

Purpose of the Plan:

- Provide a vision for parks and recreation in Kent for the next 10 years
- Ensure department offerings and priorities are aligned with community needs
- Address gaps & inequities in service delivery
- Prepare the department to respond to changing needs and trends
- Describe future funding requirements and potential sources
- Strengthen fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and efficiency
- Ensure no duplication of services, improve partnerships



Why Us:



≈100

Parks & Rec System
Master Plans

Steering Committee Guidance:

PLAN PURPOSE

PLAN PROCESS

- EVALUATE PHASE
- ENGAGE PHASE
- ENVISION PHASE
- PLAN PHASE

Small group of key staff, board members, and city officials



Involvement, direction, reviewing materials

4 Meetings
Each about **2hrs**

Provide critical knowledge and context for Kent



Help promote engagement opportunities



Determine community's vision for the future of parks and recreation in Kent



Ensure that plan and recommendations are right for the YOUR community



Project Process

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Evaluate

What the Data Says...

Based on availability of parks & 13 amenities

45% live with high or medium-high service

19% live with low or medium-low service

= 80% live with medium levels of service or higher

+ these areas with the highest LOS have the most children

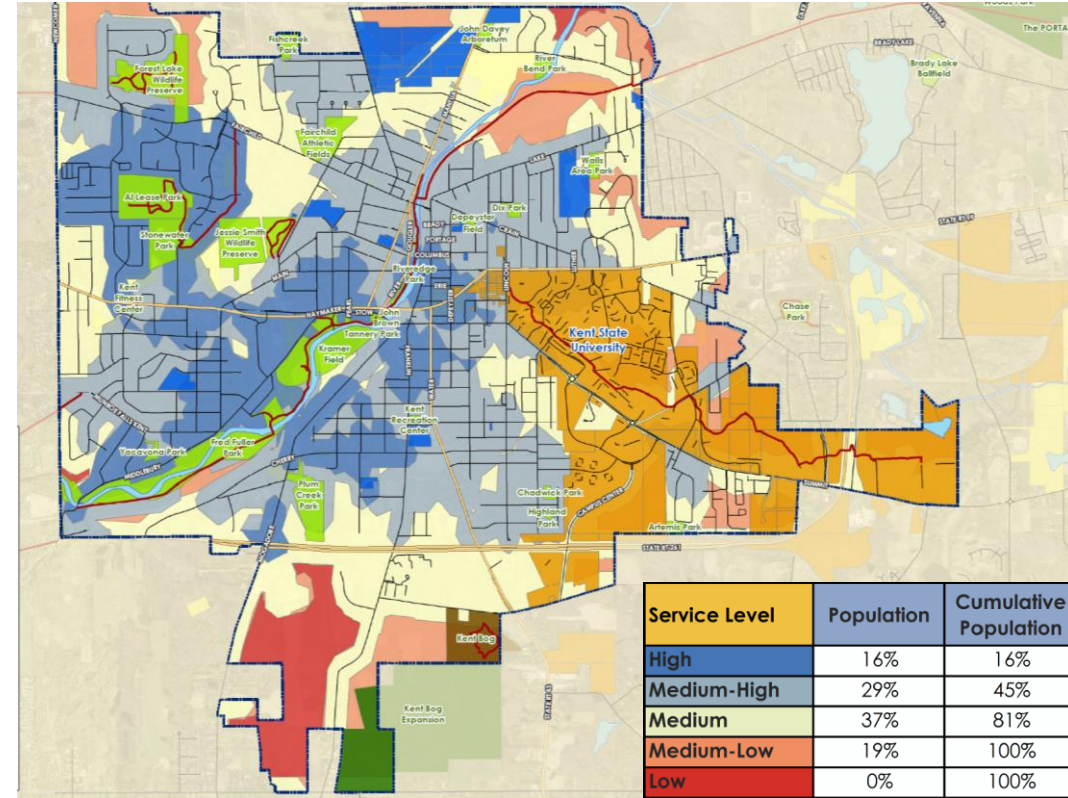
67%  within walking distance to a park



Site assessment determined:

- + Athletic field updates needed
- + Some aging infrastructure & equipment
- + Opportunities at existing parks
- + ADA deficiencies

Park Service Levels



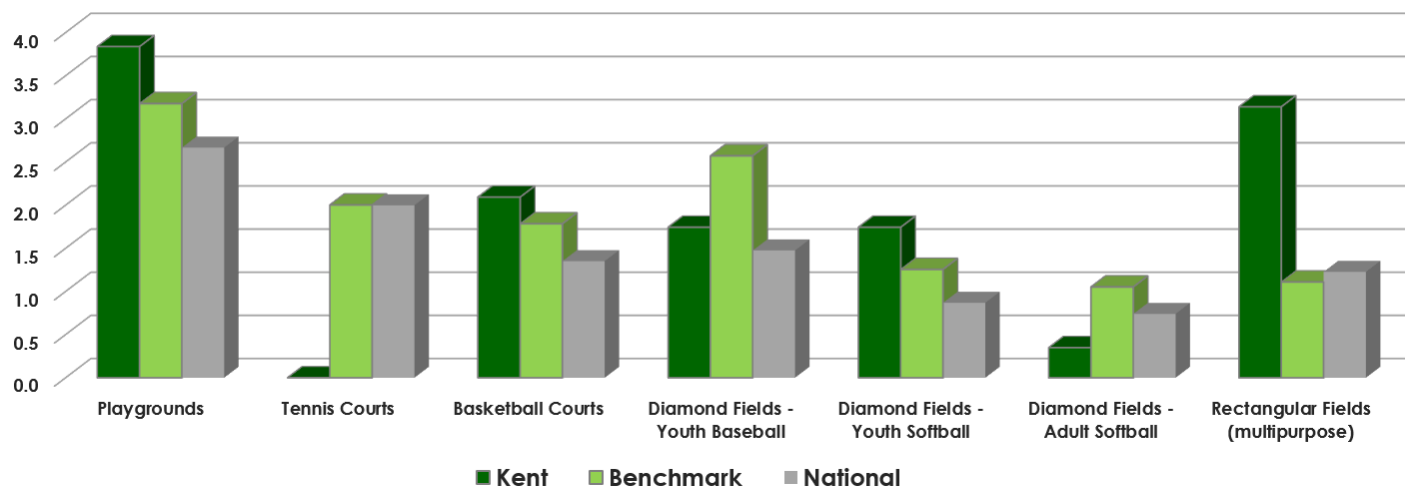
Population Changes – Slow Growth & Aging

- Population projected to remain steady (1980-2026)
- Comparatively low median age (23) but still aging –11% age 65+
- Kent State University's presence plays a major role

What the Data Says...

Benchmarking to 24 agencies serving populations between 18,000-40,000 (8 states)

Facilities Per 10,000 Population



Similar or higher level of service for most facilities



The large amount of undeveloped parkland creates significant potential for improvements

- **Fewer staff than the benchmarks** (4.4 FTE/10,000 pop. vs 7.4)
 - 31.1 acres per FTE vs 15.8
- **Lower operating expenditures per acre of parkland** (\$5K vs \$6K)
- **Operating budgets & revenues are lower than the benchmarks**

Engage

Learning from the Community...

PLAN PURPOSE

PLAN PROCESS

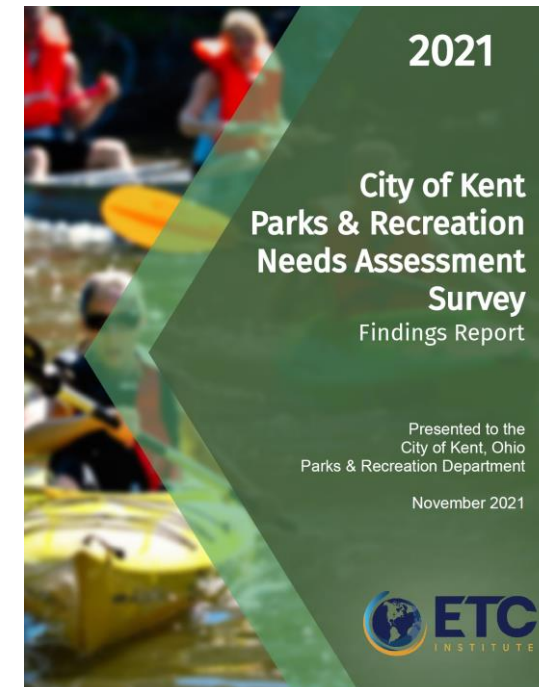
▪ EVALUATE PHASE

▪ **ENGAGE PHASE**

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- **401 Random Sample Mail Surveys**
- **557 Web/Handout Surveys**
 - 80% of respondents Kent residents
 - Website, email, handout, QR code
- **10+ stakeholder groups** engaged
 - e.g., P&R employees, Kent State University, Kent City School District, private stakeholders, program parents
- **2 Open House Workshops (67 attendees)**



Engage

Top Findings from Survey Results & Open House

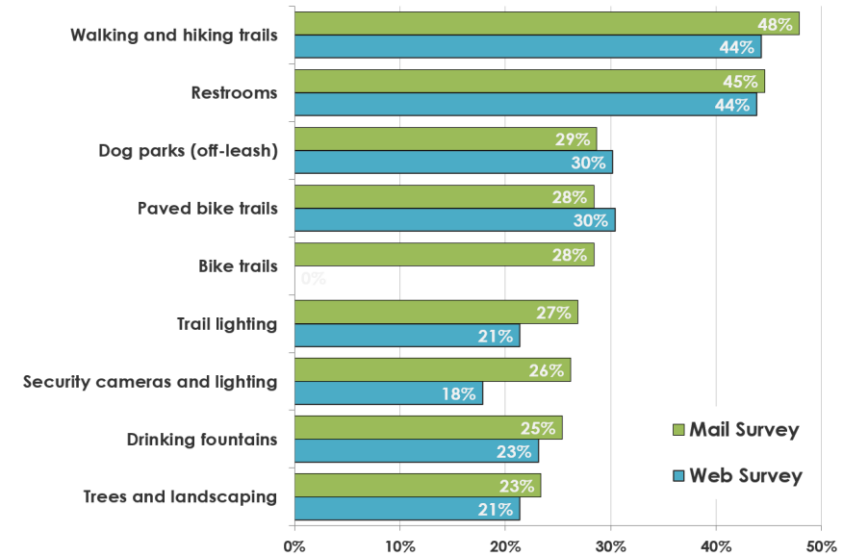
PLAN PURPOSE

PLAN PROCESS

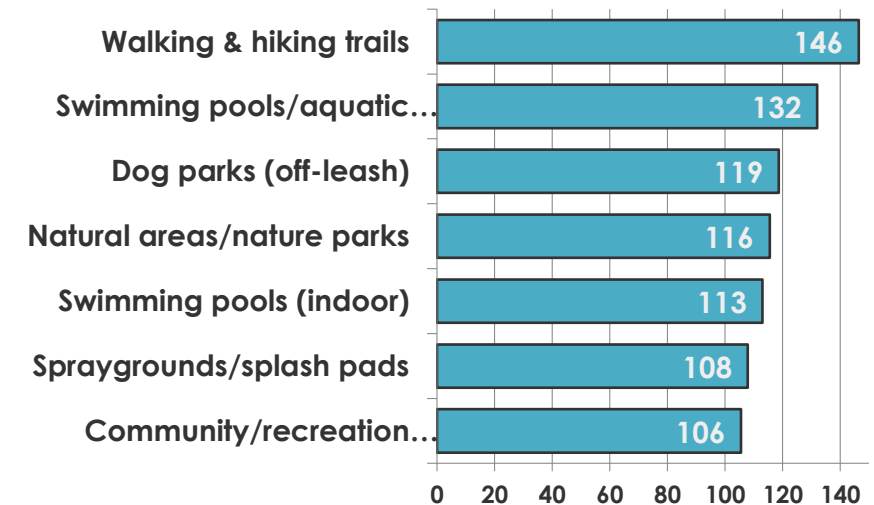
- EVALUATE PHASE
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- **Connectivity and trails** – walking, hiking, biking (paved & gravel)
- **Athletic field improvements** – more, lights, turf, improvements to existing (better use, support elements)
- **Pickleball** courts w/ lights
- **Recreation center** w/ senior space
- **New park features** (e.g., splash pad, dog park, nature areas/parks)
- **Preservation of and access to natural areas**
- **Upgraded playgrounds** w/ accessible, adaptive equipment
- **Support amenities** – restrooms, wayfinding, security, shade, seating

Upgrades/additions to Existing Parks



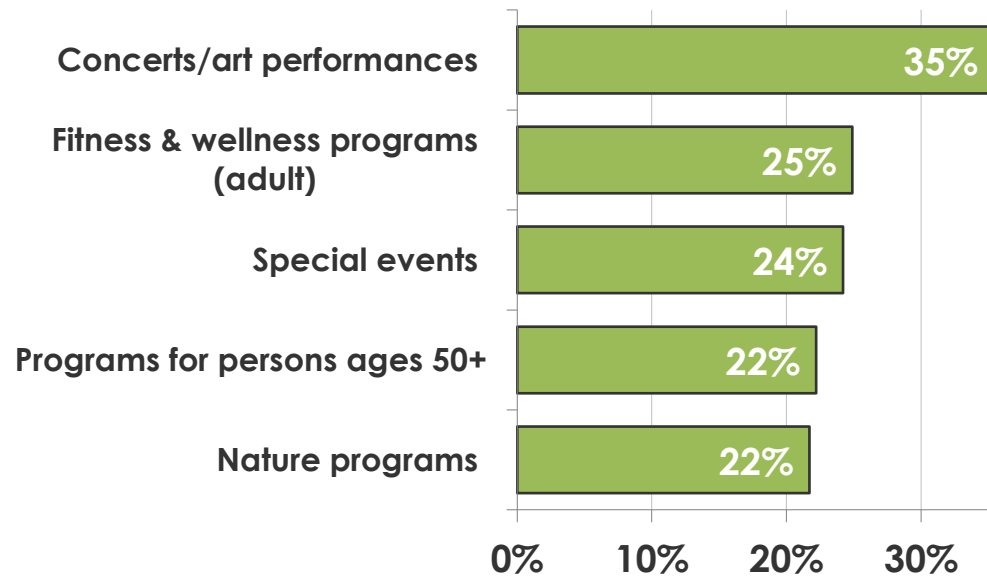
High Priorities for Investment



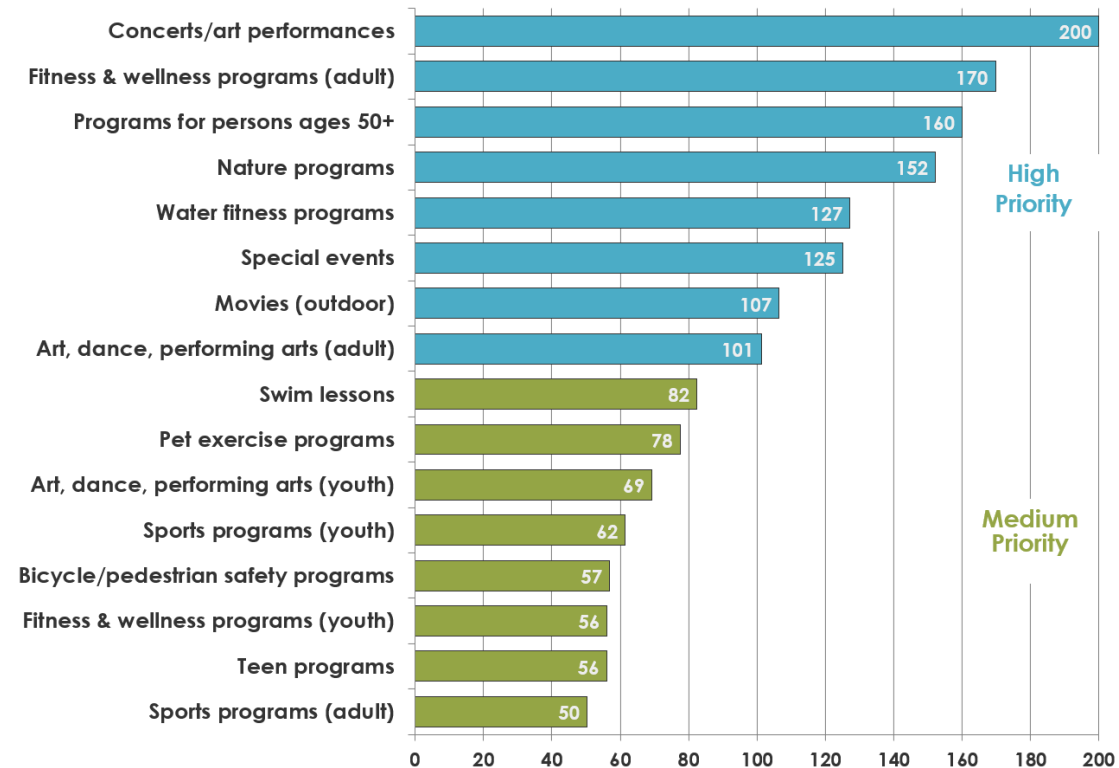
Top Findings from Survey Results & Open House

- **Additional programming and events**
 - Concerts/performances
 - Movies
 - Special events
 - Age 50+ programs
 - Nature programs
 - Adult fitness & wellness classes
 - Youth sports improvements

Most Important Programs



Program Priorities for Investment



Community Priorities for Investment...

Engage

System



Upgrades to existing parkland



Increased maintenance at existing parks



Connectivity & trails added to and through parks



Access to natural areas & activities (picnics, fishing, etc.)



Improved ADA accessibility



Restrooms & support features (lighting, drinking fountains, etc.)



Wayfinding & entrance signage

Facilities



Improve/expand indoor recreation space



Pickleball courts



Dog park



Upgraded playgrounds with unique equipment



Outdoor aquatic facilities



More & upgraded picnic areas/ shelters

Programs



Fitness & wellness classes



Additional community events (concerts, festivals, movies)



Active adult (50+) programs



Strategic & collaborative marketing



Partnerships with local organizations



Continuous community engagement



Find alternative funding streams for parks



Nature Programs

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The Path Forward: Strategic Plan

GOALS

Exceptional Spaces

- Inviting Places
- Up-to-Date Amenities
- Responsible Stewardship
- The Cuyahoga River

Enriching Connections

- Engaging Gatherings
- Accessible Connections
- Continuous Engagement

Exceptional Operations

- Effective Administration
- Creative Promotion
- Reliable Funding

Enriching Experiences

- Attractive Athletics
- Health & Wellness
- Ongoing Collaboration

Mission: *To provide exceptional parks, programs, and experiences for all*

Vision: *Our parks and programs improve the health and wellbeing of the whole Kent community and beyond*

VALUES

Excellence

Opportunity

Sustainability

Inclusion



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Systemwide Recommendations

- **Upgrade and improve existing parks and facilities** – address deferred maintenance
- **Ensure ADA accessibility** throughout the park system
- **Update feasibility study for a recreation center** to determine specific needs
- **Add pickleball courts** due to strong demand
- **Develop a dog park** in response to public requests
- **Upgrade the amphitheater** at Fred Fuller Park for added concerts, events, and more
- **Improve trail connectivity** throughout Kent & add trails within the parks



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- EVALUATE PHASE
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Systemwide Recommendations

PLAN PURPOSE

PLAN PROCESS

EVALUATE
PHASE

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PLAN PHASE

- **Upgrade & replace playground equipment throughout the system** – include a variety of park features
- **Update and modernize athletic fields**
- **Improve access to the Cuyahoga River** – canoeing, kayaking, fishing, etc.
- **Utilize new/improved facilities to meet unmet programming needs**
- **Improve park experiences by adding support features** – shade, restrooms, seating, drinking fountains
- **Strategically and consistently place signage** (entrance, wayfinding, etc.) throughout the park system



How do we get there?

- **Staff the department** as needed to maintain and operate the system as it changes
- **Continuous Community Engagement**
- **Seek & Utilize Partnerships**
- **Partnerships & Marketing**
 - Consistent communication
 - Cross promotion
 - Multiple formats
- **Parks Foundation (501c3)**
 - Enables receipt of philanthropic funds & fundraising, volunteerism, increased marketing
- **Grants** – ODNR, Federal, State, USDA
- Sponsorships
- **Taxpayer Approved Bond** – 70% indicated support, only 12% opposed



2024 Parks & Recreation Master Plan



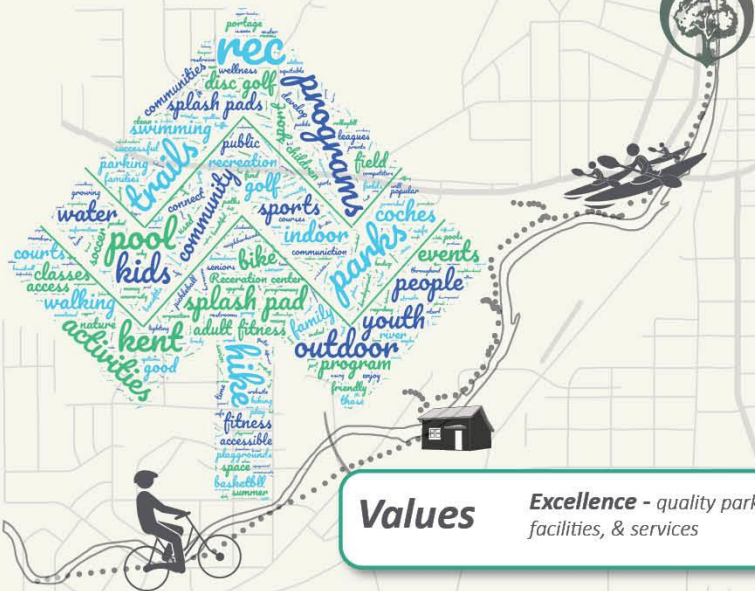
Introduction

This 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be critical to the city's future as it clarifies the department's responsibilities and the community's needs, as well as what partnerships can be leveraged to best deliver parks, facilities, and recreational choices. Known as the "Tree City" Kent is poised to provide abundant outdoor recreational opportunities while preserving the unique natural features of the Cuyahoga Watershed.

The Kent community desires:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Upgrades & improvements to existing parks/facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ADA access - Updated playgrounds & restrooms - Improved canoe and kayak access | Expanded programming/events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special events, concerts, movies - Altered program times & offerings - Special needs, fitness, art & performing arts, active adult programming |
| Connectivity & trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trails within parks and throughout city - Mountain biking - Signage + wayfinding | Support amenities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restrooms & drinking fountains - Picnic areas & seating |
| New spaces & facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indoor recreation space & gymnasiums - Indoor/outdoor aquatics | Operational improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved marketing - More community engagement - Improved partnerships |

Survey Says:



What's Next for Kent?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Upgrade + improve existing facilities | 10 Improve access to Cuyahoga River (canoeing, fishing, etc.) |
| 2 Ensure ADA accessibility | 11 Find funding streams (park foundation, sponsorships, etc.) |
| 3 Conduct a recreation center feasibility study | 12 Continuous public engagement |
| 4 Add pickleball courts based on public desire | 13 Utilize new facilities for programming & events |
| 5 Develop a dog park due to public request | 14 Maintain appropriate staffing levels |
| 6 Upgrade amphitheater at Fred Fuller Park | 15 Add support features (restrooms, shade, drinking fountains etc.) |
| 7 Improve trail connectivity & add trails within parks | 16 Strategically market parks & programs |
| 8 Upgrade/replace playgrounds | 17 Strategically + consistently place signage |
| 9 Upgrade & modernize athletic fields | 18 Seek partnerships to best deliver parks and recreation services |

Mission

To provide exceptional parks, programs, and experiences for all

Vision

Our parks and programs improve the health and wellbeing of the whole Kent community and beyond

Goals + Objectives



Values

Excellence - quality parks, facilities, & services

Opportunity - opportunity for education & healthy active living

Sustainability - ecologically sensitive and responsible stewardship of parks and facilities

Inclusion - equity and access for our diverse population

How To Use This Plan

Determine responsibility

- PLAN PURPOSE
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- EVALUATE PHASE
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ACTION PLAN - 2024 Kent Parks & Recreation Master Plan								
Legend of Abbreviations/Organizations								
Parks = Kent Parks & Recreation or the Parks & Recreation Board				OP = Parks and Recreation Operating Budget				
City = City Council, Other City Departments				CIP = Capital Improvement Budget				
Partners = Other Organizations (county/state, private agencies, schools, state/federal grants, etc.)				Revenue = Items that Generate Additional Revenue				
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	Timeframe (Years)			Category	Agency	Funding Source	Section Reference	
	0-2	3-5	6-10					
Goal 1: Exceptional Spaces								
Offer excellent facilities that inspire play and strengthen the community								
Objective 1.1 – Inviting Places: Provide quality parks and facilities that engage the community								
Strategy 1.1.1:	Provide consistent amenities throughout the system			Ongoing	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.6
Strategy 1.1.2:	Utilize existing parkland to meet unmet facility needs identified in this plan			Ongoing	Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP	5.4.6
Strategy 1.1.3:	Continually evaluate opportunities to improve park service levels in underserved areas using existing parkland			Ongoing	Capital/Planning	Parks	OP/CIP	5.4.6
Strategy 1.1.4:	Conduct a feasibility study for a recreation center with senior space to determine locations, size, and amenities			✓	Capital/Planning	Parks/Partners	CIP/Partners	5.4.6
Strategy 1.1.5:	Develop a dog park in a Kent park in response to strong public demand for the facility; include shade, seating, water access, and prioritize land that is unsuitable for other uses			✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.4.6
Strategy 1.1.6:	Develop interpretive and informational signage throughout the park system (following signage plans) to help visitors understand natural features, history, and awareness of sensitive ecosystems and rare species			✓	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.6
Strategy 1.1.7:	Implement a playground replacement program that identifies the expected useful life of all playgrounds with a timeline for replacement			✓	Capital/Planning	Parks	CIP	5.3.6
Strategy 1.1.8:	Continue to replace dated playgrounds and add in strategic locations			Ongoing	Capital	Parks	CIP	5.3.6
Strategy 1.1.9:	Include separate age 2-5 equipment when adding or upgrading playgrounds			Ongoing	Capital/Policy	Parks	CIP	5.3.6
Strategy 1.1.10:	Consider themed playground equipment, such as climbing rocks, sensory features, etc., potentially providing for marketing and resident/visitor photo opportunities			✓	Policy	Parks	CIP	5.3.6

Locate funding source

Identify action based on priority and timeframe