

CITY OF

STILLWATER

MASTER PARK AND
COMMUNITY RESOURCES PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Parks Master Plan Team would like to extend a special thank you to the residents of Stillwater, stakeholders, and staff for their valued input throughout the planning process.

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Adopted by the Planning Commission XXXXXX XX, 2022

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Executive Summary

Stillwater, Oklahoma, is often called one of America's "most livable" cities. It has good neighborhoods, excellent schools and low crime rates along with recreational and cultural opportunities that you will only find in a university city. Oklahoma State University provides many cultural and educational opportunities and might be considered the soul of Stillwater, with its beautiful campus. It is the top employer in Stillwater, with over 5,000 employees.

Stillwater also has a big and beautiful park system, with 817 acres of parks (excluding Lake McMurtry) meaning that there are nearly 17 acres per 1,000 residents—well above the national average of 9.9 acres per 1,000 residents. Parks are well-distributed throughout the community and offer a variety of recreational opportunities. Stillwater is also home to the Kameoka Trail system, a 3-mile loop around Boomer Lake. Combined with other segments throughout the City the trail totals approximately 6.8 miles. OSU has built still more trails that can be used by the public.

Well-developed parks and natural areas are often the first place that visitors view in a community. A great park system shows that City leadership is interested in providing the best for its citizens.

The 2017 Stillwater Community Survey completed by the ETC Institute found that 82% of residents surveyed were very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of park facilities such as picnic shelters, playgrounds and splash pads. Residents were least satisfied with the quality of the City swimming pool and programs (53% 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied') Residents felt that the top two choices that should receive the most emphasis from City leaders over the next two years were 1) maintenance of City Parks, landscapes and facilities and 2) the quality of the City's walking and biking trails.

In 2021 a Quality of Life survey completed by Vibrant Stillwater showed that the availability of parks and playgrounds was rated 83% positive.

An online survey taken in conjunction with this plan shows that 53% of citizens rate the physical condition of all Stillwater parks as good or excellent.

What this says is that the citizens are satisfied with the park system, but improvements are warranted. This document will show which improvements should be made to the parks, what changes to recreation programs as well as changes to operations and maintenance could help.



The Need for Parks Planning

A truly comprehensive strategic plan is backed by the community and belongs to the community. Master planning engages residents, records community priorities, evaluates what the city has and what it needs, and helps parks and recreation departments and the public weigh program and facility desires against realistic budgets. Ten reasons why these plans are beneficial:

1. They assess current and future recreation needs of the community. Decision-makers can prioritize resource allocation for rehabilitation projects as well as for new programs, facilities and services in a manner that is fiscally responsible, environmentally sound and publicly supported.
2. They establish a long-range vision. When fit with an implementation strategy, action plan and recommendations for a given planning period, system-wide plans help ensure effective access to and use of existing facilities and program resources.
3. They help prioritize and budget for capital improvement plans. As demographics change and populations grow, so should park systems. Municipalities can make a strong impact through aligning priorities and investments across their park systems.
4. **Master plans provide strategies to fill gaps and reduce redundancies within park systems.** When preparing a system plan, analyzing the equitable access to parks, their distribution and bike/pedestrian connectivity is essential to understanding existing gaps and overlaps.
5. The master planning process builds community support. Not only do public engagements generate funding support, but they also provide valuable perspectives from the broader community to ensure the system meets diverse needs, improves transparency and builds trust.
6. **Plans promote new ideas and partnerships.** These collaborative efforts help communities build and deepen new and existing partnerships and alliances.



Introduction to the Planning Process

7. They establish a strong foundation, which is good for grant applications. These applications require documentation and a balanced, responsible action plan to meet those needs. Many grant applications require an approved comprehensive plan.
8. Master plans encourage new opportunities for future development. System plans may recommend communities set aside open space and preserve land to accommodate projected population and spatial growth of the area.
9. They align Capital Improvement Program (CIP) investments with community needs. In a proactive analysis, current and projected recreational trends are the general basis for investing in new programs and facilities, as well as the rehabilitation of existing park amenities.
10. Master plans and the planning process educate the public. These plans provide insight on the physical and mental health benefits that parks, trails and natural open spaces provide residents. Whether walking on a trail, gathering with loved ones, connecting with nature, playing sports or using play equipment, data indicates that recreation improves health, social interaction and community pride.

In addition to analyzing current programs and facilities, interactive public planning processes take into account community needs and ambitions. Through the consideration of options, this process produces a plan of action that enables municipalities to make changes and improvements that will help their parks system keep pace with and support the growth of each community.

"If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."
Yogi Berra



Value & Benefits of Parks & Recreation

It is important that the citizens, the staff and the leadership of Stillwater understand just how important parks are for the City.

Most important, parks create—no, they define-- the sense of community. It is when people can meet and interact with neighbors and fellow citizens in a social atmosphere that they truly feel connected to a community. Parks provide the location and opportunity for this to happen and their importance to a community cannot be overstated.

What else do parks contribute?

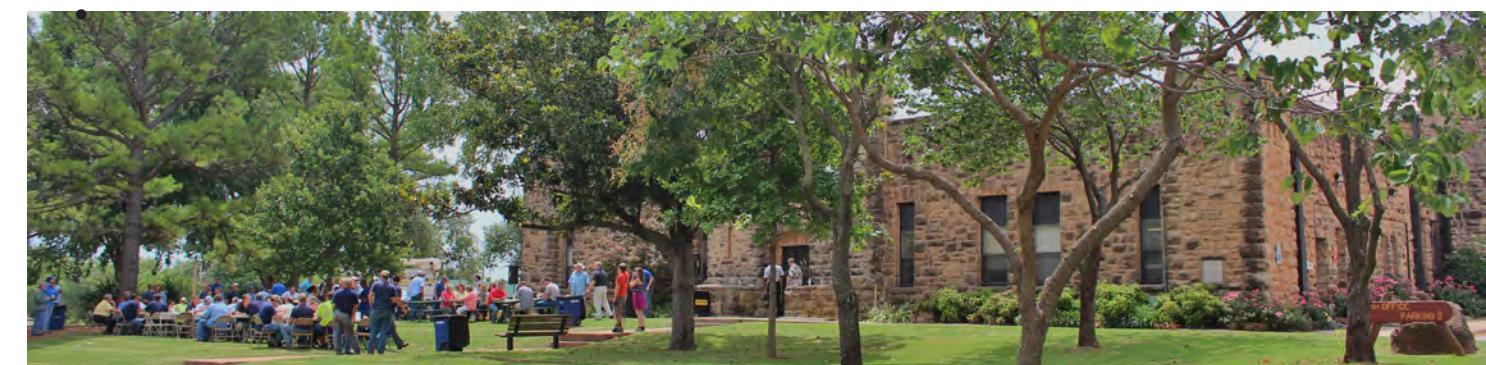
Green space: It is green space that improves mental and physical health for all people. This green space is comprised with trees, wildlife and open, natural areas. The trees clean the air we breathe, provide shade and produce oxygen. With today's concerns about Climate change, the mature trees that are protected in our parks are invaluable. More should be added to Stillwater's parks.

The birds, bees and other wildlife that has been in sharp decline over the last 50 years depend on those trees and the open park areas for sustenance and habitat. The protection that city parks provides may be the only thing that keeps many of them around.

Parks also provide people with the opportunity to be physically active—running, walking and playing sports. This is a major combatant against obesity. Recreation programs are important as they provide equal opportunities for children, families and seniors.

And parks provide true economic benefits. They increase the property value of areas adjacent to or near parks. They bring people into the city for tournaments and special events that are hosted in parks, attracting tourist dollars.

As Stillwater considers the future of the park system, whether to shrink or enlarge the facilities offered to the citizens, they should remember the value of parks. Without them, the City would be a far less attractive and enjoyable place to live.



Master Plan Process

A Parks Master plan is a comprehensive look at the needs and growth patterns of a community to determine future parks facility, programming, maintenance, and staffing needs. The Master Plan is also a policy guide which outlines the vision for the future of parks in Stillwater. This plan also contains a defined Action Plan to achieve the vision with short-, medium- and long-term actions. It is important to recognize that the Planning process will continue long after adoption of the Master Plan. It will be necessary to track implementation and completion of action items, as well as update the plan periodically with new demographic information and as community needs change.

The Planning process for the Stillwater Parks Master Plan begins with a study of existing conditions, and in-depth look at demographics, economy, and parks programming. This project includes the following important components:

- **Needs Assessment**
- **Public Involvement Strategy**
- **Implementation**



Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment takes a mix methodology approach to fully uncover the needs of Stillwater, including qualitative & quantitative investigation methods. By combining these two methods a complete picture is revealed. The quantitative methods include an on-line survey, level-of-service analysis, & benchmarking. Qualitative methods include a comprehensive park inventory conducted from June 21 to the 23rd, & public meetings. Chapter 5 contains more details on the Needs Assessment.

Public Involvement

The project began with a kick-off meeting on June 23rd, 2021. Representatives from every City department were in attendance, as well as the following community stakeholders:

- Prairie Arts Center
- Stillwater Public Schools
- Visit Stillwater
- Lake McMurtry
- Downtown Stillwater
- Oklahoma State University
- Stillwater Area Sports Association
- Downtown Stillwater Association
- Stillwater Chamber
- Interworks
- Meridian Technology Center

An Open House was held on September 28, 2021 to introduce the public to the project and unveil the on-line survey. The survey consisted of 33 questions targeting visitation, preferences and use, maintenance, satisfaction, communication, needs, programming, funding and resource allocation. Chapter 4 contains detailed results and analysis of survey results.



Chapter 8 includes recommendations for the City of Stillwater and its partners to implement the plan and achieve the community's vision. This section is meant as a working structure, outlining action items in short, medium and long-term time frames.

While public involvement is crucial to community buy-in, having the support of City leadership, including appointed and elected official, is important as well. Most Master Plans go through some sort of formal adoption process, usually by Planning Commission and City Council. For Parks Master Plans in communities that have Parks Boards, Committees or Commissions their approval is also desirable. Stillwater does not currently have a Parks Board, though city municipal code references a Parks, Events and Recreation Board.

Other Plans

The process to create a Parks Master Plan includes a thorough review of all applicable past studies, plans and reports. This information is used to inform the plan. Stillwater has several Master Plans related to parks and recreation, spanning back to 1990, including the following.

Boomer Lake Master Plan (1990)

Core Commercial Districts Master Plan (2005)

Wayfinding Program (2005)

Transportation Enhancement Plan (2007)

Annexation Plan (2008)

Multi-use Trail and On-street Bicycle Master Plan (2009)

Stillwater Corridor Redevelopment Plan (2012)

C3-Plan Comprehensive Plan 2030 (2013)

Community Investment Plan (CIP)

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 (2021)



With the exception of the Boomer Lake Master Plan and Multi-use Trail and On-street Bicycle Master Plan, most of the other plans tangentially relate to this Parks Master Plan. These other plans outline long-term land use and city boundaries, outline transportation improvements (mainly focused on roads for automobiles), and directional signage plans.

The Boomer Lake Master Plan was done over thirty years ago, when the lake had to be drained to repair the dam to federal standards. The important east-west connection of Lakeview Drive was extended at the section line at this time as well. One crucial finding of this plan and its public survey results showed no pedestrian pathways, with a strong desire for pedestrian amenities.

Multi-use trails have since been added with the 3-mile Kameoka Trail encircling Boomer Lake and extending beyond.

2009's Multi-use Trail and On-street Bicycle Master Plan outlines a vision and policies furthering multi-use trails and on-street bicycle facilities throughout the city. The trail plan outlines the following important criteria that effects this planning effort:

- Trails along stream and drainageway corridors provide recreation and environmental value to the users and trails along these corridors should have a minimal impact on the natural resources.
- Regional parks should be connected to on-street bicycle routes and/or multi-use trails.
- Neighborhood parks should be connected to on-street bicycle routes and sidewalks.

The trail plan also recommended land development changes to municipal code – trail dedication, fee in-lieu, impact fees, and zoning overlays for environmental protection. Existing and proposed multi-use trails and on-street bike infrastructure were also outlined in the plan.



The Community Investment Plan (CIP) and Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 outline medium term priorities and establish funding across the board for the entire city. These types of plans give insight to a community's priorities. By examining projects outlined in the CIP we can see how Community Resources (Parks) stacks up in relation to other City departments. Fiscal year 2021 – 2022 for Community Resources shows a focus on replacement, repairs, and study of existing structures in the Parks system.

The Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, adopted in May 2021 defines the priorities, objectives, strategies, and performance indicators to achieve the City's vision and mission. The Strategic Plan is a 5-year document authored and adopted as a part of the municipal budgetary process. The six priorities of City Council outlined in the plan are:

1. **To provide effective services and accountable government for all residents by practicing fiscal responsibility, transparency and outstanding customer service.**
2. **To serve with integrity and demonstrate proactive leadership, motivated management and smart planning skills that focus on results needed to create a better community.**
3. **To promote a safe and secure community for all residents through equitable services, enhanced relationships, and responsive care.**
4. **To develop a strong sense of place that recognizes the interconnectedness of people, buildings and public systems (such as transportation, utilities and parks) that best serve the needs of the public.**
5. **To cultivate partnerships that enhance the unique culture of Stillwater with equal access to services and amenities, strong and connected neighborhoods, and a thriving economy and business atmosphere.**
6. **To encourage participation and an understanding of government through outreach and inclusiveness initiatives that inspire trust, confidence, and ownership in local government.**

Goals of the Master Plan

The following strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan directly address or affect Parks and this planning effort.

- 1.1.3 Assure sustainability and a positive life cycle cost initiatives, funding streams, and projects.
- 2.1.2 Continue public outreach to help guide allocation of resources toward areas that residents have identified as needing improvement.
- 2.1.3 Increase awareness of master plans and design projects that align accordingly.
- 4.1.1 Develop and/or update infrastructure master plans that include detailed implementation strategies.
- 4.1.2 Make decisions that meet the demands of current customer while always planning for the needs of future generations.
- 4.1.3 Prioritize funding and support resource allocation to maintain existing infrastructure assets and/or to plan for future growth.
- 4.2.1 Implement innovative ideas that maximize current spaces, connect residents, and beautify community neighborhoods.



- 4.2.2 Plan, maintain, repair and continuously enhance streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails while considering all modes of travel.
- 4.2.3 Maximize parks, trails, open spaces, public spaces and public use facilities that meet the needs of the community.
- 5.3.1 Continue to develop community partnerships that improve artistic, historic, wellness, educational, cultural and recreational opportunities that create a sense of pride among residents and draw visitors to Stillwater.
- 5.3.2 Broaden public-private partnerships to increase opportunities for further development, to maximize current spaces, and to collaborate on projects that increase resident satisfaction and draw visitors to Stillwater.
- 5.3.3 Leverage partnerships to fulfill the diverse needs and abilities of residents while working towards more inclusivity and accessibility in all events, spaces, and amenities.
- 6.3.3 Encourage broad participation of residents through meetings, forums, taskforces, and other interpersonal opportunities to create deeper conversations between residents, elected officials and city staff.

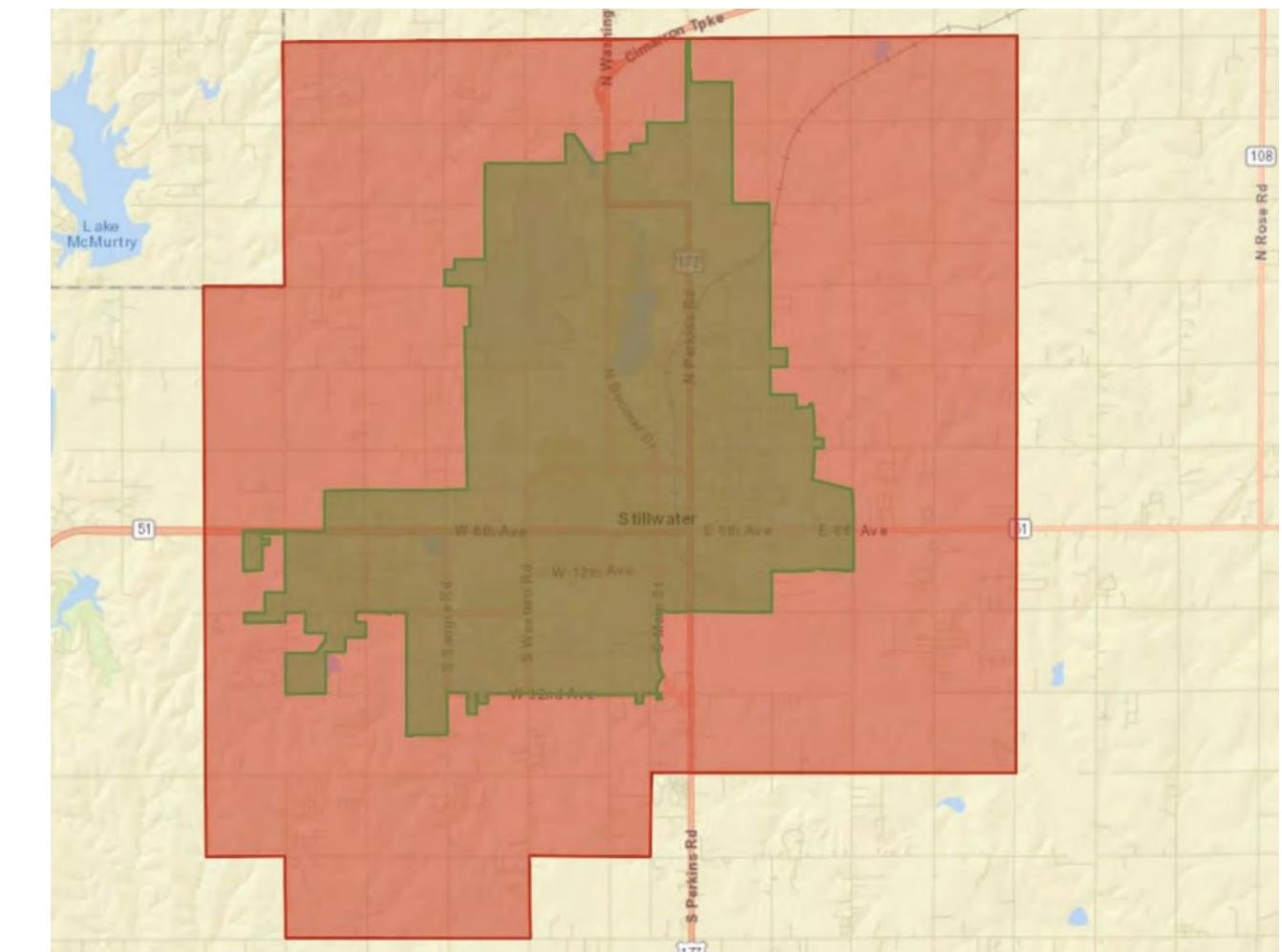
- 1** Create opportunities for everyone to safely and enjoyably play.
- 2** Prioritize equitable investments in parks in areas with the greatest needs.
- 3** Form an interconnected Citywide park system.
- 4** Facilitate innovative recreational opportunities.
- 5** Design a healthy sustainable park system that preserves critical habitat and open space and protects bio-diversity.
- 6** Utilize financial resources efficiently and equitably.
- 7** Determine future directions for programs and services.
- 8** Manage and maintain parks and facilities in an efficient and cost effective manner.
- 9** Develop a funding plan to support the vision for parks and recreation.



Stillwater Demographic Analysis

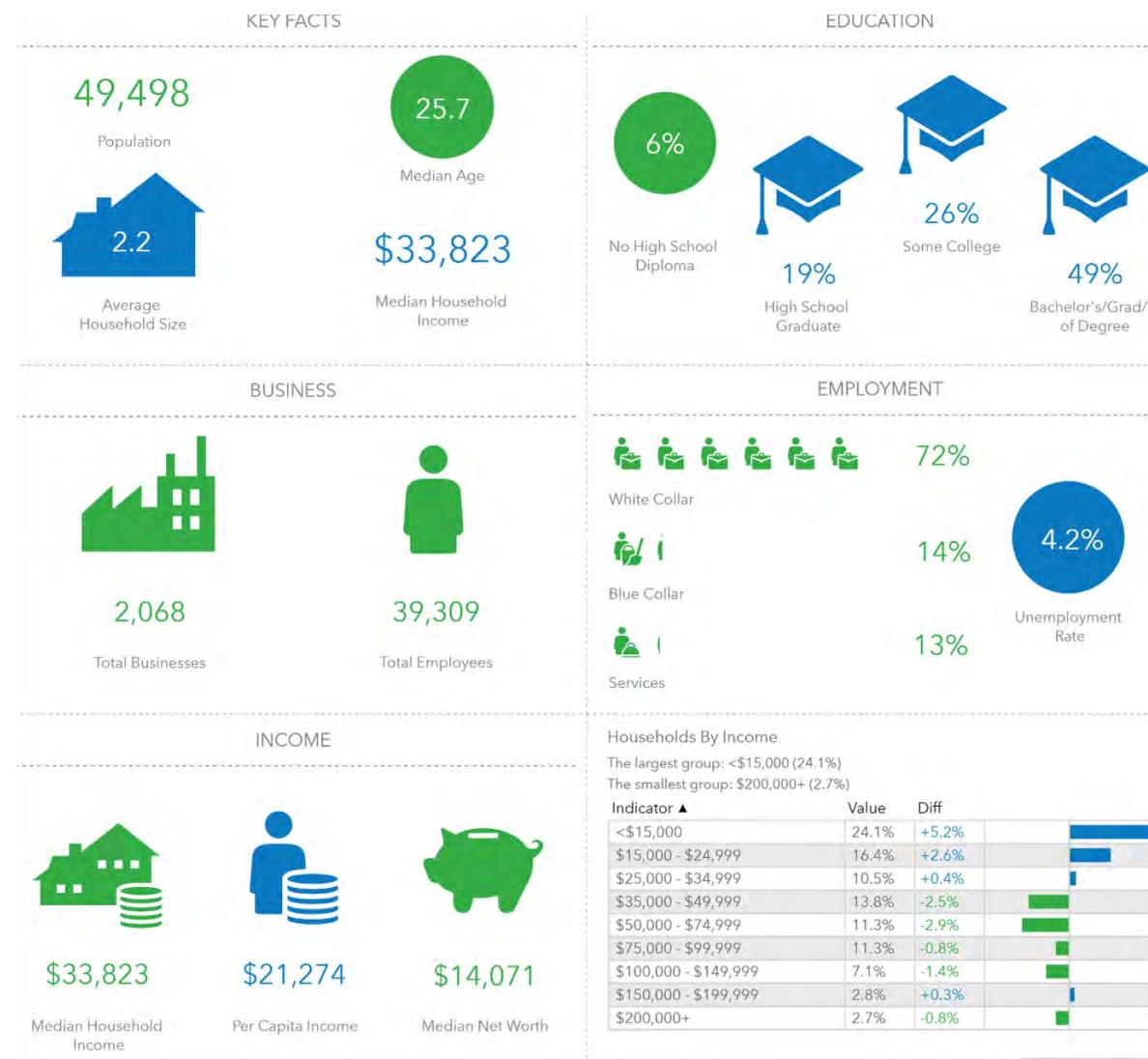
The following is a summary of the demographic characteristics within the city limits of Stillwater as well as the identified Stillwater Growth Area. It is important to understand the demographic characteristics of the community that the city's parks and recreation services are going to have to serve both now and in the future.

Demographic information was accessed from Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) who utilizes 2010 Census data and their demographers for 2021-2026 projections. In addition to demographics, ESRI also provides data on housing, recreation, and entertainment spending.



Green Boundary – City of Stillwater
Red Boundary – Stillwater Growth Area

Stillwater Background



Household by Income comparison uses the Primary Service Area and compares it to Payne County.

Table 1. Demographic Summary

	City of Stillwater	Stillwater Growth Area
Population:		
2010 Census	45,688 ¹	50,171 ²
2021 Estimate	49,498	54,428
2026 Estimate	51,340	56,556
Households:		
2010 Census	17,941	19,683
2021 Estimate	19,509	21,420
2026 Estimate	20,313	22,333
Families:		
2010 Census	7,920	9,177
2021 Estimate	8,512	9,830
2026 Estimate	8,818	10,203
Average Household Size:		
2010 Census	2.16	2.20
2021 Estimate	2.18	2.22
2026 Estimate	2.18	2.22
Ethnicity (2021 Estimate):		
Hispanic	5.6%	5.5%
White	76.3%	77.0%
Black	4.9%	4.7%
American Indian	4.3%	4.3%
Asian	6.9%	6.5%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
Other	1.6%	1.6%
Multiple	5.8%	5.9%
Median Age:		
2010 Census	24.3	24.6
2021 Estimate	25.7	26.6
2026 Estimate	26.2	27.2
Median Income:		
2021 Estimate	\$33,823	\$36,022
2026 Estimate	\$35,860	\$37,616

¹ From the 2000-2010 Census, the Primary Service Area experienced a 14.6% increase in population.

² From the 2000-2010 Census, the Secondary Service Area experienced a 15.2% increase in population.

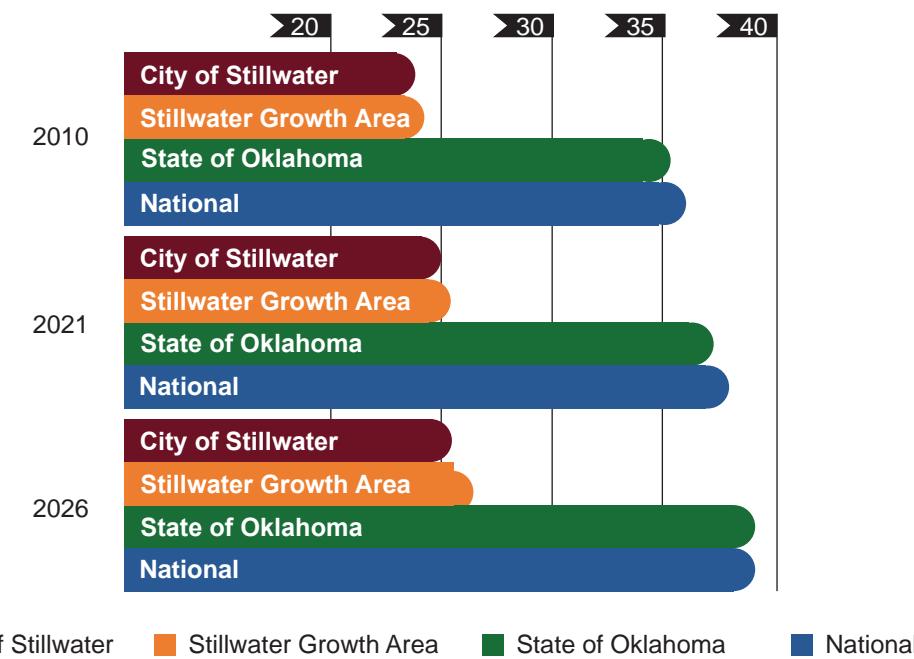
Age and Income

The median age and household income levels are compared with the national and state numbers. The median age in the City and Growth Area is significantly lower than the State of Oklahoma and the National number. This reflects the presence of Oklahoma State University.

Table 2. Median Age

AREA	2010 CENSUS	2021 PROJECTION	2026 PROJECTION
City of Stillwater	24.3	25.7	26.2
Stillwater Growth Area	24.6	26.6	27.2
State of Oklahoma	36.2	38.1	39.0
Nationally	37.1	38.8	39.3

Figure 1. Median Age



Households with Children

The following table provides the number of households and percentage of households in the City and Growth Area with children. As a point of comparison in the 2010 Census, 33.4% of households nationally had children present.

Table 3. Households with Children

AREA	Number of Households with Children	Percent of Households with Children
City of Stillwater	3,747	20.9%
Stillwater Growth Area	4,319	21.9%
State of Oklahoma	--	33.3%

Table 4. University Enrollment

	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students
Oklahoma State University	20,323	4,212
TOTAL	24,535	

Note: based on the 2020 -2021 school year



Table 5. Educational Attainment

	Estimated Population	Percent of Population
Less than 9th Grade	434	1.7%
9 - 12 Grade, No Diploma	995	3.9%
High School Diploma	3,954	15.5%
GED/Alternative Credential	969	3.8%
Some College, No Degree	5,077	19.9%
Associate Degree	1,633	6.4%
Bachelor's Degree	6,378	25%
Graduate/Professional Degree	6,097	23.9%

Table 6. Median Household Income

	2021 Projection	2026 Projection
City of Stillwater	\$33,823	\$35,860
Stillwater Growth Area	\$36,022	\$37,616
State of Oklahoma	\$54,281	\$58,439
Nationally	\$64,730	\$72,932

The presence of Oklahoma State students has a significant impact on household income in Stillwater.

Recreation Expenditures Spending Potential Index

It is possible to examine the overall propensity for households to spend dollars on recreation activities. Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2016 and 2017 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The following comparisons are possible.

Table 7. Recreation Expenditures Spending Potential Index

City of Stillwater	SPI	Average Amount Spent
Fees for Participant Sports	51	\$58.80
Fees for Recreational Lessons	46	\$64.82
Social, Recreation, Club Membership	57	\$140.98
Exercise Equipment / Game Tables	55	\$30.29
Other Sports Equipment	58	\$4.13
Stillwater Growth Area	SPI	Average Amount Spent
Fees for Participant Sports	54	\$62.50
Fees for Recreational Lessons	49	\$69.27
Social, Recreation, Club Membership	60	\$148.60
Exercise Equipment / Game Tables	58	\$32.14
Other Sports Equipment	61	\$4.34

SPI: Spending Potential Index as compared to the National number of 100.

Average Amount Spent: The average amount spent per household.



Population Distribution by Age

Utilizing 2021 census estimates for the City of Stillwater and Stillwater Growth Area, the following comparisons are possible.

Table 8. Stillwater Age Distribution (2021)

Age	Population	% of Total	National Population	Difference
0 - 5	2,287	4.6%	6%	-1.4%
5 - 17	4,559	9.3%	15.9%	-6.6%
18 - 24	17,139	34.7%	9.2%	+25.5%
25 - 44	12,988	26.2%	26.8%	-0.6%
45 - 54	3,404	6.9%	12.1%	-5.2%
55 - 64	3,640	7.4%	12.9%	-5.5%
65 - 74	2,995	6%	10.2%	-4.2%
75+	2,487	5%	7.1%	-2.1%

Population: 2021 census estimates in the different age groups in the City.

% of Total: Percentage of the City population in the age group.

National Population: Percentage of the national population in the age group.

Difference: Percentage difference between the City population and the national population

Table 9. Stillwater Growth Area Age Distribution (2021)

Age	Population	% of Total	National Population	Difference
0 - 5	2,563	4.6%	6%	-1.4%
5 - 17	5,306	9.7%	15.9%	-6.2%
18 - 24	17,543	32.3%	9.2%	+23.1%
25 - 44	14,412	26.5%	26.8%	-0.3%
45 - 54	3,963	7.3%	12.1%	-4.8%
55 - 64	4,345	8%	12.9%	-4.9%
65 - 74	3,494	6.4%	10.2%	-3.8%
75+	2,804	5.1%	7.1%	-2%



Utilizing ESRI information for the City of Stillwater and the Stillwater Growth Area, the following comparisons are possible.

Table 10. Stillwater Population Estimates

AGE	2010 Census	2021 Projection	2026 Projection	Percent Change	Percent Change National
0 - 5	2,295	2,287	2,442	+6.4%	+.09%
5 - 17	4,457	4,559	4,652	+4.4%	+0.1%
18 - 24	17,840	17,139	17,300	-3%	-0.2%
25 - 44	10,731	12,988	13,579	+26.5%	+13%
45 - 54	3,591	3,404	3,410	-5%	-10.4%
55 - 64	3,060	3,640	3,640	+18%	+13.3%
65 - 74	1,862	2,995	3,323	+78.5%	+72.2%
75+	1,852	2,487	3,027	+63.4%	+56.4%

Figure 2. Stillwater Growth Area Age Group Distribution

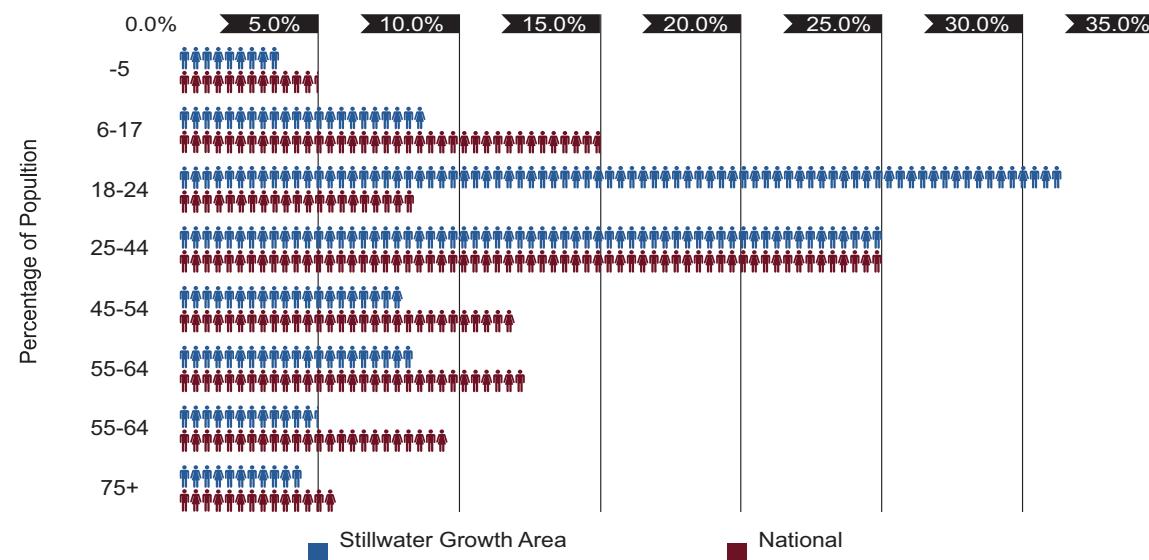


Table 11. Stillwater Growth Area Population Estimates

AGE	2010 Census	2021 Projection	2026 Projection	Percent Change	Percent Change National
0 - 5	2,559	2,563	2,732	+6.8%	+0.9%
5 - 17	5,279	5,306	5,418	+2.6%	+0.1%
18 - 24	18,298	17,543	17,720	-3.2%	-0.2%
25 - 44	11,836	14,412	15,100	+27.6%	+13%
45 - 54	4,378	3,963	3,978	-9.1%	-10.4%
55 - 64	3,596	4,345	4,243	+18.1%	+13.3%
65 - 74	2,201	3,494	3,927	+78.4%	+72.2%
75+	2,027	2,804	3,434	+69.4%	56.4%

Ethnicity and Race

Below is listed the distribution of the population by ethnicity and race for the City of Stillwater and the Stillwater Growth Area for 2021 population projections. The U.S. Census Bureau considers Hispanic to be an ethnic group and those that identify as Hispanic are also a member of a racial category as well.

Table 12. Hispanic Ethnicity Population and Median Age

	Total Population	Median Age	% of Population	% of Oklahoma Population
Stillwater	2,772	23.2	5.6%	11.7%
Stillwater Growth Area	3,001	23.3	5.5%	11.7%

Stillwater's population is 76.3% white, compared to 68.6% in the state of Oklahoma. and 77% in the Growth Area. The figures below shows a breakdown of Stillwater and Stillwater Growth Area population by non-white race.

Figure 4. Stillwater Population by Non-White Race (2021)

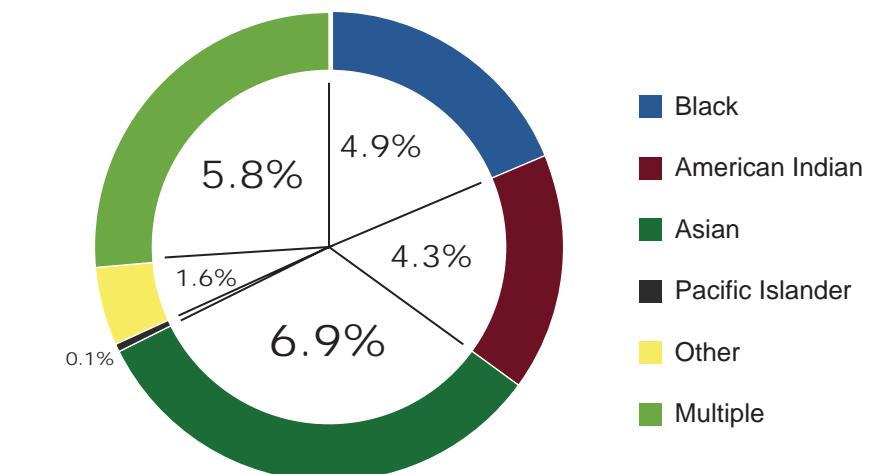
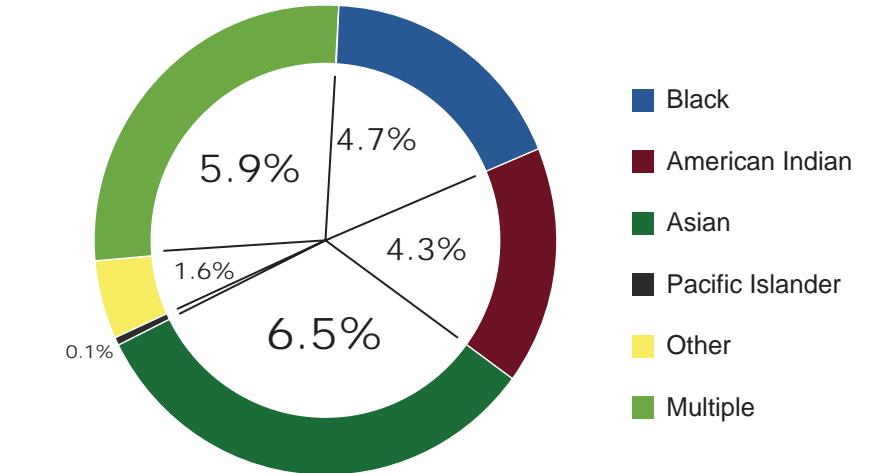


Figure 3. Stillwater Growth Area Population by Non-White Race (2021)



2021 Stillwater Growth Area Total Population:

54,428 Residents

Demographic Summary

The following summarizes the demographic characteristics of the City of Stillwater and the Stillwater Growth Area.

- The population of the city is estimated to be nearly 50,000 in 2021. The Growth Area adds approximately another 5,000 people. The demographic characteristics of the two market areas are very similar.
- The population is expected to continue to grow at a steady pace for the next five years. The City's Comprehensive Plan calls for the population to reach 61,525 by 2030.
- Future age group growth will be strong across all ages, except the 18-24 and 45-54 age categories. The strongest growth will be in the senior age classifications.
- The population characteristics area heavily impacted by Oklahoma State University with a student population of 24,500 (2020-2021).
 - Lower median age
 - Lower number of households with children
 - Lower median household income level
 - Age distribution is very strong in the 18-24 age group
 - High educational attainment
- The population is heavily employed in the service industries and White Collar occupations.
- Household budget expenditures are lower than the state and national numbers and expenditures for recreation purposes are also lower.
- There is limited cultural diversity.
- The tapestry segments indicate a young and active population.



Demographic Impacts on Future Parks & Recreation Services

The demographic characteristics noted above have a significant impact on the delivery of parks and recreation services in Stillwater.

- Sports participation data from the National Sporting Goods Association as well as other national organizations indicates that participation in recreation activities is highest in communities with these demographic characteristics:
 - Younger age groups
 - Higher income
 - Higher education
- With Stillwater's young median age and higher educational levels, the rate of participation in recreation activities should be high. However, the relatively lower rates of income will deter some use.
- The demographics of Stillwater are dominated by students who attend Oklahoma State University. This holds down the median age and also results in lower median income levels. However, with the university's excellent recreation facilities (both indoor and outdoor) most of the needs for this demographic are satisfied.
- With the expected growth in the overall population of Stillwater in the coming years, the demands for parks and recreation services should continue to expand.
- The general population is expected to age with strong growth numbers in the senior age categories. Providing services to this age group will continue to be important in the future.
- Despite the smaller percentage of households with children, there is expected to be a small increase in the youth aged population in the future. This reinforces the need for continuing to provide youth focused services in the coming years.
- Even when factoring out the college student population, Stillwater has relatively low median household income levels that will have an impact on how facilities and services are priced in the future.

Key Trends in Recreation

Public parks and recreation agencies have been tested in the last 10 to 20 years to alter their approach to providing parks and recreation services based on the following:

Increasing Demands

Ever increasing facility, program, and service demands from the public.

Inclusiveness

The requirement that agencies provide access to facilities, programs and services to an ever more diverse population.

Cost Effectiveness

A demand that parks and recreation agencies be more cost effective in their development and operations of services and facilities.

Measurable Outcomes

A strong need to be able to quantify the results and benefits of the programs and facilities that are provided.



As a result of these factors the following general best practices have been adopted.

- Parks and recreation agencies have a clear vision statement regarding their roles and responsibilities in providing services to their constituents.
- The vision statement is backed up by a number of pointed goals.
- Utilizing the vision and goals, a professional and updated master plan is in place to guide future development and operations of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- There are on-going, long range, planning efforts to position the agency for success in the future.
- There is a realization that an agency cannot effectively be all things to all people in the delivery of parks and recreation services and facilities. As a result, specific areas of focus are determined, and certain functions are left to others.
- Careful analysis is done to determine which services should be provided in-house and which should be contracted to other providers.
- There is strong record keeping that allows for trends and directional analysis. This also results in the development of specific performance measurements. For this to be effective there must be full computerization of all management records. This includes program registration, point of sale, rentals, facility scheduling, time card management, maintenance, etc.



As Stillwater looks to improve their parks, they should consider some of the new trends that are evolving in parks and recreation:

To address the focus on health and health equity, parks help support mental health and well being as well as physical well being. Outdoor workout/exercise facilities have become more important for people of all ages, whether as an outdoor fitness area or obstacle course.

People are tuning in to high-speed Wi-Fi in parks with charging stations becoming more common and downloadable material like augmented reality walks, games, and exhibits being used. Geocaching, where people use GPS to locate treasures is becoming a popular new way to encourage people of all ages to get out and explore.

Outdoor Classrooms: As a result of the pandemic, learning outside the classroom has replaced online learning. Students and teachers both will prefer to do the activities outside. It is also fun to learn outside the traditional classroom and the ability to learn about nature is increased.

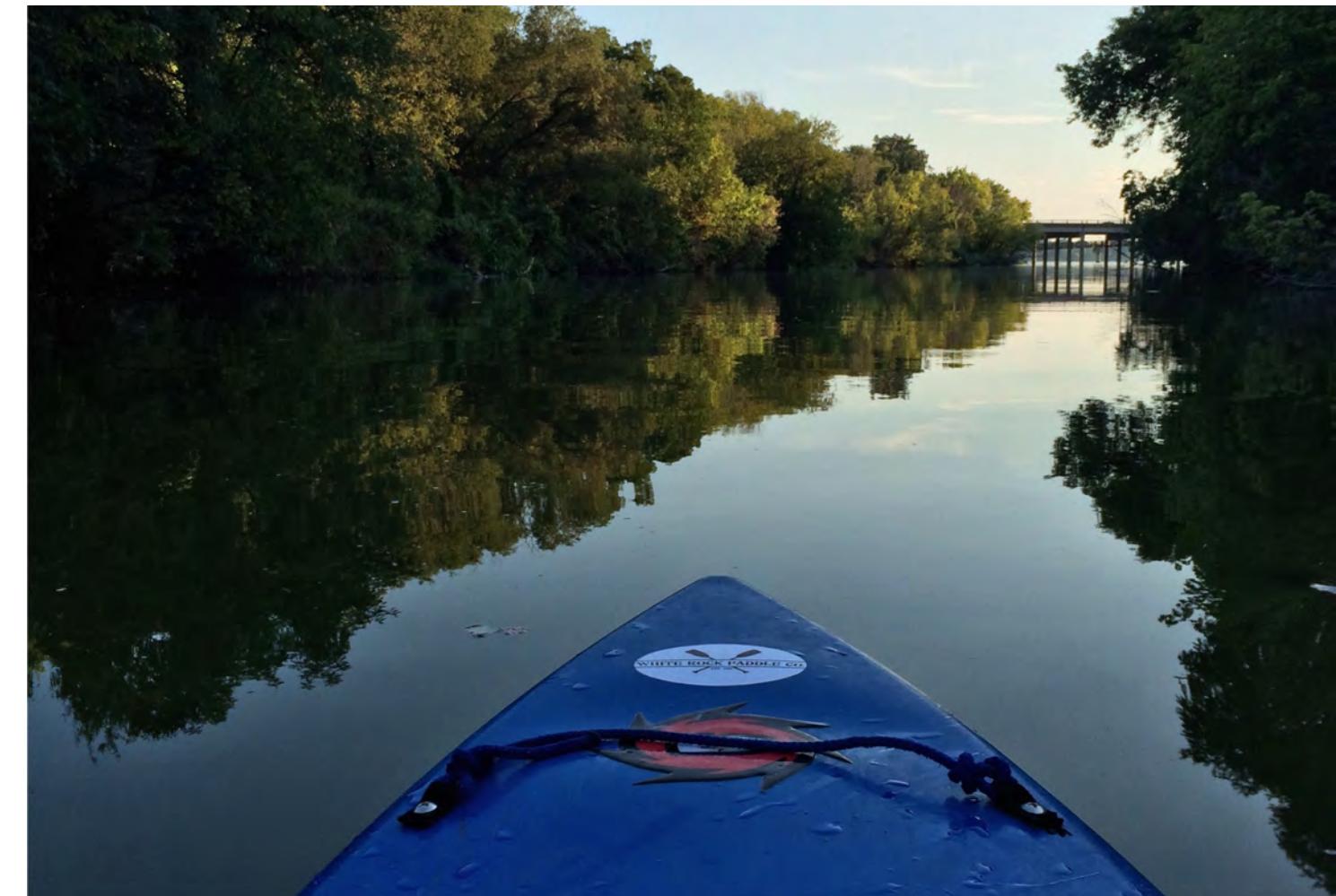
Many agencies are offering flexible pricing options, membership packages and variable pricing to attract more residents to parks and recreation spaces.

Parks have become more Instagram-worthy or Facebook-friendly. Who doesn't appreciate the concept of sharing a great snapshot with friends and family to show you are outside and loving it?



Programming Trends

- **Virtual programming**
- **Developing programs that are single day or no more than 4 sessions at a time.**
- **Developing programs for youth during non-school days, Christmas break, spring break and any other extended breaks.**
- **A variety of summer camps.**
- **More Saturday programs and the introduction of some Sunday programming (especially in adult sports leagues).**
- **Introducing programs that are oriented toward specific ethnic groups.**
- **Developing a baseline of programs that appeal to the family unit.**
- **Staggering the days and times of similar programs that are offered at multiple locations.**
- **Drop-in pay as you go fitness classes.**
- **Expanded senior programming to include a greater focus on the Baby Boomer generation which often means programs and services that are available in the evenings and on weekends.**

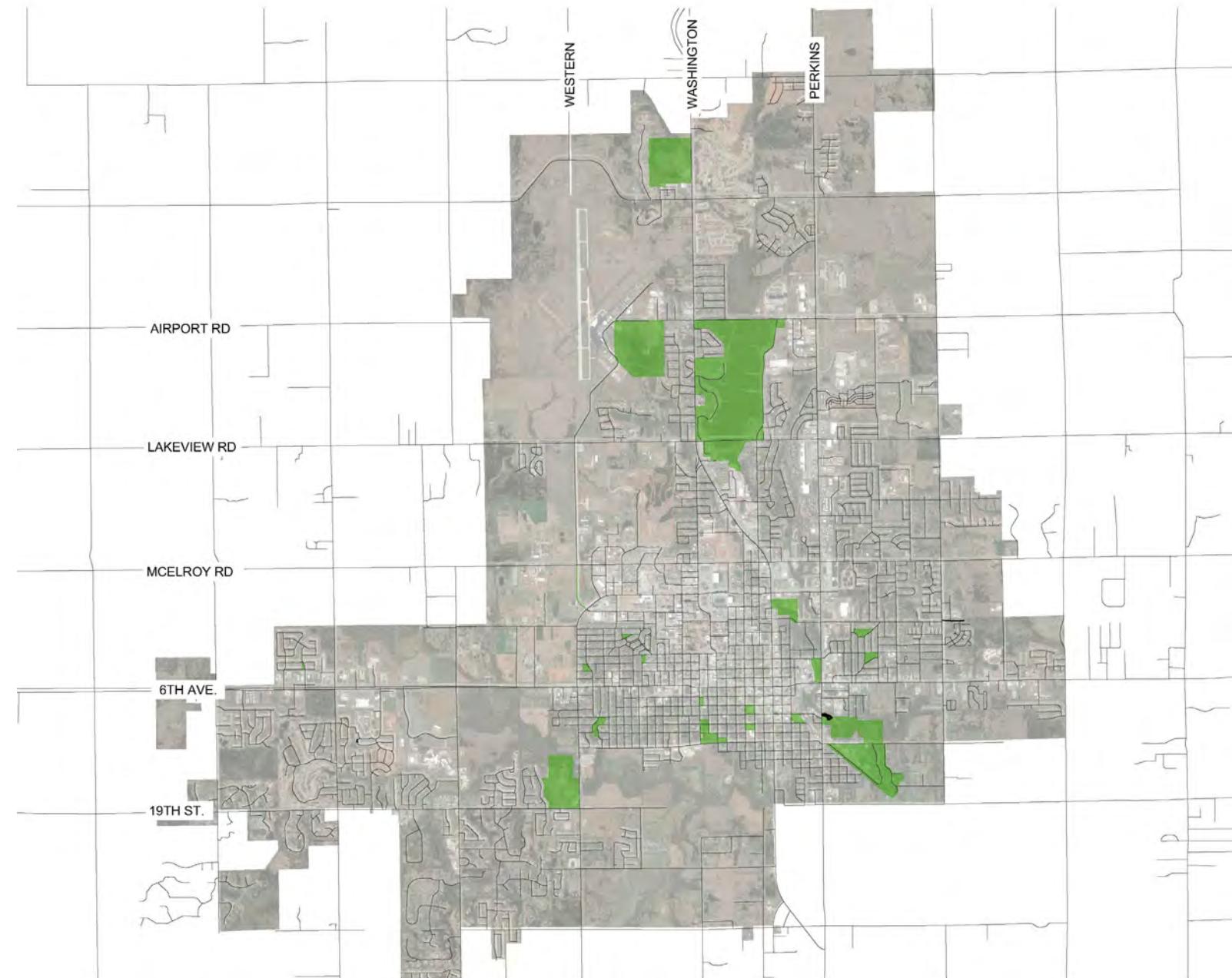


Parks Classification



Existing
Parks &
Recreation
Inventory

Stillwater has 19 public parks and facilities, over 817 acres, ranging from Mini Parks to Community Parks. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines delineate classifications of parks. Those found within Stillwater are described in more detail on the following pages.



Mini Park

These parks usually address unique recreational needs of smaller populations, typically serving within a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius. Mini parks range in size from 2,500 square feet to 1 acre. Off street parking is typically not necessary. Stillwater has the following Mini Parks:



CHRIS SALMON PLAZA



TOWER PARK
SUNSET PARK



WEST PARK

Metropolitan

These parks serve multiple communities and loosely range from 100 to 499 acres. They can include natural areas, and activities such as boating, fishing, swimming, and trails. Stillwater is fortunate to have two parks classified as Metropolitan.



BOOMER LAKE



SANBORN LAKE

Neighborhood

Neighborhood parks serve within a quarter to half-mile radius and tend to serve a wide variety of age groups within. They can include both passive and active recreational opportunities. They range between 1 to 15 acres in size. Stillwater has the following Neighborhood Parks:



BERRY PARK
MYERS PARK



ARRINGTON PARK
CENTENNIAL PLAZA



ARROWHEAD PARK
INGHAM PARK

Community

These parks serve several neighborhoods, within 1 to 2 miles. They loosely range from 16 to 99 acres with active or passive recreational opportunities. Stillwater has the most of this classification of parks which includes the following:



BABCOCK PARK
SOUTHERN WOODS PARK



COUCH PARK
WHITTENBERG PARK



HOYT GROVE PARK
STRICKLAND PARK

Facilities

Stillwater has a number of facilities, serving a range of needs within the community. Much of the programming and management of these facilities is handled by contractors, not the city.



ARMORY RECREATION CENTER
PRAIRIE ARTS CENTER



STILLWATER COMMUNITY CENTER
SENIOR CENTER



MUNICIPAL POOL
KAMEOKA TRAIL

Park Like Land

The following properties are not considered Stillwater City Parks, but they contribute to the recreation opportunities and open space for Stillwater.

Oklahoma State University Campus The 860+ acre campus of OSU is located in the center of Stillwater and known for its formal gardens and less formal open space. There are walking trails through and around the campus that cross through Stillwater and include benches and places for respite. The campus also provides opportunities for recreation that can be utilized by the community at large.



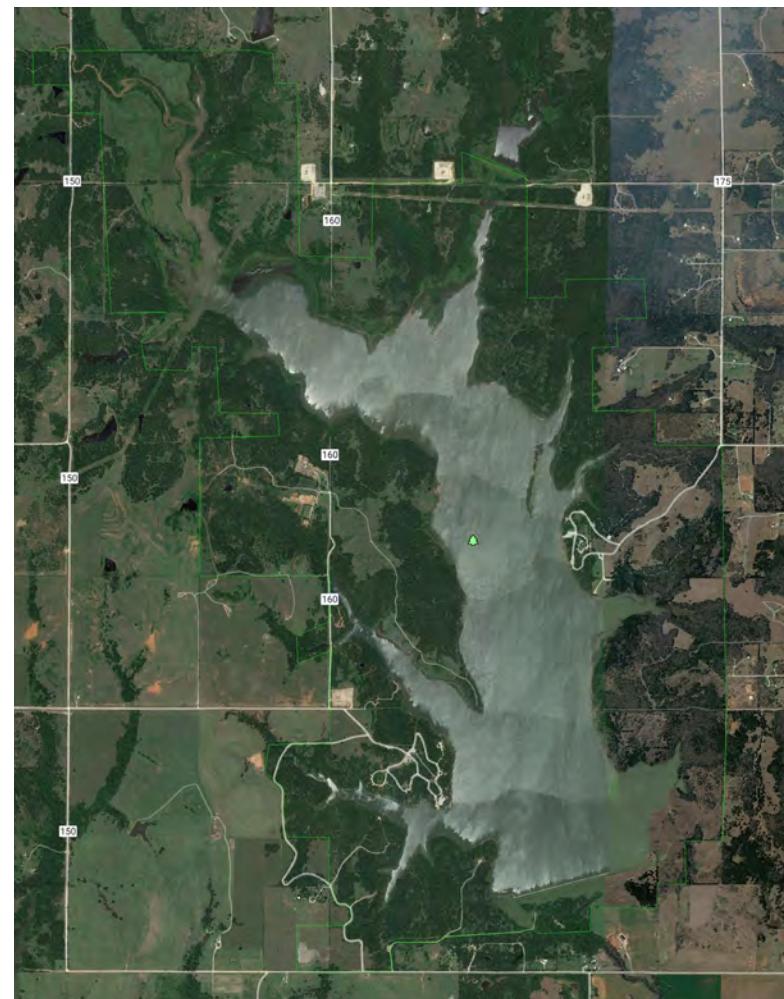
Stillwater schools There are 9 public schools in Stillwater, each with an open campus that provide playgrounds or recreation opportunities that can be enjoyed by the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Botanical Garden at Oklahoma State University showcases 100 beautiful acres of gardens and walking trails meant to nurture research, promote discovery and inspire new ideas. The Botanic Garden is a living, multidisciplinary laboratory currently used by several departments within Oklahoma State's Division of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources in addition to the local and regional communities at large. Practices and projects include drought response; water quality; sustainable practices and energy; and reptile and amphibian studies.



Meridian Technology Center

Meridian Technology Center is a public two-year technical college. It is part of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. Although not a park or public land, the Meridian Technology center provides 158 acres of open space, including a walking trail around a highly visible pond along Highway 51 in western Stillwater. This beautiful open campus is one of Stillwater's most visible public spaces.



Lake McMurtry is operated by the Lake McMurtry Friends, Inc., a nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization. Just 10 miles outside of Stillwater OK, Lake McMurtry is a perfect family friendly getaway. It offers RV and tent camping, swimming, fishing, boating, 32 miles of multi-use trails for mountain biking, hiking and trail running, two 18-hole disc golf courses, kayak & Standup paddle board rentals, pavilion rentals and watchable wildlife.

Group facilities, picnic areas, outdoor grills, fire rings and restrooms are available on-site, as well as RV dump stations, fishing docks, boat ramps and a fishing house. There are 3,198 acres in the park (including the water) The land surrounding the lake is owned by the City of Stillwater and is not considered flood plain.

Parks System

The Plan Team conducted extensive inventories of Stillwater's Parks System over a series of visits. Several general improvement items needed in all parks were identified through this process. These include:

- Evaluate planting design in all beds to reduce maintenance
- Plant trees throughout the parks to maintain tree canopy in the future
- Replace loose granular fill playground surfacing (fibar or rubber) with a unitary play surface
- Install bike racks with two points of contact, one for frame and one for wheel
- Replace signs which are dated or illegible
- Retain an arborist to evaluate the health of existing trees and recommend corrective treatment measures



The inventory and assessment efforts are summarized on the following pages, broken out by each park in alphabetical order. Assessments of each park are also provided, including Criterion Scores and Key Needs. As part of this Master Plan a park condition assessment was completed for all City-owned park sites and facilities.

Key Needs are identified for each facility and broken out by High, Medium and Low priorities. High priority needs are those which are critical to safety, accessibility, or security, or those which would provide functional improvements to highly utilized park components. Medium priority needs are those which increase the value or usability of a park or amenity, some of which could be accomplished by existing Parks staff or volunteers. Low priorities are those best achieved in the long-term. Improvements to parks can be done out of sequence, depending on funding availability.

Each category was rated on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high. The values are added up for each park which created an even comparison across all parks in Stillwater.

The following Park Condition Assessment Summary, shows the criterion score assigned for each park. It is itemized by individual condition assessment category and includes the calculated composite scores.

Criterion Scores Applied to Each Park are as follows:

Type	Rating
0 - 49	Poor
50 - 69	Fair
70 - 84	Good
85 - 100	Excellent

Park Name	Assessment Categories															Criterion Score	Rating					
	Ease walking to Park	Clarity of Signage	ADA Compliance	Lighting	Visibility from a distance	Multi-modal Capacity	Feeling of Safety	Overall Attractiveness	Overall Maintenance	Pleasant Places to Sit	Protection from Weather	Mix of Things to Do	Level of Activity	Programming Flexibility	Sense of Ownership	Playground and Sports Equipment	Built Structures	Sidewalks, Streets, and Parking Lots	Energy and Sustainability			
Arrington Park	4	4	2	3	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	5	5	5	3	4	75	Good	
Arrowhead Park	3	4	3	4	5	4	4	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	3	n/a	3	n/a	50	Fair	
Babcock Park & Sports	3	4	2	4	2	1	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	55	Fair	
Berry Park	1	4	1	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	n/a	n/a	49	Poor	
Boomer	5	5	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	79	Good	
Centennial Plaza	1	4	1	4	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	n/a	n/a	2	4	32	Poor
Chris Salmon Plaza	4	1	2	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	2	3	3	n/a	n/a	3	4	49	Poor	
Couch Park	2	4	2	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	80	Good	
Hoyt Grove Park	2	3	2	1	3	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	50	Fair	
Ingham Park	3	5	3	1	5	2	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	n/a	67	Fair	
Myers Park	2	7	2	3	5	2	5	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	4	4	n/a	2	3	54	Fair	
Sanborn Lake Park	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	2	2	n/a	41	Poor	
Southern Woods Park	4	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	64	Fair	
Strickland Park	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	91	Excellent	
Sunset Park	5	1	1	3	5	5	5	4	2	3	3	1	2	1	3	n/a	2	1	2	49	Poor	
Tower Park	4	3	2	4	5	5	4	3	3	2	2	1	2	3	2	n/a	n/a	3	n/a	48	Poor	
West Park	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	5	n/a	79	Good	
Whittenberg Park	1	2	4	5	2	2	4	4	4	2	2	1	3	2	3	4	3	3	n/a	51	Fair	

Arrington

Neighborhood Park

Size: 3.22 acres
Location: 1202 Arrington Pl.

This park is a well-used neighborhood park with a playground and a large flat lawn area on the east, open for use. There are existing sidewalks on the north side of the park, along the road, and a sidewalk leading to the playground. A drainage ditch bisects the park from north to south, in the western third of the park. The only parking available is on-street.



PLAYGROUND WITH SYNTHETIC TURF



PICNIC TABLES AND SHELTER



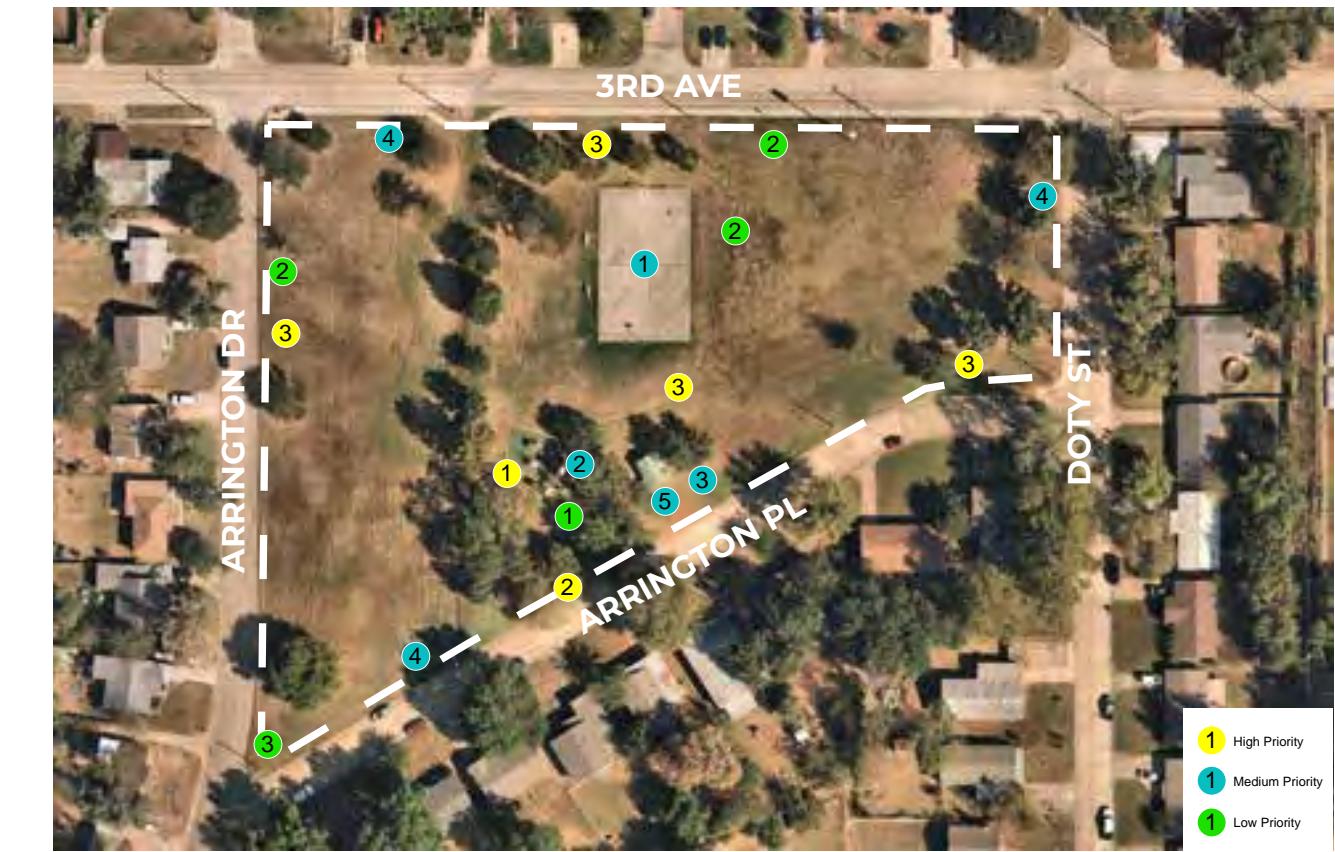
COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC MEETING



Criterion Score
75, GOOD

Public Survey
0.4% chose this as
their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their
favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Replace Safety surfacing at playground – recommend unitary play surfaces
2. Improve access and ADA accessibility issues.
3. Add ADA compliant perimeter sidewalk with connections to adjacent streets, basketball court and playground

Medium Priority

1. Repair, paint and stripe existing basketball court.
2. Add bottle fill station near playground
3. Add lighting
4. Add trash receptacles
5. Add bike rack

Lower Priority*

1. Replace wood benches with steel or composite wood
2. Add street trees and trees near facilities for shade
3. Add park identification sign

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.

Arrowhead

Neighborhood Park

This park is not a well used neighborhood park. As it is adjacent to student housing, the primary residents of the neighborhood are students and the playground equipment is not used. The park has a history of vandalism prior to lighting being installed. Since Westwood Elementary, with a large playground, and the OSU campus, with its open space, are both nearby, the playground can be removed, reducing maintenance and liability.



PLAYGROUND



CONCRETE PICNIC TABLE



PLAYGROUND SWINGS



OPEN SPACE WITH TREES

Size: 1.01 acres
Location: 1807 W Arrowhead Place

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Playground	1
Sidewalks around playground	1
Picnic Tables	1
On-street Parking	1
Lighting	2
Mature Trees	
Rules and Identification Signs	2

Criterion Score
50, FAIR

Public Survey
0.7% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Sell the park to a developer. This could be turned into approximately 7 residential lots with a small green space on the eastern corner.
2. Use the proceeds to fund improvements to other well-used parks.
3. Remove playground



Babcock

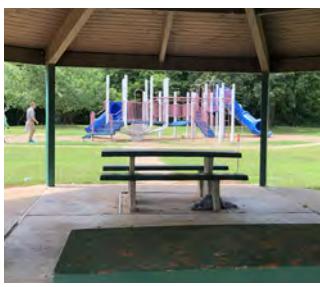
Community Park

Size: 61.92 acres
Location: NW Corner of S. Western Rd. & W 19th Ave

Babcock Park is Stillwater's main sports complex with baseball, softball and soccer fields. It is also the park that generates a lot of complaints—mostly about parking. While there is parking near the softball/baseball fields, it is not enough to support the entire site—especially when soccer games are going on concurrently. New parking is needed—and there is room for it.

A new drive is proposed on the west side of the drainageway, which would cross over to the eastern half of the site. It would connect the road on the east, allowing for better traffic flow through the park. It also leads to new parking lots, a restroom and concession building and playground to support the soccer complex. The drainage ditch that divides the park does not hold water most of the time and so a low water crossing or culvert would allow easy crossing, except during flooding events.

A new soccer field could be constructed at the far north end, which would replace the practice field lost by constructing the road. Lighting of 1/3 of the soccer fields is suggested to allow games to be played after dark, when temperatures cool down. ADA access should be provided to some of the fields.



SHELTER & PLAYGROUND



BASEBALL FIELDS

If the lighted fields also had sidewalks leading to them, this would help to meet this need. This park floods and a portion of it is located in the floodway, which reduces the ability to construct features in the park which would contribute to flooding and damage from floods.

The playground area at the north end of the park is not well used and can be better sited.

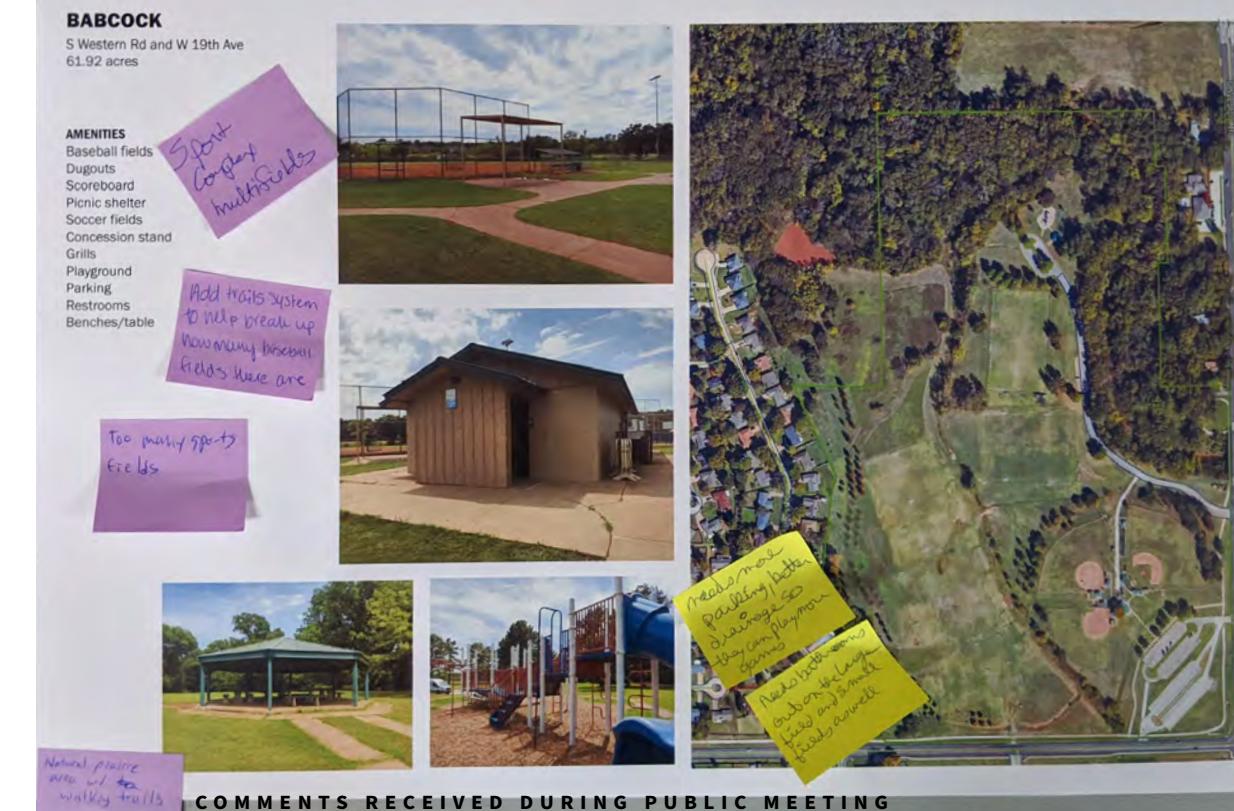
Facilities

Type	Quantity
Baseball	1
Softball	2
Restroom	1
Concession Stand	1
Small Soccer Fields	12
Medium	6
Soccer Fields	
Large Soccer Fields	2
Shelter	1
Playground	1
Multi-use Concrete Trail	
Asphalt Parking Lot	1 (73 Spaces)
Gravel Parking Lot	1 (95 Spaces)

**Criterion Score
55, FAIR**

Public Survey
26% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
13% chose this as their favorite park



CONCRETE TRAIL



SOCCER FIELDS

Babcock, continued

Key Needs

High Priority

1. Add a new drive to access the soccer fields with low water crossing or culvert across drainage area. This will improve traffic flow within the park, allowing access to West 19th Ave.
2. Construct new parking lots to serve the soccer fields. In doing so, one of the soccer fields will need to be relocated north.
3. Add a concession and restroom and storage building near the center of the soccer complex.
4. Add a new walk to make the existing shelter accessible.
5. Add lighting to 1/3 of the soccer fields—those in the center of the site, furthest from the surrounding residential areas. This will increase the time they can be used.
6. Renovate interior and exterior of restrooms
7. Add new walks to make the site accessible

Medium Priority

1. Add new monument signs
2. Relocate the playground to the entrance of the softball fields.
3. Add a new playground with a shelter near the new concession building.
4. Pave gravel parking lot and access drives.
5. Add trash receptacles
6. Remove extra concrete and replace broken sign at shelter.

Lower Priority*

1. Paint the shade shelter
2. Add bike racks

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.



PICNIC SHELTER



PLAYGROUND



Berry

Neighborhood Park

Size: 3.57 acres
Location: S Berry St & E Maple Ave

This park is not a well used neighborhood park. It is very close to Arrington Park, which appears to be much better utilized. The playground equipment is old and could be removed or relocated to other parks.



SHELTER, PICNIC TABLES, BENCHES



Criterion Score
49, POOR

Public Survey
0.4% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Playground	1
Shelter	1
Picnic Tables	2
Wood Benches	3
Rules and Identification Signs	2



Key Needs

High Priority

- Sell the park. This could be developed into residential housing.
- Use the proceeds to fund improvements to other well-used parks.

If this is not likely to happen soon,

1. Remove/relocate playground equipment and borders to reduce maintenance.
2. Retain the picnic tables and shelter.
3. Remove wood benches

Medium Priority

1. Replace picnic tables
2. Add trash receptacle
3. Consider adding sculpture in the park

Lower Priority*

1. Part of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.
2. Paint the shade shelter

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.



PLAYGROUND

Boomer

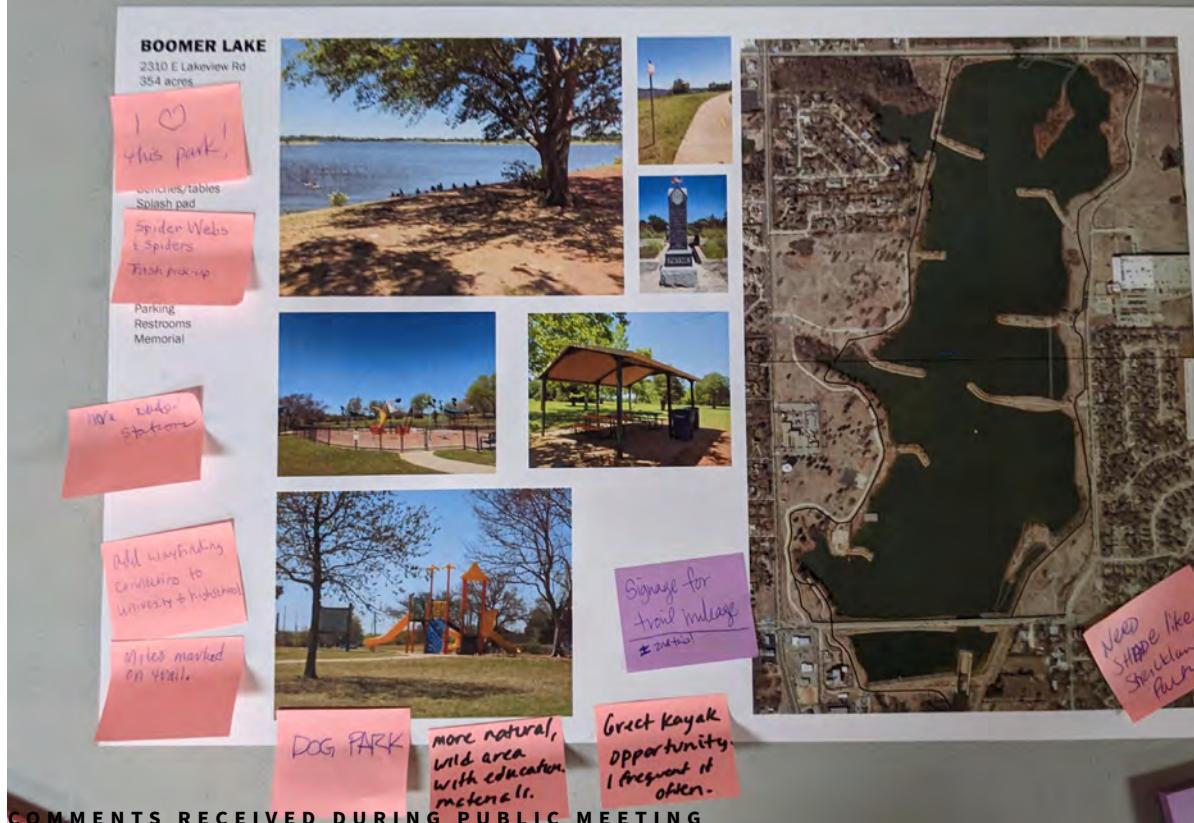
Metropolitan Park

Size: 353.731 acres
Location: Washington St. & Lakeview Rd.

This park is Stillwater's most popular community park with lots of activities around a small lake. Still, the park feels underutilized—there is a lot of unused land where improvements can be added which are needed within Stillwater's park system.

A lack of suitable maintenance is evident in this park. Restrooms are dirty; drinking fountains do not work. Parking lots need to be re-striped, especially to identify ADA parking. ADA sidewalks to restrooms and playgrounds are not compliant, and not safe in that they slope directly onto the lake road.

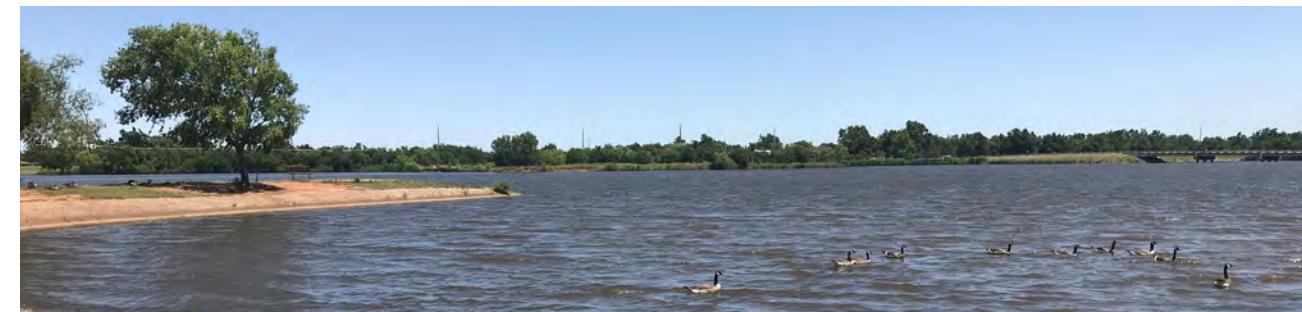
As with other parks, there is a lot of mown Bermuda lawns that could be converted to natural grass and wildflower areas to increase interest and reduce mowing. This is especially true on the long peninsulas that characterize the lake. This park also really needs a concentrated tree planting program to break up the wide open spaces and provide shade.



Criterion Score
79, GOOD

Public Survey
23% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
33% chose this as their favorite park



BOOMER LAKE



MEMORIAL



LAKE STATION



ELECTRIC CAR STATION

Facilities

Type	Quantity
18 Hole Disc Golf Course	1
Concrete Trails	
Peninsulas	9
Boat Ramps	2
Memorial	2
Fishing Dock	1
Pedestrian Bridges	3
Event Pier	1
Large Playground	1
- Shelter	1
- Tables	2
- Large & Small Playground	1
- Swings	5
- Zipline	1
Tennis Courts	2
Brick Shelters (4 Tables)	2
Large Brick Shelters (10 Tables)	1
Small Shelter	1
Large Shelter with Grill (6 Tables)	2
Splashpad	1
Electric Car Station	2
Roads and Parking Lots	
Bike Aid Station	1
Restrooms	3

Boomer, continued

Key Needs

High Priority

1. Add ADA access to playgrounds and restrooms from accessible parking spaces.
2. Add a new walk to connect the shelter on the east side of the lake to the 10' wide trail for accessibility
3. Add a safe pedestrian crossing at Airport Road and N. Knoblock Street
4. Relocate the fence at the splashpad to protect people from injuries from the pump equipment.
5. Replace safety surfacing at playground – recommend unitary play surfacing.
6. Replace pedestrian bridges with fiberglass or composite decking.

Medium Priority

1. Add a shelter near the splash pad, or renovate the existing shelter by removing a section of the back wall to provide visibility to the splash pad.
2. Remove tennis courts. These are basically obsolete and not used.
3. Build a new dog park south of where the tennis courts are removed. There are restrooms and parking nearby.
4. Add six pickleball courts north of where the tennis courts were removed.
5. Construct a new lighted monument sign at the corner of Lakeview Road and Washington Street that would celebrate the park's location. The current sign, in an unmaintained median at Boomer Lake Drive, should be removed if this bed can't be maintained.
6. Remove the event pier and create an event area at the peninsula just south of the existing pier.
7. Re-stripe parking lots
8. Replace restrooms
9. Add trash receptacles and benches, especially at disc golf and along the trails
10. Add additional water fill stations
11. Replace picnic tables
12. Add kayaking area, in partnership with OSU; consider ramp north of Airport Road or south of the event peninsula.
13. Add a new basketball court and small playground on the east side of the lake near restrooms.

Lower Priority*

1. Convert each peninsula and other wide open spaces to natural wildflower areas, with trees to reduce maintenance.
2. Construct a concrete boat ramp north of Airport Road
3. Remove planting beds at the Veteran's Memorial, and other peninsulas or re-design to lower maintenance.
4. Add mural to water tower
5. Replace signs at shelters to designate reserved status.
6. Add wayfinding signage and mile markers.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.



EVENT PIER



RESTROOMS



LARGE SHELTER



PLAYGROUND



Centennial

Neighborhood Park

The site is not accessible and has no obvious purpose, except to showcase the Welcome to Stillwater sign, even though a visitor is well within the boundaries of Stillwater by the time they reach the sign. The sign is not attractive or welcoming. The Kameoka trail sign is not located on the Kameoka trail. The park has high maintenance planting areas that aren't visible to the public.

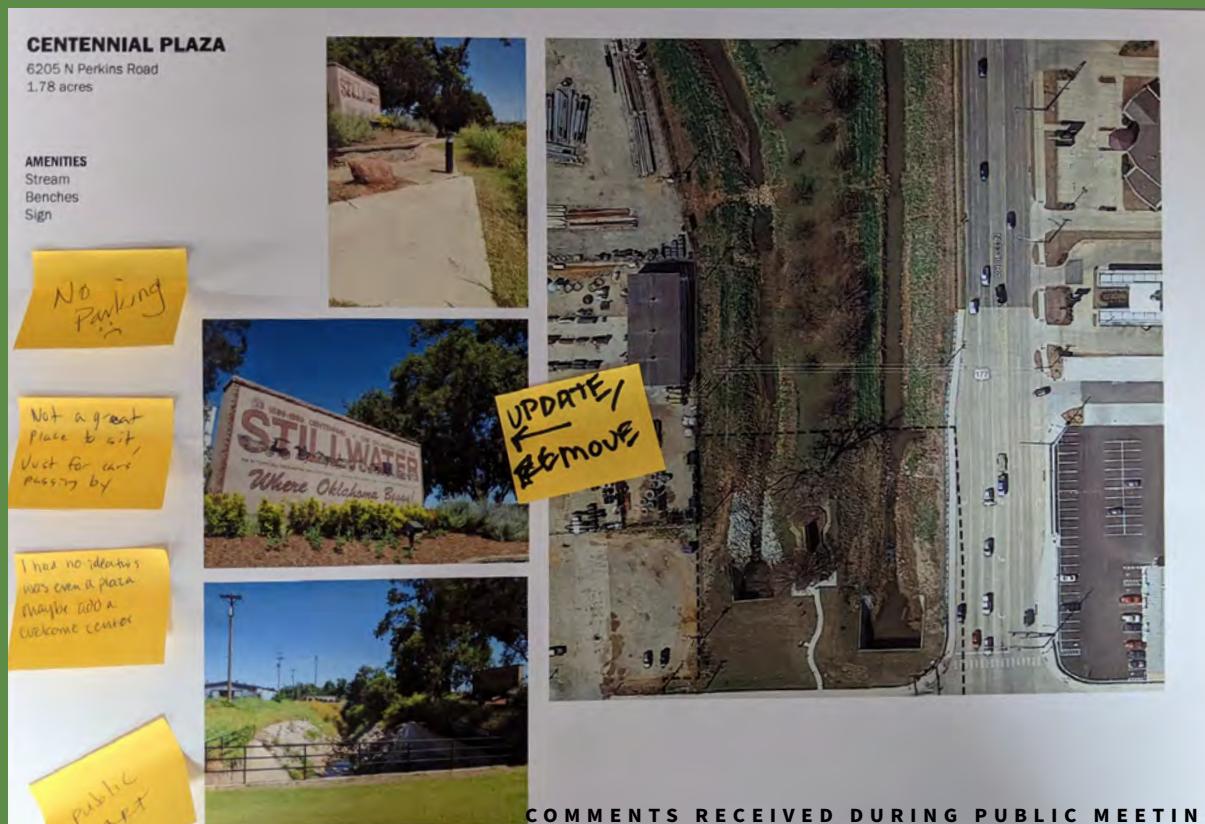
Size: 1.78 acres
Location: 6th Ave. & Perkins Rd.

Facilities

Type	Quantity
City Sign	1
Monument to Kameoka Trail	1



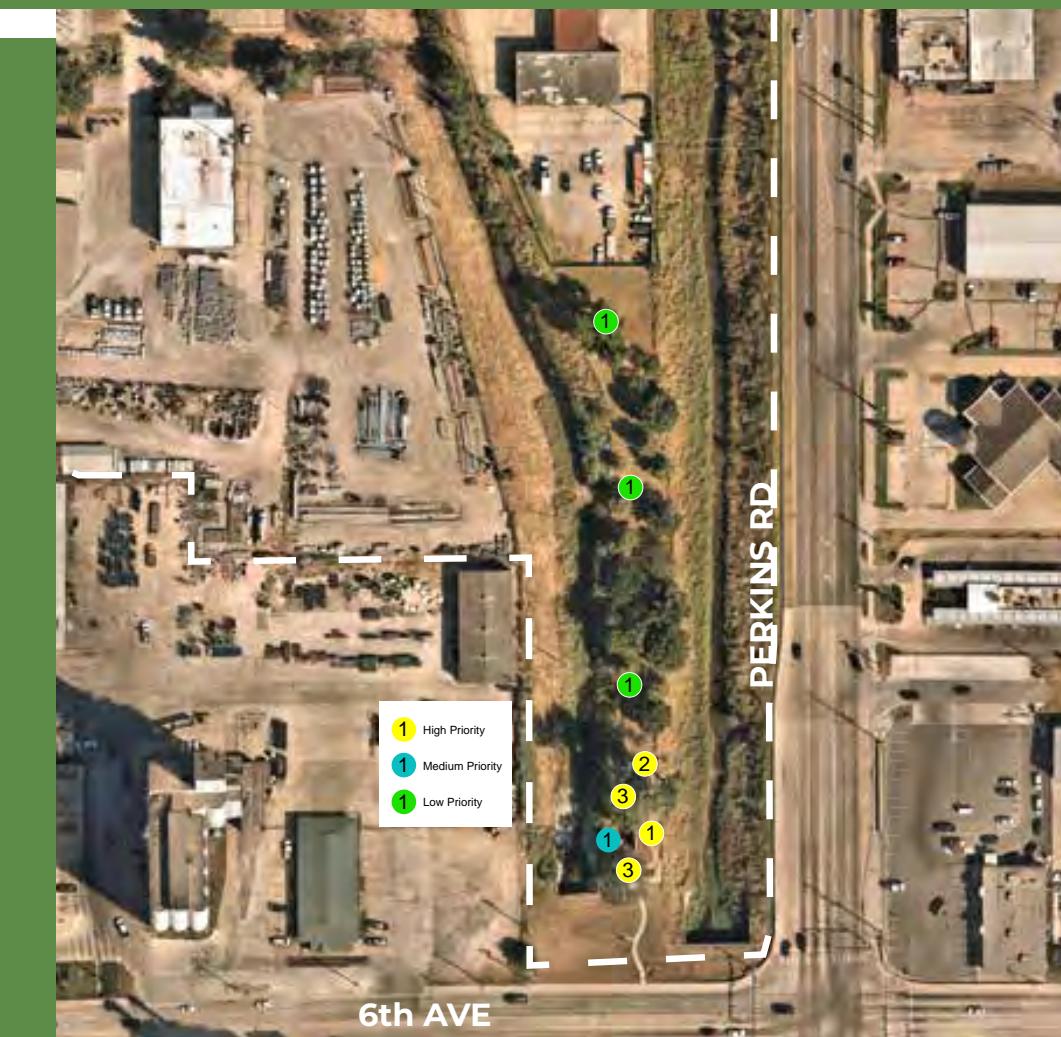
PATHWAY LIGHTING



Criterion Score
32, POOR

Public Survey
0% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Sell or give away this park. It is a good location for food trucks or other small vendors. There is enough room for the food trucks with picnic tables, along with a small gravel parking area.
2. Relocate the Kameoka Trail sign to be near the trail.
3. Remove the planting beds.

Medium Priority

1. Dispose of the 'Stillwater' monument sign, which has no purpose

Lower Priority

1. If a sale is not likely, remove the improvements and convert area between drainage channels to natural wildflower area.



CITY GATEWAY MONUMENT

Chris Salmon Plaza

Mini-Park

Size: 0.08 acres
Location: 823 S Main St.

While a public space in downtown is definitely an asset to a community, this one is not very inviting. This plaza is too hot of a place during summer to be enjoyed. It should be redesigned to add shade for park users. The back wall is not attractive & does not contribute to the park.

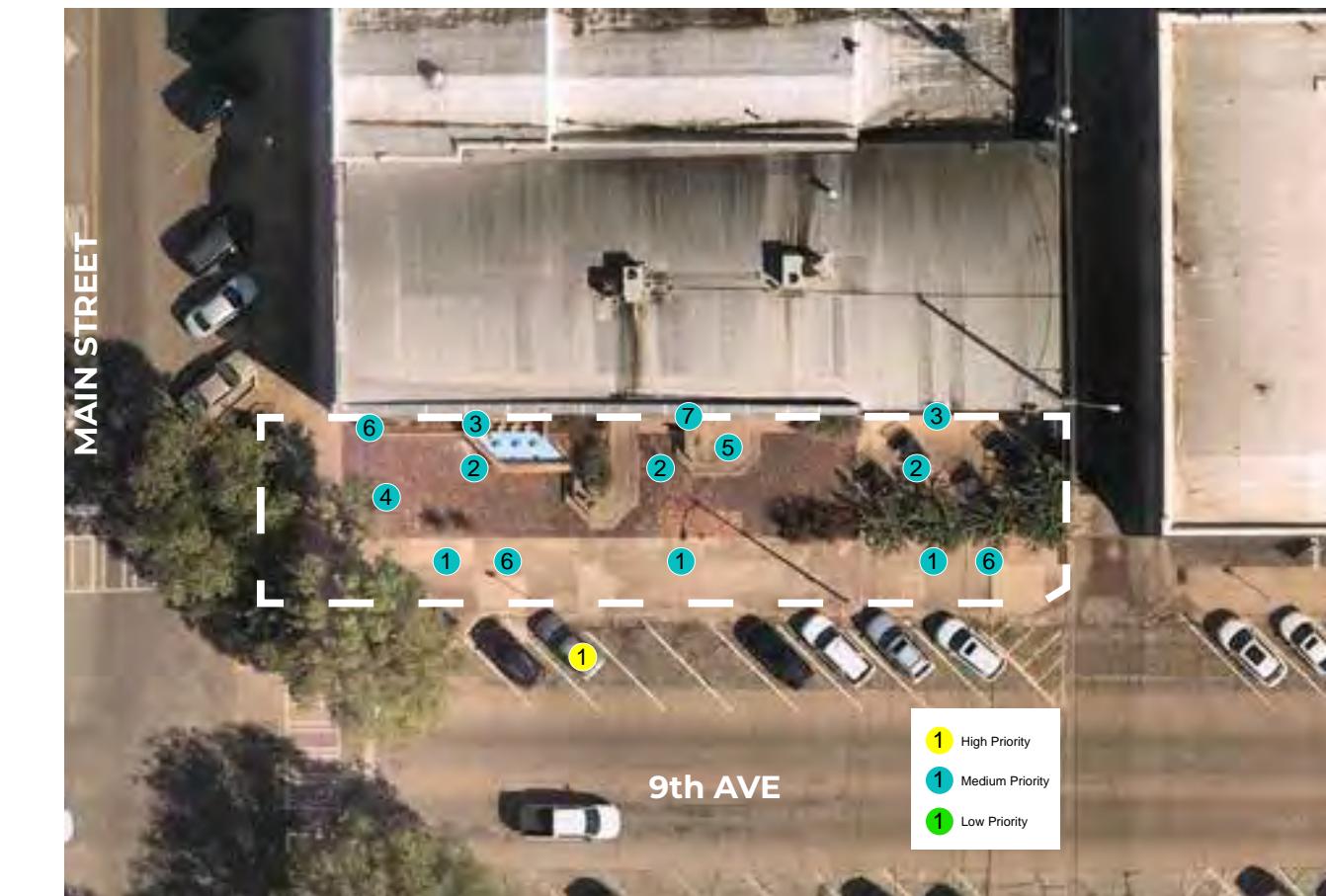
The current fountain requires too much maintenance. Some sort of water feature should be included in the re-design that requires less maintenance. This could be a movie night space & performance space. Add electrical supply for holiday lighting.



Criterion Score
49, POOR

Public Survey
0.3% chose this as
their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their
favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Add accessible parking

Medium Priority

1. Construct a pergola along the south walk, which would shade the walk and most of the site.
2. Redesign the site to replace the fountain and planting areas.
3. Add a new façade and/or mural to the back wall.
4. Add seating and trees.
5. Create a small stage.
6. Add electric outlets for Holiday lighting.
7. Add a movie screen feature



FOUNTAIN & STAGE

Couch

Community Park

Size: 78.28 acres
Location: 800 E 12th Ave.

This is a beautiful park with lots of mature trees and many facilities for park patrons. The playground and trails are well-used. However, the park is disjointed. It is unorganized and has significant accessibility issues. The sports fields are operated by the schools and SASA. The pool is operated by the YMCA, but it is old and in disrepair.

There is a lot of on-street parking which causes congestion during games. Edges of the asphalt trail are crumbling and overgrown with grass. East of the river is a beautiful forested area, but because it is flood prone it is largely unused. It is also separated by the creek with difficult access. The park maintenance facility on the northwest portion of the site is not well located and conflicts with the function of the rest of the park.



PLAYGROUND



BASEBALL FIELD



SHELTER



ASPHALT TRAIL

Criterion Score
80, GOOD

Public Survey
25% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
28% chose this as their favorite park

COUCH
800 E 12th Ave
78.28 acres

AMENITIES
Baseball field
Softball field
Bleachers/grandstands
Scoreboard
Picnic shelter
Trail
Tennis Court
Stream
Playground
Drinking Fountain
Restrooms
Benches/tables
Parking
Community garden
Story walk

Comments received during public meeting:

- Bad Mosquito Problem!
- Bogache - education on clearing ditch
- LOVE THIS PARK
- Great shade trees!
- Great shade trees, grassy, concrete paths, nice!

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Buildings	6
Tennis Courts	4
Practice Field	1
Baseball Field	1
Softball Field	1
Community Garden	1
Large Gravel Parking Lot	1
Large Shelters (4 Tables Each)	2
Large Playground	1
- Small Structure	1
- Large Structure	1
- Swings	4
Small Picnic Table Shelter	1
Restrooms	1
1/2 Mile Asphalt Trail	
Story Walk	
Concrete Walks	



BOOMER CREEK

Recommendations

Criterion Score: 80, Good

Key Needs

High Priority

1. Improve accessibility of the entire site by adding walks and/or ramps from existing parking.
2. Construct an aquatics facility, to include a new pool, a splash pad and a destination playground, along with parking on the south (where maintenance has moved). This would allow the removal of the long drive leading to the pool. Whenever a road or drive can be removed from the middle of a park, safety is increased since pedestrian/vehicular conflict is reduced.
3. Add two parking lots, one on each side of the existing baseball/softball fields. Include bus parking. Besides serving the baseball field, it would provide parking for the new gym and the aquatic and playground facility.
4. Repair drainage issues near the 12th street entrance.
5. Replace safety surfacing at existing playground
6. Return the Senior Center to the fire department. It was used by them at one time and according to Stillwater staff, they were a good fit. Refer to the Facilities Assessment section.

Medium Priority

1. Relocate the park maintenance facility to a different site where it will be less visible and would not interfere with park users. See Chapter 6.
2. Accept the donation of a multipurpose gym to be located northeast of the new parking lot but be aware that this building will be very visible and should be designed to contribute to the park aesthetic.
3. Remove the 60 degree parking along E Alcott Ave. This will improve vehicular circulation by preventing people backing out into traffic.
4. Construct two new monument signs that would celebrate the park's location; one near the new playground/pool location and one at the east entrance drive.
5. Remove the storage building as it is unused and unattractive.
6. Remove the small softball field east of tennis courts, and build two new multipurpose tennis courts which can be additionally striped for pickleball.
7. Remove the gravel maintenance road to restroom.
8. Replace signs at shelters.
9. Add trash receptacles
10. Replace picnic tables
11. Add a water bottle fill station at playground
12. Construct a large shelter with nature trails and interpretive signage on the east side of the creek to function as a nature center.

Lower Priority*

1. Part of this park, in particular east of the river could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.
2. Add a pedestrian bridge to access the east side of the creek.

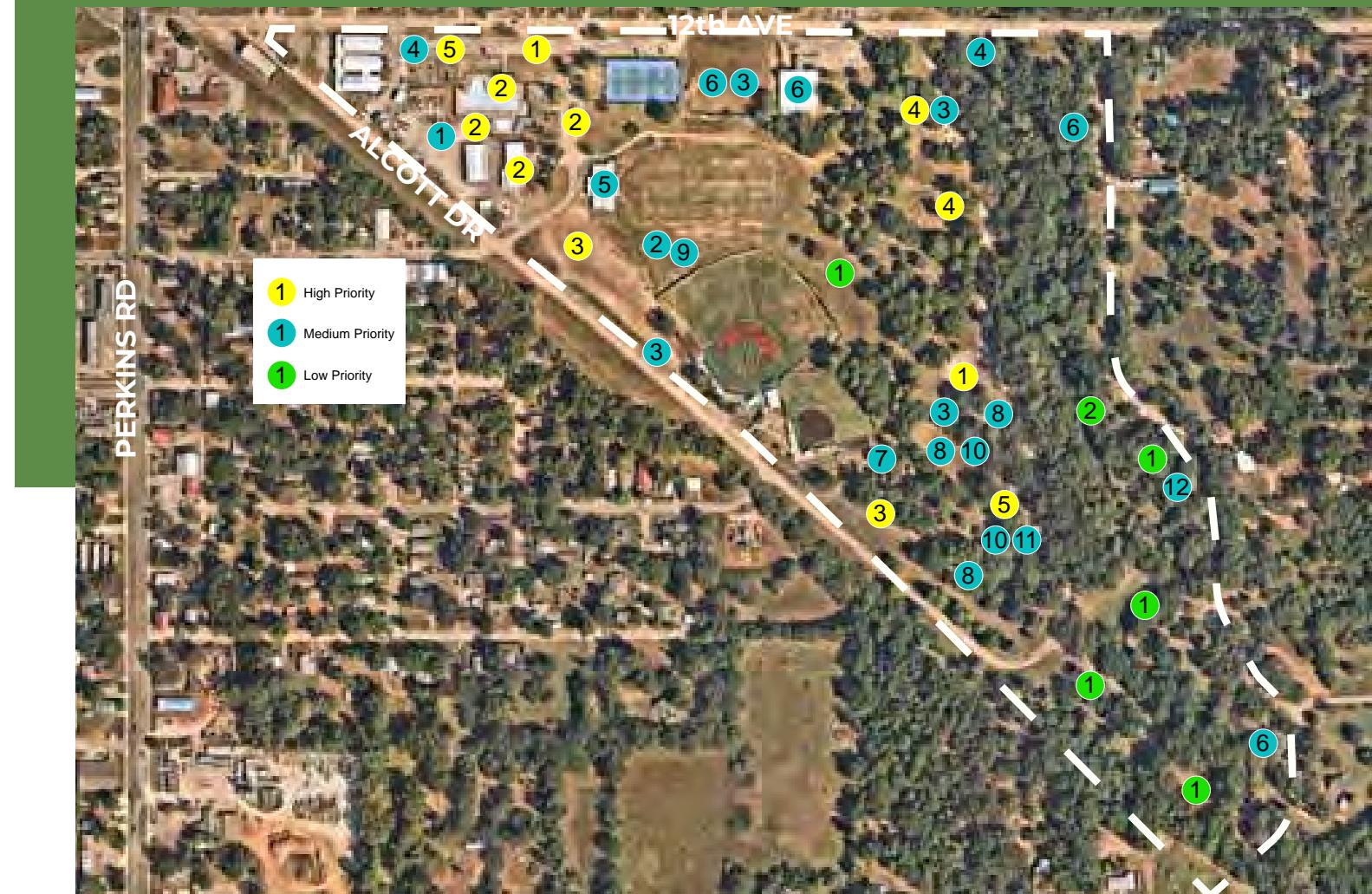
*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.



SHELTER NEAR PLAYGROUND OPEN FIELD

PARKING LOT

PLAYGROUND



Hoyt Grove

Community Park

This is another beautiful park surrounding a creek, with large mature trees throughout. The Disc Golf course is popular and very well used. But this park is underutilized and largely inaccessible. The bridge at the park entrance is not ADA compliant. A paved trail extends about 650 linear feet into the park and then stops. While the only real use for the park is the disc golf course, there are large amounts of open space that is mowed regularly. This mowing could be significantly reduced by adding wildflower areas.

Size: 48.53 acres
Location: 1008 E 12th Ave.

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Practice Baseball Field (not used)	1
18 Hole Disc Golf	1
Parking Lot	1
Pedestrian Bridges	3
Portion of Kameoka Trail	1



PRACTICE BASEBALL FIELD

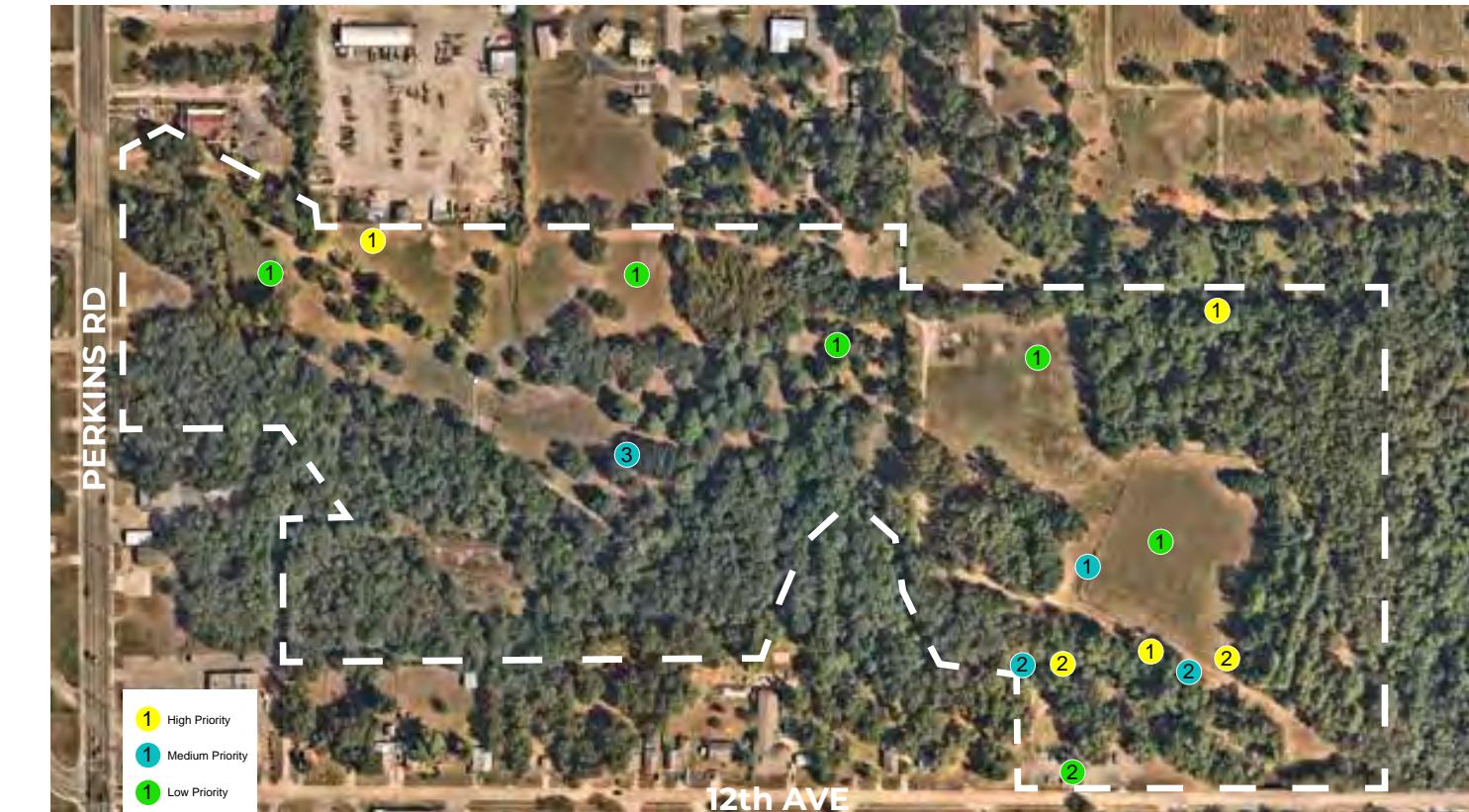


COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC MEETING

**Criterion Score
50, FAIR**

Public Survey
2% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
1.5% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Construct additional 3700+/- linear feet to make a closed loop trail. This would be a good project to be funded through the Recreational Trails Grant, administrated through the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department.
2. Replace pedestrian bridge.

Medium Priority

1. Remove the fencing at the baseball field which is not used.
2. Add trash receptacles, dog waste stations and benches.
3. Add picnic tables.

Lower Priority*

1. Part of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.
2. Resurface and restripe parking lot.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.



PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE



DISC GOLF COURSE

Ingham

Neighborhood Park

This is a beautiful park with many mature trees, but very little apparent use. The playground is not used much—the neighborhood is mostly owner-occupied with few children. There are two playgrounds at the new Westwood Elementary school just 2 blocks away which can serve the children in the area.

A channelized stream cuts off the northeast side of the park. This park would be included in parks to be sold, except the slope would make it hard to develop.

Size: 1.4 acres
Location: W 4th Ave and S Ridge Dr

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Playground	1
Bottle Fill Station	1
Free Library	1
Benches	3
Trash Receptacle	1
Park Sign	1



WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATION

INGHAM
W 4th Ave and S Ridge Dr
1.4 acres

AMENITIES
Playground
Drinking Fountain
Benches/tables
Stream
Lending Library

Was an element of a biological park. Could be transformed to teach about environmental habits and care.

Signs

Comments received during public meeting

**Criterion Score
67, FAIR**

**Public Survey
0.4% chose this as their most visited park**

**Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park**



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Replace safety surfacing. Recommend unitary play surfacing.

Medium Priority

1. Add gazebo/shelter for neighborhood events.

Lower Priority*

1. Part of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32.



ACCESS RAMP TO SWINGS



CHANNELIZED STREAM



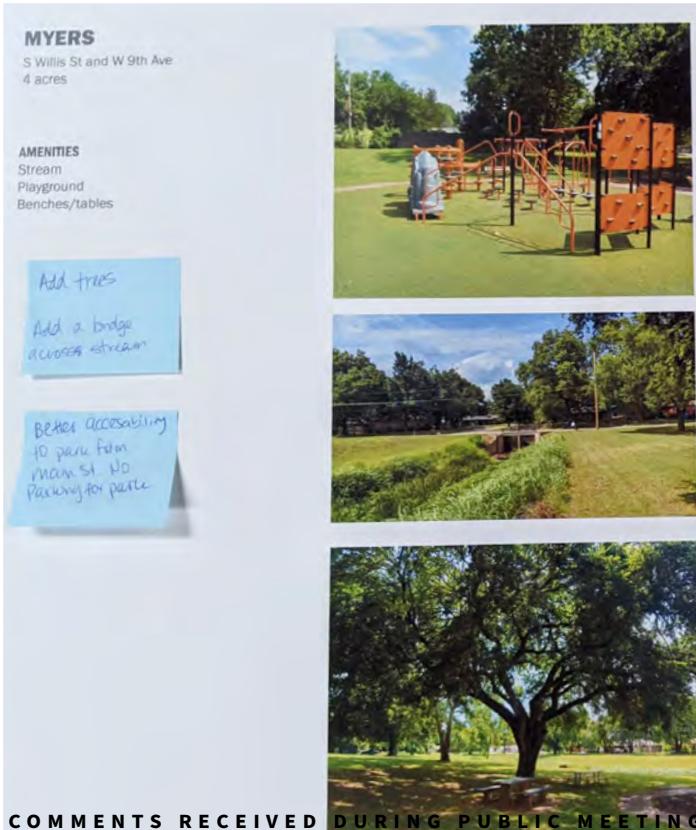
PLAYGROUND

Myers

Neighborhood Park

Size: 4.02 acres
Location: Corner of S Ridge Dr. & W 9th Ave.

This is a well-used park in a nice neighborhood, however the southern half of the park is not usable because it follows a creek with a steep embankment. The park runs on both sides of a creek that is not well-maintained and has lots of weeds and tall grass around it. The southern half of the park is unusable. The park floods. The playground is well used, but needs new turf surfacing. The park has lots of mature trees.



Facilities

Type	Quantity
Playground	1
Swing Set	1
Picnic Table	2
Benches	1
Trash Receptacle	1
Lift Station	1

Criterion Score
54, FAIR

Public Survey
0.5% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Replace surfacing at the playground. Recommend unitary play surfacing.
2. Add ADA parking and walk on south side to improve accessibility.

Medium Priority

1. Add shelters for neighborhood events, one on east and one on the west.
2. Convert west and south sides to a natural wildflower areas to reduce mowing.

Sanborn Lake

Metropolitan Park

Size: 111.8 acres

Location: 2020-1 W Airport Rd.

Sanborn is a park that has three distinct areas:

The western section has three adult softball fields, restrooms, concessions and a gravel parking lot which is also used as overflow parking for the airport. The eastern section has 2 softball fields, a restroom and concession building which appears well used.

Further to the south, down a gravel road is a small lake with nature trails and a small gravel parking area. This is a beautiful area--one of the hidden gems in the Stillwater park system. Unpaved walking trails encircle the lake where birds and wildlife are plentiful. One could imagine they are miles from the city, surrounded by native trees and wildflowers. The dam on the south end of the lake leaks, but caution should be taken; repair of the dam might cause destruction to the habitat that should be preserved. The Friends of Sanborn Park have a nature camp at this location annually.

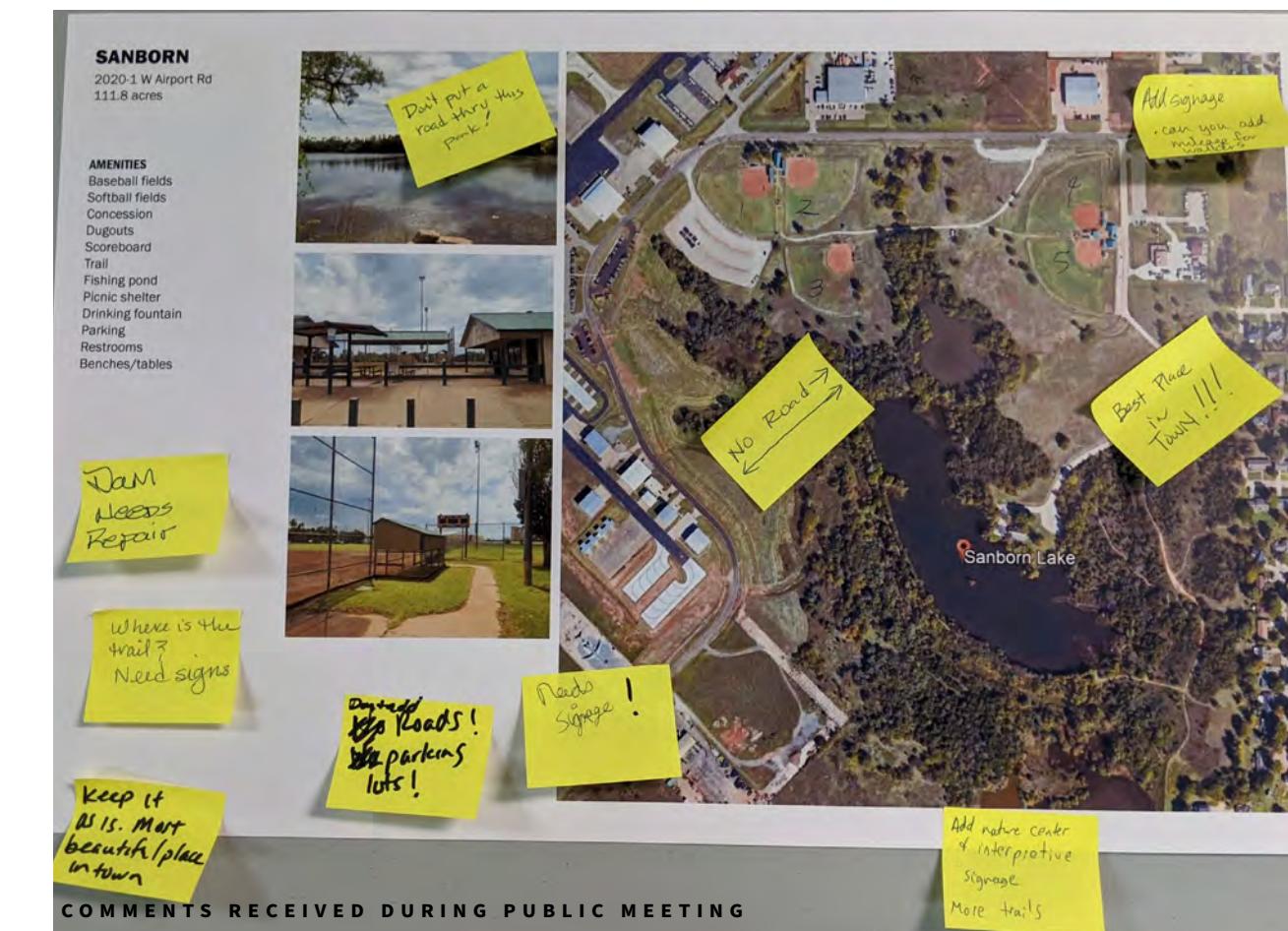
However, a new road is planned which will largely make this park obsolete. The proposed location of the road is shown. Resulting from this road construction will be the loss of the three softball fields on the west. These fields, which were originally constructed with Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) must be rebuilt. An agreement with the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department is ongoing to replace them.

What can't be rebuilt is Lake Sanborn, a natural pond and wetland. This special wetland is providing food and habitat for fish and wildlife, and it helps clean water and preserve shorelines. It should be preserved. During the research and development of this master plan, it was agreed that the pond and wetland would be surveyed and designated a conservation area for preservation. This would guarantee that future development would not disturb the pond and wetland area.

Criterion Score
41, POOR

Public Survey
3% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
4.3% chose this as their favorite park



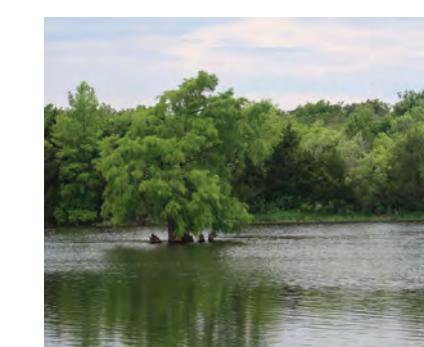
CONCESSIONS STAND



SHELTER



SANBORN LAKE



SANBORN LAKE



DUGOUT



BENCH AT SANBORN LAKE



BASEBALL FIELD



SANBORN LAKE

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Baseball	2
Softball	3
Restroom	2
Concession Stand	2
Parking Lots	2
Lake	
Hiking Trails	

Sanborn Lake, continued

Key Needs

High Priority

1. Survey the wetland and pond and designate it is a conservation area for preservation.
2. Monitor the construction of the road, to assure compliance with the Clean Water Act and to all state and local regulations and to ODOT standards for road and bridge construction, including best management practices for erosion control and the control of construction debris, so that damage to this fragile environment is prevented.
3. Construct a new sports complex to replace the fields lost when the new road is constructed. See Chapter 6.
4. Transfer the western portion of the park to the airport for parking

Medium Priority

1. Convert the area around the lake to a nature park similar to Martin Nature Park in Oklahoma City, with native grasslands and treed areas with trails add interpretive signage to educate the public about preservation and native areas.
2. Add a large shelter with parking, which can be rented out for various venues.

Lower Priority*

1. Evaluate the leaking dam. There is concern that repair of the dam would require that all trees would need to be removed from it. If so, the beauty and appeal of the pond and trails will be destroyed. So, detailed evaluation of options should be determined.
2. Replace the park sign, which is illegible.
3. Part of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.

Future Considerations

1. Pave the road to the lake.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32



Southern Woods

Community Park

Size: +/- 7.04 acres
Location: 600 W 12th Ave.

There is a lot going on in Southern Woods Park. This is a fairly large park, but it is divided by roads and a drainage channel that split the park. When roads divide a park, they offer the opportunity for pedestrian-vehicle conflict.

The park is unorganized and needs updating. The newest improvements made at the park include a playground and a splash pad on the eastern corner of the park. This is very popular and in good condition, but it lacks parking and easy access.

An existing parking lot at 11th and Hester does not have sidewalks to connect it to any of the site amenities. The softball field and shelter appear well-used, but the shelter needs upgrading. A majority of the park is in a flood plain. The dog park on the south is not of sufficient size (especially the small dog area). It is a very popular feature of the park, but it should be relocated and improved. The restroom and concession building is placed convenient to the field.



Criterion Score
64, FAIR

Public Survey
5% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
1.6% chose this as their favorite park

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Splash Pad	1
Playground	1
- Large structure	1
- Small structure	2
- Swings	6
- Restroom	1
- Shelter	1
(2 tables)	
Shade Structure (4 Tables, 2 Grills)	1
Softball Field	1
Basketball	1
Dog Park	1
Multipurpose Trail	1
Parking Lots	3
Restrooms/Concession	1



Southern Woods, continued

Key Needs

High Priority

1. Add a fence along 12th Ave. between Hester and Knoblock St. to prevent children running out onto 12th Ave.
2. One easy way to unify this park is to remove roads not needed. By removing S. Hester St. From 11th Ave south, the parking lot can more easily serve the play areas without concern of children running across the road. The southern portion of Hester can be turned into a small parking lot, also convenient to the playground.
3. New 90 degree parking on the west side of Knoblock St. will also help with access to the playground and splashpad.
4. Purchase the lot shown which is north of the parking lot.
5. This would allow removal of W 10th Ave. between S. Washington St. and S. Ramsey St is recommended to open up the area to become more parklike and create larger green space.
6. Renovate or replace the restrooms
7. New sidewalks throughout the park would connect new parking to site amenities.

Medium Priority

1. The purchased lot (4, above) will accommodate a new large dog park. Fence the area with approximately equal sizes for large and small dogs. This offers the opportunity to switch sides periodically, which allows the lawn in the field with small dogs to rest and rejuvenate. Add shade shelters, trash receptacles, dog waste receptacles, benches, frost-free water hydrant and cute dog 'toys' on each side.
2. The existing dog park should be returned to T-Ball games by removing the trees and would then come under SASA maintenance and control.
3. Upgrade the existing shelter and amenities
4. Add a large shelter between the splash pad and playground that can be rented out.
5. Replace safety surfacing at the playground

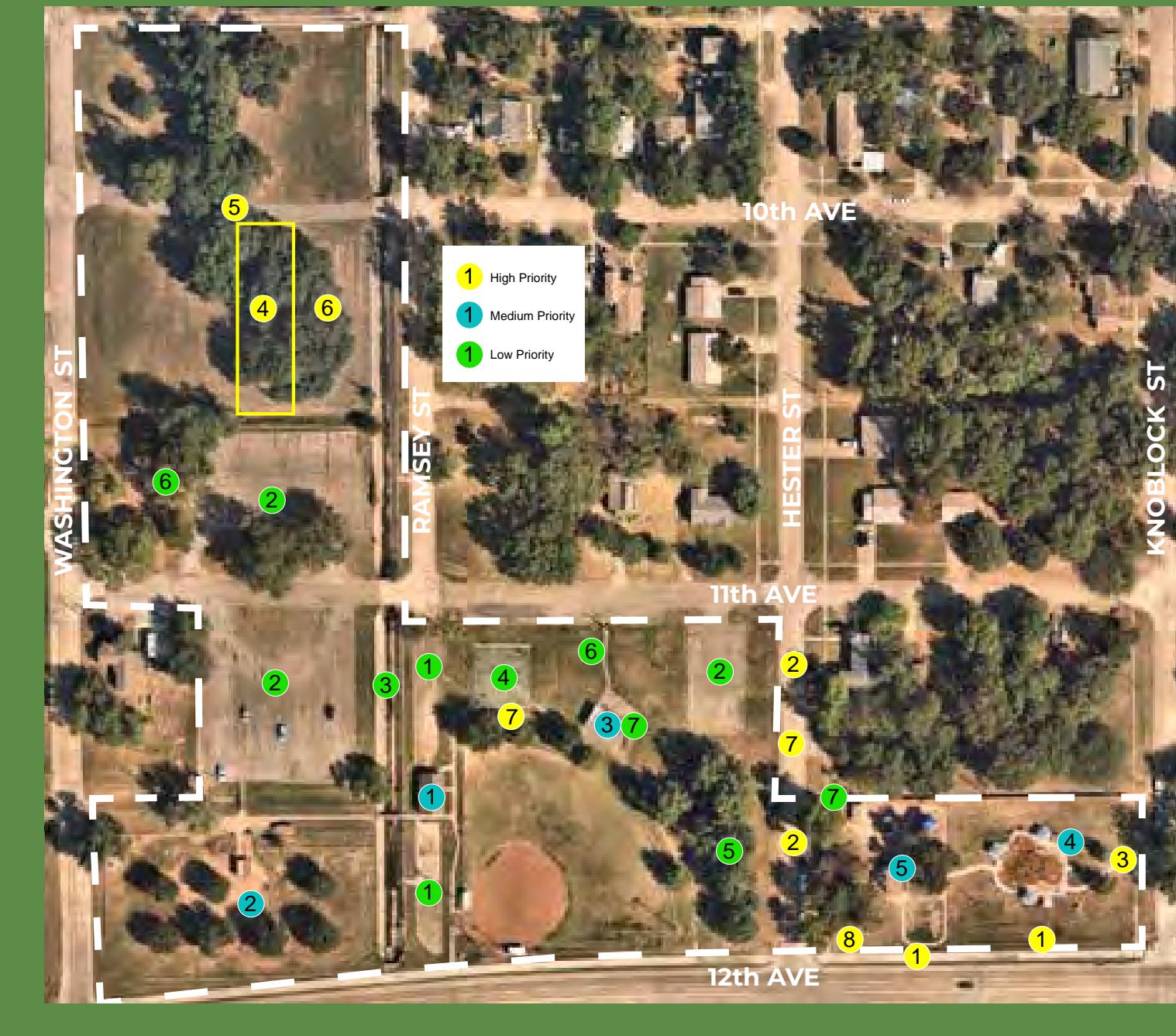
Lower Priority*

1. Remove the paved portion of Ramsey Street, south of 11th Ave. for aesthetic reasons.
2. Re-stripe parking lots
3. Add a pedestrian bridge across the drainage channel for park users
4. Repair, paint and stripe existing basketball court.
5. Part of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.
6. Add bike racks, benches, and water bottle fill stations.
7. Remove and replace signs at shelters

Future Consideration

1. When additional flood plain land is acquired, add parking from the north of the splash pad so people don't need to cross the street. Orient the play area entrance to enter from the north.
2. Acquire additional land as it becomes available, and abandon more roads within the park to make it more parklike and unified.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32



OPEN FIELD



DOG PARK



BASKETBALL COURT



SHELTER & TABLES

Strickland

Community Park

Size: 12.27 acres
Location: N Main St. & W Hall Fame Ave.

This is a very nice park with lots to do. The park is framed by a stream on the west and south and it is visible and easily accessed from Main Street on the west and accessed by East Virginia Avenue on the South. A new universally accessible playground has recently been added to the site, along with a shelter, a single restroom, grill and benches. A skate park and pump track are also new and in good condition.

There is a railroad track along the east side that might be included in a rails to trails project that the City of Stillwater is pursuing.

Facilities

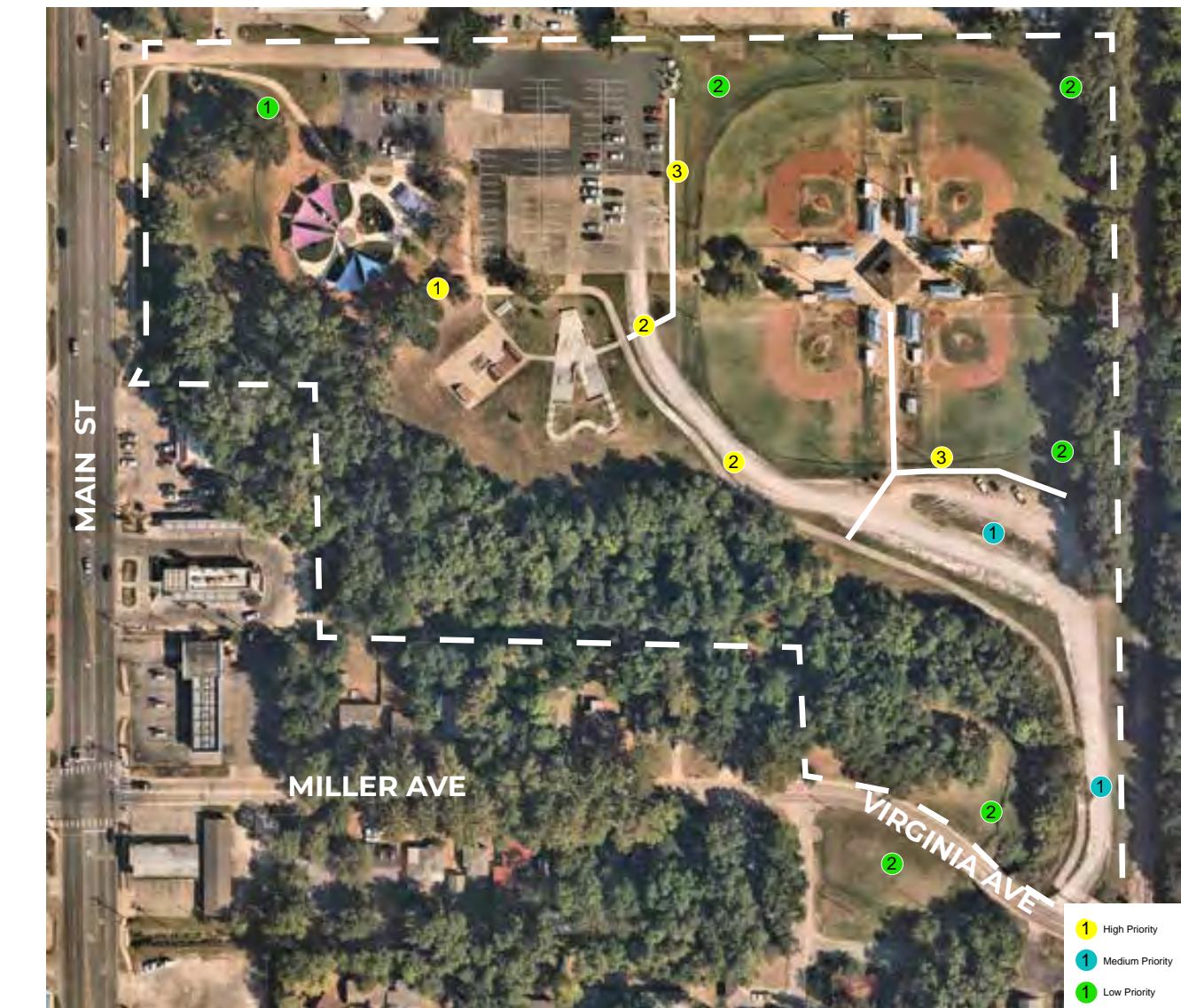
Type	Quantity
Playground	1
- Large Structure	1
- Shelter	1
- Tables	4
- Restrooms	1
- Grill	1
Skatepark	1
Multi-Purpose Trail	1
Baseball Fields	4
- Restroom	1
- Concessions	1
Parking Lot	1
EV Charging Station	1



Criterion Score
91, EXCELLENT

Public Survey
10% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
6.7% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Add on to the restroom to include both a men's and women's side. The size of the park and the amount of improvements justifies the construction of a full restroom facility.
2. Remove the road that connects the two parking lots. This road is currently used as a shortcut through by non-park users. It creates conflict between vehicle traffic and park users. If removed, it will create a safer environment for children.
3. Add paved sidewalks to connect site uses with parking lots.

Medium Priority

1. The gravel parking lot and access drive to Virginia should be paved and striped.

Lower Priority*

1. Add a story walk near the playground.
2. Part of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32

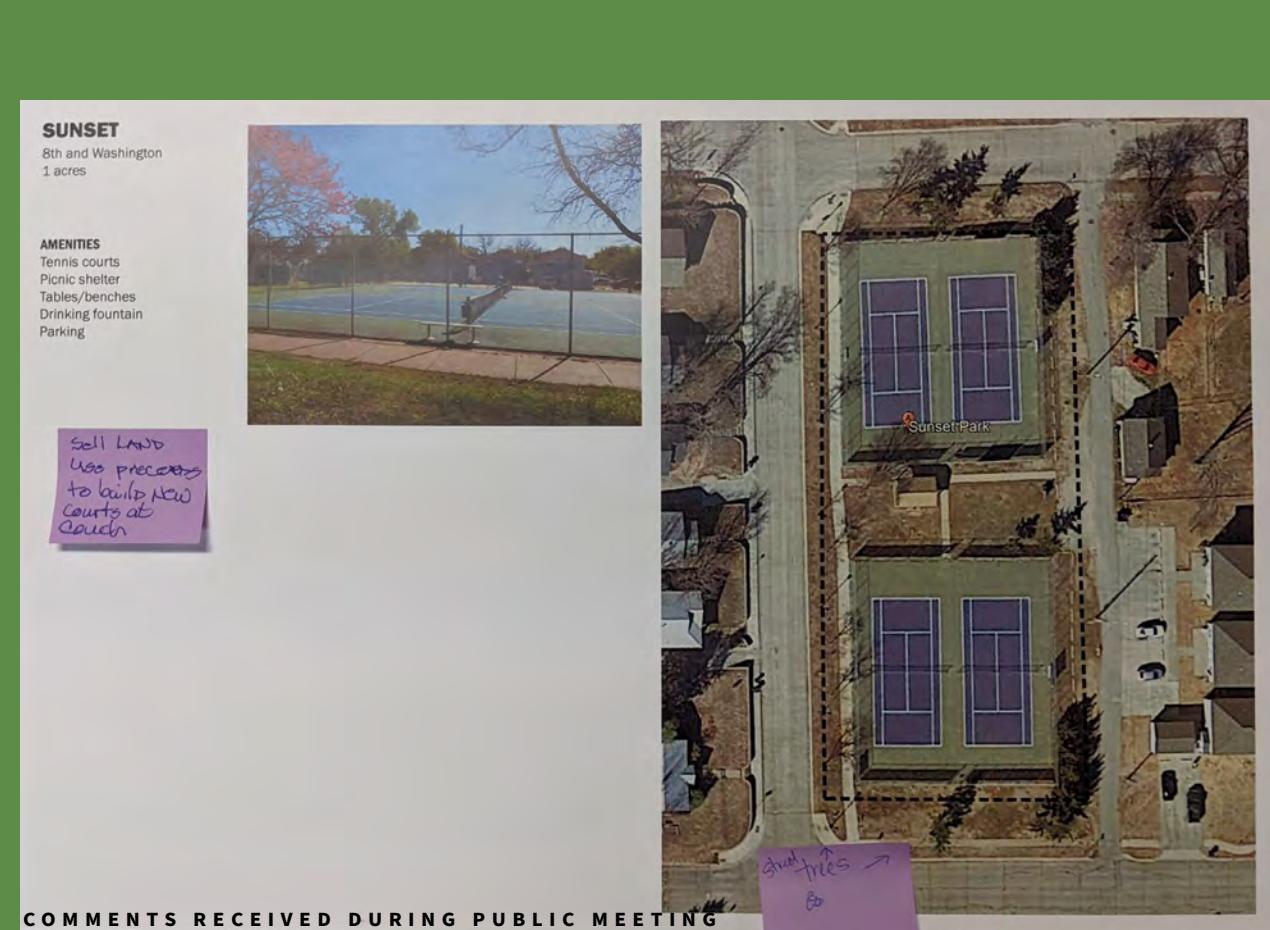
Sunset

Neighborhood Park

Size: 1 acre
Location: W 8th Ave. & Washington St.

This park provides tennis court use only. At one time, this was a popular use, but with the new tennis courts at Couch Park, most people go there and these are not highly used. The condition of the courts is not good, and to build new courts elsewhere would cost the same as what it would cost to renovate these courts.

The park is surrounded by sidewalks on the south and west and has grass parking on the east. People park across the street to the south. There is no ADA access within the park and parking is limited. This park could be sold with proceeds used to improve other parks.



Criterion Score
49, POOR

Public Survey
0.4% chose this as
their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their
favorite park

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Tennis	4
Street Parking	
Shelter	1
Tables	2
Drinking	1
Fountain	



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Sell this park. It is in a location that is highly valuable to surrounding properties, either for parking or for further development. The opportunity to sell this park is good, and should be pursued. Funds received from the sale of this park should be invested in other park improvements.

Tower

Mini Park

Size: 0.83 acres
Location: S Walnut St. & W University Ave.

This park mainly provides basketball opportunities. While basketball courts were once a popular feature, the fraternity and sorority houses build their own courts, and these are largely unused. This park is located close to the OSU campus & the land has high value.

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Basketball	2
Street Parking	
Picnic Table	1

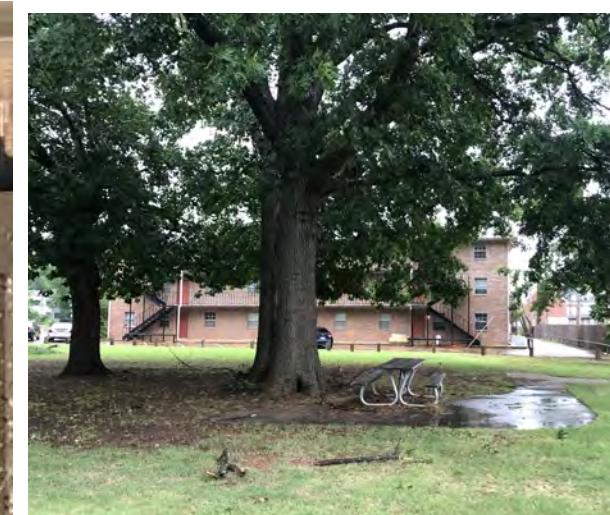
This park could be sold with proceeds used to improve other parks. There are other neighborhood parks nearby to serve the community.



Criterion Score
48, POOR

Public Survey
0% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Remove the basketball courts.
2. Sell the park or swap the land for other land owned by the University.

Medium Priority

1. Hopefully, require preservation of the large Oak trees on site.

West

Mini Park

Size: 0.34 acres
Location: Corner of Charles Dr. & 4th Pl.

This is a standard homeowner association park which is used only by the neighborhood. The distant location of this park makes it a very high cost for the City of Stillwater to maintain.

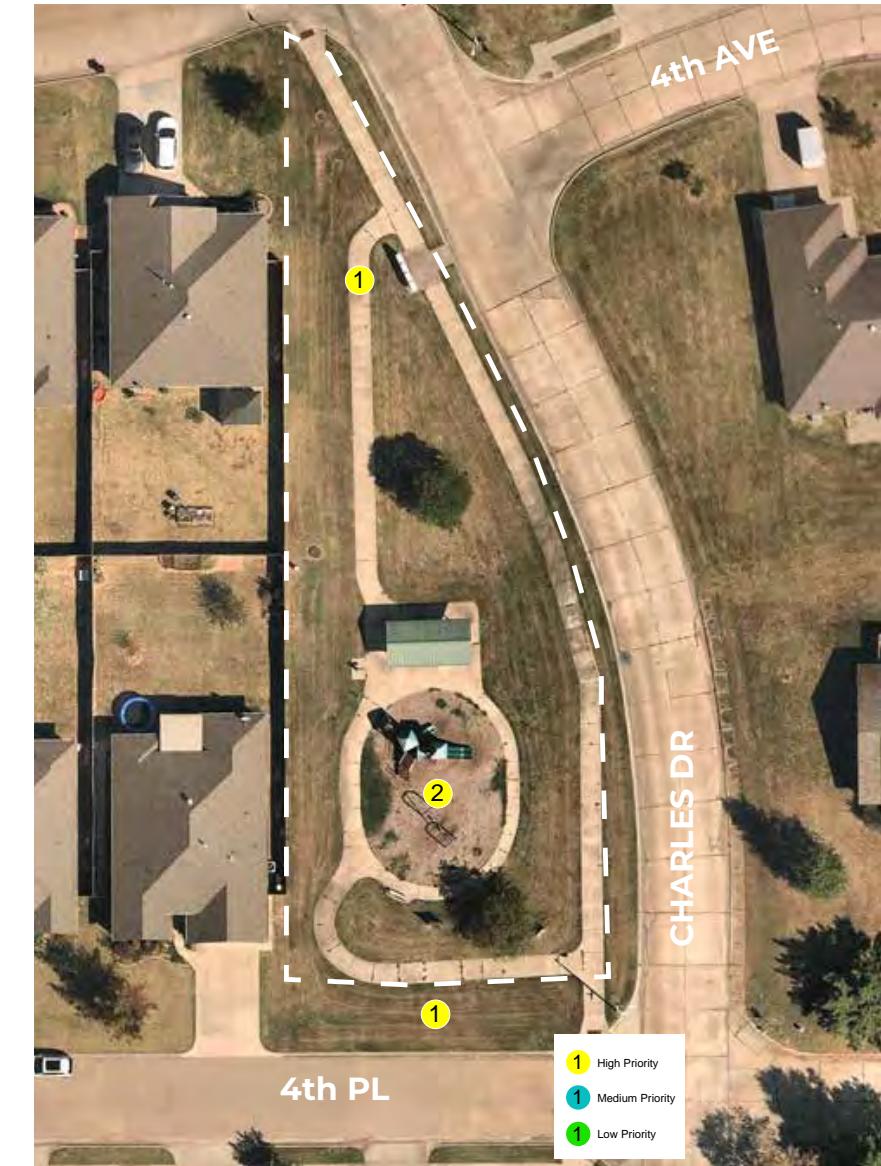
Facilities

Type	Quantity
Playground	1
- Swings	2
- Play Structure	1
Shelter	1
- Tables	2
- Drinking Fountain	1
- Hose Spigot	1

Criterion Score
79, GOOD

Public Survey
1.4% chose this as their most visited park

Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park



Key Needs

High Priority

1. This park should be sold or given to the neighborhood so that future maintenance would be their responsibility.
2. If the sale does not appear to be acceptable, remove the playground



Whittenberg

Community Park

Size: 78.02 acres
Location: 5500 N Washington St.

Criterion Score
51, FAIR

Public Survey
2% chose this as their most visited park

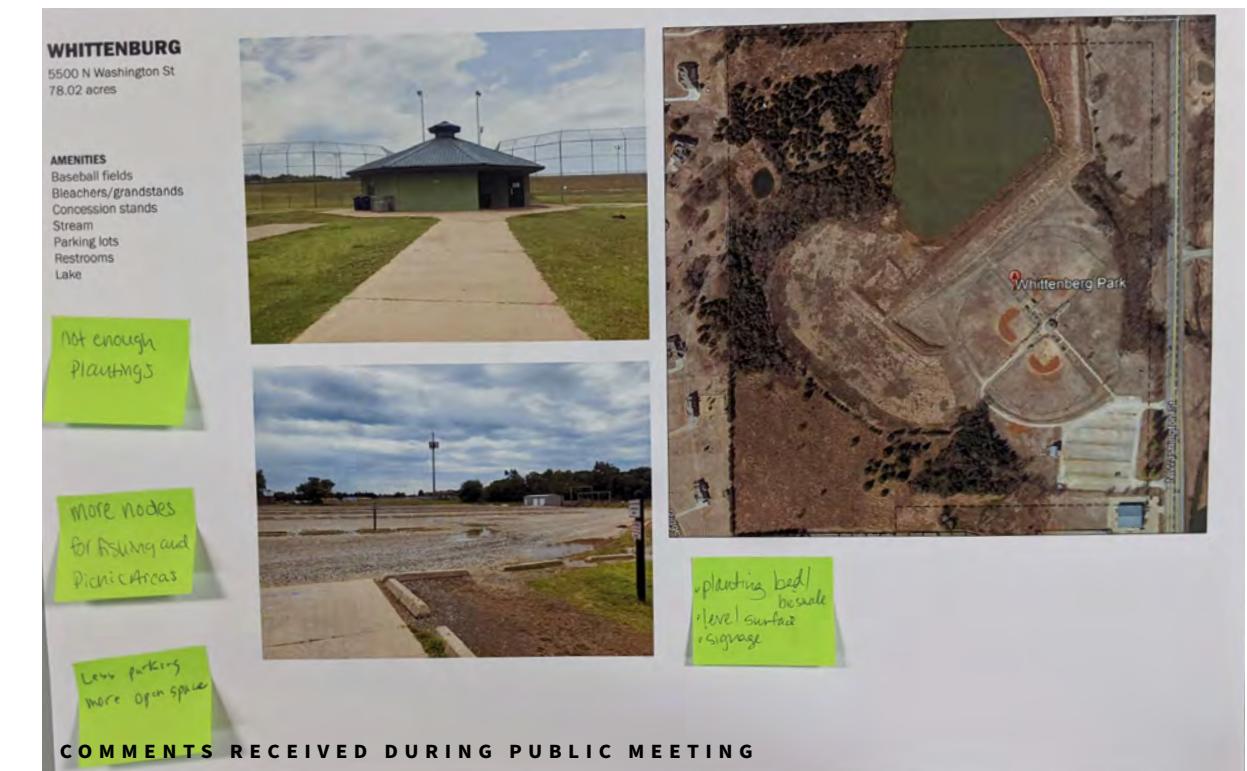
Public Survey
0% chose this as their favorite park

This is a very large park on the far north part of Stillwater. The baseball fields are in good condition and used for football in the winter. This is the best place in Stillwater for sledding in winter. There are large areas of unused land being mowed frequently both to the west of the fields and also to the northeast. There are still more acres of land both south and north of the mowed land that is not maintained or used for any purpose. The Maintenance and compost facilities are unattractive.

This park could present a good location for additional soccer fields if needed in the future. It would require an investment to construct new parking lots on the northeast and southwest parts of the park. However, since the park is located in the far north of Stillwater, this investment doesn't seem warranted at this time.

In the meantime, these areas could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing. Or, this land could be sold. If sold, the maintenance of the park would be reduced and proceeds could be used to fund improvements to other parks.

The neighborhood to the west is a high-end residential area. The location of the property, near the golf course and surrounding a small lake, would make this land valuable to a developer (shown outlined in yellow). On the northeast, along N. Washington St. the land could be developed for either residential or commercial use. The lake view location (outlined in yellow) is near the golf course, and on the route to Tulsa, with a high traffic volume. Most of the land is not in flood prone areas (shown shaded in blue).



RESTROOMS & CONCESSION



FIELDS

Facilities

Type	Quantity
Baseball	3
- Restrooms	1
- Concessions	1
Sledding Hill	1
Gravel Parking Lot	1
Storage Facility	1
Lake	1



PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE

Whittenberg, continued

Key Needs

High Priority

1. This land could be sold for residential use.

Medium Priority

1. Add a playground east of fields.
2. The park sign is not visible and should be replaced

Lower Priority*

1. Clean up or screen the maintenance/compost facility.
2. Remove planting beds or redesign beds at both entrance drives to reduce maintenance.
3. Large areas of this park could be planted with wildflowers to reduce mowing.

*Includes general items needed in all parks. Refer to page 32



ENTRY SIGN AND PLANTING BED



PARKING



Facilities Inventory and Discussion

The plan team also conducted inventories of Stillwater's Recreation Facilities. These include:

The Armory
Municipal Pool
Kameoka Trail

Community Center
Prairie Arts Center
Senior Center

Both the physical building/facility were reviewed along with operations. The following pages summarize the findings and recommendations.

Key needs are identified for each facility and broken out by High, Medium and Low priorities. High priority needs are those which are critical to safety, accessibility, or security, or those which would provide functional improvements to highly utilized facility components. Medium priority needs are those which increase the value or usability of a facility, some of which could be accomplished by existing Parks staff or volunteers. Low priorities are those best achieved in the long-term. Improvements to facilities can be done out of sequence, depending on funding availability.



Armory

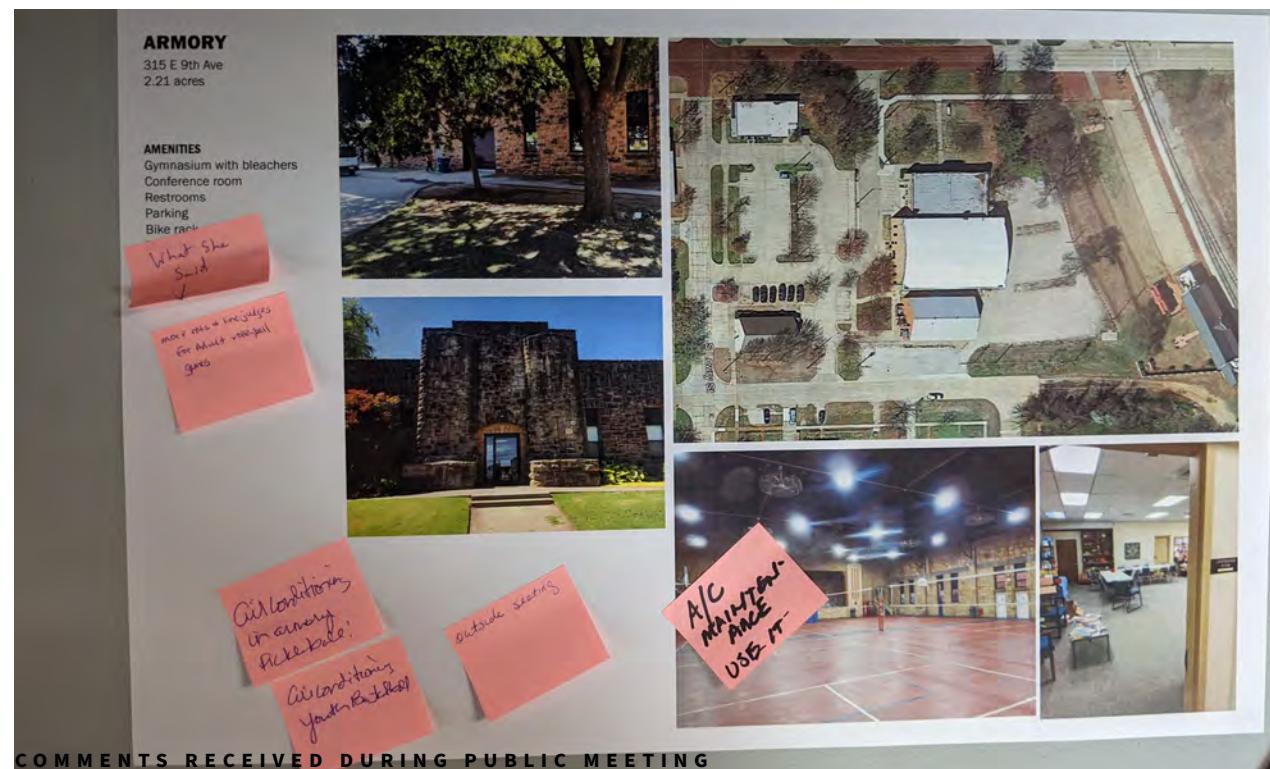
Location: 3930 W 6th Ave.

The Armory Recreation Center is an old National Guard armory that was built as part of the WPA efforts of the 1930's. The building contains a gym area with a stage that is used for seating, offices in the front of the building, a small kitchen, restrooms, and a large storage area in the basement that was once a functioning indoor shooting range.

Directly behind the building is located the Stillwater Employees Fitness Center that is operated by the city's Human Resources Department. This facility has a significant number of cardio and weight equipment, two changing areas, and two shower/bathrooms. It is also of note that it is available to staff 24 hours a day through pin-pad access.

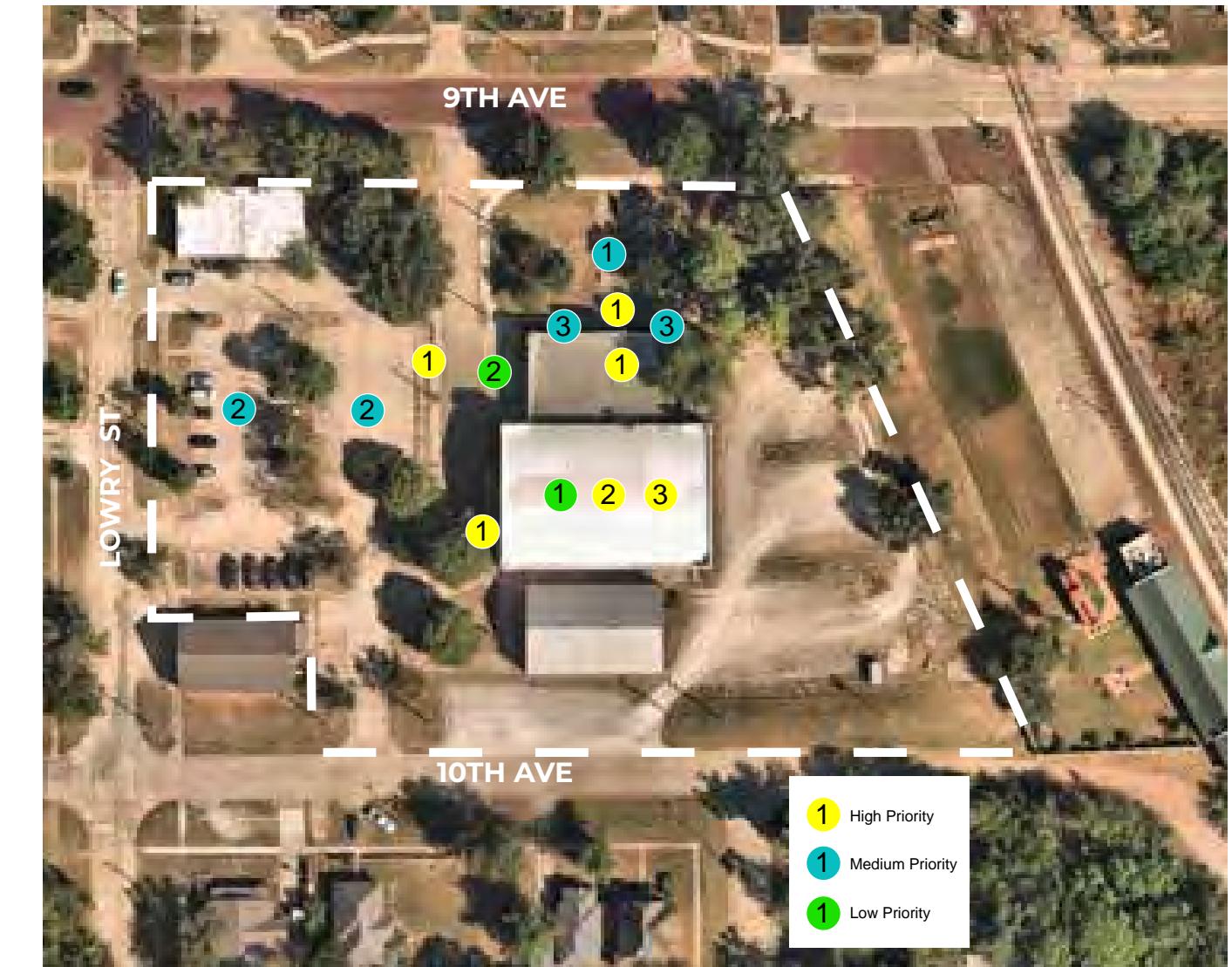
The building is operated and maintained by SASA, who provides programming of the building and has it open for drop-in use as well. SASA has their offices in the center and stores much of their sports equipment in the basement. The city's Community Resources Manager has their office in the center as well.

The facility should continue to be operated and maintained by SASA. The Community Resources office should be moved out of this facility to the Community Center and SASA encouraged to utilize the full building for their offices and other community programs. This may require renovation of the area in front of the gym.



COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC MEETING

Public Survey
26% chose this as their most visited facility



Key Needs

High Priority

1. Improve access and ADA accessibility issues, especially at building entrances and restrooms.
2. Add air conditioning to the gym.
3. Re-roof and insulate the building.

Medium Priority

1. Replace north walk to make evenly spaced stair risers or make the building accessible from that entrance. Remove the bench from front sidewalk.
2. Restripe parking lots, especially accessible spaces.
3. Redesign planting beds to require less maintenance.

Lower Priority

1. Power wash the building to remove mold and refresh the look.
2. Add bike rack.

Community Center

Location: 315 W 8th Ave.

The Community Center has 14 versatile, well-equipped rooms, plus the 710-seat Winfrey D. Houston Theater and the Lowry Activity Center (old gym and stage area) that is another prime event venue. There is a separate building, the Dining and Event Hall, that is immediately adjacent to the main center that houses the senior meal program. There are a variety of sizes of rooms as well as types of uses (dance/recreation) that are available. The lobby and lounge spaces in the building can also be used as pre-function space. There is also a small catering room in the center.

This is the primary city-operated facility that supports recreation functions, city wide events, city meetings, gatherings, and social service programs (senior lunch). There is a Community Center Manager, Facility Supervisor and Administrative Tech that are all full-time positions as well as part-time tech support, custodial and building technicians. In addition, work study students from OSU are also utilized.

There is a need for more storage in the building. It is worth noting that the second floor in the center cannot be utilized due to asbestos issues.

This facility has the ability to support more city and community based recreation programming and events and could be utilized as the primary hub for these activities. There is also the potential to locate the full senior center operation at this location.

The main entrance is at the back of the building. This entrance needs to be redesigned to create a more welcoming and accessible. The only existing accessible parking is on the east side of the building. There are nine parking spaces at the north entrance that are not accessible, even though they are labeled as such.

Indoor Facilities

Type	Quantity
Winfrey D. Houston Theater with 710 seats	1
Lowry Activity Center	1
Multipurpose Rooms	14
Dining and Event Hall	1
Catering Room	1

Outdoor Facilities

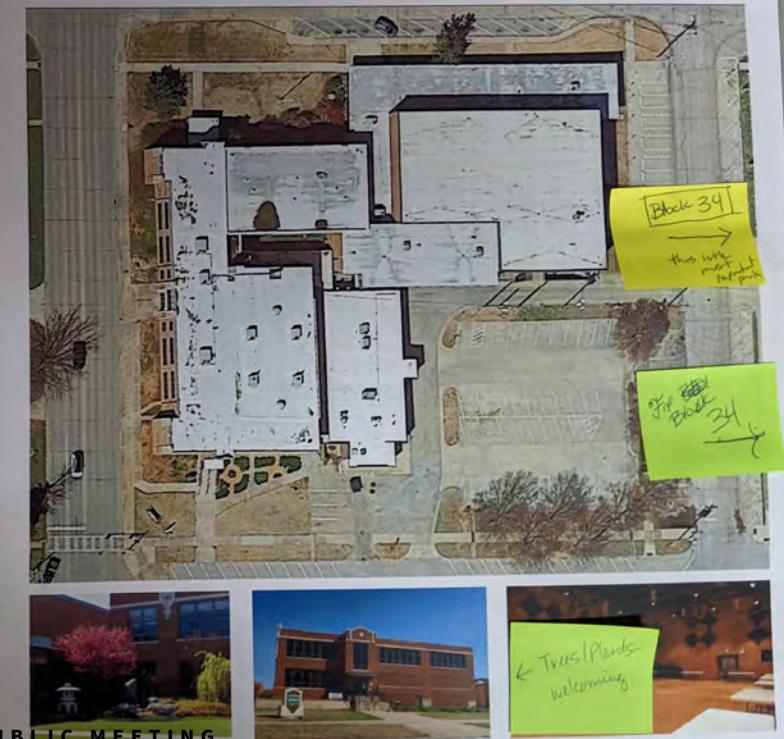
Type	Quantity
Japanese Garden	1
Display Garden	1
Parking Lot	1
OSU Bus Stop	1
On-street Parking	1

Public Survey
24% chose this as their most visited facility

COMMUNITY CENTER
315 W 8th Ave
2.5 acres

AMENITIES
14 rooms
710-seat Winfrey D. Houston Theater
Lowry Activity Center
Dining and Event Hall
Lobby
Catering kitchen
Gardens
Parking

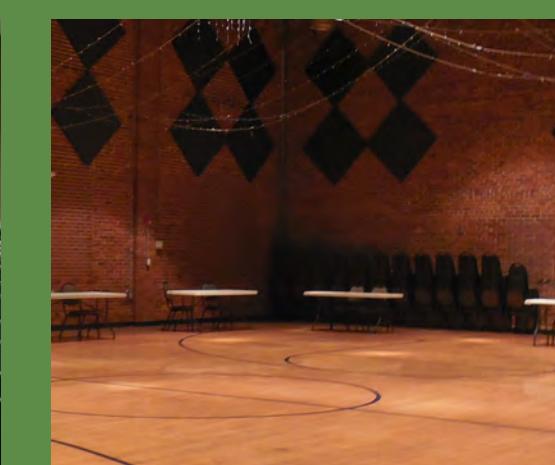
COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC MEETING



WINFREY D. HOUSTON THEATER



LOWRY ACTIVITY CENTER



Partnerships

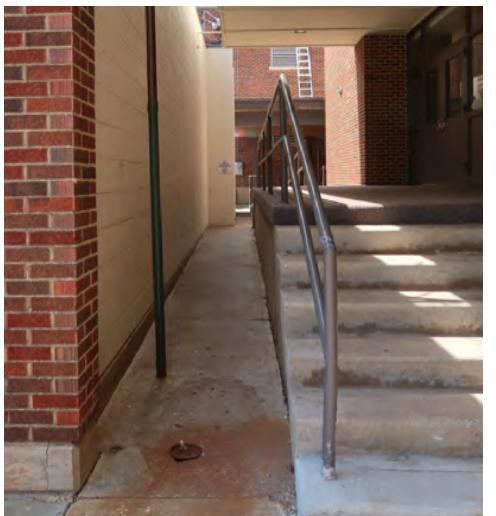
The City is responsible for the management and maintenance of the building but most all of the activities and events that take place in the facility are provided by other entities, or the facility is rented for community use. The City does conduct several special events out of the center.

The Stillwater Community Singers, Stillwater Community Band and Stillwater Jazz are primary program partners as well.

There is also Friends of Stillwater Community Center, Inc. that ensures the accessibility and affordability of the center.

The senior meal program is also provided by an outside agency, Project HEART.

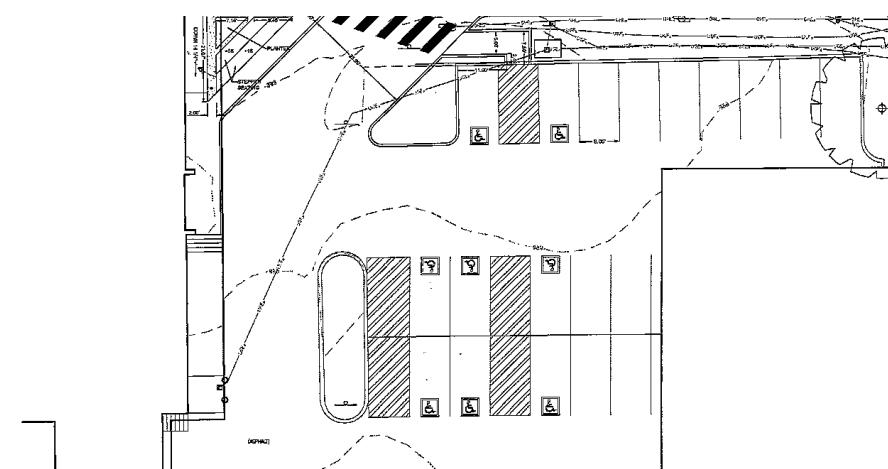
Community Center, continued



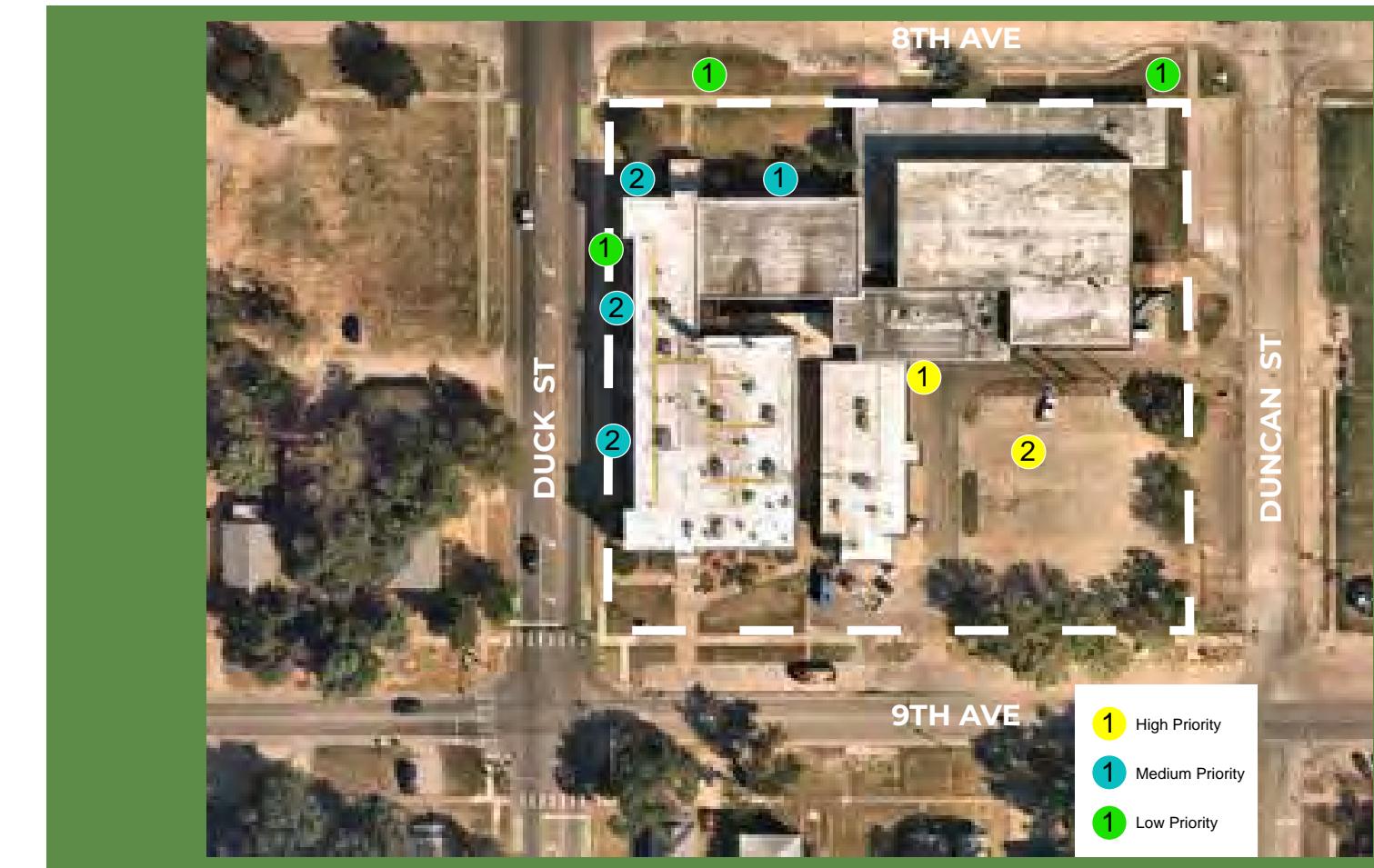
ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES AT ENTRANCES



RENDERING OF PROPOSED ENTRANCE CHANGES BY INTEGRATED ARCHITECTURE



PROPOSED PARKING IMPROVEMENTS BY GOSE AND ASSOCIATES



Key Needs

High Priority

1. This main entrance does not have functional ADA access and the entrance is hidden and unwelcoming. The south entrance porch, stair, and ramps should be removed and redesigned to make the building accessible and appear safe and welcoming.
2. Redesign and construct the parking areas to meet ADA and to support the new entrance. A proposed plan has been provided showing plans for the parking.
3. Certain areas of the building do not have hot water. Add hot water service throughout.

Medium Priority

1. The Japanese Garden is not well maintained. Contract out planting bed maintenance or redesign to reduce maintenance.
2. Redesign planting beds around the building to be low maintenance.

Lower Priority

1. Add street trees along 8th, 9th and Duck St.

Future Considerations

Senior recreation services should be consolidated into the Community Center to provide a central location for senior services plus reduce the cost of operation and staffing requirements.

Municipal Pool

Location: 801 E 12th Ave.

The pool has a traditional focus on swim team use with limited appeal to recreational swimming. There are two smaller slides that need to be renovated or replaced and a small wading pool, but this facility does not really have a strong attraction to youth or families.

Because of the age and condition of the pool, the aesthetics are less than ideal. As noted above, the conventional nature of the pool results in limited appeal to recreational swimmers. There is also limited shade and no direct access to grass areas inside the fence line.

Existing Outdoor Facility

- The pool has a traditional focus on long course swim team use with six 50-meter lanes
- Two smaller slides that need to be renovated or replaced
- Small wading pool for younger children
- Concession/restroom with a shaded seating area.



Public Survey
26% chose this as their most visited facility



CONCESSION AREA WITH SEATING



SLIDES

Key Needs

High Priority

1. Replace the pool with a new Aquatics Facility. Refer to Chapter 6.
2. If this is not planned soon, renovate or replace the two slides.
3. Redesign the drop-off area at the east parking lot to be more functional.

Partnerships

The pool is owned by the City but operated by the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma on a management contract. The YMCA manages the facility's operation, maintenance and programs. The City, as the owner, pays for pool chemicals and any long-term improvements and maintenance needs including the pool's two mechanical systems.

Prairie Arts Center

Location: 1001 S Duck St.

The City built the facility to replace the arts center that was part of the Senior Center. The facility includes spaces that support a wide array of arts programs. This includes an art shop, print studio, jewelry studio, pottery studio, painting area, classroom space that can be used for a variety of arts classes, a former glass blowing area and wood shop area, and a kitchen that is used more as a small classroom. The facility provides specific programming for the schools either on site or at the school buildings themselves.

A farmers' market is also conducted seasonally in the parking lot of the center twice a week. In addition, OSU also offers a series of special events as well as a yoga class out of the Prairie Arts Center.

Key Programming includes:

Adult	Youth
Art Partners	Art Partners
Pottery	Pottery
Printmaking	Art Academy
Photography	Art Camp
Drawing/Painting	Workshops
Jewelry	Silkscreen
Glass	Jewelry
Fiber Arts	Drawing/Painting
Parent/Teacher Resources	

Outdoor Facilities

Type	Quantity
Raised Garden Beds	1
Connection to Public Library	1
Parking Lot	1
Farmer's Market	1
Electric Car Station	1



COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC MEETING

Public Survey
24% chose this as their most visited facility



PLANTING AREA OUTSIDE BUILDING

Key Needs

Lower Priority

1. Plant street trees along W. 10th Ave and Duck St.
2. Add bike rack.

Partnerships

Even before the new center was constructed, there was a partnership in place with OSU to provide arts programs. In 2017, the city turned over management and operations of the Prairie Arts Center to OSU's Department of Art, Graphic Design and Art History. Since that time OSU has been responsible for all maintenance and operations of the center under a formal lease agreement. OSU also provides the programming that takes place in the center.

In 2005 the Friends of Multi Arts (FMAC) was formed to promote and support the Multi Arts Center (former name of the center) and they actually operated the center from 2012 until 2017. The center should continue to be operated by Oklahoma State University under the current operating agreement.

Kameoka Trail

This is a great trail system, which runs through Stillwater from Boomer Lake, south to Couch Park, although with a few major gaps. There are ongoing discussions with ODOT regarding creating a Rails-Trails project which would connect this trail through Stillwater.

The trail is 6.8 miles long and nearly continuous. It is typically 10' wide, except for some areas near Hoyt Grove park that are just 5' wide.

Key Needs

High Priority

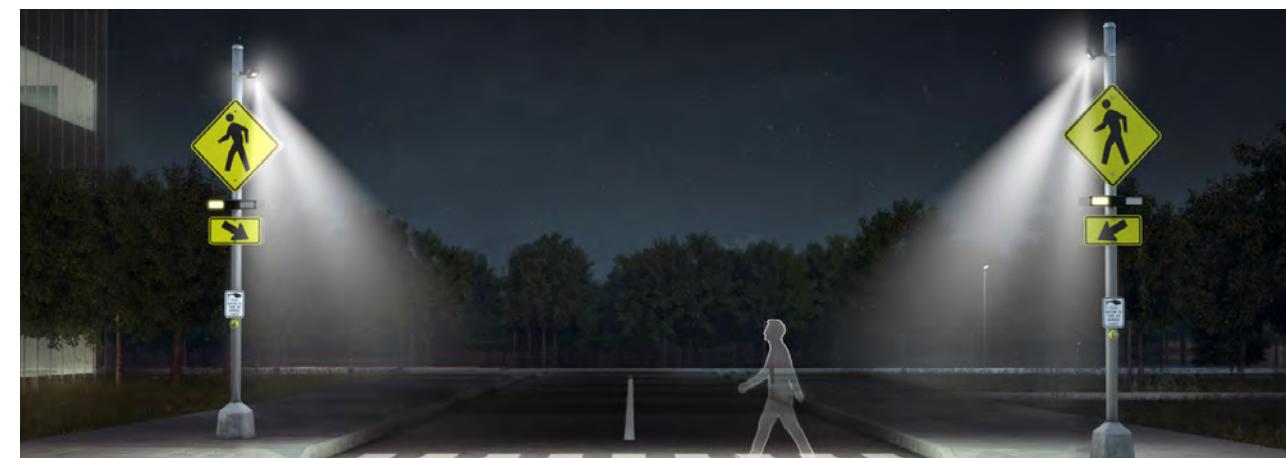
1. Create a safe crossing at 12th Street between Hoyt Grove and Couch Parks. Crossings should be built to Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards with a solar panel for wireless power, push button activation, led warning lights, pedestrian lighting and striping.
2. Create a safe crossing north of Boomer Lake across Airport Road. A center median and a pedestrian crossing pole will be required in the center of Airport Road to provide a safe crossing.
3. Fill gaps in the trail system and make all trails 10-foot wide for multi-use opportunities.

Medium Priority

1. Add trash receptacles and benches along the trail

Lower Priority

1. Where appropriate, plant wildflowers along the trail to reduce mowing.
2. Add shelters with solar lights.
3. Add wayfinding signage and mile markers.



EXAMPLE OF MUTCD STANDARD CROSSING. IMAGE FROM TAPCONET.COM



NORTH OF THE SENIOR CENTER ON E. 12TH AVE



NORTH OF BOOMER LAKE ACROSS AIRPORT ROAD

Senior Center

Location: 1015 E 12th Ave.

The center includes a large open community room as well as an adjoining game area. There is also a large kitchen (was once a commercial kitchen but now has more of a home orientation) and two smaller meeting/classrooms. The building is located in Couch Park and has its own parking lot.

The building was remodeled when the arts center moved into it's new facility (approximately 2001). This is a traditional senior center that is focused more on social and less active forms of recreation, with an emphasis on the older (75+) senior market. The center is operated by the City, and it supports senior activities and functions. There are two full time staff at the facility, a Senior Center Supervisor, and an Administrative Technician. There is one part-time staff. The center is open on weekdays from 9:30am until 4:30pm. There are limited programs consisting primarily of cards, low-impact exercise classes, line dancing, crafts, education, and movies. Most of the instructors are volunteers. The senior lunch program is offered at the Community Center by another organization.

The facility is underutilized. The center is only used for senior activities and averages about 50-75 people a day. There are not any evening or weekend uses or rentals of the center for non-senior activities. Many years ago, the center had more extensive programming and events but when staff was cut this was greatly reduced. There appears to be little to no marketing or promotion of the center or its programs at this time.

If the center is going to attract a broader segment of seniors and possibly be used for other basic recreation programs or even rentals, then there will need to be an upgrade to the surfaces and finishes in the building. This building should be leased or sold to another community organization for their use/management, preferably related to recreation. If Stillwater wants to serve their seniors, they need a better facility. Refer to Chapter 6, Park & Amenities Surplus & Acquisition.



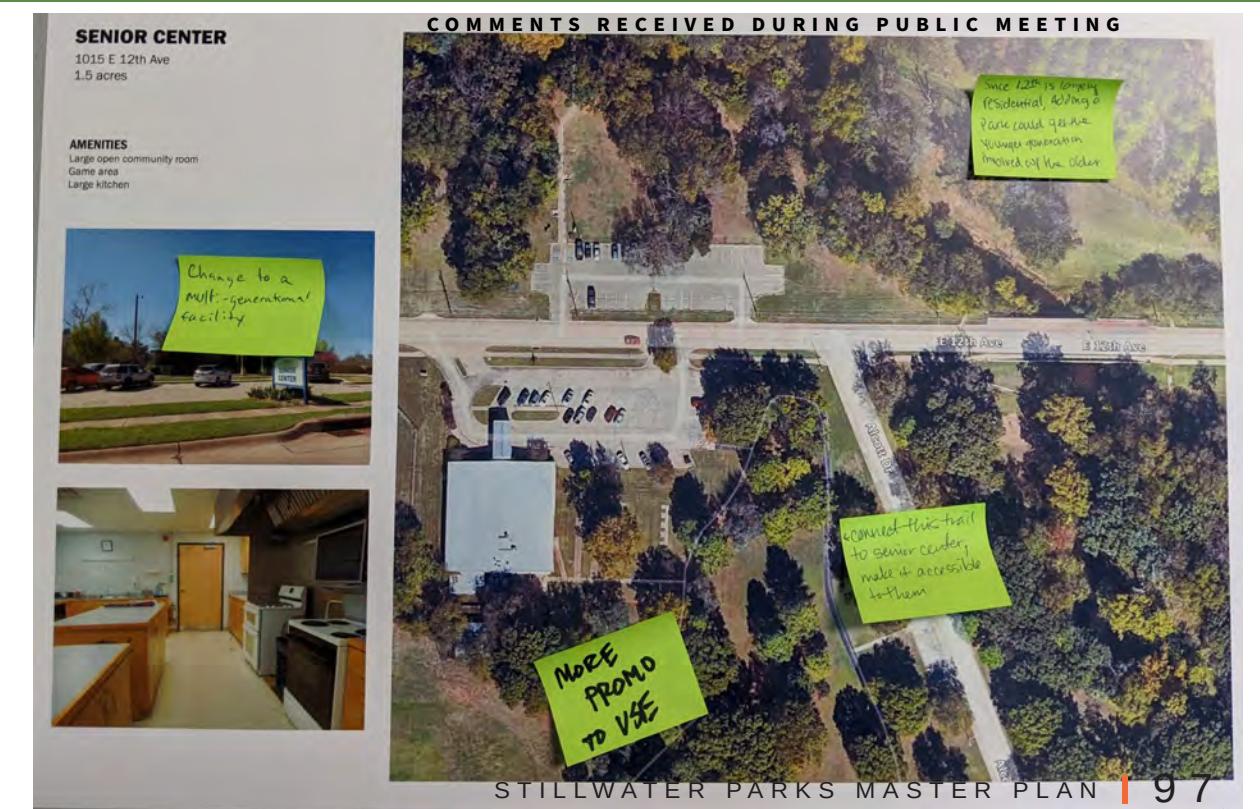
COMMUNITY ROOM



MEETING ROOM



OUTSIDE OF BUILDING



STILLWATER PARKS MASTER PLAN

Outreach Approach

The approach to outreach and engagement for the City of Stillwater Parks Master Plan is multifaceted and customized based on the desires of the city. We engaged stakeholders as well as cast a wider net to reach Stillwater residents and students. This approach ensures that the Master Plan captures the Vision of the community, as well as securing buy-in for the adoption and implementation of the plan.



The goals of the outreach efforts are as follows:

1. Understanding stakeholder concerns and desires
2. Hearing the public's concerns related to parks
3. Quantifying use and visitation of City of Stillwater parks
4. Gauging public support for parks and parks improvements
5. Assembling a clear picture of the community's preferences for parks in the future
6. Informing the public about the Master Plan

**P U B L I C
I N P U T**



The City of Stillwater maintains several important partnerships and relationships related to its Park's operations and maintenance. These include the following organizations:

- Stillwater Public Schools
- Visit Stillwater
- Lake McMurtry
- Downtown Stillwater
- Oklahoma State University
- Prairie Arts Center
- Stillwater Area Sports Association (SASA)
- Stillwater Chamber
- Interworks
- Meridian Technology Center

A Kick-off meeting was held on June 23, 2021, at the Community Center with Stakeholders, to introduce the project team, the project timeline, and get feedback on core issues and direction. In addition to the outside Stakeholders listed above, Stakeholders within the City of Stillwater were also engaged at this meeting. This included representatives from:

- Community Resources
- City Manager's Office
- Senior Center
- Public Works
- Planning
- Community Center
- Innovation Team
- Procurement

At this meeting the plan team heard that alumni want to come back to town and experience the sports they played but may not have the opportunity to utilize the offerings that are available because of current conditions. And there is a need to improve the quality of life for residents and students which in turn creates a draw for visitors. Things the stakeholders felt would improve the quality of life in Stillwater are trail connections, a safe pedestrian environment, performance venues in parks, and requirements of new residential development to include parks.

Much of the discussion at this meeting involved sports, as these activities are enjoyed by children and adults alike in Stillwater. Sports interests range from soccer, softball, basketball, baseball, volleyball, and a growing interest in pickleball.

There was vocal support for a multiuse sports complex that could accommodate various tournaments at once. While most thought this was needed, it was also noted that in the early 2000s an attempt to fund a sports complex facility was not supported by voters.

While Stillwater has many strong partnerships, stakeholders noted there are still opportunities to capitalize on through the university and Stillwater Public Schools. Many brought up the OSU Botanical Gardens as a potential partnership.

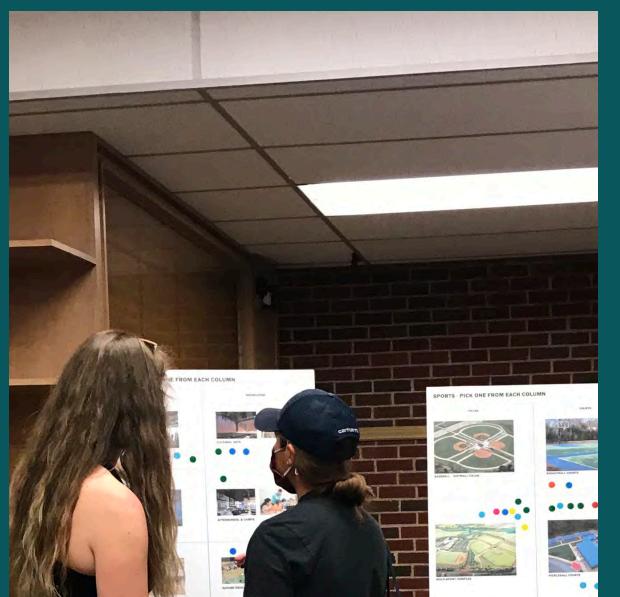
"Most recently there were 97 teams playing 221 games within a 48 hour time period which can create logistical challenges with our existing facilities."



Open House

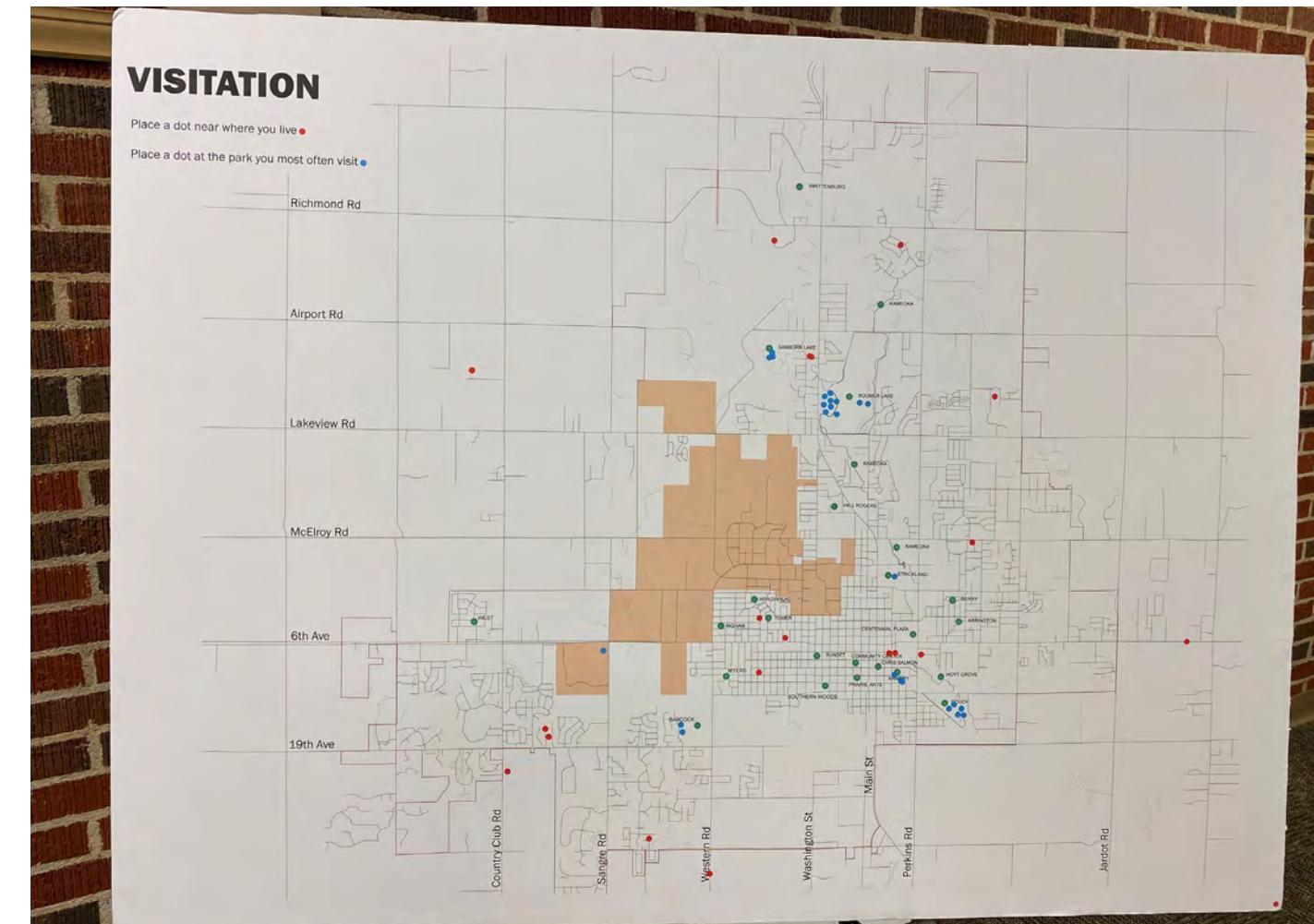
An Open House was held on September 28th, 2021, at the Stillwater Community Center. There were various activities to engage and gather feedback from attendees. A snow cone truck was also at the event. It is estimated that approximately 25 participants attended the Open House. The following activities were available for participants.

- Visitation Map
- Money Game
- Preference Survey
- Map Your Trails
- Every Park

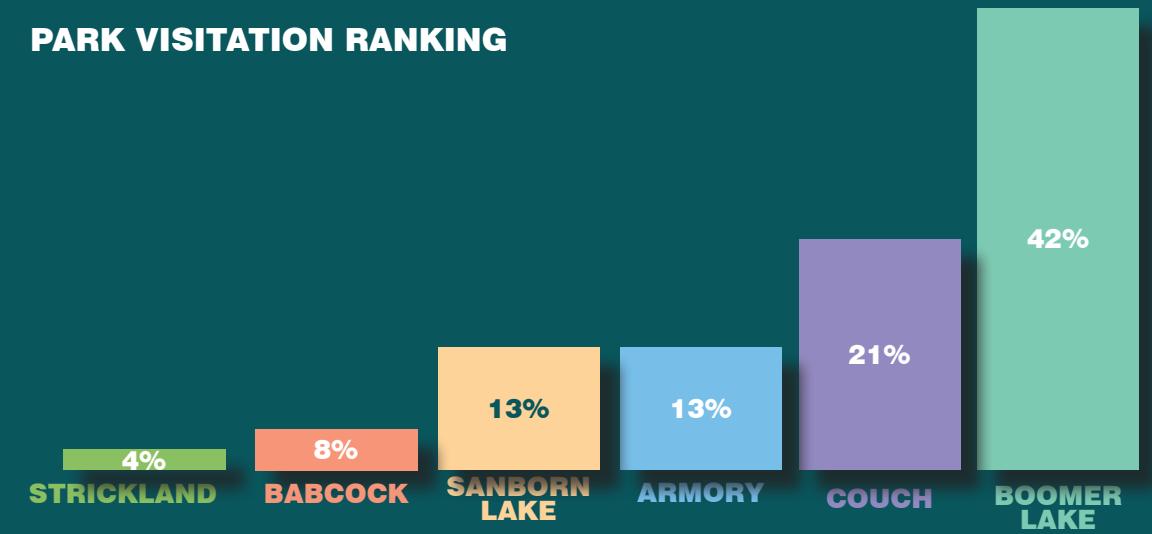


Visitation Map

A map of Stillwater with Parks identified on a board and easel. Participants were invited to place a red colored sticker near where they live on the map, and a blue colored sticker on the park they visit most often. Despite living near the neighborhood parks of Tower, Arrowhead, Ingham, Myers, and Chris Salmon, those surveyed do not utilize those parks.



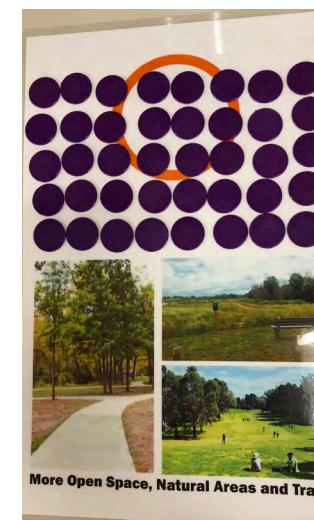
PARK VISITATION RANKING



Money Game

Participants were given 10 tokens and asked to divide amongst different parks improvement 'buckets' of:

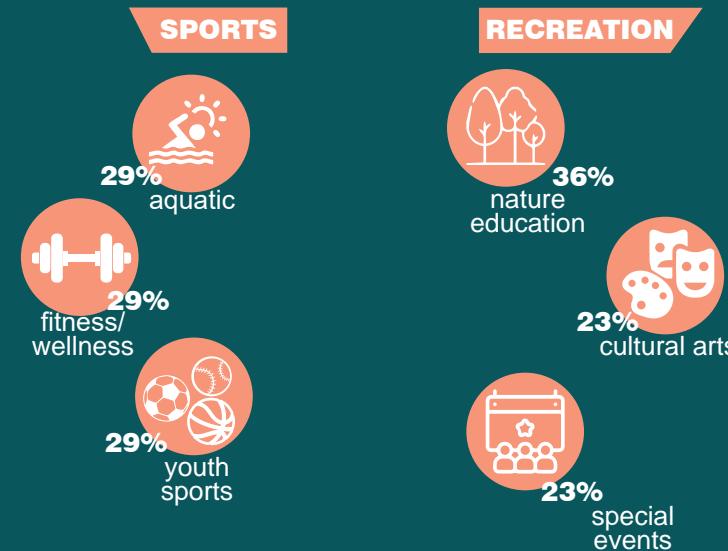
- New Multi-Sports Complex
- More Open Space, Natural Areas and Trails
- Renovations to Existing Parks and Facilities
- New Aquatic Facility
- New Indoor Recreation Center



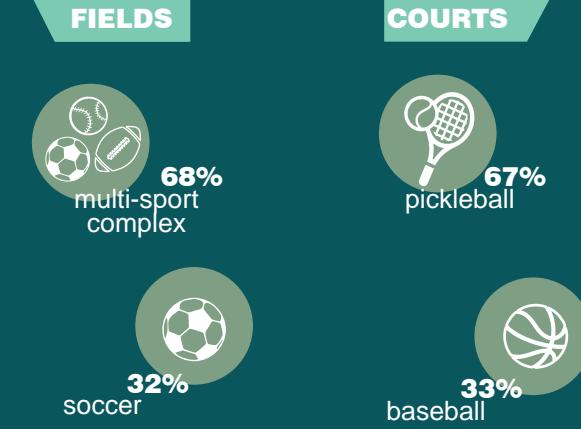
Preference Survey

Images of different types of sports facilities and programming were on large boards. Sports Facilities were further broken down by Fields or Courts. Programming was broken out into Sports Programming and Recreation Programming. Participants were given one sticker to place near their choice for the most needed items in Stillwater for each category.

PROGRAMMING

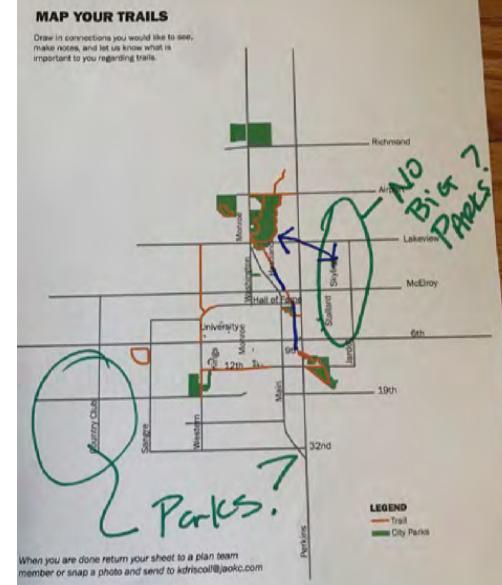


SPORTS FACILITIES



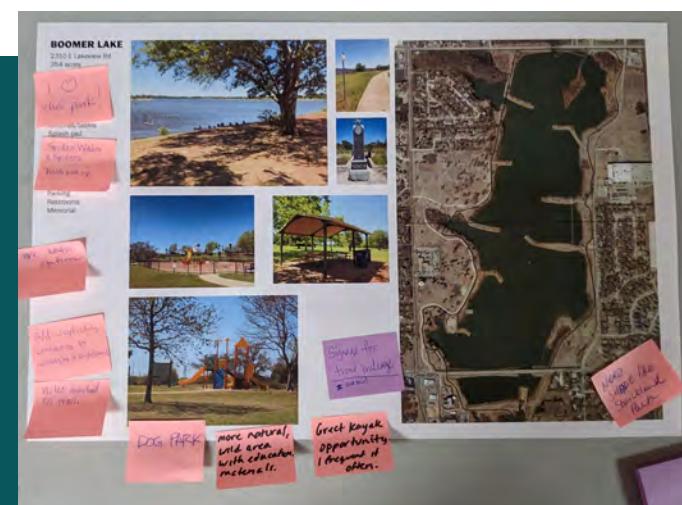
Map Your Trails Activity

A stylized map of Stillwater with existing trails was printed on an 8.5x11 sheet of paper. Participants had various colored pens to draw in trails and connections and make notes of what they'd like to see in Stillwater. Notes were made about lighting, safe crossings, and needed trail connections. Participants wanted to see the Kameoka trail completely connected, as well as more east/west connections.



Every Park

Sheets of every park with photos, amenities list, size and location were laid out in the hallway. Plan team members were there to talk with attendees and sticky notes and markers were provided for note taking. These pages are provided in their entirety in Chapter 3.



Online Survey

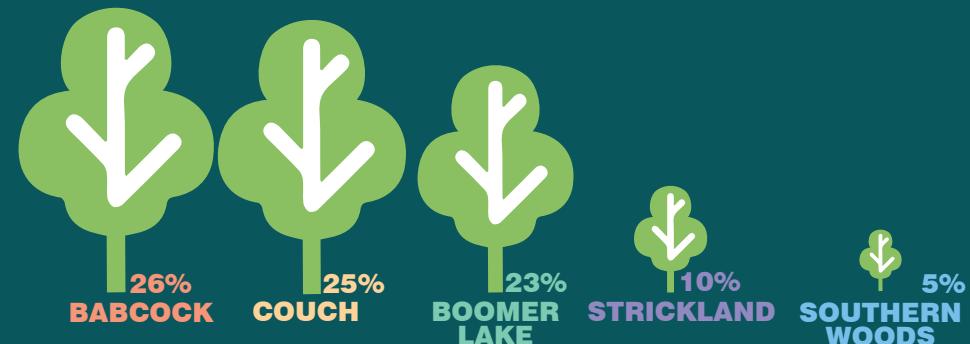
An online survey was created with input from the City of Stillwater and hosted via survey monkey from September 13 to November 13, 2021. Various posters and printed materials were posted in city parks and left with willing businesses around Stillwater to get the word out about the survey, and the Open House. Ultimately,

781 responses were obtained from the online survey. This is a great response rate for a public survey targeting public parks. Question categories spanned Visitation, Preferences, Maintenance, Satisfaction, Communication, Future Needs, Recreation Programming and Funding/Resources.

Nearly all respondents are Stillwater residents (93%), and only 1.4% live in the surrounding areas of unincorporated Payne County, Perkins, Yale, Perry, Morrison, Coyle, and Red Rose. And 4 percent are Oklahoma State University students. Most respondents were female (69%) and within the 35 – 44 age range (48%). A majority (70%) of those taking the online survey have children under the age of 18 living with them. Nine percent of respondents have someone in their household with a disability. This is slightly less than the U.S. as a whole (13%).

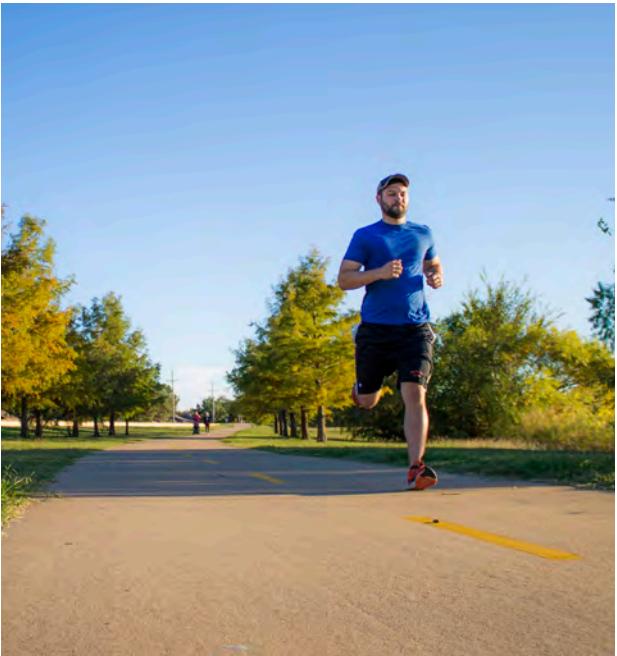
Nationally, park use was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Stillwater was no different. Prior to the 2020 CDC guidelines and restrictions 53% people surveyed visited a Stillwater park at least once a week. When asked in the last 12 months how often they visited a City of Stillwater park 46% responded 'At least once a week'. This could be due to the early restrictions Stillwater placed on parks, as well as a later state of Emergency declaration by the City in 2021 during the height of the Delta and Omicron variant surges. Both are healthy rates of park use for a community of Stillwater's size and population. This could be due to the population skewing slightly younger due to the University and changing demographics .

The most visited parks of those surveyed were Babcock, Boomer, Couch, Strickland, and Southern Woods.



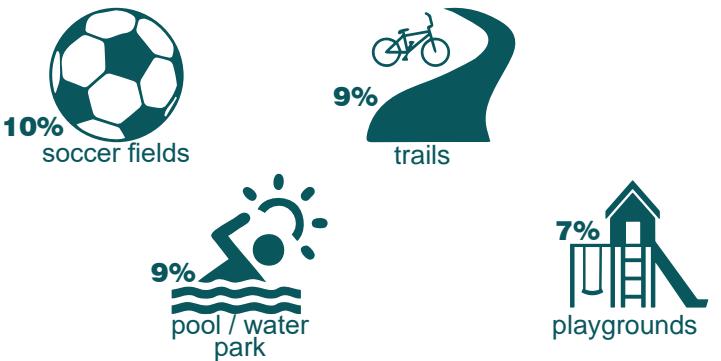
"Need more trails and safe pedestrian paths and bike paths to promote more activity. The streets are often narrow with no foot paths. The driving culture is very dominant."

Favorite parks largely tracked with frequency of visits (Boomer 33%, Couch 28%, Babcock 13%). These favorites clearly serve differing needs with most people using Boomer Lake for walking, Couch park for spending time with family/friends, Babcock for organized team sports.



"We have many youth in Stillwater who play soccer and yet there are not adequate facilities for the number of players and spectators. Some sort of lighted complex is needed in the city of Stillwater."

TOP FOUR DESIRED ACTIVITIES



While there was strong support for sports facilities, we did hear from the Open House and the online survey that more natural areas were desired, as well as facilities on the west side of town and additional playscapes. When asked what type of park land is most needed in Stillwater the top three were Large Community Parks, Natural Areas, and Sports Facilities.

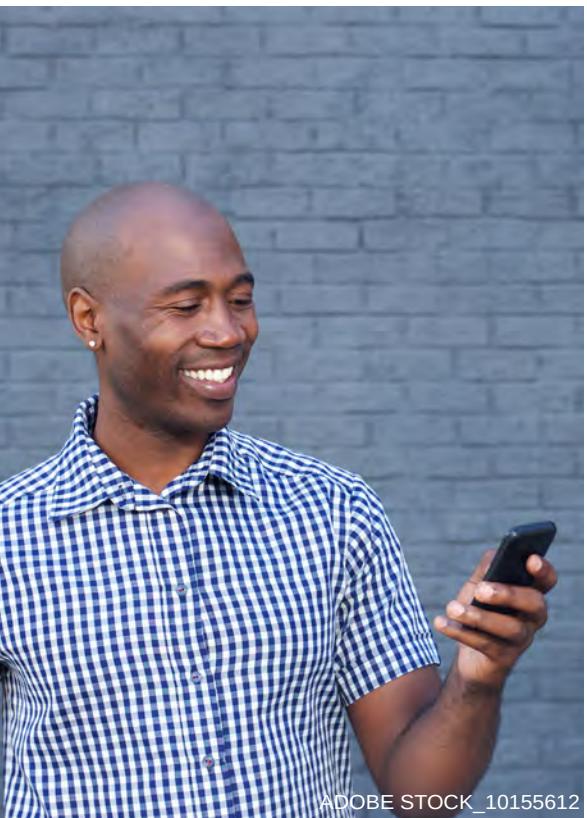
"We spent a weekend at a complex in Tulsa a few weeks ago. It was lovely because it had smaller playgrounds spread throughout the sports complex. They were not huge or expansive, but simple playscapes throughout the complex that was nice for the younger kids and parents."



"Less focus on playgrounds and sports complexes. More natural space is needed."

Most respondents rated the physical condition of Stillwater parks they have visited as 'Good' (46%), with another 39% rated as 'Fair'. When asked to rate the maintenance of the following categories 'Parks and Outdoor Facilities', 'Indoor Recreation Facilities', 'Natural areas and open spaces', 'Trails', 'Stillwater Municipal Pool', and 'Splashpads' most rated maintenance as 'Good', except for the Stillwater Municipal Pool, where the majority of those who answered rated maintenance as 'Poor'. A majority (62%) of those surveyed feel the current pool should be replaced with a new pool, while a 9% wanted to see smaller splash facilities around town.

The most needed indoor recreation spaces identified were Gymnasium (basketball, volleyball, etc.), Indoor Pool, Climbing Wall, and Walk/Jog Track. Additional programs that those surveyed want to see in order of highest are 'Special Events and Festivals', 'Outdoor/nature education', 'Youth Sports'. While most of these are not run by the City of Stillwater, but rather other organizations, Stillwater Parks can provide the basic infrastructure and facilities for these programs to occur.



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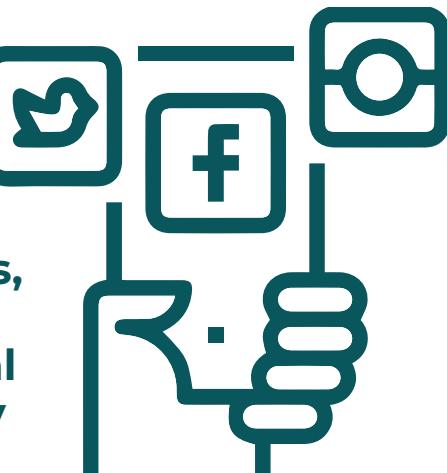
"Yes, as a long-term resident of Stillwater we are extremely disappointed in the lack of maintenance at parks across the town. We either start maintaining the parks or reduce the number of them and focus on having quality facilities. (Several of the parks rarely/almost never have individuals using them.)"

"Anything to promote more knowledge of our local nature. Additionally, I'd support STEM and tutoring programs if logistics could be handled well."

"Nature walks and bird watching would be great!"

"Life is busy. Come and go spaces seem to fit better today. A rigid scheduled program space seems to be underutilized."

Most respondents (51%) want to receive information about parks and recreation facilities, services and programs via social media, followed by email (25%).



Funding

Funding for improvements, facilities, and programming is where the rubber meets the road. Without sustainable funding sources the greatest of intentioned visions will not occur. Stillwater passed an increase to a roads and transportation sales tax in February of 2022. Stillwater city tax rate is 4.31%, combined with county and state for a total of 8.81 percent. When asked how they would be willing to fund parks and recreation improvements over half of respondents supported a

General Obligation Bond issue or Special Sales Tax Dedication. Only 4% of respondents said they would not be willing to fund additional improvements. Thirty-seven percent of respondents said they would support an increase in allocation from the city's general fund budget, with the understanding it would mean a reduction elsewhere in the city's budget.

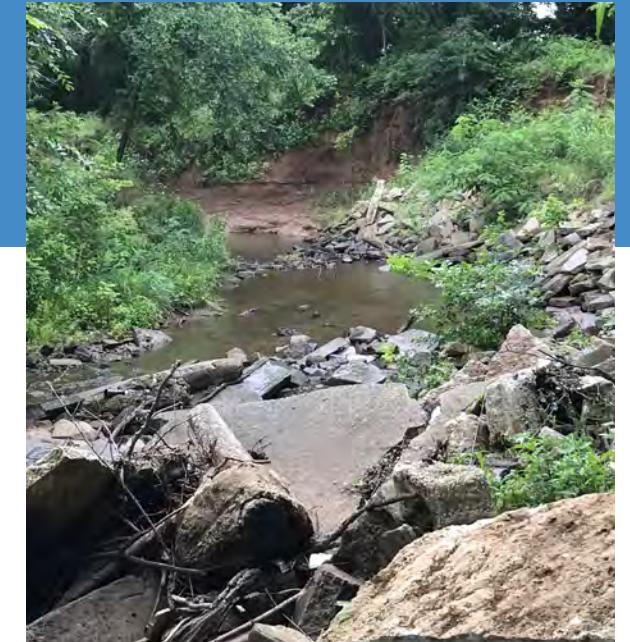


While user fees alone are not widely supported the survey has shown some support for user fees. Only 20% of respondents supported programs and facilities funding coming wholly from city funds.





NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Standards Based Needs Assessment

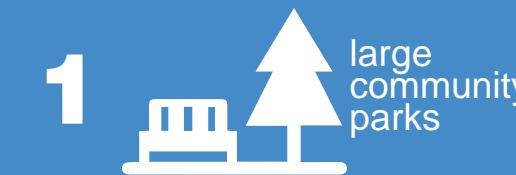
One way to evaluate park systems is to use national guidelines and standards to identify their facility needs. It is important to recognize that national standards are guidelines or benchmarks that are intended to serve as a starting point for park planning. Each city has its own unique geographic, demographic, and socio-economic composition, and as such the arbitrary application of national standards would not necessarily meet the need of the community.

The NRPA guidelines projects a goal that every resident could walk to a neighborhood park. That has been interpreted as that everyone would be within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of a neighborhood park.



MOST NEEDED?

OUTDOOR PARK LAND



INDOOR RECREATION



Demand Based Needs Assessment

Demand based needs assessment helps to determine what additional facilities are needed in Stillwater. Demand is based on preferences expressed by citizens through the stakeholder meetings, public meetings and the online survey.

Public input is a critical part of any planning process. In the park planning process, public input helps identify what types of existing facilities are being used, where key deficiencies may occur and where the citizens of Stillwater would like to see their funding targeted.

The graphs on this page and throughout this document indicate the public's needs and desires of the park system and of individual park needs.

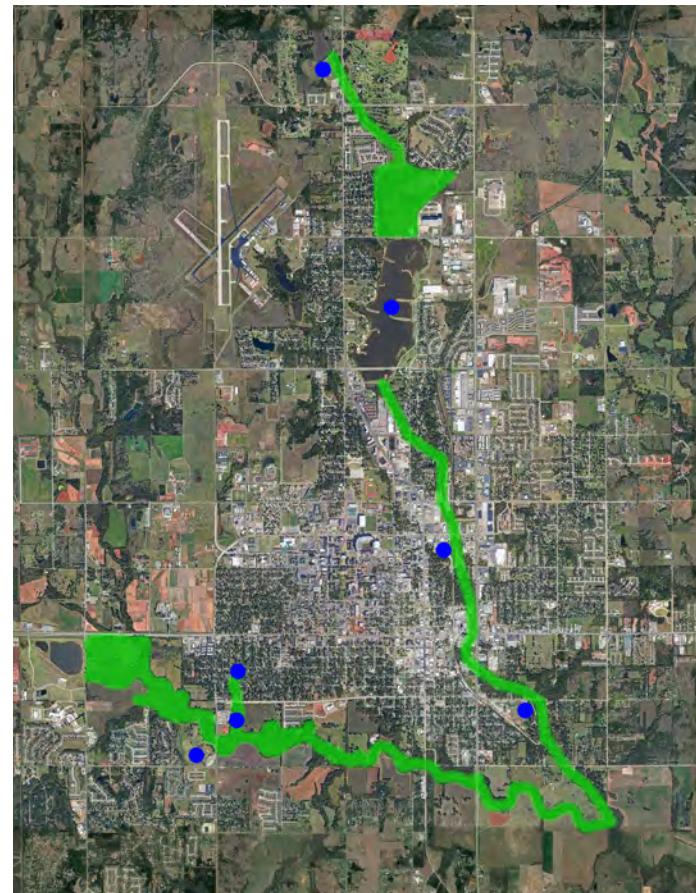
Resource Based Assessment - Trails

The resource-based assessment addresses key physical features of the city that might be incorporated as potential recreational opportunities. The City of Stillwater has several landscape features that should be preserved and adopted for recreational use and open space preservation. Three important resources include the OSU campus, the railroad and Stillwater Creek.

The railroad runs north-south on the east side of Stillwater and offers a great opportunity for a rails-trails trail. That trail would create a much more pleasant route through the east side of Stillwater from Couch Park to Boomer Lake Park. This is already being researched by the city separate from this plan.

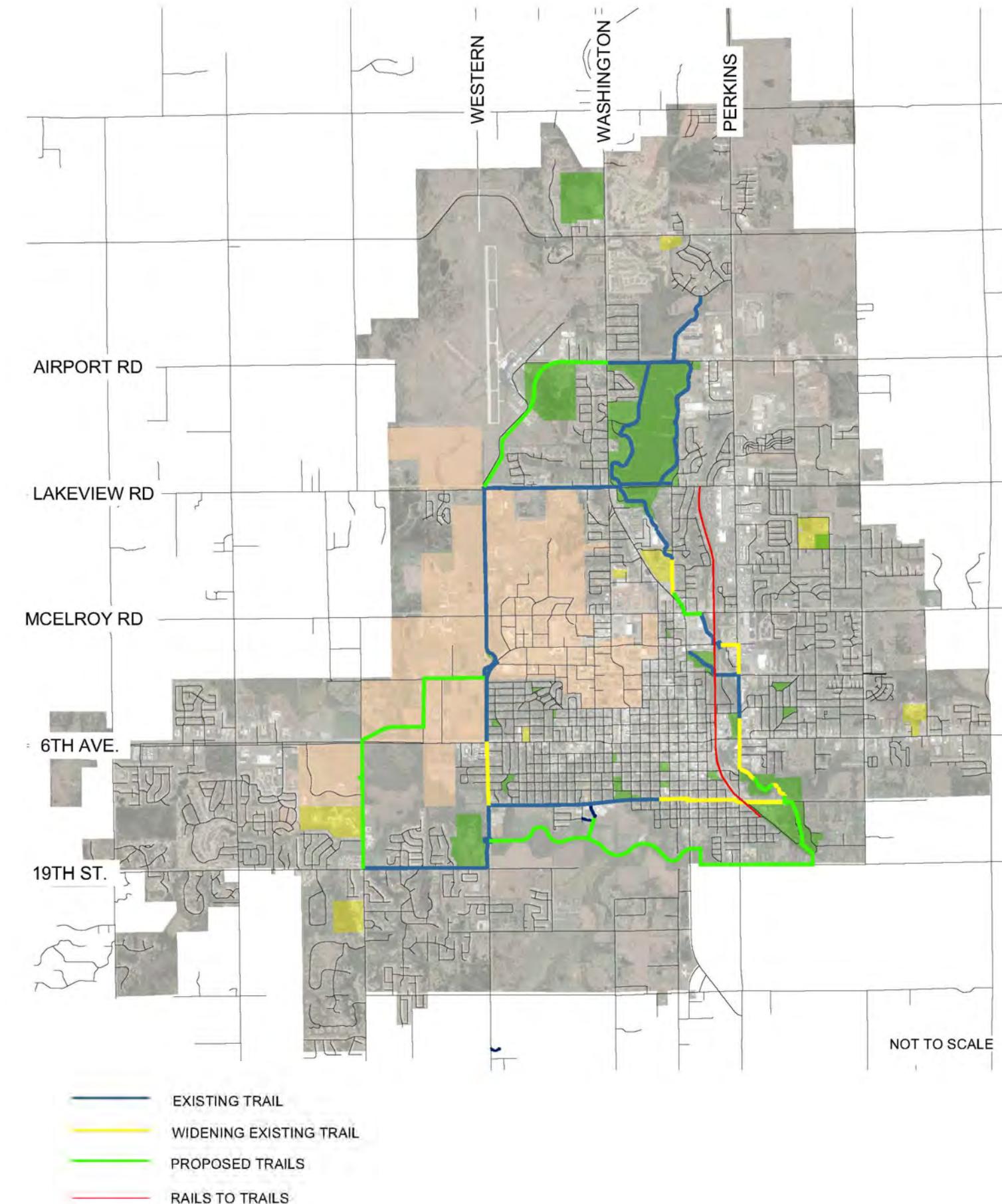
Stillwater Creek is a beautiful resource that has been largely unused. It offers an opportunity to connect Babcock Park to Couch Park, which would be a beautiful nature trail along the creek.

OSU campus has multiple walks and trails running through and around the campus which are already used by citizens of Stillwater. Another new connection on the western part of town would connect Babcock Park to the Meridian Technology center, the OSU Botanical Garden and then on to the OSU campus.



These connections can be made with a looped trail system, which is something that the public has indicated their preference for and that is included in Stillwater's C3 Comprehensive Plan 2030. A looped trail around Stillwater would be a benefit for both transportation and recreation. It would also be a way to connect and unify the city with recreational opportunities.

The map on the following page shows that Stillwater is already close to attaining a full looped trail. Only a few links need to be filled. Existing trails are shown blue; proposed new 10' wide trails in green and proposed widening of existing trails (yellow). Shown in red is an opportunity for a rails to trails project being pursued by the city.



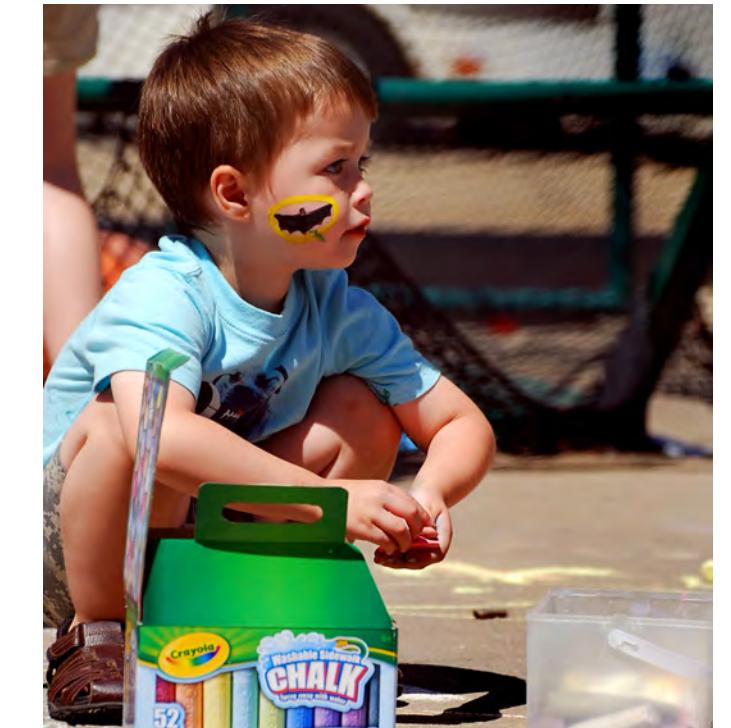
Parks and Amenities Surplus

At the beginning of the master planning process, it was clear that the City of Stillwater did not want to expand their park system. Maintenance of the parks is a big concern internally and reduction of needed maintenance is a goal. This can be attained by removing the under utilized parks and facilities from Stillwater's park system where possible.

In assessing the parks, the design team has remained cognizant of the City's position and has recommended reduction of some parks and park amenities that weren't utilized sufficiently, especially where other nearby facilities provided similar benefit. This means they could be sold or traded, to raise funds for other park improvements, or given away, to reduce maintenance of the parks.

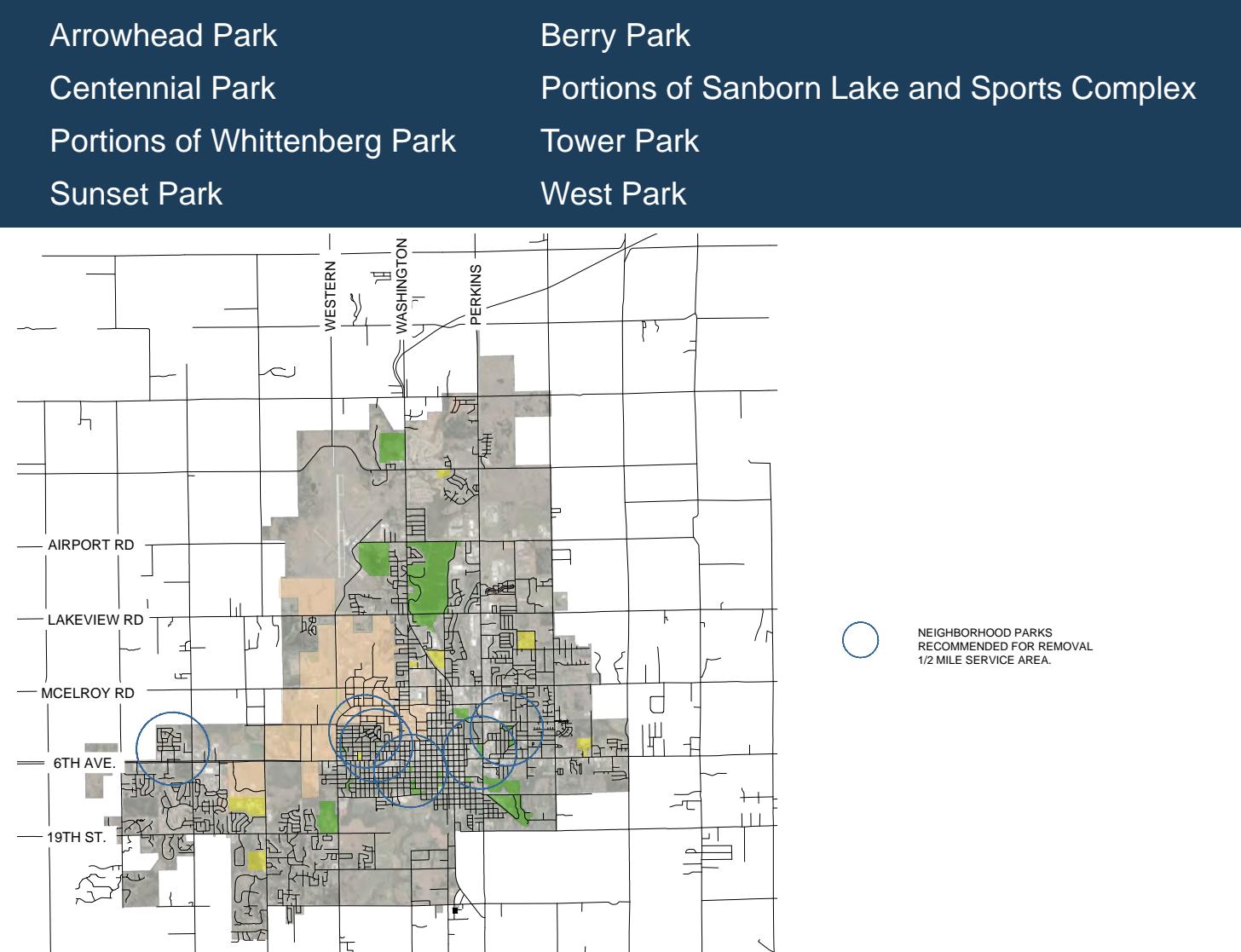


PARK & AMENITIES SURPLUS & ACQUISITION

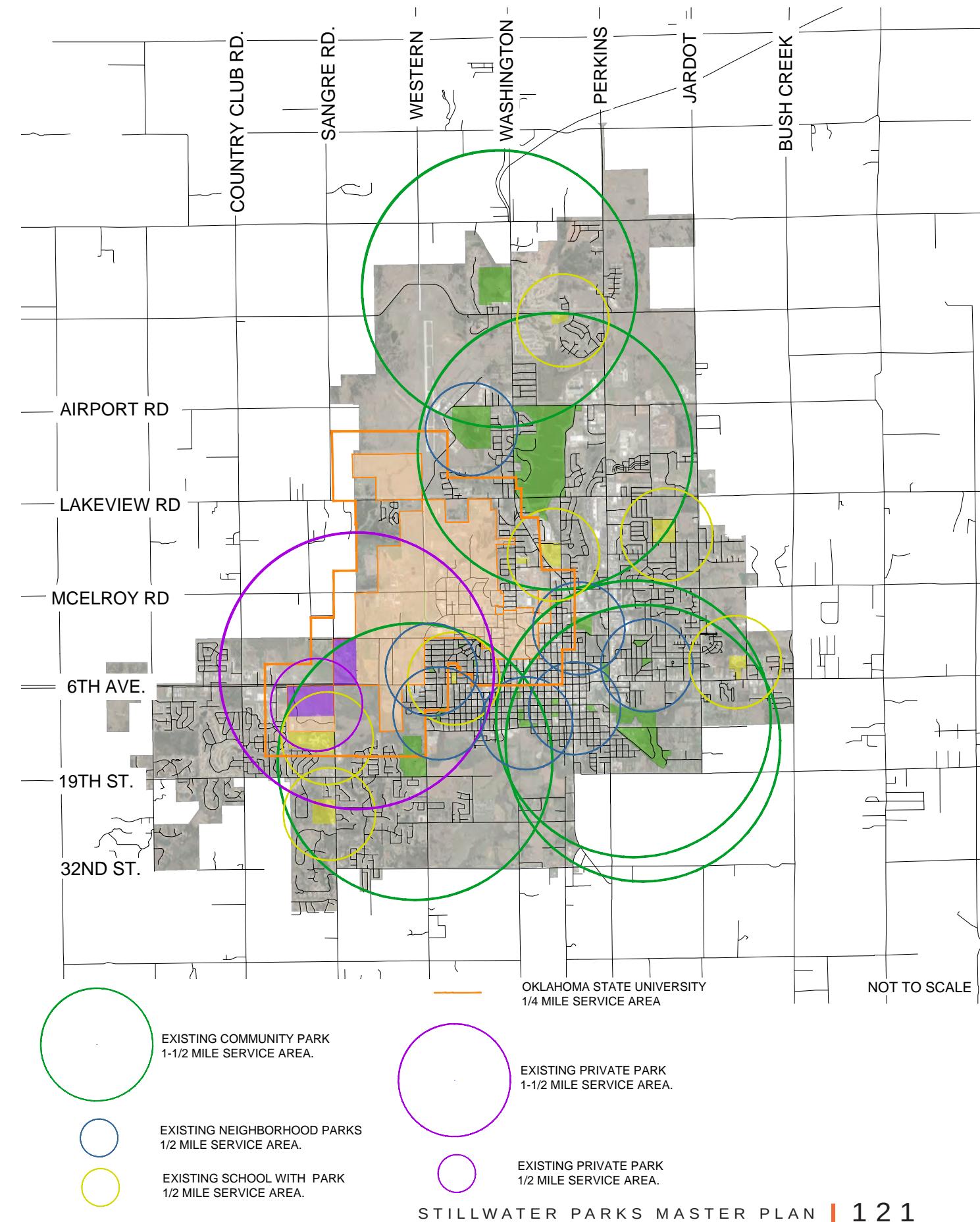


It has also been noted that the City of Stillwater has a higher percentage of park land per resident compared to similar sized communities—nearly 17 acres per 1000 citizens, not including Lake McMurtry. This is well above the national average of 9.9 acres/1000. If one includes all of the open space that is provided by Oklahoma State University (including the renowned 100-acre Botanical Garden), the Meridian Technology Center and the Stillwater Schools, the citizens of Stillwater really are especially privileged. The location of parks is well-distributed throughout the community so that few people are not within a 15-minute walk from a green space.

A good evaluation of the park system cannot be complete without consideration of a reduction in parks to reduce maintenance and to fund improvements to those highly used and highly valued parks. See below for recommended reduction in park land and facilities. Additional information is found at each park's assessment in Chapter 3.



The map on the following page illustrates the park service areas with this park land removed and with Sanborn Park reflected as a smaller neighborhood park. Even if all of these parks are removed, Stillwater will retain a good distribution of parks throughout the city.



Facilities Surplus Senior Center

Stillwater's Senior Center provides limited services. The building consists of a game room, two small meeting and classrooms. There is a kitchen, but it is not used. Programming is targeted toward older seniors with an average daily participant of 50 in 2019. With Stillwater's senior population of around 4,000, this is a low participation number, probably related to the limited services offered.

Programs and services should be offered that serve a wide range of the senior age category, including an appeal to the more active senior.

There are significant improvements now planned at the Community Center. This includes a new entrance that will feel safe and welcoming to all visitors with ADA access and parking. There will be new hot water added throughout the building and renovations that will welcome the seniors. Meals are already provided at the Community Center and new senior activities could be provided.

If the senior programs are moved to the Community Center, there are many new opportunities for them, including:

- Exercise equipment and programs
- An arts studio with classes in drawing and painting, pottery, glazing pre-fired pottery, mixed media, floral design
- Cooking classes
- A Bocce ball court
- Billiards room
- A social lounge
- Basketball
- Pickleball
- Classes could be offered in technology (computers, tablets & smartphones), photography, social media, genealogy, foreign languages and more.
- Seminars and social events throughout the year to improve quality of life and further develop a sense of community.
- Movie nights
- Block 34 events
- The Winfrey D. Houston Theater and the Lowry Auditorium have multiple entertainment venues, from movies, to big band concerts that would welcome the seniors at little or no cost.



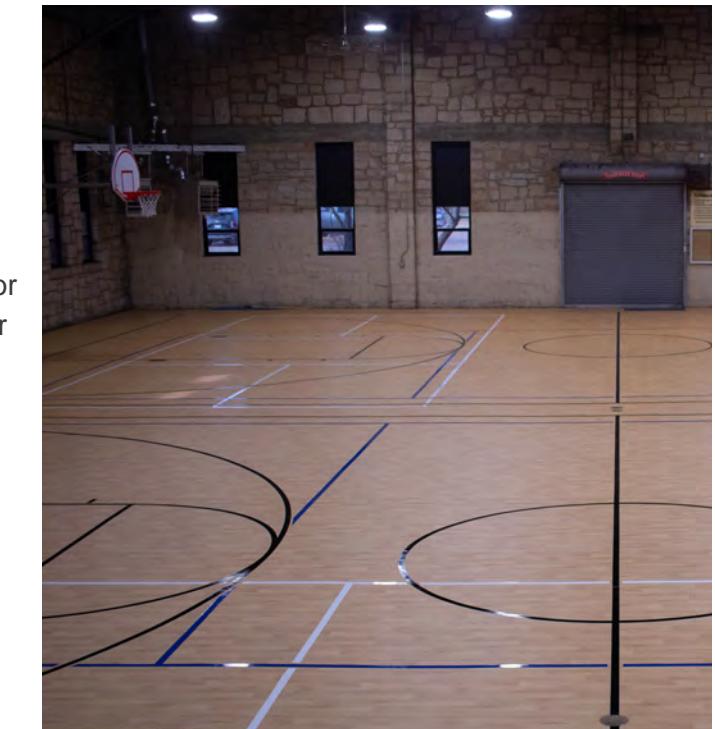
Parkland & Facility Acquisition

The public participation process indicated that in addition to the existing facilities, several new recreation facilities should be considered for the future.

Recommendations for new park land is somewhat controversial since Stillwater wishes to reduce its park inventory. However, the following recommendations for future growth of the park system must be considered as discussed on the following pages.

- Recreation Center
- New sports complex
- New Aquatics Facility
- Expansion of existing parks
- Acquisition of nature corridors
- Relocate or build new parks maintenance facility

Most areas for growth in Stillwater are located on the west side of town. Stillwater's land development code does not currently include provisions for private open space. Revisions should be made to require private park developments within new residential developments. Additionally, the city should adopt a policy to not accept new park land for public maintenance unless ongoing funds for maintenance are provided and the park land or facilities meet an unmet need. New parks that will serve newly developed residential areas should be provided by the developer. This will involve changes to subdivision regulations to require new housing additions to provide their own parks to serve new neighborhoods.



Recreation Center

There was interest expressed by the community in having a recreation center. However, this is an expensive facility to build and operate and a facility of this nature does not fit with the current philosophy of developing and operating indoor recreation facilities. As a result, the city should work with other non-profits to encourage and possibly assist with the development of a center that would be available to the public.

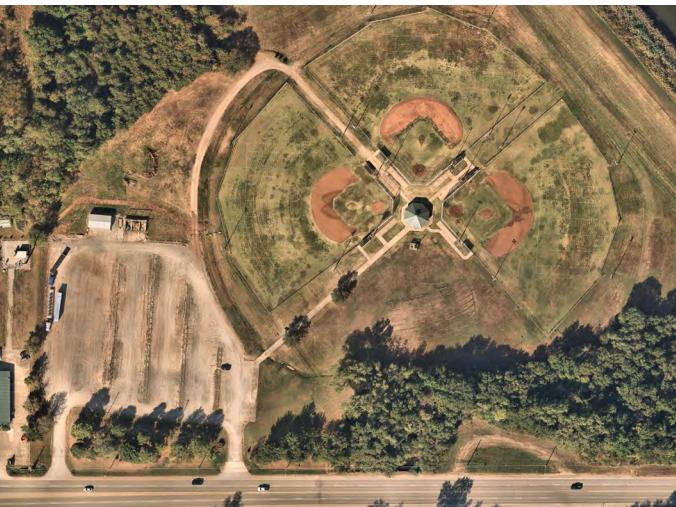
New Sports Complex

Despite the presence of a number of athletic fields at existing parks, there is not a city-wide sports complex to serve as a central location for community youth/adult sports competition as well as local and regional tournaments.

Existing Athletic Fields Inventory: 19 baseball/softball fields, 8 soccer fields

- Couch Park – 1 high school baseball and 1 high school softball field, old football field (including old locker rooms), 1 baseball/softball field
- Whittenburg – 3 baseball/softball fields
- Sanborn – 5 baseball/softball fields
- Babcock – 8 soccer fields, 3 baseball/softball fields
- Strickland – 4 baseball/softball fields
- Southern Woods – 1 baseball/softball field

Note: Three of the baseball/softball fields are expected to be lost at Sanborn.



Reasons for a Sports Complex:

- Provide a central location where most youth sports games can be played.
- Allowing local sports organizations to host tournaments rather than always having to travel.
- Providing local sports organizations the opportunity to raise funds through hosting tournaments.
- Giving the opportunity for adult sports leagues to have fields for their programs and tournaments.
- Attracting out of town teams to provide an economic impact for the community.
- Providing a location where larger community events can be held.
- To reduce maintenance costs by having more fields at a central location.

Sports Complex Description: A preliminary listing of amenities for the initial phase of the sports complex is as follows:

- Lighted Diamond Fields - Baseball and Softball (4) (to replace the 3 lost at Sanborn)
- Concession/Press Box Complex with Covered Seating and Storage
- Men's and women's Restrooms/Universal Restrooms
- General Recreation Area with Park Pavilions and Shaded Playground
- Perimeter Trail
- Parking – 250-300 spaces
- Operations and Maintenance Building and Yard

Second Phase:

- Lighted Rectangular Fields (4) (Full sized that can be divided to smaller fields).
- Parking – 250-300 spaces

Future phases to be constructed as the city's population grows might include:

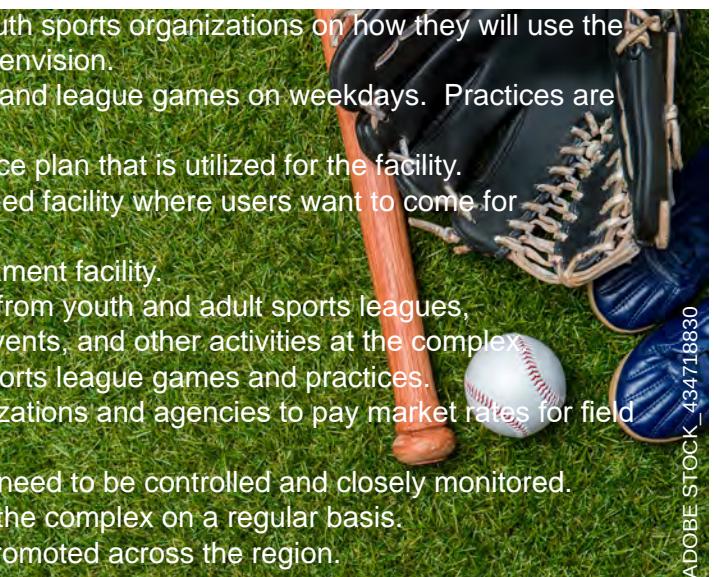
- Additional Lighted Rectangular Fields
- Additional Lighted Diamond Fields
- Open Event Space
- Additional General Recreation Facilities
- Expanded Infrastructure and Support Facilities

To accommodate a sports complex of this size and magnitude will require a site of 75 acres or more.

Keys to Project Success: Some of the keys to the overall success of the operation and management of a Stillwater Sports Complex include:

- Agreement from the local youth and adult youth sports organizations on how they will use the facility and the type of tournament uses they envision.
- Priority of use for tournaments on weekends and league games on weekdays. Practices are the lowest priority.
- A well thought out operations and maintenance plan that is utilized for the facility.
- Meeting high expectations for a well maintained facility where users want to come for tournaments.
- The complex cannot be seen as just a tournament facility.
- There needs to be a broad base of activities from youth and adult sports leagues, tournaments, sports camps/clinics, special events, and other activities at the complex.
- The complex will need to be used for both sports league games and practices.
- There will need to be a willingness for organizations and agencies to pay market rates for field use.
- The costs of operation and maintenance will need to be controlled and closely monitored.
- There will need to be capital investment into the complex on a regular basis.
- The complex will need to be marketed and promoted across the region.

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Future Field Sports Programs: While the existing field uses are for the traditional sports of baseball, softball, soccer and football, there are opportunities to introduce other sports in the future. The other sports programs that could be developed include:

Lacrosse – This is the fastest growing youth team sport in the country and has seen strong growth in the Midwest. It should be expected that Lacrosse will be a growth sport in Oklahoma within the next five years.

Rugby - While this has traditionally been an adult sport, there has been recent growth in youth rugby in the Midwest. Starting both an adult and youth rugby program in Stillwater may occur in the coming years.

Ultimate Frisbee – This sport has not been as popular as the other two, but it has seen increases in participation over the last five plus years. The interest in this team sport is primarily in teens and young adults.

It is significant that each of these sports requires rectangular fields for play. This could result in much higher demand for this type of playing field in the future.



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Tournament and Event Use: One of the primary reasons for the development of a sports complex is the ability to attract tournaments and other events to Stillwater. However, there are a number of factors that impact the ability to attract tournaments:

Tournament Options – Over the last 10 years there has been a strong movement nationally to develop athletic complexes that can attract both youth and adult tournaments to a community. This emphasis has been fueled by the desire to provide a strong economic impact for a community. However, as a result, there now are instances where there are more tournament sites than there are available weekends or teams. This can impact the ability to host a large number of tournaments a year.

Within the greater Stillwater region, there are a significant number of communities that can host a variety of athletic field related tournaments.

Fees for Use – The cost of field usage and maintenance can impact the size and number of tournaments and events that are offered. The overall cost of renting fields has gone up over the last 10 years as communities can no longer justify financially underwriting tournaments to the same level they once did.

Organizational Capacity – The reality is that most tournaments are conducted by sports organizations that are run by volunteers. The organizations utilize these tournaments as fundraisers, but the time and manpower demands can take its toll on volunteers, so there are often limits to the number of such events that can be conducted per year.

Private Tournaments – Over the last 10 years there has been a large growth in private tournament operators who organize and run tournaments at public facilities. They often pay low fees for field use while generating significant revenue for themselves. Many communities now have much higher fees for field use for private tournament operators and/or they take a percentage of revenues generated.

Other Possible Uses: The focus of a sports complex is serving the needs of athletic field sports for both youth and adult leagues and tournaments. However, it is possible that the complex can support a number of other activities. Some examples include:

- Sports clinics and camps (especially summer camps)
- Outdoor volleyball leagues (grass) and tournaments
- Special events (see above)
- Outdoor fitness workouts (through permits to trainers)
- Family outings and events (pavilion rentals)

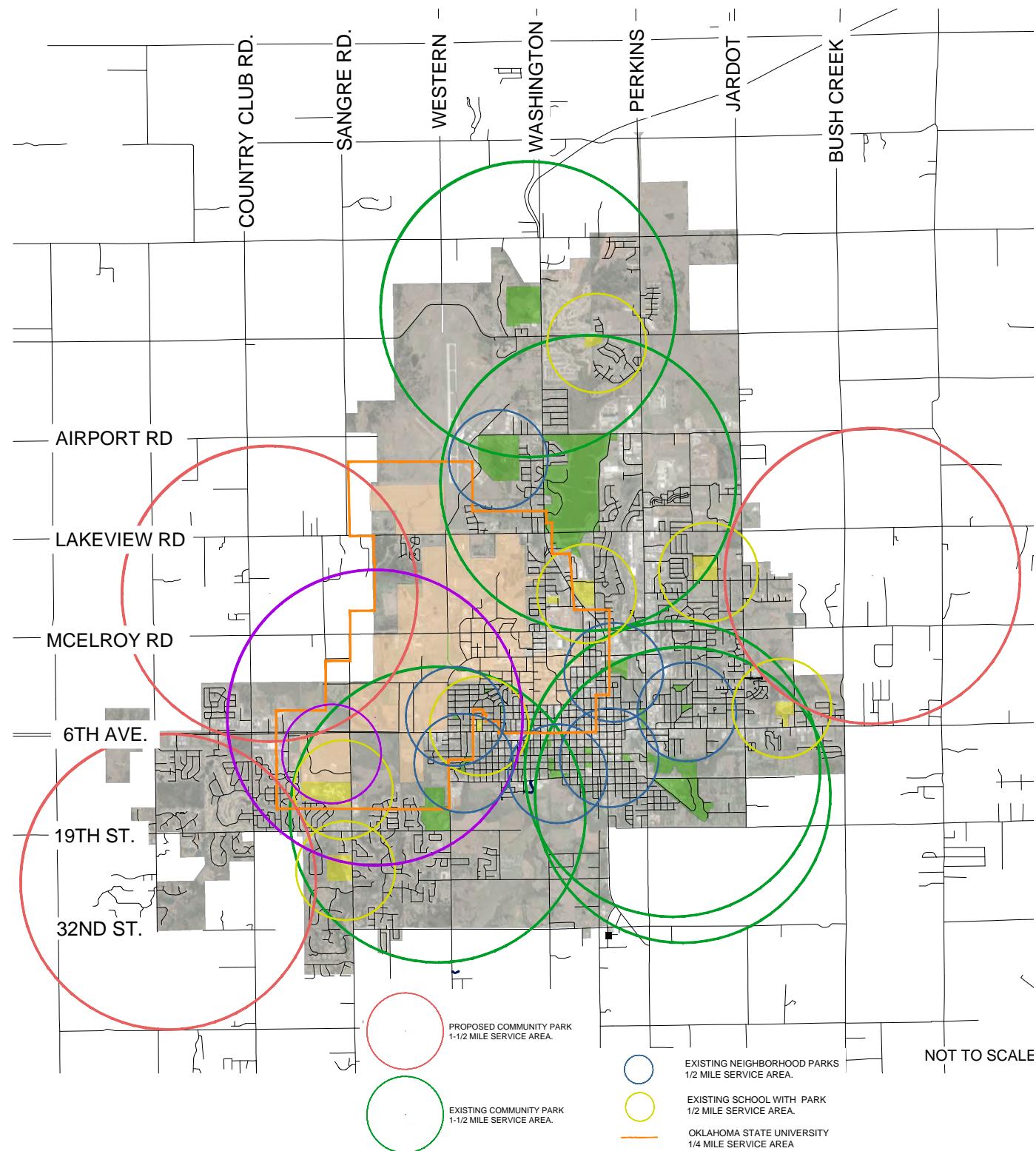
Beyond sports tournaments, there are a number of other events that can be conducted at a sports complex including the following examples:

- Fun runs and cross country meets
- Endurance events
- Car shows
- Concerts
- Festivals
- Holiday events



Determining the ability to host these events, their impact on the playing fields themselves and the overall cost vs. revenue question will have to be answered.

Several locations have been discussed, but they are not known at this time. Three suggested locations are shown on the adjacent plan which relate to the city's growth to the west and southwest and the most underserved areas in the city are to the east and south. These were also chosen based on the distribution of other community parks. This is included in this plan to show cost estimates for the park improvements, not including the cost of land acquisition.



Aquatics Center

The existing Stillwater Municipal Pool is in need of being replaced. It is at the end of its useful life and has limited appeal to the recreational swimmer. As a result, the city should consider planning for the development of a comprehensive outdoor aquatic center that serves the entire community in a central location.

For most communities in the central portion of the United States, outdoor aquatic centers are considered to be a basic recreational service. So, most communities have at least one outdoor aquatic center that is operated seasonally.

Aquatic Facility Trends

The age of the conventional pool in most recreational settings has greatly diminished. Without doubt the hottest trend in aquatics is the recreation pool concept. This idea of incorporating slides, lazy rivers (or current channels), interactive play features, fountains, zero depth entry and other water features into a pool's design has proved to be extremely popular for the recreational user. Recreation pools appeal to the younger kids (who are one of the largest segments of the population that swims) and to families. These types of facilities are able to attract larger crowds, and families, including multi-generational groups. People tend to come from a further distance and stay longer to utilize such pools. This translates into the potential for more admissions and increased revenues. It is estimated conservatively that a leisure pool can generate up to 30% more revenue than a comparable conventional pool and the cost of operation while being higher, has been offset through increased revenues. Of note is the fact that patrons are willing to pay a higher user fee with this type of pool that is in a park like setting than a conventional aquatics facility.

Despite the recent emphasis on recreational swimming the more traditional aspects of aquatics (including swim teams, instruction, and aqua fitness) remain as a part of most outdoor aquatic centers. The life safety issues associated with teaching children how to swim is a critical concern in most communities and competitive swim team programs continue to be important.



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Aquatic Market Segments

Aquatic markets that could be served include:

1. Recreation aquatic activities - This includes a variety of activities found at recreation pools with zero depth entry, warm water, play apparatus, slides, seating areas and deck space. These are often combined with other non-aquatic areas such as concessions and birthday party or other group event areas.
2. Instructional programming - The primary emphasis is on teaching swimming and lifesaving skills to many different age groups. These activities have traditionally taken place in more conventional pool configurations but should not be confined to just these spaces. Reasonably warm water, shallow depth with deeper water (4 ft. or more), and open expanses of water are necessary for instructional activities. Easy pool access, a viewing area for parents, and deck space for instructors is also crucial.
3. Fitness programming - These types of activities continue to grow in popularity among a large segment of the population. From aqua exercise classes, to lap swimming times, these programs take place in more traditional settings that have lap lanes and large open expanses of water available at a 3 1/2 to 5 ft. depth.
4. Therapy – A growing market segment for many aquatic centers is the use of warm, shallow water for therapy and rehabilitation purposes. Many of these services are offered by medically based organizations that partner with the center for this purpose. This is a more difficult market to accommodate in an outdoor aquatic center.
5. Competitive swimming/diving - Swim team competition and training for youth, adults and seniors requires a traditional 6 to 10 lane pool with a 1 meter diving board at a length of 25 yards or 50 meters. Ideally, the pool depth should be no less than 4 ft. deep (7 is preferred). Spectator seating and deck space for staging meets is necessary. This market is usually relatively small but very vocal on the demands for competitive pool space and time.
6. Specialized uses – Activities such as water polo and artistic swimming (formerly synchronized swimming) can also take place in competitive pool areas as long as the pool is deep enough (7 ft. minimum) and the pool area is large enough. However, these are activities that have small participant numbers and require relatively large pool areas. As a result, it may be difficult to meet the needs of all specialized uses on a regular basis.
7. Social/relaxation - The appeal of using an aquatics area for relaxation has become a primary focus of most outdoor aquatic facilities. This concept has been very effective in drawing non-swimmers to aquatic facilities and expanding the market beyond the traditional swimming market. The use of natural landscapes and creative pool designs that integrate the social elements with swimming activities has been most effective in reaching this market segment.



8. Special events/rentals - There is a market for special events including kid's birthday parties, corporate events, community organization functions, and general rentals to outside groups. The development of this market will aid in the generation of additional revenues and these events/rentals can often be planned for after or before regular hours or during slow use times. It is important that special events or rentals not adversely affect daily operations or overall center use.

Specific market segments include:

1. Families - Within almost any market, an orientation towards family activities is essential. The ability to have family members of different ages participate in a fun and vibrant facility is essential.
2. Pre-school children - The needs of pre-school age children need to be met with spray grounds, very shallow or zero depth water which is warm and has play apparatus designed for their use. Interactive programming involving parents and toddlers can also be conducted in more traditional aquatic areas as well.
3. School age youth - A major focus should be to meet the needs of this age group from recreational swimming to competitive aquatics. The leisure components such as slides, play features, fountains, lazy rivers and zero depth will help to bring these individuals to the pool on a regular basis for drop-in recreational swimming. Lap lanes provide the opportunity and space necessary for instructional programs and aquatic team use.
4. Teens - Serving the needs of this age group will require recreation pool amenities that will keep their interest (slides) as well as the designation of certain "teen" times of use.



5. College – The use of public outdoor aquatic centers by college students that live off campus is another possible market segment. They usually prefer the recreational aspects of the facility but are also interested in lap swimming. The social aspects of the aquatic center are also a big draw as well.
6. Seniors - As the population of Stillwater continues to age, meeting the needs of an older senior population will be essential. A more active and physically oriented senior is now demanding services to ensure their continued health. Aqua exercise, lap swimming, therapeutic conditioning and even learn to swim classes have proven to be popular with this market segment.
7. Special needs population - This is a secondary market, but with the ADA requirements and the probable existence of shallow warm water and other components, the amenities are present to develop programs for this population segment. Association with a hospital and other therapeutic and social service agencies will be necessary to enhance this market.
8. Special interest groups - This is a market that needs to be explored to determine the use potential from a variety of groups. These could include swim teams (and other aquatic teams), school district teams, day care centers and social service organizations.



Aquatic Center Description

A seasonal outdoor pool that has two tanks of water and a bather load of 500 to 600. The recommended location is Couch Park. With the relocation of the Maintenance facility (next section), the entire northwest corner of Couch Park is opened to development of an aquatics facility. This is plenty of space for all amenities needed, with additional parking and even a YMCA building, if deemed important. This location, in south-central Stillwater, is perfect to offer opportunities to the Stillwater community at large that coincide with the mission and values of the YMCA.

Pools

- Recreational Pool (4,000 SF of water surface area)
 - Free form pool
 - Zero depth entry area with large interactive play features
 - Current channel
 - Slide (at least 30 ft tower with two slides)
 - Funbrellas for shade over the pool area
- Lap/Competitive Pool
 - 8 lane x 25 yard with a 1 meter diving board
 - Seating for 200-300 (with shade covering)
- Splash Pad with large play structure
- Deck areas with 6-8 covered pavilions

Grass area

- Group pavilion area
- Sand play area (optional)
- Sand volleyball- 2 courts (optional)

Bath House

- Men's and women's locker rooms
- 4-5 Universal change rooms
- Office area/lifeguard room/first aid room
- Check in/front desk
- Multipurpose room for meetings, trainings, and birthday parties
- Concession area with covered outdoor seating
- Small retail shop at the front desk area

Pool mechanical building

Parking - 250-300 cars



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Other Considerations

- The existing pool should continue to function until a new facility is built, if at all possible.
- Possible project partners include:
 - YMCA
 - School District

Any project partners should provide both capital and operational funding for the project and the roles and use expectations need to be clearly outlined prior to the city committing to the project.

- The YMCA could still be the operator of the facility but there needs to be improvements to the management of the pool and guarantees on days and hours of operation.
- A feasibility study needs to be conducted prior to beginning the actual design of a new aquatic center. This will identify capital and operations costs/revenues.

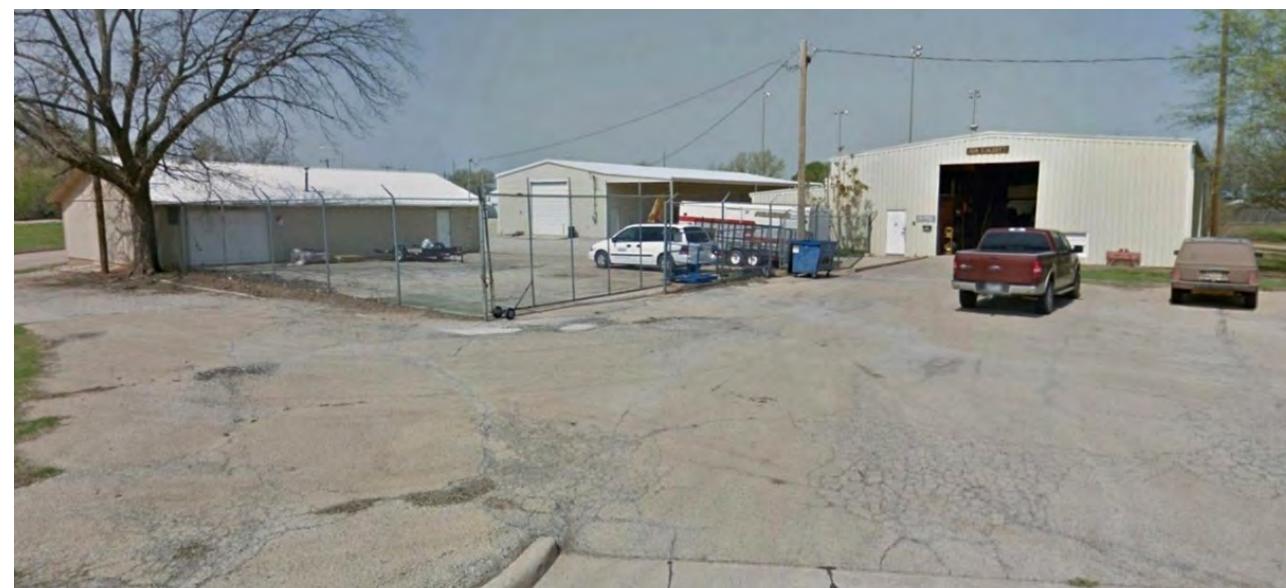


Optional Amenity –The 8 lane x 25 yard pool could be increased to a 50 meter distance to better serve the competitive aquatic interests of the community.

New Maintenance Facility

The current park maintenance facility is located at Couch Park, one of the most popular parks in Stillwater. This is not an appropriate location for this facility. It visibly detracts from the parklike aesthetic. It takes up a lot of valuable parkland and it generates undesirable vehicular traffic, creating a safety hazard for park patrons. Consolidation with other city maintenance and public works functions should be considered.

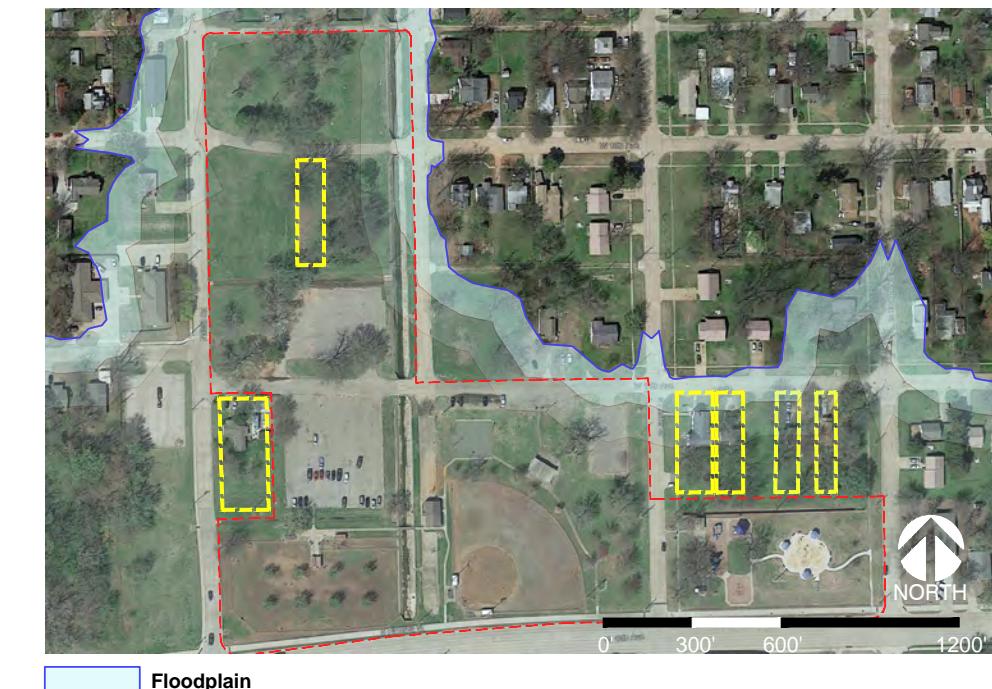
If that cannot be effective, a new location is recommended. Once moved out of this location, this becomes a perfect location for the new pool and aquatics facility mentioned previously.



Expansion of Existing Parks

Acquisition of land for future growth of existing parks will only serve to increase the value and services that Stillwater can provide. An example of this is Southern Woods Park. As surrounding flood plain land is vacated or offered for sale, Stillwater should be ready to obtain it and add it to the park system. This park in particular is broken up with privately owned land which can become very useful as part of the park.

There may be other parks that could be expanded to provide additional amenities. Those that are surrounded by flood plain or otherwise unusable land should be considered. It is better to acquire and use this land as parks if it serves an unmet community need.



Nature Corridors

Acquisition of nature corridors for trails should be considered. Stillwater Creek is a great opportunity for Stillwater to develop a linear park, a trail to connect different areas of Stillwater. Already, Babcock Park, Hinrichs and Myers Park are connected. The Stillwater Environmental Department mentioned their interest in preserving this area for wetland protection. The combined use as a trail and preservation area would benefit all. Chapter 7 of the 2013 comprehensive plan reinforces the need to preserve the natural areas of Stillwater.

Boomer Creek running both north and south of Boomer Lake offers another opportunity to create a linear park extending from Whittenberg Park to Couch Park and then to Stillwater Creek. The city should proactively preserve these linear park corridors for future development of trails that can provide connections to other parks, trails and schools.

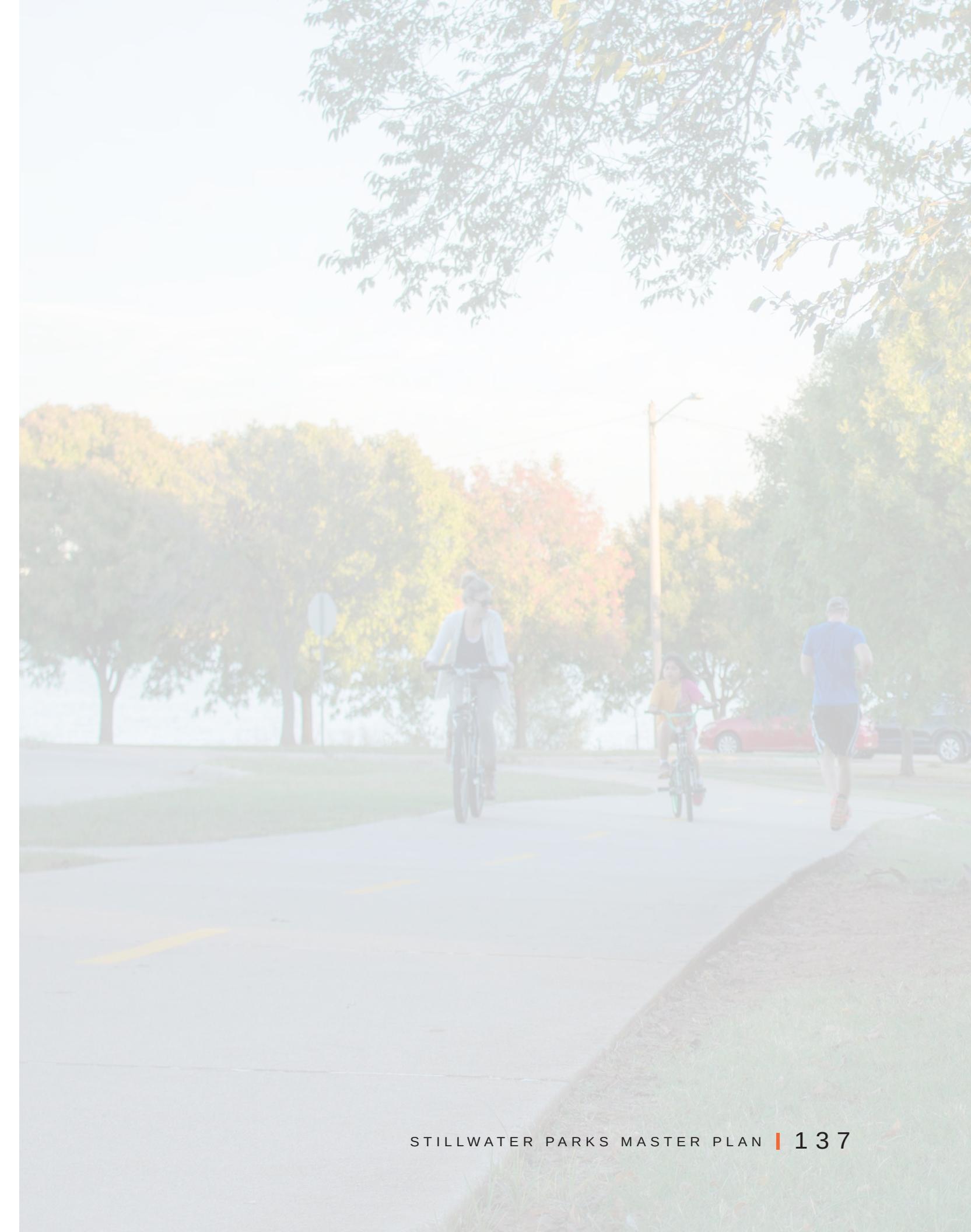
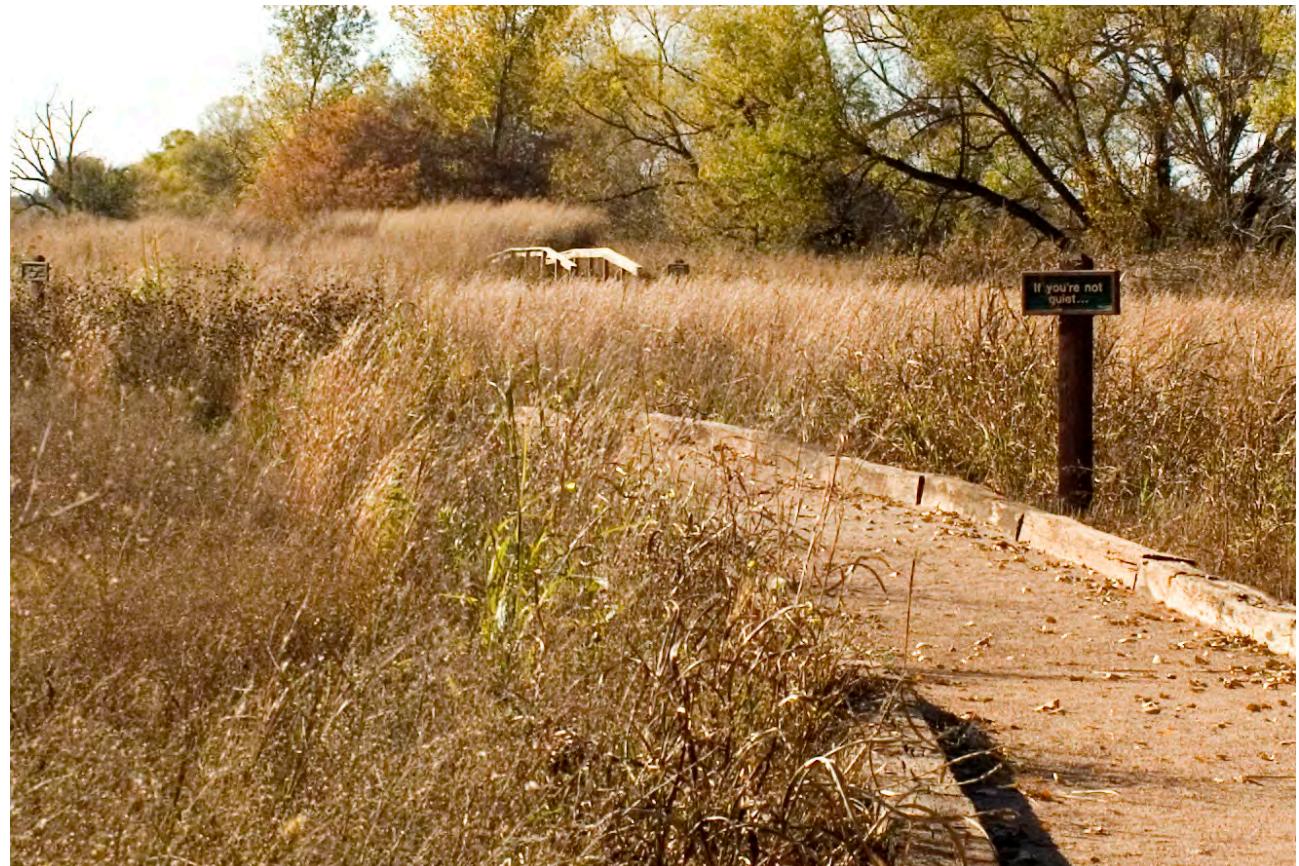
Trails

Trails are something that the community would like. It was noted as one of the top two items desired in both the online survey and in the public meeting. When asked to 'map your trail' at the public meeting, many new trails were drawn. The adjacent map shows a consolidation of existing trails, recommendations by the community, the Rails-Trail and other recommendations by the design team.

Gaps in the Kameoka Trail system should be filled as a first priority, along with new trail extensions. Stillwater has reported that a 2.5 mile Rails-trails facility has been provisionally approved by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT). This will complete the Kameoka Trail and means that Stillwater will have nearly a complete trail loop within Stillwater.

The agreement will have ODOT remove the rails and leave a useable railbed. Once approved, grant funding should be aggressively sought annually, to pave the trail, beginning in the most needed areas. Matching funds of 20% are needed for the Recreational Trails Program, but there are creative ways to match grants that do not necessarily mean cash is needed.

In the meantime, the railbed can be used for running, walking, fat tire bikes and mountain bikes. Signs should be added as soon as possible to encourage trail use. Citizens should be encouraged to help clean up the roadbed with an 'Adopt a Trail' or other cleanup program to allow trail use to begin in advance of paving the trail.



Preliminary Recreation Programs and Facilities Assessment

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE



The delivery of parks and recreation services in the City of Stillwater has changed dramatically in the last 5 plus years. This was done as an effort to reduce duplicated efforts and equipment between city departments.

Before this time, the City had a traditional parks and recreation department with a parks division responsible for the maintenance of parks, trails, open space and facilities. It was staffed to provide a high level of service.

There was also a Recreation Division that was responsible for providing a wide array of programs and services as well as the operation of a number of recreation facilities including indoor centers and pools.

Now, there is a dramatic change in the City's approach to parks and recreation. The Parks and Recreation Department was essentially dismantled with parks maintenance moving to Public Works and the Recreation Division is much reduced in staffing and programming.



Some park facilities (Lake McMurtry, athletic fields, etc.) operations and maintenance became the responsibility of other non-profit organizations. Most recreation programming (with the exception of senior programming and some special events) became the responsibility of other organizations (SASA, YMCA, OSU) under contract from the City. The management and maintenance of a number of facilities (Prairie Arts Center, Armory Recreation Center and the Municipal Pool) also were contracted to outside organizations. The Senior Center and Community Center remained as city operated and maintained facilities and are the primary locations for recreation services provided by the City.

With the change in philosophy in how the City provides recreation programs and facilities, the City now is in more of a role of a contract administrator for other organizations and entities than a direct provider of most services. This has resulted in reduced staffing for recreation programming and facilities operations. The exception to this is the Community Center which has its own staff.

With limited staff the City has a rather disjointed approach to providing recreation programs and facilities. This includes:

- Organizational structure that is not well identified without established goals and directions.
- No program plan in place to guide the delivery of services by the City and other organizations.
- Limited operational policies and procedures to ensure uniform and consistent approach to providing by programs and facilities.
- Lack of maintenance plans and requirements for facilities operations.
- No coordinated marketing of recreation opportunities to the community.
- Many of the recreation facilities are older and in need of upgrades and/or renovation. There are significant ADA and other access issues with many of these facilities.



Recreation Programs

Other than a few senior programs and a select number of special events, the City relies almost solely on other organizations for the delivery of recreation programs to the community. These include:

- Stillwater Area Sports Association (SASA) - is the main organization responsible for providing youth and adult sports, both team and individual, to the community. They utilize the Armory Recreation Center for some activities as well as the City's athletic fields. They receive an annual payment from the City for providing these services.
- Oklahoma State University (OSU) – utilizing the Prairie Arts Center as the site, OSU's Art Department provides cultural arts programming that is focused primarily on the visual arts.
- YMCA of Greater Oklahoma – the YMCA provides all the aquatic programming at the Municipal Pool.
- Lake McMurtry Friends - The mission of Lake McMurtry Friends is to enrich the quality of life by providing opportunities to engage in sustainable outdoor recreation, environmental education, and nature conservation.



Recreation Facilities

While the City owns all of the public indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in the community (with the exception of OSU facilities), many of these amenities are operated and maintained by other organizations through management contracts. In each of these facilities, on-going custodial and maintenance services are the responsibility of the contract organization but most capital improvements and/or replacement is still the responsibility of the City.

Armory Recreation Center

The facility is managed and maintained by SASA, and the gym is a location for youth and adult sports activities. SASA has their offices in the building. The City's Community Resources Manager also has office space in the facility.

Prairie Arts Center

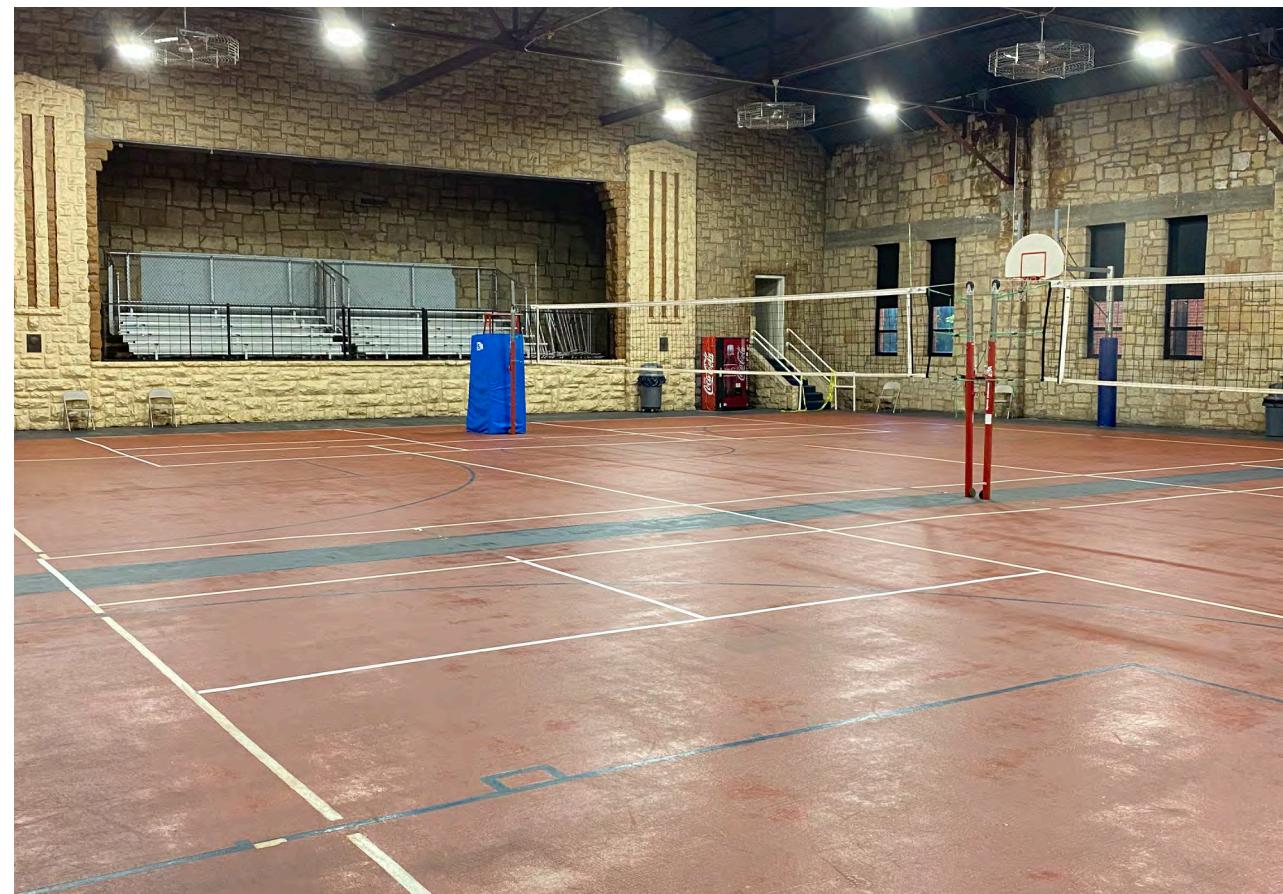
The center is managed and maintained by OSU's Art Department and is the primary location for arts programming in the community.

Stillwater Municipal Pool

The YMCA is responsible for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the pool, with the exception of the pool's mechanical system.

Athletic Fields

SASA conducts all field maintenance and lining for rectangular and diamond fields that are utilized by the organization for their programs.



Recreation Programming

Most recreation programming is the responsibility of other organizations under contract from the City. City programs are concentrated in senior programs and special events. Senior programs are coordinated out of the Senior Center and been reduced in number and variety over the last 5 years.

A weekday senior meal program is offered by a contract provider (Project HEART) at the Community Center. Below is a summary of senior programming and facility usage for the Senior Center and Community Center.

	2019 Participants
Programs	2,065
Senior Center (daily)	50
Community Center	183,689



The city also conducts a number of special events.

- Dancing with Daddy
- Boomer Blast Fireworks Show, July 4th
- Mummy and Son
- Halloween Festivities
- Holidays in Stillwater

Beyond these city programs, recreation programs that are provided by other organizations under contract by the city include:

Stillwater Area Sports Association (SASA)

SASA is the main organization responsible for providing youth and adult sports, both team and individual, to the community. Their primary sports are:

Adult	2019 Participants	Youth	2019 Participants
Volleyball	400	Tennis	38
Softball	810	Softball/Baseball	1,165
Basketball	200	Flag Football	75
Pickleball	(75 per wk.) 3,600	Basketball	594
Total	4,935		1,872

Note: 2019 participation numbers were used rather than 2020 to minimize the impact from COVID.

In addition to these programs, SASA also conducts a number of adult softball and youth baseball/softball tournaments. They utilize the Armory Recreation Center for some activities as well as the city's athletic fields. SASA is responsible for upgrades and maintenance to the Armory and the athletic fields they use. They receive an annual payment of \$216,000 from the city for providing these services. The amount of payment has been reduced over the years with a hope that it will one day be eliminated.

Oklahoma State University (OSU)

Utilizing the Prairie Arts Center as the site, OSU's Art Department provides cultural arts programming that is focused primarily on the visual arts. In addition, OSU also offers a series of special events as well as a yoga class out of the Prairie Arts Center.

YMCA of Greater Oklahoma

In addition to being responsible for the operation of the Municipal Pool, the YMCA provides all the aquatic programming at the facility. This primarily consists of youth swimming lessons and the utilization of the pool by a summer swim team.

Recreation Programming Concerns:

- Senior programs and services are split between the Senior Center and the Community Center.
- No program plan is in place to guide the delivery of services by the city and other organizations and ensure that the needs of the community are being met in all program areas.
- There is not a fee policy in place to guide fee setting for internal programs and facility use.
- There are no existing program metrics that detail out the number of people being served by in-house programs or ones offered by contract providers.
- Recreation programs do not have the benefit of having well established marketing efforts, a seasonal program brochure or computerized registration.
- Most programs and services are low or no fee, especially for youth.
- Community Resources has very few performance measures and record keeping regarding city-based recreation programs and services, or most services provided by other contract providers.
- There are program opportunities that seem to be missing in a number of areas. This includes:
 - Fitness/Wellness
 - Youth
 - Education
 - General
 - Special Needs
 - Outdoor Recreation
 - Teens
 - Social Services



Recreation Facilities Concerns:

- Many of the recreation facilities are older and in need of upgrades and/or renovation. There are significant ADA and other access issues with many of these facilities.
- For facilities that are contract managed by other organizations there are not always up to date contracts.
- There is a lack of established maintenance plans for city operated facilities and limited maintenance standards and requirements for contract operators.

Assessment of Staffing and Operations

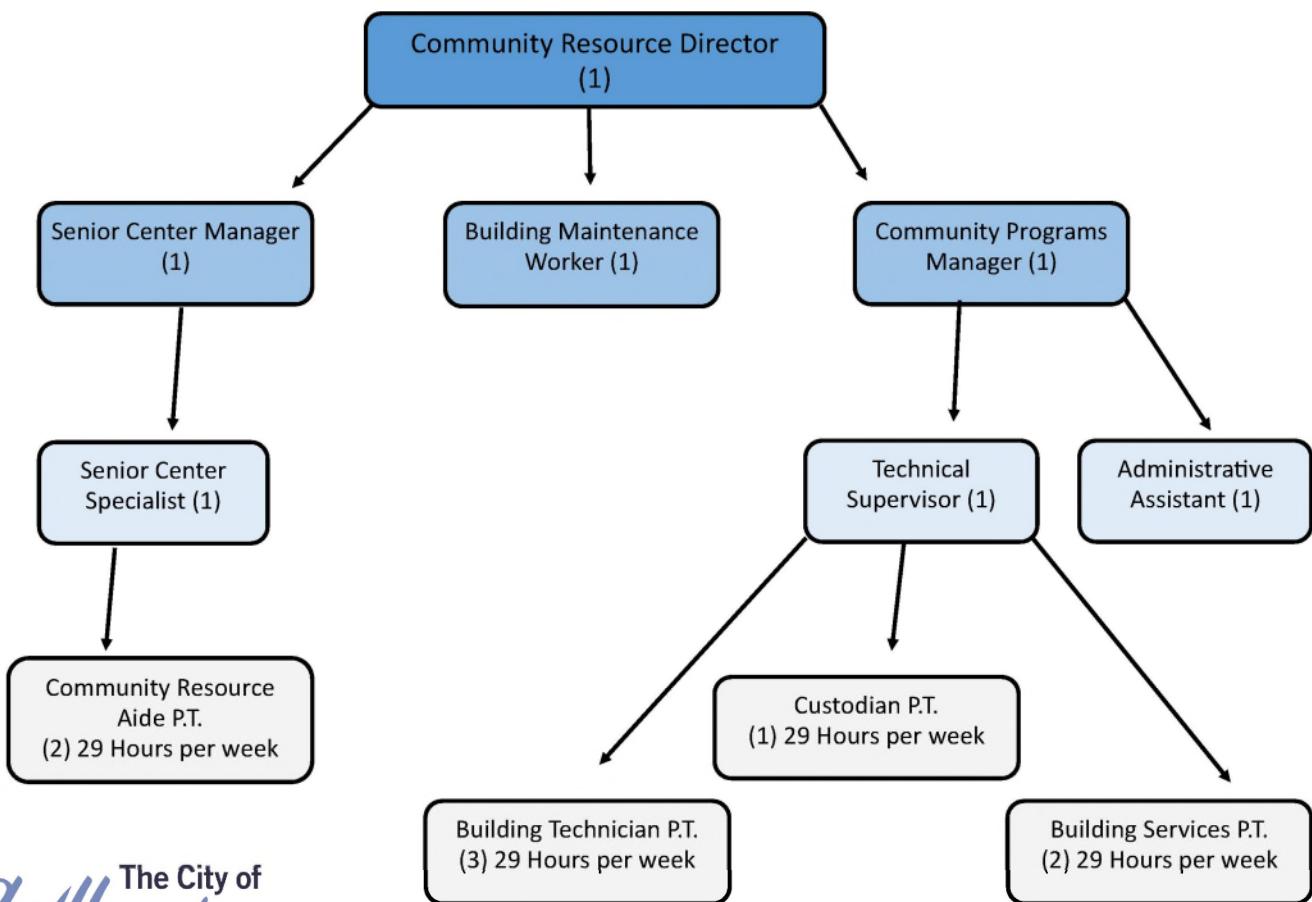
The Parks Division has been eliminated with parks maintenance moving to Public Works. With this change the dedicated number of parks maintenance personnel was reduced from 30 to 7 full time staff. Some park facilities (McMurtry Lake, athletic fields, etc.) operations and maintenance has become the responsibility of other organizations. Other maintenance functions were contracted to private entities. Considering the number of parks and facilities that must be maintained, the level of current staffing is low, only 6 full time and one seasonal worker, according to a list of Public Works/ Water Utilities Personnel list dated 7-29-21. This makes it extremely difficult to have adequate maintenance for most parks.



Community Resources

The Recreation Division has been reduced to 7 full-time staff and 9 part-time staff. The staff is responsible for senior programs and special events, the management of the Senior Center, and the Community Center. Beyond these programs and services, the staff manage contract program providers and facility operators. There are also two community resource aides. This has resulted in a very reduced staffing for recreation programming and facilities operations. The organizational chart for Community Resources is shown below.

The operations responsibilities of parks and recreation facilities and programs, as noted above, are housed in two different departments.



The operations and maintenance budget for Parks is located within the budget for Public Works as part of the Operations Field Services account. There is not a separate budget for parks maintenance or a way to account for the costs of maintaining individual parks or facilities. This is a major shortcoming. Establishing an overall parks maintenance budget with subaccounts for larger parks (Couch Park, Boomer Lake Park, etc.) and the grouping of smaller parks into single accounts by geographic area is essential. This type of budgeting is now considered as a best practice for parks and recreation agencies.

For Community Resources, there are a number of budgets that cover recreation facilities and programs. However, there is not an individual budget category for senior programming or operations and maintenance of the Senior Center.

There are minimal operations and management policies and procedures in place for both Parks and Community Resources. The city itself has policies and procedures that cover human resources (employee manual), purchasing and other management functions but this is the extent of most policies.



Parks would benefit by having detailed operations and maintenance plans for the division as a whole and also for individual parks and facilities. This needs to be backed up by the actual tracking of parks maintenance costs for each park or facility. Also having safety and security measures as well as facility and playground inspection programs (conducted by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector) are needed.

Community Resources also needs specific operations policies for the facilities that they operate as well as more stringent requirements for the operations of facilities by contractors. A maintenance plan for each facility that is maintained by the city as well as by contractors is important as well. Recreation programming also needs policies regarding how programs are administered and monitored as well as a general fee policy.

Other general policies that both divisions need are emergency action plans, a continuity of service plan and a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan (DEI).

Developing key performance metrics for parks/facility maintenance and recreation services are not present.

It does not appear that much, if any, technology is utilized for the management and operations of parks or recreation functions. Having a maintenance management system in place for both parks and facilities that would serve as a work order system and an accounting of maintenance by task and amenity would be helpful.

This should be augmented by the tracking of actual maintenance staff time and materials for each park and facility. For recreation services and facilities, having computerized registration, facility usage, as well as rental tracking is important.

Marketing is not a high priority for Stillwater parks, facilities, and programs. Most marketing efforts are related to promotion of the Community Center and special events, but little else. The city's web site has limited information and does not feature links or promotion of facilities and programs that are provided by contractors. There is not any type of a marketing strategy or plan in place to guide marketing efforts.



Future Recommendations

The City of Stillwater has embraced its current approach to providing parks and recreation services that limits the city's role as programmers, facility managers, and athletic field maintenance. The city will need to formalize this philosophy and promote it to the public. This philosophy will impact the delivery of parks and recreation facilities services in the future and serves as the guide for the recommendations in this section.

Programs

The concept of having most recreation programs and services being provided by other organizations in the region, contracting management of key recreation facilities to many of these same organizations, and requiring a level of maintenance for these same facilities needs to be reinforced.

The City of Stillwater will need to determine the areas of focus for future recreation programming efforts based on the level of financial commitment that it wants to make to recreation programs and services.

The city should develop an overall basic programming philosophy with the following policies:

- The city will not be the primary provider of most recreation programs and services that are available in the community but will coordinate these efforts to ensure that adequate recreation services are obtainable.
- Develop partnerships with other providers to bring a full spectrum of recreation programs and services to the community.
- Ensure that recreation program and service opportunities are available to all ages, incomes, abilities, gender, and ethnic groups in an equitable and inclusive manner.



Based on the programming philosophy, develop a program plan that includes the general direction of recreation programming for the next 5 plus years.

1. Establish the basics of the plan:

- Determine which programs will be primarily offered by city staff. This will include:
 - Seniors
 - Special events
 - Self-directed
- Keep programming contracts with existing organizations and explore possible contracts with other providers for specific program areas when possible. This could include:

Program Areas	City	Contract	Possible Contracts
Sports		Green	
Fitness/Wellness			Green
Cultural Arts		Green	
Aquatics		Green	
Youth			Green
Education			Green
Special Needs			Green
Special Events	Blue		
Outdoor Recreation			Green
Seniors	Blue		
Teens			Green
Self-Directed	Blue	Green	
Social Services			Green

- Contracts should clearly identify specific roles and expectations as well as limits to facility scheduling, fees, and operations. Partnerships with organizations should reflect the needs and culture of the specific markets they will be providing the services for. Other contract requirements should include:
 - Program plan
 - Safety and security plans
 - Participant code of conduct
 - Background checks for all staff and volunteers
 - Quarterly and annual reports on program numbers and participants
 - DEI policy
 - Coaches training program and concussion protocol
- For those program areas where there are not contracts, utilize other providers on a referral and clearinghouse basis. This should involve promotion of their activities, coordinating of some programs, and permitting of facilities. However, this process needs to be closely managed to be successful.

2. Priorities for general programming expansion based on community input should include:

- Youth Sports
- Special Events/Festivals
- Outdoor Education
- Fitness/Wellness
- Aquatics

3. Ensure that recreation programs are available for specific demographic groups including:

- Youth – Programs that serve a variety of interest areas beyond just sports including after-school and summer camps.
- Teens – Activities that are both organized and drop-in in nature.
- Seniors – Programs and services that serve a wide range of the senior age category, including an appeal to the younger more active based senior.
- Intergenerational/Multigenerational – Offering programs and services that have an appeal to multiple generations or across generations,
- Ethnic/Culturally Based – There should be an effort to offer programs and services that are appropriate for the cultural orientation of the area.

4. Programming should include virtual options in addition to traditional in-person offerings.

5. The city should adopt a policy of recognizing only one youth sports organization for each sport. This will reduce the demand for additional athletic fields in the future.

6. For other organizations and recreation providers in the area, clearly identify areas of programmatic responsibility to ensure that there is not overlap in resource allocation.

7. Establish clear staffing and operational budget requirements for Community Resources to support the program plan.

8. There will need to be the establishment of basic performance measures to track recreation programming effectiveness. This includes the following for both city programs and those contracted:

- Rates of fill for programs and activities (capacity vs. actual numbers).
- Participation numbers and comparisons to past years/seasons.
- Rate of program cancellations (should be between 15% and 20%)
- Financial performance including cost per participant.
- Evaluations from participants.



Recreation Facilities

Continuing the current approach to providing recreation facilities has the following impact on existing as well as potential new recreation amenities.

City Operated Facilities:

- **Senior Center** – This building has the lowest use by the community of any city recreation facility. Senior recreation services should be consolidated into the Community Center to provide a central location for senior services plus reduce the cost of operation and staffing requirements. The building should be repurposed for other city needs (non-recreation) or leased to other community organizations for their use.
- **Community Center** – This is and should continue to be the primary location for city recreation programs and services. This will require continued upgrades to the building, parking, and support amenities. Essentially all indoor based programs and services should be housed in this facility. In addition, all recreation staff should also be located in the center. Beyond city organized activities, it is recognized that the center needs to continue to support use by other contract service providers as well as rentals to other community groups. Having priorities of use established for each major space in the building will help to ensure maximum utilization of the building.
- **Splash Pads** - The two splash pads are major aquatic amenities for the city and there needs to be an ongoing commitment to maintaining and upgrading the facilities in the future.

City Facilities Operated by Others:

- Armory Recreation Center – The facility should continue to be operated and maintained by SASA. The Community Resources office should be moved out of this facility to the Community Center and SASA encouraged to utilize the full building for their offices and other community programs. This may require renovation of the area in front of the gym.
- Prairie Arts Center – The center should continue to be operated by Oklahoma State University under the current operating agreement.
- Stillwater Municipal Pool – While this facility is in need of being replaced, the existing pool should continue to function until a new facility is built, if at all possible.
- Athletic Fields – The concept of having the various user groups being responsible for the maintenance of the fields themselves should continue but with stronger maintenance standards and possible provisions for use by other groups on an occasional basis with a rental fee.



Recreation Facilities Recommendations:

- Develop a detailed deferred maintenance list for all city owned facilities
 - Prioritize needed improvements per facility and overall
 - Determine ADA required improvements
 - Develop a funding plan
- Develop general maintenance standards for all recreation facilities as well as safety and security requirements.
- General requirements for city management of facilities should include:
 - Operations and management plan
 - Continuity of operations plan
 - Maintenance plan specific to the facility
 - Safety and security protocols
 - Emergency action plan
 - Staffing requirements
 - Minimum level of staffing
 - Background checks
 - User code of conduct
- Have current operational and management agreements for all facilities that are being contract operated.
- General requirements for contract management should include:
 - Operations and management plan
 - Maintenance plan
 - Safety and security protocols
 - Emergency action plan
 - Staffing requirements
 - Minimum level of staffing
 - Background checks
 - User code of conduct
 - A diversity, equity, and inclusion policy (DEI)
 - A quarterly and annual report that tracks specific performance characteristics
- Establish priorities for potential future city facility development.
- Complete feasibility studies for any possible new recreation facilities.
- Determine possible project development/operations partners for any new facilities.
- Determine funding mechanism for capital development and operations.



Staffing and Operations Recommendations

Critical to having strong management and operations of recreation programs, services, and facilities; is having a strong staffing and operations plans in place. The following are specific recommendations in these two areas.

With minimal staffing for parks and recreation, and a commitment to contracting most of recreation programming, many facilities and athletic field maintenance, the city needs to consider the following:

- Establishing an overall staffing philosophy for Parks and Community Resources will be essential. This should be tied to levels of service for parks and facilities as well as for recreation programs. It should also reflect what maintenance and programming tasks will be contracted to other organizations or providers.
- All job descriptions for full-time and part-time staff should be updated or developed to adequately reflect the actual duties of each position.
- With key management positions in Parks and Community Resources nearing retirement, developing a succession plan within the next year will be important.
- Critical to the long-term success of parks and recreation staffing is a commitment to staff training and ultimately certification. Developing a formal annual training program is essential.
- Parks maintenance should be identified as a specific division within Public Works. Strong consideration should be given to adding two parks maintenance positions to the staffing plan to increase the level of maintenance in existing parks. As part of this, an analysis of what additional maintenance functions could be contracted should be completed before hiring these positions.
- If the Senior Center is utilized for other purposes and senior programming is moved to the Community Center, then the current level of staffing is adequate for Community Resources. The Senior Center Supervisor should be retitled to Senior Services Supervisor and the Administrative Technician moved to the Community Center.



Specific operations recommendations are noted below by category.

- Additional budget accounts will need to be set up to accurately represent the financial commitments to different aspects of Parks and Community Resources.
- Parks should have its own budget that is part of the overall Public Works budget. All expenses associated with the maintenance of parks should be accounted for in this budget. Once Parks has its own budget, establishing sub budgets for larger parks and facilities is recommended as a way for identifying and tracking exact costs.
- With the existing commitment to recreation programming focusing on seniors and special events, Senior Services should be a new budget account to track actual expenditures for this program area. The Parks & Recreation Administration budget should be renamed Community Resources Administration.



Policies and Procedures

Parks and Recreation best practices call for agencies to have comprehensive operational policies in place that are updated on a regular basis.

- Parks and Community Resources needs to make a commitment to updating the basic policies and procedures of the organization including staff/supervisor policies, financial transactions, customer service, safety and security, and emergency action plans.
- There should be a comprehensive Parks and Community Resources staff and operations manual based on operations requirements of the city in general.
- One of the key areas of focus must be on policies and procedures that deal specifically with safety and security of parks, facilities, and programs. As a subset to this, there also needs to be a comprehensive emergency action plan for each division as well as for each individual facility.

- It is critical that the Parks and Community Resources develop a continuity plan that covers possible interruptions of operations from natural disasters, pandemics, terrorist acts or other conditions. This needs to outline a process for maintaining basic services associated with maintenance and operations of parks, recreation facilities, trails, as well as recreation programs and services.
- Parks and Community Resources should establish goals and metrics for social equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEI) for parks, facilities, and recreation programs. These metrics will need to be monitored to make sure that the goals are being met.
- Both of the divisions should develop key performance measures for all aspects of operations including recreation programs and services, facility usage, and parks maintenance.

Maintenance Plans and Procedures

Specific Parks and Facilities Maintenance Recommendations

- Increase the level of maintenance staff by adding at least two full-time positions.
- Develop an overall parks maintenance plan to guide long term maintenance practices and procedures.
- Establish specific parks maintenance plans for each of the major parks in the system.
- Require other organizations that maintain city parks or facilities to follow a maintenance plan that has been developed by parks staff.
- Track maintenance by individual park or facility based on actual staff time and materials.
- Develop an asset inventory within all city parks and recreation facilities with provisions for a yearly update.
- Have an up-to-date listing of deferred maintenance for each major park or facility and develop a plan to fund these required improvements.
- Consider the establishment of lifecycle cost estimates for all major capital assets in the parks and facilities.
- Formal park/facility inspections should be completed on a weekly basis.
- Staff schedules, maintenance plans, tracking of inventories, facility inspections and actual maintenance time and materials records need to be fully automated with the ability to make entries from the field on tablets or other hand-held devices.
- Critical to the long-term success of parks maintenance is a commitment to staff training and certification. Developing a formal annual training program will be essential. This should include Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSI), and chemical applicators licenses.



In 2012, the City of Stillwater changed the way they maintained parks. Prior to this time, the parks were maintained within the parks department, which was comprised of 30 full time, and up to 10 part time maintenance staff. There were inefficiencies and equipment was duplicated in various city departments. And it was felt that a change in how maintenance is provided could save the City substantial funding.

Around this time, Stillwater Area Sports Association (SASA) had taken over the sports programs and along with it, they assumed maintenance of the sports fields, which is a significant portion of highest maintained areas. The Public Works Department assumed responsibility for mowing and maintenance of the remainder of the park land, although some mowing is done under contract.

Over 70% of the public rated the maintenance of the parks as satisfactory or better in the public survey, the design team looks more critically than park users. They look at safety issues, ADA compliance and compliance with the Consumer Product Safety Commission's recommendations for playground safety. They look at the number and health of trees and landscaping and how they can be expected to perform in the future.

Currently, the Public Works Department mows lawns approximately every 7 days, although delay during rainy days is expected. This is considered an adequate mowing schedule for parks. However, there is concern about other maintenance tasks which are not included in any known schedule. Things like cleaning sidewalks and trails, striping parking lots, maintaining site furnishings and shelters, planting and caring for trees. Because these things have not been maintained or upgraded over the last several years, many are now noted to be deficient and result in safety concerns and inferior park conditions. Many of the items listed in the park assessments as needing improvement are actually deferred maintenance items.

A recommended maintenance schedule is included in the Appendix, which shows minimum tasks and frequencies. This type of schedule should be used as a checklist and marked weekly or annually to track completed tasks. This schedule can also help with budgeting for materials and supplies needed for future improvements.

A detailed evaluation of funding should also be done to determine if dollars were actually saved with the transition. Are the savings goals hoped for being actually met? Has the quality of maintenance remained acceptable? Or has it declined?



Natural Wildflower Areas—no mow zones

Under the Individual parks assessment, several areas are suggested to become natural wildflower areas to reduce mowing. This is becoming a common treatment for parks to improve the parkland, while reducing maintenance. The maintenance division should develop specific levels of service for each park utilizing the NRPA's maintenance standards (as edited towards Stillwater's Park System) that divides outdoor park maintenance into 4 different levels. These include:

Level 1 – High visibility areas that require the highest level of maintenance. It would include maintaining of lawns and planting beds and possibly extra fountains or unusual features.

This would include Chris Salmon Park

Level 2 – Is the normal standard and what an individual expects to see on a regular basis.

This would include most of the remainder of the parks, except noted below.

Level 3 – This level is one step above allowing the land to return to its original state. This would reduce scheduled mowing from a weekly basis to 2-3 times per year. This is a new trend in park management to plant wildflowers and native grasses in 'wild' areas. This means seeding native grasses and wildflowers into these areas turning an open field into blooming wildflowers during most of the year. In areas near trails or other higher used areas, mowing only the edges of used areas is done regularly, allowing other spaces to look natural.

This would include parts of Boomer, Centennial Park, Couch, Hoyt Grove, Sanborn, Ingram, Myers, Strickland and Whittenberg Parks as indicated on each park assessment. The image below shows a trail in Oklahoma City that is only mowed about 4-6' on each side of the trail. This way of maintaining open spaces significantly reduces maintenance and benefits wildlife and pollinators. It improves soil health, prevents erosion and improves water quality.

An OSU fact sheet is included in the appendix which addresses Wildflower Gardening in Oklahoma.

Level 4 – This level allows the land to return to its original natural state or open space that is already in its natural condition. Parts of Lake McMurtry could be maintained in this way.



When assigning levels of maintenance to a park, it is common to have varying levels within different areas of the same park. Highly developed areas often have a higher level assigned while less developed have a lower level.

This type of treatment was tried in the past within the Stillwater Parks System, but the public was not happy and demanded that areas be mowed. This section is included as a way to help to get public support of the program. First, the benefits should be emphasized:

Benefits to Wildflower/Native Grass Landscaping

The following text is excerpted from "Source Book on Natural Landscaping for Local Officials: Part of the Site Planning Series" (full citation below).

Reduced costs of landscape maintenance

The major savings of natural landscaping is the lower cost of landscape maintenance. The combined costs of installation and maintenance for natural landscape over a ten year period may be one fifth of the costs for conventional landscape maintenance. The costs of the following maintenance factors are significantly reduced or eliminated through natural landscaping: labor, water, fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, replanting annual flowers, and mowing. The costs for landscape irrigation are avoided by natural landscaping. The reduced consumption of fossil fuel for lawn maintenance equipment is an additional benefit.

Reduced soil erosion

Natural landscaping has distinct advantages over conventional turf grasses in stabilizing easily erodible soils, especially on stream banks and areas where moving water is present. The roots of native prairie plants are very dense, fine, and deep (in some cases, 5 to 10 feet in mature plants) and hold soil well. By contrast, typical turf grass root systems are only four to six inches deep.

Improved water quality

Native vegetation enhances the infiltration of contaminated stormwater. The dense, deep root systems augment the permeability of the soil and help the uptake of certain stormwater pollutants. Native vegetation buffers are particularly effective along the edges of streams, lakes, and wetlands. They can intercept runoff and subsurface water pollutants from urban and agricultural land uses and construction sites.

Reduced air pollution

Standard lawn maintenance equipment creates significant amounts of air pollution. Equipment such as lawn mowers, leaf vacuums, and other fossil fueled lawn maintenance equipment emit high levels of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides, which contribute to the formation of ground level ozone (smog), toxins and other particulates. USEPA estimates that a gasoline powered lawn mower emits 11 times the air pollution of a new car for each hour of operation. Natural landscaping can significantly reduce the need for fossil fueled lawn and garden equipment and this reduces the associated air pollution and health risks.

Reduced noise pollution

Noise from lawn and gardening equipment has become a source of increasing dissatisfaction in some communities. Natural landscapes reduce the need for this equipment.

Reduced greenhouse effect

Natural vegetation can help to combat global climate change (the "greenhouse effect") by removing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. Plants remove CO₂ from the atmosphere and store the carbon in the body of the plant, the root system and the soil.

excerpt continued

Habitat restoration and protection

Due to extensive urban and agricultural development, high quality natural communities cover only a small percentage of Oklahoma's land. With this decrease of habitats, many plants and animals have lost the special conditions and requirements they need for their survival. Natural landscaping plays a part in attracting native animals and re-establishing a natural population of wildlife and the natural cycles within which they thrive. Native insects, including butterflies and moths, attract a wide array of songbirds, who eat the insects and the plant seeds.

Beautification

Though it is difficult to quantify, beautification is an important reason, sometimes the fundamental reason, for natural landscaping. Many people living or working in natural landscapes appreciate the variety of textures, colors and shapes of native plants. The wildlife, especially the birds and butterflies attracted to the plants, also enhance the aesthetic appeal of natural landscaping.

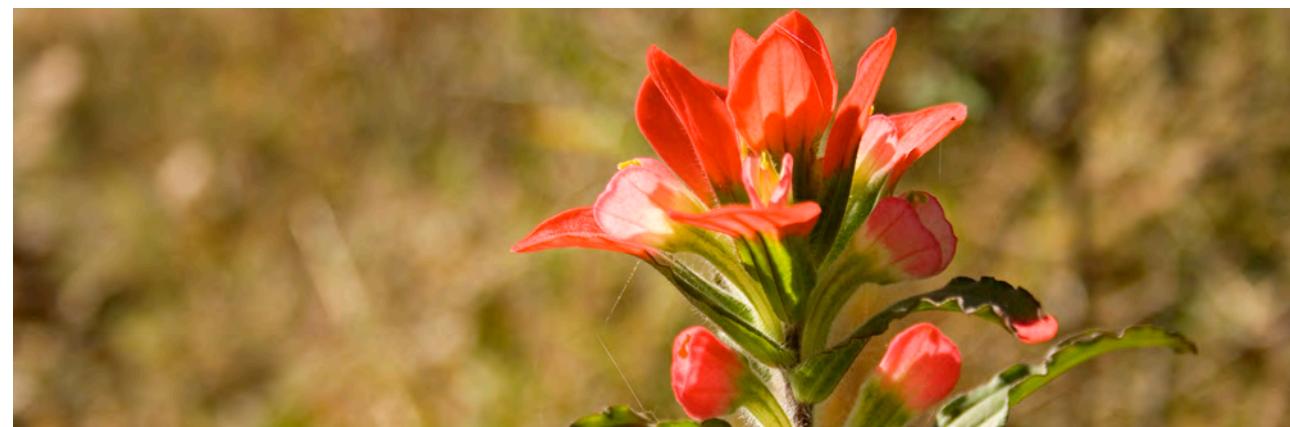
Conservation education

Natural landscapes are an invitation to appreciate plant diversity, seasonal flowering cycles, sustainability of native landscapes, and wildlife habitat, all of which are absent in conventional landscapes. Educational programs such as nature walks and talks, exhibits, and volunteer days sponsored schools and community organizations can provide information on preservation, protection and restoration of natural habitats. These opportunities increase the awareness and understanding of the public about the community which they reside.

Passive recreation opportunities

Natural landscapes provide recreational opportunities such as bird watching and photography. Nature offers both tranquility and excitement. It can serve as a place to relax, a place of diversity and excitement. By incorporating native landscaping throughout the community, it also offers the opportunity for children to experience and learn from nature in their own yard and community."

Mariner, Richard. "CHAPTER 2: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL LANDSCAPING?" Source Book on Natural Landscaping for Local Officials: Part of the Site Planning Series, Chicago, Ill. (222 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1800, Chicago 60606), 1997.



Educate the Public

Once the City makes a commitment to add wildflowers and native grasses into their parks and change the way it's parks are maintained, the next step is to educate the public and get them to support this change. These are suggestions as to actions that should be taken to get community support:

- Create a video: Look at one developed by Pinellas County in western Florida created a video to explain their "no mow" policy to the public, sharing the many benefits to people and wildlife, while saving the county money each year in maintenance costs.
- This video should be adapted to Stillwater and shared as part of a media event promoting the new policy through the local TV stations, news, radio, social media, and PSA's.
- Install signs: "Habitat restoration for future generations" along the edges of habitat areas. Make the signs attractive and relate them to the purpose.
- The benefits to Wildflower plantings should be shown to the public.
- Use areas for education-coordinate with the schools to have a naturalist take classes on a nature hike. Provide classes for adults as well.

Trees and Landscaping

An aggressive program to increase the urban forest of Stillwater should be initiated, starting with adding trees to the park system. A minimum of 1,200 new trees should be added to Stillwater Parks over the next 10 years. Trees provide shade, sustenance, and shelter for wildlife. Trees sequester carbon, and improve air, soil, and water quality. They also support a healthy community and make people happy.

While there are many mature trees in the Stillwater parks system, they won't live forever, and many have suffered damage from recent ice storms. New trees should be added to maintain and improve the urban forest canopy. Even though trees are generally easy to grow, all trees need maintenance, including corrective pruning to reduce damage from storms. Species should be selected that are hardy to the Oklahoma climate and that have good structural form. Trees native to the area are preferred. To ensure the survivability of new trees, simple irrigation system should be installed to keep the trees watered for the first three years. If irrigation systems such as bubblers or spray heads are not feasible tree gators and tree diapers are good alternatives. This means that trees would not need weekly or more frequent watering. Instead, monthly attention might be needed for only the first 3 years. After that, depending on the species, most can survive without supplemental water, except in periods of extreme drought.



Playgrounds

Public Works reports that they inspect playgrounds monthly. If all surfacing is changed to the engineered wood fiber mulch, they will need to inspect and make replenishment of mulch more often. Because the wood or plastic mulch is so easily compressed and moved, it becomes less effective in providing for the safety for children or in maintaining an accessible path through the playground. This can become a safety concern that most communities cannot maintain. Unitary play surfaces, which include Poured in Place or Synthetic Turf materials are strongly recommended.

Playgrounds are costly to maintain and carry a certain level of liability. Where they are well used and serve a community need, playgrounds should be retained. Removal of underused playgrounds is recommended in Chapter 3, in each park evaluation.



Adopt a Park Program

By adopting a park, Stillwater residents, schools, clubs, businesses, neighborhood associations and service organizations can make their parks more beautiful for everyone and reduce maintenance tasks by the City of Stillwater. The volunteer work also helps extend the benefits of tax dollars by enabling city parks employees to spend more time on other projects and responsibilities. Prior to implementing an Adopt-A-Park program a maintenance schedule and standard operating procedures should be outlined. Adopt-A-Park allows citizens, and particularly park users, to show pride in their community and take an active role in beautifying their surroundings and public spaces. Typically, groups to visit the park of their choice on a regular basis to pick up litter and to perform other tasks to help keep the park clean. Local service organizations, youth organizations, church groups, and neighborhoods can have fun while providing a community service. Adopting groups may volunteer for:

- Pick up litter and waste
- Sweep court surfaces
- Sweep pavilion areas
- Clean picnic tables and benches
- Clean and rake children's play areas
- Remove graffiti
- Plant and maintain flowers or trees



Marketing

To maximize facility usage and the program offerings by Community Resources, as well as other contract providers in the community, there needs to be a strong marketing effort to inform and promote services that are available.

This can best be accomplished by having a parks and recreation marketing plan. This document needs to be a simple, easy to implement, document that serves as a guideline for specific marketing efforts. The yearly plan should outline areas of focus, specific marketing tools and tasks, as well as the responsible staff member for implementation, financial resources that are required, and a thorough evaluation process. The marketing plan should focus on the following areas:

- Website enhancement to better promote facilities and programs.
- Utilizing a registration, point of sale and rental tracking software program. Ultimately this will need to include on-line registration and payments for rentals and permits.
- Program options available through the Community Center.
- Facilities and programs provided by contractors.
- Promoting rentals at the Community Center and other facilities.



Staffing and Operations Recommendations:

- Establish an overall staffing philosophy for Parks and Community Resources.
- Develop a succession plan for key staff.
- Parks should be its own division within Public Works and additional maintenance staff is needed. Parks should also have its own budget.
- Community Resources needs to establish a Senior Services budget.
- Continue to develop a 5-year CIP budget.
- Update basic policies and procedures with an emphasis on safety and security.
- Develop a continuity plan.
- Establish goals and metrics for DEI.
- Develop a comprehensive maintenance management plan.
- Recreation programs, services and facilities need to be supported by established marketing efforts.
- Establish a program and facility fee policy.

Funding Strategies

Funding the development and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities and services remains a challenge for many cities across the country. In the last 10 years there has been less reliance on the general fund of most cities as the primary funding source. As a result, other forms of funding have been explored. The following are some options that Stillwater may want to consider moving forward.

Local Taxing Sources

Beyond the allocation of funds from the city's general fund for ongoing maintenance or the passage of a bond issues for capital projects, there are other taxing sources available.

Capital Improvement Fund – Establishing a dedicated funding source for capital projects from either a percentage of existing tax revenues or through a tax increase established for that purpose.

Dedicated Tax – This has become much more prominent in last 15-20 years. Voters approve a dedicated parks and recreation property tax millage or sales tax to fund on-going operations and maintenance as well as capital improvements. In Oklahoma this would be a sales tax.

Park Impact Fee – For new housing, developers have to either pay a per unit fee and/or dedicate so much property for future park development. Most larger communities now have this as part of their development fee.

Real Estate Transfer Fees – This is funding through the sale and transfer of real estate, where a small percentage goes to a tax that can support parks and recreation.

Transient Lodging Tax – This is a tax on hotel and motel rooms where a percentage tax is collected on each room night sold. This often funds parks and recreation amenities that attract visitors (such as sports complex).

User Fees – Increasingly cities are asking users to pay a higher percentage of maintenance and programs through the fees that are charged for these services. This requires a strong fee for service philosophy and solid fee policies. This can also include sponsorships, cell tower leases, and other fees.

Amenity Development – Some cities target recreation amenity development that is usually done through a partnership with a private or non-profit agency to build and operate amenities such as a wedding/event center or cabins at a park that are rented. These are amenities that have the ability to generate a strong positive cash flow and are used to help fund other aspects of operation.



IMPLEMENTATION

State and National Tax Sources

Many states have tax funding that is available through grant programs and other sources for certain programs and facilities. Some of the national funding mechanisms include.

Land Water Conservation Fund – The LWCF funds a variety of outdoor parks and amenities through their grant process.

Community Development Block Grant – CDBG funds can also be utilized to develop and maintain parks and recreation amenities in lower income areas of a community.

American Rescue Plan Act – In 2021 funding for pandemic recovery was awarded to cities. Some have used this to improve and/or build new parks and recreation facilities. This is likely to be a short-term source of funding only.

There are other federal sources including the National Recreational Trails Program and Design Arts Program to name a few.



Non-Tax Sources

Many communities now try to diversify capital and operations funding with other non-tax sources. A few are noted below.

Parks Foundation – Many cities have established a parks and recreation foundation, 501(C)3, to provide a way for individuals and corporations to provide donations to fund parks and recreation facilities and programs. This also increases eligibility for certain grants. Often the city council will serve as the actual board, or they appoint others to the board.

Grants – There are a wide variety of grants from foundations and corporations that can fund certain aspects of facility's development or specialized programs.

Fundraising – A possible source of capital funding can come from a comprehensive fundraising campaign. Contributions from local businesses, private individuals and social service organizations can be targeted. To maximize this form of funding a private fundraising consultant may be necessary.

Naming Rights and Sponsorships – Although not nearly as lucrative as for large stadiums and other similar facilities, the sale of naming rights and long-term sponsorships could be a source of some capital funding as well. It is often necessary to hire a specialist in selling naming rights and sponsorships if this revenue source is to be maximized to its fullest potential. No lifetime naming rights should be sold only 20-year maximum rights should be possible. Determining the level of financial contribution necessary to gain a naming right is crucial.

Land Trusts – Are often set up to provide funding for a specific park development and/or operation. The land trust is usually a non-profit agency.

Endowment Fund – This form of operational funding is relatively rare as it requires a large fund balance to establish an annual operational endowment level of any magnitude.

Other

Partnerships – Stillwater already makes great use of this funding source by partnering with a variety of organizations to manage facilities and provide programs and other services. This requires a strong partnership agreement to be in place.

Sponsorships – There has been a real strong effort nationally to establish comprehensive sponsorship programs for recreation facilities, programs, and services. This has been particularly beneficial for special events and for senior activities. This has required the development of a detailed sponsorship program to be effective.

Ground Lease of Property – In communities where it has been difficult to fund new parks and recreation facilities, cities have issued low fee ground leases to private and non-profit organizations to build and operate facilities that will benefit the recreation needs of residents. This has included soccer complexes, ice rinks, and other specialty facilities.

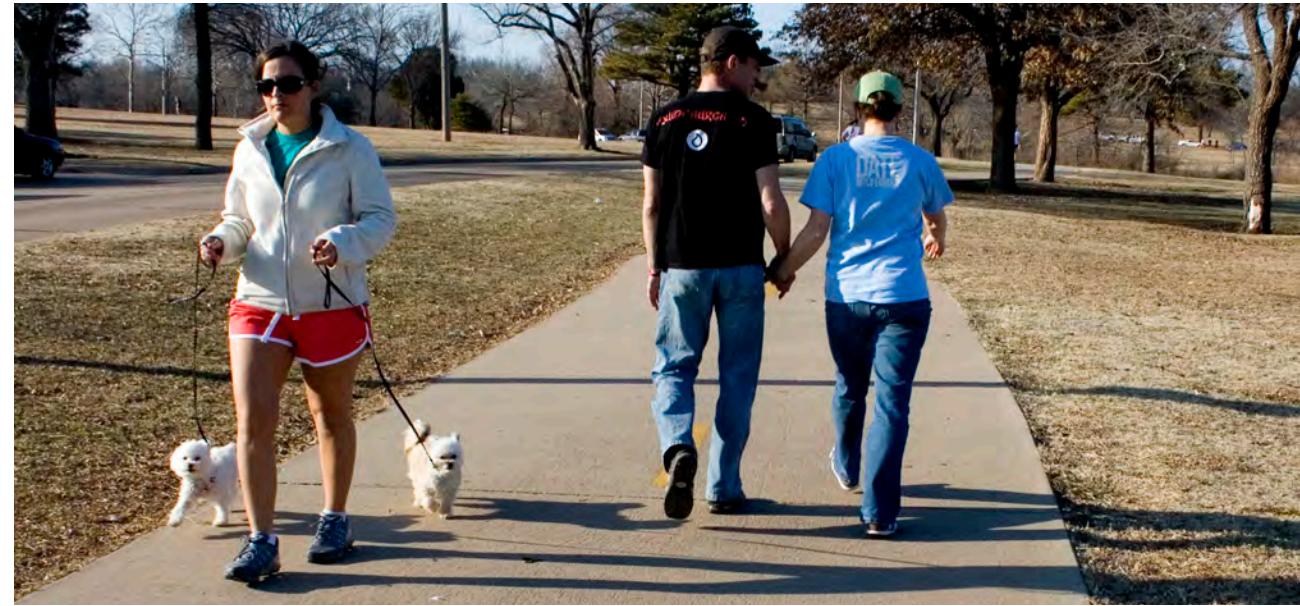
Sale of Park Property – Although more unusual, some cities have sold off certain parks or open space property that is no longer needed, in poor condition, and does not have any deed restrictions. However, almost without exception, the money that has been generated from the sale has been earmarked for other park development or renovation projects.

Operational Funding Sources

There are a variety of funding sources that are being utilized for parks and recreation facilities, programs and services. These include:

Fees and Charges – Collecting fees for services continues to be one of the primary sources of revenue for parks and recreation agencies. In fact, there is a great deal of pressure in most agencies to increase the level of funding from this source.

General Fund – Most agencies continue to rely on a yearly budget allocation from the general fund of a city or county for most parks and facility maintenance functions as well as some programs and services. However, for many agencies the level of funding from this source has been reduced in the past 5 years.



Fee Setting

As parks and recreation agencies are becoming much more aggressive in revenue generation the need to develop an overall fee policy is critical. The first step in developing a clear user fee policy is to adopt a general philosophy for setting fees. For this to occur, the following must take place.

- Establish a standardized approach to setting fees.
- Determine the overall goal of cost recovery for programs, services, and facilities.
- Ensure general access to recreation programs and services is not denied simply based on the ability to pay.
- Require that exclusive use of any public parks, facilities or services by individuals or organizations results in the compensation for the costs associated with such use.
- Require that users pay for programs and services when there is an instructor, official or other personnel associated directly with the provision of the service.
- Require that at least a portion of other direct and indirect expenses associated with the delivery of a program or service to the user be recovered through fees.

From this, agencies are developing a comprehensive fees and charges policy that is updated annually. This usually includes:

Programs and Services - are categorized into four levels of offerings that are divided by the level of instruction, expertise, or importance to the community's well-being. Priority for funding and facility usage should be based on the category in which they fall, with fees being set accordingly. The four categories often include.

1. **Community events** – special community wide events, activities or festivals that are one- time events. There is generally little to no fees for these activities. Some revenues may be collected from sponsorships and sales of goods and services.
2. **Basic or core programs** – those that are essential to recreation and community needs (such as teen activities, senior programs, youth sports activities, special populations, etc.). These program's direct costs are usually subsidized.
3. **Enhanced** – those that are beyond basic and are focused on an audience that has the ability to pay. Programs in this area could include adult fitness and sports, or general programs. These programs are generally recovering 100% of direct costs and some indirect costs.
4. **Specialized** – these are activities that are very specialized in nature. These often include activities such as private swim lessons, fitness assessments, trip programs, facility rentals and the like. Fees are set based on what the market will bear but at minimum would require 100% of direct costs and most indirect costs to be covered.



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Outdoor Facilities – Outdoor facilities are usually sorted into three categories for fee assessment.

1. Drop-in Outdoor Facilities – drop-in use of basic park amenities should remain free.

Examples would be open park areas, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas, outdoor courts, skate parks, etc.

2. Specialized Outdoor Facilities - such as swimming pools, lighted/organized sports fields, and similar facilities should have market rates established for use. There should be a rate differential for youth, adult and senior users.

3. Rental of Facilities – rentals of specialized facilities should require a fee for use that could be based on categories of non-commercial and commercial. Fees for non-commercial should be based at minimum on recovering all direct costs of renting the facility and commercial should be significantly higher. All field or facility maintenance fees required for a rental plus any other amenities not normally associated with the facility will be charged to the renter.

Indoor Facilities – Indoor facilities also are sorted in three categories for fee assessment.

1. Drop-in Indoor Facilities - drop-in use of basic indoor facilities such as youth game rooms, open lounge areas, community gathering spaces and similar areas usually do not require a fee for use.

2. Specialized Indoor Facilities - such as, fitness areas, gyms, pools, racquetball courts, ice rinks, etc. should require a fee for use. Specific cost recovery goals need to be established for each specialized facility to determine the basic fee structure that needs to be developed. There should be a rate differential for youth, adult, disabled and senior users.

3. Rental of Facilities – rentals of specialized facilities shall require a fee for use based on categories of non-commercial and commercial. Fees for non-commercial should be based at minimum on recovering all direct costs of renting the facility and commercial should be considerably higher. All facility maintenance fees required for a rental plus any other amenities not normally associated with the facility will be charged to the renter.



Other

Programs and services offered by outside contractors should be required to pay a minimum of 30% of their gross revenues to the agency with all direct costs to the agency being covered.

Action Plan

This master plan has revealed key priorities to improve the park system in Stillwater. These are Administrative/Operations Recommendations and Facilities Recommendations.

Administrative/Operations Recommendations

- Develop a detailed deferred maintenance list for all city owned facilities
 - Prioritize needed improvements per facility and overall
 - Identify ADA required improvements
 - Develop a funding plan
- City management and contract management of all facilities should include:
 - Operations and management plan
 - Continuity of operations plan
 - Maintenance plan specific to the facility
 - Safety and security protocols
 - Emergency action plan
 - Staffing requirements
 - Minimum level of staffing
 - Background checks
 - User code of conduct
 - A diversity, equity, and inclusion policy (DEI)
 - A quarterly and annual report that tracks specific performance characteristics
- Maintain current operational and management agreements for all facilities that are being contract operated.
- Determine possible project development/operations partners for any new facilities.
- Determine funding mechanism for capital development and operations.





Staffing and Operations

- Establish an overall staffing philosophy for Parks and Community Resources.
- Update job descriptions for full-time and part-time staff
- Develop a staffing succession plan.
- Develop a formal staff training program.
- Identify Parks maintenance as a specific division within Public Works. Strong consideration should be given to adding two parks maintenance positions to the staffing plan to increase the level of maintenance in existing parks.
- If the Senior Center is utilized for other purposes and senior programming is moved to the Community Center, then the current level of staffing is adequate for Community Resources.
- *Budgets:* Additional budget accounts should be set up to accurately represent the financial commitments to different aspects of Parks and Community Resources. Parks should have its own budget that is part of the Public Works budget. All expenses associated with the maintenance of parks should be accounted for in this budget. Once Parks has its own budget, establishing sub budgets for larger parks and facilities is recommended as a way for identifying and tracking exact costs.
- For any budget accounts where there are direct revenues associated with costs (recreation programs and facilities), revenues should be linked and shown with expenses to determine a true net cost.
- Develop a fee policy to cover all forms recreation programs, facility use, facility rentals, and other functions.
- A budget and staff commitment to marketing and promotions should be reflected in the Community Resources budget.
- Develop a five year CIP budget with breakdowns for major park and facility areas.
- Complete annual reports for all aspects of Parks and Community Resources operations to summarize yearly financial statistics and utilization rates and compared with previous years.
- Develop a comprehensive Parks and Community Resources staff and operations manual based on operations requirements including:
 - safety and security of parks, facilities, and programs.
 - a comprehensive emergency action plan for each division as well as for each individual facility.
 - goals and metrics for social equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEI) for parks, facilities, and recreation programs.

Maintenance Plans and Procedures: The city needs to increase the commitment to parks and facility maintenance. In order to accomplish this the following is necessary:

- The Parks Division needs to develop a comprehensive maintenance management plan for parks and facilities as a whole. This needs to include specific functions that need to occur, their frequency, required resources and tracking of work. This plan should also have a specific focus on preventative maintenance and should include buildings and structures.
- For city-owned facilities that are operated and maintained by other organizations it is just as important that a maintenance management plan is developed by Parks and Community Resources for operators to follow.
- Park/facility inspections should be completed on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Staff schedules, maintenance plans, tracking of inventories, facility inspections and actual maintenance time and materials records need to be fully automated with the ability to make entries from the field on tablets or other hand-held devices.

Marketing: To maximize facility usage and the program offerings there needs to be a strong marketing plan to promote services that are available and which should focus on the following areas:

- Website enhancement to better promote facilities and programs.
- Utilize a registration, point of sale and rental tracking software program.
- Program options available through the Community Center.
- Facilities and programs provided by contractors.
- Promote rentals at the Community Center and other facilities.



Physical Improvements Prioritization Criteria

1. Address priority items as indicated

by the public— The public input that was provided should not be taken lightly. If you ask for citizen input and then don't use it, you lose credibility.

The public has specifically noted:

In the Online Survey:

1. New Sports Complex
2. More open space, natural areas and trails
3. Renovations to existing indoor facilities
4. New aquatic facilities
5. New indoor recreation center
6. Increased maintenance of existing parks and facilities
7. More programs and events

In the Public Meeting:

1. Increased Maintenance of Existing Parks and Facilities
2. More Open Space, Natural Areas, and Trails
3. New Multi-Sports Complex
4. More Programs and Events
5. Renovations to Existing Parks and Facilities
6. New Aquatic Facility
7. New Indoor Recreation Center

Note: both public groups selected the same top 6 items. They have clearly identified the priorities for Stillwater.

*There's so little time and so much to do
There's so little time for dreams to
come true.*

Louis Armstrong



2. Renovate Existing Parks— Any city should maintain what already exists. Stillwater's existing parks need improvements that will greatly improve the image of each park and the park system as a whole. Of primary importance is improving the parks for health and safety and to meet federal requirements of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). These improvements are generally listed as high priority. This means playground safety requirements, surfacing and accessible sidewalks, ramps and parking in each park.

In each park assessment, improvements are listed as high, medium and low. Generally, the high priority items should be addressed first. But not always. Availability of funding might encourage Stillwater to improve lower priority items in advance of higher priorities. As long as improvements are done with the knowledge that higher priority items will occur in an area, this opportunity should be taken.

The following parks are targeted due to their importance to the park system's function:

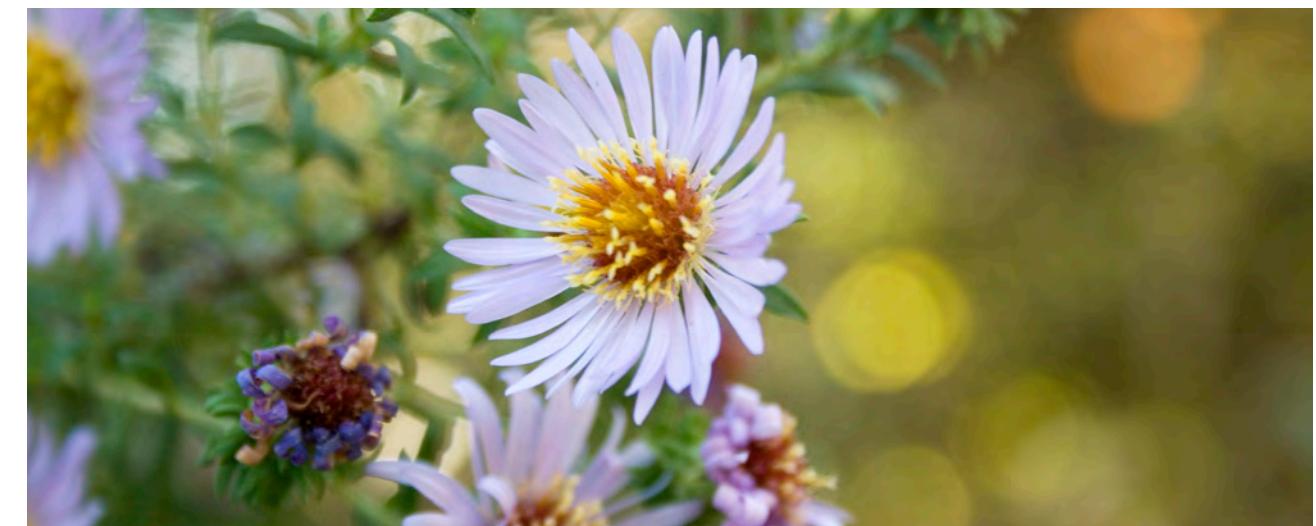
- Babcock, because of Soccer and parking conflicts
- Sanborn, because of the new road which will bisect the park, reducing its facilities.
- Southern Woods, with improvements to reduce vehicular conflict and offer new opportunities
- Couch Park, with improvements to reduce vehicular conflict and offer new opportunities
- Strickland, to reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflict
- Boomer, because it is the pride of the Stillwater parks system
- Fill gaps in the Kameoka Trail
- Construct a new sports complex (new funding dependent)
- Construct a new aquatic center (new funding dependent)
- Renovate the Community Center and relocate the Senior Center operations there.

Refer to each park's individual park assessment in chapter 3

In addition, operations and budgeting should be considered. This means that improvements to reduce maintenance should be enacted early. Those include:

1. Sell the parks indicated, using proceeds to fund new park improvements.
2. Remove equipment from parks where they are not fully utilized.

Do not remove facilities without adding new or improved facilities earlier or at the same time.



Capital Cost Estimates

The cost of improvements throughout the park system are segmented into three categories as shown in the park assessments in chapter 3. Higher priority projects should be addressed in the near and mid-term ranges. Lower priority projects may be deferred, or completed in house or with volunteers as funding allows.

One way to address the aging infrastructure throughout Stillwater's park system is to allocate annual capital improvement dollars in general categories. The consultant team recommends a line item each year in the budget to address issues identified in this plan. This would allow the city to make improvements gradually throughout the city based on the parks and amenities ranked with the highest needs and/or receiving the most complaints. This flexible approach allows the city to be responsive to the public while distributing improvements city-wide.



Playgrounds are another amenity within a park system that require continual improvements and could benefit from an annual allocation of funding. A similar flexible approach is recommended for general playground upgrades and to address capital needs.

Costs were estimated and compiled by the consultant team using historic data if the improvements were recommended to be performed at the time of this study with additional appropriate costs for contingency and escalation for the time frames noted above. With any estimate of costs, it is impossible to know what impact fluctuations in market conditions and final scope may have on a project in the future.

Cost Estimate Summary (Full estimate is included in the appendix)

High Priority	\$ 8,008,846 (excluding the Aquatic Center)
Medium priority	\$7,618,177 (excluding the Sanborn Nature Center)
Low Priority	\$2,564,320

Property sale

If properties are sold for the amount listed on the Payne County Website (this is usually a low number), the proceeds from those sales would fund nearly all of the high priority items (excluding the new Aquatics Facility). Along with the land sale, individual park amenities (benches, shelters, playground equipment, etc. could be moved to parks or along trails where there is an ongoing need.

"Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but not plans"
Peter F Drucker

Funding

The park system in Stillwater is a great asset to the community. This plan recommends reducing physical property, reducing maintenance levels to reduce costs and then making an investment in the remainder of the parks to upgrade them to become more appreciated by the citizens. Stillwater citizens have shown that they care about the parks and want to see them improved. They have been involved in public meetings and online events to let City administrators know what they want in their parks. It is the obligation of the administration to do their best to follow through with the goals of the community. This means that a level of funding must be targeted toward improving the parks—both in terms of administration, additional park maintenance personnel and through capital funding of improvements. It is important that these funds be used efficiently, maximizing their impact by leveraging them against grants and donations. It also helps if smaller improvements/repairs are done with in-house personnel.

Funding of the big ticket Items (\$750,000+):

1. Sports Complex	\$10 million+
2. New Aquatic Facility	\$15 million
3. Sanborn Park Nature Center	\$1 Million



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These are items that would not be normal budget items--special funding could come from Sponsorships or Bond issue. Bond funding is supported by the public, based on their response to public meetings and the online survey. Entering into a partnership agreement with the schools, the YMCA or other partners can reduce funding needed. Obtaining a named sponsorship, who might provide significant funding for any of these items, is something that might prove successful. Teaming with the Stillwater Community Foundation to develop a fundraising campaign might also be helpful.

Development of these 'big ticket items' will require a detailed plan to specify the details as desired by Stillwater and more accurately estimate the costs of development.

Funding of park improvements (\$200,000 to \$750,000)

These items total a large amount, but can be addressed individually, to progressively improve the parks system.

Priorities:

1. Babcock park—soccer fields, roads and parking, include restrooms and concession. Partner with the soccer association.
2. Address health and safety issues in the parks:
 - a. Pedestrian bridges at Boomer, Hoyt Grove and Couch
 - b. ADA access to restrooms and playgrounds
 - c. Renovate restrooms
 - d. Add Air Conditioning and re-roof the Armory Recreation Center
 - e. Replace playground surfacing
 - f. Add safe road crossings at trails
 - g. Add site lighting
3. Construct new playgrounds
4. New recreation opportunities:
 - a. Trails
 - b. Splash Pads
 - c. Dog parks
 - d. Pickleball
 - e. Tennis/basketball
 - f. Develop Chris Salmon Park
5. Pave parking lots and roads
6. Add trees to increase the urban forest.



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Funding would come from the sale of park properties listed. Additional funding could come from within the operating budget for parks, which should include at least \$200,000/year for accessibility, playgrounds and other park improvements. That, if used as matching funds for grants would make a huge impression in a short time.

Funding of deferred maintenance items (Less than \$200,000)

Many of the medium and low priority items are deferred maintenance items, not actually improvements. A goal should be made to remove these items from the maintenance list within 5 years through targeted planning. This should be done by including at least \$25,000 of funds in the budget for capital expenses. Deferred maintenance items priorities:

1. Relocate benches, play equipment and other assets from parks to be sold
2. Begin wildflower/native grass transition—reduces maintenance costs
3. Use Goats on the Go for cleaning up creeks, such as at Myers Park and other large overgrown areas at least once/year in the fall.
4. Restripe and sign parking lots—especially ADA routes
5. Have arborist evaluate trees and do corrective pruning
6. Remove unused fences, pavement, and structures
7. Replace signs
8. Repair drainage issues
9. Paint or clean structures
10. Repair/add fencing
11. Add site furnishings and trash receptacles



“To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time.”
Leonard Bernstein



APPENDIX

Wildflower Planting OSU Fact Sheet
Parks Standard Maintenance Tasks
Key Grant Funding Sources
Survey Results



Wildflower Gardening in Oklahoma

December 2020

EXTENSION

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Introduction

Wildflower gardens can be pleasing to the eye for many gardeners. These landscapes bring the natural world into the human context of gardens and landscapes. Recreating this beauty in a public garden or in a backyard can improve personal and public well being.

In many ways, wildflower gardens are more environmentally friendly than traditional gardens. Although most plants will survive for a time in any given environment without human interference, they will need the right conditions to perform in the desired way (many flowers, growth habit, height, etc.) When the environmental conditions are not ideal, such as poor soil fertility, fertilizers or other amendments are needed. Once established, wildflowers will meet the desired aesthetic more easily because the plants are accustomed to the soils and growing conditions of the local climate. They will survive with little additional water during the growing season, few soil amendments and little to no fertilizer depending on the chosen site.

A wildflower garden can be a pleasing addition to any garden in Oklahoma provided the right steps are taken in its establishment.



Photo by Gathering Place Horticulture Team/Shane Bevel Photography

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets are also available on our website at:
extension.okstate.edu

Site Selection and Preparation

Selecting a site is one of the most important decisions to make when creating a new wildflower garden. Almost any site, no matter how large or small, can become a wildflower garden, but consideration of certain factors will determine the long-term success of a new garden. When selecting a site, pay close attention to things like sun and wind exposure, drainage (where water pools, drains quickly or runs off, etc.), site topography (hilly, flat, depressed, etc.), site access for maintenance, available irrigation (if needed), existing vegetation (native or not) and the new garden's place within the overall garden or site. These conditions will dictate which species to plant because a successful wildflower garden resembles the natural habitats of native plants as close as possible.

If there are multiple options for sites, the desired plant species or aesthetic can dictate where a wildflower garden should be located. Oklahoma is a diverse state with many different types of ecological regions. There are multitudes of worthy wildflowers that do well in shady spots, full sun, dry, arid regions, wetlands and anywhere in between. Choose a site that will best support the desired plant community without the need for a total overhaul of the site's natural composition.

Almost any garden site will have existing vegetation and, more often than not, this vegetation will consist of aggressive, weedy species that thrive in neglected areas. Eliminating or at least greatly reducing these weeds before planting will save a lot of time and hassle in the long run. There are many ways to accomplish this, but all of them require some preplanning. It can take anywhere from a few weeks to several growing seasons to eliminate weeds in an area. Even once the established weeds, grasses and other plants are removed, there will still be a rich and diverse seed bank within the soil. This collection of seeds can remain dormant for years, only to germinate once the weedy competition is eliminated or the soil disturbed.

Non-selective post-emergent herbicides (i.e. glyphosate) are an effective way to kill perennial weedy plants growing in a chosen area (Figure 1). Multiple treatments may be needed and they should be spaced out every few weeks as new weeds germinate. If time permits, repeated sprayings during an entire growing season also will reduce those cool-season weeds that germinate in the cooler temperatures of spring and fall.

Solarizing or smothering is another way to get rid of the existing vegetation on a site as long as the existing vegeta-



Figure 1. Non-selective post-emergent herbicides are an effective way to kill perennial grasses covering a garden site. Multiple treatments may be needed.

tion is of manageable size. Solarizing is accomplished using clear plastic sheeting and the sun's heat to effectively cook the plants and seeds. The heat of solarizing soil also can reduce the amount of viable weed seeds, but will not totally eliminate them. Smothering by utilizing black plastic or another opaque material blocks sunlight and stops photosynthesis, thereby killing plants.

In addition to these methods, tilling also is an option, although it is not always the most reliable method. Tilling will kill and aid in the removal of some perennial weeds that have stubborn root systems (Figure 2), but it can effectively multiply others by dividing rhizomes and other plant parts that serve as propagules for new plants. Tilling also will kick up dormant seeds below the soil surface. For this reason, a shallow tilling depth will help keep deeper seeds dormant, but this is not guaranteed (Figure 3).

After tilling, the area should be left relatively undisturbed for enough time to see new weed growth and then retreated with herbicide to kill any weeds that have sprouted. Repeating this process multiple times should exhaust the weed seed bank of the site. If time permits (as in preparing a site during



Figure 2. Tilling can aid in the removal of some perennial grasses and weeds.



Figure 3. A shallow tilling depth will help keep deeper seeds dormant.

a growing season or longer), till the site multiple times. This will bring up more weed seeds that will germinate and then can be killed.

Soil amendments are typically not needed for wildflower gardens because the species planted are largely adapted to poor soil conditions. Luxury conditions tend to favor lush growth in wildflowers, often resulting in plants that flop over. If a large portion of the top soil has been removed or other soil problems are suspected, please consult a local Extension office for soil testing and amendment recommendations.

Species Selection

The conditions of your garden's site will dictate which species will thrive in your wildflower garden. Thankfully, many seed companies list recommended conditions for each species in their catalogues. See page five for a list of popular Oklahoma wildflower species.

Another strategy for selecting suitable species is to simply observe and study a natural area with similar conditions to your specific garden site. What species grow in this natural area? Is there a mixture of grasses and forbs? Are there woody shrubs and trees with low-growing underbrush? Nature can be the best inspiration when designing a beautiful wildflower garden.

Whether the goal is a prairie restoration, uniform color, a mosaic of colors and textures, a windbreak or an attractive privacy screen, always go back to the desired aesthetic. These are things to think about when choosing species for a native garden. When all else fails, choose a seed mix that has already been tried and tested for your region. Most nurseries specializing in native plants and wildflowers have multiple mixes for all types of aesthetic and cultural conditions. Seed mixes can be a great choice for a small space in a yard or for someone that wants to try out this type of gardening without a large investment.

When to Plant

When planting a wildflower garden with seed, seed dormancy must be understood. Many native species have evolved only to germinate when conditions are most advanta-

geous, such as after a fire or a heavy rain event. Most commonly, seeds need a cold and wet period to break dormancy (stratification). This dormancy can be artificially broken by placing seeds in a moist growing medium in a refrigerator for a specific period depending on the species, usually four weeks to eight weeks. Some seed companies will sell seeds that have already been put through this process but many companies do not because untreated seeds have a longer shelf life. In Oklahoma, it is highly recommended planting be done in the late fall to ensure the seeds go through a natural stratification or other dormancy breaking process. In areas that receive more snowfall, a post-frost/snowfall planting can be done. Fall planting also is beneficial because it will not hinder more pressing garden tasks in the spring.

If planting in the fall on a sloped but barren area, a cover crop of a non-weedy, cold-season species is recommended. This will mitigate erosion of the site while seeds remain dormant and will keep seeds from washing away. With time, this cover crop will die out or be outcompeted by the planted species. Common cover crops are oats (*Avena sativa*) and winter wheat (*Triticum*).

Additionally, if planting pre-established plants, such as plugs or container-grown specimens, planting should be done in early spring after the danger of frost. Many perennial species perform best after a full growing season to establish and survive the following winter.

Sowing Seed

Successful seed sowing will lead to a full garden with a balance of the species selected represented through the garden. A few simple steps can ensure an even distribution of seeds over a large area:

1. Separate the area to be planted into a few equal parts. Each can be sown by one or two people without much overlap so certain areas aren't easily missed (Figure 4).
2. Combine all of the seeds in an appropriate container and mix them.
3. Divide the mix into equal parts—the same number of parts as the garden is divided.
4. Add moistened filler material to each section of seed. Good filler materials are sawdust, compost, peat moss, sand or rice hulls. Whichever filler material is chosen, it should be lightweight enough to be easily spread and carried around the garden without much effort.
5. Add three parts filler material for each part or section of seed mix to create a broadcast mix.
6. Broadcast this mix evenly over each area (Figure 5).
7. Lightly tamp the seed with your feet or other tools to ensure good seed-soil contact without burying the seed too deeply.

Maintenance

Wildflower gardens are not set it and forget it efforts. Once seeds are planted, it's mostly a waiting game until spring, but keep an eye out for cool-season weeds and remove them as necessary. Once the garden starts growing, it will need no less maintenance than a normal garden while it establishes during the first three growing seasons.

The first growing season will be the most labor-intensive. If the steps listed above are followed, you will greatly reduce the amount of work required in subsequent years. Weeds will



Figure 4. Separate the area to be planted into a few equal parts. Each can be sown by one or two people without much overlap so certain areas aren't easily missed.



Figure 5. Broadcast seed mix by hand over the garden area.

come up, as they do, in any garden. Hand-pulling weeds is not recommended as fragile young root systems of adjacent seedlings can be damaged. If an infestation of a serious noxious weed establishes, pulling may be the only option but gentle care must be taken. For many weeds, mowing will keep them under control. When the seedlings reach a height of 8 inches to 10 inches, mow the garden down to a height of 4 inches to 5 inches or the tallest setting on most push mowers. Although this may sacrifice some blooms, it won't hurt the plants and will actually contribute to a richer garden in the long run. Mowing at this height prevents weeds from shading out new seedlings and helps remove flowers and seed heads of weed species. Leave the clippings and debris in place, as they will add organic matter to the soil and act as a mulch. Be careful not to leave any mature weed seed heads after mowing. Spot-spraying of herbicides when wind conditions are calm should only be used as a last resort on especially tough weed species.

In the second growing season, the garden plot should be more mature and abundant with desired species. If there are large amounts of weeds still present at the beginning of the season, mow the plot to a height of 6-12 inches. If certain species did not sprout in the first season, their seeds may not have broken dormancy and may sprout this year. If there are desirable species that simply never emerge, reseed the area with these missing species. Annual species that may not have set enough seed in the first year to become properly established need to be reseeded. Unless there are major problems in the previously outlined process, the second season will be the first productive year for the garden with many plants being mature and healthy, creating the beautiful wildflower garden you are seeking.

After the second growing season, your garden will continue to mature and establish and it should reach an equilibrium. Continue to watch for troublesome weeds and remove them as necessary. The established wildflowers should be healthy enough to withstand soil disturbance around their roots. Reseed any annual species if they are not properly abundant by year three. You can create a management practice within the garden to encourage these annuals to reproduce on their own. One of the most highly recommended management principles for a wildflower garden, especially for Oklahoma prairie species, is to employ prescribed burning after three years to four years of establishment. Burning removes the thatch layer that builds up. This thatch layer can smother young plants. Burning every year yields more flowers and healthier plants, but after five years to seven years of prescribed burns, it is recommended either to burn only every three years or to burn sections of the garden on a three-year rotation.

Burning is not always an option, especially in urban and residential areas. Many public gardens, parks and most nature reserves or forests recognize the importance of fire as a tool used in maintaining healthy ecosystems but local laws often preclude its use. Instead, annual mowing in the early spring and raking and removal of dead debris can reduce the thatch layer. Always refer to local authorities for specific burning restrictions.

The maintenance regime will depend on the overall aesthetic and purpose of the garden. Wildflower gardens can look unkempt in the winter (Figure 6) and therefore, may need to be maintained in a way to improve their aesthetics, despite the recommended cultural guidelines. Also, some municipalities have ordinances regarding vegetation height and maintenance.

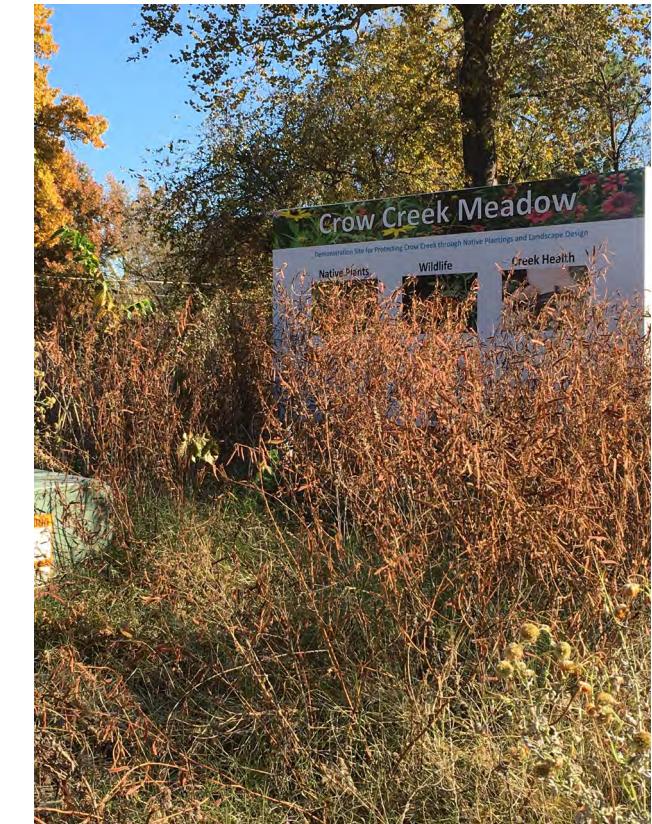


Figure 6. Wildflower gardens can look unkempt in the winter.

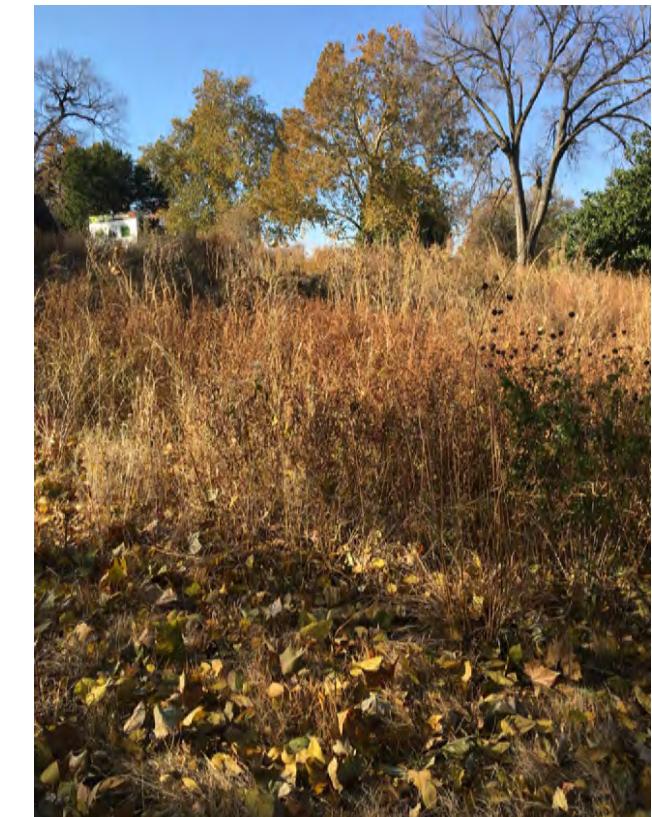


Figure 7. Some municipalities have ordinances regarding vegetation height and maintenance. Be aware of these restrictions before creating a garden.

Be aware of these restrictions before creating your garden (Figure 7).

Conclusion

Although not a new concept, wildflower gardens are gaining in popularity among gardeners seeking ways to enhance native ecosystems in urban areas while also seeking to reduce the resources needed to keep their gardens beautiful. Wildflowers present opportunities to bring a part of Oklahoma's natural heritage into the backyard and, through each gardener's individual interests, demonstrate the diversity of the Oklahoma flora.

Oklahoma Native Wildflowers*

Amsonia illustris—shining bluestar
Amsonia hubrichtii—Arkansas bluestar
Aquilegia canadensis—eastern columbine
Arnoglossum plantagineum—Indian plantain
Asclepias spp.—There are more than 20 native milkweed species. See *Native Milkweeds of Oklahoma* in the references section for more information.
Astragalus crassicarpus—ground plum
Baptisia alba—white wild indigo
Baptisia australis—blue false indigo
Baptisia sphaerocarpa—yellow wild indigo
Callirhoe bushii—Bush's poppy mallow
Callirhoe involucrata—purple poppy mallow
Camassia scilloides—wild hyacinth
Coreopsis palmata—prairie coreopsis
Dalea candida—white prairie clover
Dalea purpurea—purple prairie clover
Echinacea pallida—pale coneflower
Echinacea paradoxa—yellow coneflower
Echinacea purpurea—purple coneflower
Eryngium leavenworthii—Leavenworth's eryngo
Eryngium yuccifolium—rattlesnake master
Euphorbia corollata—flowering spurge
Euphorbia cyathophora—fire-on-the-mountain
Euphorbia marginata—snow-on-the-mountain
Eutrochium purpureum (syn. *Eupatorium purpureum*)—sweet Joe Pye weed
Gaillardia pulchella—Indian blanket
Helianthus maximiliani—Maximilian's sunflower
Helianopsis helianthoides—oxeye sunflower
Liatris pycnostachya—prairie blazing star
Lilium michiganense—Michigan lily
Oenothera gaura (syn. *Gaura biennis*)—biennial beeblissom
Pediomelum tenuiflorum (syn. *Psoralidium tenuiflorum*)—slenderleaf scurfpea
Rudbeckia gigantea—large coneflower
Rudbeckia maxima—giant coneflower
Rudbeckia subtomentosa—sweet black-eyed Susan
Rudbeckia triloba—brown-eyed Susan
Salvia azurea—blue sage
Silphium laciniatum—compass plant
Spigelia marilandica—Indian pink
Sympyotrichum novae-angliae—New England aster
Tradescantia bracteata—prairie spiderwort

*This list is not a full representation of the native flora in Oklahoma, but a collection of popular, successful plants

used in gardens across the state. The environmental conditions of a specific site will determine whether certain species are appropriate. See the "Species Selection" section of this publication for further information.

Acknowledgements

Louis Anella, PhD, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, OSU
F. Todd Lasseigne, PhD, CEO Tulsa Botanic Garden
Samuel Fuhlendorf, PhD, Department of Natural Resources and Ecology Management, OSU
David Hillock, Associate Extension Specialist, Consumer Horticulture, OSU
Department of Horticulture & Landscape Architecture, OSU
Tulsa Botanic Garden, Tulsa, OK
Gathering Place, Tulsa, OK
Unless otherwise stated, photography by Louis Anella, PhD or Andy Fusco

Plant and Seed Sources

Native American Seed—Junction, TX, 1-800-728-4043, info@seedsource.com, <http://www.seedsource.com>
Pine Ridge Gardens, London, AR, (479) 293-4359, office@pineridgegardens.com, <http://www.pineridgegardens.com>
Prairie Moon Nursery, Winona, MN, (866) 417-8156, info@prairiemoon.com, <http://www.prairiemoon.com>
Prairie Wind Nursery, Norman, OK, (405) 579-8846, <http://www.prairiewindnursery.com>
WildThings Nursery, Shawnee, OK, (405) 255-1707, marilyn@wildthingsnursery.com, <http://www.wildthingsnursery.com>

Societies & Organizations

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Poteau, OK, (918) 647-9123, mailbox@kerrcenter.com, <http://www.kerrcenter.com>
The Nature Conservancy, Tulsa, OK, (918) 585-1117, <http://www.nature.org>
Oklahoma Native Plant Society, Tulsa, OK, onpsinfo@gmail.com, <http://www.oknativeplants.org>

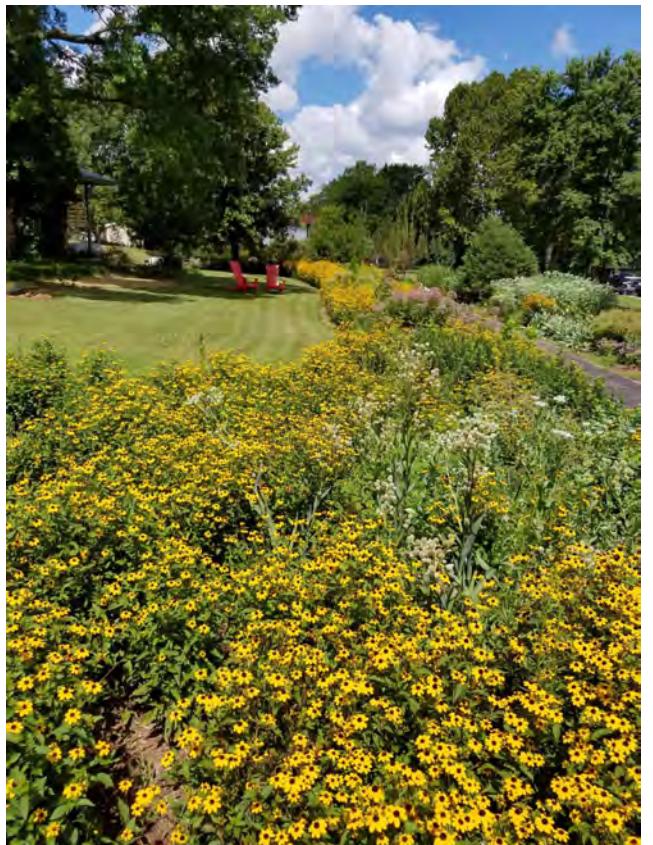
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The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

WE ARE OKLAHOMA

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state, and local governments co-operatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education

for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.

- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit <https://eo.okstate.edu>.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 40 cents per copy. 12/2020 GH.

Parks Standard Maintenance Tasks

Daily

- Remove trash, litter and debris.
- Empty trash containers when they are more than half filled.
- Remove and replace trash liners placed at dog parks, regardless of how much the containers are filled.
- Pick up ground trash and debris in the park while checking trash containers
- Clean restrooms daily. More frequent cleaning may be necessary at times based on usage.

Weekly, or with each mowing visit

- With each mowing event, use string trimmers and edgers to maintain neat edges.
- Blow or vacuum sidewalks and play areas.
- Clean and replace grills as needed.
- Sweep and clean trails and walks. The usefulness and accessibility of paved surfaces are compromised when they are not kept clean.
- Evaluate granular fill playground surfacing to assure safety requirements and ADA access is achieved and replenish as needed
- Wash and scrub restroom floors and walls on a weekly basis
- Remove litter and debris, sweep and mop floors, scrub toilets, sinks and urinal with disinfecting cleaner, refill toilet paper, soap and paper towels as needed
- Inspect specific areas such as pavilion rentals and athletic areas for litter and debris and remove prior to scheduled use during normal working hours.

Bi-weekly

- Remove weeds from cracks in pavement at least bi-weekly during the growing season.
- Trim or remove weed trees in channelized creeks
- During winter months, continue to clean walks and paved areas

Annually

- Paint steel shelters for a fresh look.
- Brushhog native wildflowers and grass areas each spring.
- Plant new trees
- Trim existing trees to remove dead wood, and promote safe growth.
- Each fall, plant large unused lawn areas with wildflowers/grasses to reduce maintenance. This has the potential of reducing mowing from weekly to two times per year.
- As wooden benches need repair, use steel or composite wood for seating and backs.
- Re-stripe parking lots, especially accessible parking spaces.
- Paint lines and replace goals of basketball and other games
- Remove and replace signs at shelters
- Winterize restrooms. Winterize annually and open up in spring
- Clean and clear roofs, gutters, drains and pipes of park structures.
- Evaluate the need to replace older playground equipment and shade structures
- Replace broken fences, guard rails and bollards
- Upgrade park signage
- Evaluate condition and repair walking and jogging trails in parks.
- After any severe weather event
- Evaluate all structures and facilities to look for damage
- Trim existing trees to remove dead wood, and promote safe growth.

Key Grant Funding Sources

- **Oklahoma Recreational Trails Program (RTP)** is an excellent way to get assistance in the funding of trails and trail amenities. It is a state-administered, federal aid program managed through the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department (OTRD) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Program is a reimbursable grant, meaning the project sponsor must pay all project costs as they are incurred. Sponsors then may request reimbursement for 80% of eligible expenses up to the amount approved for the project. For 2021, the maximum grant amount is \$300,000 (with at least a \$75,000 match) for a total project cost of \$375,000. Applications are due in January.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** is a federal assistance program administered by the National Park Service (NPS) at the federal level. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a reimbursable grant, meaning the project sponsor must pay all project costs as they are incurred. Sponsors then may request reimbursement for 50% of eligible expenses up to the amount approved for the project. All costs must be incurred and paid by the project sponsor during the project period as identified in the approved Sponsor Agreement. Technically, there is not a funding cap, but in general, projects from \$250,000 to \$600,000 are likely to be considered. Applications are due in August.
- **Statewide Transportation Alternatives Program** - This program provides monetary support for transportation activities designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects of the transportation system. Funding is on a cost reimbursement basis and projects selected are eligible for reimbursement of up to 80% of allowable costs. As of 2021, funds requested cannot exceed \$700,000 per project. Applications are due in November.
- **Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust TSET** – This program provides funding in two categories: Policy and Built Environment Change (up to \$350,000 per project per year for up to two years) and Innovations in Active Living and Healthy Eating (up to \$250,000 per project per year for up to two years). Applicants must have adopted a comprehensive tobacco-free policy for all properties under the applicant organization control. Eligible projects include sidewalks, park improvements, trails, and traffic studies.
- **Environmental Protection Agency** - The EPA can provide funding for projects with money collected in pollution settlements, or with funding targeted at wetland and habitat preservation or reclamation. Applications are due in June.
- **Partnering with Volunteer Groups** - Partnering with volunteer groups can be helpful when constructing nature and bike trails. Their efforts can be used as part of the required match for the Recreational Trails Program. There are a variety of sources for volunteers including user groups, local residents, corporate community service initiatives, and business and civic support groups.
- **Keep Oklahoma Beautiful** As a state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, KOB organizes the annual Great American Cleanup in Oklahoma and provides materials and tools for communities and volunteers. KOB facilitates several other state-wide programs, including Litter Education, Fresh Paint Days, and Lend-A-Bin.

Stillwater Parks Survey

Monday, November 15, 2021



1

781

Total Responses

Date Created: Friday, July 16, 2021

Complete Responses: 781

2

Q1: Prior to the 2020 CDC guidelines and restrictions related to COVID-19, how often did you or members of your household visit a City of Stillwater park?

Answered: 776 Skipped: 5



*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

3

Q2: During the past 12 months, approximately how often did you or members of your household visit a City of Stillwater park facility?

Answered: 775 Skipped: 6

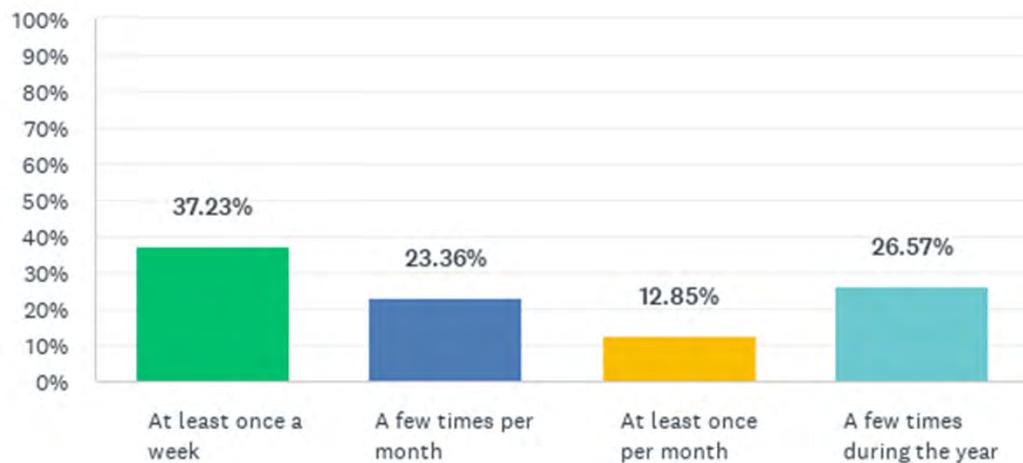


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

4

Q4: How often do you and your household use this park?

Answered: 685 Skipped: 96

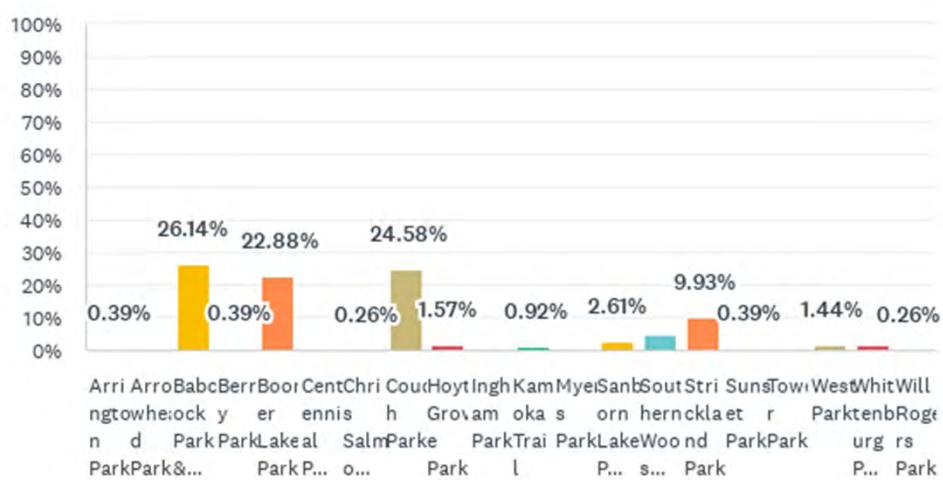


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

5

Q5: Which park do you and your household use most often? (select one)

Answered: 765 Skipped: 16

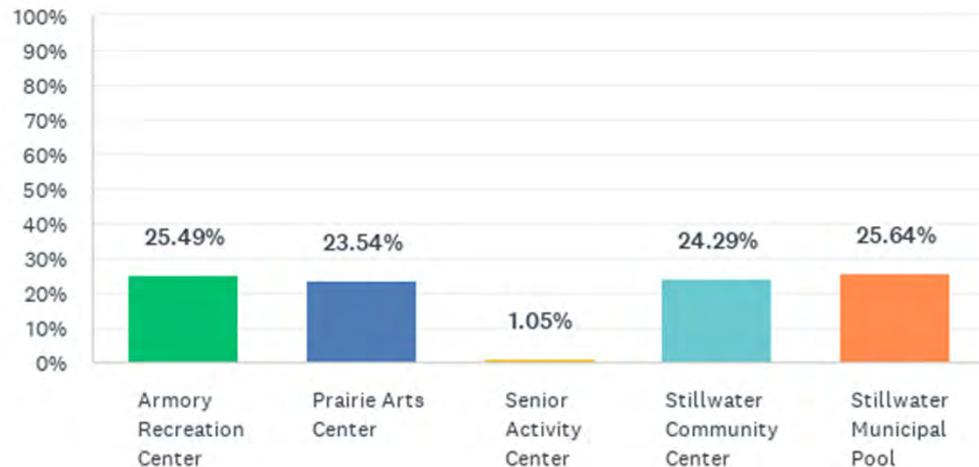


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

6

Q6: Which facility do you and your household use most often? (select one)

Answered: 667 Skipped: 114

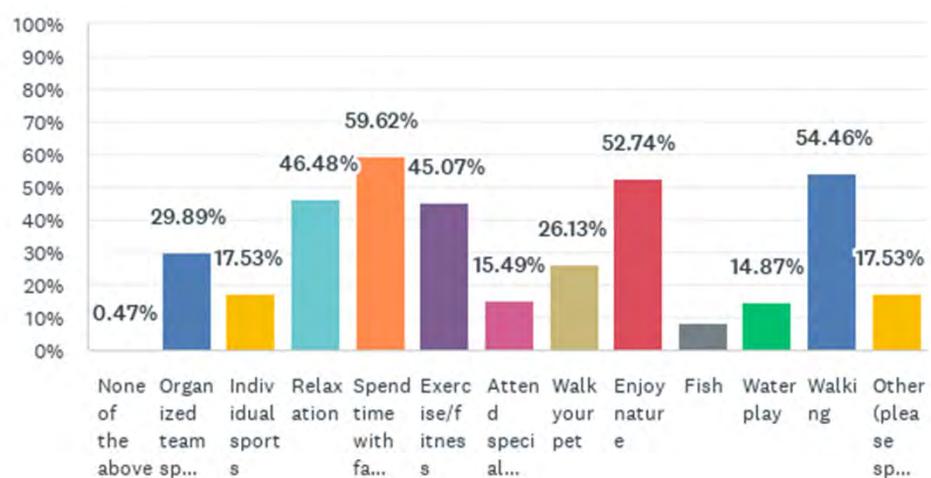


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

7

Q10: What do you do in this park? (select all that apply)

Answered: 639 Skipped: 142

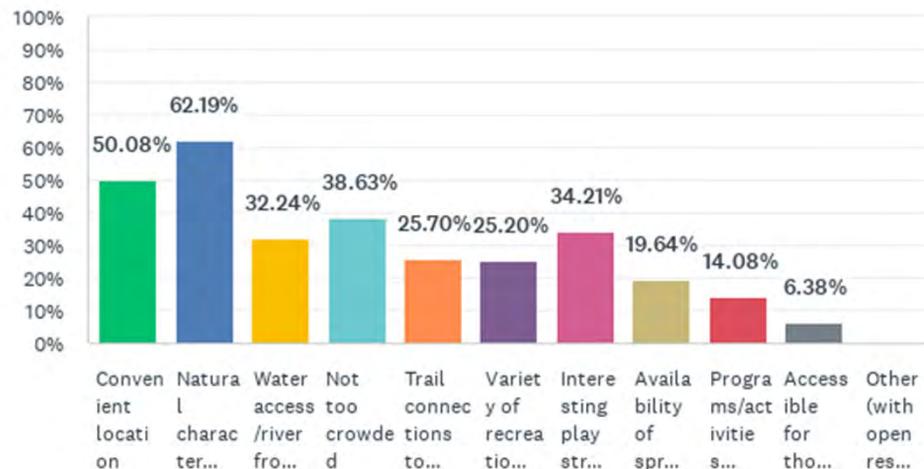


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8

Q11: Thinking about your favorite park or open space in Stillwater, what do you like about it? (check all that apply)

Answered: 611 Skipped: 170

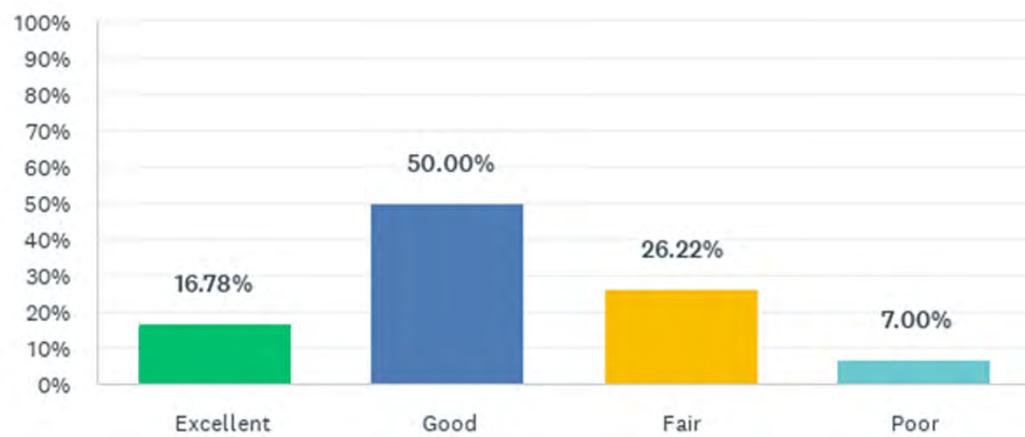


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

9

Q13: Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of your favorite park or open space in Stillwater?

Answered: 614 Skipped: 167

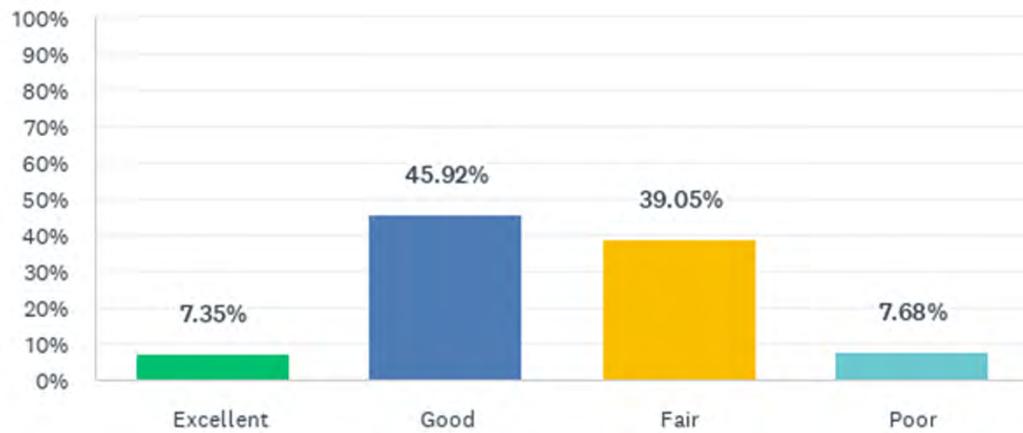


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

10

Q14: Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of ALL City of Stillwater parks you have visited?

Answered: 612 Skipped: 169

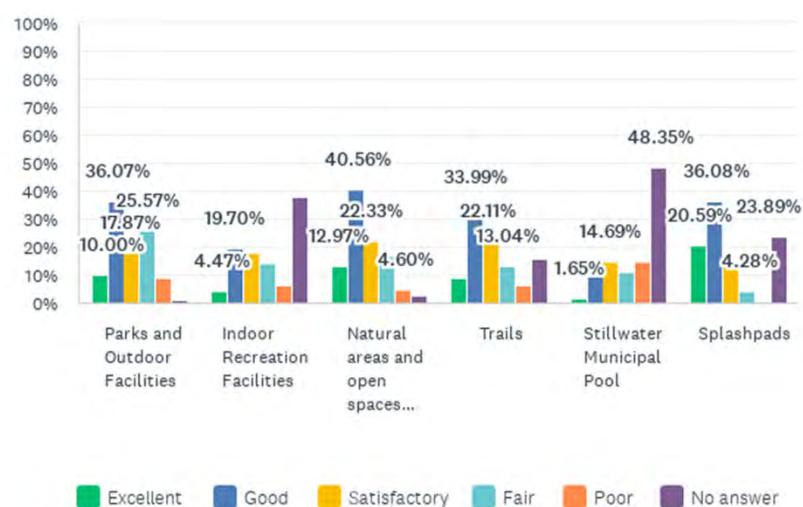


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

11

Q15: Rate the maintenance of the following.

Answered: 610 Skipped: 171

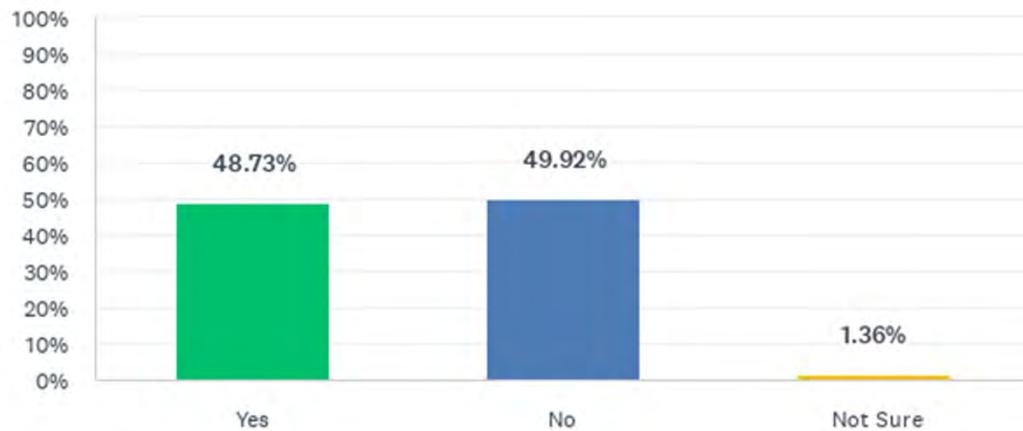


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

12

Q17: I am within walking distance of my closest local park (10-15 minutes).

Answered: 589 Skipped: 192

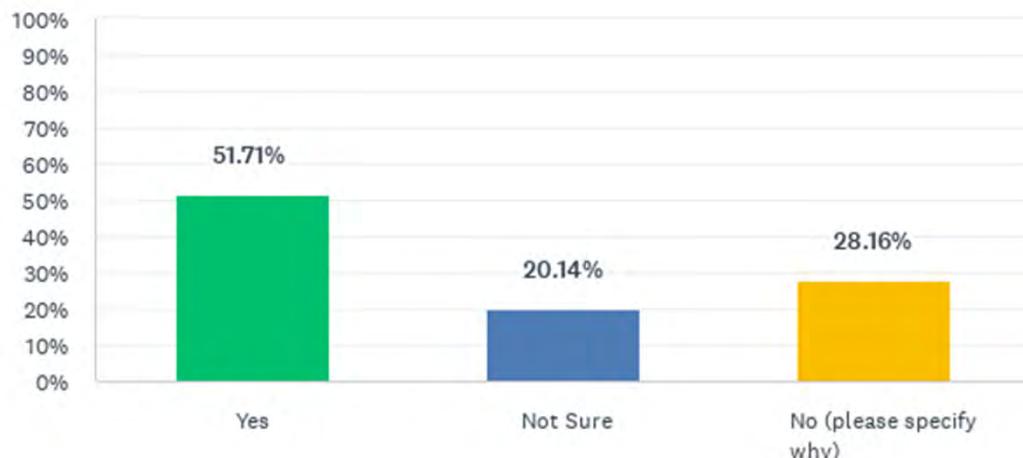


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

13

Q18: Do you feel that there are sufficient parks and green space within walking distance of your residence?

Answered: 586 Skipped: 195

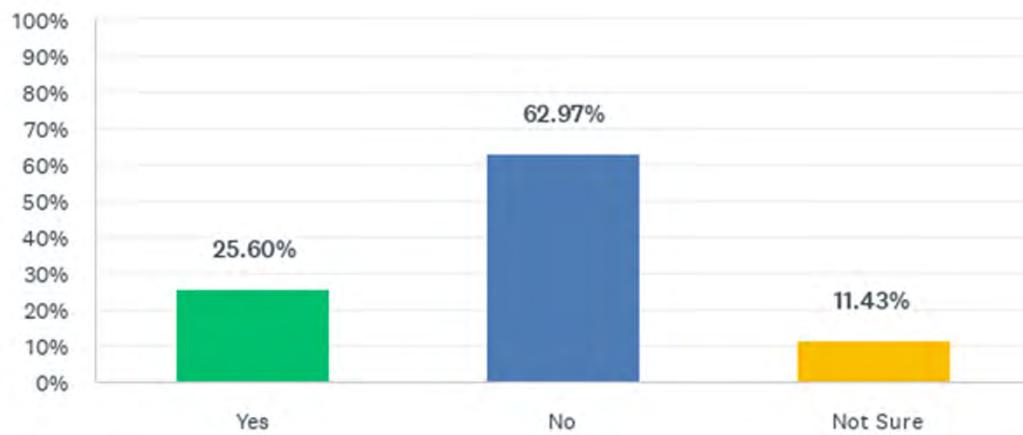


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

14

Q19: The parks in my neighborhood are a very important reason why I chose to live there.

Answered: 586 Skipped: 195

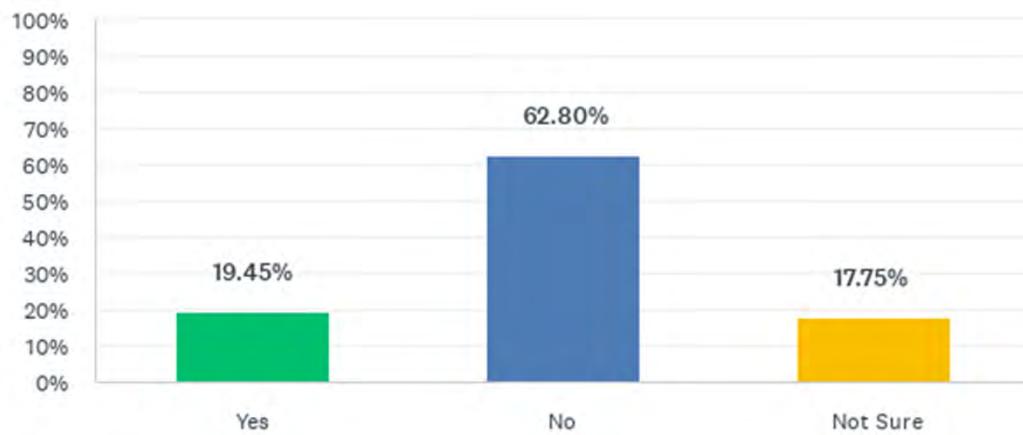


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

15

Q20: I knew nothing about the parks in my neighborhood when I moved there, but now they are a very important reason why I continue to live there.

Answered: 586 Skipped: 195

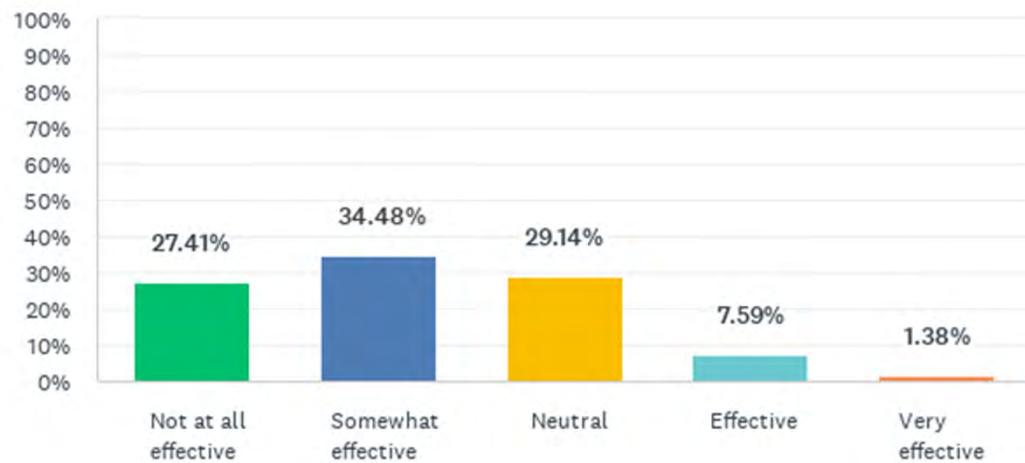


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

16

Q22: How effective do you feel the City of Stillwater is at reaching you with information on parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services?

Answered: 580 Skipped: 201

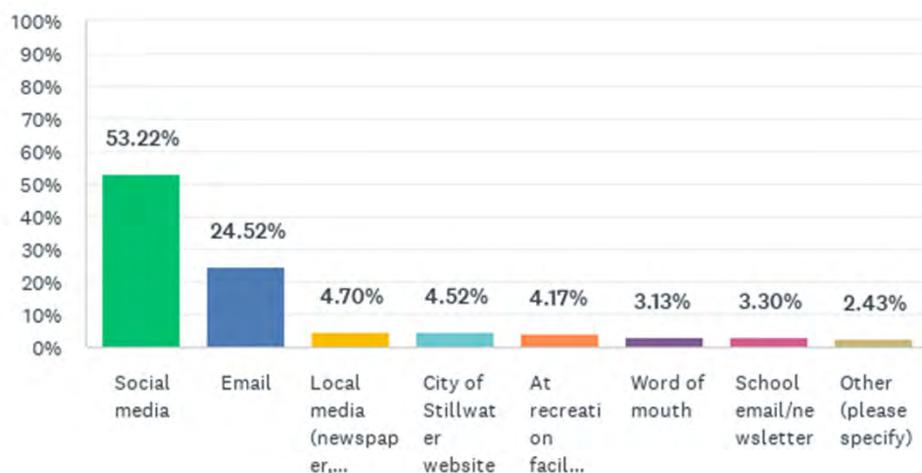


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

17

Q23: What is the best way for you to receive information on parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs?

Answered: 575 Skipped: 206

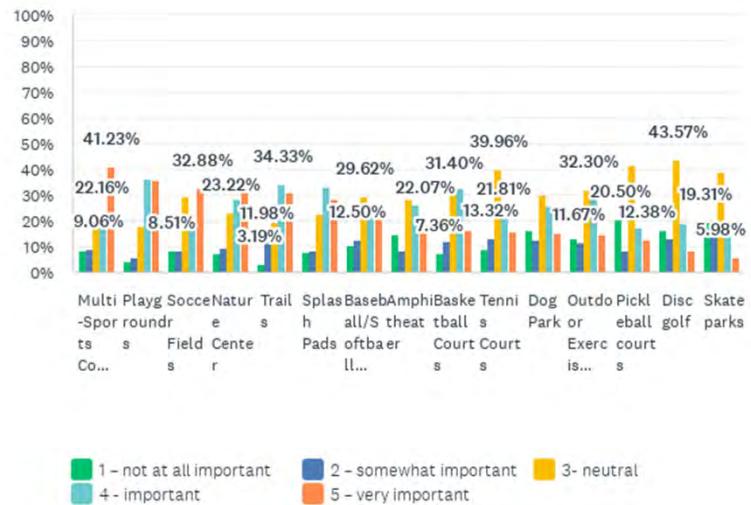


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

18

Q25: From the list of park improvements below indicate the level of importance needed in Stillwater over the next 5 to 10 years.

Answered: 528 Skipped: 253



*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

19

Q26: What type of outdoor park land is most needed in Stillwater?

Answered: 522 Skipped: 259

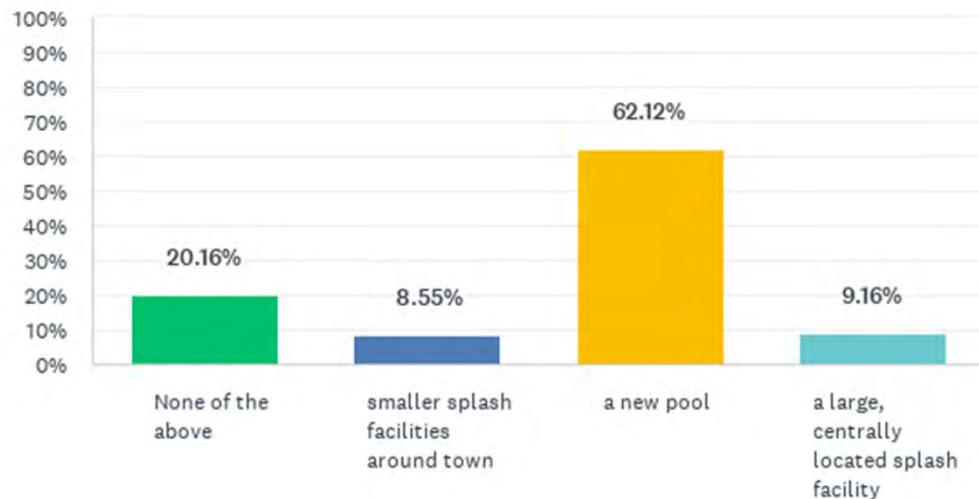


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

20

Q27: The Stillwater Municipal Pool should be replaced with

Answered: 491 Skipped: 290

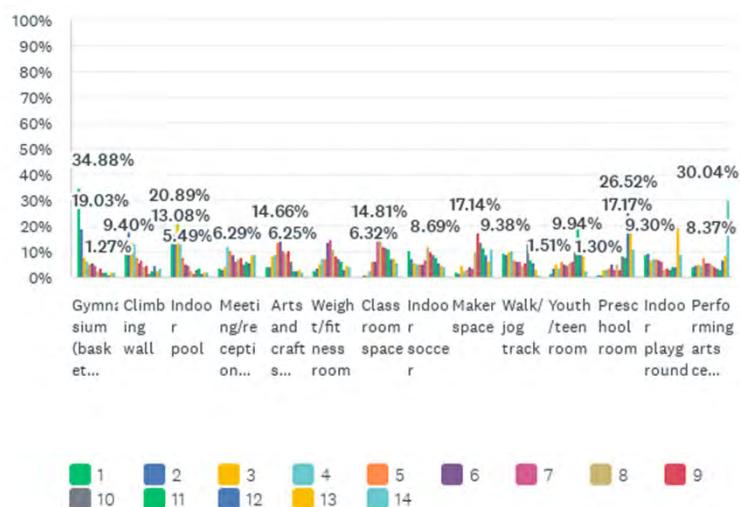


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

21

Q28: Rank the following indoor recreation spaces most needed in the community.

Answered: 503 Skipped: 278

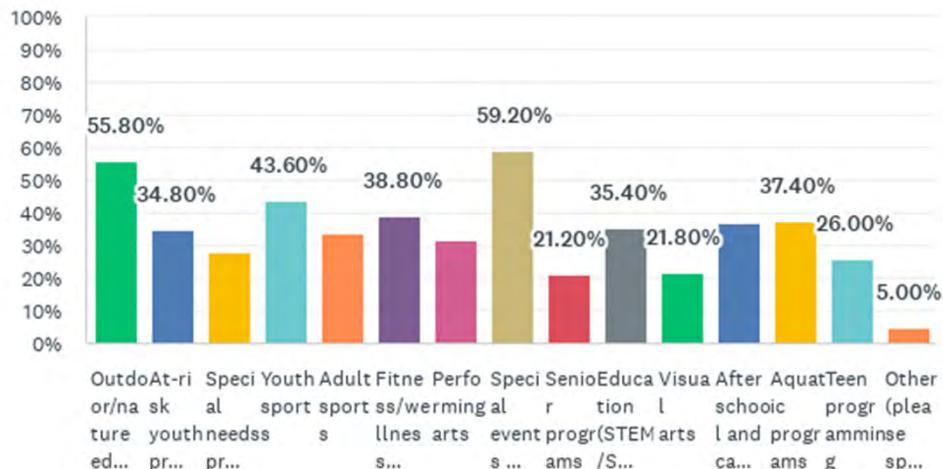


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22

Q30: What additional recreation programs do you want to see in parks and facilities? (select all that apply)

Answered: 500 Skipped: 281

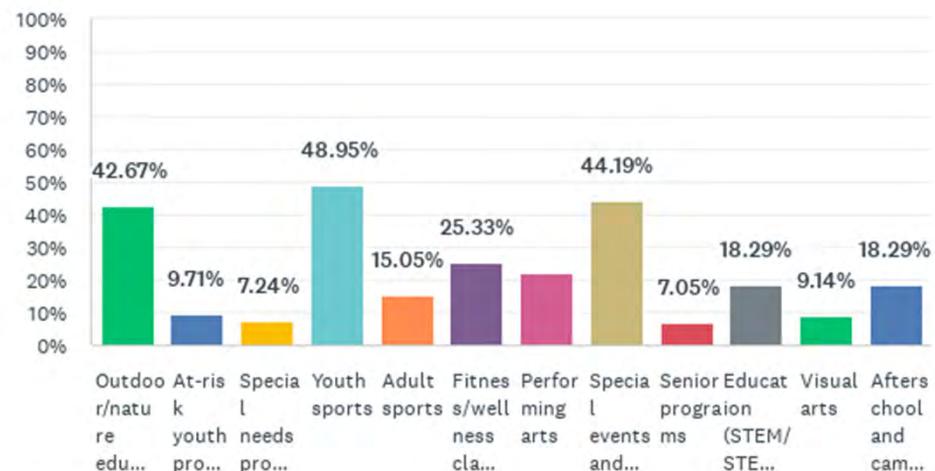


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

23

Q31: Which three programs/services are the highest priorities to you and your household?

Answered: 525 Skipped: 256

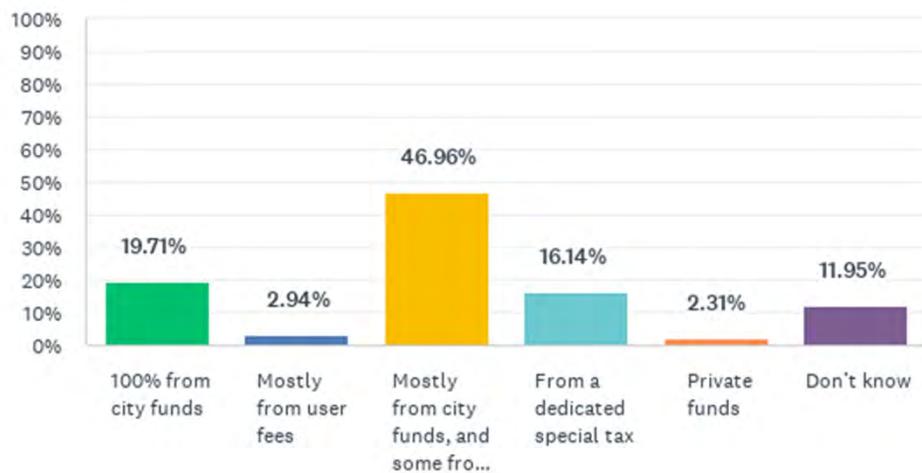


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

24

Q33: Which of the following best describes how you feel park and recreation programs and facilities should be funded?

Answered: 477 Skipped: 304

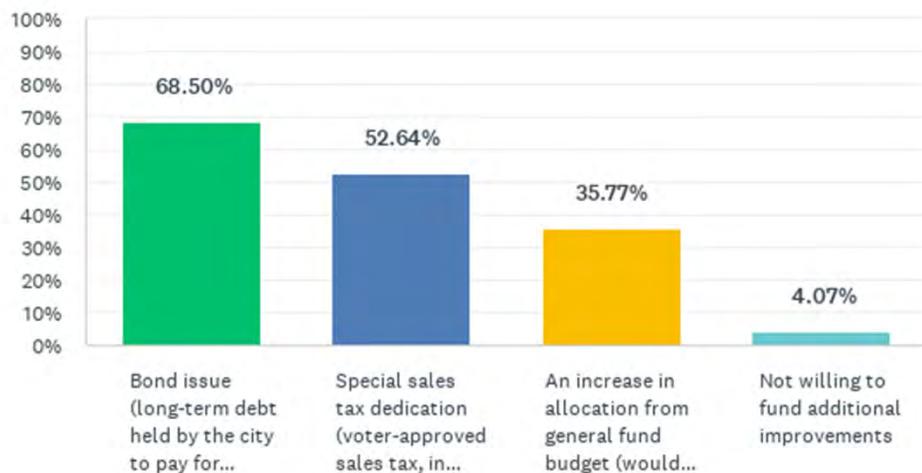


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

25

Q34: How would you be willing to fund Parks and Recreation improvements? (check all that apply)

Answered: 492 Skipped: 289

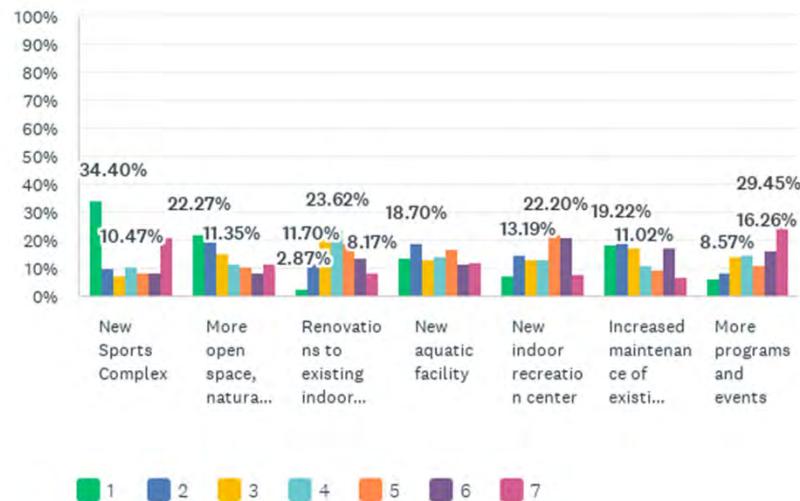


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

26

Q35: How should the City direct its current resources? Please rank the following items in order of importance – 1 = most important.

Answered: 488 Skipped: 293

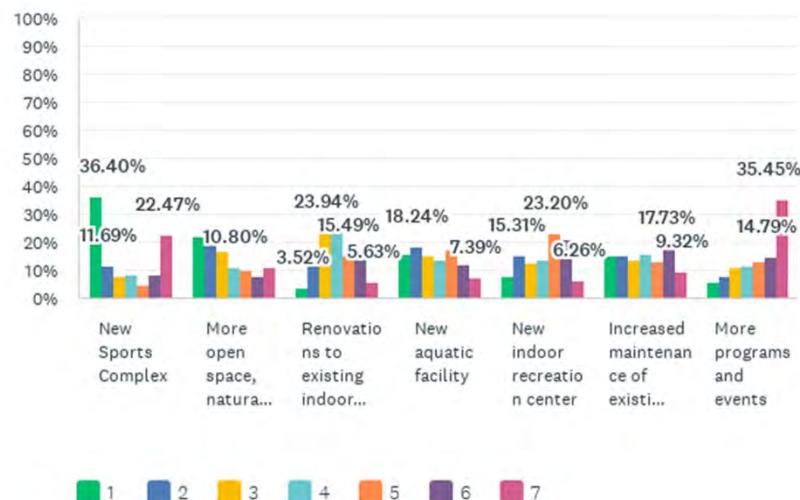


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

27

Q36: How should the City direct any new funding? Please rank the following items in order of importance – 1 = most important.

Answered: 468 Skipped: 313

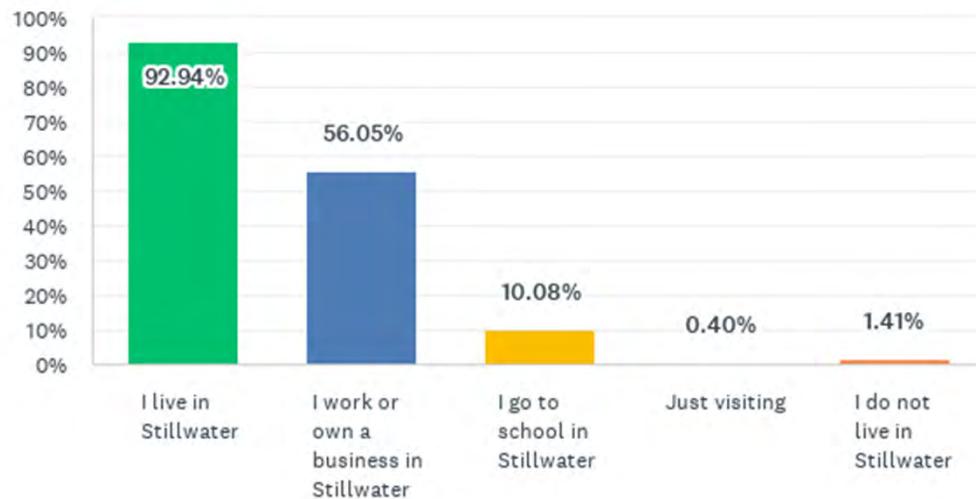


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

28

Q38: Do you live, work or go to school in Stillwater? (select all that apply)

Answered: 496 Skipped: 285

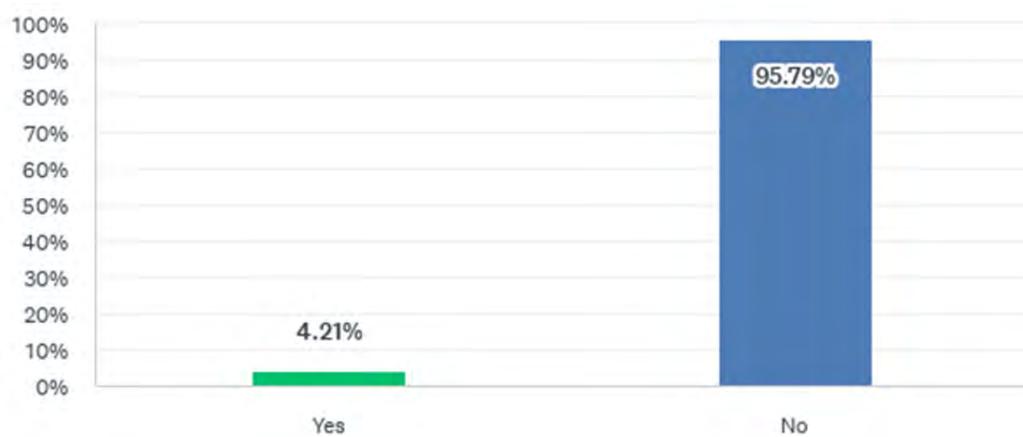


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

29

Q39: Are you an Oklahoma State University student?

Answered: 499 Skipped: 282

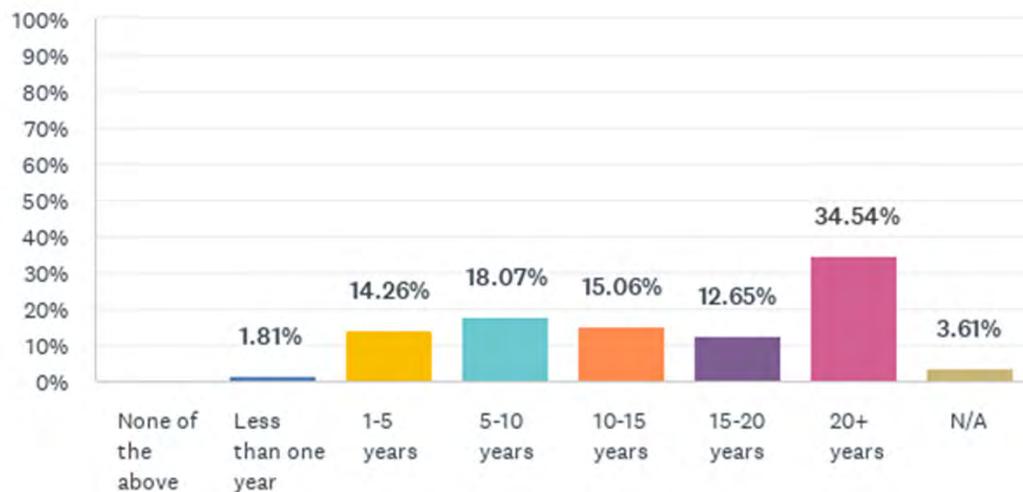


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

30

Q40: If you live in Stillwater, about how long have you lived here?

Answered: 498 Skipped: 283

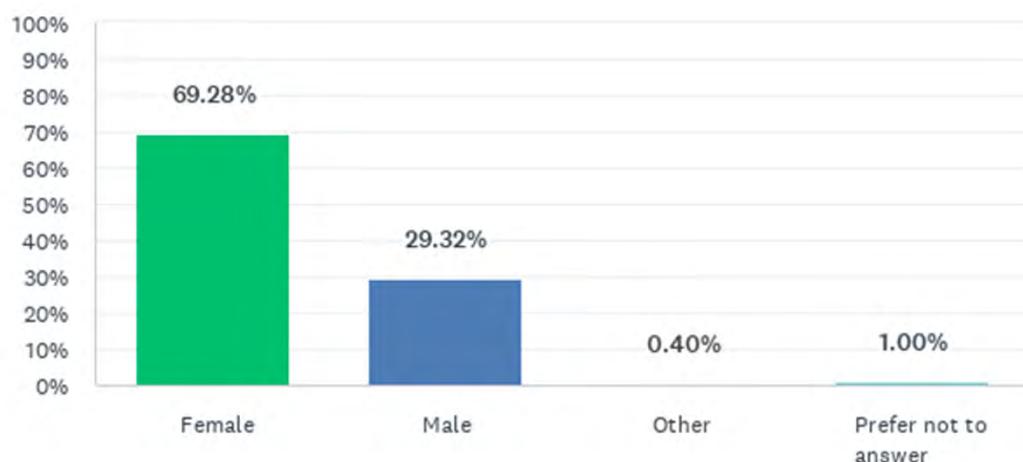


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

31

Q41: What is your gender?

Answered: 498 Skipped: 283

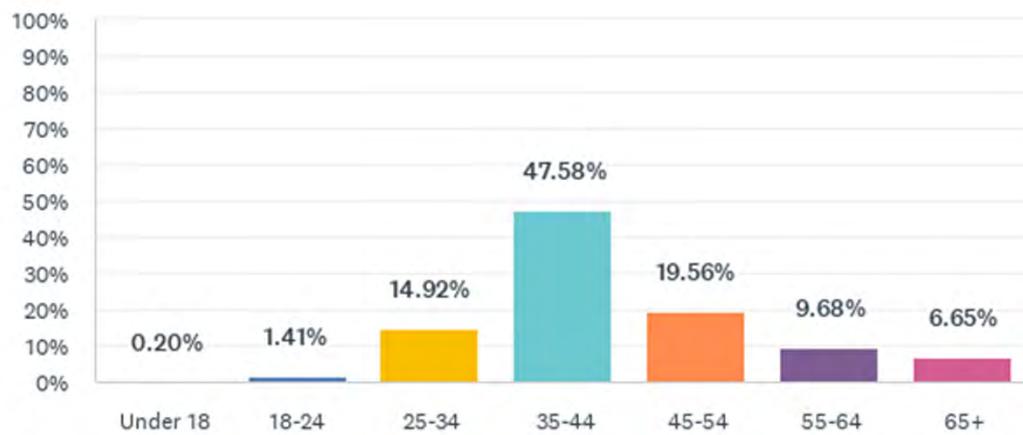


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

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Q42: How old are you?

Answered: 496 Skipped: 285

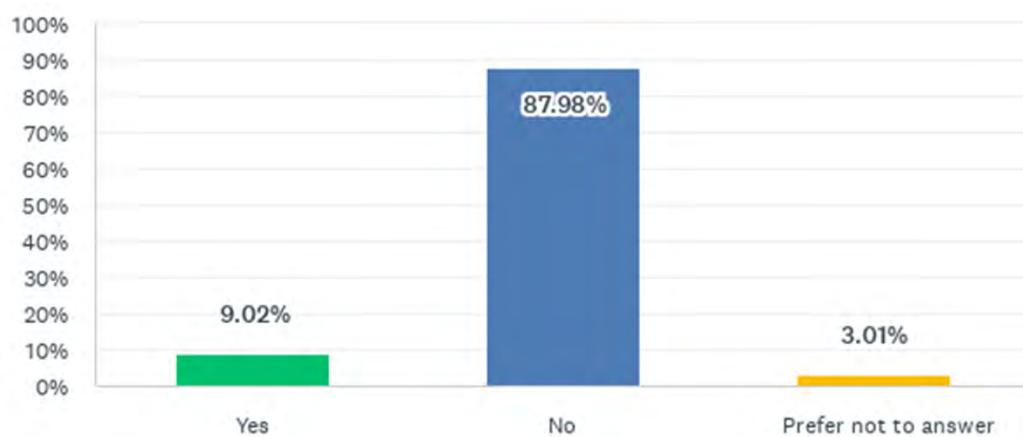


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

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Q43: Do you or anyone in your household have a disability?

Answered: 499 Skipped: 282

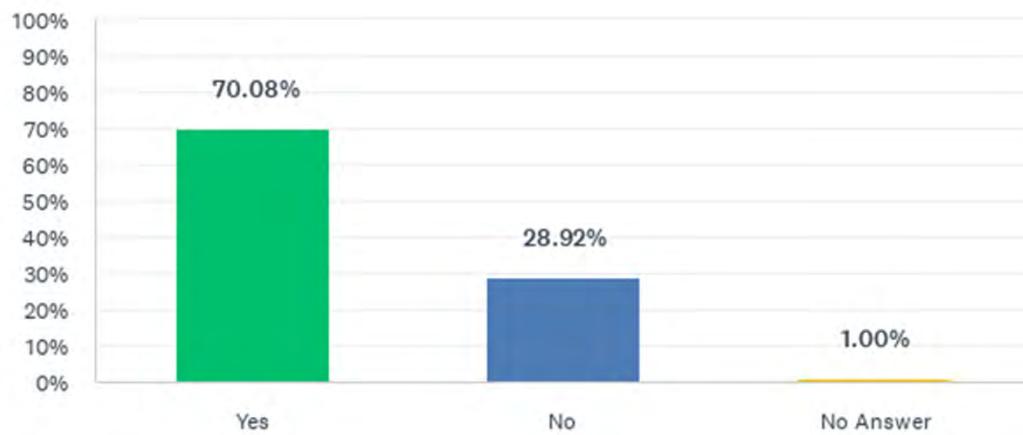


*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy

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Q44: Do you have any children under the age of 18 living with you?

Answered: 498 Skipped: 283



*This data is preliminary in nature, and has not been formalized or reviewed for accuracy