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**PARKS & REC
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COMMUNITY
WORKSHOP**

OCTOBER 7, 2025

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Supplement A Engagement Report



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Summary

Who We've Heard From

Staff	Commission & Council	Community
Planning Session April 2025 Interviews April 2025 Workshop April 2025 <i>Financial Sustainability Strat.</i> Focus Groups June 2025 Workshop June 2025 <i>Financial Sustainability Strat.</i> Interviews October 2025 Workshop October 2025 <i>Service Analysis</i>	Planning Session April 2025 <i>Parks Commission & City Council Reps</i> Board Meeting October 2025 <i>Parks Commission</i>	Focus Groups April and June 2025 <i>80 participants / 6 groups</i> Pop Up Engagements June 2025 <i>12 participants</i> Questionnaire September 2025 <i>1,121 responses</i> Community Workshop October 2025 <i>22 participants</i> Virtual Engagement Room October 2025 <i>18 participants</i> Provider Luncheon October 2025 <i>39 participants / 34 groups</i> Needs Assessment Survey December 2025 <i>405 responses</i>

Detailed Schedule

Schedule of Activities

Engagement Activity	Date	Time	Location	# of People
Staff Planning Session	4/3/25	9:00am	Switchyard Park	60
Staff FSS Workshop	4/3/25	10:45am	Switchyard Park	60
Community Focus Group #1	4/3/25	12:00pm	Switchyard Park	12
Community Focus Group #2	4/3/25	2:00pm	Switchyard Park	11
Community Focus Group #3	4/3/25	3:30pm	Switchyard Park	3
Community Focus Group #4	4/3/25	6:00pm	Switchyard Park	14
Community Focus Group #5	4/4/25	8:30am	Switchyard Park	11
Staff Interviews	4/4/25	2:00pm	Mayor's Office	3
Commission/Council Planning Session	4/10/25	6:00pm	City Hall	5
Staff Focus Group #1	6/5/25	8:00am	Cascades Golf Course	10
Staff Focus Group #2	6/5/25	9:00am	Cascades Golf Course	10
Staff Focus Group #3	6/5/25	10:00am	Cascades Golf Course	10
Community Focus Group #6	6/5/25	11:45am	Cascades Golf Course	15
Staff Focus Group #4	6/5/25	1:00pm	Cascades Golf Course	10
Staff Focus Group #5	6/5/25	2:00pm	Cascades Golf Course	10
Staff Focus Group #6	6/5/25	3:00pm	Cascades Golf Course	10
Staff FSS Workshop	6/6/25	8:30am	Switchyard Park	30
Staff FSS Workshop	6/6/25	10:00am	Switchyard Park	30
Community Pop Up Eng.	6/7/25	8:00am	Miller-Showers Park	6
Community Pop Up Eng.	6/7/25	8:00am	Granfalloon (event)	6
Community Questionnaire	Jun.-Aug.	-	online	1,121
Staff Interviews	10/7/25	10:00am	Parks Operations Center	4
Community Workshop	10/7/25	6:00pm	Switchyard Park	22
Staff Interviews	10/7/25	1:30pm	Parks Operations Center	6
Staff Interviews	10/7/25	3:00pm	Parks Operations Center	4
Virtual Engagement Room	Oct.-Dec.	-	online	18
Provider Luncheon	10/8/25	11:30am	Bloomington Convention Center	39
Staff Svc. Analysis Workshop	10/8/25	2:30pm	Banneker Center	25
Commission Work Session	10/18/25	5:00pm	Miller-Showers Park	4
Needs Assessment Survey	Nov.-Dec.	-	mail, online	405

Staff – Planning Session I

A staff Planning Session, hosted on April 3rd 2025, guided staff through an analysis of the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

What are the Department's strengths – what should be celebrated?

- **Staff:** the greatest strength identified by staff was exactly that; the Department has a talented and collaborative work force led with strong leadership and a positive work culture
- **Community Support:** the Department is well supported by the community thanks to its strong reputation and ability to get community involved through engagement and volunteerism
- **Programs & Services:** the Department provides a strong and diverse offering of programs and services that focus on health and wellness, inclusion and accessibility, and meets a variety of interests
- **Parks, Trails & Facilities:** staff are proud of its parks, trails and facilities amenities and believe they do well providing well-maintained, safe, and attractive spaces for the community

What could be improved?

- **Capital Improvement:** staff identified capital improvement to Departmental assets as a top area for improvement, which were highlighted by decisions on aged infrastructure, overall maintenance, and specific improvements to inventory (e.g., parking, EV charging stations)
- **Internal Communication:** three key areas identified by staff for improved internal communication efforts include: top down, between Department Divisions, and transparency
- **Website:** the website and registration system are seen as a major weakness
- **Pay & Benefits:** pay and benefits (including training and career development), for both full-time and part-time/seasonal staff, is seen as an area of improvement
- **Programs & Services:** issues related to services and programming were highlighted; suggestions included contracted vs. in-house programs, increase in diverse programs, and program evaluation
- **Internal Processes:** some staff voiced frustration in internal processes bottle-necking operations, such as purchasing and hiring.

Staff – Planning Session I

What opportunities exist?

- **Capital Improvement:** addressing the Department's capital improvement needs was seen as the top priority for improvement, whether improvements to current inventory or consideration of the construction of new assets (e.g., new ice arena)
- **Partnerships:** staff see expanded partnerships as a major opportunity for the Department, primarily through educational institutions (e.g., Indiana University, Ivy Tech Community College, Monroe County Community School Corporation)
- **Communication & Marketing:** staff pinpointed increased external marketing and communication efforts as a major opportunity to connect with the community
- **Pay & Benefits:** enhancements to compensation packages and providing opportunities/incentives for training would be valued by staff
- **Programs & Services:** there were a plethora of suggestions for program-related opportunities including diversifying sports offerings, expanding festivals and events, and improving outdoor recreation opportunities
- **Activating College-Aged Students:** staff believe the community's college-aged students can be further activated through Department services

What gets in the way?

- **Financial:** one of the top themes was mentions of financial limitations affecting Department-wide operations, from budget constraints affecting capital improvement projects and programming to affordability for the community
- **Internal Processes:** many staff members voiced their high-level concerns over frustration with both Department-wide and City-wide processes and realities that complicate day-to-day operations
- **Internal Communication:** siloed departments/divisions, messages getting lost in the organization's hierarchy, and lack of clear direction lead the concerns over internal communication hurdles
- **Capital Improvement:** lack of preventative maintenance and the accumulating backlog to aging infrastructure and equipment is a major burden that staff identified
- **Staffing Issues:** staff shared their frustrations to overall shortages, turnover, and levels of support
- **External Communication:** while the public strongly supports the Department, a slew of concerns were named including navigating outspoken citizens and balancing special interests

Staff – Planning Session I

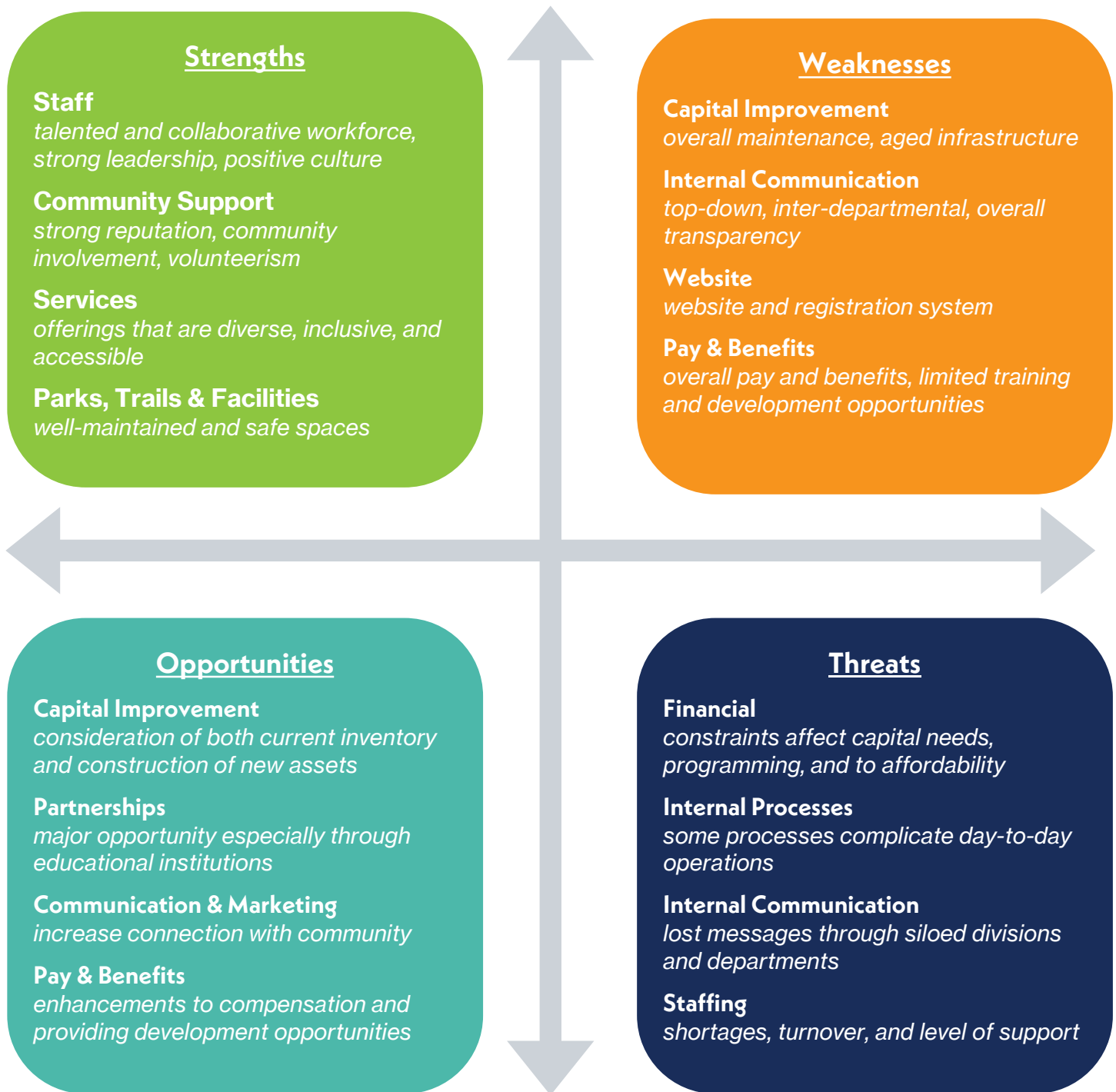
What's happening to which the Department should pay attention?

- **Environmental Considerations:** staff believe the prevalence of today's environmental considerations, highlighted by climate change, signals a need for the Department's increased environmental planning and stewardship
- **Unhoused Population:** the unhoused population in the community and their effect on the Department (e.g., encampments in parks, safety) present immediate issues, while opening the door for bigger conversations about how the City can address mental health and addiction
- **Economic Considerations:** how the Department responds to inflation and economic uncertainty that the community faces (e.g., housing, salaries) and that the organization faces (e.g., funding cuts, property tax changes) are major issues the Department needs to respond to
- **Public Support:** today's politically charged environment is affecting the public's attitudes towards the City and Department
- **Demographics:** staff feel that the Department could more properly respond to the community's shift in demographics to adapt to emerging needs

Given what's happening, what should be prioritized with attention and/or resources?

- **Capital Improvement:** staff have a strong focus on addressing the Department's deferred maintenance and equipment needs
- **Staffing:** improved support for current staff (e.g., training, equipment, benefits) and addressing needs for full-time and part-time/seasonal staff are the top priorities
- **Partnerships:** staff identified reducing overall duplication of services which suggest an opportunity for increased partnership opportunities
- **Financial Sustainability:** staff want to prioritize creating a more financially sustainable Department by way of maximizing revenues and properly addressing deferred maintenance needs
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion:** staff feel that the Department can better reach and serve the community's underserved populations and ensure safe and equitable spaces and programs
- **Environmental Considerations:** there's continued emphasis on climate resilience, energy efficiency, improved sustainability practices, and expansion of green spaces

Staff – Planning Session I



Staff – Planning Session I



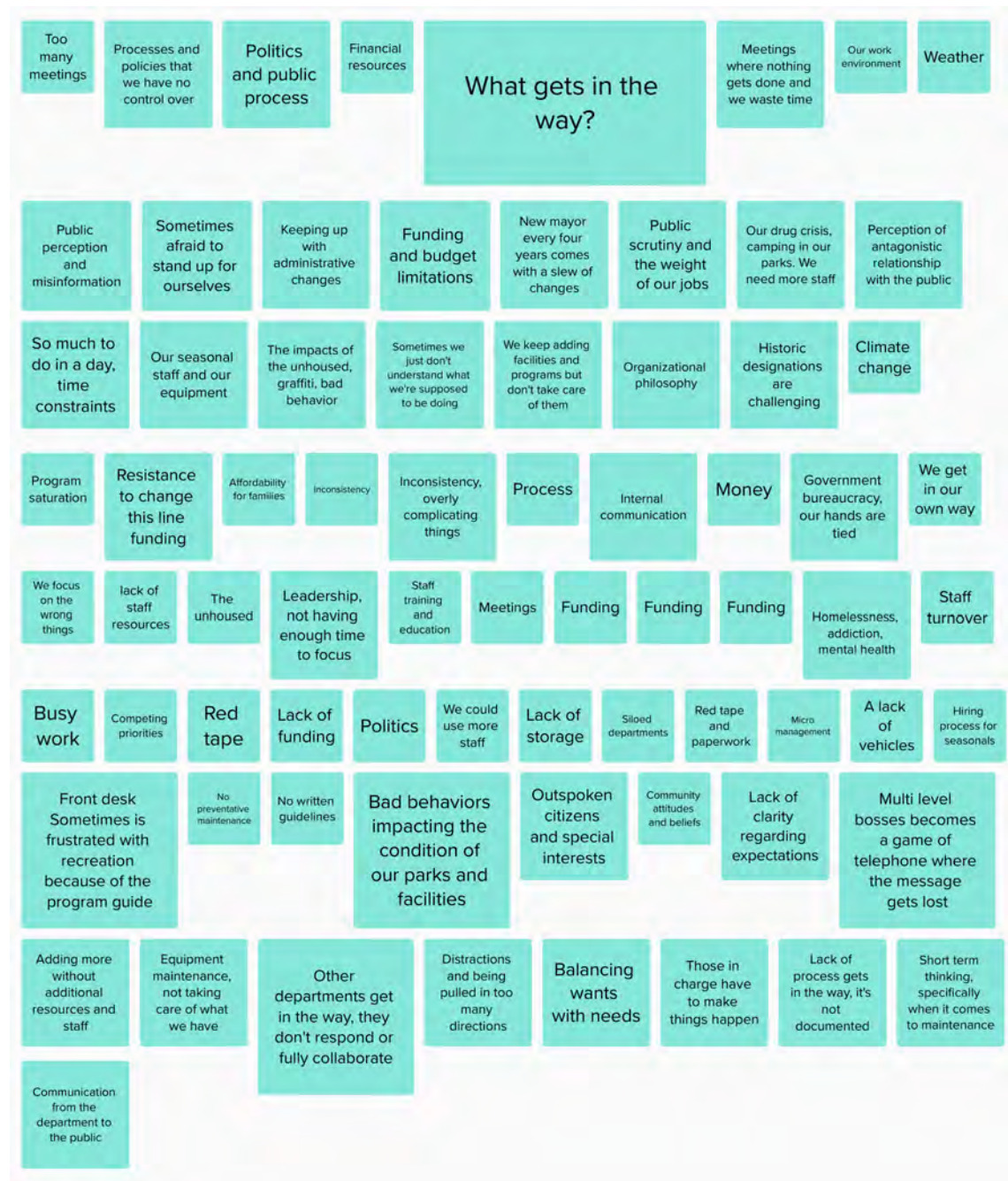
Staff – Planning Session I



Staff – Planning Session I



Staff – Planning Session I



Staff – Planning Session I



Staff – Planning Session I



Commissioners & Council – Planning Session I

A Board of Park Commissioners/City Council Rep Planning Session, hosted on April 3rd 2025, guided appointed and elected representatives through an analysis of the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

What are the Department's strengths – what should be celebrated?

- **Partnerships:** good collaboration and relationships with external organizations
- **Parks, Trails & Facilities:** Department provides well-maintained parks, trails and facilities for the community
- **Organizational Operations:** the Department has strong trust and a reputation for its ability to plan and operate

What could be improved?

- **Communication & Marketing:** opportunities to improve Department's overall reach and effectiveness, from use of communication channels to branding and recognition
- **Improvements to Parks, Trails & Facilities:** ideas included improved parks access to proactively addressing deferred maintenance

What opportunities exist?

- **Partnerships:** potential opportunities exist with organizations such as McLean County and educational institutions
- **Parks:** system-wide changes (addressing lack of parks on east side) and park specific opportunities (e.g., reimagining Lower Cascades Park) exist

What gets in the way?

- **Competing Interests:** lack of public consensus on issues
- **Overall Resources:** lack of overall resources (e.g., space, money)

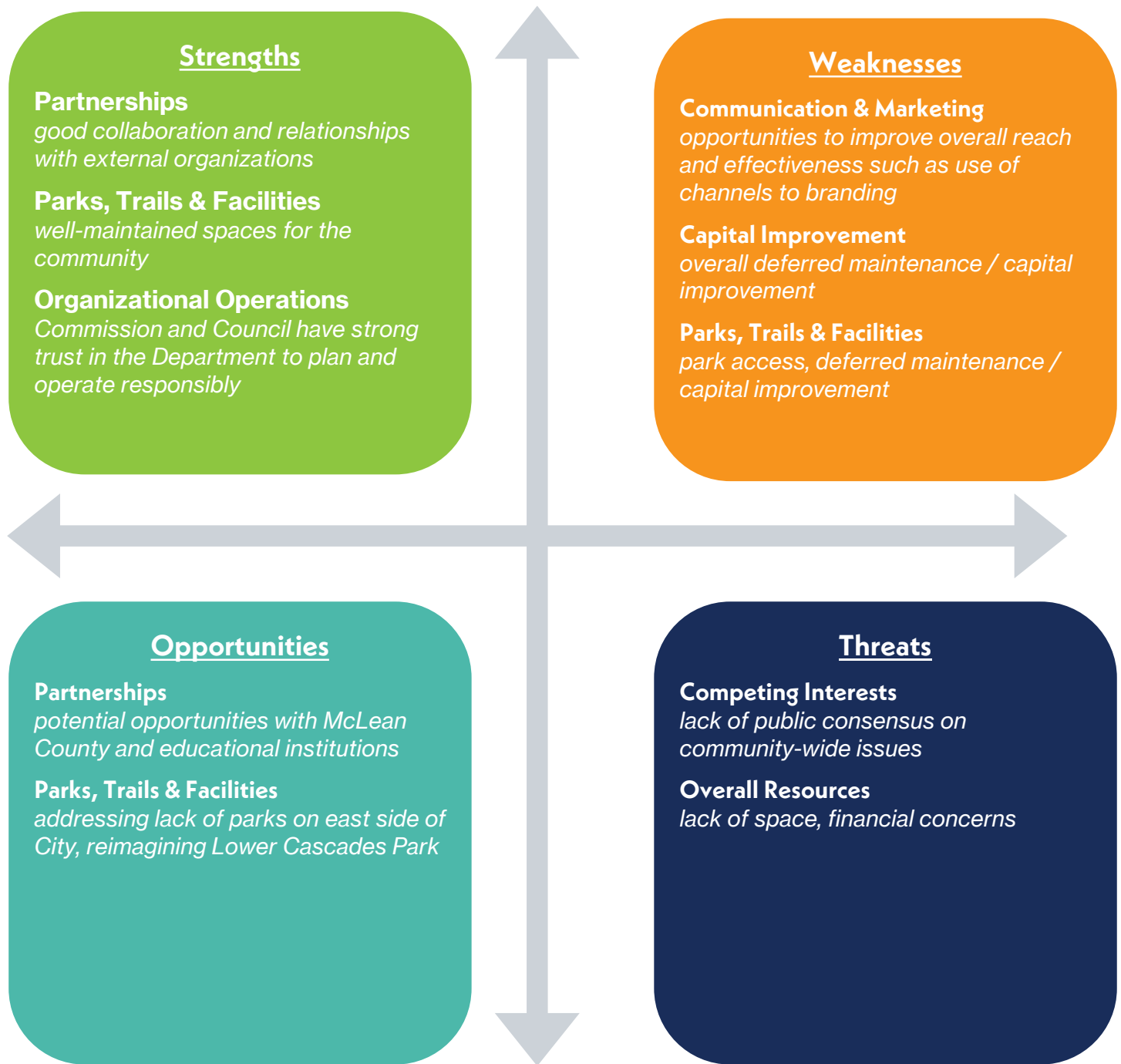
What's happening to which the Department should pay attention?

- **Demographics:** shifting demographics will change overall community interests and expectations
- **Financial Considerations:** the Department should be sensitive to affordability of its services and larger changes to state and federal funding

Given what's happening, what should be prioritized with attention and/or resources?

- **Infrastructure:** the Department has a lot to consider when it comes to addressing its infrastructure, from making hard decisions on older assets (e.g., Bryan Park Pool and Mills Pool) to repurposing some spaces

Commissioners & Council – Planning Session I



Board & Council – Planning Session I

What are the department's strengths - what should be celebrated?	A trustworthy model - financially	A history of doing things "the right way"	Collaborations with MCCSC	Programming - breadth of service provision
	Good planning	Knowledgeable staff	Urban forestry; healthy tree canopy	Facilities
	Maintenance; staff does a nice job to make the system look good	Community gardens	General community collaborations (e.g., Stay Cool)	Parks and facilities are being used
	Inclusive programming for persons with disabilities	Staff listen	Center Stone partnership	Community connectivity; trail system
What could be improved?	Explore other methods of communication; enhance community awareness; education	Safety	Forsight in planning; ahead of the curve; avoid deferring maintenance	Branding and recognition of the breadth of the parks and rec system (e.g., BCT)
	Improving access to parks	Multi-use	Collaborations re: facilities	
What opportunities exist?	Collaborations with County, Ivy Tech and IU (and IU Health) - bolder and bigger opportunities	Consider programmatic opportunities for those with Autism	Ambassador/cadet/park ranger - park presence to enhance a sense of safety	Few parks on the east side
	Reimagine Lower Cascades - engage the community in the space	Consideration of the recommendations of the recent FM study	New HS graduation requirements; opportunities within parks and recreation	More opportunities to explore with the Foundation
	Enhanced connectivity incl: neighborhood connections to schools			

Commissioners & Council – Planning Session I



Community Focus Groups

Focus groups with community groups and individuals, held in April and June 2025, covered several relevant city-wide and departmental issues.

When you hear “Bloomington Parks and Recreation” what immediately comes to mind?

- **Parks & Trails:** the Department’s parks, amenities, and trails was the most mentioned theme; specific mentions included Switchyard Park and Bryan Park, athletic fields, overall green space, and the proximity and connectivity of the system
- **Programs & Services:** the wide-array of programs and services, highlighted from summer camps and the Farmers Market, are very appreciated by focus group members
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion:** focus group members believe that the Department casts a wide net of high-quality programs and spaces that are inclusive to a range of interests and needs
- **Aquatics:** commonly mentioned was the Department’s aquatic programs and pools
- **Staff:** the Department’s dedicated employees are top of mind for focus group members

Do you currently use any services offered by the Department? If so what services? If not, why?

- **Parks & Trails:** all focus group members indicated they use Department services, with parks, amenities, and trails being far and away the most used service; the most frequent responses included Switchyard Park, B-Line Trail, Bryan Park, Cascades Golf Course, Windslow Park, Rose Hill Cemetery, and general trail usage
- **Recreation Facilities:** the second most used service were the Department’s various facilities, highlighted by Frank Southern Ice Arena, Twin Lakes Recreation Center, and Bryan Pool
- **Special Events:** focus group members strongly support special events like Movies in the Park, Food Truck Fridays, Movies in the Park, Fourth of July

What do you believe will be the most important community wide issues the greater Bloomington area and region will face in the next 3-5 years?

- **Affordable Housing:** focus group members voiced their concerns over affordable housing
- **Unhoused Population:** the increased unhoused population in parks and public spaces is an important issue communicated

Community Focus Groups

- **Financial Considerations:** other financial considerations were shared that included inflation, funding concerns, and healthcare
- **Environmental Considerations:** climate change, and the Department and City's response to it, was a prevalent issue raised
- **Education:** education considerations are prevalent issue, from early childhood education to the community's college/university population; issues raised include childhood education options, re-districting, and serving the college-age population
- **Demographics:** the increased shift in the aging population was mentioned by some focus group members
- **Transportation:** traffic management, accessible public transportation options, and need for more parking are notable issues shared

In what ways do you believe the Department can influence and/or impact these issues?

- **Long Range Planning:** focus group members urged the Department to strategically plan for future land use as well as capital maintenance to address current infrastructure needs
- **Accessibility:** accessibility to parks, trails, and facilities was a popular theme; specific call outs included improving service to those with physical disabilities and trail connectivity
- **Safety:** the Department can address the issue of safety at parks and public spaces, especially on the B-Line Trail
- **Partnerships:** partnerships, specifically human services, could help better serve the unhoused
- **Programs & Services:** a variety of responses for addressing programmatic issues were shared that ranged from improving youth sports experiences, to focusing on the young family demographic, to improving community health education

In your opinion, how should the Department invest resources (including taxpayer dollars) in order to have the greatest impact on the greater community?

- **Maintain Current Inventory:** the top priority heard from focus group members was to maintain and preserve what the Department currently has
- **Essential/Core Programs & Services:** another top priority was for the Department to focus on providing core and essential services that serve the greater community
- **Safety:** improvements to safety in parks and public spaces through increase physical presence and protocols was mentioned by several members
- **Environmental Considerations:** ideas shared included native plantings, invasive control, and overall environmentally friendly investments

Community Focus Groups

- **Accessibility:** improved connectivity and accessibility to parks and facilities was mentioned multiple times
- **Partnerships:** increasing the connection and transparency of local program and service providers by the Department was seen as a good investment

Are there any barriers (if any) you believe prevent people from participating in services offered by the Department?

- **Accessibility:** the accessibility, transportation related (e.g., public transportation options and physical connections) as well as on-site accessibility issues, were the most mentioned barrier
- **Communications & Marketing:** a key barrier identified was the low overall awareness of what the Department offers including the website
- **Affordability:** the fees for programs was seen as a significant barrier, specifically for low-income residents and non-residents
- **Safety:** safety in parks and public areas is seen as a barrier preventing participation in services

What opportunities exist for the Department to partner with other community organizations?

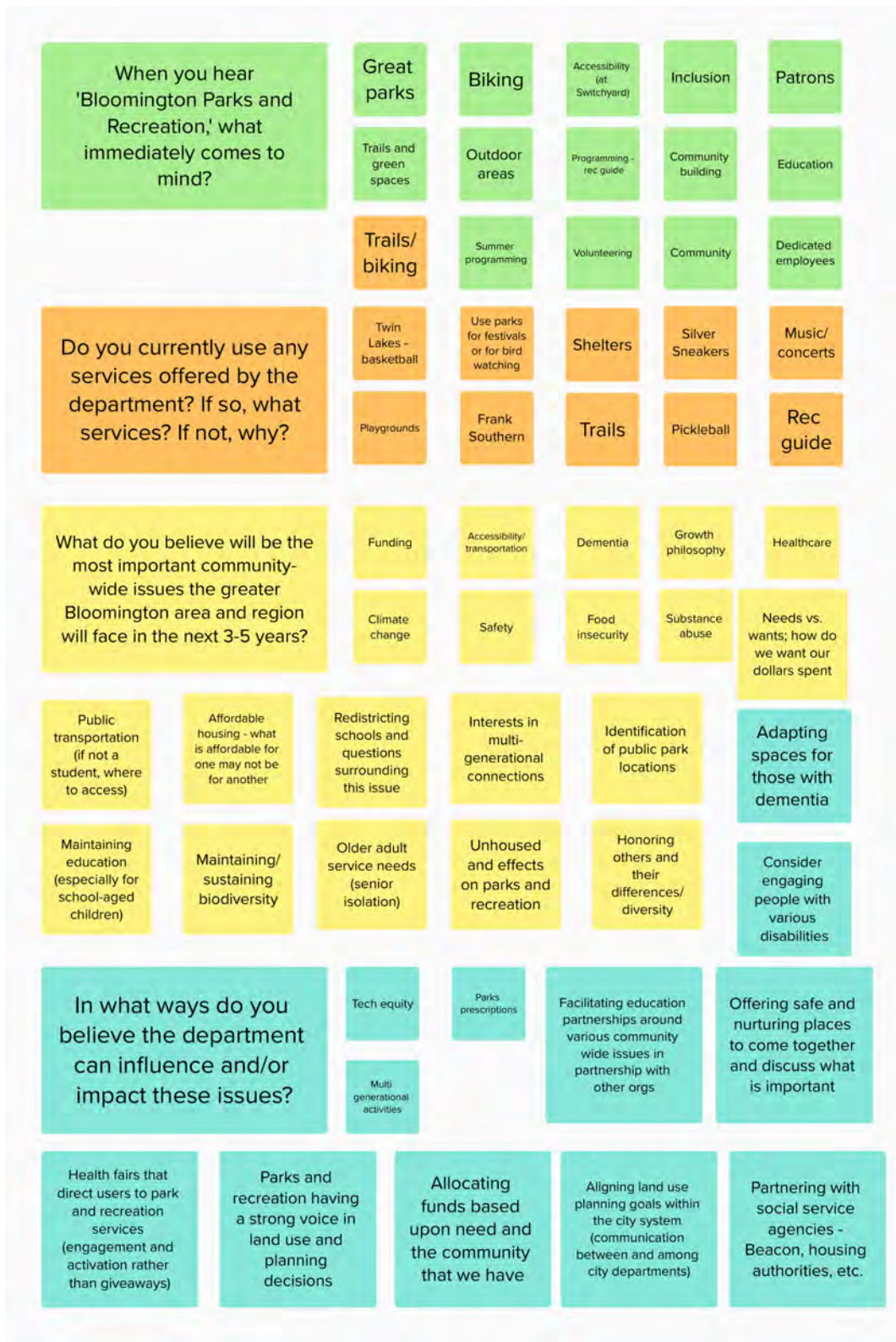
- **Indiana University:** the top local organization identified was Indiana University; specific answers included expansion of partnered experiential learning opportunities
- **Health & Human Services:** focus group members suggested partnerships with local hospitals, rehab facilities, and organizations addressing poverty to increase reach and share facilities/amenities
- **Inter-departmental:** a handful of responses referenced the opportunity for greater inter-departmental relations within the City
- **Environmental & Conservation Groups:** multiple organizations mentioned included state parks, Sycamore Land Trust, and Sassafras Audubon Society
- **Arts, Culture & History Organizations:** focus group members generalized local arts, culture, and history organizations as potential partnership opportunities
- **Bloomington Transit:** a couple of focus group members suggested working with Bloomington Transit for increased public transportation opportunities

Community Focus Groups

Is there anything else as it relates to the department or master planning process you would like to share?

- **Financial Considerations:** the top additional topic were various financial considerations that included suggestions like exploring additional revenue generating opportunities and identifying alternative funding streams (such as grants)
- **Partnerships:** another primary suggestion topic was those related to partnerships and included identifying new partnerships, requiring formalized agreements, and potential access to storage space
- **Accessibility:** suggestions included improved connectivity between parks and facilities and overall improvements to trails, specifically the B-Line Trail
- **Communication & Marketing:** a couple of suggestions identified improved use of communication channels could improve awareness and marketing efforts
- **Long Range Planning:** community representatives called on for the Department to be fiscally responsible and realistic in long range planning efforts

Community Focus Groups – Adults & Seniors



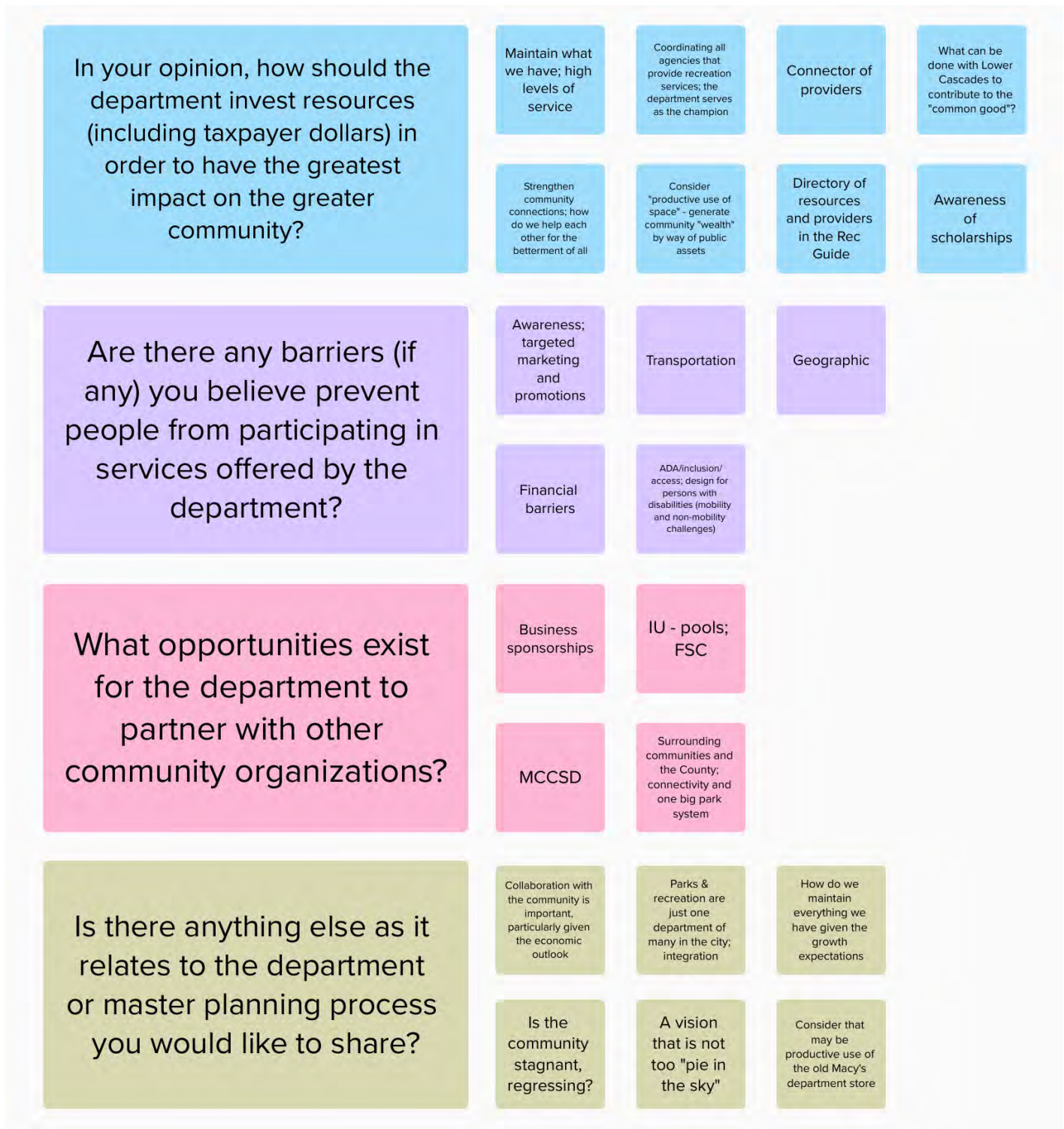
Community Focus Groups – Adults & Seniors



Community Focus Groups – BPR Foundation

When you hear “Bloomington Parks and Recreation” what immediately comes to mind?	Parks and recreation programs - everything from golf to TL to Banneker, Switchyard, etc.	Green space, trails, health and fitness	Excellent parks and rec system; comprehensive; a struggle to keep it that way	Greenspace
Do you currently use any services offered by the department? If so what services? If not, why?	Initially city parks but also the programs that we have participated in	Due to my background with the school systems, more awareness of programs for youth/ students	Bloomington - uniqueness	Aware Winning
What do you believe will be the most important community wide issues the greater Bloomington area and region will face in the <u>next 3-5 years</u>?	Bryan Park - lounge and socialize; Switchyard, Bline (nearest my home)	Walk in the parks; Cascades GC	Special events (e.g., Drool in the Pool)	Golf, lake, trails, fields for kids sports
In what ways do you believe the department can influence and/or impact these issues?	Parks and trails - run; winter I skate; Kid City in the past	Cascades GC; walk trails; Griffy Lake; coached youth sports at TL; Food Truck Fridays	Cascades GC Switchyard	
	Federal funding issues	Retaining and maintaining young talent in Bloomington (will affect all of us)	We will see things turn around for the better	Cost of living
	Budget; economics; keeping what we have "up to snuff"	Housing affordability	The issues we face today will be with us as we move forward	Families moving out
	Potential expansion of the Centerstone program (employ the unhoused - Ready to Work program)	Continue high levels of services to keep and attract families	Refocus on attracting business to town (econ development)	Focus on what is "right in our backyard" and how lucky we are to have what we do
	Attention and focus (intentional) on engaging youth to help with mental health challenges; social connections	Partner with local businesses that strengthen existing programs and services (e.g., youth sports)	Improve community outreach	Maintain/ improve existing infrastructure

Community Focus Groups – BPR Foundation



Community Focus Groups – Civic & Business Leaders



Community Focus Groups – Civic & Business Leaders



Community Focus Groups – Community Affiliates & School Representatives

When you hear “Bloomington Parks and Recreation” what immediately comes to mind?

My children Camping ban Bugfest Passive outdoor space and trails Switchyard Park

Twin Lakes - turf fields Comprehensive services Kids programming Family and community minded Outdoor arts programming

Softball fields; leagues Farmers Market; 50th year in 2024 Proximity of parks to neighborhoods (what is proximity for new neighborhoods?) Third space; gathering Parks Habitat restoration Community leadership; presence in the community Lifelong participation

Do you currently use any services offered by the department? If so what services? If not, why?

Rental space (Switchyard, shelters, etc.) Bton softball league; Bryan Park Cascades GC Connectivity; trails; safe access Pools

Trivia league Pools (Bryan Park is walkable) Trails (Rogers Park) Skating rink Rose Hill Cemetery

3rd Street Park (Waldron) Dog Park Trails (bike connectivity) Walking field trips Food Truck Fridays Youth sports @ Twin Lakes Splashpad B-line

What do you believe will be the most important community wide issues the greater Bloomington area and region will face in the next 3-5 years?

Climate change Farmers Market Library partnership Music in the Park Garden plots

Maintaining sufficient wildlife habitat Unmitigated growth of very ugly apartments City/State conflicts re: annexation Healthcare in general Safe routes

Shrinking population (birthrates) Concerns re: continuing increases in IJ registrations; enrollment may shrink Parking; traffic management Dramatic shifts in Federal funding Stress levels; mental health Affordable housing Aging population How do we continue to maintain a family friendly community

Lack of high quality childcare or early learning opportunities Access to healthcare Unhoused population and available services Updating infrastructure; maintenance Income inequality Growth/built environment philosophy

Community Focus Groups – Community Affiliates & School Representatives

In what ways do you believe the department can influence and/or impact these issues?	Analyze effectiveness of marketing	Articulate (more clearly) what it is parks and recreation can influence (e.g., mental health impacts)	Collaborations with the schools	Take care of what is in place (infrastructure)	Build to the population we want
	Target young professionals in terms of "quality of place" (pickleball)	Warming and cooling stations for people in need	Broader access to restrooms (for children, unhoused)	Ensure continuity in operations (sharing institutional knowledge, historic records)	Bike and ped lanes and trails; connectivity
In your opinion, how should the department invest resources (including taxpayer dollars) in order to have the greatest impact on the greater community?	Supporting what has been built; long term funding plan	Retention of professional staff	Safety of parks/trails	Continue invasive plant removal	Native species and plantings
	Take care of what we have	Essential services (e.g., childcare)	East-west B-line Trail equivalent	Continue pollinator gardens	
Are there any barriers (if any) you believe prevent people from participating in services offered by the department?	Awareness (website is difficult to navigate)	Physical access (playgrounds, trails)	Normalizing what's new	Lack of non-motorized connections	
	Transportation	Limited spaces for community interests (capacity)	Fees for those who cannot afford services	Lack of safe routes	Blown Police
What opportunities exist for the department to partner with other community organizations?	Work with local businesses; assist with marketing/promotions	Schools	Buskirk-Chumley Theater (BCT)	AmeriCorp	IU School of Education (young educators)
	Beacon	Boys & Girls Club	City/IU (shared ice facility)	Funtire (retirees to enhance the volunteer resources of the org)	Bloomington Transit
Is there anything else as it relates to the department or master planning process you would like to share?	Appreciate the program guide	Scholarship process is tedious; make it more accessible	Providers Network	Griffey improvements have been great	
	Target retirees (those with an ability to pay)	More outdoor movies	Funding for headstone restoration at Rose Hill	Making non-motorized connections between facilities	

Community Focus Groups – High School Students

When you hear “Bloomington Parks and Recreation” what immediately comes to mind? Bryan Park and pool Switchyard Park My childhood; skating at Frank Southern Farmers Market Tball	Do you currently use any services offered by the department? If so what services? If not, why? Dog park Switchyard Park Frank Southern B-Line trail Southeast Park Bryan Park and pool	What do you believe will be the most important community wide issues the greater Bloomington area and region will face in the <u>next 3-5 years</u>? Housing pricing Summers are getting hotter Unhoused population Changing weather patterns
In what ways do you believe the department can influence and/or impact these issues? Greater bike and pedestrain access (more connectivity) Some concerns re: safety (B-Line trail at night) More greenery by walking areas; tree canopy Splashpads Drinking fountains in more locations Safe bike trails; more space between vehicular traffic and bike lanes	In your opinion, how should the department invest resources (including taxpayer dollars) in order to have the greatest impact on the greater community? Adding native plantings, trees, vegetation; investment in the future Community wide events that reach a broader portion of the community Pollinators; environmental investments Children's activities	Are there any barriers (if any) you believe prevent people from participating in services offered by the department? Transportation Awareness
What opportunities exist for the department to partner with other community organizations? Figure skating club; use former members to teach; promotions Sierra Club	Is there anything else as it relates to the department or master planning process you would like to share? Public art in the parks; local artists A more corporate culture; does that lend to public private partnership opportunities? Consider different social media for marketing purposes Multi-use space; sports centric facility	

Community Focus Groups – Participants & Users



Community Focus Groups – Participants & Users

In what ways do you believe the department can influence and/or impact these issues?

Maintain Kid City

Partner to accommodate/address the unhoused

Competitive programming for youth

Frank Southern maintenance

Maintain pools

Affordable childcare and other youth service options

Mediator to assist with conflicts in public spaces

Consider how to make youth sports/baseball more appealing

Address pickleball court access and limit exclusive use of courts (RCA)

Continue to consider accessibility for persons with disabilities

In your opinion, how should the department invest resources (including taxpayer dollars) in order to have the greatest impact on the greater community?

Maintain/invest what exists

Maintain high levels of safety; a physical presence in parks/open spaces

Restroom access beyond current hours

Leverage partnerships

Safety protocols in parks (ensure safe surroundings in places like playgrounds)

Affordable access for those who don't have the ability to pay

Are there any barriers (if any) you believe prevent people from participating in services offered by the department?

Cost of services for users

Times and availability; what of offered and when

Safety concerns

Lack of rules for courts at RCA park

Crowding

Quality of services provided

Non resident rates

Connections between facilities (non motorized)

Lack of facilities (ice, soccer, pickleball, etc)

What opportunities exist for the department to partner with other community organizations?

IU/Frank Southern/ County

Partner with schools to utilize under used/available facilities

Soccer field labor; sports tourism dollars (matching grants)

Internships beyond the School of Public Health...

Scout programs (charter)

Grant writing for pickleball

A Friends Group

Is there anything else as it relates to the department or master planning process you would like to share?

Create a financial dashboard about how the city/ department is spending/ investing subsidy

Grant writing opportunities

Signage boards for information sharing

Formalize MOUs with all affiliates and partners

Research grant and funding opportunities

Storage for regular user groups

Inconsistency in decision making (partnerships seem to need to start over each time, there is turnover)

The approach to do not doing anything can be dangerous

Staff Focus Groups

Focus groups with staff were held in June 2025 and covered several relevant city-wide and departmental issues.

What do you believe will be the most important community wide issues the greater Bloomington area and region will face in the next 3-5 years?

- **Unhoused Population:** staff's most mentioned theme that the greater Bloomington area and region will face was the general unhoused population and the related drug and mental health crisis the community is facing
- **Affordable Housing:** staff also highly mentioned affordable housing
- **Financial Considerations:** concerns over inflation, cost of living, funding reductions, and tax burdens were shared
- **Environmental Considerations:** staff shared their believes that issues such as included climate change and access to natural resources raise the need for productive planning
- **Decrease Trust in Government:** the declining levels of trust in government from the public was another community wide issue that was heard from staff

In what ways do you believe the Bloomington Parks & Recreation Department can influence and/or impact these issues?

- **Communications & Marketing:** the most frequent way staff identified that the Department can influence these issues was to be better communicators that both internally and externally
- **Affordability:** staff suggested that the Department should continue offering affordable and accessible programs and services including expanding low-cost opportunities and funding for needs-based assistance
- **Parks & Trails:** creating and maintaining safe public gathering spaces, such as parks and trails, is an important way the Department can serve the community by creating social connections and getting the public outdoors
- **Financial Sustainability:** the Department can commit to being financially responsible and accountable by taking care of what it has

Staff Focus Groups

In your opinion, what organizational/operational changes and/or improvements should be made to better serve the community?

- **Organizational Philosophy:** one of the most mentioned suggest change from staff was a change in organizational philosophy specifically regarding valuing high service quality over high service quantity
- **Staffing:** suggestions for staffing changes included more flexible use and eligible benefits for part-time and seasonal staff, a comprehensive on-boarding process, and a consistent performance review process
- **Internal Communication:** from top-down communication to inter-departmental, improvements to internal communication that focuses on clarity, transparency, cross-training, and expectations is an area that staff sees as an opportunity to change
- **Technology:** a less mentioned but prevalent area that staff identified was improved use of technology (e.g., website and payment systems, general automation, and GIS technology)
- **Drug Use in Parks:** one specific area that was mentioned was for the Department to address the use of drugs in parks for the greater good of the community

From your perspective, what might get in the way of making these changes and/or improvements?

- **Understanding and Education:** staff believe that a general lack of education and understanding at all levels, from staff to elected leaders to the community, may inhibit the Department from making necessary changes and improvements
- **Resistance to Change:** staff also identified that there may be those who have a fear or resistance to change due to reluctance, unwillingness, potential process (long and unruly)
- **Lack of Resources:** in general, staff believe that a lack of resources – including time, qualified staff, and financial – is a barrier to making change
- **Technology:** a lesser mentioned area that staff called out was the current lacking use of relevant technology

Are there any barriers (if any) you believe prevent people from participating in services offered by the Bloomington Parks & Recreation Department?

- **Website:** the top barrier staff believe prevent people from participating in Department services are the current websites (City site and RecTrac registration) citing that they are difficult to navigate, don't always properly function, payment processing, and disconnect between the websites
- **Safety:** staff believe there are public concerns about safety in parks and facilities, and staff feel like the perception of safe and welcoming spaces has declined in recent years

Staff Focus Groups

- **Communication and Marketing:** overall communication and marketing efforts to the community were highlighted by language barriers and the overall spread of information to the community
- **Competition:** staff cited competition and the amount of other available opportunities as a reason people may not be participating in Department services
- **Affordability:** cost to participate in Department services was a lesser mentioned but relevant potential barrier

What opportunities exist for the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department to partner with other community organizations?

- **School Districts:** staff believe that the relationship with school districts, such as Monroe County, could be improved in terms of attitude and reciprocity
- **Inter-departmental:** working better with City departments, such as the Police Department, was an opportunity identified by staff
- **Indiana University:** how the Department and City exist alongside IU was brought up by staff
- **Health & Human Services:** working with local non-profit organizations to address the unhoused population of Bloomington was called out

Is there anything else as it relates to the department or master planning process you would like to share?

- **Internal Processes:** this was the top area that staff continued to share some frustrations with and had a wide-range of topics such as limitations with policies that favor special interests, purchasing limitations, part-time and seasonal staff, hiring and onboarding, and a lack of standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- **Inter-departmental Relations:** staff echoed that relationships with other City departments are a challenge and an area they'd like to see improved
- **Partnerships:** staff shared that the Department should continue to improve the process and organizations it partners with
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion:** a more diverse workforce in addition to increased efforts to serving diverse communities was another area staff wanted to bring up regarding the planning process

Staff Focus Groups



Staff Focus Groups



Staff Focus Groups

In your opinion, what organizational/operational changes and/or improvements should be made to better serve the community?

Better website

Provide benefits to seasonal staff

Improve mission statement/ purpose

Use data to inform decision making

Public transit to natural areas like Gruffy and LS

Timing of budget prep does not allow for adaptability

Take advantage of GIS tech; use it to inform decision making

Cross training to improve understanding of the community

Focus on a smaller amount of services; less is better

Information about public transit - users and staff

Comprehensive on-boarding process

Maintain what we have and not add when it may not be prudent

More youth sports opportunities (beginner level)

Work with Legal to help staff understand the rights of our citizens

Improve internal communication with other departments

Defining what we do best and focusing on those things (quality versus quantity; maintain high level of service)

Differently use part time/seasonal staff allowing for flexibility to make more frequent changes and adjustments

Automation where it makes sense and where effective

Improve communications in the department - top down

Parking at the market - waive parking fees during the Market

Set departmental and area goals; include in performance review process (create consistency across the organization)

Streamline our payment collections and reduce systems (we use a variety of collection mechanisms such as Square, RecTrac, Jot)

Changing our philosophy on growth; maintain what we have rather than adding more

Limit open air drug use; eliminate rights as they relate to drug use

Define partnerships, consistency in agreements, terms, etc.

Direct address of drug use in parks and open spaces; weekly programming on health and wellness

We need to measure the added responsibilities in contrast to available resources

Benefits for staff (use of assets as a benefit is nice but encourage staff to use department facilities; affordable)

Evaluate and analyze our services - what are the intended outcomes before offering a service

Shift our organizational philosophy to high level of service above more services (prioritize taking care of what we have)

Establish cross-divisional teams by work function to increase communication and knowledge sharing (e.g., invoicing & PO's, maintenance staff)

Open our minds to other revenue streams (social enterprises - e.g., sales opportunities)

Staff Focus Groups



Staff Focus Groups



Staff Focus Groups



Questionnaire

The online Questionnaire, open to the public June to August 2025, asked respondents three key questions.

1. What activities do you or members of your household do to improve health and general well-being? Select all that apply.



- One of the most mentioned key themes in the open-ended responses was soccer and soccer fields, which accounted for approximately 44% of responses. The next most common mentions were ice skating and hockey, together appearing in roughly 26% of responses, with smaller clusters around baseball, softball, and pickleball.

Questionnaire

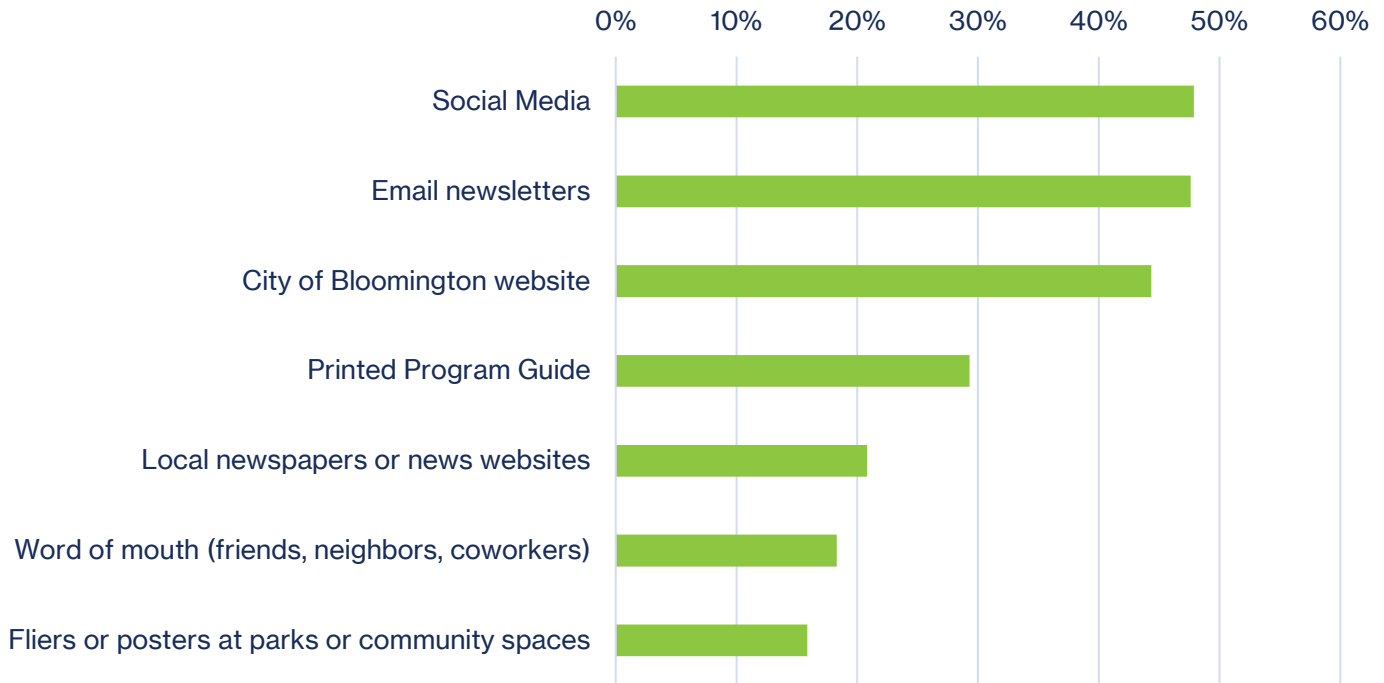
2. What should Bloomington Parks and Recreation focus on (prioritize) to improve and better serve the well-being of the greater community? Select up to three.



- The “other” responses to this question indicated there is a desire for improved/expanded park facilities, particularly soccer fields (about one-third of responses) and the ice rink (roughly 15% of responses). In general, responses focused on improved maintenance of facilities and expanded ability to host revenue-generating events and tournaments.

Questionnaire

3. How would you prefer to get information about Bloomington Parks and Recreation parks, facilities, and activities?



- The open responses suggested a wide mix of communication methods beyond social media, with the most common being email (program guides, newsletters, club updates), text message alerts, and community calendars (RSS feeds, Visit Bloomington, Bloomington events calendar). Respondents also noted radio (NPR/WFIU, local stations), listservs/neighborhood associations, and specific social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, X/Twitter) as additional ways they'd like to receive information.

Pop Up Engagements

The Pop Up Engagements, hosted on June 6th and 7th, were held at two locations, the Twin Lakes Recreation Center and on the B-Line Trail. The purpose of these engagement activities were to have informal conversations with residents as well as encourage participation in the Questionnaire.

Due to input of interactions being directed to the Questionnaire, there was no additional substantial engagement responses to report.

Community Workshop & Virtual Engagement Room

The Community Workshop, hosted on October 7th, 2025, had five interactive stations at which participants could engage. Additionally, the Virtual Engagement Room mirrored the interactive stations of the Community Workshop and was open for community responses from October 7th to December 5th, 2025.

Below are highlights of two of the key stations.

Which two are most important to you?

	High Quality Services (quality parks, facilities, recreation programs)	Add More Services (increase # of parks, facilities, recreation programs)	Stabilize Taxes & Fees
Community Workshop	81.8% (18)	59.1% (13)	54.5% (12)
Virtual Engagement Room	88.9% (16)	55.6% (10)	55.6% (10)
Combined	85.0%	57.5%	55.0%

What would you tell the Parks & Recreation Department today that it needs to hear?

	Community Workshop		Virtual Engagement Room
1	Thanks/compliments 35.7% (5)	1	Thanks/compliments 75% (3)
T2	Add park and facility amenities 21.4% (3)	2	Financial considerations 25% (1)
T2	Environmental considerations 21.4% (3)		-