

Comprehensive Parks and Recreation System Master Plan

2026-2030

CITY OF
SIOUX FALLS
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 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation System Plan. The efforts of this community will continue to ensure the success of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation.

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CHAPTER ONE – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sioux Falls, the largest city in South Dakota, sits at the heart of the region and pairs a vibrant downtown and big-city amenities with small-city hospitality. The City's Parks and Recreation Department ("SFPR") maintains public open spaces, delivers a comprehensive system of parks and recreation facilities, and creates positive leisure opportunities for all residents, continuing a long legacy of high-quality service.

The SFPR system encompasses more than 3,200 acres of parkland across 83 parks and 7 undeveloped sites, plus one recreation center, five gymnasiums, three support sites, three golf courses, a refrigerated ice ribbon, six outdoor ice rinks, five outdoor pools, one indoor aquatic center, the Downtown River Greenway, and over 40 miles of paved, off-street trails. SFPR also partners with third parties to operate signature destinations including the Great Plains Zoo & Delbridge Museum of Natural History, Great Bear Recreation Park, the Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum & East Sioux Falls Historic Site, The Lodge at Jacobson Plaza, and the Falls Overlook Café, and recently added a Levitt performance venue, one of only seven in the nation. The system is well maintained and provides excellent citywide coverage.

Accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) since 2010, SFPR meets national best practices across more than 150 measured standards. CAPRA, the only national accreditation for parks and recreation, recognizes excellence in operations and service; SFPR is one of just 213 accredited agencies among 8,000+ systems nationwide, underscoring its accountability, quality management, and commitment to community outcomes.

This Parks and Recreation System Master Plan engaged the community to shape a shared vision for the future of parks and recreation in Sioux Falls. Input was gathered through focus groups, stakeholder interviews, public forums, a statistically valid needs assessment survey, and a project website (https://engagepros.mysocialpinpoint.com/sioux-falls-parks-master-plan) that provided more engagement tools such as a vision board, mapping activity, and online survey. Community feedback was integrated with technical research and analysis to produce the final plan from January to October 2025.

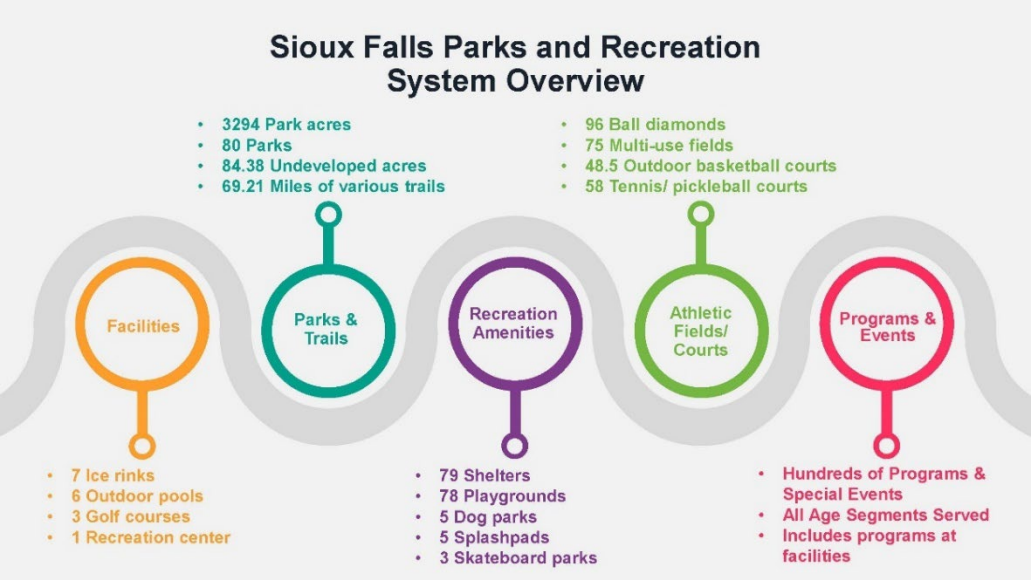


Figure 1 - SFPR System Overview

1.2 SYSTEM PLAN GOALS

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

- A plan that is grounded in inclusive and accessible community engagement.
- A future strategy for parks, recreation and green spaces that are equitable to the entire community regardless of socioeconomic, cultural, racial, or geographic differences.
- 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 Sioux Falls.
- Enhance the environmental resiliency of the City by leveraging parks and green spaces as green infrastructure equitably distributed throughout the community.
- Shape the financial sustainability and organizational excellence to achieve the strategic objectives, identify revenue opportunities, and ensure future operational and maintenance needs are addressed.
- Develop a dynamic and realistic action plan.



1.3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE LAST MASTER PLAN

The Department has made great strides in the past 5 years working towards achieving several of the objectives set forth in the 2020 Comprehensive Master Plan. The current plan approved, in February of 2020, included 4 overarching priorities including:

- Equitable Access to Parks & Facilities
    - The addition of the Hayward Park Splash Pad, an area of City that had a gap in aquatics services due to arterial street network and railroad tracks.
    - Acquired land for new parks and trail development.
    - Established policy in cooperation with the planning department to ensure trail corridors are preserved through private developments.
- Maintaining & Growing Infrastructure:
    - SFPR targeted aging infrastructure on pool replacements for the City's three oldest facilities. McKennan is under construction and Kuehn, & Frank Olson are currently in design which will be valuable to SFPR for the next 20 years regarding their replacement.
    - Added shade to Terrace Laurel Oak Family Aquatic Centers and looking at additional updates as part of the 5-year CIP.
    - Added new elements to existing parks like the Mini pitch at Terrace Park.
    - Continued to focus on priority facility investments with new neighborhood parks and trails.
- Year-Round Programming:
    - Shifted philosophy for school-based Community Centers to regional Recreation Centers and moved toward closing the gap on indoor recreation space needs with the purchase of the Westside Recreation Center. This, coupled with the Frank Olson recreation center, would provide over 150,000 square feet of indoor recreation space. Allowing the City to realize about half of the recommended service level of 300,000 SF for a City of its size.
    - The recently completed Jacobson Plaza also helps move the needle on year-round programming opportunities and is the City's first step towards moving towards refrigerated ice.
- Financing A Parks System of Excellence:
    - Established the Sioux Falls Parks & Recreation Foundation who has been instrumental in donations towards the Big Sioux River Trail System and McKennan Park Wading pool upgrades.
    - Continued to focus on public/private partnerships and maximizing private investment in our park system.

1.4 PROJECT PROCESS

The System 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:

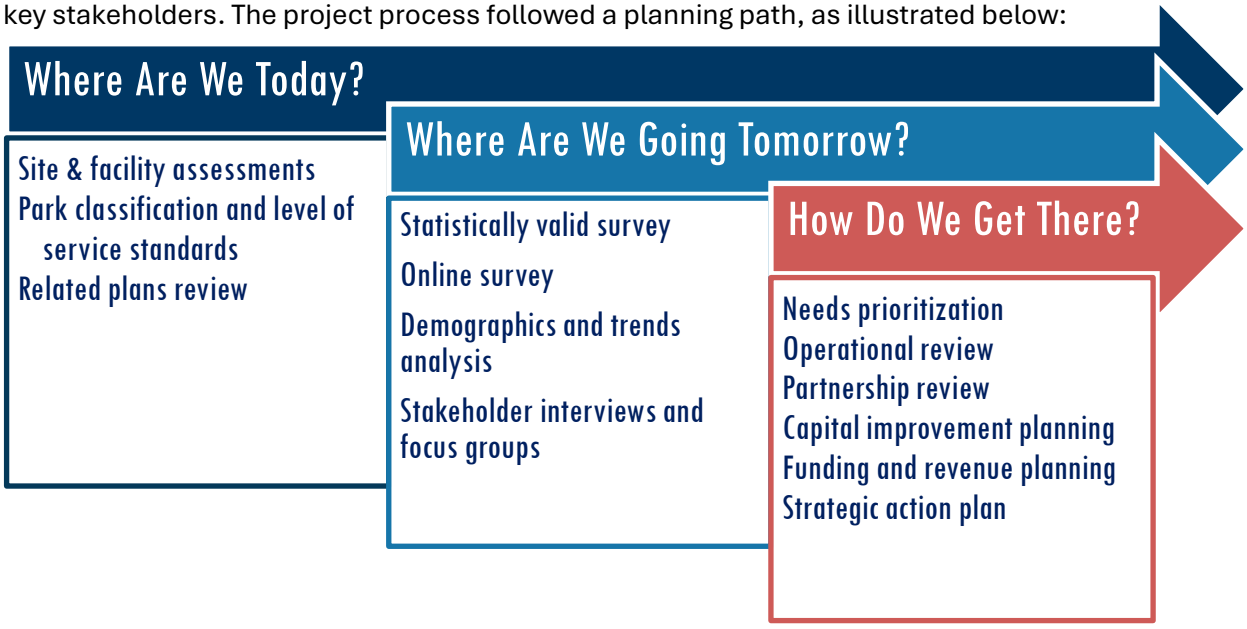


Figure 2 - Process Overview

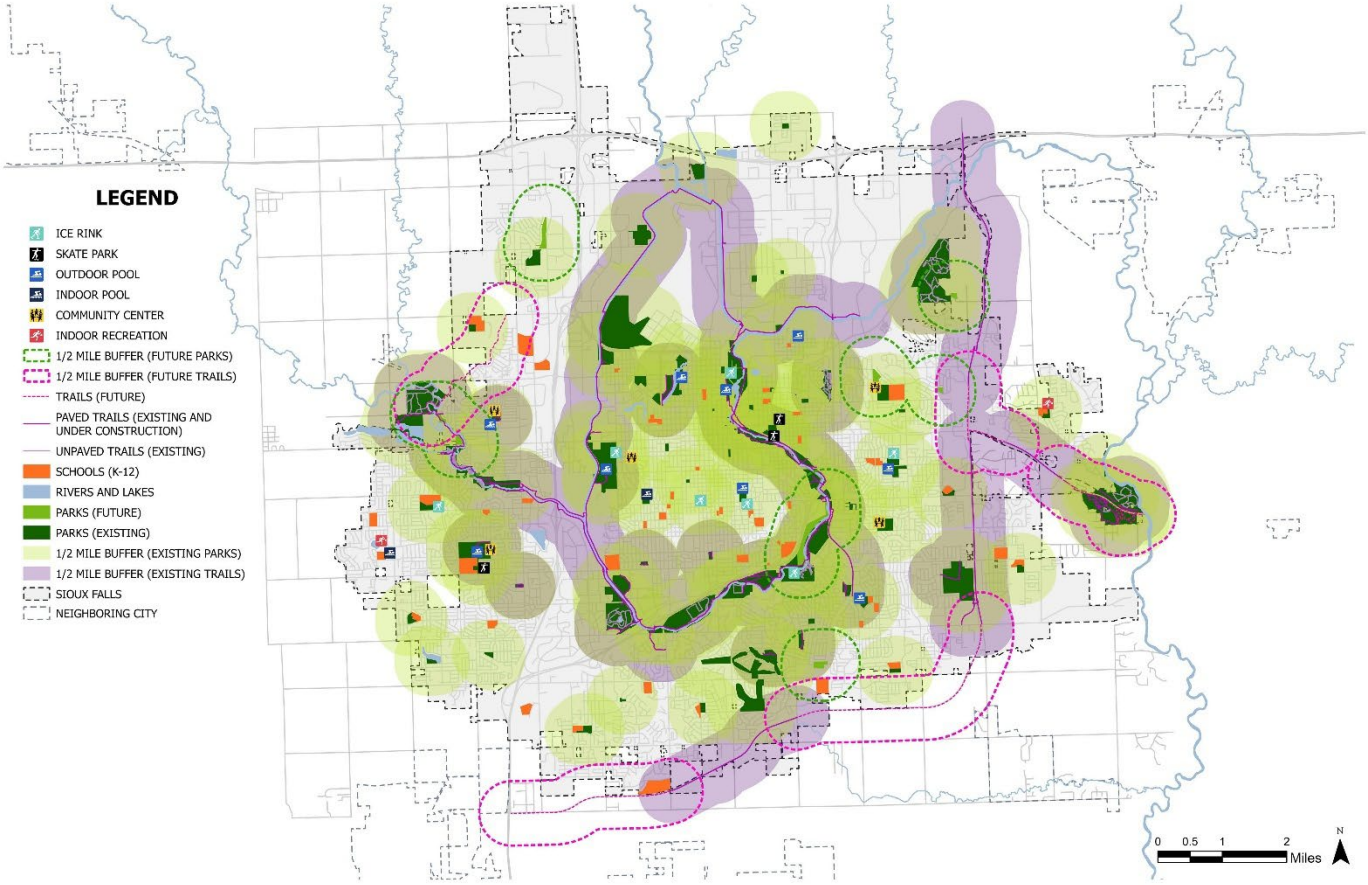
1.5 SFPR VISION & MISSION



Figure 3 - SFPR Vision & Mission

1.6 CURRENT PARKS AND FACILITIES MAP

The planning area for this Master Plan includes all areas within the boundaries of the City of Sioux Falls. While this plan recognizes that the actual service areas of some SFPR parks, facilities, and programs may extend beyond the defined boundaries of the planning area, the primary purpose of this plan is to first and foremost identify and address the park and recreation needs of Sioux Falls residents. **Map 1** depicts the planning area and location of SFPR parks and greenways, as well as a half-mile service level of service area surrounding parks and trails.



Map 1 - SFPR Park System Managed by SFPR

1.7 COMMUNITY DRIVEN PLAN

The Master Plan is built around key themes that were borne from the Sioux Falls community throughout the 10-month planning process. Multiple methods were used for the Sioux Falls community to provide their vision for the next five years. Below summarizes the methods used.



SOCIAL PINPOINT MAP

(160 RESPONSES)



COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

(75+)



STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

(483 RESPONSES)



ONLINE AND YOUTH SURVEY

(381 RESPONSES AND 440 YOUTH RESPONSES)



STAKEHOLDER AND STAFF FOCUS GROUPS (16+)

1,500+ Community Participants

1.8 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRIORITY AREAS



- Park Maintenance & Cleanliness
  - SFPR is highly valued by the community for maintaining clean and well-kept parks.
  - Continue to update existing neighborhood parks.



- Diverse Parks & Amenities
  - Continue to offer a wide variety of parks and amenities that cater to all age groups and interests, from large destination parks to neighborhood spaces.



- Year-Round Recreation
  - There is a call for more indoor recreational spaces, as well as adult fitness and wellness programs.
  - Year-round facilities to support activities during colder months, with also a focus on expanding outdoor winter activities.



- Sustainable Growth & Existing Infrastructure Improvements
  - As Sioux Falls grows, there is a need for strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, and securing parkland to meet future demands.
  - Continue to take care of existing parks and trails.



- Accessibility & Connectivity
  - Continue to promote walkability and multi-modal transportation.
  - Ensuring access to parks and recreational programs, particularly in underserved communities, is a major priority.

1.9 THEMES OF THE PLAN

1.9.1 ONE SIOUX FALLS

The Master Plan is organized under the guidance of the One Sioux Falls framework that the City administration and employees use to guide their work to provide excellent quality of life in Sioux Falls. Each of the four focus areas falls under the umbrella of innovation and investments in foundational growth for the community.

- **Safety and Health:** Provide a safe community in which the health and well-being of our citizens is above the national average.
- **Accessible Housing:** Foster the availability of housing options at all income levels, throughout the city.
- **Workforce:** Continue to develop a community with a quality of life that will attract and retain the best employee base in the United States.
- **Engaging People:** Engage, collaborate and partner with the community to solve our challenges and seize our opportunities.

1.9.2 SYSTEM MASTER PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles emerged from the Master Plan that are based on feedback from the community, technical assessments, and review of best practices, which in turn fall under the umbrella of One Sioux Falls. The five overarching guiding principles include:

- Long Term Sustainability
- Exceptional Customer Experiences
- Year-Round Programming
- Equitable Access to Parks & Facilities
- Maintaining & Growing Infrastructure



Figure 4 - Master Plan Guiding Principles

1.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded in community feedback, stakeholder input, technical analysis, and the Master Plan's priority rankings, the following key recommendations are designed to strengthen the park and recreation system and position SFPR to meet current and future needs of the community. While SFPR should pursue all recommendations in this Master Plan, the near-term priorities will require sustained commitment from the community, elected officials, Park Board members, and SFPR staff. Successful implementation will keep SFPR responsive to community needs and among the best-managed park systems in the nation. The following present recommendations are organized by strategic priorities. Chapter 7 – Strategic Action Plan also presents these recommendations, as well as additional strategies and action steps for consideration.

1.10.1 LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

- Continue to implement proactive asset and resource management.
    - Ensure proactive care for aging and expanding assets.
    - Use structured maintenance schedules and lifecycle planning.
    - Continue enhancing VUEWorks with accurate, consistent data entry.
    - Leverage historical data for forecasting resource needs when planning and developing new assets.
    - Integrate maintenance staff into key facilities.
        - Embed maintenance staff in future key facilities such as the Westside Recreation Center.
        - Ensure cleanliness, safety, and responsiveness.
    - Develop advanced seasonal operations planning.
        - Use advanced planning and resource deployment strategies.
        - Improve readiness for winter and event-based demands.
- Maintain alignment with CAPRA standards and consider application for NRPA Gold Medal.
    - Keep plans and procedures current to CAPRA standards.
    - Ensure consistent application of best practices across operations.
    - Consider application for the NRPA Gold Medal Award.
- Continue best practice for capital planning (reinvest 3-4% of asset valuation annually, balance reinvestment vs. new projects).
    - Reinvest 3% to 4% of total park system asset valuation in capital investment projects annually.
    - Ensure capital funding is balanced between Capital Reinvestment (60%), New/Upgraded Investments (20%), and Visionary Projects (20%).

- Establish clear cost recovery and financial stewardship standards.
    - Implement clear cost recovery goals aligned with community benefit.
    - Allocate resources effectively and sustain operations amid rising costs.
    - Evaluate and adjust pricing for facilities (e.g., wedding venues, Arrowhead House).
    - Align programs to better meet cost recovery goals.
- Modernize the pricing policy and receive City Council approval.
    - Discuss existing fee approval process and investigate opportunities for implementation of a modern pricing policy.
    - Utilize the pricing of Basic and Supplemental used at the Westside Recreation Center programs and price programs accordingly across the system.
- Improve cost efficiency and resource allocation.
    - Use cost-per-user data and service analysis.
    - Prioritize high-impact areas and improve operational sustainability.



1.10.2 EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

- Continue to strengthen sponsorships and partnerships.
    - Develop a formal sponsorship including multi-year (tiered) structure quantifying the value of sponsoring parks and recreation activities and spaces.
    - Create a standardized partnership framework to streamline negotiations.
- Enhance partnerships that support programs and facilities.
    - Formalize standards for community partnerships.
    - Promote shared investment in outcomes and facility stewardship.
- Standardize all partnership agreements.
    - Ensure agreements include KPIs, financial terms, and legal clauses.
    - Regularly evaluate performance.
    - Validate community impact of all agreements.
    - Foster stronger communication between partners.
    - Set timelines for agreement evaluation and renewal.
    - Establish regular meetings to review metrics, financials, and legal requirements.
- Continue to implement community-driven planning practices.
    - Use resident feedback from surveys, focus groups, and community meetings.
    - Ensure programs reflect evolving interests and priorities.
- Strengthen staffing and workforce development.
    - Refine full-time/part-time staffing models to improve retention.
    - Expand training in customer service and safety.



1.10.3 YEAR-ROUND RECREATION

- Strengthen health and wellness programming for all ages.
    - Continue to prioritize health and wellness as a cross-generational core program area.
    - Provide tailored opportunities for youth, adults, and seniors.
- Continue to invest in year-round recreation programs, recreation facilities and amenities.
    - Continue to invest in indoor recreational spaces, as well as adult fitness and wellness programs.
    - Continue to have a focus on expanding outdoor winter activities.
    - Enhance Great Bear trails and amenities.



1.10.4 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PARKS

- Expand equity in access through tiered pricing models and affordability.
    - Apply tiered pricing strategies.
    - Pursue scholarships to ensure affordability for all income levels while maintaining financial sustainability.
- Prioritize addressing the service gaps and eliminating geographic inequities in the availability of indoor recreation spaces.
    - Complete construction of Frank Olson Recreation Center to help reduce the level of service shortage and improve service area on the east side of the City.
    - Conduct a feasibility study on future multi-generational recreation center for underserved areas of the community.
- Strategically acquire land for additional parks and natural areas to keep pace with population growth.
    - As Sioux Falls grows, there is a need for strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, and securing parkland in population growth areas to meet future demands.
    - Determine where neighborhood parks may be lacking based on access and density maps used as part of the System Plan process and prioritize areas for new park development.
    - Begin to plan for a new community park.
    - Begin to plan for a new regional park.
    - Increase staff for operation and maintenance of newly acquired land.
    - Continue to offer a wide variety of parks and amenities that cater to all age groups and interests, from large destination parks to neighborhood spaces.
- Continue the initiative of a half mile strategy connecting residents to parks and trails.
    - Develop new neighborhood parks in areas of the City not currently served by a park, of any classification, within one half of a mile. Use equity mapping to identify best locations.
    - Work with developers to establish agreements for parks and trail development and connectivity alongside their development project.
- Continue investing in redevelopment of existing parks.
    - Continue to regularly evaluate existing parks and make investments to provide equity in facilities and services to all residents throughout the community.

1.10.5 MAINTAINING GROWING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Upgrade existing maintenance shop campus.
    - Make upgrades at the existing park shop campus through renovation and expansion.
    - Expands capacity to accommodate staffing and equipment needs.
- Expand the Recreation Trail, river access, and the Big Sioux River Greenway.
    - Coordinate with transportation projects to promote walkability and multi-modal transportation.
    - Seek opportunities and partnerships to implement additional phases of the Downtown River Greenway.
    - Develop criteria where the highest area of population receives priority for connections to spine trails.
    - Work towards establishing trail connections to parks through bike trails, side paths, bike boulevards, bike routes, and bike lanes, where appropriate.
    - Prioritize greenway properties for acquisition citywide.
- Develop new earned income opportunities.
    - Look to implement one to two new earned income opportunities such as recreation service fees, leasing space, value added packages, naming rights, advertising, gift cards.
- Work with the Sioux Falls Parks Foundation to expand its role and to help raise funds.
    - Identify and prioritize Visionary Projects in the Capital Improvement Plan best suited for public-private partnerships.
    - Prepare materials to communicate the projects and needs to potential donors and community groups.
    - Train and regularly communicate with Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation staff and Sioux Falls Parks Foundation Advisory Board Members to foster an understanding of park needs and priorities.
    - Seek feedback from community philanthropists and tailor the project ‘asks’ to maximize success.
- Expand advertising sales to diversify revenue streams.
    - Broaden advertising beyond traditional opportunities (e.g., scoreboards) to include facility signage, digital displays, and branded community events.
    - Introduce advertising placements in high-visibility spaces within recreation centers, athletic complexes, and trail systems.
    - Establish clear guidelines for tasteful and appropriate advertising to maintain community trust.
    - Create flexible advertising packages that allow small businesses, nonprofits, and regional partners to participate at varying levels.

1.11 CONCLUSION

SFPR is widely recognized as a best-practice agency for delivering consistent maintenance excellence and equitable levels of service for residents and visitors. This Master Plan positions SFPR 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 Falls Park to the Recreation Trail. Signature destinations, including the Great Plains Zoo & Delbridge Museum of Natural History, Great Bear Recreation Park, Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum & East Sioux Falls Historic Site, the Levitt Performance Venue, Jacobson Plaza, and the Westside Recreation Center, are major community assets, and SFPR's program portfolio reaches all ages and interests.

The Sioux Falls community uses SFPR parks and recreation facilities, as evident in the table below, 95% of the community is using these assets based on the statistically valid needs assessment survey results with comparison to national benchmarks.

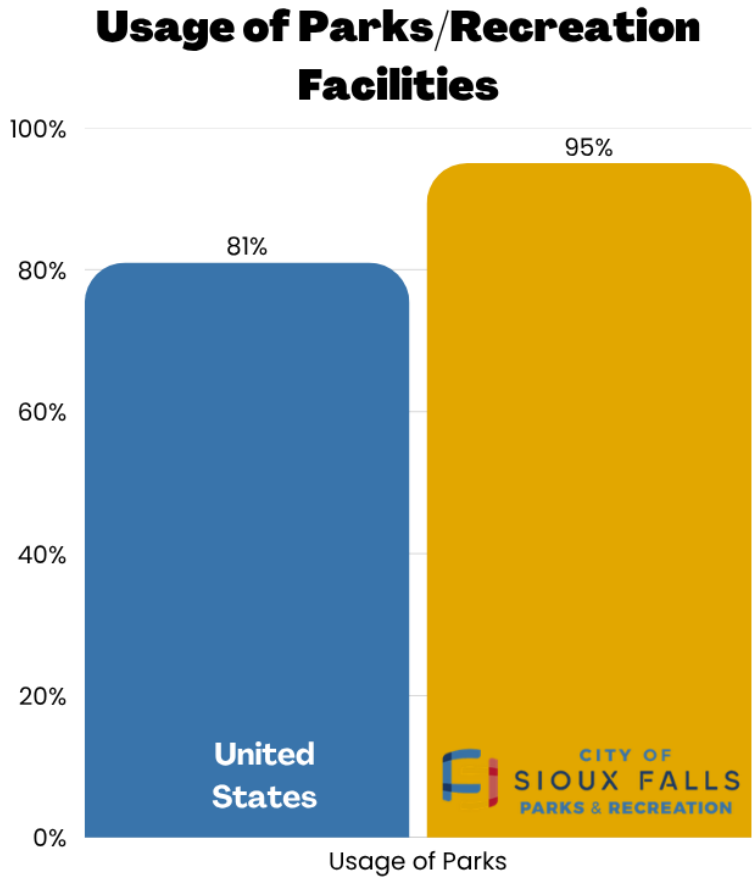
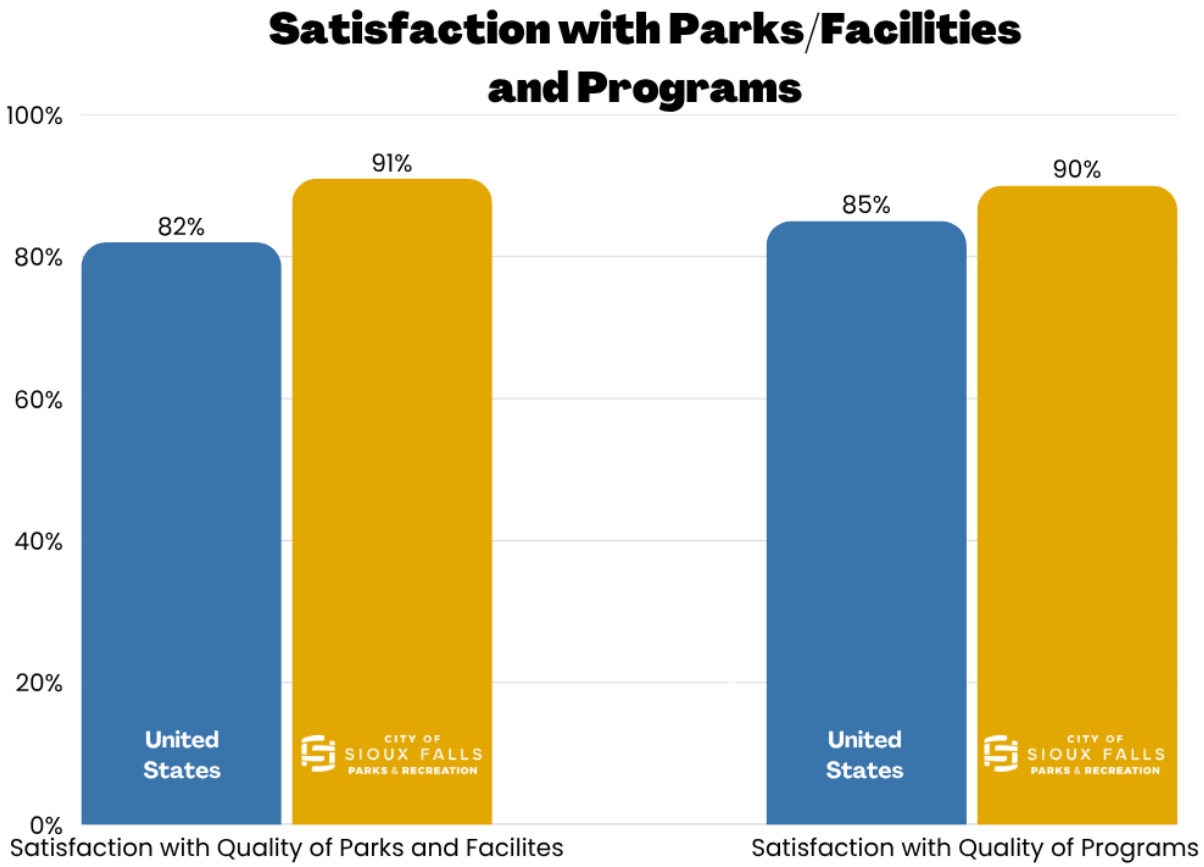


Figure 5 - Usage of Parks/Recreation Facilities

The Sioux Falls community takes pride in SFPR, 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, SFPR 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. SFPR should also add amenities that meet evolving needs, such as year-round indoor space and winter recreation, acquire new land for future parks and trails, and secure additional funding sources to support a "park system of excellence."

With these actions, SFPR 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 Sioux Falls.

