

Re-envisioning New Haven Parks Report
January 15, 2024
Urban Resources Initiative

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope

In October 2023, the city of New Haven put out a call for a facilitator to inform the restructuring of Parks and Recreation. The city requested the following:

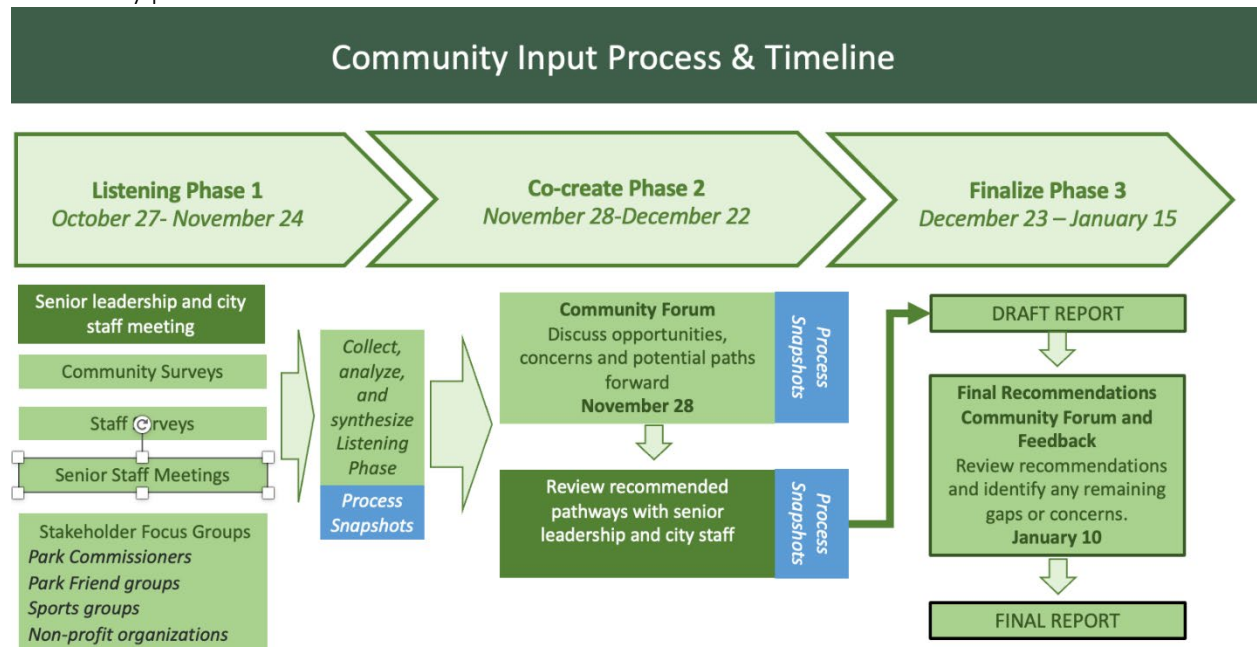
- 1) Community input process focused on understanding current challenges and priorities for change
- 2) Evaluation of potential models and case-studies from park management in other cities

The accepted proposal by Urban Resources Initiative planned a three-phase process develop recommendations based on community priorities for re-envisioning how New Haven Parks and Recreation units can more effectively and equitably serve the public and care for the City’s natural resources. Rather than only focusing on restructuring, the City requested URI gather ideas and recommendations to re-envision how New Haven Parks are managed, maintained, and programmed.

Beginning in November 2023 URI led an engagement process to understand community perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the New Haven parks system and desired outcomes of the re-envisioning process. Selected based on community desired outcomes, URI analyzed various parks management models and mapped how they might achieve community priorities and their limitations. Finally, URI developed a set of short, medium, and long-term action steps to achieve community priorities.

1.2 Process Overview

URI led a three-phase process to create recommendations to re-envision New Haven Parks based on community priorities.



The process started with a *Listening Phase* which sought community input through a community survey and focus group discussions. Learnings from the Listening phase were synthesized and made publicly available in “Process Snapshots” on [URI website](#) (See Appendix A).

The Community Survey focused on understanding identified strengths and areas for improvement. The electronic survey was made available in English and Spanish and distributed through signage with QR code link to the digital survey in 41 parks and shared digitally through Parks Friends, Sports groups, and parks non-profit partners as well as targeted email outreach and an article in the New Haven Independent. There were 353 respondents to the Community Survey from over 18 neighborhoods. The highest number of respondents live in Dwight (79 people) and East Rock (67) with additional respondents from East Shore (26), Edgewood (20), Wooster Square (19), Fair Haven Heights (17), Prospect Hill (14) and Fair Haven (14). The highest number of respondents have lived in New Haven between 11-30 years (36.7% of respondents), while 26% of respondents have lived in New Haven 31 years or more. 38% of respondents have children under the age of 18. Respondents report visiting East Rock Park the most frequently (57.5% of respondents), followed by Edgewood Park (50%), Edgerton Park (45.7%), Lighthouse Point Park (44.5%), West Rock Park (30.5%), and East Shore Park (29.3). While large destination parks had the highest reported visits, other parks like Long Wharf, Pitkin Plaza, Quinnipiac River, Scantlebury, Jocelyn Square, Criscuolo, Beaver Ponds and Beecher also were identified by respondents as parks they frequently visit. (See Community Survey Results in Appendix D).

353 Community Survey Responses
53 Focus Group Participants
40 Community Forum Participants

Focus Group Discussions

- Parks Friends Groups
- Sports Groups
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Parks Commissioners
- YARD Senior Staff
- Maintenance and Tree Division Senior Staff

The Focus Group Discussions provided an opportunity to understand how a specific group views the parks’ strengths, key challenges, and what outcomes they would like to see from the re-envisioning process. The focus groups engaged a total of 53 people. Focus groups included Parks Friends groups (29 participants), Sports groups (11 participants), non-profit organizations (9 participants) and Parks Commissioners (4 participants). A summary of each focus group discussion can be found in “Process Snapshots” in Appendix A. While the URI-led process focused on gathering community input, the city requested that we also meet with senior-level staff to better understand key challenges and their suggestions. This included two meetings with senior staff from

YARD and Maintenance and Tree Divisions, as well as a separate survey for staff with limited responses (9). Moreover, individual staff reached out to URI staff by phone and email to share concerns and suggestions outside the formal process.

The second phase, the Co-creation phase, included a Public Community Forum to share learnings from the Listening Phase and co-create priority outcomes of the re-envisioning process. The Community Forum was attended by more than 40 people including Mayor Elicker, city staff, members of Park Friends & athletic groups, and NHV residents. Desired outcomes from the listening phase were organized and listed organized by four themes: Accountability & Transparency, Equity, Communications, and Improving Services. In the first session, participants reviewed the outcomes already in each theme and added their own suggestions. In the second session, participants ranked their priorities within each theme by allocating 3 sticky-dots per theme. The results from the Community Forum were synthesized and made publicly available in a “Process Snapshot” on [URI website](#) (See Appendix A).

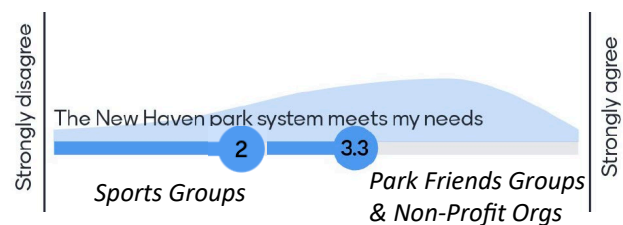
In the next step of the Co-Creation phase, URI shared summary recommendations on December 20th, 2023, with the Mayor and key city staff to learn their initial feedback, gather additional input and guidance for report refinement.

In the final phase a Community Forum was held on January 10, 2024, to share the final recommendations and hear from Mayor Elicker the city’s planned direction. The forum attendees had the opportunity to respond offering support, identifying any remaining gaps and/or raise any concerns. A summary of the Community Forum is detailed in Addendum E.

2. Listening Phase

2.1 Community perspectives on current strengths and areas for improvement

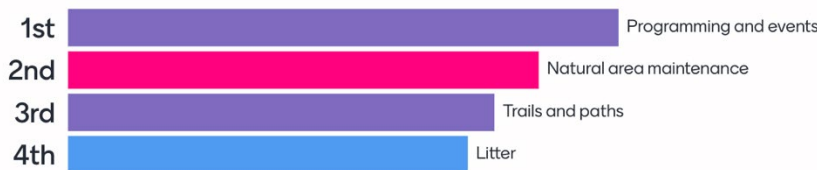
Throughout the listening phase, community members reflected on the strengths of the New Haven park system. 63.4% of survey respondents feel the park system serves their needs and 83.3% of respondents visit a park daily or weekly. Focus Group participants from Park Friends Groups and Non-profit organizations ranked 3.3 out of 5 that New Haven park system meets their needs, while sports groups ranked a 2 out of 5.



When asked “*What do you love about New Haven Parks*”, 77 of 320 survey responses emphasized the natural areas and beauty, for example the “opportunity to interact with nature in the city” and “the trees, waterways and mountains in those that have them.” Other respondents highlighted the quantity and diversity of parks (59 of 320), such as “there are lots of them and can serve as the center for community activities” and proximity and accessibility of parks (48 of 320), such as “I love that the parks are close to residential neighborhoods.” Focus Group participants also highlighted the nature, trees, trails, and beauty of the parks while also emphasizing community connection and meeting people (Sports; Non-Profits; Parks Friends Groups).



Non-Profit Organizations



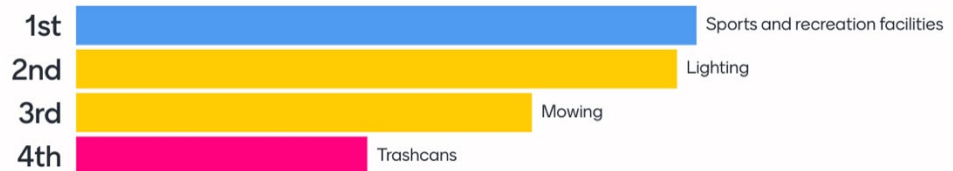
The Focus Group with Representatives from 8 non-profits that operate out of New Haven parks included City Seed, Save the Sound, LEAP for Kids, Monk Youth Jazz and

STEAM Collective, Common Ground, Audubon CT, Sierra Club’s Inspiring Connections Outdoors. Participants rate the park systems ability to meet their needs as a 3.3 out of 5. **Their top priority for improvement is programming and events, highlighting the ability to engage nonprofits more to provide additional programming.** In particular, they identify more demand for nature-based programming than they can meet, highlighting the limited ability for park rangers to meet this need. They note the

collaboration with non-profits working in ranger stations is going well. Focus group participants expressed the need for a park strategy including an ecological management plan and DEI/BIPOC centered initiative. They emphasized inequities across the park system, highlighting that they would like to see increased attention to maintenance in BIPOC neighborhoods and rangers who reflect the community they are serving. Additionally, they would like to see the city provide resources that help people know how to access parks and park programming. *For further detail see the Non-Profit Groups Process Snapshot in Appendix A.*

Sports Organizations

The Sports Focus Group with athletic league organizers included baseball, adult kickball, tennis, soccer, runners,



football, and rugby. Their top priority for improvement is Sports and Recreation Facilities, emphasizing the need for working bathrooms, lighting, drinking fountains, bleachers, and equipment storage. They noted the need for improvements in field and court quality and maintenance, in particular noting challenges with mowing and baseball diamonds. Participants expressed that athletes are leaving New Haven for programs with better facilities and some leagues are considering leaving as well. They would like to see sports fields and facilities that children and can feel pride in. *For further detail see the Sports Organizations Process Snapshot in Appendix A.*

Park Friends Groups



The Focus Group with Park Friends included 29 people representing 20 parks. Their top priority for improvement is litter. They expressed that picking up litter and emptying

trash cans is a big gap in park maintenance that is currently being filled by Parks Friends volunteers. They highlighted inequities in the park system emphasizing that BIPOC neighborhoods are especially neglected. Trash cans are a clear example of where the Parks Friends groups notice inequities in how parks are maintained: highlighting that some parks do not have any trash cans and others are rarely emptied. They would like to see city staff create opportunities for their volunteer groups and the broader public to participate in shaping park programming and priorities for playgrounds and facilities. Participants also expressed concerns related to natural area management and maintenance, in particular highlighting the need for invasive plants control and improved accountability and training related to mowing. They would like to see a long-term trail maintenance plan and more rangers for more parks. Many of their suggestions relate to communication, for example the need for a single point of contact and schedules for mowing and trash-pick up. *For further detail see the Park Friends Process Snapshot in Appendix A.*

2.2 Key challenges and suggestions

In the listening phase, community members also reflected on areas they would like to see improved. The following section details perspectives on key challenges and suggestions from the community survey and focus group discussions organized by priorities related to park maintenance (2.2.1), park equipment (2.2.2) programming and events (2.2.3) and sports and recreation facilities (2.2.4)

2.2.1 Park Maintenance

For park maintenance, the largest area for improvement is litter, with 76.5% of respondent listing it as one of their top two priorities for improvement, followed by trails/paths (30.3%), followed by mowing (23.1%), natural areas (17.5%) and waterways (12%). Figure 1 reflects the community survey responses to how well they think the parks are maintained with the highest ranked answers a “2”.

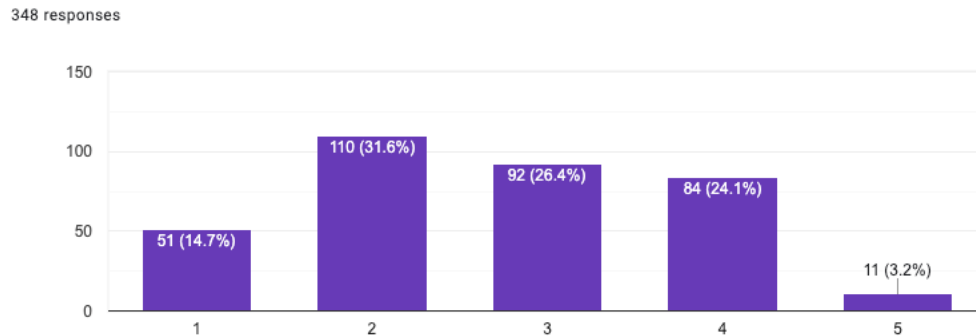


Figure 1: How well do you think the parks are maintained (mowing, trails/paths, litter, natural areas and waterways), on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being poorly and 5 being pristinely.

Litter

Litter is a top priority for **76.5%** of community survey respondents

Nearly half (46.5%) of the community survey respondents think New Haven’s parks are maintained poorly in terms of mowing, trails/paths, litter, natural areas and waterways (scoring 1 or 2 on a scale with 5 as pristine and 1 as poor). Of those respondents, the top priority for improving maintenance was to focus on litter (193 of 252 respondents, 76.5%). Additionally, the Park Friends focus group named litter as a top concern and the nonprofits focus group listed litter and pet waste as top challenges. One respondent shared *“Honestly, the major issue the parks have is the constant amount of litter around the park. There tends to be a plethora of trash, ranging from plastic bottles, paper trash of all kids, glass bottles and shards, and other miscellaneous trash.”*

Suggestions for addressing litter:

- Provide pet waste bags. (nonprofit)
- Develop an anti-litter campaign for youth and the general public. (Community Forum, Park Friends, nonprofit)
- Provide trash bins in all parks and distribute with equity in mind. (Park Friends)

Trails and Paths

Trails and paths were listed as top priority by 76/252 responses on the survey and were in the top 3-4 priorities for non-profit focus group and Park Friends focus group. Not all trails are considered parks and connected to the system as pointed out by the nonprofits and Park Friends focus groups. It is not clear who is responsible for maintenance or who to contact when a situation arises on trails. The trails seem to have a lack of planning and management. As noted in the sports and recreation section above, Farmington Canal bike path is a top priority for survey respondents. Also, several stakeholders expressed gratitude for trails in parks and closed road in East Rock Park (Athletics and Park Friends).

Top Priority:
Improve maintenance of trails and Farmington Canal bike path

Suggestions for trails and paths:

- Conduct an assessment on condition and use of trails; prioritize maintenance by necessity, equity and urgency.
- Collect usage data to help make decisions about when to conduct maintenance and management. (e.g. The Friends of Farmington Canal have infrared counter data for the trail.) (Park Friends)
- Build connectivity between parks through trails.
- Use trail blazes and maps to help park users utilize the trails. (Community Forum)

Mowing

Commissioners, Park Friends, and Sports focus groups noted mowing as a challenge particularly due to the irregularity of maintenance and for the practice of mowing over gardens planted by volunteers. Mowing is a priority listed by 58 of 252 responses in survey. Nonprofit stakeholders were concerned that mowing can interrupt ecological functions of the parks. This idea came up in the community forum as well. Sports leaders requested that mowing be more regular. The grass on the soccer fields is often too high. Mowing is a loud activity and can be obstructive of volunteer activities.

Mowing was raised as a key challenge in Focus Group Discussions with Park Commissioners, Park Friends, and Sports groups

Suggestions for mowing:

- Identify low-mow areas that promote pollinators and other ecological functions. (Non-profit focus group and community forum)
- Post a schedule for regular mowing on the City’s website so that volunteers and event hosts can work around the schedule.

Natural Area and Waterways

Invasive plant control is a major concern for the Park Friends focus group. Volunteers invest numerous hours throughout the city and throughout the year to maintain natural areas. Most Park Friends groups spend a considerable amount of energy on invasive vegetation removal and would like to be supported more thoroughly by the parks staff through swift removal of piles of plant debris, so that their work is not ineffective. Staff, nonprofits, and Park Friends reported a lack of vision and planning.

Suggestions for natural areas:

- Support volunteer groups’ efforts to remove invasive plants by picking up their large piles of plant debris after community clean-ups.
- Develop a master plan for natural areas in collaboration with nonprofits and volunteer groups working on this topic.

2.2.2 Park Equipment

Priorities for park equipment improvement include bathrooms (52.7%) and trash cans (46.9%), followed by playgrounds (27.6%), lighting (26.4%), and benches (25.5%).

Bathroom Access and Maintenance

New Haven parks lack access to open, functioning, and clean bathrooms. Most parks utilize temporary porta johns that have varying degrees of cleanliness maintained by outside contractors. Community Survey respondents identify bathrooms as the top priority for park equipment improvement (52.7% of respondents).

Top suggestion: Open all permanent bathroom facilities and provide regularly cleaned porta johns

According to staff, New Haven has only one plumber to maintain all irrigation needs and the permanent bathrooms, which is why most permanent bathrooms are closed year-round. Staff also pointed out that the city does not have a cleaning standard for bathrooms. The Sports focus group reported that a lack of decent bathrooms is a contributing factor for loss of athletes and potentially a loss of sports leagues in New Haven.

Survey respondents shared that they would like to see *“better bathroom facilities. Bathrooms are rarely open. Other parks have porta-potties which are...barely usable”*; *“getting the bathrooms clean, safe, and operational again”*; *“Open up the public bathrooms, please! I don’t care if they are expensive to operate and become resources for homeless people. Everyone deserves a place to use the bathroom. New York City is able to maintain restrooms in their public parks- so should New Haven.”*

Suggestions for addressing bathroom access:

- Hire additional plumbers or contract with outside plumbers to open all permanent bathrooms.
- Develop standards of cleanliness for bathrooms and hire outside contractors to maintain them.
- Where there are no permanent bathrooms, contract with porta john companies that will clean thoroughly and regularly year-round.

Trash Cans

Second only to bathrooms, trash cans were listed as facility priority by 112 of 238 respondents in the community survey. Survey respondents shared, *“Trash... it’s always overflowing;”* *“keep the parks cleaner and enact consequences for those that dump trash;”* and they like to see *“Regular organizing of community clean ups.”*

Top priority: The presence of high-quality trash cans that are regularly emptied

Trash cans were a point of contention in the conversation with Park Friends. While everyone agreed they were needed universally, trash cans were pointed out as a clear indicator of investment in a park. Parks with cans are seen as a higher priority and generally associated with parks in more affluent neighborhoods and often provided with resources from the higher capacity and more well-funded Park Friends groups. People want to see higher quality bins as opposed to the plastic barrels.

Staff pointed out the challenges of emptying the trash cans. Union contracts have made it difficult to streamline waste removal in the parks.

Suggestions for trash cans:

- *Invest in quality metal trash cans for all parks.*
- *Prioritize the emptying of cans in parks.*
- *One community forum attendee suggested partnering with [Terracycle, a company that recycles cigarettes and other waste products for free when you purchase their nice metal bins.](#)*

Playgrounds

A top priority for the Park Friends and Community Forum attendees, playgrounds should be equitably distributed throughout New Haven. Many of the city's playgrounds lack accessibility and accountability for their maintenance. One survey respondent reported, *"In some parks, the playground equipment is very old or not totally functional (e.g. swings are way too high for young kids, but baby swings are too small for others)."* Another respondent stated, *"Making sure broken playground equipment is fixed and replaced. When things break, it stays broken or "closed" for months at a time."* In the community forum, the Equity breakout group discussed what is the ideal minimum distance any resident should have to walk to get to a playground.

Top priority:
Playgrounds
equitably
distributed
throughout New
Haven

Suggestions for playgrounds:

- Ensure every neighborhood has an accessible playground.
- Increase accountability when repairs are required and post signage with a reasonable timeline for the repairs.
- Provide bathrooms, trash cans, and water fountains near playgrounds.

Lighting

Lighting is a big concern for sports groups. It is an issue of safety and accessibility. Lighting allows sports groups to engage more athletes for longer in the year. Survey respondents were also concerned about lighting: *"I would like to see the underpasses near Jocelyn Square Park better maintained. There needs to be significant infrastructure investment in lighting, video surveillance, and walkability improvements. The East Street underpass is particularly problematic for local residents. Having good parks means maintaining the ability to get to them safely."*

Suggestions for lighting:

- Increase number of facilities and fields with lighting.
- Turn the lights on for morning and evening activities.

Benches and Picnic Tables

Of 239 community survey respondents, 61 listed benches as a top priority for repair and improvement (25.5%). Respondents wrote, *"Benches replaced and fixed, most things need a fresh coat of paint;"* *"Upgrading them to offer more for the children slides, water parks, benches for family to sit, grills, courts with the net;"* and *"The benches at East Rock Park are falling apart, and there aren't many of them."*

Suggestions for benches:

- Invest in more benches. Where possible, partner with local groups such as to support bench donations, such as current examples of Historic Wooster Square Association and Friends of East Rock Park.
- Repair existing benches. Again, bench repairs could be sponsored by local businesses, individuals, and Park Friends groups.

2.2.3 Programming and Events

Only 14.9% of survey respondents reported that they participated in YARD programs. The majority of survey respondents prefer to learn about parks programming via email (269/332 respondents). New Haven has inadequate staffing to activate parks and make them accessible to all neighborhoods. One challenge noted by the nonprofit focus group was that the parks are lacking infrastructure to help break down access barriers. One survey respondent recommended, *“I wish YARD would do less organized programming and start doing things like run a snack bar at the Coogan Pavilion. Few kids sign up for organized programming, but lots of kids use the skatepark.”* Another wrote, *“Any programs that include the elderly would be welcome: hiking, biking, swimming, tennis, canoeing, bird-watching...”*

14.9% of survey respondents participate in YARD programs.

Suggestions for programming:

- Ranger programs should be offered later in the day and on weekends. (nonprofit)
- Rangers should reflect the community and engage with children and adults. (nonprofit)
- Separate the ranger position from positions that need expertise in parks maintenance. (nonprofit)
- Open snack bars in parks to create additional jobs for youth and more unorganized programming by supporting the youth that already frequent the skateparks, soccer fields, and playgrounds. (survey)
- Create intergenerational nature- and/or arts-based community building. (nonprofit)
- Partner with nonprofits to provide expert nature-based programming. (nonprofit)
- Focus on ecological restoration and wildlife habitat and communicating those goals and practices through education and signage. (nonprofit)
- Outsource communications, for example, registration services, permitting, and/or website design/management (one city staff warned against putting all city’s online contracts into Veoci).

2.2.4 Sports and Recreation Facilities

Community survey respondent’s highest priority for improving sports and recreation facilities is Farmington Canal bike path (28.6%), followed by basketball courts (18.8%) and soccer fields (18.8%). The Sports focus group collectively gave the facilities a 1.7 out of 5 stars stating field/court quality and maintenance issues as well as a lack of storage facilities, working bathrooms, lighting, and drinking fountains. The group was reportedly happy about the recent track and field improvements at Wilbur Cross and the new baseball fields. They also liked the closure of park roads for the safety of runners.

Priority Improvements for Sports Facilities:

- Farmington Canal
- Basketball courts
- Soccer fields
- Baseball fields

Survey respondents who reported a negative impression of the maintenance of sports and recreation facilities reported their top concern for maintenance was the Farmington Canal bike path (38/133 responses). Next in priority were basketball courts (25/133), soccer fields (25), baseball fields (19), and tennis and pickle ball courts (18).

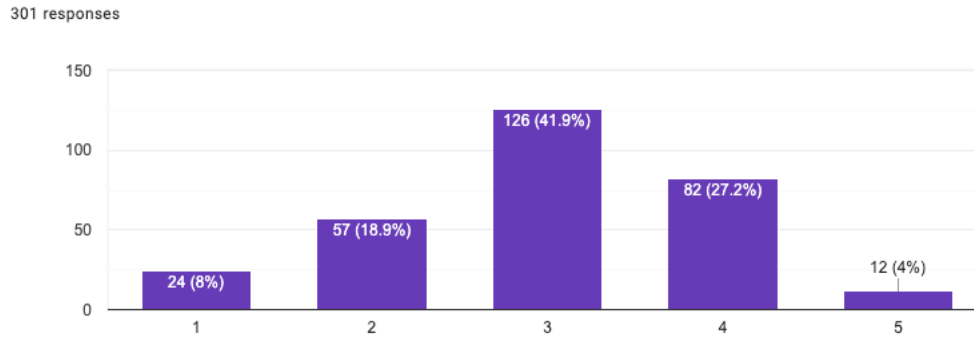


Figure 2: How well do you think the sports/recreation facilities are maintained (Farmington Canal, basketball courts, tennis courts, pickleball courts, bocce courts, skate parks, soccer fields, baseball fields, ice rink, rugby fields, cricket pitches, etc.)? on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being badly and 5 being excellently.

Suggestions for sports and rec facilities:

- Maintain fields and courts. Conduct major maintenance in the off-seasons or shoulder-seasons. Too often the big annual maintenance happens during the season and is not ready until the season is nearly over.
- Provide clean bathrooms.
- Add bleachers and storage facilities.
- Increase lighting at facilities and fields for evening and morning activities.

2.3 Staff perspectives on current strengths and areas for improvement

When reflecting on what is working well about the current structure, staff highlighted community relationships, YARD programming, the redundancy of administrative functions, Parks and Trees maintenance work well together, Public Works responsiveness is improving, Public Works willingness to assist with equipment and staff, YARD staff is open to new ideas, clear division of work within YARD, cross-departmental field meetings have improved scheduling and athletic fields.

When reflecting on areas for improvement, staff emphasized that roles and responsibilities need to be clarified and some need to be re-envisioned. They highlighted the conflict in permitting process between Parks and YARD, the lack of central decision maker for recreation facilities and fields until the mayor, the need to streamline the procurement process, a lack of clarity about who is in charge of trail maintenance, and a need to re-envision and train for irrigation and caretaker jobs. There is a sense that the Parks department of Public Works is impacted by decisions made by other departments without their staff's input. Overall, they emphasized personnel and equipment shortages, limited budget and a lack of clarity about budget allocations.

Staff would like to see a Parks Department with a clear vision and plan including a proactive approach to parks issues, considering future maintenance in mind; a clear budget, staff and equipment plan to achieve baseline standards for all parks, neighborhoods, streets and facilities; Clear points of contact; Strong partnerships with continuous staff engagements on projects.

Highlighting the success of their own public rebranding campaign, YARD staff suggested that others do the same with a new logo, website, clothing, and signage. YARD also identified problems with maintenance of athletic fields and other facilities, and recommended permits could be connected to staff calendars with

all tasks associated with the permit. One of the park rangers suggested that they have a checklist of daily, weekly, monthly, and/or seasonal maintenance activities that helps park rangers know their responsibilities, the equipment needed and with whom to collaborate.

Maintenance staff suggested that jobs be structured to have limited and specific responsibilities, such as “Field crews that only do fields” or to structure responsibilities by geographic zones: foreman could be responsible for playground inspections in their geographic zone with daily checklist for playground maintenance. Staff working from the same location could improve efficiencies. There were also specific suggestions about systems or technology that could provide accountability, for example a system for providing supervisors before and after photos for maintenance requests.

2.4 Priority Outcomes

2.4.1 Accountability and Transparency

Community input across every stakeholder group identified **accountability and transparency concerns related to maintenance, funding including capital improvements, and roles and responsibilities of staff** and departments. Maintenance staff shared their perspective of problematic job descriptions, such as Caretaker position which was described as including too many responsibilities. They noted it could be more effective to have narrowly defined roles such as ‘field crews’ who only perform field maintenance.

Community Forum Accountability & Transparency Priorities

- 1 **Clarity on who is responsible for what within the parks**
- 2 **Financial reports for park system**
- 3 **Follow through on planned facilities maintenance and upgrades**

Clarifying roles and responsibilities, such as who is responsible for trail maintenance, coupled with who and how to contact with concerns would improve both accountability and transparency. Desired outcomes about funding transparency included communication about resources available, budget allocations, actual funding spent, and funding source by department. Not only clarity about financial reporting, but perhaps more importantly, inclusion in the process of decisions made on funding to make available to finance improving services came up repeatedly, with the ARPA as example.

2.4.2 Communication

Community Forum Communication Priorities

- 1 **Simple user-friendly tool for external communication**
- 2 **Clarity about who to contact**
- 3 **Clear process to report concerns**

Improving communication internally and externally is needed and was raised by all stakeholders. Residents repeatedly pointed to the **need for clarity on point of contacts** of who to call for questions and a clear process to report problems. This is a source of frustration as residents complained of experiencing a ‘pass the buck mentality’ when they are repeatedly redirected to other staff searching for

answers to solve problems. Developing systems to communicate status of repairs and updates on scheduled completion for long-term issues and improvements is desired.

Staff also expressed **needs for communication improvement internally**. Coordination between city departments, and externally with non-profits and others was flagged by staff as needed. Communication problems staff identified included challenges with permitting process or when staff in another city agency make decisions that impact their work.

Overall, there is a need to **better publicize maintenance activities, programs, events**, opportunities with staff and volunteers working together including utilization of multiple pathways to communicate (city website, email blasts, social media). Beyond digital media, adding kiosks at permanent park locations with large programmable signs to publicize information was recommended.

2.4.3 Equity

Stakeholders conveyed that parks are both qualitatively and quantitatively better in certain neighborhoods (more park space in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods than poorer communities of color). Concerns about **equity were conveyed across a range of concerns including equitable distribution of park programming, maintenance, and infrastructure amenities** (bathrooms, playgrounds, etc.) across all parks and neighborhoods. Residents asked that there be parity of money spent across the city ('regardless of park size or volunteer group').

Community Forum Equity Priorities

- 1 **Safe parks**
- 2 **Equity in maintenance across all parks**
- 3 **DEI/ BIPOC centered initiative to address systemic neglect**

As part a desired outcome of equity, parks need to be experience as safe places both physically and psychologically. The intersection of accessibility and safety was identified including safe street crossing to playgrounds; defining safety (walking, lighting, language-inclusive signage); parents with disabilities; bike routes connecting an emerald necklace of parks. Finally, the process of neighborhood engagement is tied to equity, and should continue beyond this specific community input process.

2.4.4 Improving Services

Community Forum Priorities for Improving Services

- 1 **Coordination between parks department and other city departments**
- 2 **Park rangers that are public facing**
- 3 **Climate change planning and education**

Addressing inequities, improving accountability, transparency and communication will all lead to improving services. Improving coordination between city departments as noted in Communication section above should extend to departments such as Transportation (creating walking and biking routes to parks for instance) as well as to non-profit agencies. Other themes identified to improve services include professional development for staff; more public-facing park rangers; creating a clear vision and plan for the

future of parks including the threats posed by climate change, as well as specific needs for improvements for infrastructure amenities (lighting, field conditions, repaving parking lots) and maintenance (improved mowing, trail maintenance, athletic fields, playgrounds, tree pruning and care).

3. Analysis of potential models to restructure management units

3.0 Model 0: Keep Existing Structure, with improvements

In 2020 the Parks, Recreation and Trees Department was replaced with current structure with the aim of improving services and saving funds through efficiencies. Some of the envisioned improvements and efficiencies were not realized, for various reasons. For example, one the proposals to streamline staffing to address trash pick-up and litter was not realized due to union agreements. “Model 0” would not require a restructure, but rather revisit the initial intentions of reorganizing.

Potential to meet prioritized outcomes

- Capture labor cost-savings of trash removal if Union contract can be resolved. Additional cost-savings of eliminated Parks Director position.

Potential challenges

- Issues around leadership, communication and accountability would not be resolved.

3.1 Model A: Parks Department with Geographic Zones

Create a structure with Parks, Recreation and Trees under a single director (i.e. Parks Director). This structure reunites maintenance, tree divisions, park rangers, and the City’s Landscape Architect. This would resemble the pre-2020 structure but with the incorporation of geographic zones of responsibilities.

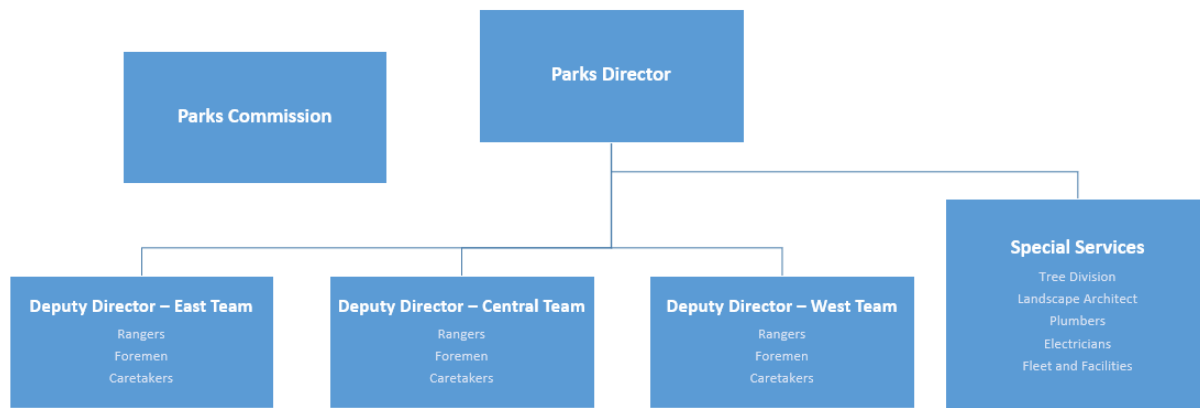
In New Haven there could be 3 zones East, West and Central. The zones should be created with an equity lens to ensure that resources are distributed fairly across the city. In the *sample* chart below, the three zones have a balance of park acres and population served. While the West zone has significantly more acreage, it serves substantially fewer people.

Neighborhood	Population	Total Acres of Park	Geographic Zone
Dixwell	5045	11.8	Central
Downtown	10981	3.0	Central
Dwight	4051	6.1	Central
East Rock	8854	190.7	Central
Hill	15626	70.5	Central
Newhallville	6036	7.7	Central
Prospect Hill	4667	38.35	Central
Wooster Square	3053	7.2	East
Annex	7327	13.4	East
East Shore	4002	232.4	East
Fair Haven	16271	30.6	East
Fair Haven Heights	6711	47.1	East
Quinnipiac Meadows	6149	18.0	East
Beaver Hills	5118	102.4	West

Edgewood	4456	107.8	West
West Rock	4820	354.0	West
Westville	8513	172.3	West

Sample New Haven Park Zones Chart

Each of the geographic zones could have a Zone Lead (Deputy Director level) and integrated maintenance and programming teams including Foreman (maintenance), Rangers (programming) and points of contact. Creating a “Specialty Trades Team” with staff trained with specific expertise (plumbers, electricians, athletic fields) would work across the city rather than in geographic zones, as some services can be shared across rather than a specialized position (i.e. plumber etc.) working in each geographic zone. A senior managerial position leading this team could be primary point of contact for Athletic groups. See Sample Organizational Chart.



Sample New Haven Organizational Chart

Potential to meet prioritized outcomes

- A leadership position of city agency director level will provide vision, leadership and point of contact responsibility alleviating bottlenecks and communications that falls onto the Mayor.
- Three Deputy Directors creates senior level staff redundancy to cover management needs when staff take paid time off (vacation, sick leave, etc.)
- Equity: Creating geographic zones could offer a pathway for greater equity as dedicated staff capacity and budget will be allocated across geographic zones.
- Accountability and Transparency: for greater accountability Deputy Directors could publicly report maintenance activities completed, and within their zone attend community meetings and meet with elected to share accomplishments and respond to concerns.
- Communication:
 - for improved communications, the Deputy Directors could be primary point of contact for Park Friends that are within their geographic zone.
 - Bringing together park rangers with the maintenance and tree division could improve internal communication, which was identified by staff as a current challenge.
 - to resolve the community desired outcome to clarify who is responsible and who to contact for problems, like the LCI Neighborhood Specialists model.
- Improving Services:

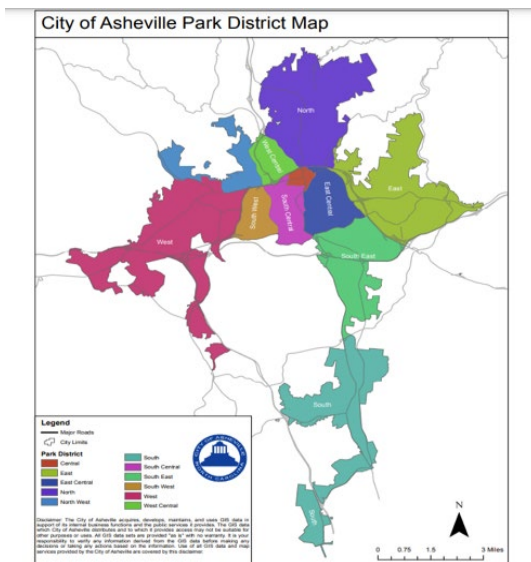
- Bringing together the City’s Landscape Architect with the maintenance division could address concerns regarding capital improvement implications on maintenance teams.
- Incorporating park rangers as part of a team alongside maintenance staff within the geographic zone and reporting to the same Deputy Director could alleviate current confusion of responsibility for trail maintenance and improved services of that expressed community priority.
- Developing teams working in a region with redefining positions to specify responsibilities more narrowly (as noted under Accountability section) will alleviate unrealistic expectations that staff find unable to meet and improve services for the public.

Potential Challenges:

- Increased staffing needs: one director, three deputy director level and separation of maintenance and programming into three geographic teams.
- This model relies upon strong leadership with the Parks Director ensuring there not a discrepancy between how the parks are maintained and programed across the geographic zones.

Case Studies of Parks Departments with Geographic Zones: Asheville, Minneapolis, Portland, and Pittsburgh

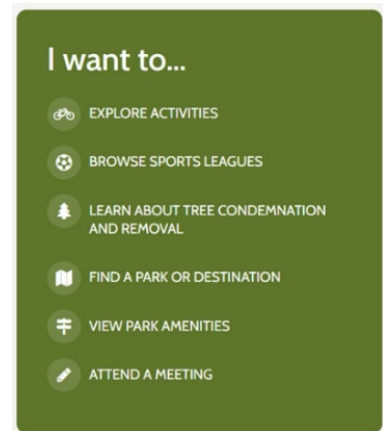
Asheville, NC (population 93,000) Parks Department manages over 75 public parks, playgrounds, and open spaces including full-complex recreation centers, swimming pools, cemeteries, sports fields and courts, and community centers. Asheville has established ‘park districts’ with defined parks and facilities that fall within each district, as detailed in the chart and map below. The Parks Department maps the census tracts and population size served in each district, which ties to their equity planning.



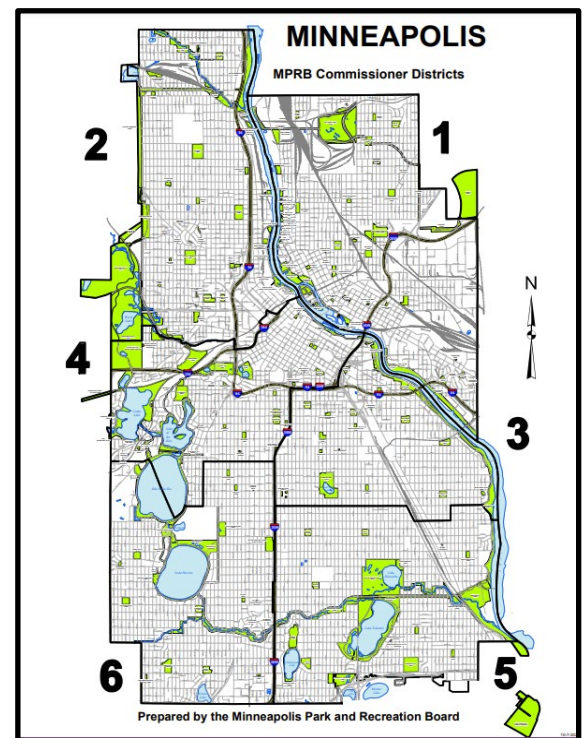
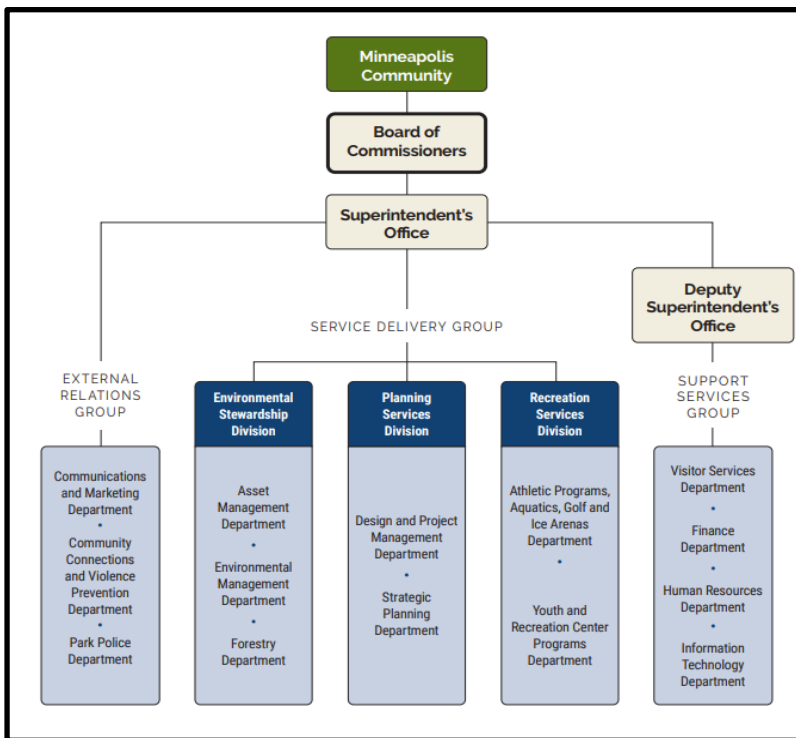
Park District	
EAST	
Census Tract	Total Pop
18	7645
19	3054

Facility/Park	Neighborhood
Charlie Bullman Park	Haw Creek and Sondley
East Asheville Center and Park	Oakley and Broadview Park
Haw Creek Park	Bull Mountain
Master Park (minimally developed)	Cloister Condominiums
Ann Patton Joyce Park	Beverly Hills
Asheville Municipal Golf Course	Parkway Forest
Azalea Dog Park	Redwood Forest
Azalea Soccer Complex	
Recreation Park & Pool	
River Bend Greenway	
Riverbend Park	
WNC Nature Center	

Minneapolis (population 418,000) park system spans 7,059 acres of parkland including 185 park properties are 55 miles parkways, 102 miles of Grand Rounds biking and walking paths, 22 lakes, 12 formal gardens, seven golf courses and 49 recreation centers. Accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies with distinction for excellence in operations and service. Their website is extremely easy to navigate and offers a helpful example, as seen in the website interface for public engagement shown here.



The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) oversees the park system through 6 districts, and further refines the agency into groups across the districts include “Service Delivery”, “Support Services” and “External Relations” (see chart below).



Portland, OR (population 600,000) offers a compelling example of dividing into geographic zones for funding capital improvement and maintenance. Described as “coalition maps” the City posted online the planned investments by region creating transparency in the planning process, as detailed in the website excerpts shown below. Visit [their website](#) to see additional great examples.

About Parks Capital Improvement Project Planning

Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) and its 120 friends and partner groups steward your public parks system. In addition to maintaining today's parks, PP&R is responsible for working with City Council, our [Portland Parks Foundation](#) and others, to build the parks system for the next generation. This requires planning, community input, and resources to complete this work.

We track our existing major maintenance needs and growth needs (growing our parks system to match population growth), on the PP&R Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) list. The CIP tracks projects regardless of their funding status. In fact, many projects on our CIP are unfunded.

For each geographic area, there is a maintenance list and a growth list. *Note: As of the first quarter of 2018--we are in the process of updating all lists (expected update Spring/Summer 2018).*

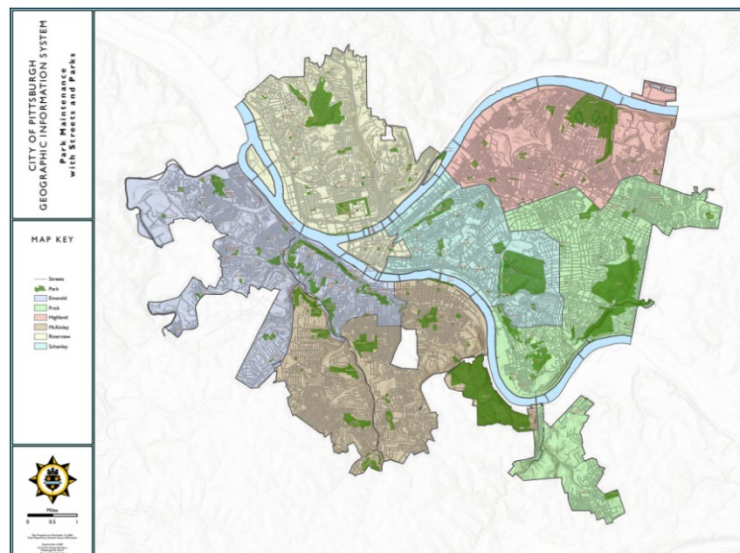
- **Maintenance projects** maintain or replace existing facilities, such as the replacement of a roof or the repair of an existing pool.
- **Growth projects** add new facilities (building a new park or a new playground in a park) or expand existing facilities (like adding a gymnasium to an existing community center).

Parks System Development Charge revenues (SDCs) can be used to fund growth projects, but not maintenance projects. For more information, please visit the [Parks SDC](#) page.

Coalition Maps for Capital and Planning Investments

- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - SE Portland 502.14 KB
- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - North Portland 1023.67 KB
- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - Central Northeast Neighborhoods 1.45 MB
- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - East Portland 430.42 KB
- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - Northwest Portland 394.64 KB
- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - Inner Northeast Neighborhoods 405.21 KB
- 📄 Parks Capital and Planning Investments - Southwest Portland 319.83 KB

[Pittsburgh, PA](#) (Pop, 295,000) also has divided their city into 6 geographic zones to guide maintenance and programming activities, as seen in the map below. In addition, this city has a robust Private Public Partnership model, which is further described in 3.3 Model C.



3.2 Model B: Expanded Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Individual Parks

Model B focuses on PPP in which private organizations have management responsibilities for specific parks. Currently the City of New Haven takes advantage of a range of public-private partnership opportunities that reduce costs for the municipality and increase offerings. Other cities have more expansive PPP models further to increase private investment. One of the most notable is Central Park, which is entirely privately managed by the non-profit Central Park Conservancy through an agreement with NYC Parks (see case study examples below). Current examples of Model B in New Haven include

- Edgerton Park Conservancy
- Botanical Garden of Healing Dedicated to Victims of Gun Violence operated by URI with volunteers
- Town Green Proprietors
- Farmington-Canal Association

- Alling Golf Club operated by [New England Golf Corporation](#)
- Lighthouse Carousel (restored with private funding led by volunteers with an "Adopt-A-Horse" program including establishment of an endowment at the Community foundation for Greater New Haven for future maintenance).
- Ralph Walker Skating Rink operated by SKATE NEW HAVEN
- Athletic fields operated by athletic organizations (Pop Warner, New Haven Youth Soccer, etc.)
- Multiple Parks supported by New Haven Park Friends groups (see Table 1)

In New Haven, two individual parks are primarily managed by non-profits including the Edgerton Park managed by the Edgerton Park Conservancy and the Botanical Garden of Healing Dedicated to Victims of Gun Violence managed by URI. A third unique model established in 1810 is The Committee of the Proprietors of Common and Undivided Lands at New Haven. The Town Green Proprietors (five trustees) “act to preserve the Green’s history, preventing its commercialization and ensuring that it remains an open and beautiful green space for enjoyment by the community.”

A key opportunity for expanding Model B in New Haven is based in the existing Parks Friends groups, an approach used in Washington D.C. and Portland, as detailed in the case studies below. Currently, many New Haven Park Friends volunteer groups carry out maintenance, programming and fundraising to support their individual parks. Every neighborhood except for the Annex and Quinnipiac Meadows has at least one active Park Friends group (see Table 1 below). These grassroots volunteer groups generally operate informally, cooperatively, and autonomously. These volunteers and their investment of time and resources are an incredible asset to New Haven.

Neighborhood	Population	Total Acres of Park	Park Friends Groups
Beaver Hills	5118	102.4	Friends of Beaver Ponds Park
Dixwell	5045	11.8	Friends of DeGale Field, Friends of Scantlebury
Dwight	4051	6.1	Friends of Rainbow Park; Monitor Square, Kensington Square
East Rock	8854	190.7	Friends of East Rock Park
East Shore	4002	232.4	Friends of Fort Wooster Park
Edgewood	4456	107.8	Friends of Edgewood Park
Fair Haven	16271	30.6	Friends of Quinnipiac River Park, Dover Beach, Jocelyn Square and Mill River Trail
Fair Haven Heights	6711	47.1	Friends of Quarry Park, Friends of Fairmount
Hill	15626	21.0	Friends of Kimberly Field
Newhallville	6036	7.7	Friends of Cherry Ann Park, Farmington Canal Assoc.
Prospect Hill	4667	38.35	Edgerton Park Conservancy
West Rock	4820	354.0	Botanical Garden of Healing volunteers
Westville	8513	172.3	Blockwatch 303, East Edge Gardeners
Wooster Square	3053	7.2	Historic Wooster Square Association, Friends of Lenzi

Table 1: Neighborhood Population, Park Acreage, and Park Friends Groups

Some Park Friends groups could increase the role of civil society to support park management, capital investment and programming. Currently, Friends of East Rock, Friends of Edgewood and Friends of Beaver Ponds actively fundraise and pay for capital investments and programming. For example, Friends of East

Rock paid for new garbage cans in 2023 and Friends of Edgewood has paid for “Nature Pals” programming annually for the past decade. However, given that the resources across these groups vary, private investment could exacerbate existing inequities across the parks. To address this challenge, the city could take the approach of NYC and the Central Park Conservancy, where private funding and management of Central Park allows for greater resource investment in other parks.

In order to increase the opportunity of private investment through the Park Friends groups, a new or existing non-profit could serve as an umbrella organization with a formal mandate to support all Park Friends groups (through a MOU agreement with the City) and focus on addressing inequity gaps in partnership with the city (see 3.2 Model C recommendation). Parks Friends groups are currently supported by URI in a few ways, including participating in URI’s Community Greenspace program, which provides material and technical guidance for the volunteers to carry out planting and maintenance activities in the parks. Additionally, URI provides coordination between these volunteer groups and the Parks maintenance staff, holds an annual meeting with park friend group leaders and Parks maintenance staff, and serves as a fiscal agent for the Park Friends groups that raise funds.

Potential to meet prioritized outcomes

- Improved services
 - Desired upgrades to athletic fields, playscapes and other amenities could be supported by private investment, and more likely to attract private resources with active role.
 - Non-profits and other private sector entities could support additional management and programming activities.
- Communication: The potential increased role of Park Friends groups, non-profit organizations, and other partners will come with increased coordination between the groups and stronger relationship with park staff.
- Accountability and Transparency: The parks managed under this PPP model would need clear partnership agreements that outline responsibilities.

Potential challenges

- MOUs should be established to outline partnership agreements to avoid union conflicts and potential grievances.
- Senior city staff (Parks Director or Deputy Directors) need to maintain relationships with partners in the PPP to ensure efficacy.
- Equity: Risks increasing inequities across the park system as specific parks see improvements through private partnerships, while others do not.

Case Studies of Expanded Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Individual Parks: New York City, Washington, D.C. and Portland

New York City: Central Park Conservancy raises \$100 million annually and is entirely responsible for all maintenance, programming and events offered at Central Park (843 acres). The City of New York has entrusted the Central Park Conservancy with the complete day-to-day care of this iconic public space. Over 300 Conservancy employees tend to the Park’s complex maintenance, restoration, and architectural needs—from horticulture, tree and turf care, trash management, visitor services, and much more. This allows the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to allocate nearly its entire budget to other parks.

Washington D.C. (population 631,000) over 850 acres including 243 neighborhood parks, 68 recreation & community centers, 35 pools and aquatic centers, 36 spray parks, 122 outdoor basketball courts, 138

tennis courts, and 110 athletic and ball fields. “The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) relies on the support of individuals, non-profit organizations, groups, and businesses that are committed to working with DPR to make a sustainable impact on a shared goal around the community. DPR partners provide time, resources, or financial support that allow DPR to extend the impact of many of our programs and services.”

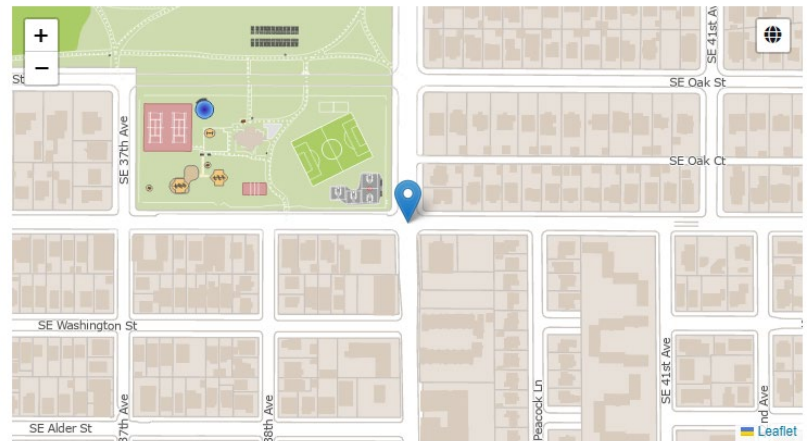
DPR has a **Partnerships and Development Division** to establish innovative public and private partnerships and volunteer services by individuals, groups and organizations. There are three different ways to partner with DPR.

- 'Adopt a' Partners are individuals or organizations that support DPR efforts to keep DPR properties beautiful and provide general clean-up and maintenance services.
- 'Friends of' Groups are nonprofit organizations with 501(c)3 status and a stated mission to support a DPR park or facility.
- Programmatic Partners are organizations that support DPR’s mission by providing high-quality programs at no cost to DPR or District residents at DPR facilities.

Portland, OR (population 600,000) also listed as a case study with maintenance divisions by geographic zone, also works in a Public Private Partnership model. This city has robust relationship support with their park friend volunteers, and similar to the Washington, DC model has “adopt a” partnerships for stewardship of specific parks (such as the Friends of Laurelhurst example seen on right).

Friends of Laurelhurst Dog Off-Leash Area

The dog off-leash area in this park has been "adopted" by the Friends of Laurelhurst OLA. To volunteer at your neighborhood park, call 503-823-5121.



Year acquired: 1909

Size in acres: 32.27

3.3 Model C: Expanded Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Parks Services

Model C focuses on PPP in which private organizations have specific responsibilities across the park system. The City of New Haven has a few existing public-private partnership opportunities that reduce costs for the municipality for services including:

- Wood salvage by CityBench
- Tree planting and park volunteer support by New Haven Urban Resources Initiative
- Town Green Special Service District staff maintain flower boxes, set up informal seating daily, address litter, water trees and other streetscape improvements funded by the merchants in the districts.
- Management of Q House by LEAP

Town Green Special Services District (and other similar districts) provides a helpful local example of merchants in the area surrounding the park funding services including addressing litter, watering trees, maintaining flower plantings and more.

As a means of expanding Model C, the City could formally partner with organizations (via MOU) to provide services and accelerate investments in parks. The Parks Friends groups could provide an opportunity in

this model as well, if organized across an umbrella organization, allowing them to increase the role of private investment across the park system as a whole to address community identified needs, and focus on addressing inequity gaps in partnership with the City. As detailed in 3.2 Model B recommendations, this would require an existing or new organization to step into the “umbrella” role with a formal mandate to strengthen coordination amongst the Park Friends groups, as well as communication with the Parks maintenance division.

Similarly, the city could pursue a hybrid Public Private model, like is done in the city of Sandy Springs, GA in which the city works collaboratively with contracting partners who provide a range of services (see case-studies below).

Potential to meet prioritized outcomes:

- Improved Services
 - Partnerships with NGOs could help to address gaps in programming across broad range of topics identified such as river paddling, nature walks, plant identification, pollinator pathways with a focus on addressing inequities.
 - Partnerships with NGOS could help to address gaps in services (like the Natural Area Conservancy example) that a non-profit might wish to pursue that addresses community identified gaps (like ecological restoration, etc.) with a focus on addressing inequities.
 - Partnerships with New Haven based universities (SCSU, Yale, Albertus, Gateway) could also help fill services gaps by offering internships to work with Park staff. College interns could help with maintenance (trails, etc.) with a focus on addressing inequities.
 - Private sector contracts to manage services, such as custodial for public bathrooms, communication services, such as website developers.

Potential challenges:

- MOUs should be established to outline partnership agreements to avoid union conflicts and potential grievances.
- Communication: senior city staff (Parks Director or Deputy Directors) need to maintain relationships with partners in the PPP to ensure efficacy.
- Accountability: This model requires strong oversight. Services by private sector partners could be monitored by creating ex-officio roles/positions on advisory boards that could be held by city staff leaders or Park Commissioners.

Case Studies of Expanded Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Parks Services: New York City, Louisville, Pittsburgh, and Sandy Springs

New York City: Another New York example is [the Natural Areas Conservancy](#), a non-profit established in 2018. New York City parks include 20,000 acres of natural areas, and within those areas there are 7,300 acres of forest within NYC Parks jurisdiction. Unlike the Central Park example, the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) manages 7,300 acres of forests across all NYC parks including restoration projects, planning, and volunteer engagement. NAC carries out their work with authority granted by NYC Parks, and work in close partnership including NYC Park Commissioner representation on the NAC Board of Directors. NAC also leads a “Forest in Cities” learning network for practitioners with membership from 17 different cities, including New Haven represented by New Haven Tree Coordinator, Annie Mixsell and Chris Ozyck (URI).

Pittsburgh, PA (Pop, 295,000) through the [“CitiParks” department and Department of Public Works](#) maintains approximately 3,800 acres of park land across 170 parks with a wide variety of amenities, monuments, fountains, courts, fields, and more. Under an official public-private partnership agreement, the non-profit Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, has completed 23 major park improvement projects and invested nearly \$145 million. Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) was founded in December 1996 by a group of citizens concerned with the deteriorating conditions of Pittsburgh’s historic city parks. PPC works with thousands of volunteers, hosts hundreds of events, and provides programming for more than 7,500 children annually.

HOW WE'RE FUNDED

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is funded through various sources to support our mission and impact. Learn more about the impact of charitable giving to Pittsburgh's parks.

POWERED BY PHILANTHROPY

DEIA COMMITMENT

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) is committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in Pittsburgh's public parks. The PPC strives to create an organizational culture of inclusion and acceptance that reflects our core values and the voices of our diverse team.

LEARN MORE

PARTNERS IN THE PARKS

The City of Pittsburgh and its Departments of Public Works and Parks & Recreation - known as CitiParks - cultivate 3,800 acres of parkland in 170 parks. Together, they provide citywide events and festivals, public pools, recreation and senior centers, and innovate programming for children and seniors.

VISIT CITIPARKS

Louisville, KY: Other successful examples include [The Parklands](#) of Floyds Fork in Louisville, KY. The Parklands operates four major parks covering nearly 4,000 acres, and is one of the largest donor and visitor supported public park systems in the U.S. Like the Central Park Conservancy, The Parklands non-profit is a private organization that is responsible for full management of the four parks, including: security, maintenance, capital improvements and programming (see website excerpt provided here). Moreover, while the park land was purchased with private-sector funds, the Parklands operates the 4,000 acres of parkland as a public park system.

Sandy Springs, GA (Pop, 107,000) with over 950 acres across 28 parks and 22 miles of Chattahoochee River shoreline. Sandy Springs uses a hybrid PPP model with contracting partners (over \$11 million in outsourced contracts by 2020) including: Municipal Court Solicitors, City Attorney, and Non-Emergency Call Center and park related services.

4. Recommended Pathways for an equitable and effective park system

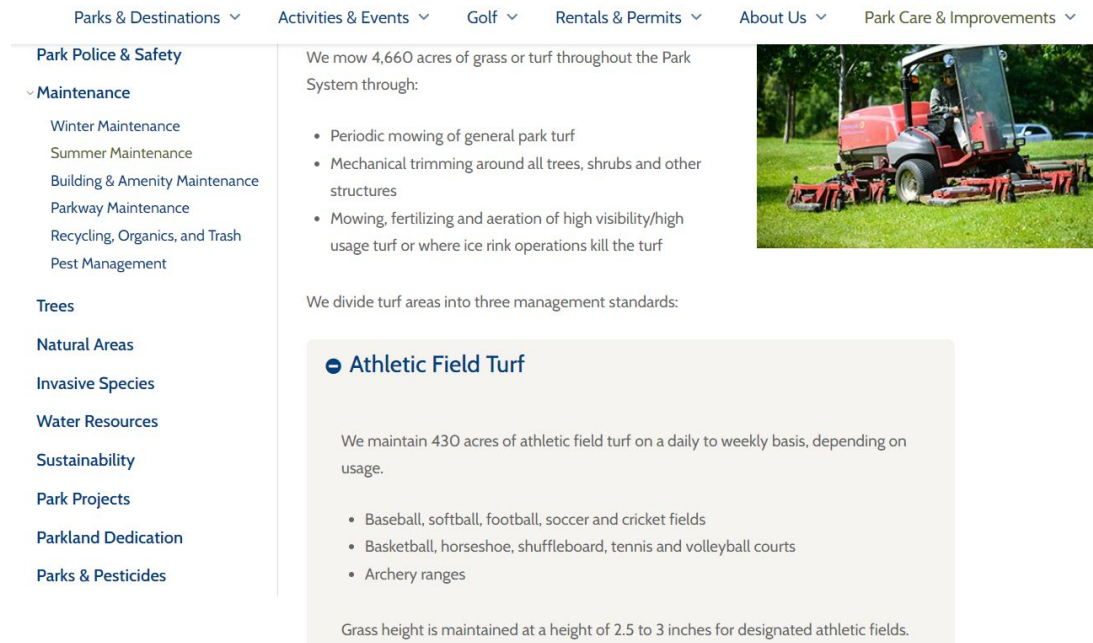
These suggested actions are irrespective of management models.

Short-Term Actions:

Across the survey and focus groups **communications, bathrooms and litter** were universally highlighted as priorities.

1) Improve External Communications

- Post clear schedule and calendars online including park mowing, park trash pick-ups, programming activities, and athletic events (See example from Minneapolis, Minnesota here with more detail in Appendix B)



The screenshot shows a website navigation menu with categories: Parks & Destinations, Activities & Events, Golf, Rentals & Permits, About Us, and Park Care & Improvements. The 'Park Care & Improvements' menu is expanded, showing sub-sections: Park Police & Safety, Maintenance (with a dropdown arrow), Trees, Natural Areas, Invasive Species, Water Resources, Sustainability, Park Projects, Parkland Dedication, and Parks & Pesticides. The 'Maintenance' section is selected, displaying a list of tasks: Winter Maintenance, Summer Maintenance, Building & Amenity Maintenance, Parkway Maintenance, Recycling, Organics, and Trash, and Pest Management. The main content area features a heading 'We mow 4,660 acres of grass or turf throughout the Park System through:' followed by a bulleted list: Periodic mowing of general park turf, Mechanical trimming around all trees, shrubs and other structures, and Mowing, fertilizing and aeration of high visibility/high usage turf or where ice rink operations kill the turf. To the right of this text is a photograph of a red riding lawn mower on a green lawn. Below this, another heading reads 'We divide turf areas into three management standards:' followed by a sub-section titled 'Athletic Field Turf'. This sub-section contains the text 'We maintain 430 acres of athletic field turf on a daily to weekly basis, depending on usage.' and a bulleted list: Baseball, softball, football, soccer and cricket fields; Basketball, horseshoe, shuffleboard, tennis and volleyball courts; and Archery ranges. At the bottom of this sub-section, it states 'Grass height is maintained at a height of 2.5 to 3 inches for designated athletic fields.'

- Post information on who to contact for various needs online: Either clearly provide points of contact and their responsibility (such as contact for trash; contract for natural areas management) or list a single point of contact that is responsible for connecting the public with correct staff.
- Provide a simple, user-friendly online tool for registering for programs and/or events. (See example from Bentonville, Arkansas here and Appendix B for more detail).

CURRENT FIELD STATUS

During questionable weather conditions: Look for field, facility, and event status updates to be posted no later than 3 p.m. on the day in question. Time of change is displayed in the "As Of" column.

Field status for Saturday games will be updated by 7:30 a.m. that morning

[Sign Up](#)

Get Bentonville field status updates sent directly to your email, or text message sent to your cell phone! [Sign up](#) for this free service.

Parks & Recreation
[Email Parks & Recreation](#)

Physical Address
215 SW A Street
Bentonville, AR 72712

Phone: [479-484-7275](tel:479-484-7275)

Bentonville - Trails

Field	Status	As Of	Comment
All-American Trail	Open	Mon, 23 May at 12:00	
Applegate Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Sep at 12:14	Trail and Tennis are clear
Arkansas Missouri Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
Belle Vista Lake Trail	Limited	Mon, 27 Mar at 12:00	Trail over dam is permanently closed. Trail detour on the north end of the dam. Proceed with caution.
Citizens Park Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
Cristal Bridges Trail	Limited	Thu, 9 Mar at 12:00	Trail is under construction. Watch for detours!
Downtown Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
Edfield Park Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
F St. Trail	Open	Thu, 1 Dec at 12:24	Trail is clear
John Dicksfield Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
Memorial Park Fitness Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
North Bentonville Trail	Open	Mon, 20 Dec at 12:00	
North Walton Boulevard Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Sep at 12:14	Trail and Tennis is clear
Park Springs Square Trail	Open	Thu, 10 Nov at 12:00	Some tracks are still under construction. Please follow on trail signage only.
Shagbark Tree Mt. Bike Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Jul at 12:00	
South Bentonville Trail	Open	Thu, 21 Sep at 12:14	Trail and Tennis is clear
Town Branch Trail	Open	Thu, 1 Dec at 12:24	Closed due to construction at 7 Street Intersection. Detours are in place.
Trail of Two Cities	Open	Thu, 1 Dec at 12:24	Trail is clear and fully open
Winking Spring Trail	Limited	Mon, 27 Mar at 12:00	Trail detour near the spring. Trail detour is in place. Proceed with caution.

Bentonville Parks-Rec Programming

Field	Status	As Of	Comment
Citizens Park - Soccer	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Citizens Park - Tennis	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Creskade Park- Cricket Field	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Creskade Park- Pickle Ball	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Lawrence Plaza Ice Skating Lessons	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Nichols Ford Aquatic Center- Barracudas	Closed	Thu, 30 Nov at 12:13	
Nichols Ford Aquatic Center- Lap Swims	Closed	Thu, 30 Nov at 12:13	
Nichols Ford Aquatic Center- Swim Lessons	Closed	Thu, 30 Nov at 12:13	
Memorial Park - Baseball	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Memorial Park - Kickball	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Memorial Park - Sand Volleyball	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Memorial Park - Soccer	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Memorial Park - Softball	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	
Memorial Park - Tennis	Open	Mon, 9 Dec at 07:00	

2) Improve Bathroom Facilities

- Open existing bathrooms facilities.
- Hire external contractor to keep bathroom facilities clean and operating.
- Contract with porta-john companies for parks where there are no permanent bathroom facilities.

3) Litter prevention:

- Provide pet waste bags.
- Provide trash bins equitably across all parks.
- Ensure routine trash removal.
- Create an anti-litter campaign with signage focused on youth and the public.
- Engage public in litter cleanup campaign: key opportunity to partner with Parks Friends groups in their successful litter clean-up efforts.

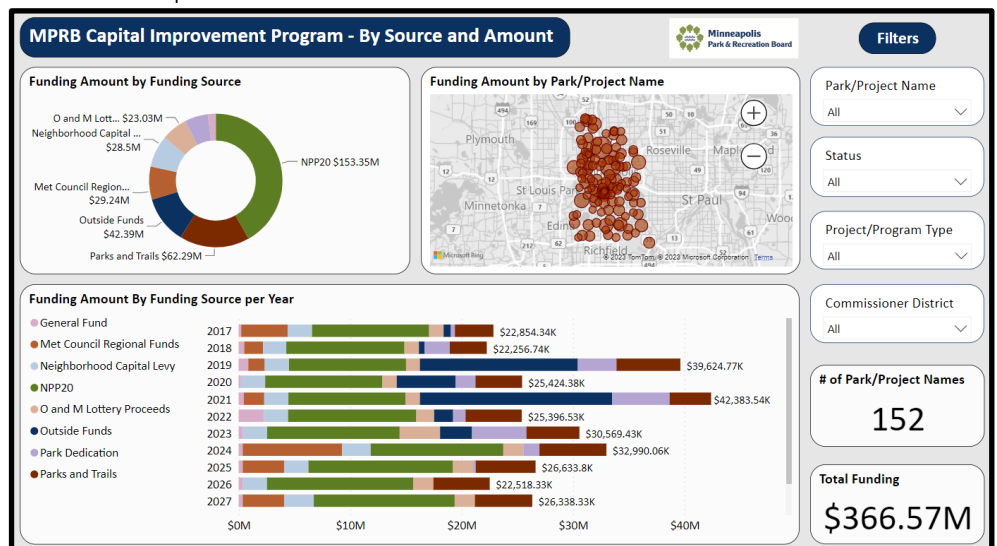
4) Other low-hanging fruit

- Formally partner (MOU) with a “umbrella” organization to support Park Friends and raise additional private investment (see 3.2 Model B and C).
- Turn on morning and evening sports field lights.
- Create a daily playground maintenance checklist for staff.
- Connect permits to staff calendars outlining all tasks associated with the permit.

- Emphasize public facing roles of park rangers.

Mid-Term Actions

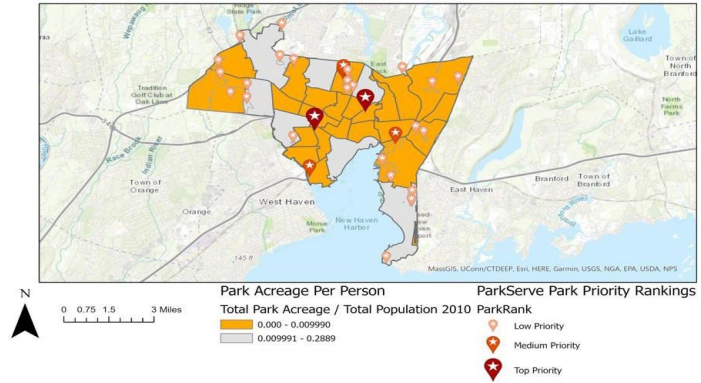
- Develop internal plan to address inequity, for example hiring rangers who reflect the community and whose role is explicitly public-facing programming.
- Improve technology:
 - Before and after photos could help supervisors improve accountability.
 - Improve digital process including key card access and public interface.
- Develop an ongoing process for community engagement and input including desired programming and maintenance needs,
- Create structures that foster a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to trail, tree, and equipment maintenance. Being reactive is an issue for both equity and efficiency. Shifting to a proactive approach could lead to more equal distribution of services.
- Provide park system financial reports. For example, Minneapolis offers a great example of transparency in funding (see box to the right) and Portland posts online planned investments by geographic region (see example page 16)
- Follow through on planned facilities maintenance and upgrades. Grand Rapids, MI provides a strong example of budget and facility upgrade reporting (see page 16 in Case Study Appendix B).
- Develop communications and programming related to climate change.
- Improve staff training in athletic field maintenance.



Long-Term Actions

Develop a Strategic Master Plan for long-term development, maintenance, and flourishing of the parks. The last Parks Master Plan process was completed in the year 2000. A new Master Plan is needed which centers Diversity, Equity & Inclusion as part of the planning process and addresses impacts of climate change.

In 2021, Deputy Director Bill Carone in partnership with TPL, URI and Park Friends, conducted an inventory of parks including documenting every park amenity (ranging from trash cans to splash pads) and the condition of the amenity. This inventory was mapped and revealed spatial inequities of amenities and park land across the city. A future index could be created that reviews park equity with sociodemographic characteristics as the primary factors that are also cross analyzed and ranked alongside other park access criteria such as park safety (identified as a key desired outcome in this Community Input Process) and park to people ratio. The map image below displays a different visualization that represents census tracts in New Haven which are below the National Recreation Association’s outdoor recreation threshold of 1 acre of park land/ 100 people.



Map of New Haven Census Tracts that are below the National Recreation Association’s Outdoor Recreation Threshold

Creating a more equitable park system was a key desired outcome the community input process identified. Some recommendations in the models described above have included means of beginning to address inequities, such as ensuring that park staff are assigned to geographic zones of the city to deliver services (maintenance and programming) more equally. The Master Plan should address impacts of Climate Change and create a DEI/BIPOC centered initiative including:

- Accessibility for wheelchairs, strollers, micro-mobility accommodations, as well as signage for Spanish-speaking residents and people without access to internet.
- Address neglected neighborhoods and give more attention to the smaller parks so people do not have to go to other neighborhoods to enjoy a park.
- Creating a welcoming park community.
- Ensuring all residents have a park and playground (playscape, splashpad, swings) within walking distance.

Case Studies of Centering Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Planning Process: Asheville and Grand Rapids

Asheville, NC (93,000) also described under section 3.2 as a case study of a Parks Department with geographic zones including the census tracts and population size served in the district, which is linked to their equity planning. As seen on the public chart below, their maintenance budget for existing service levels and 'best practice' BP service level is clearly detailed. And, in the following Rehabilitate & Capital Improvements chart, the focus of addressing underserved parks is emphasized.

Investing in Neighborhood Parks and Facilities **Programs and Initiatives:
FY 2017-2023**

Updated 7/15/2017 **Maintaining** **\$33,920,236***

Maintaining the System

Implementing best practices for park and park asset maintenance, including environmentally sustainable practices; providing particular focus on maintenance of parks and park assets in under-served areas of city; improving integrity and durability of parks and park assets; enhancing natural areas

	Current service level	BP Service level
Mowing	Every 14 days	Every 10 days
Landscaping Improvements	Every 20 years	Every 5 years
Playground maintenance	2 times per year	6 times per year
Building maintenance	4,167 hours per year	18,500 hours per year
Greenway maintenance and repair	.25 miles per year	1 mile per year
Plumbing start up and shut down	6-8 weeks	3-4 weeks
Roof inspections	0 times per year	2 times per year
Horticulture, formal garden, and natural area maintenance	4,080 hours per year	10,080 hours per year
Parking lot maintenance	0 times per year	Every 10 years
Site amenity replacement	Every 30 years	Every 10 years

Rehabilitate & Capital Improvements **\$7,000,000***

Enhancing park safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading park lighting with more efficient fixtures and systems where necessary and appropriate • Implementing building security improvements, including improved systems and universal locking • Focusing on parks in under-served areas of the city
Fixing it first	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing immediate maintenance needs and critical failures that are otherwise unattached to capital investments • Satisfying regulatory requirements and accessibility for people with disabilities (implementing ADA Transition Plan, meeting critical codes) • Implementing maintenance and accessibility projects and accelerating resolution of life safety projects that are otherwise unattached to capital investments or where those investments might be less immediately sequenced • Focusing on parks in under-served areas of the city
Addressing the backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing maintenance backlog for buildings and sites and incorporating environmental sustainability where operations and programming would be enhanced... where replacement of park components is required because they have reached the end of their service life • Upgrading systems for energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, comfort (hvac, plumbing) • Improving facilities for maintenance activities that address operational and energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, protection of equipment, suitable working environment for operations and maintenance staff • Focusing on underserved areas of the city

Grand Rapids, MI (197,000)

[Grand Rapids uses a “criteria-based system to prioritize millage funding for park capital projects.”](#) The system focuses on racial and economic equity to determine where investments are needed most.

“Parks are ranked on criteria of community characteristics (areas of concentrated poverty, communities of color, population density, etc.) and park characteristics (asset lifespan, asset condition, accessibility needs, etc.)”

The city engages residents in the project’s planning and design, which typically begins one year before construction. The citizen-run Parks Advisory Board reviews the projects before City Commission approves them.

Appendix

- A. [Listening and Co-creation Phase Process Snapshots](#)
- B. [Case Studies](#)
- C. [New Haven Park index with acreage by neighborhood](#)
- D. [Community Survey Results](#)
- E. [January 10 Community Forum Summary Addendum](#)

Choosing the Projects

We use a criteria-based system to prioritize millage funding for park capital projects. The system focuses on racial and economic equity to target investments where they are most needed.

Parks are ranked on criteria of community characteristics (areas of concentrated poverty, communities of color, population density, etc.) and park characteristics (asset lifespan, asset condition, accessibility needs, etc.)

We involve residents in the planning and design of each project. Design typically begins one year before construction.

The citizen-run [Parks Advisory Board](#) reviews the projects. City Commission then approves them before any funds are spent.

New Haven Park index with acreage by neighborhood

Neighborhood	More than one neighborhood	Acreage	Park Name
Annex		0.57	Griswold_Triangle
Annex		12.87	Peat_Meadow
Beaver_Hills	Newhallville	100.59	Beaver_Ponds
Beaver_Hills	Newhallville	3.77	Cherry_Ann_Park
Beaver_Hills		0.07	Crescent_Winthrop_Triangle_Isad
Beaver_Hills		1.78	Norton_Parkway_Mall
Dixwell		9.83	De_Gale_Field
Dixwell		0.14	Mary_Decosta_Park_Hentry_St_Pla
Dixwell		0.04	Munson_St_Triangle
Dixwell		1.78	Scantlebury
Downtown		0.21	Broadway_Triangle

Downtown		0.42	Jean Pope Memorial Park
Downtown		16.00	New_Haven_Green
Downtown		0.49	Pitkin_Plaza
Downtown		1.78	Shelton_Triangle
Downtown		0.04	State_Street Triangle
Dwight		1.35	Chapel Day Sitting Plaza
Dwight		0.30	Garden_Street_Playground
Dwight		0.56	Kensington
Dwight		1.78	Monitor_Square
Dwight		0.10	Rainbow_Edgewood_Mini_Park_
Dwight		0.13	Sherman Triangle
Dwight		1.83	Troup_School
East_Rock		0.56	Cedar_Hill_Playground
East_Rock		35.95	College_Woods_Cold_Spring_Walk
East_Rock	Fair_Haven	107.78	East_Rock
East_Rock		38.35	Edgerton
East_Rock		8.02	Rice_Field
East_Shore		91.35	East_Shore
East_Shore		24.62	Fort_Hale
East_Shore		23.50	Fort_Wooster
East_Shore		2.32	Hannah's_Dream_playground_withi
East_Shore		0.63	Jerry_Juliano_Playground
East_Shore		90.03	Lighthouse_Point
Edgewood	Westville	107.78	Edgewood
Fair_Haven		3.05	Chatham_Square_Park
Fair_Haven		10.99	Clinton_School_Clinton_Ave_
Fair_Haven		11.06	Criscuolo
Fair_Haven		2.79	English_Mall_
Fair_Haven		0.07	Ferry_Street_Mall
Fair_Haven		0.02	Ferry_Street_Triangle
Fair_Haven		2.58	Jocelyn_Square
Fair_Haven_Heights		4.86	Dover_Beach
Fair_Haven_Heights		21.53	Fairmont_Park
Fair_Haven_Heights		4.76	Hemmingway_Creek
Fair_Haven_Heights		0.19	Lewis_Street_Playground
Fair_Haven_Heights		15.71	Quarry_Park
Fair_Haven_Heights		0.04	School_Bishop_Woods
Hill		0.24	Ann_Street
Hill		5.77	Bayview
Hill		0.80	Defender's_Park
Hill		2.13	Ernest_Mcclain_Park_Washington_
Hill		0.20	Galvin_Playground
Hill		0.07	Kimberly Triangle

Hill	10.98	Kimberly_Field
Hill	49.42	Long_Wharf_Veterans_Memorial
Hill	0.85	Trowbridge_Square
Newhallville	3.91	Lincoln_Basset
Quinnipiac_Meadows	2.94	Middletown_Avenue
Quinnipiac_Meadows	9.65	Quinnipiac_River
Quinnipiac_Meadows	0.22	Ross_Woodward_School
Quinnipiac_Meadows	5.17	Smith_Palmieri_Parcel
West_Rock	1.24	Beecher_Park
West_Rock	0.35	Harper_Ave_Park
West_Rock	6.66	Hilltop_Playground
West_Rock	1.27	Mountain_Road_Sitting_Area
West_Rock	1676.34	West_Rock
West_Rock	0.18	West_Rock_Playground
West_Rock	5.08	Winslow_Augustine
Westville	West_River	172.33 West_River_Memorial
Wooster_Square	0.66	Lenzi_Memorial
Wooster_Square	0.46	Paul_Russo_Memorial_Park
Wooster_Square	0.76	Union_Street_Dog_Park
Wooster_Square	4.74	Wooster_Memorial
Wooster_Square	0.60	Wooster_Memorial_Park

Addendum E: January 10 Community Forum Summary

In the third and final phase of the Re-envisioning New Haven Parks process a community forum was held on January 10th, 2024. The community forum was attended by 51 people including Mayor Elicker, city staff, community-members that had previously participated in the Re-envisioning process, and people that were new to the process. The goals of the forum were to i) share an overview of the Final Report including, recommended actions and potential models, illustrating how the Listening and Co-Creation phases and city case-studies drove the recommendations ii) hear reflections from Mayor Elicker on the future direction of New Haven parks and iii) gather public reflections in small group discussion about support and concerns for recommendations and future directions. A summary of Mayor Elicker’s response and public reflections through the small group discussions are provided below.

Mayor Elicker’s Response Summary

Mayor Elicker began his remarks with appreciation to the attendees for participating in the process including recognition of City staff, and thanked URI and lead facilitator Liz Felker. He shared his perspective on need for the process starting with the frustrations shared about the merger of the departments of Parks and Public Works. Rather than responding to frustrations by just separating the

departments again, the Mayor offered he wanted to hear from the community about what was working and what was not working and do something a little bit more comprehensive and innovative. This led the City to put out a request for proposals to help the City think differently. He reported that URI submitted the best proposal, which is how we got here.

The Mayor shared that URI gave the City a sneak peak of the report recommendations and presentation in December. He noted that there is a lot in the report that URI did not talk about this evening. And, gave a caveat that the City is still thinking through things. Mayor Elicker offered a timeline toward adopting changes including:

- Some things can be potentially implemented in this year's budget; some things will take longer; and some things will not really be related to the budget as much.
- **MAYOR'S GOAL:** present a plan to the board of alders as a potential change that can be evaluated in the budget process, which is due on **March 1, 2024**, which means it needs to be ready by early- to mid-February.

Overview of Tentative Plan

The Mayor offered an overview of the City's tentative plan, which is not finalized because they want to hear feedback this evening and need to understand the cost better.

1. Separate out Public Works and Parks and establish a Parks Director position again.

- The Mayor likes the proposed geographic zone model (Model A) which would have different districts across the City, with a "**Parks District Manager**" for each zone. This model would help to address many of the communications issues. The Parks District Manager would attend Community Management Team meetings and some of the Friends clean-up events, respond when there is an issue, and build relationships with the community.
- The City is considering this model with **3 or 4 districts**. New Haven already has similar models in other departments (ie LCI Neighborhood Specialists, Police) that have been overwhelmingly popular.
- Challenge: The City would need to create new positions for these 3-4 districts.
- The City currently has some separation of maintenance per district already, but the goal would be to have **different maintenance teams** for different districts.

2. Create a new position: Superintendent of Athletic Fields, and potentially add several field technicians.

- This would address issues in coordinating with sports groups who want lights on in the fields and improved field maintenance.
- We need highly trained technicians to maintain all the existing and new sports facilities coming online.
- We don't have a specialized person in a higher management position, so this could allow for upward mobility within the staff positions.

3. Address bathrooms and litter challenges: Open physical bathrooms with more staff to open/close and monitor the bathrooms and address litter in the park.

- More staffing would allow the physical bathrooms to be open on a more regular schedule.

- The City is considering hiring an additional plumber.
- Hiring seasonal staff has been challenging.
- The City is working to acquire more **permanent trash cans** and plans to distribute them with equity in mind. Some bins are ordered already.

4. **Master Plan**

- This process, led by URI, had a tight timeline with the specific goal to meet the budget deadline. URI has had under 3 months to complete this report. Next we will need a more comprehensive master plan which would give us more time to better understand capital needs, investment priorities, and come up with recommendations to advise the new Parks Director. The City would hire an outside party to develop the master plan.

Community Forum Participant Response Summary

After Mayor Elicker shared the tentative plan, the community forum participants were asked to show their support or concern for the proposed direction for New Haven parks through a show of hands. The overwhelming majority of participants expressed support for the proposed direction, while a few participants raised their hands expressing concerns. Support, concerns, and recommendations for the potential models and short, medium and long-term actions are detailed below as well as identified gaps in recommended actions.

Community Forum Response to Potential Models

Support for Model A: Parks Department with Geographic Zones

All breakout groups expressed support for this model and highlighted positive attributes including:

- Creates **accountability and engagement** (stewardship over a place).
- Provides an opportunity to have an **equity** lens.
- We would like to see a real parks department and a real parks director. We want separation of leaders in parks that is separate from public works.
- We have few major parks that serve neighborhoods but there are also many small parks that are important. Having parks in separate regions we can give smaller parks the attention they need.
- Positive features of this model:
 - Accountability, communication, familiarity, flexibility
 - More things such as maintenance will get done
 - Communication will be stronger because residents will have a point person to voice their concerns
 - Programming can be flexible to fit the need of the area through the parks. Ex: nature walks might not be interesting in one neighborhood, but edible plants
- Rangers

- Recommend that Rangers are included in parks department (rather than Youth and Rec), but unclear of where Rangers sit in the model. Relatedly concerned there was no mention of Youth and Rec changes.
- A Ranger covering a specific region will help spread out the workload.
- Rangers would not have to be responsible for summer camp all summer (in YARD) and neglect trail/park maintenance, but could offer weekly programming for camps
- Rangers would have less YARD activities (i.e. turkey giveaway, social services), but more park related activities/programming.
- Rangers could offer programming for ALL ages rather than just youth.
- Ranger related resources could also be for **park stewardship** and citizen science projects rather than solely programming and recreation (while still being resource for env. education)
- Creates new jobs needed to move forward and create more jobs in the long term
- Knowledgeable, respected people who have 10-15 years of experience – we need to move people up through **promotions** rather than external hires.

Support for Hybrid Model including Model A with aspects of Models B & C

- Models B+C were identified as necessary and important to be coupled with Model A, as those Models are **cost effective**, bring resources, and allow for creative solutions from the community.
- Model C is appropriate for certain services, i.e. it can be used to across departments such as IT.
- Liked the idea of the **Umbrella Friends Group**
 - Curious about how this would be managed; are there staff people?
 - Redistribute more **equitably**, sharing volunteer work across the City
- **Public/private partnerships** with responsibilities and permissions at certain parks
 - Each park is different
 - Volunteer groups can get equipment that the City does not have money for
 - We need money! Funding cannot just come from City taxes. Opportunities to raise funds from other organizations
 - Model A could be combined with Model B as a hybrid; some parks like East Rock are enormous and they might be better structured as PPP.
 - **Make Parks Friends groups more important.** Friends groups are an asset to our community. We would not want to lose all those resources.
 - Friends groups need to get funding (for capacity/education) from the City because some parks may not know how to organize a Friends group

Concerns and recommendations raised for Model A: Parks Department with Geographic Zones

- Must ensure equity across zones especially where fewer parks
- Ensure funding across each zone
- Requires strong administrative support for zones
- Match expertise needed for park zones
- Concerns about how to create Geographic zones:
 - Maybe there need to be **more geographic zones.**

- How do we break up zones? Should it be based on population, demographic, region? Facilities? Proximity? Could be parallel from the CMT group and parks.
- Would be good to **cut the data in different ways and make decision based on that**
- View parks as large ecosystems and natural resource management priorities.
- Sample list did not include the total population/acreage for each region.
- Divide up the districts so areas identified as underserved start to get attention.
- How to decide where to place specific staff people?
- "I like the Model A. I have some concerns about how the 3 or 4 sections would be drawn and what they would be based on. It looks like East Rock would be in the Central Zone but it's an enormous park and I want to make sure that the resources afforded to each zone is proportionate to the acreage and population"
- Ensure geographies do not create silos. People working in different geographies need to be meeting and sharing learnings.
- Rangers
 - If each ranger is specific to one area, other locations will not receive the programming of the expertise of that ranger. **Each zone could have a different environmental focus.**
 - It would be nice for rangers to have focused management areas, but hard to complete.
- Understanding is that the proposal would hire deputies over the forepersons, who are already the leaders of the teams.
 - Instead of spending the money on a person, we need **equipment** to get the job
 - Emphasizes that this money could be spend better elsewhere
 - If there is a major need, the teams will go help each other
- Increases bureaucracy – could we rearrange staff rather than all new hires? Creating new positions will require additional time and money to support.
- We need to make sure we are getting to the root of the problem of why parks on not being maintained properly not creating to new structures on top of the problems.
- A good thing about the previous system is that you had a closer proximity to all staff and there was a sense of unison and communication
 - Suggestion to analyze potential issues and identify efficiencies and synergies

Concerns and recommendations raised for Model B and C

- B+C – requires oversight of vendors for services
- Need transparency and accountability
 - with Conservancy Groups (example of Edgerton);
 - Should also be the case for Friends Groups, perhaps be under a larger umbrella for transparency
- Concerns about conservancies:
 - Concerns that taking money or control from Conservancy could possibly be taking away from those who are doing a good job.
 - Conservancy (Edgerton) is not an equitable model; things happen in that park that the city does not know about; inequity and management decisions sometimes that do not align with management goals of the Parks.
 - Conservancy groups like Edgerton Park that does not seem to have much of a vision

- Closed board meetings of conservancies create transparency problems.

Community Forum response to Suggested Actions

Support for Short-, Medium- and Long-term Actions

- Participants expressed enthusiastic support for **improved communications** (where/who /ensure phone # is correct and set: staff can change but phone # should remain same). Several people pointed out that it is frustrating that the department does not answer the phone when they call.
- Participants also were very supportive of the City making efforts toward **litter prevention**. One participant expressed, "I think that the education component of anti-littering campaigns are important, parks people getting into schools, starting when they're young."
- Participants were happy to see that **pet waste bags, and trash bins** are a priority.
- One participant shared, "I love the **financial report transparency** that Minneapolis was doing. You could see efforts at an equitable distribution of funds. It restores trust in the department... I also like what Grand Rapids did in reporting their projects."
- Desire for the Mayor to spend a good amount of time focusing on the long-term plan.

Concerns and recommendations related to short-, medium- and long-term actions

- **Lighting of athletic fields:** Some participants were concerned about light pollution, energy consumption, and birds/wildlife affected by lights and wanted to be sure they were only turned on as needed and turned off at night.
- **Master Plan:** One participant wanted to make sure the City considers applying for Planning Grants both to ensure that money is available for making this process happen and so it doesn't use tax dollars.
- **Bathrooms:** One participant expressed concern about the plan to re-open bathrooms. "I'm a con on bathrooms. It's unrealistic that we can keep bathrooms in order. I am thinking it's more realistic to take care of port-o-potties."
- **Recycling Bins:** One group discussed adding recycling bins to the recommendations, but it was shot down by three strong opponents who did not trust that residents would properly keep trash out of the recycling bins.
- **Communications:** We should be realistic in realizing that communications challenges will also have a longer timeframe to solve. Requires staffing and resources to accomplish.

Gaps Noted in Actions

- One group recommended that every park have an **annual park wellness audit** with a survey that has clearly outlined standards and expectations.
- One participant recommended **seeking support from local businesses** to adopt/sponsor parks.

- Another participant recommended the City have an **audit of sustainability practices** – materials (like no artificial turf), tools (like rakes or electric tools in lieu of gas engine) and an energy efficient fleet.
- There was a concern that more emphasis be made on **planning to respond to climate change**.
- There was a suggestion for adding a long-term goal for **education on parks** (akin to Sound School).
- One group requested that the City increase **transparency about the Parks Commission** – they are wanting to know who, what, why.
- Another participant suggested that the City increase **transparency about the current structure** of the Parks Department by posting an organizational chart on the City’s website.
- The city could take a first step towards establishing regions by (1) **creating separate email accounts for each region** e.g., westparks@newhavenct.gov and (2) **posting signs at the parks** encouraging people to send their comments/concerns about a specific park to the relevant email. This could be done before any restructuring and would have a minimal cost.
- One participant suggested the parks department needs to have a culture shift towards a stance that the park staff need to steward with equity and access in mind; they need to **steward both parks AND community**.
- Another concern is that many trees are being killed by **invasive plants** in the parks, and there should be more investment in **planting native plants** to attract pollinators.
- Some communities need **more parks**. And some neighborhoods are historically neglected. Could the City add a long-term goal for **addressing neglected neighborhoods** and adding more parks?
- One participant suggested the City provide **materials on-hand for athletic field users** to prepare fields for games and maintenance. Another person added, “It should be easier; there are certain things that you need before a game can be played.” He wondered if the City could allow volunteers to do this work themselves.