0.25 to 0.5 mile distance from homes and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	Between 2.16 and 11.82 acres	Annie's Woods, Boardman Park, Chesebro Park, Deprin Park, Garden of Eden Park, Huntley Park, League of Women Voters Park, Lions Park, Mason Park / Larson Lake, McCormick Park, Moluf Park, Overlook Park, Pappas Park, Prairie Creek Park, Prather Park, Sweet Park, Wright Farm Park
	Community Park	Community Parks focus on meeting community-wide recreation needs and serve a broader purpose than the Neighborhood Park. These parks preserve unique landscapes and often serve the community as gathering places and general athletics locations. Elements in these parks include playgrounds, pavilions, trails and path systems, and multiple sport courts and fields. These parks may also preserve unique landscapes and open spaces.	Usually serves two or more neighborhoods within a 0.5 to 3 mile distance from homes.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Between 24.50 and 108.46 acres	DeKalb Kiwanis Park, Hopkins Park, Katz Park, Prairie Park, Welsh Park
	Natural Area	Conservation and wildlife areas, wooded areas, and waterways that are maintained for the most part in their natural state.	Service radius is unlimited.	No applicable standard. Between 11.28 and 31.87 acres	Rotary Park, Hoger Farm, Devonaire Storm Facilities, Greenwood Conservation Area
	Special Use	Special use facilities focus on meeting specialized community-wide needs. These spaces include indoor and outdoor areas and are designed for limited recreation or operational activities. Examples include golf courses, nature centers, and museums.	No applicable standard.	Variable depending on the desired amenity. Between 4.06 and 135.60 acres	Buena Vista Golf Course, Hopkins Park Community Center & Pool, Ellwood House Museum / Ellwood Park, Haish Gymnasium, Maintenance Campus, River Heights Golf Course, Sports & Recreation Center
	Trail / Linear Park	These spaces effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment. Development typically includes a path system and may have supplemental recreation development such as shelters and furnishings.	Determined by resource availability and opportunity.	No applicable standard. 8.58 acres	DeKalb Nature Trail
	Undeveloped Area	Lands owned by the agency, but not yet developed with any amenities to provide meaningful access to the site such as trails, seating areas, and other passive and active recreation amenities.	No applicable standard.	No applicable standard	St. Mary's Park, Kensington Park, Veteran's Park, Fairmont Dr. Lots

Park & Open Space Matrix

The following matrix is the inventory of the Park District's parks and open spaces, grouped by park classification. This table includes information on the park size and available amenities for each of the owned and maintained sites at the time of the comprehensive master planning process to present a complete review of the Park District's outdoor recreation offerings.

Detailed park inventories for the parks reviewed by the planning team are included in the Supplementary Documents - Inventory document.

	ACREAGE		Regional Trail Access	TRAILS				INDOOR FACILITIES			DAY USE AMENITIES					SPORTS COURTS AND AMENITIES						
	Acreage - Own	Acreage - Lease / Manage		Multi-Use Trails	Hiking Trails	Bicycle Trails	Nature / Interpretive Trails	Indoor Program / Support Facility	Restrooms (X – Permanent, P – Portable)	Concessions	Fitness Stations	Dog Park	Picnic Shelter	Amphitheater/Bandshell	Playground	Basketball Court	Volleyball Court	Pickleball Court	Tennis Court	Tennis Court with Pickleball Overlay	Baseball Field	
ACTIVE PARK AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM																						
Mini Parks																						
8 DeKalb Square		0.48										1										
15 Hallgren Park	1.18											1		1								
16 Hanna Park	0.97			0.04																		
22 Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park	0.63			0.06								1		1								
24 Liberty Park	1.13			0.07								1		1								
29 Memorial Park		0.23																				
31 Moudy Park		0.14																				
32 Oakland Park	0.87											1										
38 Raymond Park	0.31													1								
41 Shipman Park	1.07													1								
48 Yusunas Park	0.50																					
Mini Park Acreage	6.66	0.85																				
	7.51																					
Neighborhood Parks																						
1 Annie's Woods	5.90					x						1		2		0.5						
2 Boardman Park	5.25					x																
4 Chesebro Park	3.82															1.0						
9 Deprin Park	6.91							P														
12 Garden of Eden Park	3.44			0.18								1		1								
19 Huntley Park	2.49			0.14										1								
23 League of Women Voters Park*	5.20			0.20						3	1		1	1		0.5						
25 Lions Park	11.50		x	0.40			x	P		2	1	1	1	1		0.5	1					
27 Mason Park / Larson Lake	13.70			0.60								1		1								
28 McCormick Park	5.32							x				1		1								
30 Moluf Park	3.03																					
33 Overlook Park	2.16			0.25										1								
34 Pappas Park	4.47			0.06										1								
35 Prairie Creek Park	18.60																					
37 Prather Park	5.57							P						1						1		
44 Sweet Park	6.30 *											1										
47 Wright Farm Park	5.04			0.20								1		1		0.5						
Neighborhood Park Acreage	108.70	0.00																				
	108.70																					
Community Parks																						
6 DeKalb Kiwanis Park/Barb Blvd	52.73	0.17						x	P	x			1							1		
18 Hopkins Park	82.78		x	0.85				x		x			2	1	1	1.0		4	2		4	
20 Katz Park	24.50			0.60					x			2	1		1							
36 Prairie Park	102.30		x	1.66		0.58			P													
46 Welsh Park	10.01			0.57					x				1		1	1.0/1.0		2				
Community Park Acreage	272.32	0.17																				
	272.49																					
	387.68	1.02																				
ACTIVE PARK & OPEN SPACE HOLDINGS	388.70		3	5.88	0.0	0.0	0.6	2	8	1	5	2	18	1	20	6.0	1	6	2	0	6	

Useful Life

Where installation or renovation year is available, amenities are also compared against the useful life recommended by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) useful life criteria recommendations. These recommendations provide an estimated number or range of years an amenity is expected to remain in usable condition and in compliance with codes and regulations, based on its use and materials/construction. Amenities that are beyond useful life are noted in red text and are deducted from the District's total number of amenities provided to determine the number of amenities at current standards. The useful life status of an amenity is solely based on the age of the amenity rather than actual physical condition and compliance.

[illegible]

Park & Open Space Matrix

	ACREAGE		TRAILS				INDOOR FACILITIES		DAY USE AMENITIES				SPORTS COURTS AND AMENITIES									
	Acreage - Own	Acreage - Lease / Manage	Regional Trail Access	Multi-Use Trails	Hiking Trails	Bicycle Trails	Nature / Interpretive Trails	Indoor Program / Support Facility	Restrooms (X – Permanent, P – Portable)	Concessions	Fitness Stations	Dog Park	Picnic Shelter	Amphitheater/Bandshell	Playground	Basketball Court	Volleyball Court	Pickleball Court	Tennis Court	Tennis Court with Pickleball Overlay	Baseball Field	
OTHER DEKALB PARK DISTRICT OPEN SPACE & FACILITIES																						
Natural Areas																						
10	Devonaire Storm Facilities	31.87																				
13	Greenwood Conservation Area	2.50																				
17	Hoger Farm	21.12																				
40	Rotary Park		22.72	0.74					P				1									
Natural Area Acreage		55.49	22.72																			
		78.21																				
Special Use																						
8	Buena Vista Golf Course	61.00		0.65				x	x													
5	Hopkins Park Community Center and Pool	4.06	x					x	x	x												
11	Ellwood House Museum / Ellwood Park	6.60		0.35					x	x												
14	Haish Gymnasium	1.17						x	x													
26	Maintenance Campus	2.75						x	x													
39	River Heights Golf Course	127.29						x	x	x			1									
42	Sports & Recreation Center	5.67						x	x													
Special Use Acreage		208.54	0.00																			
		208.54																				
Trails, Corridors, and Linear Parks / Greenways																						
7	DeKalb Nature Trail	24.45		x	1.29										x							
Trail, Corridor and Linear Park Acreage		24.45	0.00																			
		24.45																				
Undeveloped Area																						
49	Fairmont Dr. Lots	0.60																				
43	Kensington Park	1.04																				
21	St. Mary's Park	3.43																				
45	Veteran's Park	10.12																				
Undeveloped Park Acreage		15.19	0.00																			
		15.19																				
		691.35	23.74																			
TOTAL DEKALB PARK DISTRICT HOLDINGS		715.09		5	8.91	0.0	0.0	0.58	9	9	3	5	2	20	1	20	6.0	1	6	2	0	6

BEYOND USEFUL LIFE
AMENITIES AT CURRENT STANDARDS

0	0	0	0	0	5	0	6	1.0	0	0	0	0	1
9	9	3	5	2	15	1	14	5.0	1	6	2	0	5

*League of Women Voters Park
improvements planned for construction in
2025

** 1.47 acres at Sweet Park leased to DeKalb County Housing Authority

Acreage information was derived from GIS data obtained from DeKalb Park District and DeKalb County

All text in red indicates an amenity is beyond its useful life.

INDOOR FACILITIES	Indoor Program / Support Facility
	Restrooms
	Concessions
	Fitness Stations
	Dog Park
DAY USE AMENITIES	Picnic Shelter
	Amphitheater/Bandshell
	Playground
	Basketball
SPORTS COURTS AND AMENITIES	Volleyball Court
	Pickleball
	Tennis Court
	Tennis Court with Pickleball Overlay
	Baseball

SPORTS COURTS AND AMENITIES														WATER-BASED AMENITIES					NATURAL FEATURES	LAWN GAME AMENITIES										
Softball Field	T-Ball Field	Cricket Field	Lacrosse Field	Football / Rugby Field	Futsal Field	Soccer Field	Multipurpose Synthetic Turf Field	Running Track	Golf Driving Range (tees)	Golf Course (holes)	Disc Golf (holes)	In-line Skating Rink	Skate Park	Boat Launch	Fishing Area	Ice Skating	Sled Hill	Splash Pad	Swimming Pool	Creek / River / Open Water	Natural Area	Community Gardens	Baggio	Bocce	Chess/Checkers	Foosball	Gaga Ball	Horseshoe Pit	Ping Pong	Shuffleboard

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

7	3	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	13	27	9	0	1	0	3	0	1	1	1	17	17	2	5	0	4	1	1	2	1	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	3	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	13	27	9	0	1	0	3	0	1	1	1	17	17	2	5	0	4	1	1	2	1	0

WATER-BASED AMENITIES	Softball
	T-Ball Field
	Cricket
	Lacrosse
	Football / Rugby
	Futsal
	Soccer
	Multipurpose Synthetic Turf Field
	Running Track
	Golf Driving Range (tees)
	Golf Course (holes)
	Disc Golf (holes)
	In-line skating
	Skate Park
	Boat Launch
Fishing	
Ice Skating	
Sled Hill	
Splash Pad	
Swimming Pool	
NATURAL FEATURES	Creek / River / Open Water
	Natural Area
	Community Gardens
LAWN GAME AMENITIES	Bocce
	Bocce
	Chess Game Table
	Football
	Gaga Ball
	Horseshoe Pit
	Ping Pong
Shuffleboard	



Level of Service

This level of service analysis evaluates how well the DeKalb Park District's parks, facilities, and amenities are serving the current needs of the community.

The development of a level of service standard for parks and recreation began in the 1980s with the development of levels of service for other infrastructures such as water, stormwater drainage, sewer systems, and transportation. These benchmarks provide agency officials with the ability to respond to growing communities, evolving demographics, and changing needs. It is important to note, however, that these benchmarks are not strict rules that all communities should follow. These level of service benchmarks are simply another gauge for agencies to use when determining future needs and services.

According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), the level of service is a quantification of the park and recreation delivery philosophy and policy of a community. Its basic utility is in meeting a legal and/or economic requirement of quality service and equity. As a basic rule, a level of service benchmark should:

- Be practical and achievable
- Provide for an equitable allocation of park and recreation resources throughout a community with equal opportunity access for all citizens
- Reflect the real-time demand of the citizens for park and recreation opportunities

The level of service standard uses three measurements to help a community to evaluate the comprehensiveness and equity of their current outdoor park and recreation offerings:

1. **Acreage:** A calculation of the minimum amount of land required to provide all of the recreation activities and facilities required to support such activities.
2. **Distribution:** An evaluation of how equitable park and open space sites are placed throughout the community, as well as how accessible existing sites are to residents.
3. **Amenities:** A calculation of the minimum number of amenities and facilities required to meet state and/or national averages.



Level of service guidelines are developed by state and national agencies, including the NRPA. Historically, a level of service analysis has been limited to total park and open space acreage alone and did not include distribution, amenities, or indoor square footage. The national standard for acreage level of service was 10 acres per 1,000 population, but as park and recreation planning developed, professionals saw the need to develop a more comprehensive benchmarking tool that could be adjusted for and specific to each community. Because one size does not fit all, NRPA recommends using community-specific benchmarks if needed.

Park Metrics is NRPA's online management tool, designed for public park and recreation agencies. This tool is a supplement to the NRPA standards that have guided land acquisition and development for the past 45 years. Through this tool, agencies have the ability to compare themselves and their offerings with departments and agencies in their state or region based on factors such as total population, operating budget, and full-time technical equivalent employees. This allows agencies to plan and benchmark with more applicable data than national averages.

Park Metrics has thousands of data points and more than 900 completed profiles. It is the largest and most comprehensive collection of detailed municipal, county, state, and special district data. As more agencies add their data to the database, trends and patterns begin to emerge that help agencies plan and benchmark.

The following level of service analyses reference national NRPA standards, Park Metrics benchmarks, and state-specific standards set by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The DeKalb Park District was compared against 2025 data for agencies with populations between 30,000 and 50,000 registered with the NRPA's Park Metrics. 21 comparable agencies located in Midwest states were found. A list of these agencies is located in the Appendix.

Acreage

Acreage level of service benchmarks are calculations of the recommended amount of land required to provide recreation activities and the facilities to support them.

The NRPA's population ratio method (acres/1,000 population) emphasizes the direct relationship between recreation spaces and people. It is the most common method of estimating an agency's level of service for parkland and open space. In addition to the baseline of 10 acres/1,000 population used in this analysis, Park Metrics benchmarks are also used to understand how the recreation services compare to agencies of similar population size and region.

Based on the NRPA benchmark of 10 acres per 1,000 population applied to the city's 2025 population of 39,387, 393.87 acres of mini, neighborhood, and community park space is recommended for the DeKalb Park District. With 388.70 acres of open space dedicated to mini, neighborhood, and community park uses, the Park District has a 5.17 acre deficit compared to this benchmark, with acreage deficiencies in mini and community parks and a surplus in neighborhood parks. The Park District has an existing level of service of 9.87 acres per 1,000 population, which is below the NRPA recommended 10 acres per 1,000.

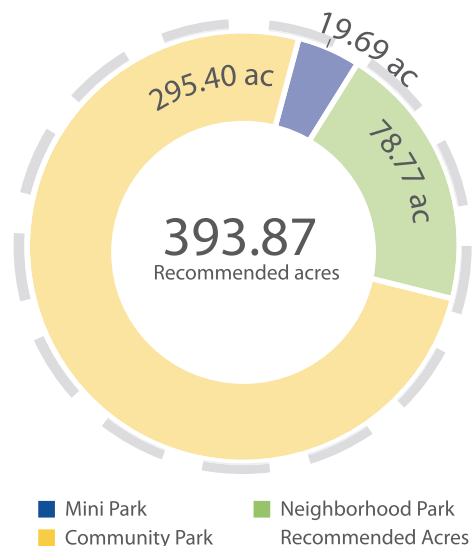
When all District-owned and maintained recreation open space is added to the level of service analysis, the Park District is 321.22 acres above the NRPA recommendation. This level of service gauge includes special use parks, natural areas, trails, and undeveloped areas, in addition to mini, neighborhood, and community parks. When including all of these properties, the District has an overall level of service of 18.16 acres per 1,000 population.

The Park Metrics database was referenced to understand how the DeKalb Park District compares to agencies across the nation with similar population sizes. Out of over 900 agencies reporting, there were 21 agencies located in the Midwest with populations between 30,000 and 50,000. Park Metrics provided information on the following level of service benchmarks:

- Total Number of Parks
- Total Acres Maintained
- Acres of Parks per 1,000 Residents

The DeKalb Park District owns and/or maintains 49 park and open space sites that total 715.09 acres, this is significantly higher than the reported median of 19 parks and also higher than the median of 543.00 acres for comparable agencies as reported by Park Metrics.

NRPA Recommended Acreage



Park Metrics Benchmarks - Parks and Open Spaces

30,000 - 50,000 population

21 agencies

Benchmark	Park Metrics Median	DKPD
Total number of properties maintained	19	49
Total acres of properties maintained	543.00	715.09
Acres of parks per 1,000 residents	13.60	18.16

Level of Service Analysis: 10 acres / 1,000 population

OWNED / LEASED ACTIVE RECREATION AREAS

Classification	DeKalb Park District Acreage (Total)	DeKalb Park District Existing Level of Service (acres / 1,000 population)	IAPD/NRPA Recommended Acreage	IAPD/NRPA Recommended Level of Service (acres / 1,000 population)	Acreage deficiency / surplus (acre)	Acreage deficiency / surplus (%)
Mini Parks	7.51	0.19	19.69	0.50	-12.18	38.13%
Neighborhood Parks	108.70	2.76	78.77	2.00	29.93	137.99%
Community Parks	272.49	6.92	295.40	7.50	-22.91	92.24%
Total Active Recreation Areas	388.70	9.87	393.87	10.00	-5.17	98.69%

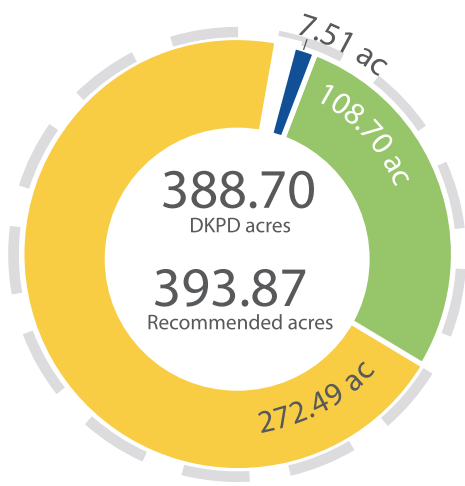
Recommended acreage is based off the existing population of 39,387

ALL DEKALB PARK DISTRICT MANAGED OPEN SPACE

Classification	DeKalb Park District Acreage (Total)	DeKalb Park District Existing Level of Service (acres / 1,000 population)	IAPD/NRPA Recommended Acreage	IAPD/NRPA Recommended Level of Service (acres / 1,000 population)	Acreage deficiency / surplus (acre)	Acreage deficiency / surplus (%)
Mini Parks	7.51	0.19	19.69	0.50	-12.18	38.13%
Neighborhood Parks	108.70	2.76	78.77	2.00	29.93	137.99%
Community Parks	272.49	6.92	295.40	7.50	-22.91	92.24%
Natural Areas	78.21	1.99	0.00	0.00	78.21	N/A
Special Use Areas	208.54	5.29	0.00	0.00	208.54	N/A
Trails, Corridors, Linear Parks	24.45	0.62	0.00	0.00	24.45	N/A
Undeveloped Areas	15.19	0.39	0.00	0.00	15.19	N/A
Total DeKalb Park District Open Space	715.09	18.16	393.87	10.00	321.22	181.55%

Recommended acreage is based off the existing population of 39,387

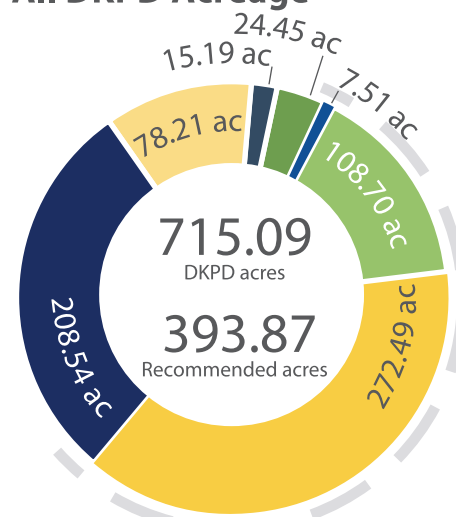
DKPD Active Recreation Acreage



- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Recommended Acres

98.7%
Active Park acres provided

All DKPD Acreage



- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Natural Areas
- Special Use
- Trails
- Undeveloped
- Recommended Acres

181.6%
DKPD acres provided

Distribution

Planning areas are used to analyze park distribution, land acquisition, and park facility redevelopment needs. Planning areas are delineated by major pedestrian barriers, including major roads or highways, railroad corridors, and impassible natural features.

The location and geographic distribution of the parks can offer an indication of how well an agency is serving its residents. Understanding where parks are located in relation to residential development determines who is underserved. This analysis may reveal the need for acquisition to expand service or may show that the Park District is serving the residents well, and should focus on maintaining or updating existing assets.

Methodology

In the DeKalb Park District, arterial roads, the Union Pacific Railroad, and the Kishwaukee River serve as the main pedestrian barriers which resulted in 21 planning areas. The planning team also identified seven non-planning areas shown in light blue. These areas are isolated by pedestrian barriers but do not have any residents. Additionally, there may be some limited locations where appropriate pedestrian access is provided across planning areas. These pedestrian crossings are marked on the map but their location and/or distance from residents is insufficient to fully mitigate the barriers they cross.

A service area, illustrated in the following maps with an orange halo, was created around each active park. The shape of each service area is determined by analyzing the existing road and sidewalk infrastructure to identify the actual route and distance one has to travel to access the park. The size of the service area is dependent upon the park classification and is either a quarter-, half-, or one-mile. The table on page 23 notes the various recommended service area distances for mini, neighborhood, and community parks. Special use areas, natural areas, trails, and undeveloped areas are not included in this analysis.

Since planning area boundaries are considered barriers to safe or comfortable pedestrian access, and mini and neighborhood parks are considered walk-to (walkable) destinations, service area buffers for mini and neighborhood parks were truncated to the planning area boundaries in which the park is located. For community parks, the boundaries were not truncated because these parks are seen as drive-to destinations.

Finally, overlaying service area maps reveal which areas are most and least served by the existing park system. The orange service area buffers overlap to form a gradient that illustrates the degree to which residents are served. Residents who fall within the darker, more opaque orange areas are served by multiple parks and their amenities. Population for each planning and service area further informed the level of service analysis.

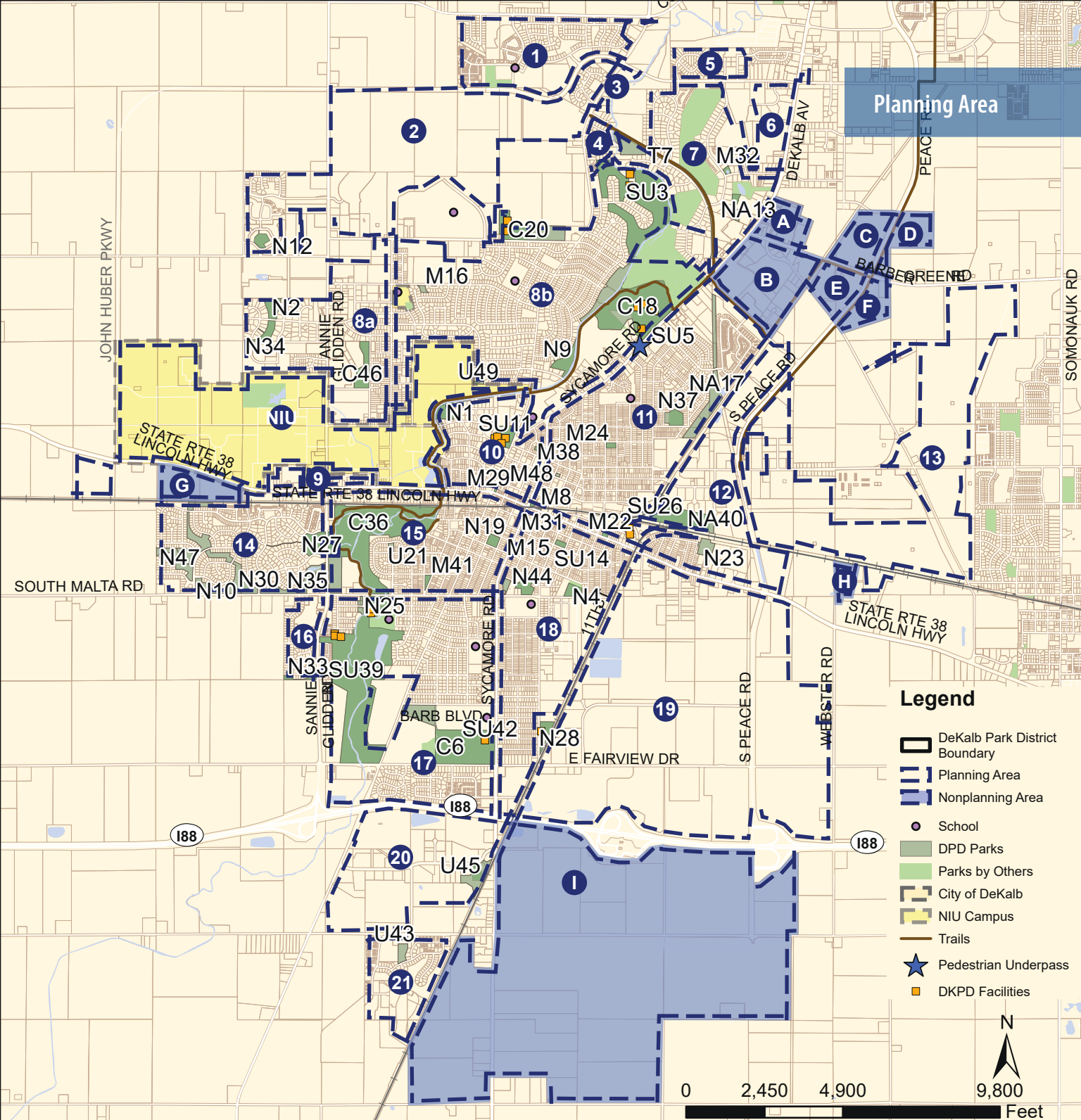
Location	Population Density (population per 1 mile)	2025 Total Population	2025 Total Households
1	2,644	1,084	386
2	969	1,105	436
3	267	8	1
4	840	42	21
5	3,570	357	127
6	115	15	2
7	1,623	925	330
8a	13,239	8,076	3,477
8b	2,742	4,223	1,807
9	14,271	999	551
10	5,059	1,619	828
11	4,180	4,473	2,068
12	626	363	164
13	20	24	4
14	3,734	2,203	748
15	4,488	3,007	1,415
16	2,964	326	110
17	2,354	2,801	1,076
18	4,595	3,676	1,632
19	26	47	8
20	39	21	6
21	1,458	350	154

Total	-	35,744	15,351
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NIU Campus	2,972	3,566	128
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Total	-	39,310	15,479
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*Planning area populations are projections of US Census data applied to the City geographic areas and may vary slightly from actual populations.



Planning Area

Legend

- DeKalb Park District Boundary
- Planning Area
- Nonplanning Area
- School
- DPD Parks
- Parks by Others
- City of DeKalb
- NIU Campus
- Trails
- Pedestrian Underpass
- DKPD Facilities



0 2,450 4,900 9,800 Feet

MINI PARKS

- M8. DeKalb Square
- M15. Hallgren Park
- M16. Hanna Park
- M22. Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park
- M24. Liberty Park
- M29. Memorial Park
- M31. Moudy Park
- M32. Oakland Park
- M38. Raymond Park
- M41. Shipman Park
- M48. Yusunas Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

- N1. Annie's Woods
- N2. Boardman Park
- N4. Chesebro Park
- N9. Deprin Park
- N12. Garden of Eden Park
- N19. Huntley Park
- N23. League of Women Voters Park
- N25. Lions Park
- N27. Mason Park/Larson Lake
- N28. McCormick Park
- N30. Moluf Park
- N33. Overlook Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

- N34. Pappas Park
- N35. Prairie Creek Park
- N37. Prather Park
- N44. Sweet Park
- N47. Wright Farm Park
- C6. DeKalb Kiwanis Park
- C18. Hopkins Park
- C20. Katz Park
- C36. Prairie Park
- C46. Welsh Park

NATURAL AREAS

- NA10. Devonaire Storm Facility
- NA13. Greenwood Conservation Area
- NA17. Hoger Farm
- NA40. Rotary Park

SPECIAL USE

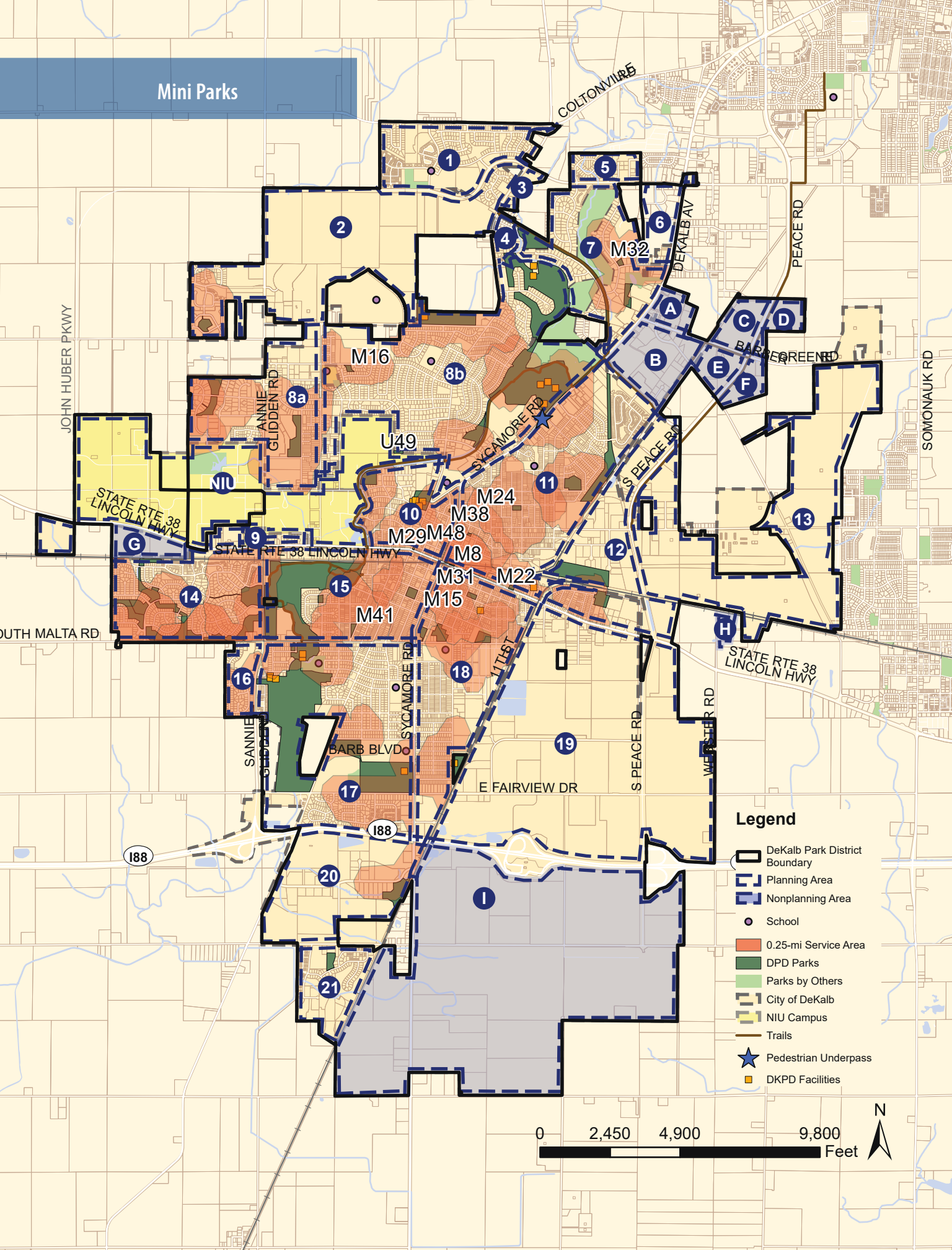
- SU3. Buena Vista Golf Course
- SU5. Hopkins Park Community Center and Pool
- SU11. Ellwood House Museum/Ellwood Park

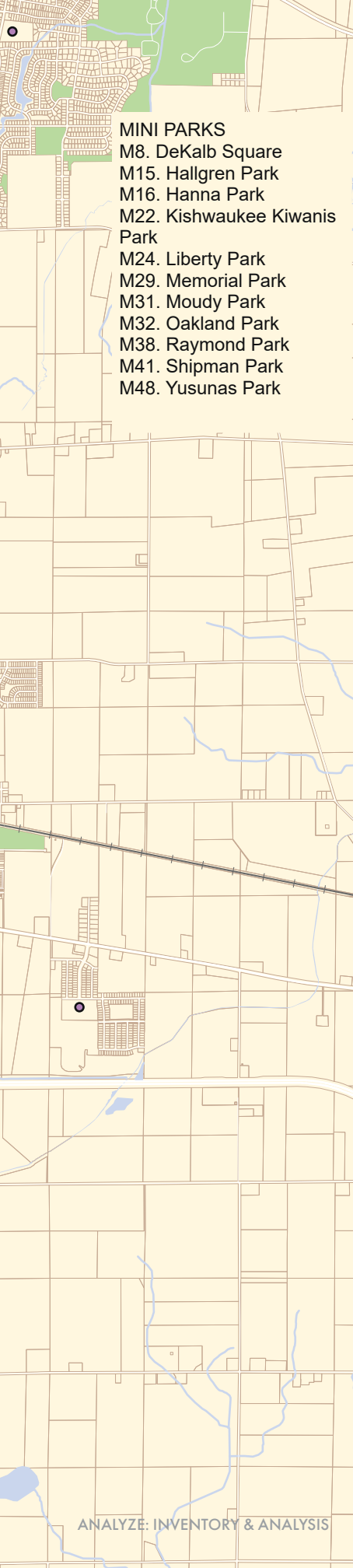
TRAIL

- T7. DeKalb Nature Trail

UNDEVELOPED

- U21. Kensington Park
- U43. St. Mary's Park
- U45. Veteran's Park
- U49. Fairmont Dr. Lots





Mini Park Distribution Analysis

Mini parks meet the need for a walkable, drop-in recreation experience. Appropriate elements in these parks typically include playgrounds, picnic areas, and seating opportunities.

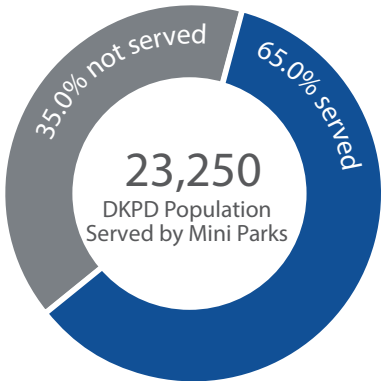
The purpose of the mini park distribution analysis is to determine which planning areas are underserved by the Park District's existing mini park landholdings. The DeKalb Park District has 11 mini parks between 0.14 and 1.18 acres in size.

The map to the left illustrates the quarter-mile (0.25-mile) service area reach for mini park service shown in orange. In addition to mini park locations, quarter-mile service areas are shown for neighborhood and community parks as these parks can serve the function of a mini park for those residents within a quarter-mile distance from the park.

The map illustrates where mini park service is concentrated within the Park District. More than half of the DeKalb Park District residents, 65.0%, have access to an active recreation park within a 0.25-mile walk of their homes. Mini park service is heavily concentrated in Planning Areas 8a, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 18, with over 75% of the population in each area served by a park. Mini park service is relatively centralized within the Park District. According to NRPA's Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines, mini park service areas do not include residents who must cross a planning area boundary to reach the park. Service areas are truncated to all planning area boundaries. The exception is the pedestrian underpass of Sycamore Road at the northeast corner of Hopkins Park which provides pedestrian access.

The most significant service gaps occur in Planning Areas 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 19, and 21, where 0% of the population is currently served. Based on population size, Planning Areas 1, 8a, 8b, 11, and 17 exhibit the largest service gaps, each with more than 1,000 residents unserved.

Despite the existing service gaps, some Park District residents may be finding active recreation access through other providers such as available public school properties.



Location	2025 Population Served	% Population Served	Unserved Population	% Population Unserved
1	0	0.0%	1,084	100.0%
2	655	59.3%	450	40.7%
3	0	0.0%	8	100.0%
4	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
5	0	0.0%	357	100.0%
6	0	0.0%	15	100.0%
7	667	72.1%	258	27.9%
8a	6,217	77.0%	1,859	23.0%
8b	1,935	45.8%	2,288	54.2%
9	0	0.0%	999	100.0%
10	1,495	92.3%	124	7.7%
11	2,821	63.1%	1,652	36.9%
12	225	62.0%	138	38.0%
13	0	0.0%	24	100.0%
14	1,888	85.7%	315	14.3%
15	2,730	90.8%	277	9.2%
16	326	100.0%	0	0.0%
17	1,468	52.4%	1,333	47.6%
18	2,810	76.4%	866	23.6%
19	0	0.0%	47	100.0%
20	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
21	0	0.0%	350	100.0%
Total	23,250	65.0%	12,494	35.0%
NIU Campus	920	25.8%	2,646	74.2%
Total	24,170	61.5%	15,140	38.5%

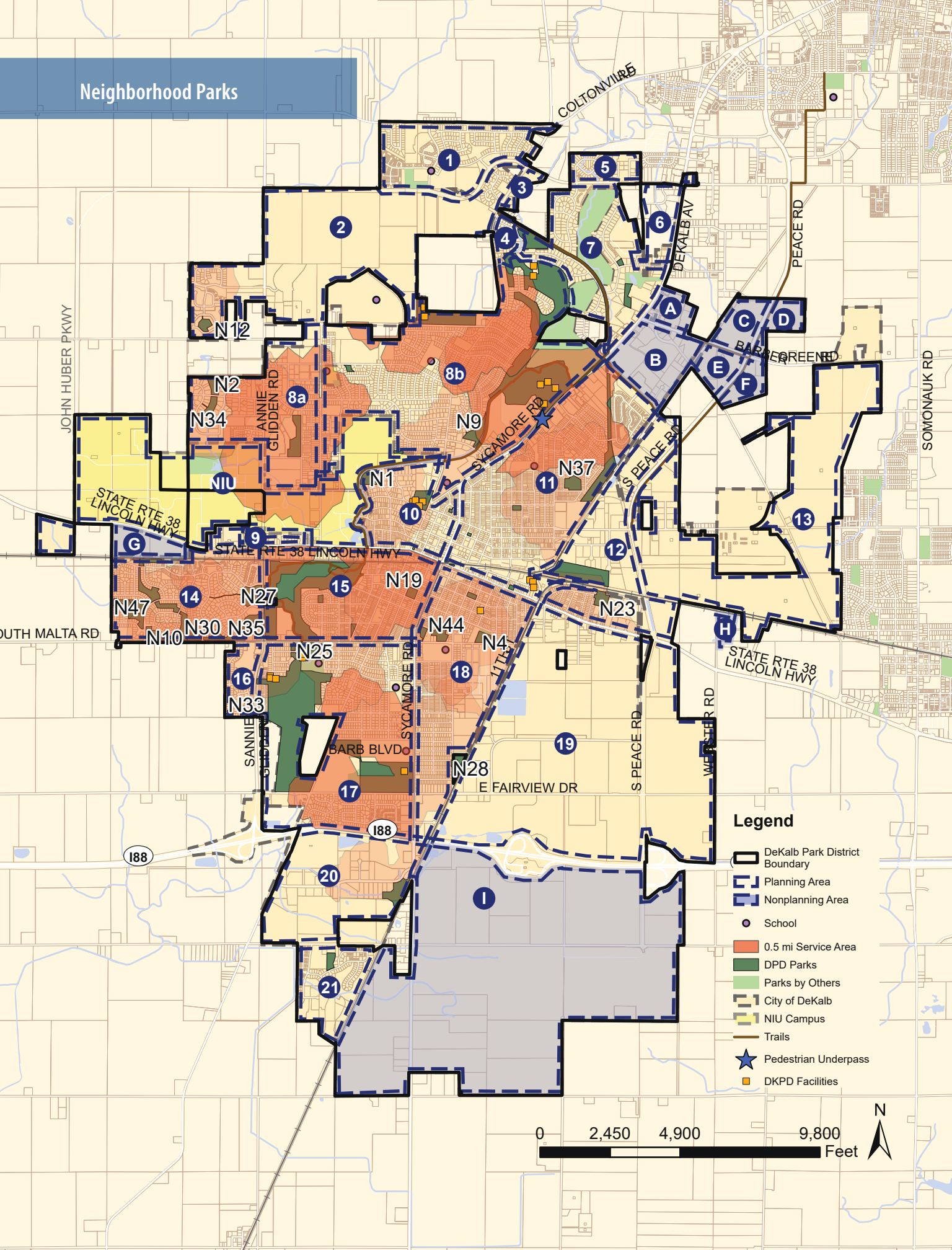
Neighborhood Parks

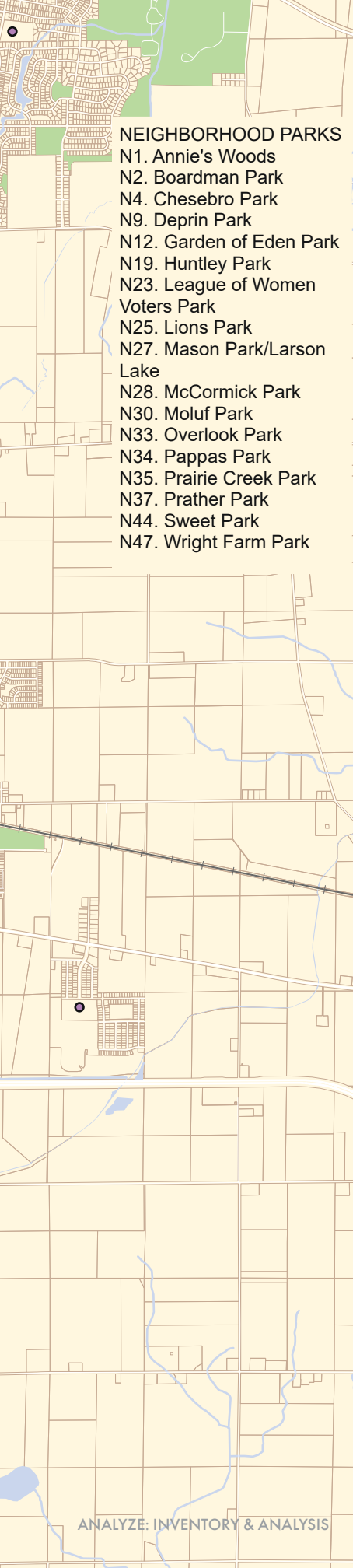
Legend

- DeKalb Park District Boundary
- Planning Area
- Nonplanning Area
- School
- 0.5 mi Service Area
- DPD Parks
- Parks by Others
- City of DeKalb
- NIU Campus
- Trails
- Pedestrian Underpass
- DKPD Facilities

Map Labels:

JOHN HUBER PKWY, STATE RTE 38 LINCOLN HWY, SOUTHWEST MALTA RD, ANNIE GLIDDEN RD, SYCAMORE RD, BARB BLVD, E FAIRVIEW DR, S PEACE RD, DEKALB AV, PEACE RD, SOMONAUK RD, COLTONVILLE, BARBERS GREEN, NIU, N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6, N7, N8a, N8b, N9, N10, N11, N12, N13, N14, N15, N16, N17, N18, N19, N20, N21, N22, N23, N24, N25, N26, N27, N28, N29, N30, N31, N32, N33, N34, N35, N36, N37, N38, N39, N40, N41, N42, N43, N44, N45, N46, N47, N48, N49, N50, N51, N52, N53, N54, N55, N56, N57, N58, N59, N60, N61, N62, N63, N64, N65, N66, N67, N68, N69, N70, N71, N72, N73, N74, N75, N76, N77, N78, N79, N80, N81, N82, N83, N84, N85, N86, N87, N88, N89, N90, N91, N92, N93, N94, N95, N96, N97, N98, N99, N100, N101, N102, N103, N104, N105, N106, N107, N108, N109, N110, N111, N112, N113, N114, N115, N116, N117, N118, N119, N120, N121, N122, N123, N124, N125, N126, N127, N128, N129, N130, N131, N132, N133, N134, N135, N136, N137, N138, N139, N140, N141, N142, N143, N144, N145, N146, N147, N148, N149, N150, N151, N152, N153, N154, N155, N156, N157, N158, N159, N160, N161, N162, N163, N164, N165, N166, N167, N168, N169, N170, N171, N172, N173, N174, N175, N176, N177, N178, N179, N180, N181, N182, N183, N184, N185, N186, N187, N188, N189, N190, N191, N192, N193, N194, N195, N196, N197, N198, N199, N200, N201, N202, N203, N204, N205, N206, N207, N208, N209, N210, N211, N212, N213, N214, N215, N216, N217, N218, N219, N220, N221, N222, N223, N224, N225, N226, N227, N228, N229, N230, N231, N232, N233, N234, N235, N236, N237, N238, N239, N240, N241, N242, N243, N244, N245, N246, N247, N248, N249, N250, N251, N252, N253, N254, N255, N256, N257, N258, N259, N260, N261, N262, N263, N264, N265, N266, N267, N268, N269, N270, N271, N272, N273, N274, N275, N276, N277, N278, N279, N280, N281, N282, N283, N284, N285, N286, N287, N288, N289, N290, N291, N292, N293, N294, N295, N296, N297, N298, N299, N300, N301, N302, N303, N304, N305, N306, N307, N308, N309, N310, N311, N312, N313, N314, N315, N316, N317, N318, N319, N320, N321, N322, N323, N324, N325, N326, N327, N328, N329, N330, N331, N332, N333, N334, N335, N336, N337, N338, N339, N340, N341, N342, N343, N344, N345, N346, N347, N348, N349, N350, N351, N352, N353, N354, N355, N356, N357, N358, N359, N360, N361, N362, N363, N364, N365, N366, N367, N368, N369, N370, N371, N372, N373, N374, N375, N376, N377, N378, N379, N380, N381, N382, N383, N384, N385, N386, N387, N388, N389, N390, N391, N392, N393, N394, N395, N396, N397, N398, N399, N400, N401, N402, N403, N404, N405, N406, N407, N408, N409, N410, N411, N412, N413, N414, N415, N416, N417, N418, N419, N420, N421, N422, N423, N424, N425, N426, N427, N428, N429, N430, N431, N432, N433, N434, N435, N436, N437, N438, N439, N440, N441, N442, N443, N444, N445, N446, N447, N448, N449, N450, N451, N452, N453, N454, N455, N456, N457, N458, N459, N460, N461, N462, N463, N464, N465, N466, N467, N468, N469, N470, N471, N472, N473, N474, N475, N476, N477, N478, N479, N480, N481, N482, N483, N484, N485, N486, N487, N488, N489, N490, N491, N492, N493, N494, N495, N496, N497, N498, N499, N500, N501, N502, N503, N504, N505, N506, N507, N508, N509, N510, N511, N512, N513, N514, N515, N516, N517, N518, N519, N520, N521, N522, N523, N524, N525, N526, N527, N528, N529, N530, N531, N532, N533, N534, N535, N536, N537, N538, N539, N540, N541, N542, N543, N544, N545, N546, N547, N548, N549, N550, N551, N552, N553, N554, N555, N556, N557, N558, N559, N560, N561, N562, N563, N564, N565, N566, N567, N568, N569, N570, N571, N572, N573, N574, N575, N576, N577, N578, N579, N580, N581, N582, N583, N584, N585, N586, N587, N588, N589, N590, N591, N592, N593, N594, N595, N596, N597, N598, N599, N600, N601, N602, N603, N604, N605, N606, N607, N608, N609, N610, N611, N612, N613, N614, N615, N616, N617, N618, N619, N620, N621, N622, N623, N624, N625, N626, N627, N628, N629, N630, N631, N632, N633, N634, N635, N636, N637, N638, N639, N640, N641, N642, N643, N644, N645, N646, N647, N648, N649, N650, N651, N652, N653, N654, N655, N656, N657, N658, N659, N660, N661, N662, N663, N664, N665, N666, N667, N668, N669, N670, N671, N672, N673, N674, N675, N676, N677, N678, N679, N680, N681, N682, N683, N684, N685, N686, N687, N688, N689, N690, N691, N692, N693, N694, N695, N696, N697, N698, N699, N700, N701, N702, N703, N704, N705, N706, N707, N708, N709, N710, N711, N712, N713, N714, N715, N716, N717, N718, N719, N720, N721, N722, N723, N724, N725, N726, N727, N728, N729, N730, N731, N732, N733, N734, N735, N736, N737, N738, N739, N740, N741, N742, N743, N744, N745, N746, N747, N748, N749, N750, N751, N752, N753, N754, N755, N756, N757, N758, N759, N760, N761, N762, N763, N764, N765, N766, N767,





Neighborhood Park Distribution Analysis

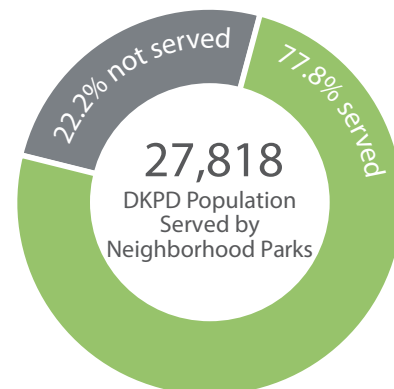
Neighborhood parks remain the basic unit of the park system and are generally designed for informal active and passive recreation and community gathering spaces.

The purpose of the neighborhood park distribution analysis is to determine which planning areas are underserved by the Park District's existing neighborhood park landholdings. Currently, the Park District has 17 neighborhood parks that range from 2.16 acres to 18.60 acres in size.

The map illustrates the half-mile (0.5-mile) service area reach for neighborhood parks. This plan also illustrates a half-mile service area (shown in orange) for community parks, as these parks can serve the function of a neighborhood park for residents within a 0.5-mile from a park. According to NRPA's Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines, neighborhood park service areas do not include residents who must cross a planning area boundary to reach the park. Service areas are truncated to all planning area boundaries. The exception is the pedestrian underpass of Sycamore Road at the northeast corner of Hopkins Park which allows access.

In total, 29,466 residents, or 77.8% of the DeKalb Park District population, have access to a neighborhood or community park within a half-mile (0.5-mile) walking distance from their homes. Planning Areas 8a, 14, 15, and 16 are the best served, with 100% of residents having park access. In contrast, Planning Areas 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 19, and 21 experience the greatest service gaps, with 0% of residents served, totaling 3,851 people without access to a neighborhood or community park. When considering population size, Planning Areas 1, 7, 8b, 9, 10, and 11 have the largest service gaps, each with more than 500 residents lacking access to a neighborhood or community park.

Despite the existing service gaps, some DeKalb Park District residents may be finding active recreation access through other providers such as available public school properties.



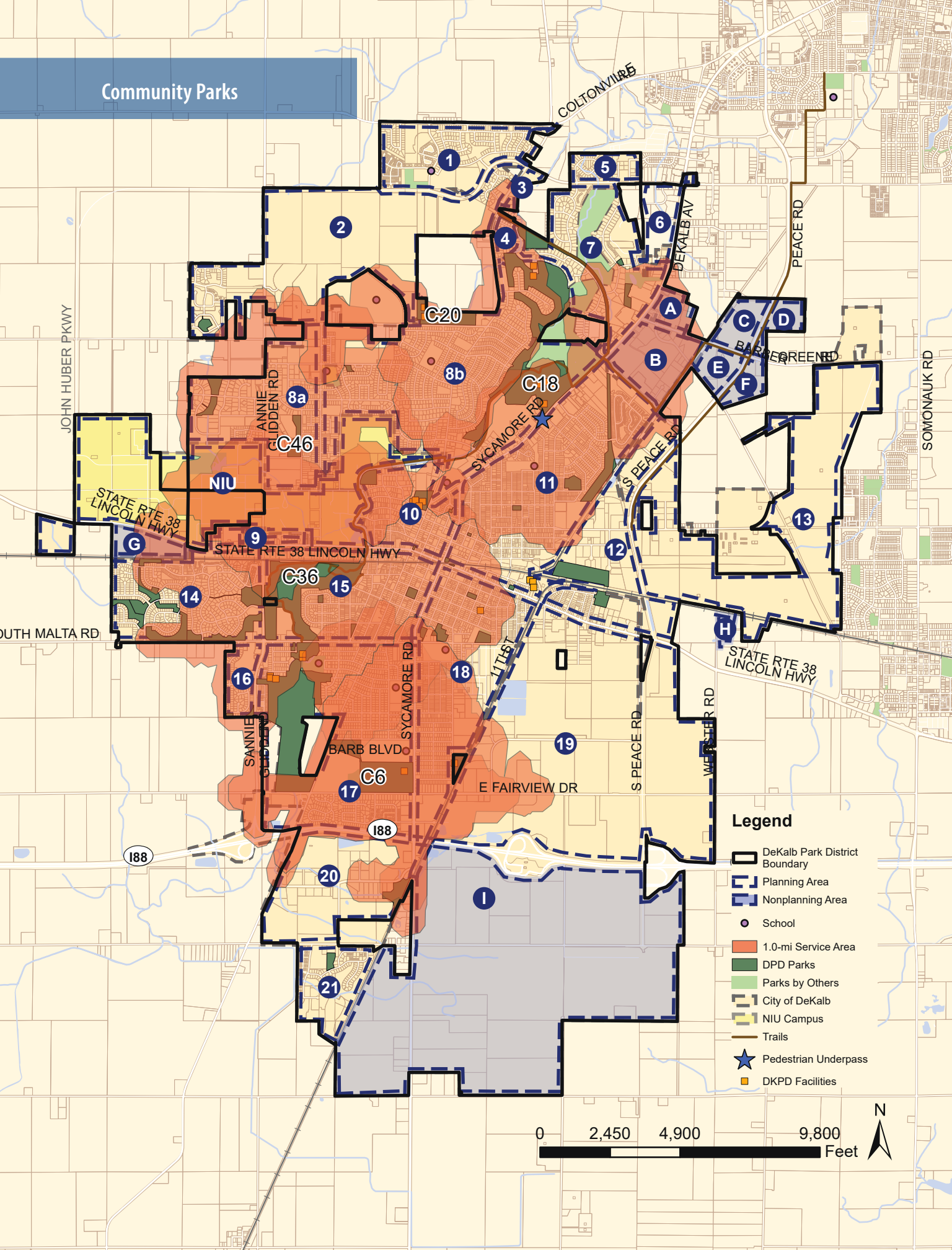
Location	2025 Total Population	% Population Served	Unserved Population	% Population Unserved
1	0	0.0%	1,084	100.0%
2	729	66.0%	376	34.0%
3	0	0.0%	8	100.0%
4	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
5	0	0.0%	357	100.0%
6	0	0.0%	15	100.0%
7	0	0.0%	925	100.0%
8a	8,076	100.0%	0	0.0%
8b	3,345	79.2%	878	20.8%
9	0	0.0%	999	100.0%
10	1,090	67.3%	529	32.7%
11	2,744	61.3%	1,729	38.7%
12	317	87.3%	46	12.7%
13	0	0.0%	24	100.0%
14	2,203	100.0%	0	0.0%
15	3,007	100.0%	0	0.0%
16	326	100.0%	0	0.0%
17	2,341	83.6%	460	16.4%
18	3,627	98.7%	49	1.3%
19	0	0.0%	47	100.0%
20	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
21	0	0.0%	350	100.0%

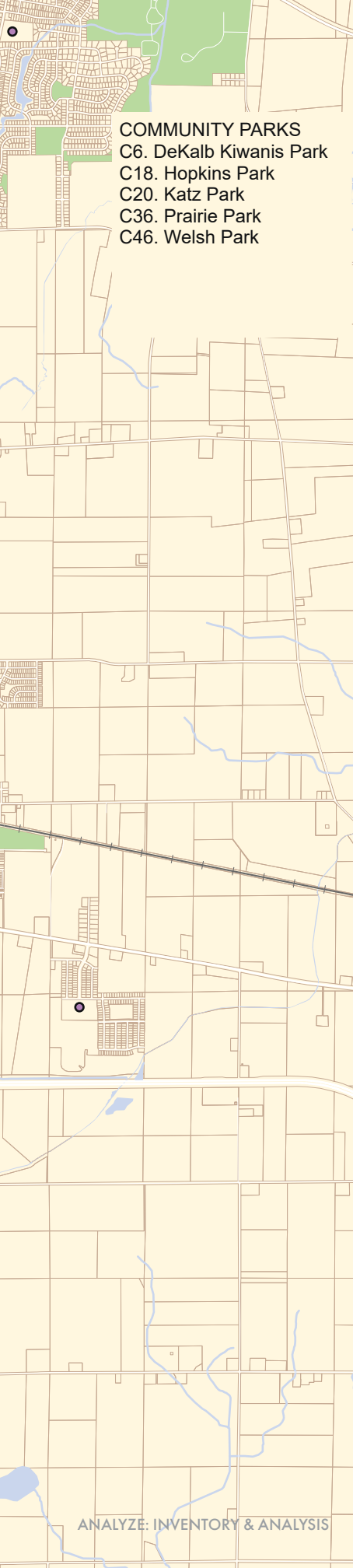
Total	27,818	77.8%	7,926	22.2%
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NIU Campus	1,648	46.2%	1,918	53.8%
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Total	29,466	75.0%	9,844	25.0%
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Community Parks





Community Park Distribution Analysis

Community parks focus on meeting community-wide recreation needs. These parks may preserve unique landscapes and often serve as event and team sports spaces.

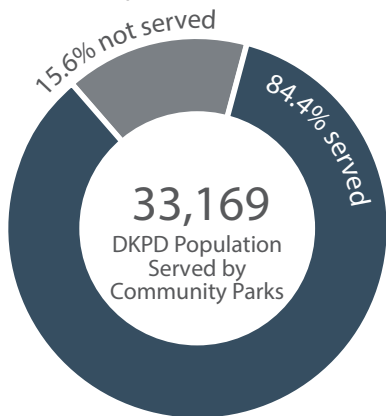
The purpose of the community park distribution analysis is to determine the location of gaps in community park service area coverage. Currently, the Park District has five community parks that are between 10.01 acres and 102.30 acres in size.

The map illustrates the one-mile (1-mile) service area reach for community parks, shown in orange. Unlike mini and neighborhood parks, community parks are considered drive-to recreation destinations so service areas are not limited to the boundary of the planning area in which they are located. These drive-to destinations cover multiple planning areas and are community destinations for local residents. Community park service areas also extend past municipal boundaries and it is common for local residents who do not live within the Park District to utilize these spaces as well. Unlike mini and neighborhood park spaces, community parks serve a unique recreation need that cannot be met by smaller active recreation open spaces or by passive use parks.

Even though community parks are only located in four of the Park District's Planning Areas, community park service extends into 15 out of the 21 planning areas. In total, 30,169 (84.4%) of DeKalb Park District residents and an additional 820 non-Park District residents reside within a 1.0-mile drive of a community park.

Seven Planning Areas, 3, 4, 8a, 9, 10, 15, and 16 serve 100% of their residents with community park access. No residents in planning areas 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, and 21 are served by community parks. When considering population, additional community park access is most needed in Planning Areas 7, 14, and 18 with over 500 residents in each area not living within a 1-mile service area reach of a community park.

Due to the size and variety of amenities offered by community parks, it is unlikely that unserved residents have access to equivalent community park service from other recreation providers.



Location	2025 Total Population	% Population Served	Unserved Population	% Population Unserved
1	0	0.0%	1,084	100.0%
2	0	0.0%	1,105	100.0%
3	8	100.0%	0	0.0%
4	42	100.0%	0	0.0%
5	0	0.0%	357	100.0%
6	0	0.0%	15	100.0%
7	299	32.3%	626	67.7%
8a	8,076	100.0%	0	0.0%
8b	4,196	99.4%	27	0.6%
9	999	100.0%	0	0.0%
10	1,619	100.0%	0	0.0%
11	4,171	93.2%	302	6.8%
12	0	0.0%	363	100.0%
13	0	0.0%	24	100.0%
14	1,671	75.9%	532	24.1%
15	3,007	100.0%	0	0.0%
16	326	100.0%	0	0.0%
17	2,625	93.7%	176	6.3%
18	3,095	84.2%	581	15.8%
19	22	46.8%	25	53.2%
20	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
21	0	0.0%	350	100.0%

Total	30,169	84.4%	5,575	15.6%
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NIU Campus	2,931	82.2%	635	17.8%
Outside District	820			
Total	33,920	86.3%	5,390	13.7%

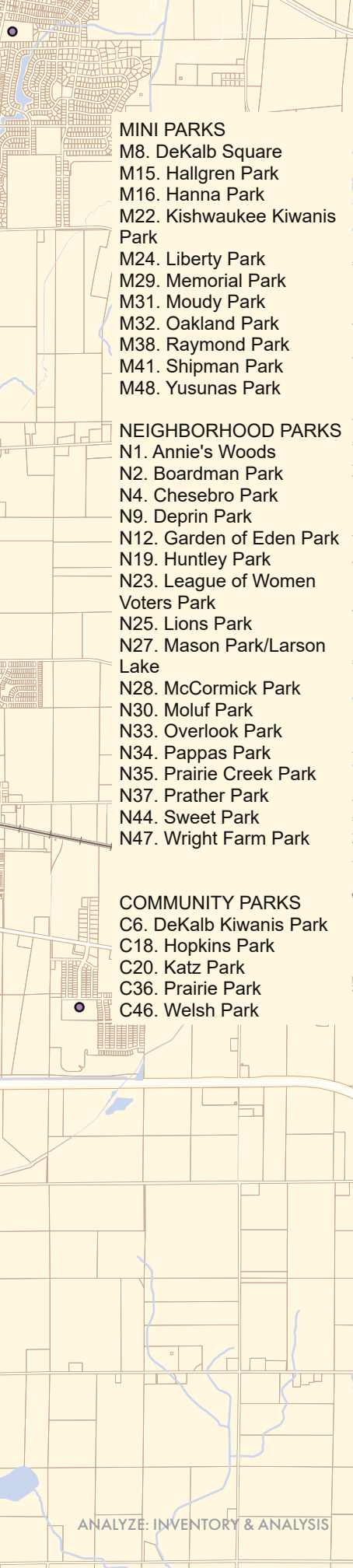
Overall

Legend

- DeKalb Park District Boundary
- Planning Area
- Nonplanning Area
- School
- 0.25, 0.5, and 1.0-mi Service Area
- DPD Parks
- Parks by Others
- Trails
- City of DeKalb
- NIU Campus
- Pedestrian Underpass
- DKPD Facilities

0 2,450 4,900 9,800 Feet





MINI PARKS

- M8. DeKalb Square
- M15. Hallgren Park
- M16. Hanna Park
- M22. Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park
- M24. Liberty Park
- M29. Memorial Park
- M31. Moudy Park
- M32. Oakland Park
- M38. Raymond Park
- M41. Shipman Park
- M48. Yusunas Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

- N1. Annie's Woods
- N2. Boardman Park
- N4. Chesebro Park
- N9. Deprin Park
- N12. Garden of Eden Park
- N19. Huntley Park
- N23. League of Women Voters Park
- N25. Lions Park
- N27. Mason Park/Larson Lake
- N28. McCormick Park
- N30. Moluf Park
- N33. Overlook Park
- N34. Pappas Park
- N35. Prairie Creek Park
- N37. Prather Park
- N44. Sweet Park
- N47. Wright Farm Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

- C6. DeKalb Kiwanis Park
- C18. Hopkins Park
- C20. Katz Park
- C36. Prairie Park
- C46. Welsh Park

Overall Park Distribution Analysis

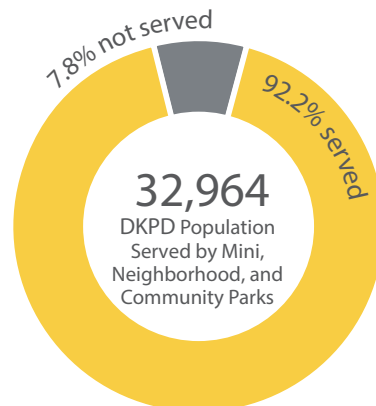
The Overall Distribution Analysis illustrates the combined District-wide service for mini, neighborhood, and community park assets.

The map illustrates the service areas for all mini (quarter-mile), neighborhood (half-mile), and community (one-mile) parks. Per NRPA guidelines, the mini and neighborhood park service areas are truncated to the boundaries of the individual planning areas in which they reside. Community parks are considered drive-to destinations, so those service areas are not truncated to the planning area boundaries. Natural areas, special use parks, trails, and undeveloped areas are not included in this analysis because they do not provide active recreation services.

In total, 92.2% of Park District residents live within at least one active park service area in addition to 820 non-District residents. This is above the planning team's database median of 89.8% service. Park service in the DeKalb Park District is primarily concentrated near the west and central portions of the District and the downtown area. Gaps in service have emerged around new developments to the north, and industrial areas to the east and south, with planning areas 1, 5, 6, 13, and 21 having 0% of their residents served by either mini, neighborhood, or community parks. In total, 2,780 Park District residents are unserved, with most located in planning areas 1 (0.0%), 2 (34.0%), 5 (0.0%), 7 (27.9%), 17 (53.2%), and 21 (61.9%).

Park distribution varies throughout the Park District. Many residents are served by multiple service areas, as shown by the darkest gradients of orange on the map to the left, while others have limited or no access to any of the DeKalb Park District parks.

Despite the existing service gaps, some DeKalb Park District residents may be finding active recreation access through other providers, such as available public school properties for mini and neighborhood park service. However, community park service from other recreation providers is likely not available.



Location	2025 Total Population	% Population Served	Unserved Population	% Population Unserved
1	0	0.0%	1,084	100.0%
2	729	66.0%	376	34.0%
3	8	100.0%	0	0.0%
4	42	100.0%	0	0.0%
5	0	0.0%	357	100.0%
6	0	0.0%	15	100.0%
7	667	72.1%	258	27.9%
8a	8,076	100.0%	0	0.0%
8b	4,223	100.0%	0	0.0%
9	999	100.0%	0	0.0%
10	1,619	100.0%	0	0.0%
11	4,412	98.6%	61	1.4%
12	317	87.3%	46	12.7%
13	0	0.0%	24	100.0%
14	2,203	100.0%	0	0.0%
15	3,007	100.0%	0	0.0%
16	326	100.0%	0	0.0%
17	2,625	93.7%	176	6.3%
18	3,676	100.0%	0	0.0%
19	22	46.8%	25	53.2%
20	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
21	0	0.0%	350	100.0%

Total	32,964	92.2%	2,780	7.8%
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NIU Campus	3,076	86.3%	490	13.7%
Outside District	820			
Total	36,860	93.8%	2,450	6.2%



Amenities

In addition to park acreage and distribution, another measure of level of service is the total number of recreational amenities available to residents. These benchmarks come from the Illinois Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics databases.

SCORP Comparison

Based on the Illinois SCORP, the DeKalb Park District meets or exceeds the recommended number of amenities for 12 of the 33 amenities outlined in the chart on the following page. Amenities that meet or exceed the recommendation are identified by black or green text in the “Surplus / Deficit” column.

Items with red text noted in the “Surplus / Deficit” column are deficiencies. The five amenities with the greatest deficiencies according to the comparison against SCORP averages are:

- Hiking Trails: -18.1
- Tennis Courts: -17.3
- Fishing Pier / Docks / Access: -13.1
- Horseshoe Pits: -7.5
- Volleyball Courts: -5.7

Additionally, the last column on the right orders the amenities by highest to lowest difference according to the SCORP benchmarking where 1 represents the greatest value under the Illinois facility average.

This surplus/deficit analysis only counts District amenities that are provided by the DeKalb Park District and at current standards (not beyond their useful life). By replacing aged assets, the District may be able to meet or exceed some of these recommendations.

Park Metrics Comparison

In addition to the SCORP averages, the planning team referenced NRPA’s Park Metrics to identify how the DeKalb Park District compares to other agencies in the Midwest states with populations between 30,000 and 50,000. Park Metrics provided information about the total population per amenity for 30 different recreation outdoor amenity types for the 21 agencies within this population range. A list of these peer agencies is located in the appendix.

The table on the following page compares the total number of District-owned and managed facilities to agencies with similar populations. Since Park Metrics are a collection of self-reported data rather than a recommendation of number of amenities, this benchmark compares the District to averages without prioritizing specific amenities.

While these benchmarks provide numerical comparisons between the District and other recreation providers, they are not considered recommendations. Not all recreation amenities are appropriate or feasible for every community. Each amenity noted as a surplus or deficit should be considered in conjunction with local context such as actual usage records and community input to determine if meeting these benchmarks is in alignment with community interests. Amenities that are not recorded by a Park Metrics or SCORP are marked insufficient data (ISD).

Existing Population 2025

DKPD			Illinois Facility Average		Surplus / Deficit	Ranking
Existing # of Facilities (total)	Existing # of Facilities at current standards	Existing # of Facilities per 1,000 population	Total # of Facilities needed to meet IL Average	IL Average # of Facilities per 1,000 population	Surplus / Deficit	Highest to Lowest Difference

OUTDOOR WATER-BASED FACILITIES

Fishing Pier / Docks / Access	3	3	0.08	16.1	0.41	-13.1	3
Boat Launch Ramps / Access	0	0	0.00	4.7	0.12	-4.7	8
Canoe only access areas	0	0	0.00	1.5	0.04	-1.5	17
Swimming Pools	1	1	0.03	1.1	0.03	-0.1	19
Spray Grounds / Splash Pads	1	1	0.03	1.2	0.03	-0.2	18

OUTDOOR TRAILS

Multi-Use Trails (Miles)	8.91	8.91	0.23	6.4	0.16	2.5	29
Hiking Trails	0.0	0.0	0.00	18.1	0.46	-18.1	1
Bicycle Trails	0.0	0.0	0.00	4.0	0.10	-4.0	9
Physical Fitness Trails (Stations)	5	5	0.13	8.7	0.22	-3.7	10
Nature / Interpretive Trails (Miles)	0.6	0.6	0.01	2.2	0.05	-1.6	16

OUTDOOR DAY USE FACILITIES

Dog Parks	2	2	0.05	0.3	0.01	1.7	28
Picnic Shelters	20	15	0.38	8.1	0.21	6.9	30
Playgrounds	20	14	0.36	15.9	0.40	-1.9	13

OUTDOOR SPORTS COURTS AND FACILITIES

Basketball Courts	6.0	5.0	0.13	9.8	0.25	-4.8	7
Volleyball Courts	1	1	0.03	6.7	0.17	-5.7	5
Pickleball Courts	6	6	0.15	ISD	ISD	ISD	
Tennis Courts	2	2	0.05	19.3	0.49	-17.3	2
Baseball Fields	6	5	0.13	10.2	0.26	-5.2	6
Softball Fields	7	6	0.15	5.5	0.14	0.5	24
Football Fields	0	0	0.00	2.2	0.05	-2.2	11
Soccer Fields	8	7	0.18	7.0	0.18	0.0	20
Field Hockey	0	0	0.00	0.0	0.00	0.0	21
Running Tracks	0	0	0.00	2.0	0.05	-2.0	12
Golf Driving Range	13	13	0.33	0.0	0.00	13.0	31
Golf Course (9-Hole Course)	1	1	0.03	0.2	0.01	0.8	27
Golf Course (18-Hole Course)	1	1	0.03	0.3	0.01	0.7	25
Frisbee Golf (course)	1	1	0.03	0.3	0.01	0.7	26
Skate Park	1	1	0.03	0.6	0.02	0.4	23
Ice Rinks	0	0	0.00	1.6	0.04	-1.6	15
Bocce Court	0	0	0.00	0.0	0.00	0.0	21
Horseshoe Pits	2	2	0.05	9.5	0.24	-7.5	4
Shuffleboard courts	0	0	0.00	1.8	0.05	-1.8	14

Recommended acreage is based off the existing population of 39,387

Park Metrics Benchmarks

Existing Population 2025

DKPD			Park Metrics Facility Median	Surplus / Deficit	Ranking
Existing # of Facilities (total)	Existing # of Facilities at current standards	Existing # of Facilities per population	Total # of Facilities needed to meet Park Metrics median	Surplus / Deficit	Highest to Lowest Difference

OUTDOOR DAY USE AMENITIES

Playgrounds	20	14	0.36	15.3	-1.3	7
Fitness zones / exercise stations	5	5	0.13	1.5	-3.5	4
Community gardens	2	2	0.05	1.1	0.9	16
Skateboard parks	1	1	0.03	1.0	0.0	10
Ice rink	0	0	0.00	1.3	1.3	18
Swimming pools	1	1	0.03	1.9	0.9	15
Splashpad or spray grounds	1	1	0.03	1.4	0.4	13
Dog park	2	2	0.05	1.1	0.9	14
Disc golf course	1	1	0.03	1.0	0.0	12
Driving range (stations)	13	13	0.33	14.1	1.1	17
Regulation 9-hole course	1	1	0.03	1.0	0.0	11
Regulation 18-hole course	1	1	0.03	1.2	-0.2	9

OUTDOOR SPORTS COURTS AND AMENITIES

Basketball Courts	6.0	5.0	0.13	9.3	-4.3	3
Pickleball Courts	6	6	0.15	5.6	-0.4	8
Tennis Courts	2	2	0.05	7.3	-5.3	2
Multiuse courts - tennis/pickleball	0	0	0.00	4.2	4.2	19
Diamond fields	13	11	0.28	12.5	-1.5	6
Rectangular fields	8	7	0.18	12.5	-5.5	1
Synthetic rectangular fields	0	0	0.00	1.7	-1.7	5

Recommended acreage is based off the existing population of 39,387

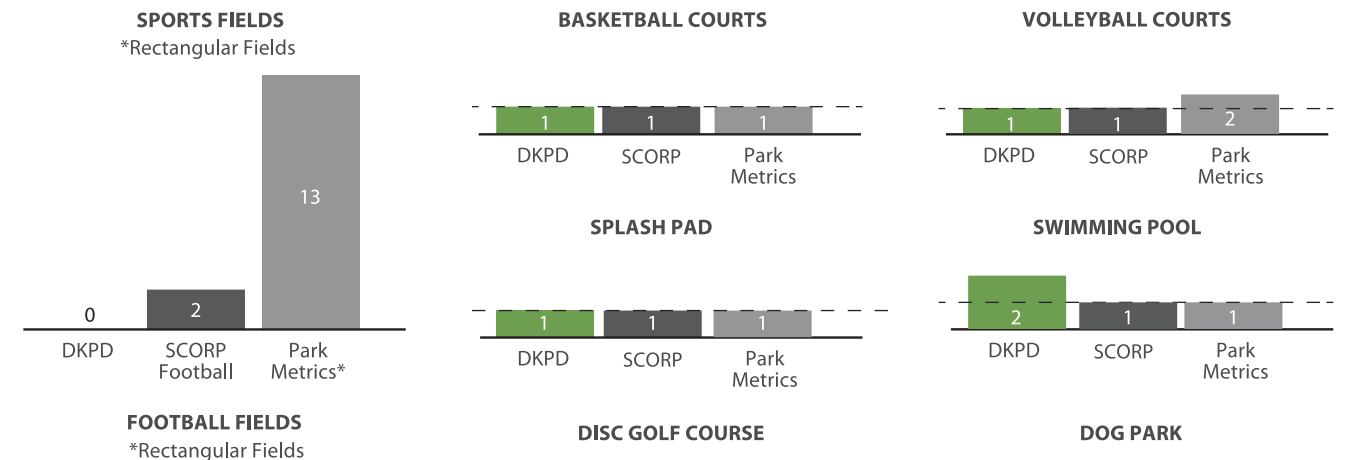
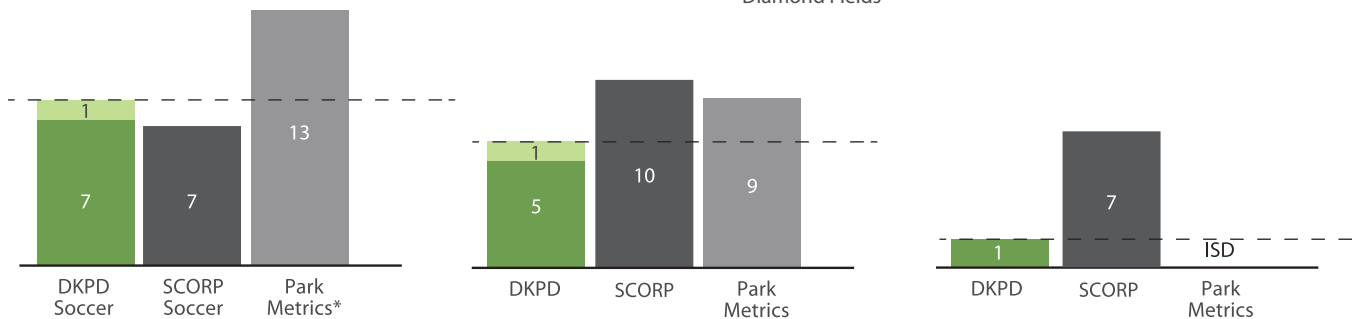
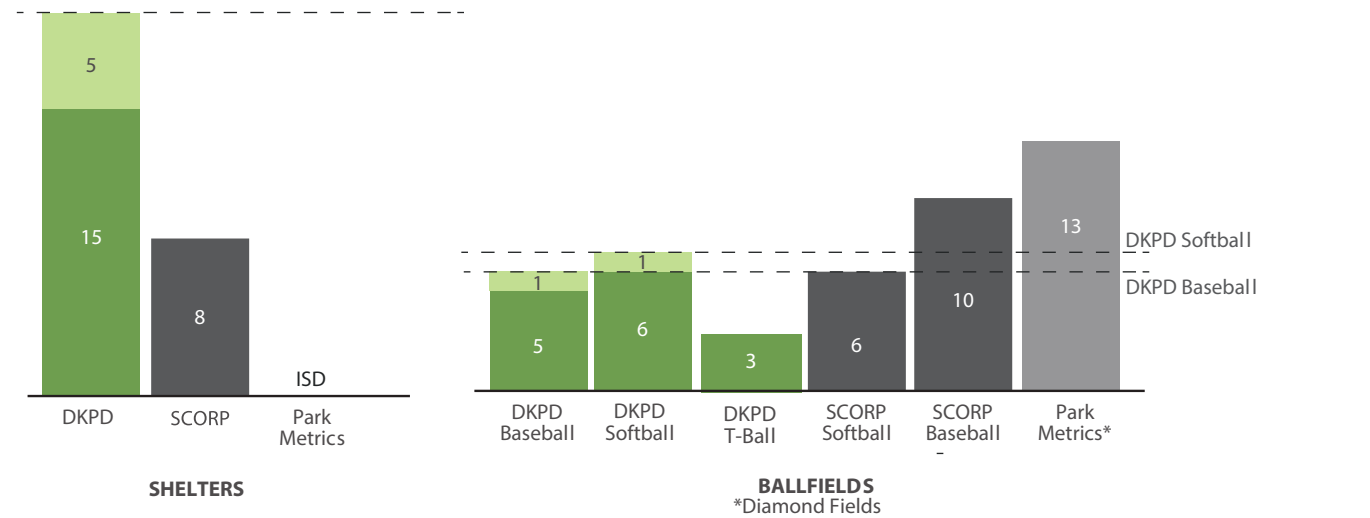
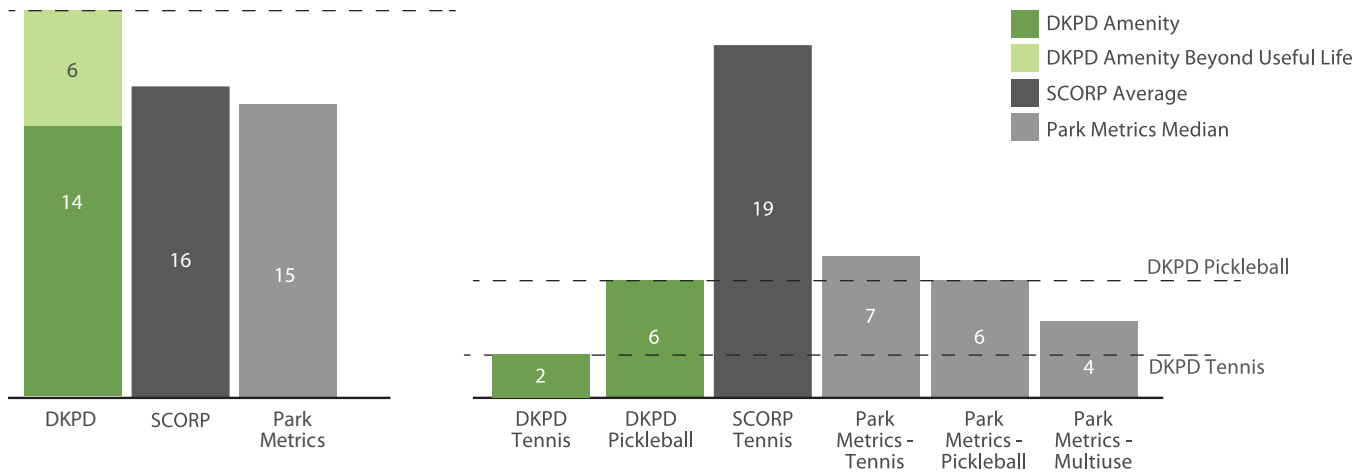
Park Metrics - Agency Responsibilities

Park Metrics also collects data for overall agency responsibilities. The following table shows the number of agencies, out of the 21 total identified Midwest peer agencies, which provide specific services, and if DKPD provides that service. The Park District is generally aligned with the other agencies, providing six of the eight recorded services.

30,000 - 50,000 population

Benchmark	Total agencies providing services	DKPD
Park sites	15	X
Indoor facilities	15	X
Indoor swim facilities/water parks	6	
Outdoor swim facilities/water parks	9	X
Indoor performing arts center	2	
Recreation programming and services	15	X
Conduct jurisdiction wide special events	9	X
Golf courses	6	X

Providing park sites, providing indoor facilities, and providing recreation programming and services are the most commonly provided services and are offered by most of the peer agencies (15 agencies / 71%) and by DeKalb Park District. Less common services include outdoor aquatics and special events which slightly less than half (9 agencies / 43%) of the peer agencies and DKPD provide. Only about 30% (six agencies) of the peer agencies provide golf courses, which DKPD does offer, and about 30% (six) of peer agencies have indoor aquatics, which DKPD does not provide. The least commonly provided offering is indoor performing arts which only two (10%) of the peer agencies provide and which DKPD does not offer.







Facility Inventory and Analysis

The Planning Team also inventoried the Park District’s recreation facilities including detailed reviews of the District’s large buildings/campuses.

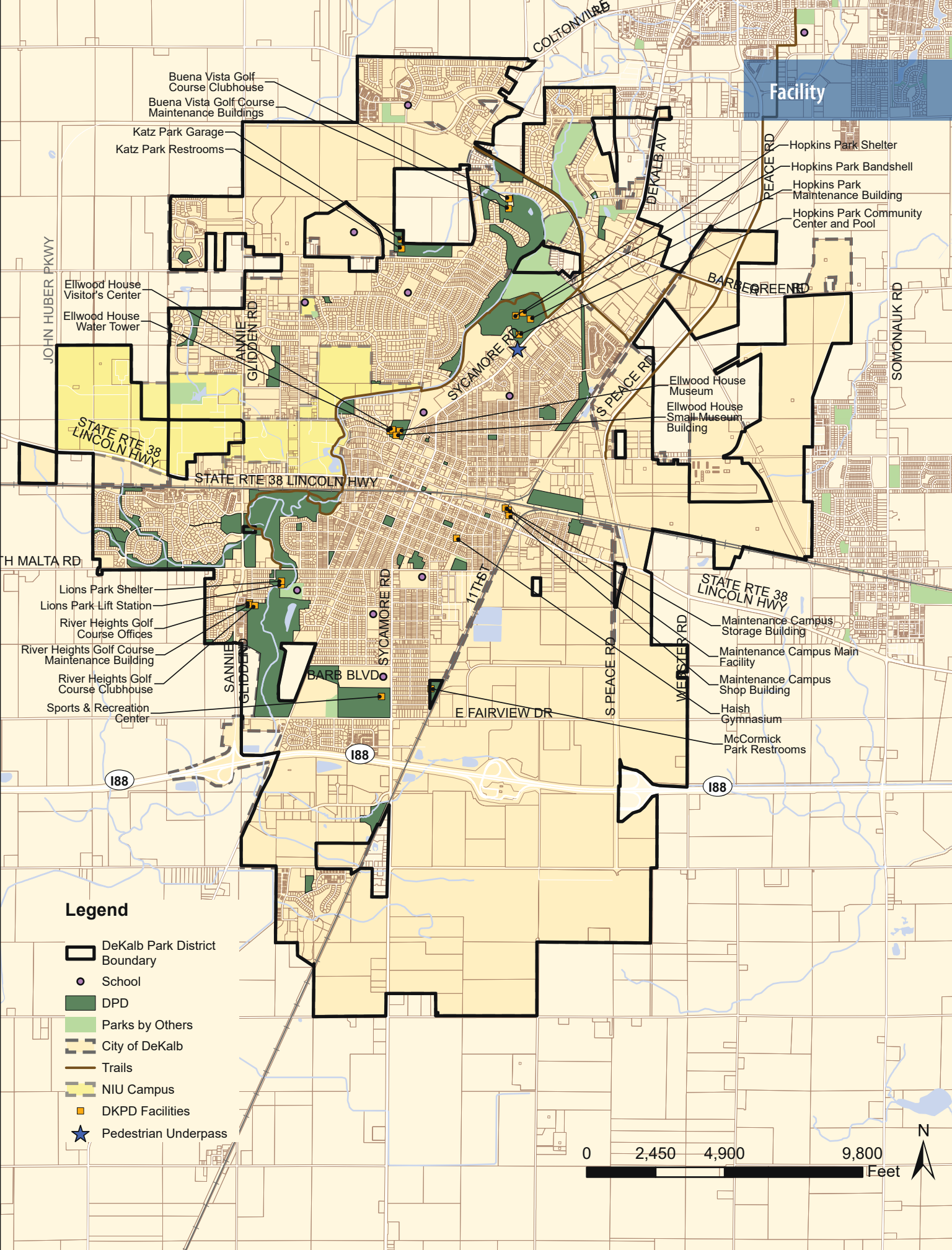
Facility Use

The DeKalb Park District maintains 23 facilities across the District, located at 11 different locations. These facilities are grouped into four categories:

1. **Recreation and Fitness Programming:** These spaces are primarily intended for public use to provide recreation and fitness activities for individual and/or programmed use, such as fitness and recreation centers. These facilities may also include support and non-public administrative and operational spaces.
2. **Special Use:** These spaces are primarily provided for public use but provide limited, specialized spaces or activities. They are typically focused on providing and supporting a single activity such as golf, or providing support facilities to other locations such as restrooms.
3. **Aquatics:** These facilities provide indoor aquatics or provide support spaces for outdoor aquatics.
4. **Operations and Maintenance:** These locations are staff spaces not intended for public use and are provided to meet District operational needs. They include maintenance, storage, and office locations.

The map to the right shows each of the DeKalb Park District’s facilities and the matrix on the following page lists each location, by category and includes the types of rooms and uses included at each location.

Detailed facility inventories for the ten facilities reviewed by the planning team are included in the Supplementary Documents - Inventory report.



Buena Vista Golf Course Clubhouse
Buena Vista Golf Course Maintenance Buildings

Katz Park Garage
Katz Park Restrooms

Ellwood House Visitor's Center
Ellwood House Water Tower

Facility

Hopkins Park Shelter
Hopkins Park Bandshell
Hopkins Park Maintenance Building
Hopkins Park Community Center and Pool

Ellwood House Museum
Ellwood House Small Museum Building

Maintenance Campus Storage Building
Maintenance Campus Main Facility
Maintenance Campus Shop Building
Haish Gymnasium
McCormick Park Restrooms

Lions Park Shelter
Lions Park Lift Station
River Heights Golf Course Offices
River Heights Golf Course Maintenance Building
River Heights Golf Course Clubhouse
Sports & Recreation Center

Legend

- DeKalb Park District Boundary
- School
- DPD
- Parks by Others
- City of DeKalb
- Trails
- NIU Campus
- DKPD Facilities
- Pedestrian Underpass



Facility Inventory Matrix

	SQUARE FOOTAGE	RESTROOMS		ADMIN		ACTIVITY ROOMS							
	Total Square Footage**	Restrooms	Locker Rooms	Reception Desk	Office	Kitchen	Concessions	Banquet / Community Rental	Classroom / Multipurpose	Art Room	Senior Room	Teen Room	Auditorium

INDOOR FACILITIES

Recreation & Fitness Programming

Community Center (at Hopkins Park)	6,079	X		X	X	X		X					
Sports & Recreation Center	68,130	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				
Haish Gymnasium	18,854	X	X	X	X								
Hopkins Park Shelter	3,784	X				X							
Lions Park Shelter	2,044	X				X			X				
Recreation & Fitness Programming	98,891												

Special Use

Buena Vista Golf Course Club House	1,218	X		X		X	X	X					
Ellwood House Visitor's Center	10,822	X		X	X	X		X	X				
Ellwood House Museum	19,443	X						X					
Ellwood House Small Museum Building (1st Floor Only)	1,750	X			X								
Hopkins Park Bandshell	2,064												
Katz Park Restrooms (Pavilion area: 5328 sq.ft***)	630	X											
McCormick Park Restrooms (Pavilion: 950 sq.ft***)	175	X											
River Heights Golf Course Club House	10,124	X		X		X	X	X					
Welsh Park Restrooms (Pavilion area: 1500 sq.ft***)	450	X											
Single-Use	46,676												

Aquatics

Community Pool (at Hopkins Park)*	12,225	X	X	X	X		X						
Aquatics	12,225												

Operations and Maintenance

Buena Vista Golf Course Maintenance Buildings	4,028												
Hopkins Park Maintenance Building	1,825												
Katz Park Garage	800												
Maintenance Campus Main Facility	11,289	X			X	X							
Maintenance Campus Shop Building	9,345												
Maintenance Campus Storage Building	18,242												
River Heights Golf Course Maintenance Building	2,194												
River Heights Golf Course Duplex Building	2,194	X			X								
Maintenance	49,917												

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE	207,709	15	3	7	7	8	4	5	3	0	0	0	0
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*Facility under construction at time of inventory. Included amenities are planned for reopening in 2026
 **Square footage is approximate and should be verified on-site prior to any construction documents.
 *** Area is inclusive of restroom block. Included square footing is only for interior spaces, not open-air pavilion areas

Total Square Footage	Restrooms	Locker Rooms	Reception Desk	Office	Kitchen	Concessions	Banquet / Community Rental	Classroom / Multipurpose	Art Room	Senior Room	Teen Room	Auditorium
SQUARE FOOTAGE	RESTROOMS		ADMIN				ACTIVITY ROOMS					

RECREATION AND FITNESS						OTHER		
Gymnasium	Indoor Turf	Fitness / Weight Room	Aquatics	Indoor Activity Courts	Dance	Storage	Greenhouse	Maintenance

						X		
X	X				X	X		
X		X				X		
						X		
						X		

						X		
						X		
						X		
						X		
						X		
						X		
						X		

			X			X		
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						X		X
						X		X
						X		
						X		
						X		X
						X		X
						X		X
						X		

2	1	1	1	0	1	20	0	5
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Gymnasium	Indoor Turf	Fitness / Weight Room	Aquatics	Indoor Activity Courts	Dance	Storage	Greenhouse	Maintenance
RECREATION AND FITNESS						OTHER		

Other Recreation Providers

In addition to the DeKalb Park District, residents have access to numerous private gyms and fitness clubs operating within and near the District boundaries. Two facilities of note in the community are the Kishwaukee Family YMCA and the Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Health and Wellness Center. Both are private fitness centers providing similar spaces and services to the Park District including fitness centers, training and classes, and gymnasiums,

School buildings may also provide some recreation and sports resources to their student bodies as part of their curriculum and through extracurricular activities. Some school buildings, and other community gathering places such as churches, may also open their spaces to their communities or as rentals when normal programming is not in session. These locations are commonly used for community gatherings and programming such as meeting rooms, programs such as scout meetings, and intramural and adult sports. The DeKalb Public Library is a significant local provider of community gathering, educational, and a variety of other program types, many of which are offered at no charge.

Northern Illinois University (NIU) which is located on the western edge of the District is also a significant location of indoor space within the community. While the university campus is intended for student and staff use, the on-campus NIU Recreation Center provides gym, fitness, and programming spaces, similar to the Park District. The university is also expected to provide sufficient social gathering and educational spaces to meet their communities' indoor needs.

Facility Usage Analysis

This analysis provides a review of the DeKalb Park District facility offerings compared to Park Metrics and the Planning Team database.

Square Footage Benchmarks

Level of service guidelines for indoor space are less established than the guidelines for parks and open spaces but the project team uses a Chicagoland benchmark of two square feet (SF) per person of public use space. Within this benchmark, it is typical for agencies to provide about 1.5 SF per person of active recreation and programming space and about 0.5 SF per person of indoor aquatic space.

The table to the right is a calculation of the minimum amount of spaces recommended to provide indoor recreation activities per 1,000 population. DeKalb Park District has an estimated 142,248 square feet of indoor recreation space and 0 square feet of indoor aquatics space. Recreation space consists of recreation and fitness programming buildings that are for public use and programs and includes the SRC facility and the public rooms of Haish Gymnasium. Spaces which are primarily for support such as restrooms or locations that are not open for consistent public use or whose primary function are not recreation activity are excluded from this benchmark.

Indoor aquatics refer to indoor pool spaces. Because the Community Pool will be an outdoor pool and the interior spaces are limited to support spaces consisting of locker rooms and restrooms, the Park District is recorded as providing 0 aquatics service.

DeKalb Park District exceeds the total and recreation square feet benchmark by about 7,174 square feet and provides a total amount of public square feet of about 2.18/1,000 population. However, it does not meet the indoor aquatics benchmark.

Facility Use Benchmarks

NRPA's Park Metrics also records data for interior spaces. When compared to similarly sized Midwest agencies, the Park District provides more individual facilities and more square feet than the median.

DeKalb Park District also provides additional public indoor facility spaces that are not recorded by Park Metrics including two golf course clubhouses and a historical center.

While the District provides some common interior spaces for recreation uses, the supply per 1,000 population is below the median for most uses. DeKalb Park District is only above the benchmark for community centers. It is below the median number of facilities per residents for restrooms, performing/visual arts, and recreation centers. The recommended number of recreation centers for the Park District population is 1.5 and the District has 4 facilities that provide this use, however, existing facility conditions which restricts use, lowers the amount provided at current standards to 1 which falls below the benchmark. There are also some facility types the District does not provide at all including a senior center, an indoor ice rink, and a nature/interpretive center. While the District does not provide a senior center directly, District residents may have access to the Club 55 senior service locations provided by the Family Service Agency, including one in DeKalb.

Level of Service Analysis: Chicagoland Benchmark

INDOOR RECREATION SPACE

Classification	DeKalb Park District Square Feet (Total)	DeKalb Park District Existing Level of Service (SF / population)	Recommended Square Footage	Recommended Level of Service (SF / population)	Square Footage deficiency / surplus (SF)
Indoor Recreational Space	85,948.00	2.18	59,080.50	1.50	26,867.50
Indoor Aquatics	-	0.00	19,693.50	0.50	(19,693.50)
Total Square Feet	85,948.00	2.18	78,774.00	2.00	7,174.00

Recommended square footage is based off the existing population of 39,387

Park Metrics Benchmarks - Facilities

30,000 - 50,000 population	21 agencies	
Benchmark	Park Metrics Median	DKPD
Total number of operated buildings	11	23
Square footage of operated buildings	141,785	207,709

Existing Population 2025

DKPD			Park Metrics Facility Median	Surplus / Deficit	Ranking
Existing # of Facilities (total)	Existing # of Facilities at current standards	Existing # of Facilities per population	Total # of Facilities needed to meet Park Metrics median	Surplus / Deficit	Highest to Lowest Need

INDOOR FACILITIES

Recreation Center	4	1	0.03	1.5	-0.5	6
Community Center	1	1	0.03	1.1	0.1	7
Senior Center	0	0	0.00	0.8	-0.8	5
Ice Skating Rink (indoor)	0	0	0.00	1.7	-1.7	1
Nature / Interpretive Center	0	0	0.00	1.0	-1.0	2
Performing and / or Visual Arts Center	1	0	0.00	0.9	-0.9	4
Permanent and semi-permanent restrooms	5	3	0.08	3.9	-0.9	3



Program Assessment

Recreation Results LLC collaborated with staff from the DeKalb Park District's Recreation Department to analyze District-offered programs.

Introduction

To better understand and assess DeKalb Park District's recreation program offerings, Recreation Results LLC collaborated with staff from the District's Recreation Department to conduct a series of analyses in the summer and fall of 2025. The assessment was intended to inventory and better understand the scope of programs offered by the District, uncover who is participating in the programs, and evaluate the overall performance and health of the program portfolio. Information from this report, combined with other community stakeholder feedback and other insights uncovered regarding parks, facilities, and operations, will help shape recommendations for future recreation program offerings and operations.

This program assessment incorporated information from a variety of sources, including:

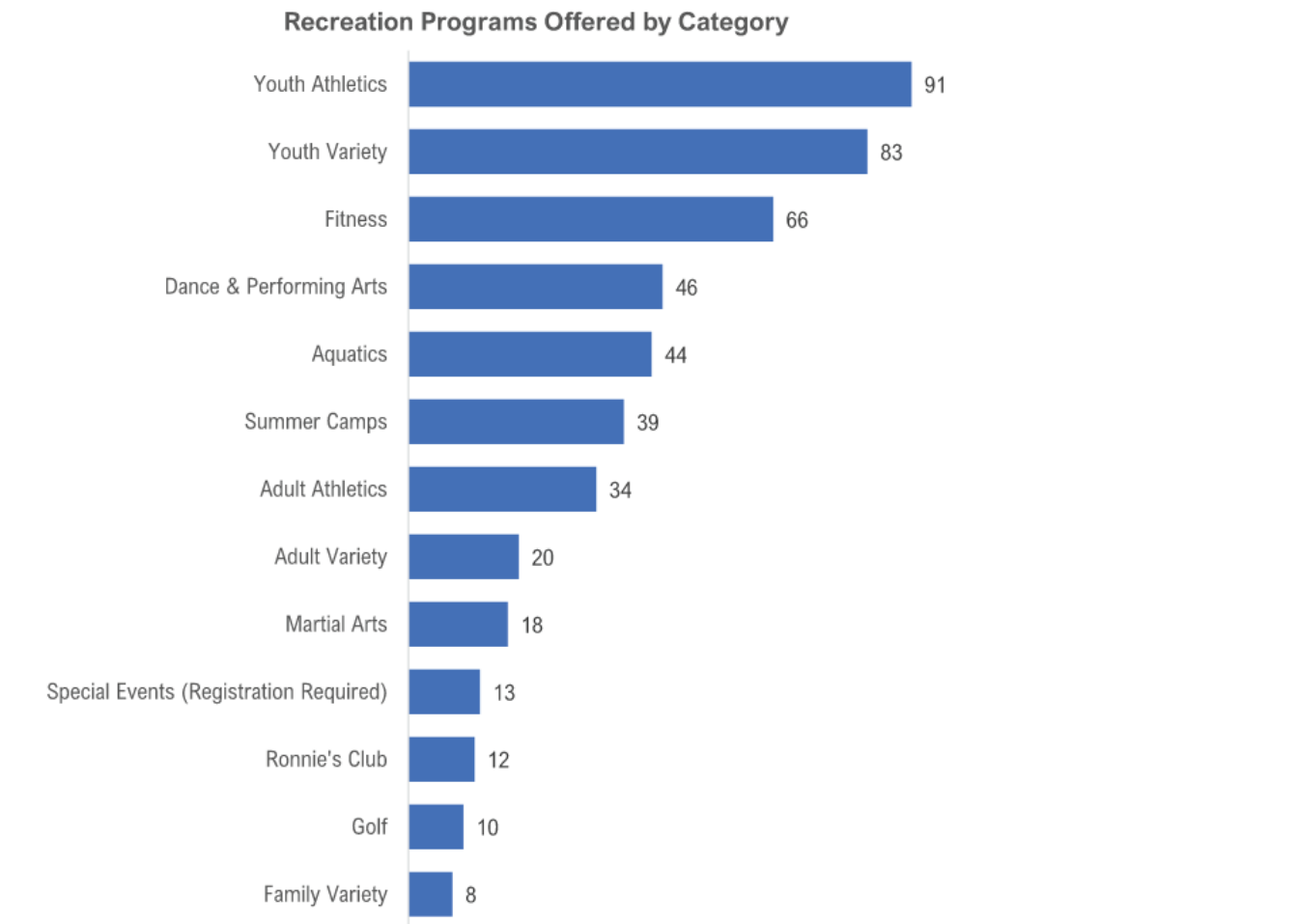
- Program design and registration data from the District's ActiveNet software
- Staff responses to a series of questions about program operations and performance for a random sample of District recreation programs offered in the prior year
- District recreation guides, website, and overall online presence
- Staff input regarding the District's strengths, goals, and challenges

Key insights from this recreation assessment are included on the following pages.

Program Offerings

Recreation Activity Offerings

As part of the program analysis, an inventory of programs by category was created. In 2024, many of these activities were offered multiple times throughout the year resulting in over 480 sessions available for registration in total in addition to those drop-in programs and events that are open to the general public without registration. The most frequently offered type of programs were geared towards youth with youth athletics and youth general recreation in the top two spots followed by adult fitness, dance and performing arts, and aquatics rounding out the top five categories. The chart below showcases the make-up of these unique activities offered in 2024 spread across different core program areas utilized in the District’s recreation software.



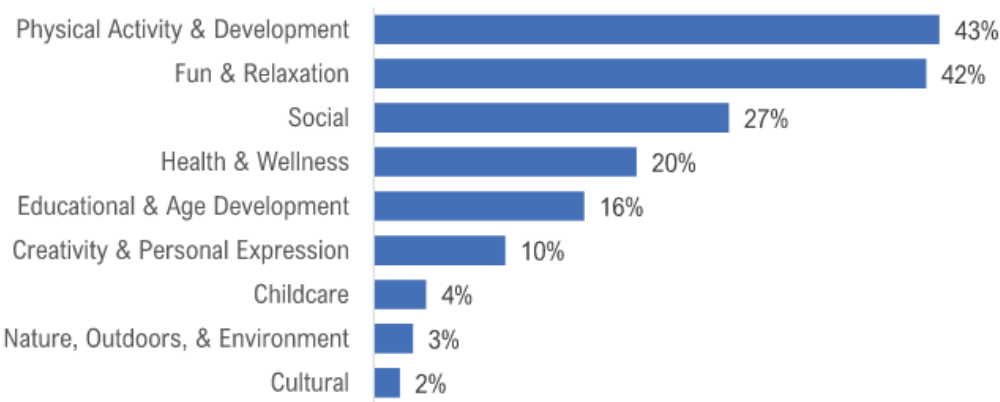
While the data collected indicates a good variety of program options available to the community, the District is lacking in other types of programs commonly offered by parks and recreation organizations for communities of their size, most notably visual arts; nature and outdoor recreation; and early childhood programs.

Recreation Activity Benefits

As part of the input collected from staff about the activities that they offered, they were asked to share the primary and secondary benefits of each program. Results indicated that many of the District’s programs have an emphasis on physical activity and health and wellness, as well as fun, relaxation, and social benefits. Given the District’s heavy emphasis on sports, fitness, and aquatic programs and on camps and special events, these top benefits come as no surprise.

However, due to a lower number of specialty programs in other areas, such as arts, culture, and nature, benefits like “Nature and Environment” and “Cultural” (and to some extent, programming aimed at age-based growth and development) appeared much less frequently. The District is encouraged to find opportunities to offer art, cultural, and nature-based activities. This doesn’t always require creating brand new programming from scratch, however. This can also be accomplished by adapting or combining current popular programs to create a spin-off, such as offering a yoga class that begins and ends with a short hike in the woods or walks outdoors as a way to incorporate nature into a traditional fitness class.

Key Benefits Offered Through Programs



Program Scheduling

Recreation Class Locations

Two of DeKalb Park District’s recreation facilities, the Sports & Recreation Center and Haish Gym, housed most recreation classes, with Huntley Middle School pool serving as an alternate site for swim lessons during fall as well as during the winter, spring and summer during the construction of the update of Hopkins Pool. In addition to these facilities, a small number of programs and events were also held at other District sites, including parks, golf courses, Ellwood House Museum, as well as occasional non-District sites located within the community.

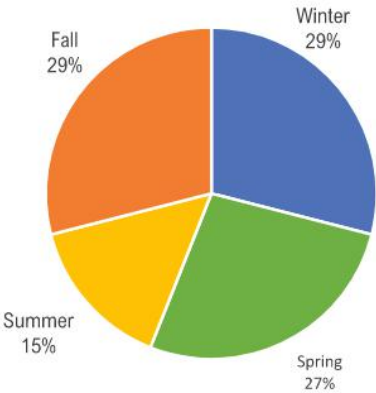
Recreation staff noted that classes were sometimes placed in spaces that were not originally intended for programming, such as a conference room at the Sports & Recreation Center and a banquet room at Hopkins Community Center, but this was necessary due to a lack of available space. Programming staff and instructors expressed concern that use of these spaces sometimes leads to a poorer experience for participants and makes it more difficult for the District to compete among other providers in the area.

Recreation Class Offerings Throughout the Year:

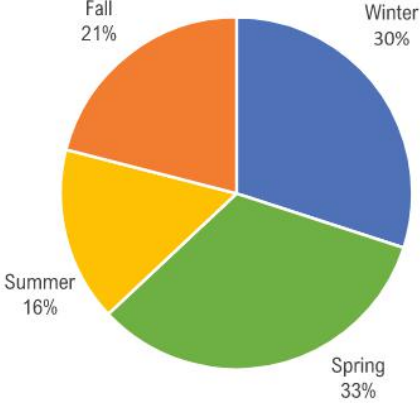
Reviewing past program offerings, the District often offered a relatively balanced number of unique activities each season, and registrations reflected that balance, including in the most recent year (2024). DeKalb Park District has recently shifted its programming schedule to center around three seasons – Winter (including Spring), Summer, and Fall. As staff and customers adapt to these changes, it will be helpful for the District to monitor any impact on the total programs offered and on registration trends, as imbalances can sometimes create challenges. For example, these imbalances can sometimes lead to heavier periods of work for staff. If temporary weather events, construction, or facility maintenance challenges negatively impact registration during a busier season, it can be difficult to recover from.

However, in 2025, the Winter and Summer program options were nearly double the number offered in the Fall. As staff and customers adapt to these changes, it will be helpful for the District to monitor this, as an imbalance can sometimes create challenges. For example, it can sometimes lead to heavier periods of work for staff. If temporary weather events, construction, or facility maintenance challenges negatively impact registration during a busier season, it can be difficult to recover from.

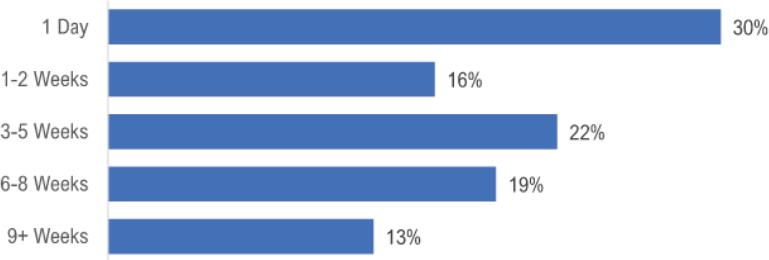
Unique Activities Offered by Season in 2024



Registrations by Season in 2024



Unique Activities Offered by Session Length



Length of Recreation Classes

Recreation classes often vary in length due to several factors, including the time needed to instruct the specific activity, the scheduling needs of the participants, the attractiveness of the program to potential customers in terms of commitment level and pricing, as well as the park and recreation organization’s facility and staff availability. DeKalb Park District’s program offerings tended to lean towards shorter lengths. These shorter programs likely offer more flexibility and possibly a lower cost to participate than longer sessions. However, they may present challenges in building a relationship and retaining program participants who may be more infrequent users of District programs.

Program Audience

Age Group Offerings: Although a variety of programs are offered throughout the year, when taking a broad look at program offerings by age group, it becomes apparent that the District serves a few ages with a few areas well, possibly leaving other needs and interests unmet. The following heatmap shows the age distribution of programs offered in the past year as categorized by staff. This graphic highlights several strengths and potential gaps in program offerings, including:

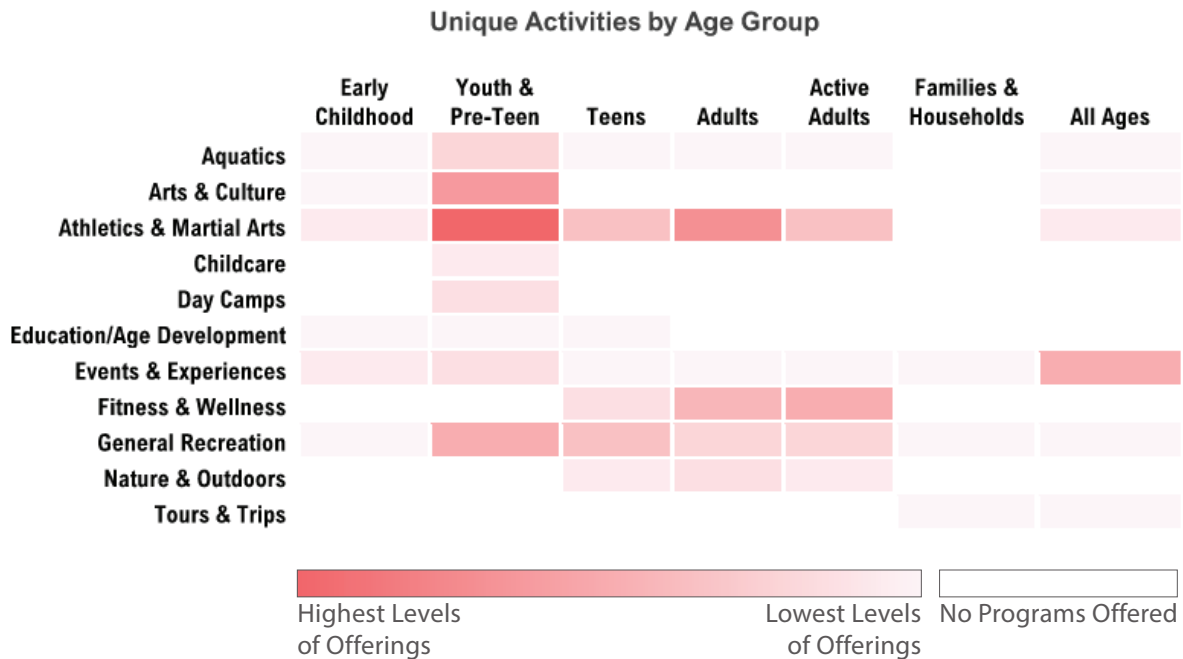
Strengths

- ◇ Youth have a good variety of programs available to them, although programming for the Early Childhood age group is much lighter.
- ◇ Comparatively speaking, DeKalb Park District offers a variety of programs for Teens, Adults, and Active Adults, although all to a lesser extent than the amount offered for youth.
- ◇ General Recreation programs and Events & Experiences were the only program categories that had offerings for all audience groups. This aligns with feedback from recreation staff who considered their large number of community events that attracted a wide audience as a strength for the organization.

Potential Gaps to Consider Addressing (Where Need/Demand Exists)

This heatmap also highlights some gaps in programming that could inspire new programs for the District, such as:

- ◇ More recreation programs geared towards families, especially craft or nature programs
- ◇ Trips for Teens on days off school
- ◇ Arts and culture programs for Teens and Adults
- ◇ Nature programs for Early Childhood, Youth, and Families
- ◇ Educational/Lifelong Learning Classes for Active Adults
- ◇ Tours and Trips for Active Adults

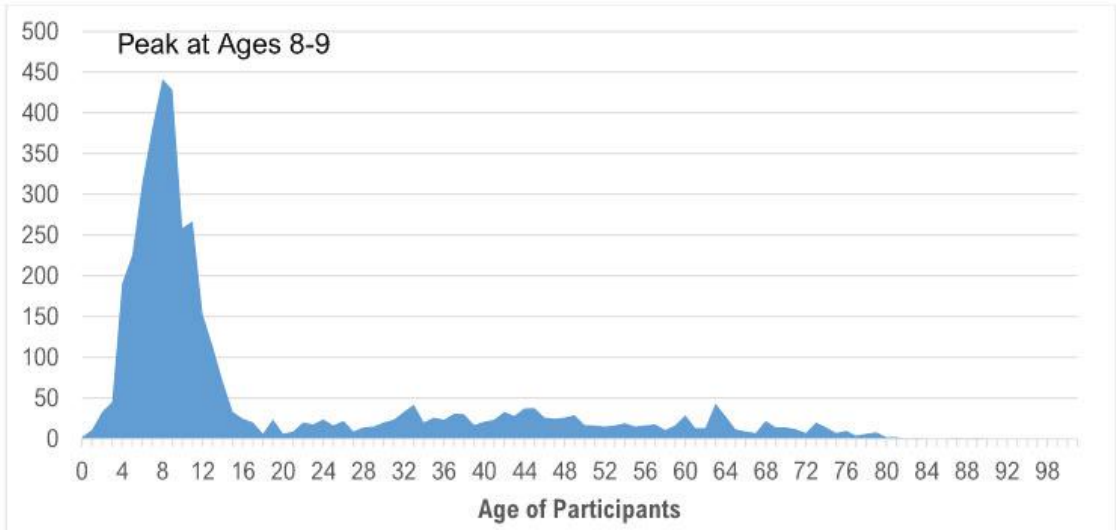


Participation by Age

When it comes to recreation programs, participation is often heavily skewed towards youth participants. This holds true for DeKalb Park District as well, where participation by those 14 and younger made up 70% of total registration in 2024. And while that number may seem high, it is not uncommon for it to sometimes reach 75-80% of total registrations at other park and recreation organizations.

Some points that are important to consider when evaluating these results is that DeKalb Park District, which has a strong set of adult sports leagues, counts each team as one registration even though there are multiple adult players on each team. These numbers also do not include attendees at special events or adults utilizing other District services such as facility memberships. Regardless, these results indicate that there is still considerable opportunity to improve service to adults in the community, and resident feedback should be collected and monitored to gauge the level of demand for additional programs.

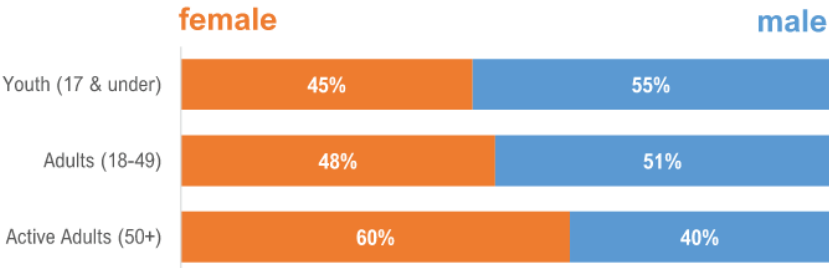
Recreation Program Participants by Age



Participation by Gender

While most park and recreation organizations make an effort to provide opportunities for the majority of their community, not all residents are interested in specific types of programs equally. This often leads to disparities in participation, including those related to the gender of participants. For example, group exercise classes tend to have higher participation rates among females, and sometimes sports programs tend to have higher participation rates among males. Overall, the DeKalb Park District is doing an excellent job of offering program options that attract a fairly balanced number of participants of each gender across all age levels.

Registrations by Age and Gender



Resident Use of Recreation Programs: Most participants in recreation programs offered by the District are from those residing within the DeKalb Park District residency boundaries. In 2024, 74% of registrations came from District residents. The other 26% of participants mainly came from neighboring communities, including those living in Cortland and Sycamore, and to a lesser extent also Malta and Rochelle. While serving its residents should always be a priority, as long as excess capacity continues to exist within recreation programs, non-resident neighbors that the District hasn't reached yet could be a potential source of new registrations and help lessen the number of program cancellations that negatively impact DeKalb Park District residents.

Program Portfolio Health

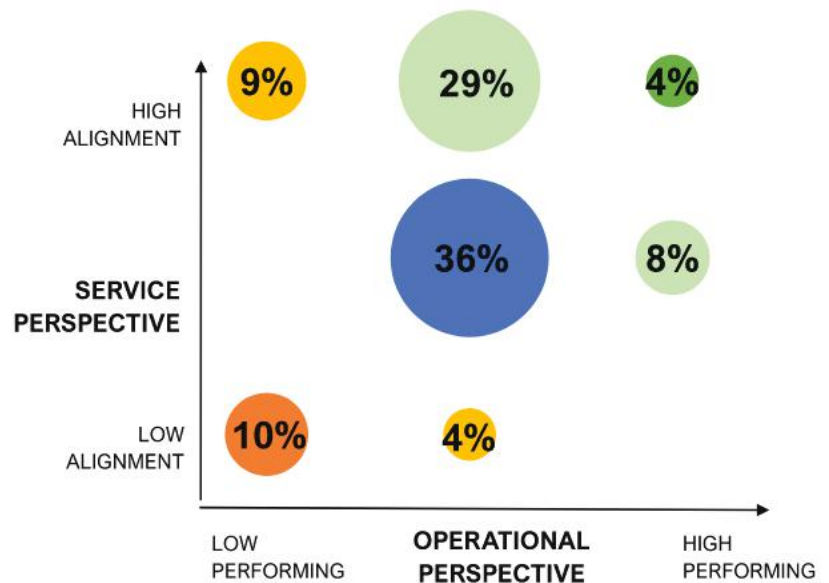
Although program registration and other operational metrics mentioned in this report can provide some insight into the current state of recreation programs offered by the District, they alone do not tell the whole story. To capture a fuller picture, additional analysis of the health of the program portfolio (slate of programs offered) was conducted.

To complete this analysis, programming staff answered a series of questions about a random sample of 148 recreation programs offered in the past year. These questions concerned current program performance, operations, audience, and benefits as well as staff's perspective about each program's future direction. Recreation Results LLC. then compiled and analyzed their responses to share insights about the health of the District's recreation program portfolio.

Program Operational and Service Alignment

Measuring the health of a recreation program portfolio can be difficult because park and recreation organizations are often tasked with meeting certain operational or business-related outcomes in addition to working to serve the community and meet their mission. Sometimes these two interests can even compete against each other. Using staff program assessment responses, programs were rated from both a service/mission perspective as well as an operational/business perspective.

As illustrated in the chart, programs offered by the District seem to be a good fit overall with 77% of programs rating satisfactorily or higher from both a service and operational perspective. The 4% of programs falling in the upper right-hand corner, including "Tuesday Pickleball Competitive Leagues," "SAMA Karate Classes," and Yoga and Pilates are likely ones that are worthy of expansion or should serve as inspiration for the District to create spin-offs of.



Because the District has so many new programs that they are trying to get off the ground and while also temporarily offering new programs to work around facility closures due to construction (see Program Life Cycle Analysis on the following page), it is not surprising to see 10% of current programs landing in the lower left hand corner (rating poorly from both a service and operational perspective). Some of these programs included Dance Classes, Swim Adult Group Lessons, and Breakfast with the Bunny. Although there are several reasons why a program may fall in this area, they should be monitored to determine if performance can be improved, or if factors like competition or duplication in the community means that it may be worthwhile shifting District resources to other programs.

Also of note are the 9% of programs that were rated as highly aligned with the District's mission from a service perspective, but were not as successful operationally. Many of these programs were unique special events not offered elsewhere in the community that were time and resource-heavy. In those circumstances, evaluating how to lessen the burden may result in better outcomes, such as finding ways to utilize partners, sponsorships, or volunteers, or adding revenue generation opportunities to supplement expenses.

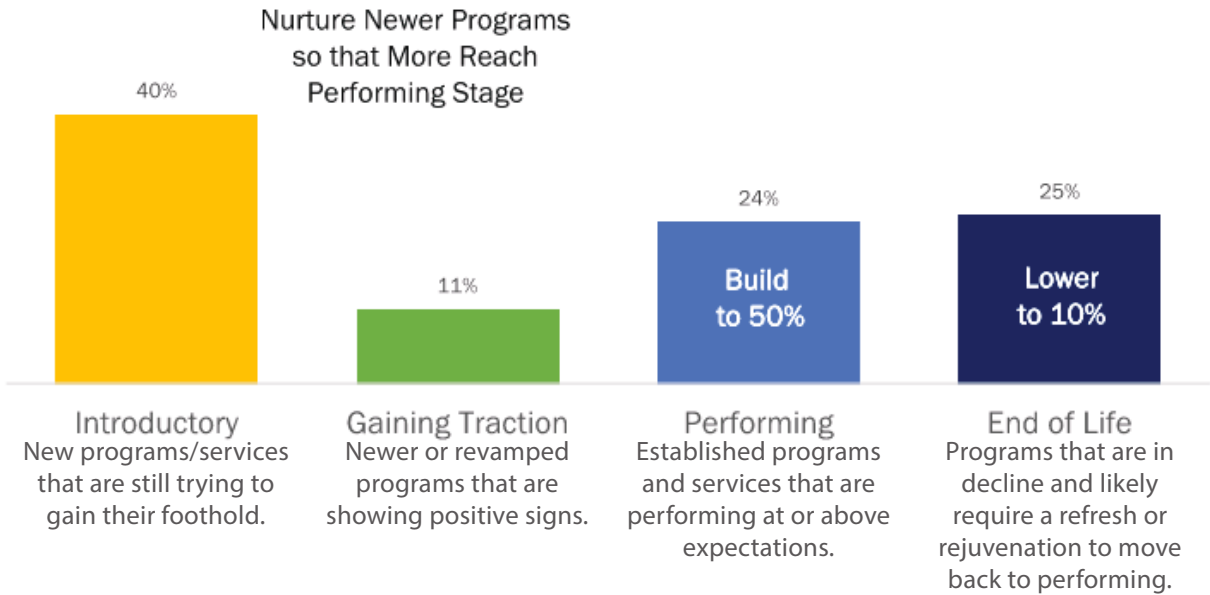
Program Life Cycle Analysis

Another avenue used to evaluate the overall health of the District’s overall program offerings is to understand where programs fall on the program life cycle, which begins when a program is first introduced and continues until it reaches the end of its life. Looking at programs from this angle can help shape recommendations about current program offerings and future program development strategies. A summary of the life cycle stages used in this analysis are shared below:

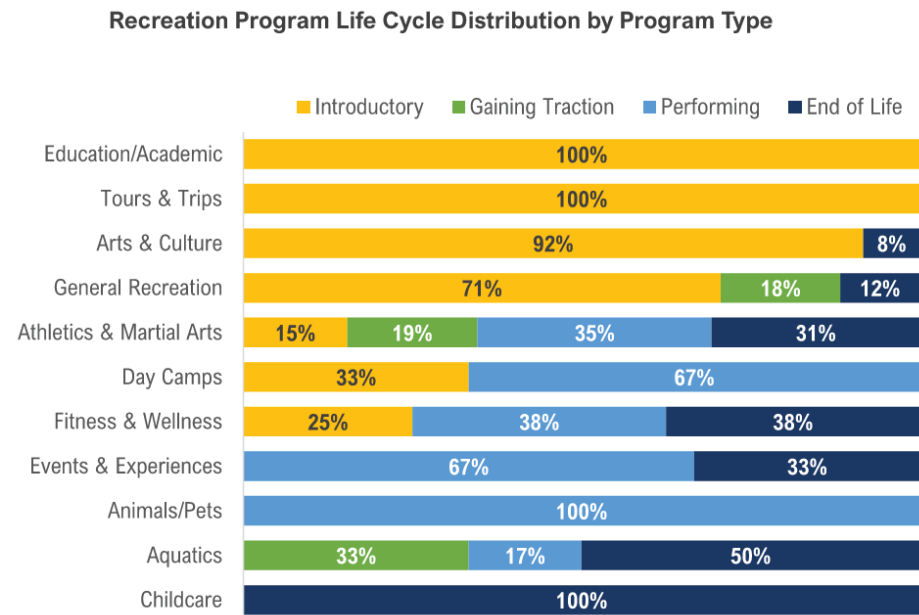
- ◇ **Introduction:** Recreation programs falling into this stage are new or somewhat new recreation opportunities that are still working to gain a foothold. They require extra effort and attention to get off the ground and are not quite meeting participation or financial goals yet but still hold potential for success in this early stage. Examples include: Bunco Party, Act It Out, Bingo Bonanza, Dungeons & Dragons.
- ◇ **Gaining Traction:** Recreation programs falling into this stage are ones that have really picked up steam. They are the immediate successes or somewhat newer programs that are showing growth and may soon become a consistently well-performing program. Examples Include: Tuesday Pickleball Leagues, Water Mania Days, Adult Knitting Class.
- ◇ **Performing:** Recreation programs that have run long enough and successfully enough to be considered consistent performers fall into this stage. They no longer require the same amount of attention and effort as they did to meet participation and financial goals as they did when they were initially offered. Examples Include: Rockin’ w/ Ronnie Kids Concerts, Kids Egg Hunt, Adult Coed Volleyball League.
- ◇ **End of Life:** Recreation programs falling into this stage are ones with declining participation, or ones that now need extra attention to get back to the participation and financial performance that they once had. They need to be renewed in some way to get them back on track or otherwise, they are likely to die out. Examples Include: Adult Group Swim Lessons, Tai Chi for Energy, Ronnie’s Club Days Off School.

The chart below shows the overall results of this analysis. The District has a large slate of new program offerings with staff describing over half of their programs as “Very New” or “Fairly New.” Some of this comes from staff continuing to develop new program opportunities within the community. Still, much of it also stems from other challenges, such as navigating construction that has led to facility closures or responding to program instructor turnover that has resulted in the cancellation of classes, including some that were steady performers for the District.

Staff should make an effort to nurture those new programs to move them along to the “Performing” stage, as well as refresh, reinvigorate, or release those that are nearing their “End of Life.” While this will require some effort, having a larger pool of steady performers will bring more stability to their registrations and sales and will lead to a higher percentage of programs that require less hands-on work to fill.



The following chart shows the life cycle distribution for each program area. By diving deeper into the results, some additional imbalance becomes apparent. For example, some program areas are almost entirely in the “Introductory” stage, while others, such as more traditional or steady programs like events and aquatics, have none. Also, some important program areas, including athletics, fitness, events, and aquatics, have a higher percentage of programs that have reached or are approaching “End of Life” than one would typically like to see.

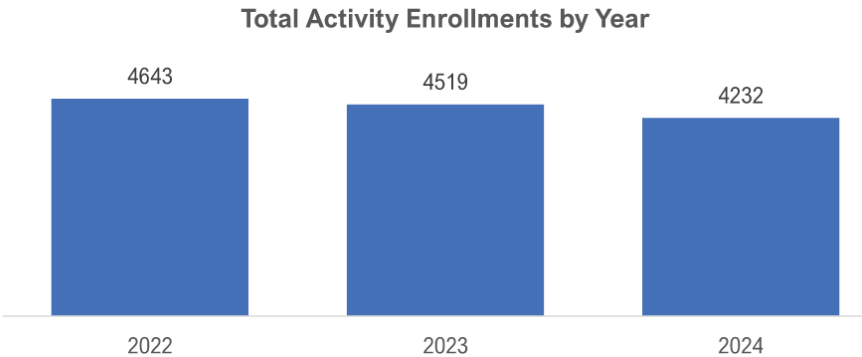


Program Operations and Performance

Program Registration Trends

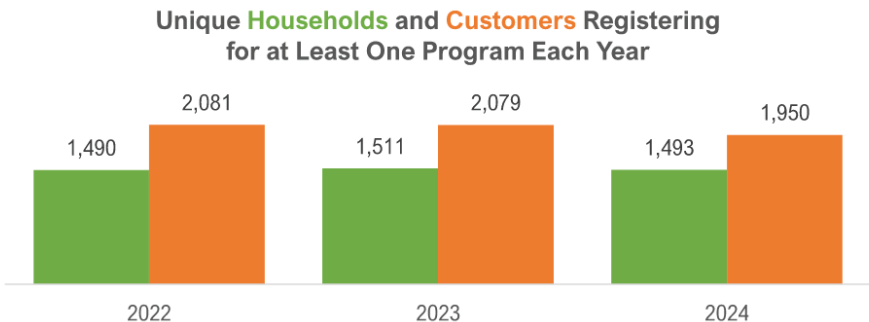
Examining District program and registration trends provides important data to better understand how well the District is performing as it works to meet its mission of providing recreation opportunities to the community. One of the first key metrics to review is total program registrations.

Overall, program registrations have been declining slightly over the past several years. To better understand some of the underlying causes of this decline, the same data was analyzed in several different ways.



Unique Households and Customers Registering for Programs

One helpful way to examine registration trends is by looking at how many unique people are registering for programs. While the number of unique households that are registering for at least one program has fluctuated slightly, the number of unique individuals registering for a program has experienced a small decline over the past several years.



Average Registrations Per Customer

Another analysis was completed related to how customer purchasing levels may be affecting overall registration totals for the DeKalb Park District. When examining the average number of programs purchased per customer, we found that it has remained constant at 2.2 registrations per customer over the past three years. This indicates that, despite serving slightly fewer people through registered programs each year, those who are returning are doing so at the same rate. On a positive note, this metric shows signs of increasing in 2025, as it was at 2.7 programs per person after the first three quarters of the year.

Household Retention

A final important metric to review is customer retention, which often reflects the quality of programs that a park and recreation organization offers. In this case, a review of overall household retention rates was examined, which measures the percentage of households that participated in at least one program in the previous year and returned in the following year to register for at least one program. In recent years, DeKalb Park District's household program retention rates have been hovering around 41-42%.

While the District's retention rate is steady, it is lower than that of many other northern Illinois park and recreation organizations. However, it is important to note that the District is likely facing retention challenges due to factors such as pool closures and instructor turnover, which have led to the cancellation of some classes. The District should make a concerted effort to reach out to past participants and encourage them to stay engaged in recreation programs. Doing this will also result in higher performance in other areas, as returning customers often register for programs at twice the rate of new customers.

Program Registration Sales Strategies

The results of this analysis suggest that the decline in registration is likely due to a similar decrease in the number of unique individuals registering for the program. Monitoring this number, as well as conducting targeted outreach to win back lost customers and improve retention, will likely be the most effective way to increase program registration overall, especially in terms of strategies that do not require additional staff or facility space to see improvements.

A secondary strategy, especially with the higher-than-desired turnover rates, is to make a concerted effort to retain new customers who sign up for their first program with the District. Although it seems obvious enough, many park and recreation organizations fail to realize which programs are attracting the largest number of new customers and therefore don't capitalize on the opportunity to market to them and introduce them to the full scope of programs that the organization offers.

In the first three quarters of 2025, DeKalb Park District had already attracted over 650 new program participants. The top program area that attracted the most new participants to the District was aquatic programs. This may be especially surprising given that the District's Hopkins Pool was closed in 2025 due to construction, so the aquatic programs that were offered were off-site at Huntley Middle School. Individual programs that were successful in recruiting new participants to the DeKalb Park District often fell into the Special Events category and included events such as Breakfast with the Bunny, Independence Day Run/Walk, Teen Glow-in-the-Dark Egg Hunt, Daddy-Daughter Dance, and Fishing Derby, as well as Camp Discover. Identifying opportunities to highlight other District programming and encourage registrations for other programs during or immediately after these programs should also provide a boost to overall registration totals.

Program Marketing and Online Presence

Participants often learn about program offerings from their local park and recreation providers through a variety of ways. A review was completed of several of those key methods with a summary shared below:

Online Searches and Reviews

When searching for key terms related to popular recreation programs and facilities in DeKalb, Illinois, the District performed well in general Google webpage search results, but was often listed lower when searching through Google Business (maps).

In several instances, the District did not appear at all while searching on Yelp, and the District has multiple unclaimed Yelp listings which are displaying outdated information. Taking ownership and updating the various DeKalb Park District Yelp listings is recommended. Online visibility is crucial to customer experience, and it is helpful to residents and visitors to ensure all local listings are consistently updated with new information, photos, and responses to reviews.

When searching Google, the District’s main business profile had 9 reviews and a 4.1-star rating within their Google Business Profile. While this is positive rating, interaction or response to these Google reviews will help with improving overall business and search rankings (note that River Heights Golf Course profile owner is responding to any negative reviews). Encouraging more reviews from participants will also help improve the district’s visibility in community members’ search results.

Search Terms	Google Search Ranking	Google Business Ranking	Yelp Ranking
Golf	1 st	1 st	River Heights #1 Buena Vista #2
Fitness	1 st	9 th	11 th
Adult Sports & Athletics	1 st	1 st	Did Not Appear
Youth Sports & Athletics	1 st	1 st	Did Not Appear
Aquatics/Pool	1 st	6 th	Did Not Appear
Summer Camp	1 st	3 rd	Did Not Appear
Cultural Arts	5 th	Did Not Appear	Did Not Appear

Social Media

Dekalb Park District lists Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube as their social media channels for communicating. They post daily for events, classes, and general park district news to Facebook, X, and Instagram.

The District would benefit from increased diversity of the types of posts to increase engagement with followers as the majority of posts are focused on pushing out information about upcoming programs and events. Adding more frequent photos and videos after or during programs and events, sharing posts with more updates about what’s going on in parks to encourage the community to spend more time outdoors, and posts showcasing staff, volunteers, or even participant stories are always examples. As with Google reviews, it’s also good practice to engage those that comment on your posts to keep the conversations going.

Website

DeKalb Park District has a visually appealing and easy-to-navigate website filled with program, park, and facility information. The District links various communication tools to its website, including online registration, rainout line, calendar, and social media outlets. Content is up-to-date and links within the main menu and important call to action buttons are all functioning as expected.

One area to consider updating would be to review the use of fillable PDF forms on the website for various rentals, as online submission forms generally provide a better experience for renters, and may also create efficiencies for staff responsible for processing rental applications. Another area of consideration to improve the user experience is to link the address and location of each park and facility within their individual website pages to a specific Google Business Profile for full map functionality directly from the page, as well as adding park and facility photos to each individual location page.

Program Operations

Program Instruction

Although District staff are responsible for overseeing each program mentioned in this report, park and recreation organizations can utilize a variety of approaches towards securing instructors and facilitators to produce the program experience for participants. At the DeKalb Park District, the vast majority (97%) of recreation programs are led by District employees, with a small number utilizing independent contractors or outside companies to lead the rest. And while they are not included in this data, it is important to note that the DeKalb Park District is a member of Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association which offers additional programming to DeKalb Park District residents with special needs.

Many park and recreation providers with a similar number of staff as the District often rely much more heavily on independent contractors and outside vendors to provide programming. Although any new programs offered, including those by independent contractors, will still require oversight by District staff, this could be an effective solution to expand program options without placing quite as heavy a burden on the District as staffing the programs themselves would, assuming quality contractual instructors can be found.

Staff Perspective on Program Operations

During a workshop with District staff, discussions and activities took place to uncover their perspectives about efforts to offer recreation programs to the community. Information from that workshop was used to better inform the results of this analysis and guide recommendations. Some of the themes related to the District's strengths and challenges in program operations are highlighted below.

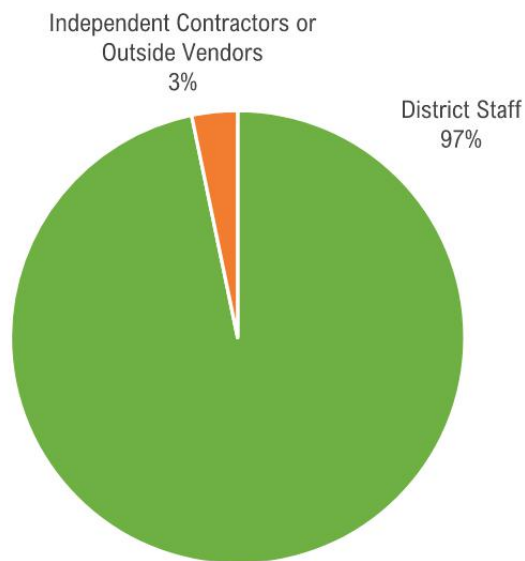
◇ Strengths and Opportunities

- Positive reputation in the community
- Excitement surrounding pool re-opening
- Variety of well-attended special events
- Staff ownership of programs and providing quality experience
- Scholarship program

◇ Challenges and Roadblocks

- Lack of facility space, including appropriate space for programs
- Higher than desirable program cancellation rates that impact customers' willingness to return
- Competition within the community, especially those with more specialized facilities or the ability to offer programming for free
- Finding and retaining program instructors
- Turnover at the administrative level and frequent implementations of new software/tools that result in constant change and shifts in priorities

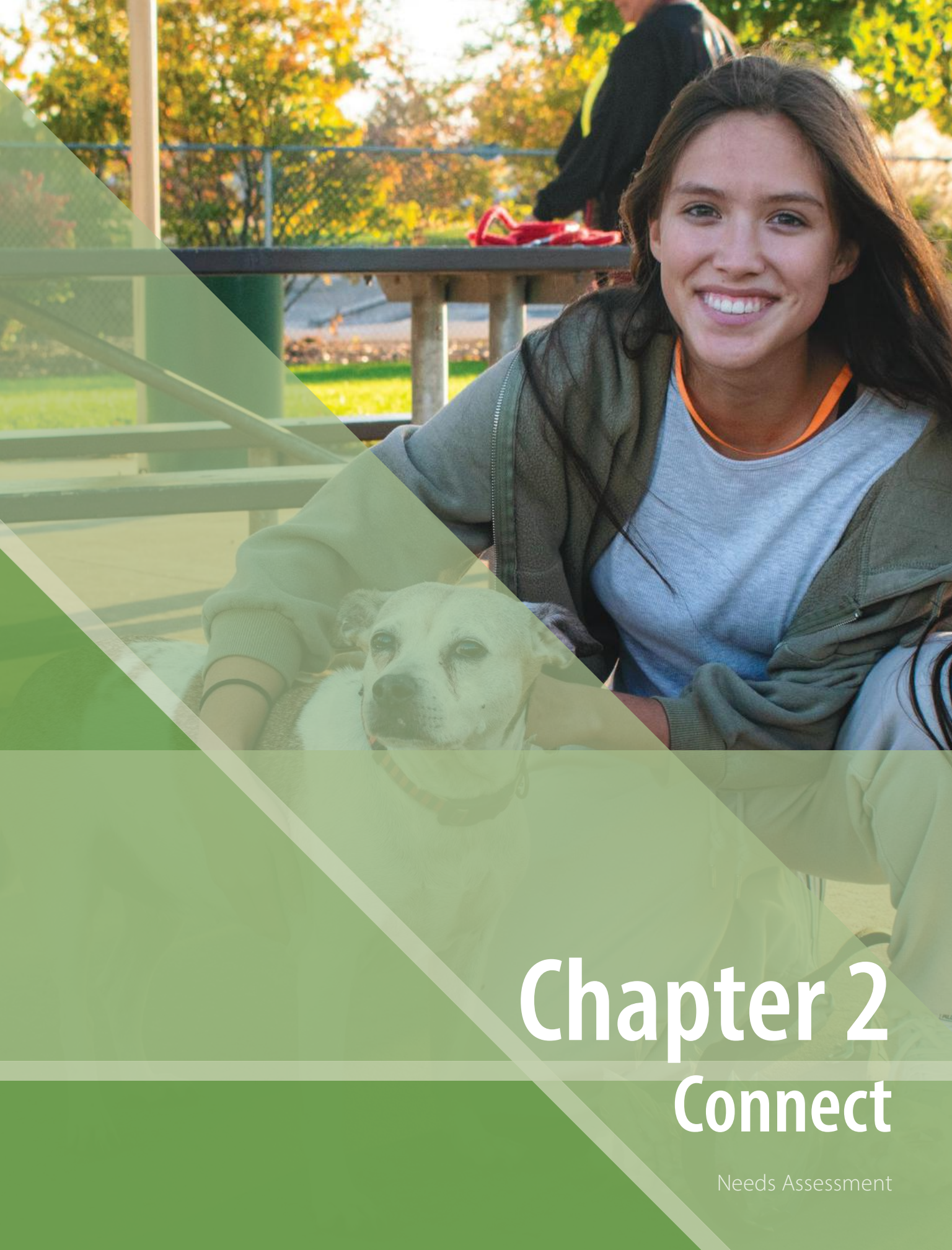
Activities Offered by Type of Instructor or Leader



◇ Goals and Aspirations

- More facility space and associated resources to improve programming
- Better engaging adults in park district programs
- Consistent registration and improved retention of program participants
- Improved and increased sponsorships, partnerships, and volunteers to support programs
- Differentiate park district programs from competition and similar providers
- Tiered scholarship programs to improve access





Chapter 2

Connect

Needs Assessment



Overview

Local recreation trends were derived from the Sports and Market Leisure Potential and Recreation Expenditures Report from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

Purpose

The purpose of understanding park and recreation trends is to determine probable demands for certain services and amenities. Recreation trend reports were compiled from nationally-recognized sources to explore spending, participation, and inactivity.

In order to increase participation, knowing the trends and interests of various user groups is crucial. Significant changes in specific activities (both increases and decreases) over the past two to five years are summarized. The national, state, and local trend reports are followed by summaries of all engagement sessions completed during the planning process. This systematic approach to community engagement provided a multitude of avenues for residents to provide input on aspirations and needs while defining concerns and opportunities for the next five years.

During the Connect: Community Engagement & Needs Assessment Phase, the Consultant Team reviewed trends, facilitated interviews with the Park District Board of Commissioners, Staff Department Heads, and key stakeholders, conducted a staff workshop with

the parks, recreation, and golf departments, hosted a pop-up input event at the 2025 DeKalb Kite Fest, and held a community input meeting. A statistically valid community survey was distributed to a random sampling of households and later opened to the public. This comprehensive engagement approach ensured input from a broad cross section of residents with diverse interests and goals.

Chapter Outline

- National Trends
- State Trends
- Local Trends
- Community Interest and Opinion Survey
 - Statistically Valid Survey
 - Open Survey
- Staff and Board Interviews
- Staff Workshop
- 2025 DeKalb Kite Fest
- Community Meeting
- Stakeholder Interviews

METHODOLOGY

Review of Trends

National, State, and Local Trends

National trends were derived from the 2025 Sports, Fitness, and Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report, facilitated by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, a top national researcher in the sports and fitness industry, as well as the 2025 Outdoor Foundation's Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report. State trends were derived from the 2020 Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Environmental Systems Research Institute's (Esri) Business Analyst provided local recreation participation trends.

Community Interest and Opinion Survey

Statistically Valid, District-wide Survey

Conducted by aQity Research & Insights Inc. during September, October, and November of 2025, the statistically valid community survey was distributed to a random sample of households in the DeKalb Park District. The goal for completion was 400 surveys, and a total of 408 DeKalb households completed the survey. The results for this sample have a 95 percent level of confidence with a precision rate of at least ± 4.9 percent.

Online, Open Survey

After Statistically Valid Survey responses were collected, the same survey questions were made available online for all members of the public to participate. The survey was open from December 1st, 2025 through January 20th, 2026 and received 49 responses. Participation in this version of the survey was not restricted by address allowing anyone to provide feedback regardless of District residency. It also did not ensure responses were unique to one individual or household. Key findings of the open survey are found at the end of this section, after the SVS results.

Staff and Board Interviews

In-person interviews and one online conference call for informal conversations with Staff and Board members to provide input on parks, programs, and facilities

Members of the DeKalb Park District Board of Commissioners and District Staff Department Heads completed individual interviews regarding needs and priorities for the District over the next 5-10 years. Each group was formatted as a facilitated discussion between participants and a planning team representative.

Staff Workshops

Focus group workshops with various full-time and part-time staff members

Staff provided input about their goals, objectives, desires, and hopes for the next five years as well as their opinions on the current state of the District in workshops. Representatives from all District departments participated.

Park Board of Commissioners Workshop

Input meeting held to gather input from the Park Board of Commissioners

Commissioners provided input about the strengths and weaknesses of the District in response to a series of focused questions. Additional information regarding future improvements and potential action items for the next five years was also discussed.

2025 DeKalb Kite Fest

Public pop-up event to gather input from community members

A community pop-up Event was held at the 2025 DeKalb Kite Fest at the Sports & Recreation Center / DeKalb Kiwanis Park to gather input from the public-at-large. Residents participated in a variety of activities to provide input on needs, desires, and priorities for the next 5-10 years.

Community Meeting

Public meeting to gather input from community members

One public meeting was held at the Community Center Terrace Room to gather input from the public. Six residents participated in a variety of activities to provide input on needs, desires, and priorities for the next five years.

Stakeholder Interviews

In-person conversations with key stakeholder groups to provide input on parks, programs, and facilities

Specific interest groups, or stakeholders, relevant to the District's programs, operations, parks, and facilities were invited to participate in small group discussions regarding their organizations' needs and priorities for the next five years. Each group was formatted as a facilitated discussion between participants.



National Trends

Derived from the statistically valid surveys facilitated by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association with the Physical Activity Council and the Outdoor Foundation, the following data will help inform the planning team’s recommendations.

The Physical Activity Council (PAC) is a partnership of seven major trade organizations in U.S. sports, fitness, and leisure activities. These organizations are the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), the National Golf Foundation (NGF), Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), the International Health, Racquet, and Sports Club Association (IHRSA), the Tennis Industry Association (TIA), the United States Tennis Association (USTA), and Snowsports Industries America (SIA).

The PAC produces an annual Sport, Fitness, & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report providing information on participation, inactivity, spending, aspirational participation and projections. The 2025 report compiled and analyzed 18,000 online interviews collected in 2024. These surveys were then weighted against a total population of 308,888,845 ages 6 and older. The following variables were used: gender, age, income, household size, region, and population density.

Other research incorporated in this chapter references the Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report, created by the Outdoor Industry Association and Outdoor Foundation. These partner organizations research and publish the annual Topline report which tracks American outdoor recreation trends with a focus on youth, diversity, and the future of the outdoors.

In addition to these studies, this chapter references Active Network, a national software company that utilizes recreation data to study market trends.

Sports and Fitness Participation

For the eleventh consecutive year, physical activity in the U.S. has increased, and for the first time since SFIA began tracking participation, the rate has reached 80%. This means about 247.1 million Americans participated in at least one activity during 2024. This is a 6.8% increase from 2019. Comparing participation rates from 2015 to 2024 shows the greatest percent of growth by

participation in outdoor sports (10.2%). Fitness sports (6.9%), racquet sports (6.6%), team sports (5.2%), winter sports (2.1%), and water sports (2.1%) all also increased in participation over the last ten years. While categories generally grow or maintain participation from year to year, individual sports and team sports had participation decreases in the 2019-2022 year ranges. Participation in both has been increasing since 2021-2022 and team sports has exceeded 2015 numbers, experiencing a lower overall decline compared to individual sports. Individual sports saw a greater decrease in participation that started prior to 2019 and 2024 levels are still below 2015 and 2019 numbers despite the last two years of growth.

The trend of all seven categories’ participation increases since 2022 indicates a growing prioritization of physical activity and healthy lifestyles among Americans. The data collected suggests that Americans are continuing to add high-calorie burning exercise and outdoor activities to their existing routines. The most popular activity category continues to be fitness sports followed by outdoor sports, individual sports, team sports, racquet sports, water sports, and winter sports.

Core participation is active or organized participation in a sport or activity on a regular basis which indicates commitment and dedication to an activity compared to casual or intermittent participation. Core participation in 2024 increased to over 170 million Americans, the highest it has been in the last five years, indicating a healthy and growing sports and recreation industry. Based on core participation, the top ten activities in 2024 defined by core participation, were:

Walking for Fitness (50+ times / year)	76,316,000
Free Weights (Dumbbells / Hand Weights) (50+ times / year)	29,684,000
Running / Jogging (50+ times / year)	24,005,000
Weight / Resistance Machines (50+ times / year)	17,967,000
Hiking (Day) (8+ times / year)	16,966,000
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent / Upright)	16,689,000
Free Weights (Barbell) (50+ times / year)	14,996,000
Yoga (50+ times / year)	13,907,000
Elliptical Motion / Cross-Trainer (50+ times / year)	12,716,000
Bodyweight Exercise & Bodyweight Accessory-Assisted Training (Calisthenics) (50+ times / year)	11,804,000

In addition to referencing the current most popular activities by measuring core participation, the Overview Report also lists the growth of activities over one-, three- and five-year periods. These predictions can be used to recognize ongoing recreation trends and predict future areas of growth.

Racquet sports had the largest growth from 2023 to 2024 at 9.4%, followed by team sports at 8.1%. Racquet sport growth can largely be attributed to unusually high growth in pickleball (45.8%) and tennis (8.0%). Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing sport for the fourth consecutive year with an estimated 19.8 million total participants. Growth trends in the team sports category included growth in 20 of the 24 included sports with a high growth rate in wrestling (8.6%).

The top ten core growth activities across all categories over the past three years are:

Pickleball	355.00%
Cardio Tennis	29.10%
Rafting	25.50%
Camping	17.70%
Hiking (Day)	16.90%
Climbing (Sport / Boulder)	16.20%
Football (7-on-7)	15.60%
Cardio Kickboxing	10.90%
Trail Running	9.40%
Kettlebells	6.00%

As evidenced by the above lists, 2024 participation increases were concentrated in the fitness activity category which included seven of the ten activities, and outdoor sports category (two of ten activities). The remaining activity is classified into both the fitness activity and outdoor sports categories.

Growth trend activities represented a more diverse group of categories. Activities from outdoor activities (4), racquet sports (2), fitness activities (2), water activities (1), and team sports (1) are all represented in the top ten core growth activities by participation numbers.

These trends reveal that active people are increasingly looking for nontraditional health and recreation options that offer a fun physical, emotional, and mental

experience. While the largest amount of growth is being seen in less traditional sectors, many class-based group fitness and exercise programs, as well as health club-based activities and team sports have increased in popularity over the last three years, as almost all included activities have increased participation.

Of the 24 Team Sports activities, 20 increased in total participation from 2023 to 2024, with wrestling increasing the most at 8.6%. Basketball, Football (flag), Football (tackle), Football (7-on-7), Gymnastics, Softball (slow-pitch), and Track and Field all also saw significant growth, over 7% in each activity in the last year.

15 of the 17 Individual Activities saw increased participation in 2023. Trail Running experienced the greatest total participation growth, 8.5%, followed by Roller Skating (2x2 wheels) (7.4%) and Roller Skating (inline wheels) (7.3%).

2023 - 2024 total participation increased in 14 of the 23 Outdoor Activities. The greatest increases were for Bicycling (BMX) (5.8%) and Climbing (Sport/Boulder) (5.1%).

Over the last year total participation in racquet sports increased dramatically with five of the seven included activities seeing growth. The majority of category growth can be attributed to pickleball which experienced a 45.8% increase in participation. In addition to the abnormally high pickleball growth, other racquet sports activities had growth rates consistent with other categories with the two highest being Tennis (8.0%) and Squash (6.4%).

13 of the 14 water activities saw an increase in total participation over the last year. The largest increases were in Stand Up Paddling (6.6%) followed by Surfing (5.9%).

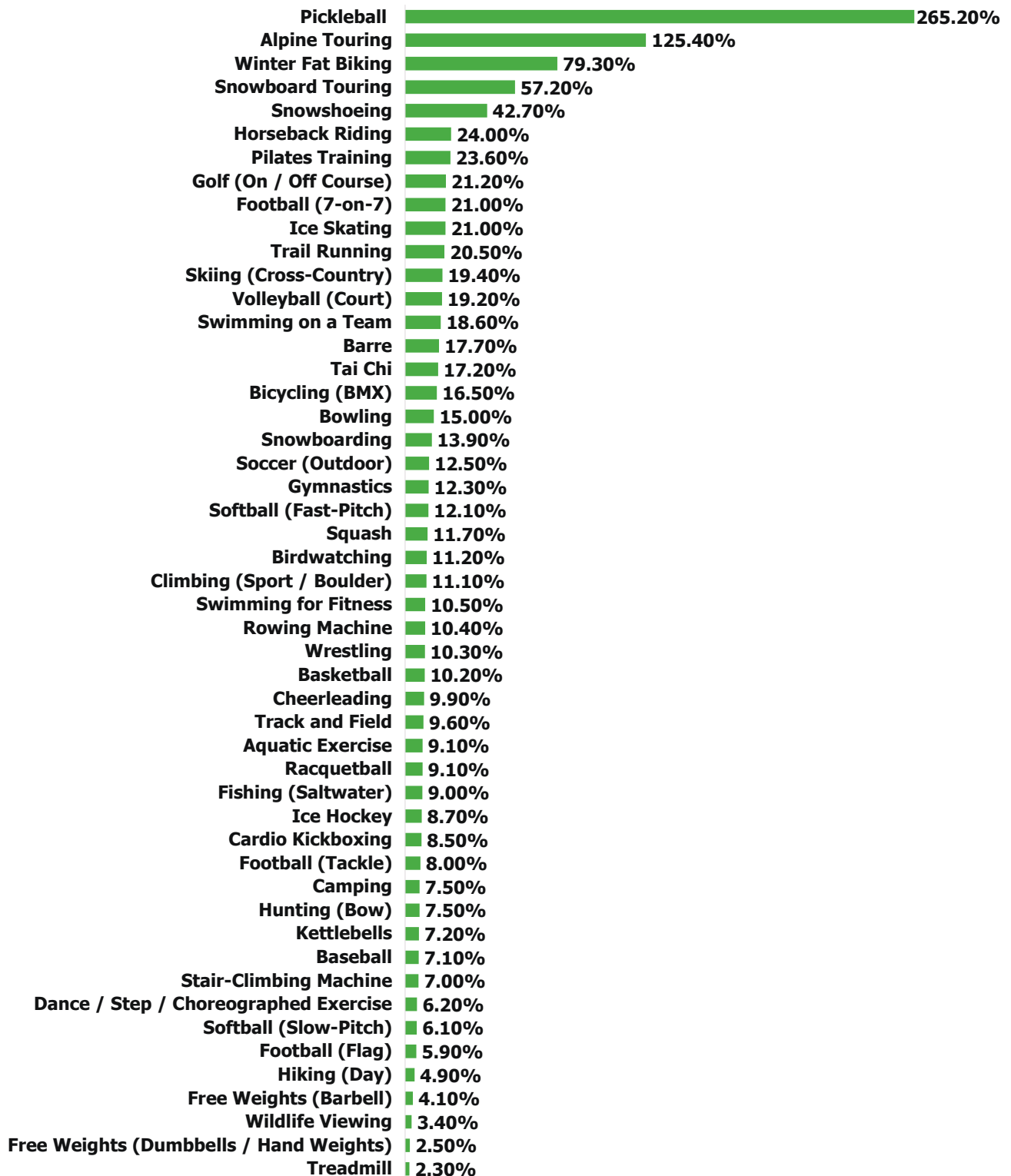
Six of the nine winter sports increased in total participation from 2022 to 2023. The greatest growth was seen for snowboarding (9.3%), then Sledding/Saucer Riding/Snow Tubing (6.6%), and Snowmobiling (5.9%).

The Fitness Activities category is further divided into three subcategories: aerobic activities, conditioning activities, and strength activities. Aerobics is the largest subcategory with 14 activities, 12 of which increased participation from 2023-2024. The greatest increase was in Stationary Cycling (Group) (6.0%), followed by Running/Jogging (5.7%). Boot Camp Style Training, Swimming for Fitness, and Aquatic Exercise also all increased by over 4 percent.

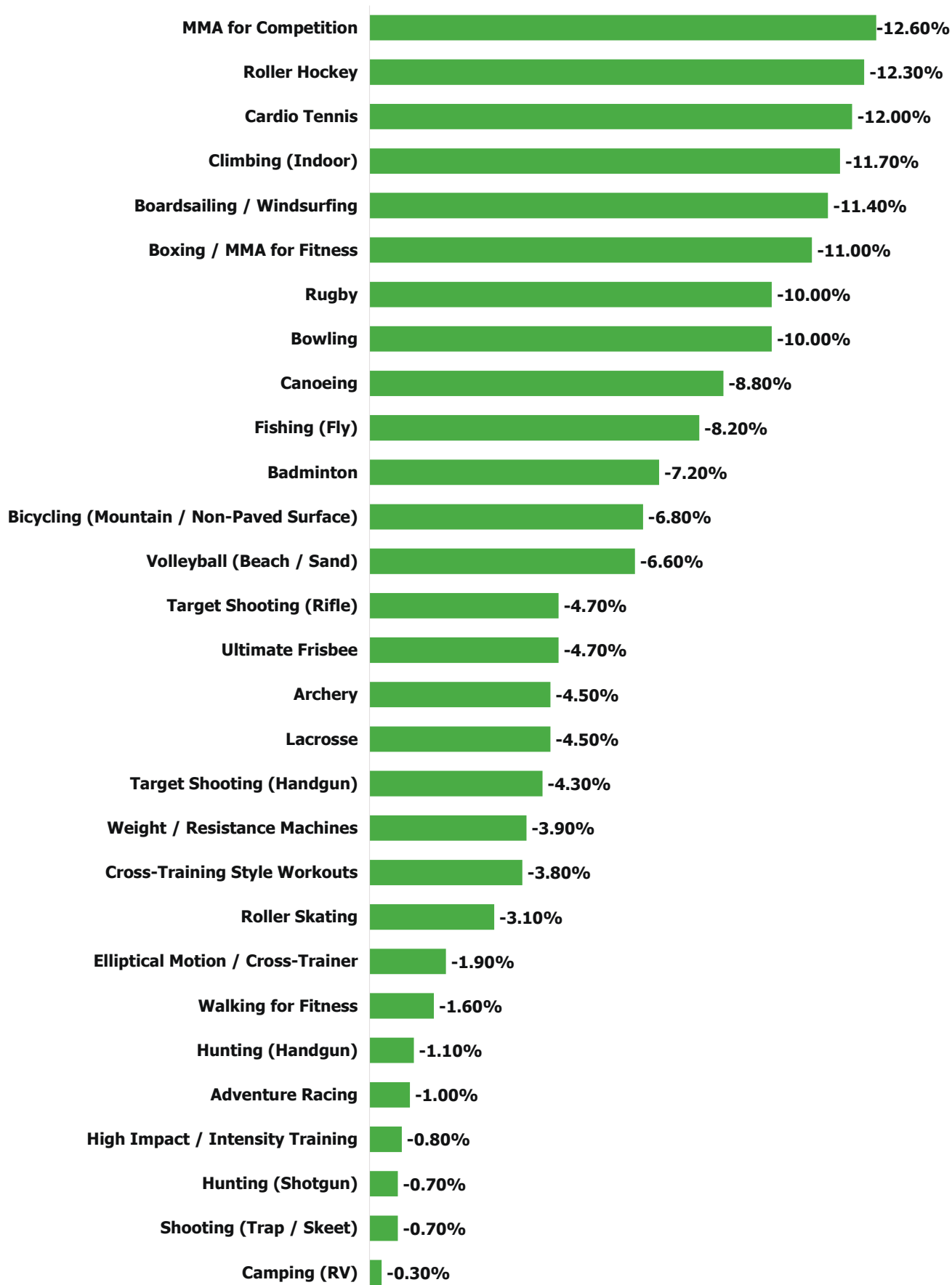


Four of the five Conditioning Activities have grown in the last year with the greatest increase in Yoga (9.9%), then Pilates Training (8.7%). The Strength Activities subcategory includes 4 activities which all increased in total participation. These are Kettlebells (7.7%) followed by Weight/Resistance Machines (4.8%), Free Weights (Dumbbells/ Hand Weights) (4.4%), and Free Weights (Barbell) (4.1%).

Three-year growth trends indicated that the following activities saw steady or increasing participation from 2021 to 2023 among participating ages 6+ and are likely to continue to provide opportunities to engage more people in the future:



These same growth trends also indicate which activities have been trending down in participation over the last 3 years:



Outdoor Sports & Participation

The Outdoor Industry Association is a collective of outdoor industry leaders which publishes an annual trends report. According to the most recent Outdoor Foundation Topline Report, published in 2025, over half the U.S. population (58.6%) participated in one or more outdoor sport or activity in 2024. A record number of people, 181.1 million, went on at least one outdoor recreation outing over the course of the year. This represents an increase in participant base of about 32 million people, but frequency of individual participation is generally declining across the last thirteen years. 2025 recorded an average number of 65 outings per participant which is slightly higher than 2023, but still about 22 fewer outings per year than recorded in 2012. This overall trend of increasing overall participation but decreasing quantities of outings suggests a shift toward more casual participation.

Growth was most concentrated amongst the youth (6-12) and senior (65+) age groups (+5.6% and 7.4%) and participants identifying as Black and Hispanic (12.8% and 11.8%). Households with high incomes over \$100,000 also increased participation (10.7%), as did non-college educated high school graduates (11.2%).

The Outdoor Foundation Topline Report identified the most popular activities as walking for Fitness, 115M participants, and Hiking, 63M participants. The activities most likely to attract new participants included Hiking, Camping, Fishing, Bicycling, and Running and it was determined that people who are participating in longer duration activities such as camping and backpacking are most likely to engage in multiple outdoor activities.

Engaging Inactives

An “inactive” person is defined by the Physical Activity Council as one who does not participate in any of the sports/activities covered in the PAC Overview Report. In 2024, 61.8 million (20%) Americans were inactive. This is the lowest inactivity has been since tracking began and the seventh consecutive year of inactivity decline. Inactivity went down for all eight age groups from 2024 to 2025 and inactivity at every age group was significantly lower in 2024 than it was in 2019, pre-pandemic. By age, the youngest groups, 6-12 and 13-17, recorded the greatest declines of over 10% each. While their overall activeness is increasing, Americans over 65 continue to have the largest rate of inactivity, reflecting the trend that people generally become less active as they age.

In order to understand how to engage inactives in sports and activities, the PAC survey lists “aspirational” activities that inactives are interested in participating in. Aspirational activities are becoming more varied

between age groups but swimming for fitness and camping made the top ten list for all age groups in 2024. Running / jogging made the list for all age groups except 55-64 and 65+. Working out with weights, working out using machines, or working out using weight resistance machines made the list for all age groups except 6-12. All age groups show interest in some outdoor activities such as hiking, or fishing, in addition to camping.

Active adults, as well as inactives, also tend to be interested in social programs and sports leagues as well as active recreation. Active Network recommends the following activities for adult recreation programs:

- Sports – Broomball, Inner Tube Water Polo, Pickleball, Wallyball
- Exercise – Beyond Zumba, Dance Buffet (multiple styles of dance in a single program), Kettlebells, Outdoor Yoga, CrossFit
- Technology – Beginner’s Guide to iPad, Social Media, Digital Photography
- Entertainment – Karaoke, Improv, Murder Mystery Dinners, Speed Dating, Wii for Seniors
- Art – Cooking, Drawing/Painting, Jewelry Making, Mixed Media Arts, Pottery, Quilting
- Professional/Other – Languages, Estate Planning, Self-Publishing, finances
- Other - Life skills, Brain fitness, Writing, Backyard agriculture

Many agencies are “branding” their active adult programs for younger populations instead of the traditional seniors to encourage long-term participation.

Health and Wellness Market Trends

In addition to the above participation studies, professional organizations track market sector trends to better understand what consumers are seeking in the health and fitness industry. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conducts an annual international survey among practitioners in the commercial, clinical, community, and corporate fitness industries called the Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends. In their predictions for 2025, the majority of trends in the top 20 are related to programming (7), digital technology (4), and training modalities (4) with all three evenly represented in the top ten with three inclusions each. The final represented trend in the top ten list is categorized as special populations. Two of the top 20 trends reported are new to the list compared to the previous year, with the remaining eight carried over from 2024. The top 10 trends for 2025 are:

1. Wearable technology (activity trackers, smart watches, heart rate monitors, GPS trackers, and smart eyeglasses)
2. Mobile Exercise Apps (track exercise activity and allow users to receive performance feedback)
3. Fitness Programs for Older Adults (safe, age-appropriate exercise for older, retired adults)
4. Exercise for Weight Loss (aerobic activity, strength training, and accompany dietary changes to create a caloric deficit)
5. Traditional Strength Training (exercise incorporating weighted equipment which focuses on technique to manage muscular fitness)
6. High-intensity interval training (HIIT consists of repeated exercises of short, near maximum intensity effort followed by rest periods)
7. Data-driven training technology (technology that uses data to track and understand physiological responses)
8. Exercise for Mental Health (physical activity and exercise to boost mood and improve mental health)
9. Functional fitness training (exercise that uses strength, endurance, balance, and other training types that apply to daily living activities)
10. Health/wellness coaching (health and lifestyle programs based in behavioral science for industry professionals)







State Trends

Data from the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is used to compare District amenities to other park departments and districts in the state of Illinois.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is prepared as a five-year document by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to maintain Illinois' eligibility to participate in the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program. Its purpose is to "evaluate the outdoor recreation needs of Illinois citizens and determine how best to meet these needs, considering the state's natural resources, recreational lands and facilities, and socioeconomic factors."

The 2021-2025 SCORP identified Illinois' continued low ranking of per capita supply of outdoor recreation land and facilities compared to the rest of the nation. As a result, park and recreation agencies throughout Illinois consistently plan for and achieve a high level of excellence with the recreation opportunities they provide to their communities and land acquisition remains a high priority where possible.

Recreation Facilities and Park Lands Inventory

There are about 1.5 million acres of outdoor recreation land in Illinois, ranging from federal and state lands to schools and private commercial lands. Municipal agencies—including park and recreation departments, park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, and county park departments—provide about 350,900 acres of parks, own 195,800 acres of natural areas, and lease or manage another 15,600 acres of open space. The state offers over 470,000 acres of open space through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, including parks, fish and wildlife areas, conservation areas, and recreation areas. Federal lands include the 280,000-acre Shawnee National Forest and ten National Wildlife Refuge sites statewide. Other providers include schools, nonprofits, and private entities offering unique outdoor recreation opportunities, though lands managed by private providers were not included in the SCORP.

Top Activities

Based on the 2020 Illinois Community Recreation Facilities and Park Lands Inventory, the top five trends across the state by importance to be made available to Illinois residents are:

1. Pleasure walking
2. Scenic drives
3. Swimming in an outdoor pool
4. Picnicking
5. Bicycling (road)

These results align with the reported preference for investment in trail development and maintenance and the high participation in trail activities such as pleasure walking and running/jogging which had the highest frequency for median participation/year among resident responses. The reported continued and increasing popularity in pickleball and wildlife/bird watching, as well as the decreasing participation in many categories from the 2014 results is likely due to the aging populations in communities across the state.

According to the survey, municipal parks or county preserves are used as critical, close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities and provide a variety of activities for programming/events, sports, trail systems, and play. State parks are typically tourism destinations and are significant conservation sites mostly used for wildlife and water activities such as motor boating and water skiing, as well as tent camping, vehicle camping, and hiking. Federal locations in Illinois consist mostly of water bodies and are primarily used for sailing, water skiing, and motor boating. Private recreation locations may offer a variety of activities such as athletic fields, walking tracks, playgrounds, campgrounds, and hunting areas.

The importance of providing outdoor recreation opportunities close to residents' homes or neighborhoods has continued to increase with most of the surveyed activities reported to be taking a more localized form. While this may be partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, previous surveys have also shown greater participation at localized locations for most activities.

Funding Priorities

Public recreation providers identified their top funding priorities for two categories: Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Efforts, and Facilities. For Outdoor Recreation and Conservation, the top three priorities were

1. Maintain existing parks/recreation areas
2. Provide environmental/conservation programs
3. Develop/improve existing land/water open spaces

The top facility priorities were

1. Inclusive/ADA programs/facilities
2. Community/regional parks
3. Neighborhood parks

Attitudes about Outdoor Recreation

Respondents were asked to rate the various factors they considered to be important when making decisions about engaging in outdoor recreation opportunities. Top contributing factors to respondents' decisions to participate in outdoor recreation activities include "to have fun," "exercise/keep healthy," to "spend time with family and friends," and to "experience nature and/or the outdoors."

Survey respondents indicated that "health and fitness," "area inclusion"/"service for all people", and "quality of life and economic development" are important aspects of parks and recreation. Additionally, over 70% of respondents agreed with the importance of all of the other resources listed in the survey including "maintenance," "health and fitness", "area inclusion" (access for all people,) "quality of life and economic development," "trails and greenway development," "wildlife habitat protected and restored," "conservation education," "public access to lakes, rivers, and streams," and "land acquisition - outdoor rec." The top reported concerns regarding parks and recreation were "facilities are clean," "parking available," "increased accessibility," and "educational activities needed."

Outdoor Recreation Priorities

Priorities identified by the IDNR are listed in the 2021-2025 State of Illinois SCORP as:

- Improving Health and Wellness
- Access to Parks and Recreation
- Natural Resources and Conservation Management
- Funding and Economic Development



Local Trends

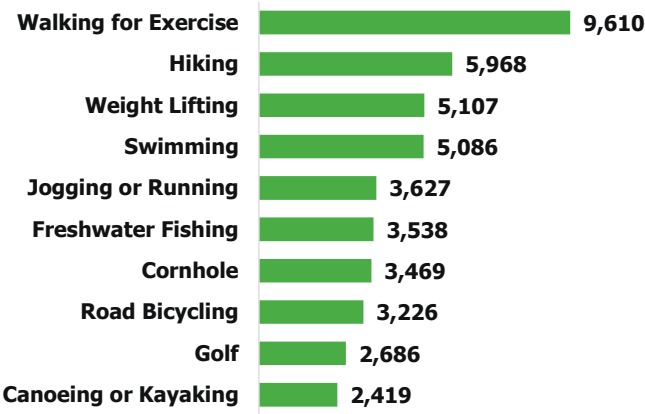
Local recreation trends were derived from the Sports and Market Leisure Potential and Recreation Expenditures Report from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

This data is based on national inclination to use various products and services and has been applied to the local demographic composition of the DeKalb Park District boundary. Usage data was collected by Growth for Knowledge Mediamark Research and Intelligence, LLC. (GfK MRI) in a national survey that was representative of U.S. households. Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the relative likelihood of the adults in specific areas to exhibit certain consumer behaviors or purchasing patterns compared to the U.S. population as a whole. An MPI of 100 represents the U.S. average. Numbers under 100 indicate a lower than average representation and numbers above 100 represent a higher than average representation.

The number of MPIs over 100 for the DeKalb Park District is slightly higher than what the planning team typically finds in the Chicagoland region. Scoring 33 activities over 100 MPI speaks to an active community which bodes well for future program participation.

These activities include a variety of indoor and outdoor activities for team and individual participation which could indicate opportunities for District service.

Based on projected 2025 Park District population, the top ten recreational activities by participation are predicted as:



Sports and Leisure Market Potential

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected # of Adults/HHs	Percent	MPI
Participated in rock climbing in last 12 months	1,022	3.2%	181
Participated in skateboarding in last 12 months	647	2.0%	164
Participated in rollerblading in last 12 months	605	1.9%	160
Participated in ping pong in last 12 months	1,933	6.1%	152
Participated in roller skating in last 12 months	946	3.0%	149
Participated in fly fishing in last 12 months	538	1.7%	147
Participated in volleyball in last 12 months	1,192	3.8%	142
Participated in frisbee in last 12 months	1,266	4.0%	139
Participated in ice skating in last 12 months	1,106	3.5%	137
Participated in paddleboarding in last 12 months	1,100	3.5%	133
Participated in football in last 12 months	1,162	3.7%	132
Participated in basketball in the last 12 months	2,360	7.4%	130
Participated in soccer in last 12 months	1,535	4.8%	130
Participated in marathon/triathlon in last 12 months	430	1.4%	121
Participated in spinning in last 12 months	621	2.0%	118
Participated in cornhole in last 12 months	3,469	10.9%	116
Participated in fishing (fresh water) in last 12 months	3,538	11.2%	116
Participated in crossfit in last 12 months	626	2.0%	115
Participated in softball in last 12 months	649	2.1%	114
Participated in archery in last 12 months	814	2.6%	113
Participated in jogging or running in last 12 months	3,627	11.4%	111
Participated in hunting w/ shotgun in last 12 months	799	2.5%	110
Participated in canoeing or kayaking in last 12 months	2,419	7.6%	106
Participated in target shooting in last 12 months	1,544	4.9%	106
Participated in weight lifting in last 12 months	5,107	16.1%	105
Participated in golf in last 12 months	2,686	8.5%	105
Participated in baseball in last 12 months	999	3.2%	105
Participated in tennis in last 12 months	1,179	3.7%	104
Participated in rowing (indoor/outdoor) in last 12 months	586	1.9%	103
Participated in water skiing in last 12 months	386	1.2%	103
Participated in hiking in last 12 months	5,968	18.8%	102
Participated in bicycling (road) in last 12 months	3,226	10.2%	102
Participated in boating (power) in last 12 months	1,400	4.4%	100
Participated in swimming in last 12 months	5,086	16.0%	99
Participated in walking for exercise in last 12 months	9,610	30.3%	94
Participated in bicycling (mountain) in last 12 months	946	3.0%	94
Participated in pickleball in last 12 months	1,060	3.3%	92
Participated in aerobics in last 12 months	2,081	6.6%	88



Community Interest and Opinion Survey

aQity Research & Insights Inc. administered a community survey for the DeKalb Park District during September, October, November, and December of 2025. The survey was administered as part of the Park District's Comprehensive Master Plan process.

Methodology

An eight-page survey was mailed through USPS and emailed at random to a sample of households throughout the DeKalb Park District. The mailed survey included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey, encouragement for recipients to respond, as well as three options for submission of the completed survey; By Mail within the enclosed pre-paid envelope, Online with a QR code directed to the online survey format, or By Phone with aQity's phone number listed as well as working hours.

Periodic reminders were issued throughout the collection period to encourage responses. After contacting selected households, the survey was then posted on the District's outreach platforms like the Park District's website and social media platforms.

The goal was to receive at least 400 completed surveys for a reasonable margin of error of ± 4.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This goal was exceeded, with a total of 408 households completing the survey. The results for the random sample of 408 households have a 95 percent level of confidence with a precision of at least ± 4.9 percent.

Report Outline

- Key Insights and Recommendations Executive Summary
- Detailed Analysis of Questions
- Identifying Resident Priorities and Expectations
- Open-Ended Questions Sample Responses
- Survey Methods Summary
- Comparison of "Statistically Valid" Survey Findings

Major Findings By Category

1. **Overall Opinions of DKPD:** Overall perceptions of the DeKalb Park District are positive. Nearly three out of four residents (74%) reported having a favorable opinion of the District, compared to just 9% who expressed a negative opinion—representing an approximate eight-to-one positive-to-negative margin. The District’s average overall rating of 6.9 on a 0–10 scale is considered somewhat favorable.

Open-ended survey responses provide additional context for these opinions and highlight the District’s key strengths. Nearly half of respondents (44%) cited parks and open spaces as what they value most about the District, frequently referencing the cleanliness and maintenance of these areas as well as the availability of walking trails. Facilities and programs were each mentioned by 27% of respondents, with residents expressing appreciation for aquatic facilities, sports fields, golf courses, a wide range of programming, concerts in the park, and youth-focused activities.

Additionally, 17% of respondents identified strengths related to District management and administration. These comments emphasized overall upkeep, reasonable fees, and friendly, professional staff, reinforcing the generally favorable perception of the District and helping to explain its strong overall ratings.

Open-ended responses regarding dislikes or desired improvements further clarify areas of concern. Just over one-third of respondents (37%) cited administrative or staff-related issues, most often referencing project spending—particularly related to the pool replacement—as well as program and membership fees and, less frequently, specific customer service experiences.

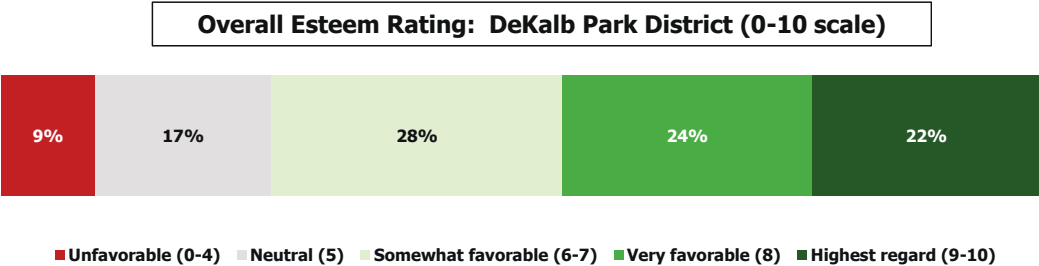
District facilities were also a common focus of improvement-related comments, again led by the pool. Respondents noted the need for broader facility upgrades and maintenance, including specific concerns such as broken equipment, lighting issues at athletic fields, and desired improvements at recreation centers. While parks and open spaces were the most frequently cited strength, they accounted for a smaller share of negative comments (16%), typically focused on maintenance expectations or differing preferences for additional amenities versus preserving natural conditions. Programs were mentioned least often (9%), with comments most commonly calling for expanded or enhanced youth sports offerings.

Survey results also indicate that a portion of the community is not highly familiar with the District. 14% of respondents were unable to offer an opinion due to a lack of familiarity. Among the 86% who did provide a rating, nearly one in five respondents indicated neutral esteem, reporting no strong positive or negative feelings toward the District.

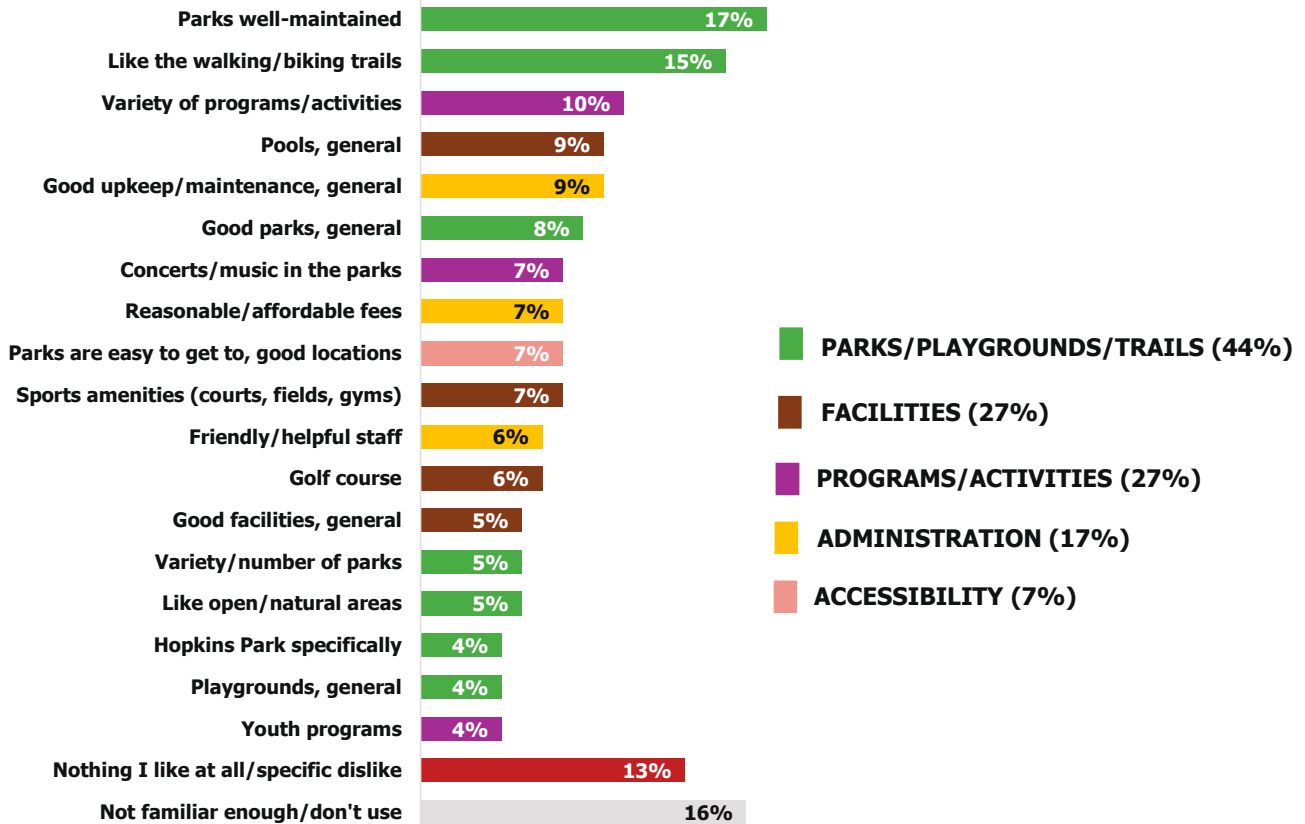
This lack of familiarity may be influenced by the presence of seasonal or transitional residents, such as Northern Illinois University students and faculty. Further analysis will help clarify the underlying sources of these responses.

Despite varying levels of familiarity, most residents feel included in the District’s offerings. More than four-fifths of respondents (81%) indicated that their household and its interests are sufficiently represented in the programs, facilities, and services provided by the District.

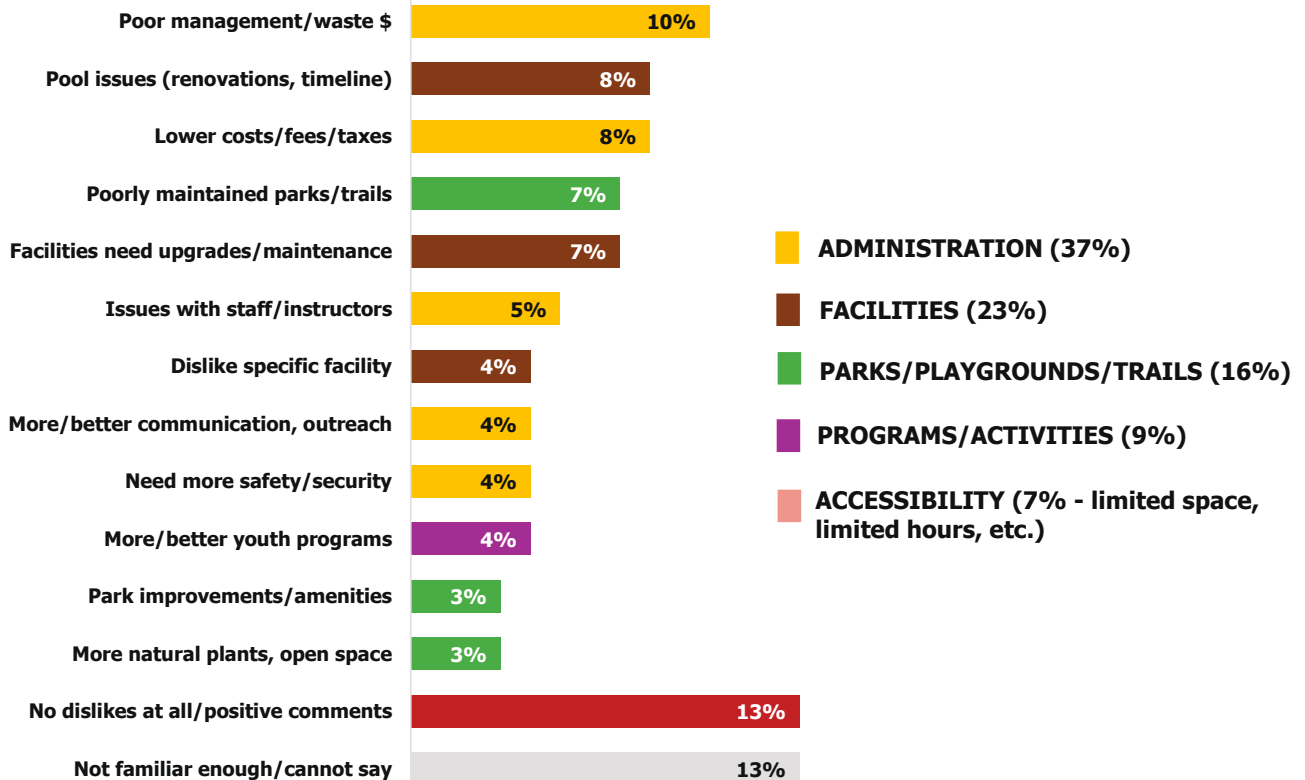
When informed that approximately 6% of their property taxes support the Park District, a majority of residents (61%) rated this investment as at least a good value, including 22% who described it as an “excellent” value. In contrast, 22% rated the value as “poor,” while the remaining 17% characterized it as an “average” value.



Strengths/Likes About DPD
(most frequent open-ended responses)



Weaknesses/Dislikes About DPD
(most frequent open-ended responses)



- 2. Park and Facility Usage/Satisfaction:** Among all respondents, a large majority of households (84 percent) reported that someone in their household visited a DeKalb Park District (DKPD) park or outdoor amenity during the past year. Of the households that visited a DKPD park or outdoor space, Hopkins Park was used by the highest percentage of households (70 percent). Other locations used by a substantially smaller, but similar, share of households include the Nature Trail, Lions Park, Prairie Park, and Katz Park, each cited by approximately one-third of respondents (33 to 35 percent).

Nearly two-thirds of households (65 percent) reported visiting at least one DKPD indoor facility during the past year. The most frequently visited facilities include the Sports & Recreation Center (29 percent), Ellwood House Museum (24 percent), and the Hopkins Park Community Center (23 percent).

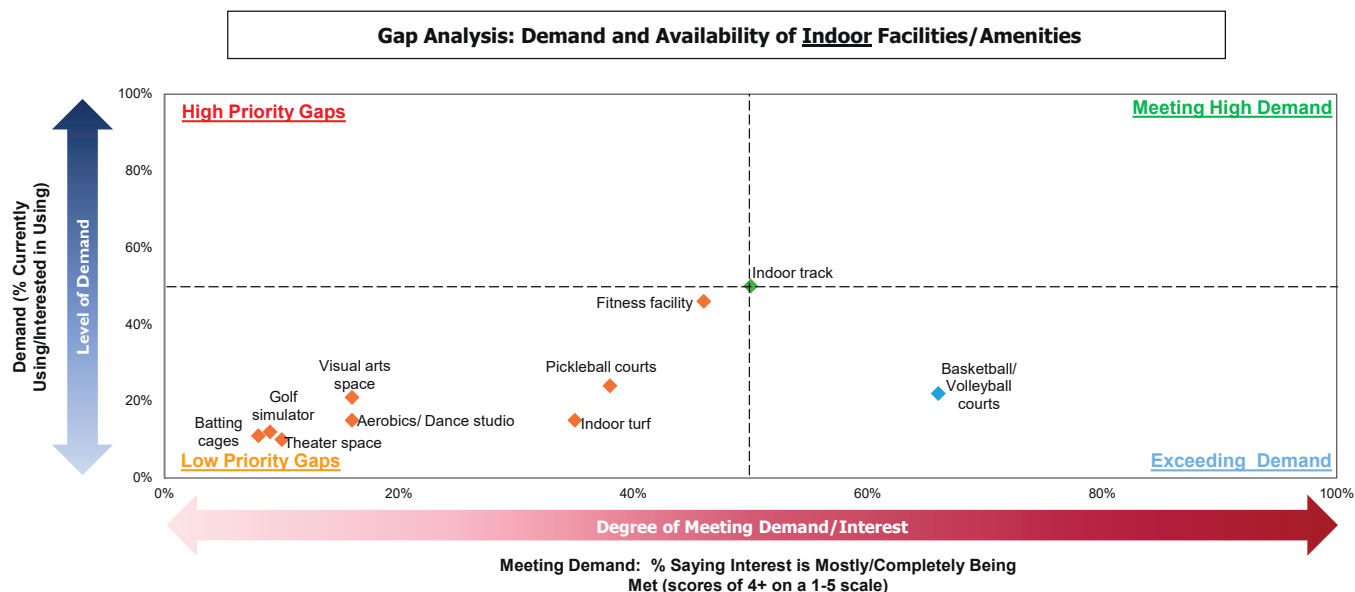
Overall satisfaction with DKPD parks and facilities is very strong. Residents provided particularly high ratings for overall accessibility, which received an average score of 8.2 on a 0–10 scale, and safety, which received an average score of 8.1. These ratings are notably higher than the District’s overall esteem rating of 6.9.

Among the relatively small percentage of non-users of DKPD parks and facilities, the most commonly cited reasons for non-participation include a lack of awareness of District offerings (61 percent) and not having children under the age of 18 in the household (55 percent), suggesting a perception that District programs and facilities are primarily oriented toward youth or young families.

- 3. Need for Indoor Facilities/Amenities:** Based on the needs assessment, several indoor facilities and amenities emerged as being in the highest demand among DeKalb Park District households. The facilities most frequently identified include an indoor walking/running track and a fitness facility, both of which are currently meeting demand and are considered readily available. Pickleball courts rank as the next highest-demand facility, representing a notable gap between interest and existing availability. Basketball and volleyball courts also rank among the higher-demand facilities and are generally meeting current household needs.

Other indoor facilities and amenities were identified by a smaller percentage of households; however, many of these represent unmet needs within the community. Facilities such as program space or studios for visual arts demonstrate a significant gap between demand and availability, indicating that household needs are largely not being met.

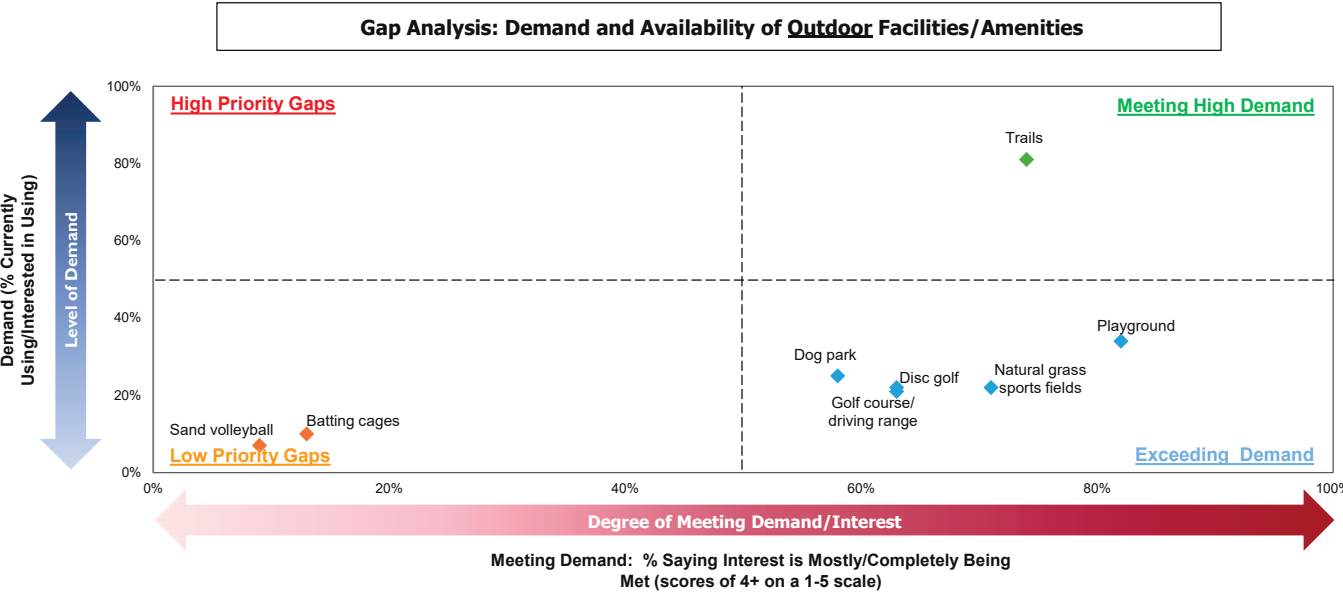
Additional facilities tested in the survey—including aerobics or dance studios, batting cages, golf simulators, indoor turf, and theater space—ranked lower in overall demand. Despite the lower level of interest, the limited availability of these amenities means that the households seeking these options currently have few or no opportunities to access them within the community.



4. Need for Outdoor Features: Based on the needs assessment, several outdoor features emerged as being in high demand among DeKalb Park District households. Walking and biking trails are by far the most desired outdoor feature, with more than four-fifths of respondents (81 percent) expressing a need or interest. Playgrounds represent the next highest level of demand, cited by approximately one-third of residents.

Other outdoor features identified by a notable share of households include dog parks, outdoor grass sports fields, a disc golf course, and a driving range or golf course. Overall, these outdoor amenities are considered readily available and are meeting the needs of most households that express interest in each feature.

Outdoor features that exhibit unmet needs are limited to those with the lowest overall demand. These include outdoor batting cages and sand volleyball courts, where interest exists among a relatively small percentage of households and current availability does not fully meet those needs.

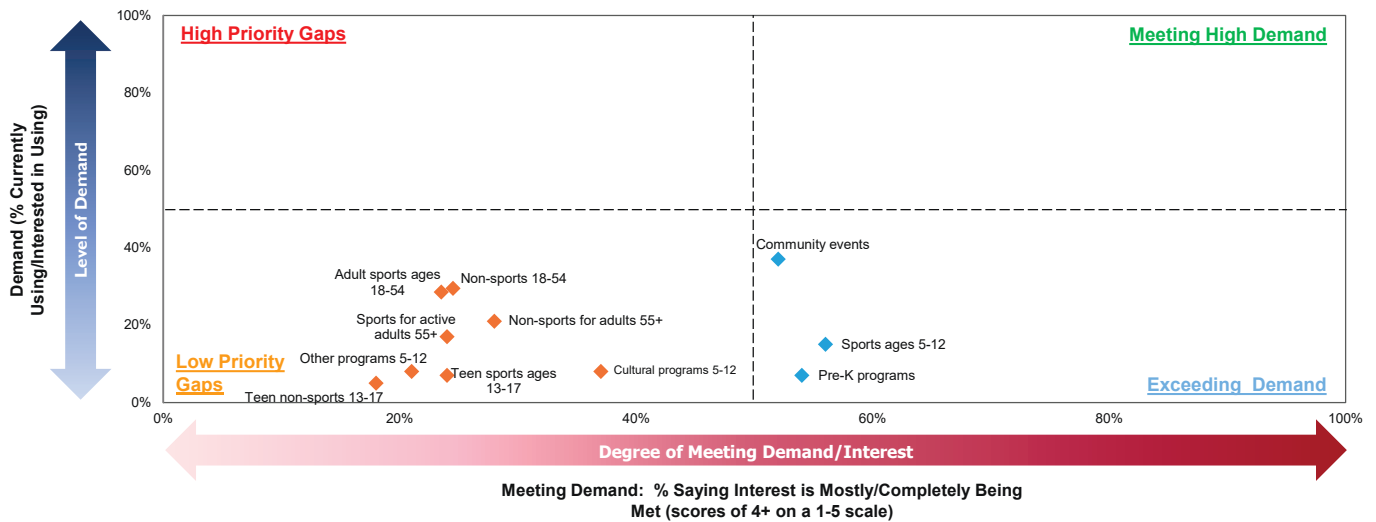


5. Programs Participation and Satisfaction: Approximately two out of five households (42 percent) reported that a household member participated in a DeKalb Park District program or attended a District-sponsored event during the past year. Among those who participated, satisfaction levels are strong, with more than four-fifths of respondents (81 percent) indicating they were at least somewhat satisfied. This includes nearly one-third of participants (32 percent) who reported being completely satisfied. Only a small percentage of participants (12 percent) indicated dissatisfaction.

Findings from the needs assessment indicate that demand for programs and events is highest for community-wide events and for programs serving adults ages 18 to 54, including both sports and non-sport activities at similar levels of interest. Demand is also notable for non-sport program options for older adults ages 55 and older.

Households expressing interest in community-wide events, as well as youth programming—particularly for children under the age of 13—generally feel that these needs are currently being met. In contrast, residents identified adult programming as a key area for improvement. Respondents indicated that the District’s highest program priority should be expanding sports opportunities for adults ages 18 to 54, which currently represent a gap in offerings, followed by additional non-sport programming options for this same age group.

Gap Analysis: Demand and Availability of Age-Based Program Options



6. Sources of District Information: When seeking information about DeKalb Park District programs, events, and facilities, nearly two-thirds of households reported using the District’s website as a primary information source. In addition, just over half of respondents (51 percent) indicated they reference the printed seasonal program guide. Use of the printed guide is approximately three times higher than use of the digital program guide, which is referenced by 17 percent of households.

Other District-managed communication channels are used by a smaller share of households. These include signage at DeKalb Park District facilities (19 percent) and the District’s social media posts (18 percent).

Residents also rely on several non-District sources for information about Park District offerings. The most frequently cited non-District source is word of mouth from friends and neighbors (26 percent), followed by the “What’s Happening in DeKalb” social media page (21 percent) and the DeKalb Public Library (18 percent).

Open Survey Key Findings

A copy of the statistically valid survey (SVS) was also made publicly available online in the winter of 2025-2026. This open survey used the same instrument as the statistically valid copy, but did not restrict responses, allowing anybody to participate. The open survey was advertised on the Park District website and via social media and received 49 responses.

The majority of open survey responses were from current Park District users, especially those with children. Open survey respondents were also more likely to be permanent year-round residents. The open survey responses were also not representative of the District’s ethnic make-up with a greater percent of white and non-hispanic participants.

Compared to the SVS results, the open survey responses differed for outdoor amenities. Respondents placed a higher priority on sports including indoor turf fields and batting cages and a lower priority on trails and a walking track. However, the open survey responses were consistent with the SVS responses for indoor priorities with both groups rating their highest priorities as a fitness center and indoor track. Responses to other topics, including overall opinion of the Park District and opinion of specific amenity types and maintenance, and how they seek information about the District were similar. The exception was with quality of staff in which the open survey responses were less satisfied.



Staff and Board Interviews

The following summary is an overview of the informal conversations held between individual participants from the DeKalb Park District Board of Commissioners and Park District Staff Department Heads and the consultant team.

Format

The staff and board interviews were structured as facilitated discussions between individual participants and the consultant team, with the exception of one interview that included two participants. Eight in-person interviews were conducted on August 6th and 7th, 2025, and one online conference call interview was conducted on August 22nd, 2025. The conversation was structured around the overarching question, “What should the DeKalb Park District Focus on Over the Next 5-10 Years?” The following list of questions was used to lead the discussion, where participants were encouraged to consider their role within the Park District, what they hear from the community, and their professional opinions. Based on individual conversation progressions, questions 1 through 7 may not have been asked in the same order depending on time and prior conversation topics. Each interview ended with discussions of questions 8 through 10.

1. What is your history in the community and position/role with the Park District? How do you interact with the Park District locations, amenities, and services as a community member and an employee?
2. How does time affect staff and user experiences?
3. Who are your community members and user groups?
4. Where are opportunities or needs for improvements to the existing parks and open space, facilities, and programs?
5. Are any new parks, amenities, facilities, and/or programs needed?
6. What park and/or facility improvements are needed to improve and/or expand programs and recreational offerings?
7. What changes or resources are needed to improve Park District operations?
8. As a representative of the Park District and based on your day-to-day experience, what do you think cannot be ignored or deferred?

9. What should the vision for the Park District be for the next 5 years?
10. Are there any other comments you would like to share about the DeKalb Park District, or the community in general?

The following responses are not direct quotations, but rather a summarized interpretation of the participants' conversations. Items discussed are organized by the general theme of the asked question and responses.

Results

1. **History, Roles, and Experiences:** Most participants have lived in DeKalb for years or decades, and often use park services with their family. Three commissioners are newly elected, motivated by community involvement and past controversies. Several staff are relatively new (under 5 years), though many bring experience from other districts. Appreciation was expressed for recent improvements: pool redevelopment, golf course upgrades, and special events. Noted challenges include staff turnover, past controversial policies, and outdated facilities from the 1990s.
2. **Time and User Experience:** Peak demand is 5-9 pm and Saturday mornings/afternoons, with senior and early childhood programs being exceptions as these often thrive during the day. Off hour programming was noted to be difficult for staff to provide due to availability of seasonal and part-time staff to supplement full-time employees working during business hours. Seasonal challenges include extreme summer heat, limited winter use, and lack of indoor alternatives. Building comfort issues like no AC and poor ventilation at gyms hinder the use of certain facilities during specific seasons. Off-season additions like indoor golf were suggested.
3. **Community Members & User Groups:** Parks/ events generally represent the community, but non-white, Hispanic, low-income families, and teens are underrepresented or are not fully integrated. Pools and major events like 4th of July and Kite Fest serve as 'melting pots' for all demographics. There is a significant low-income population within the community. Barriers to participation include transportation, awareness, pricing inconsistencies, and safety/security concerns. Partnerships exist but sometimes limit flexibility, like schools and affiliates. Suggested partners include schools, NIU, Chamber, and philanthropic organizations. Primary competitors are NW Medicine facility, YMCA, private gyms, and the library.
4. **Existing Parks, Facilities, and Programs - Needs/ Improvements:** Haish Gymnasium is divisive, where some value its character and others suggest removal due to its age and condition. Sports & Recreation Center is popular but is nearing its capacity, causing suggestions for expansion and renovation. Golf was praised for outdoor improvements, but facilities like the clubhouses, maintenance buildings, and offices need updates. Some suggestions for parks focused on upgrades including soccer field drainage and slopes, parking, shelters, and aesthetics. Program suggestions included childcare, STEM, cultural arts, and more parent-child options.
5. **New Parks, Amenities, Facilities, Programs:** New park suggestions included canoe/kayak launches, futsal/ice court, multi-season shelter, and an inclusive park. Regional amenities and recreation tourism was proposed, including mini-golf, ice rink, sports complex, entertainment centers, concessions, and disc golf expansion to 18 holes. It was also suggested that revenue generation should focus on rental spaces and unique features not offered by private providers.
6. **Facility Improvements to Support Programs:** Interest in a new indoor facility was expressed, possibly including indoor turf, an elevated track, gyms, studios, a modern fitness center, and indoor pool. It was also noted additional office space would be needed to allow staff growth. There is, however, a lack of large parcels limiting the ability for major development. Indoor expansion is seen as key to supporting winter use and year-round programs. Awareness and access limitations are tied to facility quality, location, and outdated offerings.
7. **Operations Improvements:** Stronger staff and community buy-in is needed to overcome past mistrust. Misinformation and opposition to change is expected to continue to present challenges. Funding is seen as the most pressing need, affecting staffing, facilities, and operations. There is an overall desire for more staff (full-time, part-time, and seasonal) to sustain and expand services. Participants emphasized that quality of offerings is important and some expressed an opinion that it is better to do fewer things well than many things poorly.
8. **Immediate Needs/Cannot be Deferred:** Haish Gymnasium was noted due to its age, maintenance needed, safety, and location. Pool redevelopment is in-progress but concerns about cost and operational sustainability remain.

9. **Five-Year Vision:**

- Update and add new facility spaces considering:
 - Indoor pool
 - Expanding the Sports & Recreation Center
 - How to maximize winter use
 - How to secure funding and availability through location, pricing, and welcoming design
- Remove Haish Gymnasium
- Expand path network
- Provide consistent messaging,
- Provide unique/meaningful offerings to bring people into DeKalb
- Maintain and build upon the success of golf
- Maintain what already is available
- Focus on re-building pool use
- Embrace technology and trends

10. Other Comments: The community is divided on some issues, like pro-park vs. anti-park sentiment as well as varied program timing preferences. DeKalb is described as unique: part small-town, part industrial, with historical assets unlike other suburbs. The Park District is seen as needing a clearer mission and a stronger strategic vision. The large number of parks offered presents challenges, including underutilization of some parks, lack of meaningful development, and uneven distribution. Opportunities exist due to non-landlocked status and unmet market demand for certain activities.







Staff Workshop

The following summary is an overview of the workshop completed by the DeKalb Park District staff members.

Format

Members of the DeKalb Park District staff were invited to attend an in-person meeting where staff were then separated into three groups: park staff, golf staff, and recreation staff. In total, 13 Park District staff members participated in the staff workshop held at DeKalb's Ellwood House Visitor's Center across all three groups on August 20th, 2025.

Following introductions, staff members were asked to brainstorm ideas and suggestions for what the DeKalb Park District should focus on and improve in the next five to ten years. Due to participant turnout, workshop structure varied between Group 1 (park staff) and Groups 2 & 3 (golf and recreation staff).

Group 1 (Parks)

Group 1 included eight participants representing park staff. Participants were experienced District employees who have worked with the District for an extended period and provided operational and institutional

perspective. The format allowed for an interactive workshop where participants were asked to write down five items on Post-it notes that they felt should be the Park District's focus. Staff were then asked to select the three most important items. The planning team organized and prioritized responses into categories with direction from participants. Participants then discussed the categories and ideas, adding key categories that had not yet been represented. The following list is a record of their responses and is not presented in priority order.

1. *Improve communication*

- ◇ Better communication with staff

2. *Tools and equipment*

- ◇ Add and improve equipment and vehicle inventory
- ◇ More up-to-date equipment for maintenance

3. More full-time staff

- ◇ Hire more full-time maintenance help
Note: Open FTE positions at the time of the workshop were filled by time of adoption

4. New parks and facilities

- ◇ Softball and baseball complex
- ◇ Hiking and biking trails
- ◇ Driving range at River Heights, consider acquisition of farmland in the future
- ◇ Teen programs and amenities

5. Maintain existing infrastructure

- ◇ Make more useful/programmable
- ◇ Maintain existing parks and amenities
- ◇ Repair roof at Sports & Recreation Complex
- ◇ Upgrade and repair existing facilities
- ◇ Master Plan Hopkins Park
- ◇ Beautify curb appeal at all parks
- ◇ Review underserved area investments

6. Understand and value talent

- ◇ More staff input on projects
- ◇ Value employees more
- ◇ Open conversations
- ◇ Consider history and community connection

After organizing the responses, participants were given two stickers to vote on the items most important to them. Participants could vote on a category (blue) or an individual item (green).

Additional discussion of the priorities on the chart occurred after voting.

1. Communication

- ◇ Feels neighborhoods needs, wants, and constraints should be better considered
- ◇ No staff input on the pool improvements

2. Education

- ◇ District users are not aware of the Forest Preserves available
- ◇ More education, more diversity, and more activities for all are needed

3. Park Improvements

- ◇ Consider more rentable shelters
- ◇ Improve parks beyond playgrounds and grass areas for more types of activity
- ◇ Infrastructure improvements to buildings, turf areas, and shelters
- ◇ More river access with kayaks/boating, consider Lions Park
- ◇ Soccer field complex upgrade

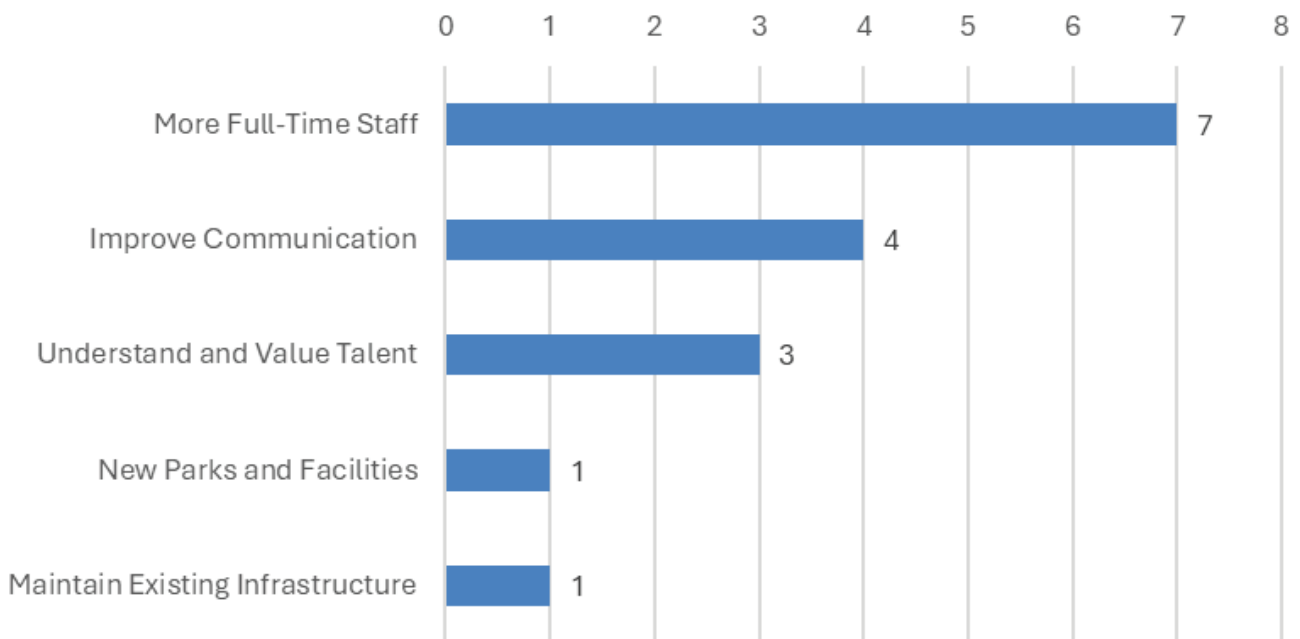
4. New parks and facilities

- ◇ Understand land cash ordinance and where money goes when new business and industries come to town
- ◇ Fitness center at SRC

5. Safety

- ◇ More police patrolling at Welsh Park
- ◇ More mandatory safety training for staff

Staff Workshop Prioritization



Group 2 (Golf)

Group 2 included two participants and the workshop was a focused discussion where participants were asked to brainstorm ideas and suggestions verbally, which the planning team took notes on, categorized, and summarized. The following list is a summary of their responses.

1. Clubhouse needs

- ◇ A larger clubhouse with restaurant or sit-down food could attract more people
 - TVs and dining would get people to stay longer and allow the clubhouse to operate year-round.
 - Current clubhouse hosts weddings. Consider a separate space in a larger clubhouse that would be away from the pro-shop and golf crowd.
 - Consider golf simulators for year-round use.
- ◇ Parking
- ◇ Parking seems too far from clubhouse and flow is not ideal
 - Maintenance shop appears as the main focus when visitors pull-in
 - Parking size is typically adequate

2. Maintenance and equipment

- ◇ Need for larger shop for equipment
- ◇ Would like to have maintenance shop further from public space and clubhouse
- ◇ Consider more environmentally friendly mowers and maintenance equipment
- ◇ Consider GPS integration in equipment
- ◇ Need more equipment in general for maintenance

3. River Heights Improvements

- ◇ Consider adding driving range at River Heights
- ◇ Consider acquiring nearby farmland
- ◇ Back 9 feels cramped, with a couple of safety issues with stray balls
- ◇ Renovating course could attract more people
- ◇ Consider a snack half-way house

4. Staff Improvements

- ◇ Need additional full-time maintenance staff member
- ◇ Need additional full-time clubhouse staff member
- ◇ Golf team does not have enough access to the on staff mechanic as they are shared between parks and golf
- ◇ Need more offices for full-time employees
- ◇ Communication is a challenge with how spread out the District is

5. Golf Programming

- ◇ Consider additional programs and involvement for younger and junior golfers
- ◇ Trail pass and rates are potentially low
- ◇ Consider more tournaments and promoted events
- ◇ Events need more advertising
- ◇ Consider nature walks and programs at course
- ◇ Consider Audubon certification

6. Park Improvements

- ◇ Need larger fitness center and more programming
- ◇ Shelters at parks could use updating
- ◇ Update curb appeal at parks
- ◇ More splash pads
- ◇ Consider indoor ice if there is a desire from the public

7. Technology Improvements

- ◇ In-house IT staff are needed.
- ◇ Website could be more user friendly

Group 3 (Recreation)

Group 3 included three participants and the workshop was a focused discussion where participants were asked to brainstorm ideas and suggestions verbally, which the planning team took notes on, categorized, and summarized. Ideas that were repeated by multiple participants have the number of repetitions adjacent to the statement. The following list is a summary of their responses.

1. Sports & Recreation Complex

- ◇ Fix roof leak and HVAC at Sports & Recreation Complex (2)
- ◇ Need expanded and appropriate programmable space (3)
 - Closet space
 - Multipurpose room
 - Art class
 - Dance studio
 - Fitness studio
 - Fitness exercise room
- Need additional basketball space
- Drop in games
- Rentals
- Organized basketball groups
- Consider how to transition smoother into the future with improvements as to not repeat issues of space and maintenance with Haish Gym and the Sports & Recreation Center

2. Haish Gymnasium

- ◇ Hub for lower income residents
- ◇ All storage for programs is at Haish, which is challenging for programs at the Sports & Recreation Center

- ◇ Additional and updated spaces are needed
- ◇ Would like to take care of what they have facility wise, before building new
- ◇ Programs face time constraints due to gym scheduling

3. Communication

- ◇ Interdepartmental communication needs improvement
- ◇ More connections between departments
- ◇ Would like a prolific mission statement about what the District goals are with the community to help staff focus efforts
- ◇ Needs consistent leadership, harder to make progress with frequent turnover
- ◇ Work to build trust between staff at all levels
- ◇ Park District makes decisions without consulting all parties involved, or too hasty for staff to keep up with.

4. Summer Camp Program

- ◇ School district allows use of facility for summer camp
 - Facility use is not always consistent depending on school district's needs.
 - Staff and students use Hopkins Park shelter during the end of summer camp to accommodate the school district's needs which is difficult for parents and students to move and has weather constraints.
- ◇ Summer camp program is lower priced compared to other districts and 11 weeks long, which is an advantage.
- ◇ A large multi-purpose space would be helpful to host camp.

5. Community Reach

- ◇ Would like to see DeKalb Park District incorporate the smaller surrounding towns more.

6. New Amenities

- ◇ Indoor play spaces for 2-5 age groups
- ◇ Programmed preschool space
- ◇ Manpower and space for after school programs

7. Underserved constraints

- ◇ Difficulty offering paid programs for economically distressed areas of the District.
- ◇ Difficulty providing reliable transportation to economically distressed areas.
- ◇ Marketing programs to the lower income community can be challenging
 - It was suggested that instructors will work for free as mitigation for costs
 - Good instructors for higher quality programming will need to be paid, but would like to find a way

to mitigate costs so that programs are accessible for all incomes

- ◇ Would like to investigate grants for programs and scholarship programs as a long-term solution

8. Exterior Programs

- ◇ Park District could make more money with programmed games and lighting on soccer fields.
- ◇ Consider consolidation of sports fields (2)
- ◇ Baseball and softball are declining in popularity.
 - Adult leagues want alcohol and flexible play times
 - Park District has limited capacity to serve alcohol
 - There is more ball space available than usage.



2025 DeKalb Kite Fest

The following summary is an overview of the pop-up event coordinated by the planning team at the 2025 DeKalb Kite Fest hosted by the DeKalb Park District.

Format

As part of the DeKalb Park District's ongoing public engagement efforts, the planning team attended a community pop-up event at the 2025 DeKalb Kite Fest held at the Sports & Recreation Center / DeKalb Kiwanis Park on Sunday, September 7th from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The event, which drew an estimated 2,000 visitors, provided an opportunity for event visitors to share feedback and ideas to help guide the District's planning priorities. Representatives from the planning team staffed an informational and interactive booth from 12:00 to 2:00 PM, where participants could engage in various input-driven activities and open-ended conversations to share their thoughts.

Community input was collected through three displayed whiteboard prompts, multiple poll boards, and comment cards focusing on future priorities for parks, facilities, programs, and special events. The following is a summary of each available activity and the responses received.

Whiteboard Comments

Three whiteboards with individual prompts were displayed within the pop-up booth at the event. Participants were invited to share their input by writing comments directly on the boards, providing ideas and feedback to help guide the District's planning efforts. One of the following prompts was printed on the top of each board, although participants did not always match their response to the prompt on the board.

1. What should the agency focus on over the next five years, specific to programs and special events?
2. What should the agency focus on over the next five years, specific to facilities?
3. What should the agency focus on over the next five years, specific to parks?

The planning team also added comments heard through conversations where visitors did not participate directly with provided activities.

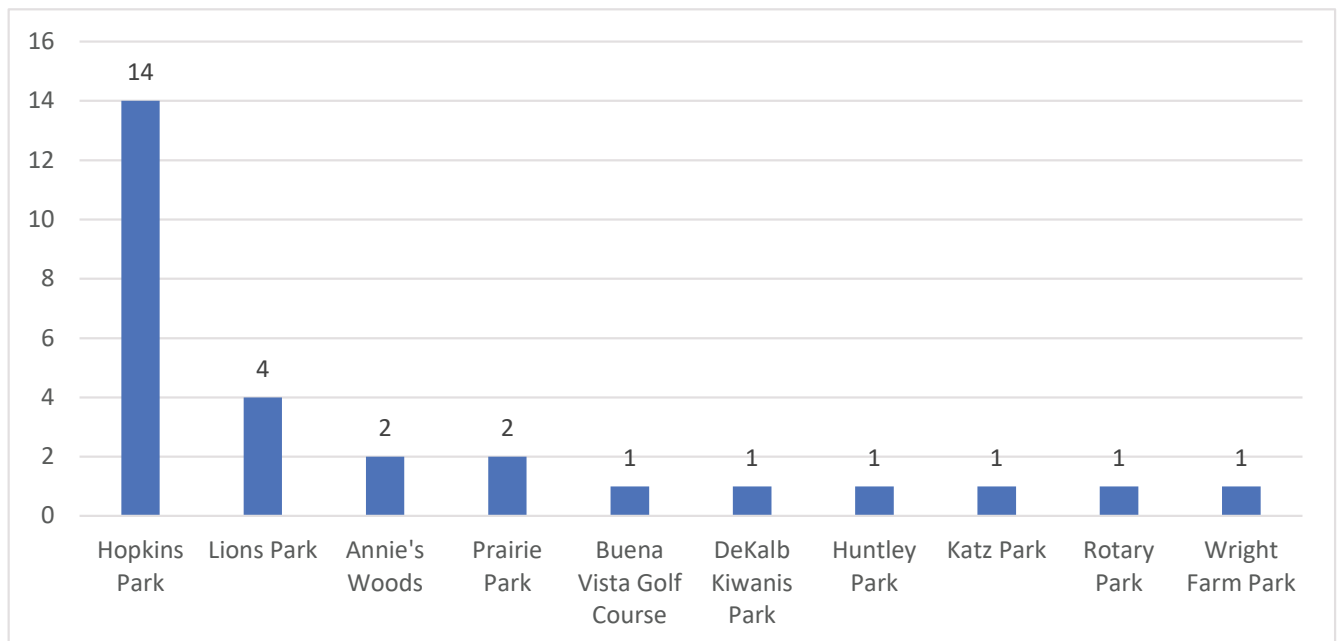
The list of comments received on the boards are included as written. If a comment was written by multiple participants, or participants indicated support of a comment via notes or a symbol, such as a star or arrow, the number of iterations is included in parentheses. Writing/marks that did not pertain to the question, such as drawings, scribbles, or people writing their name are omitted.

1. Loved Kite Fest (3)
2. Saw Kite Fest from highway & stopped
3. Move improved it (Kite Fest) [Compared to previous fest location]
4. Entertainment
5. Autism programs (2) that accept Medicaid
6. Special needs program
7. Affordable gymnastics for little kids
8. Toddler/kids gym time at the Sports & Recreation Center
9. Gym with childcare
10. More pop-up events with food and community – like bike tours with history or foraging classes/teach how-to classes
11. Like Lions & Mason (Parks) – Separate big and little areas
12. Lions Park, not as many age-friendly amenities
13. Play areas that appeal to wide age groups – Toddlers three, adult exercise (2)
14. Like padded surface at Hopkins – no wood chips in car
15. Parks look nice (3)
16. Like the number of parks
17. Kids love watching the trains at Huntley Park
18. Like dog park at Katz Park
19. Safer dog parks
20. Some fenced parks
21. Finish the pool (4)
22. Indoor batting cages (2)
23. More indoor soccer fields
24. MTB trails
25. Headquarters
26. Paths put parks in motion
27. Walking and bike path (2)
28. Connecting the South-DeKalb bike/walking paths through to North DeKalb and maybe all the way through to Sycamore and the Great Western Trail
29. Making sure getting to park is easy for crossing streets
30. Areas that support native plants and habitat
31. Clean out bluebird houses and bat houses regularly to encourage nesting
32. Cooperation
33. Adequate trash containers
34. Housing

Polls

Five interactive poll boards allowed participants to share feedback using sticky dots.

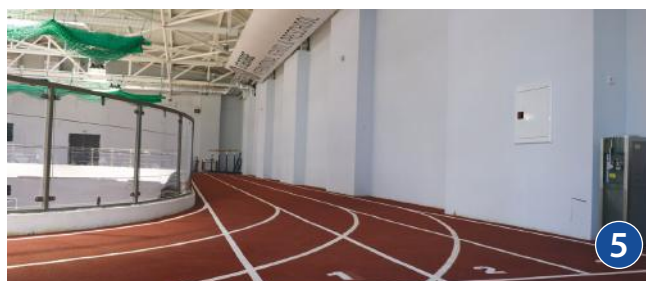
1. **Favorite Park:** This board featured a map of DeKalb where participants were asked to place one dot on their favorite park. Votes were quantified and displayed through the below bar chart.



2. Indoor Amenities: This board prompted participants to place a dot on the indoor amenity interest(s) they would want to see in the Park District. 10 labelled images were shown: aerobics/dance studio, basketball/volleyball courts, batting cages, fitness facility, golf simulator, indoor turf for field sports and baseball/softball fields, pickleball courts, running/walking track, space for visual arts programs/studios, and theater programs/rehearsal space. The number of dots placed on each option is recorded on the bottom right of each graphic shown below.



space for visual arts programs/studios



running/walking track



aerobics/dance studio



basketball/volleyball courts



batting cages



fitness facility



theater program/rehearsal space



indoor turf for field sports and baseball/softball fields



golf simulator



pickleball courts

3. Outdoor Amenities: This board prompted participants to place a dot on the outdoor amenity interest(s) they would want to see in the Park District. 8 labelled images were shown: batting cages, disc golf course, dog park, golf course and driving range, outdoor natural grass athletics/sports fields, playground, sand volleyball courts, and walking and biking trails. The number of dots placed on each option is recorded on the bottom right of each graphic shown below.



walking and biking trails



batting cages



playground



dog park



disc golf course



outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields



sand volleyball courts



golf course and driving range

4. Programs & Activities: This board prompted participants to place a dot on their top programs and activities interest(s) they would want to see in the Park District. 15 labelled images were shown: indoor, preschool/early childhood programs (under age 5), indoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12, outdoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12, indoor, youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12, indoor, other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12, indoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17, outdoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17, indoor, teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17, indoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54, outdoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54, indoor, adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54, indoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+, outdoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+, indoor, non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+, and community events for all ages. The number of dots placed on each option is recorded on the bottom right of each graphic shown below.



community events for all ages



indoor, preschool/early childhood programs (under age 5)



indoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12



indoor, other programs (learning, social, etc.) ages 5-12



indoor, youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12



indoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54



indoor, adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54



indoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17



outdoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12



outdoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17



indoor, teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17



outdoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54



indoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+



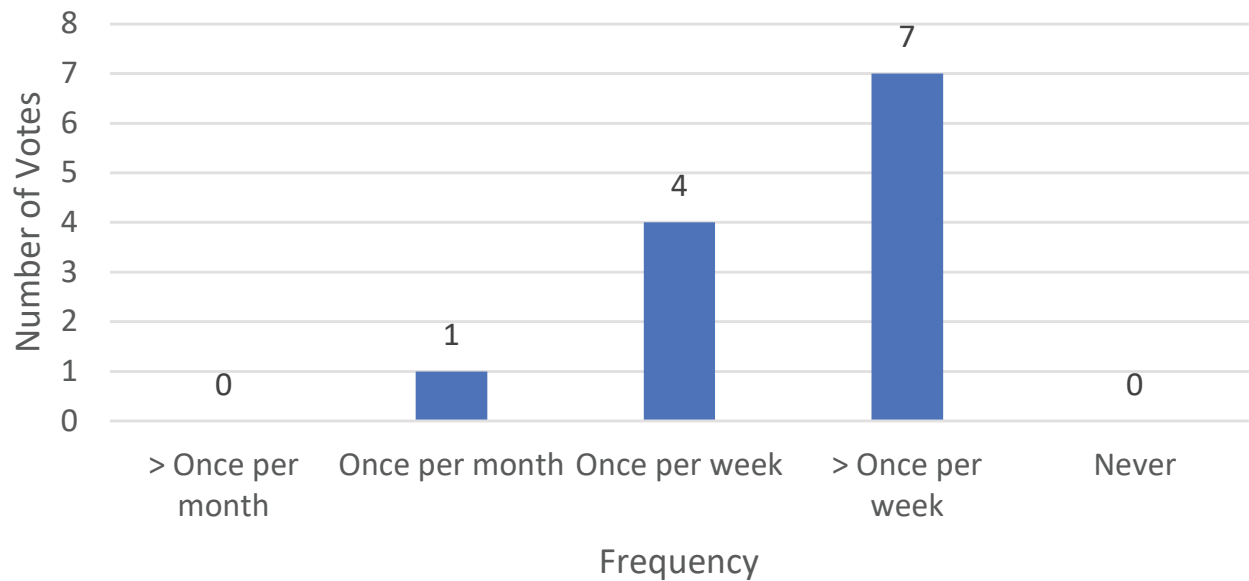
outdoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+



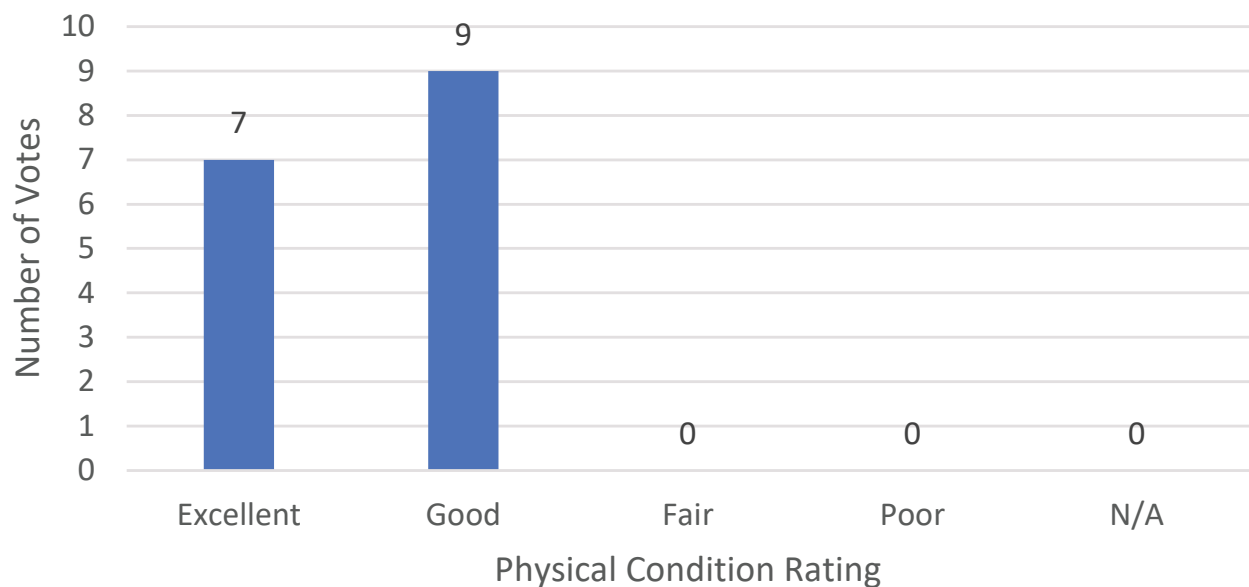
indoor, non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+

5. Participation and Satisfaction: This board presented four multiple-choice questions, prompting participants to use one dot per question. Votes were quantified and displayed through the bar charts representing each question below.

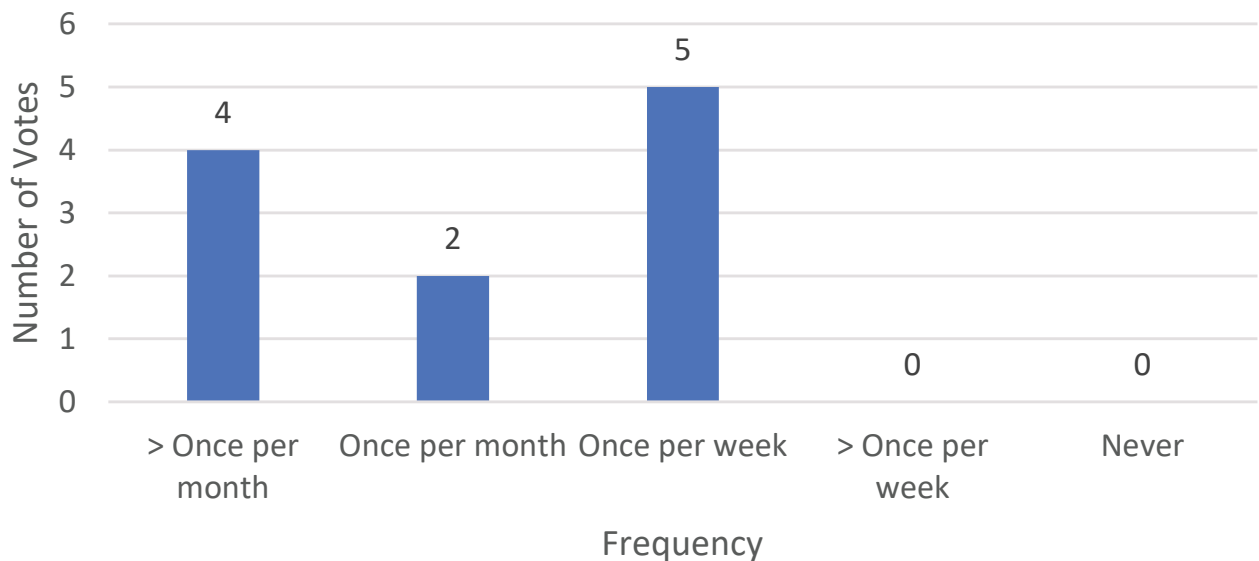
How often have you or members of your household visited Park District parks and/or recreational facilities in the past 12 months?



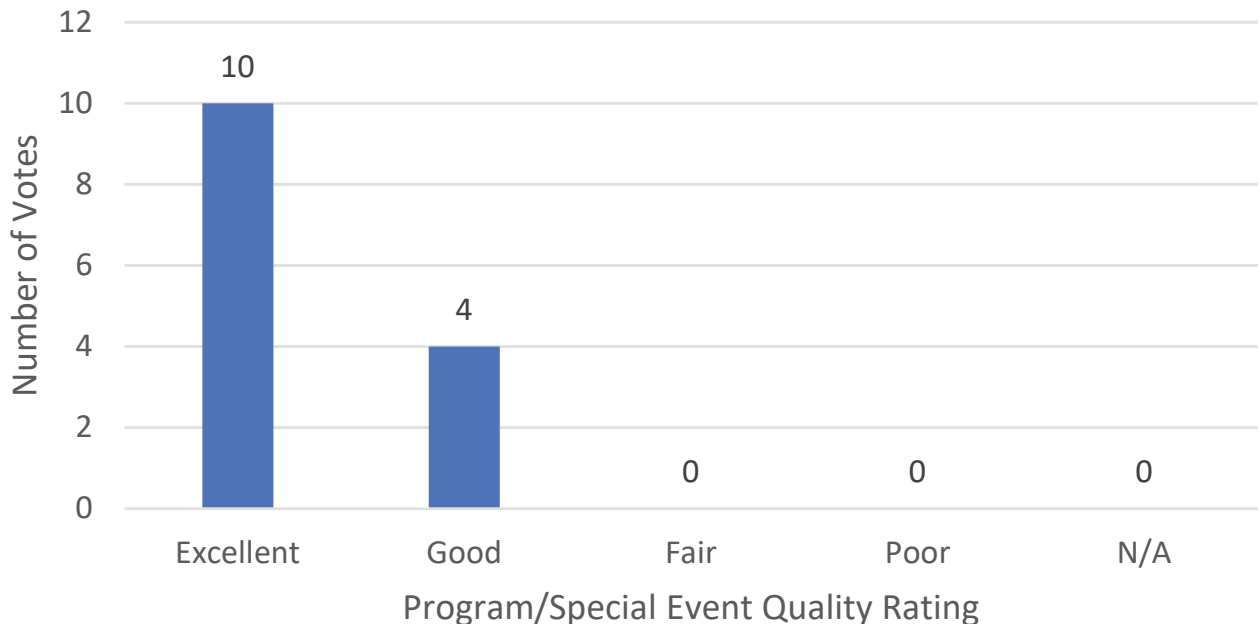
Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of the Park District parks and recreation facilities? (see map)



How often have you or members of your household participated in Park District programs and/or special events in the past 12 months?



Overall, how would you rate the quality of the Park District programs and/or special events?



Comment Cards

Participants and booth visitors were also invited to share feedback using comment cards. These cards provided an opportunity for participants to privately write down any thoughts or ideas they had about the Park District. The cards specifically read: "Please provide any additional comments regarding what the DeKalb Park District should focus on over the next 5–10 years that you would like to share with us!"

The planning team also recorded comments heard in conversations where visitors did not complete a card directly.

Responses are recorded below directly as written or as noted by the planning team during open discussion.

- ◇ Blue bird and bat houses need to be cleaned
- ◇ All gender bathroom
- ◇ I would say to transition all parks from wood chips to the soft foam flooring
- ◇ Prairie restore
- ◇ Birds and elevation view
- ◇ Liked seeing animals – many at Hopkins
- ◇ Shipman Park needs improvements – Other park improvements took awhile
- ◇ Participant rides their bike a lot
- ◇ Like Overlook but hot
- ◇ Love park







Community Meeting

The following is a summary of the community meeting hosted by the DeKalb Park District.

Format

The DeKalb Park District hosted a community meeting at the Terrace Room Community Center as part of their public engagement efforts. The meeting was held on Thursday, September 25th, from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Representatives from the planning team staffed an informational session to engage attendees and gather community input. The community meeting had six total participants. During the event, participants were able to provide feedback through a variety of activities but were not required to complete every item. An open discussion was also held where participants were able to voice their thoughts. The following is a summary of each available activity and the responses received.

Whiteboard Comments

Three whiteboards with individual prompts were displayed at the event. Participants were invited to share their input by writing comments directly on the boards, providing ideas and feedback to help guide the District's planning efforts. One of the following prompts were printed on the top of each board, although participants did not always match their response to the prompt on the board.

1. What should the agency focus on over the next five years, specific to programs and special events?
2. What should the agency focus on over the next five years, specific to facilities?
3. What should the agency focus on over the next five years, specific to parks?

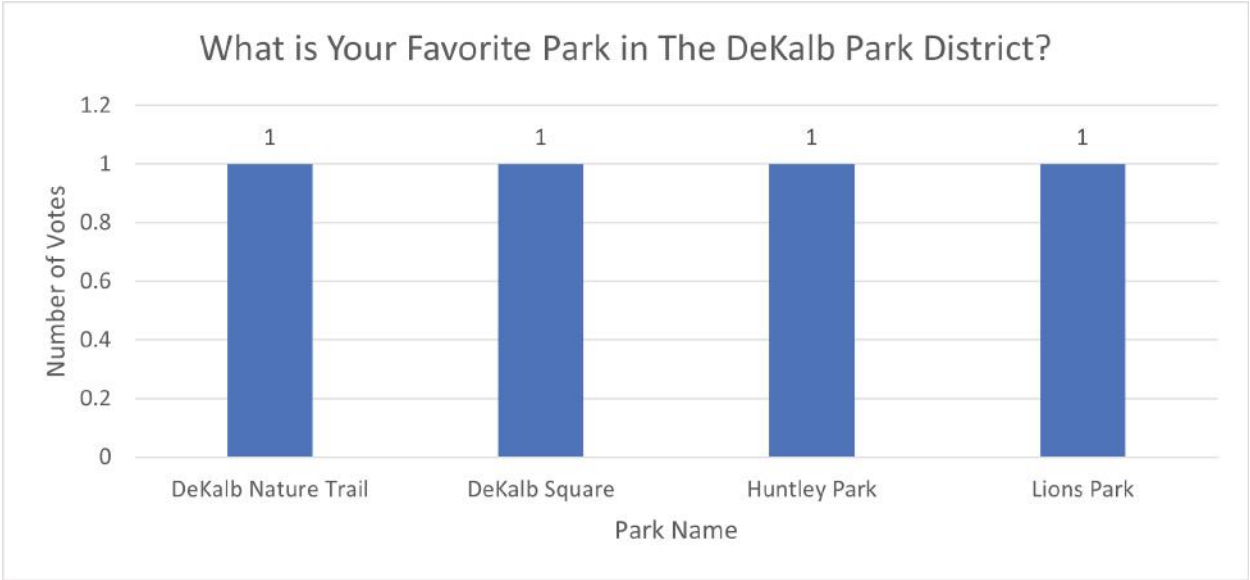
The list of comments received on the boards are included as written. If a comment was written by multiple participants, or participants indicated support of a comment via notes or a symbol, such as a star or arrow, the number of iterations is included in parentheses. Writing/marks that did not pertain to the question, such as drawings, scribbles, or people writing their name are omitted.

- 1. Craft cultural learning experiences for seniors
- 2. Bus stop access to parks (collaboration)
- 3. Seniors
- 4. Disabled
- 5. Sustainability

Polls

Five interactive poll boards allowed participants to share feedback using sticky dots.

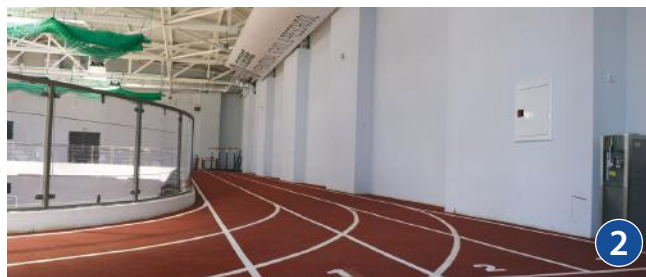
1. **Favorite Park:** This board featured a map of DeKalb where participants were asked to place one dot on their favorite park. Votes were quantified and displayed through the below bar chart.



2. Indoor Amenities: This board prompted participants to place a dot on the indoor amenity interest(s) they would want to see in the Park District. 10 labelled images were shown: aerobics/dance studio, basketball/volleyball courts, batting cages, fitness facility, golf simulator, indoor turf for field sports and baseball/softball fields, pickleball courts, running/walking track, space for visual arts programs/studios, and theater programs/rehearsal space. The number of dots placed on each option is recorded on the bottom right of each graphic below.



pickleball courts



running/walking track



space for visual arts programs/studios



theater program/rehearsal space



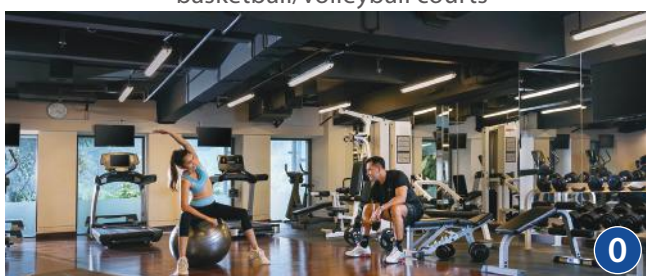
aerobics/dance studio



basketball/volleyball courts



batting cages



fitness facility



golf simulator



indoor turf for field sports and baseball/softball fields

3. Outdoor Amenities: This board prompted participants to place a dot on the outdoor amenity interest(s) they would want to see in the Park District. 8 labelled images were shown: batting cages, disc golf course, dog park, golf course and driving range, outdoor natural grass athletics/sports fields, playground, sand volleyball courts, and walking and biking trails. The number of dots placed on each option is recorded on the bottom right of each graphic below.



walking and biking trails

6



dog park

1



playground

1



sand volleyball courts

1



disc golf course

0



outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields

0



batting cages

0



golf course and driving range

0

4. Programs & Activities: This board prompted participants to place a dot on the programs and activities interest(s) they would want to see in the Park District. 15 labelled images were shown: indoor, preschool/early childhood programs (under age 5), indoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12, outdoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12, indoor, youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12, indoor, other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12, indoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17, outdoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17, indoor, teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17, indoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54, outdoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54, indoor, adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54, indoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+, outdoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+, indoor, non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+, and community events for all ages. The number of dots placed on each option is recorded on the bottom right of each graphic shown below.



community events for all ages



indoor, preschool/early childhood programs (under age 5)



indoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12



indoor, other programs (learning, social, etc.) ages 5-12



indoor, youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12



indoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54



indoor, adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54



indoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17



indoor, non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+



indoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+



outdoor, teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17



outdoor, youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12



indoor, teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17



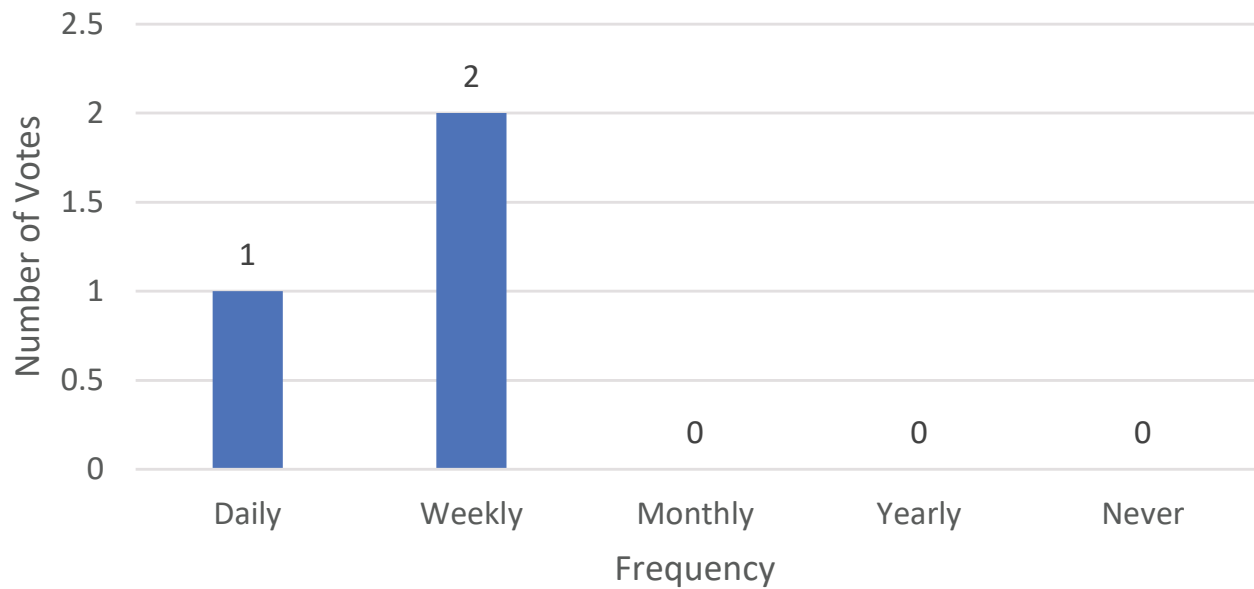
outdoor, adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54



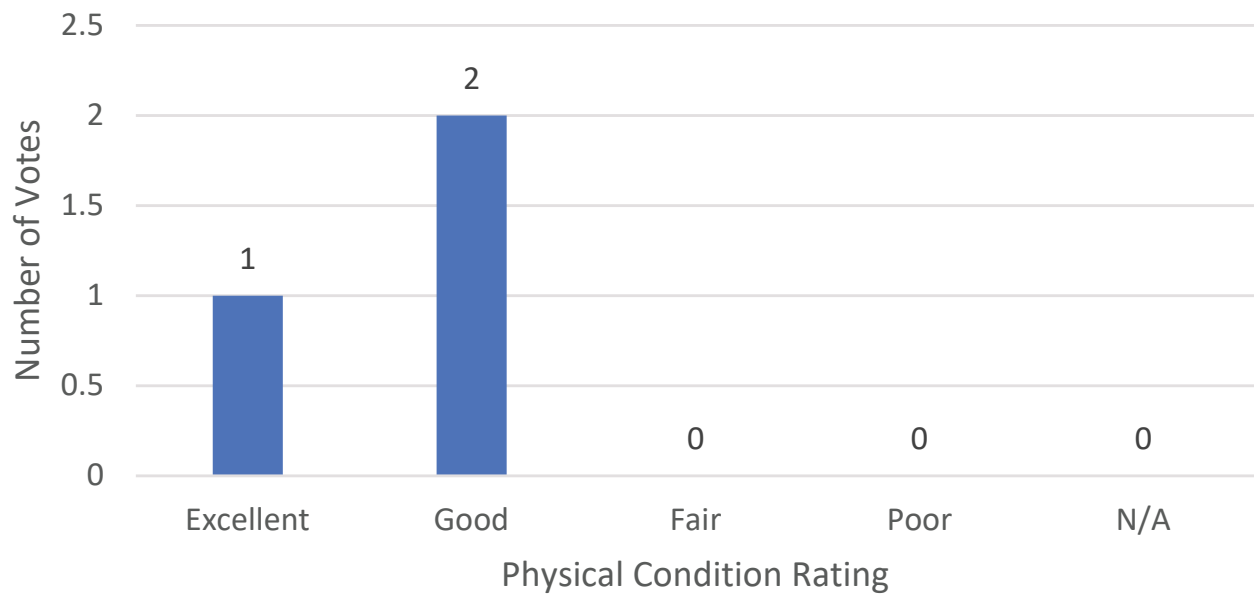
outdoor, sports/athletics for adults ages 55+

5. Participation and Satisfaction: This board presented four multiple-choice questions, prompting participants to use one dot per question. Votes were quantified and displayed through the bar charts representing each question below.

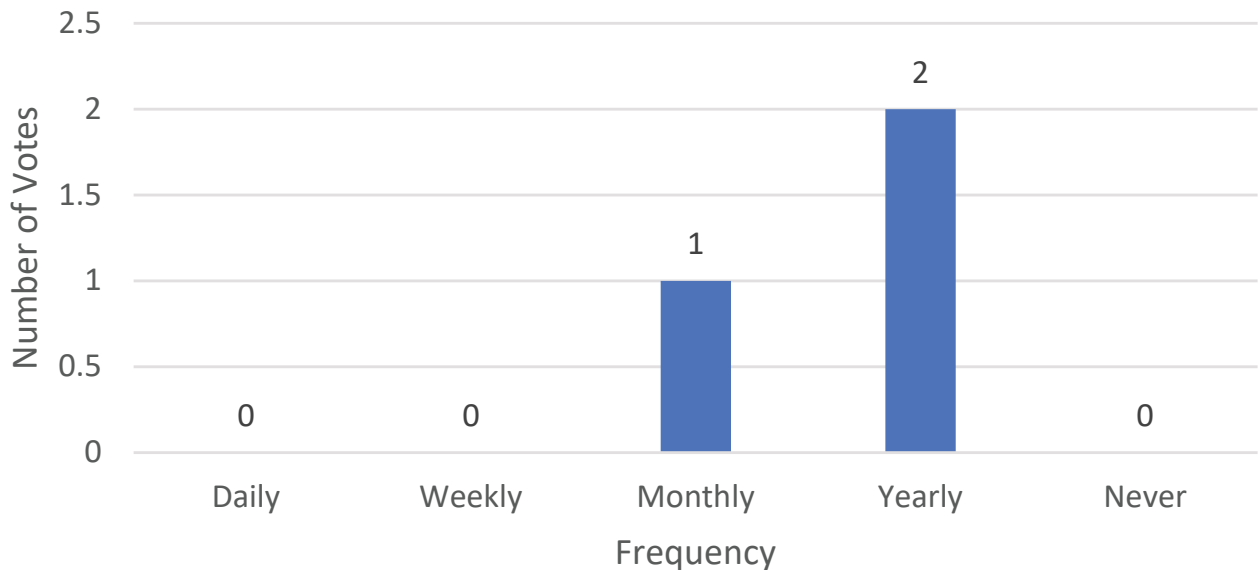
How often have you or members of your household visited Park District parks and/or recreational facilities in the past 12 months?



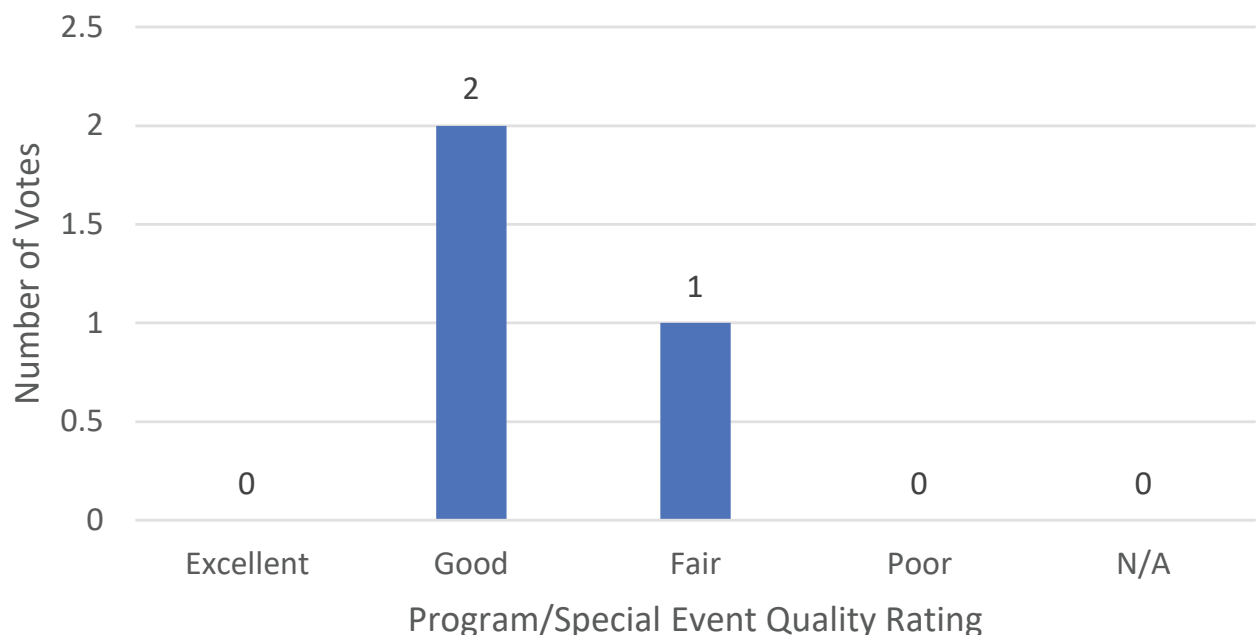
Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of the Park District parks and recreation facilities? (see map)



How often have you or members of your household participated in Park District programs and/or special events in the past 12 months?



Overall, how would you rate the quality of the Park District programs and/or special events?



Comment Cards

Participants were also invited to share feedback using comment cards. These cards provided an opportunity for participants to privately write down any thoughts or ideas they had about the Park District. The cards specifically read: "Please provide any additional comments regarding what the DeKalb Park District should focus on over the next 5–10 years that you would like to share with us!" Responses are recorded below directly as written.

- ◇ Bus stops near parks
- ◇ Online registration only for programs is inadequate
- ◇ Bring back paper registration
- ◇ More porta potties in parks
- ◇ Programs are duplicated at both ends of the city
- ◇ Provide an indoor pickleball court, consider reusing indoor space at Haish Park
- ◇ Provide more bike accessibility to connect areas of town and allow kids to access areas of town independently
- ◇ Free splash pad at Welsh Park is an important and highly used aspect
- ◇ Kite Fest is a well-attended event for the community
- ◇ Camp Discover is a critical resource for working families
- ◇ Seek collaboration with Forest Preserves, the library, and NIU
- ◇ Serene park location is essential, with access for seniors and without highway, train, or playground distractions
- ◇ There is a lot of land provided for a single use (disc golf) at Prairie Park
- ◇ Provide benches in the shade
- ◇ Provide quiet areas at parks for seniors at parks
- ◇ Put trash receptacles at a distance from seating areas to avoid bees and wasps
- ◇ Provide water fountain / water bottle filler at the pickleball and tennis courts
- ◇ Develop low maintenance trails through existing forests in town (mulch paths)
- ◇ Indoor pickleball courts, could have a different use during the summer
- ◇ New bike trails for transportation rather than leisure to travel across the city

Verbal Responses

Responses are recorded below as heard and summarized by the planning team.

- ◇ Include more bike trails
- ◇ Consider eliminating some parks to better maintain used park space
- ◇ Move garbage receptacles away from seating areas
- ◇ More shade for benches, black metal can get hot
- ◇ More ADA equipment in parks
- ◇ Include fitness equipment for seniors
- ◇ Summer camp with the Park District is the only camp that families can do for one week at a time, it is essential for childcare and takes 4C families
- ◇ Evaluate the usability of each park
- ◇ Program sign up should be more accessible, including paper and mail in methods in multiple languages
- ◇ There was a perception of limited public notice regarding the decisions made about the pool. Concern was expressed that future decisions would be made without representation.
- ◇ There is need for improved marketing and communication
- ◇ Consider public reminders for events as the date approaches
- ◇ Consider creating a public bulletin or public ads that can change for special events (such as electronic bank bulletins)
- ◇ There is a need for a central space for news and community gatherings
- ◇ Consider posting the survey at the library.
- ◇ Consider sharing the online survey with the high school student council
- ◇ Improve and increase trails to connect outside of the community
- ◇ Consider more variety of play provided and unique playgrounds such as creative play, nature play, and water-based play.
- ◇ Consider seniors and their needs and park uses
- ◇ Strengthen partnership with Forest Preserves, there is limited programming at the Forest Preserves
- ◇ Strengthen partnership with NIU
- ◇ Consider more partnership with the library. The library serves as the community hub.





Stakeholder Interviews

The following summary is an overview of the informal conversations held between stakeholders within DeKalb Park District and the planning team.

Format

The planning team staff conducted 2 in-person interviews with DeKalb Park District stakeholders on September 25, 2025. These interviews were held as informal conversations between the planning team and small groups of participants. The first group included six participants and the second group included three. There was also one participant who was unable to attend the full interview and provided partial feedback with the second group and via written comments. Each conversation was structured around the overarching question of “What should the DKPD Focus on Over the Next 5-10 Years?” During the interview, participants were asked a series of questions to be considered through their roles within their respective organizations, as partners to the Park District, and through their professional and personal opinions.

Each interview began with a brief explanation of the Comprehensive Plan process and goals provided by the planning team, followed by introductions (questions 1 and 2). Depending on the conversation progression, questions 3 through 11 may not have been asked in the same order to all participants or may have been omitted depending on time and prior conversation topics.

Because participant group conversations did not strictly follow the question order, some results are organized by topic. Question responses with similar topics are grouped together including questions 1 and 2, and questions 8, 9, and 10.

Participants were also provided with the list of questions in advance.

The following list is a record of the questions asked and a summarization of the participants’ responses. General comments and themes that were provided by more than one participant are noted by a number in parentheses following the comment.

1. *Are you a resident within the DeKalb Park District jurisdictional boundaries? How long have you lived in DeKalb or the surrounding area?*
2. *What organization do you represent and how long have you been with them? Have you had past involvement or partnership with the DeKalb Park District?*

Participant relationships with the Park District varied from very close working relationships and joint ownership arrangements (Ellwood House Museum) to no partnerships or collaborations (DeKalb Township). Most participants described involvement between these two levels which were dependent on the type of services provided by each organization. For organizations with closer partnerships, the Park District provides land and facilities, including some maintenance, and sometimes is a partner in programming offerings. This is typical for Opportunity DeKalb, AYSO, DeKalb County United Academy, and Chamber of Commerce programs at Welsh Park, DeKalb Kiwanis Park, and Sports & Recreation Center. Other local municipal units including the Township, City, and School District share jurisdictional limits with the Park District and the agencies engage with the District and each other in local policy decisions and partnership events/initiatives.

Some participants discussed the history of the City of DeKalb and DeKalb Park District including large development growth and subsequent pocket park acquisition which created park size, quantity, and distribution challenges for the District (2). They also described a more recent shift to a more thoughtful development approach (1). This current approach was described as being aligned with trends (1), inclusive of more recreation interests (1), and inclusive of more diverse demographics (1).

Working relationships were generally described favorably (3) although some organizations expressed interest in more Park District support (1) specifically through funding (1), planning (2), or location development (1). Others stated their desire for more collaboration (3) and 3 participants complimented the recent achievements and energy of District staff.

Personally, 4 participants described themselves as long-term DeKalb residents and 5 discussed using Park District offerings with their families. Others spoke about other personal and professional experiences including coaching (1), starting/running travel sports leagues (1), and operating sports facilities (1).

3. *In your experience working or coordinating with DeKalb Park District, what has worked well? What are some areas that could be improved?*

Two participants described the current relationships as working well. Some described the Park District as limited (1) and not always taking advantage of the resources available to them (1) such as volunteers and new interest groups.

Participants praised the Park District's staff as being supportive (1) and stated their satisfaction when staff has assisted with joint projects (2). 1 participant expressed satisfaction with the maintenance of District properties but 1 referenced a large quantity of deferred items across the District.

Participants also identified potential areas to improve, including more cooperation when promoting events and programs (3), more frequent communications (1), cross-promotion of offerings (2), and managing competition between the Park District and its stakeholders (2). Specifically, regarding communications, stakeholders commented that they and the community must seek out information online or at a facility (1). While no specific examples were given, it was also stated that the Special Recreation Association is limited compared to other communities (1).

Participants described resource shortages including funds (1), quantity of staff (1), and 1 noted the accessibility challenges, especially at old facilities.

Two participants expressed dissatisfaction with how space is allocated, describing opinions that outsiders get priority access to facilities over local taxpayers (1), that access isn't reflective of monetary investment (1), and that use by other sport types detracts from dedicated field use (1).

4. *In comparing recreation providers within the local region, what do you prefer about DeKalb Park District offerings and what do you prefer at other locations?*

Participants described location use fees as high for what is made available (1) and commented that the website could be improved (1).

DeKalb Kiwanis Park was described positively for its ability to accommodate the entire soccer program at a single location (1) which benefits families with multiple children who play. However, disadvantages of DeKalb Kiwanis Park were listed as uneven fields (1), limited storage (1), minimal support facilities (1), and lack of permanent bathrooms (2).

5. Are there any programs and/or events in which you are affiliated with the DeKalb Park District and are there improvements or additional resources needed?

- ◇ Opinion that Park District buildings close too early and are missing opportunity to fulfill more interest (2)
- ◇ Ellwood House should also be marketed as a park with trails and gardens (not only facility) (1)

6. How is your organization expecting to provide recreation over the next five years and how can DeKalb Park District be involved?

- ◇ School District: A new elementary school has been built recently but there is overcrowding in the middle school conflicting with a need for early intervention and the early learning center. The District received a land donation and is determining next steps to manage space needs.
- ◇ Ellwood House Museum: Goal to complete mansion restoration
- ◇ DeKalb County United Academy: Current roster of 25 teams and over 300 players is expanding. Program need for additional fields is in conflict with limited and shrinking availability

While not related to recreation, several governmental representatives referenced a new, multi-agency tax rate collaboration plan intended to benefit residents (2).

Participants also discussed a need to align the District with community changes including changing racial and ethnic profiles (2), competing with technology to gain visitors (1), and better using technology operationally (2) with some potential to share data (2) and physical resources amongst organizations (1).

7. Do you see other opportunities for increased or added partnerships with the DeKalb Park District?

- ◇ Grant funding for park and facility renovations (2)
- ◇ Expand programming at Welsh Park to bring more community members in (1)
- ◇ Improve communications and awareness (3)
 - Advertise successes (1)
 - Partner with others (1)
 - Create more engaging content (1)
 - Create more convenient content (1)
 - Increase frequency (1)
- ◇ Safety and security (3)
 - Security concerns in downtown spaces (2) and previous pool (1)
 - Vandalism, encroachment, and other land misuse needs to be addressed (2)
 - Need to determine the role of the Park District to supplement police management and responses in parks and facilities (2)
 - Residents/park users need to take ownership of their community (2)

One participant also questioned how the geographic distribution of programs impacts accessibility.

Another suggested that transportation limitations to participation could be addressed in partnership with other local agencies (1).

Two participants commented on the importance of having and following plans, including inter-agency plans (1).

8. What programs do you currently participate in or have in the past that you feel are beneficial to the community? How could those be improved or expanded on?

9. What additional programs, perhaps some that you don't actively participate in, do you support, and feel would benefit the community as a whole?

10. What service, facility, or amenity gaps do you feel exist in the region? Either related to your organization, or that you think would benefit the DeKalb Park District generally?

- ◇ Lack of winter activities (2)
 - Sled hill cited as positive addition (1)
 - Disappointment over the relocation of the Lions Park outdoor ice rink (1)
 - Loss of the natural setting (1)
 - Lack of a shelter and fire (1)
- ◇ 60' and 90' ball fields (1)
 - Travel programs unserved (1)

- ◇ Outdoor turf field with lights (1)
 - Allow consistency of rentals (1)
- ◇ Lightning detectors needed (1)

Participants discussed facilities as economic drivers (2) including an indoor ice/hockey rink (3), roller rink (1), and multipurpose sport facilities/fieldhouse (2).

- ◇ One participant commented on the lack of local ice rink competition as an opportunity but acknowledged the potential expense as a challenge.

Regarding existing locations, participants discussed challenges at Sports and Rec Center including overall facility size limitations (1), lack of parking (1), limited concessions seating areas (1), and poor spectator visibility (1). 1 person also described the access and operational challenges at Haish gymnasium but expressed a desire to not lose the historic site.

Participants also commented that the District does a good job with programming (1) and tries new program ideas (1) but tends to miss potential expansion (2) or could do more targeted marketing to build participation (1). Specifically, participants suggested the Park District follow-up on events and programs that do well (1) and reduce options that compete with other providers (1). Others suggested a willingness to expand partnerships (2) or take-over programs rather than allowing them to discontinue (2). There was also a suggestion to do fewer things at a higher quality level (1) and focus on special events with large appeal (2).

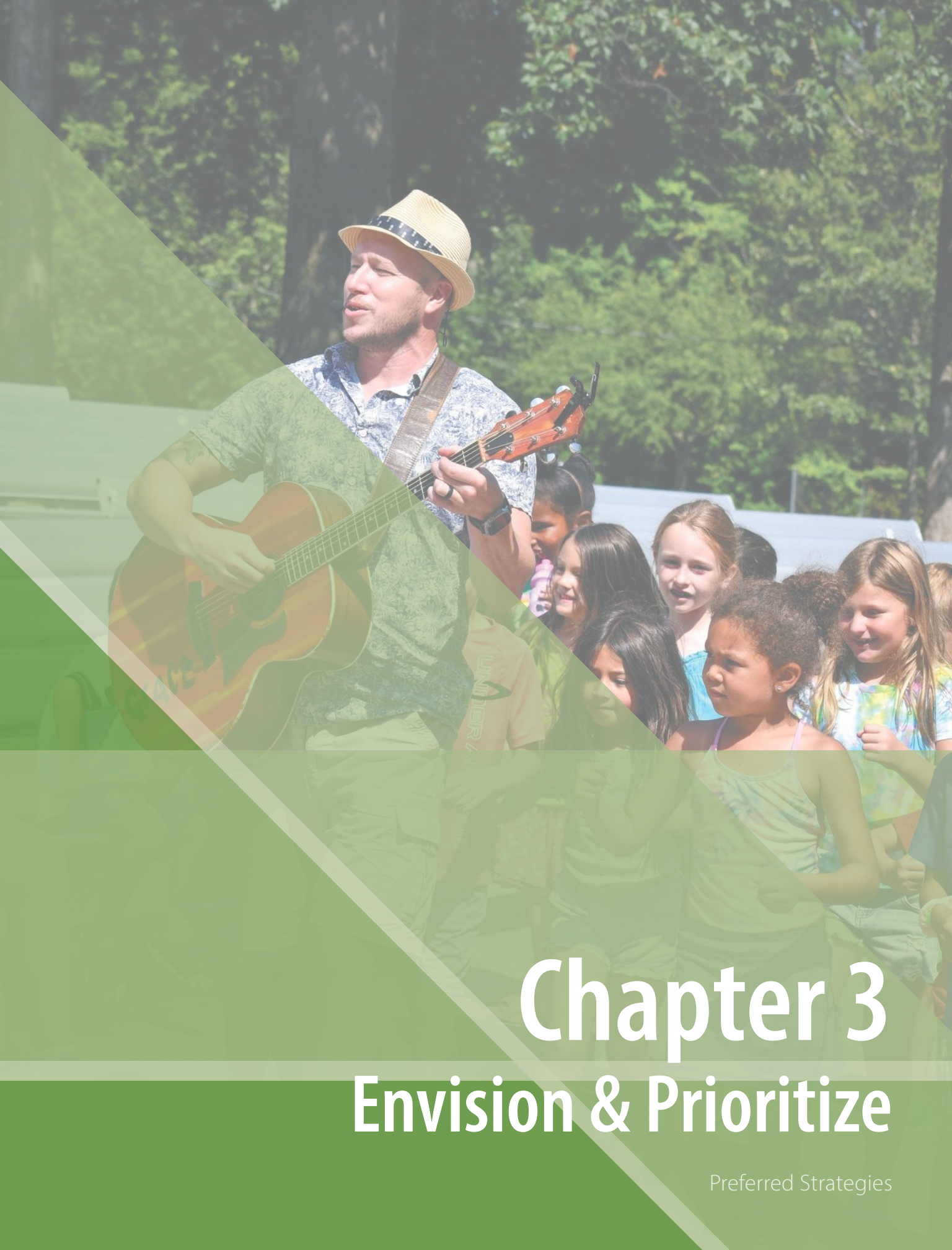
Three participants observed a trend of maintaining what exists rather than adding new opportunities. Participants suggested using grant funding (2) and expanding partnerships (3) to increase District capacity to innovate and expand. However, 1 participant commented that overplanning and over building can negatively affect park use and maintenance needs.

It was also suggested that the Park District utilize community liaisons (1), trusted experts (1), and/or a Friends group (1) to expand service opportunities. NIU (2), University Village Collaborative (1), Youth Services (1), and Networking for Families (1) were also suggested as local service providers who could become District partners. The City of DeKalb and NIU were also suggested as potential GIS resources and collaborators to help the Park District better understand resident trends (1).

11. Based on today's discussion, what do you think are the top priorities the DeKalb Park District should focus on for the next five years?

- ◇ Address deferred maintenance
- ◇ Provide opportunities for the community, especially kids
- ◇ Anticipate ongoing growth and plan long-term
- ◇ Preserve unique historic elements
- ◇ Connect pathways and trails





Chapter 3

Envision & Prioritize

Preferred Strategies



Overview

This chapter documents the Envision & Prioritize: Preferred Strategies phase of the comprehensive master planning process.

Purpose

The purpose of the Envision & Prioritize Phase is to develop actionable items for the DeKalb Park District to accomplish over the next ten years and beyond.

The project team conducted a visioning workshop to develop a series of goals and strategies to address the challenges and opportunities revealed during the evaluation and analysis phases. The strategies were then organized into primary goals that relate back to the needs that were identified in the previous phases. Following the visioning workshop, the planning team met with Park District staff members to review and build upon the proposed strategies. The planning team also presented the preliminary goals and strategies to the Park District Board of Commissioners for feedback and initial prioritization discussion.

These revised needs and strategies became the preferred action items to implement over the next ten years.

Chapter Outline

This chapter is organized into five goals on the following pages:

1. Improve Indoor Facility Access
2. Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces
3. Improve and Expand District Programs and Special Events
4. Improve Park District Operations and Satisfaction
5. Improve District-wide Recreation Access

Each goal also includes a summary of the background needs and Master Plan findings that determined the goal and strategies to accomplish it. These items are not listed or numbered by priority order, numbers are provided for reference only. Priority and implementation order information is provided in the action plan in Chapter 4.

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This final section of this chapter includes high-level preliminary budget estimates for studies and capital projects.

Background: This section consists of a brief narrative describing the District's existing amenities and circumstances around each goal and other observations made by the Planning Team and District staff. Additional details about the process and results for these items can be found in Chapter 1 Analyze and Chapter 2 Connect.

Strategies: This section lists the Action Plan strategies that are planned for the next ten years and beyond.

1. IMPROVE INDOOR FACILITY ACCESS

Background:

The DeKalb Park District includes 23 buildings/structures across 11 geographic locations. Due primarily to age, most of these buildings were evaluated as in “fair” or “poor” condition with accessibility and code non-compliance frequently noted as concerns. Staff and District participants also identified issues with the facilities’ ability to accommodate programs either because appropriate spaces are not available or because they are undersized or there is not enough quantity to meet demand. Compared to benchmarks for indoor space, the District exceeds the number of buildings and the square footage medians. About 70% (142,248 SF) of the District facilities are used for recreation, fitness, or special use programming with the remaining support facilities, such as locker and restrooms, or are operational or maintenance spaces which are not used by the public directly. The provided public spaces are used for recreation and community centers and for performing arts but when considering facility condition, the District falls below the benchmarked amount of recreation center space. Additionally, some common indoor uses such as a senior center, and nature/interpretive center are not offered by the District. An exception to the condition and use concerns is the aquatics bathhouse for Community Pool which was under construction at the time of the assessment. The importance of completing the Community Pool was identified throughout all Connect phase forums. The golf courses as a whole also received positive community reviews but opportunities to improve the clubhouses to be more modern, accommodate larger groups, and to better introduce golf to new players were suggested by staff and stakeholders. Additionally, the maintenance and other back-of-house locations at both courses are in need of repairs and updates.

Community engagement participants also identified gaps in indoor space service in every platform. Frequently suggested improvements from all of the events included an indoor walking/running track, a large modern fitness center, and gym space for sports including pickleball, basketball, and volleyball. Board, staff, and stakeholder participants also commented on existing facility challenges including outdated and non-compliant spaces, especially at Haish Gymnasium.

Strategies:

1.1 Complete **Indoor Recreation Facility** feasibility study to provide expanded recreation at Sports & Recreation Center (SRC)

- A. Develop facility and site use models to include trending and in-demand indoor spaces that will meet community interests and programming needs, considering:
 - i. Additional synthetic turf fields for rectangular and ballfield use
 - ii. Fitness center
 - iii. Studio Spaces
 - iv. Gymnasium for multi-purpose courts (pickleball, basketball, etc.)
 - v. Walking track
 - vi. Small auditorium
- B. Coordinate facility expansion and renovation with existing SRC needs considering,
 - i. Improved entry and lobby experience
 - ii. Updated and expanded restrooms and locker rooms
 - iii. Improved spectator spaces and view lines
 - iv. Additional staff offices
 - v. Enhanced HVAC capacity
- C. Determine estimated facility cost/recovery goals and funding strategies, considering:
 - i. In-house, affiliate, and rental policies and structure
 - ii. Grant programs such as IDNR PARC (Illinois Department of Natural Resources Park and Recreation Facility Construction)
 - iii. Internal funding methods such as cash donations or bonds
 - iv. Consider public-private partnerships
- D. Coordinate facility expansion with DeKalb Kiwanis sports field renovations and other outdoor sports complex needs per goal 2.1

1.2 Implement **Sports & Recreation Center** design and implementation pending results of feasibility study (goal 1.)

1. IMPROVE INDOOR FACILITY ACCESS

1.3 Complete **District-wide Indoor Space Assessment** to evaluate new and renovated indoor facility space operations and determine remaining unmet needs including:

- A. Review renovated Sports & Recreation Center and changes to Haish Gymnasium and Community Center
- B. Determine community interest and need for additional indoor spaces, considering:
 - i. Multi-purpose education and activity rooms
 - ii. Recreation tourism potential
 - iii. Community rental, banquet, and other gathering spaces

1.4 Develop and implement **Community Center Use Plan**, considering:

- A. Coordinate Park District and Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association office space needs in coordination with completed Sports & Recreation Center spaces
- B. Improve banquet and event rental experience including entry experience, additional social spaces, and kitchen expansion and renovation.

1.5 Develop and implement decommission plan for **Haish Gymnasium**, considering:

**Facility repairs and renovations to address failing infrastructure, safety, or code compliance to be addressed on an as-needed but limited basis until long-term facility use can be determined.*

- A. Consider facility renovations for continued public use such as:
 - i. Preserve unique and historic features
 - ii. Renovate or replace 1990s addition to provide modern support amenities such as restrooms and locker rooms, multi-purpose rooms, fitness center, etc.
 - iii. Convert inaccessible community rooms, restrooms, and stage areas to District storage
 - iv. Convert outdated office space to public lobby and gathering areas

OR

- B. Consider alternative facility use by others if District recreation and athletic needs are met at other locations, such as:
 - i. Rentable public space for community meetings, banquet and other gatherings
 - ii. Rentable space for other organizations such as sports affiliates, school, or church groups
 - iii. Community auditorium and performance space, pending Sports & Recreation Center renovation results
 - iv. Expand parking as needed

1.6 Reinvest in Golf Courses at **River Heights** and **Buena Vista**

- A. Complete **River Heights** Clubhouse improvements considering:
 - i. Improve visitor entry experience by screening non-public spaces and improving identification and wayfinding signage
 - ii. Renovate and expand, or replace clubhouse to provide improved entry and check-in experience, modernize aesthetics and equipment, and improve community dining space
 - iii. Consider adding trending and revenue generating spaces such as:
 - a. Large group rental or banquet space
 - b. Interior practice spaces such as virtual bays
 - c. Larger pro shop
 - d. Gaming machines
- B. Complete **River Heights** Operational improvements considering:
 - i. Provide new maintenance and office spaces away from course entry and clubhouse, pending land availability
 - ii. Renovate entry area to improve visitor experience, considering combining parking lots and access roads
 - iii. Expand course practice areas such as putting and driving facilities if operations are moved
 - iv. Complete irrigation well installation
- C. Complete **Buena Vista** Clubhouse improvements considering:
 - i. Improve visitor entry experience by screening non-public spaces and improving identification and wayfinding signage
 - ii. Renovate clubhouse to provide improved entry and check-in experience, modernize aesthetics and equipment, and improve concessions area

1. IMPROVE INDOOR FACILITY ACCESS

- iii. Consider adding trending and revenue generating spaces such as:
 - a. Pro shop improvements
 - a. Gaming machines
- D. Complete **Buena Vista** Operational improvements considering:
 - i. Renovate office spaces

1.7 Complete **Maintenance Campus** renovations to improve site layout and facility condition, including:

- A. Consider land acquisition to expand maintenance yard, pending property availability
- B. Consider land acquisition or lease agreement to provide second vehicular access point via Route 38 to the south
- C. Replace cold storage facility in poor condition with modern facility
 - i. Consider connection to existing office space for increase facility efficiency
 - ii. Consider addition of climate controlled space to expand shop capacity



2. MAINTAIN & UPDATE PARKS & OPEN SPACES

Background:

Park locations are well distributed throughout the DeKalb Park District and about 36,040 (92.2%) residents have access to an active park location. The District also provides a good variety of recreation amenity types across its active parks and other open space locations. However, overall site and amenity condition across the parks varies by location and some parks are outdated or have deteriorated conditions due to age. Staff also observed this trend, noting that the installation years and maintenance schedules of many properties are grouped in the same time period which puts strain on District staff and financial resources, sometimes leading to deferred maintenance. Staff, as well as the Board, community meeting participants, pop-up participants, and stakeholders also commented that some amenities need maintenance or replacement and generally rated maintaining existing resources highly. This prioritization of maintenance also aligns with the statistically valid survey results and state trends. While the need to upgrade and modernize parks was heard from multiple participant groups, the DeKalb community, staff, and stakeholders also expressed interest in maintaining unique and historic elements such as the masonry throughout multiple park sites. The most frequently referenced types of amenities needing updates included sports field maintenance, playground renovations, and repairs to damaged shelters. When considering new amenities, Connect phase participants suggested unique and modern play equipment, kayak launches, and an outdoor ice rink. Stakeholders, staff, and some community members also expressed interest in destination recreation activities such as a sports complex and an expanded disc golf course.

While the District provides active park service for the majority of the community and performs well against acreage benchmarks, several of the park sites are restricted by their size or adjacent land uses and there are sections of the community that lack service, mostly along the east and west edges of the District.

Strategies:

2.1 Develop, prioritize, and **implement park improvement plans** including developing site-wide park redevelopment plans and utilizing grant funding opportunities

- Current Improvement Plans (2025-2027):
 - i. Prairie Park
- A. Priority Group A (Years 1-3):
 - i. **DeKalb Kiwanis Park:** Renovate park for improved sports use and in coordination with Sports & Recreation Center development per goal 1.2
 - a. Improve grass rectangular field conditions including field grading and soil amendments for drainage
 - b. Consider addition of multi-purpose synthetic rectangular/diamond field space and field lighting
 - c. Renovate ballfields at Barb Blvd. to replace dugouts, backstops, and fencing beyond useful life and restore infields, regrading outfields, and consider a separate parking lot
 - d. Consider addition of batting cages
 - e. Improve park circulation including:
 - f. Add accessible path connections between SRC and Fairview Drive parking areas
 - g. Provide accessible paths to park amenities including shelter/drinking fountain and ballfield player and spectator areas
 - h. Replace asphalt path beyond useful life at ballfields
 - i. Consider perimeter walking path for recreation and improved connection between rectangular and ballfield areas
 - j. Consider agreement with adjacent Huntley Middle School to connect school property and park paths
 - k. Improve park support amenities including
 - l. Expand parking as needed to support SRC renovation/development and elevated sports use
 - m. Consider adding external access restrooms in coordination with SRC renovation
 - n. Relocate or screen loose materials storage near southeast corner of park to improve security and park aesthetics
 - o. Consider additional shelters and a playground to support non-sports users
 - p. Coordinate amenity development with existing middle school playground equipment type and replacement schedule
 - q. Complete natural area improvements to park woodlot such as understory clearing to improve habitat quality and improve visibility
 - r. *Consider grant funding*

2. MAINTAIN & UPDATE PARKS & OPEN SPACES

- iii. **Katz Park: Renovate park to address aging amenities**
 - a. Coordinate rectangular and ballfield quantity and layout with DeKalb Kiwanis park and SRC site changes to replace field types needed
 - b. Replace aged and damaged shelter and playground equipment
 - c. Repair and improve aged parking lot
 - d. Replace skate park equipment
 - e. Address poor drainage throughout the park including at the picnic shelter and skate park
 - f. Repair fence posts and replace damaged fence fabric at ballfields and dog park
 - g. Consider addition of batting cages
 - h. Resurface park paths and consider expansion of concrete pavement at key activity areas including the ballfield player and spectator areas and the shelter
 - i. Repair dog park fencing and equipment as needed
 - j. *Consider grant funding*
- C. Priority Group B (Years 4-6):
 - i. **Prather Park: Renovate park to address aging amenities**
 - a. Consider ballfield use needs in coordination with District-wide ballfield supply changes at DeKalb Kiwanis/SRC, McCormick, and Katz Park renovations and reduction of ballfield service and capacity to provide additional green space, increase buffer between park use and adjacent properties, and reduce park crowding
 - b. Consider lighting and outfield reductions to promote neighborhood park character
 - c. Replace playground, considering relocation and expansion
 - d. Add shelter and picnic amenities
 - e. Resurface parking lot and consider pavement reduction if park amenities are reduced
 - ii. **Garden of Eden Park: Renovate park to address aging amenities and consider additions to expand park use**
 - a. Replace aged and damaged shelter and playground equipment
 - b. Renovate brick pavers in poor condition and consider amenity change to improve area function such as picnic or games area
 - c. Resurface asphalt path
 - d. *Consider grant funding*
- D. Priority Group C (Years 7+):
 - i. **McCormick Park: Renovate park to address aging athletic fields**
 - a. Coordinate ballfield quantity and layout with DeKalb Kiwanis park and SRC site changes and Katz Park renovation
 - b. Consider ballfield use needs in coordination with District-wide ballfield supply changes at DeKalb Kiwanis/SRC and Katz Park renovation. Reduce ballfield service and capacity to provide additional green space, increase buffer between park use and adjacent properties, and reduce park crowding.
 - iii. **Chesebro Park: Renovate park to address aging athletic fields**
 - a. Add playground with inclusive features for physical, emotional, and mental play support
 - b. Add shelter and seating areas
 - c. Add an accessible loop path connecting to the public sidewalks, the school building, and recreation amenities
 - d. Expand basketball areas and add recess game additions such as a gaga ball pit, ground markings for pavement games, chalk areas, or funnel ball

2. MAINTAIN & UPDATE PARKS & OPEN SPACES

- ii. **Mason Park/Larson Lake:** Renovate park to address aging amenities and consider natural feature improvements
 - a. Replace or repair shelter and playground once equipment reaches end of useful life and consider nature based and nature themed inclusions for playground equipment
 - b. Consider nature interpretive features around pond and perimeter path
 - c. Resurface park paths
 - d. Consider shoreline restoration to remove invasive species and naturalization expansion to improve water quality and reduce mown turf maintenance
 - e. Consider pond aerators to improve water quality
- iii. **Veteran's Park:** Renovate park to increase access and consider natural feature improvements
 - a. Provide accessible paths to memorials and add a seating and contemplation area
 - b. Consider additional of brick paver field or other memorial addition element
 - c. Provide nature trails and consider a bridge crossing to expand access into the south portion of the site
 - d. Consider a dock or overlook at the creek for nature viewing
 - e. Consider addition of play area with nature-based or themed elements and buffer between play and memorial areas

2.2 Complete feasibility study for a **sports complex development**

- A. Coordinate with Indoor Access strategies
- B. Consider DeKalb Kiwanis Park/Sports & Recreation Center
- C. Consider land acquisition
- D. Consider McCormick Park renovation
- E. Consider District-wide sports field location / renovation / relocation / consolidation
 - i. DeKalb Kiwanis / Barb Blvd. Parks
 - ii. McCormick Park
 - iii. Katz Park

2.3 Provide **trekking and in-demand amenities** when completing park renovations in coordination with goals 2.1 and

2.6

- A. 1+ additional splash pads
- B. Additional pickleball courts
- C. Trails
- D. High-quality rectangular sports fields
- E. Unique / diverse play opportunities to provide equipment variety and improve park identity such as:
 - i. Zip lines
 - ii. Climbing
 - iii. Height
 - iv. Customized equipment at community parks
- F. Nature-based / nature-inspired play and nature trails

2.4 **Evaluate appropriate amenities that are below benchmark** when completing renovations in coordination with park development and renovations.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. SCORP<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Basketball (5)ii. Volleyball (6)iii. Tennis (17)iv. Baseball (4)v. Football (2)vi. Tracks (running/walking) (2)vii. Picnic Games (bags, bocce, horseshoe, etc.)viii. Trails | <ul style="list-style-type: none">B. Park Metrics<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Basketball (4)ii. Tennis (5)iii. Rectangular Sports Fields (5)iv. Synthetic Turf Fields (2)v. Trails |
|---|--|

2. MAINTAIN & UPDATE PARKS & OPEN SPACES

2.5 Continue to **monitor and implement relevant community interests** when completing park renovations in coordination with goals 2.1 and 2.2

- A. District-wide connectivity
 - i. Pedestrian and biking trails
 - ii. Partnerships for under / overpasses, bus routes, regional bike routes
- B. Winter activities
- C. Conservation and environmental stewardship

2.6 Develop and / or update and **implement capital improvement plans** for all locations to address low cost and limited scope repairs / replacements to manage normal material aging and reduce deferred maintenance items outside of full/ large park redevelopments

- A. Continue to track and budget for amenity maintenance or replacement by installation year for playgrounds, roofs, paving replacement / sealcoat, etc.
- B. Continue to stagger major investment items to evenly distribute fiscal exposure

2.7 Consider **strategic land use agreements or acquisitions for program expansion**

- A. River Heights Golf Course: Consider adjacent agricultural property for facility / maintenance needs, course expansion, and / or practice / training areas
- B. SRC / DeKalb Kiwanis Park: Identify adjacent locations for expansion of outdoor sports amenities and to strengthen the connection between the rectangular and diamond field areas
- C. Large acre new property: Consider new park site for facility / sports complex needs
 - i. Monitor local real estate market for agricultural and underutilized industrial opportunities

2.8 Consider strategic land use agreements or acquisitions to **provide walkable park service in Planning Area (PA) gaps**

- A. PA 1: Consider future land acquisition if available
 - i. Accept developer land contribution

2.9 Consider strategic acquisitions when appropriate property is available to **support economic stimulus initiatives**

- A. River Heights Golf Course
- B. Sports Complex
- C. Recreation Center/Community Center
- D. Indoor Ice Center

3. IMPROVE & EXPAND PROGRAMS /SPECIAL EVENTS

Background:

The DeKalb Park District offers a variety of program and special event types and was praised throughout the Connect phase for the amount and creativity of its offerings. However, Connect phase participants also observed that the available programs are not offered consistently and changes or cancellations are frequent which negatively affects the user experience. It was also noted that facility limitations can negatively affect program experiences when the available spaces are not appropriate for the activity, or when there is not enough space for the type/quantity of programming desired. The program assessment also confirms that over half of the offered programs are in the introductory or gaining traction life cycle period and that this large quantity of new programs require significant staff time and resources compared to programs in the performing stage which are consistent with steady user groups and lower staff investment. Similarly, about 10% of District are both low performing and have low alignment with the District mission. Programs that are low performing and/or lack alignment also tend to require additional resources while generating less community impact.

District programs that typically perform well include special events, day camps, animals/pets, and fitness and wellness offerings. Most of the introductory efforts are focused on education/academic, tours and trips, arts and culture, and general recreation categories. The program assessment also identified a lower quantity of visual arts, nature and outdoor recreation, and early childhood programs compared to other park and recreation organizers of a similar size. In the Connect phase, participants in every platform rated the District's special events highly. When asked what types of programs they would be interested in, options for special needs individuals and more community special events were suggested most often. Pop-up and community meeting participants also expressed interest in art and cultural spaces. Considering user groups, youth make up about 70% of all registrations indicating a potential opportunity to expand service for adult age groups. Staff, Board members, and stakeholders also noted a lack of options for and participation from the pre-teen and teenager age ranges outside of school activities. Most Connect phase groups also praised the District's aide program and commented on the importance of inclusion of under-resourced individuals and community groups.

Strategies:

3.1 Establish and monitor **key performance indicators for program life cycle health**, including:

- A. Repeat customer registrations
- B. Portfolio service alignment and performance evaluations
- C. Target life cycle percentages
- D. Continue to issue and respond to exit and satisfactory surveys to understand participant experiences

3.2 **Improve program retention and reach** to increase program enrollment and engage underserved communities

- A. Improve and expand use of online registrations and fillable PDF forms to improve user convenience and staff efficiencies
- B. Continue to create stability and repetition in program offering types and schedules to build consistent user base
- C. Restructure scholarship programs to improve access and introduce tiers for different levels of need and types of assistance and continue to work with and expand partnerships with local agencies and community groups to expand program awareness and use, and to pool resources for appropriate programs
- D. Address program operational concerns which affect customer experience including:
 - i. Instructor loss
 - ii. Lack of space
- E. Expand opportunity awareness by continuing to work with partners and other local businesses and community groups to cross-promote programs
- F. Expand all-ages appeal by offering on-location supplementary activities during popular program times and at special events

3. IMPROVE & EXPAND PROGRAMS /SPECIAL EVENTS

3.3 Address program operations concerns

- A. Improve instructor recruitment and retention
- B. Evaluate program skill requirements and workload management to reorganize staff and contractor responsibilities
- C. Increase partnerships for program promotion and competition reduction
- D. Consider programming needs during development of park renovations and facility improvements in coordination with goals 1 and 2

3.4 Provide trending or in-demand programs / amenities

- A. Continue to provide existing successful events such as Music at the Mansion and Kite Fest
- B. Consider ways to increase appeal for all community groups such as diversity in performers and concessions
- C. Identify and partner with existing local initiatives to reach new and underrepresented community areas (such as increasing Park District presence at Opportunity DeKalb and Welsh Park events)

4. IMPROVE DISTRICT OPERATIONS & SATISFACTION

Background:

The Park District has undergone significant changes in recent years resulting in much of staff leadership and Board membership being new to the District, although many individuals in these roles are long-term District residents and/or have experience in other industry roles or locations. These turnovers have resulted in inconsistencies in District communications and policies which were identified during the Connect phase platforms. Among the public, participants expressed dissatisfaction about past communications and a lack of transparency regarding specific project and funding decisions. Board, staff, and stakeholders discussed uncertainty over the District's priorities and reduced communications between departments and to other organizations. Despite these past challenges, participants did express positive feelings about the District's future, particularly among the Board, staff, and stakeholder groups.

While the Park District is one of the most prevalent recreation providers in the community, other organizations including schools, Northern Illinois University, and the library provide recreation locations and a variety of programs. Some of these programs serve markets the District does not participate in while others overlap or compete with District offerings. Participants in all of the Connect phase platform discussed the District's relationship with other agencies and community groups and maintaining and strengthening partnerships was a common theme. Additionally, the District's existing marketing efforts and online presence are good but the program assessment identified areas to improve information clarity, increase visibility in web searches, and promote engagement with the community all of which will improve overall awareness of District initiatives.

Other District challenges identified by the planning team and during the Connect phase include deteriorated physical conditions related to age and deferred maintenance and insufficient resources to address every District need and want. The District has lost staff during turnover periods, including some individuals with specialized skills or knowledge who have not been replaced. While some of these roles may be filled through contracted, affiliate, or partnership agreements, direct District positions may provide better results for specialized services and/or for consistency over time. Regarding maintenance, the number of properties and amount of acres maintained by the District is greater than industry benchmarks and includes some park properties that are not utilized by the community due to their size, location, and/or lack of provided amenities. Other locations are frequently vandalized or are not considered safe by the community and require additional District resources to address these concerns.

Strategies:

4.1 Complete and adopt **District-wide Strategic Plan** to:

- A. Improve internal district communications including
 - i. Define staffing roles
 - ii. Create feedback loops
 - iii. Establish project input system
 - iv. Improve proximity of collaborators
- B. Recognize change and reinforce stability by:
 - i. Developing consistent messaging for District groups including staff/Board, partners/stakeholders, and the community
 - ii. Building District teams through collaboration and inclusion in key decisions and processes
- C. Refresh/restate the District mission and core values to better align with current community, staff, and Board priorities

4.2 **Improve external District communications and transparency** with the public and stakeholders including

- A. Expand social media announcement scope and frequency
- B. Increase partner cross-communication for joint benefit
- C. Utilize limited physical mailings to highlight key opportunities and changes

4. IMPROVE DISTRICT OPERATIONS & SATISFACTION

4.3 Evaluate underutilized land holdings to determine possible land use changes such as naturalization or land swaps to reduce District maintenance or create new access opportunities, considering

- A. Kensington Park
- B. Moluf Park
- C. Raymond Park
- D. Hanna Park
- E. St. Mary's Park

4.4 Support the DeKalb Parks Foundation

- A. Provide District documents for mission, vision, and expectations to align with Foundation objectives
- B. Consider coordinating advisor groups through the Parks Foundation to improve community and partner relationships
- C. Receive assistance in District marketing and communications to expand outreach channels and audience and celebrate District milestones and successes
- D. Receive fundraising assistance for appropriate initiatives such as:
 - i. Donor and sponsorship opportunities including events and limited projects
 - ii. Resident and participant scholarship support for enrollment needs
- E. Transfer fundraising and assistance programs to Foundation management including the Golf for Kids Outing and fee assistance programs. Consider future transfer of District memorial bench and memorial program

4.5 Maintain staff in organizational chart roles and provide support resources

- A. Explore filling programming instructor and coordinator roles with attention to program needs and alignment with District operations to help support long-term staffing

4.6 Strengthen the existing volunteer program / workforce, considering:

- A. Partnerships with local service organizations and school clubs including local districts and the college community
- B. Host periodic events such as invasive species removals or rotating park clean-ups to build regular event schedule and participation base

4.7 Improve park and facility security by monitoring remote areas and locations with past concerns

- A. Utilize technology such as security lighting, timed locks, and motion-activated features to enhance visitor comfort and a sense of security
- B. Complete periodic in-person visual reviews of secluded or high activity areas as part of regular maintenance activity and/or with local partners such as law enforcement on irregular timing
- C. Receive and respond to resident comments and concerns regarding park and facility activity
- D. Consider park police force/security or expansion of park watch program

4.8 Improve visibility, branding, and, differentiation within the community

- A. Strengthen online presence by creating or claiming and updating web pages and review website listings
- B. Respond to online reviews
- C. Encourage participants in programs or at specific locations to provide online review
- D. Provide variety in online and social media posting to encourage engagement and celebrate District accomplishments in addition to sharing information/promoting activities
- E. Develop and use consistent brand language and imagery to promote all Park District initiatives
- F. Consider changing or eliminating programs with significant overlap with those provided by others
- G. Consider partnership options to reduce loss or interruption of service for Park District users
- H. Use existing successful events and popular locations to promote other District initiatives

5. IMPROVE DISTRICT-WIDE RECREATION ACCESS

Background:

The DeKalb Park District offers a sufficient quantity and variety of open space and programs for a community of its population but is limited by physical condition of some spaces and resident's ability to participate. Similarly, despite the amount of indoor space provided by the District, facility size, design and condition limit how these spaces can be used. Results of the Analyze and Connect phase identified the need to expand access by improving existing asset conditions and removing barriers to community participation. Goals 1 through 4 include strategies to improve condition and safety of existing locations, and supplement existing options with new and modified amenities. They also include strategies to increase the quality of District services from an operational level and improve awareness of the District throughout the community.

In addition to these initiatives, expanding physical access to existing District offerings was identified as a Connect phase priority and several barriers to participation were identified in the Analyze phase. Despite the high percent of active park service, about 2,780 District residents are unserved and non-vehicular travel is limited by the planning area boundaries. During the Connect phase stakeholders and staff commented that lack of transportation reduces some community members' ability to participate, particularly for under-resourced individuals. In addition to improving access, trails for pedestrian and bike use are consistently popular recreation amenities. Trails have been among the highest priority items in National and state recreation trends for over five years in a row and every Connect phase platform prioritized them highly.

Strategies:

5.1 **Provide park access in under-served areas** of the community and planning areas (PA) with low existing service

- A. Add active park amenities to existing open spaces without service
- B. Consider land acquisition / land swaps to add service in under-represented areas (coordinate with Parks and Open Space strategies)
- C. Create and / or manage IGAs to provide resident access to existing locations by others, considering
 - i. PA 1: Monitor continued access at existing Gwendolyn Brooks Elementary School
 - ii. PA 1: Provide pedestrian crossing aids across and complete/add trails adjacent to both sides of W Bethany Rd. to connect PA 1 and 3
 - iii. PA 1: Consider future land acquisition for park development if available
 - iv. PA 8b: Monitor continued access at existing Jefferson Elementary School and new Dr. Leroy A. Mitchell Elementary School
 - v. PA 17: Monitor continued access at existing Lincoln Elementary School
 - vi. PA 18: Monitor continued access at existing Founders Elementary School
 - vii. PA 21: Determine access to existing Five Step Holdings trail system
 - viii. PA 21: Add active park development to St. Mary's Park
 - ix. PA 21: Consider IGA for public access to existing active park amenities and possible addition of amenities at St. Mary's School property

5.2 **Improve District-wide non-vehicular connectivity**

- A. Continue to participate in regional bike and other transportation planning initiatives by others
- B. Coordinate trail connections and pedestrian amenities such as bridges, underpasses, and crossing aids with City of DeKalb developments
- C. Provide trail connections between existing park spaces and regional trails in coordination with park and facility renovations per goals 1 and 2
- D. Provide internal park trail development, prioritizing loop trails in coordination with park renovations per goal 2

5.3 Develop and/or update **District-wide ADA transition plan** and implement improvements in coordination with park and facility renovations per goals 1 and 2

5.4 Expand community awareness of existing resources and opportunities to **expand utilization of existing offerings** in coordination with promotion and communication strategies included in goal 4





Chapter 4

Implement

Action Plan



Overview

This chapter documents the Implement: Action Plan phase of the comprehensive master planning process.

Purpose

The purpose of the Implement Phase is to prioritize the District needs and strategies for the next ten years into the action plan. Following the Envision phase, the planning team worked with staff to further refine the District needs and strategies to determine implementation order and steps.

Ordering Criteria

The following criteria were considered to determine when each item should be implemented within the ten-year plan:

- **Current Planned Initiative:** A project which is already in progress or has reserved capital improvement funding
- **Meets Recreation Need/Interest:** The project provides for a need or interest identified from the Analyze and Connect Phase findings
- **Age/Condition:** The project addresses a facility or amenity that is at or nearing the end of its useful life or is in poor condition
- **Availability/Utilization:** The project fulfills an offering, facility, or amenity need that has limited availability and/or is highly utilized
- **Attainability:** Considers the District's financial and staff resources to accomplish certain projects over a ten-year period
- **Additional Data Required:** More detailed information is needed concerning indoor space, market, or program needs to inform the required investment

Chapter Outline

The Implement Chapter includes three sections: a list of recurring items, the action plan, and an annual checklist of projects.

Recurring Items

Recurring items are best practices and standard policy items that occur on a regular basis or that are part of typical project planning and decision making. Where possible, components that fulfill recurring item goals should be implemented in coordination with physical development, planning studies, and policy adoption.

Action Plan Layout

The Action Plan Calendar consists of three areas:

- **6-year Calendar:** The first six years are organized by fiscal year into quarters (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4) to provide a general idea of when each action or action item step might occur within a given year.
- **10-year Outlook:** Across years 7-10, action items are organized by the fiscal year in which they are expected to begin but detailed action item steps and quarterly milestones are not included to maintain flexibility on this longer timeline.
- **Beyond 10 Years items:** Includes items which are not high priority and/or are beyond the District's available resources but are still needs that should be considered for future planning and implementation

Annual Checklist

The checklist section consists of the action plan items in chronological order by year and organized by goal.

Both the action plan and checklist are flexible living documents and should be periodically re-evaluated and updated to reflect completed projects. This document should also be revised as needed to reflect changing community needs and new opportunities that may arise after the adoption of this plan. The District may also reorder or adjust the included action items to respond to changes in the District from previously completed projects or respond to specific political, financial, or other outside influences.

In-Progress Initiatives

In addition to these planned items, the District is in the process of implementing other projects which address some strategies described in Chapter 3. Prior to year 1 of the Action Plan, the District is completing the following initiatives:

- ☐ 1.1 Completing **Hopkins Park Pool Re-construction** with plans to review and adjust operations after the first season of use.
- ☐ 1.2 Completing a **Sports & Recreation Center** feasibility study and 2.3 completing a **high end sports complex** feasibility study to determine how to address indoor and outdoor sports and fitness needs including preliminary site.
- ☐ 1.5 Developing a decommission plan for **Haish Gymnasium**
- ☐ 2.1 Implementing park improvements including constructing renovations for **League of Women Voters Park** and completing final plans for **Prairie Park** improvements.
- ☐ 4.4 Supporting the continued establishment of **DeKalb Parks Foundation**.

In addition to these in-progress initiatives and the following action plan and recurring items, the Park District will continue to complete regular maintenance and replacements in accordance with the annual capital improvements plan and budget.

RECURRING ITEMS

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.5 Implement **Haish Gymnasium** facility repairs and renovations to address failing infrastructure, safety, or code compliance to be addressed on an as-needed but limited basis until long-term facility use can be determined.

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.3 Provide **trending and in-demand amenities** when completing park renovations
- ☐ 2.4 **Evaluate** appropriate **amenities that are below benchmark** when completing park renovations
- ☐ 2.5 Continue to **monitor and implement relevant community interests** when completing park renovations
- ☐ 2.6 Develop and / or update and **implement capital improvement plans** for all locations
- ☐ 2.7 Consider **strategic land use agreements or acquisitions for program expansion**
- ☐ 2.8 Consider strategic land use agreements or acquisitions to **provide walkable park service in Planning Area (PA) gaps**
- ☐ 2.9 Consider strategic acquisitions when appropriate property is available to **support economic stimulus initiatives**

Goal 3: Improve and Expand Programs / Special Events

- ☐ 3.1 Establish and monitor **key performance indicators for program life cycle health**
- ☐ 3.2 **Improve program retention and reach** to increase program enrollment and engage underserved communities
- ☐ 3.3 **Address program operations concerns**
- ☐ 3.4 **Provide trending or in-demand programs / amenities**

Goal 4: Improve District Operations and Satisfaction

- ☐ 4.2 **Improve external District communications and transparency** with the public and stakeholders
- ☐ 4.3 **Evaluate underutilized land holdings** to determine possible land use changes such as naturalization or land swaps to reduce District maintenance or create new access opportunities
- ☐ 4.5 **Maintain staff in organizational chart roles and provide support resources**
- ☐ 4.6 **Strengthen the existing volunteer program / workforce**
- ☐ 4.7 **Improve park and facility security** by monitoring remote areas and locations with past concerns
- ☐ 4.8 **Improve visibility, branding, and, differentiation** within the community

Goal 5: Improve District-Wide Recreation Access

- ☐ 5.1 **Provide park access in underserved areas** of the community and planning areas (PA) with low existing service
- ☐ 5.2 **Improve District-wide non-vehicular connectivity**
- ☐ 5.3 Develop and/or update **District-wide ADA transition plan** and implement improvements in coordination with park and facility renovations per goals 1 and 2
- ☐ 5.4 Expand community awareness of existing resources and opportunities to **expand utilization of existing offerings** in coordination with promotion and communication strategies included in goal 4

ACTION PLAN

Year 1: 2027				Year 2: 2028			
January February March	April May June	July August September	October November December	January February March	April May June	July August September	October November December
Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Design SRC Development 1.2	Fund SRC Development	Bid / Construct SRC Development					
Complete River Heights Irrigation Well 1.6-B							
Design park improvements - DeKalb Kiwanis 2.1 - A	Fund park improvements - DeKalb Kiwanis, Ph 1	Bid/construct park improvements - DeKalb Kiwanis, Ph 1					
Construct park improvements - Prairie Park 2.1							
			Adopt Key Performance Indicators 3.1			Fund park improvements - DeKalb Kiwanis, Ph 2 2.1 - A	Design & engineer park improvements - DeKalb Kiwanis

ACTION PLAN

Year 3: 2029				Year 4: 2030			
January February March	April May June	July August September	October November December	January February March	April May June	July August September	October November December
Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
			Decommission Haish Gymnasium 1.5				
	Develop Community Center Use Plan 1.4		Implement Community Center Use Plan				
				Complete District-wide Indoor space Assessment 1.3			
		Fund park improvements - Katz Park 2.1 - A	Design & engineer park improvements - Katz Park	Bid/construct park improvements - Katz Park			
Bid/construct park improvements - DeKalb Kiwanis, Ph 2							
					Conceptualize park improvements - Prather Park 2.1 - B	Fund park improvements - Prather Park	Design & engineer park improvements - Prather Park

Legend



Improve Indoor
Facility Access



Maintain and
Update Parks
and Open Spaces



Improve and
Expand District
Programs and
Special Events



Grant Candidate

ACTION PLAN

Year 5: 2031				Year 6: 2032			
January February March	April May June	July August September	October November December	January February March	April May June	July August September	October November December
Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
				Plan → Maintenance Campus Renovations 1.7	Construct → Maintenance Campus Renovations		
					Conceptualize park improvements - Garden of Eden Park 2.1 - B	Fund park improvements - Garden of Eden Park	Design & engineer park improvements - Garden of Eden Park
Bid/ construct park improvements - Prather Park 2.1 - B							

ACTION PLAN

Years 7 - 10				Beyond 10 Years 2037+	
Year 7: 2033	Year 8: 2034	Year 9: 2035	Year 10: 2036		
Implement Buena Vista Clubhouse Improvements 1.6 - C			Implement River Heights Operational Improvements 1.6 - B		
	Implement Buena Vista Operational Improvements 1.6 - D				
Bid/construct park improvements - Garden of Eden Park	Fund park improvements - Chesebro Park 2.1 - C	Implement park improvements - Chesebro Park		Complete River Heights Clubhouse Improvements 1.6 - A	
		Fund park improvements - Wright Farm Park 2.1 - C	Implement park improvements - Wright Farm Park		Complete park improvements - Welsh Park 2.1 - C
Fund park improvements - McCormick Park 2.1 - C	Implement park improvements - McCormick Park		Fund park improvements - Mason Park / Larson Lake 2.1 - C	Implement park improvements - Mason Park / Larson Lake 2.1 - C	
				Complete park improvements - Veterans Park 2.1 - C	

Legend



Improve Indoor
Facility Access



Maintain and
Update Parks
and Open Spaces



Improve and
Expand District
Programs and
Special Events



Grant Candidate

YEAR 1 - 2027

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.2 Design **SRC Development**, final design anticipated to begin prior to the start of Year 1
- ☐ 1.2 Fund **SRC Development**
- ☐ 1.2 Bid/construct **SRC Development**
- ☐ 1.6-B, Complete **River Heights** Irrigation Well

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1 Construct park improvements for **Prairie Park**, complete work scheduled to begin prior to the start of Year 1
- ☐ 2.1A, Design and engineer park improvements for **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Phase (Ph) 1, final design anticipated to begin prior to the start of Year 1
- ☐ 2.1-A, Fund **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Ph 1
- ☐ 2.1-A, Bid/construct **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Ph 1

Goal 3: Improve and Expand Programs / Special Events

- ☐ 3.1 Adopt **key performance indicators for program life cycle health**

YEAR 2 - 2028

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.2 Construct **SRC Development**

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-A, Construct **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Ph 1
- ☐ 2.1-A, Fund **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Ph 2
- ☐ 2.1A, Design and engineer park improvements for **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Ph 2

YEAR 3 - 2029

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.2 Complete **SRC Development** construction
- ☐ 1.4 Develop **Community Center Use Plan**
- ☐ 1.4 Implement **Community Center Use Plan**
- ☐ 1.5 Decommission **Haish Gymnasium**

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-A, Bid and construct park improvements for **DeKalb Kiwanis Park**, Ph 2
- ☐ 2.1-A, Fund park improvements for **Katz Park**
- ☐ 2.1A, Design and engineer park improvements for **Katz Park**

YEAR 4 - 2030

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.3 Complete District-wide **Indoor Space Assessment**
- ☐ 1.4 Implement **Community Center Use Plan**
- ☐ 1.5 Decommission **Haish Gymnasium**

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-B, Bid/construct park improvements for **Katz Park**
- ☐ 2.1-B, Conceptualize park improvements for **Prather Park**
- ☐ 2.1-B, Fund park improvements for **Prather Park**
- ☐ 2.1-B, Design and engineer park improvements for **Prather Park**

YEAR 5 - 2031

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-B, Bid and Construct park improvements for **Prather Park**

YEAR 6 - 2032

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.7 Plan **Maintenance Campus Renovations**
- ☐ 1.7 Construct **Maintenance Campus Renovations**

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-B, Conceptualize park improvements for **Garden of Eden Park**
- ☐ 2.1-B, Fund park improvements for **Garden of Eden Park**
- ☐ 2.1-B, Design and Engineer park improvements for **Garden of Eden Park**

YEAR 7 - 2033

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.6-C, Implement **Buena Vista Clubhouse** improvements

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-B, Bid and Construct park improvements for **Garden of Eden Park**
- ☐ 2.1-C, Fund park improvements for **McCormick Park**

YEAR 8 - 2034

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.6-C, Implement **Buena Vista Clubhouse** improvements
- ☐ 1.6-D, Implement **Buena Vista Operational** improvements

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-C, Implement park improvements for **McCormick Park**
- ☐ 2.1-C, Fund park improvements for **Chesebro Park**

YEAR 9 - 2035

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.6-D, Implement **Buena Vista Operational** improvements

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-C, Implement park improvements for **Chesebro Park**
- ☐ 2.1-C, Fund park improvements for **Wright Farm Park**

YEAR 10- 2036

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.6-B, Implement **River Heights Operational** improvements

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-C, Implement park improvements for **Wright Farm Park**
- ☐ 2.1-C, Fund park improvements for **Mason Park / Larson Lake**

BEYOND 10 YEARS - 2037 +

Goal 1: Improve Indoor Facility Access

- ☐ 1.6-A, Implement **River Heights Clubhouse** improvements
- ☐ 1.6-B, Complete **River Heights Operational** improvements

Goal 2: Maintain and Update Parks and Open Spaces

- ☐ 2.1-C, Implement park improvements for **Mason Park / Larson Lake**
- ☐ 2.1-C, Complete park improvements for **Veteran's Park**
- ☐ 2.1-C, Complete park improvements for **Welsh Park**





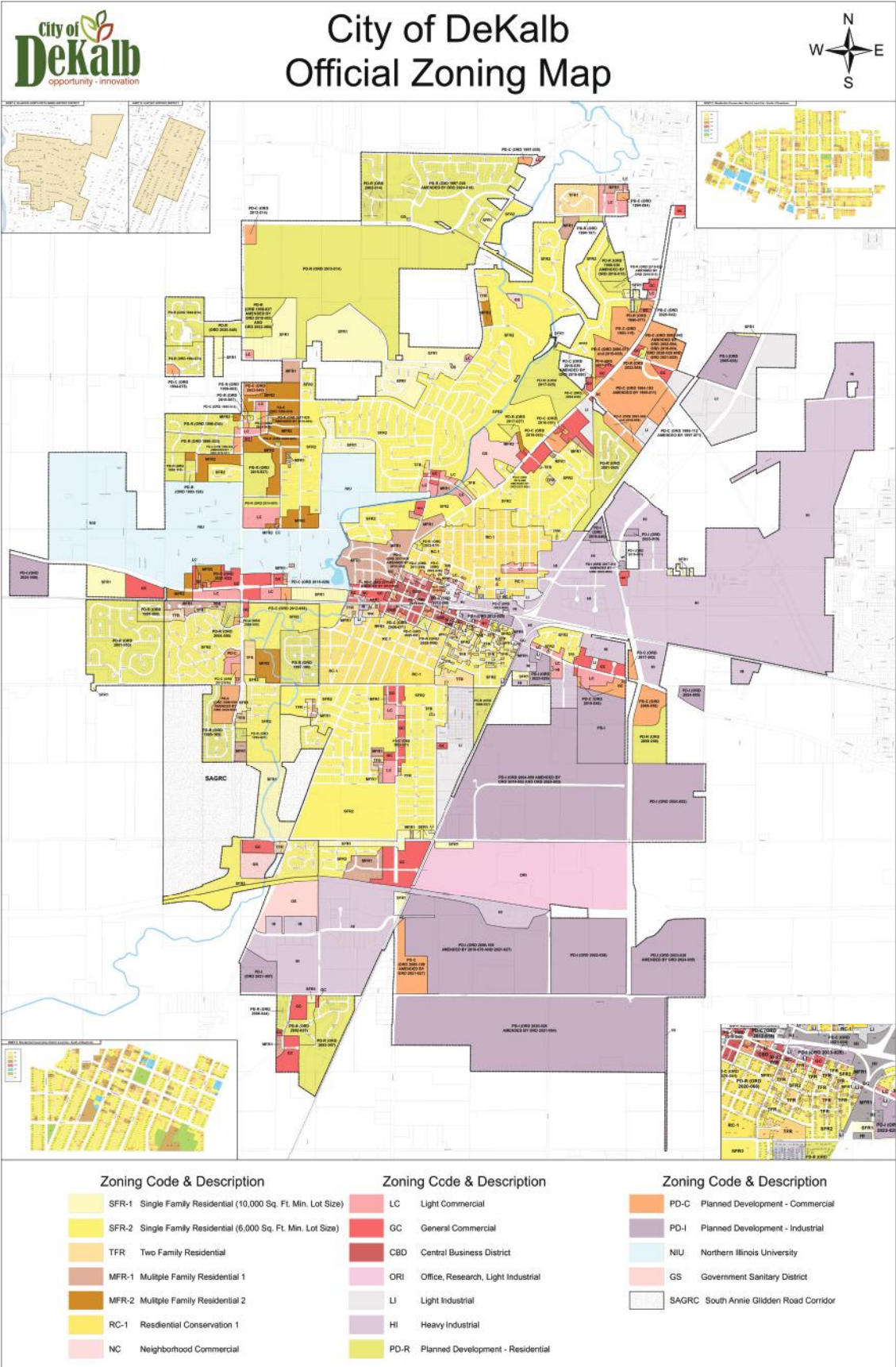
Appendix





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Trails
Parks & Golf Courses
Water

0 1/2 1
Miles

check out our interactive map!

Scan the QR code or go to dekalbparkdistrict.com/locations to view our interactive map and filter locations by amenities!



Appendix A. Estimates of Official Poverty

HOW OFFICIAL POVERTY IS CALCULATED

Following the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of dollar value thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty (available in the table below).

If a family’s total money income is less than the applicable threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty. The official poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes or tax credits and excludes capital gains and noncash benefits (such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and housing assistance). The thresholds do not vary geographically.

Example: Consider a five-person family with two children, their mother, their father, and their

great-aunt. This family’s 2023 poverty threshold is \$37,275. Each family member had the following income in 2023:

Mother	\$14,000
Father	\$13,500
Great-aunt	\$11,000
First child	\$0
Second child	\$0
Total:	\$38,500

Since their total family income (\$38,500) was higher than their threshold (\$37,275), this family would not be considered “in poverty.”

The OMB Statistical Policy Directive 14 directed the Census Bureau to consistently update the poverty thresholds each year for cost of living changes. Thresholds in this report series are adjusted using the CPI-U and are compared to current year (unadjusted for inflation) money income. If, alternatively, the Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series for all Urban Consumers All Items (R-CPI-U-RS) index had been used to inflation-adjust poverty

thresholds from previous years, current poverty rates would be lower. This is because the R-CPI-U-RS results in a smaller cost-of-living adjustment over longer periods than the CPI-U.

While the thresholds, in some sense, represent the needs of families, they should be interpreted as a statistical yardstick rather than as a complete description of what people and families need to live. There are other ways to measure a family’s needs; many government assistance programs use different income eligibility cutoffs, while the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) uses a different approach for setting thresholds and defining resources. Additional information on SPM methodology is available in the SPM technical documentation at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/supplemental-poverty-measure/datasets/spm/spm_techdoc.pdf>.

For a history of the official poverty measure, refer to “Poverty: The History of the Official Poverty

Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years Old: 2023 (In dollars)

Size of family unit	Related children under 18 years old								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person (unrelated individual):									
Under 65 years	15,852								
65 years and over	14,614								
Two people:									
Householder under 65 years	20,404	21,002							
Householder 65 years and over	18,418	20,923							
Three people	23,834	24,526	24,549						
Four people	31,428	31,942	30,900	31,008					
Five people	37,901	38,452	37,275	36,363	35,807				
Six people	43,593	43,766	42,864	41,999	40,714	39,952			
Seven people	50,159	50,472	49,393	48,640	47,238	45,602	43,808		
Eight people	56,099	56,594	55,575	54,683	53,416	51,809	50,136	49,710	
Nine people or more	67,483	67,810	66,908	66,151	64,908	63,198	61,651	61,268	58,907

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024.

Measure,” available at <www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/about/history-of-the-poverty-measure.html>, or “The Development of the Orshansky Poverty Thresholds and Their Subsequent History as the Official U.S. Poverty Measure” by Gordon M. Fischer, available at <<http://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1997/demo/fisher-02.html>>.

Weighted Average Thresholds

Since some data users want a summary of the 48 thresholds to get a general sense of the “poverty line,” the following table provides the weighted average thresholds for 2023. The weighted average thresholds are based on the relative number of unrelated individuals and primary families of each size and composition and are not used in computing poverty estimates.¹

Weighted Average Poverty Thresholds: 2023

Size of family unit	Dollars
One person	15,480
Two people	19,680
Three people	24,230
Four people	31,200
Five people	36,990
Six people	41,860
Seven people	47,670
Eight people	52,850
Nine people or more	62,900

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2024 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC).

HOW INCOME IS MEASURED

A family’s money income is used to determine the poverty status of the family and all individuals in it. Money income is calculated for each person 15 years and older in the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC) sample. Respondents are asked questions on the amount of money income received in the preceding calendar

year from each of the following sources:

1. Earnings.
2. Unemployment compensation.
3. Workers’ compensation.
4. Social Security.
5. Supplemental Security Income.
6. Public assistance.
7. Veterans’ payments.
8. Survivor benefits.
9. Disability benefits.
10. Pension or retirement income.
11. Interest.
12. Dividends.
13. Rents, royalties, and estates and trusts.
14. Educational assistance.
15. Alimony.
16. Child support.
17. Financial assistance from outside the household.
18. Other income.

Data on income collected in the CPS ASEC cover money income received (exclusive of certain money receipts such as capital gains) before payments for personal income taxes, Social Security, union dues, Medicare deductions, etc. Money income also excludes tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. Money income does not reflect that some families receive noncash benefits such as nutritional assistance programs, health benefits, and subsidized housing. In addition, money income does not reflect the fact that noncash benefits often take the form of the use of business transportation and facilities, full or partial payments by businesses for retirement programs, medical and educational expenses, etc.

The income of the household does not include amounts received by people who were members during all or part of the previous year

if these people no longer resided in the household at the time of the interview. However, the CPS ASEC includes income data for people who are current residents but did not reside in the household during the previous year. It should be noted that although the income statistics refer to receipts during the preceding calendar year, the demographic characteristics such as age, labor force status, and household composition are as of the survey date.

Data users should consider these elements when comparing income levels. Moreover, readers should be aware that for many different reasons, many respondents tend to misreport or not report all types of income.² Income earned from wages or salaries, the largest component of money income, tends to be more accurately reported and weighted totals are in line with other aggregate benchmarks.³ Still, estimates in this report are affected by ongoing challenges of nonresponse and misreporting. More details on the impact of nonresponse bias are available in Appendix C.

ENDNOTES

¹ A primary family is a group of two or more people, one of whom is the householder, related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. All such people (including related subfamily members) are considered members of one family.

² For more information about the extent and nature of nonresponse and misreporting, refer to Adam Bee, Joshua Mitchell, Nikolas Mittag, Jonathan Rothbaum, Carl Sanders, Lawrence Schmidt, and Matthew Unrath, “National Experimental Wellbeing Statistics,” SEHSD Working Paper #2023-02, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2023, <www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2023/demo/SEHSD-WP2023-02.html>.

³ For more details on how income aggregates compare across different surveys, refer to Jonathan L. Rothbaum, “Comparing Income Aggregates: How do the CPS and ACS Match the National Income and Product Accounts, 2007–2012,” SEHSD Working Paper 2015-01, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2015, <www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2015/demo/SEHSD-WP2015-01.pdf>.

IDNR Grant Administration Division Per IPRA-Park & Natural Resource Management Section's Recommendations

USEFUL LIFE CRITERIA

<u>FACILITY</u>	<u>Expected useful life</u>	<u>Evaluation Criteria – Factor</u>
<u>BB/Softball fields</u>	8-10 years	# Games/week, # Practices/week Grass infields? Maintenance Procedure/Standards Is site used for multiple uses, soccer, football? Is space used for organized or programmed events? Spectator considerations – bleachers Concession stands
<u>BB/Softball Field Lighting</u>	20 years	Pole Type (wood, steel, concrete) Wiring type (aluminum, copper) HID or incandescent fixtures Existing FC vs. new standards Accepted grounding systems? Panel Capabilities/Technology Electrical Code compliance
<u>Soccer Fields</u>	8-10 years	Usage rating A/B/C/D # games/week, # weeks/year, time of year, age of user
<u>Irrigation system</u>	20 years	Irrigated Y/N Usage # games per week Drainage considerations Maintenance standards/levels Is site used for organized or programmed events? To what extent? Is site used for multiple uses? Softball, BB or football
<u>Tennis Courts</u>		Lighted Y/N (Use BB Criteria)
Resurface	12-15 years	Surface clay, asphalt, other
Total Renovation	20-25 years	Color coat/overlay/rebuild Frequency of color coating Location – high water table Fencing material/posts Preventive maintenance Location: Water table concerns Is site used for organized or programmed events? To what extent? Are courts used for making ice?
<u>Basket Ball Courts</u>		Same as tennis courts
Resurface	12-15 years	
Total Renovation	20-25 years	
<u>Volleyball Courts</u>		Sand / Grass? Lighted Y/N Borders Bleachers/spectator area
<u>Shuffleboard</u>		Same as tennis courts
Resurface	12-15 years	
Total Renovation	20-25 years	

<u>Picnic Shelters</u>	25 years	Support structures: masonry, steel, wood Roof type: metal, asphalt, shingle, slate, cedar shake Construction type: post & beam, frame Historical value and consideration Preventive maintenance record Is site used for organized or programmed events? To what extent?
<u>Playgrounds</u>	15 years metal 10 years plastic 8 – 12 years wood	Meet Standards? ASTM, CPSC, ADA Daily usage by intended user group Location: school, or neighborhood park Surfacing Material Preventive maintenance record Border construction material Location: retention area/water?
<u>Boat Launch Ramps</u>	15-20 years	Construction materials, gravel, concrete Location i.e. Lake Michigan Annual Usage Is facility fee generating? Region
<u>Fishing Piers & Docks</u>	15-20 years	Original construction materials plastic, wood, aluminum Location i.e. Lake Michigan Annual volume/usage Winter removal and storage? Preventive maintenance record
<u>Swimming Pools</u>	25 years	Stand alone site?
Bathhouse	25 years	Heated for winter?
<u>Boathouse</u>	10-15 years	Attached to Community Center Y/N Mechanical room connected? ADA compliance Y/N Local Code compliance? Preventive Maintenance record Location i.e. Lake Michigan
<u>Restrooms</u>	Same as pools	Same as pools
<u>Parking Lots</u>		Gravel, asphalt or concrete
Resurface	10-12 years	Monthly volume and load use
Total Renovation	20-25 years	i.e. delivery trucks or garbage Spring use –heavy, moderate, light Seal coating frequency Preventive maintenance record Original construction design loads Location: flooding/water concerns Snow removal or salt use? Curbed or sheet drainage to edges
<u>Bike Paths</u>	Same as Parking lots	Same as Parking lots
<u>Interpretive Center</u>	Same as Bathhouse	Same as Bathhouse

Peer Agency List: Agencies with Populations Between 30,000 - 50,000

Agency	Population	Year of Data
Hilliard Recreation & Parks Department	37,303.0	2024
Glendale Heights (Village of)	32,796.0	2024
LaGrange County Parks	40,500.0	2024
Northville Parks and Recreation	37,877.0	2024
Wauwatosa (City of)- Department of Public Works	47,038.0	2024
Crystal Lake Park District	50,000.0	2024
Elk Grove Park District	32,812.0	2024
Lombard Park District	43,779.0	2024
Dublin Parks & Recreation Department	49,328.0	2024
Downers Grove Park District	49,706.0	2024
Independence Township Parks, Recreation & Seniors	36,951.0	2024
Westerville Parks and Recreation	37,958.0	2024
Northbrook Park District	34,058.0	2024
Inver Grove Heights Parks & Recreation	35,000.0	2024
Sun Prairie Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department	38,387.0	2024
Highland Park (Park District of)	30,163.0	2024
Brownsburg Parks	33,273.0	2024
Beavercreek (City of)	46,549.0	2024
Wentzville (City of) Parks and Recreation	47,497.0	2024
Gurnee Park District	33,193.0	2024
Bourbonnais Township Park District	40,138.0	2024



Meeting Summary

Date: August 6, 7, and 22, 2025
Location: The Terrace Room, DeKalb Park District
Virtual Conference Call
Attendees: Park District Board of Commissioners
David Castro, President
Brian Tobin, Vice President
Tia Anderson, Treasurer
Michelle Foster, Commissioner
Dean Bourdages, Commissioner
Staff Department Heads
Chrissy Tluczek, Superintendent of Recreation
Cindy Slinkard, Golf Course and Rental Facilities Operations Manager
Jenny Schnider, Superintendent of Finance and Administration
Mat Emken, Superintendent of Parks and Development
Mike Siefken, Golf Maintenance Superintendent
Bridget Deatrick, Hitchcock Design Group (HDG)
RE: DeKalb Park District Comprehensive Master Plan Study
Staff and Board Interviews

Purpose of Meeting:

HDG staff conducted eight in-person interviews with DeKalb Park District (DKPD) Staff and Commissioners on August 6 and August 7, 2025, and one online conference call interview on August 22, 2025. These interviews were held as informal conversations between Hitchcock Design Group and one participant, except for one interview which included two participants. The conversation was structured around the overarching question of “**What should the DKPD Focus on Over the Next 5-10 Years?**” During the interview, participants were asked a series of questions to be considered through their roles in the Park District, what they hear from the community, and their professional opinions. Depending on the conversation progression, questions 1 through 7 may not have been asked in the same order to all participants or may have been depending on time and prior conversation topics. The final 15-minutes of every interview was spent discussing questions 8 through 10.

Summary:

The following is a combined summary of all participants’ responses to each question and are not direct quotations. General comments and themes that were provided by more than one participant are noted by a number in parentheses following the comment.



1. *What is your history in the community and position/role with the Park District? How do you interact with the Park District locations, amenities, and services as a community member and an employee?*

Participant experience with the Park District and in the greater DeKalb area varied but most are residents of several years or decades (9) who have participated in the Park District services, including with their families (5)

Three of the commissioners are newly elected, within the first months of their first terms of service and 3 referenced a desire to become involved to have a voice in the community, including in response to past changes and controversy (2).

Most (3) of the staff members who participated are new to the DeKalb Park District, having been in their roles less than five-years, although some staff also discussed prior experience at other, similar organizations (4).

- a. *What works well and should be maintained? Expanded?*

5 participants discussed the pool redevelopment and 1 added that the splash pad will be a good addition. 1 also described the upcoming Community Center renovation as positive, particularly for rental improvements and the front desk experience.

The golf courses and programs were also mentioned by 2 participants as greatly improved, with specific comments referencing the Buena Vista course driving range, improvements to woman's tees, and generally hearing more compliments about the courses. 4 noted the profitable golf course operations as a significant achievement. 1 participant acknowledged the popularity and profitability of golf but also noted that it is a limited user group and that the culture can feel restrictive to outsiders (1). 1 participant also commented on the amount of resources used to maintain golf courses and opportunities to improve sustainability (1).

2

In general, participants complimented the Park District, citing beautiful outdoor areas (1) and that the amenities have been improving overall (2). A few participants also mentioned specific amenities or services they like including the new fitness stations near Prairie Park (1), the pavilions at Lions and Hopkins Parks (1), the playground at Hopkins Park (1), and lighting at Hopkins Park. Participants also noted the popularity of pickleball (1) and the walking/running/biking trails (3) with 1 commenting on the recent work and maintenance improvements. However, it was also suggested to add more loops to add distance, variety, and interest on the shorter lengths (1), or to widen the trails to accommodate more users (1). Other path suggestions included safety and comfort amenities such as restroom access (1). 1 participant also noted that trail use can be difficult if parking locations or public status is unclear.

Participants discussed programming with 3 citing a great amount and variety of options and noting a lot of creativity in what is offered, and 1 suggesting that new options encourage participation. However, 1 person suggested that continuing to try things that don't work detracts from popular programs that



need the resources. 5 participants described the popularity of the special events including 4th of July, Music at the Mansion, and Kite Fest.

1 participant referenced the ongoing benefits of the significant equipment and fleet upgrades that have already been completed.

a. *What could be improved and how?*

4 participants noted that the District's ongoing transitional period has been challenging with 2 referencing the District's history of executive turn-over, and 3 stating that there had been some controversial policies, including financial decisions that the community as a whole found questionable. 1 participant also noted how persistent short staffing in certain roles forces the District to maintain instead of improving itself. 5 participants did note a personal or general perception that things are improving and that past mistakes are being corrected. 1 noted that they feel staff actually care about the District and another commented that staff do a good job (1).

1 participant explained that a lot of prior work was done to break down barriers between divisions, and 2 commented that they want to see integration continue with 1 calling for more communication and collaboration. Overall, 2 mentioned that staff buy-in at all levels is important and 1 person commented that there is a need for greater awareness and inclusion of various community groups. 3 people feel that staff/board/worker cohesion is improving.

1 participant discussed the challenges of updating outdated and poorly done development from the 1990s building boom (1) and the burden on the budget of completing multiple concurrent projects (1). Specifically, 1 participant commented that multiple playgrounds need updates due to age. 1 participant stated a goal of leaving the system better than it was and another of setting up the next generation for success (1).

3

3 participants discussed the Comprehensive Master Plan process noting a desire for collaboration (1), representation of multiple perspectives (2), and interest in basing actions on results (2).

2. *How does time affect staff and user experiences?*

a. *Time of day? Day of week?*

Timing of programs was the most frequently cited reasons why staff and commissioner think the community may not participate in District offerings (5) with unavailability during business hours (2) provided as an example. 2 participants noted the high demand for the 5pm – 9pm time slot for nearly every location followed by Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon as the next most requested times for programs (1). Possible exceptions to this demand were cited as senior and early childhood activities (2). 2 participants described the difficulty of offering programs and events outside of business hours when many staff have already worked a full week and 1 explained that it can be hard to find volunteers to supplement staff capacity. 1 participant observed a similar trend in park use noting the busiest times as evenings but also commented that many locations are used all day to some extent.



b. Seasonally?

3 participants noted that some amenities are inherently seasonal, but others wondered if off-season uses could be added such as summer sledding (1) or snow removal on bike trails (1). Another suggested that improved concessions could extend visit durations or seasons (1). New opportunities for winter revenue generation were suggested by 2 participants, including indoor golf spaces and programs (1). 1 also mentioned that summer heat and humidity is starting to limit outdoor space use.

Building limitations were mentioned by multiple participants including unpleasant summer conditions at Sports and Recreation Center (2) and Haish Gymnasium (2) due to lack of air conditioning and ventilation.

3. Who are your community members and user groups?

a. Are users representative of the community demographics? Who isn't participating?

Most people commented that the community is well represented at various locations and events, but perception of integration was mixed. 2 participants were not aware of any lack of inclusion while 3 felt that representation was limited by area of the community and type of event. Specifically, participants estimated that low income (1), non-white (2), and Hispanic (3) participants are under-represented overall, although 3 participants described the pool as one of the only melting pots in the city where all demographics came together, and 1 noted similar integration at the 4th of July event.

4

1 participant explained that special recreation participation is low because most people are served through Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association (KSRA), but another noted that when special needs individuals do participate, the program providers do not always have the necessary resources for their full inclusion (1).

Teenagers were also identified as a low participation group (4) as well as adults without kids in their homes (1). 1 participant spoke about a perception that parks are for little kids which could be limiting use amongst some residents.

b. What might be preventing community use?

Participants cited transportation (4), knowledge/awareness (5), and not feeling welcome (2) as possible barriers to community use. Specifically, 1 person mentioned that transportation is a concern throughout the community and not unique to the Park District. Walkability improvements by working with others, like the City, was suggested by 1 participant to improve recreation options and non-vehicular access.

1 participant also mentioned that some locations, like Haish Gymnasium and Sports and Recreation Center are not in visible or well-traveled locations so awareness remains low.



A few participants made suggestions to build awareness by working with others (3), such as local news (1) and school districts (1), to share information and raise awareness, but 1 participant expressed frustration that past requests to share information via the schools were denied. 3 people mentioned that the website and social media accounts are good but only work when people seek them out. 1 person suggested more physical signage and ads could improve visibility.

1 participant noted that lack of time cannot be fixed by the District.

3 participants referenced significant low-income populations and the barriers that creates. However, participants also provided examples of available assistance (3), including the Camp Power program for underprivileged kids which has received positive reviews from the child attendees and regarding the administration of the program (1). 1 participant noted that program pricing is inconsistent and that some options are overpriced for the market while another suggested that sliding fees and rates based on need could create equity (1).

2 participants described lack of childcare as restrictive and 1 as likely impacting single parent households most. 1 suggested concurrent programming where different/separate child and adult programs take place at the same location and time, so schedules align.

Safety and security were mentioned by 3 participants with 1 further commenting that biking and dropping-off kids unsupervised is declining. The Annie Glidden/University Village neighborhood on the west edge of the community was mentioned by 4 participants as having real and perceived safety concerns which prevent some residents from visiting the renovation at Welsh Park. 2 participants commented that the park renovation has resulted in some positive increase in use, but 2 acknowledged there is still resistance to visiting from some. 1 participant suggested the Park District take on a larger role in the Welsh Park events held by others in order to connect with what could be an underserved community.

5

c. Who are your partners? Competition?

Participants listed the local YMCA (6), Northwestern Medicine Wellness Center (5), and other, unspecified private fitness centers (3) as competition for District facilities, although some also noted the locations' price points (5), condition (1), membership terms (1), and hours of operations (1) as differentiating the available options. Participants also identified other private competition from local dance studios (1).

For programs, 1 participant described the library significant competition since many of their programs are free and 2 participants noted a large number of private summer camps being offered locally. Park Districts (3), specifically Sycamore (4) were also listed as general competition in their mission and



services provided, however 2 participants felt Sycamore Park District did not detract from DKPD offerings.

1 participant noted that the District receives frequent partnership requests but cannot always determine their appropriate role. A few participants described challenges with existing partnerships including the limitations they place on Park District use, for example the middle school reservation of Sports and Recreation Center (1) and the sports affiliates which contribute to District revenue (5) but limit in-house program space and participation (4). 1 participant noted that the 5013c foundation was recently established and its potential is still undefined. Participants noted the Ellwood House foundation (2) and indoor pool use at the middle school (1) as good existing partnerships.

When asked who some possible partners could be, participants suggested the Chamber of Commerce (1), philanthropic organizations (1), and educational organizations/schools (2). 1 specifically suggested that additional indoor spaces might be available through the School District. Another thought the Park District and travel sports affiliates could do more together (1). 3 participants suggested reviewing what works for the competition, and 1 suggested that the Park District should start competing where it can do better and partnering when it cannot.

2 participants described Northern Illinois University (NIU) as separate with limited interaction although 1 observed that some students integrate into town and stay for multiple years during their studies. Some (3) saw the University as an opportunity for future partnership expansion through cross-advertisement of events and programs (1), collaborations with relevant majors and classes (1), and student employee recruitment (1), but 1 participant noted that past efforts to do more with NIU have failed. 2 participants also suggested students as a new market group such as at a new fitness center (1), at the golf courses (1), or at other unique features that the campus cannot offer (2).

6

4. *Where are opportunities or needs for improvements to the existing parks and open space, facilities, and programs?*

a. *What would you change? Add? remove?*

Challenges with the Haish Gymnasium interior were mentioned by 8 participants including poor air circulation (1), lack of ADA accommodations (1), poor bathroom spaces (2), and an insufficient fitness center (4). Opinions on the building were mixed with some appreciating the unique or interesting character of the building (4) but being unsure what would be feasible at the location (5). Others supported its removal due to its age and operational challenges (3) but 1 participant noted that a replacement must be provided before it can close.

The Sports and Recreation Center was mentioned by 5 participants as very popular, possibly being at capacity (1), but several noted challenges at the facility such as lack of multipurpose space (1), limited future expansion (2), and insufficient spectator areas (1). 2 participants also noted that the planned renovations to improve facility aesthetics are needed. 5 participants suggested



that it would be a good location to expand/create new indoor spaces due to land availability and existing infrastructure, although some mentioned that this would impact the sports fields (3).

Generally, participants described other facility infrastructure issues (2), including interior aesthetics (2) and roof replacements (1) as District-wide needs. Parking (1) and open-air shelters (1) were also mentioned as generally poor or outdated across the District.

The golf courses were praised for their outdoor improvements (1) but facility age and poor conditions were noted as concerns at both courses (2) and insufficient office spaces were cited at River Heights (2). It was also suggested that the Buena Vista maintenance buildings be consolidated and security improved (1). 2 participants also suggested a full renovation at River Heights to expand the course and driving range, add virtual bays, provide a new clubhouse that could offer meeting and banquet rentals, and improve office spaces.

Participants suggested several specific park renovations including at Hopkins to increase use (1), DeKalb Kiwanis to improve soccer play (3), ballfields (1), drainage issues (1), and parking (2), better separating Raymond Park from adjacent private property (1), and Katz to restore the ballfields (1) and repair the parking lot (2). 1 participant also suggested synthetic turf fields for DeKalb Kiwanis Park (1). 2 participants described the park spaces in general as too similar and 1 suggested adding unique elements and features to create district locations and experiences within the District. Participants also mentioned some planned and upcoming opportunities which they feel will improve the District including the League of Woman's Voters Park 2025 renovation (1), and a possible renovation plan and grant for Prairie Park Improvements (3). There was also a suggestion add another splash pad (2) and 1 participant observed that most basketball courts are halves, not full.

7

A few participants mentioned a need for attention to details and conveniences such as drinking fountains with bottle fillers (1), bathrooms (2), and shade (2). 2 participants provided an example of obstructed views for Music at the Mansion as ways user experiences can be negatively impacted. 5 participants noted how aesthetics affect first impressions and influence the entire experience, with negative examples of temporary fencing and weed control provided by 1 participant. Another suggested adopting a regular maintenance schedule and adding staff if needed (1). 1 participant expressed their support for naturalized landscapes citing the sustainability and reduced maintenance needs as benefits.

Program suggestions included identifying technology and STEM (1), cultural arts (2), and softball (1) as trending markets, and childcare (2) as an unmet need but 1 participant noted that existing spaces lack accommodations for these types of uses. Some participants also noted that existing competition might prevent expansion into popular markets such as sports (travel programs) (1) and childcare (library) (1). 1 participant also suggested that there are limited options for children and caregivers to participate together, especially during



weekdays. Other possible program suggestions were indoor volleyball (1), children's golf (1), karate (1), more fitness classes (1), and family field trips (1). 1 person commented on how changing time slots and trying new things can displace other options and can hurt existing offerings. 2 participants discussed parent-child programs that are already popular such as Breakfast with the Bunny/Santa and the Daddy Daughter Dance and wondered if similar, more inclusive options could be added. 1 participant also described the Teen Egg Hunt as an outlier because it has good attendance by pre-teen and young teen boys.

5. *Are any new parks, amenities, facilities, and/or programs needed?*

a. *What might be needed to support those?*

b. *What newer trends do you envision fitting well in the community? Which might not?*

Participants suggested adding canoe/kayak launches (2), a multi-season shelter with movable walls and a fireplace (1), and courts, like futsal, that could be used for winter ice skating (1). 1 discussed addition trending amenities including pickleball but also acknowledged the sport's reputation for noise (1). There was also a suggestion for a fully inclusive park, not only adding a single accessible feature (1). 1 participant suggested expanding to an 18-hole disc golf course, citing a recent county study which suggested new tourism opportunities to a larger course.

2 participants also commented on how regional features and recreation tourism could benefit the District. 1 noted that there is a lack of private providers of functional and unique spaces which could an opportunity for the District. Suggestions for possible amenities with regional appeal and revenue generation included rental spaces (2), a consolidated sports complex with lighting (2), a mini-golf course (2), an indoor ice rink (2), and an entertainment complex with non-traditional amenities and food/drink services (2) such as bowling, batting cages, and driving ranges (1). Another suggestion to boost revenue was expanded concessions at key park locations (1). 1 participant also expressed a desire that any regional facility profits would support itself and contribute to other District needs.

2 participants stated that they don't think DeKalb is missing anything significant, with 1 stating that the Park District has a lot of opportunity and is comparable to others.

6. *What park and/or facility improvements are needed to improve and/or expand programs and recreational offerings?*

a. *Locations? Amenities?*

b. *Access?*

c. *Awareness?*

Some participants expressed confidence that new facility spaces would be heavily utilized, specifically; indoor turf (3), an elevated track (4), gyms (3), studios (1), an indoor pool (2), and a modern fitness center (3). 2 participants also noted an existing lack of office space which limits needed staff growth.



(1) participant also commented that the Pak District currently lacks a large parcel that could support major development while maintaining existing uses.

7. *What changes or resources are needed to improve Park District operations?*

Buy-in from staff (2) and the community (2) was noted as critical with participants citing how past challenges have damaged the perception of the District. 2 participants also noted how a few loud voices can be highly influential for positive or negative perception. Related to this, 1 participant commented that misinformation and general opposition to change is widespread but is not isolated to the Park District.

Funds were an overarching theme (8) with participants citing other needs as more staff (4), more part-time help (2), and more (1) and/or the right (2) spaces to keep up with demand. It was also suggested that additional seasonal help should be considered all year (1). 3 people commented that what is provided should be done right, even if at greater expense.

8. *As a representative of the Park District and based on your day-to-day experience, what do think cannot be ignored or deferred?*

4 participants mentioned Haish Gymnasium an immediate need, citing the building's age (1) and deferred maintenance (1). Others discussed the challenges posed by location including its embedment in a neighborhood which limits options (1) and safety concerns due to lack of lighting at night and in the winter (1).

3 participants mentioned that even though the pool is in-progress, they have remaining concerns over its cost (1) and future operations (1), with 1 person mentioning that the new design will reduce full-time staff's ability to monitor and help.

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9. *What should the vision for the Park District be for the next 5 years?*

- Update and add new facility spaces (6) with thoughtful multipurpose design (1), and considering:
 - o An indoor pool (1)
 - o Expanding at the Sports and Recreation Center (2)
 - o How to maximize winter use (1)
 - o How to secure funding (1)
 - o Availability through location, pricing, and welcoming design (1)
- Remove Haish Gymnasium (1)
- Expand paths (1)
- Provide consistent messaging (1)
- Provide unique, but meaningful offerings (2) to bring people into DeKalb (1)
- Maintain and build upon the success of golf (3)
- Maintain what already is already available (2)
- Focus on re-building pool use (1)
- Embrace technology and trends (1)



- a. *What will be different from today and what does/will the community need?*
6 participants discussed the new economic and development opportunities that the industrial development in the southeast section of the City will provide. 3 participants expressed the hope that these new jobs will bring residents, not just commuters, while 5 commented on the economic potential through new revenue (2) and possible sponsorship or partnership opportunities (2).

Participants described other changes in the community including a comment that old industrial DeKalb is almost gone (1) and that the community is generally becoming more accepting and adaptable (1). Another commented on the aging population and need to accommodate seniors (1). Others expressed uncertainty, including that there are several subdivisions plotted without any building scheduled (1) and that NIU has the potential to significantly affect the community due to its large population of students and employees (1). 1 participant spoke to the need to plan for amenity age-outs in areas that shouldn't change, such as new tree planting before mature specimens reach end of life.

- b. *What will the community need to remain relevant to its current residents?*
3 participants noted that good programs keep involvement up, but they must also be convenient (1) and on trend (1). 3 participants stated that the Park District must continue to listen to the current residents.

1 participant discussed the Park District's role in resident quality of life through its locations, activities and services and how people rely on them to stay healthy and active.

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- c. *What does the community need to be attractive to newcomers looking to make DeKalb their home?*
2 participants commented on a need to keep up with competition with 2 noting that people will choose where to live based on what is available, and its condition (2), selecting the location that gives them the most (1), especially for children (2).

2 participants restated the importance of the pool in attracting residents and visitors, with 1 noting that it peaked interest and desire to stay in town amongst NIU students' families when it was previously open. 1 participant suggested that the pool could be used to distribute information and host pop-ups to build awareness of other locations due to its anticipated popularity.

10. *Are there any other comments you would like to share about the DeKalb Park District, or the community in general?*

A few people discussed the discrepancies in the community noting the conflict between pro- and anti- park development opinions (2), wide varieties in desired program times and days (1), and that it is hard to reach people who do not want to be involved (1).

Several people spoke to the uniqueness of DeKalb describing it as far enough west that it can but does not have to compete with the Chicago suburbs (1) but noted that it was



influenced by the suburb boom in the 1990s (1). Despite this, participants described DeKalb as a mix of small town and industry (1) and generally slower paced (1) and laid back (1). 1 participant also noted that DeKalb has history which other suburbs lacks, such as parks and stone construction from the 1920s and properties developed by famous designers or previously occupied by historically significant figures. 1 participant commented on a need for understanding of how being low-income influences peoples' lives, calling for quality options and equitable access regardless of a household's resources.

1 participant described the Park District as doing things the "DeKalb way" to align with the community instead of sticking strictly to industry standards and best practices. The Park District was also described as needing a stronger strategic vision and clearer mission to guide decisions by 2 participants. Participants suggested that the District needs to change with the times and adapt (1) but others cautioned against moving too fast, without enough planning (2).

5 people commented that the District has a lot of parks and 2 commented that there are too many, specifically mentioning a desire to omit "detention parks" and other land that does not benefit the District (2) while 1 observed that the quantity of parks provided requires a lot of resources to maintain. Some participants commented that some parks are isolated which makes them unknown or hard to visit (2), while others are restricted by size (2) or history (real or perceived) (1). 1 participant also observed that focusing on well used parks will have the biggest impact. 1 person commented that distribution and distance between parks is unequal across the District (1) but another remarked that distribution seems good.

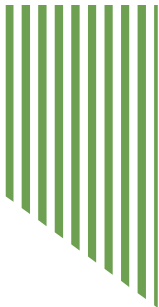
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Some people described opportunity in DeKalb including that it is not land-locked which allows expansion (1) and that many people leave the community to do specific activities which they saw as new market potential (1).



2025 DeKalb Park District Community Survey < Draft >

Results & Analysis
December 23, 2025





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The findings in this report are based on an online survey of n=408 residents within the DeKalb Park District (DPD). The dates of data collection were September 22nd through December 1st, 2025.

The randomly sampled households received survey invitations via email and/or USPS delivery (both postcards and paper questionnaires for older residents). All respondents were given three options to complete the survey (online, by mail, or by phone).

- Most completed the survey online (n=322) or by mailing a completed hard copy questionnaire (n=86). No one opted for a phone interview.

Based on their self-reported demographics, the respondent sample was weighted to match US Census figures for DeKalb by region, gender, age, race/ethnicity, homeowner vs. renter status, and presence of children under age 18 in the household.

- The random sample design included invitations to NIU students and faculty, though response from these groups was relatively low. Still, the weighted results bring the sample demographics closer in line with US Census data, which includes these segments.

The maximum margin of error for a sample of n=408 respondents is +/- 4.9% (at the 95% confidence level).*

Percentages in this report may not always add to 100%, due to rounding.



Sample Demographics

Gender *		
	Male	48%
	Female	50
	Other/Prefer to self-describe	2
Race (multiple responses) *		
	White	69%
	African American/Black	20
	Asian	9
	Middle Eastern/North African	7
	Other/Multi	13
Hispanic/Latino Ethnicity *		
	% Yes	19%
Children in Household Under 18? *		
	% Yes	25%
Own vs. Rent Home *		
	Own	58%
	Rent	42

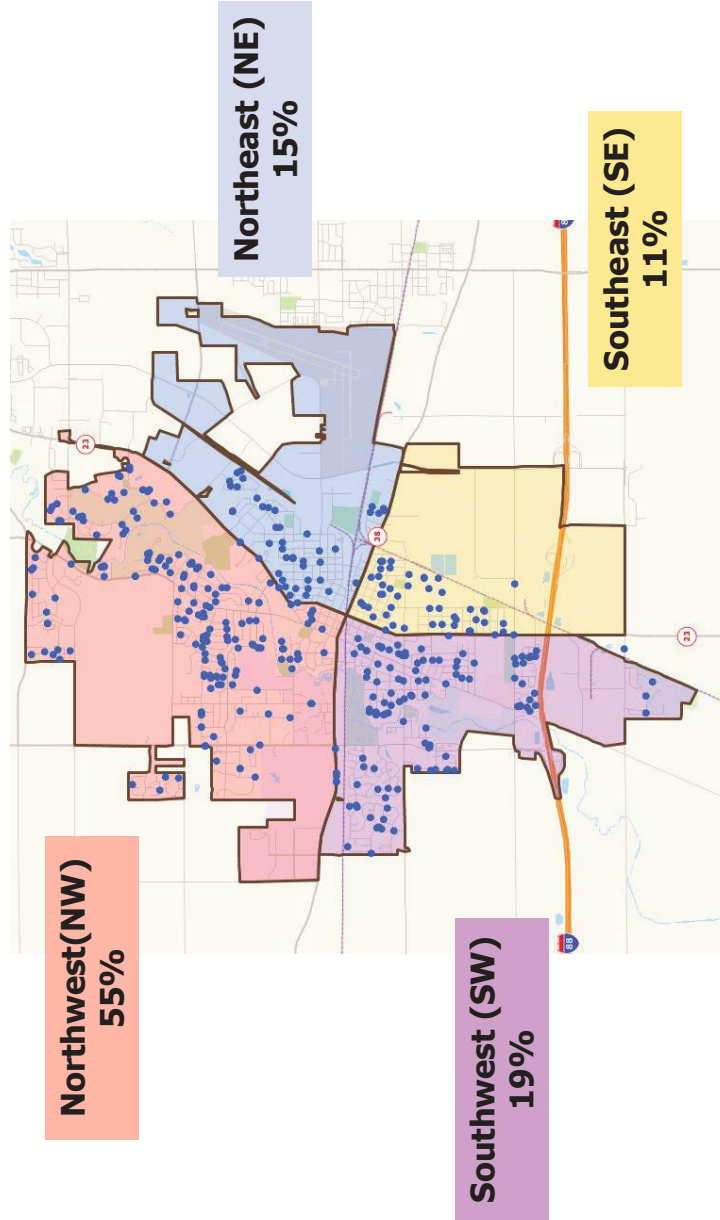
Age *		
	Under 35	35%
	35-44	19
	45-54	13
	55-64	13
	65+	20
	<i>Mean (avg.) for ages 18+</i>	
		46.5
Length of residence in DeKalb		
	< 5 years	16%
	5-9 yrs.	19
	10-19 yrs.	25
	20-29 yrs.	14
	30-39 yrs.	12
	40+ yrs.	14%
	<i>Mean (avg.)</i>	
		19.6 yrs.
Self-Described Resident Type		
	Permanent/year-round resident	86%
	Seasonal (NIU student, faculty)	14

* Respondent sample weighted to align with US Census data for DeKalb, with adjustment for age given NIU student population





Sample Distribution by Region*



* Respondent sample weighted to align with US Census data for DeKalb



Executive Summary: Key Findings





The DeKalb Park District Earns Favorable Opinion Ratings Overall, But Concerns Remain About Specific Facilities, Programs

Summary: Key Findings

- **Key metrics such as overall esteem ratings for the DPD and its perceived value (based on its share of property taxes) are positive and in line with regional benchmarks.** [< pp. 13-15 >](#)
 - On a 0-10 esteem scale, 74% have a positive opinion of the District overall, vs. only 9% who are unfavorable (over an 8:1 positive-to-negative margin). This includes 22% who hold the District in the highest regard (scores of 9 and 10).
 - Its average rating is a positive 6.9, which is directly in line with average ratings for park agencies in Northern IL.
 - When informed that about 6% of their property taxes goes to the DPD, 61% rate the agency a good or better value, vs. 22% who consider it a poor value. The average rating of 6.2 is slightly higher than the regional comparison.
 - While the oldest and most long-term residents tend to give the District it's highest esteem ratings, newer residents who moved here in the past 5 years tend to give the highest value scores. Only non-users feel it is a poor value.
- **The District's top strengths are clearly its parks, trails, and outdoor amenities (cited by 44% overall). Residents appreciate the general upkeep of these locations, the easy access to trails, and the number and variety of parks and open space.** [< pp. 16-20 >](#)
 - Its facilities and programs/activities each rank 2nd (cited by 27% each), followed by park administration/staff (17%).
- **When identifying weaknesses or suggested improvements, 37% cite admin/management issues, mostly financial (recent projects such as the pool project, taxes/spending, etc.).** [< pp. 21-25 >](#)
 - This is followed by scattered responses regarding staff or instructors, and the need for more/better communication.
 - Facility issues rank second at 23%, echoing the delays/cost for the pool, or other facilities that need attention (the gym/fitness center, lights at sports fields, etc.).



Likewise, Residents
Feel Outdoor
Amenities/Facilities
Are in Good Shape,
with Specific Indoor
Options Representing
“Gaps”

➤ **Among the outdoor features tested, demand is highest for walking and biking trails, followed by playgrounds, a dog park, disc golf course, natural grass sports fields, and a golf course/driving range. Each of these are deemed readily available among those most interested.**

- The only “gaps” for outdoor features (not currently available) are batting cages and sand volleyball courts. However, only 7% to 10% of residents express an interest or demand for each.
- In fact, the #1 priority for outdoor recreation is clearly trails (continued improvements, connectivity, etc.), cited by 41%. Dog parks and playgrounds run a distant 2nd at only 7% each.

< [pp. 48-53](#) >

➤ **By comparison, many of the indoor features and facilities tested represent “gaps” in that they are not deemed readily available – either by the DPD or anyone else (other agencies, private facilities/gyms, etc.).**

- The only indoor amenities deemed readily available are an indoor walking/running track (highest with 50% demand/interest) and indoor basketball/volleyball courts (22% demand).
- A fitness facility receives the 2nd highest level of demand at 46%, but less than half of these residents feel that this need/interest is currently being met. This represents an opportunity for the DPD, followed by indoor pickleball courts and/or visual arts space/studios.
- All other indoor features tested (aerobics/dance space, indoor turf fields, a golf simulator, batting cages, or theater/rehearsal space) garner lower levels of demand (15% or less for each).

< [pp. 40-46](#) >



Virtually All Residents Recently Used/Visited DPD Parks and Outdoor Properties, Along with its Indoor Facilities

Summary: Key Findings

- **Overall, 92% report someone in their household going to a DPD property in the past year, with Hopkins Park by far the top destination (70%).**
 - A least a third also reported going to Lions, Katz or Prairie Parks, or to the Nature Trail. One in four recently visited Annie's Woods or Dekalb Kiwanis Park.
 - Among the facilities, one in four went to the SRC, the Ellwood House Museum, or the Hopkins Park Community Center/ Terrace room in the past year. Slightly fewer went to Haish Gym or one of the DPD's golf course (13% to 16% each).

[< pp. 32-33 >](#)
- **Satisfaction with these locations is very strong, with at least 86% satisfied with their overall experience and the accessibility, safety, and cleanliness at DPD sites.**
 - Satisfaction is also strong for staff service (67% satisfied vs. 6% dissatisfied). The remaining 27% are neutral, most likely because they have little or no interaction with staff during their visits and do not have an opinion.
 - Consistently, satisfaction with DPD parks and facilities is highest among the oldest and more long-term residents, as well as those in the NW region. Slightly lower scores (though still positive) tend to come from residents under age 35 and those in the NE and SE regions.
 - Any dislikes tend to be scattered responses for specific locations, but general feedback centers around a need for more upkeep (usually District trails, garbage in parks, or better cleaning at facilities such as the SRC or Haish Gym).

[< pp. 34-37 >](#)
- **Among relatively few non-users, the top reason for non-usage is not having children at home (n=20 out of 31). This suggests a perception that the DPD is mostly focused on children and young families, and less relevant to non-child households (regardless of the adult's age).**
 - The 2nd biggest reason for non-usage is lack of awareness with DPD parks/facilities, health mobility issues, and/or general lack of interest or free time.

[< pp. 38 >](#)



The Biggest Program Opportunities/"Gaps" Center Around More Adult Options

➤ **Overall, community events garner the most demand among programming options (cited by 37%). These residents are generally satisfied with the current event options (no "gap").**

< [pp. 58-61](#) >

- Those seeking more in this area are especially interested in more music options or concerts, family events and street fests or holiday themes, and nature- or community-focused activities.

➤ **Nearly a third express a need or interest in either sports or non-sports for adults ages 18 to 54 (29% for each), followed by demand for sports (17%) and non-sports programs for active adults ages 55+ (21%).**

- Each represent "gaps" currently, meaning many feel this interest is not being met (especially for 18- to 54-year-olds).
- By comparison, residents most interested in youth sports for ages 5-12 and/or pre-school programs report plenty of options currently (non-gaps).

➤ **The top program priorities that residents seek form the District are (in ranked order):**

< [pp. 62-65](#) >

- Sports for adults 18-54 (usually basketball, disc golf, exercise/fitness programs, pickleball)
- Non-sports for 18-54 (arts and crafts, social events, nature education, community programs, fitness (dance, yoga))
- Community events (music and concerts, family events, holiday festivals or street fests, nature education)
- Sports/activities for ages 5-12 (more focus on baseball/softball, basketball programs, soccer, dance)
- Non-sports for ages 55+ (social activities, arts, yoga, day trips/excursions, special interest classes, fitness and wellness)
- Sports for 55+ (Pickleball, fitness and wellness, walking groups, yoga, golf).



**For DPD Information,
Most Rely on the
District Website and
Printed Seasonal
Guide**

Summary: Key Findings

- **A majority report referencing the website (65%) or printed program guide (51%) for information on DPD offerings, events, programs, etc.**
 - By comparison, only 17% reference the digital version of the program guide on the website (meaning the printed version is used 3:1 vs. the digital).
- **Other non-DPD sources are also widely used, such as word-of-mouth from friends and neighbors (26%) and the “What’s Happening in DeKalb” website (21%).**
- **Just under one in five (18%) reference the District’s social media postings on Facebook or Instagram, with 7% also getting information from non-DPD social media pages/groups.**
- **Men and younger residents tend to rely most on the District website, while women, older adults (ages 45-54 and 65+), and long-term residents are more likely to reference the printed guide.**
 - The digital guide tends to be used more by younger residents (35-44), those with children, and recent DPD program participants.

< [pp. 67-70](#) >



I. Overall Opinions of DPD: Esteem, Strengths, Improvements Sought, and Value





Overall Opinions of DPD

Overall, local residents have a positive opinion of the DPD, with about three-quarters (74%) giving positive ratings (6+ on a 0-10 scale), including 22% who hold the District in highest regard (scores of 9 or 10).

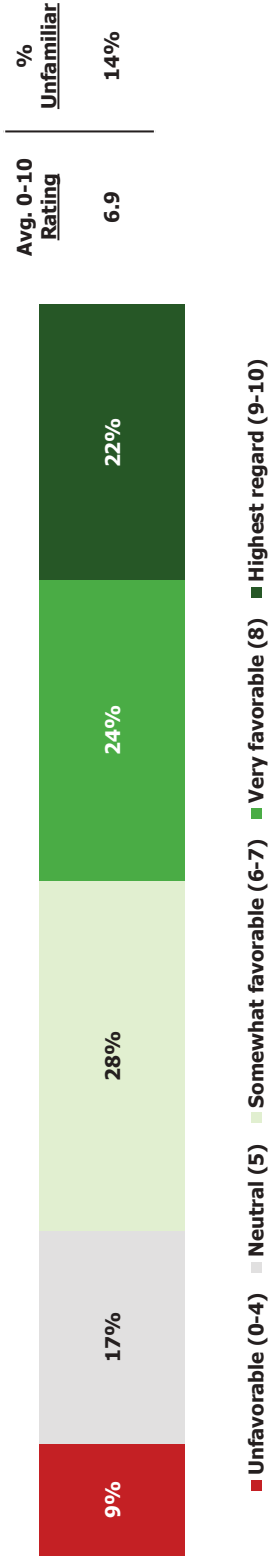
By comparison, only 9% offer negative opinions.

- The District's ratio of favorable-to-unfavorable scores is just over 8:1.

The remaining 17% who offer an opinion give neutral scores, meaning they are likely less familiar with the District to have an opinion either way. Note also that another 14% of the overall sample was unable to give an opinion due to lack of familiarity with the DPD.

- These levels of unfamiliarity/neutral opinions is generally higher than we see for most park agencies and appears to be in part due to the percentage of "temporary" residents (e.g., NIU students, staff, etc.) in the District. In fact, while the number of seasonal respondents is very small, after weighting this group reports 34% unfamiliarity with the DPD.

Overall Esteem Rating: DeKalb Park District (0-10 scale)



Q3. Please give your overall opinion of the DeKalb Park District using the 0-10 scale below. If you are not familiar enough to offer an opinion, please mark "Unfamiliar".

**The average rating of 6.9 is considered “somewhat favorable” overall.**

- Significantly higher ratings tend to come from the oldest and most long-term residents, as well as recent park/facility users and respondents in the NW region.
- The youngest adults under age 35 are less favorable, and neutral ratings tend to come from non-users and residents in the SE area.

Differences: Overall DPD Esteem Rating (0-10 scale)

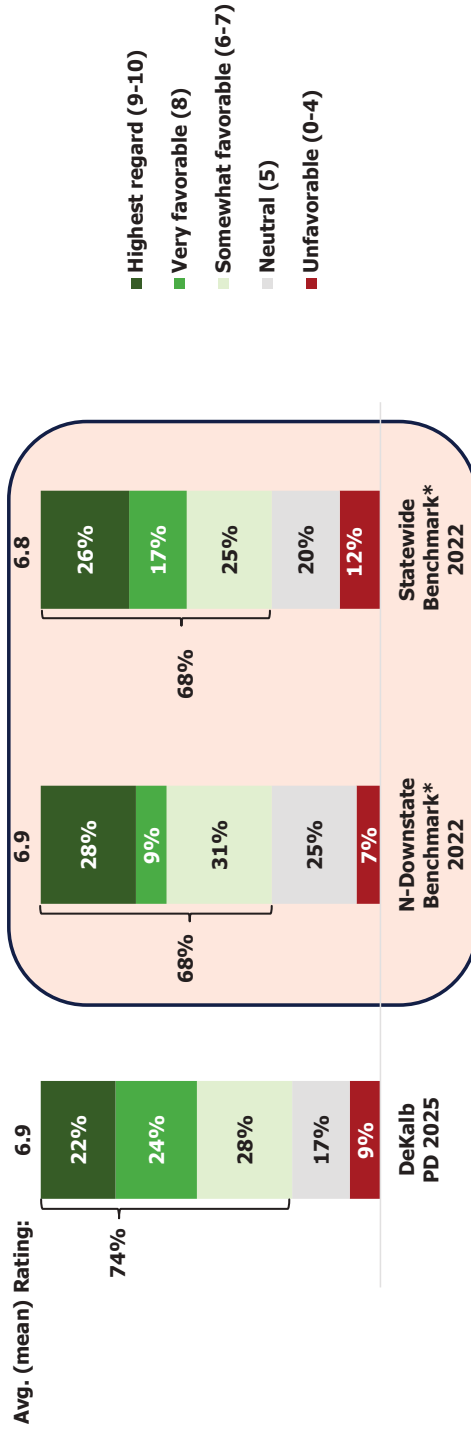
Attribute	Avg. 0-10 Rating	Lower than Avg. Ratings	Higher than Avg. Ratings
Overall Esteem	6.9	- Under age 35 (6.4) - Lived in DeKalb 5-29 yrs. (6.6) - SE region (5.2) - Non-users/visitors (4.8, n=12)	- Ages 65+ (7.6) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (7.5) - NW region (7.2) - DPD users/visitors (7.0)



DPD esteem ratings are virtually identical to regional (Northern IL counties) and statewide benchmarks for park agencies.

- The district has slightly higher “very favorable” scores, but slightly fewer “highest regard” ratings.

Benchmark Comparisons: Overall Esteem Ratings



* The Northern Downstate region from the 2022 IAPD statewide survey includes counties with park district agencies – Boone, DeKalb, Henry, Kankakee, Kendall, Ogle, Putnam, Rock Island, Stephenson, Whiteside, and Winnebago counties.



DPD Strengths/Positives

In an open-ended format, respondents were asked what they appreciate most about the DPD or to describe its strengths.

Nearly half (44%) mention something about District parks and open spaces, clearly the top response. They especially value the cleanliness of these locations, and the availability of walking trails in the system.

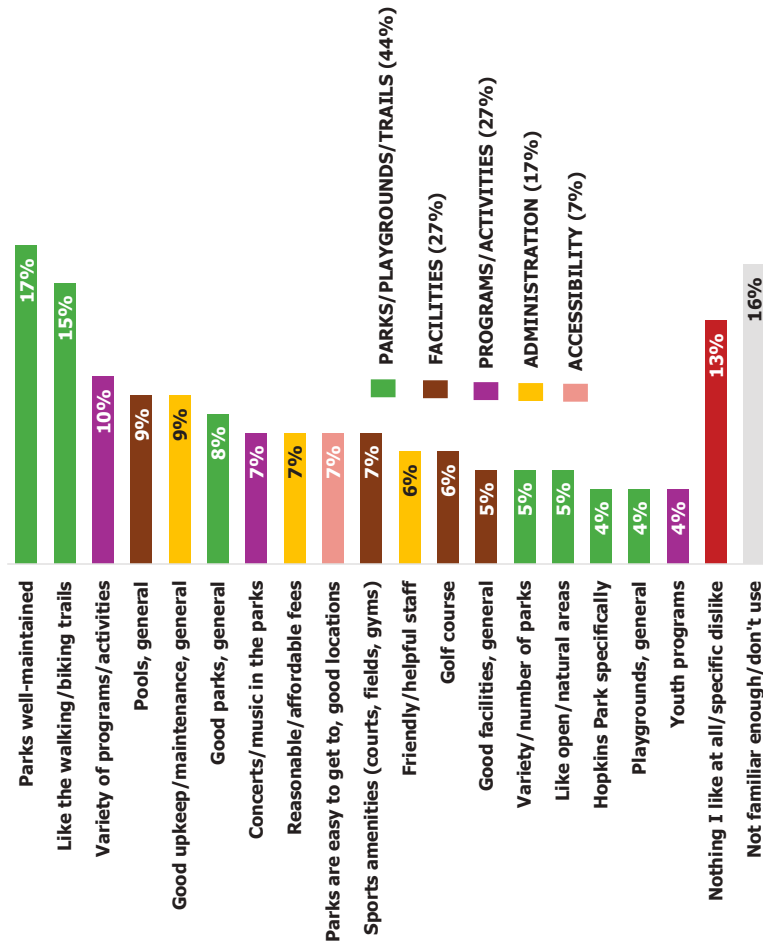
District facilities run a distant second, cited by 27% overall. These responses about equally cite the pool, sports facilities/fields, and golf courses.

An equal number (27%) like the programs and activities, especially the wide range of options, concerts in the park, and youth programs.

Seventeen percent mention something about District management/administration, with 9% appreciating how well-kept things are in general, along with reasonable fees and friendly staff.

- Verbatim responses are provided on the next few pages.

Strengths/Likes About DPD (most frequent open-ended responses)





Parks/Playgrounds/Trails (NET=44%)

Sample Verbatims: DPD Strengths/Positives

"Nice job maintaining and updating city parks. Appreciate local events like Music at the Mansion, Movies in the Park, and Kite Fest."

"Very clean, well-maintained flowers and fields. High quantity to choose from, each with great quality and convenient locations for every neighborhood."

"I appreciate our parks and the way they're well maintained. As a gardener I enjoy native plants and trees. As a grandmother, I'm a great fan of the playgrounds!"

"The parks are beautifully maintained. I honestly don't know specifics because I haven't been there since I was kid, but I remember there being a decent variety."

"Love the parks. They are well maintained and clean from trash. I walk my Huskie everyday, so we visit a lot of the parks."

"Bike trails, well maintained parks (especially Annie's Woods and Hopkins Park)."

"Many walking trails and an abundance of small parks/playgrounds within neighborhoods."

"Development of walking trails and new playgrounds. We love the wooded trail around the Hopkins Park's perimeter and the prairie plants."

"I love the walking path by the Kishwaukee River and use it regularly."

"Good amount of connecting bike paths."

"The parks and play areas are overall good. I am pleased with the recent update of Hopkins Park."

"Great parks, both natural passive nature, and active sports and history."

"Maintains multiple parks throughout DeKalb that are available to all."

"The city offers and maintains parks for people and is willing to continue this service! Walking/running/biking trails and excellently maintained."

"I was surprised to see the number of parks in and around town. Although we don't frequent them all, they appear to be well managed/kept when we drive by."

"Many different parks, playgrounds and activities available for the whole family."

"I like the open public park spaces for all residents. The natural and undeveloped spaces."

"I love the ability to walk and enjoy nature, the trees, the flowers, birds, etc."

"I love the new play area at Hopkins; it is more accessible to kids with disabilities. I love the walking paths, my favorite being the nature trail from 1st Street to Route 23; recently repaved and always clean."





Facilities (NET=27%)

Sample Verbatims: DPD Strengths/Positives

"I have 5 children and they all loved the pool and the many parks around DeKalb. We also love the biking paths. Lots of outside activities to choose from!"

"The pool which we don't have right now."

"Addressing the pool replacement, improving the golf courses after extended neglect, a more professional and competent (than in the past) executive director. Hosting indoor soccer, partnering with AYSO and the City (for 4th of July), community events such as the Fourth of July Fireworks, Kite Fest, Daddy-Daughter Dance to name a few."

"We loved the pool; both my daughter and granddaughter used it frequently."

"I appreciate how they have accommodated the pickleball enthusiasts both indoors and outdoors.:"

"I enjoy that the district has built pickleball courts - I use them every other day during summer!"

"My son utilizes Haish Gym for open gym sometimes."

"Being able to walk indoors despite of the weather, I enjoy daily walking."

"The golf courses have really improved. The parks are starting to look better."

"I am primarily a user of DeKalb's golf facilities. I am satisfied with the pricing and the condition of the golf courses."

"The golf courses with the recent upgrades and maintenance on the course have recently improved."

"The easy way to reserve a shelter house. The parks are well-maintained."

"It feels like they are trying to continue to improve facilities."

"Facilities are top notch. Golf courses are excellent."



Programs /Activities (NET= 27%)

"Amazing variety of programs and maintenance of facilities."

"Offers a variety of year-round activities for the entire community (water park, Sledding Hill, Bandshell, pickle ball courts, walking trails)."

"Variety of sports and other programs offered for children of all ages."

"Diverse programs for young and old at several sites in the community, excellent hard copy magazine with various offerings by season."

"They have good programs for adults ranging from fitness to crafts."

"There seems to be a lot of activities for families, which is great!"

"All the different activities that they offer. When our children were young (adult now) we didn't take advantage of much the park district offered - now that we have grandchildren, trying to do more!"

"The band concerts and fireworks are a good thing for the community."

"Bandshell concerts, Elwood House concerts, bike path trails, frisbee golf course."

"The DeKalb Muni Band concerts in the summer."

"The concerts in the park during the summer months, Hopkins Park for a gathering place for visiting with friends & family."

"I like that it has events for the kids and activities for them to do. Also helped me with signing up my younger brother for some type of soccer event/activity for the cheap as any actual academies and clubs are too expensive."

"They have some cool programs for kids around Easter & Halloween."

"The multiple opportunities for kid's activities."

"Lots of year-round events and opportunities for local business to thrive and shine."

"Camp Maple Leaf is great. Nice clean parks."

Sample Verbatims: DPD Strengths/Positives



Sample Verbatims: DPD Strengths/Positives

Administration (NET=17%)

"I think that all the amenities are very well taken care of and prepared for the public."

"The park district does a great job at maintaining its properties."

"I grew up in the 40s and 50s. We only had 3 or 4 parks in DeKalb. You have created many parks and upgraded equipment as the years go by. Keep up the good work."

"Fees for programs reasonable, facilities generally are good."

"Affordable classes and programs."

"It gives access to free dog parks, dog trails, regular walking trails."

"I like affordable activities for kids. I like the playground."

"Talented staff with programs and children's events."

"I like the Coach of the Aces volleyball team - 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. He is a great mentor. He tries very hard to get the girls to communicate with each other. He encourages team spirit and always commends and compliments the girl's good effort. My daughter looks forward to the practice all week long and feels connection with the game. Coach, in our opinion, is awesome!"

I like most of the staff and some of the supervisors who work for the Park District as I feel that they do genuinely care about the community. They also keep the parks relatively clean."

"Sensei is one of a kind. Truly a fantastic educator and asset to DeKalb. We like the Egg Hunt; we've enjoyed cultural offerings like music and movies. Improvements to the parks has been good. Excited about the new pool. Overall, the pricing is good for events and sports."

"They seem kind when speaking to them."

Accessibility (NET=7%)

"There are parks everywhere in DeKalb -- they're clean and accessible. I also appreciate the variety of facilities (ball courts, walking paths, picnic tables, etc.). I really appreciate that there are plenty of trees and wildlife."

"We like the available gym on Haish, and the Park District seems to have a lot of programs geared toward our youth."

"Maintains multiple parks throughout DeKalb that are available to all."





Similarly, respondents were asked what they dislike or which improvements they would like to see in an open-ended format.

Just over a third (37%) mention administrative or staff issues, mostly focusing on project spending (often for the pool replacement), the fees charged for programs and memberships, and specific issues with staff or service.

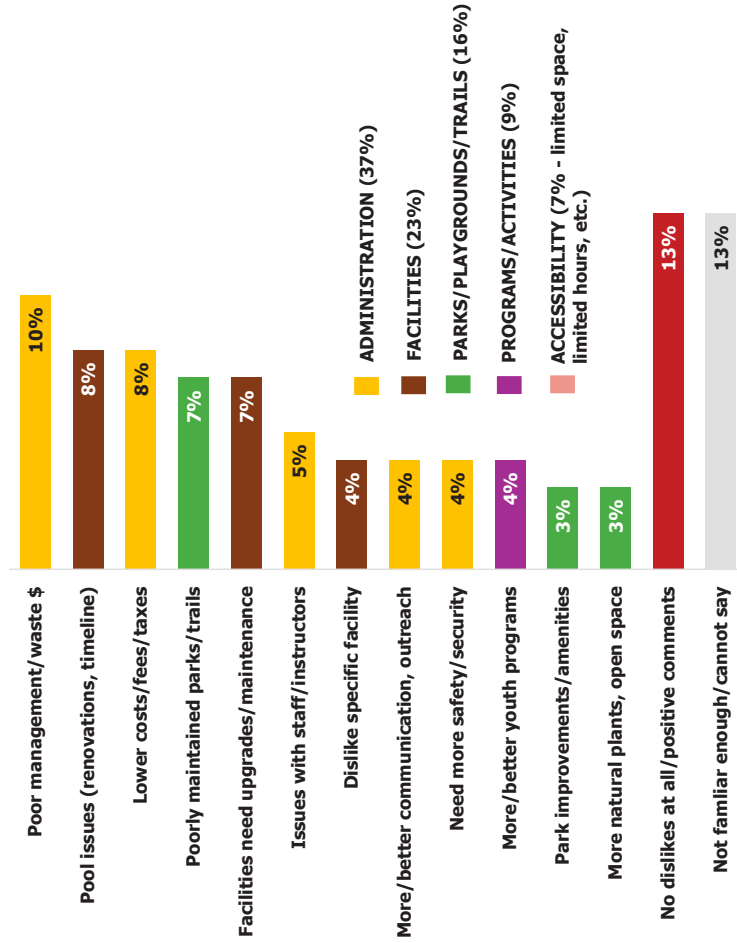
Slightly fewer mention something about District facilities, with again the pool garnering the top response. Others feel DPD facilities in general need more improvements, or cite specific facility issues (e.g., broken equipment at Haish, working lights at Katz Park fields, upgrades at SRC, etc.).

While the parks are the top positive response, they garner only 16% of the negative comments. Usually these residents seek better-kept parks and trails, with most of the rest divided between more park amenities vs. keeping things open and natural.

Only 9% gave comments about programs, with better youth programs (usually sports) coming up most often.

DPD Weaknesses/Improvement Opportunities

Weaknesses/Dislikes About DPD
(most frequent open-ended responses)





Sample Verbatims: Weaknesses/Improvement Opportunities

Administration (NET=37%)

"It appears that projects were started and not quite finished."

"There is a lot of wasted time during the workday. Crews seem unsupervised. The Park District does hire older folks and part time positions are available. Seems like the district could get by with fewer vehicles."

"Lack of continuous leadership, the short- and long-range plans suffer."

"The District seems to be spending a lot of resources trying to emulate high tax-base communities, particularly those east of here, and in doing so, taking away the charm and character of the community. For example, replacing the existing, perfectly fine granite signs with the new ones was done to make the parks look better? Additionally, it would be saddening if the District follows through on all the Prairie Park master plan recommendations, particularly the clearing of so many trees to accommodate an additional nine holes of frisbee golf. Also, the removal of the oak trees at Buena Vista was simply a terrible decision."

"Learn to spend money more appropriately and on things the community actually wants."

"Doesn't seem to be a long-term plan that stays in place through the election cycles."

"Struggling to make decisions, especially regarding Hopkins Pool. The pool design was decided and then redesigned twice? Disability access and good governance of natural areas do not seem to be a priority."

"They seem very slow to start/finish projects, for example the water park project."

"Huge tax burden, not much of a pay off. Would like to see better offerings."

"They forgot to tax Meta for two years, costing taxpayers a lot of money. Finance department is asleep at the wheel. Should have never happened, lost hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"Maybe more free programs for older adults."

"I wish youth baseball didn't cost so much. The price tag is a barrier for many families. I can afford the \$160 for 9u baseball but a lot of people can't. It was heartbreaking to see 30 kids total sign up."

"Walking the inside track during winter used to be much cheaper at the YMCA."

"More supervision for activities that could draw unsupervised minors."

"It'd be nice to have more lighting or cameras active as the sun is setting before it gets dark. Some parts of the path are obscured from main street areas, and I just want to feel a bit safer."

"I tend to avoid the stretch of Nature Trail between the lagoon and Lyons Park due to being told by older residents that it's dangerous around dusk - safety features?"

"Seeking more consistent feedback from residents, like this survey, would be good.. make it annual or biannual so we have more say & the DeKalb Park District has more regular feedback".

"Better advance communication once signed up for a sport about try outs and team information."





Sample Verbatims: Weaknesses/Improvement Opportunities

Facilities (NET=23%)

"I just don't understand the lack of a swimming facility for how many years???? I think the ball was dropped on that one!"

"No swimming pool for two summers. "

"My daughter has been disappointed at how long it has taken to get the Hopkins Pool up and running again. The ice-skating rink years ago was a big flop.

"I strongly dislike how all of the decisions of the current pool were made. The community (and the pool committee) was completely disregarded. Members of the Park Board seemed to not care about members of the community that took time to speak to them about their concerns about the pool. A smaller pool is absolutely ridiculous. We had the opportunity to make something that would provide a great service to the community and the pool currently being built does not meet the community's needs."

"The swimming pool project is/was a disaster. What started out as a 7 million rehab, turned into a 14-million-dollar replacement. Closing the pool for two years is unacceptable. DeKalb did not need a 14-million-dollar pool. As a taxpayer, this project, in my mind, is a complete failure and disregard for the use of taxpayer money. The pool project is a big elephant in my opinion."

"They need to remodel and update the Park District buildings."

"The gym has limited equipment. It's super convenient to my house but I let my membership lapse because of the lack of equipment. "

"All the deferred maintenance on buildings, parks, parking lots, etc. should be made a priority. Many of the park district's assets have been let go for far too long. This should be made a priority before any new assets are even considered. Let's take care of what the community already owns first. The district may also want to consider divesting itself of some of the small parcels of land acquired in the past that serve no real recreational or greenspace purpose."

"Clean or provide broom to clean pickleball courts."

"Haish Gym—tried to use workout equipment and didn't receive adequate staff assistance. "

"The lighting on the fields at Katz Park and the indoor rec center facility are poor quality. Although it appears that all the bulbs are there, the lighting is outdated (I.e., yellow tinted and not bright enough)."

"The gym facility and equipment is lacking. No outdoor basketball courts for kids in my community or nearby."

"Ellwood Museum Park could use more benches and picnic tables in the shade. Signage could be improved for the prairie trail that goes on the other side of the Kishwaukee River and starts on the east side of the bridge on Taylor Street. I love that path but it's hard to get to. It would be really cool if a bridge was added over the river to get to that path and make it a loop!"

"I would love to see the Park District develop an outdoor complex that is capable of hosting sporting tournaments for soccer, baseball, and softball complete with a pavilion and adequate parking. Kiwanis Park could be a good location, as it is close to Route 88. A facility like that could also promote business like restaurants and hotels to develop on the south end of town, which is rather underdeveloped at the moment."





Parks/Playgrounds/Trails (NET=16%)

"The bike path on the side of Route 23 along the golf course is broken and bumpy. We could use more bike path and sidewalks (although I think the issue is more present when we get into Sycamore). I hear security concerns about the bike trail by the university (from Route 38 to Annie Glidden/Taylor) and do not feel safe riding there alone."

"Clear snow/ice from the paths and trails."

"My feelings about the Park District are not particularly negative in any respect, though more might be done (especially in conjunction with NIU grounds) to address litter build-up in open spaces."

"Downed trees often linger for attention. Is the wood reapplied elsewhere?"

"Maybe a bit more care or maintenance in the overall park areas in landscaping."

"Monitoring parks cleanliness more."

"Need control (lack of) on park property that borders other properties (I'm a next-door neighbor to park property)."

"Would be nice to have more seating area, as you walk. More trash cans, close to where trails start and end."

"Some better lighting, even if playgrounds or trails are expected to be closed after dark, it would still help a lot with safety."

"Parts of the park are old like the bathroom facilities."

"Every year the park district mows down vegetation along the river long before migratory monarchs emerge. I found 10 very large monarch caterpillars by WNIU the day before mowing commenced. I released 70 monarchs AFTER the park district mowed everything to the ground along the river."

"Plant more trees."

"Would like to see more naturalized areas with native plants, garbage is an issue the closer to campus you go"

"I'm just worried about the disruption of natural habitats if Prairie Park gets new trails and a huge playground. I think updates can be made without changing the peaceful, undisturbed land and trees."

Sample Verbatims: Weaknesses/Improvement Opportunities





Sample Verbatims: Weaknesses/Improvement Opportunities

Programs/Activities (NET=9%)

"It would be better to have some toddler-ages activities, like swim classes."

"Need more stuff for really little kids."

"Programs for 1-3-year-olds are very limited. There's not a single program to sign my children up for. Sycamore/Genoa over preschool classes and more activities for that age range. I would love to take advantage of more programs for my kids if they were available."

"Youth sports. Specifically, TBall. One thing is picture day shouldn't be the same day they play a game. It's too long of a day for the kids to get pictures done then do a light practice and play a game. We've had to cut games short because kids can't pay attention or too tired."

"Youth sports—boys' basketball. The organization of boy's basketball is terrible. The cost is way too much for what the kids get."

"Swim lessons have become more limited over the years and now are only available at the freezing cold pool at Huntley, which is not a good option for little kids. We choose the Y for swim lessons because of this. Also, the removal of a 50-meter pool was beyond disappointing, as there were no plans to include that in the new pool concept. As a parent of 2 DCST swimmers for many years, this drives more people away from the facility."

"I really wish Dekalb and Sycamore could join for youth programs."

"I wish there were more day classes for seniors. Five doesn't work for many of us. I would also like the names of the instructors listed as there are people, I wouldn't want to take class from so I don't even sign up. More morning classes please!"

"Doesn't seem to have very many classes for seniors."

"I am disappointed that there are no golf lessons or women leagues that I am aware of. I wish there was more tennis leagues also and Pickleball and Tai Chi!"

Accessibility (NET=7%)

"I would like more Special Olympics like other towns offer. We just have bowling"

"It's a bit inaccessible for some people as far as price. I don't make enough money to comfortably afford any classes, memberships, or activities I would want to do, but do not make little enough that I qualify for SNAP, therefore getting the discount."

"The basketball program doesn't cover all grades. Monitor coaches' behavior, over the years I have witnessed yelling at kids from sidelines, this is not professional sports, they are children. I know it's hard to get coaches but, can't we do better?"





DPD Overall Value

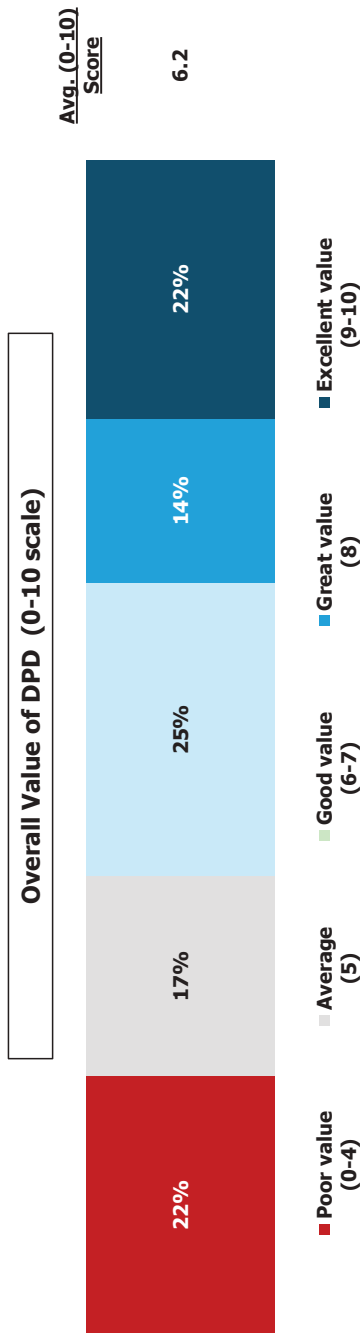
Survey respondents were informed that 6% of their property taxes goes to the DPD. When asked to rate the value that its share of property taxes represents (given the parks, facilities, and programs that it provides), residents give positive scores overall.

Three out of five (61%) feel this share represents at least a good value, including 22% who say it is an excellent value.

- By comparison, 22% rate the District a “poor” value, and the remaining 17% of respondents feel it is an “average” value.

The average rating overall (6.2) represents a solid “good” value overall.

- Only non-DPD users/visitors give below average scores on average (4.1). Higher than average ratings tend to come from recent users (6.3), residents in the NW region (6.5, vs. 5.1 from those who win the SE), and the newest residents who moved here in the past five years (7.1, vs. 5.6 from 5- to 29-year residents).

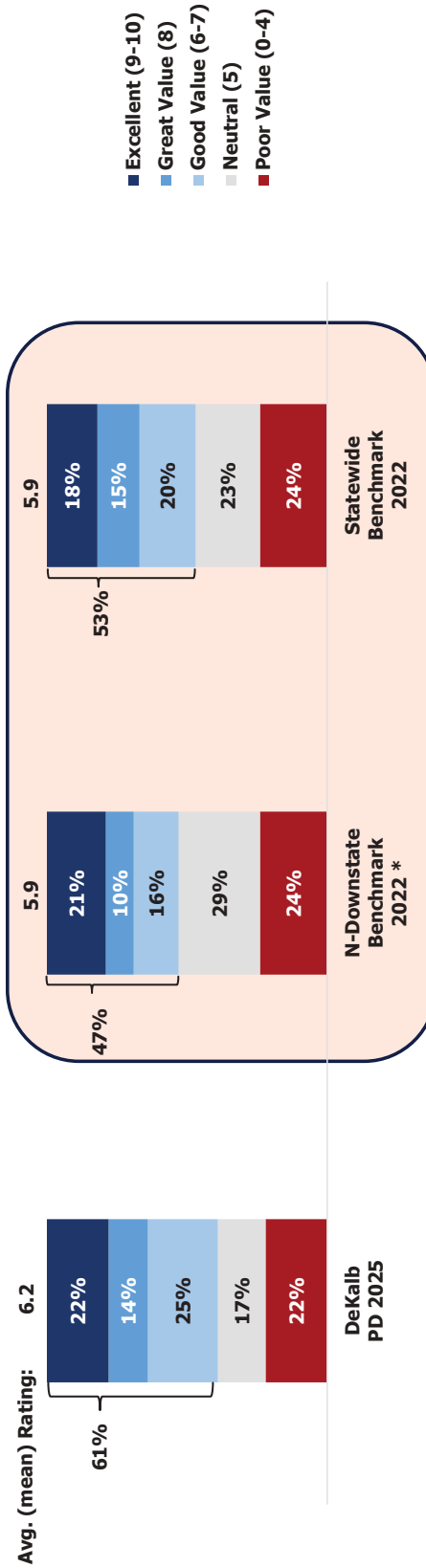


Q21. As you may know, about 6% of your property taxes goes to the DeKalb Park District. Thinking about the programs, parks, facilities, and services that the Park District provides, please rate the overall value that the Park District represents given its share of property taxes.



Compared to regional and statewide benchmarks, the DPD enjoys slightly higher overall value ratings (especially in the “good” to “great” value range).

Benchmark Comparisons: Perceived Value Relative to Property Tax Share



* The Northern Downstate region from the 2022 IAPD statewide survey includes counties with park district agencies – Boone, DeKalb, Henry, Kankakee, Kendall, Ogle, Putnam, Rock Island, Stephenson, Whiteside, and Winnebago counties. Note also that the 2022 IAPD survey tested value scores based on agencies receiving roughly 5% of local property taxes (slightly lower than the 6% share for the DPD).

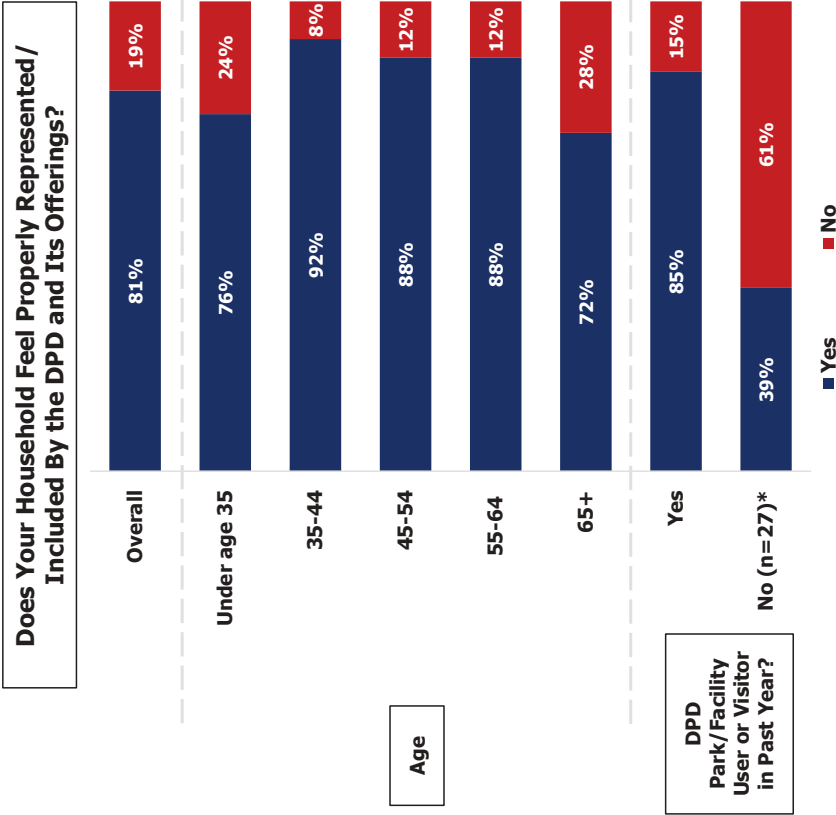


Inclusion/Representation of Residents' Interests

A strong majority (81%) feel included and represented by the DPD and its programs and offerings.

The disagreement primarily comes from non-recent users of the District's parks/facilities.

- By age, those more likely to disagree include both the youngest and oldest residents (24% and 28%, respectively).



Q24. The DeKalb Park District is committed to creating an environment that respects and celebrates the differences of all community members by providing access and opportunities to everyone, regardless of social/financial/ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical ability. Is your household and its interests properly represented/included within the DeKalb Park District and its offerings?
* Small n of cases



Those who do not feel included/represented give a wide range of reasons, most often:

- Those seeking more programs or opportunities for seniors.
- Residents who are unhappy with specific decisions or actions by the District, usually centering around the pool and/or its costs.

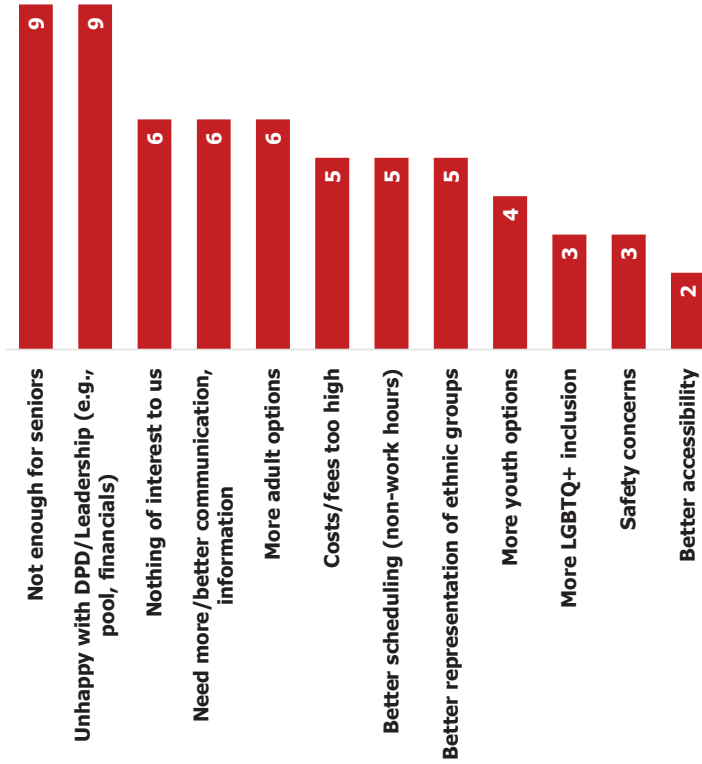
The remaining reasons are more scattered, with some additional residents seeking more adult program options (non-seniors), and/or better or more varied scheduling.

A few residents cite a lack of inclusion based on their limited finances, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation.

Examples of these responses are on the next page.

Inclusion/Representation of Residents' Interests

Top Reasons for Not Feeling Represented/Included By the DPD and Its Offerings (n=62)





Sample Reasons for Not Feeling Included/Represented

"More activities for ages 65+. I would love to find a group of 65+ year olds to go out to eat with, have a glass of wine & play bunco or bingo, could be mix of men & women."

"Resources are not directed towards senior citizen interests."

"Poor planning resulted in the pool being closed for an unacceptable number of years. This could have been avoided by looking at past project plans and adapting them to current day needs."

"My children are swimmers, and the new pool has nothing for them that the YMCA doesn't already have. They really enjoyed swimming at Hopkins in the early mornings with the swim team, taking advantage of the 50-meter length. Now they have to drive to St. Charles and pay to use their indoor facility. They also enjoyed the diving wells which will no longer exist."

"Wasting money on a pool."

"Too much emphasis on golf and league sports."

"Not a lot of things like skating, dance nights etc. But maybe they offer but we don't know about it."

"There's not enough adult sports & non-sports programs for women specifically."

"Programs are geared for younger people/families."

"Every time I get a catalog it's full of stuff for kids. As a childfree Gen Xer, there isn't a lot of activities for adults."

"We feel that we are priced out of a lot of programs because the cost is too high."

"I am right at the cutoff for financial help. Can't afford many of the programs."

"I can't drive at night, and the class I would like was at night."

"The time of classes offered."



"I'm Hispanic. Haven't seen a Latino cop at all. Not familiar with government offices so I can't say if you have any."

"Because we are minorities."

"There is not enough for small kids under age 5."

"I don't believe there are enough attractions for the youth, whether that be in a learning sense or just having fun."

"I would like to see more LGBT/queer-themed events. There's a large and growing community of LGBT folks in Dekalb and seeing a rainbow at the park district would signal to everyone that it's safe to join and participate."

"Current events are specifically straight-family focused. LGBTQ+ couples may not be comfortable attending a dance class or other activity with straight folks. Queer people are not always comfortable. In your current program guide, only three, maybe four, photos contain POC and one of those included your own staff member."

"I believe before anyone can use a dog park, they need to prove their animal is health and had their shots."



II. Recent DPD Park and Facility Usage, Satisfaction, and Reasons for Non-Usage



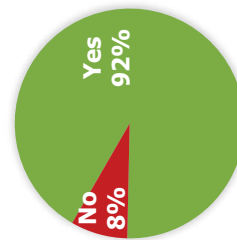


Most respondents (92%) report that someone in their household has used or visited a DPD park or facility in the past year.

- By far, Hopkins Park is the most popular destination (70%), with half as many also going to Lions, Katz or Prairie Parks (33% to 35%), or the Nature Trail (34%).

In addition, nearly two thirds (65%) have been to a District facility during that time, with about equal numbers visiting the SRC (29%), Elwood House Museum (24%) and the Community Center at Hopkins (23%).

Used or Visited DeKalb Park District Park and Facility Locations in Past Year



Usage of DPD Parks and Facilities

DPD Parks/Facilities Visited or Used in Past Year (top responses)	% Reporting (n=408)
Parks/Trails NET	84%
Hopkins Park	70%
Lions Park	35%
Nature Trail	34%
Katz Park	33%
Prairie Park	33%
Annie's Woods	25%
Dekalb Kiwanis Park	24%
Huntley Park	18%
Dekalb Square	14%
Rotary Park	14%
Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park	12%
Hallgren Park	8%
Mason Park/Larson Lake	8%
Welsh Park	8%
Shipman Park	7%
Prather Park	7%
Garden of Eden Park	7%
Liberty Park	6%
Chesebro Park	6%
Prairie Creek Park	6%
McCormick Park	5%
Memorial Park	5%
Deprin Park	5%
Facilities NET	65%
Sports & Recreation Center	29%
Elwood House Museum	24%
Hopkins Park Community Center/Terrace Room	23%
Haish Gymnasium	16%
River Heights Golf Course	15%
Buena Vista Golf Course/Driving Range	13%



Many of the District's most-visited assets attract residents from throughout the District, with a few exceptions.

- While 55% of all households are in the NW region, nearly three-quarters (74%) of Annie's Woods visitors come from the NW region.
- Similarly, Hopkins Park, the Nature Trail, and River Heights Golf Course draw a disproportionate number of visitors from the NW area.
- Conversely, 11% of the population live in the SE region, but nearly one in five visitors (twice as many) go to the Community Center or Haish Gym from these neighborhoods.



Usage of DPD Parks/Trails/Nature Areas/Facilities

Significant Differences: Park Usage by Region

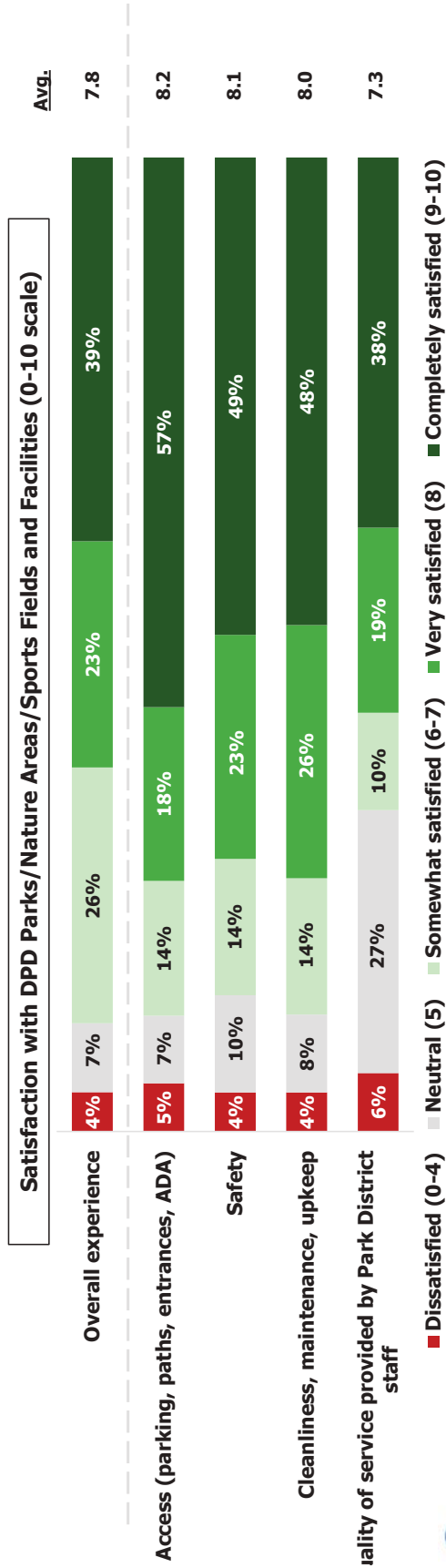
DPD Locations Recently Visited/Used (top responses)	n	Region			
		NW	SW	NE	SE
Overall (row) % of Respondents	408	55%	19%	15%	11%
<i>PARKS/TRAILS/NATURE AREAS</i>					
Hopkins Park	306	63%	10%	14%	12%
Lions Park	160	56%	12%	19%	12%
Nature Trail	173	70%	11%	12%	7%
Katz Park	134	67%	9%	7%	16%
Annie's Woods	122	74%	8%	10%	8%
Dekalb Kiwanis Park	111	60%	15%	12%	13%
Huntley Park	88	61%	24%	3%	12%
Dekalb Square	70	64%	10%	16%	9%
Rotary Park	62	63%	5%	19%	13%
<i>FACILITIES</i>					
Sports & Rec Center	107	51%	33%	7%	9%
Ellwood House Museum	139	71%	12%	7%	9%
Hopkins Park Community Center/Terrace Rm.	97	61%	8%	11%	20%
Haish Gymnasium	64	46%	26%	9%	19%
River Heights Golf Course	85	62%	13%	3%	22%
Buena Vista Golf Course	89	74%	16%	4%	6%

= statistically higher regional response at the 90% confidence level



Recent DPD visitors offer very strong satisfaction with most attributes associated with their recent visits, especially for accessibility and overall safety. In terms of overall satisfaction:

- Virtually all (91%) express satisfaction with their experience, including 39% who are completely satisfied. By comparison, only 4% are unhappy.
- Note that with the exception of staff service, 86%+ are satisfied with each attribute tested. The staff service scores are slightly lower only because of the large number of neutral responses (27% giving a score of "5"), suggesting that they have not encountered staff during recent park/facility visits and cannot offer an opinion.



Q9. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the parks, trails, nature areas and buildings/facilities that you recently visited above.



In general, satisfaction with DPD attributes tend to increase with age, with the oldest residents (ages 65+) consistently giving higher than average scores. Younger adults (especially those under 35) tend to give lower but still favorable scores.

Likewise, residents in the NW region tend to be most satisfied, while those on the east side of DeKalb tend to give lower scores (especially the SE region).

Significant Differences: Satisfaction with DPD Parks/Trails/Nature Areas/Facilities (0-10 scale)

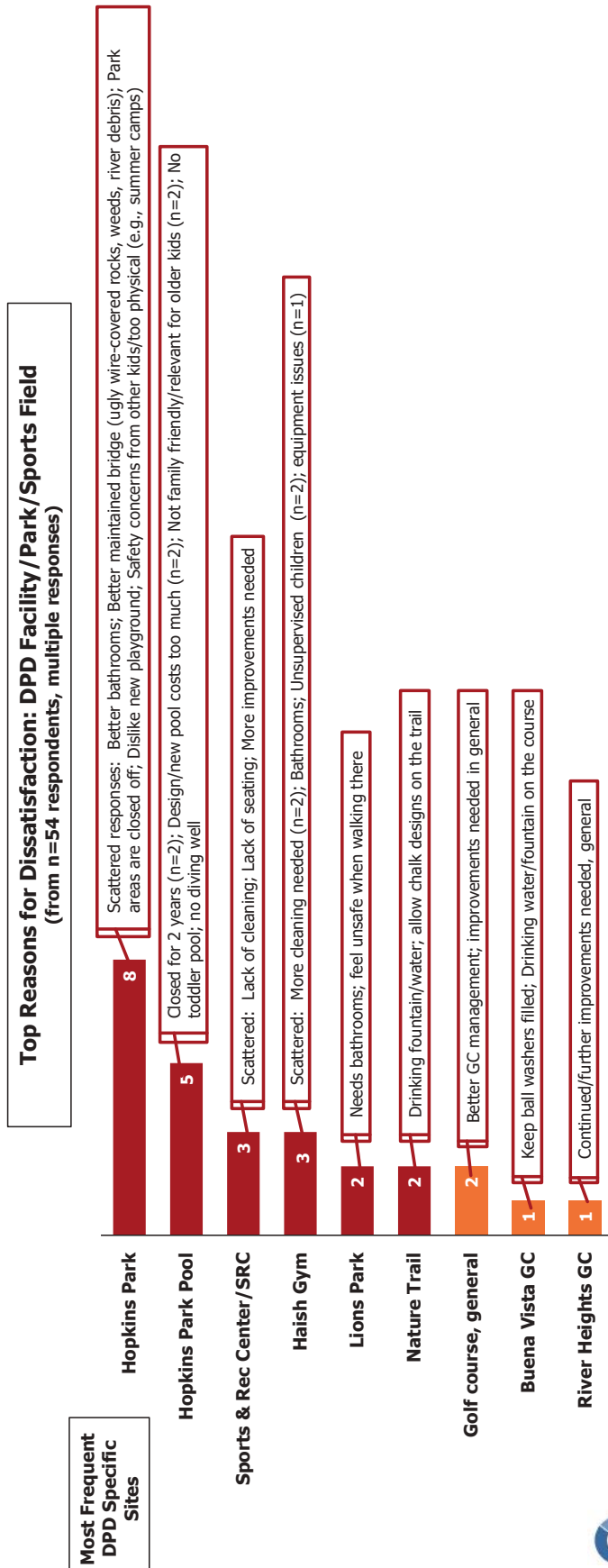
Attribute	Avg. 0-10 Rating	Lower than Avg. Ratings	Higher than Avg. Ratings
Overall experience	7.8	- Under age 35 (7.3) - SE (6.8) and NE regions (7.4) - Lived in DeKalb 5-29 yrs. (7.6) - Non-program participants (7.5)	- Ages 65+ (8.3) - NW region (8.1) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (8.4) - DPD program participants (8.3)
Accessibility (parking, paths, entrances, ramps/ADA, etc.)	8.2	- NE (7.4) and SE regions (6.9)	- NW (8.6) and SW regions (8.5)
Safety	8.1	- Under age 35 (7.8) - No children in household (7.9) - NE (7.3) and SE region (7.2) - Lived in DeKalb 5-12 yrs. (7.4)	- Ages 65+ (8.7) - Households with children (8.7) - NW region (8.5) - Lived in DeKalb 13+ yrs. (8.5)
Cleanliness, maintenance and upkeep	8.0	- Ages 45-54 (7.6) - NE (7.2) and SE regions (6.8) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (7.6) - Permanent residents (7.9)	- Ages 65+ (8.6) - NW (8.4) and SW regions (8.4) - Lived in DeKalb <5 yrs. (8.5), seasonal residents (8.9, n=8)
Quality of service from DPD staff	7.3	- Under age 35 (6.3) - Renters (6.5)	- Ages 45-54 (7.6), 55-64 (8.0), 65+ (8.3) - Homeowners (7.7)



Satisfaction: DPD Parks/Trails/Nature Areas/Facilities

Those who give lower satisfaction scores (6 or below on a 0-10 scale) for any attribute were asked to explain why they are not more satisfied.

Many cited specific parks or facilities, but the sources of dissatisfaction with each were scattered and not very consistent.

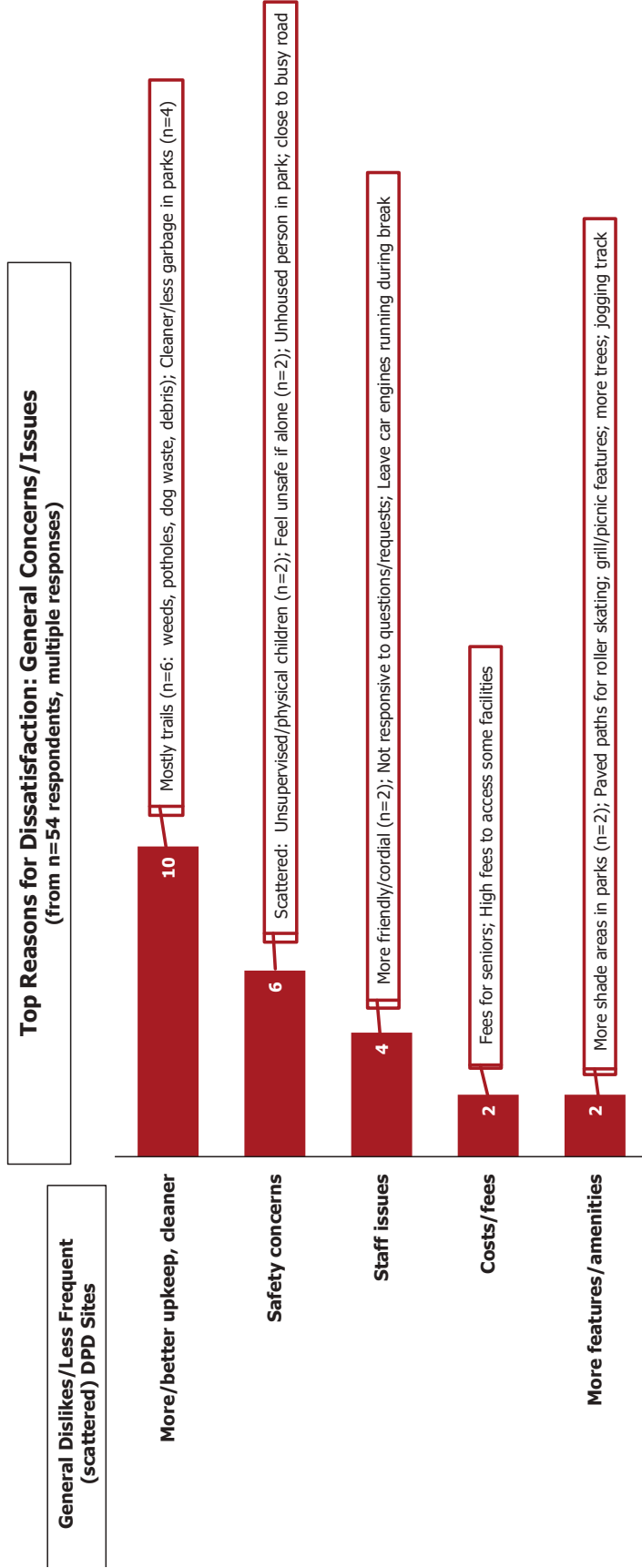


Q10. (FOR THOSE GIVING SATISFACTION SCORES OF "6" OR LOWER ON ANY PARK/FACILITY ATTRIBUTE): If you are unhappy with a specific DeKalb Park District location, please describe which one(s) and why.



Satisfaction: DPD Parks/Trails/Nature Areas/Facilities

The remaining comments/suggestions from dissatisfied DPD uses/visitors generally concern a need for more maintenance and upkeep and District locations, or a range of safety concerns.



Q10. (FOR THOSE GIVING SATISFACTION SCORES OF "6" OR LOWER ON ANY PARK/FACILITY ATTRIBUTE): If you are unhappy with a specific DeKalb Park District location, please describe which one(s) and why.





Among the relatively few non-users/visitors in the past year, most attribute this to not having children in their household – suggesting that they view the DPD as mostly focused on youth and young families, and less relevant to them.

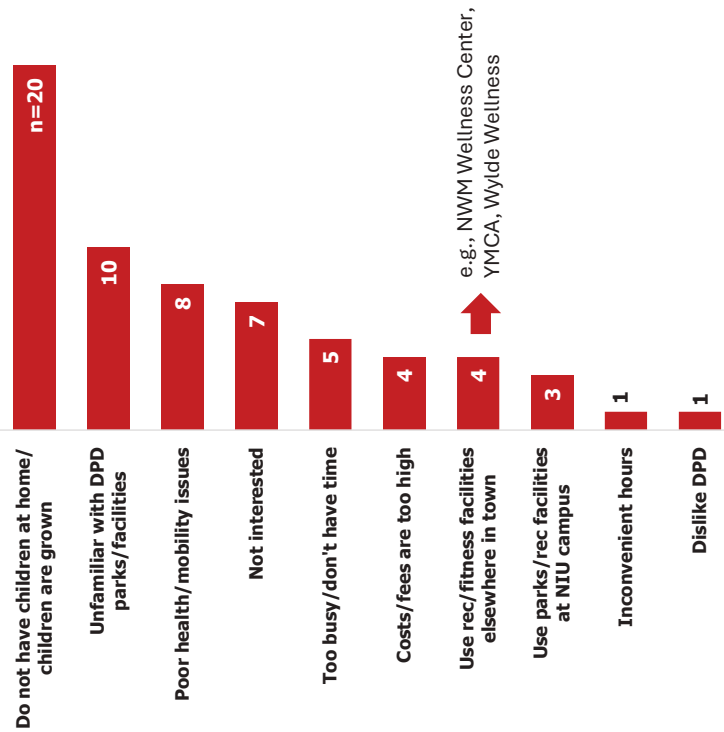
- This echoes an earlier response from many who do not feel included or represented by the District because they do not feel that it offers enough activities for adults and seniors.
- This represents a clear opportunity for the District to remind residents of its offerings for all agencies, with greater attention focused on adult programming and activities.

The other top reasons for non-usage focus on general lack of awareness of DPD offerings, health issues limiting one's activities, or a general lack of interest/free time.

A few respondents cite fees as a barrier or use other facilities for recreation/fitness (n=3 to 4 each).

Reasons for Non-DPD Usage

Top Reasons: Reasons for Not Using/Visiting DPD Parks/Facilities (n of respondents, base n=31)



Q8. If you haven't visited any DeKalb Park District park, trail, nature area or facility recently, why not? Please select all that apply.



III. Needs Assessment: Indoor Facilities and Amenities





As part of a needs assessment, respondents were asked if their household currently has an interest or usage for various indoor facilities and amenities.

Roughly half express demand or interest in an indoor track (50%) or a fitness facility (46%). Half as many seek pickleball courts, basketball/volleyball courts, or visual arts studios/space.

The remaining facilities tested each garnered less interest or demand. Note that one out of four residents (24%) express interest in none of these amenities.

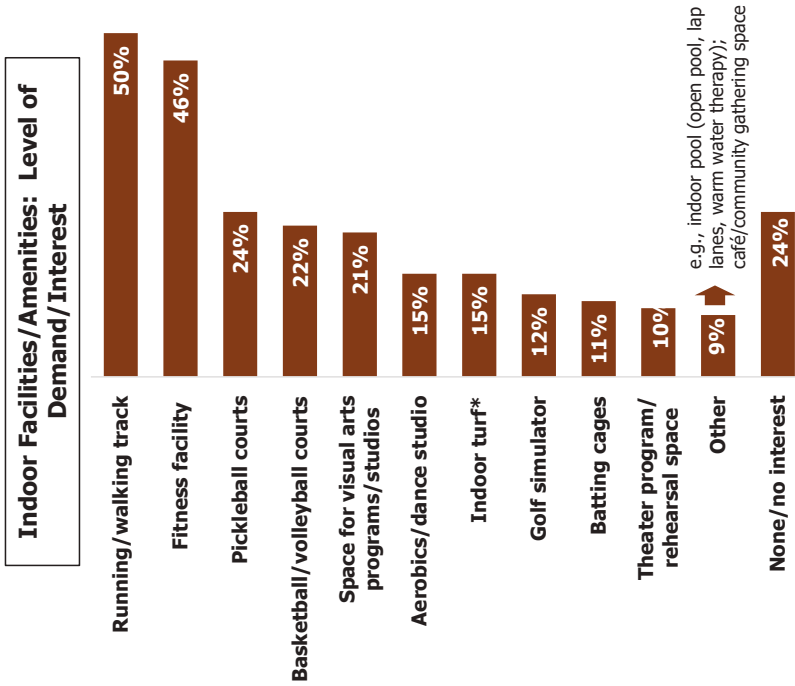
As shown on the next pages:

- Residents in the NE and NW regions along with homeowners are most interested in an indoor track, while SE residents and ages 35-44 and 55-64 tend to express the most demand for a fitness facility.
- Likewise, 35- to 54-year-olds are the most interested in pickleball courts, along with NW residents and homeowners.
- Men are much more likely to seek basketball/volleyball courts than women. These also appeal to households with children and adults ages 35-44, and non-white residents.
- Visual arts space likewise appeals most to ages 35-44, those with children, and NW residents.



Q11A. Below, indicate if you or a household member uses or has a need/interest in these indoor amenities:
* (e.g., soccer, lacrosse, etc. and baseball/softball fields)

Needs Assessment: Indoor Facilities/Amenities





Significant Differences: Demand/Interest in Indoor Amenities/Facilities

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Running/walking track	50%	- NE (63%) and NW regions (56%, vs. 29% in SW and 38% in SE regions) - Homeowners (58%, vs. 38% of renters)
Fitness facility	46%	- Ages 35-44 (57%), 55-64 (60%) - SE region (74%) - Lived in DPD 13-29 yrs. (65%)
Pickleball courts	24%	- Ages 35-54 (28%), 55-64 (39%, vs. 9% of ages 65+) - NW region (29%) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (40%) - Homeowners (31%, vs. 15% of renters) - DPD users/visitors (26%, vs. 4% of non-users) - DPD program participants (31%, vs. 19% non-participants)
Basketball/volleyball courts	22%	- Men (28%, vs. 16% of women) - Ages 35-44 (40%) - Households with children (45%, vs. 14% of those without children) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (34%) - Non-white adults (45%, vs. 11% of white residents)
Space for visual arts programs/studios	21%	- Ages 35-44 (34%) - Households with children (34%, vs. 17% of those without children) - NW region (29%) - DPD program participants (31%, vs. 14% of non-participants)
Aerobics/dance studio	15%	- Women (27%, vs. 2% of men) - NE region (28%)
Indoor turf (e.g., soccer, lacrosse, etc. and baseball/softball fields)	15%	- Ages 35-44 (37%) - Households with children (43%, vs. 5% of those without children) - NW region (20%) - DPD program participants (25%, vs. 8% of non-participants)



Significant Differences: Demand/Interest in Indoor Amenities/Facilities (cont'd)

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Golf simulator	12%	- SE region (27%) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (20%) - Homeowners (18%, vs. 3% of renters) - White adults (17%, vs. 0% of non-white residents) - DPD users/visitors (13%, vs. 1% of non-users)
Batting cages	11%	- Ages 35-44 (28%) - NE region (26%)
Theater program/rehearsal space	10%	- Households with children (20%, vs. 7% of those without children) - DPD program participants (16%, vs. 6% of non-participants)
None/no answer	24%	- SW region (44%)



Needs Assessment: "Gap" Analysis Explanation

Respondents who report use or interest in each amenity/option were also asked how well those interests are currently being met on a 1-5 scale, either by the DeKalb Park District or any other source/provider.

- A score of "4" means their interests are mostly met, and a "5" means they are completely met.

The results are reported on the following pages using a scatter plot that shows both:

- Overall demand for each amenity (vertical axis) based on the % who indicate usage or interest.
- And the % with scores of "4" or "5" who report that this "interest" is currently being met (horizontal axis) using the 1-5 scale.

In the example below, options A and C in the upper right quadrant are in high demand and sufficient supply, while amenities E and G (upper left) represent opportunity (high demand not currently being met).

- Options to the bottom (B, D, and F) are in lower demand.



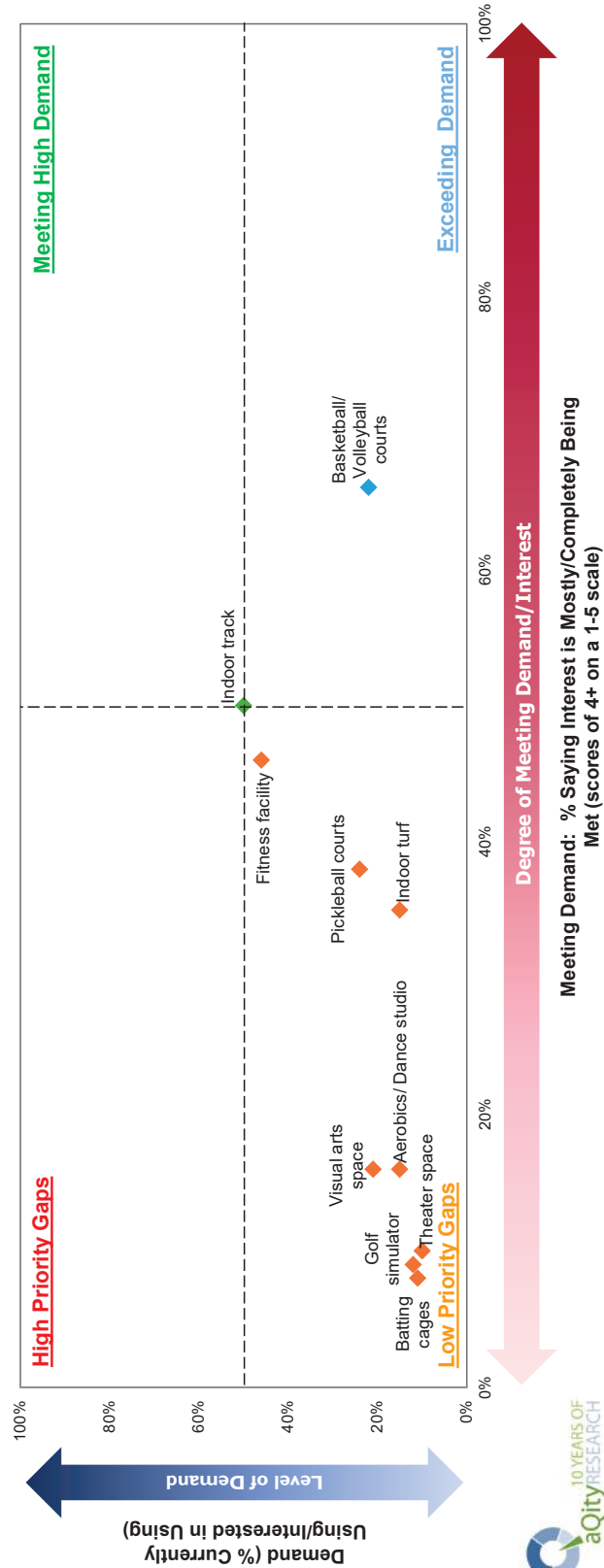


Needs Assessment: Indoor Facilities/Amenities

The “gap” analysis for indoor facilities shows that among residents expressing a need for an indoor track, 50% feel that need is mostly/completely being met currently. Those seeking fitness facilities (ranked 2nd in overall demand) are slightly less likely to feel this need is being addressed (46% saying their need is mostly/completely met).

- Basketball/volleyball courts are the one indoor feature currently available among those interested. The remaining options tested represent lower priority “gaps” (given their lower levels of overall demand. Of these, the features that might warrant more attention are a fitness facility, pickleball courts, and/or visual arts space/studios.

Gap Analysis: Demand and Availability of Indoor Facilities/Amenities





When asked which one indoor facility should be the DPD's #1 priority to address, the most frequent response was "none of these" (34%).

This reflects the fact that the two options in highest demand (fitness facility, indoor track) are seen as already available/addressed by roughly half of those interested, and the remaining options garner relatively low levels of demand.

- As shown on the next page, the oldest adults and SW area residents are most likely to feel none are priorities.

The youngest adults (under age 35) tend to place their priority on a fitness facility, while slightly older residents (ages 35-44) are more likely to focus on an indoor track.

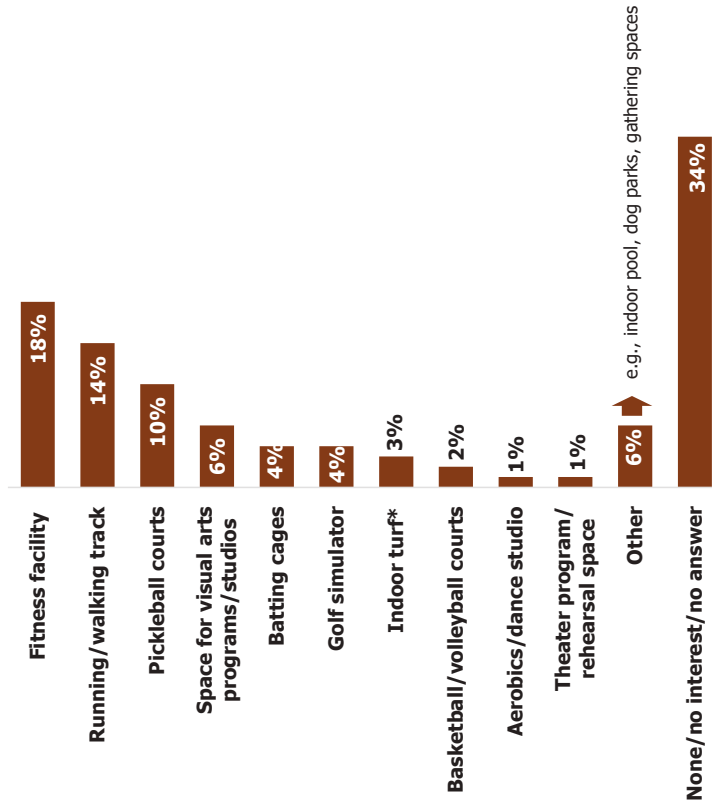
- Note that renters are almost 3X as likely to identify a fitness facility as the top priority vs. homeowners.

Pickleball courts tend to be most important to residents ages 55-64 and those in the SE region.

The 35-44 age group tends to be most interested in batting cages.

Needs Assessment: Indoor Facilities/Amenities

Top Priority for DPD: Indoor Facilities/Amenities



Q12. Please select the one indoor amenity that the Park District should prioritize providing, adding or improving.
* (e.g., soccer, lacrosse, etc. and baseball/softball fields)



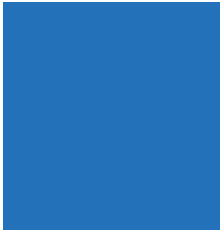


Significant Differences: Top Indoor Facility/Amenity Priority for DPD

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Fitness facility	18%	- Under age 35 (25%, vs. 7% ages 45-54) - Lived in DeKalb <30 years (22%, vs. 7% 30+ yrs.) - Renters (28%, vs. 10% of homeowners)
Running/walking track	14%	- Ages 35-44 (22%, vs. 6% of those under age 35)
Pickleball courts	10%	- Ages 55-64 (28%) - No children in household (12%, vs. 4% of those with children) - SE (30%) and NW regions (11%, vs. 2% in the SW and NE regions) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (17%, vs. 2% who have lived here <5 yrs.) - White adults (14%, vs. 1% of non-white residents)
Space for visual arts programs/studios	6%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Batting cages	4%	- Ages 35-44 (15%) - NE region (16%)
Golf simulator	4%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Indoor turf	3%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Basketball/volleyball courts	2%	- Ages 45-54 (5%)
Aerobics/dance studio	1%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Theater program/rehearsal space	1%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
None/No priorities/NA	34%	- Ages 65+ (52%) - SW region (49%)



IV. Needs Assessment: Outdoor Facilities/Amenities





Among outdoor features, the vast majority of residents express an interest or demand for paths and trails (81%).

- At least 59% of all subgroups express a need or interest in walking and biking trails, with the highest interest from adults under age 35 (see next page).

Playgrounds represent a distant second at 34% overall demand (mostly from women, households with children, NW residents, and current DPD users and program participants).

One in four (25%) express interest in a dog park (mostly older adults 55-64 and in the SE region).

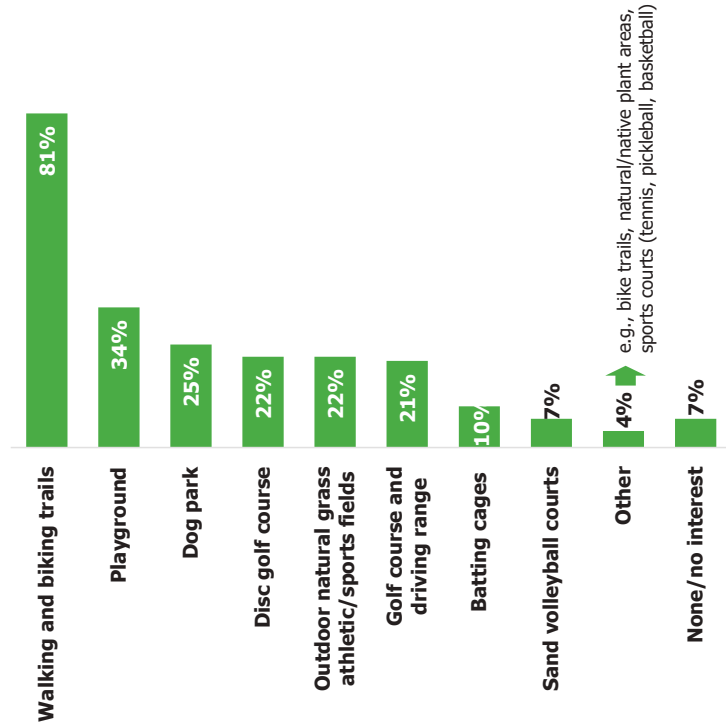
Nearly as many seek:

- Disc golf courses (22%), especially the youngest adults (under 35) as well as non-DPD program participants – an opportunity to engage this segment/activity.
- Outdoor natural grass sports fields (22%), including households with children, those in NW region, and Hispanic/Latino residents.
- A golf course/driving range (21%) – of greatest interest to homeowners and the most long-term Dekalb residents.

Note that only 7% report no interest in any outdoor facilities/amenities.

Needs Assessment: Outdoor Facilities/Amenities

Outdoor Facilities/Amenities: Level of Demand/Interest



Q13A. Below, indicate if you or a household member uses or has a need/interest in these outdoor amenities.



Significant Differences: Demand/Interest in Outdoor Amenities/Facilities

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Walking and biking trails	81%	- Under age 35 (90%) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (90%) <i>NOTE: Demand cited by at least 59% of all segments, including non-DPD users/visitors</i>
Playgrounds	34%	- Women (46%, vs. 22% of men) - Ages 35-44 (53%) - Households with children (81%, vs. 19% of those without children) - NW region (50%) - DPD users/visitors (36%, vs. 17% of non-users) - DPD program participants (52%, vs. 22% of non-participants)
Dog park	25%	- Ages 55-64 (43%) - SE region (43%) - White adults (32%, vs. 9% of non-white residents)
Disc golf course	22%	- Under age 35 (36%) - DPD users/visitors (24%, vs. 1% of non-users) - Non-DPD program participants (28%, vs. 13% of participants)
Outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields	22%	- Under age 45 (32%) - Households with children (44%, vs. 15% of those without children) - NW region (26%) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (33%) - Hispanic/Latino adults (47%, vs. 17% of non-Hispanic residents)
Golf course and driving range	21%	- Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (26%), 30+ yrs. (29%) - Homeowners (28%, vs. 12% of renters) - White adults (29%, vs. 4% of non-white residents)



Significant Differences: Demand/Interest in Outdoor Amenities/Facilities (cont'd)

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Batting cages	10%	- Ages 35-44 (33%)
Sand volleyball courts	7%	- Ages 35-44 (22%), 45-54 (15%) - Households with children (20%, vs. 3% of those without children) - Lived in Dekalb 5-29 yrs. (11%) - DPD program participants (14%, vs. 2% of non-participants)
None/no interest/NA	7%	< no statistically meaningful differences >

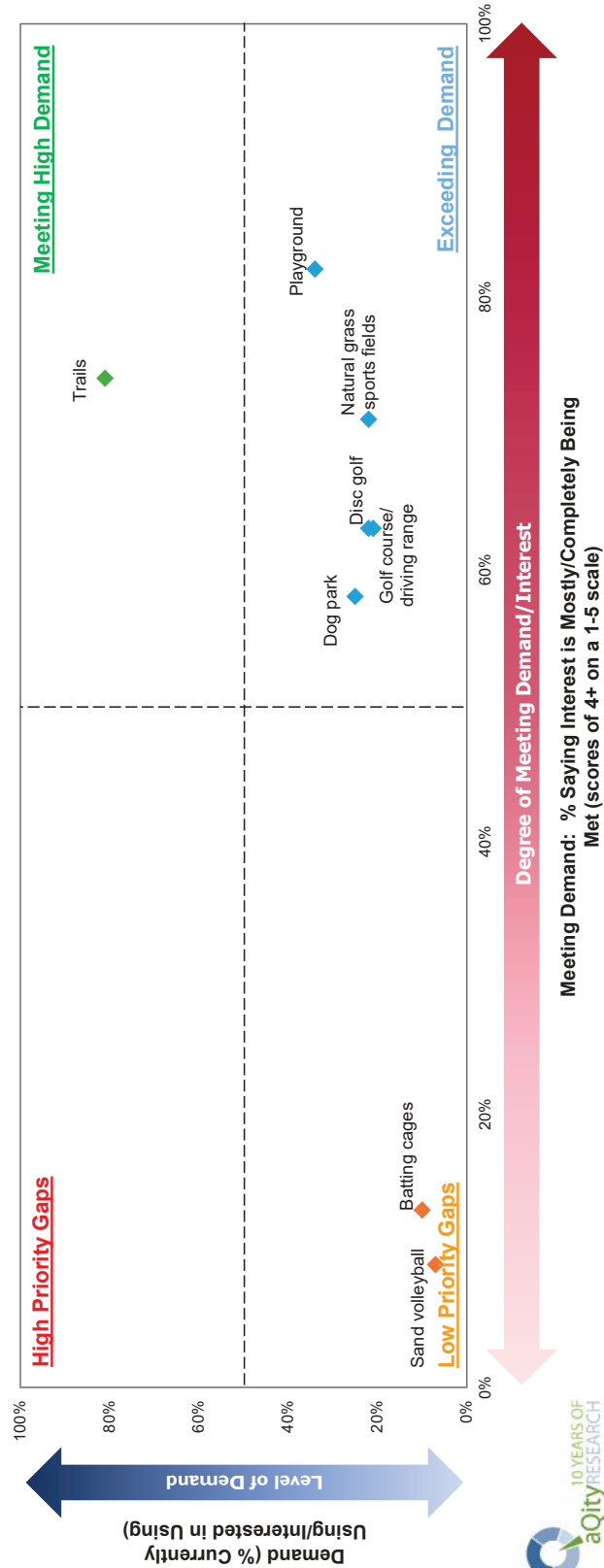


Needs Assessment: Outdoor Facilities/Amenities

The gap analysis shows a very different story for outdoor features, with those in highest demand already being mostly/completely available currently (especially playgrounds)

The only two “gaps” are for those in lowest demand – batting cages and sand volleyball. Virtually no one expressing an interest in either feels that these features are easy to find/available.

Gap Analysis: Demand and Availability of Outdoor Facilities/Amenities





Not surprisingly, walking/biking trails registers as the top priority among outdoor features for the DPD.

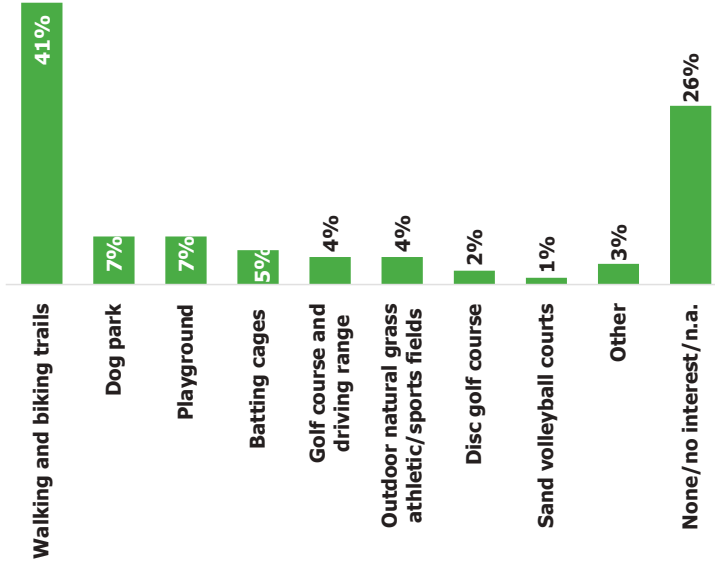
- This is especially true among those without children, non-white adults, and SW residents (see next page).

The next top response is “none are priorities” at 26%, mostly coming from the most long-term local residents and older adults (55+). Again, they may be less interested in these options, or feel that they are readily available.

Each of the remaining outdoor amenities is most important to 7% or fewer residents.

Needs Assessment: Outdoor Facilities/Amenities

Top Priority for DPD: Outdoor Facilities/Amenities



Q14. In the above list of outdoor amenities, please select the one outdoor option that the DeKalb Park District should prioritize providing, adding or improving.



Significant Differences: Top Outdoor Facility/Amenity Priority for DPD

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Walking and biking trails	41%	- SW region (59%) - Lived in DeKalb <5 years (49%) or 13-29 yrs. (56%) - Non-white adults (57%, vs. 34% of white residents)
Dog park	7%	- SE region (36%)
Playgrounds	7%	- Women (12%, vs. 2% of men) - Households with children (21%, vs. 2% of those without children)
Batting cages	5%	- Ages 35-44 (21%) - NE region (15%)
Golf course and driving range	4%	- Ages 65+ (11%)
Outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields	4%	- Non-DPD users/visitors (16%, vs. 3% of recent users)
Disc golf course	2%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Sand volleyball courts	1%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
None/No priorities/NA	26%	- Ages 55-64 (37%), 65+ (54%) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (41%)



V. DPD Program/Event Participation and Satisfaction





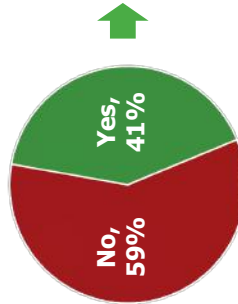
DPD Program Participation and Satisfaction

Roughly two out of five respondents report a household member participating in a DPD program or event in the past year. Self-reported participants tend to be:

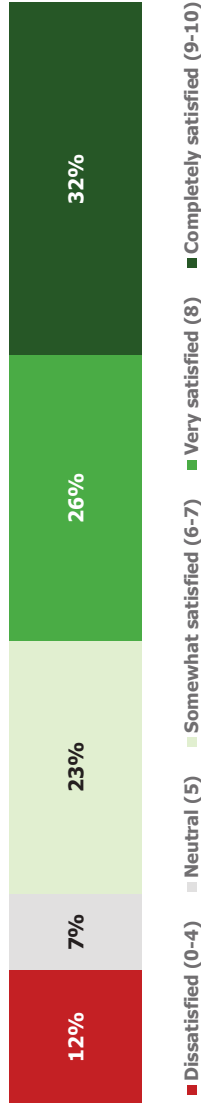
- Ages 45-54 (59% “yes”, vs. 35% of those under 35 and 57% of those 55+)
- Have children at home (68%, vs. 32% of those without children)
- Homeowners (50%, vs. 30% of renters)
- NW residents (50%)
- Long-term DeKalb residents of 13+ yrs. (50%, vs. 18% of those who lived here <5 yrs.).

Satisfaction among participants is strong (7.3 average 0-10 score), with 81% at least somewhat satisfied vs. 12% unhappy. The highest ratings come from participants ages 65+ (8.1, vs. 7.1 among those under 55) and residents without children (7.9, vs. a relatively low 6.3 of those with children).

**Recent DPD Program/
Event Participation?**



Overall Satisfaction: DPD Programs/Events (0-10 scale)



**Avg. 0-10
Rating**

7.3



Q15. In the past 12 months, have you or household members participated in DeKalb Park District recreation programs or community events?
Q16. (If YES): Please rate your overall satisfaction with the DeKalb Park District recreation programs and events you recently attended/participated in.



Reasons for lower satisfaction with DPD programs/events are below, with a few citing facility-related issues.

Program/Event-Related

"Youth sports. Better communication with certain things. Hoping more parents get their kids involved in youth sports."

"DeKalb's youth baseball/softball organization being run through the Park District has allowed it to deteriorate even more than the average local baseball/softball program in other places. I recognize external factors also impact that, but local youth baseball is almost completely dead here, with almost all competition having moved out into travel organizations."

"Not enough youth sports programs. DeKalb used to be the best and now it seems Sycamore has more to offer."

"Youth sports—organization and cost."

"Youth baseball is a complete mess. It just needs a total overhaul and redo! Wasco Park District has an amazing youth baseball rec league! DeKalb needs to watch and learn how they do things and follow them."

"Sports are disorganized and lack communication. The coordinator tries their hardest, but more help is needed and more clear direction for volunteer coaches so there's more consistency."

"Rude staff completely ruined my family's time at Breakfast with the Bunny the moment we arrived."

"Restorative yoga at the Sports Rec Center. The instructor talked the entire time about events going on in her life. It wasn't quiet and not restorative."

Program/Event-Related (cont'd)

"Holiday programs are poorly managed."

"General communication with board."

"Bus trip to Wrigley field for Cubs vs. Brewers game."

Facility-Related

"As a member of the DeKalb Municipal Band, our stage is poorly laid out for the number of personnel. No water or restroom. Old sound system."

"Indoor walking trail has limited hours."

"Artificial turf smells and I am concerned regarding airborne microplastics inhalation."

"Walk path."

"The Mason Park – indoor."



VI. Needs Assessment: Events and Age-Based Program Options





Among the event and program options tested, residents express the greatest demand/interest for:

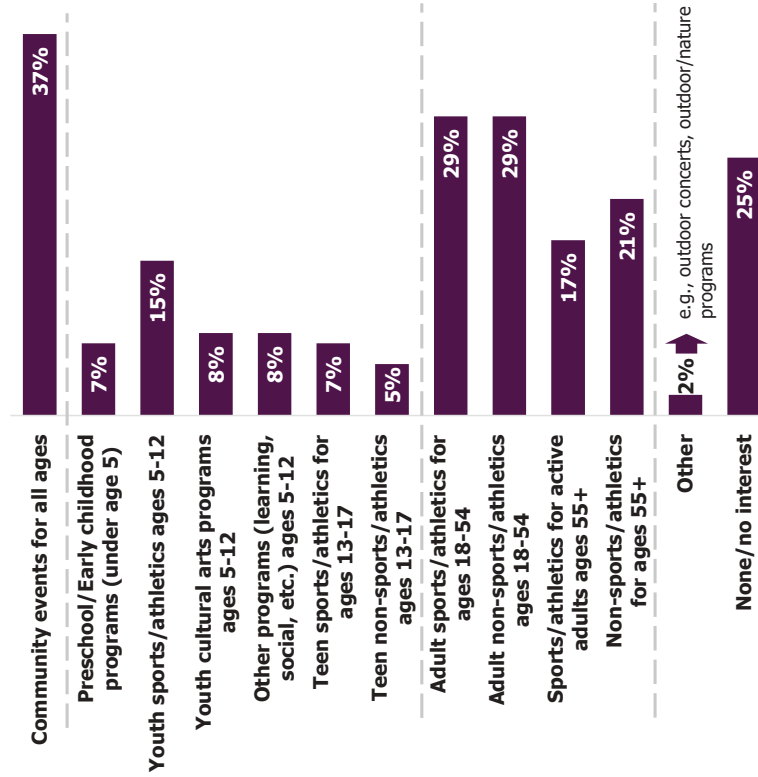
- Community events (37%) – especially women, long-term residents, current DPD users and program participants, and ages 35-44 (see next page)
- Adult programming for ages 18-54, both sports and non-sport activities (29% each)
 - Both options appeal most to adults under 45, with non-sport programs of greater interest among women and those in the NE region.
- Activities for older adults ages 55+, slightly more geared to non-athletic activities (21%) vs. sports (17%)
 - Again, women tend to be interested in non-sports programming within this age group.

Demand is lower for youth activities (given that many households do not have children), but youth sports for ages 5-12 garners the greatest interest/demand.

One in four (25%) express a need or interest in none of these, mostly younger adults (under 35), men, renters, newer and seasonal residents, and those in the SW area.

Needs Assessment: Age-Based Program Options

Events and Age-Based Program Options: Level of Demand/Interest



Q18. Please indicate if you or a household member uses or has a need or interest in the following programs and activities.



Significant Differences: Level of Demand/Interest in Events and Age-Based Program Options

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Community events	37%	- Women (51%, vs. 23% of men) - Ages 35-54 (50%) - NW (44%, vs. 19% in the SW region) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (50%) - DPD users/visitors (39%, vs. 18% of non-users) - DPD program participants (48%, vs. 29% of non-participants)
Preschool/early childhood programs (under age 5)	7%	- Households with children (22%, vs. 1% of those without children)
Youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12	15%	- Ages 35-44 (41%) - Households with children (49%, vs. 3% of those without children) - NW region (22%) - Homeowners (21%, vs. 7% of renters) - DPD program participants (27%, vs. 6% of non-participants)
Youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12	8%	- Households with children (23%, vs. 3% of those without children) - NW region (12%, vs. 2% in other regions) - DPD program participants (14%, vs. 3% of non-participants)
Other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12	8%	- Households with children (22%, vs. 3% of those without children) - NW region (12%, vs. 2% in other regions) - DPD program participants (14%, vs. 3% of non-participants)
Teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17	7%	- Households with children (20%, vs. 3% of those without children)
Teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17	5%	< no statistically meaningful differences >



Significant Differences: Level of Demand/Interest in Events and Age-Based Program Options (cont'd)

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54	29%	- Under age 35 (50%), 35-44 (25%, vs. 8% of those ages 55+) - Lived in DeKalb 5-29 yrs. (37%)
Adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54	29%	- Women (36%, vs. 20% of men) - Under age 35 (38%), 35-54 (43%, vs. 6% of those ages 55+) - NE region (47%) - Lived in DeKalb 5-29 yrs. (35%) - Permanent resident (32%, vs. 7% of n=11 seasonal residents)
Sports/athletics for active adults ages 55+	17%	- Ages 55-64 (52%), 65+ (32%) - No children in household (22%, vs. 1% of those with children) - White adults (23%, vs. 5% of non-white residents)
Non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+	21%	- Women (31%, vs. 12% of men) - Ages 55-64 (61%), 65+ (38%) - No children in household (25%, vs. 11% of those with children)
None of these/NA	25%	- Men (38%, vs. 11% of women) - Under age 35 (33%) - No children in household (30%, vs. 9% of those with children) - SW region (48%) - Lived in DeKalb <5 yrs. (39%) - Renters (34%, vs. 18% of homeowners) - Seasonal residents (56% of n=11, vs. 19% of permanent/year-round residents) - Non-DPD program participants (32%, vs. 14% of participants)

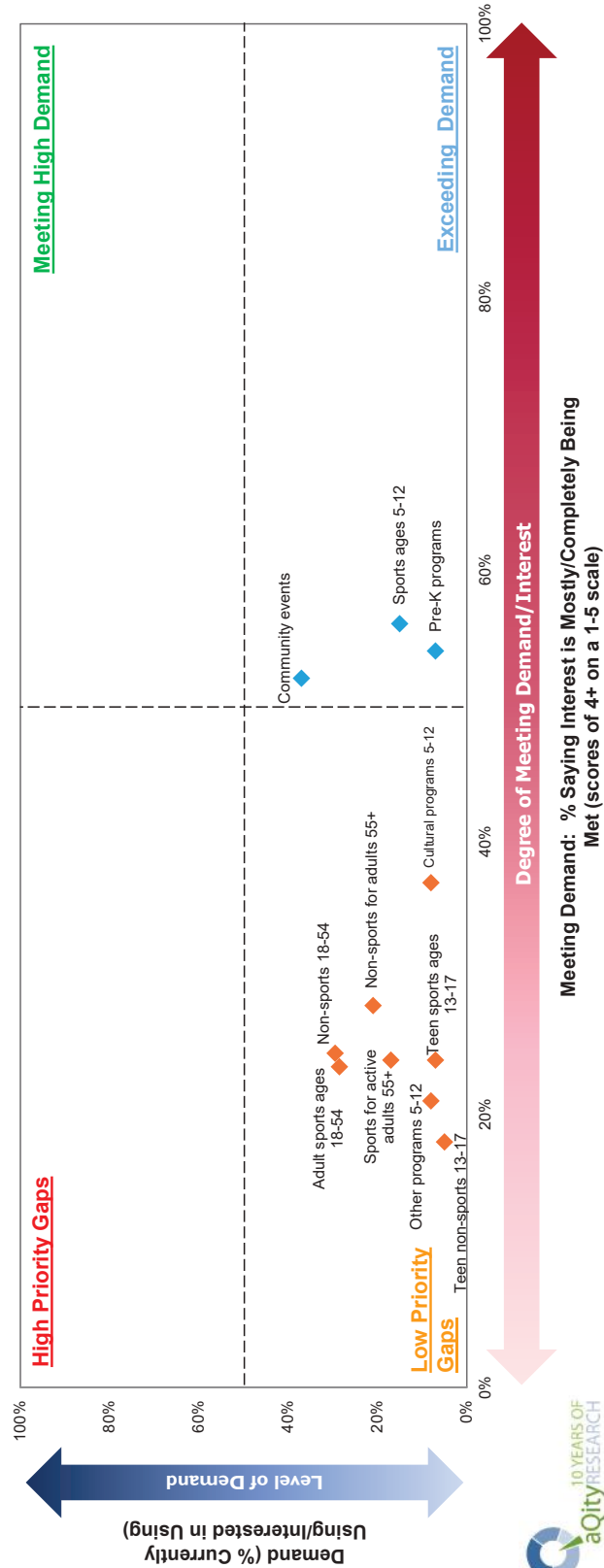


Currently community events, youth sports (for ages 5-12), and pre-K programs are deemed readily available among those interested in each.

All of the remaining age-based programming options represent “gaps”, with the biggest opportunities focusing on adult-based programs – especially for ages 18-54 (both sports and non-sports)

- Note that while relatively few express a need for teen non-sport programming, this area registers as the option least available currently.

Gap Analysis: Demand and Availability of Age-Based Program Options





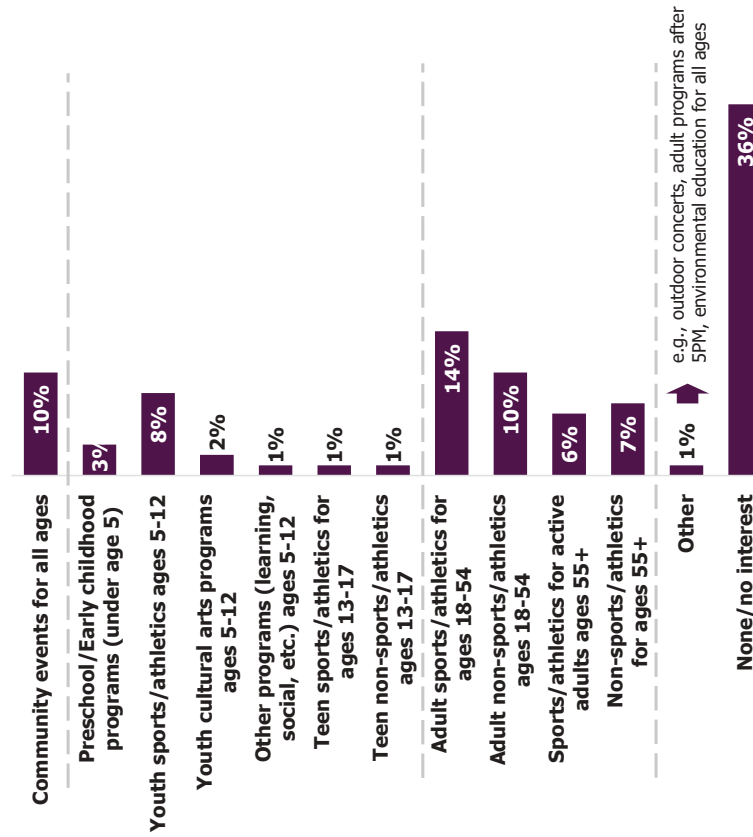
When asked their top programming priority for the DPD to address, most residents are divided between adult program options (especially for ages 18-54), or “none/no interest at all”.

- Adult sports appeal most to the youngest adults under 35, along with men, those without children, and newer residents to DeKalb (see next page).
- Women and NE residents are most interested in non-sports programming for ages 18-54.
- For older adults, those in the 55-64 age range are especially interested in non-sports activities.
- The 36% who express interest in none of these tend to be men and those without children (across multiple age groups).

The specific programs or activities for the top responses are shown on page 65.

Needs Assessment: Age-Based Program Options

Top Priority for DPD: Events and Age-Based Program Options



Q19. Please indicate the one program area that the DeKalb Park District should prioritize.



Significant Differences: Top Event/Program Priority for DPD

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Community events	10%	- Women (15%, vs. 4% of men) - Ages 45-54 (21%) - White adults (14%, vs. 1% of non-white residents)
Preschool/early childhood programs (under age 5)	3%	- Women (6%, vs. 0% of men) - Households with children (12%, vs. 0% of those without children) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (7%)
Youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12	8%	- Ages 35-44 (33%) - Households with children (28%, vs. 2% of those without children) - NW region (12%, vs. 3% from those in all other regions) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (15%) - Homeowners (13%, vs. 2% of renters) - DPD program participants (14%, vs. 4% of non-participants)
Youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12	2%	- Households with children (7%, vs. 0% of those without children) - DPD program participants (5%, vs. 0% of non-participants)
Other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12	1%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17	1%	< no statistically meaningful differences >
Teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17	1%	< no statistically meaningful differences >



Significant Differences: Top Event/Program Priority for DPD (cont'd)

	Overall	Most Likely to Express Demand/Interest
Adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54	14%	- Men (19%, vs. 7% of women) - Under age 35 (35%) - No children in household (16%, vs. 6% of those with children) - SW (23%) and SE regions (25%) - Lived in DeKalb <5 yrs. (14%), 13-29 yrs. (24%)
Adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54	10%	- Women (16%, vs. 4% of men) - Ages 35-44 (27%), 45-54 (17%) - NE (24%) and NW regions (10%)
Sports/athletics for active adults ages 55+	6%	- Ages 65+ (13%)
Non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+	7%	- Ages 55-64 (27%), 65+ (17%) - No children in household (10%, vs. 0% of those with children)
None of these/NA	36%	- Men (50%, vs. 23% of women) - Under age 35 (37%), 45-54 (35%), 65+ (57%) - No children in household (44%, vs. 11% of those with children)



Specific Activities for #1 Priority Program/Event Options

	Community events: All ages (n=35)	Youth sports, ages 5-12 (n=20)	Adult Sports, Ages 18-54 (n=20)	Adult Non-Sports, Ages 18-54 (n=20)	Sports for Active Adults 55+ (n=37)	Non-Sports for Active Adults 55+ (n=33)
n=6 or more cases	Music events/concerts (n=8)		Basketball (n=6)	Arts - pottery, painting, crafts (n=6)	Pickleball (n=8) Exercise/fitness (n=7) Walking groups (n=6)	Social events (n=6)
n=5 cases	More for families/all ages			Social events (game nights, dances)	Yoga	Arts (pottery, painting, crafts); Yoga; Day trips/excursions
n=4 cases	Street fests/holiday festivals; Special interests (e.g., lectures/demos/presentations)	Baseball/softball; Basketball	Disc golf			Special interests (learning, cooking)
n=3 cases	Nature education; Community-focused, general		Exercise/fitness classes	Nature education; Community-focused, general; Special interests (lectures, job fairs)	Health/wellness (tai chi, nutrition class); Better hours/scheduling; Golf league/group	Walking group; Exercise/fitness class; Health/wellness class
n=2 cases	Races (5K, 10K, etc.); Exercise/fitness class; Dance; Daytrips/excursions; Social events/speakers (finances, naturalists); Volunteer opportunities; Seasonal events	Dance, soccer	Pickleball; Better hours/scheduling	Yoga; Dance; Music/concerts	Community focused, general; Social events	Nature education
n=1 case	Walking group; Yoga; STEM-related; Arts; Affordable programs	Gymnastics, archery, running club, football, volleyball, wrestling	Soccer, Dance; Kickball; Whiffleball/Blitzball; women's sports; indoor tennis		Volleyball; Biking groups; Kickball; Archery	STEM-related; Dance; Street festivals; Seasonal events





VII. Sources of DPD Information





By far, the vast majority of residents seek DPD information on the District website or the printed seasonal guide.

- Note that the printed guide is referenced 3:1 over the digital version on the website (51% and 17%, respectively) and is the preferred source by a 4:1 margin (28% and 7%, respectively).

The third most frequent source of information comes through word-of-mouth from friends and neighbors – though it is seldom cited as one's main source of District information.

About one in five get their information from DPD signage and/or its social media pages/group postings. About as many go to the Public Library for District information.

Aside from local news providers, no more than 8% cite any other source.

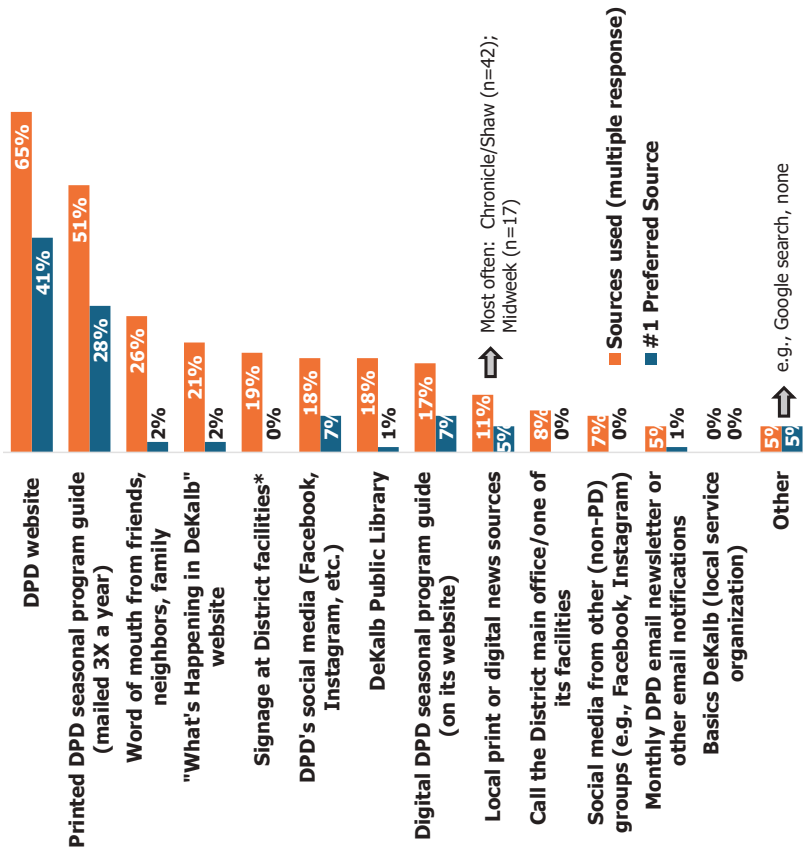


* e.g., banners, digital sign at River Heights Golf Course, etc.)

Q23. In general, when you seek information about the DeKalb Park District and its programs, parks, facilities or services, from what sources do you get that information?
Q24. Please indicate your one preferred source when seeking information about the District.

Sources of DPD Information

Sources When Seeking DPD Information



Q23. In general, when you seek information about the DeKalb Park District and its programs, parks, facilities or services, from what sources do you get that information?
Q24. Please indicate your one preferred source when seeking information about the District.



Younger adults, men, and recent DPD visitors and users are most likely to rely primarily on the District website for information, while women, older adults, and long-term residents tend to prefer the printed seasonal guide as their primary source. As shown below and on the following pages:

- While residents tend to report using multiple sources, whereas non-white adults reflect the overall average responses. Note that Hispanic/Latino adults tend to report calling District offices or use non-DPD social media for information.
- Younger adults, those with children and program participants tend to reference the digital seasonal guide, but many also get District information from the Public Library.

Meaningful Differences: Sources Used When Seeking DPD Information

Source	Cited as a Source (multiple response)	#1 Preferred Source (single response)
DPD website	(65% Overall) - Under age 45 (71%, vs. 55% of ages 45-54 and 50% of ages 65+) - Households with children (78%, vs. 60% of those without children) - SW (80%) and SE regions (75%) - DPD users/visitors (70%, vs. 3% of non-users)	(41% Overall) - Men (53%, vs. 29% of women) - Under age 35 (59%) - SW region (57%) - DPD users/visitors (44%, vs. 2% of non-users)
<u>Printed</u> DPD seasonal program guide	(51% Overall) - Women (64%, vs. 37% of men) - Ages 45+ (64%, vs. 40% of those under age 45) - NW region (59%) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (68%) - White adults (63%, vs. 23% of non-white residents) - DPD program participants (66%, vs. 39% of non-participants)	(28% Overall) - Women (38%, vs. 18% of men) - Ages 45-54 (42%), 65+ (40%) - Lived in DeKalb 30+ yrs. (40%)
Word of mouth	(26% Overall) - NW region (33%) - White adults (35%, vs. 8% of non-white residents)	(2% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>



Meaningful Differences: Sources Used When Seeking DPD Information (cont'd)

Source	Cited as a Source (multiple response)	#1 Preferred Source (single response)
"What's Happening in DeKalb" website	(21% Overall) - SE region (53%) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (26%) - White adults (26%, vs. 9% of non-white residents)	(2% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>
Signage at District facilities	(19% Overall) - NW residents (21%)	(0% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>
DPD's social media	(18% Overall) - DPD program participants (26%, vs. 13% of non-participants)	(7% Overall) - DPD program participants 13%, vs. 3% of non-participants - Ages 45-54 (11%)
DeKalb Public Library	(18% Overall) - Children in household (37%, vs. 12% of those without children) - White adults (23%, vs. 7% of non-white residents) - DPD program participants (28%, vs. 11% of non-participants)	(1% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>
Digital DPD seasonal program guide	(17% Overall) - Ages 35-44 (28%) - Children in household (31%, vs. 12% of those without children) - NW region (23%) - Lived in DeKalb (13-29 yrs. (27%)) - DPD users/visitors (18%, vs. 1% of non-users) - DPD program participants (26%, vs. 10% of non-participants)	(7% Overall) - Age 35-44 (18%) - Children in household (13%, vs. 4% of those without children) - NW region (9%) - Lived in DeKalb 13-29 yrs. (17%) - Homeowners (11%, vs. 1% of renters) - DPD program participants (13%, vs. 2% of non-participants)

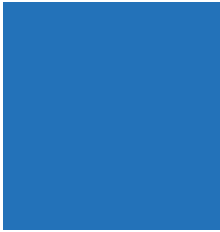


Meaningful Differences: Sources Used When Seeking DPD Information (cont'd)

Source	Cited as a Source (multiple response)	#1 Preferred Source (single response)
Local news (digital, print)	(11% Overall) - Ages 55-64 (19%), 65+ (23%, vs. 6% under age 55) - SE region (27%) - White adults (16%, vs. 0% of non-white residents) - DPD users/visitors (12%, vs. 1% of non-users)	(5% Overall) - Ages 55+ (12%, vs. 2% of those under 55) - SE region (21%)
Call the District	(8% Overall) - Under age 35 (14%) - No children in household (10%, vs. 2% of those with children) - SW region (21%) - Hispanic/Latino adults (23% of n=32, vs. 4% of non-Hispanics)	(0% Overall) < no statistically meaningful differences >
Social media from non-DPD groups	(7% Overall) - White adults (10%, vs. 1% of non-white residents) - Hispanic/Latino adults (21% of n=32, vs. 4% of non-Hispanics)	(0% Overall) < no statistically meaningful differences >
Monthly DPD email newsletter/other emails	(5% Overall) - Lived in DeKalb <5 yrs. (12%)	(1% Overall) < no statistically meaningful differences >



APPENDIX: Questionnaire and Topline Results





Final Topline Results

Statistically Valid Survey (SVS) responses (n=400) collected from September 22nd through December 1st, 2025.
Public responses (n=19) collected from Dec. 1st, 2025 through Jan. 20th, 2026 (small n of cases).
NOTE: Percentages may not sum due to rounding (+/-1%)

Q1. How many years have you lived in Dekalb?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	400	49
Less than 5 years	16%	10%
5-9 years	19%	12%
10-19 years	25%	19%
20-29 years	14%	23%
30-39 years	12%	17%
40+ years	14%	19%
Mean	19.57	24.38
Median	13.00	20.50

Q2. Which of the following best describes you?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	400	49
I am a permanent, year-round resident of Dekalb	86%	94%
I am a seasonal resident of Dekalb (e.g., NIU student, faculty, or other type of seasonal/temporary)	14%	4%
I do not currently live in Dekalb	-	2%

Q3. Please give your overall opinion of the Dekalb Park District (DPD). If you are not familiar enough to offer an opinion, please mark "Unfamiliar."

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	362	49
Highest regard (9-10)	22%	18%
Great (8)	24%	22%
Good (6-7)	28%	24%
Neutral (5)	17%	12%
Dislike(0-4)	9%	22%
Mean	6.90	6.31
Median	7.00	7.00
Unfamiliar	14%	-

Q4. What do you like most about the Dekalb Park District, or what does it do particularly well?

Analysis of coded open-ends is included in the full report.

Q5. What do you dislike most about the Dekalb Park District, or what could it do better?

Analysis of coded open-ends is included in the full report.

Q6. Which DeKalb Park District parks, trails, nature areas, and facilities you or household members have visited in the last 12 months?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
PARKS (NET)	84%	92%
Annie's Woods	25%	31%
Barb Boulevard	3%	10%
Boardman Park	3%	-
Chesebro Park	6%	4%
DeKalb Kiwanis Park	24%	27%
DeKalb Square	14%	20%
Despin Park	5%	8%
Garden of Eden Park	7%	8%
Hallgren Park	8%	15%
Hanna Park	1%	2%
Hopkins Park	70%	80%
Huntley Park	18%	20%
Katz Park	33%	37%
Kensington Park	3%	4%
Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park	12%	18%
League of Women Voters	4%	8%
Liberty Park	6%	12%
Lions Park	35%	49%
Mason Park/Larson Lake	8%	22%
McCormick Park	5%	20%
Memorial Park	5%	10%
Moluf Park	3%	4%
Moudy Park	4%	2%
Nature Trail	34%	51%
Oakland Park	4%	-
Overlook Pointe Park	2%	6%
Papage Park	4%	2%
Prairie Park	33%	24%
Prairie Creek Park	6%	4%
Prather Park	7%	18%
Raymond Park	2%	6%
Rodary Park	14%	24%
Shoman Park	7%	10%
St. Mary's Park	2%	8%
Sweet Park	4%	12%
Veteran's Park	4%	8%
Welsh Park	8%	16%
Wright Farm Park	1%	6%
Yusunas Park	2%	4%
FACILITIES (NET)	65%	82%
Buena Vista Golf Course/driving range	13%	29%

Ellwood House Museum	24%	31%
Haish Gymnasium	16%	20%
Hopkins Park Community Center/Terrace Room	23%	39%
River Heights Golf Course	15%	29%
Sports & Recreation Center	29%	51%
None of the above	8%	-

Q7. Which park, trail, nature area, or building/facility do you use most often?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	359	49
Annie's Woods	2%	6%
Barb Boulevard	**%	-
Boardman Park	1%	-
Chesbro Park	-	2%
Dekalb Kiwanis Park	3%	-
Deprin Park	**%	-
Garden of Eden Park	2%	-
Hallgren Park	3%	-
Hopkins Park	22%	24%
Huntley Park	2%	2%
Katz Park	7%	4%
Kensington Park	**%	-
Kishwaukee Kiwanis Park	1%	2%
League of Women Voters	1%	-
Liberty Park	1%	-
Lions Park	4%	8%
Mason Park/Larson Lake	1%	-
McCormick Park	**%	-
Memorial Park	**%	-
Moluf Park	**%	-
Nature Trail	15%	14%
Oakland Park	**%	-
Overlook Pointe Park	1%	2%
Pappas Park	**%	-
Prairie Park	10%	2%
Prairie Creek Park	**%	-
Prather Park	1%	-
Rotary Park	**%	-
St. Mary's Park	**%	2%
Sweet Park	2%	2%
Welsh Park	**%	-
Wright Farm Park	**%	-
Yusunas Park	**%	2%
Buena Vista Golf Course/driving range	5%	-
Elwood House Museum	**%	-
Haish Gymnasium	1%	4%
Hopkins Park Community Center/Terrace Room	**%	4%
River Heights Golf Course	2%	6%
Sports & Recreation Center	10%	12%

Q8A. Overall experience - Please rate your satisfaction with the parks, trails, nature areas, and buildings/facilities that you recently visited

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	369	48
Completely satisfied (9-10)	39%	42%
Very satisfied (8)	23%	23%
Somewhat satisfied (6-7)	26%	19%
Neutral (5)	7%	8%
Dissatisfied (0-4)	4%	8%
Mean	7.84	7.73
Median	8.00	8.00

Q8B. Cleanliness, maintenance, and upkeep - Please rate your satisfaction with the parks, trails, nature areas, and buildings/facilities that you recently visited

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	371	48
Completely satisfied (9-10)	48%	46%
Very satisfied (8)	26%	21%
Somewhat satisfied (6-7)	14%	15%
Neutral (5)	8%	10%
Dissatisfied (0-4)	4%	8%
Mean	8.04	7.81
Median	8.00	8.00

Q8C. Access (parking, paths, entrances, ramps, etc.) - Please rate your satisfaction with the parks, trails, nature areas, and buildings/facilities that you recently visited

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	371	49
Completely satisfied (9-10)	57%	53%
Very satisfied (8)	18%	8%
Somewhat satisfied (6-7)	14%	16%
Neutral (5)	7%	16%
Dissatisfied (0-4)	5%	6%
Mean	8.23	7.78
Median	9.00	9.00

Q8D. Safety - Please rate your satisfaction with the parks, trails, nature areas, and buildings/facilities that you recently visited

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	369	48
Completely satisfied (9-10)	49%	48%
Very satisfied (8)	23%	10%
Somewhat satisfied (6-7)	14%	19%
Neutral (5)	10%	12%
Dissatisfied (0-4)	4%	10%
Mean	8.10	7.65
Median	8.00	8.00

Q8E. Quality of service provided by park district staff - Please rate your satisfaction with the parks, trails, nature areas, and buildings/facilities that you recently visited

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	356	48
Completely satisfied (9-10)	38%	33%
Very satisfied (8)	19%	8%
Somewhat satisfied (6-7)	10%	12%
Neutral (5)	27%	35%
Dissatisfied (0-4)	6%	10%
Mean	7.35	6.65
Median	8.00	6.50

Q9. If you are not satisfied with a specific DeKalb Park District park, trail, nature area, or facility/building, which one(s) and why?

Analysis of coded open-ends is included in the full report.

Q10. If you haven't visited any DPD park, trail, nature area, or facility recently, why not?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	31	-
Do not have children/children are grown	55%	-
Unfamiliar with Park District parks/facilities	61%	-
Poor health or mobility	16%	-
Dislike the Park District, had bad experience	2%	-
Cost/Fees are too high	26%	-
Too busy/don't have time	10%	-
Nothing of interest offered	24%	-
Inconvenient hours of operation	4%	-
Use parks/recreational options at NU campus	24%	-
Use recreational/fitness facilities elsewhere in town	17%	-
Other, please specify	27%	-

Q11A. Indicate if you or a household member uses or has a need or interest in these indoor amenities

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	203	50
Aerobics/dance studio	15%	18%
Basketball/volleyball courts	22%	24%
Batting cages	11%	22%
Fitness facility	46%	45%
Golf simulator	12%	16%
Indoor turf for field sports (soccer, lacrosse, etc.) and baseball/football fields	15%	31%
Pickleball courts	24%	20%
Running/walking track	50%	43%
Space for visual arts programs/studios	21%	16%
Theater program/rehearsal space	10%	14%
Other, please specify	9%	8%
None of the above	24%	20%

Q11B. MEANS - How well is this need/interest being met?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	288	40
Aerobics/dance studio	2.29	3.22
Basketball/volleyball courts	3.66	3.31
Batting cages	2.47	1.36
Fitness facility	3.34	2.82
Golf simulator	1.62	1.12
Indoor turf for field sports (soccer, lacrosse, etc.) and baseball/softball fields	2.92	3.20
Pickleball courts	2.95	3.10
Running/walking track	3.29	2.62
Space for visual arts programs/studios	2.47	1.62
How well is this need/interest being met?		
Theater program/rehearsal space	2.15	1.57
Other, please specify	2.22	1.25

Q11B. TOP 2 BOX - How well is this need/interest being met?
(% Completely/mostly being met currently)

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	288	40
Aerobics/dance studio	16%	56%
Basketball/volleyball courts	66%	46%
Batting cages	8%	-
Fitness facility	46%	27%
Golf simulator	9%	-
Indoor turf for field sports (soccer, lacrosse, etc.) and baseball/softball fields	35%	40%
Pickleball courts	38%	30%
Running/walking track	50%	29%
Space for visual arts programs/studios	16%	-
How well is this need/interest being met?		
Theater program/rehearsal space	10%	-
Other, please specify	30%	-

Q12. Please select the one indoor amenity that the Park District should prioritize providing, adding or improving.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	402	49
Aerobics/dance studio	1%	2%
Basketball/volleyball courts	2%	4%
Batting cages	4%	8%
Fitness facility	18%	20%
Golf simulator	4%	2%
Indoor turf for field sports (soccer, lacrosse, etc.) and baseball/softball fields	3%	12%
Pickleball courts	10%	4%
Running/walking track	14%	16%
Space for visual arts programs/studios	6%	-
Theater program/rehearsal space	1%	-
Other	6%	2%
None of the above	33%	29%

Q13A. Indicate if you or a household member uses or has a need or interest in these outdoor amenities.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
Batting cages	10%	24%
Disc golf course	22%	10%
Dog park	25%	18%
Golf course and driving	21%	20%
Outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields	22%	24%
Playground	34%	41%
Sand volleyball courts	7%	14%
Walking and biking trails	81%	61%
Other	4%	2%
None of the above	7%	20%

Q13B. MEANS - How well is this need/interest being met?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	361	37
Batting cages	2.40	1.75
Disc golf course	3.70	2.60
Dog park	3.60	3.22
Golf course and driving	3.78	4.10
Outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields	3.74	3.50
Playground	4.31	4.25
Sand volleyball courts	1.72	1.86
Walking and biking trails	4.01	4.00
Other	2.87	1.00

Q13B. TOP 2 BOX - How well is this need/interest being met? (% Completely/mostly being met currently)

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	361	37
Batting cages	13%	8%
Disc golf course	63%	20%
Dog park	58%	44%
Golf course and driving	63%	80%
Outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields	71%	50%
Playground	82%	80%
Sand volleyball courts	9%	14%
Walking and biking trails	74%	70%
Other	43%	-

Q14. Please select the one outdoor option that the DeKalb Park District should prioritize providing, adding, or improving.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	395	49
Batting cages	5%	8%
Disc golf course	2%	-
Dog park	7%	4%
Golf course and driving	4%	8%
Outdoor natural grass athletic/sports fields	4%	-
Playground	7%	16%
Sand volleyball courts	1%	6%
Walking and biking trails	43%	24%
Other	3%	-
None of the above	24%	33%

Q15. In the past 12 months, have you or household members participated in DeKalb Park District recreation programs or community events?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
Yes	42%	63%
No	58%	37%

Q16. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the DeKalb Park District recreation programs and events you recently attended/participated in.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	152	31
Completely satisfied (9-10)	32%	23%
Very satisfied (8)	26%	29%
Somewhat satisfied (6-7)	23%	19%
Neutral (5)	7%	13%
Dissatisfied (0-4)	12%	16%
Mean	7.31	6.71
Median	8.00	8.00

Q17. With which Park District program(s) or event(s) are you dissatisfied, and why?

Analysis of coded open ends is included in the full report.

Q18A. Please indicate if you or a household member uses or has a need or interest in the following programs and activities.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	459
Community events for all ages	37%	37%
Preschool/Early childhood programs (under age 5)	7%	20%
Youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12	15%	22%
Youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12	8%	12%
Other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12	8%	14%
Teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17	7%	20%
Teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17	5%	10%
Adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54	29%	24%
Adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54	29%	31%
Sports/athletics for active adults ages 55+	17%	14%
Non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+	21%	14%
Other	2%	-
None of the above	25%	20%

Q18B. MEANS - How well is this need/interest being met?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	296	31
Community events for all ages	3.41	3.11
Preschool/Early childhood programs (under age 5)	3.61	2.70
Youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12	3.33	3.30
Youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12	2.90	3.83
Other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12	2.46	4.00
Teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17	2.48	3.00
Teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17	2.70	2.80
Adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54	2.87	3.33
Adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54	2.76	3.00
Sports/athletics for active adults ages 55+	3.11	3.14
Non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+	3.01	2.57
Other	2.27	-

Q18B. TOP 2 BOX – How well is this need/interest being met?
(% Completely/mostly being met currently)

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	296	39
Community events for all ages	52%	44%
Preschool/Early childhood programs (under age 5)	54%	30%
Youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12	56%	40%
Youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12	37%	67%
Other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12	21%	71%
Teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17	24%	20%
Teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17	18%	20%
Adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54	24%	50%
Adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54	24%	33%
Sports/athletics for active adults ages 55+	24%	29%
Non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+	28%	14%
Other	30%	-

Q19. Please select the one program area that the DeKalb Park District should prioritize providing, adding, or improving.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	394	49
Community events for all ages	10%	8%
Preschool/Early childhood programs (under age 5)	3%	10%
Youth sports/athletics for ages 5-12	8%	12%
Youth cultural arts programs for ages 5-12	2%	-
Other programs (learning, social, etc.) for ages 5-12	1%	-
Teen sports/athletics for ages 13-17	1%	6%
Teen non-sports/athletics for ages 13-17	1%	8%
Adult sports/athletics for ages 18-54	14%	8%
Adult non-sports/athletics for ages 18-54	10%	6%
Sports/athletics for active adults ages 55+	6%	4%
Non-sports/athletics for adults ages 55+	8%	6%
Other	1%	-
None of the above	35%	31%

Q20. What specific program(s) or event(s) should the Park District offer for your program area should the Park District prioritize?

Analysis of coded open-ends is included in the full report.

Q21. Do you believe that your household and its interests are properly represented and included in the DeKalb Park District and its offerings?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	400	48
Yes	81%	79%
No	19%	21%

Q21A. Why don't you feel that your household is properly represented and included?

Analysis of coded open-ends is included in the full report.

Q22. Please rate the overall value that the Park District represents given its share of property taxes.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	402	49
Excellent value (9-10)	22%	27%
Great value 8	14%	12%
Good value (6-7)	25%	22%
Average value (5)	17%	12%
Poor value (0-4)	22%	27%
Mean	6.16	6.22
Median	6.00	7.00

Q23. When you seek info about the DPD and its programs, parks, facilities, or services, from what sources do you get that info?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	400	48
DeKalb Park District website	65%	71%
Printed DPD seasonal program guide (mailed 3 time a year)	51%	58%
Digital DPD seasonal program guide (mailed 3 time a year)	17%	21%
DeKalb Park District email newsletter (or other email notifications)	5%	4%
Signage at Park District facilities (digital sign at River Heights Golf Course, or banners at other facilities)	19%	12%
Call the DeKalb Park District main office or one of its facilities	8%	4%
DeKalb Park District's social media (e.g., District page on Facebook, Park District on Instagram, X, etc.)	18%	46%
Other local groups (non-Park District) social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	7%	21%
"What's Happening in DeKalb" website	21%	25%
DeKalb Public Library Basics DeKalb (local service organization)	18%	17%
Word of mouth from friends, neighbors, family, etc.	4%	4%
Local print or digital news sources	26%	29%
Other	11%	6%
	5%	2%

Q24. Select your most preferred source when seeking information about the Park District?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	385	48
DeKalb Park District website	41%	31%
Printed DPD seasonal program guide (mailed 3	28%	35%
Digital DPD seasonal program guide (on the	7%	6%
Monthly Park District email newsletter (or other email notifications)	1%	-
Signage at Park District facilities (digital sign at River Heights Golf Course, or	4%	2%
Call the DeKalb Park District main office or one of its facilities	4%	-
DeKalb Park District's social media (e.g., Facebook, posts on Instagram, X, etc.)	7%	12%
Other local groups' (non-Park District) social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	4%	2%
"What's Happening in DeKalb" website	2%	4%
DeKalb Public Library	1%	-
Word of mouth from friends, neighbors, family, etc.	2%	2%
Local print or digital news sources	5%	2%
Other	5%	2%

Q27. In what year were you born? (AGE SHOWN BELOW)

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	398	48
<35	35%	27%
35-44	19%	33%
45-54	13%	12%
55-64	13%	12%
65+	20%	15%
Mean	46.51	45.17
Median	43.00	41.50
No Answer	5	1

Q26. Please note your gender.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	405	49
Male	48%	27%
Female	50%	73%
Prefer to self-describe	2%	-
No Answer	3	-

Q27_1. Ages 5 or under - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	89%	78%
One	6%	14%
Two or more	5%	8%

Q27_2. Ages 6 to 13 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	83%	76%
One	13%	16%
Two or more	4%	8%

Q27_3. Ages 13 to 17 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	89%	69%
One	10%	18%
Two or more	1%	12%

Q27_4. Ages 18 to 34 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	53%	63%
One	22%	16%
Two	22%	20%
Three or more	3%	-

Q24. Select your most preferred source when seeking information about the Park District?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	385	48
DeKalb Park District website	41%	31%
Printed DPD seasonal program guide (mailed 3	28%	35%
Digital DPD seasonal program guide (on the	7%	6%
Monthly Park District email newsletter (or other email	1%	-
indications)		
Signage at Park District facilities (digital sign at river	*%	2%
entrance, or on course, or banners at other		
Call the DeKalb Park District	*%	-
main office or one of its facilities		
DeKalb Park District's social media (e.g., Facebook,	7%	12%
Facebook, posts on Instagram, X, etc.)		
Other local groups' (non-Park District) social media (e.g., Facebook,	*%	2%
Instagram, etc.)		
What's Happening in	2%	4%
DeKalb's Facebook		
DeKalb Public Library	1%	-
Word of mouth from friends, neighbors, family, etc.	2%	2%
Local print or digital news sources	5%	2%
Other	5%	2%

Q27. In what year were you born? (AGE SHOWN BELOW)

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	398	48
<35	35%	27%
35-44	19%	33%
45-54	13%	12%
55-64	13%	12%
65+	20%	15%
Mean	46.51	45.17
Median	43.00	41.50
No Answer	5	1

Q26. Please note your gender.

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	405	49
Male	48%	27%
Female	50%	73%
Prefer to self-describe	2%	-
No Answer	3	-

Q27_1. Ages 5 or under - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	89%	78%
One	6%	14%
Two or more	5%	8%

Q27_2. Ages 6 to 13 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	83%	76%
One	13%	16%
Two or more	4%	8%

Q27_3. Ages 13 to 17 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	89%	69%
One	10%	18%
Two or more	1%	12%

Q27_4. Ages 18 to 34 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	53%	63%
One	22%	16%
Two	22%	20%
Three or more	3%	-

Q27_5. Ages 35 to 54 - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
None	64%	57%
One	14%	10%
Two or more	22%	33%

Q27_6. Ages 55 or older - Including yourself, how many people live in your house?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	407	49
None	66%	71%
One	18%	4%
Two	16%	25%
Three or more	4%	-
No Answer	0	1

Q28. Do you own or rent your current residence?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	407	49
Own	58%	78%
Rent	42%	22%
No Answer	0	-

Q29. Which of the following identifies your ethnicity?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	408	49
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6%	-
Asian	9%	2%
Black	20%	4%
Middle Eastern or North African	7%	-
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	-
White	69%	92%
Other	6%	4%

Q30. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ethnicity?

	RESPONDENT TYPE	
	SVS	Public
Total Answering	402	49
Yes	19%	8%
No	81%	92%
No Answer	10	1



RE: DeKalb Park District Comprehensive Master Plan

HITCHCOCKDESIGNGROUP



Agenda

Date: Monday, September 22, 2025
To: DeKalb Park District Stakeholder Interviews
From: Hitchcock Design Group (HDG)

RE: Comprehensive Master Plan
Stakeholder Interview Agenda

Meeting Structure:

- Hitchcock Design Group (HDG) will provide an overview of the Comprehensive Master Plan process, goals of the plan, and schedule
- Participant introductions (questions 1 and 2)
- Facilitated conversation amongst participants using the below list of questions (3 - 11).

Interview Questions:

1. Are you a resident within the DeKalb Park District jurisdictional boundaries? How long have you lived in DeKalb or the surrounding area?
2. What organization do you represent and how long have you been with them? Have you had past involvement or partnership with the DeKalb Park District?
3. In your experience working or coordinating with DeKalb Park District, what has worked well? What are some areas that could be improved?
4. In comparing recreation providers within the local region, what do you prefer about DeKalb Park District offerings and what do you prefer at other locations?
5. Are there any programs and/or events in which you are affiliated with the DeKalb Park District and are there improvements or additional resources needed?
6. How is your organization expecting to provide recreation over the next 5 years and how can DeKalb Park District be involved?
7. Do you see other opportunities for increased or added partnerships with the DeKalb Park District?
8. What programs do you currently participate in or have in the past that you feel are beneficial to the community? How could those be improved or expanded on?
9. What additional programs, perhaps some that you don't actively participate in, do you support, and feel would benefit the community as a whole?
10. What service, facility, or amenity gaps do you feel exist in the region? Either related to your organization, or that you think would benefit the DeKalb Park District generally?
11. Based on today's discussion, what do you think are the top priorities the DeKalb Park District should focus on for the next five years?

HITCHCOCKDESIGNGROUP

Board Prioritization Results

The following is a summary of the High (0-5 years), Medium (6-10 years), or Low (10+ year) Priorities developed by the Board. Additional discussions regarding specific strategies are included in italics as subbullets where applicable. Each strategy is followed by a number in parentheses referencing its category.

High Priority

- Complete pool reconstruction and manage facility re-opening (1)
- Complete study of and implement new or expanded recreation center (1)
- Complete planned park improvements at League of Women Voters and Prairie Parks (2)
- Continue strengthening scholarship programs (4)
- Complete District Strategic Plan – Build District stability in response to changes (4)
- Support the ongoing establishment of the [Parks Foundation]* 501c3
**name changed following workshop completion*
- Improve internal District communications (4)

The above strategies were identified as being current or preferred to be completed in the earliest years of the plan.

The below strategies were identified as high priority but preferred or needing to be completed after the above items:

- Renovate/expand Sports and Rec Center (1)
- Develop and implement Haish Gymnasium use plan (1)
 - Noted prior Planning Team and staff discussions that alternative or replacement spaces at other locations would be desirable prior to making changes to Haish
- Reinvest in Buena Vista Golf Club (1)
 - Board discussion that this could shift into medium priority if needed
- Maintenance campus evaluation and renovation/relocation (1)
- Develop and/or update and implement ADA transition plan at key park and facility locations (5)
 - Discussed current plan completed ±2015 and that 5-year planning cycles are typical

Medium Priority

- Reinvest in River Heights Golf Course (1)
- Develop and implement park improvement plans – DeKalb Kiwanis Park (2)
- Plan for and implement high-end sports complex development (2)
- Complete acquisitions for program expansion- SRC/DeKalb Kiwanis Park (2)
- Improve non-vehicular connectivity (5)

The following strategies were preferred to be completed after the above items

- Complete acquisitions for program expansion – River Heights Golf Course (2)
- Develop and implement park improvement plans
 - Garden of Eden Park
 - DeKalb Square
 - Wright Farm
 - Mason Park/Larson Lake
 - Prather Park
 - Katz Park

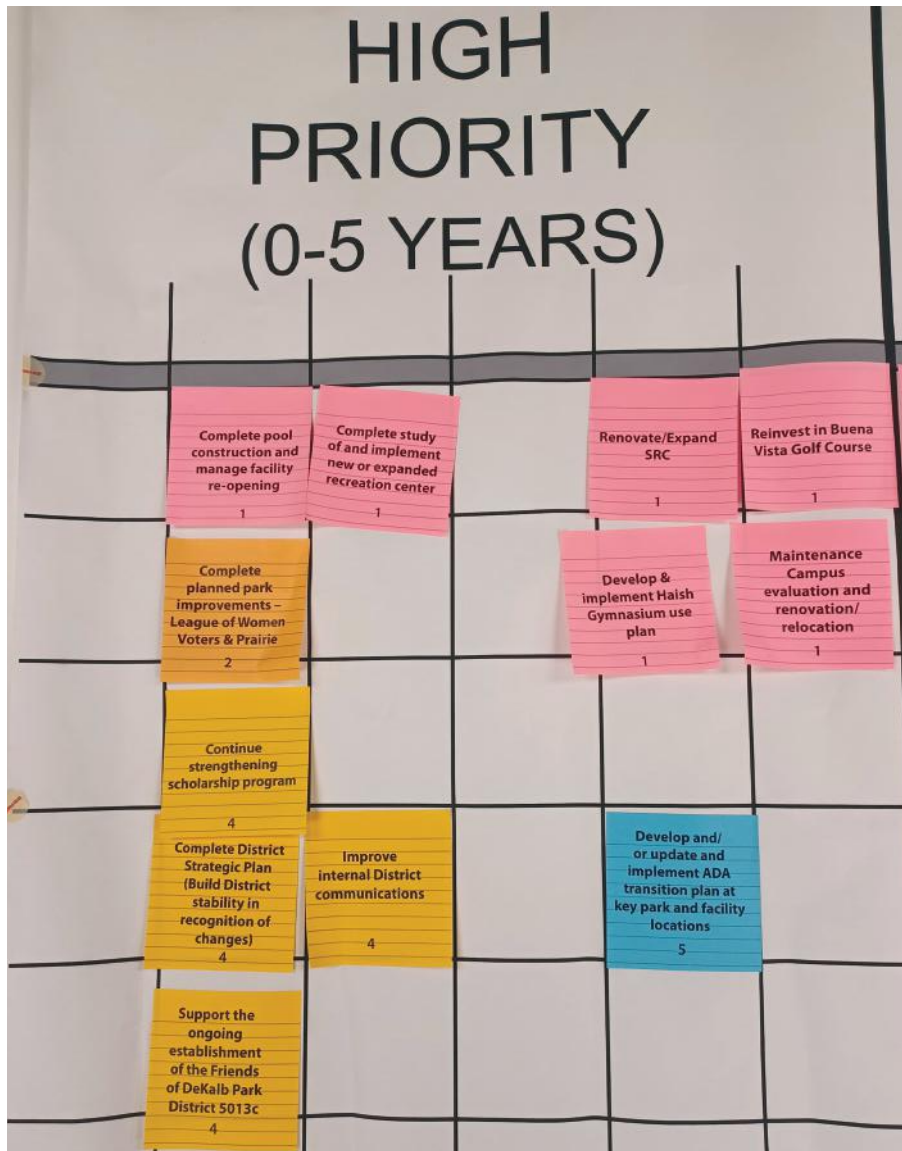
The Planning Team and staff will develop the implementation order for the above park improvement plan locations

Low Priority

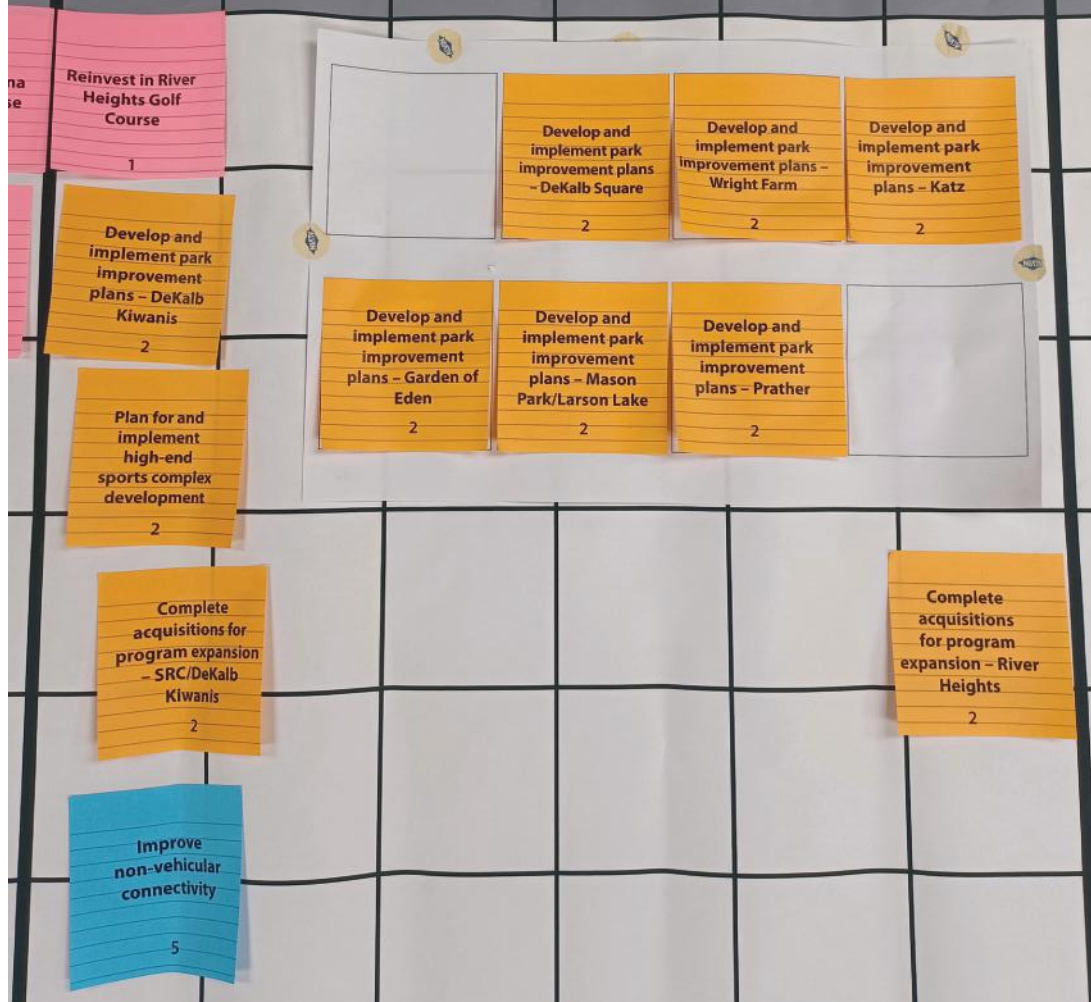
- Consider acquisition for economic stimulus (2)
- Complete acquisitions for program expansion – new property (2)

Recurring

- Develop and/or update and implement capital improvement plans (2)
- Provide appropriate trending and in-demand amenities (2)
- Provide appropriate amenities that are below benchmarks (2)
- Consider IGAs or acquisitions for walkable park service (2)
- Establish and monitor key performance indicators for lifecycle health (3)
- Improve program retention and reach (3)
- Evaluate program operations (3)
- Improve visibility and branding within the community (3)
- Provide appropriate trending and in-demand programs/amenities (3)
- Improve external District communications and transparency (4)
- Fill vacant staff positions (4)
- Strengthen volunteer program / work force (4)
- Provide park access in underserved areas of the community (5)
- Expand community awareness of existing resources (5)
- Continue to provide and expand aid programs for under-resourced community members (5)



MEDIUM PRIORITY (5-10 YEARS)



LOW PRIORITY (10 YEARS & BEYOND)

Consider strategic
acquisition for
economic stimulus

2

Complete
acquisitions
for program
expansion - New
Property

2

Recurring Items

Expand community awareness and use of existing resources 5	Establish and monitor key performance indicators for program lifecycle health 3	Improve program retention and reach 3	Evaluate program operations 3
Improve visibility branding and differentiation within the community 3	Provide appropriate trending and in-demand programs / amenities 3	Consider Golf Pro staff/affiliate position 3	Improve external District communications and transparency 4
Continue to provide and expand aid programs for under-resourced community members 5	Provide park access in underserved areas of the community 5	Fill vacant staff positions 4	Strengthen volunteer program / work force 4
Consider strategic IGAs or acquisitions for walkable park service 2	Provide appropriate amenities that are below benchmark 2	Provide appropriate trending and in-demand amenities 2	Develop and / or update and implement capital improvements plans 2

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