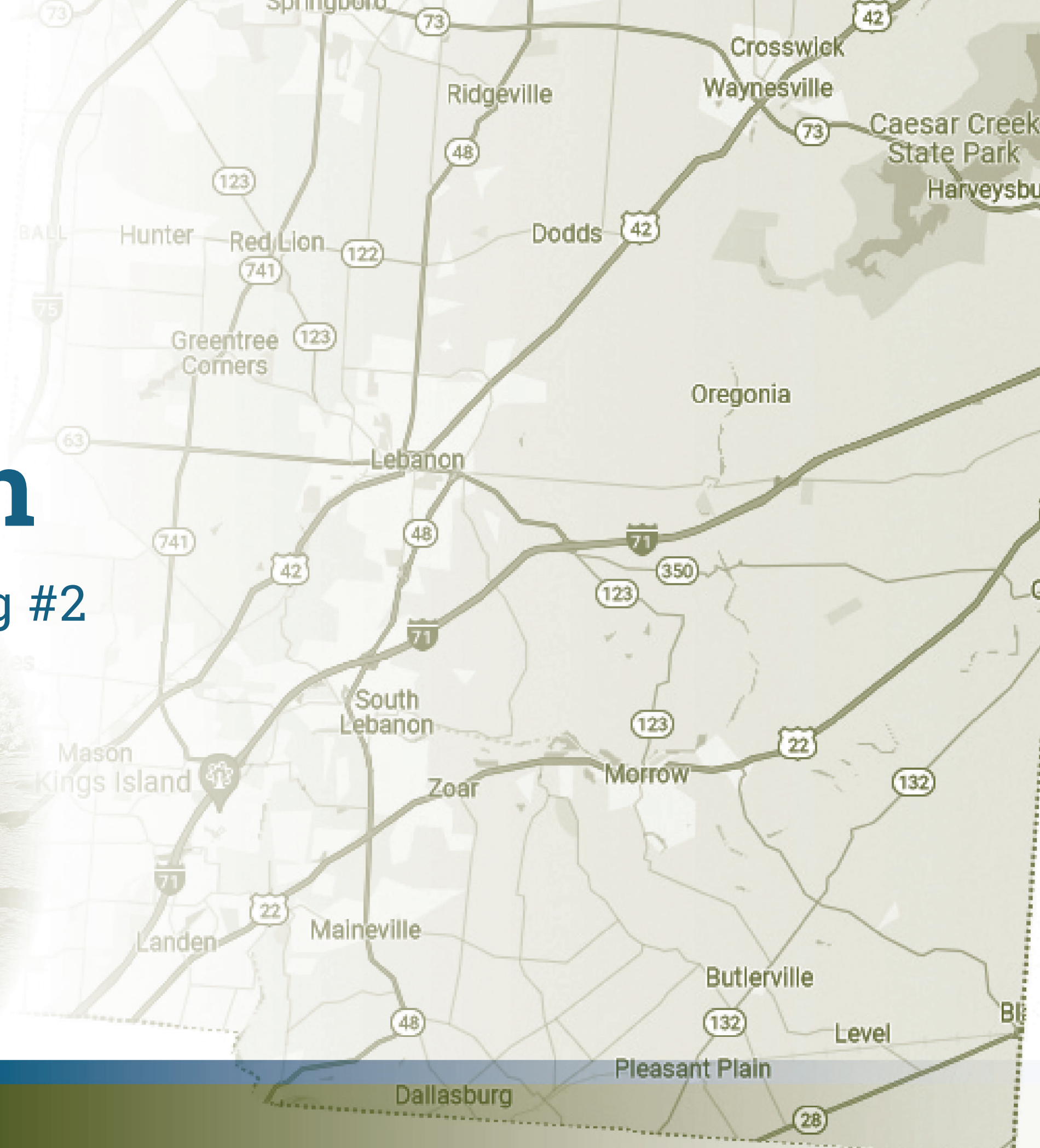




# Strategic Plan

Steering Committee Meeting #2  
September 25, 2024



# MEETING OUTLINE

- PROCESS UPDATE
- AWARENESS ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY
- DRAFT MISSION, VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES
- QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION
- NEXT STEPS

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



**WHAT WE HEARD**

# WHO WE HEARD FROM

- Public Survey (365 responses)
  - YOU! (WCPD Steering Committee)
  - Board of Park Commissioners
  - Warren County Municipal League
  - Lebanon Chamber
  - Leadership WC Class
  - Friends of WCPD
  - WCPD Staff
- 8 Stakeholder Focus Groups (122 participants, virtual):
    - Conservation
    - Recreation
    - Connectivity & Trails
    - Businesses
    - Nonprofits
    - Civic
    - Education
    - Health & Seniors



# SURVEY DETAILS N=365

## Respondent Demographics

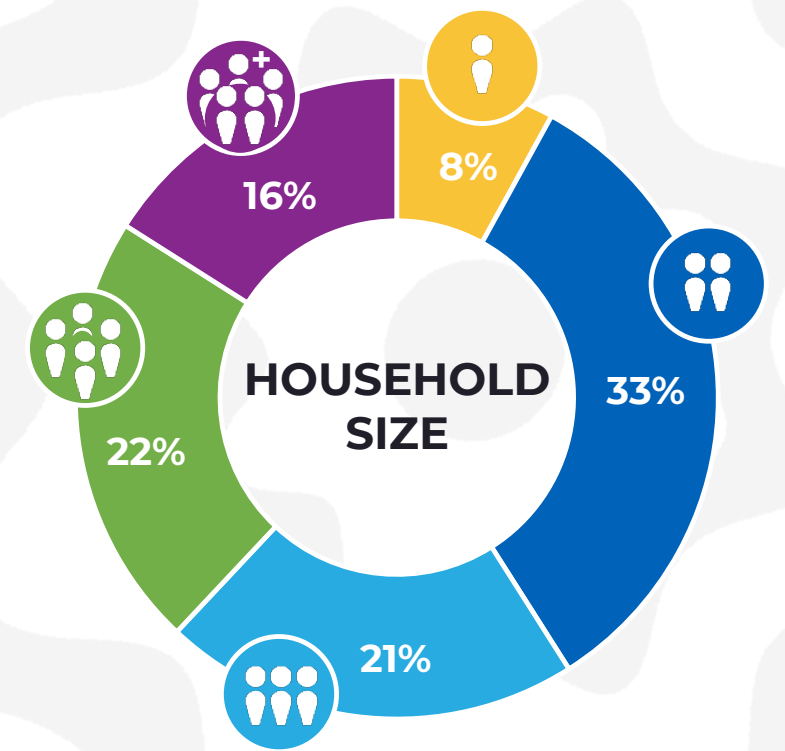
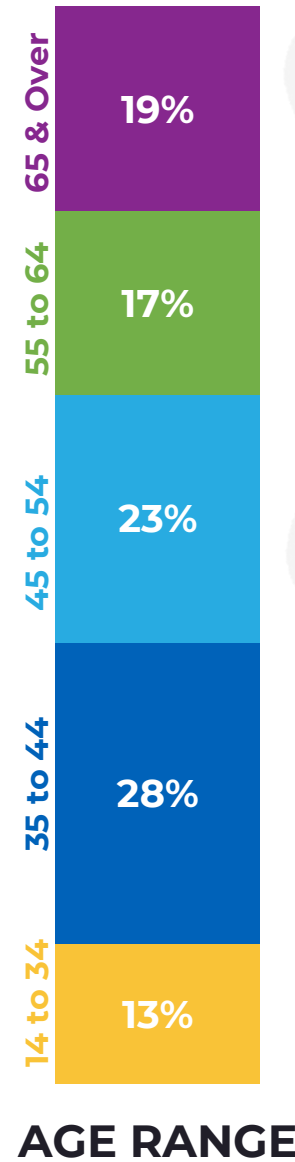
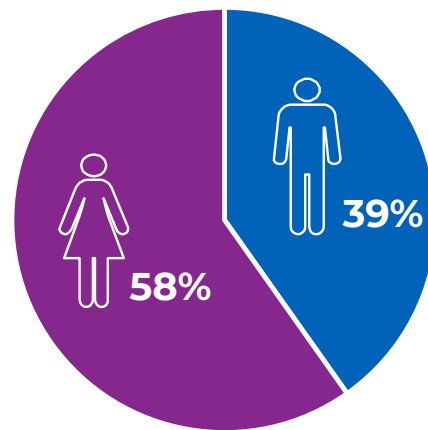
Panel members were required to be Warren County residents, but WCPD list members represented natural fallout. Soft quotas were set to monitor completes by age to track with county representation.

# 92%

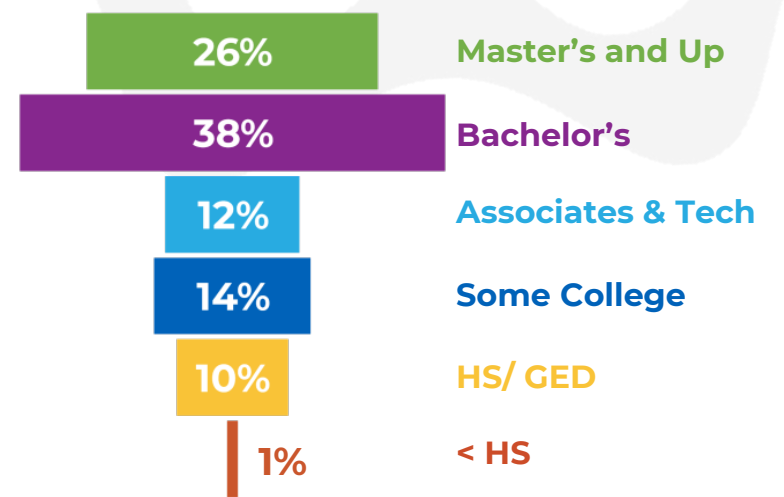
WARREN COUNTY, OH RESIDENTS



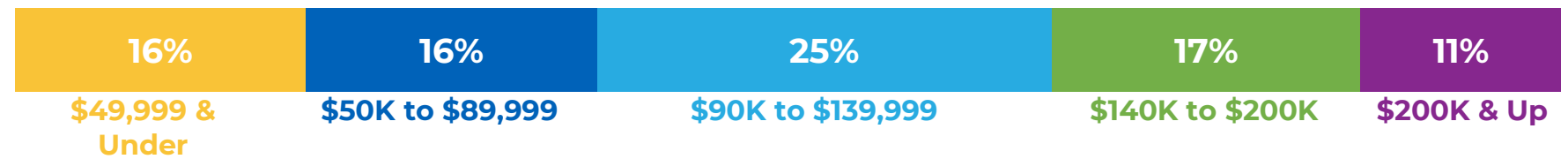
### GENDER



### EDUCATION LEVEL



### HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Most respondents used/ visited many park and outdoor features widely available throughout the Warren County Park District system.

Those less engaged with the WCPD visited ‘dog parks’ and ‘camping areas’ more. These respondents also were less likely to have used/ visited some of the most popular activities overall.

<b>Park &amp; Outdoor Activities</b> <i>n=365</i>		<b>LESS ENGAGED</b>	<b>MORE ENGAGED</b>
Shelters and picnic areas	<b>66.8%</b>	60.9%	68.6%
Hiking / nature trails	<b>66.6%</b>	48.9% ↓	72.7% ↑
Paved biking / walking trails	<b>65.2%</b>	46.7% ↓	71.6% ↑
Natural features (Woods, meadows, prairies, etc.)	<b>63.0%</b>	52.2% ↓	66.8% ↑
Playgrounds	<b>55.6%</b>	52.2%	56.5%
Sports fields / courts	<b>43.6%</b>	41.3%	43.9%
Outdoor community event spaces	<b>42.7%</b>	44.6%	42.1%
Fishing / boating	34.8%	42.4%	32.1%
Canoeing / kayaking	<b>31.8%</b>	27.2%	33.2%
Indoor community event spaces	<b>28.5%</b>	28.3%	28.4%
Splash pad / water play	<b>26.3%</b>	28.3%	25.5%
Golf course	<b>25.8%</b>	29.3%	24.4%
Dog park	<b>24.1%</b>	37.0% ↑	19.9% ↓
Camping areas	<b>23.8%</b>	34.8% ↑	20.3% ↓
Mountain bike trails	<b>14.5%</b>	12.0%	15.1%
Disc golf	<b>13.4%</b>	12.0%	14.0%
Equestrian / horse trails	<b>3.6%</b>	7.6% ↑	2.2% ↓

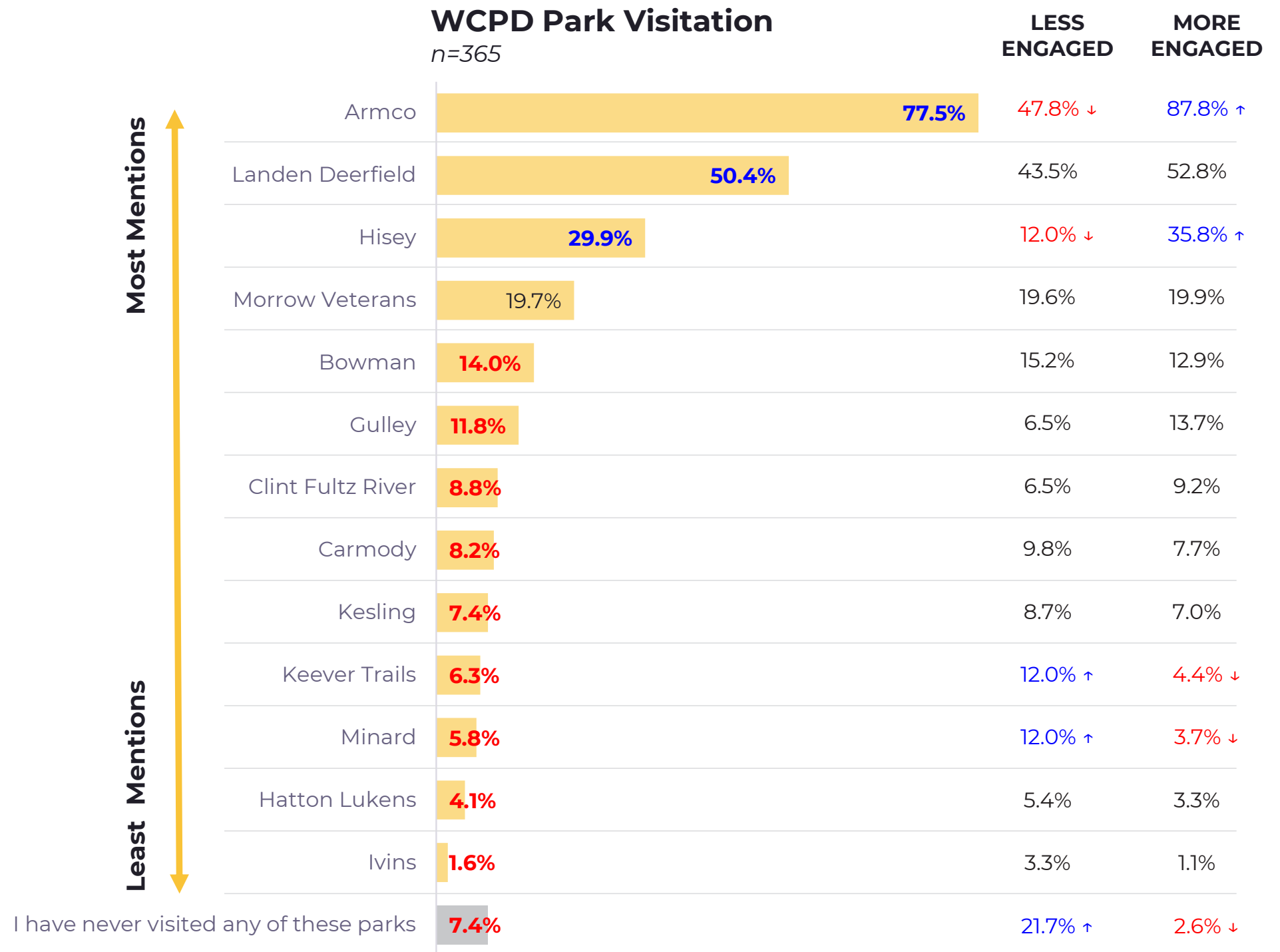
Far and away, Armco and Landen Deerfield lead the pack; Armco especially so among our more engaged respondents.

Keeper Trails and Minard have significantly more mentions by our less engaged respondents.

Further investigation is warranted to understand what those parks offer these visitors specifically. Is it location? Features? Use/situational? Exploration may expose motivations that can assist with planning, marketing and communication development.

Most Mentions

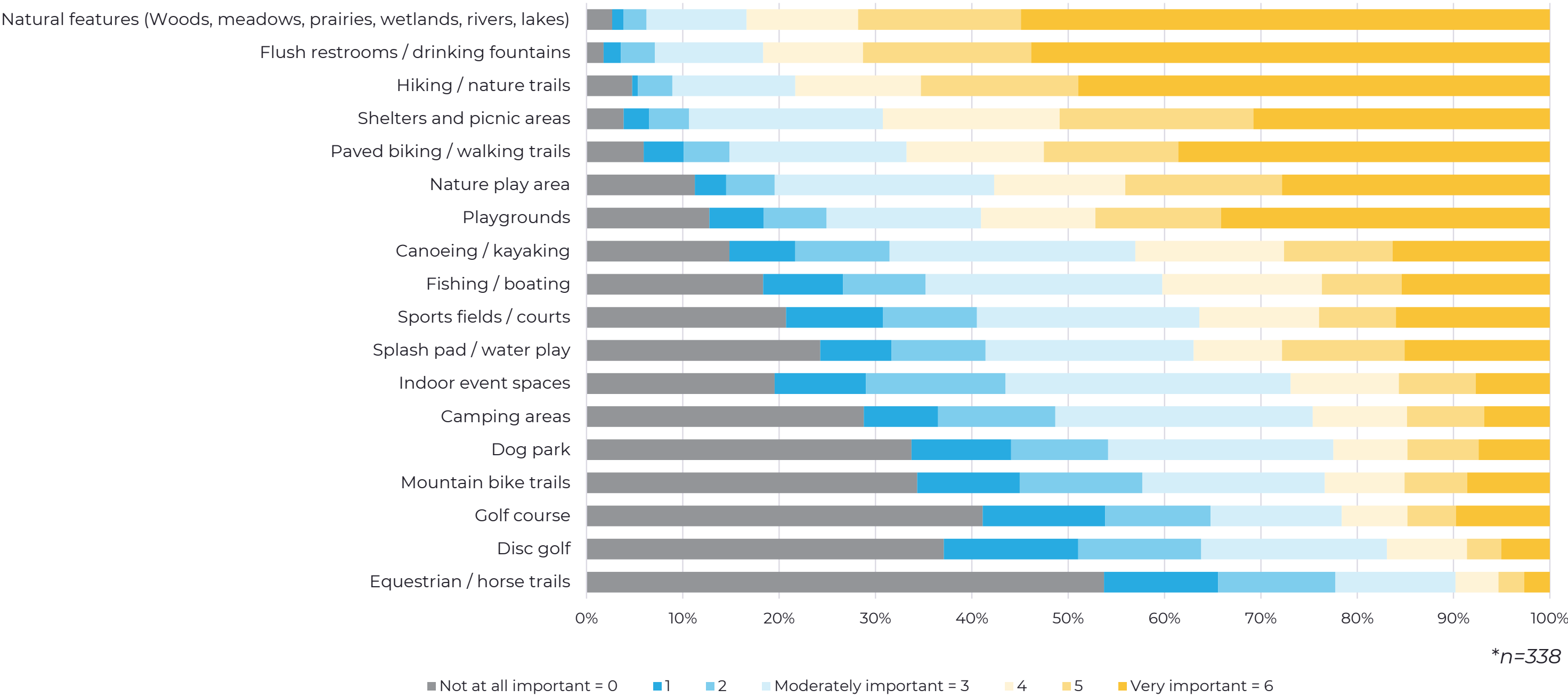
Least Mentions





The natural/ ecological and convenience features rate most important with respondents.

**PARK FEATURE IMPORTANCE | WCPD User\***

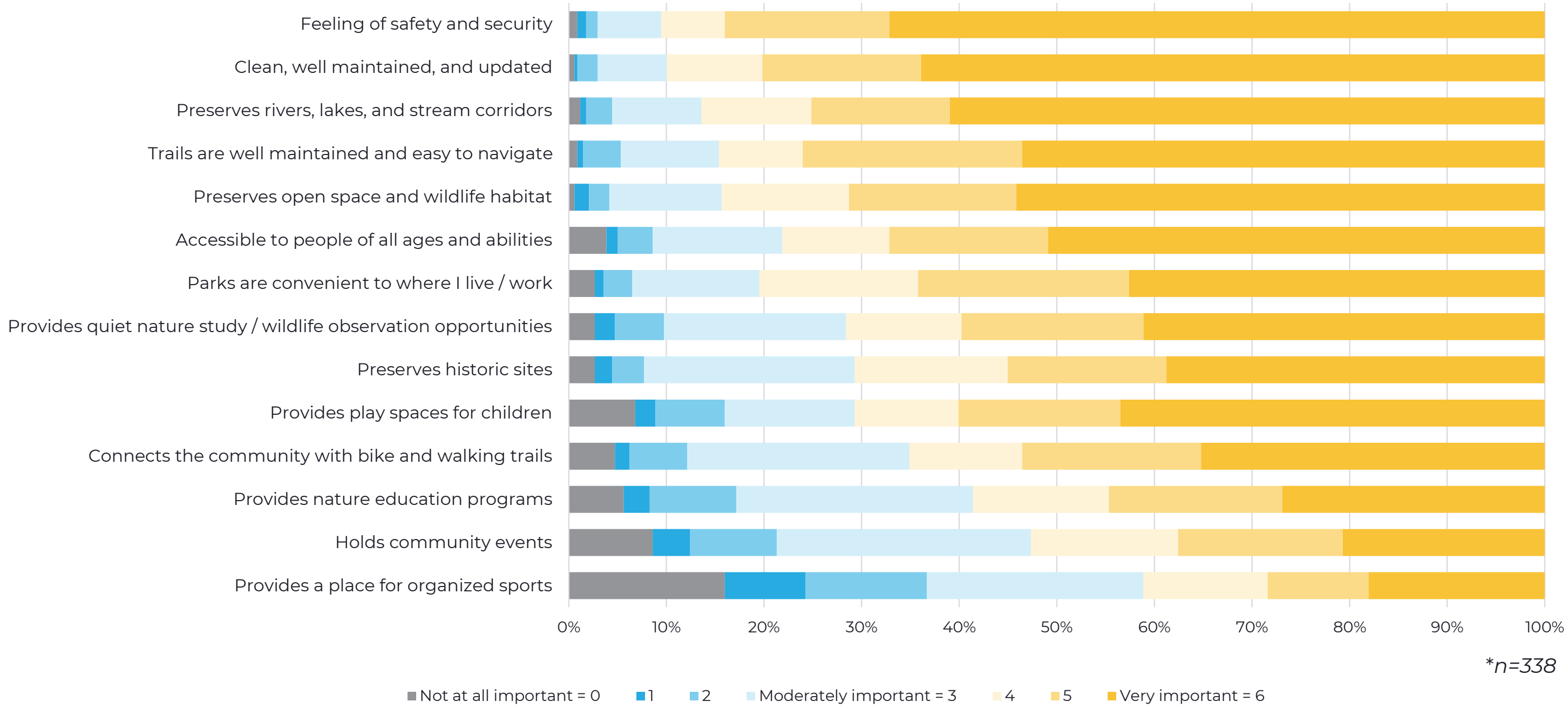


\*n=338

Ranked by AVG Total Score

Safety and cleanliness, along with preservation, maintenance and habitat rank among the most important factors for park guests.

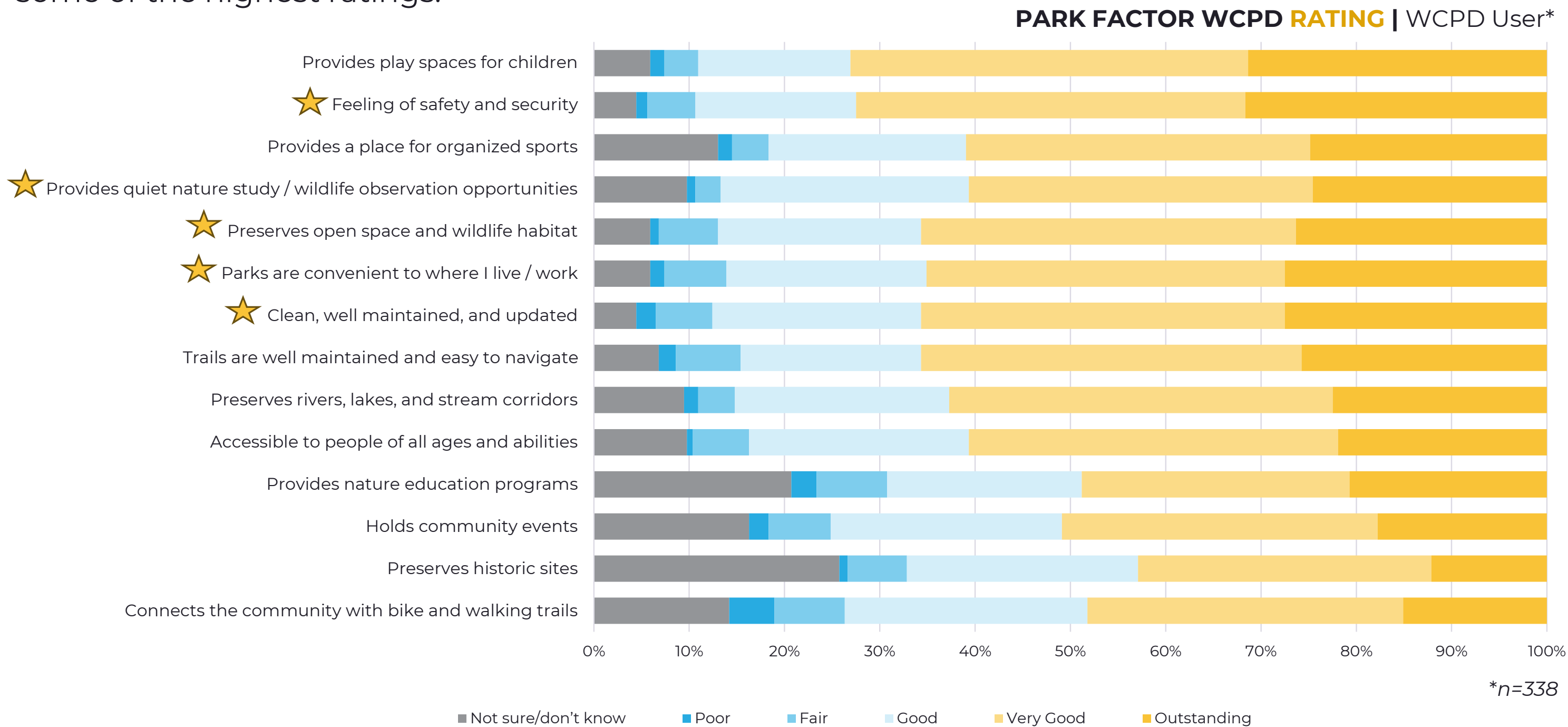
**PARK FACTOR IMPORTANCE | WCPD User\***



\*n=338

Ranked by AVG Total Score

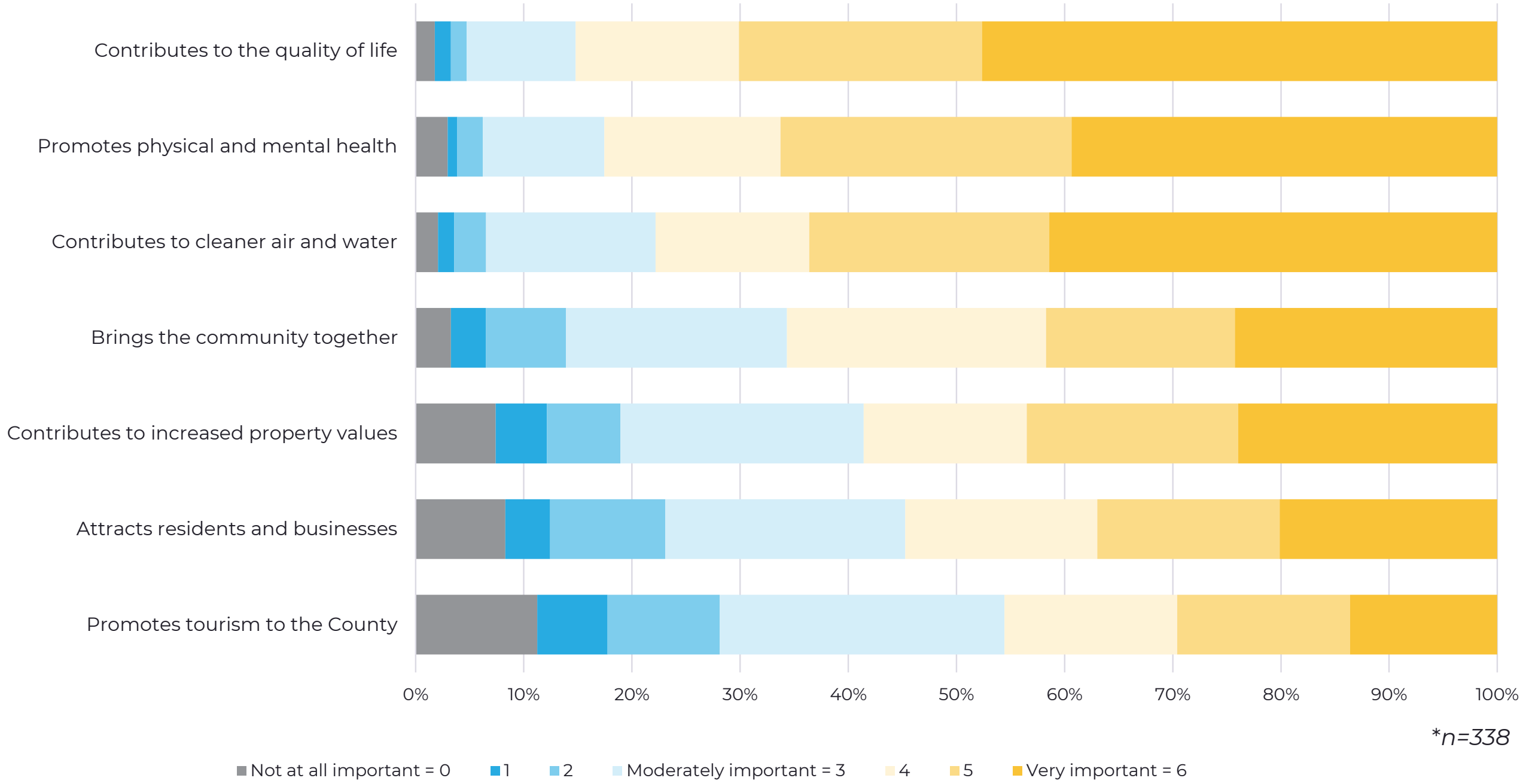
WCPD received relatively high marks across the board. Some of the most important factors also have some of the highest ratings.



Ranked by AVG Total Score

Most believe the most important park benefits are contributions to quality of life and physical and mental health.

**PARK BENEFIT IMPORTANCE | WCPD User\***



# WHAT WE HEARD (KEY TAKEAWAYS / THEMES)

## What makes us **UNIQUE & SPECIAL?**

- **Natural assets** and conservation
- Community **collaboration**
- **Diverse recreational offerings** for all ages and abilities
- Strategic **location** of county
- **Financial responsibility**
- **Educational Opportunities**
- **River corridors and trails**

Warren County Park District visitors express deep appreciation for parks. Most relay how important they are for connecting with nature and the peace it brings them. Many clearly value the safety, accessibility and cleanliness of the parks for family activities like sports and playgrounds. They discuss the value parks bring to the residents of the community and highlight the variety of activities and amenities available for all ages from kids to seniors.

*Looking for wildlife is what I enjoy most. The most enjoyable park experience is being away from people just enjoying nature around me. – Male, 30*

*Seeing the familiar faces of people and their dogs. When you go often and get to know people, it becomes like a community. – Female, 73*

*What I love most is getting out into nature and enjoying fresh air and a change of scenery with my loved ones. At Armco, I enjoy that the park is clean and well cared for and safe to enjoy with my family. We enjoy the playgrounds, picnic shelters, and gazebos. – Female, 28*

*It is right by the senior center – which makes it easy to meet up with my grandparents to walk or enjoy the scenery. We will also sometimes use the shelter houses – Female, 27*

*The cleanliness, accessibility, and pretty good fishing. – Male, 35*

*I enjoy fishing, birding, hiking, spring wild flowers, star gazing, and especially sport rocketry. My daughters were involved in 4H. Through your park opportunities one of them took first place at Ohio State Judging in Intermediate Fishing, Ohio Birds, Solid Fuel Rocketry Junior – Male, 61*

*It's a great way to engage in the outdoors and keep my kids busy and having fun without being on devices. – Female, 40*

**Overall, parks are cherished as a place for quality time with loved ones, relaxation, recreation, and a break from daily life.**

# WHAT WE HEARD (KEY TAKEAWAYS / THEMES)

What can we learn from our **PEERS**?

- **Sustainable funding models**
- Effective **communication, marketing, and outreach**
- Diverse and innovative **programming**
- Land **conservation / preservation** strategies
- **Collaboration and partnerships**

## WHAT WE HEARD (KEY TAKEAWAYS / THEMES)

How do we **PARTNER** with neighbors to **CONNECT** our assets?

- **Regional Connectivity** – physical (i.e., trails) and organizational
- Cross-jurisdictional **collaboration** (planning, engagement, funding)
- Collaborative **programming**
- Regular **communication / interaction**



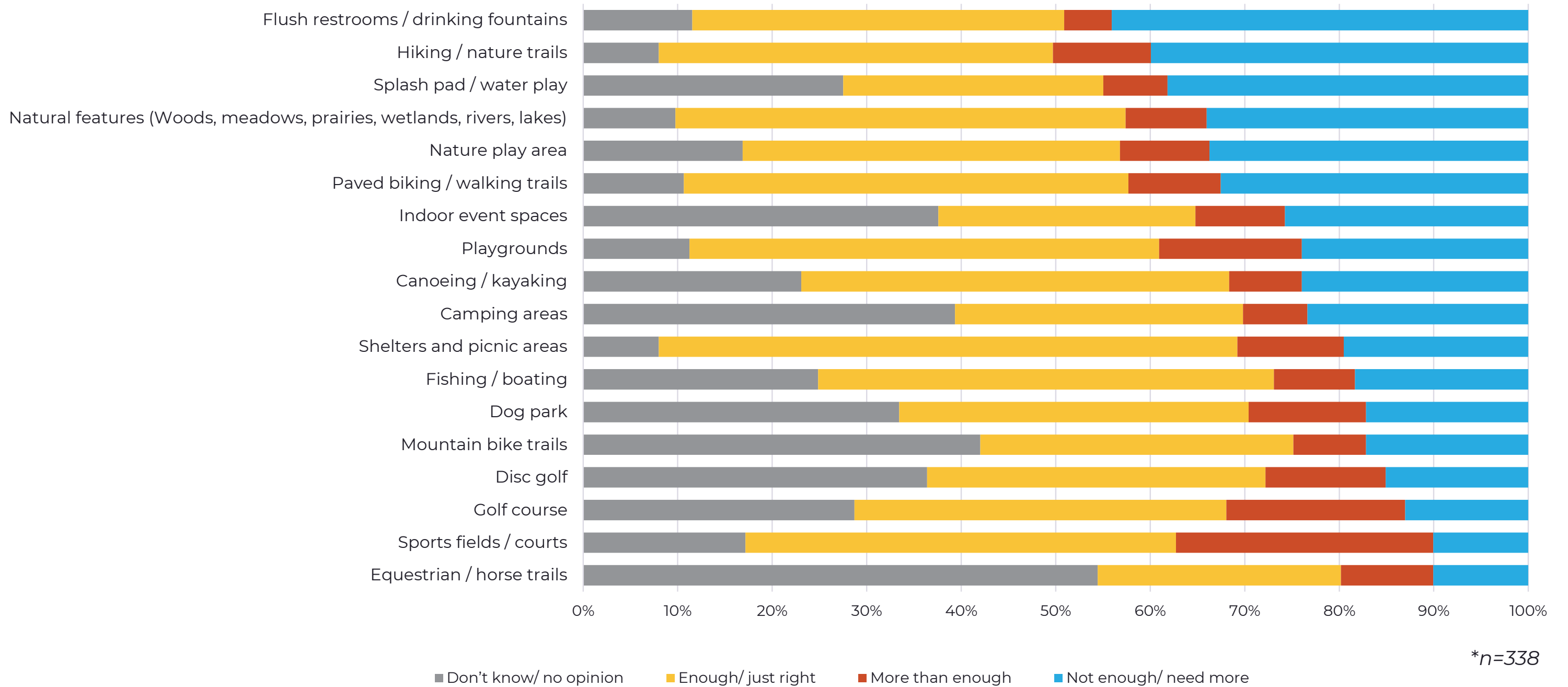
# WHAT WE HEARD (KEY TAKEAWAYS / THEMES)

What's **MISSING** from our parks?

- **Funding** and resource limitations
- **Facility upgrades** and **new amenities**
- Improved **marketing** and community **awareness**
- **Connectivity** to link all major assets
- **Conservation** efforts
- Expanded environmental **education**
- **Diverse amenities and programming**
- **Staffing and operational challenges**
- **Facilities in South Eastern** portion of county

# WCPD visitors would most like more 'flush restrooms / drinking fountains' and 'hiking / nature trails'.

**PARK FEATURES ENOUGH STATUS | WCPD User\***



\*n=338

Ranked by 'Not enough / need more'

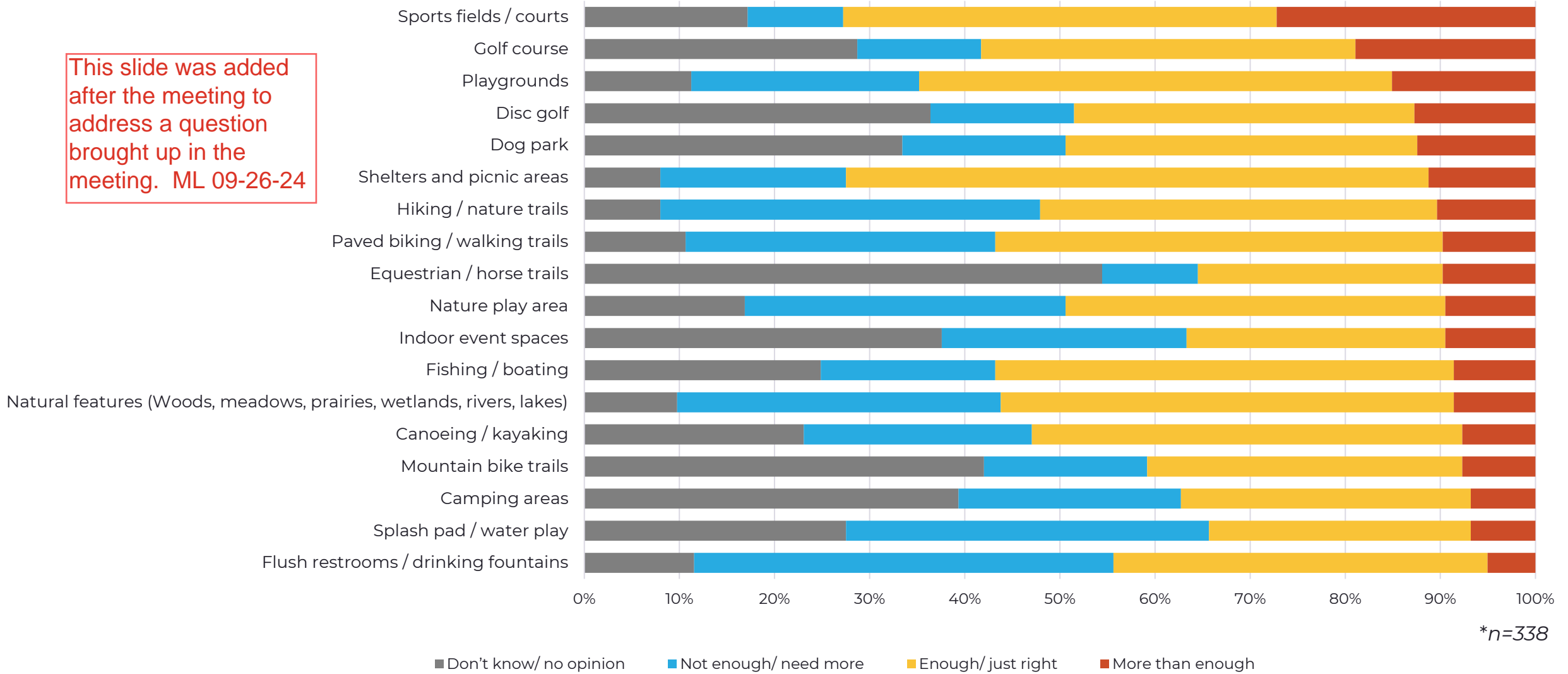
34 Q. For the following park features, please tell us whether you think Warren County Park District parks have 'Not enough', 'Enough' or 'More than enough' of each.



'Sports fields / courts' and 'Golf course' were the two highest rated 'More than enough' park features.

**PARK FEATURES ENOUGH STATUS | WCPD User\***

This slide was added after the meeting to address a question brought up in the meeting. ML 09-26-24



\*n=338

Ranked by 'More than Enough'



# STRENGTHS

Elements that Warren County & Warren County Park District excel at, benefit residents, or make the area unique and special.

## Leadership & Stakeholder Feedback

- Financial management
- Natural resources / assets
- Diverse recreational offerings
- Strong community partnerships
- Dedicated personnel

## WCPD Survey Feedback

- Safety & security
- Play spaces for children
- Spaces for organized sports
- Quiet nature / wildlife observation opportunities
- Open space & wildlife habitat preservation

# WEAKNESSES

Elements that prevent the County and District from being its best version or that need improvement.

## Leadership & Stakeholder Feedback

- Financial limitations
- Geographic gaps in park coverage
- Facility & infrastructure improvements
- Public awareness
- Staffing and resource limitations
- Marketing & branding deficiencies

## WCPD Survey Feedback

- Connecting community with bike & walking trails
- Preserving historic sites
- Holding community events
- Providing nature education programs
- Accessibility for people of all ages and abilities

# OPPORTUNITIES

Elements that can be improved, have untapped potential, or need more investment.

## Leadership & Stakeholder Feedback

- Funding diversification
- Land activation and development
- Diverse programming
- Partnership development
- Brand development
- Enhanced connectivity

## WCPD Survey Feedback

- Nature and outdoor features and programs that serve the public good
- Language, communication & marketing targeted toward sentimentality in 'pride of place' & 'our parks' may help build familiarity and increase visitation.

# THREATS

Elements that cause negative impacts to the area, prevent improvements, or are barriers for residents/visitors.

- Financial instability
- Development pressures
- Infrastructure deterioration & maintenance challenges
- Safety and security
- Competition for attention & resources
- Public awareness challenges

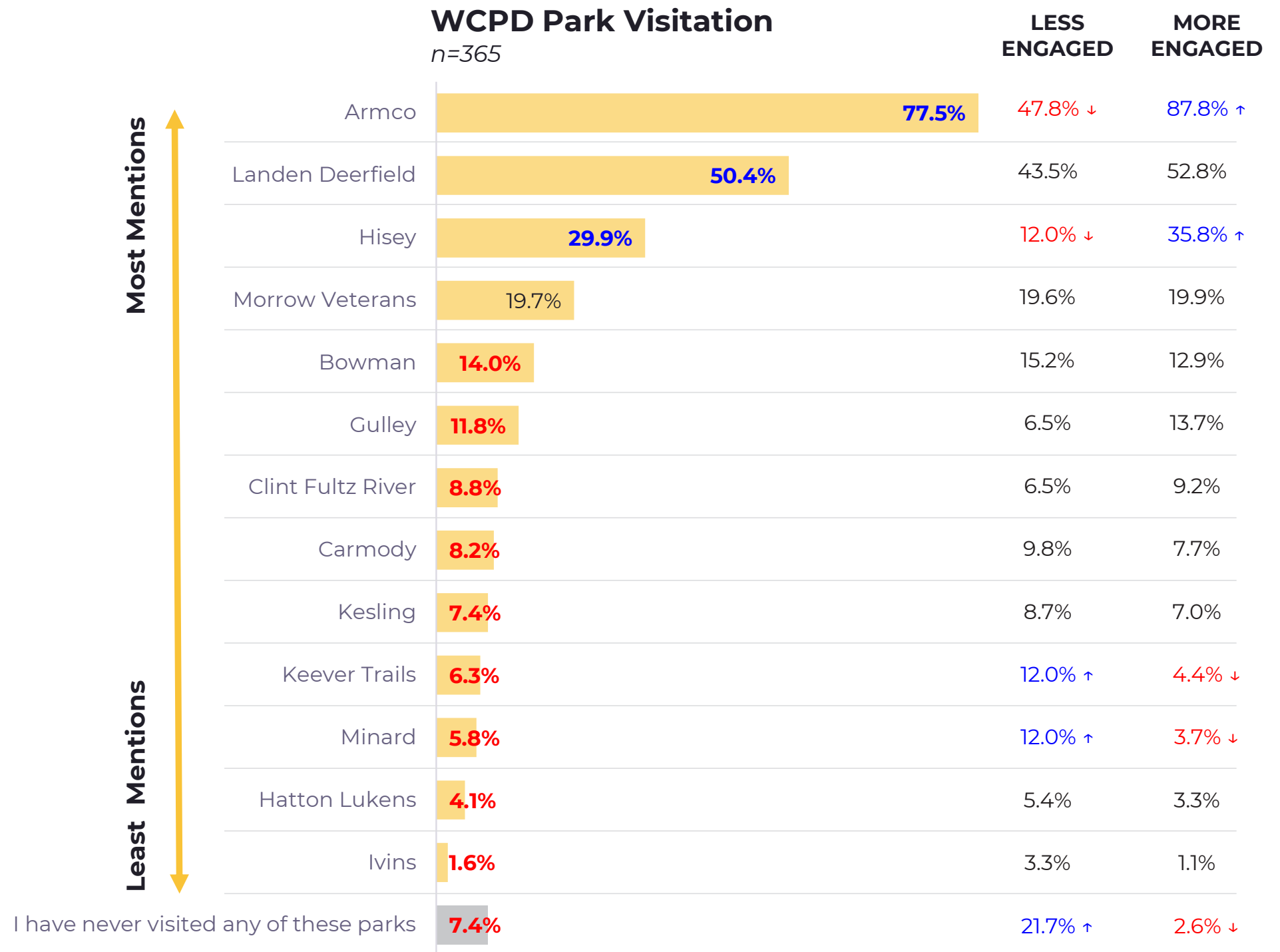
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Most Mentions

Least Mentions







## **HAVE WE MISSED ANY MAJOR TOPICS?**

Scan the QR code (on the screen or on your handout) to participate in the polling exercise.

**DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT, VISION,  
GOALS & OBJECTIVES...**

## MISSION STATEMENT

A brief, concise statement that defines the Park District's purpose and values.

## VISION

Defines long-term aspirations and the direction to take in the future. Serves as the foundation for goals and objectives.

## GOALS

Represent overarching, desired outcomes that align with the themes identified in the vision statement.

Steering Committee Meeting #3

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## OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

# EXISTING MISSION STATEMENT

The Warren County Park District is dedicated to the acquisition, development, protection, and preservation of quality parks and natural areas throughout Warren County, Ohio to achieve and maintain a balance of programs, operations and facilities for public use and enjoyment by residents, guests and visitors. This includes parks that contain the natural areas of the Little Miami Scenic River corridor, the Great Miami, and Twin Creek stream basins, as well as quality park properties for recreation throughout the County.

It also includes the ownership and operation of public parks, nature preserves, and recreational facilities on a scale sufficient to support and maintain quality experiences and opportunities for children and adults of all ages. The Park District also responds to the changing and growing demographics of Warren County, Ohio.

# MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

## *COLUMBUS AND FRANKLIN COUNTY METRO PARKS*

To conserve open spaces, while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature.

## *GREAT PARKS OF HAMILTON COUNTY*

To preserve and protect natural resources and to provide outdoor recreation and education in order to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

## *GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT*

To conserve, preserve and protect the natural features of Geauga County and to provide outdoor recreational experiences to our residents of every age, every season.

## *FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS (DAYTON)*

To protect the region's natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature.

## *TOLEDO METROPARKS*

Metroparks Toledo will conserve the region's natural resources and provide outdoor recreation opportunities that inspire personal wellness and connections to nature.



**PLEASE PROVIDE ONE WORD THAT YOU  
THINK BELONGS IN WARREN COUNTY  
PARK DISTRICT'S MISSION STATEMENT**

Scan the QR code (on the screen or on your handout) to  
participate in the polling exercise.

# DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT

Definition: A brief, concise statement that defines the Park District's purpose and values.

To enhance the quality of life for Warren County residents by providing accessible parks and natural greenspace for everyone to enjoy.

*TABLE DISCUSSION & REPORT BACK:*

*How would you revise this draft statement based on what you see in the word cloud?*

# EXISTING VISION

The Warren County Park District is dedicated to providing excellent parks, quality recreation, and the preservation of green space for the benefit of all county residents.





**PLEASE PROVIDE ONE WORD THAT  
YOU THINK BELONGS IN THE VISION  
STATEMENT**

Scan the QR code (on the screen or on your handout) to participate in the polling exercise.

# DRAFT VISION

Definition: Defines long-term aspirations and the direction to take in the future. Serves as the foundation for goals and objectives.

**We envision Warren County Park District as a leader in providing diverse, connected green spaces and parklands that balance conservation and recreation while fostering strong community connection.**

## *TABLE DISCUSSION & REPORT BACK*

*How would you revise this draft statement based on what you see in the word cloud?*

# DRAFT GOALS

Definition: Represent overarching, desired outcomes that align with the themes identified in the vision statement.

- A. Conservation and land preservation:** Enhance efforts to preserve natural areas, rural character, and wildlife habitats, with a particular emphasis on river corridors and tributaries.
- B. Community engagement, awareness, and partnerships:** Strengthen outreach, communications, branding, partnerships, funding, and volunteer programs.
- C. Diversity of offerings:** Provide quality, diverse and accessible recreational opportunities, environmental education, and programming for all residents
- D. Connectivity:** Improve regional and local trail networks and connections between communities, parks, schools, and other assets
- E. Funding:** Develop a diverse and sustainable funding strategy
- F. Facility Management & Improvements:** Develop a systematic and adaptive approach to resource management, facility improvement, maintenance, and sustainable best practices
- G. Organization:** Improve organizational capacity, skills, efficiency, and effectiveness

**HANDOUTS**



Scan the QR code to participate in the polling exercises.

# MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

## *COLUMBUS AND FRANKLIN COUNTY METRO PARKS*

To conserve open spaces, while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature.

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# DRAFT GOALS

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**C. Diversity of offerings:** Provide quality, diverse and accessible recreational opportunities, environmental education, and programming for all residents

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**D. Connectivity:** Improve regional and local trail networks and connections between communities, parks, schools, and other assets

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**E. Funding:** Develop a diverse and sustainable funding strategy

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**F. Facility Management & Improvements:** Develop a systematic and adaptive approach to resource management, facility improvement, maintenance, and sustainable best practices

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**G. Organization:** Improve organizational capacity, skills, efficiency, and effectiveness

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# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL A:

**Conservation and land preservation:** Enhance efforts to preserve natural areas, rural character, and wildlife habitats, with a particular emphasis on river corridors and tributaries.

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Conduct a natural resource assessment of the county, identifying targeted areas for conservation, preservation, and restoration
- Conserve natural areas including prairies, woodlands, wetlands, riparian corridors, and sensitive plant communities.
- Implement land management plans for each site (in X parks by [year])
- Evaluate strategic land acquisition opportunities
- Expand nature education programs focused on stewardship, conservation, and sustainable practices (to reach X% more participants by [year])

# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL B:

**Community engagement, awareness, and partnerships:** Strengthen outreach, communications, branding, partnerships, funding, and volunteer programs.

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and branding strategy (by [year])
- Expand partnerships with schools, local businesses and community organizations to promote outdoor activities, local resources, and improve overall quality of life.
- Implement collaborative programs with schools and libraries annually
- Establish and facilitate regular stakeholder meetings for ongoing collaboration.
- Conduct on-going market research in order to refine goals, improve services and evaluate outcomes
- Develop and implement an expanded volunteer program (by [year])

# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL C:

**Diversity of offerings:** Provide quality diverse, accessible recreational opportunities, environmental education, and programming for all residents.

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Provide experiences that connect people with nature and inspire diverse park usage, while maintaining the integrity of natural resources
- Evaluate existing programs and services in accordance with the Park District Mission and Vision, relevant industry trends, market research and community needs
- Promote health and wellness activities and expand educational programming and events
- Develop master plans for each park
- Update aging infrastructure (in X number of parks by [year])
- Design and implement inclusive and accessible design features across all parks.
- Increase access to open space, recreational trails, waterways and natural play areas to diversify outdoor experiences consistent with the Mission and user needs.
- Evaluate sites for the best location of a potential new nature center

# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL D:

**Connectivity:** Improve regional and local trail networks and connections between communities, parks, schools, and other assets

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Collaborate with local and regional partners to create a county-wide trail connectivity plan
- Collaborate with (X) neighboring jurisdictions on trail planning, funding, and management (by [year])
- Facilitate regular stakeholder meetings and an annual county-wide trail summit for on-going collaboration with the trail community.
- Consider a range of trail types and experiences as part of the visioning and collaboration for a county-wide trails network.
- Develop (X miles of) new trails that connect communities, parks, schools, and assets (by [year] )



# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL E:

**Funding:** Develop a diverse and sustainable funding strategy

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Diversify and grow revenue sources / funding mechanisms
- Continue to increase supplemental funding through sponsorships and grow donations by collaborating with a nonprofit partner / foundation
- Partner with communities, organizations and businesses to support local initiatives, impact the regional economy, and generate revenue
- Expand opportunities for corporate engagement, partnerships, sponsorships, and funding

# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL F:

**Facility Management & Improvements:** Develop a systematic and adaptive approach to resource management, facility improvement, maintenance, and sustainable best practices

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Conduct facility evaluations of each site to determine needs / opportunities
- Develop a Management Plan for each property
- Establish sustainability standards and updated procedures to guide design and management of land, facilities, and equipment
- Evaluate opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce costs
- Implement asset management software system
- Encourage on-going training and best practices for management staff

# DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Policies, or recommended actions that are specific and measurable and aimed at achieving goals and fulfilling the vision.

## GOAL G:

**Organization:** Improve organizational capacity, skills, efficiency, and effectiveness

## RELATED OBJECTIVES:

- Present 2025 Strategic Plan to the Board of Park Commissioners, staff and stakeholders to establish an implementation strategy for each objective.
- Develop procedures with staff to increase communication and engagement
- Expand career development opportunities for employees by taking advantage of cost-effective programs through partnering agencies, local resources and on-line training
- Expand volunteer and community service programs
- Implement asset management software system
- Identify staff and equipment needs to keep pace with park improvements and expansion

## **HANDOUTS**

Break into groups to discuss the **MISSION** statement, **VISION**, and **GOALS** for Warren County Park District.

# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE?

The Steering Committee is composed of **highly engaged** community **leaders and stakeholders** who recognize the importance of parks and open space and represent a broad range of interests from across Warren County. Members will **provide insights** into the current situation and **engage in a process of collective discovery** so that we can better understand community needs, identify gaps in service, and chart a path forward. Members will also **act as liaisons** between the Park District and their own networks to drive participation in community outreach efforts.

## Meetings:

1. **May 21.** Review background information, benchmarking, and trends analysis. Collectively determine the Park District's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the threats and opportunities the Park District faces.
2. **Summer 2024.** Assist in leading and inviting stakeholders to focus group sessions.
3. **Late Summer 2024.** Review input received from stakeholders and brainstorm ideas for the Park District's mission, vision, and goals.
4. **Fall (Early November) 2024.** Review and provide feedback on the draft mission and vision statements, goals, and objectives.
5. **Early 2025.** Review and provide feedback on the draft Strategic Plan prior to its adoption and celebrate our accomplishments.