
CITY OF NOBLESVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

2026-2030



NOBLESVILLE
INDIANA
PARKS & RECREATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment, Noblesville Parks and Recreation (“NPRD”) has been a cornerstone of the City’s quality of life, enriching the community through exceptional parks, trails, facilities, and programs that foster connection, wellness, and environmental stewardship. As the City of Noblesville continues to grow and evolve, the Parks and Recreation Department remains dedicated to its role as a steward of public spaces and community experiences, while also recognizing that access to parks and recreation enhances not only physical and mental health but also social cohesion and environmental resilience.



Building on more than nine decades of parkland development and nearly four decades of formal departmental leadership, the 2026–2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan serves as a visionary roadmap for the next chapter of growth. This master plan guides sustainable development, equitable access, and innovation within the park system, ensuring that Noblesville continues to offer high-quality spaces that promote belonging and community pride for generations to come.

The Department currently manages and maintains more than 875 acres of developed parkland, over 150 acres of natural and undeveloped property, and 18 miles of park trails and greenways, including signature destinations such as Forest Park, Federal Hill Commons, Finch Creek Park, Dillon Park, and two municipal golf courses, Fox Prairie and Forest Park Golf Course. The Department’s facilities support outdoor programming and community events that draw residents and visitors alike. The Department also partners with local organizations, schools, and regional agencies to expand access and leverage shared resources for inclusive programming and environmental conservation.

Recognized for its leadership in community engagement, the Department developed this master plan through an inclusive process that combined public input with technical analysis. Engagement efforts included community surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and public meetings designed to capture diverse perspectives. The resulting plan integrates those insights with demographic, operational, and environmental data to inform decisions about future parkland acquisition, facility development, programming priorities, and financial sustainability.

The Noblesville Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2026–2030 reaffirms the Department’s vision to connect people, parks, and nature, while also preserving the city’s unique character while shaping a more accessible, connected, and resilient park system for the future.

1.1 GOALS OF THE PLAN

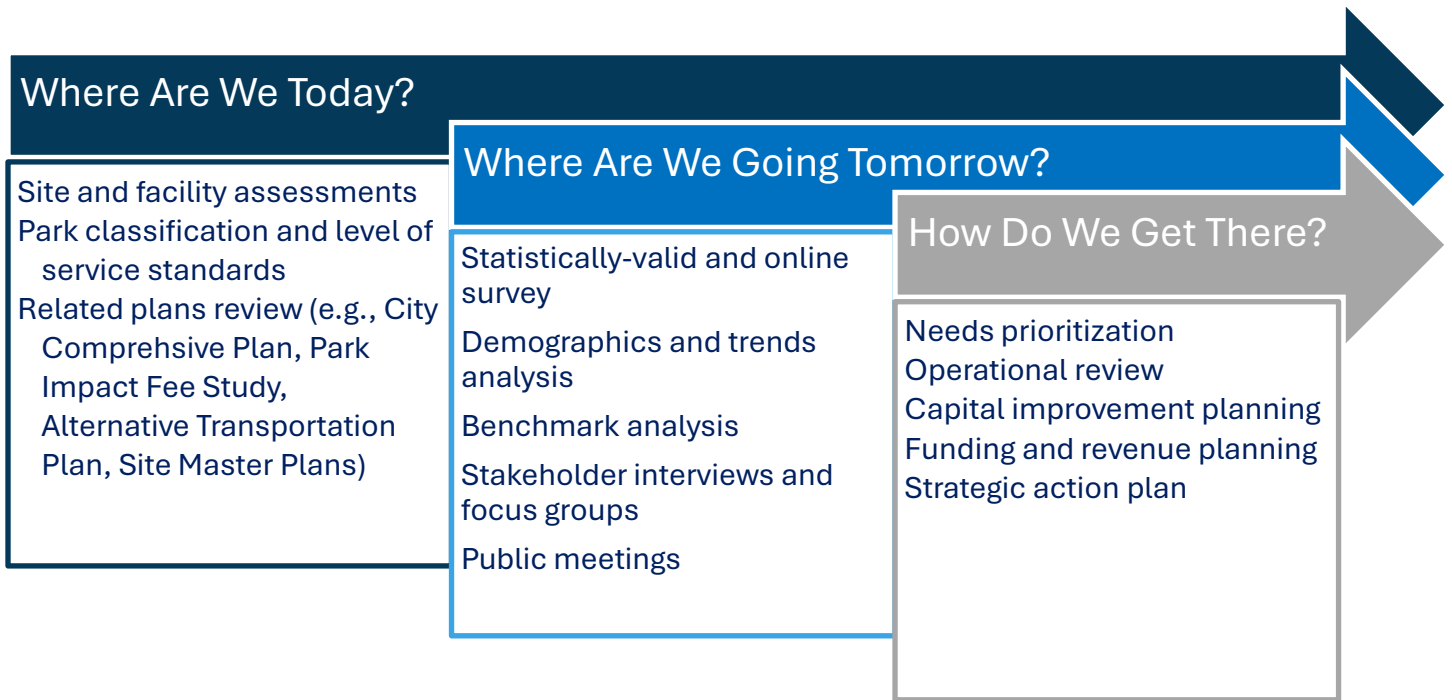
The master plan comprehensively outlines the current and future needs of the community, updates level of service standards, evaluates the financial health of City of Noblesville, and presents a strategic action plan for the next five years. This master plan responds to the dynamic shifts such as population growth, shifting demographics, evolving recreational trends, increased usage of Noblesville parks and facilities since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the numerous new recreation programs that have collectively influenced and redefined the demand for park and recreation services. The goals of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan include:

- **Create a plan that is grounded in inclusivity and accessibility** to ensure the broad interests of the diverse community and stakeholders in Noblesville are heard and can help guide growth and development of parks and recreation sites, facilities, and programs.
- **Outline a strategy for parks, recreation, and greenspaces that are equitable to the entire community** regardless of socioeconomic, cultural, racial, or geographic differences, and provides fair 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 the City of Noblesville.
- **Identify financial funding strategies and organizational excellence** to achieve strategic objectives, identify revenue opportunities, dynamic partnerships, and ensure future operational and maintenance needs are addressed.
- **Develop a dynamic and realistic action plan** that is based on unique levels of service, promotes health and safety, supports active lifestyles, builds community connectivity, and creates a road map to ensure long-term success and financial sustainability for Noblesville's parks, recreation programs, and facilities.



1.2 PROJECT PROCESS

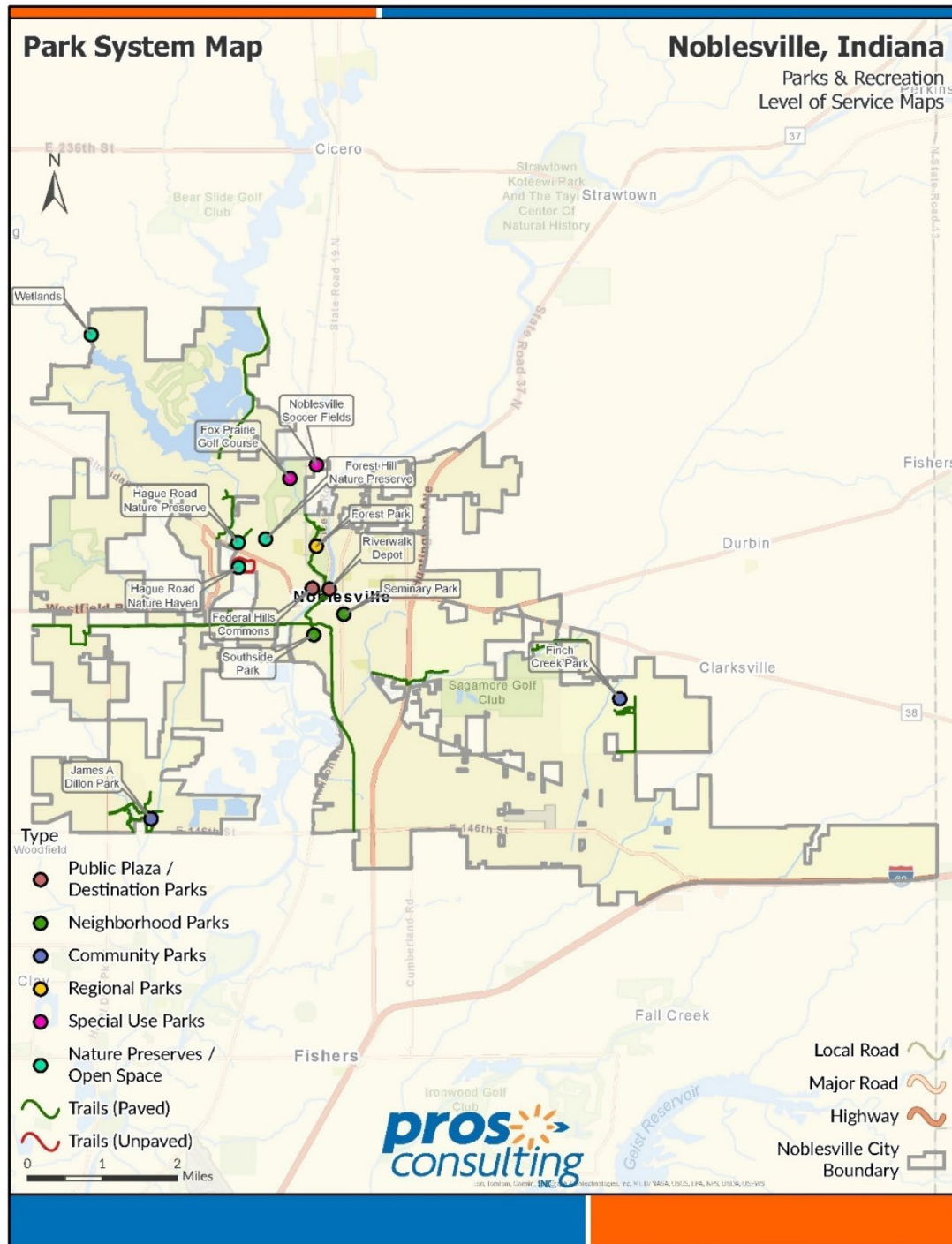
The master plan followed a process of data collection, public input, on-the-ground study, assessment of existing conditions, market research, and open dialogue with local leadership and key stakeholders. The project process followed a planning path, as illustrated below:



1.3 CURRENT PARKS MAP & DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA

The planning area for this master plan includes all areas within the boundaries of the City of Noblesville.

Map 1 depicts the planning area, park definition/type, and location of Noblesville parks and trails/greenways.



Map 1 - Noblesville Park System Managed by the Department

1.3.1 NOBLESVILLE PARKS INVENTORY

Current Noblesville parks inventory by park name, address, park classification and size are detailed in the table below.

Noblesville Parks Inventory			
Name	Address	Classification	Acres
Riverwalk Depot	181 North 8th Street	Public Plaza/Destination	0.65
Federal Hill Commons	175 Logan Street	Public Plaza/Destination	6.50
Seminary Park	350 South 10th Street	Neighborhood	1.5
Southside Park	396 Washington Street	Neighborhood	3
James A Dillon Park	6001 Edenshall Lane	Community	76.14
Finch Creek Park	16233 Boden Road	Community	194.25
Forest Park	701 Cicero Road	Regional	150.77
Fox Prairie Golf Course	8465 E 196th St, Noblesville, IN 46060	Special Use	220.09
Noblesville Soccer Fields	Fox Prairie and ST RD 19	Special Use	29
Hague Road Nature Preserve	SR 38 and Hague Road	Nature Preserve/Open Space	62.98
Hague Road Nature Haven	SR 38 and Hague Road	Nature Preserve/Open Space	50.63
Forest Hill Nature Preserve	0 Lakeview Dr.	Nature Preserve/Open Space	4.95
Wetlands	329 Poplar Dr.	Nature Preserve/Open Space	9.54
Finch Creek Expansion	1525 E. SR 38th	Undeveloped Parks	29.46
Hyde Park	141st and Brook School Rd.	Undeveloped Parks	154.65
Janus Development	17400 Willow View Rd.	Undeveloped Parks	10.83
Riverfront	0 Division Street	Undeveloped Parks	14
SW Firestone Property	0 Pleasant Street	Undeveloped Parks	7.17
Total Acres:			1,026.11

Table 1 - Noblesville Inventory

1.4 PARKS AND RECREATION OVERVIEW



CHAPTER TWO – COMMUNITY PROFILE

2.1 PLANNING AREA

The jurisdiction of the Noblesville Planning Department includes the corporate limits of Noblesville and the unincorporated areas of Noblesville Township and certain unincorporated areas of Fall Creek, Wayne, and Delaware Townships. Noblesville retains jurisdiction over unincorporated areas of Fall Creek Township bounded by Interstate 69, Atlantic Road, the north township line (146th Street), Howe Road, 141st Street, Marilyn Road, and 136th Street.

Noblesville also retains jurisdiction over unincorporated areas of Delaware Township bounded by State Road 37, the north township line (146th Street), the old Norfolk & Southern Railroad, and 141st Street. The jurisdictional areas of Noblesville Planning are defined and understood with the adjacent municipalities. There is much coordination with the various planning areas in trails/greenways connectivity and utility service areas.

PLANNING AREA MAP

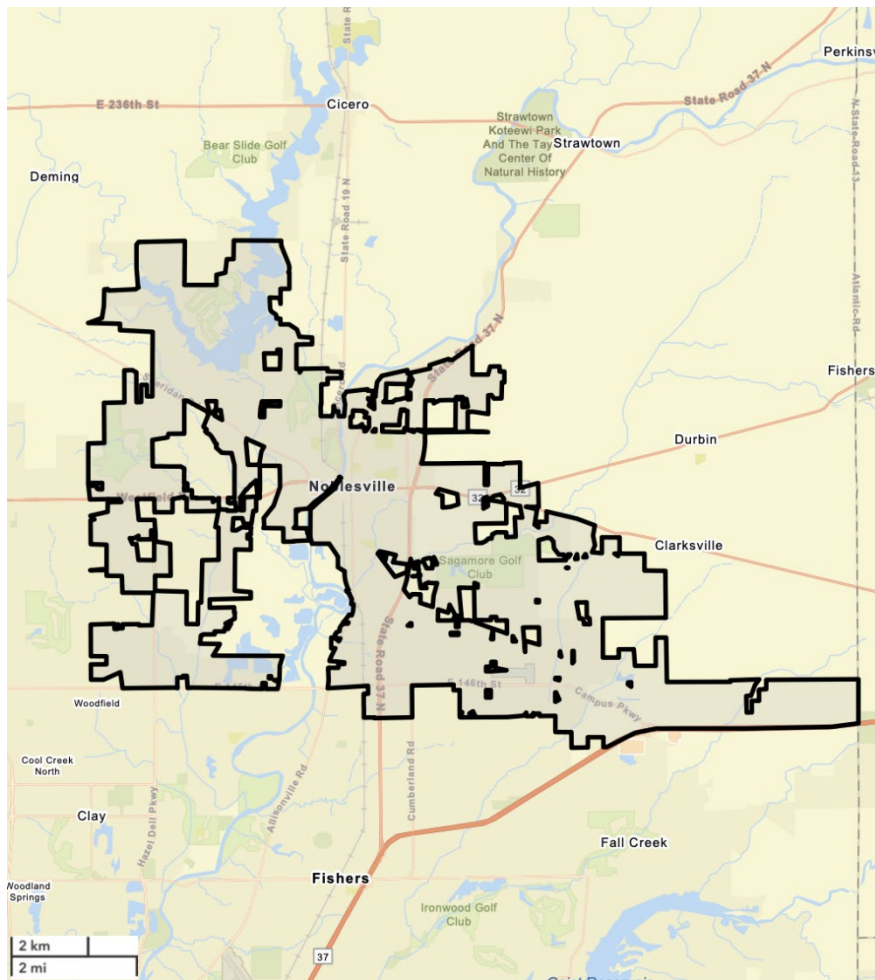


Figure 1 - Service Area Boundaries

2.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The City of Noblesville's commitment to parks and recreation spans nearly a century. In 1925, the City Council authorized the acquisition of Forest Park, laying the foundation for a robust public park system. A Park Board was established in 1930 to oversee park planning and growth.

Over subsequent decades, land acquisitions expanded the system dramatically. The Fox Prairie Golf Course was developed in 1969, followed by Southside and Seminary Parks in the early 1980s. The Dillon Park donation in 2003 marked Noblesville's first new community park in nearly 80 years, and the Hague Road Nature Haven and Preserve soon followed as key conservation areas.

In 2008–2010, the City acquired 200 acres east of State Road 37 for Finch Creek Park, which opened in 2020 with major amenities including courts, splash pad, destination playground, and maintenance facilities. Downtown revitalization was further enhanced by the completion of Federal Hill Commons and Riverwalk Depot, creating civic gateways and hosting signature community events.

Between 2020 and 2025, the City of Noblesville and its park system entered a dynamic phase of infrastructure renewal, connectivity enhancement, and strategic growth. Major milestones during this five-year span reinforced the City's commitment to integrating natural systems, mobility, and recreation in a cohesive vision for quality of life.

In 2021–22, the City and County advanced trail and greenway projects that bridged neighborhoods and parks. For example, the pedestrian component of the Little Chicago Road bridge and pedestrian path from Elderberry Drive to Carrigan Road received a \$4.5 million federal grant in 2024, enhancing non-motorized access near park systems. Simultaneously, capital investments approved in the 2025 City budget prioritized trail extensions, including the expansion of the Midland Trace Trail along the Pleasant Street corridor, strengthening park access and connectivity city-wide.

The “Reimagine Pleasant Street” initiative emerged as a landmark infrastructure and walkability investment. In 2024 the project advanced through Phase 1 with new roundabouts, a pedestrian tunnel beneath SR 32 for the Midland Trace Trail, and improved links to park and open-space corridors. The vision positioned the park system as both a destination and critical node within the mobility network, strengthening the linkage between neighborhoods, natural areas, and recreation facilities.

Beyond mobility, the period saw significant downtown and mixed-use redevelopment that directly influenced park planning. The approval of the \$67 million “Granary” mixed-use project in 2024, located near the Pleasant Street corridor, highlighted the City's focus on placemaking, economic vitality, and open space integration. Parks and trails were referenced as essential elements in the broader redevelopment strategy, reinforcing the role of outdoor amenity infrastructure during a period of accelerated urban growth.

Capital planning during this timeframe also reflected an increased emphasis on sustainability and natural resource management. Strategic acquisitions and infrastructure upgrades targeted improved floodplain resilience, trail-side habitat restoration, and expanded neighborhood green space.

The Department currently manages and maintains more than 875 acres of developed parkland, over 150 acres of natural and undeveloped property, and 18 miles of park trails and greenways, including signature destinations such as Forest Park, Federal Hill Commons, Finch Creek Park, Dillon Park, and two municipal golf courses, Fox Prairie and Forest Park Golf Course. These assets reflect Noblesville's legacy of stewardship and provide the foundation for the next generation of park investments and partnerships.

2.3 AGENCY OVERVIEW

The City of Noblesville Parks and Recreation Department serves as a cornerstone of the community's quality of life, managing a diverse and growing portfolio of parks, facilities, and programs. The department is guided by a commitment to service excellence, environmental stewardship, and fiscal responsibility, while adapting to a rapidly growing population and expanding recreational demands.

The Department operates under a five-member Park Board appointed by the Mayor and City Council, which oversees policy direction, fiscal approvals, and long-range planning. Day-to-day operations are managed by the Director of Parks and Recreation, supported by division managers and administrative staff. Members of the Park Board include:

- Steve Rogers, President (Term Ends: 12/31/2028, Appointed by Mayor)
- Angie Sutton, Vice President (Term Ends: 12/31/2027, Appointed by Mayor)
- Brianna Craig, Secretary (Non-Voting, Appointed by Parks Board)
- Joe Forgey, Noblesville School Board Representative (Appointed by School Board)
- Scott Noel, Member (Term Ends: 12/31/2026, Appointed by Mayor)
- Ian Hauer, Member (Term Ends: 12/31/2029, Appointed by Mayor)

The City's 2025–2026 adopted budgets reflect stable investment in park operations and capital reinvestment. A recurring Park Programs Subsidy annually supports community capital projects, programs and aligns cost recovery levels. Fiscal priorities include diversification of revenue, cost-of-service modeling, and lifecycle asset management.

The Department partners with Noblesville Schools, Hamilton County Parks, and community nonprofits to share facilities, co-sponsor events, and expand access. Future priorities include enhancing trail connectivity, reinvesting in existing infrastructure, expanding recreation opportunities, and integrating sustainability into all capital projects.



CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT

The current organizational structure is depicted below (Figure 2).

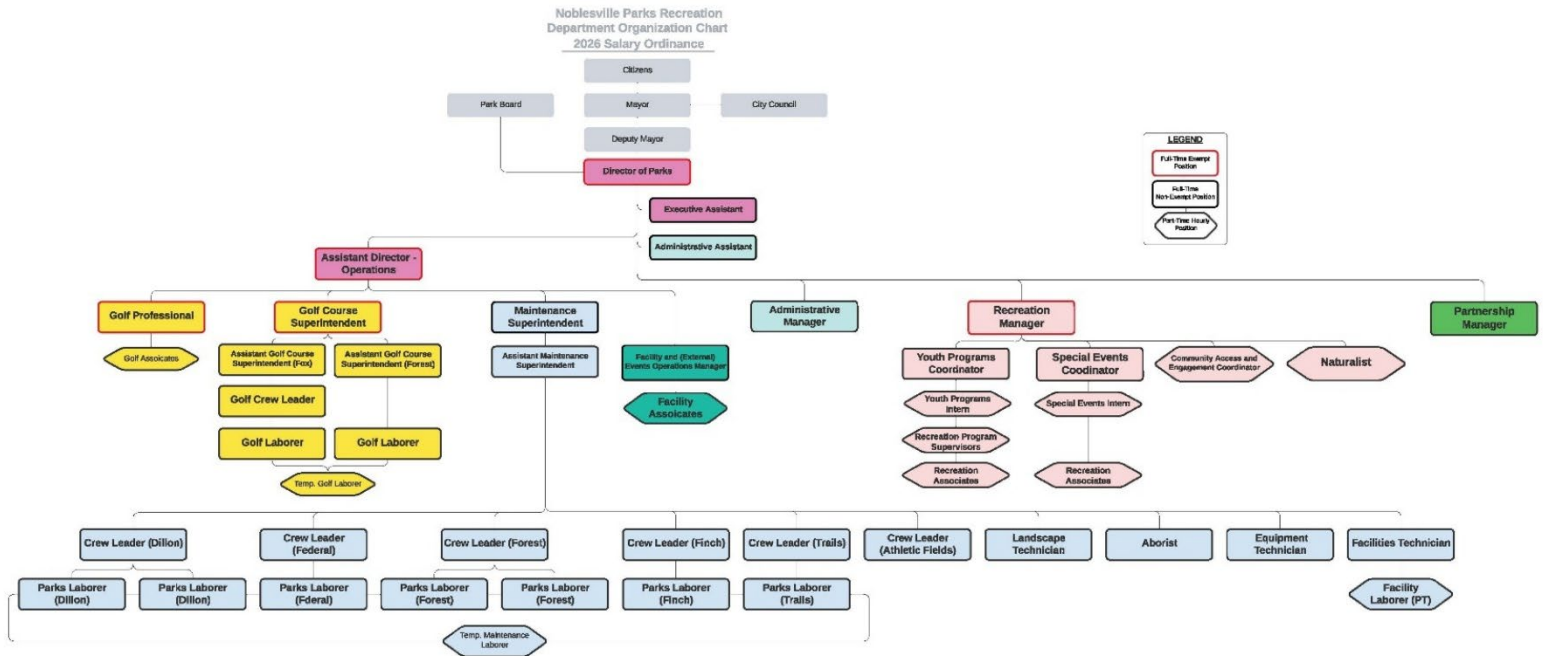


Figure 2 - Department Organizational Structure

The Department collaborates with other City departments to ensure coordinated investment and efficient operations. The Department's structure includes Administration, Recreation Services, Golf, and Parks Maintenance Operations divisions, supported by seasonal staff. Workforce development focuses on training and cross-department collaboration.

Operations are funded through a mix of general fund allocations, program revenues, sponsorships, and grants. The Department applies cost-of-service models to balance community affordability with fiscal stewardship. Core services remain subsidized, while premium programs and rentals strive to achieve higher cost recovery.

Equity remains a central principle. ADA audits and inclusive design standards guide all new developments. Partnerships with Noblesville Schools, Hamilton County Parks, and community nonprofits expand capacity and access to recreation for all residents.

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND PARK BOARD LOCATION

The Noblesville Parks & Recreation Department Office is located at, as well as for reaching out Park Board members:

Noblesville Parks and Recreation Offices
701 Cicero Road
Noblesville, IN 46060
(317) 776-6350

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOL CORPORATION

Currently, the Park and Recreation Board utilize the law allowing a school board member to serve on the Park and Recreation Board. An ongoing relationship between the two entities needs to continue to be nurtured to maximize mutual benefits in the areas of programming and facilities.

2.4 NATURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Noblesville's natural landscape remains central to its identity, recreation system, and environmental goals. The community's location within the White River watershed provides both opportunities and responsibilities for long-term resource stewardship.

2.4.1 PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Hamilton County lies within the Tipton Till Plain, a glacially influenced region characterized by gently rolling terrain, fertile soils, and extensive drainage networks. The White River and its tributaries, including Stony Creek and Cicero Creek, are key natural features that shape local hydrology and park planning¹.

2.4.2 GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

The city sits atop a series of glacial deposits overlaying limestone and shale bedrock. Modern park planning integrates slope stability, floodplain boundaries, and soil types into design standards. Federal Hill Commons, Finch Creek Park, and the Pleasant Street corridor each incorporate green infrastructure for flood mitigation.²

¹ Indiana Geological & Water Survey, 2025

² City of Noblesville Engineering & Parks Department, 2025

2.4.3 SOILS

Soils across Noblesville are highly productive, primarily Miami, Crosby, and Brookston series. These support both agriculture and sustainable turf management within parks. Updated soil mapping (2024) from the Natural Resources Conservation Service confirms strong suitability for stormwater retention areas and prairie restoration zones.³

2.4.4 VEGETATION & WILDLIFE

The city's urban forest and natural areas are transitioning through active management programs addressing canopy replacement and invasive species. The 2024 Street Tree Inventory recorded 28,450 street trees citywide, up from 26,237 in 2020. Efforts target replacement of ash and elm species affected by Emerald Ash Borer, with resilient species such as hackberry and swamp white oak prioritized.⁴

Common native tree species include sugar maple, bur oak, hickory, and sycamore. Restoration work emphasizes riparian buffers, pollinator habitats, and meadow-style plantings at Finch Creek Park and the Hague Road Nature Haven.

Wildlife commonly observed includes white-tailed deer, raccoons, herons, and migratory birds. The White River corridor supports fish species such as smallmouth bass and channel catfish along with other panfish.⁵

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Noblesville Parks and Recreation maintain a proactive and science-based approach to managing invasive plant species throughout the park system. The department currently partners with two dedicated Park Stewards who conduct regular restoration efforts at Forest Park, visiting multiple times per month to target high-priority invasive species including Bush Honeysuckle, Tree of Heaven, and Velvetleaf. These ongoing efforts focus on habitat restoration, re-establishing native understory vegetation, and improving long-term ecological health within park boundaries.

The City also partners closely with the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and their Strike Team, which assists with large-scale invasive species identification and removal. The Strike Team visits Forest Park biannually, in spring and fall, to inventory target areas, identify and mark invasive species, and conduct concentrated eradication activities. These seasonal operations are guided by trained identification experts who dedicate multiple hours per visit to field treatment and data collection. A map of the targeted management zones treated in 2025 is maintained for ongoing monitoring and adaptive management purposes.

Volunteer involvement continues to play a vital role in the City's stewardship strategy. Noblesville Parks coordinates Weed Wrangle volunteer events at the Hague Road Nature Haven, primarily targeting Bush Honeysuckle, with additional events planned for spring 2026. At Dillon Park, the most established group of Park Stewards has spent over five years restoring the riparian corridor along Kirkendall Creek, successfully removing nearly all invasive vegetation and transforming the site into one of the most ecologically resilient natural areas in the park system.

The department also works with its maintenance team to identify and control Poison Hemlock and Giant Hogweed along trail corridors; however, due to safety concerns, volunteer participation is excluded from those specific treatments. In addition to invasive management, Noblesville continues to advance sustainable landscaping practices, including the installation of a rain garden at the Forest Park Pool

³ USDA NRCS Soil Survey Update, 2024

⁴ Noblesville Street Department Urban Forestry Report, 2024

⁵ Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division, 2024

parking lot and a native demonstration garden at Federal Hill Commons, both designed to improve stormwater management, biodiversity, and public education.

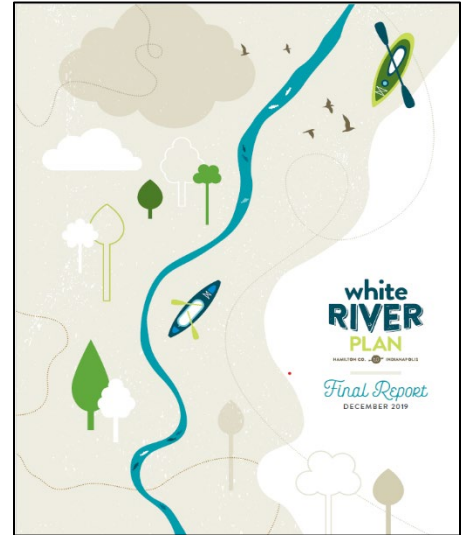
2.4.5 WHITE RIVER

The West Fork of the White River remains a defining natural and recreational feature. Since 2022, Noblesville and Hamilton County have advanced the White River Vision Plan to enhance public access, water quality, and riparian health. Projects at Federal Hill and Southside Park integrate native landscaping and stormwater bioswales.⁶

With several put-in and take-out sites, such as the Logan Street Bridge in Noblesville, the river can be navigated by canoe from Muncie, through Noblesville, to where the West and East Forks finally combine as the White River flows to feed the Wabash River in Mt. Carmel, Illinois.

The White River floods periodically, as do most rivers within the state. This produces intermittent flooding of adjacent streets, open space, and park land. The homes and sites around Southside Park have had FEMA involvement and relocation of residents have occurred over the past several years. The City and County have addressed flood risk management and continue to assess the area.

Federal Hill Commons was also built and designed with flooding in mind. It is designed to take water on if the river overflows at certain levels. As more and more land in the City of Noblesville is developed, the Park Department, in conjunction with Planning, Engineering, Economic Development and the Mayor's office, and guided by the master plan and Recreation Impact Fee document, will continue to develop more green space with drainage and flooding potential as a significant informer of what, can be, should be, and will be built to meet the public's demands for green space.



2.4.6 CLIMATE

Noblesville experiences a humid continental climate with four distinct seasons. Average annual precipitation totals 41 inches, and average snowfall is 22 inches. The average January temperature is 29°F and July averages 75°F. The city experiences about 43 thunderstorm days annually.⁷

2.4.7 WEATHER RELATED EVENTS AND TREE PLANTINGS

Over the past five years, Noblesville Parks has experienced several significant weather-related events that created unexpected operational and financial impacts across the system. At Forest Park, severe storms in July and September 2024 resulted in large tree branches striking Shelter 5 and Shelter 4, respectively, causing roof damage that required approximately \$8,000 in repairs per structure, totaling roughly \$16,000 in unplanned facility expenses. In early spring 2025, a major storm system caused the White River to flood east of Forest Park, significantly impacting the adjacent golf course. The course was closed for several days due to standing water and course saturation, resulting in lost revenue during a critical early-season window. While these events did not rise to the level of tornado or ice-storm disasters, they illustrate the increasing volatility of wind and rain events and their direct financial implications for park infrastructure and enterprise operations. To mitigate risk, the department utilizes the AnythingWeather alert system across multiple park properties to provide real-time lightning and storm warnings, distributes mobile

⁶ White River Vision Plan Annual Report, 2025

⁷ National Weather Service Climate Summary, 2024

alerts to staff and partner organizations including sports leagues and aquatic personnel, and consults with an on-call meteorologist prior to major public events. In 2025, only one concert required cancellation due to dangerous weather conditions, reflecting a proactive and vigilant monitoring approach.

In response to both storm impacts and public input, the department has accelerated its focus on canopy development and natural area improvements. Significant tree plantings occurred this year at Dillon Park, Forest Park, Finch Creek Park, Southside Park, Seminary Park, and Hague Road Nature Haven, with plans to plant an additional 100 trees across various properties in 2026. These efforts help address areas where additional shade is needed, particularly in open park spaces, along trails, and near gathering areas that experience high summer heat exposure. Public feedback during recent engagement efforts emphasized a desire for more natural areas and additional walking opportunities through those landscapes. While the department has made meaningful headway in targeted invasive species removal beginning in spring 2025, the overall invasive load across our properties is substantial, and restoration is a multi-year process. This timing gap may explain why public input continues to call for expanded invasive management despite recent progress. To address this, Noblesville Parks is actively partnering with the Southern Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management group and Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District to inventory and prioritize invasive-heavy areas under its stewardship and develop phased renaturalization plans. Over time, these coordinated efforts will improve ecological health, accessibility, shade coverage, and overall user experience throughout the park system while building greater resilience to future weather-related impacts.



2.5 MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL & CULTURAL FEATURES

Noblesville's cultural identity continues to evolve as a dynamic intersection of heritage, natural beauty, and artistic expression. The City's built environment and community traditions are deeply connected to its landscape, waterways, and civic spaces, forming the foundation of its quality-of-life identity and tourism economy.

Morse Reservoir serves as one of the region's premier recreational lakes, encompassing over 1,500 acres of water and 35 miles of shoreline. In addition to boating, kayaking, and fishing, the reservoir plays a critical role in stormwater management and habitat restoration. Recent shoreline stabilization projects and invasive aquatic plant control efforts led by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have improved water quality and wildlife habitat while enhancing recreational safety.⁸

The **Nickel Plate Express** continues to grow as a regional heritage tourism asset, offering year-round excursions and special events such as the Pumpkin Express and Reindeer Ride. In partnership with Noblesville Parks & Recreation, accessibility improvements, including ADA-compliant rail cars and interpretive signage, have strengthened its community reach and educational value.⁹

Hamilton County Courthouse Square, dating back to the late 19th century, remains the civic heart of downtown Noblesville. Its historic French Renaissance architecture, combined with an active retail and dining environment, makes it a focal point for community events such as the Street Dance, Bed Race, and seasonal markets. The integration of public art, façade restorations, and pedestrian improvements since 2023 has reinforced its role as both an economic engine and cultural gathering space.¹⁰

The **Holliday Hydroelectric Powerhouse and Dam**, constructed in 1922, stands as a testament to early 20th-century engineering and Noblesville's industrial past. The City and Hamilton County are partnering with Duke Energy and local preservationists on adaptive reuse concepts, exploring potential interpretive programming, trail connections, and sustainable power education exhibits as part of a long-term restoration strategy.¹¹

The **Belfry Theatre** and **Ruoff Music Center** together anchor Noblesville's performing arts ecosystem. The Belfry, entering its sixth decade of operation, continues to host community theater productions and educational programs in partnership with the Parks Department. Meanwhile, Ruoff Music Center attracts more than 600,000 visitors annually and ranks among the top five outdoor amphitheaters nationwide for ticket sales. Together, these venues position Noblesville as a regional destination for music and performing arts.¹²

The **Noblesville Cultural Arts District**, established in 2017 and expanded in 2024, reinforces the City's long-standing commitment to creativity and place-based economic development. Spanning roughly 50 city blocks, the district includes Federal Hill Commons, Seminary Park, and a network of artist studios, murals, and galleries. New initiatives supported by the Indiana Arts Commission and Hamilton County Tourism include rotating public art installations, downtown wayfinding murals, and a community makerspace at the historic Fire Station No. 1. These investments promote walkability, cultural equity, and community engagement through the arts.¹³

Noblesville Parks and Recreation also partner with the **Indiana Peony Festival**, which is held every May at Seminary Park near downtown. The initiative seeks to inspire Indiana residents statewide to celebrate the

⁸ Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water, *Morse Reservoir Habitat and Shoreline Stabilization Project Summary*, 2024

⁹ Nickel Plate Express, *Annual Report*, 2024

¹⁰ City of Noblesville Economic Development, *Downtown Enhancement and Historic Preservation Plan*, 2023

¹¹ Duke Energy & City of Noblesville, *Holliday Hydroelectric Adaptive Reuse Feasibility Study*, 2025

¹² Ruoff Music Center *Annual Attendance Report*, 2024

¹³ Indiana Arts Commission, *Statewide Cultural Districts Program Annual Update*, 2025

peony, the official state flower, through coordinated community engagement and beautification efforts. In Noblesville, the vision includes enhancing the City's visual identity and civic pride through peony-themed landscaping projects, public gardens, and horticultural education programs. These efforts also align with regional tourism goals by promoting Hamilton County as a premier destination each May, when peonies are in full bloom and the Indianapolis 500 festivities attract visitors from across the country.

Together, these assets illustrate how Noblesville's built environment and cultural heritage complement its natural resources, shaping a cohesive identity that blends preservation with innovation. The continued collaboration among city departments, local nonprofits, and regional arts organizations ensures that Noblesville's historic and cultural landscape will remain vibrant, inclusive, and economically sustainable well into the next planning cycle.

NOBLESVILLE'S ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2020

The City of Noblesville's Alternative Transportation Plan 2020 sets forth a comprehensive vision for a multimodal system of sidewalks, bike paths, greenways and trails that explicitly links neighborhoods, education centers, employment, and recreational assets, including parks and open space. The NAT 2020 document recognizes the parks system as an essential network component, identifying parks, greenways and trailheads as "destination nodes and connectors in the overall mobility plan."

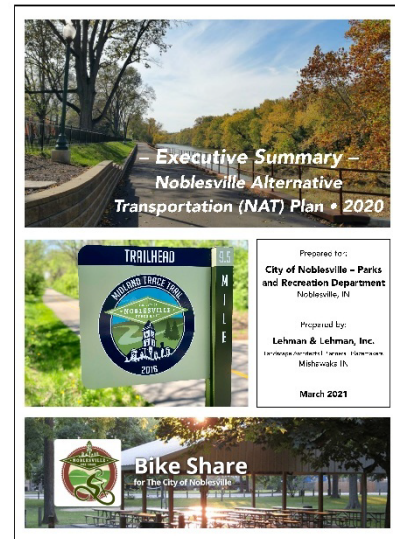
By embedding parks and recreation facilities within the transportation framework, the NAT 2020 plan and the Noblesville Parks & Recreation Department strategy mutually reinforce each other: trails serve as the circulation system while parks become the anchors for trail destinations and community gathering spaces. For example, the NAT 2020 goal of "ensuring safe and direct pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, schools and public destinations" aligns directly with the Department's objective of equitable access and connectivity.

The plan further identifies greenways as "multi-purpose corridors of recreation, transportation, open space and ecological stewardship." This dual role enables NPRD to leverage trail investment for both recreation and open-space conservation, effectively connecting neighborhood residents to natural areas, park amenities, and non-motorized access routes.

Operationally, this integration suggests several strategic implementation priorities for the 2026–2030 Master Plan cycle:

- Design trailheads and way-finding signage at park gateways to enhance visibility and access.
- Prioritize connector segments between neighborhoods, parks and employment zones to maximize park utilization and walk/bike access.
- Integrate ADA-compliant pedestrian and bicycle facilities in park designs, ensuring inclusivity of the non-motorized network.
- Coordinate capital improvement planning across the parks department and transportation/engineering divisions to align trail and park facility timelines and budgets.

Through the NAT 2020 framework, parks in Noblesville have become more than recreational destinations, they are integral nodes in a broader mobility, health and community-connectivity strategy.



2.6 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) took effect January 26, 1992 guarantees that access to recreation and play settings is now a civil right for all Americans. The City of Noblesville has addressed ADA in its *Civilian Handbook*, Chapter 1, Section 1.5, as well as in *City of Noblesville Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan*, which was updated in 2023.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), this document shall serve as the City of Noblesville's Transition Plan. Included are results of a self-evaluation that addresses barriers within City programs and facilities. The development of this plan has occurred with the assistance of several individuals and organizations throughout the community. The Engineering Department for the City of Noblesville ADA Coordinator will coordinate all aspects of ADA compliance. Any comments, additions or suggestions about this plan may be directed to the Coordinator for ADA Access to Public Facilities and Public Right-of-Way and for General Information and Complaints.

This Transition Plan will continuously be updated. A public hearing regarding the contents of the plan will be held on a yearly basis. Notice of the public hearing will be given at least two (2) weeks in advance of the hearing. Any comments, suggestions or additions to the plan may be addressed to the City's ADA Coordinator throughout the year.

General complaints, comments, concerns, and questions may be filed electronically through the City's Web Site at: www.cityofnoblesville.org

Issues regarding City of Noblesville public facilities or facilities within the right-of-way can be submitted to:

Andrew Rodewald, PE Project Manager
16 South 10th Street Suite 155
Noblesville, IN 46060
317-776-6330
arodewald@noblesville.in.gov

Questions Regarding the ADA and Public Communications may be directed to:

Lexie Rock, Communications Director
16 South 10th Street
Noblesville, IN 46060
317-776-6367
lrock@noblesville.in.gov

Issues regarding public facilities within the City of Noblesville's Parks may be directed to:

Savannah Wines, Parks Director
Forest Park Inn 701 Cicero Road
Noblesville, IN 46060-1441
317-776-6350
swines@noblesville.in.gov

Noblesville Parks is committed to implementing universal design principles in all renovations and new construction throughout the park system for the use of visitors and patrons of the park facilities and programs. Each year ADA compliance improvements are applied in both renovations and new improvements. While the ongoing, annual ADA improvements are not noted, or called out, singularly they

are embedded within the identified capital improvements. Other annual renovations of parks and facilities where ADA compliance is needed are handled through the annual department budget.

2.6.1 RECENT ADA UPDATES

Below outlines recent major additions to accessible facilities, programs, and services in the parks:

- Addition of Sensory Friendly Easter Egg Hunt – 2026
- Launching the new website that adheres to the Web Content - 2025
- Addition of sensory bags for use during transitions at summer camp – 2025
- Addition of the communication board at the Forest Park south playground – 2025
- Addition of AudioEye (Accessibility Help Desk) to CivicRec – 2025
- Addition of “Success Plans” to youth programming – 2025
- Introduced “Community Access and Engagement Coordinator” to the 2026 Salary ordinance for Parks - 2025
- Completion of the Federal Hill to Forest Park Trail – Accessibility for non- motorized vehicle access between the two parks.
- Trail access as part of the new roundabout installed at 38/Hague Road. Trail linkage avoiding crossing major roadways; accessibility to non-motorized vehicle traffic.
- Liquid Gold sealant on all Forest Park and Dillon Park trails completed within the last 5 years – helps improve longevity of the paved trails and thus better use by all non-motorized vehicle traffic.

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)

The City of Noblesville Parks and Recreation Department 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



APPLICANT PRESIDENT

STEVEN C. ROGERS

(President's printed name)

SIGNATURE

 Brianna Craig

(Secretary's printed name)

DATE March 2, 2026

2.7 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

A key component of the master plan for Parks and Recreation is a Demographics and Recreation Trends Analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to provide Noblesville's Parks and Recreation Department ("Department") with insight into the makeup of the population they serve and identify market trends in recreation. The report also helps to quantify the market in and around The City of Noblesville, Indiana ("City") 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 Noblesville residents to understand who the Department serves. Second, recreational trends are examined on a national and local level to understand what the population may want to do. Findings from this analysis establish a fundamental understanding that provides a basis for prioritizing the community's need for parks, trails, facilities, and recreation programs. This assessment is reflective of the City'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 and could have a significant bearing on the validity of projected figures. **Figure 1** provides an overview of Noblesville's populace based on current estimates of the 2024 population. A further analysis of each of these demographic characteristics can be found in in this chapter.

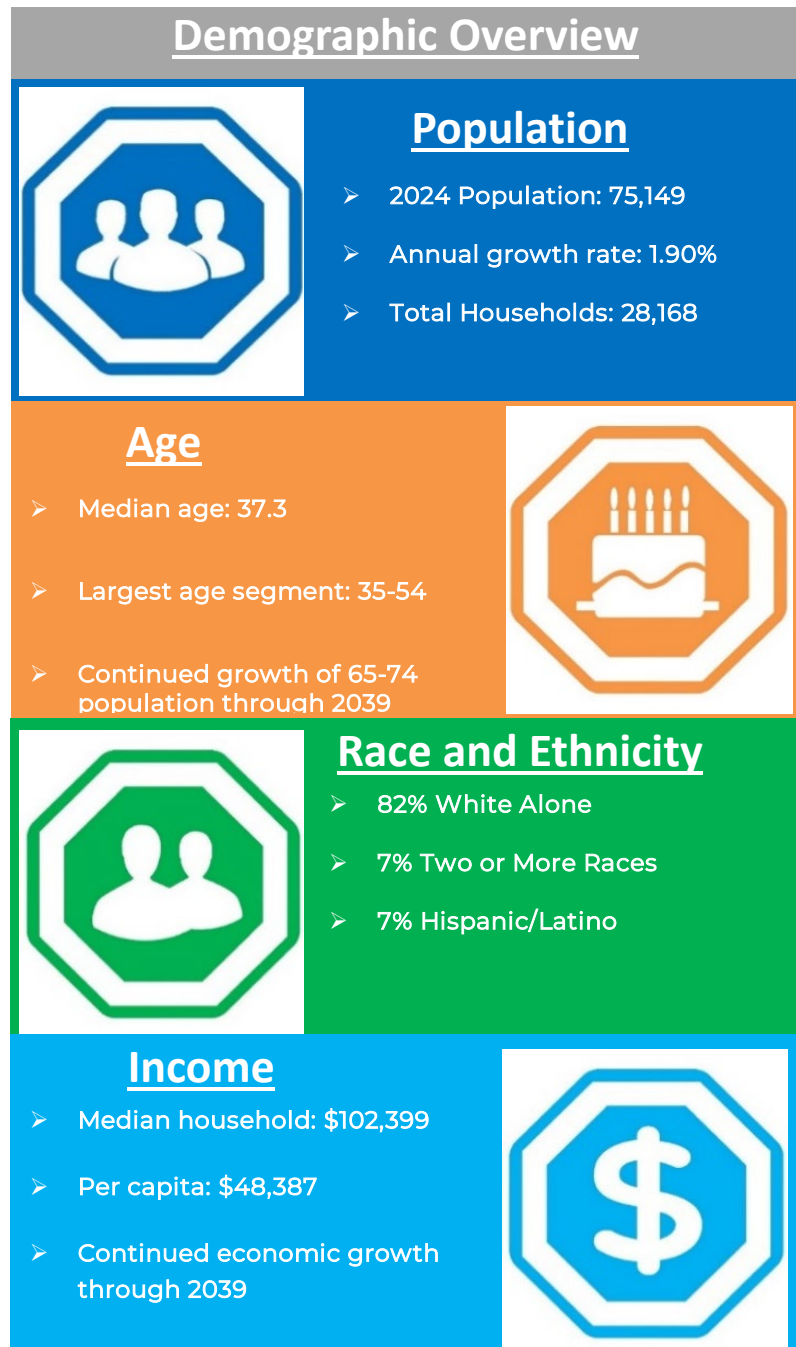


Figure 3 - Demographic Overview of Noblesville

2.7.1 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 October 2024 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2020 Census. ESRI then estimates the current population (2024) as well as a 5-year projection (2029). PROS then utilized straight line linear regression to forecast demographic characteristics for 10 and 15-year projections (2034 and 2039).

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.

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 defines 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.

2.7.2 CITY POPULACE

POPULATION

Noblesville has a steadily increasing population with a consistent yearly rate of change from 2010 to 2024. In fact, the population has increased from 52,646 in 2010 to an estimated 75,149 in 2024. The City's population is expected to continue to rise in the following 15 years, where it is projected to reach 97,265 residents by 2039 (**Figure 3**). The total number of households has also increased at a rate proportional to the population growth, rising from 19,338 in 2010 to an estimated 28,168 in 2024. By 2039, it is estimated that there will be 36,984 total households within Noblesville, which is likely to continue to increase (**Figure 4**).

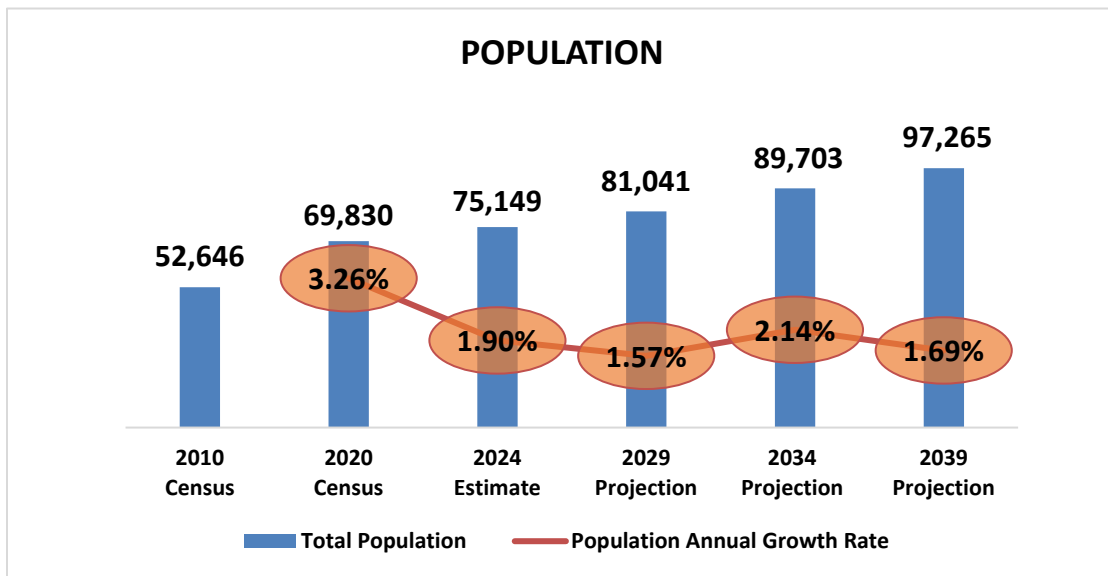


Figure 4 - Noblesville's Total Population and Annual Growth Rate

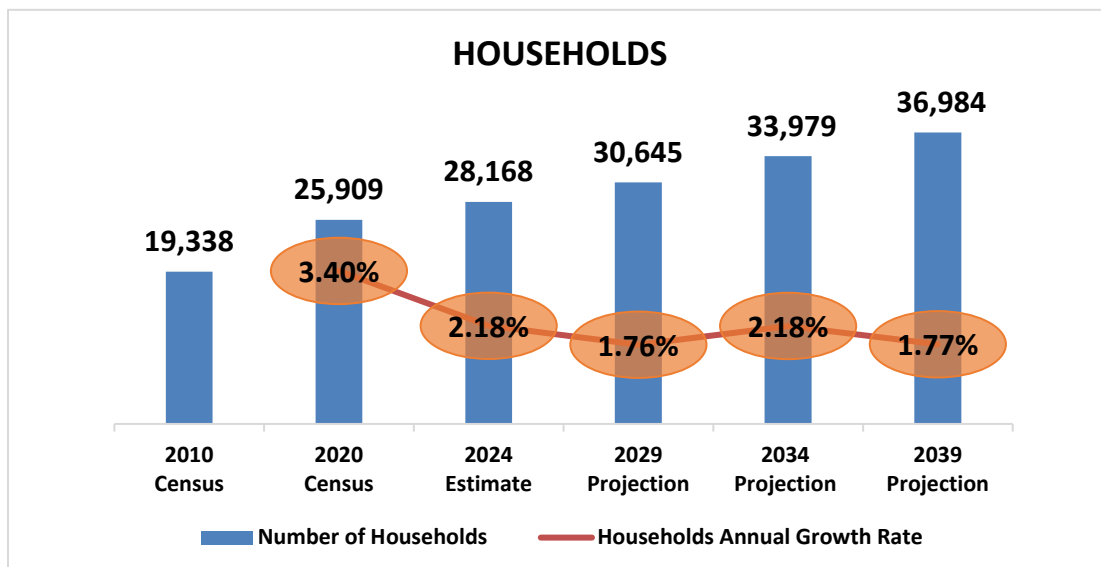


Figure 5 - Noblesville's Total Households and Annual Growth Rate

AGE SEGMENTATION

The largest age segments of Noblesville's current population are 35-54 (29%), 18-34 (20%), and 0-12 (19%), demonstrating a family-centric population. Within the community, there is an aging trend, with people between the ages of 18-34, decreasing from making up 27% of the population in 2010 to making up 17% of the population by 2039; meanwhile, the three oldest age segments have increased in percentage, going from 18% of the population in 2010 to making up 24% in 2024 and is expected to continue growing to 29% in 2039. The median age has increased from 33.2 in 2010 to 37.3 in 2024 and is projected to increase in the coming years. Therefore, the amenities updated and developed for the City should likely be designed to appeal to an increasing middle-aged demographic. Determining whether the population is more active or inactive will help the department plan out new programs that fit the City's aging demographic (**Figure 5**).

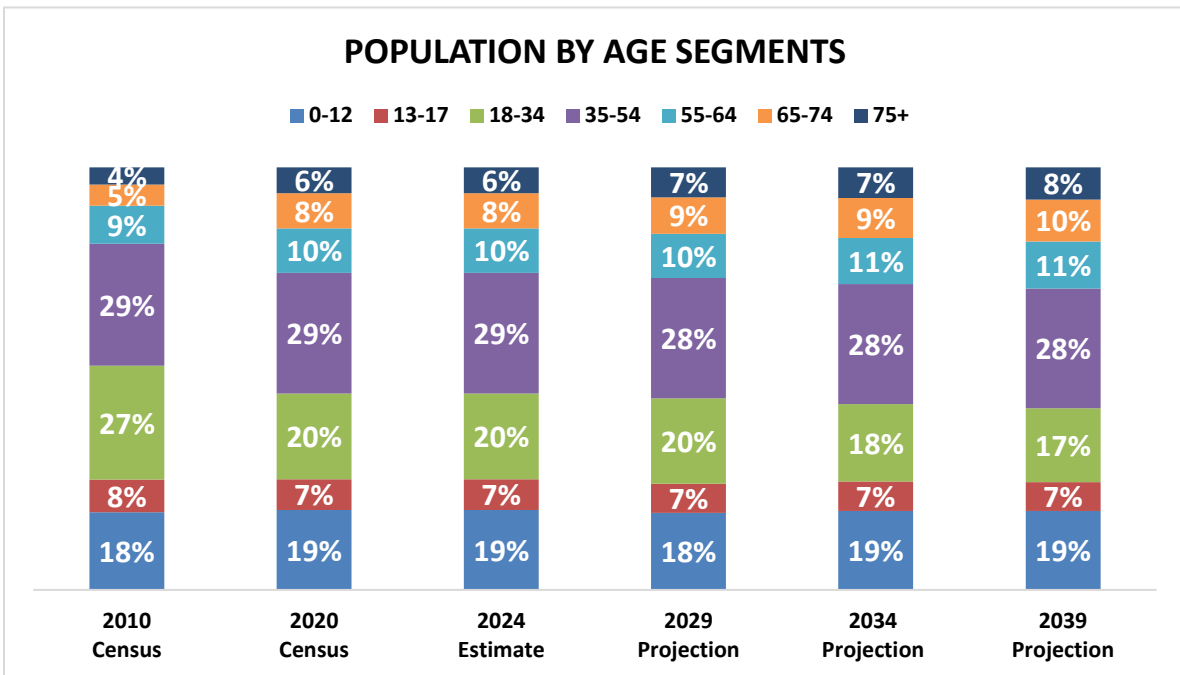


Figure 6 - Noblesville's Population by Age Segments

RACE

Analyzing race, Noblesville's current population makeup is majority White, with the 2024 estimate showing 82% of the population being White Alone, along with 'Two or More Races' (7%) and Black or African American Alone (5%) representing the next largest categories. Predictions for 2029 and beyond expect the population to diversify, with a decrease in the White Alone population accompanied by increases in the other populations by 2039 (Figure 6).

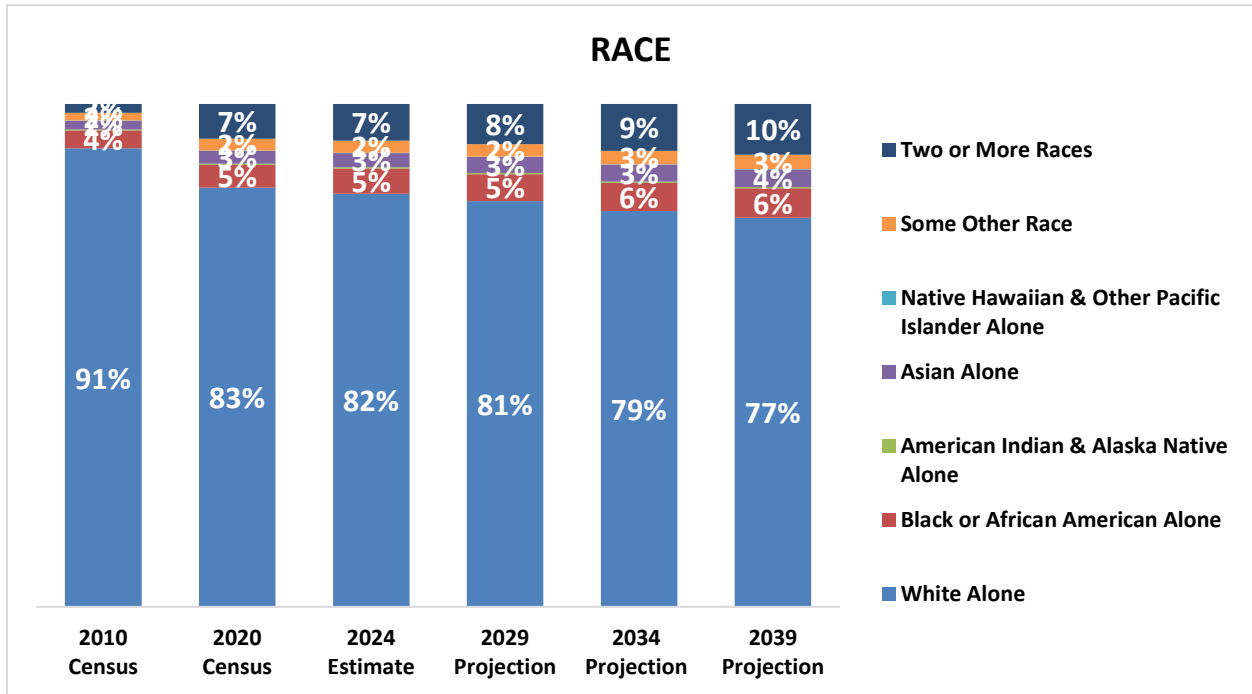


Figure 7 - Noblesville's Population by Race

ETHNICITY

Noblesville'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 2024 estimate, people of Hispanic/Latino origin represent 7% of Noblesville's population, which is below the national average (19% Hispanic/Latino) and the state of Indiana average (8.8% Hispanic/Latino). The City's Hispanic/Latino population has experienced a minor increase over time and is expected to continue growing slightly to 8% of the total population by 2039 (Figure 7).

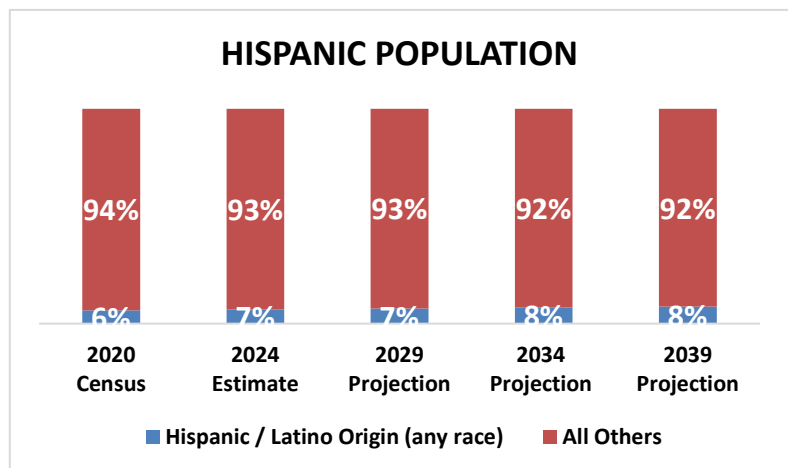


Figure 8 - Noblesville's Hispanic Population

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

When analyzing income, the per capita income is 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. Noblesville's per capita income (\$48,387) is significantly above the Indiana average (\$37,705), while the City's median household income (\$102,399) is also significantly above the Indiana median (\$70,604). Noblesville projects to increase in both median household and per capita income, where the averages are expected to increase to \$139,962 and \$69,747 respectively by 2039. These relatively significant income projections should be taken into consideration when the Department is pricing out programs, calculating cost recovery goals, or planning out amenities for potential parks and trail systems (Figures 8 and 9).

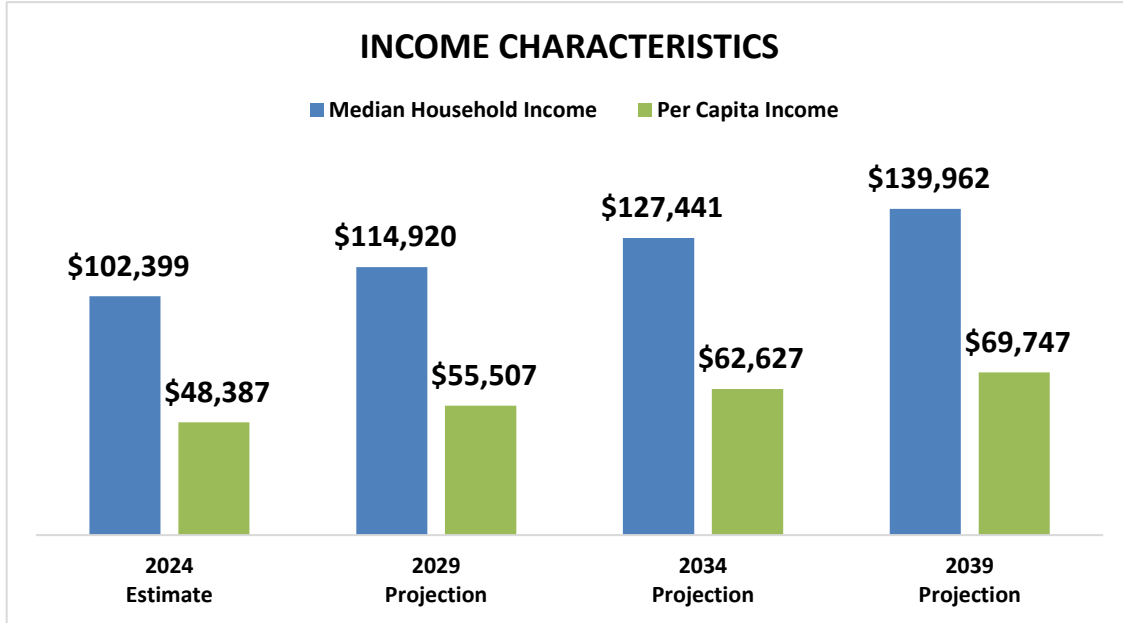


Figure 9 - Income Characteristics of Noblesville

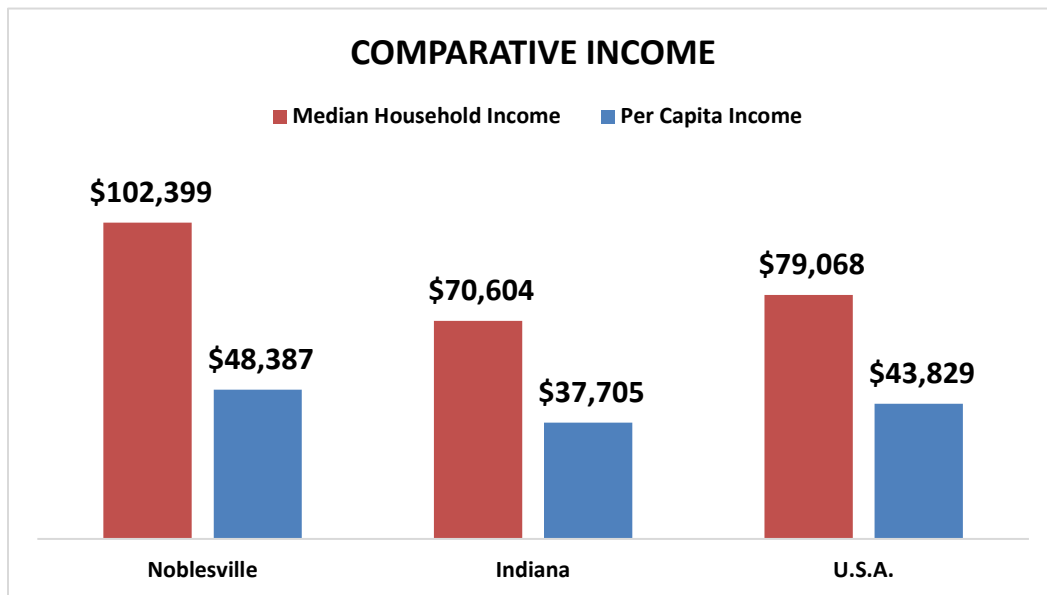


Figure 10 - Comparative Income Characteristics of Noblesville

EDUCATION

Assessing education, 36.8% of Noblesville's residents (aged 25+) have attained up to a bachelor's degree, which is well above the national average (30.3%). 16.8% of the population hold Graduate or professional degrees, while a smaller portion of the population holds just an associate degree (9.2%), and a slightly larger number of civilians only have a high school degree (15.7%). Alternatively, it is estimated that just 3.3% of the population never attained a high school diploma (Figure 10).

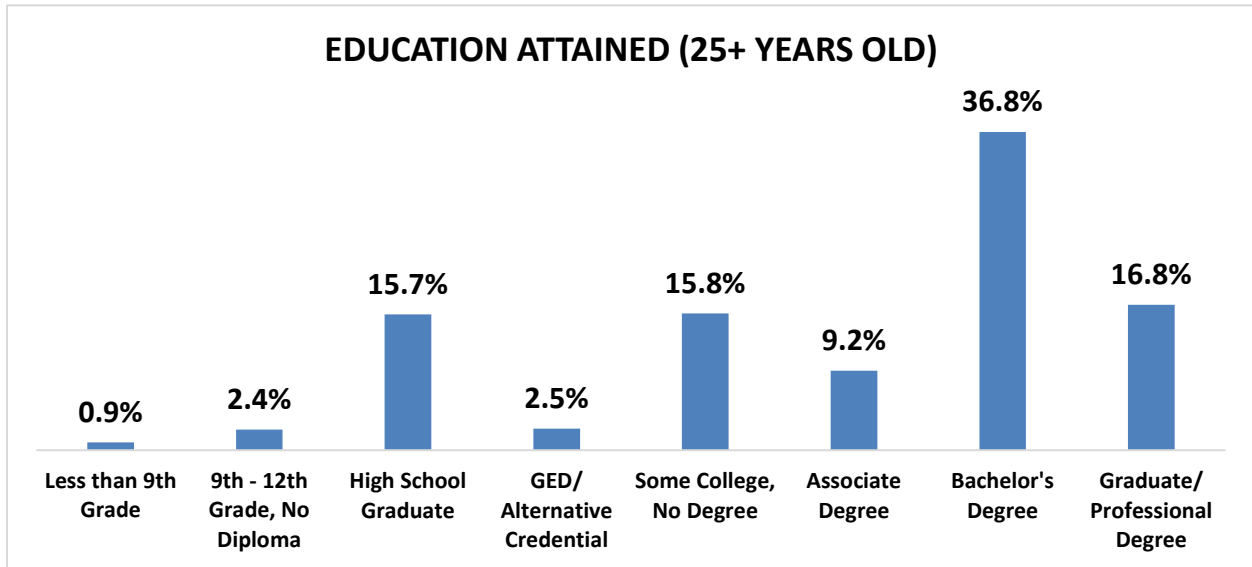


Figure 11 - Noblesville's Educational Attainment

UNEMPLOYMENT

In assessing the civilian labor force (16+ years old), currently 96.4% of residents hold a full or part-time position, while the remaining 3.6% of Noblesville'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).**

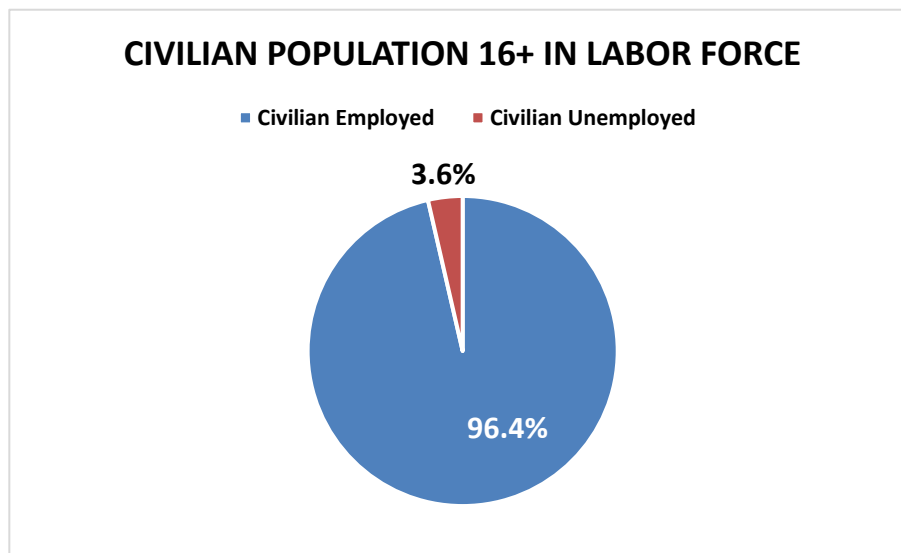


Figure 12 - Noblesville's Employment Rates

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Noblesville's population can also be analyzed by the industry makeup of its workforce. Within Noblesville, 'Services' (51.7%) make up most of the working population's industry, while 'Retail Trade' and 'Manufacturing' make up the next two most common occupations at 12.4% and 10.6%, respectively (**Figure 12**).

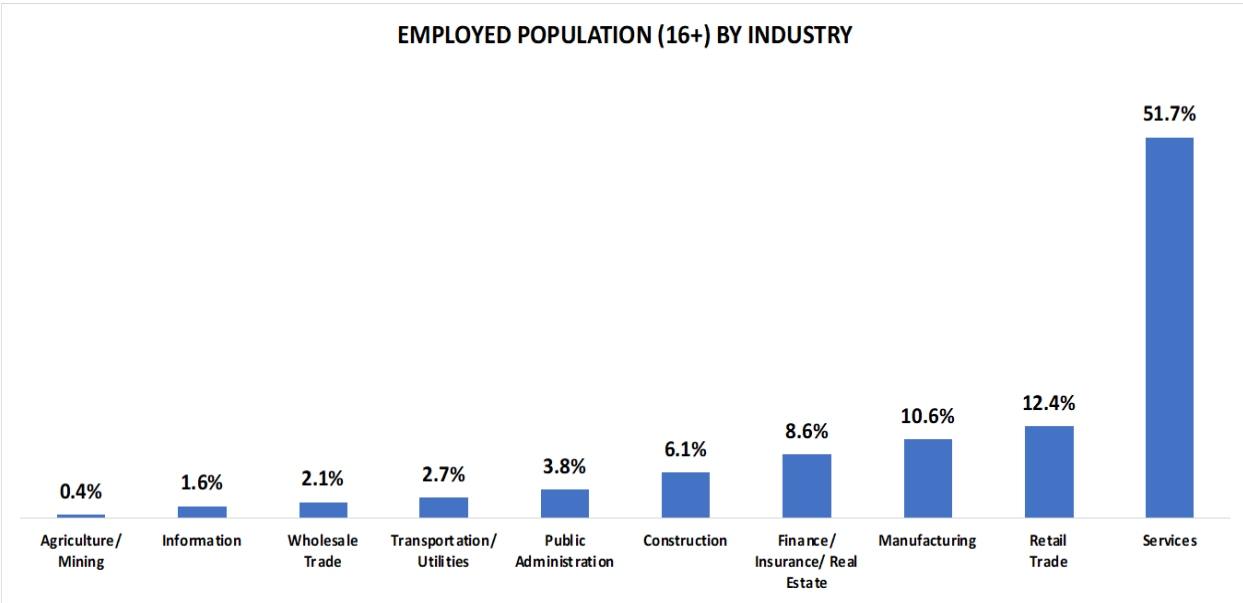


Figure 13 - Noblesville's Employed Population by Industry

AT-RISK POPULATION

The At-Risk Population of Noblesville is defined as those more likely to experience an adverse health, economic, or social outcome. As shown in **Figure 13**, 575 households are without an automotive vehicle, 1,406 households are below the Poverty Level, and 5,110 households contain someone with a Disability. The population of 65+ is considered at risk and is totaled at 10,879 in Noblesville. This information is important as it relates to the types of programs and amenities the Department provides the community. **Note: the information below comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), as well as ESRI.**

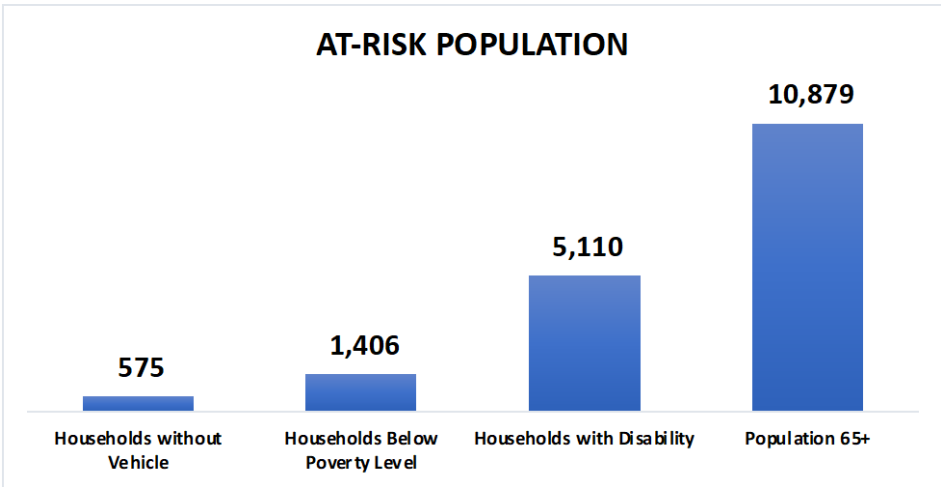


Figure 14 - Noblesville's At-Risk Population Statistics

In addition, the United for ALICE¹⁴ (“Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed”) report, which analyzes households in communities that earn above the federal poverty level but still struggle to afford basic household needs, was used to support demographic data on income levels within Noblesville. According to this source, approximately 28% of Noblesville households within its designated Census Places are either below the ALICE threshold or below the poverty level.

DEMOGRAPHIC IMPLICATIONS

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

- Noblesville’s population trends may indicate a need to identify and understand the interests of all ages, especially middle-aged and senior populations. Adding more recreational activities for the active adult population, such as exercise/yoga classes, recreational sports like pickleball, or new nature trails, may prove to be beneficial in keeping many populations active. In addition to adults, the rising percentage of children may also give a better idea of what offerings may serve the community best. Projects like new parks with playgrounds, recreational sports leagues, and walking trails could provide the benefits needed by the children but also the parents that take them there.
- The City’s high household income characteristics might suggest potential disposable income at the family level. The Department should be mindful of this type of generalization, as it does not recognize the low-income residents in the city. When pricing out programs and services, the department should create equity in access by providing avenues for participation for low-income families. Currently, low-income census tracts exist within the city; south of State Road 32 between the White River and State Road 37.
- In comparison to the United States average (0.70%), Noblesville had a high annual growth rate from 2020 to 2024 (1.90%). However, the annual growth rate is projected to slow to 1.69% from 2034 to 2039, while still showing a continuation of the steady growth the community has seen in the past decade. This population growth should be considered and accounted for when planning new amenities and offerings for the community, as well as the maintenance and upkeep of current offerings to provide the same level of service or better.
- Finally, the Department should ensure its diversifying population is reflected in its offerings, marketing/communications, and public outreach. With increasing diversity in both race and age, as well as uncommonly high population growth, Noblesville should remain prepared to change its offerings over time to remain culturally relevant for its diversifying user base.

¹⁴ United for ALICE: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports-mobile/indiana#10/39.8212/-85.7710>

2.8 LOCAL TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Recreation Trends Analysis provides an understanding of national, regional, and local recreational trends as well as recreational interest by age segments. Trends data used for this analysis were 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. National Trends information is in **Appendix 4**.

The following charts show sport and leisure market potential data for Noblesville 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 Noblesville's MPIs, the data demonstrates mostly above-average market potential index (MPI) numbers in assessed areas, with high potential in some specific activities. For example, Golf, Pickleball, and Basketball all scored the highest in the General Sport category, while also demonstrating higher participation compared to the national average. Something to note about the City's MPI scores is that there are very few activities below the national average, as 3 out of the 47 activities had an MPI score below 100. This becomes significant when the Department 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 47 sport and leisure activities that are prevalent for residents within Noblesville. The activities are categorized by activity type and listed in ascending order, from lowest to highest 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 the Department.

GENERAL SPORTS MARKET POTENTIAL

The following chart shows that almost all Noblesville's recorded General Sports are above the national average regarding MPI. Golf (9.6%), Basketball (6.3%), and Tennis (4.2%) took the top three spots while also posting scores above the national average. Soccer and Baseball showed potential as they took the next two highest spots, also scoring above the national average. Softball (1.7%) took the bottom spot of the category, though it does show potential with a score very close to the national average. It is also worth noting that Noblesville outscored the Indiana average in all but one activity (**Figure 14**).

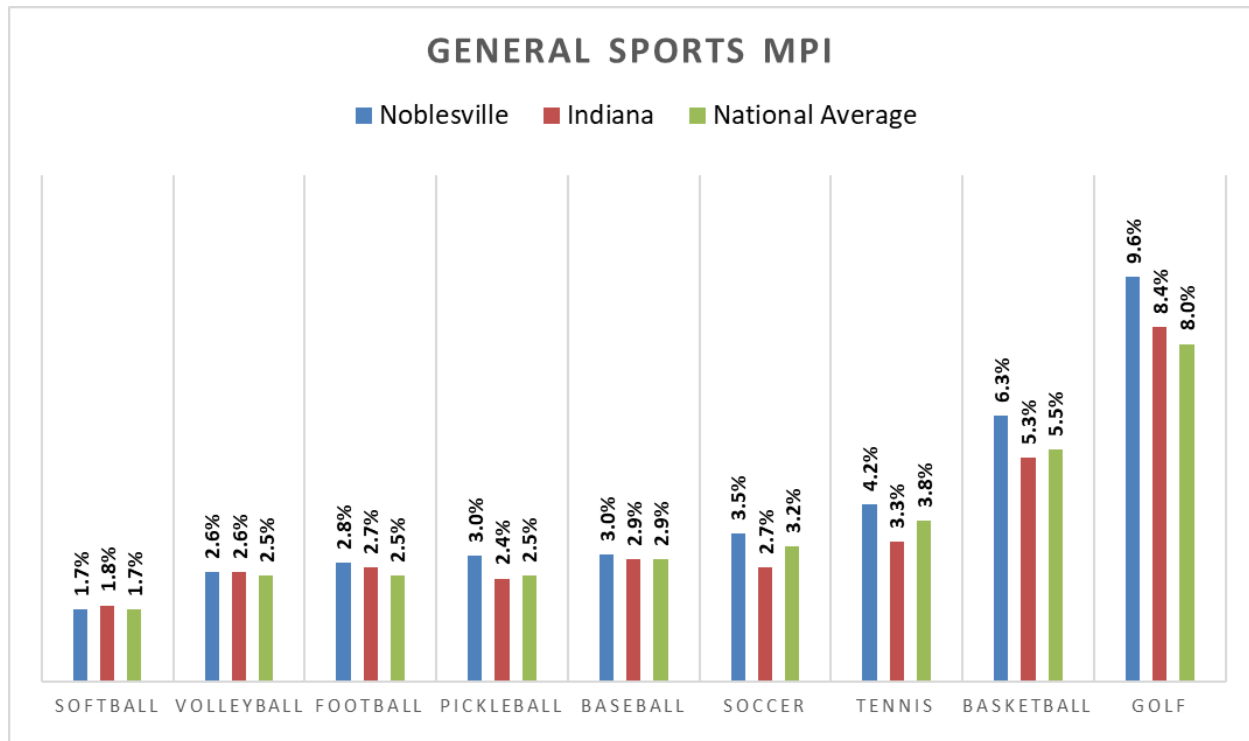


Figure 15 - General Sports MPI for Noblesville

FITNESS MARKET POTENTIAL

Assessing MPI scores for the Fitness Activity category reveals that most of Noblesville's fitness activities are above the national average. Walking for Exercise (35.6%) and Swimming (18.1%) took the top two spots, while Weight Lifting (17.0%) and Jogging/Running (12.5%) followed up in the next two spots. Alternatively, the lowest-scored activity was Zumba (2.8%), yet it outscored the Indiana state average of 2.4%. In fact, Noblesville outscored the Indiana average in every Fitness MPI activity (**Figure 15**).

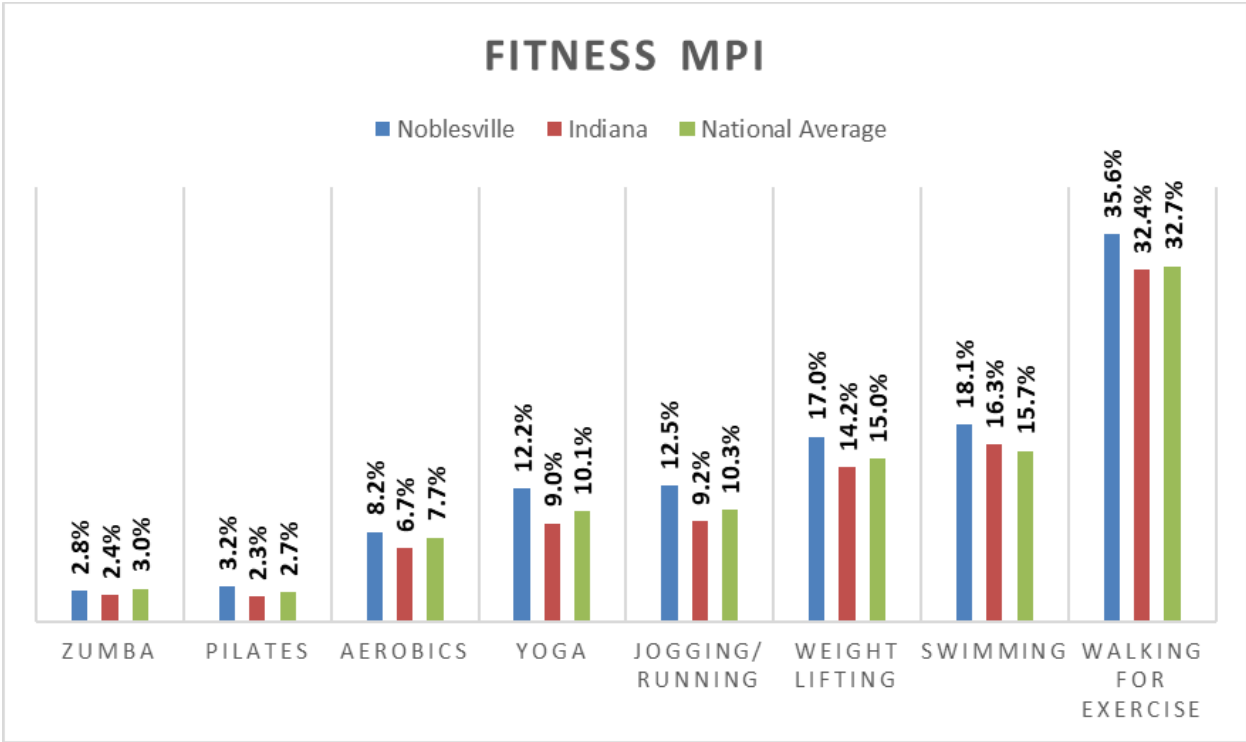


Figure 16 - Fitness MPI for Noblesville

2.8.1 OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MARKET POTENTIAL

Noblesville's Outdoor Activity MPI chart reflected relatively strong scores in almost all of the recorded activities; the City scored higher than the US average on 8 of the 9 activities, with the most popular activities being Hiking (21.4%), Road Biking (11.8%), and Fresh Water Fishing (10.7%). Alternatively, the lowest score in the City's Outdoor Activity MPI belonged to Rock Climbing (1.9%), which still outscored the national average. It's worth noting that in the one activity that the City did not outscore the national average, Horseback Riding (2.0%), it was by less than 0.1%. While outscoring the US average in most activities, Noblesville only outscored the Indiana average in four of the activities and tied for just one of them. Noblesville's exceptional scores for most of the Outdoor Activities could give the Department insight into programs, clubs, and other projects that might prove to be beneficial for both the Department and residents (Figure 16).

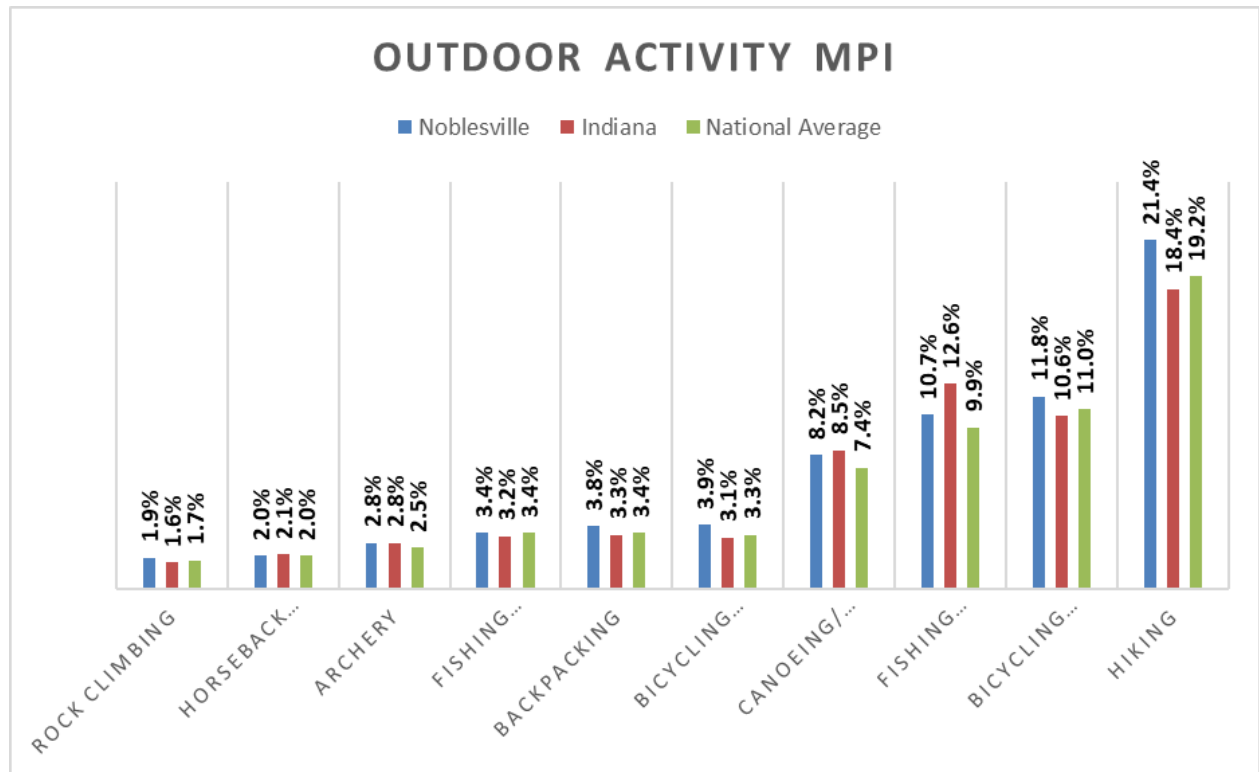


Figure 17 - Outdoor Activity MPI for Noblesville

COMMERCIAL RECREATION MARKET POTENTIAL

The Commercial Recreation MPI category reveals that all of the City's recorded Commercial Recreation activities are above the national average. The most popular activities in the service area were 'Dined out' (60.7%), 'Attended Sports Event' (18.2%), and 'Visited a theme park' (16.8%). The lowest scoring activities were 'Flew a drone' (2.9%) and 'Visited and indoor water park' (2.9%). Every Commercial Recreation Activity scored above the Indiana average, except 'Visited an Indoor Waterpark'. Paired with the other MPI ratings (General Sports and Fitness, and Outdoor Activities), these activities could signal potential target areas for projects when developing the Department (Figure 17).

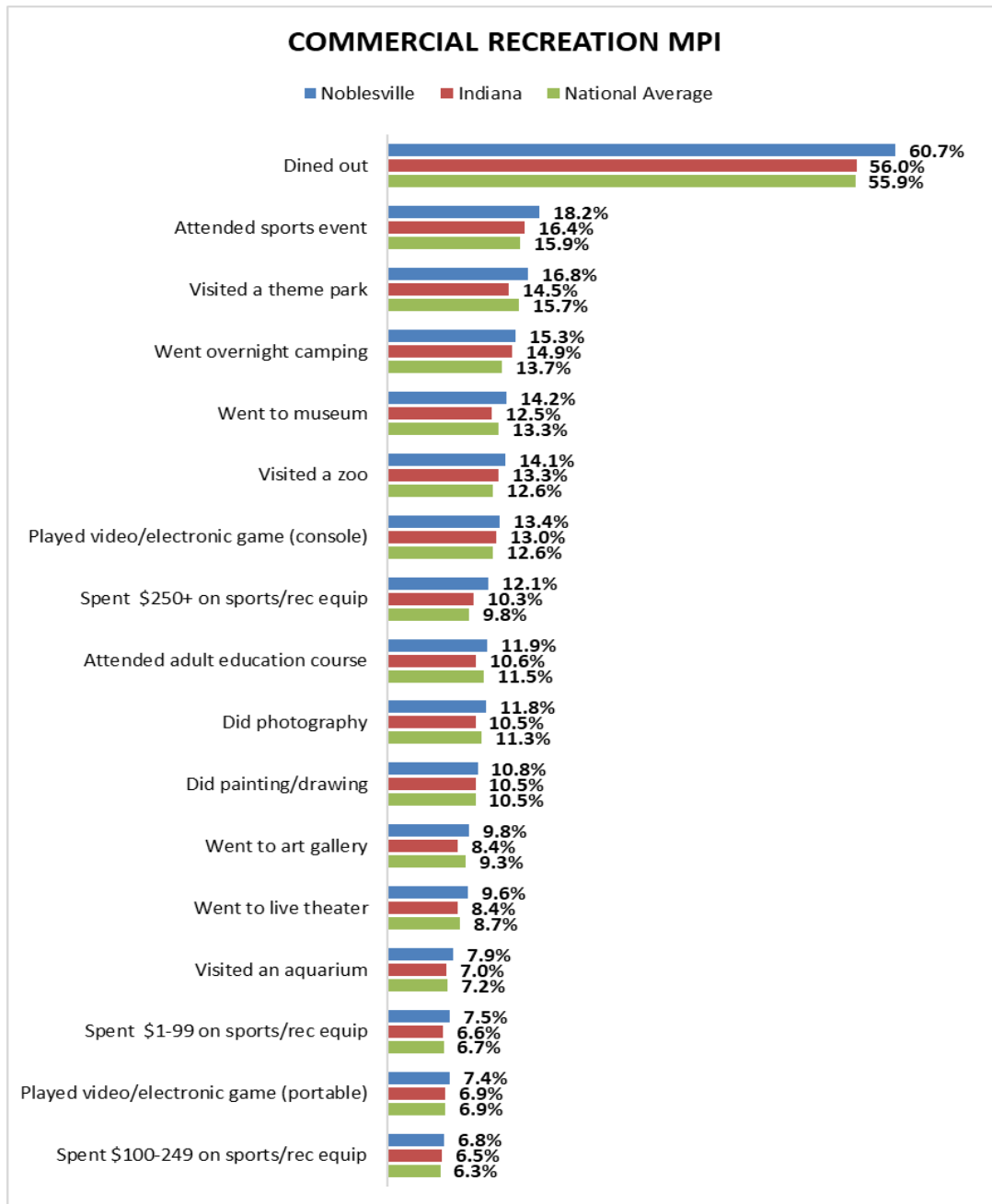


Figure 18 - Commercial Recreation MPI for Noblesville

2.9 BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

2.9.1 METHODOLOGY

Noblesville Indiana Parks & Recreation (“Noblesville”) identified operating metrics to benchmark against peer communities related to parks and recreation financials and assets. The goal of this analysis is to evaluate how Noblesville’s Parks & Recreation service is positioned amongst peer communities, therefore, the information sought was a combination of operating metrics that factor budgets, staffing levels, programming, and inventory.

Information used in this analysis was obtained directly from each participating benchmark community (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 completed as of April 2025, 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 communities, which is indicated by a blank space or “N/A” in the data tables where the information was missing.

The communities listed below were selected for benchmarking because they are mid-sized cities, well educated, relatively affluent, invested significantly in parks and recreation, and manage a unique variety of amenities. The variety of the populations served by these communities will allow Noblesville to benchmark itself against communities with various services as well as communities that they may strive to measure up against in the future. These benchmarked communities include the following:

- Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation Services
- City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation Services
- Columbus Indiana Parks & Recreation Services
- Lafayette Parks & Recreation Services
- Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation Services

OVERVIEW

The table below lists each benchmark community in the study, arranged by population per square mile. Noblesville serves a population of 75,149 residents, ranking third among comparable agencies in total population served. Noblesville's jurisdiction encompasses 32.79 square miles, making it the third largest service area in the peer group, larger than Bloomington, Lafayette, and Upper Arlington, but smaller than Carmel Clay and Columbus. With a population density of 2,254 residents per square mile, Noblesville ranks fourth, reflecting a balance between urban and suburban development patterns. These characteristics position Noblesville as a growing mid-sized community, requiring a park and recreation system that can effectively address both the needs of a substantial population base and the service challenges associated with a geographically expansive jurisdiction.

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Population	Jurisdiction Size (Sq. Mi.)	Population per Sq. Mi.
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	OH	City	35,743	9.84	3,632
City of Bloomington	IN	City	79,168	23.16	3,418
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	IN	City	70,783	29.50	2,399
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	IN	City	75,149	34.33	2,189
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	IN	Joint Department	102,296	47.00	2,177
Columbus Parks and Recreation	IL	City	51,522	227.63	226

2.9.2 BENCHMARK COMPARISON

The following tables provide a general overview of each system's inventory, including park acreage, trail mileage, staffing, budget, recreation facilities, and programming.

Agency	Population	Jurisdiction Planning Area (sq. mi.)	Total Acres Owned or Managed	Acres Developed/ Regularly Maintained	Acres of natural areas/ open space	Acres per 1,000 residents
City of Bloomington	79,168	23.2	2,342	422	1940	29.6
Columbus Parks and Recreation	51,522	28.1	992.4	867	79	19.3
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	75,149	34.3	1,026	810	216	13.7
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	70,783	29.5	703	700	3	9.9
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	102,296	47.0	690	162	528	6.7
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	35,743	9.8	183	181	25	5.1
NRPA Median for agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999: 11.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents						

PARK ACRES COMPARISON

The parkland data shows Noblesville provides 1,026 acres, or 13.7 acres per 1,000 residents, above the NRPA median of 11.2 and ahead of Lafayette, Carmel Clay, and Upper Arlington. Bloomington leads the group with 2,342 acres, translating to 29.6 acres per 1,000 residents, while Columbus also stands out with 19.3 acres per 1,000. Noblesville maintains 682 acres of developed parkland and 128 acres of natural areas, offering a balance between active and passive spaces, though both figures are lower than larger peers. Lafayette and Carmel Clay manage more expansive planning areas but provide fewer acres per capita,

and Upper Arlington, with a compact jurisdiction, offers the least parkland overall. This analysis highlights that while Noblesville performs well against national standards, it lags behind leading peers in overall acreage and developed parkland, indicating room for growth to meet future demand. It is worth noting that Carmel includes undeveloped land in natural areas and open space, where Noblesville has an additional 216 acres of undeveloped land not included in the calculation.

TRAIL MILAGE COMPARISON

The trail data shows that most peer communities meet or exceed the NRPA median of 19 total miles of trail, though provision per capita varies. Bloomington leads in total mileage with 34 miles, split evenly between paved and unpaved trails, offering strong diversity in user experiences. Lafayette (32 miles) and Carmel Clay (27.6 miles) also provide sizable networks, though Lafayette is entirely paved while Carmel Clay offers some balance with unpaved options. Upper Arlington, despite its smaller population, maintains 17 miles, equating to 0.5 miles per 1,000 residents, the highest ratio among the group. Columbus offers 23 miles, all paved, at 0.4 per 1,000. Noblesville, with 19.6 miles, is right at the NRPA median but provides the lowest ratio at 0.3 miles per 1,000 residents due to its larger population base. While Noblesville lags behind peers in per capita trail access, suggesting a need for continued expansion to keep pace with community growth, the City of Noblesville also owns and maintains an additional 58.09 miles of Citywide perimeter paved trails.

Agency	Population	Total Miles of Trail Owned or Managed	Total miles of paved/hard surface trail	Total miles of unpaved/soft surface trail	Trail Miles per 1,000 residents
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	35,743	17.0	16	1	0.5
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	70,783	32.0	32	0	0.5
City of Bloomington	79,168	34.0	18	16	0.4
Columbus Parks and Recreation	51,522	23.0	23	0	0.4
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	75,149	19.6	19	1	0.3
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	102,296	27.6	25	3	0.3
NRPA Median for agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999: 19 total miles of trail					

STAFFING COMPARISON

The staffing data reveals that Noblesville has significantly fewer employees and full-time equivalents (FTEs) than its peers and the NRPA median. With only 34 total employees and 46.3 FTEs, equating to just 6.2 FTEs per 10,000 residents, Noblesville operates at a fraction of the staffing levels seen in comparable agencies. In contrast, Upper Arlington (20.66 FTEs per 10,000 residents) and Columbus (19.02) maintain the highest staffing ratios, while Carmel Clay (16.2) and Bloomington (15.7) also exceed the NRPA benchmark of 11.1. These higher-performing agencies demonstrate the staffing capacity necessary to support robust park systems and program offerings. Overall, Noblesville's low staffing levels highlight a major operational constraint that may impact its ability to expand services, maintain facilities, and meet the growing expectations of the community.

Agency	Total Employees	Total Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs)	Total FTEs per 10,000 Residents
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	475	73.8	20.66
Columbus Parks and Recreation	341	98.0	19.02
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	732	166.0	16.23
City of Bloomington	64	124.0	15.66
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	34	46.3	6.2
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	47	N/A	N/A
NRPA Median for agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999: 75.8 Total FTEs, 11.1 FTEs per 10,000 residents			

The maintenance staffing data shows that Noblesville falls significantly below peer agencies in overall maintenance capacity when measured in FTEs and volunteer engagement. Although Noblesville employs a comparable number of full-time (23) and part-time/seasonal (22) maintenance staff to agencies like Bloomington and Lafayette, its reported maintenance FTEs total 29.5, lower than Columbus (50.0), Bloomington (35.5), Carmel Clay (31.0), and Lafayette (30.0). This discrepancy suggests a gap in available labor hours to support ongoing maintenance needs. Volunteer engagement further distinguishes the systems: Bloomington (8,586 hours) and Lafayette (7,555 hours) leverage substantial volunteer support, while Noblesville reports only 10 hours for the year, indicating an underutilized community resource. Overall, Noblesville's maintenance workforce appears significantly constrained relative to peers, which may limit its ability to keep pace with maintenance demands, especially as its park system continues to grow.

Agency	Total Fulltime Maintenance Employees	Total Parttime / Seasonal Maintenance Employees	Total Maintenance Employees FTEs	Total Volunteer Hours (2024)
Columbus Parks and Recreation	40	13	50.0	4,585
City of Bloomington	23	35	35.5	8,586
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	19	17	31.0	2,611
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	24	20	30.0	7,555
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	15	8	17.3	4,509
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	23	22	29.5	10

BUDGET COMPARISON

The financial data highlights clear differences in cost recovery and spending efficiency across agencies. Columbus demonstrates the strongest performance, recovering 95% of its \$12.6 million operating budget through fees and charges while maintaining expenses per acre (\$12,657) and per FTE (\$128,168) close to NRPA medians. Carmel Clay also operates at a high scale with \$19.7 million in expenses and a 71% cost recovery, though its expense per acre (\$28,484) is considerably higher, reflecting intensive investment in its parkland. Upper Arlington and Noblesville both show moderate operating expenses (~\$7 million) but achieve only 40% and 37% cost recovery, respectively, signaling reliance on tax support. Lafayette spends similarly (\$8.1 million) but recovers just 28%, while Bloomington has the lowest cost recovery at 14% despite a sizable \$11.8 million budget, suggesting heavy subsidy. Compared to NRPA medians, Noblesville's per-acre expense (\$8,442) is efficient, but its low-cost recovery underscores a limited ability to generate earned income relative to peers.

Agency	Total Operating Expenses (FY24)	Total Fees, Charges, and Earned Revenue (FY24)	Operating Expense per Acre	Operating Expense per FTE	Cost Recovery
Columbus Indiana Parks & Recreation	\$ 12,560,478	\$ 11,962,573	\$ 12,657	\$ 128,168	95%
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	\$ 19,654,290	\$ 14,009,496	\$ 28,484	\$ 118,399	71%
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	\$ 7,050,300	\$ 2,822,556	\$ 38,526	\$ 95,481	40%
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	\$ 7,395,567	\$ 2,701,499	\$ 8,442	N/A	37%
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	\$ 8,076,919	\$ 2,296,679	\$ 11,538	N/A	28%
City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation	\$ 11,800,000	\$ 1,676,000	\$ 5,038	\$ 95,161	14%
NRPA Median for Agencies Serving 50,000-99,999 Residents: \$9,108 per acre, \$108,000 per FTE, \$8.00 million in annual operating expenditures					

The capital budget data reveals major differences in investment levels across peer communities. Carmel Clay leads with average annual capital expenditures of over \$10 million, equating to nearly \$98 per resident, reflecting consistent reinvestment in facilities and infrastructure. Upper Arlington follows closely with \$4.1 million annually, the highest per capita at \$115, signaling strong local commitment despite a smaller population. Bloomington shows significant recent growth, averaging \$4.0 million annually and \$50 per resident, boosted by a large FY24 allocation. In contrast, Columbus invests a more modest \$1.1 million annually (\$22 per resident), while Noblesville averages just under \$1.0 million and \$14 per resident, pointing to comparatively limited reinvestment capacity. Lafayette lags furthest behind, averaging only \$85,000 annually (\$1.20 per resident), indicating minimal capital funding. Overall, Noblesville's investment levels trail substantially behind peer communities, raising concerns about its ability to keep pace with growing facility and infrastructure needs.

Agency	FY22 Capital Budget	FY23 Capital Budget	FY24 Capital Budget	Avg. Annual Capital Expenditures	Avg. Annual Capital Expenditures per Resident
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	\$ 3,402,990	\$ 3,486,582	\$ 5,431,440	\$ 4,107,004	\$ 114.90
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	\$ 11,483,151	\$ 6,651,575	\$ 11,899,967	\$ 10,011,564	\$ 97.87
City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation	\$ 750,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 9,200,000	\$ 3,983,333	\$ 50.31
Columbus Indiana Parks & Recreation	\$ 1,367,500	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,122,500	\$ 21.79
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	\$ 2,119,331	\$ 433,250	\$ 446,500	\$ 999,694	\$ 13.52
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	\$ -	\$ 65,000	\$ 190,000	\$ 85,000	\$ 1.20

RECREATION FACILITIES COMPARISON

The data highlights that Noblesville has significantly less indoor recreation space compared to its peers. With only one facility totaling 5,476 square feet, just 74 square feet per 1,000 residents, Noblesville provides far below the access seen in peer communities. Columbus leads with 6,740 square feet per 1,000 residents, followed by Upper Arlington with 5,092, both demonstrating strong investments in indoor recreation. Bloomington (2,018 SF per 1,000) and Carmel Clay (1,566 SF per 1,000) fall in the mid-range, while Lafayette, though limited at 311 SF per 1,000, still offers more than quadruple Noblesville's provision. This comparison underscores a major service gap in Noblesville's ability to meet community needs for indoor recreation facilities.

Agency	Population	Number of Outdoor Aquatic Centers / Pools	Number of Indoor Recreation Facilities	Total Indoor Recreation Facility Square Footage (SF)	Indoor Recreation SF per 1,000 residents
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	35,743	3	6	182,000	5,091.91
Columbus Indiana Parks & Recreation	51,522	1	4	347,240	6,739.65
City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation	79,168	2	5	159,741	2,017.75
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	102,296	1	3	160,225	1,566.29
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	70,783	3	1	22,000	310.81
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	73,916	1	1	5,476	74.08

RECREATION PROGRAMMING COMPARISON

The program cost recovery data shows wide variation in financial performance across agencies. Noblesville leads with the highest recovery at 137%, generating more revenue than expenses despite its relatively small program budget, suggesting efficient operations and strong demand. Lafayette (111%) and Carmel Clay (105%) also exceed full cost recovery, demonstrating sustainable programming models. Columbus achieves a solid 80% recovery, though it still requires some subsidy, while Upper Arlington (58%) relies more heavily on tax support. Bloomington shows the lowest recovery at just 21%, indicating a heavy dependence on subsidies to sustain programming. Overall, Noblesville, Lafayette, and Carmel Clay stand out as leaders in financial efficiency, while Bloomington highlights the other end of the spectrum with significant operational reliance on public funding.

Agency	Total Operating Expenditures / Budget for Programs	Revenue Generated by Programs	Programming Cost Recovery
Noblesville Parks and Recreation	\$ 42,199	\$ 57,976	137%
Lafayette Parks & Recreation	\$ 1,951,679	\$ 2,169,239	111%
Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation	\$ 6,238,165	\$ 6,524,156	105%
Columbus Indiana Parks & Recreation	\$ 3,064,537	\$ 2,451,007	80%
Upper Arlington Parks & Recreation	\$ 2,396,200	\$ 1,385,600	58%
City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation	\$ 2,205,612	\$ 470,528	21%

2.9.3 CONCLUSION

The benchmark comparison highlights that Noblesville Parks and Recreation demonstrate strong performance in some areas while facing notable gaps in others. Noblesville excels in trail provision, with one of the most extensive and accessible systems among its peers, and achieves impressive cost recovery for recreation programming, outperforming all benchmarked communities. Parkland provision per capita also meets NRPA standards, positioning the community competitively in open space access. However, Noblesville lags significantly in indoor recreation facilities, staffing capacity, and capital investment, all of which limit its ability to deliver services at the scale and quality seen in comparable agencies. Financially, operating expenses are efficiently managed, but low-cost recovery and limited reinvestment capacity point to sustainability concerns. Overall, Noblesville's strengths in trails and program efficiency establish a solid foundation, but addressing facility, staffing, and funding gaps will be critical for meeting future community needs and keeping pace with peer communities.

CHAPTER THREE – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 STAKEHOLDER AND ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERVIEW OVERVIEW

A method of understanding what part Noblesville Parks and Recreation Department has in the lives of the Noblesville community is the key leader and stakeholder engagement process. One-on-one interviews, eight (8) in total, or small group focus groups, six (6) in total, were conducted with approximately 80+ stakeholders. These focus group interviews were held during the months of November 2024 through January 2025. Interviews with elected officials were completed as one-on-one interviews virtually in November 2024.

Answers from the interviews also helped to identify themes, key issues, as well as questions on the community survey that was administered in the Winter/Spring of 2025. The elected official interviews each lasted thirty (30) minutes, and the stakeholder focus group was approximately one (1) hour and participants were all engaged. Participants interviewed included representatives from the following:

City of Noblesville Staff	Noblesville City Council
Noblesville Schools Foundation	Hamilton Co. Artists
Noblesville Schools	Boys and Girls Club
Noblesville Park Board	Pickleball groups that play at Forest Park
Noblesville Parks Foundation	Hamilton County Artists
Noblesville Board of Public Works and Safety	Noblesville Advisory Council on Disabilities
Noblesville Babe Ruth	Serve Noblesville
Noblesville Creates	Keep Noblesville Beautiful Board
Noblesville Main Street	Noblesville Tree Board
Front Porch Music Fest	Noblesville Preservation Alliance
Friends of Central Pool	Janus Developmental Services
Peony Festival	Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation
Noblesville Chamber	Noblesville Cultural Arts
Local business owners	Nickle Plate Heritage Railroad

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

VALUE OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Diverse Facilities/Amenities and Park Types: Residents of Noblesville highly value their parks and recreation services for their diverse amenities, well-maintained facilities, and strong sense of community. Concerts, special events like the farmers market, and community-wide celebrations such as the Fourth of July at Forest Park are among the most cherished offerings. The park system provides a variety of amenities, including an outdoor aquatic center, two golf courses, skate parks, splash pads, pickleball courts, and playgrounds, ensuring that there are activities for people of all ages and interests. Also, the community expressed how much parks contribute to the City's quality of life and toward improving mental health.

Trails: The trail system has now become an essential part of the City's infrastructure, enhancing connectivity and encouraging outdoor recreation. Recent improvements, such as improving safety and expanded trails, have further increased accessibility and usage of the trail system.

Programs and Activities: Residents involved in the pickleball group that plays at Forest Park, summer camps, and youth sports organizations benefit from well-maintained facilities, providing engaging opportunities for youth, families and seniors throughout the year. Active seniors have also seen an expansion in programming, allowing them to participate in various recreational and learning activities. The City and parks department work well together to bring special events and activities to residents, such as the summer concert series, which contributes to a vibrant community atmosphere.

Unique Assets: The diversity of park experiences, each with its own unique amenities and identity, makes them attractive and well-used by different segments of the community. Forest Park stands out as a beloved destination with its abundance of mature trees, shaded areas, pool, indoor meeting/program space, and year-round accessibility. Spaces such as Seminary Park which hosts the Indiana Peony Festival, Federal Hill Commons, and Dr. James A. Dillon Park have become important gathering spots, serving the needs of diverse community groups. The community appreciates the differences in each park experience and amenities.

Well Maintained Parks: Maintenance and cleanliness are widely appreciated, with park staff ensuring that shelters, playgrounds, and other facilities remain in excellent condition.

Keeping up with Growth: As the City continues to grow, efforts to expand the park system and enhance amenities remain a priority, ensuring that parks and recreation services continue to play a vital role in Noblesville's cultural identity, quality of life, and commitment to outdoor engagement for generations to come.

AREAS OF THE SYSTEM THAT NEED IMPROVEMENT OR ADDITIONAL FOCUS

Enhancements to Parks and Trails: Improvements to Noblesville's parks and recreation system should focus on safety, accessibility, connectivity, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. Safety concerns include the need for emergency phones along trails, safety features around playgrounds for children, and increased security cameras in key locations. Enhancing accessibility throughout the system is a priority, with recommendations for sensory parks, adult-sized changing tables, designated seating at events for individuals with disabilities, and improved ADA pathways to all park areas. Expanding green spaces, pocket parks, and nature-based experiences, along with better natural resource management and tree succession planning, is also emphasized. The community also desires expanded recreational offerings such as a dog park and more pickleball courts.

Finally, strategic long-term planning is necessary, with considerations for future population growth, sustainable park development specifically to the east side of the City and incorporating arts and environmental education into programming. Efforts such as invasive species management, a tree inventory, and park expansion opportunities in underdeveloped areas will help maintain a thriving and inclusive park system for future generations. Many also expressed a desire for completion of Finch Creek Park and additional study for an indoor community center at a central location with the City.

Connectivity: Connectivity remains crucial, with calls for completing trail linkages, adding rest areas along paths, and integrating artistic site amenities like benches and bike racks.

Marketing and Communications: Improved communication and marketing efforts are needed, including multilingual signage and outreach to ensure all residents are aware of available programs and facilities.

Strengthening partnerships, increasing volunteer opportunities, and creating a centralized event calendar would further enhance engagement and participation.

Recreation Programs: The community would like to see expanded offerings for summer camps, as the program fills up very quickly.

Other Areas of Emphasis: Key areas of focus for Noblesville's parks and recreation system include expanding outdoor recreation options beyond sports, such as adding a sledding hill to the system and promoting self-directed activities. Accessibility should be integrated into all services and facilities to ensure inclusiveness. There is also a need to evaluate the return on investment (ROI) for future projects, with tools to help staff effectively communicate their long-term benefits to the City Council. Additionally, the arrival of new staff presents an opportunity for fresh perspectives and innovative improvements to the system.

CHALLENGES FACING THE PARK SYSTEM

Financial Sustainability and Keeping Up with Population Growth: Over the next five years, Noblesville Parks & Recreation will face several key challenges, primarily centered around financial sustainability, growth management, and infrastructure maintenance given parks are receiving more use with the population increase. Ensuring adequate funding for park expansion and maintenance without overburdening taxpayers will be crucial, requiring innovative approaches such as sponsorships, naming rights, and strategic partnerships with developers. As the City grows, particularly to the east, the parks system must expand thoughtfully, integrating parks, trails, and services as essential infrastructure while proactively securing land before it becomes cost prohibitive. The need for an indoor recreation space is growing, with Finch Creek or Forest Park suggested as potential locations.

Addressing these challenges will require strategic planning, partnership collaboration, and a balance between maintaining current facilities and investing in future growth.

Lifecycle Replacement and Maintenance: Maintaining and upgrading existing amenities, including the aging pool and tree canopy, is a priority, along with planning for lifecycle replacements of both current and future assets. Additionally, better integration of natural resources management, such as invasive species removal and a tree nursery initiative, is necessary for long-term environmental sustainability.

Marketing and Communications: Community awareness and engagement also present challenges, as residents may not be fully informed about available programs, development plans, or opportunities to participate. Improved marketing, website updates, and clearer communication between other City departments and the public will be essential. Furthermore, competition from neighboring park systems and private recreation providers means that Noblesville must continue to enhance its offerings while adapting to emerging trends.

RECREATION FACILITY AND AMENITY NEEDS

Recreational Facilities: As Noblesville looks toward the future, there is a clear need for diverse recreational facilities and amenities that cater to all age groups and interests. Key priorities include the development of indoor spaces, such as a recreation center that include flexible programming areas. Also mentioned were indoor areas for pickleball and tennis courts.

For outdoor recreation, enhancing existing facilities like the tennis courts, outdoor pool, mini golf course, and splash pad, as well as creating a dog park, and accessible kayak launches along the White River, are important steps.

Improving Forest Park was also mentioned by the community such as replacing the aging pool, adding walking paths between amenities, and replacing older amenities that are not receiving use by the community were mentioned as examples.

Finally, creating a central location for an indoor recreation space, and filling gaps in trail connectivity are essential for meeting the City's evolving needs.

Accessibility and Inclusivity: Additionally, there is a strong desire for more inclusive spaces, such as playgrounds, accessible trails, and adaptive equipment for people with disabilities. The riverfront access should also be utilized more effectively, with infrastructure improvements to support water access, such as personal watercraft rentals and a blue-way trailhead.

Outdoor Amenities: The community is also calling for more nature-focused amenities, such as hiking trails, pollinator gardens, and a nature center with live animals. To address growing demand from population growth, there is a need for better infrastructure, including larger spaces for events, community gardens, and areas to support food trucks. A focus on beautification and public education around sensitive environments would enhance the visitor experience.

Recreation Programming: As the population grows, it will also be essential to expand programming, including year-round swimming lessons, increase in summer camp access due to demand, senior activities, and additional opportunities for programs for youth and families that are not currently offered.

RECREATION PROGRAMS MOST NEEDED

Inclusivity: As Noblesville evolves, there is a growing need for expanded and more inclusive recreational programs and events. A key focus is building stronger partnerships with schools and service providers to offer programs for all age groups, including those with special needs, such as adaptive recreation and programming for teens with autism. The City should also increase efforts to expand its volunteer base and find qualified staff, including a Therapeutic Recreation Staff Member, to enhance adaptive programs. Engaging with the private industry and partnering with local government agencies for joint programming in adaptive programs, environmental or arts-focused events, could also be beneficial.

Events and Volunteer Opportunities: Community-building events, like seasonal celebrations and campouts, should continue to be prioritized, alongside nature-based programming that includes interpretive signage and educational activities. There is also a demand for activities that bridge age gaps, especially for teens and older adults, including volunteer opportunities and programs that cater to working adults, seniors, and the late afternoon/evening hours.

Recreation Programming Communications: The development of a community hub for centralized program information would improve accessibility and participation. A concerted effort is needed to promote and communicate events and recreation offerings effectively, such as using reminders or a texting application, and ensuring the needs of older adults, including single seniors, are met with tailored offerings of communication.

TOP PRIORITIES

Top Priorities for Parks: The top priorities for Noblesville Parks & Recreation over the next five years focus on enhancing connectivity, accessibility, and creating diverse, engaging spaces for the community. A major goal is to strengthen the trail system to ensure it connects all parks and neighborhoods, with an emphasis on eliminating gaps and linking key areas, such as the Nickel Plate Trail.

Enhancing park features with unique, natural elements that celebrate Noblesville's identity and using native plantings for beautification are also critical goals. Accessibility for all ages and abilities is central,

with plans to create more enclosed, accessible playgrounds, provide spaces for families with young children, and ensure that parks cater to the aging population.

Another priority is to improve safety and maintenance by ensuring the parks are clean and well-maintained and by staffing parks appropriately to be proactive in their upkeep as parks receive more use with the growing population. The inclusion of more bike trails, adding more exciting water play features that are more immersive than what exists at the current pool and splashpads, and designated spaces for both small and large community events is needed to make the parks more versatile and attractive to all residents. Lastly, enhancing infrastructure for food trucks, improving public access to water activities, and developing more pocket parks downtown will ensure the system remains vibrant and appealing as Noblesville continues to grow.

Top Priorities for Facilities: There is a strong desire for a multigenerational community center that offers indoor and outdoor spaces for a wide variety of activities, including those that accommodate individuals with special needs. Indoor spaces for year-round programming are needed, such as an aquatic center, recreation programs, fitness classes, and event space for community gatherings and activities.

Top Priorities for Programming: The focus on youth programming should be expanded to address the needs of both young children and teens, with increased activities, including nature-based education, arts classes, and specialized programs for children with special needs. There is a call for more community-wide events, such as continuing to promote concerts and outdoor movies, to strengthen community ties and create traditions. There's a strong call for increasing communication to raise awareness about park offerings and events, with a focus on reaching all segments of the population. Also, the expansion of senior programs as the community continues to age in place.

Top Priority for Parkland Expansion: A critical aspect of planning involves acquiring and developing land for future parks and recreation facilities to meet growing demand. Parks should also be integrated into the City's economic development by utilizing public spaces for gatherings, markets, and activating the White River riverfront. Additionally, there is an emphasis on environmental stewardship, including removing invasive species, reforesting park areas, and maintaining tree canopies.

3.1.1 KEY STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

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

Value of the Parks and Recreation Department: Noblesville's parks and recreation services are highly valued for their diverse facilities and amenities that cater to a wide range of interests and age groups. Residents enjoy well-maintained spaces from aquatic centers, golf courses, skate parks, splash pads, and pickleball courts to various playgrounds that foster community through events like concerts, farmers markets, and Fourth of July celebrations at Forest Park. The trail system, now an integral part of the City's infrastructure, enhances connectivity and promotes outdoor recreation, while varied park types like Forest, Federal Hill Commons, Seminary, and Dr. James A. Dillon Parks provide unique identities and meeting places. Consistent upkeep and expansion efforts ensure that as the City grows, these parks continue to support Noblesville's cultural identity and quality of life.

Areas of the System Needing Improvement or Additional Focus: Enhancements are needed to boost safety, accessibility, and connectivity across the park system. This includes installing emergency phones on trails, improving ADA-compliant pathways, and creating sensory parks and enclosed playgrounds for younger children. There is also a call to expand green and pocket parks, implement better natural resource management (like invasive species removal and tree succession planning), and strategically plan for

future growth, especially on the City's east side. In addition, improved marketing and communication efforts, such as multilingual signage, a centralized event calendar, and stronger partnerships, are seen as essential for increasing community engagement and ensuring residents are aware of available programs.

Challenges Facing the Park System: Key challenges include ensuring financial sustainability amid population growth without overburdening taxpayers. As usage increases, innovative funding approaches—such as sponsorships, naming rights, and partnerships with developers—will be critical, along with proactive land acquisition before costs escalate. Maintaining and upgrading aging facilities, like pools and tree canopies, while integrating comprehensive natural resource management strategies (for instance, through tree nurseries and invasive species control) also present significant challenges. Additionally, improving communication and marketing to compete with neighboring systems and private recreation providers is essential to keep residents informed and engaged.

Recreation Facility and Amenity Needs: There is a clear demand for modern, diverse recreational facilities that accommodate all ages and interests. Priorities include developing indoor spaces—such as a multigenerational community center with an indoor aquatic area, flexible event spaces, and dedicated indoor sports courts—to support year-round programming. Outdoor facility enhancements are also needed, including updates to tennis courts, mini golf, splash pads, and the addition of amenities like dog parks and accessible kayak launches along the White River. Improving accessibility and inclusivity through adaptive equipment, accessible trails, and playgrounds is a top priority, alongside incorporating nature-based features like hiking trails, pollinator gardens, and a nature center.

Recreation Programs Most Needed: The community is calling for more inclusive and adaptive recreation programs that serve all age groups and special needs populations. Emphasis is placed on building stronger partnerships with schools and service providers to create programs for youth (including teens with autism), seniors, and working adults. Expanded volunteer opportunities and community-building events such as seasonal celebrations, campouts, and nature-based educational programs are also needed. Improved communications through a centralized community hub or dedicated outreach methods would help ensure that residents are aware of and can participate in these varied programs.

Outcomes Accomplished by the Noblesville Parks and Recreation Department in 5 Years: Looking ahead, top priorities include enhancing trail connectivity to link all parks and neighborhoods, upgrading and maintaining facilities for safety and accessibility, and creating engaging, multigenerational spaces that offer both indoor and outdoor programming. Strategic land acquisitions and infrastructure investments will enable the development of new parks and the activation of underutilized areas like the riverfront. Expanded programming for youth and seniors, coupled with environmentally sustainable practices such as reforestation and invasive species management, will reinforce the parks' role as vibrant community assets. Finally, a comprehensive communication strategy is essential to ensure that all residents are informed and actively engaged, thereby cementing Noblesville's commitment to a thriving, inclusive park system for future generations.

3.1.2 THEMES

Based on the community engagement report, five main themes emerged:

- **High Value on Diverse and Well-Maintained Parks and Amenities**
 - Noblesville Parks is highly valued by the community for maintaining clean and well-kept parks.
 - Continue to update existing community and neighborhood parks.
- **Trail System Connectivity**
 - Trails are seen as vital infrastructure that improve accessibility, safety, and community connection, with strong interest in completing linkages and integrating rest areas and artistic amenities.
- **Nature Based Features**
 - Accessible water access to the White River, and other nature-based features to serve wellbeing interests of a growing and diverse Noblesville population.
- **Need for Expanded Indoor Facilities and Outdoor Amenities**
 - There is strong demand for a multigenerational community center and indoor recreation space.
- **Sustainable Growth & Existing Infrastructure Improvements**
 - Managing population growth while maintaining and expanding parks will require creative funding solutions, strategic land acquisition, and balancing new development with upkeep of existing assets.
- **Accessibility**
 - Emphasize ADA compliance, sensory-friendly amenities, adaptive equipment, and inclusive programming for people of all ages and abilities, with a particular focus on those with special needs.



3.2 PUBLIC MEETINGS

3.2.1 FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

On February 5, 2025, a public meeting was held at Forest Park from 6 pm-7:30 pm and had 22 attendees. The forum began with a brief presentation explaining the master plan process, initial findings, live polling, and next steps. Followed by break-out sections in the back of the room as it relates to future needs for parks, trails, facilities and programs. Below outlines the key highlights of findings from each of these break-out sections. Results of the live polling can be found in Appendix 5.



FACILITIES

1. AV option at the green room
2. Playgrounds
 - a. Indoor play w/ sensory enrichment for users with developmental issues
 - b. Improve all playgrounds in general
 - c. Use poured in place surfacing over mulch as the surfacing
3. Water park expansion and improvements
4. Sports parks
 - a. Fountains at Babe Ruth Field
 - b. Adaptive sport opportunities
5. Interconnected trails for longer runs

PROGRAMS

1. Summer camp for kids
2. Adult fitness
3. Autism community
 - a. Discussions/information
 - b. Full day programs
 - c. ½ day programs
4. Events for veterans

PARKS

1. More evenly distribution of park facilities across state roads and Greenfield Avenue
2. Safe places for developmentally delayed users
3. Park and walk trails
 - a. for those with limited mobility in mind
 - b. More benches along trails
 - c. Paved trails
4. Accessibility/connectivity
 - a. Ball Fields
 - b. More sidewalks connecting existing facilities within the parks
 - c. Connecting trails between parks

5. Reduce invasive plant species within all parks
6. Improve Southside Park

TRAILS

1. Provide restrooms (Pleasant Street specifically mentioned)
2. Dog watering stations
3. Control invasive species
4. More connectivity on west and east side

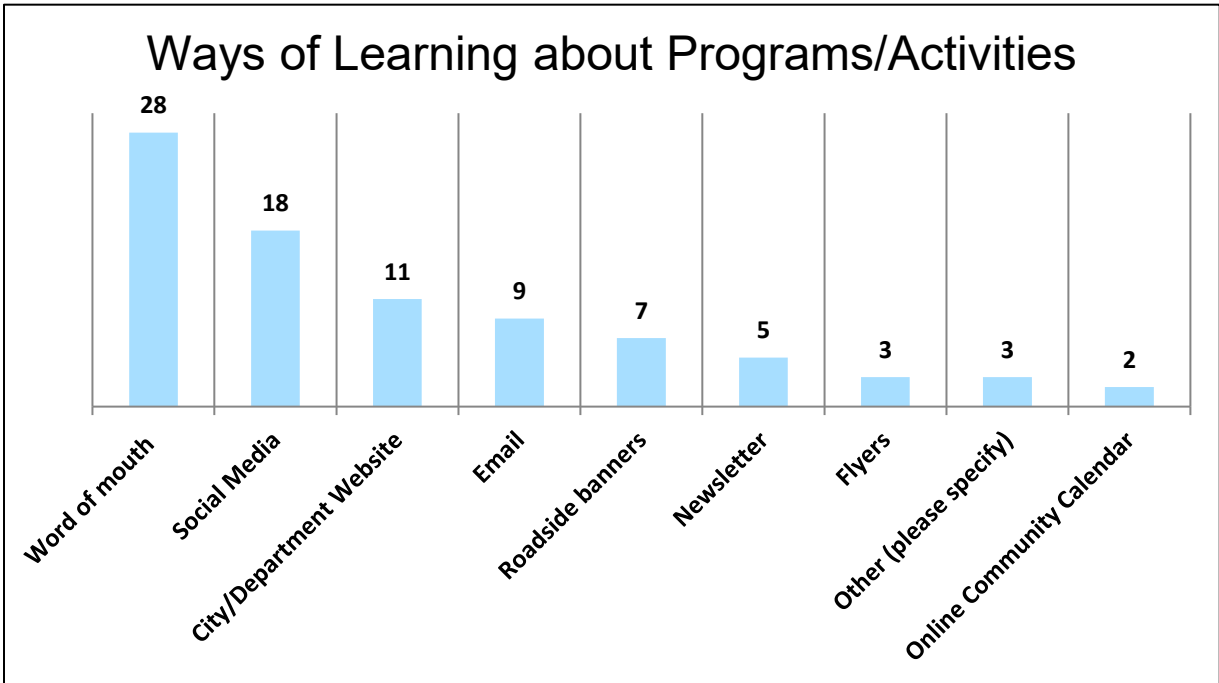


3.3 YOUTH SURVEY FINDINGS

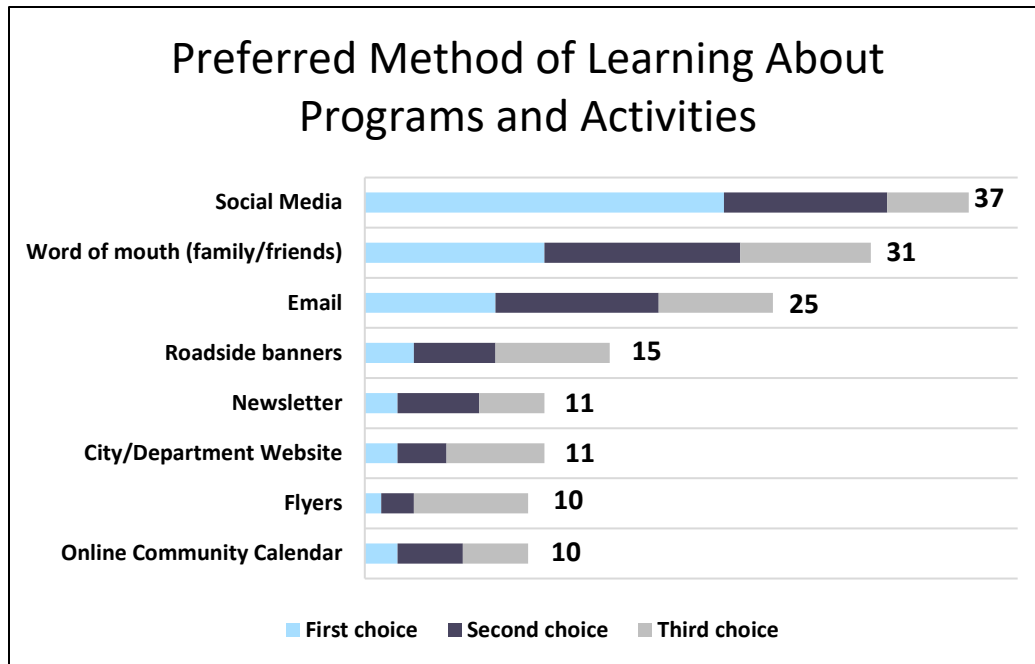
As part of the community input process, PROS Consulting conducted an on-line youth survey (powered by SurveyMonkey) for a better understanding of the needs, preferences, and satisfaction levels of Noblesville’s youth concerning parks, recreation facilities and amenities. A total of fifty-one (51) students took the survey, which was available from late February to the end of March 2025.

3.3.1 YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents indicate the top method for learning about programs and activities is Word of Mouth (28), followed by Social Media (18), the City/Department Website (11), and by Email (9). The least common methods indicated by respondents were Online Community Calendar (2), Other Methods (3), and Flyers (3).



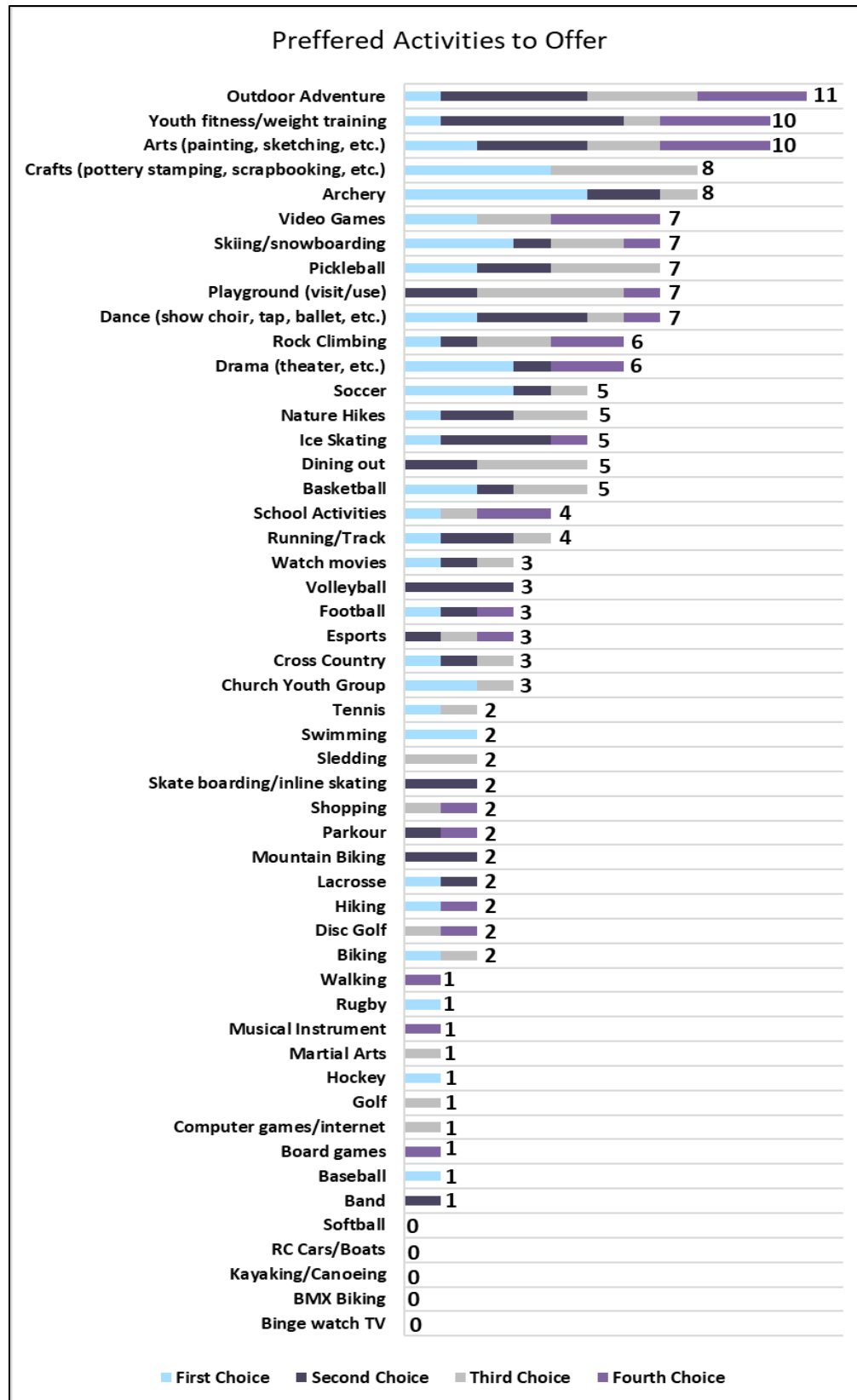
Respondents indicate the most preferred ways of learning about programs and activities offered by Noblesville Parks and Recreation are Social Media (37), Word of Mouth (31) and by Email (25). The least preferred method of learning about the programs and activities offered by Noblesville Parks and Recreation are Online Community Calendar (10), Flyers (10) and the City/Department Website (11).



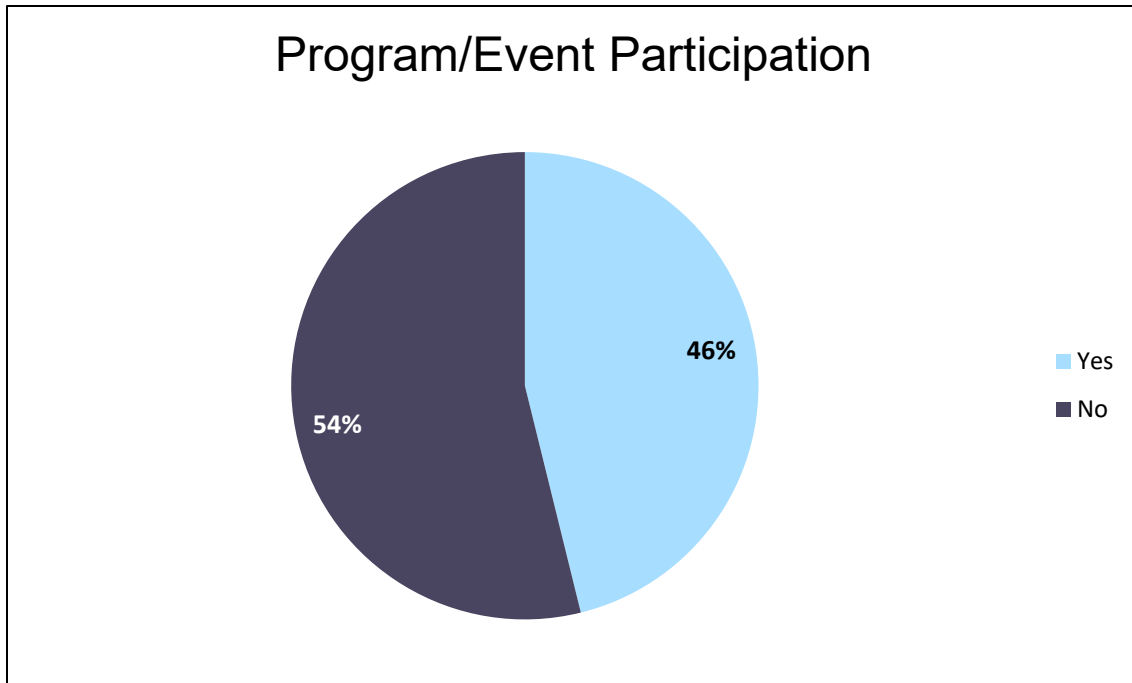
Respondents indicate the activities they participate in based on a list provided. The top answers were School Activities (28), Watch movies (26) and Church Youth Group (23). The least participated activities were BMX Biking (0), Softball (1) and Mountain Biking (1).

Activities Involved In			
School Activities	28	Cross Country	8
Watch movies	26	Kayaking/Canoeing	8
Church Youth Group	23	Pickleball	8
Shopping	22	Band	7
Walking	20	Ice Skating	7
Dining out	18	Tennis	7
Crafts (pottery stamping, scrapbooking, etc.)	17	Football	6
Board games	16	Volleyball	6
Musical Instrument	16	Archery	5
Outdoor Adventure	16	Rock Climbing	5
Playground (visit/use)	16	Baseball	4
Arts (painting, sketching, etc.)	15	Esports	4
Nature Hikes	15	Skiing/snowboarding	4
Binge watch TV	14	Other (please specify)	4
Computer games/internet	14	Parkour	3
Youth fitness/weight training	14	Disc Golf	2
Biking	13	Hockey	2
Dance (show choir, tap, ballet, etc.)	13	Lacrosse	2
Hiking	12	Martial Arts	2
Running/Track	12	RC Cars/Boats	2
Video Games	12	Rugby	2
Soccer	11	Skate boarding/inline skating	2
Swimming	11	Golf	1
Drama (theater, etc.)	10	Mountain Biking	1
Sledding	10	Softball	1
Basketball	8	BMX Biking	0

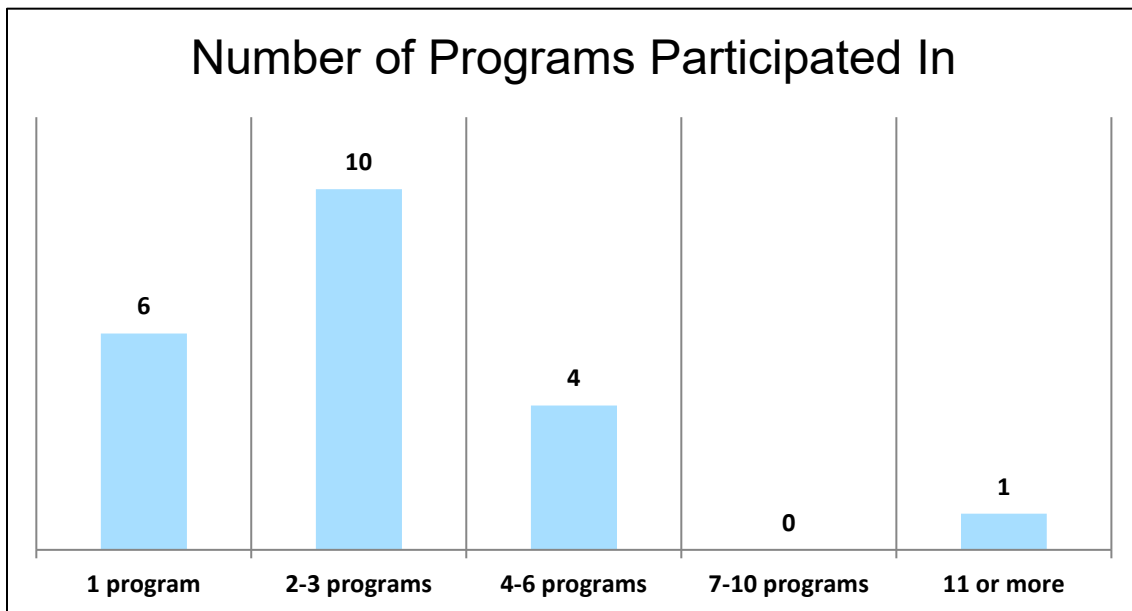
Respondents provided the top four activities they would like to see Noblesville Parks and Recreation to provide. Based on the chart provided, the activities with the most choices selected would be Outdoor Adventure (11), Youth fitness/weight training (10) and Arts (10). While the activities with the least number of choices selected were Binge Watch TV (0), BMX Biking (0) and Kayaking/Canoeing (0).



Respondents were asked if they have participated in any Noblesville Parks and Recreation programs in the past year. As shown in the chart, 46% responded with 'Yes' and 54% responded with 'No'



Respondents indicated how many programs or activities offered by Noblesville Parks and Recreation they participated in this past year. Six (6) respondents stated they participate in at least one program within the past year. Ten (10) respondents stated they participated in two to three programs within the past year. Four (4) respondents stated they participated in four to six programs within the past year. There were no (0) respondents stating they participated in seven to ten programs within the past year. Finally, there was one (1) respondent that stated they participated in eleven or more programs within the past year.



Respondents indicated which recreation programs offered by or co-sponsored by Noblesville Parks and Recreation they participated in the past year. Ten (10) responded that they participated in the Back-to-School Block Party, nine (9) in Volunteer Opportunities, and seven (7) in Summer Camps. The programs with the least number of answers were Safe Sitter, Lego Club, Kids Chess Club, Family Cooking Class, and Disc Golf Camp – all with zero (0) responses.

Noblesville Activities/Programs Participated In	
Back to School Block Party	10
Volunteer Opportunities	9
Summer Camps	7
Parent / Child Events	5
Kayaking	4
Movie Night	3
Father/daughter dance	2
Fishing	2
Mud Day	2
Nature Programs	2
Tennis	2
Family Tie Dye	1
Mother/son fight night	1
Princess in the Park	1
Youth Golf	1
Disc Golf Camp	0
Family Cooking Class	0
Kids Chess Club	0
Lego Club	0
Safe Sitter	0

Respondents indicated the main reason they do not participate in Noblesville Parks and Recreation programs. The top reasons for not participating were Not aware of the programs (16), Other responsibilities/no time (6), and Nothing I am interested in (2). The lowest reasons for not participating in Noblesville Parks and Recreation programs were Lack of transportation (0), Facilities are not sufficient/appropriate (0), and No place to do the activity (0).

Reason for Not Participating in Activities/Programs	
Not aware of programs	16
Other responsibilities/no time	6
Nothing I am interested in	2
Cost	2
Need adaptive recreation for disability	1
Facilities and programs are too far away	0
Lack of family support	0
No experience/instruction to the activity	0
No place to do the activity	0
Facilities are not sufficient/appropriate	0
Lack of transportation	0

Respondents were asked what mode of transportation is available to them to get to the programs or parks. The top forms of transportation were Parents drive (28), Personal vehicle (26) and Carpool with friends (16). The lowest forms of transportation were Public transportation – bus (0), Car service – Uber/Lyft/Taxi (1), and Skateboard/Rollerblade (2).

Mode of Transportation Available	
Parents provide	28
I have a car	26
Carpool with friends	16
Walking	14
Ride a bike	13
Skateboard/roller blade	2
Car service (uber, lift, taxi)	1
Public transportation (bus)	0

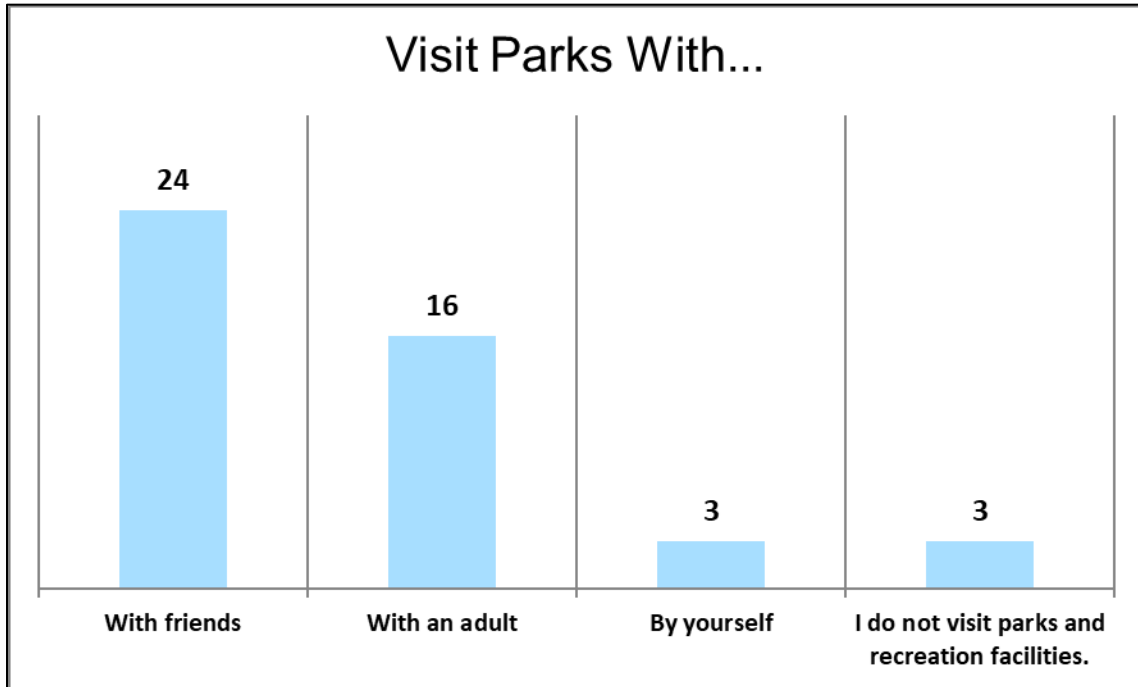
Respondents provided information on their choices of how they spend most of their free time. Based on the chart below, the activities with the most choices are Home (36), School – Athletics/Activities/Clubs (30) and Friend’s House (29). The activities with the least number of choices are the YMCA (8), Skate Park (8) and a Restaurant (9).



Respondents were asked why they selected the choices provided previously and a list of responses were given. The top reasons the previous choices were selected were Enjoyment (38), Friends are There (29) and Location (20). The lesser of the reasons were Unsupervised activities (3), Available transportation (6) and Supervised Activities (6).

Why do you go to the locations for free time?	
Enjoyment	38
Friends are there	29
Location	20
Cost (affordable)	15
Supervised activities	6
Available transportation	6
Unsupervised activities	3
Other	1

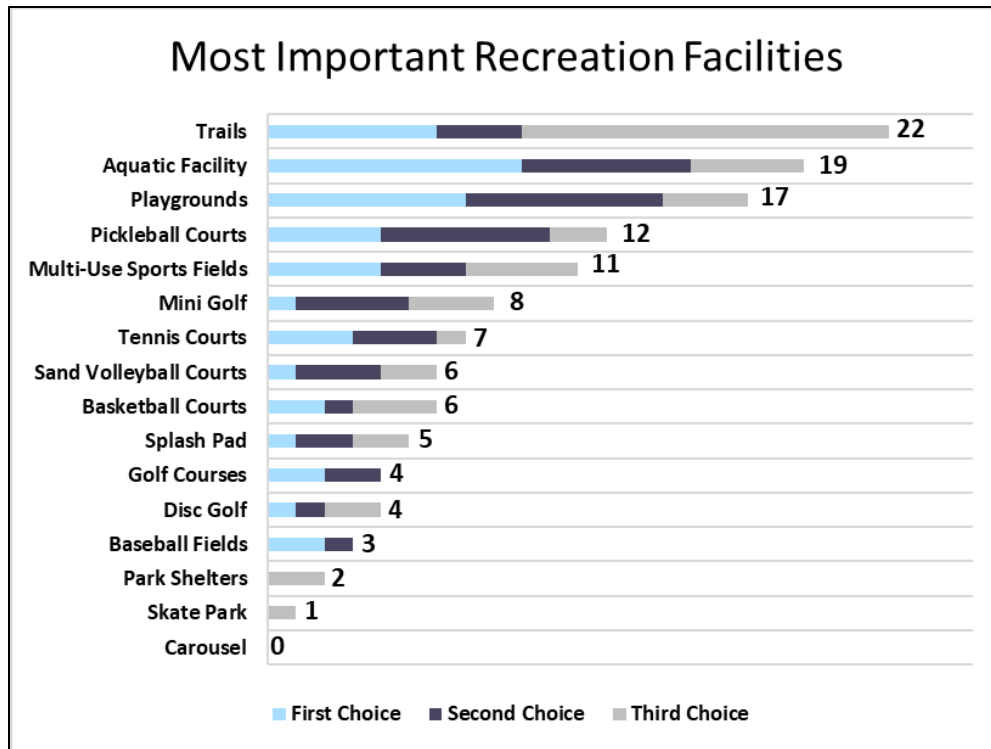
Respondents indicated whom they visit the park and recreation facilities with. The top response provided was with friends (24) and then with an adult (16). Three responses (3) stated they go by themselves and another three (3) stated they do not visit parks and recreation facilities.



Respondents provided all the locations they have visited in the last year. The top locations provided were Forest Park (38), Federal Hill Commons (34) and Dr. James A. Dillon Park (26). The least popular locations that were visited last year were Station 76 Community Room (0), Southside Park (0), and Riverwalk Depot Pocket Park (0).

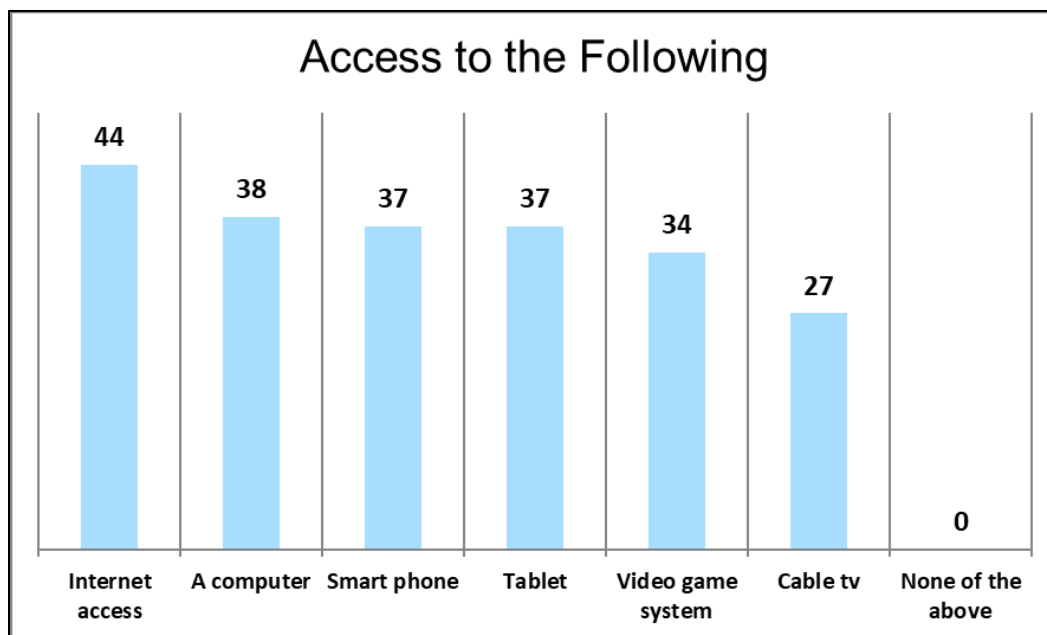
Locations Visited	
Forest Park	38
Federal Hill Commons	34
Dr. James A. Dillon Park	26
Forest Park Aquatic Center	23
Noblesville Trails	22
Finch Creek Park	15
Seminary Park	12
Forest Park Lodge	10
Forest Park Golf Course	7
Fox Prairie Golf Course	6
Riverwalk Depot Pocket Park	0
Southside Park	0
Station 76 Community Room	0

Respondents were asked to check the top three recreation facilities, other than those located at school, which are most important to them and their friends. Based on the chart, the recreation facilities with the popular choice selections were Trails (22), Aquatic Facility (19) and Playgrounds (17). The recreation facilities with the least popular choice selections were Carousel (0), Skate Park (1), and Park Shelters (2)



3.3.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents indicated all of the following they have access to at home. Forty-four (44) have access to the Internet, thirty-eight (38) have access to a computer, thirty-seven (37) have access to a smart phone, thirty-seven (37) have access to a tablet, thirty-four (34) have access to a video game system and twenty-seven (27) have access to cable TV.



3.4 PROJECT WEBSITE FINDINGS

PROS Consulting, through the website client Social Pinpoint, hosted an interactive project website to gain a better understanding of the characteristics, preferences, and satisfaction levels of the Noblesville Parks & Recreation Department (“Department”) users for the Department’s 2025 Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The interaction on the website provided the Department with insight into what respondents wanted to see prioritized and funded, as well as their satisfaction with the Department itself. This interactive project website provided three opportunities for users to provide feedback, including an online survey, an interactive social mapping activity, and a vision board activity.



Demographically, the contributions did not collect data on participants’ gender, race, economic status, or age. It is important to note that the survey asked respondents to answer several questions for or in place of their family or household, meaning that some answers may be indicative of total households rather than individuals.

There were several key takeaways from the website. For example, there were some clear winners in terms of direction that the Department should take with current and future offerings, including additional disc golf courses, trails, riverfront recreation access, and natural area preservation. Respondents also indicated that parks and trails are the two most important offerings from the Department, with youth and family programs being a distant third. It will also be apparent throughout this report that survey respondents specifically had generally positive feedback for the Department, with relatively few concerns.

3.4.1 METHODOLOGY

This project website was powered by Social Pinpoint, and has been open for roughly five months, from January 6, 2025, through May 13, 2025, and received a total of 156 individual survey responses, 59 individual social map interactions, and 5 vision board contributions. The survey included six (6) questions total, while the interactive mapping activity had three preset categories (‘Something I Like’, ‘Ideas/Suggestions’, and ‘Make a Comment’).

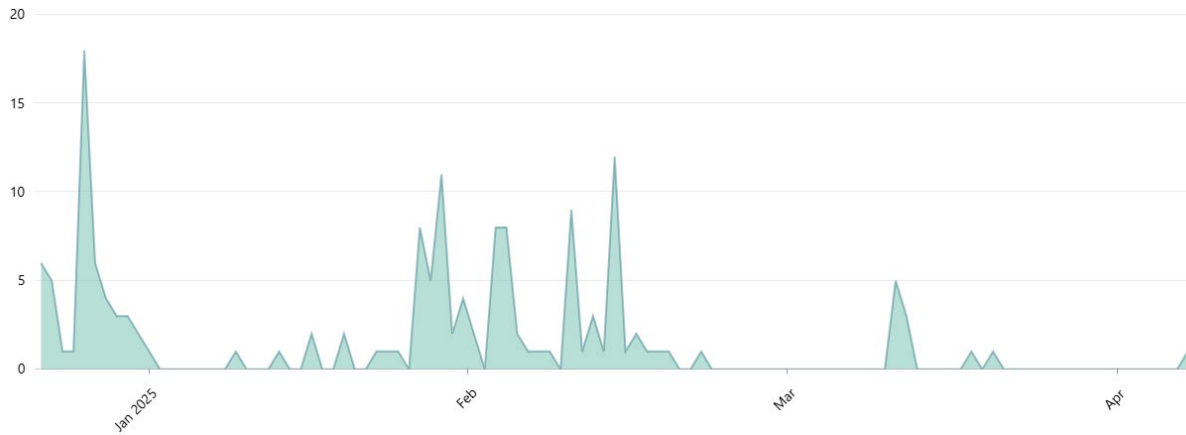
Survey respondents had the option to skip certain questions, which led to many questions having a high number of skipped responses. However, each question was analyzed individually, meaning that skipped responses were typically not considered.

Please note: the language used in this document is not always word for word with the questions posed on the project website. Some questions or responses were shortened for the sake of brevity.

Appendix 6 includes the full survey findings for questions that were open ended, as well as social map findings.

3.4.2 SURVEY FINDINGS

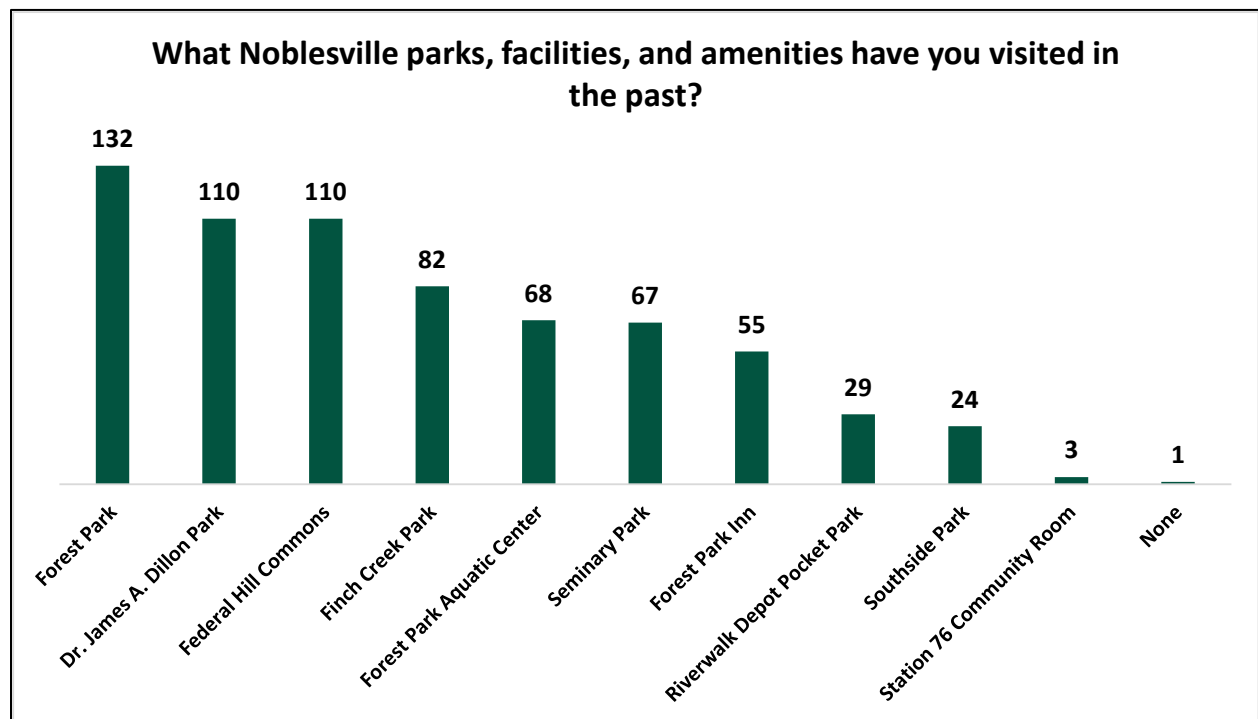
The project site's survey has yielded 156 individual contributions since opening in early January. The following chart shows the contributions and when they were made.



The following subsections show the response data for each individual question in the survey.

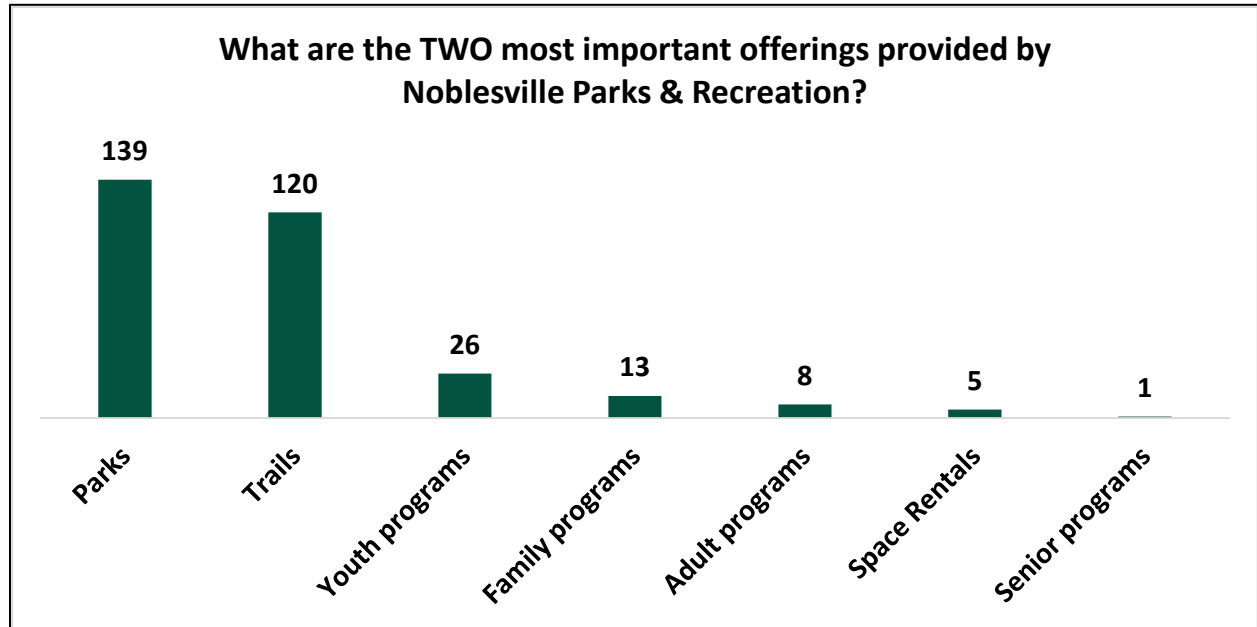
QUESTION 1: PARKS, FACILITIES, AND AMENITIES USAGE

When asked which Noblesville parks or facilities that the respondent or any members of their household have visited in the past, 132 respondents said they visited Forest Park, 110 visited Dr. James A. Dillon Park, and 110 visited Federal Hill Commons.

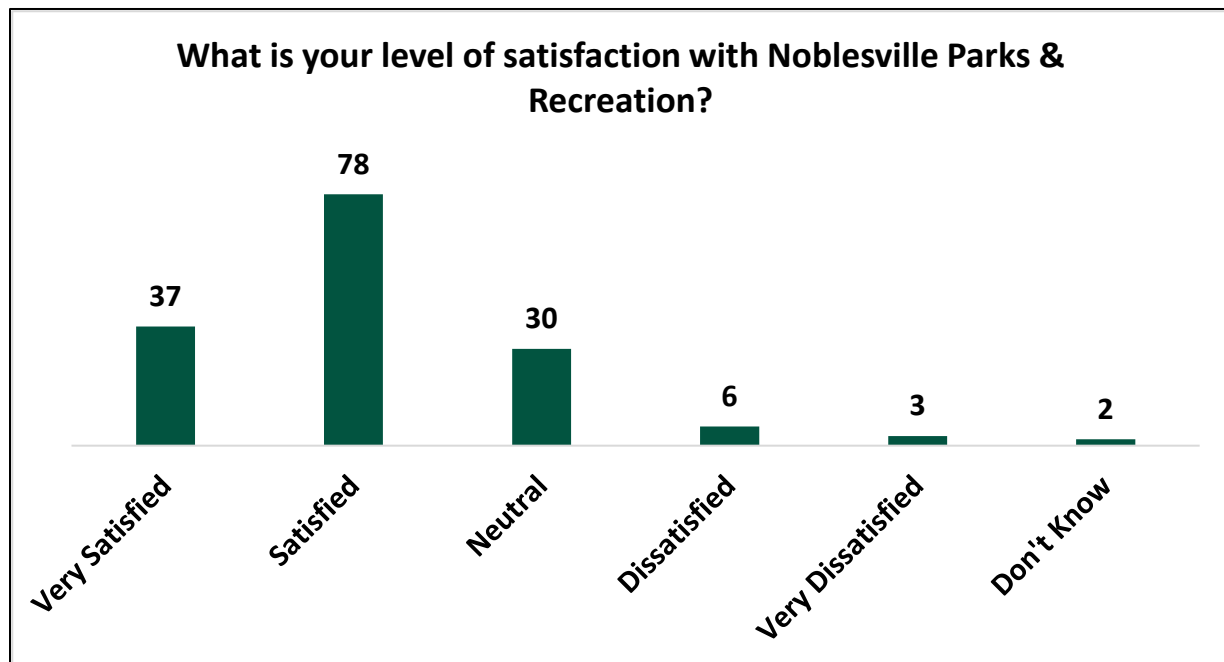


QUESTION 2: MOST IMPORTANT OFFERINGS

Respondents were also asked their opinion on the most important offerings provided by Noblesville Parks & Recreation; 139 respondents indicated that parks were one of the two most important, while trails was the second most important with 120 responses.

**QUESTION 3: SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH NOBLESVILLE PARKS & RECREATION**

Respondents were also asked about their overall satisfaction with the value their household receives from Noblesville Parks & Recreation. This question had a relatively positive outcome, with **37 respondents** being 'Very Satisfied' and 78 respondents being 'Satisfied'.



QUESTION 4: NEW EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Question 4 was an open ended-question that asked respondents about which new and exciting experiences or programs they may want to see offered by the Department. While a quick preview of some of these responses is provided below.

- “Nature walks and hikes, bird habitat improvement. More nature focused land management.”
- “More disc golf courses”
- “More trail connectivity. Maybe more riverfront development (parks).”
- “Splash pads for kids (other than at the aquatic center). Increased walking trails in scenic areas (we LOVE going to Potters Bridge and walking. We would like more areas like that!)”
- “More pickleball courts and additional bike paths to connect subdivisions to parks throughout the city.”
- “Larger skate park. More robust trail system that’s interconnected with local areas. We are in need of completed sidewalks connecting outer residential housing tracts to downtown Noblesville so you can take your bikes and or walk.”
- “Preserve undeveloped areas as they are, for wildlife, watershed, and natural beauty.”

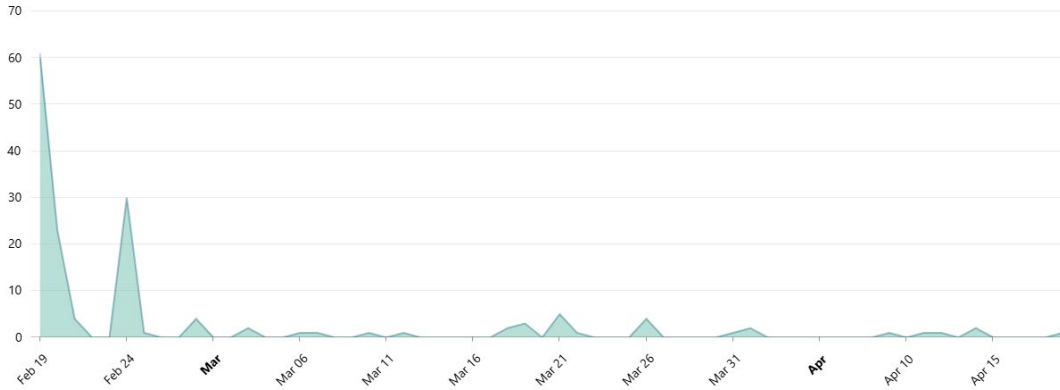
QUESTION 5: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Question 5 was also an open ended-question; this time, respondents were asked about what they think makes the Noblesville park system meaningful or unique to them. While a quick summary of these responses is provided below.

- “I’ve gone to Noblesville parks since I was a kid and I love seeing all the new things they add and how they have changed certain parks to be nicer and more inviting.”
- “Our park system is valuable for the variety of parks and spaces. I most enjoy the parks that are prominently a place of nature, quiet, and a serene place to visit. I believe having quiet natural spaces, along with a variety of social options, is important to our community’s mental health.”
- “Walking paths, pickleball, concerts, places to relax and connect with others in the community”
- “We live at the playgrounds in the summer! They’re a great place to meet up with friends and neighbors and feel connected to the community. The trails are wonderful and I’m so excited for midland nickel plate to connect.”
- “The Noblesville park system offers a variety of age appropriate play equipment for children to develop their motor skills in a safe outdoor space.”
- “Beautifully maintained. Lots of variety. Trails, pool, kid areas, water features, nature, golf, activities (farmer’s market, music, beer fest, etc).”
- “I greatly appreciate the trails interconnecting the parks, city, and public spaces. Overall there is a nice mix (current & planned) of areas and activities accessible to people who wish to safely explore on foot/bike.”

3.4.3 INTERACTIVE SOCIAL MAP FINDINGS

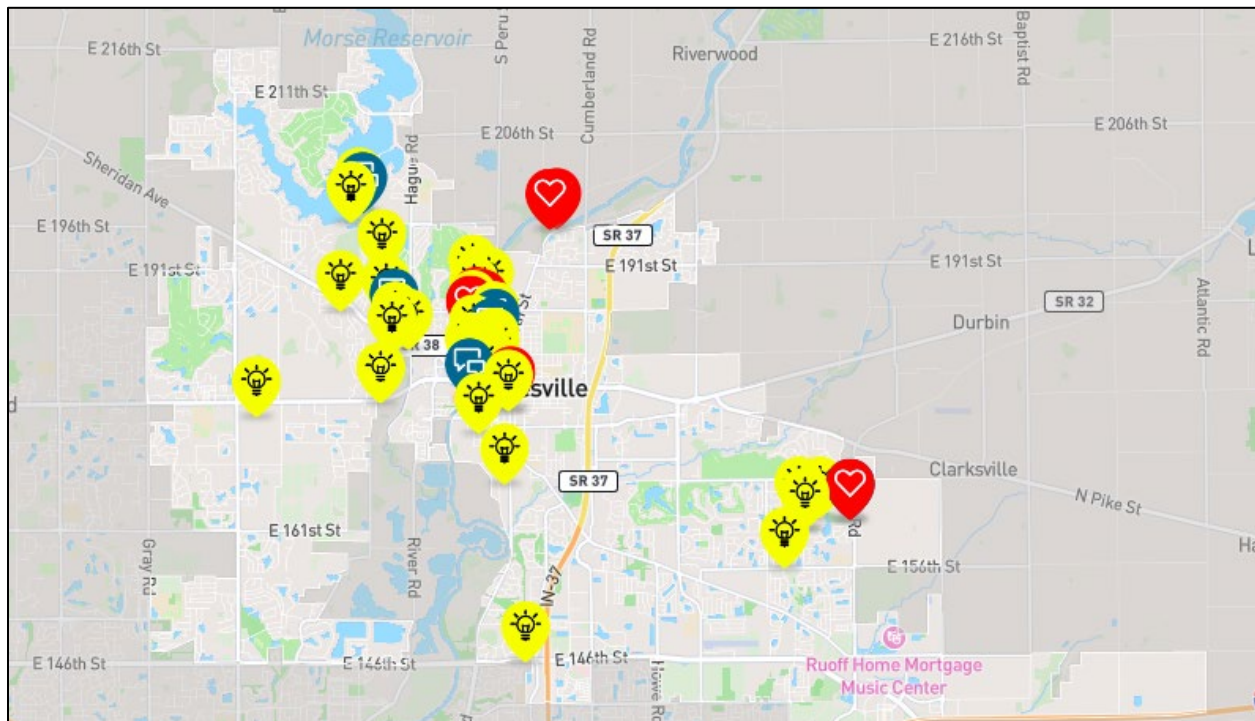
The project site's Interactive Social Map has been active for the same amount of time as the survey and has yielded 59 individual contributions. The following chart shows the contributions and when they were made.



Similarly, the maps below show the placement of each social map contribution. The social map function allowed for respondents to utilize three different categories to leave a contribution, including 'Ideas/Suggestions', 'Something I Like', and 'Make a Comment'.

OVERALL INTERACTIVE SOCIAL MAP CONTRIBUTIONS

The following map shows the geographical spread of each category, with each Ideas/Suggestions contribution tagged by a **yellow and black light bulb**, each 'Something I Like' contribution tagged by a **red and white heart**, and each 'Make a Comment' contribution tagged by a **white and blue speech bubble**. The full results of this activity, including a list of each individual response.



CONTRIBUTIONS BY PARK: FOREST PARK

Of the 59 individual contributions made on the interactive social map, 17 comments or suggestions were made on Forest Park. Those responses can be seen in the table below.

Contribution Type	Contribution	Date
Ideas/Suggestions	Paint these bridges/under passes just like you did at the Nickle Plate Crossing. The current train doesn't match the brand ID of the city and Forest Park.	February 18, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	It would be nice to tend to the path leaving Forest Park. It's full of invasive plant species.	February 19, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Walking trails on the road from the Forest Park and golf course over to Federal Hill area. There are no sidewalks or anything here!	March 26, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	My daughter, who has 2 young kids, would appreciate having better sidewalk access between park features.	February 8, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Would love more adaptive play equipment at this playground or others going forward.	February 18, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	This playground section could use an expansion/refresh	February 18, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Forest Park deserves better entrance signage. Never seen such small signs welcoming to such a great park!	February 18, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	This connection between the White River Trail into Forest Park is dangerous. It needs pedestrian flashers. The activation switch when crossing INTO Forest Park is not in a safe location.	February 8, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Signage for different trail options (e.g. nickel plate this way, midland trace that way...)	February 19, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Add a small recreational lake like at Koteewi for kayaking or standup paddle boarding. It is too dangerous on Morse with the jet skis and tubers.	February 18, 2025
Something I Like	Beautiful traditional park. Would love more native plants or a community garden?	February 11, 2025
Something I Like	Best park in the city! It has a little bit of everything for everyone and it connects so many things. Quit cutting the trees down though (sad to see several go last year).	February 24, 2025
Something I Like	Love the turf at the new Forest Park playground. It's clean, safe, and much more accessible than mulch	February 18, 2025
Something I Like	Good bathrooms! Always open when we need them	January 10, 2025
Something I Like	Kids love the new playground equipment. They miss the sand pits – but parents do not!	January 10, 2025

Make A Comment	Golf structure in need of repair	February 18, 2025
Make A Comment	Please replace the pylons along Cicero Road!	February 18, 2025

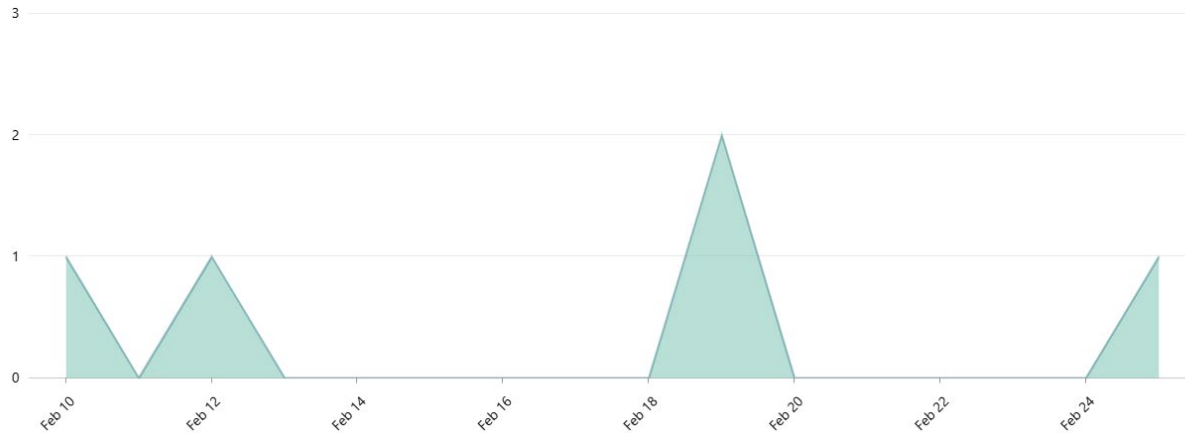
CONTRIBUTIONS BY PARK: HAGUE ROAD NATURE HAVEN

Of the 59 contributions, 3 were made on Hague Road Nature Haven. Those comments are listed below.

Contribution Type	Contribution	Date
Ideas/Suggestions	Is it possible to create a creek side play area here or elsewhere?	February 6, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Needs care as a nature area. Invasive removal, trail care, erosion control, education.	February 11, 2025
Ideas/Suggestions	Love the idea of making a creek entry point for play but keeping trails marked for public to stay on.	February 24, 2025

3.4.4 VISION BOARD FINDINGS

Finally, the project site's Vision Board activity (open during the same duration as the survey and mapping activity) yielded 5 individual contributions. The following chart shows the vision board's contributions, all made in February 2025.



The vision board function allowed for respondents to leave an open-ended response to the question of **“What is your vision for the Noblesville Parks & Recreation Master Plan?”**. These responses were then displayed publicly on the project site with the capability for other users to ‘like’ a response.

VISION BOARD CONTRIBUTIONS

The following table shows **all 5 individual contributions** to the vision board activity.

Finish Finch Creek Park! Walking trails, dog park, disc golf, green space. The above was to be included with the field house and playground
Larger clubhouse at Fox Prairie with full service cafe for lunch, etc. Use of private riding carts with purchase of a course pass
I believe that with hard work, our cycling and trail infrastructure could be some of the best in America outside of nyc/SF. insane potential
A community dog park would be really nice to have.

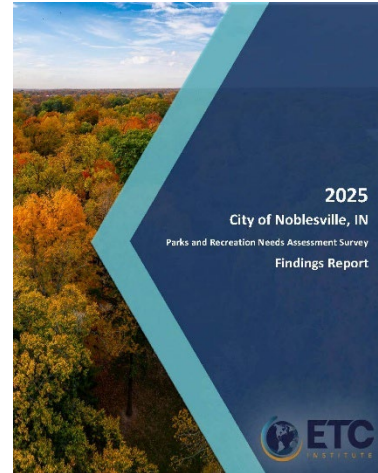
3.5 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

ETC Institute administered a community needs assessment survey for the City of Noblesville during the months of winter 2025. This survey will be used to gather input to help determine parks and recreation priorities for the community.

3.5.1 METHODOLOGY

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Noblesville. 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 NoblesvilleParkSurvey.org. After the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute followed up with residents to encourage participation. To prevent people who were not residents of Noblesville 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 collect a minimum of 400 surveys from residents. The goal was met with 420 surveys collected. The overall results for the sample of 420 surveys has a precision of at least ± 4.7 at the 95% level of confidence.



3.5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS

Importance of Parks and Recreation. Most respondents (97%) feel parks, recreation services, and open space is “very important” (87%) or “important” (10%) to the quality of life in Noblesville.

Use of Parks, Facilities, and Open Spaces. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of respondents say in a typical year they visit parks, recreation facilities, or open spaces provided by Noblesville Parks and Recreation. Of those respondents, the facilities used most often (either “sometimes” or “frequently”) were Forest Park (72%), Federal Hill Commons (46%), and Nickel Plate Trail (39%). The three parks or facilities used most frequently by households are Forest Park (73%), Federal Hill Commons (43%), Dr. James A. Dillon Park (27%). Most respondents (93%) rated the overall condition of parks as “good” (45%) or “excellent” (48%).

Barriers to Use. The top three reasons respondents do not visit parks and recreation locations or do not visit more often are not being aware of park or facility locations (40%), City, State, private, or HOA facilities (35%), or being too far away from home (22%).

Organizations Used. The non-City organizations that households use most often for recreation and/or sports activities are Hamilton County parks (67%), homeowners association/apartment complex (39%), and neighboring communities (36%).

Program Participation. Forty-six percent (46%) of respondents participate in recreation programs or events offered and/or hosted by the Noblesville Parks and Recreation Department. Most respondents (89%) rate the overall quality of recreation programs or events as either “excellent” (37%) or “good” (52%).

Barriers to Participation. The reasons most often selected for why respondents do not participate or do not participate more often in Noblesville programs are not knowing what is offered (51%), too busy/not interested (21%), and program times not being convenient (19%).

Communication Methods. Respondents most often learn about the Noblesville Parks and Recreation Department via social media (59%), the website (43%), or from friends and neighbors (42%). Respondents most prefer to learn via social media (65%), the website (48%), or from monthly enewsletters (27%).

Special Events. The special event concepts the highest percentage of respondents said they would be interested in participating in are concerts at the commons (71%), winter festival/holiday shops (56%), and holidays at the hill (52%).

Improvements. The improvements the highest percentage of respondents support are improvements to existing large community parks (86%), improving existing paved walking and biking trails (86%), and improving existing nature preserves (85%).

Funding Mechanisms. The three funding mechanisms the highest percentage of respondents support are grants from state, federal, and private sources (88%), corporate sponsorship and donations (86%), and enterprise operations (75%).

Satisfaction with Value. The highest percentage of respondents (66%) felt “satisfied” (45%) or “very satisfied” (21%) with the overall value received from facilities, programs, and services in Noblesville Recreation.

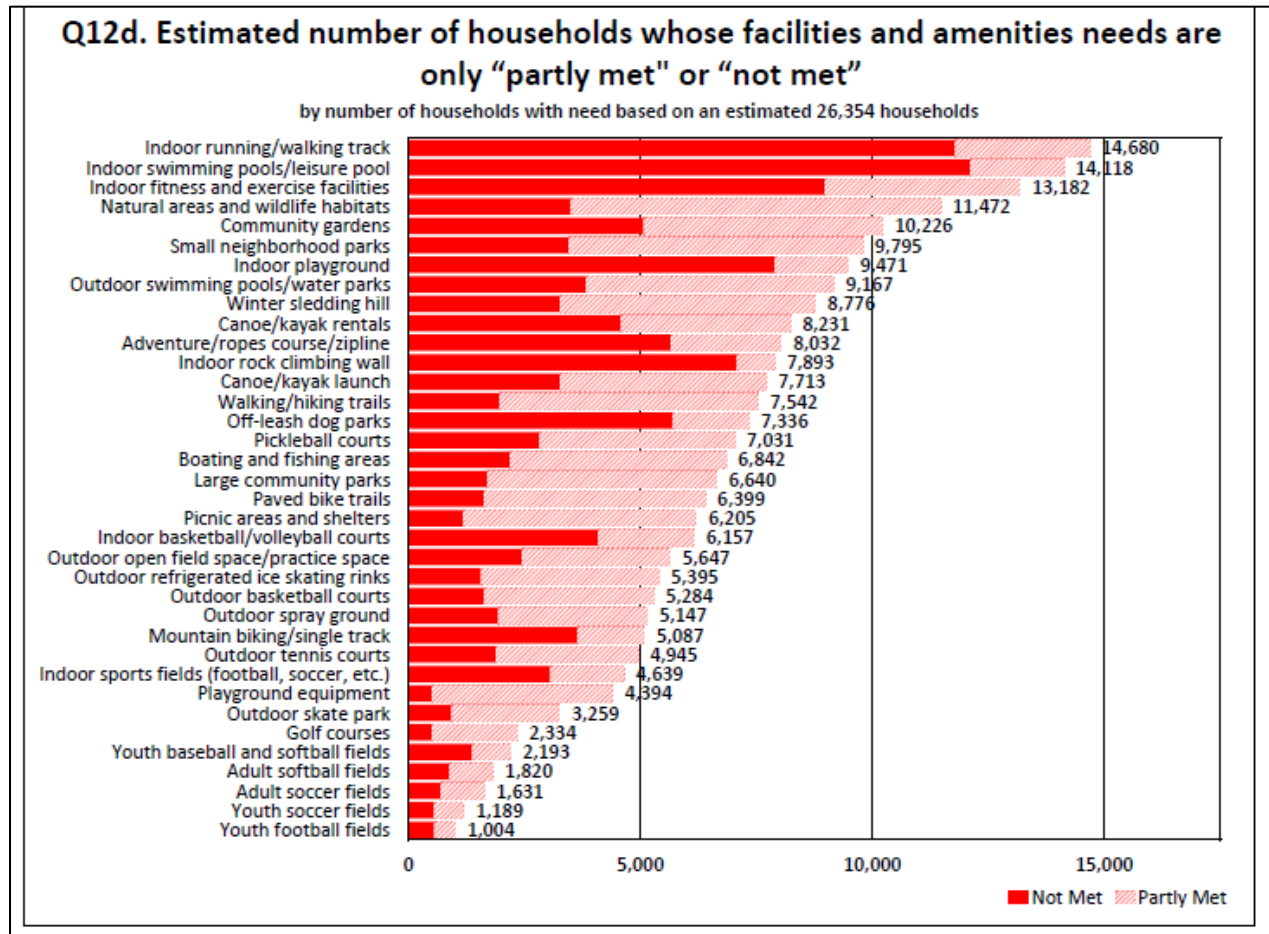
3.5.3 PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND AMENITIES NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Facility/Amenity Needs: Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 36 parks and recreation facilities/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/amenities.

The three facilities/amenities with the highest number of households that have an unmet need:

1. Indoor running/walking track – 14,680 households
2. Indoor swimming pools/leisure pool – 14,118 households
3. Indoor fitness and exercise facilities – 13,182 households

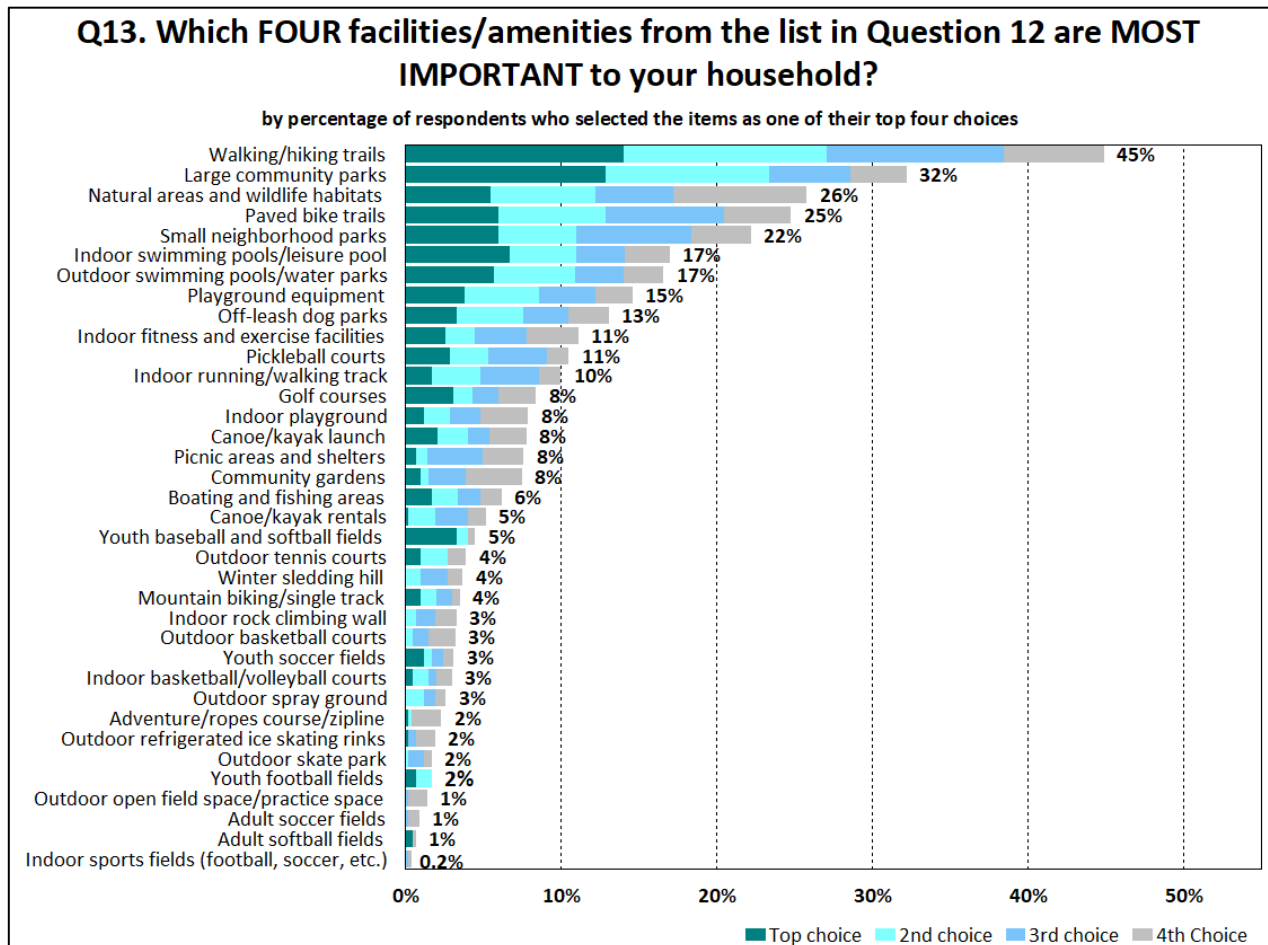
The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 36 facilities/amenities assessed is shown in the chart below.



Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities Importance: In addition to assessing the needs for each facility/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 amenities/facilities ranked most important to residents:

1. Walking/hiking trails (45%)
2. Large community parks (32%)
3. Natural areas and wildlife habitats (26%)
4. Paved bike trails (25%)

The percentage of residents who selected each program as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart below.

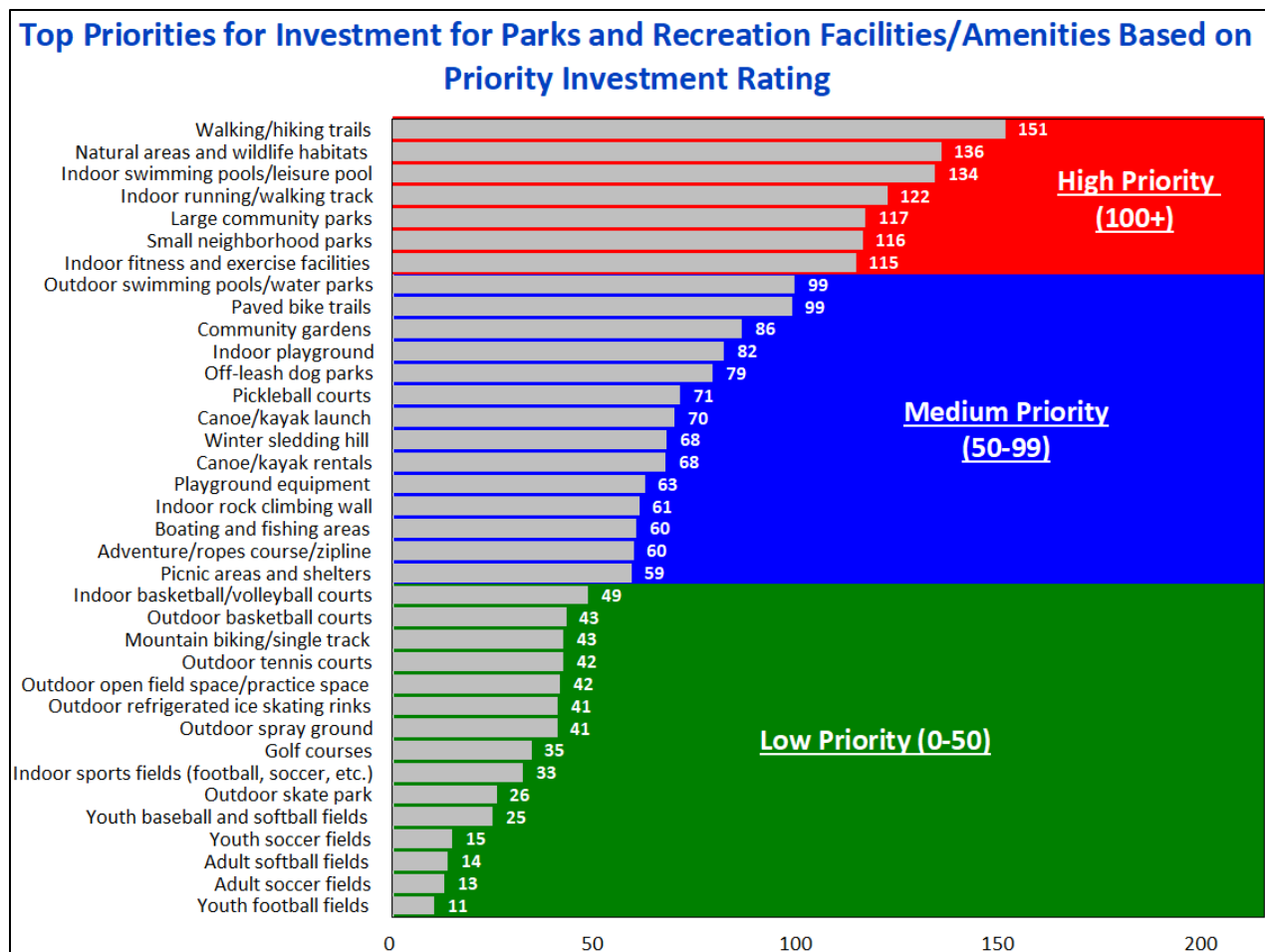


Priorities for Facilities/Amenities Investments: The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs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

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

- Walking/hiking trails (PIR=151)
- Natural areas and wildlife habitats (PIR=136)
- Indoor swimming pools/leisure pool (PIR=134)
- Indoor running/walking track (PIR=122)
- Large community parks (PIR=117)
- Small neighborhood parks (PIR=116)
- Indoor fitness and exercise facilities (PIR=115)

The chart below shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 36 amenities/facilities assessed on the survey.



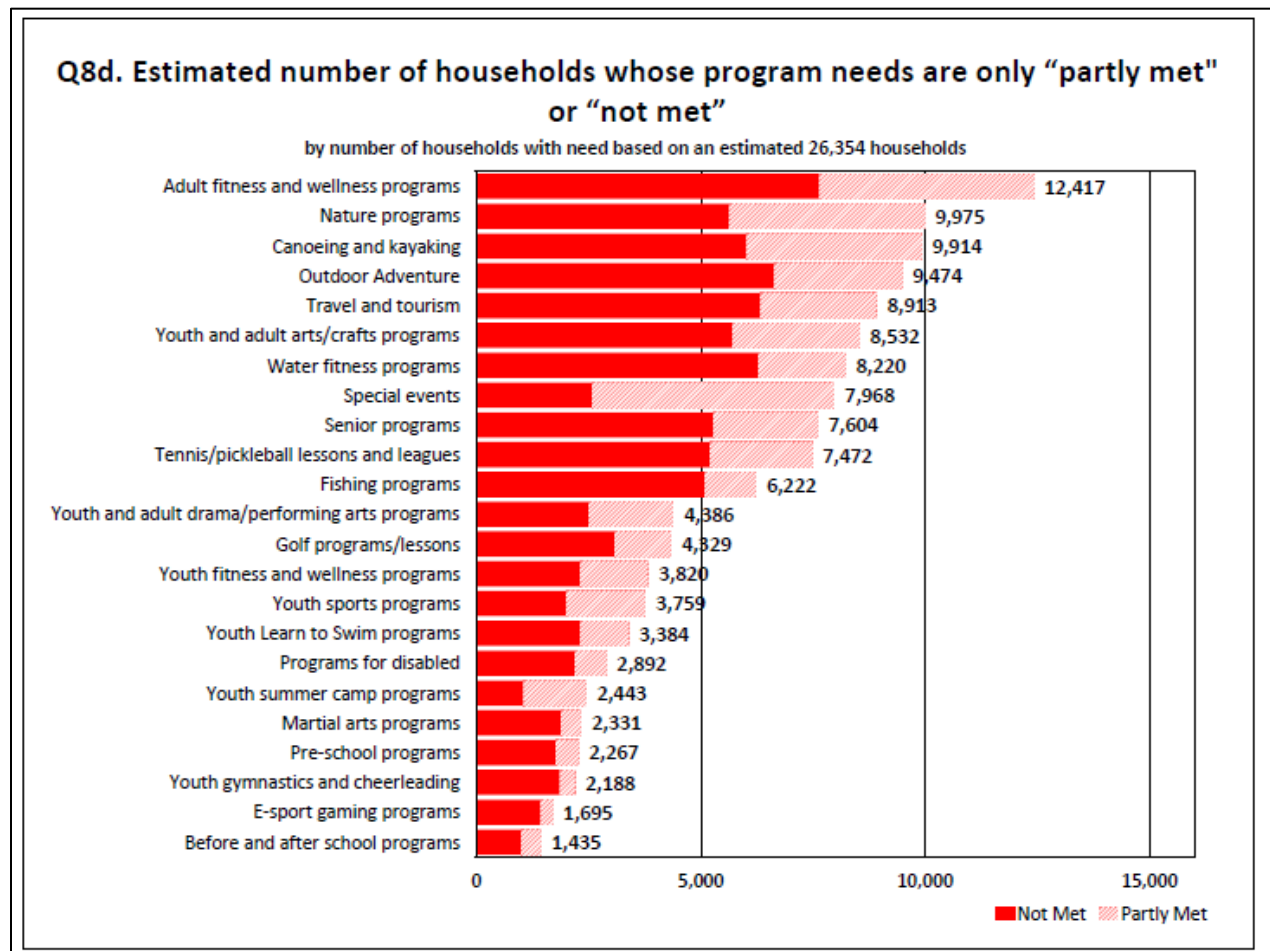
3.5.4 PROGRAM NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Program Needs: Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 23 program features 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 programs.

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

1. Adult fitness and wellness programs – 12,417 households
2. Nature programs – 9,975 households
3. Canoeing and kayaking – 9,914 households

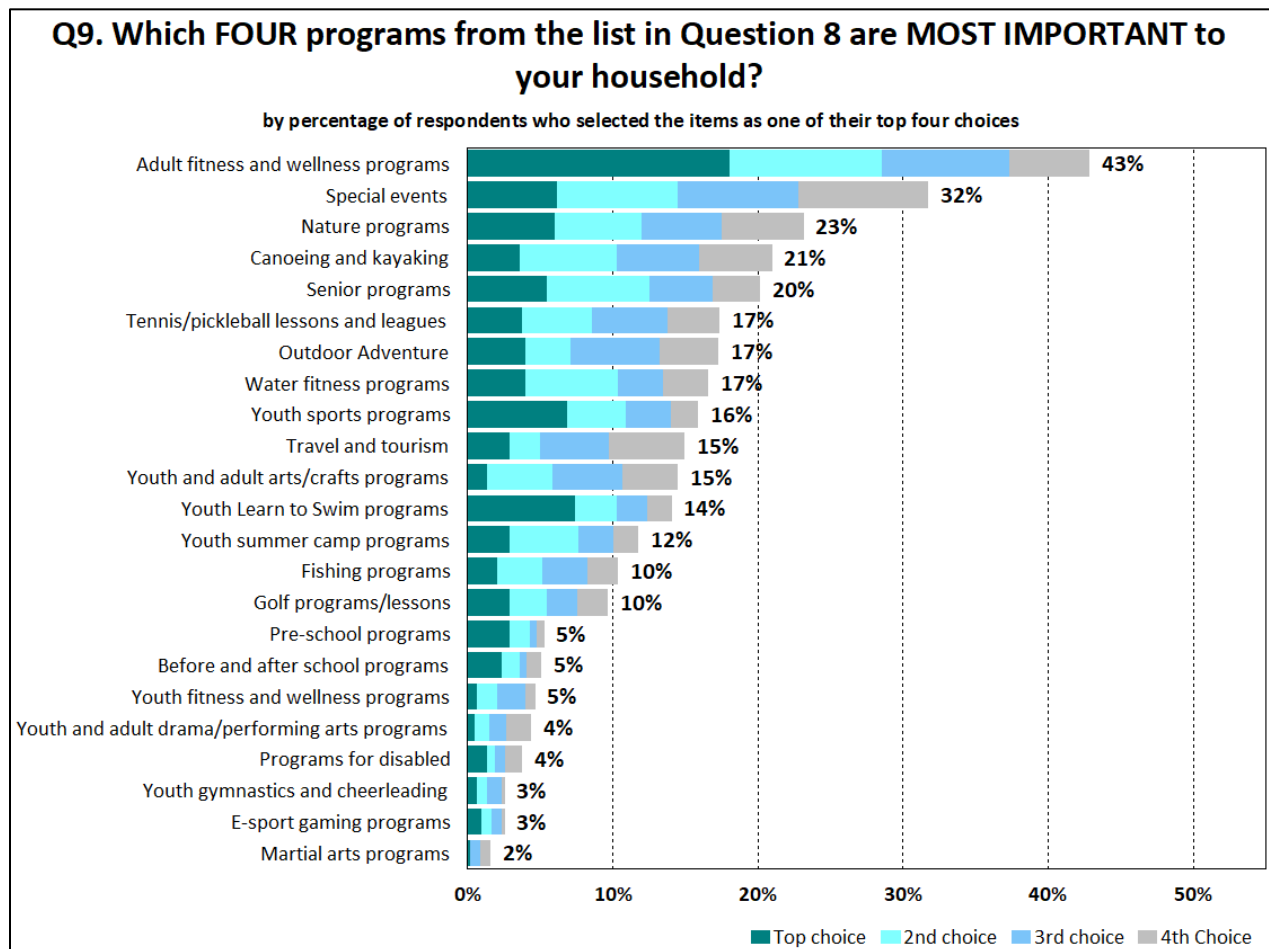
The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 23 programs assessed is shown in the chart below.



Programs 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 four choices, these were the four programs ranked most important to residents:

1. Adult fitness and wellness programs (43%)
2. Special events (32%)
3. Nature programs (23%)
4. Canoeing and kayaking (21%)

The percentage of residents who selected each program as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart below.

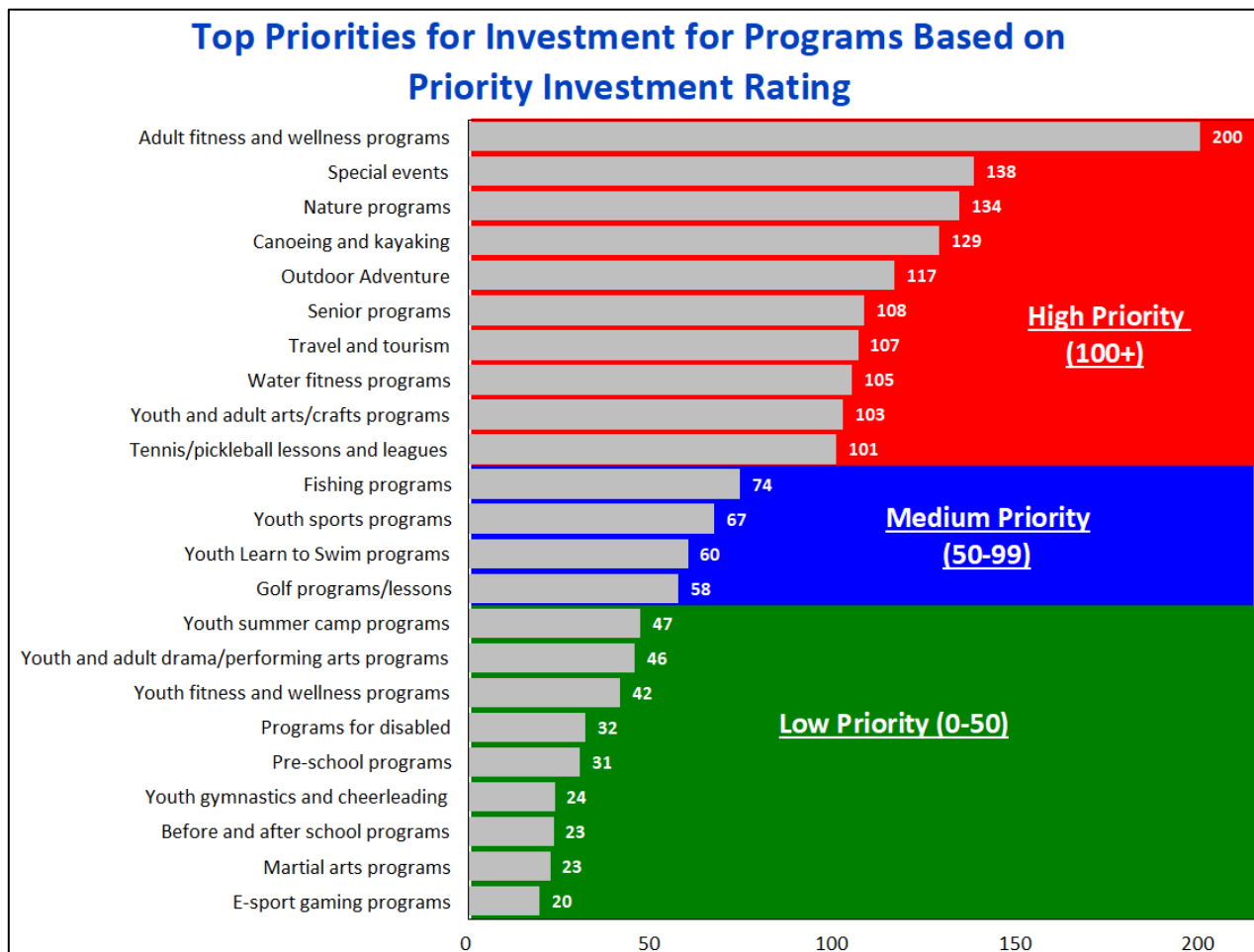


Priorities for Program Investments: The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance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

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

- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR=200)
- Special events (PIR= 138.3)
- Nature programs (PIR= 134.4)
- Canoeing and kayaking (PIR= 128.8)
- Outdoor Adventure (PIR= 116.6)
- Senior programs (PIR= 108.3)
- Travel and tourism (PIR= 106.7)
- Water fitness programs (PIR= 104.9)
- Youth and adult arts/crafts programs (PIR= 102.5)
- Tennis/pickleball lessons and leagues (PIR= 101)

The chart below shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 23 programs assessed on the survey.



CHAPTER FOUR - PARKS, FACILITIES AND PROGRAM NEEDS ANALYSIS

4.1 PARK DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CLASSIFICATIONS

4.1.1 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+

4.1.2 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.

4.2 PARK TYPOLOGIES

4.2.1 PUBLIC PLAZA/DESTINATION 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 event space, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing and socializing, taking lunch breaks, etc.

Successful public plaza/destination parks 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/destination parks offer minimal amenities on site and are not designed to support organized recreation services. The service area for a public plaza/destination parks 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. Noblesville's inventory includes Riverwalk Depot and Federal Hill Commons, which hosts the summer concert series.

Public plaza/destination 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 an amphitheater, playground, shelters, splashpad, benches for walkers, landscape, and trails for enjoyment of the natural environment or display of public artwork. Events would include farmer's markets and singular focused events.

- Size of park: Public plaza/destination 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.

4.2.2 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 it 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, Seminary Park and Southside Park are classified as a neighborhood park within Noblesville'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.

4.2.3 COMMUNITY PARK

Community parks provide diverse recreation opportunities to serve the residents of Noblesville. 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, Noblesville Community Parks include James A. Dillon Park and Finch Creek park.

- Size of park: 10 to 300 acres, but ideally 20 to 75 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.

4.2.4 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, Noblesville has Forest Park that fall under the regional park designation. Hamilton County has Morse Beach Park, Potters Bridge Park, and Bray Family Homestead Park under the regional park destination.

- 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.

4.2.5 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 Noblesville's inventory includes Fox Prairie and Forest Park Golf Courses, as well as the Forest Park Outdoor Pool and the Noblesville Soccer Fields near Fox Prairie Golf Course.

- 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.

4.2.6 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. Noblesville offers many unique nature preserves/open space parks that include Hague Road Nature Preserve, Hague Road Nature

Haven, Forest Hill Nature Preserve, among others. Hamilton County has Burr Oak Bend Preserve and Riverwood Canoe Launch that fall under Nature Preserve.

- 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.

4.2.7 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 Midland Trace East Trail, Midland Trace West Trail, Nickel Plate Trail, Forest Park Trail, and Dillon Park Trail 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.
- 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.

4.3 PARK AND FACILITY ASSESSMENT

The assessment of the Noblesville Parks System was comprehensive and evaluated recreation facilities at three different levels:

1. Individual recreation facilities, courts, fields, and apparatus
2. Individual park sites
3. The park system as a whole

Full results can be found in the **Appendix 1**.

4.3.1 INDIVIDUAL RECREATION FACILITIES

Each park was visited to document the quantity (inventory) and quality (analysis) of individual recreation elements, such as play equipment, ball fields, and pavements. Various industry standards are used to determine the quality of the facilities, including ADA accessibility regulations, campus and playground safety standards (CPTED and CPSI), and INPAWS list of native and invasive species. Other observations that are less official/measurable include general wear and tear and level of maintenance provided by Parks staff.



4.3.2 INDIVIDUAL PARK SITES

Each park is evaluated from a design standpoint to ensure the acreage dedicated to recreation is well utilized, well maintained, safe, and inviting to the community. The relationship of facilities to one another is critical to an effective design. Typically, a small park wants to be dedicated to either active recreation facilities (athletic fields, courts, or large playgrounds), or passive recreation (naturalized plantings, trail system, etc.). Larger parks can support both active and passive recreation facilities because ample space allows for transitions between different types of recreation. Effective transitions include forested areas, berms, natural features, and buildings.

4.3.3 PARK SYSTEM EVALUATION

The park system was evaluated for its overall effectiveness of serving the community. This assessment includes pedestrian connectivity between parks, equal distribution of parks and their amenities throughout the community, and consistency of overall character and maintenance among all park sites.

The rating of individual facilities is based on national and local standards of quality and adapted to fit Noblesville needs. This rating system is consistent with the trail surface rating used in 2020 for the Noblesville Alternative Transportation Plan (NAT).

RATING ISSUES GENERAL CONDITION/CHARACTER

10 None No issues, New Construction

9 None No issues, well maintained

8 None No issues, some wear and tear/showing age

7 Aesthetic No safety concerns, refresh/renovation needed in the next 1-2 years

6 Aesthetic No safety concerns, refresh/renovation needed ASAP

5 Regulations No safety concerns; does not meet latest ADA requirements/INPAWS guidelines

4 Regulations/safety Minor safety concerns present due to age/maintenance issues. Facility

does not meet latest ADA requirements/playground safety guidelines/ some invasive species present. Short-term correction can be provided with increased maintenance. Renovation/replacement should be scheduled ASAP

3 Regulations/safety Several safety issues present; No ADA compliance available. Apparatus/element should be taken off-line until renovations/replacement can be provided

2 Regulations/safety Entire recreation apparatus/element is considered dangerous. Removal should be prioritized even if replacement is not possible

1 Regulation/safety Entire recreation apparatus/element is dangerous and poses a threat to users, as well as the surrounding area. Restrict use of the element and cordon off the surrounding area to ensure failure does not cause harm. Removal needs to take place ASAP.

Assessments of facilities should be completed on an annual basis and following large storm events to ensure damage and safety hazards are quickly mitigated. Evaluations should include not only recreation facilities, but also support elements, such as parking, signage, vegetation, and infrastructure. Trails are an important part of the health of the park system to ensure access between sites is provided. Updates to parks and facilities should maintain/ incorporate system standards, including colors, products, and signage, so each park is recognized as part of the Noblesville Parks system.

4.3.4 GENERAL SYSTEM COMMENTS

WAYFINDING

Along main roads that provide access to or are within a quarter mile of a park entrance, a simple wayfinding sign should be used. This sign can be universal but use an arrow to indicate where someone would turn to access a nearby park. Wayfinding signage along trails is also important. The new trail along Pleasant Street connects the Nickel Plate Trail to the White River Greenway and, once complete, will connect to the Midland Trace Trail. Ensuring a comprehensive signage program along these trails will be imperative to the community navigating these trails effectively.

SUSTAINABILITY

Becoming a more sustainable department can be a great marketing message to the community. The benefits are numerous, but if the end result doesn't ultimately save you time, resources, or dollars, it can be difficult to convince the decision makers that the changes are worth the investment.

There are some initiatives that can help reduce maintenance; therefore, reduce gas usage expenses) carbon emissions (pollution), and time in the field (resources).

LAWN ALTERNATIVES

The amount of mown lawn within the park system is extensive. Open lawns are an important amenity for the park system, but there are parts of each park that could be seeded using an alternative ground cover.

Low mow turf is a short fescue mix that grows to +/-6" tall and stops. It can be mown but is intended to be used in areas where open lawns are not needed for recreation needs, "the back 40", or as a transition between mown lawn and native plantings.

There are a variety of groundcovers that can spread into large areas and are tolerant of foot traffic. Environmental conditions should be considered to determine the right kind of ground cover. Some

examples include No Mo Liriope (non-native), Barren Strawberry, and Carex spp. In addition to these examples, low stature prairie seed is a great mix for poor soil and is a combination of native grasses and forbs. All these groundcovers are more expensive than seeded lawn and require a certain amount of maintenance to get established. However, once this time and expense has been provided, the result is a very low maintenance area that requires limited time and expense. One issue related to alternate ground covers is the education of the community. There is a certain expectation that parks are manicured. This is appropriate in some areas, but not all. Signage explaining the benefits of certain ground covers can help with this process.

NATIVE SPECIES

For the most part, the parks system is a fantastic resource for Noblesville for quality and native urban tree canopy. Only in rare instances are invasive species present. All effort should be made to remove any invasive species from the parks system, including pear trees (mostly found in naturalized areas).

Plantings found in older parking lots do not match the character of the parks department. Roses and non-native perennials are out of place and should be replaced with ornamental grasses and native species.

PARKING LOTS

Establish an annuals budget to upkeep parking lots throughout the system. This schedule should allow the parks department to mill and resurface, provide full depth asphalt repair in select locations, seal coat and stripe all parking lots and drives over a 5-7 cycle. Some areas will require more regular

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

One of the main requests that came from the public engagement input is the desire for additional trails. Some of the strongest connections to be made within a community is connecting all of your parks with trails and extend regional trails to connect to other regional trails. Noblesville has done an excellent job at making these connections. With the completion of Pleasant Street corridor, the only parks not connected to the rest of the system are Seminary Park and Federal Hill Commons. The completion of Pleasant Street provides pedestrian corridors between the Nickel Plate Trail, Midland Trace Trail and White River Greenway Trail. These off-road trails combined with trails provided along 146th Street, Boden Avenue, and Hague Road connects all other parks within the system, as well as several other recreation amenities operated by other groups.

Trail connections to Seminary Park and Federal Hill Commons should be studied. Both parks have their different challenges to get these trail connections. Seminary Park has ample sidewalk connections, but trails encourage bike and scooter use. Being within the downtown fabric, Federal Hill Commons is encompassed by two highways and a major arterial street. The new underpass of the Nickel Plain rail line at Nixon Street should offer significant benefits in connecting to Forest Park. The number of people accessing Federal Hill Commons for events justifies having trail connections that do not have to interact with SR 32 or SR 19. Pedestrian bridges or tunnels should be evaluated under both of these highways.

Providing the next layer of trail development in Noblesville has been a top priority based on public input. Trail connections to and between schools, as well as between commercial districts and residential neighborhoods are the next layer of development. Removing difficult road crossings and connections to and between more regional trail systems using natural and off-road corridors also creates a more diverse trail network.

4.4 LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

4.4.1 OVERVIEW

Level of Service (LOS) standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities. LOS standards are updated over time as industry trends and community demographics change.

Park facility standards were evaluated using a combination of resources. These resources included market trends, demographic data, community and stakeholder input, the statistically valid community survey, and general observations. The existing level of service was based on analysis of the City of Noblesville inventory, as well as Hamilton County Parks. This information allowed standards to be customized to Noblesville.

It is important to note that these LOS standards should be viewed as a guide. The standards are to be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the situation and needs of the community. By applying these standards to the population of Noblesville, gaps or surpluses in park and facility types are revealed.

4.4.2 PER CAPITA “GAPS”

According to the Level of Service, the City is performing well in meeting the Noblesville needs to properly serve the Noblesville community today and in the future. The existing level of service meets and exceeds best practices and recommended service levels for many items; however, there are several areas that do not meet recommended standards. Although Noblesville meets the standards for total park acres, there is a deficit for public plaza/destination parks (.36 acres), neighborhood parks (6.77 acres), community parks (30.21 acres), regional parks (6.4 acres), as well total miles of trails (4 miles paved and 2.76 unpaved).

For outdoor amenities, Noblesville shows a need for ball diamonds (3 fields), basketball courts (4), tennis courts (2), pickleball courts (2), and dog parks (2), and outdoor pools (1).

Regarding indoor recreation space, there is a shortage of 107,248 square feet. Also, there is a shortage of indoor aquatic space of 37, 575 square feet.

The standards that follow are based upon population figures for 2024 and 2029, the latest estimates available at the time of analysis.



Current Inventory					Current LOS			Metrics				Recommended Standard			Current Needs			5-Year Forecasted Needs		
Item	PUBLIC AGENCIES			Total Inventory	Service Level Based on Current Population			2025 NRPA Park Metrics Median Metric by Jurisdiction Population 50,000 to 99,999			2025 Survey Needs Assessment Priority	Recommended Service Levels for Study Area			Assessment	Additional Need	Assessment	Additional Need		
	Noblesville	Hamilton County Parks	Total Public Agencies																	
PARKLAND (ACRES)																				
Public Plaza/Destination Parks	7.15	-	7.15	7.15	0.10	acres per	1,000				High High	0.10	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	0.36	Acres	Need Exists	0.95	Acres
Neighborhood Parks	4.50	-	4.50	4.50	0.06	acres per	1,000					0.15	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	6.77	Acres	Need Exists	7.66	Acres
Community Parks	270.39	-	270.39	270.39	3.60	acres per	1,000					4.00	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	30.21	Acres	Need Exists	53.77	Acres
Regional Parks	150.77	181.00	331.77	331.77	4.41	acres per	1,000					4.50	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	6.40	Acres	Need Exists	32.91	Acres
Special Use Parks	249.09		249.09	249.09	3.31	acres per	1,000					3.25	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres	Need Exists	14.29	Acres
Nature Preserves/Open Space	128.10	191.00	319.10	319.10	4.25	acres per	1,000					4.25	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	0.28	Acres	Need Exists	25.32	Acres
Total Developed Park Acres	810.00	372.00	1,182.00	1,182.00	15.73	acres per	1,000					16.25	acres per	1,000	Need Exists	39.17	Acres	Need Exists	134.92	Acres
Undeveloped Parkland	216.11	-	216.11	216.11	2.88	acres per	1,000					0.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres	Meets Standard	-	Acres
Total Park Acres	1,026.11	372.00	1,398.11	1,398.11	18.60	acres per	1,000	10.3	acres per	1,000		16.25	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	-	Acres	Meets Standard	-	Acres
TRAILS (MILES)																				
Paved Trails	18.59		18.59	18.59	0.25	miles per	1,000	18.1 miles of trails			High High	0.30	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	3.95	Miles	Need Exists	5.72	Miles
Unpaved Trails	1.00		1.00	1.00	0.01	miles per	1,000					0.05	miles per	1,000	Need Exists	2.76	Miles	Need Exists	3.05	Miles
OUTDOOR FACILITIES																				
Shelter	13	5	18	18	1	site per	4,175				Medium Low	1	site per	5,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites	Meets Standard	-	Sites
Rectangular Fields (Football, Soccer, Multipurpose)	18	-	18	18	1	field per	4,175					1	field per	4,659	1	field per	10,000	Meets Standard	-	Fields
Ball Diamonds	3	2	5	5	1	field per	15,030	1	field per	4,560	Low Low	1	field per	10,000	Need Exists	3	Fields	Need Exists	3	Fields
Basketball Courts	4	-	4	4	1	court per	18,787	1	court per	8,447	Low Low	1	court per	10,000	Need Exists	4	Courts	Need Exists	4	Courts
Tennis Courts	2	-	2	2	1	court per	37,575	1	court per	5,818	Low Medium	1	court per	20,000	Need Exists	2	Courts	Need Exists	2	Courts
Pickleball Courts	6	-	6	6	1	court per	12,525	1	court per	8,592	Medium	1	court per	10,000	Need Exists	2	Courts	Need Exists	2	Courts
Sand Volleyball	4	1	5	5	1	site per	15,030	1	court per	29,214		1	site per	20,000	Meets Standard		Sites	Meets Standard		Sites
Playgrounds	8	3	11	11	1	site per	6,832	1	site per	3,643	Medium Medium	1	site per	10,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites	Meets Standard	-	Sites
Dog Park	-	-	-	-	1	site per	#DIV/0!	1	site per	55,250	Medium Low	1	site per	50,000	Need Exists	2	Sites	Need Exists	2	Sites
Skateboard Park	2	-	2	2	1	site per	37,575	1	site per	61,384	Low Low	1	site per	40,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites	Need Exists	0	Sites
Splash Pad	3	-	3	3	1	site per	25,050	1	site per	51,000	Low Medium	1	site per	50,000	Meets Standard	-	Sites	Meets Standard	-	Sites
Outdoor Pool	1		1	1	1	site per	75,149	1	site per	48,064		1	site per	50,000	Need Exists	1	Sites	Need Exists	1	Sites
INDOOR RECREATION SPACE (SQ. FT.)																				
Indoor Recreation Space	5,476		5,476	5,476	0.07	SF per	person	1	site per	Community Center - 58027 Recreation Center - 31805	High	1.50	SF per	person	Need Exists	107,248	Sq. Ft.	Need Exists	116,086	Sq. Ft.
Indoor Aquatic Space	-		-	-	-	SF per	person	1	site per	Aquatic Center - 63418	High	0.50	SF per	person	Need Exists	37,575	Sq. Ft.	Need Exists	40,521	Sq. Ft.
2024 Estimated Population																			75,149	
2029 Estimated Population																			81,041	

Notes:
The City also owns and maintains an additional 58.09 miles of Citywide perimeter paved trails.
The 5,476 indoor recreation space includes lodge type building that are able to offer limited programming and serve as rentals.

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4.5 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.

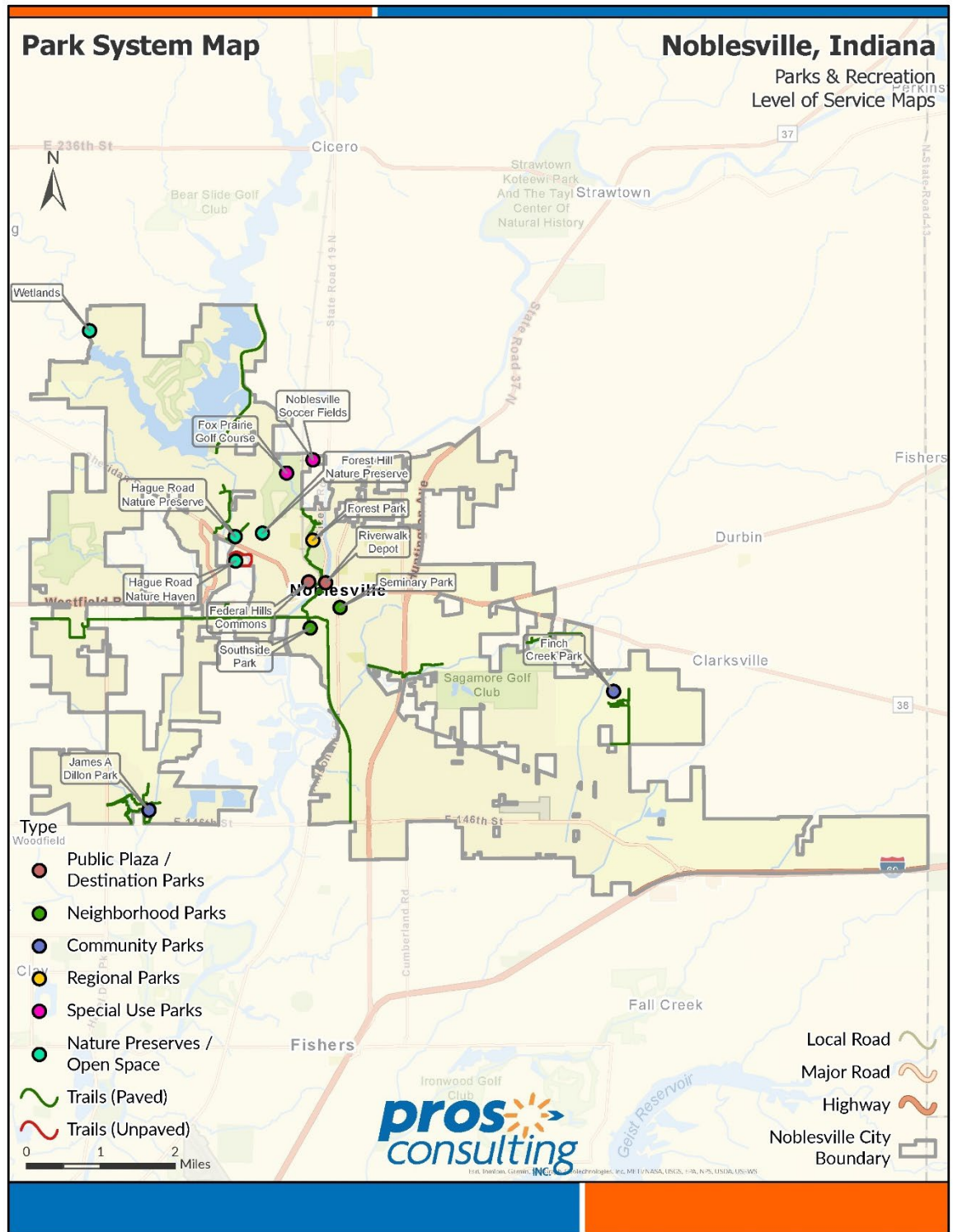
4.5.1 SERVICE AREA MAPS

Service area maps and standards assist the City of Noblesville in assessing where services are offered, how equitable the service distribution and delivery is across the Noblesville 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 Noblesville to assess gaps in services, where facilities are needed, or where an area is over saturated. This allows the Noblesville 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 depending 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. 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 represent the areas not served by a given amenity or park acre type. Maps were created for:

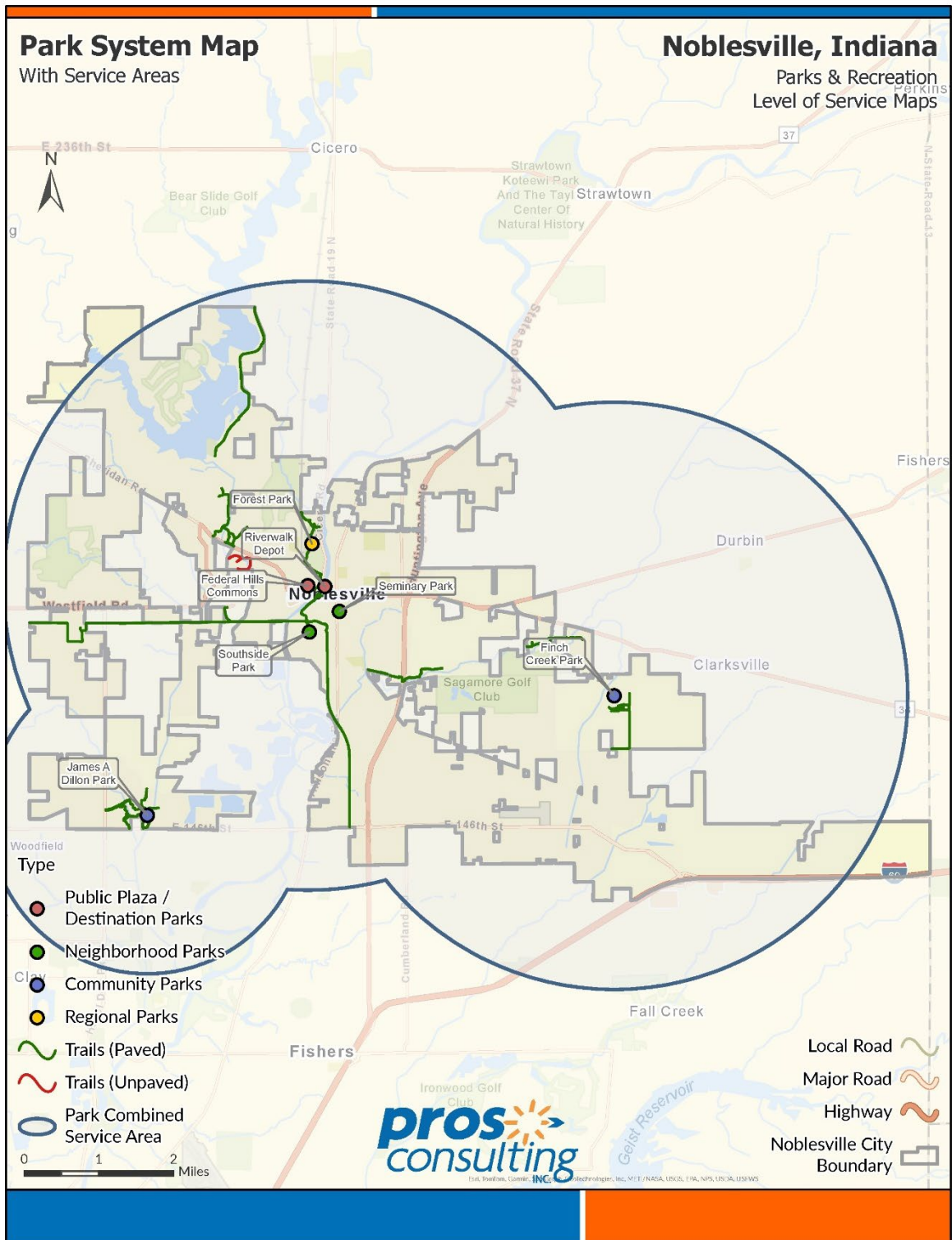
- All Parks Location (**Map 2**)
- Park System Map Service Area (**Map 3**)
- Pave Trails Service Area (**Map 4**)
- Public Plaza/Destination Parks Service Area (**Map 5**)
- Neighborhood Parks Service Area (**Map 6**)
- Community Park Services Area (**Map 7**)
- Regional Park Service Area (**Map 8**)
- Special Use Park Service Area (**Map 9**)
- Nature Preserve/Open Space Service Area (**Map 10**)
- Undeveloped Parkland Service Area (**Map 11**)
- Unpaved Trail Service Area (**Map 12**)
- Shelters Service Area (**Map 13**)
- Rectangular Fields (Football, Soccer) Service Area (**Map 14**)
- Ball Diamonds Service Area (**Map 15**)
- Basketball Courts Service Area (**Map 16**)
- Tennis Courts Service Area (**Map 17**)
- Pickleball Courts Service Area (**Map 18**)
- Sand Volleyball Service Area (**Map 19**)
- Playgrounds Service Area (**Map 20**)
- Dog Park Service Area (**Map 21**)
- Skateboard Service Area (**Map 22**)
- Splashpad Service Area (**Map 23**)
- Outdoor Pool Service Area (**Map 24**)
- Indoor Recreation Space Service Area (**Map 25**)
- Indoor Aquatic Service Area (**Map 26**)

4.5.2 ALL PARKS MAP



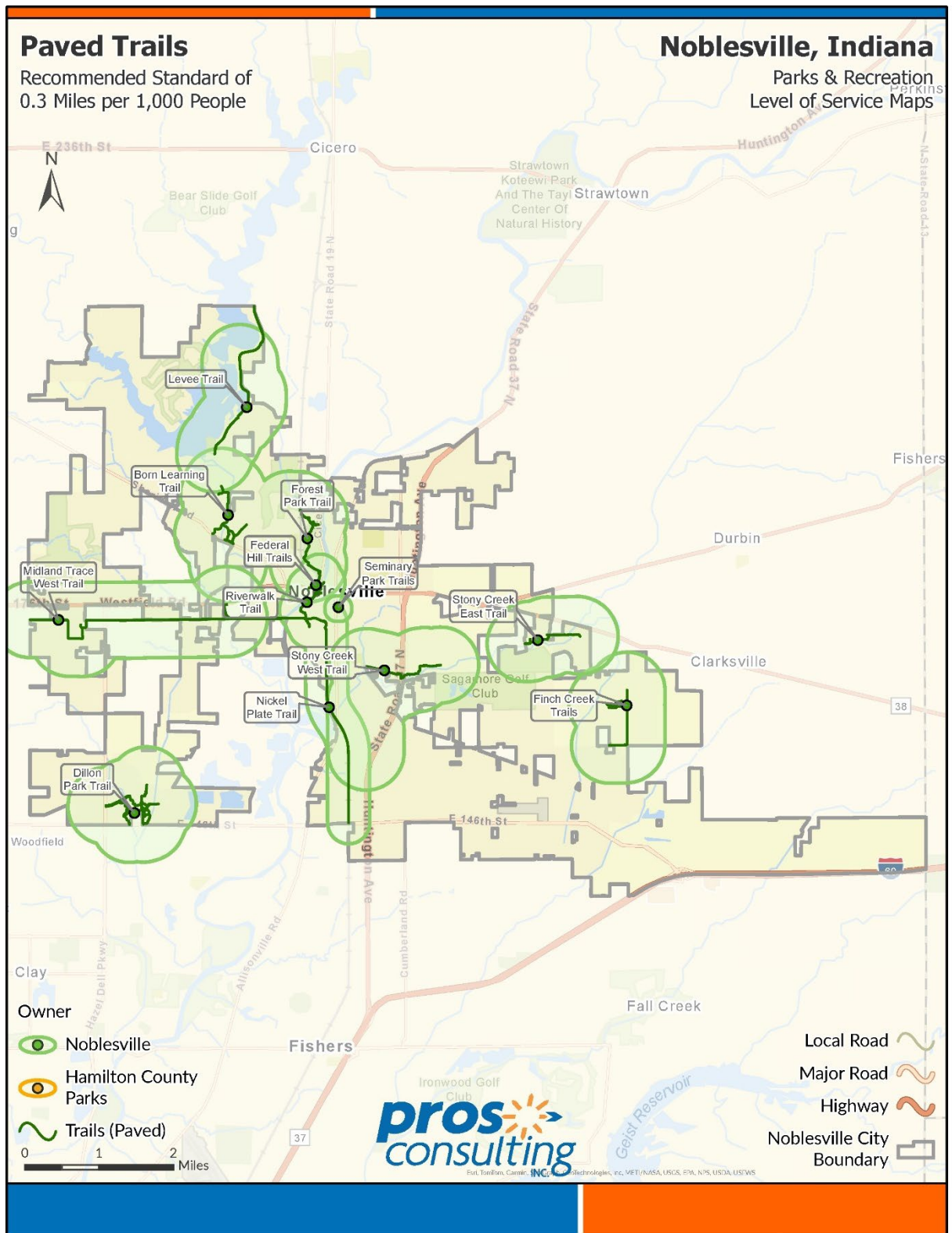
Map 2 - All Parks Map

4.5.3 ALL PARKS SERVICE AREA

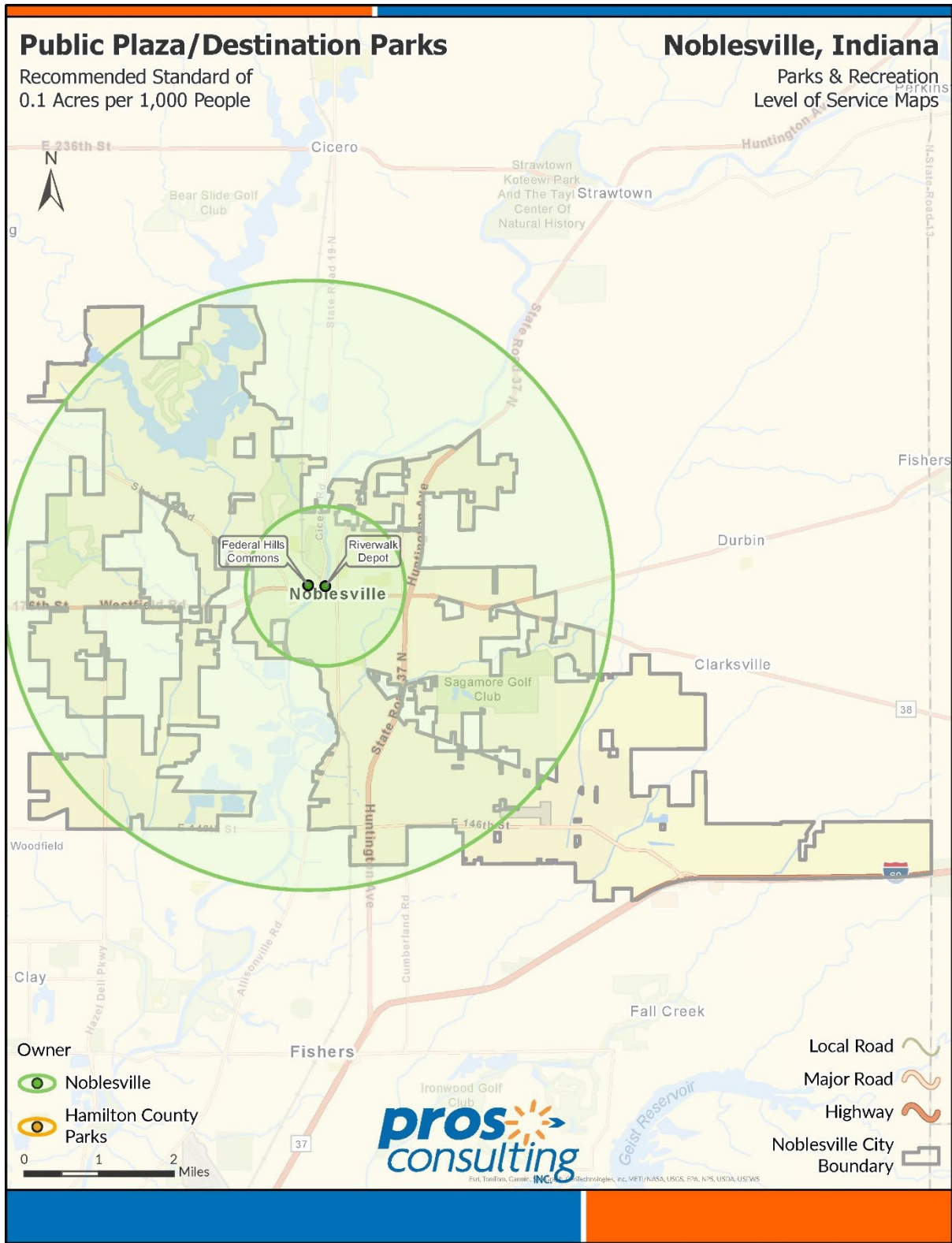


Map 3 - All Parks Service Area

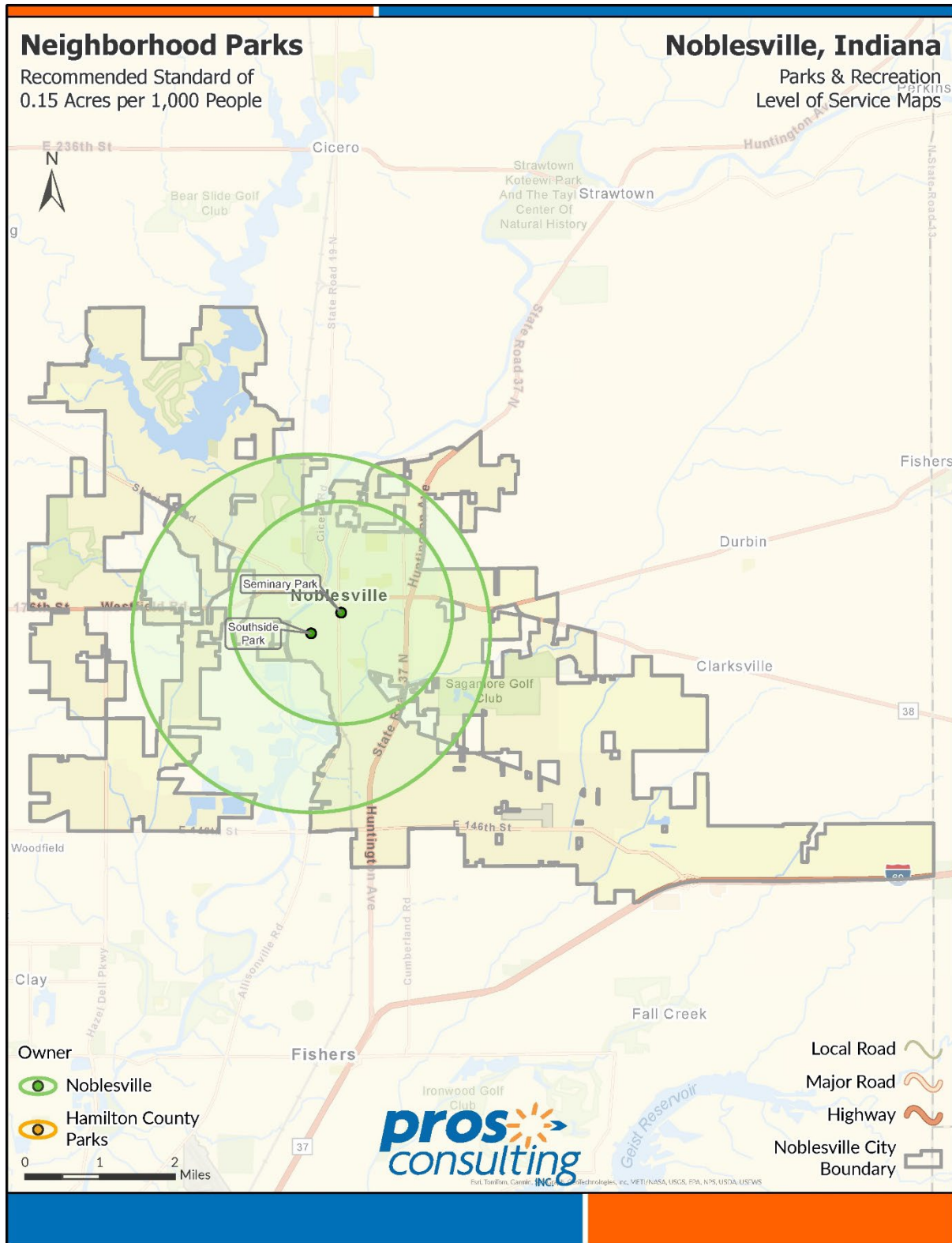
4.5.4 PAVED TRAILS SERVICE AREA



4.5.5 PUBLIC PLAZA/DESTINATION PARKS SERVICE AREA

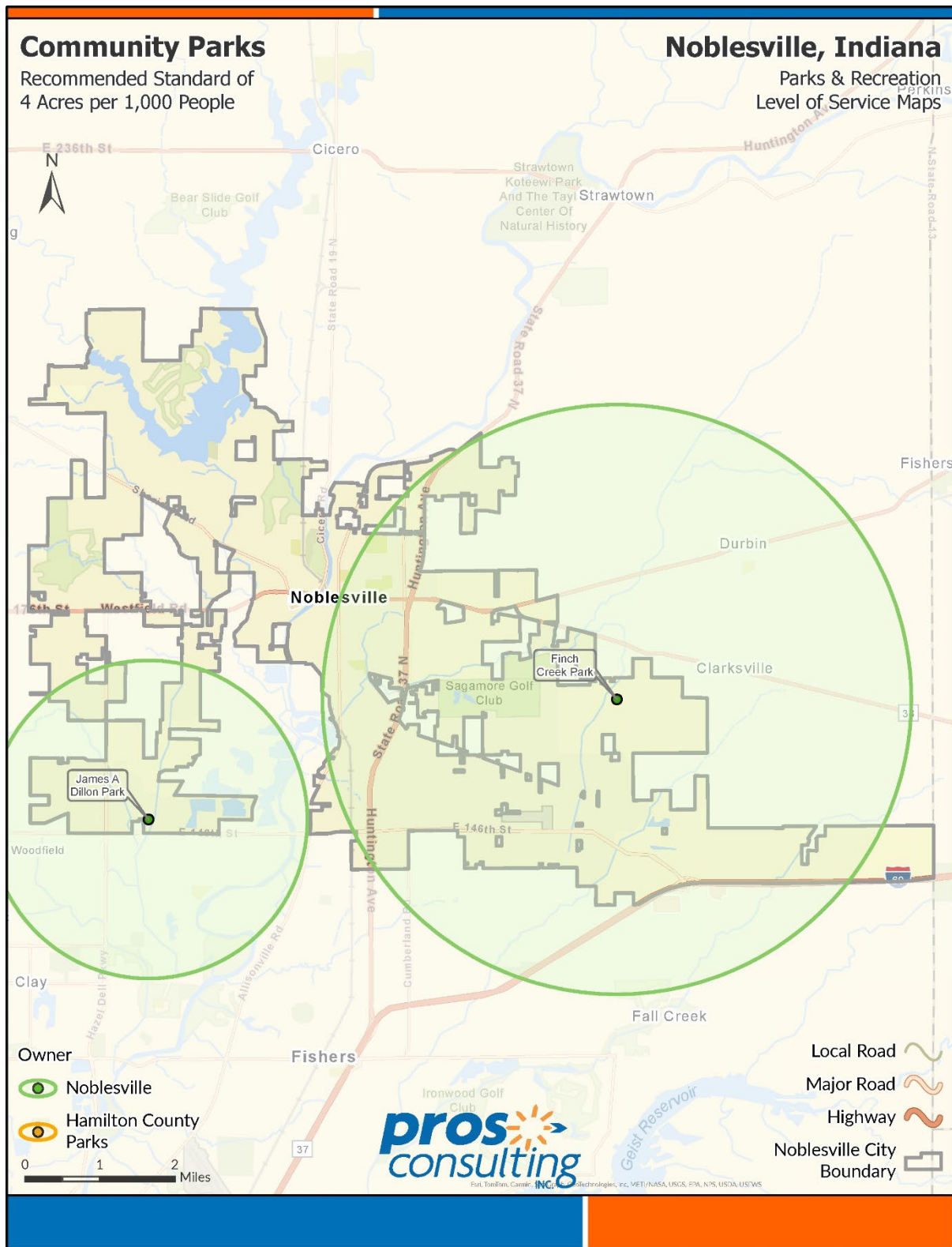


4.5.6 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS SERVICE AREA



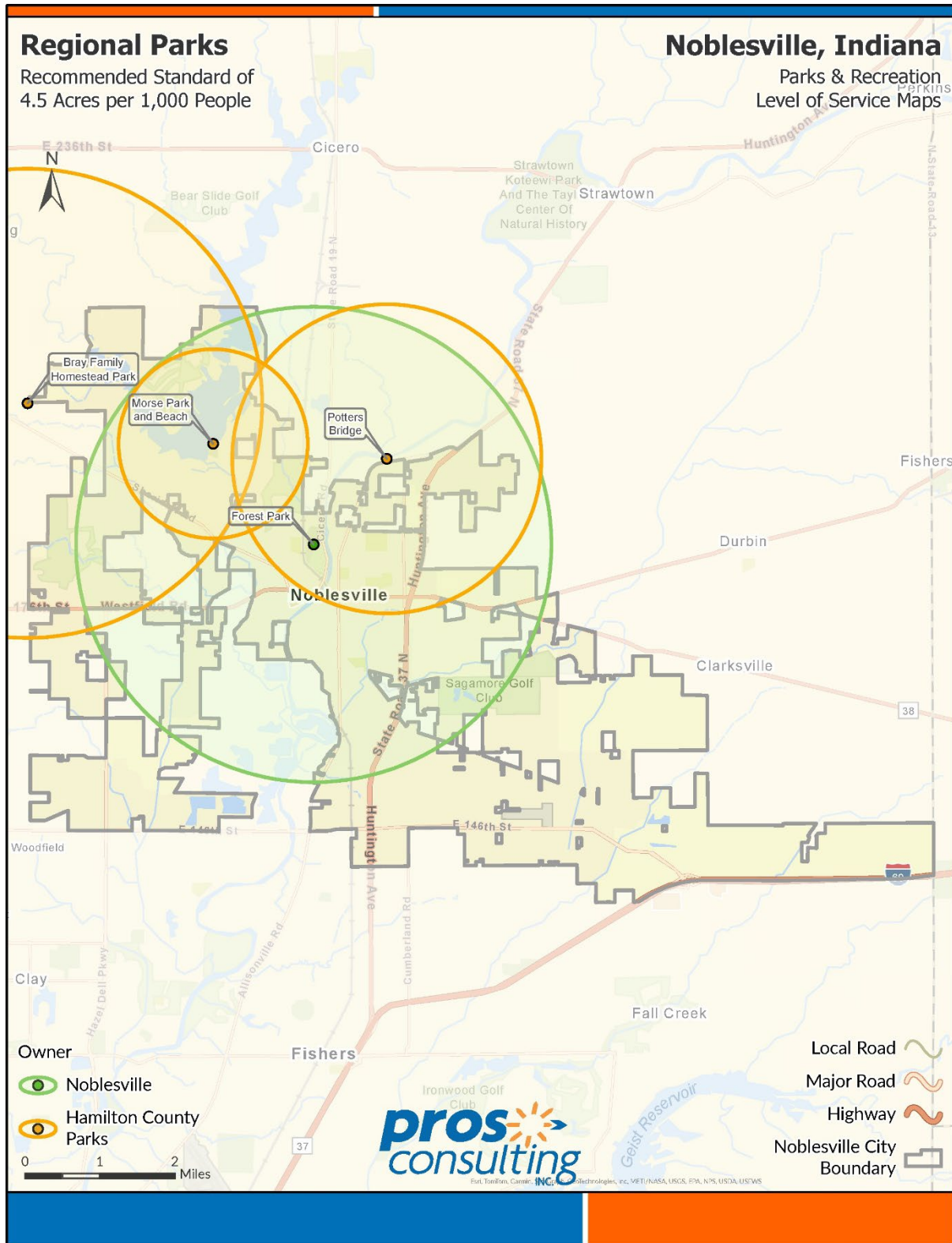
Map 6 - Neighborhood Parks Service Area

4.5.7 COMMUNITY PARKS SERVICE AREA



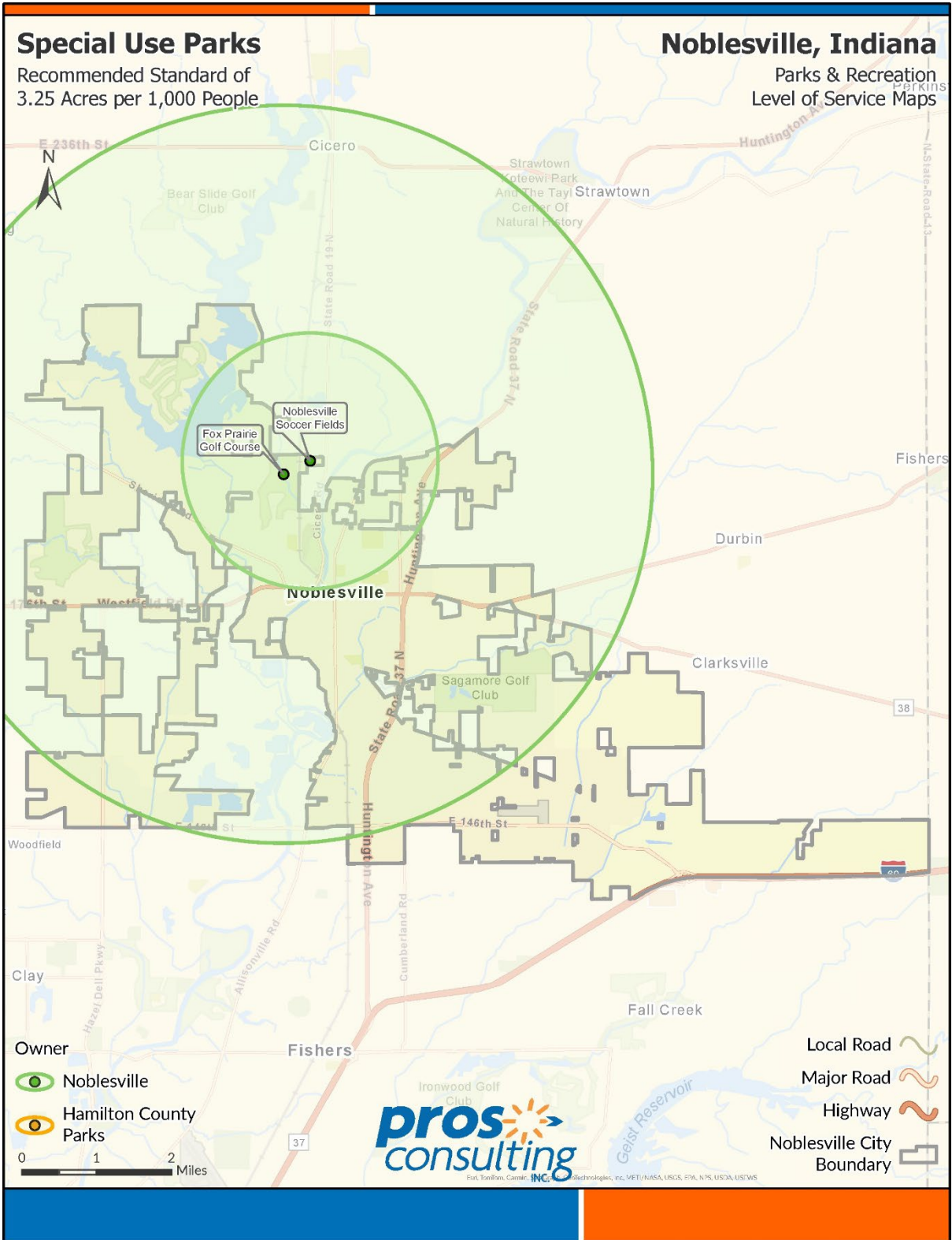
Map 7 - Community Parks Service Area

4.5.8 REGIONAL PARKS SERVICE AREA

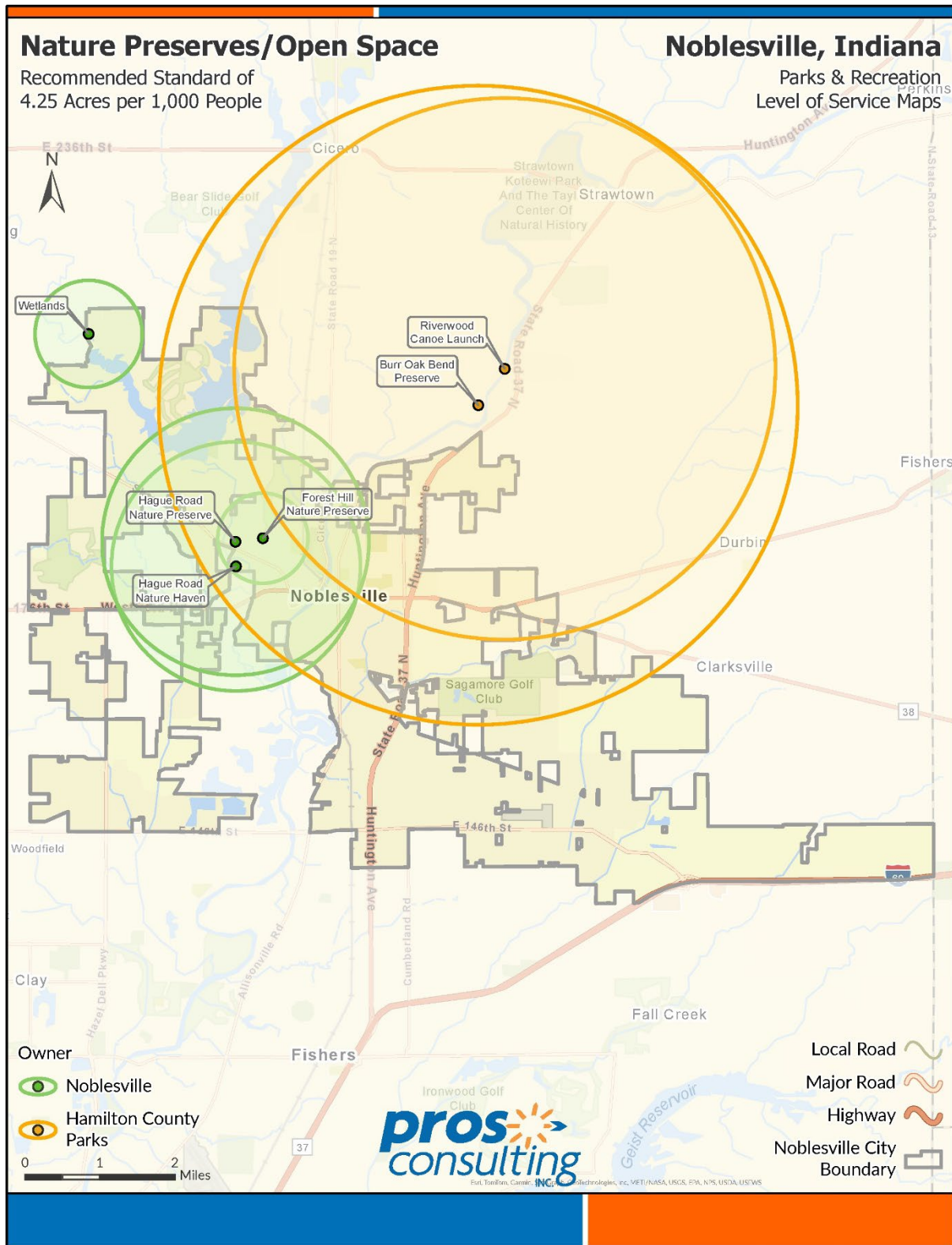


Map 8 - Regional Parks Service Area

4.5.9 SPECIAL USE PARKS SERVICE AREA

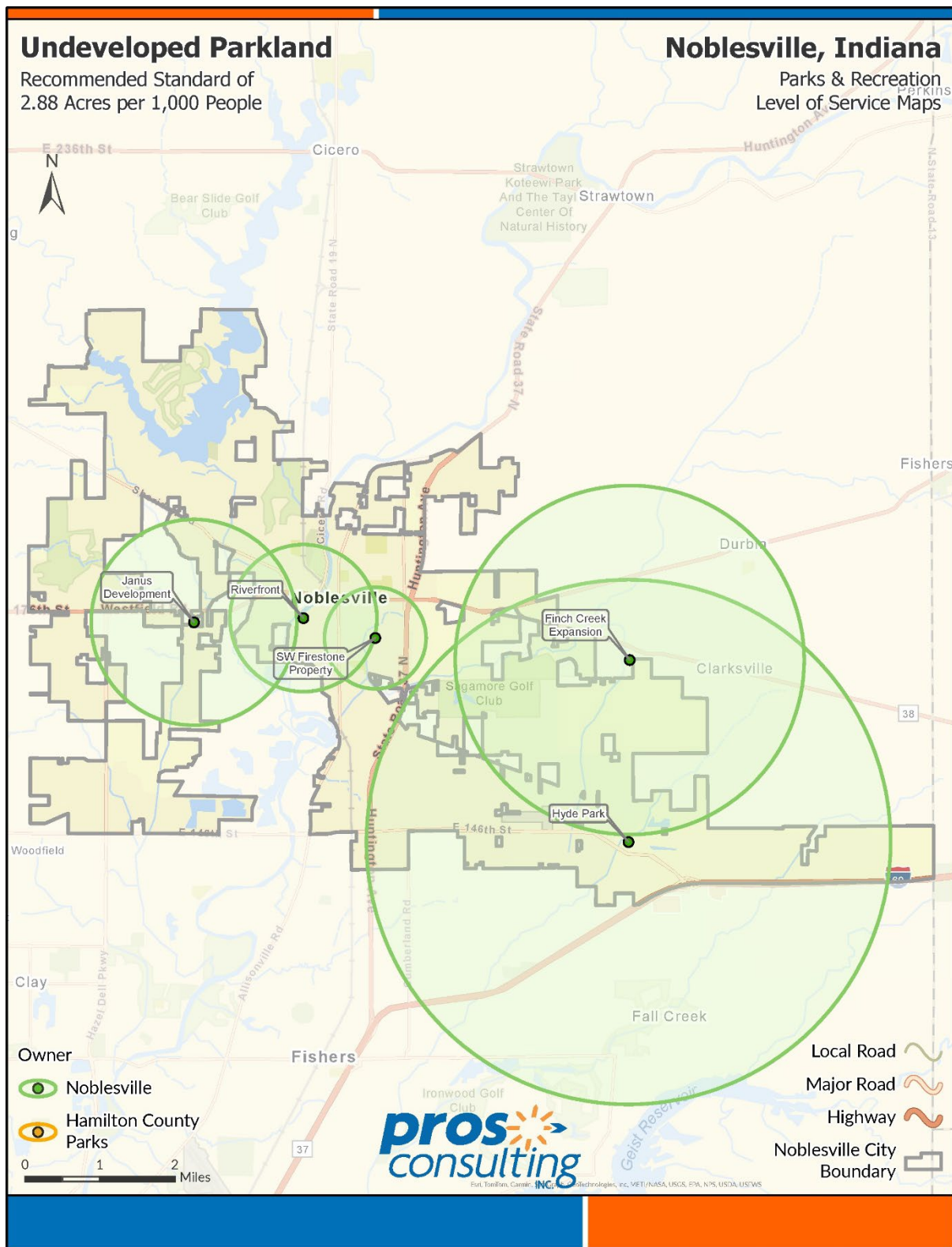


4.5.10 NATURE PRESERVES/OPEN SPACE SERVICE AREA

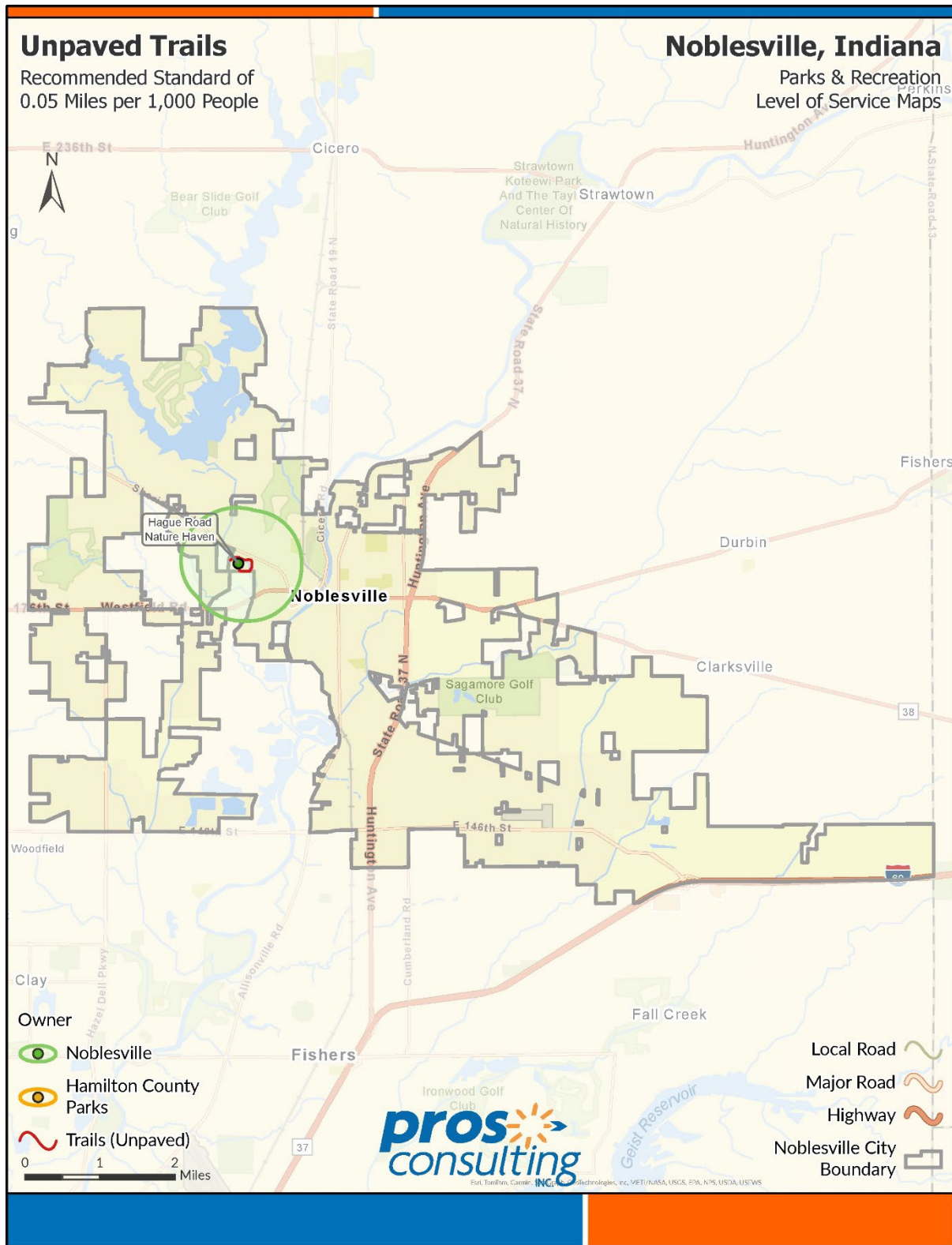


Map 10 - Nature Preserves/Open Space Service Area

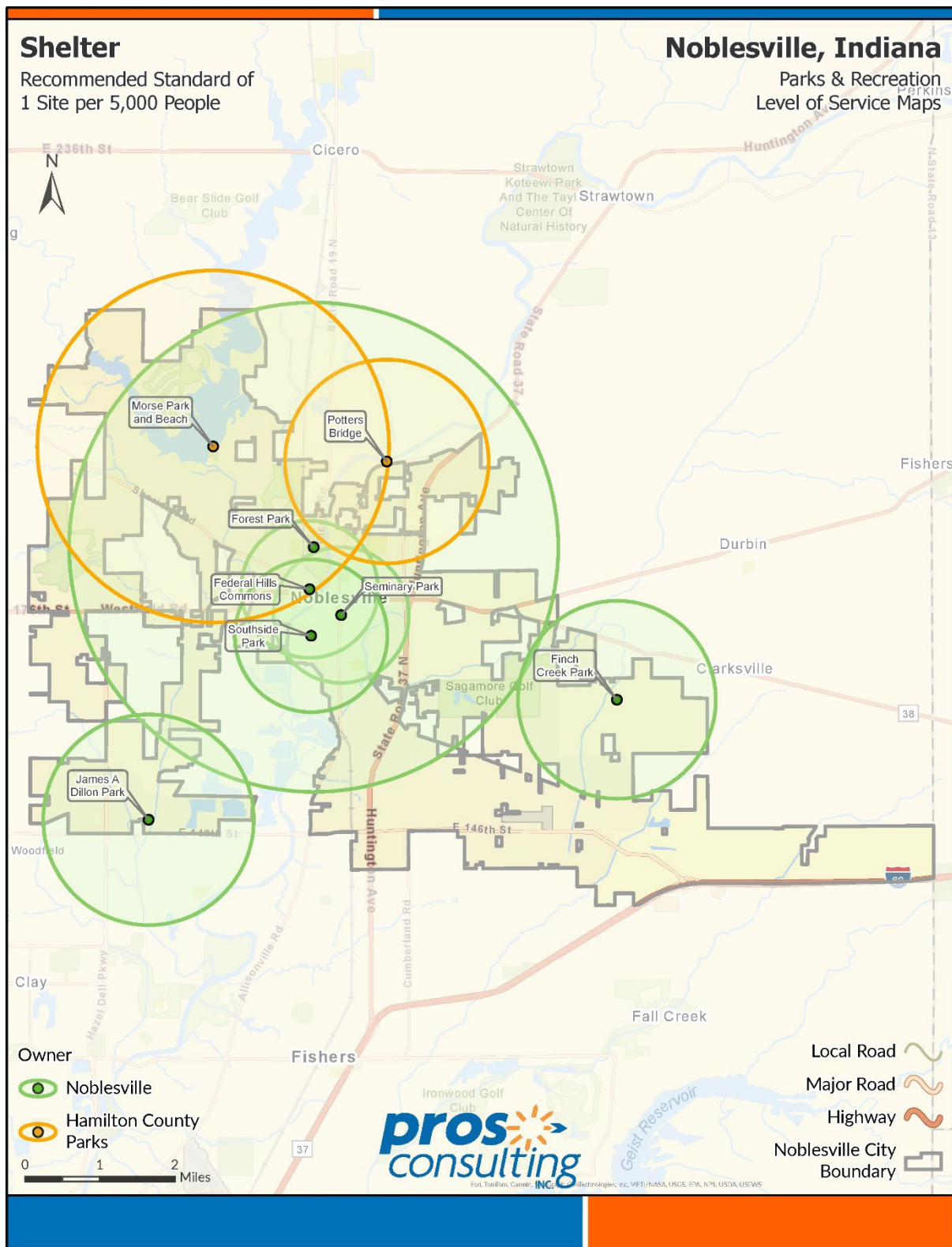
4.5.11 UNDEVELOPED PARKLAND SERVICE AREA



4.5.12 UNPAVED TRAILS SERVICE AREA

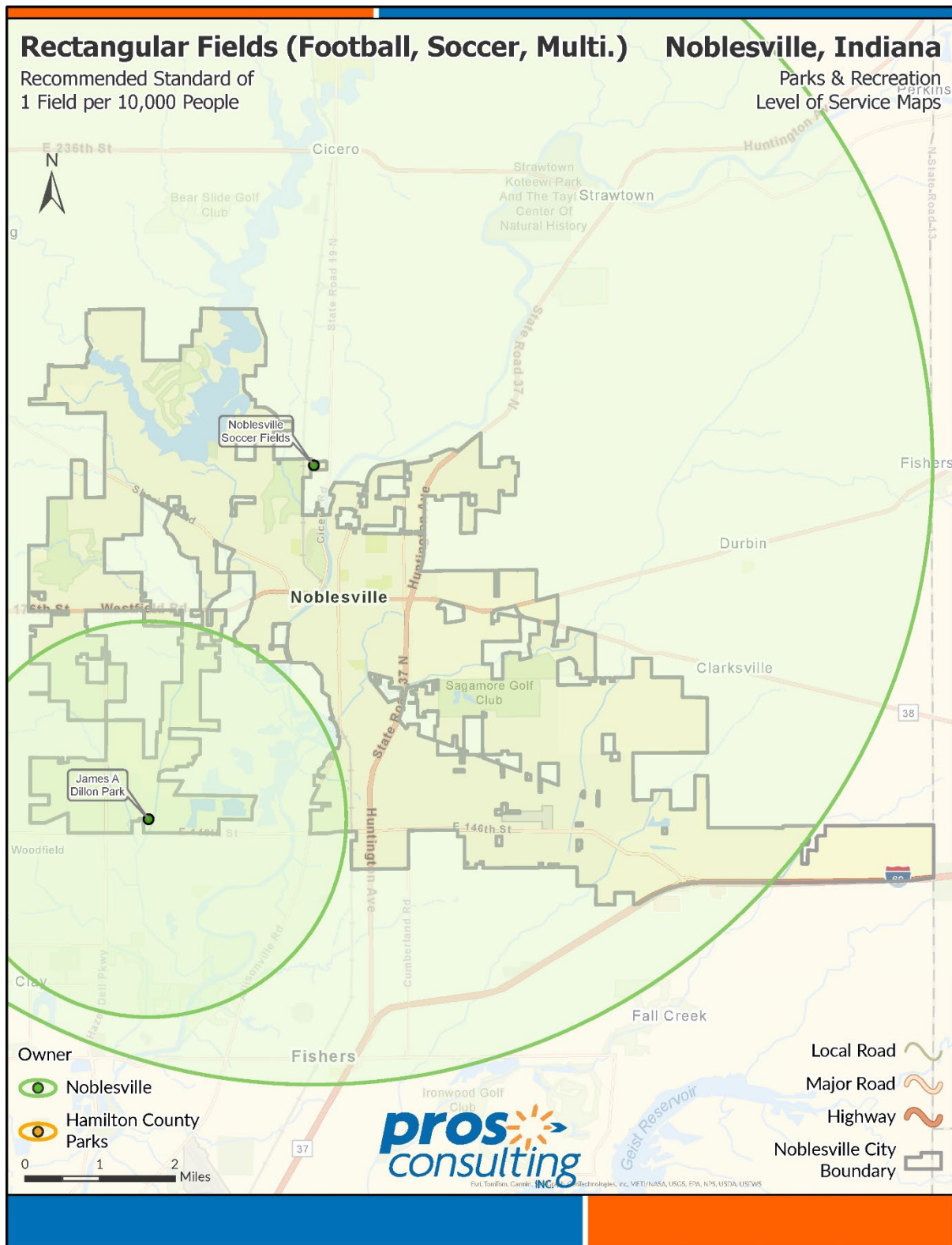


4.5.13 SHELTERS SERVICE AREA



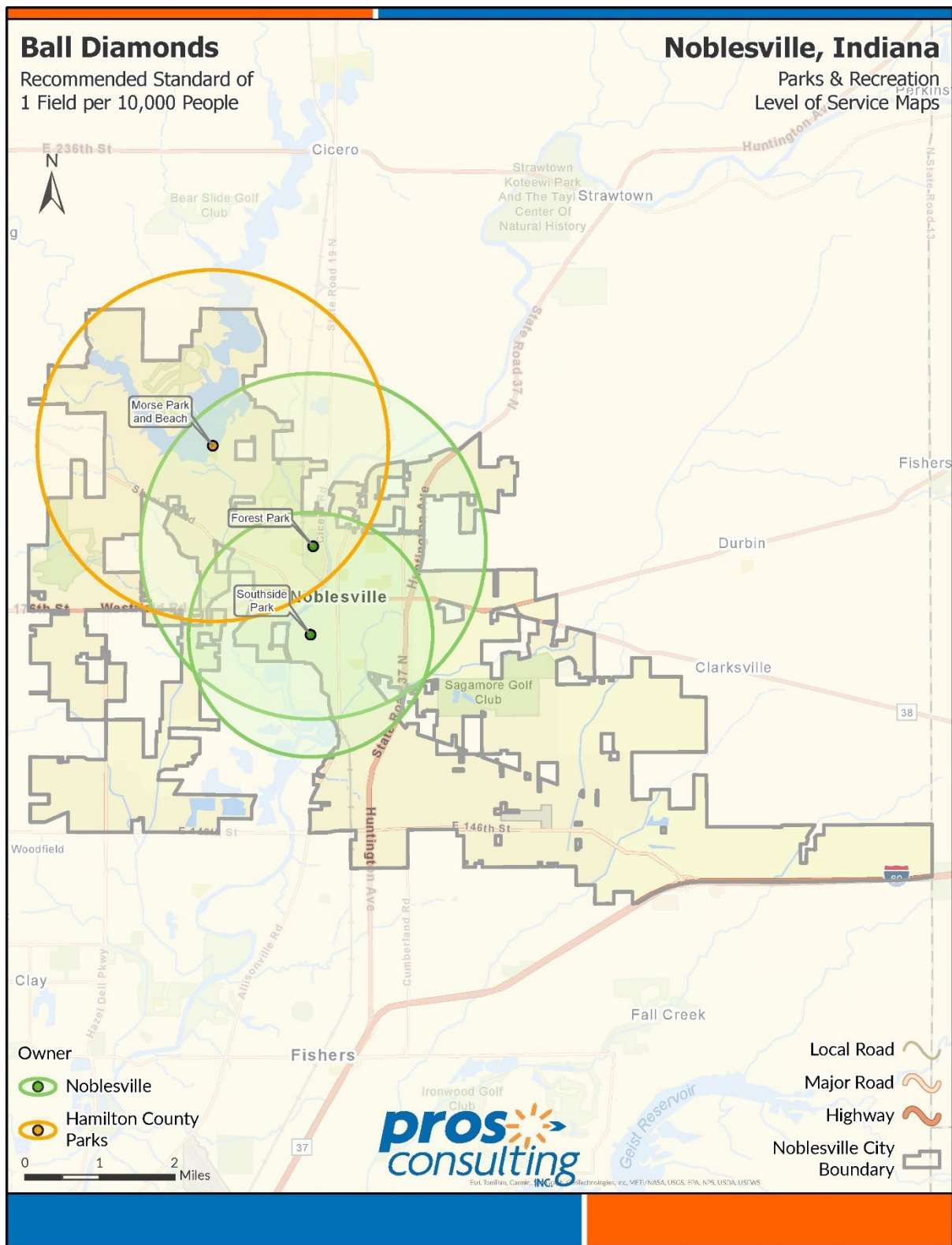
Map 13 - Shelters Service Area

4.5.14 RECTANGULAR FIELDS (FOOTBALL, SOCCER, MULTIPURPOSE) SERVICE AREA



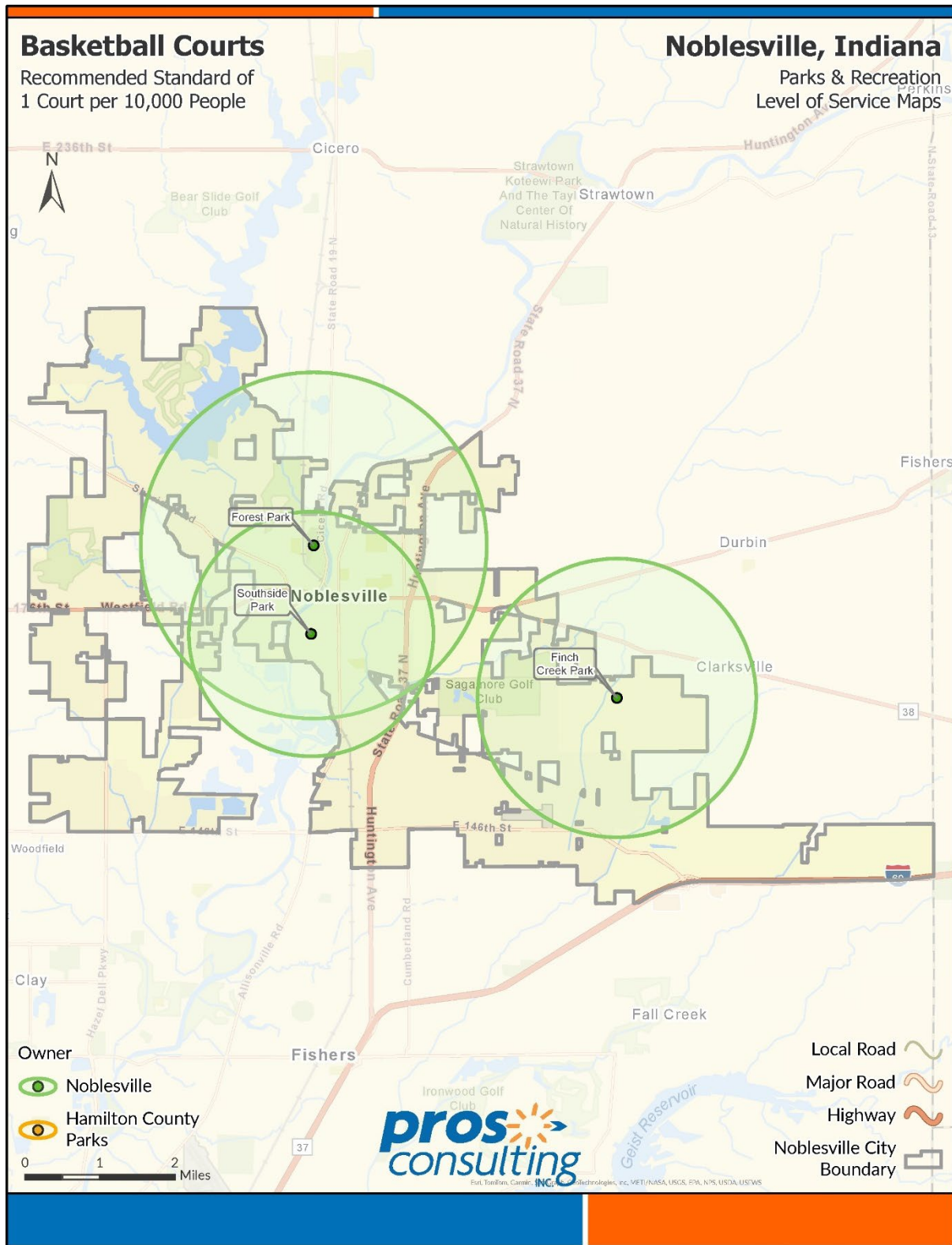
Map 14 - Rectangular Fields Service Area

4.5.15 BALL DIAMONDS SERVICE AREA



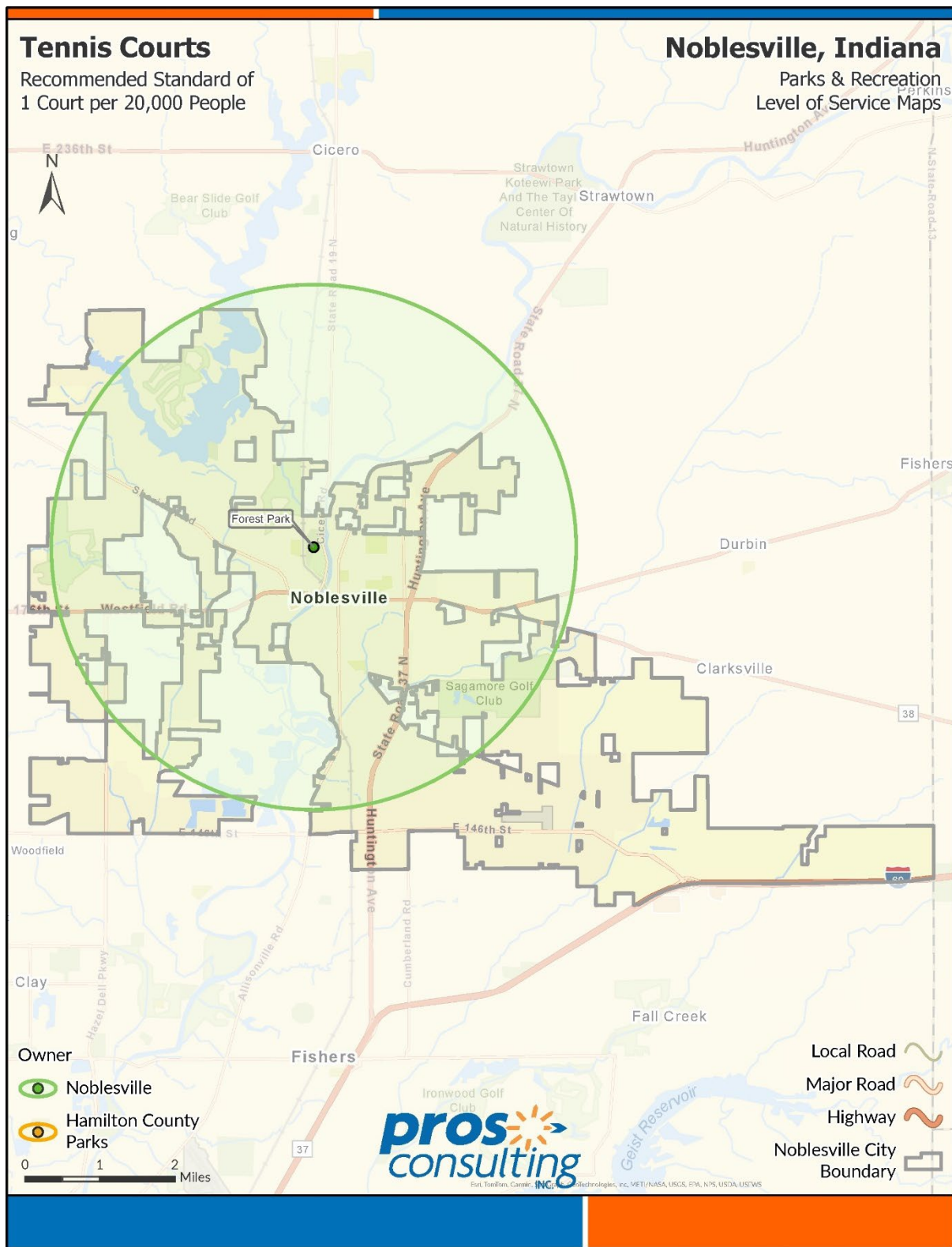
Map 15 - Ball Diamonds Service Area

4.5.16 BASKETBALL COURTS SERVICE AREA

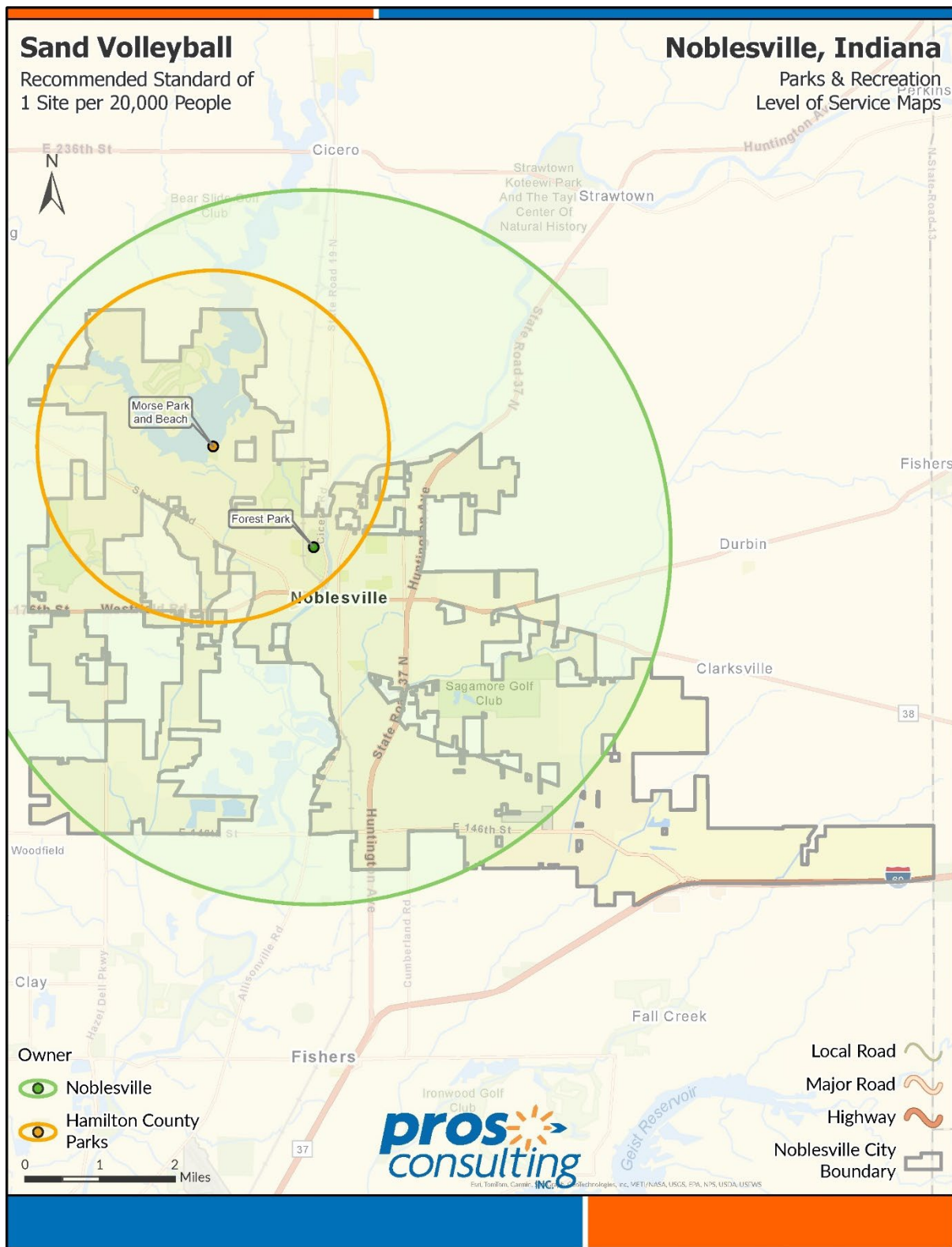


Map 16 - Basketball Courts Service Area

4.5.17 TENNIS COURTS SERVICE AREA

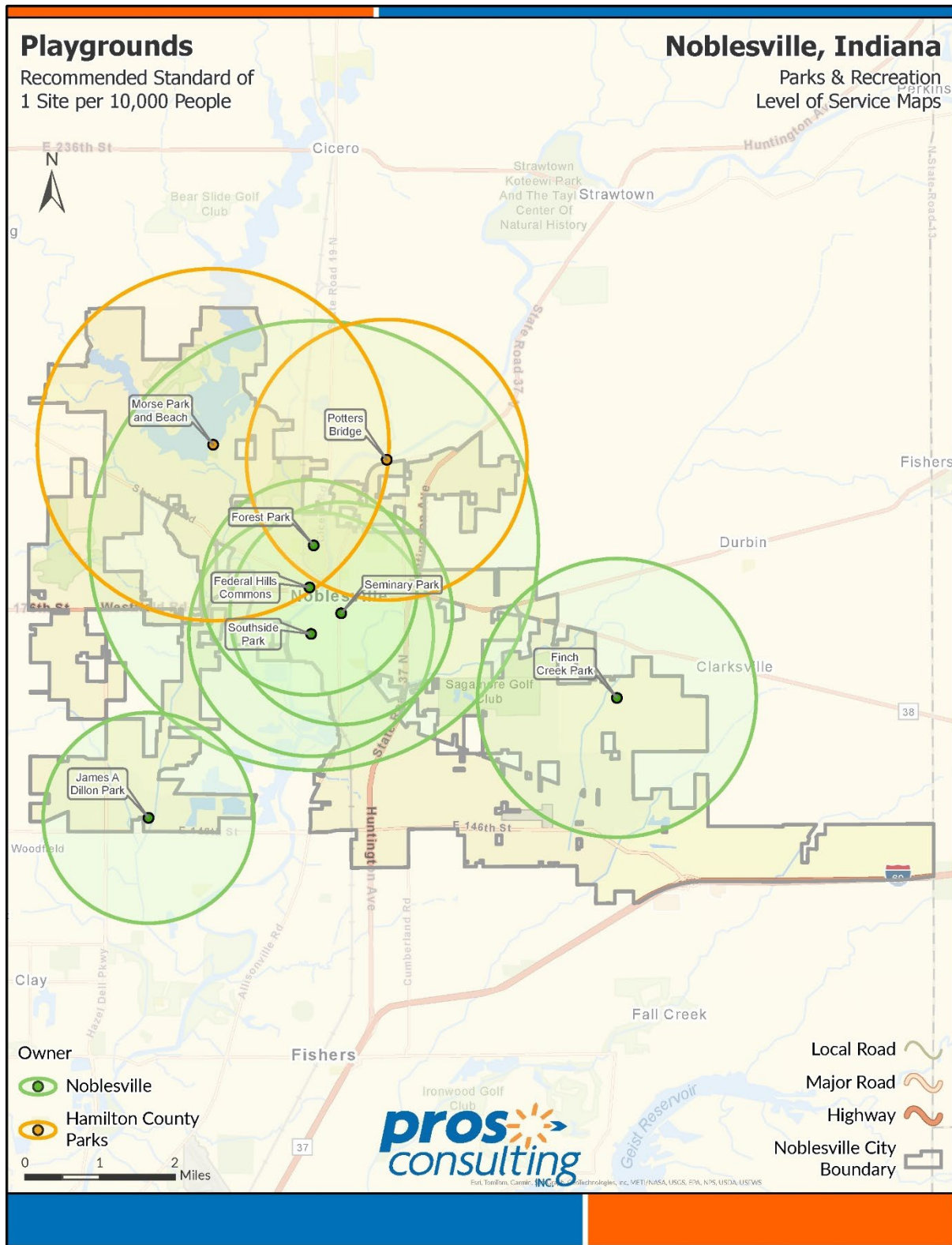


4.5.19 SAND VOLLEYBALL SERVICE AREA

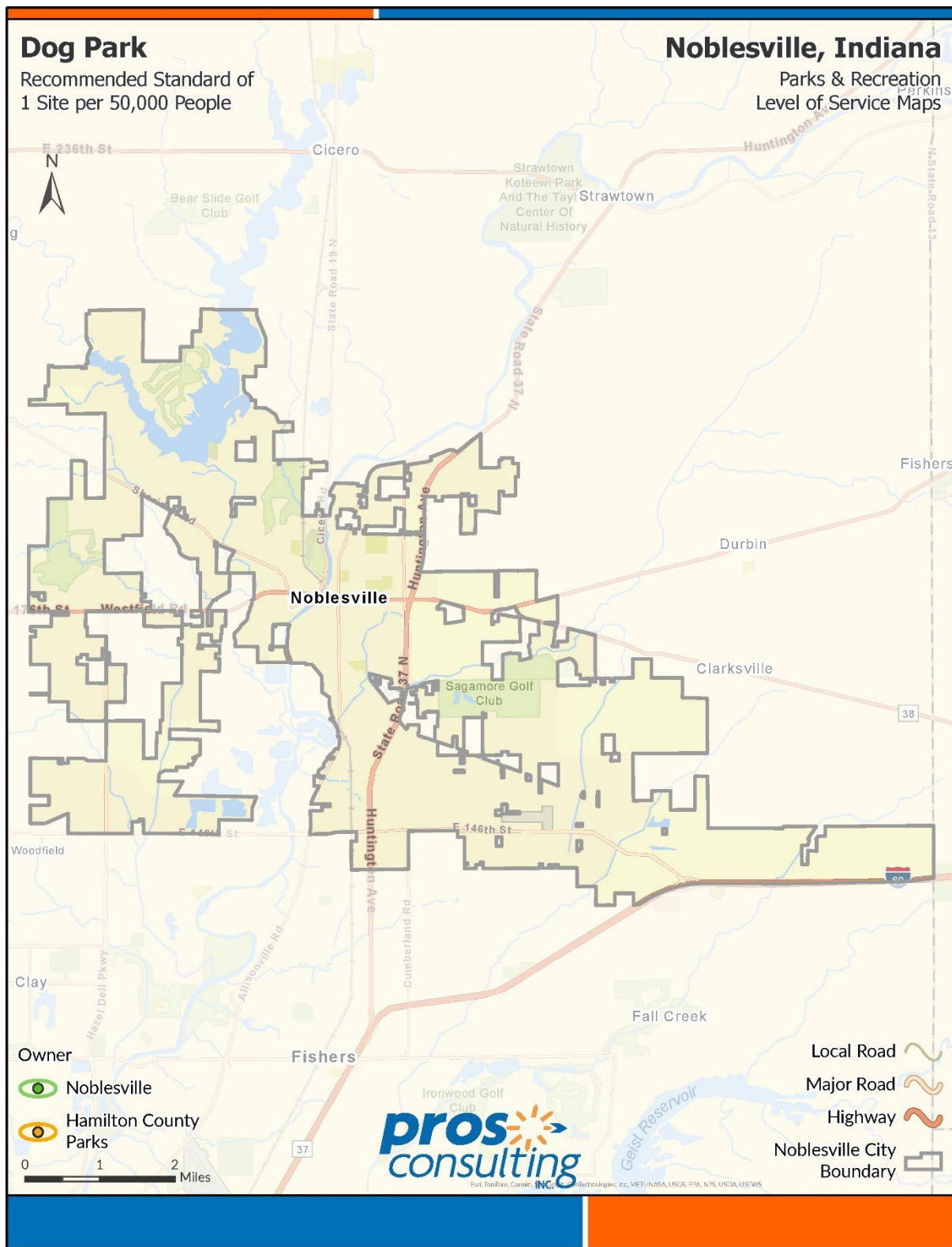


Map 19 - Sand Volleyball Courts Service Area

4.5.20 PLAYGROUNDS SERVICE AREA

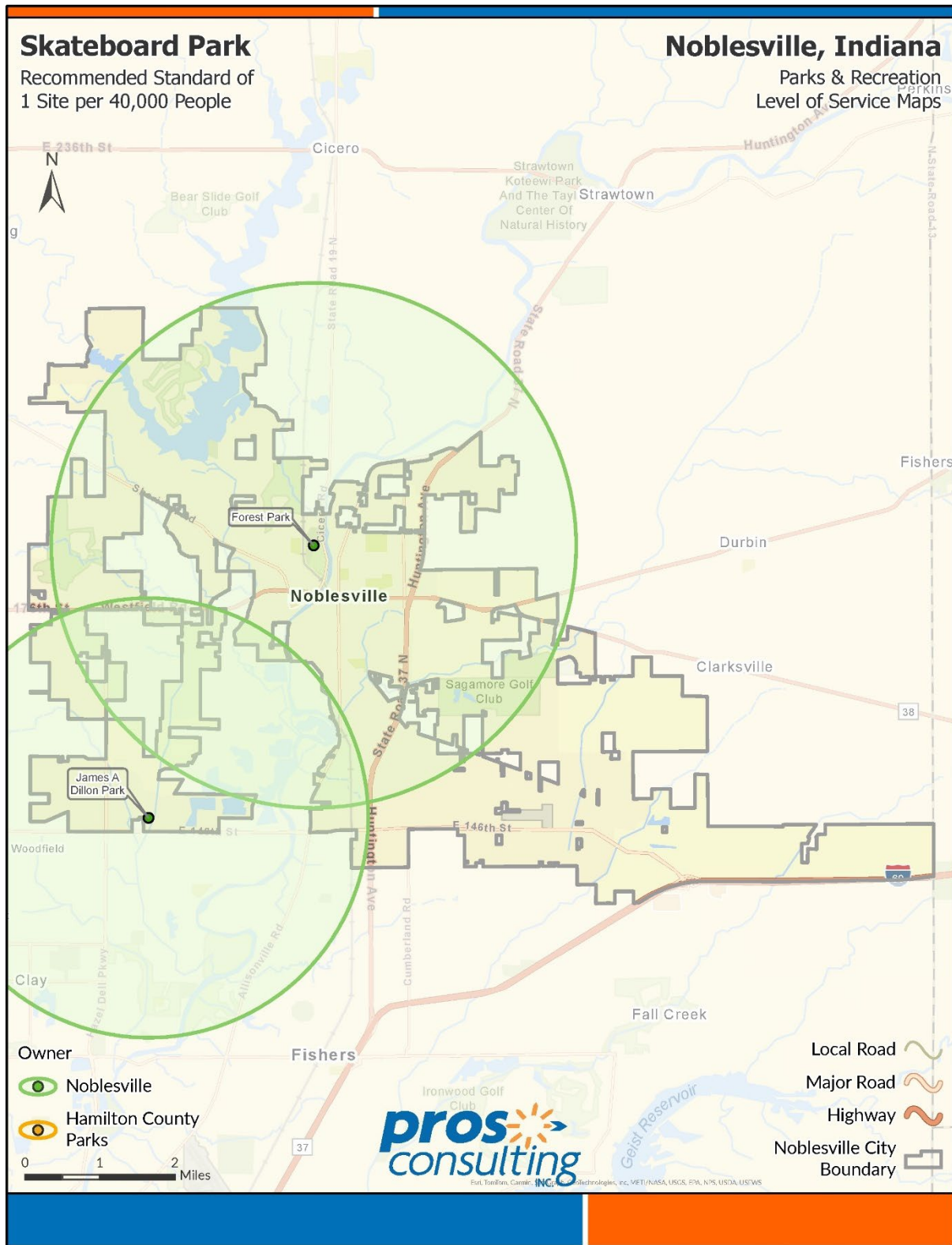


4.5.21 DOG PARK SERVICE AREA



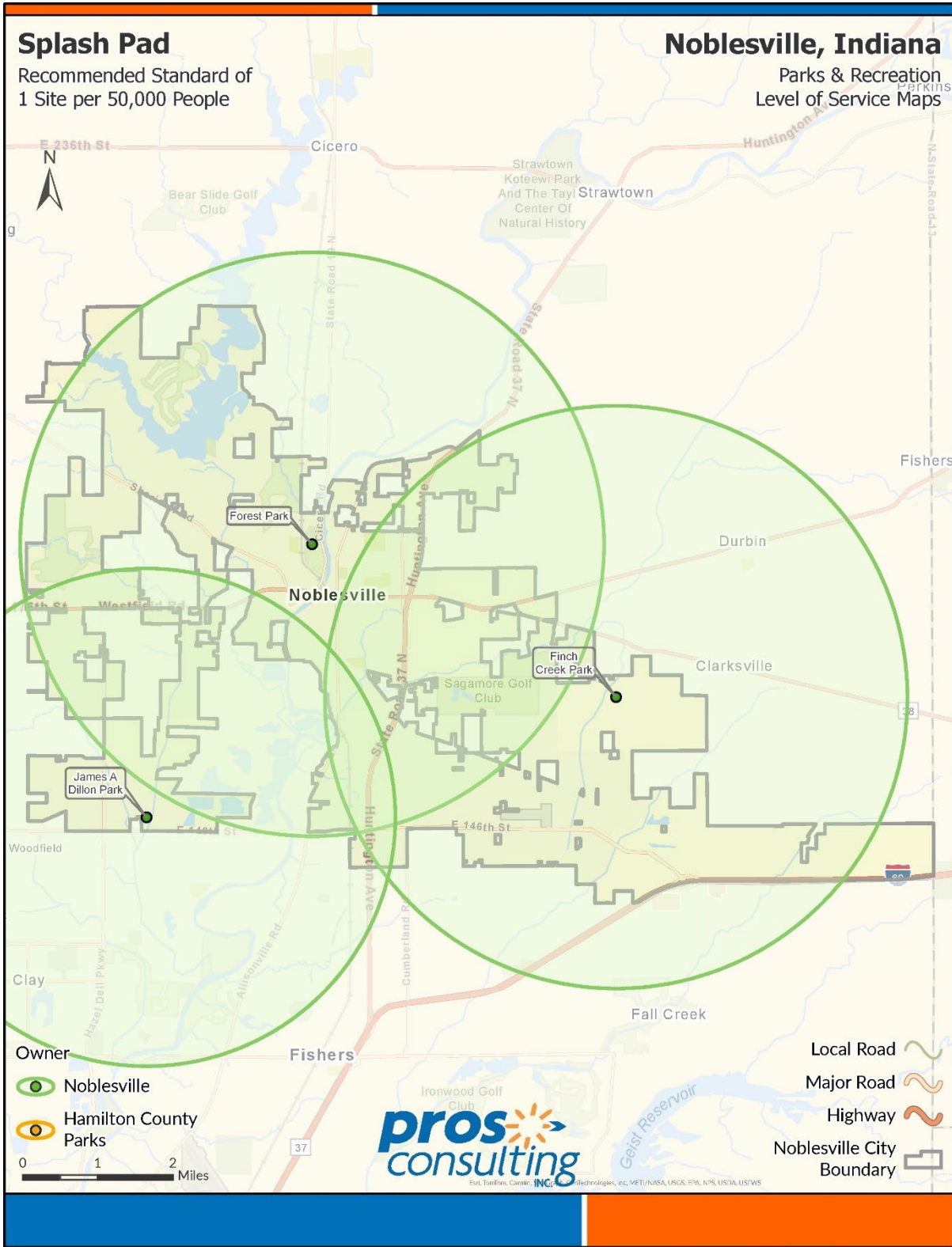
Map 21 - Dog Park Service Area

4.5.22 SKATEBOARD PARK SERVICE AREA



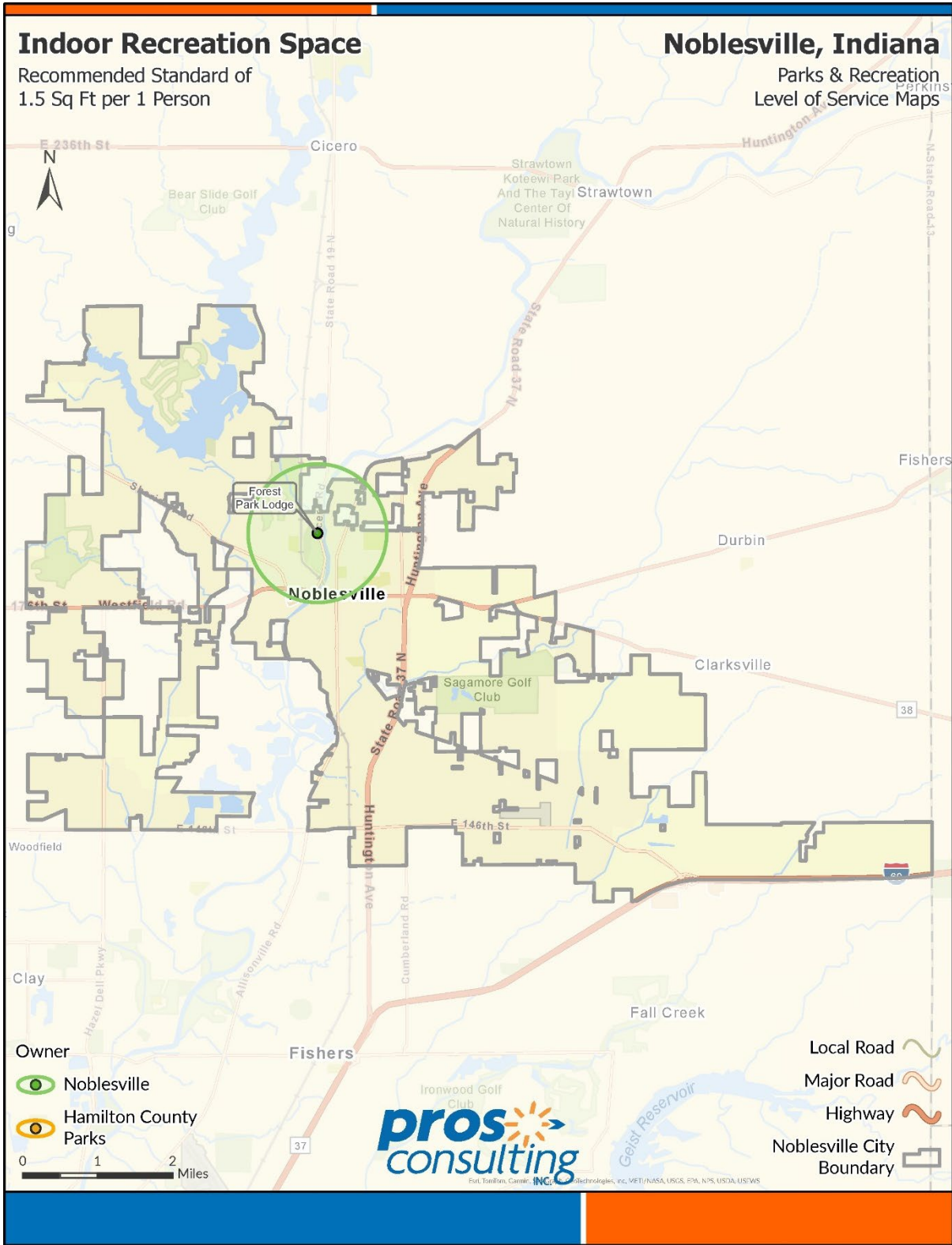
Map 22 - Skateboard Park Service Area

4.5.23 SPLASH PAD SERVICE AREA



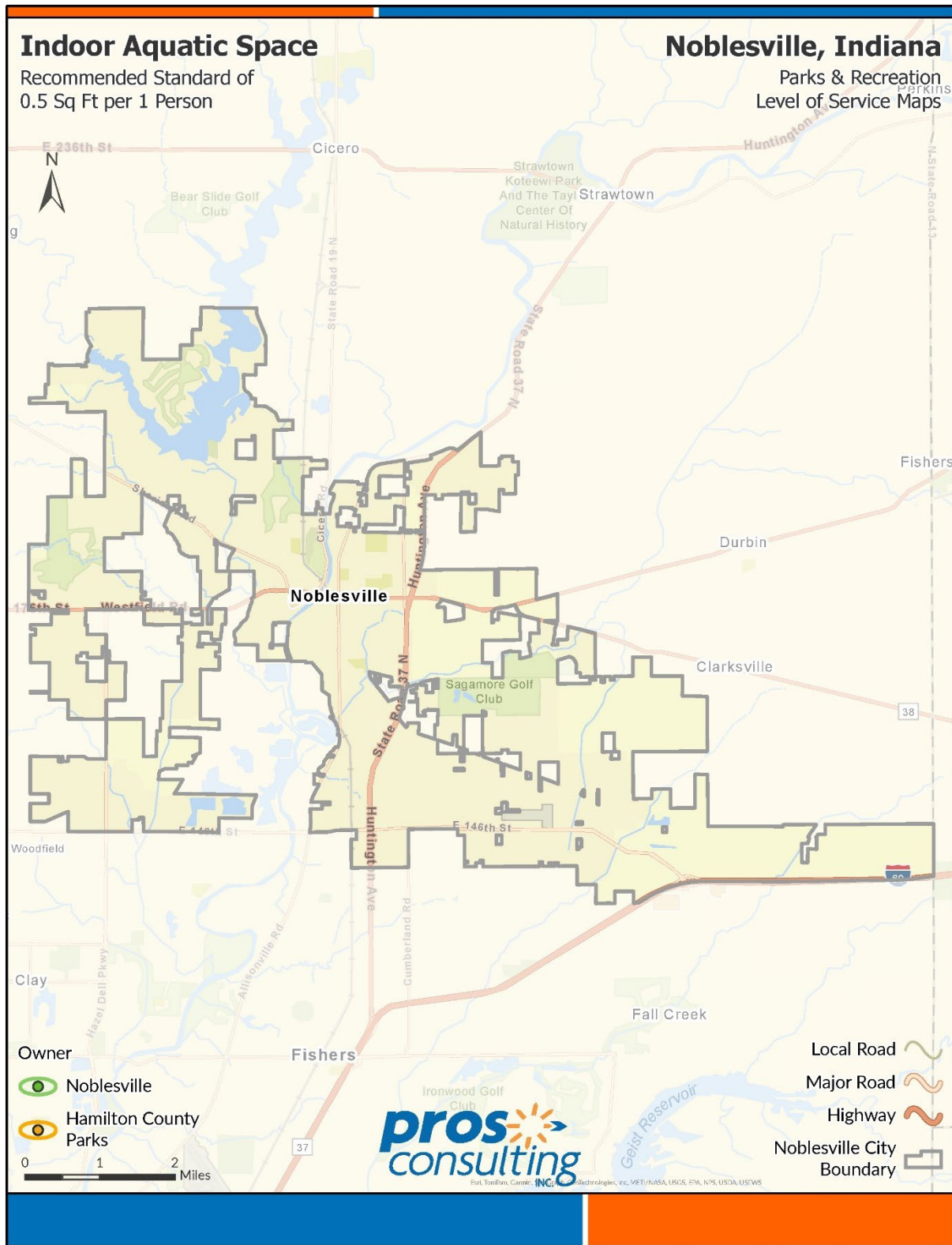
Map 23 - Splashpad Service Area

4.5.25 INDOOR RECREATION SPACE SERVICE AREA



Map 25 - Indoor Recreation Space Service Area

4.5.26 INDOOR AQUATIC SPACE SERVICE AREA



Map 26 - Indoor Aquatic Space Service Area

CHAPTER FIVE - RECREATION PROGRAM AND OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

A Program Assessment is a systematic and ongoing method of gathering, analyzing and using information from various sources about a program or service and measuring the outcomes in order to make improvements that align with community needs.

NPRD's program development process is a mix of in-house planning and contracted support, shaped by both current staff efforts and the transition from prior administration practices. Without prior statistically valid data on community needs, the department has relied on budget planning and creative brainstorming to design programs and events. Once ideas are identified, staff reach out to partners, sponsors, volunteers, and vendors to support implementation. The process includes outlining activity schedules, creating task and supply lists, and defining setup and teardown responsibilities to ensure smooth implementation. After each program and event, staff conduct recaps to evaluate successes and areas for improvement, which informs planning for future offerings. To improve efficiency, NPRD is placing more emphasis on defining programs and events a season ahead, with the goal of creating a more manageable and proactive program portfolio. This should continue with additional structure to create a program development process that is consistent for the Department.

NPRD programs are delivered across a variety of parks and facilities, though space limitations shape how offerings are implemented. Key outdoor locations include Federal Commons, Seminary Park, and park shelters at Forest and Dillon Parks, which support events and seasonal activities. Indoor programming is primarily housed at the Lodge at Forest Park, though its role as a rental venue limits consistent availability. Additional spaces such as the Green Room and Station 76 are used sparingly due to constraints like size and storage. For camps, NPRD partners with Mojo Up Fieldhouse and has begun expanding use of Finch Creek beyond just summer camp. Notably, schools are not currently utilized, which further narrows indoor options and reinforces the importance of partnerships and creative use of existing facilities.



5.1.1 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Conducting a program assessment as part of a parks and recreation master plan provides a picture of how well current offerings align with community needs, participation trends, and organizational goals. It helps identify strengths, such as programs that are thriving or filling critical gaps, while also uncovering underperforming services and potential duplication. By analyzing programs and services the assessment allows NPRD to make data-driven decisions about which programs to grow, modify, or phase out. It also connects program delivery to broader financial and operational strategies, ensuring that goals, staffing, and facility usage are aligned with the community's expectations. Most importantly, a program assessment ensures that recommendations in the master plan are rooted in community feedback, creating a roadmap that balances innovation, sustainability, and enables NPRD to maximize impact across all age groups and interests.

CORE PROGRAM AREAS

Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. To help reach this goal, it is important to identify Core Program Areas based on current and future needs to create a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. The philosophy of the Core Program Area assists staff, policy makers, and the public focus on what is most important. Program areas are considered as Core if they meet any one or more of the following categories:

- The program area has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.
- The program area consumes a relatively large portion (5% or more) of the agency's overall budget.
- The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- The program area has wide demographic appeal.
- There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program area's offerings.
- There is full-time staff responsible for the program area.
- There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.
- The agency controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.

EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREAS

Through discussions with the NPRD staff, three Core Program Areas were identified as currently being offered for recreation programs.

Parks and Recreation Core Program Areas		
Camps	Special Events	Youth Programs

CAMPS

Description: Camps are engaging and dynamic camp experiences that foster creativity, adventure, and personal growth through recreational and educational activities for all ages.

Goals:

- Provide safe, engaging, and inclusive camp experiences that support social, emotional, and physical development.
- Offer a variety of camp programs that cater to different interests, age groups, and abilities.
- Maintain high-quality, well-trained staff to ensure a positive and enriching environment for all participants.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Description: Special events are designed to bring the community together through memorable, inclusive, and family-friendly experiences that celebrate local culture, traditions, and seasonal activities.

Goals:

- Provide events for people of all ages to enjoy and to help create a sense of community by bringing people together.
- Provide events that help create a community that is safe and enjoyable to live in. Achieve full cost recovery for all events while providing events at low or no cost.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Description: Youth Programs are engaging and inclusive programs that provide recreational, educational, and social opportunities to support youth development.

Goals:

- Provide safe and enriching programs that promote social, emotional, and physical well-being.
- Offer diverse opportunities for skill-building, leadership, and personal growth.
- Ensure accessibility through affordable programming and financial assistance options.

AGE SEGMENTS

An Age Segment Analysis was conducted to review the who is served by different program areas and identify any gaps. It is recommended that staff perform an Age Segment Analysis by individual programs to further understand and tailor future offerings to community needs. Primary age segments served refers to the main or most important age groups that NPRD targets with its programs and services. Secondary age segments refers to additional age segments that programs and services may reach as a result of being offered but are not the primary target age segment.

NPRD Age Segments Served								
Core Program Area	Preschool (5 and Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18-34)	Adult (35-50)	Adult (51-69)	Adult (70+)	All Ages Programs
Camps	S	P						
Special Events	S	P	S	P	P	S	S	P
Youth Programs	S	P	S					

The NPRD age segment analysis shows that current programming is strongly centered on youth, with elementary-aged children receiving the most consistent emphasis across all core program areas. Special Events are the only Core Program Area with broad, multi-generational reach, serving all age segments. This indicates an imbalance in services across the lifespan. By broadening programs and services beyond youth NPRD can better balance its program portfolio and more fully meet the needs of the community. Partnering with local organizations that are providing services to teens, young adults, and older adults will be the best approach until NPRD has greater resources to take a lead role in providing for these age segments.

PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

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

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

For this exercise, the Department used a classification method based on three categories: Essential Services, Important Services, and Value-Added Services. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. The following graphic describes each of the three program classifications.

Core Classification

NPRD Must Provide; if it protects assets & infrastructure, is expected and supported, is a sound investment of public funds, is a broad public benefit, there is a negative impact if not provided, is part of the mission, and needs high to complete subsidy.

Enhanced Classification

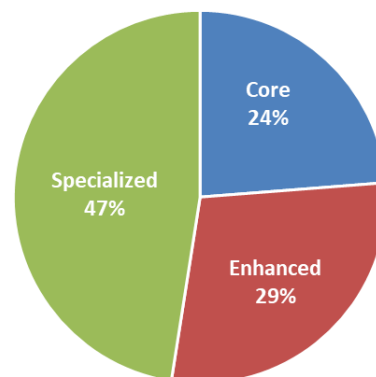
NPRD Should Provide; if it expands & enhances core services, is broadly supported & used, has conditional public support, there is a economic / social / environmental outcome to the community, has community importance, and needs moderate subsidy.

Specialized Classification

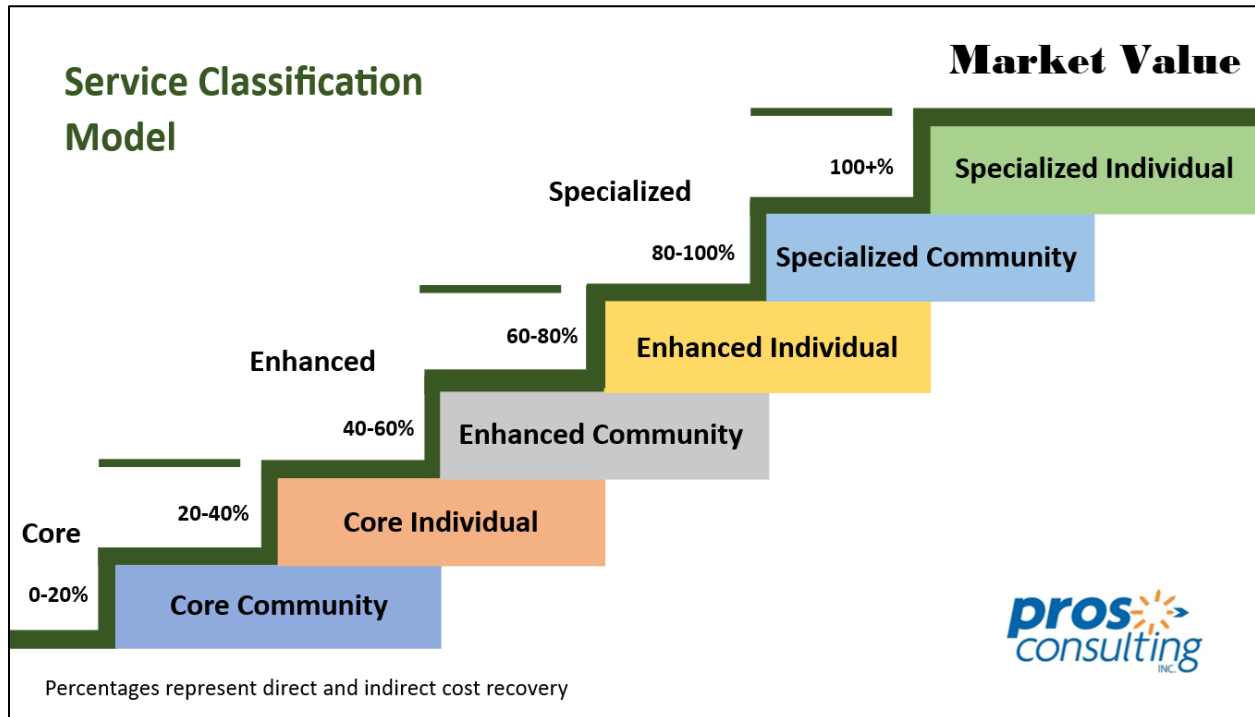
NPRD May Provide; with additional resources, it adds value to community, it supports Core & Important Services, it is supported by community, it generates income, has an individual benefit, can be supported by user fees, it enhances community, and requires little to no subsidy.

Core programs reflect high public expectation and provide broad community benefits such as health, safety, and access to services despite socioeconomic circumstances, often requiring public funding to remain accessible to all. Enhanced programs balance both public and individual benefits, covering some direct costs while still requiring support to ensure access where alternative providers are limited. Specialized programs are designed to meet the interests of specific individuals or groups, often in markets where other providers exist, and are expected to recover most costs through fees with limited public subsidy. This framework helps agencies clearly define the role of each program, prioritize resources, and ensure that services are delivered in a way that benefit all residents within the community, create financially sustainable, and ensure mission-driven outcomes. The NPRD program classification distribution shows a more individualized focus. For better mission alignment, NPRD may want to rebalance the distribution toward more core and enhanced offerings.

NPRD Program Classifications



As the Department continues to evolve to better meet the community's needs, there could be an added benefit to managing the services if they all were classified according to the Cost Recovery Service Classification Model depicted below based on the amount of community benefit versus individual benefit each program/ service provides.



COST OF SERVICE AND COST RECOVERY

The previously identified Core Program Areas would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics including administrative costs. Theoretically, staff should review how programs are grouped for similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to determine if current practices still meet management outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

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

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST-OF-SERVICE

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting needs to be created on each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these numbers are in place, and the Department's program staff should be trained on this process. A Cost-of-Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (i.e., program-specific) and indirect (i.e., comprehensive, including administrative

overhead) costs. Completing a Cost-of-Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program, but it also provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs. The figure below illustrates the common types of costs that must be accounted for in a Cost-of-Service Analysis.



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

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

Agencies use Cost-of-Service Analysis to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track cost recovery as well as to benchmark different programs provided by the Department between one another. Cost recovery goals are established once Cost-of-Service totals have been calculated. Program staff should be trained on the process of conducting a Cost-of-Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken on a regular basis.

PRICING STRATEGIES

To ensure access, financial sustainability, and market competitiveness, best practice pricing strategies can be applied to offset operational costs in delivering programs and services. This is especially during periods when operational costs are increasing. These strategies consider factors such as age, household status, and residency, allowing pricing to reflect user characteristics and encourage participation across demographics. Operational variables like day of the week, time of day, and location help align pricing with demand patterns and facility use. The following are best practices in pricing programs and services.

NPRD employs a multifaceted pricing strategy designed to balance access and financial sustainability across its programs and services. Currently, NPRD uses the following pricing strategies.

Best Practice Pricing Strategies	
Pricing Strategy	Description
Age Segment	Different prices offered for different ages
Bundle Pricing	Programs/ services are grouped together at a single, often discounted, price
By Competition (Market Rate)	Competitors' prices influence your price
By Cost Recovery Goals	Dept. cost recovery goals influence your price
By Customer's Ability to Pay	Scholarships, subsidies, discounted rates offered for low-income
By Location	Different prices at different locations
Family / Household Status	Different prices offered for family / household groups
Group Discounts	Different prices for groups
Introductory Pricing	Program/ service is offered at a lower price for a limited time when it's first launched
Prime / Non-Prime Time	Different prices for different times of the day
Residency	Different prices for resident vs non-resident
Subscription/ Member Pricing	Pay a recurring fee at regular intervals (i.e., memberships, member/ non-member)
Weekday / Weekend	Different prices for different days of the week

It is important to note the following pricing strategies and how they contribute to NPRD and its ability to adapt and align with community needs:

NPRD Pricing Strategies Implemented							
Core Program Area	Age Segment	Residency	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recovery Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Camps		X		X		X	X
Youth Programs	X	X			X	X	
Special Events		X	X			X	

- Fees structured by residency-based pricing offers discounted rates for residents, recognizing their tax contributions
- Benchmarking by competition helps remain competitive with market rates and avoid undercutting alternative providers
- Pricing with cost recovery goals sets fees to help offset expenses without placing undue burden on users.
- A customer's ability to pay ensures that financial barriers do not prevent community members from accessing essential recreation opportunities.

PROGRAM LIFECYCLE

Recreation programs naturally move through a lifecycle that reflects how community interest, participation levels, and market conditions evolve over time. Introductory programs typically begin with modest participation as awareness builds, followed by a take-off stage where interest grows rapidly. As programs gain traction, they enter a growth phase marked by steady, consistent participation before reaching maturity, where growth slows but demand remains stable. Eventually, programs may enter saturation, with minimal new growth and increased competition, and then move into decline as participation drops. Some programs may ultimately become a “no go” stage and be cancelled altogether as interest is not enough and NPRD should no longer offer. Understanding these lifecycles is essential for agencies to make proactive decisions about program development, marketing, resource allocation, and when to refresh or retire offerings to ensure long-term relevance and continue positive community impacts.

Lifecycle Stage	Description	Actual Program Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New program; modest participation	35%	65%	50-60% total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	13%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent population growth	17%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	9%	9%	40% total
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	13%	22%	0-10% total
Decline	Decline participation	9%		
No Go	Cancelled Programs	4%	4%	

The NPRD program lifecycle distribution reflects a healthy focus on innovation, with 65% of programs in the early to mid-stages of Introduction, Take-Off, and Growth, aligning well with the recommended 50–60%. However, the distribution shows 22% of offerings in Saturation and Decline, above the recommended 0–10%, indicating some programs are decreasing in relevance or facing heavy competition from alternate providers. NPRD should focus on critically evaluating saturated and declining programs for revitalization or retirement to ensure long-term balance and continued positive impact.

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Ancillary Services are additional services to the main line of business that enhance or support the agencies main line of business. In parks and recreation agencies, these are typically non-programmatic services that are provided to the public such as shelter rentals, venue rentals and special use facilities. The following are NPRD’s ancillary services and the analysis period is defined as Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2024.

The NPRD ancillary services data reveals a mix of growth areas and challenges across offerings. Tom Thumb Mini Golf participation has remained above 4,000 participants, but revenue declined by 3%, suggesting pricing adjustments or spending per visit may be lagging. Concessions at the Carousel/Mini Golf have grown by 22% in revenue since fiscal year 2022, highlighting a significant increase in 2023 and decrease in 2024 while still being above FY 2022. Conversely, the Carousel experienced significant decline in 2024, with participation dropping 81% and revenue falling 75% since FY22, raising concerns about its long-term viability or operational constraints.

Pickleball has seen explosive growth, with participation up 177% and revenues climbing 47%, reflecting national trends and high local demand. Similarly, the Ice Rink continues to perform strongly, with participation up 46% and revenue increasing by 39%, underscoring its role as a key revenue generator. Meanwhile, Holiday Carriage Rides saw a 29% decline in participation and 28% drop in revenue, suggesting limited scalability or waning interest in this seasonal activity.

Rental services remain stable revenue drivers. Indoor Venue Rentals posted a modest 3% gain, while Outdoor Venue Rentals increased by 18%, showing continued interest in spaces for private events. Overall, NPRD's ancillary services portfolio is buoyed by the success of emerging activities like pickleball and strong staples like the ice rink and rentals, but areas such as the carousel and carriage rides may require reevaluation.

Ancillary Services				
Services	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	Difference (%)
Tom Thumb Mini Golf				
Total Participation	4,727	5,586	4,895	4%
Revenue	\$ 15,237.02	\$ 17,573.84	\$ 14,774.69	-3%
Concessions @ Carousel/Mini Golf				
Total Participation	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Revenue	\$ 8,097.63	\$ 12,302.52	\$ 9,867.58	22%
Carousel				
Total Participation	10,793	12,499	2,037	-81%
Revenue	\$ 24,078.94	\$ 27,687.88	\$ 5,913.51	-75%
Pickleball				
Total Participation	1,332	3,293	3,689	177%
Revenue	\$ 17,085.80	\$ 18,913.00	\$ 25,064.00	47%
Ice Rink (Jan-Dec)				
Total Participation	3,758	5,137	5,470	46%
Revenue	\$ 53,431.00	\$ 58,066.00	\$ 74,306.00	39%
Holiday Carriage Rides (Jan-Dec)				
Total Participation	109	77	77	-29%
Revenue	\$ 11,200.00	\$ 6,603.00	\$ 8,075.00	-28%
Indoor Venue Rentals				
Total Participation	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Revenue	\$ 100,857.94	\$ 99,384.62	\$ 103,617.62	3%
Outdoor Venue Rentals				
Total Participation	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Revenue	\$ 46,241.96	\$ 51,639.24	\$ 54,414.06	18%

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) TRACKING

NPRD understands the need to track the data it creates from service delivery. They track KPIs to better inform decision making for the program portfolio. Currently, the following is tracked for programs and events:

- Total Participation
- Total Revenue
- Program Cancellations are documented
- Demographic information.
- Partners with the County to use Placer AI on events.

HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES

NPRD integrates Human Resources practices to support high-quality service delivery and operational excellence across its programs and facilities. Staff receive foundational training that includes the services identified in the following table.

NPRD Human Resources Practices
Consistently update policies & procedures
Lesson plans
Customer service training
Basic life safety training (ex. CPR, First Aid)
Specialty skill training
Continuing education
Diversity training
Performance reviews; full-time
Performance reviews; part-time
Performance reviews; seasonal

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Currently, NPRD utilizes the following to gain insight into customer perceptions:

- Post-program surveys
- Non-customer/non-user surveys
- Focus groups
- Statistically valid surveys
- Public/Community Meetings

MARKETING

NPRD currently manages its marketing in-house, with most efforts led by staff to fill a critical gap in promoting programs and events. The Department uses a mix of platforms, supported by a content calendar that guide priority messaging. Recent efforts focus on using real photos of community members rather than heavy graphics to better tell the department's story and build authenticity. NPRD has also hired a staff member with a marketing background and works with a city photographer to capture high-quality images, though a full year of consistent content has not yet been completed. While CivicRec is used for email communication, challenges exist when participants opt out of messages and miss program updates, prompting a need to evaluate whether a different system could improve outreach. Going forward, NPRD should formalize its marketing strategy, clearly define how each method will be used, and consider dedicating a full-time position to support consistent, effective communications. The marketing methods used by NPRD (Right).

NPRD Marketing Methods Used
Program guides (online)
Website
Smart/mobile phone enabled site
Flyers and/or brochures
Email blasts and/or listserv
Newsletters (print)
In-facility signage
Facebook
Instagram
QR Codes

5.1.2 ALIGNING WITH COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

NPRD's current core program areas include camps, special events, and youth programs, which provide a strong foundation of services but also highlight opportunities to better align with community priorities.

The statistically valid survey indicates that residents place high value on expanding adult fitness and wellness programs, senior programs, and water-based activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and water fitness, which are areas not currently in NPRD's program portfolio mix. While special events already align with one of the community's top priorities (PIR = 138.3), other highly ranked needs such as nature programs, outdoor adventure, arts and crafts, and tennis/pickleball show gaps between what residents are asking for and what is currently being provided.



To better align with community needs, NPRD should continue building on the popularity of special events while strategically expanding into underrepresented program areas. This includes developing more adult and senior offerings, incorporating fitness, wellness, and outdoor adventure activities, and diversifying youth and family programs to include arts, cultural, and nature-based opportunities. Doing so will balance the department's current youth-centric focus with a broader, better serving portfolio that reflects resident priorities and strengthens lifelong engagement in parks and recreation services.

NPRD Program Alignment Matrix		
Community Priority Program	PIR Score	Current NPRD Program Alignment
Adult fitness and wellness programs	200	The highest priority rating, not currently aligned
Special events	138.3	Provided as a Core Program Area; Resident supported as they have wide segment appeal
Nature programs	134.4	Not currently aligned
Canoeing and kayaking	128.8	Not currently aligned
Outdoor Adventure	116.6	Not currently aligned
Senior programs	108.3	Not currently aligned
Travel and tourism	106.7	Not currently aligned
Water fitness programs	104.9	Not currently aligned
Youth and adult arts/crafts programs	102.5	Not currently aligned
Tennis/pickleball lessons and leagues	101	Partially aligned (pickleball growth; tennis not offered)

5.1.3 OPERATIONAL STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The program assessment considers both the strengths and challenges of NPRD's current recreation program portfolio to provide a balanced understanding of how services are delivered and where improvements are needed. Recognizing these internal factors is essential, as they directly influence the department's ability to meet community needs, adapt to changing expectations, and manage resources effectively. By evaluating what supports success alongside the barriers that limit growth, the assessment establishes a foundation for strategic recommendations that will guide future program development, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure long-term sustainability. The following are the identified strengths and challenges.

NPRD Program & Service Delivery Strengths and Challenges	
Strengths	Challenges
Strong community participation in events	Limited access to facilities due to youth sports providers
Leadership support for recreation	Limited knowledge of past practices (new staff)
Reasonably priced programming	Need stronger marketing and photography
Commitment to continuous improvement	Lack of contractor/partner network, especially arts; limited space/storage
Partnerships and sponsorships pursued	Scheduling conflicts due to limited space
Passionate and innovative staff	Only two staff running programs, limiting capacity
	Need to build stronger professional networks
	Unreliable volunteers; need formalized process
	Cost recovery planning underdeveloped



5.1.4 KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Based on the detailed assessment of NPRD programs and services, the following key areas should remain in focus while delivering services to residents to ensure quality, sustainability, and alignment with community needs:

NPRD Key Areas of Focus	
Focus Area	Potential Strategies
Expand Adult Fitness and Wellness Programs	Offer low-cost fitness classes in parks; partner with local gyms/ health organizations to provide creative packages/ discounts.
Increase Senior Programs	Introduce senior wellness/social programs with senior and health organization partnerships.
Develop Nature Programs	Host guided hikes, nature education, and family-friendly nature activities. Partner with IDNR or Hamilton County Naturalist
Introduce Canoeing, Kayaking, and Water Fitness	Partner with outfitters for canoe/ kayak dry land classes and excursions; expand water fitness at local facilities.
Add Outdoor Adventure Opportunities	Introduce outdoor skills workshops, climbing/ obstacle programs, adventure races.
Broaden Youth and Family Arts & Cultural Programs	Offer family art events, seasonal workshops, partnerships with local artists and use flooring protectant in Forest Park Lodge.
Support Tennis and Pickleball Growth	Expand open play, clinics, and leagues; partner with local gymnasium and clubs.
Strengthen Special Events	Enhance and formalize sponsorship opportunities with a program that is promoted by the City and create promotional content; add themed/seasonal events.
Formalize Volunteer Program	Develop structured volunteer program through Park Foundation.
Enhance Marketing and Communication	Define parks and recreation specific marketing plan; use real photos, social media, and recreation guide.
Improve Cost Recovery Planning	Adopt cost recovery policy; align pricing with service classification and set annual cost recovery goals.
Evaluate Saturated and Declining Programs	Phase out low-demand programs; retool saturated and declining programs through participant surveys
Strengthen Partnerships and Sponsorships	Formalize sponsorship/partnership agreements with ROI requirements using best practices.

5.2 OPERATIONAL REVIEW

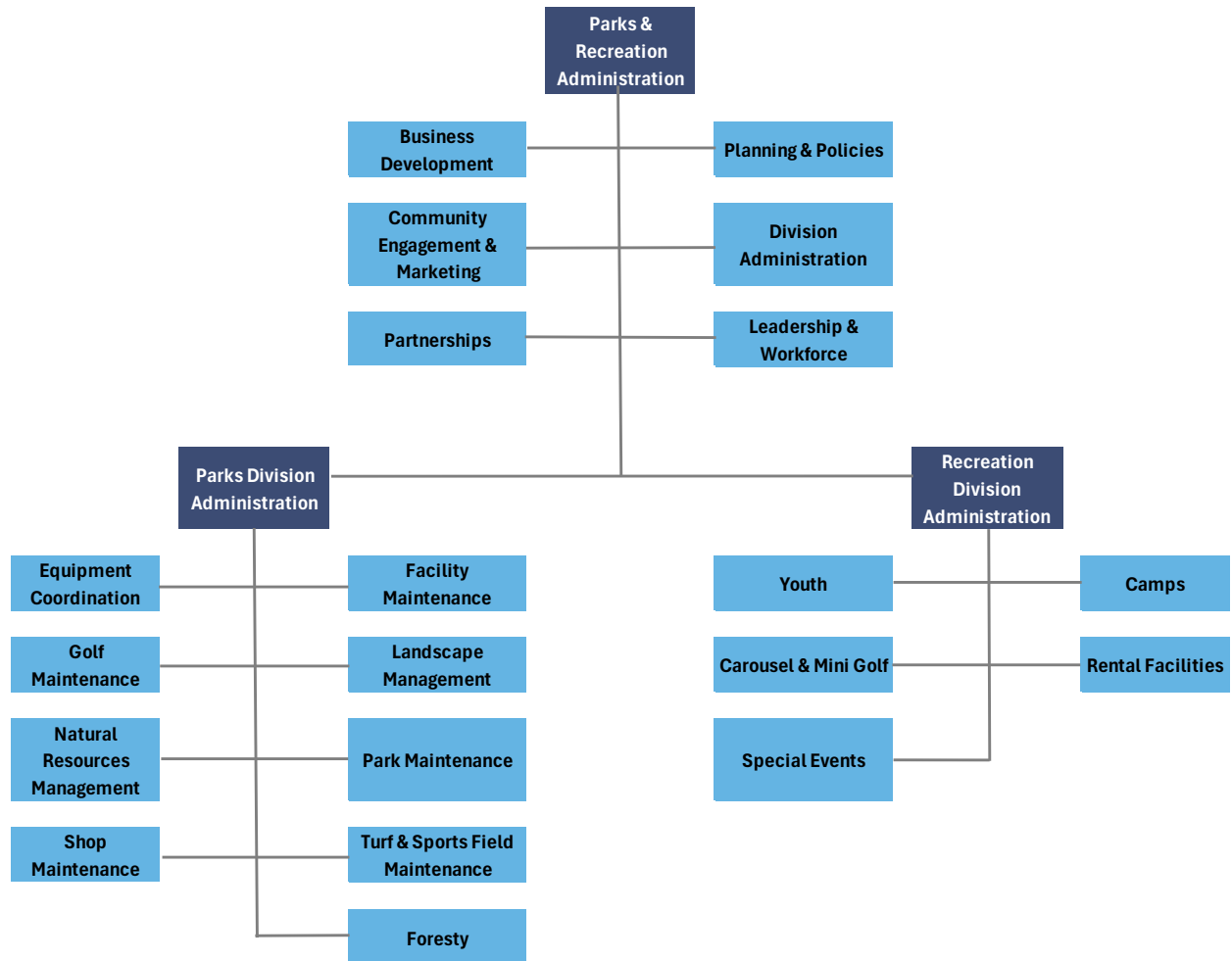
Noblesville Parks & Recreation (NPRD) plays a vital role in supporting the quality of life, health, and community identity of the City of Noblesville. From historic Forest Park to the modern amenities of Finch Creek Park, the Department provides far more than parks and playgrounds; it delivers the spaces, programs, and experiences where the community comes together. NPRD is the steward of more than 1,000 acres of developed and undeveloped parkland, almost 20 miles of trails and greenways, seven developed parks, two golf courses, and a wide range of recreational facilities. NPRD is responsible for maintaining a diverse and growing system that serves residents of all ages while preserving the City's natural and cultural assets.

This Operations and Maintenance Review examines how NPRD supports the system through its people, practices, and resources. Guided by its mission to enhance quality of life, NPRD must balance day-to-day operational demands with long-term sustainability, system growth, and evolving community expectations. This review provides a comprehensive look at current operations and maintenance practices to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities to support a safe, welcoming, and well-maintained parks and recreation system for current and future generations.



5.2.1 DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

NPRD is organized around a functional structure designed to clearly align leadership, operations, and service delivery across an expanding parks and recreation system. This structure supports accountability, specialization, and coordination between administrative leadership, parks operations, and recreation services, ensuring that day-to-day maintenance needs and community-facing programs are delivered efficiently and consistently.



5.2.2 DEPARTMENT MAJOR FUNCTIONS

PARKS & RECREATION ADMINISTRATION

At the department-wide level, Parks & Recreation Administration provides strategic direction, policy guidance, and organizational oversight. Core functions within this area include Business Development, Planning & Policies, Community Engagement & Marketing, Division Administration, Partnerships, and Leadership & Workforce Development. Together, these functions guide long-term planning, fiscal sustainability, workforce readiness, policy compliance, and community relationships. This administrative structure supports both internal operations and external engagement, ensuring the Department remains responsive to community needs while maintaining professional standards and operational discipline.

PARKS DIVISION ADMINISTRATION

Parks Division Administration oversees the stewardship, maintenance, and operational integrity of Noblesville's parks, trails, golf courses, natural areas and site amenities. This division encompasses several highly specialized sub-functions critical to maintaining a safe, attractive, and sustainable park system. Facility Maintenance addresses buildings, shelters, restrooms, and park infrastructure, while Park Maintenance and Landscape Management focus on grounds care, horticulture, and aesthetics across developed parks. Turf & Sports Field Maintenance ensures high-quality playing surfaces for athletic use, and Forestry supports tree health, canopy management, and risk mitigation throughout the system.

Additional operational support functions include Equipment Coordination and Shop Maintenance, which manage fleet, tools, and mechanical operations necessary for efficient fieldwork. Natural Resources Management emphasizes environmental stewardship, habitat protection, and sustainable land management practices, while Golf Maintenance supports course conditions and playability at Noblesville's golf facilities. Collectively, these functions represent the backbone of the Department's operations and maintenance responsibilities.

RECREATION DIVISION ADMINISTRATION

Recreation Division Administration is responsible for program planning, service delivery, and facility-based experiences that activate parks and public spaces. Core program areas include Youth Programs, Camps, Special Events, Carousel & Mini Golf, and Rental Facilities. These functions provide structured recreational opportunities, seasonal programming, and community events that serve residents of all ages and contribute to Noblesville's identity as an active and connected community. Coordination within this division ensures consistent customer service, safe operations, and effective use of facilities while supporting revenue generation and community access.



5.2.3 PLANS, POLICIES & STANDARDS MANAGEMENT

PLANS

The Department demonstrates strong progress in long-range and physical planning, with a newly updated Master Plan (2025) and Trails and Greenways Plan (2025) providing a solid strategic and connectivity framework. Site Development Plans are in place to guide capital improvements at the park level, and the Emergency Action Plan is covered through a city-wide framework. However, several operationally focused plans remain under development or fragmented. Business plans, a standalone Recreation Plan, a comprehensive Marketing Plan, and a fully integrated Maintenance Management Plan are not yet formalized, though many of these elements are being addressed through the ongoing operational analysis and program assessment. Collectively, this indicates a system that is well-positioned strategically, but still transitioning toward more comprehensive, department-specific operational and service delivery planning. As part of this transition, NPRD is interested in seeking Accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. CAPRA Accreditation is the national standard for excellence in park and recreation management, which is a rigorous, peer-reviewed process ensuring agencies meet high standards for operations, services, and accountability to the public.

Noblesville Parks and Recreation Documented Plans			
Plans	Yes	No	Notes
Master Plan	X		
Business Plans		X	Operational Analysis is currently underway
Recreation Plan		X	Program Assessment is a component
Marketing Plan		X	City has several components of a plan individually
Site Development Plans	X		
Maintenance Management Plan		X	Has several components and Ops review will identify gaps
Trails and Greenways Plan	X		Original Plan in 2020
Emergency Action Plan	X		City-wide Plan

POLICIES

Core administrative and operational policies are largely in place, including purchasing, pricing, refunds, cost recovery, facility use, volunteer engagement, and sponsorships, many of which are supported through city-wide policies. Notably, partnership and sponsorship policies are actively being refined, signaling a growing emphasis on external collaboration and revenue diversification. Several policy gaps remain, particularly in land management, land acquisition and use, and park-specific special event policies. Additionally, naming rights decisions are handled on a case-by-case basis rather than through a formal policy and promotion, which can create inconsistency. Overall, the policy framework provides a functional foundation but would benefit from clearer alignment and formalization in key operational areas that are required by CAPRA Standards.

Noblesville Parks and Recreation Documented Policies			
Policies	Yes	No	Notes
Park Rules & Regulations ordinance and enforcement Policy	X		Rules exist, but not actually part of code enforcement currently.
Land Acquisition & Use Policy		X	City does have this.
Land Management Policy		X	
Purchasing Policy	X		City-wide
Pricing Policy	X		
Refund Policy	X		
Cost Recovery Policy		X	
Facility Use Policy		X	
Partnership Policy		X	City-wide in progress
Sponsorship Policy	X		City-wide – being combined with partnership – in progress
Volunteer Policy		X	
Special Event Policy (outside orgs.)	X		Only applies if you are closing a street. No specific park event policy.
Memorial Policy – Memorial Tree and Bench Policy/ Program	X		
Communications Process (social media, lead time, methods, review/approval of materials)		X	Regular communication channels
Other – Naming Rights Policy		X	Case-by-case basis

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Standards and procedures represent the greatest opportunity for advancement and will assist in achieving CAPRA Accreditation. While city-wide standards exist for marketing, onboarding, and brand identity, many department-specific standards such as recreation program development, program quality assurance, maintenance standards, facility standards, and marketing procedures are either informal or still in development. Camps stand out as a strength, with American Camp Association (ACA) standards actively guiding operations. Cash handling procedures are well established as mandated by the State of Indiana. Performance evaluations and training standards are partially implemented, primarily for full-time staff and camps, leaving gaps for part-time and seasonal employees. As staff continue to develop park-level maintenance and facility standards, the Department has an opportunity to move from high-level guidance to consistent, documented procedures that support accountability, workforce development, and long-term operational excellence.

Noblesville Parks and Recreation Documented Policies			
Standards/Procedures	Yes	No	Notes
Recreation Program Development		X	Included in program assessment
Recreation Program Standards		X	Except Camps are working through ACA accreditation and those standards are implemented.
Parks and Recreation Employee Handbook / Manual (Fulltime, Pt, Seasonal)	X		Just the City. A supplement
Maintenance Standards		X	Staff are developing forms for each park – High level to move into more detail.
Facility Standards		X	Same as above
Marketing Standards & Brand Style Guide	X		City-wide
Office Standard Operating Procedures		X	Cash handling procedures have been in place.
Marketing Procedures	X		Not formalized
Performance Evaluation Procedure	X		Full-time and part time staff
Onboarding Procedure	X		City-wide
Training Standards (annual calendar, inhouse, specialty)		X	In development for all, but in place for camps.

5.3 DEPARTMENT FOCUS GROUPS

An operational review of NPRD was conducted to assess current practices and identify opportunities to strengthen service delivery as the system evolves. With a focus on enhancing positive guest experiences, the review explored what NPRD can continue to build on and where change may be needed to meet community expectations. The process included data review, on-site observations, focus groups and a S.W.O.T. analysis focused on key areas of operational capacity.

The key areas of operational capacity provide a framework for evaluating and strengthening how NPRD functions. These areas include Processes, Management, Resources, Technology, and Communications. They represent the essential components needed to deliver effective and efficient services. Together, they support the achievement of strategic goals, guide decision-making, and ensure the agency can adapt to changing community needs while maintaining high standards of service delivery.

<u>Processes</u>	<u>Management</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Technology</u>	<u>Communications</u>
A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve outcomes identified through approved plans, policies, and standards for parks and recreation services	The organization, coordination, and supervision of all business activities in a park and recreation agency to achieve defined outcomes	A stock or supply of money, inventory, staff, information, and other assets in a parks and recreation agency that can be utilized in order to function effectively	The application of software, devices, tools and equipment for practical parks and recreation purposes, especially to increase efficiency	The internal and external exchange of information regarding parks and recreation operations, promoting services, and capital projects

5.3.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The operations and maintenance review highlights a dedicated, highly skilled, and collaborative workforce that is successfully maintaining a growing and increasingly complex park system but is operating at or beyond its sustainable capacity. Staff demonstrate strong teamwork, flexibility, and a “can-do” culture, routinely pulling together across crews to address routine maintenance, emergency response, and visible community identified needs. The Department benefits from diverse skill sets, newer equipment that is generally kept operational through thoughtful lifecycle replacement, and a willingness to train staff on the job. However, these strengths are being stretched by continued system expansion, limited staffing, and insufficient facilities and tools to proactively manage assets rather than react to daily demands.

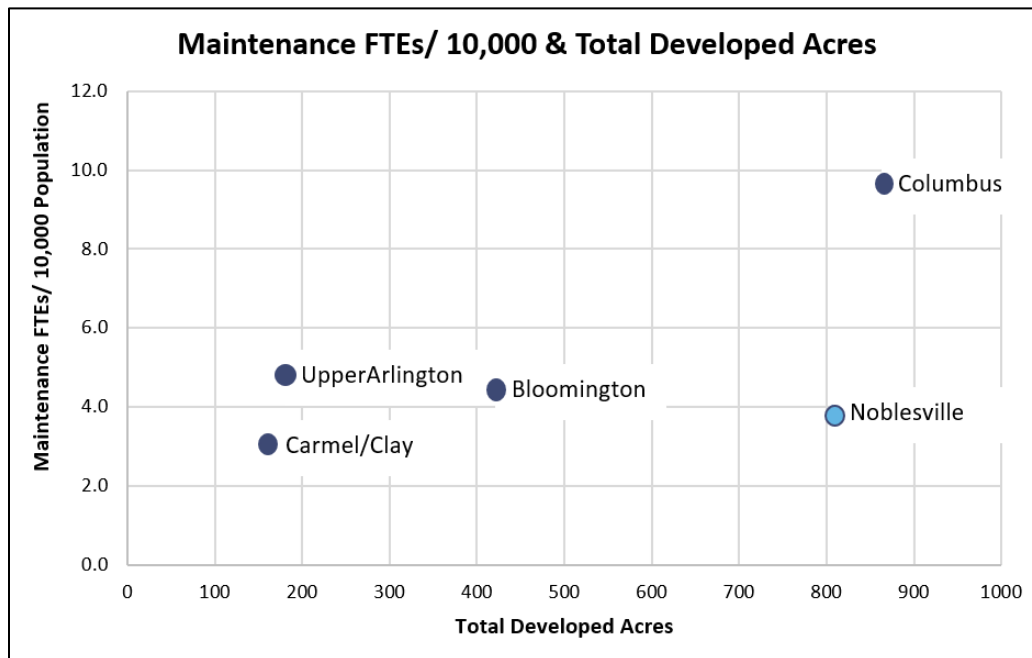
The most significant operational challenges center on staffing capacity and infrastructure. Manpower constraints are acute, particularly given the scale of assets maintained. Maintenance facilities are undersized and at maximum capacity, with limited storage, inadequate breakroom space, and insufficient bays for equipment repair, forcing increased outsourcing and inefficiencies. “Windshield time,” shared vehicles, and lagging seasonal staffing further limit productivity. The absence of a dedicated maintenance management system, standardized manuals, and checklists makes tracking work, planning preventive maintenance, and capturing institutional knowledge difficult, heightening risks related to succession planning and consistency.

Looking forward, the review identifies several priority areas that would define operational success. These include increasing staffing levels, particularly in trails and peak seasons, expanding maintenance and storage facilities, and ensuring development decisions are better aligned with long-term maintenance

capacity. Continuing to Improve safety and training through regular toolbox talks, formalized standards, and clearer procedures is critical. Equally critical is integrating maintenance input earlier in the park design process to avoid over-development and increased maintenance and lifecycle costs. Improving data, reporting, and asset tracking—along with better coordination of equipment, vehicles, and supplies—would help the Department move from reacting to daily issues toward more planned and efficient maintenance. This shift would support consistently high-quality parks, better meet community expectations, and create better, more sustainable working conditions for staff.

5.4 STAFFING CAPACITY

The comparison of maintenance FTEs per 10,000 residents against total developed acres highlights a clear capacity imbalance for Noblesville relative to peer agencies. Noblesville maintains 875 developed acres with 3.9 maintenance FTEs per 10,000 residents, placing it well below Columbus, which supports a comparable level of developed acreage with more than 9 maintenance FTEs per 10,000 residents. This indicates that NPRD maintenance staff are responsible for substantially more developed acreage per employee, increasing operational strain and limiting the ability to perform preventive and detail-oriented maintenance.



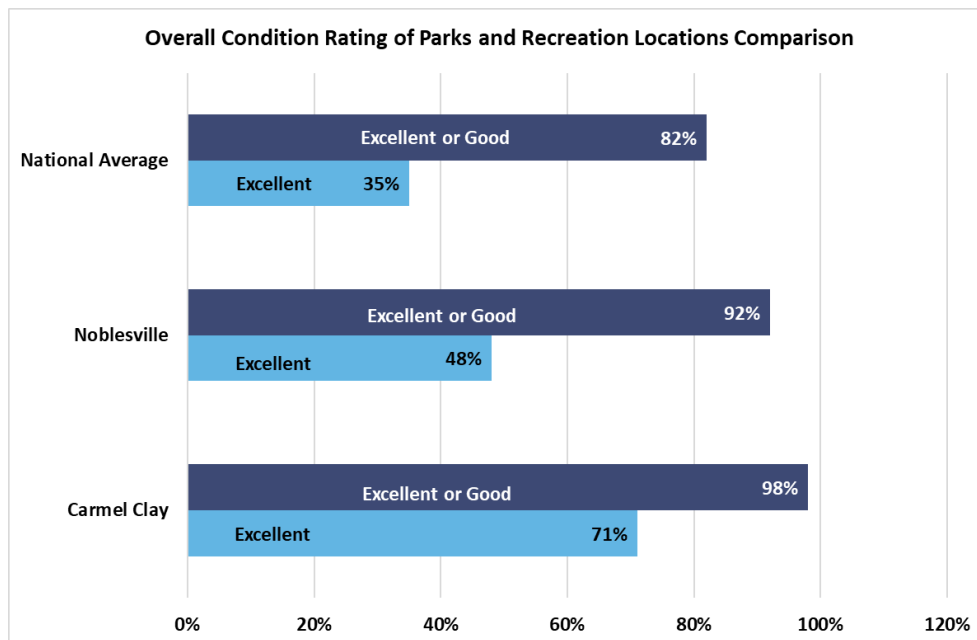
Peer systems with fewer developed acres such as Upper Arlington, Carmel Clay, and Bloomington maintain higher or comparable maintenance staffing ratios despite managing smaller systems. This reflects a service model that prioritizes proactive care, quicker response times, and higher finish standards. For Noblesville, the data suggests that current maintenance staffing levels have not kept pace with system development. As additional facilities and park improvements come online, this imbalance will continue to widen unless maintenance staffing and operational resources are increased to align with peer benchmarks and community expectations.

5.5 PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

ETC Institute administered a parks and recreation needs assessment survey for the City of Noblesville, Indiana during the winter months of 2025. The purpose of the survey was to help determine parks and recreation needs and priorities for the City. Overall, the importance of parks and recreation is extremely high and continues with public identified priorities:

- Most respondents (97%) feel parks, recreation services, and open space is “very important” (87%) or “important” (10%) to the quality of life in Noblesville.

When asked about the overall condition of all the NPRD locations households had visited, the responses were excellent (48%), good (45%) with fair and poor at 7%. When compared to national benchmark responses and one of the benchmark communities, the condition rating comparison clearly demonstrates a strong relationship between maintenance staffing levels, the ability to perform proactive maintenance, and overall park quality outcomes. Noblesville performs well above the national average, with 92% of park and recreation locations rated “Excellent or Good,” compared to the national average of 82%. This indicates that despite staffing constraints, the Department’s existing team is delivering strong results. However, when compared to Carmel Clay’s survey from 2 years previous, which reports 98% Excellent or Good and a substantially higher share of facilities rated “Excellent” (71% vs. Noblesville’s 48%), the data suggests that higher staffing investment enables a shift from maintaining “good” conditions to consistently achieving “excellent” outcomes.



When viewed alongside the earlier FTE comparisons, the connection becomes clear: agencies with higher maintenance FTEs per capita and per developed acre are better positioned to conduct preventive and detail-oriented maintenance, address issues before they escalate, and sustain higher finish standards across their systems. Noblesville’s lower maintenance staffing levels limit the time available for proactive work, causing staff to prioritize visible or urgent needs rather than long-term asset care. Increasing maintenance FTE capacity would allow Noblesville to protect its strong performance, reduce deferred maintenance, and more consistently move facilities from “good” to “excellent,” aligning outcomes with higher-staffed peer agencies and community expectations.

5.6 KEY FOCUS AREAS

Noblesville Parks and Recreation Operations & Maintenance Key Focus Areas		
Key Focus Area	Challenge	Importance
Staffing Capacity	Maintenance staffing has limited ability to perform proactive maintenance; risk of burnout and loss of institutional knowledge	Incrementally increase maintenance FTEs, with emphasis on trails and peak seasons
		Align staffing levels to achieve better FTEs per developed acre
		Develop succession planning and capture institutional knowledge
		Expand cross-training, safety toolbox talks, and career pathways
Maintenance Facilities, Equipment & Infrastructure	Undersized maintenance facilities; insufficient storage and repair bays; shared vehicles; increased outsourcing	Plan for expanded or additional maintenance and storage facilities
		Increase vehicle and equipment availability (repair coordination) to reduce inefficiencies
		Expand on-hand inventory of routine supplies and purchase in bulk where appropriate for better pricing
		Integrate maintenance facility needs into long-term capital planning
Shift from Reactive to Proactive Maintenance	No dedicated CMMS; limited standardized manuals and checklists; difficulty tracking work and assets	Implement a maintenance management system (CMMS) aligned with City systems
		Develop standardized maintenance manuals and checklists by asset type
		Establish data-driven performance metrics ("maintenance by the numbers")
		Prioritize preventive and predictive maintenance practices
Design Integration & Lifecycle Cost Management	Maintenance staff not consistently involved early in design; overdevelopment increases long-term maintenance burden	Formalize maintenance review and cost estimation in all capital projects
		Use lifecycle cost analysis to guide design and material decisions
		Balance desired amenities with long-term operational capacity
		Improve coordination between planning, design, and operations
Plans, Policies, Standards & CAPRA Readiness	Operational plans and department-specific standards are incomplete or informal; policy gaps exist	Finalize Maintenance Management, Recreation, and Marketing Plans
		Close policy gaps (land management, special events, naming rights)
		Formalize maintenance, facility, and program standards
		Use CAPRA standards as a roadmap for documentation and accountability
Training & Workforce Development	Training uneven across staff types and reliance on on-the-job learning	Create standardized training calendars for all staff categories
		Expand specialty training beyond camps to other operations
		Support workforce development tied to performance standards
		Protect current performance by addressing staffing and facility gaps
Community Expectations & Performance Outcomes	High performance despite constraints; fewer facilities rated "Excellent" compared to peers	Increase staffing to shift more facilities from "Good" to "Excellent"
		Use survey and benchmark data to convey needed operational investments
		Align service levels with community expectations

CHAPTER SIX - PRIORITY RANKINGS AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

6.1 FACILITY/AMENITY AND PROGRAM PRIORITY RANKINGS

The purpose of the Facility and Amenity/Program Priority Rankings is to provide a prioritized list of facility and amenity needs for the community served by Noblesville Parks and Recreation. 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 Noblesville facilities and amenities, as well as programs:

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 36 different facilities and amenities, as well as 23 programs.	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/programs.	50%

Figure 19 - Scoring System for Priority Investment Rating

These weighted scores provide an overall score and priority ranking for the Noblesville parks and recreation 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).

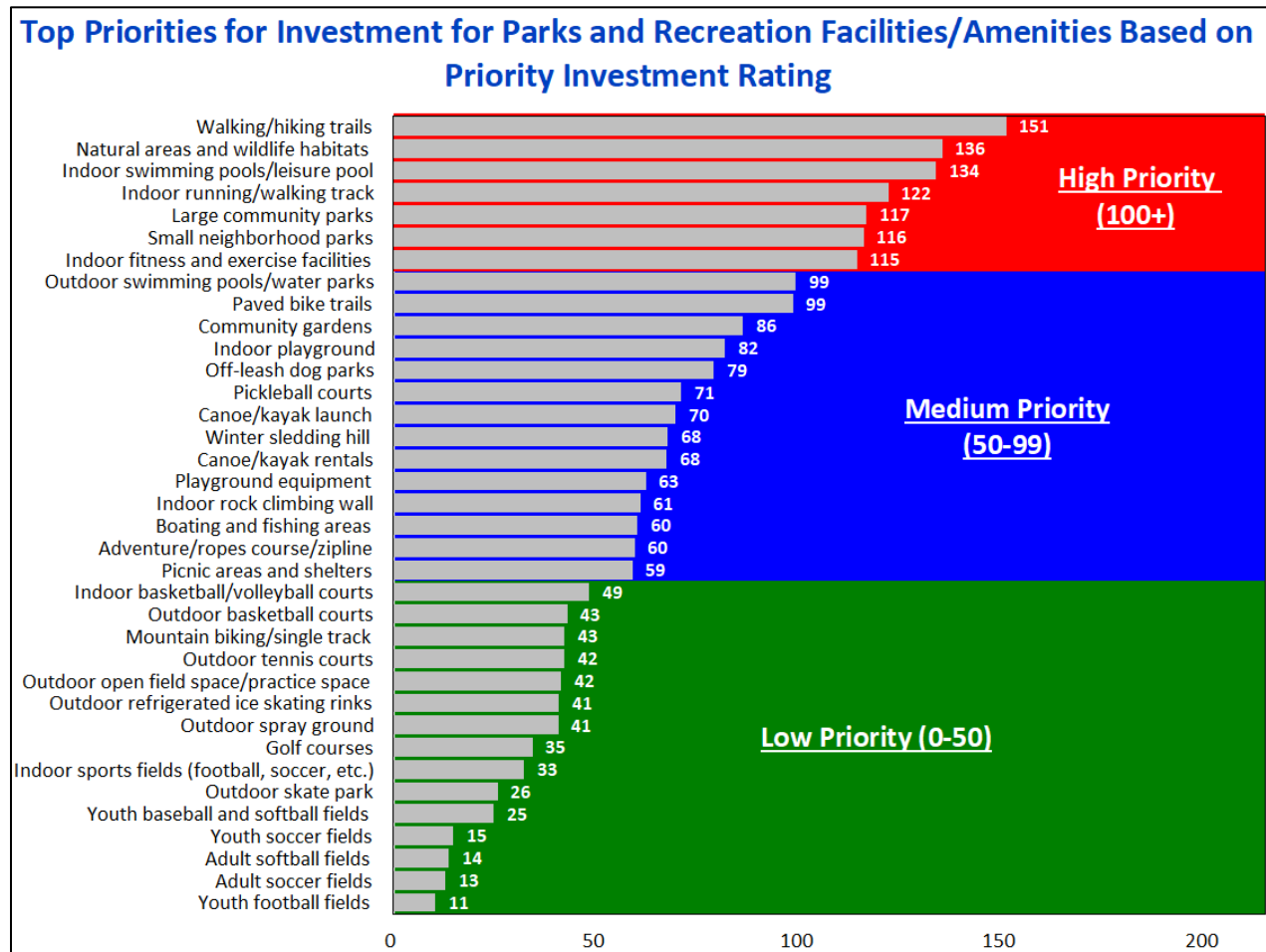
6.1.1 PRIORITIES FOR FACILITY INVESTMENTS

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/facilities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facility/amenity.

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

- Walking/hiking trails (PIR=151)
- Natural areas and wildlife habitats (PIR=136)
- Indoor swimming pools/leisure pool (PIR=134)
- Indoor running/walking track (PIR=122)
- Large community parks (PIR=117)
- Small neighborhood parks (PIR=116)
- Indoor fitness and exercise facilities (PIR=115)

The chart below shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 36 amenities/facilities assessed on the survey.

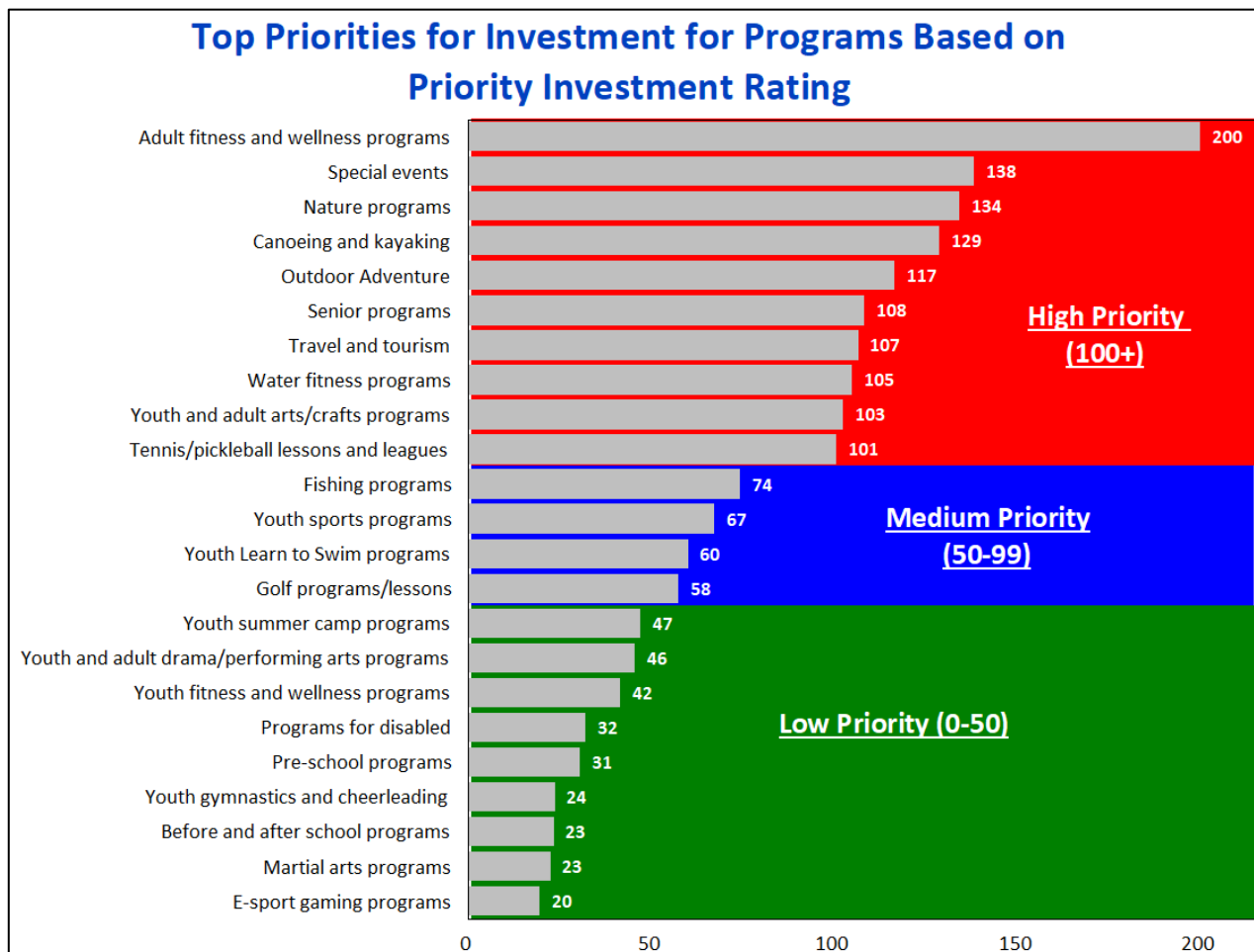


Priorities for Program Investments: The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance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

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

- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR=200)
- Special events (PIR= 138.3)
- Nature programs (PIR= 134.4)
- Canoeing and kayaking (PIR= 128.8)
- Outdoor Adventure (PIR= 116.6)
- Senior programs (PIR= 108.3)
- Travel and tourism (PIR= 106.7)
- Water fitness programs (PIR= 104.9)
- Youth and adult arts/crafts programs (PIR= 102.5)
- Tennis/pickleball lessons and leagues (PIR= 101)

The chart below shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 23 programs assessed on the survey.



6.2 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is an outline of physical improvements to be completed within the park system. The CIP provides a “blueprint” documenting five years of projects, including the estimated costs, the proposed locations, sources of funding, and revenue projections. This list of priorities is determined by the public feedback and data collected during the Parks and Recreation Master Planning process. Public input is integral to the success of this process. The public has ongoing opportunities to provide input on capital improvements, including feedback on park-specific site plans. Throughout the year, the public is invited to comment at monthly Park Board meetings, the annual Public Hearing held before the budget is approved, and by contacting Noblesville Park Board members.

Fiscal sustainability is an important aspect in developing the CIP. Funding for the preservation, protection and adequate maintenance of existing park assets is prioritized over allocating funds for new parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, capital improvements with the capacity to generate income are given priority over projects that would represent new operational costs with minimal to no offsetting revenue.

The CIP should be viewed as a working document, updated no less than 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. Additionally, the City is considering new indoor recreation spaces to enhance programming and services. If determined feasible to move forward, Impact Fee revenue can be used as part of an overall funding strategy.

6.2.1 TYPES OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

For this CIP, capital improvements are defined as projects with a useful life of at least three years, resulting in the creation or renovation of a fixed asset that allows Noblesville to serve the park and recreation needs of the community. Examples of capital improvements include new construction, remodeling, recreation equipment replacements, and purchase of parkland, park fixtures, buildings, vehicles, and maintenance 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 2026 dollars) is included, while anything below this threshold will be incorporated into the general Parks budget request. Capital improvements within this CIP are divided into two classifications:

Replacement/Reinvestment is the improvement or replacement of **existing** park assets and any related master planning efforts. 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 emergency needs. Reinvestment needs for next five years are estimated at \$18,085,000

New Investment is the purchase and/or development of **new** parks, recreation facilities, and/or equipment. Included in the costs for New Investment are planning and design of the parks and facilities. These are typically extensive planning processes 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 \$39,840,000 in New Investments during the five-year planning period.

6.2.2 PRIORITIZATION OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

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

Prerequisite: 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: Reinvestment towards revenue generating facilities mandated to be self-sufficient. The condition of these facilities has a direct impact on operational costs and revenue generation.

Priority 1: Capital repairs or replacements required to ensure the safety of visitors or employees regardless of the asset's revenue generating capacity.

Priority 1: Master planning processes that will inform priorities of individual parks or part facilities.

Priority 2: Reinvestment towards 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 towards the enhancement of existing parkland or community assets with the potential for revenue generation and limited operational expenses.

Priority 4: New Investments toward the purchase of new parkland with limited potential for revenue generation and more extensive operational expenses.

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
System wide	1	Reinvestment	Develop a Noblesville Parks system-wide wayfinding signage package	\$60,000	City Capital Budget
System wide	1	Reinvestment	Develop a Noblesville trail system wayfinding package	\$30,000	City Capital Budget
System wide	2	Reinvestment	Manage invasive plants with mitigation practices and supplement open areas with native species	\$30,000	Partnerships and volunteerism

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
System wide	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a tree inventory, including quality rating for all trees (health, location, species, etc.). Remove all trees identified as being a safety concern.	\$60,000	Community & Urban Forestry Assistance (CUF-A) Grant, Arbor Day Foundation
System wide	1	Reinvestment	Evaluate existing facilities, including playgrounds, trails, bleachers, restrooms, concessions, windows, and site furnishings to assess making these elements more accessible and user friendly for those with limited mobility and special needs	\$30,000	Special Fundraiser
System wide	1	Reinvestment	Develop a life cycle replacement plan for annual pavement repair, replacement and/or restriping parking lots throughout the parks system	\$40,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a Park Masterplan process	\$85,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Add wayfinding within park	\$50,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Add wayfinding along SR 32 pointing to all access points	\$20,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Mill, resurface, and stripe parking lots	\$800,000	City Capital Budget

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Identify and install areas of low mow turf	\$75,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Clean joints of permeable pavers	\$30,000	City Capital Budget, Operational Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Enhance ADA Accessibility	\$40,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	2	Reinvestment	Redesign and replace playground	\$800,000	Naming Rights, Friends Groups, Special Fundraisers, Foundation Grants
Dillon Park	2	Reinvestment	Provide enhanced planting/screening along neighbors at central section of park to minimize impacts of disc golf.	\$60,000	Volunteerism, Sponsorship
Dillon Park	2	Reinvestment	Resurface trails	\$30,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	2	Reinvestment	Redesign and renovate splash pad	\$1,500,000	City Capital Budget
Dillon Park	1	Reinvestment	Evaluate skate park effectiveness utilizing public input received during Forest Park skatepark process	\$75,000	Special Fundraiser
Federal Hills Commons	1	Reinvestment	Update Playground equipment + surfacing	\$800,000	City Capital Budget
Federal Hills Commons	1	Reinvestment	Renovate greenroom building and site to make this space more connected to the park character and environment	\$800,000	Food & Beverage Tax, Friends Group,

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Federal Hills Commons	4	New	Provide a connector bridge/gateway over SR 32	\$4,500,000	Next Level Trails, MPO Grant
Federal Hills Commons	1	Reinvestment	Provide a pedestrian friendly connecting trail into Forest Park	\$200,000	Recreational Trails Program, City Capital Budget
Federal Hills Commons	1	Reinvestment	Provide expanded "pavement" along north walk (grass pave or otherwise)	\$60,000	City Capital Budget
Federal Hills Commons	4	New	Design and Install new communications board at SR 32/SR 19	\$30,000	City Capital Budget
Hague Nature Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a park masterplan+ including connections to other natural sites and connection through off road trails down from Morse reservoir to Midland Trail	\$85,000	City Capital Budget
Hague Nature Park	4	New	Provide strong pedestrian connections (bridges, tunnels, etc. across Hague Road and SR 38	\$8,000,000	Next Level Trails grant, MPO, Impact Fees
Hague Nature Park	4	New	Enhance plantings with native tree initiatives	\$30,000	Arbor Day Foundation, Friends Groups, volunteerism, IDNR Lake and River Enhancements (LARE)

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Hague Nature Park	2	Reinvestment	Wayfinding signage update	\$20,000	City Capital Budget
Hague Nature Park	2	Reinvestment	Eliminate mown areas by replacing them with prairie/native plantings	\$150,000	IDNR Lake and River Enhancements (LARE)
Hague Nature Park	4	New	Install interpretive signs for various ecosystems found on the site.	\$50,000	IDNR Lake and River Enhancements (LARE)
Riverwalk Depot	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a Park Masterplan process	\$75,000	City Capital Budget
Riverwalk Depot	1	Reinvestment	Provide wayfinding (outside of park) to trailhead area	\$15,000	City Capital Budget
Riverwalk Depot	1	Reinvestment	Simplify signage in the park	\$30,000	City Capital Budget
Finch Creek Park	2	Reinvestment	Repair/replace turf at playground	\$165,000	City Capital Budget
Finch Creek Park	1	Reinvestment	Replace pickle ball court pavement with PT concrete	\$480,000	Naming Rights, Special Fundraisers, City Capital Budget
Finch Creek Park	1	Reinvestment	Replace basketball court pavement with PT concrete	\$450,000	City Capital Budget, Naming Rights, Special Fundraisers
Finch Creek Park	2	Reinvestment	Replant berm	\$50,000	Volunteerism
Finch Creek Park	2	Reinvestment	Replace furnishings at spray pad	\$30,000	Naming Rights, Site Furnishings Memorial (Benches, shade, etc.)
Finch Creek Park	1	Reinvestment	Extend park trails to connect to adjacent neighborhood trails	\$40,000	City Capital Budget, Impact Fees, Trail Grants

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Finch Creek Park	1	Reinvestment	Add wayfinding signage from 146th street	\$30,000	City Capital Budget
Finch Creek Park	1	Reinvestment	Identify locations for low mow turf installation and replace mown lawn	\$60,000	City Capital Budget, Special Fundraiser, Sponsorship
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a Park Masterplan process	\$200,000	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a skatepark master plan process; determine correct location for this amenity	\$60,000	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a tree inventory; supplement tree canopy to anticipate urban forest decline.	\$60,000	Arbor Day Foundation, Friends Groups, volunteerism, IDNR Lake and River Enhancements (LARE)
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Identify maintenance facility needs; expand or relocate as needed.	Study: \$80,000 New facility: \$2,000,000 (not including land)	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Make repairs to pedestrian pavement throughout park to bring areas up to ADA compliance.	\$500,000	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	2	Reinvestment	Update all park wayfinding, including shelter signage	\$200,000	City Capital Budget

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Forest Park	2	Reinvestment	Mill, resurface, and restripe all paved areas; determine through master plan process where asphalt can be reduced	\$3,000,000	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	3	New	Renovate the golf club house and surrounding site, including parking lot. Reorient entrance to be more visible. Create an attractive and welcoming facility	\$4,000,000	Corporate Sponsorship, General Obligation Bond, Net Revenue Fund
Forest Park	4	New	Construct a new skate park	\$1,000,000	Corporate Sponsorship, General Obligation Bond, Special Fundraisers, Naming Rights
Forest Park	2	Reinvestment	Update final restroom building; add restroom locations to wayfinding signs	\$500,000	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Update park lighting to LED technology; conduct photometrics study to identify bright and dark spaces in park	\$50,000	City Capital Budget
Forest Park	2	Reinvestment	Update carousel to a working condition and something that can be visually enjoyed	Repairs: unknown Doors and lighting: \$50,000	Corporate Sponsorship, Friends Group, Crowdfunding, Special Fundraiser

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Forest Park	1	Reinvestment	Update putt-putt area to be more inviting and ADA accessible	\$150,000	Special Fundraiser, General Obligation Bond, Corporate Sponsor
Forest Park	2	Reinvestment	Upgrade old playground equipment to provide a second play experience. This should be universally accessible and provide a different play experience than the newer play area.	\$1,500,000	Corporate Sponsorship, City Capital Budget, Naming Rights
Forest Park	3	New	Work with local swim organization to redevelop the aquatics center into a community-based facility.	TBD	Corporate Sponsorship, City Capital Budget, General Obligation Bond
Seminary Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a Park Masterplan process	\$65,000	City Capital Budget
Seminary Park	2	Reinvestment	Replace site furnishings with styles that are more historic to the character of the park	\$70,000	Memorial Program, Corporate Sponsorship, City Capital Budget
Seminary Park	4	New	Incorporate the history of the site in a more holistic manner	\$150,000	City Capital Budget
Seminary Park	2	Reinvestment	Adjust accessory items to make them accessible to all	\$40,000	City Capital Budget
Seminary Park	1	Reinvestment	Address the stone wall on east side of park. Complete rebuild using existing materials, repair and removal.	\$1,200,000	Corporate Sponsorship, City Capital Budget, Friends Groups

PARK/FACILITY	PRIORITY LEVEL	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Seminary Park	4	New	Implement findings from the master plan process	\$4,000,000	Special Fundraiser, General Obligation Bond, Corporate Sponsor
Southside Park	1	Reinvestment	Conduct a Park Masterplan process	\$185,000	City Capital Budget
Southside Park	1	Reinvestment	Enlarge park by incorporating vacant/ city- owned properties	-	Land & Water Conservation Fund, City Capital Budget
Southside Park	4	New	Provide strong trail connection to Pleasant Street; add wayfinding	\$80,000	Land & Water Conservation Fund, City Capital Budget, Recreational Trails Program, Impact Fees
Southside Park	1	Reinvestment	Add wayfinding from 8th Street	\$20,000	City Capital Fund
Southside Park	4	New	Add facilities to this park as identified by the master planning project, noting this in a flood prone area. This includes the following: road removal/utility relocation, property acquisition, re-platting and survey, environmental, Design, Park Construction, Building Construction.	\$12,000,000	City Capital Budget, General Obligation Bond, Impact Fees

6.2.3 CIP PRIORITY TOTALS

CIP Priority Totals	
Priority 1 Total	\$ 9,120,000
Priority 2 Total	\$ 8,165,000
Priority 3 Total	\$ 4,000,000
Priority 4 Total	\$ 29,840,000
Total CIP	\$ 51,125,000



CHAPTER SEVEN – FUNDING AND REVENUE STRATEGIES

Public recreation agencies such as the City of Noblesville and the Noblesville Parks & Recreation Department (NPRD) face the ongoing challenge of balancing broad community expectations with the need to secure stable and sufficient funding. NPRD is expected to deliver high-quality parks, facilities, programs, and events while also maintaining existing assets, addressing lifecycle replacement, and planning for future growth. These responsibilities are becoming increasingly complex as traditional funding sources including property taxes, user fees, capital financing tools, and grants are influenced by economic conditions, competing public priorities, and evolving legislative actions. Notably, Indiana Senate Bill 01, which impacts property tax structures and long-term revenue growth for local municipalities, underscores the vulnerability of relying too heavily on a limited set of funding sources.

In this environment, the importance of developing strong, diversified funding strategies cannot be overstated. To ensure long-term sustainability and operational resilience, the City must proactively broaden its funding portfolio and strategically pursue both established and innovative revenue sources. A comprehensive funding and revenue strategy allows resources to be aligned with community priorities, organizational goals, and service expectations. Doing this for both the citywide level and for specific facilities, assets, and core program areas will help municipalities continue much needed services. While identifying and implementing these funding mechanisms require deliberate planning, coordination, and policy alignment, the result is a more financially resilient parks and recreation system. It will help the City protect existing investments, supports consistent service delivery, and position NPRD to continue meeting the community's needs despite an increasingly uncertain fiscal landscape.

Key Funding sources include the six identified in the graphic below:



7.1 CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES

The City currently uses a mix of sources included in this table:

Current Revenue & Funding Sources					
Capital Funding Sources	Taxes	Grants	User Fees	External Funding Sources	Franchise/Licenses
Public Private Partnership (P3)	Property Tax	Next Level Trails	Program Fees	Corporate Sponsorship	Concession Management
Impact Fees	Impact Fees	Local Nonprofit Foundation Grants	Tickets / Admissions / Membership Fees	Partnerships	Interlocal Agreements
Net Revenue Fund	Food & Beverage Tax	Arbor Day Foundation Corporate Partnerships	Permits (Special Use Permits)	Foundations / Gifts	Land Leases
	General Obligation Bond		Reservations / Rentals	Private Donations	Naming Rights
				Volunteerism Friends Groups	

7.2 EXTERNAL FUNDING

NPRD currently leverages a mix of external funding sources to support programs, facilities, and amenities, with opportunities to further strengthen and formalize these efforts. Corporate sponsorships are an established and effective funding tool, allowing local and regional businesses to invest in parks, facilities, programs, and events in exchange for recognition and community visibility. Existing sponsorships, such as naming rights discussions for Federal Commons and seasonal event sponsors demonstrate strong private-sector interest. Moving forward, sponsorships should be guided by standardized agreements and regular evaluations that complement the formal sponsorship program to ensure alignment with the City's mission, protect public trust, and maximize long-term value.

7.2.1 CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

Corporate sponsorships allow local and regional businesses to invest financially in parks, facilities, programs, and events in exchange for recognition, branding, or marketing exposure. Sponsorships are currently used for special events, seasonal amenities, and emerging naming rights opportunities and represent one of the most flexible external revenue sources available to the Department.

Limitations & Impacts

Sponsorships require ongoing management and renewal, and revenue levels may fluctuate with economic conditions. Without clear policies, sponsorships can raise concerns about commercialization of public spaces or misalignment with community values. Staff time is required to solicit sponsors, manage relationships, and ensure the terms of the agreement are delivered on from both parties.

Actions Required

- Adopt a formal sponsorship policy and valuation framework
- Use standardized sponsorship agreements with clear terms and renewal timelines
- Regularly evaluate sponsorships for mission alignment and community perception
- Track sponsorship revenue and reinvestment outcomes annually

7.2.2 PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships involve shared development, programming, or operational responsibilities between the City and nonprofits, schools, other agencies, or private entities. These collaborations help expand services, reduce direct City costs, and leverage specialized expertise while activating parks and facilities.

Limitations & Impacts

Partnerships can increase administrative complexity and may create unclear accountability if roles are not formalized. Informal arrangements can lead to inconsistent expectations, uneven resource allocation, or misalignment with City priorities. Long-term partnerships may also limit flexibility if not periodically reviewed.

Actions Required

- Formalize partnerships through written agreements or MOUs
- Clearly define roles, responsibilities, costs, and performance outcomes
- Categorize partnerships by purpose (program, facility, event, operational)
- Conduct regular partnership evaluations to confirm alignment with the Master Plan
- Report to governing bodies on partnership outcomes annually before renewal is determined

7.2.3 FOUNDATIONS AND GIFTS

Foundations and philanthropic gifts provide funding for capital improvements, amenities, programs, and long-term enhancements that exceed what public funding alone can support. These contributions often fund signature assets, special projects, or legacy improvements within the park system. The Noblesville Parks Foundation was founded in 2014. The Foundation is led by an all-volunteer board of dedicated residents committed to strengthening their community by supporting and expanding the impact and value of Noblesville's parks, trails, and green spaces.

Limitations & Impacts

Gifts are frequently restricted to specific uses and may not cover long-term maintenance costs. Legal compliance, donor stewardship, and reporting requirements increase administrative oversight. Reliance on volunteer leadership/ boards within foundations can impact continuity and capacity, especially with changes in leadership.



Actions Required

- Strengthen coordination and relationships between NPRD and the Noblesville Parks Foundation
- Establish clear gift acceptance and donor recognition policies
- Prioritize foundation funding for Master Plan-identified projects
- Require routine maintenance and lifecycle replacement planning for all gifted assets (endowments)

7.2.4 PRIVATE DONATIONS

Private donations may include monetary gifts, land, equipment, art, or in-kind services from individuals or businesses. These donations allow residents and organizations to directly invest in parks and recreation facilities, often supporting localized or memorial improvements.

Limitations & Impacts

Donation management can be time-consuming for staff and may unintentionally create inequities across the park system if gifts are concentrated in certain locations. Donor intent may conflict with broader system priorities, and legal and tax compliance must be maintained.

Actions Required

- Route donations through a Parks or Community Foundation when possible
- Create and apply a formal gift acceptance and evaluation process
- Encourage donations aligned with system-wide priorities and graciously say no to those that do not align
- Clearly communicate long-term maintenance responsibilities to donors

7.2.5 VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteerism is an indirect funding source that reduces operating costs by supplementing staff capacity while strengthening community ownership and advocacy. Volunteers support events, stewardship, programming assistance, and select maintenance activities.

Limitations & Impacts

Volunteer programs require consistent supervision, training, and risk management. Volunteers cannot replace skilled or licensed labor, and informal coordination limits scalability and consistency. Liability considerations must be addressed.

Actions Required

- Formalize a structured volunteer program with defined roles volunteers can fill
- Track volunteer hours and estimated value of service to communicate to leadership
- Assign staff oversight responsibility
- Align volunteer efforts with priority programs and stewardship needs such as invasive species removal and park beautification efforts in spring/summer/fall

7.2.6 FRIENDS GROUPS

Friends Groups are community-based organizations formed to advocate for and raise funds for a specific park, facility, or program. These groups help build strong local support and can generate targeted funding and volunteer engagement.

Limitations & Impacts

Friends Groups can require significant staff coordination and may focus resources on a single site at the expense of system equity. Without clear guidance, group priorities may drift from City goals.

Actions Required

- Establish MOUs defining roles, funding use, and accountability

- Assign staff liaisons to each Friends Group
- Align group initiatives with the Parks Master Plan
- Conduct annual alignment and performance reviews

7.2.7 SPECIAL FUNDRAISERS

Special fundraisers are events or campaigns designed to raise money for specific programs, amenities, or capital projects. These are typically episodic and best suited for high-visibility initiatives.

Limitations & Impacts

Fundraisers can consume significant staff time and may yield inconsistent revenue. Event fatigue and limited scalability can reduce long-term effectiveness if relied upon too heavily.

Actions Required

- Evaluate return on investment before launching new fundraisers
- Focus on signature or one-time projects
- Utilize the Parks or Community Foundation for event management
- Limit City staff involvement to oversight and coordination

7.2.8 IRREVOCABLE REMAINDER TRUSTS

Irrevocable remainder trusts are a planned giving mechanism through which high-net-worth individuals dedicate assets to support parks and recreation over time, typically through interest earnings or designated endowments.

Limitations & Impacts

These trusts require long-term relationship building, legal expertise, and significant time investment. They offer limited short-term revenue and depend on donor capacity and interest.

Actions Required

- Partner with foundations and estate planning professionals
- Develop a planned giving program and marketing materials
- Identify priority legacy projects or endowments
- Strategically engage high-capacity donors

7.2.9 CROWDFUNDING

Crowdfunding uses web-based platforms to raise funds from a broad group of supporters for a specific project, program, or amenity. It is most effective for discrete, highly visible initiatives with strong community appeal.

Limitations & Impacts

Campaigns may fall short of funding goals and require intensive marketing and storytelling. Crowdfunding is not suitable for ongoing operational funding.

Actions Required

- Use crowdfunding selectively for high-interest projects
- Run campaigns through a Parks or Community Foundation

- Set realistic goals, timelines, and communication plans
- Pair campaigns with broader community engagement efforts

7.3 USER FEES

User fees are a critical component of a balanced and resilient funding strategy for Noblesville Parks & Recreation, particularly as legislative actions such as Indiana Senate Bill 01 place increased pressure on traditional property tax revenues for local municipalities. By allowing users to directly contribute to the cost of programs, facilities, and services they utilize, user fees help offset operating expenses while maintaining high-quality offerings and reducing reliance on tax-supported funding. The effectiveness of this approach depends on clear pricing and cost-recovery policies, regular fee review, and careful alignment with access and equity goals—ensuring that user fees strengthen long-term financial sustainability without compromising the Department’s public service mission or community accessibility.

7.3.1 PROGRAM FEES

Program fees are dedicated user fees charged for organized recreational activities that require registration or reservation, such as adult and youth sports leagues, instructional classes, and special interest programs. These fees allow participants to contribute directly to the upkeep of facilities and the cost of delivering services. When structured appropriately, program fees support financial sustainability while remaining market-driven and competitive with both public and private providers. Nationally, public parks and recreation agencies recover approximately 35% to 50% of operating expenditures through earned revenue, and program fees represent a primary mechanism for achieving this benchmark.

Limitations & Impacts

Program fees must balance revenue generation with access and affordability. Over-reliance on fees can create barriers to participation, particularly for youth, seniors, and low-income households. Inconsistent fee structures can also lead to inequities across programs and facilities. Additionally, fees must remain responsive to market conditions, program demand, and cost-of-service realities to remain effective.

Actions Required

- Conduct annual reviews of program fees to ensure alignment with cost recovery goals
- Adopt a formal pricing and cost-recovery policy to guide fee setting
- Benchmark fees against comparable public and private providers
- Maintain financial assistance options to preserve equitable access

7.3.2 TICKETS, ADMISSIONS, AND MEMBERSHIP FEES

Tickets, admissions, and membership fees are charged for access to self-directed recreation facilities such as pools, ice skating rinks, ballparks, and other entertainment or recreational venues. These fees help offset the operational and staffing costs associated with operating facilities that experience high demand or seasonal use, reducing reliance on tax-supported funding.

Limitations & Impacts

Admission and membership fees can fluctuate with participation trends, weather, and seasonal demand, creating variability in revenue. If not consistently structured, fees may lead to confusion or perceived inequity among users. There is also a risk that excessive pricing could reduce participation and undermine public access objectives.

Actions Required

- Review admission and membership fees annually to ensure cost recovery targets are met
- Establish consistent pricing structures based on residency, usage patterns, and demand
- Align admission and membership pricing with the Department's broader pricing policy
- Monitor participation trends to adjust pricing strategically

7.3.3 PERMITS (SPECIAL USE PERMITS)

Special use permits allow individuals or organizations to use park property for private or commercial purposes, such as food vendors, special events, or fee-based activities. In exchange, the City receives a flat fee or a percentage of gross revenue. This funding strategy ensures that private benefit derived from public spaces contributes financially to park operations and maintenance.

Limitations & Impacts

Special use permits require clear policies to manage risk, public access, and operational impacts. Without defined standards, permitting can become inconsistent or lead to conflicts over appropriate uses of park spaces. Administrative oversight is required to ensure compliance with permit terms and to protect public assets.

Actions Required

- Develop or update a comprehensive special use permitting policy
- Clearly define allowable locations, activities, and event types
- Review permit fees regularly to ensure consistency and fairness
- Align permit pricing and terms with the Department's overall pricing policy

7.3.4 RESERVATION/ RENTALS

Reservation and Rental fees are charged for reserving public facilities and amenities for private or group use, including picnic shelters, meeting rooms, lodges, and event spaces. Equipment rentals—such as tables, chairs, tents, stages, bicycles, kayaks, and canoes—also fall under this category. Rentals provide a reliable source of earned income while maximizing the use of existing park assets.

Limitations & Impacts

Rental revenue is influenced by seasonal demand, facility condition, and market competition. Fees that are not regularly updated may fall below market value or fail to recover operational costs. Additionally, high rental demand can limit public access if not carefully managed.

Actions Required

- Review rental rates annually to ensure alignment with market conditions and cost recovery goals
- Adopt standardized pricing structures across similar facility types
- Coordinate rental policies to balance revenue generation with public access
- Integrate rental fee strategies into the Department's comprehensive pricing policy

7.4 GRANTS

Grants can be a great funding source as part of a larger overall funding strategy for capital projects and some for specific services. For most parks and recreation agencies, grants are seen as an opportunity to obtain free money, increased credibility with fiscal stewardship, increased access to valuable data, and the

ability to augment funding for projects or initiatives that may not have the full support of leadership otherwise. Grants should not be a major funding source in an overall funding strategy.

The City has been awarded State, Federal, and Community Foundation grants in the past. It is important for the City to understand each grant's requirements. Staff understand the cost-to-benefit ratio that exists and should be explored with all grants. Staff look at the pros and cons of each individual grant to understand the level of commitment required by the department and the city. NPRD should continue to consider the following when determining if a grant opportunity will be a part of the overall funding strategy:

- The overall time commitment to pull information together for the application process.
- What is the level of competition.
- How well does the project or service meets the application requirements.
- Is there an opportunity to renew the grant or will SFPR be able to fund for the long-term.
- What are the reporting requirements and length of time to continue, if awarded the grant

A list of available grants can be found in the Appendix.



7.5 CAPITAL FUNDS

Capital funding is essential to sustaining and enhancing a high-quality parks and recreation system. These funds support the acquisition, development, renovation, and long-term replacement of major assets such as parks, trails, facilities, and infrastructure. Unlike operating revenues, capital funds are typically restricted to one-time or long-term improvements and must be carefully aligned with adopted plans, lifecycle needs, and community priorities. The three funding sources within this section, the City is currently utilizing in various capacities including parks and recreation capital needs.

7.5.1 NET REVENUE FUND

The Net Revenue Fund captures surplus revenues generated at the end of the fiscal year and places them into a designated reserve. These funds provide a flexible and internally controlled source of capital funding that can be used for facility repairs, asset replacement, lifecycle needs, or unforeseen "rainy day" expenses. For Noblesville Parks & Recreation, this approach supports fiscal discipline while allowing earned revenues from parks, recreation, and golf operations to be reinvested directly back into the system.

Limitations & Impacts

The effectiveness of a Net Revenue Fund is highly dependent on annual operating performance and reserve levels. In years with limited surplus, available funding for capital reinvestment may be constrained.

Overreliance on this fund for major capital needs could also reduce financial resilience if reserves are not adequately protected.

Actions Required

- Establish a formal policy identifying a specific percentage of annual net revenue to be transferred into the reserve fund
- Clearly define eligible uses for the fund, prioritizing capital repair and lifecycle replacement
- Monitor reserve balances annually to ensure long-term fiscal stability
- Coordinate Net Revenue Fund use with the City's broader capital planning and lifecycle strategies

7.5.2 IMPACT FEES

Impact fees provide a growth-related funding mechanism intended to ensure that new development contributes its fair share toward new park and recreation infrastructure that benefits the community at large. When properly structured, impact fees help offset the cost of acquiring land and developing facilities needed to serve new residents, reducing pressure on existing taxpayers.

Limitations & Impacts

Impact fees are legally restricted and may only be used for qualifying capital improvements tied to growth and identified in the City's Zone Improvement Plan. The program requires ongoing updates and formal adoption to remain valid. Failure to update the Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) every five years can result in a lapse in the ability to collect fees, creating a funding gap during periods of continued growth.

Actions Required

- Update the Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) on a five-year cycle and ensure final approval and adoption happen in advance of the current ordinance expiration date to avoid any gaps in fee collection
- Review impact fee assumptions and rates to ensure they reflect current development conditions and increasing costs
- Obtain review and recommendations from the Impact Fee Advisory Committee
- Secure adoption by the Plan Commission and City Commissioners to maintain compliance
- Ensure all collected fees are tracked and used in accordance with statutory requirements

7.5.3 PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (P3)

Public-Private Partnerships (P3), particularly Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) models, allow the City to partner with private entities to design, finance, build, operate, and maintain park and recreation facilities for a defined period. Under this structure, the private partner typically provides upfront capital financing and assumes operational responsibility before transferring the asset back to public ownership at the end of the agreement term. This model can accelerate project delivery and reduce immediate public capital outlay.

Limitations & Impacts

P3 arrangements involve complex legal, financial, and public review processes and require careful structuring to protect public interests. Long-term agreements can limit flexibility, and poorly structured contracts may shift risk back to the City. While upfront capital costs are reduced, long-term financial and operational implications must be fully understood before proceeding.

Actions Required

- Ensure full compliance with Indiana Code 5-23 governing public-private partnerships
- Conduct detailed feasibility, legal, and financial analyses prior to project selection
- Engage legal and financial advisors with P3 expertise
- Establish clear performance standards, accountability measures, and exit provisions
- Use P3s selectively for projects where risk transfer and private expertise provide clear public benefit

7.6 FRANCHISES AND LICENSES

Franchises and licenses offer scalable, market-responsive revenue opportunities that can enhance programs and facilities without significant public capital investment. Success depends on clear policies, strong contracts, and ongoing oversight to balance revenue generation with public access, community values, and long-term system sustainability.

7.6.1 POURING RIGHTS

Pouring rights agreements grant a beverage company exclusive rights to sell its products within park facilities, recreation venues, or golf operations in exchange for guaranteed payments, commissions, or a share of gross sales. These agreements can generate stable, long-term revenue with minimal operational burden and are commonly used at sports complexes, golf courses, and event venues.

Limitations & Impacts

Pouring rights may limit product choice and require careful consideration of brand alignment with community values. Revenue is tied to sales volume, which can fluctuate with participation and weather. Long-term agreements can also limit flexibility if market conditions change.

Actions Required

- Develop a formal pouring rights policy and solicitation process
- Identify facilities or operations suitable for exclusive agreements (e.g., golf course)
- Negotiate contracts with performance benchmarks and escalation clauses
- Periodically renegotiate agreements to maximize return on investment

7.6.2 CONCESSION MANAGEMENT

Concession management generates revenue through the sale or rental of food, beverages, and merchandise at parks and recreation facilities. The City may operate concessions directly or contract with private vendors in exchange for a percentage of gross sales or net profits, providing flexibility based on staffing and operational capacity.

Limitations & Impacts

Concessions require compliance with health regulations and consistent oversight to ensure quality service. When contracted, the City may relinquish some control over operations and customer experience. Revenue can be seasonal and demand-driven.

Actions Required

- Determine whether concessions are best managed in-house or through contracts
- Establish clear concession agreements with defined performance expectations

- Ensure compliance with City and Health Department regulations
- Track revenue performance and reinvest proceeds into facility improvements

7.6.3 GREENWAY UTILITY AGREEMENTS

Greenway utility agreements allow utility companies or private entities to install infrastructure such as fiber optics or other underground utilities. This can be done within park or greenway corridors in exchange for annual payments or easement fees. These agreements can provide ongoing revenue while supporting broader infrastructure needs.

Limitations & Impacts

Utility installations must be carefully coordinated to avoid conflicts with park use, environmental goals, or future trail development. Engineering, zoning, and regulatory considerations are critical, and long-term easements may restrict future flexibility.

Actions Required

- Coordinate with engineering and planning staff to evaluate feasibility
- Identify appropriate corridors or locations for utility use
- Establish easement agreements with clear terms and restoration requirements
- Ensure utility use aligns with long-term greenway and park plans

7.6.4 PRIVATE CONCESSIONAIRES

Private concessionaires finance, construct, and operate recreation-related amenities such as golf services, specialty recreation activities, or attractions on City-owned property. In return, the City receives lease payments, revenue sharing, or other compensation while expanding offerings without direct capital investment.

Limitations & Impacts

These arrangements may reduce City control over operations, pricing, and customer experience. Long-term contracts require careful oversight to ensure public interests are protected and facilities remain accessible and well-maintained.

Actions Required

- Identify appropriate recreation activities for private operation
- Conduct financial and operational feasibility analyses
- Develop contracts with clear performance standards and termination provisions
- Monitor operations regularly to ensure alignment with City goals

7.6.5 NAMING RIGHTS

Naming rights generate revenue by allowing businesses or organizations to attach their name to a facility, building, or park improvement for a defined period. Proceeds are often used to offset construction or renovation costs and can significantly reduce public capital investment.

Limitations & Impacts

Naming rights may raise public sensitivity if not applied consistently or transparently. Agreements must balance revenue generation with preservation of community identity and public trust.

Actions Required

- Adopt a formal naming rights policy with eligibility criteria
- Identify facilities or improvements appropriate for naming opportunities
- Use standardized sponsorship agreements with defined terms
- Ensure public communication and approval processes are clear

7.6.6 ADVERTISING SALES

Advertising sales generate revenue through tasteful and appropriate placement of ads in park-related materials and facilities, such as program guides, scoreboards, dasher boards, or other high-visibility locations. This approach leverages existing assets to create incremental income.

Limitations & Impacts

Advertising must be carefully managed to avoid visual clutter or negative impacts on park aesthetics. Revenue potential depends on market demand and audience reach.

Actions Required

- Define acceptable advertising locations and formats
- Develop sponsorship or advertising agreements
- Ensure advertising aligns with community standards and brand guidelines
- Monitor placement and effectiveness regularly

7.6.7 INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS

Interlocal agreements involve partnerships between two or more governmental entities to jointly develop, use, or maintain facilities such as sports fields, regional parks, or shared amenities. These agreements maximize public resources and reduce duplication of services.

Limitations & Impacts

Shared facilities require coordination across jurisdictions, which can complicate decision-making and operations. Clear governance and cost-sharing arrangements are essential within an agreement and should include a termination clause.

Actions Required

- Identify opportunities for shared-use or joint development
- Develop interlocal agreements with defined roles and financial commitments
- Establish measurable outcomes and performance metrics
- Review agreements periodically for effectiveness

7.6.8 CATERING PERMITS AND SERVICES

Catering permits allow approved caterers to provide food and beverage services within parks and facilities in exchange for permit fees or a percentage of sales. Some agencies also operate in-house catering services, creating an additional earned revenue stream.

Limitations & Impacts

Catering activities require oversight to ensure compliance with health regulations and facility policies. Demand may be event-driven and seasonal.

Actions Required

- Develop a catering permit and licensing policy
- Define fee structures or revenue-sharing percentages
- Ensure compliance with health and safety regulations
- Coordinate catering services with facility rentals and events

7.6.9 LAND LEASES

Land leases generate revenue by allowing private entities or agencies to lease City-owned land or facilities for recreation-related uses, utilities, or other compatible purposes. Lease arrangements may include fixed payments and/or a percentage of gross revenue and can support uses the City does not have capacity to manage directly.

Limitations & Impacts

Leasing public land requires careful consideration of zoning, regulatory requirements, and long-term public access. Poorly structured leases can limit flexibility or create future constraints on park use.

Actions Required

- Identify suitable sites for lease opportunities
- Develop standardized lease agreements outlining terms and maintenance responsibilities
- Ensure compliance with zoning and regulatory requirements
- Align lease uses with the Parks Master Plan and community priorities

7.7 TAX SUPPORT

Tax-supported funding tools provide powerful mechanisms for delivering transformative park and recreation investments, but each carry political, fiscal, and statutory implications. Strategic use requires close coordination with finance staff, clear public communication, and disciplined alignment with capital priorities to ensure long-term sustainability and community support.

7.7.1 SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT BONDS

Special Taxing District Bonds allow the City to levy a special benefits tax on properties located within a defined Park District to repay bonds issued for capital park and recreation projects. The taxing district has the same boundaries as the issuing jurisdiction, and the tax is levied outside the City's maximum levy, with its own constitutional debt limit.

Limitations & Impacts

This strategy results in a new tax for property owners within the district and impacts circuit breaker calculations across all City taxing authorities. Because the tax burden is localized, there may be heightened sensitivity among affected property owners, requiring clear justification and communication.

Actions Required

- Coordinate closely with the City's Finance Department to assess feasibility
- Define district boundaries and eligible projects
- Conduct public outreach to explain benefits and tax implications
- Ensure compliance with constitutional debt limits and statutory requirements

7.7.2 LEASE-RENTAL BONDS

Lease-rental bonds finance capital projects through a lease agreement with a building corporation, with lease payments typically supported by a special benefits tax. This mechanism allows the City to finance projects outside the constitutional debt limit and maximum levy, while still delivering major capital improvements.

Limitations & Impacts

Lease-rental bonds result in a new tax rate and affect circuit breaker calculations for all City taxing authorities. Long-term lease obligations require stable revenue sources and careful structuring to avoid fiscal strain.

Actions Required

- Engage financial and legal advisors early in the process
- Identify suitable capital projects for lease-rental financing
- Evaluate long-term affordability and impacts on taxpayers
- Secure necessary City approvals and public transparency

7.7.3 FOOD AND BEVERAGE TAX

A Food and Beverage (F&B) Tax, typically ranging from 1% to 2%, can be dedicated to capital projects, including park and recreation facilities that enhance quality of life and support tourism and economic activity.

Limitations & Impacts

This approach often involves reprioritizing an existing funding source or securing special enabling legislation. Proceeds may already be committed to other uses, requiring careful coordination and political support.

Actions Required

- Confirm legislative authority and allowable uses
- Evaluate current F&B tax allocations and competing priorities
- Build consensus among City leadership and stakeholders
- Adopt formal resolutions dedicating funds to park capital projects

7.7.4 CUMULATIVE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Cumulative Capital Development Fund allows the City to allocate a portion of existing revenues such as unassigned fund balance or future increases in assessed valuation toward capital projects, including parks and recreation infrastructure.

Limitations & Impacts

Use of this fund typically requires reprioritizing existing revenues, which may reduce flexibility for other capital or operational needs. Revenue availability is dependent on growth in assessed value and overall fiscal performance.

Actions Required

- Identify available balances or projected revenue growth
- Establish clear priorities for park and recreation investments
- Coordinate fund use with the City's Capital Improvement Program
- Monitor fund balance to maintain fiscal stability

7.7.5 INNKEEPERS TAX

The Innkeepers Tax is a tax on overnight accommodations that can be dedicated to parks and recreation, particularly facilities and amenities that enhance tourism, events, and visitor experiences.

Limitations & Impacts

Although the tax primarily affects visitors, it requires City approval and may involve coordination with other municipalities or tourism entities. Revenues may fluctuate with travel and economic conditions.

Actions Required

- Evaluate current Innkeepers Tax collections and commitments
- Demonstrate the tourism and economic benefits of park investments
- Secure City approval to allocate additional funds to parks align expenditures with visitor services

7.7.6 EXISTING LOCAL INCOME TAXES

A portion of incremental revenues from existing local income taxes, driven by countywide income growth, can be allocated to park capital projects, providing a scalable funding source tied to economic performance.

Limitations & Impacts

This strategy involves reprioritizing existing revenues and may compete with other City or County funding needs. Revenue growth is subject to economic cycles.

Actions Required

- Analyze trends in income tax growth
- Identify feasible allocation levels for park capital needs
- Coordinate with broader fiscal planning efforts
- Formalize allocations through budget and policy actions

7.7.7 GENERAL OBLIGATION (GO) BONDS

General Obligation Bonds finance capital projects through a property tax-supported bond issuance. While repayment rates are outside the maximum levy, the bonds are subject to constitutional debt limits. GO bonds are commonly used for major, long-term public infrastructure investments.

Limitations & Impacts

GO bonds require an increase in the City's tax rate and impact circuit breaker calculations for all taxing authorities. Debt capacity limitations and public support are key considerations.

Actions Required

- Evaluate debt capacity and timing within the City's financial plan
- Identify priority park capital projects suitable for bonding
- Consider smaller or phased bond issuances, such as one-year bonds
- Conduct public outreach and secure required approvals

7.7.8 TIF-BACKED BONDS

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)-backed bonds use incremental property tax revenue from designated TIF districts to fund capital projects tied to economic development, including park improvements that support redevelopment and placemaking.

Limitations & Impacts

Using TIF revenues for parks limits availability for other economic development projects. Projects must demonstrate a clear nexus to redevelopment or economic benefit within the TIF district.

Actions Required

- Identify park projects that support economic development goals
- Coordinate with redevelopment and planning staff
- Evaluate long-term impacts on TIF, align project selection with redevelopment area plans

7.7.9 CUMULATIVE BUILDING FUND

A Cumulative Building Fund allows the City to levy a dedicated tax up to \$0.0167 per \$100 of assessed value to support capital projects, including park buildings and facilities.

Limitations & Impacts

This approach results in a new tax and is subject to the maximum levy, requiring careful consideration of overall tax burden and competing funding priorities.

Actions Required

- Assess levy capacity and tax rate impacts
- Identify eligible park capital projects
- Secure City approvals and public understanding
- Integrate the fund into long-term capital planning

7.7.10 CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCOME TAX (CEDIT)

CEDIT revenues may be used to fund projects that promote employment, attract new businesses, or retain and expand existing businesses. Parks and recreation projects that support workforce attraction, downtown vitality, or redevelopment may qualify.

Limitations & Impacts

Use of CEDIT for parks requires reprioritizing an existing funding source and demonstrating clear economic development benefits aligned with statutory intent.

Actions Required

- Determine if there is a portion of CEDIT revenues available for parks
- Identify park projects with strong economic development outcomes
- Assess financial requirements and long-term impacts
- Align allocations with City economic development objectives

7.8 CONCLUSION

NPRD will be challenged to continue maintaining existing assets, address lifecycle replacement, expand programs, and plan for future growth. The City faces heightened financial pressure driven by economic uncertainty, competing municipal priorities, and legislative changes with Indiana Senate Bill 01, which impacts long-term property tax revenue growth for local governments. This funding analysis emphasizes that reliance on any single funding source or a few sources is no longer sufficient. Instead, long-term sustainability depends on a balanced funding portfolio that strategically combines user fees, external funding, grants, capital funds, franchises and licenses, public-private partnerships, and selective tax-supported mechanisms. Each funding category is evaluated not only for its revenue potential, but also for its limitations, administrative requirements, equity considerations, and alignment with community values and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

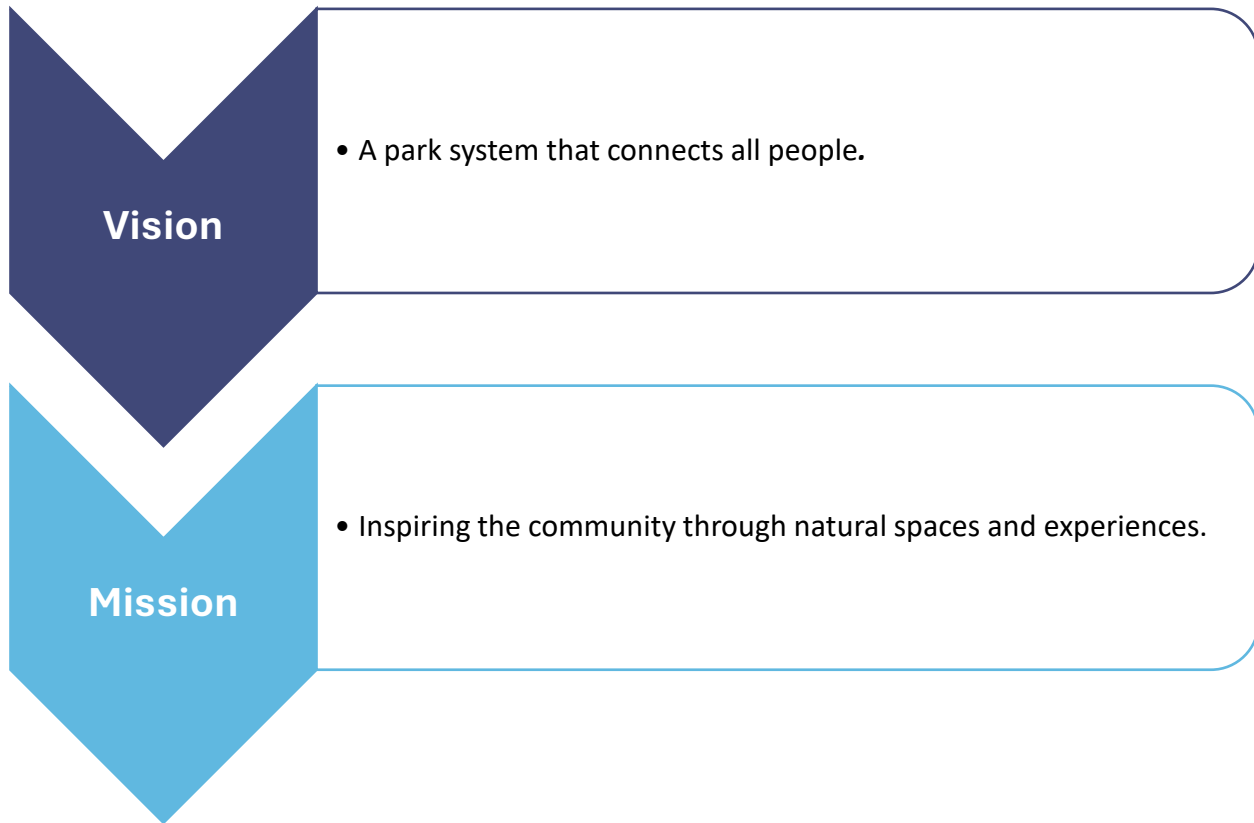
Key themes emerging from the analysis include the importance of formalizing policies and agreements, regularly reviewing and adjusting pricing and cost-recovery targets, strengthening partnerships with nonprofits and the Noblesville Parks Foundation, and aligning all funding decisions with lifecycle planning and capital priorities. User fees and earned revenue are positioned as increasingly critical tools for offsetting operating costs and reducing reliance on property taxes. Grants, sponsorships, and philanthropic support are best used to supplement, rather than replace, core public investment. Capital funding tools, including impact fees, reserve funds, bonding options, and public-private partnerships, provide opportunities to deliver major projects when used selectively and with careful financial oversight.

Collectively, the strategies outlined provide the City and NPRD with a flexible, resilient framework for funding parks and recreation services in an evolving fiscal environment. By proactively diversifying revenue sources, strengthening governance and financial discipline, and aligning investments with adopted plans and community priorities, the City is better positioned to protect existing assets, sustain high-quality programs and facilities, and continue delivering meaningful recreation experiences for residents and visitors well into the future.

CHAPTER EIGHT – ACTION PLAN

8.1 VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

The following outlines the foundational framework for NPRD including vision and mission, as well as values shown below:



VALUES

- Connection
- Accessibility & Inclusion
- Sustainability
- Stewardship
- Health & Wellness
- Pride in Place
- Responsiveness & Accountability

8.2 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

8.2.1 PARK AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement a coordinated wayfinding program that improves visibility of parks and trail access points, helps users navigate between parks and facilities that reinforces connectivity across the broader trail network.
- Advance sustainability initiatives that reduce long-term maintenance demands, fuel usage, and operational costs while positioning environmental stewardship as a visible community benefit.
- Reduce mowing intensity and maintenance costs by strategically converting non-programmed lawn areas to low-maintenance turf and alternative groundcovers while preserving high-quality open lawns for recreation.
- Protect and enhance the ecological health and visual character of the parks system by prioritizing native species and removing invasive or incompatible plant materials.
- Preserve parking lot and drive infrastructure and improve user experience by implementing a predictable, lifecycle-based maintenance and reinvestment program.
- Coordinate with planning and engineering departments to prioritize and complete the next layer of trail and pedestrian connections to strengthen access between parks, neighborhoods, schools, commercial areas, and regional trail systems.
- Complete an indoor recreation community center feasibility study to meet the community's high desire for year-round indoor recreation space.
- Continue to reimagine existing parks through effective planning and appropriate updates.
- Continue to review aquatics as a community need, while refreshing the existing aquatic center with new trends in aquatic design.



8.2.2 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Formalize a consistent, department-wide program development framework to ensure offerings align with community priorities and staff capacity.
- Shift from a youth-dominant portfolio toward a more balanced lifespan approach that includes the other age segments.
- Apply a formal program classification and cost recovery model to guide pricing, subsidy decisions, and resource prioritization.
- Implement program lifecycle management principles into recreation programming.
- Improve financial and operational performance of ancillary services while protecting community favorites.
- Strengthen use of performance metrics to guide program, pricing, and staffing decisions.
- Transition from tactical marketing to a strategic, outcomes-driven communications approach.



8.2.3 OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Realign staffing or resource levels with system size, asset complexity, and peer benchmarks to move from reactive to proactive maintenance.
- Address undersized and over-capacity maintenance facilities to improve efficiency, safety, and long-term asset care.
- Transition toward preventive, data-driven maintenance to protect assets and reduce long-term costs.
- Formalize department-specific standards and procedures to improve consistency and prepare for CAPRA accreditation.
- Ensure long-term maintenance implications are considered before new assets are built or acquired.
- Balance system expansion with the Department's ability to maintain quality standards.
- Leverage technology to improve planning, transparency, and decision-making.



8.2.4 FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance Sponsorship & Naming Rights Opportunities - Leverage sponsorships and naming rights while protecting public trust.
- Expand Strategic Partnerships to Offset Operating Costs - Use partnerships to reduce City financial exposure while expanding services and programming.
- Improve Grant Readiness and Match Strategy - Maximize competitiveness for state, federal, and private grants through preparation and alignment.
- Optimize Earned Revenue Without Compromising Access - Refine cost recovery and pricing strategies to strengthen financial performance while maintaining equity.
- Leverage Volunteerism Strategically - Use volunteers to expand capacity and environmental stewardship, not to replace skilled labor.
- Align Funding Decisions with Asset Lifecycle Planning - Ensure funding strategies support the full lifecycle of parks and facilities.
- Align funding sources with capital improvement projects creating dynamic funding strategies that will enhance the park system

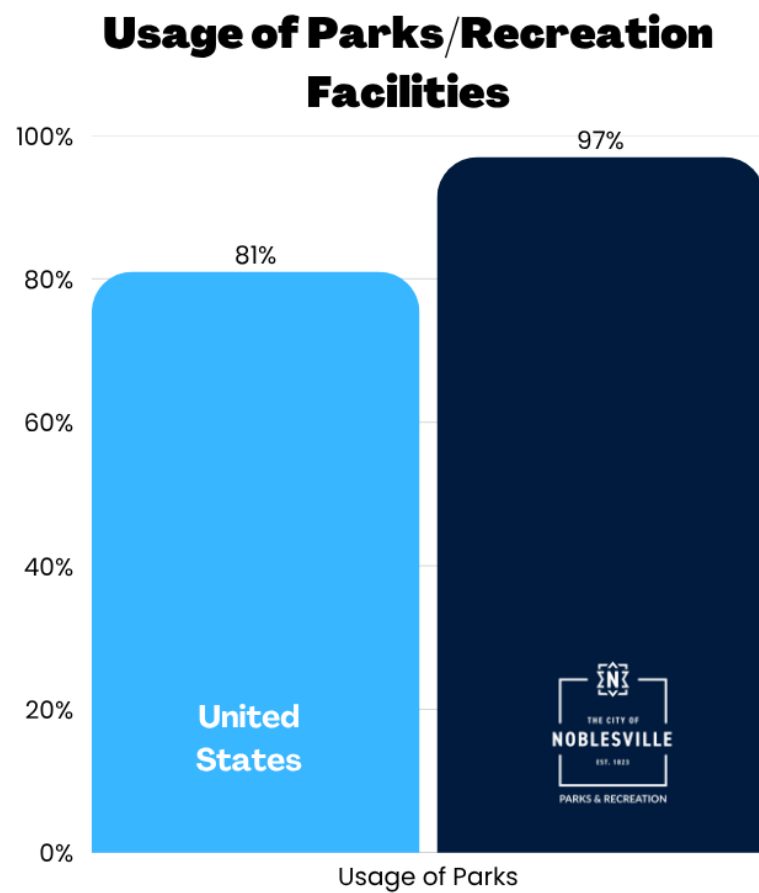


CHAPTER NINE – CONCLUSION

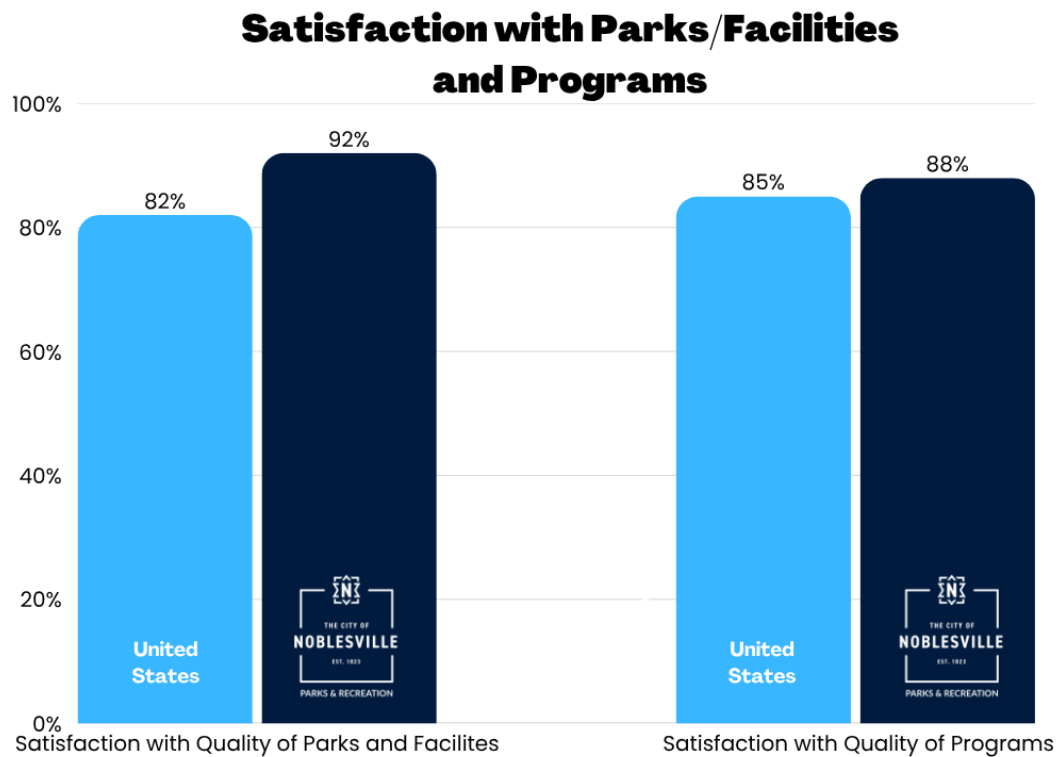
Noblesville Parks delivers consistent maintenance, quality programs and levels of service for residents and visitors. This Master Plan positions Noblesville Parks and Recreation to continue offering innovative, well-balanced facilities and programs as the city grows over the next five years.

Public engagement consistently praised the quality of maintenance and the accessibility of diverse park experiences, from Forest Park to the Nickel Plate Trail. Signature destinations, such as Dillon Park and Federal Hills Commons Park, are major community assets, and the Department's program portfolio continues to expand to all ages and interests.

The Noblesville community uses parks and recreation facilities, as evident in the table below, 98% of the community is using these assets based on the statistically valid needs assessment survey results with comparison to national benchmarks.



The Noblesville community takes pride in its parks and programs, as evident in the table below, based on the statistically valid needs assessment survey results with comparison to national benchmarks.



To sustain this high standard, the Department must stay ahead of infrastructure and asset needs, invest in improvements to existing amenities and trails, and maintain equity across the system as the City expands. The Parks and Recreation Department should also add amenities that meet evolving needs, such as year-round indoor space, acquire new land for future parks and trails, and secure additional funding sources to support a “park system of excellence.”

With these actions, Noblesville Parks and Recreation is well-positioned to build on its legacy over the next five years, providing a comprehensive mix of high-quality parks, facilities, programs, and services that elevate quality of life across the City of Noblesville.

