

2025 — 2029

Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the many citizens, staff and community groups who provided extensive community input for the development of this Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The efforts of this community will continue to ensure the success of Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation.

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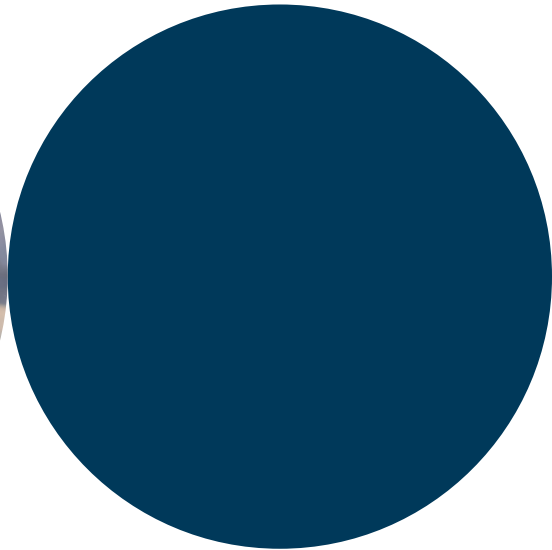
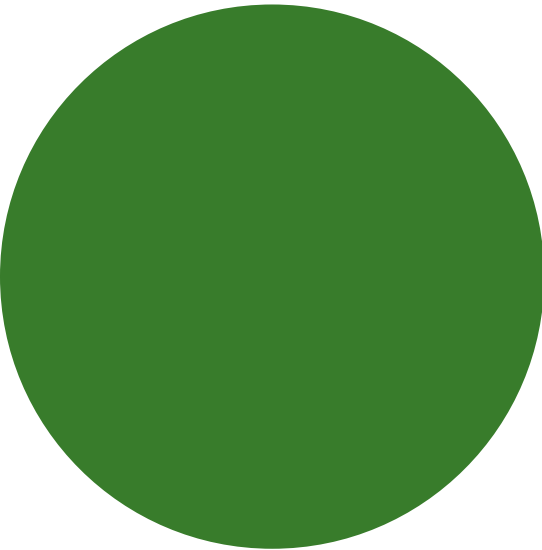
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

Since its inception in 1991, Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (“CCPR”) has contributed significantly to the quality of life of the Carmel community. As stewards of public spaces, CCPR recognizes the profound impact parks and recreation have on the physical, social, and environmental well-being of the community. Building on CCPR’s 33-year history, the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (“Master Plan”) serves as a visionary roadmap that will guide CCPR toward sustainable development, equitable access, and the cultivation of vibrant spaces that will foster a sense of belonging for generations.

CCPR manages and maintains nearly 692 park acres and numerous recreation facilities, including the Monon Community Center, The Waterpark, Ralph L. Wilfong Pavilion, and Jill Perelman Pavilion. In addition, CCPR partners with Carmel Clay Schools to offer Extended School Enrichment (“ESE”), an afterschool care program for K-6 grade students located at all 11 Carmel elementary schools. The Summer Camp Series is a component of ESE that offers 13 different summer camps accommodating children ages 5-15. CCPR’s over 650 employees serve millions of visitors each year.

CCPR is recognized as one of the best and most innovative park and recreation agencies in the nation, receiving the National Gold Medal for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2014 and 2020, the highest honor for a municipal park and recreation system.








The department is one of only 203 agencies nationwide that is nationally accredited, demonstrating its commitment to utilizing industry best practices. CCPR has also received national, regional, and state awards for the design of its parks and facilities, outstanding programs, excellence in providing services to people with disabilities, and commitment to environmental stewardship.

A trademark of CCPR, the Master Plan was developed based on extensive community engagement. This inclusive process involved various outreach methods such as community focus groups, an intercept survey at “pop-up-events,” key stakeholder interviews, public forums, and a statistically valid needs analysis survey, alongside an online survey open to all residents and visitors. Merging insights gleaned from these interactions with the community with technical analysis, the final Master Plan serves to guide the management and development of the park system for the next 5+ years to ensure continued high-quality experiences and services for the community.

1.2. MASTER PLAN GOALS

The Master Plan comprehensively outlines the current and future needs of the community, updates level of service standards, evaluates the financial health of CCPR, and presents a strategic action plan for the next five years. This Master Plan responds to the dynamic shifts within the Carmel community since the adoption of the previous plan in 2020. Factors such as population growth, shifting demographics, evolving recreational trends, the establishment of new parks and facilities, increased usage of CCPR parks and facilities since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resounding success of numerous programs have collectively influenced and redefined the demand for park and recreation services. Consequently, these changes necessitate innovative strategies to effectively manage the park and recreation system over the upcoming five years.

The goals of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan include:

-  **CREATE A PLAN** that is grounded in inclusive and accessible community engagement to ensure the broad interests of the diverse community and stakeholders in Carmel are represented and served.
-  **OUTLINE A PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGY** to serve the entire community regardless of socioeconomic, cultural, racial, or geographic differences that provide fair and equitable community benefit to all.
-  **UTILIZE A WIDE VARIETY OF DATA SOURCES** and best analytical practices to predict trends and patterns of use, community impact, and how to address unmet needs in Carmel, while reflecting achievable best practices.
-  **IDENTIFY NEW AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING STRATEGIES** that align with strategic objectives to ensure CCPR's long-term viability.
-  **DEVELOP A DYNAMIC AND REALISTIC ACTION PLAN** that creates a road map to ensure long-term success and financial sustainability for CCPR that considers the community's needs and guides staff in handling upcoming financial challenges over the next five years.

1.3. PROJECT PROCESS

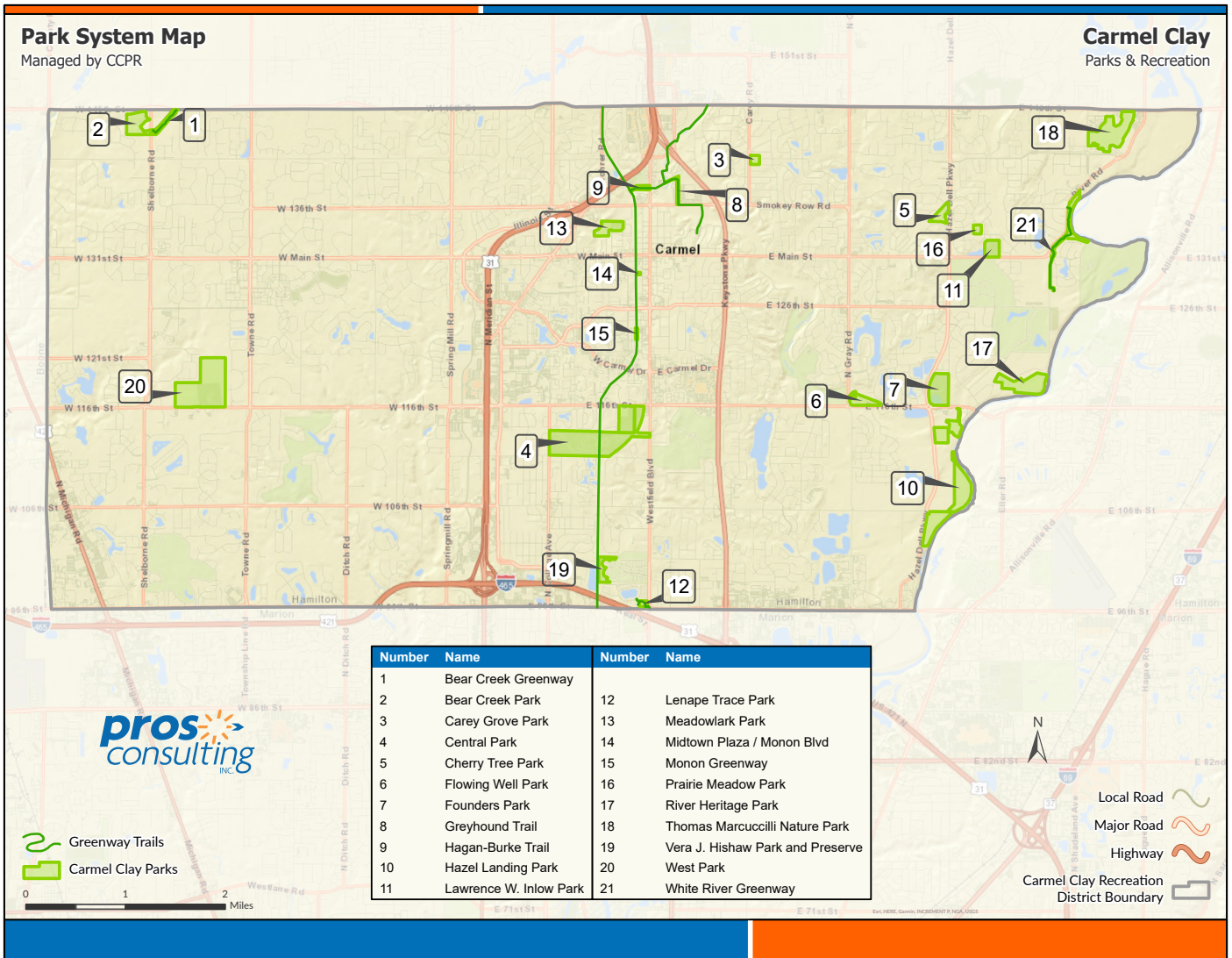
The Master Plan followed a process of data collection, public input, on-the-ground study, assessment of existing conditions, market research, and open dialogue with local leadership and key stakeholders. The project process followed a planning path, as illustrated in **Figure 1**:



FIGURE 1 - PROJECT PROCESS

1.4. CURRENT PARKS MAP & DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA

The planning area for this Master Plan includes all areas within the boundaries of the City of Carmel. While this plan recognizes that the actual service areas of some CCPR parks, facilities, and programs may extend beyond the defined boundaries of the planning area, the primary purpose of this plan is to first and foremost identify and address the park and recreation needs of Carmel residents. **Map 1** depicts the planning area and location of CCPR parks and greenways.



MAP 1 - CCPR PARK SYSTEM MANAGED BY CCPR

1.4.1. CCPR Inventory

Current CCPR inventory by park name, address, park classification and size are detailed in **Table 1**:

CCPR INVENTORY

NAME	ADDRESS	CLASSIFICATION	ACRES
Midtown Plaza/Monon Blvd.	365 Monon Blvd., Carmel, IN 46032	Public Plaza/Micro Parks	0.3
Carey Grove Park	14001 N. Carey Road, Carmel, IN 46033	Neighborhood Park	5.8
Founders Park	11675 Hazel Dell Parkway, Carmel, IN 46033	Community Park	35.27
Lawrence W. Inlow Park	6310 E. Main Street, Carmel, IN 46033	Community Park	16.37
Meadowlark Park	450 Meadow Lane, Carmel, IN 46032	Community Park	18.59
River Heritage Park	11813 River Road, Carmel, IN 46033	Community Park	40
Central Park	1195 Central Park Drive West, Carmel, IN 46032	Regional Park	160.65
West Park	2700 W. 116th Street, Carmel, IN 46032	Regional Park	120.57
Cherry Tree Park	13720 Hazel Dell Parkway, Carmel, IN 46032	Nature Preserves/Open Space	13.38
Flowing Well Park	5100 E. 116th Street, Carmel, IN 46033	Nature Preserves/Open Space	17.47
Hazel Landing Park	10601 Hazel Landing Parkway, Carmel, IN 46033	Nature Preserves/Open Space	95.5
Prairie Meadow Park	5282 Ivy Hill Drive, Carmel, IN 46033	Nature Preserves/Open Space	4.54
Vera J. Hinshaw Park and Preserve	East of Monon Greenway b/w 98th Street and 99th Street, Carmel, IN 46032	Nature Preserves/Open Space	11.73
Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park	7405 Hopewell Parkway, Carmel, IN 46033	Nature Preserves/Open Space	63.24
Greyhound Trail	931 Rangeline Road to 2400 E. 136th Street, Carmel, IN 46032	Greenways/ Trails	1.2
Hagan-Burke Trail	146th Street to the Monon Greenway, Carmel, IN 46032	Greenways/ Trails	1
Lenape Trace Park	9602 Westfield Boulevard, Carmel, IN 46032	Greenways/ Trails	4.53
Monon Greenway (including trailheads)	96th Street north to 146th Street, Carmel, IN 46032	Greenways/ Trails	26.1
Bear Creek Greenway	Drees Homes at Albany Village, Carmel, IN 46074	Greenways/ Trails	9.05
White River Greenway (including Matilda Haverstick property)	13410 River Road, Carmel, IN 46033	Greenways/ Trails	19.66
Bear Creek Park	14330 Shelborne Road, 46074, Carmel, IN 46074	Undeveloped	26.91
Total Acres:			691.86

TABLE 1 - CCPR INVENTORY

1.5. CARMEL/CLAY BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

The Park Board was originally established in August 1991 through an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the City of Carmel and Clay Township, last amended February 2005. A distinct political subdivision under Indiana law, the Park Board serves as the policy-setting body and fiduciary guardian for CCPR, through which it acquires, preserves, and maintains open lands and parks and provides quality recreation programs.

The mailing address and administrative office for CCPR is 1411 E 116th St, Carmel, IN 46032.

The Park Board is comprised of nine appointed members based on their interest in and knowledge of parks and recreation. The Mayor and Township Trustee each appoint four members to staggered, four-year terms. The Carmel Clay School Board self-appoints one of its members to a one-year term. Current Park Board members include the following individuals:

JUDY HAGAN, President

JENN KRISTUNAS, Vice President

LIN ZHENG, Treasurer

LINUS RUDE, Secretary

JONATHAN BLAKE

KATIE BROWNING

JAMES D. GARRETSON

JOSHUA KIRSCH

MARK WESTERMEIER



1.6. PARK BOARD MASTER PLAN APPROVAL

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RESOLUTION NO. G-2024-002

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025-2029 COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation (the “Park Board”) is a governmental entity created and authorized to administer the Carmel/Clay Department of Parks and Recreation (the “Department”) pursuant to that certain agreement entitled “Interlocal Cooperation Agreement” signed by the respective authorized officials of Clay Township, Hamilton County, Indiana and City of Carmel, Indiana on July 30, 2002 and effective January 1, 2003, as amended from time to time; and

WHEREAS, the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement and Indiana Code Section 36-10-3-11 grants the Park Board authority to prepare, publish, and distribute reports and other materials relating to park and recreation activities in the Carmel Clay Community; and

WHEREAS, the Park Board is dedicated to serving the park and recreation needs of the Carmel Clay Community and recognizes the importance of sound planning to achieve this goal; and

WHEREAS, the Park Board, based on extensive input from key stakeholders and the general public, has developed and reviewed a five-year parks and recreation master plan; and

WHEREAS, the Park Board has complied with the guidelines established by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) for development of a five-year parks and recreation master plan to become eligible for grants administered by the IDNR; and

WHEREAS, the Park Board has determined that it is in the best interests of the Carmel Clay Community to have an official five-year parks and recreation master plan to guide future growth and development of the Carmel Clay park and recreation system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation adopts the 2025-2029 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan as set forth in Exhibit “A” attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation this 10th day of December 2024, by a vote of 7 ayes and 0 nays.

CARMEL/CLAY BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Judith F. Hagan, President	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
Jenn Kristunas, Vice-President	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
Lin Zheng, Treasurer	<u> Absent </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
Linus Rude, Secretary	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay

Jonathan Blake	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
Katie Browning	<u> Absent </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
James D. Garretson	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
Joshua A. Kirsh	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay
Mark Westermeier	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
	Aye	Nay

CERTIFICATION

I certify under the penalties of perjury that the foregoing members of the Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation voted as indicated above at a public meeting on December 10, 2024.

Signed by:

C184E3C849FE485...

Judith F. Hagan, President



CHAPTER 2

CCPR PROFILE



2.1. PLANNING AREA

Carmel is a city in Hamilton County, Indiana. It has a total land area of approximately 50 square miles and an estimated population of 103,156 residents. The city is well-connected with four major north/south roadways, including US-421, US-31/Meridian Street, Keystone Parkway, and Hazel Dell Parkway. Major east/west roads include I-465, 96th Street, 116th Street, and 146th Street.

2.1.1. Agency Overview

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (“CCPR”) was established in 1991 through an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the City of Carmel and Clay Township. It manages nearly 700 acres of parkland, with an annual operating budget of approximately \$16.1 million, and employs over 600 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. CCPR has five divisions and offers numerous recreation facilities and programs, serving over 4.2 million visitors annually.

GOVERNMENT

The City of Carmel has the following government administration positions and agencies:

- The government consists of a mayor and a city council.
- The current mayor is Sue Finkam.
- The city council consists of nine members. Six are elected from individual districts and three are elected at-large.

Current boards, committees, and commissions serving the City of Carmel include:

- Advisory Committee on Disability
- Board of Public Works and Safety
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Carmel Audit Committee
- Carmel Cable and Telecommunications Commission
- Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation
- Carmel Climate Action Advisory Committee
- Carmel Economic Development Commission
- Carmel Ethics Board
- Carmel Fire Department Merit Board
- Carmel Fire Department Pension Board
- Carmel Historic Preservation Commission
- Carmel Home Place Advisory Board
- Carmel Plan Commission
- Carmel Police Merit Board
- Carmel Police Department Pension Board
- Mayor's Advisory Commission on Arts
- Carmel Redevelopment Authority
- Carmel Redevelopment Commission (CRC) and Department of Redevelopment
- Local Public Improvement Bond Bank
- Mayor's Advisory Commission on Human Relations
- Storm Water Management Board
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Urban Forestry Committee

Clay Township has the following government administration positions and agencies:

- The government consists of a township trustee and township board.
- The current township trustee is Paul Hensel.
- The township board consists of three members.

The township government is entrusted to perform services vital to the area. These duties include:

- Administration of Township assistance
- Maintenance of abandoned cemeteries: In Clay Township these cemeteries are Calvary Cemetery, 96th and Shelborne Road; Farley Cemetery, 106th Street and Keystone Parkway; Home Place Cemetery, 106th Street and College Avenue; and White Chapel, East 116th Street across from Flowing Well Park.
- Provide park and recreation services through an interlocal agreement with the City of Carmel.
- Appoint members to various City-Township boards. The trustee appoints four of the nine members of the Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation to four-year terms. The trustee appoints five of the nine members of the TriCo Regional Sewer Utility Board of Trustees for four-year terms.

CITY DEPARTMENTS

- Brookshire Golf Course
- Chief of Staff
- Community Services
- Controller
- Economic Development
- Engineering
- Fire
- Human Resources
- Information and Communications Systems
- Law
- Marketing & Community Relations
- Police
- Redevelopment
- Streets
- Utilities

2.2. NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE

The natural resources in Carmel and Clay Township offer a wide array of outdoor recreation opportunities. CCPR celebrates our community's topography, water features, woodlands, created prairielands, and open spaces and increases community engagement and involvement with natural areas through stewardship programming. While lands containing natural resources are often considered environmentally sensitive and may have limited development potential, they provide endless opportunities for both active and passive park and recreation uses. But that is not all - the protection of these natural resource areas can have a host of other benefits, such as preserving unique landforms, maintaining habitats for wildlife, and conserving riparian and vegetative cover. CCPR is committed to working closely with the City of Carmel and Clay Township, as well as local developers, to carefully monitor and advocate for the preservation of natural resources within CCPR's boundaries to the greatest extent feasible.

The following natural features and landscapes exist within the service and planning area of CCPR and this Plan:

2.2.1. River, Floodplains and Riparian Areas

The White River continues to be recognized as both Carmel's and the greater region's most significant environmental feature. The river and its associated floodplain and riparian areas situated on the eastern boundary of the planning area provide an excellent opportunity for people to connect with nature. The floodplain area of White River is extensive and reaches almost half a mile from the river's centerline in some segments, making it the most extensive expanse of undeveloped and natural landscape in the area. Other streams and creeks that drain into the White River also traverse the planning area, providing additional opportunities for nature enthusiasts. Although Cool Creek has been predominantly urbanized, portions of its basic floodway have been preserved as a natural amenity. Williams Creek, located west of Meridian Street, is another environmental corridor that is incorporated within large private estates or areas planned for urban development.



2019 WHITE RIVER PLAN

CCPR continues to develop and implement plans to expand trails, river access, and environmental education consistent with the goals outlined in the White River Vision Plan and planning efforts for the Hamilton County South River District. CCPR's Director/CEO currently serves on the Central Indiana Regional Development Authority's (CIRDA) White River Technical Committee, which aims to ensure cohesion with the White River Vision Plan and develop funding strategies for the river corridor.

Over the last planning period, the department entered into an agreement with Clay Township and other local partners for the development of a pedestrian bridge across the White River Greenway. Along with the existing perimeter pathways along 106th Street, this bridge will provide an east/west corridor providing connectivity between Fishers, Carmel, and Zionsville, as well as connectivity between the Monon Greenway and Nickel Plate Trail. Construction of this bridge will begin in 2024.

The department completed improvements at River Heritage Park, which includes a fully accessible loop trail with two new river overlooks and seating for the public. Plans have been developed to connect River Heritage Park to Hamilton County Parks and Recreation's Prather Park with a perimeter path along River Road, which will effectively serve as a southern extension of the White River Greenway once constructed.

CCPR secured a \$4 million Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) grant from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation issued through CIRDA. Along with local matching funds, this grant will fund construction of an approximately 1.3-mile extension of the White River Greenway north to 146th Street from its current terminus. This project, which will begin in 2024, will also include a trailhead with a river overlook, parking lot and restrooms. Much of the trail will be constructed on an easement granted by Conner Prairie and will run by the anticipated location of a proposed White River Education and Ecology Center.

Outdoor adventure activities have also been identified by the community as a future priority for programming. As CCPR continues to activate the White River, activities such as implementing a canoe/kayak launch and rental services, rafting and stand-up paddling are opportunities to enhance this core program area.

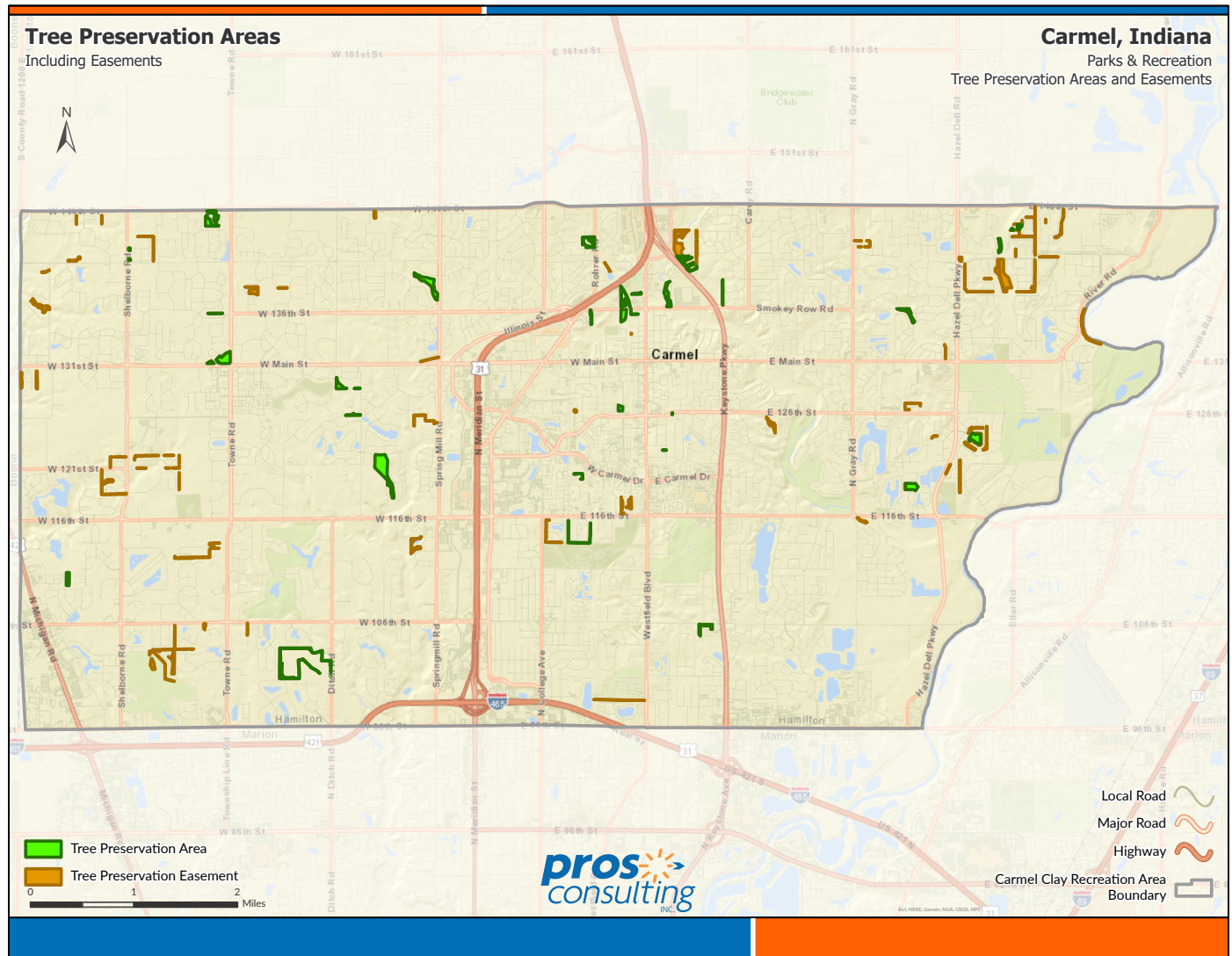
WETLANDS

In addition to the White River, wetlands are another important environmental feature in the planning area. There are several designated wetlands on the National Wetland Inventory Maps within Carmel and Clay Township. Developing properties with delineated wetlands could be challenging and expensive due to the cost of mitigation. Therefore, exploring undeveloped properties with significant wetland areas could be a viable option for creating new parks in underserved parts of the community. Many existing parks have preserved or created wetlands, which provide a refuge for wildlife and a chance for educational interpretation.



2.2.2. Woodlands

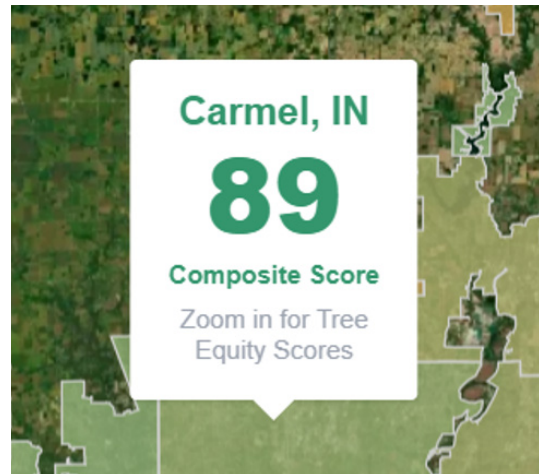
Carmel and Clay Township have very few original woodland areas left. Most of these woodlands are concentrated along the White River or other streams and tributaries like Cool Creek or Williams Creek. Since a lot of these woodlands are situated in areas that also have wetlands, undeveloped properties with substantial woodlands can serve as logical potential locations for new parks in underserved areas. The preservation and restoration of woodlands were the primary drivers behind the creation of CCPR in 1991 and remain a key focus of the department. **Map 2** below depicts areas of the city that have been designated as tree preservation areas or easements.



MAP 2 - TREE PRESERVATION AREAS

The website treeequityscore.org provides more resources to assess canopy coverage, calculate tree planting needs, and quantify the potential health, economy, and environmental benefits of the City's arbor management strategies.

Broken down into U.S. Census block groups, the website analyzes the aforementioned factors and determines an equity score for each block and a canopy goal for the community. Carmel's scores range from 73 to 100 (the highest possible score). These scores can be used to classify areas of the city that have arbor needs into high, moderate, and low priority classifications. The lower the score the higher the priority for tree planting. Carmel has a composite score of 89. This overall score is made up of the smaller scores from each of Carmel's U.S. Census block groups. According to the website, Carmel's canopy cover goal is 50%. This percentage is determined using data from the USDA Forestry Service and The Nature Conservancy.



CARMEL TREE EQUITY SCORE FROM TREEEQUITYSCORE.ORG

2.2.3. Groundwater

The groundwater in the sand and gravel aquifer system of the West Fork of the White River valley is a significantly important feature in Carmel and Clay Township. This is the primary water supply source for the residents. The glacial drift contains the groundwater, available at depths ranging from 50 to 400 feet, and wells yield several hundred gallons per minute. The City of Carmel has designated areas surrounding these wells as “wellhead protection areas” to ensure the quality of the drinking water remains safe and pure.

2.2.4. Natural Resource Management

The CCPR Natural Resource Management Plan (NRM) was updated in 2023 to reflect departmental strategies and priorities. The plan focuses on three main priorities: environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Environmental Sustainability: The primary goal is to maintain a sustainable environment for native plants, wildlife, and future generations. This involves protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the environment. Each site-specific NRM plan outlines the prioritized biological communities and strategies to maintain sustainable habitats. Key elements for wildlife survival include food, water, shelter, and a safe place for raising young.

Social Sustainability: This priority focuses on the health and well-being of the community. The NRM Plan outlines how educational programs and resources support each property through community engagement. This includes interpretive signage, environmental education programs, digital information sharing, and hands-on volunteer stewardship opportunities. Volunteer tasks range from planting projects and invasive removals to data collection for Citizen Science.

Economic Sustainability: The third priority involves advanced planning, maximizing volunteer stewardship, and phasing restoration with cost-effective management strategies to maintain the natural resources within our parks. Budgets are planned months in advance, and efficient work plans are developed to maximize the benefits of seasonal changes in biological communities, reducing costs and minimizing resource consumption.

CCPR has also focused resources on preservation-designated parks. Notable efforts include the conversion of turf to native prairie at the Hazel Landing Park, invasive species mitigation efforts at Vera Hinshaw Preserve, and Woodland Gardens native planting restoration for Earth Day. The Flowing Well restoration efforts achieved an impressive 92.6% survival rate for woody trees and shrubs, which is a testament to CCPR's commitment to preserving and enhancing natural areas in parks.

CCPR has been making significant efforts to highlight natural areas in parks. One of their initiatives is the development of interpretive plans through updated signage. Founders Park and Flowing Well interpretive signs were installed in 2020 and 2021, respectively. Meadowlark Park interpretive signs were installed in 2022, including 2 historical signs created with resources provided by the Carmel Clay Historical Society. Prairie Meadow interpretive signs, in partnership with Carmel Utilities, City of Carmel Storm Water Department, and Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District, were installed in 2023. Interpretive signs for River Heritage Park are also in the development stage. Additionally, CCPR has created educational content, including the Park Conversations magazine, volunteer stewardship projects, and the My Park Series.

To increase appreciation for natural resources, CCPR is expanding environmental education and park stewardship programming. They have developed program offerings and opportunities designed to provide tangible benefits to participants. Programs such as Wildflower Walks have been expanded, while a stewardship-focused web presence has been developed on carmelclayparks.com. CCPR has strengthened the infrastructure for informal/unstructured, yet educational, opportunities throughout the park system. The department has also incorporated nature-based programming into established out of school programs that serve hundreds of children daily. As part of a grant award, CCPR planted a native food forest at Founders Park in 2021. The planting of 100 native fruit and nut trees will provide a diverse range of native food sources for the community to pick and use sustainably once the trees mature.

Furthermore, staff works to gain additional engagement with park visitors through informal interactions in the parks and CCPR continues to build on these initiatives in 2023.

2.2.5. Invasive Species Control

Just as in many other Indiana communities, invasive weed species pose threats to native ecosystems and biodiversity throughout parks and other public properties. CCPR has recently updated its strategies on invasive species control within the NRM plan.

CCPR focuses its efforts on an adaptive management strategy that involves establishing site goals, identifying invasive species, determining control methods, implementing plans, monitoring impacts, and continuous evaluation. This approach ensures dynamic responses to changing conditions and focuses on effective, sustainable solutions.

A three-pronged approach to resource utilization involves volunteers, internal staff, and external contractors. Staff, trained in invasive plant identification and control methods, supports volunteer initiatives. Contractors provide expertise, especially in challenging areas, ensuring consistent efforts over multiple years.

Continuous monitoring, supported by citizen science programs, ensures prompt action against new infestations. Evaluation of control methods considers success, failure, and adaptability. Annual assessments guide adjustments, improving the efficiency of control priorities and plans.



CCPR's Adopt-A-Park program has grown from 4 participants to 13 different participant groups over the last several years, including private individuals, corporate businesses, local civic groups, and non-profits. This program helps support long-term preservation standards along trails and within park properties.

In 2022, the Hamilton County Invasives Partnership (HIP) grew to be a significant resource for education and action to support the preservation of natural areas throughout CCPR's properties and Hamilton County. CCPR is a large contributor to multiple initiatives with this partnership, including GIS mapping, Weed Wrangles, and volunteer training.

Lastly, the Pollinator Partnership group is also a huge resource in support of preservation of natural areas through the Project Wingspan initiative. CCPR supported the partnership with nine total seed collection or seed sorting events to procure usable native wildflower seed for redistribution through the partnership.

2.3. CLIMATE

Indiana experiences distinct seasons, with weather heavily influenced by the Gulf of Mexico and Canadian weather systems. Autumn is generally mild, with cool temperatures and clear skies. Summer is hot and humid, while winter is cold. Spring and summer see frequent rainfall, with severe weather in the form of thunderstorms and tornados.

Carmel and Clay Township experience similar weather patterns, with July being the warmest month and January the coldest. CCPR's operations are impacted by weather, with heavy snow in winter increasing staffing and supply costs, and unseasonably cool or wet summers negatively impacting attendance at The Waterpark. Severe winds or flooding can damage park amenities, requiring repairs or replacement. Therefore, it is critical for CCPR to maintain rainy day reserves to cover potential weather-related budget shortfalls or capital maintenance needs. CCPR's recently updated Maintenance Management Plan provides standards and strategies to minimize the impact of the weather's effects on operations and level of service.

Overall, parks play a vital role in climate change mitigation by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, cooling urban areas, protecting biodiversity, and educating the public about climate change. Some specific examples of how parks are being used for climate change mitigation include:

- Planting trees to help offset carbon emissions.
- Creating green roofs and walls can help to reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, and provide habitat for wildlife.
- Restoring wetlands to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Creating community gardens and farms to provide fresh, local food and help to reduce reliance on energy-intensive food production systems.

Additionally, The Trust for Public Land's Climate-Smart Cities program identifies four key objectives for parks as multi-benefit climate solutions:

Cool: Parks with abundant shade from trees and other vegetation help to reduce the urban heat island effect, which can lead to increased energy consumption and air pollution. This can be achieved by planting trees, designing parks with shade-producing structures, and promoting the use of native plants with low water needs.

Absorb: Parks can function as sponges, absorbing and filtering rainwater, reducing stormwater runoff and flooding, and recharging groundwater supplies. This can be achieved using rain gardens, bioswales, and other green infrastructure elements.

Protect: Strategically located parks and natural lands can buffer coastal cities from rising sea levels, storm surges, and flooding, protecting communities and infrastructure. This can be achieved through the creation of coastal parks, wetlands restoration, and the use of natural barriers like dunes and mangroves.

Connect: Parks can provide vital green corridors for wildlife and promote biodiversity, while also serving as recreational spaces that connect people to nature and enhance public health. This can be achieved by creating networks of parks and greenways, promoting the use of native plants, and providing educational opportunities about the importance of natural spaces.



2.4. MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The City of Carmel has undergone significant changes over the years. The construction of major highways like I-465, Keystone Parkway, and U.S. 31 has led to the evolution of different types of development in the area. Carmel updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2022 detailing diverse development patterns, each contributing to the city's unique character and functionality. For instance, the Urban Core and Downtown Neighborhoods aim to foster a vibrant mix of commercial, industrial, recreational, and residential uses. Characterized by small block and lot sizes, this pattern emphasizes diverse building frontages and streetscape facilities.

Typical corridors provide connectivity to community features and allow for expanded housing with limited commercial development. White River provides an ecological, connected, historical, and active feature for residents with riverfront greenways, natural trails, parks, and other public spaces. The Monon Greenway provides an ecological spine that connects Carmel's Downtown with northern and southern city gateways as well as other parks, plazas, and the city's trail network. The plan further delineates development patterns for different areas of the community. Each pattern is tailored to specific purposes and characteristics to enhance Carmel's urban fabric.

CCPR puts forward a continued effort to tell the stories of the rich history of the City of Carmel and Clay Township within their parks. As previously outlined, staff collaborated with the Carmel Clay Historical Society on the Meadowlark Park Interpretive signage that was installed in 2022. For example, a sign near the Meadowlark Park pond details the type of fish park users may observe while visiting the park while educating readers about the history of angling and how to abide by state fishing regulations.

In addition, the master plan process for Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park included tribal consultation and collaboration coordinated by the Applied Anthropology Laboratories (AAL), College of Sciences and Humanities, at Ball State University.

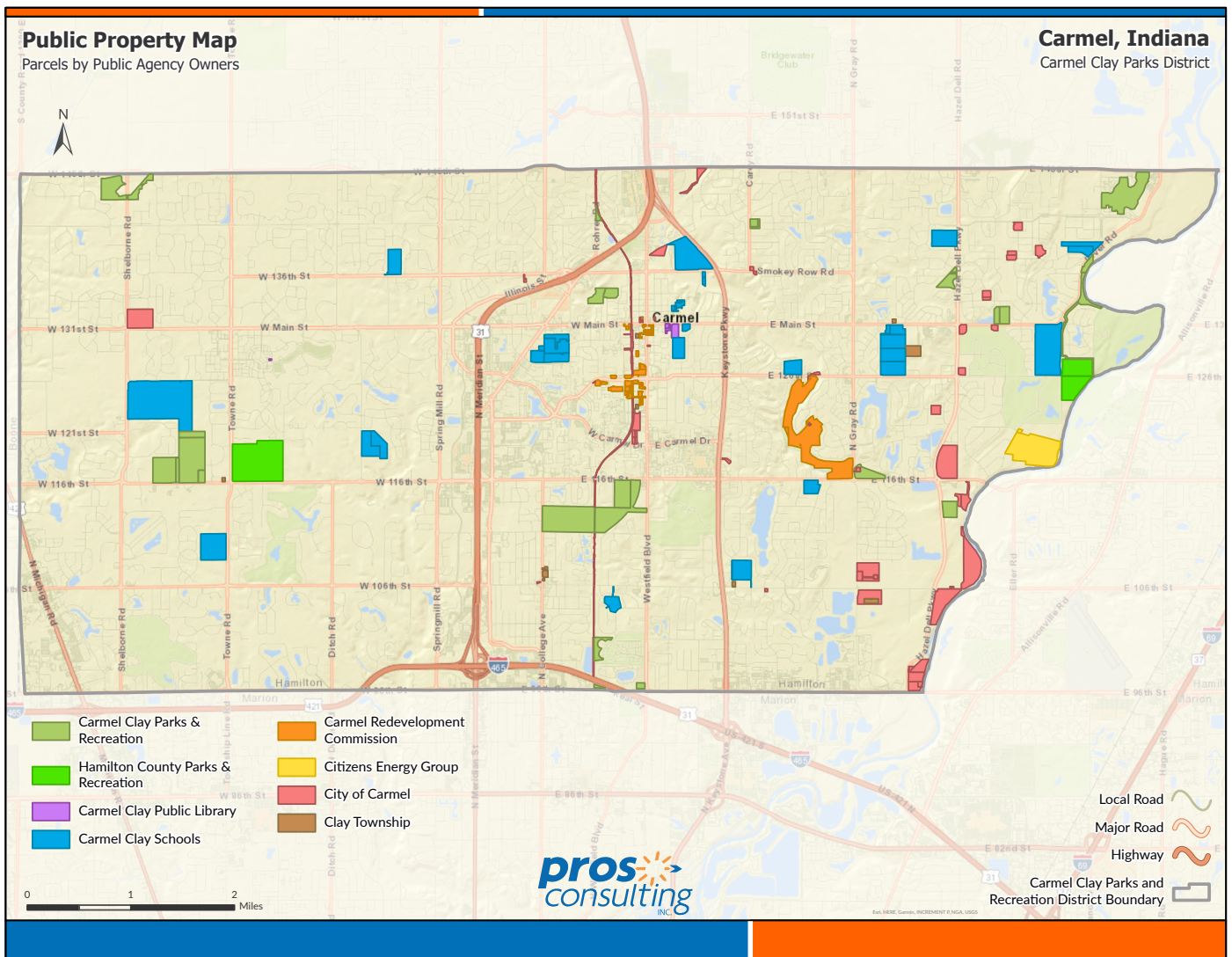
There have also been several developments and partnerships in the arts and culture space in Carmel and Clay Township. In 2021, the Creative Arts program category was retitled Arts & Culture to focus on creating more culture-based programs with an emphasis on cultural experiences and education.

CCPR completed the City Center mural project in partnership with Carmel High School and the City of Carmel in 2021. Similarly, the improvements to the existing Japanese Garden honoring Carmel’s sister city of Kawachinagano, Osaka, Japan, began in 2021 in partnership with Clay Township and the City of Carmel. Upon completion, CCPR will assume maintenance responsibilities for the expanded park.

In 2023, CCPR completed the 116th Street tunnel mural project in partnership with Carmel High School. CCPR also engaged Purdue University in 2023 to develop concept plans for a proposed Chinese Garden adjoining the Carmel Clay Public Library and on property owned by Carmel Clay Schools.

2.4.1. Parcel Ownership Map

Map 3 below depicts the parcel ownership of public agencies within the City of Carmel boundaries. These properties identify potential opportunities for intergovernmental partnerships to expand the park system and/or areas to advocate for enhanced trail connectivity.

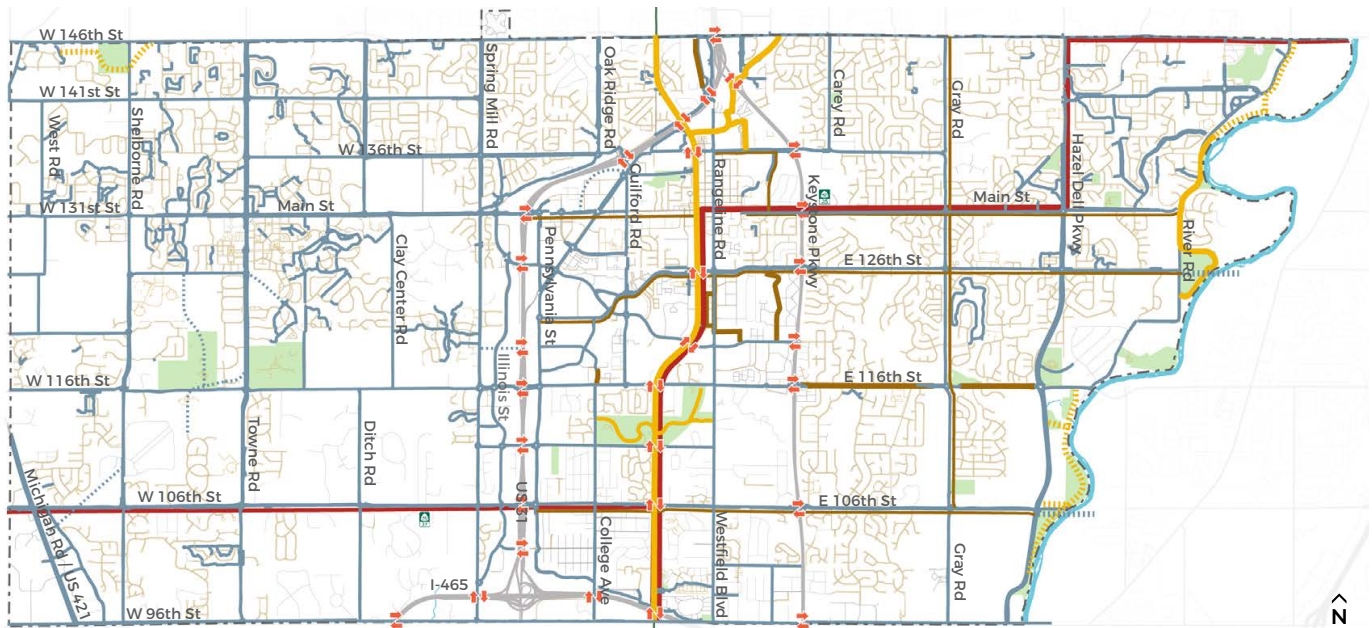


MAP 3 - PUBLIC PROPERTY MAP

2.5. TRANSPORTATION & WALKABILITY

The City of Carmel completed updates to its Comprehensive Plan in December of 2022, including strategies and actions to enhance alternative transportation and mobility. Realizing that Carmel's development future includes more densification, City leaders have updated a comprehensive plan to shift Carmel away from car-centric infrastructure and towards a more sustainable and equitable transportation system for all. **Map 4** below shows the recommended mobility and pedestrian update outlined in the 2022 Comprehensive Plan.

Mobility and Pedestrian Plan Map Recommended Update



LEGEND

- Regional Trail
- Multi-use Path
- Mobility Lane / Cycle Track
- Greenway
- Sidewalk
- - - - Proposed Multi-use Path
- - - - Proposed Mobility Lane / Cycle Track
- - - - Proposed Greenway
- + + Grade-separated Crossing
- Public Park
- Water body
- River
- - - - Municipal Limits

Note: paths are required on both sides of all streets where they are identified unless otherwise noted.

Note: The Mobility and Pedestrian Plan Map found at carmelcomprehensiveplan.com is the governing map and one to reference for use.

MAP 4 - 2022 CARMEL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: MOBILITY AND PEDESTRIAN MAP

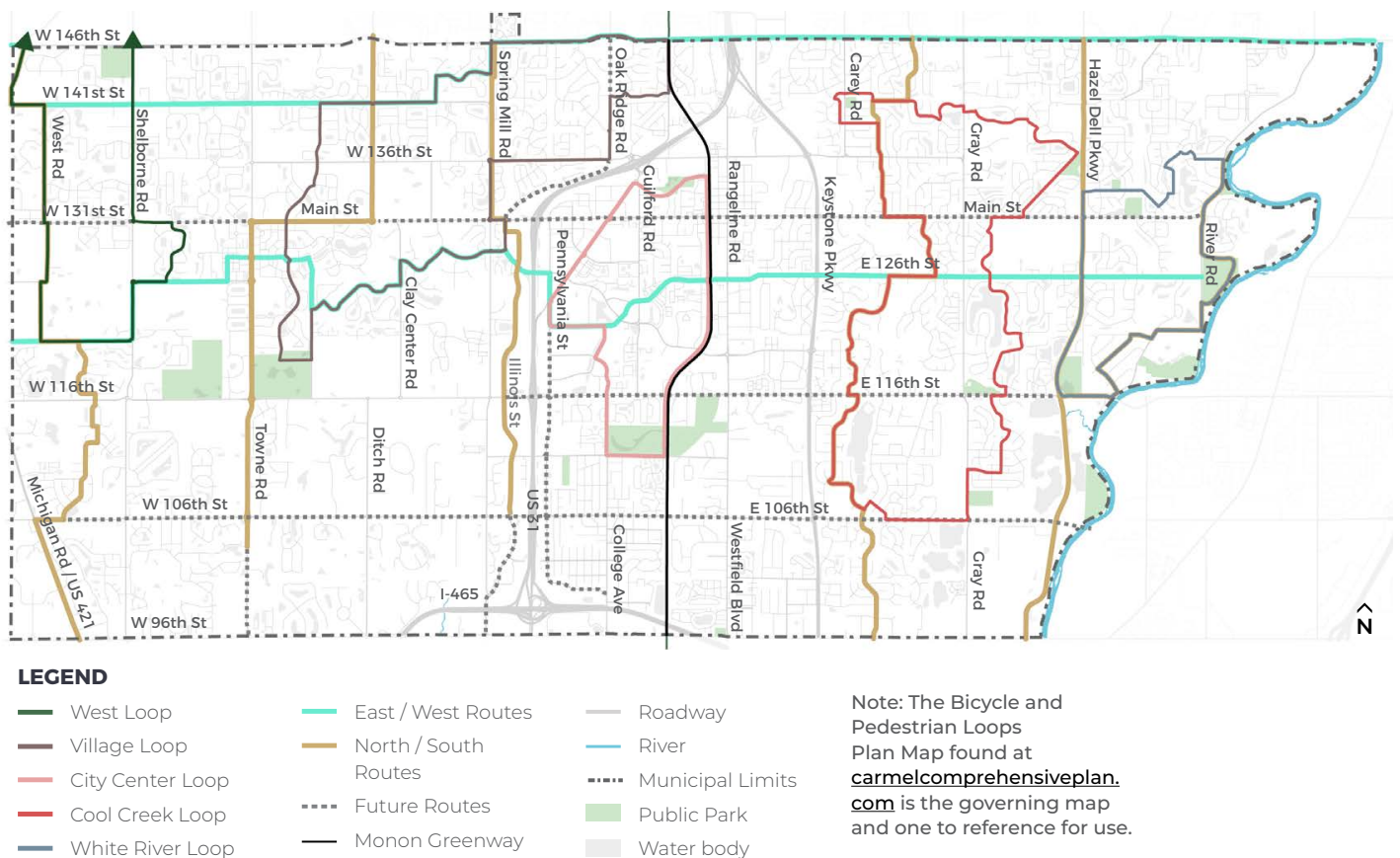
Goals from the plan include:

- 2-5% of commuting traffic should be made by foot, bicycle, or other form of micro-mobility by 2030.
- Develop a regional and intracity transit system.
- Make walking and biking safer and more convenient through complete streets.
- Implement Vision Zero to eliminate severe pedestrian and cyclist injuries.
- Expand the bicycle network with secure parking and amenities.
- Explore alternative transportation options with major employers and hotels.
- Complete major east-west path links and connecting paths.
- Ensure accessible infrastructure for aging and disabled populations.
- Require street and multimodal connectivity between adjacent developments.

Map 5 depicts the bicycle and pedestrian loops located within City of Carmel boundaries.

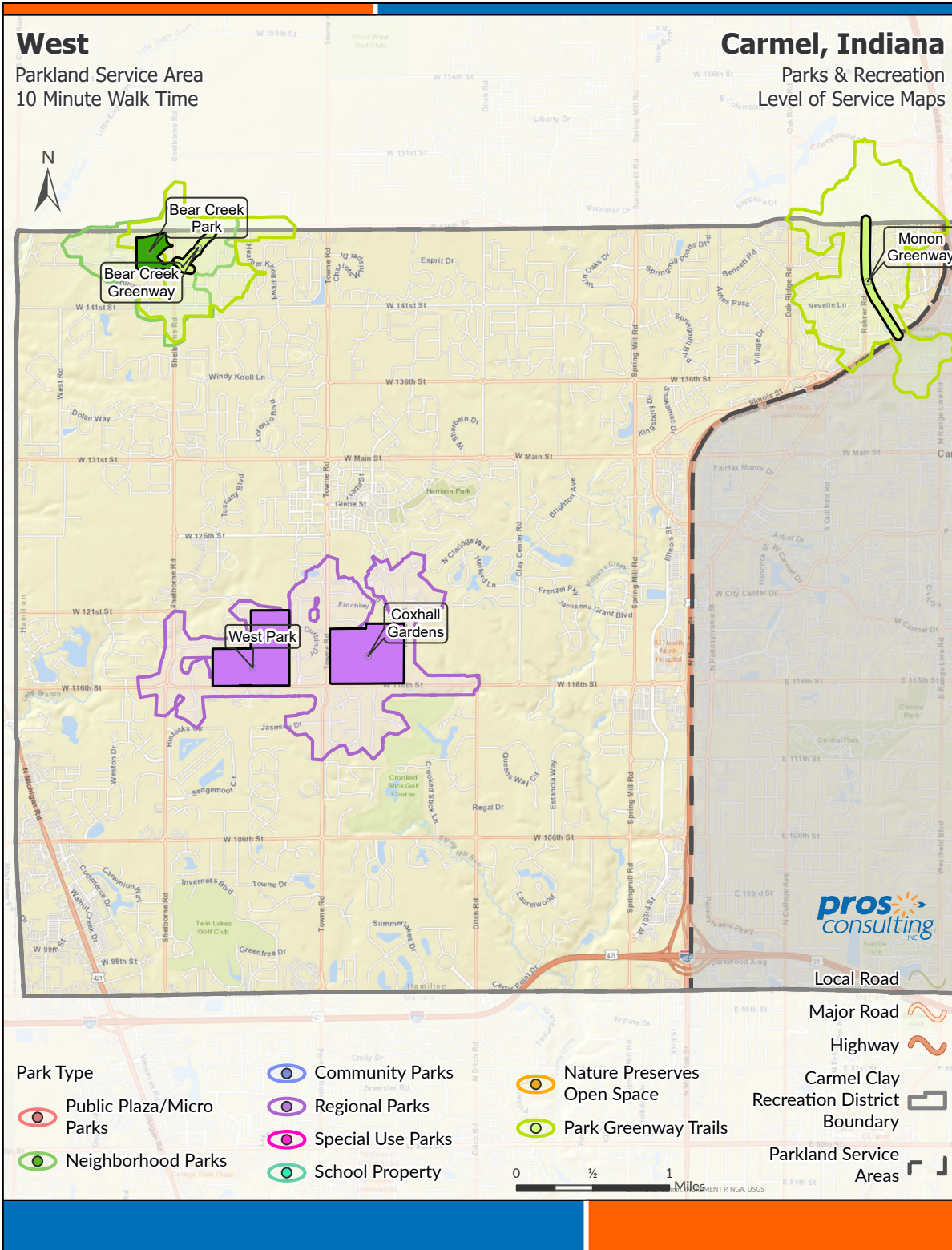
Bicycle Pedestrian Loops Map

Bicycle and Pedestrian Loops Graphic Update



2.5.1. 10-Minute Walk Maps

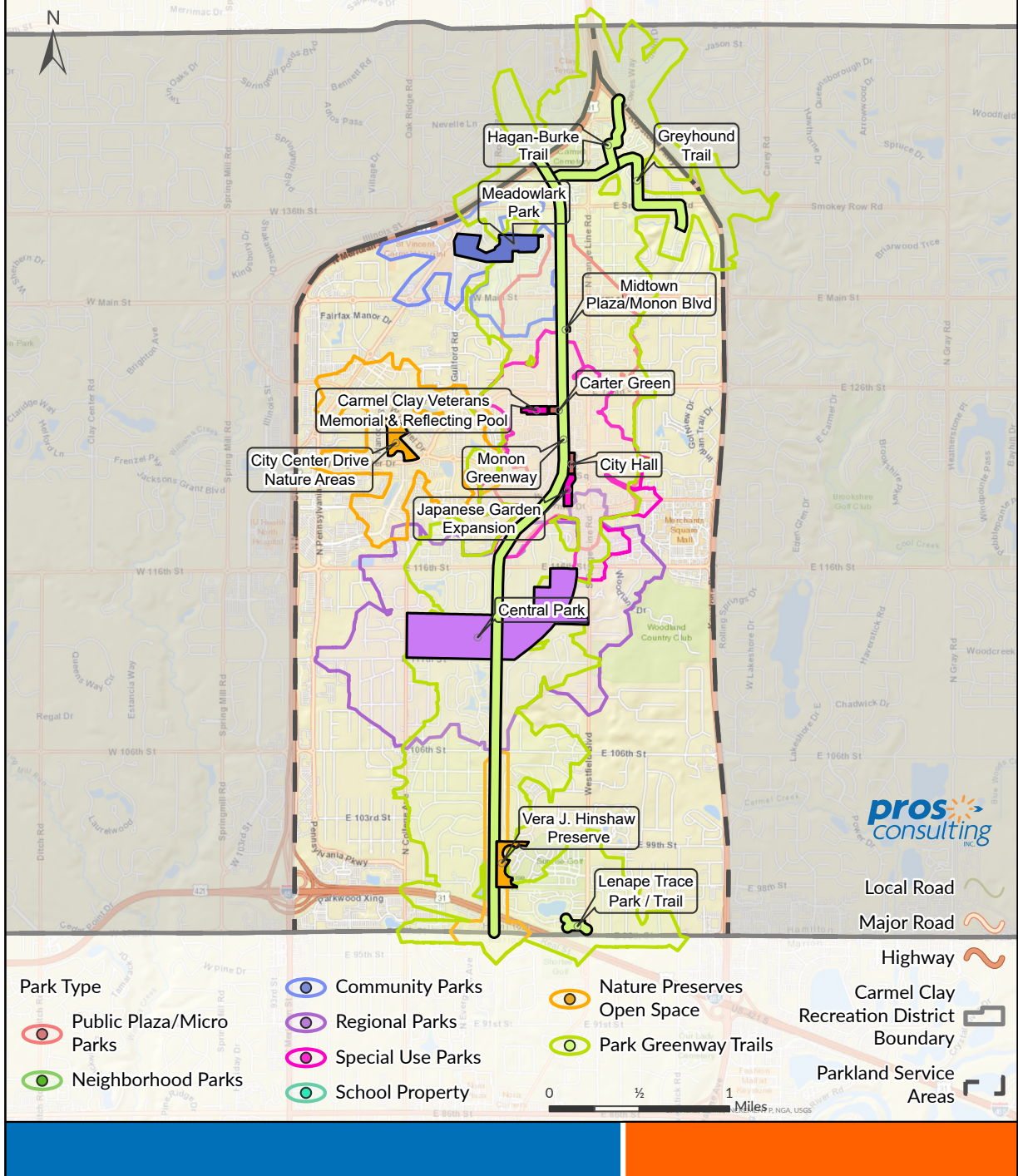
The following three maps depict a 10-minute walk to public park property, which include CCPR parks, special use parks that include Hamilton County Parks and Recreation parks and some city properties such as City Hall, Brookshire Golf Club, as well as Carmel Dads' Club Gray Road Park. Divided within the three main corridors of Carmel, below is **Map 6** for West Carmel, **Map 7** for Central Carmel, and **Map 8** for East Carmel.



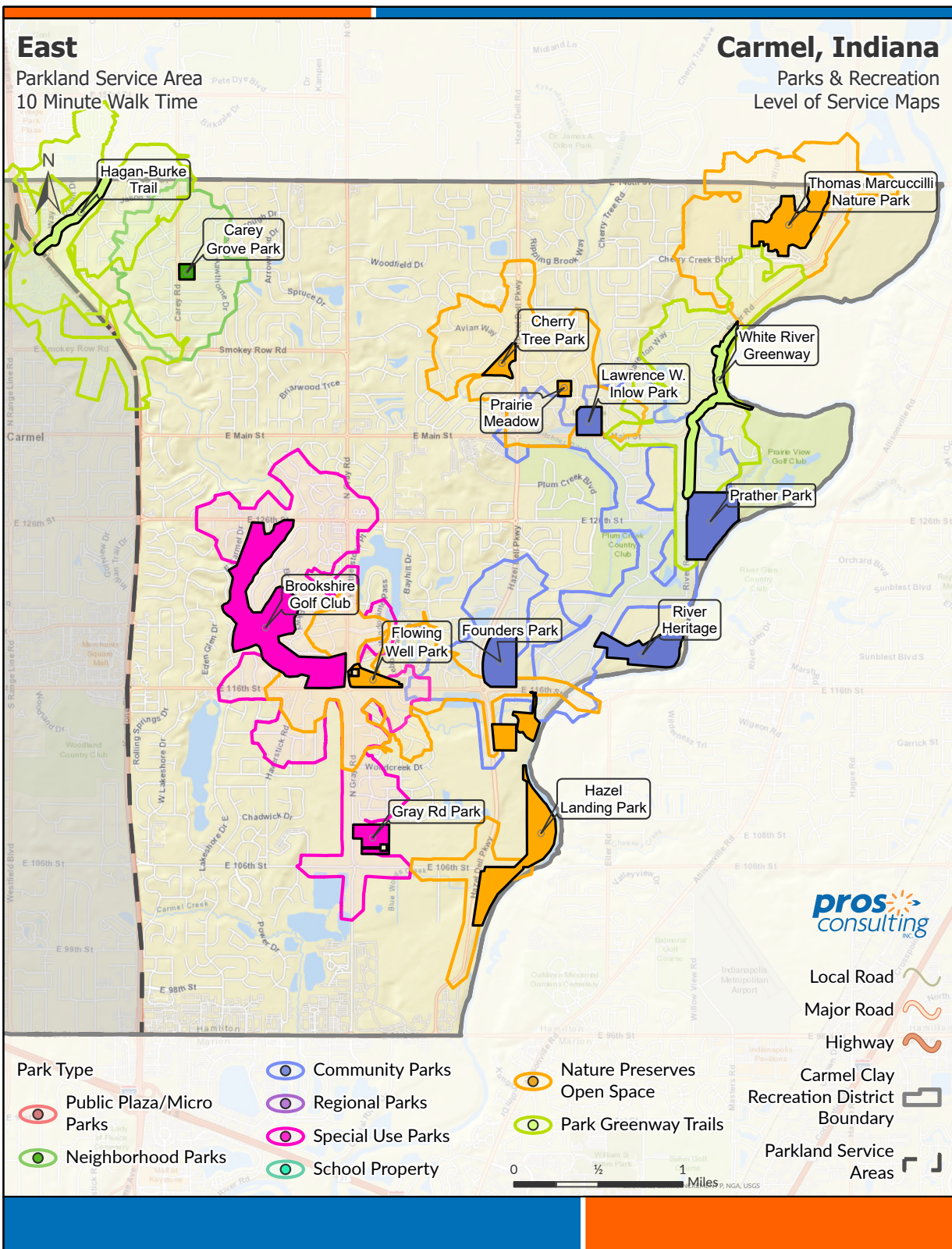
MAP 6 - 10 MINUTE WALK MAP: WEST

Central
Parkland Service Area
10 Minute Walk Time

Carmel, Indiana
Parks & Recreation
Level of Service Maps



MAP 7 - 10 MINUTE WALK MAP: CENTRAL



MAP 8 - MINUTE WALK MAP: EAST

2.6. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

A key component of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan is a Demographics and Recreation Trends Analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to provide (“CCPR”) insight into the makeup of the population they serve and identify market trends in recreation. This report also helps quantify the market in and around the City of Carmel, Indiana and assists in providing a better understanding of the types of parks, facilities, and services used to satisfy the needs of residents.

This analysis is two-fold; it aims to identify the who and the what. First, it assesses the demographic characteristics and population projections of Carmel residents to understand who CCPR serves. Second, recreational trends are examined on a national and local level to better understand what the population may want to do. Findings from this analysis establish a fundamental understanding that provides a basis for prioritizing the community need for parks, trails, facilities, and recreation programs.

2.6.1. Demographic Analysis

The Demographic Analysis describes the population in Carmel. This assessment is reflective of Carmel’s total population and its key characteristics such as age, race, and income levels. It is important to note that future projections are based on historical patterns and unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the analysis could have a significant bearing on the validity of projected figures.

Figure 2 provides an overview of Carmel’s populace based on current estimates of the 2023 population.

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW



POPULATION

2023 Population: 103,156
Annual growth rate: 1.70%
Total Households: 39,656



AGE

Median age: 40.9
Largest age segment: 35-54
Continued growth of 55+ pop. through 2038



RACE & ETHNICITY

76% White Alone
12% Asian Alone
5% Hispanic/Latino



INCOME

Median household income: \$122,514
Per capita income: \$66,321

FIGURE 2 - DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF CARMEL, IN

METHODOLOGY

Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in June 2023 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2020 Census. ESRI then estimates the current population (2023) as well as a 5-year projection (2028). PROS then utilized straight line linear regression to forecast demographic characteristics for 10 and 15-year projections (2033 and 2038).

Note: Some data has yet to be released from the 2020 Census, resulting in certain analyses utilizing 2010 data instead (e.g., age segmentation).

RACE AND ETHNICITY DEFINITIONS

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below. The Census 2020 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2010 Census and earlier censuses; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time. The latest (Census 2020) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Hispanic or Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

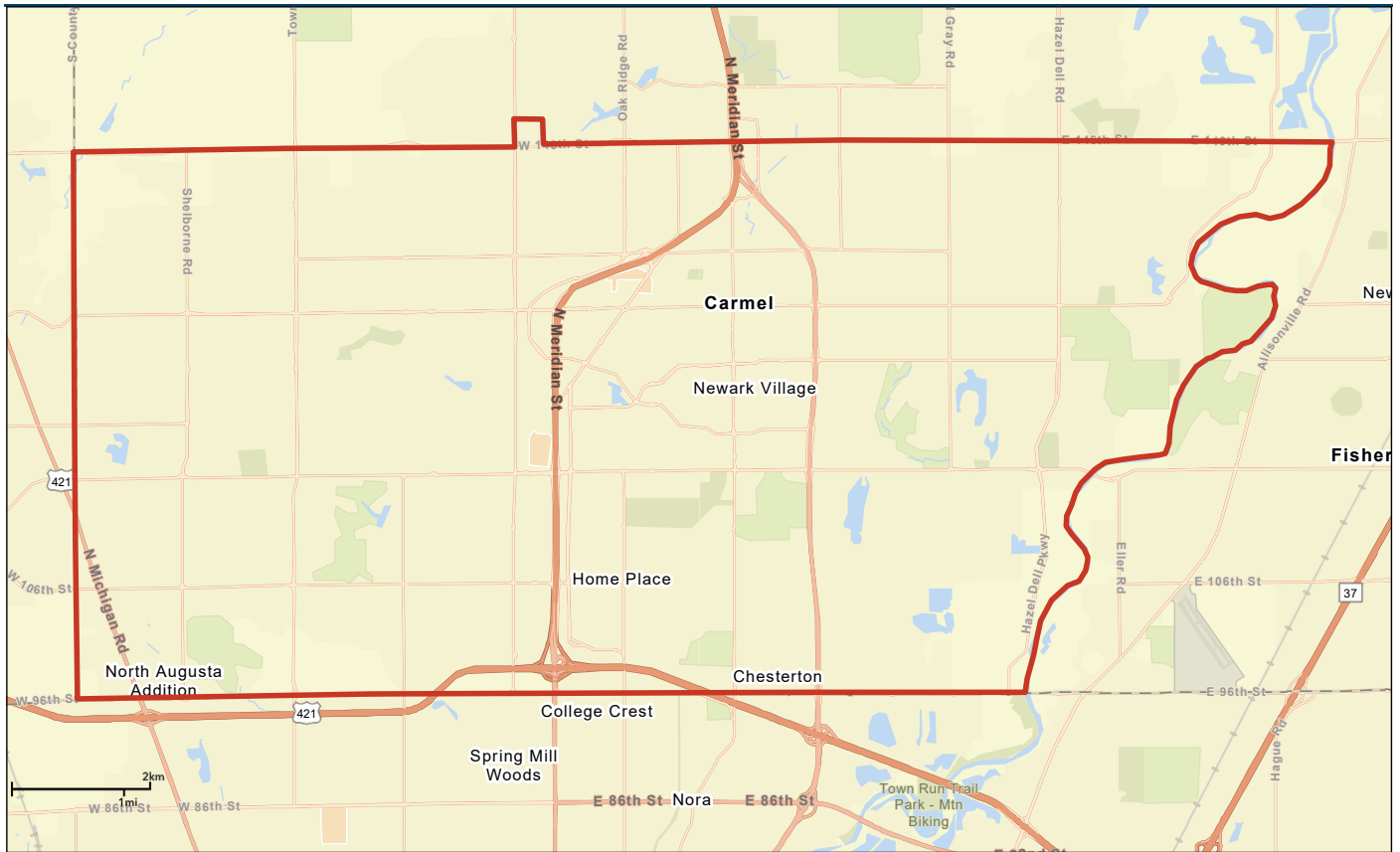
The Census states that the race and ethnicity categories generally reflect social definitions in the U.S. and are not an attempt to define race and ethnicity biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. We recognize that the race and ethnicity categories include racial, ethnic, and national origins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

Please Note: The Census Bureau states that the race and ethnicity categories generally reflect social definitions in the U.S. and are not an attempt to define race and ethnicity biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. We recognize that the race and ethnicity categories include racial, ethnic, and national origins and sociocultural groups. They define Race as a person's self-identification with one or more of the following social groups: White, Black, or African American, Asian, American Indian, and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, or a combination of these. Ethnicity is defined as whether a person is of Hispanic / Latino origin or not. For this reason, the Hispanic/Latino ethnicity is viewed separate from race throughout this demographic analysis.



DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS BOUNDARY

The City of Carmel boundaries shown below were utilized for the demographic analysis (**Map 9**).



May 03, 2023

MAP 9 - DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS BOUNDARY



2.6.2. City Populace

POPULATION

Carmel has a steadily growing population that ranges from moderate to heavy yearly growth. In fact, the population has increased from 83,954 in 2010 to an estimated 103,156 in 2023. Carmel's population is expected to continue to steadily grow in the following 15 years, where it is projected to reach 124,355 residents by 2038 (Figure 3). The total number of households has also grown at a consistent rate, increasing from 30,938 in 2010 to an estimated 39,656 in 2023. By 2038, it is expected that there will be 49,417 households within Carmel, and that number is likely to continue to grow over time (Figure 4).

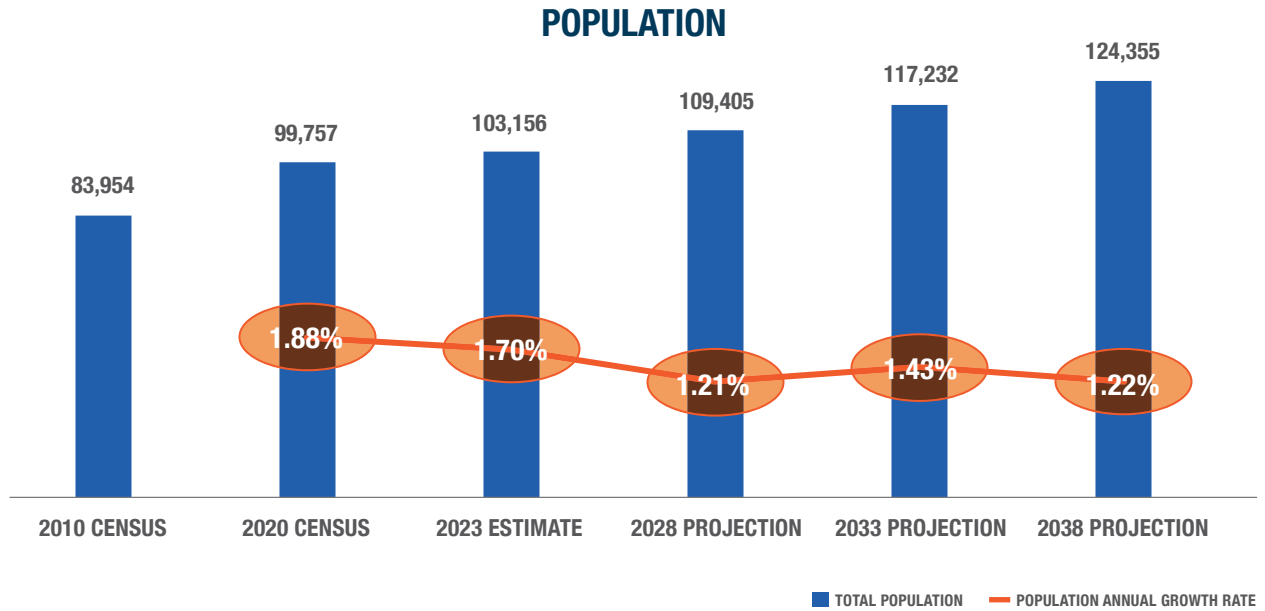


FIGURE 3 - CARMEL'S TOTAL POPULATION AND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE

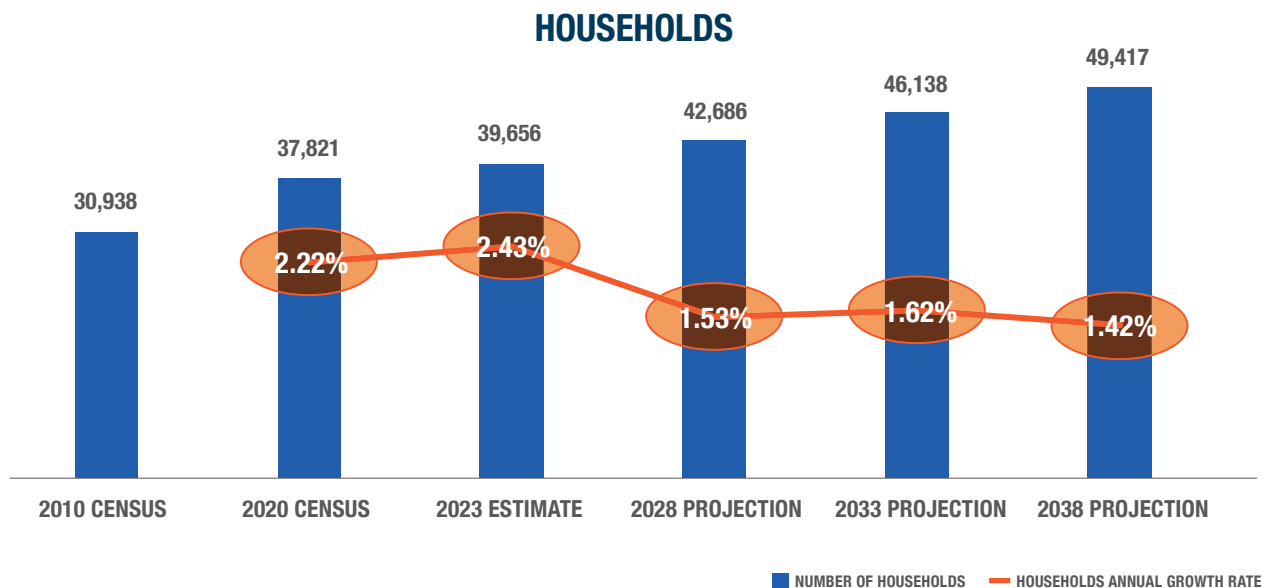


FIGURE 4 - CARMEL'S TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS AND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE

AGE SEGMENTATION

The largest age segments within Carmel’s population are 0-12 years old (17%), 18–34 years old (17%), and 35–54 years old (28%). There is an aging trend with people over the age of 55, increasing from 22% of Carmel’s total population in 2010 to making up 36% of the population by 2038; as the population projects to age over time, younger populations will decrease in exchange for middle age and elderly populations increasing. Likewise, the median age has risen from 39.1 in 2010 to 40.9 in 2023, where it projects to continue to increase to 42.0 by 2028. Therefore, the amenities updated and developed for Carmel should likely be designed to be accessible for the slow growing elderly population, while also remaining oriented for families with both old and young children (Figure 5).

POPULATION BY AGE SEGMENTS

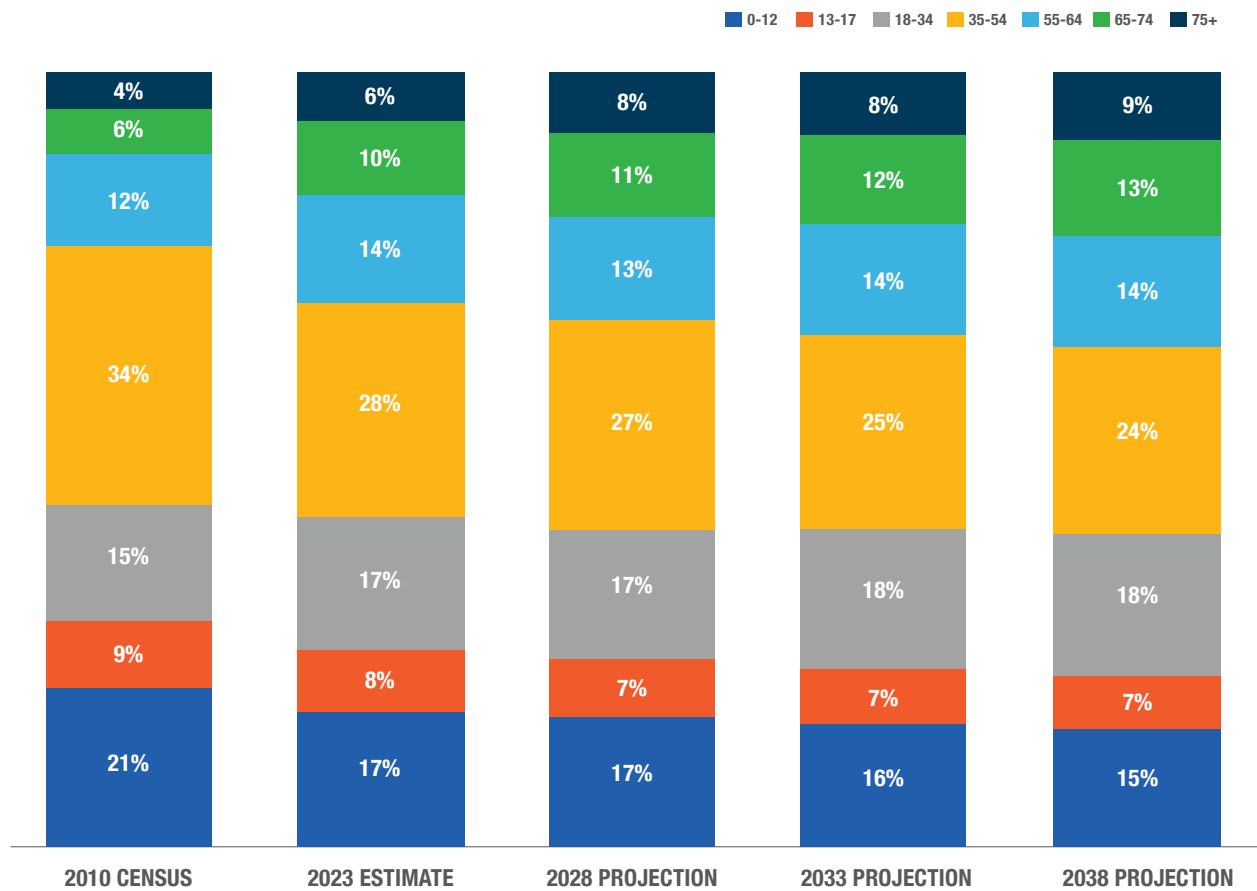


FIGURE 5 - CARMEL'S POPULATION BY AGE SEGMENTS

RACE

Analyzing race, Carmel's current population is predominantly White Alone, with the 2023 estimate showing 76% of the population falling into the White Alone category, along with Asian Alone (12%) and Two or More Races (7%) representing the second and third largest categories. Predictions for 2038 expect the population to steadily diversify, with a decrease in the White Alone population, and minor increases to all other race categories. Within this change, the Two or More Races category will increase the most from 7% in 2023 to 10% by 2038 (Figure 6).

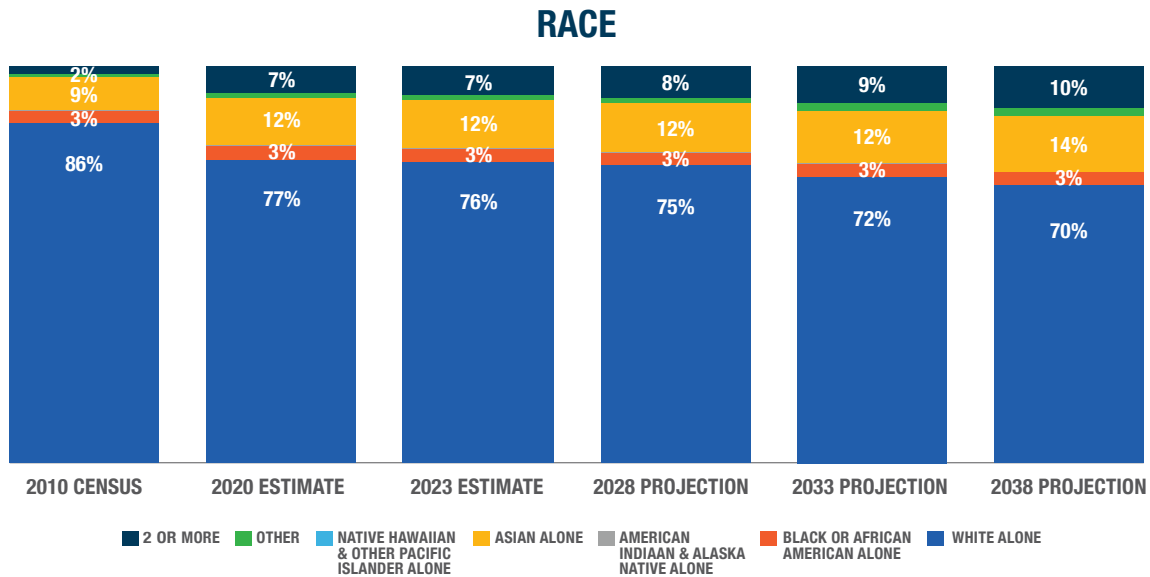


FIGURE 6 - CARMEL'S POPULATION BY RACE

ETHNICITY

Carmel's population was also assessed based on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, which by the Census Bureau definition is viewed independently from race. It is important to note that individuals who are Hispanic/Latino in ethnicity can also identify with any racial categories identified above.

Based on the current 2023 estimate, people of Hispanic/Latino origin represent 5% of Carmel's population, which is below both the national average (19% Hispanic/Latino) and the state of Indiana average (8% Hispanic/Latino). However, the Hispanic/Latino population has experienced a minor increase over time and is expected to continue growing slightly to 7% of Carmel's total population by 2028 (Figure 7).

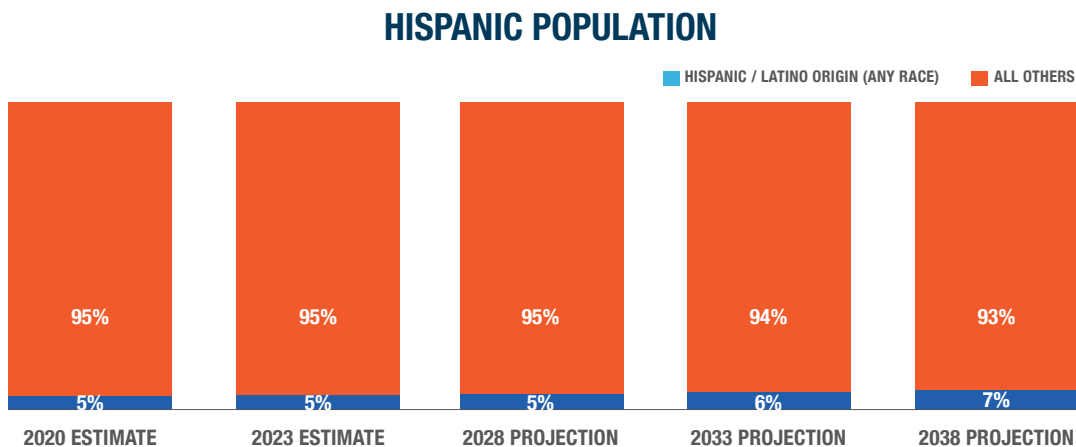


FIGURE 7 - CARMEL'S HISPANIC POPULATION

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

When analyzing income, the per capita income is that earned by an individual while the median household income is based on the total income of everyone over the age of sixteen living within the same household. The City of Carmel's per capita income (\$66,321) and median household income (\$122,514) are both well above the state of Indiana averages (\$32,537 and \$61,944) and national averages (\$35,672 and \$65,712). Carmel projects to increase in both median household and per capita income, where the averages are expected to increase to \$87,993 and \$168,003 respectively by 2038. These above average income characteristics should be taken into consideration when CCPR is pricing out programs and calculating cost recovery goals (Figures 8 and 9).

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

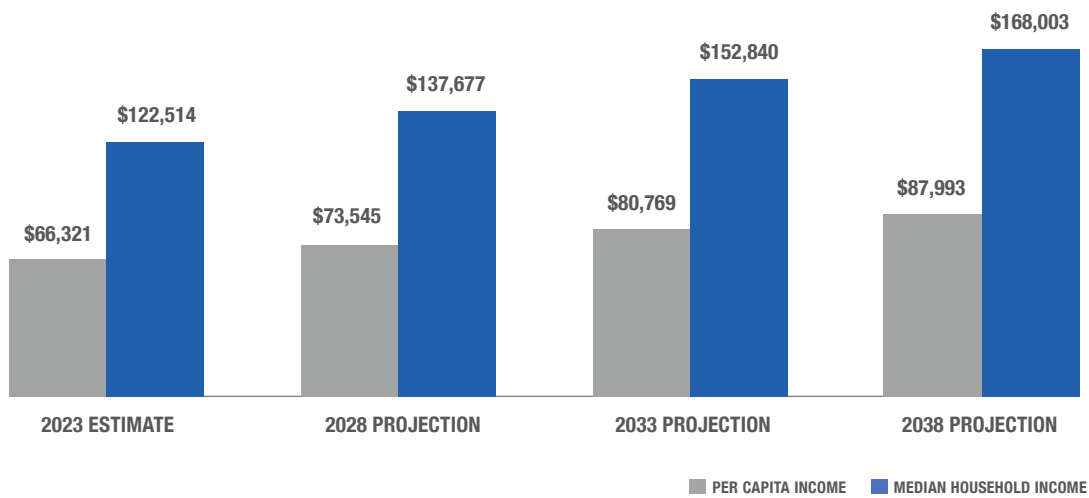


FIGURE 8 - PROGRESSIVE INCOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CARMEL

COMPARATIVE INCOME

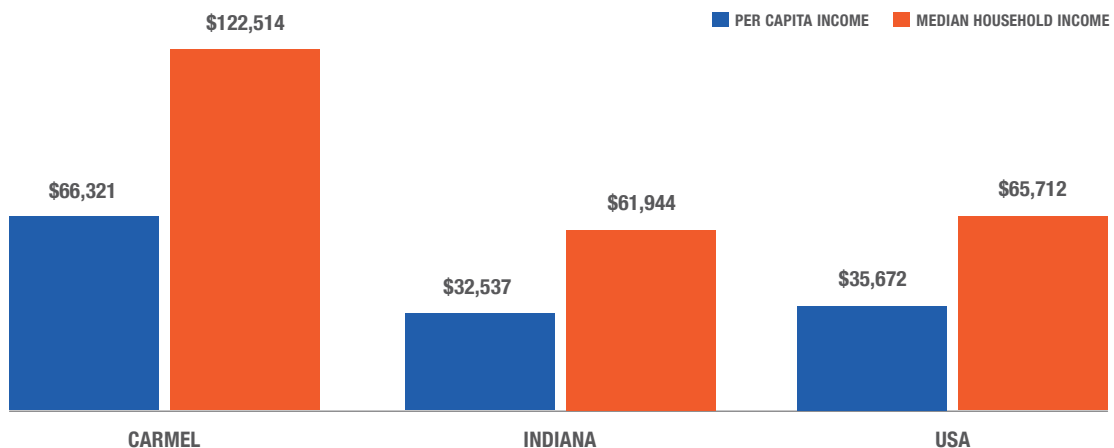


FIGURE 9 - COMPARATIVE INCOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CARMEL

EDUCATION

Assessing education, approximately 43% of Carmel's residents (aged 25+ years old) have attained up to a bachelor's degree, which is well above the national average (30.3%). Thirty-two percent (32%) of the population hold Graduate or professional degrees, while smaller portions of the population hold just an associate degree (5%) or a high school degree (7%). Alternatively, it is estimated that just 1% of the population never attained a high school diploma (**Figure 10**).

EDUCATION ATTAINED (25+ YEARS OLD)

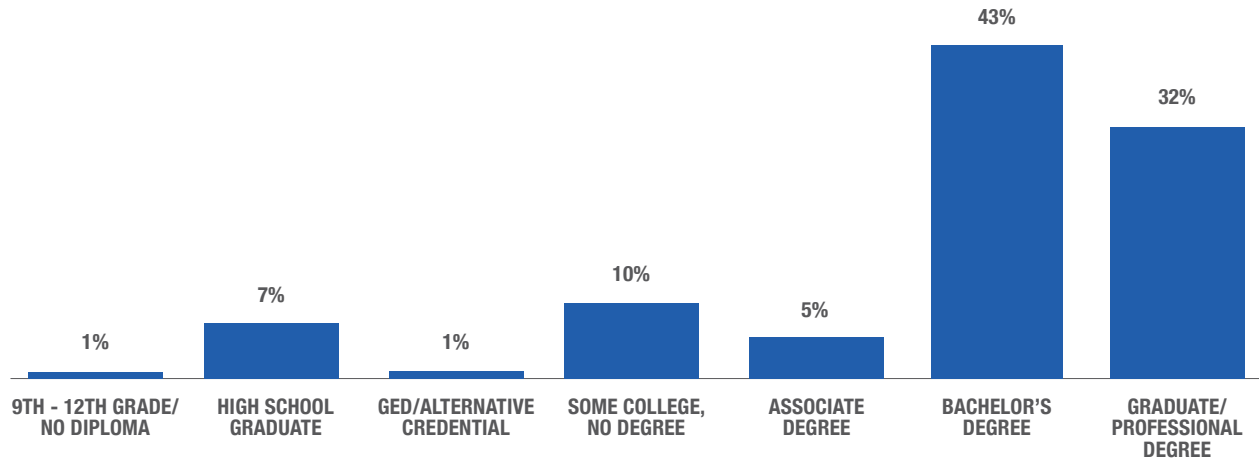


FIGURE 10 - CARMEL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

UNEMPLOYMENT

In assessing the civilian labor force (16+ years old), currently 97% of residents hold a full or part-time position, while the remaining 3% of Carmel's (civilian) population are deemed unemployed. This is in line with the national unemployment rate of 3.7%. *Note: The unemployment rate excludes individuals who are currently in institutions such as prisons, mental hospitals, or nursing homes* (**Figure 11**).

CIVILIAN POPULATION 16+ IN LABOR FORCE

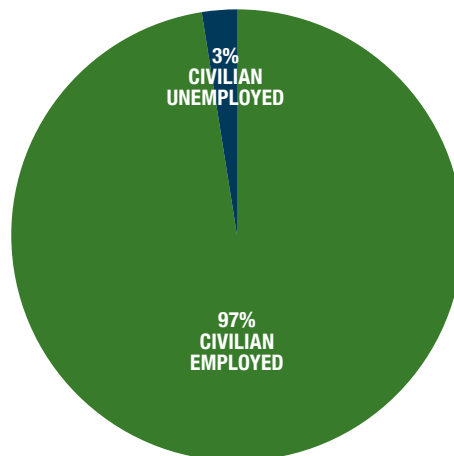


FIGURE 11 - CARMEL EMPLOYMENT RATES

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Carmel's population can also be analyzed by the industry makeup of its workforce. Within Carmel, 'Services' (57%) make up most of the working population's industry, while 'Manufacturing' and 'Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate' make up 12% of the population each (Figure 12).

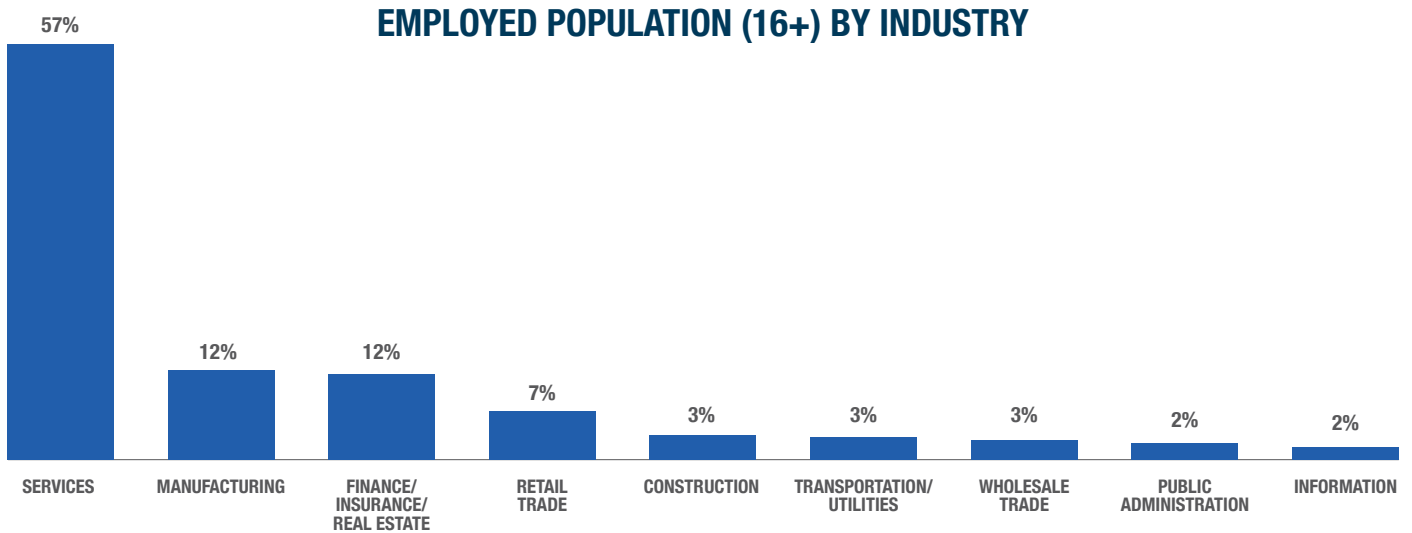


FIGURE 12 - CARMEL'S EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

DISABILITY

The percentage of Carmel's population diagnosed with a disability is shown in Figure 13. When split by age, the 75 and over population has the highest percentage of residents with a physical or mental disability at 32.3%. This information is important to CCPR as it relates to the types of programs and amenities it provides to the community. *Note: the following chart utilizes statistics from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).*

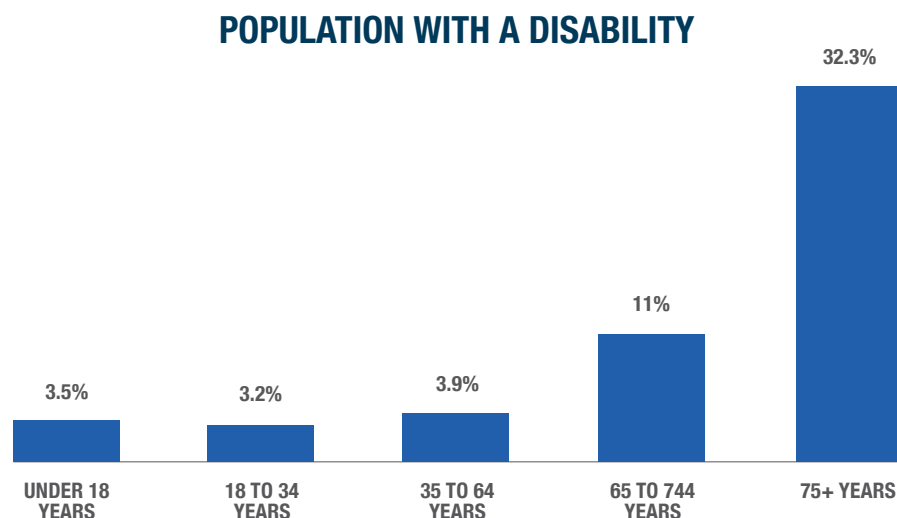


FIGURE 13 - CARMEL'S DISABLED POPULATION STATISTICS

2.6.3. Poverty Level

Poverty status is determined by comparing annual income to a set of dollar values called poverty thresholds that vary by family size, number of children and age of householder. If a family's before tax money income is less than the dollar value of their threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty. For people not living in families, poverty status is determined by comparing the individual's income to his or her poverty threshold. Carmel's poverty level (3.6%) is low for the State of Indiana, average of the State of Indiana is 12.6%, as is Hamilton County (4.5%), based on the Quick Facts by the United States Census Bureau.

According to United Way's ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) data, households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county, 20% of Hamilton County, fall under this category. While this data tells us that most of the community can afford to pay for desired park amenities and programs, it is important to remember that parks and recreation services were created to improve everyone's quality of life regardless of their ability to pay. Since it is difficult to forecast the disposable income households will have in the future, it is important that CCPR continue to develop the recreation fee assistance for programs such as the afterschool program.

2.6.4. Demographic Implications

While it is important not to generalize recreation needs and priorities based solely on demographics, the analysis suggests some potential implications for Carmel, Indiana:

- Carmel's aging population indicates a need to refocus on activity for **elderly populations**. Adding more recreational activities for elderly populations, such as exercise classes or elderly recreational leagues, may prove to be beneficial in keeping that population active.
- Carmel's relatively high median income and household income characteristics suggests **potential disposable income at the individual and family level**. CCPR should be mindful of this when pricing out programs and events and considering amenities, while staying aware of the potential interaction that they can expect from a populace that has a higher-than-average income level.

- In comparison to the United States average (.74%), Carmel had a **relatively high annual growth rate from 2020 to 2023** (1.70%). Although the annual growth rate is projected to drop to 1.37% from 2023 to 2038, this population growth should be considered when planning new amenities and offerings for the community, as well as the maintenance and upkeep of current offerings.
- Finally, Carmel should ensure its **diversifying population is reflected in its offerings, marketing/communications, and public outreach**. With increasing diversity in both race and age, Carmel and CCPR should remain prepared to change its offerings over time.

2.7. RECREATION TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Trends Analysis provides an understanding of national, regional, and local recreational trends as well recreational interest by age segments. Trends data used for this analysis was obtained from Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA), National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI). All trend data is based on current and/or historical participation rates, statistically valid survey results, or NRPA Park Metrics. The following pages depict local trend data, for a complete summary of National Trend information, see **Appendix 3**.

2.7.1. Local Sport and Leisure Market Potential

The following charts show sport and leisure market potential data for Carmel residents, as provided by ESRI. Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the probable demand for a product or service within the defined service areas. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident will participate in certain activities when compared to the U.S. national average. The national average is 100; therefore, numbers below 100 would represent lower than average participation rates, and numbers above 100 would represent higher than average participation rates. The service area is compared to the national average in four (4) categories – general sports, fitness, outdoor activity, and commercial recreation.

It should be noted that MPI metrics are only one data point used to help determine community trends; thus, programmatic decisions should not be based solely on MPI metrics.

Overall, when analyzing Carmel's MPI scores, the data demonstrates mostly above average market potential index (MPI) numbers in all assessed areas, with higher potential in several more specific activities. For example, Golf and Tennis both scored well above the national average, while also outperforming most of their other General Sports counterparts according to the analysis. Alternatively, certain categories of recreation had consistently higher scores for Carmel, such as Fitness and Outdoor Activity recreation. These MPI scores show that Carmel's residents have a strong participation presence when it comes to certain recreational offerings but may have less interaction with certain outlier activities (like Softball or Horseback Riding). This becomes significant when CCPR considers starting up new programs or building new facilities, giving them a strong tool to estimate resident attendance and participation.

The following charts compare MPI scores for 44 sport and leisure activities that are prevalent for residents within the City of Carmel. The activities are categorized by activity type and listed in descending order, from highest to lowest MPI score. High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate that there is a greater likelihood that residents within the service area will actively participate in those offerings provided by CCPR.

GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

Figure 14 shows that most of Carmel's recorded General Sports are around or slightly above the national average regarding MPI, with the three highest scores belonging to Golf (131), Tennis (130), and Volleyball (109). Carmel's General Sports scores are relatively above average, with a couple of major outliers (Golf and Tennis) being well above and one offering (Softball) being well below the national average at 86.

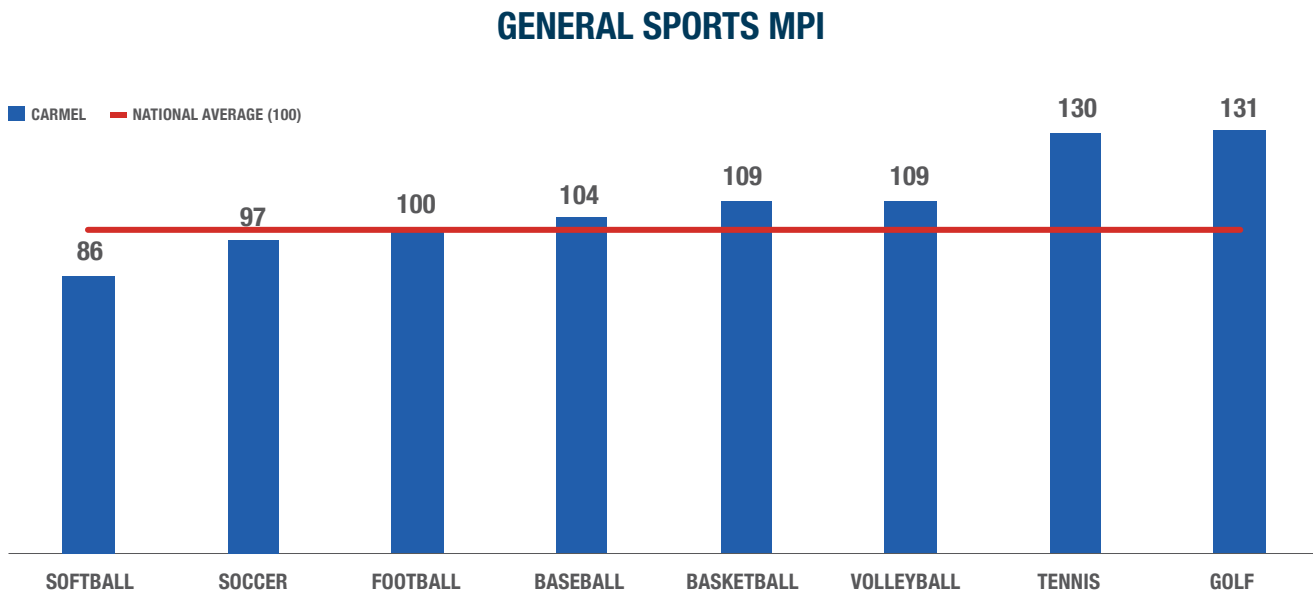


FIGURE 14 - GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX

FITNESS MARKET POTENTIAL

Assessing MPI scores shown in **Figure 15** for the Fitness Activity category reveals that Carmel's fitness activities are nearly all above the national average. Of these activities, Pilates (130), Jogging/Running (127), and Yoga (126) scored the highest; alternatively, the lowest scored activities were Walking for Exercise (118), Aerobics (118), and Zumba (99), with only Zumba scoring below the national average.

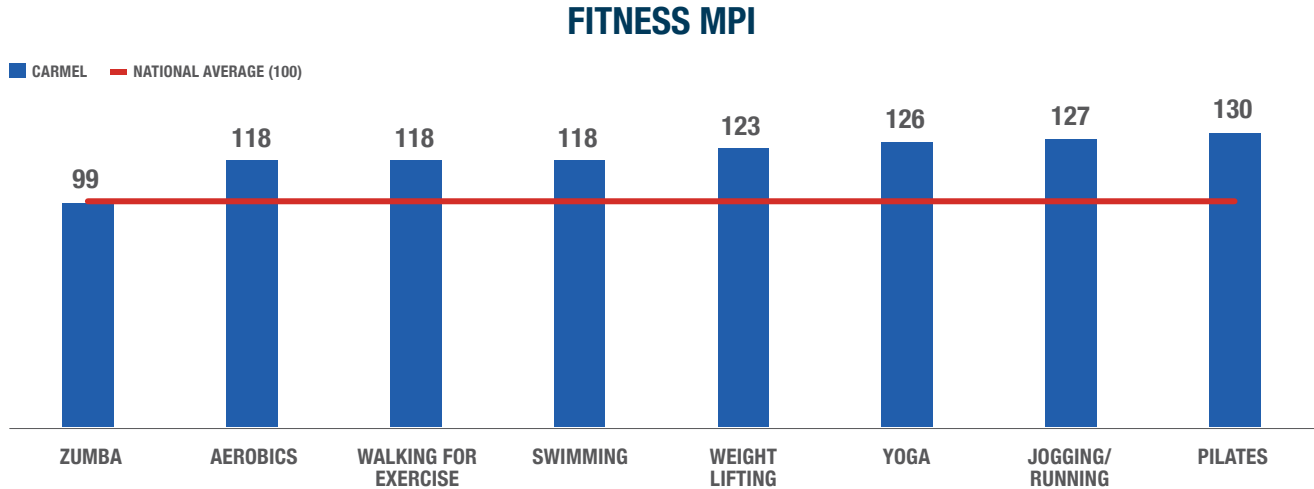


FIGURE 15 - FITNESS MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MARKET POTENTIAL

Carmel's Outdoor Activity MPI shown in **Figure 16** reflected similarly strong scores to that of its Fitness MPI; Carmel is mostly above the national average, with the most popular activities being Road Biking (128), Mountain Biking (123), and Hiking (122). The three lowest scoring activities (Freshwater Fishing, Rock Climbing, and Horseback Riding) are each either above or near the national average, though Horseback Riding scored somewhat lower than its counterparts.

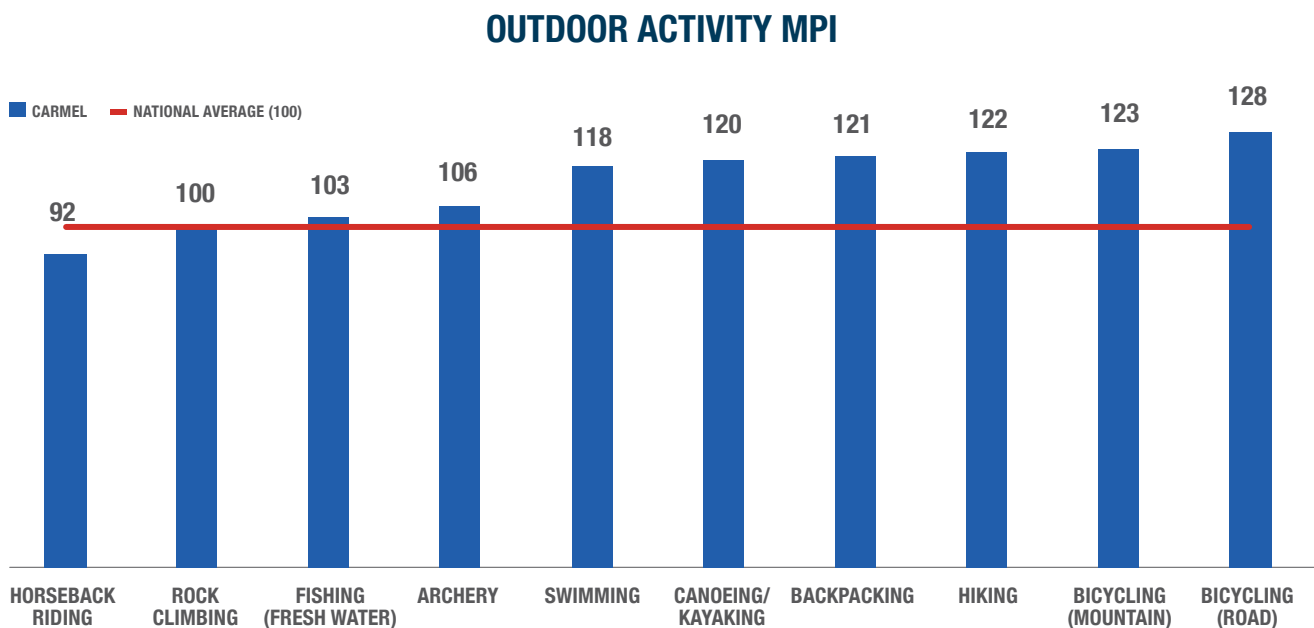


FIGURE 16 - OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX

COMMERCIAL RECREATION MARKET POTENTIAL

The Commercial Recreation category shown in **Figure 17** reveals that most of the recorded Commercial Recreation activities are also above the national average, with a few exceptions. The most popular activity in the service area was 'Went to live theater' (130), while 'Spent \$250+ on sports/recreation equipment' (128), and 'Participated in a book club' (128), also had relatively high scores. The types of activities that are popular in Carmel are diverse; artistic activities and sports activities alike have similarly high ratings across the board. One thing to note is the high willingness to spend money on sports or recreational equipment, as the 'Spent \$1-\$99 on sports/recreation equipment' category scored at 110, the 'Spent \$100-249 on sports/recreation equipment' scored at 110, and the 'Spent \$250 on sports/recreation equipment' category scored at 128. Paired with the other MPI ratings (General Sports, Fitness, and Outdoor Activity), these activities could signal potential target areas for new facilities, funding, or programs for CCPR.



COMMERCIAL RECREATION MPI (last 12 months)

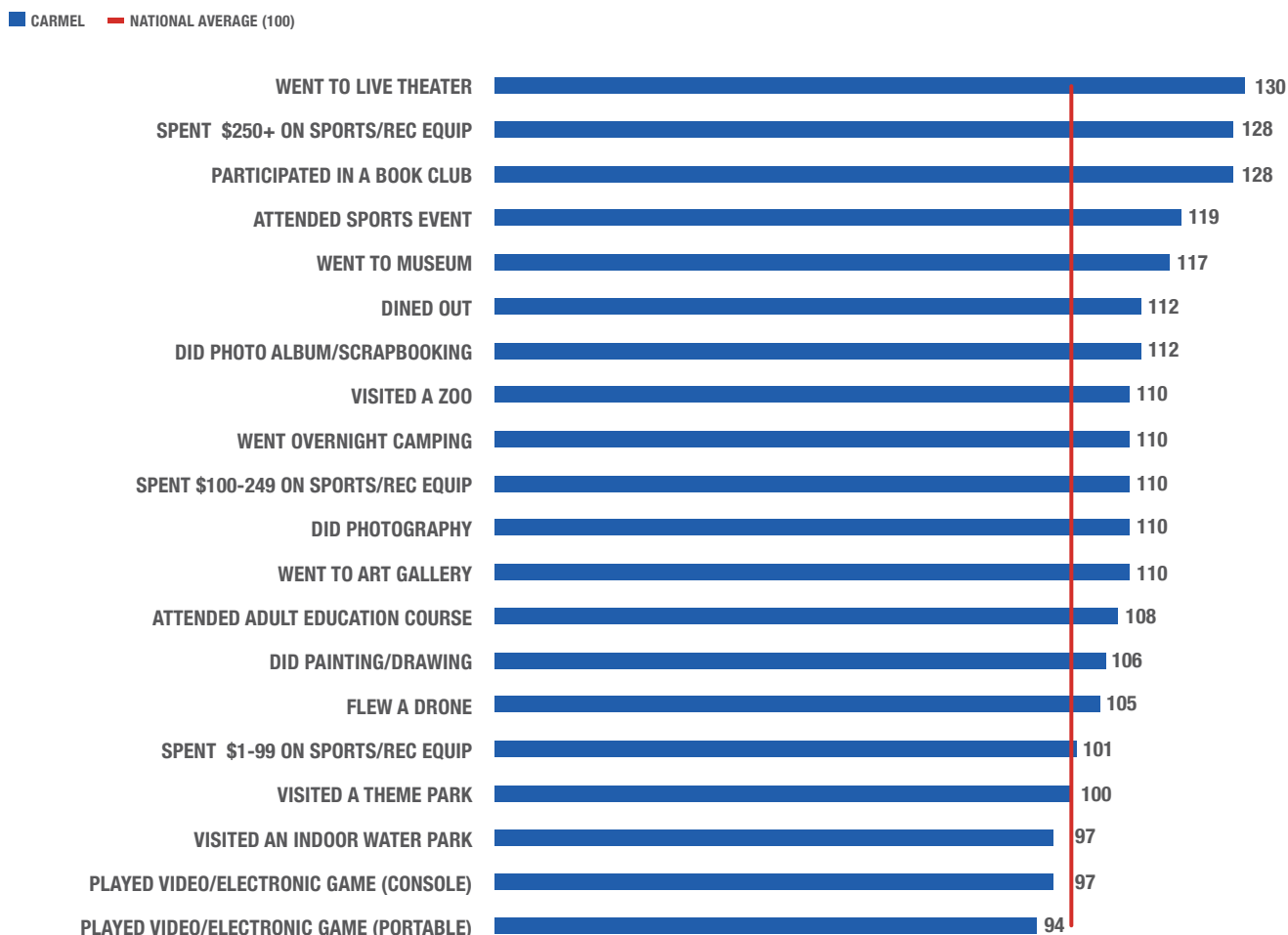


FIGURE 17 - COMMERCIAL RECREATION MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX

2.8. BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

2.8.1. Methodology

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (“CCPR”) identified operating metrics to benchmark against comparable parks and recreation agencies. The goal of the analysis is to evaluate how CCPR is positioned amongst peer best-practice agencies. The information sought was a combination of operating metrics that factor budgets, staffing levels, and inventories, as well as perspective on the organizational culture, philosophy, and identity.

Information used in this analysis was obtained directly from each participating benchmark agency (when available) and information available through the National Recreation and Park Association’s (NRPA) Park Metrics Database.

Due to differences in how each system collects, maintains, and reports data, variances may exist. These variations can impact the per capita and percentage allocations, and the overall comparison must be viewed with this in mind. The benchmark data collection for all systems was complete as of October 2023, and it is possible that information in this report may have changed since the original collection date. In some instances, the information was not tracked or not available from the participating agencies, which is indicated by a blank space in the data tables where the information was missing.

The agencies listed below were selected for benchmarking because they were communities of similar size, located outside of major metro areas, CAPRA Accredited, NRPA Gold Medal winners and/or finalists, and had similar socioeconomic characteristics as that of CCPR. These benchmarked agencies were:

- Arlington Heights Park District (IL)
- Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (NC)
- South Suburban Park and Recreation District (CO)
- Franklin Parks Department (TN)
- Naperville Park District (IL)
- Westerville Parks and Recreation (OH)

Table 2 lists each benchmark agency in the study, arranged by total population served.

AGENCY	STATE	JURISDICTION TYPE	YEAR ESTABLISHED	POPULATION	JURISDICTION SIZE (SQ. MI.)	POPULATION PER SQ. MI.
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	NC	Town	1945	182,000	58.00	3,138
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	CO	Park District	1959	151,054	45.70	3,305
Naperville Park District	IL	Park District	1966	149,540	41.00	3,647
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	IN	Other	1991	103,156	50.00	2,063
Franklin Parks Department	TN	City	1987	85,469	41.20	2,074
Arlington Heights Park District	IL	Park District	1925	74,409	16.30	4,565
Westerville Parks and Recreation	OH	City	1966	39,910	12.62	3,162

TABLE 2 - BENCHMARK AGENCIES

Of all agencies examined, CCPR's served population is roughly in the benchmark median. The park agency, established in 1991, is the youngest agency in the entire analysis, with the oldest agency dating back to 1925. CCPR's jurisdiction size served is the second largest by total acreage, compared to the other agencies, and has the lowest population density with 2,063 residents per square mile.

2.8.2. Benchmark Comparison

PARKS AND FACILITIES

Table 3 provides a general overview of each system's park acreage and facilities. Assessing the level of service for park acres, CCPR ranks near the bottom of those agencies evaluated for amount of total park acres managed with just 692 acres. At the same time, CCPR is also near the bottom in terms of the number of facilities that the agency manages.

Regarding the number of parks that each agency manages, each agency was also asked to identify the number of parks they have that are either 10 acres or less or 100 acres or more. CCPR has 4 parks that are 10 acres or less (which is the lowest amount in this analysis), and 2 parks that are 100 acres or more. Only one agency (Westerville) indicated that they are responsible for the green spaces within the boulevards, esplanades, and/or roundabouts in their respective communities, which is shown in **Table 3**.



AGENCY	TOTAL ACRES MANAGED	NUMBER OF PARKS 10 ACRES OR LESS	NUMBER OF PARKS 100 ACRES OR MORE	NUMBER OF FACILITIES MANAGED	RESPONSIBLE FOR GREEN SPACE?
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	4,123.56	74	0	18	No
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	2,688.00	15	6	42	No
Naperville Park District	2,473.98	82	5	4	No
Franklin Parks Department	965.00	6	3	4	No
Arlington Heights Park District	713.98	33	0	24	No
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	692.00	4	2	4	No
Westerville Parks and Recreation	658.00	14	0	4	Yes

TABLE 3 - BENCHMARK: PARKS AND FACILITIES



FACILITY SUMMARIES (INCLUDING GOLF COURSES)

Table 4 shows each benchmarked agency’s listed indoor facilities, as well as their golf courses.

AGENCY	STATE
Arlington Heights Park District (IL)	5 recreation/community centers (including two indoor tennis centers), 1 indoor aquatic center, 5 outdoor pools, 2 fitness centers, 8 outdoor ice rinks (Winter only), 1 18-hole golf course, 1 9-hole golf course
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (IN)	1 community center, 2 pavilions, 1 waterpark, and 0 golf courses
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (NC)	5 community centers, 2 nature and outdoor centers, 4 art facilities, 1 soccer park, 1 tennis park, 1 baseball facility, 0 golf courses
South Suburban Park and Recreation District (CO)	6 recreation/community centers (3 of which are also indoor aquatic centers), 4 outdoor pools, 1 sports complex, 1 sports dome, 1 ice arena, 1 nature center, 3 18-hole golf courses, 1 9-hole golf course
Franklin Parks Department (TN)	1 recreation/fitness center, event facility with rental space for outdoor events, 1 horse arena, 0 golf courses
Naperville Park District (IL)	1 community/activity center, 1 park clubhouse, 1 interpretive center, 1 nature center, 2 18-hole golf courses
Westerville Parks and Recreation (OH)	1 recreation center, 1 indoor pool, 1 outdoor pool, 0 golf courses

TABLE 4 - BENCHMARK: FACILITIES SUMMARY

STAFFING

Table 5 compares staffing levels for each system by comparing full-time employees, part time/seasonal employees, and 2022 volunteer hours to each community’s total population. In general, agencies participating in the benchmark study ranged widely from heavily staffed to considerably more limited staffing. In terms of Full-Time Employees, CCPR reported the 5th highest number with 63. Lastly, CCPR logged the second lowest amount of total volunteer hours in 2022 of the seven benchmarked agencies.

AGENCY	FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PART-TIME EMPLOYEES	SEASONAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2022
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	249	765	263	19,223
Westerville Parks and Recreation	58	323	110	4,435
Arlington Heights Park District	91	1,106		4,000
Naperville Park District	126	681		46,343
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	63	386	150	3,357
Franklin Parks Department	51	1		2,929
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	77	350	110	33,935
NRPA Median 2022 = 8.9 FTEs per 10,000 Residents				

TABLE 5 - BENCHMARK: STAFFING

PART-TIME EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Agencies were also asked to list the benefits that they offer to their part-time employees. CCPR offers all the directly mentioned benefits (medical, dental, vision, PTO, and retirement), which only two other agencies offer. Some of the other listed benefits included sick leave, pension, and program/membership discounts. Individual agency results can be seen in **Table 6**.

AGENCY	MEDICAL BENEFITS	VISION BENEFITS	PAID TIME OFF (PTO)	RETIREMENT BENEFITS	OTHERS
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Arlington Heights Park District	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	N	N	N	N	
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	Y	N	N	N	Sick leave
Franklin Parks Department	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Naperville Park District	Y	N	Y	Y	Pension, 457, program and membership discounts
Westerville Parks and Recreation	N	N	Y	N	Hours worked requirement for paid personal leave

TABLE 6 - BENCHMARK: PART-TIME EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

OPERATING EXPENSE PER CAPITA

Dividing the annual operational budget by each service area's population allows for a comparison of how much each agency is spending per resident. Agencies participating in the benchmark study are spending on parks and recreation operations at a substantial rate, with only one of the agencies spending below the national median of \$93.01 per resident. **Table 7** shows CCPR ranks as the third lowest among peer agencies for total operating expense (\$13.1M) as well as expense per resident (\$127.51). In terms of total earned income (not including tax revenue), CCPR was in the middle of the pack with \$15M for FY 2022.

AGENCY	POPULATION	TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE (FY22)	TOTAL USER FEES, CHARGES, AND EARNED INCOME (FY 22)	OPERATING EXPENSE PER RESIDENT	USER FEES, CHARGES, AND EARNED INCOME PER RESIDENT
Arlington Heights Park District	74,409	\$26,982,640	\$16,358,760	\$362.63	\$219.85
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	151,054	\$53,991,269	\$32,691,826	\$357.43	\$216.42
Westerville Parks and Recreation	39,910	\$11,073,421	\$15,861,042	\$277.46	\$397.42
Naperville Park District	149,540	\$29,423,327	\$14,556,728	\$196.76	\$97.34
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	103,156	\$13,153,618	\$15,003,545	\$127.51	\$145.45
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	182,000	\$17,192,347	\$7,704,932	\$94.46	\$42.33
Franklin Parks Department	85,469	\$2,553,589	\$152,077	\$29.88	\$1.78
NRPA Median 2022 = \$93.01 Operating Expense per Residents					

TABLE 7 - BENCHMARK: ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES SUMMARY

Due to the volatility of Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets and availability of funding from year to year, the table below reveals the last three years of actual capital expenditures from FY2020, FY2021, and FY2022. These figures were then utilized to show the average annual capital investment for each agency shown in **Table 8**. The top performing benchmark agencies are investing significant dollars into CIP efforts each year, with four of the seven benchmarked agencies (including CCPR) having average annual capital expenditures of over \$10 million for the past three fiscal years. CCPR itself is averaging \$10,545,989 annually in CIP expenses, with slight yearly increases from FY 2020. Though CCPR only ranked fourth out of the seven benchmarked agencies in the average annual capital expenditures, it ranked third in average annual capital expenditures per resident, putting the agency in a strong position in terms of its population served.

AGENCY	FY20 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	FY21 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	FY22 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	AVG. ANNUAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	AVG. ANNUAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES PER RESIDENT
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	\$60,687,377	\$32,691,826	\$23,625,232	\$39,001,478	\$258.20
Westerville Parks and Recreation	\$12,284,063	\$2,800,721	\$2,740,797	\$5,941,860	\$148.88
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	\$9,640,423	\$10,514,394	\$11,483,151	\$10,545,989	\$102.23
Naperville Park District	\$15,140,195	\$8,460,906	\$13,265,710	\$12,288,937	\$82.18
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	\$13,382,803	\$21,185,000	\$8,047,000	\$14,204,934	\$78.05
Arlington Heights Park District	\$1,775,996	\$3,944,980	\$5,525,560	\$3,748,845	\$50.38
Franklin Parks Department	\$533,415	\$41,797	\$46,530	\$207,247	\$2.42

TABLE 8 - BENCHMARK: CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

PARK-SPECIFIC CAPITAL PROJECT BONDS

Agencies also listed the bonds issued over the past four fiscal years that directly benefited parks. Of the seven agencies (besides CCPR), only 3 had any bonds issued in that time. The full breakdown can be seen in **Table 9**.

AGENCY	FY19 BONDS ISSUED	FY20 BONDS ISSUED	FY21 BONDS ISSUED	FY22 BONDS ISSUED
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	\$30,917,691	\$4,305,000	N/A	\$750,000
Arlington Heights Park District	\$469,000	\$-	\$774,000	\$-
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	\$-	\$112,000,000	\$-	\$-
South Suburban Park and Recreation District	\$-	\$-	\$17,715,000	\$-
Franklin Parks Department	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-
Naperville Park District	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-
Westerville Parks and Recreation	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-

TABLE 9 - BENCHMARK: PARK-SPECIFIC CAPITAL PROJECT BONDS

BEFORE/AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

The benchmarked agencies were also asked if they operated a before and/or afterschool program. In addition to CCPR, only one of the six agencies benchmarked operates this type of program. CCPR enrolls 1,877 participants across 11 sites and Arlington Heights enrolls 990 participants across 12 sites.

NATIONAL LEVEL AWARDS

Lastly, agencies were benchmarked for any recent **national-level awards** that they have won in the last five years. The results can be seen in **Table 10**.

AGENCY	NATIONAL-LEVEL AWARDS
Arlington Heights Park District (IL)	2020 Gold Medal Finalist, 2022 USTA Outstanding Facility Award
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (IN)	2020 National Gold Medal Winner, CAPRA initial accreditation 2014
Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (NC)	CAPRA initial accreditation 2002
South Suburban Park and Recreation District (CO)	2023 Gold Medal Finalist, CAPRA initial accreditation 2019
Franklin Parks Department (TN)	N/A
Naperville Park District (IL)	CAPRA initial accreditation 2011
Westerville Parks and Recreation (OH)	2019 NRPA Gold Medal, CAPRA initial accreditation 2005

TABLE 10 - BENCHMARK: NATIONAL LEVEL AWARDS

2.8.3. Other Inquiries

RECRUITMENT AND RETAINMENT TACTICS

The following is a list of **notable recruitment and retention tactics** that each of the benchmarked agencies is currently employing or plan to utilize soon. If a benchmarked agency is unlisted, it is due to them not listing any recruitment or retention tactics.

Arlington Heights Park District (IL)

- Currently conducting a salary and benefits study

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (IN)

- Discounted memberships (Community Center and Dog Park), tuition reimbursement, bonus programs
- Year-round referral bonus of \$100/referral
- \$300 seasonal bonus for new hires of lifeguard, swim instructor, inclusion instructor, outdoor parks worker, head counselor, and counselor

South Suburban Park and Recreation District (CO)

- Recreation benefits (recreation facilities, golf, shop merchandise, hotel stay discounts, fitness package discounts)
- Referral bonus (\$100)
- Utilizing state grants to pay for lifeguard and lifeguard instructor trainings, hiring bonuses, and end-of-Summer bonuses

Franklin Parks Department (TN)

- New compensation plan for all pay grades
- Vacation leave buy-back program and policy
- Family Paid Leave

Naperville Park District (IL)

- Signing bonuses for select positions
- Referral bonuses up to \$150
- Community referral program - \$100 e-voucher

Westerville Parks and Recreation (OH)

- Lifeguard Certification Reimbursement

UNIQUE PARTNERSHIPS

The following is a list of **notable and/or unique partnerships** that each of the benchmarked agencies is currently a part of. If a benchmarked agency is unlisted, it is due to them not listing any unique partnerships.

Arlington Heights Park District (IL)

- Member of the Northwest Special Recreation Association (NWSRA), made up of therapeutic recreation professionals that help to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in parks and recreation.

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (IN)

- Facilitates before and after care school programs in partnership with Carmel Clay Schools at each of the district's 11 elementary schools

Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (NC)

- Facility Residency Program: Our theater spaces partner with cultural groups in the area to provide discounted meeting space and performance spaces. Other partnerships include larger sports partnerships with USTA, USA Baseball, and the NCAA.

South Suburban Park and Recreation District (CO)

- Partnerships for pickleball courts, disc golf course, as well as working with local cities to apply for park/trail/playground improvement grants.

Franklin Parks Department (TN)

- Friends of Franklin Parks not for profit organization partnership with Hayes House, Harlinsdale Farm and Ellie G's Dreamworld (going in at the new Southeast Municipal Complex), and an Interlocal Agreement between the Franklin Special School District Poplar Grove and Freedom Middle Schools for ballfields located at.

Naperville Park District (IL)

- American Red Cross, Community Gardeners, Sports leagues, Adult Day Services, and Rotary Clubs.

Westerville Parks and Recreation (OH)

- Local sports organizations, including baseball, softball, soccer, and football organizations.

PARK SYSTEM INITIATIVES

The following is a list of **notable park system initiatives** that each of the benchmarked agencies are currently employing or plan to utilize soon.

Arlington Heights Park District (IL)

- Recreation Park Open Space and Facility Improvements
- Updating the District's Comprehensive Master Plan for 2023/4-2033/34
- Analysis of preschool program viability

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (IN)

- Development of the north extension of the White River Greenway (one of the top goals within the department's current five-year master plan; supported by the 2019 White River Vision Plan.
- Development of a Pedestrian Bridge across the White River connecting the City of Carmel and the City of Fishers.
- New Park Developments:
 - Bear Creek Park – 26.91-acre parcel will provide much needed park in northwest Carmel which was a top priority of the department's current five-year master plan.
 - Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park – 63-acre parcel located within the White River Corridor in northeast Carmel which aligned with top priorities within the department's current five-year master plan.
- Development of a Long-Term Capital Funding Plan to help CCPR replace the pending loss of Local Income Tax once the Central Park Bond is retired in 2025.

Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (NC)

- Complete the projects on the 2019 Bond. This includes the completion of 3 brand new parks in the Fall 2023.
- Complete the PRCR Master Plan – about 70% completed as of 9/1/2023. This includes moving forward with the designing of two new indoor community facilities, while also re-imagining and reenergizing existing parks and facilities.
- Implement new recreation registration software system starting in the fall of 2023.

South Suburban Park and Recreation District (CO)

- Development of the RidgeGate East Community in Lone Tree. This is projected to increase our population from 153,251 in 2021 to 162,081 by 2026. Accordingly, a regional park, three neighborhood parks, and connecting trails are in development.
- In 2023, South Suburban took over the management of the Hudson Gardens & Event Center. This is an important staple in the City of Littleton, specifically in their interest to have gardens and programs in the area.
- Grand opening of the new Littleton Golf and Tennis Club. This facility was destroyed in a windstorm in 2021. The totality of tennis programs from that facility have been very limited and utilizing a temporary space for lessons.
- South Suburban Ice Arena and Goodson Recreation Center utilization study. The Ice Arena was permanently closed in 2021 and the space has held temporary (non-ice) programs since. The Recreation Center has been determined most in need of improvements and several programs have outgrown their space within.

Franklin Parks Department (TN)

- Pedestrian Bridge at Harlinsdale Farm (under construction)
- Historic Hayes Home restoration (under construction)
- Southeast Municipal Complex in progress to be bid in 2023 (233-acre multi-sport complex); construction for 3-yrs starting in Spring 2024
- Bicentennial Park starting construction in late summer, early fall 2023.

- Thompson Alley Neighborhood Park (under construction)
- Updating Parks Master Plan (approval sought by end of 2023 calendar year)

Naperville Park District (IL)

- Formulation of 2023 Master Plan and Indoor Space Needs Assessment to guide future direction including new recreational amenities and improvement projects.
- Rothermel Family Skate Facility Renovation Project at Centennial Park
- Rothermel Family Pickleball Courts Development Project at Frontier Sports Complex
- Frank J. Rus Pavilion Development and Site Improvements Project at Knoch Knolls Park

Westerville Parks and Recreation (OH)

- Development of the Sycamore Trail Park to recognize the Underground Railroad in Westerville (supported by the 2014 PROS plan).
- Development of an active adventure park adjacent to our economic development zone to help attract and retain workforce in the community (supported by the 2014 PROS plan).
- Development of an over 160' bicycle and pedestrian bridge that will provide active transportation options linking residents with Community Center and the 33-mile Alum Creek Trail.
- Reimagining two legacy parks, Metzger and the Sports Complex, so they stay vibrant assets in the community (supported by the 2014 PROS plan).
- Reconstructing the Shinto Shrine to pay respect to the one-of-a-kind, hand carved structure and the Japanese community.

2.8.4. Summary

While each of the agencies included in this analysis are high performing park systems, it is important to note that each agency varies significantly in the size and scope of the parks and services they provide, making direct comparisons difficult. The power in this analysis is to identify areas where these agencies may most excel, providing opportunities for further discussion to better understand the factors to their success.

For example, it is worth learning more about what is driving Naperville to achieve volunteer hours over 13 times greater than CCPR, despite having a population only 45% larger than Carmel. Having CCPR staff examine the areas of greatest contrast, especially as it pertains to programs and services, is where this benchmark is ultimately most meaningful.

The peer agencies selected are high performing park systems which allows CCPR to benchmark itself against some of the best parks and recreation agencies in the country. Specific areas where CCPR performs to an exceptional level include part-time employee benefits, as well as average annual capital expenditures per resident.

With a population size falling in the middle of the benchmarked communities, this analysis allows CCPR to see communities that are on par with them, as well as communities that they may aspire to compare to in the future that are larger such as Cary or South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

When it comes to staffing and operating expenses, CCPR is well staffed and funded, as the Department was able to keep up with, and in some cases exceed, most other benchmarked agencies. CCPR also possesses a healthy amount of capital investments, while being one of the few agencies with ample capital project bonds issued over the last three years due to the Clay Township Impact Program.

Overall, the benchmark analysis reveals that CCPR is a stable high performing park system measured against its peers. Included in this benchmark was information about unique partnerships, strategies, and initiatives from the benchmarked agencies. The perspective gained through the peer comparison is valuable in identifying areas for improvement and establishing strategic goals to pursue. Also, CCPR should utilize these findings as a baseline comparison that provides key performance indicators (KPIs) to be tracked and measured over time.

2.9. ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

2.9.1. CCPR Statement on Accessibility

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (CCPR) makes a good-faith effort to ensure all patrons, and the community at-large, are knowledgeable of the resources and opportunities available to them, which supports full and active participation within CCPR's parks, facilities, and programs.

CCPR believes every individual has the right to participate in activities and programs that support their physical, mental, social, and emotional wellness, and therefore contributes to enhancing their overall quality of life. Based on this belief, and CCPR's vision and mission, CCPR is committed to the provision of services for individuals of all ages, skills, and ability levels. This is achieved by incorporating universal design for all new parks and facilities, identifying and removing barriers in order to serve individual and community needs, as well as provide quality programs and services accessible to all, such as the many recreational, leisure and education-based programs, volunteer opportunities and interactive public events.

This commitment to accessibility is further illustrated through the Department's employment of two full-time Inclusion Supervisors. Through their specialized training, the Inclusion Supervisors are uniquely qualified to review requests for accommodation and prescribe reasonable modifications in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). CCPR has an ADA Request for Modification located on its website at the following:

https://ccpr.formstack.com/workflows/request_for_modifications

In addition, CCPR is dedicated to non-discrimination in the provision of programs, services, and activities to the public.

CCPR will continue to incorporate all consumer feedback, current research, and practice knowledge to meet and exceed customer/community satisfaction and protect and promote access for all future generations.

2.9.2. ADA Coordinator and Grievance Process

The CCPR ADA Coordinator contact information and Grievance Process and Form is found online on CCPR's website.

If users believe that there is an accessibility or inclusion issue that is covered under the ADA, it should be brought to CCPR's attention within 60 days by filling out a Grievance Form at the following:

https://ccpr.formstack.com/forms/ccpr_grievance_form

Potential issues should be notified in writing whenever possible, however, if users are unable to write due to a disability, they can contact Kelvin Solares, CCPR Inclusion Supervisor and ADA Coordinator, to discuss alternate delivery methods. Once a grievance is filed, individuals will receive confirmation of receipt within 48 business hours from the CCPR Inclusion Team. The Department will conduct an analysis of the grievance and follow up with the final resolution within 120 days.

If this does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, qualified individuals may submit an appeal within 15 days of the decision. Appeals should be in writing addressed to the CCPR Inclusion Supervisor or agreed upon alternative delivery method from original submittal. All appeals will receive a written response within 30 days of receipt.

2.9.3. Accessible Facilities And Programs

CCPR incorporates universal design principles at all parks, which means spaces are designed with features that can be enjoyed by all people – including kids and adults with disabilities. Furthermore, CCPR's website has the UserWay widget which uses a variety of visual aid tools and translates website content in multiple languages.

Below are a few examples of recent park projects CCPR has completed in the last five years:

RIVER HERITAGE PARK

Inclusive Playground Experience

The park's playground has two main sections: the front pod, which is located at the entrance of the park, and the back trail, which winds through the wooded areas extending toward the White River.

Both sections feature play pieces that are wheelchair accessible, including a swing and merry-go-round. Play experiences along the back trail provide options for users with varying levels of mobility and body strength, which includes zip lines, climbing structures, and more.

Wheelchair Accessible Nature Trail

A looping .75-mile immersive nature trail winds through the forest and along the White River. The trail has a hard, rubberized surface that is wheelchair friendly. The surfacing was chosen to provide a more natural feel as opposed to asphalt.

White River Overlooks

Along the backside of the park, there are two overlooks that offer a view of the White River. The structures, which are fixed several feet from the water's edge, are accessible and feature foot railings for safety and unobstructed viewing for users who may be in a wheelchair.

MEADOWLARK PARK

The recent renovation of Meadowlark Park included the addition of a new playground that followed universal design principles, along with accessible restrooms. Also, the fishing pier was replaced to be wheelchair accessible.

CAREY GROVE PARK

As part of the recent renovations to Carey Grove Park, accessible restrooms were added to the park, as well as an updated playground using universal design principles. Also, musical features were incorporated throughout the playground to make it CCPR's very first musical park. The musical features added a learning and exploratory component for park users.

ADAPTIVE PROGRAMS

One of CCPR's core program areas is Adaptive Programming designed for individuals with disabilities. CCPR believes that everyone should participate in leisure opportunities that allow for performance at their highest level and encourages participation of all ages and abilities. CCPR's goal is to provide programs for all age segments that have a measurable positive impact on physical, mental, social, and emotional health for individuals in the community with cognitive or developmental disabilities. These programs are provided at low or no cost to the community.

EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT AND SUMMER CAMP SERIES

During the school year, CCPR offers the Extended School Enrichment (ESE) program, on-site after-school care at all 11 Carmel Clay elementary schools. During the summer months, the CCPR team offers 10+ summer camp options for ages 5-15 via the Summer Camp Series (SCS). CCPR is committed to offering inclusive programs. By making reasonable accommodations, CCPR's inclusion model allows participants of many different ability levels to participate in the program. The ESE/SCS Inclusion + Engagement Supervisor is the contact for general questions about the program process and inclusive services. ADA Requests for modifications can also be found on the CCPR website.

2.9.4. Inaccessible Facilities And Programs

CCPR completed an Access Audit and Transition Plan in 2015 and recently updated it with accessibility audits for the Jill Perelman Pavilion in 2019 and West Park in 2022. CCPR has some parks that have ADA accessibility challenges that include the following:

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

CCPR's Administrative Office is slated for replacement in future years when funding is available to bring the facility up to code.

LAWRENCE W. INLOW PARK

CCPR is working to create an accessible route of crushed or compacted stone from the Lawrence W. Inlow Park parking lot/sidewalk to the first tee of the disc golf course.

WEST PARK

CCPR's Access Audit and Transition Plan at West Park revealed some slopes that needed minor corrections in slope percentage for the accessible routes around and within the playground. The Jill Perelman Pavilion audit also identified door adjustments and fixture relocations that CCPR will modify.

SYSTEMWIDE MODIFICATIONS

CCPR's Access Audit and Transition Plan identified various slope percentage corrections needed on accessible routes in some parks that CCPR is working to modify.

2.9.5. Upcoming Upgrades on Accessibility

COMMUNICATION BOARDS

Communication boards are visual communication tools for individuals with limited or no language ability. Composed of both pictures and text, communication boards allow individuals to easily identify and point to what they want to communicate, which increases safety and promotes independence. Communication boards are being beta tested at River Heritage Park.

AUDIBLE GPS APP

CCPR has explored utilizing audible GPS apps which provide audio cues to users to navigate their surroundings. If utilized, this technology would allow park users to receive audio directions to CCPR parks or features within a park, such as restrooms, playgrounds, or interpretive signage.

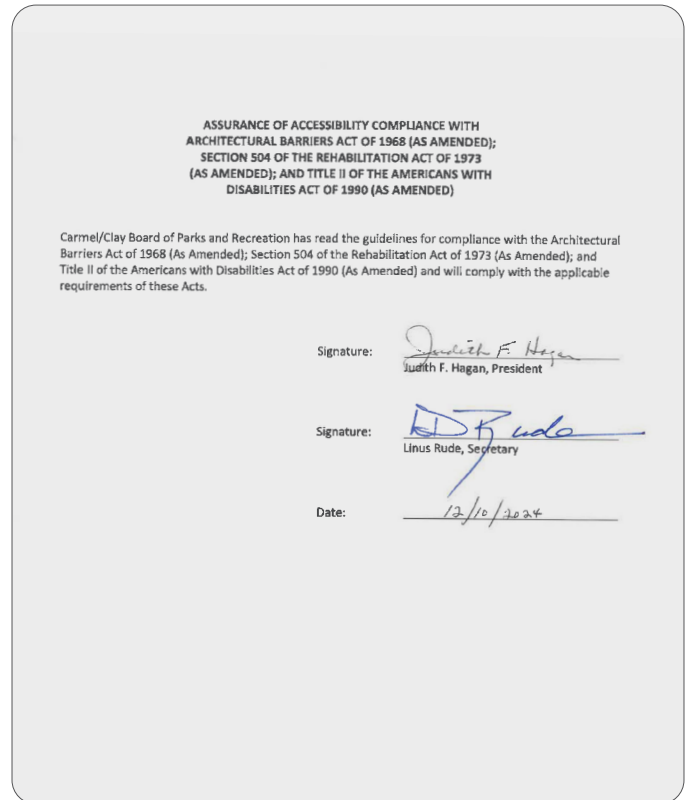
INTERACTIVE INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

CCPR is beta testing tactile and interactive interpretive signage at River Heritage Park. These signs have been designed to include space for Braille. Each sign has a different element that encourages park users to touch or move. Some examples include gears that turn, hinged panels that reveal photos, deer antlers, and a canoe you can move along a track.

2.9.6. PUBLIC INFORMATION OF ADA REQUIREMENTS

Information for the public regarding accessible sites, programs and services can also be found on CCPR's website at <https://www.carmelclayparks.com/ada-inclusion/>

2.9.7. Assurance of Accessibility Compliance with Architectural Barriers Act



ASSURANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE WITH ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT OF 1968 (AS AMENDED); SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (AS AMENDED); AND TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990 (AS AMENDED)

Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation has read the guidelines for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (As Amended); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (As Amended); and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (As Amended) and will comply with the applicable requirements of these Acts.

Signature: Judith F. Hagan
Judith F. Hagan, President

Signature: Linus Rude
Linus Rude, Secretary

Date: 12/10/2024

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1. KEY LEADER AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

3.1.1. Overview

A method of understanding what part CCPR has in the lives of the Carmel community is the key leader and stakeholder engagement process. One-on-one or small group focus group interviews were conducted with approximately 40 stakeholders, which were chosen to be interviewed by the staff at CCPR. These interviews were held during the months of April through July of 2023, either virtually or on site at the CCPR Administrative Offices.

Answers from the interviews also helped to identify themes, key issues, as well as questions on the community survey that was administered in the summer of 2023. The interviews each lasted 30 to 45 minutes and participants were all engaged. Participants interviewed included the following:

- Carmel City Council Members
- Clay Township Board
- Carmel Mayor
- Clay Township Trustee
- Mayoral Candidates
- CCPR Park Board Members
- City of Carmel Department Heads
- Carmel Clay Schools District Administration
- Carmel Dad's Club
- CCPR Parks Foundation Members
- Advocates for the Arts
- Hamilton County Elected Officials

The following summarized the responses of the stakeholder and elected official interviews.

3.1.2. Value of the Parks and Recreation Department

Maintenance and Care of Parks: Maintenance and care of the parks is paramount to the community and the parks exhibit a clean and welcoming feel for all. The recent park upgrades throughout the park system are well received by the community as the parks provide high-end experiences that are well maintained and are accessible. Trails and greenspaces are recognized for their safe environment and the balance of active and passive uses while also maintaining natural areas throughout the system.

Meeting Community Needs through Unique Experiences: CCPR strives to provide opportunities that are affordable and on the leading edge of trendy experiences. The staff leans into the community to listen and learn about programs and amenities that are needed and one of the favorites residents like is green space, and they want to be sure there are efforts to preserve open areas in the system. The community knows the staff are aware of what the community wants and what it takes to provide a wide variety of amenities that are the pride of Carmel residents. Many of the participants acknowledged that dog parks are a priority for the community, and they hope that more of them will be added.

Unique Programming: Other values were related to the Extended School Enrichment Program (“ESE”) and the Summer Camps, as both are heavily used by the community, along with many unique programming opportunities at the MCC.



3.1.3. Areas of the System That Need Improvement or Additional Focus

The Waterpark and MCC: The positive reputation CCPR has in the community also includes improvements. These included some comments that the parks and facilities are too crowded, specifically at The Waterpark and the Monon Community Center. It was mentioned that CCPR might want to consider alternative pricing at The Waterpark as one avenue that may help regulate attendance.

More Passive Nature Experiences: Other areas for improvement included ensuring that CCPR continues to add passive nature space as the City continues to become denser in population.

Additional Parkland in West Carmel: With the continued increase of population to the west side of Carmel, additional parks and amenities will be required to serve these members of the community. Participants mentioned that the development of Bear Creek Park should be a priority. Additionally, developing easier access to enjoy the White River is another for improvement.

Communications: Regarding communications, continuing to educate the community on what is available can always be improved such as the location of certain amenities and trails, as well as recreation programs.

Diversity of Facilities, Amenities, and Programming: There are opportunities for additional programming and more amenities such as adult fitness equipment in the parks like the amenities added at Carey Grove Park. Additional amenities stakeholders mentioned were more pickleball courts, another summer camp facility that could take pressure off the Monon Community Center, and another dog park. As the city's population becomes denser in downtown Carmel, attention needs to focus on park needs in the center of the City and how to meet the growing population. As Carmel continues to grow and become more diverse, equity and the types of programs and amenities will continue to play a larger role as the community grows and more residents use the parks.

Senior Programming: Many of the stakeholders brought up that senior programming is becoming more of a need as the community continues to trend in age.

Impact Fees: Nearly every participant mentioned that the City collected impact fees should go directly to CCPR.

3.1.4. Opportunities for the CCPR System

Senior Programs and Increased Volunteers: CCPR is recognized throughout the community for providing exceptional recreation services and there are some opportunities that could be a complement to the CCPR efforts. Many brought up the senior service program needs and that there could potentially be a partnership with Carmel Prime Life that provides senior program services, as well as more community-wide events. Additionally, the City's current volunteer program could better fall under a CCPR responsibility.

Sports Programs: Other suggestions included expanded opportunities with Carmel Dad's Club to provide more sports programs at some of our parks, as some parks such as Founders Park has a practice field area.

Partnerships: Regarding additional partnerships, consideration for working with a non-profit food pantry, as well as medical facilities with clinics as staging areas for our program centers at Ralph L. Wilfong and Jill Perelman Pavilions. Additional collaborative programming with other non-profits, such as the Children's Museum or the Indianapolis Arts Center to utilize CCPR facilities to establishing these program types to the community.

White River Activation and Brookshire Golf Course: Participants mentioned their desire to activate the White River along with consideration of the Brookshire Golf Course to fall under CCPR responsibility.



3.1.5. Areas that CCPR Does Well and that Should Not Be Changed

Variety of Programming: The CCPR is a valuable community asset that the community is proud of for providing a variety of programming that fits all age groups with desired programs as well as a variety of amenities. CCPR does a great job offering adaptive programs and a variety of activities and amenities that align with their needs. The ESE and Summer Camp programs are well attended, and parents are thankful for how well the programs are managed and how their kids benefit from attending them.

Trails: Trails are vital to the quality of life in the community and CCPR understands they must remain active in planning along with the City trail linkages to these the new developments.

Partnerships: The system has developed and maintained excellent partnerships through the years that have helped with funding, as well as providing programs and services to the Carmel community. CCPR should continue to expand partnerships when appropriate.

3.1.6. Challenges Facing the Park System

Dedicated Funding: Daily operations, maintenance and capital improvements require funding that stakeholders feel is currently sufficient. However, the challenge facing CCPR is to find new and dedicated funding for the park system. The increased funding demand cannot fall completely on the City as reduction in the Local Income Tax has reduced their budget. Also, Park Impact Fees are not appropriately reaching the park system as they have been diverted to the Carmel Redevelopment Commission. The Township has been excellent in assisting on larger capital projects and the hope is this continues under the Interlocal Agreement between the City and Township. In the future, the largest challenge is securing a dedicated long-term funding source.

Need for Additional Green Space: As the Carmel population continues to grow, additional green space will be needed to provide recreational opportunities to the community, as well as acquiring additional land. However, land is limited, and the buildout of the City is starting to become evident as density increases.

Staffing and Operations: Regarding staffing and operations, as the size of the park system increases, additional maintenance will be required and a larger staff to provide programming, organize events, and manage facilities. The community has enjoyed well maintained parks and will expect that level of care in the future. They will not want the facilities and amenities to deteriorate if deferred maintenance becomes a burden too heavy for the system to manage.

3.1.7. The Interlocal Cooperation Agreement

Flexibility in Funding Options through the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement: The Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the City of Carmel and Clay Township has been a success in providing park and recreation services to the City. All stakeholders agreed upon this as the funding from the two entities allows for flexibility in funding options. Also, the balance of the CCPR Park Board between the two entities works great.

3.1.8. Recreation Facilities and/or Programs Most Needed

Facility and Amenity Needs and Senior Programming: CCPR is well known for its progressive view about offering a wide range of activities and programs to the community. The community would like to see additional pickleball courts, an additional dog park, concession canoe/kayak rentals, and senior programs. In general, there are some programs and activities currently taking place that need additional capacity at the The Waterpark and the MCC.

Passive Parks: Additionally, stakeholders want to ensure there is a balance of passive parks to provide more open space for relaxing and gathering.

Westside Park Development: As a growing community, Carmel is experiencing more cultural diversity, mainly on the west side of the City, programs should be in place to communicate to new residents all that the park system offers, as well as how to serve their needs. The development of Bear Creek Park will be a great opportunity to provide more resources on the west side of the community. Additionally, it would be great to have an accessible park, like the updated River Heritage Park, on the west side of Carmel.

3.1.9. Outcomes Accomplished by the CCPR In 5 Years

Dedicated Long Term Funding: Overall and most importantly, the community wants the system to remain well funded and continue with the quality of operations and care that CCPR provides for the park system. This includes the development of Bear Creek Park, completion of the White River greenway and the White River Ecology Center, an additional park in downtown that is greater than Midtown Plaza, as well as a master plan for the quarry park. Regarding amenities, additional dog parks were brought up by participants considering the lengthy wait list that exists for the current one, as well as pickleball courts. Participants all mentioned a long-term dedicated funding source as an accomplishment five years from now.

Communications: Regarding communications, increased awareness to the community of all that the community has to offer, as there is a belief among some of the participants that the community is not aware of all the parks and unique amenities located within them.



3.1.10. Key Stakeholder Summary

The following summarizes the responses of the stakeholder and elected official interviews.

- The recent updates throughout the parks in the system over the last five years have been well received by the community. CCPR does well adapting to change and can meet the challenges for new programming and additional maintenance to provide clean, safe, and beautiful parks and facilities. The overall quality of the system is appreciated by the community.
- It is apparent that long-term funding needs to be secured to keep the parks an exceptional resource to the community. It is recognized that the Park Foundation will grow over the next five years in its fundraising efforts to support CCPR.
- The ESE and Summer Camp Series programs are appreciated by the community, along with the expansion of senior programming due to the aging demographics of the City, and community-wide special events that bring the community together are desired.
- The role of the City of Carmel and Clay Township governments is crucial to the parks, and their funding must expand as the system adds more parks and amenities. CCPR must continue to utilize partnerships where appropriate, as current partnerships with Carmel Dad's Club, Carmel Clay Schools, and Hamilton County, among others, are vital to enhancing the quality of life in Carmel.



3.2. COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

In collaboration with CCPR staff, focus group discussions were as part of the Comprehensive Master Plan process. These discussions aimed to collect community opinions on current park and recreational services. The insights and shared visions for CCPR’s future are summarized over the following pages and will serve as a crucial guide for enhancing and expanding services to better meet the needs of the City of Carmel and Clay Township community. **Table 11** shows the community groups that were represented during these meetings:

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

Mayor’s Advisory Commission on Arts	Carmel High School
Carmel moms groups	Carmel Neighborhood Association Network
Carmel Small Business Network	Forest Dale Elementary School
Carmel Middle School	Islamic Life Center
Friends of the White River	Mayor’s Advisory Commission on Human Relations
Carmel Clay Public Library Teen Library Council	One Zone Chamber of Commerce
Carmel Mayor’s Youth Council	Prime Life Enrichment
Prairie Trace Elementary School	University High School
Towne Meadow Elementary School	White River Alliance
Urban Forestry Committee	

TABLE 11 - COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

3.2.1. What Do You Think People Value the Most About Parks and Recreation Services in Carmel?

Based on the responses given during the community focus groups, here are the top findings regarding what people value the most CCPR's about parks and recreation services:

Variety and Accessibility: People greatly appreciate the diversity of options offered in the parks, ranging from bike trails, play spaces, and water features to programs like yoga and tai-chi. Parks serving different age groups and being accessible for people with disabilities are also emphasized. Placemaking opportunities such as Midtown Plaza were also repeatedly pointed out as desired options. This points to the Carmel community's values of inclusion and variety of recreational activities and spaces to choose from.

Maintenance and Cleanliness: The responses highlighted that parks in Carmel are well-maintained, clean, and safe. Attention to the maintenance of bathrooms, play equipment, and park features such as splash pads and padded surfaces was greatly appreciated. This suggests the community values the cleanliness and upkeep of the parks and the safety they provide.

Monon Community Center: There's a specific mention and appreciation of the Monon Community Center repeatedly, indicating that it is an integral part of the community's recreational activities. The center's offerings, such as fitness classes and swimming lessons, are well received.

Connectivity and Walkability: People value the connectivity of the parks through bike trails and walking paths. The ability to commute safely by bike or foot and the opportunity to easily access different parks is a highly valued feature.

Integration with Nature and Conservation Efforts: There's appreciation for the green open spaces, trees, native species, wildflowers, and focus on conservation. This shows that the community values the natural environment and the efforts to preserve it. Moreover, the parks providing a space for people to connect with nature in an urban setting are cherished.

Overall, the responses indicate that the Carmel community values the diverse, accessible, and well-maintained parks, recreation services, and their efforts to preserve nature. They are appreciated for their role in bringing the community together, providing spaces for physical activity, relaxation, and social interaction, and enhancing the quality of life in the city.

3.2.2. What Part of The Parks and Recreation System Do You Believe Needs Improvement or More Focus?

According to the community focus groups, these are the top areas where CCPR might need more focus or improvement:

Facilities and Equipment: A significant amount of feedback highlights the need for upgrades and additions to the facilities and equipment. Suggestions include more water stations, trash cans, and shade structures in parks, improvement in gym facilities (particularly for basketball), the addition of equipment for sports like pickleball, and improved access and safety at various park features.

Programs and Activities: There are calls for a broader range of programs and activities that cater to diverse demographic groups including teenagers, multicultural audiences and the aging population. This includes suggestions for more events like movie nights, more nature-based activities, expansion of fitness offerings (like yoga), and enrichment programs. More events to celebrate different cultures and programming in the evenings and weekends are also suggested.

Infrastructure and Access: Concerns were raised about overcrowding in areas like the Monon Community Center and the need for more neighborhood-oriented parks. Feedback also emphasized the need for more divergent paths off the Monon Greenway to reduce traffic, and improved access to parks including widening of roads. Safety improvements at certain sites and improved access for wheelchair users were also suggested.



Conservation and Nature Focus: Some community members would like to see more focus on preserving natural areas, adding more trees for shade, and letting nature “be nature”. They also suggested more environmental education opportunities and the use of environmentally sound materials in park construction.

Communication and Outreach: Community members cited the need for ongoing communication from the parks department, including publicizing meetings and signage for education.

Other suggestions include better enforcement of park rules, better management of user group conflicts, attention to safety concerns, increased staffing to support programs, and integration of arts into the park system. Overall, the community would like to see a parks system that is inclusive, accessible, and caters to the diverse needs and interests of its users.

3.2.3. What is CCPR Doing Well That Should Not Be Changed?

Here are some areas where Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation seems to be doing well and should continue:

Facilities and Infrastructure: Community members appreciate the wide sidewalks, pedestrian focus, and play areas around the Monon. They also appreciate the Midtown area and Carmel’s focus on creating green spaces and parks like Central Park that support wildlife. The universally accessible playgrounds and fitness equipment are valued, as are the Monon Greenway and Midtown Carmel area.

Maintenance and Cleanliness: The cleanliness of parks and maintenance standards are highly valued. Users appreciate the upkeep of the restrooms, the access to water fountains and bottle filling stations, and the overall condition of park resources.

Events and Programming: Community members appreciate the variety of events and programming. This includes CCPR offerings such as fitness classes and other special fitness events. There was also praise for other community events held on park property like concerts, the Farmers’ Market and Christkindlmarkt held at Carter Green. They also appreciate the partnership with organizations like the Carmel Dad’s Club for offerings and camps.

Engagement with Environment: People love the native landscaping, the focus on environmental education, and the engagement with environmental organizations. The plaques in the parks and parks like Lawrence W. Inlow Park, which have been renovated with environmental considerations, are popular. They also appreciate the focus on risk play and adult programming to learn about it.

Unique Spaces and Experiences: Community members appreciate the unique personalities of different parks and themed places, with the belief that parks offer something for everyone. They also appreciate the river access points and see them as an asset.

In terms of future needs, suggestions include more adult fitness equipment, splash parks, dog parks, and a nature center. They would like to see education on nature for residents, more collaboration with Hamilton County Parks and Recreation for activation of areas like Coxhall Gardens. The community would also like to see more green space near the city center, wildlife corridors, a lap pool, more low-impact nature-based activities, and more picnic areas.

Finally, they would like to see more parks like Central Park, which support wildlife, and improved connectivity between parks.

3.2.4. As You See Carmel Changing in the Future, What Recreation Facilities and/or Amenities are Most Needed in Carmel?

Based on the input provided during the community focus group meetings here are the top areas of focus for future recreational facilities and amenities in Carmel:

Expanded Outdoor and Fitness Amenities: More adult fitness equipment in parks, rental bike options with varied sizes, workout areas with ellipticals and stationary bikes, and additional outdoor amenities like Gaga Ball Pits.

Enhanced Park Infrastructure: Upgrades to park infrastructure, including more benches (both by playgrounds and in natural settings), more dog fountains, and additional ADA-compliant facilities for senior citizens. This also includes the addition of more playground equipment catering to children of various abilities and a push for more trees and green spaces.

Focus on Nature and Environmental Education:

Development of a nature conservatory and interactive indoor Nature Center, as well as increased focus on educational programs around nature and the environment, specifically for younger kids. There is also a desire for the maintenance and expansion of preserved natural areas.

Inclusivity and Diversity: Efforts to make parks more inclusive and representative of Carmel’s international feel, with signage catering to different linguistic audiences and an emphasis on diverse design in parks.

Improved Accessibility and Connectivity: A desire for more offerings and facilities outside of downtown Carmel, better connectivity between parks, and increased accessibility to parks and recreation facilities, including potential shuttle services from parks to downtown.

3.2.5. How Would You Describe Your Interactions with CCPR? Anything You Would Like to See Changed in How Ccpr Works with You and Your Organization?

Here are the feedback points on interactions with CCPR, both positive and areas for potential improvement according to the community focus groups:

Staff Engagement: While staff are generally described as friendly and professional, there are also instances where they seem disengaged, often busy on their phones at the Monon Community Center. Improving staff engagement and customer service should be a priority.

Communication: Communication from Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation is generally perceived as good, and the department is seen as responsive to community needs. However, there are suggestions to improve the clarity of information, with customers often being directed to voicemail and front desk staff not having enough information to answer questions.

Digital Experience: The online catalog on the website was cited as not user-friendly. Enhancements could be made to improve the digital experience for users.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation has established positive partnerships with different entities like the library, summer camp programs, environmental groups, and others. These partnerships are well-regarded, and there’s a desire for more collaboration, particularly with Prime Life and Carmel Green Initiative.

Programs and Services: While programs like the Extended School Enrichment (ESE) and Summer Camp Series are well-received, there are suggestions for more transparency around what students are doing in the ESE program. Participants were also interested in the pre-selling of tickets for the Waterpark. Additionally, some individuals felt the summer program was expensive for families with multiple children.

3.2.6. If You Had a Magic Wand, What Would You Like to See Accomplished in the Next Five Years to Improve Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation?

Given the variety of ideas and aspirations listed by the community focus groups, the consultant team distilled them down to five broad categories to capture their vision for improving CCPR over the next five years:

Expanded and Diversify Facilities: From indoor rock climbing to amusement parks style amenities, to more splash pads and zip lines, the desire for diversified recreation facilities is clear. This also includes more parks in certain areas, more areas for passive recreation, and innovative concepts like an indoor park for inclement weather, a nature center, and a state-of-the-art fitness facility for seniors.

Improved Nature and Green Spaces: There’s a strong push for preserving and enhancing green spaces, including maintaining mature trees, allowing some nature to remain wild, creating more trails and hiking opportunities, and ensuring parks serve as habitats for local wildlife. The desire for a park featuring natural beauty with trails for biking, hiking, and running is evident.



Enhanced Connectivity and Accessibility: This includes both physical connections between parks and recreational spaces, as well as social connections through programs and activities that reach all ages and abilities. It encompasses better trail connectivity, making all parks safe and fun for everyone, and ensuring all facilities are truly accessible to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Increased Engagement and Programming: Suggestions range from more teen activities, to organized sports, to targeted programs for seniors. People also express a desire for more community events and public awareness initiatives, more offerings for high school students, and extended school enrichment for 6th grade and beyond.

Sustainability and Environmentally Conscious Practices: This includes everything from preserving green spaces in new development, to the construction of net zero emissions facilities, to more comprehensive plans for tackling environmental issues. It shows a clear desire to ensure that Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation is leading the way in sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.



3.3. INTERCEPT SURVEYS

In partnership with CCPR staff, intercept surveys were conducted at 10 special events held over the summer of 2023. Those events were:

- A5SiaFest
- Adaptive 5k
- Arbor Day Tree Planting
- Brews on the Boulevard
- Carmel Farmer's Market
- Carmel Pride
- CarmelFest
- Monon Mixer
- Prairie Trace Cultural Fair
- Sensory-Friendly Swim

The purpose was to collect real-time feedback from a diverse sample of users in the context of their actual environment. Over 150 surveys were collected, and the following are the cumulative results from these responses.

3.3.1. Visitation

WHICH CCPR PARKS / AMENITIES DO YOU/YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

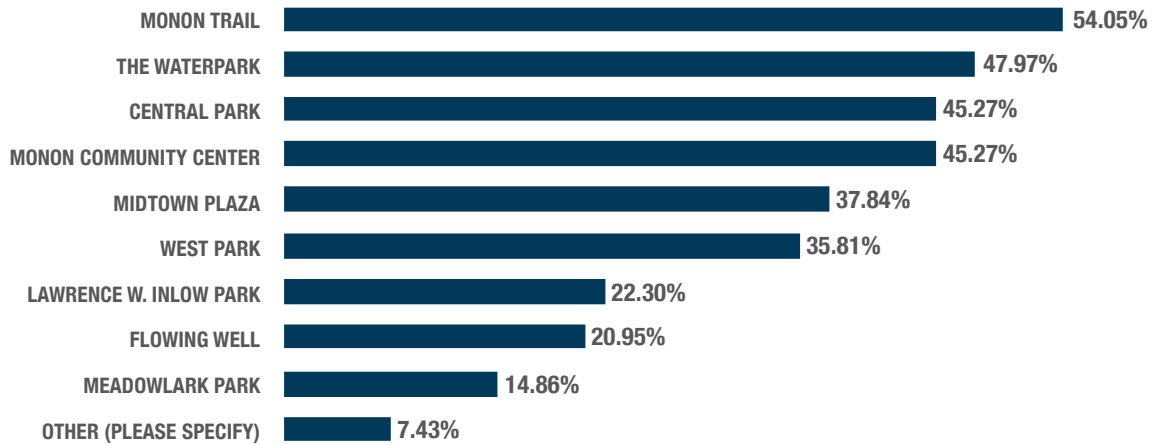


FIGURE 18 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: VISITATION

Other parks listed were Founders, Gray Road, Lenape Trace, River Road, Carey Grove, and Prairie Trace.

3.3.2. Program Participation

WHICH PROGRAMS/SERVICES OFFERED BY CCPR DO YOU/YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATE IN? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

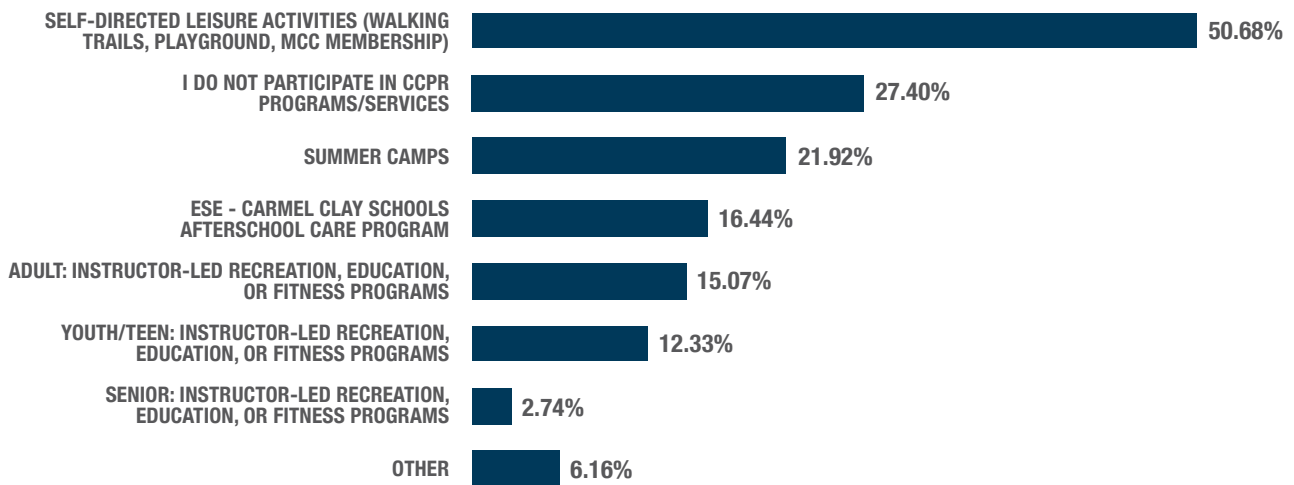


FIGURE 19 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

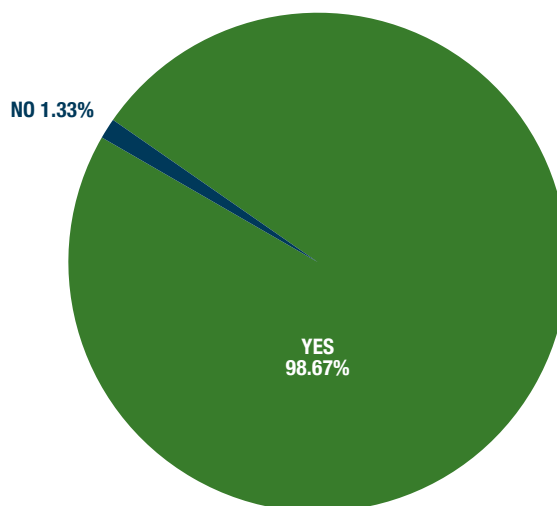
Other mentioned programs were adaptive programs, adult nights, Monon mixer, and volunteer opportunities.



3.3.3. Welcoming

DO YOU/YOUR HOUSEHOLD FEEL WELCOME IN CCPR PARKS, FACILITIES AND OFFERINGS?

FIGURE 20 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: WELCOMING AT CCPR PARKS, FACILITIES AND OFFERINGS



Respondents who answered yes to this question were asked “what is most welcoming for you/ your household?” These are the key themes from those responses:

The Monon Greenway and various park trails: These were frequently mentioned as welcoming aspects of Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation.

Events and Programs: Many responses highlighted the value of special events, including adult nights and cultural events, as well as adaptive programming for families with special needs.

Cleanliness and Maintenance: Respondents appreciated the cleanliness of facilities and well-maintained parks, noting this as a significant factor in feeling welcomed.

Inclusive and Friendly Environment: Several responses indicated that a sense of inclusion, friendly staff, and LGBTQ+ acceptance were essential elements of their welcoming experience.

Variety and Accessibility of Facilities: Respondents valued the variety of options available, such as the Waterpark, fitness facilities, and playgrounds, with an emphasis on accessibility for all family members.

There were only two respondents who answered no to the above question. Their reasons were “more adult only events” and “friendlier staff”.

3.3.4. Better Serve

IS THERE ANYTHING CCPR CAN DO TO BETTER SERVE YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS?

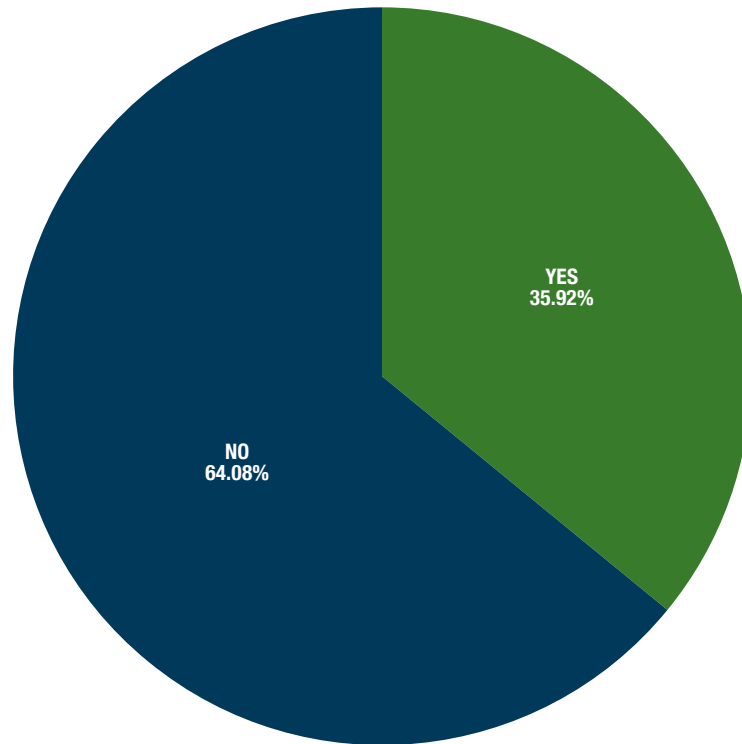


FIGURE 21 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: BETTER SERVE

Respondents who answered yes were given the opportunity to expand on what CCPR could do to better serve their needs. These are the common themes from those responses:

Enhanced Facilities and Variety: Respondents expressed a desire for a broader range of amenities, including a wave pool, dive pool, rock climbing wall, and basketball courts, among others. Many also suggested that each park should have its unique character and features.

Expanded Events and Programs: Many respondents wanted more special events, adult nights, cultural activities, and programs, including more offerings for diverse ethnic groups and the LGBTQ+ community.

Special Needs and Inclusivity: There was a call for more family programs for special needs, adjustments to adaptive hours, and general efforts to improve inclusivity.

Improved Operations and Services: Respondents suggested improvements such as more efficient ticket check-ins, better staff training, and stricter rules about the use of equipment like waterpark tubes.

More Green Spaces and Nature Trails: Respondents expressed a desire for more nature trails, green spaces, and park cleanliness to enhance the outdoor experience.

3.3.5. Carmel Residents

DO YOU LIVE IN CARMEL?

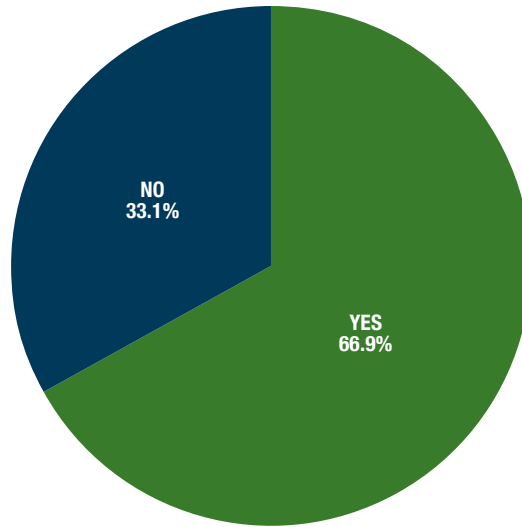


FIGURE 22 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: CARMEL RESIDENTS

3.3.6. Gender

GENDER

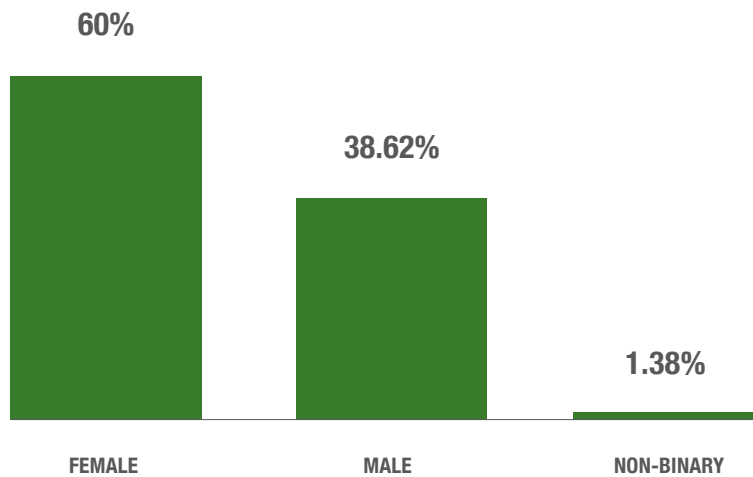


FIGURE 23 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: GENDER

3.3.7. Age Range

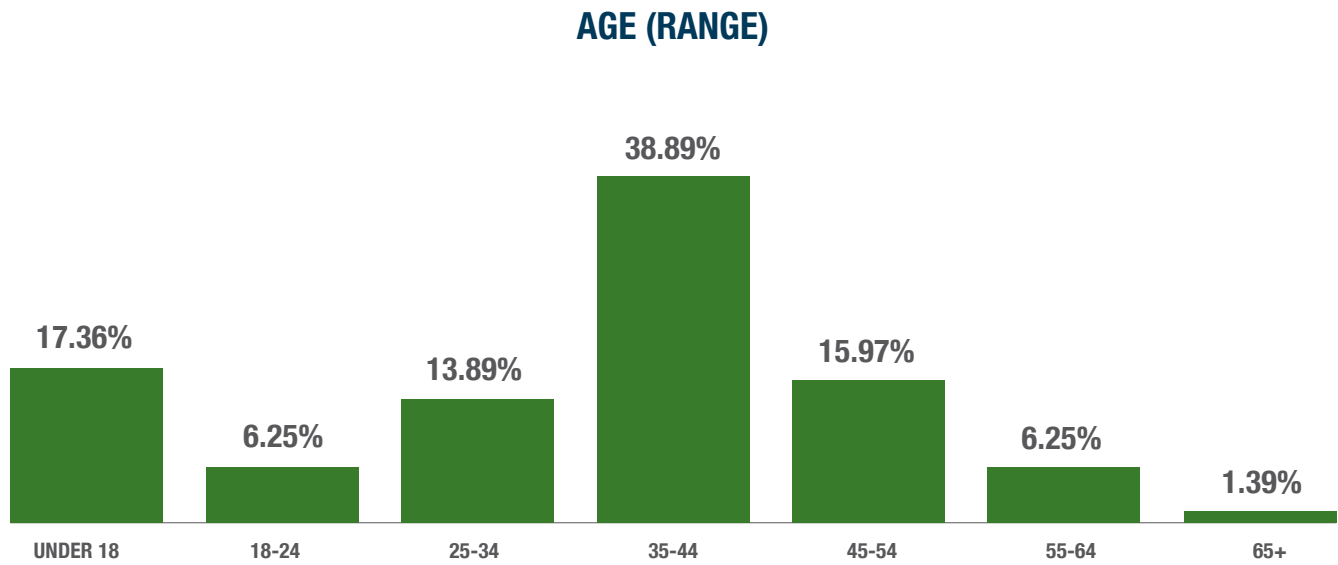


FIGURE 24 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: AGE RANGE

3.3.8. Race and Ethnicity

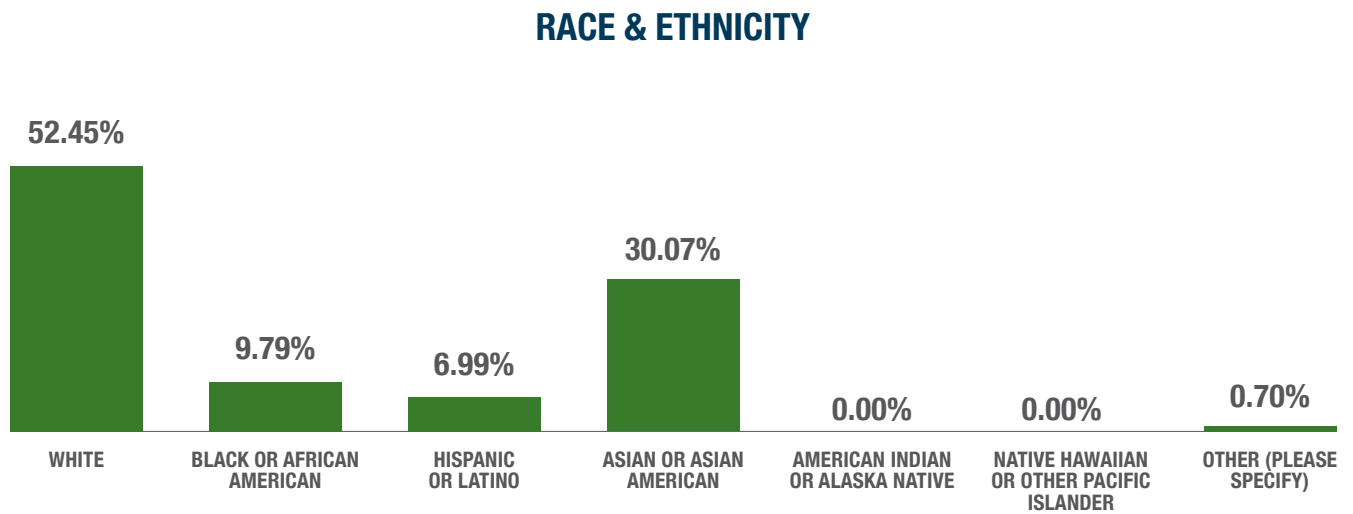


FIGURE 25 - INTERCEPT SURVEY: RACE AND ETHNICITY

NOTE: The one respondent who selected "Other" identified as East Asian.

3.4. FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

CCPR held an open forum on Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024, at 6:00 pm at a regularly scheduled park board meeting. The meeting was held at the Clay Township Government Center and was open to the public which included two members of the public. The forum began with a brief presentation explaining the master plan process, initial findings, preliminary recommendations, and next steps. The park board meeting is open to the public and was professionally video-taped and available to the public for download at <https://www.youtube.com/@CarmelClayParksRecVideos> if community members were unable to attend (129 views by members of the public).

3.5. SECOND PUBLIC MEETING

The second public forum was held on November 14th at a special joint meeting that included the Park Board, City Council, Clay Township Trustee and Township Board members. The meeting was held at the Jill Perelman Pavilion at West Park and was open to the public, which included attendance of eighteen community members. The consulting team updated the park board members, elected officials, and the public on the master plan findings and recommendations. The meeting was open to the public and was professionally video-taped and available to the public for download at <https://www.youtube.com/@CarmelClayParksRecVideos> if residents were unable to attend (26 views by members of the public).

3.6. STATISTICALLY-VALID NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

3.6.1. Overview

ETC Institute administered a community interest and opinion survey for Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation during spring and summer months of 2023. The survey will help Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation determine park and recreation priorities for the community.

3.6.2. Methodology

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation region. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online at CarmelClaySurvey.org.

After the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute followed up with residents to encourage participation. To prevent people who were not residents of the Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation region from participating, everyone who completed the survey online was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC Institute then matched the addresses that were entered online with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed online did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the online survey was not included in the final database for this report.

The goal was to complete a minimum of 400 completed surveys from residents. The goal was met with 412 completed surveys collected. The overall results for the sample of 412 households have a precision of at least +/-4.8 at the 95% level of confidence. The full report can be found in the **Appendix 1**, and it contains the following:

- Charts showing the overall results of the survey (**Section 2**)
- Priority Investment Rating (PIR) that identifies priorities for facilities and programs (**Section 3**)
- Benchmarks comparing data from the City of Carmel and Clay Township to national averages (**Section 4**)
- Trend charts that compare results from 2023 to 2018 (**Section 5**)
- Tabular data showing the overall results for all questions on the survey (**Section 6**)
- Cross-tabulations that separate results by the six geographical areas (**Section 7**)
- Answers to open-ended questions (**Section 8**)
- A copy of the cover letter and survey instrument (**Section 9**)

The major findings of the survey are summarized below and on the following pages.

3.6.3. Benefits, Importance And Improvements To Parks And Recreation

AGREEMENT WITH BENEFITS

Most respondents (99%) say that parks, recreation services, and open space are “very important” (86%) or important (13%) to the quality of life in Carmel. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with 9 statements regarding potential benefits of parks and recreation (**Figure 26**).

Q1. HOW IMPORTANT ARE PARKS, RECREATION SERVICES, AND OPEN SPACE TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN CARMEL?

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know")

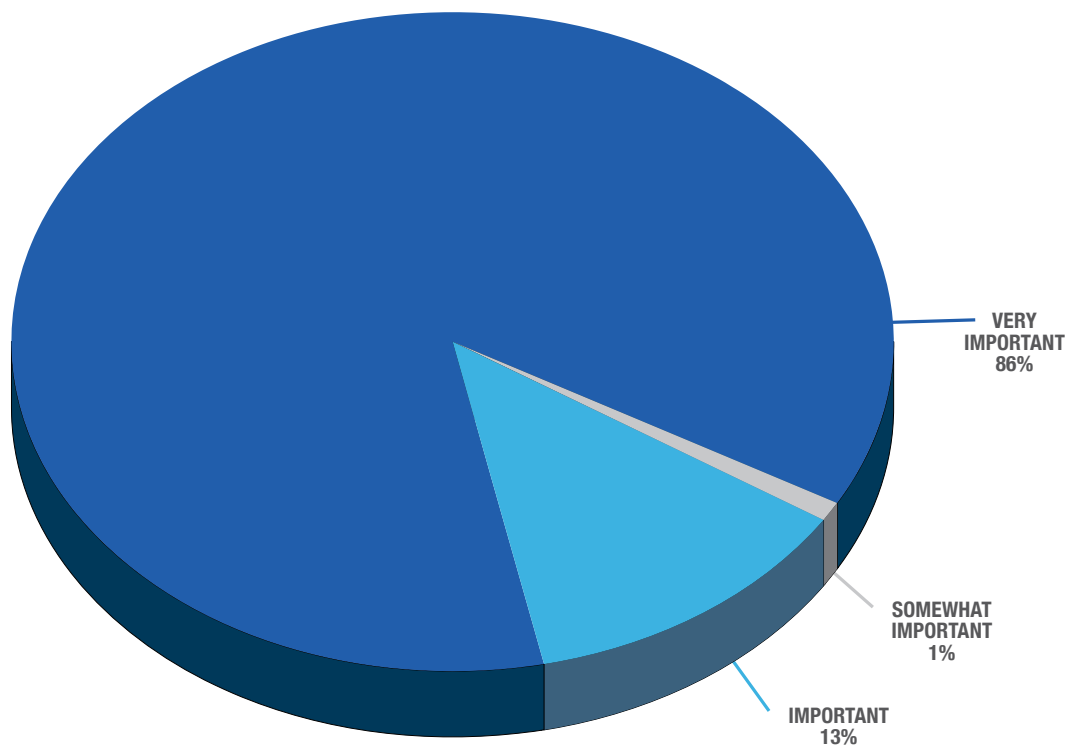


FIGURE 26 - IMPORTANCE OF PARKS, RECREATION SERVICES, AND OPEN SPACE TO QUALITY OF LIFE

Respondents most agreed (selecting “strongly agree”) that parks and recreation services provide places for people to enjoy outdoors (85%), makes Carmel a more desirable place to live (84%), and preserves open space and natural areas (84%). These were also the three benefits most important to households (Figure 27).

Q2. LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH BENEFITS FROM PARKS, RECREATION SERVICES, AND OPEN SPACE PROVIDED BY CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know")

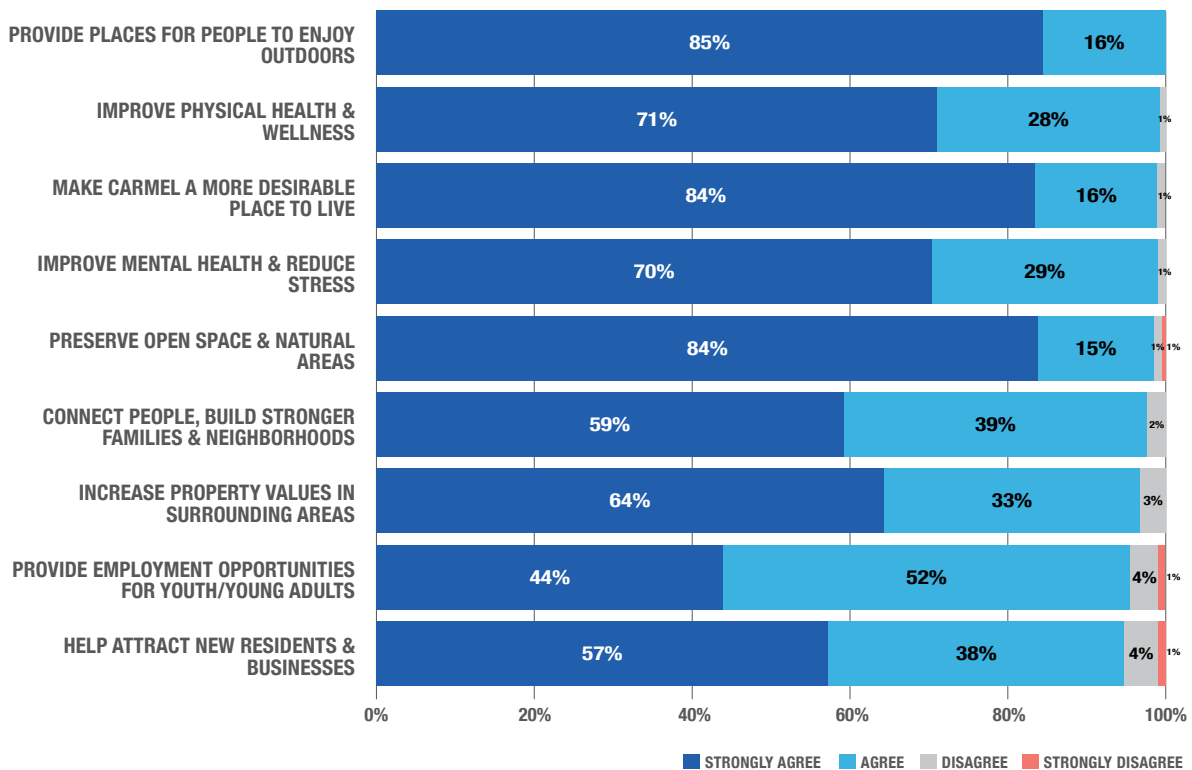


FIGURE 27 - LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH BENEFITS

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARK SYSTEM

Respondents were asked to rate their level of support towards 8 major actions Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation could take to improve the park system and serve residents. Respondents most supported (rating “very supportive” or “somewhat supportive”) acquiring new parks and open space (86%), finishing developing a multi-use trail along White River (73%) and partnering up to construct a new center to expand programming for seniors/older adults (73%) as shown in (Figure 28). These three actions were also the most often selected by respondents when asked to select the top three actions their households would most support (Figure 29).

Q5. SUPPORT FOR MAJOR ACTIONS THAT CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION COULD TAKE TO IMPROVE THE PARK SYSTEM AND SERVE RESIDENTS

by percentage of respondents

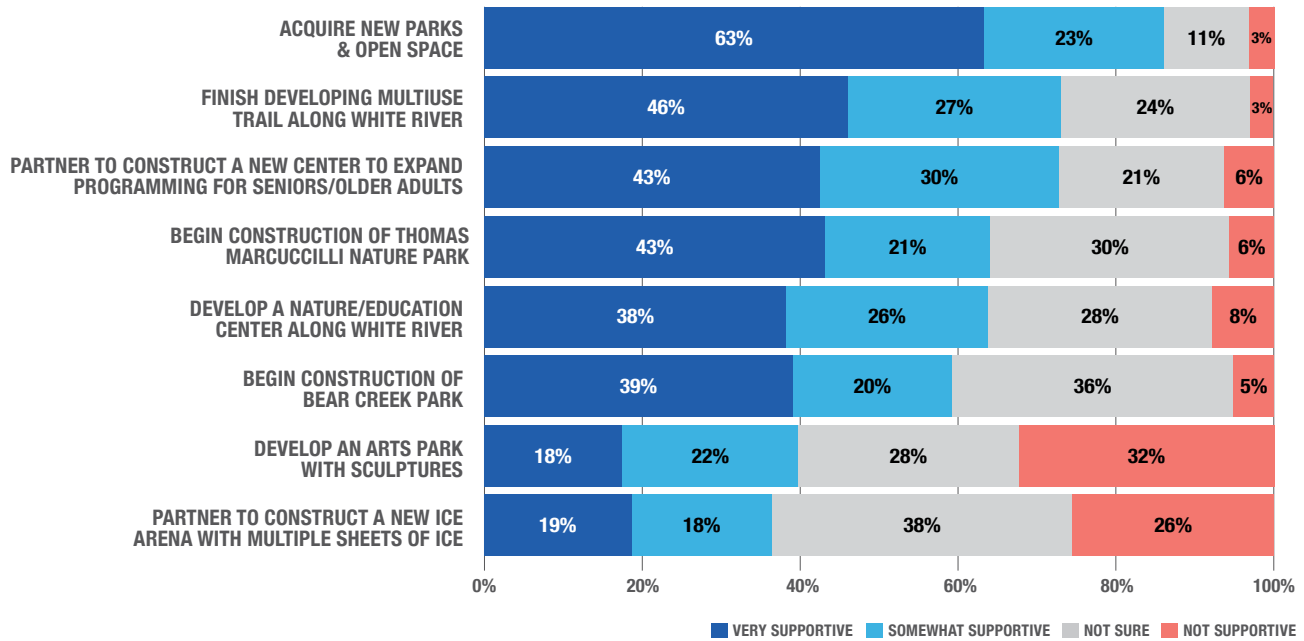


FIGURE 28 - SUPPORT FOR MAJOR ACTIONS

Q5A. WHICH THREE ACTIONS FROM THE LIST IN QUESTION 5 WOULD YOU MOST SUPPORT CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION TAKING?

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top three choices

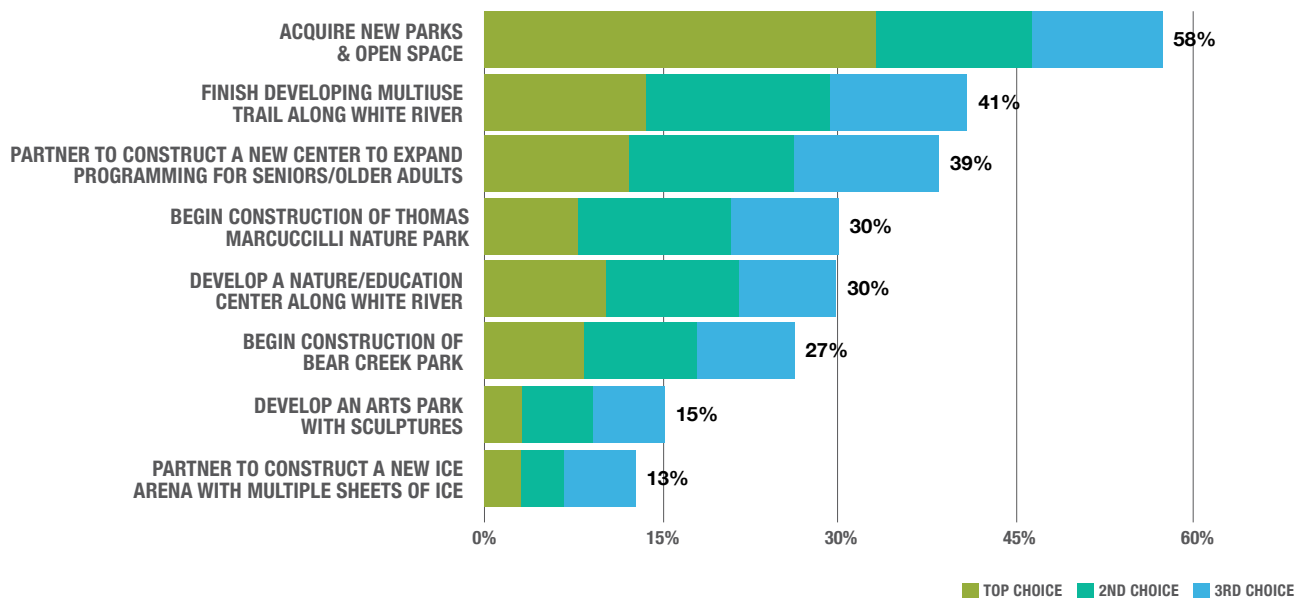


FIGURE 29 - ACTIONS WITH MOST SUPPORT

3.6.4. Parks and Recreation Facilities Use

USE OF PARKS/FACILITIES

Respondents were asked to indicate how often their household had visited any of the 15 listed Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation facilities in the past year. Respondents most often visited (selecting “frequently” or “sometimes”) Monon Greenway (56%), Midtown Plaza/Monon Boulevard (57%), and Central Park (42%). These were also the three facilities most often selected when asked to choose which parks/facilities their household used most often (**Figure 30**).

Q3. IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU USED THE FOLLOWING PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES PROVIDED BY CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION?

by percentage of respondents (excluding “did not know existed”)

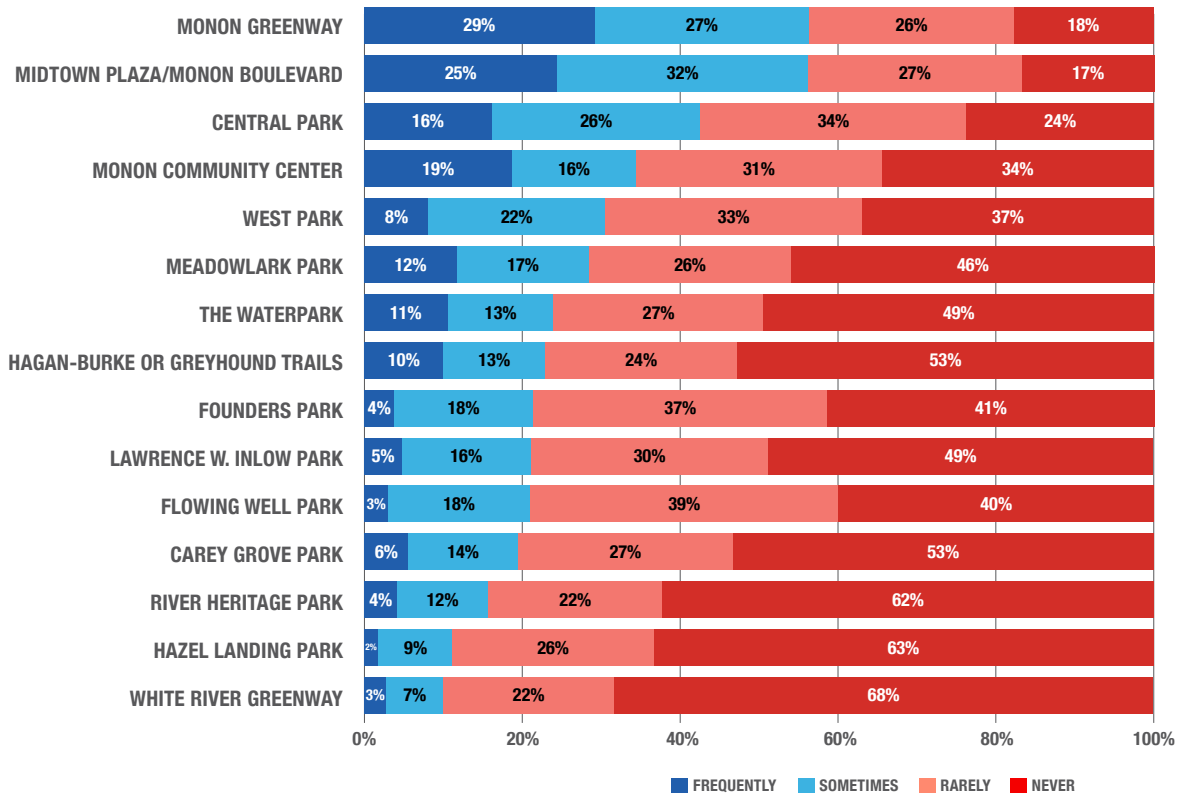


FIGURE 30 - USAGE OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN THE LAST MONTHS

Respondents were also given the option to note which facilities they “do not know existed.” Respondents were the least aware of White River Greenway (23%), Hazel Landing Park (20%), and River Heritage Park (20%) (Figure 31).

Q3. IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU USED THE FOLLOWING PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES PROVIDED BY CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION?

by percentage of respondents who indicated they do not know the facility existed

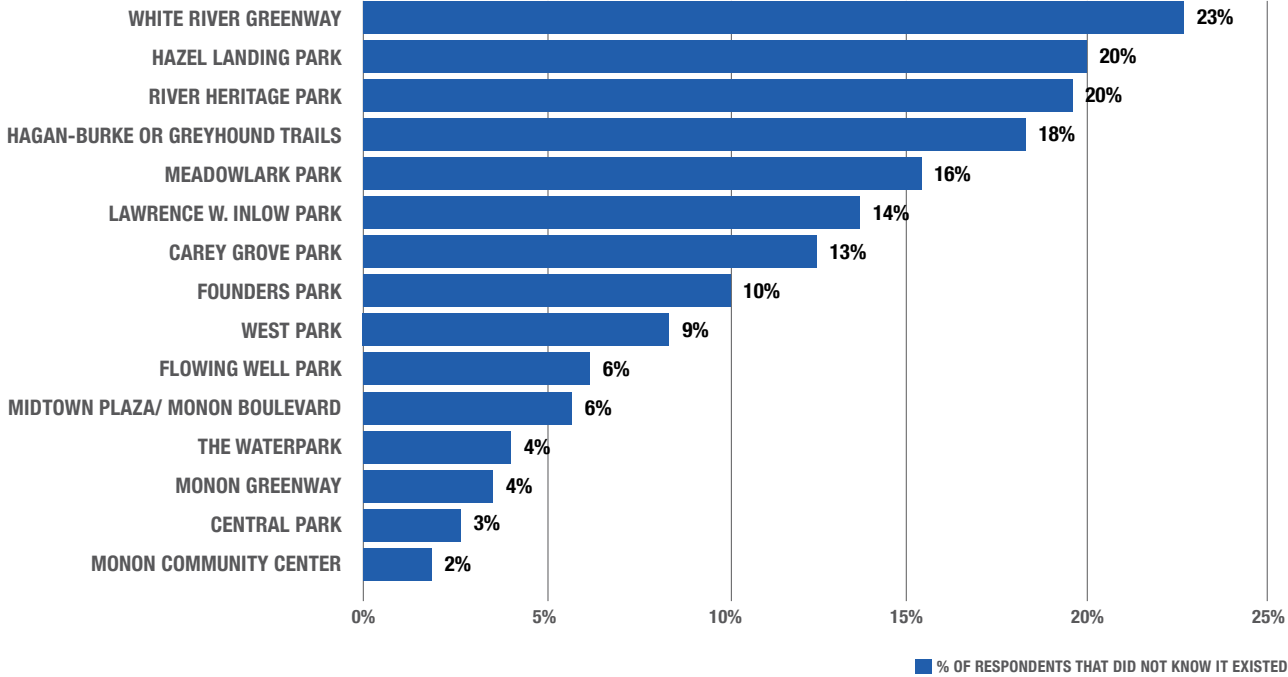


FIGURE 31 - PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO DID NOT KNOW A FACILITY EXISTED

RATING CONDITION OF FACILITIES AND PARKS

Respondents were asked to rate their overall condition of all Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation facilities and parks their household visited. Most respondents (98%) rated the overall condition as either excellent (71%) or good (28%) (Figure 32).

Q3B. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL CONDITION OF ALL THE CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION LOCATIONS YOU HAVE VISITED?

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know")

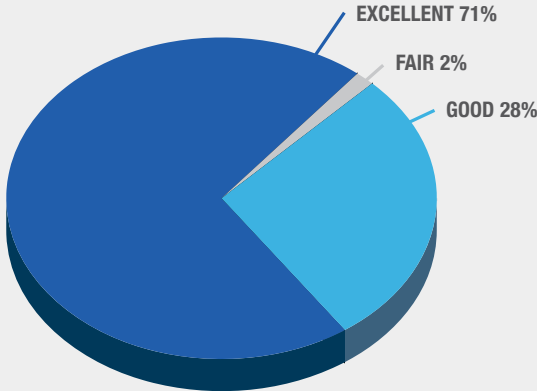


FIGURE 32 - RATING CONDITION OF FACILITIES AND PARKS

OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents were asked to indicate how often their household had visited any of the 9 listed recreation facilities provided by organizations other than Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation in the past year. Respondents most often visited (selecting “frequently” or “sometimes”) Cool Creek Park in Westfield (36%), neighborhood association parks/facilities (36%), and private fitness clubs (30%). When asked to select just three facilities households used most often, Cool Creek Park (51%), Coxhall Gardens (39%), and neighborhood association parks/facilities (28%) were the top three chosen (**Figure 33**).

Q4. IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU USED THE FOLLOWING PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES PROVIDED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS?

by percentage of respondents (excluding “did not know existed”)

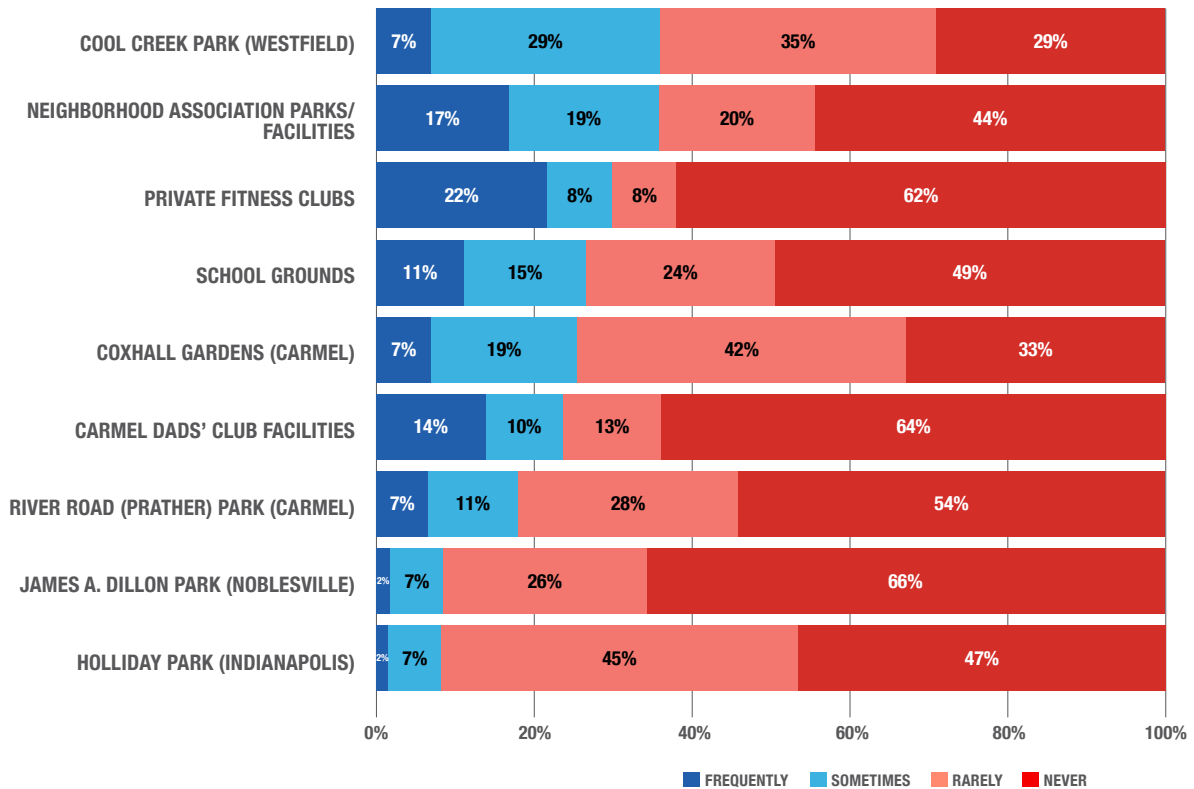


FIGURE 33 - USAGE OF OUTSIDE PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

3.6.5. Parks and Recreation Programs

USE OF PROGRAMS

Respondents were asked to indicate if their household participated in any parks and recreation programs during the past year. Thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents participated (**Figure 34**).

Q8. HAVE YOU OR OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATED IN ANY RECREATION PROGRAMS OFFERED BY CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

by percentage of respondents

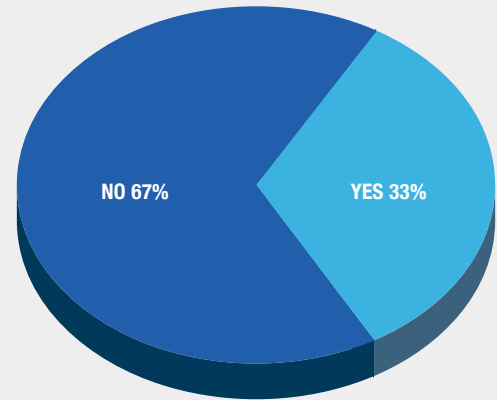


FIGURE 34 - RECREATION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The highest percentage of respondents participated in aquatics programs (including swim lessons) (36%), group fitness (35%), or wellness programs such as yoga and tai chi (34%) (**Figure 35**).

Q8A. PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU OR ANY MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATED IN EACH OF THE RECREATION PROGRAM TYPES

by percentage of respondents who answered "Yes" to Q8

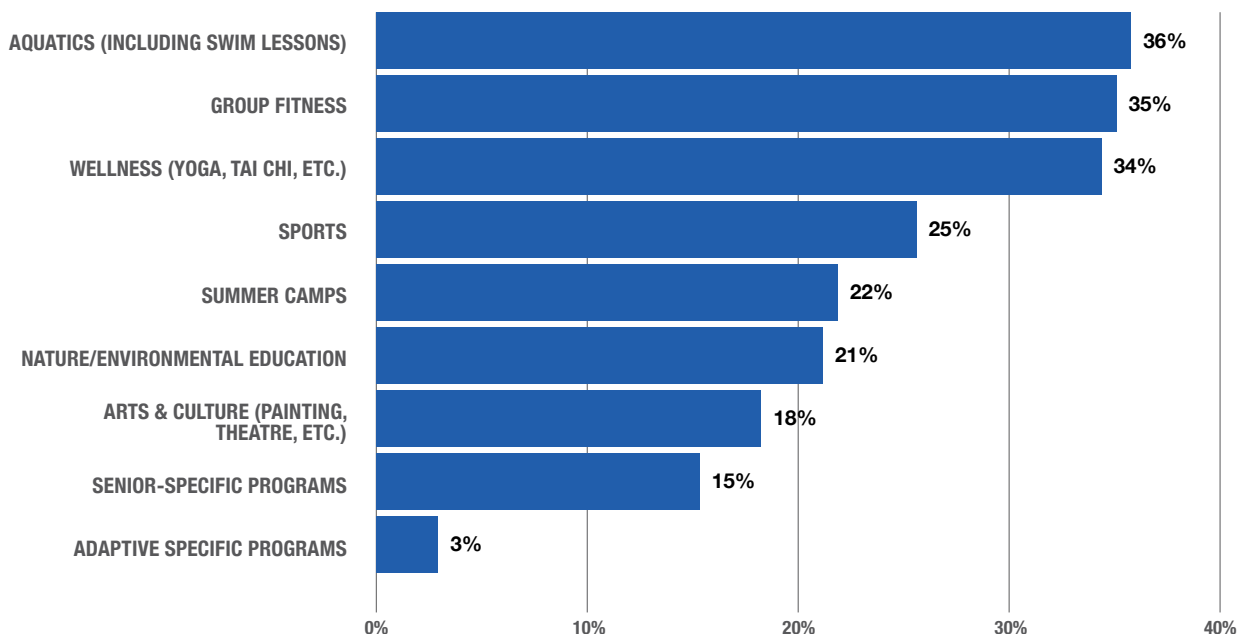


FIGURE 35 - TYPE OF RECREATION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION



Respondents were then asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each of the programs they had participated in over the last year. Respondents were most satisfied (rating “satisfied” or “very satisfied”) with group fitness programs (88%), summer camps (86%), and nature/environmental education programs (79%) (Figure 36).

Q8A. SATISFACTION WITH RECREATION PROGRAMS

by percentage of respondents who indicated they had participated in the program

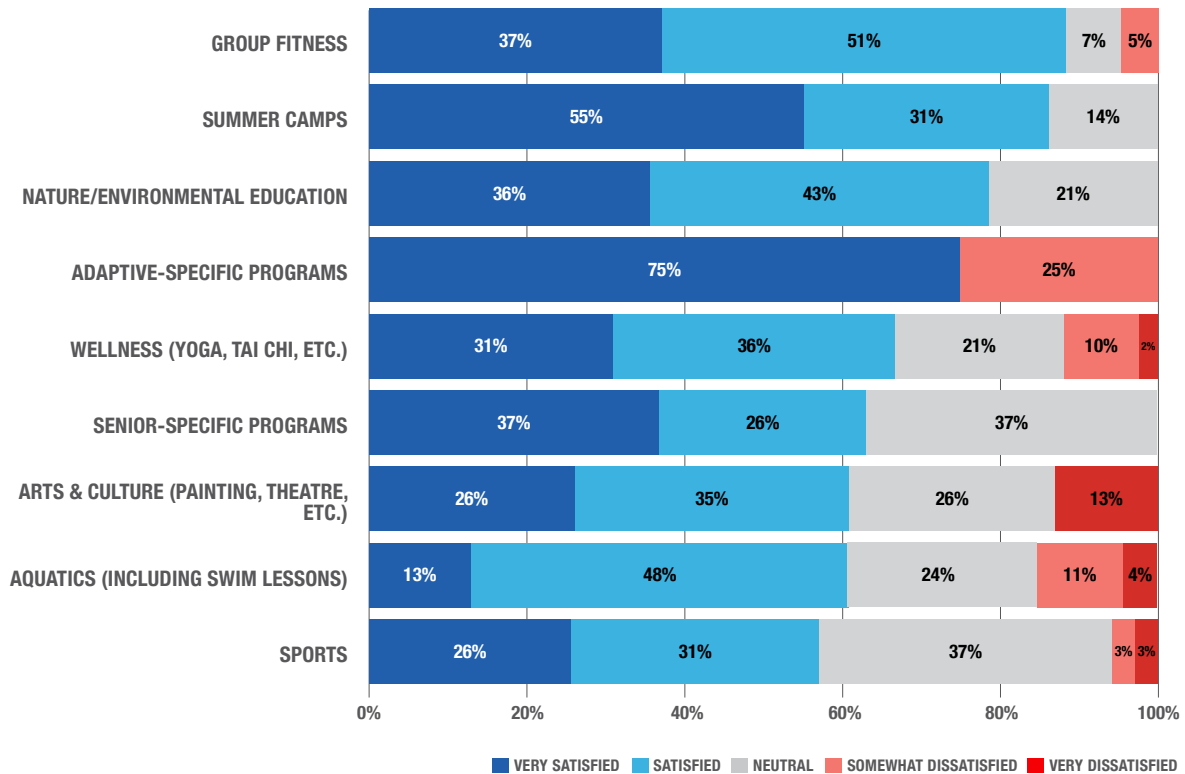


FIGURE 36 - SATISFACTION WITH RECREATION PROGRAMS

INCENTIVES AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Respondents were asked to select the three primary reasons why their household participates in CCPR programs. Location of programs (57%), interesting/relevant topics, quality of programs (41%), and value of programs (41%) were the top reasons respondents participated in CCPR programs (**Figure 37**).

Q8C. WHICH THREE ARE THE PRIMARY REASONS WHY YOU OR MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATE IN CCPR PROGRAMS?

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top three choices

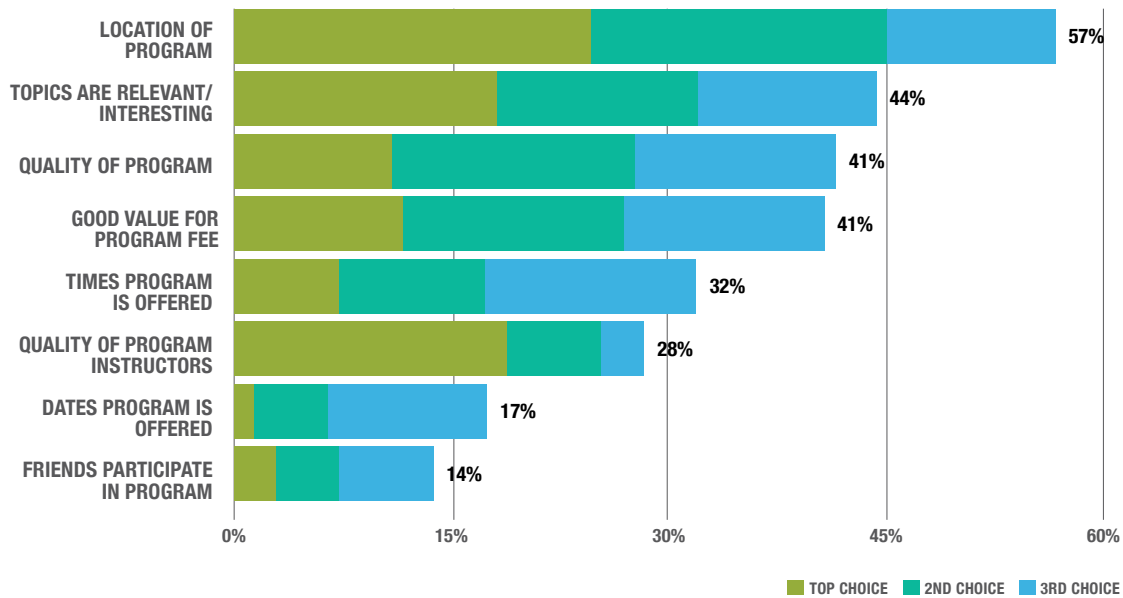


FIGURE 37 - PRIMARY REASONS TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS



Then respondents were asked to select the top three reasons why their household does not participate or does not feel their needs are currently being met. Not knowing what is being offered (34%), inconvenient program times (23%), and high fees (22%) were the most often selected barriers to participation.

Q9. WHICH THREE ITEMS ARE THE PRIMARY REASONS WHY YOU OR MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD CURRENTLY DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN CCPR PROGRAMS OR FEEL THAT YOUR NEEDS ARE NOT CURRENTLY BEING MET?

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top three choices

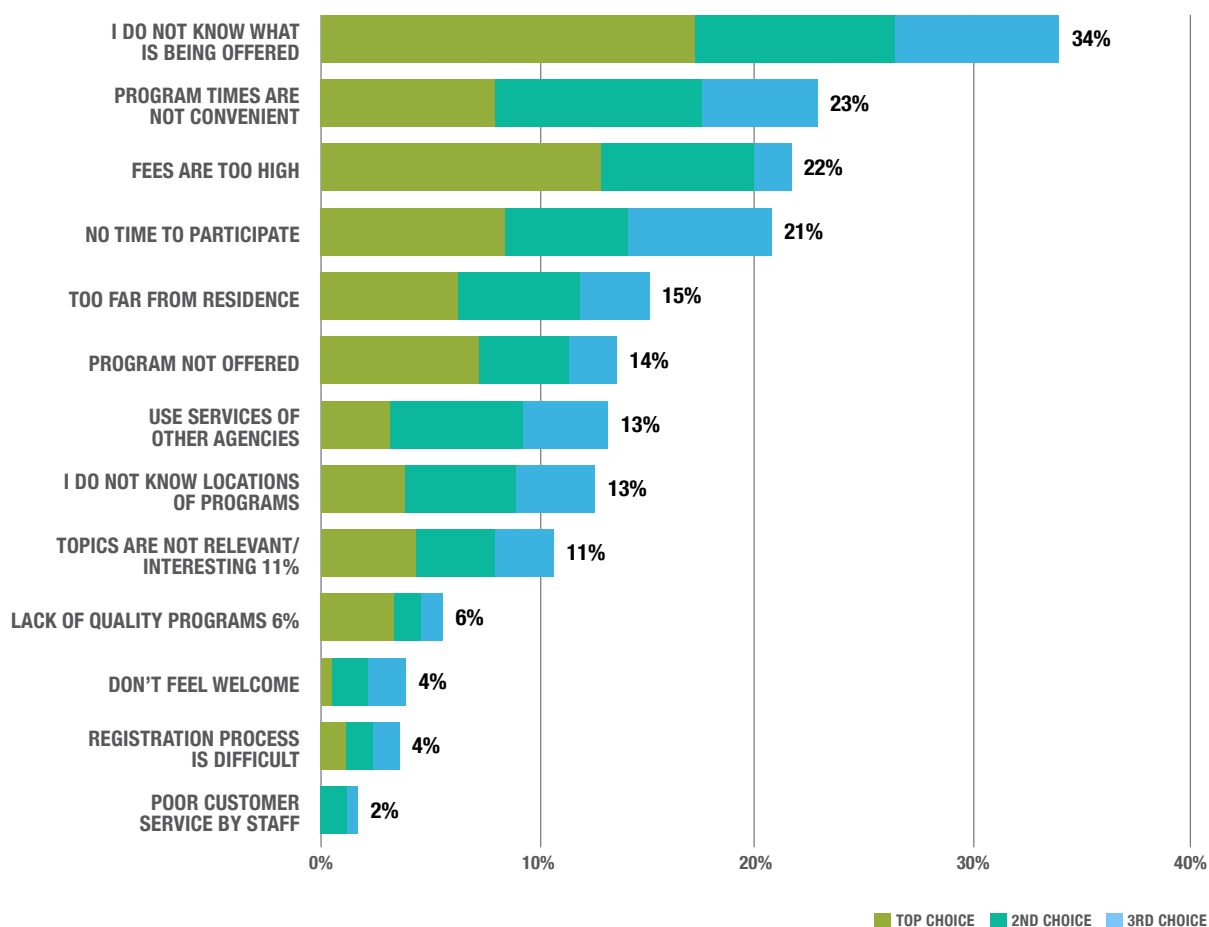


FIGURE 38 - PRIMARY REASONS TO NOT PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS

COMMUNICATION METHODS

Respondents were asked to select all the ways they learn about Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation programs and activities. The most common communication methods were the CarmelClayParks.com website (58%), speaking with friends and neighbors (47%), and social media (41%) (**Figure 39**).

Q11. PLEASE CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS YOU LEARN ABOUT CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

by percentage of respondents

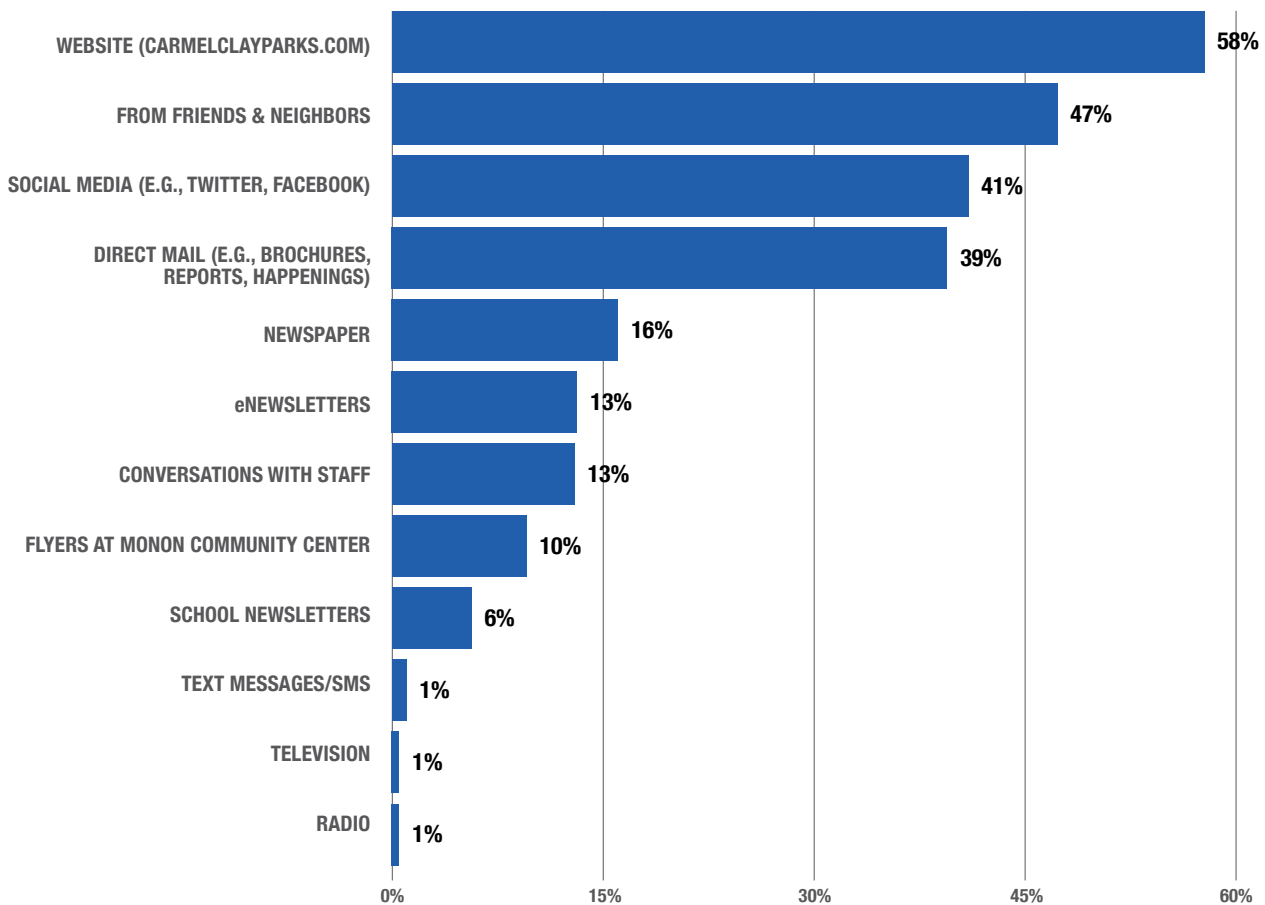


FIGURE 39 - WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Respondents most prefer to receive communication via the website (57%), direct mail (47%), or social media (41%) (Figure 40).

Q11A. WHICH THREE OF THE SOURCES ARE YOUR MOST PREFERRED WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION?

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top three choices

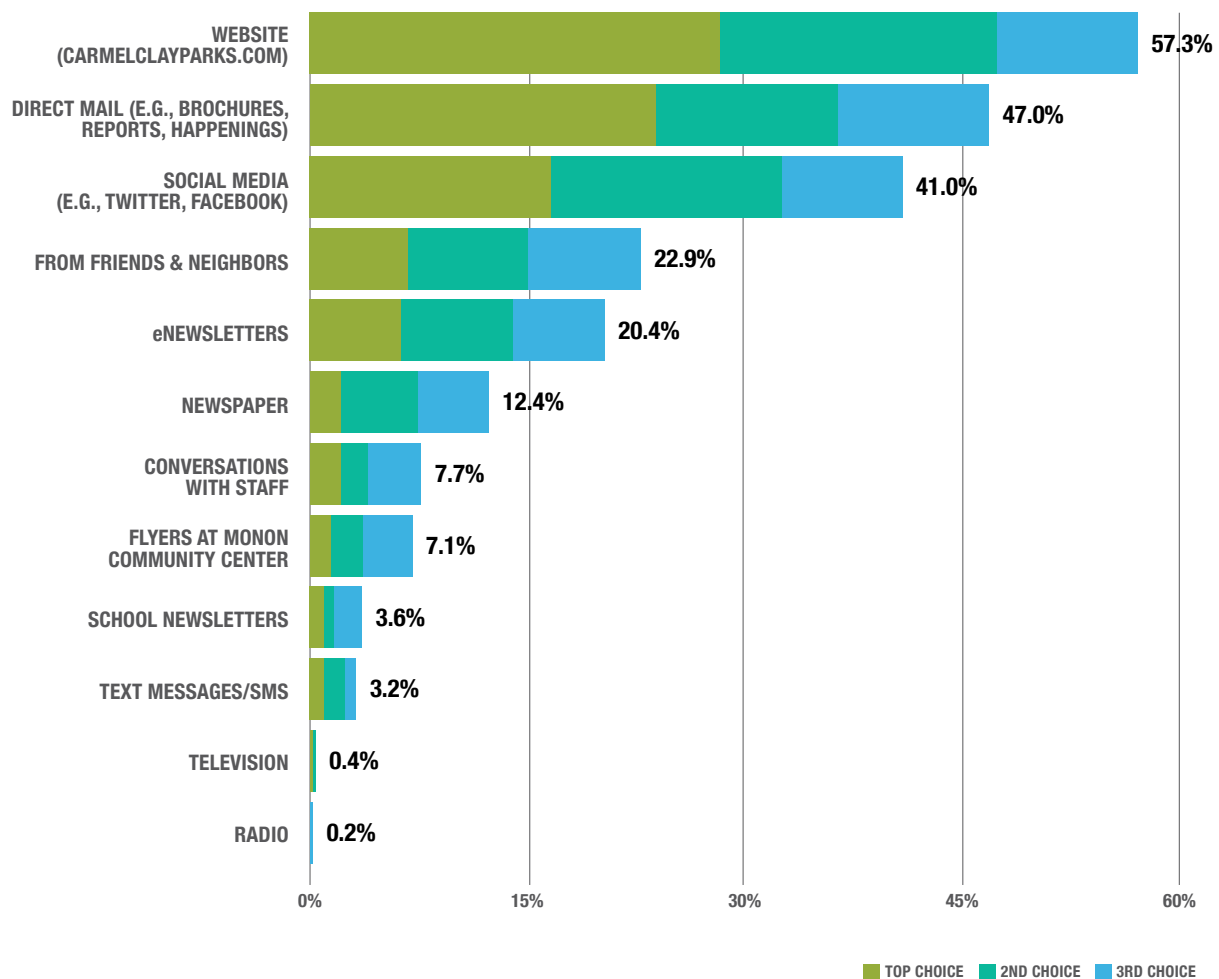


FIGURE 40 - MOST PREFERRED WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS AND RECREATION SERVICES

3.6.6. The Monon Community Center and Waterpark

THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER AND WATERPARK USE

Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents report being a member of the Monon Community Center and Waterpark or frequent it as a day-use pass holder (**Figure 41**).

Q10. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER AND WATERPARK OR FREQUENT AS A DAY USE PASS HOLDER?

by percentage of respondents

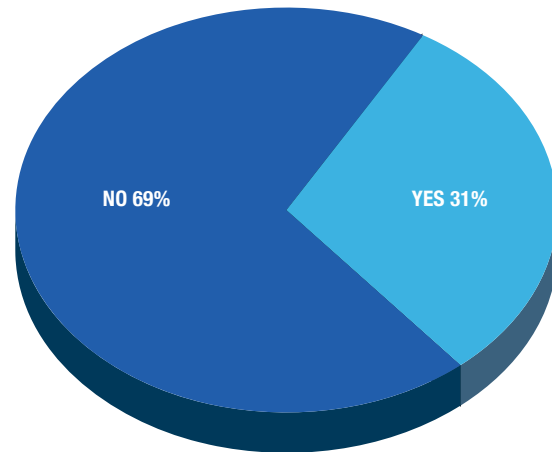


FIGURE 41 - MEMBER OF THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER OR DAY PASS USER

Of those respondents, the highest percentage (48%) visit the facilities 1-4 times per month followed by 32% visiting 5-10 times per month (**Figure 42**).

10A. IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER AND WATERPARK, HOW MANY TIMES PER MONTH DO YOU OR MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT THE FACILITY?

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")

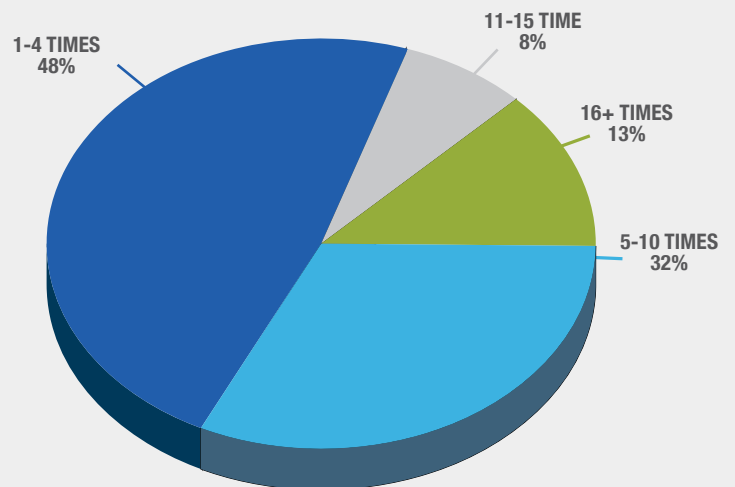


FIGURE 42 - HOW MANY TIMES PER MONTH DO YOU VISIT THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER

RATING ASPECTS OF THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER AND WATERPARK

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction regarding eight aspects of the Monon Community Center and Waterpark. Respondents were most satisfied (rating “satisfied” or “very satisfied”) with the hours of operation (88%), selection of fitness equipment (86%), and maintenance/cleanliness of the facility (84%) (Figure 43).

Q10B. PLEASE RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER AND WATERPARK FOR EACH OF THE ITEMS

by percentage of respondents (excluding “don’t know”)

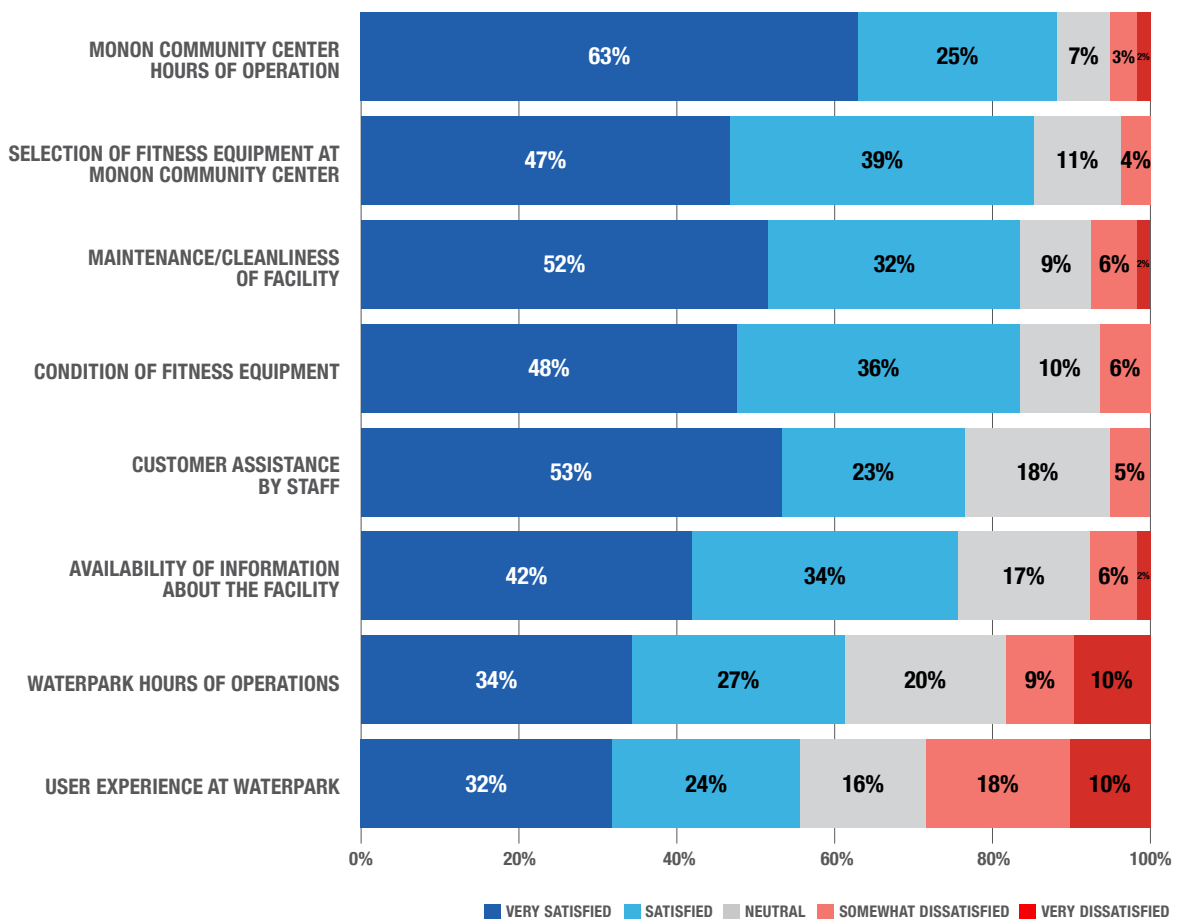


FIGURE 43 - SATISFACTION WITH THE MONON COMMUNITY CENTER AND WATERPARK

3.6.7. Parks and Recreation Facility and Amenity Needs and Priorities

FACILITY AND AMENITY NEEDS

Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 32 parks and recreation facilities and amenities and to rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had the greatest “unmet” need for various facilities and amenities. The three parks and recreation facilities and amenities with the highest percentage of households that have an unmet need:

1. Canoe/kayak rentals– 14,213 households
2. Canoe/kayak launch – 10,614 households
3. Heated therapy pool (indoor) – 9,164 households

The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 32 parks and recreation facilities and amenities assessed is shown in **Figure 44**.

Q6C. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE FACILITY AND AMENITY NEEDS ARE ONLY “PARTLY MET” OR “NOT MET”

by number of households with need based on an estimated 37,229 households

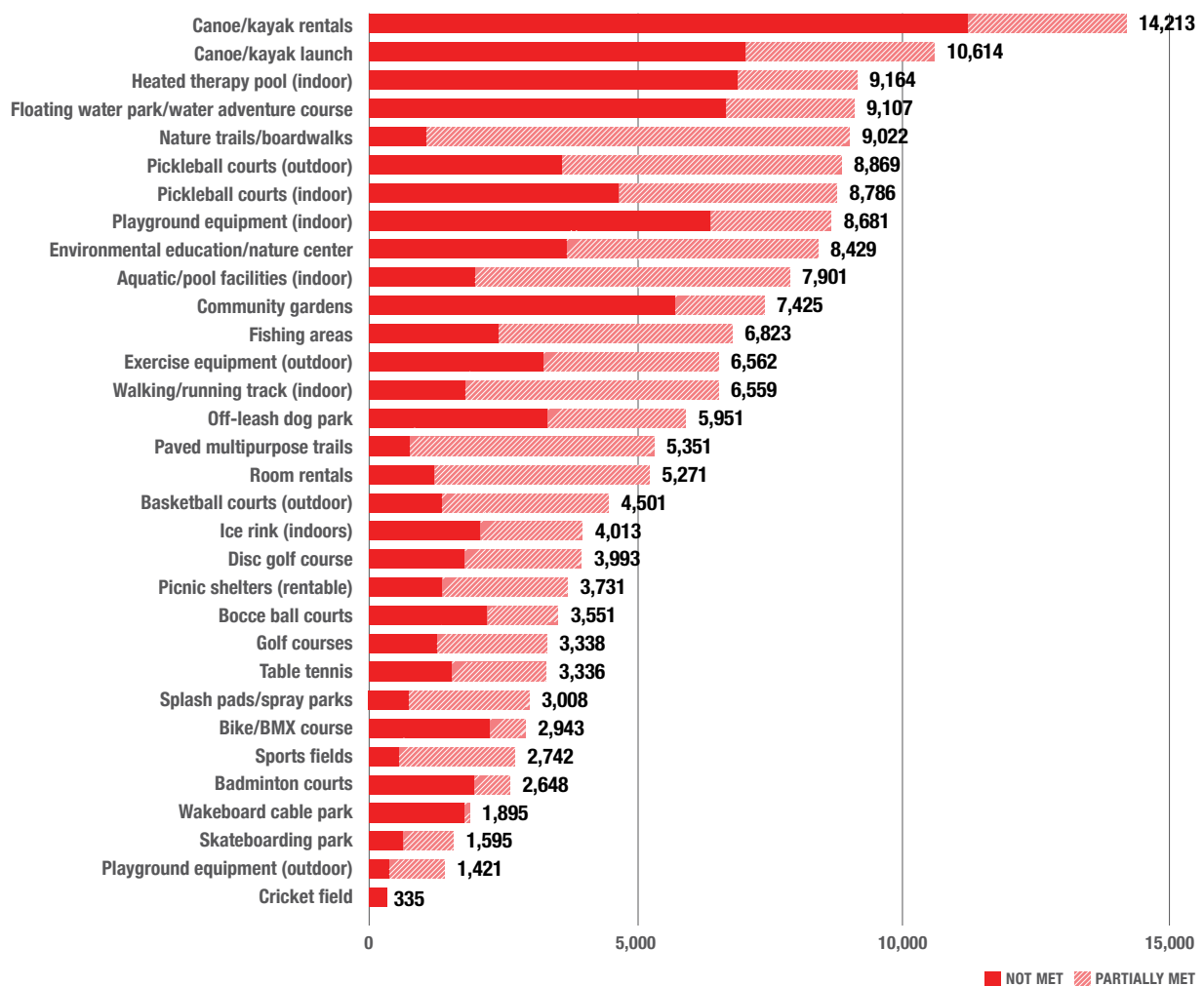


FIGURE 44 - HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE FACILITY AND AMENITY NEEDS ARE PARTLY MET OR NOT MET

Figure 45 shows how well the needs for facilities and amenities are being met.

Q6B. HOW WELL HOUSEHOLDS' NEEDS FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES ARE CURRENTLY BEING MET

by percentage of respondents who answered "Yes" to Q6

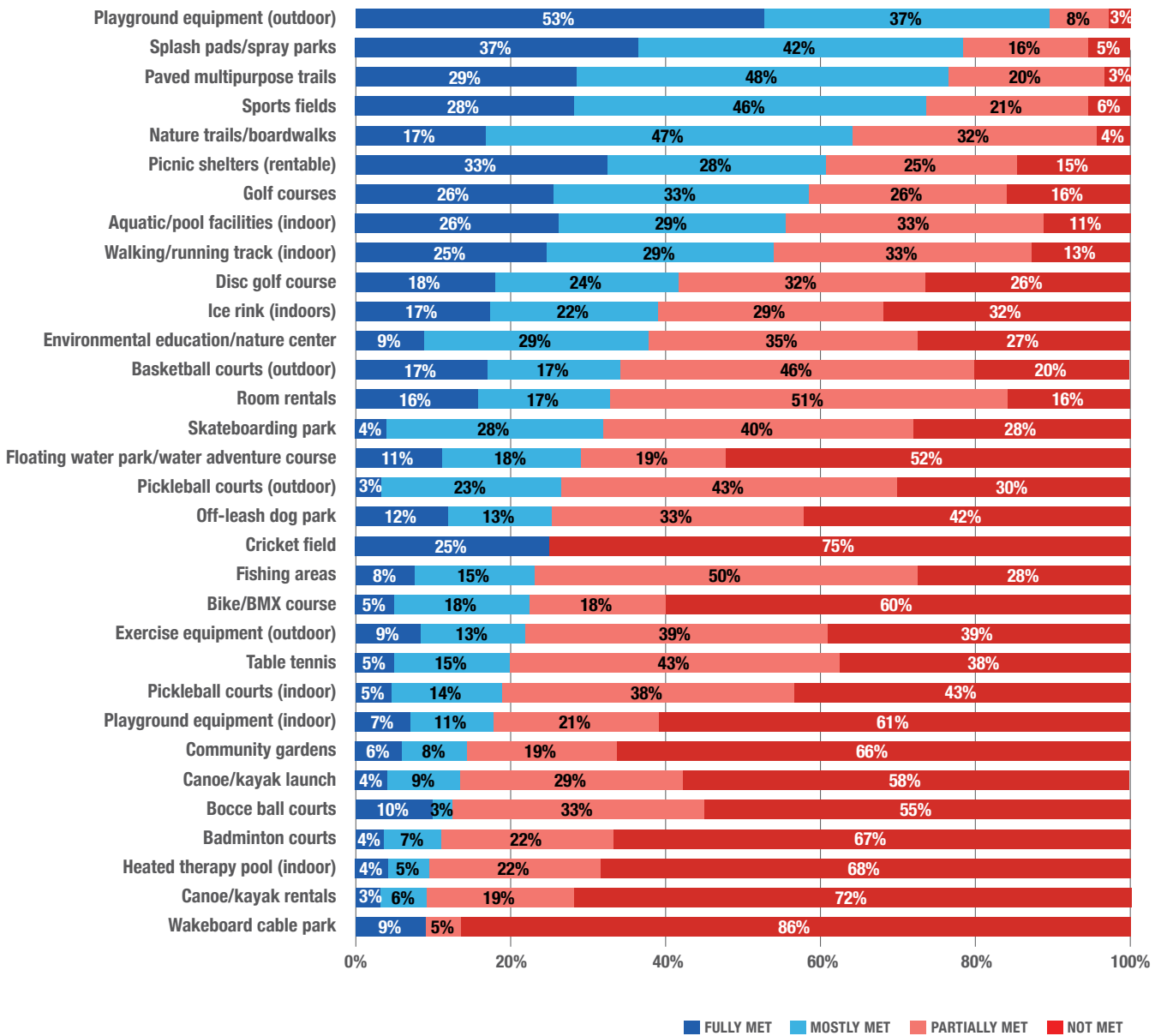


FIGURE 45 - HOW WELL HOUSEHOLD NEEDS FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES ARE MET

FACILITY AND AMENITY IMPORTANCE

In addition to assessing the needs for each parks and recreation facility and amenity, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each item. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, these were the four facilities and amenities ranked most important to residents:

1. Nature trails/boardwalks (43%)
2. Paved multipurpose trails (38%)
3. Aquatic/pool facilities (indoor) (19%)
4. Canoe/kayak rentals (16%), Playground equipment (outdoors)(16%), and pickleball courts (outdoor)(16%)

The percentage of residents who selected each facility and amenity as one of their top four choices is shown in **Figure 46**.

Q7. FACILITIES AND AMENITIES MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices

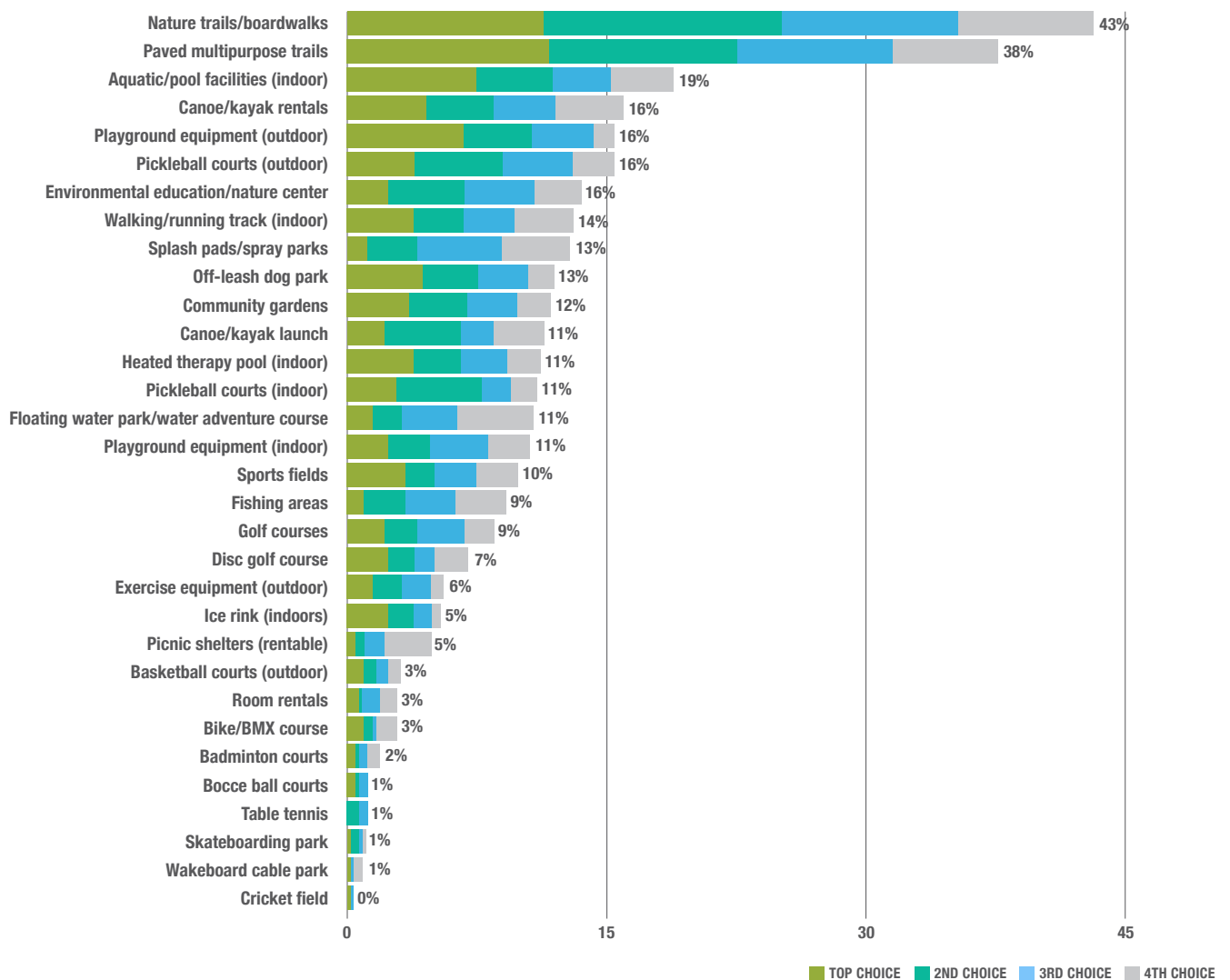


FIGURE 46 - FACILITIES AND AMENITIES MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

PRIORITIES FOR FACILITY AND AMENITY INVESTMENTS

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance that residents place on facilities and amenities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facility and amenity.

Based the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following parks and recreation facilities and amenities were rated as high priorities for investment:

1. Nature trails/boardwalks (PIR=164)
2. Canoe/kayak rentals (PIR=137)
3. Paved multi-purpose trails (PIR=125)
4. Canoe/kayak launch (PIR=101)

Figure 47 shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 32 recreation facilities and amenities assessed on the survey.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES BASED ON PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING

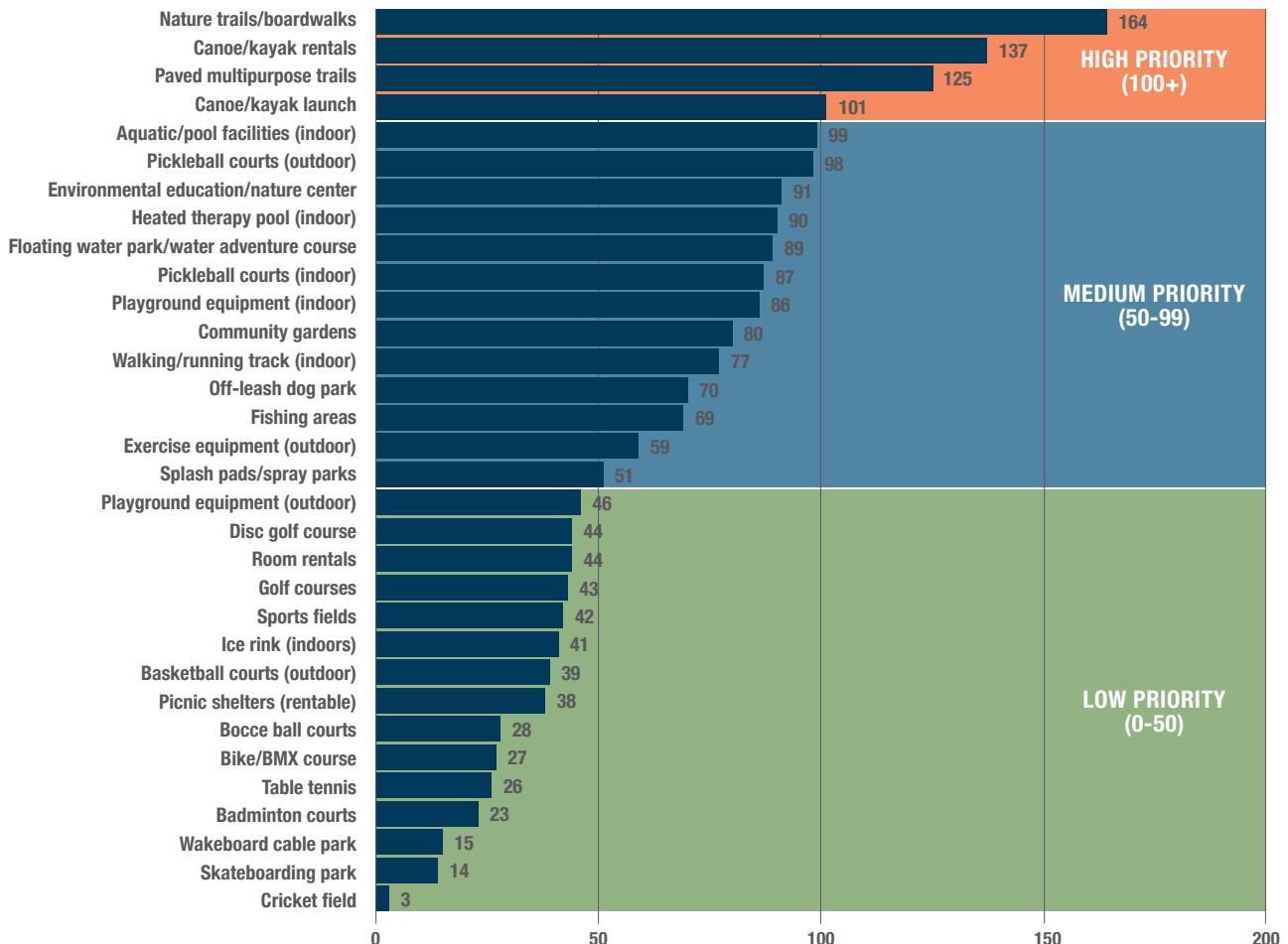


FIGURE 47 - TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

3.6.8. Program Needs and Priorities

PROGRAM NEEDS

Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 11 programs and to rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had the greatest “unmet” need for various recreation programs.

The three programs with the highest percentage of households that have an unmet need:

1. Wellness programs (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) – 11,604 households
2. Outdoor adventure programs – 10,952 households
3. Senior-specific programs – 10,051 households

The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 11 parks and recreation programs assessed is shown in **Figure 48**.

Q7C. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE PROGRAM NEEDS ARE ONLY “PARTLY MET” OR “NOT MET”

by number of households with need based on an estimated 237,229 households

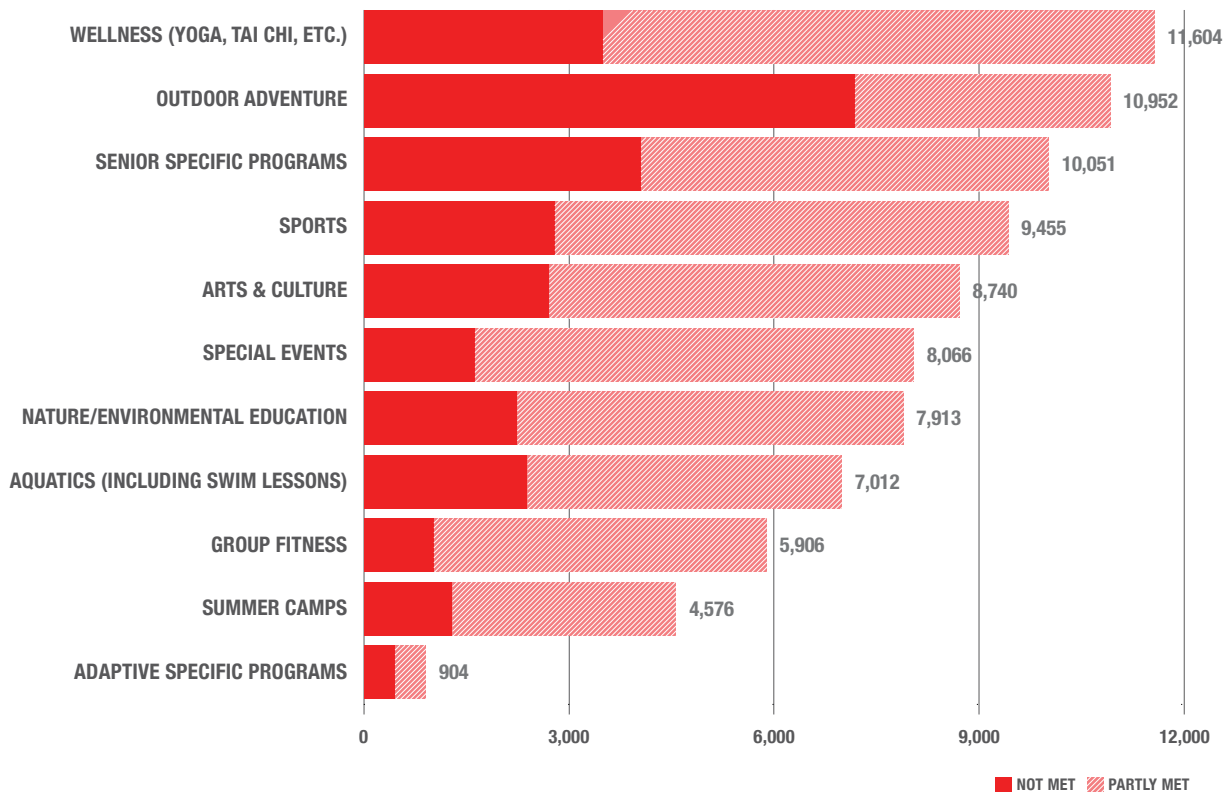


FIGURE 48 - HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE PROGRAM NEEDS ARE ONLY PARTLY MET OR NOT MET

Figure 49 shows how well the Need for Programs is being met.

Q7B. HOW WELL HOUSEHOLDS' NEEDS FOR PROGRAMS IS CURRENTLY BEING MET

by percentage of respondents who answered "Yes" to Q7

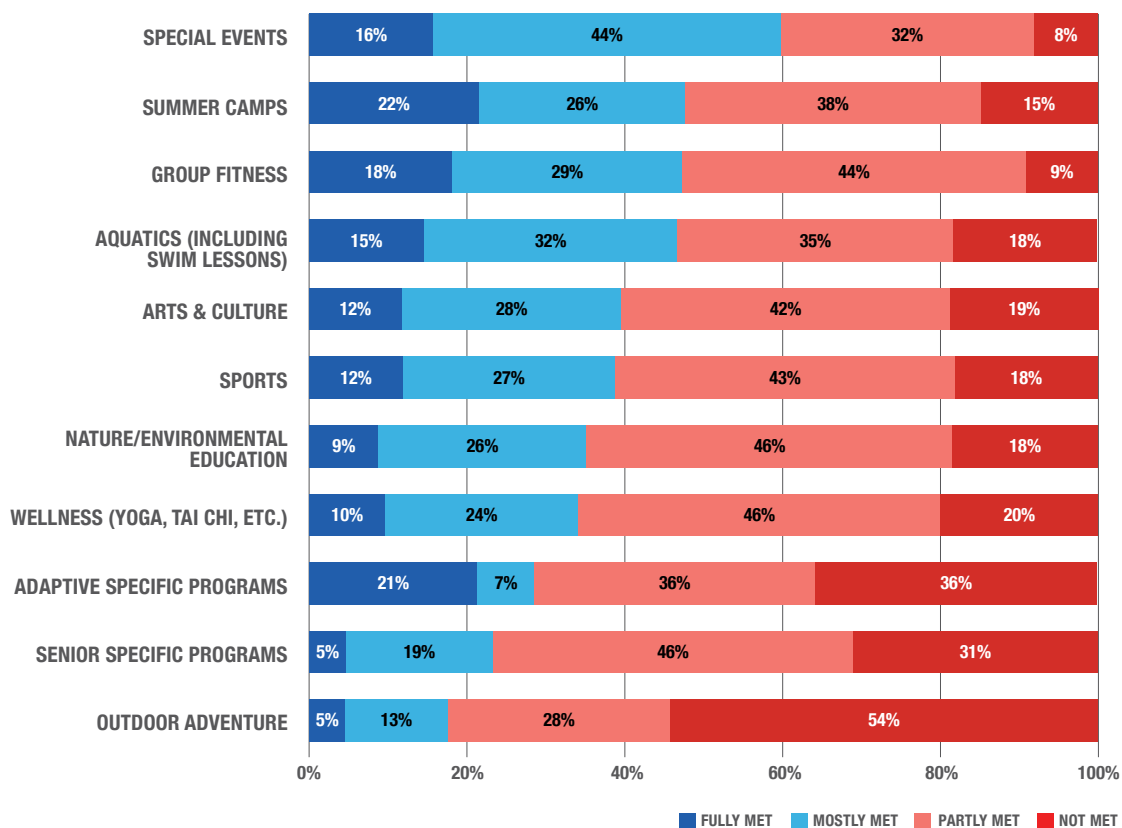


FIGURE 49 - HOW WELL HOUSEHOLD NEEDS FOR PROGRAMS ARE MET

PROGRAM IMPORTANCE

In addition to assessing the needs for each program, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each item. Based on the sum of respondents' top three choices, these are the three most important programs to residents:

1. Special events (34%)
2. Senior-specific programs (27%) and Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) programs (27%)
3. Sports programs (26%)

The percentage of residents who selected each program as one of their top three choices is shown in **Figure 50**.

Q8. PROGRAMS MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top three choices

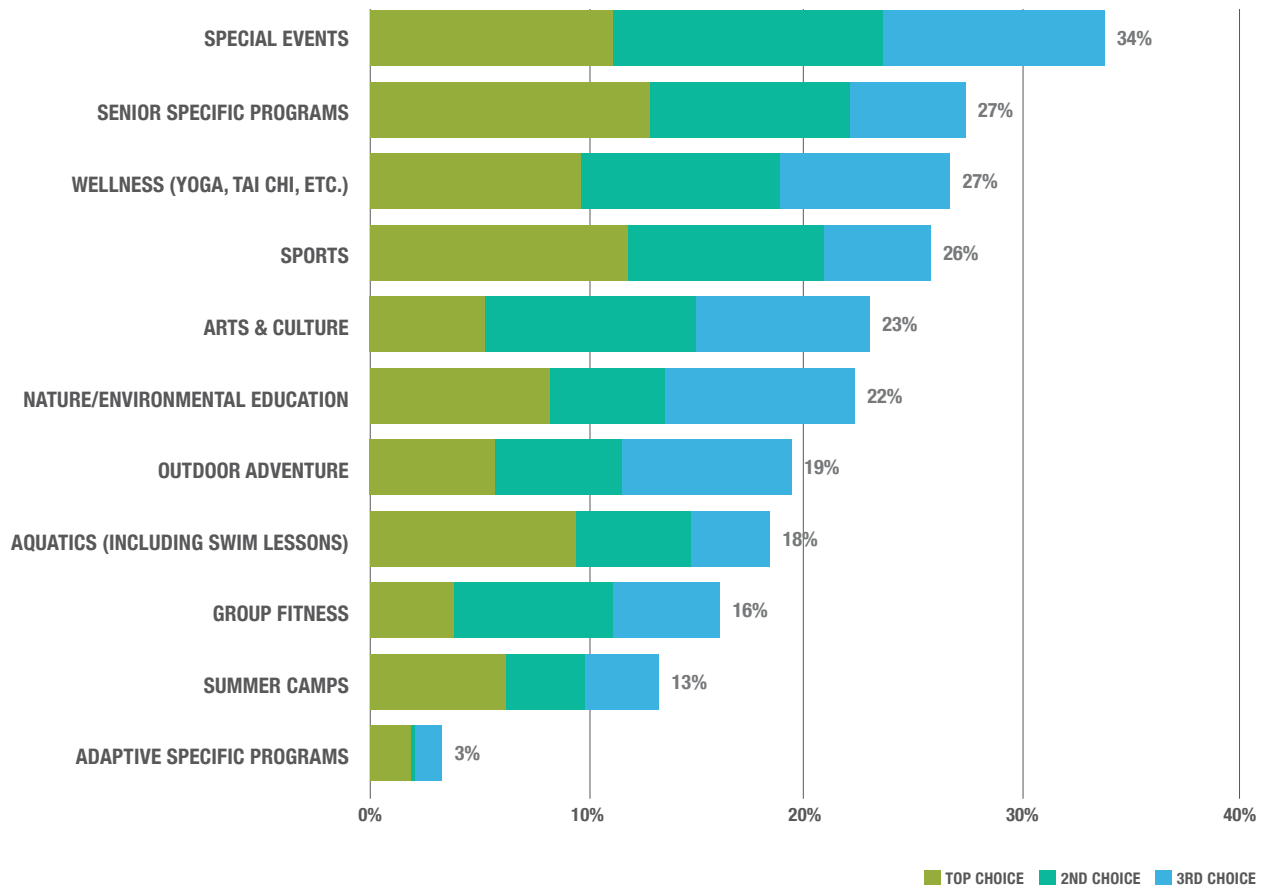


FIGURE 50 - PROGRAMS MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

PRIORITIES FOR PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weights (1) the importance that residents place on each program and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the program. Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation programs were rated as high priorities for investment:

1. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (PIR=179)
2. Special events (PIR=170)
3. Senior specific programs (PIR=168)
4. Sports (PIR=158)
5. Outdoor adventure (PIR=152)
6. Arts & culture (PIR=143)
7. Nature/environmental education (PIR=134)
8. Aquatics (including swim lessons) (PIR=115)

Figure 51 shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 11 programs assessed.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT FOR PROGRAMS BASED ON PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING

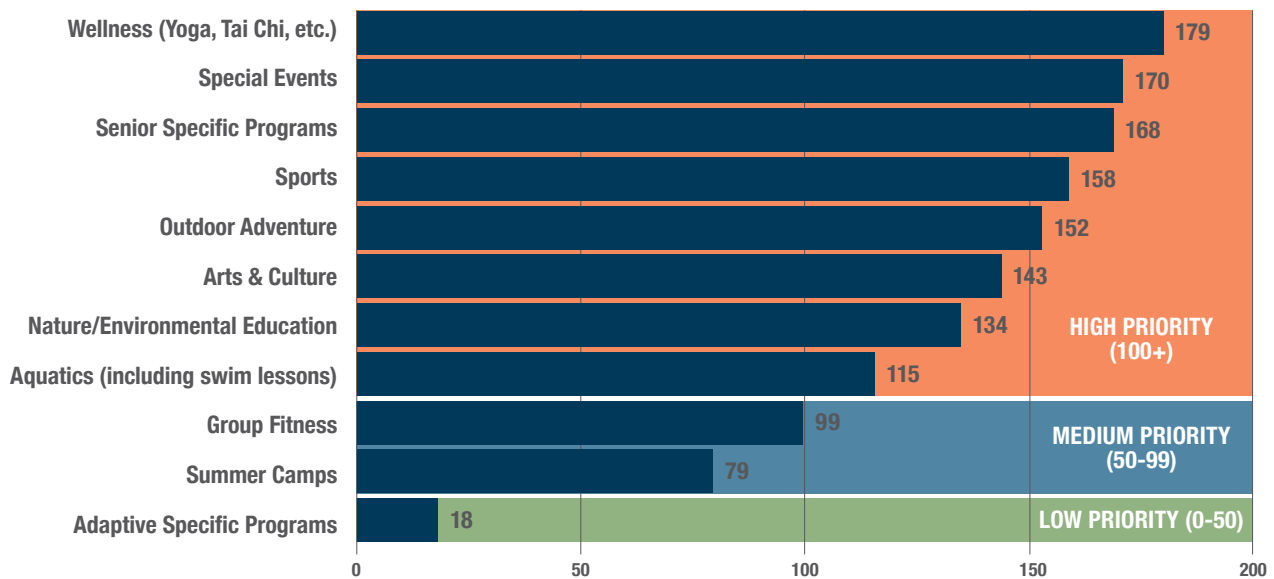


FIGURE 51 - TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT FOR PROGRAMS

3.6.9. Conclusion and Recommendations

When analyzing the facilities and amenities, the three items that were the most important to respondent's households were also in the top four of the highest priorities for investment. These included nature trails/boardwalks, canoe/kayak rentals, and paved multipurpose trails.

Focusing on creating paved multipurpose trails (e.g., walking, biking) would benefit the largest number of residents within the City of Carmel. Nature trails and/or boardwalks are the most important needed amenity and was also in the top five for unmet need. Canoe/kayak rentals will give additional access to the White River through launches. Focusing on these facilities and amenities will give CCPR the opportunity to provide the greatest benefit for the largest number of residents.

When analyzing the programs, wellness, special events, and senior specific programs were in the three for unmet need, and very high on importance. Based the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation programs were rated as high priorities for investment:

1. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (PIR=179)
2. Special events (PIR=170)
3. Senior specific programs (PIR=168)
4. Sports (PIR=158)
5. Outdoor adventure (PIR=152)
6. Arts & culture (PIR=143)
7. Nature/environmental education (PIR=134)
8. Aquatics (including swim lessons) (PIR=115)

3.7. ONLINE SURVEY AND STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY COMPARISON

As part of the Comprehensive Master Plan, Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (CCPR) conducted a statistically valid and an online community survey, both completed by ETC Institute, to better prioritize community needs. The statistically valid survey was completed by 412 households and is the only scientific and defensible method to understand community needs.

The online community survey, which was slightly condensed, had similar questions giving those who were not randomly selected for the statistically valid survey a chance to participate in the community engagement process. The online community survey was promoted by the CCPR Marketing & Communications team from July 19, 2023, to August 23, 2023, through press releases, CCPR social media, email blasts, as well as the CCPR website and received 992 responses.

The online community survey typically receives more responses from actual users of the parks and recreation system because the marketing of the survey's online link is more targeted to those who follow the agency on social media, participate in programs, or patronize the facility.

Overall, the findings from both surveys shared many similarities. Respondents agreed that parks, recreation services, and open spaces are very important to the quality of life in Carmel, and they are very satisfied with the overall condition of the park system.

Both surveys included the Priority Investment Rating (PIR) that equally weighs the importance that residents place on services and how many residents have unmet needs for the service.



TOP PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATINGS FOR PROGRAMS

Statistically Valid Survey	Online Community Survey
1. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (179)	1. Sports (186)
2. Special Events (170)	2. Special Events (174)
3. Senior specific programs (168)	3. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (158)
4. Sports (158)	4. Outdoor adventure (152)
5. Outdoor adventure (152)	5. Aquatics (including swim lessons) (147)

TABLE 12 - TOP PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATINGS FOR PROGRAMS

Key Observations:

- Four of the top 5 responses were the same for both surveys.
- Senior specific programs rated as a higher priority in the statistically valid survey, but still rated as a high priority in the online survey while not making the top 5.
- Aquatics rated as a higher priority in the online survey, but likewise was rated as a high priority in the statistically valid survey while not in the top 5.

TOP PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATINGS FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Statistically Valid Survey	Online Community Survey
1. Nature trails/boardwalks (164)	1. Nature trails/boardwalks (170)
2. Canoe/kayak rentals (137)	2. Playground equipment (indoor) (143)
3. Paved multipurpose trails (125)	3. Canoe/kayak rentals (139)
4. Canoe kayak launch (101)	4. Aquatic/pool facilities (indoor) (134)
5. Aquatic/pool facilities (indoor) (99)	5. Paved multipurpose trails (134)

TABLE 13 - TOP PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATINGS FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Key Observations:

- Four of the top 5 responses were the same for both surveys.
- Canoe/kayak launch rated significantly higher in the statistically valid survey but identified as a medium priority in the online survey.
- Indoor playground equipment was a significantly higher priority in the online survey, but only a medium priority in the statistically valid survey.

Below are a few other key comparisons based on respondent's top three or four choices that will be important for CCPR to keep in mind with future planning efforts:

SUPPORT FOR MAJOR ACTIONS THAT CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION COULD TAKE TO IMPROVE THE PARK SYSTEM AND SERVE RESIDENTS

Statistically Valid Survey	Online Community Survey
1. Acquire new parks & open space (58%)	1. Acquire new parks & open space (54%)
2. Finish developing multiuse trail along White River (41%)	2. Finish developing multiuse trail along White River (42%)
3. Partner to construct a new center to expand programming for seniors/older adults (39%)	3. Partner to construct a new center to expand programming for seniors/older adults (39%)
4. Begin construction of Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park (30%)	4. Begin construction of Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park (30%)
5. Begin construction of Bear Creek Park (30%)	5. Develop a Nature/Education Center along White River (29%)

TABLE 14 - SUPPORT FOR MAJOR ACTIONS

Key Observations:

- The top four priorities were identical for both surveys. Only the fifth most supported priority varied between the two surveys.
- Developing a nature/education center just missed the top 5 at 27% in the statistically valid survey.
- Beginning construction of Bear Creek Park was preferred by 24% of online survey respondents, showing relatively close overall preferences between the two surveys.

FACILITIES AND AMENITIES MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

Statistically Valid Survey	Online Community Survey
1. Nature trails/boardwalks (43%)	1. Nature trails/boardwalks (36%)
2. Paved multipurpose trails (38%)	2. Paved multipurpose trails (33%)
3. Aquatic/pool facilities (indoor) (19%)	3. Aquatic/pool facilities (indoor) (26%)
4. Canoe/kayak rentals (16%)	4. Playground equipment (outdoor) (19%)
5. Playground equipment (outdoor) (16%)	5. Playground equipment (indoor) (18%)
6. Pickleball Courts (outdoor) (16%)	6. Pickleball Courts (indoor) (18%)

TABLE 15 - MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Key Observations:

- Five of the top 6 facilities viewed as most important were the same with both surveys.
- Canoe/kayak rentals were more preferred by respondents of the statistically valid survey, while not making the top 6 for the online survey.
- Indoor playground equipment made the top 6 only for the online survey.

PROGRAMS MOST IMPORTANT TO HOUSEHOLDS

Statistically Valid Survey	Online Community Survey
1. Special Events (34%)	1. Special Events (32%)
2. Senior specific programs (27%)	2. Sports (30%)
3. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (27%)	3. Aquatics (including swim lessons) (25%)
4. Sports (26%)	4. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (25%)
5. Arts & culture (23%)	5. Senior specific programs (23%)

TABLE 16 - MOST IMPORTANT PROGRAMS

Key Observations:

- Four of the top 5 programs viewed as most important were the same for both surveys.
- Arts and culture programs were prioritized by significantly more respondents to the statistically valid survey, while not making the top 5 for the online survey.
- Aquatic programs were only a top 5 priority on the online survey.

3.8. THEMES FROM THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Based on the quantitative and qualitative methods used to engage the Carmel community, themes emerged around programming, connectivity, parks and facilities, and funding that are summarized below:

Special Events and Senior Programs

- Evaluate appropriate role for CCPR.
- Address through enhanced collaboration.

Outdoor Adventure Opportunities

- Activation of White River.
- Canoe/kayak launch and rentals.

Connectivity

- White River Greenway completion.
- Nature and paved trails.

Capacity/Overcrowding at Facilities

- The Monon Community Center and Waterpark.
- Summer camps.

Long-term Funding Solution

- Park impact fees reach the park system.
- Role of the Foundation.
- Maintaining what we own.

Park Development

- Development of Bear Creek Park.



CHAPTER 4

PARKS, FACILITIES, AND OPEN SPACE ANALYSIS



4.1. PARKS AND FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

Park properties and facilities are the physical backbone of CCPR’s parks and recreation system. They support and facilitate programming and user experiences while creating access to recreational opportunities. It is paramount that these properties and facilities be well maintained, meet current standards, and accommodate the highest and best use. Periodic assessment of their physical condition is critical to CCPR’s ability to budget and implement priority repairs and improvements in an organized and timely manner.

As part of the Master Plan, a park assessment was conducted for each park. CCPR staff and the PROS Consulting visited 15 parks, trailheads, and facilities over a two-day period in September 2023. At each location, questions were answered as to the overall strengths, challenges, and opportunities at each location, as well as each site was walked, inventoried, and assessed on the overall conditions through a park assessment form and photos.

CCPR manages one of the premier systems in the State of Indiana and Midwest and it has undergone significant updates over the last several years as a part of the “Reimagining Parks” campaign. This impactful program has improved park accessibility, safety, aesthetics, and play opportunities for the community to enjoy for years to come.

The full Park Assessment is in **Appendix 2**. The following pages outline the methodology and general findings.

4.2. METHODOLOGY

The site assessment form used to document each site visit included the following items/categories:

- Design and usage
- First impressions
- Access and visibility
- Site structures/amenities
- Site furnishings
- General landscape/hardscape
- Overall condition
- Any identified corrective actions needed
- Any planned capital improvements
- Strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities

Park conditions were rated using a differential scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor. The table below provides the condition descriptions utilized in this analysis.

SCALE OF CONDITIONS

ASSESSMENT FINDING	GENERAL DESCRIPTION
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park/amenities are in excellent condition with little or no maintenance problems noted. • Park/amenities do not have any major design issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park/amenities are in good condition and feature only minor maintenance problems. • Generally, most maintenance issues with these park/amenities appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use but do not significantly affect usability. • Park/amenities may only have minor design issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance (i.e., drainage, structural, utilities, etc.).
Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park/amenities are in fair condition and indicate ongoing maintenance problems. • Generally, most maintenance issues with these park/amenities appear to be the result of age and heavy use resulting in some loss of usability. • Some maintenance issues may be compounded over time due to deferred maintenance because of budget and/or resource limitations.
Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park/amenities are in poor condition and clearly show ongoing maintenance problems that ultimately may result in suspended use for repair/replacement. • Maintenance issues with these park/amenities are the result of age and heavy use, and generally are compounded over time due to chronic deferred maintenance because of budget and/or resource limitations resulting in significant loss of usability. • Park/amenities may feature major design or safety issues that contribute to diminished use or maintenance (i.e., drainage, structural, utilities, etc.).

TABLE 17 - CONDITION DESCRIPTIONS FOR PARK AND FACILITY ASSESSMENTS

4.3. SYSTEM SUMMARY

The following sites were assessed:

- Carey Grove Park
- Central Park East
- Central Park North & Maintenance
- Flowing Well Park
- Founders Park
- Hazel Landing Park
- Lawrence W. Inlow Park
- Meadowlark Park
- Midtown Plaza & Monon Blvd.
- Prairie Meadow Park
- River Heritage Park
- Trailheads and Monon Greenway
- West Park
- Westermeier Commons & Central Park West
- White River Greenway

4.4. STRENGTHS

CCPR continues to balance new growth with the need to maintain what the park system already has. Staff are mindful of maintenance management needs and standards when designing new spaces to ensure the facilities and amenities get consistent attention, while minimizing downtime for park users.

Through the “Reimaging Parks” campaign, CCPR has demonstrated an intentional effort to upgrade and enhance the security, accessibility, and overall play value of parks, facilities, and amenities. This program has created parks, facilities, and amenities that continue to be a destination experience for not only Carmel residents but visitors from across Hamilton County and even Central Indiana.

CCPR also strives to be a model agency when it comes to their efforts to promote stewardship of parks and natural spaces within their community. The CCPR Adopt-a-Park and volunteer outreach continues to build their volunteer network and educates residents on what is needed to maintain parks to the high level of service that is expected by the community.

4.5. CHALLENGES

It is recommended that CCPR continue to refine their existing **maintenance standards and planned maintenance program** regularly to ensure new builds stay at the level of service that is expected. Aging infrastructure including pavement repair and replacement, drainage repair, irrigation replacement, and fencing are all areas that should consistently be programmed into a capital replacement program for the annual budget for CCPR to minimize maintenance backlogs.

In addition, as the system continues to evolve, CCPR leadership should continue to assess opportunities to add maintenance and natural resources staff and determine how storage needs for equipment and supplies can be addressed. **Creating “satellite” storage facilities** throughout the park system can address storage needs and minimize drive time for staff.

CCPR staff have identified the need for playground surfacing repair or upgrades in certain properties. They will also be exploring alternatives for certain play features to ensure these spaces stay current with playground safety standards and regulations.

While vandalism of parks and public spaces is currently not an issue, there is new technology consistently being developed to combat this issue. CCPR has indicated that they intend to add to their current security network with additional cameras and upgrading restrooms with automatic locks to deter undesirable use after the park closes. This technology requires the right infrastructure and CCPR has identified the need for more consistent internet connection along greenways and in more remote areas through fiber service.

Lastly, CCPR continues to battle invasive species in their parks and natural spaces. The existing **natural resources management plan** should be consistently evaluated to ensure staff have the necessary resources and strategies for arboriculture, horticulture, invasive, and waterway management.



4.6. OPPORTUNITIES

Through engagement with CCPR staff, several opportunities rose to the top for the park system over the next three to five years:

- New technology enables CCPR to better understand where users are coming from and the frequency of use through people counters at facilities, upgraded surveillance systems to help mitigate increasing costs that come from vandalism repair, as well as continuing to update all restrooms to automatic locs.
- Several properties can be expanded to include new park facilities, amenities, and connection opportunities which would address growing demand for park usage in Carmel. CCPR staff will be focusing on completing master plans for undeveloped properties over the next few years.
- Increasing accessibility to park users of all abilities should be a focus for aging parks and play spaces.
- Consider the addition of two (2) Natural Resource Technician positions to manage invasive species and restoration projects, as well as supporting volunteer stewardship projects.

4.7. PARK DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CLASSIFICATIONS

4.7.1. Introduction

In developing design principles for parks, it is important that each park be programmed, planned, and designed to meet the needs of its service area and classification within the overall park and recreation system. Every park, regardless of type, needs to have an established set of outcomes. Park planners/designers design to those outcomes, including operational and maintenance costs associated with the design outcomes.

Each park classification category serves a specific purpose, and the features and facilities in the park must be designed for the number of age segments the park is intended to serve, the desired length of stay deemed appropriate, and the uses it has been assigned. Recreation needs and services require different design standards based on the age segments that make up the community that will be using the park. A varying number of age segments will be accommodated with the park program depending on the classification of the park. The age segments used for this purpose are broken into the following sets and subsets:

AGES 0-17

Ages 0-5
Ages 6-12
Ages 13-17

AGES 18-34

Ages 18-24
Ages 25-34

AGES 35-54

Ages 35-44
Ages 45-54

AGES 55-74

Ages 55-64
Ages 65-74

AGES 75+

4.7.2. Definitions

LAND USAGE: The percentage of space identified for active or passive use within a park. A park master plan should follow land usage guidelines.

Active Use: An area that requires more intensive development to support the desired recreation activities. Spaces are designed specifically to encourage people to congregate and interact with each other. Active areas include built amenities, such as playgrounds, splash pads, sports courts or fields, community centers, program pavilions, swimming pools, rentable shelters, and similar amenities. Active may also be used in reference to a program or activity that requires a more vigorous physical effort to participate, such as playing sports, swimming, working out, skating, etc.

Passive Use: An area that has minimal to no development, usually for the purpose of providing non-programmed open space and/or preserving or restoring natural habitat. Areas that are developed are designed to promote casual and frequently self-directed activities, such as hiking, fishing, bird watching, wildlife viewing, picnicking, kite-flying, Frisbee, or similar generally unstructured activities. Built amenities may include trails, boardwalks, fishing piers, benches, picnic tables, grass meadows, etc. Passive may also be used in reference to a program or activity that requires minimal physical exertion to participate, such as attending an arts and crafts class, continuing education program, etc.

PARK/FACILITY CLASSIFICATIONS: Includes Pocket Park/Public Plaza, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Special Use Park/Facility, School Grounds, Greenways/Trails, and Nature Preserves/Open Space.

SIGNATURE FACILITY/AMENITY: This is an enhanced facility or amenity which is viewed by the community as deserving of special recognition due to its design, location, function, natural resources, etc. A signature facility/amenity is frequently synonymous with the park from the general public's perspective. A signature facility/amenity may also be a revenue facility. Examples include a community center, waterpark, destination playground, artesian well, or similar facilities, amenities, or natural features.

SITE FEATURES: The specific types of facilities and amenities included within a park. Site features include such elements as a community center, playground, splashpads, picnic shelters, restrooms, sport courts, trails, open meadows, nature preserves, etc. These types of amenities are categorized as lead or support amenities. Community demographics and needs should be considered when identifying site features for a park.

REVENUE FACILITIES: These include facilities that charge a fee to use in the form of an admission fee, player fee, team fee, or permit fee. These could include pools, golf courses, tennis courts, recreation centers, sport field complexes, concession facilities, hospitality centers, reservable shelters, outdoor or indoor theatre space, and special event spaces.

USER EXPERIENCES: The type of intentional recreation experiences a user has available to them when visiting a park. A park master plan should incorporate user experience recommendations based on the following types of experiences:

Leader-Directed Experiences: An experience received from a facility, amenity, or service where participant involvement is directed by a leader and supervision is required for participation. These experiences, usually provided through an organized class, often promote skill development or learning, but may be for recreational purposes only. Leader-directed experiences typically require advance registration and include a user fee to participate. Examples include day camps, learn-to-swim programs, environmental education classes, sports leagues, etc. Certain types of special events, such as concerts, 5K fun runs/walks, or similar events that rely on the performance or significant coordination of someone to occur are also considered leader-directed experiences.

Self-Directed Experience: An experience received from a facility, amenity or service that provides opportunities for individuals or groups to participate independently and at their own pace. Supervision, when provided, is primarily to promote safety or regulate attendance. A user fee may or may not be charged, depending on the setting. Advance registration is often not required. Examples include playground or splashpad usage, picnicking, disc golf, nature walks, walking a dog, etc. General use of a community center, such as using fitness equipment, using the gym or indoor aquatic during open times, or walking the track, are also considered self-directed experiences.

4.8. PARK TYPOLOGIES

4.8.1. Public Plaza/Micro Parks

A public plaza/micro park is a small outdoor space, usually an acre, but may be up to 10 acres, and most often located in an urban area surrounded by commercial buildings or higher-density housing. Public plaza/micro parks are small, urban open spaces that serve a variety of functions, such as: small event space, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing and socializing, taking lunch breaks, etc.

Successful public plaza/micro park have four key qualities: they are accessible, allow people to engage in activities, are comfortable spaces that are inviting, and are sociable places. In general, public plaza/micro parks offer minimal amenities on site and are not designed to support organized recreation services. The service area for a public plaza/micro park is usually less than a quarter mile and they are intended for users within close walking distance of the park.

This type of park is not commonly found in a public park system, and is normally designed, constructed, and maintained as a common's area within a downtown corridor. CCPR's inventory includes Midtown Plaza/Monon Blvd. The City of Carmel's inventory includes City Hall and Carter Green.

Public plaza/micro parks are not designed to accommodate more than very limited recreation services. They are typically able to provide recreation services for one user group such as a playground, splashpad, benches for walkers, landscape, and trails for enjoyment of the natural environment or display of public artwork.

- **Size of park:** Public plaza/micro parks are between one to ten acres in size. Anything larger would typically be considered a neighborhood park.
- **Service radius:** Several city blocks or less than 1/4 mile in a residential setting.
- **Site selection:** Servicing a specific recreation need, ease of access from the surrounding area, and linkage to the community pathway system are key concerns when selecting a site. Ideally, it will have adjacency to other park system components, most notably greenways, and the trail system. Location is determined by the needs of the neighborhood, partnership opportunities and the availability and accessibility of land.
- **Length of stay:** One-hour experience or less.
- **Site features:** Community input through the public meeting process needs to be the primary determinant of the development program for this type of park. Public plaza/micro parks are not designed to accommodate more than very limited recreation use. Amenities are ADA compliant. Although demographics and population density play a role in location, the justification for a public plaza/micro park lies more in servicing a specific recreation need or taking advantage of a unique opportunity. Given the potential variety of public plaza/micro park activities and locations, services can vary.
- **Landscape design:** Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience.
- **Revenue facilities:** None.
- **Land usage:** 90% active/10% passive. The character may be one of intensive use or aesthetic enjoyment. Area businesses and residents should be encouraged to assist in policing and the day-to-day maintenance of this type of park, as they are in downtown areas. The primary function of such a park is to provide recreation space to those areas of the city where population densities limit the available open space.

- **User experiences:** Predominately self-directed, but a signature amenity may be included which provides opportunities for leader-directed programs. Depending on the size and location, special events could be activated.
- **Maintenance standards:** Dependent on-site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- **Signage:** Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience.
- **Parking:** Parking is typically not required.
- **Lighting:** Site lighting is typically used for security and safety.
- **Naming:** Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.

4.8.2. Neighborhood Park

A neighborhood park should be 3-10 acres; however, some neighborhood parks are determined by use and facilities offered and not by size alone. The service radius for a neighborhood park is one half mile or six blocks. Neighborhood parks should have safe pedestrian access for surrounding residents; parking may or may not be included but if included accounts for less than ten cars and provides for ADA access. Neighborhood parks serve the recreational and social focus of the adjoining neighborhoods and contribute to a distinct neighborhood identity. Currently, Carey Grove Park is classified as a neighborhood park within CCPR's inventory.

- **Size of park:** 3 to 10 acres (usable area measured). The preferred size is eight acres.
- **Service radius:** 0.5-mile radius.
- **Site selection:** On a local or collector street. If near an arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Where possible, next to a school. Encourage location to link subdivisions and linked by trails to other parks.
- **Length of stay:** One-hour experience or less.

- **Site features:** One signature amenity (e.g., playground, splashpad, sport court, gazebo); no restrooms unless necessary for a signature amenity; may include one non-programmed sports field; playgrounds for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements; no reservable shelters; loop trails; one type of sport court; no non-producing/unused amenities; benches, small picnic shelter(s) next to play areas. Amenities are ADA compliant.
- **Landscape design:** Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Customized to demographics of neighborhood; safety design meets established Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards; integrated color scheme throughout.
- **Revenue facilities:** None.
- **Land usage:** 85% active/15% passive.
- **User experiences:** Typically, self-directed, but a signature amenity may be included which provides opportunities for leader-directed programs.
- **Maintenance standards:** Dependent on-site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- **Signage:** Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience.
- **Parking:** Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park, when feasible. The goal is to maximize usable park space. As necessary, provide 5-10 spaces within park including accessible parking spaces. Traffic calming devices encouraged next to the park.
- **Lighting:** Security only. Lighting on all night for security.
- **Naming:** Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.

4.8.3. Community Park

Community parks provide diverse recreation opportunities to serve the residents of Carmel and Clay Township. These include active and passive recreation, as well as self-directed and organized recreation opportunities for individuals, families, and small groups. Community Parks often include facilities that promote outdoor recreation and activities such as walking and biking, picnicking, playing sports, playing on playgrounds, and fishing. These sites also include natural areas, emphasizing public access to important natural features. Since community parks may attract people from a wide geographic area, support facilities are required, such as parking and restrooms. Self-directed recreation activities such as meditation, quiet reflection, and wildlife watching also take place at community parks.

Community parks generally range from 10 to 100 acres depending on the surrounding community. Community parks serve a larger area – a radius of one to three miles – and contain more recreation amenities than a neighborhood park. Currently, CCPR Community Parks include Founders, Lawrence W. Inlow, Meadowlark, and River Heritage. Hamilton County Parks and Recreation's inventory includes Prather Park, formerly called River Road Park

- **Size of park:** 10 to 100 acres, but ideally 20 to 40 acres.
- **Service radius:** One-to-three-mile radius.
- **Site selection:** On two collector streets minimum and preferably one arterial street. If near arterial street, provide natural or artificial barrier. Minimal number of residences abutting site. Preference for adjacent or nearby proximity with school or other municipal use. Encourage trail linkage to other parks.
- **Length of stay:** Two to three hours experience.
- **Site features:** Four signature amenities at a minimum: (e.g., trails, sports fields, large shelters/ pavilions, community playground for ages 2-5 and 5-12 with some shaded elements, recreation center, pool or family aquatic center, sports courts, water feature); public restrooms with drinking fountains, ample parking, and security lighting. Amenities are ADA compliant. Multi-purpose fields are appropriate in this type of park.

- **Landscape design:** Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park.
- **Revenue facilities:** One or more (e.g., picnic shelters, program pavilion, dog park).
- **Land usage:** 65% active and 35% passive.
- **User experiences:** Mostly self-directed experiences but may have opportunities for leader-directed programs based on available site features and community demand.
- **Maintenance standards:** Dependent on-site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- **Signage:** Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience. May include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility.
- **Parking:** Sufficient to support the amenities; occupies no more than 10% of the park. Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to park. The goal is to maximize usable park space. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to the park.
- **Lighting:** Security lighting and lighting appropriate for signature amenities.
- **Naming:** Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.
- **Other:** Strong appeal to surrounding neighborhoods; integrated color scheme throughout the park; partnerships developed with support groups, schools, and other organizations; loop trail connectivity; linked to trail or recreation facility; safety design meets established CPTED standards.

4.8.4. Regional Park

Regional parks provide access to unique recreation features, natural areas, and facilities that attract visitors from the entire community and beyond. Regional parks often accommodate small and large group activities and have infrastructure to support group picnics. As community attractions, regional parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region. These parks may include significant natural areas and wetlands, trails and pathways, gardens and arboretums, ponds, and other water features. They add unique facilities, such as destination or thematic playgrounds, community centers, aquatic centers, sledding hills, mazes, viewing knolls, skateparks, and other interesting elements.

Regional parks can and should promote tourism and economic development. Regional parks can enhance the economic vitality and identity of the entire region. Regional parks are typically 100 or more acres in size. Currently, CCPR has Central Park and West Park that fall under the regional park designation. Hamilton County Parks and Recreation's inventory includes Coxhall Gardens.

- **Size of park:** 100+ acres.
- **Service radius:** Three miles or greater radius.
- **Site selection:** Prefer location which can preserve natural resources on-site such as wetlands, streams, and other geographic features or sites with significant cultural or historic features. Significantly large parcel of land. Access from public roads capable of handling anticipated traffic.
- **Length of stay:** All day experience.
- **Site features:** 10 to 12 amenities to create a signature facility (e.g., community center, waterpark, lake, destination playground, 3+ reservable picnic shelters, outdoor adventure amenities, gardens, trails, and specialty facilities); public restrooms with drinking fountains, concessions, restaurant, ample parking, special event site.
- **Landscape design:** Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience. Enhanced landscaping at park entrances and throughout park.
- **Revenue facilities:** More than two; park designed to produce revenue to help offset operational costs.

- **Land usage:** Up to 50% active/50% passive.
- **User experiences:** Significant mix of leader-directed and self-directed experiences. More than four recreation experiences per age segment with at least four core programs provided.
- **Maintenance standards:** Dependent on-site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- **Signage:** Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience, may include kiosks in easily identified areas of the facility.
- **Parking:** Sufficient for all amenities. Traffic calming devices encouraged within and next to the park.
- **Lighting:** Security lighting and lighting appropriate for signature amenities.
- **Naming:** Consistent with the agency's naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.
- **Other:** Safety design may meet CPTED safety standards; integrated color scheme throughout the park; linked to major trails systems, public transportation available, concessions, food, and retail sales available, dedicated site managers on duty.

4.8.5. Special Use Park

Special use parks are those spaces that do not fall within a typical park classification. A major difference between a special use park and other parks is that they usually serve a single purpose whereas other park classifications are designed to offer multiple recreation opportunities. It is possible for a special use facility to be located inside another park.

Special use parks generally contain one facility or amenity that falls into the following categories:

HISTORIC/CULTURAL/SOCIAL SITES: Unique local resources offering historical, educational, and cultural opportunities. Examples include memorials, historic downtown areas, commercial zones, arboretums, display gardens, and amphitheaters. Frequently these are in community or regional parks.

GOLF COURSES: 9- and 18-hole complexes with ancillary facilities such as club houses, driving ranges, program space and learning centers. These facilities are highly maintained and support a wide age level of participants. Programs are targeted for daily use play, tournaments, leagues, clinics, and special events. Operational costs come from daily play, season pass holders, concessions, driving range fees, earned income opportunities, and sale of pro shop items.

INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES: specialized or single purpose facilities. Examples include community centers, senior centers, performing arts facilities, and community theaters. Frequently these are in community or regional parks.

OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES: Examples include aquatic parks, disk golf, skateboard, BMX, and dog parks, which may be in a park.

The City of Carmel's inventory includes Brookshire Golf Club, Japanese Garden Expansion, and Carmel Clay Veterans Memorial & Reflecting Pool. Carmel Dad's Club inventory includes Badger Park & Shirley/O'Malia Fields, Aletto Family Sports Center, Hermann Fields, Gray Road Park, Pittman Fields, Carmel Clay Community Soccer Complex, and River Road Athletic.

- **Size of park:** Depends upon facilities and activities included. The diverse character of these parks makes it difficult to apply acreage standards.
- **Service radius:** Depends upon facilities and activities included. Typically serves special user groups while a few serve the entire population.
- **Site selection:** Given the variety of potential uses, no specific standards are defined for site selection. As with all park types, the site itself should be located where it is appropriate for its use.
- **Length of stay:** Varies by facility.
- **Site Features:** Varies by facility.
- **Revenue facilities:** Due to the nature of certain facilities, revenue may be required for construction and/or annual maintenance. This should be determined at a policy level before the facility is planned and constructed.
- **Land usage:** Varies by facility.
- **User experiences:** Varies by facility.
- **Maintenance standards:** Dependent on-site features, landscape design, and park visitation.

- **Signage:** Directional signage and facility/amenity regulations to enhance user experience.
- **Parking:** On-street or off-street parking is provided as appropriate for facility.
- **Lighting:** Security lighting and lighting appropriate for facility.
- **Landscape design:** Appropriate design to enhance the park theme/use/experience.
- **Naming:** Consistent with the agency’s naming policy for naming of parks, such as being named after a prominent or historic person, event, or natural landmark.
- **Other:** Integrated color scheme throughout the park; safety design meets established CPTED standards.

4.8.6. School Grounds

By combining the resources of two public agencies, such as CCPR and Carmel Clay Schools, the school grounds classification allows for expanding the recreation, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Through a partnership agreement, CCPR uses elementary schools to provide its Extended School Enrichment Program to the community. The important outcome in the joint-use relationship is that both the school district and the park system benefit from shared use of facilities and land area. Depending on circumstances, school grounds often complement other community open lands. As an example, an elementary school can serve as a neighborhood park providing a playground and open space to the surrounding community during non-school hours. Similarly, a middle school or high school may serve in several capacities that could include athletic fields, tennis courts, etc.

- **Size:** Variable as it depends on function.
- **Location:** Determined by location of school district property.
- **Site features:** May include playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, athletic fields, and trails.

- **Recreation services:** Mainly self-directed recreation activities. Where feasible, if athletic fields are developed on school grounds, they are oriented to youth programming. Establishing a joint-use agreement is recommended to making school ground designations work for both agencies. This is particularly important to maintenance, liability, use, and programming of the facilities.

4.8.7. Nature Preserves/Open Space

Nature preserves/open space are undeveloped but may include natural or paved trails. Grasslands under power line corridors are one example and creek areas are another. Nature preserves/open space contain natural resources that can be managed for recreation and natural resource conservation values such as a desire to protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and endangered species. Nature preserves/open space also can provide opportunities for nature-based, self-directed, low-impact recreational opportunities such as walking and nature viewing. These lands consist of:

- Individual sites exhibiting natural resources.
- Lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential.
- Parcels with steep slopes and natural vegetation, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas (man-made ponding areas), and utility easements.
- Protected lands, such as wetlands/lowlands and shorelines along waterways, lakes, and ponds.

The intent of nature preserves/open space is to enhance the livability and character of a community by preserving as many of its natural amenities as possible. Integration of the human element with that of the natural environment that surrounds them enhances the overall experience. CCPR offers many unique nature preserves/open space parks that include Cherry Tree Park, Flowing Well Park, Hazel Landing Park, Prairie Meadow, Vera J. Hinshaw Preserve, and Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park.

- **Amenities:** May include paved or natural trails, wildlife viewing areas, mountain biking, disc golf, nature interpretation, and education facilities.
- **Maintenance standards:** Demand-based maintenance with available funding. Biological management practices observed.
- **Lighting:** None.
- **Signage:** Interpretive kiosks as deemed appropriate.
- **Landscape design:** Generally, none. Some areas may include landscaping, such as entryways or around buildings. In these situations, sustainable design is appropriate.

- **Maintenance standards:** Dependent on-site features, landscape design, and park visitation.
- **Lighting:** Security lighting at trailheads is preferred. Lighting in urbanized areas or entertainment districts as appropriate.
- **Signage:** Mileage markers at half mile intervals. Interpretive kiosks as deemed appropriate.
- **Landscape design:** Coordinated planting scheme in urban areas. Limited or no landscape planting in open space areas with a preference for maintaining natural areas as a buffer to neighbors.
- **Other:** Connectivity to parks or other community attractions and facilities is desirable.

4.8.8. Greenways/Trails

Greenways/trails include natural and built corridors that typically support trail-oriented activities, such as walking, jogging, biking, skating, etc. Greenways/trails function as linear parks by linking features together and providing green buffers. Greenways/trails may be located along abandoned railroad lines, transportation or utility rights-of-way, riparian corridors, or elongated natural areas. Greenways/trails and linear parks may be of various lengths and widths, and these corridors typically support facilities such as viewing areas, benches, and trailheads. Greenways/trails between key destinations can help create more tightly knit communities, provide opportunities for non-motorized transportation, and link to the regional trail system. The Monon Greenway, White River Greenway, Bear Creek Greenway, Greyhound Trail, Hagan-Burke Trail, and Lenape Trace Park are examples of greenways/trails.

- **Size:** Typically, unencumbered land at least 30-feet wide. It may include a trail to support walking, bicycling, running, and sometimes equestrian type activities. Usually, an urban trail is at minimum 10-feet wide to support pedestrian and bicycle uses. Trails incorporate signage to designate where a user is located and where the trails connect in the community.
- **Site selection:** Located consistent with approved a community's comprehensive plan and/or alternative transportation plan as appropriate.
- **Amenities:** Parking and restrooms at major trailheads. May include pocket parks/public plazas along the trail.

4.9. LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

4.9.1. Overview

Level of Service (LOS) standards serve as guidelines that delineate service areas based on population, which support investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities. These standards are periodically updated to align with industry trends and changes in community demographics, as well as community needs.

The park facility standards are assessed by drawing from a variety of resources. These included market trends, demographic data, community input, stakeholder feedback, a statistically valid community survey, and general observations. The existing level of service was derived from an analysis of CCPR and other service providers in Carmel. This information enabled the customization of standards specifically for Carmel.

Importantly, these LOS standards should be regarded as a reference point. They should be supplemented by practical wisdom and context-specific judgment, considering the unique needs and circumstances of the community. By applying these standards to Carmel's population, any discrepancies or excesses in park and facility offerings become evident.



4.9.2. Per Capita “Gaps”

As per the Level of Service (LOS), there are several needs to address in effectively serving the Carmel community both today and in the future. While the existing level of service surpasses best practices and recommended standards for many aspects, there remain specific areas that fall short as the population of the city continues to grow. Notably:

- **PARK ACREAGE AND TRAILS:** Carmel nearly meets the standards for total park acres, but there is a deficit in neighborhood, community, regional, open space, and greenways park acreage, as well as total miles of trails.
- **OUTDOOR AMENITIES:** Carmel faces shortages of softball fields, pickleball courts, dog parks, and a splash pad facility.

It is essential to recognize that other providers in Carmel—such as the City, Carmel Redevelopment Commission, Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, Carmel Dad’s Club, Carmel Clay Schools, and HOAs—contribute to the community inventory measured by the Level of Service that may otherwise need to be provided by CCPR. CCPR must understand its role relative to these other providers to ensure it is effectively using its finite resources in providing parks, open spaces, and greenways within the community.

The forthcoming standards in **Figure 52** are based on population figures for 2023 and 2028, representing the latest estimates available during the analysis.

The Level of Service Standard helps to determine community unmet needs based on the Community Survey, NRPA National Standards, best practices in Midwest area communities of similar size and nature.



Item	CURRENT INVENTORY				OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS				Total Inventory	CURRENT LOS			METRICS		RECOMMENDED STANDARD			CURRENT NEEDS			FUNDED & APPROVED CIP		5-YEAR FORECASTED NEEDS					
	Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	City of Carmel	Hamilton County Parks & Recreation	Total Public Agency Inventory	Carmel Dad's Club	The Nature	Carmel Clay Schools	HOA		Total Other Service Provider Inventory	Service Level Based on Current Population			NRPA Park Metrics Median Metric by Jurisdiction Population		Survey Needs Assessment Priority	Recommended Service Levels for Study Area			Assessment	Additional Need	Projects	Total	Assessment	Additional Need			
PARKLAND																												
Public Plaza/Micro Parks	0.30	12.97		13.27					-	13.27	0.13	acres per	1,000				0.10	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres			Meets Standard	-	Acres	
Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	5.80			5.80					-	5.80	0.06	acres per	1,000				0.10	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	5	Acres			Need Exists	5	Acres	
Community Parks (Acres)	110.23		64.75	174.98					-	174.98	1.70	acres per	1,000				1.75	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	6	Acres			Need Exists	16	Acres	
Regional Parks (Acres)	281.22		116.24	397.46					-	397.46	3.85	acres per	1,000				4.00	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	15	Acres			Need Exists	40	Acres	
Special Use Parks (Acres)		130.52		130.52	179.62				179.62	310.14	3.01	acres per	1,000				3.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres			Need Exists	18	Acres	
School Property (Acres)				-				299.65	299.65	299.65	2.90	acres per	1,000				2.70	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres			Meets Standard	-	Acres	
Nature Preserves/Open Space (Acres)	205.86	3.89		209.75	5.78	23.40	57.48	86.66	296.41	296.41	2.87	acres per	1,000				3.00	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	13	Acres			Need Exists	32	Acres	
Greenways/Trails (Acres)	61.54			61.54					-	61.54	0.60	acres per	1,000				0.75	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	16	Acres			Need Exists	21	Acres	
Total Developed Park Acres	664.95	147.38	180.99	993.32	185.40		357.13	-	542.53	1,535.85	14.89	acres per	1,000				15.40	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	53	Acres		-	Need Exists	149	Acres	
Undeveloped Parks (Acres)	26.91			26.91					-	26.91	0.26	acres per	1,000				0.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres	Quarry Property: 224.72	224.72	Meets Standard	-	Acres	
Total Park Acres	691.86	147.38	180.99	1,020.23	185.40		357.13	-	542.53	1,562.76	15.15	acres per	1,000	8.9	acres per	1,000	15.40	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	26	Acres		224.72	Meets Standard	-	Acres	
TRAILS																												
Park Paved Trails (Miles)	12.41	0.49	3.50	16.40	0.60	2.33	42.38	45.31	61.71	61.71	0.60	miles per	1,000			High	0.60	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	3.93	Miles			Need Exists	3.93	Miles	
Park Unpaved Trails (Miles)	8.02		1.40	9.42	-	0.35	4.12	4.47	13.89	13.89	0.13	miles per	1,000	31 miles of trails		High	0.20	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	7.99	Miles			Need Exists	7.99	Miles	
Park Greenway Trails (Miles)	9.76			9.76					-	9.76	0.09	miles per	1,000			High	0.15	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	6.65	Miles			Need Exists	6.65	Miles	
Perimeter Trails (Miles)		159.00		159.00					-	159.00	1.54	miles per	1,000				1.45	miles per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Miles			Meets Standard	-	Miles	
OUTDOOR FACILITIES																												
Picnic Shelter	19	2	-	21.00	1	6	13	20.00	41.00	41.00	1	site per	2,516			Low	1	site per	3,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites			Meets Standard	-	Sites	
Community Shelter	7	-	3	10.00	-	-	1	1.00	11.00	11.00	1	site per	9,378			Low	1	site per	10,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites			Meets Standard	-	Sites	
Rectangular Fields (Football, Soccer, Multipurpose)	2	-	3	5.00	42	20	11	72.50	77.50	77.50	1	field per	1,331	1	field per	Multipurpose: 14,471 Youth Soccer: 12,875 Adult Soccer: 18,215 Field Hockey: 53,895 Football Field: 50,837 Lacrosse Field: 56,000 Cricket Field: 118,709	Low	1	field per	4,000	Meets Standard	-	Fields			Meets Standard	-	Fields
Baseball Diamond	-	-	-	-	3	23	1	27.00	27.00	27.00	1	field per	3,821	1	field per	Youth Baseball: 14,564 Adult Baseball: 45,257	Low	1	field per	4,000	Meets Standard	-	Fields			Need Exists	0	Fields
Softball Diamond	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3.00	3.00	3.00	1	field per	34,385	1	field per	Youth Softball: 26,508 Adult Softball: 26,313	Low	1	field per	15,000	Need Exists	4	Fields			Need Exists	4	Fields
Basketball Courts	1.50	-	1.00	2.50	-	17.00	21.50	38.50	41.00	41.00	1	court per	2,516	1	court per	8,792	Low	1	court per	4,000	Meets Standard	-	Courts			Meets Standard	-	Courts
Tennis Courts	-	-	-	-	-	38	52	90.00	90.00	90.00	1	court per	1,146	1	court per	7,797		1	court per	4,000	Meets Standard	-	Courts			Meets Standard	-	Courts
Pickleball Courts	6	-	-	6.00	-	-	18	18.00	24.00	24.00	1	court per	4,298	1	court per	29,836	Medium	1	court per	4,000	Need Exists	2	Courts			Need Exists	3	Courts
Sand Volleyball	2	-	-	2.00	-	-	-	-	2.00	2.00	1	court per	51,578				1	court per	55,000	Meets Standard	-	Courts			Meets Standard	-	Courts	
Playgrounds	21	-	2	23.00	1.00	13.00	40	54.00	77.00	77.00	1	site per	1,340	1	site per	5,024	Low	1	site per	2,500	Meets Standard	-	Sites			Meets Standard	-	Sites
Public Dog Parks	1	-	-	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1	site per	103,156	1	site per	78,526	Medium	1	site per	20,000	Need Exists	4	Sites			Need Exists	4	Sites
Skateboard Park	1	-	-	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1	site per	103,156	1	site per	110,000	Low	1	site per	110,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites			Meets Standard	-	Sites
Splash Pad	4	-	-	4.00	-	-	-	-	4.00	4.00	1	site per	25,789			Medium	1	site per	20,000	Need Exists	1	Sites			Need Exists	1	Sites	
Outdoor Waterpark	1	-	-	1.00	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1	site per	103,156				1	site per	150,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites			Meets Standard	-	Sites	
INDOOR RECREATION SPACE																												
Indoor Recreation Space (Sq. Ft.)	160,225	-	-	160,225.00	150,000	-	-	150,000.00	310,225.00	310,225.00	3.01	SF per person		1	site per	Community Center: 54,354 Recreation Center: 54,125	Medium	2.00	SF per person		Meets Standard	-	Sq. Ft.			Meets Standard	-	Sq. Ft.
Special Use Facilities (Sq. Ft.)	-	-	21,000	21,000.00	-	-	-	-	21,000.00	21,000.00	0.20	SF per person		1	site per		Medium	0.00	SF per person		Meets Standard	-	Sq. Ft.			Meets Standard	-	Sq. Ft.

FIGURE 52 - CCPR POPULATION BASED LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS



2023 ESTIMATED POPULATION 103,156 2028 ESTIMATED POPULATION 109,405

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4.10. GIS MAPPING

The maps on the following pages outline various methodologies toward mapping. Maps were created to depict service area maps based on the level of service standards, as well as others depicting the greenways/trail network.

4.10.1. Service Area Maps

Service area maps and standards assist CCPR in assessing where services are offered, how equitable the service distribution and delivery is across the Carmel service area, and how effective the service is as it compares to the demographic densities. In addition, looking at guidelines with reference to population enables CCPR to assess gaps in services, where facilities are needed, or where an area is over saturated. This allows the CCPR management to make appropriate capital improvement decisions based upon need for the system as a whole and the ramifications those decisions may have on a specific area.

The maps contain several circles, which represent the recommended per capita LOS found on the previous page. The circles' size varies dependent upon the quantity of a given amenity (or acre type) located at one site and the surrounding population density. The bigger the circle, the more people a given amenity or park acre serves and vice versa. Additionally, some circles are shaded a different color which represents the "owner" of that particular amenity or acre type. There is a legend in the bottom left-hand corner of each map depicting the various owners included in the equity mapping process. The areas of overlapping circles represent adequate service, or duplicated service, and the areas with no shading represents the areas not served by a given amenity or park acre type. Service area maps were created for:

- All Parks (**Map 10**)
- Community and Regional Parks (**Map 11**)
- Indoor Recreation Space (**Map 12**)

4.10.2. Greenways/Paved Trails/Unpaved Trails

Maps were created to show the trail network within the City of Carmel. The City of Carmel has made significant investments in various types of trail experiences for the community. These trail experiences are provided by a variety of entities, which include CCPR, City of Carmel, Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, Carmel Clay Schools, and Homeowners Associations. Maps were created for the following and include the community members responsible for management of the various trail types:

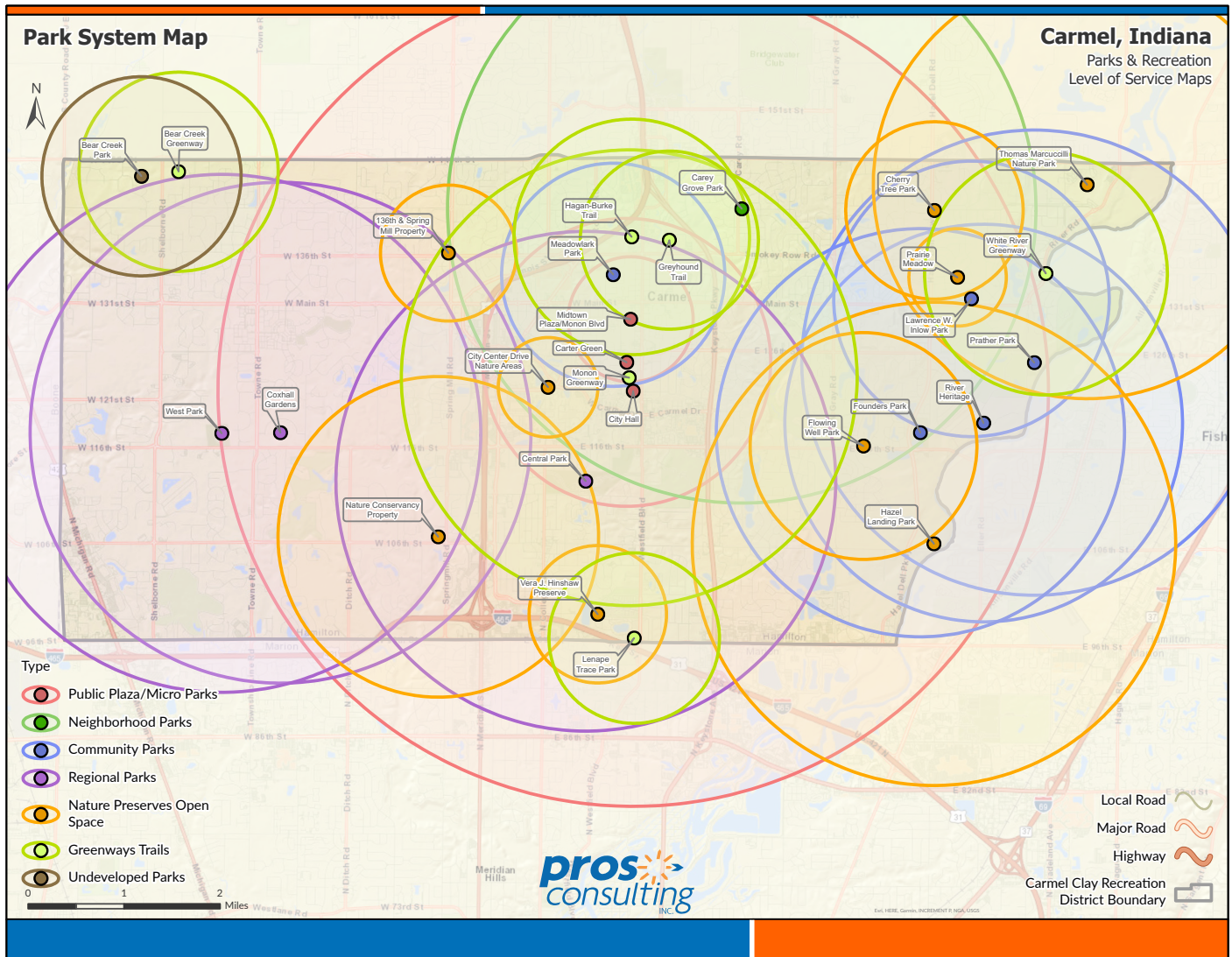
- Park Greenway Trails (CCPR Managed) (**Map 13**)
- Park Paved Trails (CCPR, City, Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, Carmel Clay Schools, HOA Managed) (**Map 14**)
- Park Unpaved Trails (CCPR, Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, HOA Managed) (**Map 15**)
- Perimeter Trails (City Managed) (**Map 16**)

Realizing that Carmel's development future includes more densification, City and CCPR leaders have made efforts to shift Carmel away from car-centric infrastructure and towards a more sustainable and equitable transportation system for all.



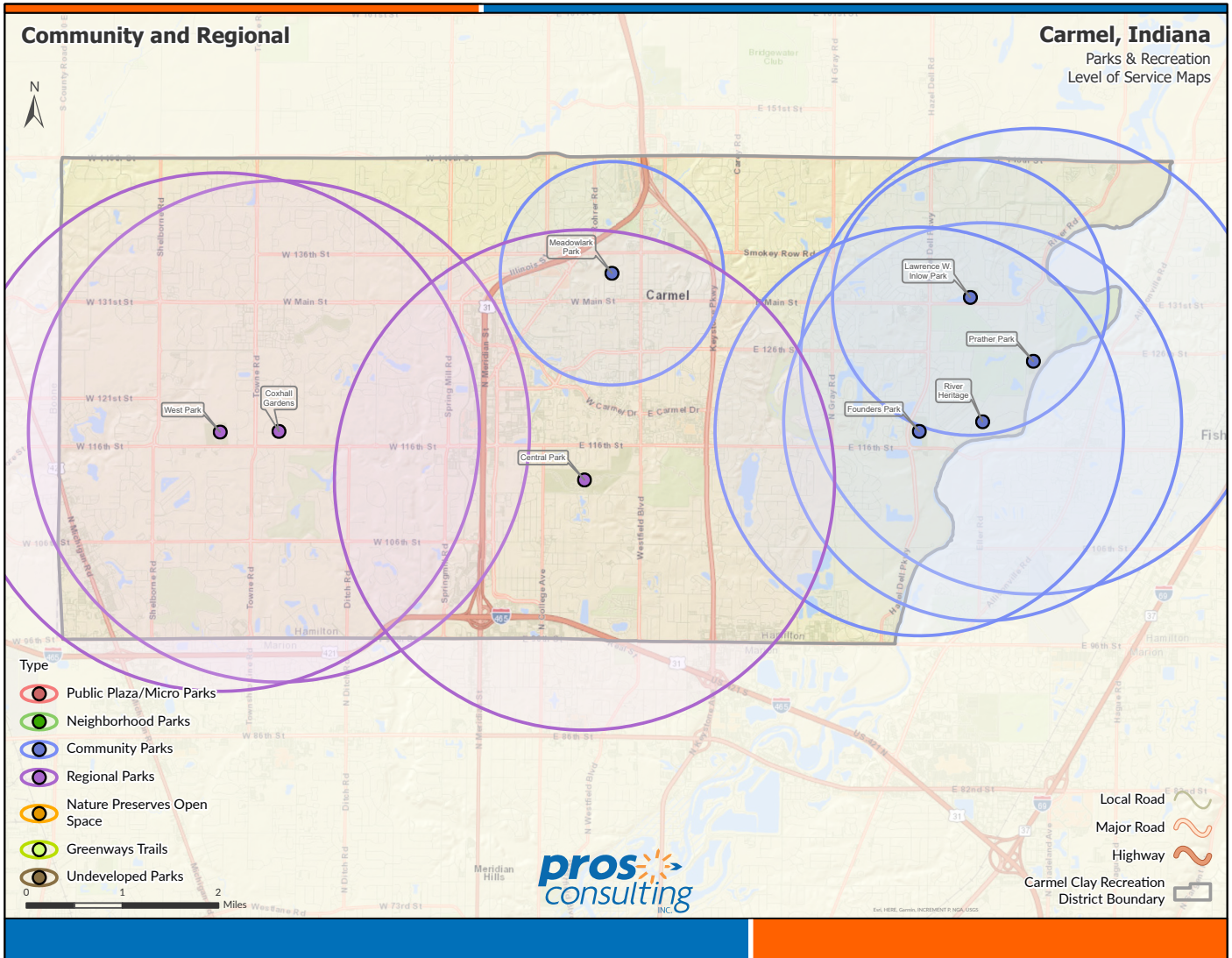
4.10.3. Service Area Maps

ALL PARKS



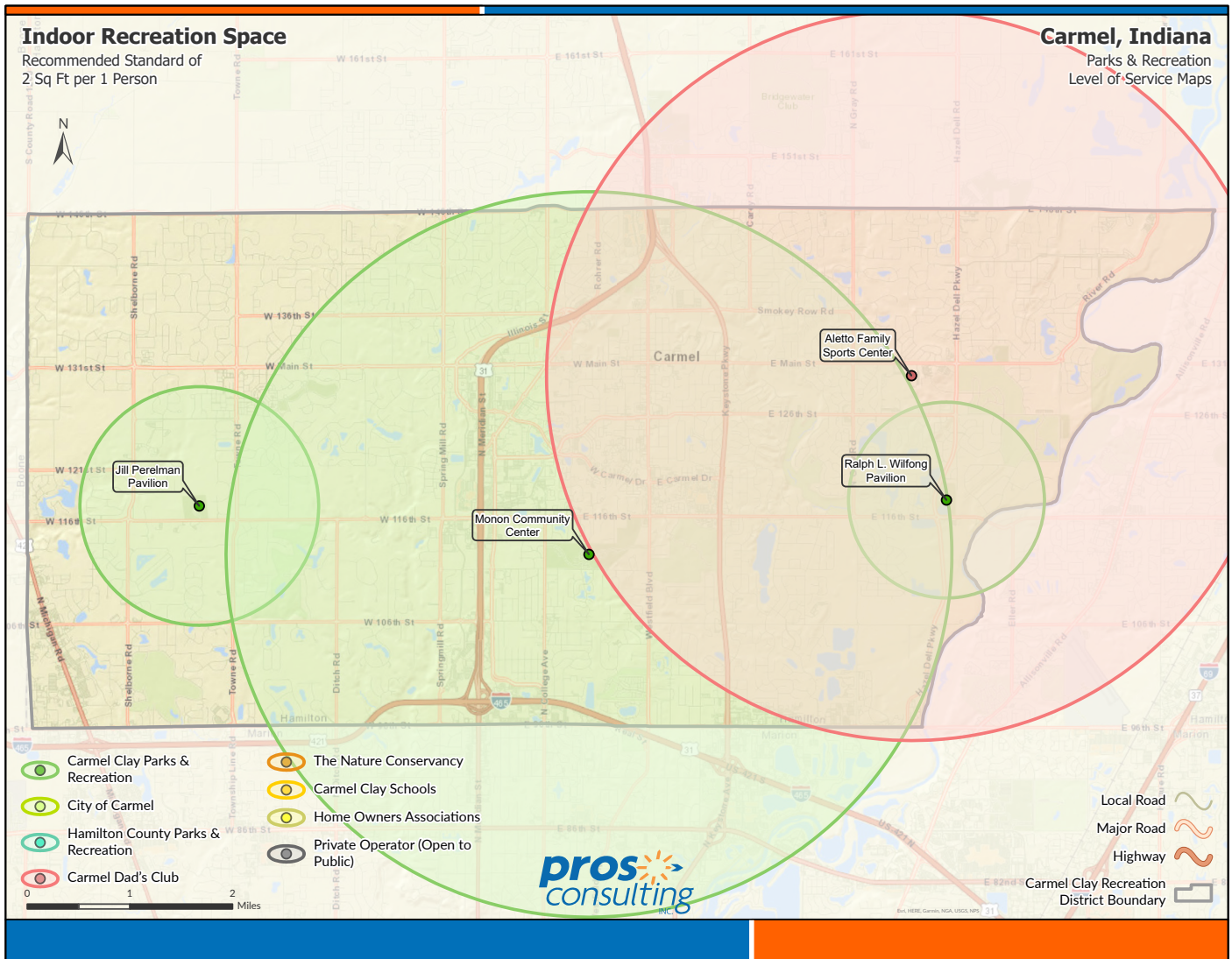
MAP 10 - PARK SYSTEM MAP LEVEL OF SERVICE

COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS



MAP 11 - COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS LEVEL OF SERVICE

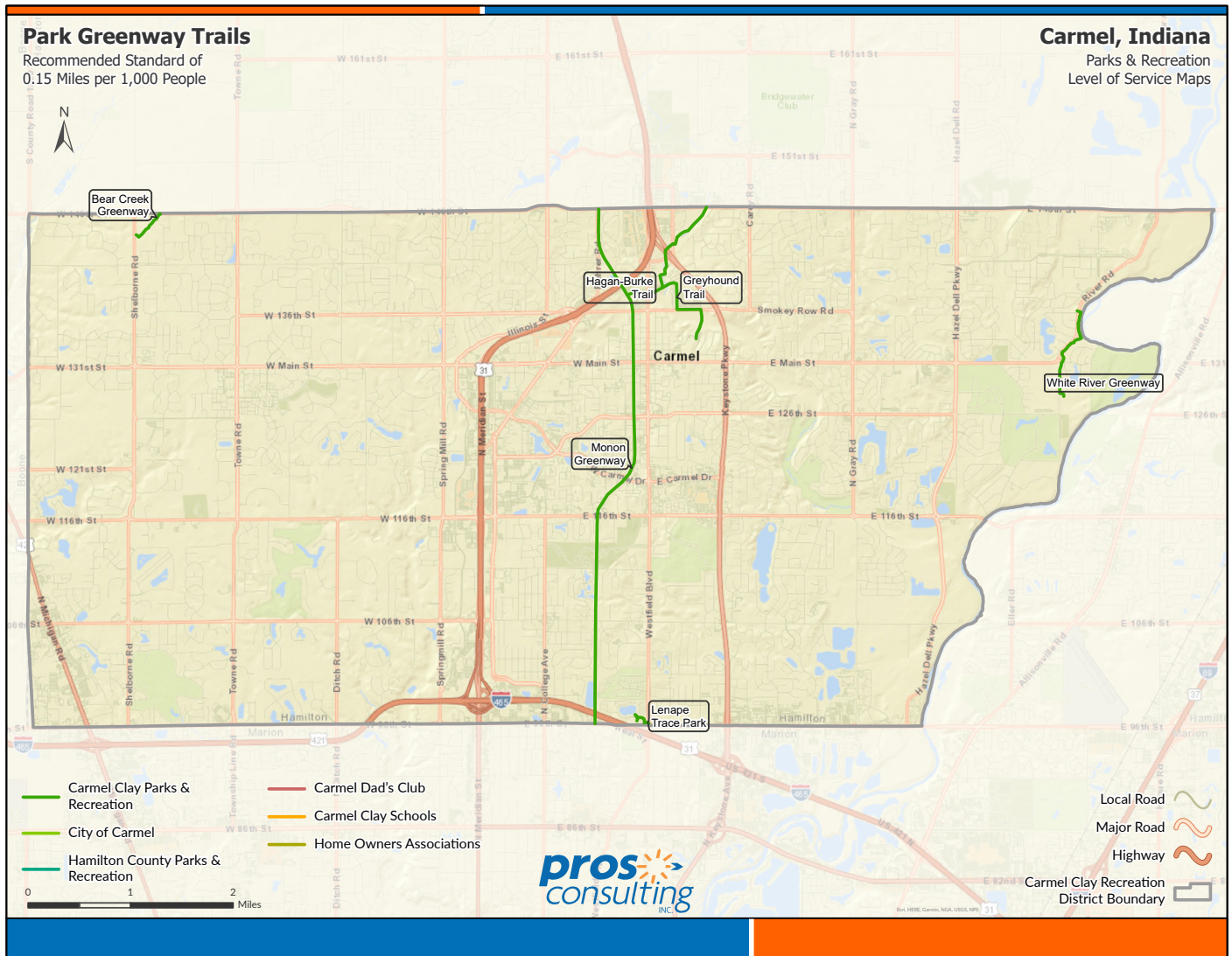
INDOOR RECREATION SPACE



MAP 12 - INDOOR RECREATION SPACE LEVEL OF SERVICE

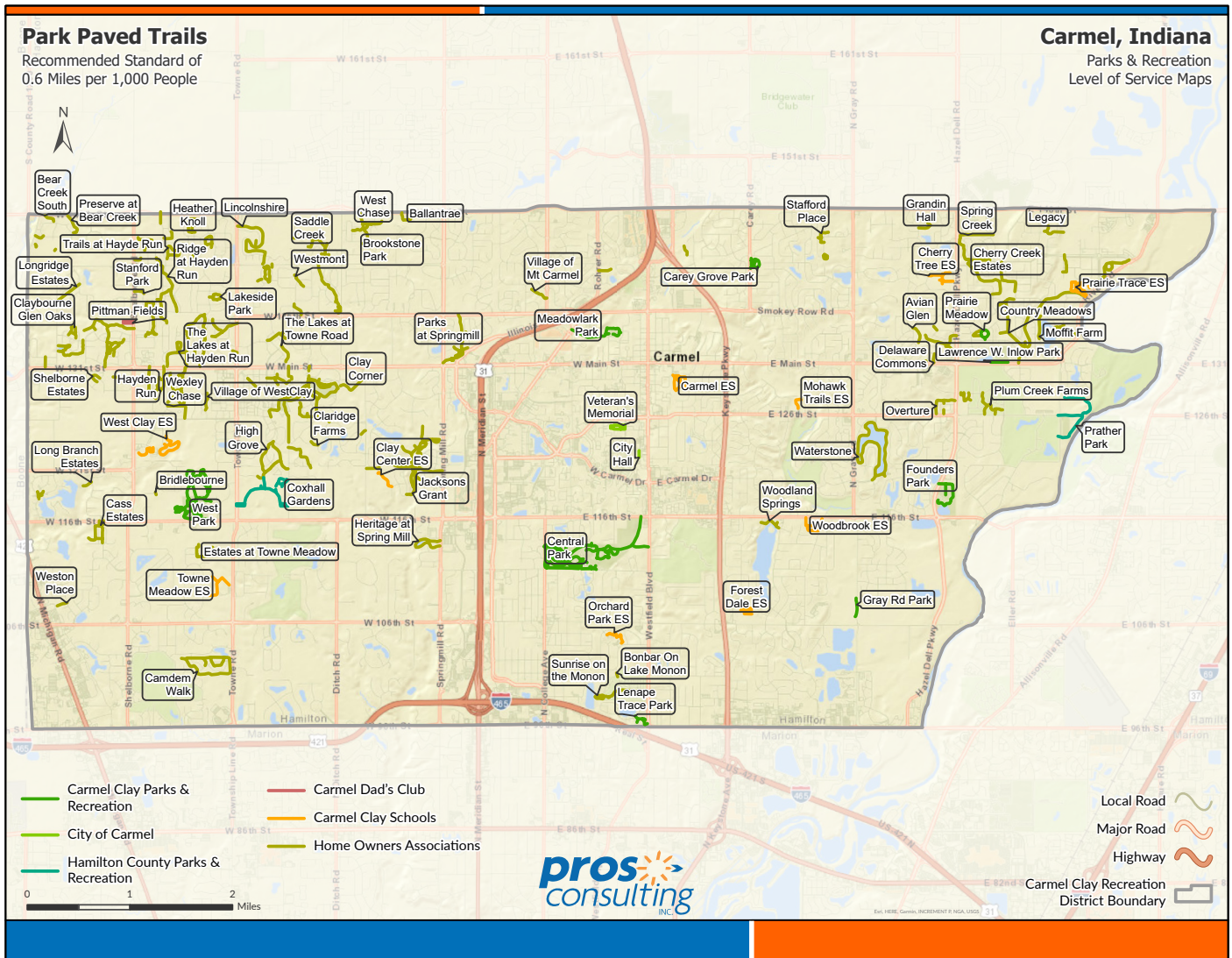
4.10.4. Greenways/Paved Trails/Unpaved Trails

GREENWAY TRAILS



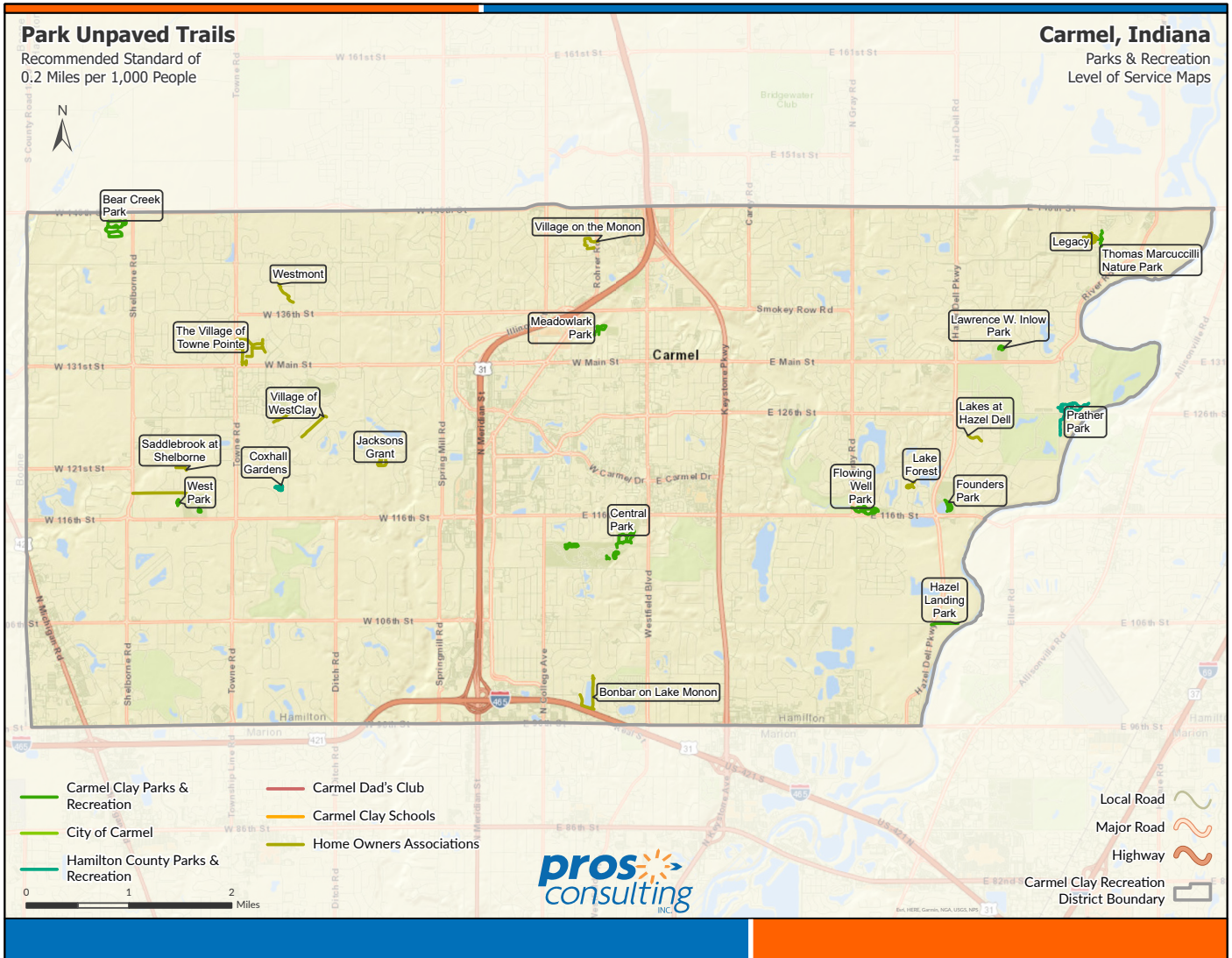
MAP 13 - PARK GREENWAY TRAILS

PARK PAVED TRAILS



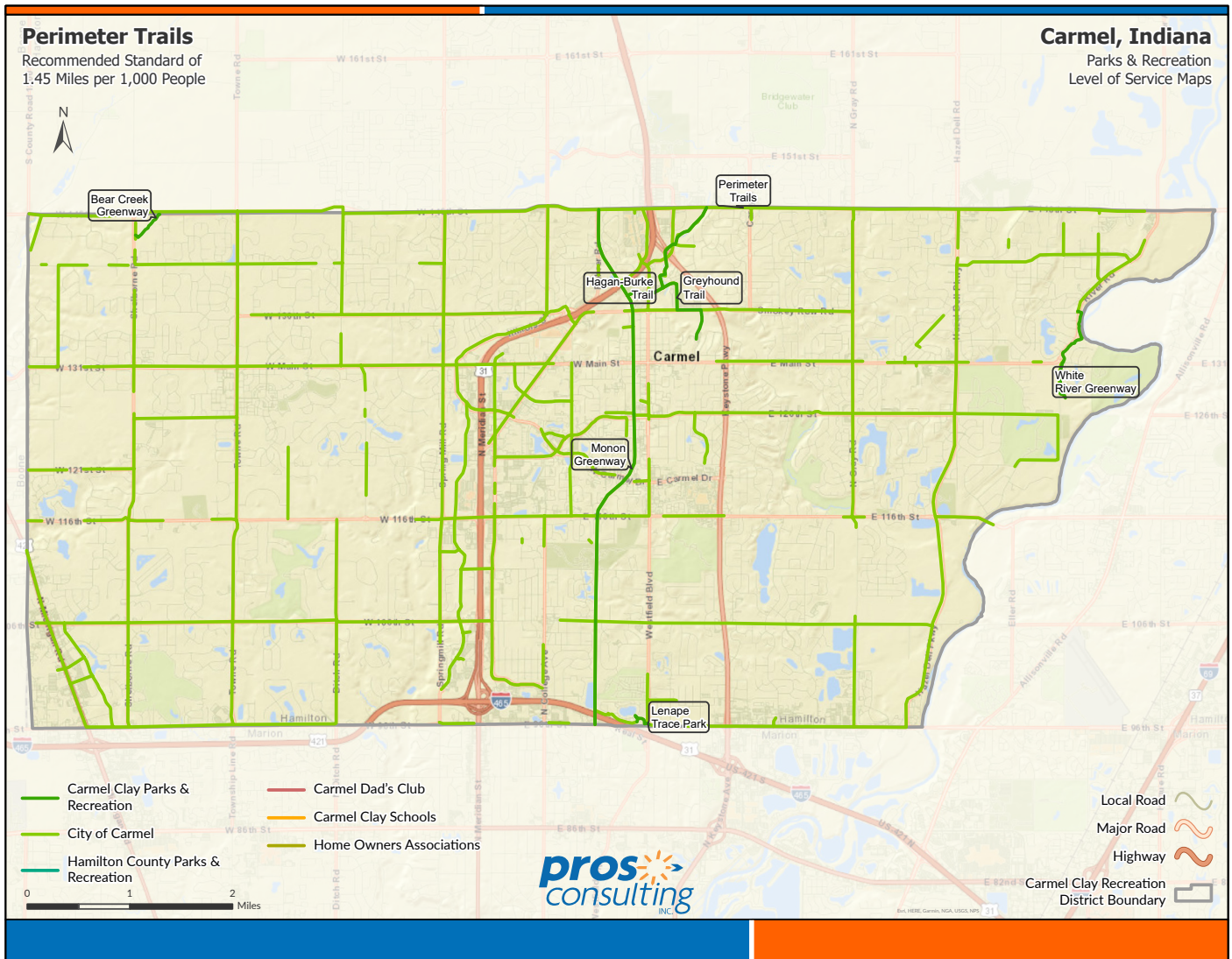
MAP 14 - PARK PAVED TRAILS

PARK UNPAVED TRAILS



MAP 15 - PARK UNPAVED TRAILS

PERIMETER TRAILS



MAP 16 - PERIMETER TRAILS

4.11. FACILITY AND AMENITY PRIORITY RANKINGS

The purpose of the Facility and Amenity Priority Rankings is to provide a prioritized list of facility and amenity needs for the community served by CCPR. This model evaluates quantitative data from the statistically valid community survey, which asked residents to list unmet needs and rank their importance. A weighted scoring system is used to determine the priorities for CCPR facilities and amenities:

DATA SOURCE	COMPONENT	WEIGHTING
Quantitative Data	Unmet Needs Reported by the Community Survey: This is used as a factor from the total number of households stating whether they have a need for a facility and amenity and the extent to which their need for facilities and amenities has been met. Survey participants were asked to identify this for 32 different facilities and amenities.	50%
	Importance Rankings Reported by the Community Survey: This is used as a factor from the importance allocated to a facility and amenity by the community. Each respondent was asked to identify their top four most important facilities and amenities.	50%

FIGURE 53 - SCORING SYSTEM FOR PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING

These weighted scores provide an overall score and priority ranking for the CCPR system. The results of the priority ranking are tabulated into three categories: High Priority (top third), Medium Priority (middle third), and Low Priority (bottom third).

4.11.1. Priorities for Facility Investments

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance that residents place on amenities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facility and amenity.

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following parks and recreation facilities and amenities were rated as high priorities for investment:

1. Nature trails/boardwalks (PIR=164)
2. Canoe/kayak rentals (PIR=137)
3. Paved multi-purpose trails (PIR=125)
4. Canoe/kayak launch (PIR=101)

Figure 54 shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 32 facilities and amenities assessed on the survey.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES BASED ON PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING

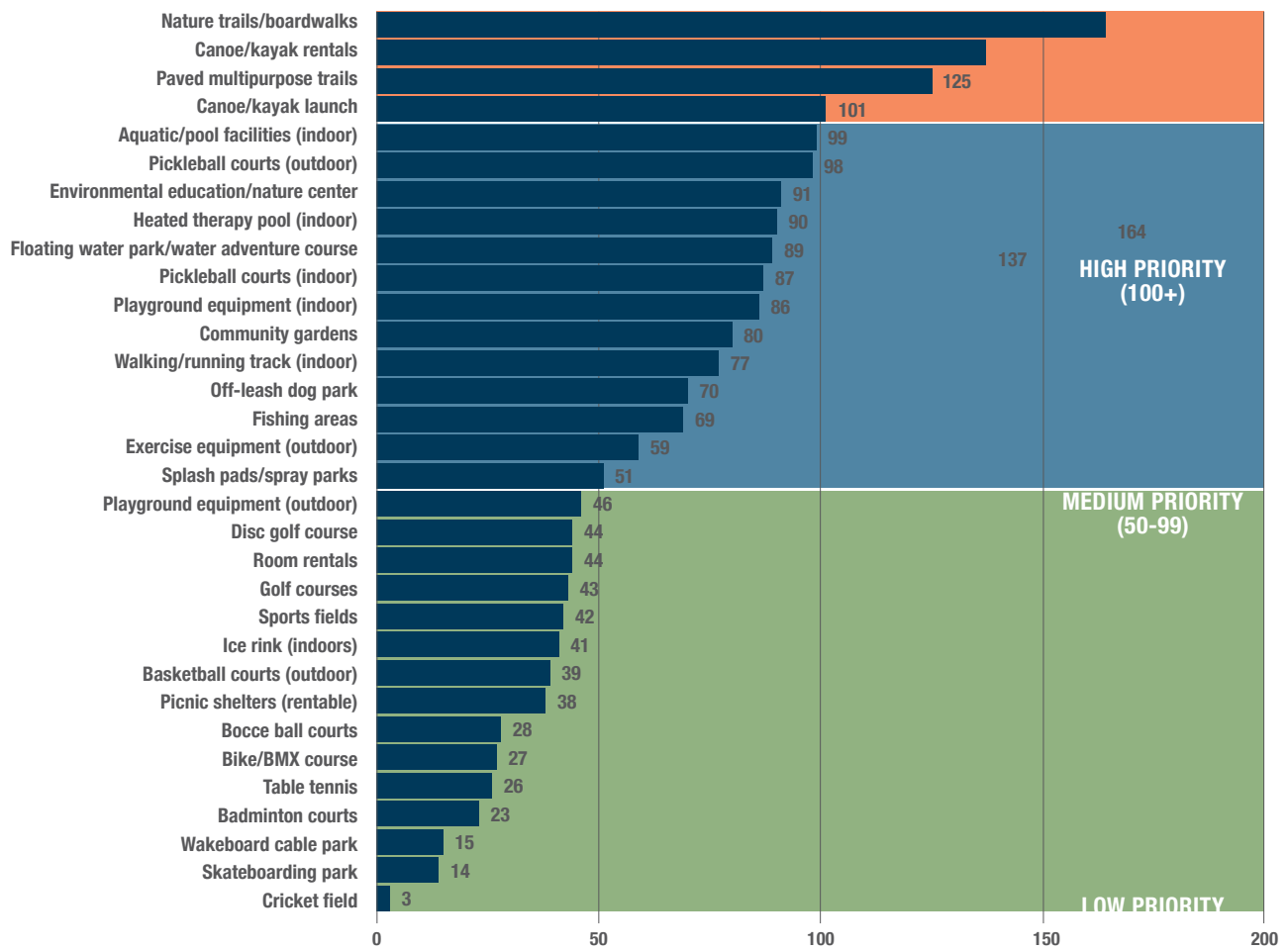
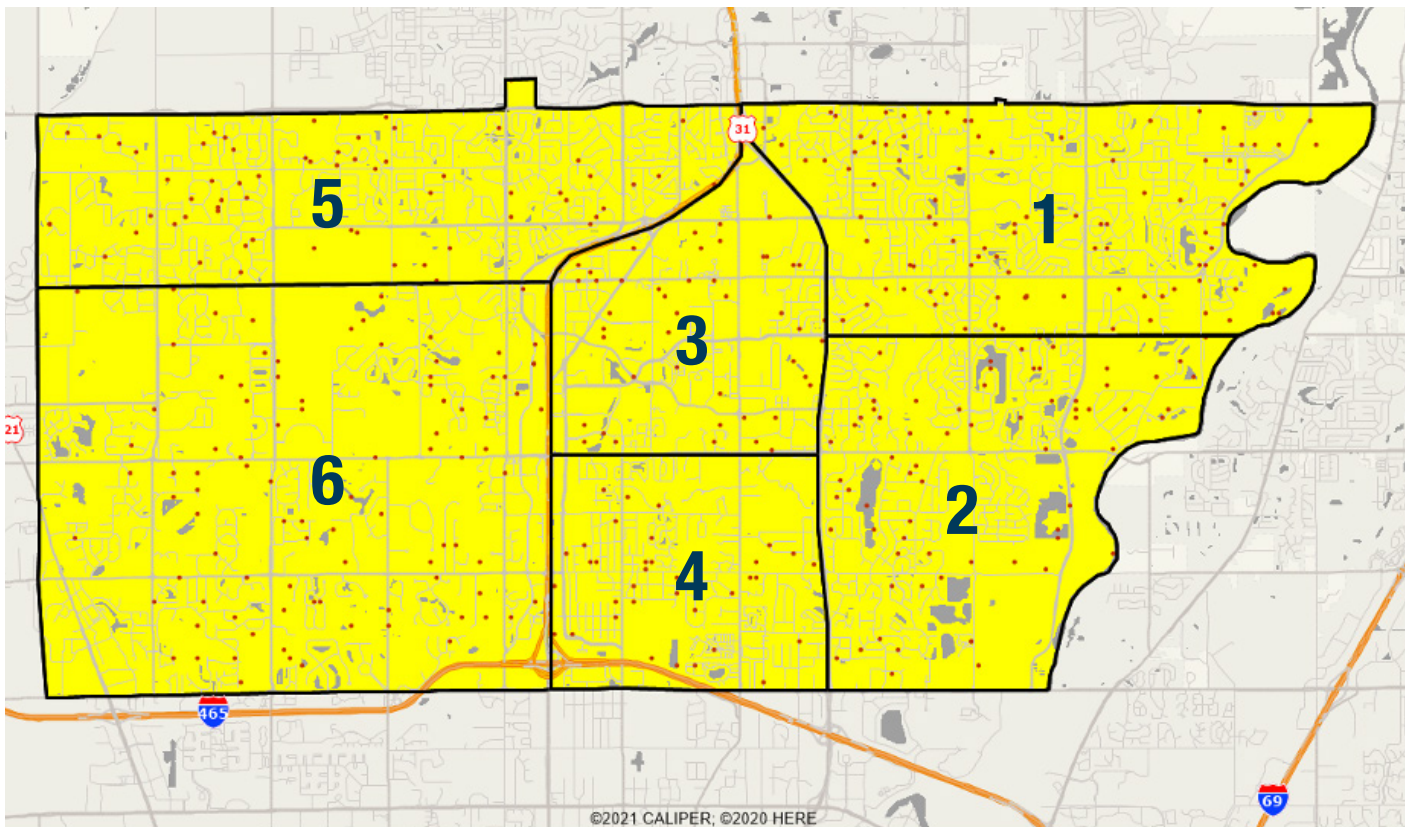


FIGURE 54 - TOP PRIORITIES FOR FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

4.11.2. CCPR Community Interest and Opinion Survey Planning Areas

The statistically valid survey was sent to six (6) distinct planning areas that CCPR has utilized in planning efforts for the Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, North Central, Southwest, and South Central. These planning areas each have unique demographics, current park types, facilities, as well as opportunities for expansion. **Map 17** shows the planning areas used for the statistically valid survey with dots representing the households that responded. The location of the statistically valid survey responses showed good representation throughout the City.

CCPR SURVEY RESULTS BY PLANNING AREA



LABELS

1. Northeast Carmel (East of Keystone Parkway and North of 126th Street)
2. Southeast Carmel (East of Keystone Parkway and South of 126th Street)
3. North-Central Carmel (North of 116th Street between Meridian Street and Keystone Parkway)
4. South Central Carmel (South of 116th Street between Meridian Street and Keystone Parkway)
5. Northwest Carmel (West of Meridian Street and North of Main Street/131st Street)
6. Southwest Carmel (West of Meridian Street and South of Main Street/131st Street)

MAP 17 - STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY RESULTS BY PLANNING AREA

4.11.3. Priorities for Facility and Amenity Investments by Planning Area

Figure 55 depicts the overall priority investment rating for the City, while also detailing each of the six (6) planning areas. It is important to recognize the similarities, as well as the differences in how each planning area prioritized certain facilities and amenities. This is a great tool as it relates to potential actions CCPR can make to meet the needs of the community.

AGENCY	OVERALL	NORTHEAST	SOUTHEAST	NORTHWEST	NORTH CENTRAL	SOUTHWEST	SOUTH CENTRAL
Nature trails/boardwalks	1	1	1	2	1	1	3
Canoe/kayak rentals	2	2	4	3	2	3	1
Paved multipurpose trails	3	4	8	1	4	2	11
Canoe/kayak launch	4	6	17	9	3	9	2
Aquatic/pool facilities (indoor)	5	5	2	8	15	11	4
Pickleball courts (outdoor)	6	3	9	4	14	4	12
Environmental education/nature center	7	8	11	5	6	13	7
Heated therapy pool (indoor)	8	12	3	14	10	8	5
Floating water park/water adventure course	9	9	6	10	7	10	8
Pickleball courts (indoor)	10	7	12	6	12	6	18
Playground equipment (indoor)	11	13	7	13	8	5	9
Community gardens	12	10	10	7	5	21	13
Walking/running track (indoor)	13	15	5	16	11	12	10
Off-leash dog park	14	11	18	11	9	17	17
Fishing areas	15	14	15	20	16	15	6
Exercise equipment (outdoor)	16	25	13	12	13	7	27
Splash pads/spray parks	17	16	20	25	18	18	21
Playground equipment (outdoor)	18	18	23	26	21	14	20
Disc golf course	19	23	21	18	17	20	25
Room rentals	20	19	25	17	25	23	14
Golf courses	21	20	19	15	19	28	24
Sports fields	22	17	16	22	29	24	19
Ice rink (indoors)	23	24	14	24	20	27	16
Basketball courts (outdoor)	24	22	22	23	24	19	23
Picnic shelters (rentable)	25	21	29	27	22	16	22
Bocce ball courts	26	27	26	19	30	25	29
Bike/BMX course	27	28	28	21	31	22	28
Table tennis	28	29	24	29	27	30	15
Badminton courts	29	26	32	28	26	26	26
Wakeboard cable park	30	32	27	30	23	31	30
Skateboarding park	31	30	31	31	28	29	31
Cricket field	32	31	30	32	32	32	32

FIGURE 55 - PRIORITIES FOR FACILITY AND AMENITY INVESTMENT BY PLANNING AREA

4.11.4. Opportunity Statements

Opportunity statements were developed utilizing the priority investment rating as potential and/or current actions that CCPR is currently undertaking to meet the needs of the community. These were developed in discussions with CCPR leadership, as well as through alignment with the Action Plan detailed in Chapter Seven. The following opportunity statements are provided for each of the facilities /amenities in order of overall ranking.

1. High Priority (Top Priorities: High Importance/Higher Unmet Need)

- **Nature trails/boardwalks:** Consistently top priority by community through multiple planning periods.
- **Canoe/kayak rentals (White River):** Opportunity for White River Corridor.
- **Paved multipurpose trails (e.g., walking, biking):** Consistently a top priority by community through multiple planning periods.
- **Canoe/kayak launch (White River):** Opportunity for White River Corridor.

2. Medium Priority (Continued Emphasis: High Importance/Lower Unmet Need)

- **Aquatic/pool facilities (indoors):** Component of community center.
- **Pickleball courts (outdoors):** Recently added at Meadowlark and Lawrence W. Inlow Park and well used.
- **Environmental education/nature center:** Consider partnership opportunities along the White River Corridor.
- **Heated therapy pool (indoor):** Component of community center.
- **Floating water park / water adventure course:** Potential at future Quarry Park.
- **Pickleball courts (indoors):** Component of community center.
- **Playground equipment (indoors):** Potential addition at Monon Community Center with renovations.
- **Community gardens:** Lower development cost; Higher priority on east side of community.
- **Walking/running track (indoor):** Component of community center.
- **Off-leash dog park:** Lower development cost; Higher priority for NE and NW.
- **Fishing areas:** Opportunity along White River Corridor and recent renovations at Meadowlark Park.
- **Exercise equipment (outdoors):** Lower developmental cost. Recently added at Carey Grove Park.
- **Splash pads/spray parks:** Recent upgrades to Lawrence W. Inlow & West Park.



3. Lower Immediate Need (Lower Importance/Lower Unmet Need)

- **Playground equipment (outdoors):** Recent upgrades to Carey Grove, Lawrence W. Inlow, Meadowlark, River Heritage & West Park.
- **Disc golf course:** 3 courses already in community; low need.
- **Room rentals:** Potential at community center and pavilions.
- **Golf courses:** City has made improvements to Brookshire Golf Club.
- **Sports fields:** Carmel Dad's Club has made many improvements to the sports fields in the community including recent addition of the indoor Alleto Family Sports Center.
- **Ice rink (indoors):** Low need and high development and operational costs; potentially filled by the private sector.
- **Basketball courts:** Low need and recent improvements at Meadowlark and Carey Grove Park.
- **Picnic shelters (rentable):** Recent upgrades throughout the system at Carey Grove, Lawrence W. Inlow, Meadowlark, River Heritage & West Park
- **Bocce ball courts:** Court included in Monon Boulevard
- **Bike/BMX course:** Lower priority; Opportunity for White River Corridor.
- **Table tennis:** Component of community center, Midtown Plaza and Monon Blvd.
- **Badminton courts:** Component of community center.
- **Wakeboard cable Park:** Potential at future Quarry Park.
- **Cricket field:** Lowest ranked need per survey

4.12. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Capital Improvement Plan (“CIP”) is a five-year projection of planned physical improvements to the park system. The CIP provides revenue projections and a “blueprint” for spending priorities to support the desired outcomes of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. No actual expenditures are made until they are included in the annual budget and/or reviewed and approved by the Carmel/Clay Board of Parks and Recreation (Park Board), in accordance with applicable Indiana Code and Park Board Purchasing Rules.

One of the core functions of the Park Board and CCPR management is to preserve and protect existing park system assets, therefore the CIP strives to provide necessary funding for the ongoing capital maintenance or replacement of existing assets before allocating funds for new parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, based on the Park Board’s mandate to achieve cost recovery for recreation facilities and programs, capital improvements with the ability to contribute to this goal are given priority over projects that would represent new operational costs with minimal to no offsetting revenue. The permitted uses of available funding and identified public needs also factor into the establishment and prioritization of the proposed timelines within this CIP.

Public input is integral to the success of CCPR. The public had ongoing opportunities for input on capital improvements through the planning process for this Master Plan and park-specific site plans. The public is also invited to provide comments at the beginning of every Park Board meeting and at the annual Public Hearing held before the budget is approved, or by contacting CCPR and Park Board members throughout the year.

The CIP should be viewed as a working document, updated at least annually to reflect actual revenue collections, refined cost projections, potential changes in community or park system needs, and unique opportunities. The total cost of capital improvements outlined in this CIP far exceeds the revenue projections from current funding streams. Opportunities for new revenue sources and/or partnerships to help share costs will need to be explored to accelerate new capital development.

4.12.1. Types of Capital Improvements

For this CIP, capital improvements are defined as projects with a useful life of at least three years that result in the creation or renovation of a fixed asset that allows CCPR to serve the park and recreation needs of the community. Examples of capital improvements include construction, remodeling, equipment replacements, or purchase of parkland, park fixtures, buildings, vehicles, and equipment. Planning efforts associated with capital improvements, including architectural, engineering, and legal services, are also considered capital expenditures and incorporated within the CIP. Regarding the capital funding needs outlined later in this chapter, anything projected to cost over \$25,000 (in 2023 dollars) is included, while anything below this threshold will be incorporated into CCPR's general fund budget request. Capital improvements within this CIP are divided into two classifications:

CAPITAL REPLACEMENT/REINVESTMENT: The improvement or replacement of existing park assets and any related planning efforts. Capital Reinvestment is required to preserve the usefulness and extend the life of existing park assets and may be the result of capital replacement plans or unexpected, emergency needs. Capital Reinvestment needs for the current 5-year planning period are estimated at \$25,361,756.

NEW INVESTMENT: The purchase and/or development of new parks, recreation facilities, and/or equipment. "Soft costs" associated with the planning and design of the park system or specific parks are also classified as a New Investment. New Investments are typically identified and designed through an extensive planning process with input from many stakeholders, including the community, user groups, elected officials, other governmental entities, partners, staff, and the Park Board. There is an estimated need for \$58,229,433 in New Investments during the 5-year planning period.

4.12.2. Prioritization of Capital Improvements

Continued investment in the park system is critical to providing quality parks and recreation experiences for the residents of Carmel and Clay Township. Since funding for capital improvements is finite, projects are prioritized based on the following criteria, subject to the permitted uses of available funding:

ALL IMPROVEMENTS: All capital improvements must support the goals and objectives of the most current Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan as approved or amended by the Park Board.

PRIORITY 1: Capital Reinvestment needs of revenue generating facilities mandated to be self-sufficient. Since the condition of these facilities has a direct impact on operational costs and revenue generation, capital repairs and replacements for revenue facilities receive the highest priority. Applicable facilities currently include the Monon Community Center, The Waterpark, Jill Perelman Pavilion, Wilfong Pavilion, and the Central Bark Park. Any capital repairs or replacements required to ensure the safety of visitors or employees will also be considered a Priority 1 project, regardless of the asset's revenue generating capacity.

PRIORITY 2: Capital Reinvestment needs of existing parks and non-revenue generating recreation facilities or equipment. Residents and community leaders consistently place a high priority on maintaining existing assets.

PRIORITY 3: New Investments enhancing existing parkland or community assets with consideration given for revenue generation and operational expenses.

PRIORITY 4: New Investments requiring the purchase of new parkland with consideration given for revenue generation and operational expenses.



4.12.3. Funding Sources for Capital Improvements

The following is a summary of current and historical funding sources used by or available to Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation to pay for capital improvements within the park system:

TAXES

Originally created in 1991 by the City of Carmel and Clay Township, CCPR currently operates under the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement (Interlocal) approved by the City Council and Township Board in 2002 and amended in 2004 and 2010. The Interlocal specifies that the City and Township provide tax funding for CCPR based on each entity's proportionate share of the aggregate assessed valuation for the entire township for the following fiscal year. Funding may come from property taxes or income taxes at the discretion of the City and Township. CCPR's General Fund (101) and Parks Capital Fund (103), both maintained by the City's fiscal officer, have historically been funded under this provision. As of March 1, 2018, the last remaining unincorporated area within the township was annexed into the city, eliminating the Township's obligation to contribute to these two funds.

The General Fund (101) is used to cover expenses related to the general administration, operation, and maintenance of the park system. Only a nominal amount of the General Fund has been used for capital improvements, predominately for small equipment replacements. General Fund dollars are not used for operating or capital expenses at the Monon Community Center (MCC) or for the Extended School Enrichment (ESE) program.

The Parks Capital Fund (103), which was not funded between 2007 and 2019, is a non-reverting fund dedicated to capital projects within the park system. Budget allocations were suspended as a result of Local Income Tax (LIT) received from the Township attributable to the Central Park Bond, which is described below. As of 2020 the 103 Fund has been funded in some capacity by the City of Carmel, mainly for capital repairs and replacements to infrastructure owned by the City of Carmel but managed by Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation. This includes spaces like the Monon Greenway and Central Carmel (including Monon Boulevard and Midtown Plaza).

LOCAL INCOME TAX ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE CENTRAL PARK BOND

Since 2008, the primary source of tax dollars used to fund CCPR's capital projects has been Local Income Tax attributable to the Central Park Bond (Central Park Bond LIT). As a result of the \$55 million Central Park Bond originally issued in 2004 and refinanced in 2015, the Township currently receives a share of LIT paid to the State by all Hamilton County residents with income tax obligations. LIT is distributed to local units of government within the county based on a State-established formula¹. Through 2023, CCPR received \$46.9 million in Central Park Bond LIT from the Township.

The Township is required under the 2010 amendment to the Interlocal to provide the Central Park Bond LIT for CCPR's capital projects throughout the term of the bond. Upon retirement of the Central Park Bond in January 2025, Clay Township will have no contractual obligation under the Interlocal to provide LIT or any new funding to CCPR.

PARK IMPACT FEES

The Park Impact Fee is established by a Zone Improvement Plan, which requires the approval of both the Carmel Plan Commission and City Council. New residential development and the resulting increase in population places a greater demand for park infrastructure. Indiana law allows communities to assess an impact fee to fund new capital development to accommodate the increased demand. The maximum fee is defined by a State-established formula that factors infrastructure needed to serve the new residents and the community's historical capital investment within the park system.

As part of this master planning process, the 2025-2029 Zone Improvement Plan was prepared and is expected to be approved prior to December 2024 to ensure no lapse in the Park Impact Fee. The new fee is anticipated to increase from \$4,882 at least six months following adoption by the City Council.

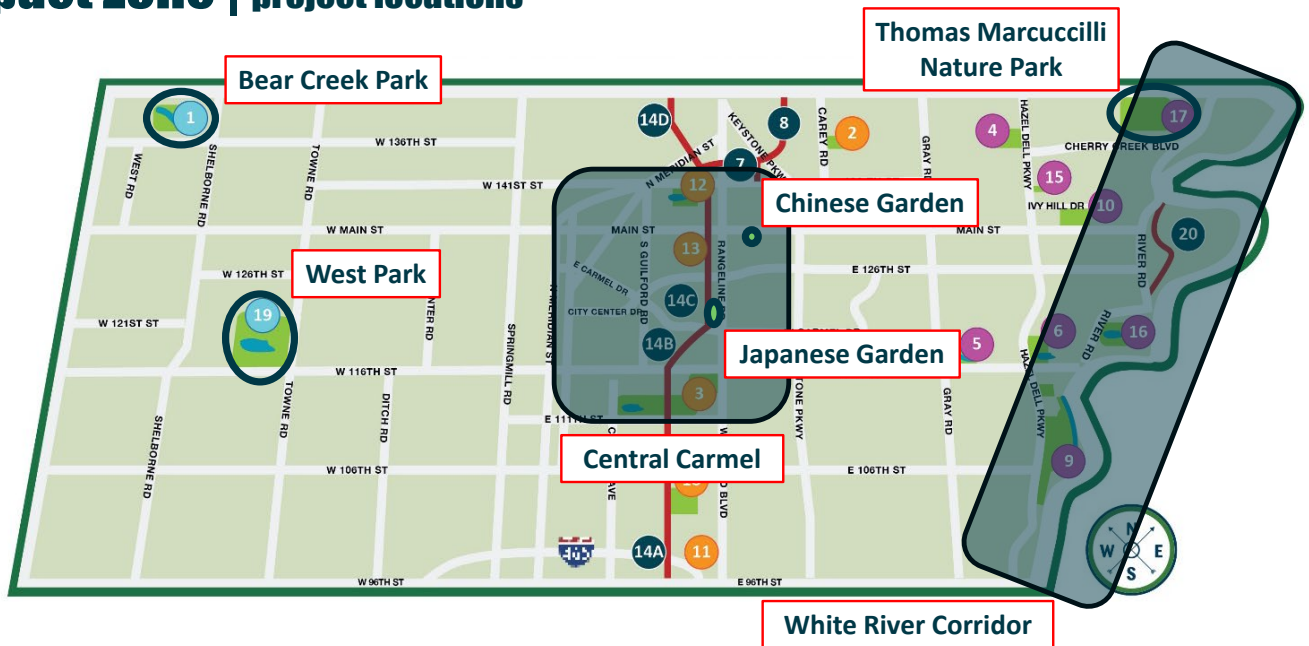
¹ The Central Park Bond was one of the last bonds issued in the state for which the budgeted repayments factor into the LIT distributions. New bond repayments no longer factor into the distribution formula for local units of government.

A Zone Improvement Plan must be adopted at least every five years to continue collecting Park Impact Fees.

All fees are deposited within the non-reverting Park Impact Fee Fund (106), which is maintained by the City's fiscal officer, and may be used by CCPR for new capital development within parks or projects specifically identified within the current Zone Improvement Plan. Fees collected each year vary based on market factors impacting residential development.

The new Zone Improvement Plan would also permit the use of Park Impact Fees in the following locations as depicted in **Map 18** below.

Impact Zone | project locations



MAP 18 - IMPACT ZONE PROJECT LOCATIONS

BONDS ISSUED BY THE CITY OR TOWNSHIP

Both the City and Township have periodically issued bonds that directly impact the park system. In these instances, the City or Township use bond proceeds to fund capital improvements, turn the assets over to CCPR to manage and maintain, and repay the bonds with other funding sources so not to impact CCPR's budget. Example investments by the City include Monon Boulevard and Midtown Plaza, both of which opened in 2019, as well as the Reimagining Parks initiative through the Clay Township Impact Program that updated and enhanced existing parks beginning in 2019. The

Township previously issued bonds to assist in the acquisition of Central Park and fund the park's original development.

With the recent election of Mayor Sue Finkam, the new administration is currently evaluating the City's bonding priorities based on its current and projected needs and capacity. To the extent City projects include park-related components, it is likely that CCPR will assume at least some level of maintenance responsibility. City-issued bonds could be a potential source to fund projects outlined in this CIP.

The Township should continue to have the ability to issue bonds that benefit CCPR capital projects but will likely have a significantly reduced bonding capacity through 2038. Beyond the 2019, 2020, and 2022 CTIP bonds, additional Township-issued bonds in the immediate future may not be a viable funding source for this CIP.

PARK SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

While the Park Board has used a “pay as you go” approach for the funds under its control by using existing cash on hand to fund capital improvements, Indiana Park Law and the Interlocal does allow the sale of bonds to fund park projects. Issuance of a bond by the Park Board must follow all requirements defined by applicable State law and the Interlocal, including a public hearing, and receive approval from both the City Council and Township Board.

As specified within the Interlocal, it is anticipated that a special benefit tax would need to be levied by the City or Township to repay the bond, likely impacting tax rates. Strong public support would be necessary to secure approval from elected officials. Park Board-issued bond should be considered a potential funding source for this CIP.

LEASE FINANCING

State law allows CCPR to use lease financing for certain capital purchases, such as the acquisition of vehicles, fitness equipment, building mechanical systems, and other amenities or significant components. This funding option has been implemented for CCPR’s fleet of vehicles and may be a viable means to finance some future projects.

USER FEES

As revenue-generating facilities or programs like the Monon Community Center, Central Dog Park, and Summer Camp Series continue to be self-sufficient and generate net income, it has been increasingly possible to fund some capital projects with revenue generated from user fees. User fees are deposited into the ESE Fund (108), MCC Fund (109), or Recreation Facilities Fund (110) based on the revenue source. These non-reverting funds are maintained by the City’s fiscal officer and may be used to fund operating and/or capital projects.

While it is unlikely user fees from revenue-generating operations will be able to fund systemwide capital projects, there may be some capacity to help fund some level of improvements to the facilities helping generate the revenue in the first place. Some levels of proceeds from user fees are a viable funding sources for select projects identified in this CIP.

GIFTS, DONATIONS, SPONSORSHIPS, & GRANTS

CCPR’s non-reverting Gift Fund (853) is funded by gifts, donations, sponsorships, and grants received from individuals or organizations. The person or entity providing the funds often restricts its use for specific projects or purposes. The Gift Fund is maintained by the City’s fiscal officer and may be used to fund operating and/or capital projects, depending on applicable restrictions. The Gift Fund has not been a meaningful source of funding for capital projects for over 15 years. With the addition of a Resource Development Coordinator in 2023, CCPR is starting to more actively explore grant, sponsorship, and donation opportunities that may be available.

PARKS FOUNDATION

The Carmel Clay Parks Foundation, Inc. was established in 2011 as a 501(c)3 charitable organization with the sole mission of supporting Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation. While still in its formative stage, the Parks Foundation has the potential to be a significant source of revenue for capital improvements in the future, helping complement other funding sources and providing additional avenues for securing bequests, donations, grants, and similar alternative funding mechanisms. The Resource Development Coordinator works closely with the Foundation to identify potential funding opportunities.



SPECIAL LEGISLATION

The Park Board, in close collaboration with the City and Township, could lobby the Indiana General Assembly to secure special legislation proving a new taxing source for CCPR. If pursued, this could ensure new funding does not adversely affect either the City's or Township's maximum levy or constitutional debt limit. CCPR could consider seeking a funding model similar to that used by public libraries, conservancy districts, and/or other separate taxing units. Given the challenges in securing special legislation, while not impossible, this should not be counted on as a guaranteed source of future funding.

CAPITAL MAINTENANCE RESERVES

The Park Board maintains capital maintenance reserves to protect and sustain CCPR's revenue-generating facilities in the event of unforeseen or emergency situations. These reserves help ensure the availability of funding and mitigate the need to request additional appropriations from the City or Township for emergency capital repairs or replacements. While not a viable source of funding for this CIP, it is a critical resource to protect the park system's assets when emergencies occur.

4.12.4. Capital Improvement Schedule

Table 19 depicts the desired implementation schedule for Capital Reinvestments and New Investments.

Timelines and budgets will likely need to be adjusted based on the actual funding received, unexpected needs, and/or unique opportunities not identified or envisioned at the time this CIP was developed.

Capital Reinvestments were identified as recommended capital repairs and replacements in CCPR's Life-Cycle Asset Management Plan. New Investments are based on the identified community needs within this Master Plan and construction estimates from the 2025-2029 Zone Improvement Plan. The prioritization of each capital repair/replacement and new investments is detailed below, as well as the potential funding source. Also, based on Indiana's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, if the capital project aligns with one of the five (5) goal/objectives from the plan, which are described below:

1. Develop more trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
2. Encourage and promote outdoor recreation participation.
3. Continue emphasizing Indiana's aquatic resources, both natural and man-made.
4. Protect and enhance Indiana's natural and outdoor recreation resources.
5. Provide funding for outdoor recreation development at the state and local levels.

Year	Park / Facility	Project Type	Project	Funding Needs	Priority Level	Potential Funding Source	Indiana SCORP Alignment
2025	Central Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Admin office roof, East entry asphalt and pavers, trail asphalt replacement	\$2,582,707	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2025	Founders Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Parking lot replacement	\$712,346	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	2
2025	Hazel Landing Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Pedestrian surfaces	\$157,306	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	2
2025	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Indoor pool refinish, filters	\$463,361	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2025	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Fitness Equipment Replacements	\$124,145	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2025	Monon Greenway	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Trailhead roofs, Bridge, heaters	\$85,783	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2025	The Waterpark	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Slide refinish	\$43,879	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2025	Bear Creek Park - Bundles A & B	New Investment	Playground, splash pad, adventure tower, trails & parking lot	\$8,829,194	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 2
2025	Chinese Garden - Phase 1	New Investment	Pavilion & extensive landscape	\$1,045,208	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	2
2025	The Waterpark	New Investment	Kiddie Pool conversion to splash pad	\$848,720	3	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2025	White River Corridor	New Investment	Property acquisition	\$2,114,133	4	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 3
2026	Central Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Skatepark	\$943,788	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	2
2026	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Water heaters, Roof	\$2,872,493	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2026	River Heritage Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Silo painting	\$84,741	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	2
2026	The Waterpark	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Water heaters, Pool refinish	\$142,705	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2026	Central Maintenance Facility	New Investment	New building for maintenance operations	\$7,211,998	3	Bond	N/A
2026	Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park - Bundle A	New Investment	Trail & boardwalks	\$5,764,087	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 2
2027	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Exhaust fans, building controls, standpipes, fire alarm system, fan coils	\$1,329,730	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2027	Central Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Admin & Maintenance office reinvestments, shelter roof replacement	\$121,49	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2027	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Fitness Equipment Replacements	\$283,193	1	Bond/General Operating Fund	N/A
2027	The Waterpark	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Heaters, pumps, roofing, building controls,	\$288,616	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2027	Central Carmel	New Investment	Property acquisition	\$4,803,023	4	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	2
2027	River Heritage Park - Phase 2 Renovations	New Investment	Restroom building	\$166,604	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	2
2027	Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park - Bundle B	New Investment	Trails, boardwalks, native landscape restoration & parking	\$6,653,868	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 2

TABLE 19 - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE (PAGE 1 OF 2)

Year	Park / Facility	Project Type	Project	Funding Needs	Priority Level	Potential Funding Source	Indiana SCORP Alignment
2027	White River Greenway	New Investment	South Expansion - Phase 1	\$2,458,091	4	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 2
2028	Central Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Office reinvestments, Lagoon boardwalk, trail railings	\$2,605,831	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Flowing Well Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Trails, Fencing	\$43,341	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Founders Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	FFE, Playground, Recreational field, trails	\$5,467,103	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Greyhound Trail	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Fencing	\$41,805	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Hagan Burke Trail	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	FFE, Trail asphalt, fencing	\$1,327,189	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Hazel Landing Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Canoe Launch, parking lot, bollard	\$390,714	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	2 & 3
2028	Lenape Trace Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Trail Asphalt	\$101,919	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Pool drain covers	\$35,961	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2028	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Fitness Equipment Replacements	\$140,451	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2028	Monon Greenway	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Various FFE, South trailhead parking lot	\$539,308	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	River Heritage Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Parking Lot	\$51,424	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	2
2028	The Waterpark	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Pool drain covers	\$35,961	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2028	West Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Boardwalk	\$1,024,879	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	White River Greenway	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Trail Asphalt & Concrete	\$606,806	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2028	Bear Creek Park - Bundle C	New Investment	Program pavilion (~6,000 SF facility)	\$4,493,254	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	2
2029	Central Park	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Office reinvestments	\$41,238	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2029	Jill Perelman Pavilion	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Carpet, Water heater, security	\$67,288	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2029	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Metal panel soffit, Indoor pool reinvestment	\$679,428	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2029	Monon Community Center	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Fitness Equipment Replacements	\$391,698	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	N/A
2029	Monon Greenway	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	North and South Trailhead restroom reinvestments	\$32,841	2	Bond/ General Operating Fund	1 & 2
2029	The Waterpark	Capital Repairs/ Replacements	Panel roofing, soffit, pool reinvestments	\$1,481,580	1	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2029	The Waterpark	New Investment	Activity pool enhancement	\$5,373,235	3	Bond/ General Operating Fund	3
2029	White River Corridor	New Investment	Property acquisition	\$2,228,228	4	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 2
2029	White River Ecology Center	New Investment	Nature center focused on White River	\$6,239,790	3	Bond/Park Impact Fee/Grant	1 & 2
2025-2029 TOTAL:				\$83,591,189			

TABLE 19 - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE (PAGE 2 OF 2)

4.12.5. Summary of Capital Improvements

Table 20 summarizes the five-year planning time for both capital repairs/replacements and new investments which total \$83,591,189.

Year	Capital Repairs / Replacements	New Investments	Total
2025	\$4,169,529	\$12,837,255	\$17,006,784
2026	\$4,043,726	\$12,976,085	\$17,019,811
2027	\$2,023,038	\$14,081,586	\$16,104,624
2028	\$12,431,390	\$4,493,254	\$16,924,644
2029	\$2,694,073	\$13,841,253	\$16,535,326
TOTAL	\$25,361,756	\$58,229,433	\$83,591,189

TABLE 20 - SUMMARY OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

4.12.6. Conclusion

The capital improvements to the park system necessary to support the desired outcomes of the 2025-2029 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan have an estimated cost of \$83,591,189. This includes \$25,361,756 in Capital Reinvestment projects necessary to preserve or replace existing park assets and \$58,229,433 in New Investments intended to meet the evolving park and recreation needs of a growing and increasingly more diverse community.

Currently, CCPR does not have the necessary funding to meet these capital improvements. Without new funding sources, many of the capital repairs or replacements will be deferred, and many new investments will not be feasible.

Recognizing that funding for capital improvements is finite, projects have been prioritized based on defined criteria that considers improvements to existing assets before developing new ones and recognizes the impact of facility conditions in achieving cost recovery goals. Permitted or restricted uses of available funds also factors into the allocation of capital dollars. For example, Park Impact Fees per State statute may only be used for New Improvements in parks specifically identified in the Zone Improvement Plan.

CCPR will take all appropriate measures to extend the life of existing assets to mitigate the impact of the deferred Capital Reinvestment projects. Capital repairs or replacements required to ensure the safety of visitors or employees will always be prioritized.

Some critical funding decisions will need to be made by community leaders that will have a significant impact on both the current planning period and long-term future of the park system. While CCPR's capital funding sources have historically been significant, new sources must be identified to fund the projects identified in this plan. Two capital funding sources are waning or will no longer be available for this plan.

CCPR will cease receiving Local Income Tax attributable to the Central Park Bond after 2025 and the Township will no longer have funding obligations under the current Interlocal Agreement beyond repayment of existing bonds. New revenue from Park Impact Fees is also expected to decline as the availability of vacant land reduces the ease of constructing new residences. When this drop in Park Impact Fee funding will occur is less certain than the timeline for LIT, making it more crucial to capitalize on this funding source while it remains viable. New funding options must be considered and implemented during this planning period to avoid facing a true capital funding crisis in the not-too-distant future.

CHAPTER 5

RECREATIONAL PROGRAM ANALYSIS



5.1. INTRODUCTION

A significant component of the Comprehensive Master Plan and the business plans for the Monon Community Center/The Waterpark and the Extended School Enrichment/Summer Camp Series is the recreation program assessment. Recreation programs and services form the essential foundation of park and recreation systems. The goal of the analysis is to understand current recreation program and activity offerings, as well as recommendations for additional programming to meet community needs and priorities identified in the community needs assessment.

The assessment helps identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities regarding programming. The assessment also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, areas of improvement, and future programs and services for residents and visitors.

The program findings and comments are based on a review of information provided by CCPR including program descriptions, financial data, website content, community survey results, and discussions with staff. This report addresses the offerings from a systems perspective for the entire portfolio of programs. The following pages highlight the Recreation Program Assessment, and the recount is in **Appendix 4**.

5.1.1. Framework

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation strives to provide exceptional experiences through innovative services. Recreation programming is at the forefront of these agency principles, as outlined in the vision and mission statements below:

MISSION STATEMENT: CCPR will be stewards of a healthy community by providing transformative experiences.

VISION STATEMENT: To be a national leader in parks and recreation, enhancing our community one park, program, and person at a time.

CCPR provides a broad range of recreation and leisure programming for all ages and abilities. These offerings are supported with dedicated spaces which include the Monon Community Center, Ralph L. Wilfong Pavilion, Jill Perelman Pavilion, and The Waterpark.

5.1.2. Program Assessment Overview

Below are some overall observations that stood out during analysis:

- The **program descriptions and goals** within each core program area effectively communicate the key benefits and desired outcomes for the participants.
- **Age segments** are represented among various core program areas. This should be continuously monitored to ensure that programs represent future demographics.
- Of the different **program lifecycle** stages, 60% of CCPR's programs are categorized in the Introduction, Take-Off, or Growth stages.

- **Pricing strategies** are used consistently across all Core Program Areas. CCPR frequently prices programs according to market rate, established cost recovery goals, and the customer’s ability to pay. This demonstrates a fair approach to pricing programs as well as ensuring that the Department continues to operate its programming self-sufficiently.
- Nearly all core program areas are operating at or above established **cost recovery goals**. ESE and SCS revenue are distributed across its division to ensure operation at cost recovery.
- CCPR employs a variety of methods to track **program performance** including customer satisfaction levels through surveys, real-time feedback (i.e. “customer feedback technology”), program cancellation rates, and participation levels. CCPR staff indicated that they are working toward tracking customer retention rates for all services in the future.
- Methods for marketing and promotions rely heavily on technology including the CCPR website, social media, and blogs or vlogs. Print advertisements are used sparingly with some printed guides offered at the Monon Community Center for those who request them.

5.2. RECREATION PROGRAMMING STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

The Department’s Recreation Programming is broken into focused Program Areas and Categories to better support the department’s vision:

“To be a national leader in parks and recreation, enhancing our community one park, program, and person at a time.”

Due to the multitude of program service providers in the City of Carmel and surrounding communities, CCPR’s programmatic focus is divided into one of two buckets. The first bucket entails that the program(s) offered must be perceived as better than other providers, meaning the department has a rich history of providing or has resources that

provide a unique experience for participants. The second bucket allows development of programs that meet an unmet need of the community. This could include programs for unserved or underserved populations.

Additionally, the department analyzes each program area’s ability to positively affect cost recovery goals, level of management and oversight needed, and its flexibility to be **cross-pollinated** with other program categories (**Figure 56**). This sized-down approach allows the most effective use of staff time and resources.

Recreation Program Areas are prioritized as either Core or Supplemental. Program Areas falling into the Core category are defined as those programs, which over time, will meet departmental goals and objects while adhering to the conceptual foundations of play. These are programs that continue to experience high participation and growth and fall into one of the two priority buckets.

Supplemental Programming helps fill the smaller unmet or underserved needs in the community and can be viewed as somewhat traditional offerings of a park department or community center, most of these programs are led by contractors.

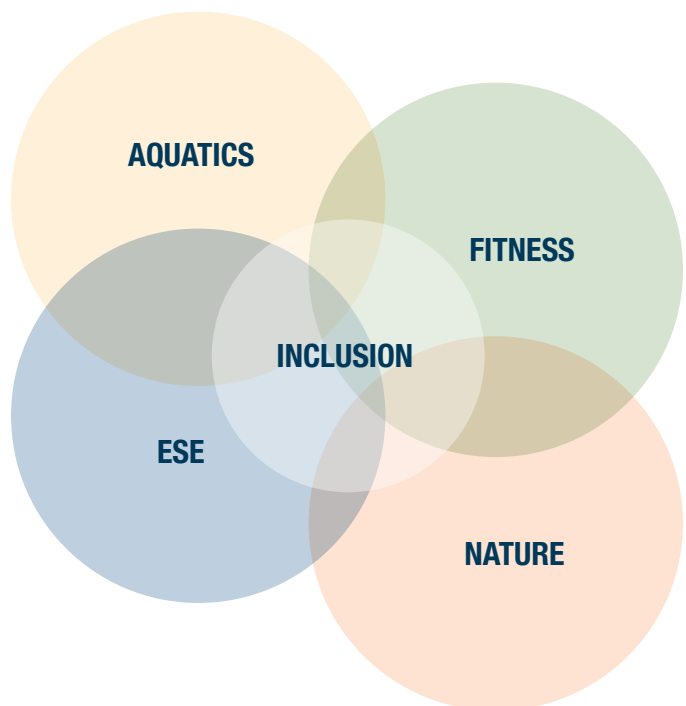


FIGURE 56 - PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

5.2.1. Core Program Areas

Recreation Programming is broken down into the following Core Program Areas (Figure 57):

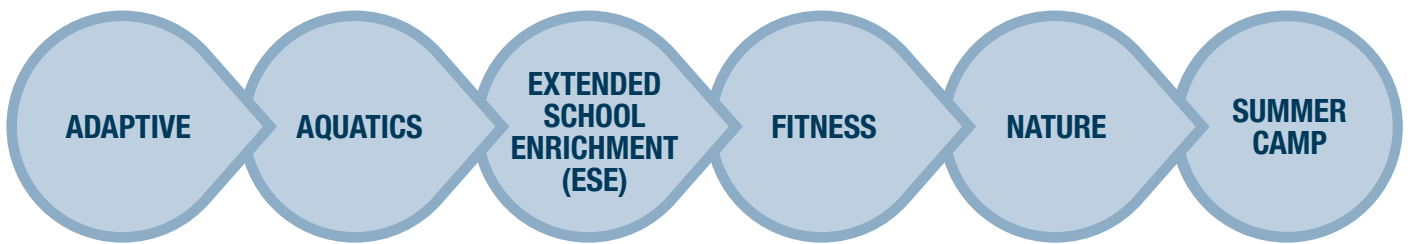


FIGURE 57 - CORE PROGRAM AREAS

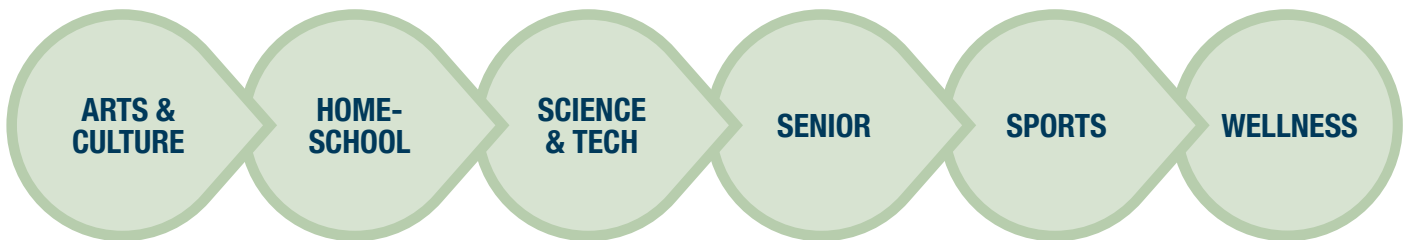


FIGURE 58 - SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM AREAS

5.2.3. Prioritization of Services

The provision of facilities, programs and services is fundamental to the vision and mission of Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation. Since the resources available to offer programs and services are limited, the delivery of these services is prioritized based on the following criteria (see **Program Classifications** on next page, **Figure 59**):

ALL SERVICES: All programs and services must support the goals and objectives of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as approved or amended by the Park Board.

PRIORITY 1: Programs and services that directly contribute to the cost recovery objective of the department, are high priorities of the public and for which there is a demonstrated demand or expectation for the department to offer or are legally mandated to be provided.

- Parks: greenways, open space, playgrounds, splash pads, trails
- Facilities: Monon Community Center, The Waterpark, Central Dog Park, program pavilions
- Programs: aquatics, Extended School Enrichment, Summer Camp Series, fitness
- Other Services: inclusion, natural, cultural and land resource management

PRIORITY 2: Programs and services that are value-added or complimentary to Priority 1 Services that build brand loyalty or directly or indirectly contribute to cost recovery expectations.

- Facilities: shelter (rentable)
- Programs: adaptive, nature
- Other Services: concessions, KidZone

PRIORITY 3: Program and services for which there is an unmet need within the community and the department is well-positioned to provide that do not detract from cost recovery objectives.

- Programs: arts & culture, enrichment, homeschool, science & technology, senior, sports, wellness



FIGURE 59 - PROGRAM CLASSIFICATIONS

5.2.4. Core Program Area Descriptions, Goals, & Example Programs

Adaptive	<p>Description: Adaptive Programs are geared towards individuals with disabilities. CCPR believes that everyone should participate in leisure opportunities that allow for performance at their highest level, and we encourage participation of all ages and abilities.</p> <p>Goals: Provide programs for all age segments to have a measurable positive impact on physical and mental health for members with cognitive or developmental disabilities in the community. Provide adaptive programs at low or no cost. Achieve full cost recovery for all adaptive programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive 5k • Adaptive Ballet • Adaptive Creative Art • Barrier-Free Theatre
Aquatics	<p>Description: Promote safety, fitness, and technique to all levels of swimmers. Encourage swim awareness, socializing, and community through aquatics classes and events.</p> <p>Goals: Promote safe swimming practices for people of all ages and skill levels. Achieve cost recovery and profit from programs. Offer classes and/or events to the greater community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/Child Swim Lessons • Learn to Swim • Sea Dragons Swim Team • Flowboarding
Extended School Enrichment (ESE)	<p>Description: Out of school time programs offered for participants ages 5-15 during the school year.</p> <p>Goals: Provide safe and enriching programs, ensuring the development of basic life skills for participants. Promote a culturally, socially, and physically inclusive environment for the success of all participants. Achieve full cost recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended School Enrichment • School's Out Camps • Enrichment Specials
Fitness	<p>Description: Exercise and fitness activities that promote healthy lifestyles for all ages. Fitness programs are defined as programs included with Monon Community Center membership.</p> <p>Goals: Provide programs and facilities for all age segments to have a measurable positive impact on physical, emotional, social, and mental health for the community. Provide multi-level programs at low cost. Achieve full cost recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunrise Yoga • Fluid Motion • Strictly Strength • Cycle
Nature	<p>Description: Programs to promote nature education, interaction, and learn more about local parks.</p> <p>Goals: Provide programs for all ages the increase nature learning in the community, increase number of Citizen Science volunteers, and meeting cost recovery for paid programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping Basics • Hoosier Riverwatch • My Park Series • Pollinator Pooza
Summer Camp Series	<p>Description: Out of school time programs offered for participants ages 5-15 during the summer season.</p> <p>Goals: Provide safe and enriching programs, ensuring the development of basic life skills for participants. Promote a culturally, socially, and physically inclusive environment for the success of all participants. Achieve full cost recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EnRoute • Success on Stage • Outdoor Explorers • I.M.P.A.C.T.

FIGURE 60 - CORE PROGRAM AREA DESCRIPTIONS, GOALS, AND EXAMPLES

5.2.5. Supplemental Program Descriptions and Examples

ARTS & CULTURE

Kids as young as 1 (with a parent) and adults (18 + years) will learn new ways to express themselves through their creativity.

- Little Artist Series
- Photography Club
- Adult Artist Series: Abstract Art

HOMESCHOOL

Enrichment programs that create learning opportunities through hands-on experiences and social interaction.

- Homeschool Art
- Homeschool Video Game Creation
- Homeschool Outdoor Sports

SCIENCE & TECH

Programs designed to create curiosity and develop critical thinking skills through play-based learning.

- Engineers at Play
- Future Coders I
- Apprentice Gamer Bots

SENIOR

A variety of senior programs designed for the 65 and better community including exercise (both low impact or high-intensity), wellness, education, or social programs.

- Bridge Club
- Unlocking Social Security
- Retirement Income Planning

SPORTS

A wide variety of instructional and competitive sports opportunities for all ages and skill levels.

- Skateboarding I
- Beginning Archery
- Beginner Pickleball

WELLNESS

Programs that promote a holistic healthy lifestyle for all ages. Wellness programs are defined as fee-based programs not associated with Monon Community Center membership and/or day passes.

- Lunch and Learn
- On the Trail to Fitness
- Tai Chi

FIGURE 61 - SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND EXAMPLES

5.2.6. Existing Core Program Area Recommendations

CCPR's existing Core Program Areas provide a well-rounded and diverse array of programs for the community. Based upon the findings from demographic and recreation trends information, staff should evaluate Core Program Areas and individual programs, ideally on an annual basis, to ensure offerings are relevant to evolving demographics and trends in the local community. Furthermore, based on key leadership/focus group input, statistically valid survey results, and discussions with CCPR staff, additional programming needs have been identified within the following existing Core Program Areas. CCPR should ensure that programming staff, supplies, and services grow commensurate to additional planned programming. Otherwise, service quality will be negatively impacted. There are no substantial recommendations from data provided by CCPR for current programming in the core areas of Aquatics and Nature.

ADAPTIVE

CCPR offers a diverse range of adaptive programming for individuals of all ages with disabilities. According to the statistically valid survey, 75% of respondents stated that they are very satisfied with adaptive-specific programs. In addition, 64% say that their needs for adaptive programming are fully to partly met in the community.

According to data provided by CCPR staff, 43% of the adaptive programs offered fall in the mature to declining stages of the program lifecycle. The agency should closely monitor these programs to ensure that they are either modified or replaced with innovative programs that align with community needs and trends.

EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT (ESE)

CCPR staff indicated that ESE has recently shown minimal to no participation growth due to capacity limits, primarily staffing for after school and facility space for camps. There would be growth if CCPR had the capacity to support it. The agency has decided to address these concerns as well as others with a business plan specific to ESE and SCS programming. The business plan will recommend solutions to help ensure out-of-school programming continues to meet the needs of the community.

FITNESS

Fitness programs are defined as programs included with a Monon Community Center membership. Pilates, yoga, trail running, and dance/choreographed exercise are programs that continue to show national participation growth over the last five years. These programs also align with the findings from the ESRI Fitness Market Potential Index, specifically for the City of Carmel and Clay Township.

According to community input, there is an opportunity for increased senior specific fitness programs. Neuro fitness, such as Boxing for Seniors, is an emerging program that supports seniors with early signs of neurodegenerative health issues such as Parkinson's Disease.

Finally, future fitness programming should emphasize all phases of health including social, mental, and physical. CCPR should look to enhance current fitness programs, including personal training, by focusing on creating strong relationships with participants. Develop individualized and more comprehensive fitness experiences by using technology to create personalized health assessments using real-time data that refer participants to group fitness programs tailored to specific goals. Lastly, programs that help with active body recovery, sleep habits, and mental well-being can help individuals achieve their unique fitness goals.



5.2.7. Potential New Core Program Areas and Recommendations

Throughout the community engagement process, several key programming themes emerged including special events, outdoor adventure programs, and more dedicated senior programming. Additionally, all these program areas scored high in terms of community need on the statistically valid survey (e.g., wellness, special events, senior specific programs, and outdoor adventure programs).

During the stakeholder and staff engagement process, ideas and solutions were discussed for core programming areas of focus. CCPR staff indicated that they were evaluating their appropriate role to develop more dedicated senior services through enhanced collaboration with external organizations.

The community has identified Special Events as an integral part of the overall programming portfolio. Currently the City of Carmel implements special events with little assistance from CCPR. Significant resources would be required for CCPR to begin providing special events for the community, including additional staff. CCPR should continue to assess their partnership with the City and other community agencies to determine if a larger role in providing special events is warranted with the limited resources of CCPR to provide these types of activities to the community.

Outdoor adventure activities have emerged as a growing need for the community. CCPR has indicated that the activation of the White River with activities such as implementing a canoe/kayak launch and rental services is a priority. Rafting, Kayaking, and Stand-up Paddling are other opportunities to create programming using the White River. Also, Mountain Biking and Skateboarding have seen a steady increase in participation over the past five years according to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association.

Lastly, sports programming that can engage the age segments from youth to active adults include golf and tennis. These sports activities also continue to see increases in participation nationwide.

5.3. STATISTICALLY VALID COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY - PROGRAM PRIORITY RANKINGS

The purpose of the Program Priority Rankings is to provide a prioritized list of program needs for the community served by CCPR. This model, depicted in **Figure 62**, evaluates quantitative data from the statistically valid community survey, which asked residents to list unmet needs and rank their importance. A weighted scoring system is used to determine the priorities for CCPR programs:

DATA SOURCE	COMPONENT	WEIGHTING
Quantitative Data	Unmet Needs Reported by the Statistically Valid Community Survey: This is used as a factor from the total number of households stating whether they have a need for a program and the extent to which their need for a program has been met. Survey participants were asked to identify this for 11 different programs.	50%
	Importance Rankings Reported by the Statistically Valid Community Survey: This is used as a factor from the importance allocated to a program by the community. Each respondent was asked to identify their top four most important programs.	50%

FIGURE 62 - SCORING SYSTEM FOR PRIORITY INVESTMENT RATING

These weighted scores provide an overall score and priority ranking for the CCPR system. The results of the priority ranking are tabulated into three categories: High Priority (top third), Medium Priority (middle third), and Low Priority (bottom third).

5.3.1. Priorities for Program Investments

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute as a part of the statistically valid community survey to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation programs. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance that residents place on programs and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the program.

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following programs were rated as high priorities for investment:

1. Wellness (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.) (PIR=179)
2. Special events (PIR=170)
3. Senior specific programs (PIR=168)
4. Sports (PIR=158)
5. Outdoor adventure (PIR=152)
6. Arts & culture (PIR=143)
7. Nature/environmental education (PIR=134)
8. Aquatics (including swim lessons) (PIR=115)

Figure 63 shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 11 programs assessed on the survey.

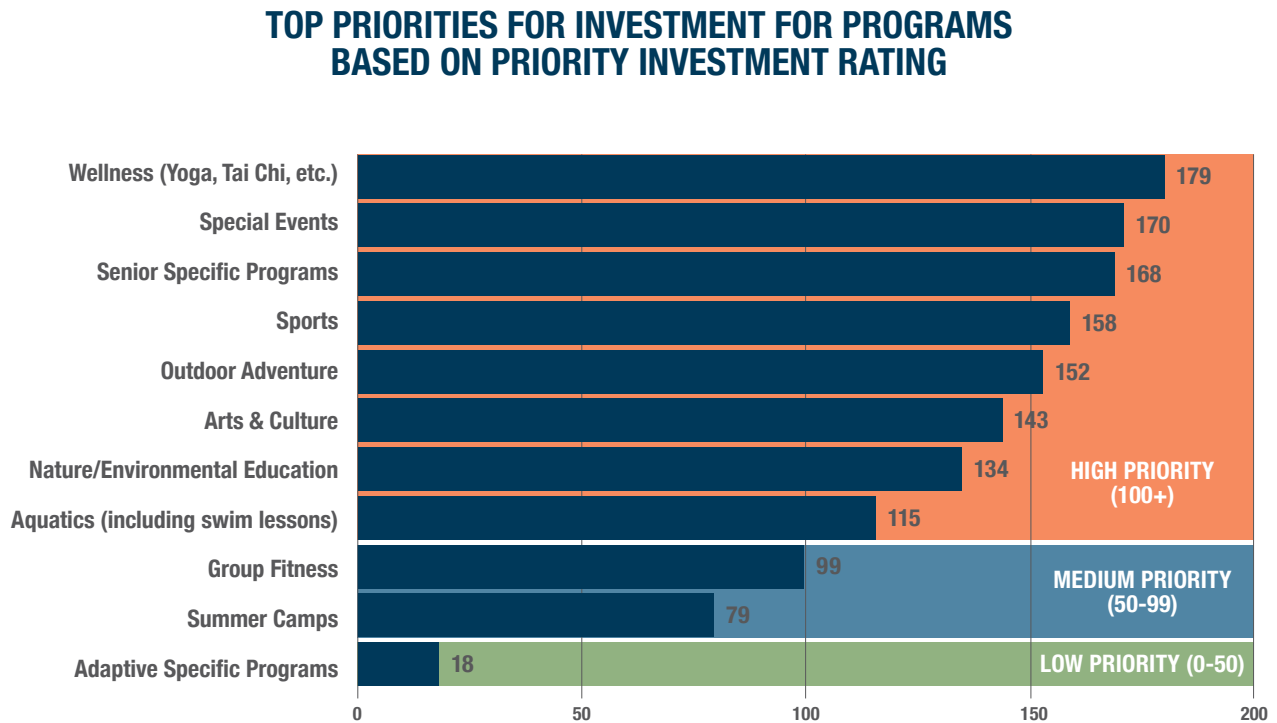


FIGURE 63 - TOP PRIORITIES FOR PROGRAM INVESTMENT

5.3.2. Priorities for Programs by Planning Area

Figure 64 depicts the overall priority investment rating for the City, while also detailing each of the six (6) planning areas. The analysis of the statistically valid community survey considered investment priorities for programming in the different regions served by CCPR. It is important to recognize the similarities, which is a great tool as it relates to potential actions CCPR can make to meet the needs of the community.

AGENCY	OVERALL	NORTHEAST	SOUTHEAST	NORTHWEST	NORTH CENTRAL	SOUTHWEST	SOUTH CENTRAL
Wellness	1	3	1	1	4	4	3
Special events	2	4	6	3	2	1	2
Senior-specific programs	3	1	3	5	7	3	4
Sports	4	2	7	2	6	2	8
Outdoor adventure	5	6	5	7	1	5	1
Arts & culture (ex. painting, theatre, etc.)	6	8	2	4	3	7	5
Nature/environmental education	7	5	4	6	5	9	6
Aquatics (including swim lessons)	8	7	8	9	8	8	7
Group fitness	9	10	10	10	9	6	9
Summer camps	10	9	9	8	10	10	10
Adaptive specific programs	11	11	11	11	11	11	11

FIGURE 64 - PRIORITIES FOR PROGRAMS BY PLANNING AREA

5.3.3. Opportunity Statements

Opportunity statements were developed utilizing the priority investment rating from the statistically valid community survey as potential and/or current actions that CCPR is currently undertaking to meet the needs of the community. These were developed in discussions with CCPR leadership, as well as through alignment with the Action Plan detailed in Chapter Seven. The following opportunity statements are provided for each of the programs in order of **overall** ranking.

1. High Priority (Top Priorities: High Importance/ Higher Unmet Need)

Wellness (Yoga, Tai chi, etc.): Current core program area.

Special events: Explore special event partnership opportunities outside Central Carmel.

Senior specific programs: Expand opportunities for senior programs through collaboration.

Sports: Explore expansion of sports supplemental programming through partnerships.

Outdoor adventure: Potential for expansion of these programs along the White River Corridor through canoe/kayaking, as well as future Quarry Park.

Arts & culture: Expand opportunities for arts & culture through partnerships.

Nature/environmental education: Current core program area.

Aquatics (including swim lessons): Current core program area.

CHAPTER 6

OPERATIONAL REVIEW AND FINANCIAL ANALYSIS



6.1. STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

In April 2023, as a crucial component of the Master Plan, staff focus groups were conducted involving members of the Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (CCPR) team. These sessions served as the cornerstone for identifying operational challenges and future priorities, while helping determine the most relevant topics for the operational review.

A facilitation guide was created that featured a set of thought-provoking questions to stimulate discussions, with additional follow-up inquiries introduced as needed. Participants from various key functions within CCPR were selected by representatives from the following divisions:

- Administration (Business Services, Human Resources and Marketing & Communications)
- Extended School Enrichment and Summer Camps
- Recreation & Facilities
- Park and Natural Resources (full and part-time)
- Senior Management (Executives and division directors)

The following outlines comments, suggestions, as well as recommendations from the staffing review.

6.1.1. Strengths to Build on Over the Next Five Years

CCPR has achieved remarkable brand recognition in its history. Recently, this has been further exemplified thanks to the successful Reimagining Parks initiative that revitalized a wide range of parks and introduced new playgrounds and amenities that have been embraced by the entire community.

CCPR is actively dedicated to enhancing its inclusion and adaptive programs, with a specific focus on improving existing parks that expand upon amenities such as inclusive playgrounds, accessible trails, as well as overlooks. Also, CCPR is focused on developing new parks to meet the needs of a growing community. CCPR staff have effectively engaged in community outreach efforts over the past five years with all their planning efforts.

Internally, CCPR staff were appreciative of the culture which fostered better relationships and a more collaborative, less isolated approach among divisions, partly thanks to the contributions of the culture committee in organizing staff events and promoting a more integrated work environment.

CCPR boasts a dedicated full-time team with long tenure, earning the trust of the community. With their innovative program offerings, effective management of park assets, and dedication to the preservation of natural areas, CCPR is committed to advancing these programs into the future. Maintaining these high standards requires adequate staff to meet the needs of the community and to ensure CCPR continues to operate at a high level.

6.1.2. Key Outcomes from the Focus Groups

CCPR is facing several challenges and opportunities. First, as the system expands with new properties, there is a need to ensure adequate staffing to keep up with the growth. Sustainability from a staffing perspective is a key consideration, focusing on what is feasible to maintain a competent workforce.

Space constraints at the MCC, which is nearing its capacity, are a pressing issue, especially if additional full-time employees are required to accommodate program expansion. Ensuring an appropriate workspace for full-time staff should be considered.

Furthermore, the establishment of a new maintenance facility is needed, as well as ensuring there is adequate funding within the Parks & Natural Resources Division for a small natural resource-focused team, demonstrating a dedication to environmental preservation and education.

Additionally, there's a desire to continue to build a sense of unity among employees who might otherwise feel segregated by different divisions.

6.1.3. Park, Facility, and Program Improvements

Staff outlined several key areas for improvement within the organization. There is a pressing need to build a functional, right-sized maintenance facility that embodies a world-class parks department. Regarding specific amenities, staff believe there is a demand for a pump track or single track, and an evaluation of the indoor aquatics center for the most efficient use of space. The desire for pickleball courts and additional dog park(s) is evident, with a recognized need for these facilities. An outdoor fitness trail with stations, expansion and/or renovation of the skatepark, and the introduction of more amenities for the 2-5 age group were also mentioned as potential development opportunities.

Senior programming was mentioned often, with a focus on partnering and collaborating with PrimeLife.

Enhancing The Waterpark user experience and maintaining its high-quality standard is essential, ensuring it provides a welcoming, safe, and clean environment for visitors.

6.1.4. Operational or Maintenance Issues to Address

Several concerns and improvement areas have been identified within the MCC and The Waterpark. Staff have noted that members at The Waterpark and the MCC have mentioned that cleanliness can be improved at both facilities. The MCC requires a new roof due to leaks, and there are water temperature problems in the locker rooms, as well as temperate swings in the MCC potentially necessitating an enhanced HVAC system. Staff mentioned that aquatics and facility space need expansion, as it's currently insufficient, and personal trainers are reluctant to work at the crowded MCC. A space study is needed to identify the best use of space. Outdated sound systems in group fitness areas and overall technology upgrades are also on the agenda.

In the realm of the Extended School Enrichment Division, staff retention is a concern due to the limited workforce. Regarding ESE and Summer Camp Series facilities, there is a desire for an additional facility to accommodate the participation growth, especially considering the high demand for camps at Jill Perelman Pavilion. Adequate storage for kids and staff is essential, along with indoor space for active play during adverse weather conditions. Until a new facility is constructed in Bear Creek Park, consider identifying underutilized facilities in the community that could serve as additional camp locations. Along with a new maintenance facility, the Parks & Natural Resources Division would like to see a small satellite shop on both sides of the city and address lighting issues in the maintenance shop parking lot, as it is very dark when employees arrive and leave during times of the year. Managing the fleet for fuel, small engines, oil changes, and tires, as well as centralizing fleet maintenance, is seen as an opportunity to improve efficiency and ensure equipment is properly cared for.

6.1.5. Organizational Alignment

CCPR did amazing work in dealing with the changes in protocols from COVID-19. Early on, staff recognized this was going to be a time when the community would need their parks and services most to help cope with the continuous change in human interactions. To help prepare for changes that could take place after reopening, CCPR developed the Resumption of Operations Plan to reopen parks, programs, and facilities in a phased manner. CCPR was very committed to implementing policies and measures to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This required many significant changes to operations, especially during the initial phases. CCPR had to consider revenue generation and user demand as it prioritized what services to provide when it was safe to provide such services. This effort to minimize the financial impacts of the pandemic has helped the services rebound much faster.

The organization has identified several key priorities across its system. First, there is a need to ensure understanding and buy-in with elected officials on how CCPR operates. Creating another dedicated space for summer camps is essential to free up the MCC for other activities. Additionally, there is a focus on developing an actionable staffing plan that places emphasis on employee well-being, including the potential addition of a dedicated training manager to enhance capacity.

With staffing needs across the system, all staff have a desire to grow the Human Resources team to support enhanced recruitment for the growing Extended School Enrichment, Recreation & Facilities, as well as the Parks & Natural Resources divisions.

6.1.6. One Improvement Over the Next Five Years

On a system-wide level, there's a commitment to advancing adaptive and inclusive programming, ensuring that everyone can participate. Additionally, the organization maintains high maintenance standards within the park system, which are seen as crucial, and there's a determination to uphold these standards. This effort, however, will necessitate an increase in staffing levels to meet the rigorous maintenance requirements, as well as when new park properties are added to the system.

Within the Parks & Natural Resources Division, there is a need for additional staff support to take care of the growing park system. Building a new maintenance shop and implementing a professional growth plan for staff to progress within the system are key areas of development.

The MCC and The Waterpark are evaluating the efficient use of their indoor and aquatic space to meet growing demand. During peak seasons, enhancing and/or increasing guest services is desired to improve customer experience.



6.2. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The section of the report presents the financial assessment of CCPR as a part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As a key element of the Master Plan, available information was reviewed to assess the financial situation of CCPR. The revenues, expenditures and capital funds were analyzed to identify trends and assess CCPR's financial integrity. The cost recovery for facilities, programs, and services at major functional levels has also been analyzed to assess the adequacy of revenues to cover continuing operations.

6.2.1 Data Reviewed

The detailed cost and activity information prepared by CCPR staff was reviewed as part of this analysis. The financial reports for fiscal years 2017 through 2022 were analyzed to assess the financial situation of CCPR.

6.2.2. Financial Strength

CCPR has maintained adequate cash balances for each year shown in Table 21. A strong cash balance provides flexibility with respect to managing programs, maintaining assets, and meeting the changing needs of the community. This proved to be especially true as CCPR's cash reserves, along with key operational adjustments, were critical to help absorb the significant financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic without the need to obtain subsidies from the City of Carmel or Clay Township.

The cash balances increased between the fiscal years 2017 and 2022. The fiscal year 2022 cash balance is 46% of annual expenditures and is 3% less than the 2017 cash balance. The fiscal year 2022 non-capital funds cash balance is 33% of annual non-capital funds expenditures and is 1% less than the 2017 non-capital funds cash balance.

It is recommended that agencies have a range of cash and investments between 60 and 90 days to cover unexpected revenue drops and unusual or emergency expenditures. CCPR had 168 days of total cash for 2022. The non-capital funds cash was 120 days for 2022. CCPR should continue to maintain enough cash reserves.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Cash Balance	\$15,723,674	\$12,057,165	\$12,514,537	\$9,196,683	\$13,319,459	\$15,469,704
Annual Expenditures, Encumbrances, & Reserves	\$31,858,429	\$34,005,409	\$31,411,855	\$27,212,255	\$26,460,238	\$33,564,694
Cash to Expenditures	49%	35%	40%	34%	50%	46%
Days of Cash	180	129	145	123	184	168
Non-Capital Cash	\$3,189,465	\$7,496,767	\$7,183,879	\$4,310,561	\$4,873,243	\$6,728,415
Non-Capital Expenditures	\$9,261,555	\$20,380,798	\$22,408,875	\$17,164,812	\$16,379,678	\$20,687,173
Cash to Expenditures	34%	37%	32%	25%	30%	33%
Days of Cash	126	134	117	92	109	119

TABLE 21 - CASH BALANCES

Total revenues and other financing sources and total expenditures, encumbrances and reserves are shown in **Table 22**. CCPR has consistently managed revenues and expenditures to cover the cost of operations as shown in **Table 23**.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Revenues & Other Financing Sources	\$32,223,401	\$34,131,892	\$31,475,052	\$27,353,556	\$26,937,474	\$33,774,810
Total Expenditures, Encumbrances & Reserves	\$31,858,429	\$34,005,409	\$31,411,855	\$27,212,255	\$26,460,238	\$33,564,694
Revenues Over / (Under) Expenditures	\$364,971	\$126,483	\$63,197	\$141,302	\$477,236	\$210,115
Percent Recovery	101%	100%	100%	101%	102%	101%

TABLE 22 - TOTAL REVENUES AND TOTAL EXPENDITURES

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Operating Revenues						
Taxes-City of Carmel	\$3,003,488	\$3,092,608	\$3,370,433	\$4,431,772	\$4,567,845	\$4,921,884
Taxes-Clay Township	\$2,744,425	\$3,374,030	\$3,427,998	\$3,134,980	\$3,832,358	\$3,557,502
Impact Fee	\$1,741,606	\$1,148,884	\$1,075,906	\$964,584	\$1,351,368	\$783,665
Earned Income	\$10,292,096	\$10,673,640	\$11,495,655	\$6,236,191	\$7,868,282	\$11,051,128
Total Operating Revenues	\$17,781,615	\$18,289,162	\$19,369,992	\$14,767,527	\$17,619,853	\$20,314,179
Operating Expenditures						
Personal Services	\$7,356,192	\$7,770,799	\$8,099,311	\$7,552,145	\$6,721,709	\$8,164,597
Supplies	\$928,320	\$891,506	\$927,888	\$520,238	\$576,488	\$765,233
Other Services & Charges	\$3,790,602	\$3,922,016	\$4,424,668	\$4,232,657	\$3,767,043	\$4,184,908
Capital Outlay	\$120,933	\$54,617	\$115,646	\$217,888	\$28,561	\$38,880
Total Operating Expenditures	\$12,196,047	\$12,638,938	\$13,567,512	\$12,522,928	\$11,093,802	\$13,153,618
Revenues Over / (Under) Expenditures	\$5,585,568	\$5,650,224	\$5,802,480	\$2,244,599	\$6,526,051	\$7,160,561
Percent Cost Recovery	146%	145%	143%	118%	159%	154%

TABLE 23 - OPERATING REVENUES AND OPERATING EXPENDITURES

CCPR has no debt, which is unusual for a large agency. The Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the City of Carmel and Clay Township, which created the park system, dictates that any bonds issued to acquire or improve real property be issued in either the name of the City or Township. Payments for bonds issued by the City or Township for the benefit of CCPR are not included in CCPR's budget, but instead paid by the City or Township through their respective budgets.

In 2004, the Carmel Clay Parks Building Corporation issued a \$55 million lease-rental bond, the proceeds of which were used to construct Central Park and the Monon Community Center. Because the City did not have the ability to tax unincorporated areas of the Township at the time of issuance, and to ensure property owners both within and outside the incorporated limits of the City were paying the same tax levy for the Central Park Bond, the City Council passed an ordinance authorizing issuance of the bond and waiving to the Township its taxing authority for bond-related expenses. As authorized by this action, for the life of the 20-year bond, Clay Township levies a tax on all property owners within the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the township to make the annual lease payments on the Central Park Bond.

Clay Township, through its Impact Program, has further invested in CCPR through the issuance of over \$36.3 million in bonds between 2019 and 2022 directly benefiting the park system. These bonds provided for major renovations and enhancements in Flowing Well Park, Hazel Landing Park, Lawrence W. Inlow Park, Meadowlark Park, River Heritage Park, West Park, and along the Monon Greenway and other assets within Central Carmel. The Township also issued over \$17.8 million in bonds that indirectly benefited the park system by installing roundabouts adjacent to Central Park, improving vehicle access to and from the park, developing a large event shelter in Hamilton County Parks and Recreation’s Coxhall Gardens, and constructing a fieldhouse for the Carmel Dads’ Club, which manages youth sports within the community (that in other communities frequently is the responsibility of the parks department). The fieldhouse is also available to CCPR for summer camps.

While payments for the Central Park and Impact Program bonds represent expenses on behalf of the park system, CCPR funds are not used to make these payments and are therefore not reflected in CCPR’s budgets. For capital improvements managed by CCPR, the Township will make annual bond payments averaging slightly over \$3 million through 2041. A summary of the outstanding bonds issued by Clay Township directly benefiting CCPR is provided in **Table 24**.

Project	Issue Date	Original Amount	Final Maturity	Range of Outstanding Annual Debt Service
Central Park (refinancing of bond issued in 2002)	10/21/15	\$20,000,000	01/15/25	\$1,333,170 to \$2,406,718
Central Park (refinancing of bond issued in 2002)	10/21/15	\$16,970,000	01/15/25	\$945,400 to \$2,063,680
West Park	11/26/19	\$4,765,859	01/15/39	\$111,200 to \$858,425
Lawrence W. Inlow Park	11/26/19	\$2,639,928	01/15/39	\$61,700 to \$477,350
Meadowlark Park	11/26/19	\$4,132,416	01/15/39	\$96,500 to \$745,100
Carey Grove Park	11/26/19	\$2,080,860	01/15/39	\$48,650 to \$375,350
River Heritage Park	11/26/19	\$3,070,003	01/15/39	\$72,100 to \$557,300
Monon Greenway	11/26/19	\$4,754,501	01/15/39	\$121,250 to \$895,150
Japanese Garden	11/26/19	\$3,093,926	01/15/39	\$72,100 to \$557,300
Flowing Well Park	11/26/19	\$1,935,990	01/15/39	\$45,300 to \$352,600
White River Pedestrian Bridge	11/26/20	\$4,305,000	07/15/40	\$173,825 to \$347,963
Carter Green, Japanese Garden, Misc. Park Improvements	05/18/22	\$5,580,000	01/15/42	\$396,600 to \$403,500

TABLE 24 - CLAY TOWNSHIP BONDS ISSUED FOR CCPR-MANAGED ASSETS

Two separate Carmel Redevelopment Authority lease-rental bonds issued in 2017 have also benefited the park system, with portions of these bonds used to expand the Midtown section of the Monon Greenway, provide new recreational amenities within the Monon Boulevard, and construct Midtown Plaza.

6.2.3. Revenues

Total revenues for CCPR’s operating and capital budgets for fiscal years 2017 through 2022 are shown in **Table 25**. Over the period, total revenues increased by 14%. Tax revenues increased by 48% and the earned income increased by 7%. The percentage of earned income to total revenues ranged from 42% to 58%. The 2020 revenues were negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic. In similar size agencies across the country, earned income provides 40% to 60% of funding. CCPR has maintained a good mix of funding from earned income with the most recent years being higher than the average.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
REVENUES						
Taxes-City of Carmel	\$3,003,488	\$3,092,608	\$3,370,433	\$4,431,772	\$4,567,845	\$4,921,884
Taxes-Clay Township	\$2,744,425	\$3,374,030	\$3,427,998	\$3,134,980	\$3,832,358	\$3,557,502
Impact Fee	\$1,741,606	\$1,148,884	\$1,075,906	\$964,584	\$1,351,368	\$783,665
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	\$10,292,096	\$10,673,640	\$11,495,655	\$6,236,191	\$7,868,282	\$11,051,128
TOTAL REVENUES	\$17,781,615	\$18,289,162	\$19,369,992	\$14,767,527	\$17,619,853	\$20,314,179
Annual Change		3%	6%	-24%	19%	15%
Cummulative Change		3%	9%	-17%	-1%	14%
Annual Increase in Tax Revenues		13%	5%	11%	11%	1%
Cummulative Increase in Tax Revenues		13%	18%	32%	46%	48%
Annual Increase in Impact Fees		-34%	-6%	-10%	40%	-42%
Cummulative Increase in Impact Fees		-34%	-38%	-45%	-22%	-55%
Annual in User Fees, Interest & Earned Income		4%	8%	-46%	26%	40%
Cummulative Increase in User Fees, Interest & Earned Income		4%	12%	-39%	-24%	7%
Percent of Revenues from Earned Income	58%	58%	59%	42%	45%	54%

TABLE 25 - TOTAL REVENUES

As illustrated in **Table 26** User Fees and Other Earned Income have been the majority source of revenue for CCPR apart from 2020 and 2021. Revenue generating operations were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic skewing the numbers for these two years. For similar sized agencies across the country, earned income provides 40% to 60% of total funding, putting CCPR in line with national averages. The percentage of taxes as a total of CCPR’s total revenue has generally trended upward as more non-revenue producing assets have come online placing a greater demand on the tax roll. Most notably, operating expenses have increased because of the recent park renovations and assumption of new recreation amenities developed by the city within central Carmel, all requiring additional tax funding.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
REVENUES						
Taxes	32%	35%	35%	51%	48%	42%
Impact Fee	10%	6%	6%	7%	7%	4%
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	58%	59%	59%	42%	45%	54%
TOTAL REVENUES	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 26 - PERCENT OF TOTAL REVENUE BY CATEGORY

6.2.4. Operating Expenditures

Table 27 illustrates CCPR’s historical operating expenses from fiscal years 2017 through 2022. Like most park and recreation agencies and other service-oriented organizations, Personal Services (which include salaries, wages, and employer’s share of taxes and benefits) represents on average 61% of CCPR’s operating expenses during the six-year period. Other Services and Charges comprise on average 32% of expenditures, accounting for utilities, transaction and software fees, professional services, and similar expenses. Capital Outlays represent less than 1% of expenses, as CCPR’s capital expenditures are primarily funded through the department’s capital budgets.

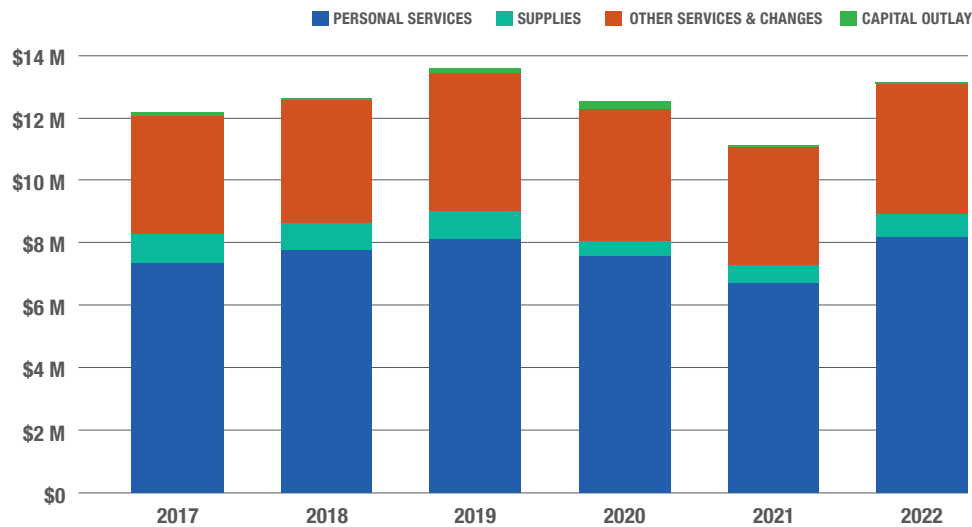


TABLE 27 - EXPENDITURES

The total expenditures for fiscal years 2017 through 2022 have increased by 8% from \$12,196,047 in 2018 to \$13,153,618 in 2022 as shown in **Table 28**. The 2020 and 2021 expenditures reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with 2022 showing largely a full recovery to pre-pandemic numbers.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EXPENDITURES						
Personal Services	\$7,356,192	\$7,770,799	\$8,099,311	\$7,552,145	\$6,721,709	\$8,164,597
Supplies	\$928,320	\$891,506	\$927,888	\$520,238	\$576,488	\$765,233
Other Services and Charges	\$3,790,602	\$3,922,016	\$4,424,668	\$4,232,657	\$3,767,043	\$4,184,908
Capital Outlay	\$120,933	\$54,617	\$115,646	\$217,888	\$28,561	\$38,880
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$12,196,047	\$12,638,938	\$13,567,512	\$12,522,928	\$11,093,802	\$13,153,618
Annual Total Change		4%	7%	-8%	-11%	19%
Cummulative Total Change		4%	11%	3%	-9%	8%
Annual Operations and Maintenance Change		4%	7%	-9%	-10%	19%
Cummulative O&M Change		4%	11%	2%	-8%	9%
Annual Capital Change		-55%	112%	88%	-87%	36%
Cummulative Capital Change		-55%	-4%	80%	-76%	-68%
Percent of Capital to Total Expenditures	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%

TABLE 28 - OPERATING EXPENDITURES

6.2.5. Capital Development & Maintenance Expenditures

CCPR’s Capital Development & Maintenance expenses from fiscal years 2017 through 2022 are outlined in Tale 29. During the six-year period analyzed, CCPR has devoted over \$30 million to capital improvements within the park system. All expenditures were funded solely through Local Income Taxes received from Clay Township, Park Impact Fees, accumulated cash reserves from Summer Camp and Monon Community Center operations, and a small amount of interest earned on associated accounts. It is important to note the identified capital expenses in **Figure 9** do not include additional capital investments funded by Clay Township or the City of Carmel through the issuance of bonds.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EXPENDITURES						
Capital Development & Maintenance	\$3,846,733	\$9,205,060	\$5,252,375	\$5,374,536	\$1,906,241	\$4,464,188
Annual Capital Development & Maintenance Change		139%	-43%	2%	-65%	134%
Cummulative Capital Development & Maintenance Change		139%	37%	40%	-50%	16%

TABLE 29 - CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURES

CCPR’s expenditures from its capital budgets have historically varied year-to-year since these funds have not been required for debt service obligations. Instead, CCPR must allow cash balances to accumulate until such time as there is sufficient money available to fund projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan. Key capital projects funded since 2017 include, but are not limited to:

- Replacement of play features in The Waterpark’s main activity pool and kiddie pool.
- Renovations to the Monon Community Center entrances, expansion of fitness into the overhead walkway between the two buildings, replacement of fitness equipment, and flooring and furniture replacements.
- Phase 1 development of The Groves in West Park, including Jill Perelman Pavilion.
- Expansion of the Central Dog Park.
- Renovation and enhancement of the Lawrence W. Inlow Park playground.
- Acquisition of the 27-acre Bear Creek Park property in northwest Carmel and 14 acres within the White River Corridor for a future trailhead.
- Development of master plans for Bear Creek Park and Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park to help guide future improvements in these new parks.



6.2.6. General Fund

The City of Carmel General Fund resources provided to CCPR are shown in **Table 30**. The General Fund revenues have increased by 150% over the study period. General Fund revenues covered 35% of the Department’s 2022 total operating expenditures.

General Fund Fund 101	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual
OPERATING REVENUES						
Taxes-City of Carmel	\$3,003,488	\$3,092,608	\$3,370,433	\$3,906,772	\$4,122,845	\$4,641,884
Taxes-Clay Township	\$86,202	\$88,760	\$100,662	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Operating Revenues	\$3,089,690	\$3,181,368	\$3,471,095	\$3,906,772	\$4,122,845	\$4,641,884
OPERATING EXPENSES						
Personal Services	\$1,812,842	\$2,080,022	\$2,253,859	\$2,532,229	\$2,687,944	\$2,847,076
Supplies	104,312	125,082	119,234	113,746	108,039	160,757
Other Services & Charges	852,007	845,050	1,031,548	1,076,316	1,063,473	1,101,663
Capital Outlay	13,351	15,811	54,776	11,063	5,789	3,676
Total Operating Expenses	\$2,782,512	\$3,065,965	\$3,459,417	\$3,733,354	\$3,865,245	\$4,113,173
OTHER EXPENSES						
Funds Returned	\$342,379	\$103,003	\$47,157	\$123,900	\$240,860	\$198,007
Total Other Expenses	\$342,379	\$103,003	\$47,157	\$123,900	\$240,860	\$198,007
Total Operating Expenses & Other Expenses	\$3,124,890	\$3,168,968	\$3,506,574	\$3,857,254	\$4,106,104	\$4,311,180
Net Revenues and Expenses	\$92,730	\$105,130	\$69,651	\$119,198	\$137,679	\$468,383

TABLE 30 - GENERAL FUND - REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

6.2.7. Capital Fund

The Capital Fund resources are primarily provided by the City of Carmel property taxes as shown in **Table 31**.

Capital Fund Fund 103	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual
OPERATING REVENUES						
Taxes-City of Carmel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$525,000	\$222,500	\$280,000
Taxes-Clay Township	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	\$3,315	\$2,754	\$5,383	\$779	\$2,320	\$12,668
Total Operating Revenues	\$3,315	\$2,754	\$5,383	\$525,779	\$224,820	\$292,668
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES						
Cash Reserves as of Beginning of Year	\$432,049	\$424,569	\$143,346	\$102,757	\$481,436	\$553,321
Total Revenues & Other Financing Sources	\$435,364	\$427,323	\$148,730	\$628,535	\$706,256	\$845,988
OPERATING EXPENSES						
Personal Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Services & Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Operating Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
DEVELOPMENT & OTHER EXPENSES						
Capital Development & Maintenance	\$10,795	\$283,976	\$45,973	\$147,099	\$152,935	\$380,048
Total Development & Other Expenses	\$10,795	\$283,976	\$45,973	\$147,099	\$152,935	\$380,048
ENCUMBRANCES & RESERVES						
Encumbrances & Dedicated to Projects	\$424,569	\$143,346	\$102,757	\$481,436	\$553,321	\$465,940
Total Encumbrances & Reserves	\$424,569	\$143,346	\$102,757	\$481,436	\$553,321	\$465,940
Total Expenses, Encumbrances & Reserves	\$435,364	\$427,323	\$148,730	\$628,535	\$706,256	\$845,988
Net Income	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cost Recovery	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cash Balance/Investments	\$424,569	\$143,346	\$102,757	\$481,436	\$553,321	\$465,940

TABLE 31 - CAPITAL FUND - REVENUE, EXPENDITURES, AND COST RECOVERY

6.2.8. Cost Recovery from User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income

Non-Tax Revenues, which exclude revenues from taxes or impact fees, have averaged 77% over the six-year period. Looking more closely at year-to-year numbers, **Table 32** shows that CCPR's cost recovery from non-tax revenues typically ranges between 84% and 85% of the total operating expenses, except for the pandemic impacted years of 2020 and 2021, which still significantly exceeded industry best practices of 35- 40% cost recovery. CCPR continues to demonstrate a best-in-class cost recovery rate because of its entrepreneurial approach to managing operations. This strong cost recovery well positions the department to continue providing quality programs and facilities for the community without significant reliance on tax dollars for operations.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	\$10,292,096	\$10,673,640	\$11,495,655	\$6,236,191	\$7,868,282	\$11,051,128
Operating Expenditures	\$12,196,047	\$12,638,938	\$13,567,512	\$12,522,928	\$11,093,802	\$13,153,618
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income Over / (Under) Operating Expenditures	(\$1,903,951)	(\$1,965,298)	(\$2,071,857)	(\$6,286,737)	(\$3,225,520)	(\$2,102,490)
Cost Recovery from Earned Income	84%	84%	85%	50%	71%	84%

TABLE 32 - COST RECOVERY FROM NON-TAX REVENUES

6.2.9. Operating Funds

A summary of the cost recovery for each of the respective operating funds is provided in **Table 33**. CCPR has consistently demonstrated a healthy cost recovery rate with Extended School Enrichment, the Monon Community Center, and Recreation Facilities. Only during 2020 and the height of the pandemic did Extended School Enrichment or the Monon Community Center dip below 100% cost recovery, which is well above industry best practices and industry averages.

Fiscal Year: Program Funds	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Industry Average Cost Recovery
Extended School Enrichment	112%	111%	113%	69%	109%	123%	100%+
Monon Community Center	105%	109%	112%	69%	105%	118%	80% to 100%
Recreation Facilities	256%	219%	143%	113%	133%	127%	40% to 100%

TABLE 33 - SUMMARY OF COST RECOVERY FROM SELECTED OPERATIONS



6.2.10. Extended School Enrichment Operations

The revenues and expenditures for Extended School Enrichment (ESE) and Summer Camp Series operations for fiscal year 2022 are illustrated below in **Table 34**, which are generally reflective of this fund’s financial performance throughout the six-year assessment period for this financial analysis. Factoring in all associated operating expenses, the program had a cost recovery rate of over 100% in 2022, consistent with its historical practices dating to ESE’s inception in 2006.

EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT	108 UNASSIGNED	1081 BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL	1082 CAMPS	FUND TOTAL
	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual
OPERATING REVENUES				
Earned Income	\$57,328.47	\$2,987,416.53	\$1,430,732.66	\$4,475,477.66
Interest & Other Revenue	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Revenues	\$57,328.47	\$2,987,416.53	\$1,430,732.66	\$4,475,477.66
OPERATING EXPENDITURES				
Personal Services	\$0.00	\$2,074,972.04	\$601,410.67	\$2,676,382.71
Supplies	\$0.00	\$124,862.66	\$47,339.00	\$172,201.66
Other Services & Charges	\$0.00	\$333,342.80	\$438,558.93	\$771,901.73
Capital Outlay	\$0.00	\$11,297.64	\$0.00	\$11,297.64
Total Operating Expenditures	\$0.00	\$2,544,475.14	\$1,087,308.60	\$3,631,783.74
NET INCOME	\$57,328.47	\$442,941.39	\$343,424.06	\$843,693.92
Cost Recovery	N?A	117%	132%	123%

TABLE 34 - 2022 EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM COST RECOVERY

The Revenues, Expenditures, Cost Recovery and Cash Balance/Investments for Extended School Enrichment for fiscal years 2017 through 2022 are shown in **Table 35**.

The cost recovery has remained strong, and the fund has a healthy cash balance to provide for program needs and help contribute towards capital projects benefiting the summer camp programming.

EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT Fund 108	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual
OPERATING REVENUES						
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	\$4,221,188	\$4,254,853	\$4,554,746	\$2,600,394	\$2,979,177	\$4,475,478
Total Operating Revenues	\$4,221,188	\$4,254,853	\$4,554,746	\$2,600,394	\$2,979,177	\$4,475,478
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES						
Cash Reserves as of Beginning of Year	\$2,957,823	\$3,404,220	\$3,841,547	\$2,836,070	\$1,483,031	\$1,716,861
Total Revenues & Other Financing Sources	\$7,179,011	\$7,659,073	\$8,396,292	\$5,436,464	\$4,462,208	\$6,192,339
OPERATING EXPENSES						
Personal Services	\$2,742,148	\$2,777,293	\$2,850,202	\$2,450,542	\$2,014,657	\$2,676,383
Supplies	284,818	273,168	304,161	136,648	96,498	172,202
Other Services & Charges	732,168	746,194	861,877	1,087,274	631,553	771,902
Capital Outlay	16,921	20,871	6,460	72,928	2,639	11,298
Total Operating Expenses	\$3,776,055	\$3,817,526	\$4,022,700	\$3,747,392	\$2,745,347	\$3,631,784
ENCUMBRANCES & RESERVES						
Encumbrances & Dedicated to Projects	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$12,807	\$0	\$0	\$0
Operating Reserve	878,002	1,291,547	1,773,262	408,031	641,861	1,560,555
Cash Flow Reserve	1,025,000	1,050,000	1,050,000	1,075,000	1,075,000	1,000,000
Total Encumbrances & Reserves	\$1,903,002	\$2,341,547	\$2,823,262	\$1,483,031	\$1,716,861	\$2,560,555
Total Expenses, Encumbrances & Reserves	\$5,679,056	\$6,159,073	\$6,845,963	\$5,230,422	\$4,462,208	\$6,192,339
NET INCOME	\$445,133	\$437,327	\$532,046	(\$1,146,997)	\$233,831	\$843,694
Cost Recovery	112%	111%	113%	69%	109%	123%
Cash Balance/Investments	\$3,403,002	\$3,841,547	\$2,836,070	\$1,483,031	\$1,716,861	\$2,560,555

TABLE 35 - EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT - REVENUE, EXPENDITURES, COST RECOVERY, AND CASH BALANCE/INVESTMENTS



6.2.11. Monon Community Center Operations

The revenues and expenditures for the Monon Community Center’s (MCC) operations for fiscal year 2022 are illustrated below in **Table 36**, which are largely representative of the MCC’s financial performance throughout the six-year assessment period for this financial analysis. Factoring in all associated operating expenses, the MCC had a cost recovery rate of over 100% in 2022, consistent with its historical practices dating to 2010, the facility’s third year of operations.

MONON	109 UNASSIGNED	1091 ADMINISTRATION	1092 GUEST SERVICES	1093 MAINTENANCE	1094 AQUATICS	1095 FOOD SERVICE	1096 RECREATION	1097 GIFT CARDS	FUND TOTAL
	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual	2022 Actual
REVENUE									
Earned Income	\$181,294.91	\$31,421.67	\$5,121,971.54	\$0.00	\$47,525.95	\$281,549.31	\$557,561.46	\$278.00	\$6,221,602.84
Other Revenue	(\$8,300.00)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,300.00	\$0.00
Total Revenue	\$172,994.91	\$31,421.67	\$5,121,971.54	\$0.00	\$47,525.95	\$281,549.31	\$557,561.46	\$8,578.00	\$6,221,602.84
EXPENDITURES									
Personal Services	\$0.00	\$298,962.15	\$809,834.84	\$176,246.21	\$667,831.02	\$88,820.67	\$599,443.08	\$0.00	\$2,641,137.97
Supplies	\$0.00	\$16,487.96	\$30,523.41	\$68,200.81	\$163,082.83	\$96,088.69	\$40,322.14	\$0.00	\$414,705.84
Other Services & Charges	\$0.00	\$1,537,456.52	\$4,851.79	\$451,313.57	\$113,860.12	\$5,055.45	\$64,478.07	\$0.00	\$2,177,015.52
Capital Outlay	\$0.00	\$23,905.98	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$23,905.98
Capital Development/Maint.	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$20,909.50	\$20,909.50
Total Expenditures	\$0.00	\$1,876,812.61	\$845,210.04	\$695,760.59	\$944,773.97	\$189,964.81	\$704,243.29	\$20,909.50	\$5,277,674.81
NET INCOME	\$181,294.91	(\$1,845,390.94)	\$4,276,761.50	(\$695,760.59)	(\$897,248.02)	\$91,584.50	(\$146,681.83)	\$278.00	\$964,837.53
Cost Recovery	N/A	2%	606%	0%	7%	148%	79%	41%	118%

TABLE 36 - MONON COMMUNITY CENTER PROGRAM COST RECOVERY

The Revenues, Expenditures, Cost Recovery and Cash Balance/Investments for the Monon Community Center for fiscal years 2017 through 2022 are shown in **Table 37**. The cost recovery rate has remained strong, and the fund has a healthy cash balance which positions it to withstand the financial impacts of unforeseen circumstances and contribute towards the cost of capital projects within the facility.

MONON COMMUNITY CENTER	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual
OPERATING REVENUES						
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	\$5,908,074	\$6,224,718	\$6,654,125	\$3,407,573	\$4,607,881	\$6,221,603
Total Operating Revenues	\$5,908,074	\$6,224,718	\$6,654,125	\$3,407,573	\$4,607,881	\$6,221,603
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES						
Cash Reserves as of Beginning of Year	\$2,666,639	\$3,040,404	\$3,485,724	\$4,180,048	\$2,638,160	\$2,859,859
Transfer from Cash Change Fund	16,600	16,000	16,000	0	0	0
Gift Card Sales & Customer Overpayments	72,654	9,109	5,979	1,812	0	0
Total Other Financing Sources	\$2,755,893	\$3,065,513	\$3,507,703	\$4,181,860	\$2,638,160	\$2,859,859
Total Revenues & Other Financing Sources	\$8,663,967	\$9,290,231	\$10,161,828	\$7,589,433	\$7,246,041	\$9,081,461
OPERATING EXPENSES						
Personal Services	\$2,801,203	\$2,913,485	\$2,995,250	\$2,569,374	\$2,019,108	\$2,641,138
Supplies	524,596	469,968	481,739	257,556	362,149	414,706
Other Services & Charges	2,185,684	2,292,336	2,427,737	1,974,134	1,967,858	2,177,016
Capital Outlay	90,661	17,935	54,410	133,897	20,134	23,906
Total Operating Expenses	\$5,602,142	\$5,693,724	\$5,959,135	\$4,934,961	\$4,369,249	\$5,256,765
DEVELOPMENT & OTHER EXPENSES						
Transfer to Cash Change Fund	\$16,000	\$16,800	\$16,000	\$14,400	\$15,400	\$15,400
Gift Card & Customer Credit Transfers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Development & Other Expenses	\$16,000	\$16,800	\$16,000	\$14,400	\$15,400	\$15,400
Total Expenses	\$5,618,142	\$5,710,524	\$5,975,135	\$4,949,361	\$4,384,649	\$5,272,165
ENCUMBRANCES & RESERVES						
Outstanding Liabilities	\$29,606	\$30,852	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Operating Reserve	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Capital Maintenance Reserve	635,799	1,004,872	1,655,048	38,160	259,859	1,303,787
Cash Flow Reserve	1,375,000	1,450,000	1,525,000	1,600,000	1,600,000	1,500,000
Total Encumbrances & Reserves	\$2,010,799	\$2,454,872	\$3,180,048	\$1,638,160	\$1,859,859	\$2,803,787
Total Expenses, Encumbrances & Reserves	\$7,628,941	\$8,165,396	\$9,155,183	\$6,587,521	\$6,244,507	\$8,075,952
NET INCOME	\$305,932	\$530,995	\$694,990	(\$1,527,387)	\$238,632	\$964,838
Cost Recovery	105%	109%	111%	69%	105%	118%
Cash Balance/Investments	\$3,046,243	\$3,491,520	\$4,186,693	\$2,640,072	\$2,861,392	\$3,809,296

TABLE 37 - MONON COMMUNITY CENTER - REVENUE, EXPENDITURES, COST RECOVERY, AND CASH BALANCE/INVESTMENTS

6.2.12. Park and Recreation Impact Fees

In 1991, the Indiana General Assembly passed legislation creating an alternative funding mechanism for local infrastructure improvements in fast growing areas. As established in IC 36-7-4-1300 et seq., the Impact Fees Law allows units of local government the option of passing onto new residents the costs of building new infrastructure expected by and required to support those same residents. This helps maintain quality of life as the community grows, while also ensuring existing residents do not bear the financial burden of the population growth. Impact fees may be assessed for park and recreation facilities, roads and bridges, drainage and flood control, and water and sanitary utilities.

The Carmel Common Council first authorized the Park and Recreation Impact Fee in 1996 through adoption of Ordinance D-1249-96. As required by state statute, the impact fee has been reauthorized five times since its original adoption, most recently on November 18, 2019, through Ordinance Z-644-19. Carmel has chosen to only charge impact fees to support new parks and recreation infrastructure for the community.

The impact fee is formally established through the Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP), which is prepared by CCPR in coordination with the Department of Community Services (DOCS), reviewed and approved by the Carmel Plan Commission, which also serves as the impact fee advisory committee, and adopted by the Council through an ordinance. There is a minimum 6-month waiting period before the rate established within a newly adopted ZIP goes into effect. Plans must be updated at least once every five years per state statute. As with the current ZIP, a new ZIP is being prepared in conjunction with the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The new ZIP, upon adoption by City Council, will be incorporated into this Master Plan as an appendix.

The impact fee is calculated based on a state-mandated formula that factors in park infrastructure needed to serve new residents, a 10-year projection of new housing units, the new residents' estimated share of principle payments for outstanding and proposed bonds for park infrastructure, and other projected capital funding sources. This calculation is referred to by state statute as the Community Level of Service. Based on the calculations in the 2020-2025 Zone Improvement Plan, the impact fee could be up to \$4,882 per residential dwelling unit, which was the amount approved by the Council in 2019.

Under no circumstances may the impact fee exceed what Indiana law refers to as the Current Level of Service. This effective cap is calculated based on the current asset value of the park and recreation system (including land and improvements) divided by the total housing units in the community at the time the ZIP is prepared. The Current Level of Service in Carmel is \$6,861.

It is important to note that both the Current and Community Levels of Service could have been higher than specified in the 2020-2025 Zone Improvement Plan. The existing asset value included only park and recreation assets directly owned and/or managed by CCPR. City-owned and managed assets, such as Brookshire Golf Club and Carter Green, were not factored into the calculations and would have increased the Current Level of Service. Additional capital projects to serve new residents could have been identified and included in the ZIP, which would have increased the Community Level of Service and resulted in a higher permissible impact fee.

The 2020-2025 adopted rate of \$4,882 represented a 64% increase from the previous impact fee of \$2,972, which was already the highest park and recreation impact fee in the state. Other communities, including Noblesville and Westfield, have more comparable rates when including road impact fees, which are not assessed in Carmel.

The impact fee applies to all new residential development within the City of Carmel. The fee is assessed and collected by DOCS for every new residential dwelling unit at the time a construction permit is issued, with funds deposited into a designated fund for CCPR. For multifamily housing, the impact fee is collected for each unit in the building. (For example, the total fee for a 100-unit apartment complex equals 100 multiplied by the impact fee rate.) Fees are not charged for residential remodels or commercial developments of any type. Since most single and multifamily residences are built as part of a larger development, this fee is typically paid by the developer and factored into the sale price or rental fee as one of the many costs of construction.

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All impact fees collected are deposited within the Park Impact Fee Fund (106), which is maintained by the Office of the Controller for the City of Carmel and may be used by CCPR for new capital development within parks specifically identified within the ZIP. Currently improvements are authorized within West Park, Bear Creek Park, and the White River Corridor. The ZIP also allows impact fees to be used to acquire new parkland along the White River Corridor and in northwest Carmel.

Both state statute and City Ordinance permit the issuance of credits in lieu of impact fees. A developer or individual may be granted the option of financing, constructing, and dedicating parks and recreation infrastructure instead of paying all or part of the park impact fee. The credit must be approved by the Park Board if the improvement is specified within the ZIP. The Park Board granted its first-ever waiver on December 14, 2021, in the amount of \$75,560 in return for the donation of approximately 9 acres of new parkland adjacent to Bear Creek Park and \$158,025 in improvements provided by the developer, including a new multipurpose trail that will become the beginning of an envisioned Bear Creek Greenway.



With the adoption of Ordinance Z-547-10 on December 20, 2010, referred to as Patch VIII to the Carmel Zoning Ordinance, the Council gave the Board of Public Works (BPW) authority to grant waivers for infrastructure or other improvements not included in the ZIP. IC 36-7-4-1335 authorizes such waivers for improvements that are beneficial to the community and not just the development and are either a useful addition to the current zone improvement plan or reasonably likely to be included in a future zone improvement plan. Since Patch VIII went into effect through September 6, 2023, BPW has approved waivers totaling \$12,923,785, all associated with Carmel Redevelopment Commission (CRC) projects. A summary of CRC-related impact fee credits is provided in **Table 38**.

As **Table 38** indicates, the vast majority (90% or \$11,586,478) of impact fee credits approved by BPW for CRC projects have been issued since 2018. Furthermore, \$6,575,107 of the BPW's approved "credits" since 2018 were in name only, with cash collected from the developers based on the applicable impact fee rate and deposited into a fund controlled solely by the CRC. While this practice has been reviewed and approved by Corporation Counsel for the City of Carmel, the Park Board's counsel views this diversion of funds to be inconsistent with the Impact Fee Act (Ind. Code §36-7-4-1329) or City Ordinance (Ord. # Z-644-19, Section L).²

²Legal opinion from Brian C. Bosma, Park Board Attorney, dated January 6, 2022.

DEVELOPMENT	DATE APPROVED	CREDIT DESCRIPTION	TOTAL UNITS	CREDITED RATE	TOTAL AMOUNT
2017 TOTAL					
The Railyard at Midtown	04/04/18	Cash payment	207	\$2,457	\$508,599
The Kent	07/05/18	Cash payment	83	\$2,457	\$203,931
2018 TOTAL					
2019 TOTAL					
Proscenium	04/01/20	Developer construction	197	\$2,972	\$585,484
Proscenium	04/01/20	Developer construction	22	\$2,972	\$65,384
Gramercy West	08/05/20	Cash payment	239	\$2,972	\$710,308
The Grove at The Legacy	09/02/20	Cash payment	75	\$2,972	\$222,900
2020 TOTAL					
Firehouse Square	02/17/21	Developer construction	57	\$2,972	\$169,404
Magnolia	03/17/21	Cash payment	30	\$2,972	\$89,160
North End	03/17/21	Developer construction & cash payment (\$62,448)	484	\$2,972	\$1,438,448
The Signature	07/21/21	Developer construction & cash payment (\$698,963.40)	303	\$2,972	\$900,516
Avant Apartment Phase 2	08/04/21	Cash payment	96	\$2,972	\$285,312
The Muse	08/04/21	Developer construction & cash payment (\$283,502)	278	\$2,972	\$826,216
2021 TOTAL					
The Courtyards of Carmel	01/05/22	Cash payment	149	\$4,882	\$727,418
1st on Main	06/01/22	Developer construction	43	\$2,972	\$127,796
Lakeside Apartments Phase 2	07/06/22	Cash payment	110	\$2,972	\$326,920
The Wren	10/19/22	Cash payment	78	\$4,882	\$380,796
The Windsor	10/19/22	Cash payment	36	\$4,882	\$175,752
2022 TOTAL					
Proscenium II	02/01/23	Developer construction	55	\$4,882	\$268,510
Buckingham AT&T Site	09/06/23	Developer construction	244	\$4,882	\$1,191,208
Monon Square North	09/06/23	Cash payment	378	\$4,882	\$1,845,396
The Concourse	09/06/23	Developer construction	99	\$4,882	\$483,318
111 S Rangeline Road Townhomes	09/06/23	Cash payment	11	\$4,882	\$53,702
2023 TOTAL					\$3,842,134
2017 - 2023 TOTAL					\$11,586,478

TABLE 38 - PARK AND RECREATION IMPACT FEE CREDITS ISSUED BY CITY OF CARMEL BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR THE BENEFIT OF CARMEL REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION PROJECTS (1/1/2017 – 9/6/2023)

During the same timeframe, as outlined in **Table 39**, CCPR received impact fees or was the beneficiary of credits issued by the Park Board totaling \$8,568,695 – or just 42.5% of the total fees and credits issued within the City of Carmel. Since 2020, the amount of impact fees/credits diverted to CRC projects has increased dramatically, with the CRC receiving nearly 2.4 times as much as CCPR in the past 3+ years. Park and recreation impact fees have effectively become a greater funding source for the CRC than the department responsible for developing and managing the park system.

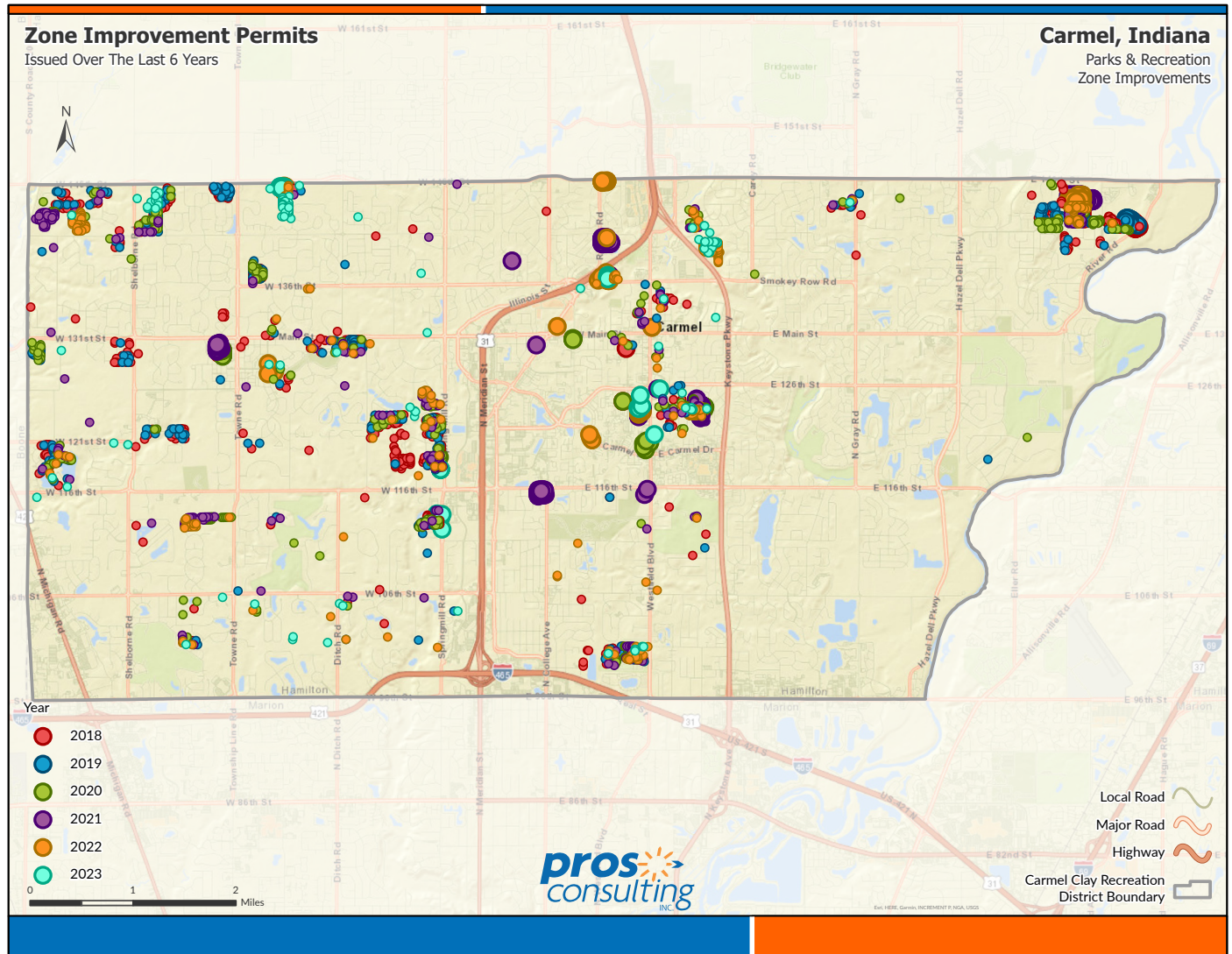
	CRC	CCPR	TOTAL
2017	\$0	\$1,741,606	\$1,741,606
2018	\$712,530	\$1,148,884	\$1,861,414
2019	\$0	\$1,075,906	\$1,075,906
2020	\$1,584,076	\$964,584	\$2,548,660
2021	\$3,709,056	\$1,426,928	\$5,135,984
2022	\$1,738,682	\$783,665	\$2,522,347
2023 (YTD)	\$3,842,134	\$1,427,122	\$5,269,256
TOTAL	\$11,586,478	\$8,568,695	\$20,155,173

TABLE 39 - TOTAL PARK AND RECREATION IMPACT FEES AND CREDITS RECEIVED BY CARMEL REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND CARMEL CLAY PARKS & RECREATION (1/1/2017 – 9/6/2023)

Impact fees have historically been a critical component of CCPR’s capital funding. Over the past six years, impact fees were used to help develop The Groves section of West Park, acquire Bear Creek Park, and prepare plans for Bear Creek Park, Thomas Marcuccilli Nature Park (within the White River Corridor), and the White River Greenway North Extension. With large tracts of land suitable for traditional suburban development quickly disappearing, and much of the community’s residential growth increasingly being driven by redevelopment within Central Carmel, impact fees are increasingly becoming a nominal capital funding source for CCPR based on current trends. This is especially true considering the volume of credits being issued by BPW for CRC projects. Community leaders must determine if impact fees are being used effectively and where future impact fees are best directed for new park and recreation infrastructure to serve our new residents and the community-at-large.

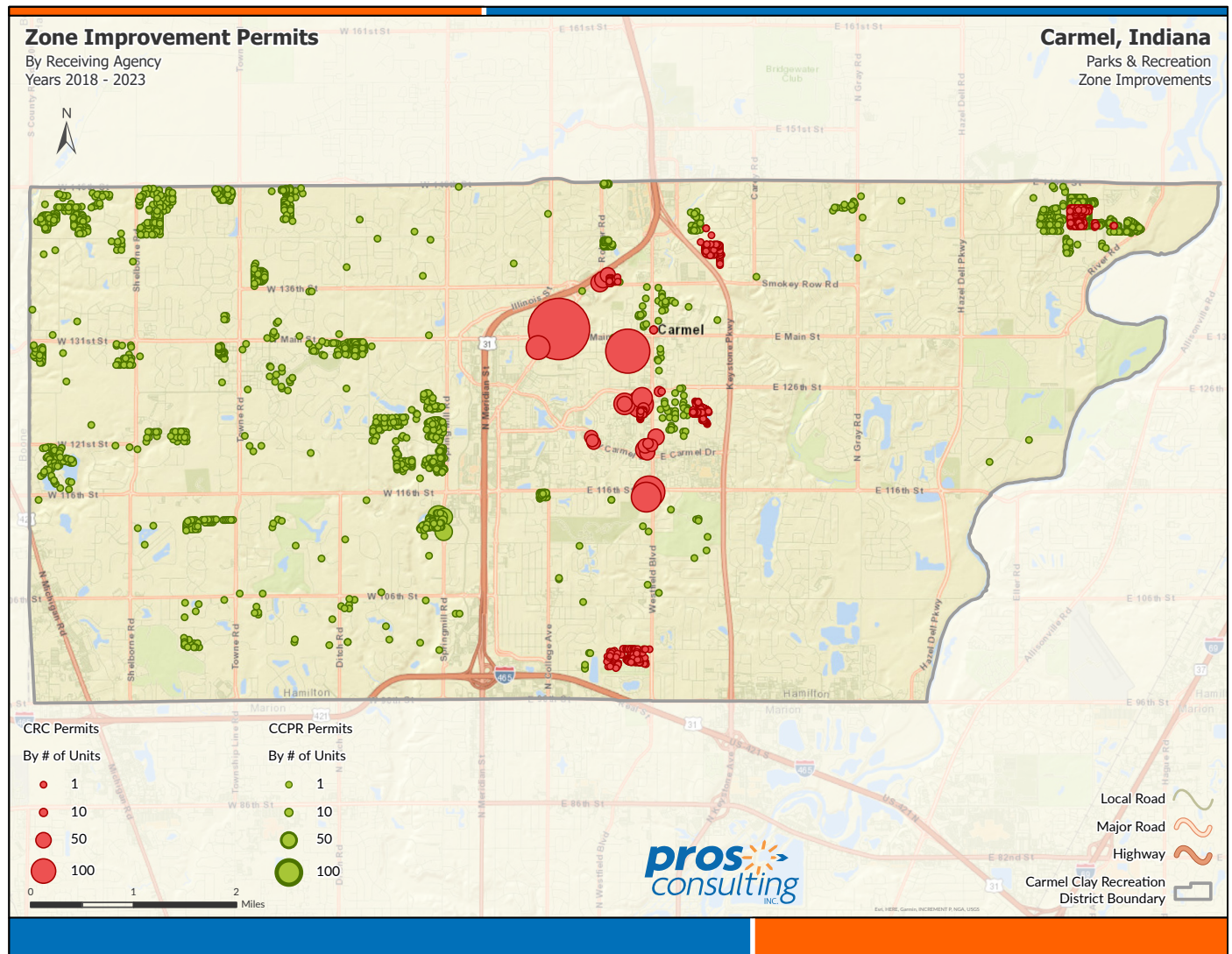
More recently, a new Zone Improvement Plan was adopted in June 2024 that will take effect in January 2025. The adopted plan will have an increase in the city’s park impact fee through a phased increase over five years that would raise the rate from its 2024 level of \$4,882. Beginning January 1, 2025, the new rate will be \$5,425 in 2025 with a phased in schedule of increases to \$8,275 in 2029.

Map 19 below shows Zone Improvement Permits issued over the last six (6) years.



MAP 19 - ZONE IMPROVEMENT PERMITS OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS

Map 20 below shows Zone Improvement Permits by receiving agency, either CCPR or the Carmel Redevelopment Commission.



MAP 20 - ZONE IMPROVEMENT PERMITS BY RECEIVING AGENCY

6.2.13. Local Income Tax (Lit)

The Indiana legislature originally established local income taxes in 1973, which have been adopted by all 92 counties are an important revenue source for municipalities, including the City of Carmel and Clay Township. County Option Income Tax (COIT), along with County Adjusted Gross Income Tax (CAGIT), County Economic Development Income Tax (CEDIT) and several special purpose Local Option Income Taxes (LOIT) were consolidated and renamed Local Income Tax (LIT) under House Enrolled Act 1485 adopted on May 6, 2015. LIT is collected by the State and distributed to local units of government within Hamilton County based on a formula factoring in tax collections from the previous state fiscal year and eligible expenses from each unit's budget. Because LIT is an income tax and subject to fluctuations in the economy, annual LIT distributions can vary from year to year and are subject to economic disruptions.

As a result of the \$55 million Central Park lease-rental bond originally issued in 2002, Clay Township currently receives a larger share of LIT than it otherwise would receive. The LIT Clay Township receives attributable to the Central Park bond is referred to as Central Park Bond LIT. From 2008 through the end of 2023, the Township will have received a cumulative total of \$46,893,660 in Central Park Bond LIT.

Effective January 1, 2005, the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the City and Township creating CCPR was amended dedicating Central Park Bond LIT to capital projects approved by the Park Board within Central Park. A second amendment was adopted in 2010 extending use of Central Park Bond LIT for any capital expenditures with the park system. Until 2023, Central Park Bond LIT was received and maintained by the Township Trustee in the Township's Park Capital Non-Reverting Fund (1215). Central Park Bond LIT and related capital expenditures for the past six years are identified in **Table 40**.

	2017 (Twp 1215) COIT Capital	2018 (Twp 1215) LIT Capital	2019 (Twp 1215) LIT Capital	2020 (Twp 1215) LIT Capital	2021 (Twp 1215) LIT Capital	2022 (Twp 1215) LIT Capital
REVENUES						
Taxes-Clay Township	\$2,658,223	\$3,285,270	\$3,327,336	\$3,134,980	\$3,832,358	\$3,557,502
Earned Income	\$27,980	\$10,318	\$14,865	\$75,638	\$1,247	\$15,151
Total Revenues	\$2,686,203	\$3,295,587	\$3,342,201	\$3,210,618	\$3,833,605	\$3,572,653
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES						
Capital Development & Maintenance	\$3,850,727	\$3,112,509	\$1,892,363	\$2,564,716	\$3,295,442	\$5,628,396
Total Revenues & Other Financing Sources (b)	\$6,536,930	\$6,408,097	\$5,234,564	\$5,775,335	\$7,129,047	\$9,201,049
OTHER EXPENSES						
Capital Development & Maintenance	\$3,424,421	\$4,435,345	\$2,669,847	\$2,479,892	\$1,500,651	\$3,725,855
Total Other Expenses	\$3,424,421	\$4,435,345	\$2,669,847	\$2,479,892	\$1,500,651	\$3,725,855
ENCUMBRANCES & RESERVES						
Encumbrances & Dedicated to Projects	\$1,612,509	\$472,752	\$1,064,716	\$2,581,482	\$4,128,396	\$3,975,194
Park System Capital Maintenance Reserve	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$713,960	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Total Encumbrances & Reserves	\$3,112,509	\$1,972,752	\$2,564,716	\$3,295,442	\$5,628,396	\$5,475,194
Total Expenses, Encumbrances & Reserves	\$6,536,930	\$6,408,097	\$5,234,564	\$5,775,335	\$7,129,047	\$9,201,049
Current Cash Balance/Investments (b - d)	\$3,112,509.29	\$1,972,751.75	\$2,564,716.23	\$3,295,442.13	\$5,628,395.99	\$5,475,194.04

TABLE 40 - LOCAL INCOME TAX ANALYSIS (2017-2022)



As of 2023 and due to a recent rule change, the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) notified Clay Township all LIT distributions must be deposited into and expended from the Township's General Fund. To ensure Central Park Bond LIT is clearly used for the intended purposes and properly tracked, CCPR now invoices the Township for the Central Park Bond LIT. The Township in turn issues a check from its General Fund in compliance with SBOA rules, which is deposited into the Parks Capital Fund (103) within a designated cash account maintained by the City Controller on behalf of the Park Board. Expenditures of Central Park Bond LIT from Fund 103 are appropriated by City Council at the request of the Park Board.

With the pending retirement of the Central Park Bond in January 2025, the Township will no longer have contractual obligations under the Interlocal Agreement to provide new capital funding to CCPR, creating a dire challenge which will need to be addressed. With the state legislature changing the rules for LIT distribution after the original issuance of the Central Park Bond, payments for the Township's more recently issued debt no longer factor into the distribution formula. (In fact, the Central Park Bond was the last bond issued under the old distribution formula.) As a result, the Township does not have the means to leverage new LIT based on the state formula to replace the Central Park Bond LIT.

6.2.14. Gift Fund

The Gift Fund was established to be the repository of gifts, donations, sponsorships, and small grants, providing additional resources to better support CCPR's facilities and programs. The Gift Fund may be used for both operating and capital projects, although specific funds may be subject to restrictions based on the source. Between 2017 and 2022, the Gift Fund had total revenues of \$216,501. **Table 41** shows the contributions, expenditures, and reserves. The unencumbered and undesignated reserves were \$12,108.88 at the end of fiscal year 2022 with all other funds dedicated to specific projects.

	2017 (853) Gift	2018 (853) Gift	2019 (853) Gift	2020 (853) Gift	2021 (853) Gift	2022 (853) Gift
REVENUES						
User Fees, Interest & Other Earned Income	\$3,901	\$3,223	\$5,665	\$14,346	\$118,749	\$70,617
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES						
Cash Reserves as of First of Year	\$32,584	\$36,357	\$38,050	\$30,413	\$37,586	\$106,938
Total Revenues & Other Financing Sources	\$36,485	\$39,580	\$43,716	\$44,759	\$156,334	\$177,555
OPERATING EXPENSES						
Supplies	\$128	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Services & Charges	\$0	\$1,530	\$13,303	\$0	\$0	\$0
Capital Outlay	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenses	\$128	\$1,530	\$13,303	\$0	\$0	\$0
OTHER EXPENSES						
Capital Development & Maintenance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$7,173	\$49,397	\$47,956
Total Operating Expenditures & Other Expenses	\$128	\$1,530	\$13,303	\$7,173	\$49,397	\$47,956
ENCUMBRANCES & RESERVES						
Designated Gifts	\$13,764	\$14,570	\$14,373	\$18,443	\$93,061	\$117,490
Total Expenses, Encumbrances & Reserves	\$13,892	\$16,100	\$27,676	\$25,616	\$142,457	\$165,446
Current Cash Balance/Investments	\$36,357.19	\$38,050.21	\$30,413.04	\$37,585.55	\$106,937.73	\$129,598.85
Unencumbered/Undedicated Funds	\$22,592.89	\$23,480.12	\$16,039.84	\$19,142.35	\$13,876.80	\$12,108.88

TABLE 41 - GIFT FUND ANALYSIS

While not intended to be a primary source of capital funding, thanks to the addition of a full-time position in 2023 dedicated to resource development, it is anticipated the Gift Fund will begin receiving additional donations and sponsorships. This should help supplement CCPR's funding from tax dollars, user fees, and grants.

6.2.15. Grants

While grants have historically been a lower focus of CCPR, the department has more recently increased efforts to solicit grants to assist with capital projects and endeavors. In 2023, CCPR received a \$4 million Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) grant from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to fund the White River Greenway North Extension. As a matching component to the READI Grant, Hamilton County also awarded CCPR a \$1 million grant to benefit the White River Corridor. CCPR's new Resource Development Coordinator will assist with the application and administration of all future grants.

6.2.16. Financial Assessment Summary

CCPR's financial position must be viewed in several different lights. First, due to its successful management practices, CCPR is an undisputed industry leader in achieving high levels of cost recovery in its operations. CCPR has consistently maintained sufficient reserves to weather unforeseen circumstances in its revenue-generating operations, which was most evident during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic during which no tax subsidies were required for the Monon Community Center or Extended School Enrichment programs.

Second, the City of Carmel has consistently provided additional tax funding necessary for CCPR's General Fund operations to support the expanding amenities in the park system without the capacity to generate revenue. This places the department in a sound position to maintain the recently renovated parks, thanks in large part to the Clay Township Impact Program, and newer park spaces like Monon Boulevard and Midtown Plaza, developed by the City of Carmel.

Third, from 2019-2023, CCPR has made \$59.4 million in capital investments to the park system, predominantly from Central Park Bond LIT and bond proceeds from the Clay Township Impact Program (CTIP). The City of Carmel has likewise contributed through the development of Monon Boulevard and Midtown Plaza, creating valuable park space within a growing Central Carmel.

Fourth, CCPR is exploring additional opportunities to generate earned income with the recent addition of a full-time position dedicated to resource development. This position is tasked with building relationships within the community to secure gifts, donations, sponsorships, and grants that supplement the department's other funding sources. While it is notable CCPR received \$5 million of grants in 2023, it has not historically pursued grants with much effort. The Resource Development Coordinator should help sustain CCPR's efforts to apply for and be awarded grants in the future. At the same time, resource development cannot be viewed as the primary source of capital funding for the park system.

Finally, CCPR faces an uphill challenge with its capital funding that must be addressed immediately for the department to have sustained success. Revenue from impact fees have increasingly been diverted to Carmel Redevelopment Commission projects, impacting the ability to provide new parks and recreation infrastructure aligned with the Master Plan to serve the growing community. More importantly, CCPR will lose its largest recurring source of capital dollars once the Central Park Bond is paid off in January 2025. While Clay Township will retain responsibility for repaying CTIP-related bonds, it will no longer have any contractual obligations under the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement to provide new funding to CCPR.

Without identifying and securing new funding sources, CCPR will not have the financial means to make capital repairs and replacements to existing infrastructure, let alone acquire and develop new assets. If revenue-generating amenities like the Monon Community Center and The Waterpark are not routinely renovated and updated, this will ultimately impact customer satisfaction and result in declining pass sales and revenue, creating a downward cycle for the department. Resolving CCPR's capital funding must be a top objective of the Park Board and elected officials to ensure the long-term success of the park system.

6.3. FUNDING AND REVENUE STRATEGIES

Parks and recreation departments are continuing to find ways to generate revenue to offset operational and capital costs beyond simply tax support. More and more agencies are charging fees for services, partnering with businesses, and using their facilities to boost local economies. This mindset is critical to keeping up with rising costs and increased demand for services.

This report, enhanced by the matrix in **Appendix 6**, includes a range of options and ideas for generating more funds, both currently used by CCPR and possibilities for the future. These can be used for different projects, regular operations, or partnerships. They can also spark new ideas for increasing revenue in the future.

6.3.1. External Funding Sources

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS - IMPLEMENTING

This revenue-funding source allows corporations to invest in the development or enhancement of new or existing facilities in park systems. Sponsorships are also highly used for programs and events.

A dedicated Resource Coordinator focuses on corporate sponsorships as well as other earned income possibilities. The key is to understand what companies seek, aligning their interests with specific parks, programs, or facilities. For example, pet stores might be interested in sponsoring a dog park.

A partnership program will be relaunched, with CCPR providing training and support to staff building targeted packages based on company missions, and software like Bloomerang will streamline website integration and simplify sponsorship management.

CCPR plans to collaborate with the Carmel Clay Parks Foundation for grants, donations, and sponsorship opportunities. Smaller sponsorships will be managed by the department, especially when tied directly to programs.

Overall, CCPR aims to diversify funding sources through strategic corporate partnerships, maximizing impact and aligning with company values.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: A sponsorship agreement should be created for each opportunity that protects all parties involved and clearly outlines terms. Sponsorships should be regularly evaluated to ensure they continue to align with the CCPR mission.

PARTNERSHIPS - IMPLEMENTING

Partnerships are joint development or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a city department, or a private business and a city agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner. CCPR is currently implementing several partnerships including the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Carmel and Clay Township, a partnership with Carmel Clay Schools for out-of-school programming, and an agreement with the Carmel Dad's Club for youth sports activities.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: Partnerships should be regularly evaluated to ensure they align with the CCPR mission and that resources are applied correctly. Partnership agreements should be specific to public, private, and non-profit partnerships. The funding source can be used for operations or capital development.

FOUNDATIONS/GIFTS - IMPLEMENTING

These dollars are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gift catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, and sales of items. CCPR currently works with the Carmel Clay Parks Foundation ("CCPF") and plans to implement software to better track donors. Another goal is to improve coordination of messaging with the CCPF to increase public awareness of the CCPF mission.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: CCPR should continue to strengthen its relationship with the CCPF to ensure future success. The CCPF will continue to manage gifts and large-scale donations as well as take the lead role in planning future special fundraisers.

VOLUNTEERISM – IMPLEMENTING

Volunteerism is an indirect revenue source in that people donate time to assist the department in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces the department’s cost in providing the service and builds advocacy for the system. CCPR plans to focus volunteer efforts on its natural resources management and adaptive recreation programming.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: Volunteers require consistent oversight from operational staff. A successful volunteer program should be operated through sound policies and standards. One goal for the current CCPR volunteer program could be to have volunteer hours reach 3-5% of CCPR’s total staff hours needed to operate natural resource maintenance activities.

6.3.2. Other Capital Funds

NET REVENUE FUND - IMPLEMENTING

CCPR currently appropriates profit at the end of the year from self-earned income into the net revenue fund. These funds are available for capital repairs/replacements, or rainy-day needs. Past reserves are contributing to the indoor playground that is planned for the Monon Community Center. Additionally, \$1.7 million in reserves were allocated to the Jill Perelman Pavilion.

Limitation, Impacts, and Actions Required: This funding source is dependent on yearly reserve levels.

IMPACT FEES- IMPLEMENTING

As established in Indiana Code 36-7-4-1300 et seq., the Impact Fees Law allows units of local government the option of passing onto new residents the costs of building new infrastructure expected by and required to support those same residents. Through a formally established Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP), an impact fee is calculated based on both the current and community levels of service. This revenue from residential development helps maintain quality of life as the community grows, while also ensuring existing residents do not bear the financial burden of the population growth. Impact fees may be assessed for park and recreation facilities, roads and bridges, drainage and flood control, and water and sanitary utilities. The impact fee is updated regularly for necessary adjustments based on community growth projections.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: While future community build-out will slow the growth of this revenue, impact fees have historically been a major contributor to CCPR capital funding. Several park properties either already acquired, developed, or in planning have at least partially benefitted from impact fee revenue.

In the spring of 2024, an amendment to the City’s Unified Development Ordinance was passed that reorganized the method in which park and recreation impact fee credits were granted and what organizational bodies should be included in the process. The amendment removed the power of the Board of Public Works related to impact fees. It also provides the City Council the authority to audit the Carmel Redevelopment Commission and CCPR on any projects involving impact fees and/or credits. It also consolidated two existing funds into a single fund instead of an urban parks fund and a parks fund. Essentially, ensuring that impact fees are spent in a manner that benefits the community as a whole.

In the future, CCPR will continue to focus on what park and recreation amenities and facilities are needed by residents. CCPR will also explore a vision plan for the use of impact fees in central Carmel parks that will address community needs.

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (P3)

This Build-Operate-Transfer (“BOT”) source makes it easier for municipalities and local government entities to engage in public-private-partnerships to develop projects in their communities. In the BOT framework a private sector entity designs and builds infrastructure as well as operate and maintains these facilities for a certain period. During this period, the private party has the responsibility to procure the financing for the project. The facility is then transferred to the public administration at the end of the agreement.

This is a funding source that CCPR will explore for the future development of new properties such as Bear Creek Park.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This source requires extensive legal and public review processes while adhering to Indiana Code 5-23. However, upfront capital financing for large-scale projects does not have to come from the city or township which could help expedite said projects.

6.3.3. User Fees

PROGRAM FEES - IMPLEMENTING

This is a dedicated user fee, which can be established by a local ordinance or other government procedures for the purpose of implementing recreation programs and activities. The fee can apply to all organized activities, which require a reservation of some type or other purposes, as defined by the local government. Examples of such activities include youth and adult enrichment and sports, fitness and wellness, nature, adaptive, and special interest classes. CCPR must position its fees and charges to be market-driven and based on current operational budget needs.

ADMISSIONS/MEMBERSHIP FEES - IMPLEMENTING

This revenue source is from accessing facilities for self-directed activities such as pools, ice skating rinks, ballparks, and entertainment facilities. These user fees help offset operational costs.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: Program fees and admissions/memberships offset the need for tax revenues to fund CCPR programs and facilities. CCPR should annually review fees to ensure the agency is meeting established cost recovery goals.

PERMITS (SPECIAL USE PERMITS) – IMPLEMENTING

These special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. CCPR receives either a set amount of money or a percentage of the gross service that is being provided.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy provides a mechanism for special use of parks for events and/or private benefit. CCPR should ensure permitting policies and procedures are regularly reviewed for any necessary updates.

RENTALS – IMPLEMENTING

This revenue source comes from the right to reserve specific public property for a set amount of time. The reservation rates are usually set and apply to group picnic shelters, meeting rooms for weddings, reunions and outings or other types of facilities for special activities. The rental of equipment such as tables, chairs, tents, stages, bicycles, roller blades, boogie boards, etc. that are used for recreation purposes also falls under this source.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: CCPR should regularly review rental fees to ensure that they are consistent with the market rate and cost recovery goals.



6.3.4. Grants

CCPR actively seeks out grants to build capacity with capital funding for park development and improvements. When used appropriately, this strategy can alleviate financial pressures on CCPR to meet community demand. Grants can also enhance the public's perception of the agency's fiscal performance and effectiveness as well as push some projects that could be delayed through to completion. However, there are several other limitations, impacts, and actions to consider when seeking grant funding.

- Grant funding is highly competitive, requiring strong proposals and alignment with funder priorities. This requires specific staff qualifications.
- Many grants require matching funds from CCPR, which could strain the existing budget if not properly planned for in advance.
- If awarded a grant, there are often various reporting requirements and limitations on grant use, which could divert staff time and resources away from daily operational needs.
- CCPR should align project priorities and needs strategically with relevant grant opportunities.
- When possible, CCPR should partner with CCPF and other organizations on grant applications for grant-related expertise and fundraising support. Partnerships can foster community engagement and advocacy.
- CCPR should track grant-funded project impacts and document outcomes for future applications.
- Grant management software can help streamline the application and reporting procedures.

Below are a few grants that CCPR has pursued or intends to explore in the future. More grant opportunities and their descriptions can be found in **Appendix 6**.

LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)

Up to 50 percent reimbursement for outdoor recreation projects. Indiana Department of Natural Resources ("IDNR") reviews LWCF grant applications and submits recommended projects to the National Park Service for final approval.

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (IDNR) – INDIANA TRAILS PROGRAM

This grant opportunity is for development of urban trail linkages, trail head and trailside facilities; maintenance of existing trails; restoration of trail areas damaged by usage; improving access for people with disabilities; acquisition of easements and property; development and construction of new trails; purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment; and environment and safety education programs related to trails.

NEXT LEVEL TRAILS (IDNR)

Next Level Trails (NLT) is designed to incentivize collaborative efforts to accelerate trail connections. The IDNR Division of Outdoor Recreation will administer the program in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Transportation.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) – TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA)

The TA program is funded through the Transportation Improvement Program and supports active modes of transportation such as trails, sidewalks, and safe routes to school. This program can also assist with historic preservation or tourism projects. The call for projects is typically for projects four years in advance. The projects must align with the MPO's short- and long-range plans including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC ACCELERATION AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (READI)

A State program designed to promote collaboration amongst local communities and promote coordinated long-term planning to attract and retain top talent to Indiana. Funding goes toward projects related to quality of life, place, and opportunity. Coordination with economic development organizations and neighboring municipalities is required.

6.3.5. Tax Support

CENTRAL PARK BOND LIT

Ensure trailing Local Income Tax (“LIT”) attributable to the Central Park Bond continues to be appropriated for CCPR capital projects after the bond is paid off on 1/15/2025.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This is a short-term funding source for the Township with significantly declining revenue with the payoff of the Central Park Bond. Central Park LIT is already dedicated to CCPR capital projects through 2024, but this commitment needs extended beyond payoff of the bond to secure all or a portion of the trailing LIT to be received by the Township. An amended Interlocal is required to extend allocation obligation of Township.

SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT BONDS

Issue special benefits tax upon property located within the Park District for the repayment of bonds issued for CCPR capital projects. The district is coterminous with the jurisdiction of the issuing Source. The tax is outside the maximum levy of the Source. The Taxing District has a separate constitutional debt limit.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy results in a new tax. Total outstanding debt subject to the constitution debt limit of 1/3 of 2% of certified assessed value of Park District. Impacts circuit breaks for all Hamilton County taxing authorities. Interlocal amendment required to transfer Park Taxing District to Township. Bonds currently are issuable by the City only under current terms of Interlocal.

LEASE-RENTAL BONDS

Enter into a lease agreement with Carmel Clay Parks Building Corporation to pay for CCPR capital projects. Lease payments may be paid through a special benefits tax for the Park District, which is outside the constitutional debt limit and maximum levy of the Township.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy results in a new tax rate. Total outstanding debt is subject to a statutory debt limit of 1/3 of 2% of certified AV of Park District. Impacts circuit breaks for all Hamilton County taxing authorities. Permissible under current Interlocal.

INCREASE FOOD AND BEVERAGE TAX- CITY IS CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTING FOR OTHER NEEDS

Increase Carmel’s F&B tax from the current maximum of 1% to 2% with additional proceeds dedicated to CCPR capital projects.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy results in a new tax rate. Total outstanding debt is subject to a statutory debt limit of 1/3 of 2% of certified AV of Park District. Impacts circuit breaks for all Hamilton County taxing authorities. Permissible under current Interlocal.

CUMULATIVE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Allocate at least a portion of existing collected for CCPR capital projects. (i.e., Undedicated amounts in current fund balance and/or future increases in revenue above current commitments resulting from increases in assessed valuation provided to CCPR.)

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy would include a reprioritization of an existing funding source. It is permissible under current Interlocal and City’s ordinance.

6.3.6. Franchises and Licenses

POURING RIGHTS - IMPLEMENTING

Private soft drink companies can execute agreements with CCPR for exclusive pouring rights within park facilities. A portion of the gross sales goes back to CCPR. CCPR currently has pouring rights with Pepsi for vending and fountain machines.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy requires a contract that is negotiated periodically to ensure the greatest return on investment for CCPR.

CONCESSION MANAGEMENT – IMPLEMENTING

Concession management is from retail sales or rentals of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items. CCPR either contracts for the service or receives a set amount of the gross percentage or the full revenue dollars that incorporates a profit after expenses.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: Depending on the management philosophy CCPR should either establish a contract with a third-party management company that includes clear outcomes or hire and train staff for the internal management of concessions according to County Health Department regulations. Currently, CCPR manages concessions in-house.

GREENWAY UTILITY - IMPLEMENTING

This revenue source is available when the city allows utility companies, businesses, or individuals to develop some type of improvement above ground or below ground on their property for a set period and a set dollar amount to be received by the city on an annual basis. Greenway utilities are used to finance the acquisition of greenways and development of the greenways by selling the development rights underground for the fiber optic types of businesses.

Limitations, Impacts, and Actions Required: This strategy provides for additional earned income for spaces within parks to be designated for use by utility companies through an easement agreement. CCPR currently implements utility easements for the future Bear Creek Park. However, CCPR would like to minimize the use of this strategy to avoid tying up key pieces of property that could be used for recreation.

6.3.7. Summary

CCPR is positioned to enhance financial sustainability and meet community recreational needs through a diverse set of funding strategies. Regular evaluations and strategic alignments will be essential for successful implementation. Critical actions for successful implementation of the funding strategies include:

- Regularly assessing and aligning funding strategies with CCPR's mission and community needs. Ensure that partnerships, sponsorships, and grants are in harmony with the organization's values and goals.
- Actively pursuing a mix of funding sources to reduce dependence on any single channel. Continuously explore new opportunities and adapt strategies to changing economic and community landscapes.

- Improving coordination and messaging with key partners, such as the Carmel Clay Parks Foundation, to increase public awareness of fundraising initiatives and missions. Foster open communication with the community to build understanding and support for various funding mechanisms.
- Regularly evaluating the performance of partnerships, sponsorships, and other revenue-generating initiatives to ensure they remain effective and aligned with CCPR's objectives. Adapt strategies based on the outcomes of evaluations to optimize financial outcomes.
- Streamlining processes and utilizing software tools for efficient management of sponsorships, volunteer programs, and grant applications. Implement sound policies and standards for volunteer programs, ensuring consistent oversight from operational staff.
- Embracing innovation in funding models, such as exploring Public-Private Partnerships (P3), to finance large-scale projects without straining the city or township budgets. Stay abreast of industry trends and be prepared to adapt strategies based on emerging opportunities.
- Implementing a feedback loop to learn from successes and challenges. Utilize data and feedback to continuously improve funding strategies, ensuring they remain effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

The successful implementation of these strategies will contribute to the long-term well-being of the community and the continued growth and improvement of Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation.

CHAPTER 7

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Based on community feedback, stakeholder input, technical analysis, and the priority rankings outlined within this Master Plan, the following key recommendations were developed to enhance the park and recreation system and position it to best serve the current and future needs of the community. The full Strategic Action Plan can be found in **Appendix 5**.

7.1. VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following outlines the foundational framework for CCPR including vision and mission (**Figure 65**), as well as guiding principles shown below:



FIGURE 65 - CCPR VISION AND MISSION

7.1.1. Guiding Principles

ENHANCING PARK AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Through inspiring parks and innovative services, CCPR contributes to the quality of life and economic vitality of its community.

PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

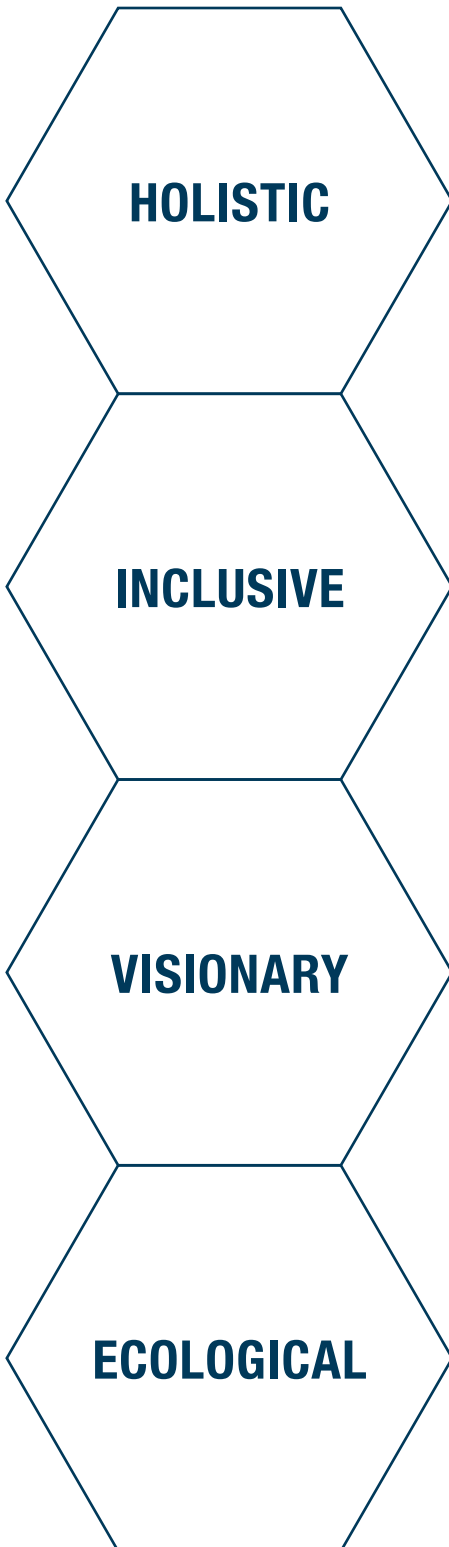
In a city renowned for its world class parks and facilities, CCPR is dedicated to providing excellent customer service to everyone.

ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM

By creating an environmentally and financially sustainable system, CCPR will ensure parks are available for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

7.2. CORE VALUES

The following outlines the foundational framework for CCPR's Core Values (**Figure 66**):



HOLISTIC

For Our Community: Whether in a park or program, you are part of our community. CCPR focuses on positive mental, physical, and environmental health.

For Our Team: We are in the business of people. Our staff are more than their job titles. We value what makes each of us unique, whether it's on or off the job. We know we're not perfect, but we're always striving to show up and learn.

INCLUSIVE

For Our Community: CCPR intentionally develops opportunities for everyone to safely play, learn, and grow.

For Our Team: We understand that our differences are what make us better. We value diverse ideas and backgrounds in our team because they foster growth and forward-thinking.

VISIONARY

For Our Community: Through innovation, CCPR creates state-of-the-art parks, facilities, and engaging programs.

For Our Team: We're movers and shakers. The future is always top of mind, and our vision inspires what we do every single day.

ECOLOGICAL

For Our Community: CCPR continues its pledge to be good stewards of parkland through sustainable choices and environmental education.

For Our Team: We consistently ask how our practices can be more sustainable. We understand that the choices we make today have long-term effects on the world around us.

FIGURE 66 - CCPR CORE VALUES

7.3. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

7.3.1. Enhance Park and Recreation Opportunities Within the Community:

- ✓ Acquire additional parks and natural areas, especially underserved areas.
- ✓ Expand trails, river access, and environmental education along the White River Regional Corridor.
- ✓ Facilitate implementation of a West Regional Corridor.
- ✓ Develop a coordinated Vision Plan for parks and public spaces within Central Carmel.
- ✓ Develop environmental educational facilities and programs.
- ✓ Seek innovative solutions to serve identified underserved and unserved populations.

7.3.2. Provide Exceptional Customer Experiences:

- ✓ Continue to reimagine existing parks through effective planning and appropriate updates.
- ✓ Create nature preserve experiences throughout the park system.
- ✓ Provide a diverse selection of facilities and amenities to accommodate indoor and outdoor recreational pursuits.
- ✓ Balance and expand program opportunities throughout the community.
- ✓ Balance and expand volunteer opportunities throughout the community.
- ✓ Continue reinvestments in revenue facilities by adding or replacing amenities.
- ✓ Attract and retain high-performing employees.
- ✓ Examine internal and external communication efforts.



7.3.3. Ensure the Long-Term Sustainability of the Park And Recreation System:

- ✓ Develop a long-term funding plan.
- ✓ Continue and expand conservation management practices throughout the park system.
- ✓ Expand environmental education and park stewardship programming to increase appreciation for natural resources.
- ✓ Align business practices to achieve 100% cost recovery for Recreation & Facilities Division and Extended School Enrichment Division.
- ✓ Use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to drive data-driven decisions regarding services and operations.

7.4. “FOURWARD” FOCUS

CCPR should aim to fulfill all the recommendations outlined in this Master Plan. However, the following top four (4) priorities are crucial for the next five (5) years. Achieving these goals will necessitate persistent effort and community support, along with collaboration from elected officials, Park Board members, and CCPR. Successfully implementing these objectives will ensure that CCPR remains responsive to the community’s needs and continues to be one of the best-managed park and recreation systems in the country. Here are the key recommendations:

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

- ✓ Secure dedicated funding source(s).
- ✓ Protect use of impact fees for park and recreation infrastructure.
- ✓ Renegotiate interlocal agreement between City and Township.

WHITE RIVER CORRIDOR

- ✓ Celebrate and protect Carmel’s most significant natural resource.
- ✓ Complete White River Greenway and trail connections.
- ✓ Leverage opportunities for outdoor adventure.
- ✓ Collaborate with partners to enhance stewardship in a regional ecosystem.

WEST CARMEL GREENSPACE

- ✓ Begin implementation of Bear Creek Park Master Plan.
- ✓ Continue implementation and development of West Park Master Plan.
- ✓ Secure additional parkland and/or help preserve natural areas.

ACHIEVE MORE THROUGH EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

- ✓ Develop and implement Central Carmel Greenspace Vision Plan.
- ✓ Expand opportunities for senior programming.
- ✓ Explore special event opportunities outside Central Carmel.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION



In its first 33 years of existence, CCPR has achieved an unparalleled level of success in serving the park and recreation needs of the Carmel community. Sound planning grounded on robust public input has been the foundation of this success. This master plan builds upon CCPR's rich history of identifying what residents want from their park and recreation system. Bold new opportunities and strategies for the next five years are identified to sustain and expand upon Carmel's nationally recognized parks and continue meeting expectations of the residents and visitors it serves.

While this master plan provides a blueprint for achieving new heights, the goals and objectives outlined within can only be achieved with sufficient funding. With the loss of approximately \$3.5 million annually in Local Income Taxes (LIT) beginning in 2025, a new capital funding strategy must be implemented immediately to successfully meet the identified park and recreation needs of residents.

The consequences of not addressing the funding issue are severe. CCPR's ability to make capital investments to repair and rehabilitate existing park and recreation infrastructure, let alone construct new amenities demanded by the community, will be severely limited without more funding. Failure to make future reinvestments in the Monon Community Center and The Waterpark will impact their appeal and ability to achieve cost recovery. Simply put, without a long-term funding solution, CCPR faces the real risk of a downward spiral both in maintenance standards and customer satisfaction, something residents with high expectations for quality of life will not tolerate.

Despite the funding challenges, the storyline of this master plan is far from doom and gloom. In just three decades, CCPR has become a revered institution within the community. An amazing 99% of residents view parks, recreation, and open space as very important (86%) or important (13%) as shown in **Figure 67**.

ETC Institute (2023)

2023

2018

TRENDS

Importance of parks, recreation services, and open space to quality of life
by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know")

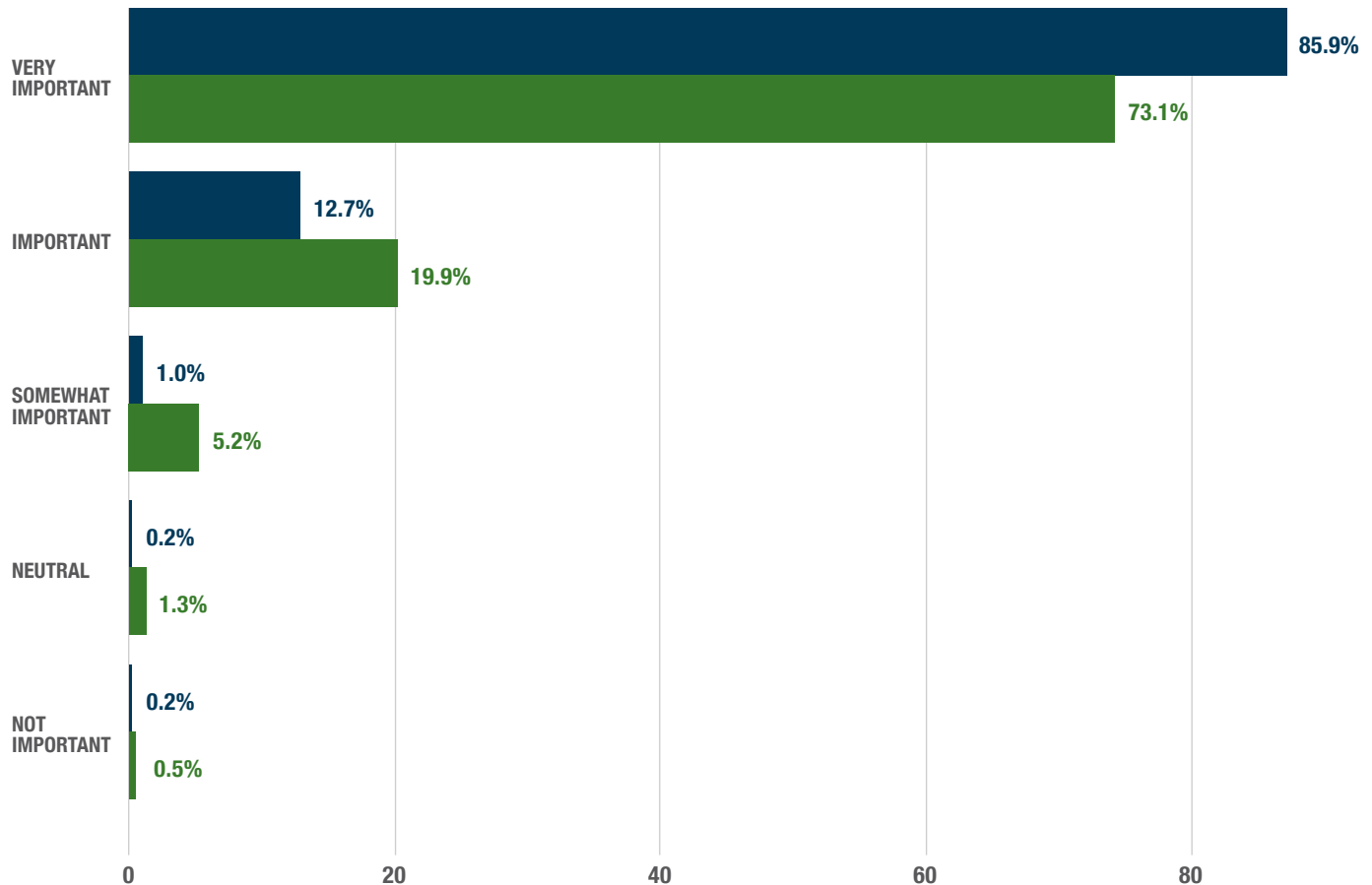
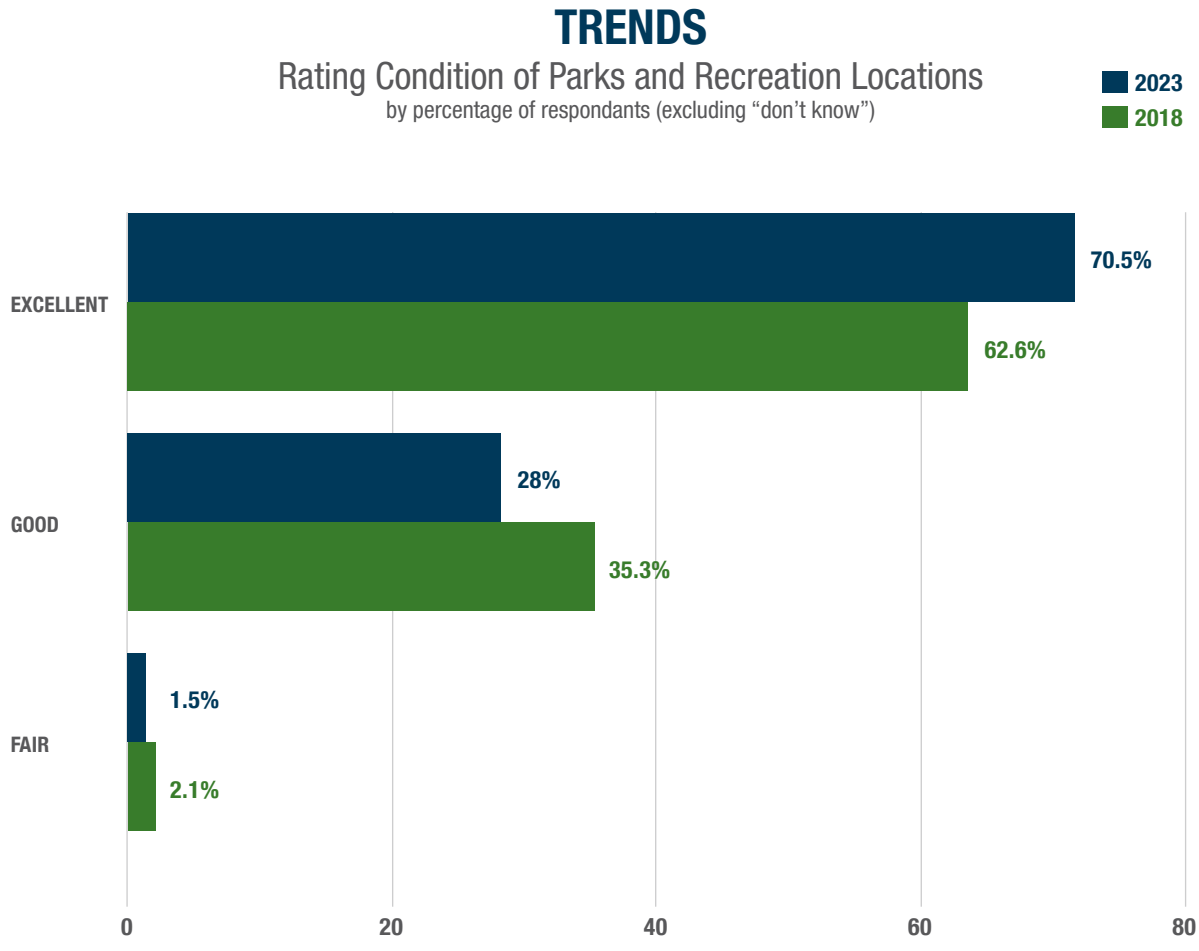


FIGURE 67 - TRENDS: IMPORTANCE OF PARK, RECREATION SERVICES, AND OPEN SPACE TO QUALITY OF LIFE

Satisfaction with the overall condition of CCPR locations is similarly high, with 99% ranking them as excellent (71%) and good (28%) as shown in **Figure 68**. To put this in perspective, the national average is 58% - a remarkable 40 percentage points below CCPR. Sound fiscal management has helped CCPR consistently achieve 84% operational cost recovery, compared to a 25% national average. What CCPR has accomplished is truly special and something seldom replicated by other communities. This should give elected officials confidence to continue investing in CCPR.



ETC Institute (2023)

FIGURE 68 - TRENDS: RATING CONDITION OF PARKS AND RECREATION LOCATIONS



The pathway chosen by community leaders will have a profound determination on CCPR's future success. For a park and recreation system created through local grassroots efforts, Carmel and Clay Township residents have always been the driving force behind CCPR. Based on tremendous community support, as well as a high level of commitment from community leaders, the likelihood of overcoming the funding challenge is high. With this plan for a dynamic and transformative future now finalized, it is time to move forward and get things done!



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