
COUNTY-WIDE PARKS, RECREATION, AND LEISURE FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT



IOWA WEST FOUNDATION

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Equitably addressing the parks, recreation, and leisure needs of Pottawattamie County's residents requires coordinated planning, carefully targeted investment, and cooperation between neighborhoods and communities. As stewards of public tax dollars, public recreation providers in the county should also demonstrate that major park or recreation facilities are supported by the appropriate population, carefully formulated funding strategies, and a long-term maintenance plan before beginning construction. In addition, many communities in the county will need assistance to address even the most basic recreation and leisure needs. Understanding and addressing the residents' recreation needs and defining a balanced response is the primary goal of this Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment.

This study is not intended to be a conventional parks and recreation master plan. Recommendations for expanded or new facilities will not extend to the level of precisely describing the projected facility or identifying proposed locations. The purpose of the study's findings and recommendations is to assist the Iowa West Foundation (IWF or Foundation) in evaluating and awarding grant proposals for the continued philanthropic support of parks, recreation, and leisure enhancements and projects in the county.

1.1 WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

This Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment began with a careful examination of Pottawattamie County's existing park and recreation system, its indoor recreation assets and programmatic offerings, and the county's demographics. It is also based on input from the county's residents gathered during the Study's public outreach process. The conclusions drawn from this analysis and engagement were then used to project the parks and recreation needs of tomorrow. The process included:

- ✿ Incorporating public input from a wide spectrum to help determine the direction for preserving and improving the residents' quality of life (see [Chapter 5](#)). This included:
 - ✿ Three interactive public meetings distributed geographically across the county. The meetings featured Keypad Polling technology where the audience responded to questions regarding their recreation needs and preferences.
 - ✿ A statistically valid, random sample community survey mailed to 5,000 households in the county.
 - ✿ An open, online version of the community survey (non-statistical).
 - ✿ A youth outreach that included a text survey and Facebook Page.
 - ✿ A project website where residents could review products and post comments/suggestions.



Figure 1: Residents from the southeast area of the county participating in a Keypad Polling exercise

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

RESIDENTS WOULD GENERALLY LIKE PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, AND PICNIC SHELTERS CLOSE TO THEIR HOMES, BUT WOULD BE WILLING TO TRAVEL TO LARGE CENTRALIZED FACILITIES. THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RESPONSES FROM COUNCIL BLUFFS AND THOSE OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTY ON THIS QUESTION. FOR EXAMPLE, RESIDENTS IN MORE RURAL AREAS WOULD PREFER SMALLER, CLOSE IN FACILITIES AS COMPARED TO LARGER, CENTRALIZED COMPLEXES.

TRAILS AND TRAIL-BASED ACTIVITIES CONSISTENTLY SCORED AS THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED RECREATION AMENITY AND THE MOST DESIRABLE RECREATION FACILITY FOR RESIDENTS.

AFTER TRAILS, PLAYGROUNDS, SWIMMING POOLS / SPRAYGROUNDS, PARKS, AND FISHING AREAS WERE IDENTIFIED BY RESIDENTS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES TO ADD OR EXPAND.

RESIDENTS PREFERRED IMPROVING EXISTING FACILITIES BEFORE BUILDING NEW; DESIRED BETTER COORDINATION / COOPERATION BETWEEN AGENCIES; AND FELT THAT PARK AND RECREATION RESOURCES SHOULD BE MARKETING BETTER TO ATTRACT VISITORS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

☞ Evaluating existing park, recreation, and leisure facilities to understand how residents are being served and to create a baseline against which future needs can be assessed (see [Chapter 4](#)). Findings of this analysis included:

- ✂ Parks in the Council Bluffs / Carter Lake area are well maintained and generally well distributed. However, not all residents are within walking distance of a park and the northeast quadrant of Council Bluffs lacks a community park.
- ✂ Residents in small towns and rural areas are generally well served by neighborhood parks, but many of the facilities in these parks need to be upgraded. There is also a need for community parks and sports facilities in some of the smaller communities in the county.
- ✂ There are only five outdoor pools / aquatic areas in the county, resulting in a shortage of water-base recreation.
- ✂ Trails are found in Council Bluffs or in the county's large nature-based parks. Other than the Wabash Trace Trail, there are no regional trails connecting communities and only small isolated trail segments in the cities and towns outside of Council Bluffs. Even within Council Bluffs, there are still a number of important missing trail linkages.
- ✂ Natural areas protect many of the county's most sensitive habitats. These are typically open to the public and offer recreation facilities where public use is appropriate.
- ✂ Educational facilities are generally supported by adequate recreation amenities but access is often limited to school-based activities.

☞ Evaluating if the current indoor facilities and recreation programs are meeting the needs of the community (see [Chapter 4](#)). The Planning Team observed that:

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- ✂ There is lack of indoor recreation facilities in the Council Bluffs area and consequently shortfalls in some recreation programs typically offered by other communities its size.
- ✂ The non-profit sector fills a critical role but is limited by undersized facilities.
- ✂ There are only five indoor aquatic centers in the county and two of these are school facilities with restrictions on public use.
- ✂ Recreation facilities and programming outside of the southwest quadrant of the county is limited due to a shortage of facilities.
- ✂ Residents in the eastern third of the county often travel to adjacent counties for indoor recreation facilities and programs.

Readers are encouraged to review the chapters noted above to gain a full understanding of the findings identified during this phase of the study.

1.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following recommendations have been formulated to help establish a strategy for investing in parks, recreation, and leisure facilities in Pottawattamie County. They are not intended to direct the IWF to provide financial assistance for specific facilities in specific communities or that there is an implied commitment that an application for a project addressing need identified in the study will be funded. That process is better left to the Foundation's grant evaluation process. Rather, this section of will focus (1) on suggesting polices that could help guide the decision making and improve the grant process for public agencies and private donors, and (2) on recommendations for addressing the broad recreation needs of the County.

1.2.1 Guiding Policies

Because IWF's grants are meant to support a wide spectrum of needs in the county, many of the Foundation's polices do not specifically apply to park, recreation, and leisure facilities. Therefore, the following policies have been suggested to help clarify the grant-making process for public recreation amenities.

The following is a brief cross-section of recommended policies for parks, recreation, and leisure facilities that the IWF should consider. See [Chapter 7](#) for additional information.

1.2.1 Economic Sustainability

Policy: The managing entity for a major park, recreation, and leisure facility will submit a maintenance and long-term operations plan demonstrating that facility upkeep and staffing can be paid for by user fees or that the managing entity has allocated resources to subsidize these costs on an on-going basis.

Policy: Due to economies of scale and limited funding sources, major facilities with high construction and operating costs will be regional (serving several communities or a population base of approximately 3,000 residents) in order to be sustainable.

1.2.3 Public Access

Policy: The Foundation has a special interest in funding park, recreation, and leisure facilities that are open to the general public, or at minimum, open to the public during non-working hours (after 3:00 PM and on weekends).

1.2.4 Partnering

Policy: Cooperation between agencies, cities, and towns is strongly encouraged in order to foster park, recreation, and leisure facilities that provide the greatest benefit for the community at the lowest cost; and to share the burden of planning, construction, and operations.

1.2.5 Recreation Equity for Park, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities

Policy: It is the Foundation's goal to foster an equitable distribution of park, recreation, and leisure facilities and programs throughout Pottawattamie County.

Policy: The Foundation supports providing basic park amenities within walking distance of the majority (at least 80%) of residents in a city or town. Basic park amenities typically include a small area of grass for turf-based recreation, a picnic shelter, and a small playground.

1.2.6 Universal Access and Safety

Policy: Public recreation facilities that are constructed with Foundation funding are strongly encouraged to meet the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Policy: The Foundation is interested in partnering with county recreation providers to bring existing park and recreation facilities in compliance with current safety standards and to encourage design of new facilities to meet or exceed those standards.

1.2.7 Recreation Facilities and Programs for Youth

Policy: Because of its emphasis on supporting children and teenagers and encouraging positive recreation outlets for youth in Pottawattamie County, the Foundation places a high priority on promoting youth-based facilities and recreation programs.

1.2.8 On-Going Maintenance

Policy: On-going maintenance should be the responsibility of the recreation facility provider and not funded by the Iowa West Foundation.



Figure 2: Residents expressed strong support for youth-based recreation activities and facilities

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1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED NEEDS

These recommendations evolved from the findings of the study and from the voice of Pottawattamie County's residents. It is hoped that these recommendations will encourage the county's park, recreation, and leisure providers to complete their own independent assessments and to take appropriate action to address the needs of their residents.

1.3.1 Careful Advancing Planning

Advance planning is necessary to protect what are often significant financial investments for the IWF. The Foundation should require that a feasibility study or master plan be completed for large facilities (\$2.0 million and up) to identify the type and scale of the facility to be built, a funding plan, its location, the role of each partner, and the cost to build and operate the facility. This would apply to large community parks, indoor recreation facilities, aquatics facilities, regional trail systems, cultural arts facilities, etc. Funding on-going maintenance should be the responsibility of the agency that operates the facility.

1.3.2 Trails

Trail projects between neighborhoods and communities would benefit each town and attract others to the region (both new residents and visitors). Examples of trail projects identified during Need Analysis and requested during public outreach are listed in [Chapters 6 and 7](#). Trail construction should be a high priority for the Foundation because trails were ranked as the most popular amenity by the community during the public engagement process and because of the potential economic benefit trails can have by attracting visitors.

1.3.3 Indoor Recreation Facilities

Council Bluffs: An indoor recreation center that would serve the Council Bluffs area has been identified as a primary need. Ideally this should be accomplished through a partnership with the YMCA and the City of Council Bluffs, and additional partners if appropriate. The Foundation should support a cooperative effort to develop such a center.

Central and Southeast Pottawattamie County: The central and southeast areas of the county are underserved for indoor recreation facilities. Due to the high cost to build and operate indoor recreation centers, they must be developed and operated on a regional basis, especially in rural areas of the county.



Figure 3: The Council Bluffs YMCA is centrally located but has limited opportunity for expansion

Specialty Indoor Facilities: There are also needs for several other specialty indoor facilities:

- Indoor Field House -- A facility that includes synthetic turf fields and basketball/ volleyball courts would serve a wide variety of year-round sports needs. A field house should be developed in the western portion of the county near the eastern edge of Council Bluffs and would likely require a partnership between a number of organizations.
- Indoor Aquatics -- Additional indoor aquatic facilities are needed in the county. The cost of development and operation of these facilities requires that they be regional in nature, involve partnering between multiple agencies, and are paired with other indoor recreation amenities.

1.3.4 Recreation Programs

Expanding recreation programs and services will be necessary to meet the long term recreation needs of residents. One of the primary limitations to providing additional recreation programs is the lack of indoor recreation facilities as compared to outdoor parks and fields. As indoor recreation facilities expand, there will be a natural growth in the demand for programming. The Foundation should support programming for both indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure activities that is developed through partnerships and in coordination with a variety of providers.



Figure 4: Rock climbing can be either an indoor or outdoor recreation activity

1.3.5 Outdoor Aquatic Facilities/Pools and Water-play

Due to the high cost to construct and operate outdoor pools, they should be regional efforts involving partnerships between communities and organizations in order to receive a favorable response by the Foundation. An alternative for small communities is the development of smaller-scale water play/ splash grounds that serve several neighborhoods.

1.3.6 Community Parks and Regional Sports Complexes

Community parks and sports complexes are unevenly distributed in Pottawattamie County. The Foundation should support the construction of community park or sports complex in communities that have a demonstrated need for such facilities. Requests for funding should document need based on projected population growth, growth in participation in team sports, and the ability to fund the majority of the capital construction cost and all of the cost of on-going maintenance.

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1.3.7 Neighborhood Parks

County residents will utilize neighborhood parks if they are within walking distance, well maintained, and offer an interesting mix of uses and features. The Foundation should assist communities in providing at least one park with basic amenities in order to serve residents. Basic park amenities typically include a picnic shelter, a small area of open turf, play equipment, and often a court facility.

1.3.8 Improvements to Existing Park Amenities

Residents feel well maintained park and recreation facilities are important and would prefer "to take care of what we have". The Foundation should support communities in upgrading aging equipment and in improving safety and ADA accessibility. This will ensure that the parks will continue to meet the residents' needs for the essential park amenities. The Foundation could consider establishing an annual mini-grant that is dedicated enhancing parks, so they comply with accessibility and safety standards.

1.3.9 Outdoor / Nature-Based Amenities and Programs

Outdoor / nature-based recreation was frequently cited as a county-wide need by the participants of this study. Based on this level of public support and growing interest in nature-based recreation, the Foundation should support new parks and natural areas that preserve unique or sensitive habitats and to work with the county's recreation providers to continue improving existing facilities.

1.3.10 Cultural Arts Programs and Facilities

Providing opportunities for activities such as the performing and the visual arts is an essential element of a well-rounded parks and recreation program. The Foundation should encourage efforts to modify, remodel, or build new cultural arts facilities along with the development of recreation programming associated with such facilities. Any significant new cultural arts facilities should be regional in nature and have multiple partners and funding sources to ensure sustainability. On a smaller scale, programs, and events that promote the arts on a more local level could be considered for funding by the Foundation if the benefits can be clearly articulated.

1.3.11 Youth Gathering Places and Activities

The lack of "things to do" was a frequent comment made by teenagers participating in the public outreach process. Though many were active in high school sports, there was still a desire for alternative gathering places for youth. One example is the Phoenix Theater in Neola where Tri-Center high school students take an active role in its operation and success. Other suggestions included coffee houses, soda shops, and art studios. Since fostering the

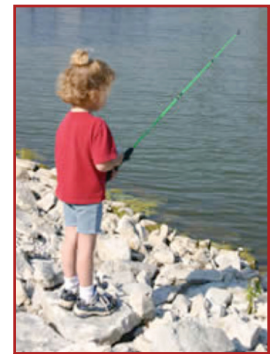


Figure 5: Fishing is a popular activity in Pottawattamie County

youth in the county is a core mission for the Foundation. Directing funds toward facilities and establishments that cater to the youth should be a priority.

1.3.12 School Facilities

The Foundation should support projects that are designed to enhance public access to school facilities for recreation purposes – as long as public access is strongly encouraged and promoted. Coordinating the delivery of recreation programs and services through school facilities is also encouraged as is the establishment of activities that are focused on school age youth.



Figure 6: Coordinating recreation programs through school facilities is encouraged

1.3.13 Non-Traditional Recreation Opportunities

Residents expressed strong support for non-traditional recreation. In the public opinion survey, natural parks, an outdoor amphitheater, and destination playgrounds were the highest ranked nontraditional recreation amenities. During pubic meetings, comments were frequently made in support of dog parks, fishing, target / skeet shooting, and camping. The Foundation should look for opportunities to support these types of facilities and activities.

1.3.14 Community Clearinghouse for Recreation and Leisure Activities

Many participants in this study conveyed a desire to know what was happening in adjacent communities – including sporting events, special events, festivals, recreation offerings, etc. A community clearinghouse website could be established, so cities and towns could exchange information and better coordinate functions, and residents could better understand what is available in the area.

1.3.15 Transportation Programs for Rural Communities

Since it is not possible to fund all amenities in every community, the Foundation should support and assist in investigating subsidized transportation in lieu of constructing major facilities in each city / town. The program could be seasonal and communities could pool funds to staff and operate the system.

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1.3.16 Facility Summary Table

The following table provides a summary of the recommendations for addressing the county's needs. It also illustrates the fact that, while some improvements may be a high priority, they may be costly or difficult to implement – while others are easy to implement, but are a lower priority.

Table 1: Facility Summary

RECOMMENDATION	ASSESSED NEED	RELATIVE COST	COMPLEXITY OF IMPLEMENTATION	COMMUNITY SUPPORT
Improvements and Upgrades to Basic Park Amenities	High	\$	Low	High
Community Centers	Low	\$\$\$	Medium	High
Cultural Arts Facilities	Medium-High	Varies	High	Low
Regional Sports Complex for Central Area of the County	High	\$\$\$	High	High
Outdoor Nature-based Facilities	Low	\$ to \$\$\$\$	Low	High
Trails Master Plan	Medium	\$	Low	High
Trail Construction	Medium	\$ to \$\$\$\$ (varies with length/ complexity)	High	Very High
Aquatic Facilities	High	\$\$\$\$	High	High
Transportation Program	Medium	\$\$\$	High	Medium
Community Clearinghouse	Medium	\$\$	Medium	High
Youth-based Facilities	High	\$\$\$	Medium	High
Council Bluffs Indoor Recreation Center	High	\$\$\$\$\$	Very High	High
Central Pott. County Indoor Recreation	Low	\$\$\$\$	High	Medium
Neighborhood or Pocket Parks in Underserved Areas	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium	Low

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Making Pottawattamie County a “great place to live, work, and play”, is the essence of the Iowa West Foundation’s vision for enhancing the community’s quality of life. In support of this vision, the Iowa West Foundation (the Foundation or IWF) has commissioned this independent Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment). The Foundation sees this study as an opportunity to learn more about the recreation and leisure needs and aspirations of the County’s residents. This has been accomplished by evaluating existing facilities, assessing the current and future needs of county residents, and making objective, gap analysis-based recommendations on ways to better address the recreation and leisure needs of Pottawattamie County. The Foundation believes that this information will also help other recreation providers – local governments, school districts, and non-profit agencies – in assessing potential recreation investments.

This Needs Assessment is not intended to be a conventional master plan. For example, where recommendations for expanding or constructing new facilities are made, they will be general in nature. In addition, the study will not recommend specific locations for new facilities. Instead, the Iowa West Foundation intends to utilize this study’s findings and recommendations to inform the Foundation’s evaluation and philanthropic support of proposals for parks, recreation, and leisure facilities. This study will be a guiding and informing document that encourages further consideration and study where necessary. It will also identify opportunities for partnering and cooperation between various stakeholders (cities, county, not-for-profit organizations, community school districts, private business and corporations, etc.) in the planning of shared and joint-use facilities.

The IWF has previously conducted a general community needs assessment, which has informed the Foundation’s emphasis on programs and philanthropic efforts to date. Similarly, two additional studies were undertaken in 2010/2011: a community youth needs assessment that is focused on needs, perceptions and attitudes; and this Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities study.

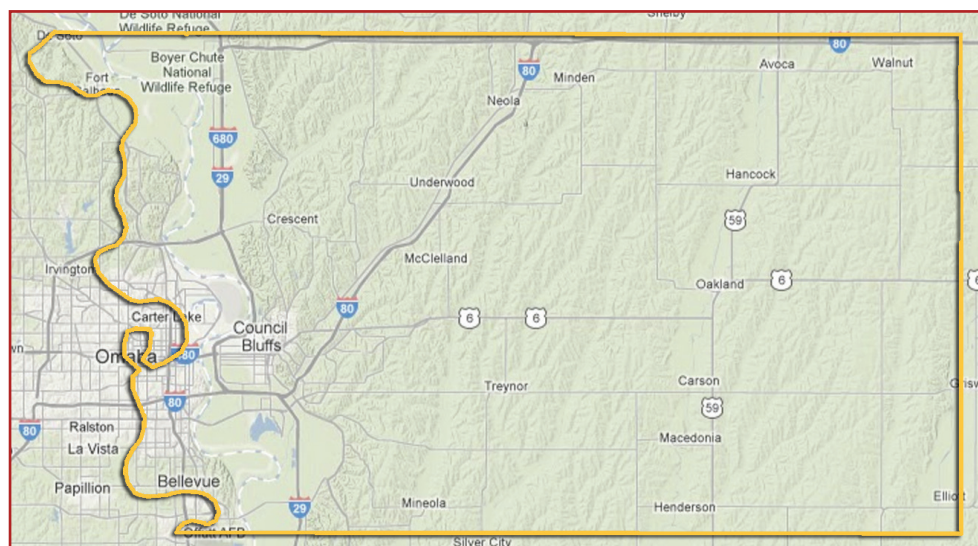


Figure 7: Pottawattamie County

2.1 VISION, MISSION, AND HISTORY

The Vision of the Iowa West Foundation is to foster a community “where families choose to live, and businesses choose to locate, because of its quality of life and high standard of living.”

The Foundation has a special interest in:

- ☁ Community Development and Beautification
- ☁ Economic Development
- ☁ Education
- ☁ Human and Social Needs

The Iowa West Foundation was established in 1994 as a private charitable foundation. It is funded by investment income and the Iowa West Racing Association, which receives contracted fees paid by local casino operators – Ameristar and Harrah’s. The Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization, as described in the 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, and is headquartered in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The Iowa West Foundation supports communities throughout southwest Iowa and eastern Nebraska.

2.2 WHAT IS A PARKS, RECREATION, AND LEISURE FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

This Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment will examine Pottawattamie County’s existing park and recreation system, indoor recreation assets, and recreation programs. It will assess the recreation and programmatic needs of today’s residents and anticipate those of tomorrow. The goal is to create a decision-making framework for investing



Figure 8: Bayliss Park, in Council Bluffs, is an excellent example of incorporating public art into a functional urban park.

IOWA WEST FOUNDATION’S MISSION

“TO IMPROVE LIVES AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES FOR TODAY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. WE DO THIS BY PROVIDING LEADERSHIP, CREATING PARTNERSHIPS, LEVERAGING RESOURCES, AND SERVING AS A CATALYST IN IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITY NEEDS.”

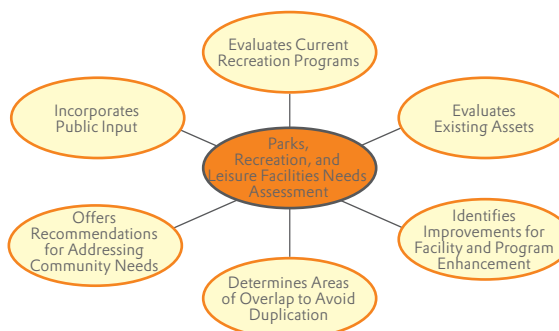


Figure 9: Factors influencing the Needs Assessment Study

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in communities to create a vibrant system of recreation and leisure facilities that reflects the needs of the county's residents. To do so, the Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment:

- ☞ Incorporates public input from a wide spectrum of sources to help determine the direction for preserving and improving the residents' quality of life.
- ☞ Evaluates the existing assets to understand how current residents are being served and to create a baseline against which future needs can be measured.
- ☞ Evaluates if the current recreation programs are meeting the needs of the community.
- ☞ Identifies improvements that would enhance both the facilities and programs.
- ☞ Determines if there are areas of overlap and how to avoid duplication.
- ☞ Offers recommendations for addressing the community's needs.
- ☞ Identifies opportunities for the IWF to partner with communities to satisfy the park and recreation needs of their residents.

2.3 WHY DO WE NEED A PARKS, RECREATION, AND LEISURE FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

Creating a vibrant system of parks, recreation, and leisure facilities in Pottawattamie County is an essential community amenity that will support the IWF goal of "improving lives and strengthening communities for today and future generations". Parks and recreation facilities and programs:

- ☞ Contribute to the livability of a community by enhancing its quality of life.
- ☞ Offer opportunities for recreation and relaxation.
- ☞ Promote good health, general well-being, and a strong sense of community.
- ☞ Help stimulate economic investment as the properties near a park and recreation facilities typically increase in value.

The Iowa West Foundation asked the Planning Team of Winston Associates, Inc., Ballard*King and Associates, Ltd, Balanced Community, Inc., and RRC Associates, Inc, to assist them in

completing this Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment.

The Planning Team was challenged to create a summary of the needs to be addressed through a planning process that focused on public engagement and which established a framework that will inform funding decisions for the foreseeable future.

"STUDIES IN A WIDE RANGE OF URBAN AREAS HAVE DOCUMENTED INCREASES IN REAL ESTATE VALUE FOR RESIDENCES LOCATED NEAR PARKS, WITH INCREMENTS IN REAL ESTATE VALUE ATTRIBUTED TO INDIVIDUAL PARKS RANGING INTO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS. HOMES NEAR GREENWAYS HAVE ALSO BEEN SHOWN TO SELL FOR HIGHER PRICES THAN THOSE FARTHER AWAY."

THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

2.4 RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Over the years, Pottawattamie County and the larger cities within the county have completed planning studies that contain findings and information relevant to this study. The Planning Team has reviewed these documents and developed the following brief summaries of the recommendations and policies which focused on parks, trails, and recreation/leisure facilities.

2.4.1 2004 Pottawattamie County Comprehensive Plan

The following represents the parks and recreation goals associated with the rural, unincorporated areas of Pottawattamie County:

- Programs of citizen participation should be fostered in rural Pottawattamie County to maintain and improve the economic and social quality of life of each community and the County as a whole.
- Maintain and strengthen relationships between the County and each community, to produce planning practices supportive of proper land usage, economic and housing growth, public facilities and services, transportation, and recreation.
- Establish and maintain land use development patterns and densities in rural Pottawattamie County that conform to uniform planning standards.
- Ensure that adequate open and recreational space is maintained in the County. Emphasize recreational opportunities associated with the river corridors, as well as existing Pottawattamie County parks, nature areas, and wildlife habitat areas.
- Provide for the equitable distribution of public facilities to meet the cultural, educational, social, recreational, safety, and health needs of the County.
- Provide a transportation system throughout the County that enhances the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.
- Develop a comprehensive trails plan to allow for educational and recreational activities throughout the County. The coordination of recreational trails with connections to regional communities and recreational gathering points will enhance recreation and tourism in Pottawattamie County.

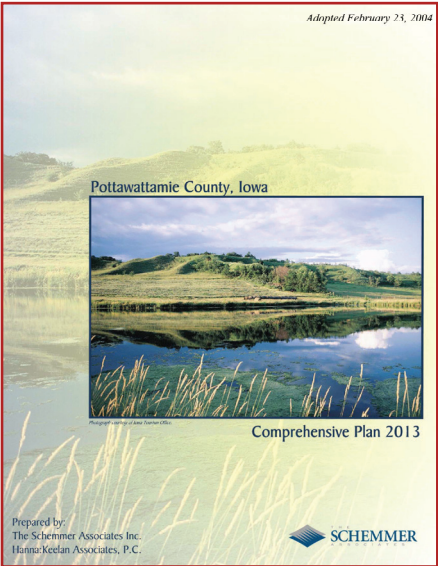


Figure 10: The Comprehensive Plan guides long-range planning policy and decision within the County.

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2.4.2 1994 Council Bluffs Comprehensive Plan

The Council Bluffs Comprehensive Plan includes these relevant goals and policies:

- ☁ Ensure that adequate open and recreational space is maintained.
- ☁ Identify areas to be developed for public parks and recreation uses.
- ☁ Encourage the rehabilitation of existing parks.
- ☁ Identify and utilize resources to capitalize on the Missouri Riverfront for open space and recreational use.
- ☁ The Missouri River floodway should remain in its present open space or recreational (land use) classification.
- ☁ The emphasis of the riverfront development strategy should be the development of passive recreational uses which are coordinated with other recreational opportunities in the metropolitan area and southwest Iowa.

2.4.3 2002 Council Bluffs Park System Master Plan

This master plan provided a number of specific, major objectives. The number one recommendation in 2002 was for an indoor recreation center with an aquatic center. This has not been accomplished due to a number of reasons: costs, competing service providers, and difficulty determining a location.

Other areas of attention included:

- ☁ Landscaping and city-wide beautification (accomplished)
- ☁ Renovation of aquatic centers (Pirate's Cove /Wilson pool) (accomplished)
- ☁ Identified park amenities and improvement projects (initiated and ongoing)
- ☁ Trails/greenways expansion (initiated and ongoing)
- ☁ Riverfront development (initiated and ongoing)
- ☁ Fairmount Park improvements per master plan (to be addressed)
- ☁ **Addition of new neighborhood parks (initiated and ongoing)**
- ☁ Enhancement of Lake Manawa North Shore (initiated and ongoing)
- ☁ Development of the Nature Center at Big Lake and Vincent Preserve (accomplished).
- ☁ **Only minor steps have been taken to address new neighborhood parks.**

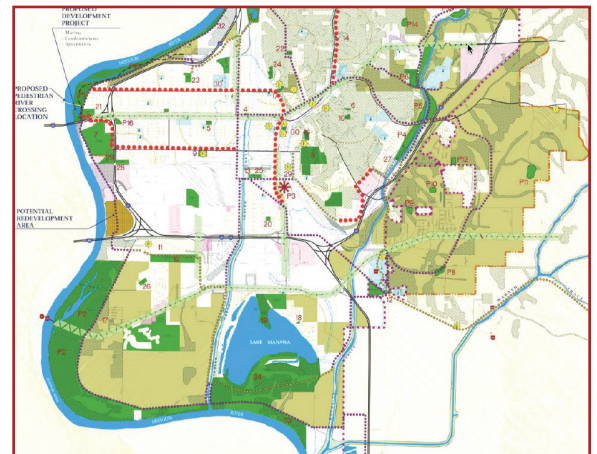


Figure 11: The 2002 Park Master Plan encouraged riverfront park development

Many recommendations of the 2002 plan have been accomplished, including: renovation of Wilson Pool, landscaping Broadway’s west entrance, numerous park improvements, construction of trails, and commencement of construction for River’s Edge Park.

2.4.4 2002 Two-Mile Limit Study City / County Plan

The City of Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County initiated a joint study, funded in part by the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED), to examine land use and infrastructure needs extending no less than two miles out from the corporate boundary.

- ☞ The Two-mile Limit Study encourages the use of residential development that utilizes an open space style of subdivision which provides for open space areas and a mix of lot sizes not to exceed the density of any one residential development category. Open Space totals approximately 850 acres of the Missouri River and Little Pony Creek floodways.
- ☞ The Two-mile Limit Study reflects proposed City parks and trails. Four parks are proposed within the Study Area.
- ☞ Parks, recreation and leisure facility related policies:
 - ✂ Promote and protect park and recreational areas as designated in the Land Use Map.
 - ✂ Develop a functional system of open spaces – including neighborhood, community, and regional parks.
 - ✂ Provide appropriate access to parks, open space, and recreational opportunities. Access should be provided in a manner that will protect the unique character and quality of such areas.

2.4.5 Loess Hills Recreation Plan

In 2009, the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Council contracted with Western Hills Resources to complete a Recreation Plan Study of the Loess Hills. The purpose of the plan was to take advantage of grant sources to fund projects and increase public access to Loess Hills. The plan identifies and prioritizes development potential for outdoor recreation facilities and amenities to assist in marketing the assets of the area. The plan contains an inventory of existing recreation opportunities in the Loess Hills, identifies future recreation opportunities, and prioritizes recreational linkages.

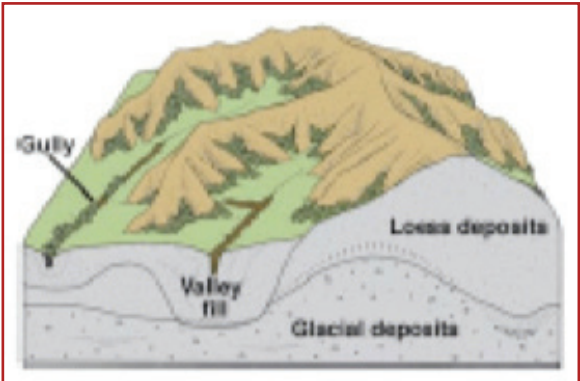


Figure 12: Morphology of Loess Hills

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2.4.6 2006 Carter Lake Comprehensive Plan

The Carter Lake Comprehensive Plan includes the following relevant goals and policies:

- ☞ Develop a circumferential pedestrian system that links the lakefront and open spaces.
- ☞ Maximize potential for boating and water sports.
- ☞ Prioritize the completion of a Lakeshore Promenade.
- ☞ Carter Lake should continue a regularly budgeted program for the rehabilitation of existing parks.
- ☞ Develop as a “bicycle-friendly” community.

The plan also identifies needed improvements to existing parks and recommends the creation of a recreational soccer program.

2.4.7 City of Carter Lake Parks and Recreation Department Five Year Plan 2010 - 2014

The Carter Lake Parks and Recreation Department Five Year Plan provides an inventory of existing facilities and amenities and identifies key system needs:

- ☞ Development of present land already utilized for recreation (including trails).
- ☞ Maintenance of existing parks and protection of resources.
- ☞ Acquisition and/or development of land to meet future needs (including trails, a community center, and a water park).

Immediate priorities included:

- ☞ Field lights on Field # 3 at Hamilton Sports Complex.
- ☞ Construction of shelters at Wavecrest and Ortiz Parks with permanent tables.
- ☞ Re-location of the east-west fence line at Mabrey Park, so that additional parking is available.
- ☞ Asphalt the road and parking areas at Wavecrest Park.
- ☞ Remodel the interiors of the restroom buildings at Mabrey and Wavecrest Parks, to include automatic lock doors.
- ☞ Replace the dugouts at Hamilton Sport Complex Fields # 1 & # 2.



Figure 13: Water-oriented recreation has always been important in Carter Lake

2.4.8 2011 Vision Treynor Survey

In 2011, the City of Treynor conducted a community survey to identify local needs for recreation amenities. Some key findings:

- 63.4% of respondents indicated that recreational sports, such as softball, baseball, soccer, football, golf, etc. were very important (highest rating possible) to the Treynor community.
- 72% of respondents rated the importance of recreational sports to their family as either important (25.4%) or very important (46.6%)
- The top identified facility that would add value to the Treynor community was a pool, followed by baseballfields (tennis courts and fitness facilities were popular write-in responses).



Figure 14: Pottawattamie County's natural resources promote a wide range of recreation activities

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An important first step in completing the County-wide Needs Assessment was to gain an in-depth understanding of the demographic profile of Pottawattamie County. Changes in the rate of population growth, age distribution, and where growth or a decrease in population may occur impact the need for parks and recreation facilities.

During the early phases of the Needs Assessment process, the Planning Team completed a number of tasks that were designed to gain a detailed understanding of the demographics of the county and its communities. A combination of data collected by the U.S. Census, including formal decennial Census counts and the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), ESRI data, and Woods and Poole information prepared for Pottawattamie County, is used to describe demographic trends.

Important observations that can be drawn from this analysis:

- ☁ The bulk of the population is located in the Council Bluffs area in the southwest portion of the county.
- ☁ Continued population growth is projected, mainly occurring in the southwest portion of the county.
- ☁ The rural portion of the county is projected to have a more moderate growth rate.
- ☁ The median age is increasing and the percentage of residents in the 65+ age group is expected to increase.
- ☁ Median household income has increased over the past couple decades, but is slightly below the national average.

3.1 POPULATION

Pottawattamie County is approximately 960 square miles in area and spans nearly 50 miles from its western boundary to its eastern boundary. The majority of the county is rural in character, while the bulk of the population (approximately 70%) is in urban areas concentrated on the west end, in and around Council Bluffs-Carter Lake area.

Pottawattamie County has generally experienced steady population growth (approximately 6%) over the past couple decades. Figure 16 shows the county's population change over the past 50 years. Table 2 shows the population change per municipality.



Figure 15: Recreation needs for seniors will increase as the population ages

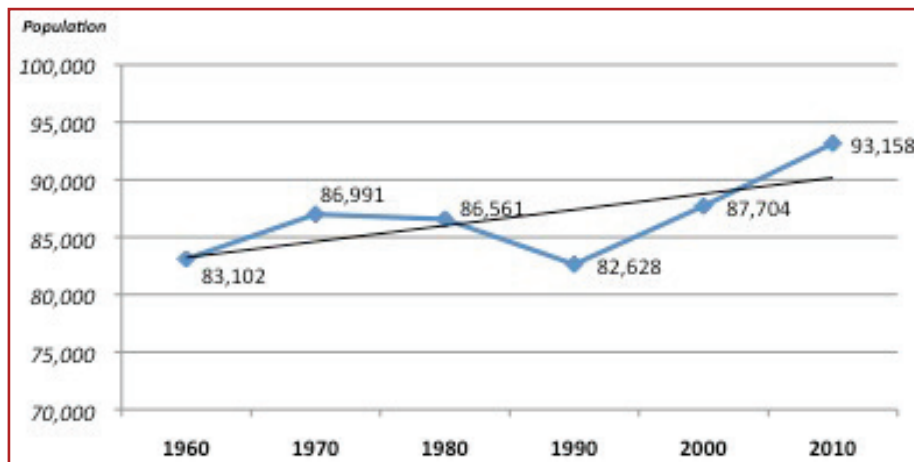


Figure 16: County population change between 1960 and 2010 with trend line (source: US Census)

Table 2: County population by municipality between 1990 - 2010 (source: US Census)

Population per Municipality	1990	2000	2010
Avoca	1,497	1,610	1,506
Carson	705	668	812
Carter Lake	3,200	3,248	3,785
Council Bluffs	54,315	58,268	62,230
Crescent	113	537	617
Hancock	201	207	196
Macedonia	262	325	246
McClelland	no data	127	129
Minden	498	564	599
Neola	894	845	842
Oakland	1,496	1,487	1,527
Shelby	637	696	641
Treynor	897	950	919
Underwood	515	688	917
Walnut	857	778	785
County Population within Municipality	66,087	70,871	75,622
Total Pottawattamie County Population	82,628	87,704	93,158
County Population in Unincorporated County	16,541	16,833	17,536
Percentage of County in Council Bluffs/Carter Lake Area	69.6%	70.1%	70.8%

increasing population
 decreasing population
 stable population

3.1.1 County Population Projections

According to the 2009 Woods and Poole Economics, Inc. *Projection of Total Population for Iowa and its Counties (2010-2040)*, Pottawattamie County is expected to continue to grow in population - nearing 92,000 people in 2040. However, compared to the 2010 Census, the county has already exceeded the projection. Using the same rate of change, the adjusted 2040 population projection for 2040 is 95,273 people.

3.1.2 Future Growth Locations

According to the Pottawattamie County Comprehensive Plan, future development in the county is expected to concentrate in close proximity to each of the existing communities. It projects that most of the future growth will occur around existing communities in the western portion of the county, near Council Bluffs. The Pottawattamie County / Council Bluffs Two Mile Limit Study also reflects this type of growth pattern and projection. The County Comprehensive Plan estimates that the rural population growth will increase at 1.5% annually.

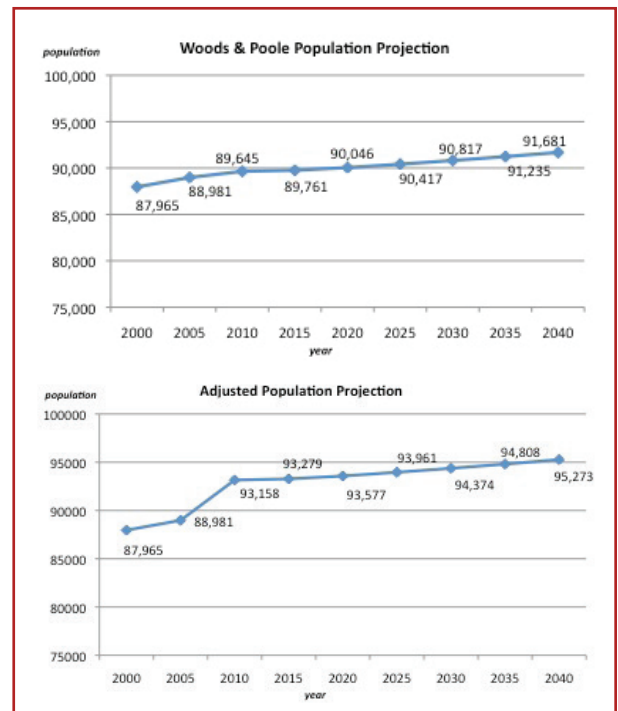


Figure 17: Adjusted County population projections (2009 Woods and Poole, US Census 1990, 2000, 2010; Planning Team calculations)

Table 3: 2010 Pottawattamie County Population Estimates (source: US Census and ESRI)

Ages	2000 Pop.	2010 Pop.	2015 Pop.	Percent Change	Percent Change Nat'l
-5	5,796	6,004	5,886	1.6%	14%
5-17	17,017	15,435	15,313	-10%	4.3%
18-24	7,962	8,225	7,948	-0.2%	14.2%
25-44	25,043	23,266	23,186	-7.4%	0.0%
45-54	12,009	13,736	12,067	0.5%	14.2%
55-64	7,905	11,443	12,629	59.8%	65.7%
65-74	6,475	6,665	8,256	27.5%	45.9%
75+	5,497	6,406	6,360	15.7%	19.5%
Population:	2010 census estimates in the different age groups in the service area				
% of total:	2010 census estimates in the different age groups in the service area				
National Population:	Percentage of the national population in the age group				
Difference:	Percentage difference between the service area population and the national population				

3.1.3 Population by Age

Figure 17 shows the population distribution by age group (age cohort) in 2000 and for 2010. There appears to be a slight shift toward an older population. This is also seen in the median age increasing from 36.5 years in 2000 to 38.5 years in 2010. Median age (Figure 19 and Table 4) is one of the primary determining factors of participation in recreation activities. In general, the lower the median age, the higher the participation rates are for most activities.

Utilizing Census information for Pottawattamie County, the following comparisons are possible:

- ☞ 24.1% of the Pottawattamie County residents were under 18 years of age; 75.9% is 18 and over.
- ☞ The percentage of the population under the age of 18 was barely more than the national average (24%); the percentage (42%) of the population aged 45 – 85+ was higher than the national population (39.5%).
- ☞ The trend is for an aging population over the next decade. (Pottawattamie County has also identified the expectation for a general overall increase in the 65+ year age group in its Comprehensive Plan.)

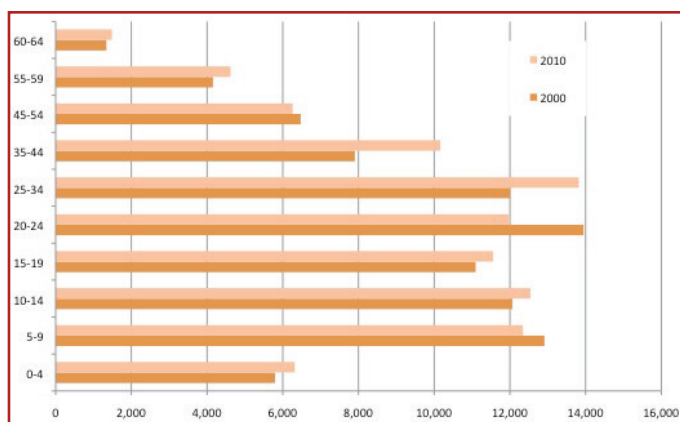


Figure 18: Population by age group (source: 2000 US census, 2009 ACS)

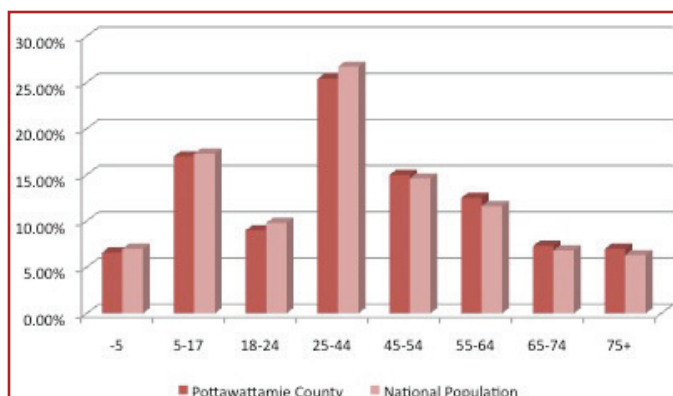


Figure 19: 2010 Pottawattamie County Age Group Distribution Chart (source: ESRI)

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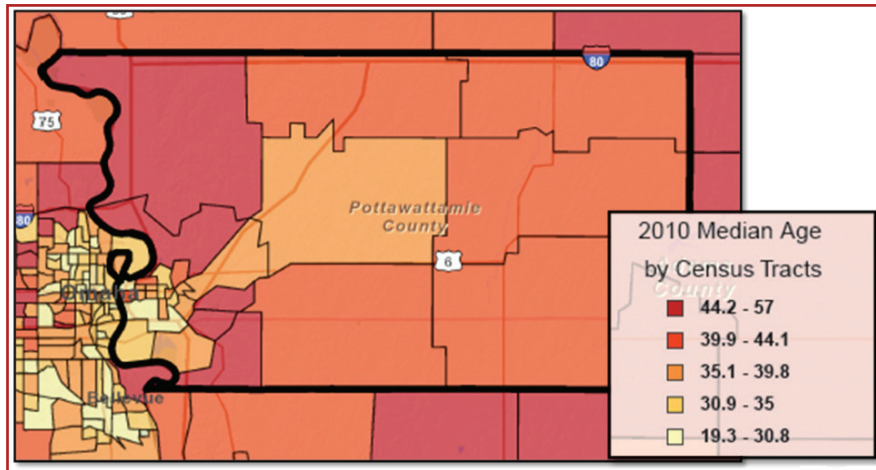


Figure 20: Map of median age by Census tracts (source: U.S. Census).

Table 4: Median age in Pottawattamie County compared to national counts (source: U.S. Census)

	2000 Census	2010 Census	2015 Projection
Pottawattamie County	36.5	38.5	39.1
Nationally	35.3	37.2	37.3

3.2 HOUSEHOLDS

3.2.1 Household Income

Household income level is also a primary determining factor of participation in recreation activities: the level of participation increases as the income level increases.

Though lower than the national rate, household income has increased over the past decade: from \$40,089 in 2000 to an estimated \$51,328 in 2010. Continued growth in this area should result in a commensurate increase in recreation participation.

"WITH INCOME THE BIGGEST PREDICTOR OF PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION, THE FACT THAT DISPOSABLE INCOME HAS DOUBLED SINCE 1960, TELLS US THAT MORE PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO PARTICIPATE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION."

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN AMERICA, CLAYNE R.
JENSEN, STEVEN GUTHRIE

Table 5: Median Household Income (source: U.S. Census).

	2000 Census	2010 Census	2015 Projection
Pottawattamie County	\$40,089	\$51,328	\$58,922
Nationally	\$42,164	\$54,442	\$61,189

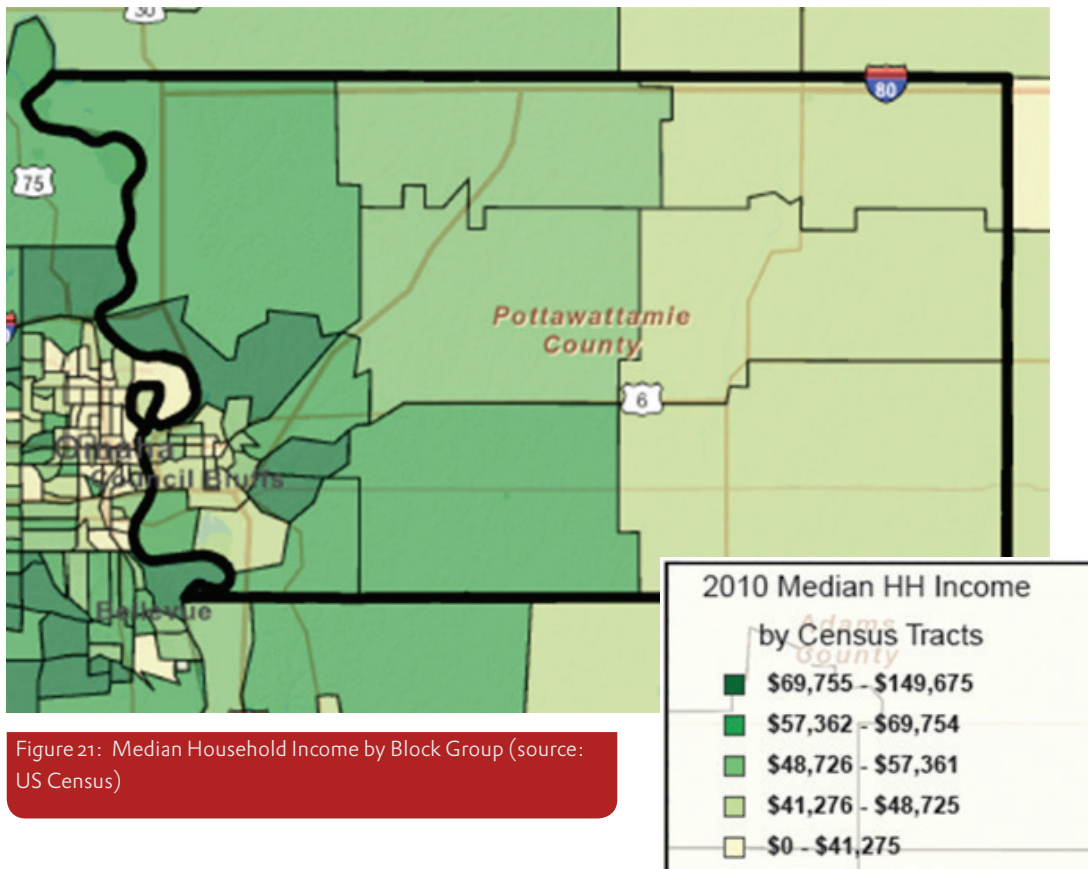


Figure 21: Median Household Income by Block Group (source: US Census)

3.2.2 Household Budget Expenditure

In addition to Household Median Income, it is important to examine Household Budget Expenditures. In particular, looking at housing information - shelter, utilities, fuel, public services, entertainment and recreation - can provide a snapshot into the cost of living and spending patterns in the service areas.

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Household Budget Expenditures: (Consumer spending data is derived from the 2004 and 2005 Consumer Expenditure Surveys from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ESRI forecasts for 2010 and 2015 are summarized in Tables 6 and 7.

Recreation Expenditures Spending Potential Index: In addition to participation in recreation activities, ESRI also measures recreation expenditures in a number of different areas and then indexes this against national numbers. Again, recreation expenditures are lower in Pottawattamie County than the comparables nationally.

Table 6: Household Budget Expenditures (source: 2004 and 2005 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics; ESRI forecasts for 2010 and 2015)

	POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY		
	SPI	AVG. AMT SPENT	PERCENT
Housing	87	\$17,766.16	29.9%
- Shelter	86	\$13,534.50	22.8%
- Utilities, Fuel, Public Service	93	\$4,231.66	7.1%
Entertainment & Recreation	91	\$2,944.84	5.0%

Table 7: Recreation Expenditures / Spending Potential Index (source: 2004 and 2005 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics; ESRI forecasts for 2010 and 2015)

	POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY	
	SPI	AVERAGE SPENT
Fees for Participant Sports	88	\$94.16
Fees for Recreational Lessons	84	\$114.62
Social, Recreation, Club Membership	88	\$144.44
Exercise Equipment / Game Tables	75	\$61.44
Other Sports Equipment	97	\$9.19

SPI:	Spending Potential Index as compared to the National number of 100
Avg. Amt. Spent:	The average amount spent per household
Average Spent:	The average amount spent for the service or items in a year
Percent:	Percent of the total 100% of household expenditures
Note:	Shelter along with utilities, fuel, public service are a portion of the housing percentage

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

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4.1.1 *Park and Recreation Classifications*

URBANIZED ZONE: COUNCIL BLUFFS

URBANIZED ZONE: CARTER LAKE

NORTHWEST POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY CRESCENT AND THE LOESS HILLS

WESTERN I-80 CORRIDOR: MCCLELLAND, UNDERWOOD, AND NEOLA

SOUTH CENTRAL POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY: TREYNOR

EASTERN I-80 CORRIDOR: MINDEN, AVOCA, AND WALNUT

SOUTHEAST POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY: HANCOCK, OAKLAND, CARSON, AND MACEDONIA

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APPENDIX

A critical step in completing the County-wide Needs Assessment is to gain an in-depth understanding of the existing system of parks and recreation facilities in Pottawattamie County. During the early phases of the Needs Assessment process, the Planning Team completed an extensive inventory and evaluation of the existing conditions in the county and its communities. The key questions this evaluation was to answer include:

- ❧ How is the existing system of park and recreation facilities/programs organized and which governmental agency is responsible for what facility or program?
- ❧ What amenities are included in each facility?
- ❧ What improvements are needed to the existing facilities so they can better serve the community?
- ❧ Are there nature-based and non-traditional recreation opportunities available to residents?

4.1 ANALYSIS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

This first portion of the existing facilities evaluation focuses on outdoor parks, recreation, and leisure facilities. This section addresses the full array of outdoor recreation assets, with the exception of outdoor pools, which have been grouped with other aquatics facilities in a subsequent section.

For the purposes of evaluating the outdoor recreation facilities, areas of Pottawattamie County have been grouped by geographic proximity, based on the assumption that they share similar physical and economic influences. For example, the proximity to the Loess Hills creates a unique physical setting for the recreation resources and communities in the northwest corner of the county while the presence of I-80 and short driving distance to the Council Bluffs/Omaha area creates a distinct economic identity for McClelland, Underwood, and Neola.

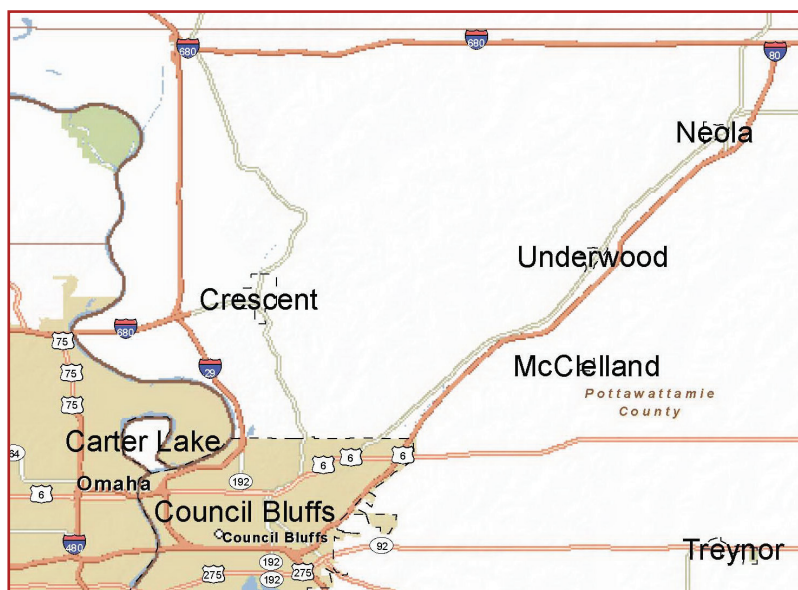


Figure 22: Towns along major highways have easy access to Council Bluffs' and Omaha's recreational amenities

4.1.1 Park and Recreation Classifications

In order to facilitate the evaluation and discussion of parks and recreation facilities, it is first necessary to develop a nomenclature for grouping like facilities. In this section, parks have been classified into types, based on the way citizens are likely to use them, and on their size and amenities.

- ☼ Pocket Parks (often called Mini Parks)
- ☼ Neighborhood Parks
- ☼ Community Parks, Sports Complexes, and School Sites
- ☼ Naturalized Community and Regional Parks
- ☼ Specialized Recreation Facilities

Pocket Parks range in size from ¼ to 3 acres and are typically found in high density areas. They are intended to be walk-to facilities that provide recreation for the residents in their immediate vicinity. They typically have play equipment, a picnic shelter and tables, and a small turf area for informal recreation.

Neighborhood Parks are typically 3 to 20 acres in size and are also intended to be walk-to facilities, usually within ½ to ¼ mile of the homes they serve. They typically have a playground, an open turf/play area large enough for informal field sports and practices, a basketball and/or tennis court, picnic facilities, restrooms (occasionally), and off-street parking.

Community Parks, Sports Complexes, and School Sites are typically 20 to 60 acres in size. They are typically drive-to facilities that serve multiple neighborhoods. They are characteristically located along major municipal transportation routes and have on-site parking. These facilities have clusters of recreation amenities and fields and typically have night-time illumination. They often contain pavilions for group picnics, trails, and may include special facilities such as a recreation center, skate park, swimming pool, or a splash ground. When these large parks have the basic services/features found in a neighborhood park, they also serve as neighborhood parks for nearby residents.



Figure 23: Sunset Park has amenities found both in neighborhood and community parks

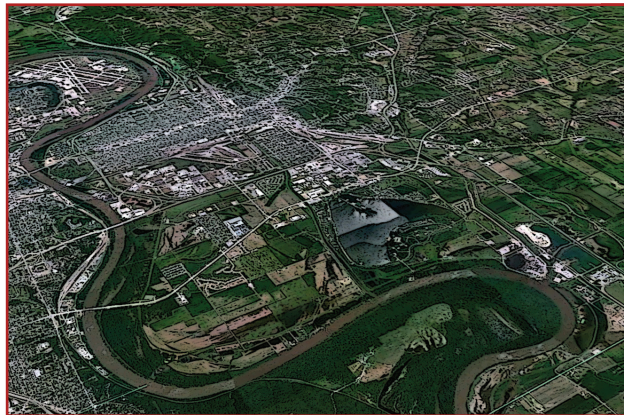
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Naturalized Community and Regional Parks serve an even greater population -- typically an entire community or county. They are often associated with large natural areas such as rivers, woodlands, and lakes, and have special features to take advantage of their resources, such as docks and fishing piers, trails, and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Specialized Facilities are unique park and recreation assets dedicated to a specific use. While these facilities do not fall into any of the typical park classifications, they do serve as a community-wide or regional recreational resource. This category includes golf courses, fairgrounds, off-road vehicle parks, shooting ranges, etc.



Figure 24: The Loess Hills are one of Pottawattamie County's most valuable natural resources



URBANIZED ZONE: COUNCIL BLUFFS

The City of Council Bluffs features a full range of park and recreation facilities that have been developed since the city was founded in the mid-1800s. With a population of over 62,000 (2010 census), it is the largest city in Pottawattamie County. The parks and recreation system is managed by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Public Property. In addition to the City of Council Bluffs, the local school districts – Iowa Western Community College, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, and the River City Baseball and Softball Association (RCBSA) provide outdoor recreation facilities in Council Bluffs.

In general, the parks operated by the City of Council Bluffs are very well maintained. Most facilities have seen regular upgrades over the years and generally appear to comply with current safety and ADA standards.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Well distributed throughout the city, although there are a few neighborhoods that are not within walking distance of a park. Table 8 summarizes the facilities included in each neighborhood park. All but one park includes a playground and most include a picnic shelter and many have restrooms.

Table 8: Pocket and Neighborhood Parks in Council Bluffs

	SIZE (ACRES)	PICNIC SHELTER	PLAYGROUND	RESTROOM	SPORTS FIELD	COURT FACILITY
Bayliss Park ¹						
Broadway Park	1.2	✓	✓			
Cochran Park	3.3		✓			Basketball/Tennis (2)
Kimball Park	1.6		✓			Basketball/Tennis (1)
Cook Park (Green / Open Space)	4.0					
Graham Park	5.1		✓		Baseball/ Softball	
Iowa West Foundation Trailhead	3.0	✓	✓	✓		
Kimball Park	1.6		✓			Basketball/Tennis (1)
Kirn Park	5.0	✓	✓	✓	Football/ Soccer	
Manawa City Park	0.8	✓	✓			
Malmore Park	2.0	✓	✓			
Peterson Park	3.1	✓	✓	✓	Soccer	
Playland Park	9.1	✓	✓	✓		Basketball/Tennis (2)
Prospect Park	2.4		✓			
Roberts Park A number of community park facilities	8.9	✓	✓	✓	Baseball/ Soccer (lighted)	Tennis (4) (lighted)
Sternhill Park	12.0	✓	✓	✓	Soccer	Horseshoes (2)
Sunset Park	6.0	✓	✓	✓	Baseball (lighted)	Basketball/Tennis (2) (lighted) Horseshoes (22) (lighted)
Trolley Park	2.7	✓	✓			Basketball/Skatepark
Twin City Park	6.4		✓		Soccer	
Westwood Park	7.0	✓	✓	✓	Baseball (lighted) Soccer	

¹ While Bayliss Park fits within the neighborhood park category from a size standpoint, it functions as an urban or city-center park with a major water feature, plaza, and historic monuments.

² Has climbing wall, skate parks, and open space

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COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

The City of Council Bluffs owns and operates the majority of the community parks and sports complexes in the Council Bluffs area, with the Council Bluffs Sports Complex being the flagship facility. These large parks are well distributed throughout the city, with only the northeast corner lacking a facility.

STAN HAHNSEN PARK

A 13.7-acre community park serving the northeast area of town focuses primarily on sports. It has three baseballfields (adult and youth), soccer field (youth practice), a picnic/playground complex, restroom building, and 124 off-street parking spaces. The baseballfields were renovated last year and the park is in generally good condition.

BIG LAKE PARK

A 163-acre park boasts two large lakes and is located in north central area of Council Bluffs. It offers a mix of passive and active uses that includes fishing, trails, mature vegetation paired with a baseball field (youth/practice), a multi-use turf / soccer field, tennis courts, a large picnic complex with large playground (both recent construction), and 150 off-street parking spaces. The park is in excellent condition due to a number of recent renovations.

At the time of this report (2011), due to the release of historic level of water into the Missouri River, the portion of Big Lake Park located north of the levee was flooded for several weeks. It is anticipated that the landscape elements and park facilities located in this area of the park will be significantly impacted by this flood event.



Figure 25: The character of Big Lake Park may change dramatically if large trees die as a result of the 2011 floods

COUNCIL BLUFFS RECREATION COMPLEX	An 84-acre regional sports complex in the south central area of Council Bluffs that has been designed to accommodate major tournaments. It was constructed over a 12-year period and was just recently completed. It includes four baseballfields (youth/adult), six softballfields (youth/adult), six multi-use turf fields, 24 dedicated soccer fields for all ages, four dedicated footballfields, an extensive paved trail system with links to the Nebraska/Iowa Riverfront Trail, a number of restroom concessions buildings, picnic shelters and play equipment, an on-site maintenance facility, and 950 off-street parking spaces.
VALLEY VIEW PARK	<p>A 16-acre community park located on the east side of the city. It includes two baseball/softballfields (youth/practice), 10 acres of multi-use turf (counting the outfield areas) which accommodates two soccer fields and two footballfields (flag football), a trail system, a picnic shelter/playground complex, two tennis courts, and 136 off-street parking spaces. The facility is generally in good condition but the paving needs to be re-surfaced and ballfields are due for renovation.</p> <p>Recently, the City of Council Bluffs has acquired approximately 37 acres to expand Valley View Park. This additional property will allow the park to be expanded to the north and the south.</p>

OTHER PROVIDERS	
BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF THE MIDLANDS	Primarily an indoor facility, but the site includes an outdoor multi-use turf area.
COUNCIL BLUFFS YMCA SPORTS COMPLEX	Located in the south-central area of Council Bluffs. It offers three baseballfields, eight dedicated soccer fields, six dedicated footballfields, a multi-use turf area, and parking for approximately 150 cars.
RIVER CITY BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL ASSOC. (RCBSA)	Owns and operates a three field baseball/softball complex in the southeast corner of Council Bluffs. The fields are lighted and the complex is served by a gravel parking lot.



Figure 26: The Council Bluffs Recreation Complex is the City's flaship facility for tournaments and team recreation

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NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS

STATE OF IOWA

LAKE MANAWA STATE PARK

This 1,500-acre park includes 660 acres of natural lake and is located 2.5 miles south of Interstate 80 in Council Bluffs. The lake offers a wide range of recreation activities and is one of the premier boating opportunities in the Omaha/Council Bluffs area, featuring good quality boat ramps and parking. It is used for sail boating (Lake Manawa Sailing Association), fishing, and motor boating. Paddleboats and canoes are available for rent. The park offers numerous picnic opportunities, 72 camping spaces, and a number of nature trails for hiking / biking. This is an unusual resource for a city of its size.

WILSON ISLAND RECREATION AREA

This site on a bend in the Missouri River features 544 acres of dense cottonwood forest, and is located 5.5 miles west of I-29/680. The recreation area features camping with 135 shaded camp sites, two youth camps, showers and flush toilets, a modern rental cabin, a picnic area, river access via a boat ramp, and an extensive trail system including a shoreline trail. The entire area (except for the campgrounds) is open for hunting.

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

NARROWS RIVER ACCESS

This 36-acre county park, operated by the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, provides access to the Missouri River for boating activities, a trail system for hiking, a number of opportunities for fishing, bird watching, volleyball, horseshoes, camping, a picnic shelter / playground / restroom complex, along with off-street parking.



Figure 27: Narrows River Park provides an important access point for the Missouri River, as well as passive recreation opportunities

CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS

FAIRMOUNT PARK	An 80-acre historic park constructed in the early 1900s and is located in a spectacular setting on the bluff above the city. It features rolling terrain with wooded hillsides that frame areas of open turf. It features a playground and numerous opportunities for picnicking and scenic overlooks. The park has seen serious decline over the years with the amenities and infrastructure throughout most of the park long overdue for renovation. The City has a master plan for \$7.0 million in improvements that are scheduled to be implemented as funds become available.
LAKE MANAWA NORTH SHORE PARK	This 52-acre park is on the north shore of Lake Manawa. It has been owned and operated by the City of Council Bluffs but will be transferred to the State of Iowa in 2012. It features access to Lake Manawa (with 36 truck/trailer parking spaces) and a large wooded area. It includes a 10-acre multi-use turf area, a fishing pier, a picnic shelter/playground/restroom complex, a trail system and 24 off-street parking spaces. A major renovation is planned for this park which includes the relocation and upgrading of the park campground.
LEWIS AND CLARK PARK	This 54-acre natural area is located on the north side of Council Bluffs. It features a monument to Lewis and Clark, a restroom building, an extensive system of walking and mountain bike trails, and off-street parking. The facility was recently renovated and could be a model for similar facilities in the Council Bluffs area.
VINCENT PRESERVE	Vincent Preserve is in the Loess Hill area and is 42 acres of natural habitat / prairie preserve and includes areas of restored habitat. There is a shelter with ADA access and a parking lot.



Figure 28: Fairmount Park features spectacular wooded glens

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SPECIALIZED AND NON-TRADITIONAL RECREATION FACILITIES

BROADWAY SKATE PARK AND THE SKATE PARK AT TROLLEY PARK

The Broadway Skate Park is the larger of the two and is well used by the skating community. There is also a climbing wall available at the Broadway Skate Park.

RIVER VALLEY OHV PARK (ATV PARK)

A 380-acre wooded site on the southwest side of the city near the Missouri River. The site offers off-road and motorcycle enthusiasts opportunities for riding at a site that is easily reached from all areas of Council Bluffs. A parking lot is provided in the southeast corner of the park. The park does experience seasonal closures due to spring flooding. This property is jointly managed by the City and the State of Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

DISC GOLF COURSE

Located on the Iowa Western Community College campus. This facility is open to the public.

GOLF COURSES

The Council Bluffs area is well served by golf courses:

- 🌳 Bent Tree Golf Club
- 🌳 Dodge Riverside Golf Club (City of Council Bluffs)
- 🌳 Fox Run Golf Course
- 🌳 Westwood Golf Course (City of Council Bluffs)
- 🌳 Lake Shore Golf Course



Figure 29: Skate parks are becoming increasingly popular recreation amenities across the country

SCHOOLS

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The Council Bluffs area is served by two school districts: The Council Bluffs Community School District and the Lewis Central Community Schools. In addition, Council Bluffs is also home to the Iowa School for the Deaf, and two non-public schools. As is typical for school facilities, outdoor recreation is provided for each of the elementary, middle, junior high, and high schools as well at the Iowa School for the Deaf, and the community college. Because each school's primary mission is to provide resources for its students, the use of outdoor recreation and sports facilities by the public is often limited. In addition, some schools in the Council Bluffs area did not provide inventory data on their outdoor recreation facilities, so the available information is limited. For the purposes of this study the following assumptions are being made (based on the Assessment Team's past experience):

- ✿ Playgrounds and field sports areas at elementary schools and middle schools are available to the community when school is not in session. The lack of picnic facilities limits their function as a public park, therefore, these facilities cannot be counted to the same degree as a public park when determining how well a community is served for playgrounds and informal sports facilities.
- ✿ Junior high and high school baseball, softball, football, track and field, and soccer facilities are generally not available for use by the public for organized sports, even outside of normal school hours. This same assumption applies to the Iowa School for the Deaf and Iowa Western Community College. Tennis and outdoor basketball courts, to the degree they are available, are often open to the public.

IOWA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE (IWCC)

The IWCC campus is over 300 acres. In addition to the college buildings, the site includes NJCAA sanctioned baseball/softball fields and track facility, a natural turf soccer field, basketball and volleyball courts, and extensive off-street parking. None of the outdoor recreation facilities are open to the public.



Figure 30: While IWCC has excellent recreation facilities, they are not available for general public use

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URBANIZED ZONE: CARTER LAKE

The City of Carter Lake is in a unique geographic setting, being on the west side of the Missouri River and surrounded on three sides by Carter Lake. However, it is still a part of the State of Iowa and Pottawattamie County and is included in this study. The 3,700 plus residents of Carter Lake enjoy access to a number of parks which are generally placed within walking distance of most residents. The City of Carter Lake hopes to add lights to the third ballfield at the Hamilton Sports Complex, expand the existing trail system, and add a splash play facility.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

ORTIZ PARK	Ortiz Park is a small pocket park (0.64 acres) located in the south-central area of town near the downtown. Ortiz Park contains play equipment, a 6-seat swing, and a sand volleyball court. Play equipment was updated in 1999 and in 2000.
WATSON PARK	A small pocket park (0.5 acres) located in the northwest quadrant of the city. Watson Park includes a 6-seat swing set, teeter-totters, merry-go-round, spiral slide spring-form animals, a small climber, a park bench, and a covered table. Most equipment was installed in the 1990's.
ROSENBAUGH PARK	This pocket park (0.72 acres) is in the north-central area of the city. It contains spring-form animals, a geodesic climber, a swing set with slide, a glider, a tennis court, and a basketball court. In 2002, the concrete surfaces of both the tennis and basketball courts were replaced and basketball and tennis components added.
WAVECREST PARK	A 2.25-acre facility in the northwest corner of the city fronting on Carter Lake. It includes two small swings, a slide, a climber, a restroom building, a shelter, picnic tables, grills, and a fire pit. Other improvements include a fishing jetty and lakeside swings and benches. In 2006, the shoreline was stabilized and the beach area was expanded.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS

MABREY PARK

This 7.2-acre park is located at the southeast corner of the city and fronts on Carter Lake. The park includes picnic tables, swings, grills, and two picnic shelters with electricity. The park also includes three horseshoe pits, a basketball court, a modular skate park, a boat ramp with the dock, a BMX track, a fishing jetty, off-street parking, a concrete path, and a restroom building (ADA accessible). Shoreline stabilization was completed in the 1990s and the park is in good condition with much of the equipment recently installed.

HAMILTON SPORTS COMPLEX

This 20-acre sports complex is on the east-central side of town, north of the Boys and Girls Club site. This complex houses a lighted baseball field, a lighted baseball / softball field, and a third, smaller ballfield. The complex includes an open turf area often used as a small soccer field. Also supporting this complex are two concession stands, a play area protected by fencing and overhead netting, and a batting cage. Bleacher seating on concrete pads and warning tracks are provided for each field. Two off-street parking areas are provided, one paved and one gravel surfacing, that accommodates approximately 140 vehicles.

NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF THE MIDLANDS

The Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands operates a facility on the east side of Carter Lake which includes a 35-acre wooded area that abuts Carter Lake. The Boys and Girls Club operates a summer day camp (Camp Nakomis) at this location and offers programs in fishing, archery, arts, and outdoors skills.

SPECIALIZED RECREATION FACILITIES

SHORE LINE GOLF COURSE

The Shore Line Golf Course is on the west edge of Carter Lake and fronts on Carter Lake. It is a full 18-hole, par-72 course.

SCHOOLS

Carter Lake Elementary School is the only school in Carter Lake and is centrally located within the community with a limited number of playground facilities.

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Figure 31: The range of amenities at Mabrey Park makes it Carter Lake's central park facility

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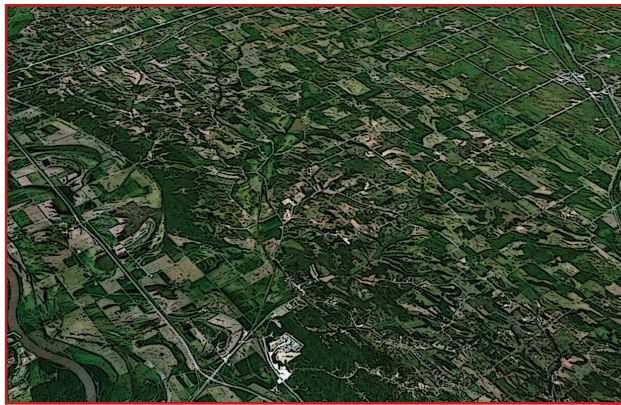
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NORTHWEST POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

CRESCENT AND THE LOESS HILLS

The City of Crescent is a small community with approximately 625 population set in the Loess Hills. The wooded hillsides and rolling terrain give it a character that is unique in Pottawattamie County. The town has one park.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

CRESCENT CITY PARK

A small park (+/- 1.69 acres) that serves as Crescent's city park and sports complex. The baseball/softball field was recently renovated with new fencing, dugouts, and infield and sees heavy use for the youth teams. The park also includes a combined tennis/basketball court (in need of reconstruction), volleyball court, an asphalt walking trail, a ½-acre area of open turf, and a picnic shelter. The City is in the process of refurbishing the restroom/concession building, hopes to add lighting for the ball field in the future, and will add a play structure in 2011. The existing parking lot (+/- 40 cars) is too small but there is no land for expansion.

SPECIALIZED FACILITIES

OLD LINCOLN HIGHWAY VETERANS MEMORIAL MONUMENT

A small monument area (less than an acre) with a gazebo and a small gravel off-street parking area located outside of Crescent near the highway.



Figure 32: The City of Crescent is proactive in providing recreation amenities as demonstrated by the newly renovated ballfield at Crescent City Park

SCHOOLS	
CRESCENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Located in the center of the community, just west of City Park. It includes a playground, additional outdoor play equipment, and basketball/foursquare courts.

NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARK	
POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD	

HITCHCOCK NATURE AREA	The Hitchcock Nature Area is operated by Pottawattamie County Conservation Board. The 1,200-acre site is located in the heart of the Loess Hills and features rolling hills with heavy forest cover and harbors some of the largest remaining prairie remnants in Iowa. It is heavily used for hiking, camping, picnicking, bird watching, and snow sledding. In the heart of the nature area is the Loess Hills Lodge, which is used for nature education and features a 45-foot viewing tower. The nature center offers 18 RV sites and tent camping, camping cabins for overnight rental, modern restrooms and showers, a playground, and year-round environment education and seasonal recreation programs.
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STATE OF IOWA - DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES	
BOYER BEND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA	This 77-acre wildlife area along the Missouri River just west of the Hitchcock Nature Center is only accessible from the river. It is managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
PIGEON CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA	This 98-acre wildlife area along the Missouri River just north of Interstate 680 is only accessible from the river. It is managed by the DNR.

SPECIALIZED RECREATION FACILITIES	
MT. CRESCENT SKI AREA	The only ski area in Pottawattamie County, Mt. Crescent, offers 300-foot vertical and 2,000-foot runs. During the winter season, it features skiing, snowboarding, a terrain park, and tubing. It also hosts a number of events during the summer and the lodge is rentable for special events.



Figure 33: The County's most unique recreation amenity, Mt. Crescent Ski Area

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WESTERN I-80 CORRIDOR:

McCLELLAND, UNDERWOOD, AND NEOLA

Interstate 80 leaves Council Bluffs and runs northeast until it merges with Highway 680, where it turns east. The communities of McClelland (+/- 125 persons), Underwood (+/- 900 persons), and Neola (+/- 850 persons) are grouped along this segment of I-80. These communities have a strong connection to the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area with many residents commuting to the cities for jobs, shopping, and entertainment. The towns are set in rolling hills and surrounded by agricultural uses.

McClelland

The Town of McClelland has a population of approximately 125 and is approximately 4 miles south of I-80.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

McCLELLAND TOWN PARK

Approximately 0.5 acres in size and located in the north end of town. It is a well-maintained facility with mature trees and includes a picnic shelter, older play equipment on pea-gravel surfacing, a small turf area, brick restroom building, and a small basketball court. Parking is on the adjacent streets. Not all facilities are ADA accessible and the older play equipment area should be upgraded.



Figure 35: McClelland Town Park is the recreation heart of McClelland

Underwood

The City of Underwood has a population of nearly 925 and is just west of I-80. Railroad Highway connects Underwood to Neola, a distance of approximately 5 miles.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	
CITY HALL PARK	The small park behind City Hall is primarily a playground with swings focused for younger children, but does offer some events for older children. There are two picnic tables under large shade trees that make the park popular with day care operators. The City Hall’s restroom is available when the building is open, as is the seven car parking lot.
TRAIL HEAD PARK	This 1.5 acre park is at the south end of Milwaukee Avenue and includes a small area of open turf that is in good condition and well maintained, a large multi-level play structure, swings, a restroom, a picnic shelter with picnic tables and grills, and six off-street parking spaces. The park does offer benches under large shade trees. The City notes that the park is ADA accessible.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES	
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	All sports facilities in Underwood are on school district property.

SCHOOLS (UNDERWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT)	
UNDERWOOD ELEMENTARY / MIDDLE SCHOOL	The elementary / middle school is in the center of town, just south of 3 rd Street. It is a new facility with several clusters of play equipment surrounding the school and is available to the community when school is not in session.
	The elementary / middle school site also provide two lighted baseball and softballfields for Underwood. The fields are used for little league baseball and have +/- 200-foot foul lines. The fields are served by a restroom/concessions building, bleacher seating on concrete pads, and the +/- 150 car-school parking lot. As this facility is relatively new, all amenities are in very good condition and most facilities are ADA accessible.
	There is space for a multi-purpose turf area and a third ball field on the south side of the school site, but these fields have only been rough graded and do not have useable turf grasses.



Figure 36: The Underwood Elementary/Middle School ballfields are used by the school and Little League teams in the area

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**OLD MIDDLE
SCHOOL SITE
(BUS BARN)**

The old middle school site in the northeast corner of town has been converted to a multi-purpose turf field with adjacent gravel parking. The field is in good condition but the turf is not fully grown in all areas.

**UNDERWOOD
HIGH SCHOOL**

Located on the west side of town and includes a football/soccer/track field, softball field, and baseball field, all are in good condition.

Neola

The City of Neola is approximately ½ mile north and west of I-80 and has a population of approximately 850 people. The downtown fronts on the Railroad Highway with the rest of the town to the north.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

**CENTENNIAL
PARK / NEOLA
BALLPARK**

The only park serving Neola and serves as the town’s neighborhood and community park. The park is approximately 7 acres in size and is located in the southwest corner of town with access from Railroad Highway. The park features a lighted little league field that is home to the Neola Little League. The field has +/- 325-foot foul lines and large covered bleachers. The park also includes a T-ball field, batting cage, one tennis/basketball court (needs resurfacing), a restroom building, metal picnic shelter, a small turf area, and a perimeter walking trail that sees heavy use. The play equipment area includes a new play structure, spring toys, swings, and a small children’s play structure in a wood chip surface play bay. A gravel parking lot serves the park. Many of the park’s amenities are older and nearing the end of their useful life. Most of the facilities in the park do not meet current ADA accessibility guidelines. The City has examined the possibility of purchasing adjacent land to expand the park in order to add a soccer field, but all discussions have been preliminary.



Figure 37: The City of Neola's goal is to expand Centennial Park in the future

NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS	
POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD ARROWHEAD PARK	This 148-acre park features a 17-acre lake and offers a number of recreational opportunities including fishing, hiking and equestrian trails, wildlife viewing, paddle boat and canoe rental, picnicking, an upgraded playground, and volleyball courts. There are three rental cabins, 54 camp sites with electrical power, and tent camping is allowed throughout the park. The park has a welcome center / nature education building (Breezy Lodge) and a shower house facility. Arrowhead Park is located a few miles southeast of Neola and is operated by the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board.

SCHOOLS (TRI-CENTER COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT)	
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:	The Cities of Neola and Minden are served by the Tri-Center Community School District. All of Tri-Centers schools are located on a 40-acre campus on the north side of Interstate 680 just west of the merge with I-80. The Tri-Center campus has an athletic field complex that includes a football/soccer/track stadium, baseball and soccer fields, several practice fields, and play areas for the elementary school.

SPECIALIZED RECREATION FACILITIES	
QUAIL RUN GOLF COURSE	The Quail Run Golf Course is a 9-hole, par 36 course located outside of Neola.



Figure 38: Tri-Center's 40-acre campus provides all of the recreation amenities for the District's students

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SOUTH CENTRAL POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY: TREYNOR

The City of Treynor has a population of approximately 1,000 people. Treynor is approximately 17 miles east of Council Bluffs on Highway 92 and is surrounded by agricultural uses.

It is worth noting that a group of Treynor citizens have started a group named Vision Treynor. This citizens' committee has been working for nearly 18 months and has begun the process of planning a major community park for the city. With the assistance of an engineer and an outdoor aquatics facility consultant, Vision Treynor has developed a concept plan document that examined two sites that could accommodate an outdoor aquatics area, a baseball/softball four-plex, sports courts, and soccer fields. The plan included cost estimates and outlined steps that would be needed to complete the facility. In addition to the concept plan document, the committee completed an online public survey to gauge the Treynor region's interest and support for such a facility.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

TREYNOR WEST PARK

A small 2.5-acre park site in the west end of town. The City does not own the land at this time. The limited number of park amenities, such as a merry-go-round, two individual covered picnic tables, and slide, are all in need of complete renovation. Also, the park is not ADA accessible.



Figure 39: The existing trees create a shaded, comfortable respite for the residents of Treynor

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

TREYNOR EAST PARK

A 3.8-acre park that serves as the city's main park. It is on a sloping site south of the Highway 92 on the east end of town and is directly north of the golf course. It includes a small baseball/softball field, a 2.5-acre open turf area, a recently renovated play equipment area (2005) with swings and play structures for older and younger children, an older restroom building, a good quality group picnic shelter, two single-table picnic shelters, and numerous mature trees. The park is served by a small +/- 10 space gravel parking lot (which also provides access to the golf course) along with parking on an adjacent street. The play bay and group picnic shelter are accessible and the City plans to make the restroom ADA compliant in the future.

SPECIALIZED RECREATION FACILITIES

TREYNOR RECREATION AREA GOLF COURSE

A 9-hole facility with a driving range and chipping green.

SCHOOLS (TREYNOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS)

TREYNOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located south of Highway 92 on the east side of town. It was built in 2004 and includes the standard elementary school outdoor play equipment and court facilities. The school site does feature the District's football field and running track. The running track will be renovated in 2012 and will be open to the public when completed.

TREYNOR JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Also located south of Highway 92 just west of the elementary school. It too is a relatively new facility (1984 with an addition in 2000) with a new auditorium. The high school is supported by a full-size baseball field and softball field complex that opened in 2009 and includes open turf area for practice. This is a fully fenced facility that is locked when not in use.

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Figure 40: The Treynor High School sports fields can only be used for student activities

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EASTERN I-80 CORRIDOR MINDEN, AVOCA, AND WALNUT

Minden

The City of Minden is a small town of 600 residents and is located two miles south of I-80 just as it merges with 680 and turns east.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

CITY PARK

A 0.4-acre pocket park adjacent to the downtown. It features a small turf area, play equipment, swings, and a small picnic shelter with grills. The park is well shaded by mature trees and there are eight parking spaces adjacent to the street. Unless approached from the corners of the block, most facilities in the park are not ADA accessible, due to the retaining wall that raises the park above street level.

KEHLER PARK

Approximately 1.5 acres and located in the northeast corner of town. It includes small areas of open turf, a basketball court, a small five space off-street parking lot, and five physical fitness structures.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

MINDEN BALLFIELD

The ballfield is located south of Main Street and is used for both youth/adult softball and baseball. The community uses the outfield as a multi-use turf area for field sports and the turf is in good condition. The ballfield is supported by a concession stand, restroom, play structure with swings, a walking path, and a 60-space parking lot. The City notes that the site is ADA accessible.

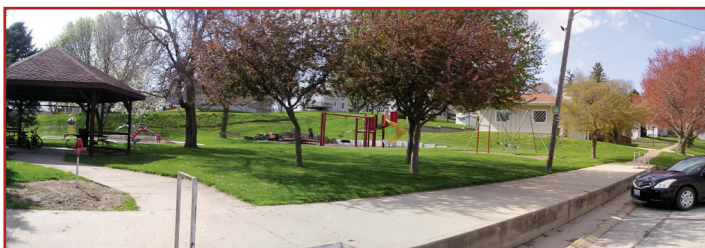


Figure 41: Minden Town Park is situated in between residential neighborhoods and the downtown

Avoca

The City of Avoca is a one of the larger cities in eastern Pottawattamie County with just over 1,500 residents. Avoca is located one mile south of I-80 on Highway 59.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES	
EDGINGTON PARK	<p>Avoca’s only park but is the largest city park in eastern Pottawattamie County. Edgington Park is not within walking distance for most Avoca residents. The park is approximately ¼ mile east of town on Highway 83 but is connected by an off-road, asphalt recreation path. Edgington Park is 29 acres in size and includes the Splash Outdoor Pool facility.</p> <p>In general, this is a well-maintained park with large groves of shade trees and a wide array of amenities. The park includes a dedicated soccer field, two baseball/softballfields, a small T-ball area, two sand volleyball courts, a basketball court, and horseshoe pits. The park offers seven picnic shelters ranging in size from large group shelters to small shelters for one or two tables. There is one relatively new masonry restroom building east of the soccer field and a second smaller, older restroom south of the ballfields. The ballfields are also served by a metal skin storage/concessions building. There is a wide array of slides, teeter-totters, monkey/climbing bars, and play structures in Edgington Park. Much of the play equipment is older and lacks adequate safety surfacing. There are 88 dedicated parking spaces for the park and additional parking on park roads. The majority of the facilities in the park are not ADA accessible.</p>

NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS	
STATE OF IOWA - DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES	
GREEN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA	<p>Managed by the DNR, contains 10 acres of timber, and is located 2 miles south of Avoca.</p>



Figure 42: One of the larger parks in the Eastern half of the County, Edgington Park boasts diverse recreation amenities, as well as being the City's sole park facility

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SCHOOLS (A-H-S-T COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT)

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Avoca and Hancock are served by the A-H-S-T Community School District. Both the A-H-S-T elementary school and secondary school are located on the A-H-S-T campus, which is on the south side of Avoca. The site includes baseball and softball fields and a football/soccer field.

SPECIALIZED FACILITIES

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

Located on the south side of Avoca. The fairgrounds include a number exhibit halls and barns, large group picnic shelter, a "green" that is shaded by large trees, a race track with grand stands (which appears to no longer be used), and an RV campground with restrooms and showers.

Walnut

The City of Walnut has 785 residents. Walnut is located one mile south of I-80 and six miles east of Avoca.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

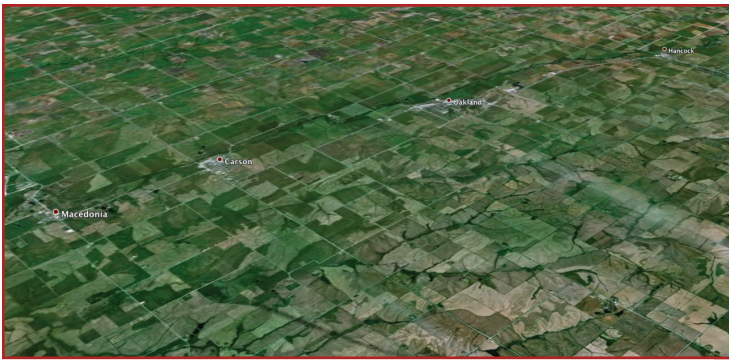
VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

A 7.4-acre facility that is jointly operated by the Walnut School District and the City of Walnut. The east half of the park provides neighborhood park amenities, while the west half serves as the high school's baseball, football, and softball fields. In 2011, the City opened a splash ground in the park and the amenity has been a popular attraction for the region, not just for residents of Walnut. The football field is overlaid on the outfield of the baseball field. The neighborhood park includes a newer, multi-deck play structure with freestanding climbing events, swings, a wood group picnic shelter, and a number of freestanding picnic tables - all in the shade of mature trees. An ADA accessible concession/restroom building located on the east side of the baseball field serves both the field and the neighborhood park area. The football and softball fields are supported by an elevated press box and grandstand. Parking is provided in several gravel lots on the south side of the park. The park is well maintained although it appears that drainage may be an occasional problem. Not all facilities in the neighborhood park would be considered ADA accessible.

SCHOOLS (WALNUT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT)

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

All of the grades in the Walnut Community School District (WSD) are located at the Walnut campus. The school site has a number of court facilities and an elaborate volunteer-built playground that is open to the public when school is not in session. The WSD's sports fields are located at Veterans Memorial Park.



SOUTHEAST POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY HANCOCK, OAKLAND, CARSON, AND MACEDONIA

Hancock

The City of Hancock is a small community of 250 residents. It is located on Highway 59, approximately seven miles south of Avoca. It is southeast of a series of oxbows on the Nishnabotna River and adjacent to Botna Bend County Park.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES	
HANCOCK CITY PARK (MEMORIAL PARK)	The only park and serves as the neighborhood and community park. It is 15 acres in size, but appears larger, as it abuts Botna Bend County Park. The park has one lighted baseball/softball field, a newer restroom/concession building and an older restroom in poor condition, a group picnic shelter (in need of refurbishment), and two additional picnic shelters. The play equipment is in very poor condition, but the City will be removing the old play equipment and constructing a new playground. There are 50 – 75 off-street parking spaces for the park. With the construction of the new play structure, one of the major deficiencies in the park will be addressed. Additional upgrades will be needed on other facilities to maintain quality and meet current safety and ADA standards.

NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS	
POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD	
BOTNA BEND COUNTY PARK	A 119-acre park is located on the West Nishnabotna River in Hancock and is operated by the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board. The park offers a number of recreational opportunities, including fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, canoeing (with access to the Nishnabotna River Water Trail), and picnicking. It has an upgraded playground and volleyball court. There are displays of bison and elk in corrals, 30 improved camping sites, opportunities for tent camping, and a clubhouse / shower house facility.

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Oakland

The City of Oakland has a population of around 1,525 people. It is located on Highway 59, approximately 12 miles north of Carson and east of the Nishnabotna River.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

LIONS PARK

Lions Park is on the north end of Oakland, just east of the Oakland Outdoor Pool. It is primarily an open green space with a picnic shelter and opportunities for picnicking.

SCHUEMAN PARK

This park is located in the southwestern area of the city, but is currently only providing green space and open turf areas. All existing built facilities in the park need to be demolished and reconstructed.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

CHAUTAUQUA PARK

This is one of the largest community parks in eastern Pottawattamie County. It is located adjacent to the Nishnabotna River southwest of downtown Oakland. Most of the park's facilities have been recently constructed or refurbished. The park includes two lighted baseball/softball fields that are supported by a restroom/concessions/picnic shelter building. There is a large play structure southwest of the ballfields with structures for older and younger children in an engineered wood fiber play bay as well as a sand volleyball court. There is a full-size soccer field on the south end of the park that is east of a large parking lot (+/- 100 cars). There is a large group picnic shelter on the east side of the park with additional parking and a restroom building. The park has large numbers of mature trees, a system of small ponds, site furnishings, and individual picnic table/shelters scattered throughout. It also features a looped walking trail, camping, and access to the Nishnabotna Water Trail. The park appears to meet current safety and ADA standards. Chautauqua Park is well planned and maintained and could be a model for other community parks in the eastern portion of the county.

SPECIALIZED RECREATION FACILITIES

OAKLAND COUNTRY CLUB GOLF COURSE

A 9-hole, par 32 facility.

SCHOOLS (RIVERSIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT)	
RIVERSIDE STADIUM	The school district owns and operates a football/soccer stadium and high school baseball field on the north side of Highway 59 as it enters Oakland. The stadium complex is just west of the Oakland Outdoor Pool and Lions Park.
RIVERSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Located in the southeast quadrant of Oakland and features a small ballfield, multi-use turf area, play equipment, and elementary school court facilities.
RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL	Located in central Oakland, but no outdoor recreation facilities are provided at the site other than a small open turf area.

Carson

The City of Carson’s population is 812 people. It located on Highway 92, ten miles east of Treynor on the east bank of the Nishnabotna River.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES	
MILLSTONE PARK	<p>Millstone Park is Carson’s only park and it serves as the City’s neighborhood park and its community park. The park is approximately 11 acres and is located in the northeast corner of town along the banks of the Nishnabotna River. A put-in/take-out for the Nishnabotna Water Trail is provided in the park along with river bank camping opportunities as well as a hiking trail. Most of the built facilities (two masonry restroom / concessions buildings), vehicular access, and parking are on an embankment that is +/- 30 feet above the park site. A rodeo arena is located on the south end of the site. There is a baseball/softball field (with scores box and covered dugouts) and multi-purpose turf area in the center of the park, and a picnic facility/playground and basketball court at the north end. The picnic shelter can accommodate large groups and the play equipment is a large post and deck system. The play area includes several swings, a merry-go-round, and tall spiral slide. The safety surfacing for the play ground does not meet current standards. Most of the park is not ADA accessible due to lack of paved sidewalks and the embankment slope.</p> <p>The City has recently completed a master plan that would extend the park south to the Carson Community Center. The plan calls for two new soccer fields and a disc golf course behind the Community Center, a system of walking paths, a second ballfield, a spray ground, and improved parking, picnic / play areas, and support facilities.</p>

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The Riverside School District operates a middle school in the center of Carson. The school site includes a multi-use turf area and outdoor basketball courts.



Figure 43: The unique geography of the river corridor area makes Millstone Park a multi-level facility

Macedonia

The City of Macedonia is a small community of 250 residents in the southern-most area of Pottawattamie County, west of Highway 59. The town is approximately ½ mile south of the Nishnabotna River.

POCKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

MACEDONIA CITY PARK

The community's only park and is located in the center of town, east of the old high school. It is an older facility about 3.25 acres in size on a rolling site with mature trees, informal turf area, a small gazebo, and an asphalt loop path. Most of the play equipment (slides, swings, teeter-totters, and climbing bars) is older and lacks proper safety surfacing.

COMMUNITY PARKS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

There is a good quality lighted baseball / softball field east of the high school building that features a large, covered grandstand area, and sloping grass spectator berms. There is also an area of open turf west of the ballfield.

NATURALIZED COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARKS

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

OLDE TOWN PARK

This 8-acre park is a significant site for the county historically as it is the site of the first bridge over the Nishnabotna River. It is located one mile west of Macedonia and on the historic Mormon Trail. The park offers fishing, primitive camping, and canoe access to the West Nishnabotna River / Nishnabotna Water Trail. The park is operated by the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board.

4.2 NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION STANDARDS

Park standards are used to assist park districts and municipalities with park planning. The most typically accepted and applied standards for park and recreation facilities have been those recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The NRPA standards provide a recommended minimum number of facilities and land requirements – or **level of service** – for parks based upon population and geographic area (i.e., 1 soccer field for every 10,000 people, or 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 people). These standards are to be viewed as a guide to address minimum goals and should be tailored to fit each unique community’s specifications (size, climate, preferences, trends, fiscal capacities, etc.).

The NRPA guidelines have provided a baseline to work with as communities plan for future parks and recreation demand. It is important, however, that these standards be reviewed closely by each community to ensure that they fit with their needs, participant demands, financial constraints, local conditions, and community desires and objectives. Surveying of park usage and resident interest along with natural, social, and economic characteristics and national and local trends can be used to influence the individual standards. For example, communities that desire to protect or create open space and parks as a key component of their community character could strive to provide more parks and open space than the typical standard.

Table 10 provides the standards for park types.



Figure 44: Park and Recreation standards are designed to promote safety, diversity, and availability to all users

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Table 10: Levels-of-Service Standards for Amenity/Facility
(per the National Recreation and Parks Association)

Park Type	Amenity Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria	Acres per 1,000 pop.
Mini	Serves isolated, limited, unique recreational needs	Less than ¼ mile distance in residential setting	Between 2,500 sq. ft. and one acre in size	0.5
Neighborhood	Serves as the recreational focus of the neighborhood; focus on informal, active and passive recreation	¼ to ½-mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers	5 acres is considered minimum size; 5 to 10 acres is optimal	2
School	School property fields and/or playgrounds	Determined by school district property	Variable - depends on function	n/a
Community	Serves broader purpose than the neighborhood park; focus on community-based recreational needs; as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site; usually serves two or more neighborhood and is within a ½ to 3-mile distance	As needed to accommodate desired uses; usually between 30 and 50 acres	2.5
Natural Resource Areas	Land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, open space	Resource availability and opportunity	Variable	n/a
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic needs and associated facilities; located throughout the community	Strategically-located community-wide facilities	Determined by projected demand; usually a minimum of 25 acres with 40 to 80 acres being optimal	n/a
Private Parks/ Recreational Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned, yet contribute to the public park and recreation system	Variable	Variable	n/a

Table 9 cont'd: Levels-of-Service Standards for Amenity/Facility

Park Type	Amenity Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria	Acres per 1,000 pop.
Greenways	Intended to tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment	Resource availability and opportunity	Variable	n/a
County Parks	Rurally located, County operated large properties that contain some active recreation facilities and a large percentage of natural or geographical features. Target size of 200 or more acres	200+ acres 5-6 mile service radius to serve most of the County	5.0 acres / 1,000	5
Regional or State Park	State or multi-county agency operated park with large size. Attracts visitors from multiple counties. Contains some active facilities but primarily large areas of natural environments	500+ acres 30+ mile service radius to serve several counties or region of the state		n/a

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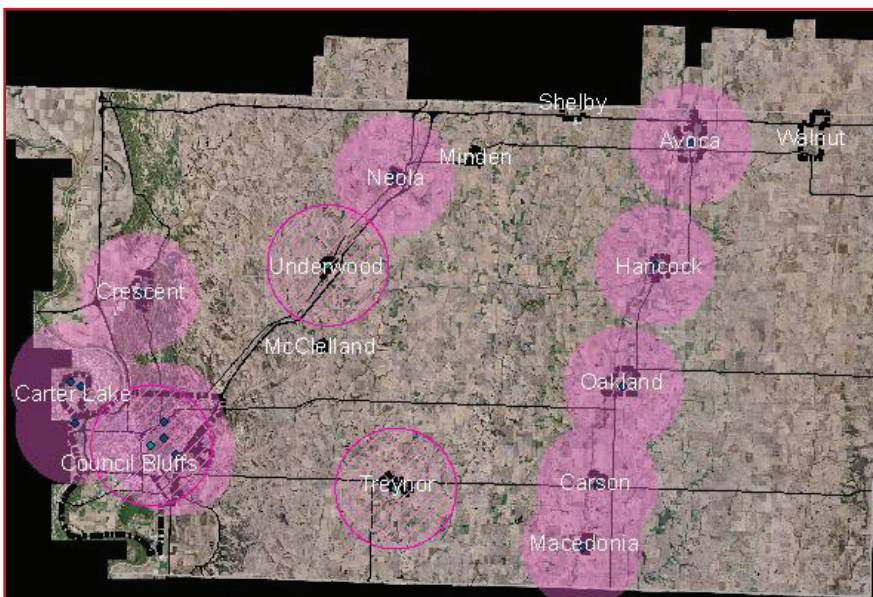





Figure 45: An example of the Level-of-Service mapping (including the in Appendix). This Map displays the service areas for basketball

4.2.1 Levels of Service Analysis - Sports Facilities

The Levels of Service (LOS) for sport facilities in a community computes the quantity of an amenity (i.e. number of sport fields) relative to the community's population. LOS is often expressed by a ratio, typically expressed as "per thousand people". LOS can be used to:

-  Measure change and progress over time
-  Make comparisons between communities (both in and outside the county)
-  Establish equity between communities

As a means of comparing the ratio of sports facilities between the communities in Pottawattamie County, the following LOS analysis is provided. It should be pointed out that smaller communities will often have a higher LOS for a particular facility than a large city because there are fewer people available to use that facility. It is therefore desirable to compare communities of similar size where possible.

It also should be noted that not all communities have *every* facility. Council Bluffs, Neola and Underwood do have each of the measured amenities. The other communities are missing one or more. The communities appear to be meeting minimum standards for most amenities. However, these ratios are markers to use as a starting point for evaluation. The cost of building and maintaining a facility, a community's desire for certain facilities and the ability to share facilities should all be taken into consideration.

Table 11: Level-Of-Service for Sports Facilities

Amenity / Facility	Number of Units per Population	Ratio	Service Radius
Basketball Court	1 / 5,000	0.2	¼-mile to ½-mile
Tennis Court	1 / 2,000	0.5	¼-mile to ½-mile
Volleyball Courts	1 / 5,000	0.2	¼-mile to ½-mile
Baseball Field	1 / 5,000 (lighted 1/30,000)	0.2	¼-mile to ½-mile
Football Field	1 / 20,000	0.05	15-30 minute travel time
Softball Field	1 / 5,000	0.2	¼-mile to ½-mile
Play Structures	1 / 1,000	1	¼-mile to ½-mile

Source: Lancaster, R.A. (Ed.). (1990). Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines. Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Park Association

Table 12: Level-of-Service for Sports Facilities per Municipality

Municipality	Baseballfields	Softballfields	Soccer Fields	Footballfields	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Play Structures
Avoca (1,506)	1.99**	1.33**	1.33**	.66**	.66		1.99**
Carson (812)	1.23		1.23	1.23	1.23		1.23
Carter Lake (3,785)	.026	0.53	0.53		0.53	0.53	1.82
Council Bluffs (62,230)	0.27**	0.11**	0.59**	0.21**	0.24**	0.24**	0.38
Crescent (617)	1.62				1.62	1.62	3.24
Hancock (196)		5.10			5.10		5.10
Macedonia (246)		4.06			4.06		8.12**
McClelland (129)							
Minden (599)	1.67	1.67	1.67***				3.34
Neola (842)	3.78**	3.78**	1.89**	1.89**	1.89	1.89	9.52**
Oakland (1,527)	1.96**	0.65	1.30		1.30		1.30
Treynor (919)	2.18**	1.09**	1.09****	1.09**		4.36	
Underwood (917)	2.18**	2.18**	5.7****	1.09**	3.27**	1.09	3.27
Walnut (785)	1.27	2.54	1.27***	***			2.54
County	0.34	0.23	0.40**	0.18**	0.29**	0.19**	0.67**

LOS is per 1,000 persons

* U.S. Census 2010

*** Turf area

** Includes school district facilities

**** School district turf area

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4.3 TRAILS

The majority of the trails in Pottawattamie County are located in and around Council Bluffs. The Pottawattamie County Conservation Board also provides trails in many of its parks, as do a number of cities in their larger parks.

The Council Bluffs Trail Master Plan is annually incorporated into the Metropolitan Trail Plan which allows coordination of trail planning across the Metro's communities. Opened in 2009, the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge ties together the Iowa and Nebraska trails systems. This unique twin pylon, cable-stayed bridge has been named as one of the world's most beautiful Pedestrian Bridges.

The trail system in Council Bluffs includes over 39 miles of concrete and asphalt trails. Bicycle lanes are also used to connect trail segments throughout the city.

Trails and bike lanes in Council Bluffs:

- ☁ The trail head for the 63-mile Wabash Trace Trail is located in Council Bluffs in the southeast corner of the city. The Wabash Trace Trail is a soft-surface trail in good condition that is maintained largely by volunteers and funded by donations.
- ☁ The trails in Council Bluffs are typically 10-foot wide, concrete, and in good condition. The City of Council Bluffs has a Recreation Trails Master Plan that presents the existing and future trails for the city along with the existing bicycle lanes. The plan calls for trail connectors as well as new trails to Lewis and Clark Monument, Narrows Park, and a link following the Missouri River on the south end of town.
- ☁ Carter Lake has a concrete Lake Front trail and trails through Mabrey Park. The town has plans for an expanded trail system that will link parks and other community amenities. These trails are relatively new and in good condition. The current plan is to complete the project within the next 5 to 10 years.

Table 13: Name and Length of Trails in Council Bluffs

Name	Length in Miles
Emil Pavich Trail	1.4
Harry Langdon Bike Lanes	2.6
Indian Creek Trail	3.6
Iowa Riverfront Trail	6.99
Lake Manawa Trail	4.2
Mid-City Trail	0.7
Valley View Trail	4.3
Veterans' Memorial Trail Segment	5.3
Western Historic Trail Segment	2.1



Figure 46: The Iowa Riverfront Trail is an important north-south trail along the Missouri River

4.3.1 Trails in other Communities

There are trails in other communities of the county:

- ☞ A one-mile trail located in the Walnut Wetlands Area
- ☞ An asphalt trail spanning a quarter of a mile between Edgington Park and the City of Avoca
- ☞ Walking trails in Edgington Park (Avoca), Chautauqua Park (Oakland), Millstone Park (Carson), Macedonia City Park, and at Centennial Park/Neola Ballpark (Neola)

Trails are also located throughout the Pottawattamie County in parks and wildlife refuge area, including:

- ☞ Arrowhead Park (Neola area)
- ☞ Big Lake Park (Council Bluffs area)
- ☞ Botna Bend Park (Hancock area)
- ☞ Fairmount Park (Council Bluffs area)
- ☞ Farm Creek Public Wildlife Area (southeast county)
- ☞ Hitchcock Nature Area (over 10 miles of trails – Crescent area)
- ☞ Lewis and Clark Park (Council Bluffs area)
- ☞ Narrows River Park (Council Bluffs area)
- ☞ Vincent Bluff State Preserve (Council Bluffs area)
- ☞ Wilson Island State Recreation Area (northwest county).

According to the County, the trails at Botna Bend are in good condition and capacity exists. However, the trails at other county parks are not in as good condition:

- ☞ The trails at Arrowhead Park are in fair condition, but near capacity
- ☞ The trails at Hitchcock Nature Center are in poor condition, and at capacity
- ☞ The trails at Farm Creek Public Wildlife Area are in poor condition, and under capacity
- ☞ The trails at Narrows River Park are fair, but under capacity

The West Nishnabotna River Water Trail

The West Nishnabotna River Water Trail is an approximately 30-mile designated canoe/kayak route located in eastern Pottawattamie County. The water trail spans the West Nishnabotna River from Edgington Park in Avoca to Olde Town County Park outside Macedonia with other access points (at community parks) in Hancock, Oakland, and Carson. Camping is offered at each access point, except Edgington Park.



Figure 47: The Nishnabotna River Trail attracts users from all over the country

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4.3 INDOOR RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ANALYSIS

There are a significant number of recreation programs and services being provided in Pottawattamie County.

4.3.1 Indoor Recreation Providers

Within Pottawattamie County and the immediate surrounding area, there are a number of indoor sports, recreation, fitness and aquatic providers. A brief description of the major facilities is below.

Public Providers

Considering the population of the county, especially on the western end, there are very few indoor public recreation providers in the area.

- ☁ Lied Center: Located on the campus of the Iowa School for the Deaf, this center includes a large two court gyms, 2 racquetball courts, small weight/cardio area, multi-purpose room, 5-lane lap pool and recreational swim area. Use by the general public is limited to certain hours of the day.
- ☁ Carson Community Center: This facility has a large meeting room and several smaller spaces, kitchen, and a small weight room.
- ☁ Treynor Community Center: This center has two large rooms that can be used for events, including a full-service kitchen. They have long range plans to possibly build an indoor pool.
- ☁ Oakland Community Building: This is a small facility that has space for meetings and events.
- ☁ Council Bluffs Library: The library has a small teen center.
- ☁ Hitchcock Nature Center: Located in Hitchcock State Park, this facility is owned by Pottawattamie County. It features a large exhibit area, education rooms, and a small gift shop.

- ☁ School Districts: Each of the 12 school districts in Pottawattamie County has extensive indoor facilities that can be utilized for recreation purposes. This includes gymnasiums, classrooms, multi-purpose rooms, and in some instances weight rooms (high schools).



Figure 48: The pool at the Lied Center is spacious and well-lit

It is significant that the City of Council Bluffs does not have any indoor recreation buildings, but the City’s master plan does call for the development of a multifaceted indoor recreation center. School facilities (both indoor and outdoor) are one of the primary locations for public recreation programs and activities. This is particularly true for the rural areas of the county.

Non-Profit Providers

The greatest provider of indoor recreation, sports, fitness and aquatics space is the non-profit sector, which has a number of facilities located throughout the county.

- ☞ Council Bluffs YMCA: The YMCA is located downtown and is a full service indoor facility with a large fitness area, indoor pool, gyms, child care area and group fitness studio. This location suffers in part from a lack of parking. The YMCA has plans to expand the center at its current location.
- ☞ Boys & Girls Club (Council Bluffs and Carter Lake): Both of these centers have gyms and other multi-purpose space that can be used for a variety of active recreation pursuits, cultural arts programs, and education programs to serve youth.
- ☞ The Center: This is a full service senior center with an indoor pool, fitness area, ballrooms, dance studio, game room, café/kitchen, indoor golf simulator, and a meeting room.
- ☞ The Salvation Army: This facility has several classrooms, plus a chapel. Most of the focus is on social service programming and passive recreation pursuits.
- ☞ SW Iowa Performing Arts Center: Located on the Iowa Western College Campus, this facility has a variety of spaces to support performing and visual arts.
- ☞ Neola Area Community Center: This center has a covered outdoor pool (the pool is owned by the City of Neola), a large gym, small weight room, and several community rooms. While the center functions as a public facility, it is actually operated by a non-profit.
- ☞ UMBA Hall: The Underwood Memorial Building Association owns and operates this facility. The building includes a large multi-purpose room that can be used for meetings, events, and roller skating.

Other Non-Profit Centers

In addition to the facilities noted above, there are also a number of non-profit centers located outside of the county that attract use from residents in certain areas of Pottawattamie County.

- ☞ Montgomery County YMCA – Located in Red Oak, this is a full service YMCA that has indoor tennis, an indoor pool, a gym, track, racquetball courts, fitness area, and



Figure 49: Residents in the eastern half of the county often travel to towns outside of Pottawattamie County to use indoor recreation facilities

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a multi-purpose room with a kitchen. This center attracts users from the southern portion of Pottawattamie County.

- ☞ Nishna Valley Family YMCA – This YMCA is located in Atlantic and features an indoor pool, gym, racquetball courts, fitness area, meeting rooms, and preschool center. The facility attracts members from the northeast portion of Pottawattamie County.
- ☞ Petersen Family Wellness Center (Lewis Family Aquatic Complex) – This is a full service center that is located in Harlan and includes a gym, indoor pool, racquetball courts, and a fitness center. It also attracts users from northeast Pottawattamie County.

Led by the YMCA, the non-profit indoor recreation facilities are the most comprehensive and prevalent centers in the county and surrounding area. They not only serve the more populated west end of the county, but there are also a significant number that serve the more rural areas as well.

Private Providers

In contrast to the relatively high number of non-profit providers, there are very few private indoor sports, recreation, fitness and aquatic facilities in the county.

- ☞ Fit 4 Life: This fitness center is located in downtown Council Bluffs.
- ☞ Bulldog Fitness Center: This is a small facility located in Oakland.
- ☞ Anytime Fitness/Curves: There are several of these small fitness centers located in the county.

Considering the population base in the western portion of the county, it is startling that there are so few private providers in the market place. In addition, those that are present are smaller, fitness-focused centers. Note: there may be other fitness studios, personal training facilities, martial arts and dance studios in the county as well.

Other

Besides the indoor facilities previously described, there are a couple of other, more specialty use facilities in the county.

- ☞ Mid America Center: This is a large events center located in Council Bluffs that hosts a number of sports events. Some of these attract local teams and others draw teams from outside the area.
- ☞ Kanesville Arena: This arena is located on the Iowa Western Community College campus and serves the college athletic programs and student athlete recreational needs. It is not available for general student or community use.

4.3.2 Conclusion

Despite the seemingly large number of indoor recreation providers in Pottawattamie County, there are still a significant number of shortcomings.

- There are virtually no comprehensive public indoor recreation centers present in the county. School facilities serve as the primary indoor facilities that are available for public use; however, their use is limited by school activities.
- The non-profit sector, and specifically the YMCA, is the main provider of indoor sports, recreation, fitness, and aquatic facilities in the county. There are three significant non-profit facilities that are located in other counties that serve portions of Pottawattamie County.
- There are virtually no private sector facilities in the county.
- The existing Council Bluffs YMCA is significantly undersized to serve the more heavily populated west end of the county. The facility also has limited parking.
- When the three non-profit centers that are located in adjacent counties are considered with the other indoor facilities, the east end of the county is reasonably well served by indoor sports, recreation, fitness, and aquatic facilities.

Table 14: Presence of Indoor Recreation Amenities

Facilities	Strong	Adequate	Poor
Gymnasiums	★		
Indoor Tracks		★	
Fitness Amenities	★		
Cultural Amenities			★
Senior Areas		★	
Teen Areas			★
Youth Areas	★		
Multi-Purpose Rooms	★		
Raquetball Courts	★		
Nature Centers		★	
Indoor Pools		★	
* Strong - There are a relatively high number of this amenity on comparison to the population			
** Adequate - There is an adequate number of this amenity in comparison to the population			
*** Poor - There is a low number of this amenity in comparison to the population			

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Table 14 identifies basic indoor recreation, sports, fitness, and aquatic amenities that are available in the area and the relative number of these components in comparison to the population base. Note: This takes into consideration the amenities that are provided by the three facilities that are located outside of Pottawattamie County. This analysis is a basic assessment only.

4.4 AQUATIC FACILITIES

In addition to examining the indoor recreation, sports, and fitness facilities that are present in the county, it is important to focus in on the presence of aquatic facilities, both indoor and outdoor, that are available in the area.

4.4.1 Indoor Aquatic Centers

There are five indoor pools in the county:

- ☼ The Center: The senior center has a warm water fitness pool that is available to its patrons.
- ☼ Council Bluffs YMCA: The YMCA as a 6 lane x 25-yard pool that is actually owned by the City of Council Bluffs.
- ☼ Lied Center: The Iowa School for the Deaf has a conventional 6-lane pool that opens into a zero depth entry area with an interactive play feature. There is limited public access.
- ☼ Kirn Jr. High: This Council Bluffs School District pool has a conventional 8-lane tank that has just undergone an extensive renovation. This pool is open to the public.
- ☼ Titan Hill Intermediate School: This Lewis Central School District pool is a conventional 8 lane facility that serves the school district's needs as well as the general public.

Beyond these facilities that are located in the county, there are three aquatic centers that are located in other counties that service residents of Pottawattamie County:

- ☼ Montgomery County YMCA: The YMCA, located in Red Oak, has a lap pool with a small recreational pool that is attached.



Figure 50: The Center was designed to meet the recreation needs of Council Bluffs senior community and includes a warm water pool

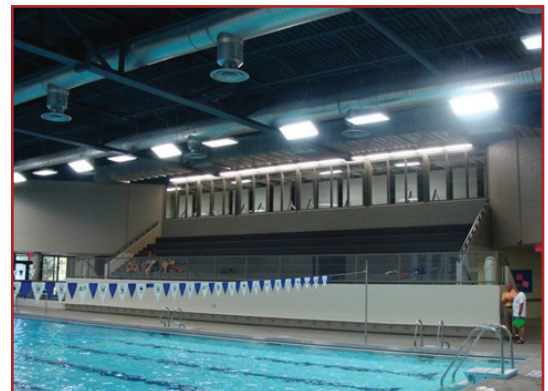


Figure 51: The fact that the Kirn Middle School pool is open for public use makes it a valuable asset for Council Bluffs

- ☁ Nishna Valley Family YMCA: This YMCA is located in Atlantic and features a combination lap and leisure pool.
- ☁ Petersen Family Wellness Center (Lewis Family Aquatic Complex): This center in Harlan has a combination lap and leisure pool.

4.4.2 Outdoor Aquatic Centers

There are also a number of public outdoor pools in the county:

- ☁ Avoca Family Aquatic Center (The Splash): Operated by the City of Avoca, this facility includes a leisure pool with a slide.
- ☁ Joseph Katelman Water Park: This is a City of Council Bluffs leisure pool.
- ☁ Pirate Cove Water Park: A second City of Council Bluffs leisure pool.
- ☁ Oakland Swimming Pool: The City operates a small conventional pool.
- ☁ Neola Community Center Pool: Even though this pool is located inside the community center, the room is not heated and the pool is only open in the summer so it essentially functions as an outdoor pool. The pool is operated by the community center but owned by the City of Neola.



Figure 52: Avoca's Splash outdoor pool complex serves northeastern county residents during the summer months



Figure 53: The pool at the Neola Community Center is unusual in that, while it is enclosed, it is not usable during the winter because it is unheated



Figure 54: The Joseph Katelman Water Park in Council Bluffs is a good example of the type of outdoor aquatics facility found in the county

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While there are a number of aquatic facilities that are located in the county, there are also a number of deficiencies:

- ☁ There are only five indoor aquatic centers in the county - two of these are school pools and another is part of the Iowa School for the Deaf. This limits their availability to the general public.
- ☁ The three indoor recreation centers that are in adjacent counties have substantial indoor aquatic facilities with both conventional lap areas as well as leisure pool amenities. These centers do serve key portions of the eastern portion of Pottawattamie County.
- ☁ With only five outdoor pools in the county, there are limited opportunities for outdoor swimming for Pottawattamie County residents. It is also significant that only two are located in the east end of the county and one of these is a small, older pool with limited appeal.

Table 15 grades the number of indoor and outdoor aquatic amenities that are available in the area in comparison to the population base. This analysis is a basic assessment only.

Note: This takes into consideration the aquatic facilities that are provided by the three indoor facilities located outside of the county.

Table 15: Presence of Aquatic Facilities

Facilities	Strong	Adequate	Poor
Indoor Pools		☼	
Outdoor Pools			☼
* Strong - There are a relatively high number of this amenity on comparison to the population			
** Adequate - There is an adequate number of this amenity in comparison to the population			
*** Poor - There is a low number of this amenity in comparison to the population			

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- 5.2 PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
- 5.3 FOCUS GROUP AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
 - 5.3.1 *Parks, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation Facilities*
 - 5.3.2 *Indoor Facilities*
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The County-wide Parks, Recreation and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment for Pottawattamie County is the direct result of an extensive public engagement process. The public was able to participate in a variety of ways:

- ☞ Interviews with stakeholders, such as municipality and school district representatives
- ☞ Interviews with focus groups representing different special interests and view points in the county
- ☞ Three public meetings held in different locations of the county
- ☞ A statistically valid, random sample community survey
- ☞ Open online version of the community survey (non-statistical)
- ☞ Youth text survey and Facebook Page
- ☞ Project website

A separate but relatable youth survey, Capturing our Voices, was conducted by Promise Partners during the preparation of this plan. A summary of those results as they pertain to parks, recreation and leisure facilities is also included in this chapter. For additional / more detailed information on the public engagement process and its products, please see the Appendix.

5.1 THE PROJECT WEBSITE

At the beginning of the Needs Assessment process, a project website -- www.IowaWestRecStudy.org - was established by the Planning Team. The website included an overview of the project, news and updates, a calendar, public meeting materials, collected public comment, and results of the public opinion survey.

Throughout the process, the website was updated as new products for the needs assessment became available. In addition, "email blasts" were sent to individuals who asked to be kept up-to-date on the project. These emails notified them of upcoming events and when new material was posted on the website.



Figure 55: The project website was designed to distribute products and information to county residents while providing an opportunity for them to contribute their comments and suggestions

The website also allowed for users to provide comments. The following is an abbreviated summary of comments submitted.

- ☞ The need for a Council Bluffs YMCA expansion
- ☞ Land for ballfields (2 softball, 2 baseball , and soccer) in/near Treynor
- ☞ Pool in Treynor
- ☞ Fitness center in Treynor
- ☞ County bus service to recreation facilities
- ☞ A park like Yanney Park in Kearney, NB
- ☞ Rock climbing facility in Council Bluffs
- ☞ Martial arts center in Council Bluffs
- ☞ Bigger pool in Council Bluffs



Figure 56: Rock climbing has become a popular recreation amenity - for adults as well as school age children

5.2 PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Consultant Team met with the project Advisory Committee at the onset of the project (March 2011) to discuss goals for the project, priorities and issues. The Advisory Committee included representatives from:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Pottawattamie County CITIES Fund | City of Avoca |
| Pottawattamie County Conservation Board | YMCA |
| Jennie Edmundson Memorial Hospital | Iowa School for the Deaf |
| Council Bluffs Community School District | Metropolitan Area Planning Agency |
| City of Carter Lake Parks and Recreation | Underwood School District |
| Western Iowa Development Association | The Center |
| Pottawattamie County Community Foundation | Alegent-Mercy Hospital |
| Golden Hills Resource Conservation & Development | Promise Partners |
| Iowa Western Community College | Neighborhood Center |
| Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce | National Park Service |
| Boys & Girls Club of Council Bluffs | Iowa West Foundation (IWF) |
| Lewis Central Community Schools | City of Council Bluffs |
| Friends of Lake Manawa | Southwest Iowa Nature Trails |
| Iowa Department of Natural Resources | |

In addition to the Advisory Committee, IWF staff attended the meeting.

The group discussed the progressively positive relationship among the entities and IWF. They were encouraged that IWF was looking to reach past traditional ideas and willing to receive input from a variety of participants. Participants were pleased to see the inclusion of county-wide public engagement during the development of the needs assessment.

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They commented favorably on the Foundation's efforts, such as helping communities get started on projects which were needed or would otherwise be impossible for a community to commence. It was also noted that some areas of Council Bluffs and other parts of the county felt overlooked. The group also mentioned that there was a sense that the youth were in need of more facilities targeted to their age group.

The group cited several key questions for the consultant team to address during the project process:

- ☞ What and where are the gaps in services?
- ☞ What are the communities' long-term needs?
- ☞ How can on-going maintenance be funded?
- ☞ How can redundancy be avoided?
- ☞ Can destination locations be created (and where)?
- ☞ How can IWF bring to reality a major indoor recreation facility somewhere in the county?
- ☞ How can the positive assets in place be best marketed so people use these facilities more?
- ☞ What are supplemental funding sources?
- ☞ How will public relations be done to advertise all of the available resources?
- ☞ What activities should be taking place in the structure that is already in place?



Figure 57: On-going maintenance costs can overwhelm small communities if not properly planned for

The Advisory Committee set priorities for the project and set the foundation for the assessment as a whole.

The Planning Team also presented the preliminary recommendations of the Needs Assessment Study to the Advisory Committee in October of 2011. The comments and suggestions provided during that presentation were used to shape the final recommendation included in this document.

5.3 FOCUS GROUP AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

A series of focus groups and interviews with stakeholders that represented Pottawattamie County and its municipal partners were held over a three day. This series of meetings was the kick-off to the public engagement process for the Parks, Recreation and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment.

The goal of each focus group was to conduct in-depth discussions with average county citizens with different interests and backgrounds. Meetings were held with residents in each of the communities, as well as interest groups such as the SW Iowa Nature Trails (SWINT), Loess Hills Preservation Society, the Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce, and youth groups (student councils and academic clubs).

Stakeholder interviews were held with representatives from:

Pottawattamie County	
Neola	Avoca
Hancock	Oakland
Carson	Macedonia
Treynor	Carter Lake
McClelland	Underwood
Council Bluffs	Minden
Walnut	Crescent

As well as Iowa State Parks, the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, county school districts, and other recreation service providers in the county.

The following is a brief summary of the comments that were mentioned frequently. Please see the Appendix for detailed summaries of each meeting.

5.3.1 Parks, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Based on the input provided during the focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews, the following observations were noted regarding parks, trails, and outdoor recreation facilities:

There was a desire for a more coordinated system for all the recreation providing entities within the county to communicate, cooperate, and work together to:

- ☞ Share events occurring around the county
- ☞ Identify what facilities can be found and what programs are offered at the different

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP: TJ ENGINEERING CLUB

YOUTH SANCTUARY PROJECT



For a regional student engineering competition, the TJ Engineering Club designed a "youth sanctuary", a facility that the group felt was needed in the Council Bluffs area.

To design the facility, the group conducted a brainstorming session to identify elements that should be included then refined the program to best provide for teens in Council Bluffs.

The final design included (among many) a climbing wall, basketball court, laser tag room, fitness area, indoor track, gym, skate park, lounge area, amphitheater, study area, library, computer lab, and a dormitory.

The club built a 3D model and selected a site for the project: a lot in west Council Bluffs adjacent to Playland Park.



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parks and recreation areas

- ☁ Express individual needs
- ☁ Coordinate groups, volunteers
- ☁ Avoid duplication and overlapping services

There was a preference to maintain and leverage existing facilities over constructing new facilities

- ☁ There was concern about the cost of maintaining and/or operating new facilities
- ☁ Many existing facilities were already in need of repair and maintenance

There was a split between whether to focus on fewer, larger facilities or smaller facilities in more communities:

- ☁ Many of those from the western portion of the county supported larger, shared facilities
- ☁ Many of those from the eastern portion of the county did want to see facilities in each community
- ☁ There was direction to determine which facilities should be in each community versus those that should serve a more regional base

There was a desire to better promote and market the recreation resources in Pottawattamie County and tie these amenities to economic development

- ☁ The county-wide recreation system could encourage families to remain in or move to Pottawattamie County
- ☁ The county-wide system could support business development

Participants from all areas of the county considered trails to be an important amenity

- ☁ Council Bluffs should take full advantage of its trails system
- ☁ A trail system in the county was a popular theme
 - ☁ Many supported connecting communities with trails
- ☁ Both hard surface and soft surface trails were desired

Many felt that the Council Bluffs area was strong in outdoor sports fields.

Participants from all over the county identified a lack of practice fields in both the urban and rural areas.

A pool was also a popular theme (though the high cost of operation was recognized).



Figure 58: This tennis court may need to be reconstructed because regular maintenance was deferred

There was also a sentiment that there was a need for natural areas for non-structured activity areas (hiking, exploring, etc.).

5.3.2 Indoor Facilities

Based on the input provided during the focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews, the following observations were noted regarding indoor recreation and leisure facilities:



Figure 59: The Carson Community Center provides meeting rooms, a small fitness center, and city offices for the community

Indoor facilities were identified as one of the most needed amenities in the county – both in the rural areas and in the urban areas.

Many participants expressed a desire for a community center:

- ☞ The Carson Community Center was considered a success and a good example
- ☞ Most indicated the desire for a fitness area as a component of a community center

There was indication that schools and communities could work together to allow better joint use of indoor school facilities.

Many of the rural communities indicated that there was an overall lack of places to gather

- ☞ Restaurants and coffee shops were desired in cities like Avoca, Treynor, Carson, and Macedonia
- ☞ There was also the desire to see arts and performing arts centers

Places for youth to gather were desired in all of the communities.

5.4 PUBLIC MEETINGS

On April 25th, 26th and 27th 2011, public meetings for the County-wide Parks, Recreation and Leisure Needs Assessment were held in Council Bluffs, Carson, and Avoca, respectively. The purpose of the meetings was to gain an understanding of community attitudes regarding park and recreation facilities, programs, and services and to identify needs throughout the county. A presentation by the Assessment Team highlighted the Team’s findings to date including the review of the county’s various existing park and recreation systems and programs.

The meetings were well attended. According to sign-in sheets and key pad polling numbers, around 23 participants attended the meeting in Avoca, 13 participants attended the meeting in Carson, and 44 participants attended the meeting in Council Bluffs.

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5.4.1 Keypad Polling

Keypad polling was utilized during the public meeting to help understand community attitudes. Highlights of the key findings of the keypad polling results include:

- ☞ The recreation services in which people were most satisfied varied from meeting to meeting
- ☞ At the Avoca meeting, the availability of nature-based recreation was the top answer
- ☞ At the Carson meeting, the number of quality parks, sports fields and playgrounds was tied with the preservation of permanent open space
- ☞ At the Council Bluffs meeting, 53% were most satisfied with trails and bike paths

The recreation services in which people were least satisfied also varied

- ☞ The extent of trails and bike paths was the top response in both Avoca and Carson
- ☞ Avoca participants equally choose the availability of indoor recreation opportunities as the top choice
- ☞ The availability of indoor recreation opportunities was also the top choice at the Council Bluffs meeting
- ☞ The adequacy of recreation programs and activities was the second most selected response at the Carson meeting

The primary source for recreation activities also varied throughout the county. At the Council Bluffs meeting, municipalities and schools were the top source. At the Carson meeting, the top source was state/county programs and programs in other communities. At the Avoca meeting, city programs followed by programs in other communities were the primary sources. Overall, municipalities were chosen as the top source of recreation activities, followed by other providers and schools.

Table 16: Keypad Polling results regarding the source of recreation activities

Source For Recreation Activities	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	Weighted Averages
City Programs	23.3%	30.7%	38.5%
County/State Programs	9.6%	13.3%	11.5%
YMCA/Boys & Girls Club	12.3%	5.3%	8.8%
Schools	13.7%	13.3%	13.5%
Churches	9.6%	1.3%	5.4%
Private Health Clubs	4.1%	2.7%	3.4%
Other Communities	8.2%	14.7%	11.5%
Other Providers	15%	16%	15.5%
Do Not Participate	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
* Totals are combined from all meetings			
** Weighted numbers were derived by weighting the 1 st choice by 2 points, and the 2 nd choice by 1 point.			

City parks and recreation departments followed by County facilities then schools were the top 3 places participants went for recreation programs and services.

Assets in the park closest to one’s home that received an “A” (in order of top selection): overall maintenance followed by play equipment then sports fields. Restroom was the most selected asset receiving an “F”.

Though no one amenity was a clear favorite, top-ranked amenities included: restrooms, playground equipment, sprayground/water play, and basketball courts. Overall, when it came to ranking the amenities one would like in an neighborhood park:

Table 17: Keypad Polling results for top-ranked outdoor recreation amenities			
Amenity	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	Weighted Average*
Tennis courts	2.8%	8.3%	6.9%
Basketball court	16.7%	6.9%	20.1%
Playground equipment	18%	13.9%	25%
Picnic tables / benches	8.3%	19.4%	18%
Horseshoe pits	5.6%	6.9%	9%
Sandbox	1.4%	1.4%	2.1%
Restrooms	18%	15.3%	25.7%
Sprayground / water play	19.4%	8.3%	23.6%
Picnic pavilion	5.6%	15.3%	13.2%
Sand volleyball	4.2%	4.2%	6.25%
* Totals are combined from all meetings			
** Weighted numbers were derived by weighting the 1 st choice by 2 points, the 2 nd choice by 1 point, and taking the average and percentage of those numbers.			

- ☞ When ranking the most important indoor recreation facility need in Pottawattamie County, the top choices varied from meeting to meeting. In Avoca, the top choice was community / art rooms; in Carson, the top choice was a teen center followed closely by a pool; in Council Bluffs, the top choice was a field house followed closely by walk / jog track and fitness space. Overall, the top-ranking indoor recreation facilities were fitness space, walk / jog track, and field house. (Rated in Table 18)
- ☞ The greatest needs for additional recreation programs and services were in outdoor (non-sport) activities, followed by fitness / wellness, then cultural arts. “Cultural arts” was a more popular choice in Avoca and Carson than it was in Council Bluffs.
- ☞ Natural parks were chosen by all three groups as the non-traditional recreation facility participants would like made available to their families.
- ☞ The majority of participants at all three meetings also were willing to travel up to 10 – 20 minutes to participate in recreation programs and services.
- ☞ When asked to choose between fewer but larger facilities with more amenities versus a greater number of smaller community-level facilities with fewer amenities,

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Table 18: Keypad Polling responses to the question regarding "Most important indoor recreation amenity"

Amenity	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	Weighted Average*
Pool	6.5%	4.1%	8.7%
Gym	13%	8.2%	17.3%
Walk / jog track	11.7%	26%	24.7%
Fitness space	16.9	20.5%	27.3%
Community / Art rooms	13%	13.7%	20%
Ice rink	2.6%	2.7%	4%
Racquetball courts	2.6%	1.4%	3.3%
Teen Center	13%	6.8%	16.7%
Senior Center	4%	6.8%	7.3%
Field House	16.9%	9.6%	22%
* Totals are combined from all meetings			
** Weighted numbers were derived by weighting the 1 st choice by 2 points, the 2 nd choice by 1 point, and taking the average and percentage of those numbers.			

there was a 60% to 40% split in Council Bluffs with more choosing larger facilities. The majority of participants in both Avoca and Carson (96% and 83% respectively) preferred smaller community-level facilities.

- The groups were asked to choose between focusing resources on building new facilities or focusing resources on maintaining existing facilities. In both Carson and Council Bluffs there was an approximately 40% to 60% split in favor of maintaining existing facilities. Approximately 2 out of 3 participants in Avoca preferred to focus resources on new facilities.
- The Carson and Avoca groups were asked which recreation areas should have most emphasis. Over half (53%) of Avoca residents indicated "other" with 21% choosing indoor sports facilities. In Carson, the top choice (38%) was natural-based recreation facilities followed by traditional recreation facilities (31%).



Figure 60: Keypad Polling gave each meeting participant an opportunity to provide their views on parks and recreation facilities and services in the county

5.4.2 Voiced and Written Comments from Public Meetings

Immediately following the PowerPoint presentation, an open forum was held at each public meeting to give attendees an opportunity to ask questions, as well as offer their comments and suggestions regarding the needs assessment. Written comment cards were also completed by many meeting attendees. A full report of all comments received is included in the Appendix. An overview of questions and comments that were submitted is provided below:

Council Bluffs

- ☞ Maintenance and renovation of existing facilities, including those on school district properties and the city and state parks, was important
- ☞ Facilities / amenities that should be considered include:
 - ✂ Water-based sports
 - ✂ River access
 - ✂ Theme park
 - ✂ Large community facility and sports complex
 - ✂ Indoor space for basketball, walking track, etc.
 - ✂ Unstructured nature-based areas
 - ✂ Camping, fishing, hunting
 - ✂ Fitness center
 - ✂ Dog park
- ☞ The YMCA was in need of expansion and renovation
- ☞ Some city parks were perceived as unsafe

Carson

- ☞ Biggest issue is how to budget staff and volunteer time
- ☞ Communities need to communicate and coordinate events and programs
 - ✂ A central website may be a means
- ☞ There was a willingness by school districts to work with communities to fill a recreation role
- ☞ Facilities should be located in eastern/central county
 - ✂ Not all facilities should be in Council Bluffs
 - ✂ Need more facilities in county
- ☞ Many communities want their own community center (most with fitness areas)
- ☞ Facilities / amenities that should be considered include:
 - ✂ Arts programs
 - ✂ Performing arts center

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- ✂ Amphitheater
- ✂ Archery club
- ✂ Soccer fields
- ✂ Trails
- ✂ Practice fields
- ✂ Field house

Avoca

- ☞ Many participants want smaller, close-by facilities
- ☞ There was a willingness by school districts to fulfill a recreation role
- ☞ A trail network (both hard and soft surface) would be a cooperative venture that the population could support
- ☞ There is a need for indoor recreation space (especially during the winter months)
- ☞ Small towns should work together to create priorities that will benefit the small towns and determine how to leverage what each has and determine where desired facilities should locate.



Figure 61: The recently completed Little League Fields at Underwood Middle School are a good example of a school district working with the community to provide recreation facilities

5.5 IDENTIFIED NEEDS VIA INVENTORY FORMS

This section presents issues and needs identified by project participants during the inventory phase of the project:

- ☞ Loess Hills area is in need of a woody plant control program.
- ☞ Carter Lake Park and Recreation Department identifies the following needs in its 2010-2014 5-Year Plan:
 - ✂ Complete Carter Lake Trail Plan trail system (then connect them to outlying metro area trails)
 - ✂ Plan and utilize city-owned properties at 65 and 98 Carter Lake Club
 - ✂ Expand facilities to broaden available activities
 - ✂ Maintain existing amenities
 - ✂ Install lights at ball field #3
 - ✂ Develop community center
 - ✂ Water park development
 - ✂ Development of pavilions and shelters
 - ✂ Expand recreation programs – more diversified active programs for children and young adults; both active and passive recreation programs for the adult sector; recreation programs for the family sector.

- ☞ Restroom facilities are needed at Macedonia's Olde Town Park. Access to fishing areas could also be improved.
- ☞ Tri-Center Community School District in Neola is in need of playground renovation.
- ☞ Parking is lacking at the Walnut Wetlands Area.
- ☞ The basketball/tennis courts at Crescent City Park are in need of repair. Lighting for the ballfields, tennis courts, and volleyball courts would allow them to be used after dusk.
- ☞ The majority of the K-12 school district and college facilities are not generally open for public use.
- ☞ There is a need for an indoor facility for basketball, volleyball and baseball in Council Bluffs.
- ☞ Camping facilities at Arrowhead Park need upgrading and expanding.
- ☞ Vegetation needs management at Blackbird Marsh Conservation Area.
- ☞ The basketball courts need improvement at Botna Bend Park.
- ☞ Administrators at the Hitchcock Nature Center would like to improve and expand the trail system.
- ☞ The fishing access and the shoreline could be improved at Narrows River Park. Flush toilets are also needed as well as shelter areas.
- ☞ The road needs improvement and ballfields need renovating at Valley View Park.
- ☞ Wilson and Kirn Middle Schools could benefit from adjustable hoops and retractable bleachers (for more seating).
- ☞ The following are identified needs in Council Bluffs:
 - ☞ Twin City Park has drainage problems and needs upgrading.
 - ☞ The tennis courts at Sunset Park and Playland Park need improvements.
 - ☞ The field and track need to be renovated at Kirn Park.
 - ☞ The parking lots at Westwood Park needs upgrading.
 - ☞ The roads in Fairview Cemetery need to be improved.
 - ☞ The Old Fountain (Broadway Fountain) at N 7th and Mynster Streets needs restoration.
- ☞ Parking surface at the Council Bluffs YMCA needs re-surfacing.



Figure 62: County recreation providers frequently noted the value of lighted ballfields provided the community

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Facilities needing ADA compliance:



Restrooms at Treynor East Park



Amenities at Treynor Park West



Amenities at Olde Town Park (Macedonia)



Amenities at Prospect Park (Council Bluffs).

5.6 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

During May and June of 2011, the Assessment Team (primarily RRC Associates) conducted a Recreation Needs Assessment Survey 2011 for the County-wide Parks, Recreation and Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment. The purpose of the survey was to identify needs and priorities for the park and recreation facilities, programs, and services within the county. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results and was administered by mail. A non-statistical (open) version was then posted online on the website. (A separate youth text survey was also conducted – see section 5.9 for more information.)

In early May, surveys were mailed to a random sample of 5,000 households throughout Pottawattamie County with care that higher numbers were sent to rural areas to allow for a decent sample size.

Residents responded to questions regarding their use of existing recreation facilities in the county, what improvements they would like to see, and if they participate in any recreation programs. Residents were then given a list of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and asked to indicate their need for the facility and if they currently have that facility available to them.

5.6.1 Survey Overview

Overall, the survey showed similar results to the input received during meeting with stakeholders, focus groups and the communities. Very few respondents indicated that there was not a need for additional outdoor recreation facilities of any type or that there was not a need for additional recreation programs.

Popular and desired outdoor activities included biking on streets and trails, walking/jogging, swimming, and fishing. For neighborhood parks, restrooms, play equipment, and picnic tables were considered important elements.

Potential amenities that received attention were destination playground, outdoor amphitheater, natural parks, and facilities that allowed riding bikes on streets/roads. Facilities that were not considered as important include motocross or BMX tracks, skate parks, ice rinks and in line skating areas.

Participants indicated that they were more satisfied by existing trails/paths, parks, sports fields and playground than by the available indoor recreation opportunities. Areas of attention for indoor recreation were fitness / wellness areas and gyms. Programs in fitness/wellness,

playgrounds, trails, pools and other non-sport outdoor activities were highly supported overall as desired future amenities.

5.6.2 Survey Review by Question

The following is a review of the survey per question. To get an idea if needs were different between those residents in Council Bluffs and those in other areas of the County, the survey responses were cross tabbed depending on whether or not the respondent resided in Council Bluffs.

Participants were first asked to rate their household’s satisfaction with recreation services as they relate to Pottawattamie County as a whole. A scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “Not At All Satisfied” and 5 means “Extremely Satisfied” was provided.

The top rated areas for satisfaction were a 3.6 rating for “extent and quality of pedestrian trails and bike paths” and a 3.5 rating for “number and quality of parks, sports fields, playgrounds”.

The lowest rating went to the “availability of indoor recreation opportunities” at 2.3 with 59% of respondents rating it either 1 or 2.

Comparing the responses from residents of Council Bluffs to those residing elsewhere in the County, both groups gave the lowest rating to the availability of indoor opportunities. However the top rating for residents of Council Bluffs was the extent and quality of trails where those in outside of Council Bluffs rated the number of quality parks, sports fields and playgrounds as the top and trails as second. This is likely due to the fact that most of the trails are located in and around Council Bluffs.

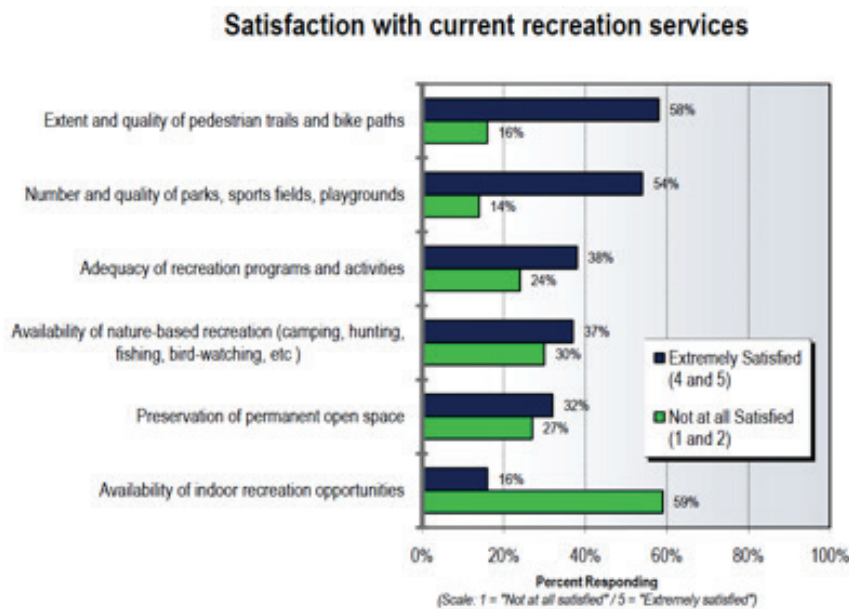


Figure 63: Residents were happiest with the pedestrian/bike trails, and least happiest with the availability of indoor recreation opportunities

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The second question had 3 parts to it. Participants were asked approximately how many times in the last twelve months have they or members of their household used each of the 28 listed types of facilities, amenities, and programs. Then, they were asked to rate how important each of these facilities and amenities was to their household (using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “Not At All Important” and 5 means “Very Important”). Thirdly, they were asked to indicate which facilities were most in need of improvement or addition/expansion.

Top numbers for use over the past year went to walking/jogging (25.8), bike riding on streets/roads (12.6), bike riding on trails (8.3), and then fishing (6.4). Lowest numbers of use went to in line hockey and BMX (both at 0) followed by skateboard park and ATV park usage (both at 0.1).

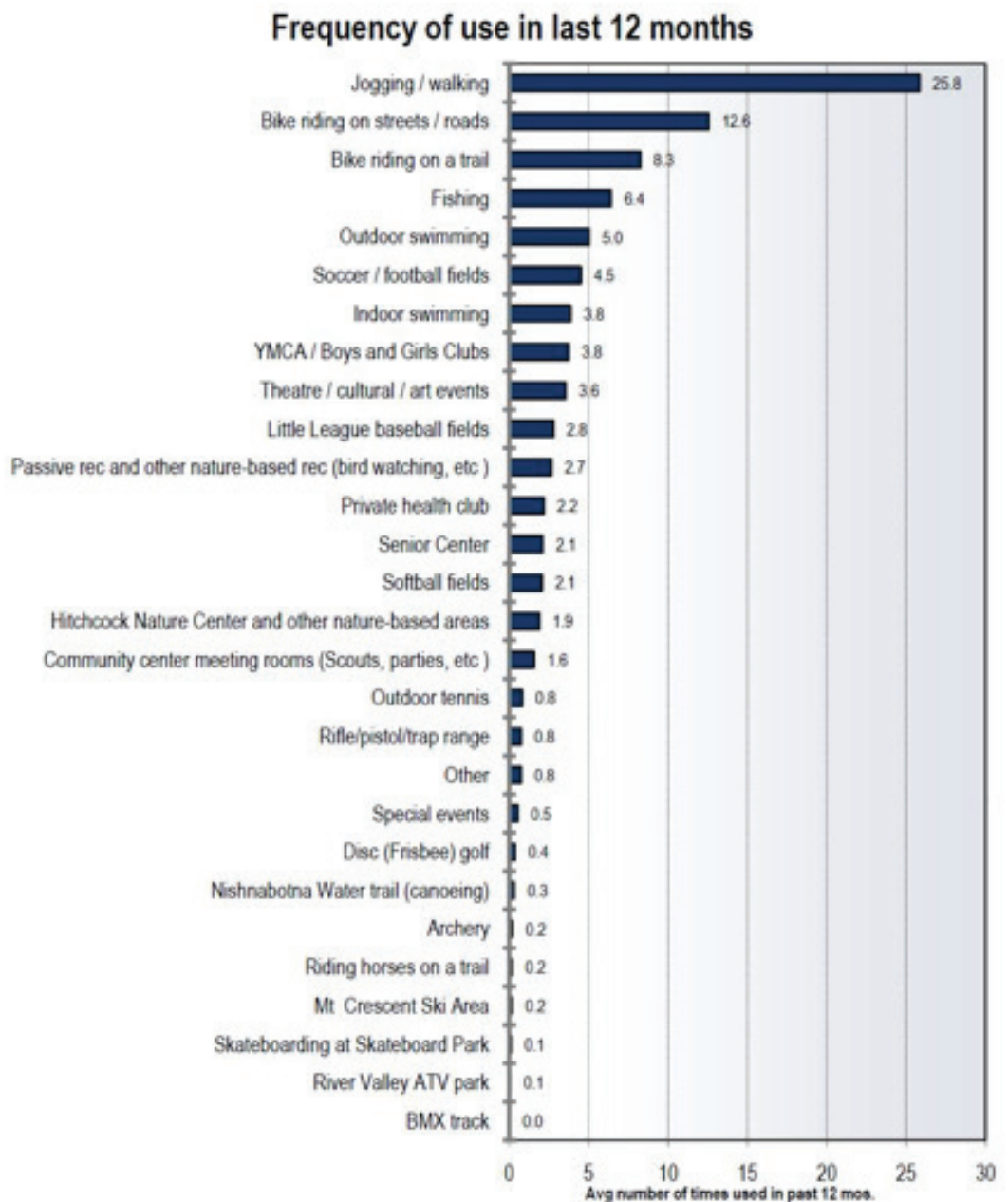


Figure 64: Survey responses were similar to those responses heard in public meetings

In rating importance, top ranking went to walking /jogging (4.1 – with 73% rating it a 4 or 5), biking on trails (4.0 – with 69% rating it a 4 or 5) and outdoor swimming (with 62% rating it a 4 or 5).

The lowest rated activities were in line hockey and BMX track both (with 56% rating it a 1 or 2).

Overall, the facilities rated in most need of improvement or addition/expansion were: 1) biking on trails, 2) jogging / walking, 3) fishing, and 4) outdoor swimming. The lowest rated areas for expansion or improvement were: 1) Mt Crescent Ski Area, 2) BMX track, 3) skateboard parks, and 4) outdoor tennis.

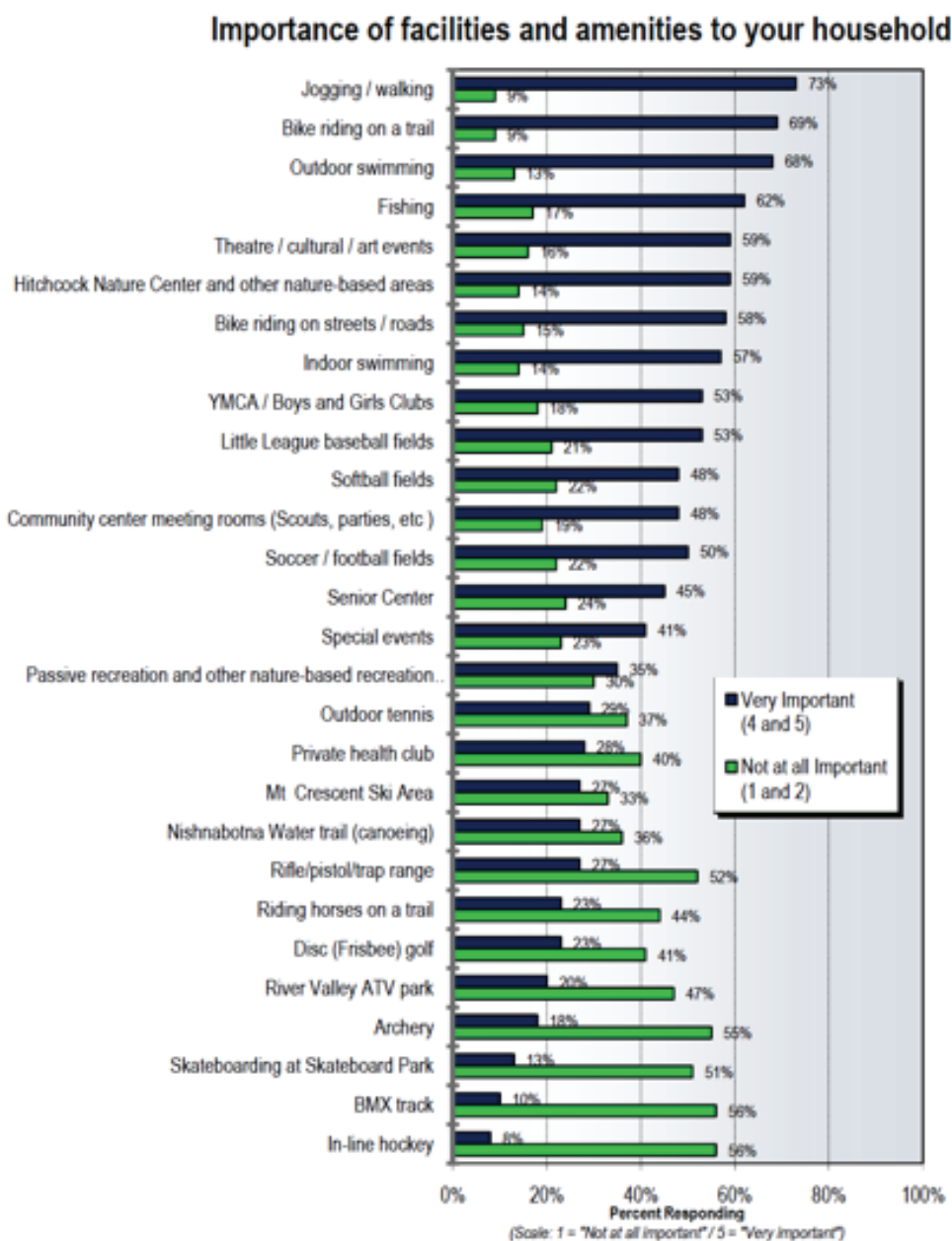


Figure 65: Alzot of facilities ranked high in importance, enforcing the important of diverse recreation needs in the county

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Comparing the results from residents of Council Bluffs and those residing outside Council Bluffs, the activities and facilities used differed mostly on if the facility was available. For example, county participation was low for the use of the YMCA for those residing outside of Council Bluffs compared to those residing within the city. The importance rating was very similar between the two groups and the overall areas in need of improvement/expansion were similar though riding on streets and roads was slightly more favored by those in Council Bluffs.

The next survey question asked how often does one's household participate in recreation activities through the following 7 providers: city/town, county, YMCA/Boys & Girls Clubs, schools, churches, private health clubs, programs in other communities, or other providers.

**Most in need of improvement of addition/ expansion-Top
3 Combined**

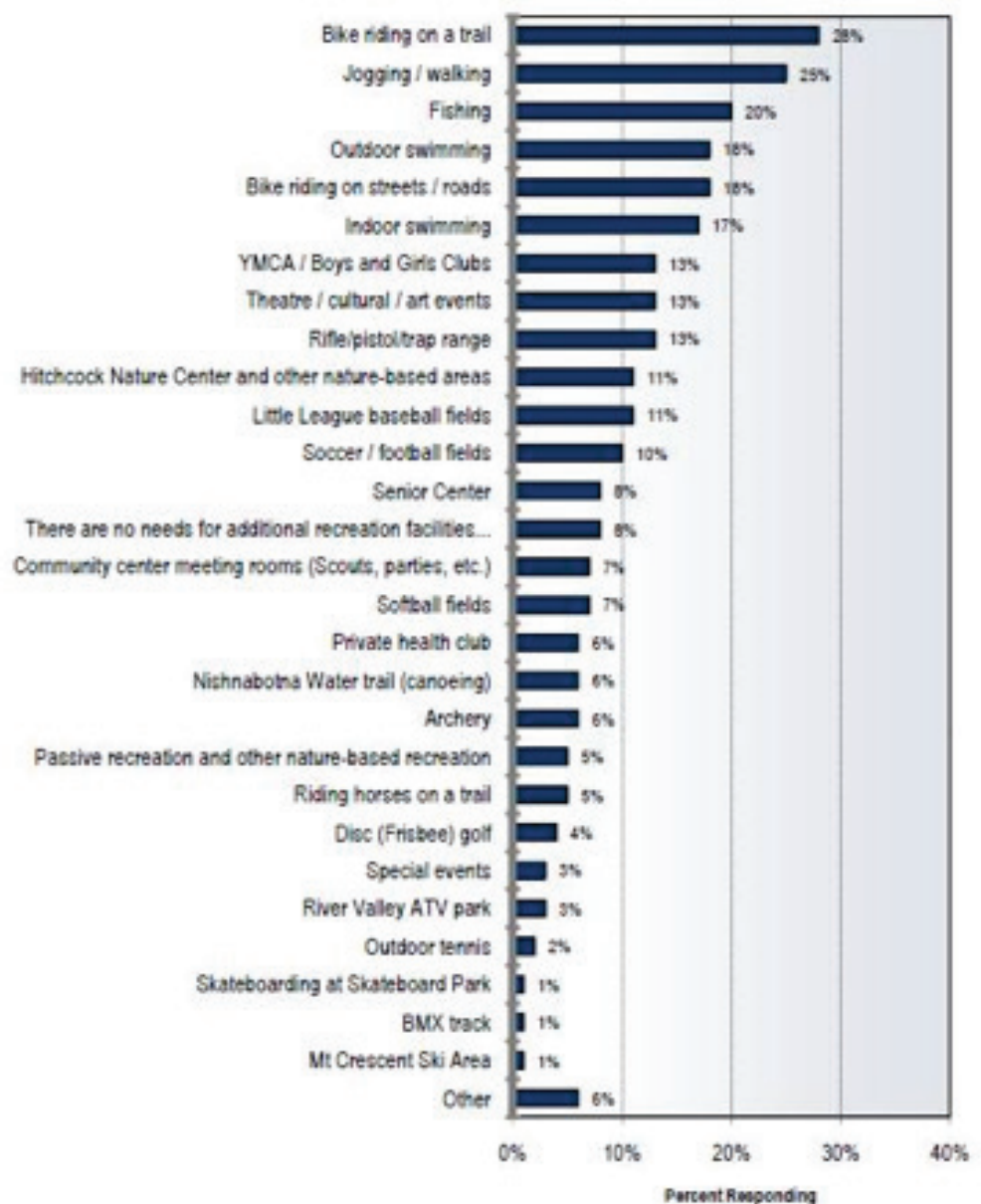


Figure 66: Across the county, trail use and swimming were rated highly for importance, addition and expansion.

57% of respondents indicated that they use city / town facilities occasionally or frequently. School facilities were used occasionally or frequently by 56% of respondents. 85% of respondents rarely or never used private health clubs, 77% rarely or never used the YMCA / Boys and Girls Clubs.

The responses between those residing outside of Council Bluffs and residents of Council Bluffs were similar though respondents residing outside Council Bluffs were more likely to participate in programs in other communities (47% vs. 26%).

Participants were then asked to rate the park nearest their home using a grading system of A-F for selected aspects. Half of respondents graded restrooms with a D or F while 72% gave shade an A or B. Overall maintenance also received an A or B from 71% of respondents. The responses between those residing outside of Council Bluffs and residents of Council Bluffs were similar.



Figure 67: There is a wide gap between residents attending activities in their own town/city, versus adjacent municipalities

The next question listed 22 facilities. Survey takers were asked if it was best to have:

- A) Fewer but larger recreation facilities with more amenities, higher quality, and centrally located (up to 30 minute drive); OR
- B) A greater number of smaller recreation facilities with fewer amenities, lower quality, but located in more areas closer in which to drive or walk; OR
- C) None/Do not have an interest in or will not use this facility, regardless of location, size, or amenities available.

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Ratings of park nearest your home

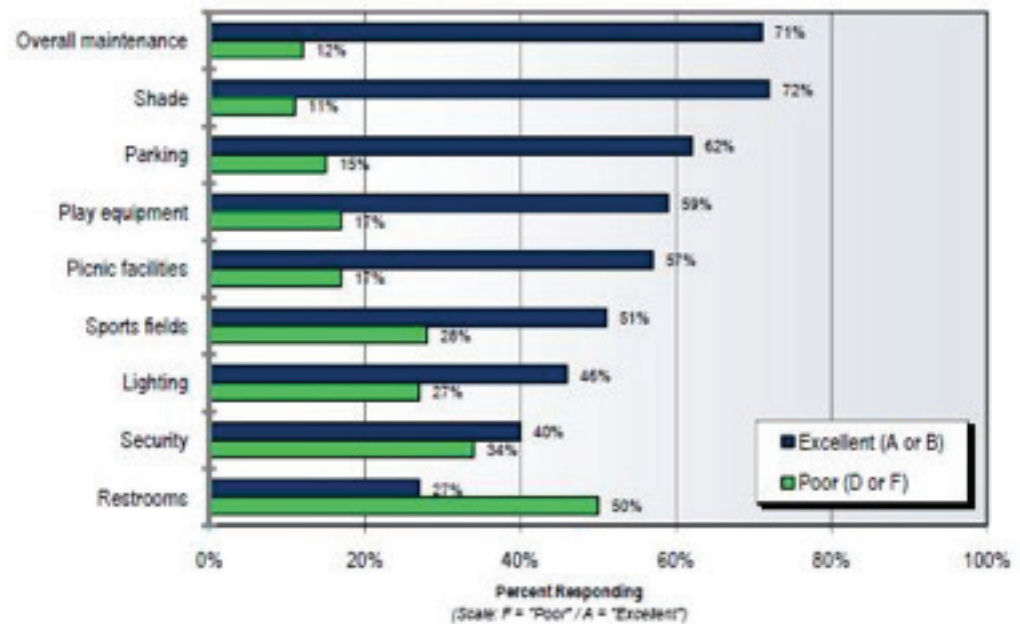


Figure 68: While maintained well, upgrades such as restrooms are needed at many facilities

Over 69% of respondents indicated more, smaller facilities for playgrounds, picnic shelters and parks. Many other facilities received a mixed rating. Skate parks were not used by 57% of respondents.

Respondents were then asked of those items, which ones are considered to be the most important to add/expand in Pottawattamie County. The most important to expand were: paved trails, playgrounds and pools. Bottom rankings went to volleyball, tennis and skate park.

There were some differences between respondents residing in Council Bluffs to those residing in other areas of the County. More Council Bluffs residents preferred fewer larger facilities for sports fields where respondents residing outside Council Bluffs were more likely to choose more, smaller facilities for sports fields. The majority of respondents from outside of Council Bluffs also choose more, smaller facilities for swimming pools.

In regards to the combined importance for expansion of future facilities, The Council Bluff resident responses as well as the rest of the respondents matched the overall top 3 ranking (paved trails, playgrounds and swimming pools) but pools ranked higher with respondents residing outside Council Bluffs and fishing areas was fourth ranked where fourth ranking was parks for those residing within Council Bluffs. Bottom rankings were also similar between the two groups.

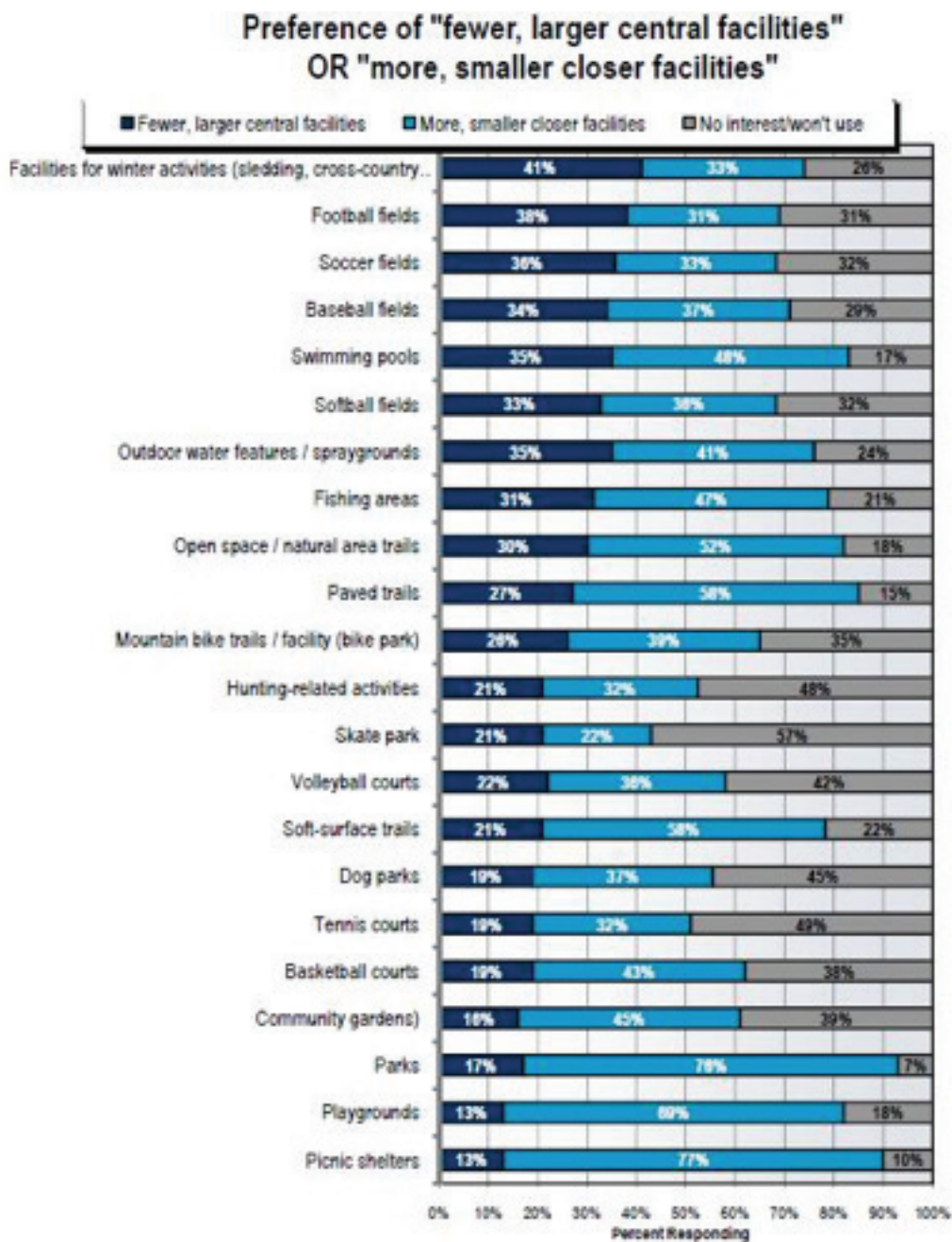


Figure 69: Preferences of fewer, larger facilities vs. smaller, closer facilities

A list of 13 non-traditional outdoor recreation facilities was provided. The top ranked facilities to add in Pottawattamie County were natural parks, outdoor amphitheater, and destination playground. The lowest rankings went to motocross, BXM, and skate park.

The most important facilities overall were: outdoor amphitheater, destination playground then dog park. The bottom ranking overall went to motocross, BMX and skate park.

Only 4% of respondents indicated that there was "no need for additional outdoor recreation facilities". Both groups – those residing outside Council Bluffs and Council Bluff residents – had very similar responses to this question for both top ranking and bottom ranking.

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Most important to add/expand in Pottawattamie County - Top 3 Combined

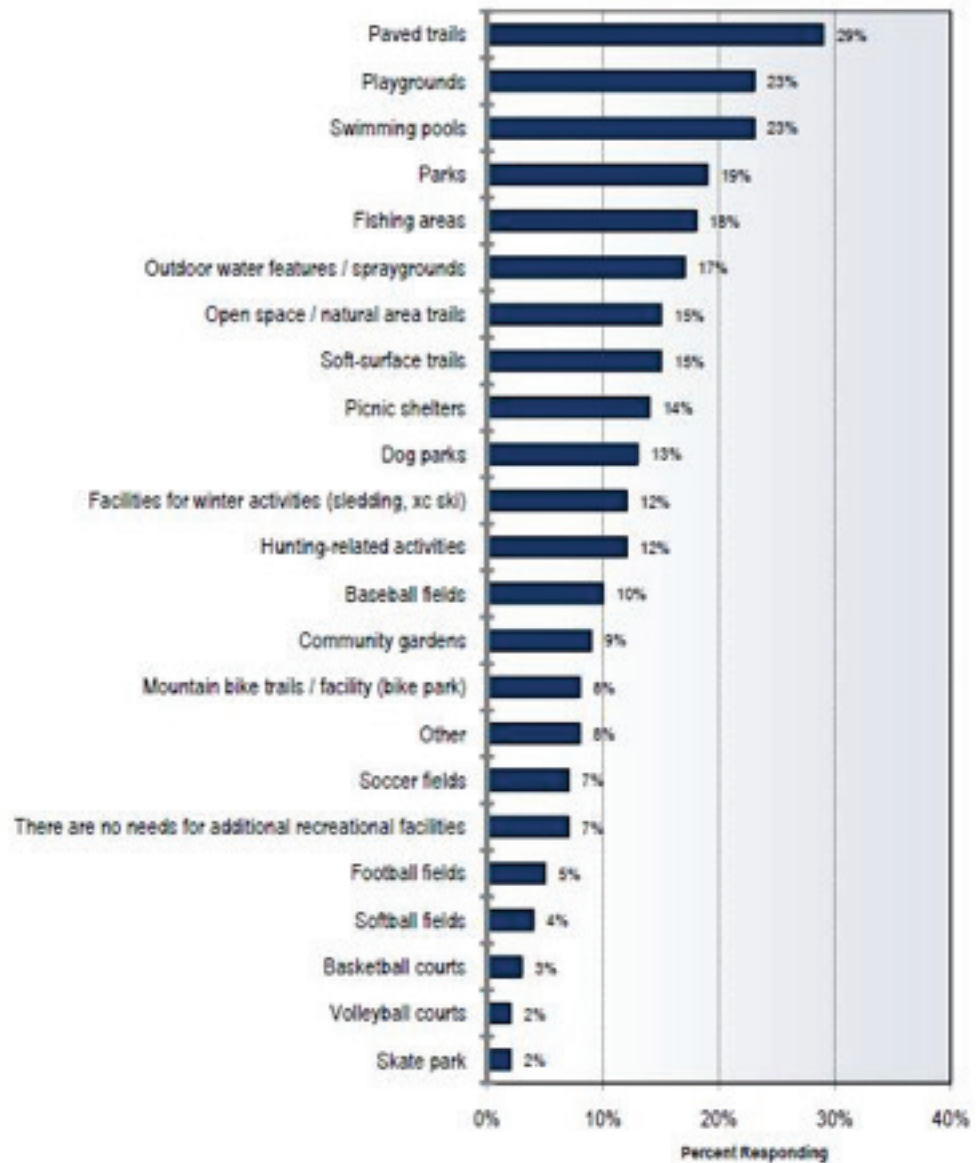


Figure 70: Most important amenities to add to or expand

In regard to the question about amenities in neighborhood parks, respondents indicated that the top three (3) amenities that should be included were restrooms, play equipment and picnic tables were top ranked. The lowest ranked amenities included sandbox, horseshoe pit and sand volleyball court.

Both groups – those residing outside Council Bluffs and Council Bluff residents – had very similar responses to this question for both top ranking and bottom ranking.

Respondents then ranked the important needs for indoor recreation facilities in Pottawattamie County by rating 13 amenities from 1 -5 with 1 being low important and 5 being the very important. The top rated indoor facilities were a gym and pool (both at 4.0) with 71% of respondents rating the amenity either a 4 or 5. Walk/jog track and fitness space both received the next highest ranking of 3.9. The lowest ranked amenities were racquetball courts, art rooms, and ice rink.

Overall, the most important facilities to respondents were pool, walking / jogging track, gym and fitness space. The lowest ranked amenities were racquetball courts, art rooms, community rooms, and ice rink. Again, both groups – those residing outside Council Bluffs and Council Bluff residents – had very similar responses to this question for both top ranking and bottom ranking.

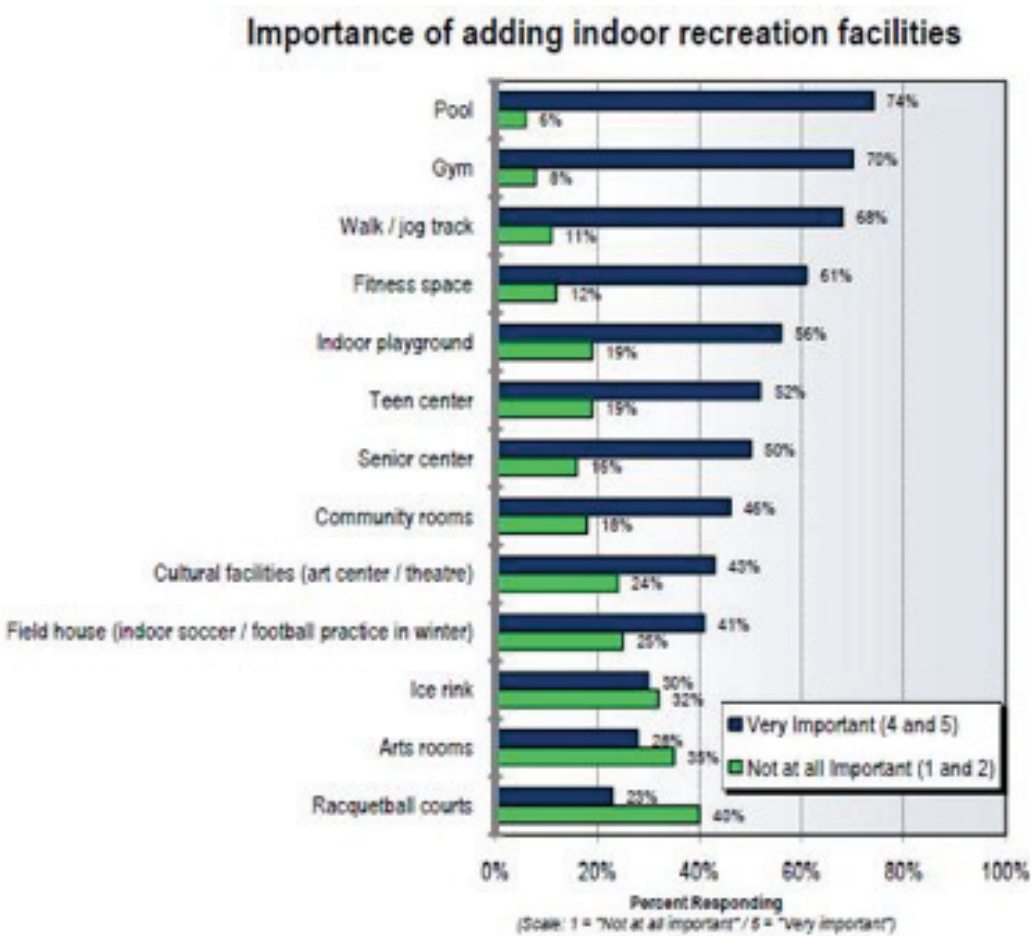


Figure 71: The importance of indoor recreation facilities

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In response to the question “how well are needs being met for each of the following groups, in regards to recreation programs and services,” all ranked pretty evenly with no one group appearing to be over or under served.

As for the greatest needs for additional recreation programs and services, the top ranking areas were fitness /wellness and non-sport outdoor activities with 71% of respondents rating it a 4 or 5. The comparably low rated amenities were cultural arts and special events though they received a 3.1 and 3.5 respectively indicating that attention to these areas was unneeded. Only 5% of respondents said there was no need for additional recreation programs and services. Both groups – those residing outside Council Bluffs and Council Bluff residents – had very similar responses to this question for both top ranking and bottom ranking.

Importance of adding outdoor recreation facilities

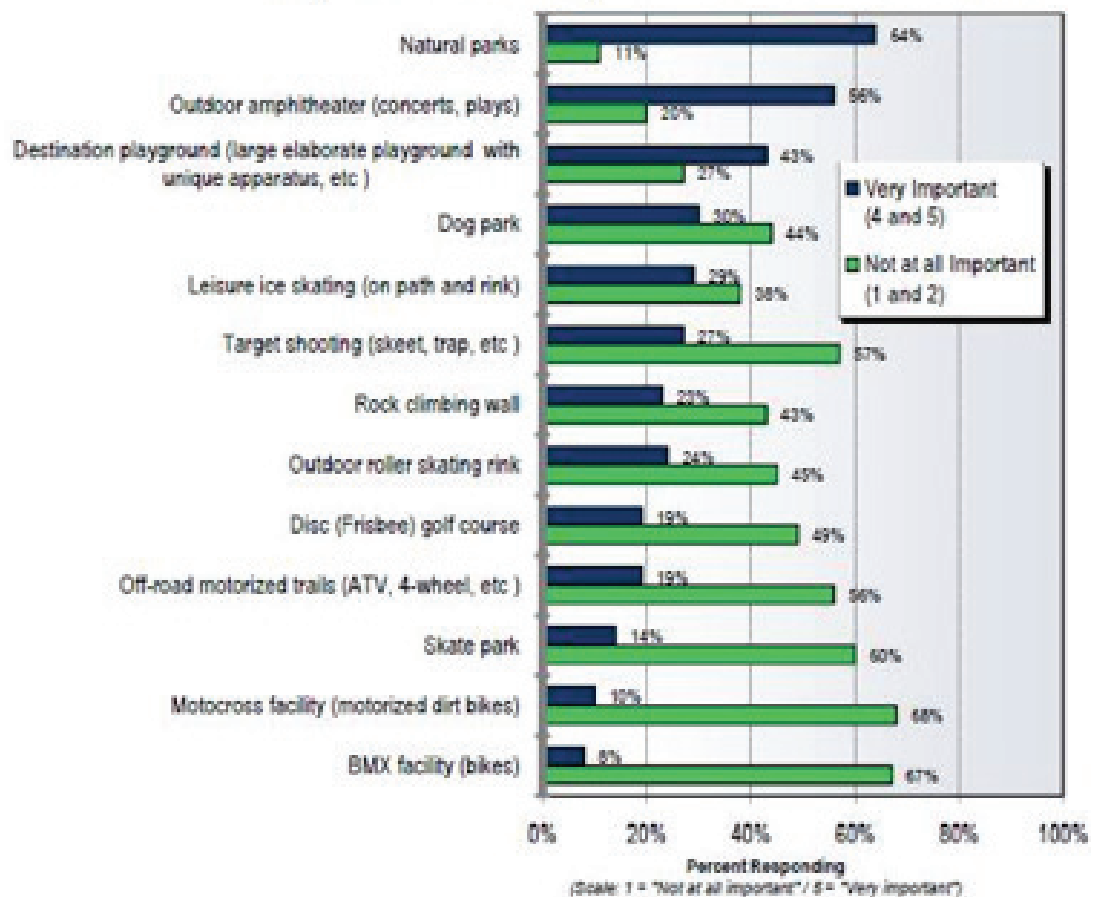


Figure 72: Youth-oriented facilities, such as skate parks, motocross, and BMX ranked lower because respondents were mostly in an older demographic

5.6.3 Demographics

A little more than half of the overall respondents (244 out of 436) reside in Council Bluffs. The remaining 208 respondents represented all of the other areas of the County with the second largest amount of respondents coming from Crescent.

The amount of time living in Pottawattamie County varied pretty equally amount the time spans though over half (62%) have resided in the County for over 20 years. The age of respondents also varied with 66% being between 25 and 55 years old. Twenty-three percent were between 55 and 74. Only 1% of respondents were between 18 and 24 years of age; only 9% were over 75 years old. Weighting the data to accurately reflect the age distribution of Pottawattamie County was based on current US Census data which showed a distribution as follows; 26.5 percent are 18 to 34 years old, 22.4 percent between 35 and 44 years, 19.3 percent between 45 and 54 years, 12.7 percent between 55 and 64 years, 10.4 percent are between 65 and 74 years and 8.82 percent are 75 and older.

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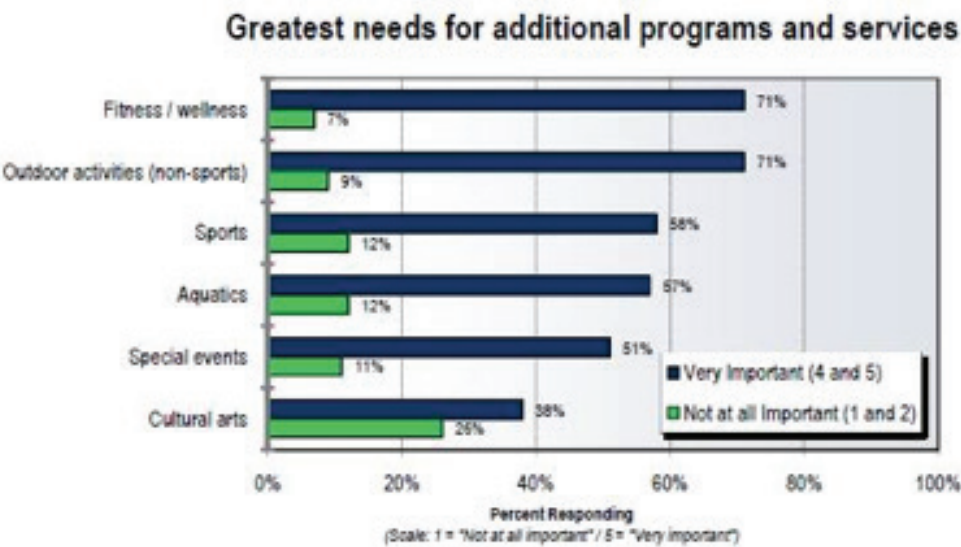
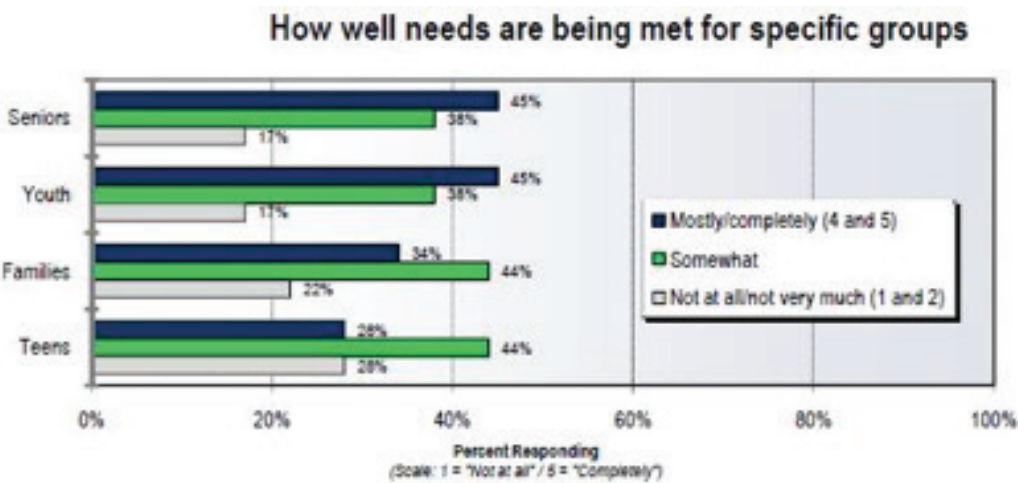
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Just over half (55%) of the respondents were female. The average household size was 2.9 persons. Over half of respondents did not have someone under the age of 18 living (56%) or someone over the age of 55 (64%) living in their household.

Eighty-four percent of respondents had internet access at home and 59% of respondents received most information about what is happening around Pottawattamie County via a newspaper.

5.7 INDOOR FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Utilizing information that was gathered from the statistically valid survey as well as from focus groups and community meetings that were held throughout the County, the following were some of the basic findings regarding Indoor Facilities, Aquatic Centers and Recreation Programs and Services.

5.7.1 Indoor Facilities and Aquatic Centers

- ☞ The lack of availability of indoor recreation opportunities is a major concern for residents of the County. This was a major finding from the survey and was backed up through community meetings and stakeholder sessions.
- ☞ County residents believe that the top priority should be to take care of existing facilities first before building any new indoor recreation amenities.
- ☞ There is a strong feeling that the existing indoor recreation facilities in the County are not able to adequately meet the needs of the residents. Additional space is needed.
- ☞ The survey identified key indoor components that residents are looking for in a new or expanded indoor recreation facility as a pool, walk/jog track, fitness/wellness areas and gymnasiums. The need for a fieldhouse with a synthetic turf surface was also noted as a high priority in community meetings and some stakeholder sessions.
- ☞ The existing Council Bluffs YMCA is not seen as a facility that can adequately serve the residents of the west end of the County. A larger, more aesthetically pleasing, and more comprehensive facility that is located outside of the downtown area is preferred. The lack of parking at the Y is also a major concern.
- ☞ There will need to be a stronger emphasis on establishing partnerships between current providers to develop any new or expanded indoor recreation facilities. This is particularly true for the school districts as they have existing buildings that can be utilized for recreation purposes.
- ☞ The demand for new or expanded cultural arts facilities was much lower



Figure 73: The Neola Community Center Pool is an example of an existing facility that would see more use if it was renovated to allow for winter use

than for sports and fitness facilities.

- ☞ There needs to be improved marketing and promotion of what already exists in the area.
- ☞ Expanded or new indoor recreation facilities should be developed to serve as emergency shelters as well.
- ☞ Community gathering spaces are important for all communities.
- ☞ The need for additional aquatic facilities (both indoor and outdoor) is stronger in the eastern outlying areas of the County.



Figure 74: Providing facilities that can accommodate cultural arts and special events was frequently mentioned as a need in Pottawattamie County

5.7.2 Recreation Programs and Services

- ☞ While there was a strong need expressed for new or improved parks and recreation facilities and especially indoor recreation amenities, the demand for expanded recreation programming was generally lower but still significant.
- ☞ There needs to be a greater emphasis placed on regional coordination and promotion of recreation programs and services. There is the perception that there are overlapping services by providers in the area.
- ☞ The survey indicated that people participate in recreation activities that are provided through the schools, churches and city/town recreation programs. The YMCA and private health clubs ranked relatively low as service providers.
- ☞ The greatest need for expanded programs and services are in fitness, outdoor activities, sports and aquatics. Other areas that were mentioned include water sports that can take place in lakes and rivers (canoeing, kayaking, etc.), program alternatives for youth beyond sports, outdoor education, and hunting and fishing.
- ☞ While the survey indicated very little support for a greater emphasis on non-traditional recreation activities (skateboarding, BMX, rock climbing, etc.), there was a greater emphasis placed on these types of activities in some stakeholder and community meetings.
- ☞ Pottawattamie County will need to plan for the growth in participation in lacrosse and rugby by youth.
- ☞ The rural areas of the county have more limited recreation opportunities than the urban areas.
- ☞ Increased emphasis needs to be placed on providing greater opportunities for self directed recreation activities.

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5.8 OPEN ONLINE VERSION OF PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The Recreation Needs Assessment Survey 2011 was also made available to interested parties via the project web site (open online non-statistical survey). The results of the survey show the overall result as well as both the random sample results and those obtained by the open (online) survey.

Comparing the two groups of respondents, the distribution of results was very similar. The importance of the YMCA was notably higher in the open (online) survey as well as the percentage of respondents that indicated that biking on trails (existing and future trails) was of highest importance to expand (though this was a top rated activity for both groups). Sixty-nine percent of open (online) survey respondents were from Council Bluffs.

5.9 YOUTH TEXT SURVEY AND FACEBOOK PAGE

A short twelve question survey (separate from the public opinion survey) was conducted by youth in Pottawattamie County regarding their recreation needs. The survey was available via text messaging (SMS), phone (IVR) and web. A Facebook page was published to help with survey outreach in addition to posting information on the project website. Over 1,200 mini decorative cards with information about the survey were handed out to youth and youth groups in the county. Local youth groups participated in handing out the cards, sending emails and spreading the word about the survey.

A total of 90 responses were received from youth in the county. The largest percentage of survey respondents resided in Neola (45%) and Minden (21%), followed by Council Bluffs (16%) and Crescent (8%). These results were not geographically representative of the county but still shed some light on the recreation needs of youth.

Respondents were almost evenly split between female (48%) and male (52%). They varied by age however, with the largest category being between the ages of 13 and 15 (68%), followed by ages 10 to 13.

The most selected favorite activity in summer was swimming (35%) followed by baseball/softball (22%), soccer (11%) and football (7%). Additionally, fishing (6%), hanging with friends (3%) and playing outside (3%) were popular.

Overall, when asked about their favorite winter activities, the participants most commonly listed volleyball (21%), followed by basketball (19%) and sledding (14%). Snowboarding (10%), wrestling (10%) and ice skating (10%) were also mentioned.

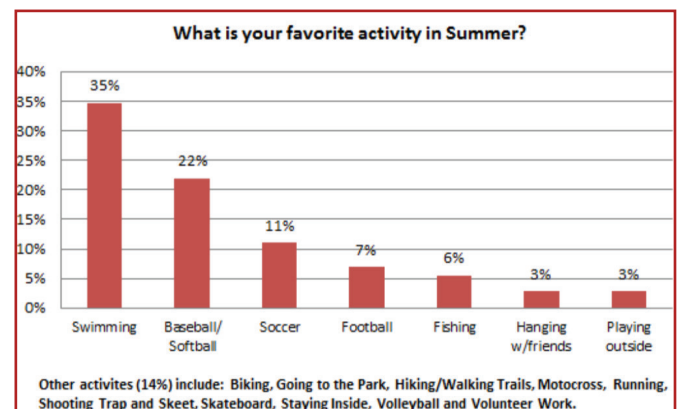


Figure 75: Youth responses to favorite summer activities

About one third (30%) of the respondents indicated that they participated in organized activities outside of school. Activities included volleyball, soccer, basketball, baseball, softball, wrestling, football and swim team. A variety of sponsoring organizations were represented, including Avoca swim team, CBYSA, AAU, Neola Community Center. A full list of activities and sponsoring organizations is provided in the Appendix.

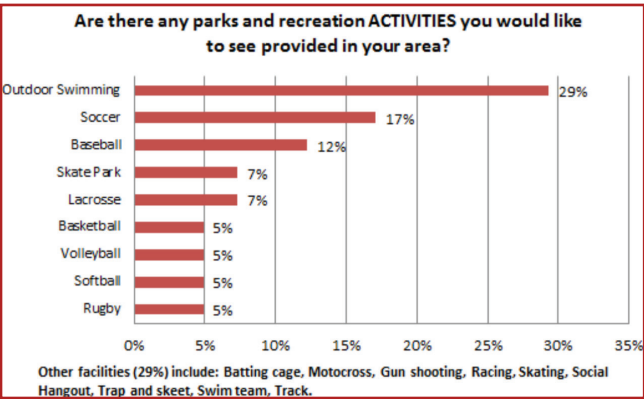


Figure 76: Activities that youth indicated they wanted to see in the area

Respondents were asked whether they felt there were adequate facilities located near their home. Overall, almost half said yes (48%) while 19% rated the facilities as OK and another 33% said the facilities were inadequate. Of the three top responding communities, Neola, Minden and Council Bluffs, Minden had the highest percentage of respondents who did not believe there were adequate facilities (42%). A complete list of comments in regard to adequate facilities is located in the Appendix.

Respondents were asked if there were any parks and recreation facilities they would like to see in their area. Overall, 3% said there were no new facilities they would like to see. Of those that want to see more, the ranking included baseball/softballfields (32%) followed by soccer fields (28%), swimming pool (12%) park (8%) and footballfields (7%).

When asked if there were additional activities they would like to see in their area, 16% said no. Of those that said yes, the top rank was for outdoor swimming (29%), followed by soccer (17%), baseball (12%), skate park (7%) and lacrosse (7%).

5.10 CAPTURING OUR VOICES - PROMISE PARTNERS YOUTH SURVEY

Capturing Our Voices was a county-wide youth assessment conducted in the spring of 2011 by Promise Partners: Pottawattamie County Alliance for Youth. The study had a broader purpose than parks, recreation and leisure facilities but the effort did collect data that can contribute to this needs assessment. The assessment included five focus group meetings with 55 young people and a survey of approximately 2,400 youth ages 11 through 24. Among the survey respondents, more than 90% were age 11 to 18 and two-thirds lived in Council Bluffs with the remaining one-third residing in other areas of Pottawattamie County.

When survey participants were asked how they spend their time in activities, a fair number were involved in outdoor activities or sports/athletics on a weekly basis.

However, the highest rankings went to social networking sites, cell phones/texting, watching

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television and streaming radio/television. Relatively few respondents spent much time playing video games, reading or participating in arts or music.

The survey asked respondents to grade facilities and services. Fifty percent or more gave a grade of A or B to:

- ☞ After-school programs or school clubs
- ☞ Youth facilities not based in schools
- ☞ Community sports programs
- ☞ Community art, music and dance programs
- ☞ Church/spiritual groups or classes
- ☞ Career development programs.

Respondents also ranked more recreation opportunities as one of the top six factors to them in creating an ideal community. "More youth activities, entertainment, recreational facilities, food places, shopping, swimming pools, movie theaters, improvements to the YMCA" was cited as an answer to the negative of "nothing to do."

The survey revealed that besides home or a friend's home, respondents tended to spend time at malls and that a small percentage (under 10%) of the respondents movie theaters during cold months and these plus athletic centers and parks during the warm months.

Most respondents (84%) participated in outdoor activities at least one hour a week with 24% spending 4 to 6 hours a week and 23% spending 10 or more hours a week on outdoor activities. Popular activities included jogging/running, weight lifting, gymnasium activities, and open grass play. Less popular activities included tennis, aerobics and activities at skate parks and water parks.

GAP ANALYSIS & NEEDS ASSESSMENT

6

- 6.1 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES
- 6.2 OUTDOOR RECREATION SERVICE AREA / DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS & GAP ANALYSIS
- 6.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ANALYSIS
 - 6.3.1 *Trends in Outdoor Recreation*
 - 6.3.2 *Trails*
 - 6.3.3 *Specialized and Non-Traditional Recreation Facilities*
- 6.4 INDOOR RECREATION & PROGRAMMING SERVICE AREA / DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS / GAP ANALYSIS
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 - 6.4.2 *Recreation Programs and Services*
- 6.5 INDOOR RECREATION / PROGRAMMING NEEDS ANALYSIS
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Evaluating the quantity and condition of the facilities and services that are available in Pottawattamie County for parks, recreation, and leisure activities is only one aspect of the Needs Assessment study. It is equally important to determine how well the county's residents are being served by the existing system and to identify if populations within the county are underserved. For this portion of the Needs Assessment Study, the Assessment Team synthesized the findings of the Existing Conditions Analysis with the input collected from the community during the Public Engagement phase of the project.

6.1 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

When evaluating parks and recreation amenities, a number of basic principles and observations apply.

- ❧ **Recreational Equity.** One of the core principles for public facilities and services such as schools, public safety, and recreation amenities is to attempt to provide equitable (not necessarily equal) access to the facility or service. When it comes to recreational resources this may mean that residents in each community expect to have easy access to basic recreation facilities such as a park. Or, that there is an equitable distribution of regional facilities such sports complexes, recreation centers, outdoor pools, etc.
- ❧ **Demographics.** The distribution of the population across a geographic area and the growth trends within a community also influence the parks, recreation, and leisure facility needs of the residents. For instance, people who live in larger cities typically have higher expectations for accessible recreation amenities than those in rural areas. And, if a community's population is rapidly increasing, the need for park and recreation amenities is typically increasing proportionally.
- ❧ **The Popularity of Trails.** If one were to review a random sample of public opinion surveys that were completed for park and recreation plans in the Midwest and West, trails will be the most popular recreation amenity – both in level of use and desirability. In the end, this is not a fluke, but a reflection of the fact that trails can be used by all ages and abilities without paying a fee. In addition trails can be used for recreation as well as a means to get to work or reach a desired destination. This means that when evaluating public input for a community-wide park and recreation planning project, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th priorities must be carefully considered when evaluating needs.
- ❧ **Cooperation.** One of the most prominent themes heard throughout the public engagement process is that all of the governmental entities in



Figure 77: Iowa is widely acknowledged as an innovator in recreational trail development and promotion

Pottawattamie County need to cooperate to provide recreation services and facilities and avoid duplication. Each of the needs identified in this chapter are offered with the understanding that inter-governmental cooperation is critical to the long term viability of existing and new facilities. And that all new facilities, especially major ones, should be cooperative ventures whenever possible.

- ☁ Safety and Accessibility. All parks should be safe and accessible to all members (children, elderly, disables, etc.) of the community.

6.2 OUTDOOR RECREATION SERVICE AREA / DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS & GAP ANALYSIS

A service area analysis reveals how parks and recreation facilities serve individual neighborhoods and communities and helps identify locations where service is lacking. A service area is a zone surrounding the amenity from which residents will travel (walk or drive) to use the facility. It is defined by a constant distance from that amenity - typically a radius. This Needs Assessment study uses service areas that are commonly used for park and recreation master plans in the western half of the country. It should be noted that service area calculations often vary from community to community, depending on the particular circumstances (size of the community, geography, quality of facilities, etc.).

- ☁ Pocket and Neighborhood Parks: 1/3-mile radius service area
- ☁ Community Parks, Sports Complexes, and School Sites: 3-mile radius service area
- ☁ Naturalized Community and Regional Parks / Specialized Facilities: The service area varies with the uniqueness of the facilities offered. For instance, the Hitchcock Nature Area and Lake Manawa will draw from the entire county and beyond because of the uniqueness of the amenities they offer. For this reason, the following service area analysis will not address naturalized parks.
- ☁ Indoor Recreation, Aquatics, and Community Centers: Service areas can vary from 5 to 15 miles depending on the location and quality of a facility. For instance an individual may only be willing to drive 5 to 10 miles in heavy city traffic to reach a recreation center, while an individual living in the rural parts of the county with good highway access will be quite willing to drive 15 miles to reach a similar facility. The indoor recreation, aquatics, and community center assessment is covered in Section 6.4 below.



Figure 78: Preserving high valuable natural areas has the added benefit of providing opportunities for environmental education programs

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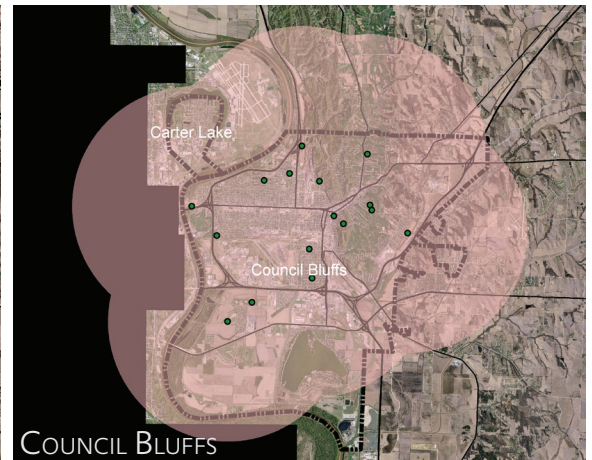
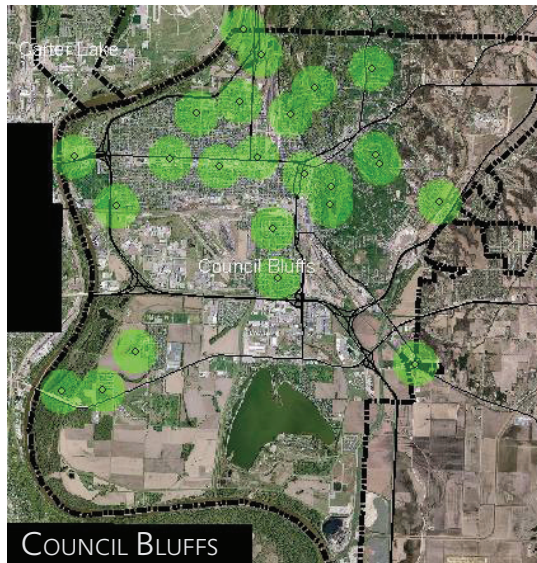
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Service areas for outdoor recreation facilities at schools are typically not calculated at the same level as public parks. This is due to the fact that sports facilities at high schools and colleges are rarely available for public use; playgrounds and turf areas at elementary and middle schools cannot be used during the school day (for security reasons); and schools usually lack support facilities such as picnic shelters, grills, volleyball, horseshoes, etc. that many parks include. Therefore schools should only be considered in a service area analysis if they are open to the public and include typical park amenities, which is done in some communities.

Gap Analysis - Urbanized Area: Council Bluffs

Pocket and Neighborhood Parks. When a $1/3$ mile radius (+/- five city blocks) is applied to pocket and neighborhood parks in Council Bluffs (see map on the following page, it becomes clear that there are a number of neighborhoods that are not within walking distance of a park. This fact was noted in the 2002 Park Master Plan, which called for additional neighborhood parks throughout the city. While Council Bluffs is generally well served for parks, this is one area where there is room for improvement.

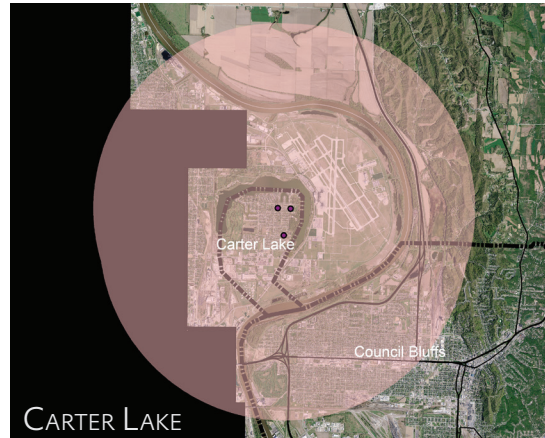
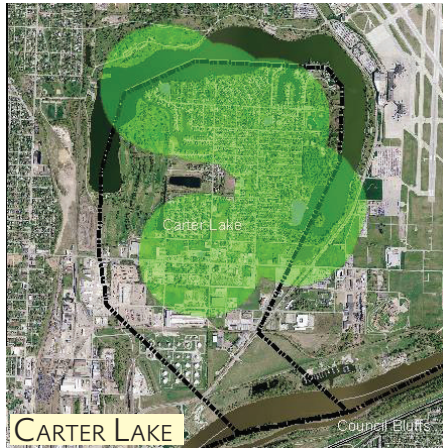


Community Parks and Sports Complexes. Council Bluffs is well situated when it comes to the distribution of sports fields, community parks, and sports complexes. The map above right shows each sports facility or field with a 3-mile service radius.

In 2011, historical levels of water were released from the upstream dams into the Missouri River. As a result, extensive flood damage was experienced in Council Bluffs. Portions of Big Lake Park and the Dodge Riverside Golf Club were inundated for over three months. Additionally, the entire stretch of riparian woodlands boarding the Missouri River as it passes through Council Bluffs was covered with flood water. The River's Edge Park construction site and the City's trail system also sustained flood related damage. Action to address these park related issues is critical and may be compromised by the need to also direct significant City financial resources into flood related recovery activities associated with streets, sewers and other major public work elements.

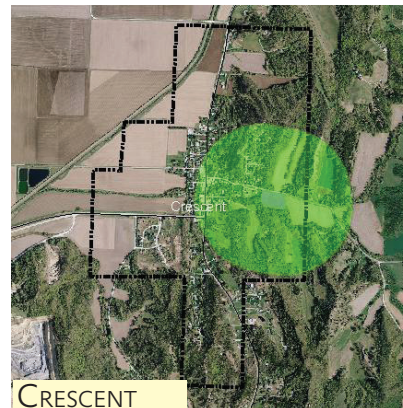
Gap Analysis - Urbanized Area: Carter Lake

When it comes to the distribution of all park types, the residents of Carter Lake are well served as shown by the neighborhood park service area map (left) and community parks and sports complexes (right).



Gap Analysis: - Northwest Pottawattamie County: Crescent and the Loess Hills

The City of Crescent has one park that serves as both a neighborhood and community park. With a 1/3 mile service area, the majority of the developed area of town is covered. However, the City may consider constructing an additional pocket park to meet the needs residents in the south area of town.



Gap Analysis - Western I-80 Corridor: McClelland, Underwood, and Neola

McClelland and Underwood. Both McClelland (below left) and Underwood (below center) are well served by their parks. Underwood is very well served for sports facilities as Trailhead Park includes a baseball field as does Underwood Middle School (two fields).

Neola. Neola's Centennial Park and Ballfield offers residents in the southwestern quadrant of the city a nearby park. An additional pocket park(s) should be considered to serve the remaining residents.

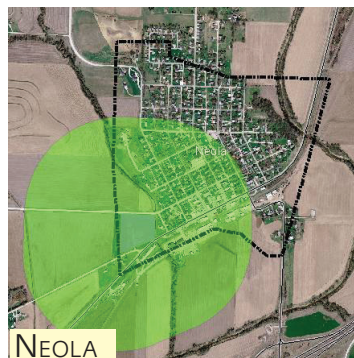
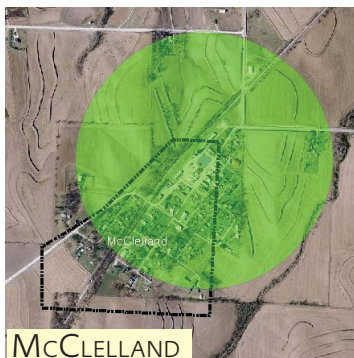


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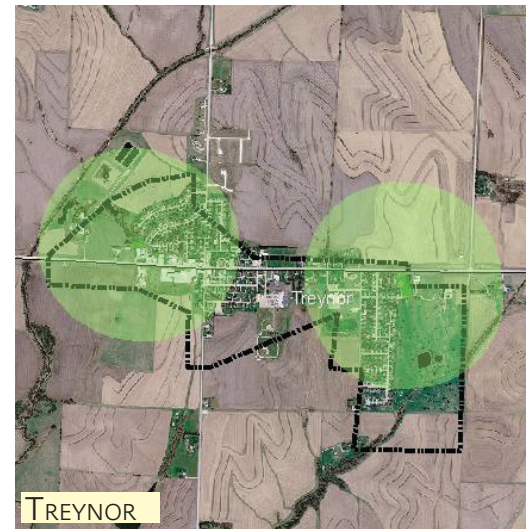
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*Gap Analysis - South Central Pottawattamie
County: Treynor*

Treynor. From the standpoint of pocket and neighborhood parks, Treynor appears to be reasonably well served. While Treynor East Park is an excellent facility, Treynor West Park is a park in name only. Additional, good-quality walk-to parks are needed in the west and central areas of town.

Community Parks and Sports Complexes.

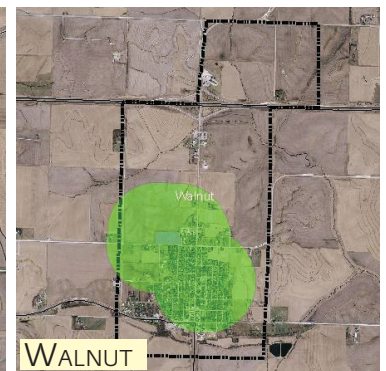
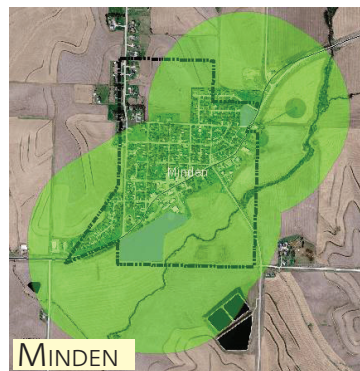
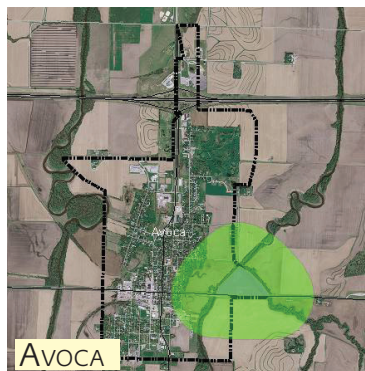
Compared to other communities its size in Pottawattamie County (Underwood, Neola, and Carson), Treynor only has one city-owned and operated baseball/softball field and no soccer or multiuse turf area. Neola has two ballfields (one with a large outfield), Underwood has access to the two fields at the Middle School, and Carson has one ball field and a soccer field.



Gap Analysis - Eastern I-80 Corridor: Minden, Avoca, and Walnut

Minden and Walnut. Both Minden and Walnut's residents are within walking distance of their existing parks (lower left and lower right). However, if Walnut adds residential units in undeveloped north half of the city, additional parks may be needed.

Avoca. Using a 1/3 mile service radius for Edgington Park (below center), it is clear that the vast majority of Avoca's residents do not live within walking distance to a park. Even the school district's facilities are on the south end of the city. Therefore additional pocket and neighborhood parks should be considered for the city.



Gap Analysis: - Southeast Pottawattamie County: Hancock, Oakland, Carson, and Macedonia

Both **Hancock** (upper left) and Macedonia (lower right) are well served for neighborhood parks. In addition, each community has sports fields available in their parks.

In **Oakland** (upper right), Chautauqua Park serves as the community park for the entire city and a walk-to park for the majority of the residents living in the south end of town. Schueman Park could address the needs of the residents in the southeast quadrant of the city, but only if it is re-developed. Because Lions Park is on the north side of Highway 59 and has limited facilities, a north-side neighborhood park should be considered.

Carson (lower left, pervious page). When Millstone Park is fully developed, it will meet the park and recreation needs of the west half of the city. An additional pocket or neighborhood park would benefit the residents living in the east half of town.

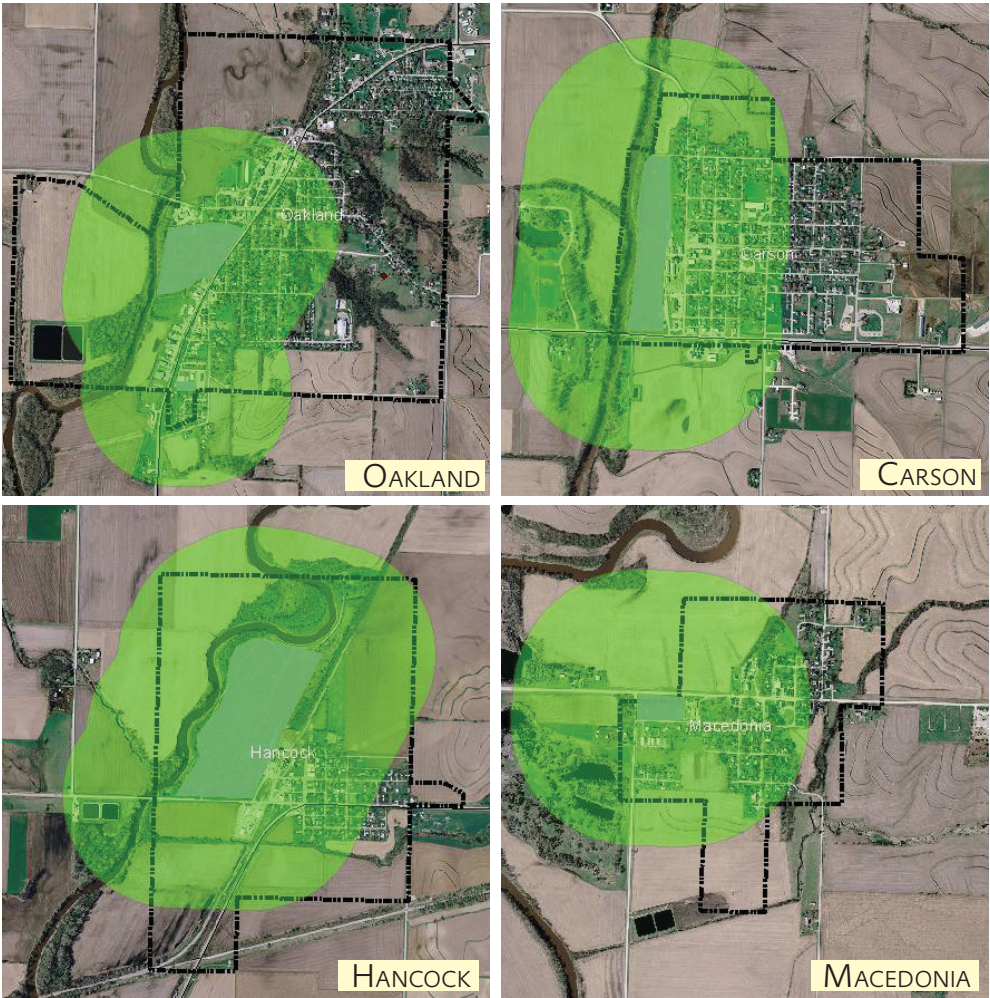


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6.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ANALYSIS

The following is a brief overview of the outdoor recreation needs identified during the Needs Assessment process. The needs identified below are a synthesis of the input from the stakeholders and parks/facility management staffs, the public, and the observations of the Assessment Team.

6.3.1 Trends in Outdoor Recreation

One of the goals of the Needs Assessment Study was to identify if there was need for non-traditional recreation in Pottawattamie County. There are a number of non-traditional recreation trends that have been growing in recent years (in no particular order).

- ☁ Nature-based recreation facilities and programs that focus on camping, fishing, nature education, etc.
- ☁ Dog parks
- ☁ Destination playgrounds, which are very large play equipment facilities with play events for all ages, climbing walls, splash grounds, and picnic/party facilities (see photo right)
- ☁ Climbing walls
- ☁ Water play / splash grounds
- ☁ Bike parks
- ☁ Outdoor ice rinks / ice trails
- ☁ Target shooting/skeet ranges
- ☁ Off-road vehicle facilities
- ☁ Skate parks. While skate parks are not a new trend, are very popular facilities when a good quality facility is constructed and heavily used by the youth demographic, which rarely responds to public opinion surveys or attend public meetings.



Figure 79: Dog parks are used throughout the year

Responses from the public engagement process have been limited in this area, partly because people typically do not request recreation amenities they have never seen or used. None-the-less, most frequently requested non-traditional recreation facilities include (% = ranked in the top three by respondents to the public opinion survey):

6.3.2 Trails

The importance of providing a trail system that connects the cities and key destinations in Pottawattamie County was a consistent theme throughout the Needs Assessment process.

Trails were frequently mentioned during the focus groups and stakeholder interviews. Participants felt that:

- ☞ Council Bluffs should take full advantage of its trail system by completing critical links.
- ☞ There was strong support for a county-wide trail system. For example, the residents from Neola and Underwood both mentioned the importance of constructing a trail along Railroad Highway to connect the communities.
- ☞ Both hard and soft surface trails were desirable.

The Public Opinion Survey:

- ☞ Trails were used for jogging and walking at a rate that was that was four times higher than the next highest non-trail activity (26 times per year average / 6.2 times per year for fishing).
- ☞ Bike riding on trails and jogging/ walking on trails was given a 4 or 5 (with 5 being very important) by over 70% of the respondents.
- ☞ Adding paved trails was the highest priority for respondents (17%) when compared to a list of other recreation amenities.



Figure 8o: One of the reasons recreational trails are so popular is that they serve multiple users and ages

Based on these responses it is safe to say that developing an integrated trail system in Pottawattamie County should be considered on of the highest priorities for the residents and would see heavy use if constructed.

In order to develop a county-wide trail system, the first order of business would be to complete a county-wide trail master plan that identified missing links, key destinations, potential trail corridors, and established construction and maintenance standards.

6.3.3 Urbanized Area: Council Bluffs

The outdoor recreation needs for the Council Bluffs area include:

- ☞ Restore Fairmount Park. Fairmount Park is historically significant and features the most spectacular setting of all the parks in the city. The park has fallen into serious disrepair and should be restored to a level that would encourage residents to take advantage of its unique setting.
- ☞ Expand and enhance the trail system
- ☞ Increase opportunities for nature-based recreation (ranked high in the public opinion survey)
- ☞ Follow through with the plans to improve the system of parks and trails fronting on the Missouri River

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- ☁ Add neighborhood parks in areas that are currently underserved
- ☁ Continue to upgrade existing parks on an on-going basis including equipment replacement renovation, tree plantings, ADA accessibility, and safety. Potential projects include improving drainage at Twin City Park, improve tennis courts at Sunset and Playland Parks, renovate the track at Kirn Park, etc.
- ☁ Look for opportunities for joint use of facilities with other recreation providers in the city.

6.3.4 *Urbanized Area: Carter Lake*

The outdoor recreation needs for the Carter Lake area include:

- ☁ Complete the trail system
- ☁ Continue to upgrade and maintain existing parks
- ☁ Install lighting for Field #3 at Hamilton Sports Complex
- ☁ Add water play amenities
- ☁ Improve ADA accessibility.

Naturalized Parks - Narrow River Park: Improve fishing access and shoreline and add flush toilets

Schools - The Council Bluffs Community School District would like to construct a new stadium for football and soccer.



Figure 81: Improving fishing access in the county was requested by both the public and recreation providers

6.3.5 *Northwest Pottawattamie County: Crescent and the Loess Hills*

The outdoor recreation needs for Crescent and the Loess Hills include:

Crescent

- ☁ Refurbish the tennis/basketball court
- ☁ Install lighting for the baseball field, tennis, and volleyball
- ☁ Construct additional parking for Crescent City Park
- ☁ Improve ADA accessibility
- ☁ Address underserved areas of town.

Hitchcock Nature Center

- ☁ Continue with on-going maintenance and upgrades and identify ways to increase capacity

- ☞ Improve fishing opportunities
- ☞ Improve and expand the trail system.

6.3.6 Western I-80 Corridor: McClelland, Underwood, and Neola

The outdoor recreation needs for McClelland, Underwood, and Neola are as follows:

McClelland

- ☞ Upgrade play equipment and add appropriate safety surfacing
- ☞ Improve ADA accessibility.

Underwood

- ☞ Add a multi-use turf field at the middle school
- ☞ Build a trail between Underwood and Neola and ""Safe Routes to School"" trails.

Neola

- ☞ Purchase additional land adjacent to Centennial Park / Neola Ballfields for expansion and construct a dedicated soccer field
- ☞ Improve ADA accessibility
- ☞ Continue to renovate and enhance existing facilities.



Figure 82: The wide shoulders of the Railroad Highway could be developed as a regional trail between Underwood and Neola

Naturalized Parks: Arrowhead Park: Improve trail system and showers.

Schools: Construct a perimeter loop walking trail at the Tri-Center Schools campus.

6.3.7 South Central Pottawattamie County: Treynor

The outdoor recreation needs identified for Treynor include:

- ☞ Refurbish or replace Treynor West Park with a new neighborhood park facility
- ☞ Improve ADA accessibility in Treynor East Park
- ☞ Vision Treynor has identified a need for the large community park in Treynor which would include an outdoor pool/splash play facility, baseball/softballfields, soccer fields, picnic facilities and playgrounds, etc. It is not clear at this time if a facility on this scale is needed in Treynor or if the city could sustain it. Additional independent study will be needed to determine the viability of such a facility or if a joint venture with a nearby community is possible.

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Schools: Treynor Community School District is in need of refurbishing the all weather track.

6.3.8 Eastern I-80 Corridor: Minden, Avoca, and Walnut

The outdoor recreation needs for the Eastern I-80 corridor (Minden, Avoca, and Walnut) include:

Minden

- ☞ Continue to upgrade and enhance existing parks including ADA accessibility.

Avoca

- ☞ Address areas in the city that are underserved for neighborhood parks
- ☞ Remove and replace old play equipment in Edgington Park and provide adequate safety surfacing
- ☞ Improve ADA accessibility throughout the park
- ☞ Construct an off-road recreational trail between Avoca and Walnut
- ☞ Improve maintenance capabilities and staffing.

Walnut

- ☞ Continue to upgrade and enhance existing parks including ADA accessibility.

6.3.9 Southeast Pottawattamie County: Hancock, Oakland, Carson, and Macedonia

The outdoor recreation needs for the Eastern I-80 corridor (Minden, Avoca, and Walnut) include:

Hancock

- ☞ Remove and replace old play equipment in Hancock City Park, replace with the new equipment purchased by the City during the 2010 winter, and provide adequate safety surfacing. (This work may already be complete as it was scheduled for summer of 2011)
- ☞ Renovate the small restroom building
- ☞ Improve ADA accessibility throughout the park.



Figure 83: Like many of the small towns in the county, Hancock's park facilities would benefit from safety and ADA upgrades

Oakland

- ☞ Add amenities to Lions Park
- ☞ Create a safe pedestrian crossing at Highway 59 to access Lions Park and the school district stadium
- ☞ Refurbish Schueman Park.

Carson

- ☞ Implement the master plan for Millstone Park
- ☞ Upgrade safety surfacing for play equipment in Millstone Park
- ☞ Improve ADA accessibility throughout Millstone Park
- ☞ Add a neighborhood park that serves the east side of town.

Macedonia

- ☞ Remove and replace old play equipment in Macedonia City Park and provide adequate safety surfacing
- ☞ Add a larger picnic shelter in the park
- ☞ Demolish existing high school building
- ☞ Take advantage of trail opportunities in the area.

Naturalized Parks

- ☞ Botna Bend Park: Improve the office building, paving for parking area, sport courts, and boat ramp/dock improvements.
- ☞ Olde Town Park: Add restroom facilities and upgrade/expand facilities (camping, parking, picnic facilities, etc.).

6.3.10 Specialized and Non-Traditional Recreation Facilities

Pottawattamie County is home to a number of golf courses ranging from full 18-hole facilities to 9-hole courses. It was noted during the stakeholder interviews, that each time a new course has opened in the county, rounds at nearby courses have declined. This is consistent with recent statistics on golf rounds nation-wide¹. There does not appear to be a need of additional golf courses in the county. However, there is a need for more youth-base programs that encourage play.

¹ Data compiled by the National Golf Founation, of Jupiter, FL - based golfing association which reports on the economy of golf, indicates the total amount of rounds played on courses in the U.S. fell by 6 % from 2008 to 2009.

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6.4 INDOOR RECREATION & PROGRAMMING SERVICE AREA / DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS / GAP ANALYSIS

6.4.1 Indoor Recreation and Aquatic Facilities

The immediate Council Bluffs area is not being adequately served with indoor sports, recreation, fitness, and aquatics facilities.

The Council Bluffs YMCA is simply not an adequate facility for the market. The Lied Center is only available to the general public on a limited basis, and The Center serves only the senior community. A large, comprehensive community based recreation center is needed to serve the Council Bluffs market.



Figure 84: Indoor leisure pools are the primary revenue generator for large public recreation centers

While many of the more rural communities have smaller community centers there is only one true comprehensive center (in Neola) in the rural areas of the county. The

three centers that are located in neighboring counties do serve portions of the southern and northeast areas of the county. However, this leaves an area in the central region of the county that is not well served. Upgrades are needed to the existing rural centers and a new facility is needed to serve the central portion of the county.

The presence of indoor aquatics facilities in the Council Bluffs area is adequate but not strong. An additional indoor pool with a strong leisure orientation should be developed as part of a larger recreation center.

There are essentially no indoor pools in the rural areas of the county. Again, residents in the northeast and southern portions of the county can utilize indoor pools that are part of the non-profit recreation centers that are located in adjacent counties. The Neola Pool could be converted to a full indoor pool but another indoor pool in the central area of the county is needed.

There are adequate outdoor pools in the Council Bluffs area but the market could support additional facilities. In the rural areas the need is far more acute. With only three pools (two located in the northern area and a small inadequate pool in the central region), there are needs for additional outdoor pools in the central and southern areas of the county.

6.4.2 Recreation Programs and Services

Recreation programming and services are limited in part by the lack of facilities, especially indoor spaces. Increasing the number of recreation facilities will be critical to expanding recreation programming.

With a strong interest in outdoor recreation pursuits, expanding the programming opportunities in this area will be important. There currently are limited outdoor programming opportunities beyond sports.

Considering the current national focus on fitness and wellness, there needs to be a stronger emphasis on providing programming in this area.

Most of the rural communities do not have full-time recreational professionals to develop and administer programs. This has resulted in far fewer programs being available for these people.

While there is a significant focus on youth sports programming, there is a definite shortage of adult sports. Youth programming also needs increasing emphasis in non-sports activities.

Due to the lack of both indoor and outdoor pools in the county there is a lower level of aquatic programming that is available.

Although not identified as a high priority by county residents, the development of non-traditional sports (BMX, skateboarding, rock climbing, etc.) should still be pursued. These are emerging sports that focus on teens and young adults and as result do not show up as high priorities on surveys and other public input tools.

With an emerging focus on providing opportunities for people to take part in their own self directed recreational activities, there will need to be a commitment to providing facilities that promote such use.

Additional programming is also needed in the areas of cultural arts and special needs populations.

6.5 INDOOR RECREATION & PROGRAMMING NEEDS ANALYSIS

6.5.1 Indoor Recreation and Aquatic Facilities

Based on the inventory analysis and public input information regarding indoor recreation and aquatic facilities the following summarizes the needs for these amenities.

- Improving the indoor recreation opportunities for county residents will need to be a high priority. This is true for the Council Bluffs area as well as the more rural areas of the county.
- The first priority will need to be improving and upgrading existing facilities. The Council Bluffs YMCA needs to be dramatically upgraded and expanded or a new facility developed.



Figure 85: Bike parks / BMX are an emerging trend in recreation and can often be combined into one facility

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☞ Amenities that will need to be considered for a new or upgraded indoor recreation facility include:

- ✂ Pool
- ✂ Track
- ✂ Fitness
- ✂ Gymnasium

☞ The possible development of a fieldhouse with hard court and turf space should be investigated.

☞ With only 5 indoor pools in the county and four of them located in Council Bluffs (Neola's pool is not being considered as indoor because the space is not heated), there are no such pools in the rural areas of the county. This requires residents to utilize indoor pools that are located in facilities in adjoining counties.

☞ There are 4 outdoor pools in the county and only 2 are located in the eastern portion of the county (in Oakland and Avoca). Of these two only one is a viable long term facility. Technically, the Neola pool is an indoor facility yet the area is not heated. Therefore, this particular indoor pool has the same limited use as an outdoor pool.



Figure 86: Senior participation in fitness programs will increase as the population ages

6.5.2 Recreation Programs and Services

After reviewing the inventory of existing recreation programs and services and the public input information regarding program needs, the following summarizes the findings.

☞ Adding additional recreation programs and services is a medium priority.

☞ County residents identified the need for additional recreation programs in the following areas:

- ✂ Fitness
- ✂ Outdoor activities
- ✂ Sports
- ✂ Aquatics

☞ Other program area deficiencies include:

- ✂ Cultural arts
- ✂ Special needs
- ✂ Non-traditional sports
- ✂ Self directed activities

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Because of its philanthropic mission in Pottawattamie County, the Iowa West Foundation is charged with evaluating grant applications from communities throughout the county for all types of park, recreation, and leisure facilities. One of the primary goals of this Needs Assessment Study is to provide the IWF Board of Directors and staff with guidance and tools to better evaluate grant applications and make informed decisions.

The recommendations included in this chapter are intended to outline a process for evaluation and decision-making. The goal is to define a cohesive strategy for investing in parks, recreation, and leisure facilities in Pottawattamie County. This section of the County-wide Needs Assessment Study will not make recommendations to the IWF to provide financial assistance for specific facilities. That process is better left to the Foundation's grant evaluation process. Rather, this section of the report will focus (1) on suggesting policies that could help guide the decision making process and improve the process for public agencies and private donors and (2) on recommendations for addressing the broad recreation needs of Pottawattamie County. It should be noted that there is no guarantee or implied commitment that an application for a project addressing needs identified in this study will be funded. Commitment to fund a proposal can only be obtained through adherence to the IWF grant review process and not solely to recommendations contained in this document.

And finally, because the IWF's primary mission is to improve the quality of life and standard of living for all residents in southwest Iowa, these recommendations are focused on improving park, recreation, and leisure facilities that are accessible to the general public. While providing amenities that meet the needs of specific segments of the community such as students attending area schools or colleges is certainly important, recommendations for these types of facilities have generally been limited to areas where there is also an opportunity for use by the community as whole.



Figure 87: Because of liability concerns and the potential for over-use, high school and college facilities are typically not open to the public

7.1 GUIDING POLICIES

The following are recommended policies for parks, recreation, and leisure facilities that the IWF should consider.

Potential grant applicants can find a wealth of information regarding the IWF mission, types of grants distributed, policies, and the granting process on the Iowa West Foundation’s website (www.iowawestfoundation.org). However, because the Foundation’s granting spectrum is much broader than just park, recreation, and leisure facilities, many of the Foundation’s polices do not apply to these types of community enhancements. Therefore, this subsection of the report focuses on recommendations for additional policies that will help clarify the grant-making process for public recreation amenities.

There are a number of basic principles that could enhance and clarify the Foundation’s grant-making process for park, recreation, and leisure facilities. The goal for suggesting the following polices is to support IWF’s mission of improving Pottawattamie County residents’ quality of life and standard of living and to help bring consistency to decision-making, particularly in regard to recurring issues. While polices are often adopted in response to controversial decisions, they can also be used to forestall potential controversies by clarifying the Foundation’s position on critical issues. If adopted by the Board, these policies could be added to those currently listed on the Foundation’s website. Once adopted, policies should be updated and revised as new circumstances are encountered or as new goals or objectives are added.

It may be helpful to both the IWF and potential applicants to disseminate the findings of this report (including adopted policies) to park, recreation, and leisure providers throughout the county and to applicants applying for grants in this area, perhaps in the form of a summary document or website.

The following are recommended policies for parks, recreation, and leisure facilities that the IWF should consider.

7.1.1 Economic Sustainability

Policy 7.1.1.A: A fee-based park, recreation, and leisure facility application will include documentation demonstrating that it has been planned to attract users at levels that will cover or offset the cost of on-going operations and maintenance.

Example: A new outdoor aquatics facility has been planned to draw users from a service area within 20 minutes driving distance in order to reach a population base that is large enough to generate revenues that will be adequate to cover staffing and maintenance costs.

Policy 7.1.1.B: The managing entity for a major park, recreation, and leisure facility (+/- \$2.0 million dollars and above) will submit a maintenance and long-term operations plan demonstrating that facility upkeep and staffing can be paid for by user fees or that the managing entity has allocated resources to subsidize these costs on an on-going basis.

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Policy 7.1.1.C: The Foundation should support quality park, recreation, and leisure facilities in communities in order to entice existing residents and businesses to remain and to stimulate economic development by attracting new residents and businesses to Pottawattamie County.

Policy 7.1.1.D: Due to economies of scale and limited funding sources, major facilities with high construction and operating costs will be regional (serving several communities or a population base of approximately 3,000 residents) in order to be sustainable.

7.1.2 Environmental Sustainability

Policy 7.1.2.A: The IWF encourages projects that improve the standard of living and economic competitiveness while preserving sensitive habitats and valuable natural resources.

Policy 7.1.2.B: The Foundation encourages projects that adhere to sustainable principles (in design, construction, and operations) as defined by the US Green Building Council, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other similar agencies. This could include for example, following best management practices for storm water systems, use of locally produced renewable materials in construction, incorporating renewable energy sources and systems, using high efficiency HVAC systems, recycling, and zero waste practices, etc.

7.1.3 Public Access

Policy 7.1.3.A: The Foundation has a special interest in funding park, recreation, and leisure facilities that are open to the general public, or at minimum, open to the public during non-working hours (after 3:00 PM and on weekends).

Policy 7.1.3.B: The Foundation will request written commitments / agreements from grant recipients to ensure public access will be provided to funded facilities, and that the Foundation may recoup its investment (such as through first right of refusal, reimbursement of funds, or other means) if public access is curtailed.



Figure 88: Splash grounds are an example of a recreation amenity that could encourage residents to remain in a small town



Figure 89: Many park and recreation providers include provisions for recycling

7.1.4 Partnering

Policy 7.1.4.A: Cooperation between agencies, cities, and towns (especially for large projects) is strongly encouraged in order to foster park, recreation, and leisure facilities that provide the greatest benefit for the community at the lowest cost; and to share the burden of planning, construction, and operations. Special consideration will be given to well-planned cooperative ventures.

Note: The need for public agencies to work together to provide parks, recreation, and leisure facilities / programs was frequently mentioned during the public meetings held for this study.

7.1.5 Recreation Equity for Park, Recreation, and Leisure Facilities

Policy 7.1.5.A: It is the Foundation’s goal to foster an equitable distribution of park, recreation, and leisure facilities / programs throughout Pottawattamie County.

Note: Equitable distribution does not mean each neighborhood and small town has its own community center, recreation center, skate park, and outdoor pool as this is not financially sustainable over the long-term. Rather, the goal is for each neighborhood and town to have a basic set of park and recreation amenities, and have at least one major recreation resource within a 10 to 20 minute drive of most residents. To achieve this balance, the neighborhoods/towns in the county will need to jointly plan the distribution of major facilities.

Example: A park may be needed in an older, established neighborhood that has little or no vacant land. In these instances, equity might be achieved in other ways, such as by enhancing a school ground to serve as a neighborhood park, or by providing other kinds of recreation amenities, such as an urban plaza with shaded sitting areas and a small water feature, or by providing a small playground on a vacant residential lot.

Policy 7.1.5.B. The Foundation supports providing basic park amenities within walking distance of the majority (at least 80%) of residents in a city or town. Basic park amenities typically include a small area of grass for turf-based recreation, a picnic shelter, and a small playground.

Note: National park planning standards recommend that parks be placed so that most homes are within a walking distance of ¼ to 1/3 of a mile (or four to five city blocks) to a neighborhood park.

CURRENT IWF POLICY: "TO HEIGHTEN THE IMPACT OF ITS GRANT MAKING, THE FOUNDATION IS ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN LEVERAGING ITS GRANTS BY PARTNERING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATION, GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES, AND FUNDERS"



Figure 90: A skate park is an example of a facility that should serve multiple neighborhoods or several small communities

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7.1.6 Universal Access and Safety

Policy 7.1.6.A. Public recreation facilities that are constructed with Foundation funding are strongly encouraged to meet the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Policy 7.1.6.B. New and existing park and recreation facilities should provide a play event, recreation amenity, or gathering space for each age group -- including children, adolescents, teenagers, adults, and seniors.

Policy 7.1.6.C. The Foundation is interested in partnering with county recreation providers to bring existing park and recreation facilities in compliance with current safety standards and to encourage design of new facilities to meet or exceed those standards.



Figure 91: Many communities are working toward developing universally accessible play opportunities in their parks

7.1.7 Recreation Facilities and Programs for Youth

Policy 7.1.7.A. Because of its emphasis on supporting children and teenagers and encouraging positive recreation outlets for youth in Pottawattamie County, the Foundation places a high priority on promoting youth-based facilities and recreation programs.

7.1.8 On-Going Maintenance

Policy 7.1.8.A. On-going maintenance should be the responsibility of the recreation facility provider and not funded by the Iowa West Foundation.

Note: Based on this policy, the following should be added to the "Ineligible Proposals" section of the IWF's Funding Guidelines and Procedures website: "Grant requests for funding on-going maintenance of park, recreation, leisure facilities."

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED NEEDS

The following recommendations have evolved from the findings of the previous chapters of this study and more specifically, from the voice of Pottawattamie County's residents. It is hoped that these recommendations will encourage the county's park, recreation, and leisure providers to complete their own independent assessments and to take appropriate action to address the needs of their residents.

7.2.1 Trails

Trails were ranked as the most popular amenity by the community during the public engagement process for this study. Trail projects between neighborhoods and communities would benefit each town and attract others to the region (both new residents and visitors). Trails within Council Bluffs would typically be funded by the City, while projects in the eastern portion of the county would either be constructed by the individual towns or as joint venture between the town(s) and Pottawattamie County. Trail projects are also candidates for state and federal grants, which should be included as an element of a partnering approach. Examples of trail projects identified during Need Analysis and requested during public outreach and include:



Figure 92: Iowa River Front Trail in Council Bluffs

- Expansion of existing trails in Council Bluffs and completing missing links within the system
- A trail between Underwood and Neola within the railroad or highway right-of-way
- A trail paralleling Highway 83 connecting Walnut to Edgington Park/Avoca
- Loop trails around each community in the eastern portion of the county.

It is strongly recommended that a county-wide trails master plan be completed to allow for the coordination of existing trail plans and to guide future trail development. Because of the importance of trails in the minds of county residents and because of the potential for economic benefit trails can have by attracting visitors, trail construction should be a high priority for the Foundation.

7.2.2 Indoor Recreation Facilities

Council Bluffs

One of the primary identified needs is for a comprehensive indoor recreation center that would serve the Council Bluffs area. Ideally this should be accomplished through a partnership with the YMCA and the City of Council Bluffs. However, there could also be additional partners included in the project. In order to maximize resources, the Foundation should encourage and support a cooperative effort in the development of such a center. The first step in this process should be the completion of a feasibility study that would identify the type and scale of the facility to be built, its location, the role of each partner, the cost to build and operate, as well as a funding plan.

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Central and Southeast Pottawattamie County

The central and southeast areas of the county have also been identified as underserved for indoor recreation facilities. Due to the high cost to build and operate indoor recreation centers, they must be developed and operated on a regional basis in the rural areas of the county. Before moving forward with the development of such a facility a feasibility study should be completed to identify the size and amenities that would be included, based on the specific needs of this area, the potential partners to be involved, and their ability to not only contribute to the capital construction but also to fund the operations and maintenance responsibilities.

Other Areas of the County

The towns in northeast Pottawattamie County are already well served for indoor recreation by existing recreation centers in Harlan and Atlantic.

Specialty Indoor Facilities

There are also needs for several other specialty indoor facilities.

- ☁ Indoor Field House - A facility that has both hard courts (for basketball/volleyball courts) as well as synthetic turf fields (for football/soccer/lacrosse) would serve a wide variety of youth and adult sports needs year-round. A field house facility should be developed in the western portion of the county near the eastern edge of Council Bluffs and would likely require a partnership between a number of organizations.
- ☁ Indoor Aquatics - One of the other key indoor elements needed in the county is additional indoor pools. The cost of development and operation of aquatics facilities requires that they be regional in nature, that they involve partnering with multiple agencies, and that they are built in conjunction with other indoor recreation amenities. Ideally, an aquatics master plan should be completed for the county. It should explore specific improvements that need to be made to existing aquatic facilities as well as the need and possible location for additional aquatic centers.



Figure 93: A fund raising effort is underway in Des Moines to secure funding to construct a \$6.0 million indoor recreation complex (the State Indoor Training Center - SITC). The facility would include a 360' x 195' artificial turf field. Multiple organizations are partnering for the project

Recreation Professionals

One of the greatest challenges to providing an increased level of recreation facilities and programs in Pottawattamie County is the need for adequate professional staff. This is particularly true for the eastern portion of the county.

The Foundation should encourage future recreation projects to have long-term plans to provide qualified staffing on a regional or shared basis.

7.2.3 Recreation Programs

Although the need for additional recreation programs was not the highest ranked need identified during the public outreach, expanding recreation programs and services will be necessary to meet the long term recreation needs of residents.

One of the primary limitations to providing additional recreation programs is the lack of indoor recreation facilities as compared to outdoor parks and fields. As indoor recreation facilities expand, there will be a natural growth in the demand for programming options.

The Foundation should support programming, for both indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure activities, that is developed through partnerships and in coordination with a variety of providers. Specific program areas where additional services should be provided include:

- ☞ Fitness/wellness - Activities and programs that seek to improve the overall fitness and wellness of county residents, especially for youth, should be a priority.
- ☞ Outdoor recreation - One of the highest demands for new programming has been identified in the area of outdoor recreation. Services that promote environmental education, hiking, fishing, boating/canoeing, hunting and other similar activities should be encouraged.
- ☞ Adult sports - A major deficiency in programming is in the area of adult sports including basketball, volleyball, softball, and other sports. Increasing the number of services for adults should be a major focus.
- ☞ Non-traditional sports - This emerging area for recreation programming should receive additional attention in the future. This would include growing the number of activities available such as BMX, skateboarding, rock climbing, etc.
- ☞ Self directed activities - Many people now appreciate the opportunity to recreate on their own at the time that works best for them. This means that parks and recreation facilities should encourage and promote this type of programming.

7.2.4 Outdoor Aquatic Facilities / Water-play / Pools

With only five outdoor pools in the county, the Foundation will likely receive requests to fund additional outdoor pools in the future. This is particularly true for the eastern portion of the county. It is recommended that, due to the high cost to construct and operate outdoor pools, they be regional efforts involving partnerships between multiple communities and

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organizations in order to receive a favorable response by the Foundation. An alternative to establishing true outdoor aquatic facilities in the eastern portion of the county will be the development of water play or splash grounds in smaller communities.

7.2.5 Community Parks and Regional Sports Complexes

Community parks and sports complexes are unevenly distributed in Pottawattamie County. The Foundation should support the construction of community park or sports complex in communities that have a demonstrated need for such facilities. Requests for funding, should document this need based on projected population growth and growth in participation in team sports. In addition, applications should document the ability to fund the majority of the capital construction cost and all of the cost of ongoing maintenance.

☁ The central portion of the county has the greatest shortfall in community parks and sports complexes. While both Neola and Underwood have parks with ballfields, there is a shortage of dedicated multi-use turf fields for soccer, football, etc. Treynor and the south central area of the county has the greatest deficiency when it comes to community park facilities. A resident planning group in Treynor has completed a master plan for a community park, but the process is still in the feasibility and planning stages.

☁ The Cities of Council Bluffs and Carter Lake are generally well situated when it comes to community parks and

BAYLISS PARK

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

The \$4.6 million reconstruction of downtown Council Bluffs historic Bayliss Park similarly reflects broad public support, in this case for multi-purpose cultural, recreation and leisure space. When the existing fountain failed in 2003, city officials convened a public meeting and detected widespread support for fully reconstructing Bayliss Park (see <http://parksandrec.councilbluffsia.gov/bayliss.asp>).

Funders included state and local government (\$1.4 million), Iowa West Foundation (\$2.14 million), and over 2,000 individual, businesses and civic groups (\$1.15 million). The finished park includes iconic public art the fountain and pavilion by artist Brower Hatcher as well as a children's splash pad, performance area with lawn-seating, walking paths crisscrossing the park, and picnic and seating areas.

The imaginative and energetic public campaign included use of bar-coded handbills (\$1, \$3 and \$5 each) at supermarket check-out counters throughout the City, as well as other high-visibility, retail-oriented fund raising methods. The well planned and ably led capital campaign obtained larger gifts from individual and institutional donors. City leadership and funding early-on gave the project credibility and momentum.

sports complexes with only the northeast quadrant of the Council Bluffs lacking a community park. An updated master plan is needed for Valley View Park in Council Bluffs due to the purchase of additional land adjacent to the park. And the City’s plans for Rivers Edge Park may need to be re-evaluated given the recent flooding. Both of these tasks could be addressed as part of an updated park master plan for Council Bluffs.



The northeast, and south central areas are well served by community parks/sports complexes with facilities in Avoca (Edgington Park), Walnut (Veterans Park), Oakland (Chautauqua park), and Carson (Millstone Park). In addition, the City of Cason has a master plan to expand Millstone Park in the future, which would further enhance the community park amenities offered in the southeast corner of the county.

Other Facilities

There are a number of very good quality school district sports facilities throughout the county. However, as these facilities are typically not available for public recreation, they would not be available to address any shortfall.

The Council Bluffs Community School District would like replace its aging stadium and has had discussions with Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) to construct a joint-use sports stadium in the city. More recently, IWCC and the Lewis Central School District entered into an agreement for joint use of Lewis Central’s recreation facilities. While the concept of a joint use stadium for the Council Bluffs area is not being actively pursued at this time, there are cases such as Grand Junction, Colorado and Reading, Pennsylvania where school districts and colleges are sharing a stadium facility - saving on both capital construction and the cost of operations. This is a good example of a cooperative venture that the Foundation should look at favorably.

7.2.6 Neighborhood Parks

The average citizen of Pottawattamie County will utilize neighborhood parks on a regular basis if they are easily accessible (within walking distance), well maintained, and offer an interesting mix of uses and features. When residents of the county were asked in the public survey which

CHARLES E. LAKIN HUMAN SERVICES
CAMPUS

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

The Charles E. Lakin Human Services Center in Council Bluffs is one example of successful collaboration. Five respected nonprofit agencies American Red Cross, Boys & Girls Club, Heartland Family Service, MICAH House and Salvation Army joined together with public and private donors to create a \$29 million campus and \$5 million in operating endowments (see www.lakincampus.org).

The agencies combined and leveraged resources to create a client-oriented, synergistic and costeffective facility serving the public. By working together, the five agencies also saved donors \$11 million over the cost of building separately. Securing a \$12 million naming-donor early-on gave the project precious credibility and momentum. Iowa West Foundation ultimately funded 27% of the capital construction.

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facilities they would like to have “more, smaller, and closer” to their homes, playgrounds (67%) and picnic shelters (77%) ranked the highest. It should be a goal of the Foundation to assist communities in providing opportunities for at least one park that provides a set of basic amenities that could serve residents in each neighborhood of the cities or towns in the county. Basic park amenities typically include a picnic shelter, a small area of open turf, play equipment, and often a court facility.

In communities such as Neola, Avoca, Treynor, Oakland, Carson, Crescent, and parts of Council Bluffs such as the eastern quadrant, achieving this goal will require constructing neighborhood parks in underserved areas (see Chapter 6 for more information on locations that are underserved).

Improvements to Existing Park Amenities

Most communities in the county offer a range of park and recreation amenities to their residents. However, in many parks in the county, the play equipment is aging and does not meet current ADA or playground safety standards; or court facilities need to be renovated. The input collected during the public engagement process of this study supported the importance of well maintained park, recreation, and leisure facilities and a desire “to take care of what we have”. Therefore, the Foundation should support communities in improving and upgrading the park and recreation amenities in existing parks (which would address many of the needs identified in Chapter 6 of this report). In particular, projects that address aging equipment, safety, ADA accessibility, and improvements to expand operating hours (lighting for ballfields for example) will ensure the parks in Pottawattamie County will continue to meet the residents needs for the essential park amenities. (Specific improvements identified by communities are listed in Chapter 6: sections 6.3.3 through 6.3.8.)

The Foundation should consider establishing an annual mini-grant (say two to four \$25,000 to \$50,000 grants) that would be dedicated to park and recreation facility enhancement with a focus on meeting current accessibility and safety standards. Communities should first be required to complete an evaluation of their existing parks (ideally by a qualified professional) and develop a capital improvement programs for park facilities. Assistance in funding this initial evaluation could also be a role for the IWF.

7.2.7 Outdoor / Nature-Based Amenities and Programs

Outdoor and nature-based recreation was another amenity frequently requested by the participants of this study. For example, respondents to the public opinion survey listed “natural parks” as a facility that was important to their household when compared to 12 other amenities listed. In addition there were numerous comments during the public meetings and in the written comments on the survey that pointed to a strong need for nature-based facilities and programs. The improvements most frequently mentioned by the public and recreation providers included:

-  Implementation of the Fairmont Park Master Plan in Council Bluffs
-  Continued enhancement of Lake Manawa for both State of Iowa and Council Bluffs

facilities. (Note: It may be advisable to complete a unified master plan for Lake Manawa to develop a coordinated approach for improving the lake's amenities and operations.)

- ☞ Better fishing access and support facilities along the Missouri River and at Lake Manawa
- ☞ Improved infrastructure and amenities (flush toilets, showers, etc) in the Pottawattamie County Conservation Boards eight parks and natural areas
- ☞ Expansion and enhancement of trails in natural areas and parks to better serve residents and visitors

Based on the existing levels of public support and growing interest in nature-based recreation, the Foundation should continue to support new parks and natural areas that preserve unique or sensitive habitats and to work with the county's recreation providers to continue improving existing facilities.

7.2.8 Park, Recreation, and Leisure Facility Maintenance

The quality of maintenance for public facilities is a reflection of a community's economic health, which is an important factor in retaining existing residents and attracting new residents and businesses. Therefore, the Foundation should foster well maintained recreation amenities throughout Pottawattamie County. The best way for the IWF to achieve this goal is to require a maintenance and operation plan for all major facilities (\$2.0 million in value and up) it funds with grants. This is necessary to protect what are often significant financial investments for the IWF. Funding the cost of on-going maintenance should not be the role of the IWF, but the responsibility of the agency that operates the facility.

7.2.9 Cultural Arts Programs and Facilities

Except for outdoor amphitheaters, cultural arts programs and facilities were a relatively low priority for county residents based on information gathered during the Needs Assessment segment of the study. However, providing opportunities for cultural arts activities such as the performing and the visual arts is an essential element of a well rounded parks and recreation program.

The Foundation should encourage efforts to modify, remodel, or build new cultural arts facilities as well the recreation programming associated with these types of facilities. Any significant new cultural arts facilities (performing arts center, museums, galleries, etc.) would need to be regional in nature and have multiple partners and funding sources to ensure sustainability. These types of centers should also have comprehensive feasibility studies conducted prior to receiving Foundation funding.

On a smaller level, programs and events that promote the arts on a more local level could be considered for funding by the Foundation if the benefits can be clearly articulated.

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7.2.10 Youth Gathering Places and Activities

The lack of “things to do” (especially in the winter months) was a comment that was frequently voiced by Pottawattamie County teenagers during the public outreach process. Though many were interested in, and participated in programmed activities such as high school sports and recreation activities, many others noted the need for alternative gathering places where the youth population would feel welcome to spend time. An example is the Phoenix Theater in Neola (see side bar) where the Tri-Center high school students take an active role in its operation and success. Other gathering areas could include coffee houses, soda shops, and art studios.

Since fostering the youth in Pottawattamie County is a core mission for the Foundation, directing funds toward facilities and establishments that cater to the youth should be a priority. Separate funding could be reserved for these types of projects.

7.2.11 School Facilities

The utilization of school facilities for community recreation purposes has long been a basic method of dealing with limited facilities in most communities as well as an opportunity to maximize resources. This is particularly true for rural communities. The Foundation should support projects that are designed to enhance public access to school facilities for recreation purposes. In addition, opportunities to modify existing school structures and fields (or expand recreation amenities on school property) are important and should receive strong consideration for Foundation funding, where public access is allowed. Coordinating the delivery of recreation programs and services through school facilities is also encouraged as is the establishment of activities that are focused on school age youth. If this is an area that the Foundation is interested in assisting, the existing policies against funding schools and school districts may need to be modified.

7.2.12 Non-traditional Recreation Opportunities

One of the unique aspects of this study was to ask the residents of Pottawattamie County about their need / desire for non-traditional park, recreation, and leisure

THE PHOENIX THEATER, NEOLA

The Phoenix Theater in Neola is a renovation project initially funded by the 2010 Iowa Community Beautification Grant and I-JOBS Vision Iowa Grants with additional funding from IWF. The theater was originally built in 1913 and the site of the first talking picture show in the county. The theater closed in 1959, was used as a group meeting building from 1960 to 2000 then was vacant until the restoration.

The restoration was a joint project managed by the non-profit Hoodoo Corp. that included Neola, Pottawattamie County, Lions Club, 4-H, Community-Senior Center, the fire department and student groups from Tri-Center High School. The groups together raised or donated money toward the grant application and also did much of the work on the restoration itself. The theater is run by Tri-Center students who earn course credits by running the theater as part of business classes.

facilities. This could include activities such as hunting, target/skeet shooting, rock climbing, dog parks, natural parks, leisure ice courses, etc. The public survey element of the public engagement process indicated strong support for a number of nontraditional recreation activities. The highest ranking activities included (top three choice combined) natural parks (51%), outdoor amphitheater (49%), and destination playground (32%). During the public meetings, comments were frequently made in support of dog parks, fishing, target / skeet shooting, and camping. The Foundation should look for opportunities to support these facilities and activities in future funding applications.

7.2.13 Community Clearinghouse for Recreation and Leisure Activities

One area that may make a positive impact with relatively low associated costs is assisting the coordination of communication among communities. Many participants in this study conveyed a desire to know what was happening in adjacent communities - including sporting events, special events, festivals, recreation offerings, etc. Communities could also exchange information, better coordinate functions and understand what is available in their area.

A community clearinghouse website could be established that would play this role. The website should include a calendar and posting areas for each community. A person from each municipality could be appointed to gather relevant information for the site while voluntary submittals would also be welcomed. Though discussions have not been held on the subject, Pottawattamie County may be able to oversee the site and play the overall lead for coordination.

7.2.14 Transportation Programs for Rural Communities

Due to the inability to fund all amenities in every community, the Foundation should support and assist in investigating subsidized transportation in lieu of constructing major park, recreation, and leisure facilities in each community. One example would be transporting children to park, recreation, and leisure facilities during the summer months. The program could be seasonal and a partnership program in regions where communities could pool funds to staff and operate the system (i.e. the southeastern portion of the county). IWF could participate with grants for feasibility studies and equipment.

7.2.15 Facility Summary Table

The following table provides a summary of the recommendations for addressing the county’s parks, recreation and leisure needs. It is intended to illustrate the fact that while some improvements may be a high priority, they may be costly or difficult to implement -- while others are easy to implement but are a lower priority (low hanging fruit). The table describes the assessed need, the relative cost, the relative complexity involved in implementation, and the community support identified during this study’s public engagement process.

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Table 19: Facility Summary Table

RECOMMENDATION	ASSESSED NEED	RELATIVE COST	COMPLEXITY OF IMPLEMENTATION	COMMUNITY SUPPORT
Improvements and Upgrades to Basic Park Amenities	High	\$	Low	High
Community Centers	Low	\$\$\$	Medium	High
Cultural Arts Facilities	Medium-High	Varies	High	Low
Regional Sports Complex for Central Area of the County	High	\$\$\$	High	High
Outdoor Nature-based Facilities	Low	\$ to \$\$\$\$\$	Low	High
Trails Master Plan	Medium	\$	Low	High
Trail Construction	Medium	\$ to \$\$\$\$\$ (varies with length/ complexity)	High	Very High
Aquatic Facilities	High	\$\$\$\$\$	High	High
Transportation Program	Medium	\$\$\$	High	Medium
Community Clearinghouse	Medium	\$\$	Medium	High
Youth-based Facilities	High	\$\$\$	Medium	High
Council Bluffs Indoor Recreation Center	High	\$\$\$\$\$	Very High	High
Central Pott. County Indoor Recreation	Low	\$\$\$\$\$	High	Medium
Neighborhood or Pocket Parks in Underserved Areas	Medium	\$\$\$	Medium	Low

7.2.16 Lessons Learned by Other Agencies

There are other successful grant processes focused on parks, recreation, and leisure facilities that could have relevance to IWF's system for reviewing this type grant application. It may be beneficial for the IWF to investigate how other agencies award grants for park and recreation to determine if there are procedures or systems that could enhance the grant making process. One example, Great Outdoors Colorado, is provided on the following page.

7.3 NEED FOR ADDITIONAL STUDIES

Master plans and feasibility studies that are completed by experienced professionals generally result in more viable, sustainable facilities. The IWF looks favorably on funding studies that clearly established the need for, and long-term viability of, a facility or program that sets out to address a community need. As such, it is recommended that the appropriate agencies complete the necessary detailed studies before moving forward with major park, recreation, and leisure facilities. A brief summary of master plans and feasibility studies that have been mentioned in this report are included in the Appendix.

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