



Allen County Parks

2023–2027 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

April 2023

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PLACEHOLDER: BOARD MASTER PLAN ACCEPTANCE RESOLUTION FORM

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PLACEHOLDER: ADA SECTION 504 COMPLIANCE RESOLUTION

PLACEHOLDER: OTHER FORMS AND DOCUMENTS





A

Master Plan Information

Section 1

Introduction

1.1. MAILING ADDRESS

Allen County Parks Administrative Offices
Metea County Park Nature Center
8401 Union Chapel Road Fort Wayne IN 46845
Phone: 260.449.3777 Fax: 260.627.5314

1.2. PARK BOARD

On July 19, 1965, the Allen County Park Board was formed. On July 28, 1965 their first meeting was held. The original five-member board was appointed by the Circuit Court Judge of Allen County.

The goal of this board was to serve the citizens of Allen County with park areas for recreation and also to acquire large areas of land to help ensure conservation and preservation of our natural resources.

In 1985, the Allen County Park and Recreation Board was re-established in accordance with the amended Indiana Park and Recreation Ordinance dated July 19, 1965, as authorized by Indiana Code 36 10-3. Under this amended ordinance, the five-member board was increased to a seven-member board and became effective April 18, 1985.

These seven members are appointed by five sources rather than only one source under the original ordinance.

Members are appointed as follows:

- 2-members appointed by the Circuit Court Judge;
- 2-members appointed by the County Council;
- 1-member appointed by the County Commissioners;
- 1-member selected by the County Extension Committee; and
- 1-member appointed by the Mayor of Fort Wayne.

Each member serves a staggered term. They currently meet on the third Thursday of each month. On an as-needed basis, and in accordance with Indiana Code, they will conduct an executive session for special concerns such as real estate options or personnel matters. The Park Board is under the authority of both the Allen County Commissioners and County Council.

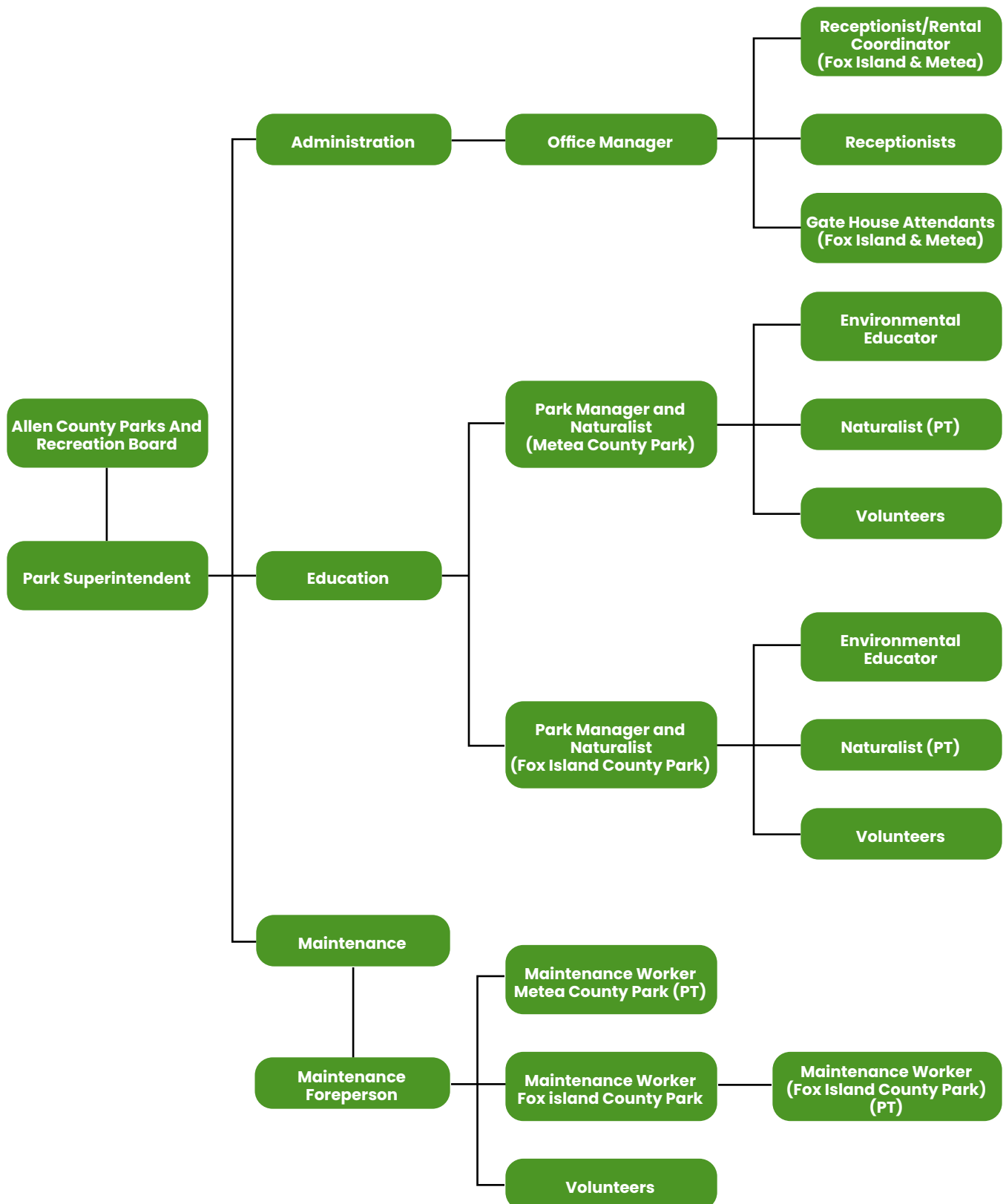


Figure 1: Departmental Organization

Section 1

Introduction

1.3. DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION

CURRENT PARK BOARD MEMBERS

- Stephanie Veit, President
- Carrie Hawk – Gutman, Vice President
- Mitch Sheppard, Secretary
- Matthew Henry, Member
- Jayde Marie Grisham, Member
- Matt Graham, Member
- Lee Wilson, Member
- Thomas A. Hardin, Park Board Attorney
- Jeff Baxter, Parks Superintendent

STAFF

The Allen County Parks and Recreation Department employs 7 full time staff and 8-20 part-time/seasonal staff depending on the season.

SUPERINTENDENT

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METEA COUNTY PARK

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Amy Simpson
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Manager
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1.4. PRIMARY CONTACT

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Section 1

Introduction

1.6. PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

In Indiana, local parks and recreation agencies must have an approved Parks and Recreation Master Plan on file with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) if they want to be eligible for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies. On August 4, 2020, the LWCF was permanently funded at \$900 million every year, providing a consistent opportunity for local park departments to improve their system. In fact, since its inception in 1964, the LWCF has helped conserve thousands of acres across the United States. However, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan does more than make an agency eligible for funding; a Master Plan serves as an overarching framework for departmental decision-making.

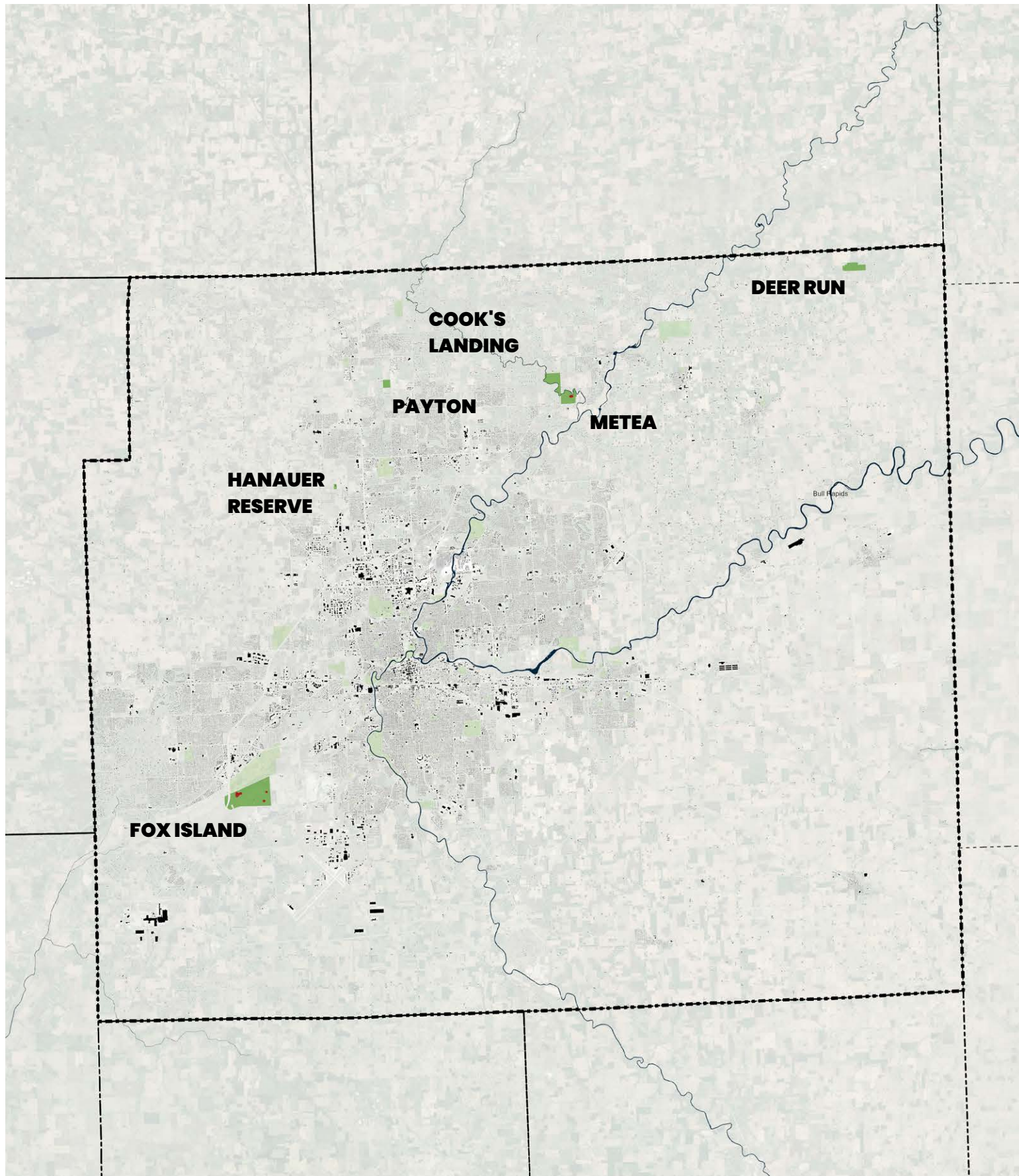
Spanning a period of five years, this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is used as a guidebook for capital improvements, programmatic changes, and more. This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan builds upon previous iterations and provides a fresh perspective of the challenges facing Allen County Parks today while preparing a path forward for 2023–2027.

1.7. ABOUT ALLEN COUNTY PARKS

Allen County Parks contains over 1,000 acres distributed across six parks. Visitor experiences include, but are not limited to, nature study, environmental education, natural and cultural history programs, outdoor recreation, and utilization of rental facilities. Allen County Parks employs seven (7) staff that are responsible for park maintenance, programming, and system administration.

Municipalities within the Planning Area	
Cities	
City of Fort Wayne	
City of New Haven	
City of Woodburn	
Towns	
Grabill	
Huntertown	
Leo-Cedarville	
Monroeville	
Zanesville	
Townships	
Aboite Township	
Adams Township	
Cedar Creek Township	
Eel River Township	
Jackson Township	
Jefferson Township	
Lafayette Township	
Lake Township	
Madison Township	
Marion Township	
Maumee Township	
Milan Township	
Monroe Township	
Perry Township	
Pleasant Township	
Scipio Township	
Springfield Township	
St. Joseph Township	
Washington Township	
Wayne Township	

Figure 2: Municipalities within the Planning Area

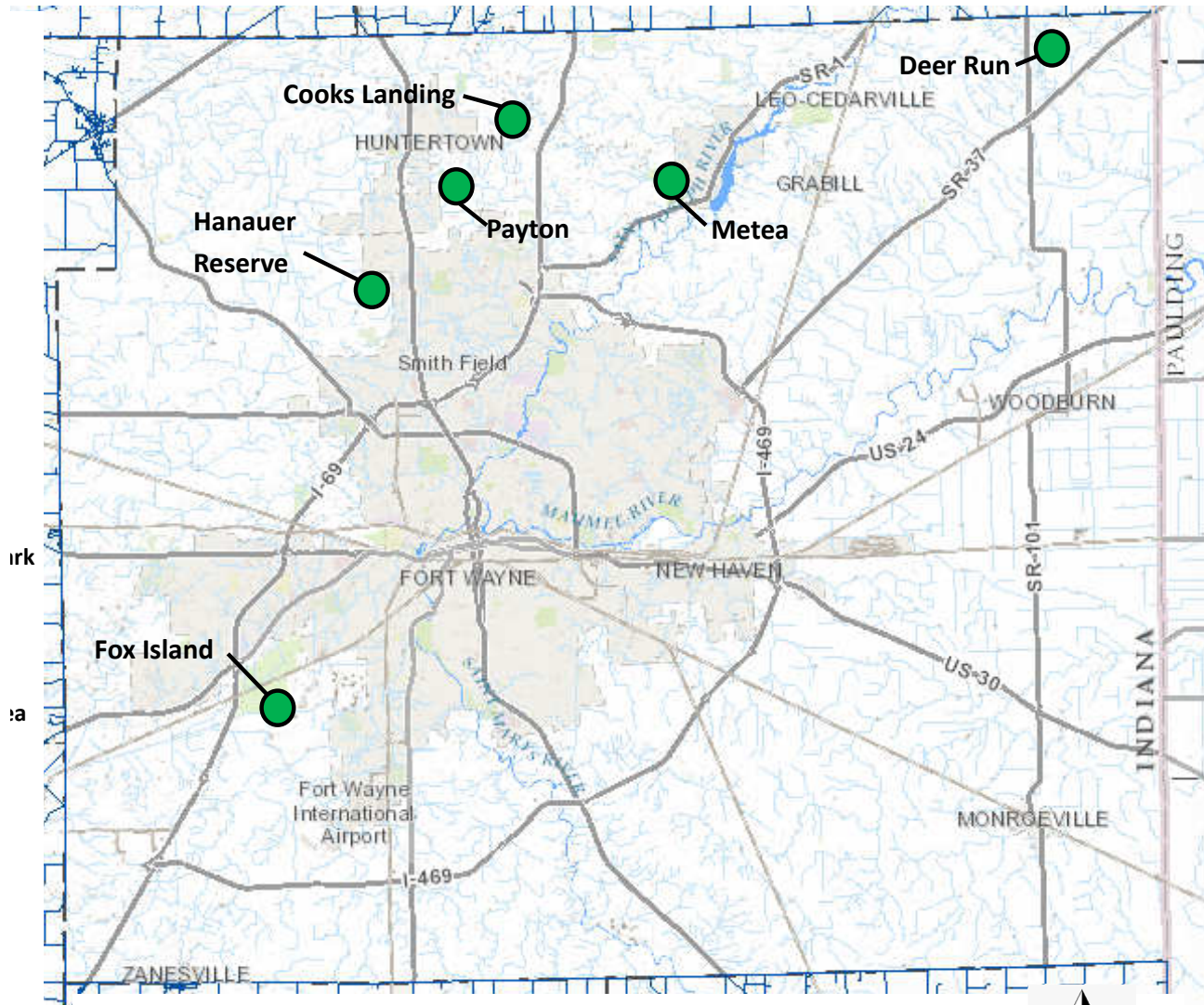


Map 1: Definition of the Study Area



Section 1

Introduction



Park Locations and Sizes		
Park	Address	Size
Allen County Hanauer Reserve	3022 Easterday Road Fort Wayne, IN 46809	9 Acres
Cooks Landing County Park	NW corner of Shoaff and Coldwater Roads	4.5 Acres
Deer Run Wilderness Area	18318 State Rd 101 Spencerville, IN 46788	107 Acres
Fox Island County Park	7324 Yohne Road Fort Wayne, IN 46809	605 Acres
Metea County Park	8401 Union Chapel Road Fort Wayne, IN 46845	250 Acres
Payton County Park	Dunton Rd North of Hathaway Road	38.25 Acres
Total		1013.75

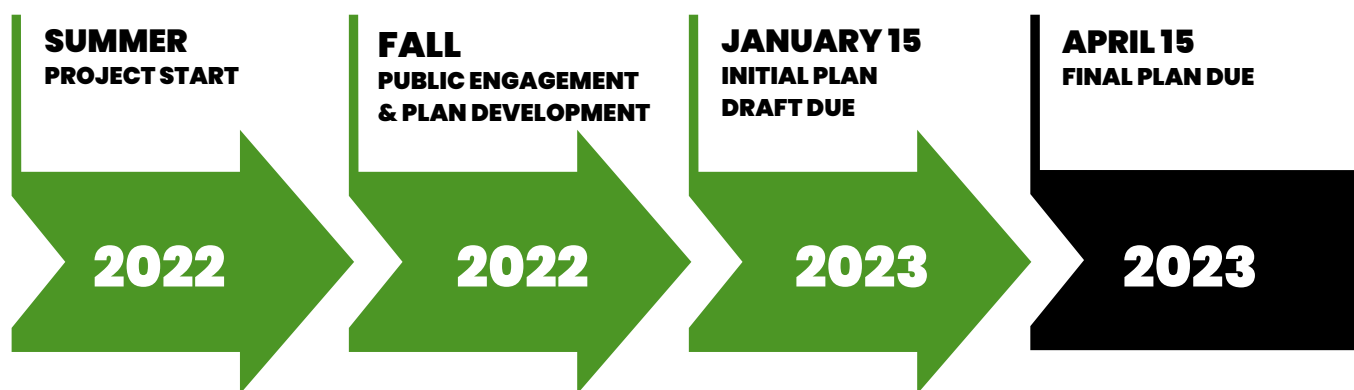
Figure 3: Park Location and Size Table

1.8. DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA

The planning area includes the entire area within the municipal boundaries of Allen County. Map 1 illustrates these municipalities.

1.9. PROJECT PROCESS

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed using an 8-month schedule. The initial phase included data collection and analysis and an inventory of parks. From there, public engagement activities were held in late October 2022 to understand the wants and needs of the public. Additional input was collected during this time from stakeholder interviews. Once all information was collected, priority initiatives were identified to create the action strategies.



Section 2

Goals and Objectives

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The primary role and responsibility of the Allen County Parks and Recreation Department is one of stewardship over the natural resource properties it owns for public use. As a steward of public resources, it is vital to maintain adequate operational and capital support. As a county park system, the department is responsible for large park properties that provide natural resources, opportunities for self-directed experiences, and overall preservation of land and history. Unfortunately, the department's financial resources have become strained over time, limiting the ability to make systematic improvements and investments. **When developing this Master Plan, it became apparent that the driving force over the next five years is to address fundamental operational concerns affecting the department's ability to deliver needed services.**

2.2. THE MASTER PLAN IS DESIGNED TO:

- **Describe the system in terms of who is served and what the surrounding area contains (Sections 3–5).**
- **Articulate the fundamental challenges posed to the department's levels of service (supply), operations, accessibility, and public need (Sections 6–8 and Section B).**
- **Present solutions for addressing operational and capital needs over the next five years and beyond (Sections 9–11).**

2.3. ALLEN COUNTY PARKS MISSION STATEMENT

“TO ESTABLISH AND MANAGE A PERMANENT PARK SYSTEM INCORPORATING CONSERVATION, EDUCATION, OUTDOOR VALUES, AND NATURE PRESERVATION, AND TO PROVIDE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF ALLEN COUNTY WITHIN THIS STRUCTURE”

2.4. AGENCY GOALS

The primary role and responsibility of the Allen County Parks and Recreation Department is one of stewardship over the natural resource properties it owns for public use. The care and maintenance of these parks is a reflection on the Park Board and staff, the County Commissioners, the County Council and even the citizens of the community. High quality care of park properties is translated by any observer as a high class image of the community in which they are located. Equally important is a diligent acquisition program to secure added parklands, especially in anticipation of areas beyond the reach of expected urban expansion.

THE GOALS OF THE ALLEN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT INCLUDE:

- Fulfill the original and primary purpose for establishing the Allen County Parks and Recreation Department “to provide needed parks, recreational opportunities and open space facilities throughout the county which fill the void between those provided on a state-wide basis and those provided by local governments.”
- Provide for the comprehensive outdoor recreational needs of the county to extent possible within resource constraints.
- Provide healthful and safe recreational pursuits, facilities and programs that reflect the area’s unique composition of persons, physical setting, and local resources.
- Preserve and enhance the county’s diverse natural and human resources and encourage greater public awareness and education of our attributes. These attributes include scenic resources, cultural antiquities, historical places and unique geological and environmental settings. These features should ideally be linked by trails or other means.

Section 2

Plan Goals and Objectives

2.5. KEY GOALS AND INITIATIVES

The following overarching goals and corresponding action items represent the main findings of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The goals and objectives were derived from internal stakeholder engagement (with staff and Park Board members), public engagement opportunities (public meetings and surveying), and the consultant team's needs analysis. Additional context is presented throughout the document, especially in Section 7.

1. CONTINUE TO IMPROVE PARK INFRASTRUCTURE, PROGRAMS, AND AMENITIES.

- 1.01. Revisit the previous five-year plan and complete any remaining projects first.
- 1.02. Implement user-friendly and welcoming park entrance gates.

2. FOCUS ON ENHANCING SYSTEM FUNDING

- 2.01. Increase the percentage of tax dollars received from the overall County budget.
- 2.02. Move toward a bond initiative that will provide capital spending relief for the system.
- 2.03. Explore revenue generation through new programs like wildlife management programs or business level facility rental fees.

3. RESTORE & REPAIR STORM-IMPACTED PARKS AND OPEN SPACES.

- 3.01. Restore public access to Fox Island Park.
- 3.02. Foster incremental regrowth of the ecological systems within the parks.

4. INCREASE THE AWARENESS AND UPGRADE USER EXPERIENCE OF THE PARK SYSTEM.

- 4.01. Create a digital fee payment system.**
- 4.02. Upgrade the Allen County Parks website.**
- 4.03. Promote the parks through a public awareness campaign.**
- 4.04. Focus on Park Board training and roles and responsibilities.**

5. ALIGN PARKS AND RECREATION INITIATIVES WITH OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS TO STRENGTHEN THE REGION.

- 5.01. Coordinate with advocacy entities like "Save Maumee" and others.**
- 5.02. Coordinate with the City of Fort Wayne and other municipal entities to develop the larger park and trail network.**

Section 3

Scoping

3.1. SCOPING INTRODUCTION

Before diving into specifics about parks within the system and department-centric challenges and solutions, the Allen County planning area was analyzed based on natural features and landscape; man-made, historical, and cultural features; and social and economic factors.

3.2. KEY FINDINGS IMPACTING THE PROVISION AND PLANNING OF ALLEN COUNTY PARKS

The following key findings are provided and grouped by the scoping feature explored.

NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE

Water resources abound within the county making it a desirable recreation opportunity.

- Four rivers run through the county making possibilities of trail systems and river parks feasible.
- Water access (lakes, ponds, or rivers) is available at every park site except for Hanauer Reserve.

Climate events impact operations and maintenance.

- Derecho event in 2022 has closed Fox Island County Park (other park sites received minor damage) affecting the entire park system's operations due to park clean-up focus.
- Proximity to Lake Michigan influences climate which can change suddenly.
- Winters and springs are becoming warmer and wetter while summers are becoming hotter, affecting the ability to perform needed "off-season" maintenance activities.

MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL FEATURES

Largest land-area county in Indiana.

- Large planning jurisdiction influences levels of service and makes geographic distribution of park sites difficult.
- The substantial transportation network provides for trails and pathways opportunities throughout the county.

Culture is becoming more prominent in the county.

- Fort Wayne completed a "Art for All" plan in 2020 that provides strategies for community engagement through public art.
- The county is home to the largest population of Burmese immigrants in the country meaning more "non-traditional" park uses may be necessary.

The following three sections provide more detail about scoping features pertinent to Allen County Parks and understanding the area served.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

Outdoor recreation activities seem popular but can be enhanced.

- Market data suggests outdoor recreation activity consumption is high meaning additional facilities and infrastructure may be warranted.
- Pricing of recreation services is of particular importance to the area because market data suggests a lower willingness to spend on recreation activities.

System enhancements are necessary.

- The county is experiencing large population growth which will put more pressure on existing park infrastructure and will simultaneously demand increased levels of service.
- Land acquisition will need to be mindful of future residential housing locations as growth continues.

3.3. NATURAL AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES**FOREST RESOURCES**

Hardwood forests originally covered a large part of Allen County, but by 1959 only 43,600 acres of woodland remained. Much of the present woodland is on sloping soils and adjacent to streams; many small areas are on wet soils in depressions and other undrained areas; and a small acreage is on droughty, sandy soils.

As in many Midwestern communities, Elm trees planted in the early part of last century suffered from Dutch Elm disease in the 1950's. More recently and currently, ash trees are similarly affected from Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Most trees in the county parks effected by EAB were left to die and fall in-place, except in instances where they posed a risk to the public.

Based upon a 2010 Indiana Urban Tree Canopy study, tree canopy covers approximately 77,686 acres or an average of 18.09% of Allen County. The county's canopy cover is considered near average when compared to the northeast regional Urban Tree Canopy of 18.06% and slightly below average when compared to the Statewide average of 24.58%. American

Forests, a recognized leader in conservation and urban forestry, has established an average canopy goal of 40% for metropolitan areas and the State encourages this standard as a general guideline or target for Indiana communities.

TOPOGRAPHY

The topographical relief within Allen county ranges from level to rolling or strongly sloping. There are numerous depressions, and some are extensive. The largest area of level topography is in the eastern part of the county. Smaller, but still fairly extensive level areas are in the southwestern and the northwestern parts of the county. In the northern and south central parts of the county and in the southwestern corner, the topography ranges from nearly level to rolling or strongly sloping but is most commonly gently undulating. The highest elevation in the county is in Perry Township. In general, many good recreational opportunities exist within the county. Pockets of rolling topography, well suited to natural park areas as well as level areas for athletic fields provide a wide range of park and recreation opportunities within Allen County.

WATERSHEDS

Allen County and Fort Wayne is somewhat unique in that the county's geographic area generally is split between two major North American watersheds. The western part of the county includes the watersheds of the Eel River and the Upper Wabash River. Both of these rivers eventually flow to the Mississippi River and drain into the Gulf of Mexico.

The majority of the county is composed of the watersheds of four rivers, the St. Joseph River, the Upper Maumee River, the Auglaize River, and the St. Mary's River. All of these watersheds eventually join to form the Maumee River, which outlets into Lake Erie in Toledo, Ohio.

The split between these two major watershed systems means that a 'continental' divide passes through the western part of the county.

Confluence of Rivers

The confluence of the St. Marys and St. Joseph rivers creates the Maumee River and is located in Downtown Fort Wayne. These rivers have historically been a key part of the history, culture, and economy of Fort Wayne and Allen County.

Section 3

Scoping

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Key Geology and Soil Facts:

- Allen County is Located in the Eastern lake section and the Till Plains section of the Central Lowland physiographic province
- The southern and western parts of Allen County are within the Tipton till plan
- The northern and eastern parts of Allen County are within the Northern lake and moraine region.

Soils Present in Allen County		
Soil Code	Soil Name	Soil Condition
s2308	Whitaker-Rensselaer-Darroch	The Whitaker series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in stratified silty and loamy outwash on outwash plains, lake plains, till plains, valley trains, and stream terraces. Slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.
s2309	Pewamo-Morley-Glynwood-Blount	The Blount series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils that are moderately deep or deep to dense till. Blount soils formed in till and are on wave-worked till plains, till plains, and near-shore zones (relict). Slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.
s2321	Houghton-Carlisle-Adrian	The Houghton series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in herbaceous organic materials more than 130 cm (51 inches) thick in depressions and drainageways on lake plains, outwash plains, ground moraines, end moraines, till plains, and floodplains. Slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.
s2326	Whitaker-Martinsville	The Whitaker series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in stratified silty and loamy outwash on outwash plains, lake plains, till plains, valley trains, and stream terraces. Slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.
s2327	Sawmill-Lawson-Genesee	The Sawmill series consists of very deep, poorly drained and very poorly drained soils formed in alluvium on flood plains. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent.
s2330	Strole-Montgomery-Lenawee	The Strole series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in lacustrine deposits of calcareous silty clay or clay on glacial lakebeds. Slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.
s6028	Nappanee-Hoytville	The Nappanee series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils that are moderately deep or deep to dense till. They formed in clayey till on wave-worked till plains, till-floored lake plains, till plains, and moraines. Slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.
s6031	Latty-Fulton	The Latty series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in clayey glaciolacustrine sediments. These soils are on lake plains. Slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.
s6043	Pewamo-Glynwood-Blount	The Pewamo series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in till on moraines, near-shore zones (relict), and lake plains. Slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.
s6043	Pewamo-Glynwood-Blount	The Blount series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils that are moderately deep or deep to dense till. Blount soils formed in till and are on wave-worked till plains, till plains, and near-shore zones (relict). Slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.

Figure 4: Soils Present in Allen County

Source: US Geological Survey, USDA

Section 3

Scoping

CLIMATE

Key Climate Facts:

- The Allen County climate is influenced by Lake Michigan and to a lesser extent Lake Erie.
- Temperature differences between daily highs and lows average about 20 degrees.
- The average occurrence of the last freeze in the spring is late April and the first freeze in the autumn in mid-October.
- The average growing season is 173 days.
- Annual precipitation is generally well distributed with higher amounts of precipitation occur in late spring and early summer.
- Measurable precipitation falls on 132 days of the year on average.
- Mid-winter through early spring is the wettest time of year.
- Autumn is the driest time of year.

Climate Data	
Item	Measurement
Average Precipitation	39.48"
Average Snowfall	33.6"
Prevailing Wind Speed	9.9 MPH
Prevailing Wind Direction	Southwest
Average High Temperature	60.3° F
Average Low Temperature	41.4° F
Mean Maximum Temperature	95.1° F
Mean Minimum Temperature	-7.1° F

Figure 5: Allen County Climate Data

Source: Weather.gov (NOAA)

June 13, 2022 Derecho Event

Three rounds of severe storms that began the afternoon of June 13th and continued into the overnight hours led to a significant swath of straight line wind damage. According to the National Weather Service, this event qualified as a Derecho.

- At the Fort Wayne International Airport, a wind gust of 98 mph from the severe storm was recorded. This was the strongest wind gust ever recorded at the Fort Wayne International Airport (previous record was 91 mph June 30th, 2012).
- Other wind measurements ranged from 50 to 75 mph which was contributed to an extremely favorable environment for severe storms.
- Hail up to golf ball sized and nuisance flooding were also reported.

Derecho Impacts

Fox Island Park was severely damaged from the Derecho event and was closed. Significant cleanup continues to be underway, with the park expected to reopen at some point in 2023. A major portion of the mature trees within were felled during the storm and are currently being removed.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The forecasted shift in the overall climatic conditions of Northeast Indiana will result in warmer, wetter winters and springs and hotter summers. Climate change will likely also create more extreme weather events.

It is not known if the June 13, 2022 Derecho can be directly correlated with the effects of climate change, but it is likely that weather events such as this will grow in frequency and severity.

NATURAL AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES IMPLICATIONS

Park Development Considerations

Given Allen County's poorly drained soils, the selection of land for new parks should include careful consideration of complicated design and permitting issues. Wetlands, floodways, floodplains, and other regulated landscape features can be incorporated into park master planning, but these must be surveyed and inventoried prior to the start of developing construction plans and budgets.

Planning Considerations

The June 13th, 2022 Derecho event demonstrates the need for planning and management of forest resources. This should include emergency response planning to prepare for potential extreme weather events such as this Derecho.

The forecasted shift in climate over the next several years will likely create stresses on the ecological systems within the parks. Planning will need to be done to determine which species may be at risk for potential impacts and how these can be lessened with careful planning.

Climate change will also change the way residents use the parks, particularly in the winter months. With warmer temperatures, winter sports such as cross country skiing, sledding, and ice skating will likely decrease in popularity. Other activities will likely become more popular in the winter, including use of the trails and other amenities. General use of the parks in the winter will also likely increase due to the warmer temperatures, increasing the need for park maintenance activities during these months.

3.4. MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL FEATURES

HISTORY

Early settlers and Native Americans referred to Fort Wayne as a crossroads because of its strategic location at the convergence of three rivers: the St. Marys, the St. Joseph, and the Maumee Rivers. The city of Fort Wayne is named after General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, a bold military leader who established the first American fort at the confluence of the three rivers.

In 1824, the Indiana General Assembly established Allen County, and the 1830s brought about the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal in Fort Wayne. This famous canal earned Fort Wayne the nickname "Summit City" because it was the highest point above sea level along the entire canal route. The great pioneer Johnny Chapman, also known as Johnny Appleseed, finished his journey by introducing apple trees throughout the Midwest in Fort Wayne. Today, you can find the historic gravesite in Johnny Appleseed Park in Fort Wayne.

Years later, with the advent of the railroad, Fort Wayne held a key position in the great Pennsylvania Railroad. As the 1800s drew to a close, industry in Fort Wayne continued to flourish as immigrants poured into the area seeking jobs. For most of the nineteenth century Fort Wayne had a small but vibrant African-American population. As proof, Fort Wayne's African Methodist Episcopal congregation, Turner Chapel AME church, was first established in the 1840s. The African-American community grew when Fort Wayne saw the Great Migration from southern states.

As the 1900s rolled in, Fort Wayne continued to flourish. Even during the Great Depression Fort Wayne continued its economic boom. Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Farnsworth Television, Zollner Piston, Central Soya, Rea Magnet Wire, General Electric, International Harvester, and the Holsum Bakery all called Fort Wayne home. Notable Fort Wayne landmarks like the Embassy Theatre, the Scottish Rite Auditorium, and the Lincoln Tower (the tallest building in Indiana at the time of construction) were built during these boom years. A rich history of baseball and basketball is also a point of pride for the city. The first lighted baseball game involving a professional team ever recorded took place in Fort Wayne and is also said to be the birthplace of the National Basketball Association (NBA).

The area is also home to a number of character defining features/places that serve as local landmarks, including the General Electric and Sunbeam Bread signs, Henry's Bar, Cindy's Diner, Coney Island, and the Concordia Theological Seminary.

Today, Fort Wayne/Allen County is not only the hub of three rivers, it is also a major metropolitan area and the second largest city in Indiana. It is the seat of Allen County, the largest land-area county in Indiana. Fort Wayne continues to progress as corporations and individuals live, thrive and expand together. In fact, during the 1980s and 1990s, Fort Wayne received accolades such as All-American City and Most Livable City.

National Register of Historic Places

Fort Wayne and Allen County have a wealth of historic architecture districts and neighborhoods. Fort Wayne in particular has a substantial number of historic landmarks, Local Historic Districts and properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Sites listed within Allen County (outside of the limits of Fort Wayne and other municipalities) include:

- Vermilyea Inn Historic District (Aboite Township)
- Craigville Depot (Jefferson Township)
- New York Chicago and St. Louis Railroad Steam Locomotive No. 765 (Jefferson Township)
- St. Louis, Besancon, Historic District (Jefferson Township)
- Dutch Ridge Historic District (Perry Township)
- Fisher West Farm (Perry Township)
- Martin Blume Jr. Farm (Perry Township)
- Horney Robinson House (Perry Township)

TRANSPORTATION

Roadway Network

Allen County has a substantial transportation network including:

- Interstate 69 running north/south through the county center. This connects Allen County with Indianapolis to the south and Lansing, MI to the north.
- Interstate 469 which is a bypass loop around the south, east and north sides of Fort Wayne.
- US 30 passes east/west through the county. This continues westward to Northwest Indiana and eastward through the northern half of Ohio.
- US 24 passes southeast/northwest through the County. This “Fort to Port” corridor provides a route for freight to the Port of Toledo on Lake Erie .
- SR 3 passes north/south through Allen County.

Airports

Fort Wayne International Airport is a major economic resource for Allen County and Fort Wayne.

- It is one of only a handful of airports in the Midwest with a 12,000-foot runway.
- Four commercial carriers provide direct flights from major cities throughout the United States, including Allegiant, American Airlines, United, and Delta.
- There are currently 13 non-stop flights including Orlando, Tampa, Atlanta, Dallas, Sarasota, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, Myrtle Beach, Chicago, Phoenix, Minneapolis, Fort Myers, and Charlotte.
- The Fort Wayne International Airport is a significant revenue source for the City of Fort Wayne.
- Total passenger volume has fluctuated in the last several years due to the ongoing implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Total traffic has rebounded to approximately 700,000+ passengers in 2022.

Smith Field, located north of the city, is a secondary airport for private air traffic and a reliever airport for Fort Wayne International Airport. Smith Field was Fort Wayne's first municipal airport and was originally called Baer Field. The airport was dedicated in 1925.

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Trails

Allen County has also made significant improvements to trails, trail access, connectivity, as well as providing linkages between trails.

- Nearly 7 miles of the Pufferbelly Trail has been constructed.
- This trail will eventually extend from the northern edge of Allen County, pass through Huntertown, and connect to the Rivergreenway in Downtown Fort Wayne. This is part of much larger 80 mile trail network that will link Pokagon State Park to Ouabache State Park.
- The Town of Leo-Cedarville is currently planning a trail system with the intention to eventually connect with Metea Park.
- Towpath Trail in southwest Fort Wayne is within a mile of Fox Island County Park. A conceptual alignment for a connection to Fox Island has been proposed, but this highway and railroad infrastructure current provide some barriers.

MAN-MADE INDUSTRY

Healthcare, manufacturing, and insurance have traditionally been the primary industries in the Fort Wayne Metropolitan Area.

Healthcare

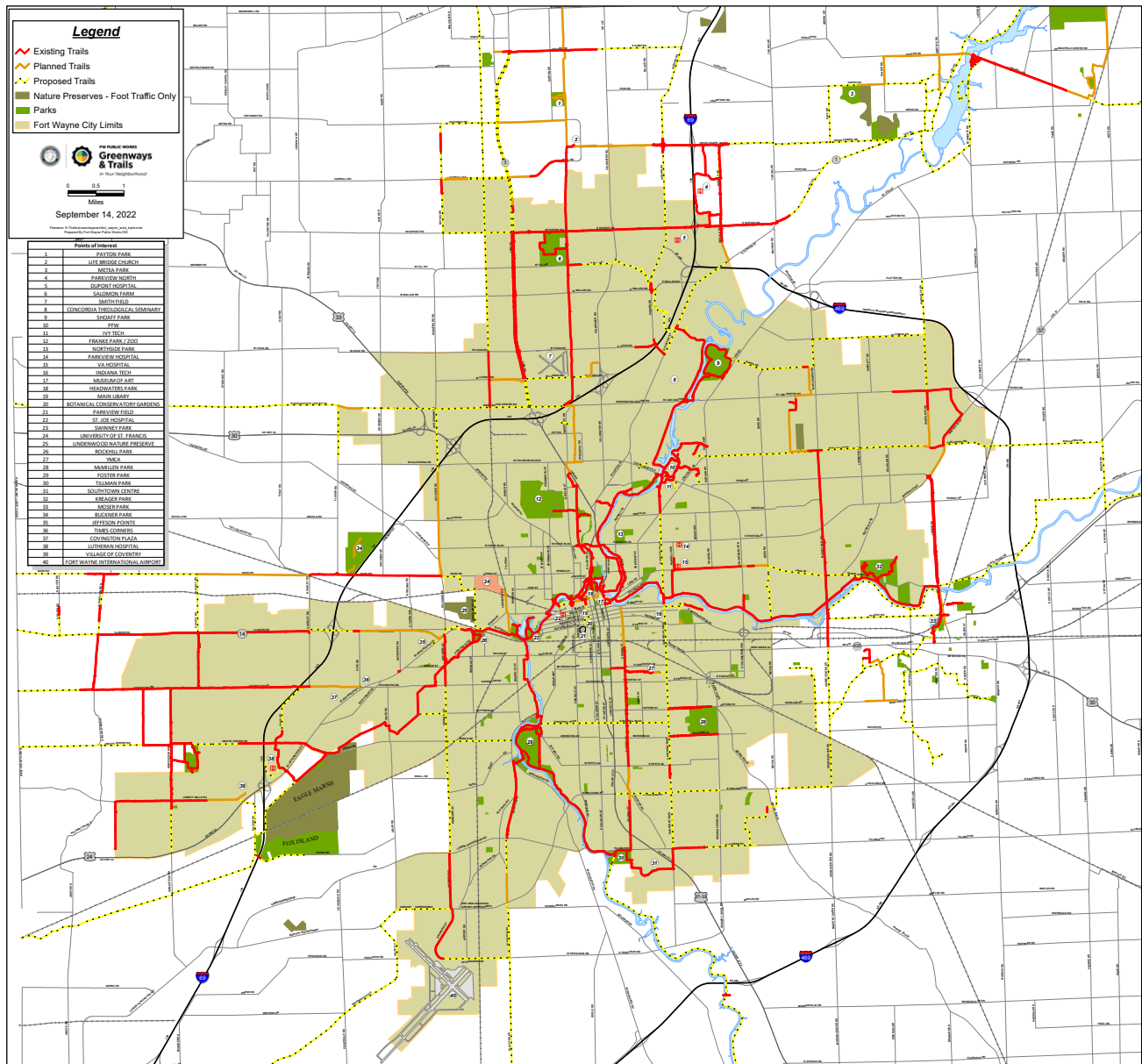
The city's hospitals form a regional medical hub that serves Allen County and the surrounding area.

- Demand for healthcare services has continued to increase alongside the area's population, particularly that of older citizens.
- Parkview Health System is headquartered in Fort Wayne and is Fort Wayne and Allen County's largest employer with nearly 9,000 employees.
- Lutheran Health Network is the third largest employer with over 4,000 employers.

Manufacturing

Dozens of manufacturing companies in the Fort Wayne area employ 100 people or more.

- General Motors is Fort Wayne and Allen County's second largest employer with over 4,300 employees. The GM Fort Wayne Assembly builds more than 1300 full-size trucks each day. The facility on Lafayette Center Road has over 4.6 Million square feet of floor area and covers 716 acres.
- BFGoodrich, manufacturer of rubber tires, has 1,500 employers in Fort Wayne.
- Dana Corp. is another automotive-based industry and has nearly 1,000 employees.
- Other manufacturing entities include Fort Wayne Metals, Master Spas, Dana Corp., Steel Dynamics, BAE Systems, and Raytheon.



Map 3: Allen County Trail Network

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Other Major Employers

- Sweetwater Sound is headquartered in Fort Wayne and has over 2,000 employees. This company employs numerous creatives, helping to create a strong arts & culture scene in Fort Wayne.
- Lincoln Financial Group was founded in Fort Wayne in 1905 as Lincoln National Life Insurance Company. The company grew to become one of the largest insurance companies in the country and was headquartered in Fort Wayne until 1998. The company is now headquartered in suburban Philadelphia. The company currently employs nearly 2,000 people in its Fort Wayne office.
- Vera Bradley, a handbag and accessory company, is headquartered in Fort Wayne and has over 600 employees. Like Sweetwater Sound, this company attracts employees from across the US and contributes to the arts & culture scene in Fort Wayne.
- Amazon has a major presence in Fort Wayne with over 1,500 employees.

CULTURE

Cultural Institutions

Various cultural institutions also help to define the community. These include the Allen County Public Library (with its notable genealogy department), the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, and the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo.

The Fort Wayne Civic Theatre performs a wide range of scripts, from Shakespeare to contemporary comedy. The Fort Wayne Museum of Art offers artworks from its own permanent collections as well as national traveling exhibitions, classes and lectures. Science Central is a hands-on interactive science center geared towards grade-schoolers. The Historic Embassy Theatre provides a classic venue for music, including the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Orchestra, theatre and film features.

Public Art

The City of Fort Wayne completed the "Art for All" plan in early 2020. This plan includes strategies for community engagement through public art. The integration of art into public spaces and parks is a key part of implementation of the plan. There are three transformational values of art in public spaces described in the plan:

Economic Value. Enhancing the identity and character of Fort Wayne through public art directly supports cultural tourism and economic development strategies which can attract and retain residents.

Social Value. When people see themselves reflected in civic spaces, they have a sense of attachment that allows them to feel ownership and respect.

Cultural Value. Public art has the power to create uniqueness through the reflection of the local history and culture, which gives communities a sense of place and identity. Public art provides a visual mechanism for understanding other cultures and perspectives, creating social cohesion and

encouraging civic engagement. Through the reinforcement of culture, public art acts as a catalyst for unity and social engagement.

The concepts and ideas present in the "Art for All" plan can potentially be implemented in partner communities such as Allen County. Allen County should consider creating an art in parks strategy in the future. This may be funded and implemented through private partners and could drive additional attendance.

BURMESE IMMIGRANTS

Fort Wayne and Allen County is home to the largest population of Burmese immigrants in the country. Burma is officially known as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and is located in Southeast Asia, bordering China, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, and India.

The first Burmese immigrants came to Fort Wayne in the early 1990s to escape political turmoil. Today there are approximately 10,000 Burmese people living in Fort Wayne and Allen County. There are numerous restaurants, temples, and festivals that contribute to the strong presence of Burmese culture in Fort Wayne.

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

Allen County professional sports offerings include:

- San Diego Padres affiliate Fort Wayne Tin Caps baseball team of the Single-A Midwest League
- Indianapolis Pacers affiliate the Fort Wayne Mad Ants basketball team in the NBA's G-league
- Edmonton Oilers affiliate the Fort Wayne Komets hockey team in the Central Division of the Double-A East Coast Hockey League.

MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

Parks for Quality of Life

The Fort Wayne Metro Area is growing and Allen County Parks will play a key role in contributing to the improvement of the overall quality of life for the area. The parks can be a selling point to keep existing residents in the area and attract new residents. It is also important to consider the needs of new populations that are moving into the area such as the Burmese population.

Other Opportunities

Allen County parks have substantial access via the robust road network. However, connections to the parks can be strengthened through the development of the trail network and potential alternative transportation modes such as specialty transit service that is planned to accommodate events or group outings for specific populations.

3.5. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

Allen County is the third-most populous county in Indiana. Known as the cultural and economic center of northeastern Indiana, Allen County is within a 200-mile radius of major population centers including: Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Milwaukee. The county contains three cities, five towns, and 37 unincorporated communities across 20 townships. Major industries include manufacturing, defense and security, healthcare, and insurance.

All demographic data was obtained from Esri in September 2022. Esri specializes in delivering the world's most powerful mapping and spatial analytics software available.

POPULATION

Allen County's population grew by 8.5% between the last two Census years. Projecting ahead, it is estimated the county will add another 3.2% to its population by 2027.

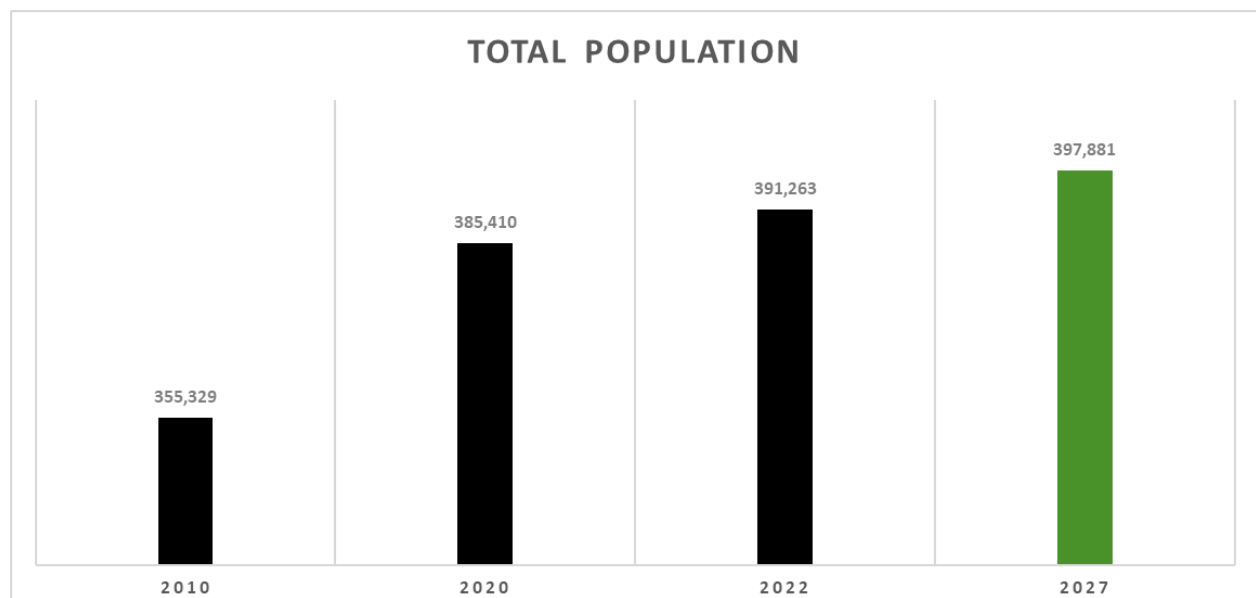


Figure 6: Allen County Population

AGE SEGMENTATION

Allen County is experiencing an aging trend since the 2010 Census. Currently, almost one-quarter of the population (23%) is older than 60 years old and that statistic is projected to increase over the next five years at least. However, a slight youth trend is projected to occur as the under 5 population increases to a level higher than measured since the 2010 Census.

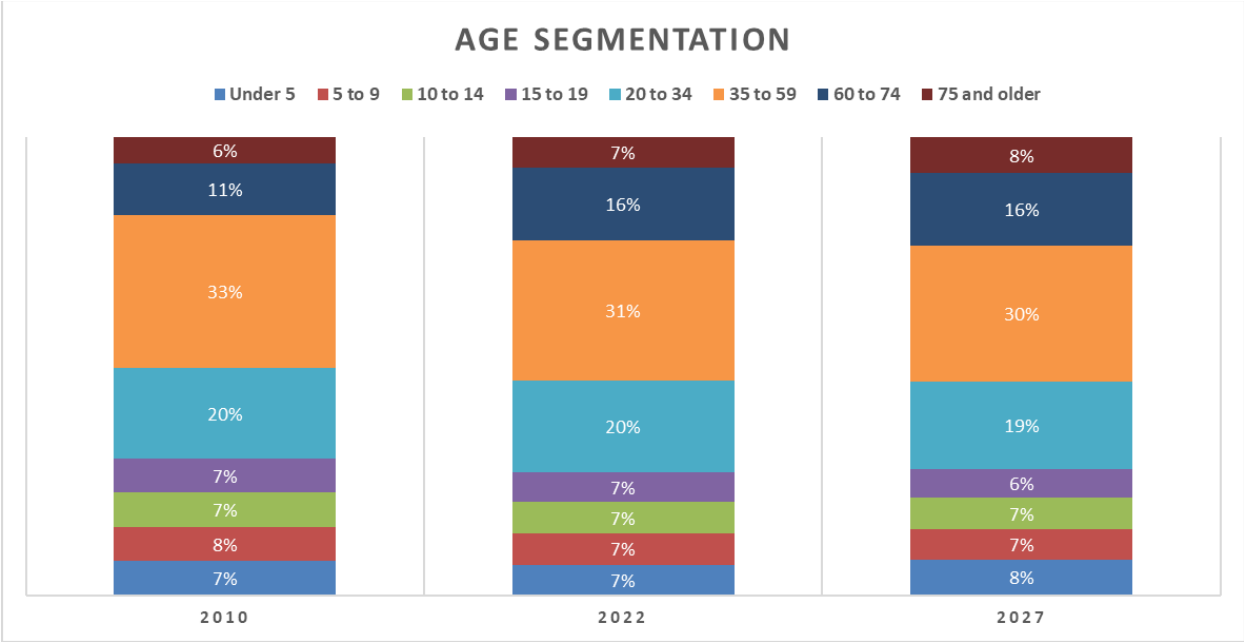


Figure 7: Age Segmentation Breakdown (2010–2027)

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RACE AND ETHNICITY

Allen County experienced diversification between the last two Census years and the White population is expected to continue decreasing to 70% by 2027. The largest minority populations include Black (12%), Two or More Races (7%), Asian (5%), and Some Other Race (4%). Moving forward, it is expected to continue seeing an increase in the Two or More Races and Some Other Race in particular. In terms of ethnicity, approximately 8.6% of the total population is recorded as Hispanic or Latino (up from 6.5% in 2010). It should be noted that ethnicity is recorded separately from race as people who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.

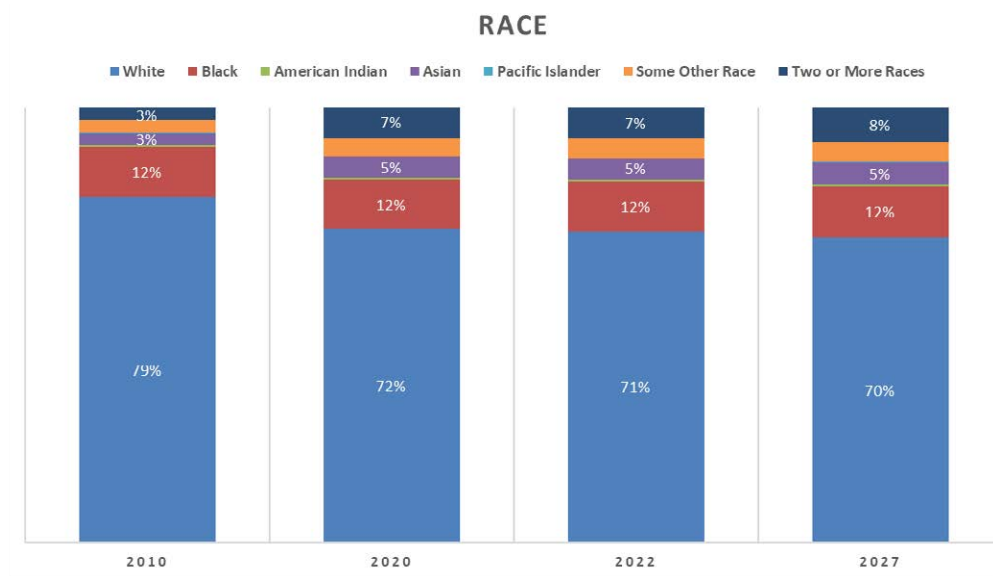


Figure 8: Race Statistics (2010–2027)

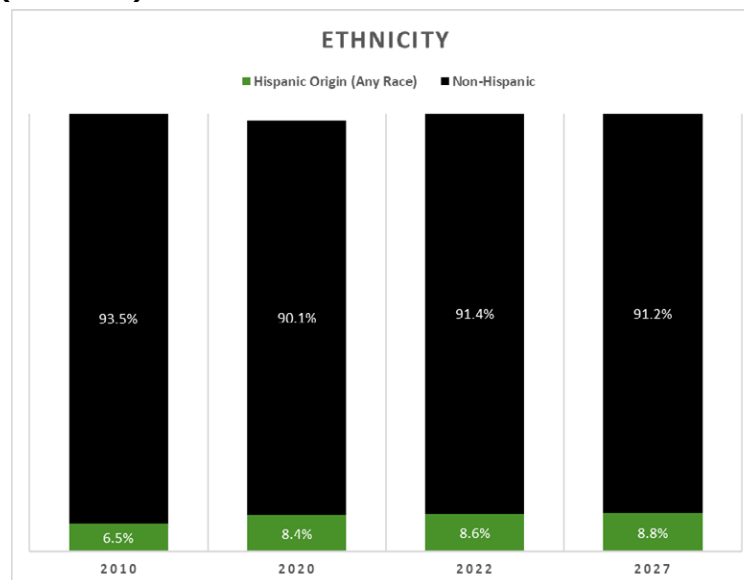


Figure 9: Ethnicity Statistics (2010–2027)

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

As community populations change, household compositions change as well. Specifically, the number of households, household sizes, and family sizes all change. Allen County’s number of households increased by approximately 14,000 between the last two Census years; however, average household size has decreased. This means more households are being constructed in the county, but occupation numbers are slightly smaller.

Household Statistics				
Characteristic	2010	2020	2022	2027
Total Households	137,851	151,690	154,349	157,501
Avg. Household Size	2.53	2.50	2.49	2.49

Figure 10: Household Statistics (2010–2027)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Allen County’s median household income is \$60,606, a figure above the median household income for the entire state of Indiana (\$58,235); additionally, the county’s median household income is projected to increase by 20% over the next five years. The largest household income category in Allen County is the \$50,000–\$74,999 range, but projections indicate the largest household income category will be \$100,000–\$149,999 by 2027.

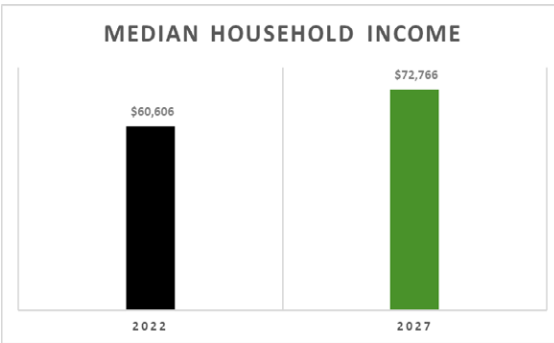


Figure 11: Median Household Income (2020–2027)

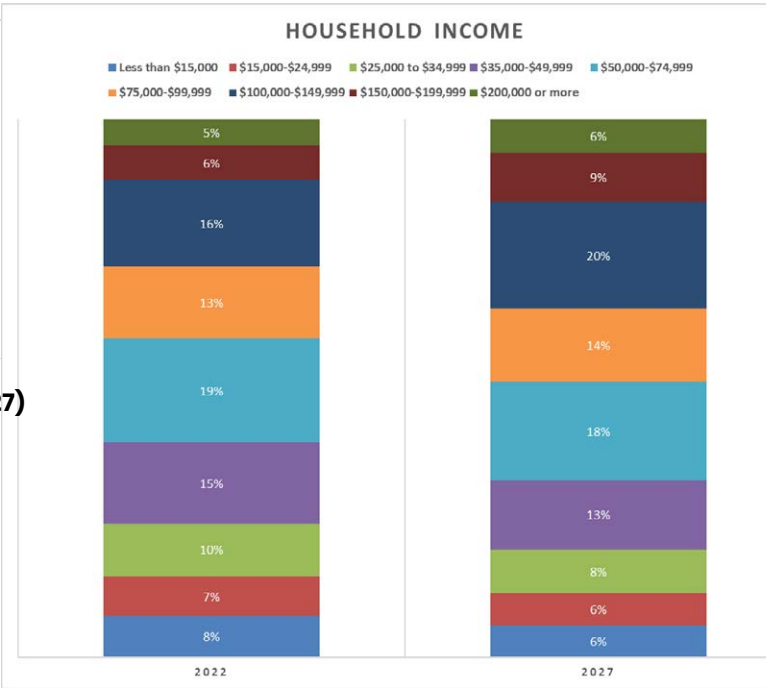


Figure 12: Household Income by Category (2020–2027)

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POVERTY

A grassroots movement including United Ways, corporations, nonprofits, and foundations from 23 states (and the District of Columbia) produces research that focuses on how to improve life across the country for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) populations. ALICE represents the growing number of individuals and families who are working but are unable to afford the basic necessities of housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and technology.

Each ALICE Report uses standardized measurements to quantify the cost of a basic household budget in each county in each state, and to show how many households are struggling to afford it.

ALICE households earn more than the federal poverty level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county (the ALICE Threshold). For Allen County, 12% of households are in poverty, but 22% are considered ALICE households. Both statistics align closely with the Indiana state average (13% and 24%, respectively).

Figure 13 shows Allen County's ALICE households by township. The top-five Townships with the highest percentage of ALICE households are highlighted in red. Additionally, the red circles represent approximate locations of an Allen County Park. As shown below, more assets, amenities, and opportunities should be focused in the southeast, south central, and central parts of the county. This idea has direct impact on land acquisition philosophy, trail development, and how to provide recreational opportunities to a broader audience.

	Eel River 17%	Perry 14%	Cedar Creek 17%	Springfield 29%	Scipio 16%
Lake 27%	Washington 37%	St. Joseph 32%	Milan 14%	Maumee 28%	
Aboite 17%	Wayne 52%	Adams 47%	Jefferson 30%	Jackson 19%	
Lafayette 15%	Pleasant 26%	Marion 23%	Madison 25%	Monroe 33%	

Figure 13: Allen County ALICE Households by Township

DISABILITY STATUS

Every age category, with the exception of those under 5 years old, report having some sort of disability. It should also be noted only the 5-17 year old age group report a single digit disability rate (7%). This means there is a relatively high prevalence of residents with disabilities across the lifespan. It will be essential for public facilities to keep accessibility considerations top of mind when making facility improvements and designing new infrastructure, especially since nearly half (45%) of those over 75 years old report having some sort of disability.

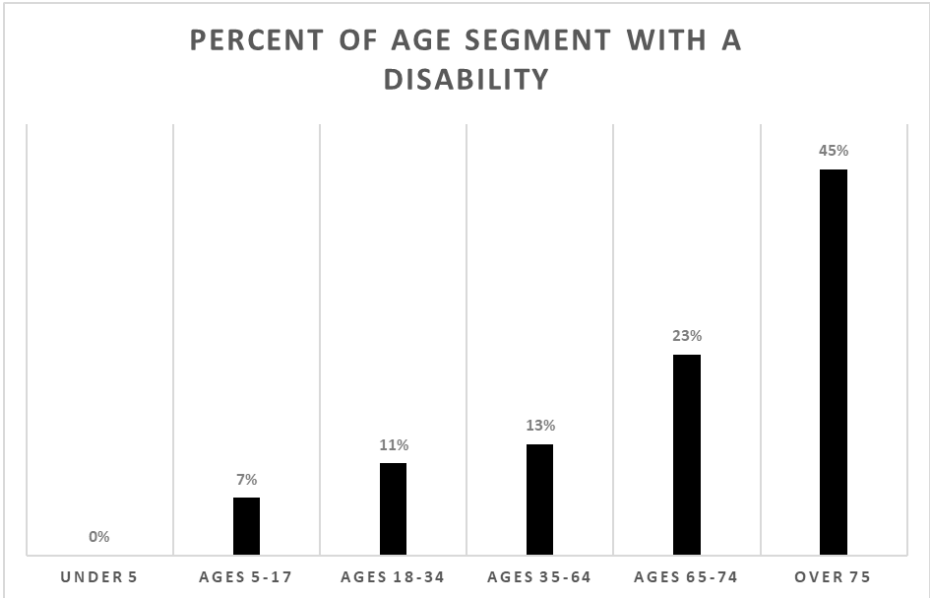


Figure 15: Disability Statistics (2022)

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EMPLOYMENT

Allen County's largest employed age segment (25-54) is also the largest unemployed age segment overall. In fact, the 25-54 age segment has the largest relative unemployment rate compared to their employment rate (5.3%). More investigation is warranted to identify the barriers to employment for this particular age group.

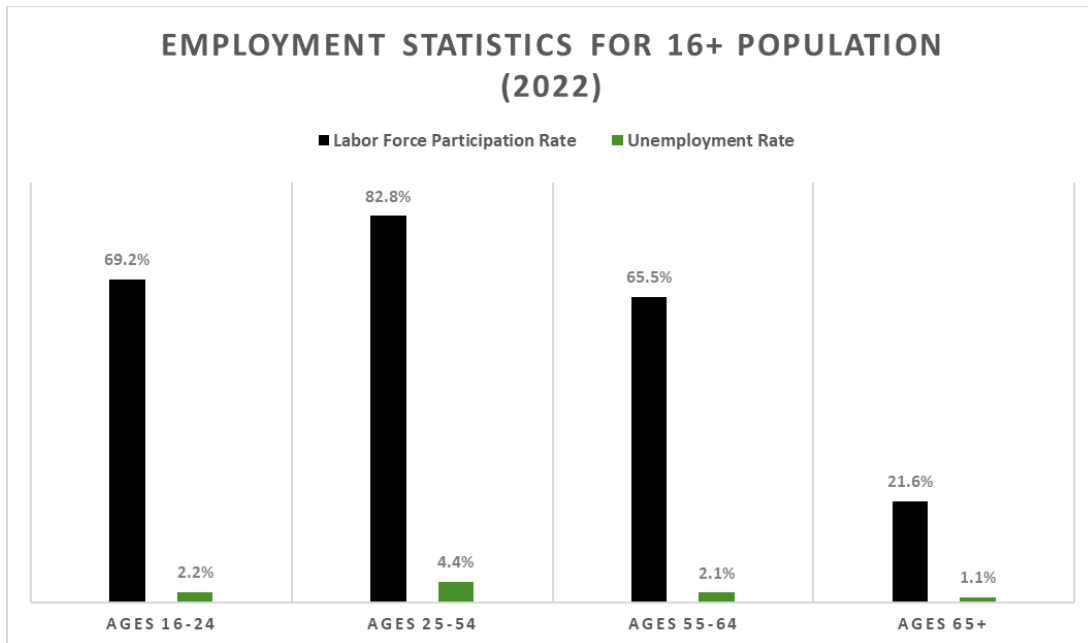


Figure 16: Employment Statistics (2022)

INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION

Allen County’s top five leading industries combine to represent 59% of all industries within the county:

- Manufacturing (17.6%)
- Health Care/Social Assistance (15.8%)
- Retail Trade (11.6%)
- Educational Services (7.6%)
- Accommodation/Food Service (6.7%)

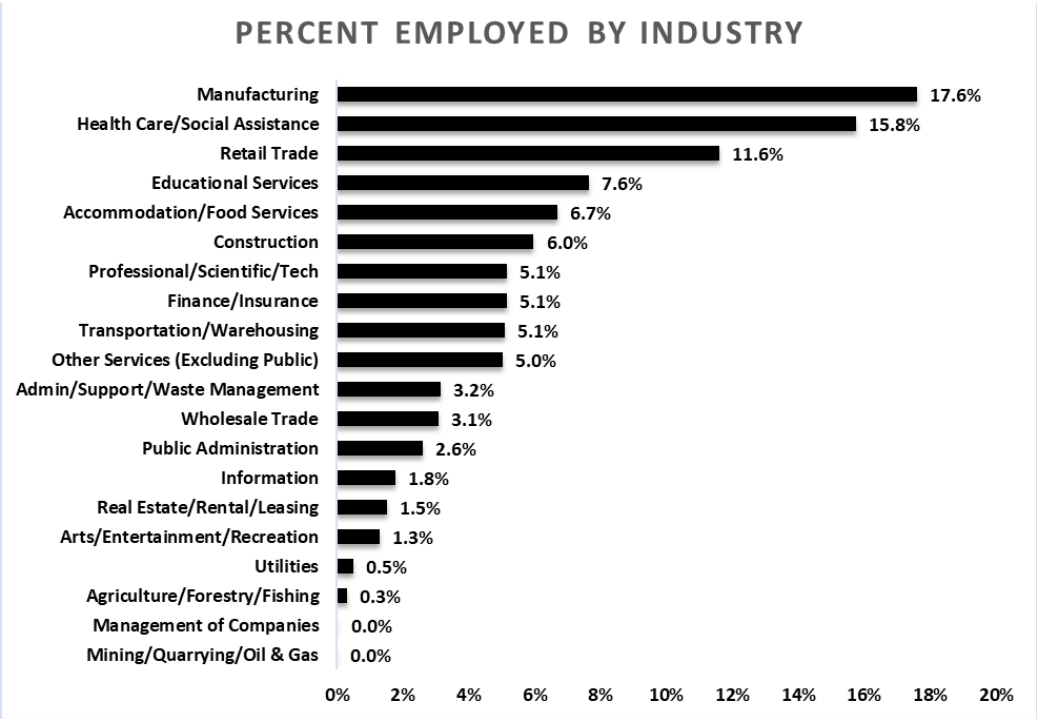


Figure 17: Industry Composition (2022)

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MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX

Esri's Market Potential data measures the likely demand for a product or service in an area. A Market Potential Index (MPI) compares the demand for a specific product or service in an area with the national demand for that product or service. A value of more than 100 represents higher demand, and a value of less than 100 represents lower demand. For example, a service with a score of 125 translates into being 25% higher than the national average.

MPI scores were pulled for three categories:

- Exercise/Personal Health Activities
- Sport Activities
- Outdoor Activities

Exercise/Personal Health Activities

All recorded activities score below the national average. However, the activities with the highest scores include yoga, walking for exercise, and swimming. Additionally, 56% of the total population is expected to participate in these three activities even though the MPI scores are below 100. These trends indicate the importance of water recreation access, trails/pathways development, and opportunities for activating park spaces through exercise programming.

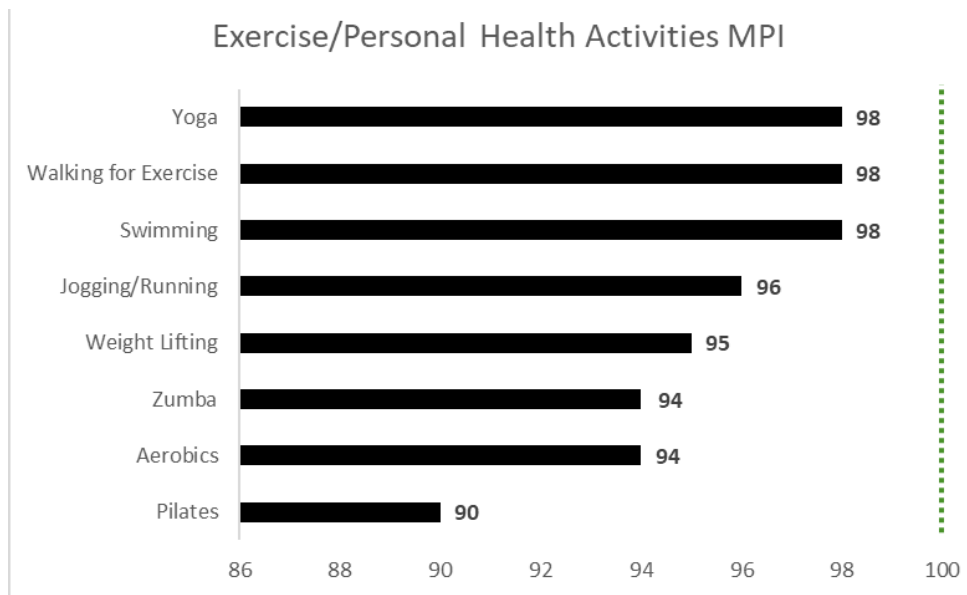


Figure 18: Exercise/Personal Health Activities MPI Scores for Allen County

Sport Activities

Three sport activities score above the national average: volleyball, bowling, and football. Four additional sport activities are slightly below the national average. In general, the county’s population is expected to participate in sport activities similarly to comparable demographics across the United States. This information is important for a county park system because county park systems are sometimes used for practice facilities/spaces which translate into rental income opportunities.

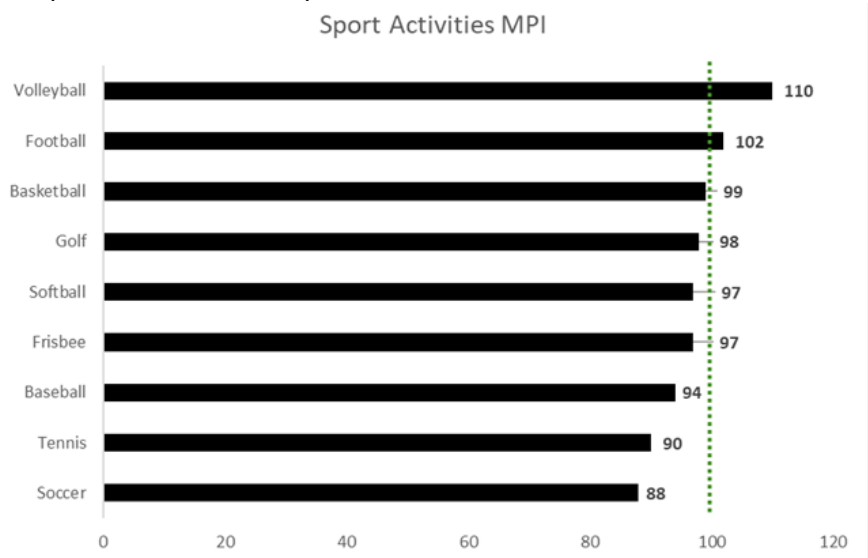


Figure 19: Sport Activities MPI Scores for Allen County

Outdoor Activities

Fresh water fishing, canoeing/kayaking, power boating, archery, and horseback riding are the highest scored activities whereas mountain biking, hiking, and road bicycling have the lowest scores. Of note, not all activities may make sense for Allen County Parks (such as horseback riding due to trail maintenance), but the notion that residents show a proclivity to engage in outdoor recreation activities is the main takeaway.

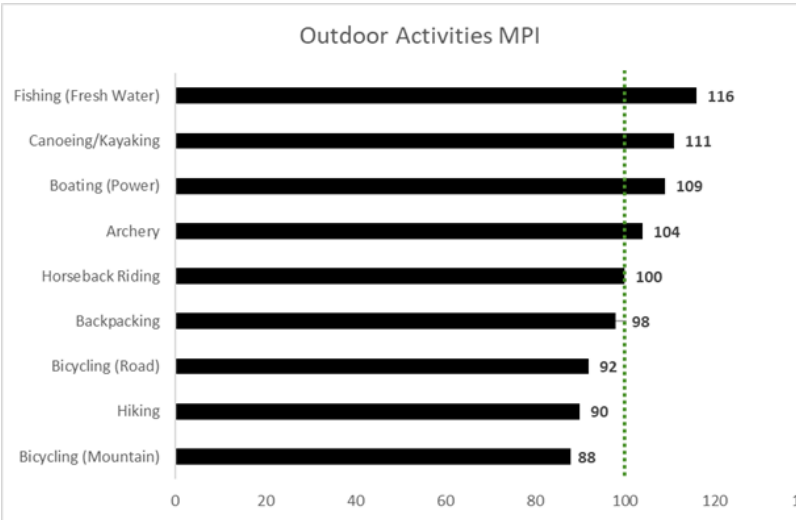


Figure 20: Outdoor Activities MPI Scores for Allen County

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SPENDING POTENTIAL INDEX (SPI)

Esri's U.S. Consumer Spending data is based on the latest Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CEX) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Spending Potential Index (SPI) compares the average amount spent locally for a project to the average amount spent nationally. Like the MPI score, an index of 100 reflects the national average.

SPI scores were pulled for two categories:

- Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions
- Sports, Recreation, and Exercise Equipment

Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions

Allen County residents exhibit below average SPI index scores for all recorded activities. Activities that receive the highest average amount spent annually include membership fees for social/recreation/health clubs, fees for recreational lessons, and fees for participant sports (excluding trips).

Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions		
Activity	SPI	Average Amount Spent
Admission to Sporting Events, excl. Trips	82	\$60.15
Fees for Participant Sports, excl. Trips	81	\$105.67
Tickets to Theatre/Operas/Concerts	80	\$73.56
Tickets to Parks or Museums	79	\$30.42
Membership Fees for Social/Recreation/Health Clubs	79	\$224.44
Fees for Recreational Lessons	74	\$118.78

Figure 21: Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions SPI Scores for Allen County

Sports, Recreation, and Exercise Equipment

Allen County residents exhibit below average SPI index scores for all recorded activities. Activities that receive the highest average amount spent annually include hunting and fishing equipment, exercise equipment and gear, and bicycles. It should be noted that the top two categories with the highest average amount spent are almost identical.

Sports, Recreation, and Exercise Equipment		
Activity	SPI	Average Amount Spent
Hunting and Fishing Equipment	90	\$49.87
Water Sports Equipment	83	\$7.89
Other Sports Equipment	82	\$6.63
Bicycles	81	\$27.56
Exercise Equipment and Gear, Game Tables	80	\$49.86
Camping Equipment	76	\$18.01
Rental/Repair of Sports/Recreation/Exercise Equipment	76	\$2.48
Winter Sports Equipment	65	\$5.48

Figure 22: Sports, Recreation, and Exercise Equipment Scores for Allen County

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IMPLICATIONS

Outdoor Recreation

The highest MPI scores, along with the highest SPI scores, indicate outdoor recreation is an area that can be leveraged. Many Midwestern states are moving toward creating an outdoor ethic and increasing 4-season recreation activities. Allen County Parks can be a catalyst for the area's outdoor ethic by providing facilities and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Level of Service and Infrastructure

The county as a whole is experiencing large population growth since the 2010 Census and projections indicate it will not be stopping soon. As a result, more stress and pressure on existing recreation infrastructure will occur. Additionally, as more people call Allen County home, the level of service will automatically decrease if new amenities and experiences are not added to the park system. This fact does not take into account a decreasing level of service based on aging infrastructure in general. When combined, the county's demographics necessitate an increased attention toward infrastructure improvements and system expansion. System expansion will also need to account for land acquisition as more land within the county is earmarked for residential development. It will behoove Allen County Parks to get ahead of the population growth by growing with the county's population and changing demographics instead of reacting to community change, albeit caveats exist for land acquisition for Allen County Parks (see below and later in this Master Plan).

Park Locations, Entrance Fees, and Programming

Given the fact county parks are in relatively lower ALICE household population areas, there is a need to expand park access to other areas of the county to really reach those more in need. Land acquisition is typically the first thought that comes to mind, but as later discussed in this Master Plan, current operational challenges may limit the pursuit of additional park land. Therefore, effort should be made to reduce perceived and real barriers to park access and program participation. Although low, Allen County Parks charges a park entrance fee, and the fee may be prohibitive to many households that need to utilize parks the most.

As a resource-focused system, Allen County Parks should identify ways to "bring the parks to people" if existing park locations are not conducive to use based on travel limitations. Many park systems look toward utilizing mobile recreation vehicles, creating "pop-up" events around the planning area, and establishing free program days or events. Given the demographics of Allen County, the park system should focus on outreach programs toward non-Fort Wayne residents (especially the southeast portion of the county) as the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department should focus on urban recreational opportunities.

Section 4

Supply Analysis

4.1. BENCHMARK COMPARISON

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) compiles data from municipalities and parks and recreation agencies across the country annually. NRPA's Park Metrics provides insights into "average" statistics in terms of park land provided per 1,000 residents, trail miles, full-time equivalents (FTEs), budget allocation, and much, much more. This comparison provides a baseline understanding of Allen County Parks ("Allen County") in terms of how it relates to agencies of similar scope. All metric standards represent the median statistic based on the NRPA's park and recreation agency performance benchmarking tool. It should also be noted that this process is self-selected, meaning park and recreation agencies choose to participate and upload their own information.

For each benchmark category, the median metric is presented based on agency characteristic. For the purposes of this benchmark, metrics for all counties, service population between 250,000-499,999 people, maintain less than 10 parks, and have an overall agency budget between \$500,000-\$1,000,000 are listed to provide additional lenses to view benchmark metrics.

4.2. PARK LAND AND TRAILS

As a standalone agency, Allen County does not necessarily align with industry benchmarks for the number of residents per park and acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Through this lens, Allen County has a lower level of service than comparable agencies; however, Allen County does contain Indiana's second largest city (Fort Wayne) which is served by a local parks and recreation department. When factoring in Fort Wayne's service provision (along with other communities such as New Haven, Grabill, Leo-Cedarville, Monroeville, Huntertown, and Woodburn) all park land and trail metrics would be larger than what appears in the table below. Regardless, the comparison to all other county park systems shows Allen County as a standalone agency has a lower level of service provided.

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
Residents per Park	65,200	8,186	4,013	3,403	1,998
Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents	2.6	9.4	11.3	6.4	11.3
Miles of Trail	14	39	59	3	5

Figure 23: Park Land and Trails Metrics

4.3. STAFFING

The national median for the number of full-time equivalents (FTE) for all counties is 71.5, meaning the median county agency has nearly 150,000 staff hours available across full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. Currently, Allen County has only 7 FTE dedicated to its system, a metric much lower than the industry benchmark for all counties, but more in alignment with agencies with similar budgets.

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	7	71.5	202	16.3	7.4
FTEs per 10,000 Residents	.2	2.8	5.8	7.7	6.5

Figure 24: Staffing Metrics

4.4. BUDGET METRICS

Allen County's 2021 budget was approximately \$900,000. Comparatively speaking, Allen County's annual operating expenditure is similar with the median figure for agencies with similar budgets but is much lower for agencies that maintain a similar number of parks. When examining other operating metrics, Allen County has a low operating expenditure per capita and per acre; however, a much larger operating expenditure per capita is shown but it is due to Allen County's low staffing level. When examining revenue, Allen County generates a much lower amount per capita but that can be attributed to the county's overall large population. When examining actual cost recovery, Allen County does a good job generating earned revenue to offset budget expenses.

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
Annual Operating Expenditures	\$901,006	\$7M	\$20.5M	\$1.7M	\$700K
Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$2.30	\$28	\$59	\$79	\$65
Operating Expenditures per Acre	\$889	\$2,000	\$4,200	\$10,600	\$5,000
Operating Expenditures per FTE	\$128,715	\$90,500	\$98,000	\$90,700	\$99,000
Revenues per Capita	\$.80	\$5	\$10	\$21	\$15
Revenue as a Percentage of Operating Expenditures (Cost Recovery)	35%	18%	22%	25%	29%

Figure 25: Budget Metrics

Section 4

Supply Analysis

4.5. DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES

When examining the distribution of operating expenditures, Allen County is like agency medians for personnel services (salaries, benefits, overtime, etc.), but from there, the distribution differs. Allen County funds a much larger percentage of capital expenses with their operating budget than agencies of similar size and scope; thus, the percentage for operating expenses is much lower, comparatively.

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
Personnel Services	58%	56%	59%	52%	56%
Operating Expenses	13%	36%	35%	40%	38%
Capital Expense (Not In CIP)	29%	4%	3%	7%	5%
Other	<1%	4%	3%	1%	1%

Figure 26: Distribution of Operating Expenditures

4.6. SOURCES OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES

In terms of sources for operating expenditures, Allen County's distribution is like industry benchmark medians. Most agencies receive their largest support from the general fund, and Allen County is no exception; however, in Allen County's case, the general fund is high because operating expenses are kept as low as possible. This is a result of general fund dollars paying for staff, but all other operating expenses needing to come from another source(s). Additionally, there is a stark contrast in percentages for sponsorships. Allen County has a Gift Fund and receives donations throughout the year. In the last five years, the Gift Fund was used for matching funds for a Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant, whereas self-generated operating funds are normally used. Also, it should be noted that earned/generated income opportunities are typically connected to facility investments, staffing levels, and the types of programs and services provided meaning consistent attention to these areas is critical for an agency like Allen County that has almost one quarter of its budget coming from earned/generated income (this notion also has implications for sponsorships/donations).

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
General Fund Tax Support	62%	65%	61%	59%	66%
Earned/Generated Income	23%	20%	20%	25%	26%
Dedicated Levies	-	7%	8%	10%	3%
Other Dedicated Taxes	-	4%	5%	2%	1%
Grants	-	2%	3%	2%	2%
Sponsorships	14%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	<1%	1%	2%	1%	1%

Figure 27: Sources of Operating Expenditures

4.7. CAPITAL BUDGET

Capital spending varies greatly from park agency to park agency. The national median statistic for capital improvement spending is approximately \$16.7 million over a five-year period for all counties. Over the last five years, Allen County has spent approximately \$800,000 in capital improvements, a figure like agencies with a similar budget but lower than agencies maintaining a similar number of parks. An important factor into Allen County's spending amount is the CIP is almost entirely self-generated funds, whereas many other agencies have separate capital funding sources/mechanisms.

The existing five-year CIP has identified approximately \$8.3 million in needed capital improvements (including land acquisition). A lower capital improvement expenditure generally translates into a growing deferred maintenance backlog, a trend Allen County needs to continue tracking and making a concerted effort to alleviate.

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
Five-Year Capital Budget Spending	\$800K	\$16.7M	\$32.1M	\$1.3M	\$700K

Figure 28: Capital Budget

Section 4

Supply Analysis

4.8. TARGETS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

When looking at how the previous capital improvement spending has been allocated, most of the funds were used for new development (74%), followed by renovations (20%). It should be noted that some of the funding attributed to new development involved renovations, but also included new enhancements, features, and facility development. No capital funding was spent on land acquisition in the last five years, but a 9-acre parcel was donated to Allen County free of charge.

Metric	Allen County	All Counties	250,000-499,999 Population Served	Less Than 10 Parks Maintained	Agency Budget \$500,000-\$1 Million
Acquisition	-	12%	8%	9%	9%
New Development	74%	37%	40%	30%	17%
Renovation	20%	45%	48%	53%	62%
Other	6%	6%	4%	8%	12%

Figure 29: Targets for Capital Expenditures

4.9. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

STAFFING AND EARNED INCOME

The ability for a public agency to help itself financially is gaining more and more traction. Currently, Allen County's cost recovery is around 35%, a figure above industry benchmark metrics, but Allen County's staffing levels are low, limiting the department's ability to generate additional revenue. With general fund monies only being attributed to staffing costs, operating costs and additional capital expenditures need to be funded by alternate revenue streams. Implementing a more robust earned income strategy that allows the department to ramp up operations and decrease operations appropriately based on economic conditions, public participation, and agency financial goals is needed. In other words, the department needs to have a mechanism to fund additional staffing (not the existing staffing baseline) through generated income; otherwise, staffing levels can remain stagnant which, in turn, restricts earned income growth potential. An alternative to this approach is to receive additional general fund monies for staffing.

CAPITAL FUNDING

Revenue generation depends a lot on the quality being received, experience provided, and degree of amenities/goods/services meeting the expectations of users. Without appropriate capital investment, facilities and amenities will move quicker toward their end of lifecycle stages and will possibly affect earned income opportunities along the way. This poses a challenge to maintain the entire park system and expand and improve the park system by adding in new amenities, facilities, and experiences as the county grows. With over \$8 million in needed capital improvements identified, and only 10% of that spent over the last five years, Allen County needs to examine alternate capital funding streams (e.g., bonds, dedicated levies, capital improvement fees, increased gate fees, etc.) to reduce a growing deferred maintenance backlog.

Section 5

Accessibility

The Park Board and staff are committed to providing recreational opportunities to persons of all abilities. Recognizing that there is always room for improvement, the Allen County Parks and Recreation Department staff performed a self-evaluation and provided commentary. The following self-evaluation was designed to determine what is and is not accessible within each park and facilities within the parks. Items noted as deficiencies are added to the Action Plan and Capital Improvement Program.

5.1. ACCESSIBILITY SELF-EVALUATION AND COMMENTARY

FOX ISLAND COUNTY PARK

Fox Island is a 605 acre park located in southwest Allen County. Within this park, 270 acres are dedicated as State Nature Preserve, which protects areas having unique plants, animals or geographic features. Hundreds of species of animals and plants live at Fox Island because of the relatively natural condition of most of the area which includes habitats of marsh, seasonal ponds, wooded sand dunes, wetland forest, old fields and restored prairie. The park contains the largest contiguous forest in the county and a glacial sand dune. Seven miles of marked trails through the preserve enable visitors to enjoy the beauty and splendor of the park. The park also contains a Nature Center, three open picnic shelters, a Bird Observation Building, lake, swimming beach, restrooms, picnic tables and grills.

Accessibility upgrades include renovations to the Nature Center along with a paved route to the Center and accessible parking. Restrooms were retrofitted and correct signage was installed. Also recently completed are an accessible paved pathway from the lake parking lot to the lake area and two of the open shelters, along with construction of an accessible restroom and playground. Accessible picnic tables and grills are provided at each of the shelters. A ramp to the lake provides access to the water. Marked accessible parking spaces were also included in this work.

The Vera Dulin Wildlife Observation Building entry is accessible but the restrooms are not at this time. There is insufficient area to make both restrooms accessible. Plans are to renovate the two smaller restrooms into one unisex accessible restroom, as budget allows.

The third open shelter located near the Geo Garden area is accessible by way of a stone pathway, but lacks an accessible path to the shelter itself. The ground adjacent to the shelter should be replaced with an accessible path to the shelter floor.

All parking lots are chip and seal and therefore difficult to maintain striping, but are maintained as often as possible and have signs designating accessible parking places. Proper signage to trails is not available for users at this time.

Most of the trails are in their natural state and inaccessible. The Upper Dune Trail is only accessible by means of the Lower Dune Trail. The trails are marked but do not properly identify how challenging

each of them can be. Some trails have wooden boardwalks to pass over areas that are wet most of the year. Most of these boardwalks have been removed and replaced with on-grade trails that are accessible.

An area near Marsh Overlook has funding for major boardwalk/pier replacement through an estate donation. This was scheduled to occur this year but will have to wait until other restorations are completed. A fishing pier was constructed as an Eagle Scout project and was built to meet accessibility requirements. This was destroyed in the June 13, 2022 Derecho, but will be rebuilt in 2024. This pier has a natural grass pathway for access. The natural grass pathway will need to be improved to an ADA-compliant pavement.

METEA COUNTY PARK

Metea County Park is a 250 acre park in northcentral Allen County near Leo Cedarville, containing the 120 acre Menoaki State Nature Preserve. The north and south areas of the park are separated by Cedar Creek, a state designated scenic river.

There are five miles of marked trails through the park and preserve. As at other county parks, most trails are in their natural state. Trails are marked, but do not properly identify challenges that may lie ahead. Boardwalks on some trails have been modified for accessibility but many require additional work and modifications or replacements. Ramps to many are non-existent, offering only steps. Trail maps do not provide the necessary information to determine challenge levels for each route.

The park also contains a Nature Center, two open shelters, a pond, prairie, picnic tables and grills, and two parking areas.

The Nature Center with its classrooms, conference room, and restrooms is fully accessible. The Center does have a lower level with a classroom. Budget constraints at the time of construction did not allow for the inclusion of an elevator although an area was constructed so that in the future one could be added. Access to the lower level is made by way of an accessible service drive to a small parking area. Signage within the building is limited and will need to be addressed.

The two open shelters are accessible only by travel across grass. Accessible pathways to the shelters are needed. Accessible picnic tables are provided once in the shelter.

An ADA-compliant sidewalk has been constructed to provide access to the pond. However there is still a need to provide signage and asphalt pavement.

Both parking areas are chip and sealed. The Nature Center has the required signage and number of spaces. The Nature Center parking lot was recently paved but needs striping, which should be complete in the spring 2023. Modifications to the trails is required at this park as well as appropriate signage.

Section 5

Accessibility

PAYTON COUNTY PARK

Payton County Park is a 40 acre park consisting of old field, forest and wetland areas. The park also contains an open picnic shelter, pit toilets, picnic tables, a parking area and two miles of trails.

The shelter is accessible by means of a recently constructed concrete sidewalk by way of volunteers from a local college. The shelter is scheduled to be repaired and accessible in-ground picnic tables will be installed.

The park has a new 12 car ADA-compliant parking lot and 1/2 mile of paved trails. The signage and striping has been completed. A new play area will be accessible in spring 2023.

The trails are in their natural state and no signage exists.

This park will hopefully see huge improvements in the next 2-years as an accessible connection to a new trail will be constructed in conjunction with a new access drive, parking lot, playground, and tables as well as new accessible pit toilets. The department is working on an application for a Land & Water Conservation Fund grant to assist with portions of this work.

COOK'S LAND COUNTY PARK

Cook's Landing County Park is a small park located in northern Allen County along the Cedar Creek. Consisting of only 4 acres this is the smallest park in the system. The park consists of a small parking area, an open shelter, picnic tables and a grill. No trails exist within this park.

The shelter contains accessible picnic tables, but lacks a designated accessible route from the parking area to the shelter. Access to areas of the park, including access to the creek edge is across flat grassy areas. No signage exists in this park. The small parking area consists of gravel and is not striped or signed. The park will require a new parking area, accessible path to the shelter & creek, as well as signage.

PROGRAMS

Programs are available to people of all abilities although we do ask that we be made aware of any needs by participants ahead of the scheduled event. Accommodations for any needs are made upon request. The small staff size of the department requires that outside sources be contracted. A more consistent method of providing this information should be planned and implemented.

Staff should be better training in providing the right materials and programming. Materials are not available at this time in braille or recorded version.

PRINTED MATERIALS AND WEBSITE

Brochures, newsletters, maps, and announcements are not available in any form other than printed copies. No large print versions, braille, or recorded versions are available at this time. Efforts should be made to correct this situation.

Most of the department brochures and maps are in need of updates. The department is currently investigating the possibility of self-guided hikes and tours available for most cell phones that may have an application in this instance as well. The current website has recently underwent an upgraded to meet all accessibility standards.

5.2. ACCESSIBILITY NOTICE

All media notices, press releases, printed materials, and newsletters are to include the following statement with regards to accessibility:

Allen County does not engage in illegal discrimination. No person shall be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, a program, service, or activity of Allen County, or be subjected to discrimination because of race, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, national origin, religion, income status, or limited English proficiency. Any individual with a disability who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a program, service, or activity of Allen County, should contact the Allen County ADA and Title VI Coordinator Laura Maser, (260) 449-7555, laura.maser@allencounty.us, as soon as possible but no later than seventy-two (72) hours before the scheduled event. Individuals requiring special language services should contact the Allen County ADA and Title VI Coordinator as soon as possible but no later than at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the date on which the services will be needed.

5.3. ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Allen County does not engage in illegal discrimination. No person shall be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, a program, service, or activity of Allen County, or be subjected to discrimination because of race, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, national origin, religion, income status, or limited English proficiency. Any individual with a disability who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a program, service, or activity of Allen County, should contact the Allen County ADA and Title VI Coordinator Laura Maser, (260) 449-7555, laura.maser@allencounty.us, as soon as possible but no later than seventy-two (72) hours before the scheduled event. Individuals requiring special language services should contact the Allen County ADA and Title VI Coordinator as soon as possible but no later than at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the date on which the services will be needed.

Note: The accessibility notice and accessibility statement have the same wording.

Section 5

Accessibility

5.4. ACCESSIBILITY GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Appointed Boards that serve the residents of Allen County (“Allen County”) have adopted a grievance procedure for prompt and impartial investigation and resolution of complaints alleging discrimination in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and related amendments, statutes, regulations, directives, executive orders, as well as any other Federal, State, or local nondiscrimination law.

Any person, or his or her representative, who believes that he or she, as a member of a protected class, has been discriminated against or harassed based on race, color, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, religion, low income status, or limited English proficiency may submit a grievance form in conformance with the procedures set forth below. Allen County will conduct a prompt and impartial investigation of all allegations and will take prompt corrective action if a claim is substantiated.

The complainant should submit, either verbally or in writing, his or her complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination or harassment. Complaint forms may be found on the Allen County website at <http://www.allencounty.us/ada>. The complaint form is intended to be an aid for the complainant. However, individuals are not required to use the designated complaint form. Additionally, the ADA/Title VI Coordinator will help the complainant reduce his or her complaint to writing if assistance is needed.

Generally, a complaint should include the name, address, telephone number of the complainant, as well as a detailed description of the alleged discriminatory conduct including the date that such conduct occurred. When possible, the complainant should also identify the name and contact information for any individual who witnessed the incident or conduct.

Complaints should be directed to:

Laura Maser

ADA / Title VI Coordinator 200 E. Berry St., Suite 380 Fort Wayne, IN 46802

P: (260) 449- 7217 F: (260) 449-4220

Email: laura.maser@allencounty.us

Within 60 days of the receipt of the complaint, the ADA/Title VI Coordinator will conduct an investigation of the allegation(s) based on the information provided. The ADA/Title VI Coordinator will issue a written report of his or her findings to the complainant.

These procedures do not deny the right of any individual to file a formal complaint with any government agency or affect an individual's right to seek private counsel. No one may intimidate, threaten, coerce or engage in other discriminatory conduct against anyone because they have taken action or participated in an action to secure rights protected by civil rights laws.

5.5. ACCESSIBILITY IMPLICATIONS

Universal Design and Accessibility should be a fundamental part of all future planning, design, and construction projects. This includes construction of new parks and facilities, as well as renovations and retrofits to existing parks and facilities. Universal Design and Accessibility goes beyond compliance with guidelines and codes; it is a design philosophy that supports the needs of all users, with and without disabilities. There are several key considerations to creating an accessible park system that is integrated into the network of accessible amenities, systems, and services provided by the larger community.

ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY WITHIN PARKS

All park pathways to the extent possible should be designed with accessibility in mind. These are fundamental to experiencing park itself and provide an accessible route to various features and amenities. Accessible routes must include a “firm and stable” pavement surface and ADA-compliant running slopes, cross-slopes, and pavement widths. If a paved path is less than 5’ wide, then it should include passing spaces. The 2010 ADAAG Standards describes in detail how these accessible routes should be designed.

FEATURES AND AMENITIES

The provision of park amenities such as benches, tables, overlook decks, etc. should include fully accessible features within amenity areas. Most vendors provide ADA-Compliant alternatives for standard site furnishings. For example, a standard picnic table may have a variant that includes an extended overhang on one end to allow for wheelchair access. Accessible playground equipment should also be provided. These accessible park features also need to be connected the rest of the park’s accessibility network through appropriate pavement surfaces and/or transportation networks.

CREATING AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM OF ACCESSIBILITY

When planning improvements or retrofits of parks, the larger community context should be considered. Where possible, these improvements should be coordinated with other County departments so that adjacent roadway and sidewalk systems can be integrated or upgraded in the future. For example, a roadway project that includes accessibility improvements could be coordinated with park construction projects to create a fully connected network of accessible routes within the park and the adjacent public rights-of-way. If a park has a limited number of accessible walkways that connect to adjacent rights-of-way, additional accessible park entrances may need to be added to increase functional access. Transit service to park facilities should also be considered. This could include special transit service to a park. An accessible route from this transit service area that connects into the park’s accessible network should be an integral component.

Note: See the Appendix for the Allen County Complaint of Discrimination Form

Section 6

Public Participation

6.1. PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

The planning team organized a public input meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2022 in New Haven and another public open house on Wednesday, October 26, 2022 in Fort Wayne. The public input meeting was designed to be an "open house" style meeting in which participants could provide input at their own pace. The Public Open House was advertised via social media, the Allen County Parks website, and flyers at various facilities. The input stations for Allen County were set up at both meetings to gather the most input for the Allen County Parks. These engagement stations were set up across the room that allowed participants to:

- Provide comments for specific parks
- Indicate community needs for programs and facilities
- Allocate money to competing priorities
- Provide context as to what they participate in most often

A total of 25+ members of the public participated during the New Haven meeting, and another 40+ participated in the Fort Wayne meeting. Meeting participants were also able to meet with Allen County staff and engage in conversations about their feedback and/or ask questions.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on the meeting participants' feedback, the following are key takeaways:

Community Needs

Meeting participants indicated having facility needs for nature trails and natural areas and green space. In terms of program and service access, paddlecraft access, outdoor adventure programs, and nature programs had the highest response.

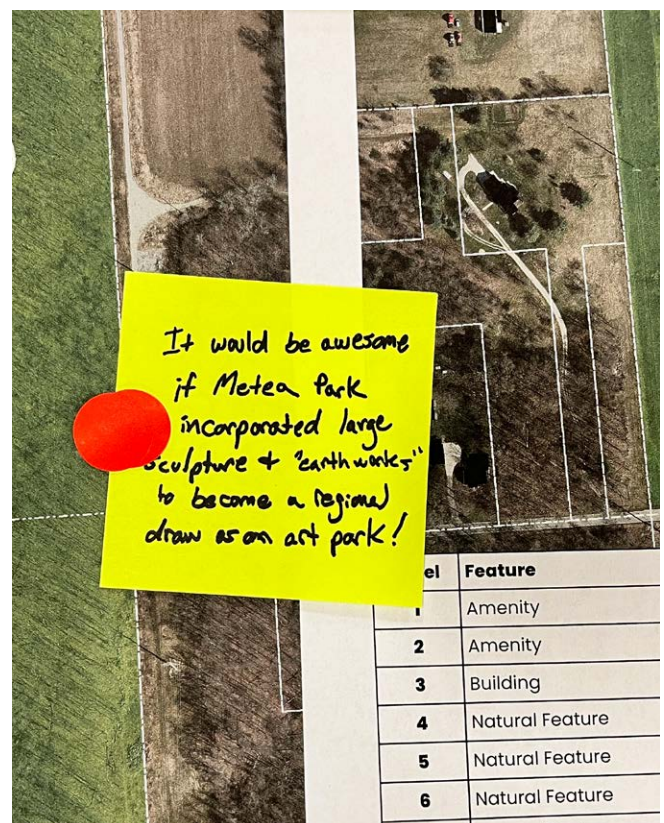
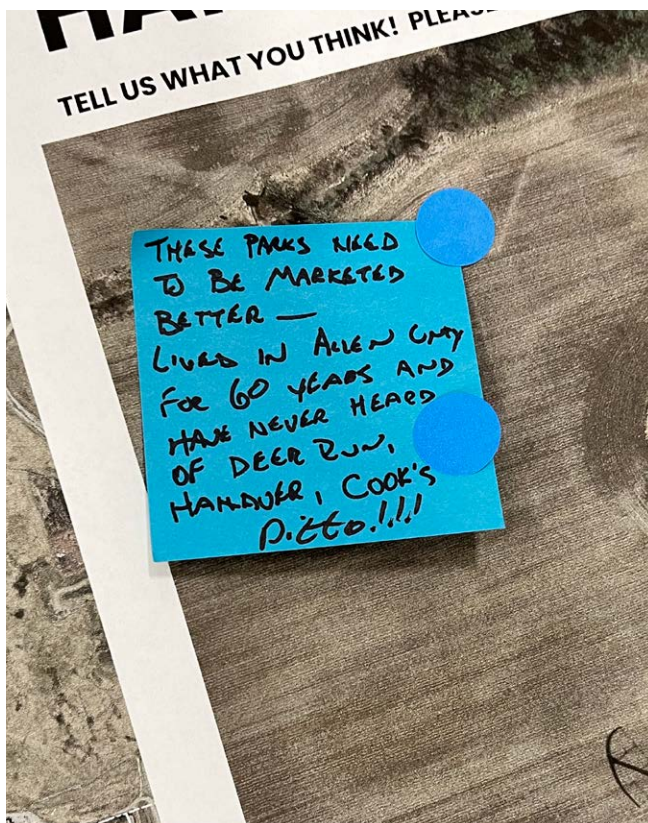
Park Visitation

Meeting participants indicated using the community center, trails, and nature areas the most in the last 12 months. For specific parks, Fox Island County Park and Metea County Park were most used.

Resource Allocation

When given the opportunity to spend \$100 across five competing priorities, meeting participants expressed the following order of importance:

- Maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities.
- Acquisition and development of pathways and greenways.
- Improvements of existing parks and recreation facilities.
- Development/construction of new facilities.
- Acquisition of new park land and open space.



Section 6

Public Participation

6.2. COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online survey was available from October through December 2022. A total of 278 responses were received. Survey announcements were made via social media, websites, and conversations with staff and colleagues. Facebook and direct email were the most successful means of advertising the survey.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on survey information received, the following are key takeaways:

Most Used Parks, Facilities, and Amenities

Parks used most often include Fox Island County Park and Metea County Park.

Barriers for Park and Programming Usage

Respondents were asked to indicate what prevents them from using Allen County parks, recreation facilities, or programs more often. The top responses were:

- "I do not know what is being offered" (29.31%)
- "Too far from residence" (24.14%)
- "No time to participate" (19.54%)
- "I do not know locations of facilities" (14.37%)

Marketing and Communication

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred ways to learn about parks, recreation programs, and park activities. The respondents were allowed to select all items that apply. The top responses were:

- Facebook (68.66%)
- Email (48.26%)
- Allen County Parks Website (47.76%)
- Word of mouth from friends and neighbors (22.89%)

Most Important Park Features and Programs/Services

Respondents were asked to indicate their most important facilities. The respondents were allowed to select all items that apply. The top responses were:

- Nature trails (88.52%)
- Natural areas and green space (77.03%)
- Nature centers / environmental learning centers (61.72%)
- Access to water recreation (30.62%)

Most Important and Programs/Services

Respondents were asked to indicate their most programs and services. The respondents were allowed to select all items that apply. The top responses were:

- Nature programs (76.56%)
- Environmental education programs (70.33%)
- Outdoor adventure programs (40.19%)
- Canoeing/kayaking/stand up paddleboarding (38.76%)

Resource Allocation

Survey respondents prioritized spending \$100 with the following average dollar amount:

- Improvements/ maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities (\$51)
- Acquisition of new park land and open space (\$33)
- Acquisition and development of pathways and greenways (\$28)
- Development/ construction of new facilities (\$17)

Overall Satisfaction

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction for the overall value they receive from Allen County Parks. On a five-point scale from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5), survey respondents report a weighted average of 4.27.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the public input received, there is a strong desire to maintain and improve the existing park system before developing new facilities. Additionally, residents report a strong desire to see an increase trail system network. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic also revitalized the need for outdoor spaces and trails.

Barriers to Participation

A common barrier for public recreation participation is not knowing what is being offered and being too busy. However, the remaining barriers listed in the top-five provide critical context for Allen County. Residents listed being too far from the parks as a key element for not using the Allen County Parks. They also noted that their desired facility was not being offered and that they use the facilities of other agencies. This speaks to the potential need for better or more clear communication of the purpose of the County Park system and how it should be used by area residents.

6.3. PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

A public presentation of findings was held on March 15, 2023 at 3:30 PM at Allen County Hanauer Reserve. This was held during a regularly scheduled Allen County Park Board Meeting and several park board members and staff were in attendance. No members of the public attended the meeting, but two members of the media were present and covered the presentation for various media outlets.

A total of

278

survey responses
were collected.

Section 7

Needs Analysis

7.1. INTRODUCTION

A needs assessment determines “gaps” between current conditions and desired conditions. An important tenet of a needs assessment is the accurate measurement of desired conditions so needs, or gaps, can be appropriately identified. A distinction must be made between “wants” and “needs.” A community may want or desire a specific amenity, program, or experience, but determining the actual need may manifest a bit different from the stated want based on many factors including, but not limited to: economic realities, physical land restrictions or constraints, system growth based on phasing, and the like.

7.2. IDENTIFIED NEEDS

The Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan included a multi-pronged approach to its creation, including societal research, industry benchmarks, existing supply, public feedback, and consultant analysis and opinion. As a result, the following sections outline and discuss key needs for Allen County Parks over the next five years.

SYSTEM FUNDING

Based on national benchmark statistics provided earlier in this document, Allen County is below average in terms of annual operating expenditures along with operating expenditures per capita and per acre. Additionally, Allen County has below average revenue generation per capita and five-year capital budget spending. Given these trends, it is imperative for increased financial investment to both maintain and enhance the park system. The following subsections outline preferred mechanisms.

Increased and Dedicated Operational Funding

Currently, Allen County’s dedicated funding only pays for salaries, a deviation from a more “standard” way park systems’ general funds are funded. Augmenting staff salaries, Allen County charges gate fees, solicits donations, and charges for some programming. Patrons can purchase an annual park pass, but there is one noticeable caveat to the process not typically seen in other systems: all park passes must be purchased with cash or check.

To better understand the park system’s funding levels, a benchmark comparison was performed. The analysis included taking a county park system’s tax income and dividing it by the county’s overall tax income; thus, a percentage of county tax dollars attributed to county parks and recreation services is calculated. The results are presented in alphabetical order, and data for some county park systems is unknown due to lack of public data. Direct requests were made to agencies when data was unavailable.

As shown by the table, Allen County's budget derived from dedicated taxes is approximately .6% of the overall county's tax income, the second lowest in the state only to Starke County; however, Starke County's department was recently created and there is no dedicated staff or office space at the writing of this plan. When examining descriptive statistics for those reporting budget figures, the maximum percentage is 8.6% (Decatur County), the average percentage is 3.78%, and the median percentage is 3.35%. Given the statistics, further examination is warranted for the general fund budget appropriated for Allen County Parks. Additionally, more information is needed for how effective gate fees are for the system's budget given, albeit low, a park entrance fee can be a barrier for park use. To put this into perspective, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) produces a national benchmarking tool called Park Metrics and according to the national survey, only 2% of all county park systems charge a park entrance fee.

Department	County Property Tax	Department Budget from Property Tax	Percent	Year
Allen County	\$81,735,624	\$520,509	.6%	2023
Brown County	\$92,506,848	\$1,080,702	1.2%	2023
Daviess-Martin County	Operates a fully self-funded budget.			
Decatur County	\$7,319,037	\$627,450	8.6%	2023
Elkhart County	\$50,667,445	\$2,316,522	4.6%	2023
Floyd County	\$10,947,005	\$640,746	5.9%	2023
Hamilton County	\$84,283,099	\$6,278,238	7.4%	2023
Harrison County	\$8,410,055	\$684,812	8.1%	2023
Hendricks County*	\$32,565,719	\$498,019	1.5%	2021
Henry County**	\$13,380,314	\$501,095	3.7%	2023
Jennings County	\$5,870,608	\$141,375	2.4%	2023
Johnson County***	\$45,546,824	\$774,296	1.7%	2023
Knox County	\$12,405,319	\$498,068	4.0%	2023
LaGrange County	\$7,795,965	\$593,370	7.6%	2023
Lake County	\$186,624,762	\$6,175,759	3.3%	2023
Parke County	\$4,037,994	\$29,127	.7%	2023
Ripley County****	\$4,625,068	\$74,355	1.6%	2023
St. Joseph County	\$75,957,042	\$2,612,648	3.4%	2023
Starke County*****	\$5,817,595	\$20,000	.3%	2023
Vigo County	\$38,154,665	\$1,218,209	3.2%	2023
*Also has \$300,000 distributed annually from Food & Beverage Tax along with a distribution from Innkeepers Tax (about 37% of total parks budget).				
**Budget for only one park: Memorial Park				
***Budget is derived from county's Food & Beverage Tax. Also have two non-reverting funds.				
****Budget for only one park: Fairgrounds Park				
*****Does not have designated office space and department was just recently created.				

Figure 30: Park System Funding Metrics

Section 7

Needs Analysis

Bonding

The park system's infrastructure is aging and needs repair and upkeep. Additionally, older park infrastructure was not developed with consistent design standards and/or materials making ongoing maintenance challenging at times. A general obligation bond (GO bond) is a municipal bond backed solely by the credit and taxing power of the issuing jurisdiction rather than the revenue from a given project. GO bonds are used around the country for park system capital repairs and improvements. Bonds are a great way to inject monies into the system and result in immediate improvements. Most municipalities will practice "consistent bonding" meaning once a bond is paid off, it will "re-up" the bond for new improvements. For Allen County, a GO bond makes sense for capital improvements as capital funding monies are limited.

ADVOCACY

After reviewing information gained from the public engagement process, more advocacy for the Allen County parks system is warranted.

Public Awareness Campaign

Given Allen County contains Fort Wayne and New Haven park systems, there can be public confusion to what system maintains and operates what park along with understanding what each park system exists to do. Since Allen County relies on donations as part of its budget, it is imperative to build a brand awareness with county residents. This is especially important as county park systems typically fill a different role than a local municipal park system. That is, county park systems are much larger in acres maintained, offer more destination/regional points of interest, and focus on nature and environment programming. Being able to articulate its mission, purpose, and system scope to a younger/new generation of park users will be vital for continuing to receive financial support via donations, but also to receive potential future financial support through referendums and other public support options.

Park Board Role

Park Boards play a pivotal role in how park systems are planned and operated. Indiana State Statute provides for the following duties to be performed by Park Boards:

- General supervision and make rules.
- Provide police protection (request assistance).
- Appoint department administrative officers.
- Establish personnel standards and qualifications.
- Make recommendations and an annual report to Council.
- Prepare and submit an annual budget to Council.

Park Board members should be vocal advocates for the park system and retain intimate understanding and knowledge of the park sites, visions for the future, and the successes and challenges of managing the park system. It is recommended to institute an annual Park Board training opportunity along with consistent system tours/technical visits to keep abreast of park system happenings along with clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and annual work planning each year.

FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Capital funding trends, documented facility needs, and recent inclement weather events have all highlighted the need to focus on system-wide facility improvements along with individual sites.

Technology and General Infrastructure

A park system's ability to deliver excellent customer service is of utmost importance to attracting and retaining visitors. As part of the customer service experience, technology improvements are necessary in Allen County parks. Public Wi-Fi is becoming (if not already an expectation) more popular in public parks and spaces. Cell phones are ubiquitous and public space users expect the ability to both use mobile technology for communication but to also interact with the spaces and places they visit. Additionally, technology improvements can aid in more streamlined operational capabilities. For example, electronic gates would reduce the need for entrance gate workers which will allow the park system to adjust its staffing make-up and not struggle to find part-time workers in an ever-changing workforce landscape. A dedicated focus on technology improvements is warranted over the next five years.

Fox Island

As mentioned previously, there was a derecho weather event in June 2022. As a result, the three rounds of storms impacted the park system, but Fox Island took the brunt of the devastation. Fox Island closed immediately following the aftermath investigation and may remain closed for over one year (at the writing of this plan). The derecho has left a profound effect on the park (and overall park system) due to the need to remove mature trees and other natural debris from the park, but also because of the lack of park entrance fees being collected due to the park's closure. This means an increased financial burden is placed on the park system because of the need for increased funding to address the storm damage and the reduced gate fee revenues. Dedicated resources are needed to assist with the park cleanup and public re-opening.

LAND ACQUISITION

As identified in the previous Five-Year Parks Master Plan, Allen County is underserved in the northwest and southeast portion of the county in terms of parkland; however, park land acquisition should only be considered in the next five years if the property fulfills an identified need because the existing system is underfunded based on operations and maintenance. If new property is acquired (through various mechanisms), it is advised that it remains undeveloped and not open to the public until additional funding and operational support can be identified and dedicated to the park system.

STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

According to NRPA Park Metrics, the average park and recreation department has the following staff breakdown:

- Operations and maintenance (45%)
- Programming (31%)
- Administration (18%)
- Capital Development (3%)
- Other (3%)

Allen County parks should focus on developing staffing standards and working toward a staffing breakdown that continues to align with national benchmarks and provides balance to managing, operating, maintaining, and programming the system.

7.3. OTHER RECREATIONAL SOURCES

There are several other recreational resources in Allen County. These promote the

ACRES LAND TRUST

ACRES Land Trust is a member-supported nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting land in northeast Indiana and portions of southern Michigan and northwest Ohio.

ACRES Land Trust preserves are centered around Fort Wayne and Allen County and radiate out to the surrounding region. Allen County Parks and ACRES can benefit from combined efforts to acquire land and provide access to natural areas.

LITTLE RIVER WETLANDS PROJECT (LRWP)

LWRP is a nonprofit land trust that focuses on restoring and preserving wetlands of the Little River Watershed. The Little River heads southwest from Fort Wayne near Fox Island. The largest LWRP preserve is Eagle Marsh which is located directly north of Fox Island Park.

Section 8

New/Existing Facilities Location Map

8.1. NEW PARKS & FACILITIES

The next five years will include various improvements to existing parks. The 2023–2027 timeframe will include two major projects.

LAND ACQUISITION FOR NORTHWEST AREA PARK

The northwest corner of Allen County lacks public open space. The funding for land acquisition is planned for 2026. A specific location or property has not been determined at this time.

LAND ACQUISITION FOR SOUTHEAST AREA PARK

The southeast corner of Allen County lacks public open space. The funding for land acquisition is planned for 2026.

8.2. IMPROVEMENTS TO VARIOUS PARKS

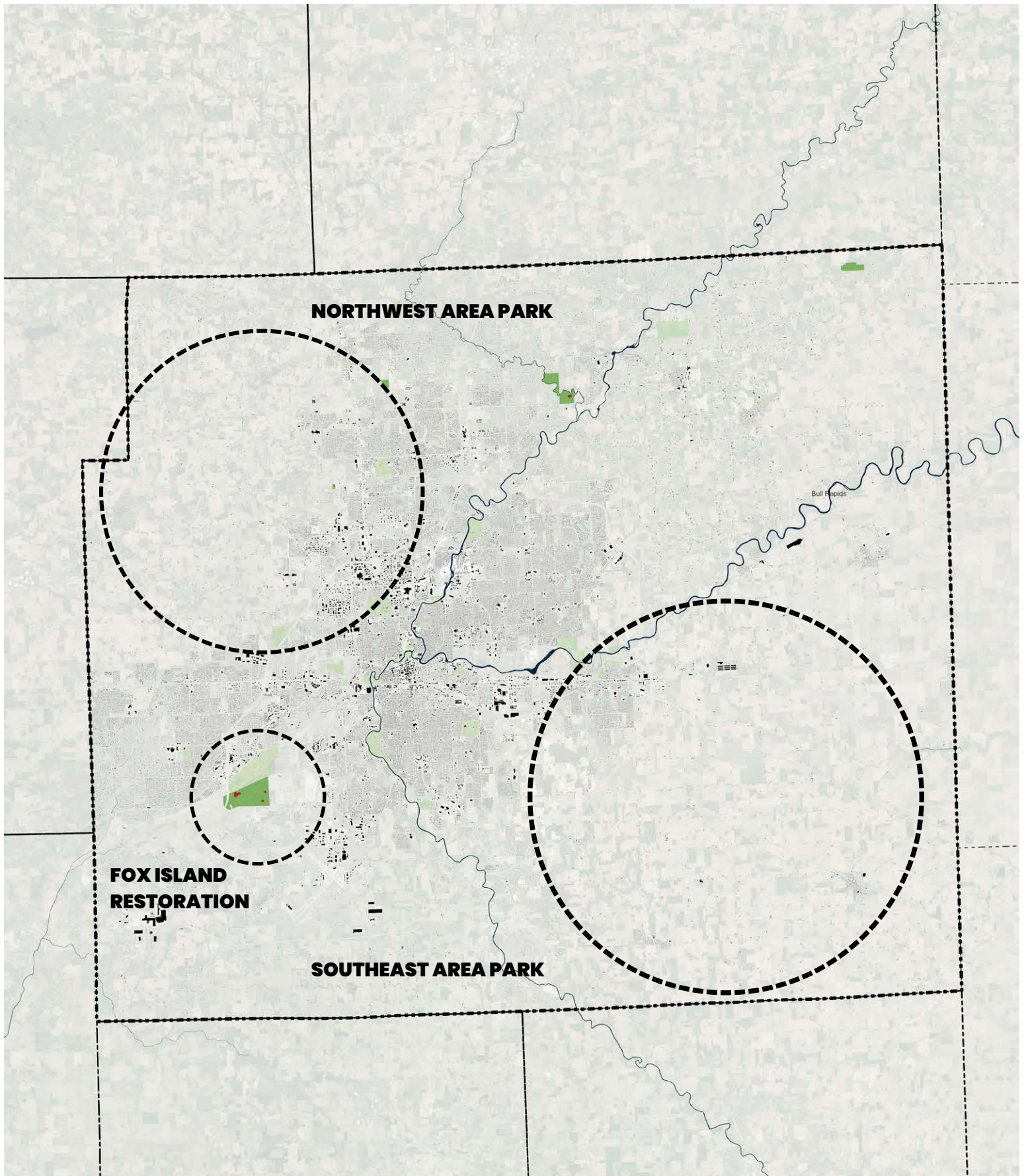
FOX ISLAND RESTORATION

Continued restoration of Fox Island from the 2022 Derecho event will be a major focus for 2023–2024.

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Various maintenance and minor additions to all parks will be completed over the next five years. This will include the following:

- Cook's Landing Boat/Canoe Landing
- Deer Run Wilderness Area Maintenance Repairs
- Fox Island Road and Parking Improvements
- Hanauer Reserve Roadway and Parking Improvements
- Metea County Park Nature Center Improvements
- Metea County Park Accessible Pathways and Roads/Parking Improvements
- Payton County Park Parking Improvements and Trail Construction



Map 4: New Facilities Map

Section 9

Priorities and Strategic Action Schedule

9.1. PROGRESS REPORT

The Allen County Parks and Recreation Department has completed various projects outlined in the previous 5-year master plan. The following projects are a sample of the larger projects completed and categorized by park:

FOX ISLAND PARK

- Honeysuckle Reduction Project
- Nature Center Improvement – Replace roof and upgrade to water saving restroom fixtures
- Construct Ponding Platform at Wetland Area – Accessible ramp and platform to water
- Accessible Boardwalks – Replace existing boardwalks with accessible design boardwalks
- Septic System Upgrades – upgrade aging finger system

METEA PARK

- North Metea Trail Construction – Construct new trails on northern portion of property including interpretive signage.
- Vernal Ponds Boardwalk – Progress towards connecting all trails via boardwalks
- Bench and Picnic Table Install – Ongoing process of add new picnic tables and benches
- Equipment and Tools – Carpet cleaner

PAYTON PARK

Major improvements to Payton Park started in 2022 and will completed early 2023

- Entry Drive and Parking Improvements
- Open Shelter Improvements
- New Playground Structure
- Restroom Enclosure
- Picnic Tables and Benches
- Connection to Fort Wayne Trails
- Reforestation – Partner with Great Tree Canopy Comeback, Trees Indiana, and Hoosier ReLeaf to plant and maintain trees

NEW FACILITY

- Hanauer Reserve – New Allen County Parks administration offices and indoor/outdoor event rental facility

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR					POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
COOK’S LANDING							
Boat/Canoe Landing Reconstruction Reconstruct boat and canoe landing area	2			\$50,000			NRO, GOB
Picnic Tables and Benches Purchase and install new picnic tables and benches	2			\$8,000			NRO, GOB
SUB TOTAL – COOKS LANDING		\$0	\$0	\$58,000	\$0	\$0	
DEER RUN WILDERNESS AREA							
Maintenance Repairs and Improvements Repairs and Replacements of challenge course equipment and structures	1	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	NRO, Donation
SUB TOTAL – DEER RUN		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	
FOX ISLAND COUNTY PARK							
Fox Island Storm Damage Restoration Remove debris piles, regrade trails, plant seedlings/trees, manage invasive species, including accessible trails	1	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$3,000	NRG, NRO, Vol, FIA
Interpretive wayside signage - All Trails	2			\$3,000	\$3,000		FIA, Vol, NRO
Accessible Trail Signage Install signage denoting challenge level of trails	1	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$5,000		NRO, NRG, Vol
HVAC Replacement Replace existing +20 year old system	1		\$150,000				NRO, SGFA, GOB
Road and Parking Improvements Reconstruct parking lots and roads throughout park	1			\$1,000,000			SGFA, GOB
New Playground Equipment Nature Themed Playground near Nature Center	3				\$85,000		NRO, NRG, Vol
Wildlife Observation Building – Restroom remodel Renovate existing two bathrooms into one accessible uni-sex restroom	2			\$15,000			NRO, FIA, GOB
					Fox Island continued on next page		

Section 9

Priorities and Strategic Action Schedule

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR					POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
Fox Island continued							
Marsh Walkways, Trail and Overlook Relocate trail, construct boardwalks and floating piers to Marsh Overlook	1		\$100,000				NRG (Baker Estate)
Carpet replacement project - Nature Center Replace stained and damaged carpets at Nature Center - existing are 15 to 20 years old.	3			\$40,000			NRO, GOB
Paved pathways Pave one mile of existing pathways for accessibility	1			\$500,000			NRO, GOB
Rental Facility Feasibility Study Contract for feasibility study regarding construction of new rental facility near or attached to existing Nature Ctr.	3		\$18,000				NRO, FIA
Rental Facility Fund Drive Based on findings, start fund drive to construct new facility	3			TBD	TBD	TBD	CFD
SUB TOTAL - FOX ISLAND		\$105,000	\$348,000	\$1,578,000	\$103,000	\$3,000	
ALLEN COUNTY HANAUER RESERVE							
Building Improvements and Repairs Lighting, ceiling and building repairs to rental facility	1	\$12,000	\$10,000				NRO,
Roadway and Parking Improvements Reconstruct and repair road and parking lot areas	2			\$750,000			NRO, GOB
Wedding Pavilion Area Improvements New sidewalks, gazebo roof, general improvements	2			\$40,000			NRO, GOB
Administrative Office improvements New accessible restrooms	1			\$85,000			Vol, NRO,
LAND - Property Acquisition Acquire contiguous property to park	1	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
SUB TOTAL - RESERVE		\$12,000	\$10,000	\$875,000	\$0	\$0	

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR					POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
METEA COUNTY PARK							
Review and implement phase II of Metea Nature Center Plan Elevator, geo-thermal, Native American exhibit	3				\$50,000	\$220,000	NRO, FOM, Vol
Nature Center Roof Replacement Remove and replace existing 20+ year old roof	2			\$250,000			NRO, SGFA, GOB
North Metea Parking Lot Construct new parking lot off Hursh Road	2			\$100,000			NRO, GOB
New Open Shelter – Lake Area Construct new open shelter in northern portion of park including picnic tables etc.	2			\$75,000			NRO, GOB, Donation
Playground Replacement Remove and replace existing wood playground equipment with new accessible composite playground structure	1			\$85,000			NRO, GOB, Donation
Accessible pathways Construct accessible pathways throughout park incl. to play area, shelters and beach	1			\$750,000			SGFA, GOB
Roads and Parking Improvements Repair and pave all roads and parking areas, add to Nature Center parking lot	1			\$1,000,000			SGFA, GOB
Park Directional Signage Construct new directional signage throughout park	2		\$8,000				NRO,
New Well nvestigate and study new source of drinking water for Nature Center. Possible deeper well to reduce sulfur content and smell.	3				\$45,000		NRO, GOB

Section 9

Priorities and Strategic Action Schedule

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR					POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
Doggie Beach Improvements	3			\$25,000			NRO, GOB, Vol
Boardwalks through vernal ponds Connect all trails via boardwalks	2		\$10,000	\$10,000			Vol, GD
Additional Benches and Picnic Tables Purchase and install new picnic tables and benches throughout park and trail system. Portable and in ground	2	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	Vol, NRG, NRO,
Nature Center - Improvements Finish basement classroom areas	2			\$20,000			NRO, Vol, FOM, GOB
Metea continued on next page							
Metea Continued							
Maintenance Barn Improvements Install new overhead doors to replace sliding units, relocate electrical switch from southwest corner to north side for better access, new roof	2			\$60,000			NRO, GOB
Construct New Fishing Pier Construct fishing pier, construct at appropriate location away from swimming and dog beach locations. Include benches and make accessible	2			\$20,000			NRO, GOB
LAND - Acquire adjacent property When possible acquire adjacent property to the park	1	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
New Restroom Building Enclosure - Open Field Area Construct porta-john enclosure for use as restroom facility	2			\$15,000			NRO, Vol
SUB TOTAL - METEA		\$3,000	\$21,000	\$2,413,000	\$98,000	\$223,000	

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR					POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
PAYTON COUNTY PARK							
Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Improvements Complete LWCF Improvement Projects including parking construction, half mile paved pathway connecting to Pufferbelly Trail Project, Shelter reconstruction, new playground, restroom enclosure, signage, picnic tables and benches.	1	\$400,000					NRG, LWCF
LAND - Property Acquisition Acquire contiguous property to park	1	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Reforestation Projects Work in conjunction with Great Tree Canopy Comeback program, Trees Indiana, and Hoosier ReLeaf to plant and maintain trees.	2			\$3,000	\$3,000		NRO, NRG, Vol
VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT							
New Truck Replace aging trucks and vans	1	\$400,000	\$55,000	\$200,000	\$3,000	\$30,000	NRO, SGFA, GOB
New /Replacement Equipment Replace old equipmenet including large area mowers, tractors, skid steer	1		\$35,000	\$200,000		\$25,000	NRO, SGFA, GOB
SUB TOTAL - VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT		\$0	\$90,000	\$400,000	\$0	\$55,000	

Section 9

Priorities and Strategic Action Schedule

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR					POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
LAND							
Large parcel north-northwest (250 acre target); LANDBANK	3				\$10,000,000		LWCF,GOB, Donation
Large parcel southeast (250 acre target); LANDBANK	3					\$10,000,000	LWCF,GOB, Donation
SUB TOTAL – LAND		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	
ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS							
COMMUNITY GROWTH; land expansion and acquisition Monitor city growth and acquire land – develop properties accordingly. The board will need to act to expand existing properties when possible and acquire additional property as needs, opportunities and economics warrant. It is always prudent to expand popular parks when contiguous land becomes available, and acquire parkland in growth areas. The board has followed this policy in the past. Explore the potential to partner with the other parks systems for joint property acquisition and development.							
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES Revisit and review G&O at the January Board meeting and revise as needed annually.							
CONNECTIVITY – TRAILS Continue to support Community interest in development and expansion of area greenways and trails. Encourage awareness and focus on the need for annual maintenance funding and daily care. Additionally, half-life and full life capital renewal funding should be planned for initially by all entities involved in this endeavor.							
FIVE YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN Prepare the 2028-2033 Master Plan; start April 2027	1					\$35,000	NRO,
Examine this plan for revisions annually Review in January at Regular Board meeting.	1						
Develop natural resource management plans and train staff for prescribed burns	1	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000			NRO,
Develop interpretive plans for each park	1		\$10,000	\$10,000			NRO,
SUB TOTAL – ADMIN		\$3,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$0	\$35,000	

PROJECT & DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	EXPENDITURE & FUNDING YEAR				
		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
ACTIONS AND PRIORITIES TOTALS						
COOK'S LANDING COUNTY PARK		\$0	\$0	\$58,000	\$0	\$0
DEER RUN WILDERNESS AREA		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
FOX ISLAND COUNTY PARK		\$105,000	\$348,000	\$1,578,000	\$103,000	\$3,000
HANAUER RESERVE		\$12,000	\$10,000	\$875,000	\$0	\$0
METEA COUNTY PARK		\$3,000	\$21,000	\$2,413,000	\$98,000	\$223,000
PAYTON COUNTY PARK		\$400,000	\$0	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0
VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT		\$0	\$90,000	\$400,000	\$0	\$55,000
LAND ACQUISITION		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS AND PRIORITIES		\$3,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$0	\$35,000
YEARLY GRAND TOTALS:		\$528,000	\$487,000	\$5,345,000	\$10,209,000	\$10,321,000



A large, bold, white letter 'B' is centered in the upper half of the image. The background is a photograph of a wooden bridge over a river, with dense green trees in the background. The entire image has a green color overlay.

B

Parks Assessment

Cook's Landing County Park



Address	Size
600 W Shoaff Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46845	4.5 AC

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

Cook's Landing County Park is a small park located in northern Allen County. A small parking lot at the corner of E. Shoaff and Coldwater provides off-street parking access to the park. Cedar Creek (a state designated scenic river) flows along the park edge and provides water access for exploration and paddling. This park has great access to Cedar Creek for fishing and canoeing.



Label	Type	Description	Condition
1	Building	Open Air Shelter	Poor
2	Parking	Asphalt Surface	Poor

Deer Run Wilderness Area



Address	Size
18318 State Road 101, Spencerville, Indiana 46788	107 AC

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

Deer Run Wilderness Area (D.R.W.A.) is comprised of 107 acres of fields, a 10 acre lake, and deciduous and coniferous forest. The mix of forest and fields is about 50/50. This park is not open to general admission as it is program based only. On grounds is a maintenance barn, a property manager's residence, a 30 element challenge course, (which includes a 50' climbing tower and 100 yard zip line), and a 30 bed campground. The challenge course is fairly evenly divided into high and low elements.

The campground has 5 platform tents that sleep 6, an open shelter with electricity, and a heated shower house. Camping can be on site in the campground or primitive in the deeper woods. It can also be off site while participating in a backpacking or canoeing adventure, which can range from day trips to weeks long.

A variety of outdoor education, adventure, and challenge programs are offered through D.R.W.A.. All are experiential oriented, which is hands-on and learning by doing! Many of the outdoor education programs already offered at the other Allen County Parks sites can be provided there also. The primary adventure programs will be camping, backpacking, canoeing, and challenge course. The challenge course can be utilized recreationally, therapeutically, and for team building in the corporate and sports arenas. In all cases, the focus is on the fostering of trust, communication, problem solving, team work, and self-esteem!



Label	Feature	Description	Condition
1	Building	Property Manager's Residence	Not Assessed
2	Building	Open Air Shelter	Fair
3	Amenity	Climbing Tower	Good
4	Amenity	Zipline	Good
5	Amenity	Challenge Course Elements	Good
6	Amenity	Campground	Fair
7	Infrastructure	Trails	Good
8	Parking	Asphalt Surface Parking Lot	Good

Fox Island



Address	Size
7324 Yohne Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46809	605 AC

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

Fox Island is a 605 acre park located in southwest Allen County. Within this park, 270 acres are dedicated as State Nature Preserve, which protects areas having unique plants, animals or geographic features. Hundreds of species of animals and plants live at Fox Island because of the relatively natural condition of most of the area, with its habitats of marsh, seasonal ponds, wooded sand dunes, wetland forest, old fields, and restored prairie. The park contains the largest contiguous forest in the county and a glacial sand dune.

Seven miles of marked trails through the preserve enable visitors to enjoy the beauty and splendor of the park. Over six miles are available during the winter for cross country skiing as long as we have four or more inches of snow on the ground. Hundreds of species of animals and plants live at Fox Island because of the relatively natural condition of most of the area, with its habitats of marsh, seasonal ponds, wooded sand dunes, wetland forest, old fields and restored prairie.

In June 2022 Fox Island Park sustained significant storm damage that has forced the closure of the park through 2022 and into 2023. Significant tree fall and debris has made it unsafe for visitors to access the park during the clearing and removal process. The following is a note to the public from the Allen County Parks Superintendent, Jeff Baxter:

"Fox Island County Park sustained heavy storm damage the night of June 13, 2022. Luckily our buildings were spared any damage but the same cannot be said for the forest, trails and roads within the park. We are estimating that between 800 to 1000 trees were brought down by the storm. We were not the only ones affected by these storms and our thoughts and prayers are with those who sustained damages to their properties in the Waynedale area and southwest Fort Wayne and Allen County.

We are currently closed and will be for the foreseeable future as we attempt to assess damage, formulate plans for removal of trees and debris from the site, and actually accomplish those plans. It is simply not safe within the park at this time to allow the public ANY kind of entry into the park. This will be a long process as we can't open just certain areas of the park and expect that people will not wander off into dangerous situations."

More info available- <https://allencountyparks.org/parks/fox-island/storm-damage-updates/>



Due to closures and minimal access from storm damage and logging activities a limited site assessment was conducted of the central area around the main parking, Observation Bldg, and Nature Center.

Label	Type	Description	Condition
16	Building	Dulin Observation Building	Good (Exterior)
17	Building	Nature Center	Good (Exterior)
22	Parking	Asphalt Parking	Good
23	Building	Gate House	Fair

Hanauer Reserve



Address	Size
3022 Easterday Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46818	9 AC

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

Allen County Hanauer Reserve is the County Park systems newest park. This facility, formerly known as the Allen County Sheriff’s Reserve will become the administrative facility for Allen County Parks. The partially wooded site has a large front lawn area with a magnificent stand of large high quality shade trees at the back of the property. The existing building will be transformed into an event facility with a capacity of 400 guests available for rental by the public



Label	Type	Description	Condition
1	Building	Event Facility	Good (Interior Not Assessed)
2	Building	Arbor	Fair
3	Parking	Gravel/Millings/Asphalt Parking	Good

Metea County Park North



Address	Size
7970-8118 Hursh Rd, Leo, IN 46765	250 AC (Total North and South)

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

Metea County Park is a 250 acre park in northcentral Allen County near Leo Cedarville, containing the 120 acre Meno-aki State Nature Preserve. The north and south areas of the park are separated by Cedar Creek, a state designated scenic river.

The entrance to the southern portion of the park is off Union Chapel Road near its intersection with Leo Road (SR 1). The northern portion of the park can be accessed off Hursh Road between Puff and Halter Roads.

Metea County Park was named for the great Potawatomi leader whose village on the north bank of Cedar Creek near its mouth was close to the boundary of the current park. Metea's village was called Muskwawsepeotan, which means "town on the old red wood creek". The village, the southeasternmost Potawatomi village in Indiana, was settled sometime after 1795, when the Potawatomi tribe first moved into northeastern Indiana from the area of the St. Joseph's River of Lake Michigan near modern South Bend.

The park offers an undisturbed tranquility that can't be found anywhere else in this area and is one of Allen County's greatest treasures. Hear the birds sing, listen to the crickets chirp, watch the flash of minnows in the water, all here at Metea County Park.



Label	Feature	Description	Condition
1	Parking	Gravel/Turf Parking	Not Assessed
2	Parking	Gravel Parking	Fair
3	Infrastructure	Hiking Trails	Good
4	Amenity	Cedar Creek Access	Good
5	Landscape Feature	Nature Preserve Area	Good

Metea County Park South



Address	Size
8401 Union Chapel Rd., Fort Wayne, IN 46845	250 AC (Total North and South)

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

(See Metea Park North for additional information)

Metea Park South is the more developed section of the Metea Park facility. Metea South hosts the Gloria Goeglein Nature Center with classrooms and conference room available for rental, education offices, gift shop, exhibits, indoor bird watching area, and restrooms. You will also find a 1.5 ac swimming lake with beach, large play-fields and playground, maintained grass trails, and picnic shelters at Metea South.



Label	Feature	Description	Condition
1	Amenity	Pavilion/Picnic Area	Good
2	Amenity	Playground	Poor
3	Building	Nature Center	Good
17	Parking	Gravel Parking Lot	Fair
19	Amenity	Swimming Beach	Poor
21	Building	Pavilion/Open Air Shelter	Fair
23	Parking	Asphalt Parking Lot	Good
25	Natural Feature	Pond	Fair
26	Landscape Feature	Nature Preserve Area	

Payton Park



Address	Size
13928 Dunton Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46845	40 AC

1.1. SITE NARRATIVE

Payton County Park is located in northern Allen County just east of State Road 3. With it's mix of open fields, woodlands, and wetlands provides the solitude and quiet of the rural countryside. Several miles of hiking trails through old field, forest and wetland areas make this small park a wonderful additional to the Allen County Park system.

Recently completed site improvements during Summer 2022 provide for improved asphalt paved parking and walking trails that extend through the greater extent of the 40 acre park.



Label	Feature	Description	Condition
1	Parking Lot	Asphalt Surface	Good
2	Building	Pavilion/Open Air Shelter	Poor
3	Landscape Feature	Wetland Pond	Good
4	Infrastructure	Trails	Good
5	Landscape Feature	Old Growth Forest	Not Assessed
6	Landscape Feature	New Growth Forest	Not Assessed





A

Appendix: Supplemental Information

ALLEN COUNTY COMPLAINT OF DISCRIMINATION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS:

The purpose of this form is to help any person interested in filing a discrimination complaint with Allen County. You are not required to use this form. You may write a letter with the same information, sign it, and return it to the address below. All bold items must be completed for your complaint to be investigated. Failure to provide complete information may impair the investigation of your complaint.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended and its related statutes, regulations, and directives (Title VI) prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability/handicap, LEP, or income status in connection with programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance for the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and/or Federal Transit Administration. These prohibitions extend to Allen County as a sub-recipient of federal financial assistance.

Upon request, assistance will be provided if you are an individual with a disability or have limited English proficiency. Complaints may also be filed using alternative formats such as computer disk, audiotape, or Braille. You also have the right to file a complaint with other state or federal agencies that provide federal financial assistance to Allen County or have the right to seek private counsel. Allen County is prohibited from retaliating against any individual because he or she opposed an unlawful policy or practice, filed charges, testified, or participated in any complaint action under Title VI or other nondiscrimination authorities.

Please make a copy of your complaint form for your personal records. Do not send your original documents as they will not be returned. Mail the original complaint form along with any copies of documents or records relevant to your complaint to the address below.

Complaints of discrimination must be filed within 180 days of the date of the alleged discriminatory act. If the alleged act of discrimination occurred more than 180 days ago, please explain your delay in filing this complaint.

****Your complaint cannot be processed without your signature.**

COMPLAINANT INFORMATION		
Name <i>(first, middle, last)</i>		
Address <i>(number and street, city, state, ZIP code)</i>		
Home telephone number	Work telephone number	Cellular telephone number
() -	() -	() -

PERSON / DEPARTMENT YOU BELIEVE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST YOU		
Name <i>(first, middle, last)</i>	Title	
Name of department		
Address <i>(number and street, city, state, ZIP code)</i>		
Home telephone number (0) -	Work telephone number () -	Cellular telephone number () -
When was the last alleged discriminatory act? <i>(month, day, year)</i>		
<p>Complaints of discrimination must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act. If the alleged act of discrimination occurred more than 180 days ago, please explain your delay in filing this complaint.</p>		
<p>The alleged discrimination was based on:</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Race</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Color</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Age</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Gender</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> National Origin</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Disability</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Ancestry</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Retaliation</div> <div style="width: 30%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Religious Affiliation</div> </div>		

Describe the alleged act(s) of discrimination. *(Use additional pages, if necessary)*

Provide the names of any individuals with additional information regarding your complaint:		
Name of witness 1 <i>{first, middle, last}</i>		Title
Name of company		
Address <i>(number and street, city, state, ZIP code)</i>		
Home telephone number	Work telephone number	Cellular telephone number
() - () - () -		
Include a brief description of the relevant information the witness may provide to support your complain of discrimination:		

Name of witness 2 <i>(first, middle, last)</i>		Title
Name of company		
Address <i>(number and street, city, state, ZIP code)</i>		
Home telephone number	Work telephone number	Cellular telephone number
() - () - () -		
Include a brief description of the relevant information the witness may provide to support your complain of discrimination:		

Name of witness 3 <i>{first, middle, last}</i>		Title
Name of company		
Address <i>(number and street, city, state, ZIP code)</i>		
Home telephone number	Work telephone number	Cellular telephone number
() - () - () -		
Include a brief description of the relevant information the witness may provide to support your complain of discrimination:		
How would you like your complaint to be resolved:		
Signature of Complainant		Date: