

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER 2015

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I. Executive Summary

A. Purpose of this Plan

The City of Meridian, Idaho, provides a comprehensive Parks and Recreation system that greatly contributes to the quality of life in Meridian and surrounding areas. In order to plan into the future of this valuable Parks and Recreation system, the City's Parks and Recreation Department began a process to develop this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Development of this plan took place from December 2014 to December 2015, and included a public input process, services

inventory and analysis, needs assessment, operational and maintenance analysis, and financial analysis.

The Master Plan provides the framework to respond to the evolving needs of this growing community.



B. Planning Process Summary

This project has been guided by a Meridian Parks and Recreation project team made up of City staff, with input from the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council. This team provided input to the GreenPlay consulting team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort created a plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts, City historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and a community-wide public meeting.
- Statistically-valid community interest and opinion survey.
- Online community engagement website – MindMixer/mySidewalk.

Facility Inventory

- Inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.

GRASP® Level of Service Analysis

- Interviews with staff to provide information about City facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the City in serving its residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- Analysis addressing recreation, parks, and related services.

Assessment and Analysis

- Review and assessment of relevant plans.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for City facilities using the GRASP® Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the citizen survey. This analysis is also represented graphically in GRASP® Perspectives.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.

Needs Assessment

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of trends related to Meridian and American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of Parks and Recreation over the next several years.

Operational and Marketing Analysis

- Analyze parks and recreation programming and service delivery.
- Conduct an organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.
- Develop a broad assessment of the overall parks and recreation operations.

Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation.
- Development of an action plan for capital improvements including cost, funding source potentials, and timeframe to support the implementation of the plan.

Other Plan Elements:

- Review of current staffing and development of recommendation for future growth potential.
- Review of the current Park Classification System and development of recommendations for a component based system of classification.
- Develop an Urban Forestry Management strategy.
- Review current Pathways Plan and develop updated recommendations.
- Conduct public engagement meeting to develop draft concept plans for:
 - South Meridian Regional Park (77 acres)
 - Borup/Bottles Properties (47 acres)
 - Margaret Aldape Park (60 acres +/-)

C. Key Issues Summary

During the initial stages of the project, the following Key Issues were identified for focus:

Organizational:

- Improve marketing and communication of activities and facilities.
- Increased staffing for programming and future facilities operations.
- Increased maintenance staffing to keep up with quality of service and demand.
- Increase opportunities to utilize technology to improve customer service and efficiencies.
- Increase social media use and navigation apps for parks and pathways.
- Increase partnerships.

Programs and Service Delivery:

- Increase year-round recreational activities.
- Expand special event offerings.
- Expand outdoor and adventure recreation opportunities.
- Need programs at convenient times for community.
- Expand programming for seniors, active adults, special needs, tweens, and teens.

Facilities and Amenities:

- Maintain existing quantity and quality of level of service.
- Maintain and improve existing facilities.
- Find opportunities to acquire new land for parks.
- Expand pathways and connectivity.
- Adopt and continue to maintain a component based inventory and level of service standard in existing GIS.
- Add indoor recreation space.
- Improve signage agency-wide.
- Maintain existing facilities and amenities.
- Develop new amenities at new and existing parks based on level of service analysis.
- Add additional athletic fields and lights.
- Evaluate parking and event/program/activity scheduling.
- Develop an ADA Transition Plan.
- Upgrade convenience and customer service items to existing facilities.
- Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks or when developing new ones.
- Gather and maintain data on HOA and alternative provider owned recreational property.
- Develop and maintain life cycle replacement and asset management plans.
- Create park identity in existing and new parks.

Finance:

- Increase event and activity sponsorships.
- Review Developer Impact fee ordinance.
- Consider dedicated funding source for parks and recreation.
- Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities.
- Consider Cost Recovery and Pricing Philosophy including scholarships.

D. Key Level of Service (LOS) Analysis Findings

Several general findings were revealed by the City of Meridian GRASP® Analysis. These may be summarized as follows:

For neighborhood access to parks and recreation, Meridian offers:

- A wide variety of well distributed recreational opportunities.
- High quality and well maintained parks.
- Good access with over 75 percent of land area above threshold when considering all providers.
- Definite distinction between “Community Parks” and “Neighborhood Parks.”
- An overall high level of service if accessed by an automobile.
- High scoring “Regional Parks” or “Community Parks.”
- A high number of components and average score per site when compared to some other communities.
- Some large “pockets” of high level of service.
- Great restroom standards.

For walkable level of service:

- While “Neighborhood Parks” often score high enough to meet the “threshold,” a lack of pathway access often keeps an area below the threshold mark.
- Some parks, especially “Neighborhood Parks,” lack unique or identifiable character.
- Alternative providers are an important supplement to Meridian’s “Neighborhood” level of service.
- There is heavy reliance on alternative providers (including schools) for walkable neighborhood level of service in many areas, and the quality of alternative providers’ parks varies greatly across the system.
- Demographic analysis shows good distribution of parks where young people live with over 75 percent of the 0-19 age group having walkable access to some recreation service.
- There is a need to identify and collect inventory data on the remaining alternative provider parks/facilities.
- Access to a quality, connected pathway system is limited and greatly impacts overall walkable level of service in Meridian.

For pathways and pathway access:

- There a variety of pathways are available across the City, but they are not meeting the needs and demands of the community.
- Many of the pathways within Meridian are not connected to the larger overall pathway system.
- A significant portion of these pathways may have limited or restricted access based on locations within subdivisions.
- Pathway access is notably absent from some Meridian residential neighborhoods.

Based on projected population growth over the next 5-7 years, Meridian and its partners need:

- Additional park land and components added to the system to maintain current level of service.
- To improve or upgrade existing components to maintain current level of service.

E. Recommendations

After analyzing the Findings that resulted from this process, including the Key Issues Matrix, a summary of all research, the qualitative and quantitative data, the GRASP[®] LOS analyses, and input assembled for this study, a variety of recommendations have emerged to provide guidance in consideration of how to improve parks, recreation, and pathway opportunities in the City of Meridian. This section describes ways to enhance the level of service and the quality of life with improvement through organizational efficiencies, financial opportunities, improved programming and service delivery, and maintenance and improvements to facilities and amenities.

Goal 1: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

Objective 1.1 – Maintain existing level of service goal

The City of Meridian currently has a Level of Service that is three acres of developed park land per 1,000 persons with a goal of increasing to a Level of Service Standard of four acres/1,000 persons by 2040. Additionally, the City should develop a Level of Service Standard that considers components within parks and a radius of .5 miles per component for walkability.

Objective 1.2 – Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding department activities and services.

The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to implement the Marketing Plan (Communication Plan) that will guide the Department's efforts in communicating and promoting its activities, services, and facilities. This will continue to create great awareness and should include all of the recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades. Additionally, the Marketing Plan should be reviewed annually and updated as needed, and should include marketing strategies that incorporate the efforts of partner departments and projects.

The marketing and communication of Parks and Recreation Department activities should be enhanced with a focused effort on adopting open lines of communication and meetings with partners and potential partners within the community. This enhanced focus will help to create advocacy in the community and provide a forum to better celebrate the successes of the Department.

Objective 1.3 – Provide improved signage agency-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, and pathways.

The Parks and Recreation Department should evaluate directional and wayfinding signage to facilities on roadway, pathways, and within parks. Additionally, the Department should develop signage standards for parks and update existing park signs as parks are renovated to meet the new standard. Improved wayfinding signage will contribute to a greater connectivity of parks, facilities, and pathways.

Objective 1.4 – Maintain existing quality standards for facilities and amenities.

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities as well as address low scoring components through the CIP Plan and the Life Cycle Maintenance Program.

Objective 1.5 – Increase social media use and navigation apps for parks and pathways.

Mobile marketing is a trend of the future. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate that chronologically across four major age cohorts, Millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices, such as smart phones. Parks and Recreation should explore additional social media uses and navigation apps for parks and pathways. The City of Meridian has current best practices for social media that should be followed, reviewed annually, and updated as needed.

Objective 1.6 – Increase appropriate partnerships within the community.

The City of Meridian Parks and Recreation Department currently partners with a number of agencies to provide programs and activities to the community. The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities, as well as build on their existing partnerships. Where not already in place, the Department should ensure that all existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed partnership agreement (Sample Partnership Policy can be found in **Appendix E**).

The City of Meridian Strategic Plan that was adopted in 2015 sets a goal of continuing to explore partnerships with alternative providers to increase level of service. Additionally, the Department should identify desired sports facilities or complexes and establish partnerships that foster their development.

Objective 1.7 – Increase the utilization of technology to improve customer service and efficiencies.

The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities to expand the use of technology Department wide. Some immediate areas in which area to increase technology within the Department include providing online shelter reservations and providing a mobile application of the Department’s website.

Objective 1.8 – Staff appropriately to meet demand and maintain established quality of service.

As recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, new facilities, pathways, parks, and facility upgrades are implemented, it is important to maintain staffing levels to maintain current performance standards. This will require the new positions both in parks and recreation.

Objective 1.9 – Maintain and keep current the Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Policies.

The Parks and Recreation Department is governed by City Code and internal standards of operations and policies. The Department should review the City Code Chapter for Parks and Recreation annually and recommend updates as needed. Additionally, staff should review Department SOPs and policies annually and update as needed.

Objective 1.10 – Expand the volunteer program

The Department currently has a Park Ambassador Program that could be reviewed, improved, and expanded to meet their growing needs. Additionally, they should continue to make use of other volunteer opportunities for park projects and events.

Goal 2: Increase Financial Opportunities

Objective 2.1 – Increase special event and activities sponsorships.

The Department should continue to explore additional sponsorship opportunities and build on existing sponsorships. All existing and future sponsorships should be evaluated to ensure that they are accurately portrayed in a signed sponsorship agreement (Sample Sponsorship Policy can be found in *Appendix D*).

Objective 2.2 – Evaluate Developer Impact Fee Ordinance.

The current Developer Impact Fee is based on a LOS of 3.04 acres of developed park land per 1,000 people. As the Department moves toward its goal of four acres of developed park land per 1,000 people, the ordinance should be reviewed every three years to keep current with the LOS. Additionally, the Department should review its Developer Impact Fee revenue annually to align with CIP requests and existing LOS.

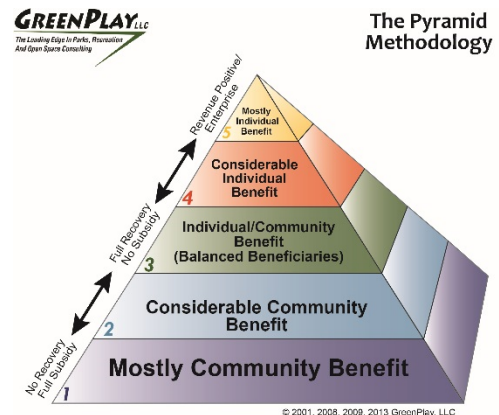
Objective 2.3 – Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities.

The Department currently takes advantage of grant opportunities available for programming, services, and facility improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. To accomplish this, the Department may consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track such grants.

Objective 2.4 – Implement a cost recovery and pricing policy.

The Department currently has a practice of cost recovery, but it varies based on the different service areas. The Parks and Recreation Department should implement a Cost Recovery Policy, such as the Pyramid Pricing Methodology to determine a consistent method of pricing Parks and Recreation activities throughout the Department. As part of the policy, the Department should continue to support the current Care Enough to Share Scholarship Program.

In addition to establishing a Cost Recovery and Pricing Policy, the Department should explore the feasibility of a dedicated revenue for parks and recreation through special revenue funds, sports, tourism, or other available sources.



Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1 – Increase year round recreational programming and activities.

The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand indoor recreational programs and activities. The community would like to see additional programs for tweens, teens, people with special needs, and seniors. As new programs are developed, continue to monitor recreational trends to stay current with programming and demand. As popularity in program offerings and activities increases, continue to look for opportunities to expand programs around working hours and commuting citizens schedules.

The City's Strategic Plan has also set a goal to attract, promote, and maintain a "signature" event for the City, and to set targets, identify gaps, and deploy programs, activities, and events that provide family-centered recreational opportunities.

Goal 4: Maintain and Improve Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1 – Maintain and improve existing facilities.

The Department should continue to implement existing plans, the CIP, Life Cycle Replacement Programs, and the Master Plan. These plans should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Objective 4.2 – Expand pathways and connectivity.

The Department should continue to implement the existing Pathways Master Plan and update as needed based on annual reviews. As new and existing pathways are designed and renovated, the Department should consider adding fitness stations and family fun stations in appropriate locations along the pathways.

Objective 4.3 – Add indoor recreation space.

Based on feedback from focus group participants and the survey results, there is a need for additional indoor recreation space. The Department should continue to explore opportunities to add additional indoor recreation space either through partnerships, purchase of an existing facility, or construction of a Community Center or Fieldhouse. Another option would be to explore opportunities to add Community Centers to newly planned elementary schools.

Objective 4.4 – Develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis.

Demand for usage of Meridian parks and athletic facilities continue to grow, and the Department should look for opportunities to add new amenities to enhance the experience for users. As Meridian continues to grow, the Department should look for opportunities to add parks and pathways in those new growth areas. Also, based on the GRASP® analysis, the Department should look for opportunities to add new components at existing parks where the level of service is below threshold.

Objective 4.5 – Acquire new land for parks.

Based on population growth and a LOS goal of reaching four acres of developed park land per 1,000 population, the Department needs to continue to find and purchase additional land for future park development. When considering new parks, priority should be given to areas where LOS is below threshold.

Objective 4.6 – Improve parking at parks.

Parking was an issue that was identified at most of the focus groups. The Department should continue to monitor parking during peak usage times and explore the need to improve and potentially add more parking at appropriate parks and amenities. Another consideration would be to explore alternative transportation options to reduce parking demand.

Objective 4.7 – Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities.

According to the ADA.gov website, “Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires State and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities... One important way to ensure that Title II's requirements are being met in cities of all sizes is through self-evaluation, which is required by the ADA regulations. Self-evaluation enables local governments to pinpoint the facilities, programs, and services that must be modified or relocated to ensure that local governments are complying with the ADA.”

Parks and Recreation currently does not have an ADA Accessibility Transition Plan which identifies needed changes during a self-evaluation process. The Department needs to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a comprehensive transition plan. Once the ADA Transition Plan is developed and adopted, it should be updated at least every five years.

Objective 4.8 – Upgrade comfort, convenience, and cultural amenities to existing facilities.

As the Department is making upgrades to and improving existing facilities, it should explore opportunities to add shade, storage, security lighting, synthetic turf, and other amenities appropriately at existing facilities. Working with the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department should seek opportunities to create individual identities for each Neighborhood Park. Where appropriate, look for opportunities to add public art to new and existing facilities.

Objective 4.9 – Add destination park amenities.

As citizen interest grows, and demand for new and different amenities at parks are identified, the Department should explore opportunities to add destination playgrounds and natural play areas at existing parks. The newly adopted Strategic Plan also has a goal to foster development of Discovery Parks that uniquely blend arts, entertainment, and culture.

Objective 4.10 – Address current and future needs for athletic fields.

As demand warrants, explore opportunities to add rectangle and diamond fields as usage increases. To help increase field time, add sports field lighting to new facilities and improvements to lighting at existing facilities where appropriate. Additionally, the Department should consider upgrading to or adding synthetic turf fields as use and demand increases.

Objective 4.11 – Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks or when developing new parks.

Continue to evaluate the programming needs of the community when developing new parks or when adding new components to existing parks.

Objective 4.12 – Monitor use, demands, and trends of recreation components.

Through the use of dashboards and other reporting and tracking tools, continue to monitor and evaluate the use, demands, and trends in recreation amenities.

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II. Introduction of the Planning Context

A. Purpose of this Plan

The City of Meridian, Idaho, provides a comprehensive Parks and Recreation system that greatly contributes to the quality of life in Meridian and surrounding areas. In order to plan into the future of this valuable Parks and Recreation system, the City's Parks and Recreation Department began a process to develop this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Development of this plan took place from December 2014 to December 2015, and included a public input process, services inventory and analysis, needs assessment, operational and maintenance analysis, and financial analysis. The Master Plan provides the framework to respond to the evolving needs of this growing community.



B. History of Parks and Recreation Department

Since the 1980s, there have been only two developed City of Meridian parks in existence—Storey Park (Previously known as “City Park” until 1980) and 8th Street Park. The Parks Division operated under the Department of Public Works until 1998 when the City created a separate Parks and Recreation Department. In January of 1998, Meridian hired its first Parks and Recreation Director, Tom Kuntz, who served in that position until 2002. Also in 1998, the Parks and Recreation Commission was formed, and the Department produced its first Activity Guide. Since 1998 there have been three Directors, Tom Kuntz (1998 to 2002), Douglas Strong (2003 to 2007), and Steve Siddoway (2008 to present). The Department continues to grow and provide facilities, programs, and services to the citizens of Meridian.

C. Parks and Recreation Department Overview

Parks and Recreation is responsible for maintaining public open spaces and for providing a quality system of parks and recreation facilities and positive leisure opportunities available to all persons in the community. The Department is also responsible for the development and maintenance of the pathways system and the urban forest. The Meridian Parks and Recreation system consists of 387 acres of parkland, 255 acres of developed parks and 132 acres of undeveloped land. The system is made up of 19 parks (not including Lakeview Golf Course): three undeveloped sites, just less than 22 miles of pathways, and 13 miles of micro pathways, a senior center, and a community center. Additionally, Parks and Recreation offers a variety of recreational programs, adult sports leagues, and special events, and handles shelter/field reservations and temporary use permits.

D. Mission, Vision, and Values

As part of the Master Planning process, GreenPlay held a series of Mission, Vision, and Values (MVV) work sessions with the Parks and Recreation staff. The purpose was to review the current MVV, validate its purpose with staff, and align with the newly adopted MVV for the City that was developed as part of the 2015 Strategic Plan. The MVV is what directs the departments and their employees daily.

The vision addresses how the Department will do its part to make Meridian, “A premier community in which to live, work, and raise a family,” as well as fulfilling the City’s Vision that “Community members will enjoy a ... myriad of diverse arts, cultural, and recreational offerings to have meaningful experiences.”

Furthermore, the Department’s focus areas are what guide its employees specifically as well as the overall CARE values of the City. Meridian Parks & Recreation staff know and strive to champion Customer service, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence, but they also practice Quality, Community, and Fun daily.

The results of the work sessions produced the current Mission, Vision, and Values.

Mission: The Meridian Parks and Recreation Department’s mission is to enhance our community’s quality of life by providing innovatively-designed parks, connected pathways, and diverse recreational opportunities for all citizens of Meridian that create lasting memories.

Vision: Meridian Parks and Recreation is a premier department that provides family-focused opportunities for the Meridian community and responds to a growing and changing population.

Focus Areas: Quality, Community, Fun

Quality: We provide quality parks, pathways, and recreational opportunities that are beautifully designed, exceptionally maintained, safe, and create memories for the citizens and visitors to Meridian.

Community: We build the sense of community in Meridian by connecting people through parks, pathways, programs, and events that bring enjoyment to individuals and families of all ages and abilities.

Fun: We provide places and opportunities that create quality of life experiences, bring balance to working individuals and families, and are fun and enjoyable. *At the end of the day, this is what it’s all about!*

E. Related Planning Efforts and Integration

As part of the master planning process, GreenPlay evaluated and utilized information from recent past and/or current planning work. The consultant team consolidated relevant information from these planning documents, inventory maps, budgets, work plans, and funding plans utilized by the Parks and Recreation Department to facilitate the comprehensive coordination of direction and recommendations.

Documents included:

- City of Meridian Strategic Plan (2015)
- 2003 Parks & Recreation Action Plan
- City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan (2011)
- Pathways Master Plan
- Impact Fees Study
- Downtown Meridian Neighborhood Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (ACHD)
- ACHD Roadways to Bikeways Plan
- City of Meridian Existing Conditions Report
- Ten Mile Specific Area Plan
- Future Land Use Map

F. Methodology of this Planning Process

This project has been guided by a Meridian Parks and Recreation project team made up of City staff, with input from the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council. This team provided input to the GreenPlay consulting team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort created a plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:



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III. What We Want – Our Community and Identified Needs

A. Demographic Profile

Understanding community demographics is an important component of preparing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This chapter provides a demographic overview of the City of Meridian, Idaho. The population data used in this demographic profile comes from ESRI Business Information Solutions, based on the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data and COMPASS to best represent the current profile.

Table 1: Summary Demographics for Meridian, Idaho – 2015

Summary Demographics	
Population	91,311
Number of Households	31,555
Avg. Household Size	2.96
Median Age	33.58
Median Household Income	\$59,969

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

Demographic Analysis

Population Projections

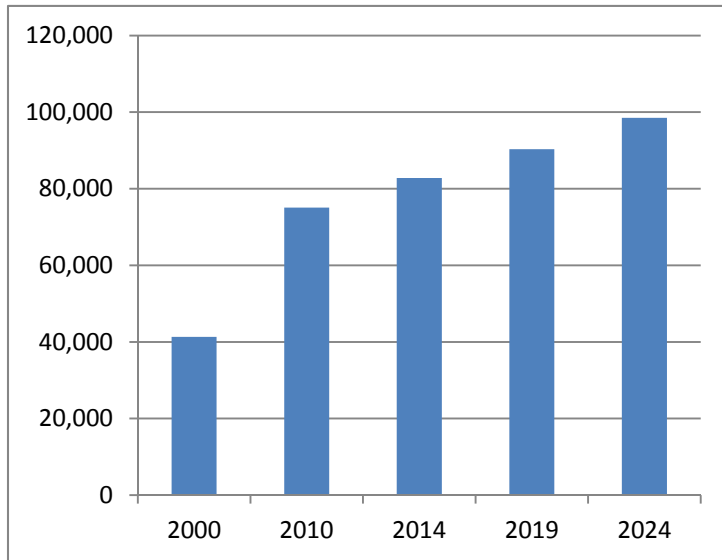
Although the future of population growth cannot be predicted with certainty, it is helpful to make assumptions about it for planning purposes. **Table 2** contains population estimates and projections for City of Meridian in the years 2015, 2020, and 2025, based on the 2010 U.S. Census. The annual growth rate for the city from 2000 through 2010 was 6.16 percent. COMPASS’ projected annual growth rate for the City for 2015 through 2025 is 1.9 percent, compared to a projected 2015-2025 annual growth rate of 1.0 percent for the State of Idaho of and 0.73 percent for the United States as a whole.

Table 2: Meridian Population Projections*

US Census (2000 and 2010) and COMPASS Projections	
2000 Population	41,315
2010 Population	82,250
2015 Estimated	91,311
2020 Projected	108,701
2025 Projected	118,600

Source: COMPASS

Figure 1: Meridian Population Growth Trend



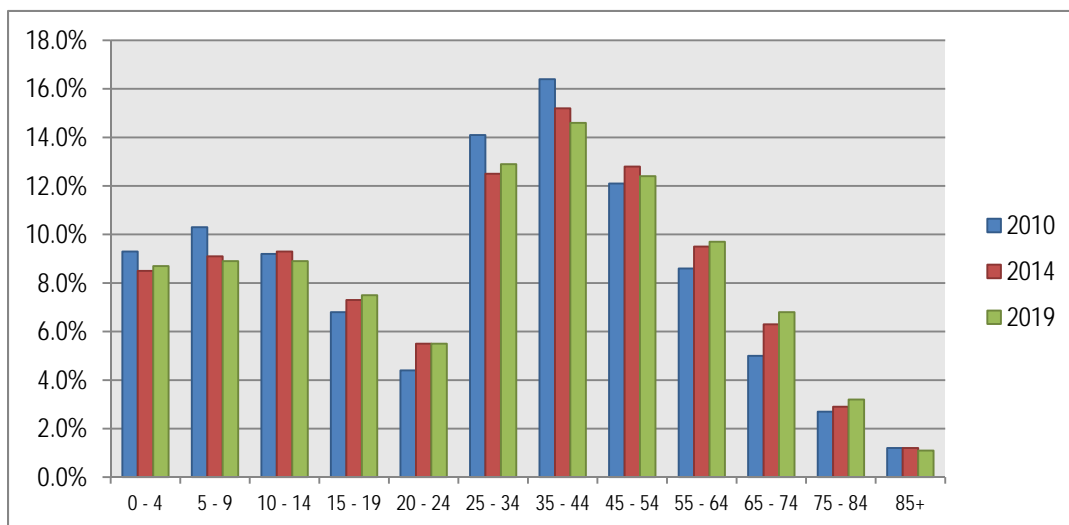
Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions. GreenPlay, LLC, calculated projected populations for 2024 based on ESRI growth multiplier of 1.75% for Meridian.

Population Age Distribution

A comparison of the estimated population break down by age for Meridian from 2010 to 2019 is shown in **Figure 1**. The gender distribution in 2014 was 49 percent male to 51 percent female. The median age in 2014 was 33.5.

The U.S. census indicates that in 2010, the median age for the Caucasian population of Meridian was 33.1. By contrast, the median age for those who self-identified as being of Hispanic Origin (irrespective of race) was 21.7. Hispanic Origin was the most significant minority ethnic/racial identifier in the Meridian population (at 6.8 percent) in 2010.

Figure 2: Population Age Distribution for the Years 2010, 2014, and 2019



Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecast provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

The age demographics have undergone a number of changes in Meridian from 2010 to 2014 with these trends generally predicted to continue through 2019. The 25-44 age range is predicted to drop by three percent to 27.5 percent from 2010 to 2019, while the 55-74 age range is predicted to grow by 2.9 percent to represent 16.5 percent of the population in 2019.

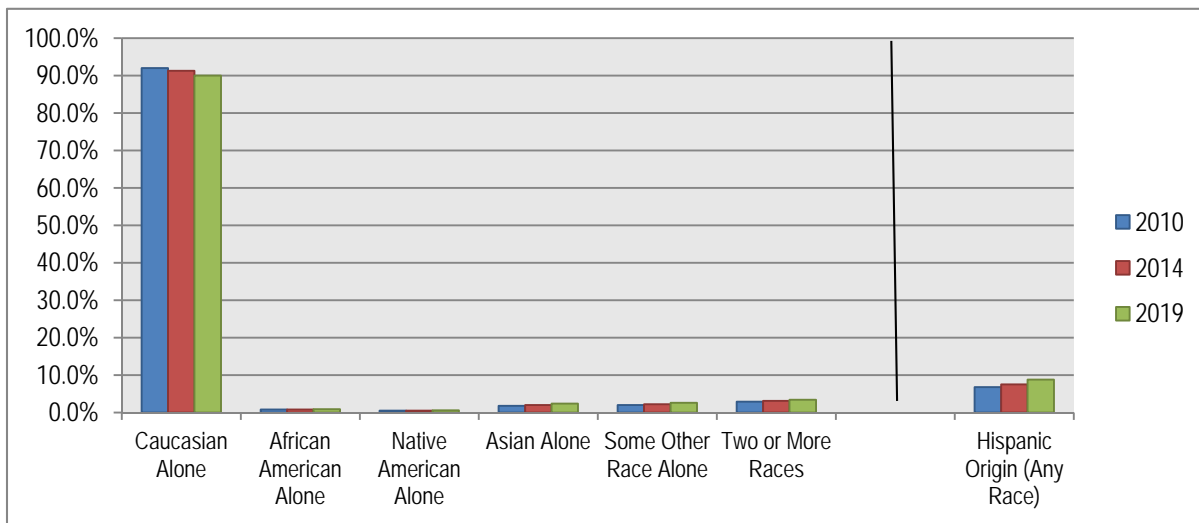


Race/Ethnicity

Figure 2 reflects the racial/ethnic population distribution for Meridian. Ninety-one percent (91%) percent of the population was Caucasian in 2014, with the Asian population at two percent, African American at .8 percent, and Native American at .5 percent of the population. Those identifying as two or more races represented 3.1 percent of the population. Additionally, the population of Hispanic origin* (a separate look at the population, irrespective of race) was at 7.5 percent in 2014.

- The Caucasian population is trending slightly downward from 92 percent in 2010 to a predicted 90 percent in 2019.
- Meridian’s Asian population is trending upward slightly from 1.8 percent in 2010 to a predicted 2.4 percent in 2019.
- The population of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race), at 6.8 percent in 2010, is expected to grow to 8.8 percent of the population by 2019.

Figure 3: Ethnicity Statistics (2014)



Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecast provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

* Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States. In the U.S. census, people who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be any race and are included in all of the race categories. Figure 3 represents Hispanic Origin as recorded in the U.S. Census.

Educational Attainment

As shown in **Table 3**, the highest ranking educational cohorts in Meridian are those residents with some college, no degree (29%) and those with a bachelor’s degree (23.8%). High school graduates follow, comprising 18.8 percent of the population. According to a census study, education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span in the workforce than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.¹

Table 3: Meridian, Idaho– 2014 Educational Attainment

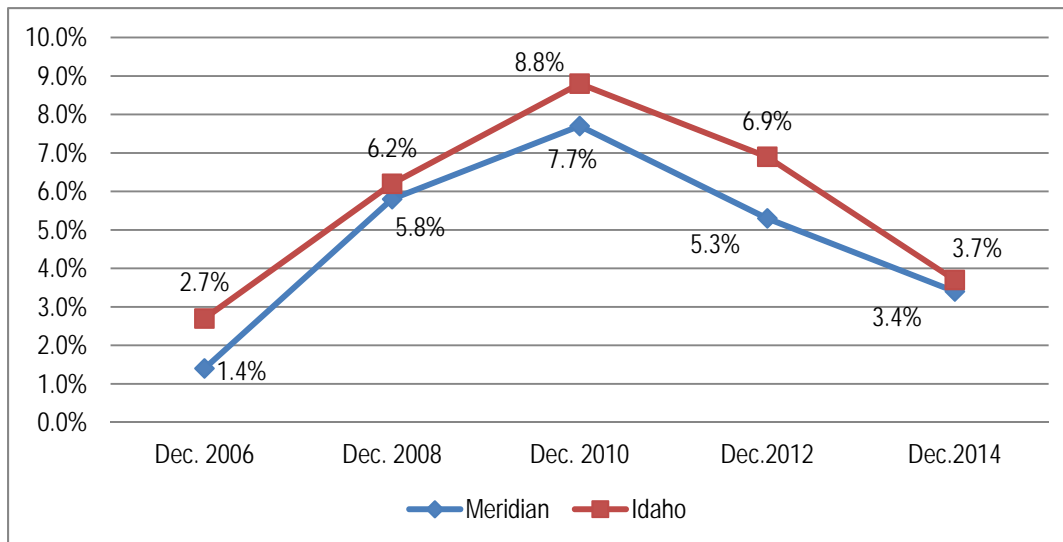
Education Attainment	Service Area Percentage
Less than 9 th grade	1.4%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	4.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	18.8%
GED/Alternative Credential	3.4%
Some college, no degree	29.0%
Associate’s degree	9.4%
Bachelor’s degree	23.8%
Graduate or professional degree	9.5%

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions 2014 estimate based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

Employment

Figure 3 provides a snapshot of the unemployment rate from December 2006 through December 2014 for the City of Meridian and the State of Idaho as a whole. The unemployment rate for both Meridian and Idaho in December 2014 was under four percent (3.4 percent for Meridian and 3.7 percent for the State of Idaho).

Figure 4: Snapshot of Meridian and Idaho unemployment rates from 2006 - 2014



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

¹ Tiffany Julian and Robert Kominski, “Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates” American Community Survey Reports, US Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-14.pdf>, September 2011.

Household Information

As reflected in **Table 4**, in 2014, Meridian had 26,674 housing units with a 72.9 percent owner-occupied housing rate, compared to 22 percent renter occupied rate. The owner-occupied housing rate dropped more than seven percent between 2000 and 2010, but has remained steady since 2010, and is predicted to rise slightly to 73.9 percent in 2019. The average household size in 2014 was 2.96.

Table 4: Meridian Housing Statistics

	2000	2010	2014	2019
Total housing units	14,431	26,674	28,943	31,304
Percent owner occupied	80.8%	72.9%	72.9%	73.9%
Percent renter occupied	15.4%	22.0%	23.4%	23.3%
Percent vacant	3.8%	5.1%	3.7%	2.8%

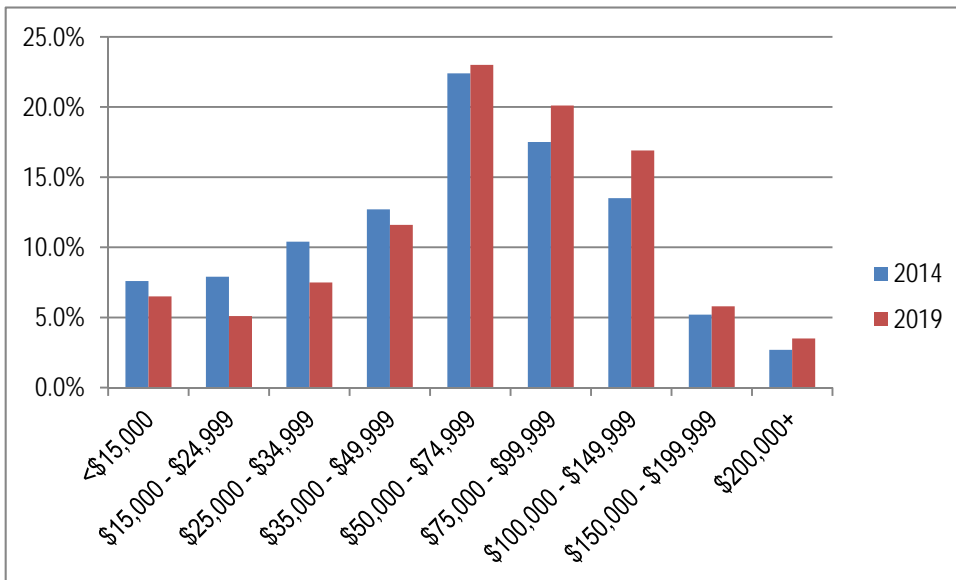
Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecasts provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

Household Income

The estimated 2014 median household income for residents of Meridian was \$59,969 and is expected to grow to \$69,355 by 2019. **Figure 4** illustrates the full income distribution estimated for Meridian in 2014 and projected for 2019.

- In 2014, most residents had an income in the \$50,000 – \$74,999 income range (22.4%), followed by the \$75,000 – \$99,999 income range (17.5%), and the \$100,000 – \$149,000 income range (13.5%).
- Income distribution in the \$75,000 – \$99,999 and \$100,000 – \$149,000 ranges is expected to rise by 2.6 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively, from 2014 to 2019.

Figure 5: Annual Household Income Distribution Comparison (2014 - 2019)



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2014.

Health Ranking

The United Health Foundation has ranked Idaho 18th in its *State Health Rankings* in 2014, down from 12th in 2013 (americashealthrankings.org/id). The State's biggest strengths include:

- Low incidence of infectious disease
- High per capita public health funding
- Low rate of preventable hospitalizations

Some of the challenges the State faces include:

- High levels of air pollution
- Low immunization coverage among teens
- Limited availability of primary care physicians

In the 2014 Idaho County Health Rankings (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, countyhealthrankings.org), Ada County ranked 6th out of 42 counties for health outcomes and 2nd for health factors. As explained in the health ranking report, "Health outcomes represent how healthy a county is while health factors represent what influences the health of the county."²

B. Park and Recreation Influencing Trends

It is a challenge and an opportunity for parks and recreation providing agencies to continue to understand and respond to the changing recreation interests of serviced populations. In this fast-paced society, it is important to stay on top of current trends. The following highlights relevant local, regional, and national recreation trends relative to the Meridian demographic and identified interests. More detail is found in **Appendix A**.

Demographic Trends

- Millennials lead structured lives filled with rules and regulations. Less accustomed to unstructured play than previous generations and apprehensive of the outdoors, they spend most of their time indoors, leaving home primarily to socialize with friends and families. With an upbeat and a can-do attitude, this generation is more optimistic and tech-savvy than its elders.
- With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, Baby Boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults. Boomers are second only to Gen Y/Millennials (born between 1980 and 1999) in participation in fitness and outdoor sports. Boomers will reinvent what being a 65-year-old means.
- Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older.

Facility Trends

- Design of a community's infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity – where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking make a big impact on improving public health and life expectancy.

² Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "County Health Rankings and Roadmaps: 2014 Rankings – Idaho," <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/idaho/2014/rankings/ada/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot> accessed on February 18, 2015.

- For the second year, dog parks were the top planned addition to parks and recreational facilities in the country in 2013. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with “designed-for-dogs” amenities like water fountains, agility equipment, and pet wash stations, to name a few.
- Communities around the country are considering adding shade structures, as well as shade trees to their parks, playgrounds, and pools as “a weapon against cancer and against childhood obesity.”
 - The fact that a connected system of pathways increases the level of physical activity in a community has been scientifically demonstrated through the Pathways for Health initiative of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Pathways can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active.
 - Park and recreation agencies have begun installing “outdoor gyms,” with equipment comparable to what would be found in an indoor workout facility, such as leg and chest presses, elliptical trainers, pull down trainers, etc. Such equipment can increase the usage of parks, pathways, and other outdoor amenities while helping to fight the obesity epidemic and increase the community’s interaction with nature.
 - There is an increasing trend toward indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional amenities, such as “splash pads,” are popular as well.

Programming Trends

- Figures from the Association for Interpretative Naturalists demonstrate that nature-based programs are on the rise. The growth of these programs is thought to come from replacing grandparents as the teacher about the “great outdoors.” It is also speculated that a return to natural roots and renewed interest in life’s basic elements was spurred as a response to September 11, 2001.
- Participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole as reported in a 2012 report. These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity by viewing/photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming. There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding, and wildlife watching in recent years.
- Some of the top ten athletic activities ranked by total participation include: exercise walking, swimming, exercising with equipment, camping, and bicycle riding.
- A national trend in the delivery of parks and recreation systems reflects more partnerships and contractual agreements reaching out to the edges of the community to support specialized services.
- The majority of Americans agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking pathways is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.

Funding Trends

- According to *Recreation Management* magazine’s “2013 State of the Industry Report,” survey respondents from parks and recreation departments/districts reporting about their revenues from 2009 through 2014 reveals the impact of the recession, as well as the beginning of a recovery. More than 25 percent of respondents saw their revenues decrease from 2009 to 2010, and 21.8 percent of respondents reported a further decrease in 2011. Forty-four percent (44%) of park and recreation respondents reported increases from 2011 to 2012.

C. Community and Stakeholder Input

Public process for the Meridian Parks and Recreation Master Plan was held January 26 – 28, 2015 and consisted of 125 participants in eight focus groups, eight stakeholder interviews, and a public forum. This section summarizes the key issues and input that was gathered from the meetings. A full summary of all public input can be found in **Appendix B**.

The community input summary is categorized below with brief details from the many focus group meetings.

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

The residents of Meridian benefit from a good geographic distribution of parks throughout the City, with some pockets of underserved areas. Participants embrace the fact that their parks form the heart of the community and feel like the programs offered are well run, diverse, affordable, and operated by dedicated employees, and as such, indicate that they feel the quality of programs currently offered are very good. Participants also recognized that the parks



are well maintained and have unique and innovative features. When asked about areas for improvement, participants identified the disconnected pathway system, the need for a larger indoor recreation facility, and the need to keep up with the city’s rapid growth as top priorities. Other general items, such as a perceived lack of parking, shade, field space for non-traditional sports, and off-leash dog areas were all identified as opportunities for improvement. Along with physical improvements, improvement of communication, and availability of information is also important to users.

Satisfaction

Residents are very satisfied with the programs, the quality of existing infrastructure, and maintenance. They also rated customer service and seeking community feedback as very good.

Programming and Activities, and Locations

Meridian residents love their programs and activities. They are very satisfied but do have an apparent demand for more year-round program offerings. Included among the additional programs are more offerings for seniors and teens, special events, performing arts, outdoor recreation and adventure programs, non-sports activities, and adaptive recreation. Two areas of the community were identified as being underserved, and may benefit from future park development. These were South and West Meridian. Certain demographics may also be underserved, including seniors and teens, as well as active adults and Millennials.

New Facilities

When asked for suggestions of new parks and recreation facilities in the City, participants identified:

- Pathway connectivity
- Fieldhouse/gym space
- Parks in South and West Meridian
- Additional athletic fields
- Large community center
- Exercise stations
- Performing Arts Center
- Iconic/Destination Parks

Values

City of Meridian residents value their parks and recreation system and feel like they get very good service from staff. Participants' number one value was family-oriented programming and activities. They also want good communication about happenings and program offerings. Quality and affordable programming is a priority, while ensuring access to diverse offerings throughout the entire city. Providing a balance between passive and active recreation, as well as organized sports and unstructured activities, is very important to the community.

D. Random Invitation Community Survey Summary

Introduction and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on City of Meridian parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs. This survey research effort and subsequent analysis were designed to assist the City of Meridian in the creation of a master plan for existing and possible future enhancements, facilities, and services.

The survey was conducted using three primary methods: 1) a mail-back survey, 2) an online, invitation-only web survey to further encourage response from those residents already within the defined invitation sample, and 3) an open-link online survey for members of the public who were not part of the invitation sample. The analysis primarily focuses on responses from the invitation sample. However, open link responses are additionally analyzed and discussed, particularly when they differ from the invitation sample.

A total of 3,500 surveys were mailed to a random sample of Meridian residents in March 2015. The final sample size for this statistically valid survey was 731, resulting in a margin of error of approximately +/- 3.6 percentage points calculated for questions at 50 percent response.³ The open link survey received an additional 661 responses.

The underlying data were weighted by age, ethnicity, and area of impact by neighborhood to ensure appropriate representation of Meridian residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample. Using the ESRI Demographic and Income Profile, which generates a 2014 population profile using 2010 Census data, the age distribution and ethnicity distribution within the respondent sample was matched to the 2014 demographic profile of the City of Meridian. In addition, the neighborhood distribution within the respondent sample was matched to the 2015 area of impact by region as provided by the City.

Current Facilities and Programs

Importance of Local Recreation Opportunities. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of the availability of local parks and recreation opportunities to their household on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “not at all important” and 5 meaning “very important.” Respondents generally indicated that local recreation opportunities are very important to their household, with 84 percent of invitation respondents and 91 percent of open link respondents providing a 4 or 5 rating. Average importance ratings were similarly high in both the invitation (4.2) and open link (4.5) samples.

Knowledge/Familiarity with Current Meridian Parks and Recreation Offerings. Respondents were also asked to rate their level of familiarity with current Meridian parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “not at all familiar” and 5 means “very familiar.” Ratings of familiarity were not as high as ratings of importance, particularly among invitation respondents. Forty-three percent (43%) of invitation respondents provided a 4 or 5 rating (average rating 3.4), compared to 70 percent of open link respondents (average 3.8).

Participation in Meridian Parks and Recreation Classes and Programs. Nineteen percent (19%) of invitation respondents and 34 percent of open link respondents indicated that they have registered for a Department program or class during the past year.

Ratings of Service Received. Respondents who indicated that they had registered for classes or programs in the past year were asked to rate the service they received on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “poor” and 5 meaning “excellent.” Satisfaction with their program or class was very high, with 95 percent of invitation respondents and 91 percent of open link respondents providing a 4 or 5 rating and an average satisfaction rating of 4.4 for both samples.

Most Used Facilities and Parks. Respondents were provided a list of 18 facilities and parks operated by the City of Meridian. They were then prompted to indicate the three facilities they use most often.

³For the total invitation sample size of 731, margin of error is +/- 3.6 percent calculated for questions at 50% response (if the response for a particular question is “50%”—the standard way to generalize margin of error is to state the larger margin, which occurs for responses at 50%). Note that the margin of error is different for every single question response on the survey depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various segments, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a General comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

Use by Sample. **Figure 5**, in the following section, explores the top three most used facilities and parks by survey sample. The following facilities were used most commonly by invitation respondents: Settlers Park (70%), Storey Park (53%), Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park (46%), Tully Park (39%), and Bear Creek Park (17%). Open link respondents also most frequently used Settlers Park (80%), followed by Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park (58%), Tully Park (28%), Storey Park (26%), and Bear Creek Park (17%).

Invitation respondents are more likely to use Storey Park and Tully Park on a regular basis, while open link respondents have a higher likelihood of utilizing Settlers Park, Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park, Heroes Park, and the Heritage Middle School Ball Fields.

Importance of Facilities to Household. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all important” and 5 is “very important,” respondents rated the importance of Meridian Parks and Recreation facilities to their households. **Figure 5** to follow illustrates the percentage of “4” and “5” responses (indicating that the respondent feels the facility is important) versus the percentage of “1” and “2” responses (indicating that the respondent feels the facility is not important) among invitation respondents. **Figure 5** depicts the average importance rating provided by invitation respondents for each facility. The highest average ratings and largest shares of “4” and “5” responses were given for the following facilities:

- Pathways (average rating 4.2; 82% rated a 4 or 5)
- Playgrounds (4.1 average; 77% rated 4 or 5)
- Picnic shelters (3.8 average; 69% rated 4 or 5)
- Swimming pools/aquatic facilities (3.7 average; 56% rated 4 or 5)
- Community/recreation center (3.6 average; 56% rated 4 or 5)
- Indoor gym space (3.3 average; 49% rated 4 or 5)
- Splash pads (3.3 average; 48% rated 4 or 5)
- Athletic fields (3.3 average; 43% rated 4 or 5)
- Outdoor basketball courts (3.1 average; 43% rated 4 or 5)

Importance vs. Needs-Met Matrix – Current Facilities. It is informative to plot and compare the facility scores for level of importance and degree to which needs are being met by these facilities using an “Importance vs. Needs-Met” matrix. Scores are displayed in this matrix using the mid-points for both questions to divide into four quadrants. The Importance scale midpoint was 3.3 (the median importance rating across all facilities); the Needs-Met midpoint was 3.4 (see **Figure 5**).

The upper right quadrant shows the facilities that have a high average rating of importance as well as a high level of needs being met. These amenities are less of a priority for improvement since needs are currently being met, but are important to maintain in the future as they are perceived to be important by respondents:

- Playgrounds
- Picnic shelters
- Splash pads (on the cusp of low importance)

Facilities located in the upper left quadrant have relatively high importance but a lower level of needs being met, which suggests that these facilities could be improved. Improving these facilities would positively impact the degree to which household needs are being met overall:

- Pathways
- Swimming pools/aquatic facilities
- Community/recreation center
- Indoor gym space (on the cusp of low importance)

The lower right quadrant shows facilities that are not important to many households, yet are meeting their needs very well. It may be beneficial in the future to evaluate the parks and recreation resources supporting these facilities:

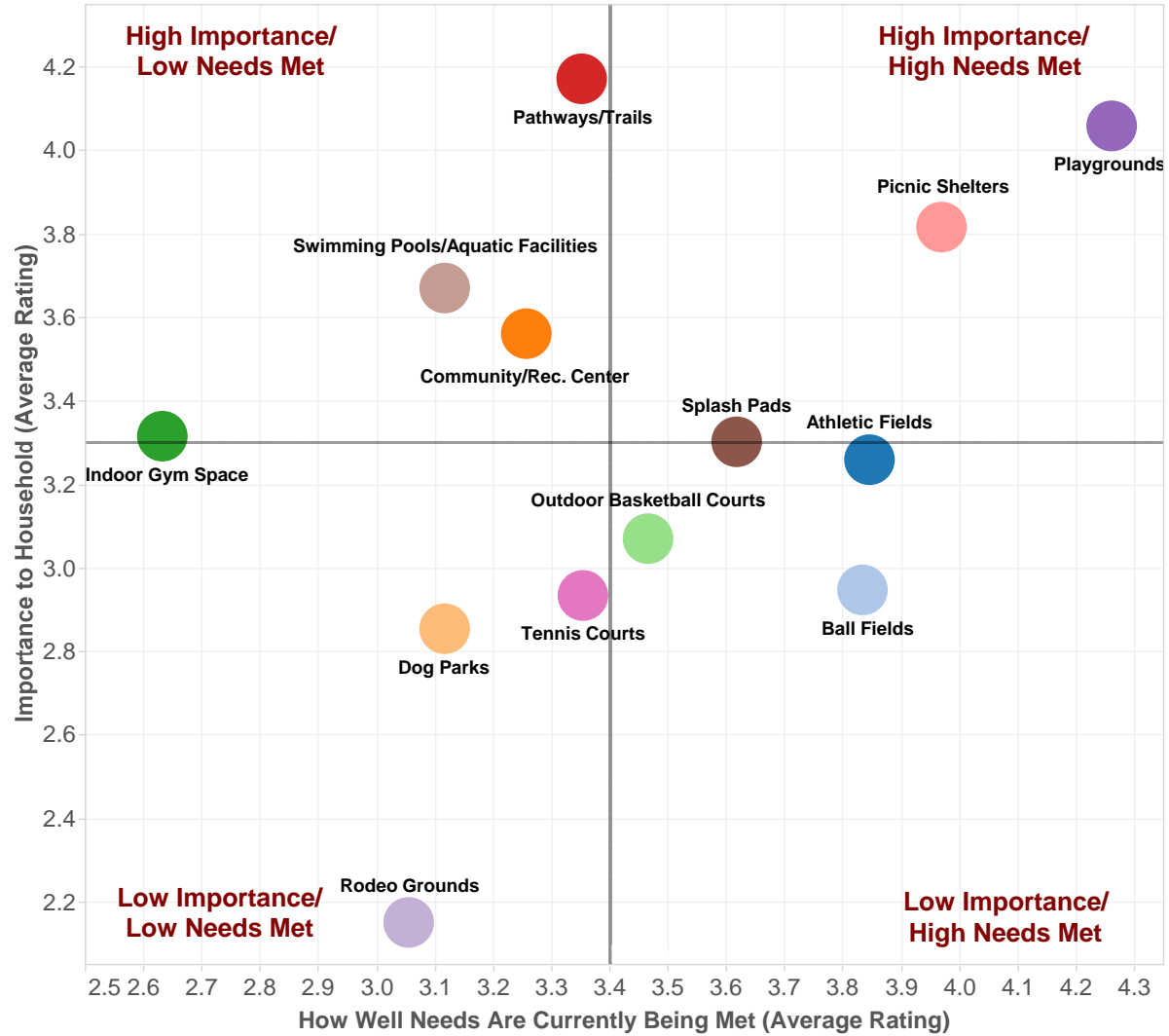
- Athletic fields
- Outdoor basketball courts
- Ball fields

Finally, facilities in the lower left quadrant are not meeting needs adequately; however, they are important to a smaller group of community members. These “niche” facilities may have a small but passionate following; therefore, there may be merit in measuring participation and planning for future improvements accordingly:

- Tennis courts
- Dog parks
- Rodeo grounds

Figure 6: Current Facilities – Importance vs. Needs Met Matrix
Invitation Sample Only

Level of Importance vs. Needs Met for Current MPRD Facilities - Invitation Sample Only



Importance of Programs to Household. Similarly, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all important” and 5 is “very important,” respondents rated the importance of Meridian Parks and Recreation programs to their households. The programs that received the highest average ratings and greatest proportion of “4” and “5” ratings from invitation respondents include:

- Youth sports (average rating 3.7; 64% provided a 4 or 5 rating)
- Family programs (3.7 average; 69% rated 4 or 5)
- Outdoor adventure programs (3.5 average; 50% rated 4 or 5)
- Youth programs (3.5 average; 57% rated 4 or 5)
- Senior programs (3.3 average; 50% rated 4 or 5)
- Adult programs (3.2 average; 36% rated 4 or 5)
- Youth camps (3.2 average; 41% rated 4 or 5)
- Teen programs (3.1 average; 40% rated 4 or 5)

Importance vs. Needs-Met Matrix – Current Programs. Another “Importance vs. Needs-Met” matrix allows a comparison of programs based on level of importance and degree to which household needs are being met. Scores are depicted in this matrix by using the mid-points for both questions to divide into four quadrants. The Importance scale midpoint was 3.3 (the median rating for importance across all programs); the Needs-Met midpoint was 3.6 (see **Figure 6**).

Programs in the upper right quadrant are considered to be highly important and are also adequately meeting the needs of respondent households. Though it is less critical to consider future enhancements for these programs, it is necessary to maintain them to keep community satisfaction high:

- Youth sports
- Youth programs

The upper left quadrant displays programs that are perceived as important but have a lower level of needs being met. Therefore, improvements to and monitoring of these programs may boost the degree to which community members feel their household needs are being met:

- Family programs
- Outdoor adventure programs

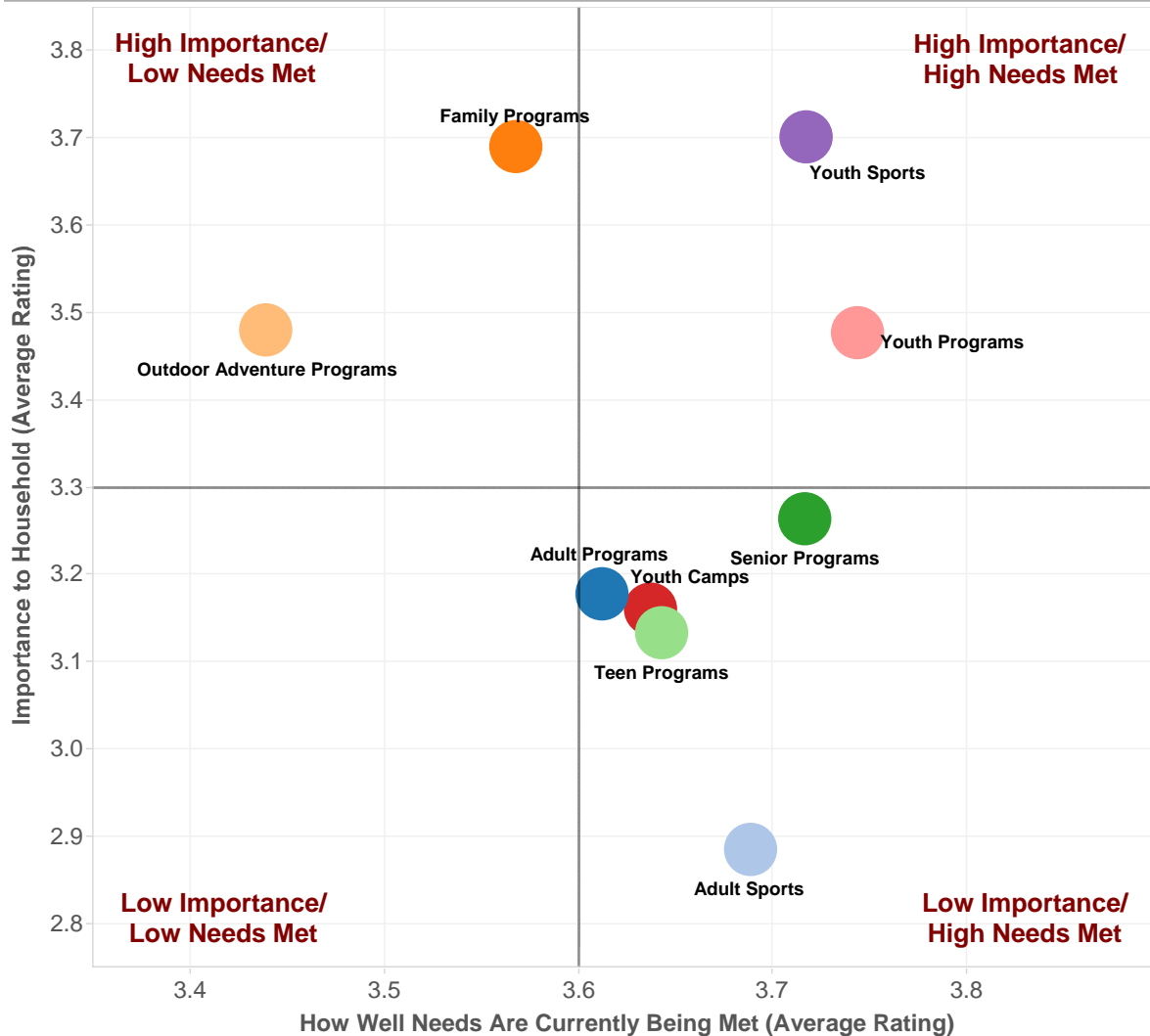
The programs located in the lower right quadrant are less important to households, but are currently meeting their needs well:

- Senior programs
- Adult programs
- Youth camps
- Teen programs
- Adult sports

Finally, programs found in the lower left quadrant are amenities that are not meeting needs well, though they are not important to the majority of households in Meridian. These programs are considered “niche” amenities, as they are important to fewer members of the community. None of the programs evaluated by respondents fell into this category, which may make future planning and of parks and recreation resources easier.

Figure 7: Current Programs – Importance vs. Needs Met Matrix
Invitation Sample Only

Level of Importance vs. Needs Met for Current MPRD Programs - Invitation Sample Only

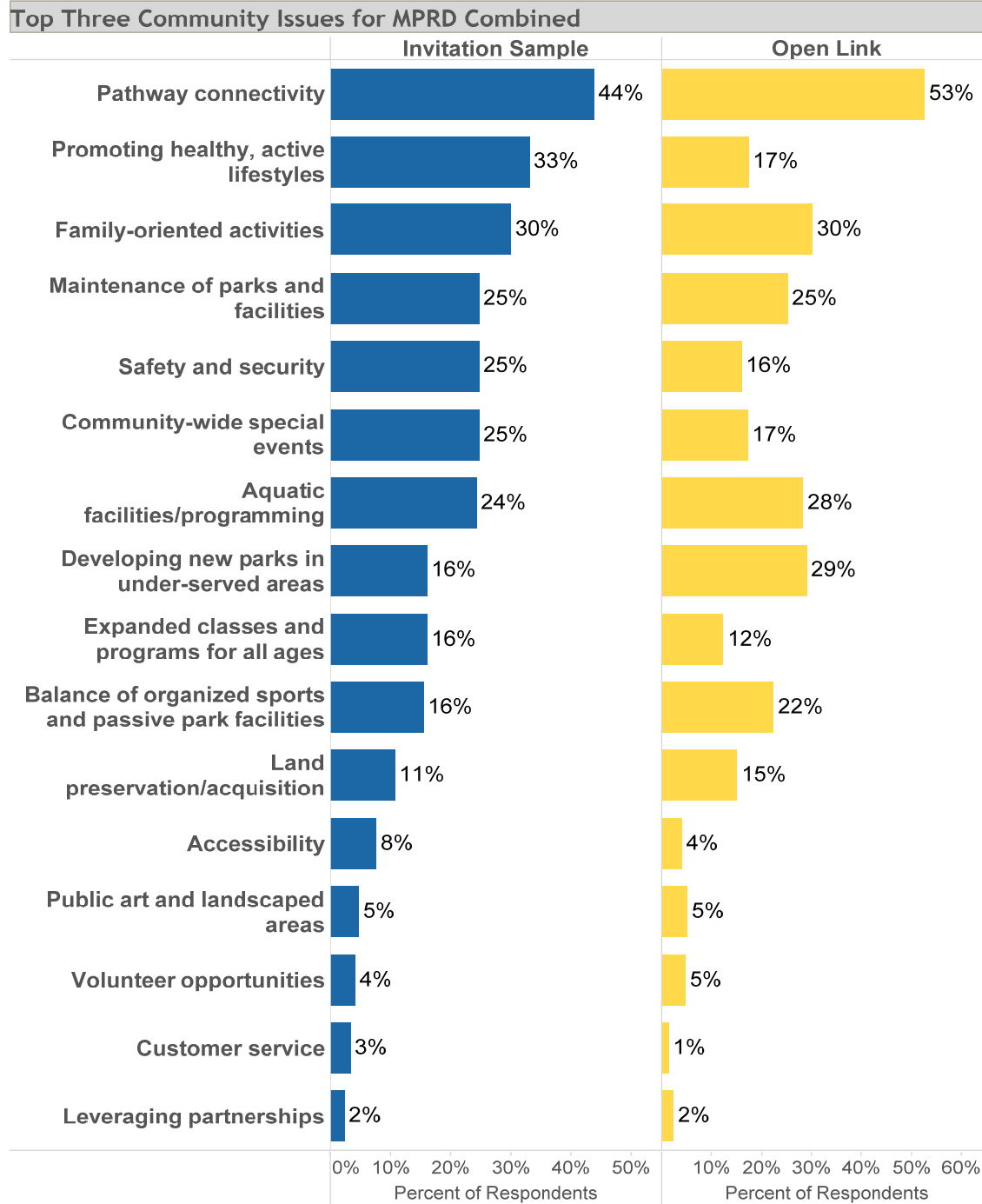


Values and Vision

Top Areas Parks & Recreation Should Focus on Improving

Respondents were asked to identify three community issues that Meridian Parks and Recreation should focus on improving from a list of potential areas. From the list, respondents indicated their number one priority, number two priority, and number three priority. As is shown below in **Figure 7**, invitation respondents indicated that the top community issue is pathway connectivity (44 percent selected this as one of their top three priorities). Pathway connectivity also had the highest percentage of respondents identifying it as their number one priority (33%). Other important community issues include promoting healthy/active lifestyles (33%), family-oriented activities (30%), maintenance of parks and facilities (25%), safety and security (25%), community-wide special events (25%), and aquatic facilities/programming (24%).

Figure 8: Top Three Areas MPRD Should Focus on Improving Combined Invitation Sample Only



Future Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Importance of Adding/Expanding/Improving Future Facilities

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not at all important” and 5 means “very important,” respondents rated the importance of the 26 potential future facilities. In general, most facilities were rated as highly important. The facilities that received the highest average ratings and largest share of respondents providing 4 or 5 ratings include:

- Indoor facilities
 - Indoor aquatics facility (average rating 3.8; 62% provided a 4 or 5 rating)
 - Community/recreation center (3.7 average; 62% rated 4 or 5)
 - Fieldhouse/gymnasium space (3.2 average; 38% rated 4 or 5)
 - Performing arts center (3.2 average; 36% rated 4 or 5)
 - Ice rink (3.0 average; 41% rated 4 or 5)

- Outdoor facilities
 - Pathways (4.1 average; 78% rated 4 or 5)
 - Shade structures in parks (4.0 average; 78% rated 4 or 5)
 - Improved park amenities (3.8 average; 70% rated 4 or 5)
 - Playgrounds (3.7 average; 65% rated 4 or 5)
 - Lights for outdoor athletic facilities (3.4 average; 49% rated 4 or 5)
 - New parks (3.2 average; 33% rated 4 or 5)
 - Exercise stations along pathways in parks (3.2 average; 39% rated 4 or 5)
 - Splash pads (3.1 average; 40% rated 4 or 5)
 - Outdoor athletic fields/courts (3.1 average; 31% rated 4 or 5)
 - Public art in the parks (3.1 average; 40% rated 4 or 5)
 - Fishing ponds (3.1 average; 42% rated 4 or 5)
 - Parking at recreational facilities (3.1 average; 28% rated 4 or 5)
 - Dog parks (3.0 average; 39% rated 4 or 5)

Top Priorities to Add, Expand, or Improve

Using the same list of facilities, respondents chose their priorities for most important future facilities to their households. The facility with the highest percentage of respondents selecting it as their first most important priority is a community/recreation center (16%). Other top priorities include an indoor aquatics facility (33%), community/recreation center (26%), improved park amenities (22%), and shade structures in parks (22%).

Financial Choices/Fees

In a final section of the survey, respondents answered questions about their opinions on the financial aspects of their relationship with Meridian Parks and Recreation. These questions include an evaluation of current program and facility fees, the impact of potential fee increases on level of participation, and an allocation of future funding toward various amenities.

Current Fees

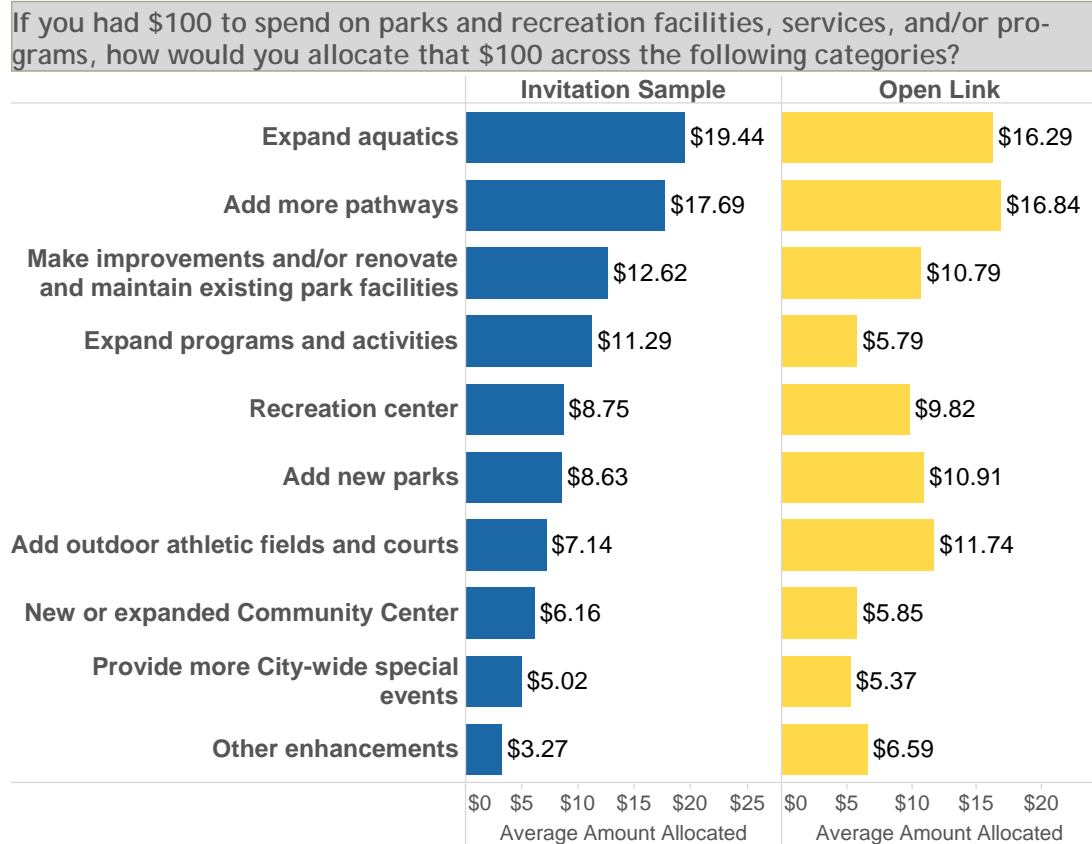
Facility Fees. Respondents were generally likely to indicate that current facility fees are reasonable, with 30 percent of invitation respondents and 48 percent of open link respondents feeling that fees are acceptable for the value received. Eleven percent (11%) of invitation respondents feel that fees are too high, and only two percent said fees were underpriced. Fifty-seven percent (57%) were unsure.

Program Fees. Similarly, 29 percent of invitation respondents and 54 percent of open link respondents believe that current program fees are reasonable. Fourteen percent (14%) of invitation sample respondents indicated that fees are too expensive, and one percent said they are underpriced. Fifty-six percent (56%) didn't know.

Allocation of Funding

Lastly, respondents were asked, "If you had \$100 to spend on parks and recreation facilities, services, and/or programs, how would you allocate that \$100 across the following categories?" and were provided with a list of nine potential categories for funding. As shown in **Figure 8**, invitation respondents allocated funding most toward expanding aquatics (\$19.44 on average) and adding more pathways (\$17.69), followed by making improvements and/or renovating/maintaining existing park facilities (\$12.62), and expanding programs/activities (\$11.29). Items that received little funding include providing more City-wide special events (\$5.02) and a new or expanded Community Center (\$6.16).

Figure 9: Allocation of Funding Toward Facilities/Services/Programs – Average Allocation Amount



E. Organizational and Marketing Analysis

Organizational Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the organizational and management structure of the Parks and Recreation Department and staffing to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the community’s needs. The needs assessment – including input from staff interviews, community and key stakeholder engagement, and level of service analysis, along with the consultant’s expertise – has identified a few areas for operational enhancement.

These key organizational issues identified and observed as areas for improvement include:

- Better marketing and communication of activities
- Enhance and improve internal and external communication
- Improve the website so it is current and usable for patrons
- Increase the utilization of technology to improve customer service and efficiencies
- Improve and update park and wayfinding signage and maps
- Increase appropriate partnerships within the community

Staffing Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the management structure and staffing levels of the Parks and Recreation Department to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future departmental responsibilities as related to the community's needs. Many observations were taken into account to determine if the Parks and Recreation Department had the right mix of staffing in the right places within the Department.

The staffing analysis process included the observations and assessments of:

- Community input
- Community satisfaction rates
- Staff focus group
- Individual staff interviews
- Facility tours
- Observations of quality of maintenance
- Professional knowledge in Parks and Recreation organizations
- SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats)
- Organizational chart

Staffing Considerations

After considering all of the organizational observations and staffing assessment, the consultant team has determined that the Parks and Recreation Department has an adequate number of staff to operate its current system with the right mix of staff in the right places within the Department. To operate more effectively in the future and to implement the Master Plan, Parks and Recreation should consider:

- Staffing appropriately to maintain a current FTE for park maintenance based on acres of park land maintained per FTE
- Developing a standard for recreation staffing that considers:
 - Number of sports teams managed per FTE
 - Number of Temporary Use Permits issued and managed per FTE
 - Number of programs and participation rates managed per FTE
- Add grant research and writer position (staff or contractual)
- Ensure that staffing resource levels can maintain existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards as the Master Plan is implemented

Marketing

The main reasons for not using Meridian programs or amenities include:

- Focus group participants indicated not aware of programs or facility

Therefore, it is important that the Department improve communications with residents about program/event offerings and Department information.

- Increasing the use of social media
- Incorporating smart phone app offerings like that of the GoStrive App which can help:
 - Build a stronger, healthier community through activities and programs
 - Cultivate an interactive link between agencies and participating individuals
 - Optimize programs with powerful analytics to reduce costs and generate revenue
 - NRPA member? Join the "GoStrive. Go Play." campaign – it's free!

G. Recreation Programming Analysis

Program Development

Understanding core services in the delivery of parks and recreation services will allow the City of Meridian Parks and Recreation Department to improve upon those areas while developing strategies to assist in the delivery of other services. The basis of determining core services should come from the vision and mission developed by the City and what brings the greatest community benefit in balance with the competencies of the Department, current trends, and the market.

The Department should pursue program development around the priorities identified by customer feedback, program evaluation process, and research. The following criteria should be examined when developing new programs.

- **Need:** outgrowth of a current popular program, or enough demonstrated demand to successfully support a minimal start (one class for instance)
- **Budget:** accounting for all costs and anticipated (conservative) revenues should meet cost recovery target established by the Department
- **Location:** appropriate, available, and within budget
- **Instructor:** qualified, available, and within budget
- **Materials and supplies:** available and within budget
- **Marketing effort:** adequate and timely opportunity to reach intended market, within budget (either existing marketing budget or as part of new program budget)

Further research into what types of programming would be successful needs to be done. Successful programs utilize continuous creative assessments, research, and planning. The Department has a process that evaluates the success of current program offerings and criteria to determine if new program ideas should be instituted or if changes should be made to current programs. Maintaining the current dashboards and evaluation process will help to ensure success.

Moreover, new leisure and recreation trends may drive different needs. It is very easy to focus on programs that have worked for a number of years, especially if they are still drawing enough interested participants to justify the program's continuation. Starting new programs, based on community demand and/or trends, can be risky, due to the inability to predict their success. If the program interest seems great, as with those identified in the citizen survey, then the programs should be expanded. Available space may hinder new or expanded opportunities in some cases.

Using historical participation levels to determine program popularity and participant feedback can be helpful in deciding if programs should be continued. In addition, utilizing citizen surveys and participant feedback, and researching trends in park and recreational programming are useful tools in determining future programming needs and desires. Sources for trends information include:

- State Parks and Recreation Associations and Conferences
- National Recreation and Parks Association
- International Health, Racquet, and Sports Association
- Parks and Recreation Trade Publications
- Outdoor Recreation Publications

Program Evaluation

All current programs should be evaluated annually to determine if they should be continued, changed (market segment focus, time/day offered, etc.), or discontinued. A few simple questions should be asked about each program that includes:

- Is participation increasing or decreasing? If participation is increasing, then it could clearly mean that the program should be continued. If participation is decreasing, are there any steps to take to increase interest through marketing efforts, a change in the time/day of the program is offered, and a change in the format or instructor? If not, it may be time to discontinue the program.
- Is there information contained in the participation feedback that can be used to improve the program?
- Are cost recovery goals being met? If not, can fees be realistically increased?
- Is there another provider of the program that is more suitable to offer it? If yes, the Department could provide referrals for its customers for the program it does not or is not willing or able to offer.
- Is this program taking up facility space that could be used for expansion of more popular programs or new programs in demand by the community?

H. Operations and Maintenance Analysis

Parks and Recreation is responsible for maintaining public open spaces and for providing a quality system of parks and recreation facilities and positive leisure opportunities available to all persons in the community. The Department also is responsible for the development and maintenance of the pathways system and the urban forest. The Meridian Parks and Recreation system consists of 387 acres of parkland, 255 acres of developed parks and 132 acres of undeveloped land. The system is made up of 19 parks (not including Lakeview Golf Course): 3 undeveloped sites, just less than 22 miles of pathways, 13 miles of micro pathways, a senior center, and a community center. Additionally, Parks and Recreation offers a variety of recreational programs, adult sports leagues, special events, and handles shelter reservations and temporary use permits.

Community Input

Focus Groups

Public Process for the Meridian Parks and Recreation Master Plan was held January 26 – 28, 2015 and consisted of 125 participants in eight focus groups, 8 stakeholder interviews and a public forum.

Focus Groups were asked, “What are the strengths of the Parks and Recreation Department that should be continued over the next several years?”

The top 3 responses were:

1. High quality parks
2. Parks well maintained
3. Innovative unique parks

Other top responses included:

1. Parks well distributed
2. Variety of amenities
3. Commitment to maintenance
4. Athletic field good quality
5. Number of parks

Focus Group attendees were asked, “What improvements are needed at existing facilities?” The top responses were:

1. Disconnected pathways
2. Parking at most parks during major events
3. Shade and mature trees in parks
4. Field space for diversity of sports

Maintenance

The City of Meridian and the Department are committed to the highest levels of maintenance. As part of the newly adopted Strategic Plan for the City and the CARE (Customer Service, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence) Values, commitment to excellence is clearly defined. Maintenance throughout the year takes many forms and task including (but not limited to) mowing, snow removal at multiple sites, downtown tree and flower pot upkeep, event support, irrigation, urban forestry, playgrounds, and ballfield grooming. Using existing data from the Parks and Recreation dashboards, the graphs below illustrate the growth in total park acreage, park acreage per 1,000 persons and the linear feet of pathways maintained by the Department.

Figure 10: Park Acreage

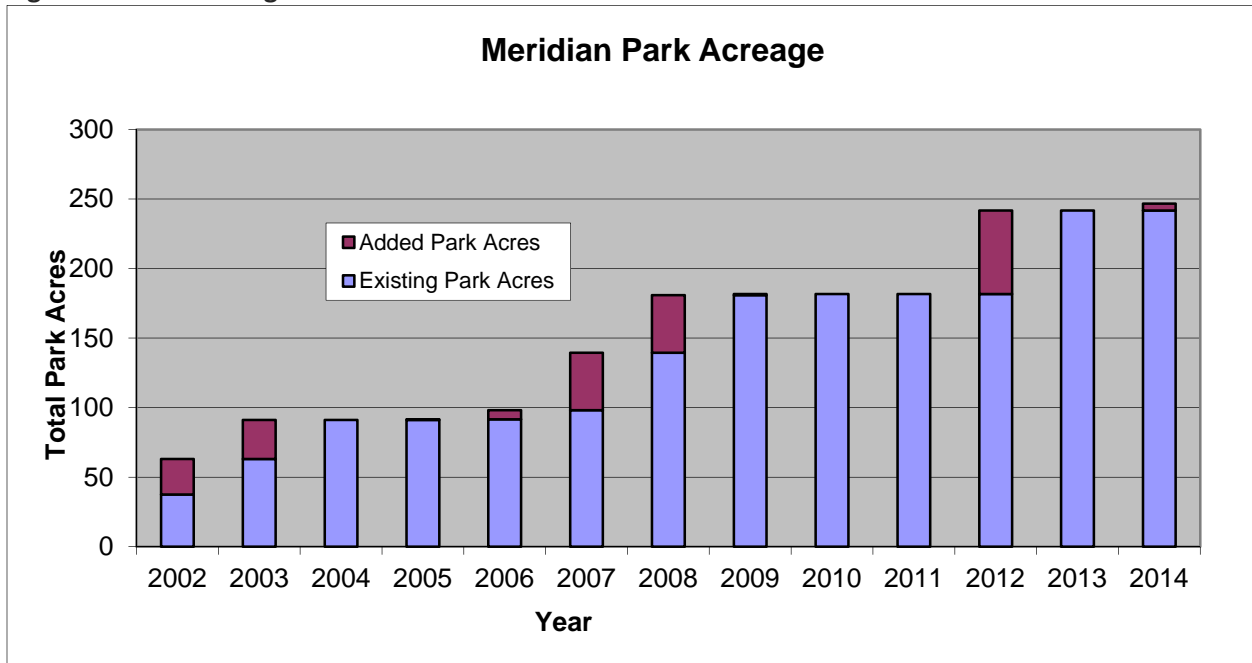


Figure 11: Pathways Maintained

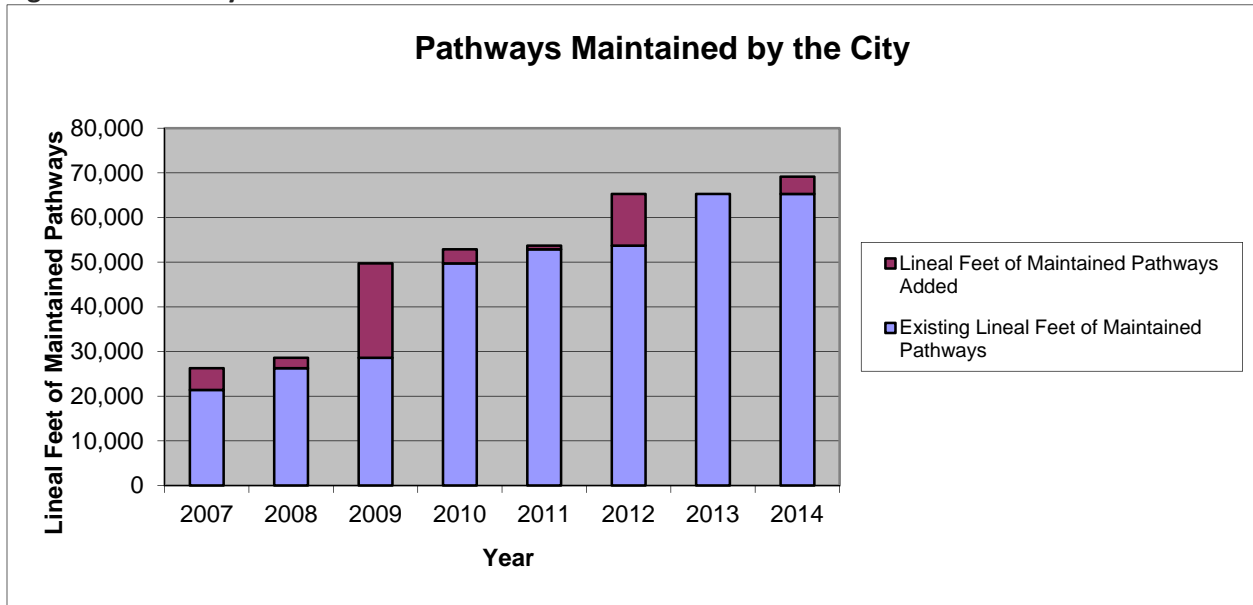
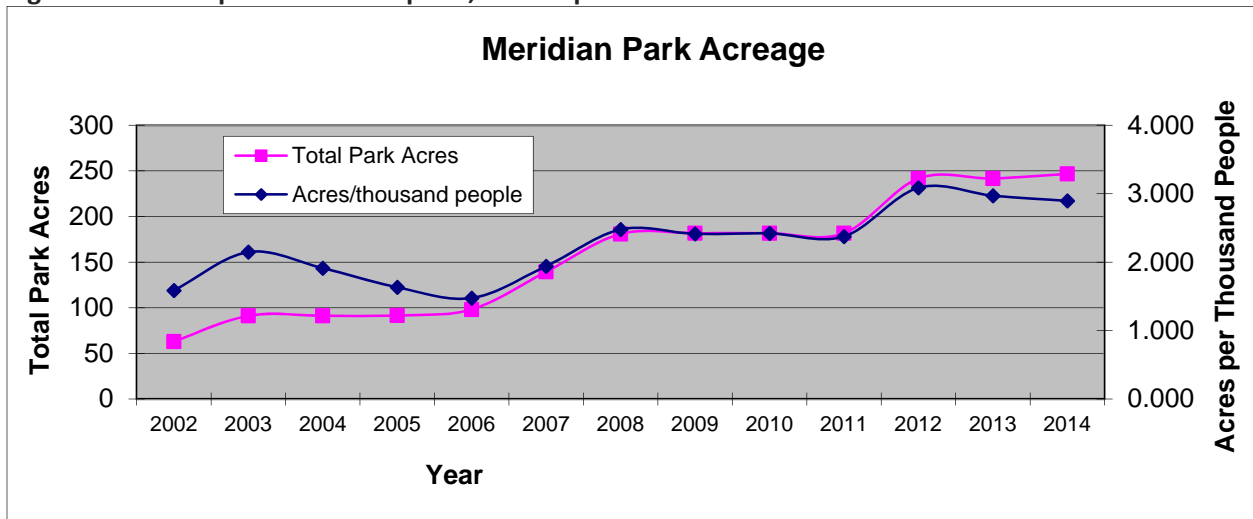


Figure 12: Developed Park Acres per 1,000 People



Conclusion

As the parks and recreation system continues to expand and maintenance responsibilities increase, staffing and equipment levels must be increased to meet citizen expectations and protect the City’s investment. In addition to new facilities, an emphasis was identified through the focus groups of maintaining current facilities that continue to provide a safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing park system.

As the population of Meridian continues to grow, significant investment will need to be made to maintain the current level of service at four acres of developed park land per 1,000 people. COMPASS estimates that the population of Meridian will grow to 151,081 by the year 2040. To maintain the current level of service, it will require 604 acres of developed park land. That will require the development of the existing 132 acres of undeveloped park land and the addition of 217 acres of park land. Additionally, to complete the pathway system, it will take community investment and cooperation from the private sector.

Specific recommendations for parks operations are:

- Continue to develop and review written maintenance standards.
- Continue to maintain quality standard park area maintenance.
- Continue providing staff training that is appropriate for the assigned areas of expertise.
- Evaluate the distribution of maintenance staff and areas of responsibilities to ensure the greatest efficiencies of resources on a regular basis.
- Plan for additional needs for staffing, equipment, and resources as the Department continues to grow in response to development and growth in Meridian.
- Continuously evaluate existing facilities, develop maintenance needs, and perform identified upgrades that maintain user expectations and quality standards.

I. Financial Analysis

Funding Resources & Cost Recovery, Current Circumstances

Parks and Recreation facilities, programs, and services are very important to the community and are in high demand. However, not all facilities, programs, and services are equal. In general, the more a facility, program, or service provides a community benefit to citizens of Meridian as a whole, the more that element is paid for by all citizens as part of the City's general fund. The more a facility, program, or service provides individual benefits, the more that element is paid for by user fees. This funding and cost recovery philosophy acknowledges the tremendous public benefits of parks and recreation to the community, not only in the obvious ways it provides recreational opportunities to the citizens, but for the sometimes unrecognized benefits of promoting economic development, crime prevention, and community health. In all cases, the City seeks to leverage partnerships wherever possible and in the best interest of the citizens to help fund the facilities, programs, and services they provide to the community.

The following are some specific examples of how various Parks and Recreation facilities, programs, and services fall on that continuum and how they are paid for.

Park Construction

New park construction relies on impact fees whenever possible for funding a new park that is being developed to maintain the existing level of service (defined for this purpose in acres per thousand residents). When impact fees are not available or when developing parks to increase the level of service, general funds are used. Grants are also sought, such as those from the Solid Waste Advisory Commission (SWAC), the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other sources. Whenever possible and in the best interest of the City, partnerships are also used to help develop new parks and/or specific amenities within them.

Park Maintenance

Park maintenance benefits the entire community and is funded from the City's General Fund. Volunteers are leveraged wherever possible to help save labor and costs.

Sports

In the sports programs, Meridian recovers all direct costs (balls, nets, bases, etc.) through user fees. Fees also cover the costs for all part-time and seasonal labor (scorekeepers, umpires, etc.) directly associated with the program. A 20 percent administrative charge is added to cover a portion of the time associated with full-time staff (recreation coordinator, front desk) that plan and support the sports leagues. The Department charges an additional fee (currently \$10 per player) as non-resident fees, for participants who do not pay taxes to the City of Meridian.



Classes & Camps

For classes and camps, fees are set to recover all direct costs, based on the anticipated number of participants. Direct costs include all part-time/seasonal staffing for the camp, supplies, equipment, and transportation. A 10 percent administrative charge is added to help cover a portion of the time associated with full-time staff (recreation coordinator, front desk) that plan and support the camps. Most classes are taught by independent contractors, where the contractor establishes the fee and the Department requires a 20 percent split of their fee to come to the City to cover the administrative costs of scheduling the classes and publishing the Activity Guide.

Events

The cost recovery philosophy for events varies by event. For example, some events (i.e., CableOne Movie Night, Community Block Party, and Christmas in Meridian) are paid for up front by the City, with the understanding that the Department will generate the revenue to break even on all direct costs through the sale of sponsorships, concessions revenue, etc. A second type of event is one that the City chooses to pay for. With these events (Gene Kleiner Day, Independence Day Celebration), there has been a deliberate decision by the City *not* to seek sponsorships. For Gene Kleiner Day, the focus is on Gene Kleiner and his donation of Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park. Currently, revenues from the Mayor's State of the City Address are helping to cover the costs of this event. For the Independence Day Celebration, there are matching funds from the Meridian Speedway for fireworks and putting on a community celebration in Storey Park and the City of Meridian is the presenting sponsor. The third type of event is fundraisers. With these events (i.e., Barn Sour Race, Disc Golf Fall Classic) all direct costs are paid for by the event, and revenues are maximized. All additional revenues, after expenses, are used for a specific purpose—for example, proceeds from the Barn Sour Race help to fund the Care Enough to Share fund, and the Disc Golf Fall Classic helps to fund a specific park improvement to be selected by the Parks and Recreation Commission. For outside events put on through Temporary Use Permits (TUP) in parks, the event organizers are expected to cover all costs, including staffing costs for City staff that have to be at the event for set-up, trash collection, and other duties.

Pathways

When developed by the City, pathways are paid for by the City's General Fund or grants, not impact fees. Impact fees are not currently charged for pathways, because most pathways are required to be constructed through the development process.

Memorial Tree Program

The Memorial Tree Program is set up to cover all direct costs associated with creating and placing the plaque. The fee structure should be revisited with a look at covering the long term costs and possible revenue generation for the City.

Picnic Shelter Reservations

Fees for shelter reservations are set to cover the direct costs for cleaning the shelter and posting the reservation. High-demand shelters may be set higher as a potential revenue source for the City. These fees have not changed in many years and should be revisited and updated.

Field/Court Reservations

Field/court reservation fees (i.e., softball field, soccer field, tennis court, etc.) are set based on regional trends for fees, supply and demand, and what the City Council determines to be in the best interest of the City. These fees should be periodically reviewed and updated.

Financial Sustainability

It is important for the City to develop a Resource Allocation and Pricing Philosophy that reflects the values of the community and the responsibility it has to the community. This Philosophy will be especially important if the City moves forward with the development of new programs, additional and/or expanded facilities, and as it strives for sustainability and determines how much it is willing to subsidize operations with tax dollars.

One means of accomplishing this goal is applying a process using an industry tool called the "Pyramid Methodology." This methodology develops and implements a refined cost recovery philosophy and pricing policy based on current "best practices" as determined by the mission of the agency and the program's benefit to the community and/or individual.

Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and understanding of elected officials and ultimately citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the agency wants to be certain that it is philosophically aligned with its residents. The development of the core services, cost recovery philosophy, and policy is built on a very logical foundation, using the understanding of who is benefitting from recreation services to determine how the costs for that service should be offset.

Recreation programs and services are sorted along a continuum of what delivers the greatest community benefit to what delivers the greatest individual benefit. The amount of subsidy for each level (not necessarily each individual program) is then determined to create an overall cost recovery philosophy.

Developing effective ongoing systems that help measure success in reaching cost recovery goals and anticipate potential pitfalls are dependent on the following:

- Understanding of current revenue streams and their sustainability.
- Tracking all expenses and revenues for programs, facilities, and services to understand their contributions to overall department cost recovery.
- Analyzing who is benefiting from programs, facilities, and services and to what degree they should be subsidized.
- Acknowledging the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the continuum, of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets.
- Defining direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and the change with the program.
- Defining in-direct costs as those that are typically costs that would exist anyway (like full-time staff, utilities, administration, debt service etc.).
- Program fees should not be based on ability to pay, but an objective program should be in place that allows for easy access for lower income participants, through availability of scholarships and/or discounts. In many instances, qualification for scholarships and/or discounts can mirror requirements for free or reduced cost lunch in schools.

IV. What We Have Now – Inventory and Level of Service Analysis

A. Inventory and Assessment

The purpose of this Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to evaluate how facilities and parks in Meridian serve the community. This analysis may be used as a tool to benchmark current level of service and to direct future planning efforts. Combined with other findings, including survey results and focus group and stakeholder feedback, it also indicates the level of service anticipated by the community.

Asset Inventory

A detailed inventory of public and semi-public physical assets available for recreational use by the Meridian community was assembled for the Level of Service analysis. This asset inventory was created to serve Meridian in a number of ways. It can be used for a variety of planning and operations tasks, such as asset management and land acquisition, as well as future strategic and master plans. The assets inventory currently includes public parks, recreation areas, and pathways managed by the City of Meridian.

Additionally, it was recognized that alternative providers, such as Homeowners' Associations, Schools and Western Ada Recreation District (WARD) facilities, provide a significant inventory of neighborhood, walk-to, and recreation opportunities. Due to limitations of time and resources, a selected sampling of alternative providers was included in the full inventory and level of service analysis. Additional alternative provider facilities owned the by City of Boise and other Homeowners' Associations were located using existing GIS data or aerial photography identification and included for reference. Scoring for these facilities and amenities were assumed to meet expectations and were included in the Level of Service analysis. The following is a summary of the overall inventoried sites.

Visited and Assessed

- 21 Meridian Parks
 - 217 Components
- 10 Indoor Facilities
 - Including Meridian Community Center, Senior Center, City Hall, 6 School Gymnasiums, and YMCA Home Court
- 9 Alternative Provider Parks (WARD, Boise Parks, Schools)
 - 58 Components

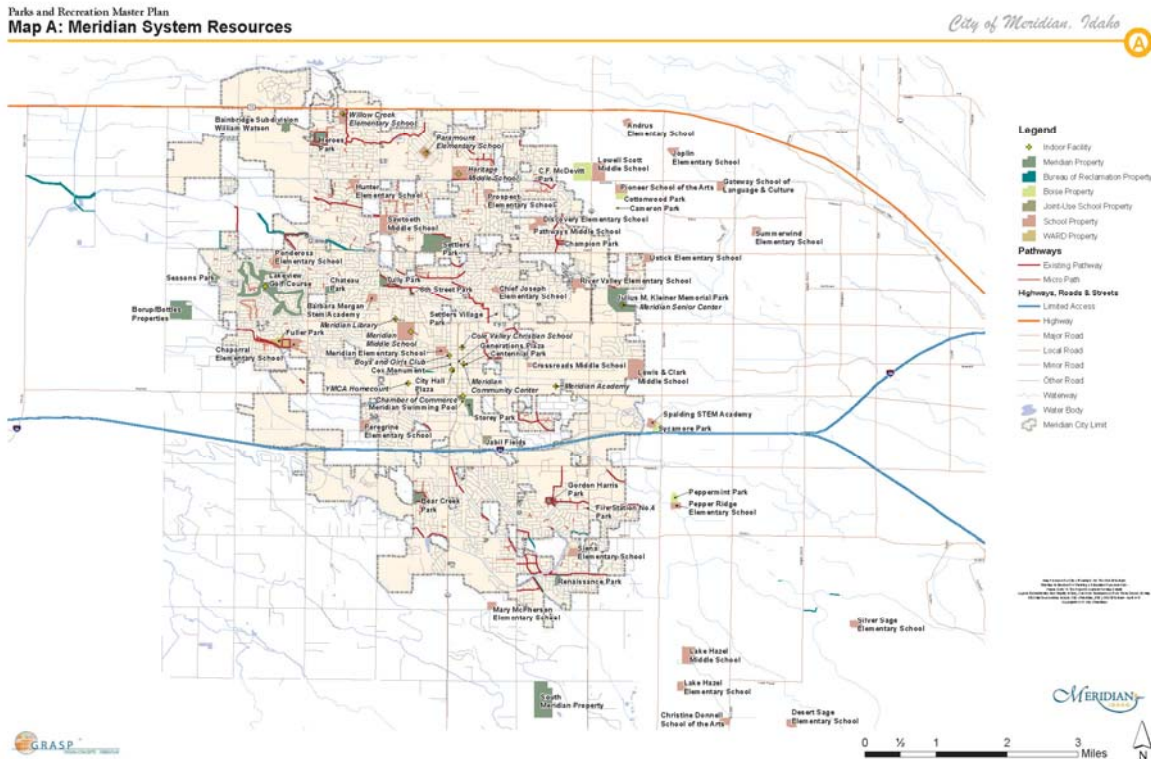
Included

- 21.8 miles of pathways, including City pathways and various Alternative Providers, and 13 miles of Micro Paths

Located and Assumed Scoring

- 64 Components at other HOA parks
- 63 Components at other schools

Map A shows the study area and key locations of properties. Larger scale maps are provided as separate documents.



Map A: City of Meridian system map showing all inventory included for GRASP® analysis.

B. GRASP® Methodology

Level of Service for a community parks and recreation system is indicative of the ability of people to pursue active lifestyles. It can have implications in regard to health and wellness, the local economy, and quality of life and tends to reflect community values. It is emblematic of the manner and extent to which people are connected to their communities.

The GRASP® Methodology involves mapping, scoring, demographics, and interpretation of the resulting perspectives to yield a picture of recreational service in a study area. The various efforts undertaken for this study are described below with general findings summarized in the following section.

An analytical technique known as **GRASP® (Geo-Referenced Amenities Standard Process)** was used to analyze Level of Service (LOS) provided by assets in the City of Meridian. This proprietary process, used exclusively by GreenPlay and Design Concepts, yields analytical maps and data that may be used to examine access to recreation across the study area. A detailed history and description of GRASP® Methodology may be found in **Appendix F.**

Asset Scoring

In planning for the delivery of parks and recreation services, it is useful to think of parks, pathways, indoor facilities, and other public spaces as parts of an infrastructure. This infrastructure allows people to exercise, socialize, and maintain a healthy physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The infrastructure is made up of components that support this goal. Components include amenities, such as playgrounds, picnic shelters, courts, fields, indoor facilities, and other elements that allow the system to meet recreational needs of a community. A **component** is a feature that people go to a park or recreation center to use, such as a tennis court to play a game of tennis, which gives users reason to visit and serve as an intended destination. A standardized list of GRASP® components is used to classify each asset in the system. This list of components and definitions can be found in **Appendix F**.

In the inventory of assets, the following information is collected:

- Component type and location
- Evaluation of component functionality
- Evaluation of associated comfort and convenience features at a location
- Evaluation of general design and ambience at a location
- Site photos
- General comments

All components are scored based on condition, size, site capacity, and overall quality as they reflect the expected quality of recreational features as compared with typical facilities in the City of Meridian.

A three-tier rating system is used to evaluate these:

- 1 = Below Expectations
- 2 = Meets Expectations
- 3 = Exceeds Expectations

Not all parks are created equal. GRASP® Level of Service (LOS) analysis also takes into account important aspects of user experience often that are easily overlooked. For example, the GRASP® system acknowledges the important differences between these identical playground structures:



(Note, these park photos have been included for illustrative purposes. They are not located in Meridian.)

The immediate surroundings of a component affect how well it functions, so in addition to scoring components, each park site or indoor facility is given a set of scores to rate its comfort, convenience, and ambient qualities. This includes traits, such as the availability of restrooms, drinking water, shade, scenery, etc. These **modifier** values are then attributed to any component at a given location and serve to enhance component and location scores.

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Table 5: Outdoor Inventory Summary Table

LOCATION	CLASS	GIS ACRES	Aqua Feat, Spray	Backstop, Practice	Ballfield	Basketball	Batting Cage	Bocce Ball	Complex, Ballfield	Complex, Horseshoes	Complex, Tennis	Concessions	Disk Golf	Dog Park	Driving Range	Educational Experience	Event Space	Garden, Community	Garden, Display	Golf	Horseshoes	Loop Walk	MP Field, All Sizes	Open Turf	Open Water	Other-Active	Passive Node	Picnic Grounds	Playground, All Sizes	Public Art	Shelter, All Sizes	Skate Park	Tennis	Volleyball	Water Access, General	Water Feature		
Julius M. Kleiner Park	Regional	57.9921	1			1.5		2				1		2		2	2	1	1			3		2	2	2	5		1	3	5			1	2			
Settlers Park	Regional	56.1231	1		6		3		1	1	1	2	1								16		6	2				1		4		10						
Bear Creek Park	Community	18.8019			2	1						1										1	1				1		1									
Heroes Park	Community	30.1501				3						1										1	5	1			1		2							1		
Storey Park	Community	17.9043			2									1							3					1	1	1		2								
Tully Park	Community	18.4778			2	1																1	1					1		2	1							
8th Street Park	Neighborhood	2.7829																						1				1		1								
Champion Park	Neighborhood	5.9830				1																1	1					1		1								
Chateau Park	Neighborhood	6.7163		1		1																1	1					1		1								
Gordon Harris Park	Neighborhood	11.1370																				1	1	1				1		1								
Renaissance Park	Neighborhood	6.5264				1																1	1					1		1								
Seasons Park	Neighborhood	6.9533				1																1	1					1	1	1								
Centennial Park	Mini	0.4520				0.5																		1				1	1	1								
Cox Monument	Mini	0.1082														1														1							1	
Fire Station No.4 Park	Mini	0.5906																								1												
City Hall Plaza	Special Use	0.9279														1	1									1				1							1	
Generations Plaza	Special Use	0.2478														1	1																					1
Heritage Ball Fields	Special Use	22.6860		1	4																		3															
Jabil Fields	Special Use	8.3980																					2															
Lakeview Golf Course	Golf	119.4263													1					1																		
Totals:		392.3850	2	2	16	11	3	2	1	1	1	4	2	3	1	5	4	1	1	1	19	11	22	9	2	2	9	1	13	5	25	1	10	1	2	4		

* These acreages reflect the total parcels in GIS and are not necessarily the specific acreages tracked for each site by the MPR Department

Table 6: Indoor Inventory Summary Table

LOCATION	Gallery	Gymnasium	Kitchen - Kitchenette	Multi-purpose	Patio / Outdoor seating	Retail / Pro-shop
City Hall	2			1		
Cole Valley Christian School		2				
Heritage Middle School		1				
Meridian Academy		1				
Meridian Community Center				2		
Meridian Middle School		1				
Meridian Senior Center	1		1	5	1	1
Paramount Elementary School		1				
Willow Creek Elementary School		1				
YMCA Homecourt		4				
Totals:	3	11	1	8	1	1

(All facilities in data set)

Catchment Areas

People use a variety of transit modes to reach a recreation destination: on foot, on a bike, in a car, via public transportation, or utilizing any combination of these or other alternatives. The mode is often determined, at least in part, by the distance to be travelled. The GRASP® system accounts for this by applying more than one **catchment area** distance to examine access to assets.

A catchment area on a map, also called a buffer, is a circle drawn around each component at a specific distance. Any point within this distance reflects the score of that component. This is called a **service area**. These buffers are overlapped and used to calculate a total GRASP® Level of Service score for any given point within the study area that reflects service from all nearby assets. This process yields the data used to create all perspective maps and analytical charts.

The GRASP® methodology typically applies two different catchment area distances to calculate scoring totals, yielding two distinct perspectives used to examine a recreation system:

1. General Access to Recreation
2. Walkable Access to Recreation

General Access analysis applies a primary catchment distance of one mile. This is considered a suitable distance for a bike ride or a short drive in a car. This one-mile catchment is intended to capture recreational users travelling from home or elsewhere to a park or facility by way of bike, bus, or automobile.

Walkable Access analysis uses a smaller catchment distance to capture users within walking distance of recreation facilities. This distance can range from as short as 1/4 mile to as long as 1/2 mile, depending on the study area. For the City of Meridian, a 1/2 mile catchment buffer was used. This catchment distance used in GRASP® studies represents a fifteen-minute walk for most users.

Academic and professional research is inconclusive on the topic of just how far people are willing to walk for recreation. Some agencies have used 1/2 mile as a walkable distance in studies they have conducted. Other studies in this country and internationally have used one mile or one kilometer (.62 miles) as walkable distances.

Assumptions

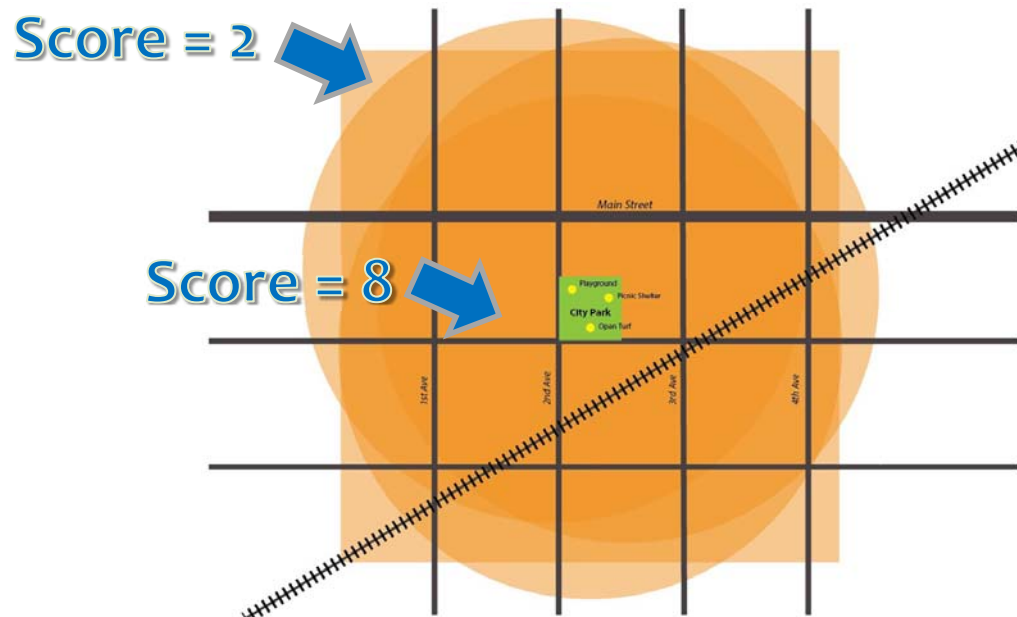
1. Proximity equates to access. This means that the presence of a recreational facility within a specific distance indicates that facility is accessible from a location. “Accessibility” in this analysis does not refer specifically to ADA accessibility.
2. General access equates to proximity of 1 mile, a reasonable distance for a drive in a car.
3. Walkable access equates to proximity of 1/2 mile, a reasonable distance attainable in 15 minutes walking at a leisurely pace.

Level of Service Analysis

Maps and data quantifications produced using the GRASP® methodology are known as *perspectives*. Each perspective is a model of how service is being provided across the study area. The model can be further analyzed to derive statistical information about service in a variety of ways. Maps are utilized along with tables and charts to provide benchmarks a community may use to determine its success in providing services.

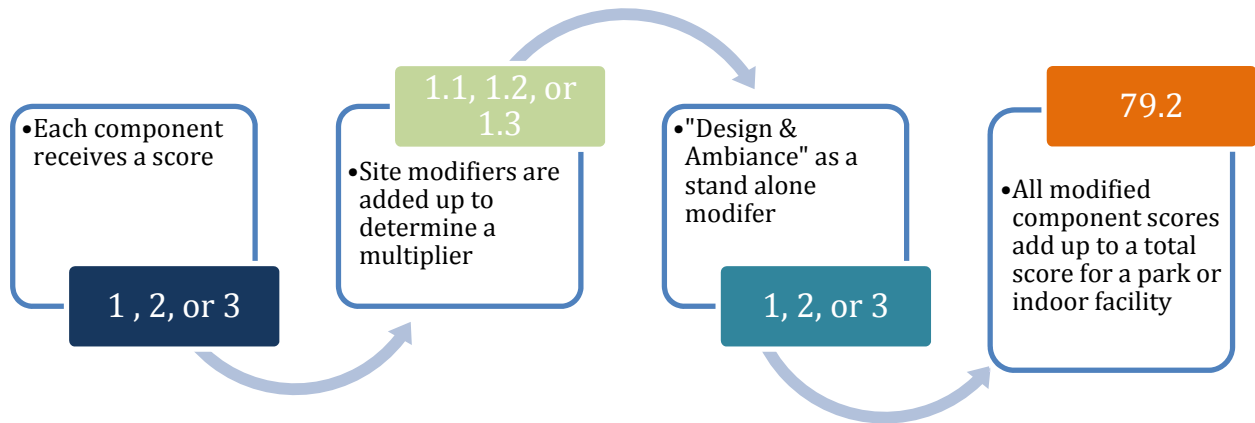
The score of any component is reflected at any point within a catchment area that surrounds it. As illustrated in **Figure 12**, these areas are overlapped and used to calculate a total GRASP® Level of Service score for any given point within the study area, in this case the City of Meridian. When service areas for multiple components are plotted on a map, a picture emerges that represents the cumulative level of service provided by that set of components in a geographic area. This process yields the data used to create all perspective maps and analytical charts. The graphic below illustrates the process assuming all three components and the park boundary itself, and thus all catchments, are scored a “2.”

Figure 13: GRASP® Catchment and Scoring Example



A basic algorithm is used to calculate scoring totals for every park and indoor facility in the inventory and is illustrated in **Figure 13**.

Figure 14: GRASP® Scoring Calculation



Perspective maps and charts are produced by applying the GRASP® process to the City of Meridian inventory. Shown on a **heat map**, cumulative GRASP® scoring for any part of the study area is represented by darker or lighter shades for higher/lower scores, respectively.

GRASP® recognizes that every agency is unique and should be measured on its own standards. This same data can also be used to portray areas that meet or do not meet a minimum standard, represented by different colors. A **threshold map** displays the data related to a minimum standard GRASP® score, called a **threshold**. A threshold score is normally set by the score of a typical “neighborhood” park within a recreation system but may also be set using a median score, average score, or some other statistical indicator. Based on the consistency in “Neighborhood Parks” in Meridian, a typical neighborhood park equivalent was used in determining the threshold. See **Appendix F** for in-depth discussion on threshold calculation.



Darker and lighter orange shades on a heat map show areas with higher or lower level of service respectively. Also shown are outdoor locations, indoor locations, and city infrastructure.



Purple, yellow, and grey shades on a threshold map show areas that meet the minimum standard, fall below the minimum standard, or have no level of service respectively.

The illustrations above show two common types of perspective maps--the heat map and the threshold map. On a heat map, a darker orange shade results from the overlap of more service areas or areas served by higher quality components. For any given spot on a perspective map there is a GRASP® Level of Service score that reflects cumulative scoring for nearby assets. This perspective shows generally those areas with access to more or better recreation opportunities. The threshold map shows the same data as compared to a minimum standard GRASP® score.

The following sections will discuss the inventory, analysis, and findings from the City of Meridian GRASP® Level of Service Analysis.

C. GRASP® Analysis

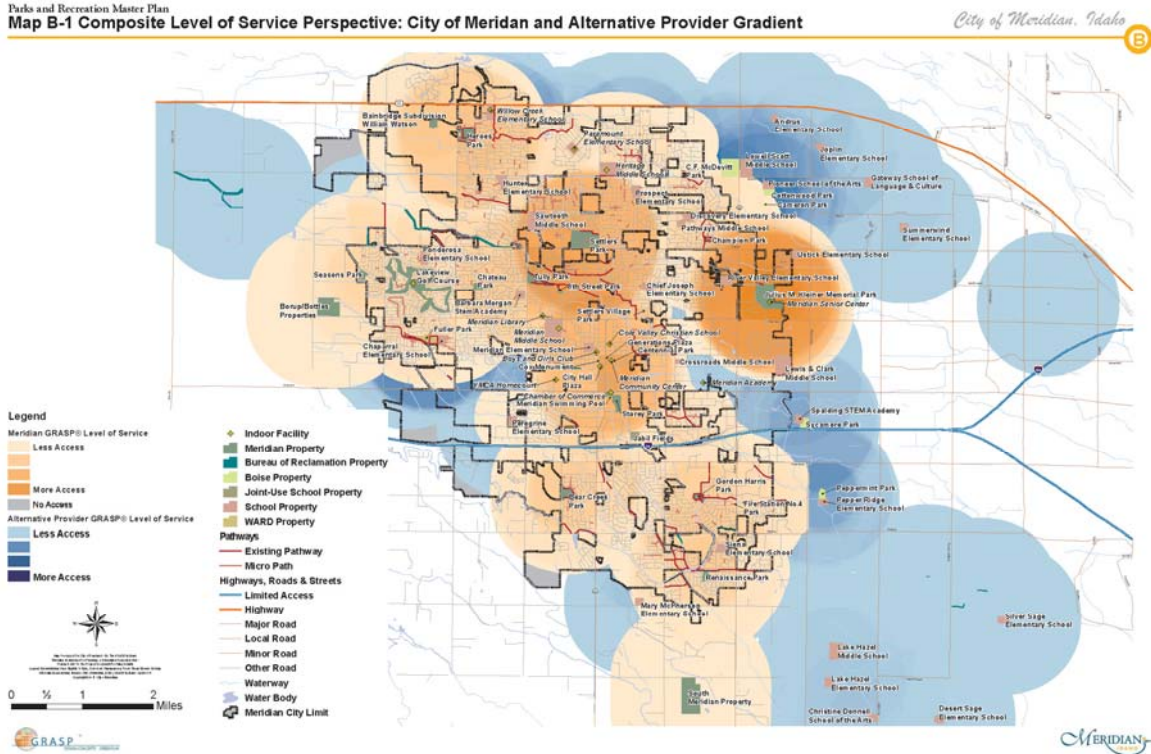
The GRASP® Methodology involves the overlap of mapping, scoring, demographics, and interpretation of the resulting perspectives to yield a picture of recreational service in a study area. Efforts undertaken for the City of Meridian analysis are described in full detail below. Findings and recommendations are summarized in the following section.

Neighborhood Access to All Recreation

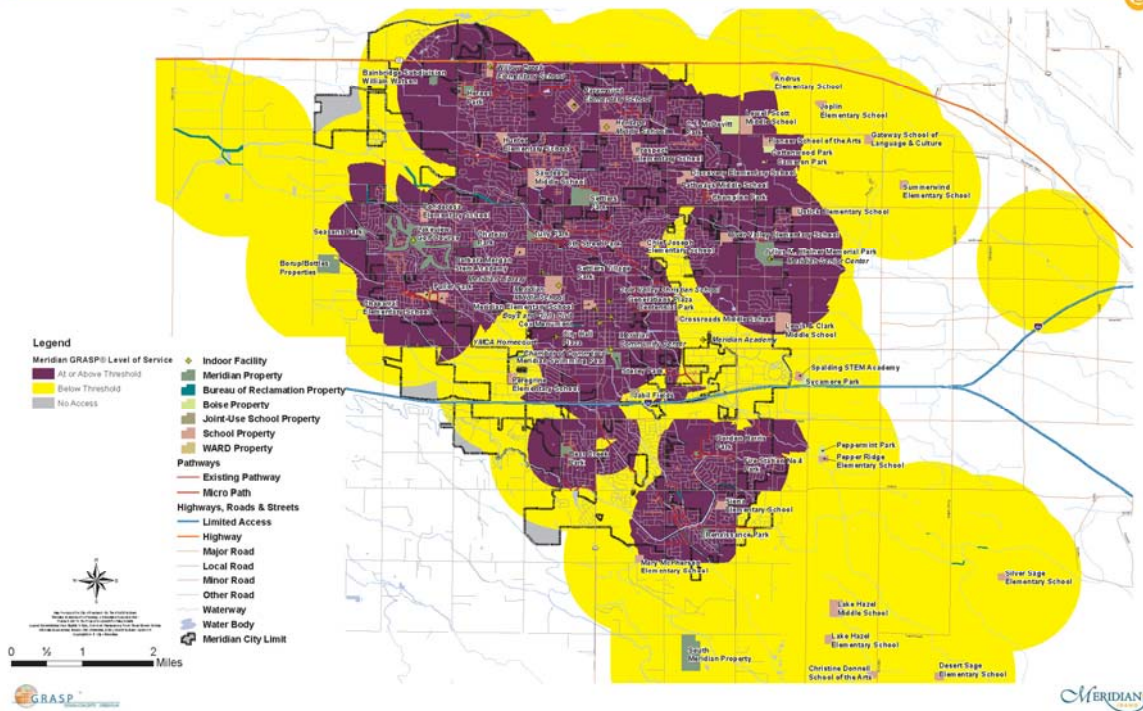
The Level of Service analysis indicates neighborhood access to recreation in the City of Meridian by any means of transportation within a 1- mile radius with a premium for 1/2 mile walkability and is represented in Map Series B.

Map B-1 shows level of service provided by the City of Meridian and Alternative Providers as unique services. Service provided by the City of Meridian is represented in an orange gradient, and service provided by alternative providers in blue gradient. The threshold map, shown in **Map B-5**, displays GRASP® scoring based on a minimum standard GRASP® score, the **threshold**. Values at or above the threshold are displayed as purple, while values below the given threshold are yellow. The analysis in **Map B-5** does not distinguish between ownership and includes all recreation opportunities available to users. A series of analysis iterations (**Maps B-2** through **B-4**) are developed that show levels of service and threshold analysis based on City of Meridian provision and alternative provider provision. Further discussion and **Maps B-2 - B-4** may be found in **Appendix F**.

The heat map, shown in **Map B-1** suggests that the study area has good distribution of facilities and good general access to parks and recreation facilities. In **Map B-5**, areas displayed in purple can be thought of as having adequate level of service. Areas in yellow indicate that service is below threshold. Residents living in areas of dark gray are within the City of Meridian limits but must travel further than one mile to access recreation.



Map B-1: Neighborhood Access to All Recreation in the City of Meridian is displayed here as a heat map, with service from City facilities shown distinct from those of alternative providers.



Map B-5: Neighborhood Access to All Recreation in the City of Meridian is displayed here as a threshold map, with service from all providers analyzed together.

Chart 1 shows statistics for general access to recreation (mapped in **Map B-5**) as compared to the threshold value based on land in the City of Meridian. It shows the percentages of the city limits that either have no service, fall below this threshold value, or exceed this threshold. While 98 percent of the City has access to some recreation, over 3/4 of that land is above threshold. This is a good indication that where service is provided, it is at a high level.

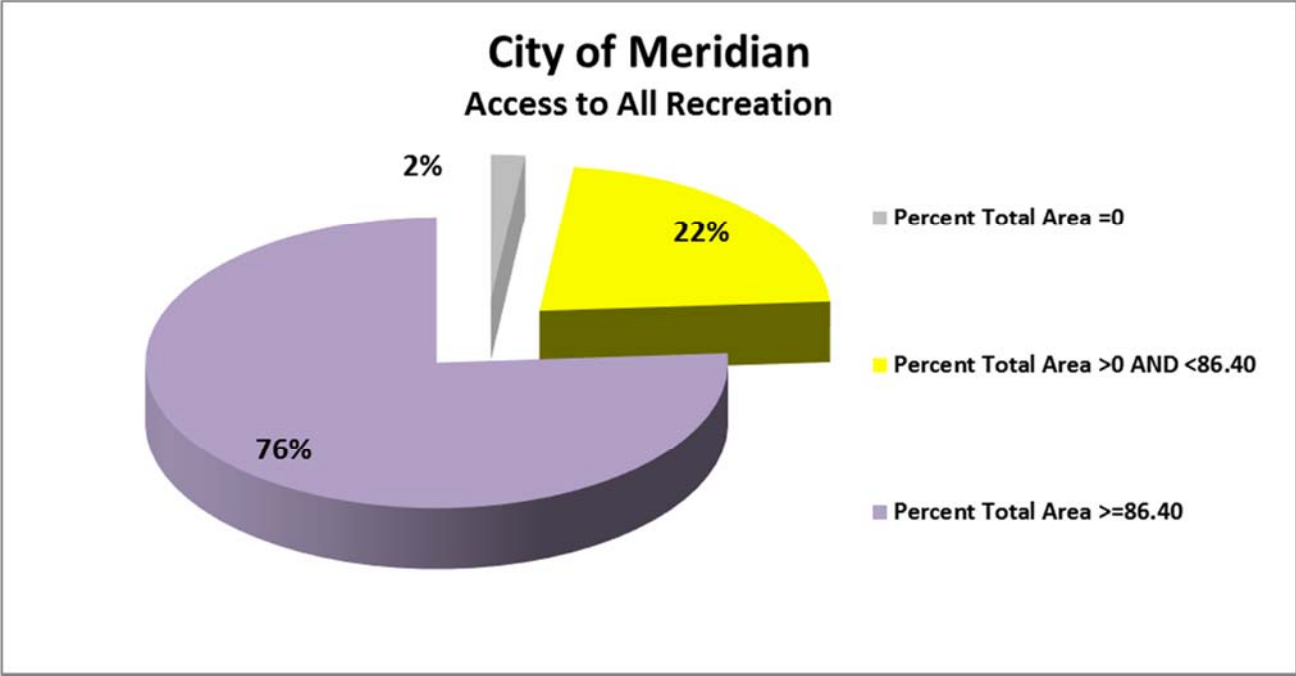


Chart 1: Access to all Recreation Pie Chart

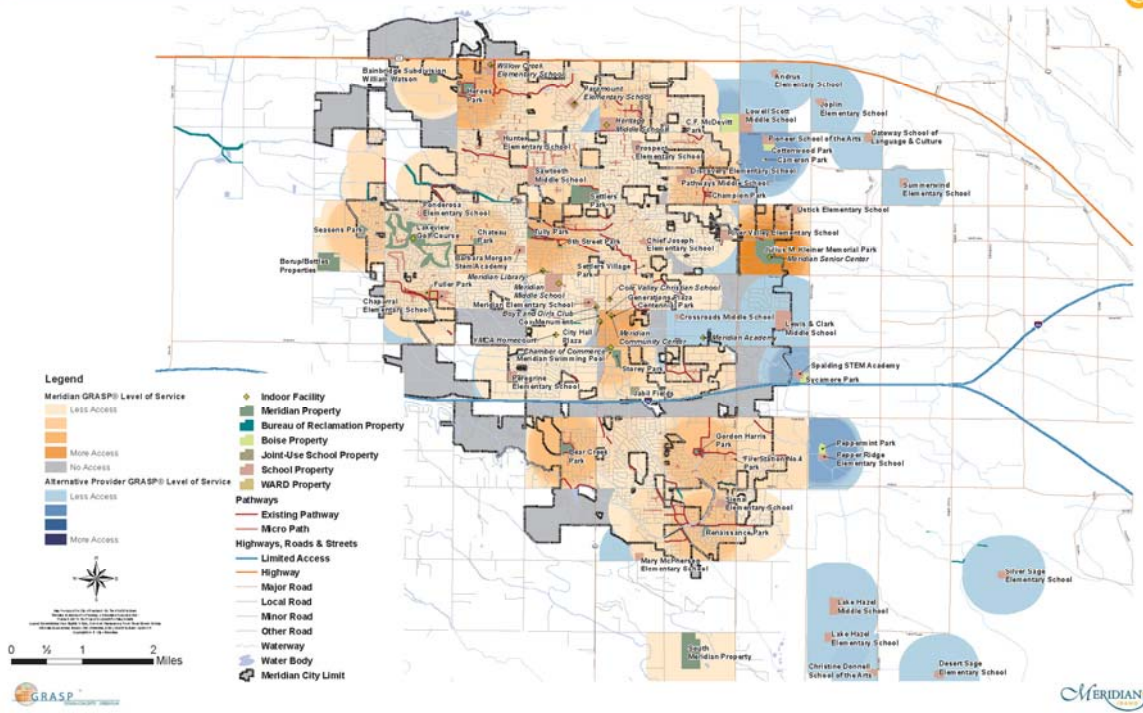
Walkable Access to Recreation

Walkability is a measure of how user-friendly an area is to people travelling on foot. A walkable environment has benefits with regard to public health, the local economy, and quality of life. Many factors influence walkability and include the presence or absence and quality of footpaths, sidewalks or other pedestrian rights-of-way, traffic and road conditions, land use patterns, and safety considerations among others. Perhaps the most significant factors affecting walkability in a study area are barriers.

Barriers are typically major streets and highways, waterways, or railroad tracks that restrict pedestrian or bicycle movement and pose a potential risk to public safety. Barriers were determined for the City of Meridian and used to “clip” the service coverage for the walkable level of service perspective analysis. This accounts for these obstacles as deterrents to active transportation that serves to limit access to recreation.

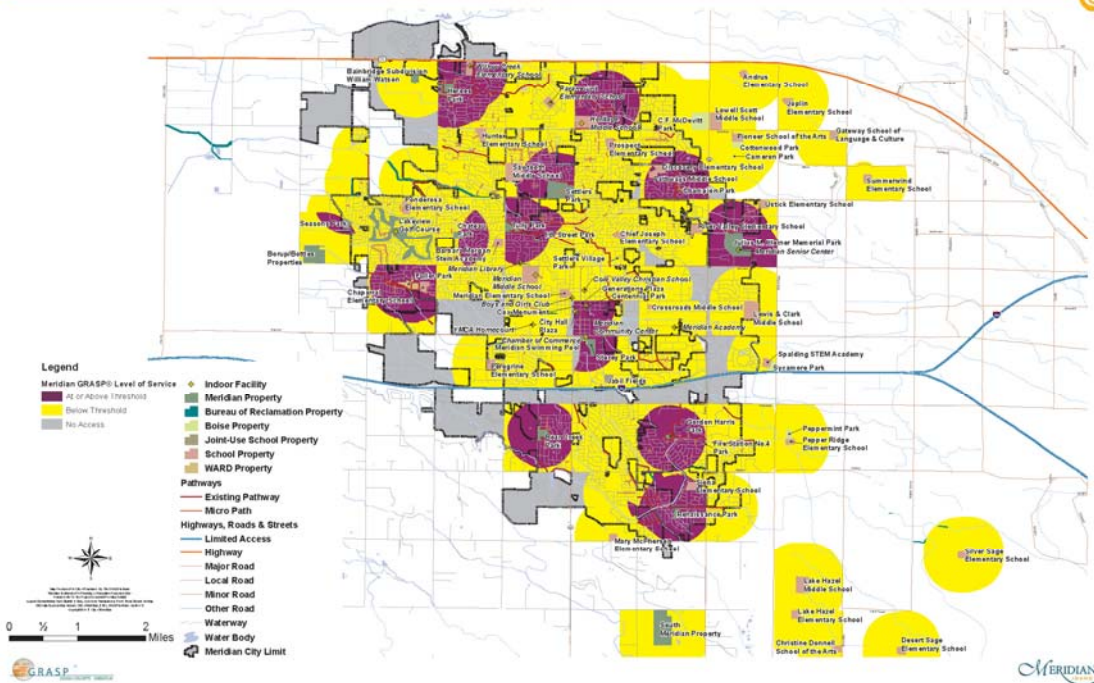
The Walkable Level of Service perspective models access to recreation using a 1/2 mile catchment distance exclusively. This represents a convenient distance to access recreation on foot or by bike and can be achieved by an average person within a 15-minute walk. This analysis does not recognize any service across a barrier.

The walkability heat map in **Map C-1** shows access to recreation in the City of Meridian by walking or other non-motorized travel mode. The effect of the barriers is notable in this perspective map. **Map C-5** displays GRASP® scoring based on the same threshold used in Map Series B. A series of analysis iterations (**Maps C-2** through **C-4**) have been developed that show levels of service and threshold analysis based on City of Meridian provision and alternative provider provision. Further discussion may be found in **Appendix F**.



Map C-1: Walkable Access to Recreation in the City of Meridian is displayed here as a heat map, with service from City facilities shown distinct from those of alternative providers.

Map C-5, shows the combined threshold analysis for walkability with no distinction as to ownership. This perspective map shows significant portions of the City at or above the threshold in walkability but also reveals many areas that fall below threshold and with no service. This analysis indicates that while overall Meridian may not be a very walk-friendly city, there are areas, subdivisions, and neighborhoods that could be considered very walkable.



Map C-5: This threshold map shows Walkable Access to all recreation in the City of Meridian based on all providers. A minimum standard GRASP® score is again used in this perspective to show service above or below threshold from any provider.

Chart 2, shows statistics for walkable access to recreation (as mapped in **Map C-5**) applying a threshold. Based on land area in the City of Meridian. While 81 percent of the City that has walkable access, only 24 percent of total City acres meet threshold, and 57 percent falls below the threshold value. A total of 19 percent of the City is without walkable service within 1/2 mile.

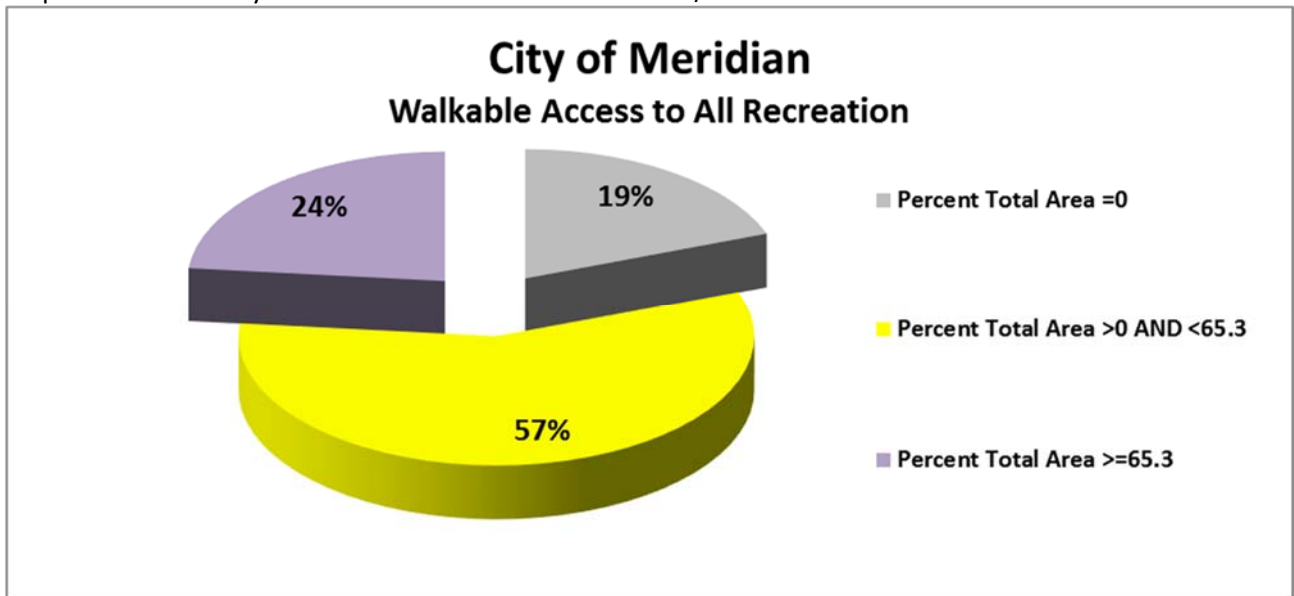


Chart 2: Walkability of City of Meridian by land area

While **Chart 2**, above, refers to the percentage of the City within walking distance of service, it does not tell the whole story. When discussing walkability, it is very important to understand the proximity of parks to population centers. Using the ESRI population database, the percentage of the actual Meridian population can also be determined within the three service levels: at or above threshold, below threshold, and no service. The results of this further analysis are shown in **Chart 3**, below, which indicates that nearly 75 percent of the Meridian population has walkable access to recreation with half of the population at or above threshold. This would indicate that parks are generally well placed in relation to population areas.

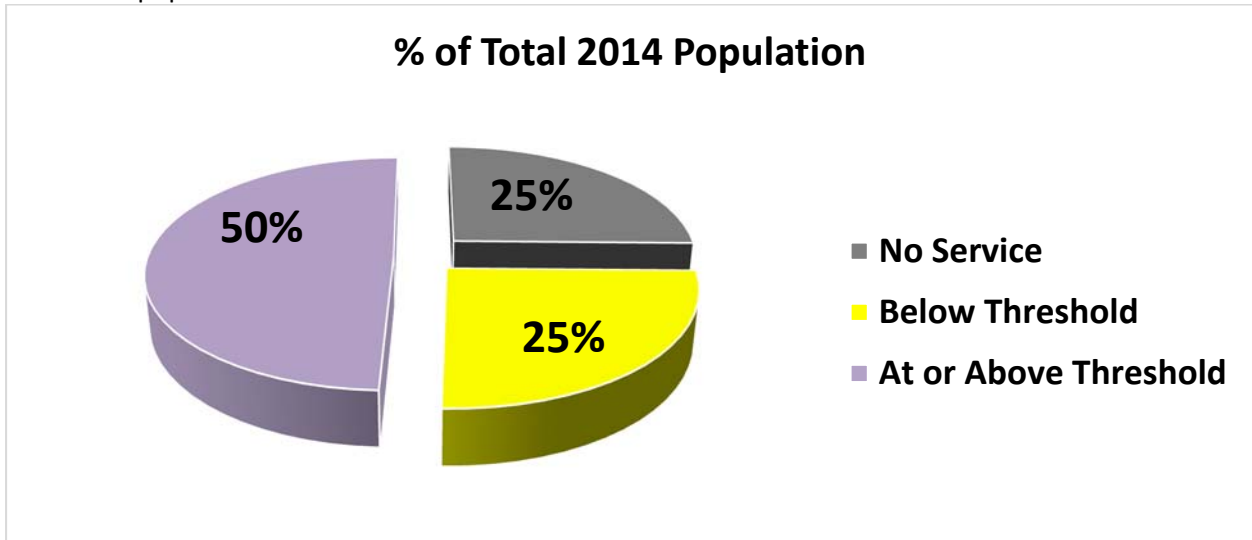


Chart 3: Walkability of City of Meridian by Population

This population analysis can also be broken down further to look at specific portions of the population. **Chart 4** shows that 77 percent of youth (ages 19 and under) live within walking distance of recreation opportunities that were included in this study, further indication that recreation is well located to serve the Meridian population.

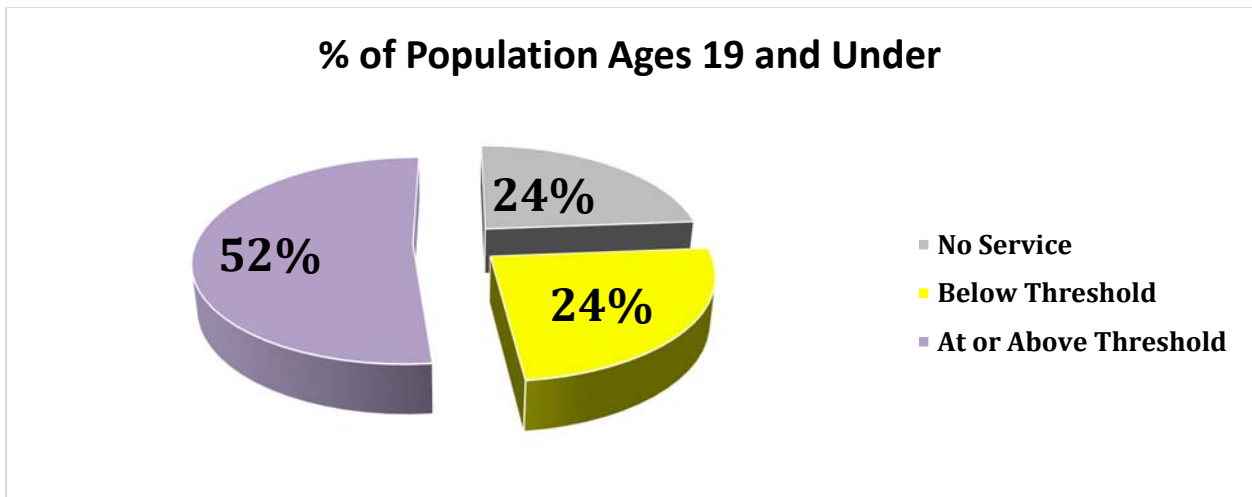


Chart 4: Youth Walkable Access to Recreation

A Note on Utilizing the GRASP® Perspectives

GRASP® perspectives provide a snapshot to benchmark future planning efforts, but it should be noted that these analyses need to be considered along with other indicators. Used in conjunction with other needs assessment tools (such as needs surveys and a public process), GRASP® perspectives can be used to determine if current levels of service are appropriate in a given location. However, it is not necessarily beneficial for all parts of the community to score equally in the analyses. The desired level of service for any particular location will depend on the type of service being analyzed and land use or demographic characteristics of the particular location. Commercial, institutional, and industrial areas might reasonably be expected to have lower levels of service for parks and recreation opportunities than residential areas, for example. All such factors must be accounted for in order to make well informed management decisions.

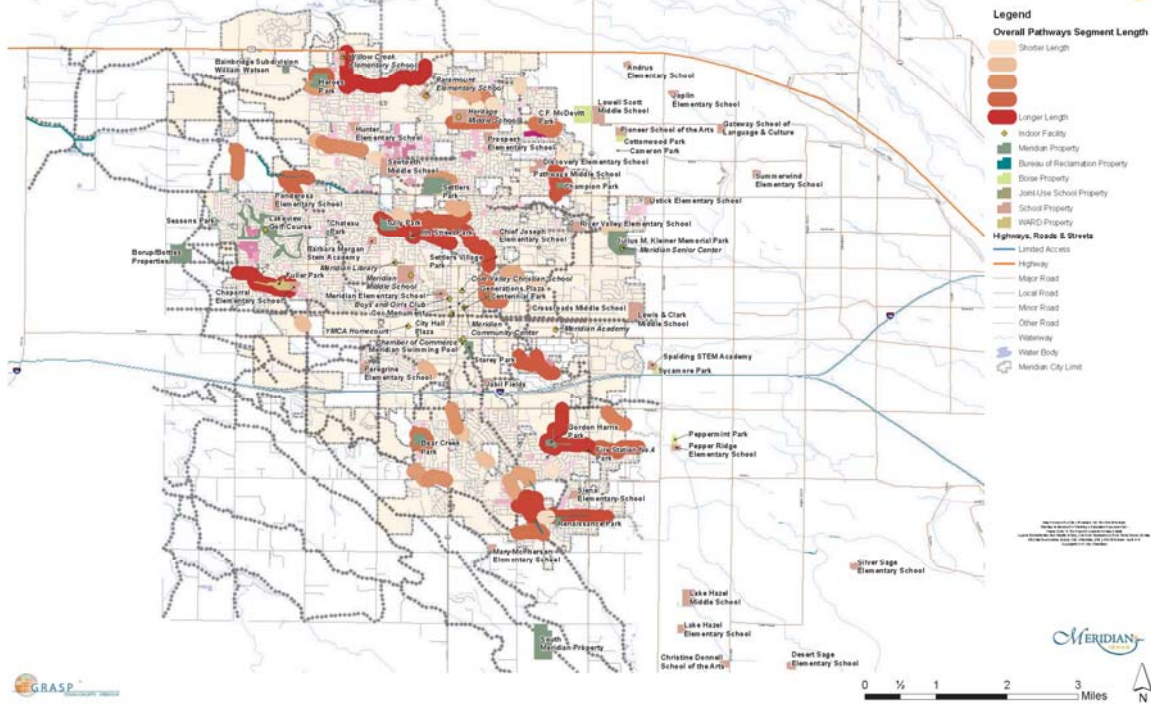
Access to Pathways

In Meridian, as in many cities across the country, pathways are recognized as valuable and desirable components to any recreation system. The following map, **Map D**, shows existing pathways in Meridian, as well as planned or proposed pathways. Meridian residents have access to a number of different types of pathway providers: those pathways provided by the City of Meridian, other public providers such as WARD Parks, and semi-public providers such as Homeowner Associations. Perceived public access may vary greatly based on some of the more restrictive neighborhood pathways. While there are a variety of opportunities to access pathways across the City, public input from this study indicates that expanded access and additional opportunities are needed.

As a pathway system matures, the need emerges to address barriers, such as roadways, waterways, and railroad crossings that separate distinct pathway networks in order to create a truly connected pathway system. A **pathway network** is a part of a pathway system within which major barrier crossings have been addressed and all pathways are connected. Pathway networks within a pathway system are typically separated from each other by such barriers or by missing pathway connections. Signaled crosswalks, pedestrian underpasses, and bridges can be used to help users navigate barriers. New pathways may be added to link trail networks and improve overall connectivity. Most communities have several pathway networks that connect users to common destinations such as schools, shops, restaurants, and civic and religious institutions in addition to parks and recreation facilities. The more integrated these networks, the more connected a community.

In response to public input regarding the need for a connected pathway and pathway system, a basic analysis is used in this mapping (**Map D**) that display longer segments of existing pathways in a darker shade of red. Shorter segments tend towards a light orange shade in this analysis.

Pathways also serve as access to other recreation opportunities. A complete discussion of “Recreational Connectivity can be found later in this document.



Map D: This map shows current, planned, and proposed pathways in the City of Meridian

GRASP® Comparative Data

The GRASP® Index, or the overall GRASP® value per capita, for the City of Meridian is 18. Because every community is unique, there are no standard or “correct” numbers for these. However, it is useful to note that the GRASP® Index for the City of Meridian falls within the mid-range. **Table 7** provides comparative data from other communities. For reference, statistics have been included for other communities of similar size in addition to smaller and larger communities across the country. It is notable that the GRASP® Index score for Meridian is similar or higher than most other cities listed with population in the 90,000 to 116,000 range. Meridian also has one of the higher “average number of components per site” and “average score per site” if compared to other cities. These are prime indicators of the well-developed Neighborhood and Community Parks in Meridian vs. other communities. Additionally, the average level of service per acre served and percentage of area with level of service are the highest of other cities of similar size. Finally, the Meridian statistics include currently undeveloped park lands that once developed will further increase the overall level of service value.

Table 7: GRASP® Comparative Data

STATE	CITY	YEAR	POPULATION	STUDY AREA SIZE (ACRES)	# OF SITES (PARKS, FACILITIES, ETC)	TOTAL # OF COMPONENTS	AVG. # COMPONENTS PER SITE	TOTAL GRASP® VALUE (ENTIRE SYSTEM)	GRASP® INDEX	AVG. SCORE/SITE	% of TOTAL AREA w/LOS >0	AVG. LOS PER ACRE SERVED	NUMBER OF COMPONENTS PER POPULATION	AVERAGE LOS/POP DEN PER ACRE	POPULATION DENSITY (PER ACRE)
VT	Essex	2011	28,858	25,230	47	153	3.3	895	31	19.0	72%	11.0	5	10	1.1
ID	Post Falls	2011	29,062	24,928	35	271	7.7	1005	35	28.7	71%	169	9	145	1.2
OR	Oregon City	2006	29,540	5,944	51	215	4.2	NA	NA	NA	86%	45	7	9	5.0
CO	Commerce City	2006	36,049	26,270	90	357	4.0	1047	29.0	11.6	73%	113	10	82	1.4
CA	La Quinta	2006	39,614	22,829	27	143	5.3	611	15	22.6	79%	78.0	4	45	1.7
UT	South Jordan	2006	44,276	14,081	48	172	3.6	1578	36	32.9	44%	29.8	4	9	3.1
CA	Palm Springs	2013	44,468	60,442	16	162	10.1	1149	26	71.8	69%	164.9	4	223	0.7
NM	Farmington	2014	46,815	21,179	98	354	3.6	2204	48	22.5	97%	223	8	101	2.2
OR	Corvallis	2011	54,462	18,006	54	309	5.7	2217	41	41.1	93%	289	6	96	3.0
MO	Liberty	2013	56,041	53,161	39	298	7.6	607	11	15.6	57%	107	5	102	1.1
MA	Brookline	2009	60,000	NA	74	128	1.7	551	9	7.4	NA	NA	2	NA	NA
ID	Meridian	2015	94,289	18,159	21*	207*	9.9*	1947	18	52.1	98%	196	2	37.8	5.2
FL	Winter Haven		100,000	42,191	31	230	7.4	328	3	10.6	37%	175	2	73.8	2.4
TX	Pearland	2015	101,900	30,468	21	164	7.8	1556	15	74.1	85%	162	2	55.4	2.9
OR	North Clackamas	2012	115,924	23,040	93	295	3.2	2207	19	23.7	97	183	3	36.4	5.0
CO	Fort Collins		130,681	33,388	45	619	13.8	2675	20	59.4	83%	217	5	55.4	3.9
NC	Cary	2011	139,382	35,578	43	562	13.1	2843	20	66.1	97%	221	4	56.4	3.9
IA	Cedar Rapids		143,788	45,987	98	759	7.7	2467	17	25.2	86%	300	5	95.8	3.1
CO	Lakewood		144,369	27,494	105	738	7.0	6476	45	61.7	100	NA	5		5.3
IN	South Bend	2011	164,396	65,387	64	339	5.3	2417	15	37.8	72%	130	2	51.7	2.5
FL	Ft Lauderdale		181,095	23,230	91	483	5.3	2662	15	29.3	98	221	3	28.4	7.8
VA	Arlington		190,000	NA	225	494	2.2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3		
WA	Tacoma		203,984	34,133	104	488	4.7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2		6.0
OR	THPRD	2012	224,627	29,097	253	1211	5	6843	30	27	100%	489	5	63	7.7

*Includes City of Meridian assets and facilities only

D. Other Types of Analysis

Capacities Analysis

One of the traditional tools for evaluating service for parks and recreation is capacity analysis. This analysis compares the total acres and quantity of assets to current and future population. **Table 8** shows the current capacities for all park land and selected components in the City of Meridian. Along with community and staff input, this information can be used to project future needs to accommodate population growth.

Based on projected population growth in Meridian and current ratio of component to that population, the City of Meridian and/or other providers would need to add 130 acres of park land by 2020 to maintain the current level of service. This could be a single 130 acre park or multiple parks. Other projected needs include: (4) ball fields, (7) multi-purpose fields, (3) tennis courts, (5) picnic shelters, (6) basketball courts, (7) loop walks, (3) horseshoe pits, (8) open turf areas, (1) volleyball court, and (12) playgrounds for example. These could be part of new parks or schools or added to existing parks.

Table 8: Capacities LOS for Community Components

Capacities LOS for Community Components														
Meridian, Idaho	Jun-15													
		2015 GIS Acres	Aquatic Feature, Spray	Ballfield	Basketball	Disc Golf	Horseshoes	Loop Walk	MP Field, all sizes	Open Turf	Playground, all sizes	Shelters, All Sizes	Tennis	Volleyball
INVENTORY														
City of Meridian+		249.4	2	12	11	2	19	20	18	9	13	25	10	1
Schools		515.7	0	5	20	0	0	22	27	32	26	3	6	1
Identified Alternative Providers*		87	0	10	8	1	0	3	2	9	37	6	1	2
Total		852.1	2	27	39	3	19	45	47	50	76	34	17	4
CURRENT RATIO PER POPULATION														
CURRENT POPULATION 2015	94,289													
Current Ratio per 1000 Population		9.04	0.02	0.29	0.41	0.03	0.20	0.48	0.50	0.53	0.81	0.36	0.18	0.04
Population per component		111	47,145	3,492	2,418	31,430	4,963	2,095	2,006	1,886	1,241	2,773	5,546	23,572
PROJECTED POPULATION - 2020	108,701													
Total # needed to maintain current ratio of all existing facilities at projected population		982	2	31	45	3	22	52	54	58	88	39	20	5
<i>Number that should be added by all providers to achieve current ratio at projected population</i>		130	0	4	6	0	3	7	7	8	12	5	3	1

*Incomplete data available on all alternative provider park boundaries; +Only includes currently developed or planned and funded Meridian Parks. Does not include future parks or golf course

GRASP® Index for Specific Components

A capacities analysis is based purely on the quantity of assets without regard to quality or functionality. Higher LOS is achieved only by adding assets, regardless of the condition or quality of those assets. In theory, service provided by assets should be based on their quality as well as their quantity. An example will help illustrate.

In the case of Meridian, playgrounds currently score at 125 and have a GRASP® Index of 1.3. Based on population projections by the year 2020, Meridian and its partners would need to provide an additional 19.1 points worth of GRASP® scoring through playgrounds to maintain the current level of service per capita. Increases in GRASP® score can occur through upgrades to current components, addition of new components, or a combination of upgrades and additions. For reference, a typical component located in a typical park with typical comfort and convenience modifiers equates to a GRASP® score of 4.8 points.

This is especially useful in communities where the sustainability of the parks and recreation system over time is important. In the past, the focus was on maintaining adequate capacity as population growth occurred. Today, many communities are reaching build-out while others have seen population growth slow. The focus in such communities has shifted to maintaining current levels of service as components age or become obsolete, or as needs change. The GRASP® Index can be used to track LOS under such conditions over time.

Table 9 shows the GRASP® Indices for the various components based on the 2015 population.

The authors of this report have developed a tool that incorporates both quantity and quality for any given set of assets into a single indicator called the GRASP® Index. This index is a per capita ratio of the functional score per population in thousands.

The GRASP® Index can move up or down over time as either quantity or quality changes. For example, if all of the playgrounds in a community are allowed to deteriorate over time, but none are added or taken away, the LOS provided by the playgrounds is decreasing.

Similarly, if all of the playgrounds are replaced with new and better ones, but no additional playgrounds are added, the LOS increases even though the per-capita quantity of playgrounds did not change.

GRASP® score for any component is also directly impacted by the Design & Ambiance score, as well as comfort and convenience modifiers of any given park. Improvements or upgrades to these park features will also impact the scoring.

Table 9: GRASP® Community Component Index

Projected Community Components GRASP® Index 2020				
	Current Population 2015	94,289	Projected Population 2020	108,701
	Total GRASP® Community Score per component type	GRASP® score per 1000 population (GRASP® Index)	Total GRASP® score needed at projected population	Additional GRASP® score needed
Aquatic Feature, Spray	18.6	0.2	21.4	2.8
Ballfield	106.5	1.1	122.8	16.3
Basketball	88.5	0.9	102.0	13.5
Community Gardens	11.7	0.1	13.5	1.8
Horseshoes	180.0	1.9	207.5	27.5
Loop Walks	80.4	0.9	92.7	12.3
MP Field, all sizes	131.5	1.4	151.6	20.1
Open Turf	75.5	0.8	87.0	11.5
Passive Nodes	74.6	0.8	86.0	11.4
Playground, all sizes	125.0	1.3	144.1	19.1
Public Art	44.7	0.5	51.5	6.8
Shelter, all sizes	189.6	2.0	218.6	29.0
Tennis	137.6	1.5	158.6	21.0

E. Summary of Findings

Several general findings were revealed by the City of Meridian GRASP® Analysis. These may be summarized as follows:

For neighborhood access to parks and recreation, Meridian offers:

- A wide variety of well distributed recreational opportunities.
- High quality and well maintained parks.
- Good access with over 75 percent of land area above threshold when considering all providers.
- Definite distinction between “Community Parks” and “Neighborhood Parks.”
- An overall high level of service if accessed by an automobile.
- High scoring “Regional Parks” or “Community Parks.”
- A high number of components and average score per site when compared to some other communities.
- Some large “pockets” of high level of service.
- Great restroom standards.

For walkable level of service:

- While “Neighborhood Parks” often score high enough to meet the “threshold,” a lack of pathway access often keeps an area below the threshold mark.
- Some parks, especially “Neighborhood Parks,” lack unique or identifiable character.
- Alternative providers are an important supplement to Meridian’s “Neighborhood” level of service.
- There is heavy reliance on alternative providers (including schools) for walkable neighborhood level of service in many areas, and the quality of alternative providers’ parks vary greatly across the system.
- Demographic analysis shows good distribution of parks where young people live with over 75 percent of 0-19 age group having walkable access to some recreation service.
- There is a need to identify and collect inventory data on the remaining alternative provider parks/facilities.
- Access to a quality, connected pathway system is limited and greatly impacts overall walkable level of service in Meridian.

For pathways and pathway access:

- There a variety of pathways are available across the City, but they are not meeting the needs and demands of the community.
- Many of the pathways within Meridian are not connected to the larger overall pathway system.
- A significant portion of these pathways may have limited or restricted access based on locations within subdivisions.
- Pathway access is notably absent from some Meridian residential neighborhoods.

Based on projected population growth over the next 5-7 years, Meridian and its partners need:

- Additional park land and components added to the system to maintain current level of service.
- To improve or upgrade existing components to maintain current level of service.

Preliminary Recommendations

- Improve recreational connectivity through neighborhood pathway connections and park “spurs.”
- Continue to improve level of service especially at “Neighborhood” Parks through upgrades or additional components if pathways cannot be added.
- Work with neighborhoods to create an individual identity for each neighborhood park.
- Work with alternative providers to increase level of service in areas Meridian doesn’t have neighborhood parks but level of service is low.
- Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks.

F. Park Classifications

The Nature of Classification Systems

Park classification systems are commonly utilized by park and recreation agencies. Most park and recreation agencies organize lands and facilities into various classes, types, categories, or other schemes as a planning and management tool. However, once established, classification schemes are rarely modified and over time may lose effectiveness as a tool, due to changing values of an agency or a community. Purposes for classifying lands and facilities into different categories include:

- Determination of policies and strategies for management and operation of lands and facilities.
- Definition of categories of need for land and facilities and identifying potential acquisitions to meet those needs.
- Establishment of policies and strategies for land acquisition, including exactions, easements, leases, and other strategies, in addition to fee-simple purchase.
- Establishment of benchmarks and goals for providing services and measure the results of efforts towards meeting these.

In 1995, the National Park and Recreation Association published the following classification table. At the time it represented the most recent thinking on classification and standards for parklands and facilities. NRPA has since moved in the direction of GIS mapping of Park and Recreation Lands, The GRASP® methodology is one example of a GIS driven, component-based system that may be used for both classification and level of service analysis.

NRPA Parks and Open Space Classifications (1995)

Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table			
Parks and Open Space Classifications			
Classification	General Description	Location	Size Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs	Less 1/4 mile distance in residential setting	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal activity and passive recreation	Up to to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal
School-Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use	Determined by location of school district property	Variable depends on function
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods within a 3-mile distance	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres
Large Urban Park	Large Urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres with 75 or more acres being optimal
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics or buffering	Resource availability and Opportunity	Variable
Greenways	Effectively tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and Opportunity	Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community	Strategically located Community-wide facilities	Determined by projected demand usually a minimum of 25 acres with 40 to 80 acres being optimal
Special Use Park	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use	Variable – dependent on specific use	Variable
Private Park/Recreation Facility	Parks and recreational facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system	Variable – dependent on specific use	Variable

Based on a modified 1995 NRPA Classification System the Meridian Park System would breakdown as follows:

Regional Park	Julius M. Kleiner Memorial Park
	Settlers Park
Community Park	Bear Creek Park
	Heroes Park
	Storey Park
	Tully Park
Neighborhood Park	8th Street Park
	Champion Park
	Chateau Park
	Gordon Harris Park
	Renaissance Park
	Seasons Park
Mini-Park	Centennial Park
	Cox Monument
	Fire Station No.4 Park

Special Use Park	Lakeview Golf Course
	City Hall Plaza
	Generations Plaza
	Heritage Ball Fields
	Jabil Fields
Undeveloped/Future Park Lands	Borup/Bottles Properties
	South Meridian Property
	William Watson
Private Park/Recreation Facility	HOA (Various Other Parks)
Natural Resource Areas	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Undeveloped
School-Park	Andrus Elementary School
	Barbara Morgan Stem Academy
	Chaparral Elementary School
	Chief Joseph Elementary School
	Christine Donnell School of the Arts
	Crossroads Middle School
	Desert Sage Elementary School
	Discovery Elementary School
	Gateway School
	Heritage Middle School
	Hunter Elementary School
	Joplin Elementary School
	Lake Hazel Elementary School
	Lake Hazel Middle School
	Lewis & Clark Middle School
	Lowell Scott Middle School
	Mary McPherson Elementary School
	Meridian Elementary School
	Meridian Middle School
	Paramount Elementary School
	Pathways Middle School
	Pepper Ridge Elementary School
	Peregrine Elementary School
	Pioneer School of the Arts
	Ponderosa Elementary School
	Prospect Elementary School
	River Valley Elementary School
	Sawtooth Middle School
	Siena Elementary School
	Silver Sage Elementary School
	Spalding STEM Academy
	Summerwind Elementary School
Ustick Elementary School	
Willow Creek Elementary	

Other Public or Semi-Public Providers	C.F. McDevitt Park
	Cameron Park
	Cottonwood Park
	Fuller Park
	Meridian Swimming Pool
	Peppermint Park
	Settlers Village Park
	Sycamore Park

A good classification system should address such a variety of purposes in ordering park facilities. Classifications must be clear, straightforward, and understandable, especially to agency administrators and staff. Often classification systems are adopted that are ambiguous or use conflicting criteria for defining individual classes of lands and facilities. One example might be a classification system based on both parcel size **and** uses that occur within a parcel.

Planners and administrators often try to do too many things at once within a single scheme. A common failing of classification systems is that they tend to be used based on parcel size rather than a land use basis. Often, a large parcel is owned within which a wide and diverse set of uses is contained, and there is no single classification that encompasses the full range of purposes that the parcel addresses. So a classification is chosen from among the possible choices, but it is not able to describe all of the functions of that parcel. A common alternative is to develop a new classification that fits the parcel, but over time, this leads to too many classifications and becomes unwieldy and less useful for its original purposes.

Consider a site that is located in a residential area on 20 or 30 acres that is part wooded area and part developed park, with a playground intended for use by the neighborhood but not much else. This site would be classified a neighborhood park based on use, but a community park based on size. An exception must be made to the standard in order to assign it to one classification or the other.

That same park might have a large lawn area that is used for soccer games. The combination of size and use would place it in the community park category, but everyone considers it a neighborhood park because of where it is located and the people it serves. Another exception is made to the standard. Or a new classification is created to address the unique situation. Over time, other unique situations occur, and before long there are too many classifications and/or exceptions and classification system becomes unwieldy. The ambiguity and number of exceptions that the classification scheme creates degrades its effectiveness as a planning tool. Ultimately such a scheme comes to be seen as arbitrary as it is not defensible as a means of justifying decisions.

Classifications are of relatively little importance to the general public. A visitor chooses to visit a particular park or facility for the amenities it contains, not based on its classification. A park name that includes its classification, such as Meridian Community Park, may suggest to the potential visitor what amenities it contains, but the choice to visit is still based on the amenities that are actually found there regardless of name or classification. Classifications are most valuable for internal use by an agency.

Use- or Function-Based Level-of-Service Classification

Another useful classification system is applied on a land-use basis rather than a parcel basis. To do this, first list the various types of uses found within the agency's lands and facilities. Sort these into helpful categories that have relevance to the planning, operation, and management of the assets. For example, if sports oriented parks are to be managed differently than neighborhood parks, a clear and understandable definition of what uses constitute a neighborhood park should be developed. Once the use categories are defined, all of the land and facilities owned and managed by an agency should be evaluated to identify which parts of them fall within each of the various classifications. This should be done on a use basis rather than a parcel basis. This means that a sports oriented park may be defined by boundaries that reflect the use, and these boundaries may not necessarily coincide with parcel boundaries (though often they will). These boundaries can be drawn in a GIS system and stored on separate layers from the parcel boundaries. By creating a new layer in the GIS with classifications based on use or functions, the classification system can be used more effectively to measure and manage the assets of the agency.

Component-Based Level-of-Service Classification

In general, the current Meridian Park Classification System appears to work well with the current inventory. Parks or facilities within each classification fall within reasonable ranges for acres and quantity of GRASP® components. A classification system that combines the current system with the GRASP® component based system would mean only a minor adjustment to this system. The following table characterizes the proposed classification system and offers general description and proposed GRASP® ranges based on current conditions. In this system, the primary focus or intended function of the park or facility dictates the GRASP® level of service.

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Proposed Classification	Proposed General Description	General Design and Development Guidelines	Size and Street Frontage Guidelines	Proposed <u>Unique</u> GRASP® Component Range based on Current Inventory	Proposed <u>Total</u> GRASP® Component Range based on Current Inventory
Regional Park (Large Urban Park)	Serve a broad purpose to the community and region while still providing adequate neighborhood level of service to adjacent residents. Focus is on components that occur in quantities, size and design to serve large groups or community wide events. May serve users from across city or region. Because of service area requires adequate parking facilities.	Appropriate components may include but not be limited to: Destination Playground Dog Park Sports Fields Splash Pads Event Space Open Turf Shelter Basketball, Tennis, Pickleball, etc. Loop Walk Public Art Typical Comfort and Convenience Amenities (Picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, restroom, etc)	50+ acres based on current inventory Full access on at least two sides of park. At least one side of the park should have access from a collector or arterial street.	15 to 21	39+
Community Park	Serve a broad purpose to the community while still providing adequate neighborhood level of service to adjacent residents. Focus is on components that occur in quantities, size and design to serve large groups or community wide events. Generally serves users within 1-3 mile radius. Requires adequate parking to minimize neighborhood conflict.	Appropriate components may include but not be limited to: Destination Playground Dog Park Sports Fields Open Turf Shelter Basketball or Other Courts Loop Walk Public Art Typical Comfort and Convenience Amenities (Picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, restroom, etc)	15 to 30 acres based on current inventory Visible from adjoining street and street frontage on at least two sides with 400 feet minimum	7 to 9	8 to 15
Neighborhood Park	The basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Level of service is primarily provided to individual, families and small groups through unique components. Generally serves residents within 1/2 mile walking distance up to one mile and limited on-site parking provided.	Appropriate components may include but not be limited to: Local Playground Open Turf Shelter Basketball or Other Court Game Loop Walk Public Art Typical Comfort and Convenience Amenities (Picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, restroom, etc)	.5 to 11 acres based on current inventory (City Standard Size is 7 acres) Visible from adjoining street and 200 feet of street frontage	5 to 6	4.5 to 6
Special Use Park	Covers a broad range of parks and recreational facilities oriented toward single-purpose use, limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Appropriate components may vary based on use. Typical Comfort and Convenience Amenities (Picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, restroom, etc)	Varies by use Street frontage may vary by use and size	Varies	Varies
Sports Park	Sport oriented facility.	Appropriate components may vary based on use. Typical Comfort and Convenience Amenities (Picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, restroom, etc)	Varies by use Street frontage may vary by use and size	Varies	Varies

Based on existing conditions, the current parks would fall into the following classifications.

Proposed Classification	Location	Current Number of Unique GRASP® Components	Current Number of Total GRASP® Components	GIS Acres
Regional Park (Large Urban Park)	Julius M. Kleiner Park	21	39.5	57.9921
	Settlers Park	15	55	56.1231
Community Park	Bear Creek Park	7	8	18.8019
	Heroes Park	9	15	30.1501
	Storey Park	7	11	17.9043
	Tully Park	7	9	18.4778
Neighborhood Park	8th Street Park	3	3	2.7829
	Centennial Park	5	4.5	0.4520
	Champion Park	5	5	5.9830
	Chateau Park	6	6	6.7163
	Gordon Harris Park	5	5	11.1370
	Renaissance Park	5	5	6.5264
	Seasons Park	6	6	6.9533
Special Use Park	City Hall Plaza	5	5	0.9279
	Cox Monument	3	3	0.1082
	Fire Station No.4 Park	1	1	0.5906
	Generations Plaza	3	3	0.2478
Sports Park	Lakeview Golf Course	2	2	119.4263
	Heritage Ball Fields	3	8	22.6860
	Jabil Fields	1	2	8.3980

G. Urban Forestry Management Plan

Introduction

Urban Forest Overview

This chapter is intended as a beginning to formal planning for Meridian's urban forest, a summary of data, and strategic objectives that will serve as a springboard to more detailed planning efforts in the future.

There are currently 5,000 trees in 255 acres of City parks, the golf course, and other parcels of land owned and/or maintained by the City of Meridian. Per the objectives of the comprehensive

plan, developed park land is expected to increase by an additional 206 acres by 2025. This translates to an Urban Forest of around 7,000 trees.



Based on the Treasure Valley Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Assessment (full report can be found at: <http://www.tvcanopy.net/resources/>) completed in 2013, the City of Meridian has a seven percent urban tree canopy that provides a multitude of ecosystem benefits annually to the citizens of the City, including:

- Stormwater: 8.6 million gallons, a value of \$76,400 in mitigated stormwater infrastructure costs
- Air Quality: 40.6 tons for a value of \$513,000 in reduced adverse human health impacts
- Energy Conservation: \$140,400 in reduced summer cooling costs through shading of residential homes

Urban Forest Stakeholders

Proper care of existing trees and growth of the urban forest for community benefit will involve participation by the following stakeholders:

- **City of Meridian Departments**
Meridian Development Corporation (MDC)
The City Partners with MDC for construction of the downtown tree planter box replacements, as well as sharing costs for the construction of new boxes driven by new development.
- **Ada County Highway District (ACHD)**
The City has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ada County Highway District wherein the city maintains the tree boxes and the trees, mitigates for sidewalk trip hazards, and shares cost with ACHD on some sidewalk and curb repairs related to trees in public rights-of-way in the downtown core geographic area.

- **West ADA School District (WASD)**
The City partners with the West Ada School District each year to host an Arbor Day celebration. Additional efforts, both present and future, will include the planting and maintenance of trees on WASD property.
- **Idaho Power Company (IPC)**
The City currently partners with Idaho Power Company to host the annual tree distribution events for the Treasure Valley Shade Tree Project (<http://www.tvcanopy.net/treasure-valley-shade-trees/>). Trees are then planted on private property in locations determined to help reduce future energy costs by providing shade for homes and buildings.
- **Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)**
The Idaho Department of Lands partners with the City to host an annual Arbor Day Celebration. They also provide grants to help fund Arbor Day Celebrations.
- **Treasure Valley Canopy Network (TVCN)**
The City partners with the Treasure Valley Canopy Network on a number of initiatives that have an impact on water quality, air quality, energy conservation, and overall community enhancement through strategic investment in community infrastructure (www.tvcanopy.net).
- **Others**
 - Landscape architects and design professionals
 - Local nurseries
 - Neighborhood groups
 - Community volunteers and citizens
 - Downtown business owners
 - Developers who plan to build or renovate downtown

Importance of the Urban Forest to Meridian and Treasure Valley Communities

The benefits of trees to an urban environment are varied and significant. These include:

- Energy savings/passive energy conservation achieved by the shading of homes and paved surfaces
- Shade, for the health, safety, and comfort of people who use parks and public areas
- Mitigation of urban heat island effect
- Air cleaning and purification, removal of CO₂, SO₂, and other airborne pollutants
- Reduction of storm water runoff and soil erosion
- Filtering and purification of groundwater by directly absorbing pollutants
- Aesthetic enhancement and potential increased property values
- Function as wind and sound breaks
- Screening of unsightly urban infrastructure or for privacy
- Provide valuable wildlife habitat and migration corridors

Meridian is a Tree City USA

This is a national designation that requires participating cities to:

1. Establish a Tree Board/Commission or Urban Forestry Department
2. Enact a Tree Care Ordinance as part of the local code
3. Maintain a Community Forestry Program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita
4. Observe Arbor Day and issue an Official Proclamation

Value that Grows with Time

Unlike other kinds of public infrastructure that require more maintenance with age and eventual renovation or replacement, the value of a healthy tree increases over time. Considered together, the trees that comprise the City's urban forest are a critical community asset, the value of which is often underrated.

Current Structure of Urban Forestry Department

Department Staff

City Arborist

The Urban Forestry Division currently has one full-time dedicated staff member, the City Arborist, who oversees all operations. This position was established in 2011.

Seasonal Labor

Because additional labor is needed to maintain the current standard of service, a six-month seasonal position was added for the first time in 2015. Eight hours per week of this staff person's labor was applied to the work needs of other departments.

In 2016, that need is expected to increase to one 8-month seasonal employee.

Annual Operating Budget

Urban Forestry budget is included in the Park Department maintenance budget.

Total expenditures for 2014	\$ 186,665*
Estimated expenditures for 2015	\$ 195,165

*This is a comprehensive number that includes labor expense and all direct and peripheral costs related to forestry operations.

Maintenance Overview

Meridian's Urban Forestry Division cares for all trees in Meridian City parks, including the golf course and street trees in the downtown core.

Forestry Department Responsibilities:

- **Maintenance of trees within city parks and the park system at large**
This includes coordination with the Planning Department on tree mitigation for development sites, planning for future park development, tree inventory and management, tree maintenance, pruning cycles, new plantings, removals, replacements, fertilization, pest and disease controls, and risk assessments.

- **Maintenance and management of the Kleiner Park arboretum**
The level of maintenance required by the arboretum is higher and more specialized than standard tree maintenance levels within the parks system at large.

Maintenance Contracts with Outside Vendors

Meridian City administers maintenance contracts for downtown street trees and selected trees on park properties.

Outside vendors must be Certified Arborists with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Only Certified Arborists may perform work. Contractor must follow ANSI standards and use best management practices. Meet other requirements by the City for outside vendors.

- Annual contracted amounts vary, depending on which park or area is being pruned or added to the budget for the coming year.
- Large trees requiring specialized equipment are pruned on a five-year cycle by contract.
- Smaller trees are pruned by forestry staff on an as-needed yearly or bi-yearly basis, or five-year cycle. As a standard practice, forestry staff will raise all tree limbs for clearance over sidewalks, pathways, and all other park areas each year as needed.

Downtown Trees/Public Rights-of-Way

Current care of trees within public rights-of-way involves cooperation between ACHD, the City of Meridian, and the Meridian Development Corporation. Meridian Parks and Recreation bears ultimate responsibility for management of urban street trees in the downtown core area. It is imperative that:

- All agencies and organizations with jurisdiction hold to the same standards for tree planting, care, and maintenance.
- All agencies work together to set priorities for how to achieve and maintain these standards.

Challenges Specific to Downtown Trees

The following should be considered when planning for maintenance of downtown trees and other trees in urban settings:

- Tree species within the downtown are less diverse than elsewhere in park system.
- Trees in the downtown tend to be shorter lived, with replacement occurring on a 10-15 year cycle, depending on site evaluation related to hardscape or irrigation damage by tree roots.
- Drainage can be an issue within or adjacent to existing tree boxes.
- Lack of existing Green Stormwater Infrastructure/Silva Cells, to help with drainage and encourage root growth and development.

H. Strategic Goals for Meridian Urban Forestry

General Overview

To keep pace with recent growth in the area, it is important that Meridian Urban Forestry define a clear vision for the future, as well as mechanisms for operation that will ensure a smooth transition in anticipation of future leadership changes. The following strategic goals have been identified for the continued health and sustainable future growth of our Meridian's urban forest.

1. Establish a Vision for Meridian Urban Forestry

Urban Forestry shall continue to provide a high level of service to the community by responding to tree related calls from the public and retain its current operating model of caring for all park trees; providing review and comment on development applications as they relate to mitigation, plantings on City owned property and in the downtown core area; and maintaining the current tree inventory.

2. Strengthen Approach to Management of the Urban Forest

Staff will complete the ongoing GIS inventory and formalize as a comprehensive data set for use as a management tool. Additional staff training will be required with implementation to maximize efficiency. GIS software updates and yearly technical support is ongoing to provide what is needed to manage urban forestry.

3. Evaluate Impacts of the Projected Park System Expansion on Urban Forestry

An understanding of the impacts of growth to maintenance of the urban forest will allow the City to maintain its current high level of service. It is recommended that annual assessments be conducted during the budget development process to determine needs for additional staff and equipment so as to achieve alignment with the overall master plan.

4. Guarantee the Present and Future Health of the Urban Forest

The City Arborist will work to further the health and longevity of the urban forest through diversification of tree species and age, anticipation of pests and other potential threats, and implementation of standards for planting and tree selection. Staff shall also seek continuing education on urban forestry trends, including the effects of climate change as related to forest health.

5. Maintain and Promote the Kleiner Arboretum as a Community Asset

Develop a strategic management plan to guide future expansion, ensure adequate maintenance resources, and create greater awareness of the arboretum within the local and regional communities.

6. Preserve Strong Relationship with the Community/Seek Additional Opportunities for Education and Outreach

Continue to work with the community in support of tree-related issues, while seeking additional opportunities to partner with other agencies, educate community members on the urban forest, and increase awareness of its value to our community.

7. Revise City Policy as Necessary to Strengthen Urban Forestry

Periodically review and update the City ordinance to reflect changes in the field of Urban Forestry or updates resulting from legal action in America. Updates may address changes to terms, definitions, best practices, or other considerations, as required to stay current with the industry.

8. Continue to Offer and Develop Special Programs Related to Community Forestry

Continue to offer and develop new programs that benefit the community and increase awareness of Urban Forestry. As programs are initiated, seek community participation first and then employ the City budgeting process to determine staffing and funding implications.

I. Existing Urban Forest Data

GIS Tree Inventory

A comprehensive in-house GIS inventory by City staff of all trees maintained by the City is ongoing, with completion expected in early 2016.

Data for each tree that will be included in this inventory:

- Planting Date/Year Planted
- Caliper Inches
- Location
- Condition Rating
- Species
- Cultivar
- Canopy Cover
- Pests, Diseases, Cultural Problems
- Structural Issues
- Photographs
- Value Assessments
- Work Order History

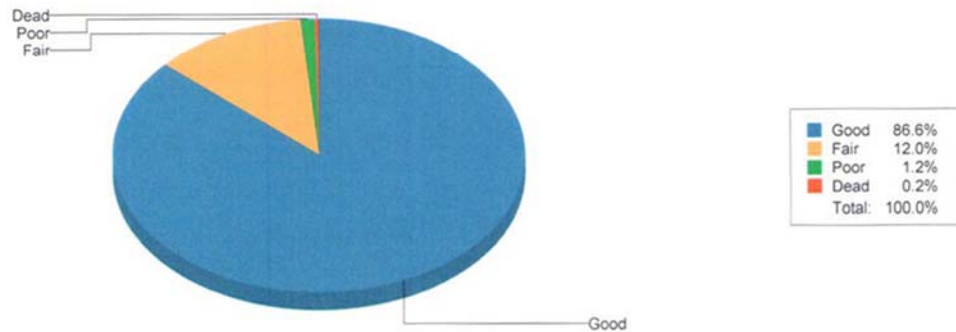
Application to Forest Management

It is intended that the resulting complex data profile of the urban forest will function as a management tool that can be finely tuned to the needs of the Department. Once data is fully compiled, layers can be manipulated and various attributes selected to generate current snapshots of such parameters as tree condition, age distribution, or pruning history. For example, see **Figure 14** which shows the current tree condition.

Figure 15: Sample Data Chart Generated in GIS Using Data from Current Tree Inventory

Condition Distribution

Report universe: All Subset



Condition	Percent	Count
Good	86.6%	1,279
Fair	12.0%	177
Poor	1.2%	18
Dead	0.2%	3
Total		1,477

Beyond analysis, this information can assist trained forestry staff with:

- Budget projections
- Prioritization of needed improvements and maintenance
- Creation of work plans
- Trends and forecasting of emerging forestry issues that may threaten tree health
- Generation of urban forest cost-benefits analysis

Need for Additional Training

Due to the complexity of the GIS database, urban forestry staff will require additional training in GIS and urban forestry-specific software in order to achieve maximum results from manipulation of the data set. Training should also be provided with regard to use of GIS interface devices in the field so that staff can keep the inventory current as new trees are planted, moved, and removed.

It is recommended that any future candidates for the City Arborist position have urban forestry management experience using the above tools and software.

Management Schedule

As it is difficult to predict not only the rate at which growth will occur, but also the form it will take, a standards-based approach is recommended over more prescriptive methods. This allows a threshold-driven mechanism for department growth that will adjust for the changing demands of a growing system. If standards of service are well-defined, funding and resources may be more readily allocated, as necessary, toward achieving and maintaining those standards.

Tree Pruning

Overview and General Guidelines

- Pruning of all park trees shall take place on a five-year rotation based on need, except where immediate pruning is required for reasons of public safety.
- The City Arborist will determine all trees in need of pruning.
- Pruning shall take place on a five-year rotation during the off-season to avoid conflicts with park users that might compromise public safety. Pruning of larger trees will be determined based on growth and will be contract pruned, also on the five-year rotation, or as needed.
- The City shall create and maintain an approved list of tree contractors. All contractors will be required to comply with the universally accepted ANSI (American Nurseryman Standards Institute) and ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) standards.
- Trees shall be monitored for poor health or stress when conditions manifest that could cause deterioration, particularly after unusual weather events, such as freezing, flooding, high winds, or due to insect infestation. In such cases, the City Arborist or other qualified staff shall be consulted to determine appropriate course of action and timing.

Tree Pruning Schedule and Approach

- Trees are currently pruned on an established five-year rotation that includes a mix of contracted services and pruning by Department staff.
- Forestry staff of Meridian Parks and Recreation will perform all pruning that can be accomplished from the ground. The City does not currently own lift trucks or major pruning equipment. When other needs arise, like pruning for larger trees and/or large tree and stump removals, this work shall be done by local tree contractors. City Council generally endorses the sharing of this work with local contractors and feels it is mutually beneficial to the City and community.

The City Arborist has established a 10-year pruning schedule based on a five-year rotation cycle, available under separate cover, available from the Meridian Parks and Recreation Department.

Equipment – for Tree Pruning and Maintenance

Department-owned equipment includes:

- Chain saws
- Pruning equipment
- Hand tools
- Trucks
- Loading equipment

As the urban forest grows, additional equipment may be required should the Parks and Recreation Department decide to accomplish a larger scope of work in-house, beyond currently established practices.

Staffing Implications of Urban Forest Growth

While it is recommended that staff levels be adjusted as necessary to maintain the current standards of service, it is useful to assess current FTE hours in relation to the size of the urban forest so as to forecast potential future staffing needs.

Additional Recommendations

Beyond the scope of this chapter, the following action items are recommended to continue to enhance the Urban Forestry Division and the level of service it provides.

1. Undertake Additional Forestry-Specific Strategic Planning

The following suggested management and master plans may be funded and commissioned as consultant-led efforts, or performed in-house, depending on staff availability and expertise. The following is a list of future planning efforts that should be considered to further the efficiency and long-term success of the Urban Forestry Division.

Urban Forest Management Plan

This plan will build on this chapter, as well as data collected as part of the GIS inventory of park system trees. As an option, this planning effort could begin in-house, using a standard template from a similar plan, as supplemented by the expertise of managers and future managers.

Arboretum Management and Master Plan

Input from an arboretum design specialist was sought at the inception of the Kleiner Park Arboretum. Preliminary plan documentation is shown in **Figure 15**.

Figure 16: Working Plan of Kleiner Arboretum



Additional planning for the arboretum is needed to address recommendations for growth, marketing to increase awareness of this little-known community asset, and suggestions for enhancing the visitor experience for greater interactivity.

Comprehensive Manual of Planting Details & Guidelines

This effort would enhance health of the urban forest by standardizing size and detailing of planting areas, requirements for stormwater accommodation, and tree selection to suit site context and plant cultural requirements, as well as minimizing long-term maintenance.

Management Plan to Address Risks Posed by Eastern Ash Borer (EAB)

It is recommended that this plan be proactively completed and implementation begun prior to appearance of the Eastern Ash Borer. Arrival of this insect pest is anticipated in ten years, or around 2025.

Urban Forest Cost-Benefits Analysis

A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of Meridian's Urban Forest could help to quantify net community benefit in terms of:

- Improvements to air quality
- Carbon sequestration
- Reduction in energy consumption
- Percentage of park canopy cover
- Asset value

2. Institute a Tree Board or Urban Forest Advisory Council

The Meridian Parks Commission currently acts as an advisory body to the Urban Forestry component of Meridian Parks and Recreation. It has been active since the adoption of the local Tree Ordinance in 2002. In the future, it may be appropriate to institute an advisory council devoted solely to Urban Forestry.

It is recommended that the City Arborist provide a quarterly update to the Meridian Parks Commission, or acting advisory council. In addition to reporting, these interactions should include training relative to the Commission's responsibilities in Urban Forestry matters, and alert them to common situations and issues that may arise. Beyond education, frequent communication also helps to bridge any potential gaps in continuity due to council turnover.

A key current responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Commission includes hearing public appeals to decisions made by the City Arborist. In such instances, the Commission's ruling is sent to City Council for final approval.

Duties of the existing Parks Commission may also include:

- Supporting the planning process for and implementation of a future Urban Forest Management Plan.
- Public education related to the importance of trees and the urban forest.
- Funding assistance with regards to grant applications, solicitation of private donations, and facilitation of public-private partnerships.

3. Ongoing Staff Training to Stay Current in the Industry

It is recommended that the Urban Forestry Division seek opportunities for continuing education to stay current with changes that may occur within the field of urban forestry. In addition, managers should seek and/or provide staff training:

- To groundskeepers and forestry assistants with specialized experience relative to tree pruning, especially with regard to the Kleiner Arboretum and other specialized landscapes.
- On forestry-specific GIS software used as an urban forest management tool.
- As needed to respond to growth and changing conditions.

4. Take a More Active Role in Construction Management

It is recommended that qualified forestry staff inspect the installation of trees on future park properties and rights-of-way the City will be responsible for maintaining.

Summary

The urban forest, when well-managed, diverse, and healthy, provides generous benefits to a community. Trees beautify landscapes and streetscapes, improve the health of environments, and enhance the user experience of parks and public spaces by providing shade and relief from summer heat. Beyond health and comfort, this shade can mitigate for "heat islands" created by increased urbanization, and offer passive cooling of homes and buildings that results in energy savings.

Unlike some components of the built environment whose values depreciate over time, the urban forest is a living system whose value only increases with the passing years. Successful long-term management of the urban forest must not only consider trees, but also site conditions and infrastructure components and their relationship to the overall health of the system.

It is also important to generate awareness of the benefits provided by the urban forest. The more the local community is educated on the value of the forest over time, the greater the investment in the forest, not only by professionals and managers of public lands, but by individual property owners, each contributing to the vitality and longevity of the whole.

J. Pathways Assessment & Recommendations

Introduction

This section is intended as an update to the *Meridian Pathways Master Plan* (Adopted in 2007 and previously amended in January of 2010) and a tool to further aid in the implementation of that plan. It does not suggest any significant changes to proposed expansion of the pathway system as outlined in the original plan, but rather seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- Quantify the impacts of pathway system expansion in terms of cost for ongoing maintenance, given the significant proposed increase to pathway mileage at plan build-out.
- Establish guidelines for what portion of the pathway system is appropriate and sustainable for the City to maintain.
- Establish City priorities for near-term pathway implementation that will have the greatest impact on connectivity.
- Propose changes to existing policy that will facilitate ongoing expansion and designate maintenance responsibilities so as to meet the needs of the City, the development community, and other stakeholders.

Pathway System Overview

The current breakdown of Meridian's existing pathways, by type, is as follows:

14.8 miles of pathways currently maintained by the City

- 7.9 miles in parks
- 6.9 miles along canals and other areas

14 miles (approximately) maintained by HOAs and other entities

28.8 Miles of Total Developed Pathways

Per the existing pathways plan, an additional 104.2 miles have been identified for development.* This amounts to a total projected mileage at build out of **133 miles**.

Importance of Pathways/Need

Pathways make communities more livable by helping to reduce reliance on the automobile. This has the potential to improve the environment and mitigate for traffic congestion. Additionally, pathways provide ongoing opportunities for physical activity to promote physical and mental health. Beyond connecting people to places, pathways also provide ongoing opportunities to be out and about that connect us interpersonally as well.

*Per Dave Peterson, Design Concepts
Numbers per Meridian Pathways Master Plan, current mileage updates per Jay Gibbons

Need

Throughout the needs assessment and outreach phase of this planning effort, community members consistently rated pathways as a high priority when given opportunity to comment via stakeholder group, survey, or public meeting. This reflects a national trend wherein pathways are increasingly important to communities.

While Meridian has identified a pathway system for development that will ultimately prove extensive, connectivity among currently built pathways continues to be a challenge.

Some of this is due to existing major roadways and other potential barriers to pedestrian traffic, but also existing development that occurred before pedestrian connections were required as part of the approvals process. Stakeholders who own linear properties along existing waterways that cut through the City are also key to enhancing the overall connectivity of the pathway system.

Stakeholders

- ***Irrigation Districts***
 - Nampa-Meridian Irrigation District – Major Stakeholder.
 - Settlers Irrigation District – Fewer land holdings in Meridian.
- ***West Ada School District***
 - History of successfully partnering with the school district.
 - Joint use of school facilities plays a key role in filling recreation demand for ball fields and active recreation facilities.
 - School properties are important when it comes to making connections, and offer opportunities for safer crossings and connections, further off (or outside of) public rights-of-way.
- ***Developers***
- ***Homeowners' Associations (HOAs)***
- ***City of Meridian – Building Department***
- ***Railroads***
 - Potential for sharing existing rights-of-way that can achieve connection on a more regional level.

Progress Update/Policies Implemented

Since adoption of the original Meridian Pathways Master Plan, significant progress has been made toward implementation. Much of this has focused on the establishment of policy and planning practices around pathway development that will lay the groundwork for greater connectivity moving forward.

Policy and Procedural Improvements Achieved Since Approval of Original Plan

- Entitlements process for development now requires dedicated easements for pathways and pedestrian connections.
- Plan review for all new development must be routed through the Pathways Project Manager for design input and approval, in addition to other departments as required.
- Developers are required to provide better documentation of construction standards/as-builts for pathways that may later be deeded to the City.
- Standard Specifications and Notes for pathway construction have been developed (in conjunction with Meridian Public Works)—similar to a performance specification.
- Pathway entitlement is no longer a part of the Development Agreement.
- Expectation has been established among developers that working with the City to provide pathway connections will be a standard project requirement. The City has seen improved cooperation and general acknowledgement from the development community that pathways benefit and add value to their final product.

Opportunities/Recommendations

Maintain a Regional Perspective

- Emphasize the need to look beyond Meridian to neighboring communities and think in terms of regional connections to Boise River Greenbelt, Eagle, Nampa, Caldwell, Star, and Kuna.
- Consider Meridian’s system as it relates to a regional pathway system.
- The pending acquisition of Margaret Aldape Park presents an opportunity for Meridian to connect to the Boise River Greenbelt system. This will provide connection to the rest of the Treasure Valley on a regional level.

Schools

- Use proximity to schools, when possible, and take advantage of existing signaled crossings in school zones.
- Provide pedestrian connections between all schools and pathway system.
- Safe Routes to Schools have already been mapped.
 - Examine these in greater detail and adjust as necessary.
 - Find/create connections between multi-use pathways and schools.

Subdivision Development

- Continue to work with developers to dedicate pathway easements and make strong pedestrian connections.
- Pedestrian connections shall be identified and preserved prior to development.
- Coordinate with developers during the entitlements process to allow alternative routes through developments, regardless of ditch or waterway location (if applicable).

Existing Rights-of-Way

- Where pathways must be integrated with public rights-of-way, revise street sections to provide for wider sidewalks and greater separation from major roadways, if possible.

As-Builts and Documentation

- The Building Department shall notify the Parks & Pathways Project Manager of all pathways, once built. Institute mechanisms for better post-construction reporting and documentation.

Key Stakeholders for Pathway Implementation

In recent years, the City has made significant progress in terms of policy to further development of the pathway system as pertains to involvement by other property owners and stakeholders. This momentum must continue, and relationships further developed, with the following key stakeholders.

Irrigation Districts

Due to the linear nature of waterways, Irrigation Districts (especially Nampa-Meridian) are key to advancing connectivity of the Meridian pathways plan. It is imperative that the City continues to partner with irrigation districts relative to the following challenges:

- Pathway development along existing canals, irrigation ditches, and laterals needs to be addressed at a more comprehensive level.
- Crossings present a special difficulty in that many waterways do not emerge at intersections where pedestrian crossings exist and are safely articulated. For example, it is not acceptable for pathways to emerge at the edge of a 45 mph collector road with minimal shoulder and no proximity to an intersection for safe crossing.
- In the past, irrigation districts have refused pathway proposals prior to any constructive discussion regarding their development. Both parties now have a history of working together and must continue to fine-tune this partnership as each new pathway segment is implemented.

Developers

- Residential and commercial developments present challenges when it comes to providing pathway easements. The City must work closely with developers during the planning phases, as it can be prohibitive to accomplish these connections after the fact.

Implementation Priorities

Because so many miles of pathway have been identified for development per the Pathways Master Plan, it is recommended that City resources focus on implementation and maintenance of the following major components of the system. Once a strong framework is established, users will enjoy greater connectivity, and secondary pathways can then tie into and expand the reach of the overall system.

The following pathways have been identified as high priorities for CIP and maintenance funds. This is intended as a general guideline for resource allocation by the City, as timing and location of private development may catalyze construction of lower priority pathways by others.

High Priority Pathways	Existing	Proposed	Total
Five-Mile Creek Pathway	2.37	8.64	11.01 miles
Ten-Mile Creek Pathway	2.03	9.00	11.03 miles
Rail-with-Trail	0	8.08	8.08 miles
TOTAL PROPOSED		30.18 Miles	

Regional Impact of Rail-with-Trail

This proposed pathway will have a significant impact on regional connectivity, as it will encompass a 22-mile right of way, with eight of those miles passing through the City of Meridian. The combination Rail-with-Trail section, as proposed, will run between the historic railroad depots in Boise and Nampa.

Because development of this pathway will deliver considerable benefits to Boise, Nampa, and others, in addition to Meridian, implementation of this pathway will require a co-operative effort from all municipalities affected, acting as regional partners, with help from COMPASS and other local agencies and organizations.

All Other Proposed Pathways

It is anticipated that implementation of this pathway will be driven largely by private developers, with ongoing maintenance provided by Homeowners' Associations.

Implementation Costs for Plan Build-Out

Even with a mandate to focus resources on the development of a few high-priority segments, cost to construct these pathways will be considerable. At the time of this plan, **construction cost for a 10' wide asphalt path was approximately \$36 per lineal foot**, or \$190,080 per mile. For estimating purposes, this figure includes base material and preparation, as well as asphalt paving, but no administrative or design costs associated with construction.

Pathways have been identified as a major priority for the City of Meridian, but given the demands on public funds for other recreational facilities, the cost for build-out of the pathway system must necessarily be considered within a greater funding context and borne, in large part, by private sector development.

Pathway Maintenance and Operations

Implications of System Expansion on Maintenance

With growth in recent years, the City has taken advantage of opportunities to develop pathway connections through proposed developments. Verbiage around these development agreements continues to evolve, but in the past, situations have arisen in which the City has been deeded ownership (and associated maintenance) of a pathway not constructed to City standards.

It is essential to establish mechanisms for construction documentation of pathways that will guarantee new segments are built to City standards, not only to ensure public safety, but to also minimize maintenance impacts over time.

Need for Shared Responsibility

As time goes on, even with high standards for construction, the pathway system will grow beyond the ability of the City to maintain it. ***Ultimate responsibility for maintenance of the pathway system must be shared between the City and private landowners (often Homeowners' associations).*** It is recommended that the City transition to requiring that maintenance of future pathways implemented as part of subdivision developments be borne by private stakeholders.

Linear Rights-of-Way/Canal Pathways

Irrigation district requirements for pathway development:

- City acts as single point of contact
- City must maintain pathway segments or coordinate maintenance with private sector/HOAs
- City must enforce irrigation district requirements with other parties

Individual licensing agreement recommendations:

- Require HOAs to maintain pathways, in perpetuity, to standards for safe public use and established landscape aesthetics
- Incorporate strong wording in these agreements to make clear to private developers that the City will no longer assume long-term maintenance of pathways.
- Shall institute mechanisms for enforcement and oversight.

Replacement Cycle for Paved Pathways

Clear delineation of maintenance responsibility is a necessity, owing to the limited life span of asphalt pavement (30 years on average). In order for pathways to remain safe and well-maintained as the system ages, a portion of paved pathway segments will require periodic re-paving on an ongoing basis.

In other words, similar to the way City trees are pruned on a 5-year cycle, so must pathways be resurfaced on a periodic maintenance rotation.

Life Cycle Repaving Costs

Assuming a total pathway system comprised of 133 miles of pathway that require re-paving every 30 years, estimated minimum cost to repave the entire system is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{l} 133 \text{ miles of pathway} \times \$142,560/\text{mile} \\ \text{or} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} = \mathbf{\$18.9 \text{ million every 30 years}} \\ = \$632,000 \text{ annually} \end{array}$$

Additional pathways proposed in the Master Plan are desired by the community and essential to the ultimate success of the plan. **However, because this increased mileage carries significant cost implications, maintenance of the system in its entirety will ultimately lie beyond the resources of the City.**

Cost Comparison for Repaving the Total Pathway Network vs. Priority Pathways Only			
	<u>Total Mileage</u>	<u>Total Cost to Repave at Build Out</u>	
Total Pathway Network	133	\$632,016	annually
Priority Pathways Only	30	\$143,130	annually

Assumptions:

- Unit cost to repave is calculated at \$27 per lineal foot or \$142,560 per mile for a 10-foot wide asphalt pathway.
- Average lifespan of pathway segment is 30 years.
- Priority pathways include:
 - Five Mile Creek Pathway
 - Ten Mile Creek Pathway
 - Rail-With-Trail

Relevant Studies and Planning Efforts

The following studies, completed since the Pathways Master Plan (adopted 2007; amended 2010, 2012) should be considered relative to the existing plan and recommendations contained in this chapter.

- **Arterial Crossing Study**
- **Union Pacific Railroad/Rail with Trail Study** (January 2015)
- **Destination Downtown**
 - Information gathering and updates to downtown streetscapes
 - Includes detailed pavement sections, also standard notes and specifications

Summary

Significant progress has been made toward implementation of the current Pathways Master Plan. Because connectivity continues to be a challenge, it is recommended that the City focus implementation efforts on a few priority pathways.

Beyond that, given the extent of the proposed system and an understanding of the projected costs for build-out and ongoing maintenance, it becomes clear that these demands will, over time, exceed the resources of the City. Moving forward, it will be crucial to shift some of the construction burden to private developers, who will typically retain ownership and maintenance responsibilities for these pathways, so they may better contribute to the sustainability and success of the overall system.

K. Summary of Planning Process for Conceptual Park Master Plans

Project Team Visioning

Preliminary design efforts for the three undeveloped park properties began with a project team discussion of potential opportunities for each park. These ideas were then summarized in a series of concept statements.

The summarized statements described a vision for each of the three regional parks, not only in terms of the type and number of amenities that might be included, but also suggested ideas for keying into contextual, historical, or other elements specific to each park, with the goal to reinforce a strong sense of place and establish each as a unique destination within the Meridian Parks and Recreation system.

Concept Narratives

South Meridian Regional Park

(77-Acre Property)

This park will be devoted to active recreation, similar to a Settlers Park, with theming and design elements that will reinforce a unique identity for a south Meridian regional park. A destination softball complex, illuminated for nighttime play and with the capacity to host area tournaments, will be part of this identity. Theming elements may include: planting design to evoke the native sage land area to the north (for non-irrigated turf areas), and also integrated art works to tie into local history and culture.

West Meridian Regional Park

(Borup-Bottles Property – 47 acres)

The Borup-Bottles property is envisioned as a smaller-scale regional park with primarily active recreation facilities similar in size and scope to the existing Heroes Park. The recent needs assessment conducted as part of the Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Planning effort determined that rodeo facilities, while important to some, are no longer appropriate for the City to offer and will not be included in this park master plan. It is suggested that theming elements, art, architecture, and other design materials for this park should focus on the agrarian/dairy heritage of the area that is representative of “Old Meridian,” much of which has been lost to new development in recent decades.

Margaret Aldape Park

(70 acres, approximately)

Margaret Aldape Park will be a natural, passive-use area unlike any other park in Meridian’s park system. This is primarily due to its riverfront location and the unique opportunities for passive recreation, including walking/hiking, picnicking, fishing, wildlife viewing, and non-motorized water sports, such as kayaking and paddle-boarding, that this landscape affords. Emphasis will be on the development of pedestrian pathways to provide access to the site in a variety of seasons and corresponding water levels. There is also opportunity to enhance current wildlife habitat to sustain and promote the diverse species, including waterfowl, great blue heron, turkey, foxes, deer and elk, which live in and migrate through the park site.

At the time of this plan, the southern park boundary remains proposed but yet-to-be-determined. Final delineation of the park boundary will be an iterative process that takes into account the final revised FEMA floodway boundary; need for park land outside the floodway that can provide parking, restrooms and other constructed support amenities; and priorities of the proposed adjacent residential development.

In terms of theming and identity, park design will take its cues from the Boise River environment, Basque culture and history, and elements of Aldape family history. Theming may relate to paths and architectural elements, materials, place names, integrated art pieces, and other design opportunities as they arise.

Design Programming

After agreeing on general a conceptual approach to the design for each park, the team developed a detailed list of program elements for each. This provided a starting point for the creation of design concepts.

Programming for each park site was founded on needs identified in the initial needs assessment. This information was then filtered through the more specific working knowledge of the Meridian Parks and Recreation project team which included staff who deal directly with programming and scheduling demands for facilities on an ongoing basis.

Concept Development

Site Analysis

Graphic site analyses were created for the South and West Meridian Regional Park properties. These diagrams summarized existing drainage patterns on site, potential irrigation water sources, locations of existing and future utilities, surrounding land uses and traffic patterns, and any other existing conditions that might affect design and development of the site.

A lengthy walking field trip and site visit was taken to the Aldape Property, but as no boundary information was available at the time, site analysis information was recorded primarily in the form of notes and photographs. No formal summary graphic was created.

Preliminary Concepts/Staff Review

For South Meridian Regional Park and West Meridian Regional Park, preliminary concepts were developed and presented to staff for review, then adjusted in a series of iterative meetings and discussions.

At this point in the process, focus was on placement of park amenities and desired adjacencies to achieve functional relationships among all elements on site. Parking needs were estimated relative to proposed park amenities, and anticipated use.

Development of Final Design Concepts

As a result of these more specific functional considerations, and after additional collaboration between the design consultant and MPR staff, the preliminary designs were refined into preferred master plan concepts for each park. Though not executed to a high level of detail, the conceptual plans aimed to establish a realistic development scenario for each property, establish a strong design aesthetic, and create a unique sense of place for each proposed park.

Each concept was then rendered in color for presentation at a community open house.

Community Input

Community Open Houses

Community open houses were held for the South Meridian Regional Park (77-Acre Property) and West Meridian Regional Park (Borup-Bottles Property) on **Thursday July 9, 2015**, and **Thursday, July 30, 2015**, respectively.

Each meeting included an initial summary of the overall master planning process and needs assessment by Meridian Parks and Recreation staff. The consultant team then offered a site analysis overview before presenting each concept in detail. Limited questions and discussion of the concepts were entertained before breaking into less formal interactions for the sake of obtaining community input.

At each meeting, opportunities for public comment included:

- Written comment cards
- Opportunity to “draw” input on black-and-white concept plans that were provided around the room, along with colored markers
- Face-to-face conversation with design consultants and MPR Staff

Due to timing and other considerations relative to the donation of the Aldape Property, a community open house was not held for the Aldape Park Master Plan.

All documents related to the conceptual park master plans are located in **Appendix I**.

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V. Key Issues

Triangulation Matrix

Key issues were identified using a number of tools: review of existing plans and documents, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a community survey, inventory and level of service analysis, and My Sidewalk online engagement. The information gathered from these sources was evaluated, and the following recommendations and action plans were developed.

The findings are summarized on the **Key Issues Matrix (Table 10)**, which captures all of the key issues that surfaced during the Master Plan process and prioritizes them on one matrix. The key issues were placed into four categories on the matrix:

- a) Priority
- b) Opportunity to Improve
- c) Minor or Future Issue
- Left blank means the issue did not come up or wasn't addressed in that venue

The qualitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of key issues include:

1. Existing planning documents
2. Consultant team's expertise
3. SWOT Analysis
4. Parks and Recreation staff input
5. Public forum input

The quantitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of the key issues include:



1. Community Survey
2. City Data
3. GRASP Analysis

The key issues were organized into four areas including:

1. Organizational
2. Finance
3. Programs and Service Delivery
4. Facility and Amenities

Preliminary recommendations are listed for each key issue and presented to the Parks and Recreation project team to gather input on the prioritization of the final recommendations and action plans. The Key Issues Matrix summarizes the areas that need immediate attention and determine the direction of the implementation of recommendations in the Master Plan.

Table 10: Key Issues Analysis Matrix

2015 Data Source  Key Issue - Rating Scale a - priority b - opportunity to improve c - minor or future issue blank means the issue didn't come up or wasn't addressed	Qualitative Data				Quantitative Data			Consultant's Analysis and Professional Expertise  Preliminary Recommendations
	Existing Documents	Consultant Team	SWOT Analysis	Public Input	Survey	City Data	GRASP Analysis	
Organizational								
Improve promotion and communication of activities	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue to implement Marketing Plan (Communication Plan) - review annually and update every 5 years
Increase staffing to meet current and future needs	b	a	a	a	a	a	a	Based on the Staffing Plan, explore opportunities to increase staffing to meet current needs and maintain optimal staffing level as new parks and programs are developed and implemented
Increase opportunities to utilize technology to improve customer service and efficiencies	b	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue to explore additional opportunities to expand the use of technology
Increase social media use and navigation apps for parks & trails	b	a	a	a	a	b	b	Explore additional use of social media outlets, navigation apps
Increase partnerships	b	a	a	a	a	b	b	Explore additional opportunities & build on existing partnerships
Finance								
Increase event & activity sponsorships	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Explore additional opportunities & build on existing sponsorships
Developer Impact Fee Ordinance	b	a	a	a	b	b	a	Continue to monitor Developer Impact Fees for new developments and review every 5 years
Consider dedicated funding source for parks and recreation (examples pathways, trails, life cycle replacement, etc.)	b	a	a	a	b	b	b	Explore feasibility of dedicated revenue source for parks and recreation through increase in property tax levy, or other available sources
Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities	b	a	a	a	b	b	b	Continue to seek philanthropic donations and grant opportunities Consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research & submit grants
Consider Cost Recovery & Pricing Philosophy including Scholarships	b	a	a	b	b	b	b	Consider implementation of a cost recovery & Pricing policy Continue the Scholarship Program
Programs and Service Delivery								
Need more year round recreational activities	a	a	b	a	a	a	a	Continue to look for opportunities to expand indoor recreational opportunities
Expand special event offerings	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Explore opportunities to produce, attract, promote and maintain events (example Farmer's Market)
Expand outdoor and adventure recreation opportunities	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Explore opportunities to offer new programs in outdoor adventure recreation to teens and active adults.
Need programs at convenient times for community	a	a	b	a	a	a	a	Continue to look for opportunities to expand programs around working hours & commutes
Expand programming for seniors, active adults, special needs, teens & tweens	a	a	b	a	a	b	b	Continue to monitor participation & demand for family-centered recreational programs & adjust to meet the needs
Facilities and Amenities								
Maintain existing quantity and quality of level of service	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue planning goal of 4 acres of park land per 1000 population and existing component levels in parks
Maintain and improve existing facilities	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue to implement existing plans, CIP, Master Plans, & Life Cycle Replacement Plan
Find opportunities to acquire new land for parks	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue to find and purchase additional land for future park development
Expand pathways, trails & connectivity	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue developing existing Pathways Master Plan, explore alternative design standards to address high use areas
Adopt and continue to maintain component based inventory and level of service standard in existing GIS	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	As new parks and components are build, enter into GIS data base for tracking
Add indoor recreation space	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue to explore opportunities to add additional indoor recreation space either through partnerships or construction of a Community Centers or Fieldhouse
Improve signage agency-wide	b	a	b	a	a	a	b	Evaluate directional/Wayfinding signage to facilities on roadways, pathways & within parks. Enhance/update existing park signs as parks are renovated
Maintain existing facilities and amenities	a	a	a	a	a	a	b	Continue to improve & upgrade existing facilities & amenities through CIP Plan & Life Cycle Maintenance Plan
Develop new amenities at new & existing parks based on level of service analysis	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Look for opportunities to add parks and trails in new growth areas and areas currently with lower level of service or without service
Add additional Athletic Fields and lights	a	a	a	a	a	a	b	Explore opportunities to add both rectangle and diamond athletic fields, and where appropriate add or upgrade sports lighting to new and existing facilities
Evaluate parking and event / program / activity scheduling	b	a	a	a	b	a	b	Explore the opportunities to improve & manage parking at parks with popular amenities / activities / events
Develop an ADA Transition Plan	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	Develop and adopt an ADA Transition Plan to comply with new ADA regulations
Upgrade convenience & customer service items to existing facilities	b	a	b	a	b	b	b	Explore opportunities to add shade, storage, public art, security lighting, artificial turf
Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks or when developing new parks	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Continue to evaluate the programming needs of the community when developing new parks or when adding new components to existing parks
Gather and maintain data on HOA and alternative provider owned recreational property	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Develop a database of HOA and Alternative Provider recreational properties and update as new development occurs
Develop and maintain life cycle replacement and asset management plans	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	Develop and maintain life cycle replacement and asset management plans and update every two years.
Creating park identity in existing and new parks	b	a	b	a	a	b	b	Explore opportunities to add Destination Playgrounds, Public Art, natural playgrounds, unique shelters, theming, entertainment and culture.

Using the Key Issues Matrix, a summary of all research, analysis, and input assembled for this study, a variety of recommendations have emerged.

Level of Service:

- Improve recreational connectivity through neighborhood pathway connections and park “spurs.”
- Continue to improve level of service especially at “Neighborhood” Parks through upgrades or additional components if pathways cannot be added.
- Work with neighborhoods to create an individual identity for each neighborhood park.
- Work with alternative providers to increase level of service in area where Meridian doesn’t have neighborhood parks but level of service is low.
- Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks.

Existing Facilities:

- Maintain and improve existing facilities and amenities including upgrades to outdated amenities that do not function well, especially in areas of low current service.
- Continue to improve level of service, especially at “Neighborhood” Parks through upgrades or additional components.
- Add shade structures where appropriate.
- Ensure ADA accessibility at all facilities.
- Work with neighborhoods to create an individual identity for each neighborhood park.

Additional or Future Parks and Amenities:

- Consider programming needs where adding or upgrading components at existing parks.
- Expand pathways & connectivity.
- Monitor sports field demands & needs.
- Improve recreational connectivity through neighborhood trail connections and park “spurs.”
- When considering new Parks look to no service and low service areas as priorities for acquisition of future park land.

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VI. Great Things to Come – Recommendations and Action Plans

A. Recommendations

After analyzing the Findings that resulted from this process, including the Key Issues Matrix, a summary of all research, the qualitative and quantitative data, the GRASP® LOS analyses, and input assembled for this study, a variety of recommendations have emerged to provide guidance in consideration of how to improve parks, recreation, and pathway opportunities in the City of Meridian. This section describes ways to enhance the level of service and the quality of life with improvement through organizational efficiencies, financial opportunities, improved programming and service delivery, and maintenance and improvements to facilities and amenities.

Organizational:

- Maintain existing level of service goal
- Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding department activities and services
- Provide improved signage agency-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, and pathways
- Maintain existing quality standards for facilities and amenities
- Increase social media use and navigation apps for parks and pathways
- Increase appropriate partnerships within the community
- Increase the utilization of technology to improve customer service and efficiencies
- Staff appropriately to meet demand and maintain established quality of service
- Maintain and keep current the Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Policies
- Expand Volunteer Program

Financial:

- Increase Special Event and Activities Sponsorships
- Evaluate Developer Impact Fee Ordinance
- Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities
- Implement a cost recovery and pricing policy

Programs and Service Delivery:

- Increase year round recreational programming and activities

Facilities and Amenities:

- Maintain and improve existing facilities and amenities
- Expand pathways and connectivity
- Add indoor recreation space
- Develop new amenities at new and existing parks based on level of service analysis
- Acquire new land for parks
- Improve parking at parks
- Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities
- Upgrade comfort, convenience, and cultural amenities to existing facilities
- Add destination park amenities
- Address current and future needs for athletic fields
- Consider programming needs when adding components to existing parks or when developing new parks
- Monitor use, demand, and trends of recreation components

Goal 1: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies**Objective 1.1 – Maintain existing level of service goal**

The City of Meridian currently has a Level of Service that is three acres of developed park land per 1,000 persons with a goal of increasing to a Level of Service Standard of four acres/1,000 persons by 2040. Additionally, the City should develop a Level of Service Standard that considers components within parks and a radius of .5 miles per component for walkability.

Objective 1.2 – Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding department activities and services.

The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to implement the Marketing Plan (Communication Plan) that will guide the Department's efforts in communicating and promoting its activities, services, and facilities. This will continue to create great awareness and should include all the recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades. Additionally, the Marketing Plan should be reviewed annually and updated as needed and include marketing strategies that incorporate the efforts of partner departments and projects.

The marketing and communication of Parks and Recreation Department activities should be enhanced with a focused effort on adopting open lines of communication and meetings with partners and potential partners within the community. This enhanced focus will help to create advocacy in the community and provide a forum to better celebrate the successes of the Department.

Objective 1.3 – Provide improved signage agency-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, and pathways.

The Parks and Recreation Department should evaluate directional and wayfinding signage to facilities on roadway, pathways, and within parks. Additionally, the Department should develop signage standards for parks and update existing park signs as parks are renovated to meet the new standard. Improved wayfinding signage will contribute to a greater connectivity of parks, facilities, and pathways.

Objective 1.4 – Maintain existing quality standards for facilities and amenities.

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities as well as address low scoring components through the CIP Plan and the Life Cycle Maintenance Program.

Objective 1.5 – Increase social media use and navigation apps for parks and pathways.

Mobile marketing is a trend of the future. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate that chronologically across four major age cohorts, Millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices, such as smart phones. Parks and Recreation should explore additional social media uses and navigation apps for parks and pathways. The City of Meridian has current best practices for social media that should be followed, reviewed annually, and updated as is needed.

Objective 1.6 – Increase appropriate partnerships within the community.

The City of Meridian Parks and Recreation Department currently partners with a number of agencies to provide programs and activities to the community. The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities, as well as build on their existing partnerships. Where not already in place, the Department should ensure that all existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed partnership agreement (Sample Partnership Policy can be found in **Appendix E**).

The City of Meridian Strategic Plan that was adopted in 2015 sets a goal of continuing to explore partnerships with alternative providers to increase level of service. Additionally, the Department should identify desired sports facilities or complexes and establish partnerships that foster their development.

Objective 1.7 – Increase the utilization of technology to improve customer service and efficiencies.

The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities to expand the use of technology Department wide. Some immediate area to increase technology within the Department would be provide online shelter reservations and provide a mobile application of the Department's website.

Objective 1.8 – Staff appropriately to meet demand and maintain established quality of service.

As recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, new facilities, pathways, parks, and facility upgrades are implemented, it is important to maintain staffing levels to maintain current performance standards. This will require the new positions both in parks and recreation.

Objective 1.9 – Maintain and keep current the Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Policies.

The Parks and Recreation Department is governed by City Code and internal standards of operations and policies. The Department should review the City Code Chapter for Parks and Recreation annually and recommend updates as needed. Additionally, staff should review Department SOPs and policies annually and update as needed.

Objective 1.10 – Expand the volunteer program

The Department currently has a Park Ambassador Program that could be reviewed, improved, and expanded to meet its growing needs. Additionally, it should continue to make use of other volunteer opportunities for park projects and events.

Goal 2: Increase Financial Opportunities

Objective 2.1 – Increase special event and activities sponsorships.

The Department should continue to explore additional sponsorship opportunities and build on existing sponsorships. All existing and future sponsorships should be evaluated to ensure that they are accurately portrayed in a signed sponsorship agreement (Sample Sponsorship Policy can be found in *Appendix D*).

Objective 2.2 – Evaluate Developer Impact Fee Ordinance.

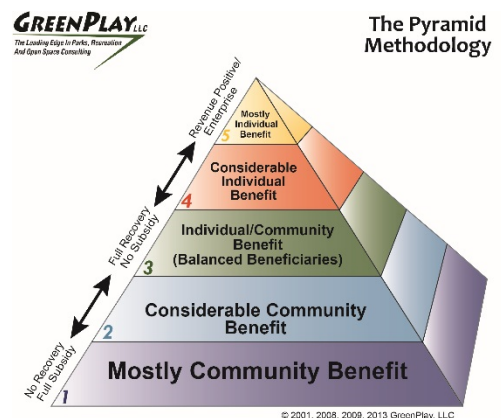
The current Developer Impact Fee is based on a LOS of 3.04 acres of developed park land per 1,000 people. As the Department moves toward their goal of four acres of developed park land per 1,000 people, they need to review the ordinance every three years to keep current with the LOS. Additionally, the Department should review its Developer Impact Fee revenue annually to align with CIP requests and existing LOS.

Objective 2.3 – Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities.

The Department currently takes advantage of grant opportunities available for programming, services, and facility improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. To accomplish this, the Department may consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track such grants.

Objective 2.4 – Implement a cost recovery and pricing policy.

The Department currently has a practice of cost recovery, but it varies based on the different service areas. The Parks and Recreation Department should implement a Cost Recovery Policy, such as the Pyramid Pricing Methodology to determine a consistent method of pricing Parks and Recreation activities throughout the Department. As part of the policy, the Department should continue to support the current Care Enough to Share Scholarship Program.



In addition to establishing a Cost Recovery and Pricing Policy, the Department should explore the feasibility of a dedicated revenue for parks and recreation through special revenue funds, sports, tourism, or other available sources.

Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1 – Increase year round recreational programming and activities.

The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand indoor recreational programs and activities. The community would like to see additional programs for tweens, teens, people with special needs, and seniors. As new programs are developed, continue to monitor recreational trends to stay current with programming and demand. As popularity in program offerings and activities increases, continue to look for opportunities to expand programs around working hours and commuting citizens schedules.

The City's Strategic Plan has also set a goal to attract, promote, and maintain a "signature" event for the City, and to set targets, identify gaps, and deploy programs, activities, and events that provide family-centered recreational opportunities.

Goal 4: Maintain and Improve Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1 – Maintain and improve existing facilities.

The Department should continue to implement existing plans, the CIP, Life Cycle Replacement Programs, and the Master Plan. These plans should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Objective 4.2 – Expand pathways and connectivity.

The Department should continue to implement the existing Pathways Master Plan and update as needed based on annual reviews. As new and existing pathways are designed and renovated, the Department should consider adding fitness stations and family fun stations in appropriate locations along the pathways.

Objective 4.3 – Add indoor recreation space.

Based on feedback from focus group participants and the survey results, there is a need for additional indoor recreation space. The Department should continue to explore opportunities to add additional indoor recreation space either through partnerships, purchase of an existing facility, or construction of a Community Center or Fieldhouse. Another option would be to explore opportunities to add Community Centers to newly planned elementary schools.

Objective 4.4 – Develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis.

Demand for usage of Meridian parks and athletic facilities continue to grow, and the Department should look for opportunities to add new amenities to enhance the experience for users. As Meridian continues to grow, the Department should look for opportunities to add parks and pathways in those new growth areas. Also, based on the GRASP® analysis, the Department should look for opportunities to add new components at existing parks where the level of service is below threshold.

Objective 4.5 – Acquire new land for parks.

Based on population growth and a LOS goal of reaching four acres of developed park land per 1,000 population, the Department needs to continue to find and purchase additional land for future park development. When considering new parks, priority should be given to areas where LOS is below threshold.

Objective 4.6 – Improve parking at parks.

Parking was an issue that was identified at most of the focus groups. The Department should continue to monitor parking during peak usage times and explore the need to improve and potentially add more parking at appropriate parks and amenities. Another consideration would be to explore alternative transportation options to reduce parking demand.

Objective 4.7 – Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities.

According to the ADA.gov website, *“Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires State and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities... One important way to ensure that Title II's requirements are being met in cities of all sizes is through self-evaluation, which is required by the ADA regulations. Self-evaluation enables local governments to pinpoint the facilities, programs, and services that must be modified or relocated to ensure that local governments are complying with the ADA.”*

Parks and Recreation currently does not have an ADA Accessibility Transition Plan which identified needed changes during a self-evaluation process. The Department needs to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a comprehensive transition plan. Once the ADA Transition Plan is developed and adopted, it should be updated at least every five years.

Objective 4.8 – Upgrade comfort, convenience, and cultural amenities to existing facilities.

As the Department is making upgrades to, and improving, existing facilities, it should explore opportunities to add shade, storage, security lighting, synthetic turf, and other amenities appropriately at existing facilities. Working with the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department should seek opportunities to create individual identities for each Neighborhood Park. Where appropriate, look for opportunities to add public art to new and existing facilities.

Objective 4.9 – Add destination park amenities.

As citizen interest grows, and demand for new and different amenities at parks are identified, the Department should explore opportunities to add destination playgrounds and natural play areas at existing parks. The newly adopted Strategic Plan also has a goal to foster development of Discovery Parks that uniquely blend arts, entertainment, and culture.

Objective 4.10 – Address current and future needs for athletic fields.

As demand warrants, explore opportunities to add rectangle and diamond fields as usage increases. To help increase field time, add sports field lighting to new facilities and improvements to lighting at existing facilities where appropriate. Additionally, the Department should consider upgrading or adding synthetic turf fields as use and demand increases.

Objective 4.11 – Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks or when developing new parks.

Continue to evaluate the programming needs of the community when developing new parks or when adding new components to existing parks.

Objective 4.12 – Monitor use, demands, and trends of recreation components.

Through the use of dashboards and other reporting and tracking tools, continue to monitor and evaluate the use, demands, and trends in recreation amenities.

B. Action Plan, Cost Estimates, and Prioritization

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for the recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, community survey, findings feedback, and all the information gathered during the master planning process with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving City of Meridian parks, recreation, and pathways. All cost estimates are in 2015 figures where applicable. Most costs are dependent on the extent of the enhancements and improvements determined.

Timeframe to complete is designated as:

- Short-term (up to 3 years)
- Mid-term (4-6 years)
- Long-term (7-10 years)

Goal 1: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

Objective 1.1: <i>Maintain existing level of service goal</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Continue the planning goal of four acres of developed park land per 1,000 population.	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.2: <i>Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.2.a Continue to implement the Marketing Plan (Communication Plan).	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.2.b Review annually and update the Marketing Plan as needed.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing

Objective 1.3: <i>Provide improved signage agency-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, and pathways</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.3.a Evaluate directional and wayfinding signage to facilities on roadways, pathways, and within parks.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.3.b Develop signage standards for parks.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.3.c Enhance and update existing park signs as parks are renovated.	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.4: <i>Maintain existing quality standards for facilities and amenities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.4.a Continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities through the CIP Plan and the Life Cycle Maintenance Programs.	See CIP Plan and Life Cycle Maintenance Programs	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.5: <i>Increase social media use and navigation apps for parks and pathways</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.5.a Explore additional social media uses and navigation apps for parks and pathways.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.5.b Follow current social media best practices, review annually, and recommend updates as needed.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.6: <i>Increase appropriate partnerships within the community</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.6.a Explore additional partnership opportunities as well as build on existing partnerships with focus on low service areas.	\$0	Staff Time TBD Potential increased revenue or decreased expenses	Ongoing
1.6.b Ensure all existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed partnership agreement (Sample Partnership Policy has been provided in Appendix E).	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
1.6.c Identify desired sports facilities or complexes and establish partnerships that foster their development.	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing

1.6.d Continue to explore partnerships with alternative providers to increase level of service. (Strategic Plan 5.A.2)	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.7: <i>Increase the utilization of technology to improve customer service and efficiencies</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.7.a Continue to explore additional opportunities to expand the use of technology Department wide.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
1.7.b Increase the use of technology by providing online shelter reservations and a mobile application of the Department's website.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 1.8: <i>Staff appropriately to meet demand and maintain established quality of service</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.8.a Hire and train staff for current and future parks, facilities, and pathways maintenance demands.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
1.8.b Hire and train staff for current and future recreation programming and facility usage demands.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
Objective 1.9: <i>Maintain and keep current the Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Policies</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.9.a Review Department SOP and policies annually and update as needed.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
1.9.b Review the City Code Chapter for Parks and Recreation annually and recommend updates as needed.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 1.10: <i>Expand the volunteer program</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
1.10.a Improve the current Park Ambassador Program.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
1.10.b Continue to make use of other volunteer opportunities for park projects and events.	\$0	Staff Time	On-going

Goal 2: Increase Financial Opportunities

Objective 2.1 <i>Increase special event and activities sponsorships</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a Explore additional sponsorship opportunities and build on existing sponsorships.	\$0	Staff Time TBD Potential increased revenue or decreased expenses	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
2.1.b Ensure that all existing and future sponsorships are accurately portrayed in a signed sponsorship agreement (Sample Sponsorship Policy has been provided in Appendix D).	\$0	Staff Time	Short Term Mid-Term Long-Term
Objective 2.2: <i>Evaluate Developer Impact Fee Ordinance</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.2.a Review Developer Impact Fee revenue annually to align with CIP requests and existing LOS.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
2.2.b Review Impact Fee Ordinance approximately every five years.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 2.3: <i>Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.3.a Continue to seek philanthropic donations and grant opportunities.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
2.3.b Consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track federal, regional, state, and local grants.	Potential Matching Funds TBD	% of successful grants TBD	Short-Term
Objective 2.4: <i>Implement a cost recovery and pricing policy</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
2.4.a Continue periodic evaluation of fees for programs and facilities.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
2.4.b Continue to support the current Care Enough to Share Scholarship Program.	\$0	\$0	Ongoing
2.4.c Develop a cost recovery and pricing policy.	\$40,000	Staff Time	Short-Term

2.4.d Explore feasibility of a dedicated funding source for parks and recreation through special revenue, sports, or other available sources.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term
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Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery

Objective 3.1: <i>Increase year round recreational programming and activities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a Continue to look for opportunities to expand indoor recreational programs and activities.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
3.1.b Continue to monitor recreational trends to stay current with programming and demand.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
3.1.c Continue to look for opportunities to expand programs around working hours and commuting citizens.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
3.1.d Explore increasing the number of program opportunities for seniors, special needs, teens, and tweens.	\$0	Staff Time	Ongoing
3.1.e Determine, attract, promote, and maintain a “signature” event for the City. (Strategic Plan 5.B.1)	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
3.1.f Set targets, identify gaps, and deploy programs, activities, and events that provide family-centered recreational opportunities. (Strategic Plan 5.B.4)	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing

Goal 4: Maintain and Improve Facilities and Amenities

Objective 4.1 <i>Maintain and improve existing facilities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a Continue to implement existing plans, CIP, Master Plan, and Life Cycle Replacement Programs.	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
4.1.b Review existing plans, CIP, Master Plan, and Life Cycle Replacement Programs and update as needed.	TBD	Staff Time	Ongoing
Objective 4.2: <i>Expand pathways and connectivity</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.2.a Continue to implement existing Pathways Master Plan, review annually, and make updates as needed.	\$170,000 per mile	\$0	Ongoing

4.2.b Add fitness stations and family fun stations in appropriate locations on pathways.	\$100-\$150K per park	\$0	Ongoing
Objective 4.3: <i>Add indoor recreation space</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.3.a Continue to explore opportunities to add additional indoor recreation space either through partnerships, purchase of an existing facility or construction of a Community Center or a Fieldhouse.	TBD	TBD	Short-Term
4.3.b Explore opportunities to add additional Community Centers to newly planned elementary schools.	TBD	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
Objective 4.4: <i>Develop new amenities at new and existing parks based on level of service analysis</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.4.a Look for opportunities to add parks and pathways in new growth areas.	TBD	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
4.4.b Look for opportunities to add new components at existing parks where level of service is below threshold.	TBD	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
Objective 4.5: <i>Acquire new land for parks</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.5.a Continue to find and purchase additional land for future park development.	TBD	Staff Time	Mid to Long Term
4.5.b When considering new Parks, look where LOS is below threshold.	TBD	Staff Time	Mid to Long Term
Objective 4.6: <i>Improve parking at parks</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.6.a Explore the need to improve and potentially add more parking at appropriate parks and amenities.	TBD	Staff Time	Short to Mid Term
4.6.b Consider alternative transportation options to reduce parking demand.	TBD	Staff Time	Short to Mid Term

Objective 4.7: <i>Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.7.a Develop and adopt an ADA Accessibility Transition Plan.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
4.7.b Review and update the ADA Accessibility Transition Plan every five years.	\$0	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 4.8: <i>Upgrade comfort, convenience, and cultural amenities to existing facilities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.8.a Explore opportunities to add shade, storage, security lighting, synthetic turf, etc. appropriately at existing facilities.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
4.8.b Explore opportunities to work with the Parks and Recreation Commission to create an individual identity for each neighborhood park.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
4.8.c Explore opportunities to add public art appropriately at existing facilities.	TBD	Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
Objective 4.9: <i>Add destination park amenities</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.9.a Explore opportunities to add destination playground and natural play areas with climbing features.	TBD	Staff Time	Short to Mid Term
4.9.b Foster development of Discovery Parks that uniquely blend arts, entertainment, and culture. (Strategic Plan 5.A.4)	TBD	Staff Time	Short to Mid Term
Objective 4.10: <i>Address current and future needs for athletic fields.</i>			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.10.a Explore opportunities to add both rectangle and diamond athletic fields as use and demands warrant.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid Term
4.10.b Where appropriate, add sports field lighting to new facilities and improvements to lighting at existing facilities.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid Term
4.10.c Consider upgrading or adding synthetic turf fields as use and demand for use of athletic field increases.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid Term

Objective 4.11:*Consider programming needs when adding new components to existing parks or when developing new parks*

Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.11.a Continue to evaluate the programming needs of the community when developing new parks or when adding new components to existing parks.	TBD	Staff Time	Short to Mid Term
Objective 4.12: Monitor use, demands, and trends of recreation components			
Actions	Capital Cost Estimate	Operational Budget Impact	Timeframe to Complete
4.12.a Continue to monitor and evaluate the use, demands, and trends in recreation amenities.	TBD	TBD	Short to Mid Term