



Munster Parks and Recreation 2018 Master Plan



Acknowledgments

Munster Parks and Recreation Department “Munster Matters” Parks and Recreation Master Plan

This plan was made possible by the tireless devotion of Munster Indiana’s Park Board and the Staff of Munster’s Parks and Recreation Department. Additionally, special thanks go out to the residents, individual stakeholders, and affiliate participants representing the various user groups for their valuable comments, input, insight, and continued interest throughout the process in the development of the Master Plan.

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This plan has been prepared with input from the residents of the Town of Munster, the Town Council, the Park Board, and the Department of Parks and Recreation Staff Members.

Adopted by the Town of Munster Park Board on this ____ Day of ____, 2018.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	1
Chapter 1: Executive Summary	3
Chapter 2: Introduction	9
Chapter 3: Community Profile and Demographics	13
Chapter 4: Community-wide Survey	23
Chapter 5: Public Participation	27
Chapter 6: Visioning	35
Chapter 7: Park Classification and Levels of Service	39
Chapter 8: Benchmarking	43
Chapter 9: Work Place Culture Assessment	45
Chapter 10: Programming	49
Chapter 11: Park Inventory and Assessments	69
Chapter 12: Sustainability	147
Chapter 13: Recommendations Summary	151
Chapter 14: Implementation Strategy	191
Appendix	193





Chapter 1

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department (MPRD) staff and Planning Resources Team, working together with community leaders and the general public, worked collaboratively to develop the “Munster Matters” Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Plan). The Plan intends to convey a vision for parks and recreation within the Department. Additionally, the Plan will function as the Department’s long-term action plan, providing guidance to the department, establishing goals and recommendations, and identifying needs related to both existing and future park facilities.

Just like roadways and utilities, parks and recreation facilities include infrastructure that needs to be replaced overtime. Playgrounds, shelters, pavilions, and athletic fields are just some of the infrastructure that are aging in parks that need to be replaced. The Plan document identifies updated amenities that reflect parks and recreation trends that can be incorporated into parks when they are renovated. The Plan also identifies the recommended actions and steps for the MPRD to implement to satisfy the expectations of the community and its principal stakeholders. It includes recommendations for improving the delivery of programs and services, protecting open spaces, improving and potentially repurposing facilities and instituting continuous improvement processes. The Purpose of the Plan is to guide operational, recreation planning and development efforts, and philosophical decisions for the MPRD over the next 3-5 year period, through 2023.

The Plan is the result of an extensive community process including focus group and stakeholder meetings, meetings with elected and appointed officials, MySidewalk – an online engagement tool, and a community-wide mail survey. The goal of the Plan is to be a comprehensive park and recreation planning tool providing direction to the Department for improving the Town’s park system by identifying priorities, long-term physical development, expanding recreation programming and ensuring effective utilization of existing parks and facilities owned, leased, or maintained by the MPRD.

This Plan is a commitment to a course of action that leads to the development of a park and recreation system that reflects the vision of the people of the Town of Munster. As that vision grows and changes, the Plan can be adapted to match the new vision. The Plan contains text, maps, tables and charts that describe existing conditions, apply accepted performance criteria and recommend specific improvements to the existing system. Once adopted, the Plan will serve as the official document to be used by the Town of Munster to guide decisions regarding parks, recreation and the preservation of open space.

The Planning Resources’ Consultant Team (Team) was commissioned by the Park Board to prepare the 2018 Master Plan. Over the last eight to nine months, MPRD in conjunction with the Team worked cooperatively to study the needs of the Department and develop an implementation strategy. The Consultant Team is comprised of award winning professionals committed to developing a high quality road map for the MPRD to continue providing exceptional parks, facilities and recreational opportunities with a wide range of diversified programs and activities.

The outdoor recreation assessments were completed by Planning Resources Inc, recreational programming, operations, and workplace culture were completed by Executive Decisions Consulting, the visioning, focus and stakeholder meetings were facilitated by Upland Design, and the public opinion/interest survey was developed and tabulated by Readex Research.

In establishing the future direction for the Department, the Munster Matters Plan’s objective is to reinforce and establish initiatives and recommendations for implementation in support of the mission, vision and values identified in this document as well as maximize the quality of life through identifying the community’s needs, prioritized improvements to parks, recreation facilities, and open space, and effective allocation of the Department’s limited resources.

Planning Process Methodology

The planning process was guided by the MPRD Executive Director, key administrative staff, and elected Park Board members, as well as by a public input process – direct public input was gathered at a series of small and large in-person meetings and through a scientific survey effort. Throughout the planning process, Department representatives met with the Consultant Team to provide input. This collaborative effort fully utilized the expertise of the consultant team and incorporated local knowledge and institutional history.

Needs & Priorities Assessment Process

To gain an accurate understanding of the existing condition of the MPRD's system and the needs of its users, the Consultant Team employed the following needs assessment techniques:

Anecdotal Techniques:

- Individual park site evaluations
- Demographics analysis
- Recreation programs analysis
- Operations workplace culture assessment

Qualitative Techniques:

- Stakeholder interviews
- Focus groups
- Community meetings and public forums

Quantitative Techniques:

- Community-Wide attitude and interest survey
- Community benchmarking
- Park Classification Level of Service (LOS)
Analysis for park acreage, facilities, and access

Master Planning

The Munster Matters Plan is based on an inventory of current conditions as well as an analysis of community needs, including valuable direction provided by Town residents through a comprehensive, community-driven process, statistically-valid survey responses, and comments made in a series of focus groups,

public workshops and other forums. The Munster Matters Plan is presented in a sequence of chapters that identify trends in parks and recreation, a detailed look at the Department and the community that it serves, a description of the input garnered from the stakeholders, program and facility users, and interested residents received during the planning process, in-depth assessments of the parks and facilities, and recommendations for the future.

The following is an overview of the contents of the Munster Matters Plan document:

Chapter 2: Introduction

The Introduction Chapter of the Munster Matters Plan identifies the purposes of the Plan and provides a general background and history of the Town and the Park and Recreation Department and highlights several key events during the Town of Munster's celebrated history.

Chapter 3: Community Profile and Demographics

In order to plan for the Department's future, we must first understand the history, culture and traditions of the community as these are the underlying principles that help shape a community along with the people it serves. This chapter reviews the Town of Munster and the Parks and Recreation Department's demographics and growth trends including annual growth rates.

This chapter also projects population figures to the year 2020 (5 years out) In addition to total population, the age and ethnicity of the Town of Munster is reviewed. This information provides an understanding of the community that allows the formulation of viable recommendations for park and recreation programs, amenities and services.

Chapter 4: Community-Wide Survey

A survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the MPRD. The Consultant Team, utilizing the services of Readex Research, conducted a Community-Wide Survey to provide the necessary decision making data. The survey was developed in conjunction with park staff and was administered from January 25, 2018 to February 26, 2018 by mail. The goal was to obtain 400 completed surveys via randomly selected sample of 2,000 residents. A total of 366 usable responses were returned. The effective response rate of 19% was calculated based on a net effective mailout of 1,928 (72 surveys were returned as undeliverable).

The results of the random sample of 2,000 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 5.0%. Preferences expressed in the statistically valid Community-Wide Survey provide insights about the demand for new programs and validation of the support for past accomplishments.

The results of the survey were used to develop a number of recommendations for improving recreation programming, and facility supply.

These and the other recommendations contained in the Plan will prove extremely useful to the Department to ensure that its park programming and facilities respond to the needs of its residents.

Chapter 5: Public Participation

This chapter details the engagement process and findings of the public participation element of the Town's Master Planning effort. This chapter summarizes the findings from the focus group meetings, stakeholder meetings, public meetings and provides a preliminary list of common land planning and programming ideas and themes that eventually became the objectives and initiatives included in the plan. The public meetings provided opportunity to test the common ideas and gather suggested action input from attendees.

Chapter 6: Visioning

Visioning brings together the inventory and public input. This chapter sets the course for the Munster Matters Plan recommendations, and is the outcome of the inventory and public process. Public engagement is critical to development of a plan that reflects community goals and builds consensus among stakeholders and residents. A robust community resident and stakeholder engagement process was initiated to seek input on what the future of parks, recreation, trails, open space, and the overall department should look like in Munster.

Chapter 6 summarizes the community involvement utilized in the planning process to include the integration of focus groups, staff and Board interviews. The findings of visioning meetings and interviews with MPRD staff and the Park Board provides an inside view of the Department. Feedback received from the community leaders, stakeholders and interested residents are summarized and their responses to activities, challenges and funding sources is documented in the Appendices to the Munster Matters Plan.

Chapter 7: Park Classification and Level of Service (LOS)

Chapter 7 assesses the park land level of service and establishes planning standards for parks and open space and a park land/open space classification system based on use. Classification standards are developed which include service areas, size of parks, acres per 1,000 population and population served for the different types of parks. Each park type serves a distinct geographical base that ranges from a few blocks surrounding a mini-park to several miles for parks that offer amenities that are unique to a region.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed a classification system that is used as a base to describe most types of parks.

The MPRD oversees 44 park sites and facilities with a total of 345 acres, this total includes the Centennial Golf Course which comprises of 95 acres. Based on

the 2018 inventory, the MPRD Park Matrix reflects the current inventory of parks, their acreage, classification, and amenities. The MPRD currently is providing 14.93 acres/1,000 population, which exceeds the NRPA recommendation of 6.25-10.0 acres/1,000 population.

A detailed service area analysis of existing parks establishes the need for additional park space within the Community.

Chapter 8: Benchmarking

Comparing park departments and recreation agencies provide an understanding of how well an agency delivers programs, services, amenities and facilities for its residents compared with other agencies. The rationale behind this comparison is that a localized comparison provides a more accurate analysis of the needs and deficiencies of an agency. This chapter provides a comparison of the MPRD to other park and recreation departments in the region, providing quantitative comparison of many of the more common elements found within parks in this region. Conclusions are offered that look at this comparison with respect to public needs.

Chapter 9: Work Place Culture

By taking a holistic approach to culture, the Planning Team worked in conjunction with Department staff to identify how the MPRD could change to reach its maximum potential.

Chapter 10: Programming

This chapter looks at a variety of topics regarding the day to day functioning of the Department; focusing on a few specific areas where opportunities exist for improved services. Maintenance, training, collaboration, and administrative topics are discussed, with a series of recommendations presented for modifying, tracking, upgrading, or collaborating in ways to provide performance standards, check lists, and defined methods of operations which will allow staff efforts to focus appropriately. These recommendations are considered

suggested guidelines that can assist the Department in providing great services to the community. This chapter also includes a review of the core program offerings of the Department, including promotional efforts, financial review of program registrations, programming space requirements, and the relationship of the Community-Wide Survey results and demographics to future program offerings. The evaluation also includes a review of activity areas, age segment distribution of offerings, fees, gender, and season offered. According to feedback during the public input process, residents greatly appreciate the variety of program offerings. The most significant challenge for recreation programs relates to improving programs and program variety for youth and teens within the community.

Chapter 11: Park Inventory and Assessments

This chapter includes a thorough review of the parks within the system. Consulting team members reviewed all of the parks and facilities and provided assessments of general conditions of each site. The park assessment includes a 2013 aerial photo image of the park, a brief overall description of the site, discussions regarding the amenities and features of the park, a few photos of select elements and park features, and a summary of recommendations for park improvements. The recommendations incorporate feedback from the public meetings, stakeholder meetings, focus groups and staff discussions. Resident households from the Community-Wide Survey expressed high levels of satisfaction toward the condition of parks and facilities.

Chapter 12: Sustainability

Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability consists of three elements: Environment, Social Structure and Economy. Collectively, these elements provide a foundation for quality of life which supports the vision and mission of the Parks and Recreation Department. The growth of the parks, open space,

and recreation system has identified the need to refine stewardship activities and establish Best Management Practices within the agency.

Chapter 12 serves as a guide for decision making for staff and Park Board so that the MPRD can provide services and maintain their facilities and operations more sustainably for the well-being of the community and the environment for present and future generations. The development and adoption a sustainability plan and the formation of a “Green Team” will ensure that sustainable practices are incorporated into all agency activities. Additionally, the development of an environmental policy focused on the core elements of purchasing, use of resources, energy, waste management, and planning and management will confirm the Department’s commitment to leadership and sound use of the Department’s resources in a responsible manner.

Chapter 13: Recommendations

Recommendations are the blueprint for action. Chapter 13 is a series of findings and recommendations regarding the Department’s parks and open space; open space standards; recreational facilities, park programs, and operations and maintenance.

The Munster Matters Plan recommendations are shaped by extensive public input, a needs assessment, and sound planning practices. These findings provide an overview of details identified within the Munster Matters Plan document.

Over the next 3 to 5 years, many influences will have an impact on the success of this plan. Funding availability, staff resources, and political and community support will play significant roles in the implementation process.

Chapter 14: Implementation Strategy, Appendix & Conclusion

The MPRD strives to be a best-practice agency. The Munster Matters Plan is a guide where Department staff needs to center their energy and values for the next 5

years. It is also a plan to inform the residents on where they will invest capital improvements in the future and how they plan to address key issues that were brought forward during the public input process. The Board and staff recognize how important it is to maintain a first-class parks and recreation system to keep people living and working within the Town’s boundaries and the economic impact the Department has on the community. The recommendations outlined in the Munster Matters Plan are aligned with the vision, mission, and core values of the community and the Department. These recommendations follow what the community voiced as a priority. Currently, the Park Board and ultimately the Town Council will need to allocate adequate funding to achieve these recommendations to ensure the successful implementation of the plan. Overall, the capital improvements can be utilized as a guideline for future improvements and development with flexibility to be altered and updated as circumstances and conditions change. Significant projects will require the development of detailed implementation plans. In the development of these plans, the Park Department may provide opportunities for residents to provide further comment on the project and influence its final form.

The goal of the Munster Matters Plan is not to overextend the Department financially or operationally. The MPRD will still require strong financial support from user fees and earned income opportunities as well as a commitment from the Board to support the basic infrastructure and staffing needs of the system. This will require a continued business planning approach and support from staff to operate in the most efficient and effective manner. The Department is willing and able to deliver on the recommendations in the plan. This will require everyone working together with the support of the Park Board and Town Council supporting the implementation of Munster Matters. The community desires and expects it so let the process begin!



Chapter 2

Introduction: History & Background



Introduction

The Town of Munster, Indiana has worked collaboratively with the Planning Resources Team to develop a Comprehensive Master Plan for the Parks System. This plan will help guide the Department in making better more-informed decisions regarding parks facilities and programs for the future of the community. Munster enjoys economic stability and offers its residents a plethora of green space, parkland, trails, golf courses and more. Parks and open spaces are one of the most visible elements of the Parks and Recreation Department and can instill a strong sense of pride in the residents of the community. A great parks and recreation agency lets citizens, visitors, and staff know that the leadership of the Town is interested in providing the best for its citizens. The leadership of Munster has long been recognized for its teamwork, excellent work ethic, and overall concern for its residents. The Town recognizes that recreation plays a critical role in the quality of life for the residents. They also believe that a strong parks and recreation network promotes multi-generational recreation, activities and trail systems which provide healthier environments, improves well-being of young and old, and reduces the potential for crime in the community.

The purpose of this Comprehensive Master Plan is to provide an assessment of the current system, to allow the citizens and stakeholders to voice their opinions regarding their desires and concerns about the Parks and Recreation Department and its direction, and to provide a set of recommendations and priorities that will guide in shaping the Department's future.

The master plan involved a comprehensive, community-driven methodology that evaluated the current conditions of the Parks and Recreation Department's open spaces, parks, and programs. The team evaluated not only the vision, mission, and goals, but the recommendations and other implementation tools as well. An extensive community outreach program was conducted to ensure a broad, effective and defensible public involvement process. This was integral and key to the development of the plan. The



planning method also included an assessment of local and statewide recreational trends as a means to examine park and outdoor recreation user patterns and future demand for amenities and facilities.

Definition of Planning Area

The Town of Munster values long-time residents and welcomes everyone. While the Town of Munster is a high energy community with a thriving business community and industry hub focused on progress, it also makes a significant investment of their taxpayers money in the development of a first-rate parks system.

The Department receives a number of non-residents from surrounding communities that visit the parks and register for park programs making Munster a regional destination for recreation. All of the Munster Parks are free to residents and non-residents alike. However, a higher fee is assessed to all non-residents who sign up for and participate in recreation programs sponsored by the Department. In fairness to the taxpayers who fund the parks, provision must be made to ensure that everyone using the parks are contributing equitable to its operating costs.

The planning area for Munster Parks and Recreation Department is the same area that is the Town of Munster. While there are multiple suburban communities surrounding Munster that the Department can service as well, the focus of the Comprehensive Master Plan remained within the Town. Each map in this report

has defined boundaries of Munster, either isolated for clear identification of the map's features or faded municipalities surrounding Munster, including where Indiana and Illinois meet, to offer context.

Inventory and Assessment

This section includes the assessments of each of the park sites, open spaces, and facilities during an on-site evaluation of each property. Each park assessment includes an overall narrative of the site, discussions regarding individual amenities and features of each park, and photographs of the park's amenities. The assessment includes a summary of the recommendations based on the team's observations and discussions with program and operation's staff and others. These recommendations incorporate feedback from the public engagement process both online and with focus groups as well as staff meetings and Board discussions.

History and Background

Munster Indiana's history begins with the Potawatomi Native Americans, the earliest known people to have lived in the area. As it was with many pre-settlement lands, there was an existing trail well-traveled by the Potawatomi situated on a dry sandy ridge. Today, this is known as Ridge Road, a prominent transit corridor in Munster where a number of civic and town service destinations are found including the town hall, a post office, police department and fire department.

The French claimed the land of today's Munster in the 1600's and 1700's as a part of their territory. By the 1760's, the British Empire claimed it. As it is commonly acknowledged today, these colonial nations



Munster Historical Society

had little regard for the Potawatomi living there at the time. Their condition only worsened in 1828 when the American Government removed them from the land in the interest of westward expansion. They were forced to Oklahoma.

With the absence of Native Americans, more European settlers began to locate to the area. They began to farm and establish a destination for the railroads. It can be said that today's town of Munster began around this time, as the first official structure was a tavern built in 1837 by a man named David Gibson. It was settled on the corner of Ridge Road and Columbia Avenue, around Heritage Park and Bieker Woods.

The town name's origin is from a Dutch immigrant, Jacob Munster. Mr. Munster built Munster's General Store which also served as a U.S. post office for local farmers and other settlers. It was often referred to simply as "Munster". By 1907, the area was incorporated as a town, with 76 residents voting "yes" to incorporate, outnumbering 28 residents voting "no".

Beyond the General Store/Post Office Munster destination, the area also had a place known as the Stallbohm Inn, where social connections were cultivated and evening dance gatherings occurred. The Inn still exists today at Heritage Park off Ridge Road, known as "Stallbohm Barn-Kaske House" and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In time, the land surrounding the Stallbohm property diminished from 202 acres in the 1950's to 90 acres by 1934. By the 1960's, the property had been reduced to 44 acres. In 1968, the Town of Munster Board of Parks and Recreation and the Town of Munster School



Munster Historical Society

Board together purchased 32 acres on the west side of Columbia Avenue. The school developed some of the land, while the Parks Department left the remaining land in its natural condition, in what is today known as Bieker Woods (named after the Biekers who had lived in the Stallbohm home).

Munster has been a booming town at various points in its history, especially post-WWII. The town's integrated public networks are seen particularly as it relates to the historic preservation of various open spaces.

Today, Munster's Parks and Recreation Department can focus on a variety of services offered to the community. This is manifested through the recent completion of Centennial Park, Munster's iconic and newest outdoor destination in town.

Park Board Mission Statement

It's important to review the Department's Mission Statement as a way to tie it into the goals of the Comprehensive Master Plan. The language for the Munster Parks and Recreation Department's Mission Statement is as follows:

"Munster Parks and Recreation mission is to provide and maintain quality parks, facilities, open/natural space, programs and services which will enhance the physical, social and emotional well being of all the citizens of Munster and the surrounding Communities."

The overt language to "provide and maintain" valuable resources for the people of Munster is manifested through all of the existing conditions of the Department's facilities and parks. It is clear that the layout of the parks have been planned in the past. With time, however, some quality fades and improvements are needed to comply with up-to-date accessibility, safety, and health codes. In addition, the general intentions behind the idea of "quality", as referenced in the Mission Statement, may evolve with time.

The Master Plan is what will inspire and direct the Department's efforts to honor the needed improvements in Munster so that their Mission Statement is demonstrated as effectively as possible.

Planning Goals

The goals of this Comprehensive Master Plan were determined through one of the initial public participation meetings in January of 2018. There was a focus group represented by the staff of the Parks and Recreation Department, and their feedback influenced what the specific goals of this Plan are. The goals are the following:

1. Enhance the Department's special events
2. Expand the Department's public recognition
3. Recognize staff input in the Department's operations
4. Generate more volunteers for special events and programs
5. Understand the current trends and the additions needed to the Department



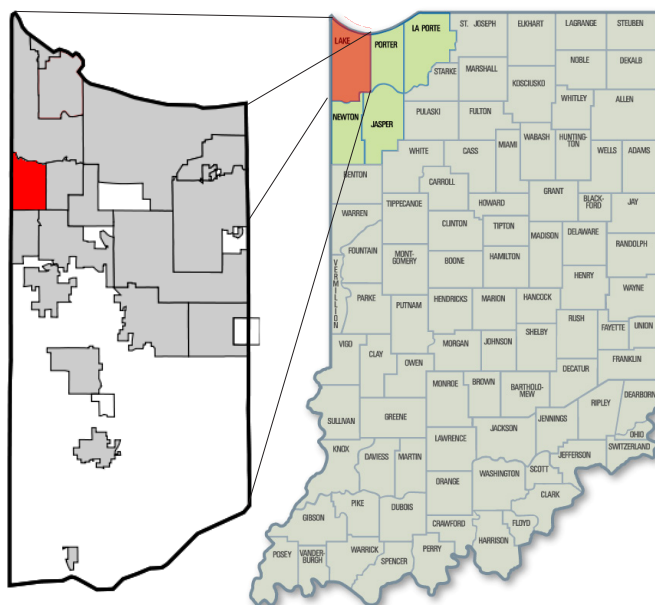
Chapter 3

Community Profile & Demographics



Community Profile and Demographics

Lake County & Northwest Indiana



Munster, Indiana is located within the Northwest Region of Indiana, the second most populated area in the state after Indianapolis and its surrounding metropolitan region. According to a 2016 Indiana Economic Digest report, Northwest Indiana not only is the state's second largest population area, but it also is the second biggest economic hub, with a gross domestic product of \$28.64 billion in 2015.

Lake County, where Munster is located, borders Lake Michigan at its north, three Illinois counties on the west (Cook, Will, and Kankakee), Indiana counties of Porter County on the east, and Newton and Jasper counties on the south.

The surrounding municipalities are Hammond (to the north), Highland (to the east), Schererville (to the Southeast), Dyer (to the south), Lynwood, Illinois and Lansing, Illinois (to the west). Of these municipalities, Hammond has the largest population of approximately 80,000.

Much of the region has a past and present economy of heavy industry, given its location in the Rust Belt. Steel mills and oil refineries are present throughout.



Munster, Indiana

Munster, Indiana has a population of 23,103, as estimated by the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates from 2016. Munster's land area is 7.5 square miles, with roughly 3,024 people per square mile. There is a slightly greater presence of females than males in Munster (see Figure 1).

The town is a suburban community, 26 miles from Chicago, with the town officials and departments offering many public resources and accommodations such as quality sanitary organization and quality public safety. The recreational opportunities are abundant, as well, with open spaces and parks spread throughout the Town.

The population and demographic information referenced for the Town of Munster is derived from multiple sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and City Data/Open Street Map.

Town of Munster Gender Distribution

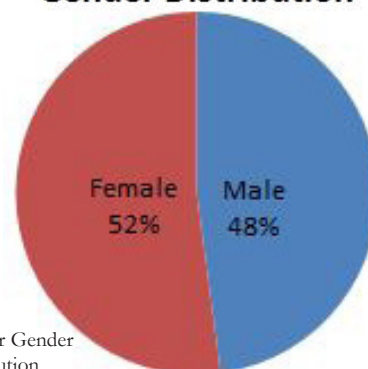


Figure 1: Munster Gender Distribution

Population Changes

Munster's population growth from the mid 20th century until 1990 is even more dramatic than the greater societal population growth in America. During that time, Munster's population grew by roughly 1000%, whereas the United State's population overall grew by roughly 110%.

The arrival of the baby boomer generation could likely explain this significant increase in the town's population between 1940 and 1980, after the end of WWII and Americans were returning home to begin their family lives in a post-WWII era.

Additionally, after World War II came the Cold War and the arms race with the USSR. An abundance in manufacturing opportunities could have contributed

to an interest in relocating to communities, such as Munster, where missile defense sites were present.

The presence of the Nike-Zeus Missile defense base C-46 (that was operational until the 1970's) as an employment center may explain, in part, the population increase as well.

The 1990's saw a slight population drop in Munster compared to the prior decade. The Cold War had ended at this point, and the missile defense site was decommissioned. Still, for the following decades there was a slight population increase that peaked in 2010. By 2010, much of Munster had been developed and little land was available within Munster's existing boundaries for residential development.

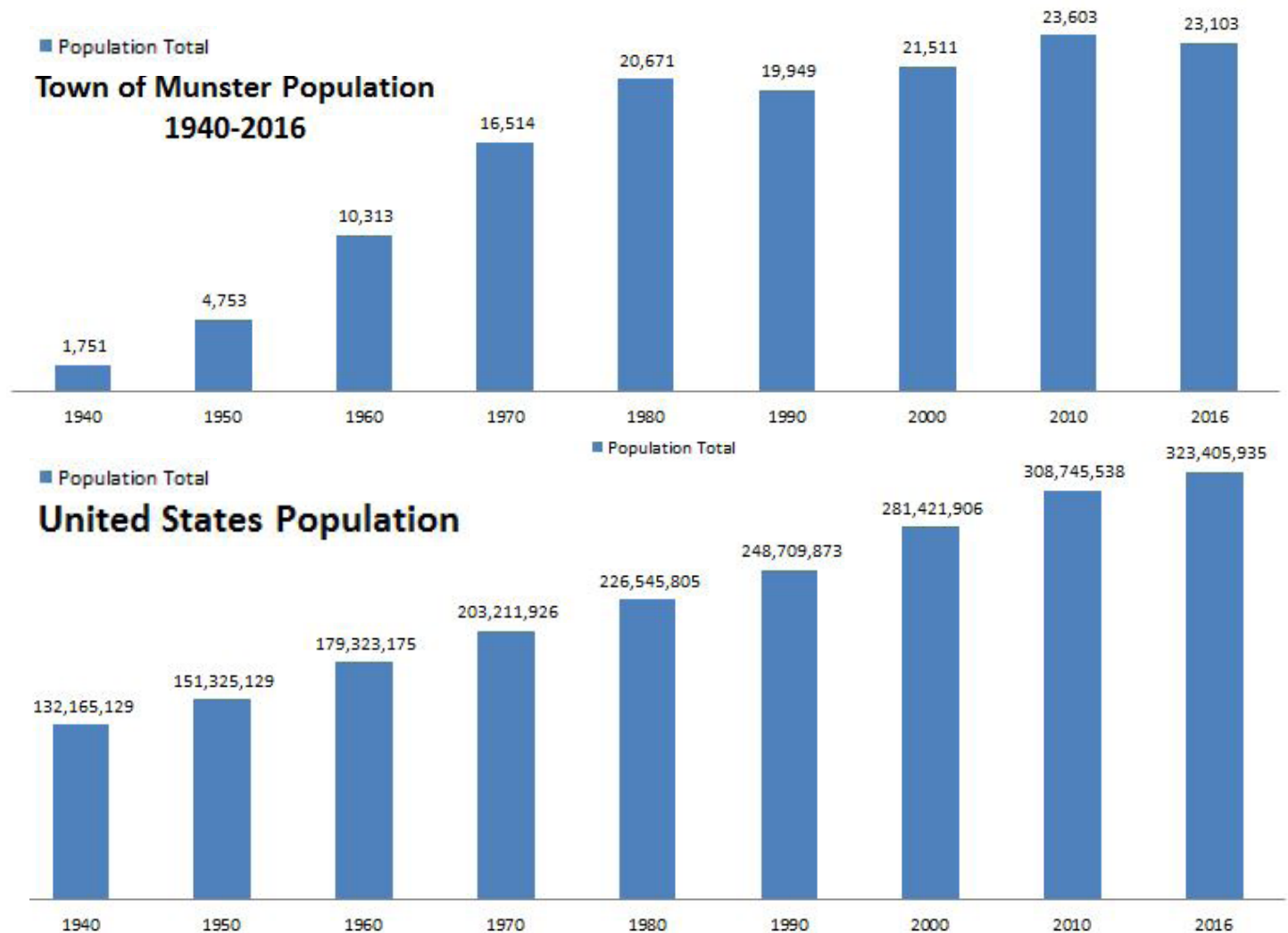


Figure 2: Munster and United States Population Growth

Population Density

Munster, Indiana is considered a low-density community. Hammond to the north has a slightly higher population density, and Chicago population density is much higher than both Munster and Hammond. There are 11,868 people/square mile in Chicago, 3,549 people/square mile in Hammond, and 3,147 people/square mile in Munster.

The least densely populated areas in Munster are to the south of 45th Street. North of 45th street there is slightly more population density. Certain industrial/commercial regions contribute to an area's overall low population density, and there are several of them in Munster.

This information comes from city-data.com

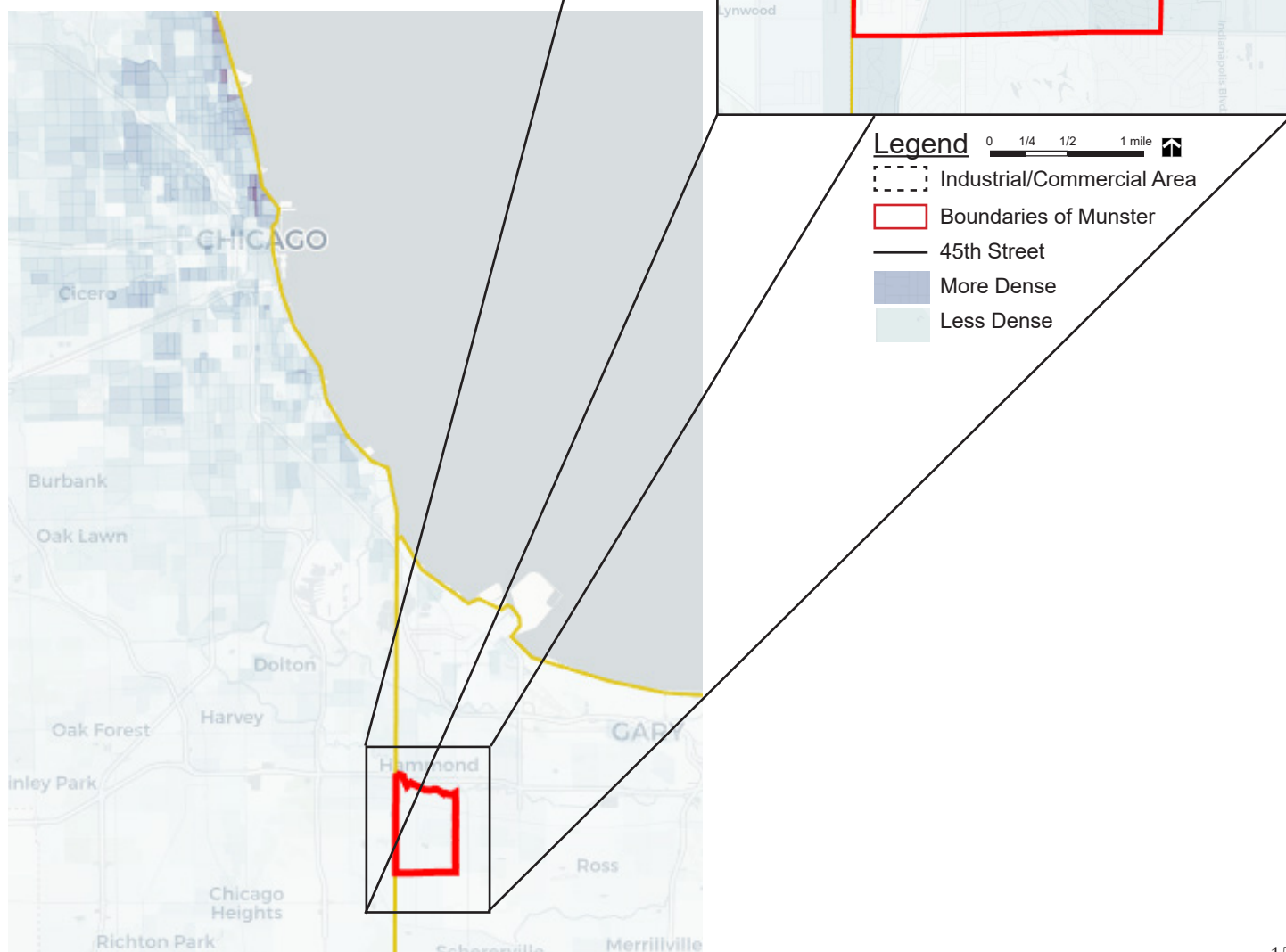


Figure 3: Population Density Map and Legend

Age Distribution

A resident's age can indicate the tendency for active or passive recreation activities, as well as help the Parks and Recreation Department adjust programming to meet future age-sensitive trends. The following age breakdowns are used to separate the population into age sensitive user groups and to retain the ability to adjust future age distribution trends.

These groups are:

- Under 5- this group are those with limited physical abilities; users of preschool programs/facilities and are the future youth activity participants
- 5 to 14-this group represents children's needs and programming, the teens will be slowly moving out of youth programs and into young adult programs
- 15 to 24- this group represents young adults who use facilities and programs independent of their family
- 25 to 34- this group represents those whose needs primarily center on relationships and starting families
- 35 to 54- this group represents users of a wide range of adult programming and park facilities, as well as people whose needs generally revolve around their family

- 55 to 64- this group includes empty nesters, those focused on new grandchildren and preparing for retirement
- 65+ - this group of senior adults are more active than at any point in history

The general indication from the data in Figure 4 is that, while some age groups in the town of Munster have less presence in 2016 than they did in 2010 or 2000, there will be a growing number of young families as well as retired people in the community. This is because of an increase in people within the baby boomer generation, as well as millennials and children they may have.

Munster Age Distribution Trends

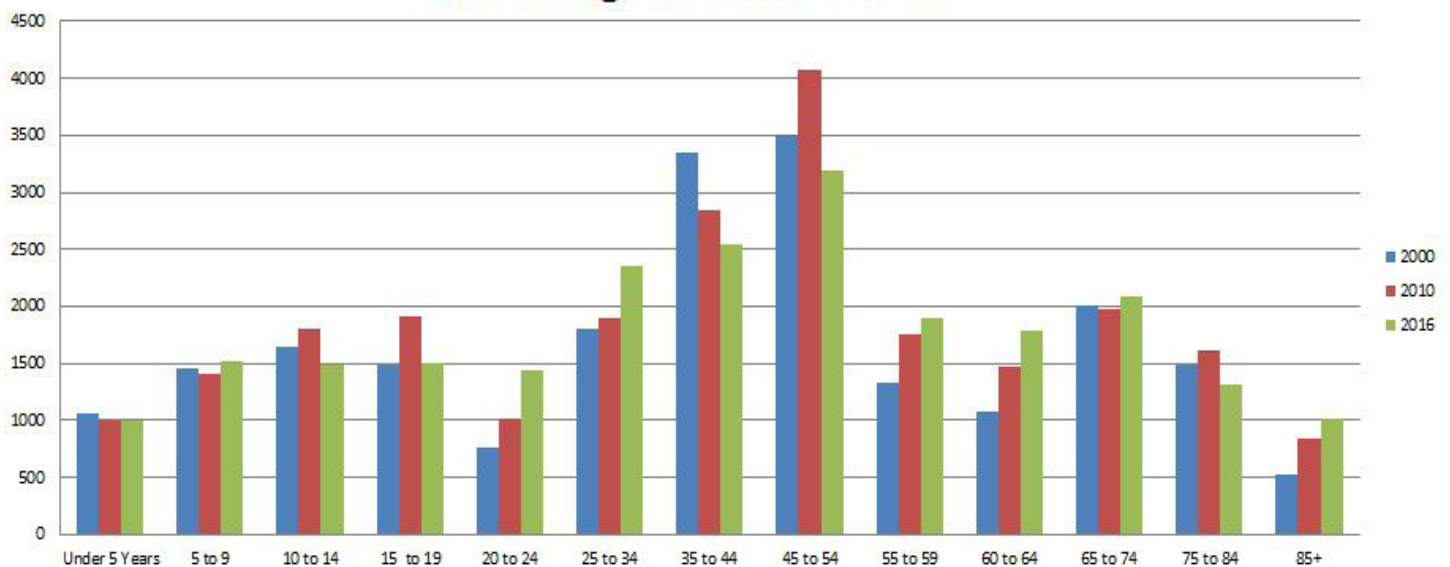


Figure 4: Munster Age Distribution Trends

Race and Ethnicity

Race, culture, and ethnicity also play a role in a community's parks and recreation needs and desires. Trends can be found in the ways different ethnic groups use park and recreation facilities and the types of programming they seek. An analysis of the town's racial and ethnic makeup reveals a predominantly Caucasian population that has been gradually diversifying over the last decade.

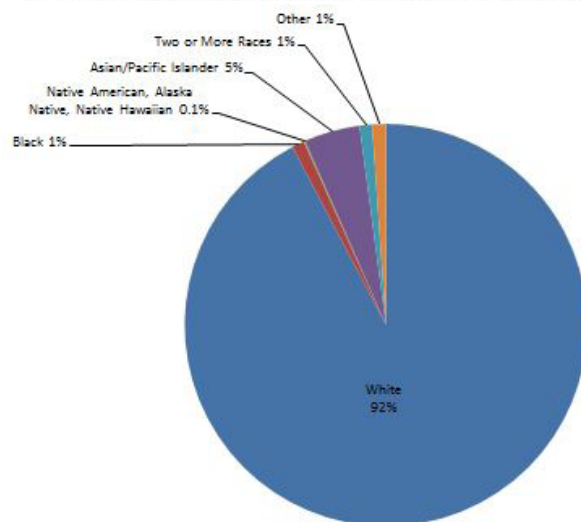
As seen in Figure 6, there is an increased representation among every racial and ethnic minority group in Munster, as the percentage of people living in the town who are white reduced from 92% in 2000 to 86% in 2010. Overall, this trend of gradually increasing diversity indicates a community open to change and acceptance, particularly in a large metropolitan region like Chicagoland/Northwest Indiana.

This is also a reflection of the greater demographic trend in America as a whole. Within the past century, the United States' white population dropped roughly 16%, and continues to decrease as representation from minority groups increase. Furthermore, more people classify themselves as either "Other race" or "Two or more races" now than ever before.

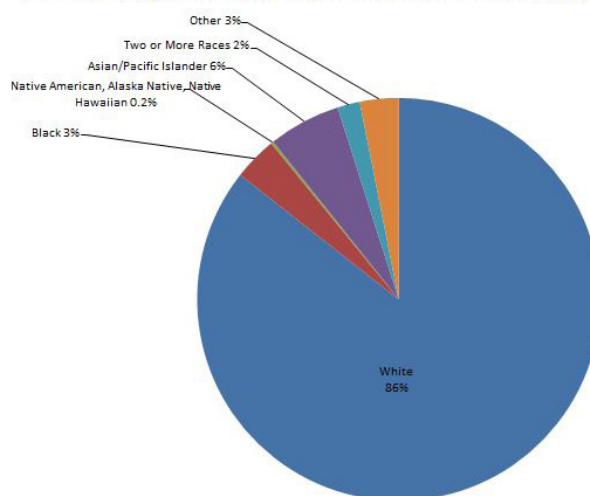
Another trend is the increasing ethnic presence of people who are Hispanic or Latino; this also will contribute to more of the Town of Munster's diversity in the future.

In acknowledging these findings of increased diversity, there are opportunities to understand the various experiences of others who don't appear to represent the existing racial or ethnic majority in the community. Enhanced consideration of everyone's perspectives will generate an even stronger sense of trust among public officials and private residents that will reflect in even greater satisfaction in the parks and recreation services.

Town of Munster
2000 Population by Race and Ethnicity



Town of Munster
2010 Population by Race and Ethnicity



Munster's Ethnicity, Hispanic or Latino

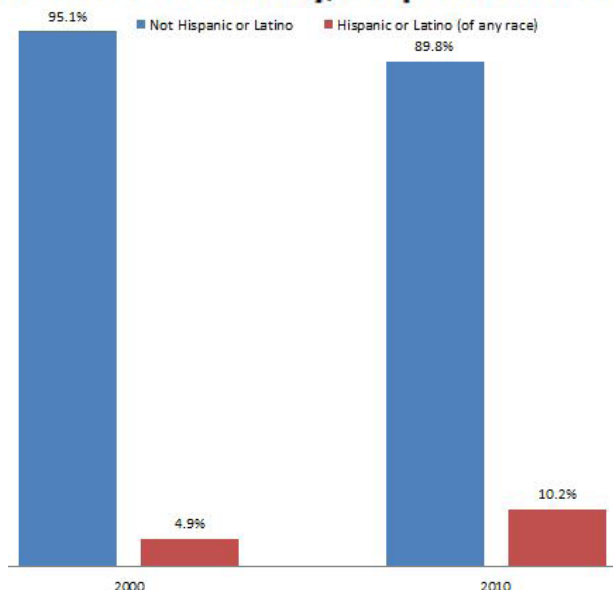


Figure 5: Ethnic Representation Chart

Figure 6: Race Representation

Language Use

In addition to the diversity of race and ethnicity, it's worth considering how many people within the Munster population speak a language other than English. Information on local language use can aid in planning purposes, such as for accommodations in public wayfinding and cultural place-making. According to a 2016 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, 80% of people in Munster speak only English while the remaining 20% can also speak a language other than English. Most of these languages spoken originated from either the European or Asian continents.

For those who do speak a non-English language, there is a higher percentage of children who speak English “very well” and a lower percentage who speak English less than “very well”. In terms of senior citizens who speak a non-English language, this pattern is different; a lower percentage speak English “very well” compared to young people, while a higher percentage speak less than “very well” compared to young people.

This information will be useful in instances where the Parks and Recreation Departments’ programming involves activities that are notably multi-generational or multi-cultural.

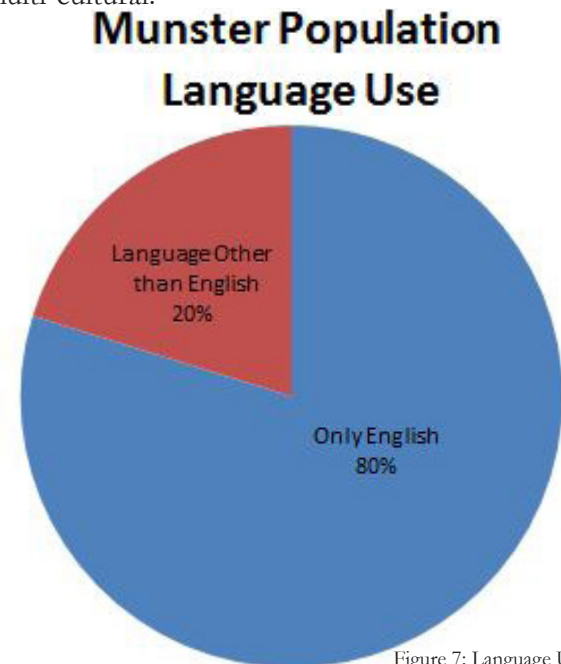


Figure 7: Language Use

English Proficiency of Second Language

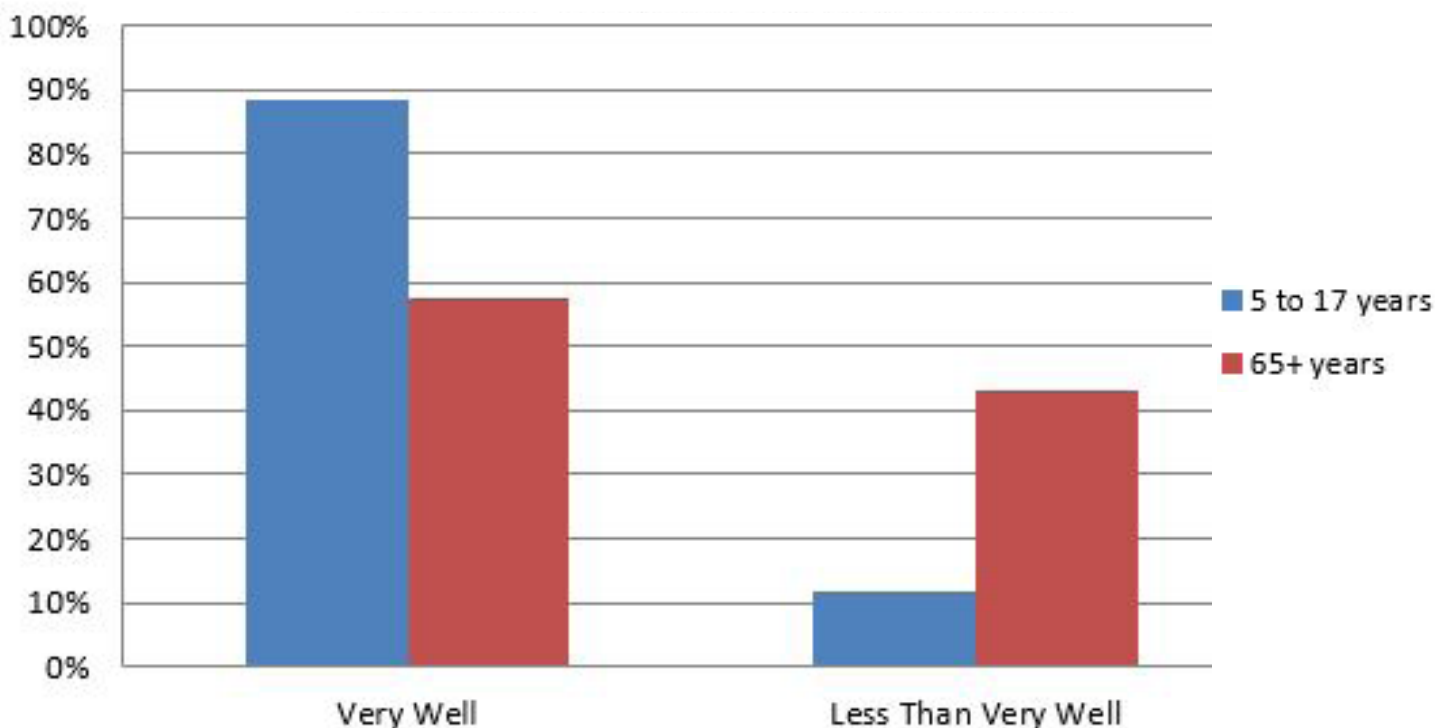
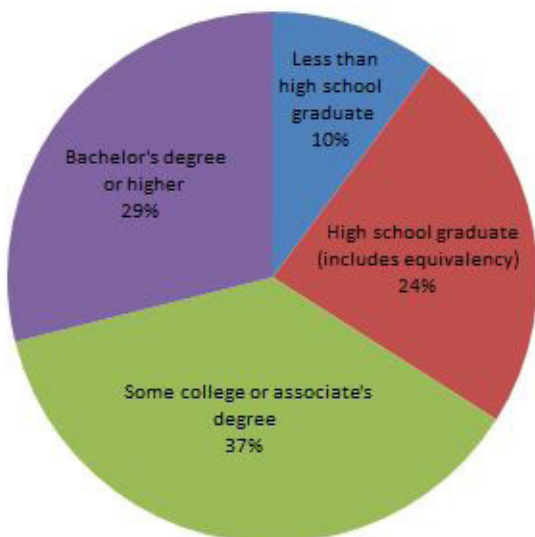


Figure 8: English Proficiency by Age Group

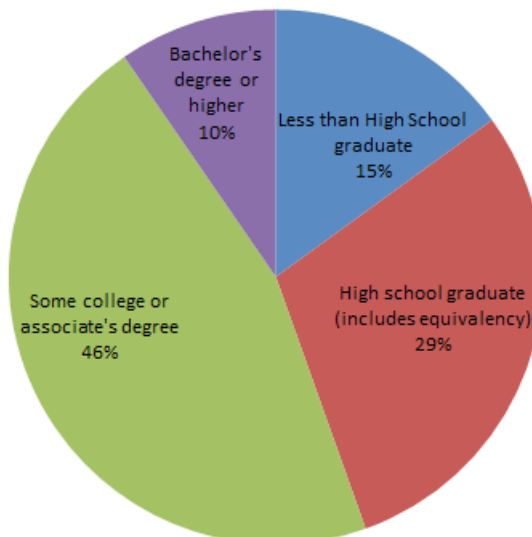
Education

The Town of Munster has a greater proportion of people with post-secondary degrees when compared to the national average. Whether it be among the age group of young adults who are in the prime years of obtaining a post-high school degree (18 to 24) or the age group of adults who generally are immersed in the workforce, the majority have received education beyond high school levels.

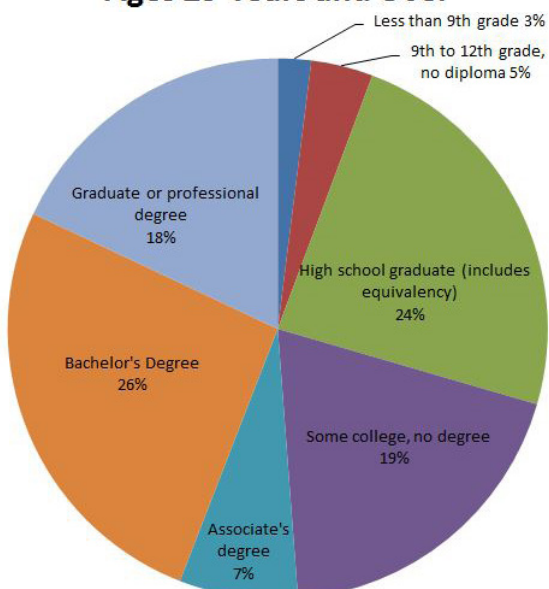
**Munster Educational Attainment
Ages 18 to 24 Years**



**U.S. Average Educational Attainment
Ages 18 to 24 Years**



**Munster Educational Attainment
Ages 25 Years and Over**



**U.S. Average Educational Attainment
Ages 25 Years and Over**

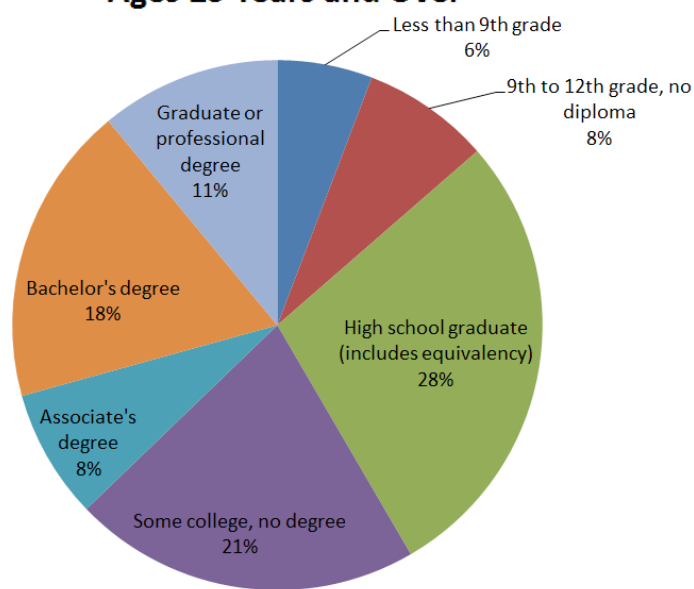


Figure 9: Various Charts on Educational Attainment in Munster, U.S.

Family Incomes

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the majority of families, 57%, in the town consist of incomes greater than \$75,000. The other 43% includes a range of income levels below \$75,000. The median family income is \$70,065 (2015 US dollars). The 2016 population below the poverty line averaged to 8%.

In contrast, the overall U.S. statistics show that 45% of families have incomes greater than \$75,000, with 55% having incomes less than \$75,000. On average, families in this northwest Indiana suburb of Chicago have more wealth in comparison to families in America overall.

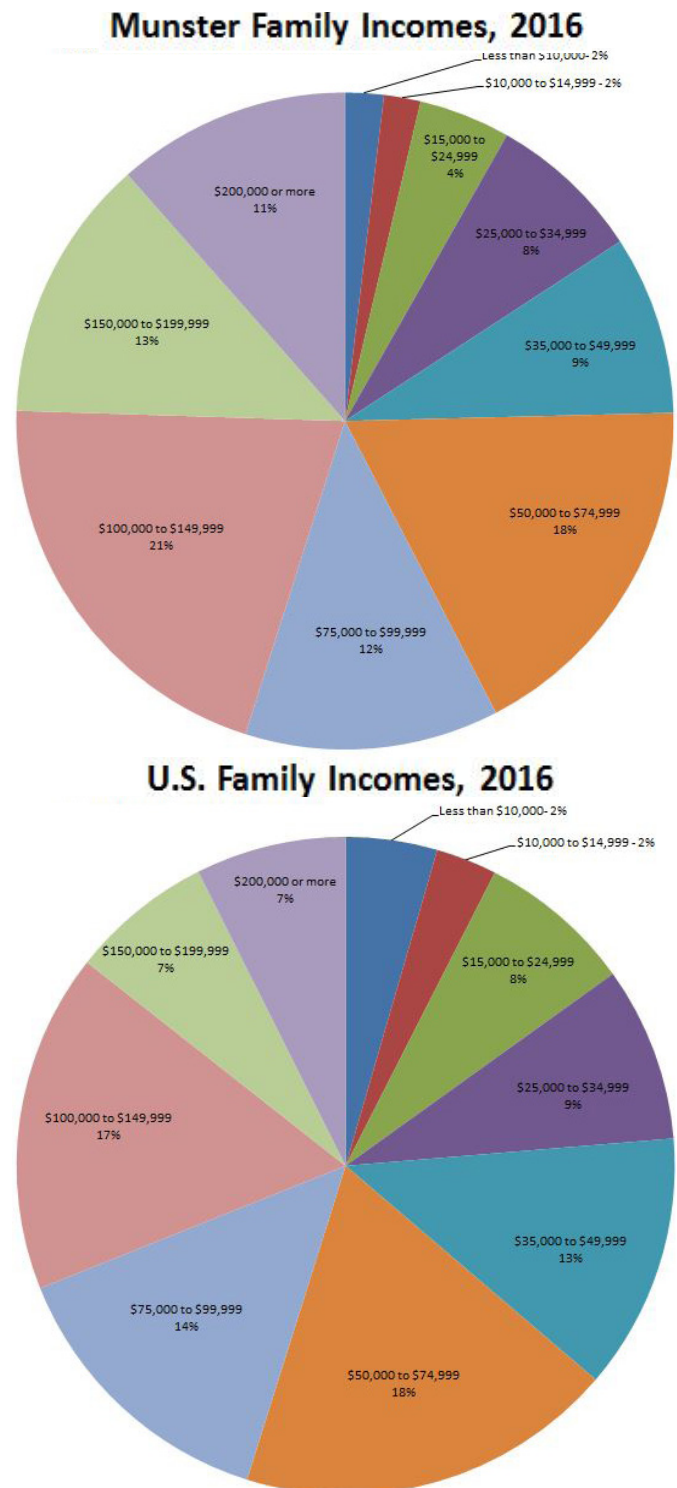


Figure 10: Family incomes in Munster and U.S.

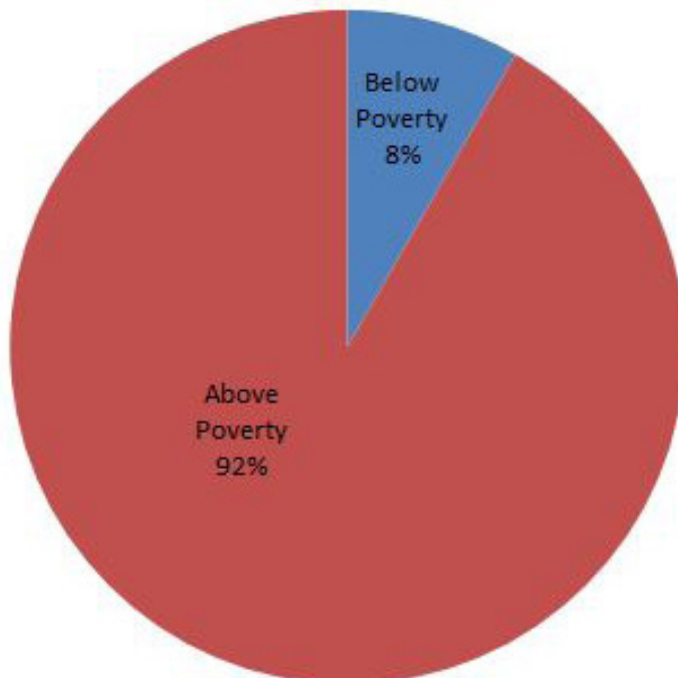
Poverty

When breaking the 8% poverty rate down by each age group, there are some notable characteristics. For example, 61% of people in the Town of Munster who live in poverty are under the age of 34, and only 9% of people living in poverty in the community are over the age of 65. This lower number for senior citizens could likely be explained, in part, by the years of preparation for retirement as well as collecting social security benefits.

Because living in poverty is notably distressing and often cyclical in families, the fact that over a quarter of people in Munster who live in poverty are 17 years or younger, as seen in Figure 11, suggests the opportunity to uplift the living conditions of younger generations through various public relief efforts, such as after school youth programming. This will support the youth's efforts to maintain a path of achieving the highest level of education they desire.

This is worth taking into account to confirm specific economic struggles facing a vulnerable portion of Munster's population, and to then consider justifiable planning measures in terms of offering local services and assistance programs.

Munster Population Before Poverty Level



Munster Population Poverty Level by Age Group

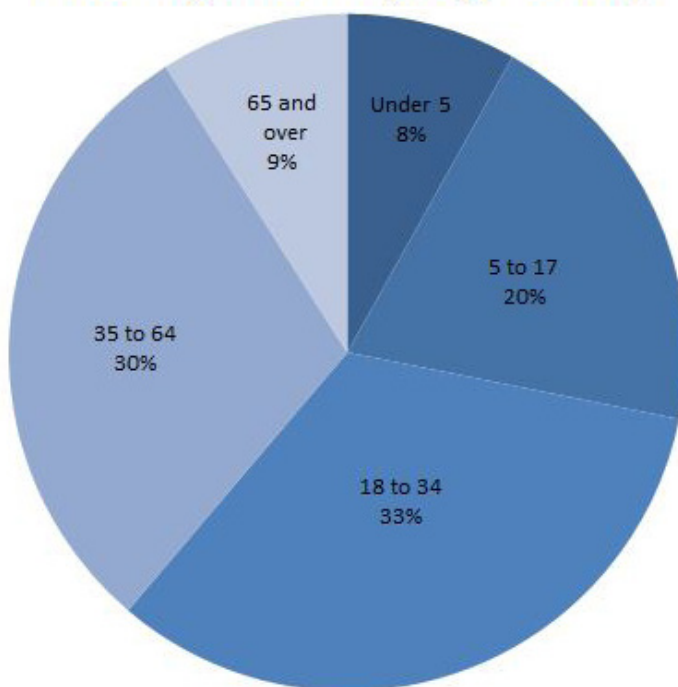


Figure 11: Charts, Below Poverty Level and by Age

Major Employers

While obtaining data for a list of Munster's largest employers was a challenge, a list of notable employers stationed in Munster is included in this plan.

According to bestplaces.net, the top occupations in Munster are: healthcare and social assistance (with 15.2% in this field), educational services (12.1%), retail trade (11.2%), manufacturing (10.5%), professional, scientific, technical services (8.7%), construction (6.8%), and finance (5.7%). Over 70% of Munster is employed in one of the aforementioned industries.

With this information, the following companies are likely to be Munster's major employers:

-Community Hospital
"healthcare and social assistance"

-School Town of Munster
"educational services"

-Peoples Bank
"finance"

-Pepsi Co.
"manufacturing"

-Three Floyds Brewery
"retail trade" and "manufacturing"

-The Times Media Company
"professional services"



Figure 12: Icons of Munster's Major Employers



Chapter 4

Community-Wide Survey



Community-wide Survey

The purpose of the Community-wide Survey (Survey) was to understand the attitudes and interests of residents in this town as it related to the delivery of a variety of parks and recreation department services. Additionally, several questions were posed to better understand the resident's use of the parks and recreation programs and facilities.

The survey sample of 2,000 was selected from a list utilizing water utility billing addresses from the Town of Munster water department that included 7,628 households. This list of all water utility bills was culled to randomly select 2,000 survey recipients.

Additionally, to provide the opportunity for residents that did not receive a survey via U.S. Mail, 200 additional copies of the survey were made available at the Parks and Recreation Department and other locations within the Town.

The 4 page (8 ½ x 11) questionnaire was designed jointly by Planning Resources, the Parks and Recreation Department, and Readex Research. All material production, addressing, mailing, and tabulation were handled by Readex Research.

Survey kits that included the questionnaire, a personalized introductory cover letter on "Munster Matters" letterhead, signed by the director of parks and recreation for the Town of Munster; and a stamped reply envelope addressed to Readex were mailed to 2,000 sample members on January 25, 2018. All the survey information was included in an outgoing "Munster Matters" envelope.

On February 2nd, Readex mailed reminder postcards to the 2,000 sample members reminding them to complete and return their surveys.

After 32 days, on February 26, 2018, the survey was closed for tabulation with 366 responses from the sample of 2,000 – a 19% response rate based on the net effective mailout of 1.928 (72 of the original kits were returned as



undeliverable).

The margin for error for percentages based on 366 responses is a ± 5.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for percentages based on smaller sample sizes will be larger.

The responses were tabulated, and the report referenced in the Appendix was prepared by Readex in accordance with accepted research standards and practices.

Summarized Survey Results

The following is a summary of the community-wide Survey (Survey) results.

- 56% of the respondents were female
- 74% of the respondents were >45 years old
- The top five most important items to consider when planning for the next 5-years include:
 - o Maintaining existing parks and facilities was considered important or very important to more than 90% of all respondents
 - o Improving trails was considered important or very important to 66% of respondents
 - o Ensuring all parks/facilities comply with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) was important or very important to 65% of respondents
 - o Improving restrooms in parks was important or very important to 60%
 - o Acquiring land/green space was important or very important to 58% of respondents

Important Improvements

When considering any improvements or developments in the parks and recreation sector that depends on the public to fund or provide the capital for the improvements it is vital to assess the public's willingness to fund those improvements or capital expenditures. This question was included: "Would you support future funding for the areas you rated a 4 or 5 in the prior question?"

- 67% responded yes or maybe
- 22% responded no or not sure; and,
- 11% indicated no answer

Programming

Several questions pertaining to programming were included in the questionnaire. More than 50% of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with:

- Youth sports
- Community events/special events
- Youth education
- Trips and travel
- Continuing education
- Adult 50+ programs
- Summer camps

The satisfied or very satisfied levels fell to 50% or below on:

- Summer camps
- Summer enrichment
- Centennial/Billy Casper golf programs
- Wellness and fitness

The satisfied or very satisfied levels fell to 38% or below on:

- Aquatics
- Adult sports

Information Delivery

An additional category of interest to the administration and staff of the Munster Parks and Recreation Department included the ways and means the Department delivered its information and program offerings to the Town's residents. A series of questions related to the delivery vehicle and satisfaction with the vehicle were included in the questionnaire. The question regarding the how the residents received their information about Department activities included:

- 82% received their information via the seasonal program brochure
- 16% received their information via town recreation staff

In addition to how they received the information they were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the information they received. Again, the scale of satisfied or very satisfied was utilized.

- 87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the seasonal program brochure while only 3% were either dissatisfied or not at all satisfied with the seasonal program brochure
- 73% were satisfied or very satisfied with mailers/flyers, while only 6% were dissatisfied or not at all satisfied
- 65% were either satisfied or very satisfied while only 8% were dissatisfied or not at all satisfied with Banners in the Parks

Region

The survey was distributed randomly throughout the Town of Munster. It was of interest however as to the area of the Town for each respondent. The Town was subdivided by major geographical or physical barriers such as railroads, highways, creeks or rivers into six sub areas (see map on following page). Responses were tabulated by area as follows:

- 30% of respondents were Area 4 (east central)
- 21% of respondents were Area 6 (southeast)
- 17% of respondents were Area 2 (northeast)
- 13% of respondents were Area 1 (northwest)
- 10% of respondents were Area 3 (west central)
- 5% of respondents were in Area 5 (southwest)

Age

The age distribution of the respondents is also important to consider. The respondent's age was separated into four age categories while the questionnaire included seven age category options. No respondents were under 24 years old and so few were under 34 years old, these categories were combined for purposes of cross tabulation of the responses.

Nearly half (50.5%) of the female respondents were <54 while 49.5% were over 55. Male respondents were significantly older 62% were >55 while 38% were <54.

When analyzing programs and various priorities, age can be a noteworthy factor and must be carefully considered.

Appendix

The entire survey and all data tables are included in the Appendix to the Master Plan

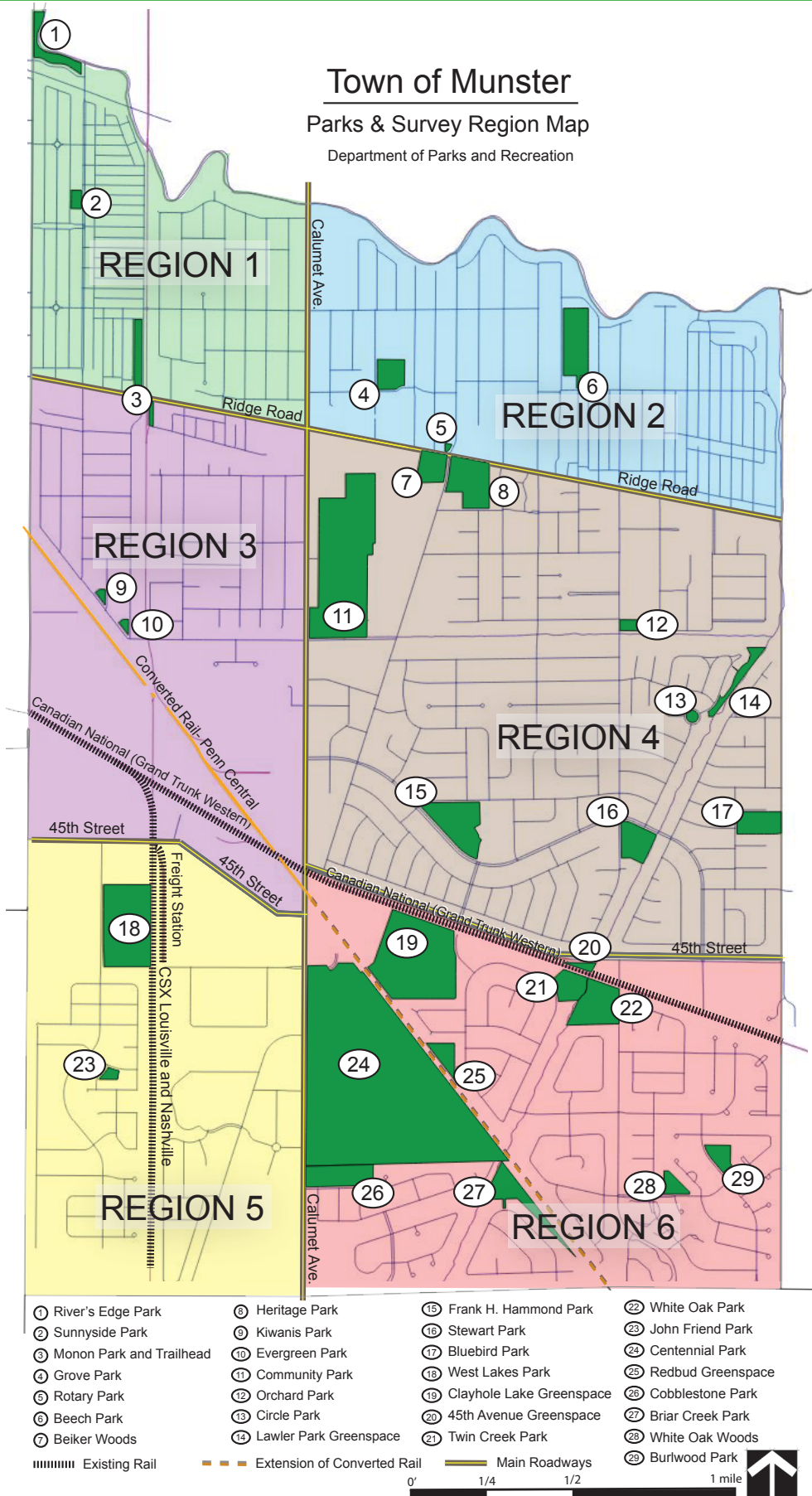


Figure 13: Map of Munster and its Survey Areas for Public Participation



Chapter 5

Public Participation



Public Participation

Focus Groups, Stakeholder Meetings

The Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department recognizes their mission of providing service to the community. The Department understands that the best way to provide service to the community is serves is to ask what their needs, opinions, and preferences are, and apply that information to all future planning. For this master plan, several methods of public input were used: Public Meetings/Open Houses, Focus Groups, Stakeholder Meetings, and MindMixer. Summaries can be found below.

Focus groups were organized to respond to specific questions about how the department currently operates and about how the focus group participants think it should operate in the future. Focus groups provide an easily accessible and flexible way to gather information from a variety of stakeholders who have vested interest in some aspect of the department's services.

On Wednesday, January 10th, 2018, the Planning Resources Team conducted a full day of Focus Group and Stakeholder meetings with Town of Munster staff, including key Town staff and all the Parks Departments. In addition, other Focus Groups included a general public open house, seniors, and Billy Casper Golf staff. Stakeholders included sports affiliates, schools, businesses, and service groups.

While each group had customized questions and the discussion was allowed to naturally evolve, each group was asked the following four questions at a minimum:

1. What are the most important issues facing the Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department?
2. What is working well for the Town regarding the Parks and Recreation Department?
3. What is not working well for the Town regarding the Parks and Recreation Department?
4. What do you hope a master planning project for the Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department

addresses overall?

The results of these meetings are summarized in this section.

Sports

The Sports Affiliates focus group was held at Centennial Park and was attended by 10 people. This group featured representatives from the following sport affiliate leagues:

- Munster Soccer Club
- Challengers Baseball/Softball
- Munster Babe Ruth
- Munster Lacrosse
- Munster Little League
- Munster Girls Softball

There is a desire for improved communication between the sports group and the Parks and Recreation Department. Few people know who is responsible for maintenance, tournaments, and other areas relating to athletic programs. This has led to certain interests-such as a concessions and special needs programming-generally underrepresented by the Park Board. One suggestion was for a liaison with the community to improve the relationship between the Parks and Rec Department and the public.

Other issues such as drainage, maintenance schedules, parking, hazards, ADA access, surfacing, and a deficiency of various amenities in different parks were also raised.

The executive director's leadership is welcomed among the Sports group, as is the existing programming, intergenerational appeal, and various current offerings from the Parks Department.

Park Board & Town Council

At a regularly scheduled Park Board meeting held at Centennial Park, 3 Park Board members were joined

by 4 Town Council members to discuss key issues such as financial constraints, staffing, identifying priorities, and certain existing conditions at the parks were mentioned. It was also noted that improvement should be throughout the Department's parks, rather than just the largest-serving parks.

In identifying strengths, the executive director's presence was again mentioned along with the correct programs in place. Event diversity and staff productivity were also identified.

The Board/Council proposed goals reflecting the desire for improved communication with the community (see "Sports" above), establishing priorities for the future, equitable parks maintenance, branding/marketing for the public, integration of the river to the Town of Munster's north side, and ideas for new parks.

Certain challenges were noted relating to insufficient dog park facilities, vandalism, and planning with other departments in town for projects that relate to bikes.

Businesses

Six local business owners attended this focus group session at Centennial Park. This group featured local business representing:

- Munster Chamber Admin Secretary
- People's Bank
- Level-Rite
- Level- Rite Concrete
- Largus Graphix Solutions
- Hasse Construction Co.

The general issues raised within the Businesses group related to generating revenue. There is a desire for more participation in events and programs to increase advertisements and sponsorships, to enhance visibility through more than simple brochures. Also, evaluations for new programs/promotions would benefit in organizing effective future attempts at generating revenue (knowing what works and what doesn't). Communication will be necessary, as well.

The strengths mentioned by the group related to the parks' conditions and opportunities to expand the existing bike path. Opportunities for better promotion of local businesses were the focus of this group, ultimately.

Open House

The general public attending this meeting held in a large meeting room at Centennial Park. While on 23 persons signed the attendance sheet, there were more than 50 persons who participated in this open house session. A brief presentation of the master plan process was provided before opening the floor up to questions.

The issues raised with this group related to turf maintenance, bike accessibility, lighting, a lack of restrooms and shade trees, and more training for staff. In addition, a space for public gathering beyond what exists (such as developing a community center) were mentioned as well as the management/coordination of existing events like the Farmer's Market and Halloween events.

The strengths identified were the number and quality of parks, the structure of existing programming (such as the reciprocal program with Dyer and Highland), and the responsiveness of the Department's maintenance staff.

Opportunities were listed, and the desire for a soccer complex was mentioned twice. Nearby soccer complexes locations in Valparaiso and Hammond were noted as examples. Also, the View Restaurant was seen as an underutilized space for which its marketing could be improved. "Festival concerts" was written down, similar to the expressed opportunity from the Businesses group.

Parks Staff

The staff meeting was attended by 7 people. Attendees were all front-line staff members. This meeting was held at Town Hall and began with a discussion and overview about the planning process and what they hope to get from the plan.

The front line staff had a long list of issues that

ranged from internal functioning as an agency to the lack of owned facilities and program offerings.

The strengths of the team efforts, leadership, and proactive programming were highlighted as well. This group sees the Park Board as very influential and supportive.

Generally, pay, training and retention of part-time staff were the focus of this group. The hope for more input from staff was listed by this group.

Staff also identified concerns received from residents and facility users. Concerns ranging from the removal of the ice rink to safety issues within the park system (i.e. playground maintenance, behaviors at the dog park, or trip hazards). Internally, staff mentioned its complex relationship with the Historical Society, falling short on generating revenue at community parks, and signage restrictions (the Town's restrictive sign ordinance adversely impacting the ability for market and advertise the Department's facilities and programs).

Schools

This stakeholder meeting was attended by 9 people. Attendees were representatives from the various education institutions within Munster. The meeting was held at Centennial Park. This focus group consisted of representatives from:

- Eads Elementary School
- School Town of Munster
- Munster High School
- St. Paul Lutheran School
- St Thomas More School

Also in attendance were a few students representing Munster H.S. and the assistant superintendent.

In summary, the students identified a need for more activities. Various programs from sports to active academics were discussed. This could possibly be accomplished through more collaboration between the private schools and various social groups. Integrating

technology in programming was also suggested, including more online engagement.

The hope that all stakeholders be included was this group's priority, along with utilizing all facilities. Improving the farmer's market, the bike paths, the number of activities bringing youth together, health-oriented programming, and fields for non-structured pickup use were all listed. Further, job training and opportunities for youth and people with disabilities was noted in the list of hopes.

Seniors

This group consisted of 10 active senior residents within the town and those from the region who participate in the Department's senior programs. The meeting was held at Centennial Park.

This group saw many good existing features. They are interested in more events/concerts, parks use in open spaces, engaged youth, and possible overnight trips.

This group found weaknesses in pricing, the workout facility, and underutilization of other existing facilities such as "The View". Expanded amenities such as fences, benches, and lighting were also mentioned.

This group would also like to see upgrades to existing facilities, mentorship programs, educational training, connections to- and expansion of existing- bike paths, and an improvement of the farmer's market.

Town Administration

At a regularly scheduled Town Administration meeting held at Town Hall, 7 department heads representing the Town's Administration team participated in this focus group session.

This group saw issues with the low number of people in maintenance. In addition, there will be an upcoming budget reduction. There is currently an uneven distribution of amenities throughout various regions.

This group would like to see potentially more donation of land to the Parks Department.

The staff is working well, as this group sees it. They believe the existing programs and sponsorships are also going well, along with the collaboration between Departments.

Improvements in maintenance coordination, and increasing the amount of natural areas were mentioned. The quality of Centennial Park is desired throughout all parks' curb appeals. An additional recreation/community center was brought up.

Service Groups

This stakeholder meeting was attended by 13 people. Attendees were representatives from the various community service organizations from within the Town of Munster. The meeting was held at Centennial Park.

This group featured individuals representing the following community service organizations:

- Munster Jr. Women's Club
- Munster Garden Club
- Munster Historical Society
- Munster Girl Scouts
- South Shore Arts
- Munster Lion's Club
- Munster Kiwanis Club
- Rotary Club of Munster
- Munster Chamber of Commerce
- Planting Possibilities

This group recognized the existing collaboration and opportunities for more of it between the Parks Department and the Historical Society. They saw a desire for more special needs programming. Like the rest of the groups, they desire more communication between the Parks Department and the public.

Billy Casper Golf

The Billy Casper Golf focus group was held at Centennial Park and attended by 6 people with a vested interest in the golf operations at Centennial Park. The most important issue among this group related to safety. For example, the concessions are solitary at the end of the day and there are no cameras. As Billy Casper Golf gets busier each year, vandalism on the course has occurred along the 4-ft fence. As it is now, the alarm system serves as a deterrent but is not linked to the police department or synced to alarm doors. Further, monitoring the golf course's range is limited, especially during the summer because of the leaves on trees.

On off season limited hours, there are technically no public bathrooms. However, sledders will use the clubhouse as a warming house and restroom. Optimizing safety during this time is a concern.

Golf is up lately because it is a more user friendly space with catering in-house. Per contract with management, concessions split profits with them. The equipment is owned by MPRD and all routine maintenance is done by BCG. They receive "tremendous" support from Parks Department.

The View restaurant could work better. It doesn't receive a lot of customers off the street, especially during the off-season. The perception is that the public doesn't know they have a restaurant. However, the restaurant does provide special events. Otherwise, it is open 9-3 from May to Sept.

The hopes for the master planning process are as follows:

1. Fix small issues outlined by groups
2. Effectively reach out to Munster residents and receive feedback
3. Make Munster residents aware of the facility
5. Ideas for implementing post-event feedback
6. Identifying pricing independent of MPRD
7. Recommend reliable WiFi at community parks

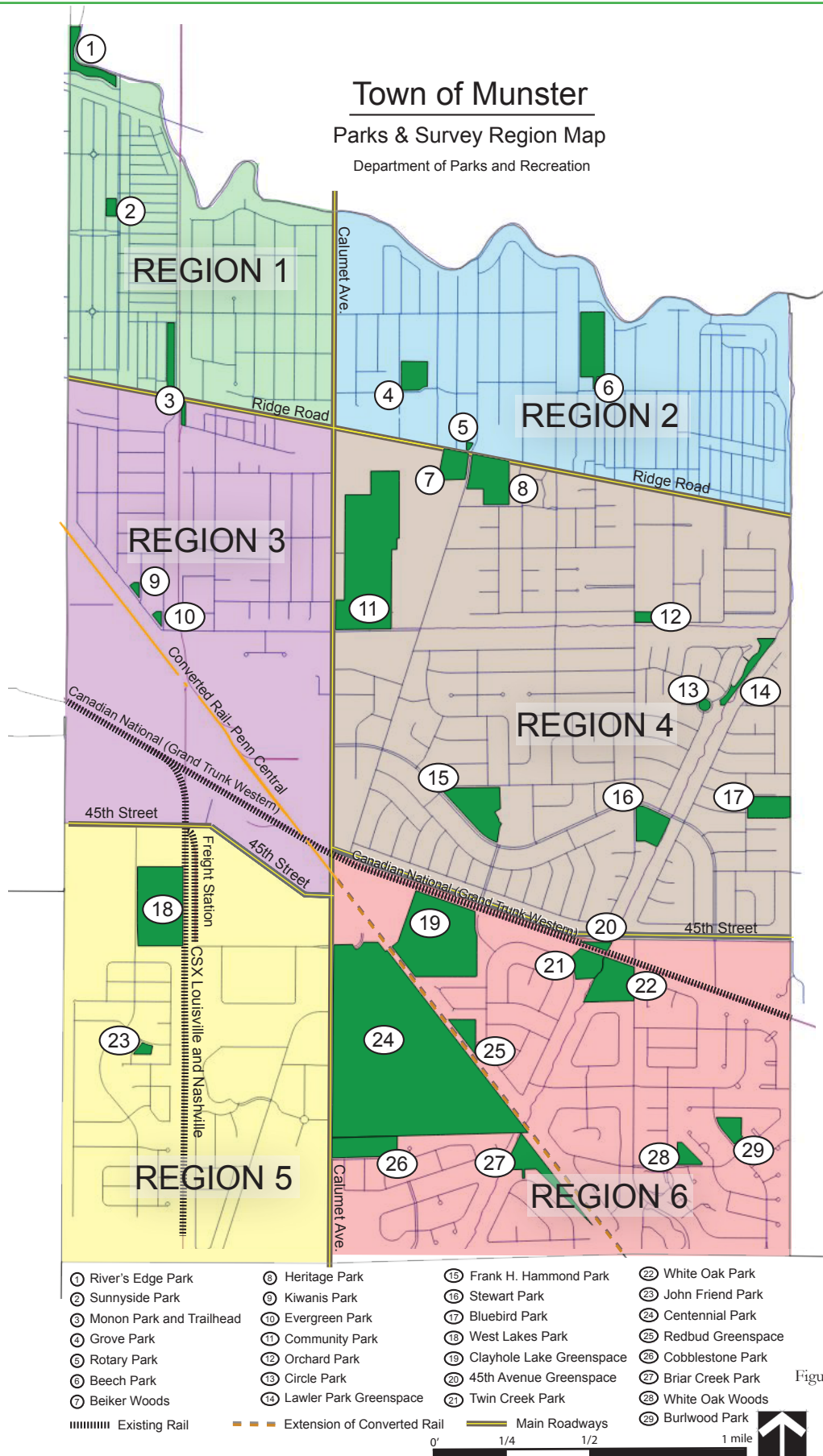


Figure 14: Map of Munster and its Survey Areas for Public Participation



MindMixer

Munster Parks and Recreation invited all members of the community to participate in MindMixer, an open and continuous on-line discussion forum over a period of three (3) months. The purpose of MindMixer was to provide an online, accessible place for residents to have an open dialogue through a series of open ended questions, idea sharing, and surveys.

Staff, community leaders, and residents generated ideas for the questions and discussion topics. Topics addressed on MindMixer were based in part on the feedback received during focus groups, stakeholder, and community leader meetings.

All residents were invited to participate in the MindMixer forum through social media, the Town of Munster website, and in community gatherings. The questions focused on frequency of use, interest in new programs, and participant's age/gender. The data collected from these questions was tabulated for analysis. These discussions provide additional insight into the public's recreation needs, and how Munster Parks and Recreation is currently meeting those needs. Forty-one people participated in MindMixer.

All participants in MindMixer were between the ages of 45 and 54. 66% of those respondents were female, and 34% were male.

Gender of Participants (n= 41)

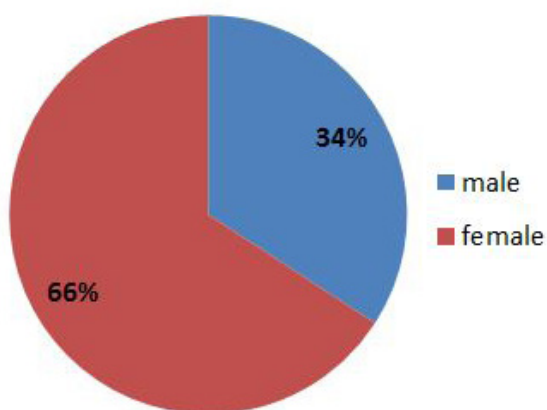


Figure 15: Gender of MindMixer Participants

Interest in the Park Department Investments

The majority of respondents believed that upgrading older playgrounds in the Town of Munster is a wise investment. Only one person who participated thought this was not a good use of resources.

Do you agree it is favorable to invest budget dollars into upgrading older Munster playgrounds? (n=14)

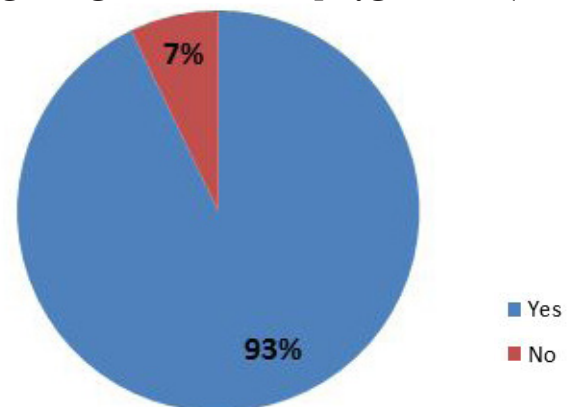


Figure 16: Favorability of Investing in Munster Playground

Current Program Utilization

Nearly a quarter of participants currently attend programs offered by the Munster Park and Recreation Department. Almost two-thirds of participants attend events 2-3 times a year. This means that the majority of people who participated in these questions are frequent users of the Munster Parks and Recreation services.

Do you attend special events organized by the Parks and Recreation Department? (n=11)

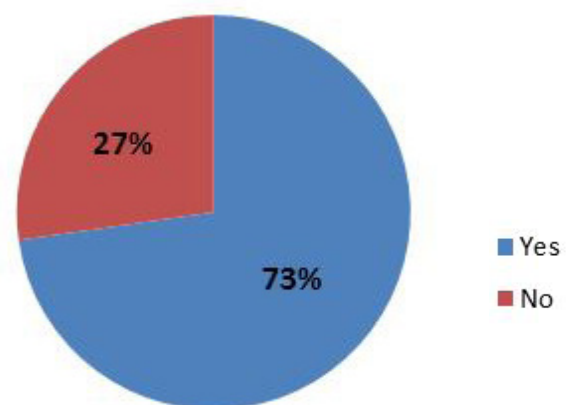


Figure 17: Attendance to Special Events

Of those who offered feedback on the question, one-third participated in programs offered by Munster Parks and Recreation ten times or more in the past year. Conversely, 13% stated that they have not participated at all, and no one attended just one program. This seems to indicate that the majority of people who take advantage of programs offered were frequent users.

How many special events have you attended in the past year? (n=11)

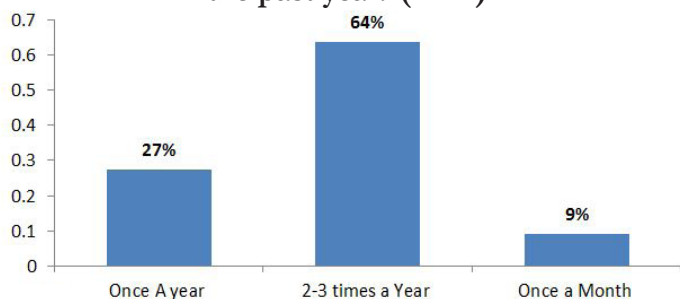


Figure 18: Frequency of Attendance to Special Events

How many programs offered by the Munster Parks and Recreation Department have you/members of your household participated in? (n=32)

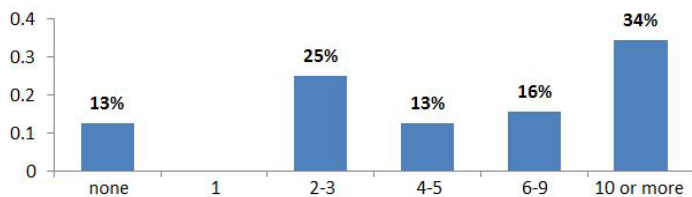


Figure 19: Number of Programs Participated in Household

Of those participants who offered information on their frequency of use of the bike trails, one half used them multiple times a week. This may indicate that the trails are heavily used, and may be useful for

How often do you use the local and/or regional bike path system (n=12)

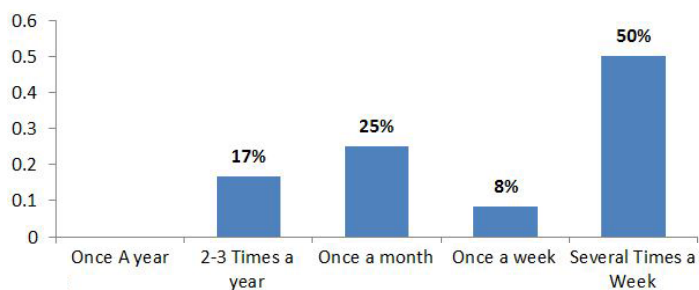


Figure 20: Bike Path Systems Use Frequency

daily commuting. However, most of the offerings are used only once a year, The Centennial Clubhouse and Community Pool are the only specialty facilities that are used by some participants at least once a week.

In the past 3 years, how often have you/members of your household visited the following facilities? (n=8)

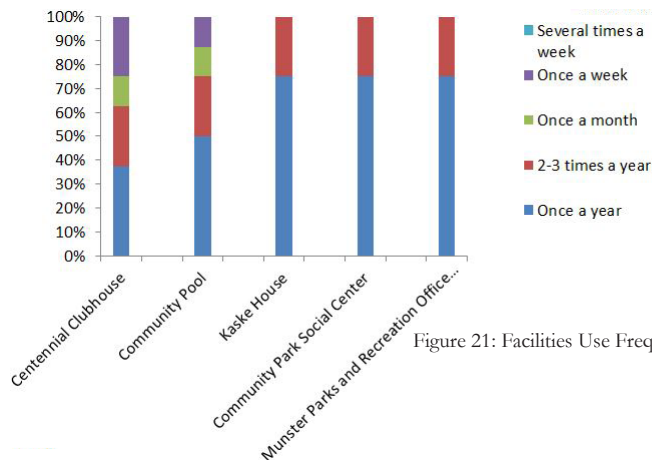


Figure 21: Facilities Use Frequency

When asked about their aquatic facility use, more than 70% of people who responded said that they used Munster pools, and almost 60% of people use public beaches. This is compared to the 7% of people who use the YMCA pool or a personal pool. It appears that in terms of water facilities, Munster parks and public beaches are well utilized.

What indoor or outdoor aquatic facilities did you or members of your household use regularly in the past 2 years? (n=28)

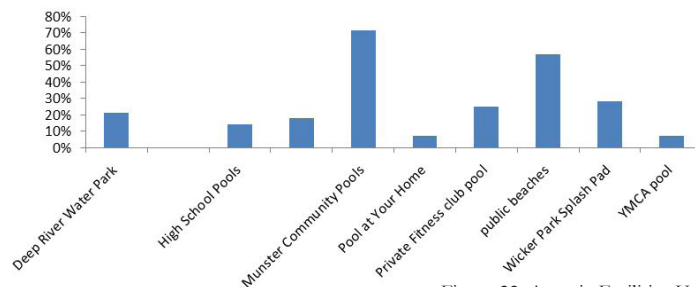


Figure 22: Aquatic Facilities Use

Everyone who provided feedback on program use participated in their organizations' programs, with a private fitness facility being the most popular. This could mean that people are interested in getting involved in a wide range of activities outside of the home.

In the past year, in which of these organizations' programs have you/members of your household participated in? (n=35)

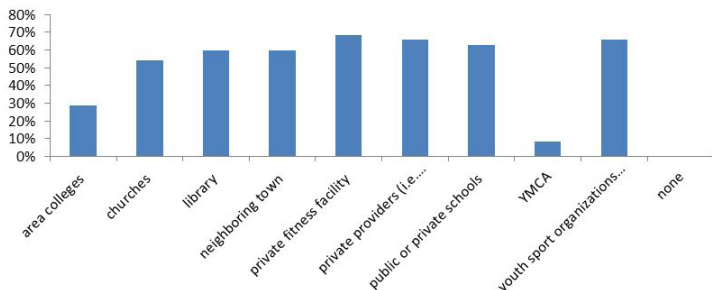


Figure 23: Organization Participation

When asked what kind of programs Munster Parks and Recreation could offer that would be of most interest, an indoor soccer field was the most popular idea. Additionally, there were requests for additional programming geared both towards adults as well as young children.

Please list types of programs that would interest you/members of your household if they were offered by the Munster Parks and Recreation Department? (n=19)

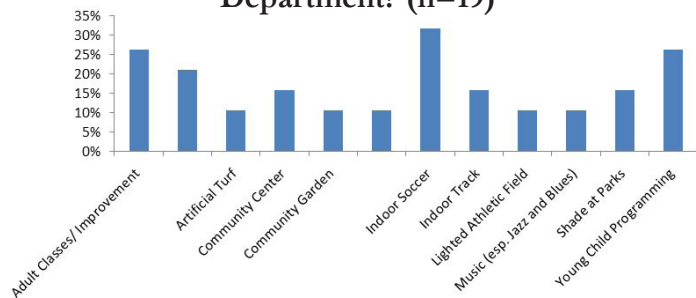


Figure 24: Programs of Interest



Chapter 6

Visioning



Visioning

Branding: Munster Matters

The Town of Munster Parks & Recreation Department branded the master plan and its process as “Munster Matters – Master Plan Campaign” with the slogan “Your Voice Matters – Be Part of the Process”. A logo was developed and used on all promotional and marketing materials, including social media, the survey, Mind Mixer, and printed materials. This branding created a strong identity for the master plan process.

A critical component of the Munster Matters – Master Plan Campaign is effective public engagement. Overall, the community visioning process must be balanced, open, and collaborative and as a result will build public trust in the process and the plan. Close interaction with the Department staff, residents, and key stakeholders was accomplished throughout the public process and resulted in the identification of residents’ concerns, expressed needs and priorities regarding the Town of Munster Parks & Recreation parks, facilities, programs, and services. The project team worked to include a comprehensive representation of interest and user groups.

These efforts included formal public input obtained in a series of focus and stakeholder group meetings and a public open house/workshop held throughout the day and evening at both Town Hall and Centennial Park Clubhouse on January 11, 2018. At these meetings the participants were asked a series of questions by the consultant team. All the groups were asked the same four basic questions, and then if appropriate, additional questions tailored to their interests. These four basic questions were:

1. What are the most important issues facing the Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department?
2. What is working well for the Parks Department?
3. What is not working well for the Parks Department?
4. What do you hope a master planning project for the Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department should address overall?

Each group met for about an hour while the facilitators recorded their comments on “flip charts”. The meeting summaries are reviewed in the previous chapter and all the data is included in the appendix of this report.

All of the information was collected and analyzed along with the park inventories and programming analysis to guide the vision for the comprehensive – Master Plan for the following elements:

- Programs
- Parks & Facilities
- Opportunities
- Trends



Accessibility and Universal Design

Munster Parks and Recreation does not discriminate against any person, regardless of the person's abilities or disabilities. In order to abide by the standards outlined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA), this Master Plan outlines accessibility and universal design in five core components:

1. Self-Evaluation/Submittal
2. Transition Plan
3. Public Notice
4. Grievance Procedure
5. Designated ADA Coordinator

Self-Evaluation

As a component for the master planning of Munster's Parks and Recreation Department, various focus groups were contacted for their input on the overall services of the Department. More details on their input can be found in Chapter 5: Public Participation. These groups include:

1. Munster Soccer Club
2. Munster Babe Ruth
3. Munster Lacrosse
4. Munster Little League
5. Munster Girls Softball
6. St. Thomas More School
7. School Town of Munster
8. Munster Chamber of Commerce
9. Munster Kiwanis Club
10. South Shore Arts
11. Munster Garden Club
12. Munster Jr. Women's Club
13. Rotary Club of Munster
14. Munster Lion's Club
15. Billy Casper Golf

There were several groups who commented that accessibility could be improved around the parks, particularly around the athletic facilities.

Examined Areas, Identified Problems, and Modifications to be Made

Every outdoor open space owned by the Parks and Recreation Department was examined by the consulting team. Accessibility issues that were identified by the team are mentioned within the park descriptions. For those detailed descriptions, see Chapter 11: Park Inventory and Assessments.

The following page is a chart that indicates issues present currently within Munster's facilities. Alongside the identified issues noted at each park is a column that indicates how modifications can be made to improve each park's condition and ADA compliance.

Transition Plan

To accomplish the modifications noted on the following page, a transition plan is necessary. Each action is also included in the Chapter 13: Recommendations section of this Master Plan, and due to the urgency in complying with ADA, every action is noted as a top priority. That means, within a year of this plan's adoption by the Park Board, each action should be taken.

Some of the tasks have quick turnover from installation to completion, and may not require much time. Other tasks may be more involved and complex, and may require significant time commitment, planning, and cost.

Potential costs to reach completion of all tasks have been referenced in the Chapter 13: Recommendations section. The low end of the potential costs is roughly \$100,000, while the high end is just under \$200,000. These estimates were based on an aggregate of all tasks mentioning accessibility in Chapter 13. A possible funding source for these projects may come from Munster Parks and Recreation's capital budget and other grants they may receive upon Park Board adoption of the Master Plan.

Figure 25: ADA Self-Evaluation Chart

Park	Accessibility Issues/Problems Identified	Modifications Identified for Compliance
Beech Park	Raised curb limits or prevents accessible entrance points to play apparatus	Provide ADA accessible routes to all activity areas within the park, including playgrounds, play apparatus spectator seating
Bluebird Park	There is no accessible route along the parking lot and no accessible connection from the parking lot to the perimeter path system	Install an accessible connection between the parking lot and the park's perimeter path system
Briar Creek Park	Not an ADA-compliant drinking fountain	Replace outdated drinking fountain with ADA compliant fountain
Burlwood Park	Not an ADA-compliant drinking fountain	Replace outdated drinking fountain with ADA compliant fountain
Centennial Park	Existing paths within dog park are not ADA compliant	Install alternate hard surfacing to comply with ADA requirements
Circle Park	Path does not provide access to connect to the the play surface	Resurface limitations
Cobblestones Park	Concrete pad at tennis courts isolated from any path, limiting access to court	Install ADA compliant path to connect to existing pad at tennis court
F.H. Hammond Park	Access point into playground may not meet ADA access requirements. There are no accessible routes to ballfield. Drinking fountain is non-compliant with ADA.	Replace outdated drinking fountain with ADA compliant fountain. Complete path access into playground and ballfield with ADA compliant pathway
Grove Park	No ADA-compliant parking spaces. Drinking fountain not ADA-compliant.	Designate ADA parking spaces as well as replace outdated drinking fountain with ADA compliant path.
Heritage Park	Meditation walkway/wooded path not compliant with ADA due to boulders restricting access	Review condition of wooded path and adjust grade and layout if not ADA compliant.
Kiwanis Park	No accessibility into playground and drinking fountain is not ADA-compliant	Review site for accessible routes to playground. Replace fountain with ADA compliant fountain.
Orchard Park	Benches distributed throughout park at inaccessible locations	Relocate benches to pads that offer adequate space and are on accessible path.
Sunnyside Park	No accessibility into playground or drinking fountain. Drinking fountain is not ADA-compliant	Plan the park site to provide access to playground. Replace drinking fountain with ADA compliant model.
Twin Creek Park	Surfacing of asphalt path is uneven at areas, which can limit access throughout park.	Resurface to address access and eliminate barriers.
West Lakes Park	No ADA-compliant parking spaces. Drinking fountain not ADA-compliant.	Designate ADA parking spaces as well as replace outdated drinking fountain with ADA compliant model.
White Oak Park	Sunken concrete near the shelter is a mobility barrier.	Resurface to address mobility barriers

Public Notice

The Munster Parks and Recreation Department is under the jurisdiction of the Town of Munster. Therefore, the information relating to their ADA compliance is all found on the Town's website, www.munster.org, which also hosts the information relating to the Parks and Recreation Department.

As every Park Board and Town Council meeting has its recorded minutes posted online, one can simply search "ADA" in the navigation bar at the top right of Munster's website. There, various results will show all of the information Munster has that highlights their compliance to ADA. For example, a more recently Park Board-adopted project relates to improvements to the Centennial Park amphitheater for both ADA standards and safety.

Grievance Procedure

There is a possibility that other, unidentified areas in Munster's Parks and Recreation facilities may present hazards or limitations to universal accessibility. According to Title II of ADA, local governments with 50 or more employees (as Munster is classified) need to set in place a grievance procedure for those who feel that they have been discriminated against because of their disability, or others with disabilities.

Munster updated their most recent grievance procedure in 2016. Therefore, it should be referred to when a grievance takes place so that anyone who feels discriminated against can take appropriate steps to see their circumstances resolved. Munster will not place any cost to resolve the situation on the person going through the grievance procedure.

Designated ADA Coordinator

Every local government that has 50 or more employees is required to have a designated individual to coordinate ADA compliance within their jurisdiction. In the Town of Munster, this person is Tom Vander Woude, Planning Director.



Chapter 7

Park Classification & Levels of Service



Park Classification and Levels of Service

In 1996, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) published the Park, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines. These guidelines presented a model of typical park classifications, as well as recommended service levels based on population. “The purpose of the publication is to underscore the most important objective of the park and recreation planning process; to ensure that a community knows how to go about securing enough of the right kind of land to provide the scale of park and open space system the citizen’s desire.” (James D. Mertes, 1996) This valuable resource provides definitions, criteria, classifications, and development standards for the recreation industry. The publication also includes a Level of Service (LOS) analysis which is a “systems approach” to facility planning. The NRPA guidelines and LOS together with input received from the community provides for an ongoing, dynamic planning process. However, NRPA recognizes that these numbers do not take into account the unique qualities and needs of all communities across the country. Local trends, demographics, climate and the popularity of certain activities over others often dictate a greater need for certain facilities. Currently, NRPA is updating their standards through the Park Metrics, formerly PRORAGIS, system, an online service designed to capture national trend data from park and recreation departments.

National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA)

Based upon the Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, the NRPA Level of Service (LOS) is a standard evaluation of park type and acreage across all park agencies based on what they offer their residents (James D. Mertes, 1996). The LOS is typically defined in parks and recreation master plans as a ratio representing the minimum amount of open space and park land needed to meet the recreation demands of the community. The NRPA recognizes the importance of the level of service as:



- An expression of minimum acceptable facilities for citizens of every community.
 - A guideline to determine land requirements for various kinds of park and recreation areas and facilities.
 - A basis for relating recreational needs to spatial analysis within a community-wide system of parks, recreation areas, and open areas.
- (James D. Mertes, 1996)

NRPA also states that each community should be considered on an individual basis in order to tailor the most appropriate range, quantity and quality of recreational facilities within the Department’s fiscal limits. Acreage of park land per 1,000 residents remains the most common technique of expressing equal opportunity, even though conditions and needs vary greatly between areas. This technique was utilized to help in determining the Level of Service for the Munster Parks and Recreation Department, along with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) standards, reviewed below.

PRORAGIS

Launched in 2009 as PRORAGIS, the NRPA Park Metrics is a search-able, online national database for use by park and recreation departments. The power of NRPA Park Metrics is its ability to run comparative reports to help agencies effectively manage and plan their resources and facilities. The park agency enters the information regarding their agency and the data can then be used to generate benchmarking reports. Users also have access to GIS mapping tools. The Munster Parks and Recreation Department should create a profile through PRORAGIS and compare the Department’s results against other agencies with a similar size and demographics. The database will let you compare the number of facility types such as ballfields, basketball courts, and tennis courts and the data will be applicable to the communities surrounding Munster that are also utilizing PRORAGIS and not based on a median of the national average.

Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

The State of Indiana has been using the 1983 NRPA guidelines as a benchmark since they were first established, but has created its own LOS guidelines for park and recreation open space. Indiana established LOS guidelines divided into three recreation acreage categories: Local, State/Federal (regional), and Total (statewide) as outlined below:

- Local (County, Township, City or Town) recreation acres: Land owned by municipal, township and County governments, and land privately owned but open for public use.
- State/Federal (Regional) recreation acres: Land owned by either State or Federal governments for public recreational use.
- Total (Statewide) recreation acres: Total of all public recreation land statewide that is owned by all the entities in the other categories.

The State of Indiana took the above categories and created LOS guidelines for parks, recreation and open space for all Hoosiers. Indiana's guidelines for outdoor recreation for acres per 1,000 people are:

- County LOS (Local): 20 acres per 1,000 people (.02 acres per person) of public (local) recreation acres
- State/Fed (Regional) LOS: 35 acres per 1,000 people (.035 acres per person) of public State and Federal (regional) recreation acres
- Total (Statewide) LOS: 55 acres per 1,000 people (.055 acres per person) total (sum of) acres of public recreational acres from the first two categories

According to the The Indiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2016-2020 (SCORP), Lake County meets this recommendation as a county for County or Local LOS.



Park Standards and Classification Descriptions

NRPA states “A park system, at a minimum, should be composed of a ‘core’ system of park lands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population.” In addition, as a means of organizing the open space facilities found in the Munster Parks and Recreation, the park sites are classified according to a NRPA hierarchy that provides for a comprehensive system of interrelated parks. These NRPA guidelines and definitions serve as a good baseline for determining a minimum standard for park services; however they are refined to address the needs of the users of the Munster Parks and Recreation Department (MPRD). The classification and acreage of the properties owned or leased by the MPR are outlined in a matrix later on in this report’s inventory and assessment section. The classifications used in the MPRD are as follows:

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Open Space/Green Space
- Special Use

Chapter 11’s maps illustrate the Munster Parks and Recreation Department’s parks and facilities that are owned or leased as well as illustrate the service areas for Mini, Neighborhood and Community Parks.

Mini Parks

The smallest type of park, “mini parks”, are mainly designed to serve a concentrated population or a specific age group or function but they can serve persons of all ages located in the immediate area. Another term

“pocket park” has also been used to identify mini parks in recent years. They are designed for up to a ¼-mile radius of service and are 1.5 acres or less in size. The park is generally a “walk-to” type park, meaning no parking facilities for automobiles are normally found. Their primary purpose is to provide recreation to residents where major roads do not have to be crossed. The amenities provided can center on play apparatus for young children; however, some include passive activities for adults and seniors depending on the needs of the surrounding neighborhood. Other amenities typically include gazebos, benches, scenic overlooks, picnic tables, and ornamental landscaping. Mini park service levels are 0.25 to 0.5 acres per thousand residents.

The MPRD contains 5 mini parks, and includes:

- Sunnyside Park
- Monon Park & Trailhead
- Rotary Park
- Orchard Park
- John Friend Park

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks form the foundation of the MPRD and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. They generally range in size from 5 to 10 acres; however, due to the available land within the community as well as the amenities provided, sites as small as two acres in size may be appropriate for a neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks are designed for a ¼ to ½ mile radius of service. Concentrated intense recreation activities are common in these parks and they are usually designed within a limited amount of space. These parks serve residents in a variety of age groups. The park should be easily accessible and access should be uninterrupted by major roads or other significant barriers.

Neighborhood park features include aesthetically designed play areas, picnic areas, splash pads, ball fields, skating, open space for field games, shelters, and walking paths. Typically neighborhood parks do not provide off street parking; however parking may be necessary due to the scope of activities and size. Neighborhood parks

should serve between 10,000 to 20,000 residents, or 1.0 to 2.0 acres per thousand people.

The MPRD contains 10 neighborhood parks, and includes:

- Beech Park
- Briar Creek Park
- Burlwood Park
- Circle Park
- Cobblestones Park
- Evergreen Park
- Grove Park
- Kiwanis Park
- Twin Creek Park
- White Oak Park

Community Parks

Community parks are diverse in nature, serving a broader purpose than the neighborhood or mini parks. They are larger than neighborhood parks and are intended to serve large populations of the community as a whole.

Community parks usually have both day and evening activities which can result in lighted fields and amenities. Community parks include a mix of active and passive activities and attract users of all ages. Large play structures, baseball fields, football fields, soccer fields, hiking trails, sled hills, and swimming pools can all be part of a community park. The service area for such a facility can vary based upon the size and scope of activities offered; however, a park of this type may serve 50,000-80,000 people or 5-8 acres per 1,000 people.

Community parks generally range in size from 15 to 50 acres. However, due to available land area, sites over 10 acres in size can be appropriate to accommodate such activities. These parks are designed for a 1 to 3 mile radius of service and usually serve two or more neighborhoods. They are also easily accessible by multiple modes of transportation with on-site parking available.

The one-mile service area radius for this park classification as shown in Chapter 11 indicates MPR's community park covers the majority of the land within

the Department's boundaries, except the far south end of town, most of which is served by neighborhood and mini park sites.

The MPRD contains 7 community parks, and includes:

- Bluebird Park
- Centennial Park
- Community Park
- F H Hammond Park
- Heritage Park
- Stewart Park
- West Lakes Park

Special Use Parks

Special use parks are areas that include specialized recreational activities. These activities can have a very broad range from field houses, marinas, museums, gardens, outdoor theaters, nature centers, and golf courses. NRPA does not have specific standards for special use parks; however, these parks usually provide amenities that serve the entire agency boundary as well as visitors from outside the community.

The MPRD has 3 facilities that fall into the special use category:

- River's Edge Disc Golf
- Heritage Park (Kaske House)
- Clayhole Lake

Detention and Open Space

In addition, the MPR has 4 sites which do not provide any recreational activities meeting the Mini, Neighborhood, or Community Park criteria. Therefore, for this analysis, they have been classified as open space. These sites are typically dry detention sites, natural areas, or open green space. These sites might provide connections to the existing bike path system.

The MPRD contains 4 Detention/Open Space sites:

- 45th Avenue Greenspace
- Lawler Park Greenspace
- Redbud Open Space
- White Oak Woods

Parks and Facilities Overview And Levels of Service (acres per 1,000 population)

The MPRD oversees 44 park sites and facilities with a total of 345 acres. The MPRD Park Matrix reflects the current inventory of parks, their acreage, classification, and amenities as shown in Chapter 11. MPRD currently is providing 345 acres of developed land, or 14.93 acres per 1,000 population, which exceeds the NRPA recommendation of 6.25 to 10.0 acres/1,000 population. This calculation includes the acreages of Community, Neighborhood, Mini, and Special Use parks.



Chapter 8

Benchmarking



Benchmarking

To better understand how well the Munster Parks and Recreation Department serves its residents, a comparative analysis with other local park agencies was developed. Benchmarking is a tool used by agencies to measure where they fall in contrast to other agencies. The Munster Parks and Recreation Department was benchmarked against three surrounding communities: Hammond, Highland, and Dyer.

For this analysis, the key benchmarking data sought included:

- Population
- Median household income
- Total number of parks
- Total park acres
- Acres per 1,000 residents
- Total number of outdoor tennis courts
- Number of athletic fields, including:
 - o Baseball/softball
 - o Soccer
 - o Football
- Number of Playgrounds
- Total expenditures (to come)
- Capital improvement expenditures (to come)
- Equalized assessed value (to come)

Population Characteristics

The three parks and recreation departments included in this comparison range in population from 15,941 to 77,577, with an average of 47,770. The Town of Highland is nearest this average, with a population of 23,727. While the range is somewhat expansive, the parks and recreation departments were chosen for this benchmarking due to their proximity to Munster.

Parks and Facilities

Relative to parks and facilities, the total acres of owned and leased land by the communities was used for comparison. The four parks and recreation departments

being compared range in park acreage from 208.4 to 838.9 acres. Munster was closer to the middle of the range, with ~345 park acres.

Traditional park baseline standards set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in “Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenways Guidelines” suggests 6.25 to 10 acres of park land per 1,000 people (Mertes & Hall, 1996). These recreation standards are commonly used in open space planning purposes and can be adjusted based on community preference. Munster exceeds the baseline, with 14.7 acres per 1,000 residents. This ratio is bolstered by several large community parks and Centennial Park. All park agencies with accessible information in this benchmark do, indeed, meet these NRPA guidelines.

Number of Playgrounds

The number of playgrounds per capita vary significantly nationwide. Due to this variability the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) has not established a specific recommendation or standard for the number of playgrounds each community should provide.

Due to the proximity of Munster to the Chicago Metropolitan Area our analysis utilizes a per capita playground standard like the regional standard of 0.72 playgrounds per 1,000 population. Applying the 0.72 playgrounds per 1,000 to the Town of Munster’s 23,103 would equate to a recommended target of ± 17 playgrounds. The Town’s Park and Recreation Department currently manages 17 playgrounds, which basically meets the standard, however when reviewing the exhibit showing locations of playgrounds within the community, most all residential areas fall within service the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile service areas of the existing playgrounds.

When comparing the Town of Munster with adjacent communities Hammond and Highland, Munster is comparable to Highland which provides

0.75 playgrounds per 1,000 population while Munster provides 0.73 playgrounds per 1,000 population. Hammond on the other hand provides only 0.28 playgrounds per 1,000 population. Both Munster and Highland meet the standard while Hammond falls significantly short of the standard.

There are three areas within the Town that do not fall within the playground service areas of the 17 existing playgrounds, they include an area in the northwest corner of the community north of Ridge Road and west of Calumet Avenue; a small residential area north of Ridge Road east of Baring Avenue; and, a residential area south of Ridge Road and east of White Oaks Avenue.

Potential park or open space sites for consideration for development of a playground area to address these three areas not within the ½ mile playground service

areas include: development of a playground in the area of the Manor Avenue Green Space, this would extend the playground service area sufficiently to the east to cover the previous void area. The second area could be addressed if the existing open space in the far northeast corner of the Town north of Ridge Road east of Hawthorne Road in the open space west of Hart Ditch. The third area could be addressed by developing a playground at Orchard Park.

Capital Improvements

Comparing the level of capital improvement expenditures can also be used as a comparison between communities. The Town of Munster has issued approximately \$1,900,000 in capital improvement bonds each year over the last several years. These bond proceeds fund park capital improvements as well as needed capital equipment replacement.

	Munster	Hammond	Highland
Community Overview			
Population (1)	23,103	77,134	23,727
Median Household Income (2)	\$70,894	\$41,685	\$62,240
% of population growth since 2010 U.S. Census	-5.2%	-4.8%	-3.8%
Parks Department Overview			
Total Number of Parks/Facilities	44	33	23
Total Park Acres	344.5	838.9	230.1
Acres per 1000 Residents	14.9	10.9	9.69
Total Outdoor Tennis Courts	15	21	5
Baseball/Softball	8	36	7
Soccer	7	6	3
Football	1	6	1
Number of Playgrounds	17	22	18
Number of Full Time Employees	12	27	14



Chapter 9

Workplace Culture



Work Place Culture Assessment

Introduction

The consultant team conducted a Work Place Culture assessment for the purpose of evaluating the employee work environment, relationships in the work place, role and purpose in the job fit, and assessing job satisfaction, communication and organizational structure of the department.

The following process was used for data and input for the assessment:

- Conduct a work culture workshop presentation
- Dispense a 50 question survey to all staff who work 35 hours or more
- Interview 12 full time staff
- Interview with the Executive Director
- Analyze job descriptions and fit for positions
- Analyze data from the staff to assess report
- Produce recommendations for the report

Background Research:

Research reveals that there is a direct link between engaged employees and better business results. The more employees are engaged, the better results for the agency, happier participants and stakeholders, and more productive and innovative that employee will be. To accomplish such a task, it is vital that leaders and their employees get on the same page with common goals, values and purpose. When there is a disconnect between the leader and their employees, research tells us performance as well as revenue are at risk. The strongest foundation a leader needs to build is trust. When trust resides in an operation, cooperation and collaboration are at its peak performance in the staff.

Since the traumatic event of September 11, there has been a shift in the way employees work to obtain their full potential. The last seventeen years, our country has experienced high levels of anxiety due to those creating

fear, such as bullying, violence on school campus' and churches, as well as ISIS. The global tension is extremely high and we've experienced more natural disasters than ever in past history. Due to this time in history, employees are seeking a psychologically and physically safe environment to work in. Employees desire an environment where trust between staff and leadership is crucial. When this cohesiveness happens, a company will thrive and grow as well as an increase in performance with staff.

Leadership, as well as managers must change as it will improve operations and high level of staff engagement. Employees are seeking to be lead and inspired. It is vital that staff are not only provided appropriate training and development, but have a work environment where leadership demonstrate empathy, sacrifice, recognition for hard work and the willingness to protect the staff from psychological dangers as well as physical.

Understanding the changing society trends is another area effecting the work place culture. All service related positions and agencies absorb the culture and climate of the society. One area to take into consideration is the shift in family dynamics, immigration, millennials' as well as the acceptance of the LGBTQ community. The park and recreation department needs to adjust their programming and work place culture in order to be as equitable as possible in distribution, diversity and inclusion.

The last area that links work place culture and improved performance is the area of technology. Too much exposure to social media, and technology can present emotional and physical/ health issues among employees. Research tells us that individuality is contributing toward anxiety, depression and poor work performance. Because we are designed as social beings, working in teams provides better innovation and

performance in the work place. Human connection and conversation is proven to work better than sending a text or email.

The following section will reveal the finding from a 50 question survey given to 12 employees who work 35 hours or more at the Munster Park and Recreation Department. These findings are based on a scale from 1- 5 and will reveal the average score. (1 being low, 5 being high)

Questionnaire Findings

Communication:	3.5
Work place Satisfaction:	4.0
Compensation:	2.0
Resources:	4.0
Performance Accountability:	2.0
Personal Expression:	3.5
Diversity:	3.5
Feedback:	2.0
Quality of Customer Focus:	4.0
Fairness and Teamwork:	4.0
Opportunities for Growth:	3.0
Respect for Management:	3.5
Desire merit-based pay	4.0

Figure 27: Questionnaire Findings

Organizational Structure:

The breakdown of the Munster Parks and Recreation Department consists of managing the organization structure of Board of Directors, City Council, Town Manager, Executive Director, Maintenance staff (Parks), and Recreation staff. The significant challenge of making a more personal and meaningful connection between each of these roles and responsibilities is of utmost importance. As each role is important to the town of Munster, each function must show support toward a common goal and purpose.

Each culture individually works very well together on

their own as they share common interest and purpose, however, aligning the mission, core values, and purpose will allow for more connection and support between these distinct roles and responsibilities. Overcoming the disconnect is the key as these separate cultures mend together the staff morale. Engagement will increase in job satisfaction and performance. When this cohesiveness improves, there will be an overall improvement in revenue as well.

Of the twelve employees who took the survey, they described the organizational culture as follows: “overworked, understaffed, unappreciated, demanding, favoritism, comfortable, teamwork, happy, micromanaged, rewarding, loyalty, challenging, stressful, old school, dedicated and adaptive.”

Although employees find their work challenging, and rewarding, there is very little room for advancement or promotion. In organizational structure it is important to provide opportunities for promotion and advancement. If an organization does not have that kind of capacity, it’s vital to provide feedback, reviews and recognition for accomplishments.

In the area of work- life balance, the maintenance staff do not believe they have the balance they need in order to provide the quality of work they want to provide the town of Munster. The concern these employees have is genuine as they need the safety and proper rest to do their jobs well.

The Following section is based on the last question from the survey in which employees were asked what they would like to happen here at the Munster Park and Recreation Department in their work place. This is a summary of their comments on culture only.

Work Culture Wish List:

- More capable help
- Increase in pay
- Better communication between Rec Dept. and Parks Dept.

- More cohesive/ efficient work space with separate office/ desk/ proper storage
- Ability to take registration on all computers
- More recognition and value for what we accomplish
- More social time with co-workers
- More support from senior management
- Competitive- merit based salary
- Less favoritism
- More opportunities for growth and development/training
- Restructure of job titles to better fit duties more accurately
- More employee bonding
- Everyone treated equal
- Better computers, desks, and software
- More work spirit (afternoon or family day)
- More ways for advancement
- Job titles that fit what we do
- More recognition from Board and Town Manager
- More time to further relationships between Recreation staff and Maintenance staff
- Updated office especially the carpet.
- To be valued, respected and appreciated
- More functional work space
- New Rec Center facility, indoor pool, Kitchen, storage areas, classrooms for fitness, 2 basketball courts, arts and crafts room.
- Registration access on all computers
- Reimbursement for cell phone use
- Use overtime as comp time
- Wear more jeans to work

Figure 28: Work Culture Wish List

Interviews

On February 22, the recreation, maintenance staff and Executive Director were interviewed by members of the consultant team. The purpose of the interviews was to gain additional information that would further assist in the work culture assessment. The confidential

interviews were approximately 30- 45 minutes allowing the employee to share any thoughts, concerns, and desires for the Munster Parks and Recreation Department. The goal was to look for consistent concerns, and common thoughts in order to better assist the leadership of Munster Parks and Recreation Department.

The following are the consistent common thoughts, concerns and desires from the Recreation and Maintenance staff:

- Job descriptions need to be adjusted to better fit the role of employee
- Over worked and understaffed
- Better pay for part-time employees
- Updated/ more functional office space
- Salary not competitive
- Under appreciated
- Never had a review
- Overall great teamwork and happy
- Disconnect with Board and Town Manager
- Desire for a Recreation Center

Executive Director Interview Summary:

The Executive Director has a good handle on the staff as well as their needs and desires. He is well liked and respected from the staff. His leadership style is a “team player” which is what employees are looking for. He is not a micro-manager and appears to trust and appreciate his staff. He admits there is no perfect culture and would like to hire more staff and reward those who work extremely hard for the Department. He agrees with the staff for better and updated office space and the desire for a recreation center. He is open and willing to make any and all changes that are necessary.

Recommendations

1. Continue to work on job descriptions to better align employee tasks and responsibilities.
2. Consider higher quality training and pay for part-time staff
3. Consider hiring more staff for maintenance team to ensure adequate time off for rest and safety purposes.
4. Ensure recreation staff receives multiple opportunities for learning and training for future ideas, trends and successful programs.
5. Ensure all staff receives feedback and twice a year reviews.
6. To improve the area of “disconnect”, arrange quarterly times for maintenance, recreation, and board members to enjoy social times together.
7. Consider the recreation office space to be updated and more efficient.
8. Consider merit-based pay for full time staff.



Chapter 10

Programming



Programming

Introduction

The recreation program assessment is prepared based upon the following information:

- Review of the organizational chart and reporting structure
- A review of program brochures
- Analysis of statistical program data provided by the Department
- A SWOT analysis to ascertain strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Staff programming questionnaire
- Conducting a work culture workshop
- Staff questionnaire about workplace culture
- One on one interviews with full time staff and the Executive Director
- Community Focus Groups
- Community survey
- Visits to key facilities
- Professional publications and associations
- Resources listed at the end of the report.

Purpose

The purpose of the recreation program assessment is to:

- a. Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of program offerings;
- b. Ascertain the quantity of programs offered on an annual basis;
- c. Identify trends in program enrollment and popularity;
- d. Identify regional and national recreation and fitness trends; and
- e. Pinpoint programming strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.
- f. Recommend strategies to increase recreation program participation, success rates and revenue.

Program and Evaluation

Programming drives demand. Individuals enrolled in programs tend to re-visit the program facilities and parks during non-program times. For example:

- A) Youth enrolled in a baseball league visits to the park not only on games days or organized practice sessions but also at their leisure to work on skills or enjoy a game of catch.
- B) Men and women taking golf lessons return to the golf course or driving range for “practice” rounds.
- C) Youth taking swim lessons return to the swimming pool/water park during open swim.
- D) Individuals enrolled in facility-based programs such as fitness classes become prime candidates for facility memberships.

This principle brings understanding that quality programming returns participants, often with companions, to parks and facilities beyond the formal instruction or program times. As a result, facility attendance, revenue, and concessions grow.

People purchase products and services to fill a need or desire. The more in sync with the needs, desires and trends of your market place, the more successful your programming will be. One method customers express their desires is by their purchasing decisions. They speak when they choose to enroll; they speak when they choose not to. Their behavior sheds light on activity preferences, days and times.

Beyond customary customer feedback methods as program evaluations, surveys, and suggestions, staff involvement in civic and community organizations is a useful method of gaining customer opinions. Similarly, active involvement in professional associations keeps

staff abreast of the hottest programming trends. Gathering customer input, however, is meaningful only if the information is deciphered, evaluated and acted upon. If you make the effort to gather information, do something with it.

Participation by minorities depends upon the Department being relevant to them. They must be able to relate to the programs and services offered. Does programming reflect their interests? Do they see themselves in the diversity of Department staff? Do they see themselves in the brochure photos?

Program evaluation has two subtexts, the macro evaluation and micro evaluation.

Macro level evaluation is the review of your comprehensive program menu often consisting of:

1. The overall program mix – (a review of the percentage of programs offered for each age or classification compared to your population demographics). Is the balance appropriate?
2. The collective bottom line (actual vs budget). Did the actual margin meet or exceed the budgeted margin for the program category?
3. The overall program success rate which indicates your level of efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Conducting a lifecycle analysis to identify and compare the percentage of programs in the stages of “introductory, new”, “core” and “decline”.

The micro level evaluation is an evaluation of each activity or class. A comprehensive activity/class evaluation consists of three perspectives:

1. The participants – Were the stated program objectives met? To what level was the participant satisfied? How can the program be improved?
2. The recreation programmer – Did the program meet its pre-stated determinants? Were the logistics smooth? Was the return on investment

worth the effort (Cost/Benefit)? Did the program meet the Department’s global objectives? What should you do differently? Is the class worthy of repeating? Examine the historical enrollment trend for the program.

3. Financial performance – Did the program meet or exceed budget objectives? Is it growing or declining in popularity and revenue? If it is run again, what financial adjustments should be made?

The recreation program assessment addresses macro level evaluation.

Program Mix

The program mix identifies each category of programming as a percent of total offering. According to data supplied by Department staff, the program mix over the last 2 years is as follows:

Program Category	Offerings	Percent
Active Adult / Continuing Ed	154	9%
Aquatics	86	5%
Golf	35	2%
Keen Ageds	43	3%
Special Event	70	4%
Summer Camp	186	11%
Summer Enrichment	132	8%
Tennis	86	5%
Trips / Travel	173	10%
Wellness / Fitness	219	13%
Youth Education	200	12%
Youth Sports	299	18%
Total	1683	100%

Documenting key performance indicators (KPI) along with maintaining a 5-year comparison delivers a macro level dashboard of overall performance and informed decision making. Recommended Key Performance Indicators are the household penetration rate, program enrollment/attendance, success rates and average class size. Waiting lists and the number of new and free offerings may also be included. Graphing each KPI over a 3 to 5-year period yields valuable internal trending information.

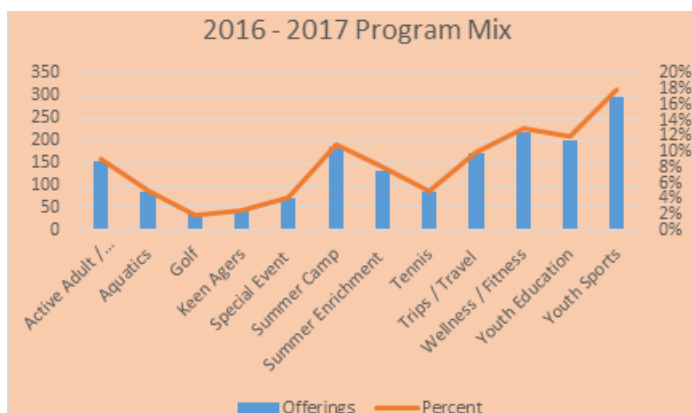


Figure 29: 2016-2017 Program Mix

Household Penetration Rate

The household penetration rate is a measure of the number of households that had at least one member of the household register for a program or activity within the year. A year to year increase or drop in household participation does not indicate a trend. At minimum three years, but ideally 5 years of tracking is necessary to identify the trend. If the 3 to 5-year trend line is increasing, programming is connecting with a growing number of households and the customer base is expanding. Conversely, if the trend line shows a decline, the customer base is shrinking. It represents a growing number of households disengaged from programming. For the non-participating households, the reputation of the Department hinges upon the visual appeal of the parks, word of mouth, social media, and news reports.

According to data provided by the Department, the household penetration rate for 2016 and for 2017 was between 8 and 10%. Translated, roughly 9 out of every 10 households are not engaged in the Departments programs. A desired penetration rate is 30% or higher.

Year	# of Housing Units	# of Households Registered	Penetration rate
2016	9,178	904	10%
2017	9,195	799	8%

Figure 30: Household Penetration Rate

Program Registration/Attendance

Program registrations and attendance gauge the popularity and relevance of your programs and services. These straightforward numbers indicate whether more or fewer people are participating in programs and services from year to year.

2016-17 Participation

Active Adult / Continuing Ed	587	2%
Aquatics	791	3%
Golf	106	1%
Keen Agers	716	3%
Special Event	13,206	55%
Summer Camp	1,539	6%
Summer Enrichment	830	3%
Tennis	501	2%
Trips / Travel	2,211	9%
Wellness / Fitness	450	2%
Youth Education	644	3%
Youth Sports	2,587	11%
Total	24,168	100%

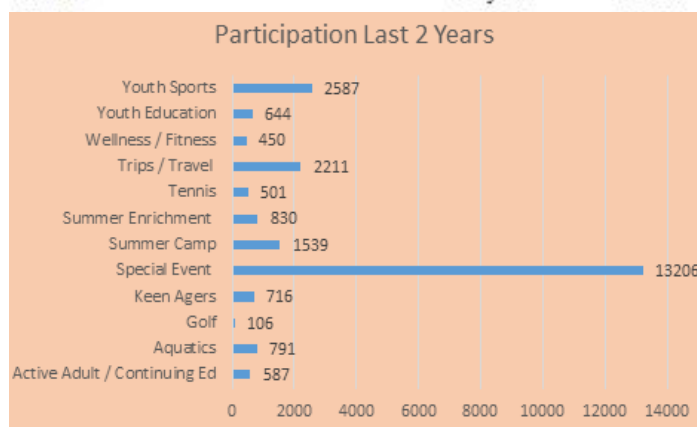


Figure 31: Participation Charts

Program Success Rates

The overall program success rate is an indication of the effectiveness and efficiency. It is calculated by dividing the number of programs run by the number offered. The consultant team recommends a success rate for the overall program menu between 70% to 90%. With respect to measuring effectiveness - A success rate that is below 70% suggests time, effort and resources are allocated to programs that are not in sync with community interests. The loss (or waste) of time, effort, and resources on developing programs that do go is a gauge of efficiency.

A success rate above 90% might indicate conservative programming lacking fresh, trending, cutting edge

offerings. New alternative opportunities when nurtured can grow into the maturity stage and become core programs.

2017 Success Rate

Active Adult / Continuing Ed	46%
Aquatics	53%
Golf	70%
Keen Agers	70%
Special Event	100%
Summer Camp	85%
Summer Enrichment	66%
Tennis	74%
Trips / Travel	38%
Wellness / Fitness	42%
Youth Education	57%
Youth Sports	57%

Figure 32: 2017 Program Success Rates

Like all products and services, selling recreation programs is a function of awareness, supply and demand, and pricing. When cancellation rates are greater than 30%:

- Eliminate offerings that have been adequately marketed yet repeatedly fail to generate sufficient enrollment.
- Consider reducing the number of similar or competing program choices and effectively market what is offered.
- With respect for busy schedules, consider shorter class schedules. Many agencies around the country are moving from 8-week programs to 4 or 6 week increments.

Average Class Size

The average class size impacts the program's margin. It is calculated by dividing the total number of participants by the number of programs run. As the average class size increases, so does the margin because once direct



Figure 33: 2017 Program Success Rates, Bar

costs are covered, additional revenue goes to the bottom line. When looking to increase support through user fees be keenly aware of the average class sizes.

The Program Balance

The Learning Resources Network (LERN) is the world's leading and largest association in continuing education and lifelong learning. According to LERN, 10% to 15% of the program menu should be new programming. These programs should be suitably marketed and given ample opportunity to grow. Sixty - 70% of the program menu should be in a growth or mature stage, yet routinely energized with a new or improved component. Ten to 15% of the program menu should be scrutinized for termination with the resources reinvested in new, trendy or cutting-edge programming. Staying current and relevant with your offerings is as much about your image and branding as it is about programming.

Each recreation program progresses through a lifecycle. The stages of the lifecycle are:

- Introductory stage
- Growth stage
- Maturity
- Decline

The content, delivery and description of core programs should be examined routinely. Content or

structural tweaks will keep a class fresh. Participant program evaluations should be highly valued in adjusting program content.

Aquatics

Aquatic operators generally agree it is better for the bottom-line to sell annual or summer passes than to depend on daily admission revenue. Pass sales are typically paid in full rather than installments which are most common in the fitness industry. Obtaining that revenue up front, weeks before the season begins provides cash flow and insulates the operation from daily weather conditions.

An outdoor aquatic facility is at financial risk when relying on daily admissions. Daily admissions are subject not only to weather conditions but to weather forecasts that not always materialize.

To improve the financial performance of the Munster Community Pool, a concentrated effort should be placed on increasing summer pass sales. Target market young families with children. Offer early registration incentives, online renewal of season passes, etc. The more income received prior to opening day means less dependency on a warm dry summer.

Community, Program Staff and Industry Perspectives

A. Community

Seven community group meetings were held on January 10, 2018 followed by an open to the public 'Meet the Planners' the same evening. Maximizing use of the band shell, deterioration of the Farmer's Market, and programming the Kaske House were the most commonly mentioned programming concerns.

Residents overwhelmingly view the band shell as a first-class community asset, yet believe it is underutilized. Regarding the Farmer's Market, they claim the number and quality of vendors has declined. Despite the

travel time, residents prefer going to markets in other communities.

The Kaske House, because of its tight quarters and narrow aisles, is not conducive to recreation programming and endangers the artifacts and conditions being preserved.

Other strongly held opinions and reoccurring themes expressed during the focus groups were:

1. Make greater use of the band shell
2. Kaske House not suitable for recreation programming
3. Participation and quality of the Farmer's Market has diminished
4. More programs on evenings and weekends
5. Desire programs in shorter sessions
6. Lack indoor programming space / Need for recreation center
7. Partnering with Hammond, Highland and Dyer for programs and activities is desired
8. Retain nonresident participation
9. Desire to know programming trends
10. Need for competitive salary and wages to retain top talent
11. Making old programs new / refreshed
12. Resolve perceived conflict between historical society and Park/Rec Dept
13. Concerts in the Park are valued and enjoyed however there's desire for concerts with "bigger names"
14. Pursue naming rights for the band shell
15. Enhancing the partnerships with Arts Council, Garden Club, Service Groups, Chamber of Commerce, school district, and youth sport groups

Additionally, a statistically valid community survey was conducted as part of the master planning process. Reoccurring programming desires were for more or improved tennis, farmers market, indoor swimming cooking classes, fitness & exercise, and yoga.

B. Programming Staff

Programming staff input was obtained through a SWOT Analysis, a written questionnaire and one-on-one interviews.

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted February 16, 2018 to obtain staff's perception of the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and to create awareness of current societal, cultural and behavioral trends. Eleven staff participated.

After each group brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, each participant was asked to mark which they believed were most important. The most highly rated are summarized in frequency of response order within each category.

Strengths

- Staff 7
- Parks (Many & Clean) 3
- Partnerships / Sponsorships 1

Weaknesses

- Under staffed 8
- Lack appropriate indoor program space 6
- Overworked 4
- Reliance on part-time staff 4
- Low pay 2
- Budget 2
- Time constraints 1

Opportunities

- Build / Acquire a Recreation Center 6

Threats

- Part time employee pay 6
- Higher salaries in IL 6
- Budget 1

Lack of appropriate indoor facilities, budget constraints, and workload were confirmed by surveys and one-on-one interviews to be the top challenges and limiting factors to increased programming.

Munster Parks and Recreation staff are pleased with the quality of equipment and level of facility maintenance. They offer creative programming opportunities.

Their challenges are staffing, marketing, increasing participation and household penetration. These challenges are not unfamiliar to park and recreation agencies across the country.

Today, the landscape of recreation service providers is highly competitive. One must distinguish themselves from the competition. Whether it be through superb service, unique programs or features, or providing the best value.

Programs held in general purpose rooms or fitted into available spaces are perceived as lesser quality. Without appropriately designed and equipped spaces, programs are at a disadvantage when compared to the competition when the competition provides specialized or custom spaces for running programs

Price, therefore, is not necessarily the primary driver in a consumer's purchasing decision. Consumers look at many things including reputation, quality of instruction, quality of facility, customer service, and price. Recreation and fitness providers with the highest market share often have facilities specifically designed for their activities. For example, people looking for a dance class are more apt to register at a facility that has a suspended wood floor, mirrors on the walls, excellent acoustics, and well qualified instructors. Those in search of aerobic fitness or karate programs desire the same qualities in the hosting facility. Arts and crafts programs will attract more participation when held in spaces designed and equipped specifically for arts and crafts with sinks, kilns, storage, display shelves, etc.

The primary indoor program locations for the Department are schools, the Social Center and the Kaske House. Facilities designed specifically for recreation programs and activities improve public perception of quality, and generally boost participation. A growing number of public recreation centers are being run on business principles so a majority of operating costs are covered through user fees.

Decreasing quality and declining participation in the farmer's market resonated from both the staff and community focus groups. Many so-called farmer's markets have transitioned into flea markets selling artesian items as produce, spices, edibles, flowers, teas, candles, soaps, and items of wear. An authentic farmer's market features farm grown produce.

Considerations for a high-quality flea or farmer's market are:

- Quality and variety of produce
- Affordability
- Location
- Transportation accessibility
- Physical layout (visibility and circulation)
- Quality, affordability and relevance of supporting facilities (i.e., shops and restaurants)
- Purposefulness (what do body oils and candles have to do with eating?)
- Attitude and helpfulness of vendors

Farmer's markets succeed because people get something from going there beyond a simple bag of produce. Many see them as a town square, more than simply a retail experience, where people gather to have conversations with fellow citizens, neighbors, and friends.

A summary of the full SWOT analysis is found in the appendix Staff SWOT Analysis 2.16.18.

C. Industry

According to Recreation Management 2017 State of the Industry Survey, the primary challenges and concerns facing programming staff from across the country are:

- Equipment and facility maintenance
- Staffing
- Marketing and increasing participation
- Creating new and innovative programs

Cost Recovery / Revenue Enhancement

Cost recovery is the degree to which a program's fee covers the direct and indirect expenses related to the provision of that program. The degree of cost recovery is based upon who benefits from the activity—the individual or the community – and how much benefit is apportioned to each. Simplistically, there are three general levels of cost recovery as follows:

- Level One – Full cost recovery. Programs and services that provide significant personal benefit and little to marginal community benefit. These programs and services – frequently competing with the private sector - should generate sufficient revenue to cover direct, indirect and administrative costs associated with program/service.
- Level Two – Self-sufficient programs. Programs in this category generate sufficient revenue to cover the direct costs of the program but not 100% of the indirect and administrative overhead. These programs and services benefit the individual participant and contribute to a well-rounded menu of activities consistent with the agency's mission.
- Level Three – Subsidized programs. Programs in this category do not generate enough revenue to cover the programs direct costs, nor any portion of the indirect and administrative costs. Often these programs are of a large-scale nature such as a July Fourth celebration, summer concert series, community fest or car/art show. These program have significant community benefits. Many are offered free of charge, therefore fully subsidized. The annual audits for the Town of Munster does not provide detailed revenue or expenses, therefore we were not able to decipher the precise level of cost recovery for the Department.

The annual audits for the Town of Munster do not

provide detailed revenue or expenses, therefore we were not able to decipher the precise level of cost recovery for the Department.

Based on the statement of receipts and disbursements contained in the audits for the fiscal years ending December 31, 2015 and December 31, 2016, revenues derived from the Departments programs and services may or may not be sufficient to cover direct and indirect costs associated with its operation and contribute to overall administrative costs.

	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>
Revenue	\$3,088,181	\$2,826,648
Expense	\$3,104,500	\$2,474,710
Net	(\$ 16,319)	\$ 351,938

Figure 34: Revenue and Expense, 2015 and 2016

For instructional and classroom type programs the Learning Resource Network (LERN) recommends ideal percentages to obtain financially successful programming. When budgeting, begin with revenue first, then limit direct costs to 60% of income. The ideal budget formula is:

Income	\$ _____ (100%)
Promotion (marketing)	\$ _____ (10-15%)
Production (wages, supplies, etc.)	\$ _____ (45-50%)
Total Direct Costs	\$ _____ (60%)
Margin	\$ _____ (40%)

Figure 35: Ideal Budget Formula, LERN

While individual programs may vary from the 40% target margin, the collective program category (preschool, youth, teen, adult, seniors) should aim toward a 40% goal. The philosophy of your elected officials, community demographics or economics may not allow for a 40% margin. In such cases management should work to achieve as close to 40% as possible.

Improving net revenue often requires shifting from a government mindset to a business mindset. Once a budget is approved, government employees zero in on 'the budget'. However, the focus is more realistically on only half 'the budget'; the expense side. In reality,

program expenses are approved only in relationship to the revenue the program will derive. If revenue is short of projections, expenses must be managed to maintain the margin.

The key to long term financial success is revenue growth. To improve the bottom line a business must either increase income or reduce expenses. The first step to increasing margins should be to analyze and reduce expenses.

Instructor costs must be rational and justified in the market place, not inflated because of longevity.

The Munster Parks and Recreation Department does not use a standard independent contractor form. Utilizing one is recommended not only to establish written responsibilities and compensation but contain safeguards from liability. An Independent Contractor Agreement common in the industry is presented in the appendix.

Independent contractor compensation may vary by the level of expertise. Ideally compensation should be based on a 60%/40% or 65%/35% split of revenue. According to staff the Department is generally at 70%/30%.

Other critical compensation factors to consider when using independent contractors:

1. When seeking to increase revenue from contracted instructor courses, don't simply increase fees. Increasing the fee makes the contractor wealthier, not the District. If a contracted instructor gets 70% of revenue, raising a fee from \$35 to \$45 generates an additional \$7 for the contractor but only \$3 for the Department. To improve the bottom line, negotiate a better percentage for the Department.

2. Another method of contracting with independent providers is to give them a flat fee per participant. Negotiate a per person charge with the contracted provider. What the Department charges a participant should be of no business to the contractor; it is between the Department and the participant.

Example: The Department agrees to pay a contractor \$20 per person to teach karate. If the class fee is \$40, the Department nets \$20/participant. Under a 70%/30% contract, the Department's net would be merely \$12.

3. Contracted instructors should never get a share of the premium charged to nonresidents. It doesn't cost the contractor any more to service a nonresident. The nonresident premium is assessed by the Department as a "fair share" fee since residents support the Department through tax dollars.

All that said, there are unique situations that call for a customized agreement suitable to both parties. The more complex the relationship, for example partnering with a hospital, the more detailed the contract. The town attorney should review all contracts that waiver from the standard form.

Negotiate the best price for all equipment and supplies. Competitively price or negotiate purchases and services every year. Lock in low prices with multi-year contracts. A final step would be to eliminate nonessential expenses.

On the income side, there are two ways to increase program revenue, either increase fees or increase

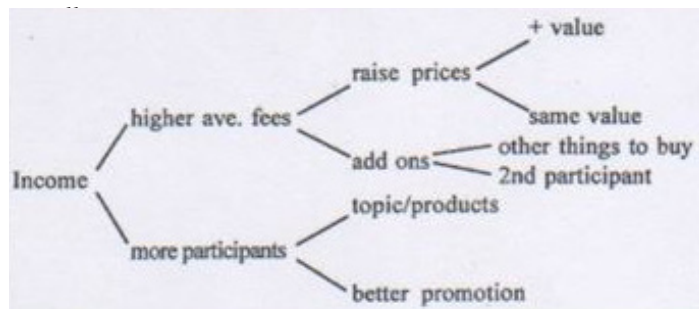


Figure 36: Program Revenue Sources Chart

Increasing Fees

When increasing fees, overall income goes up while enrollment stays relatively the same. Three techniques for increasing fees are:

- a. Simply increase the fee.
- b. Increase the fee while adding to the real or

perceived value, such as including a t-shirt or item relative to the class. Example: Little Sport Basketball program – give each participant a basketball as part of the program. If the basketball costs \$3.99 increase the program fee by \$10. Or enhance the perceived value of a class with a nicer presentation, special guest / speaker, better environment, etc. Using this technique, the participant will get more for their money.

- c. Provide ancillary retail opportunity; the ability for participants to purchase items related to the class. It's a concept public speakers use when they sell copies of their books or CDs in the back of the room.

Increasing Enrollment

The second way to increase income is to increase enrollment. There are several strategies to consider.

- a. Refresh or restructure the program. Change the title, give it a new format or new instructor using a different style. Perhaps hold the class in a new location or outside. The objective is to grow enrollment by improving the product.
- b. Better promotion. Better promotion can mean many things.
 1. Reach - Reach more people.
 2. Repetition - Reach the same people again and again.
 3. Diversify Marketing - Market the same message in multiple formats, multiple times.
 4. Target Market - Identify the target market and focus on them.

When demand exceeds supply, prices rise and/or businesses are motivated to expand. This would mean raising fees and/or adding additional sessions of programs with waiting lists. However, when supply exceeds demand, businesses scale back. This means reducing the number of programs or sessions offered

so the ones that are offered have a greater chance of succeeding. Many park and recreation agencies offer so many choices in dance, gymnastics, etc. that few of these classes reach maximum and many are cancelled. Generally, it is better to be over demanded and under supplied than over supplied and under demanded.

A final consideration for increasing net margin is to examine market pricing. After determining your program fee using your budget formula, compare it to the local competition. When comparing like-to-like programs if your fee is low by comparison, raise it. Seek to provide the best value, not the cheapest price. (Value is defined as what one gets in return for what one pays.)

Neighbor Rate

A Neighbor Rate is a program or admission fee between the resident and non-resident rate offered to bordering municipalities (Highland, Homewood, Dyer). Often it is offered in exchange for having the programs for which the neighbor rate applies listed/promoted in the neighbor's web site and in their program catalog. Though nonresidents gain lower cost access to Munster recreation programs recreation opportunities, Munster experiences fewer class cancellations, higher average class sizes and ultimately higher net revenue.

Marketing

Marketing is inclusive of advertising, public relations, promotions and sales. It is a process by which a product or service is introduced and promoted to potential customers. Its two primary purposes are:

1. Build brand awareness and reputation
2. Sell your programs and services

Branding is the process of creating distinctive and long-lasting perceptions in the minds of consumers. Its main benefit is that customers are much more likely to remember your business.

It benefits businesses by building ...

- A consistent universal image.
- Loyalty. When people have a positive experience with a memorable brand, they're more likely to buy again from that company rather than a competing brand.
- Familiarity. Branding makes an impact on your non-customers. People who haven't done business with the Department but have encountered your identity/brand/logo numerous times may become willing to recommend you even when they have little or no personal knowledge of your programs or services.
- A reputation for quality and service. With a well-established brand, you can introduce new programs or services and more easily win acceptance because your reputation precedes it.
- Greater equity. A reputable brand can leverage its good name when seeking public support, fundraising or volunteers.
- Your ability to attract and retain the best employees
- Your ability to establish partnerships within the community
- Greater employee satisfaction including an increased sense of pride and loyalty

Seasonal Brochure and Website

The Learning Resource Network (LERN) is the leading international organization for class programming and consulting. LERN research concludes printed seasonal brochures remain the number one source for marketing an agency's programs and services. Websites are second.



“Information That Works!”

The LERN recommends the design of program brochures follow the AIDA principle.

Attention (The front cover needs to attract the reader's attention).

Interest (The first two pages must create an interest in what you are offering).

Desire (The inside pages must generate the desire to sign up for a class).

Action (The registration page needs to encourage action and registration).

According to LERN you have three seconds to capture the reader's attention in a printed piece, so the message needs to be exceptionally clear.

Program descriptions should be written to describe and to sell. Begin with a dynamic opening statement or emotional appeal then describe what to expect from the class. The write up should end with a call to action; a reason to enroll.

Many, but not all your program descriptions, abide by this approach. It's recommended program write ups be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis.

The Department's online, print and social media presence should represent its community demographics. Diverse constituencies must be able to see themselves in marketing materials or they'll assume they aren't a part of your target market.

The Department does a good job using images that portray the blend of Munster residents.

Dynamic web sites with interactive features such as overhead video views of the parks or short video clips of certain classes or facilities have proven to connect with viewers. With virtual reality and experiential marketing on the rise, consider adding video clips to your website.

Target market the farmer's market directly to area farmers, fresh food grocers, and health food stores. Distribute fliers or pick up business cards from desired vendors at other area farmer's markets.

The Town of Munster has a restrictive sign ordinance which prohibits outdoor signs in high traffic area. Community groups and staff believe the ordinance inhibits marketing major community-wide activities.

Trends

Identifying industry and societal trends is key to the success of any business. Societal, cultural and behavioral trends have a significant impact on the success (or lack) of recreation programs and services and public support. Staff must be cognizant of these trends and their influence on the park and recreation industry. Programming with these societal and cultural trends in mind should increase interest and participation in your offerings.

The Planning Resources Team facilitated a brainstorming session to identify society, cultural and behavioral trends as well as trends in the park and recreation industry. Trends are patterns of gradual change or tendency moving in a certain direction over time. Tracking and responding to trends is imperative to remain relevant. Societal, cultural and behavioral trends can impact the success (or lack) of recreation programs and services and public support. Recreation programs must adapt as society and behaviors change.

Comprehensive inventory of trends is found in the appendix.

One of the big challenges the modern American family faces is mental health. Not only are adults facing anxiety and depression, but children are over committed and stressed beyond their capacity. Prescriptive medications are common to calm nerves and assist in the ability to focus.

More people are turning to natural ways to improve their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Wellness activities including mild exercise, healthy eating/cooking, natural remedies, meditation, yoga, and nature walks are rising. Market these kinds of programs with an emphasis on relaxation, anxiety relief and peace of mind.

Today, people are not only crunched for time, but they are less focused and more readily change course. Recreation programmers must recognize this shift. Programmers throughout the nation are offering classes in shorter increments (i.e. 2, 4 or 6 weeks instead of the traditional 6 to 8 weeks) to be more accommodating to individual and family schedules.

Recreation programmers must be aware that sedentary technological options have won the attention of youth – iPads, iPhones, and gaming.

Excluding reading, though today much of it takes place on a tablet screen, four of the five most popular leisure activities for both Millennials and Gen X take place on a screen:

- Watching TV
- Computer/internet
- Playing video games and computer/internet games
- Watching/going to the movies

Nationwide, the most commonly offered programs are:

- Holiday and other special events (64.7%)
- Fitness programs (53.9%)
- Educational programs (58.6%)
- Day camps and summer camps (57.7%)
- Youth sport teams (53.9%)
- Mind-body balance programs such as yoga or martial arts (49.6%)
- Arts and crafts (46.9%)
- Adult team sports (45.1%)

Outdoor recreation continues to grow steadily across the country as reported in the 2017 Outdoor Participation Report funded by the Outdoor Foundation. The biggest motivator for outdoor participation was getting exercise. Running, walking and bicycling are the most frequently engaged outdoor activities making bike paths and trail ways a high priority.

Nature-base or environmental-oriented programs have been on the rise since 2003. As early as 2015

doctors have been prescribing time outdoors to treat maladies such as obesity, anxiety, depression and disruptive behavior. Being in a natural setting has therapeutic effects on mental health.

As leaders in, and representatives of the community, MPRD is best positioned to determine whether these parks, recreation and fitness trends are applicable to the Department:

Recreation and Fitness Trends (www.activenet.com, www.pewresearch.org, www.trendsactive.com, www.nowandnext.com, activenet.org, www.nrpa.org)

For elementary age children:

- o Health/wellness (education about smoking and alcohol intake)
- o Robotics / technology
- o Tutoring help
- o Science programs
- o Transition to high school programs
- o Volunteerism
- o Dance (hip hop, ballet)
- o Performing Arts (Theater)
- o Roller Sports
- o Art/ Crafts
- o Cooking/Nutrition classes
- o Rock wall
- o Gymnastics
- o Summer camp

For youth and teen:

- o Skiing / Snow boarding
- o Back to Nature / Green Environmental
- o Theater / Acting class, Musical Theater
- o Dance
- o Pokémon Go
- o Hikes / Eco Excursions
- o Babysitting / CPR/ Pediatric Training
- o Aquatic Safety Classes
- o Piano / vocal lessons
- o Art / Paint, draw, pottery
- o Trips / Mall day, sporting events

- o Transition Programs
- o Leadership Programs
- o Job Skill Workshops
- o Community Service, Volunteering
- o Internships
- o Skill building
- o Exploration
- o Outdoor adventures
- o Tours
- o ACT preparation
- o Hanging out with friends
- o Participation in organized youth sports is decreasing.

According to a study by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, more kids than ever are not playing sports. Nearly 3 million fewer children have played basketball, soccer, track and field, baseball, football, and softball. Given the attention to sports concussions, parents are facing a difficult decision on their children's participation in traditional sports.

Over time, an emphasis on competitive sports and traveling teams has smothered recreational leagues in many communities. Too many parents feel compelled to put their kids on competitive teams with perceived expert coaching and skill development. Travelling youth's sports has become a lucrative industry. Costs for travel, practice time and other needs often force a child to specialize and select one sport over the others.

For adults:

- o Outdoor walking trails
- o Kayaking
- o Windsurfing
- o Stand up paddling
- o Lacrosse
- o Rugby
- o Cricket
- o Pickleball
- o Environmental education and nature programs
- o Programming in the parks (yoga, fitness, and dance) connects people with the parks.

- o Programs with alcohol accompaniment
- o Arts and entertainment
- o Travel programs
- o Programs for families with children of all ages. Gen X (1966-1976) and Gen Y (1977-1994) place high value on family.
- o Programs for women during their pregnancy
- o Life Sports (biking, swimming, jogging/ walking)
- o High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
- o Body Weight Training (no equipment necessary)
- o Strength Training (Building muscle mass)
- o Group Training exercise
- o Yoga (All types to include Aerial, and rope wall)
- o Functional Fitness
- o Underwater cycling (Vix)
- o Outdoor Adventure Activities
- o Indoor Adventure Activities

For seniors:

- o Tai Chi
- o Pickleball
- o Fitness Walking Clubs
- o Day Trips
- o Painting & Drawing Classes
- o Indoor Card games- Bridge / Dominoes
- o Yoga
- o Swimming
- o Golf
- o Tennis
- o Weight Training
- o Book Clubs
- o Light Aerobics
- o Fitness and Nutrition Classes
- o Volunteering
- o Computer Learning (and Teaching)
- o Lectures about History (especially war time)

In parks and facilities:

- o Trails and Bike Paths

- o Pocket Parks (small plots of open space in otherwise overbuilt areas)
- o Pop Up Parks (temporary park elements brought into neighborhoods)
- o Dog Parks
- o Nature Parks
- o Inner City Gardens
- o Aerial Parks (An aerial park is a climbing adventure set in the forest canopy. The park consists of platforms secured to trees with elements that connect each platform.)

minimum keeps recreation staff challenged and up to date with trends. It also keeps the overall program from becoming stale and outdated.

2. Consider financial mechanisms to fund construction of a recreation center.
3. Develop program evaluations that include the participants input, the programmer's perspective and the financial results.

General

High Priority

1. Continue tracking and graphing key performance indicators to gauge programming performance, effectiveness and trending. Recommended KPI's:
 - a. Household penetration rate
 - b. Number of programs/classes offered
 - c. Program enrollment
 - d. Program Success Rates
 - e. Average class size
4. Achieve program success rates of 70% - 95%
5. Implement a standard contract for all independent contracted instructors. The agreement should include duties and responsibilities, compensation, insurance requirements, a waiver and hold harmless clause. A sample contract is attached in the appendix.

Medium Priority

1. Ten to 15% of programming should be first time offerings or those still in the introductory phase. An agency's programming must be relevant and contemporary. Routinely offering new, innovative and trending programs gives residents and customers reason to look forward to the next brochure. The 10%-15%

Recreation Programming

High Priority

1. Classes must be held at convenient times the public is available to attend. Schedule more programs in the evenings and on weekends.
2. Offer classes in shorter terms. Try running classes in 4 or 6 week increments in lieu of the traditional 8 or 10 weeks. Offer a discount as incentive for people who sign up for two 4-week sessions at the same time.
3. Maximize use of the Band Shell. Programs to consider:
 - Kids Theatre
 - Chorus
 - Dance (Performances and lessons)
 - Comedy Nights
 - Magic Shows
 - Theatre Productions
 - High School Battle of the Bands
 - Host a Jazz Fest
4. Establishing a mission statement (purpose) for the Kaske House. Use the facility solely for activities consistent with the mission.
5. Build the farmer's market into something

more than a retail event. Make it a social, community gathering place in a busy location with supporting and complimentary facilities. Add music (guitar player, folk music, high school musician, etc.) Screen potential vendors; accept only high-quality vendors.

6. Popular programs consistently reaching maximum enrollment should be expanded adding additional sessions even at the expense reducing less popular classes.
7. When programming space is limited, offer programs that have proven successful and bring the highest financial return. Consider the owner of a retail store with limited space, stacks shelves with the most popular, highest mark-up products to obtain maximum sales and return on investment.
8. Provide opportunities for continued learning and/or development. When offering an introductory level class, be sure to offer an intermediary class and an advanced class.

Medium Priority

1. Less is more. Concentrate on core programs. Offer more sessions of programs with waiting list. Eliminate programs struggling or in decline.
2. Create spin offs of popular classes. When considering the development of new or introductory programs, base them on the current or future needs/interests of the Department, what's trending in the industry, or addressing a societal issue.
3. Develop programs to combat or address negative societal, cultural and behavioral trends. Consider courses in safety, healthy eating, anti-violence solutions, cultural diversity and other topics from the trends list.
4. Due to the population living longer and having more interest in health and wellness,

differentiate between younger and older adult populations. Offer programs for the 65+ as well as the new "Middle Age" being 45-64 years of age.

5. Baby boomers (born 1946-1964) desire to be fit and healthy. Design programs for them to maintain cardiovascular health, strength and flexibility. Consider programs and classes that use a chair or standing support rails.
 - Offer classes that promote balance and range of motion
 - Offer classes that provide breathing exercises, relaxation and mental clarity.
 - Offer classes that increase muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and resistance training
 - Provide an atmosphere that is warm, friendly and safe.
6. Each town has an opportunity to develop unique programs derived from utilizing their community assets. A great suggestion was a program series titled 'How Do They Do That?' featuring a weekly or monthly trip to a local business to find out how the product is made, or service delivered.

How do they do that?

- Week 1 – Tour the local newspaper production plant
- Week 2 – Learn how Pepsi makes and bottles soft drinks
- Week 3 – Discover how Gayety's makes chocolate
- Week 4 – Get a behind the scenes tour of a fine dining restaurant, chat with the chef, leave with a treat or a discount on a reservation.
- Week 5 – Meet with a realtor. Discover best methods to buy and sell property
- Week 6 – Visit a car dealership. Learn how to buy and sell a car

Market the tours to curious adults and high schoolers who may be exploring career choices.

7. Host cooking and mixology programs at The View exposing it to potential new customers.

Some ideas...

- The Making of Gourmet meals
 - Sushi
 - Poke Bowls
 - Classic Cocktails
 - Holiday Cocktails
8. Consider trending and popular program ideas suggested in the Appendix.

Partnerships

High Priority

1. Establish formal written agreements with each youth sport group detailing the roles, responsibilities, and financial obligations of each party.
2. Schedule quarterly meetings between leaders of each local government (City, Library, school district) to maintain open dialog, coordinate schedules of major activities, do the same with the program partners (Arts Council, Garden Club, Service Groups, Chamber of Commerce)

Medium Priority

1. Establish a Munster Athletic Council that consists of one representative from each youth sport group and the Park and Recreation Department. Meet monthly to discuss and coordinate field and facility needs, registration, promotion, etc.
2. Improve marketing and cooperative programming with partners and community organizations such as the Arts Council, Garden Club, Kiwanis Club and youth sport organizations. Each had expressed a desire for a closer more cooperative relationship.

Revenue Enhancement - Improving Net Margin

High Priority

1. Implement a Neighbor Rate for residents of Highland, Hammond, and Dyer to increase revenue and program success rates.
2. Manage the payroll. Managers must be sure employee's time out promptly when sent home due to inclement weather or lack of attendance. In many work places staff are paid to the nearest quarter hour. Therefore 8 minutes equates to 15 minutes. Considering the number of employees, number of shifts, and number of days in summer season or annually at a fitness center, managing staff and shift changes accounts for substantial money. One seasonal water park saved \$5,000 by making sure staff promptly logged out.
3. Begin program budgeting by estimating revenue first, based on the minimum number of participants. For classroom type programs, limit expenses to 60% to 70% of revenue, leaving 30% to 40% for overhead/administration and surplus.
4. Once a program fee has been established, compare it to local competition. All things being equal, if the fee is low, raise it marginally keeping it just below the competition. If your price is higher than the competition, make sure you're offering greater value or service.
5. Use zero based program budgets to identify specific costs and quantities. Only then can one make educated decisions on reducing expenses.
6. Strive to offer the best value not the cheapest price. (Value is defined as what one gets for what they pay).

7. Retail stores price at \$2.98, \$4.99, etc. A person's brain tends to register those as \$2 and \$4 not what they really are - a penny away from \$3 and \$5. When pondering price increases, price up to just below the nearest 5 or 0. If you're considering a price increase from \$24 to \$26, raise it to \$29. Avoid prices ending in 0 or 5 as in \$20 or \$25.
8. Add greater value to a program that justifies a price increase. Using the example of a Little Shots basketball program for ages 4 to 6 – Give each participant a basketball to keep. If the ball costs \$3 each, raise the price \$5 which adds \$2 to the bottom line. The basketball becomes a keepsake.
9. Consider independent contractor agreements based on a flat rate per participant rather than a percentage. On percentage-based instructor contracts move splits toward 65/35.
10. When possible, employ the "one more" strategy. Certain program capacities are established based on room size or instructor preference. If you have classes reaching capacity consider extending capacity by one, perhaps two participants if quality and safety aren't compromised. Since overhead costs are already covered, most revenue from one or two additional enrollments goes to the bottom-line.
2. Increase prices on popular classes that routinely fill up.
3. Sell naming rights to the Band Shell
4. Hire a promoter to contract performance at the Band Shell.
5. As in major stadiums, during peak times for ballgames bring basic concessions (soft drinks, water, candy, chips) to the people rather than require them to come to the concession stand.

Low Priority

1. Routinely shop for competitive prices on supplies and services. Don't hesitate to negotiate. Consider your volume of business and ask for a better deal. Can they afford, or do they want to lose your business, or would they rather compromise on the price? Lock in low prices with multi-year contracts.
2. The District follows LERN's recommendation for pricing without zeros right of the decimal point (\$35 instead of \$35.00). Continue this practice on all marketing materials, social media and menu boards. Using zeros right of the decimal point subconsciously makes the price seem higher.

Marketing

Medium Priority

1. Offer a 100% Satisfaction Guarantee. With nothing to lose, individuals/parents have no risk in signing up for a program. The satisfaction guarantee is a bold statement of the confidence you have in delivering quality programs by competent instructors. A few renegades might exploit the policy but agencies that have had it in place for years report rare cases of abuse.

High Priority

1. Use the web sites, publications and connections of your community programming partners to promote your activities.
2. Develop and market the Munster Parks and Recreation brand tying all facilities and operations to a single recognizable presence. Maintain high quality branding by examining the brand image on an annual basis.

3. In exchange for a Neighbor Rate negotiated having Munster Parks and Recreation programs in which the neighbor rate applies listed/promoted in the Dyer, Hammond and Highland brochures and on their web sites.
4. While printed brochures remain the prime source of information, technology and social media are necessary to systematically reach today's audiences. Employ multiple means of social media to connect with the community.
5. Enrich your web site with interactive features such as short videos of popular classes, an overhead visual tour of major parks and a welcome address by the Executive Director.
6. Use testimonials from participants or local authorities/celebrities to give credibility to programs/facilities.

Medium Priority

1. Once residents are aware of the Community Pool, purchasing a season pass is largely a function of weather, often weather from the previous summer. Therefore, provide an incentive to purchase a season pass. Send post cards or letters to season pass holders from the previous 2 to 3 years with an incentive to purchase prior to April 15th. (Purchase your pool pass prior to April 15th and receive last year's pricing!). Limit other marketing to your seasonal brochure, web site and social media. Additional marketing dollars do not provide a significant return on investment.
2. Place registration kiosks in Town Hall and Centennial Golf Course / The View.
3. Edit program descriptions. Whether in print or online opening lines should be dynamic or

emotional to capture reader attention. Consider opening with a thought provoking question. Avoid starting out with "This camp will...", "This program...", "Participants will...", "This is a". Program descriptions should use persuasive language focusing on the benefits of participation.

4. To showcase and inform constituents about your good work, include a half to full page Annual Report to the winter-spring brochure. In bullet point form state the major accomplishments, awards, financial data, and what's to come in the next 12 months.
5. Sprinkle the seasonal brochure and web site with statements about the benefits of parks and recreation. These can be found on the NRPA web site (nrpa.org) Examples:
 - a. Did you know:
 - Children are at their highest level of development when they are at play?
 - Kids that play outside have better vision than those who play inside?
 - Community play spaces boost positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and feelings of isolation?
 - 50% of all vigorous exercise happens in parks?
 - Organized activities in parks in low income neighborhoods increase peak use by as much as 25%
 - 73% of American adults believe parks, trails and open space are an essential part of the healthcare system?
 - More and more doctors are prescribing spending time in parks and on trails as a remedy for mental, physical and emotional health?

Trends

1. Evaluate the applicability of popular programs trending from around the country presented on the attachment at the end of this report.
2. Review the societal, cultural and behavioral trends on the trends attachment.
 - Evaluate the impact these trends have on your programs and services.
 - Develop programs that address or reverse negative trends. In other, words, create an antidote.
3. Offer one-time free classes outdoors in Centennial Park, Community Park and at other highly visible park locations. (aerobics, yoga, martial arts, meditation) Market through running clubs, sports stores, shoe stores, health stores and vitamin shops.

Sources And References

- Munster Parks and Recreation Department
- Town of Munster
- Staff Questionnaire
- Staff Interviews
- Work Culture Staff Survey
- Program Registration Data
- SWOT Analysis with District Staff January 16, 2018
- Community Focus Groups (7)
- Community Survey (2018)
- LERN – Learning Resource Network
- Sports & Fitness Industry Association
- American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)
- Outdoor Industry Foundation
- Recreation Management
- The Outdoor Foundation
- Center for Disease Control
- Various park and recreation agency web sites
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA)
- National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA)
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association's Open Forum
- National Recreation and Park Association's NRPA Connect
- The American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA)
- The Farmer's Market Coalition
- The Benefits of Branding by Marcia Yudkin, 2002, www.namedatlast.com/branding3.htm
- Benefits for Children of Play in Nature by Randy White
- Getting Outside is a Prescription for Better Health by Adam Werner 2017
- Boomer Basics, Jeffery Ziegler
- www.pewresearch.org
- www.trendsactive.com
- www.nowandnext.com What's Next? Staying Ahead of Trends
- www.parents.com
- www.recreationplus.org
- www.recmanagement.com
- www.greatschools.org
- www.afterschoolalliance.org



Chapter 11

Inventory & Assessments



Park Inventory and Assessments

Natural Landscape Features

The Town of Munster is known as “the Town on the Ridge” because of its proximity and location on the “ridge” shoreline of Lake Michigan which is today Ridge Road. The ridge is the main natural feature within the Town of Munster and runs east and west through the north part of town.

Within the town’s boundaries are three small lakes, one of which, located within Centennial Park, is marshy and undeveloped. Munster is bordered on the north by the Little Calumet River, a shallow river surrounded by a thin strip of wooded area; and on the West by the Illinois state line

The Town of Munster’s existing geography is relatively flat. Initially the entire northern quarter of Northwest Indiana’s plain was flat and composed of glacio-lacustrine deposits. These areas were used for farming and agricultural purposes due to their rich loam soils. These farmed areas have become more developed as the Town of Munster has expanded and grown. As far as can be determined, there are no areas within the Town of Munster upon which recreation of any type is impossible. The geology and soils within Munster’s planning area is very well suited to any urban development, including recreation.

Groundwater

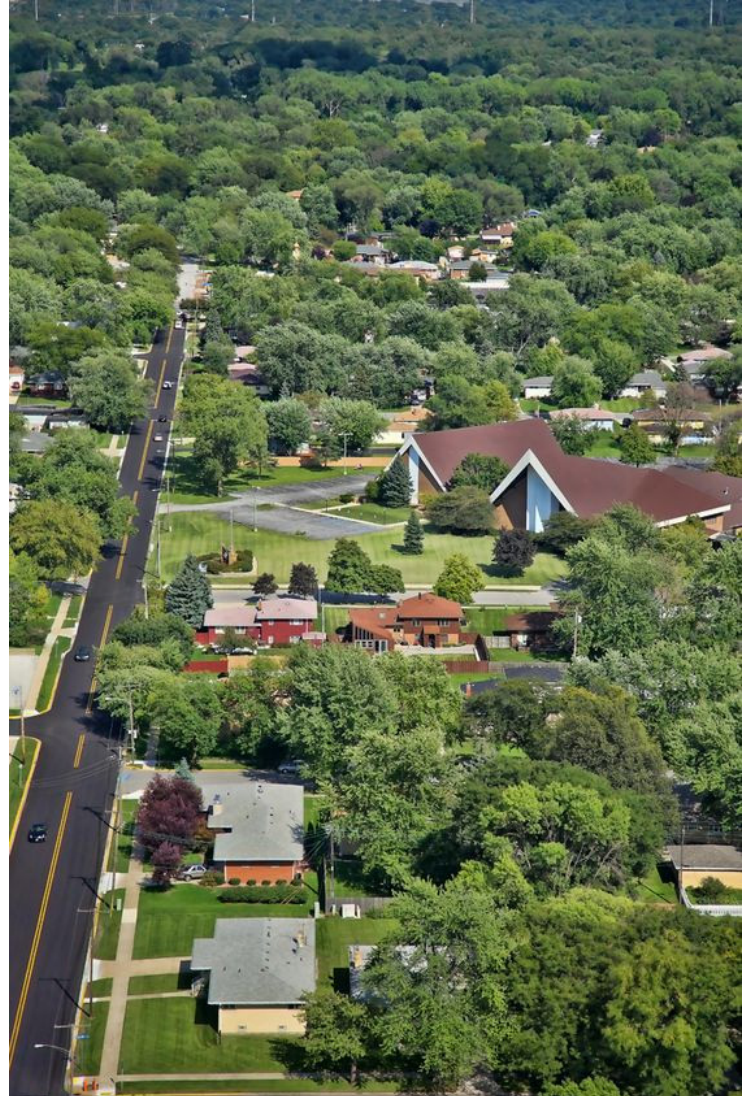
Water that infiltrates the earth surface and flows through soil and rock voids is termed “groundwater.” Aquifers are permeable units that supply and store groundwater until its removed naturally via flow to streams or ditches. Most aquifers in the northern two-thirds of Indiana are composed of glacial deposits containing groundwater. These glacial aquifers exist where sand and gravel bodies are present within clay-rich glacial till (sediment deposited by ice). A series of drainage ditches are located throughout the community. This ditch system gives the town more control over the amount of rain water that sits on the surface thereby improving the usability of the land.



Tree

The Town of Munster, like most municipalities within the northwest Indiana and Chicagoland region, has experienced tree loss due to the emerald ash borer infestation and have planted new trees to offset these losses. Additionally, the Park's Department has executed and on-going agreement with a local contractor to eliminate non-natives in the parks and plant native species. The area has a variety of native tree diversity including maple, oak, ash, and honey locust. Invasive management and prevention is a never-ending task for the Parks Department. Phragmites is a major concern. The Parks Department has begun eradication attempts at Centennial Park and are constantly mitigating through in-house means as with the control of Purple Loose-strife at Heritage Park.

The Town of Munster Parks & Recreation Department has a protected snake habitat at Centennial Park, and has been working with the Audubon Society to log bird species and ultimately the Golf Course receive "certification." In 2017, the Park's Department won the Shirley Heinze Land Trust "Bringing Nature Home Award" for their past and continuing naturalization efforts at Centennial Park



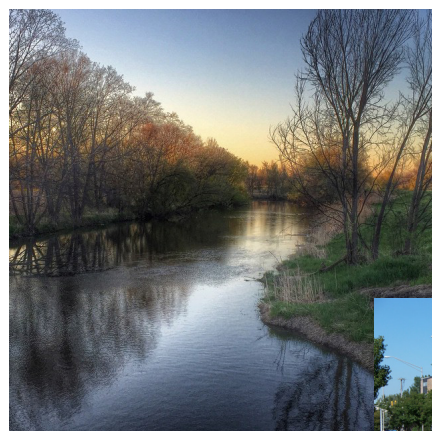
Ridge Road

Ridge Road is the most iconic corridor in Munster, Indiana. This is not just because of its historical setting during settlers' era, but it also was an ancient shoreline of Lake Michigan long before settlers arrived and the water receded to its present-day shoreline. From the north of Ridge road, the elevation descends significantly, until it reaches the Little Calumet River.



Little Calumet River

The Little Calumet River establishes the most northern edge of Munster, Indiana. It runs west from the Hart Ditch, a light stream bordering much of Munster's eastern edge. This river has experienced disturbances that affect both the nearby social and ecological systems. It floods regularly, with one particular flood in 2008 after consequential rain from Hurricane Ike. The floods resulted in major damage. It has also seen significant pollution due to industrial activity throughout the past century. Clean up initiatives are in process, but the River still needs time to recover.



Bieker Woods

This is the most preserved and protected natural feature in Munster. It is originally a lakeshore native oak savanna/woodland, given its proximity to Ridge Road. It also used to be a wooded area spanning hundreds of acres, but was reduced in size during the expansion of the Town. The species primarily situated here are oak trees, witch hazel, serviceberries, and redbuds.

In 2006, the Woodland Restoration Project commenced as part of a Lake Michigan Coastal Zone grant. The project set out to clear Bieker Woods of invasive, non-native, and aggressive vegetation such as mulberry, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and box elder. Because maples crowded out the oaks for so long, after this project, the results were many younger oaks growing alongside more mature maples.



Natural Landscape Features, cont.

Schoon Ditch

Running east-west, this small creek travels alongside the NIPSCO trail. It is named after the Schoons, a Dutch farming family that established themselves in Munster during the later part of the 19th century. They owned a great deal of land between Ridge Road and the ditch to the south, and farmed various crops such as onions, cabbage, potatoes, and cucumbers.

The western origin of the Schoon Ditch is underground in drainage pipes and culverts, but when it reaches Calumet Ave, it then opens up into a narrow creek with rip-rap along the basin. As it makes its way east, it intersects with the Hart Ditch, then feeding into the Little Calumet River.



Hart Ditch

Running north-south, this slightly larger creek passes through residents' backyards and offers natural space, such as Lawler Park Greenspace, alongside other portions of its shoreline. Not only does Schoon Ditch feed into Hart Ditch, but so does Dyer Ditch, Schererville Ditch, Cady Marsh Ditch, and Plum Creek. These creeks drain a 90-square-mile area into the Little Calumet River.



Earlier this century, there were complaints about erosion of the Hart Ditch and the loss of property for the residents whose backyards were adjacent to the ditch. Structural damage was a concern for both sides of the ditch near Circle Park. Renovations along the creek's edge were constructed in the early 2000's as a way to prevent this from continuing.

As it approaches the river, flooding remains a general concern for the Hart Ditch, even with the construction of the flood levees. At the same time, there is a greater distance between homes and the Hart Ditch once it gets closer to the Little Calumet, slightly reducing risk of property damages. The open space, protected by high berms, eventually replaces the flood levee, providing potential for flood prevention by utilizing rain gardens and level spreaders.



Man-Made Landscape Features

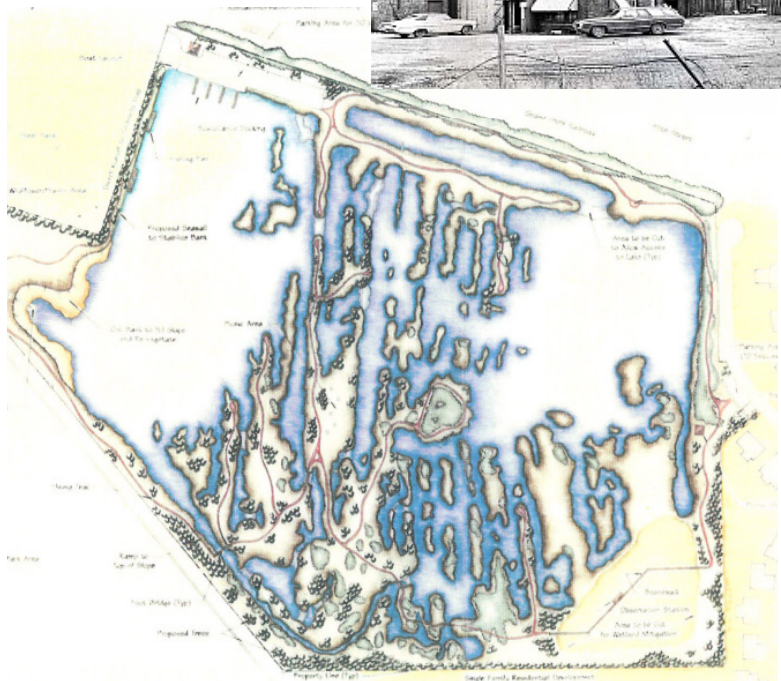
Clayhole Lake

Clayhole Lake used to be a clay pit for National Brick, a former company in the Town of Munster. When the brick operation ceased, the pit transitioned to a series of lakes and ponds. It is located south of 45th Street, northeast of Centennial Park, and west of the Twin Creeks neighborhood. Much discussion has surrounded the use of the lake for recreation; currently, fishing is not allowed in the lake and access to the body of water itself is a challenge because no paths are established there. Boating is possible in Clayhole Lake, but the multiple strips of land that break through the water will make it more challenging. There's a plan, from JF New & Associates, to integrate walking paths throughout these strips of land.

(see right for images of National Brick and lake plan)

Maynard Lake

A component of Centennial Park, Munster's flagship park, Maynard Lake is man-made and stocked for public fishing. It serves as a focal backdrop for various destinations, including "The View" dining at the Centennial Park Clubhouse, the entertainment stage, with a row of trees to the east and sculpture art to the west.



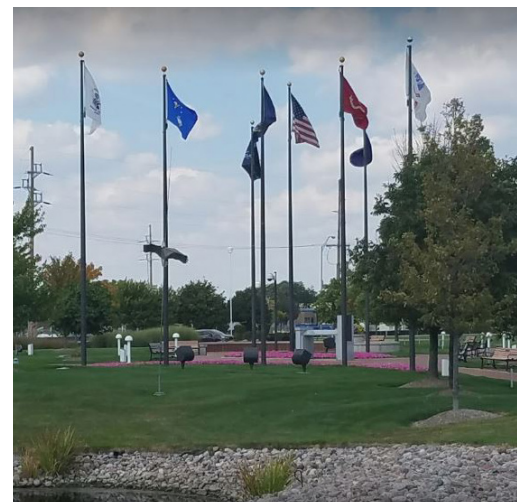
Man-Made Historical and Cultural Features

Edward P. Robinson Community Veterans Memorial

This open green space is located on the west side of Calumet Ave., across the street from Centennial Park. Although it serves (in part) as a park, this destination is not a part of the Munster Parks and Recreation Department. In fact, it is a part of the Community Foundation of Northwest Indiana, a not-for-profit that “provides leadership and resources for the enhancement of health and the quality of life in Northwest Indiana”.

The 6.5 acre memorial features bronze and granite sculptures, life-size military equipment, and flags from all branches of the military. It has a pond, a walking path, restrooms, and ornamental landscaping, as well. The effort put into this site is apparent in all the details of this memorial, and the attraction manifests in the 90+ reviews on Trip Advisor’s website.

The imagery of the Community Veterans Memorial hardly holds back from the reality of armed conflict and perpetual warfare, as those combatants experienced it. The resulting discomfort, rather than glorification, of war up-close is intended by the committee. Not only is it a graphic history lesson, but it also is a “challenge... to break the repetition of violence... to imagine and hope for peace”.



Stallhohm Barn - Kaske House

A house listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1998, the Stallhohm Barn-Kaske House is located in Heritage Park. It was built around 1890 and has been preserved, in part, by the Munster Historical Society since 1988.

There is a bronze plaque that commemorates the “Brass Tavern”, Munster’s first active building on Ridge Road, placed at the home’s front entrance. Today, the House serves as the location for Munster’s History Museum. It is a unique feature in the town.

The Parks Department currently partners with the Town’s Historical Society to allow use the historical Kaske House as their “home base” and office. The Historical Society is a cash-strapped organization with very low attendance. The Historical Society does not contribute to any general maintenance or upkeep of the building and are not charged rent. While no formal rental or usage agreement exists, the Historical Society maintains and performs upgrades to the natural areas and gardens outside the house for utilizing the facility. The Park & Recreation Department identified development options that are discussed in other parts of the plan, and recognize the benefit of expanding their partnership to incorporate the development of programs celebrating the unique history and culture of the Town of Munster including festivals, programs, etc. to attract more users into the parks.



Local Schools

As of this writing, there is no legal Joint Use Agreement between the Schools and the Parks Department. Presently, the Parks & Recreation Department rents School facilities for programming when needed throughout the season. However, the schools use the ballfields within the community without being charged rent. The Parks Department

is interested in revisiting the need for an Intergovernmental Agreement that is beneficial to both agencies in terms of risk management as well as cost savings.

Figure 37: Community Parks and Service Area

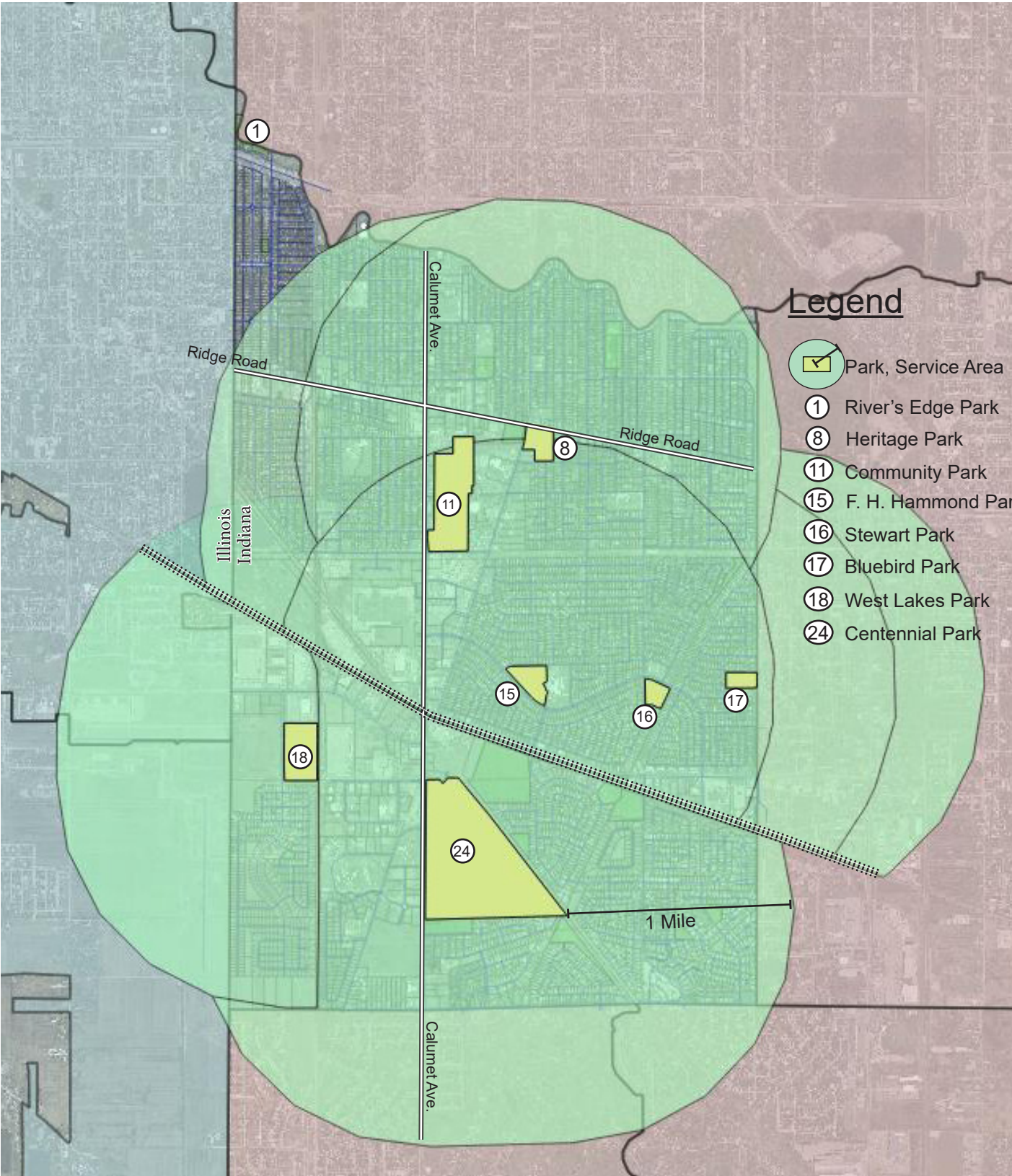


Figure 38: Neighborhood Parks and Service Area

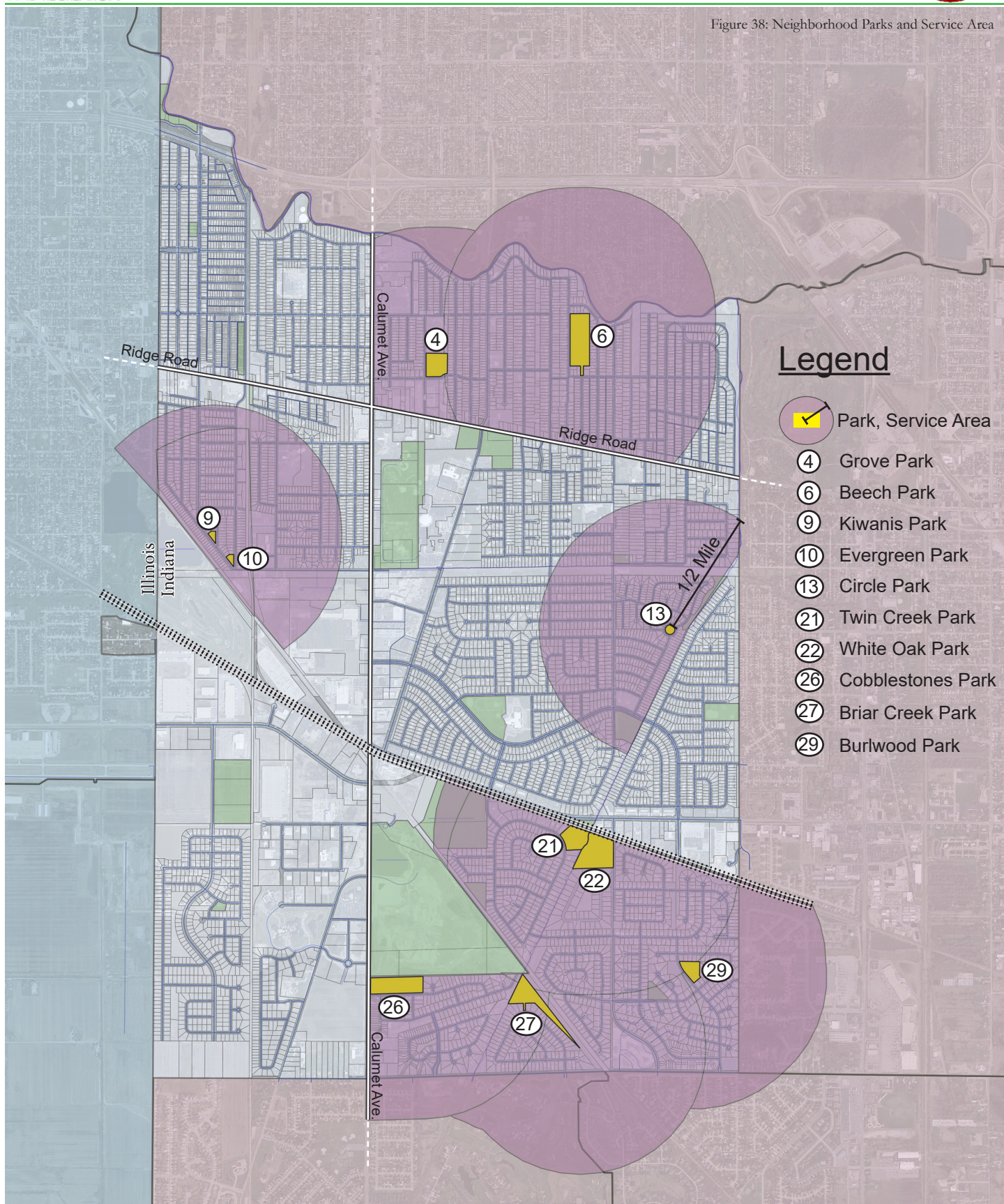


Figure 39: Mini Parks and Service Area

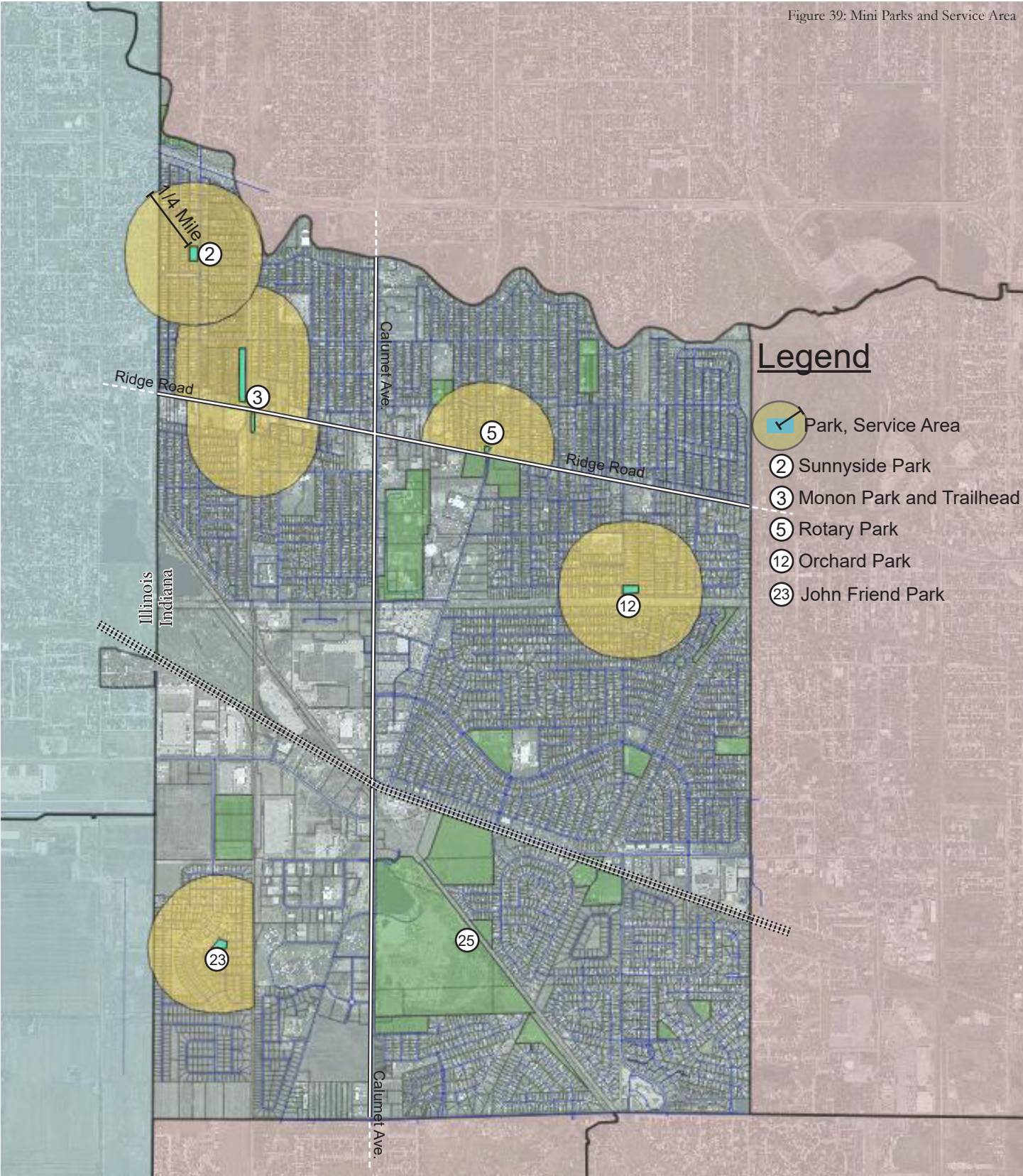


Figure 40: Mini and Neighborhood Parks and Service Area

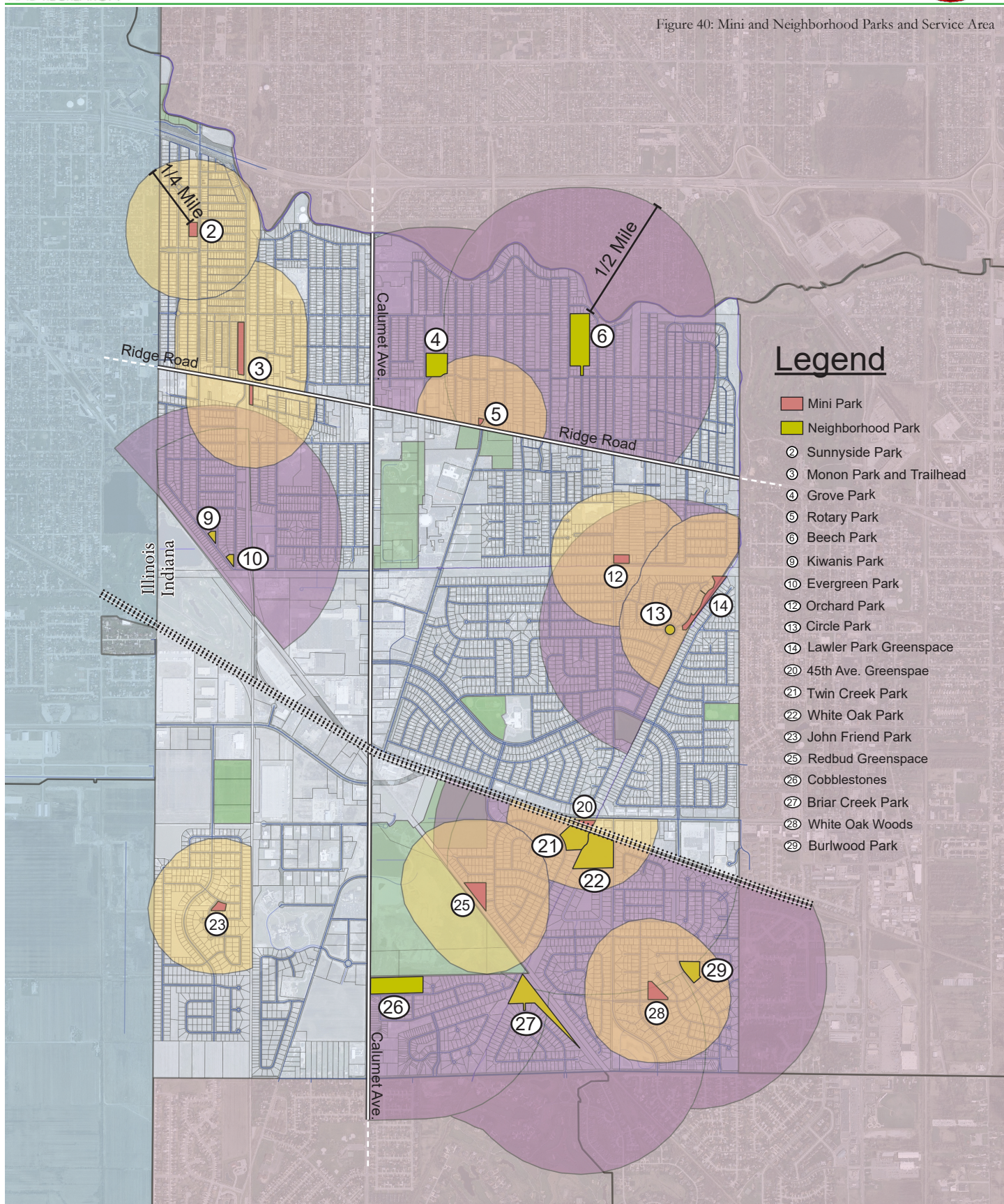


Figure 41: Playgrounds and Service Area

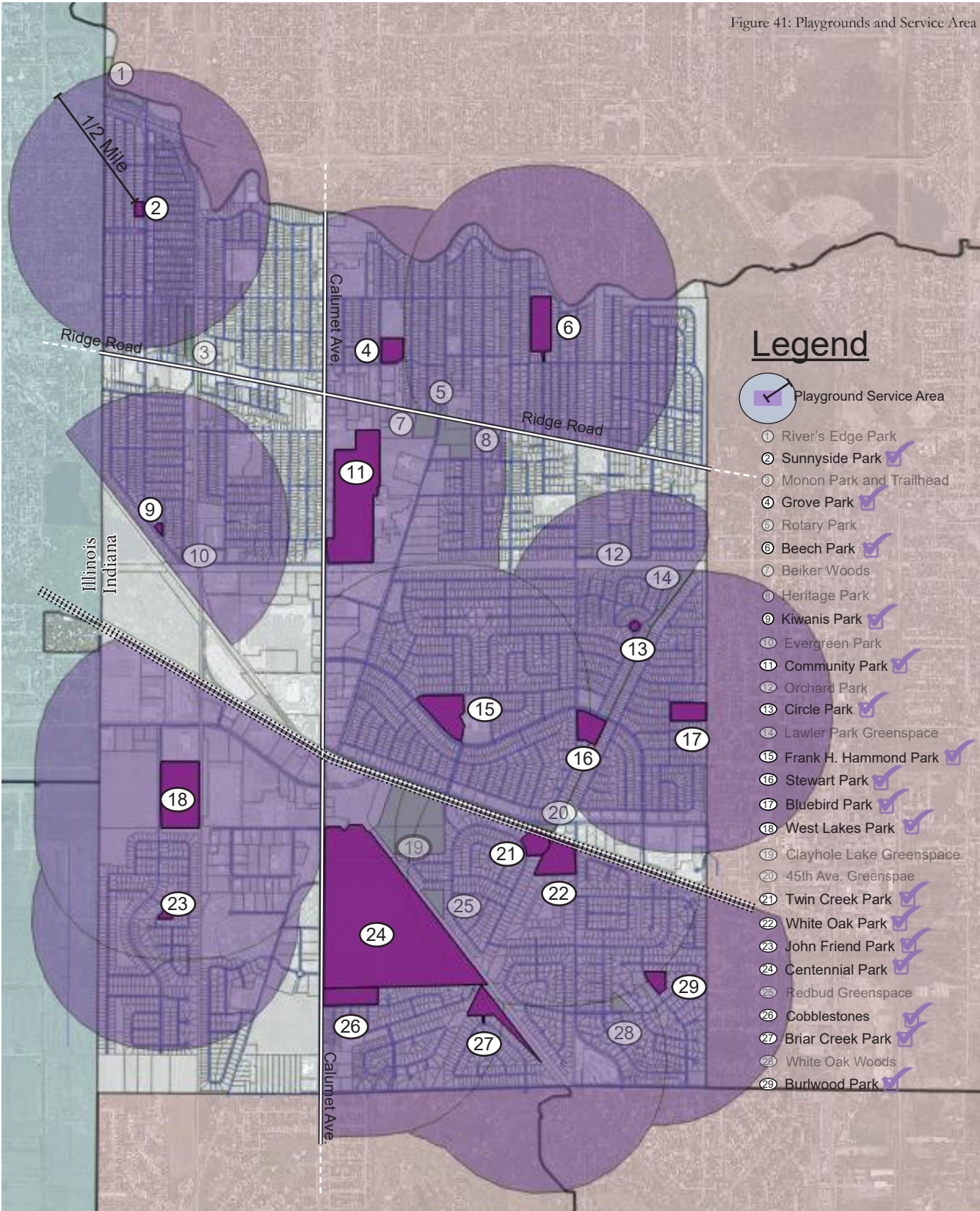


Figure 42: Rental Shelters

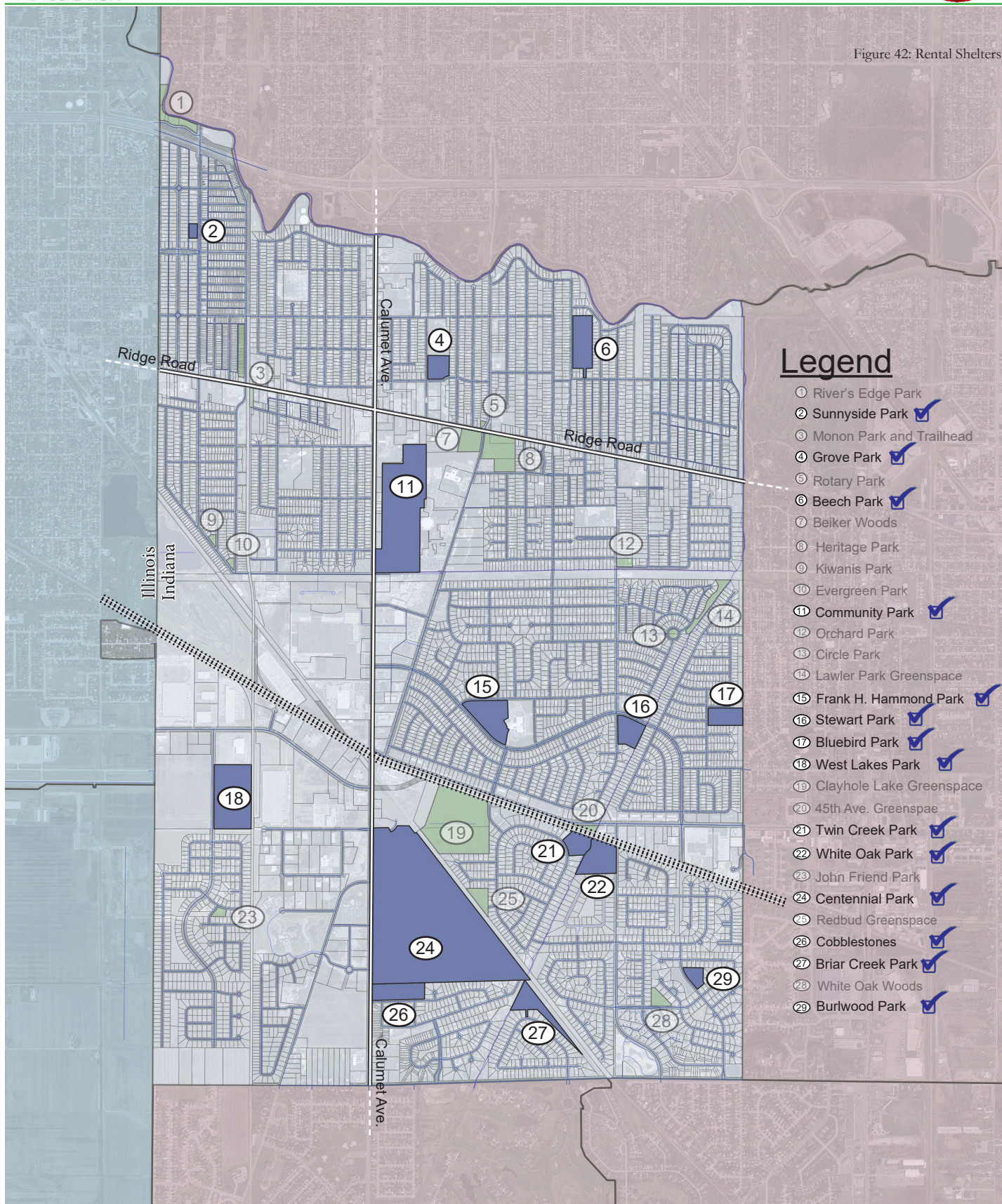


Figure 43: Drinking Fountains

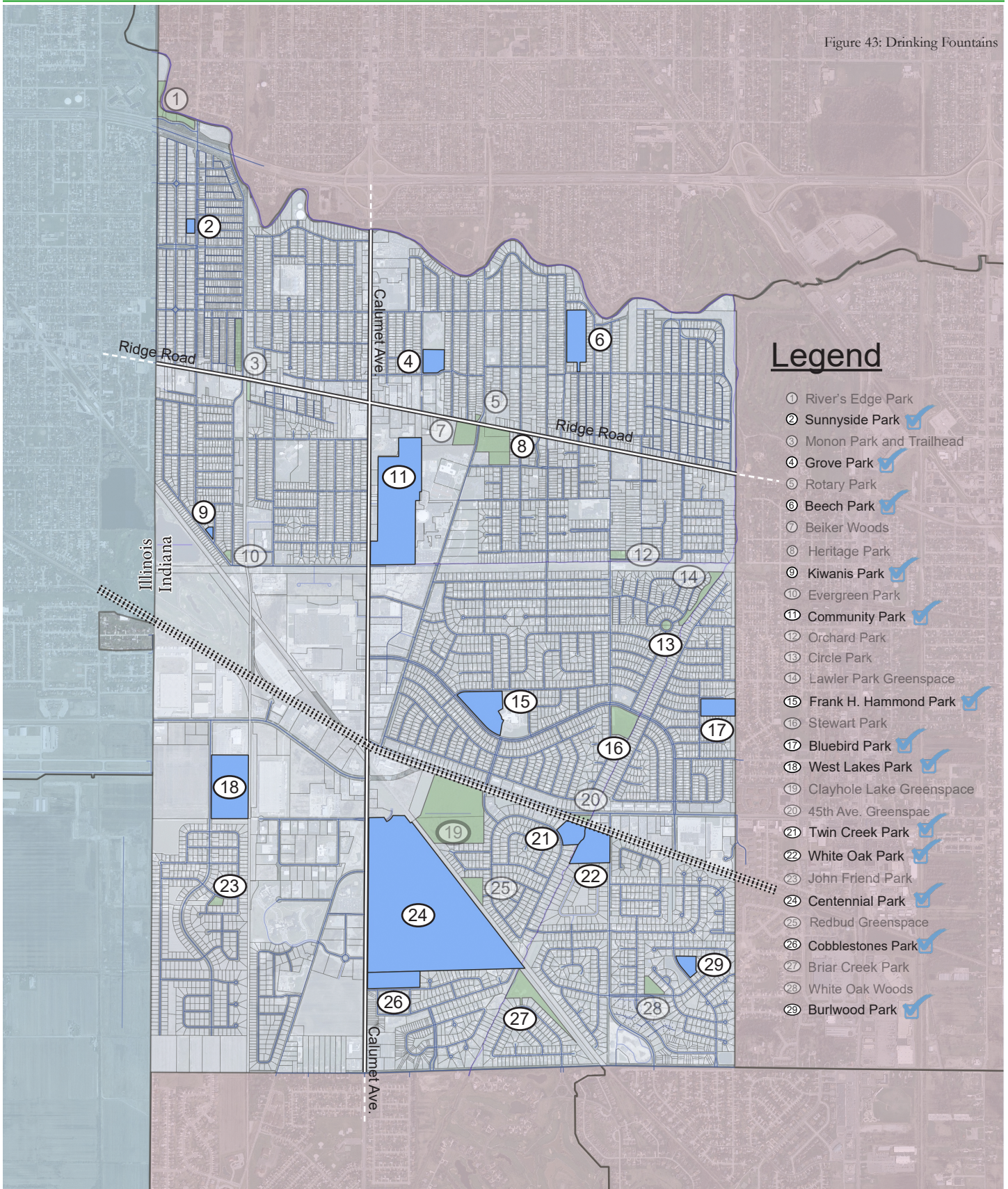


Figure 44: Tennis Courts

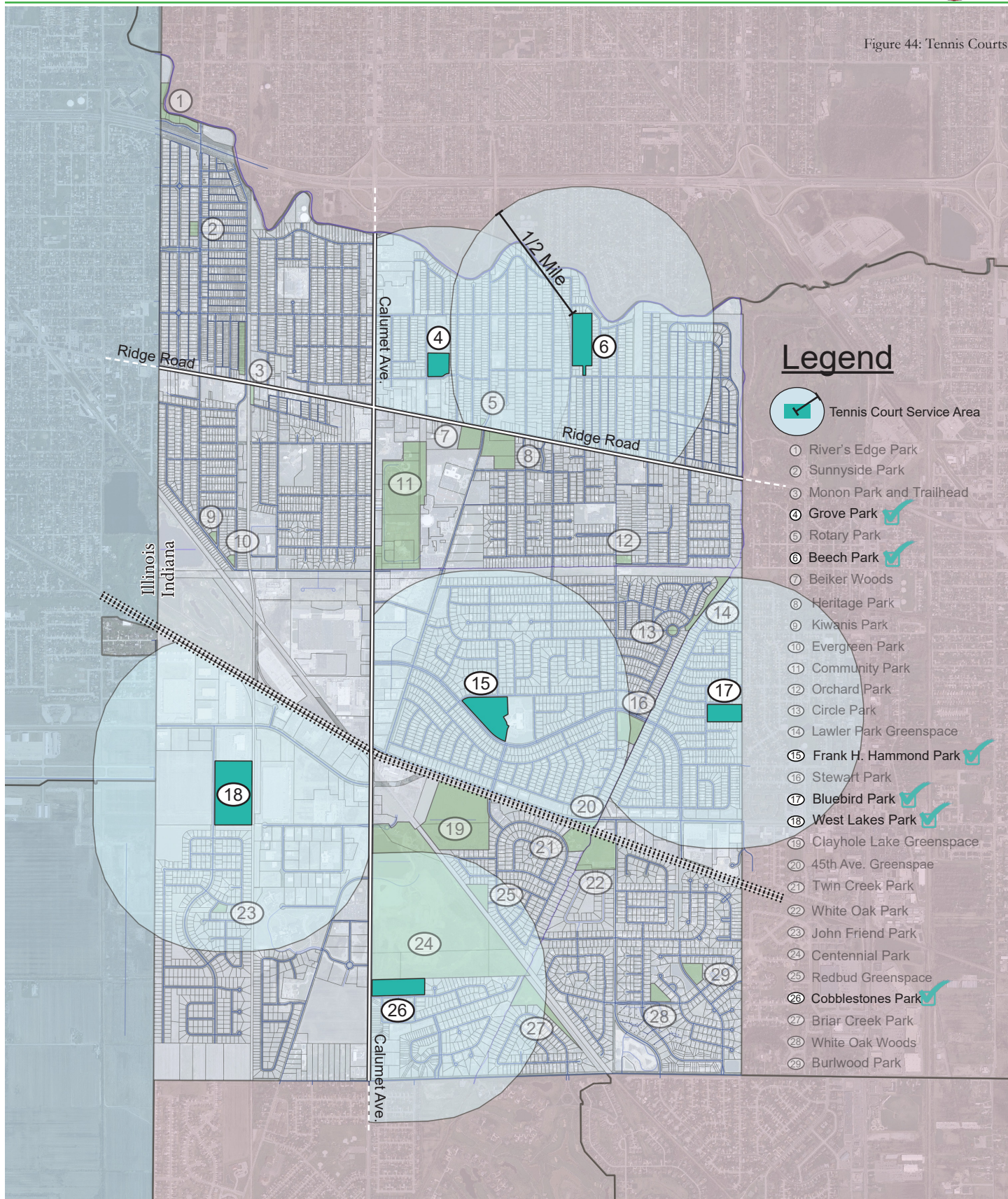


Figure 45: Basketball Courts

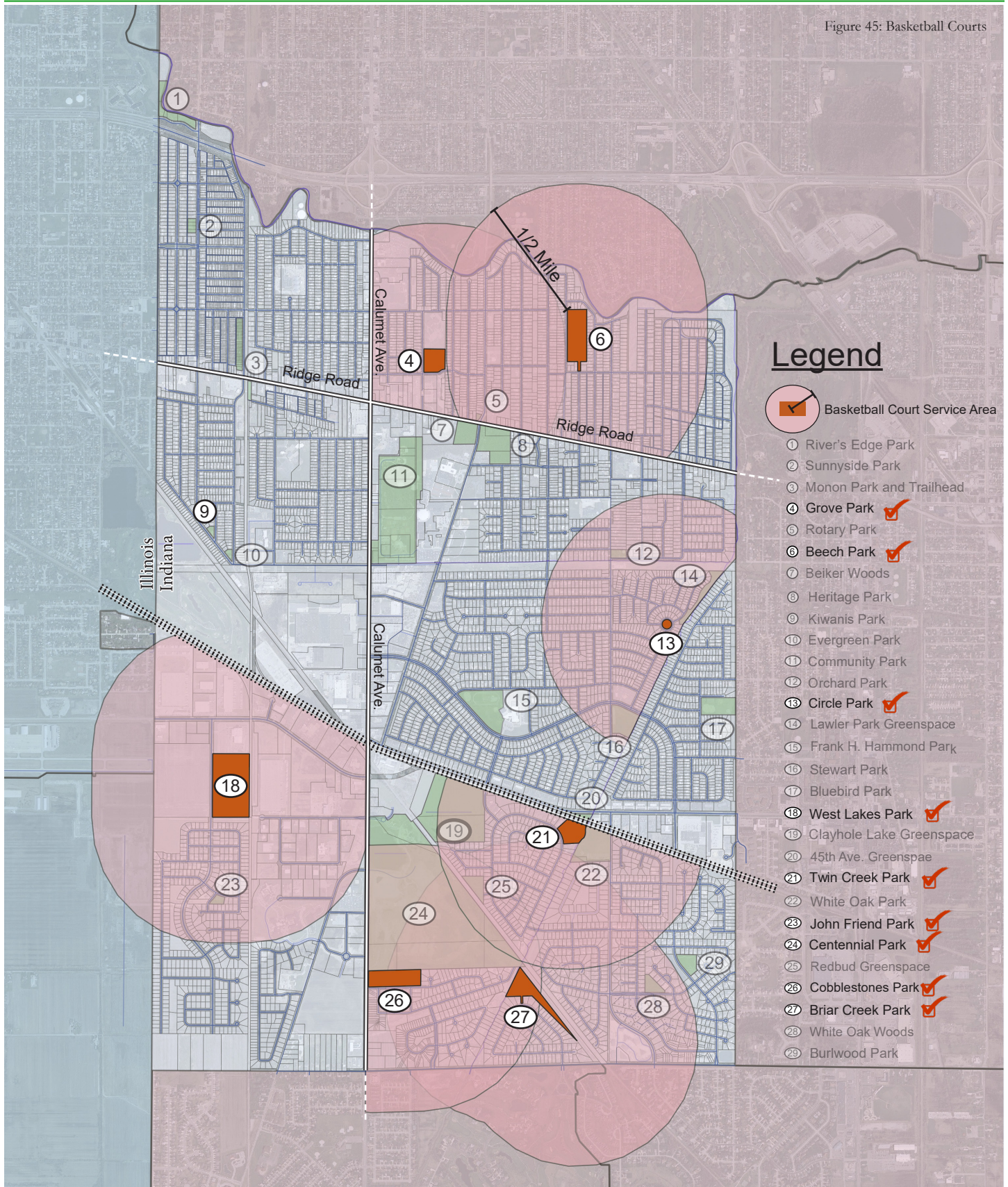


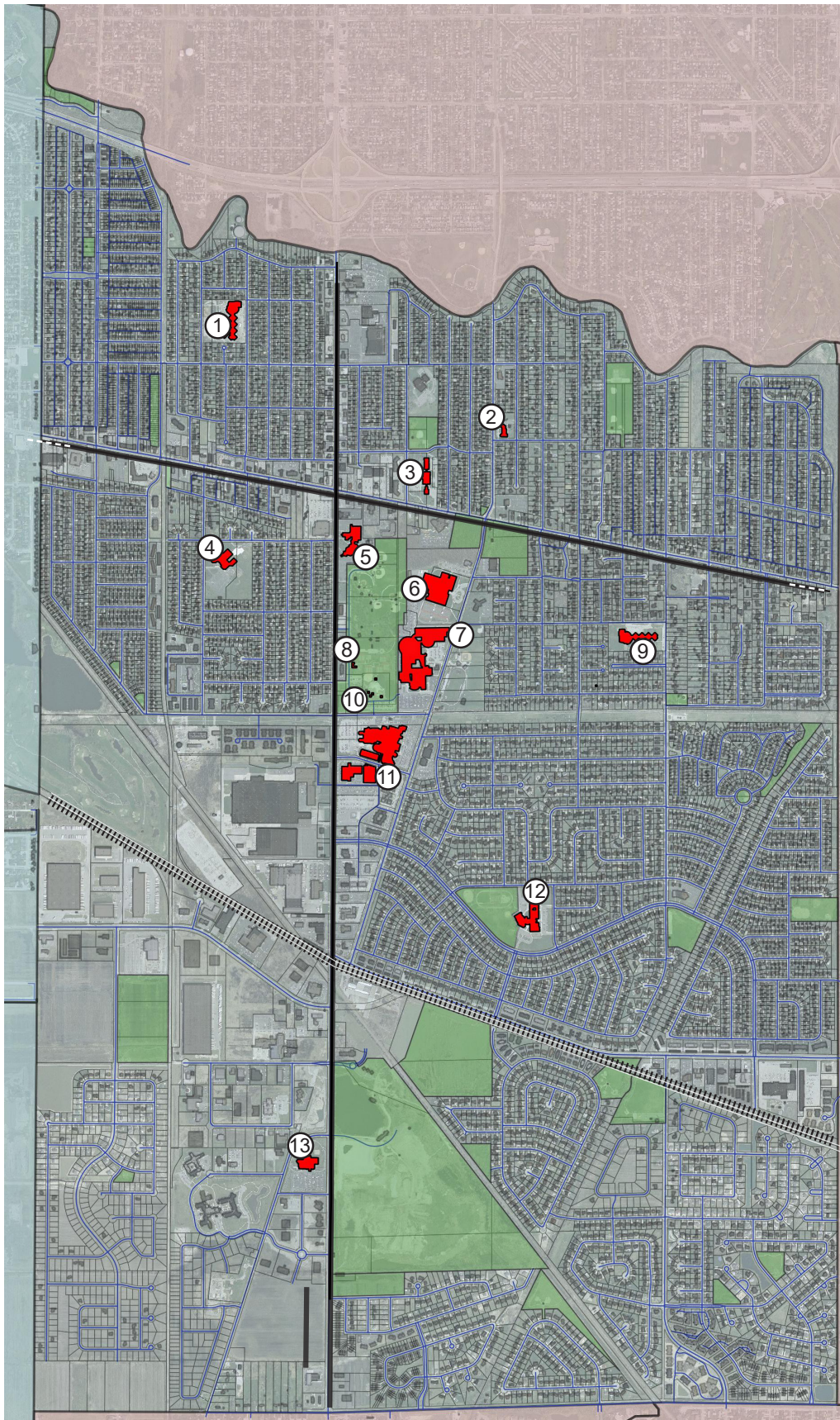
Figure 46: Schools and Facilities

Many schools in Munster are, for the most part, concentrated in the northern half of the town. However, much of the schools and facilities are centrally located, likely planned in such a way to serve as geographically feasible for all resident.

If there is a population increase within Munster and any additional schools are needed, it's worth noting that currently there are no schools within the southeast region of the town.

Legend

- ① Eads Elementary School
- ② Salvation Army
- ③ Munster Town Hall
- ④ St. Paul's Lutheran School
- ⑤ St. Thomas More School
- ⑥ Wilbur Wright Middle School
- ⑦ Munster High School
- ⑧ Community Park Social Center
- ⑨ Elliot Elementary School
- ⑩ Munster Community Pool
- ⑪ Community Hospital
- ⑫ F.H. Hammond Elementary School
- ⑬ Fitness Pointe

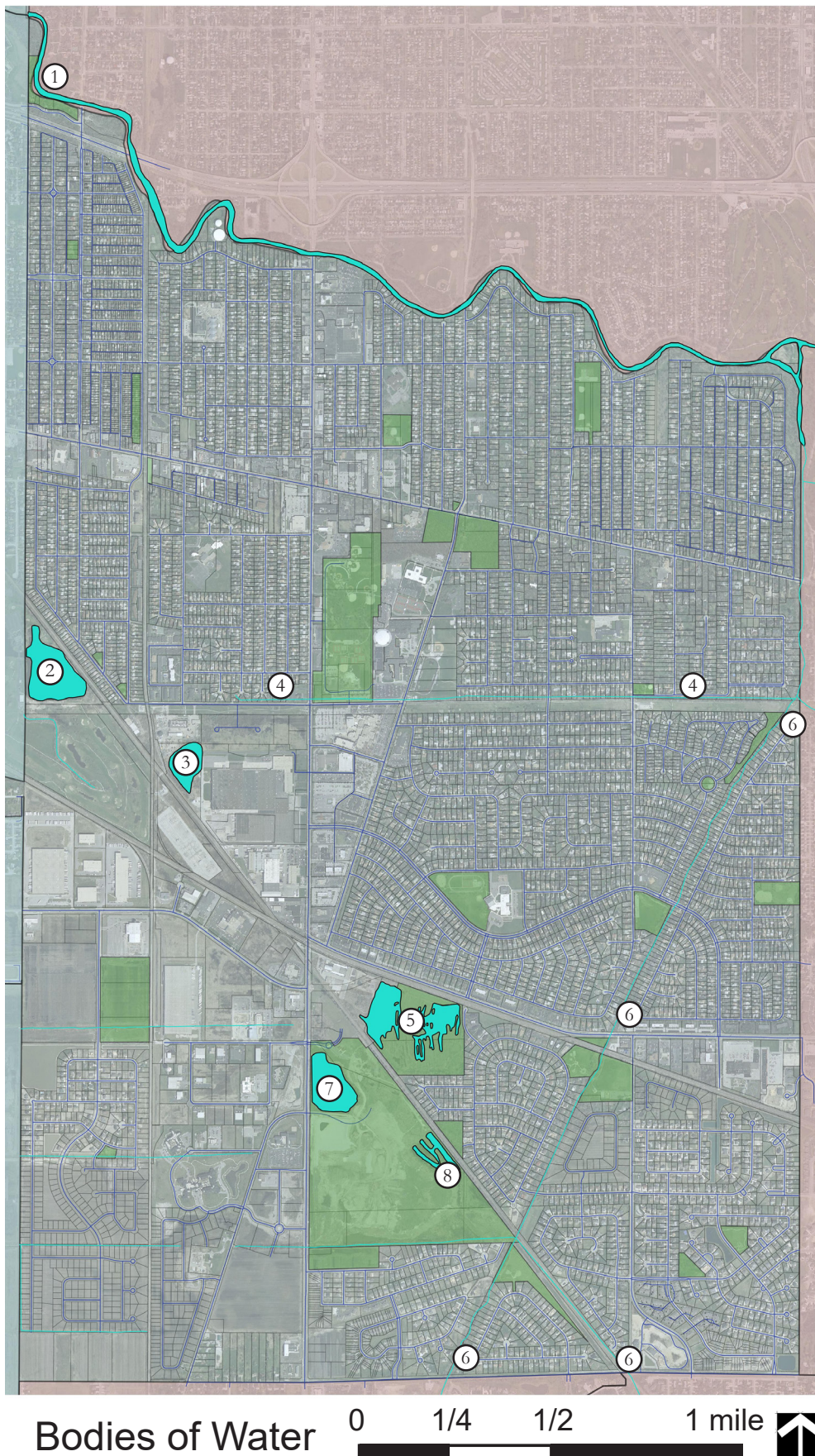


Schools and Facilities 0 1/4 1/2 1 mile

Figure 47: Munster Bodies of Water

Although Munster does not border Lake Michigan, there are a number of water bodies worth noting. Some of them are owned by other entities, shared, or owned entirely by Munster.

This inventory, in part, shaped the upcoming recommendations for water-based activities.



Legend

- ① Little Calumet River
Potentially accessible
- ② Lansing Country Club
Inaccessible to public
- ③ Industrial Swamp/Marsh
Inaccessible
- ④ Schoon Ditch
Inaccessible
- ⑤ Clayhole Lake
Potentially accessible
- ⑥ Hart Ditch
Inaccessible
- ⑦ Maynard Lake
Accessible
- ⑧ Centennial Park Golf Course Ponds
Accessible

Bodies of Water

0 1/4 1/2 1 mile



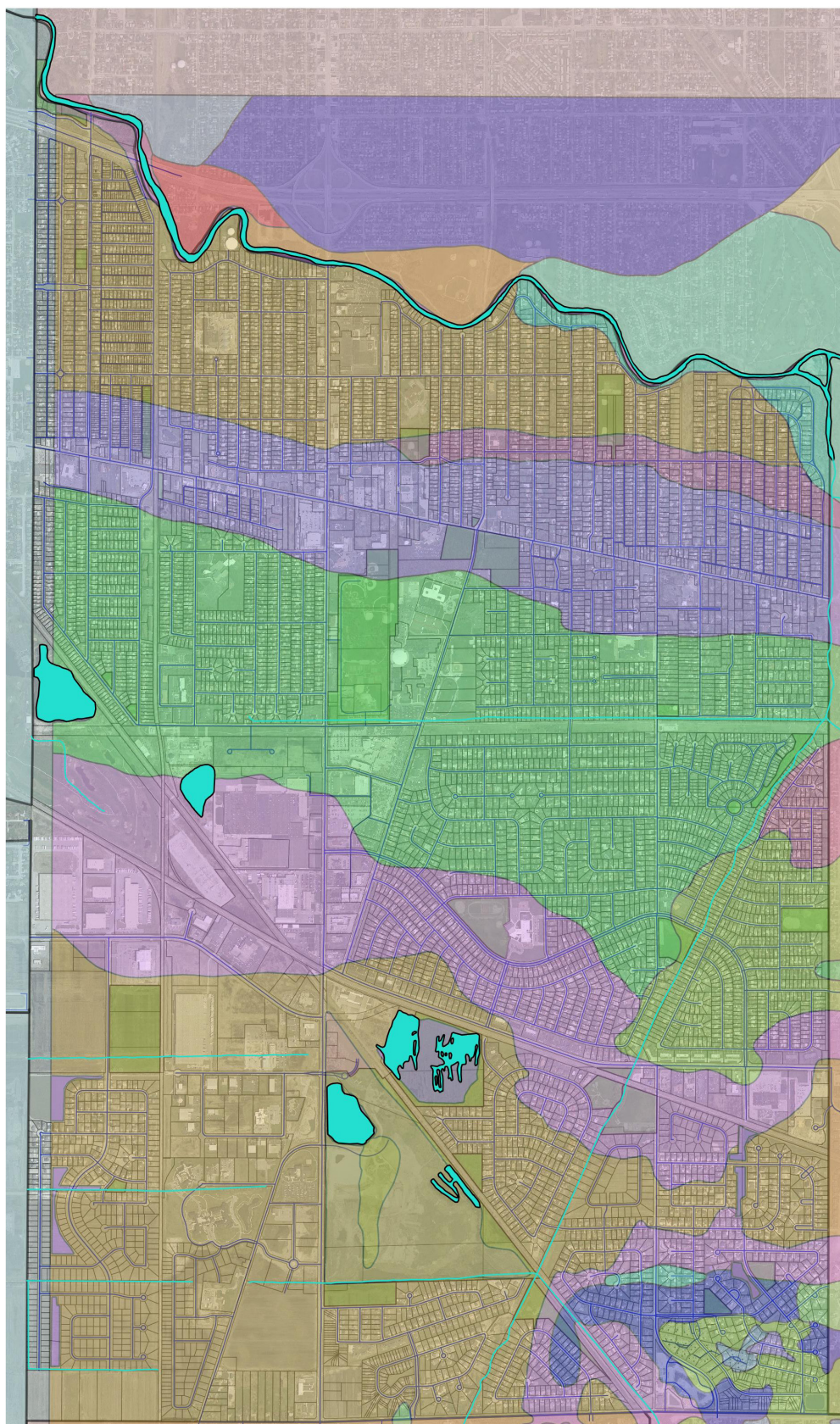
Figure 48: Soils of Munster

This data, from the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA and overlaid onto GIS software, indicates the location of various soil types throughout the town of Munster.

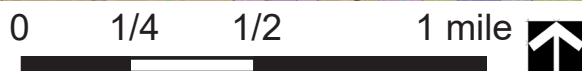
It serves as a reference for Munster's existing conditions and recognize the possibilities for future developments, although site-specific soil surveys are still necessary whenever new projects commence.

Legend

- Bono silty clay
- Clay pits
- Gilford fine sandy loam, 0-1%
- Maumee loam fine loam, 0-1%
- Maumee silt loam
- Milford silt loam, overwash
- Pewamo silty clay loam, calcareous variant
- Plainfield fine sand, 0-6% slopes
- Rensselaer loam, calcareous subsoil variant
- Sparta fine sand, 0-4%
- Sparta fine sand, silty clay loam substratum, 0-4%
- Urban land
- Water
- Watseka loamy fine sand
- Wauseon fine sandy loam



Soils



45th Ave. Greenspace

Address: 1500 45th Street

Classification: Other (Open Green Space)

Status: Owned

45th Avenue Greenspace is a 1 acre open green space located just south of 45th Street, just north of the Canadian National (Grand Trunk Western) railroad, and adjacent to the west side of the Hart Ditch.

There are utility poles running along the edge of the north side and dense vegetation running along the edge of the south side. There is a large flag pole that is situated on the southeast corner of the greenspace, giving this space the informal name of “flag pole park”.

There is currently no pedestrian access to the space, and only a single lane vehicular drive leading to a utility box next to the flag pole. It is concealed, in part, by upright arborvitae bushes.

Because this is a narrow property alongside a heavy traffic corridor, it has limited potential.



Figure 49: 45th Avenue Greenspace

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Fair
Pedestrian Access	Poor
Internal Access	N/A
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	N/A
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	N/A
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	N/A
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Fair



Beech Park

Address: 8101 Beech Ave

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Beech Park is an approximately 11-acre neighborhood park located at 8101 Beech Avenue. The park site is located at the north end of Town between Beech Avenue and Kraay Avenue north of Fairway Avenue.

The park's sign is located along Beech Avenue near the southwest corner of the site. The sign appears to be relatively new and is in fair to good condition.

The park features several active play areas including tennis courts, a soccer field, basketball court (full court) and two ballfields. There are two off-street parking areas which appear to service the ballfields. The south parking area has access to Fairway Avenue. The drive to Fairway Avenue has multiple traffic calming strips to slow traffic. The connection creates a potential "cut-thru" from Fairway to Beech Avenue, however there doesn't appear to be much advantage gained by using this route as a shortcut. It does improve traffic exiting following games at the south ballfield.

There is no identifying signage at the exit/entrance along Fairview Avenue. There is a stop sign at the exit point but no stop bar on the pavement. The access road is narrow and would be conducive to one way traffic outbound. Parking spaces are defined by pavement



striping and curb stops. Curb stops make it difficult for snow removal during winter months and can be relatively easily dislodged during plowing operations.

Additionally, a creative play area and an open-air shelter is located on the south end of the park. The shelter includes 6-8 picnic tables and is in fair to good condition. There is a lightning monitoring system on the shelter to provide weather warnings for the park activities.

The surface containment around the play area is a raised plastic curb system that is in poor to fair condition. The raised curb limits or prevents accessible entrance points to the play apparatus. The play equipment is in average to above average condition.



Figure 50: Beech Park

The woodchip surface needs replenishment or replacement as there are several areas showing exposed roots from adjacent trees.

The ballfields are limestone screenings infields which are relatively easy to manage and care for during the baseball/softball season. The backstops are limited to behind home plate with no foul line fencing down either foul line. Seasonal equipment storage boxes are located behind backstops.

The outfields of the ballfields provide area for soccer overlays and the multipurpose use of the park open space.

Spectator seating for both ball fields are near the play areas and are not accessible from the public areas.

Many trees have been damaged by string trimmers.

Tennis courts at north end of park were resurfaced and color-coated in 2015. The net posts are showing signs of base failure which could be from base failure or excessive subsurface moisture. The basketball courts were rebuilt in 2015 and color coated.

There is an expanse of under utilized asphalt pavement adjacent to the basketball court.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Fair
Pedestrian Access	Fair
Internal Access	Poor
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Fair
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	Fair
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Fair
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Good



Bieker Woods

Address: 1050 Ridge Road

Classification: Other (Wooded Park)

Status: Owned

Bieker Woods is a 7.0 acre wooded park located at 1050 Ridge Road on the southwest corner of Columbia Avenue and Ridge Road. It is located just east of the Center for Visual and Performing Arts, north of the Wilbur Wright Middle School and west (across Columbia Avenue) from Heritage Park. The park features only passive activity.

The park's sign is located on the corner of Columbia Avenue and Ridge Road. It appears relatively new and is in very good condition. It is directly across Columbia Avenue from Heritage Park's sign and across Ridge Road from Rotary Park and its sign. The Bieker Woods sign is elevated behind a segmented retaining wall (approx. 3' tall in front of sign with varying heights) that continues along the woods' edge south along Columbia Avenue separating the woods and the sidewalk. (This same segmented retaining wall also lines Heritage Park's signage paver plaza continuing south along Columbia Avenue and defines Heritage Park's western edge along the sidewalk.) There is a paver plaza in front of the Bieker Woods sign (approx. 430 sq. ft.) on the entire corner where the 2 sidewalks along Ridge and Columbia meet. There is a crosswalk signal there and the curbs are accessible. Other signage is placed adjacent to the Bieker



Woods sign at different times of the year (i.e. Munster Farmer's Market, Munster High School's Arts & Crafts Fair, etc.) since there is high visibility from the busy signalized intersection.

The trailhead is located on the east side of Bieker Woods about halfway down between Ridge Road and the Munster School District building. The wooden kiosk and signage are in fair condition. There are a handful of wooden benches with memorial plaques attached that are in fair condition but do allow for ample seating. The trail itself is not well defined through the woods and leads westward toward the rest of the woods between Community Park, the Center for Visual and Performing Arts and the Wilbur Wright Middle School.



Figure 51: Bieker Woods

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Excellent
Pedestrian Access	Excellent
Internal Access	Very Good
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Very Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	N/A
Landscaping	N/A
Paths/Trails	Fair
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Very Good



Bluebird Park

Address: 1900 Holly Lane
Classification: Community
Status: Owned

Bluebird Park is an approximately 6 acre community park located at Holly Lane and Crestwood Avenue in the east-central portion of the Town. The eastern boundary of the park is a utility right of way and immediately east of the right of way is Highland, IN. The park is surrounded on the north, west and south by single family residences in Munster, on the east by single family residences in Highland.

The park sign is located at the northwest corner of the park and appears to be relatively new and is in fair to good condition.

The park features several active play areas including tennis courts, ball fields, a recently renovated (spring 2017) active play area for tots and pre-teens. The play apparatus was replaced generally within the same footprint as the original equipment. The play area includes a new zip line. The park includes an open air shelter with a solar powered severe weather warning device, a perimeter path and perpendicular off street parking along Crestwood. The parking stalls are delineated by pavement striping and wheel stops. There is no accessible route along the parking lot and no accessible connection from the parking lot to the perimeter path system. The mountable curb



between street and off-street parking is deteriorating. It appears the parking is not convenient for park users, on-street parking along Holly Lane during ballfield use is common.

The tennis courts were recently resurfaced using a PVC court surface material to provide a renewed playing surface. This material and surface appears to be working well, we do not have any feedback on the playability of the surface from users.

Many trees have been damaged by string trimmers.

The ballfields are limestone screenings infields which are relatively easy to manage and care for during the



Figure 52: Bluebird Park

baseball/softball season. The backstops are limited to behind home plate with no foul line fencing down either foul line. Seasonal equipment storage boxes are located behind backstops. The northwest field has spectator seating, the southeast field does not.

Tennis court fencing is in fair to good condition. Some tennis court fence post footings are heaving, possibly due to frost or excessive soil moisture. There is an additional 4-ft fence between tennis courts and Holly Lane, with an undetermined purpose.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	Very Good
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	Good
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Very Good



Briar Creek Park

Address: 10299 Fox Run

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Briar Creek Park is a 7.9 acre neighborhood park situated adjacent to a low-traffic residential bend on the south (Marlou Dr and Fox Run) and cornered on the northwest and northeast ends by narrow creeks. Access into this discretely located park comes from 3 different places: the path from the residential sidewalk on the south end, the bridge from Boxwood Drive on the west end, and the east corner to the Pennsylvania greenway.

The hard surfacing within the park is sinking and now presenting hazards with potential tripping and pooling of water in unsuitable spots, both on hardscape and turf. The basketball court and hopscotch/4-square surfacing is also notably cracked, as well. There is an existing shelter at the center of the park, with posts that are in need of repainting. The amount of wood fiber surfacing is currently insufficient, as it doesn't meet an appropriate level to cover all footings (such as the toddler spring riders), leaving many pieces of play equipment exposed (such as the rock climber).

Overall, the playground equipment is in good condition. It is a combined 2-12 apparatus, and the swings are both belt and bucket (one of the buckets is designed as a special model to accompany the child's parent/guardian).



There is a standalone backstop on the open turf space that allows for a pickup game, indistinguishable from a softball or baseball field. There is no spectator seating at this field.

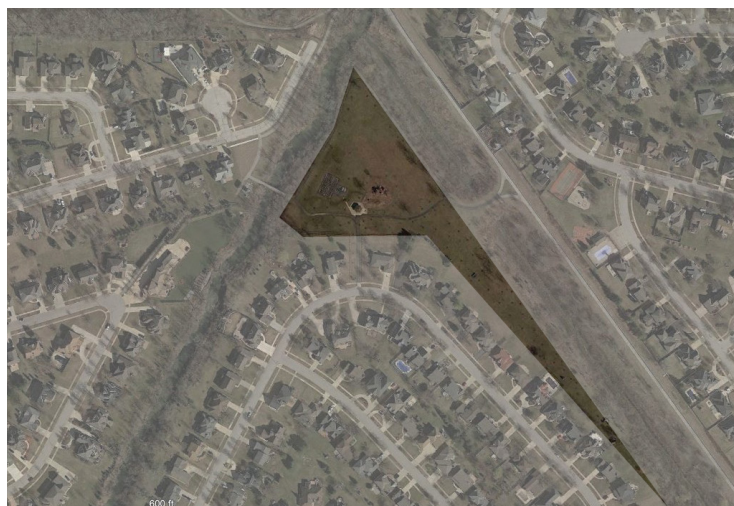
Overall landscaping is minimal, but the new trees are of diverse selection and the park's perimeter is graced with mature trees that align the creeks to the northwest and northeast.

Many existing trees were lost to the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). A significant reforestation plan is in progress with 50% of the plan complete and the remainder scheduled in the fall of 2018.



Figure 53: Briar Creek Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Fair
Sitting Area	Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Excellent
Landscaping	Very Good
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Excellent



Burlwood Park

Address: 10139 Burlwood Drive

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Burlwood Park is a 2.9 acre neighborhood park site located in the White Oak Estates subdivision just north of Somerset Drive. The park includes playground equipment, open play/turf area, walking path, drinking fountain, shelter/gazebo, and landscaping.

The play area consists of two composite play structures manufactured by Landscape Structures for ages 2-5 and 5-12, a stand-alone hammock-like structure, and two independent swing structures (one swing structure with 2 belts swings, and the other swing structure with 2 tot bucket seats). Age-appropriate signage was evident at the park. The play area was updated within the past 6 months.

The woodchips of the playground are contained by wood timbers. The surface elevation throughout the play area appears to be well below the recommended surface elevation where slide exit chutes and steps/transfer modules meet the surface. These wood timbers have also begun to age and weather. Seating opportunities for care givers and parents to watch and supervise their children were limited to a picnic table located beneath the existing gazebo/shelter. Since the initial inventory, additional benches have been installed at the park.



The gazebo/shelter is a small prefabricated structure with cedar shingles that can only accommodate one picnic table. The structure is centrally located within the park on a concrete pad which appears to be in good condition. However, the asphalt path leading to it does not meet the top of the concrete pavement flush, creating a trip hazard for park patrons. The shelter structure has begun to age, weather, and deteriorate from 19 years of exposure to the exterior elements. The drinking fountain is an older version of Murdock Fountains. While still operable, the drinking fountain is not ADA accessible and the color of the fountain's exterior steel frame has faded lacking curb appeal.

Entrance into the park is flanked by a blue 30 gallon drum used as a refuse container and a 4x4 wood post



Figure 54: Burlwood Park

with signage identifying park information and rules. Although serving a vital role to park patrons, the sign and litter are both unattractive and non-welcoming.

The asphalt path loops the entire park connecting to the existing concrete walk within the parkway. The asphalt surface appears to be level and free of major cracking, however, the surface needs seal coating to provide a fresh look to the park. Along the path leading to the gazebo/shelter are two independent bike racks surface mounted on a concrete pad. The bike racks appear to be in good condition.

The park site consists of minimal landscaping. The site appears to be very open and void of many shade opportunities. The few trees which are located within the park overall are in good to fair condition. Overall maintenance is very good. The turf is in fair condition.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Fair
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Fair



Centennial Park

Address: 1005 South Centennial Drive

Classification: Community

Status: Owned

Centennial Park is located near the intersection of S. Centennial Dr. and Calumet Ave./Columbia Ave. on Calumet Avenue, just south of 45th Street. Centennial Park serves as Munster's "Flagship" park. It is not only one of the newest parks, but is also the largest piece of real estate the Town has dedicated solely to recreational use for family oriented enjoyment.

The site consists of a large playground area, outdoor shelter/pavilions, entertainment stage, formal garden area, sculpture art garden area, 3-acre Dog Park, walking paths, a 9-hole, par 36 executive golf course and practice facility designed by Tim Nugent, a clubhouse with banquet facilities, and restaurant with outdoor seating, catch and release fishing, and expanses of natural area open space. Summer concerts are also held at the entertainment stage.

The golf course and driving range account for roughly 95 of the total 150 acreage of the park. For the purposes of this assessment, we will limit our assessment to the active and passive recreational activity areas only and not the golf course facility at this time.

Centennial Park has great curb appeal. The park



frontage is landscaped with varied topography, well maintained turf grass, and mature vegetation which serve as a natural screen to the adjacent golf course, driving range and parking lot located at the entry. There is no park sign at the parking lot entrance from Calumet Ave.

The site consists of two large expansive parking lots located on the north and south ends of the park facility. Both parking lots are constructed in a sweeping arc fashion for aesthetic and visual interest. The parking lot surfaces appear to be in good condition with clear and noticeable striping.

Centennial Park features a variety of active recreation activities. The detailed descriptions of these site elements are as follows:



Figure 55: Centennial Park

The entertainment stage serves as an iconic backdrop to Maynard Lake and provides a concert in the park series annually. The entertainment stage area consists of terraced lawn seating and decomposed granite seating areas to accommodate those with disabilities. The decomposed granite area appears to have remained at the installed elevation, little to no settling was apparent. The retaining walls in the terraced lawn seating area appear to have remained sturdy, and do not show signs of differential settling. The alignment has remained true so there is no undulation within the courses. The stage is accessed by concrete surfacing and concrete steps (front and rear). Settlement of the concrete surface is apparent in several areas surrounding the entertainment stage. Stone walls flank both sides of the entertainment stage. The stone walls have missing caps in some places. The stone walls and both sets of concrete steps appear to have shifted and settled over time and further study of how to address the deterioration of these features should be considered.

The catch-and-release fishing area consists of pressure-treated timber boardwalk constructed in an oval fashion bordered by a precast limestone seat wall. The timber decking appears to be in good condition. The seat wall also functions as a retaining wall to a sloped native conservation planting area which surrounds the boardwalk. The natural conservation area appears to consist of hearty natives and other vegetation indigenous to the area. This native planting area appears to be overgrown and in need of management for aesthetic

reasons. Attention to this native area is also recommended to promote undergrowth and maintain diversity of plant species and structure.

The creative play area is in fair to good condition but nearing the end of its useful life expectancy. There are two composite apparatus structures with multi-level decks; one for primary age users 2-5 and another for school-age users 5-12. The area also consists of a pyramid net climber with rock climbing wall and a three-bay swing set. The independent swing set includes 4 belts and 1 bucket seat – at the time of the site tour, one bucket seat was missing. Both of the composite apparatus structures, the pyramid net climber and the independent swingset is in good condition. There is some fading of play panels and slides, but no peeling of the finishes was apparent. The playground's accessible surface material is wood fiber mulch (woodchips). The wood chips are at an appropriate level and free of weeds. The play area is bordered by concrete containment curb/walk. The concrete around the play area is in good condition. There were minimal seating and shade opportunities surrounding the creative play area.

The reservable shelters and washroom building are in good condition. The concrete surface beneath the shelter area appears to be in good condition as well. Other site furnishings consist of picnic tables and litter receptacles. The litter receptacles were white 55 gallon drums and were not consistent with the style of receptacle located



throughout Centennial Park. The picnic tables under the shelter are in fair to good condition.

Centennial Park also hosts an interesting variety of public art and garden sculptures that create treasured cultural resources for the community. This sculpture garden area includes decomposed granite paths. Where these decomposed granite paths meet intersecting surfaces, new decomposed granite material should be added to create a smooth transition to these surfaces. All other areas of the decomposed granite surface material appear to be in good to fair condition. Along the paths leading up to the public art locations are interpretive signs. Many of the images on these signs have either faded or are none existent and should be replaced to continue to educate and inform park patrons of Centennial Park.

The park is home to a 3-acre members-only dog park located on the east side of the park, south of the formal garden area. The dog park consists of black vinyl chain link security fencing with controlled access gates, dog-size drinking fountains, and separate off-leash areas for small and large dogs, a dog playground, and a hilltop view that overlooks the entire park.

The entrance to the dog park lacks the curb appeal from rest of the park. The screening surface at the dog park entrance needs to be replenished or an alternate hard surface installed to address the heavy foot traffic of the park. In order for people to enjoy the dog



park, additional seating and shade structures should be considered for use by park patrons and visitors to the area. Seating and additional shade within this area will ensure everyone stays comfortable when visiting the park. No ADA accessible paths exist within the dog park. A paved pathway/trail network should be considered throughout this 3 acre area.

Centennial Park has two formal garden areas adjacent to one another across from the dog park. Each garden is accessed through an entrance arbor with shade pergola and enclosed with a white picket fence. The Gardens include a variety of roses, ornamental grasses, flowering shrubs, perennials and annuals. Within the garden space are strategically placed large rocks and small ponds to enhance the experience of the park visitor. The path



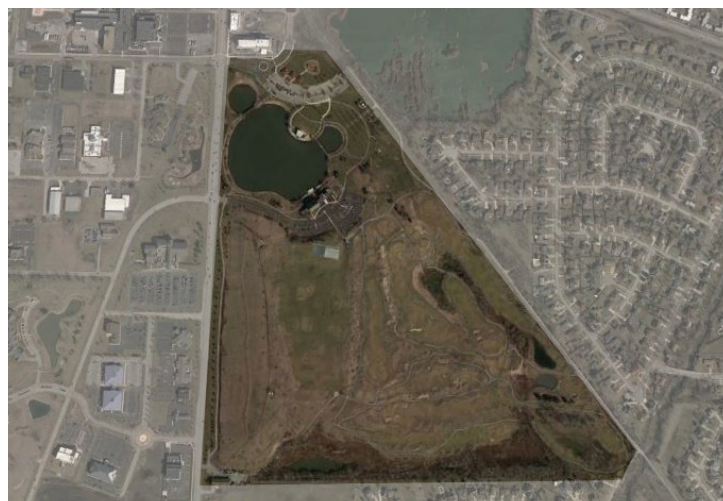
network within the formal garden area is made up of limestone screenings bordered by wood timbers. Where the limestone screenings surface meets adjacent hard surfaces (i.e. concrete or asphalt) additional screenings should be installed to provide a smooth transition between the two surfaces.

A network of asphalt walking trails surrounds Clayhole Lake and meander throughout the balance of the park. These trails afford great views of the park. These asphalt trails appear to be in good condition showing minimal signs of surface cracking and differential settling.

The steps leading down from the clubhouse has a handrail installed on one side. The grade slopes away from the steps on the opposite side, causing areas of concern.

Overall maintenance is fair to good. The turf is relatively weed-free. There are large low areas with standing water.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Excellent
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Very Good
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	Good
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	Very Good
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Very Good
Maintenance	Good



Circle Park

Address: 1700 Inner Circle

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Circle Park is a roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ - acre site located at 1700 Inner Circle Drive on the interior of the rotary. Traffic flows clock-wise one way around the site.

The park features a basketball court, a playground for preteens, a perimeter path, and a small open play space. There is a single park sign located at the Foliage Drive entrance to the rotary. The landscaping adjacent to the sign screens the sign from either the left or right.

This is a small neighborhood park where most activity is “walk to” the park. Parking is available on street on the inside of the rotary.

Basketball court dimensions are not correct for free throw distance. The basketball goal support post is in line with the playing court end line.

The preteen playground is in fair to good condition. Even though the perimeter path touches the playground at that point, it does not provide an accessible connection to the play surface at that point. The play area is bordered by timbers on all sides except adjacent to the basketball court on the south side.



General access to the playground from public sidewalks is lacking. Loose woodchip fill needs to be maintained and monitored.

The play apparatus is a combination of GameTime and Landscape Structures equipment and is nearing the end of its useful life-expectancy.

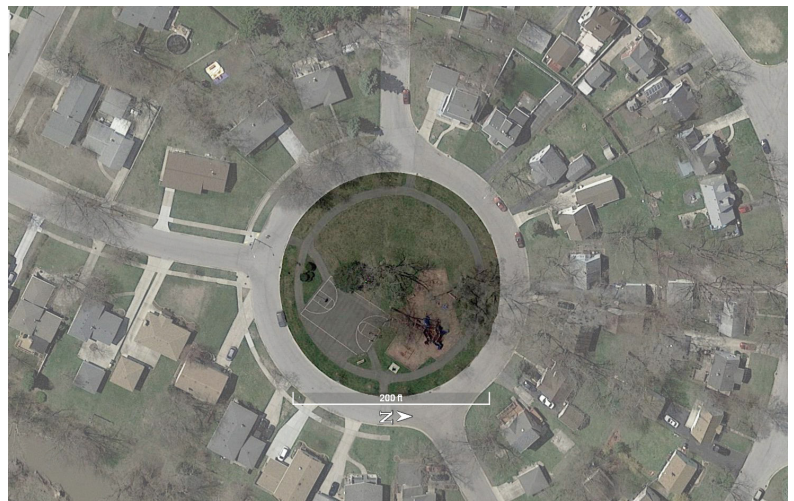
Perimeter timber curbing is broken in some areas and should be inspected/replaced. Accessible routes to play surface when replacing containment should be considered.

Site furnishings are showing age and may be reaching end of their useful life.



Figure 56: Circle Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Very Good
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Fair
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Fair
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Good



Cobblestones Park

Address: 801 Treadway Road
Classification: Neighborhood
Status: Owned

Cobblestones Park is an 8.6 acre neighborhood park just south of an emergency vehicle garage at Centennial Park, east of Calumet Avenue, north of Treadway Road, and west of the homes on Tudor Court. There is a small parking lot on the west end of the park, with a total of 26 spots, 2 of which are accessible parking spaces. The path network encompasses the perimeter of the entire park.

To the north of the parking lot is a hardscape court, combining basketball and volleyball. It currently has notable cracking down the middle. To the east of the parking lot is a softball field with limestone screening surfacing, along with a new and well-structured backstop.

The creative play area is at the south central of the park. The bucket swings and toddler spring riders separate the play space into two segments. The additional play equipment consists of a rock climbing wall, a 5-12 apparatus, and an additional swing set with four belt swings. There is a shelter in between the two play zones with picnic benches underneath. The path leading to it has two benches, each facing the areas for observing the play. The creative play area is deficient in wood fiber surfacing. Plastic logs act as borders, however some of the logs are misaligned and do not contain the play



surface. There is a solitary picnic bench on the outside of the CPA boundary.

To the north is an open space for soccer, and to the south there are additional parking spaces (semi-off street) with accessible spots in places far from the entry to the creative play area.

There are two tennis courts to the east of the creative play area. They are below average condition, with significant cracks throughout. The entry to the courts from the gates is a concrete pad. It doesn't connect to any path.

Landscaping at this park is minimal, and aside from the shelter, there is a lack of shade throughout the site.



Figure 57: Cobblestones Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Very Good
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Excellent
Sitting Area	Good
Ball Field	Very Good
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Excellent
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	Good
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Good



Clayhole Lake Greenspace

Address: 1200 Tuckahoe Place
Classification: Other (Water Body)
Status: Owned

Of all the properties belonging to the Town of Munster's Parks and Recreation Department, Clayhole Lake Greenspace carries the most potential for recreational development.

Access into the site is obscure and uninviting. Currently, it is a narrow path coming from the northeast end of the lake near one of the newer residential developments on Tuckahoe Place. There is a berm that runs along Tuckahoe Place, discouraging use of the nearby lake; no formal entrance exists currently. Situated just south of the existing railroad tracks, it is limited in its access to residents north of the site.

The vegetation is dense, and moderately represented with invasive species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. The quality of the water, at first glance, is moderately low given its murky appearance. Fishing here is not promoted, currently. Neither is swimming, boating, or ice skating.



Figure 58: Clayhole Lake Greenspace

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Poor
Pedestrian Access	Poor
Internal Access	Poor
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	N/A
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	N/A
Landscaping	Poor
Paths/Trails	Poor
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	N/A
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Poor



Community Park

Address: 8601 Calumet Ave

Classification: Community

Status: Owned

Community Park is a 49.7 acre community park located at 8601 Calumet Avenue. It is a large and very active rectangular site that is accessed from Calumet Avenue from the west and Fisher Street from the south. It is located just west of the Munster High School and Wilbur Wright Middle School, creating a large public campus feel. Lion's Club Drive is an inner roadway that runs parallel to both Calumet Avenue and Fisher Street on the west and south sides of the site, accessing internal parking lots and amenities. The Calumet Avenue street frontage between the internal drive features a Boy Scout office and facility, the Munster Branch of the Lake County Public Library, and St. Thomas More Weis Center Preschool and Church. There is a mix of multi-family residential, commercial and office space, as well as an arts center to the north side of the park, and a pathway connection to Bieker Woods Park.

Community Park features a variety of active recreation activities. The detailed description below describes these elements from the south side moving north.

The south side of the site along Fisher Street features a large rip rap swale that runs along the street



along both the park and high school street frontage. The south parking lot connects to the internal park drive and the west parking lot as well as the high school parking lot. An asphalt multi-use trail runs along the south side of the park adjacent to the swale with a wood split rail fence on the south swale side. This path connects at the corner of Fisher and Calumet to a trail head on the opposite corner that heads west and south. The path also runs north along Calumet Avenue up to where it exits the site at the corner of Calumet and Fisher Place. The Munster Firefighters Tribute Park is located at the corner of Calumet and Fisher and features a circular brick plaza with a custom logo, seating, a drinking fountain, flag poles, a fire fighter statue, and a series of stone monuments commemorating Munster firefighters. There is no park sign at the Fisher Street parking lot entrance.



Figure 59: Community Park

Munster Community Pool is located on the south end of the site. The pool is a popular summer facility for the community, and features swim lessons, party rentals and lifeguard training as well as open swimming and concessions. The main entry and access for the pool is from the south off of Fisher Street. Additional parking is available on the west side of the site, which can be accessed via the internal drive from Fisher Street or Calumet Avenue. The pool is accessed via the main entrance, where patrons can purchase single day admission or use their season pass. The main attraction is the pool itself, which features a large concrete pool deck with portable seating and several shade umbrellas, zero depth access to play areas in the shallow water area, a diving board, a simple water slide, a large water slide, and a lap pool area. Additional activities include a concession stand with access from both outside and inside the pool fence, lighting, a sand playground area, picnic seating adjacent to the concession stand area, a large shelter, a large grass berm area, and a large circular sand volleyball area.

The south portion of the site around the pool is open lawn space that features soccer fields to the east side and looks to serve some stormwater management functions on the west side. Munster's skate park is located in Community Park adjacent to the Munster Pool on the west side. The skate park features a flat asphalt paved area with modular ramps, including 4 large ramps, 1 small ramp and a metal rail rider. The skate park has its own parking lot which is accessed from the

internal park drive. The parking lot and the skate park are delineated with striping with no other barrier between the skate surface and the parking lot area. A skate themed sculpture is located in this area titled "Tearin' it Up". An electronic marquee sign is located on Calumet Avenue in this area. The sign displays messages about programming activities at the site. A sidewalk along the internal park drive terminates just north of the skate park parking lot entry drive and runs northward towards the Munster Community Park Social Center, which offers a variety of indoor programming throughout the year.

Just north of the Social Center is the main parking lot. This lot is just south of the main park entry from Calumet Avenue, and is adjacent to walks to the pool, skate park, social center, a large park shelter, concession stand and two of the south ballfields. A detention pond is situated at this location on the east side of the park. A decorative plaza is just north of the main parking lot at the terminus of the main park entry which identifies the entrance into the park. It is comprised of lighted brick pillars, concrete and brick paver hardscape, decorative landscape, planted urns, stone balustrades and up-lighting.

A smaller parking lot just north of the main entry allows for easy access to the Community Park playground area. There are two main playground areas that feature poured-in-place rubber surfacing. The one closer to the parking lot is an age 5-12 play area with a modular structure, a net climber and other freestanding play elements. There



is seating around the play area and a bike rack plaza to the east side of this play area. The play surfacing has areas that seem to have settled, causing an uneven play surface. The second playground area is deeper in the park and features an elevated ramped modular structure that seems to be designed for ages 2-12, a swing area, and play panels with a musical theme. The play equipment is generally in good condition, with some typical wear on the plastic elements and the poured in place surfacing. The play equipment and site look to be ADA accessible.

The primary programming for the Community Park site is baseball and softball. There are six baseball fields, including two 90-foot diamonds, three 60- to 70- foot diamonds, and one smaller 50-foot diamond. There are four softball fields with 60-foot skinned infields to the south part of the ballfield complex. There are five main buildings; concession, restroom, and press box brick buildings located strategically to cover each of these fields. All the fields feature dugouts with full fencing and low walls, benches, bat-racks, bleacher seating, and full backstop. The line and outfield fencing is black vinyl. There are 3 sets of batting cages - 1 in each segment of softball, Little League, and Babe Ruth. There is also a smaller parking lot located at the north side of the site to allow for closer parking for the north ballfields. The ballfields are very well maintained and are in good condition.



Community Park is a large and very active park. The amenities and facilities seem to be in good condition, showing normal wear that is expected for such a popular destination.



Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	Good
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	Excellent
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Very Good
Ball Field	Good
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	Good
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Excellent



Evergreen Park

Address: 8840 Manor Ave

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Evergreen Park is a .5 acre neighborhood park located at 8840 Manor Ave. It is a “pie-shaped” wedge where Timrick Drive and Manor Avenue meet. It is located in a quiet residential area with residential streets on two sides and backyards on the third. The park features both active and passive uses, with the active hardscape area on the north end abutting two residences and the passive open space area at the south end. The park is conveniently located adjacent near the bike path on the south end.

The park’s sign is at the southern point of the site, appears to be newer and in good condition. However, there is large utility bank located just behind the sign that is largely unscreened and causes visual clutter. The existing evergreens would have been better left unlimbed as they would have camouflaged the equipment more. There is no parking lot for the park; however there is plenty of on-street parking on both Timrick Drive and Manor Ave. There are concrete sidewalks along both streets that meet at the southern end of the site and split to allow crossing for both streets. The walks are accessible and are in good condition.



The south end of the park is predominantly open space with lawn and widely spaced trees. There are no furnishings located there, except for 1 picnic table. Toward the north end of the park there was a half-sized basketball court that has been converted to other court games including hopscotch-foursquare / tic-tac-toe play court. The hardscape surface is in poor condition in areas and would most likely need resurfacing in its entirety.

There is an asphalt path that crosses the park from Manor Avenue’s sidewalk to the walk on Timrick Drive. Adjacent to this walk there is a concrete pad and bike rack toward the center of the site. The simple u-shaped bike racks are in fair condition, with slightly rusty metal. At the east end of the asphalt path is a dog waste station and a plastic tub in good condition. The use of the plastic tub is undetermined.



Figure 60: Evergreen Park

The passive areas on the site have a generous amount of open space with lawn and some mature trees. There is plenty of shade for the park overall and a healthy mix of tree species throughout. The ornamental landscaping of ornamental trees, shrubs and perennials is lacking however. The park looks like it is maintained fairly well and has fair curb appeal to the neighborhood. Overall, this park is not inviting and inspiring.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Fair
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	Good
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Poor
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	Poor
Maintenance	Good



F.H. Hammond Park

Address: 1101 Franklin Parkway

Classification: Community

Status: Owned

F. H. Hammond Park is an approximately 12.2 acre site adjacent to Frank Hammond Elementary School. The school parking is available to park users during non-school times. The school uses its own playground and basketball courts.

F. H. Hammond features supplemental parking off-street along Oriole Drive. A running track surrounds an active court area comprised of tennis, volleyball, and pickleball. The infield of the track also includes an active playground area for pre-teens. The playground area loose fiber fill surface is contained by above ground plastic curbing. The curb breaks to permit access from the adjacent asphalt pathway. The raised curb creates issues with maintenance of adjacent turf. The access point may not meet ADA access requirements. The play apparatus appears to be in fair condition, however, it is faded and worn. Some components are peeling paint and rusting, and it may be reaching its useful-life.

The tennis court surfaces are in poor to fair condition. Surface shows evidence of standing water and mildew. Vegetation is planted as backdrops on the north and south end of the courts. The plantings



along the south side are too close to the surface and can drop litter and debris onto the court surface.

The existing running track surface appears in fair to good condition, with striping visible.

The ballfields have limestone screening infields which are relatively easy to manage and care for during the baseball/softball season. The backstops are limited to behind home plate with no foul line fencing present. Seasonal equipment storage boxes are located behind backstops. The south field (foul balls down the right field line) may conflict with the north field. A tree overhanging north field may create issues for players and fly balls on

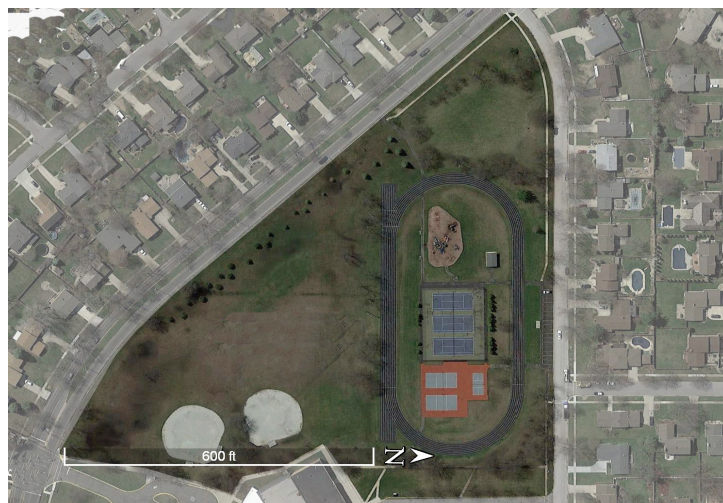


Figure 61: F.H. Hammond Park

the left side of the infield. The south field has spectator seating on both sides of the field, while the north field has spectator seating only on the first base side. There are no accessible routes to either ball field or the spectator areas from the public walk or school parking.

Many trees have been damaged by string trimmers. A single drinking fountain is located between the playground and the active court area. The fountain is not ADA accessible or compliant. The park includes a small open air shelter inside the running track. The perimeter walk is incomplete along Fran-lin Parkway.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Poor
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Fair



Grove Park

Address: 8201 Tapper Ave

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Grove Park is a 5.5 acre neighborhood park located at 8201 Tapper Avenue. It is a rectangular-shaped park on the Northeast corner of Tapper and Ridgeway Avenues. It is located just north of the Munster Police Department and Munster Town Hall. There are homes on the east and west boundaries of the park with South Side Christian Preschool to the north. The park features both active and passive uses.

The park's sign is located on the west side of the park along Tapper Avenue and appears to be newer and in good condition. There is an off street parking lot for the park located on Ridgeway Avenue with 21 spaces. There are no accessible ADA spaces and none of these spaces have backstops or curbing. There are concrete sidewalks along Tapper Avenue that connect to asphalt paving that runs adjacent to the play area. The walks are accessible and are in good condition. Another asphalt walk connects the Ridgeway Avenue sidewalk with the full basketball court. There are two hoops in good shape; no fencing around the court, and no lights. To the south of the court is another hardscape area with an undetermined purpose. It may have been a former court, but there is no striping on it to designate an obvious purpose. There is a "mutt mitt" dog waste station in between the parking and this court as well as plastic tub trash receptacle in good condition.



There are 3 tennis courts surrounded with vinyl chain-link fencing all around. The courts are in good condition with some ponding marks. To the north of the tennis courts is the softball field. There is a ballfield galvanized backstop (some rust and wear) with 2 spectator bleachers (metal, 15 x 5 rows with no fence but backed by wood timbers). The infield is limestone screening. There are neither field lights nor dugouts. To the east of the ballfield is a large soccer field (they may double as a football field) oriented north-south. One soccer goal was present.

To the west of the ballfield is a non ADA compliant drinking fountain and concrete pad for 3 u-shaped metal bike racks in good condition. The asphalt path connects these elements to the reservable open shelter structure



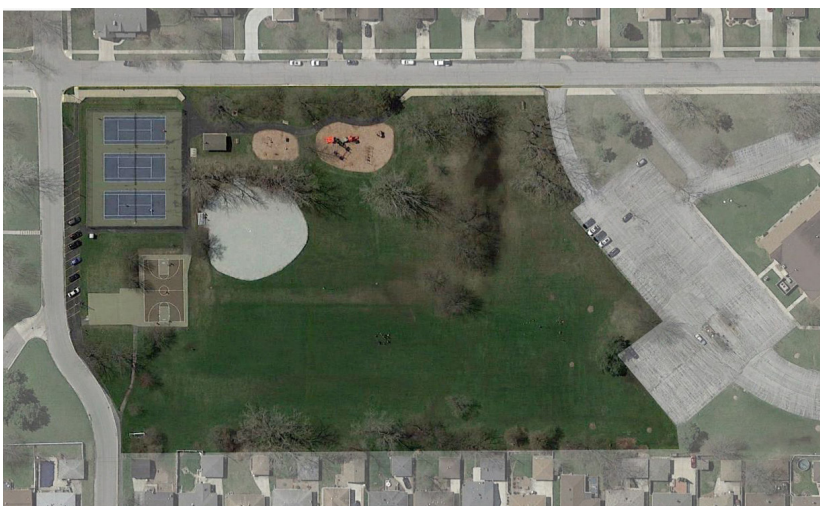
Figure 62: Grove Park

(capacity ~ 40 persons with picnic tables). Adjacent to the shelter is the park sign with minimal landscaping. North of the sign is a memorial to Corporal Robert Grove and flagpole, which surrounded by pavers.

In the north, the asphalt path leads to the two play areas. There is an ages 2-5 and an ages 5-12 area. They are integrated pieces of equipment, not accessible with wood borders and EWF surfacing. The structures are a mixture of Landscape Structures and Gametime. There is a swing set with 2 buckets and spring toys. The play area has plenty of shade from mature trees and two benches along the path on concrete pads.

The passive area to the north as well as the east half of the park (where the soccer field is located) has a generous amount of open space, with lawn and several mature trees. The park is maintained well and has very good curb appeal.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Excellent
Internal Access	Excellent
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Excellent
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Very Good
Sitting Area	Excellent
Ball Field	Good
Soccer Field	Good
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Very Good



Heritage Park

Address: 1154 Ridge Road

Classification: Community

Status: Owned

Heritage Park is a community park and is home to the Kaske House and the Munster Historical Society (MHS). The total site is approximately 10.8 total acres of which approximately 2-acres is programmed. The programming includes a gazebo, historical windmill, and the historical Kaske House that serves as the home for the Munster Historical Society. The MHS manages the house and provides a number of public service events as well as private engagements and functions.

The condition and operation of the house was not included as part of the site inventory.

The MHS offers the site for rentals such as weddings, as well as conducts several public service events throughout the year. Access to the site is via a brick paved drive from Columbia Avenue. The access is narrow and visibility into and out of the site is difficult. Site capacity is severely restricted by parking.

The site is home to a gazebo that is used for wedding ceremonies and bridal party photography. The gazebo is accessed via a nicely crafted ramp, but may not meet ADA accessibility requirements given it is across the



inaccessible lawn. The back of the house is cluttered with “modern maintenance appurtenances”.

There is a connection from the gazebo to a short loop trail winding through the adjacent woodlands returning to the open space south of the gazebo.

Southwest of the house is a meditation walkway with benches and statuary along the path. The wooded path is in reasonable condition but likely not considered as ADA accessible due to boulders restricting access to the path, path materials, and the slope/gradient.

A historic windmill is located on the site southeast of



Figure 63: Heritage Park

the house. The windmill was originally manufactured in Colorado, was put in service in Jasper County Indiana, and later donated to the Munster Parks and Recreation Department. The windmill was relocated to the present site in 2001.

Parking on-site is limited, with ingress/egress difficult due to size of parking surface. Vehicles have difficulty exiting once in the site. Additional parking is available through an agreement with the adjacent Church.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Fair
Internal Access	Good
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Very Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Very Good
Paths/Trails	Fair
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Fair



John Friend Park

Address: 9931 Lands End

Classification: Mini

Status: Owned

John Friend Park is located in one of the newer residential areas in Munster; the southwest region. It is nestled in a corner with houses adjacent on each side and across the streets.

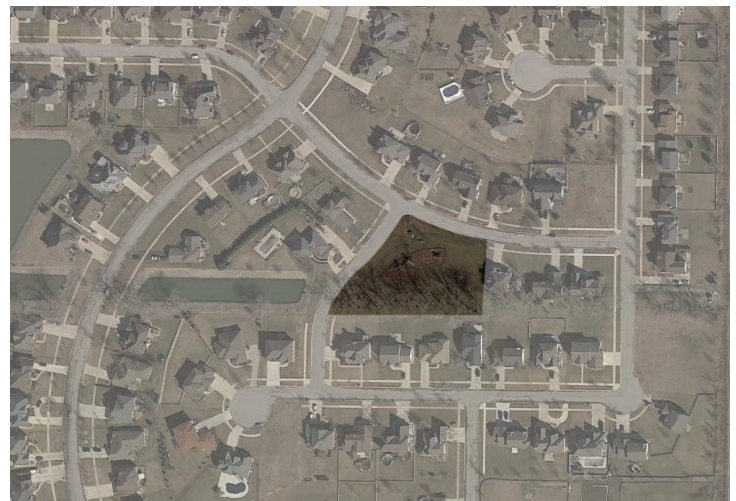
This park features new play equipment, EWF as surfacing, a picnic bench, a park bench, a bike rack, a waste bin, two belt swings, and two separate bucket swings. There are a row of maturing trees to the south edge of the park, with an effect of partial screening the homes to the south. The infrastructure was such that the path is of asphalt, the play surfacing is engineered wood fiber, and the curbing of the play area is plastic, and the entry into the play area is ADA compliant.

Certain elements to the park require adjustment and/or upgrade. During the site visit, the picnic bench was situated in the middle of an entry path. The waste bin is outdated, as is the park bench in the play area. With the exception of the trees to the south, there is a lack of landscaping throughout the site.



Figure 64: John Friend Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Very Good
Playground	Excellent
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Good



Kiwanis Park

Address: 213 Timrick Drive

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Kiwanis Park is a .52 acre neighborhood park located at 213 Timrick Drive and is a “pie-shaped” wedge where Timrick and Meadow Lane meet. It is surrounded on all sides by a quiet residential area. The park features both active and passive uses, with the active playground area toward the south end and the passive open space area at the north end abutting two residences.

The park’s sign is at the southern point of the site, and appears to be newer and in good condition. There is no parking lot for the park; however there is plenty of on-street parking on both Timrick Drive and Meadow Lane. There are concrete sidewalks along both streets that meet at the southern end of the site and split to allow crossing for both streets. The walks are accessible and are in good condition. A concrete pad and bike rack are located in the middle of the site on the Meadow Lane side. The bike rack is a very simple u-shape metal rack in fair condition with some rust. A trash receptacle is also located on this pad. It is an inexpensive plastic tub in good condition.

The play area equipment is for ages 5-12, looks relatively new (replaced in 2017) and is in very good condition. It is Playcraft Systems. It has integrated pieces and is not accessible. The surface of the play area



is EWF with a wood play area border. Next to the play equipment are swings: 2 buckets and 2 belts and are in good condition. White plastic composite split-rail fence on both sides of the play area has mold stains and is not in great condition. The fencing effectively defines two spaces. A swing bench located on a concrete pad adjacent to the play area is in fair condition. The swing provides great sight lines of the play area. A drinking fountain is located where both sidewalks terminate and is in good physical condition but is not ADA accessible. Two picnic tables located in the lawn areas adjacent to the play area are also in good condition.

The passive area to the north end has a generous amount of open space with lawn and some mature trees. There is plenty of shade for the park overall and a



Figure 65: Kiwanis Park

healthy mix of tree species throughout. The ornamental landscaping is lacking however, and there are no planting beds of shrubs, perennials or groundcovers on the site. The park looks like it is maintained fairly well and has very nice curb appeal to the neighborhood.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Excellent
Internal Access	Good
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	Very Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Very Good



Figure 66: Manor Ave. Greenspace/ Monon Park

Manor Ave. Greenspace/Monon Park

Address: 8200 Manor Ave

Classification: Mini

Status: Owned

The Manor Avenue Greenspace is approximately 3.2-acres and located at the northwest corner of Ridge Road and Manor Avenue, behind the Citgo gas station. The site was formerly 16-single family residences that were purchased by the Town of Munster and razed between 2013 and 2015. The site is nearly 1,000 ft from north to south while only ± 140 -ft deep. The site has some mature trees throughout, as well as parkway trees along Manor Avenue.

There are some areas of the site with remnants of the building foundations still visible.



Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Poor
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	N/A
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Poor
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Poor
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Fair



Figure 67: Monon Trailhead

Monon Trailhead

Address: 410 Ridge Rd

Classification: Mini

Status: Owned?

The Monon Trail Head and Fountain is located on the southeast corner of Ridge Road and Manor Avenue. The site features an overhead shade trellis, fountain, drinking fountain, memorial brick plaza. It serves as a trail head for the Monon Trail which is a former railroad right-of-way. The trail is part of the northwest Indiana regional trail network currently. In the future, it will connect to a trail network in Illinois and continue south to a spur of the Pennsy Path and the Burnham Greenway. The trail would parallel the proposed right-of-way of the West Lake Line of the NICTD South Shore Line extension toward Lowell, Indiana.

The site is in excellent condition and sets the standard for the Munster Parks and Recreation Department's site furnishing. The site furnishings are in good condition, the fountain is the centerpiece of the trailhead. The site is ADA accessible and provides ADA accessible drinking fountain. The drinking fountain color is inconsistent with other site furnishings.

The fountain mechanical systems are hidden behind landscape beds. The electrical panel and systems are exposed and visible.

Bicycle racks similar to other racks within the park system, but inconsistent with site furnishings at this site.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Very Good
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Poor
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Fair



Orchard Park

Address: 8807 White Oak Ave

Classification: Mini

Status: Owned

Orchard Park is a ½ - acre park located at 8807 White Oak Avenue in the shadow of a Town of Munster water tower. The site provides passive recreational opportunities to sit and reflect. It is on the northeast corner of White Oak Drive and Fisher Street. The sign is located at the southwest corner of the site and is visible by northbound traffic on White Oak. The sign is not clearly visible by vehicles travelling in most other directions.

The site has scattered benches and picnic tables that are in various states of deterioration. The benches are distributed throughout the lawn areas which makes them not ADA accessible. Their locations also complicates maintenance activities as mowing and trimming must occur around the bench supports. The site also has a bike rack along Fisher Street.

There is an existing bocce ball court on the east side of the site that has been abandoned. The site does not appear to be very heavily used as there is little or no signs of wear under the existing benches and tables.

Several newly planted trees have memorial plaques associated with them.



Figure 68: Orchard Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Poor
Pedestrian Access	Fair
Internal Access	Poor
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	N/A
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Good



Redbud Open Space

Address: 1150 Parkside Drive

Classification: Other (Open Green Space)

Status: Owned

The Redbud Open space is a 3.2-acre greenspace with mature cottonwoods situated next to the Penny Path, nearby Centennial Park.

This greenspace offers exclusively well-shaded open play. However, the location itself serves as a gateway into the Penny Path and Centennial Park for residents to its east.

There is also a waste disposal bin and a bag dispenser for walker's with dogs. The path is in good condition. There are many opportunities to expand on the services this park can offer, given its size and open areas.



Figure 69: Redbud Open Space

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	N/A
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	N/A
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Fair



River's Edge Disc Golf

Address: 1 River Drive
Classification: Special Use
Status: Owned

River's Edge Disc Golf Park is a 4.1 acre wooded park located at 1 River Drive along the Little Calumet River just west of Homan Avenue and north of the 94/80 Tollway. The park features a disc golf course and open space.

There is a standard park sign at the Homan Avenue corner that identifies the park site. The park contains many mature trees and a naturalized, if a bit overgrown, shoreline. There is another wood sign and some off street gravel parking at the west end of the park site along with a picnic table and waste receptacle. This location features hole #1 of the disc golf course. The tee boxes feature rubber mats to reduce wear, while the disc hole stands are simply set in the turf or landscape. The course meanders north into a more wooded and natural section of the park where it looks as if some additional holes have been added by residents that are not part of the official course and may not all be on park property. The sign in this location has been modified to note hole 2 "a, b, c, and d" and hole 3. This area has some interesting brick and block and wood patio and seating elements and a lot of grade change leading back into a more wooded landscape. The course then doubles back out along the river to



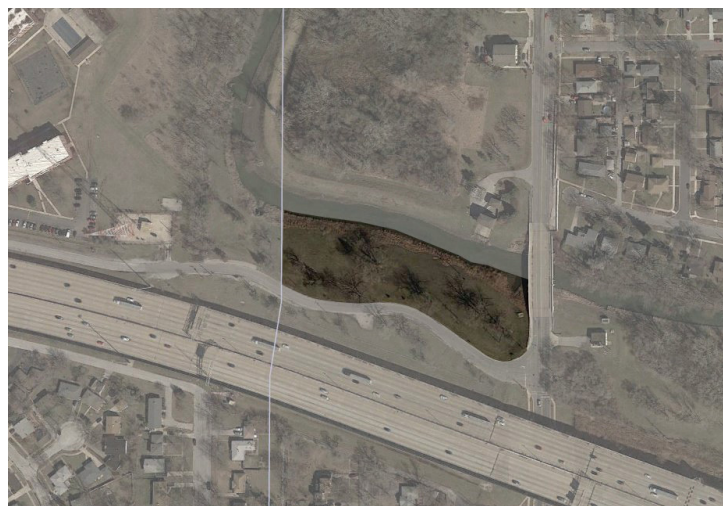
the far east end of the site and then loops back towards the west end with hole #9 as the final hole back at the southwest corner of the site. The site slopes down from the road to the river so that the course has quite a bit of grade change while maintaining open view sheds.

The park site is across the road from a large barrier wall to the 94/88 tollway and the highway noise is noticeable and constant. Despite this, the site has a very natural character. There are no other specific programmed recreational uses.



Figure 70: River's Edge Disc Golf

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	Fair
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	N/A
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Good



Rotary Park

Address: 1054 Ridge Road

Classification: Mini

Status: Owned

Rotary Park is a .2 - acre mini-park located at 1051 Ridge Road on the northwest corner of Columbia Avenue and Ridge Road. It is situated between 2 residences kitty-corner from Heritage Park. Rotary Park features only passive activity.

The park's sign is located in the center of the park in a raised landscape bed. The retaining wall is a segmented block wall in varying heights. The sign is roughly 30 years old and is chipping. It is scheduled for replacement. There is a small plaque in front of the sign commemorating the bicentennial.

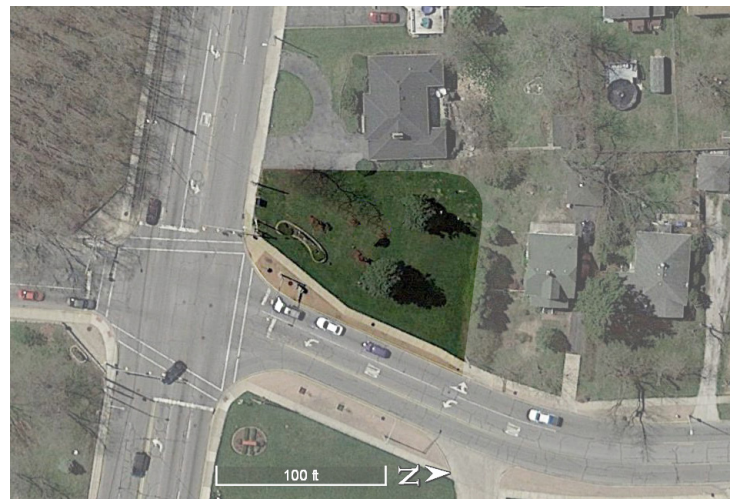
The park is predominantly green space of lawn with a few trees and 3 large metal sculptures. The sculptures are approximately 12-14' tall and are in good condition. There are light fixtures that uplight the sculptures and trees. A paver plaza in front of the Rotary Park (approx. 830 sq. ft.) leads up to the corner where the 2 sidewalks along Ridge and Columbia meet. There is a crosswalk signal there and the curbs are accessible.

The park has good curb appeal and appears to be well maintained. The landscape in the raised bed would benefit from enhancement with more attractive and diverse species.



Figure 71: Rotary Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	N/A
Playground	N/A
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	N/A
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Poor
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	N/A
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	N/A
Maintenance	Very Good



Stewart Park

Address: 1600 Franklin Parkway

Classification: Community

Status: Owned

Stewart Park is an approximately 6-acre site located at the southeast corner of Fran-lin Parkway and White Oak Avenue. The site is open space utilized for soccer. There is off-street parking with multiple access drives off White Oak Avenue on the west side of the site.

The playground is for ages 2-12 with an Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) surface contained by plastic above ground curbs. The west side of the playground touches the parking lot asphalt to provide access to the playground. The playground includes a bench and large tree.

A small pre-engineered shelter with a solar powered severe weather warning system is located adjacent to the parking lot. Nearby is a landscape planting of Arborvitae that screens a possible portable restroom site.

There is a beehive drainage grate in the middle of an open turf area. This could be a potential obstacle. A concrete pad is located south of the parking area, possibly the remnant of a small shelter.



The parking lot is accessed from White Oak Avenue via curb cuts in the middle of the lot and at the south end of the lot. It appears ingress and egress geometry is inadequate for the turning movements of entering and exiting vehicles. Islands are rutted and damaged by vehicles. The north end of parking lot is a dead end. If no spaces are available, turning around is difficult and potentially causes traffic congestion and conflicts. The parking lot is in need of sealcoating and striping. Parking stalls are delineated by wheel stops which could be damaged or displaced during plowing and winter maintenance.



Figure 72: Stewart Park

Soccer goals are stored along tree line near the creek. According to the Indiana Floodplain Information Portal, Stewart Park is not within the floodplain of the adjacent Hart Ditch. The floodplain is restricted to the stream channel and adjacent banks. Existing trees show damage from string trimmers. Additionally, several trees had guy wires and were staked.

Site furnishings do not match other parks. The playground was replaced in 2018. Play surface containment is black plastic ties that restrict access into play area. The containment ties add to trimming times and maintenance efforts. There appears to be significantly underutilized play surface areas that increase maintenance costs/ construction costs with little to no additional play value.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Fair
Pedestrian Access	Fair
Internal Access	Fair
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Fair
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	N/A
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Good
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Good



Sunnyside Park

Address: 7800 Hohman Ave

Classification: Mini

Status: Owned

Sunnyside Park is a 1.2 acre mini park located at 7800 Hohman Avenue. It is a rectangular-shaped park aligned north-south along the west side of Hohman Avenue. It is surrounded by residential with homes on three sides: the north, west (across an alley) and south sides and with houses across the median-lined street of Hohman Avenue to the east. The park features both active and passive uses. There are a couple mature specimen street trees in the parkway along Hohman.

The park's sign is located on the east side of the park in the middle of the site perpendicular, to the traffic along Hohman Avenue. The sign appears to be newer and in very good condition. Other informational signs are placed in this area at different times of the year due to the high visibility from Hohman Avenue. The rest of the eastern half of Sunnyside Park is passive and has a generous amount of open space with lawn and some mature trees. However, the ornamental landscaping is lacking. There are no planting beds of shrubs and perennials around the park sign. There are only a couple ornamental trees adjacent to the sign.

There is on-street parking only for the park located on Hohman Avenue. There is a concrete sidewalk along Hohman Avenue running north-south. This sidewalk



connects to an asphalt path north and south ends, forming a figure 8 through the site around the creative play areas and gazebo. The asphalt looks relatively new and is in good condition. There is one bench (in poor condition) on a concrete slab adjacent to the path. The location of the south connecting path should be relocated to align with the cross-walk at Hohman Avenue.

The large play area has a 5-12 integrated play apparatus, a swing set with 2 belt seats, a net climbing structure and other play features sporadically located on EWF (Engineered Wood Fiber) surfacing with wood borders. The equipment is in good condition. The play area is not accessible nor shaded.

The reservable gazebo structure is situated between



Figure 73: Sunnyside Park

the north and south play areas on a concrete pad and is in good condition. It has a 20 person capacity, with a picnic table underneath the shelter which would be inadequate for 20 people. To the west of the shelter is a concrete pad with 2 u-shaped metal bike racks and a plastic trash receptacle; all in good condition. West of the bike racks is a standard Munster drinking fountain on a small concrete pad which is not ADA accessible.

To the north of the shelter is the smaller play area for ages 2-5. There is 1 integrated play apparatus, 1 swing set with 2 bucket seats, and several other play pieces. The surface is EWF as well with wood borders. All the equipment is in good condition. The area is not accessible and there is limited shade at the site.

The passive landscape areas surrounding the play areas between the asphalt path and adjacent alley has a fair amount of open space with lawn and some mature trees. The ornamental landscaping is lacking however, and there are only the couple of ornamental trees adjacent to the park sign. The park is maintained fairly well and adds very nice curb appeal to the neighborhood.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Good
Pedestrian Access	Good
Internal Access	Good
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Very Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Fair
Paths/Trails	N/A
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Very Good
Site Furnishings	Good
Maintenance	Good



Twin Creek Park

Address: 9747 Twin Creek Blvd

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

Twin Creek Park is a 5-acre neighborhood park that is on the west side of Hart Ditch and is connected by a bridge to White Oak park on the east of the creek. It has an open green space with a field backstop. It recently added limestone screenings to the northeast. There are no spectator furnishings for this area.

At the time of inventory in November 2017, the remainder of the park was partitioned into separate zones for different uses: swings, 2-12 play, hardcourt basketball and foursquare, and a shelter. There is a layout of paths that connect all of these zones to a centralized location holding the shelter, and also connects a path that follows the entire perimeter of the park. It would not be advisable to design parks this way in today's time, because all areas are notably distant from each, and a disconnection exists. This doesn't accommodate families with children both under the age of 5 and between the ages of 5-12.

In addition to being very spatially distant, much of the park's accessories at the time of inventory were dated, such as the play equipment, water fountain, hardcourt surfacing, waste bins, and benches. Much of this has since been updated, including the play apparatus, waste bins, and benches.



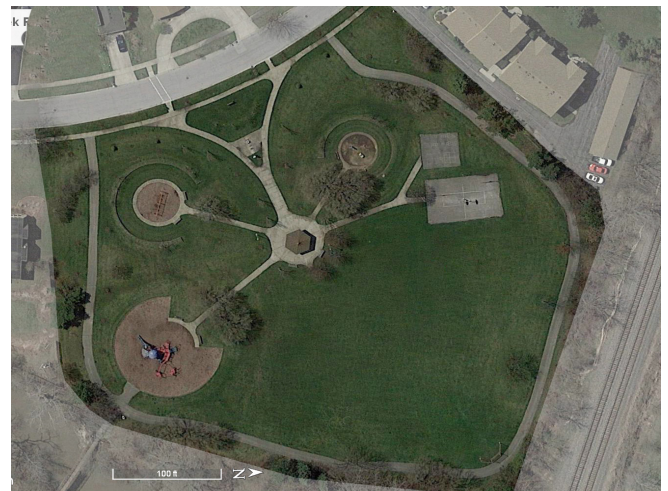
The landscaping has no major issues, although there are several young, dead trees. The concrete within the shelter area is cracking, and on the asphalt path near the backstop, there's a mature tree whose roots have upended the surface. This could cause hazards for people with strollers, wheelchairs, rollerblades, bicycles, or limited mobility.

In 2018 the primary play equipment was replaced and the infield for the ballfield was installed as limestone screenings.



Figure 74: Twin Creek Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Excellent
Pedestrian Access	Excellent
Internal Access	Fair
Playground	Very Good
Sand Play	Poor
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Good
Sitting Area	Fair
Ball Field	Fair
Soccer Field	N/A
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Very Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Excellent
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Fair



West Lakes Park

Address: 9700 Margo Lane

Classification: Community

Status: Owned

West Lakes Parks is a 23.7 acre community park mainly used for open space athletics, such as soccer. It also includes spaces for half-court basketball, volleyball, and tennis.

For visitors accessing from the north, there is no clear marking by a park sign currently is present when entering from the North. Parking spaces are plentiful, split into 2 large wings, although it's difficult where ADA spaces are intended to be located. There are two roundabouts within the parking lot and a narrow planting island in the middle of each large wing.

West Lakes Park has a very clear layout, utilizing a streambank to separate the large open space on the north portion from the slightly smaller open space on the south portion. The north portion includes open space for numerous soccer fields, a hard surface volleyball court, a half basketball court, and the aforementioned parking lot. The south portion holds two tennis courts, a shelter, and a combined age group creative play area. There are two bridges in the park that connect the south and north.

The play apparatus is dated, showing signs of red discoloration. It has wood fiber surfacing with plastic



logs serving as the creative play area border. The drinking fountain is in poor shape and not ADA accessible. An existing sound talk tube, directly buried in the ground, has bee's nests within the concave exposed ends. Each swing is isolated from one another in this play area, as well.

The hard court surfacing is in need of repair, particularly on the volleyball and tennis spaces where cracks, holes, and puddling are present. The path network connects users to all parts of the park and is well laid out. Some asphalt deterioration, particularly around the corners of the existing bridges, presents a hazard. Amenities such as benches and bike racks are in suitable condition, although bench pads could be more accommodating to comply with accessibility standards and users with



Figure 75: West Lakes Park

mobility limitations.

Landscaping overall is very good, as there is noticeable attention given towards the parking lot planting islands and streambanks. There is minimal screening between the park and the railroad tracks, leaving clear views to the park's eastern boundary. The south end has a narrow east-west oriented detention pond that attracts geese and has rip-rap along the edges.

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Very Good
Internal Access	Excellent
Playground	Good
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Very Good
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	Excellent
Sitting Area	Excellent
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	Very Good
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Excellent
Landscaping	Very Good
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	N/A
Site Furnishings	Fair
Maintenance	Good



White Oak Park

Address: 9700 White Oak Ave

Classification: Neighborhood

Status: Owned

White Oak Park is a 10.4 acre neighborhood park south of 45th street and west of White Oak Avenue. It has an open green space large enough to comfortably fit a soccer field, with a well-conditioned asphalt path around the green space's perimeter.

To the southeast corner of the park, there is a parking lot of over 100 stalls with 5 accessible spaces. This relatively larger number is consistent with the picnic shelter west of the parking lot, and has a capacity of roughly 260 people (although no specific number is defined on any existing shelter sign).

To the east of the shelter are 3 pickleball courts aligned east-west and paved in orange and blue. The condition of these courts is outstanding, perhaps due in part to the relatively new introduction of pickleball by various parks and recreation departments/agencies. To the east of the pickleball courts is a playground area with an apparatus suitable for the 5-12 age group. With colors matching the pickleball court, this apparatus also happens to be a relatively new in installation. Its condition is excellent- it has a stand-alone infant swing and a bucket swing that allows for the parent/guardian to sit and swing along with the child.



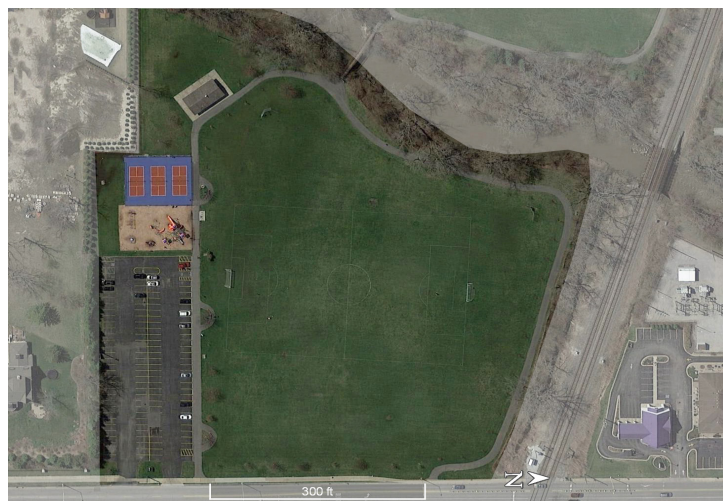
Landscaping is good quality. Fencing along the southwest corner is unnecessary and unsafe due to spear-like ornamental features along the top margins. It's possible, however, that this fencing is privately owned. The concrete surfacing of the shelter is sunken along the boundary, and it can pose as a tripping hazard. Along the path, there are dead trees in need of replacement within the circle nodes. Waste bins do not meet desired standards, as well. There is safety lighting at this park which requires additional evaluation.

To the east boundary of the park, there is a community of mature trees along the Hart Ditch and a bridge that crosses over the neighboring park, Twin Creek.



Figure 76: White Oak Park

Conditions Assessment	
Curb Appeal	Very Good
Pedestrian Access	Excellent
Internal Access	Excellent
Playground	Excellent
Sand Play	N/A
Shelter	Excellent
Toilets	N/A
Basketball Courts	N/A
Sitting Area	Very Good
Ball Field	N/A
Soccer Field	Good
Athletic Turf	N/A
Lawns	Good
Landscaping	Good
Paths/Trails	Good
Parking	N/A
Park Sign	Excellent
Site Furnishings	Very Good
Maintenance	Fair





Chapter 12

Sustainability



Sustainability

Parks and Recreation Departments are increasingly finding pressure to provide services and maintain their facilities more sustainably for the well-being of their community and the environment. The first step for a Parks Department to adopt a sustainability plan and/or policies would be the formation of a “Green Team” or “Sustainability Team” to establish strong goals and should be part of the Parks Department’s operational decision making process.

In addition, the Team should research utilizing resources that outline environmental initiatives or green practices and can help identify areas for further assessment that impacts the Parks Department, such as energy efficiency improvements.

The Parks and Rec Department should develop an environmental policy focused on the core elements of purchasing, use of resources, energy, waste management, and planning and management.

Another tool for sustainable practices is the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™), which is “a program based on the understanding that land is a crucial component of the built environment and can be planned, designed, developed, and maintained to protect and enhance the benefits we derive from healthy functioning landscapes (ecosystem services). Sustainable landscapes create ecologically resilient communities better able to withstand and recover from episodic floods, droughts, wildfires, and other catastrophic events. They benefit the environment, property owners, and local and regional communities and economies.” (Sustainable Sites Initiative, 2015)

Sustainable Focus Areas

The following is a list of sustainable practices, which use low impact design strategies that can be implemented throughout Munster.



Materials & Recycling

Materials come from natural resources that have been extracted, manufactured, or processed for human use. Once residents have the options to act responsibly with their materials and waste, they likely will. This can improve the environment and the local economy with potential new jobs. The following policies could be adopted, if not already, by Munster Parks and Recreation:

- Hosting recycling events for the community, such as holiday lights, hazardous waste, electronics, drug prescriptions, etc.
- Expand recycling opportunities in the parks with a priority to shelter and picnic areas, as well as active sports fields. Incorporate recycling disposals alongside all standard trash receptacles. This includes a commitment for Munster to manage removals in a timely manner.
- Incorporate recycling educational signage in parks and prepare education notices for the sports affiliates each year.
- Incorporate sustainable/green purchasing language into vendor contracts and specifications.
- Review material management: including the complete lifecycle of materials from manufacturing to purchasing to disposal. This includes selecting products that can be recycled or reused rather than disposed of in a landfill.
- Purchase locally or regionally produced materials and plants. Use a set of guidelines such as EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) or GreenSeal.org.
- Use vegetation and reflective materials to reduce the urban heat island and minimize effects on microclimate and on human and wildlife habitat.
- Use low VOC furnishings and paints and low-toxicity cleaning products.

Transportation

To significantly reduce the amount of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions generated each day, the Parks Department should consider implementing:

- Opportunities for improving alternative options, including transit, biking and walking.
- Review bike rack locations at all park sites.
- Update fleet and equipment to include alternative fuel and/or hybrid vehicles. This can be done as part of a Capital Asset Replacement Program strategy.

Energy

Energy conservation is reducing energy consumption through using less of an energy service. Below is a list of ways to reduce the Parks Department's energy consumption and be more energy efficient.

- Purchase Energy Star rated appliances.
- Review the Parks Department's current air filters and convert to MERV 8 rating or better to improve indoor air quality for patrons/ staff and extend the useful life of HVAC systems.
- If new buildings are proposed, they should be sited with an east-west axis, where practicable, to optimize passive solar design and include the use of broad roof overhangs to block midday summer sun.
- Review current heating and cooling systems for energy- efficiency.
- Implement a staff policy to turn off printers, computers, and scanners at night and on weekends.
- Explore solar energy or other renewable energy options both for heating water and providing electricity.

Field/Turf Management

One of the quickest, more affordable and potentially more noticeable practices is how a Parks Department manages one of its largest commodities, turf.

- Make a policy of reducing petroleum based turf chemicals.
- Consider alternative turf applications such as Bio-Solids and Bio-Char for turf fertilization and soil improvements.
- Develop a policy and maintenance schedule that eliminates all lawn waste from being removed from the site.
- Institute a composting program for any waste and lawn clippings produced by the Park Department.
- Institute a policy to further reduce weed control spraying on less active fields and fields that are not in active use seasons to only spot/selective applications.
- Promote pollinator plantings in the park's landscape programs.

Educational

In addition to being a leader in sustainability, Munster could offer programs focused on environmental education and lifestyle choices.

Programs the Town could offer may include:

- Community gardening
- Water conservation
- Greening your home
- Native plant material
- Pollinator planting
- Composting

Water

Water is a limited resource that is essential to all life, and sustainable landscapes are those that reduce water use, improve infiltration and filtration, and promote healthy rivers and lakes.

The following policies could be adopted by the Parks and Recreation Department to conserve and protect our Earth's hydrological functions:

- Reduce imperviousness through the use of permeable pavements.
- Continue to offer a rain barrel program for residents so they are able to disconnect their downspouts from the storm system and reuse the rain water on site.
- Maintain natural drainage courses, and mimic natural systems for stormwater quality control.
- Reduce use of storm pipe for stormwater management.
- Use native plants, and implement natural area restoration and management.
- Avoid development and disturbance near streams and wetlands, and on sites with high risk of flooding.
- Use Green Infrastructure practices such as; rain gardens, constructed wetlands, green roofs, and bioswales, to capture and slowly infiltrate water into the soil or groundwater.

Landscape Architectural Design

The various projects in park design or park redesign have both small and large impacts on the environment. The following guidelines in any landscape architecture project within Munster could be adopted by the Parks and Recreation Department to reduce environmental disruption:

- Improve Tree Diversity by inventorying existing tree species throughout all parks and then planning to introduce less represented tree species. When adding new trees throughout Munster's parks, abide to a ratio of 20:10:5 (no more than: 20% of the same family, 10% of the same genus, and 5% of the same species) to avoid pests and diseases
- Be aware of the selection of materials in all construction projects. Source locally, incorporate composting programs for future soil, substitute carbon-intensive materials for salvaged materials, and utilize reclaimed wood whenever possible.
- Replace outdated park drinking fountains with models that have bottle filling stands. This will reduce wasteful plastic bottles and drive up local demand for reusable bottles.
- Promote conservation of natural areas by requiring impact assessments in development that would potentially disrupt natural habitat for wildlife and native vegetation. Maintain high standards for environmental conservation efforts for developers of open space.
- Refrain from any planting of species deemed invasive by Indiana's DNR
- Although parks operate during daylight hours, some lighting fixtures are present on various sites. Investigate renewable energy practices that can be integrated in the parks to power various existing infrastructure, when possible. The goal should be for 100% renewable energy in Munster's Parks. In other words, harvest the natural forces of wind, water, solar, and geothermal.

Summary

Munster's environmental policy will confirm the town's commitment to leadership and sound use of the town's and its resident's resources in a responsible manner.



Chapter 13

Recommendations



Recommendations Summary

Needs Analysis

As discussed in the introduction, the Comprehensive Park Master Plan will serve as a guide and a tool for shaping the future of Munster Parks and Recreation. The Plan creates a strategy to maximize the quality of life through identifying the community's needs, prioritize improvements to the parks, recreation facilities, open space; and allocate funding effectively. This Plan will serve as a guide for the public to conceive and define future direction for Munster Parks and Recreation, and used as a tool by the Department staff to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Plan.

Individual site-based assessments and inventories were conducted by our planning team on all parks to determine diversity of facilities, distribution patterns, maintenance practices, age, condition and compliance with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As part of the Plan, numerous recommendations have been developed as a result of these site-based assessments, park land inventories and facility assessments. Additionally, recommendations WERE developed as a result of the analyses of programs, meetings/interviews with staff and interested public. After completing site visits and inventories, recommendations were made based upon the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) guidelines for service areas and community needs, staff responses, public input and trends.

The recommendations are not all-inclusive; however, alternatives are suggested that range from conservative to optimistic relative to funding. In the overall assessment, Munster Parks and Recreation is providing excellent services based on results from the focus groups and community wide survey. The recommendations that follow represent areas where the Department can improve and strengthen its services, operations, programs, and facilities. Based upon these recommendations, the Department should annually review goals and objectives and establish priorities to assess progress, while establishing new goals and objectives. In addition, the Capital Improvement Program and the Recommendations/Implementation should be reviewed, evaluated, and updated annually.

Along with the individual park assessments' associated recommendations, the following categories each have their own list of recommendations.

Community-Wide Survey Findings	
Recreation/ Programming	
Volunteering	
Marketing	
Work Place	
Parks/Open Space Sustainability	
Bike Paths	
Other Recreational Open Space	
Land Acquisition	

Community-Wide Survey Findings



Public Participation was extensive throughout the process of this Master Plan. In addition to in-person group feedback on current sentiments of the Parks and Recreation Department, a mail-in, community wide survey and online program collected more information volunteered by the public.

The following recommendation is built off the public participation events during the time of this report's production.

- **Develop a strategy to collect feedback data that supports expressed desire for capital improvement and improvements to programs and activities.**
This will support new project initiatives by the Parks and Recreation Department. Forming a partnership with any data collection and management service that focuses on participatory input would likely accomplish this goal.
- **Expand engagement with younger residents (ideally between 13 and 30 years of age) when collecting public feedback.**
This could be done through efficient and intelligent means of communication. An efficient means is offering end-of-program evaluations for the youth who participate in them. In addition to the tangible feedback from those evaluations, an intelligent means to communicate with the youth is through social media campaigns. Experiment with incentives to participate (such as entering participants in a drawing for something free or significantly discounted) in the beginning trials on social media. Determine if this increases feedback, and if it does, continue with the trend as long as it gathers useful information.

Understanding the Community-Wide Survey

A survey questionnaire was prepared based on input from the Town Recreation Department staff and the planning team. The questions were intended to gather input from the community on their feelings, attitudes, and interest for various park and recreation activities and facilities.

The questionnaire was mailed to 2,000 random households within the Town of Munster. Three hundred sixty-six usable surveys were returned for analysis.

The survey questionnaire requested demographic information relative to age, gender, location of residence within Munster, household size and other salient categories.

Most of the respondents 118/392 resided in the geographical area between Ridge Road and 45th Street east of Calumet Avenue. The lowest percentage of respondents 20/392 resided in the area south of 45th Street west of Calumet Avenue.

When asked what was most important for the Parks and Recreation Department to plan for in the next 5-10 years. The top five areas by region were: maintaining existing parks/facilities; improving trails/paths within parks; ADA accessibility in parks; improving restrooms in parks; and acquiring land/green space.

The least important areas for consideration were improving the skate park; improving Centennial Park dog park; and improving Centennial Park golf course.

When asked if they would support future funding for the areas they rated as important or very important the responses were 67% yes or maybe while only 22% were not sure or no.

Community-Wide Survey Findings, cont.



Program Satisfaction

When asked their level of satisfaction with a variety of Department's activities, respondents indicated overall they were most satisfied with youth sports and community events/special events and least satisfied with aquatics and adult sports. When the respondents were separated into various age categories <45, 45-54; 55-64 and >65 the satisfaction levels changed with the <45 age group most satisfied with adult +50 (keenager) programs, continuing education and youth education. The 45-54 age group was most satisfied with trips and travel; the 55-64 age group liked summer camps and community events/special events and the >65 age group favored youth sports and community events/special events.

Based on this fairly diverse response, it is recommended the Munster Parks and Recreation Department staff dig deeper into the survey results to identify the why are the individuals satisfied or not satisfied with various programs. Additionally, this information may be collected or analyzed by "exit interviews" or end of program evaluations.

Park Visitation

Residents were also asked how frequently they used various parks within the Town of Munster. As would be expected parks in close proximity to the resident were used more frequently than park sites located at other areas of the Town. There was no attempt to correlate activities within parks to the frequency of park visitation.

There may be value for the Parks and Recreation Department to dig deeper into the frequency response to determine if there is any particular activity or group of activities that would attract residents to a particular park. It is important to recognize the "if you build it they will come" syndrome and verify the park or facility has the infrastructure and resource to accommodate an increased user demand or participation.



Figure 77: Collection of various comments/key words from focus groups

Community-Wide Survey Findings, cont.



Program Offerings

Residents were asked to identify their preference for weekday or weekend recreation programs. There was no clear cut preference for weekday or weekend, most indicated either was acceptable. Additionally, there was no clear cut preference by age group other than the >65 preferred weekday programs. As far as time of day, the preference across all age groups was a 5pm – 7pm time slot. Again the >65 age group identified 10am – 2pm as most desirable and the after 7pm time slot as the least desirable.

Understanding why individuals do not participate in activities is as important as why they participate. The residents were asked the reasons they or members of their households do not use Munster parks, programs and facilities more often. It was expected, the number one reason across all age groups was not enough time, followed very closely by times don't fit schedule. There is virtually nothing practical the MPRD can do to create more time for an individual. However, there are opportunities to address the "don't fit schedule". These may be as simple as correlating available time with program offerings, to short courses or programs that are more sensitive to residents' available time blocks. The golf industry is working towards targeting players with limited time by developing strategies such as 3-hole, 6-hole, and 9-hole loops to best fit times. The MPRD should evaluate programs to see if there are opportunities to break them into smaller increments or components so time slots can be more easily managed.

Alternative Program Offerings

Residents were also asked to identify alternative organizations where they go to obtain their recreation programs. The number one response across all

Alternative Program Offerings, cont.

age groups is "private fitness facility". The MPRD should evaluate existing private fitness facility to assess their programs, facilities, fee structures to determine possible additions or modifications to the Department's facilities to either capture a higher percentage of the market place or be more equal to the competition.

Information Delivery

Information delivery is important to the success of the Department's programs and activities. Understanding how the residents get their information about the Department's offerings and how satisfied they are with the vehicle where they are receiving their information is also important.

The seasonal program brochure was the leading source of information across all age groups, with banners in parks a distant second for source. Once the source of information is identified the question was how satisfied were they with the source of information. On a scale of 5 to 1 with 5 being very satisfied and 1 not at all satisfied, the residents were very satisfied with the seasonal program brochure, followed by the mailers/flyers and the banners in parks. The residents generally had above average satisfaction with all sources of information across all age groups. The 45-54 and >65 age groups were least satisfied (3.4 of 5.0) with e-blasts.

The level of satisfaction may improve over time as more individuals become proficient with computers, email, and the internet. The MPRD may consider programs to encourage and promote the use of electronic communication, e-blasts, and use of various social media platforms.

Community-Wide Survey Findings, cont.



Aquatics

Understanding where residents go for their aquatic recreation can help the Department understand the local swimming and aquatic market. Overall over the last 2-years just over one-third of the respondents utilized public beaches while just under one-third identified the Munster Community Pool as to where they have gone for aquatic facilities.

Why didn't they go?

When reviewing why residents didn't use the Munster Community Pool in the last 2 years, the number one reason was "other" which meant some reason other than either price or no time to go. As they were the next two ranked answers. The <45 age group identified "too expensive" as the reason they did not go to the Munster Community Pool. The MPRD should conduct a competitive analysis of surrounding aquatic facilities to identify the competition, their offerings, and their fee and rate structure in order to assess where the Munster Community Pool ranks among the competition. The study can serve as the basis for developing strategies for becoming more competitive in either facilities, fees and pricing or both.

Satisfaction with Pool Facilities

The residents that used the Munster Community Pool were asked their satisfaction with various pool offerings. Overall the residents were most satisfied with safety, followed closely by lifeguard/management staff and least satisfied with "Backyard Grill" and fees. The <45 age group was least satisfied with "Backyard Grill" which could be related to either menu options, value, or costs or a combination of all three. The MPRD should consider a more in-depth study to determine why this particular age group is not satisfied with the "Backyard Grill".

Satisfaction with Pool Facilities, cont.

All age groups ranked cleanliness/maintenance; hours, locker rooms/bathhouse as just below average. The cleanliness and maintenance as well as hours of operation may be a function of available staffing. While the locker rooms/bathhouse are a physical facility and may need further review. The MPRD recently completed a locker room repainting and freshening which may address the relative dissatisfaction with the locker room and bath house.

Other Findings from Public Engagement

- Nobody who participated was under 25 years old
- Centennial Park was the most used park, followed by Community Park and F Hammond Park
- The community parks of West Lakes, Heritage, and Stewart are all used by less than 30% of Munster
- River's Edge Disc Golf is used by less than 20% of Munster
- There is a high demand, noted from in-person group sessions, for stronger presence of a Farmer's Market

Recreation and Programming



Innovative attempts at updating Munster's recreational program offerings will always have potential to elevate the Department's success. However, this potential can be only maximized when all other recommendations are explored. Program recommendations for this Master Plan are focused on expanding the existing program structure to continue to implement additional revenue streams and programs which may not be provided. The Department's long-range vision is to construct a Community Center facility to house current and expanding programs and indoor recreation activities to maintain a self-sustaining facility. The cost to implement program recommendations will vary depending on the extent of the new programs offered, staffing levels, and it may be possible that program modifications can be implemented at no costs, except for additional promotion costs related to letting the residents know of the program offerings.

- **Evaluate the Community Survey results** to determine specialized program/facility needs and requests that will lead to new and expanded programs that will appeal to a cross-section of current and future residents of diverse age, gender and ability.
- **Conduct ongoing participant user surveys** to assess and evaluate existing programs and identify recreation trends and continually monitor the viability of existing programs
- **Identify standards for macro and micro level evaluations.** Reviewing program offerings, both comprehensively and individually, can result in valuable information for the Parks and Recreation Department. By establishing clear standards, the Department can use the evaluations as a reference to benchmark performances
- **Increase program participation** by developing quantitative methods for determining community and participant need.
- **Meet the Community's demand for recreation program and services.** Based on survey data, let the desire for programming opportunities drive the renovation and repair of existing facilities, and design and construction of any future new facilities i.e. Community Center facility.
- **Continue to expand the variety of programs,** including educational, recreational and fitness, which allow participation by family groups.
- **Schedule programs to meet the needs of the Department's working public** – Create flexible program scheduling that will meet the lifestyle needs of more Department residents, including evening and weekend programming that will attract working adults.
- **Expand the number of community-wide special events at Centennial Park** – increase sponsorship participation to fund events. Create a new annual sponsorship manual listing all opportunities for the year and distribute within the community in a menu format that creates a sense of urgency within the business community. Develop a Cooperative Community Events Calendar to eliminate multiple events planned for the same day to provide for greater participation.
- **Expand and improve the local farmer's market** as a community event for the entire family. Increase attendance and participation by developing quantitative methods for determining community needs and interest.

Recreation and Programming



- **Expand Senior activities and programs** to include quality day trips and excursions as well as promote expanded interest and use of the Department's facilities and amenities.
- **Continue to work with other recreation providers** such as the City of Hammond and Dyer, Indiana's Recreation Departments in developing and increasing the quality of programs offered and discount consideration.
- **Continue coordinating program offerings with area schools** as appropriate to broaden recreation, education, athletic and fitness opportunities.

New Facility Recommendation

Based on input gained from Department staff and the results from the Community Survey, an indoor recreation space, i.e. Community Center, would be beneficial to the Department and Town at large. While residents and staff expressed a strong desire to have a Community Center facility, the Department should make a go/no-go decision based on a careful evaluation of the long-term costs associated with building and operating a community center. Estimated costs for community center facilities depend on final design, amenities, etc. Therefore, the need for a Comprehensive Community Center Feasibility Study is necessary. It is highly recommended that a financial feasibility study be performed. Additionally, before the Department commits to the renovation or construction of a new community recreation center, extensive public input including surveys, focus groups, and development of a facility amenities list should be conducted. Due to the cost of a new facility, the more diversified the expected users, the more useful the facility will be for the community.

New Facility Recommendation, cont.

If constructed, a community center facility will meet the needs of not only the Town of Munster residents, but also those in surrounding areas.

Key recommendations in determining feasibility of a Community Center are as follows:

- **Investigate the costs associated with the construction** of a new Community Center.
- **Seek community input from stakeholders** to gain input on the needs and support for specific amenities, programs, and facility size. Use this information in conjunction with the public input gained in the Master Planning process.
- **Perform a market analysis** including demographics, trends, comparable facilities within the region, alternative providers, pricing, programming, and amenities.
- **Develop an operational plan, operational cost estimates and pro forma** to determine the operational structure, building use, staffing models, management strategies, hours of operation, programming, contractual service needs, estimated expenses, estimated revenues, pricing and cost recovery models.



Current Munster Social Center, unable to meet demand

Volunteering



Munster Park and Recreation has and will continue to use volunteer labor for a wide variety of special events and programs. Volunteer labor has the advantage of little to no cost to the Department and provides a sense of pride within the Community by having an organized mechanism for interested residents too participate in the events and programs. Given the current full time and part-time staff size within the Department, volunteer labor has been and continues to be a great use for special events and focused activities that require minimal training and oversight.

It is recommended volunteer labor be recognized on a regular basis to maintain continuity of the volunteer labor force. It is recommended that the Department continue to understand the value of the volunteer labor that is being performed and promote the importance of volunteers. Key recommendations are as follows:

- **Increase the visibility and description of volunteer opportunities on the Munster Park Department's web-site.**
This will give the volunteer program a greater presence and appeal.
- **Continue to utilize volunteers to assist with special events, select recreation programs and general park maintenance activities**
This will reduce operation costs for the Parks and Recreation Department, develop personal connections between the community and volunteers, and sustain the programs and events that are appreciated by the public. Engage schools, organizations and church groups to assist in volunteering following each special event, program, or activity. This will offer a sense of collective ownership for the volunteers, shared with the Department.

- **Promote teen and youth volunteer efforts**
Recruiting Munster Parks and Recreation Departments awareness campaign in schools and youth organizations.
- **Provide volunteers with training**
Match their areas of activity to ensure that volunteer activities meet the quality and philosophical goals of the Department.
- **Host volunteer opportunities at events in various community parks**
According to the Department's Facebook page, most of the events sponsored by the Department take place at Community and Centennial Park. Other locations may draw in new participants, and offer new activities depending on the park's offerings.

Volunteer Recommendations

- Vendors at concession stands during sporting events, and potential servers at banquet-style events
- Transportation to big events for those without driver's licenses
- Setting up and clearing out spaces before and after special events
- Seasonal clearing out of nondesirable vegetation, a.k.a. invasives, throughout various park sites to reduce maintenance costs and educate the public on environmental stewardship/responsibility

Marketing



Effective marketing is crucial to increasing program participation. Expand marketing staff in which greater collaboration with program staff can be achieved to communicate offerings to the public in a more engaging and clear manner. The following are some key recommendations:

- **Expand marketing Staff** to work closer in conjunction with program staff to provide the most clear information to the residents of Munster
- **Develop advertising of programs** that focuses on filling lesser known programs in addition to the most popular programs to try to limit program cancellation.
- **Develop a regional marketing effort** for programs that are unique to the Department and the Town of Munster.
- **Broaden the utilization of Facebook, Instagram, twitter, and other social networking** to inform residents of Department news and events and encourage participation in programs
- **Increase marketing to non-residents** for participation in recreation programming to fill capacities and increase revenue.
- **Increase marketing and promotional efforts** for the clubhouse restaurant/banquet facility to increase new and repeat customers.

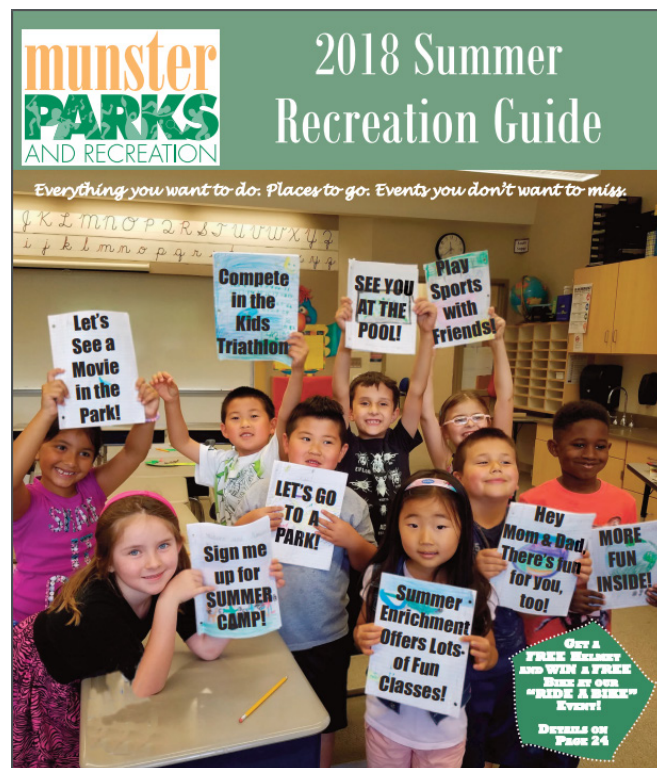


Figure 78: Recent Seasonal Recreation Guide Covers for MPR

Parks/Open Space Sustainability



In the present circumstances of climate change and human-involved environmental disturbances, private and public agencies should expect more frequent natural disasters, more common natural resource and agricultural scarcity, significant human migration from environmentally and politically hostile regions in the world, and greater species disappearance.

Although this reality is severe, there are many attractive opportunities to mitigate the consequences of climate change through sustainable measures. Sustainability is not just a buzz word today- it's an open-ended strategy to improve the environment and the economy so that both are at their most reliable in the long term.

Munster Parks and Recreation values environmental sustainability by making decisions that help protect, maintain, and preserve natural and developed resources. The following bullet points are sample recommendations.

- **Improve Tree Diversity and installation of easy-to-maintain native plants and landscapes**
This is important because it will reduce maintenance costs in both labor and supplies, reduce risks of plant species-specific diseases, and enhance the habitats of critical, local pollinators
- **Incorporate recycling bins alongside standard trash receptacles for park patrons**
Separating waste by materials has been an increasingly common practice for the past few decades. A simple and effective means to improving the trend of recycling in Munster is to provide the option at any location there is an existing trash receptacle.
- **Use long lasting materials in all capital development projects**
This will reduce the frequency of replacing the same materials at the point of deterioration, easing costs on the Department and the environment
- **Replace outdated park drinking fountains with products having bottle filling stands.**
These relatively new-to-market models offer the option for park visitors to fill their own personal water bottles, which can reduce the number of plastic bottles disposed within parks and in landfills.
- **Incorporate rain gardens and wetlands for increased flood control**
The number of vacant properties in the north end of Munster should especially be considered for this approach to flood control, given its proximity to the Little Calumet River
- **Integrate permeable pavings in new development/redevelopment**
This is another measure for flood control, as it reduces runoff from large paved areas. Prioritize the redevelopment of parking lots with permeable paving on the north end, for similar reasons stated above
- **Conserve existing natural areas**
This will retain the rich ecological vibrancy and wildlife habitats within Munster. The dense vegetation also improves the surrounding air quality and can provide a space of tranquility to local residents
- **Eradicate invasive species**
These species pose a threat to the native vegetation that sustain local wildlife; refer to the Indiana DNR: Invasive Plant Species list when determining if a park's landscape is in need of eradicating any vegetation
- **Utilize solar, wind energy when possible**
This will reduce the dependency on resources that are non-renewable and carbon-intensive. In addition to improving air quality, solar and wind energy can also reduce operating costs, long term.

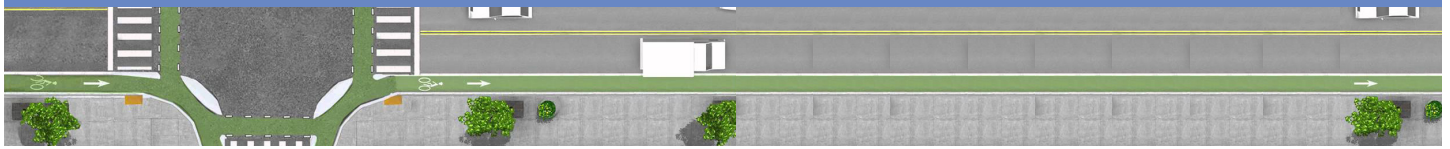
Work Place



The following recommendations are specifically for the Munster Parks and Recreation Department team members, in order to advance the working experiences for everyone.

- **Consider higher quality training and pay for part-time staff**
Current part-time staff will appreciate improvements in training and increases in pay, and it could reasonably project a stronger retention of staff. Furthermore, without high staff turnover, employees might share their positive work experiences with others. This may increase the quality and size of the applicant pool when seeking to fill any vacant positions within the Department.
- **Ensure all staff receives feedback and twice-a-year reviews**
Biannual reviews are common among many public and private enterprises; staff generally aspires to improve their skills. Regular feedback is key to identifying areas of improvement.
- **To improve the area of “disconnect”, arrange quarterly times for maintenance, recreation, and board members to enjoy social times together.**
Quarterly, or seasonally, events that encourage social cohesiveness among all staff in the parks and recreation Department can improve spirits and communal trust. Activities that support team building will strengthen existing connections and cultivate new connections.
- **Continue to work on job descriptions to better align employee tasks and responsibilities.**
Clarity of tasks and responsibilities within any position will generate improved work efficiency and staff confidence in the value of their work. This has both immediate and long-term benefits.

Bike Paths



Trails are one of the most popular recreational amenities for communities to provide for their residents. Bike paths and trails are popular with all ages from children to seniors. Recommendations for Munster's bike paths and trails were designed referencing the 2010 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Munster. The 2018 Master Plan is intended to support and enhance the direction of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendations for Munster's bike paths were designed referencing the 2010 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Munster. The 2018 Master Plan is intended to support and enhance the direction of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. This Plan recommends the Department work in conjunction with the Town to continue expanding bike path and trail access throughout the community. Key recommendations are as follows:

- **Bike Paths and trails should be developed where feasible and should connect to other existing trails** such as the Pennsy Path or NIPSCO trail creating an expanded network of linked trails throughout the community.
- **Reclaim the vacant NW/SE corridor from S. Manor Ave. to W. 45th Street** to offer a new direct connection for the Pennsy Path. Reclamation of this corridor will eliminate the detour-like route down Fisher Street and south on Calumet Ave.
- **Where bike path and trails cross streets, signage and/or marking should be installed** to alert both bike path/trail users and vehicles. Implement safety treatments at these crossings.
- **Address ADA accessibility of existing trails** so that they comply with national guidelines

- **Determine where connections through more urbanized areas of the Town are limited;** sidewalks may double as bike paths and trails.
- **Where possible, coordinate with the Town to develop trailheads for the trail users.** Trailheads should be established at strategic locations along the bike path/trail system.
- **Expand local trail standards/design standards,** particularly within busy corridors



(LED flashing lights on the margins of signage can enhance the visibility of signage when approaching a busy intersection that also serves pedestrians and cyclists)

Bike Paths, cont.

- **Trailhead areas should be of adequate size** to provide space for sheltered picnic areas, signage, public restrooms, water stations and parking facilities for users.
- **Generate a recognizable style of bike path/trail signage throughout Munster.** There is a strong sense of orientation and security when signs consistently indicate the next phase of a trail network. Interpretive maps of the entire Munster bike path/trail network are recommended to be located along the path/trail at regular intervals.
- **Evaluate wayfinding and safety constraints at all proposed and existing intersections/crossings.** Consider retrofitting certain busy intersections for enhanced cyclist protection among vehicular routes (see image on right).
- **Clarify the type of existing bike path**
Is the path shared on the road without separate bike lanes (such as Forest Ave)? Is it shared with the roads but with distinct and separate markings for cyclists (such as Fran-lin Pkwy)? Is it entirely separate from existing vehicular roadways (such as the Pennsy Path or NIPSCO trail). The City of Chicago has implemented a guide for the cyclists' benefit, and it can be replicated in any community that promotes biking, regardless of scale.
- **Investigate trail network tourism opportunities** and partnerships with local tourist attractions to determine if bike routes would improve the local economy
- **Develop a trails and bikeways master plan** that can be clear, reliable and frequently utilized by cyclists in Munster

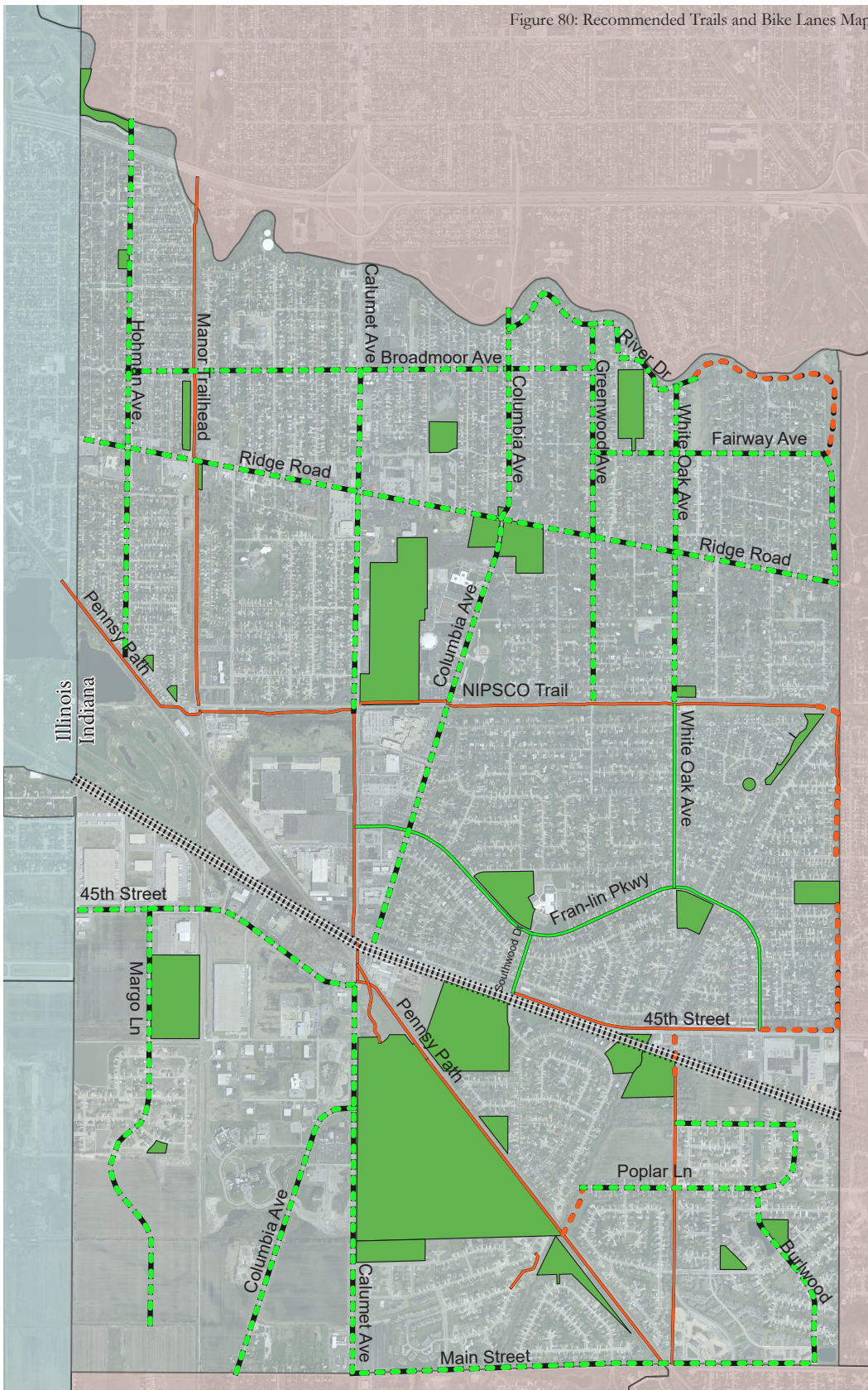


Figure 79: Existing Intersection and a Cyclist-friendly Upgrade Concept

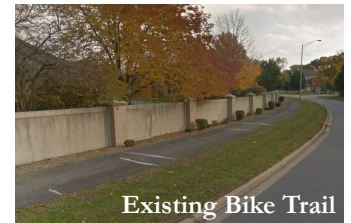
Recall...

Many of the public participation groups said during the in-person sessions that they'd like to see more bike paths throughout Munster, to enhance connection among the existing parks.

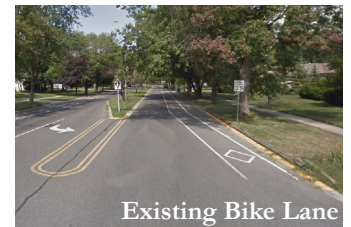
Figure 80: Recommended Trails and Bike Lanes Map



There are two primary transit routes for bicycles in Munster: bike trails and bike lanes.



The *trails* are separated from the roads and clearly marked as paths on which vehicles cannot travel. The Pennsy Path and NIPSCO Trails are the most prominent ones in Munster.



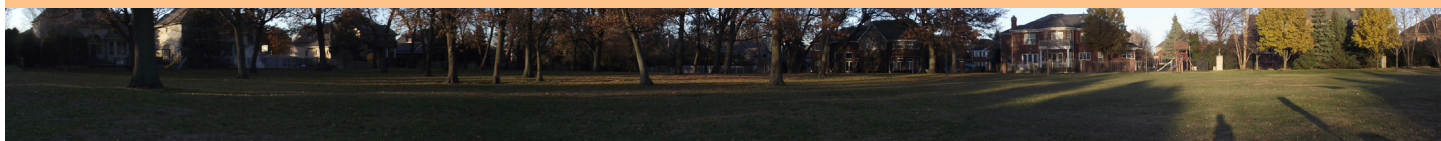
The *lanes* are shared with the existing roadways, and are separated by painted white lines. Often, there are signs that alert drivers of cyclists in advanced, to optimize safety.

Legend

- Existing Bike Lanes
- - - Proposed Bike Lanes
- Existing Bike Paths
- - - Proposed Bike Paths



Park Assessment Recommendations



Park enhancement recommendations are based on the park specific assessments presented in one of the earlier chapters. While the conditions of the parks varied, many similar issues were observed and identified Department-wide. General recommendations are presented as items to be addressed throughout the Town of Munster as a whole. The Plan aims to provide a well-balanced, and efficient parks and recreation system. More detailed individual park recommendations are based on unique issues at each park.

- **Use tree massing as spatial definition.** This is a cost-effective and long-term investment for enhancing the various park sites in Munster is through planting more trees. Beyond the recommendation to increase diversity, there are other benefits to increasing tree presence. These benefits include promoting wildlife habitat, establishing shaded areas, filtering air pollution, and preparing natural overhead structures for the Town's younger generation.
- **Ensure that access to equipment and site elements continues to meet ADA requirements.** This includes whenever site elements and playgrounds are updated.
- **Continue re-inventory of parks and facilities as sites are improved and renovated.** As components are added or taken out of service, perform an inventory and evaluation - at the very least, every 5 years in conjunction with the Department's Master Plan Updates.
- **Prepare site master plans for each individual park site within the Town of Munster.** These Master Plans will identify current uses and the proposed improvements. The plans will form the basis for developing and evaluating implementation strategies and budgeting improvements annually..
- **Embark on a program that utilizes standards** for furnishings, quality materials, enhanced landscaping, improved safety, and wayfinding.
- **Continue replacing site furnishing, playground equipment and other site amenities** on a programmed schedule that will provide regular improvements on a cyclical basis.
- **Replace aging gazebos/shelters** with ones that are updated and architecturally interesting
- **Track recreation trends, demographic changes and changes in local interests** to determine redevelopment needs of park site features and amenities.
- **Install creatively designed unique playgrounds for individual parks.** Incorporate bright colors.
- **Install and maintain mulch rings around deciduous and evergreen trees** to minimize or eliminate the need to trim grass and weeds. Provide protection from string trimmers around tree bases.
- **Entry signage for parks and open spaces in Munster should be consistent in design** to create a "brand" for increased recognition within the community.
- **Replace any faded park entry signs to enhance public perception of the park.** Incorporate updated park signage
- **Develop and enhance gathering areas/social nodes in community parks** to include wi-fi capabilities and consistently themed wayfinding signage for sculptures and focal feature areas

Land Acquisition

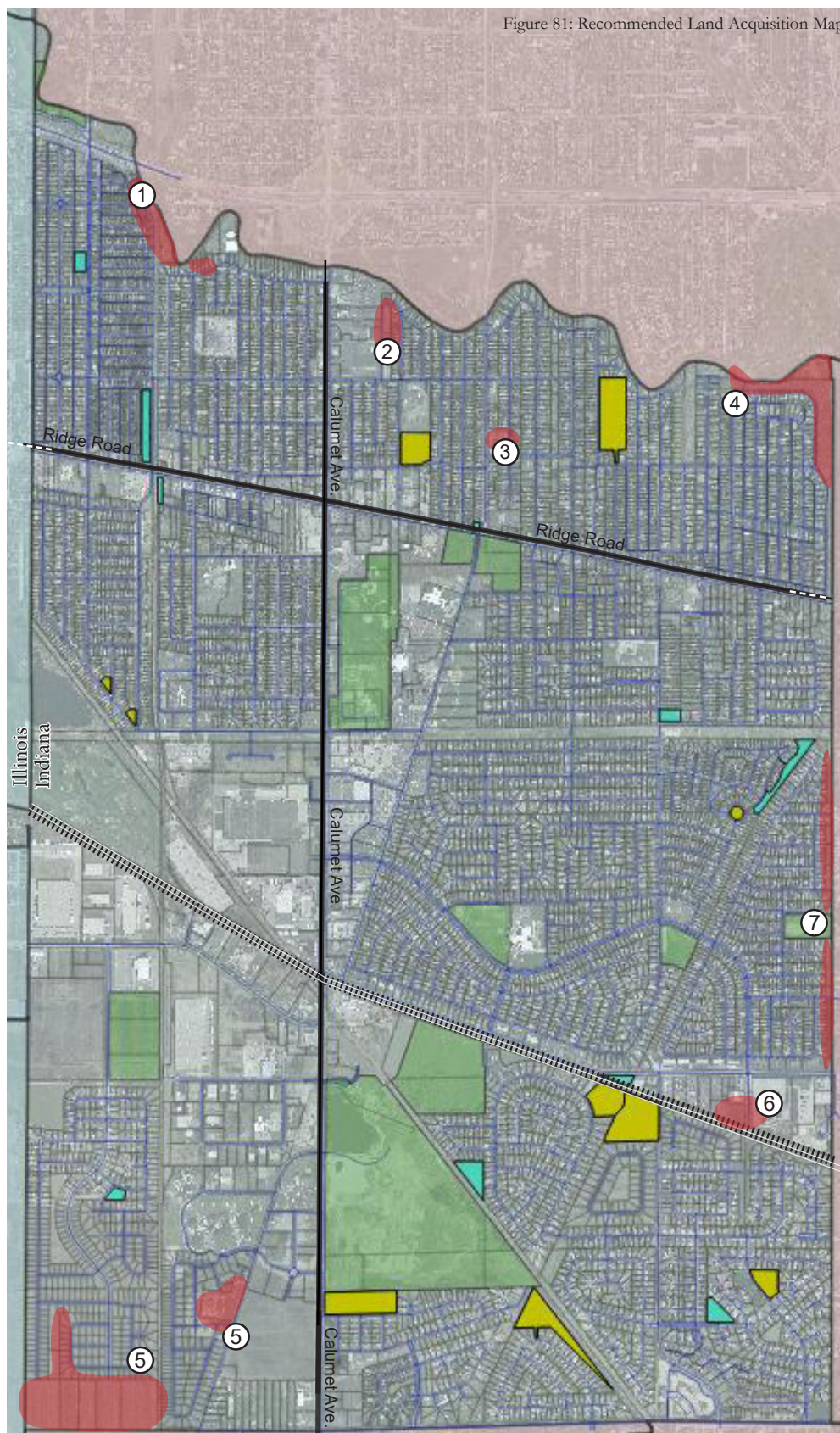


The following recommendations are intended to guide Munster's Parks and Recreation Department on the best ways forward to provide abundant and equitably distributed open space to all of its residents.

- **Work with the town Planning Department to be proactive about land acquisition & site selection for park in new or infill developments.**
Request a formal role in the town development review process.
- **Take advantage of any opportunities to acquire land for additional mini or neighborhood parks.**
This is especially recommended in the east part of "Region 1" and the southeast park of "Region 2" (see map on page 142)
- **Take advantage of any opportunities to acquire land for bike paths throughout the town.**
Some private properties are located on desirable land that offer potential for better regional bike path connection. If any of these properties placed on the market, investigate the feasibility of purchasing the property for enhanced trail connectivity.
- **Create an accessible map of all of the paths within Munster identifying access points and mile markers.**
This will outline the potential throughout Munster for successful land acquisition.

In addition, digitizing the map and offer an interactive feature for smart phone users to track their progress while on the paths. Established GPS software content, such as Google or Waze, would suffice for this level of service.

Figure 81: Recommended Land Acquisition Map



The following areas are identified because they hold open space that, if acquired by Munster, could be specified for local use in, but not limited to, the following ways:

- ① -a dog park
-a set of community garden plots
-a multi-sensory garden.
-a canoe/kayak rental station (if appropriate)
- ② -a set of community garden plots
-a formal seating/resting space
- ③ -a set of community garden plots
-a formal seating/resting space
- ④ -a connective trail
-a dog park
-a set of community garden plots
-a pair of pickleball courts
-a playground
-a canoe/kayak rental station (if appropriate)
- ⑤ -a connective trail
-an entirely new park/playground
-a set of community garden plots
-a dog park
- ⑥ -an entirely new park/playground
-a set of community garden plots
- ⑦ -a connective trail

Legend

- # Open Space Opportunities
- Neighborhood Park
- Mini Park





Area 1

Location: Northwest Munster
Acreage: 3.9 Total
Flood Risk Level: High

General Features:

Broken up into three open spaces; 2 vacant residential properties and 1 moderately vegetative site with a utility building. All properties are adjacent to the Little Calumet River Corridor.



Area 2

Location: North Central Munster

Acreage: 1.1 Acres

Flood Risk Level: High

General Features:

A narrow open space west of Euclid Avenue as well as the commercial region off of Calumet Ave. To the east there are a row of homes, and to the south is a place of worship. To the north, there are also private homes.

Figure 84: Area 3



Area 3

Location: North Central Munster

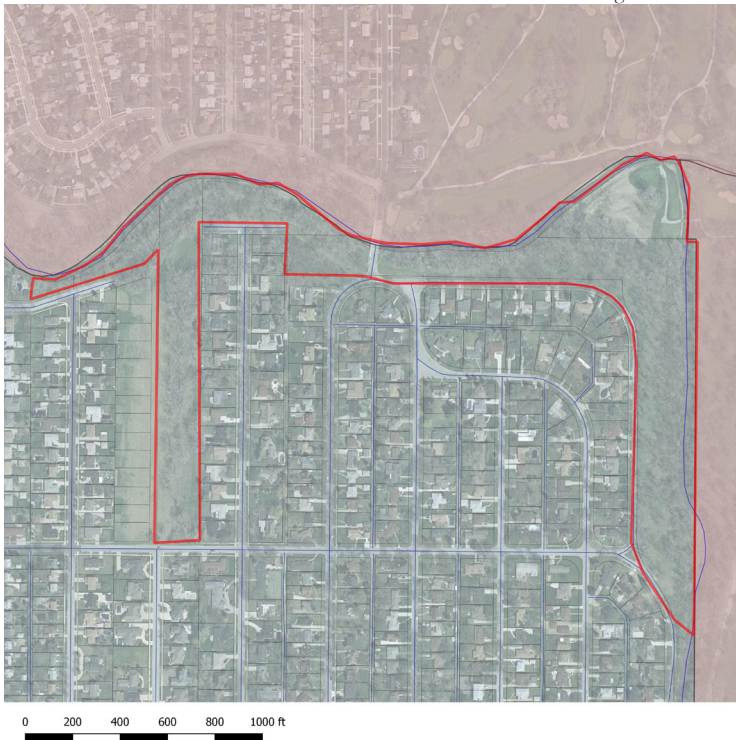
Acreage: .75 acres

Flood Risk Level: High

General Features:

A compact open space with a size that amounts to approximately 4 residential properties. It is nested among many residences and in between two neighborhood parks. As the service group indicated during the public participation process, there is a need for more green space at the north end of Town, so this area should be preserved. It may be owned currently by the Salvation Army, so a partnership between them and the Parks Department could yield beneficial results for the community.

Figure 85: Area 4



Area 4

Location: Northeast Munster

Acreage: 29.3 acres

Flood Risk Level: High

General Features:

This large area is situated at the northeast corner of Munster and features a mixture of riverfront, open turf, and wooded space. There are opportunities to develop the existing bike path network here in order to advance connectivity within Munster (this was mentioned during public participation gatherings by the school group). Additionally, there is a narrow corridor running North-South that has similar potential as the Manor Avenue Greenspace.

Figure 86: Area 5

Area 5

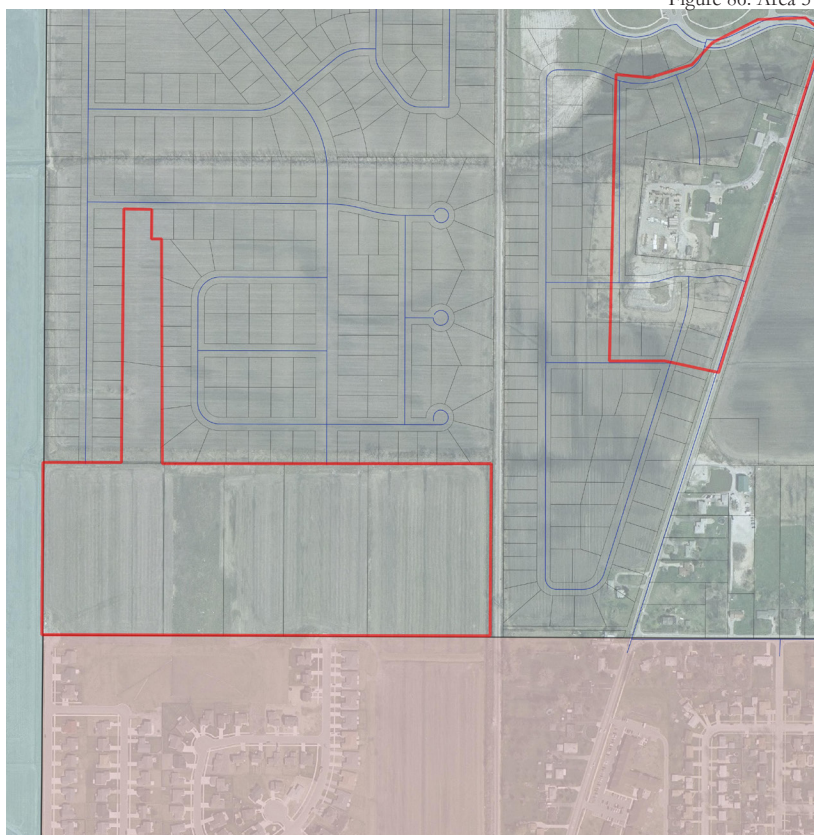
Location: Southwest Munster

Acreage: 62

Flood Risk Level: Low

General Features:

A collection of upcoming residential parcels and general open space. If some land was acquired by the Parks and Recreation Department, this area would have potential for a new, local park for the upcoming residential units.



0 200 400 600 800 1000 ft

Figure 87: Area 6

Area 6

Location: Southeast Munster

Acreage: 3.6 acres

Flood Risk Level: Undetermined

General Features:

This is an abandoned site to the north of the existing railroad tracks, to the east of Fran-Lin Parkway, to the south of an existing shopping center, and to the west of an apartment complex. A park at this location would secure an open space for Munster families who live between two restricting corridors (the tracks to the south and 45th Street to the north) and otherwise have difficulty accessing park space.



0 200 400 600 800 ft

Figure 88: Area 7

Area 7

Location: East Munster

Acreage: 8 acres

Flood Risk Level: Undetermined

General Features:

This strip of open space running north-south is adjacent to the eastern edge of Munster's town boundary. It is located under a chain of tall powerlines similar to the ones running along the NIPSCO trail. This would suggest that there's a precedent to establish a bike/walking path that connects 45th street at the south to Bluebird Park and Bluebird Park to the NIPSCO trail at the north, with suitable planning in advance.

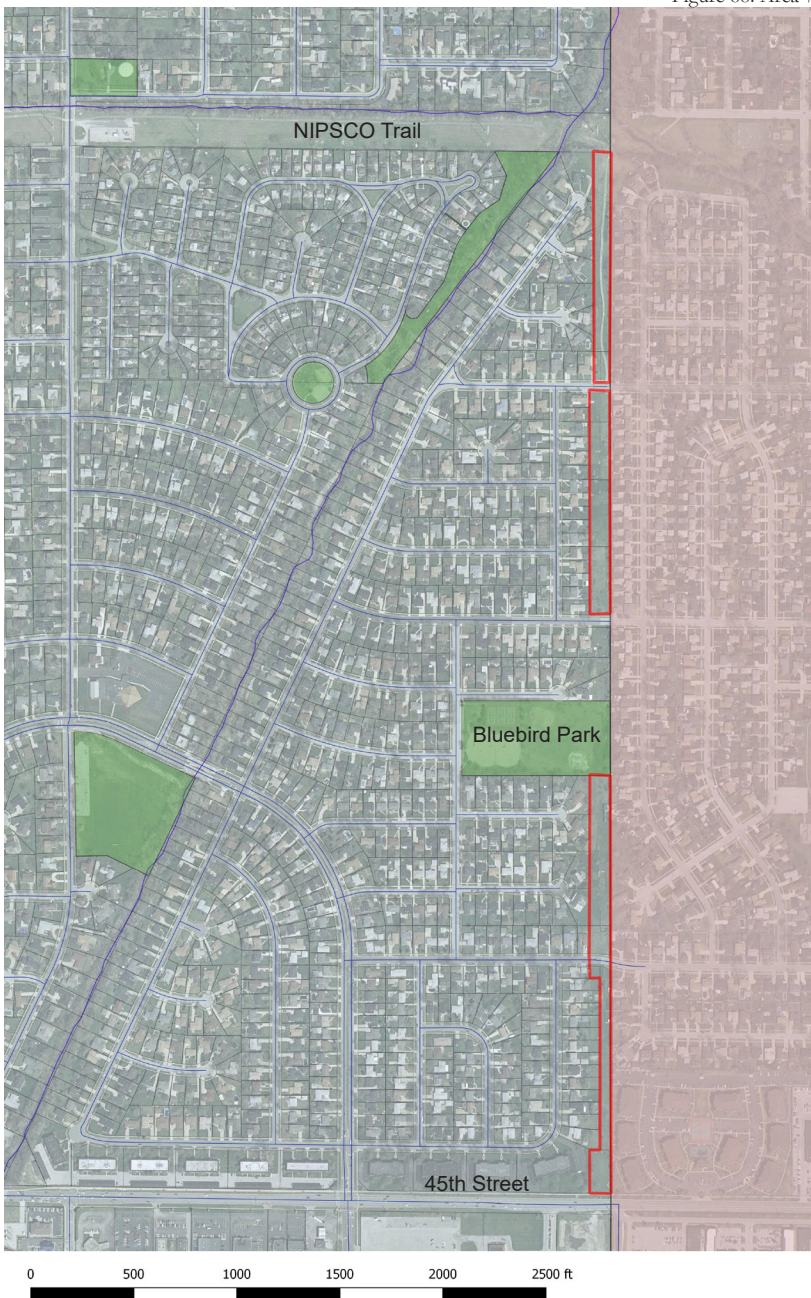
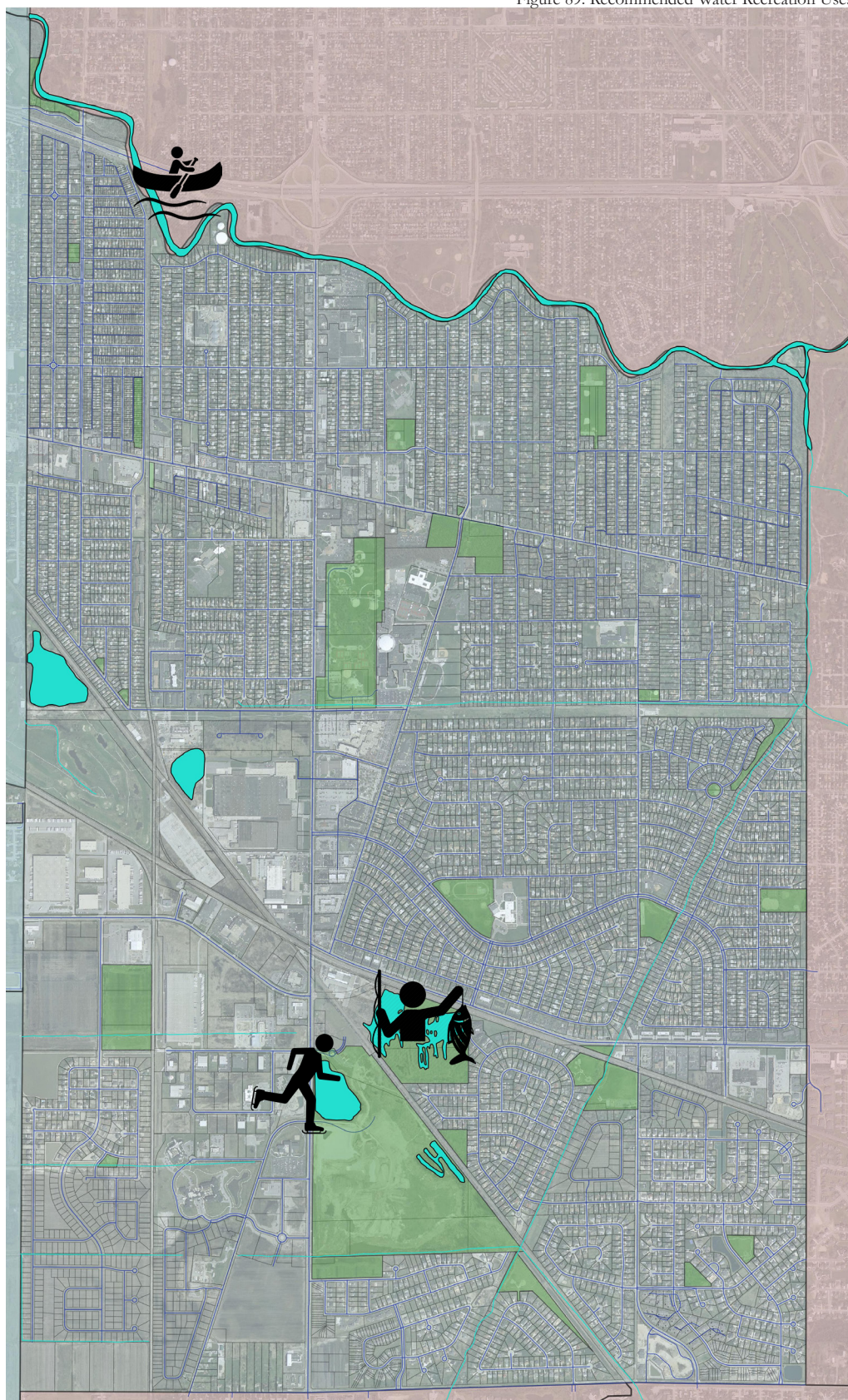


Figure 89: Recommended Water Recreation Uses



Recommended Water Recreation Uses



The Park Board and Town Council, in their in-person group meeting, expressed desire to enhance the Little Calumet River. A canoe launch somewhere in an existing open space on the river would likely be near the River's Edge Disc Golf park or at the northeast open space near the proposed bike trail

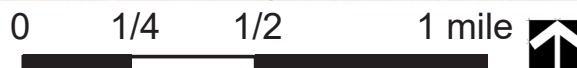


Currently, fishing is permitted at Maynard Lake but not Clayhole Lake. Since more programs are desired by all ages, consider expanding fishing to Clayhole Lake. The Lansing Country Club offers it at their body of water to the northwest, but that is run privately.



It was expressed by the Schools group that ice skating is desired. As a winter activity, it is suitable at Maynard Lake at Centennial Park due to the existing facility nearby to serve as a warming house. If it already is promoted by the Department, consider expanding its appeal by offering vendor opportunities (rentals, hot cocoa, snacks, etc.)

Bodies of Water



Recommended Improvements

Determine if neighborhood support exists for the following improvements:

45th Avenue Greenspace

- Install ornamental tree species along parkway underneath powerlines
- Create a destination for vital pollinators by planting native perennials, trees, and shrubs
- Add a park sign to the site



Beech Park

- Modify the south parking area to one-way, entering on Beech Avenue and exiting on Fair view and provide space along north edge of parking for accessible route.
- Add trail connection to northeast to the Calumet River Trail network. Path will need a bridge to access trail on the north side of the Little Calumet.
- Provide ADA accessible routes to every activity area within the park
- Provide ADA access into the play area by removing the raised plastic curb system or lowering it flush to the existing grade.
- Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations
- Provide accessible route to spectator seating and increase distance from play area.
- Replace spectator seating areas with either lower 3-row seating or 5-row seating with additional barrier protection on sides and back
- Add hardened surface behind backstops at both ballfields to reduce maintenance and improve access.
- Relocate equipment boxes to hardened surface
- Remove excess asphalt near basketball court or repurpose the area to include additional game courts



Bieker Woods

- More clearly define the trail path going through Bieker Woods. Enhance the mulch trail and connectivity to the existing asphalt path that connects the Arts Center with the Middle School.
- Add additional trails west of the asphalt connecting path in the large portion of the wooded areas without trails (note: it appears to not be officially Bieker Woods Park property)
- Update the kiosk and signage at the trailhead and throughout the trail to enhance a 'sense of place' as well as incorporate educational signage, i.e. wildlife education, forestry information etc.



Bluebird Park

- Foul line fencing needed at both fields
- Consider player benches & covered dugout areas for ballfields
- Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations
- Install an accessible connection from the parking lot to the park's perimeter path network



Briar Creek Park

- Provide additional seating for spectators, seniors, and child guardians
- Repaint shelter posts
- Increase amount of engineered wood fiber within creative play area to the recommended depth required by the manufacturer, comply with ADAAG (ADA Accessibility Guidelines) 2010 Standards
- Resurface the court games area, and replace damaged concrete path sections
- Assess condition of water fountain and replace as may be required



Briar Creek Park

Burlwood Park

- Install ample seating space for visitors
- Create new asphalt path with multiple connections to the apparatus area.
- Install larger shade structure to accommodate more park patrons and picnic opportunities
- Additional landscaping—in need of additional shade trees
- Replace drinking fountain with a model that offers an ADA-compliant feature



Burlwood Park

Centennial Park

- Add a park sign at the south parking lot entry from Calumet Avenue
- Repair settling concrete in several areas surrounding the entertainment stage
- Replace any missing stone wall caps around entertainment stage
- Replace missing bucket swing in play area
- Add new decomposed granite material around sculpture garden surface transitions
- Replenish screening surface at dog park, or install alternate hard surfacing
- Install additional seating and shading features in dog park
- Perform small scale grading to have finished slope meet flush to step down from clubhouse
- Provide inclusive bench pads for all, not some, seating



Centennial Park



Centennial Park

Circle Park Woods/Lawler Park Greenspace

- Consider interpretive signage to describe a natural area restoration and the processes
- Naturalize site landscape to minimize long-term maintenance, prioritize natives and pollinator-friendly plants



Circle Park

- Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations
- Inspect playground apparatus for damage/wear and repair/replace as necessary.
- Consider replacement of perimeter wood timber curbing with more permanent material and possible mow/trim strip to minimize trimming requirements, improve efficiency of mowing, and improve overall accessibility complying with ADA
- Resurface basketball courts to address poor surface conditions and cracking
- Verify court dimensions for free throw distance and width of lane on court.
- Restripe court to place goal support outside of playing surface
- Trim and manage vegetation adjacent to sign to improve visibility and recognition of the park
- Remove benches and replace with new benches.
- Install outside the play equipment clearance zone - footings to be installed 12" below top of playground surfacing to eliminate footing exposure.



Cobblestones Park

- Install path to connect to existing pad at tennis court entrance, offering much needed accessibility
- Increase depth of engineered wood fiber within creative play area
- Place picnic benches on a surface that isn't turf grass to avoid settling
- Increase number of seating areas, particularly near the ball field
- Assess current play equipment and replace any outdated components. Replace plastic containment curb with new concrete curb.
- Add foul line fencing down left field line
- Add spectator seating areas, near the ball field and player benches



Community Park

- Review the condition of the existing playground surfacing. Replace material at required depth as may be necessary.
- Remove the stone rip rap along the swale edge. Regrade as may be required/. Restore with native plant mix and plugs to create a more natural/sustainable setting to assist with the reduction of maintenance and flooding potential.
- Review Munster Pool use to confirm if sand volleyball and the sand play area should remain or be replaced with alternative play elements such as a splash pad area or other use.
- Add a more structural separation between the skate park area and adjacent parking lot.
- Create a site planting plan to implement over time to add shade and natural areas where feasible and create spatial identity/beautify the site.



Evergreen Park

- Enhance the park sign with an ornamental landscaped bed
- Define hard court play area and create additional game courts on existing hard surface
- Reposition existing park sign to improve visibility to pedestrians
- Install signage for the bike trail on Timrick Drive.



F.H. Hammond Park

- Complete perimeter path system along Fran-lin Parkway
- Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations
- Consider replacement of vegetative screening at tennis courts
- Consider replacement of perimeter curbing with more permanent material and possible mow/trim strip to minimize trimming requirements and improving efficiency of mowing
- Resurface tennis courts to address poor surface conditions and cracking - color coat to enhance aesthetics
- Integrate all play areas into a cohesive and inclusive play environment
- Remove and replace existing drinking fountain with new drinking fountain for accessibility and compliance with ADA.



Grove Park

- Repurpose the existing hardscape area adjacent to the basketball court for tennis practice use
- Resurface the tennis and basketball courts.
- Add fencing and dugouts to the softball field in front of the bleachers
- Enhance ornamental landscape beds around the memorial and park sign
- Add wheel stops to the parking lot with striping and ADA accessible walk and accessible spaces
- Relocate the park sign to maximize visibility along the nearby pedestrian path.



Heritage Park

- Improve intra-site trail network and environmental interpretation



Kiwanis Park

- Power wash fence to remove mold and repaint
- Enhance the park sign with an ornamental landscaping bed
- Review site for accessible routes to playground and other amenities



Monon Trail Head and Fountain

- Screen the electrical panel and systems to make them less conspicuous.
- Replace bicycle rack with furnishing in same family as current site benches and furnishings. Integrate bicycle rack into plaza space to avoid the “tacked on” appearance.



Manor Avenue Greenspace

- Remove building foundation remnants
- Consider naturalizing area to reduce maintenance and mowing
- Potential location for small playground for neighborhood and master site plan



Orchard Park

- Remove abandoned bocce court
- Continue memorial tree planting; include the memorial in a “grove” or mass plantings
- Master plan for site 1
- Naturalize where appropriate



River's Edge Disc Golf

- Clearly define the park and disc golf boundary through landscape and signage
- Address wear at the tee box areas with new matting or other landscape materials
- Master Plan site to identify issues with river banks/ parking/accessibility and volunteer construction and park identification/signage



Rotary Park

- Open up the park entrance by relocating one of the evergreens
- Enhance plantings in the raised bed



Stewart Park

- Develop wooden screen and pad for portable restroom, include accessible walk and access from parking lot for servicing restroom
- Modify parking lot layout to improve circulation
- Investigate purpose of beehive grate in the north central end of park and consider replacing it with a flat grate
- Inspect staked trees, remove guy wires and staking that are no longer functional or needed



Stewart Park

Sunnyside Park

- Master plan park site to address parking/play equipment and circulation
- Consider installing more canopy trees closer to the play equipment to provide more shade.
- Investigate additional play equipment within the existing play area
- Coordinate with Town Public Works to investigate traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian access from parking on east side of Hohman Ave.
- Align park access with crosswalk on Hohman Avenue



Stewart Park



Sunnyside Park

Twin Creek Park

- Resurface court area, mill and overlay
- Install seating area along perimeter of park path, including near ballfield
- Add player benches/spectator seating/shade shelters for dugouts
- Upgrade play around borders for clear edging
- Upgrade trash receptacles, separate recycling from general waste
- Review site for accessible routes to playground and other amenities



Twin Creek Park

West Lakes Park

- Place park sign in visible location for visitors coming from both north and south and add additional park signs
- Restripe spaces for handicap parking and install signs for each space
- Replace outdated park equipment and drinking fountain
- Investigate costs and benefits to replacing rip rap near water with naturalized plantings



White Oak Park

- Fully remove any remains of tree stumps in park
- Place picnic benches on a surface that isn't turf grass to avoid settling
- Upgrade trash receptacles, separate recycling from general waste
- Include a sign at the shelter that indicates maximum capacity



45th Avenue Greenspace

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Add a park sign to the site	\$5,000-8,000
B	Install ornamental tree species along parkway underneath powerlines	\$8,500-10,000
C	Create a destination for viral pollinators by planting native perennials, trees, and shrubs	\$8,000

Beech Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Provide ADA accessible routes to all activity areas within the park, as well as spectator seating	\$8,000-15,000
A	Inspect depth of engineered wood fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations. Provide additional EWF to play area, if necessary	\$15,000-20,000
A	Remove excess asphalt near basketball court, or repurpose the area to additional game courts	\$8,000-10,000
A	Design and install pathway network within open space	\$90,000
A	Renovate play surface area to provide seating for caregivers and provide ADA access from parking areas to play areas	\$15,000-20,000
B	Replace spectator seating areas with either lower 3-row seating or 5-row seating with additional barrier protection on sides and back	\$16,000-20,000
B	Add hardened surface behind backstops at both ballfields to reduce maintenance and improve access. Relocated equipment boxes to hardened surface	\$16,000-20,000
B	Add trail connection northeast to a recommended/proposed bike lane on River Drive	\$4,200-6,000
C	Modify the south parking area to one-way, entering on Beech Avenue and exiting on Fairway Avenue and provide space along north edge of parking for accessible route into park	\$10,000-15,000

Bieker Woods

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Clearly define the trail path; enhance connectivity to the existing asphalt path that connects the arts center with the middle school (1,000SY Wood Fiber)	\$15,000-25,000
B	Install additional trails west of the asphalt connecting path	\$20,000-25,000
B	Update the kiosk and signage at the trailhead and throughout the trail	\$5,000-10,000

Bluebird Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Add foul line fencing at both fields	\$15,000-20,000
A	Inspect depth of engineered wood fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations. Provide additional EWF to play area, if necessary	\$6,000-15,000
A	Install an accessible connection between the parking lot and the park's perimeter path system	\$6,000-8,000
B	Include player benches & dugout areas for ballfields	\$15,000-25,000

Briar Creek Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Repaint shelter posts over chipping	\$5,000-7,000
A	Increase engineered wood fiber (EWF) within creative play area	\$15,000-20,000
A	Resurface the court games area, and replace damaged concrete path sections	\$10,000-15,000
A	Assess condition of water fountain, and replace if outdated or non-compliant	\$8,000-12,000
B	Provide additional seating for specators, seniors, and child guardians	\$15,000-25,000

Burlwood Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Install additional bench seating	\$5,000-12,000
A	Replace drinking fountain with a model that offers an ADA-compliant feature	\$7,500-12,000
B	New asphalt path with multiple connections to the apparatus area	\$1,000-2,500
B	Install additional landscaping- specifically, more shade trees	\$10,000-20,000
C	Install a larger shade structure to accomodate more park patrons and picnic opportunities	\$50,000-70,000

Centennial Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Perform small scale grading to have finished slope meet flush to step down from clubhouse	\$5,000-15,000
A	Repair settling concrete in several areas surrounding the stage	\$15,000-25,000
A	Replace missing bucket swing in play area	\$500
A	Provide inclusive bench pads for all, not some, seating	\$4,000-10,000
A	Replace any missing stone caps around stage	\$3,500-8,000
B	Replenish screening surface at dog park, or install alternate hard surfacing	\$2,000-4,000
B	Add new decomposed granite material around sculpture garden surface transitions	\$10,000-20,000
B	Add a park sign at the south parking lot entry from Calumet Avenue	\$25,000-50,000
C	Install additional seating and shading features in dog park	\$30,000-50,000

Circle Park Woods/Lawler Park Greenspace

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Naturalize site landscape to minimize long-term maintenance, prioritize natives and pollinator-friendly plants	\$5,000-10,000
B	Consider interpretive signage to describe a natural area restoration and the process	\$5,000-8,000

Circle Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations	\$15,000-20,000
A	Inspect playground apparatus for damage/wear and repair/replace as necessary	\$1,000-5,000
A	Resurface basketball courts to address poor surface conditions and cracking	\$12,000-20,000
A	Restripe court to place goal support outside of playing surface	\$5,000-8,000
B	Install outside the play equipment clearance zone - footings to be installed 12" below top of playground surfacing to eliminate footing exposure. Remove benches and replace with new benches	\$8,000-15,000
B	Trim and manage vegetation adjacent to sign to improve visibility and recognition of the park	\$1,000-1,500
C	Consider replacement of perimeter curbing with more permanent material and possible mow/trim strip to minimize trimming requirements and improving efficiency of mowing	\$5,000-8,000

Cobblestones Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations	\$15,000-20,000
A	Assess current play equipment and replace any outdated components. Replace plastic containment curb with new curb	\$80,000-170,000
A	Install path to connect to existing pad at tennis court	\$4,000-7,500
B	Place picnic benches on a surface that isn't turf grass to avoid settling	\$4,000-7,500
B	Add foul line fencing down left field line	\$5,000-8,000
C	Add spectator seating areas, near the ball field and player benches	\$15,000-25,000

Community Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Review and test the playground surfacing to see if this should be replaced	\$1,000-2,000
A	Review Munster Pool to determine if sand volleyball and the sand play area should remain or be replaced with alternative play elements	
B	Naturalize the rip-rap swale and stormwater basin on the south side to reduce flooding and maintenance	\$200,000-300,000
B	Add a more structural separation between the skate park area and adjacent parking lot	\$18,000-30,000
C	Create a site planting plan to implement over time to add shade and natural areas where feasible	\$12,000-25,000

Evergreen Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Screen the mechanical bank with appropriate landscaping	\$2,000-5,000
A	Define hard court play area and create additional game courts on existing hard surface.	\$8,000-12,000
B	Reposition existing park sign to improve visibility for pedestrians	\$5,000-8,000
B	Install signage for the connecting trail on Timrick Drive	\$5,000-8,000

F. H. Hammond Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Inspect depth of Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) to verify adequate fall protection is provided based on equipment manufacturer's recommendations	\$6,000-15,000
A	Resurface tennis courts to address poor surface conditions and cracking	\$50,000-70,000
A	Consider developing play for universally accessible play environment to replace existing play	\$12,000-15,000
A	Retrofit drinking fountain for accessibility and compliance with ADA	\$7,500-12,000
B	Complete perimeter path system along Fran-lin Parkway	\$30,000-50,000
B	Consider replacement of vegetative screening at tennis courts	\$2,000-5,000

Grove Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Repurpose the existing hardscape area adjacent to the basketball court	\$8,000-12,000
A	Resurface the tennis courts and basketball courts	\$50,000-70,000
A	Add wheel stops to the parking lot with striping and ADA accessible walk and accessible spaces	\$5,000-10,000
B	Add fencing and dugouts to the softball field in front of the bleachers	\$20,000-30,000
C	Enhance ornamental landscape beds around the memorial and park sign	\$5,000-15,000
C	Relocate the park sign to maximize visibility along the nearby pedestrian path	\$5,000-8,000

Heritage Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Develop comprehensive site master plan to accomodate access/and use of Kaske House	\$25,000-35,000

Kiwanis Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Power wash fence to remove mold and repaint.	\$500-2,000
A	Review site for accessible routes to playground and other amenities	\$1,000-2,500
B	Enhance park sign with an ornamental landscaping bed	\$5,000-8,000

Monon Trail Head and Fountain

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Screen the electrical panel and systems	\$2,000-5,000
B	Replace bicycle rack with furnishings in the same family as current site benches and other site furnishings	\$4,000-6,000

Manor Avenue Greenspace

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Remove building foundation remnants	\$10,000-20,000
B	Consider naturalizing area to reduce maintenance and mowing	\$5,000-10,000
B	Potential location for small playground for neighborhood and master site plan	\$120,000-175,000

Orchard Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Remove abandoned bocce court	\$2,000-5,000
A	Develop master plan for site 1	\$12,000-15,000
A	Relocate benches to pads that offer adequate space and access	\$1,000-2,500
B	Continue memorial tree planting; include the memorial in a “grove” or mass plantings	\$2,500-5,000
B	Naturalize area to reduce maintenance	\$5,000-10,000

River’s Edge Disc Golf

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Master Plan site to identify issues with river banks/parking/accessibility and volunteer construction and park identification/signage	\$18,000-25,000
B	Address wear at the tee box areas with new matting or other landscape materials	\$15,000-20,000
B	Clearly define the park and disc golf boundary through landscape and signage	\$5,000-8,000

Rotary Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Screen existing utility box situated currently in front of the park sign	\$2,000-5,000
B	Enhance plantings in the raised bed	\$1,000-2,000

Stewart Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Develop wooden screen and pad for portable restroom, include accessible walk and access from parking lot for servicing restroom	\$5,00-10,000
A	Investigate purpose of beehive grate and consider replacing it with a flare grate	
B	Modify parking lot layout to improve circulation	\$25,000-40,000
B	Inspect staked trees, remove guy wires and staking that are no longer functional or needed	

Sunnyside Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Master plan park site to address parking/play equipment and circulation	\$12,000-15,000
A	Investigate additional play equipment within the existing play areas	
B	Plant more shade canopy trees closer to the play equipment	\$5,000-7,500
B	Align park access with crosswalk on Hohman Avenue	\$5,000-8,000
B	Coordinate with Town Public Works to investigate traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian access from parking on east side of Hohman Avenue.	

Twin Creek Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Resurface court area, mill and overlay	\$3,000-5,000
B	Install seating area along perimeter of park path, including near ballfield	\$5,000-8,000
B	Upgrade play around borders for clear edging	\$10,000-15,000
B	Upgrade trash receptacles, separate recycling from other waste	\$2,000-4,000
B	Add player benches/spectator seating/shade shelters for dugouts	\$15,000-25,000
C	Review site for accessible routes to playground and other amenities	\$1,000-2,500

West Lakes Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Paint clear spaces for handicap parking and install signs for each space	\$1,000-2,500
A	Develop updated site master plan and playground master plan prior to replacing play equipment	\$12,000-15,000
B	Place park sign in visible location for visitors coming from both north and south	\$5,000-8,000
C	Naturalize the rip-rap swale and stormwater basin on the south side to reduce flooding and maintenance	\$200,000-300,000
C	Replace outdated park equipment and drinking fountain	\$7,500-12,000

White Oak Park

Priority	Recommendation	Estimated Cost
A	Fully remove any remains of tree stumps in park (Grind/Topsoil seed)	\$1,000-1,500
A	Address concrete walk settlement adjacent to shelter slab for accessibility	\$5,000-20,000
B	Place picnic benches on a surface that isn't turf grass	\$1,500-3,000
B	Include a sign at the shelter that indicates maximum capacity	\$150-250



Chapter 14

Implementation Strategy



Implementation Strategy

Implementation of the “Munster Matters” Plan is dependent on several key factors. First and foremost is commitment to the plan. It is critical that the Parks Department and the Park Board get behind the plan and the findings presented in the plan. Without their collective devotion to the plan, the document will not be a living breathing document, but will only sit on the shelf and collect dust. The second factor is the funding of the recommendations promulgated in the plan. Many of the recommendations do not require significant funding, but primarily a change in the culture of the way things are done and modification of the management processes. It will be important in some cases to stray from the “way we’ve always done it” to trying a different way. If the Department is looking for different results, then trying alternative ways may provide those different results. Another factor and not the last, is the regular and frequent review and updating of the plan to ensure it stays current. As issues change, situations evolve, circumstances are modified the business and operational climate must change and the plan be updated and modified to “keep it relevant and current”.

Program recommendations fall into two categories, 1) those that will require additional funding to implement, and 2) those that do not require additional funding for implementation. Those that do not require additional funding would be those that would require a change in practice, such as changing day of week or time of day. Those requiring additional funding should be evaluated against the Department’s annual goals and existing programs to determine if the program should go forward in addition to the existing program menu (additional funding may be necessary) or a strategy for the program to be self-sustaining (generating sufficient program revenue to offset program expenses and meet the cost recovery goals identified).

The “Munster Matters” Plan included significant public participation and input. It is important that the Department continue to solicit public input and participation. Keeping the public engaged through social media, exit questionnaires, follow-up surveys, etc. shows the public that they are important. Should the need arise

to reach out to the public for additional capital funding (referendum) the support base can already be engaged and the need for the project or program well known and defensible. This would make efforts to market and sell the need for the project or program in any referendum effort.

Capital improvements should be reviewed for their potential impact on existing operational resources. Improvements that can reduce maintenance and operational inputs should be prioritized and implemented as soon as financially feasible, as these improvements will pay dividends for years to come. Additionally, it is important to develop control plans for each park site so as conditions change or opportunities arise the control plan for each park can be reviewed to determine if that particular site is suitable for the opportunity at hand. Each park’s activities and programs should be reviewed to ensure the appropriate relationships are developed and maintained between the activities, adjacent land uses (neighbors), parking, water bodies, athletic fields, security lighting, playgrounds, shelters to activity areas, etc. These control plans can be schematic in nature and provide direction so as playgrounds reach their expected useful life the park can be reviewed and if appropriate the playground relocated/re-purposed/age appropriateness changed based on demographics of the service area/reconstructed.

The “Munster Matters” Plan should be reviewed, at a minimum, each year during the budget planning phase of the Department’s annual budget. Priorities for capital improvements are a policy decision that should be made by the Park Board based on the needs of the individual neighborhoods and recommendations from the professional parks and recreation staff of the Department.

Planning Resources will return and revisit the “Munster Matters” Plan with the Department 12-months following the plan adoption or following the first fiscal year following adoption. This review will discuss what has been accomplished and what may have been deferred, and develop a brief updated white paper to integrate the Department’s first cycle activities.

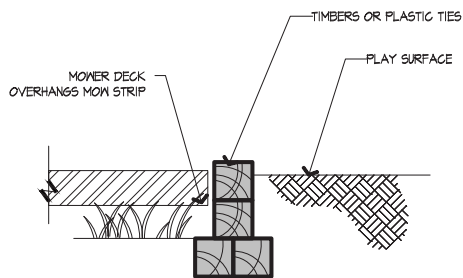
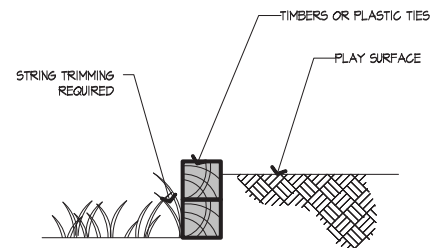
Appendix

Figure 1: Munster Gender Distribution	13	Figure 46: Schools and Facilities	83
Figure 2: Munster and United States Population Growth	14	Figure 47: Munster Bodies of Water	84
Figure 3: Population Density Map and Legend	15	Figure 48: Soils of Munster	85
Figure 4: Munster Age Distribution Trends	16	Figure 49: 45th Avenue Greenspace	87
Figure 5: Ethnic Representation Chart	17	Figure 50: Beech Park	89
Figure 6: Race Representation	17	Figure 51: Bieker Woods	91
Figure 8: English Proficiency by Age Group	18	Figure 52: Bluebird Park	93
Figure 7: Language Use	18	Figure 53: Briar Creek Park	95
Figure 9: Various Charts on Educational Attainment in Munster, U.S.	19	Figure 54: Burlwood Park	97
Figure 10: Family incomes in Munster and U.S.	20	Figure 55: Centennial Park	99
Figure 11: Charts, Below Poverty Level and by Age	21	Figure 56: Circle Park	103
Figure 12: Icons of Munster's Major Employers	22	Figure 57: Cobblestones Park	105
Figure 13: Map of Munster and its Survey Areas for Public Participation	26	Figure 58: Clayhole Lake Greenspace	107
Figure 14: Map of Munster and its Survey Areas for Public Participation	31	Figure 59: Community Park	109
Figure 15: Gender of MindMixer Participants	32	Figure 60: Evergreen Park	113
Figure 16: Favorability of Investing in Munster Playground	32	Figure 61: F.H. Hammond Park	115
Figure 17: Attendance to Special Events	32	Figure 62: Grove Park	117
Figure 18: Frequency of Attendance to Special Events	33	Figure 63: Heritage Park	119
Figure 19: Number of Programs Participated in Household	33	Figure 64: John Friend Park	121
Figure 20: Bike Path Systems Use Frequency	33	Figure 65: Kiwanis Park	123
Figure 21: Facilities Use Frequency	33	Figure 66: Manor Ave. Greenspace/ Monon Park	124
Figure 22: Aquatic Facilities Use	33	Figure 67: Monon Trailhead	125
Figure 23: Organization Participation	34	Figure 68: Orchard Park	127
Figure 24: Programs of Interest	34	Figure 69: Redbud Open Space	129
Figure 25: ADA Self-Evaluation Chart	37	Figure 70: River's Edge Disc Golf	131
Figure 26: Benchmarking Chart	44	Figure 71: Rotary Park	133
Figure 27: Questionnaire Findings	46	Figure 72: Stewart Park	135
Figure 28: Work Culture Wish List	47	Figure 73: Sunnyside Park	137
Figure 29: 2016-2017 Program Mix	51	Figure 74: Twin Creek Park	139
Figure 30: Household Penetration Rate	51	Figure 75: West Lakes Park	141
Figure 31: Participation Charts	51	Figure 76: White Oak Park	143
Figure 32: 2017 Program Success Rates	52	Figure 77: Collection of various comments/key words from focus groups	151
Figure 33: 2017 Program Success Rates, Bar	52	Figure 78: Recent Seasonal Recreation Guide Covers for MPR	157
Figure 34: Revenue and Expense, 2015 and 2016	56	Figure 79: Existing Intersection and a Cyclist-friendly Upgrade Concept	161
Figure 35: Ideal Budget Formula, LERN	56	Figure 80: Recommended Trails and Bike Lanes Map	162
Figure 36: Program Revenue Sources Chart	57	Figure 81: Recommended Land Acquisition Map	165
Figure 37: Community Parks and Service Area	74	Figure 82: Area 1	166
Figure 38: Neighborhood Parks and Service Area	75	Figure 83: Area 2	167
Figure 39: Mini Parks and Service Area	76	Figure 85: Area 4	168
Figure 40: Mini and Neighborhood Parks and Service Area	77	Figure 84: Area 3	168
Figure 41: Playgrounds and Service Area	78	Figure 87: Area 6	169
Figure 42: Rental Shelters	79	Figure 86: Area 5	169
Figure 43: Drinking Fountains	80	Figure 88: Area 7	170
Figure 44: Tennis Courts	81	Figure 89: Recommended Water Recreation Uses	171
Figure 45: Basketball Courts	82	Figure 90: Recommendations Cost Charts, Per Park	182

Reference: Mow Strip Types

The following details relate to edging and containment of playground spaces. They are intended to serve as samples for the Munster Parks and Recreation Department in the future development of their playgrounds, both existing and proposed. The details serve for aesthetic as well as maintenance benefits.

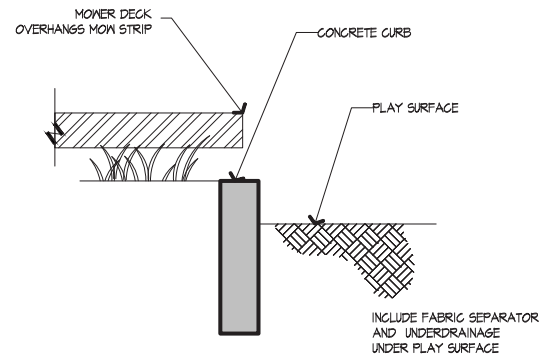
For more information, please contact the consultant landscape architects with Planning Resources Inc.



1 EXISTING PLAYGROUND CONTAINMENT

1" = 1"

02 -01



2 OFFSET TIMBER MOW STRIP

1" = 1"

02 -02

3 CONCRETE CURB CONTAINMENT MOW STRIP

1" = 1"

02 -03

