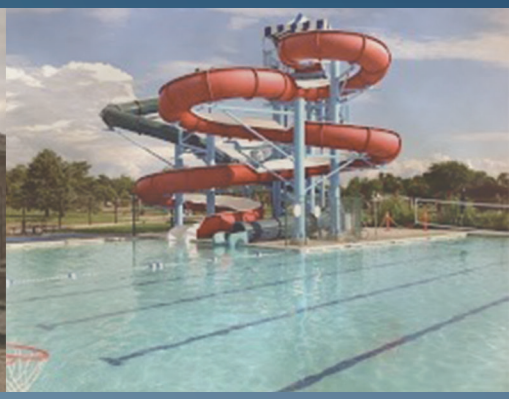
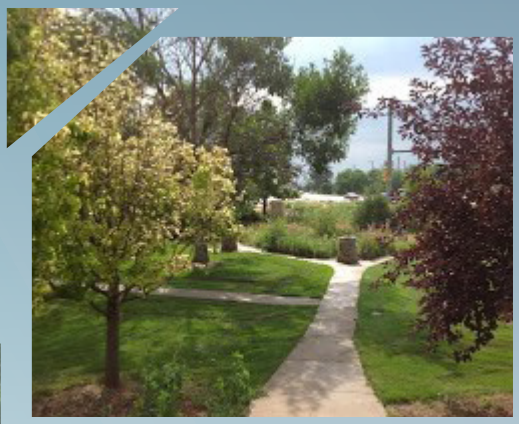
STERLING
A Colorado Treasure





Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update
April 2014

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The Sterling, Colorado, Parks, Library and Recreation Master Plan was created by a large group of staff, stakeholders, and public input, guided by a specially-created consultant team. Additionally, this plan was funded in part by ***Great Outdoors Colorado.***

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The citizens of the City of Sterling place high value on their parks, recreation facilities, and programs. They recognize the importance of these services as an enhancement to the quality of life of the community. This commitment is embodied in the Department's robust and well maintained park system.

The City of Sterling's Council has taken a leadership role in the community's economic development efforts. This has included improving the infrastructure to allow existing businesses to expand and to assist in the attraction of future businesses. The City of Sterling has worked hard to establish a sound base on which new and existing businesses can thrive.

The City of Sterling relies upon various advisory boards for recommendations concerning City development. These boards include the Planning Commission; the Public Works Board; the Parks, Library and Recreation Board; the Personnel Board; the Sterling Urban Renewal Authority Board; and the Sterling Housing Authority (the final two being quasi-municipal boards).

This final report for the Sterling Parks and Recreation Master Plan summarizes key findings and information gathered from the recently completed demographic and trend analysis, public meetings, and an inventory and analysis of existing parks, facilities, recreation programs, and maintenance operations. During the Findings Phase of the master planning process, GreenPlay's consultant team worked closely with Department staff from July 2013 – January 2014. A summary of the information collected, analysis, and key findings follow.

Community Needs Assessment

Engaging the public with sufficient and meaningful mechanisms for input allows for frank and open discussions about the current state and the future of parks and recreation. To gain valuable insight into the needs and demands of the community, the public input process included:

- Three focus group/stakeholder meetings – (October 16, 2013)
- Public meetings – (July 29 and November 18, 2013)
- Mail survey – (July – September 2013)
- Opportunities to provide input via MindMixer Website
- Board and staff input

Attendance at focus groups and the public meetings included 55 community and 8 staff members.

Focus Group/Public Meeting Summary

Generally, focus group and public meeting participants agree that facilities, programs, and services offered by the Sterling Parks and Recreation Department provide a variety of recreation opportunities. However, indoor recreation facilities at the Recreation Center are in need of updating and expansion to meet increasing public need, and there is a great necessity and demand for additional trails and connectivity of the trail system within the City of Sterling.

Demographics

Although the future of population growth cannot be predicted with certainty, it is helpful to make assumptions about it for planning purposes. ***Table 1*** contains population estimates and projections based on the 2010 U.S. Census for the City of Sterling in the years 2012 and 2017. The annual growth rate for Sterling from 2000 through 2010 was 1.25 percent. ESRI's projected growth rate for 2012 through 2017 is 0.21 percent for Sterling, compared to the projected 2012 – 2017 annual growth rate for State of Colorado (at 1.29 percent) and for the United States as a whole (at 0.68 percent).

Table 1: Population projections

US Census (2000 and 2010) and ESRI Projections	
2000 Population	11,360
2010 Population	14,777
2012 Estimated	14,767
2017 Projected	14,616

Source: 2010 Census and ESRI Business Information Solutions 2012 Demographic and Income Profile.

Key demographic trends to reference for future park and recreation planning efforts in Sterling are summarized below.

- According to ESRI Business Information Solutions (based on the 2010 U.S. Census), the estimated median household income for Sterling residents was $34,871 in 2012.
- The Sterling population grew significantly from 11,360 in 2000 to 14,777 in 2010, but is predicted to decrease slightly to 14,616 by 2017.
- The median age for the City in 2012 was 36.5, slightly lower than the median age for the United States (37.3). Sterling's median age has risen slightly from 35 in 2000, indicating that the percentages in older age groups are increasing.
- Nineteen percent (19%) of Sterling households earn less than $15,000, while the next largest household income cohort (18.9 percent) earns between $50,000 and $74,999.

Areas of Focus for Recommendations

The recommendations for this plan are focused around the following areas:

- Inventory of Existing Facilities and Level of Service Analysis
- Recreation Program Analysis
- Financial Implementation

The body of this report contains in-depth analysis of each area described above. Immediately following each area are recommendations (goals, objectives, and action items) that pertain to that subject. Action items are identified as either:

- ***Ongoing*** *– Action is already taking place and should continue.*
- ***Immediate priority*** *– Some action should be taken within the next year.*
- ***Short-term priority*** *– Some action should be taken within the next one to two years.*
- ***Mid-term priority*** *– Some action should be taken within the next three to five years.*
- ***Long-term priority*** *– Some action should be taken within five years or beyond.*

Summary of Level of Service Analysis

The following Goals, Objectives, and Actions Items are drawn from the inventory and level of service analysis with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving City of Sterling parks, open space, and trails.

Goal 1: Maintain and improve existing assets to sustain exceptional level of service currently provided.

Objective 1.1: *Maintain existing assets or resources.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
1.1.a Develop and follow established maintenance schedules.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time/TBD	Ongoing
1.1.b Develop and follow established replacement schedules. Replace equipment in accordance with equipment life-cycle and city standards.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time/TBD	Ongoing
Objective 1.2: *Provide a variety of recreation opportunities at a consistent standard.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
1.2.a Improve low-scoring components to minimum standard. Refer to the low-score modifier table on page 60 for those components in need of improvement.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	See table	Short-Term
1.2.b Improve low-score modifiers to minimum standard. Refer to the low-score component table on page 57 for those modifiers in need of improvement.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	See table	Short-Term

Goal 2: Use areas identified in GRASP® analysis to prioritize new or additional parks or amenities.

Objective 2.1
"Boost" low-service and no-service areas through the addition of new components.

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a Add new amenities to existing parks in low-service areas such as Krull Park, 11th and Delmar Park, and Beattie Circle Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
2.1.b Partner with school district to provided additional LOS and public access to school assets in no-service areas.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/RE-1 Valley School District	Staff Time/TBD	Short to Mid-Term
2.1.c Conduct site master plan to develop new park land with playground at abandoned railroad property along South Railway Street and continuing down Cheyenne Blvd.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$30,000 – $50,000	Short-Term
2.1.d Develop new park land with playground at abandoned railroad property.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Long-Term

Objective 2.2:
Consider current trends and public input to address high demand needs to add new amenities.

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.a Conduct site master plan to redevelop or repurpose Tolla Brown Skate Park and to relocate skate facilities to a location to be determined.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$40,000 – $60,000	Short-Term
2.2.b Redevelop or repurpose Tolla Brown Skate Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Long-Term
2.2.c Develop a partnership with school district to make Neos fitness system available to the public.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/RE-1 Valley School District	Staff Time	Mid-Term
2.2.d Promote a smartphone fitness training application and provide necessary infrastructure for users.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$5,000	Mid-Term
2.2.e Add a playground at 11th and Delmar Park or alternatively at a future park located in the abandoned railway to serve adjacent neighborhoods.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	$25,000 – $75,000	Short to Long-Term

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.f Pursue partnerships with local schools and Northeastern Junior College to provide access to additional athletic fields.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ RE-1 Valley School District/ Northeastern Junior College	Staff Time	Mid-Term
2.2.g Conduct a site master plan to develop a new dog park at Earl Franklin Park to serve both residents and downtown business patrons.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff time or $10,000 – $25,000	Short-Term
2.2.g Develop a new dog park at Earl Franklin Park to serve both residents and downtown business patrons.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$50,000 – $150,000	Mid-Term
2.2.h Adaptively reuse the camping cabin at Pioneer Park as a nature center to serve residents and visitors.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Private Consultant	$25,000 – $100,000	Mid-Term
2.2.i Include a community garden at Tolla Brown as part of the park's redevelopment.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD pending site master plan	Long-Term
2.2.j Research costs of adding aquatic spray ground at Prairie Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Goal 3: Develop recreational connectivity for pedestrian and bicyclists and other alternative transit users.

Objective 1:
Enhance existing trails.

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Add mileage markers to existing park loop walk trail at Columbine Park and along nature trail loop at Pioneer Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$500 – $2,000/mile	Short-Term
3.1.b Add interpretive signage along nature trails in Pioneer Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$1,000 – $4,000 each	Short-Term
3.1.c Add cardio fitness stations along existing loop walks at Columbine Park or Pioneer Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$1,500 – $6,000 each	Mid-Term

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.d Complete additional loop walk within primary park area at Pioneer Park to supplement the nature trail circuit.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	$5,000 – $20,000	Mid-Term
3.1.e Add mileage markers to any new loop walk trails to be developed.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$500 – $2,000/mile	Mid-Term
Objective 2: *Add new trails.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
3.2.a Develop a Trails and Alternative Modes of Transportation Master Plan.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Private Consultant	$40,000	Short-Term
3.2.b Add loop walk within existing parks such as Propst Park or Prairie Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$75,000 – $100,000/mile	Short-Term
3.2.c Develop in-city connections between major parks to include trails to link Pioneer Park to Columbine Park and link Columbine Park to the Recreation Center and Prairie Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works/ CDOT	TBD	Long-Term
3.2.d Develop a linear trail along the abandoned rail bed.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works/ Logan County/ CDOT	TBD	Mid-Term
3.2.e Develop regional connections to include the ditch trail on the western edge of the city and along the South Platte River, if possible.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Irrigation Service Provider Colorado Division of Wildlife/ Private Land Owners/ Public Works	TBD	Long-Term

Objective 3: *Increase public access to existing and future trails.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
3.3.a Improve trailhead at Overland Trail Recreation Area to include drinking water, bike parking, and a trail map.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	$10,000 – $20,000	Short to Mid-Term
3.3.b Develop formal trailhead at Pioneer Park to include shelter.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$40,000 – $75,000	Long-Term
3.3.b Add trailheads and trail access points as new trails are developed.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	TBD	Long-Term
3.3.b Develop trail system map to include all off-street trails as well as all on-street connections, bicycle paths, and bicycle routes.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	TBD	Mid-Term
3.3.c Develop smartphone application for web base trail map availability.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 4: *Supplement trails with bike lanes and bike routes based on trails typology.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
3.4.a Use trails and bike paths/routes outlined in the 2013 Sterling Master Plan as a blueprint for future trail planning.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time/TBD	Short to Long-Term
3.4.b Use trails typology as applied in this document to guide future trail planning decisions.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Long-Term
3.4.c Conduct sidewalk inventory or complete streets assessment as part of efforts to enhance recreational connectivity.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
3.4.d Work with Public Works and CDOT to identify compatible street options.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Summary of Recreation Program Analysis
The following Goals, Objectives, and Actions Items are drawn from the program analysis. The intent of the Program Analysis is to assist the Parks and Recreation Department in analyzing the current program offerings, identifying the program gaps and needs within the community, to assist in determining the future program offerings and improve overall communication with city residents.

GOAL 4: Enhance the programming opportunities to ensure the Department is responsive and relevant to the City of Sterling's residents' leisure behaviors, interests, and needs.

Objective 4.1:
Identify new program opportunities and evaluate current programs to ensure the Department is meeting and will continue to meet resident needs and expectations.

Actions	Primary Department	Resources Impact/ Budget Requirements	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Establish service objectives to ensure that a program, activity, or event is needed or in demand, fits within the mission of the Department, and that it is measured to determine success and effectiveness. Objectives are established at the onset of program planning so as to determine intent and success indicators. They must be measurable.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.1.b Conduct formative and summative participant evaluations for each program, activity, and event that address participant satisfaction, facility appropriateness, and future interest. Formative evaluations are necessary only when programs are offered for extended periods of time (eight week sessions as opposed to one week sessions). Response return is dependent on how evaluations are distributed and collected. Distribution should be strategic and should be done with the greatest return in mind. It is a good practice to consider an incentive for completion and return of evaluations. These are critical to program decision making.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
4.1.c Conduct an analysis of the Program Life Cycle at the conclusion of each (or selected) program, activity, or event. Once program evaluations are completed, stage of existence should be considered as decisions are made relative to the future of any service. For example, if registrations continue to decline, staff may wish to evaluate the merits of attempting to revitalize a program with a new name, adjusting scheduling to another date or time, modifying a program's format, or simply discontinuing the program reallocating resources elsewhere.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Long-Term

Objective 4.2: *Determine appropriate non-sport leisure and recreation activities and special events that can be offered (directly or partnered) to the community. Master Plan focus groups and the community survey identified a need for outdoor recreation, special events, and additional non-sport programming.*			
Actions	**Primary Department**	**Resources Impact/ Budget Requirements**	**Timeframe to Complete**
4.2.a Develop additional outdoor recreation programs and activities for youth and teen populations.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
4.2.b Develop additional Special Events in community parks and at the recreation center.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
4.2.c Conduct focus group meetings (work sessions) on an annual basis to understand changing interest, trends, and demands for non-sport activities for seniors, adults, and teens.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.2.d Continue to evaluate and research non-sport leisure and recreation trends. Create a strategy to identify potential community partners outside of the Department to help address these needs.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.2.e Periodically conduct staff evaluations for a rotating list of programs that include program, activity, and event description and details; objective review and analysis; participation, budget information including revenues and expenditures (consistently applied for each service), participant evaluation data; and future recommendations.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Long-Term

GOAL 5: Resource Development – Expand capacity of facility spaces for increased programming opportunities.

Objective 5.1: *Continue to facilitate partnerships with schools and enable additional partnerships with other organizations and agencies to provide access to spaces for programming. An area of focus identified is to increase capacity for programs. The Department is currently challenged with addressing community needs and the lack of available space in the programming areas such as fitness and gym sports.*			
Actions	**Primary Department**	**Resources Impact/Budget Requirements**	**Timeframe to Complete**
5.1.a Continue to develop and strengthen existing school relationships for continued use of school facilities for gyms and community programming spaces (including outdoor spaces) with continued emphasis on formal agreements and enforcement of those agreements.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term

Actions	Primary Department	Resources Impact/Budget Requirements	Timeframe to Complete
5.1.b Investigate partnership opportunities with other providers of recreation and wellness services that may be able to provide rooms and spaces or services for the public including public health agencies, community college, and other private non-profit organizations for enhanced community outreach. *A sample Partnership Policy is provided as a staff resource document.*	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff/Cost of Partnerships TBD	Mid-Term
5.1.c Based on community input, program expectations, demographic changes, and recreation trends, evaluate and plan actions related to the expansion/renovation of recreation center.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Long-Term
5.1.d Look at "off-peak" opportunities to increase facility usages during low demand times.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term

GOAL 6: Improve communications with residents about program/event offerings and Department information.

Objective 6.1:
Develop/Improve electronic based methods of communication with city residents.

Actions	Primary Department	Resources Impact/Budget Requirements	Timeframe to Complete
6.1.a Develop a Sterling Parks and Recreation Facebook and Twitter page to promote Department programs and services and communicate with city residents.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
6.1.b Develop other electronic based methods to improve communication including email blasts and newsletters.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
6.1.c Develop Department's pages on the City's Web Site to include more information about Department recreation programs.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term

Summary of Financial Analysis
The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items focus on the development of improved expense and revenue tracking strategies, the development of policies that focus on resource allocation, and development and renovation of recreation facilities.

Goal 7: Sustain the high level of service to which citizens have become accustomed.

A coordinated plan for the upkeep and replacement of parks, recreation, open space, and trails facilities is extremely important in establishing a strong financial position for service provision. Establishing a pricing methodology continuously reflects community values, while generating adequate revenues for assisting in sustaining Sterling Parks and Recreation Department facilities, programs, and services.

Objective 7.1: *Create and implement a cost recovery philosophy and policy.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
7.1.a Identify and understand current revenue streams and their sustainability.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
7.1.b Define direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and change with the program.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
7.1.c Define indirect costs as those that typically would exist anyway (like full time staff, utilities, administration, debt service, etc.).	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
7.1.d Acknowledge the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the scale of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets (i.e. Indirect cost associated with contracted programs like facility use, staff coordination time, etc.).	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Goal 8: Renovation and Expansion of Recreation Center

Objective 8.1: *Conduct Feasibility Studies to understand future capital and operational funding and revenue generation potential.*

According to the Parks and Recreation staff and supported citizen input, the top priorities for indoor facilities that could be added, expanded, or improved in Sterling over the next 5-10 years were as follows:
• *Recreation Center*
  ▪ *Renovation of indoor pool and supporting operating systems due the age and conditions of current facilities.*
  ▪ *Indoor gymnasium due the increased difficulty in accessing school gyms.*
  ▪ *Fitness area (weights, cardio equipment, indoor track) – 2nd most important additional according to the survey.*
  ▪ *Additional fitness class space – 3rd most important area of programming needs. Current facilities cannot support expansion for this programming.*

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
8.1.a Conduct a feasibility study for the expansion of the Sterling Recreation Center with a focus on updating indoor aquatics, developing a gym addition, and enhancing general fitness and wellness spaces.	Parks and Recreation Department	Staff time/ Consultant Fees ($20,000 to $25,000) *Note: Construction and Ongoing Operational Costs Will be Determine at the End of the Feasibility Study*	Mid-Term

II. PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE – THE PLANNING CONTEXT

A. Mission

The City of Sterling's Parks and Recreation District upholds the following mission statement:

The General Mission of the Department is to offer quality park and recreation services at a reasonable cost and equitable manner to the citizens of Sterling. Maintaining the quality and consistency of the existing park system and recreational facilities and programs is emphasized. The Department endeavors to collect a reasonable return on the recreation programs and facilities it offers.

B. Purpose of the Master Plan

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update is based on a comprehensive planning process that took place from July 2013 through February 2014 and involved extensive staff and community input as well as research and analysis of the existing parks and recreation system in Sterling. It includes key findings and information gathered from the demographic and trend analysis, a public input process, a statically valid survey, and inventory and analysis of existing Sterling's parks and facilities. The project also incorporated a review of the Parks and Recreation Department's programs and a financial analysis. Based on this analysis, recommended goals and strategies are included to address the key issues identified in the needs assessment and findings phase of the project.

C. Methodology of This Planning Process

This project has been guided by the Parks and Recreation Director and key staff, as well as by a public input process. Department representative met with the consultant team, led by GreenPlay LLC, and provided input throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates local knowledge and institutional history. The project consisted of the following tasks.

<u>Community Survey and Public Involvement:</u>

- Review of previous planning efforts and Department historical information.
- Extensive community involvement including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders and staff, community-wide public meetings, and survey instrument.
- Research of trends and statistics to help guide the efforts of programming staff.
- Utilization of MindMixer Community Engagement Tool to broaden the Public Involvement scope.

Level of Service Analysis:

- Interviews with Department staff to provide information about parks, recreation, and services, along with insight into the current practices and experiences of the Department in serving its residents and visitors.
- Review and analysis of existing parks and facilities.

Inventory:

- Inventory of parks, facilities, and surrounding areas using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess their condition.
- Identification of alternative providers.

Assessment and Analysis:

- Measurement of the current delivery of service using GRASP® Level of Service Analysis and allowance for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligns with the expectations of citizens. This analysis is also represented graphically through maps.

Related Past Planning Efforts

This plan is informed by and (where appropriate) provides a connection to past planning efforts. Reviewed plans include, but are not limited to:

- *Parks, Library and Recreation Master Plan*, City of Sterling 2007
- *Sterling Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 1996*
- *2013 City of Sterling Adopted Budget*
- *GOCO Grant Funding the 2013 Master Plan*

Note: Copies of these reports are on file with the City of Sterling Parks and Recreation Department.

D. Timeline for Completing the Master Plan

Start-up	June 2013
Information Gathering Community Meetings	July – October 2013
Inventory and Assessment of Existing Facilities	July – October 2013
Presentation of Findings	November 2013
1st Draft Report	January 2014
Final Report	February 2014

III. WHAT STERLING WANTS – OUR COMMUNITY AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Engaging the public with sufficient and meaningful mechanisms for input allows for frank and open discussions about the current state of and the future of parks and recreation. To gain valuable insight into the needs and interests of the community, the public input process included:

- Focus group/stakeholder meetings – (July and October, 2013)
- Two public meetings – (July 29 & November 18, 2013)
- Mail survey – (September – October, 2013)
- Opportunities to provide input online via MindMixer online community engagement
- Staff input

Attendance at focus groups and public meeting included 55 community and 8 staff members.

A. Community and Stakeholder Input

The following is an overview of community opinions with regard to strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for Sterling parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services.

Focus group, stakeholder, and public meeting participants were asked a variety of questions regarding Sterling parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services. Responses to questions about current strengths and issues/needs/problems that the Sterling Parks and Recreation Department can address through this planning process are summarized below. ***(See Appendix A for full list of comments)***

Strengths

General/Administration

- Department Staff
- Quality Services
- Existence of the facilities
- Partnerships (gov't, non-profit, sports)
- Affordability

Facilities and Programs

- Quality Library, Swim Park
- Well Maintained Parks
- Up to date Play Systems
- Wide Variety of Swim Programs
- Cooperation between City, School, and College
- Low Program Costs
- High Program Participation

Weaknesses/Challenges

General/Specific

- Lack of Trails and Connectivity
  - Multiple locations
- Aging and outdated facilities
  - Recreation Center
- Communication
  - Insufficient public and partner communication
- Facility limitations
  - Limited opportunities to expand programs
  - Hours of operations in pool
- Program Issues
  - Lack of Silver Sneakers
  - Lack of youth and teen programs
- Facilities
  - Lack of dog park
  - Fields are antiquated
  - Disc Golf Course Improvements

Other questions asked of the focus group participants were:

- What community issues, needs, and or problems exist in the City of Sterling that recreation programs, parks, open space, and trails can impact?
- What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks, open space, trails, and recreation service in the community? Why do you see it/them as essential?
- What improvements or changes would you make in the parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities, programs, and services in the City of Sterling today? 5 years? 10 Years?
- How can the City of Sterling work to responsibly address these improvements or changes given its resources? What opportunities exist?
- Are there potential partnerships that the city of Sterling should consider working with in the future?
- How effective is the Department in seeking feedback from the community and users on improving its performance?

Highlights from those responses are summarized in the boxes below:

Community Issues, Needs, and/or Problems Recreation, Programs, Parks, and Open Space/Trails can Impact

- Obesity Rates
- Positive Teen Choices
- Northside vs. Southside Connectivity
- Better Family Environment in Parks
- Affordability of Programs and Facilities
- Outdoor Fitness
- Vandalism
- Quality of Life Factors
- Retention of Younger Population
- Community Health and Wellness
- Increased Transportation Options

Improvements You Would Like to See Today

- Plant More Trees
- Dog Park
- More Family Hours at Aquatics Center
- Trail linkages and Development
- Increased Non-Sport Programming

Critical Importance Areas

- Bike Trails
- Accessibility
- Youth Sport Programming
- Park Maintenance
- Safety
- Modern Sports Facilities to draw tournaments and revenue

Improvements You Would Like to See in 5-10 Years

- Disc Golf Course upgrades
- Construction of Dog Park
- Platte River Trail
- Sports Complex
- Splash Park
- Increased Recreational Programming (non-sport)
- Increased Recreational Teen Programming
- New Gym Facility
- Additional Bike Paths
- Updated Pavilions
- Softball Field Improvements

How Can These Improvements Be Addressed

- Pursuit of Grants
- User and Impact Fees
- Community Fund Raising/Foundation
- High School/College Service Projects
- Increased Alternative Funding
- Greater Communication
- Increased Tax Support

Partnership Opportunities

- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- County Fairgrounds/Facility
- Local Disc Club
- Northeastern Jr. College
- School District
- Local Businesses
- Hospital
- Logan County Office of Economic Development
- State of Colorado

Increasing Effective Department Feedback Performance

- Press Releases
- Director Reports to Council
- Community Feedback Forms
- Centralized Communication Tool
- Improved Website

Focus Group/Public Meeting Summary

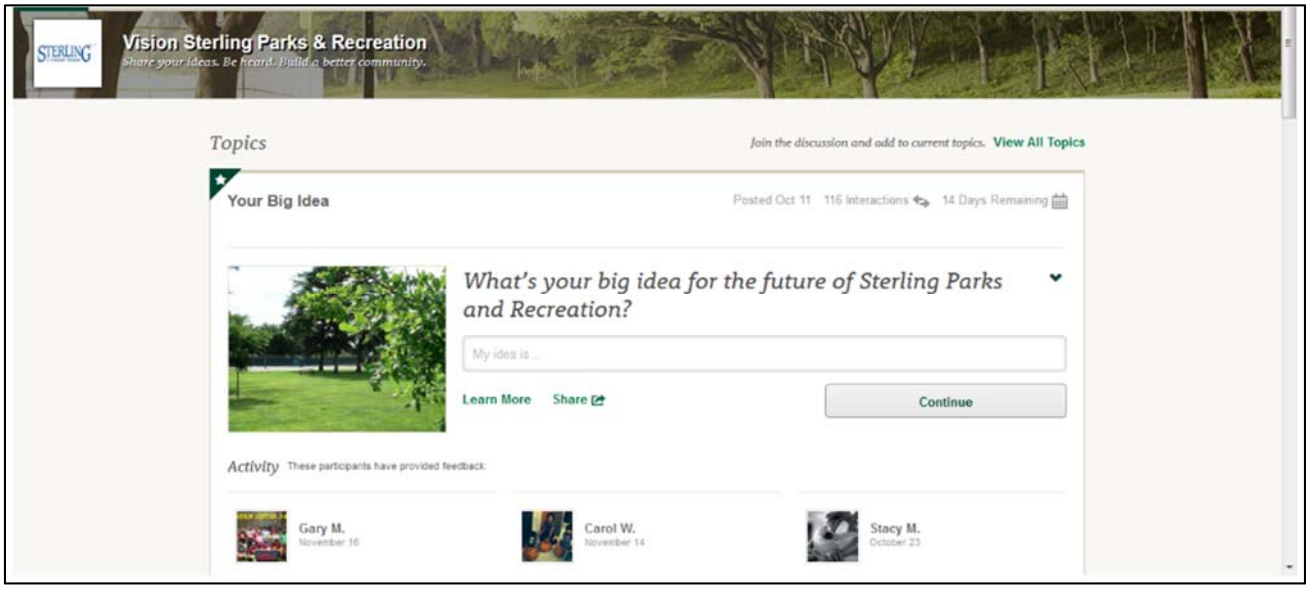
The Sterling Parks and Recreation Department provides facilities, programs, and services to Sterling residents. Citizens recognize that Parks and Recreation Department staff works hard to bring a well maintained and quality park system and a high level of customer service and program offerings to a variety of interests and age groups within its budget. On the other hand, indoor amenities are beginning to age and are in need of renovation or replacement.

Generally, focus group and public meeting participants agree that park maintenance is the greatest attribute of the Sterling Parks and Recreation Department and are a great source of pride within the community. However, they also feel that the Department's sports facilities located in the parks are in need of updating, and overall programs and services offered are lacking a wide variety of recreation opportunities, especially in the area of general interests and recreation variety for both youth and teen populations.

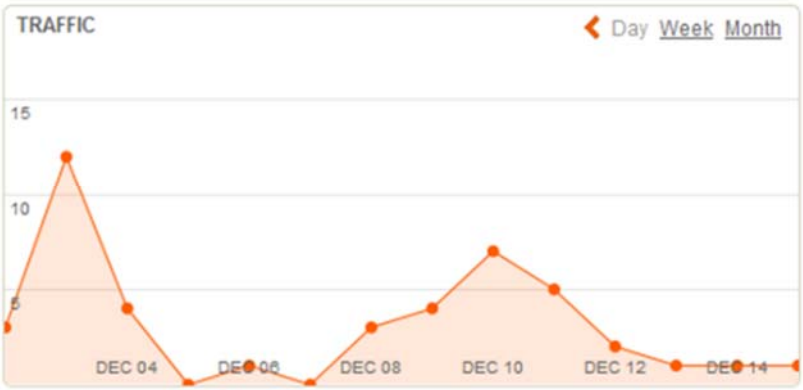
Community members would like to see improved department communication, more non-sport recreational programming, additional outdoor facilities, and an increase in partnerships to help guide the future of parks and recreation in Sterling. It is apparent that there are many community interests that seek Sterling Parks and Recreation Department support in order to flourish such as improved sport fields, improvements to the recreation center, development of partnerships, and new trail construction and connectivity.

B. MindMixer Online Community Engagement

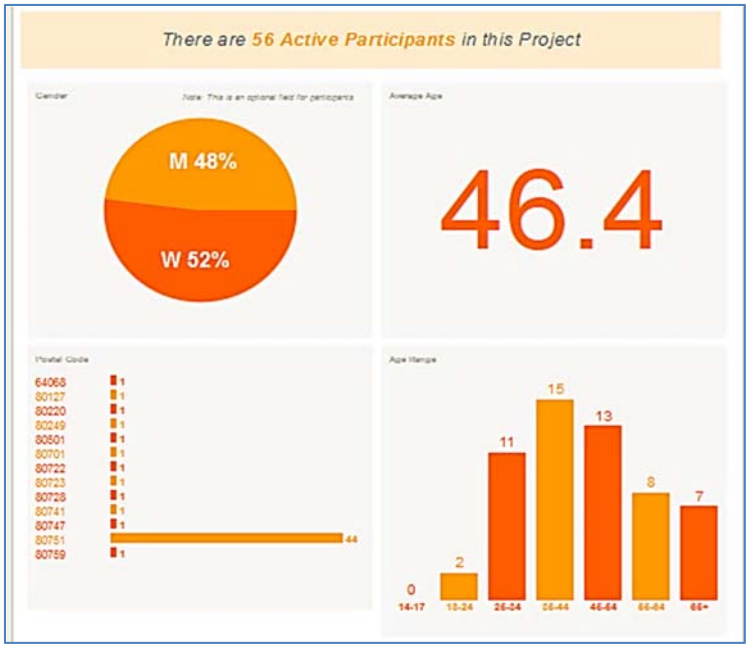
This project included creating an online community engagement site at www.envisionsterling.com. This tool was designed to enhance community involvement, and obtain additional feedback from people who may not necessarily attend meetings. A copy of the full idea report can be found in ***Appendix B***.



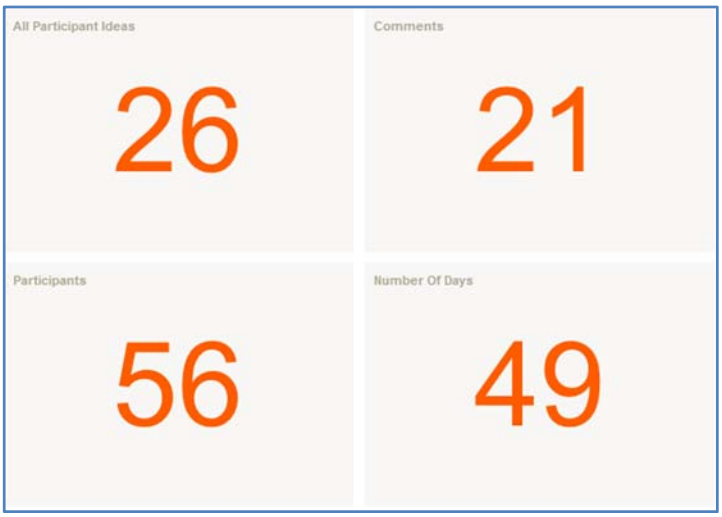
Quite a bit of traffic was generated on the site with **1,996** page views through December 17, 2013. Additional views continued as the draft documents were reviewed and made available to the public.



The average age of those that participated was 46 years old and was rather evenly distributed between males and females.



Twenty-six (26) total ideas were discussed with **21** comments from the community.



MindMixer Summary

Visioning Sterling's Recreational Programs and Your Big Idea topics generated the largest amount of ideas from the community with a total of 32 ideas added to the site. The top three topic discussions generated throughout the MindMixer are as follows:

- Expansion and Improvement of Community Walking and Bike Trails
- Improvement and Expansion of the Disc Golf Course
- Development of a Community Dog Park

C. Statistically Valid Survey

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on the City of Sterling parks, recreation, open space, and trails facilities, programs, and services. This feedback and subsequent analysis were designed to assist the City of Sterling (the City) to create a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to help serve the community over the next 10 to 15 years.

The survey was conducted using two methods: 1) a mail-back survey and 2) an online invitation-only survey. The primary list source used for the mailing was a third party list purchased from Melissa Data Corp., a leading provider of data quality solutions with emphasis on U.S., Canadian, and international address and phone verification and postal software. Use of the Melissa Data list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists.

A total of 3,000 surveys were mailed to a random sample of City of Sterling residents in September 2013, with approximately 2,950 being delivered after subtracting undeliverable mail. The final sample size for this statistically valid survey was 278 (including the mailback and web invitation versions), resulting in a margin of error of approximately +/- 5.9 percentage points calculated for questions at 50 percent response.

The underlying data for the random sample responses were weighted by age and gender to ensure appropriate representation of City of Sterling residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample. Based on the 2011 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Average estimates, the age and gender profile of residents is distributed as follows: Age: 18-35 (38%), 35-44 (16%), 45-54 (18%), 55-64 (11%), 65-74 (7%), 75 and older (10%); Gender: Male (54%), Female (46%). Below is a summary of the survey results. The complete report can be found in ***Appendix C.*** *Comments and crosstabs have been provided as a Staff Resource Document.*

Respondent/Household Profile

Respondent Characteristics

- The average length of time respondents have been living in the community is 23.9 years, with almost none living in Sterling for less than 1 year.
- The majority of respondents (roughly 90%) are registered voters within the City.
- The approximate average age of the respondents, after weighting, is 45.7 years.
- About 78 percent of respondents own their residence, while 22 percent rent.

Household Characteristics

- More than one-third of households are comprised of couples with children living at home, 23 percent are in an empty nester household, a little more than one-third are in a household with no children, and seven percent are in a single parent household.
- The approximate average annual household income of the respondents is about $61,000, with about 11 percent earning more than $100,000.
- The average number of people per household is 2.8 (2.0 median). The average number of household members under age 18, which includes households with no members under age 18, is 1.0. The average number of household with members over age 55 is 0.5.

Community Issues

Respondents were asked to rank the **top five** community issues that parks and recreation services should focus on improving. By combining the top five ranked issues, the following were identified by respondents as most important.

- Positive activities for youth (63% of households reported this issue as one of the top five issues to be improved)
- Maintaining what we have (61% of households)
- Reducing crime and vandalism (55% of households)

Second tier of most important issues included:

- Promoting healthy active lifestyles (46% of households)
- Beautification of public areas (44% of households)

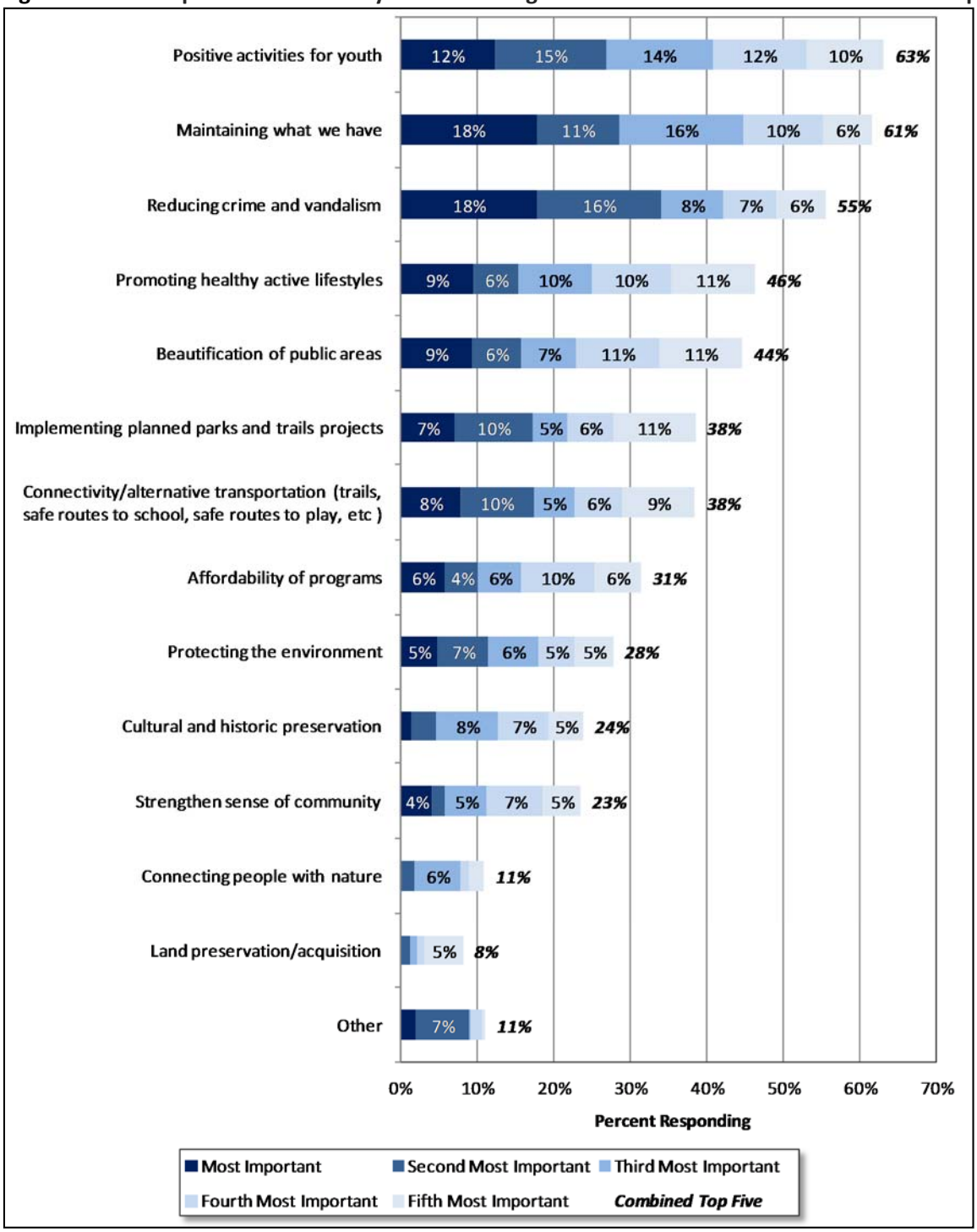
Third tier of most important issues included:

- Implementing planned parks and trail projects (38% of households)
- Connectivity/alternative transportation (trails, safe routes to school, safe routes to play, etc.) (38% of households)

While the fourth tier of issues was fairly low on the priority list, between 23% and 31% of respondents indicated the following as one of the top five most important:

- Affordability of programs (31% of households)
- Protecting the environment (28% of households)
- Cultural and historic preservation (24% of households)
- Strengthen sense of community (23% of households)

Figure 1: Most Important Community Issues Sterling Parks and Recreation Should Focus on Improving



Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix – Current Parks and Facilities

It is instructive to compare and plot the importance scores against the needs met scores in a Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix. As illustrated in ***Figure 2***, performance scores (i.e., Needs-Met and Importance) are displayed in this matrix using the mid-point rating of both questions to divide results into four quadrants (importance scale midpoint was 3.3; needs-met midpoint was 3.4). This illustrates a detailed positioning of the performance of the parks and facilities in comparison to each other.

Many of the top parks and facilities listed previously as meeting household needs are also considered the most important to Sterling households. Maintaining these important assets is an indispensable function for the City of Sterling. The following are parks and facilities that are highly important and meet the household needs of the City.

- Columbine Park
- Pioneer Park
- Recreation Center/outdoor pool
- Athletic fields
- Park shelters

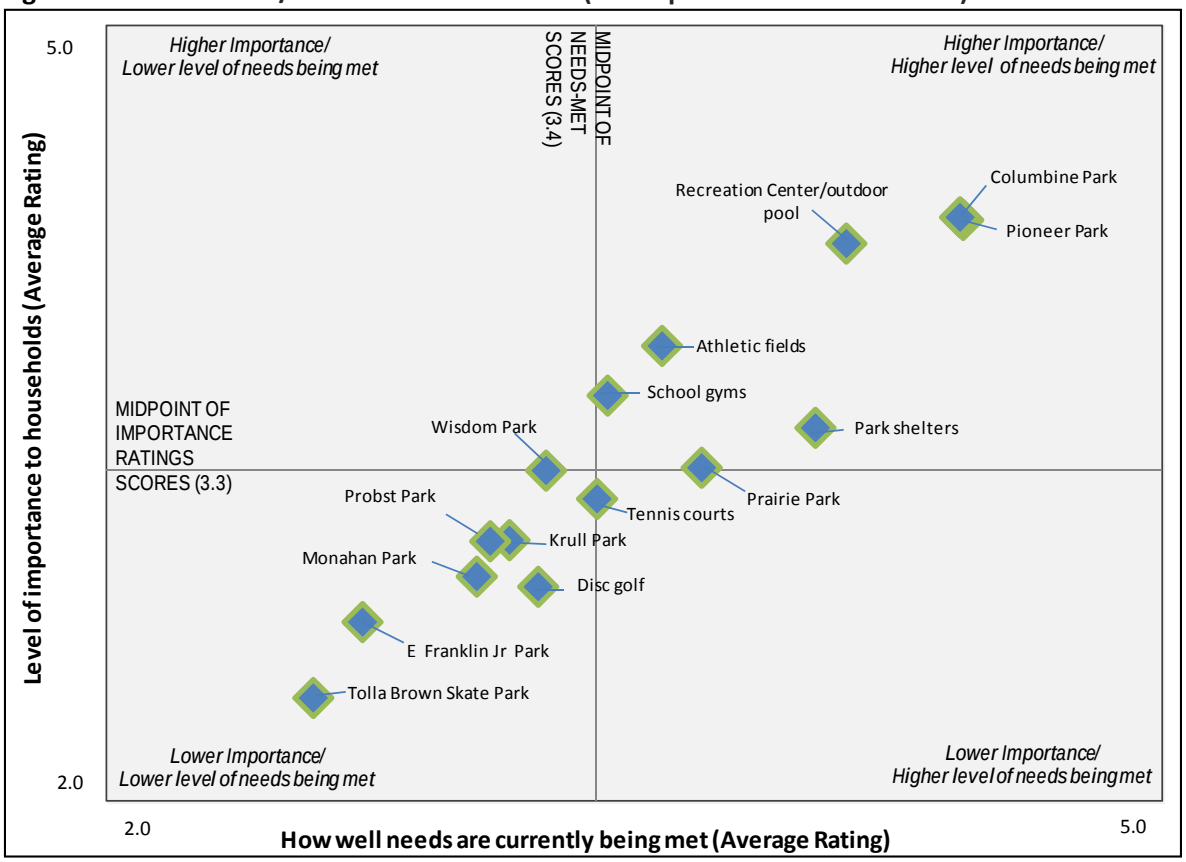
Parks and facilities located in the upper left quadrant are parks and facilities that are relatively important to households, but not fully meeting needs of respondents. Because no park or facility is located within this quadrant, Sterling seems to be satisfying respondents' needs relative to their level of importance. School gyms and Wisdom Park are the closest to this quadrant, but are not officially within those boundaries.

The lower left quadrant indicates parks and facilities that are not meeting the needs of households; however, they are important to fewer households. These "niche facilities" are used by a small but passionate following; therefore, there is merit to measuring visitation and planning for potential future enhancements accordingly. These parks and facilities include:

- Krull Park
- Probst Park
- Disc Golf
- Monahan Park
- E. Franklin Jr. Park
- Tolla Brown Skate Park

It is important to note that while some parks and facilities are found in the left quadrants, this may not necessarily indicate these parks and facilities are performing poorly. These parks and facilities are just not satisfying the needs of the community as well relative to other parks and facilities.

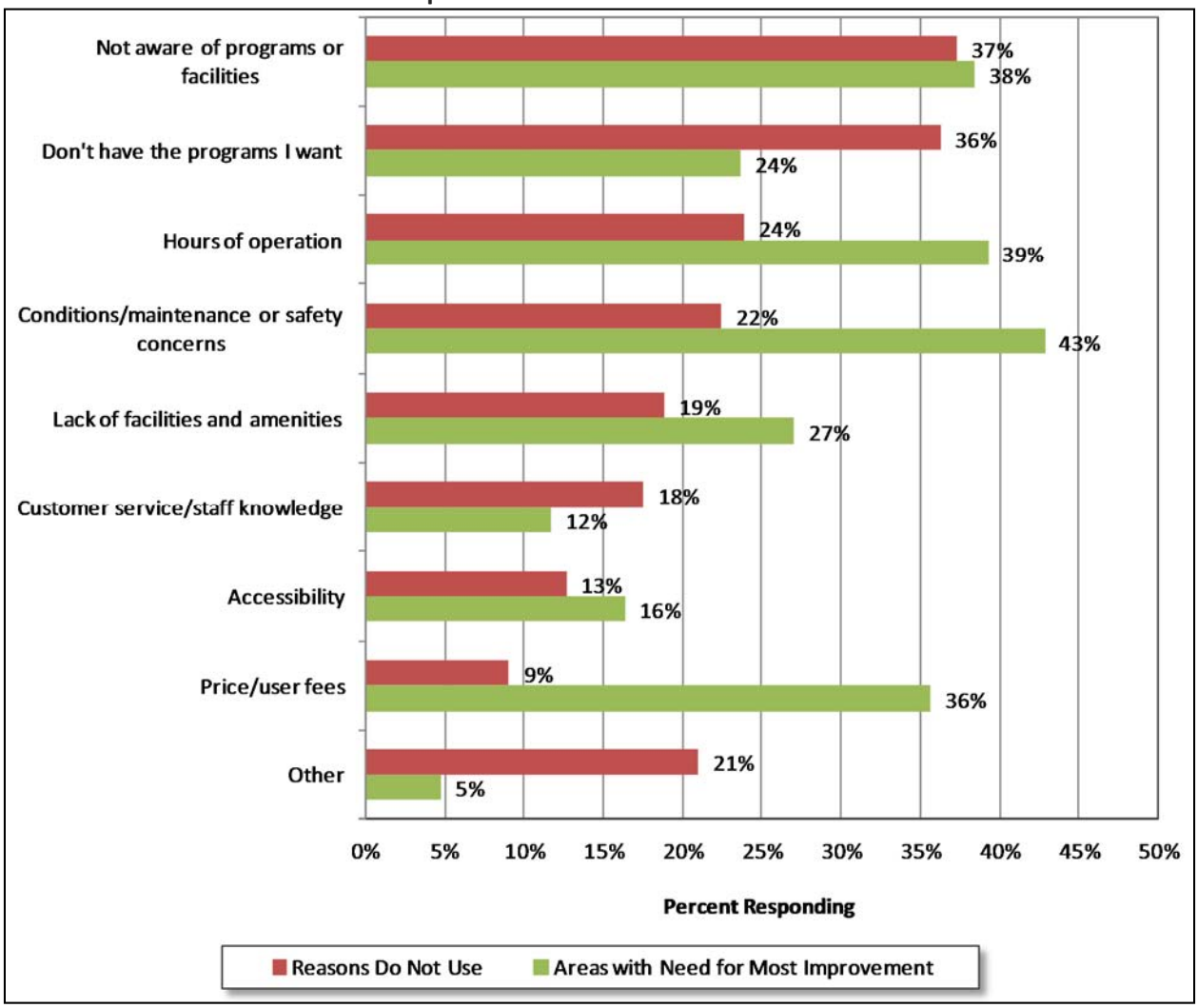
Figure 2: Current Parks/Facilities –Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix



Why Programs and Facilities are Not Used

Respondents were asked why they do not use Sterling parks, recreation facilities, community centers, open space, trails, and programs. Respondents who do use these facilities and services were asked to identify areas for improvement, as shown in ***Figure 3***.

***Figure 3*: Current Programs/Facilities - Reasons Why Households Do Not Use and Areas with Greatest Need for Improvement**



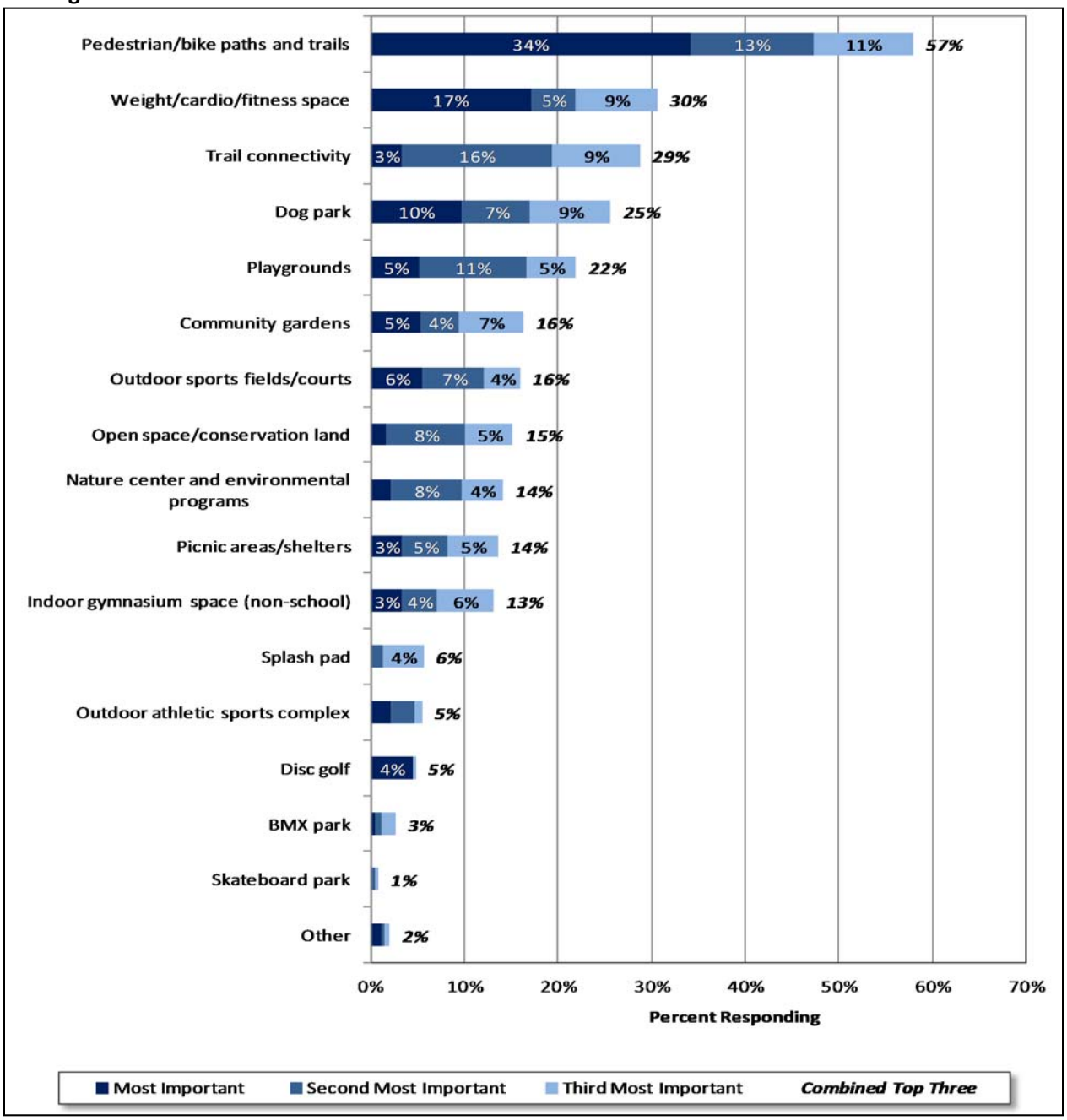
Parks and Facilities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved over the Next 5 to 10 Years

Respondents were informed of the following statement:

"*The City of Sterling funds parks, recreation, and trail operations and maintenance with user fees and tax dollars. As you answer the following questions, please keep in mind that additional funds would be required to build, operate, and maintain new parks, recreation, natural areas, and trails.*"

Based on this information, respondents rated the greatest program, park, and facility needs over the next 5 to 10 years using a 5 point scale, shown in ***Figure 4***, where 1 = "Not at All Important" and 5 = "Very Important." Pedestrian/bike paths and trails (average rating of 4.2) rated well above any other program, park, or facility.

***Figure 4*: Top Three Most Important Parks and Facilities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved in Sterling**



When asked to rank the most important, second most important, and third most important programs, activities, and special events for their household, the majority of respondents indicated outdoor recreation as the most important (46% of households) closely followed by special events such as festivals and parades (45%) (***Figure 5***).

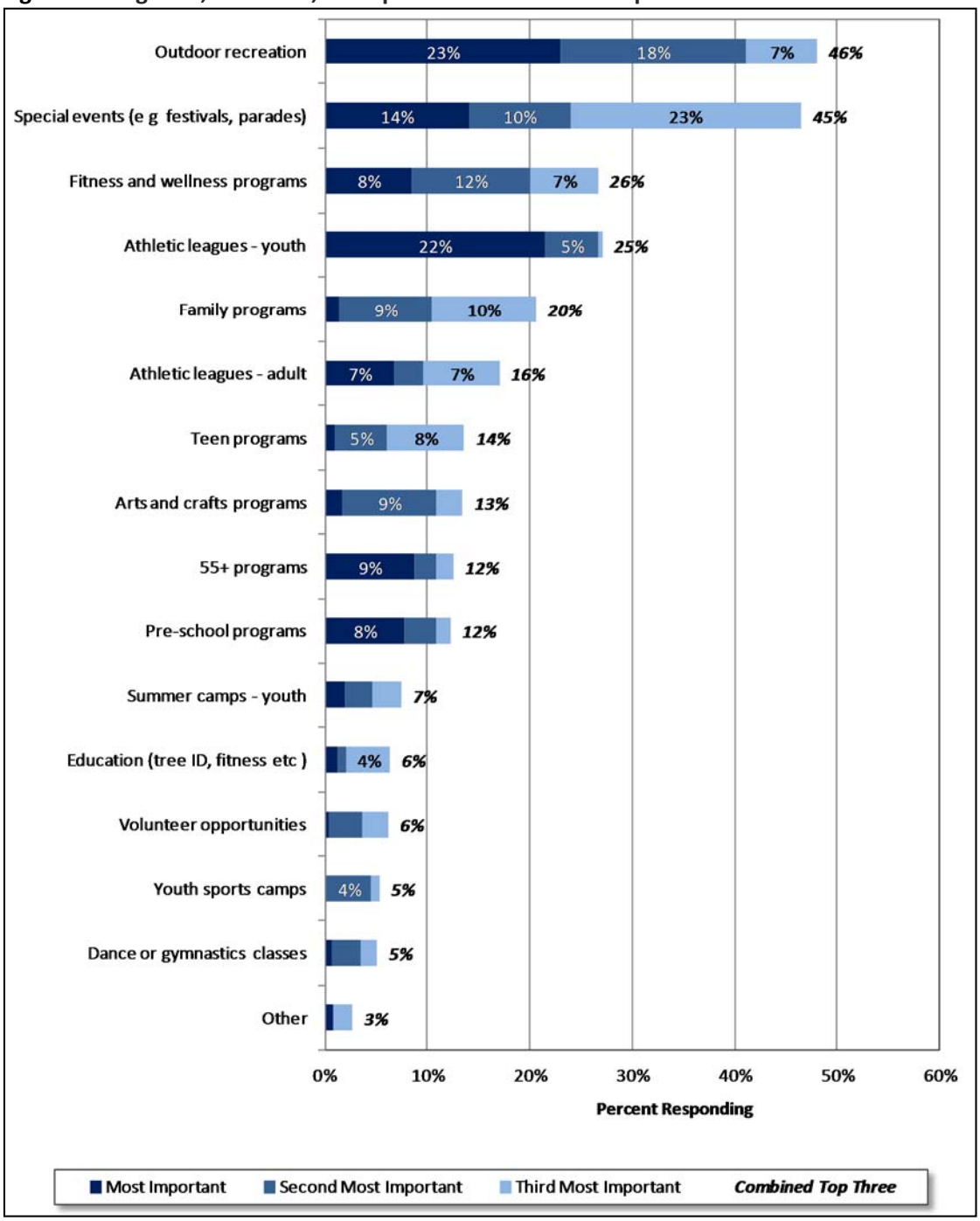
The second tier of programs, activities, and special events most important to Sterling households include:

- Fitness and wellness programs (26% of households reported this program as one of the top three most important to their household)
- Athletic leagues – youth (25%)
- Family programs (20%)

Third tier of most important programs:

- Athletic leagues – adult (16%)
- Teen programs (14%)
- Arts and crafts programs (13%)
- 55+ programs (12%)
- Pre-school programs (12%)

Figure 5: Programs, Activities, and Special Events – Most Important to Households



Communication

Local newspapers such as the *Journal Advocate* and the *South Platte Sentinel* are by far the most preferred method of communicating information about parks, recreation facilities, services, and programs offered by the city (47% of households). Other methods that are best used for communicating include:

- Social networking (19% of households)
- Email from the City (10% of households)
- Internet/website (9% of households)
- Radio (8% of households)

Respondents were also asked what methods they normally use to receive information on parks, recreation facilities, services, services, and programs. The majority of respondents (79%) reported local newspapers as the most common method of receiving information. However, several methods of usually receiving information were some of the least preferred methods. These methods included:

- Word of mouth (0% of all households indicated this method as the single best method for communicating information, but 67% indicated this method as a normal method of receiving information)
- Radio (8% reported as best; 42% reported as the usual method)
- At the recreation facilities/program location (3% reported as best; 23% reported as the usual method)
- Posters (1% reported as best; 16% reported as the usual method)
- School flyers (1% reported as best; 14% reported as the usual method)

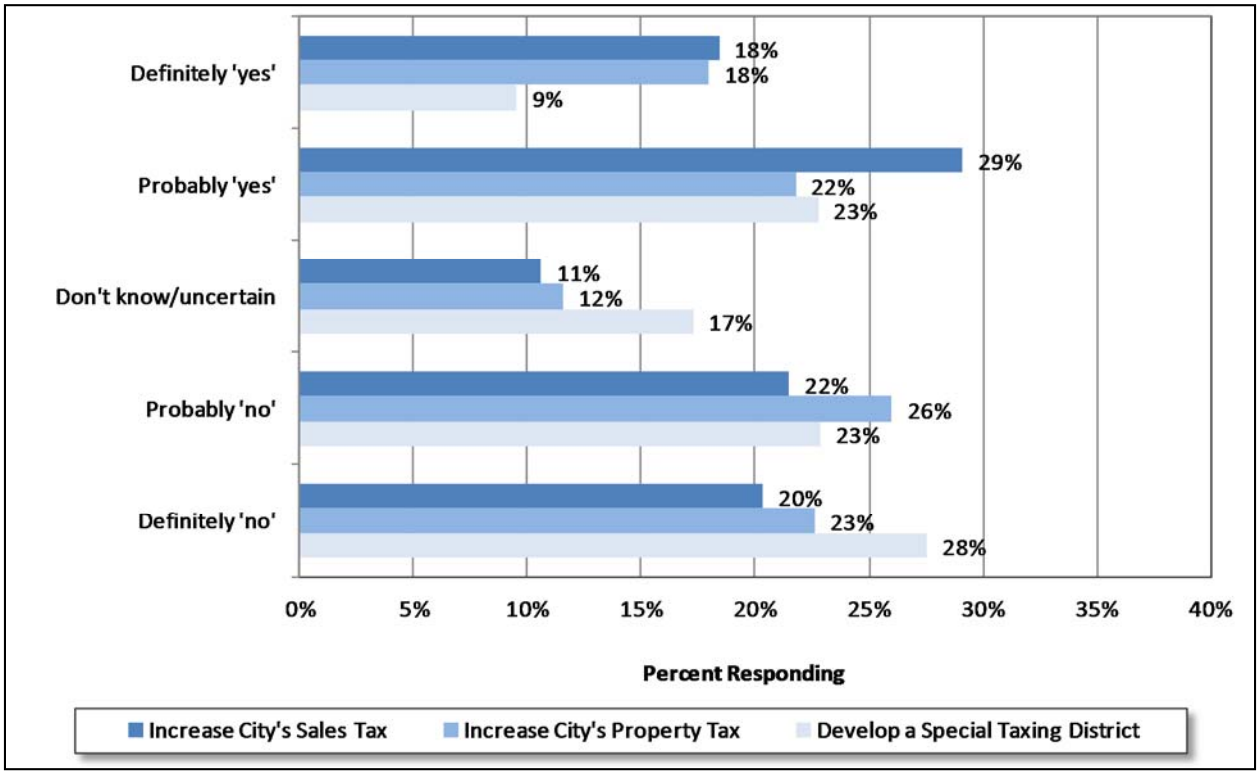
Electronic methods such as City e-mail, social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, and the internet/website have the most potential for improvement. While between 6 and 18 percent receive information through these methods, a combined 38 percent of households indicated one of these three methods as the single best method of reaching them. Considering the inexpensive cost of e-based marketing, Sterling can easily take advantage of this opportunity and improve its overall performance on providing information about recreation based opportunities.

Likelihood of Voting for Increased Taxes or the Development of a Special Taxing District

Respondents were asked if, in the case new recreation facilities are deemed a community need, how likely they would be to vote in support of increased sales taxes, increased property taxes, and the development of a special taxing district[1] to help pay for the construction and/or operating costs of future facilities. (***Figure 6***)

Increasing sales taxes had the highest support for an increase, albeit with less than half of respondents' support. Roughly 47 percent of respondents indicated either "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" in support for increased sales taxes. Another 40 percent indicated "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" in support for increased property taxes. The development of a special taxing district received the least support with only about 32 percent of respondents indicating a "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" vote for this option.

Figure 6: Financial Choices – Likelihood of Voting for Increased Sales Taxes, Property Taxes, and the Development of a Special Taxing District



[1] Respondents were given the following description of what a special taxing district is: "*A special taxing district, similar to a fire or library district, is an independent government unit that provides services either in addition to or in place of services provided by county, municipal, and township governments. Special taxing districts serve limited geographic areas and have governing boards that accomplish legislative functions through the use of public funds. They are created by majority vote through a general election.*"

Summary of all public input

The public input process produced a large amount of data and a number of key findings that include the following:

- The most important issues for the City to focus on regarding parks and recreation include: increasing positive activities for youth, maintaining what the City already has, and reducing crime and vandalism.
- Current parks and facilities do an excellent job of satisfying the City's needs relative to the level of importance placed on facilities by the community, though improvements to some parks and facilities are needed. These improvements include creating a safer and better maintained parks system and increasing hours of operation.
- The main reasons respondents do not use facilities or programs include not being aware of the programs or facilities, the City does not offer the programs they want, and hours of operation. These reasons, as well as conditions/maintenance or safety concerns and price/user fees, are some of the areas where improvement is most needed.
- Respondents indicated that pedestrian/bike paths and trails and sidewalks need to be added, expanded, or improved above any other facility or program.
- Overall, there is not overwhelming support for increased sales taxes, property taxes, or the development of a special taxing district to fund new construction and operating expenses if new facilities are deemed necessary. The majority of the resistance comes from older age groups while younger age groups are associated with the most support. Of the three alternatives to help fund new construction and operating costs evaluated, increasing the sales tax has the highest level of support overall.

D. Sterling Community Demographics

Understanding community demographics and needs is an important component of planning for future parks and recreation services and facilities in Sterling. This chapter of the ***Parks and Recreation Master Plan*** first provides a demographic overview of the City of Sterling and then highlights results of the statistically-valid survey and the public process. Pertinent parks and recreation trends impacting Sterling are summarized where appropriate. A full report on trends can be found in ***Appendix D.***

The population data used in this demographic profile comes from ESRI Business Information Solutions, based on the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data as well as the American Community Survey for 2007-2011, along with a U.S. Census report.

Key demographic trends to reference for future park and recreation planning efforts in Sterling are summarized below.

- According to ESRI Business Information Solutions (based on the 2010 U.S. Census), the estimated median household income for Sterling residents was $34,871 in 2012.
- The Sterling population grew significantly from 11,360 in 2000 to 14,777 in 2010, but is predicted to decrease slightly by 2017 to 14,616.
- The median age for the City in 2012 was 36.5, slightly lower than the median age (37.3) for the United States. Sterling's median age has risen slightly from 35 in 2000, indicating that the percentages in the older age cohorts are increasing.
- Nineteen percent (19%) of Sterling households earn less than $15,000 while the next largest household income cohort (18.9%) earns between $50,000 and $74,999.

Population Projections

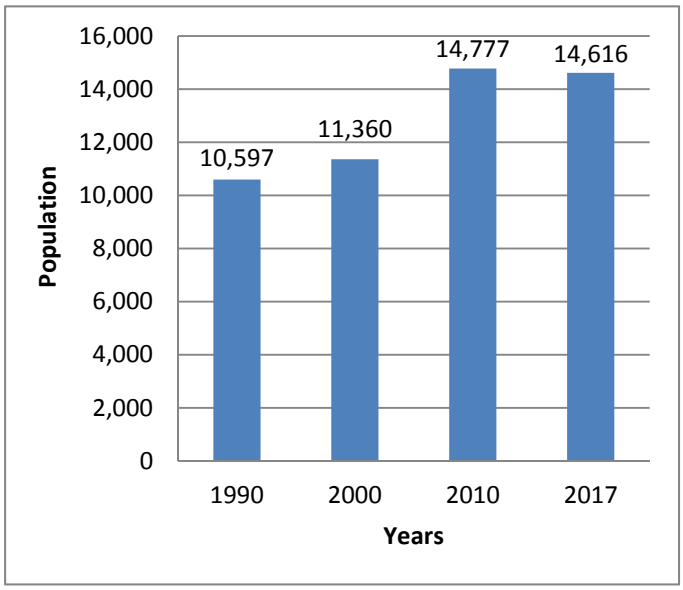
Although the future of population growth cannot be predicted with certainty, it is helpful to make assumptions about it for planning purposes. ***Table 2*** contains population estimates and projections based on the 2010 U.S. Census for the City of Sterling in the years 2012 and 2017. The annual growth rate for Sterling from 2000 through 2010 was 1.25 percent. ESRI's projected growth rate for 2012 through 2017 is 0.21 percent for Sterling, compared to the projected 2012-2017 annual growth rate for State of Colorado (at 1.29 percent) and for the United States as a whole (at 0.68 percent). The City of Sterling population growth trend is graphically represented in ***Figure 7.***

Table 2: Population projections

US Census (2000 and 2010) and ESRI Projections	
2000 Population	11,360
2010 Population	14,777
2012 Estimated	14,767
2017 Projected	14,616

Source: 2010 Census and ESRI Business Information Solutions 2012Demographic and Income Profile.

Figure 7: City of Sterling Population Growth Trend

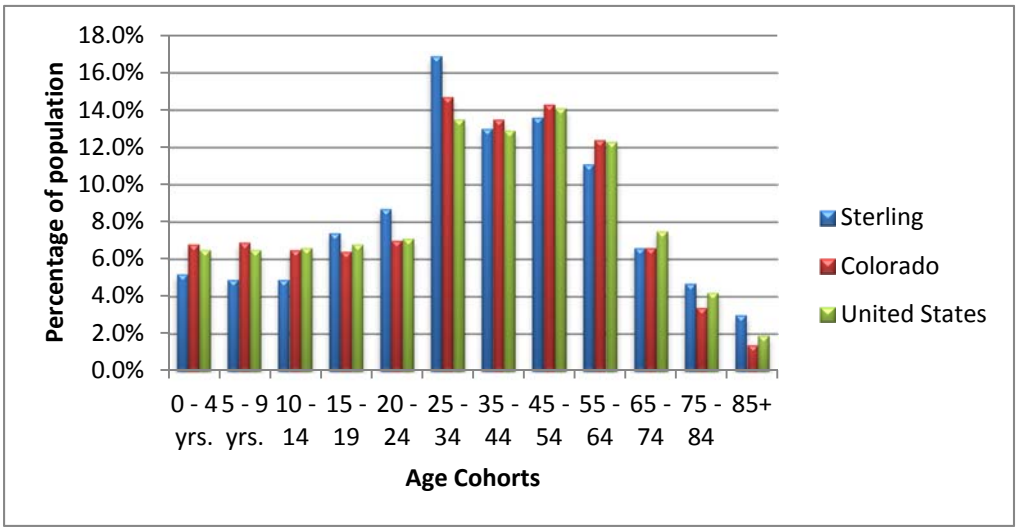


Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions.

Population Age Distribution

As part of the population trend analysis for the City of Sterling, it is useful to compare the City's age distribution and income distribution to that of the State of Colorado and the United States. As illustrated in ***Figure 8***, the age distribution within the City of Sterling favors those between the ages of 15 and 34 in comparison with Colorado and the entire United States. Additionally, the chart shows that Sterling has a lower percentage of children (0 to 14) in comparison with the overall population of Colorado and the United States.

Figure 8: 2012 Population Age Distribution for Sterling, Colorado and the United States



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions 2012 estimate based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

According to ESRI's demographic profile, the median age in Sterling in 2012 was 36.5 compared to a median age of 36.2 for the State of Colorado and 37.3 for the United States as a whole. The median age for Sterling is trending older, from 35 in 2000 to 35.3 in 2010, and is forecast to be 37 in 2017. The proportion of youth living in Sterling (ages 0 to 24) decreased from 38.4 percent of the population in 2000 to a predicted 30.4 percent of the population in 2017. By contrast, the 25-34 age cohort increased from 11.6 percent in 2000 to a predicted 16.9 percent in 2017, and the 55-65 age cohort increased from 6.7 percent to a predicted 11.4 percent in 2017.

The following age breakdown is used to separate the population into age sensitive user groups.

- **Under 5 years:** This group represents users of preschool programs and facilities. As trails and open space users, this age group is often in strollers. These individuals are the future participants in youth activities.
- **5 to 14 years:** This group represents current youth program participants.
- **15 to 24 years:** This group represents teen/young adult program participants moving out of the youth programs and into adult programs. Members of this age group are often seasonal employment seekers.
- **25 to 34 years:** This group represents potential adult program participants. Many in this age group are beginning long-term relationships and establishing families.
- **35 to 54 years:** This group represents users of a wide range of adult programming and park facilities. Their characteristics extend from having children using preschool and youth programs to becoming empty nesters.
- **55 to 64 years:** This group represents users of older adult programming exhibiting the characteristics of approaching retirement or already retired and typically enjoying grandchildren. This group may also be caring for older parents.
- **65 years plus:** Nationally, this group will be increasing dramatically. Pew Research reports that by the time all Baby Boomers turn 65 in 2030, 15 percent of the nation's population will be at least that old. Recreation centers, senior centers, and senior programs can be a significant link in the health care system. This group ranges from very healthy, active seniors to more physically inactive seniors.

Demographic Trends in Recreation – The Baby Boomers
Baby Boomers are defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964. They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans. In 2011, this influential population began its transition out of the workforce. While the City of Sterling's median age has been fairly consistent for the past decade, this demographic will have an impact on the services that the City provides. As Baby Boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, Baby Boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults.

Educational Attainment

As shown in ***Table 3***, the 2007 – 2011 U.S. Census American Community Survey indicates that the highest ranking educational cohorts in Sterling are high school graduates (33.3 percent) and those with some college education and no degree (27.5 percent) Those residents that earned an Associate's degree follow, comprising 9.2 percent of the population. According to a census study, education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span in the workforce than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.[2]

Table 3: Sterling's Educational Attainment

Education Attainment	Sterling Percentage
Less than 9th grade	7.6%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	8.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	33.3%
Some college, no degree	27.5%
Associate's degree	9.2%
Bachelor's degree	7.7%
Graduate or professional degree	6.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 – 2011 American Community Survey (This is the most current data available).

Employment Statistics

A comparison of unemployment rates for the Sterling Micropolitan Statistical Area in January of 2000, 2010, and July of 2013 presents quite a swing in employment opportunities for the city. The unemployment rate was 3.1 percent in January 2000, 7.7 percent in January 2010, and 5.8 percent in July 2013 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics, www.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LAUMCO8445403, accessed on September 14, 2013).

[2] Tiffany Julian and Robert Kominski, "Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates" American Community Survey Reports, US Census Bureau, http://www.census.gov/prod/ 2011pubs/acs-14.pdf, September 2011.

Household Size and Income Distribution

In 2010, the average household size for Sterling was 2.25, somewhat smaller than the average household size of 2.49 for the State of Colorado. The median income for Sterling was $28,260 in the 2000 Census, and in 2012 it was $34,871, according to ESRI estimates. ESRI projects that the median income will be at $39,067 in 2017. These figures are lower than those projected for the State of Colorado ($54,424 in 2012 and $63,663 in 2017) and the United States ($50,157 in 2012 and $56,895 in 2017). The highest percentage of the population in Sterling (19.6%) earns less than $15,000 per year. The next highest part of the population (18.9 percent) earns incomes in the $50,000 – $74,999 range; households in this this income range is predicted to increase to 20.1 percent by 2017.

E. Influencing Trends

It is a challenge for parks and recreation departments to continue to understand and respond to the changing recreation interests of serviced populations. In this fast-paced society, it is important to stay on top of current trends impacting outdoor and nature-based recreation. The following information highlights relevant local, regional, and national outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence the Sterling Parks and Recreation for the next ten years.

- There is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional amenities such as "spray pads" are becoming increasingly popular as well.
- Some of the top ten athletic activities ranked by total participation include: exercise walking, swimming, exercising with equipment, camping, and bicycle riding.
- The United Health Foundation has ranked Colorado 13th in its 2010 *State Health Rankings.*
- Nationally, rates of obesity continue to increase.
- Fitness, educational, and teen programs are listed at the top of the 10 programs that parks and recreation agencies are planning to add within the next three years.
- Mobile marketing (i.e. social networking) is a growing trend. Web-based niche marketing tools are becoming more popular for agencies to use as a means of marketing programs and services.
- A national trend in the delivery of parks and recreation systems reflects more partnerships and contractual agreements reaching out to the edges of the community to support specialized services.
- More agencies are creating and implementing cost recovery policies.
- The majority of Americans agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.

Demographic Trend Analysis Summary

Key demographic trends used in this plan and to reference for future planning efforts of City of Sterling Parks and Recreation Department indicate that there is a need to be prepared for expanding adult and senior programming opportunities in the future, and there is a steady need for youth programming. Since the trends indicate that Sterling's population is getting older, an upward adjustment and eventual elimination of differential in "senior fee" pricing may be needed due to the potential increase in senior users. The process for determining the need for new facilities will also need to be considered based on these trends.

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IV. FACILITY INVENTORY AND LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to evaluate how facilities and parks in Sterling serve the community. The analysis may be used as a tool to benchmark current level of service and to direct future planning efforts. Combined with other findings, including survey results and focus group and stakeholder feedback, it is also intended to indicate the level of service anticipated by the community.

A. GRASP® Methodology

An analytical technique known as C*omposite-Values Methodology* (CVM) was used to examine level of service (LOS) provided by assets in Sterling. The proprietary version of CVM used by GreenPlay and Design Concepts is known as GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standard Process). This process yields analytical maps and data that may be used to study LOS across the study area.

Composite-Values Level of Service (LOS) Analysis – This is the process used to inventory and analyze the assets, including quantity, location, and various qualities of each. The process utilizes MS Excel, MS Access, and common GIS software. The composite-values based LOS analysis process used by GreenPlay and Design Concepts is proprietary, and known as "**GRASP®"** (Geo-referenced Amenities Standards Process). It has been somewhat automated through creation of additional software code and template design for efficiency in data collection and analysis. *A detailed history and overview of* ***Composite-Values Methodology (CVM)*** *and description of* ***GRASP®*** *methodology is included in* ***Appendix E****.*

Why Level of Service?

Level of Service for a community recreation system is important, as it is indicative of the ability of people to pursue active lifestyles. LOS can have implications on health and wellness, the local economy, and quality of life and tends to reflect community values. It is often emblematic of the manner and extent to which people are connected to their communities.

Perspectives

Maps and data quantifications produced using the GRASP® methodology are known as ***perspectives****.* Level of Service perspectives show how well the community is served by any given set of assets. Maps are utilized along with quantified measurement charts to provide a benchmark of what a community may use, and determine its success providing services both at present and over time. Each perspective is a model of the service being provided across the study area. The model can be further analyzed to derive statistical information about service in a variety of ways.

Perspective maps and charts are produced based on scoring calculations determined by applying the GRASP® process to the City of Sterling inventory. Each park or recreation location, along with all on-site component assets, has been assigned a service value, or GRASP® score. These GRASP® scores are distributed on a map based on a measured distance from each asset. This distance is called a ***catchment area***, or buffer. The catchment area is a radius that extends outward in all directions from the asset and represents a reasonable travel distance to an asset.

A GRASP® score ascribed to a catchment area yields a ***service area*** for a particular asset which reflects that score. When service areas for multiple components are plotted on a map, a picture emerges that represents the cumulative level of service provided by that set of components in a geographic area.

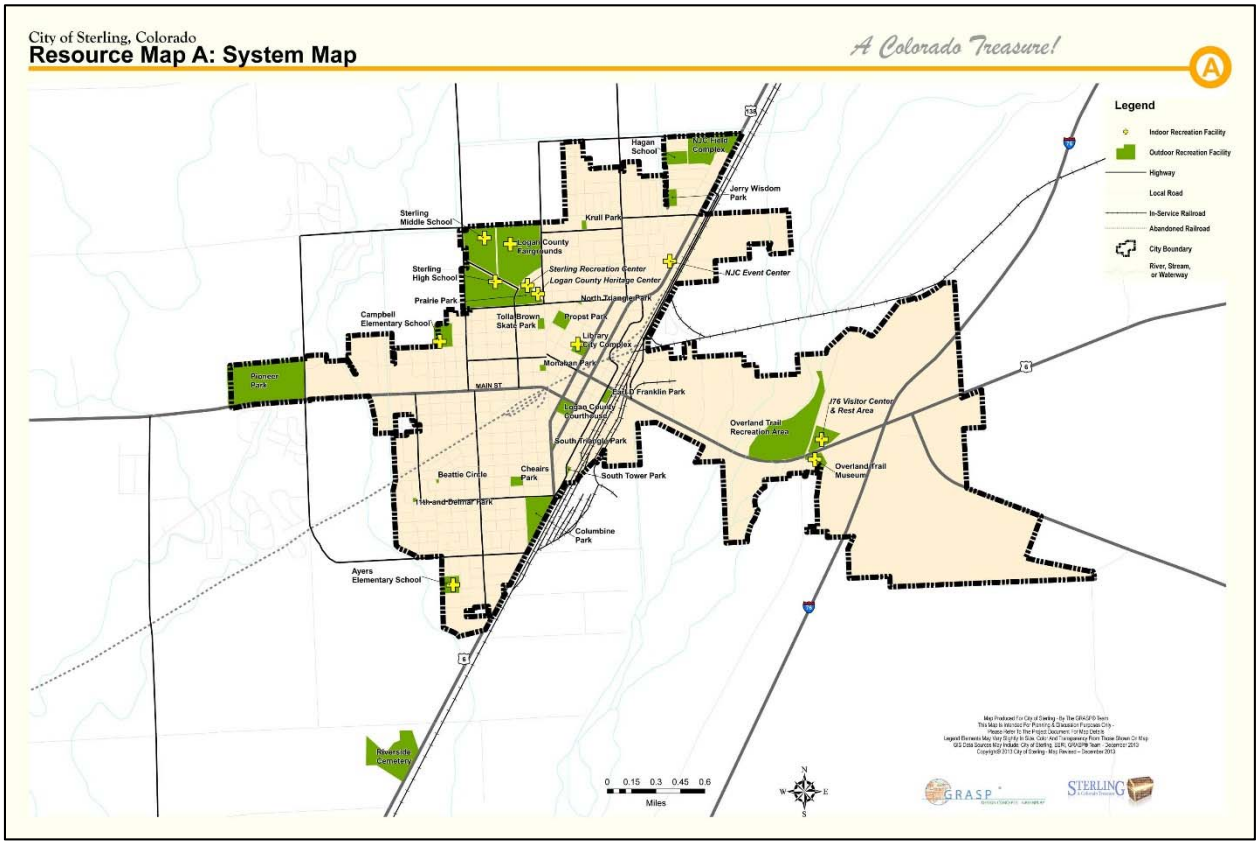
Darker and lighter orange shades on a perspective map show areas with higher or lower level of service respectively. Also shown are parks areas, outdoor components, indoor locations, and city infrastructure.

On a map, a darker shade results from the overlap of more service areas. Darker shades indicate areas served by more and/or higher quality components. All shades have GRASP® scoring values associated with them such that for any given spot on a perspective map there is a GRASP® Level of Service score that reflects cumulative scoring for nearby assets. The graphic above provides an example to illustrate.

Creating the Inventory

The Level of Service analysis process involved assembly of a detailed inventory of public and semi-public physical assets available for use by the Sterling community. This asset inventory was created to serve the City of Sterling in a number of ways. It can be used for a wide variety of planning and operations tasks such as asset management as well as future strategic and master plans. The assets inventory currently includes public parks, recreation, and trails assets managed by the Parks, Library and Recreation Department and those school facilities that are open to usage for recreation outside of school hours. Several other alternative providers were also identified, located, and scored during the inventory process.

Map A shows the study area and key locations of properties. Larger scale maps may be found in ***Appendix F***.



Map A: City of Sterling system map showing all inventory included for GRASP® analysis.

Asset Scoring

In planning for the delivery of parks and recreation services, it is useful to think of parks, trails, indoor facilities, and other public spaces as parts of an infrastructure. This infrastructure allows people to exercise, socialize, and maintain a healthy physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The infrastructure is made up of ***components*** that support this goal. Components include such amenities as playgrounds, picnic shelters, courts, fields, indoor facilities, and other elements that allow the system to meet its intended purpose.

In the inventory of assets, the following information is collected:

- Component type and location
- Evaluation of component functionality
- Evaluation of associated comfort and convenience features at a location
- Evaluation of general design and ambience at a location
- Site photos
- General comments

The immediate surroundings of a component affect how well it functions, so in addition to scoring components, each park site or indoor facility was given a set of scores to rate its comfort, convenience, and ambient qualities. This includes traits such as the availability of restrooms, drinking water, shade, scenery, etc. These ***modifier*** values are attributed to any component at a given location and serve to enhance component and location scores. For the purposes of scoring, each location is considered a component in and of itself. Thus reference to "components" includes also includes the site at which a component is located.

All scoring is based on condition, size, site capacity, and overall quality. The inventory team used the following three tier rating system to evaluate these:

1 = Below Expectations
2 = Meets Expectations
3 = Exceeds Expectations

Catchment Areas

Catchment areas, also called buffers or radii, are used to calculate total GRASP® Level of Service scores. A radius of a specific distance is drawn around each component. The total score for that component is then applied to that buffer and overlapped with all other component catchment areas. This process yields the data used to create perspective maps and analytical charts.

People use a variety of transit modes to reach a recreation destination: on foot, on a bike, in a car, via public transportation, or utilizing any combination of these or other alternatives. The mode is often determined, at least in part, by the distance to be travelled. The GRASP® system accounts for this by applying more than one catchment area distance to examine access to assets.

The GRASP® methodology typically applies two different catchment area distances to calculate scoring totals, yielding two distinct perspectives used to examine a recreation system:

1. Overall Level of Service
2. Walkable Level of Service

Overall LOS analysis applies a primary catchment distance of one mile. This is considered a suitable distance for a bike ride or a short drive in a car, or an even longer walk. A one-mile catchment is intended to capture recreational users travelling from home or elsewhere to a park or facility by way of bike, bus, or automobile.

Walkable LOS analysis uses a more focused catchment distance intended to capture users within a ten-minute walk travelling at a leisurely pace. This distance can range from as short as 1/4 mile to as high as 1/2 mile depending on the study area. **For the City of Sterling, a 1/3 mile catchment buffer was used.**

Academic and professional research on this topic is inconclusive. At least two agencies, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Trust for Public Land (TPL), have used 1/2 mile as a walkable distance for studies they have conducted.[3] Other studies in this country and internationally have used one mile or one kilometer (.62 miles) as walkable distances.

[3]Blanck et al., *Let's Go to the Park Today: The Role of Parks in Obesity Prevention and Improving the Public's Health,* Childhood Obesity, Oct 2012

In the GRASP® methodology, a one-third mile catchment area is preferred. This distance represents a maximum travel time of 10 minutes based on an average walking speed of three miles per hour. A one-third mile catchment is able to account for longer actual walking distances due to indirect routes, as are commonly found in a grid street pattern, and serves to ensure a travel time of 10 minutes or less for most people. Further discussion of walkable distances and catchment buffer types may be found in ***Appendix E***.

B. Findings

Summary of Findings from the LOS Analysis

- The City of Sterling provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities. These opportunities are well distributed throughout the 28 outdoor facilities and indoor facilities which include the recreation center, library, museum, and schools.
- The overall level of service is very high, as 96 percent of the recreational assets within the City limits meet or exceed the chosen minimum standard threshold for level of service if accessed using by an automobile.
- Areas falling below this threshold in overall level of service or without service are on the perimeter of the city and have a relatively low population density.
- Access to recreation opportunities by walking is also well distributed and very high for much of the city.
- More than half (59%) of all city land is within walking distance of at least one recreation component.
- Forty-two percent (42%) of city residents live within a walkable distance of a park or facility that meets or exceeds the minimum standard for level of service, equal to Propst Park or better.
- Areas with walkable level of service below the threshold or without any service tend to be commercial or industrial areas or are serviced by providers other than the City of Sterling.
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of children ages 0-14 live within walking distance of a park with a playground.

Perspective maps were generated along with quantitative data charts to evaluate the assets available to residents. For purposes of this study, the city limit boundary of Sterling was used as the extent of the study area. The Sterling city boundary may be found in ***Map A*** for reference. ***Table 4*** below shows the population. This figure was also used to calculate the population/acre as a measure of population density to be used in additional LOS calculations.

Table 4: Sterling Population Statistics

Study Area	Total Acres	2010 Population	Population Per Acre
City of Sterling	3,913	14,777	3.78

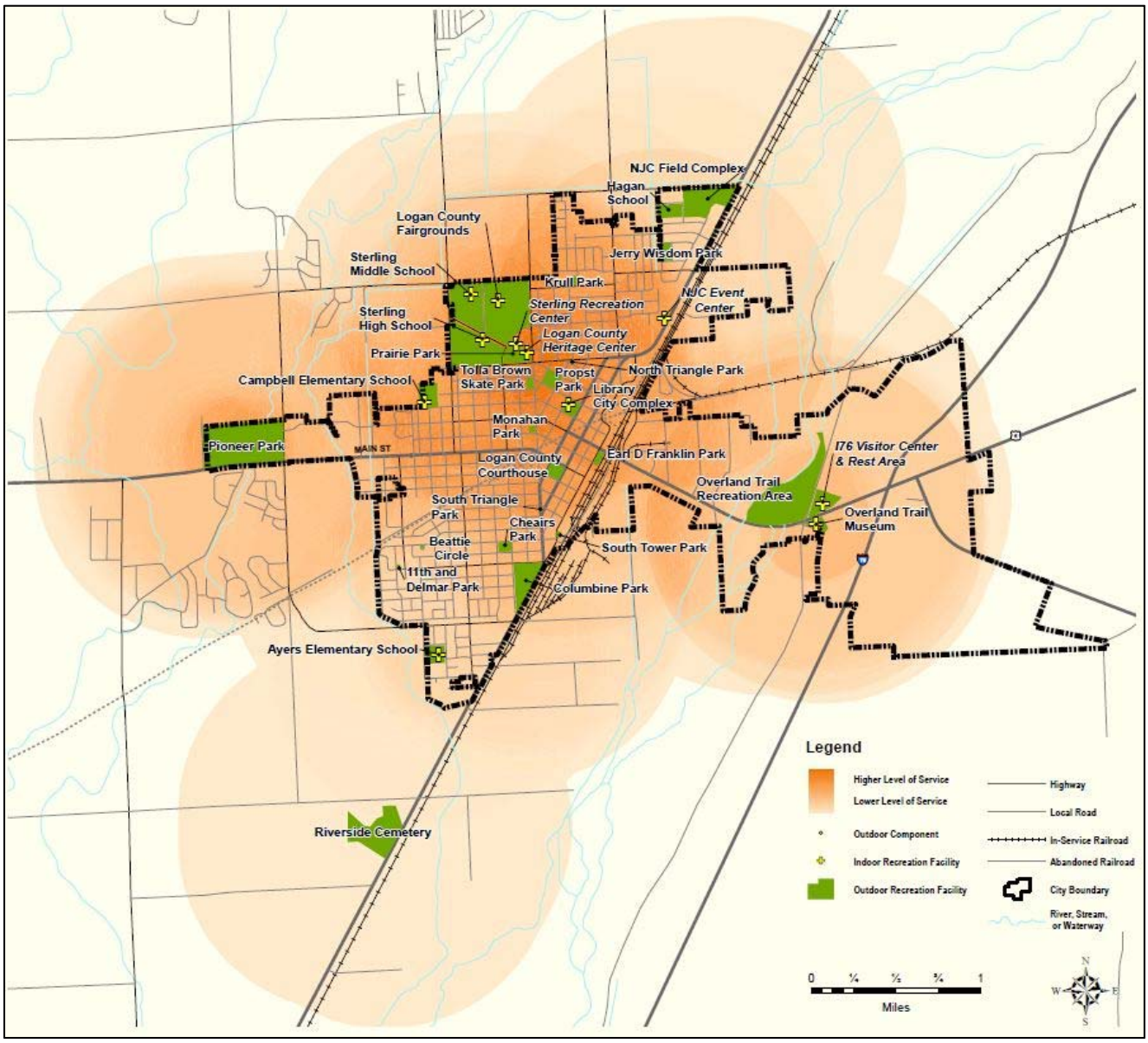
Overall Level of Service

One perspective was created to examine Overall Level of Service for the City of Sterling. Results of this analysis are displayed in ***Map B*** and ***Map B-1***.

Map B: General Access to All Recreation Components

Map B models access to all recreation components by all transportation modes. One-mile catchment radii have been placed around each component and shaded relative to the component's GRASP® score. This represents a distance from which convenient access to the component can be achieved by normal means such as driving or bicycling.

In addition, a one-third mile catchment area representing the distance that a resident can reasonably walk in 10 minutes has also been added to each component. As a result, scores are doubled within one-third mile of the asset to reflect the added value of walkable proximity. This assumes that most healthy individuals can reach a destination at this distance by walking. This doubling of the GRASP® value within a walkable distance of the component serves to place a premium those areas in closer proximity.



Map B: General Access to All Recreation Components in the City of Sterling

In general, ***Map B*** indicates that Sterling has excellent distribution of facilities and good general access to parks and recreation facilities. Areas of higher concentration are notable, particularly around the Prairie Park/Recreation Center core and associated with Pioneer Park.

The table below shows statistical information derived from ***Map B*** perspective analysis.

Table 5: Statistics for *Map B*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Percent of Total with LOS	**Average LOS per Acre Served**	**Avg. LOS Per Acre/ Population per acre**	**GRASP® Index**	**Percent Total Area =0**	**Percent Total Area >0 AND <38.4**	**Percent Total Area >=38.4**
City of Sterling	96%	279	74	60	4%	2%	94%

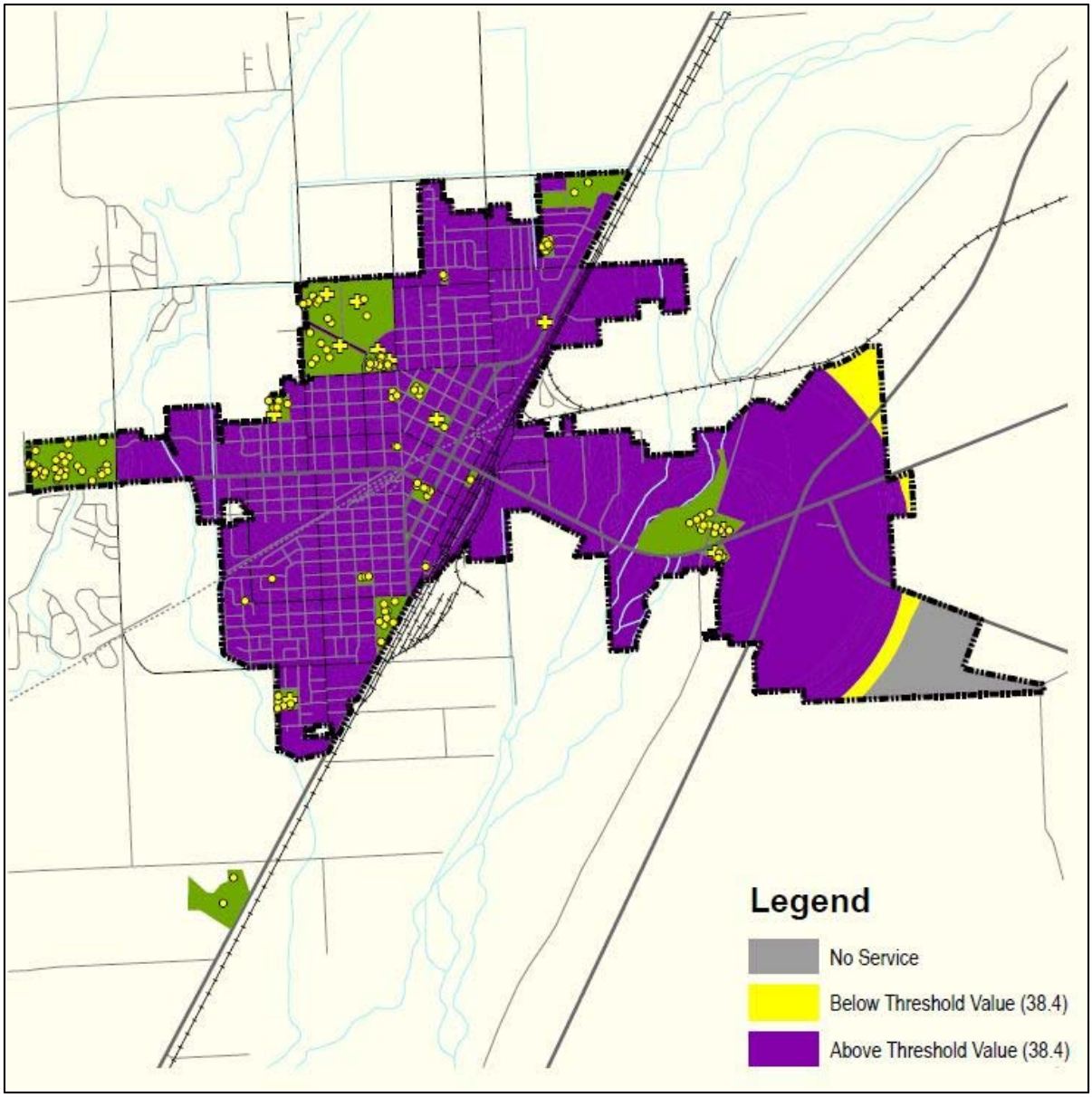
Column A: Shows the percentage of study area that has at least some service (LOS > 0).

Column B: Shows the average numerical value of LOS for the total area.

Column C: Shows the results of dividing the number from the previous column (Average LOS per Acre Served) by the population density of the area.

Column D: Shows the GRASP® Index, a simple numerical calculation that involves dividing the total numerical value of all of the components in a given area by the population of that area, in thousands. The difference between the GRASP® Index and the previous number is that the GRASP® Index reflects the total value of assets in the area in relation to the number of people the assets serve, while the previous number relates the *density* of service per acre to the *density* of people per acre. It also allows service from assets outside the planning area to be accounted for, while the GRASP® Index does not.

Columns E, F, G: Show statistics from an analysis of the values on Perspective A applying a minimum standard, or ***threshold***. Total GRASP® scoring values were bracketed to show where LOS is above or below a threshold value of 38.4. Columns E, F, and G show the percentages of the study area that either have no service, fall below this threshold value, or exceed this threshold. These results are also shown on ***Map B-1***, inset with ***Map B*** in the Appendix and below.



Map B-1: Threshold map displays General Access to All Components in the City of Sterling based on a minimum standard. The minimum standard score of 38.4 equates to the LOS provided by Propst Park.

On ***Map B-1***, areas that lack any service are shown in gray. Areas with at least some service are shown in yellow. Areas shown in purple have LOS that exceeds the threshold score of 38.4**.** This score represents access to the equivalent of a typical neighborhood park in Sterling. A park with this score might include a playground, shade shelter, and an open turf area. Propst Park is an example of a City of Sterling park with this cumulative score. Out of the total study area, 94 percent has an overall LOS score above this minimum value threshold.

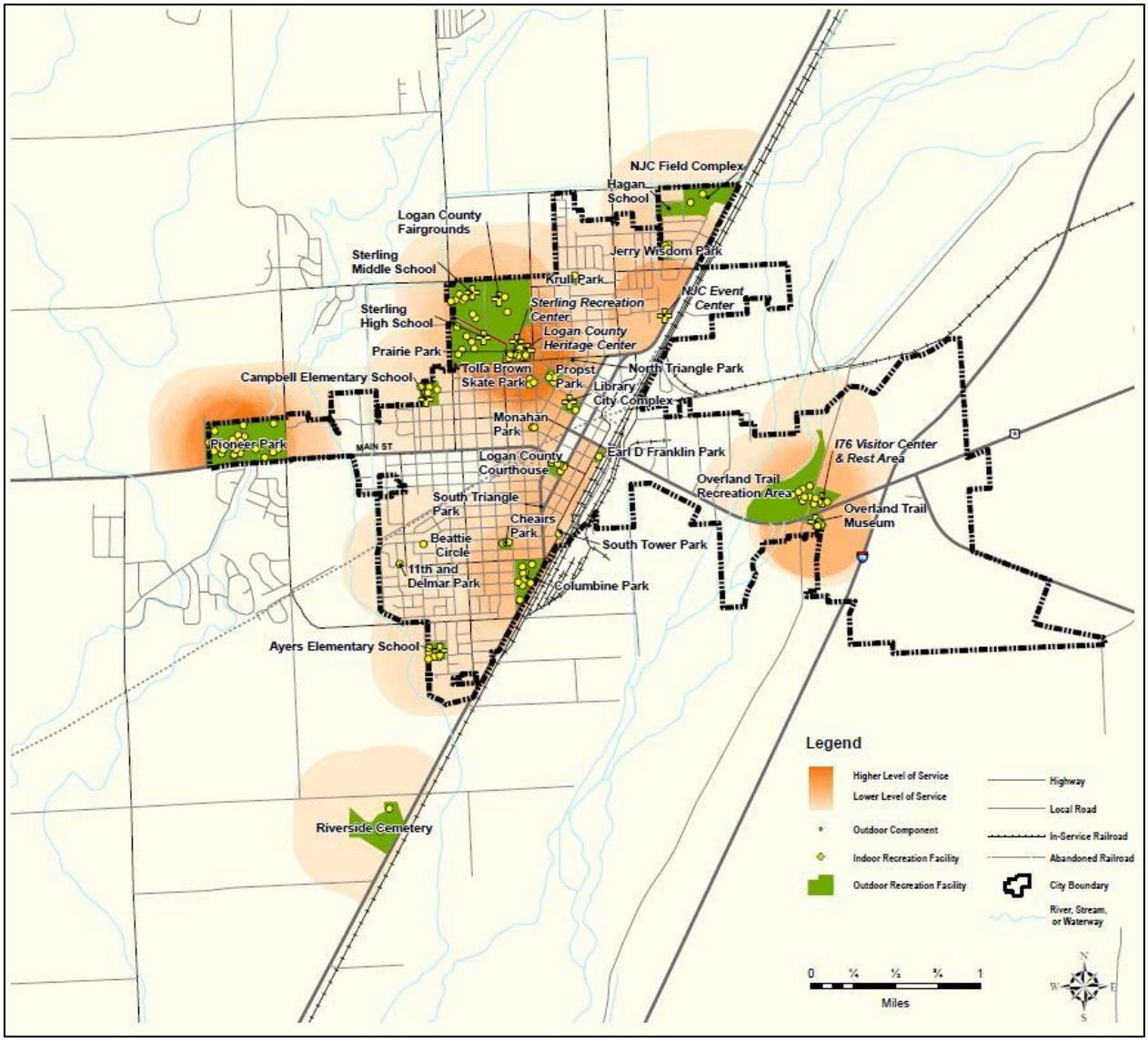
Walkable Level of Service

Walkability is a measure of how user-friendly an area is to people travelling on foot. A walkable environment benefits public health, the local economy, and quality of life. Many factors influence walkability. These include presence or absence and quality of footpaths, sidewalks, or other pedestrian rights-of-way; traffic and road conditions; land use patterns; building accessibility; and safety considerations among others. Walkability is an important aspect of ***recreational connectivity*** – the extent to which community recreational resources are physically linked to allow for easy and enjoyable travel between them. These concepts are discussed further in ***Section C*** of ***Appendix E.***

For the City of Sterling's walkable level of service perspective analysis, ***pedestrian barriers*** were determined and used to clip the service coverage. These are typically major streets or railroad tracks that restrict pedestrian movement and pose a potential risk to public safety. This accounts for the need to cross these obstacles as it serves to limit walkable access to assets.

Map C: Walkable Access to All Recreation Components

Map C models access to all recreation components by walking. One-third mile catchment radii have been placed around each component and shaded relative to the component's GRASP® score. This represents a distance from which convenient access to the component can be achieved by an average person within a ten minute walk. Scores are doubled within this catchment to reflect the added value of walkable proximity, allowing direct comparisons to be made between this ***Map B*** and ***Map C***.



Map C: Walkable Access to All Recreation Components in the City of Sterling

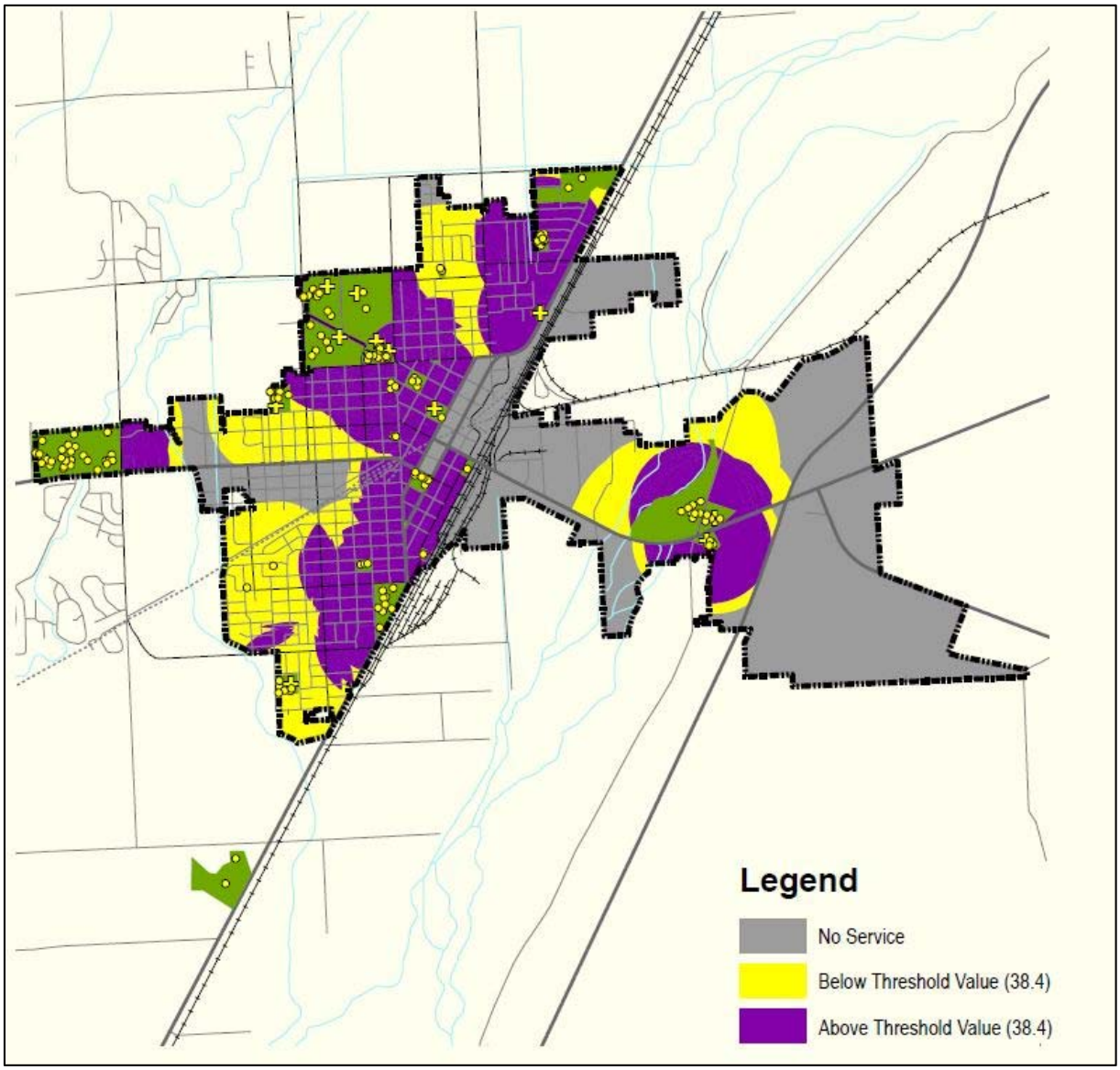
Map C analysis is intended to show the LOS available across Sterling if walking is the only way used to reach assets. Similar to ***Map B*** this map indicates higher levels of service around the Prairie Park/Recreation Center core area and surrounding Pioneer Park north of Main Street. As this walkability analysis accounts for pedestrian barriers, levels of service are notably truncated.

The following table shows the statistical information derived from perspective ***Map C*** analysis.

Table 6: Statistics for *Map C*

	Percent of Total with LOS	Average LOS per Acre Served	Avg. LOS Per Acre/ Population per acre	GRASP® Index	Percent Total Area =0	Percent Total Area >0 AND <38.4	Percent Total Area >=38.4
City of Sterling	59%	110	29	60	41%	29%	30%

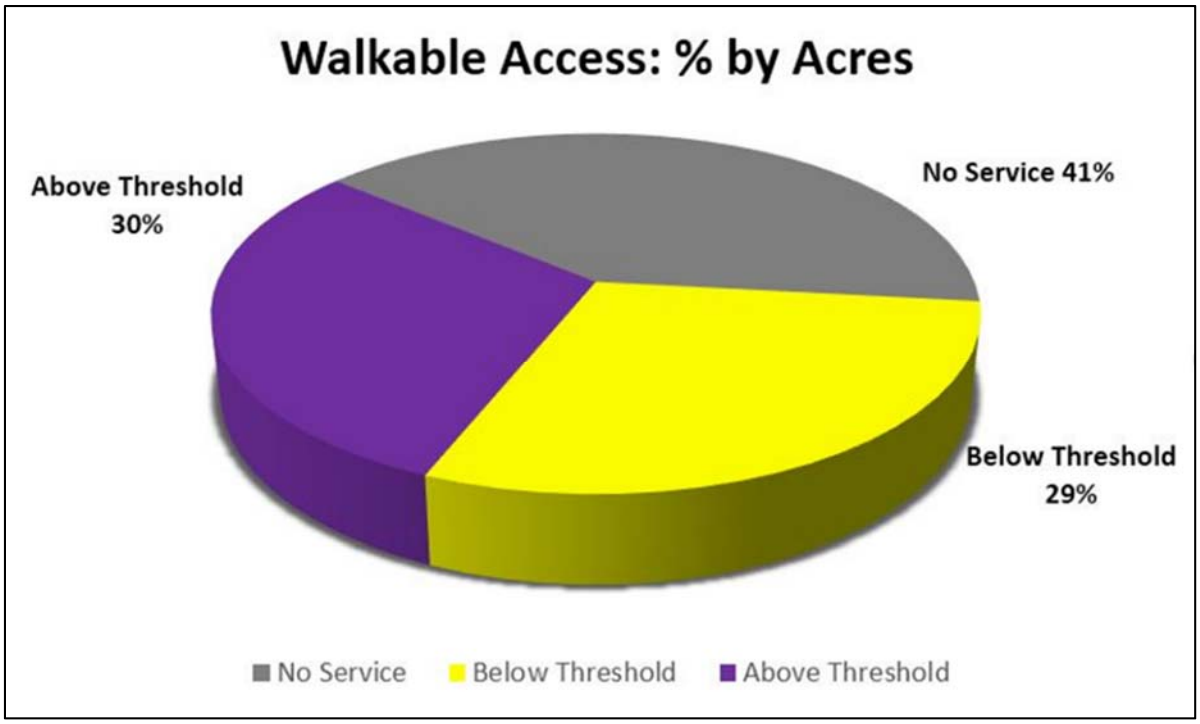
The numbers in each column are derived as described in the explanation for ***Map B*** above. The most notable difference between these perspectives, ***Map B***, and ***Map C***, is that LOS is lower for a person who must walk to get to assets than it is for someone who can drive.



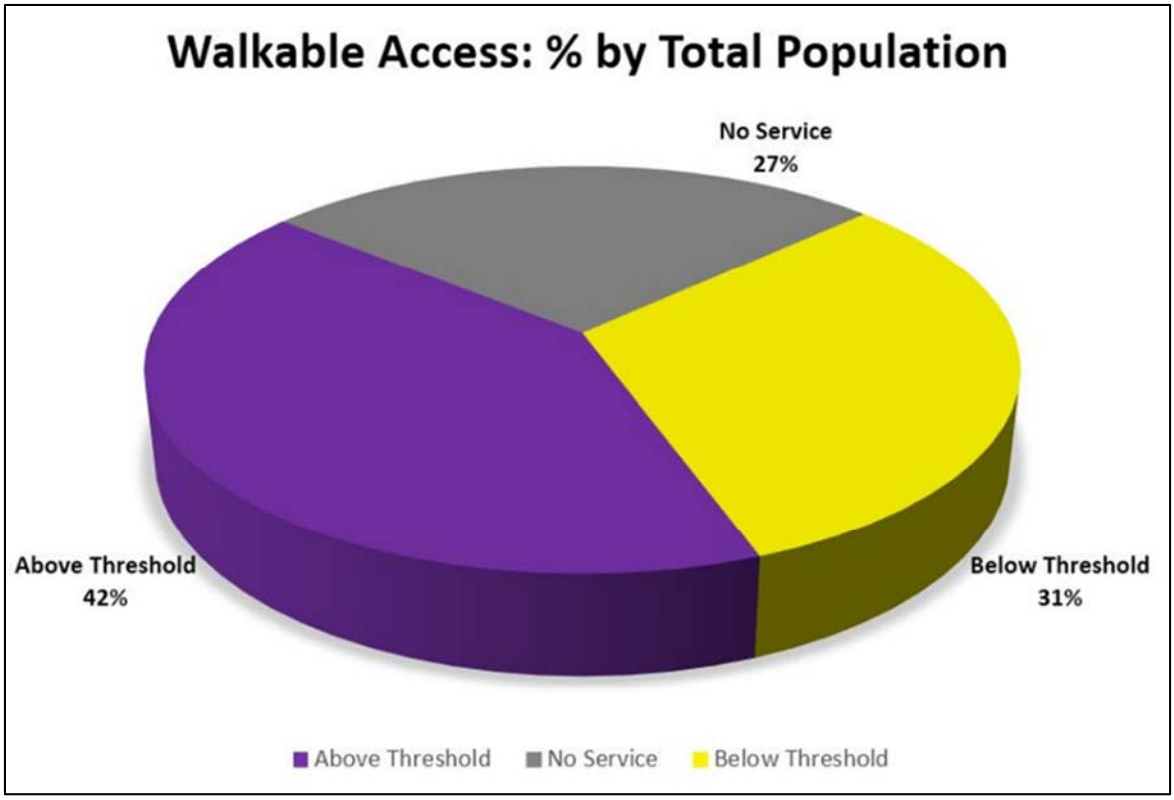
Map C-1: Threshold map displays Walkable Access to All Components in the City of Sterling based on a minimum standard. The minimum standard score of 38.4 equates to the LOS provided by Propst Park.

On ***Map C-1***, areas displayed in gray have no service within a walkable distance. Areas shown in yellow on the inset map ***Map C-1*** are areas of opportunity. These are areas where land and assets that provide service are currently available but that do not meet the minimum standard threshold value. It may be possible to improve the quantity and quality of those assets to raise the LOS without the need for acquiring new lands. Purple areas indicate walkable level of services meets or exceeds the minimum standard.

The following graphics compare this same walkable level of service coverage based and acreage and population respectively.



Walkable access to assets based on acreage. This chart displays level of service based simply on acres.

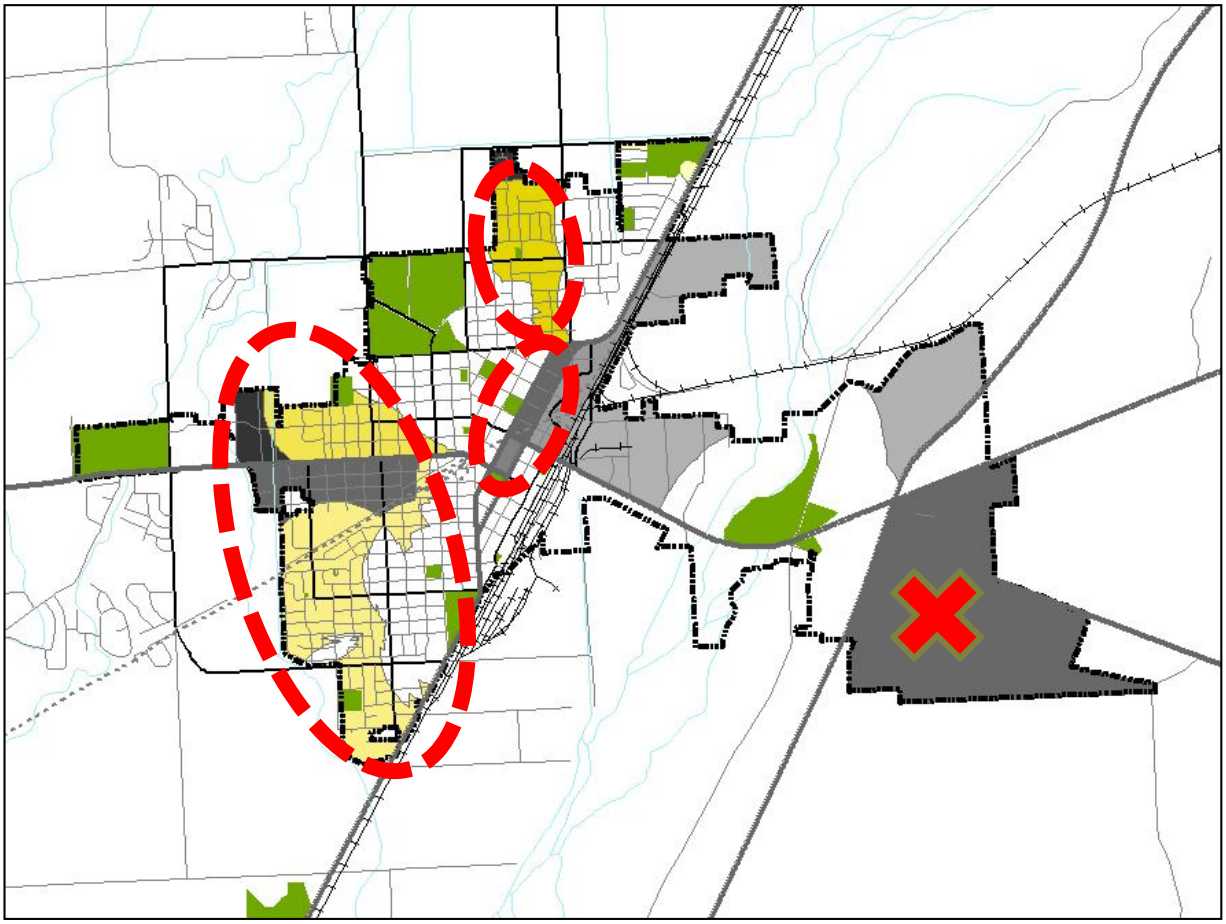


Walkable access to assets based on population. This chart displays level of service based on where people actually live. It was produced using the walkable level of service data shown in ***Map C-1*** as compared with geospatial population data based on U.S. Census blocks.

A comparison of the previous pie charts shows that walkable level of service is actually better than it looks on the map. Though only 59 percent of City land is within walking distance of some type of recreation, *an impressive 73 percent of the actual population is provided some level of walkable service*. This is due to the fact that areas with walkable LOS in the City tend to be those with higher populations. Assets tend to be concentrated where people live rather than in commercial or industrial areas. Based on acreage alone, the walkable level of service for Sterling is already exceptional so this proximity of assets to populated areas is further validation of the system as a whole.

Isolation Analysis

An examination of areas with greater population can be useful in isolate areas to target future improvements. This may be called an ***isolation analysis***.



This analysis isolates areas with no service or low service, below threshold, as indicated in ***Map C-1***. This isolation map also accounts for population density. Yellow and gray areas with darker shading highlight areas with greater populations.

Darker yellow = Below Threshold LOS/Higher population density
Lighter yellow = Below Threshold LOS/Lower population density
Darker grey = No LOS/Higher population density
Lighter grey = No LOS/Lower population density

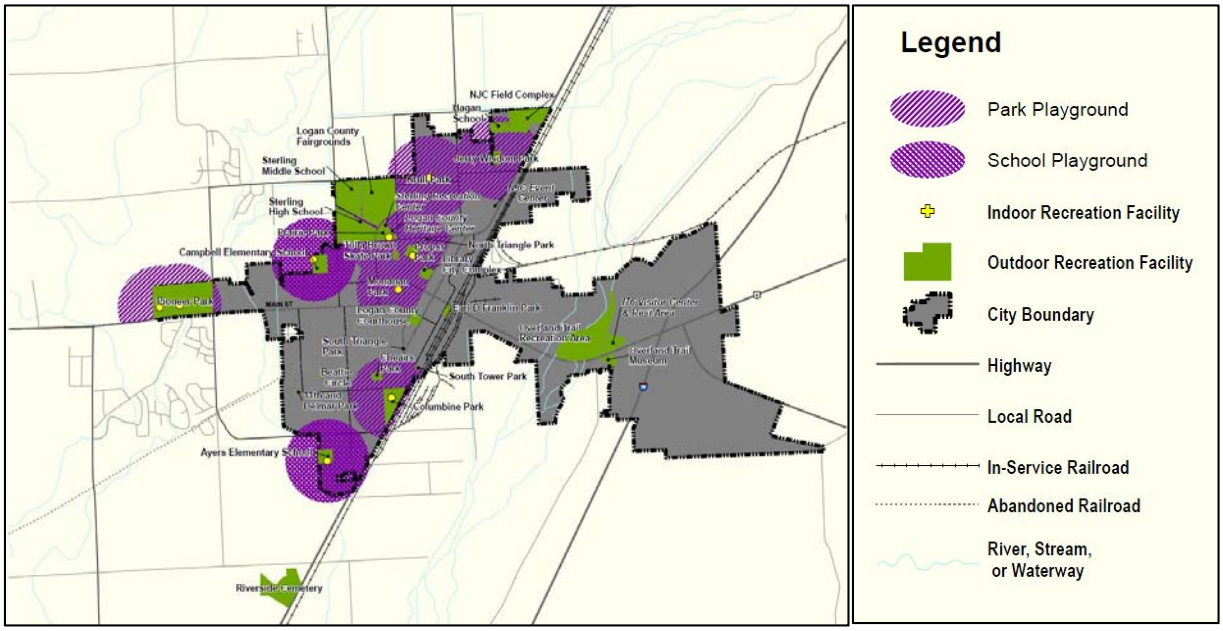
The graphic above shows areas of Sterling with low-service or no service for walkability and indicates population density based on shading. The north-central part of Sterling, the most populated area with some level of service, may have opportunity for improvement without land acquisition. Similarly, there may be similar opportunity in the west-central part of the City, though population densities are somewhat lower.

An extensive stretch of town on the blocks just south of Main St., as well as an area north of Main St. and south of Platte St., have no service and more people. A similar situation exists east of the downtown core, between N 3rd St. and N 4th St., an area with no service but heavier residential populations. As these areas have no existing inventory locations, the only way to add service is through land acquisition and development or through potential partnerships.

Finally, it may be noted that the southeast corner of City limits is displayed as having no service yet higher populations. This is the location of the Sterling Correctional Facility. As populations in this area not served by the City of Sterling, it is excluded from this isolation analysis.

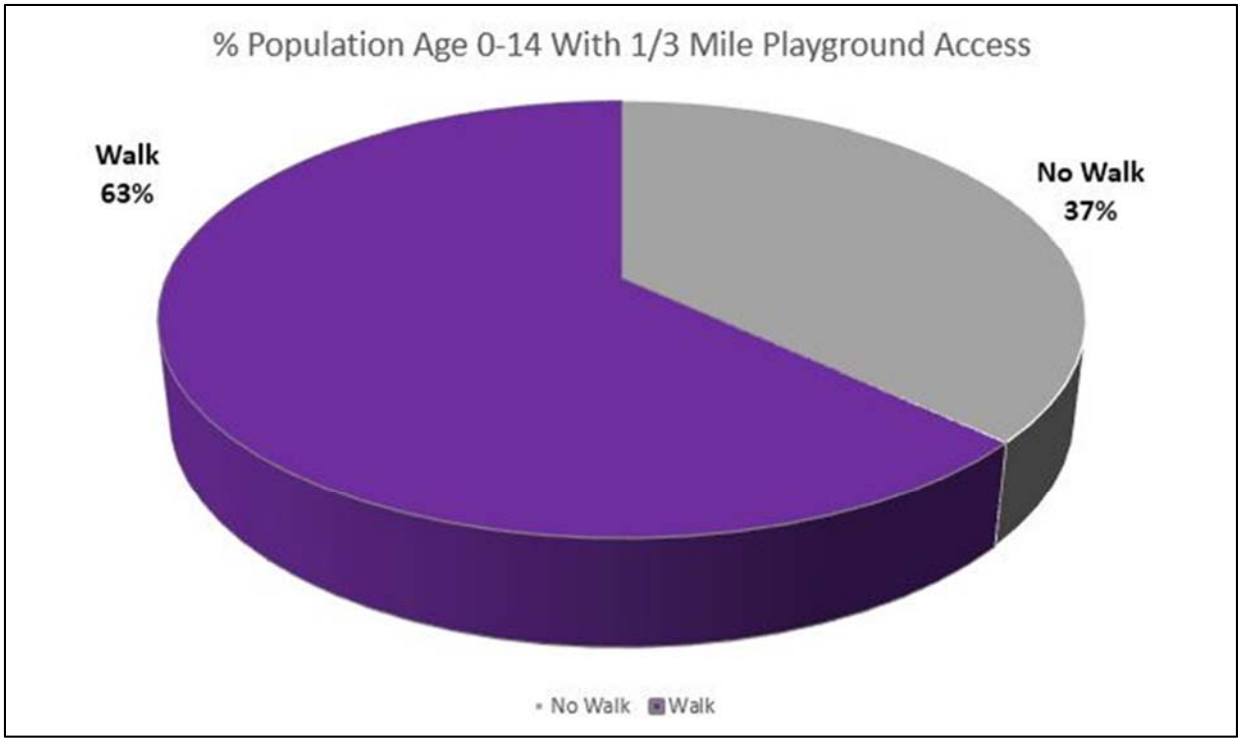
Map D: Walkable Access to Playgrounds

In the statistically valid survey, respondents indicated that playgrounds are recreation components of particular importance. ***Map D*** models walkable access to all playgrounds. One-third mile catchment radii have been applied to all playground components in the inventory, including both city and school assets. Rather than showing GRASP® scoring, this analysis simply locates areas that have walkable playground access. It should be noted that the ***Map D*** analysis does account for pedestrian barriers, such as major streets and railroad tracks. Any coverage is cut off at the barriers.



Map D: Areas with walkable access to a city or school playground. Buffers of one-third mile are used and are clipped at major streets and railroad tracks to account for these as pedestrian barriers.

An examination of ***Map D*** shows that areas of the City do emerge as lacking this amenity. These may be considered target areas for improvement. It is notable that these areas without a walkable playground are much the same as those with low-service or no service as indicated in ***Map C-1***. Upon comparison with the isolation analysis previously discussed, with its focus on population density, this analysis indicates areas of the city where future improvements should include a playground.



Percentage of children under age 14 with walkable access to a playground. Nearly 2/3 of Sterling kids have access to a playground within one-third mile and without having to cross a pedestrian barrier.

As the target user group for playgrounds tends to be children 14 years of age and under, this walkable playground coverage was compared with population statistics for this demographic. This reveals that nearly 2/3 of all kids under 14 have walkable access to a playground. As the ***Map D*** analysis does incorporate pedestrian barriers, these results are impressive in that they indicate that a solid majority of Sterling children live within one-third mile of a playground and have no major streets or railroad tracks to cross in order to access them.

Level of Service Summary Tables

The set of tables below show the statistics from all perspectives in one place for comparison:

Service Coverage Summary – Percent of City With Service

	General Access Map B	Walkable Access Map C
City of Sterling	96%	59%

LOS Summary – Average LOS Per Acre Served

	General Access Map B	Walkable Access Map C
City of Sterling	279	110

LOS Summary - Average LOS Per Acre / Population Per Acre

	General Access Map B	Walkable Access Map C
City of Sterling	74	29

LOS Summary - GRASP® Indices

	General Access Map B	Walkable Access Map C
City of Sterling	60	60

Key Conclusions
A key conclusion from the asset analyses for the City of Sterling is that proximity and transportation are relevant factors affecting levels of service. The provision of assets is reasonably equitable across the City, especially given resident access to motorized transportation. However, this picture changes upon examination of walkable access to assets. While the majority of the City still receives service, many areas do lack service altogether or receive a level of service that falls below the minimum standard threshold.

The most obvious way to increase overall LOS is to add assets in any area with lower service. However, as fewer people tend to live in many of these low-service and no-service areas, a more effective approach is to increase service in areas where localized population is greater but service is low. Furthermore, as many of these areas lack a playground, the addition of a playground should be considered a priority for any future improvements in these locations. Although nearly 2/3 of Sterling children have walkable access to a playground, the community survey indicates that efforts to further improve playground coverage should be a priority.

Additional analysis and a review of the information received from surveys, focus groups, and other sources will be needed in context to further identify the best locations for future improvements.

Other Types of Analysis

Capacities Analysis

One of the traditional tools for evaluating service for parks and recreation is the capacity analysis. This analysis compares the quantity of assets to population. ***Table 7*** shows the current capacities for selected components in Sterling. This table can be used in conjunction with other information, such as input from focus groups, staff, and the general public, to determine if the current capacities are adequate or not for specific components.

Table 7: Capacities LOS for Community Components

Capacities LOS for Community Components								
Sterling, CO	Draft: November 2013							
		Basketball	Horseshoes	MP Field, Large	Playground, Local	Shelter	Tennis	Volleyball
INVENTORY								
City of Sterling		6	8	0	6	8	10	2
Schools		7	0	9	4	0	4	2
Total		**13**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**8**	**14**	**4**
CURRENT RATIO PER POPULATION								
CURRENT POPULATION 2012	**14,777**							
Current Ratio per 1000 Population		0.88	0.54	0.61	0.68	0.54	0.95	0.27
Population per component		1,137	1,847	1,642	1,478	1,847	1,056	3,694

The capacities table is based purely on the quantity of assets without regard to quality or functionality. Higher LOS is achieved only by adding assets, regardless of the condition or quality of those assets. In theory, the LOS provided by assets should be based on their quality as well as their quantity.

GRASP® Index/Comparative Data

The authors of this report have developed a tool that incorporates both quantity and quality for any given set of assets into a single indicator called the GRASP® Index. This index is a per capita ratio of the functional score per population in thousands. The GRASP® Index can move up or down over time as either quantity or quality changes. For example, if all of the playgrounds in a community are allowed to deteriorate over time, but none are added or taken away, the LOS provided by the playground decreases. Similarly, if all of the playgrounds are replaced with new and better ones, but no additional playgrounds are added, the LOS increases even though the per-capita quantity of playgrounds did not change.

STATE	CITY	YEAR	POPULATION	STUDY AREA SIZE (Acres)	# OF SITES (Parks, Facilties, etc.)	TOTAL # OF COMPONENTS	AVG. # COMPONENTS per SITE	TOTAL GRASP® VALUE (Entire System)	GRASP® INDEX	AVG. SCORE/SITE	% of TOTAL AREA w/LOS >0	AVG. LOS PER ACRE SERVED	NUMBER OF COMPONENTS PER POPULATION	AVERAGE LOS/POP DEN PER ACRE	pop den (per acre)
ID	Post Falls	2011	*29,062*	*24,928*	35	271	7.7	1005	35	28.7	71%	169	9	145	1.2
MO	Liberty	2013	56,041	*53,161*	39	298	7.6	607	11	15.6	57%	107	5	102	1.1
NH	Keene	2011	23,409	*23,868*	42	193	4.6	1000	43	23.8	89%	125	8	127	1.0
OR	Corvallis	2011	*54,462*	*18,006*	54	309	5.7	2217	41	41.1	93%	289	6	96	3.0
VT	Essex	2011	28,858	25,230	47	153	3.3	895	31	19.0	72%	11.0	5	10	1.1
CO	Fort Collins	2006	130,681	33,388	45	619	13.8	2675	20	59.4	83%	217	5	55	3.9
CO	Lafayette	2010	24,453	5979	74	201	2.7	1300	53	17.6	83%	175	8	43	4.1
CO	Louisville	2011	19,656	5,089	145	453	3.1	3229	164	22.3	100%	903	23	234	3.9
CO	Evergreen PRD	2011	22,736	48,154	28	170	6.1	902	40	32.2	100%	540	7	1143	0.5
CO	Lone Tree	2007	10,134	1,382	49	219	4.5	561	55	11.4	76%	226	22	31	7.3
CO	Green Valley Ranch	2013	14,897	1,156	17	67	3.9	374	25	22.0	100%	436	4	34	12.9
CO	**Sterling**	**2013**	**14,777**	***3,913***	**39**	**131**	**3.4**	**891**	60	22.8	**96%**	**279**	9	74	3.8

This is especially useful in communities where the sustainability of the parks and recreation system over time is important. In the past, the focus was on maintaining adequate capacity as population growth occurred. Today, many communities are reaching build-out, while others have seen population growth slow. The focus in such communities has shifted to maintaining current levels of service as components age or become obsolete, or as needs change. The GRASP® Index can be used to track LOS under such conditions over time.

The GRASP® Index for the City of Sterling is 60. Because every community is unique, there are no standard or "correct" numbers for these. However, it is useful to note that the GRASP® Index for the City of Sterling falls within the higher range. The table above provides comparative data from other communities. For reference statistics have been included for other communities of similar size population to Sterling both within Colorado and across the country. It is notable that the GRASP® Index score for Sterling exceeds that of most other cities listed.

More on Utilizing the GRASP® Perspectives

Different Perspectives can be used to determine levels of service throughout the community from a variety of views. These Perspectives can show a specific set of components, depict estimated travel time to services, highlight a particular geographic area, or display facilities that accommodate specific programming. It is not necessarily beneficial for all parts of the community to score equally in the analyses. The desired level of service for any particular location will depend on the type of service being analyzed and the characteristics of the particular location. Commercial, institutional, and industrial areas might reasonably be expected to have lower levels of service for parks and recreation opportunities than residential areas. Levels of service for retail services in high density residential areas should probably be different than those for lower density areas.

Used in conjunction with other needs assessment tools (such as needs surveys and a public process), Perspectives can be used to determine if current levels of service are appropriate in a given location. If so, plans can then be developed that provide similar levels of service to new neighborhoods. Conversely, if it is determined that different levels of service are desired, new planning can differ from the existing community patterns to provide the desired LOS.

Each Perspective shows the cumulative levels of service across the study area when the catchment areas for a particular set of components are plotted together. As previously stated, darker shades represent areas in which the level of service is higher for that particular Perspective. It is important to note that the shade overlaying any given point on the Perspective represents the cumulative value offered by the surrounding park and recreation system to an individual situated in that specific location, rather than the service being provided by components at that location to the areas around it.

C. Recommendations

Findings of the GRASP® LOS analyses provide some guidance in consideration of how to improve recreation in the City of Sterling. This section describes ways to enhance level of service through improvement of existing sites, future development of new facilities, and potential partnerships.

Note: Any reference to level of service scoring throughout this recommendation discussion relies on walkable level of service analysis. Overall level of service scoring from a driving standpoint was extremely high and thus offered almost no room for improvement. Despite that walkable coverage provided is quite good, an examination of walkable level of service does reveal areas on which to focus improvement efforts.

Level of Service Improvements

Areas of the City that either fall below the minimum standard threshold or provide no service at all, called ***low-service areas*** and ***no-service areas***, often provide good opportunity for improvement. This might involve fixing up a tired picnic shelter or adding a playground to a park without one. Such efforts to improve level of service are more attainable than alternatives that require land acquisition and large-scale capital investment. Several such opportunities exist to improve walkable level of service in Sterling.

Low-Score Components

The inventory process involves scoring of all included assets. This scoring takes into account condition and functionality. Those components with low-scores may be addressed one by one and will serve to improve level of service. The easiest and most obvious way to raise level of service is to improve ***low-scoring components***, those that were scored down because they do not meet expectations. This entails repair, refurbishment, or replacement of existing components at a site that are in need of some attention.

A step-by-step process for scoring and strategies to address low-score components may be found in ***Appendix E***.

The following were components that did not meet expectations and thus received as score of 1 during inventory visits:

LOCATION	COMPONENT	COMMENTS	BUDGET IMPLICATION
Ayers Elementary	Backstop, Practice	Does not meet city standard	Staff time to coordinate with school district
Campbell Elementary	Basketball	Does not meet city standard	Staff time to coordinate with school district
Campbell Elementary	Backstop, Practice	Does not meet city standard	Staff time to coordinate with school district
Campbell Elementary	Multiuse Court	Does not meet city standard	Staff time to coordinate with school district
Cheairs Park	Tennis	Need resurfacing	$5,000 – $10,000
Cheairs Park	Basketball	Needs surfacing, striping, cleaning	$5,000 – $10,000
Monahan Park	Open Turf	Limited in size. Consider removing shrubs or unhealthy trees and relocating utility equipment to create additional turf space.	Staff time for both Parks and Public Works Staff
Pioneer Park	Basketball	4 hoops shared with tennis. Add dedicated basketball courts.	$10,000 – $25,000
Pioneer Park	Open Water	Irrigation ditch. Year round water. Missed opportunity to develop a pleasant park feature.	$5,000 – $15,000
Pioneer Park	Shelter (#202)	Small size. Corrugated roof. Replace with larger shelter that meets city standards.	$20,000 – $50,000
Riverside Cemetery	Water Feature	Not operable	Staff Time
Sterling High School	Tennis	Does not meet city standard	Staff time to coordinate with school district
Sterling Middle School	Volleyball	Does not meet city standard	Staff time to coordinate with school district
Tolla Brown Skate Park	Hockey, In-line	Needs to be repurposed. Consider removing concrete and building community garden.	TBD pending site master plan

Booster Components
Another way to enhance existing assets is through the addition of ***booster components*** intended to "boost" the level of service at specific existing park sites or recreation facilities through the addition of new components. These are most effective in low-service areas in which park sites already exist that have space for additional components. Based on the isolation analysis that displayed need areas based on population several such locations exist.

Krull Park
Located in the most heavily populated low-service area, the addition of one or two high demand components (these are discussed below) at Krull Park would be sufficient to boost service scoring beyond threshold.

Beattie Circle
Despite that the small size of this park, Beattie Circle may have space for the addition of at least one component or value amenity. A playground at this site or at a nearby site would be ideal, as this part of the City lacks walkable access to playground equipment. Other possible additions might include a small community garden or picnic area.

11th and Delmar Park
Any improvement to this park would provide a valuable boost to level of service for this part of the city. This location would be ideal for a playground as the surrounding neighborhood is one of the few in town without walkable playground access. As this park is often used at present as an informal ballfield, an alternative might be the addition of a practice backstop. It would also be suitable for several other high demand components (see following section).

High Demand Components
The statistically valid survey asked respondents to rank facilities by importance based on those they felt the city needed to add or improve. These ***high demand components*** should be considered in any efforts to add new components to the Sterling recreation system.

The most important outdoor needs listed by survey respondents, those rated above average in importance, are:

1. Pedestrian and bicycle paths and trails
2. Trail connectivity
3. Fitness and workout spaces
4. Playgrounds
5. Outdoor sports fields/courts/complex
6. Dog Park
7. Picnic areas and shelters
8. Nature center
9. Open space
10. Community gardens

Many of these needs may be addressed within the existing system by upgrading facilities, retrofitting less used assets, and by establishing or strengthening partnerships:

- ✓ Pedestrian and bicycle trails were indicated as the most important type of facility by a wide margin. Connectivity between trails and pathways is also indicated as an important consideration. Although the City currently has a very limited trail and bike route network, there are ways to enhance those assets that do exist and incorporate best practices for future development. Further discussion with specific recommendations may be found in the following section on Recreational Connectivity.

- ✓ Outdoor fitness and workout spaces are currently limited to those facilities found at Prairie Park. However, Sterling Middle School recently installed a Neos electronic fitness play system. These innovative systems are designed for users of various age groups to develop agility, coordination, strength, and stamina. This asset might be valuable to help fill the demand for an added fitness component. The City could further develop a partnership with the middle school to make this system available to the public on weekends and during off-hours. As this location is nearby the fitness equipment already available at Prairie Park and does little to bolster level of service for other parts of the city, other opportunities to add fitness and workout equipment elsewhere in town should also be considered. Further community input should be obtained before any substantial investment is made toward the addition of fitness assets in Sterling. Another low-cost alternative is for the city to promote smartphone fitness training applications that employ QR codes and a web based exercise regime with. This type of fitness system would require a base within a city park though minimal equipment installation is needed.

- ✓ Additional playground access is most needed in the low-service and no-service areas of Sterling south of Main Street and north of Ayers Elementary School. The most suitable existing location to add a playground would be at 11th and Delmar Park. This park has the space to accommodate one or two additional components and could further developed as a neighborhood hub. Alternatively, the abandoned railway in the center of Sterling could be developed in the future as a linear park to include a playground. Either of these options would meet the need for this high demand component and do so in an area of the city that falls below the minimum level of service standard.

- ✓ To meet the need for additional athletic fields and courts, it may be worth pursing partnerships with local schools and Northeastern Junior College. Public access to existing school and college facilities might help serve this need and save city investment for other priorities in the short term. Furthermore, NJC does have additional undeveloped land. It may be worth a discussion of the potential of pooling resources to add either fields in these locations on a temporary or permanent basis. Public input should be solicited, and a needs analysis should be conducted to guide any such efforts.

- ✓ City of Sterling residents currently have access to only one off-leash dog park located at the I-76 Rest Area, far away from where most people live in town. Earl Franklin Park has been proposed as a suitable location for a new dog park in downtown. This would be an ideal location at it could serve both residents and downtown business patrons.

- ✓ A nature center could provide the City some revenue through admission fees and provide an unmet need for the city. Pioneer Park would be a desirable location for such a potential facility, as this park currently has trails and natural areas already managed by the city, including an outdoor classroom. Additionally, the rarely used camping cabin on site might be adaptively reused, along with the nature center itself. Due to its location, in a pleasant setting surrounded by grass and trees with plenty of parking and easy through town access from the interstate, this structure could become a valuable city resource to the city if repurposed in such a way.

- ✓ A community garden is a low investment component which serves to bring people together. A garden could be included as part of redevelopment for Tolla Brown Skate Park. This is a central location with aging and underutilized components (the in-line hockey rinks, in particular) which could be removed to repurpose the site.

Low-Score Modifiers

In scoring inventory locations additional consideration was also given to basic site amenities, called ***modifiers***. These are things that support users during their visit such as design and ambience, drinking fountains, seating, BBQ grills, security lighting, bike racks, restrooms, shade, access, and parking among others. These help inform overall GRASP® scoring. Modifiers that do not meet expectations are scored down. Modifiers at a site that are in need of some attention such as repair, refurbishment, or replacement.

The following were modifiers that did not meet expectations and thus received as score of 1 during inventory visits:

LOCATION	MODIFIER	RECOMMENDATION	BUDGET IMPLICATION
11th and Delmar Park	Design and Ambience	Add city park signage.	$3,000
Cheairs Park	Seating, BBQ Grills	Seating and BBQ grills need repair/replacement.	Staff Time or $3,000 – $5,000
North Triangle Park	Access, Parking	Add city park signage.	$3,000
Propst Park	Drinking Fountain	Repair drinking fountain	$8,000 – $10,000
South Tower Park	Parking	Add city park signage.	$3,000
South Triangle Park	Access, Parking	Improve local access by adding crosswalks and possibly a bench.	Staff time to coordinate with Public Works for crosswalks + $800 – $1,500 for bench
Tolla Brown Skate Park	Drinking Fountain, Restrooms	Repair drinking fountain and improve restrooms as part of repurposing.	TBD pending site master plan

Linear Park Opportunity

Opportunity to add new park land in the heart of any established city is rare. The abandoned railroad right-of-way south of Main Street in the City of Sterling may be such an opportunity, not just to add additional park land, but also to develop a signature park with a trail connection. The land along South Railway Street and continuing down Cheyenne Blvd, much of which is already city owned, has great potential as a linear park. A trail along the length of the park would provide an important cross town pedestrian and bicycle connection and link up with the ditch trail proposed on the western edge of town. Additionally, recreational components and amenities could be located along the length of the park. These would serve to improve service coverage substantially, and would likely help bring scoring for adjacent no-service and low-service areas above threshold.

The abandoned railway south of Main Street in Sterling could be developed as a signature city park. This would serve to improve level of service in a part of town with many residents and prominent low-service and no-service areas. (Image courtesy of Google.)

School Partnerships
School assets were scored and included in the inventory used for level of service analyses. However, scoring for school components is discounted based on limited public access, as recreational facilities on school grounds are only available during non-school hours and on weekends. In reality, due to this limited availability, such facilities are often neglected by the community, as they are not recognized as part of the City's recreation system. One way to address this issue is to partner with schools to promote use of school facilities through on-site community programming and environmental cues to make them easier to use and more inviting.

School partnerships can be valuable throughout the Sterling community. Existing partnerships should be strengthened if possible, as school assets do improve the level of service provided to city residents. Particular efforts should be made to strengthen ties with Ayers Elementary and Campbell Elementary, as these schools are located in notable low-service and no-service areas.

Learning Landscapes, a program developed by faculty and students at the University of Colorado at Denver, engages the local community to envision, plan, build, and maintain custom playgrounds at neighborhood schools. The intention is to extend learning opportunities beyond the school walls and into the community. Redeveloped school grounds typically include demonstration gardens, yard games, art, shade features, and outdoor classroom facilities as well as play equipment. Volunteers are put to work in the planning and construction of these new facilities alongside emerging professionals and school personnel. The result is a sense of community investment and ownership in these assets such that they better serve nearby residents. This program serves to foster stronger ties between schools and neighbors with open lines of communication and a commitment to shared resources. Such a program can have a positive impact on the role that school ground facilities play in neighbors' daily lives, and as such elevate the level of service for the area.

The Learning Landscapes webpage (http://www.learninglandscapes.org/) describes the program is described in this way:

> *Learning Landscapes leads UCD students, elementary schools, and community members in the redesign of schoolyards into fun, multi-use parks designed to reflect the culture of the surrounding community. The Learning Landscapes project helps reconnect communities with neighborhood schools.*
>
> *[This is accomplished] by listening and actively involving the school community throughout the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the Learning Landscape schoolyard. Each school is asked to form a Learning Landscape team to help inform design and programming decisions as well as keep a watchful eye for vandalism and maintenance issues after construction is complete. The Learning Landscapes team recruits students, parents and surrounding community help to build, maintain and improve the Learning Landscape. Each new Learning Landscape has a volunteer build day where the school and community volunteers develop a sense of ownership and civic pride by creating outdoor artwork planting gardens, laying sod, or building play equipment. We document and distribute site-specific resources for educators and community members on the outdoor educational elements unique to each Learning Landscape schoolyard. Promoting the programmatic use of the Learning Landscape is critical for the long-term viability and sustainability of these projects.*

Dedication

One further strategy to expand city recreational resources is to require land dedication in future development. Private developers are often receptive to dedicating a portion of land for a variety of public uses, including park land, often in lieu of city fees or in return for tax breaks or other incentives. The City of Sterling should work with any land developers to capitalize on land dedication opportunities. One location with such potential exists at the southern tip of the city limits, east of Ayers Elementary. Additional undeveloped lands do exist within the city boundary that could potentially be developed in the future.

Undeveloped land within City of Sterling limits should be considered as potential opportunity for future park and recreation land through land dedication as a compulsory requirement of private development. An example of undeveloped land with such potential may be found at the south edge of the City. (Image courtesy of Google.)

Recreational Connectivity

The definition of recreation has evolved in recent years to include aspects of the built environment that are more important today than they were in the past. People are more inclined these days to integrate recreational opportunities within their daily lives. The infrastructure available to get people to and from destinations is of greater importance than ever before, as more and more people have started to prefer a leisurely walk or bike ride to a trip in the car. People increasingly expect that parks, recreation centers, and other community resources be easy destinations to access for a variety of users employing different modes of travel to include walking and bicycling. This concept of may be referred to as ***recreational connectivity***.

Recreational connectivity may be defined as the extent to which community recreational resources are transitionally linked to allow for easy and enjoyable travel between them. In addition to recreational trails, this may also include city sidewalks, bicycle paths, bicycle routes, and public transit infrastructure. Of course the scope of creating and maintaining such a network is a substantial undertaking that involves many players. Along with a community expectation for this type of user-friendly network infrastructure comes the expectation that stakeholders work together in the interest of the public good. At the municipal level, this might include public works, law enforcement, private land-owners, public transit operators, and user groups as well as the local parks and recreation department.

This concept of recreational connectivity is important within the scope of parks and recreation planning but also has deeper implications for public health, the local economy, and public safety, among other considerations. As more and more people look for non-automotive alternatives to get to and from local destinations, a complete network of various transportation options is in greater demand, which may include walking trails, bicycle paths, bicycle routes, and public transit. Other elements of this infrastructure might include street/railroad crossings, sidewalk landscaping, lighting, drainage, and even bike-share and car-share availability.

2013 City of Sterling Master Plan

It should be noted that the 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update includes extensive discussion of this topic. The master plan serves as a valuable reference to be consulted along with this document, as it outlines strategies to address goals in regard to parks, trails, recreation, tourism, transportation, and streetscape. The following are discussed in depth in the 2013 Sterling Master Plan:

Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Tourism Goals:

1. Maintain, enhance, and connect Sterling's existing park and open space system.
2. Develop a regional trail along the South Platte River.
3. Promote healthy living and active lifestyles.

Transportation and Streetscape Goals:

1. Maintain and improve the quality of the Sterling transportation network.
2. Develop a complete multimodal transportation system for Sterling, to ensure that residents with different transportation needs and desires can adequately access services and amenities.
3. Improve the quality and design of streetscaping along Sterling's corridors.

The following discussion addresses these same themes and provides further suggestions to build and enhance recreational connectivity in the City of Sterling.

The Trail System

Recreational connectivity in most American cities usually starts with trails. A ***trail*** may be defined as any off-street or on-street connection dedicated to pedestrian or bicycle users. ***Recreational trails***, as distinguished from transportation trails, typically pass through park lands or natural areas and can be soft or hard surface. Recreational trails are the only elements of an alternative transit network that traditionally fall to parks and recreation professionals. They are intended mostly for leisure and enjoyment of resources. ***Transportation trails***, the sidewalks or paved trails found in street right-of-ways in most municipalities, are intended more for utility in getting from one place to another. Yet these two types of city infrastructure must work together to create a well-connected community. The resulting ***trail system*** includes all trails that serve pedestrian and bicycle users in a community for purposes of both recreation and transportation.

As a trail system matures, the need emerges to address barriers such as roadways, rivers, and railroad crossings that separate distinct trail networks in order to create a truly connected trail system. A ***trail network*** is a part of a trail system within which major barrier crossings have been addressed and all trails are connected. Trail networks within a trail system are typically separated from each other by such barriers or by missing trail connections. Crosswalks, pedestrian underpasses, and bridges can be used to help users navigate barriers. New trails may be added to merge trail networks and improve overall connectivity. Most cities have several trail networks that connect users to common destinations such as schools, shops, restaurants, and civic and religious institutions in addition to parks and recreation facilities. The more integrated these networks, the more connected a city or town.

Building a trail system involves many considerations beyond the control of park and recreation managers. Vacant lands, utility easements, street right-of-ways, and existing social trails may be worth investigating for trail feasibility and to determine how trail development in these areas might impact overall connectivity. However, other departments and agencies will need to be consulted and partnered to address issues such as land acquisition, street crossings, and utility maintenance. To complicate matters, the distinction between a recreational trail and a transportation trail can be hazy. Further, on-street connections via usable, comfortable bicycle lanes and routes are also critical to establishing good recreational connectivity. Though these connections can be invaluable to a city's infrastructure, by supplementing a trail system, they introduce another set of stakeholders and complications. The types of collaboration necessary to build a trail system are not without their challenges, yet can yield lasting partnerships that benefit the community. The sooner the discussion is started, the better.

Potential partners can include school districts, public works departments, county offices, state entities, federal agencies, and/or private land owners, among others. It is important to convince stakeholders that their cooperation is critical to the public good. It can be helpful to remind them of the economic boost that often results from investment in recreational infrastructure like a trail system. Of course, not all players stand to gain from trail development. It is essential that land managers and planners be aware of all possible implications inherent in their efforts.

A **Trails and Alternative Modes of Transportation Master Plan** is highly recommended. This planning effort should include all relevant city departments in order to create a comprehensive and implementable plan. This plan should also address frequency and distribution of waysides, trailheads, access points, and interpretation.

Sterling has potential for an outstanding trail system. Here are a few general strategies to use in planning efforts as this system is established:

- Work with a variety of departments, offices, and agencies to obtain assistance and access in creating trail links.
- Look for ways to relieve cost burdens for property maintenance presently borne by other utilities by adapting these properties to create recreation opportunities.
- Create connections that blend recreation opportunities with restaurants and retail opportunities for greater economic impact.
- Create connections that allow safe, comfortable routes between homes, schools, and civic and religious institutions for user convenience.
- Look at existing utility areas such as power line easements, drainages, and detention ponds for options to improve connectivity.
- Use wide, under-utilized, or non-used street corridors for best pedestrian and bike routes within developed parts of the city.

Where to Start?

Even the most well-planned, extensive trail system has to start somewhere. Unless a city is already highly urbanized, good opportunities usually exist with which to begin building a trail system. Existing parks and open space areas are the first places to plan new trails with this idea of recreational connectivity in mind. Such interior trail assets, once established, provide a good point of departure to look outside park boundaries.

It is helpful to recognize that trails may be developed at a variety of scales. Many trails serve park users only while others are of citywide or regional extent. Also, people with a destination in mind tend to take the most direct route while recreationists tend to enjoy loop or circuit trails more than linear trails. An exemplary trail system will provide multiple opportunities for users to utilize trail segments to access different parts of the city directly or enjoy recreational circuits of various size. By employing park trails, city trails, and regional trails, users should ideally be able to pick and choose from several options to reach a destination or spend time recreating.

Park Trails

In the City of Sterling, the process of building a trail system is underway. Although city and regional trails still have yet to be developed, the city recreation system already provides an impressive level of service. Many users regularly enjoy existing trails within parks, in particular the loop walk at Columbine Park and the natural area trails at Pioneer Park. A few enhancements could make these heavily used pathways even better.

As many users at Columbine Park seem focused on exercise, the addition of mileage markers along the loop walk might be useful. Users could track their distances, which might also encourage them to try out other trail opportunities of similar length. As users tend to be intent on getting a workout rather than a leisurely stroll, it might also be worthwhile to consider adding cardio fitness stations at points along the Columbine loop as well.

The natural area trails at Pioneer Park could benefit from interpretive signage, particularly if this location is under consideration to host a nature center. Additionally, a more formalized circuit could be completed at Pioneer Park by adding trail segments to connect the main park path to the nature trails. Mileage markers along this new loop would be useful as well and would provide a longer distance alternative to the loop walk at Columbine Park. Cardio fitness stations might be desirable along these trails as well.

A new loop walk could also be developed at either Propst Park or Prairie Park to better serve the city core. The central location, shade trees, and residential surroundings of Propst Park make it an especially good potential location for a new loop walk trail. At Prairie Park this might be included as part of future development, might take advantage of right-of-ways at adjacent county land, or could involve partnership with the school district or county. The advantage to finding a location for a new loop walk at Prairie Park is its proximity to the recreation center. In either location enhancements such as mileage markers and cardio fitness stations could be included to provide additional functionality, and complement such potential additions to loop walks at Columbine and Pioneer Parks.

City Trails

With internal park trails established, the next step is to focus on connecting these park assets to each other and to various places within the city. This will involve capitalizing on existing opportunities to create strategic off-street and on-street pedestrian and bicycle links between popular recreation locations. Strategies to retrofit developed areas to meet the need for safe routes through town may be based on recommendations in the 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update. Priority should be given to development of such connections between Pioneer Park and Columbine Park with another link between Columbine Park and the Sterling Recreation Center/Prairie Park. Additionally, if a trail connection is developed along the abandoned railway this could potentially function as a third major cross-town link. With these critical pedestrian and bicycle arteries established, focus may then shift to developing spurs along these routes to other parks, schools, civic, commercial, and religious centers.

Regional Trails

Regional trails can also be developed in coordination with other types of trails and routes. The 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update identifies potential for an irrigation ditch trail west of Sterling and a trail along the South Platte River as desirable future targets. Development of such regional trails is likely to be a challenge, as they fall entirely outside city limits and will involve extensive coordination with private land owners and government entities, such as the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Colorado Department of Transportation.

Trail Typology

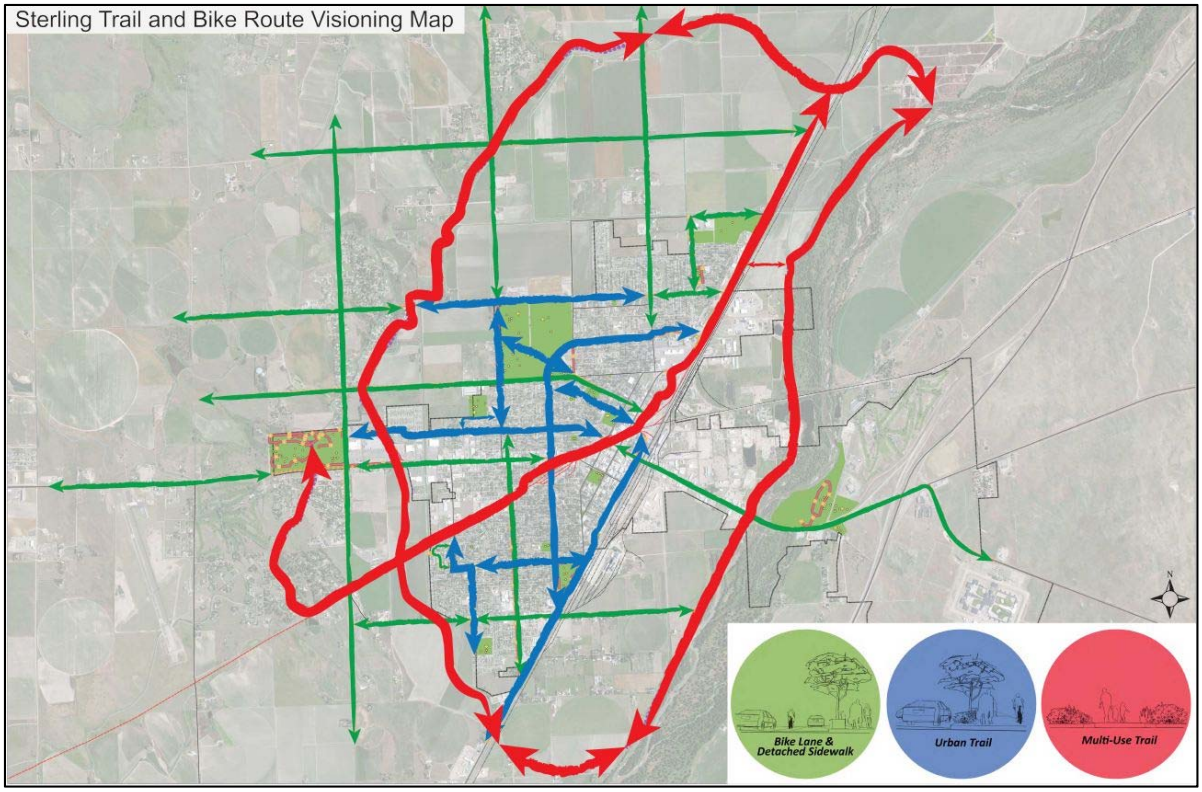
In addition the park, city, regional trail hierarchy already discussed it may be useful to employ a trails typology. A new “trail” may actually consist of several infrastructural improvements. A trail typology of three different types is recommended for use in the City of Sterling. These are:

1. Bike Lane and Detached Sidewalk
2. Urban Trail
3. Multi-Use Trail

Three trail types to be considered in developing a trail system in an established community such as Sterling. This typology may be applied to a network of connections to determine the most appropriate type for each trail segment. Pedestrian and bicycle users are accommodated in different ways in each trail type. Selection for each is largely driven by the surrounding built environment.

Each trail type refers to a strategy for connecting one place to another. The primary consideration is how to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle users travelling along the same route. In more developed areas, this might involve routing cyclists along an on-street route with a pedestrian path (essentially a sidewalk) in the right-of-way. An alternative to this is the urban trail, a right-of-way path wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. Finally, the traditional multi-use trail provides users with an off-street connection, typically through open space areas or parks. This last is often considered the ideal trail type, yet the land dedication needed to support a multi-use trail makes it impractical or impossible to develop this type of trail in many parts of an established community such as Sterling.

The 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update highlights trails and routes to be considered to enhance connectivity in the future. The consulting team for this Parks and Recreation Master Plan has applied the aforementioned trails typology to the network of connections noted in the Sterling Master Plan. The results are shown in the visioning map below.



This visioning map applies the trail typology discussed above to those trails and bicycle routes highlighted in the 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update. Some additional trail connections have been added. Colors apply as follows: Green for bike lanes/route with city sidewalks, Blue for urban trails, and Red for regional trail connections through less developed areas.

Connecting People to Trails

As the Sterling trail system continues to develop additional resources will be desirable to support users. It may be worthwhile to consider signage and wayfinding strategies, trailheads and access points, public trail maps, and smartphone applications as strategies to connect people to trails and affect a positive user experience.

Signage and Wayfinding

Signage and wayfinding strategies should be employed to enhance the Sterling trail system by promoting ease of use and improved access to recreational resources. An important aspect of effective signage and wayfinding markers is branding. An easily identifiable hierarchy of signage for different types of users assists residents and visitors as they navigate between recreation destinations. Further, a strong brand can imply investment and commitment to alternative transit and which can positively impact city identity and open up economic opportunities. Additional discussion of signage and wayfinding may be found in the 2013 Sterling Master Plan.

Trailheads & Access Points

It is also important to provide users access to trails. There are two ways to approach this. First, formal trailheads may be developed to include parking, bike racks, signage, restrooms, drinking water, a trail map, and other amenities. A trailhead is most appropriate to provide access to trails that serve a higher volume of users at destinations reached by automobile. The second approach involves simply providing a trail access point, usually without the extensive amenities found at a trailhead. Trail access points such as this are more appropriate in residential or commercial areas where users are more likely to walk or ride a bicycle to reach the trail.

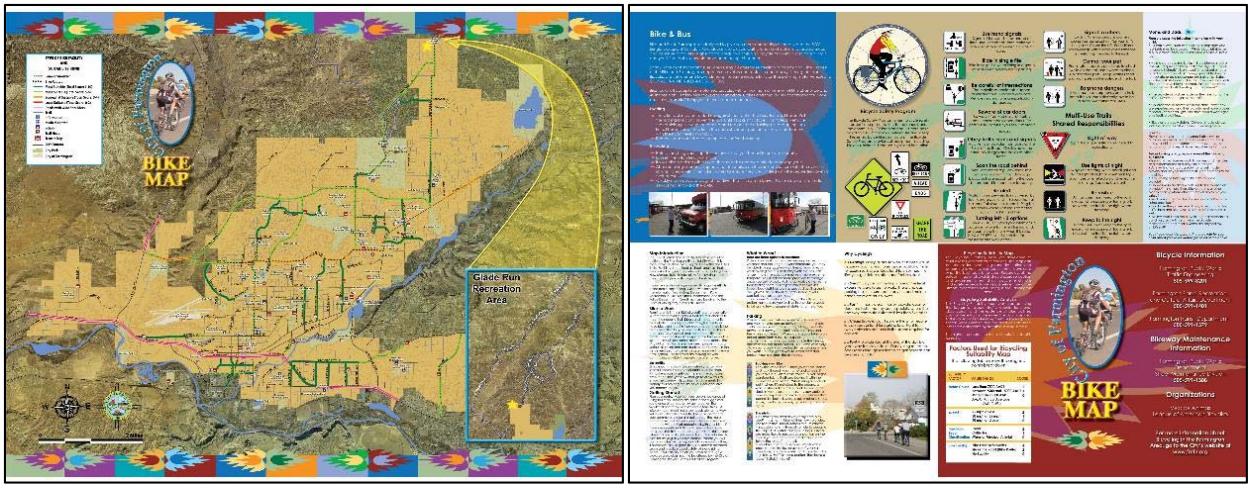
In the City of Sterling there are at least two locations appropriate for a formal trailhead. Overland Trail Recreation Area already includes parking, some limited signage, and a restroom. This could be further enhanced to include drinking water, bike parking, and a trail map. As this location is heavily used by interstate travelers, such added amenities are likely to leave a good impression on visitors and improve the likelihood of a return visit.

The other location in need of a trailhead is Pioneer Park. Users of the nature trails at this location have only informal access at the present time. A formal trailhead would serve to make park users aware of these trails and provide amenities to trail users. The existing parking area could be upgraded to include signage, drinking water, bike parking, a trail map, and possibly a shelter intended for trail users. A shelter in this location could also serve as a gathering point between a future nature center (potentially located in the camping cabin) and the entrance to the trails. Existing restrooms that already serve visitors to the nearby playground could also accommodate trail users.

As the City of Sterling still lacks trails outside park boundaries, access points are not needed at this time. However, as the trail system is expanded, access to trails from residential and commercial areas will need to be considered. Access points are really only necessary for off-street trails. Such trails should be planned to accommodate access points whenever possible. A simple spur trail from a city sidewalk will usually suffice. Other amenities are not usually included, as space is limited in city street right-of-ways. Access points such as these are provided to eliminate the need for users to pass through private property to reach an off-street trail.

Map & App Resources

By making trail maps available, users may enjoy Sterling trails with greater confidence and with a better understanding of distances, access points, amenities, and the system as a whole. Even with a developing trail system such a trail map can provide valuable information to users. For example, the City of Farmington, New Mexico created a bike map (see the following graphic) for the community, which includes various trail types to include bike paths and bike routes. In addition to showing streets with bicycle paths and safe on-street bike routes, the Farmington map also includes information about trail ownership, helpful as it displays some trails within easements or even on private land with use agreements. As the trail system evolves, this type of map can be updated to produce newer versions for distribution to users.



The City of Farmington, New Mexico provides a trail and bicycle map to users with a host of information about trails, bike paths, and bike routes.

Another way to provide a trail map to users is through web based smartphone technologies. Maps made available on this type of platform are more dynamic for users, always on hand, and can be easily updated. Upfront investment needed for this type of resource may be cost prohibitive at the present time. However, it is likely that as technologies advance, these costs will become more manageable in the future. It may be worth considering development of web based maps in long term planning decisions.

Public Transportation

A final consideration in regard to recreational connectivity is public transportation. Though this falls outside the realm of parks and recreation, many recreational users enjoy the convenience that public transit affords. The City of Sterling has an established public transportation provider – Prairie Express. Prairie Express buses operate on a fixed route and schedule but also provide route-deviation service Monday through Friday within the Sterling area to accommodate demand-response trips. This means that residents can request a pick-up or drop-off at a location not along the scheduled route. Such flexibility allows for limited service to function for the community.

Prairie Express provides bus service within the City of Sterling, including “deviation” service for trips to and from specific destinations.

It is notable that no scheduled bus stop currently exists at the Sterling Recreation Center/Prairie Park, Pioneer Park, or Columbine Park. As these are popular recreation destinations for residents, it may be worth a discussion with the service provider to suggest that stops be added at one or all of these locations.

Additional discussion of public transportation may be found in the comprehensive 2013 City of Sterling Master Plan Update.

Actionable Planning & Prioritization for Inventory and Level of Service

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items are drawn from the inventory and level of service with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving City of Sterling parks, open space, and trails.

Goal 1: Maintain and improve existing assets to sustain exceptional level of service currently provided.

Objective 1.1: *Maintain existing assets or resources.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
1.1.a Develop and follow established maintenance schedules.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time/TBD	Ongoing
1.1.b Develop and follow established replacement schedules. Replace equipment in accordance with equipment life-cycle and city standards.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time/TBD	Ongoing
Objective 1.2: *Provide a variety of recreation opportunities at a consistent standard.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
1.2.a Improve low-score components to minimum standard. Refer to the low-score modifier table on page 60 for those components in need of improvement.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	See table	Short-Term
1.2.b Improve low-score modifiers to minimum standard. Refer to the low-score component table on page 57 for those modifiers in need of improvement.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	See table	Short-Term

Goal 2: Use areas identified in GRASP® analysis to prioritize new or additional parks or amenities

Objective 2.1 *"Boost" low-service and no-service areas through the addition of new components.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
2.1.a Add new amenities to existing parks in low-service areas such as Krull Park, 11th and Delmar Park, and Beattie Circle Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Short to Mid-Term
2.1.b Partner with school district to provided additional LOS and public access to school assets in no-service areas.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ RE-1 Valley School District	Staff Time/TBD	Short to Mid-Term
2.1.c Conduct site master plan to develop new park land with playground at abandoned railroad property along South Railway Street and continuing down Cheyenne Blvd.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$30,000 – $50,000	Short-Term
2.1.d Develop new park land with playground at abandoned railroad property.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Long-Term

Objective 2.2: *Consider current trends and public input to address high demand needs to add new amenities.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
2.2.a Conduct site master plan to redevelop or repurpose Tolla Brown Skate Park and to relocate skate facilities to a location to be determined.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$40,000 – $60,000	Short-Term
2.2.b Redevelop or repurpose Tolla Brown Skate Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Long-Term
2.2.c Develop a partnership with school district to make Neos fitness system available to the public.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ RE-1 Valley School District	Staff Time	Mid-Term
2.2.d Promote a smartphone fitness training application and provide necessary infrastructure for users.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$5,000	Mid-Term
2.2.e Add a playground at 11th and Delmar Park or alternatively at a future park located in the abandoned railway to serve adjacent neighborhoods.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	$25,000 – $75,000	Short to Long-Term

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.f Pursue partnerships with local schools and Northeastern Junior College to provide access to additional athletic fields.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ RE-1 Valley School District/ Northeastern Junior College	Staff Time	Mid-Term
2.2.g Conduct a site master plan to develop a new dog park at Earl Franklin Park to serve both residents and downtown business patrons.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff time or $10,000 – $25,000	Short-Term
2.2.g Develop a new dog park at Earl Franklin Park to serve both residents and downtown business patrons.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$50,000 – $150,000	Mid-Term
2.2.h Adaptively reuse the camping cabin at Pioneer Park as a nature center to serve residents and visitors.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Private Consultant	$25,000 – $100,000	Mid-Term
2.2.i Include a community garden at Tolla Brown as part of the park's redevelopment.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD pending site master plan	Long-Term
2.2.j Research costs of adding aquatic spray ground at Prairie Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Goal 3: Develop recreational connectivity for pedestrian and bicyclists and other alternative transit users.

Objective 3.1:
Enhance existing trails.

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Add mileage markers to existing park loop walk trail at Columbine Park and along nature trail loop at Pioneer Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$500 – $2,000/mile	Short-Term
3.1.b Add interpretive signage along nature trails in Pioneer Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$1,000 – $4,000 each	Short-Term
3.1.c Add cardio fitness stations along existing loop walks at Columbine Park or Pioneer Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$1,500 – $6,000 each	Mid-Term

3.1.d Complete additional loop walk within primary park area at Pioneer Park to supplement the nature trail circuit.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	$5,000 – $20,000	Mid-Term
3.1.e Add mileage markers to any new loop walk trails to be developed.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$500 – $2,000/mile	Mid-Term
Objective 3.2: *Add new trails.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
3.2.a Develop a Trails and Alternative Modes of Transportation Master Plan.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Private Consultant	$40,000	Short-Term
3.2.b Add loop walk within existing parks such as Propst Park or Prairie Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$75,000 – $100,000/mile	Short-Term
3.2.c Develop in-city connections between major parks to include trails to link Pioneer Park to Columbine Park and link Columbine Park to the Recreation Center and Prairie Park.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works/ CDOT	TBD	Long-Term
3.2.d Develop a linear trail along the abandoned rail bed.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works/ Logan County/ CDOT	TBD	Mid-Term
3.2.e Develop regional connections to include the ditch trail on the western edge of the city and along the South Platte River, if possible.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Irrigation Service Provider Colorado Division of Wildlife/ Private Land Owners/ Public Works	TBD	Long-Term

Objective 3.3: *Increase public access to existing and future trails.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
3.3.a Improve trailhead at Overland Trail Recreation Area to include drinking water, bike parking, and a trail map.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	$10,000 – $20,000	Short to Mid-Term
3.3.b Develop formal trailhead at Pioneer Park to include shelter.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	$40,000 – $75,000	Long-Term
3.3.b Add trailheads and trail access points as new trails are developed.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	TBD	Long-Term
3.3.b Develop trail system map to include all off-street trails as well as all on-street connections, bicycle paths, and bicycle routes.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	TBD	Mid-Term
3.3.c Develop smartphone application for web based trail map availability.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department/ Public Works	TBD	Long-Term
Objective 3.4: *Supplement trails with bike lanes and bike routes based on trails typology.*			
Actions	**Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support**	**Resource Impact/Budget Requirement**	**Timeframe to Complete**
3.4.a Use trails and bike paths/routes outlined in the 2013 Sterling Master Plan as a blueprint for future trail planning.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time/TBD	Short to Long-Term
3.4.b Use trails typology as applied in this document to guide future trail planning decisions.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Long-Term
3.4.c Conduct sidewalk inventory or complete streets assessment as part of efforts to enhance recreational connectivity.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
3.4.d Work with Public Works and CDOT to identify compatible street options.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

VI. HOW WE MANAGE – ANALYSIS OF ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

A. Recreation Program Analysis

The City of Sterling offers a moderate level of recreational programming through the Sterling Recreation Center, local parks, and the RE-1 Valley School District and Northeast Community College gym space.

The Sterling Recreation Center has an indoor pool and outdoor pool. The indoor pool has a capacity of 225, which includes the diving well, and the outdoor pool has a capacity of nearly 450. The outdoor pool includes several water features including a Multi-Play 5 and three slides and a 50 × 50 beach entry, as well as a separate wading pool with a mini water dome and six water jets.

The Recreation Center offers a small weight room, wallyball, and racquetball availability. Recreation programming is primarily focused toward sports related programs including adult and youth basketball, adult and youth volleyball, wallyball and racquetball, and adult and youth softball. Special Events offered through the Department include: Movies in the Park, Rockies Baseball Skills Challenge, July 4th Fireworks, Kids Pet Show, Punt Pass and Kick, Trick or Treat Street, Nuggets Basketball Skills Challenge, and Santa City.

Survey Input
Of the programs, activities, and special events listed in the survey, residents of Sterling have participated in outdoor recreation most frequently over the past year (almost 24 times each over the past 12 months, or once every two weeks).

The following programs were used at least once in the past 12 months by the majority of households:

- Special events such as festivals and parades (70% of households used special events at least once over the past 12 months)
- Outdoor recreation (63% of households)

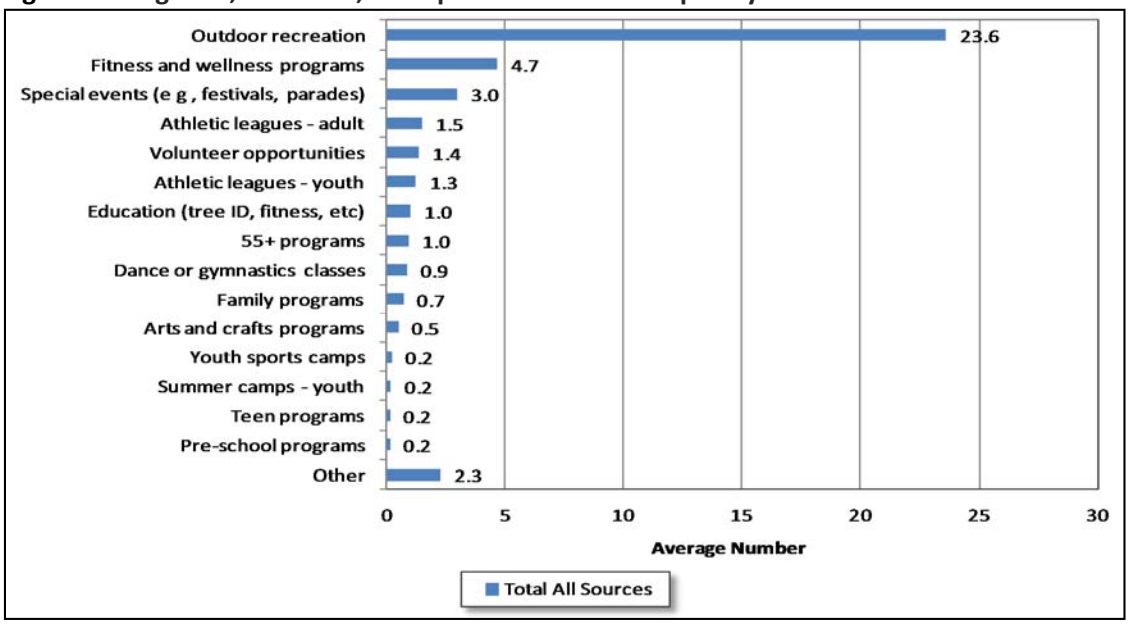
Second tier of programs/activities:

- Fitness and wellness programs (27% of households)
- Athletic leagues – youth (23% of households)

Although almost three-fourths of Sterling households attended special events such as festivals and parades at least once in the past year. The average use per household for the past year was only 3.0 times, which included households who did not attend at all. This indicates that many households attend special events, but they do so infrequently.

Outdoor recreation, however, not only has a high percentage of households who participate, but they do so very frequently (***Figure 9***), resulting in the very high average number of uses over the past 12 months.

Figure 9: Programs, Activities, and Special Events –- Frequency of Use Over the Past 12 Months



When asked to rank the most important, second most important, and third most important programs, activities, and special events for their household, the majority of respondents indicated outdoor recreation as the most important (46% of households) closely followed by special events such as festivals and parades (45%).

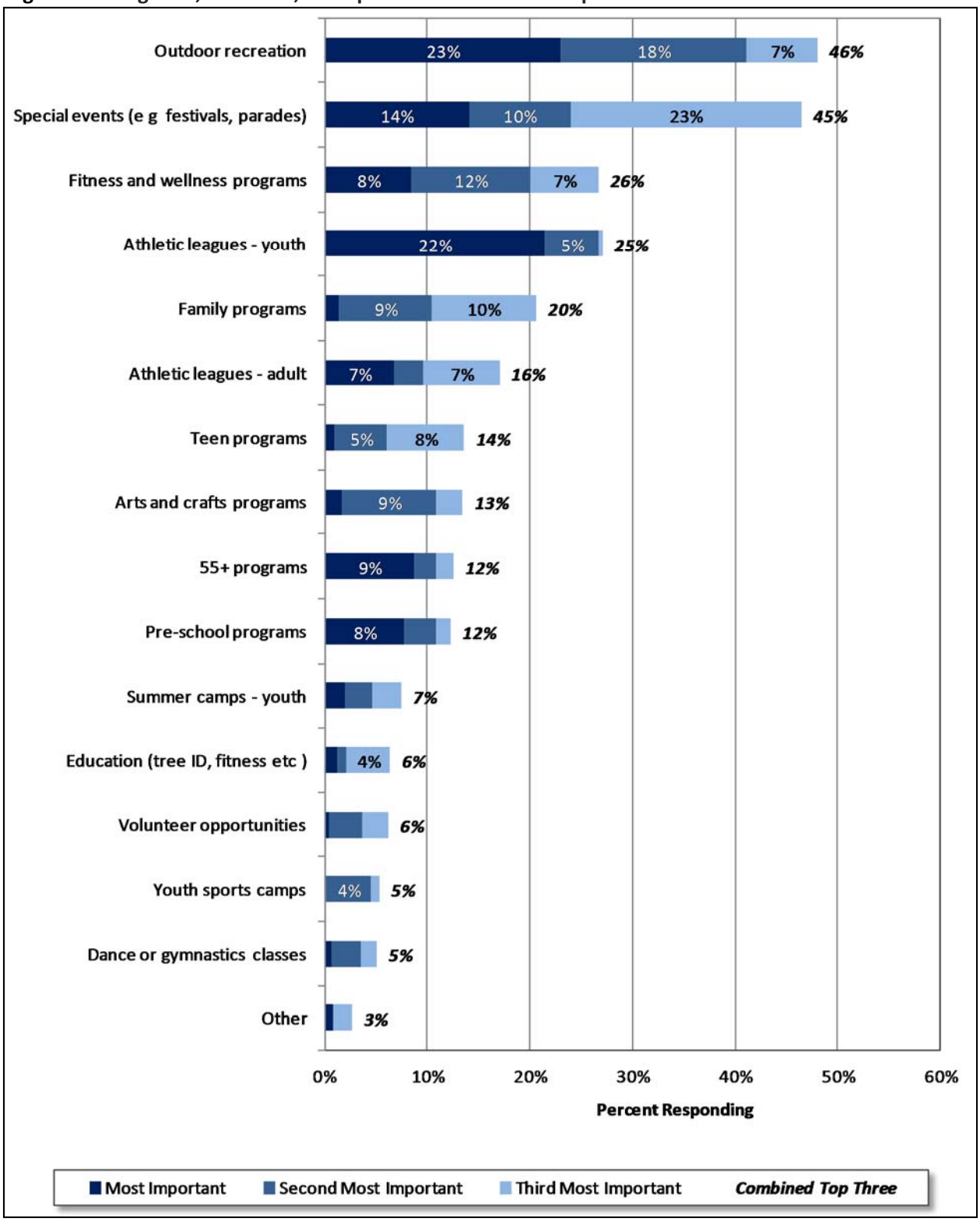
The second tier of programs, activities, and special events most important to Sterling households include:

- Fitness and wellness programs (26% of households reported this program as one of the top three most important to their household)
- Athletic leagues - youth (25%)
- Family programs (20%)

Third tier of most important programs:

- Athletic leagues – adult (16%)
- Teen programs (14%)
- Arts and crafts programs (13%)
- 55+ programs (12%)
- Pre-school programs (12%)

Figure 10: Programs, Activities, and Special Events – Most Important to Households



Outdoor Recreation Trends

The Outdoor Foundation releases an annual "Participation in Outdoor Recreation" report. According to the 2013 report,[4] while there continues to be fallout from the recent economic downturn, the number of outdoor recreation outings reached an all-time high in 2012. The foundation reports that the top outdoor activities in 2012 were running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking.

The Outdoor Foundation's research brought the following key findings.

Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Return to Nature: Nearly 50 percent of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2012. That equates to a total of 141.9 million Americans and a net gain of one million outdoor participants.
- Top Five Biggest Participation Percentage Increase in Outdoor Activities in the Past three years: Triathlon (Off Road), Adventure Racing, Telemarking, Freestyle Skiing, and Triathlon (Traditional/Road).

Youth Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Participation is fairly steady from 2011: However, participation rates dropped among teens ages 13 to 17 (particularly teenage girls) and rose among adults ages 25 to 44.
- The Influence of Family: Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.
- Physical education in schools: The importance cannot be understated. Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 75% say they had PE in school between the ages of 6 and 12.

Outdoor recreation trends are also a recurring topic of study by the United States Forest Service through the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS). An IRIS report dated January 2012[5] provides the following recent nature-based outdoor recreation trends: Participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole. These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity by viewing/photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming. There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding, and wildlife watching in recent years.

[4] "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013", Outdoor Foundation, 2013.

[5] "Recent Outdoor Recreation Trends", USDA Forest Service Internet Research Information Series (IRIS) Research Brief, January 2012, http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IRISRec/ IRISRec23rpt.pdf, accessed August, 2012.

Partnerships

The City of Sterling's Recreation programs have relied on the generosity of the RE-1 Valley School District and the Northeast Junior College (NJC) gym space. Likewise, RE-1 and NJC rely on the City for use of softball fields, swimming pools, etc. All of this sharing of resources is accomplished with the use of Intergovernmental Agreements. The participation in recreation programs is increasing, and the demand for facility use is also on the rise; however, budgets for all three entities are shrinking. Many of the recreational spaces are becoming dated and in need of replacement to meet future needs. There are also many club recreation activities now vying for the same space, which places an extra burden on existing resources. The City of Sterling is in need of additional gym space and health/wellness/fitness space to continue offering recreational and fitness programs for all ages throughout the community without overlapping efforts, and especially resources.

New park and recreation partners across the nation include healthcare providers, social services, justice, education, corporate sector, and community service agencies.

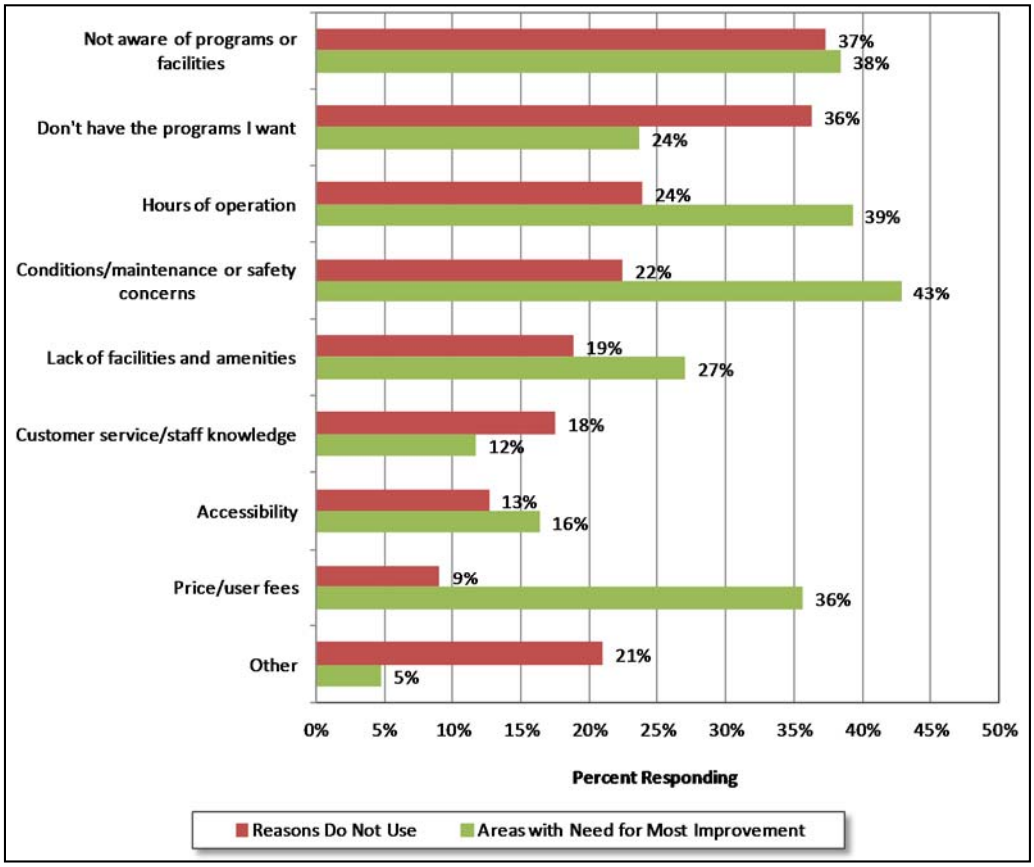
These collaborations reflect a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies, and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues.

Marketing

The City of Sterling's Parks, Library and Recreation Department, Recreation Programs page serves as the major Marketing Tool for the department and its programs along with use of local newspaper and flyers sent to schools to be sent home with children on an irregular basis. Opportunities exist for the City to improve communications such as including electronic-based methods including email, social networking, and through its website.

Respondents within the survey responded (***Figure 11***) as the top reason why they do not use and areas with greatest need for improvement being that they are not aware of programs or facilities.

Figure 11: Current Programs / Facilities - Reasons Why Households Do Not Use and Areas with Greatest Need for Improvement



Summary of Key Findings from Program Analysis

- Outdoor Recreation ranks as a high percentage of households who frequently participate in the activity.
- Recreation programs are offered at a variety of locations including the recreation center, the community parks, and schools.
- Partnerships with the schools are strong but can be improved.
- Additional partnerships opportunities exist with the NJC and other community groups.
- Capacity and availability of gym space are issues with the demand for increased programming.
- Senior, teen, and youth programming is in demand, especially in the areas of non-sport offerings.
- There is a need for an improved marketing approach of Department programs and communications.

Areas of Focus

- Expanding capacity in current program offerings
- Providing non-sport programming for seniors and youth/teens
- Resource development – alternative funds and community partners outside of schools
- Enhance the Department's marketing strategy

B. Recommendations – Recreation Programs

The following Goals, Objectives, and Actions Items are drawn from program analysis. The intent of the Program Analysis is to assist the Parks and Recreation Department in analyzing the current program offerings, identifying the program gaps and needs within the community, and to assist in determining the future program offerings and improve overall communication with city residents.

GOAL 4: Enhance the programming opportunities to ensure that the Department is responsive and relevant to the City of Sterling's residents' leisure behaviors, interests, and needs.

Objective 4.1: *Identify new program opportunities and evaluate current programs to ensure the Department is meeting and will continue to meet resident needs and expectations.*			
Actions	**Primary Department**	**Resources Impact / Budget Requirements**	**Timeframe to Complete**
4.1.a Establish service objectives to ensure that a program, activity, or event is needed or in demand, fits within the mission of the Department, and that it is measured to determine success and effectiveness. Objectives are established at the onset of program planning so as to determine intent, and success indicators. They must be measurable.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.1.b Conduct formative and summative participant evaluations for each program, activity, and event that address participant satisfaction, facility appropriateness, and future interest. Formative evaluations are necessary only when programs are offered for extended periods of time (eight week sessions as opposed to one week sessions). Response return is dependent on how evaluations are distributed and collected. Distribution should be strategic and should be done with the greatest return in mind. It is a good practice to consider an incentive for completion and return of evaluations. These are critical to program decision making.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

4.1.c Conduct an analysis of the Program Life Cycle at the conclusion of each (or selected) program, activity, or event. Once program evaluations are completed, stage of existence should be considered as decisions are made relative to the future of any service. For example, if registrations continue to decline, staff may wish to evaluate the merits of attempting to revitalize a program with a new name, adjusting scheduling to another date or time, modifying a program's format, or simply discontinuing the program reallocating resources elsewhere.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Long-Term
Objective 4.2 *Determine appropriate non-sport leisure and recreation activities and special events that can be offered (directly or partnered) to the community. Master Plan focus groups and community survey identified a need for outdoor recreation, special events, and additional non-sport programming.*			
Actions	**Primary Department**	**Resources Impact/ Budget Requirements**	**Timeframe to Complete**
4.2.a Develop additional outdoor recreation programs and activities for youth and teen populations.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
4.2.b Develop additional Special Events in community parks and at the recreation center.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
4.2.c Conduct focus group meetings (work sessions) on an annual basis to understand changing interest, trends, and demands for non-sport activities for seniors, adults, and teens.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.2.d Continue to evaluate and research non-sport leisure and recreation trends. Create a strategy to identify potential community partners outside of the Department to help address these needs.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
4.2.e Periodically conduct staff evaluations for a rotating list of programs that include program, activity, and event description and details; objective review and analysis; participation; budget information including revenues and expenditures (consistently applied for each service); participant evaluation data; and future recommendations.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Long-Term

GOAL 5: Resource Development – Expand capacity of facility spaces for increased programming opportunities.

Objective 5.1 *Continue to facilitate partnerships with schools and facilitate additional partnerships with other organizations and agencies to provide access to spaces for programming. An area of focus identified is to increase capacity for programs. The Department is currently challenged with addressing community needs and the lack of available space in the programming areas such as fitness and gym sports.*			
Actions	**Primary Department**	**Resources Impact/ Budget Requirements**	**Timeframe to Complete**
5.1.a Continue to develop and strengthen within existing school relationships for continued use of school facilities for gyms and community programming spaces (including outdoor spaces) with continued emphasis on formal agreements and enforcement of those agreements.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
5.1.b Investigate partnership opportunities with other providers of recreation and wellness services that may be able to provide rooms and spaces or services for the public including public health agencies, community college, and other private non-profit organizations for enhanced community outreach. *A sample Partnership Policy is provided as a staff resource document.*	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff/Cost of Partnerships TBD	Mid-Term
5.1.c Based on community input, program expectations, demographic changes, and recreation trends, evaluate and plan actions related to the expansion/renovation of recreation center.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	TBD	Long-Term
5.1.d Look at "off-peak" opportunities to increase facility usages during low demand times.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term

GOAL 6: Improve communications with residents about program/event offerings and Department information.

Objective 6.1: *Develop/Improve electronic based methods of communication with city residents.*			
Actions	**Primary Department**	**Resources Impact/ Budget Requirements**	**Timeframe to Complete**
6.1.a Develop a Sterling Parks and Recreation Facebook and Twitter page to promote Department programs and services and communicate with city residents.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
6.1.b Develop other electronic based methods to improve communication including email blasts and newsletters.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term
6.1.c Develop Department pages on the City's web site to include more information about Department recreation programs.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Short-Term

C. Financial Analysis

Like most cities across the United States, Sterling has been forced to reduce budgets for most City services including parks and recreation. The Parks and Recreation Department is no exception and has made every effort to maintain its high quality facilities, programs, and services with fewer resources.

The Sterling Parks and Recreation Department budget information is provided in ***Table 8*** along with cost recovery and subsidy.

Expenses

The Sterling Parks and Recreation Department's expenses are broken down into four funds:

- Parks Fund
- Tolla Brown Skate Park
- Recreation Center Fund
- Recreation Administration
- Programming
    - Adult Softball
    - Youth Softball
    - Adult Volleyball
    - Youth Volleyball
    - Adult Basketball
    - Tennis
    - Youth Basketball
    - Youth Baseball

Revenues

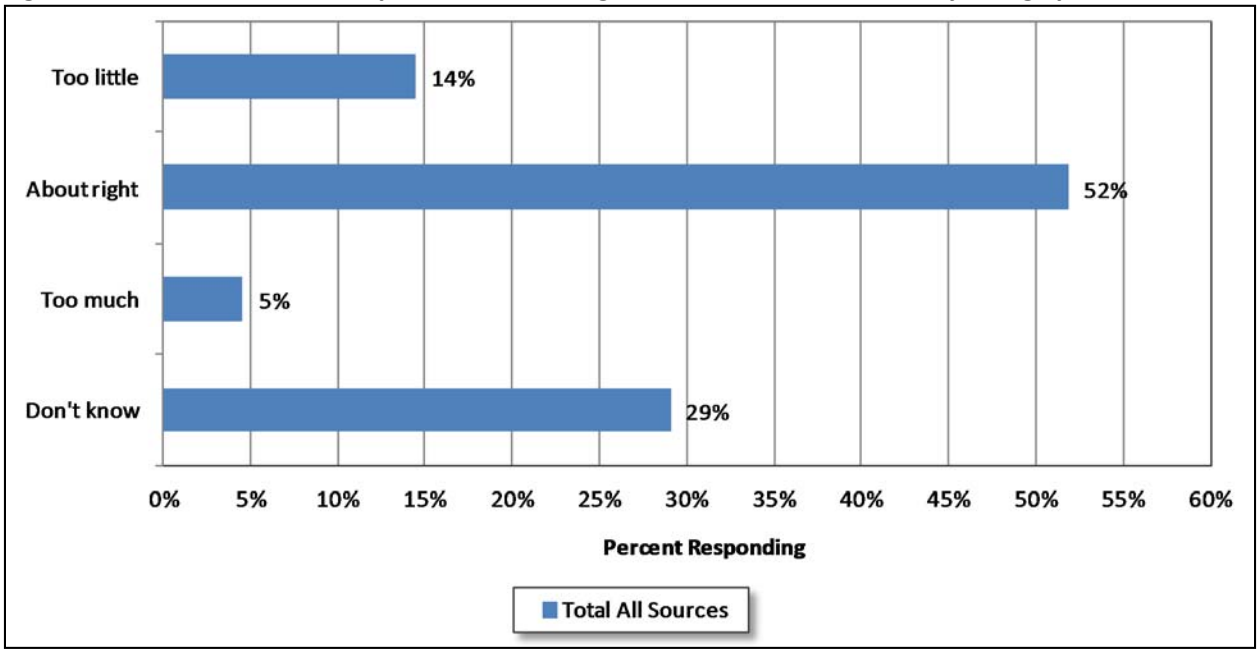
Revenues generated though Parks and Recreation Department facilities, programs, and services provide the bulk of non-tax revenue for the Department. The main sources of revenue come from:

- Parks
- Recreation Center
- Programming

Opinion on Dollars Currently Being Spent

Respondents were asked their opinion regarding the amount of dollars currently being spent by the City of Sterling on maintaining current parks and recreation facilities and programs. Many respondents indicated they don't know/don't have an opinion regarding how much is currently being spent (29%). This lack of opinion indicates that many Sterling residents are relatively uninformed about how their tax dollars are being spent. Overall, however, the majority of respondents indicated that the City was spending about the right amount (52%). Slightly more respondents indicated the City was spending too little than too much (14% versus 5%).

Figure 12: Financial Choices - Opinions Concerning Amount of Dollars Currently Being Spent



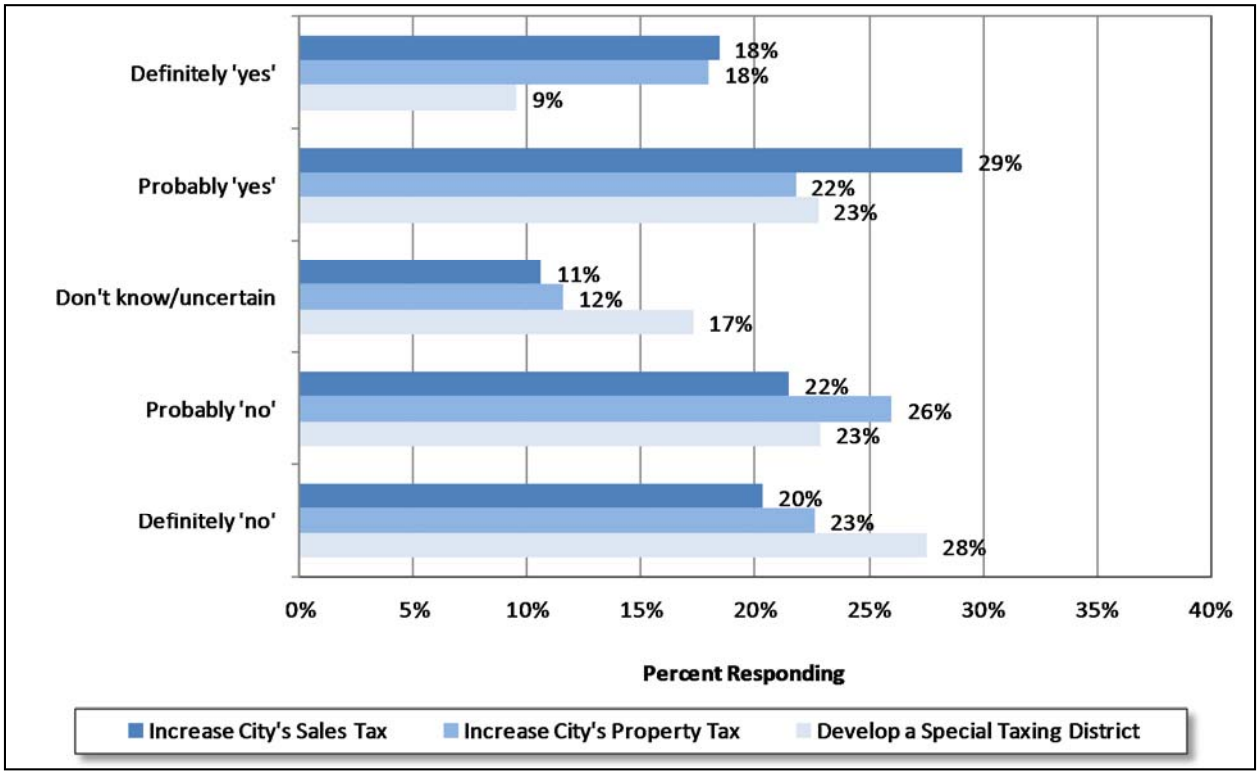
Likelihood of Voting for Increased Taxes or the Development of a Special Taxing District

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to vote in support of increased sales taxes, increased property taxes, and the development of a special taxing district[6] to help pay for the construction and/or operating costs of new recreation facilities, if they are determined to be a need.

[6] Respondents were given the following description of what a special taxing district is: "*A special taxing district, similar to a fire or library district, is an independent government unit that provides services either in addition to or in place of services provided by county, municipal, and township governments. Special taxing districts serve limited geographic areas and have governing boards that accomplish legislative functions through the use of public funds. They are created by majority vote through a general election.*"

Increasing sales taxes had the highest support for an increase, albeit, still with less than half of respondents' support. Roughly 47 percent of respondents indicated either "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" in support for increased sales taxes. Another 40 percent indicated "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" in support for increased property taxes. The development of a special taxing district received the least support with only about 32 percent of respondents indicating a "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" vote for this option.

Figure 13: Financial Choices – Likelihood of Voting for Increased Sales Taxes, Property Taxes, and the Development of a Special Taxing District



Cost Recovery

Table 8 shows total expenses, revenues, and cost recovery for the Sterling Parks and Recreation Department.

Table 8: Sterling Parks and Recreation Department Budget Information

	Expenses	Revenues	Cost Recovery
Parks (Includes Tolla Brown Skate Park)	$536,064	$7,253	1%
Recreation Center/Administration	$925,138	$135,354	15%
Programs	$147,916	$70,827	48%
Totals	**$1,609,118**	**$213,434**	**13%**

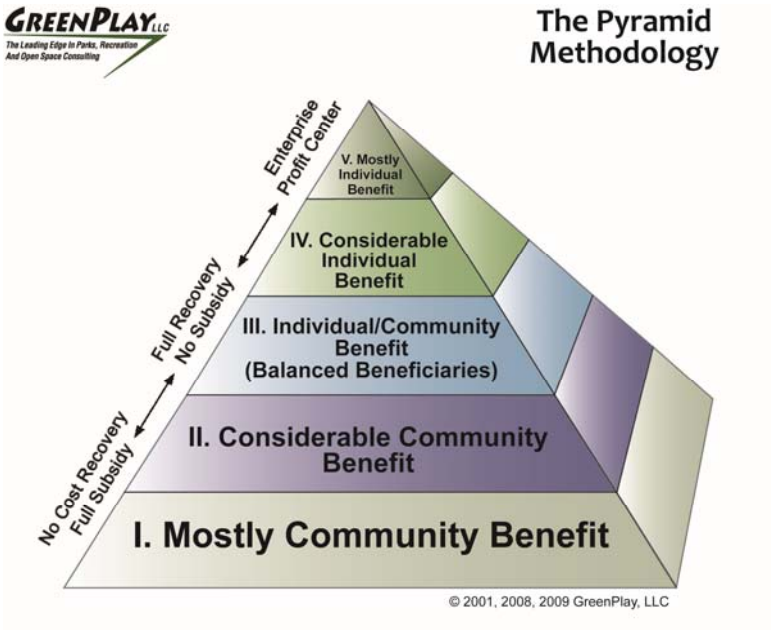
The current total Department cost recovery is approximately 13 percent (***Table 8***)**.** The parks fund generates little cost recovery, which is normal. The recreation center/administration fund cost recovery, is approximately 15 percent, and the programming fund cost recovery is 48 percent.

There are nationally recognized methodologies and best practices that should be implemented in the future to help decision makers and staff operate using consistent guidelines and cost recovery targets for categories of service, even within individual divisions. This is not to promote inter-departmental comparisons (as parks, trails, and open space will naturally always have a lower cost recovery expectation than recreation due to the nature of the services). It is to provide each fund with standard and consistent definitions of cost of service provision to benchmark against themselves over time, based on City leadership, the Department's mission and vision, and community values and goals. This methodology can also be examined based on community input regarding "willingness to pay" and demand for additional services and facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Department seeks to achieve fair and equitable cost recovery levels. The Department should revisit these levels to ensure that they are moving in a direction that seeks to sustain the quality of facilities, programs, and services now and into the future.

The Pyramid Methodology – A Potential Management Tool

Refining the subsidy and cost recovery philosophy is important as the City works to sustain services in both the short and long term. The ***Pyramid Methodology*** is an effective management tool currently being utilized by agencies across the country as a way to develop and articulate a subsidy and cost recovery philosophy.



The creation of a cost recovery and subsidy allocation philosophy and policy is a key component to maintaining an agency's financial control, equitably pricing offerings, and helping to identify core services including programs and facilities. Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and buy-in of elected officials and advisory boards, staff, and ultimately, citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the agency should be certain that it philosophically aligns with its constituents. The development of a financial resource allocation philosophy and policy is built upon a very logical foundation, based upon the theory that those who benefit from parks and recreation services ultimately pay for services. **Additional information on the *Pyramid Methodology* was provided as a staff resource document along with information on the *Public Sector Service Assessment***, which identifies optional provision strategies for all services in relation to what is happening in the market, the financial capacity of the service, and the agency's strength or weakness in the market.

D. Recommendations – Financial

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items focus on the development of improved expense and revenue tracking strategies, the development of policies that focus on resource allocation and development and renovation of recreation facilities.

Goal 7: Sustain the high level of service to which citizens have become accustomed.

A coordinated plan for the upkeep and replacement of parks, recreation, open space, and trails facilities is extremely important in establishing a strong financial position for service provision. Establishing a pricing methodology continuously reflects community values, while generating adequate revenues for assisting in the sustainability City of Sterling Parks and Recreation Department facilities, programs, and services.

Objective 7.1
Create and implement a cost recovery philosophy and policy.

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
7.1.a Identify and understand current revenue streams and their sustainability.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
7.1.b Define direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and change with the program.	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term
7.1.c Define indirect costs as those that would typically exist anyway (like full time staff, utilities, administration, debt service, etc.).	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
7.1.d Acknowledge the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the scale of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets (i.e. Indirect cost associated with contracted programs like facility use, staff coordination time, etc.).	Parks, Library, and Recreation Department	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Goal 8: Renovation and Expansion of Recreation Center

Objective 8.1
Conduct Feasibility Studies to understand future capital and operational funding and revenue generation potential.

According to the Parks and Recreation staff and supported citizen input, the top priorities for indoor facilities that could be added, expanded, or improved in Sterling over the next 5-10 years where as follows:

- Recreation Center
  - Renovation of indoor pool and supporting operating systems due the age and conditions of current facilities.
  - Indoor gymnasium due the increased difficulty in accessing school gyms.
  - Fitness area (weights, cardio equipment, indoor track) – 2nd most important additional according to the survey.
  - Additional fitness class space – 3rd most important area of programming needs. Current facilities cannot support expansion for this programming.

Actions	Primary Dept. Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Timeframe to Complete
8.1.a Conduct a feasibility study for the expansion of the Sterling Recreation Center with a focus on updating indoor aquatics, gym addition, and general fitness and wellness spaces.	Parks and Recreation Department	Staff time/ Consultant Fees ($20,000 to $25,000) *Note: Construction and Ongoing Operational Costs Will be Determined at the End of the Feasibility Study*	Mid-Term

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Appendix A – Community Input

Public Meeting 1: July 29th 12:00pm

1. **What are the key strengths of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities?**
    - Community Meeting Members Present (15 including 1 council member)
    - We have the nicest library, museum, swim park within the closest 10 counties (regional hub) they are modern/updated, size of them as well, access (easy to locate handicap accessible walkability and drivability).
    - High level of maintenance of those parks and facilities. The number of parks especially in the little neighborhood parks is just amazing.
    - Appreciate that they have up to date play systems. No metal slides etc. continually updating even when they thought it might not be necessary
    - Swimming program for wide range of ages
    - Pool is multi use compared to other facilities they have been to
    - Nice starting point to trails offers a launching point
    - Youth reading program is phenomenal
    - Museum does several programs a year that targets all ages.
    - Kids College (classes that are coordinated by the CC from 6 – 5th grade) they have science art and creative writing – so she is looking at a low cost option and drivability.

2. **What are the key weaknesses of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities in the City of Sterling?**
    - Lack of bike and walking trails mainly biking trails and areas for kids and families (safe being traffic issues)
    - Can use more multiuse/walking trails
    - Connectivity trails between the schools/sidewalks
    - Swim facility needs more time open to the public – sees it as open to suit the lifeguard, not family oriented, should be open later. Updates in locker rooms and area does not have the quality of where it was (facility age may be a factor).
    - Width of sidewalks that double as the trail components
    - Dog Park (improvement area)
    - Youth programs – middle school through high school gap in program other than sport programming – more general recreation programming
    - Frisbee golf redesign (Improvements)

3. **What community issues, needs, and or problems exist in the City of Sterling that recreation programs, parks, open space, and trails can impact?**
    - Obesity rate is higher than many communities in the state of Colorado. Fitness in General
    - Positive Teen Choices
    - Connectivity/access (north side vs south side)
    - Teen activity at Prairie Park is non-conducive to a family environment (control skate park)

4. **What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks, open space, trails, and recreation service in the community? Why do you see it/them as essential?**
    - Bike trails – serves family and senior citizens keep families' kids off the street
    - Library and museum is essential for the education of the community – may be used more than any other facility (thinks more people should go to the museum)
    - Accessibility (operation hours – trail access)
    - Having the transition between city/town to open space areas
    - Access to nature and access in a way (good for the soul)
    - Youth Sports Programming – physical activity, sportsmanship skills
    - Up to date facilities to draw in outside tournaments etc. into the community
    - Beautiful Parks essential to take care of what you have

5. **What improvements or changes would you make in the parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities, programs and services in the City of Sterling today? 5 years? 10 Years?**
    - Backwall to the tennis courts
    - Plant more trees – maybe not just in the parks
    - Plant smaller trees that need less water (?)
    - Multi use trails in town and a river trail (5 years) connectivity as well, it's a scenic issue for them as they talked about having a peaceful place to go.
    - Disc golf course – built in conflicts with other park users, how it crosses the walking path, set up unfriendly to rec players. Limited in usability for tournament play, occasionally in the softball fields.
    - Dog Park – no problem with loose dogs – big fenced in space with water – shade
    - More family hours at the aquatic center
    - Splash Park – more open access in thought
    - Services – swim lessons in the winter (problem with getting staff for those time)
    - Great programs for youth and adults – young adult teenage early 20's programming (12 – 21)
    - Plausible for timeframe for current facility for specific age groups for teenager groups etc. special programming
    - Paddle sports lessons/programming
    - Make rapids in their river – connectivity into the Platte River

6. **How can the City of Sterling work to responsibly address these improvements or changes given its resources? What opportunities exist?**
    - Pursue Grants
    - User Fees
    - Complaint on user fee for the rec center – group rate on group activities
    - CDOT
    - Community Fundraising/Matching
    - Tournaments towards support of specific
    - Community Foundation
    - Getting the youth involved in getting them vested interest
    - High School/college groups for service projects – volunteer program
    - Communication (goes up in essential questions)
    - Semi - Skilled labor projects become community projects

- Incentive program

7. **Are their potential partnerships that the city of Sterling should consider working with in the future?**
    - Colorado Division of Wildlife/State Park in association with the reservoir and lakes – Boats etc. to rent
    - County Commissioners – help support grant initiatives
    - County Fair Grounds/Facilities
    - Local Disc Club
    - Community College has resources and grant writer – keep them in the loop

8. **How effective is the Department in seeking feedback from the community and users on improving its performance?**
    - Minimal
    - Park director gives report to city council
    - Press releases – website
    - Very open and willing to take feedback
    - Sterling as a whole its difficult in what is going on
    - Some centralized communication – one place
    - It happens frequently that things happen on the same night
    - Survey questions about communication

Public Meeting 2: July 29th 6:00pm

1. **What are the key strengths of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities?**
    - Well maintained parks
    - Cooperation between city, school, college (don't have to create new facilities when other agencies have them)
    - Low cost to participate – youth programs
    - High participation in programs

2. **What are the key weaknesses of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities in the City of Sterling?**
    - Rec center pool availability (pool closes at 1:00 on Tuesday and Thursday)
    - Rec Center outdoor pool closes right after labor day/when school starts
    - Outdoor pool closes at 6:30
    - Outdoor pool closes early during the county fair
    - Lack of Silver Sneaker program (do they offer it at the heritage center – county?)
    - No longer competitive adult sports programs
    - Softball facility are antiquated (fences distance are not regulations)
    - More multi-use trails

3. **What community issues, needs, and or problems exist in the City of Sterling that recreation programs, parks, open space, and trails can impact?**
    - Health & Wellness
    - More trails/paths would help folks without auto transportation
    - Quality of life factors
    - More activities for 17 – 19 yrs.
    - More activities for young adults (Retention of this demographic)
    - College students graduate and leave and don't come back

4. **What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks, open space, trails, and recreation service in the community? Why do you see it/them as essential?**
    - Availability, The facilities exist
    - Be able to move people on a trail system
    - Safety

5. **What improvements or changes would you make in the parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities, programs and services in the City of Sterling today? 5 years? 10 Years?**
    - Improve city sidewalks
    - Pioneer ditch trail (5 years)
    - Platte River Trail – Rough trail (5 year)
    - Sport complex on College Baseball stadium property (5 year)
    - Community building at future shooting range east of town. (County it looking to build 240 acres) Non-profit operation
    - New disc golf
    - Upgrading skate park

6. **How can the City of Sterling work to responsibly address these improvements or changes given its resources? What opportunities exist?**
    - Master Plan will open the doors to more grants
    - Hire a grant writer for the City (and College, County)
    - Partnerships
    - Create a Foundation

7. **Are their potential partnerships that the city of Sterling should consider working with in the future?**
    - Work with the County Frisbee golf redesign (Improvements)
    - Hospital
    - Local Businesses
    - Prison (Right now the prison population is too high security to provide labor)
    - Chamber
    - Dept. of Wildlife and Parks
    - SE Community College
    - Logan County office of Economic Development is think about starting a community foundation.
    - State of Colorado

8. **How effective is the Department in seeking feedback from the community and users on improving its performance?**
    - The City gets a lot of feedback but doesn't really seek it out
    - How are we doing forms at aquatics building
    - Parks Advisory Board is open to the public
    - Communication can always be improved

Department Staff Focus Groups: July 29th 1:30pm & 2:30pm

1. **What are the key strengths of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities?**
    - Recreation – Youth Programs are strong – sports adult programs are average
    - Services are good
    - Everyone comments on the quality of the parks
    - Recreation Facility – we have an indoor pool and outdoor pool
    - Use of Colorado Trust Fund for Parks Improvements

2. **What are the key weaknesses of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities in the City of Sterling?**
    - Recreation – website and registration – communication
    - Staff center and division – more staff is needed – one or two
    - Disc golf needs some improvement some platforms on tee boxes
    - Rec Center is outdated - walk in areas too crowded – outgrown that facility
    - Youth and adult basketball program – they have outgrown their shared usage space with the schools. Softball fields are the same way – outdated/restrooms from the 50's
    - Puts stress on maintenance and participation
    - Communication between partners and stakeholders
    - Offices in rec center are not conducive to good communication
    - Family Locker Room
    - Additional responsibilities on Maintenance staff but no new help

3. **What community issues, needs, and/or problems exist in the City of Sterling that recreation programs, parks, open space, and trails can impact?**
    - Affordability of programs and facilities
    - Outdoor fitness – no cost options
    - Overall Vision of the City for Recreation
    - Vandalism can be a problem
    - Some parks have security cameras

4. **What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks, open space, trails, and recreation service in the community? Why do you see it/them as essential?**
    - Clear snow – safety and can continue to be active
    - Maintenance is a main source of pride
    - A lot of people use Columbine Park
    - A lot of variety in the parks

5. **What improvements or changes would you make in the parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities, programs and services in the City of Sterling today? 5 years? 10 Years?**
    - New four Gym Facility in the next 5 years
    - Lobby/front desk/cardio studio
    - Expensive – but they have fitness programs- register for classes
    - Focus of the college is narrow when it comes to the programming for the community
    - Couple of more playgrounds replacement (currently on 12 – 15 year replacement)
    - More Bike paths – connection points (west to east and north to south)
    - Update pavilions, better lighting, higher up, they flood at times
    - Softball Field improvements
    - Bathroom – non ADA compliant bathrooms at the fields
    - Staff Meeting
    - More things for young people to do
    - Fun center for young kids (mini golf, go carts, etc.)

6. **How can the City of Sterling work to responsibly address these improvements or changes given its resources? What opportunities exist?**
    - Increase in responsibilities
    - Work Smarter
    - Better Maintenance Equipment
    - Increase in staff funding to increase Level of Service
    - Email Surveys for ideas to bring the issues to the attention of the city and city council
    - Look to the demographics in giving direction to what is needed and what is built
    - City needs to look at raising taxes
    - Staff Meeting

7. **Are their potential partnerships that the city of Sterling should consider working with in the future?**
    - Better partnership with schools especially on field uses
    - County – what would be the role? She does not know other than $$$$– They have grandstand and facilities to run programs on.
    - Chamber of Commerce.
    - Local Business

8. **How effective is the Department in seeking feedback from the community and users on improving its performance?**
    - Texting
    - Word of Mouth
    - Send flyers through the schools)

Focus Group, Jay Lee, President Northeastern College: October 16th 2pm

1. **Is there any sort of shared usage agreement between the City and the College? If so, how is it working?**
    - At the time he expressed that he is not aware of any shared usage agreement between the City and the College. He is aware that the College has been working with the school district to come up with a comprehensive plan for a community sports complex park. At present, they have a baseball field and a bad soccer pitch on the east end of town. The baseball field is nice and the surrounding acreage is not developed and does not have viable surfaces. There is a lot of opportunity but there is no money.
    - The College has the best baseball field but no lights, and they have been actively pursuing working with the people that have wanted a collegiate mountain baseball team, which would consist of a 24 game home season within a two month period that would also include teams from Golden, Fort Collins and, Cheyenne. They would need field lighting to do it and be able to sell beer. At this time they haven't been able to find the money to install lights, if they can't move forward by next year it (the idea) might die.

2. **Does the College have any access or do you see any need for access to the city's Parks, Recreation facilities for any specific reason or benefit to the College?**
    - Student Services and Student Life Program do some things with the rec center, they (the college) lack a pool facility. It would be nice if there was more there (at the rec center) or something more secure or established in the way of shared access. One of the struggles the college has, it's a small community – there is a lack of opportunity for college aged kids. A conversation about programs in the park that are more active related to capture the college aged students (captivate). We are always looking for more things to do including more activities for college aged people, but at this time I am not sure what that is.

3. **Would it be beneficial to have some sort of group from the college meet with the department?**
    - ***Note: When specifically asked his interest level in having a student group engage the Parks Recreation and Library Department to discuss the issue of the creation of more programs, activities, etc. for the college aged students.***
    - I am very interested in seeing that happen and would help facilitate that communication/ group. He would be encouraged and help facilitate that. In the past different organization have done that and have gotten good suggestions and some may be unreasonable but there was good communication that happened. They do have an association of student government to go through.

4. **Does the community have access to any of the college facilities or health and wellness programs?**
    - Yes, there is community access to the facilities especially to the event center which is in part a community facility and several members take advantage of the fitness center, small running track auxiliary gym fitness equipment and the performance court which is sometimes rented out for tournaments, concerts etc.

5. **Are there any opportunities to create or expand on any shared facility access to benefit the entire community? Do you see any opportunities for partnerships with the Department for construction of new shared facilities?**
    - The vision is a big baseball facility and indoor hitting facility and a nice soccer field. Youth Baseball/softball – what they have is not necessarily up to what they need to be. A larger sports complex. There is enough space to do soccer and football.

6. **Do you see any other potential opportunities for partnerships between the college and the Library, Parks and Recreation Department?**
    - It would be nice to have trails and paths leading into campus like I experienced when living in Idaho. At this time I not aware of any that lead to campus currently.

Focus Group, Council Member – 1 Attended, October 16th, 3pm

1. **From your perspective what do you feel needs to be the focus on the Parks and Recreation department for the community?**
    - Smaller projects would be best to focus on at this point instead of the big facility. Most of the rest of the parks and rec is up to date and the department does a really good job overall.

2. **What are you hearing specifically from your constituents around the city in regards to Parks and Recreation?**
    - The most input is on trails. Dog Park has been mentioned. Why don't we have a better biking trail? But we rarely get complaints. There is always a hand full of enthusiastic individual or groups but I thinks that we actually will get more information from the surveys when the process is completed.

3. **What are your opinions of the current plans for Parks and Recreation?**
    - They do a good job as in the lines of reports they don't actually get an idea of plans and they get a quarterly in person report. Anything over $25,000 an item comes to council

4. **What are your opinions on the city's ability to finance new facilities?**
    - If it was small enough and there was enough excitement generated then it might go through. It has been a number of years since something that major (pool) has been constructed. They have a local Hotel Tax. I do not think they would be able to pass something as large as a sports complex project, but it would be more about how that partnership was constructed. SBO has their own fields, the cities softball fields. So if they say the city is giving money to NJC and a private team in the summer, the first thing people are going to question is the private use vs the public usage.
    - Partnership is good but it could be a problem with the public perception of the specific project.

Core Questions

1. **What are the Key Strengths of the recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities in the City of Sterling?**
    - Key Strengths are the facilities which are relatively new – Pool, Library especially. They enhanced Pioneer park structures and a few of the smaller parks so the enhancement and upkeep has been great.
    - Staff is good, hiring Wade was a good hire. No complaints about anyone.

2. **What are the key weaknesses of the Recreation programs and services, parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities in the City of Sterling?**
    - Lack of amenities that people see elsewhere. Bike trails, dog parks. Got one complaint about the outdoor pool being closed due to lack of lifeguards because of school starting.

3. **What community issues, needs, and/or problems exist in the City of Sterling that recreation programs, parks, open space and trails can impact?**
    - Small town so there is little crime and drugs are always prevalent but not sure if city programs can help that. They have bigger city facilities now with the skate park, pool, library etc. but not sure there is any correlation between those and impacting. They do have a number of nonprofit churches organizations that are currently more adapt to making a difference.
    - Event planning to allow alcohol at parks for special events. More accessibility is important though.

4. **What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks, open space, trails and recreation service in the community? Why do you see it/them as essential?**
    - Opportunity to be outdoors, people walk around the parks and that is a quality of life issue.
    - Some people look to use the facilities more and there are some that don't use the facility don't care.

5. **What improvements or changes would you make in the parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities, programs and services in the City of Sterling today? In 5 Years? In 10 Years?**
    - Projects for beautification have not necessarily made it to the council from the hotel tax. There is work session on October 29th on the beautification issue, but if a special project is brought forth, there is legal issues, costs too much. What we receive is under $100,000 a year but at this time we have about $175,000 in the coffers.

        5a. How does the beautification project play into parks?
        - We haven't had a specific project come up through utilization of the funds. It may impact the parks department from a maintenance piece so not necessarily in a positive manner.
        - Parameters have not been set on what exactly is "beautification" most from his perspective would be for construction. Tree planting might. Park bench stuff may come out of that. Now that we have a dog park we may want to look at that. A city advisory board is who decides which project get recommended to the council. Advisory Members are Council appointed. We had a CSU study and the Mayor at the time was on other community board

and they got this citizens advisory board to implement the CSU advisory board (like minded members). They are active until they don't want to be on the board.
    - I would like to see some small projects.

6. **How can the City of Sterling work to responsibly address these improvements or changes given its resources? What opportunities exist?**
    - Small projects. Some of the smaller things have not been has done as well as they could have as well. The non-profit group got a grant for bench but due to ADA compliance they were put in the wrong way or not to their utmost function.

7. **Are there potential partnerships that the City of Sterling should consider working with in the future?**
    - School, SBO fields, if there was something specific to the council or the advisory they would consider. Logan County could be one. NJC is one of the biggest/county but nothing specific has come up during the last four years.

8. **How effective is the Department in seeking feedback from the community and users on improving its performance?** (Time did not allow for final question)

Teen Focus Group, October 16th 4pm - Attendance: 11

1. **How often do you visit the local parks and recreation center?**
    - Visits the parks every day to hang out/use the parks and equipment. Currently walk or get a ride to the park
    - Every other day just the parks. Currently walks to the park which is one block away from their home.
    - Uses skate park every other week. Park closest to the house is a couple blocks.
    - Parks every other week and walks to the park which is a few blocks away
    - Doesn't visit the parks
    - Recreation Center a couple times a week and works out/uses pool in the summer.
    - 2 respondents stated that they do not use either.
    - Does not use the parks or rec center.
    - Go to the parks once a month uses the rec center a few times in the summer
    - Visits the Rec center when he can afford to

2. **What types of park equipment/facilities are you interested in having in your community?**
    - Inside trampoline
    - Rock wall
    - Larger hang out room
    - Air hockey table
    - Contests (sports and music)
    - Computer room
    - Gaming room

3. **What types of recreation center equipment/facilities are you interested in having in your community?**
    - Park equipment that is geared toward older kids other than the swings
    - Outdoor rock walls
    - Bigger slides
    - Bigger skate park
    - Stuff to climb
    - Tunnels
    - Laser tag
    - Paint ball
    - Skating or roller ring.

4. **What types of programs/events would you be interested in participating in if offered?**
    - Guitar lessons
    - Driving lessons
    - Drivers ED program
    - Expand on their outdoor fitness machine
    - Rope climbing
    - More people would go to the movies in the park if they show newer movies

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Appendix B – MindMixer Idea Report

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Topic Name: Your Big Idea

Idea Title: frisbee golf course upgrades and more maintnance

Idea Detail: If the city would help to get concrete tee pads. We (hellfire disc golf club) will deliver revenue for the community by getting big name tournaments big name pro's. They will bring big crowds of good honest fun people...we have already started collecting money from prior little tournaments and the city has helped us with that so far...I just know we r ready for bigger better things for the sterling pioneer disc golf course and the community players that are out there rain snow or sunshine...
Hellfire disc golf club is ready to jump on board and help with any maintenance that is needed..we understand the low budget and cost to give the park its attention it deserves.
As it stands all the reviews of the Pioneer disc golf course (PDGC) r positive for the most part most complain about no designated tee pad and lack of Intel on the PDGC COURSE itself.
The holes need updated with accurate distances better signs for the back holes from #10-#18.
Thank you for all you do to get PDGC going

Idea Author: Carlin S

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 34

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: I agree fully with the need for concrete tees and signposts for the back holes. The front signs and welcome sign are very impressive but as a new resident of Fleming I was a bit lost to say the least playing the back holes. I had read in the Sentinel and Journal Advocate that the city seeks to improve teen involvement and activities. I find disc golf to be a very fun, active and full of friendly competition and people. I've played this sport from age 13 in 1983 having never got into school sports but with the freedom and relaxed atmosphere of disc golf I really found my niche. With the many different types of discs available people of all ages can enjoy this sport. | By Dave P

Comment 2: Good Idea Mr. S | By Gary M

Idea Title: Off leash dog park

Idea Detail: Allow a group to put in a off leash dog park

Idea Author: Tracey K

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 33

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: I walk in Columbine Park in the morning and it is clear that some people want and need an off leash area for their dogs. Sometimes they take their dogs off leash when they leave the park and then the dogs use neighboring lawns to relieve themselves. Having a dog park might eliminate that issue. I think the off leash park is a great idea. | By Karen R

Idea Title: Bike friendly city

Idea Detail: I would like to see bike paths on all the main thoroughfares, Main Street, 3rd Avenue all the way to Broadway, all of Broadway, Division Avenue etc. I want to see bike racks in downtown Sterling. I would also like to see attractive signage giving people directions to the downtown and parks.

Idea Author: Karen R

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 30

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: Oh, and another thing. Like Kevin and his golf course expansion idea, I think Sterling could host bike polo events. Bike polo requires very little equipment and draws crowds of bicyclists who enjoy the sport. They often travel to a community and stay for the entire weekend. The sport only needs some portable goals made of PVC and net and the players bring their bikes and homemade mallets and ball. It is sport in which many ordinary people can become involved. | By Karen R

Idea Title: Replace BBQ grills...

Idea Detail: Nearly all of the BBQ grills in the Sterling parks, are rusted away. They are no longer safe to use. We need to replace the ones we got and maybe add a few additional BBQ grills in other parks.

Idea Author: Gary M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 22

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: I agree. The few grills that I have seen are small and rusted and falling apart. Replacing them, maybe adding a few larger ones here and there, and maybe even a stone/brick oven or two, would be awesome. A woodfired brick oven that was free for public use might draw some visitors for events and reunions, as would larger capacity public grills. | By Nicole M

Idea Title: Develop the disc golf course at Pioneer Park

Idea Detail: Disc Golf is a great and growing sport. Men and women of all ages love to play the game and are always looking for additional courses. We have a course here in Brush which attracts a lot of people, as does the one in Fort Morgan. The course in Sterling is good but sure could benefit from additional development, especially the back nine. You have a very good promoter in Sterling named Gary Mustard. I would suggest you use him as much as possible. He has connections and knows what he is doing. Thanks

Idea Author: Wayne C

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 19

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: Thank you Wayne.... | By Gary M

Idea Title: Fruit Trees and Edible Plants

Idea Detail: Since we're already watering and maintaining the parks, I'd love to see fruit or nut trees planted when trees are added or replaced. Not only are they still ornamental, but they could offer supplemental produce to those in need. Also, things like blueberry bushes, edible herbs for cooking, teas, etc. would be a neat addition.

Idea Author: Nicole M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 18

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: This would be a cool partnership with the CSU extension. Maybe plant several genetic varieties of things and have them as an example of what actually grows well in this region in specific conditions. Mark them as to how much water they have been given, etc. | By Helena S

Idea Title: My idea is to put in a fitness course around a few of the parks.

Idea Detail: The course would have stations that would incorporate different exercises so an individual could go to the park and get a good work out at no cost. It would be similar to the stations around the middle school football field. A good workout without gym fees.

Idea Author: Kory S

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 9

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: create ladder leagues for the court games.

Idea Detail: racket ball, tennis, wallyball competition would be more fun for everyone with ladder or a split league so competition levels are recognized. more fun for everyone means more participation by more age and gender segments of the citizens.

Idea Author: David M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 8

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Biking/walking trail around Sterling like Fort Collins

Idea Detail: A biking/walking trail that wraps around the city of Sterling outside of city streets. This will give walkers/bikers a chance to exercise or stroll without the worry of staying in a bike lane, staying out of the way of cars on the streets, a place for families to go together with smaller kids.

Idea Author: Stacy M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 6

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: You are right on. Family friendly. Family can NOT take a bike ride through town because of fear of traffic especially with small kids learning to ride. | By Kory S

Idea Title: I think we need more bike connective in throughout the city. St

Idea Detail: Sterling would benefit in many ways by having more bike trails the connect the city together. Healthier population. Greater quality of life. as well as a positive aspect when recruiting individual to relocate or attend college here.

Idea Author: Kim S

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 5

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: Anyone who has biked through town knows how difficult it is to get around. paths would be a great addition to Sterling. | By Kory S

Idea Title: cemetary decisions

Idea Detail: why is the name of JESUS so offensive to others in your opinion and the fact that not being able to have it in our lives shouldnt offend us. when someones last wish is to have a fish with the name of JESUS in it why should you be able to say no you cant because a few might think it offensive. It isnt going on their families stuff why should they care or have an opinion

Idea Author: John S

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 5

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Create youth engagement and mitigate some upkeep/maint. concerns

Idea Detail: NJC has had an AmeriCorps Program in the past (youth earn college dollars for community service, they can be paid a small stipend in addition to their scholarship if conditions are right) and program majors in turf management and other fields related to parks, recreation and fitness

The city has concerns with public buy-in, youth engagement, temporary summer employees, and maintenance and upkeep costs.

A program could be developed for the benefit of HS juniors and seniors at local high schools and be positive for local agencies as well.

A partnership could boost NJC's AmeriCorps participant numbers and allow them to reach potential students early, possibly stepping them into their programs with dual credit they way SHS and NJC do with nursing.... while providing work for certain park projects for the city.

City can create youth engagement, hire their temporary positions in a way that employees are motivated to complete the season, and engage more manpower for same labor costs, as the Education award is part of the compensation package.

It could potentially give NJC students with these majors opportunities to "manage" employees on some level, improving their skill base, attractiveness to employers, etc.

Idea Author: Helena S

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 2

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Maintenance and upkeep...

Idea Detail: You ask for alternate ways but only offer 3 choices. "Grants will cover initial costs, what are some alternate ways to cover maintenance and upkeep costs." We here at Hell Fire Disc Golf Club would love to take over maintenance and upkeep to the disc golf course. We simply need the city to OK it....

Idea Author: Gary M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Thank you Wade Gandee for adding a $50 disc golf tournament fee.

Idea Detail: Thank you Wade Gandee for adding a $50 disc golf tournament fee. Before there was no option on the permit application for disc golf tournaments. We here at Hell Fire Dsic Golf Club look forward to holding some good events, next one coming up is the food drive tournament. http://www.discgolfscene.com/tournaments/Throw_Out_Hunger_3_2013

Idea Author: Gary M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: We raised $200 cash and 204 lbs of food for the local Co-Op Ministries in this years Throw Out Hunger disc golf tournament held on Dec. 28th. | By Gary M

Idea Title: A sports complex at NJC; lighted baseball, soccer, etc.

Idea Detail: Sterling currently is not able to host baseball tournaments because the fields are not sufficient. A sports complex could be used both by NJC to increase its recruiting potential and by the Sterling community to bring in visitors and improve the quality of the games.

Idea Author: Alex W

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Park equipment

Idea Detail: To all the existing parks add sensory equipment, wheelchair swings, special swing seats for handicapped kids/adults

Idea Author: Mary D

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Play area at the Ballpark

Idea Detail: I'd like to see a play area with playground equipment, sandbox, etc. at the ball park for the younger kids. They are there because one or both of the parents are playing ball. I worry that they will run out in the parking lot and be hit.

A play area between Mason field and the south field the parent or caregiver can watch the game on either field while watching the children play.

Idea Author: Carol W

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Topic Name: Sterling Trails

Idea Title: Add trails

Idea Detail: Add a trail by the river that extends from the river bridge to Atwood. Add clearly marked bike paths running the full length of Sterling, going north to south and east to west. Place attractive lighting from the Museum intersection, across the bridge and over the overpass. Beautify the bridge railings. Landscape the museum intersection on the north west side. Create a nice trail around the Kiwanis Pond after it is restored.

Idea Author: Karen R

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 33

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: make access and clear hardpack trail upstream of the bridge and around ponds. make minimal expense due to likely flood damage. | By David M

Idea Title: Add crosswalk and paved trail

Idea Detail: The little trail that goes behind home depot and walmart would be an excellent way for many residents to get to pioneer park, but parts are unpaved or lacking sidewalk, there is no crosswalk crossing BallPark Road, and there is no paved trail to get around the ball fields to the park around behind them (not cutting through the parking lot).

Idea Author: Nicole M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 17

Number of Comments 0

Address: 13185 County Road 37 80751, United States

Idea Title: expand the walking biking trail system to include nature trails

Idea Detail: have walk n bike trails in natural areas down by the river. signage, river viewing

seating, develop access on both sides of the bridge, up n down stream. minimum cost because of flood damage. maybe just clear a trail n have hard pack surface.

Idea Author: David M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 10

Number of Comments 0

Topic Name: Visioning Sterling's Recreation Programs

Idea Title: Splashpad

Idea Detail: While the swimming pool is awesome, it is hard for parents with little kids or many of them to go to a swimming pool. A splash pad with fountains would be perfect and a great attraction. Include sprinklers, sprayers and other water features. Safe for little kids on up and have it somewhat enclosed with a fence.

Idea Author: LEslie R

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 27

Number of Comments 3

Comment 1: Perhaps a wading pool for toddlers ! | By Kory S

Comment 2: Fantastic idea!
Fantastic idea! | By Peggy B

Comment 3: A splash pad would be a wonderful idea. Perhaps it could be placed near downtown to bring more customers to local businesses, at pioneer park, or on the South side of town. | By Nicole M

Idea Title: overnight camping sites

Idea Detail: Encouraged travelers to stop spend the nightand shop in Sterling. I suggest Pioneer Park for camping location

Idea Author: Indelible C

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 25

Number of Comments 3

Comment 1: I would also like to see camping allowed at Pioneer Park, or some of the other larger parks. If the problem is damage to grass by tents, it wouldn't be hard to make "tent

pads" and small campsites. It could either be free, or visitors could buy some sort of "pass" that maybe included some cool freebies from local businesses, like coffee, a bagel/muffin, or a discount? | By Nicole M

Comment 2: I like this idea. I remember when Pioneer Park did encourage camping. One thing that has to be fixed at Pioneer is it needs to be connected to City Sewer and Water. When visitors use the park the toilets are often overflowing or the bathrooms are locked because of inadequate capacity to accommodate large crowds at the park. | By Karen R

Comment 3: If we can get large disc golf tournaments to come to Sterling, camping would be beneficial at Pioneer Park...:) | By Gary M

Idea Title: the Sterlijng Dog park

Idea Detail: the need and interest has already been shown, Sterling is well know for our excellent parks, this is one more great addition to what we have now.

Idea Author: jim M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 23

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Disc golf course expansion

Idea Detail: The disc golf course is already a wonderful asset and one of the better flatland courses in the state. With some expansion and improvements, Sterling has the potential of creating a destination course that could attract tourism and host PDGA A-tier level events. I could envision Sterling and Ft Morgan partnering to host an annual world class tournament on all of the excellent courses out on the northeastern plains, above and beyond the existing High Plains challenge in Fort Morgan, which attracts some of the worlds best disc golfers already.

Idea Author: Kevin C

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 22

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: And here is a link to our 3rd annual Throw Out Hunger disc golf tourney to be held Dec. 28th this year. We already have some great sponsors on board including some national brands.

http://www.discgolfscene.com/tournaments/Throw_Out_Hunger_3_2013 | By Gary M

Comment 2: Thanks Kevin... Pioneer Park is a highly rated course and the small tournaments we have hosted have drawn players from as far as Emporia, KS and Scottsbluff Neb. The first PDGA C-Teir sanctioned event is scheduled for Nov. 2 its called Peak to Plains and is being brought by Northern Colorado Disc Golf Club and we here at Hellfire Disc Golf CLub will co-host the event. | By Gary M

Idea Title: Improve the Disc Golf Course welcome large events...

Idea Detail: By making improvements to the Pioneer Park DGC large events and tournaments could take place. Ft. Morgan has an amazing disc golf course and the city is constantly improving the course. They hold large tournaments every year and last year hosted the Colorado States Disc Golf Championships. The High Plains Challenge Disc Golf Tournament brought the city of Ft. Morgan more the $200,000 to the local economy... How come Sterling will not do this.? Pioneer Park is an amazing disc golf course and people travel just to play our course. One of the biggest issues our course has is the lack of "tee pads" or level spots to "tee off" from, and lack of proper signage.

We here at Hellfire Disc Golf Club have raised $300 and donated that money to the City of Sterling Parks and Rec division, the money to be spent of improvements for the disc golf course. To this date no improvements have been made. Together with Ryan Flayhive we have donated nearly 300lbs of food and $100 cash to Ministries..

Idea Author: Gary M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 17

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: To follow through with the dog park plans

Idea Detail: I truly believe a dog park would be a definite asset to Sterling.

Idea Author: Chris C

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 17

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Maintain the parks and flowerbeds

Idea Detail: The plantings at the new library are overgrown with bindweed and other unsightly weeds. There is a locust tree growing in the new ornamental grass planted on the median on 3rd Avenue and Elwood. There are dead trees in Columbine park. There are sucker trees growing within the pine trees and they are killing the pines. The trees downtown start losing their leaves by late June or July of each year, indicating they are distressed. I would like to see the present plantings maintained before we do more plantings in the median on West Main.

Idea Author: Karen R

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 15

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: I think that is a good idea Nicole! | By Peggy B

Comment 2: I would also add that I remember there being flowers or fountains under the overpass. Now that whole area looks shady. Maybe a bit of curb appeal would help encourage more visitors. | By Nicole M

Idea Title: Infant/Toddler Area

Idea Detail: There aren't very many play areas that are safe for infants and toddlers. There needs to be shade over the equipment to prevent burns, low slides and steps for the little ones, and a ground cover that isn't wood chips, gravel, or sand and is easily walked across by tiny unsteady feet.

Idea Author: Nicole M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 15

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: I agree, the equipment at most of our parks is not made for toddlers. It is actually not safe for toddlers. We need infant sized equipment at all parks not just one. | By Kory S

Comment 2: an area for younger than 5 children is important. It would be nice to have more shade on some of the park equipment. | By LEslie R

Idea Title: Partner with other Entities

Idea Detail: I would like to see Sterling partner with NJC, the state, RE-1 Valley, and possibly private entities to provide low cost, high quality recreation opportunities. This may be to help fund and maintain a soccer complex, track and field program. Find what is needed by the other areas and by the City of Sterling, and work with those other entities to the benefit of all involved. These endeavors could potentially be funded by GOCO grants.

Idea Author: Nate K

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 15

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: A universally accessible playground/park

Idea Detail: Accessible playground would have smooth transitions between surfacing help out toddlers taking their first precarious steps, as well as grandparents who use a cane or walker. Painted edges along the paths and two-tone steps aid those with visual impairments, and the picnic tables/swings would be wheelchair accessible. Westminster has a wonderful sensory park that we could follow on a smaller scale.

Idea Author: Peggy B

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 13

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: have ladder leagues or at least split leagues for they court gam

Idea Detail: it will make leagues more fun for everyone and increase participation.

Idea Author: David M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 10

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Beautification Project

Idea Detail: Most of Sterling's Parks and Rec Centers are kinda dull! What kind of beauty could we add to such areas in Sterling, you ask? Well take the Northeastern Junior College's Botanical Walk for example. They really spiced up the site of campus! Some parks aren't being utilized, either. My suggestion for that would be to add certain things to the parks that would not only make them more appealing, but accustomed for young adults; put in basketball courts, tether ball, bike rack, bus shelter stops, or/and soccer goals? Also there are more parks here than Sterling residents may be aware of. Think about putting up information centers at each of the parks. Which would include a map of where the other parks here in town are, and what equipment is at each park. This would make it convenient for one to find certain leisure activities and where they might be, locally.

Idea Author: Cindy M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 10

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: I would definitely use a basketball court if there was one at columbine park. | By Kory S

Comment 2: I would also add that maybe a partial fence or hedge of some sort on the little tiny green area on Broadway (between Rec Center and Sykes) would be helpful. I see kids playing

there all the time, but it's so dangerous with balls going right into traffic, and there's no equipment at all there... maybe one of those octagon style climbing gyms? | By Nicole M

Idea Title: Biking/Walking trail

Idea Detail: I also would like to see a biking/walking system of trails that is out of traffic and into nature and would be safe for adults and kids alike. Biking on the county roads north of Sterling which I see people doing is so dangerous.

Idea Author: Marilyn S

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 6

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: I would like to see more connected & safe routes. Biking is something I can do year round; bike riding is inexpensive and applicable for the entire family from kids to grandma. | By Kim S

Comment 2: Connect the parks with a bike/walking path. | By Kory S

Idea Title: bike paths

Idea Detail: One bike lane up an down 3rd isnt enough

Idea Author: Hope V

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 4

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: I completely agree. We need a path for bikes/walkers away from traffic. | By Kory S

Idea Title: non traditional park

Idea Detail: Denver has a very interesting park in the middle of down town on the 16th

street mall called skyline park. They offer ping pong tables, bean bag toss, put put golf, board games and other simple out door activities all free of charge. Items are borrowed and returned I am sure they have a system of some sort. I think something similar to this would be a great way to provide an out door activity to teens and adults free of cost. Adding it to an existing park, near the rec center or even down town would be great to get some life into. the area.

Idea Author: Lindsey K

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 2

Number of Comments 0

Topic Name: Walking Sterling

Idea Title: Fix/Enhance Crosswalks and Sidewalks

Idea Detail: Right now, many streets in Sterling, including parts of Broadway, Division, and other residential streets lack sidewalks or have sidewalks that are tripping hazards and poorly maintained. Many elderly cannot walk on these for fear of falling, and many parents won't take children down these streets because of traffic concerns. Additionally, many streets lack crosswalks, or drivers disregard traffic laws, and you have to run across quickly. Some crosswalks signals are broken, outdated, or missing components (some will only allow you to cross one way), and lack a wheelchair access on the curb. Many crosswalks in other cities include sound to tell people when it is safe to cross... this might be a good idea to add as well, since many times, large vehicles like trucks and Semis can make it hard to see the signal.

Idea Author: Nicole M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 19

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: repair sidewalks and accessibility

Idea Detail: many sidewalks are are in poor condition, they are also incomplete and end before they reach the street. They also lack the accessible transition from side walk to road in many areas those with strollers, wheelchairs or bikes must go off one ramp into the street and back around the corner to cross the street when ramps are not located so that they access both streets.

Idea Author: Lindsey K

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Topic Name: Staying Healthy

Idea Title: Indoor/Outdoor Farmer's Market

Idea Detail: I know that we have some smaller farmer's markets through the year, and a health food store, but I would love to see some communication between local farmers, gardeners, canners, bakers, craftspeople, beekeepers, and ranchers, and see if we can make a year-round local market where people could stop in on Saturday and buy healthy, local honey, meats, cheeses, milk, fruits, and veggies. Finding a way to have it accept WIC/SNAP/EBT/Credit/Debit funds would be awesome too, as some of the people who need healthy foods the most are on limited budgets. Right now, you have to track all of these things down, but having an advertised, well known, year-round market could really boost the local economy while helping others get healthy.

Idea Author: Nicole M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 7

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Make the Options Known/Encourage Adult Activity

Idea Detail: A LOT of people don't know that there's a free "gym" outside the rec center. Many people don't know about Sterling's bike routes. Very few people know how to track down local products. Aside from the one "gym" near the rec center and some walking trails, there's no teen/adult equipment at any of the other parks. It would be awesome if we could add something there, and let people know about it. Perhaps the city could also do a contest with chamber bucks, for the highest body fat percentage dropped, or the largest cholesterol reduction, or weightloss, etc.

Idea Author: Nicole M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 7

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: bike paths

Idea Detail: I don't bike but I see serious cyclists out everyday. I envision a path that stretches 50 miles or more.

Idea Author: Hope V

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 5

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: I like where you are going with this idea and it all starts with bike paths in town that take you outside of sterling. Possibly connecting northeast colorado with paths. | By Kory S

Idea Title: Splash Pad?

Idea Detail: I would LOVE to see a splash pad added to the park near the rec center. I have small children who would love to play in the water, but I can not possibly watch all of them at once at the pool...in addition, my small children are all napping when the pool finally opens at 1:00. A small splash pad area and benches in that area would attract many families!

Idea Author: Tina B

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Points 3

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: I would love to see a splash pad someplace in our downtown area. | By Kim S

Idea Title: Improvements at 11th and Delmar?

Idea Detail: The south side of town is lacking in parks. The "park" at 11th and Delmar is such a waste. I understand there are water works under the lot so heavy play equipment can not be installed. What about soccer goals? A basketball hoop and concrete pad somewhere on the lot? A rollerblading/biking path/"track" around the perimeter? There is a picnic table, but no shade. Small pavilion? Something to make the area more attractive and enticing for use. I live on 10th and have small children that would love a place to play. Columbine is too far to

walk, Ayres also...

Idea Author: Tina B

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Idea Title: Sustainability Festival

Idea Detail: Solar, wind and water energy sources workshops, organic growing, grow your own garden workshops, growing gardens for kids, xeroscaping for beginners, herbology, garden tours, chicken coop tours, family oriented day for everyone. Games prizes, a great learning experience for all.

Idea Author: Denise B

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Topic Name (Instant Poll): Communicating With You

Idea Title: Email

Number of Seconds 16

Idea Title: Facebook

Number of Seconds 11

Idea Title: Newspapers

Number of Seconds 4

Idea Title: Radio

Number of Seconds 3

Idea Title: Text Messages

Number of Seconds 2

Idea Title: Twitter

Number of Seconds 1

Idea Title: Phone Calls

Number of Seconds 0

Idea Title: Newsletters

Number of Seconds 0

Idea Title: Meet-and-Greet Events

Number of Seconds 0

Comments

Number of Comments 1

Comment 1: Hello, I know this site is for the improvements within Sterling's parks and recs, but I have a vision for the monument mural that would be cost effective. Why isn't there a place on this website where I could express other ideas and visions I have for Sterling? Maybe like a general community ideas column!?
" Jus Say'N "
Cindy Morris | By Cindy M

Topic Name (Instant Poll): Funding Suggestions

Idea Title: Sales Tax Increase

Number of Seconds 3

Idea Title: Formation of a Special Parks and Recreation Tax District

Number of Seconds 1

Idea Title: Property Tax Increase

Number of Seconds 0

Comments

Number of Comments 2

Comment 1: I am not sure that our community will support another tax increase after the recent water bill increase. I believe we need to work harder to educate our residents and employees about the importance of shopping with our local merchants.

If 1/4 of the local population-14,727 (2012 census) bought an additional $20 per week in Sterling, the additional sales tax generated (3%) would be increased by $114,870.00 annually.

Eat lunch out, rent a movie, buy groceries, paint, hardware supplies, flowers, chocolate, furniture, new pair of shoes etc.

| By Kim S

Comment 2: I've used sterling parks / library / pool all my life - have only lived in Sterling proper about 5 years. sales tax first, or special district as second choice. the impact of the rec program makes is larger than just city-wide property owners... | By Helena S

Topic Name: Racquetball Courts

Idea Title: create a ladder league open to all. this will get more people

Idea Detail: playing. start a sat youth lessons. I volunteer to teach it. get another instructor.

Idea Author: David M

Number of Seconds 0

Number of Comments 0

Appendix C – Survey Report

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Parks & Recreation Master Plan Survey 2013

Prepared for:

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Prepared by:

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OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

The survey results produced a large amount of data and a number of key findings that include the following:

- Based on the survey research the most important issues for the City to focus on parks and recreation include: increasing positive activities for youth, maintaining what the City already has, and reducing crime and vandalism.

- Current parks and facilities do an excellent job of satisfying the City's needs relative to the level of importance placed on facilities by the community, though improvements to some parks and facilities are needed. These improvements include creating a safer and better maintained parks system and increasing hours of operation.

- The main reasons respondents do not use facilities or programs include not being aware of the programs or facilities, the City doesn't offer the programs they want, and hours of operation. These reasons, as well as conditions/maintenance or safety concerns, and price/user fees, are some of the areas where improvement is most needed.

- Respondents indicated that pedestrian/bike paths and trails and sidewalks need to be added, expanded, or improved above any other facility or program.

- Regarding programs, activities and special events, respondents reported participating in outdoor recreation most frequently with almost 24 times over the past 12 months. Meanwhile, with 70% of households, special events such as parades and festivals are attended by the most households within the City. Based on the survey results, these programs are the most important to the community.

- All aspects of trails and open space are important to the community; however, preserving wildlife habitat, improving or providing access to natural areas, improving trail connectivity within the City and to regional trails, and building more trails and bike paths along the Platte River are identified as the most important.

- All modes of travel for access to Sterling's parks, facilities, and programs perform fairly well.

- Local newspapers are not only the most preferred method of informing the public about parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs, but they are the most used by respondents for receiving information. Opportunities exist for the City to improve communications such as including electronic-based methods (i.e. email from the City, social networking through Twitter and Facebook, and the Internet/websites). Many respondents indicated these methods as the best way to be reached but not many respondents currently receive information via these methods.

- Many respondents don't have an opinion regarding the current amount of money being spent on maintaining parks, facilities, and programs, indicating an opportunity to better inform the public. The majority of those who had expressed an opinion indicated the City is

spending about the right amount. Slightly more respondents indicated the City is spending too little than too much.

- Overall, there is not overwhelming support for increased sales taxes, property taxes, or the development of a special taxing district to fund new construction and operating expenses if new facilities are deemed necessary. The majority of the resistance comes from older age groups while younger age groups are associated with the most support. Of the three alternatives to help fund new construction and operating costs evaluated, increasing the sales tax has the highest level of support overall.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on the City of Sterling parks, recreation, open space, trails facilities, programs, and services. This feedback and subsequent analysis were designed to assist the City of Sterling (the City) to create a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to help serve the community over the next 10 to 15 years.

The survey was conducted using two methods: 1) a mail-back survey and 2) an online invitation-only survey.

The primary list source used for the mailing was a third party list purchased from Melissa Data Corp., a leading provider of data quality solutions with emphasis on U.S., Canadian, and international address and phone verification and postal software. Use of the Melissa Data list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists.

A total of 3,000 surveys were mailed to a random sample of City of Sterling residents in September 2013, with approximately 2,950 being delivered after subtracting undeliverable mail. The final sample size for this statistically valid survey was 278 (including the mailback and web invitation versions), resulting in a margin of error of approximately +/- 5.9 percentage points calculated for questions at 50% response[1].

The underlying data for the random sample responses were weighted by age and gender to ensure appropriate representation of City of Sterling residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample. Based on current 2011 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Average estimates, the age and gender profile of residents is distributed as follows: Age: 18-35 (38%), 35-44 (16%), 45-54 (18%), 55-64 (11%), 65-74 (7%), 75 and older (10%); Gender: Male (54%), Female (46%).

[1] For the total sample size of 278, margin of error is +/- 5.9 percent calculated for questions at 50% response (if the response for a particular question is "50%"—the standard way to generalize margin of error is to state the larger margin, which occurs for responses at 50%). Note that the margin of error is different for every single question response on the survey depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various segments, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a general comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

RESPONDENT / HOUSEHOLD PROFILE

Respondent Characteristics

- The average length of time respondents have been living in the community is 23.9 years, with almost none living in Sterling for less than 1 year.
- The majority of respondents (roughly 90%) are registered voters within the City.
- The approximate average age of the respondents, after weighting, is 45.7 years.
- About 78% of respondents own their residence, while 22% rent.

Household Characteristics

- More than one third of households are comprised of couples with children living at home, 23% are in an empty nester household, a little more than one third are in a household with no children, and 7% are in a single parent household.
- The approximate average annual household income of the respondents is about $61,000, with about 11% earning more than $100,000.
- The average number of people per household is 2.8 (2.0 median). The average number of household members under age 18, which includes households with no members under age 18, is 1.0. The average number of household with members over age 55 is 0.5.

Figure 1
Respondent Characteristics (Part 1)

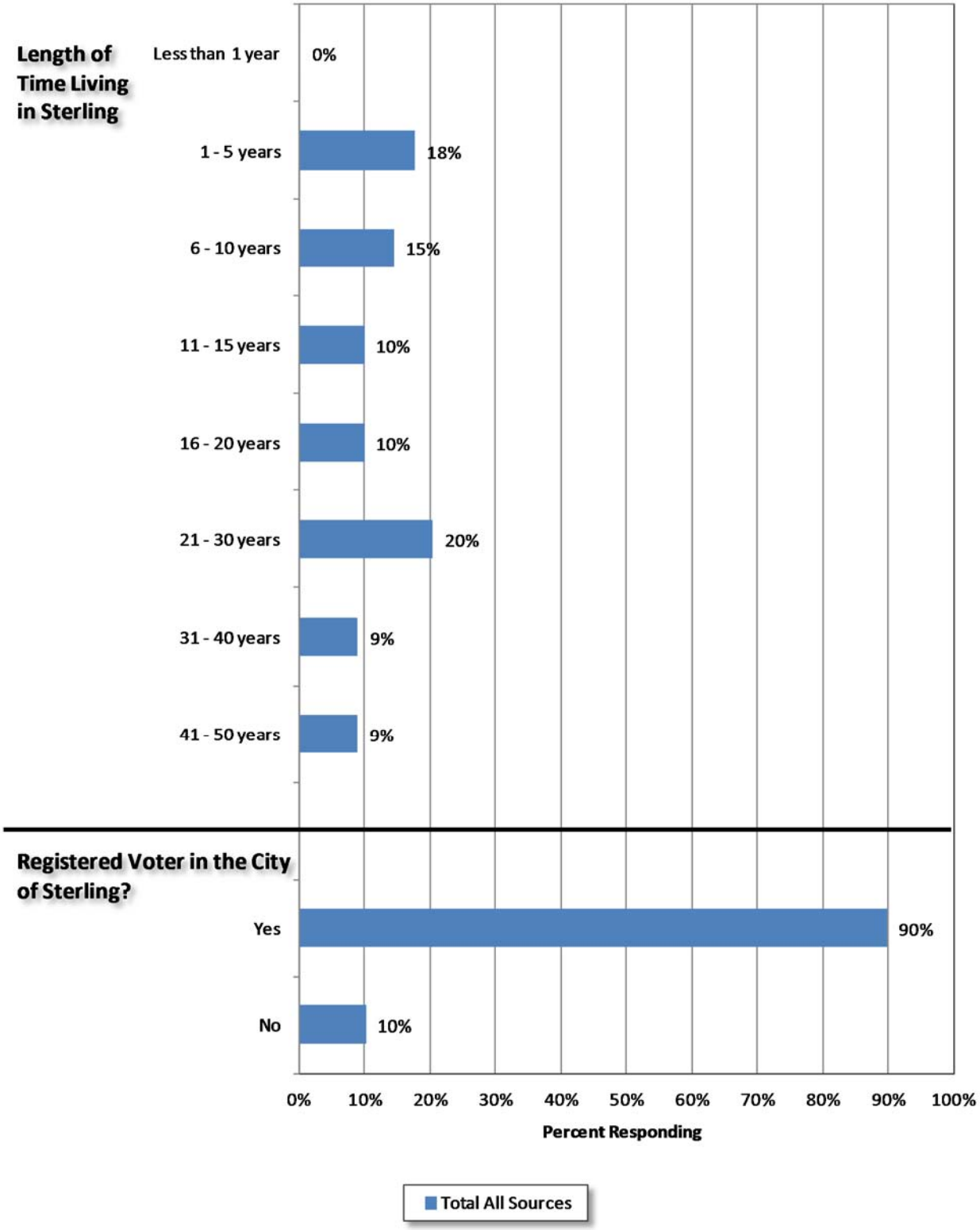


Figure 2
Respondent Characteristics (Part 2)

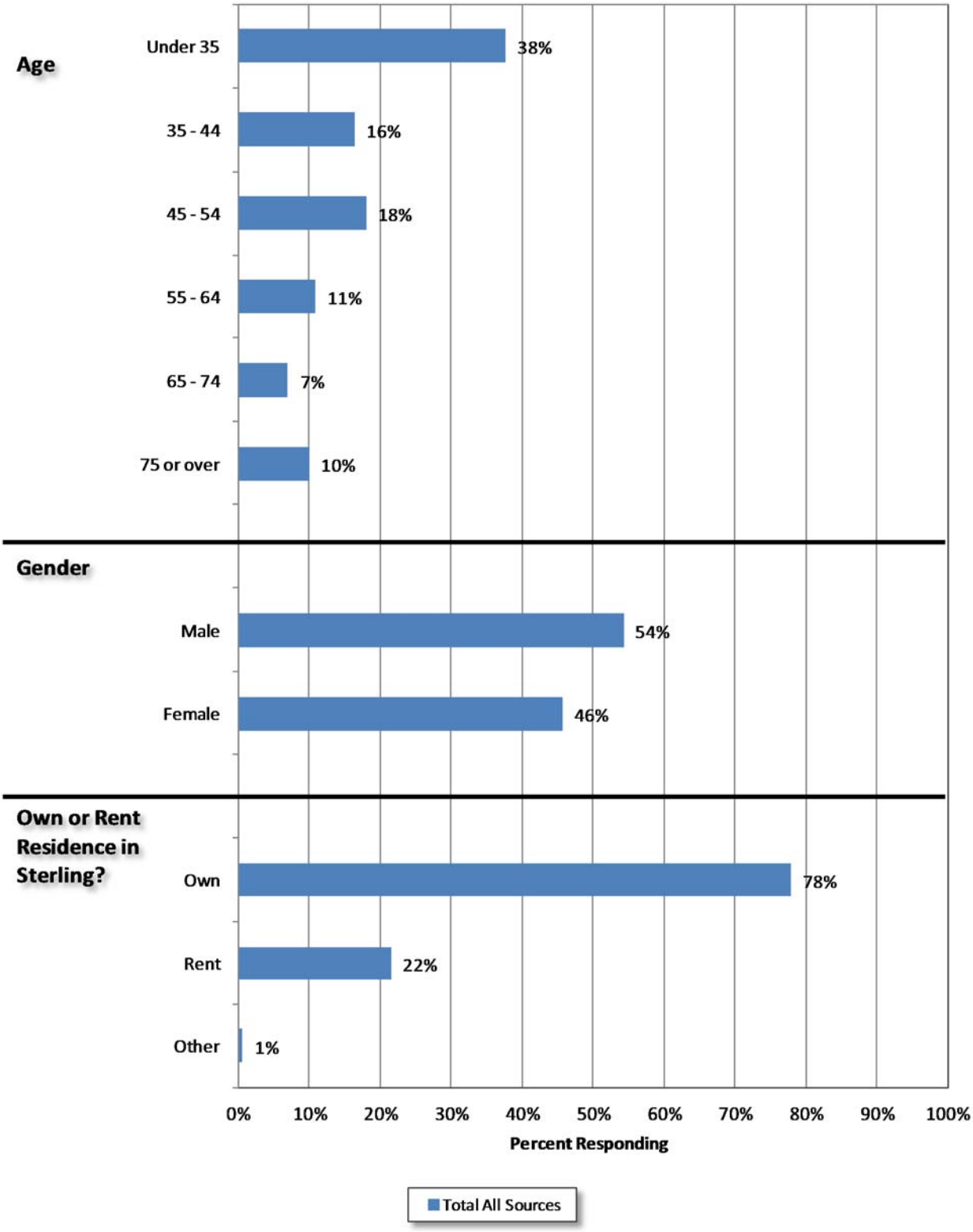


Figure 3
Household Characteristics (Part 1)

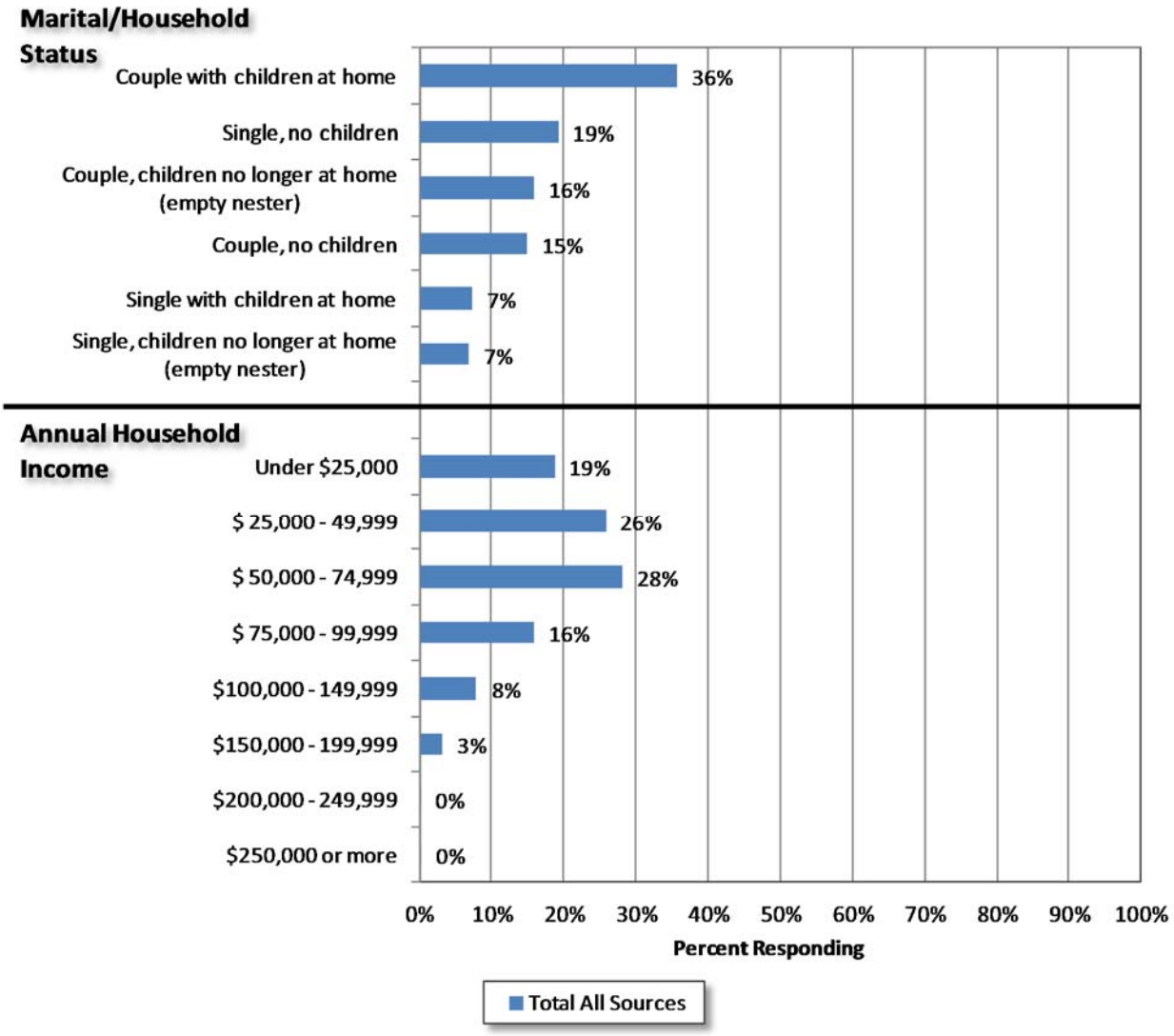
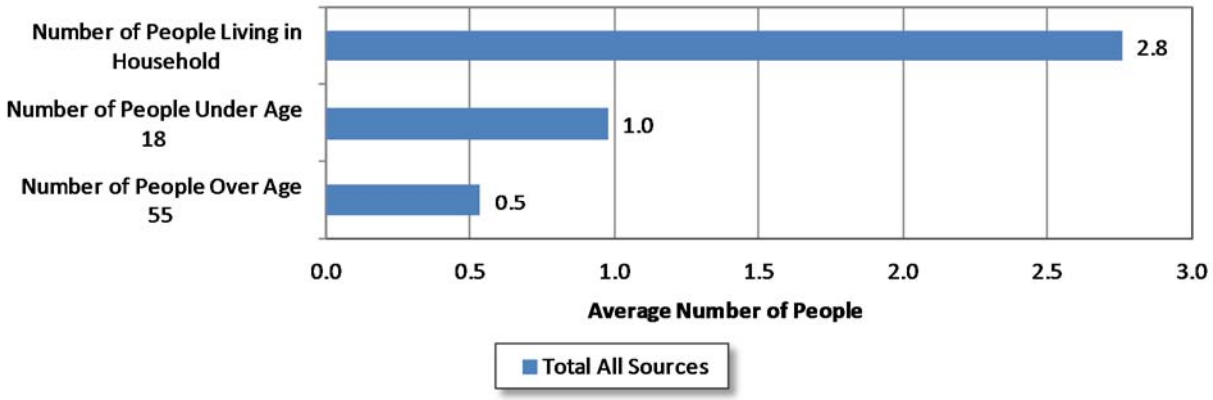


Figure 4
Household Characteristics (Part 2)



VALUES, VISION, AND CURRENT SERVICES

Community Issues

Respondents were asked to rank the **top five** community issues that parks and recreation services should focus on improving. By combining the top five ranked issues, the following were the issues respondents indicated as most important.

- Positive activities for youth (63% of households reported this issue as one of the top five issues to be improved)
- Maintaining what we have (61% of households)
- Reducing crime and vandalism (55% of households)

Second tier of most important issues included:

- Promoting healthy active lifestyles (46% of households)
- Beautification of public areas (44% of households)

Third tier of most important issues included:

- Implementing planned parks and trail projects (38% of households)
- Connectivity/alternative transportation (trails, safe routes to school, safe routes to play, etc) (38% of households)

While the fourth tier of issues was fairly low on the priority list, these issues had between 23% and 31% of respondents indicating the following as one of the top five most important:

- Affordability of programs (31% of households)
- Protecting the environment (28% of households)
- Cultural and historic preservation (24% of households)
- Strengthen sense of community (23% of households)

Current Services

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1="Not at All Important" and 5="Extremely Important", respondents were asked the level of importance the availability of local parks and recreation opportunities in Sterling have to their household. About 82% of households indicated either a 4 or 5 rating of importance regarding the availability of parks and recreation opportunities to their household. Only 3% of respondents indicated a 1 or 2. This resulted in a 4.2 average rating overall.

This question was followed by inquiring if they have registered for a class or program within the past 12 months. Those who indicated having registered were asked to rate the level of service received where 1="Poor Service" and 5="Excellent Service".

Roughly 22% of respondents reported they had registered for a class or program within the past 12 months. Of these respondents none rated the service received as "Poor", 6% rated a 2, almost one fourth (24%) rated the service as 3 (i.e. "average"), and 70% rated the service as a 4 or 5, resulting in a 3.8 average overall.

Figure 5
Most Important Community Issues Sterling Parks and Recreation Should Focus on Improving

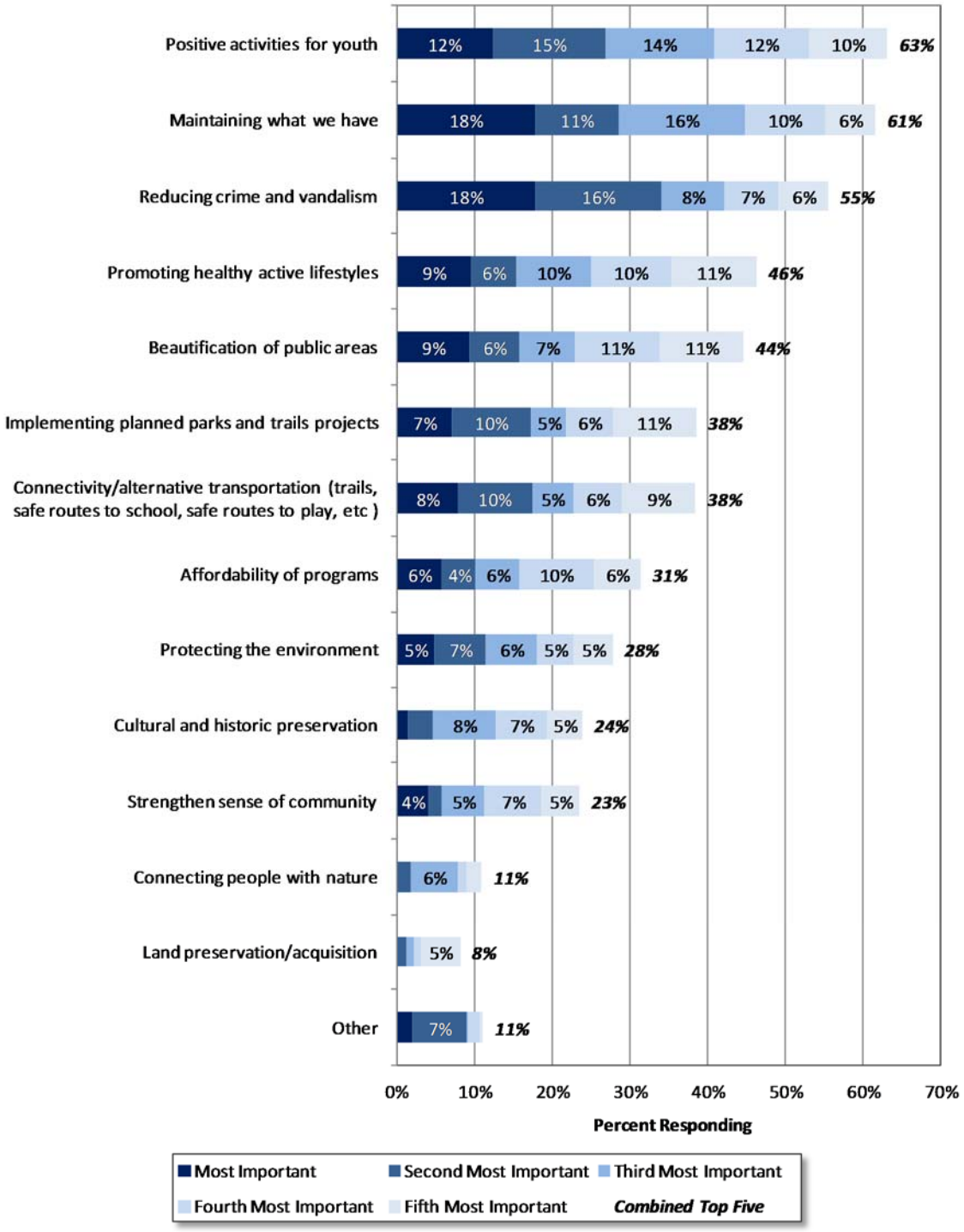
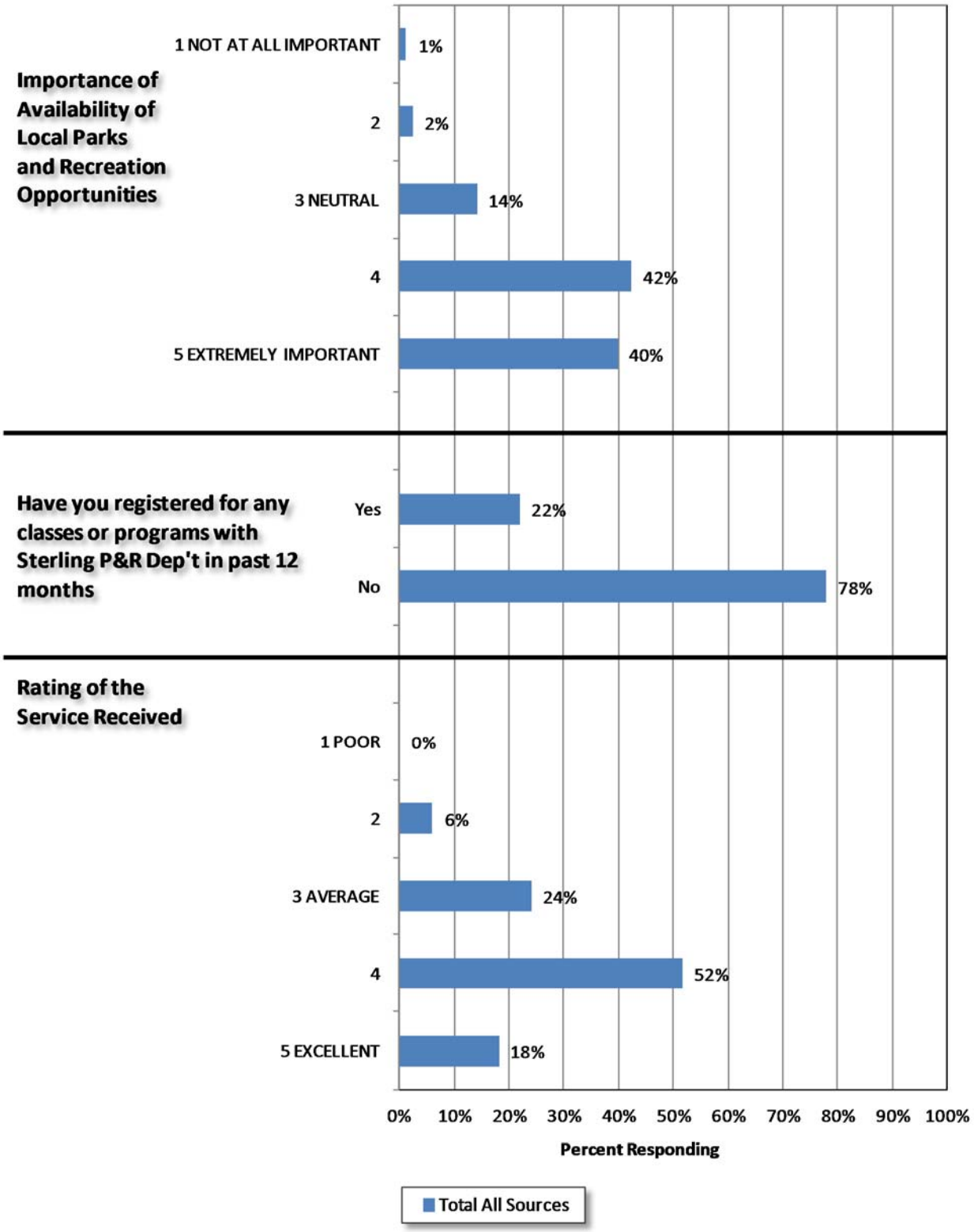


Figure 6
State of Current Services



CURRENT PARKS AND FACILITIES

Usage Frequency

Of the parks and facilities listed in the survey, Sterling residents used Columbine Park the most often over the past year (more than 23 times each on average, or almost once every two weeks, including households who never used Columbine Park). Pioneer Park followed with more than 16 times over the past 12 months. The Recreation Center/outdoor pool also had high usage with an average use of 13.2 times over the past year.

The following facilities were used at least once in the past year by the majority of households:

- Columbine Park (91% of households used Columbine Park at least once over the past 12 months)
- Pioneer Park (91% of households)
- Recreation Center outdoor pool (80% of households)

Second tier of park and facility usage:

- Park shelters (48% of households)
- Prairie Park (42% of households)
- Athletic Field (38% of households)

Though a comparatively smaller share of households (31%) reported using school gyms at least once over the past 12 months, this facility ranked fourth in average number of times used (8.0 times over the past year). This indicates that while relatively few households use school gyms, those that do use them very often.

Conversely, almost half of Sterling households used park shelters at least once in the past 12 months, but the average use per household for the past year was only 2.3 times. This indicates many households use this amenity but use it infrequently. Similar results show a high percentage of households use Prairie Park but a low average number of times used.

Figure 7
Current Parks / Facilities - Frequency of Use over the Past 12 Months

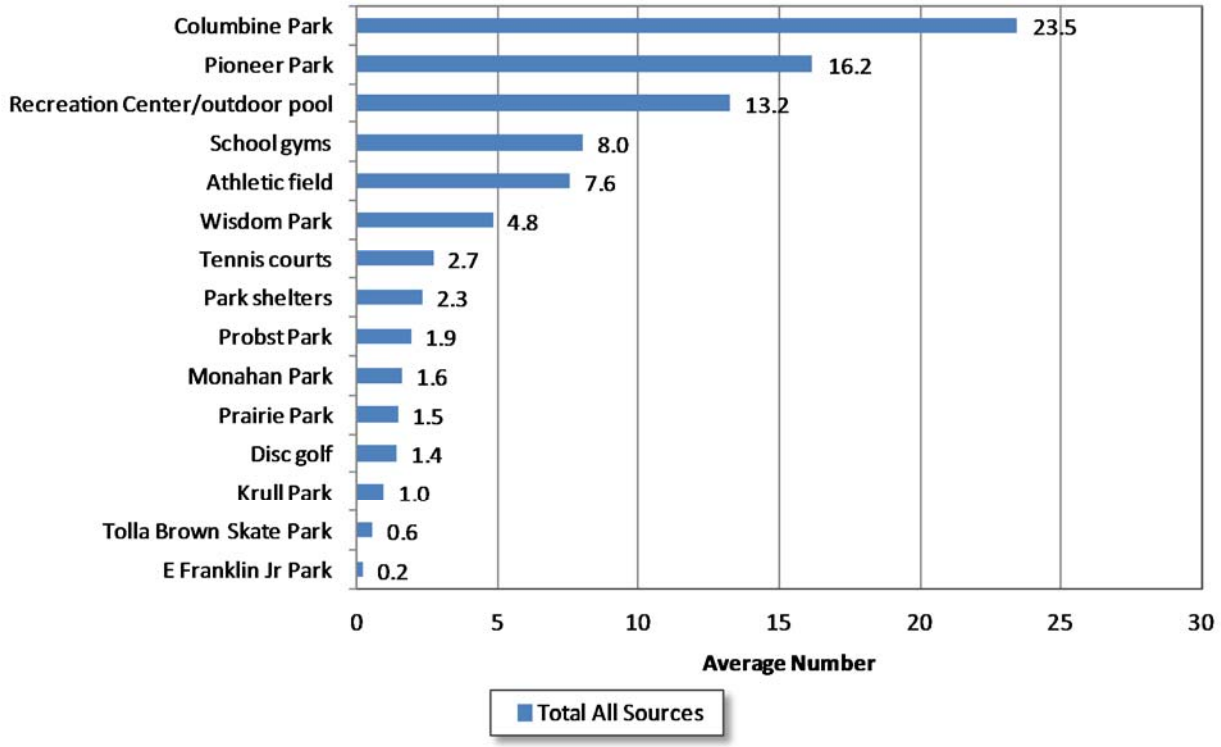
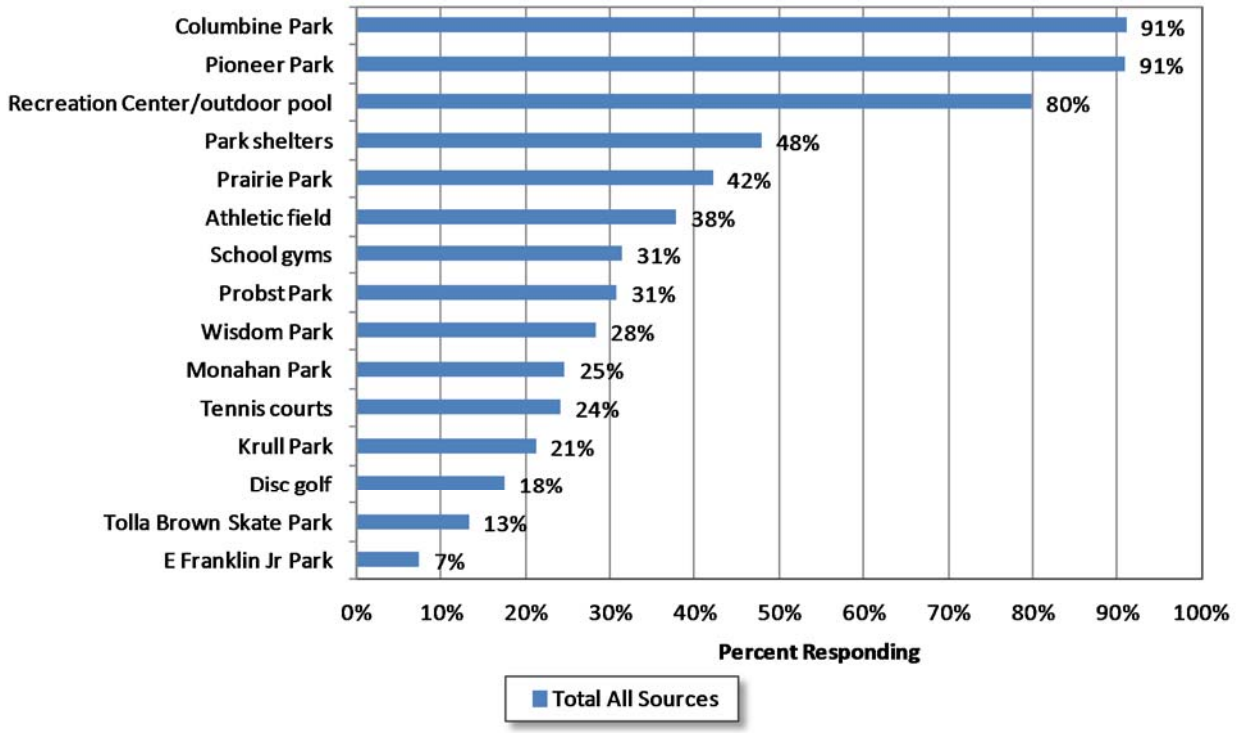


Figure 8
Current Parks / Facilities – Percentage of Households Who Used Parks and Facilities
at Least Once over the Past 12 Months



Importance of Current Parks and Facilities

In addition to importance of availability of opportunities, respondents were also asked to indicate the importance of specific parks and facilities to their household on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1="Not at All Important", 5="Very Important", and 3="Neutral".

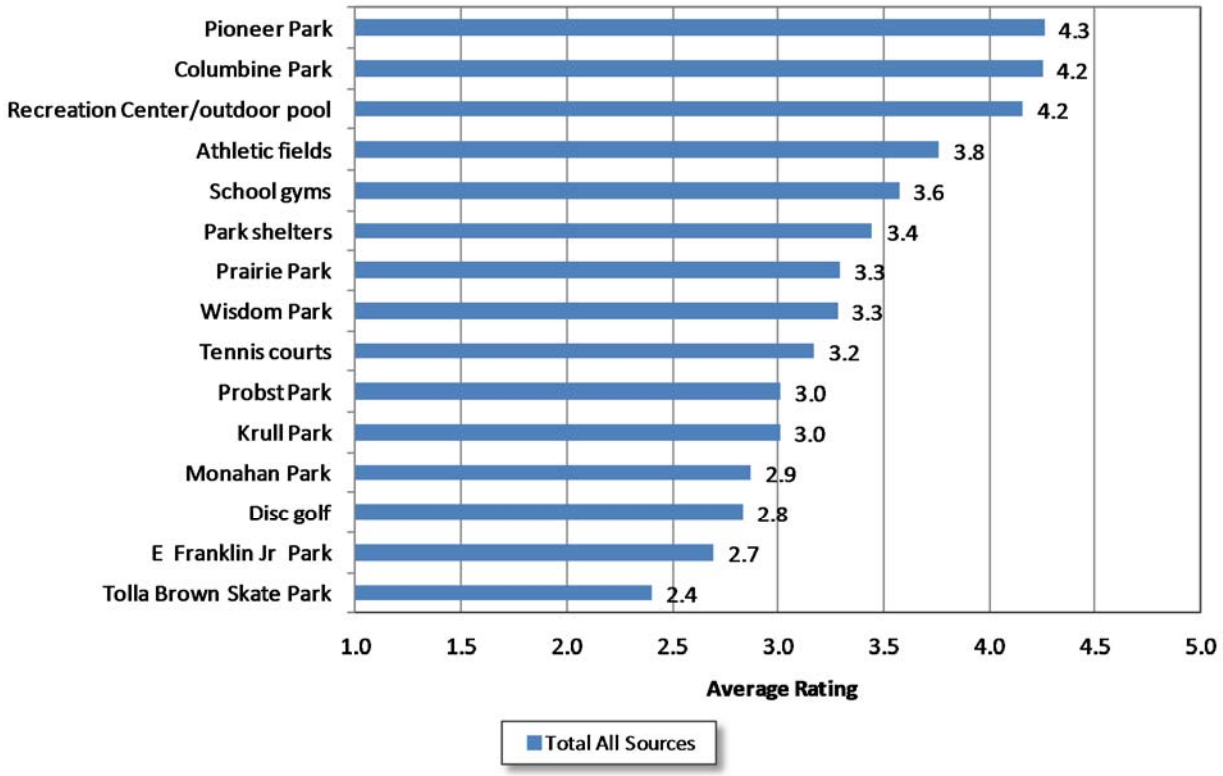
The following parks and facilities received the highest average importance ratings:

- Pioneer Park (average rating of 4.3)
- Columbine Park (4.2 rating)
- Recreation Center/outdoor pool (4.2 rating)

The second tier of important programs and facilities includes:

- Athletic field (3.8 rating)
- School gyms (3.6 rating)
- Park shelters (3.4 rating)
- Prairie Park (3.3 rating)
- Wisdom Park (3.3 rating)
- Tennis courts (3.2 rating)

Figure 9
Current Parks / Facilities – Average Rating of Importance to Household



Degree to which Current Parks and Facilities are Meeting Household Needs

Respondents were then asked to rate the same list of parks and facilities according to how well these are meeting the needs of their household. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1="Not at All (Met)" and 5="Completely (Met)", respondents indicated the following:

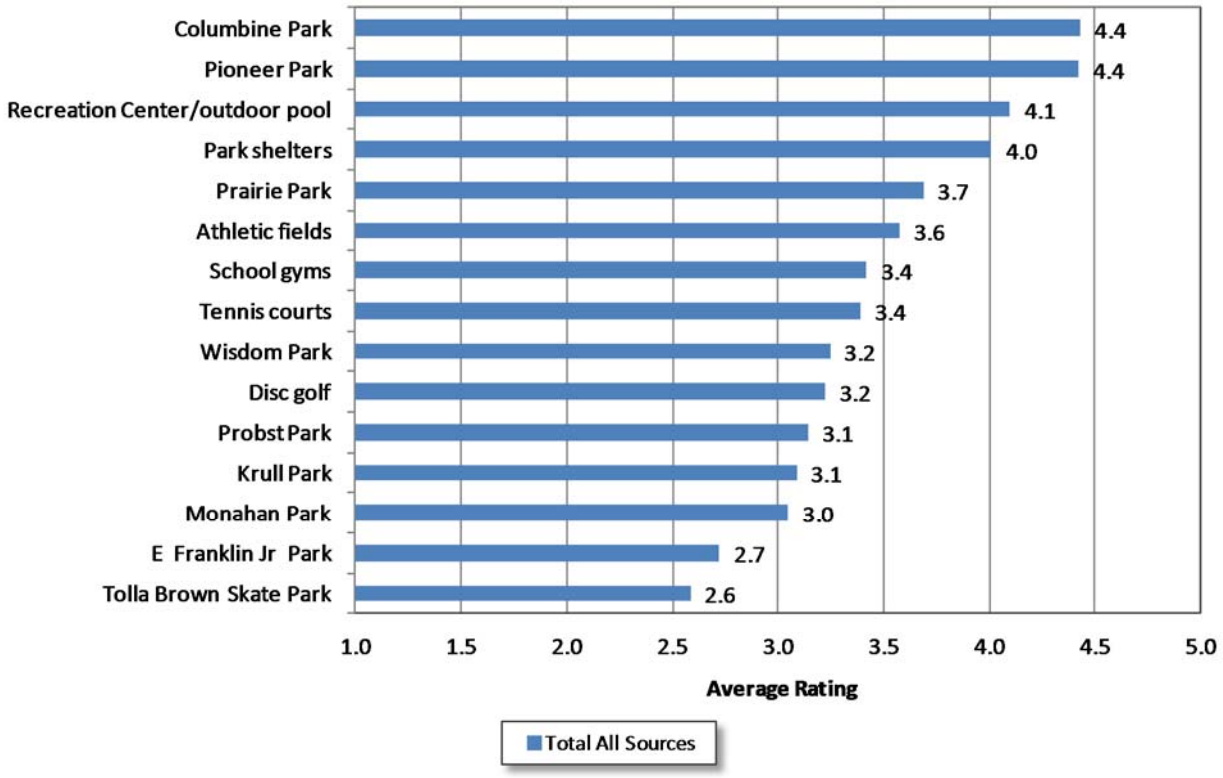
Parks and facilities most meeting the needs to households include:

- Columbine Park (average rating of 4.4)
- Pioneer Park (4.4 rating)
- Recreation Center/outdoor pool (4.1 rating)
- Park shelters (4.0 rating)

Second tier of programs and facilities that are meeting household needs includes:

- Prairie Park (3.7 rating)
- Athletic fields (3.6 rating)
- School gyms (3.4 rating)
- Tennis courts (3.4 rating)

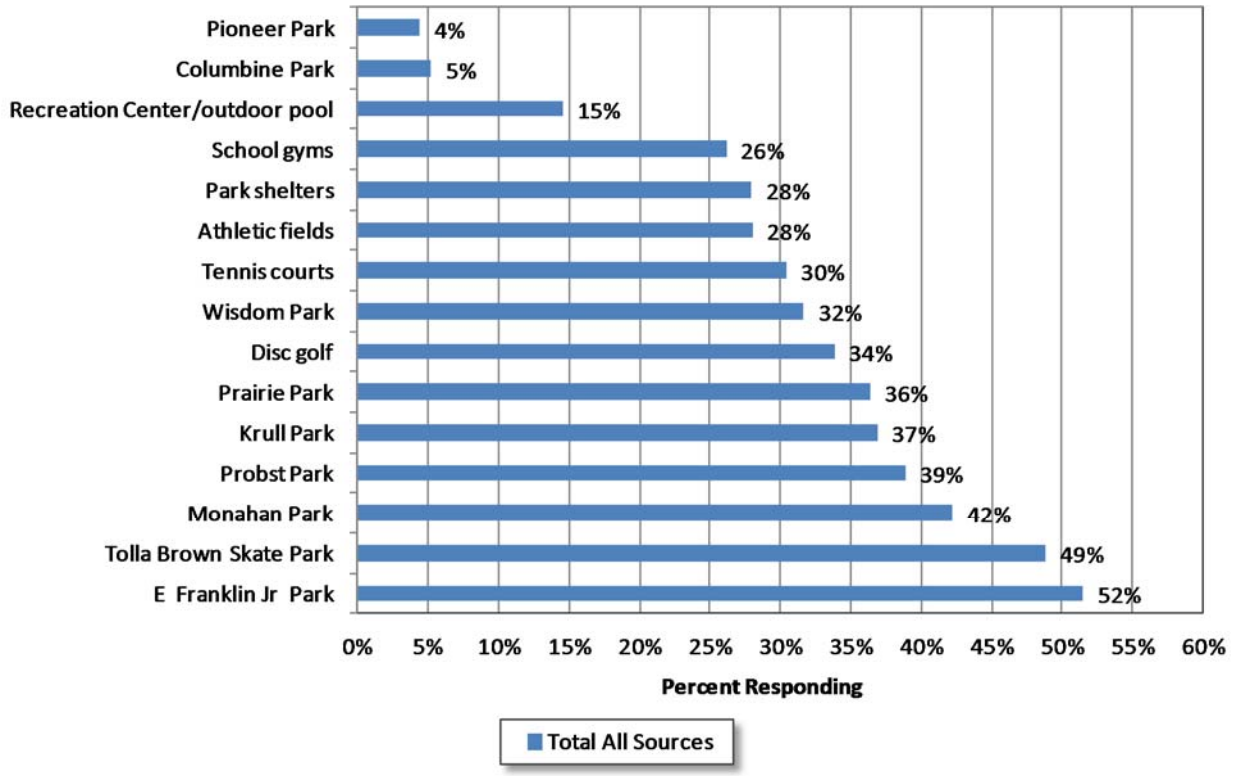
Figure 10
Current Programs / Facilities – Average Rating of Degree to Which Needs are Being Met



Respondents were also given the opportunity to indicate whether Sterling parks and facilities were not needed by their household.

- Only 4% of respondents indicated their household did not need Pioneer Park and 5% did not need Columbine Park.
- Meanwhile, roughly half of all Sterling households reported not needing Tolla Brown Skate Park and E. Franklin Jr. Park.

Figure 11
Percentage of Households Indicating They Do Not Need Current Parks / Facilities



Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix – Current Parks and Facilities

It is instructive to compare and plot the importance scores against the needs met scores in a Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix. As illustrated in Figure 12, performance scores (i.e., Needs-Met and Importance) are displayed in this matrix using the mid-point rating of both questions to divide results into 4 quadrants (importance scale midpoint was 3.3; needs-met midpoint was 3.4). This illustrates a detailed positioning of the performance of the parks and facilities in comparison to each other.

Many of the top parks and facilities listed previously as meeting household needs are also considered the most important to Sterling households. Maintaining these important assets is an indispensable function for the City of Sterling. The following are parks and facilities that are highly important and meet the household needs of the City.

- Columbine Park
- Pioneer Park
- Recreation Center/outdoor pool
- Athletic fields
- Park shelters

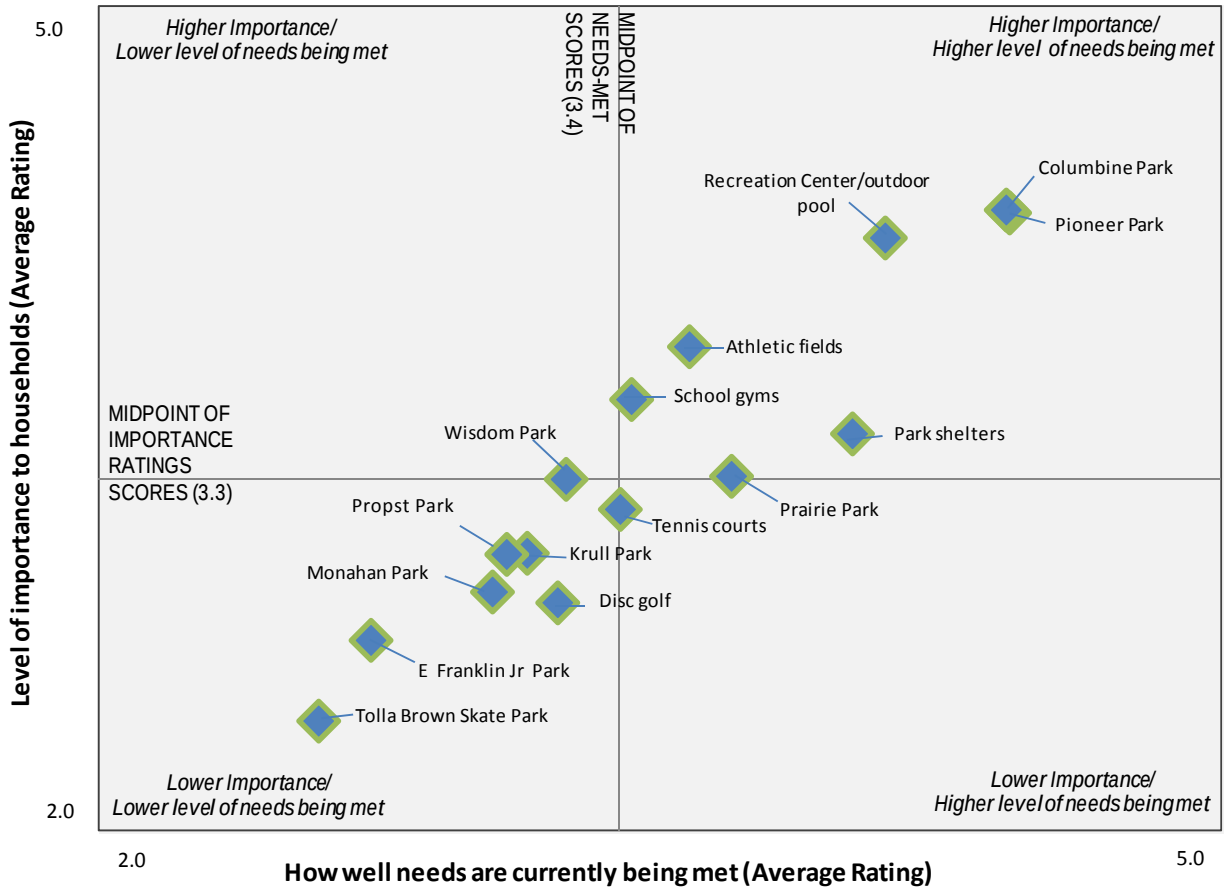
Parks and facilities located in the upper left quadrant are parks and facilities that are relatively important to households, but not fully meeting needs of respondents. Because no park or facility is located within this quadrant, Sterling seems to be performing well relative to satisfying respondents' needs relative to their level of importance. School gyms and Wisdom Park are the closest to this quadrant but not officially within those boundaries.

The lower left quadrant indicates parks and facilities that are not meeting the needs of households; however, they are important to fewer households. These "niche facilities" are used by a small but passionate following; therefore, there is merit to measuring visitation and planning for potential future enhancements accordingly. These parks and facilities include:

- Krull Park
- Propst Park
- Disc Golf
- Monahan Park
- E. Franklin Jr. Park
- Tolla Brown Skate Park

It is important to note that while some parks and facilities are found in the left quadrants, this may not necessarily indicate these parks and facilities are performing poorly. These parks and facilities are just not satisfying the needs of the community as well relative to other parks and facilities. Using the actual mean scores for importance and needs-met may be a more appropriate method to evaluate individual performance.

Figure 12
Current Parks / Facilities –Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix



Comments and Suggestions for Improvement

Respondents were given the opportunity to write in additional comments/suggestions on how current parks and facilities can be improved. Many of the comments varied; however, some common themes were evident. Verbatim comments are illustrated below.

Better security and safety enforcement, especially around the skate park…

- *The skate park has a crowd that can be vulgar for my young children to be around.*
- *Facility maintenance should be done in a regular and timely manner - don't skimp. The skate park is VERY important to the young people of this community, problem is it is a trouble spot - drug dealing etc. It's also run down. Please clean up this park so young people have a place to skate/skateboard.*
- *Skate park needs more observation by police.*
- *Skate park is horrible, nothing but a bunch of druggies wanna be gangsters and dropout flunkies hang there.*
- *More security lights at night.*
- *Tolla Brown is an eye sore. As soon as it gets repainted it gets vandalized. If it was removed it would solve a lot of problems.*
- *Tolla Brown skate park is loud late at night and messy trash thrown in nearby yards.*

Add, fix, and better maintain restrooms…

- *Fix up bathrooms.*
- *Some of these parks do not have bathrooms -that's OK, just not our favs.*
- *More seating at school gyms, cleaning of restrooms.*

Better maintain Pioneer Park…

- *Improve wooded area at Pioneer Park, removal of dead trees.*
- *Pioneer Park needs some cleanup of dead trees and branches very much.*
- *Pioneer Park trail can have better maintenance.*

Expand pool hours and swimming options…

- *It would be nice if the pool was open more often.*
- *The lap swim hours are not sufficient for the number of swimmers, and outdoor pool should stay open later than 5:30. Swim lessons are very poor. Need much improvement at rec center/pool management.*
- *The indoor swimming pool's limited hours and lack of wave suppressors/lane dividers result in excessive crowding and decreased potential revenue stream. Increased hours would make it possible to maximize the available space. More water aerobics classes could be scheduled, and more lap swimmers would take advantage of a less crowded swimming area. Substantial funding is necessary to maintain the pool; the attraction of more swimmers would provide additional funds to offset those maintenance costs.*

Why Programs and Facilities are Not Used

Respondents were asked why they do not use Sterling parks, recreation facilities, community centers, open space, trails, and programs. Respondents who do use these facilities and services were asked to identify areas for improvement.

The main reasons for not using Sterling's programs or facilities include:

- Not aware of programs or facilities offered (37% of households)
- Don't have the programs I want (36%)

Second tier of reasons for not using programs or facilities:

- Hours of operation (24%)
- Conditions/maintenance or safety concerns (22%)
- Lack of facilities and amenities (19%)
- Customer service/staff knowledge (18%)

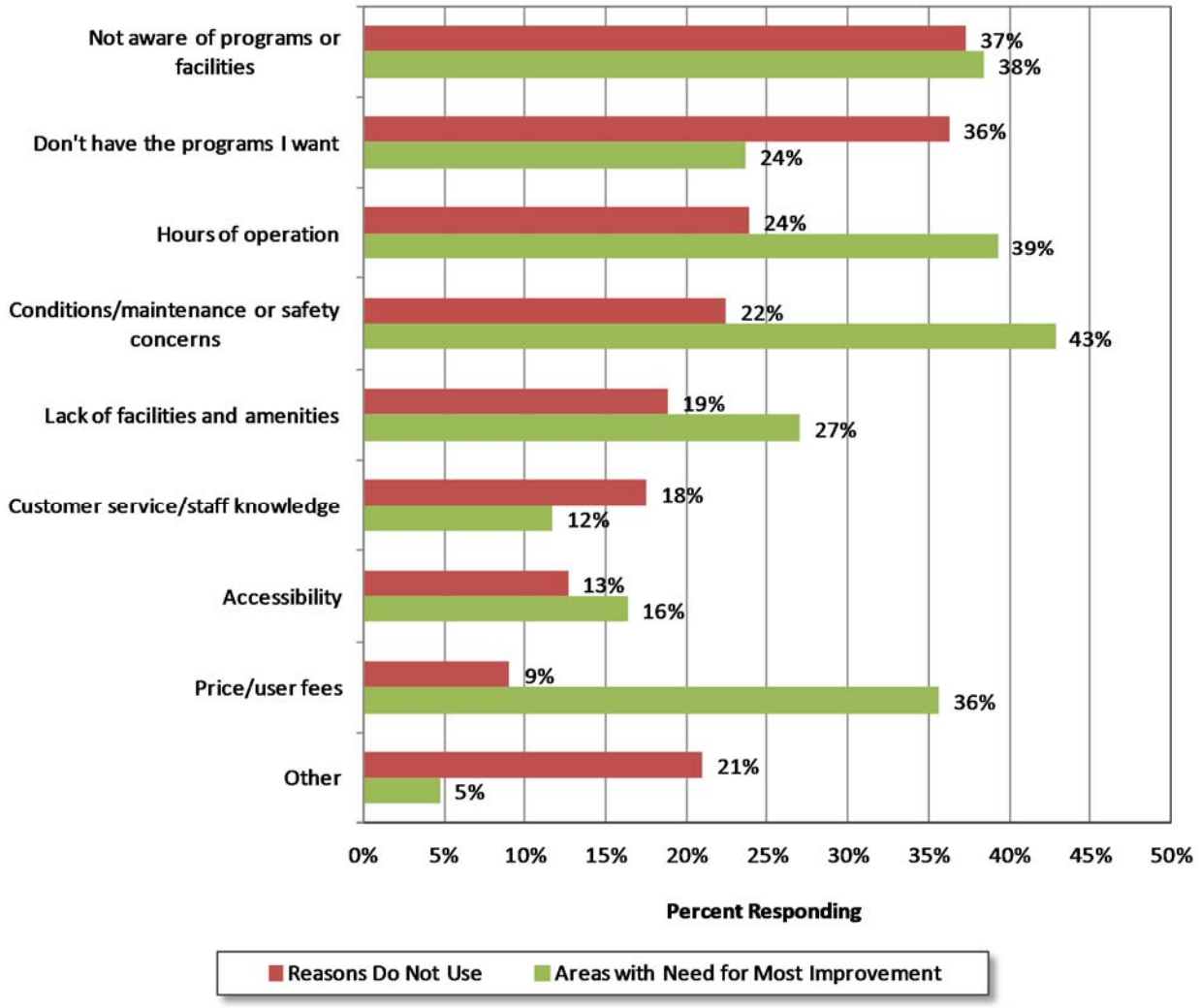
Several of the factors had more than one third of user respondents indicating a need for improvement. These included:

- Conditions/maintenance or safety concerns (43%)
- Hours of operation (39%)
- Not aware of programs or facilities offered (38%)
- Price/user fees (36%)

The following also had a relatively high rate of response:

- Lack of facilities and amenities (27%)
- Don't have the programs I want (24%)

Figure 13
Current Programs / Facilities - Reasons Why Households Do Not Use
and Areas with Greatest Need for Improvement

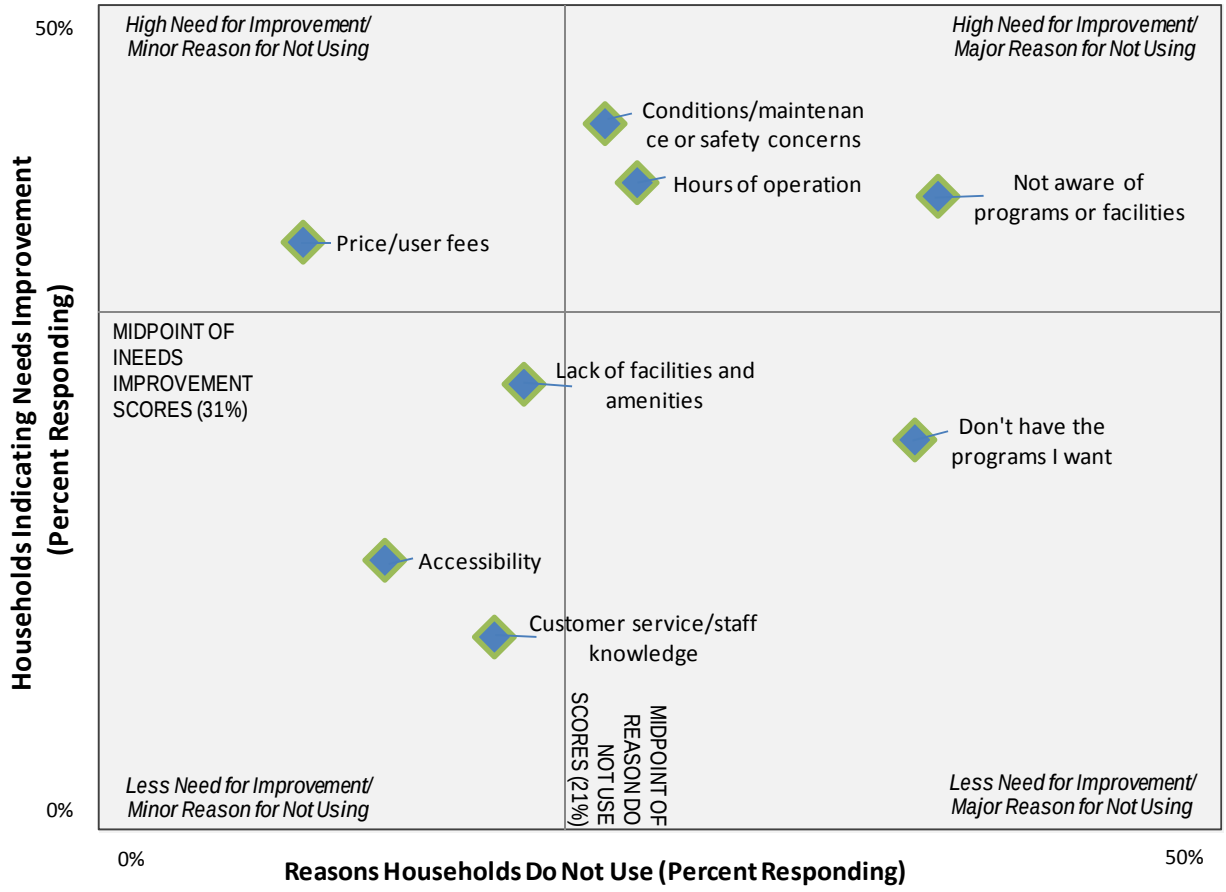


Similar to using the Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs Met) Matrix examined previously, using the mid points for the percentages of households indicating items in need of improvement and reason for not using, and plotting those scores against each other, allows for a more thorough evaluation of where to focus efforts to increase participation and visitation.

Factors found in the upper right quadrant illustrate the most frequently cited reasons for not using programs and facilities, as well as the most households indicating need of improvement. Focusing energy and resources toward these items would likely have the most impact on improving participation and visitation. These are:

- Not aware of programs or facilities
- Conditions/maintenance or safety concerns
- Hours of operation

Figure 14
Current Programs / Facilities - Reasons Do Not Use and Needs Improvement Matrix



Open Ended Comments: Reason Do Not Use

Respondents were given the opportunity to write in additional information for the "reasons they do not use/needs improvement" questions. Examples of responses are given below:

Don't have the Programs I want, such as…

- *Yoga– Yoga, aerobic, fitness, spinning etc.– Yoga, zumba, weight training– Seniors – Free computer classes for seniors – Exercise classes, possibly yoga as an example.*

Lack of facilities and amenities, such as…

- *Bicycle trails – Bike and walking paths – Child care when working out – Gym – More bike paths – Rec center: day care for smaller children while exercising – Child care when working out – Programs for the elderly/60+ – Walking/bike paths.*

Accessibility, explain…

- *Not convenient to our home – Not enough sidewalks – Pavilion usage rules – I'm disabled, wheelchair at times.*

Hours of operation, explain…

- *Hours at rec center should be expanded – Indoor and outdoor pool hours need improvement – More evening hours for outdoor pool – Morning or after dinner – Outdoor pool needs to stay open longer into year – Pool not open enough – Rec center and pool. – Sunday and Sat. at rec center all day – The limited hours the pool is open makes lap swimming less than optimal.*

Other reason:

- *Indoor track: I use NJC and would love this and other workout ops with child care, also ideas like family 5K run, mini-triathlon etc. – No time – Don't have time, always working – Elderly – Age – Hassle factor of getting there – Health problems – I work full time – Other exercise program; happy with parks in general – Paying for child care. Rec center does not take credit/debit. – The places I use are to walk and aqua arobics. Otherwise, I take the grandkids to the parks they like and do a family reunion every August. Used the weight room when it rains etc.*

FUTURE FACILITIES, AMENITIES, AND SERVICES

Parks and Facilities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved over the Next 5 to 10 Years

Respondents were informed of the following statement.

"The City of Sterling funds parks, recreation, and trail operations and maintenance with user fees and tax dollars. As you answer the following questions, please keep in mind that additional funds would be required to build, operate, and maintain new parks, recreation, natural areas and trails."

Based on this information, respondents rated the greatest program, park, and facility needs over the next 5 to 10 years using a 5 point scale where 1="Not at All Important" and 5="Very Important". Pedestrian/bike paths and trails (average rating of 4.2) rated well above any other program, park, or facility.

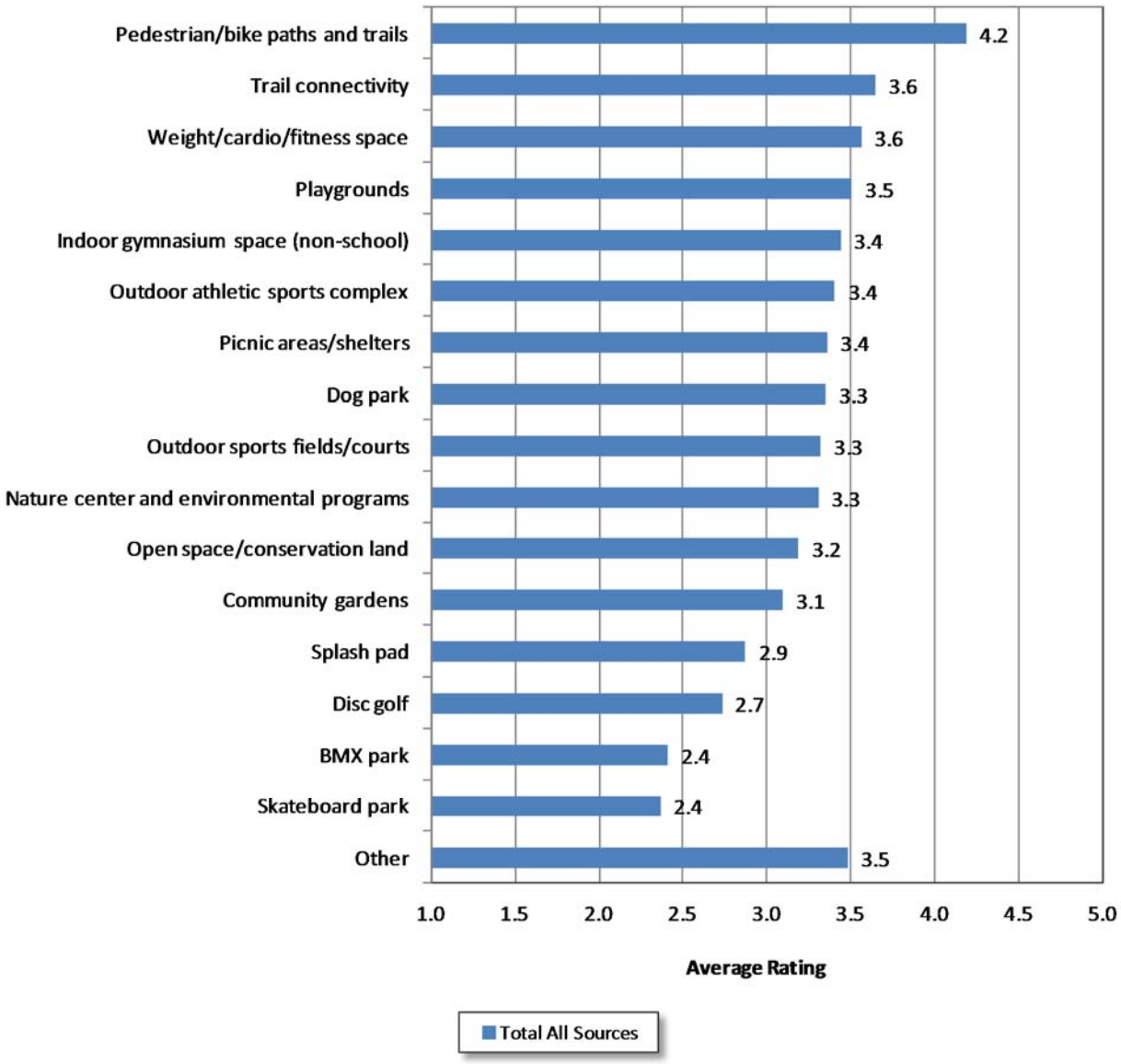
The programs, parks, and facilities that had the second highest average rating of importance included:

- Trail connectivity (3.6 rating)
- Weight/cardio/fitness space (3.6 rating)
- Playgrounds (3.5 rating)
- Indoor gymnasium space (non-school) (3.4 rating)
- Outdoor athletic sports complex (3.4 rating)
- Picnic areas/shelters (3.4 rating)
- Dog park (3.3 rating)
- Outdoor sports fields/courts (3.3 rating)
- Nature center and environmental programs (3.3 rating)

Second tier of important programs, parks, and facilities:

- Open space/conservation land (3.2 rating)
- Community gardens (3.1 rating)

Figure 15
Most Important Park and Facility Needs over the Next 5 or 10 Years – Average Rating



By combining the top three ranked programs, parks, and facilities to be added, expanded, or improved over the next 5 to 10 years, the following were the items respondents indicated as most important.

- Pedestrian/bike paths and trails (57% of households reported this facility as one of the top three facilities to be added, expanded, or improved)

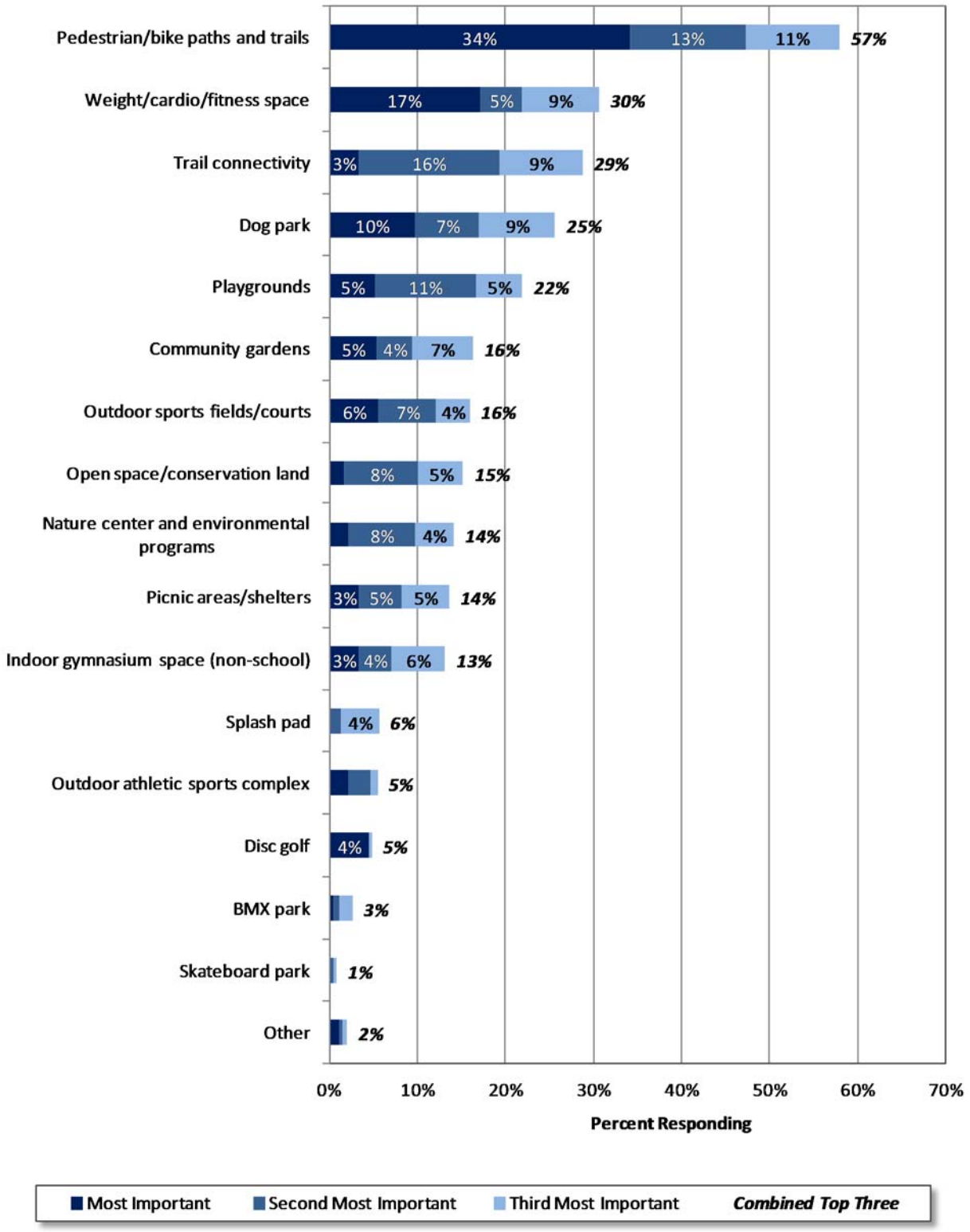
Second tier of most important indoor facilities to be added, expanded, or improved included:

- Weight/cardio/fitness space (30%)
- Trail connectivity (29%)
- Dog park (25%)
- Playgrounds (22%)

Third tier of most important indoor facilities to be added, expanded, or improved included:

- Community gardens (16%)
- Outdoor sports fields/courts (16%)
- Open space/conservation land (15%)
- Nature center and environmental programs (14%)
- Picnic areas/shelters (14%)
- Indoor gymnasiums (non-school) (13%)

Figure 16
Top Three Most Important Parks and Facilities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved in Sterling



PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Usage Frequency

Of the programs, activities, and special events listed in the survey, residents of Sterling have participated in outdoor recreation most frequently over the past year (almost 24 times each over the past 12 months, or once every two weeks).

The following programs were used at least once in the past 12 months by the majority of households:

- Special events such as festivals and parades (70% of households used special events at least once over the past 12 months)
- Outdoor recreation (63% of households)

Second tier of programs/activities:

- Fitness and wellness programs (27% of households)
- Athletic leagues - youth (23% of households)

Although almost three fourths of Sterling households attended special events such as festivals and parades at least once in the past year, the average use per household for the past year was only 3.0 times, which included households who did not attend at all. This indicates many households attend special events, but infrequently.

Outdoor recreation, however, not only has a high percentage of households who participate but they do so very frequently, resulting in the very high average number of uses over the past 12 months.

Figure 17
Programs, Activities, and Special Events –- Frequency of Use Over the Past 12 Months

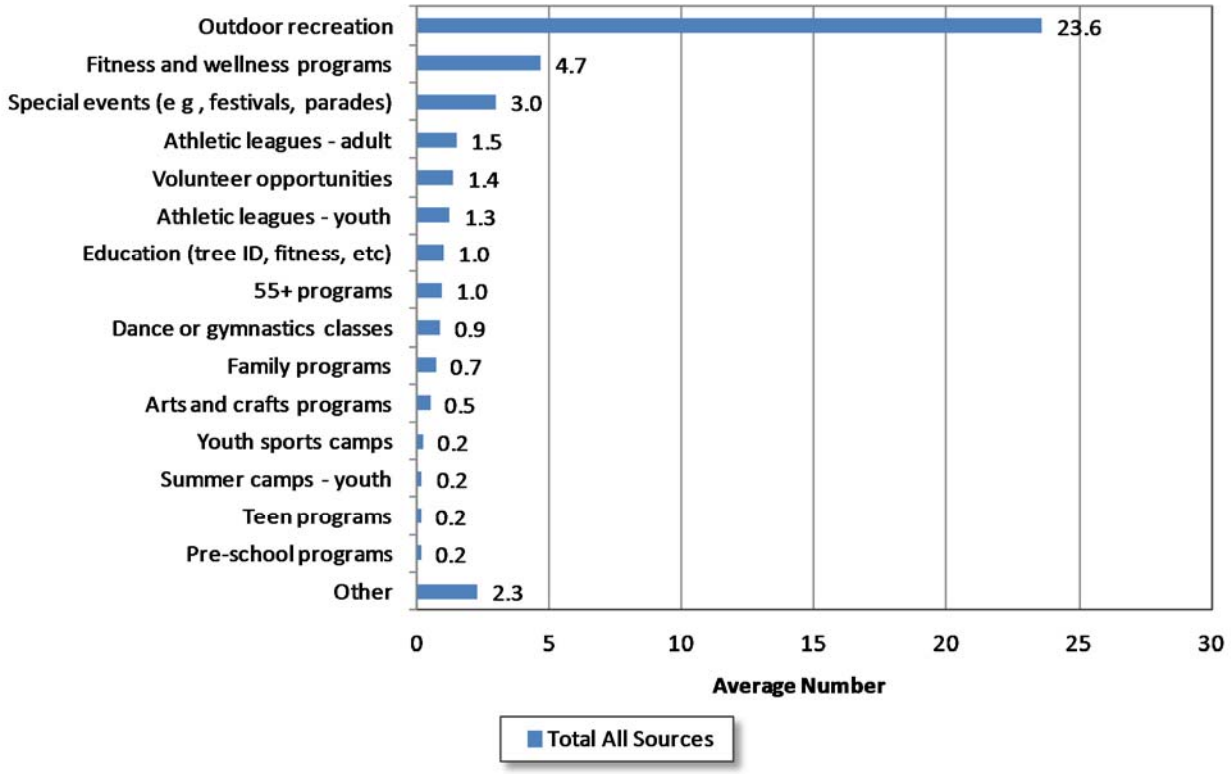
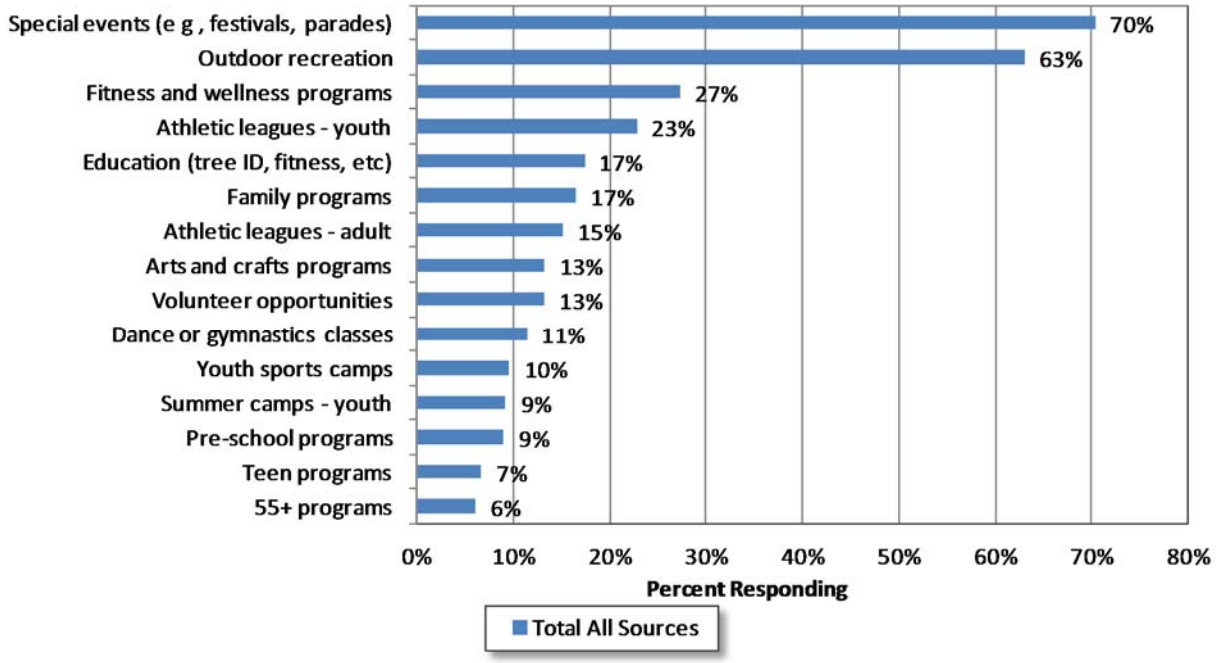


Figure 18
Programs, Activities, and Special Events –- Percentage of Households Who Used Programs
at Least Once Over the Past 12 Months



Importance of Current Programs

Respondents indicated the importance of current programs, activities and special events to their household on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1="Not at All Important", 5="Very Important", and 3="Neutral".

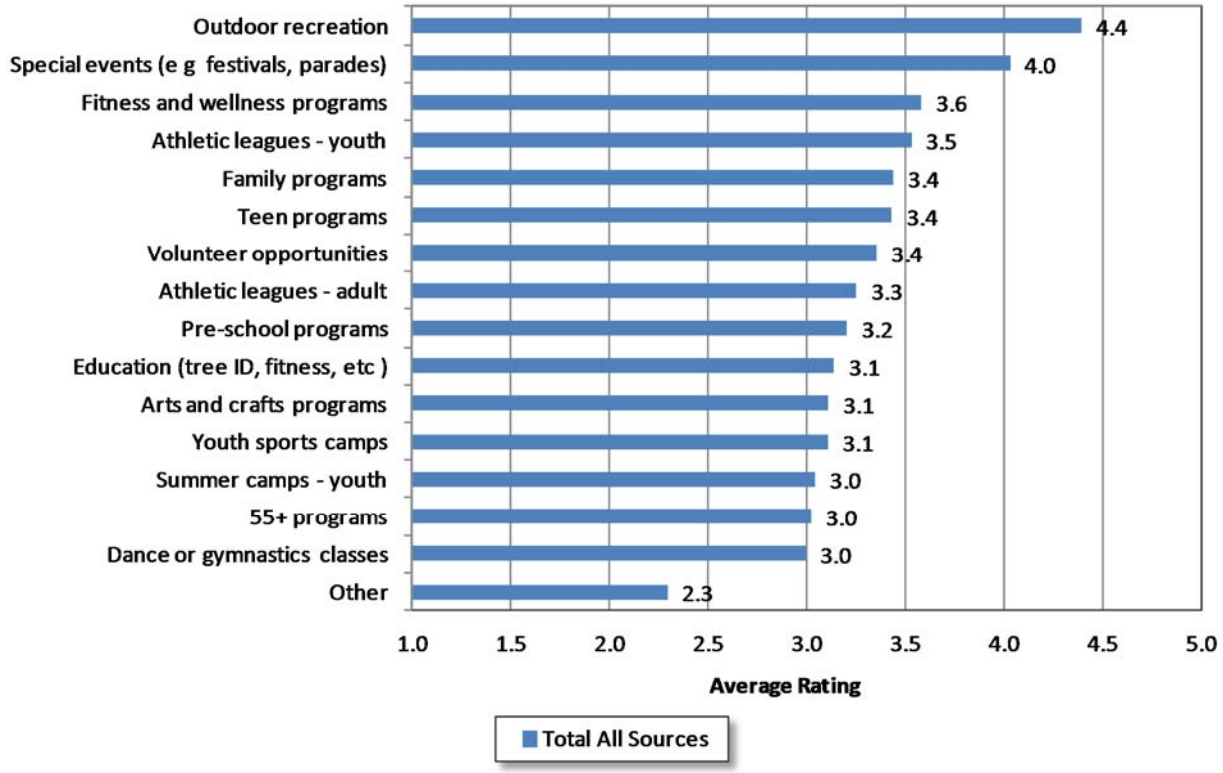
The following programs, activities, and special events received the highest average importance ratings:

- Outdoor recreation (average rating of 4.4)
- Special events (e.g., festivals, parades) (4.0 rating)

The second tier of important programs, activities and special events includes:

- Fitness and wellness programs (3.6 rating)
- Athletic leagues - youth (3.5 rating)
- Family programs (3.4 rating)
- Teen programs (3.4 rating)
- Volunteer opportunities (3.4 rating)
- Athletic leagues - adult (3.3 rating)
- Pre-school programs (3.2 rating)

Figure 19
Current Programs – Average Rating of Importance to Household



Degree to Which Programs, Activities, and Special Events are Meeting Household Needs

Respondents were then asked to rate the extent to which various programs, activities, and special events are meeting the needs of their households. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1="Not at All (Met)" and 5="Completely (Met)" respondents indicated the following:

Programs, activities, and special events with the highest degree of needs being met include:

- Outdoor recreation (average rating of 3.6)
- Special events such as festivals and parades (3.5 rating)

Second tier of programs that are meeting household needs include:

- Athletic leagues - youth (3.2 rating)

The lowest tier of programs all have an average rating below 3.0 or "Neutral." The majority of these programs also show some of the highest percentages of households indicating they do not need these programs.

- Fitness and wellness programs (2.9 rating; 41% of households indicated they do not need this program)
- Family programs (2.9 rating; 47% of households)
- Education such as tree ID, fitness etc. (2.8 rating; 53% of households)
- Athletic leagues - adult (2.8 rating; 58% of households)
- Volunteer opportunities (2.8 rating; 51% of households)
- 55+ programs (2.7 rating; 69% of households)
- Pre-school programs (2.6 rating; 64% of households)
- Youth sports camps (2.6 rating; 67% of households)
- Arts and crafts programs (2.6 rating; 52% of households)
- Dance or gymnastics classes (2.5 rating; 67% of households)
- Summer camps- youth (2.5 rating; 67% of households)
- Teen programs (2.4 rating; 61% of households)

Figure 20
Programs, Activities, and Special Events– Degree to Which Needs are Being Met

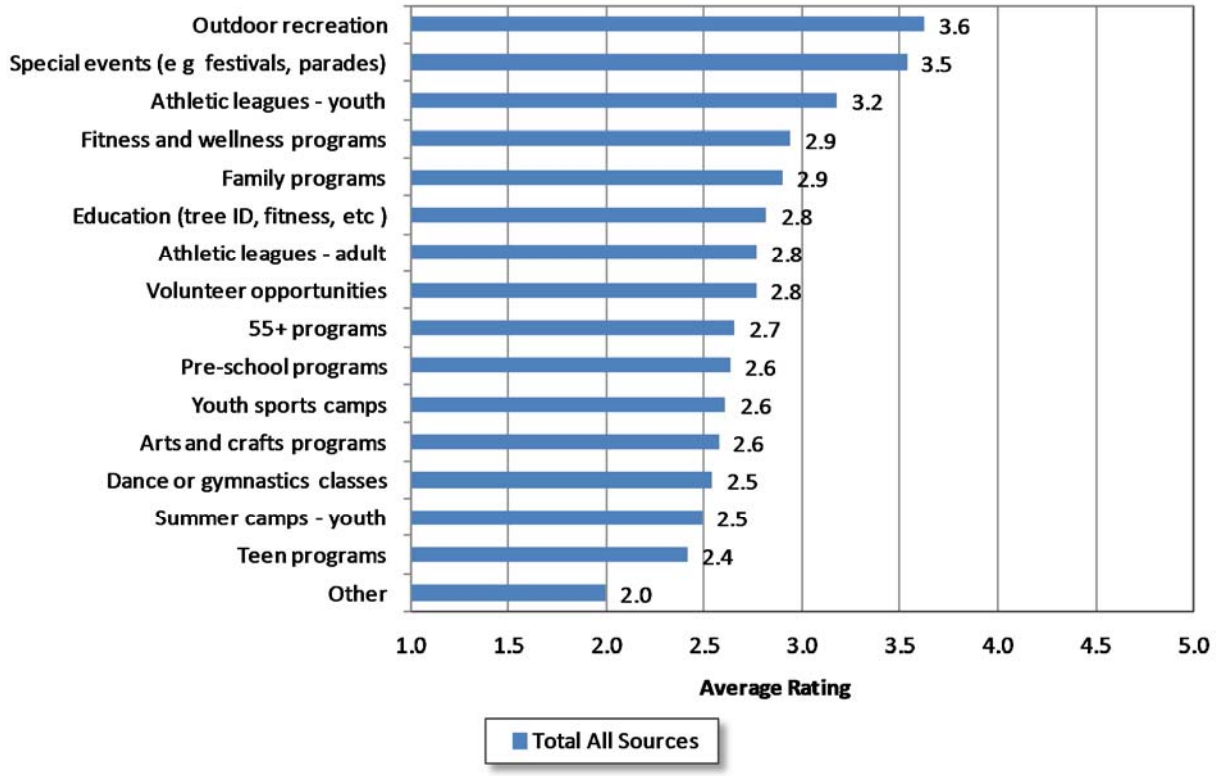
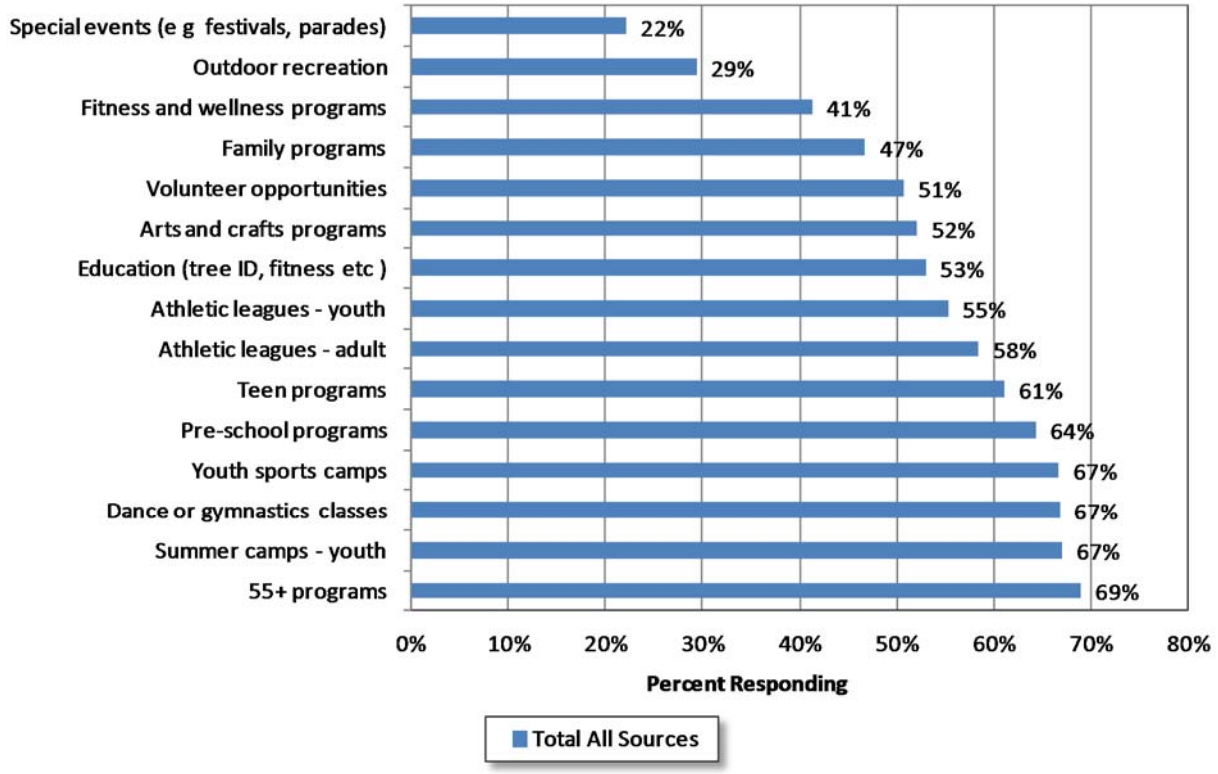


Figure 21
Current Programs – Percentage of Households Indicating They Do Not Need Current Programs



Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix – Current Programs/ Events

As with current parks and facilities, it is informative to plot and compare programs, activities, and special events performance scores using a similar Performance (i.e. Importance vs. Needs-Met) Matrix. In Figure 22, scores are displayed in this matrix using the mid-points for both questions to divide into four quadrants. Importance scale midpoint was 3.3; Needs-Met midpoint was 2.8. A positioning of each program in comparison to others is detailed.

The upper right quadrant shows the programs, activities, and special events that meet household needs and have a relatively high importance. Outdoor recreation and special events stand out as clear examples of successful programming: they are important and the community needs are being met. Similar conclusions can be drawn for other programs that fall in the upper right quadrant. The following are programs that had a high level of importance and needs being well met:

- Outdoor recreation
- Special events (e.g., festivals and parades)
- Fitness and wellness programs
- Athletic leagues - youth
- Family programs

Programs located in the upper left quadrant are programs with relatively high importance but needs could be better met. Improving these programs would have a strong impact on the degree to which needs are being met overall. Encouragingly, there is only one program that falls within this category (teen programs). Referring back to the previous Figures 19-21, although teen programs were not listed as the absolute most important to households or used by the majority of households, the lack of needs being met here means there is potential for improvement.

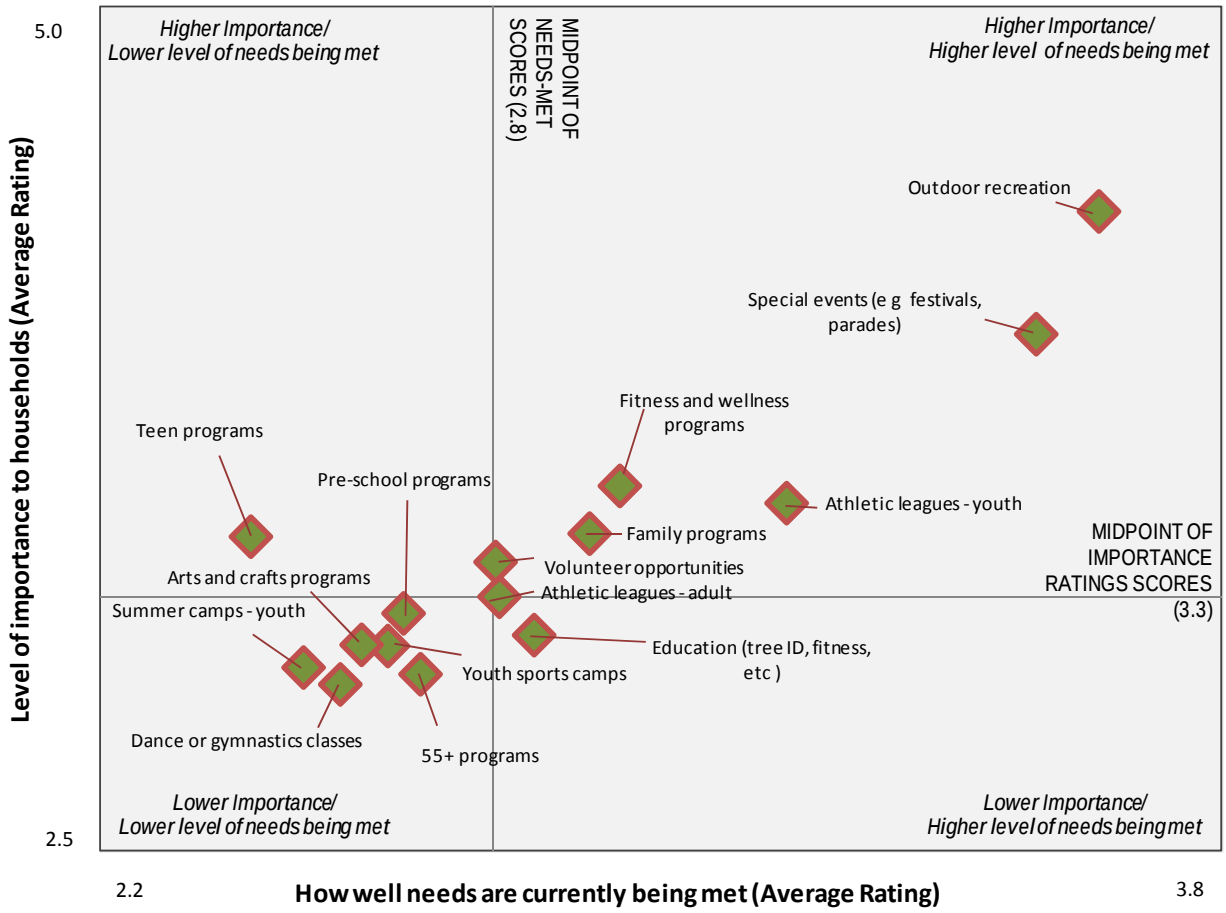
Programs found in the lower left quadrant are programs not meeting needs well; however, they are important to fewer members of the community. These “niche programs” have a small but passionate following; therefore, they are important to measuring participation and planning for potential future enhancements.

- Pre-school programs
- Youth sports camps
- 55+ programs
- Dance or gymnastic classes
- Summer camps - youth

The lower right quadrant shows programs that are not important to many households, yet are meeting their needs well. It would be beneficial to evaluate whether the resources supporting these programs outweigh the benefits. It is encouraging that these programs are performing well but if resources used to support these programs are excessive, reallocating these resources to programs in the upper left quadrant (i.e. teen programs) may be a better investment. According to results, only one program has a low importance rating, but high degree of needs being met.

- Education (tree ID, fitness, etc.)

Figure 22
Programs, Activities, and Special Events – In-Need vs. Needs-Met Matrix



When asked to rank the most important, second most important, and third most important programs, activities, and special events for their household, the majority of respondents indicated outdoor recreation as the most important (46% of households) closely followed by special events such as festivals and parades (45%).

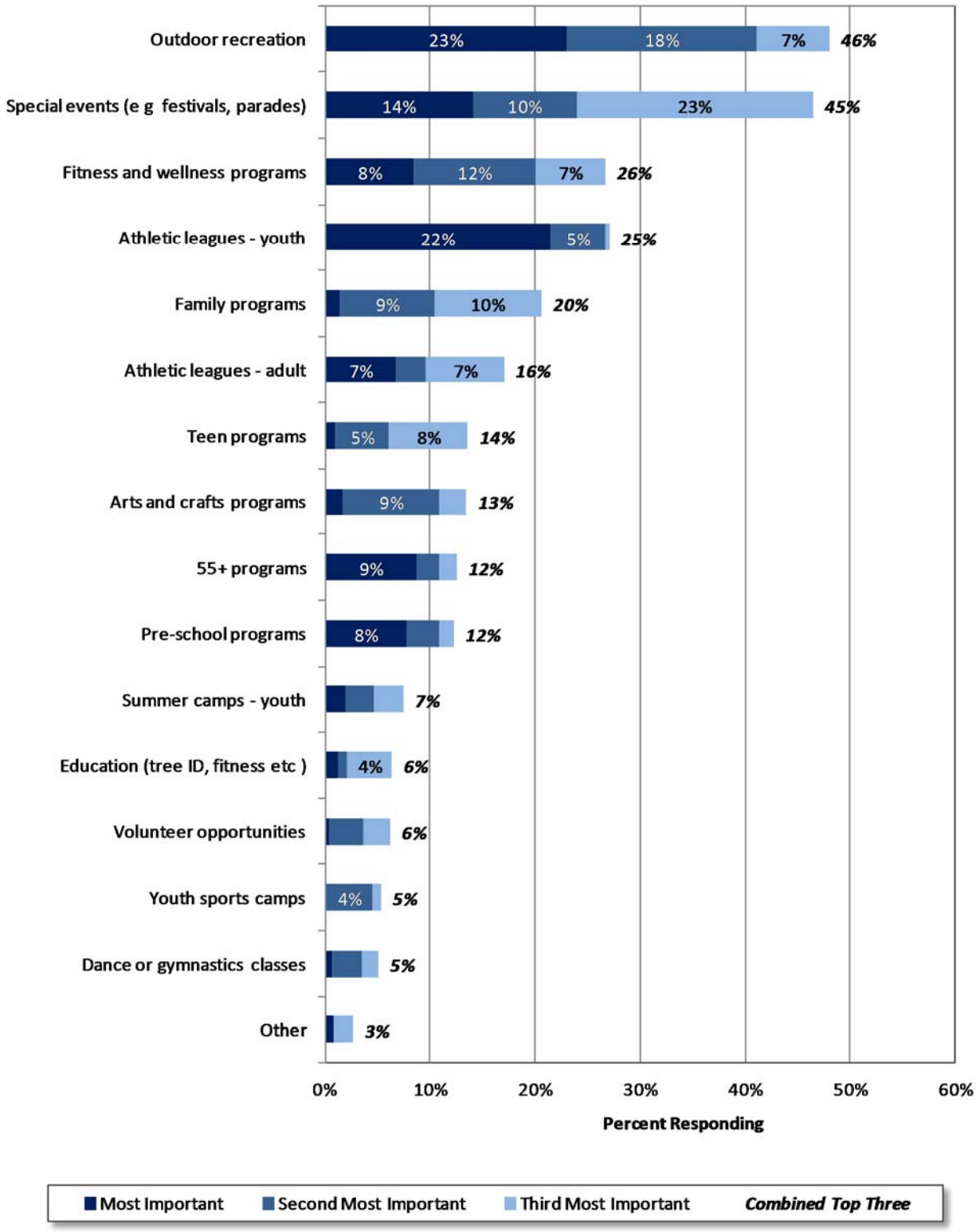
The second tier of programs, activities, and special events most important to Sterling households include:

- Fitness and wellness programs (26% of households reported this program as one of the top three most important to their household)
- Athletic leagues - youth (25%)
- Family programs (20%)

Third tier of most important programs:

- Athletic leagues - adult (16%)
- Teen programs (14%)
- Arts and crafts programs (13%)
- 55+ programs (12%)
- Pre-school programs (12%)

Figure 23
Programs, Activities, and Special Events – Most Important to Households



TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE

Importance of Trails and Open Space

Respondents were then asked to indicate the importance of current trails and open space to their household on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1="Not at All Important", 5="Very Important", and 3="Neutral".

The following aspects of trails and open space received the highest average importance ratings:

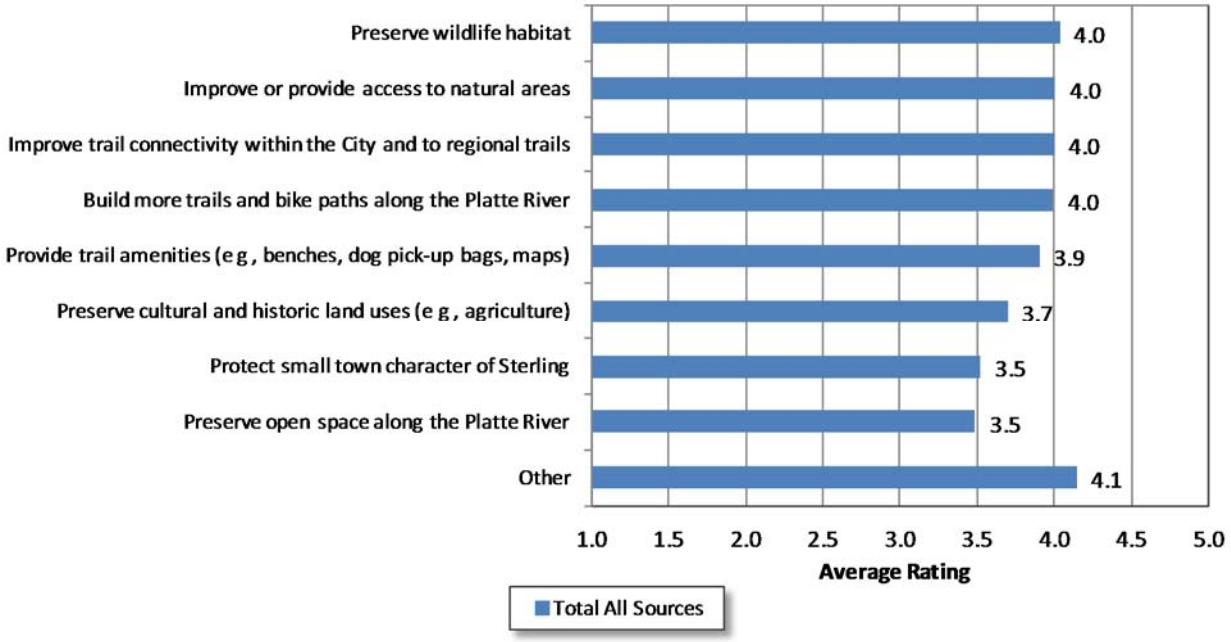
- Preserve wildlife habitat (average rating of 4.0)
- Improve or provide access to natural areas (4.0 rating)
- Improve trail connectivity within the City and to regional trails (4.0 rating)
- Build more trails and bike paths along the Platte River (4.0 rating)
- Provide trail amenities such as benches, dog pick-up bags, maps (3.9 rating)

The second tier of important aspects of trails/open space include:

- Preserve cultural and historic land uses (3.7 rating)
- Protect small town character of Sterling (3.5 rating)
- Preserve open space along the Platte River (3.5 rating)

It is important to note that all of these aspects are above the 3.0 or "Neutral" rating which indicates that trails and open space are important to the majority of households to some degree.

Figure 24
Trails and Open Space – Importance to Household – Average Rating



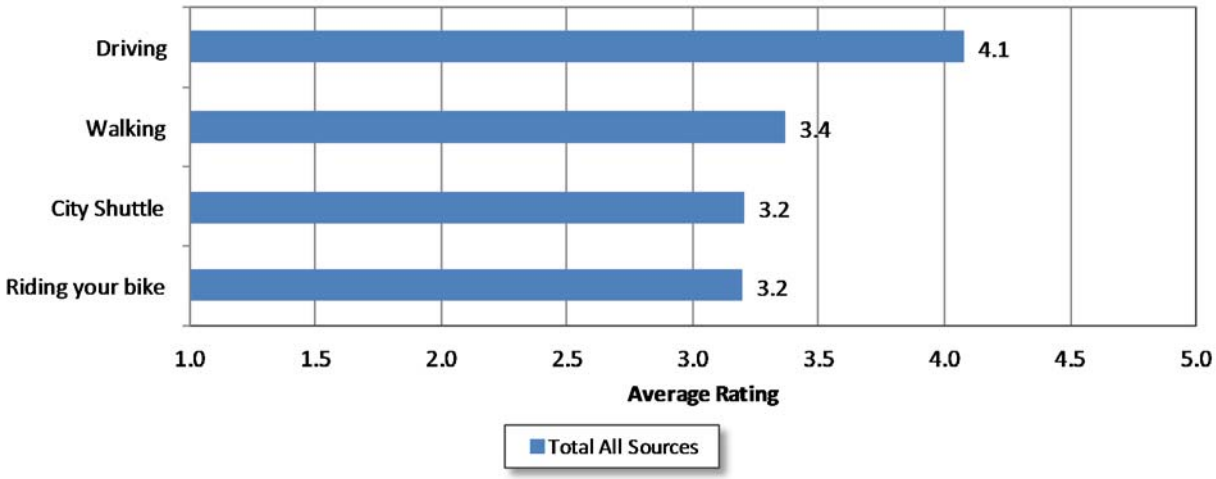
TRANSPORTATION

Performance of Modes of Travel for Access to Sterling Parks, Facilities, and Programs

Respondents rated different modes of travel for access to Sterling's parks, recreation facilities, and programs on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1="Poor", 5="Excellent", and 3="Neutral".

Driving (4.1 average rating) had the highest average rating of all the modes of travel for access to parks, recreation facilities, and programs. Walking followed with a 3.4 average rating, and City shuttle and riding your bike were the lowest rated but still higher than "Neutral" ratings at 3.2 respectively.

Figure 25
Transportation Performance for Park, Facility, and Program Access– Average Rating



COMMUNICATION

Local newspapers such as the *Journal Advocate* and the *South Platte Sentinel* are by far the most preferred method of communicating information about parks, recreation facilities, services, and programs offered by the city (47% of households). Other methods that are best used for communicating include:

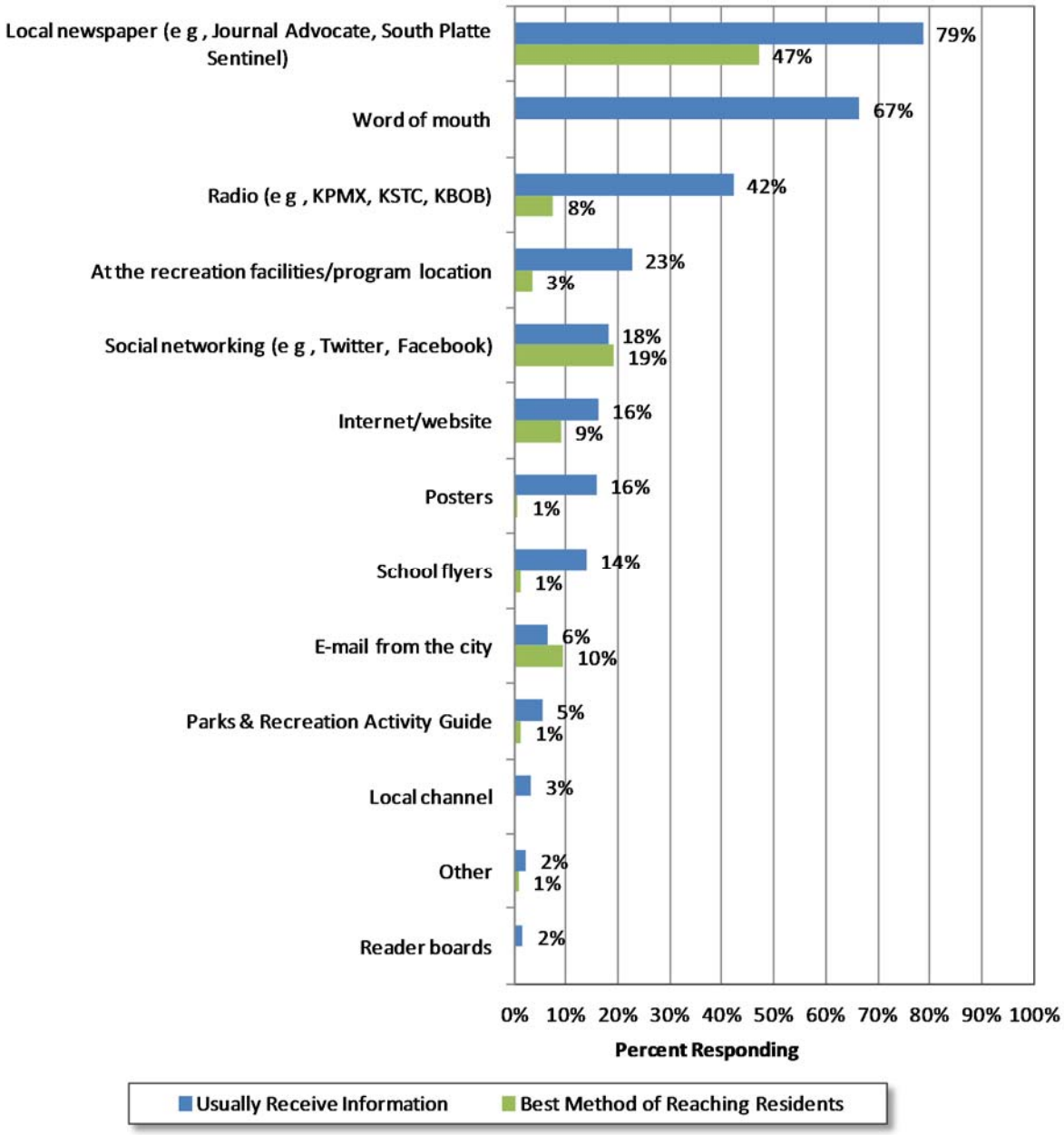
- Social networking (19% of households)
- Email from the City (10% of households)
- Internet/website (9% of households)
- Radio (8% of households)

Respondents were also asked what methods they use to normally receive information on parks, recreation facilities, services, services, and programs. The majority of respondents (79%) reported local newspapers as the most common method of receiving information. However, several methods of usually receiving information were some of the least preferred methods. These methods included:

- Word of mouth (0% of all households indicated this method as the single best method for communicating information but 67% indicated this method as a normal method of receiving information)
- Radio (8% reported as best; 42% reported as the usual method)
- At the recreation facilities/program location (3% reported as best; 23% reported as the usual method)
- Posters (1% reported as best; 16% reported as the usual method)
- School flyers (1% reported as best; 14% reported as the usual method)

Electronic methods such as City E-mail, social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, and the Internet/website have the most potential for improvement. While only between 6% and 18% receive information through these methods, a combined 38% of households indicated one of these three methods as the single best method of reaching them. Considering the inexpensive cost of e-based marketing, Sterling can easily take advantage of this opportunity and improve their overall performance on providing information about recreation based opportunities.

Figure 26
Communication – How Information is Currently Received / Best Method to Reach Residents



FINANCIAL CHOICES

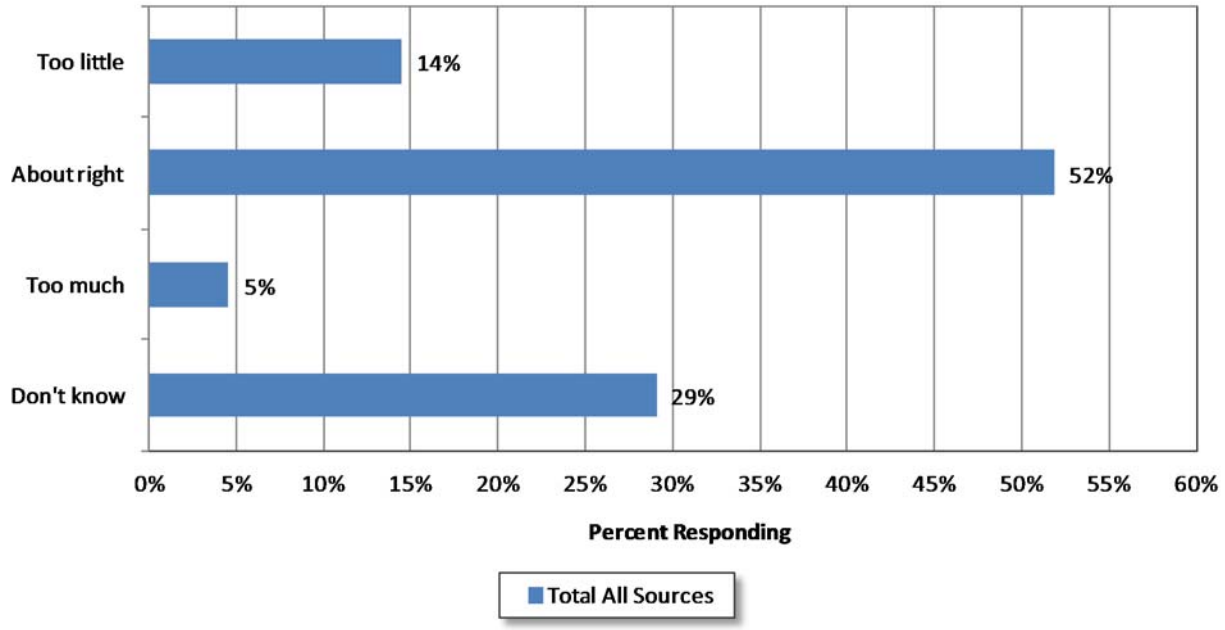
Amount of Dollars Currently Being Spent

Respondents were informed of the following statement.

"The City receives tax dollars to support and manage facilities, parks, and recreation programs. When new facilities and parks, are built, additional funds must be designated to pay for the increase in operations, maintenance, and staffing of the facilities."

Respondents were then asked their opinion regarding the amount of dollars currently being spent by the City of Sterling on maintaining current parks and recreation facilities and programs. Many respondents indicated they don't know/don't have an opinion regarding how much is currently being spent (29%). This lack of opinion indicates that many Sterling residents are relatively uninformed about how their tax dollars are being spent. Overall, however, the majority of respondents indicated that the City was spending about the right amount (52%). Slightly more respondents indicated the City was spending too little than too much (14% versus 5%).

Figure 27
Financial Choices - Opinions Concerning Amount of Dollars Currently Being Spent

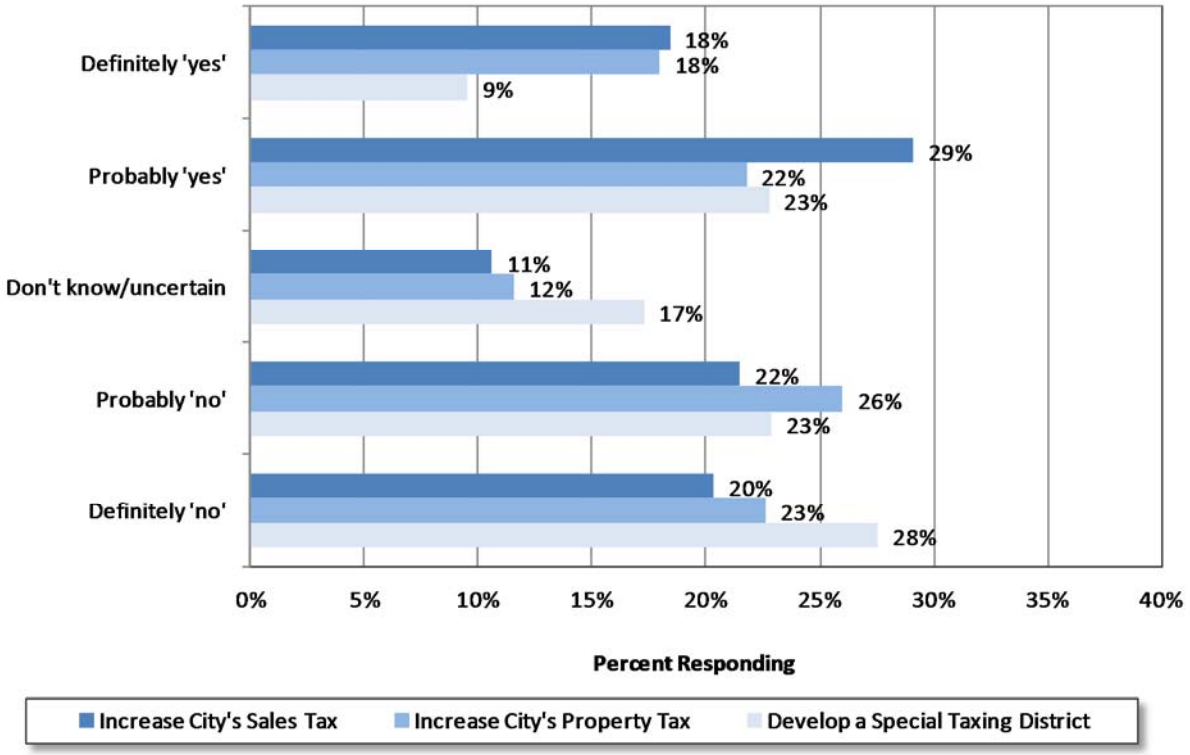


Likelihood of Voting for Increased Taxes or the Development of a Special Taxing District

Respondents were asked in the case new recreation facilities are deemed a community need, how likely they would be to vote in support of increased sales taxes, increased property taxes, and the development of a special taxing district[2] to help pay for the construction and/or operating costs of future facilities.

Increasing sales taxes had the highest support for an increase, albeit, still with less than half of respondents' support. Roughly 47% of respondents indicated either "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" in support for increased sales taxes. Another 40% indicated "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" in support for increased property taxes. The development of a special taxing district received the least support with only about 32% of respondents indicating a "Definitely yes" or "Probably yes" vote for this option.

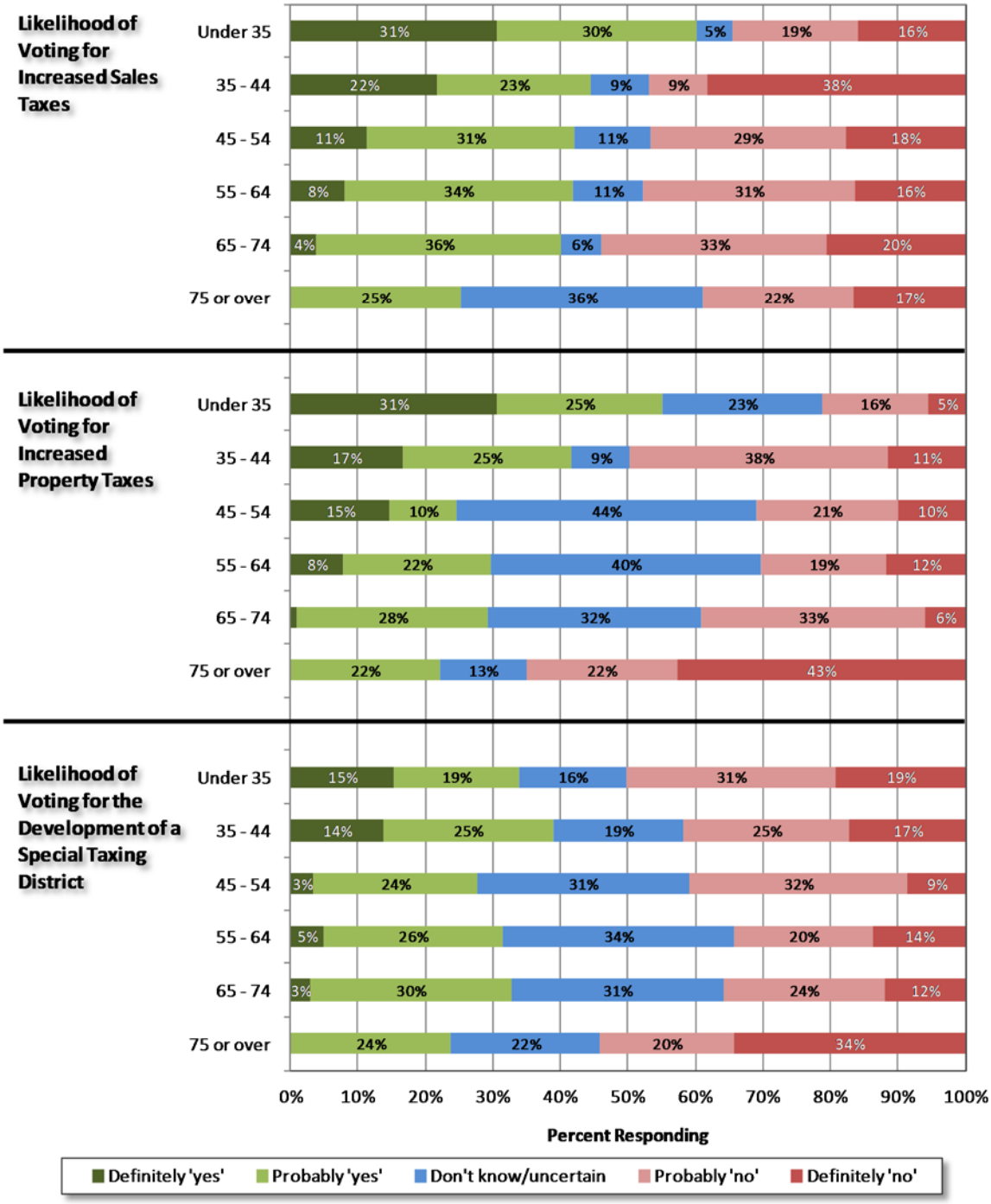
Figure 28
Financial Choices – Likelihood of Voting for Increased Sales Taxes, Property Taxes, and the Development of a Special Taxing District



[2] Respondents were given the following description of what a special taxing district is: "*A special taxing district, similar to a fire or library district, is an independent government unit that provides services either in addition to or in place of services provided by county, municipal, and township governments. Special taxing districts serve limited geographic areas and have governing boards that accomplish legislative functions through the use of public funds. They are created by majority vote through a general election.*"

When examining results by age, younger age cohorts tended to have much more support for each of the choices to help pay for the construction and operating costs of future facilities than older respondents.

Figure 29
Financial Choices – Likelihood of Voting for Increased Sales Taxes, Property Taxes, and the Development of a Special Taxing District – By Age



OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS REGARDING FINANCIAL CHOICES

Respondents were offered the opportunity to expand on their responses to the financial choices and fees questions through open-ended comments. A few dominant themes emerged within the comments, including the belief that taxes are already too high, support for maintaining current parks and infrastructure as more important right now, support for increases as long as the budgets are transparent and used for specific purposes, and applying for grants or lottery funds instead.

Example Comments

- *I think we pay plenty in taxes already.*
- *No new taxes!*
- *NO tax increases please, I CANNOT afford it.*
- *Taxes are already too high.*
- *I'm afraid if there is a tax increase the money would go to administration and not be used for improvements.*
- *To know whether it is needed to increase taxes to support program expansion, would need more details about the entire situation.*
- *Money needs to be spent on fixing drainage problems, adding and/or replacing sidewalks and streets in Sterling as a priority.*
- *Would help if citizens were advised of spending, now it appears that misappropriation of funds are being spent elsewhere.*
- *Apply for grants.*
- *Use CoGo and special grants where available to pay "as we go." No debt financing or special districts. Sales taxes seem ok, but should be limited.*
- *What about all the lottery money being wasted on new park playgrounds all the time.*

SUGGESTIONS / OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

Respondents were given the opportunity to list any additional comments or suggestions regarding parks, recreation facilities, natural areas, trails, and programs provided in Sterling. The resulting comments cover a wide variety of issues important to residents as well as a number of specific areas for potential improvements. The full set of comments, which can be found in the appendix, should be reviewed in order to understand the extent of issues covered and the specific types and location of these issues.

Overall, there were some themes that emerged, including overall support for maintaining the quantity and quality of the parks; improving, better maintaining, and adding sidewalks; expanding the bike trail system and adding connections; and maintaining current inventory of parks and facilities.

Example Comments

- *I visited Columbine Park South after filling out the survey. I was shocked. The bathroom facilities were the best-kept, fresh smelling cleanest public restroom I've ever used in my entire life. EXCELLENT job. Keep it up.*
- *I am amazed how well our parks are maintained, we have adequate amount of parks not sure about rec facilities.*
- *City needs sidewalks on all streets as eventually all roads lead to parks.*
- *Poor maintenance of sidewalks and roads makes it hard to get anywhere!*
- *Sidewalks are in poor condition, bike paths are nonexistent.*
- *Have a trail that is long and connected to others when families can enjoy a long and safe walk. Better supervision at Pioneer Park.*
- *Didn't know about many of these. Better bike and trail systems from neighborhoods to and between parks. A long trail that has several points of access.*
- *Need to keep up with maintenance on ALL City owned properties before adding to existing ones. The village buildings at the museum are in need of some TLC.*
- *No additions - good maintenance of existing. We believe there are too many small city parks for the size of Sterling (i.e. Franklin Park).*

Appendix D – Park and Recreation Influencing Trends

It is a challenge for parks and recreation departments to continue to understand and respond to the changing recreation interests of those it serves. In this fast-paced society, it is important to stay on top of current trends impacting outdoor and nature-based recreation. The following information highlights relevant local, regional, and national outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence the Sterling Parks and Recreation for the next ten years.

> The highest ranking age cohorts in Sterling are 25-34, 35-44, and 45-64. Planning for the next ten years suggests a growing demand for programs and services for young adults and Baby Boomers.

A. Demographic Trends in Recreation

Adult – The Baby Boomers: Planning for the Demographic Shift

Baby Boomers are defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, as stated in Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers.[7] They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans. In 2011, this influential population began their transition out of the workforce. As Baby Boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, Baby Boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults. In a July 2012 article in NRPA's *Parks and Recreation* magazine titled, "Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today," Emilyn Sheffield, Professor of Recreation and Parks Management at California State University, at Chico, indicated that, "Baby Boomers are driving the aging of America with Boomers and seniors over 65 composing about 39 percent of the nation's population."[8]

In the leisure profession, this generation's devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of its influence on society. When Boomers entered elementary school, President John Kennedy initiated the President's Council on Physical Fitness; physical education and recreation became a key component of public education. As Boomers matured and moved into the workplace, they took their desire for exercise and fitness with them. Now as the oldest Boomers are nearing 65, park and recreation professionals are faced with new approaches to provide both passive and active programming for older adults. Boomers are second only to Gen Y/Millennials (born between 1980 and 1999) in participation in fitness and outdoor sports.[9]

Jeffrey Ziegler, a past president of the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association identified "Boomer Basics" in his article, "Recreating retirement: how will Baby Boomers reshape leisure in their 60s?"[10] Highlights are summarized below.

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[7] Linda Cochran, Anne Roshschadl, and Jodi Rudick, Leisure Programming For Baby Boomers, Human Kinetics, 2009.
[8] Emilyn Sheffield, "Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today," *Parks and Recreation*, July 2012 p. 16-17.
[9] 2012 Participation Report, Physical Activity Council, 2012.
[10] Jeffry Ziegler, "Recreating Retirement: How Will Baby Boomers Reshape Leisure in Their 60s?", *Parks and Recreation*, October 2002.

Boomer Basics:
Boomers are known to work hard, play hard, and spend hard. They have always been fixated with all things youthful. Boomers typically respond that they feel 10 years younger than their chronological age. Their nostalgic mindset keeps Boomers returning to the sights and sounds of their 1960s youth culture. Swimming pools have become less of a social setting and much more of an extension of Boomers' health and wellness program. Because Boomers in general have a high education level, they will likely continue to pursue education as adults and into retirement.

The City of Sterling's demographic profile indicates that 24.7% of the current population falls within the Baby Boomer age range (those approximately 45 – 64 years of age).

Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to give them opportunities to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports. When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to the need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes will be important. Recreation trends will shift from games and activities that Boomers associate with senior citizens, as Ziegler suggests that activities such as bingo, bridge, and shuffleboard will likely be avoided because Boomers relate these activities to being old.

Boomers will reinvent what being a 65-year-old means. Parks and recreation agencies that do not plan for Boomers carrying on in retirement with the same hectic pace they have lived during their years in employment will be left behind. Things to consider when planning for the demographic shift:

- Boomer characteristics
- What drives Boomers?
- Marketing to Boomers
- Arts and entertainment
- Passive and active fitness trends
- Outdoor recreation/adventure programs
- Travel programs

Youth – Planning for the Demographic Shift
In her article, Sheffield also identified, as one of the five trends shaping tomorrow today, that the proportion of youth is smaller than in the past but still essential to our future. As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population, and this percentage is at an all-time low. Nearly half of this population group is ethnically diverse, and 25% is Hispanic.[11]

Hispanic Trends – Outdoor/Nature
According to Sheffield, in the United States, the Hispanic population category increased by 43 percent over the last decade, compared to five percent for the non-Hispanic portion, and accounted for more than half of all the population growth. The growing racial and ethnic diversity is particularly important to recreation and leisure service providers, since family and individual recreation patterns and preferences are strongly shaped by cultural influences.[12]

[11] Emilyn Sheffield, "Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today," *Parks and Recreation*, July 2012 p. 16-17.
[12] Emilyn Sheffield, "Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today," *Parks and Recreation*, July 2012 p. 16-17.

Participation in outdoor sports among Hispanics is at 7% nationwide, according to the 2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report.[13] Those who do get outdoors, however, participate as often as Caucasians who have the highest participation rate, with an average of 43 outings per year. Hispanic youth (ages 6 – 12) are the most likely age group to participate in outdoor recreation (56%), in the Hispanic demographic, closely followed by the 25-44 age group (54%) and the 13-17 age group (53%). The most popular outdoor activities among Hispanics are: Running/jogging and Trail Running (22%), road and mountain biking and BMX (17%), Fishing (freshwater, saltwater, and fly) (14%), Camping (car, backyard and RV) (11%), and Hiking (9%).

B. Facilities

Aquatics

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked third nation-wide in terms of participation in 2012.[14] Outdoor swimming pools are not typically heated and open year round. Swimming for fitness is the top aspirational activity for "inactives" in 6 of 8 age categories in the SFIA 2013 *Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report*, representing a significant opportunity to engage inactive populations. Nationally, there is an increasing trend toward indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional indoor and outdoor amenities like "spray pads" are becoming increasingly popular as well. In some cities and counties spray pools are popular in the summer months and turn into ice rinks in the winter months.

The 2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report provided nation-wide trends for various outdoor activities, including the following water recreation activities: board sailing/windsurfing, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, rafting, sailing, stand-up paddling, and wakeboarding (***Table 9***). Among water recreation activities, boardsailing/windsurfing has had the largest increase in participation in the past three years (17.6% increase) followed by whitewater kayaking (13.3% increase). Participation in fly fishing is up, while other fishing activities are down in the past three years. Stand-up paddling had the highest number of new participants of all sports rated in the past year, while rafting participation is down over the past three years.[15]

Table 9: Water Recreation Participation by Activity (6 years of age or older)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	3 Year Average Change
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,307	1,128	1,607	1,151	1,593	17.6%
Canoeing	9,935	10,058	10,553	9,787	9,839	-.6%
Fishing (Fly)	5,941	5,568	5,478	5,360	6,012	2.6%
Fishing (Freshwater/ Other)	40,331	40,961	38,860	39,071	39,135	-1.5%
Kayaking (Recreational)	6,240	6,212	6,465	8,229	8,144	10.1%
Kayaking (White Water)	1,242	1,369	1,842	1,546	1,878	13.3%
Rafting	4,651	4,318	4,460	3,821	3,690	-4.8%
Sailing	4,226	4,342	3,869	3,725	3,958	-2.8%
Stand Up Paddling	no data	no data	1,050	1,242	1,542	no data
Wakeboarding	3,544	3,577	3,645	3,389	3,348	-2.1%

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2013 (numbers in thousands).

[13] "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013", Outdoor Foundation, 2013.
[14] National Sporting Goods Association, "2012 Participation – Ranked by Total Participation", 2013.
[15] "Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2013", Outdoor Foundation, 2013.

Dog Parks

Dog parks are a rising trend. *Recreation Management* magazine[16] suggests that they can represent a relatively low-cost way to provide an oft-visited community amenity. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with "designed-for-dogs" amenities like water fountains, agility equipment, and pet wash stations, to name a few. According to *Dog Fancy* magazine, an ideal dog park should include the following:

- One acre or more surrounded by a 4- to 6-foot fence
- Shade and water
- Adequate drainage
- Parking near the site
- A double gated entry
- Benches
- Pet-waste disposal stations with pickup bags and covered waste receptacles

Fitness Programming

There have been many changes in fitness programs in the last ten years. What clients wanted in 2000 is not necessarily what they want today. The American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM's) *Health and Fitness Journal*[17] has conducted an annual survey since 2007 to determine trends that would help create a standard for health and fitness programming. ***Table 10*** shows survey results that focus on trends in the commercial, corporate, clinical, and community health and fitness industry. Strength training remains at a solid 2nd for the second year in a row, and body weight training appears for the first time in the top 20 trend survey. Zumba and outdoor activities appeared in the top 10 for the first time in 2012, and Zumba remains at 12, making it one of the biggest trends in fitness over the past three years.

Table 10: Top 10 Worldwide Fitness Trends for 2007 and 2013

2007	2013
1. Children and obesity	1. Educated and experienced fitness professionals
2. Special fitness programs for older adults	2. Strength training
3. Educated and experienced fitness professionals	3. Body weight training
4. Functional fitness	4. Children and obesity
5. Core training	5. Exercise and weight loss
6. Strength training	6. Fitness programs for older adults
7. Personal training	7. Personal training
8. Mind/Body Exercise	8. Functional fitness
9. Exercise and weight loss	9. Core training
10. Outcome measurements	10. Group personal training

Source: American College of Sport Medicine

[16] Emily Tipping, "2012 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation", *Recreation Management*, June 2012.
17 "Walter R. Thompson, "Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2013", Health & Fitness Journal, American College of Sports Medicine, 2012.

General Programming

One of the most common concerns in the recreation industry is creating innovative programming to draw participants into facilities and services. Once in, participants recognize that the benefits are endless. According to *Recreation Management* magazine's "2013 State of the Industry Report,"[18] the most popular programs, offered by survey respondents, include holiday events and other special events (64.2 %), fitness programs (61.4%), educational programs (58.9), day camps and summer camps (55.2%), youth sports teams (54.3%), sports tournaments and races (49.2 %), mind-body/balance programs (49.1%), swimming programming (teams and lessons) (48.5%), adult sports teams (47.8 %), sports training (44.1%), arts and crafts (42.7%), and programs for active older adults (40.9%).

The report also suggested that slightly more three in 10 (30.2%) respondents indicated that they are planning to add additional programs at their facilities over the next three years. The most common types of programming they are planning to add include:

5. Educational programs (up from No. 5 on 2012 survey)
6. Fitness programs (up from No. 3)
7. Mind-body/balance programs – yoga, tai chi, Pilates, or martial arts (up from No. 6)
8. Day camps and summer camps (up from No. 10)
9. Holiday events and other special events (up from No. 7)
10. Environmental education (down from No. 1)
11. Teen programming (down from No. 2)
12. Active older adults programming (down from No. 4)
13. Sports tournaments or races (not on the 2012 survey)
14. Sport training (not on the 2012 Survey)

Off the top 10 list for new programming from 2012 are adult sport teams and performing arts.

[18] Emily Tipping, "2013 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation", *Recreation Management*, June 2013.

Healthy Lifestyle

Local Trends

Although Colorado has long claimed bragging rights as the leanest state in the nation, it received some bad news this past year.[19] The Colorado 2011 Health Report Card found that Colorado's adult obesity levels recently jumped to the second-fastest rate in the country and that one in every five Coloradans is now obese. Adult obesity is greatest in the eastern plains and lowest in western mountain communities. Childhood obesity levels in Colorado are growing at the second fastest rate in the country, jumping from a ranking of third lowest in 2007 to 23rd in the nation for child obesity today.

C. Natural Environments and Open Space

Conservation

The top ten recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Conservation Task Force were published in the November 2011 issue of *Parks and Recreation* Magazine.[20] These recommendations are a compilation of best practices used by trend-setting agencies.

1. Take a leadership role in the community to promote conservation. Park and recreation agencies have a unique opportunity to bring governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and the public together for the cause of working together on community wide conservation objectives – clean water, wildlife habitat preservation, reducing energy use, and improving environmental quality. Park and recreation agencies must lead the way in promoting conservation to diverse and underserved audiences.
2. Lead by example in employing best management conservation practices in parks. Park and recreation agencies should become the catalyst for conservation in the community by showing how best practices can be adopted – not mowing what doesn't need it; stopping wasteful energy consumption; and reducing pesticide use for example. Show the public how conservation practices can benefit everyone.
3. Engage volunteers in conservation and stewardship. Create a sense of belonging and stewardship for parks by creating a personal sense of ownership and value. Enable people to identify with their parks and natural resources, and to care about their future. Sustain stewardship by creating meaningful public participation in implementation of conservation principles and practices.
4. Establish a strategic land acquisition strategy based on knowledge and awareness of significant natural and cultural resources (watershed protection, unique ecological characteristics, and sensitive natural areas deserving protection). As the largest owners of public land within most communities, park and recreation agencies should lead the way in developing a strategic vision for preserving open space and conserving important landscapes and natural features.
5. Engage youth in conservation. Get kids and teens outdoors and enjoying their parks. The experience of nature is inherently rewarding for youth. Set as a goal to connect kids in the community to nature and the outdoors. Children and youth will be fascinated by nature and will develop a lifelong affinity as well as a conservation ethic if they have early opportunities to enjoy nature and recreate outdoors in a safe, rewarding way.

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[19] Katie Kerwin McCrimmon, "Obesity levels spike in Colorado," *Solutions*, http://www.healthpolicysolutions.org/2012/03/22/obesity-levels-spike-in-colorado/, Accessed November 17, 2012.

[20] "Conservation Leaders in our Community," National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), November 2011 Magazine, pages 85-101, http://digital.parksandrecreation.org/launch.aspx?referral=other&pnum=&refresh=Fj302M1i0bE7&EID=8201df86-57c9-428c-b31c-18125a54265c&skip=

6. Conserve energy in all ways. Park and recreation agencies must lead by example, showing the public how and why they should adopt practices that they can see demonstrated in parks and recreation facilities. Park and recreation agencies should adopt energy conservation measures that make sense and save public taxpayer funds.
7. Protect natural resources in parks and in the community. A core mission of public parks is to protect land and water resources and to be stewards of natural resources. This means committing personnel and resources to protect natural and cultural resources and creating sustainable long-term methods of funding this conservation mission. Parks and recreation agencies are entrusted with some of the most important public assets of a community and the conservation and long-term protection of this public trust is and should be a core component of every parks and recreation agency's mission.
8. Create sustainable landscapes that demonstrate principles of conservation. Utilize sustainable landscape practices to save taxpayer funds, to measurably improve conservation benefits, and to educate the public about conservation. For example, agencies can reduce turf grass and mowing frequency; replace turf with native plants; manage floodplains for multiple uses including conservation and public recreation; enhance wetlands for water filtration and groundwater recharge; plant model landscapes of drought tolerant native plants adapted to climate and culture; and promote parks as food sources through edible landscapes and community gardens.
9. Forge partnerships that foster the mission of conservation. The greatest and most beneficial conservation successes most often occur as a result of collaboration. Park and recreation agencies should partner with non-profit and community service organizations, universities and colleges, school systems, other governmental agencies, and non-traditional partners for conservation outcomes. Promote health, education, and other goals while working toward a common mission of conservation.
10. Utilize technology to promote conservation. Park and recreation agencies need to embrace technology to promote conservation. This is not only in applications such as GIS, but in utilizing social media to engage the public, especially youth. Technology is not to be feared as something that detracts from the conservation mission of parks agencies, but rather it is to be accepted as a means of sharing knowledge and connecting people to conservation and stewardship.

Economic & Health Benefits of Parks

There are numerous economic and health benefits of parks, including the following:

- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- Research from the University of Illinois shows that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people's health and mental outlook.[21]
- US Forest Service research indicates that when the economic benefits produced by trees are assessed, the total value can be two to six times the cost for tree planting and care.[22]
- Fifty percent of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise.[23]

[21] F.E. Kuo, "Environment and Crime in the Inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime?" *Environment and Behavior*, Volume 33, pp. 343-367.
[22] Nowak, David J., "Benefits of Community Trees", (Brooklyn Trees, USDA Forest Service General Technical Report, in review).
[23] "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2010", Outdoor Foundation, 2010.

The Trust for Public Land has published a report titled: *"The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space."* The report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space[24]:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

Nature Programming

Noted as early as 2003 in *Recreation Management* magazine, park agencies have been seeing an increase in interest in environmental-oriented "back to nature" programs. In 2007, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sent out a survey to member agencies in order to learn more about the programs and facilities that public park and recreation agencies provide to connect children and their families with nature.[25] A summary of the results follow:

- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of public parks and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming, and 61% have nature-based facilities.
- The most common programs include nature hikes, nature-oriented arts and crafts, fishing-related events, and nature-based education in cooperation with local schools.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful programs, agencies listed staff training as most important followed by program content and number of staff/staff training.
- When asked what resources would be needed most to expand programming, additional staff was most important followed by funding.
- Of the agencies that do not currently offer nature-based programming, 90 percent indicated that they want to in the future. Additional staff and funding were again the most important resources these agencies would need going forward.
- The most common facilities include: nature parks/preserves, self-guided nature trails, outdoor classrooms, and nature centers.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful facilities, agencies listed funding as most important followed by presence of wildlife and community support.

[24] Paul M. Sherer, *"The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space,"* The Trust for Public Land, San Francisco, CA, 2006.

[25] National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), "NRPA Completes Agency Survey Regarding Children and Nature," http://www.narrp.org/assets/Library/Children_in_Nature/ nrpa_survey_regarding_children_and_nature_2007.pdf, April 2007.

Figures from the Association for Interpretative Naturalists, a national group of nature professionals, demonstrate that nature-based programs are on the rise. According to Tim Merriman, the association's executive director, the group was founded in 1954 with 40 members. It now boasts 4,800 members, with research indicating that about 20,000 paid interpreters are working nationally, along with an army of more than 500,000 unpaid volunteers staffing nature programs at parks, zoos, and museums. The growth of these programs is thought to come from replacing grandparents as the teacher about the "great outdoors." It is also speculated that a return to natural roots and renewed interest in life's basic elements was spurred as a response to September 11, 2001. [26]

In his book Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder[27], Richard Louv introduced the concept of restorative nature, for both children and adults, of being out in nature. This concept, and research in support of it, has led to a growing movement promoting connections with nature in daily life. One manifestation of this is the development of Nature Explore Classrooms in parks. Nature Explore[28] is a collaborative program of the Arbor Day Foundation and the non-profit organization, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, with a mission of helping children and families develop a profound engagement with the natural world, where nature is an integral, joyful part of children's daily learning. Nature Explore works to support efforts to connect children with nature.

> *"There's a direct link between a lack of exposure to nature and higher rates of attention-deficit disorder, obesity, and depression. In essence, parks and recreation agencies can and are becoming the 'preferred provider' for offering this preventative healthcare."*
>
> – **Fran P. Mainella**, former director of the National Park Service and Instructor at Clemson University.

Riparian and Watershed Best Practices

The ability to detect trends and monitor attributes in watershed and/or riparian areas allows planners opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of their management plan. By monitoring their own trends, Planners can also identify changes in resource conditions that are the result of pressures beyond their control. Trend detection requires a commitment to long-term monitoring of riparian areas and vegetation attributes.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests the following steps to building an effective watershed management plan. See Water.epa.gov29 for more information from the EPA.

- Build partnerships
- Characterize the watershed
- Set goals and identify solutions
- Design and implementation program
- Implement the watershed plan
- Measure progress and make adjustments

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[26] Margaret Ahrweiler," *Call of the Wild – From beautiful blossoms to bugs and guts, nature programs are growing as people return to their roots" Recreation Management* Magazine, Http://recmanagement.com/200310fe04.php, October 2003.
[27] Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2005.
[28] "What is the Nature Explore Program", http://www.arborday.org/explore/documents/ NE_FAQ_002.pdf, accessed on August 12, 2012.
[29]"Implement the Watershed Plan – Implement Management Strategies, US Environmental Protection Agency, http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/datait/watershedcentral/plan2.cfm

Trails and Health

A connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community has been scientifically demonstrated through the Trails for Health initiative of the (CDC).[30] Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking/running/hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding. Recognizing that active use of trails for positive health outcomes is an excellent way to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle changes, American Trails has launched a "Health and Trails" resource section in its website: www/americantrails.org/resources/benefits/.

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a "linear park," makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.[31]

D. Sports and Recreation Trends

General Sports and Recreation Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) survey on sports participation in 2011[32] found that the top five athletic activities ranked by total participation included: exercise walking, exercising with equipment, swimming, camping, and aerobic exercising, continuing a trend over a number of years. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities remain popular: hiking, running/jogging, bicycle riding, bowling, and a workout at the club.

Error! Reference source not found. ***11*** outlines the top twenty sports ranked by total participation in 2012. Some insights from the study include:

- Fitness sports increased by 5%.
- Hunting with firearms increased more than 18%, with female participation increasing 29%.
- Participation lagged in basketball, baseball, and soccer in 2012, while increasing in lacrosse, softball, and volleyball; Tackle football experienced a nearly 13% decline in participation.
- Snow sports showed an average decline of 11%.

[30] "Guide to Community Preventive Services" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html

[31] "Health Community: What you should know about trail building," National Trails Training Partnership: Health and Fitness, http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/healthcombuild.html, accessed on May 24, 2013.

[32] 2011 Participation – Ranked by Total Participation", National Sporting Goods Association, 2012, <http://www.nsga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3346>.

Table 11: Top Twenty Sports Ranked by Total Participation (in millions) in 2012

Sport	Total
1. Exercise Walking	102.1
2. Exercising with Equipment	57.7
3. Swimming	48.6
4. Camping (vacation/overnight)	45.2
5. Aerobic Exercising	44.8
6. Hiking	42.2
7. Running/Jogging	40.0
8. Bicycle Riding	39.3
9. Bowling	35.5
10. Workout at Club	35.2
11. Weight Lifting	31.1
12. Fishing (Freshwater)	30.8
13. Wrestling	28.4
14. Basketball	25.6
15. Yoga	22.9
16. Billiards/Pool	21.8
17. Target Shooting	21.7
18. Golf	21.1
19. Hunting with Firearms	19.4
20. Boating, Motor/Power	17.0

Source: NSGA 2012

The Ten-year History of Sports Participation Report,[33] published by NSGA, shows national trends in team sports and individual sports. Overall participation trends indicate a general increase in 2011 for most team sports. However, softball and volleyball show a decrease in participation through 2011. Over the decade individual sports show a dramatic increase in aerobic exercising, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, hiking, kayaking, running/jogging, target shooting and target shooting with an airgun, tennis, weightlifting, and working out at a club.

Error! Reference source not found. illustrates a ten year change in participation for selected activities including both team sports and individual sports.

[33] Ten-Year History of Sports Participation (2001-2011), National Sporting Goods Association, 2012, <http://www.nsga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3346>.

Table 12: Ten-Year History of Sports Participation (in millions) 2001-2011

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Aerobic Exercising	24.3	28.0	33.7	34.8	33.2	42.0
Archery (Target)	4.7	3.9	6.8	6.6	7.1	6.3
Backpacking/Wilderness Camping	14.5	13.7	13.3	13.0	12.3	11.6
Baseball	14.9	14.6	14.6	14.0	11.5	12.3
Basketball	28.1	27.9	29.9	24.1	24.4	26.1
Bicycle Riding	39.0	36.3	43.1	37.4	38.1	39.1
Billiards/Pool	32.7	30.5	37.3	29.5	28.2	20.0
Boating, Motor/Power	22.6	24.2	27.5	31.9	24.0	16.7
Bowling	40.3	39.4	45.4	43.5	45.0	34.9
Camping	45.5	51.4	46.0	47.5	50.9	42.8
Dart Throwing	16.9	n/a	n/a	12.1	12.2	9.3
Exercise Walking	71.2	79.5	86.0	89.8	93.4	97.1
Exercising with Equipment	43.0	48.6	54.2	52.9	57.2	55.5
Fishing (Freshwater)	39.1	33.2	37.5	30.8	29.0	28.0
Fishing (Saltwater)	11.3	10.6	10.0	10.4	8.2	9.7
Football (tackle)	8.6	8.7	9.9	9.2	8.9	9.0
Golf	26.6	25.7	24.7	22.7	22.3	20.9
Hiking	26.1	25.0	29.8	28.6	34.0	39.1
Hockey (ice)	.2	1.8	2.4	2.1	3.1	3.0
Hunting w/Bow & Arrow	4.7	5.0	6.6	5.7	6.2	5.1
Hunting with Firearms	19.2	17.7	19.6	19.5	18.8	16.4
In-Line Roller Skating	19.2	16.0	13.1	10.7	7.9	6.1
Kayaking	3.5	4.7	7.6	5.9	4.9	7.1
Mountain Biking (off road)	6.3	8.2	9.2	9.3	8.4	6.0
Muzzleloading	3.0	3.1	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.1
Paintball Games	5.6	7.4	8.0	7.4	6.3	5.3
Running/Jogging	24.5	22.9	29.2	30.4	32.2	38.7
Skateboarding	9.6	9.0	12.0	10.1	8.4	6.6
Skiing (Alpine)	7.7	6.8	6.9	6.4	7.0	6.9
Skiing (Cross Country)	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.7	2.3
Snowboarding	5.3	6.3	6.0	5.1	6.2	5.1
Soccer	13.9	11.1	14.1	13.8	13.6	13.9
Softball	13.2	11.8	14.1	12.4	11.8	10.4
Swimming	54.8	47.0	58.0	52.3	50.2	46.0
Target Shooting	15.9	17.0	21.9	20.5	19.8	19.6
Target Shooting (Airgun)	2.9	3.8	6.7	6.6	5.2	5.3
Tennis	10.9	9.6	11.1	12.3	10.8	13.1
Volleyball	12.0	10.4	13.2	12.0	10.7	10.1
Water Skiing	5.5	5.5	6.7	5.3	5.2	4.3
Weight Lifting	21.2	25.9	35.5	33.2	34.5	29.1
Workout at Club	26.5	29.5	34.7	36.8	38.3	34.5
Wrestling	3.5	n/a	n/a	2.1	3.0	3.2

Note: Participated more than once (in millions), seven (7) years of age and older.

Source: NSGA 2012

Youth Sports

Specific offerings for children's fitness are slowly increasing in health and fitness facilities. Facilities are offering more youth-specific exercise equipment. Individualized youth sports training opportunities are becoming more popular as well. In-line roller skating experienced the largest percentage decrease in participation. For youth ages 7 to 17, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, and swimming, followed by overnight/vacation camping had the highest number of participants in 2011.[34]

In 2009, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* observed that, in recent years lacrosse has become one of the country's fastest growing team sports. Participation in high school lacrosse has almost doubled this decade. An estimated 1.2 million Americans over age seven played lacrosse in 2009.[35] A 2011 report, "U.S. Trends in Team Sports," finds that lacrosse and other niche team sports are continuing to experience strong growth for youth and adults.[36]

Impact of the Olympics

Athletics cannot under-estimate the impact that both the winter and summer Olympic Games have on sports participation that year and the next. The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) recently completed a Study on Sports, Fitness, and Recreational Activity Participation. SGMA researcher Neil Schwartz reflected on the study's finding, "While some people may not be motivated to play a particular sport because of watching the Olympic Games, many people are encouraged to start exercising and getting in better physical shape because of the Olympic Games. In some cases, we see a straight line from Olympic coverage and increased sports participation and other times, it is not so direct. The research clearly supports that analysis."[37]

Outdoor Recreation

The Outdoor Foundation releases a "Participation in Outdoor Recreation" report annually. According to the 2013 report,[38] while there continues to be fallout from the recent economic downturn, the number of outdoor recreation outings reached the highest participation an all-time high in 2012. The foundation reports that the top outdoor activities in 2012 were running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking. Birdwatching is also among the favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation.

The Outdoor Foundation's research brought the following key findings.

<u>Participation in Outdoor Recreation</u>

- **Return to Nature:** Nearly 50% of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2012. That equates to a total of 141.9 million Americans and a net gain of one million outdoor participants.
- **Top Five Biggest Participation Percentage Increase in Outdoor Activities in the Past three years**: Triathlon (Off Road), Adventure Racing, Telemarking, Freestyle Skiing, Triathlon (Traditional/Road).

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[34] "2011 vs 2001 Youth Sports Participation", National Sporting Goods Association, 2012, <http://www.nsga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3494>.
[35] Evans and Trachtenberg, "Lacrosse Muscles It's Way West," Wall Street Journal, May, 2009.
[36] "2011 Preview: U.S. Trends in Team Sports, Fall 2011", SMGA, 2011.
[37] "SGMA Says the Olympics do Impact Sports Participation", Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SMGA) Press Release, March 12, 2012, https://www.sgma.com/press/431_SGMA-Says-The-Olympics-Do-Impact-Sports-Participation, accessed October 2, 2012.
[38] "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013", Outdoor Foundation, 2013.

Youth Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- **Participation Fairly Steady from 2011**: However, participation rates dropped among teens ages 13 to 17 (particularly teenage girls) and rose among adults ages 25 to 44.
- **The Influence of Family:** Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.
- **Physical education in schools**: The importance cannot be understated. Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 75% say they had PE in school between the ages of 6 and 12.

Outdoor recreation trends are also a recurring topic of study by the United States Forest Service through the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS). An IRIS report dated January 2012[39] provides the following recent nature-based outdoor recreation trends: Participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole. These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity by viewing/photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming. There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding, and wildlife watching in recent years.

E. Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. The following concepts are from the International County/County Management Association.[40]

- Parks & Recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- There is growing support for recreation programs that encourage active living within their community.
- One of the highest priorities is a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

In summary, the United States of America, its states, and its communities share the enormous task of reducing the health and economic burden of obesity. While numerous programs, policies, and products have been designed to address the problem, there is no magic bullet to make it go away. The role of public parks and recreation as a health promotion and prevention agency has come of age. What matters is refocusing its efforts to ensure the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of communities and citizens.

[39] "Recent Outdoor Recreation Trends", USDA Forest Service Internet Research Information Series (IRIS) Research Brief, January 2012, http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IRISRec/
IRISRec23rpt.pdf, accessed August, 2012.
40 www.ICMA.org, Accessed in 2012.

Administration Trends for Recreation and Parks

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed, and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out, and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness.

The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

Listed below are additional administrative national trends:

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening and more "enterprise" activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed most appropriate.
- Information technology allows for better tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often determined by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Compliance

On September 14, 2010 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an amended regulation implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards).[41] On March 15, 2011 the amended Act became effective, and for the first time in history, includes recreation environment design requirements. Covered entities were to be compliant with design and construction requirements and the development of three-year transition plan by March 15, 2012. Implementation of the three-year transition plan must be complete by March 15, 2015.

Funding

According to *Recreation Management* magazine's "2013 State of the Industry Report," survey respondents from parks and recreation departments/districts reporting about their revenues from 2009 through 2014 reveals the impact of the recession as well as the beginning of a recovery. More than 25 percent of respondents saw their revenues decrease from 2009 to 2010, and 21.8 percent of respondents reported a further decrease in 2011. Forty-four percent (44%) percent of park and recreation respondents reported increases from 2011 to 2012.

41 U.S. Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Home Page, http://www.ada.gov/, accessed on November 15, 2012.

Marketing by Parks and Recreation Providers

Niche marketing trends have experienced change more frequently than ever before as technology affects the way the public receives information. Web 2.0 tools and now Web 3.0 tools are a trend for agencies to use as a means of marketing programs and services. Popular social marketing electronic tools include:

- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- You Tube
- Instagram
- Google +
- LinkedIn

Mobile marketing is a current trend. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate chronologically across four major age cohorts, that millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices such as smart phones. For example, 95 percent of 18-to-29-year-old cell phone owners send and receive text messages, compared to 82 percent of 30-to-49-year-olds, 57 percent of 50-to-64-year-olds, and 19 percent of 65 and older.

It is also a fact that minority Americans lead the way when it comes to mobile internet access. Nearly two-thirds of African-Americans (64%) and Latinos (63%) are wireless internet users, and minority Americans are significantly more likely to own a cell phone than are their white counterparts (87 percent of Blacks and Hispanics own a cell phone, compared with 80 percent of whites).[42] By 2015, mobile internet penetration is forecast to grow to 71.1% for Hispanics compared to 58.8% for whites.[43]

42Aaron Smith, "Mobile Access 2010", Pew Internet and American Life Project, Pew Research Center, July 7, 2010, http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010/Summary-of-Findings.aspx, Accessed on November 15, 2012.
43 Erik Sass, "Minority Groups Heaviest Users of Mobile Net", Media Daily News, Nov. 18, 2011, http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/162699/minority-groups-heaviest-users-of-mobile-net.html#axzz2CK9zYGFw, Accessed on November 15, 2012.

Appendix E – GRASP® Methodology

A. GRASP® History and Methodology

GRASP® Glossary

Buffer: see catchment area

Catchment area: a circular map overlay that radiates outward in all directions from an asset and represents a reasonable travel distance from the edge of the circle to the asset. Used to indicate access to an asset in a level of service assessment

Component: an amenity such as a playground, picnic shelter, basketball court, or athletic field that allows people to exercise, socialize, and maintain a healthy physical, mental, and social wellbeing

Isolation analysis: an examination on a map of places within a study area that meet specific criteria, often included as part of a level of service assessment

Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Process® (GRASP®): a proprietary composite-values methodology that takes quality and functionality of assets and amenities into account in a level of service assessment

Level of service (LOS): the extent to which a recreation system provides a community access to recreational assets and amenities

Low-score component: a component given a GRASP® score of "1" or "0" as it fails to meet expectations

Low-service area: an area of a city that has some GRASP® level of service but falls below the minimum standard threshold for overall level of service

Modifier: a basic site amenity that supports users during a visit to a park or recreation site, to include elements such as restrooms, shade, parking, drinking fountains, seating, BBQ grills, security lighting, and bicycle racks among others

No-service area: an area of a city with no GRASP® level of service

Perspective: a map or data quantification, such as a table or chart, produced using the GRASP® methodology that helps illustrate how well a community is served by a given set of recreational assets

Radius: see catchment area

Recreational connectivity: the extent to which community recreational resources are transitionally linked to allow for easy and enjoyable travel between them

Recreational trail: a soft or hard surface trail intended mostly for leisure and enjoyment of resources. Typically passes through park lands or natural areas and usually falls to parks and recreation professionals for planning and management

Service area: all or part of a catchment area ascribed a particular GRASP® score that reflects level of service provided by a particular recreational asset, a set of assets, or an entire recreation system

Threshold: a minimum level of service standard typically determined based on community expectations

Trail: any off-street or on-street connection dedicated to pedestrian, bicycle, or other non-motorized users

Trail network: a part of a greater trail system within which major barrier crossings have been addressed and all trails are functionally connected by such things as crosswalks, pedestrian underpasses, and/or bridges. Typically separated from other trail networks by missing trail connections or by such barriers as roadways, rivers, or railroad tracks

Trail system: all trails in a community that serve pedestrian, bicycle, and alternative transportation users for purposes of both recreation and transportation

Transportation trail: a hard surface trail, such as a city sidewalk, intended mostly for utility in traveling from one place to another in a community or region. Typically runs outside of park lands and is managed by Public Works or other city utility department

Composite-Values Level of Service Analysis Methodology

Analysis of the existing parks, open space, trails, and recreation systems are often conducted in order to try and determine how the systems are serving the public. A Level of Service (LOS) has been typically defined in parks and recreation master plans as the capacity of the various components and facilities that make up the system to meet the needs of the public. This is often expressed in terms of the size or quantity of a given facility per unit of population.

Brief History of Level of Service Analysis

In order to help standardize parks and recreation planning, universities, agencies, and parks and recreation professionals have long been looking for ways to benchmark and provide "national standards" for how much acreage, how many ballfields, pools, playgrounds, etc., a community *should* have. In 1906 the fledgling "Playground Association of America" called for playground space equal to 30 square feet per child. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the first detailed published works on these topics began emerging (Gold, 1973, Lancaster, 1983). In time "rule of thumb" ratios emerged with 10 acres of parklands per thousand population becoming the most widely accepted norm. Other normative guides also have been cited as "traditional standards," but have been less widely accepted. In 1983, Roger Lancaster compiled a book called, Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, that was published by the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA). In this publication, Mr. Lancaster centered on a recommendation "that a park system, at minimum, be composed of a core system of parklands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population (Lancaster, 1983, p. 56). The guidelines went further to make recommendations regarding an appropriate mix of park types, sizes, service areas, and acreages, and standards regarding the number of available recreational facilities per thousand population. While the book was published by NRPA, and the table of standards became widely known as "the NRPA standards," these standards were never formally adopted for use by NRPA.

Since that time, various publications have updated and expanded upon possible "standards," several of which have been published by NRPA. Many of these publications did benchmarking and other normative research to try and determine what an "average LOS" should be. It is important to note that NRPA and the prestigious American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, as organizations, have focused in recent years on accreditation standards for agencies, which are less directed towards outputs, outcomes and performance, and more on planning, organizational structure, and management processes. In essence, the popularly referred to "NRPA standards" for LOS, as such, do not exist. The following table gives some of the more commonly used capacity "standards" today.

Commonly Referenced LOS Capacity "Standards"

Activity/ Facility	Recommended Space Requirements	Service Radius and Location Notes	Number of Units per Population
Baseball Official Little League	3.0 to 3.85 acre minimum 1.2 acre minimum	¼ to ½ mile Unlighted part of neighborhood complex; lighted fields part of community complex	1 per 5,000; lighted 1 per 30,000
Basketball Youth High school	2,400 – 3,036 vs. 5,040 – 7,280 s.f.	¼ to ½ mile Usually in school, recreation center or church facility; safe walking or bide access; outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings	1 per 5,000
Football	Minimum 1.5 acres	15 – 30 minute travel time Usually part of sports complex in community park or adjacent to school	1 per 20,000
Soccer	1.7 to 2.1 acres	1 to 2 miles Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to larger soccer fields or neighborhood parks	1 per 10,000
Softball	1.5 to 2.0 acres	¼ to ½ mile May also be used for youth baseball	1 per 5,000 (if also used for youth baseball)
Swimming Pools	Varies on size of pool & amenities; usually ½ to 2-acre site	15 – 30 minutes travel time Pools for general community use should be planned for teaching, competitive & recreational purposes with enough depth (3.4m) to accommodate 1m to 3m diving boards; located in community park or school site	1 per 20,000 (pools should accommodate 3% to 5% of total population at a time)
Tennis	Minimum of 7,200 s.f. single court area (2 acres per complex	¼ to ½ mile Best in groups of 2 to 4 courts; located in neighborhood community park or near school site	1 court per 2,000
Volleyball	Minimum 4,000 s.f.	½ to 1 mile Usually in school, recreation center or church facility; safe walking or bide access; outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings	1 court per 5,000
Total land Acreage		Various types of parks - mini, neighborhood, community, regional, conservation, etc.	10 acres per 1,000

Sources:
David N. Ammons, Municipal Benchmarks - Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards, 2nd Ed., 2002
Roger A. Lancaster (Ed.), *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* (Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1983), pp. 56-57.
James D. Mertes and James R. Hall, *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways* Guidelines, (Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 1996), pp. 94-103.

In conducting planning work, it is key to realize that the above standards can be valuable when referenced as "norms" for capacity, but not necessarily as the target standards for which a community should strive. Each community is different and there are many varying factors which are not addressed by the standards above. For example:

- Does "developed acreage" include golf courses? What about indoor and passive facilities?
- What are the standards for skateparks? Ice Arenas? Public Art? Etc.?
- What if it's an urban land-locked community? What if it's a small town surrounded by open Federal lands?
- What about quality and condition? What if there's a bunch of ballfields, but they haven't been maintained in the last ten years?
- And many other questions….

GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program)

In order to address these and other relevant questions, a new methodology for determining Level of Service was developed. It is called a **composite-values methodology** and has been applied in communities across the nation in recent years to provide a better way of measuring and portraying the service provided by parks and recreation systems. Primary research and development on this methodology was funded jointly by GreenPlay, LLC, a management consulting firm for parks, open space and related agencies, Design Concepts, a landscape architecture and planning firm, and Geowest, a spatial information management firm. The trademarked name for the composite-values methodology process that these three firms use is called **GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program).** For this methodology, capacity is only part of the LOS equation. Other factors are brought into consideration, including *quality*, *condition*, *location*, *comfort*, *convenience*, and *ambience*.

To do this, parks, trails, recreation, and open space are looked at as part of an overall infrastructure for a community made up of various components, such as playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, passive areas, etc. The ways in which the characteristics listed above affect the amount of service provided by the components of the system are explained in the following text.

Quality – The service provided by anything, whether it is a playground, soccer field, or swimming pool is determined in part by its quality. A playground with a variety of features, such as climbers, slides, and swings provides a higher degree of service than one with nothing but an old teeter-totter and some "monkey-bars."

Condition – The condition of a component within the park system also affects the amount of service it provides. A playground in disrepair with unsafe equipment does not offer the same service as one in good condition. Similarly, a soccer field with a smooth surface of well-maintained grass certainly offers a higher degree of service than one that is full of weeds, ruts, and other hazards.

Location – To be served by something, you need to be able to get to it. The typical park playground is of more service to people who live within easy reach of it than it is to someone living all the way across town. Therefore, service is dependent upon proximity and access.

Comfort – The service provided by a component, such as a playground, is increased by having amenities such as shade, seating, and a restroom nearby. Comfort enhances the experience of using a component.

Convenience – Convenience encourages people to use a component, which increases the amount of service that it offers. Easy access and the availability of trash receptacles, bike rack, or nearby parking are examples of conveniences that enhance the service provided by a component.

Ambience – Simple observation will prove that people are drawn to places that "feel" good. This includes a sense of safety and security, as well as pleasant surroundings, attractive views, and a sense of place. A well-designed park is preferable to poorly-designed one, and this enhances the degree of service provided by the components within it.

In this methodology, the geographic location of the component is also recorded. Capacity is still part of the LOS analysis (described below), and the quantity of each component is recorded as well.

The methodology uses comfort, convenience, and ambience as characteristics that are part of the context and setting of a component. They are not characteristics of the component itself, but when they exist in proximity to a component they enhance the value of the component.

By combining and analyzing the composite values of each component, it is possible to measure the service provided by a parks and recreation system from a variety of perspectives and for any given location. Typically this begins with a decision on **"relevant components**" for the analysis, collection of an accurate inventory of those components, analysis and then the results are presented in a series of maps and tables that make up the **GRASP®** analysis of the study area.

Making Justifiable Decisions

All of the data generated from the GRASP® evaluation is compiled into an electronic database that is then available and owned by the agency for use in a variety of ways. The database can help keep track of facilities and programs, and can be used to schedule services, maintenance, and the replacement of components. In addition to determining LOS, it can be used to project long-term capital and life-cycle costing needs. All portions of the information are in standard available software and can be produced in a variety of ways for future planning or sharing with the public.

It is important to note that the GRASP® methodology provides not only accurate LOS and facility inventory information, but also works with and integrates with other tools to help agencies make decisions. It is relatively easy to maintain, updatable, and creates easily understood graphic depictions of issues. Combined with a needs assessment, public and staff involvement, and program and financial assessment, GRASP® allows an agency to defensibly make recommendations on priorities for ongoing resource allocations along with capital and operational funding.

B. Assets Inventoried for Level of Service Analysis

Inventory asset locations for the City of Sterling GRASP® Level of Service analysis may be organized into the following categories:

Parks

Sterling's parks range in size from the approximately quarter acre South Triangle Park to the 70+ acre Pioneer Park. These parks are well distributed across the city and provide access to the majority of Sterling citizens. The parks are generally well maintained and offer a variety of both active and passive recreational opportunities. While not formally classified, the parks generally fall into two subcategories:

Regional Parks

These parks generally serve a larger audience and typically provide onsite parking in addition to programmed spaces such as ballfields:

- Overland Trail Recreation Area
- Pioneer Park

Neighborhood Parks

These parks could further be divided up into large, medium, and small categories. These too offer a similar diversity of experience than is present in the regional facilities. These parks are located throughout the community and are generally within walking distance of residential neighborhoods.

Larger parks provide various recreation opportunities through multiple components:

- Prairie Park
- Columbine Park

Most medium size parks offer limited opportunities and between two and four components:

- Cheairs Park
- Earl D Franklin Park
- Jerry Wisdom Park
- Krull Park
- Monahan Park
- Propst Park
- Tolla Brown Skate Park

Most small parks generally have a single components or are currently undeveloped:

- 11th and Delmar Park
- Beattie Circle
- North Triangle Park
- South Tower Park
- South Triangle Park

Museum
Basic components from the Overland Trail Museum were included in both the indoor and outdoor inventory.

Cemetery
Basic components from the Riverside Cemetery were included in the inventory, but they are not a focus of this master plan.

Other Civic Property
Basic components from the City Complex and Library were included in the inventory but they are not a focus of this master plan.

Schools
Schools provide a level of service and access to recreational opportunities in Sterling as in most cities, but access may be limited to non-school hours and therefore is included in the analysis at a discount. In addition to limited access, the quality of equipment and standards of maintenance may not be consistent with City of Sterling standards. Schools can, however, provide much needed access to sports fields from a programming standpoint through partnerships. The City of Sterling utilizes several school facilities both in indoor and outdoor programming. Assets at the following schools were included in the outdoor level of service analysis:

- Ayers Elementary
- Campbell Elementary
- Hagan School
- NJC Field Complex
- Sterling Middle School
- Sterling High School

Other Outdoor Providers
- Logan County Fairgrounds
- I76 Rest Area

Indoor Facilities
The City has several indoor facilities that provide spaces for a variety of programming. The physical assets represented by these facilities have been inventoried.

City Facilities
- Overland Trail Museum
- Sterling Recreation Center
- Sterling Public Library

School Facilities
- Ayers Elementary
- Campbell Elementary
- Sterling High School
- Sterling Middle School

Other Indoor Providers

- Logan County Fairgrounds
- Logan County Heritage Center
- Northwestern Junior College (NJC) Event Center
- I76 Visitor Center

C. Addressing Low-Scoring Components

The inventory process for the master plan included rating components throughout the system on their functionality. Components whose functionality is below expectations were identified and scored with a "one." A list of these can easily be extracted from the inventory dataset. By raising the score of a component, you are also raising the Level of Service in your community. But deciding how to do this may seem daunting. A strategy for addressing the repair/refurbishment/replacement or re-purposing of low-functioning components should begin with the following steps. This should be done for each individual component in the inventory that is not functioning up to expectations.

A. Determine why the component is functioning below expectations. Was it poorly conceived in the first place? Is it something that was not needed to begin with? Is it the wrong size, type, or configuration? Is it poorly placed, or located in a way that conflicts with other uses or detracts from its use? Have the needs changed in a way that the component is now outdated, obsolete, or no longer needed? Has it been damaged? Or, has the maintenance of the component simply been deferred or neglected to the point where it no longer functions as intended?

   Another possibility is that the component was scored low because it is not available to the public in a way that meets expectations. For example, a facility might be rated low because it is leased to a private group and access by the general public is limited This may be a perfectly acceptable situation and appropriately scored - the service is at a lower value because of the limitations on access.

   Another example would be when a component is old, outdated, or otherwise dysfunctional, but has historic or sentimental value. An example would be an old structure in a park such as a stone barbecue grill, or other artifact that cannot be restored to its original purpose, but which has historic value.

B. Depending on the answers from the first step, a strategy can be selected for addressing the low-functioning component:
   - If the need for that type of component in its current location still exists, then the component should be repaired or replaced to match its original condition as much as possible. Examples of this would be playgrounds with old, damaged, or outdated equipment, or courts with poor surfacing or missing nets.
   - If the need for that type of component has changed to the point where the original one is no longer suitable, then it should be replaced with a new one that fits the current needs. For example, if a picnic shelter is too small for the amount of use currently demanded, it may be replaced with a new, larger one.

- If a component is poorly located, or was poorly designed to start with, consideration should be given to relocating, redesigning, or otherwise modifying it. An example would be an amphitheater next to a street that was once small and quiet but is now loud and busy. The noise from the street makes it undesirable to use the amphitheater for its intended purpose. If there is still a need for this type of facility at this park, then consideration should be given to relocating it or redesigning it to provide screening from traffic and other noise.

- If a component is no longer needed because of changing demands, then it should be removed unless it can be maintained in good condition without excessive expense, or unless it has historic or sentimental value. Some inline hockey rinks may fall into this category. If a rink has been allowed to deteriorate because the community has no desire for inline hockey, then maybe it should be repurposed into some other use such as a basketball or tennis court, multi-use play-pad, or perhaps a skate park. It could even become a something unusual, like a trike-track course. Or it could become the surface for a large group picnic shelter. Another possibility might be to install outdoor fitness stations and make it an "outdoor gym."

  The choice of what to put in the rink's place should be made with input from the community. This could be done with a simple intercept survey, door-hung questionnaire, or by contacting a neighborhood organization. The point is that it makes no sense to replace something that the neighborhood no longer needs with something else it doesn't need.

  If no appropriate alternative use for the rink or the space it occupies is identified, it should be removed to avoid a blighted appearance, and the space should be integrated into the rest of the park with landscaping.

C. It is possible that through ongoing public input, and as needs and trends evolve; new needs will be identified for existing parks. If there is no room in an existing park for new needs, the decision may be made to remove or re-purpose an existing component, even if it is quite functional. An example of this could be found in many communities over the past couple of decades. As the popularity of tennis declined and demand for courts dropped off, perfectly good courts were sometimes converted into skate parks or inline rinks. In most cases this was an interim use, intended to satisfy a short-term need until a decision could be made to either construct a permanent facility or let the passing fad fade. The need for inline rinks now seems to have diminished, while temporary skate parks on tennis courts have been moved to permanent locations of their own and become more elaborate facilities as skateboarding and other wheel sports have grown in popularity and permanence.

   Another example of this can be found in the re-purposing by one community of a ball diamond into a dog park. The ball diamond is well-suited for use as a dog park, because it is already fenced, and the combination of skinned infield where the dogs enter and natural grass in the outfield where traffic is spread out is ideal.

It is likely that in time this facility will either become a permanent facility designed specifically to meet the needs of people recreating with their dogs, or such a facility will be constructed elsewhere to suit that purpose. Or, it could turn out that dog parks fade in popularity like inline hockey rinks, or are replaced with some other facility that dog owners prefer even more than the current dog park model. Meanwhile, the use of the ball diamond for this purpose is a good interim solution.

Trends to keep an eye on while deciding what to do with low-functioning facilities, or determining how to make existing parks serve the needs of residents as highly as possible, include things like:

- Dog parks continue to grow in popularity. This may have something to do with an aging demographic in America, with more "empty-nesters" transferring the attention they once gave to their children, who are now grown, to their pets. It is also an important form of socializing for people who may have once socialized with other parents in their child's soccer league, and now that the kids are grown they are enjoying the company of other dog owners at the dog park. And for singles, a dog park is a good place to meet people.
- Skateboarding and other wheel sports continue to grow in popularity. Making neighborhood parks skateable and distributing skating features throughout the community provides greater access to this activity for younger people who cannot drive to a larger centralized skate park.
- A desire for locally-grown food and concerns about health, sustainability, and other issues is leading to the development of community food gardens in parks and other public spaces.
- Events in parks, from a neighborhood "movie in the park" to large festivals in regional parks, are growing in popularity as a way to build a sense of community and generate revenues. Providing spaces for these could become a trend.
- Sprayparks are growing rapidly in popularity, even in cooler climates. A wide and growing selection of products for these is raising the bar on expectations and offering new possibilities for creative facilities.
- New types of playgrounds are emerging, including discovery play, nature play, adventure play, and even inter-generational play. Some of these rely upon movable parts, supervised play areas, and other variations that are different from the standard fixed "post and platform" playgrounds found in the typical park across America.
- Integrating nature into parks by creating natural areas is a trend for a number of reasons. These include a desire to make parks more sustainable and introduce people of all ages to the natural environment. An educational aspect is an important part of these areas.

D. Walkability and Bicycle Transit

A one-third mile catchment area is preferred for GRASP® walkability LOS analyses. This distance represents a maximum travel time of ten minutes based on an average human walking speed of 3 miles per hour. (Older people can travel as slow as 2.25 mph, while a healthy individual with quickened breath may be moving at 4-6.5 mph). Due to indirect routes commonly found in a grid street pattern, actual walking distance may in fact be farther than 1/3 mile. A one-third mile circular buffer (as distinct from network buffer) allows for this as even an indirect route one half-mile long can be covered in 10 minutes by an individual travelling 3 mph. Thus a one-third mile catchment distance serves to ensure a travel time of 10 minutes or less for most people.

Walkability is an important consideration in recreation these days. Various walkability metrics and methodologies have emerged to assist park and recreation managers and planners in understanding this dynamic. These include:

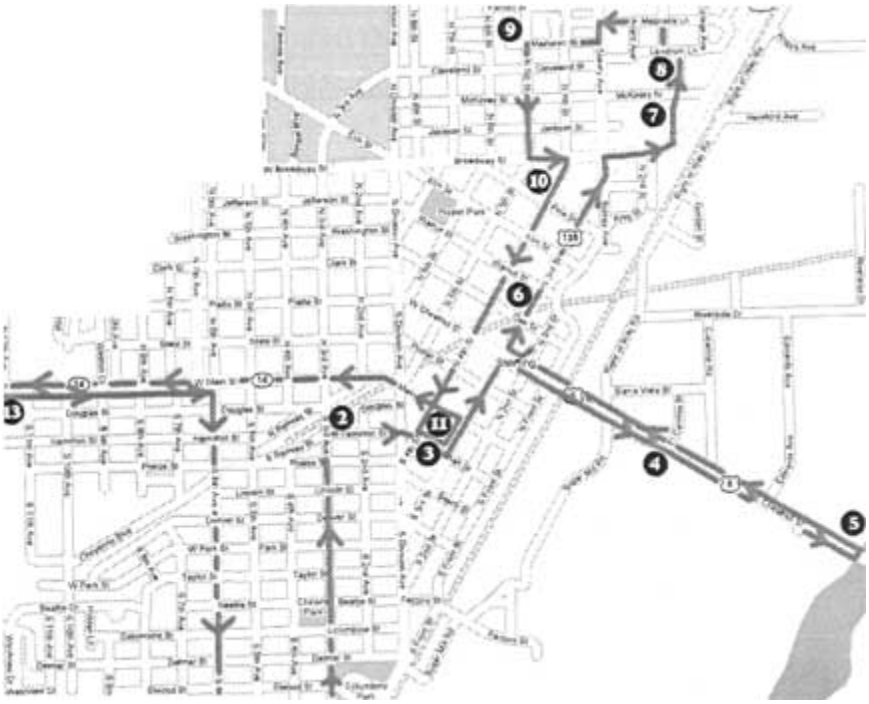
- Walk score
- Walkability TM
- Walkonomics
- RateMy Street
- Walkability App
- Safe Routes to Play
- Safe Routes to School
- Sidewalk and Walkability Inventory

It is important to take bicycle and public transportation users into account as well as pedestrians. The concept of "complete streets" refers to a built environment that serves various types of users of varying age and ability. Many associations and organizations provide guidance on best practices in developing walkable and bikeable complete streets infrastructure. One such entity, the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP, www.apbp.org) actively promotes complete streets in cities around the country. Another such organization, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO, www.nacto.org) recently released the ***NACTO Urban Street Design Guide*** which provides a full understanding of complete streets based on successful strategies employed in various North American cities. This most comprehensive reference on the topic is a valuable resource for all stakeholders involved in city planning and will likely prove to be a critical reference in building the cities of tomorrow.

Public Transportation

Prairie Express provides public transportation for the City of Sterling. The following information may be found on the Prairie Express website (www.necoexpress.com/prairie/index.html):

Prairie Express buses operate on a fixed route and schedule. However, we also provide Route-Deviation Service Monday through Friday within the Sterling area in which we are able to accommodate demand-response trips.



The schedules show the time that the bus may arrive at a stop. These times will vary depending on how many deviations a bus will make. If there are no requests to "deviate," the bus will operate as a regular fixed-route.

Residents in the Sterling area can request the bus to pick-up or drop off at a specific location, not on the advertised route, and at a slightly higher cost to the rider. The bus will leave and return at the same location from the scheduled route. This ensures that all riders who are waiting for the bus will still be accommodated.

FARES

General Public (one-way)	*$1.00*
Senior (65+ years)	*$.50*
Route-Deviation	*$1.00*

PASSES

Bus Punch Card (10 rides)	*$7.50*
Bus Pass Card	*$25.00*

Appendix F – GRASP® Maps

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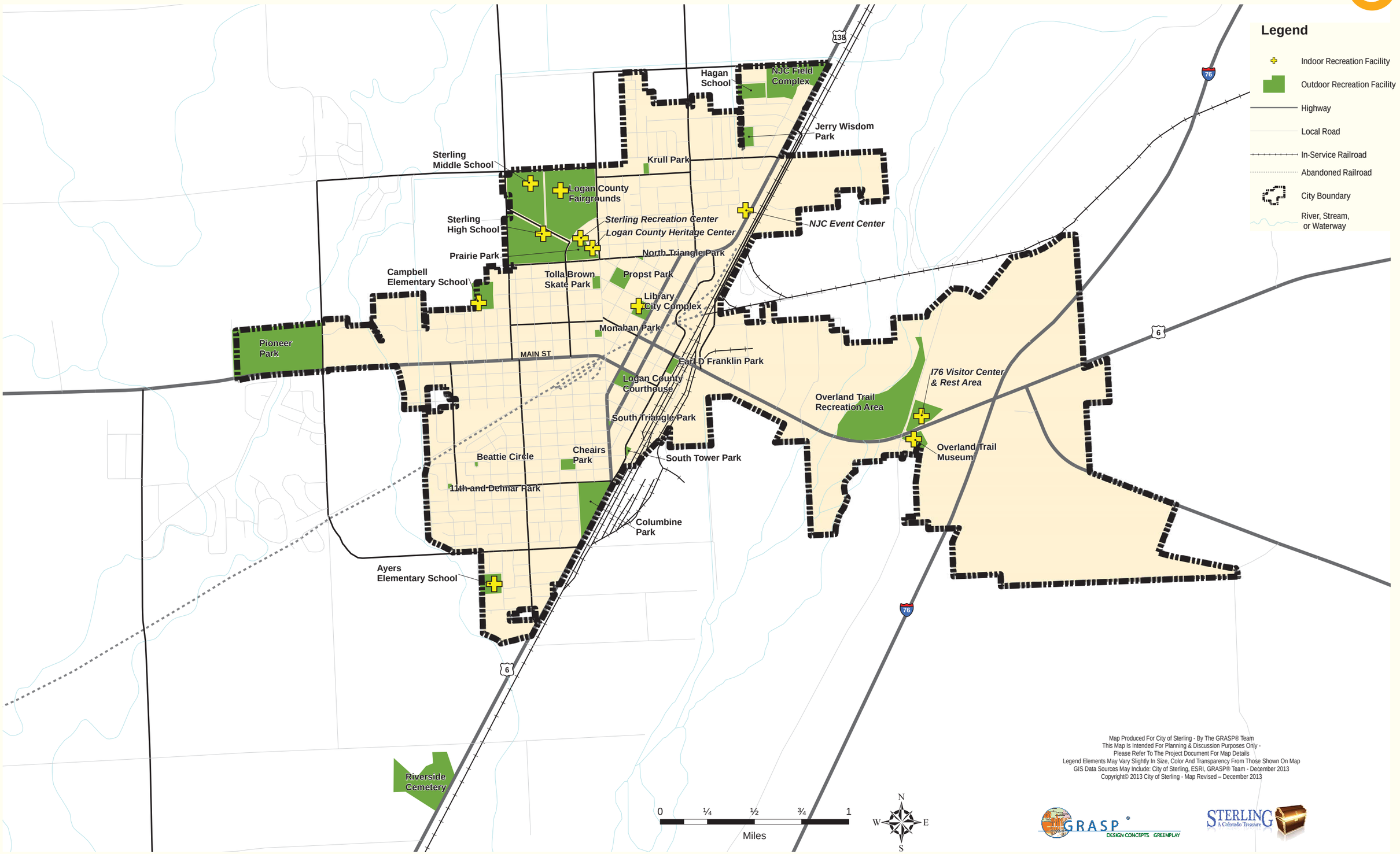
City of Sterling, Colorado

Map A: System Resource Map

A Colorado Treasure!

A



City of Sterling, Colorado

Map B: General Access to All Recreation Components Perspective

A Colorado Treasure!

B

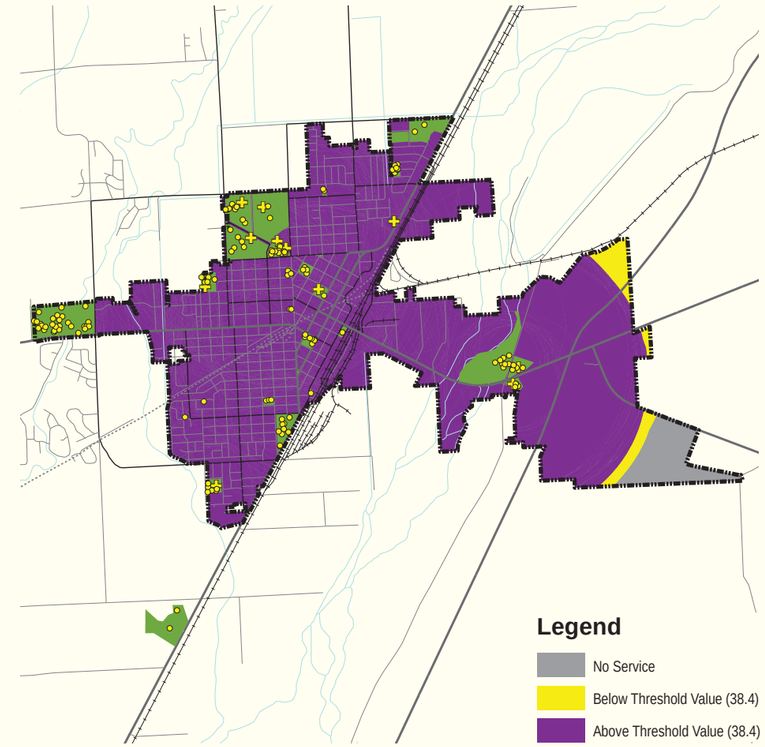
NJC Field Complex
Hagan School
Logan County Fairgrounds
Jerry Wisdom Park
Sterling Middle School
Krull Park
NJC Event Center
Sterling Recreation Center
Sterling High School
Logan County Heritage Center
Prairie Park
Tolla Brown Skate Park
Propst Park
North Triangle Park
Campbell Elementary School
Library
City Complex
Monahan Park
Pioneer Park
MAIN ST
Logan County Courthouse
Earl D Franklin Park
I76 Visitor Center & Rest Area
Overland Trail Recreation Area
South Triangle Park
Overland Trail Museum
Cheairs Park
Beattie Circle
South Tower Park
11th and Delmar Park
Columbine Park
Ayers Elementary School
Riverside Cemetery

Legend

- Higher Level of Service
- Lower Level of Service
- Outdoor Component
- Indoor Recreation Facility
- Outdoor Recreation Facility
- Highway
- Local Road
- In-Service Railroad
- Abandoned Railroad
- City Boundary
- River, Stream, or Waterway

0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1
Miles

N W E S



Legend

- No Service
- Below Threshold Value (38.4)
- Above Threshold Value (38.4)

B-1: General Threshold Analysis Perspective

This map displays level of service values based on the minimum standard for adequate service in the City of Sterling. This score was determined to be a GRASP Value of 38.4. For reference this is a score equivalent to that of Propst Park.

Map Produced For City of Sterling - By The GRASP® Team
This Map Is Intended For Planning & Discussion Purposes Only -
Please Refer To The Project Document For Map Details
Legend Elements May Vary Slightly In Size, Color And Transparency From Those Shown On Map
GIS Data Sources May Include: City of Sterling, ESRI, GRASP® Team - December 2013
Copyright© 2013 City of Sterling - Map Revised – December 2013

GRASP® DESIGN CONCEPTS GREENPLAY

STERLING A Colorado Treasure

City of Sterling, Colorado

Map C: Walkable Access To All Recreation Components Perspective

A Colorado Treasure!

C

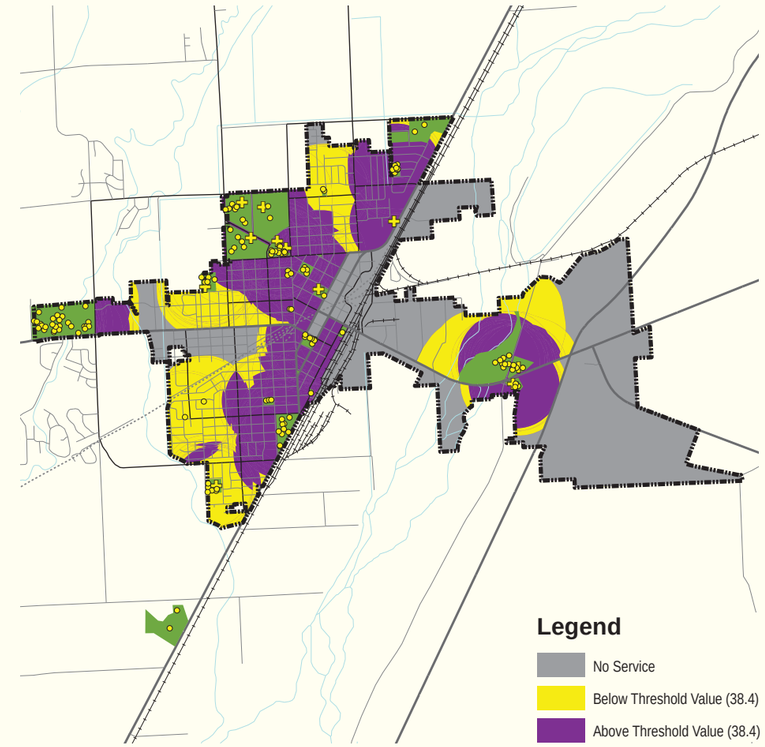
NJC Field Complex
Hagan School
Logan County Fairgrounds
Jerry Wisdom Park
Sterling Middle School
Krull Park
NJC Event Center
Sterling Recreation Center
Sterling High School
Logan County Heritage Center
Prairie Park
Tolla Brown Skate Park
Propst Park
North Triangle Park
Campbell Elementary School
Library
City Complex
Monahan Park
Pioneer Park
MAIN ST
Logan County Courthouse
Earl D Franklin Park
I76 Visitor Center & Rest Area
Overland Trail Recreation Area
South Triangle Park
Overland Trail Museum
Cheairs Park
Beattie Circle
South Tower Park
11th and Delmar Park
Columbine Park
Ayers Elementary School
Riverside Cemetery

Legend

- Higher Level of Service
- Lower Level of Service
- Outdoor Component
- Indoor Recreation Facility
- Outdoor Recreation Facility
- Highway
- Local Road
- In-Service Railroad
- Abandoned Railroad
- City Boundary
- River, Stream, or Waterway

0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1
Miles

N W E S



Legend

- No Service
- Below Threshold Value (38.4)
- Above Threshold Value (38.4)

C-1: Walkable Threshold Analysis Perspective

This map displays level of service values based on the minimum standard for adequate service in the City of Sterling. This score was determined to be a GRASP Value of 38.4. For reference this is a score equivalent to that of Propst Park.

Map Produced For City of Sterling - By The GRASP® Team
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GRASP® DESIGN CONCEPTS GREENPLAY

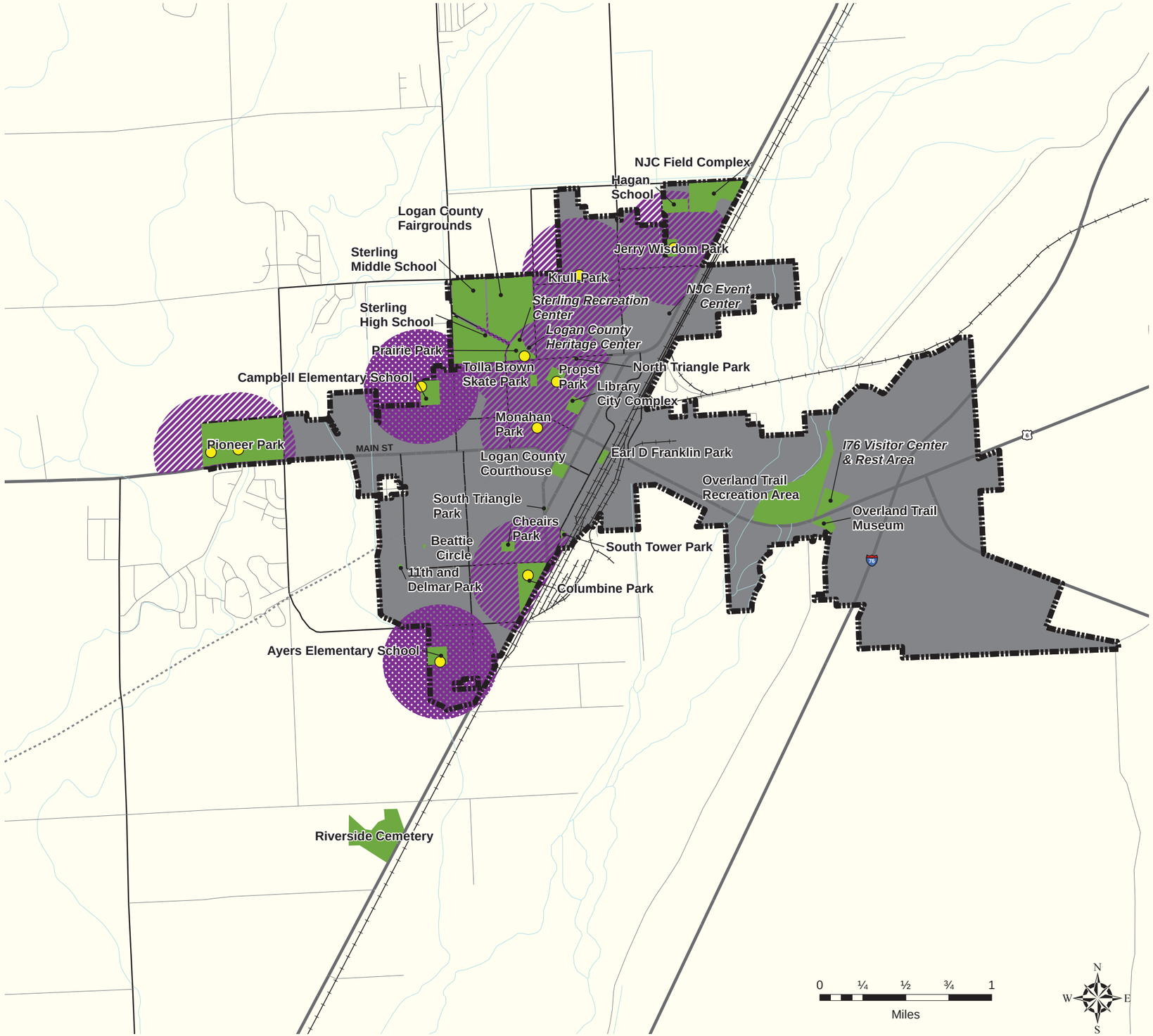
STERLING A Colorado Treasure

City of Sterling, Colorado

Map D: Walkable Access to Playgrounds Perspective

A Colorado Treasure!

D



Legend

- Park Playground
- School Playground
- Indoor Recreation Facility
- Outdoor Recreation Facility
- City Boundary
- Highway
- Local Road
- In-Service Railroad
- Abandoned Railroad
- River, Stream, or Waterway

Map Produced For City of Sterling - By The GRASP® Team
This Map Is Intended For Planning & Discussion Purposes Only -
Please Refer To The Project Document For Map Details
Legend Elements May Vary Slightly In Size, Color And Transparency From Those Shown On Map
GIS Data Sources May Include: City of Sterling, ESRI, GRASP® Team - December 2013
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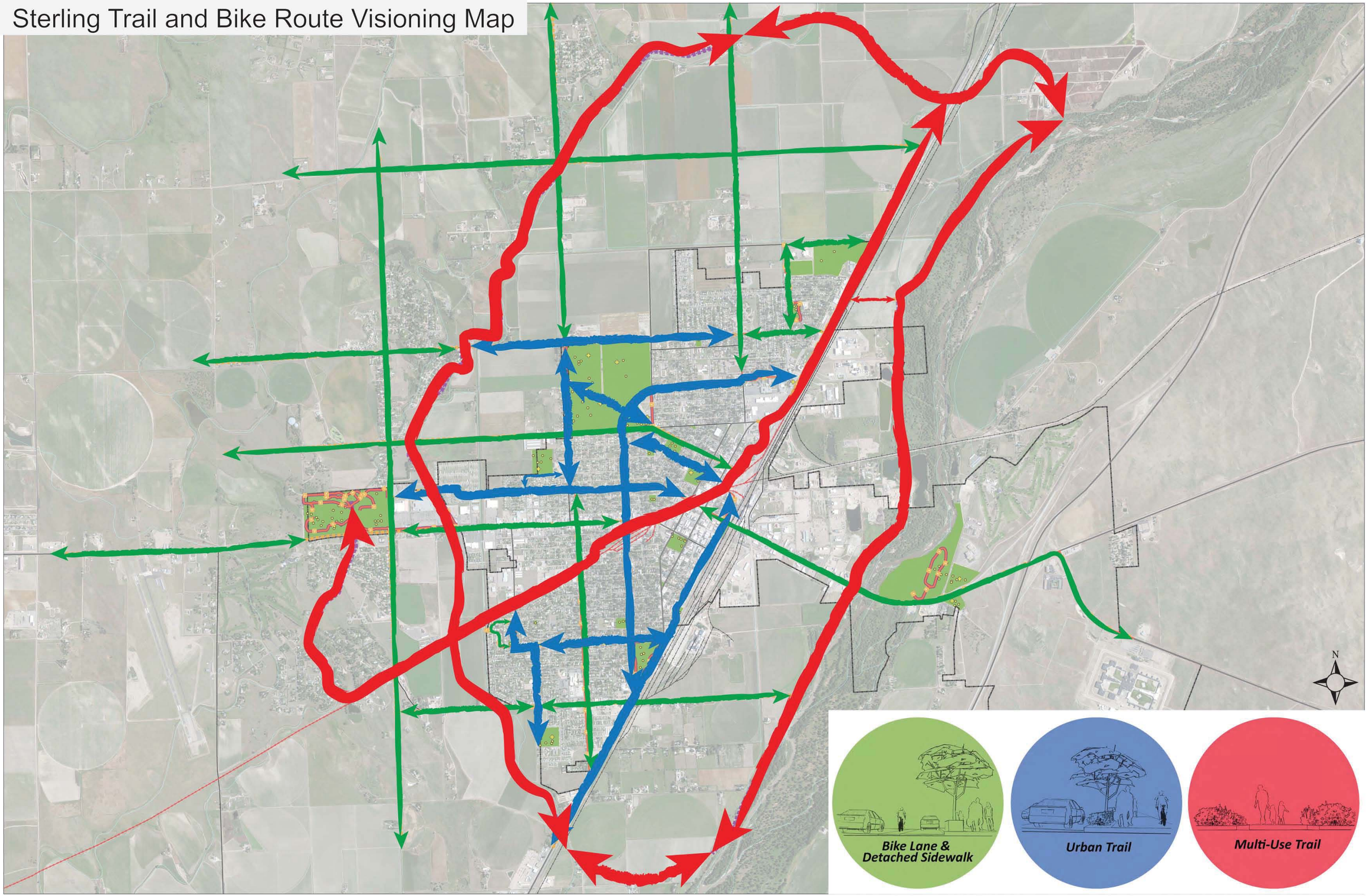
GRASP® DESIGN CONCEPTS GREENPLAY

STERLING A Colorado Treasure

Sterling Trail and Bike Route Visioning Map