

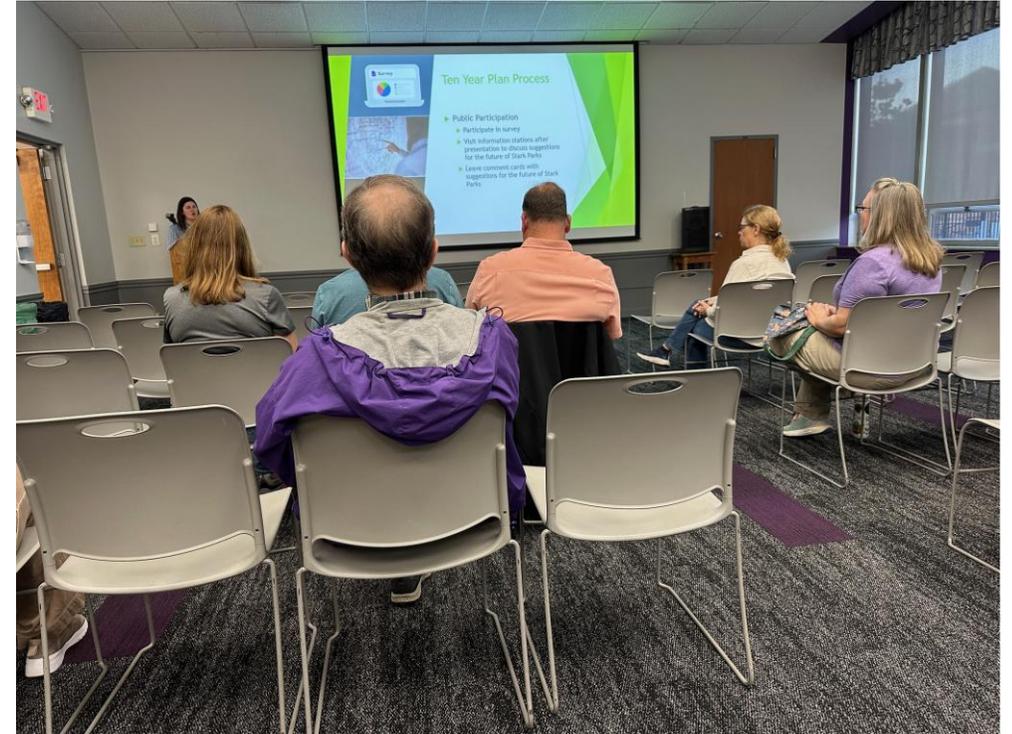
Stark Parks Comprehensive Plan Update



10 Year Plan Process Overview

10 Stakeholder and Public Meetings to gather information

- University of Mt. Union, Alliance (March 13, 2025)
- Schalmo Family YMCA, Canal Fulton (March 19, 2025)
- Glenwood Intermediate School, Canton (April 2, 2025)
- Magnolia Village Fire Station, Magnolia (April 10, 2025)
- Stark Library Lake Branch, Uniontown (April 15, 2025)
- Massillon Public Library, Massillon (April 23, 2025)
- Nimishillen Fire Station, Louisville (May 5, 2025)
- Brewster Community Room, Brewster (May 13, 2025)
- Minerva Library, Minerva (May 21, 2025)
- Meetings with All Staff, Volunteers and Key Stakeholders in June, 2025
- Meeting with Management Team in January 2026
- Presentation at Board Meeting in February 2026



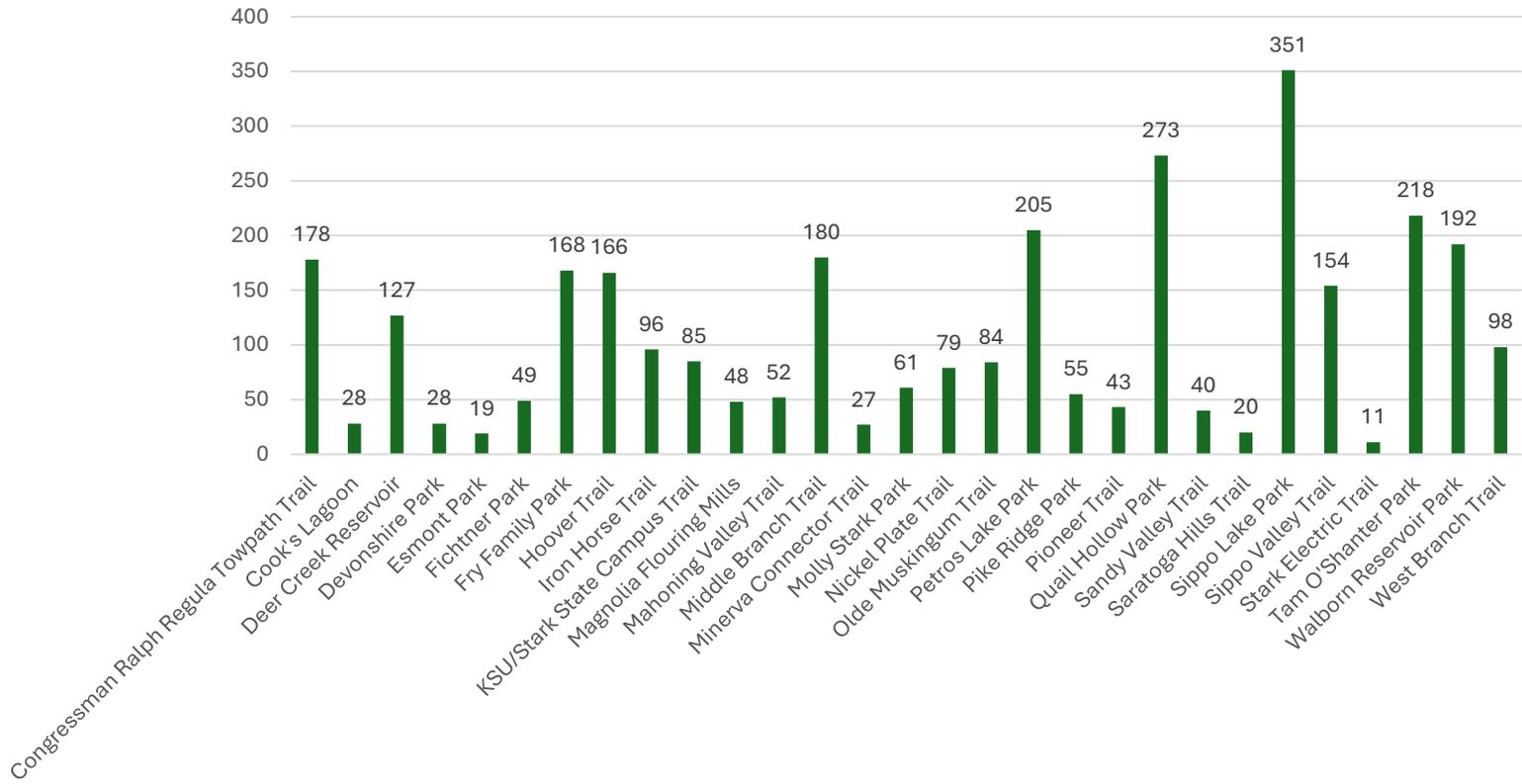
Survey Participation – 483 people participated

Next Steps

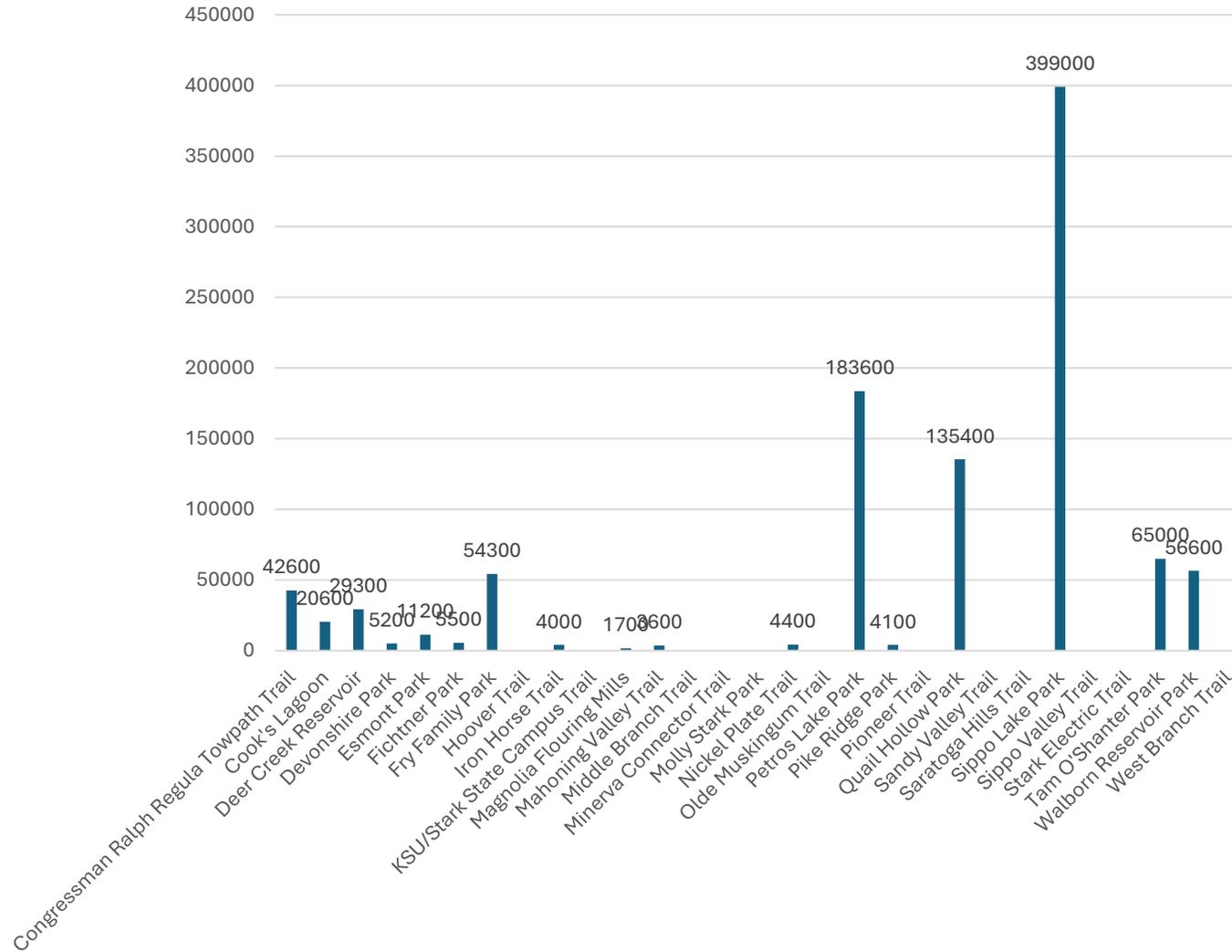
- 30-day review period for the draft
- Implementation of comments received
- Recommendation for adoption to the Park Board

Parks Visit with Past Year

Which of the following parks and trails have you visited in the past year?



Parks Visit with Past Year



Satisfaction with Stark Parks

Satisfaction with:	Excellent/Good	Poor
Overall Condition	87%	2%
Cleanliness	88%	1%
Helpfulness of Staff	64.2%	0.8%
Safety and Security	77%	0.6%
Recreation Opportunities	78%	3%
Overall Satisfaction	90%	0.8%

How Often Participated in an Activity

Activity	1 Or More Times/Week	Once or Twice/Month	A Few Times During the Yr	Interested, but Did Not Participate	Not Interested
 Walking/ Hiking/ Jogging	39%	28%	26%	4%	2%
 Cycling	14%	11%	21%	22%	33%
 Wildlife Viewing/ Photography	15%	15%	27%	21%	22%
 Bird Watching	14%	14%	20%	23%	29%
 Visiting Wildlife Conservation Center ★	4%	6%	46%	33%	11%

Survey Results

Activity	1 Or More Times/Week	Once or Twice/Month	A Few Times During the Yr	Interested, but Did Not Participate	Not Interested
 <p>Paddling</p>	3%	9%	26%	41%	21%
 <p>Attending a Special Event</p>	3%	4%	37%	41%	15%
 <p>Fishing</p>	3%	6%	12%	25%	53%
 <p>Attending a Concert ★</p>	2%	3%	19%	51%	25%
 <p>Picnicking</p>	3%	6%	38%	34%	18%
 <p>Mountain Biking</p>	2%	3%	6%	20%	68%

Survey Results

Activity	1 Or More Times/Week	Once or Twice/Month	A Few Times During the Yr	Interested, but Did Not Participate	Not Interested
 Recreational/ Adventure Programming	2%	4%	22%	63%	2%
 Nature/ Educational Programming	1%	6%	32%	43%	17%
 Winter Sports	2%	1%	10%	38%	49%
 Power Boating	1%	2%	5%	24%	68%
 Guided Hikes	0.9%	1%	10%	51%	36%
 Renting Facilities ★	1%	0.5%	7%	48%	44%

Survey Results

Activity	1 Or More Times/Week	Once or Twice/Month	A Few Times During the Yr	Interested, but Did Not Participate	Not Interested
 Horseback Riding	1%	1%	2%	24%	72%
 Touring Historic Buildings	0.9%	4%	15%	59%	21%
 Geocaching	0.5%	2%	7%	28%	63%
 Camping	0%	0.5%	6%	38%	56%

Satisfaction of Activity

Activity	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
 Walking/ Hiking/ Jogging	47%	42%	4%	0.4%	6%
 Cycling	15%	27%	4%	0.4%	53%
 Wildlife Viewing/ Photography	20%	37%	1%	0%	42%
 Bird Watching	17%	34%	1%	0%	48%
 Visiting Wildlife Conservation Center ★	26%	30%	0.7%	0%	44%

Survey Results

Activity	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
 <p>Paddling</p>	14%	22%	2%	0%	61%
 <p>Fishing</p>	3%	16%	2%	0.9%	79%
 <p>Attending a Special Event</p>	17%	26%	0.9%	0%	56%
 <p>Attending Concert</p>	12%	12%	1%	0.2%	75%
 <p>Mountain Biking</p>	4%	8%	2%	1%	85%
 <p>Picnicking</p>	11%	37%	2%	0%	49%

Survey Results

Activity	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
 Recreational/ Adventure Programming	9%	18%	2%	0%	70%
 Power Boating	2%	5%	2%	0.7%	91%
 Nature/ Educational Programming	16%	24%	2%	0.2%	58%
 Winter Sports	5%	8%	0.9%	0.9%	84%
 Guided Hikes	5%	12%	0.9%	0%	83%

Survey Results

Activity	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
 Horseback Riding	1%	4%	0.2%	0.2%	95%
 Touring Historic Buildings	7%	14%	2%	0.4%	77%
 Geocaching	2%	8%	1%	0.4%	88%
 Camping	1%	2%	2%	1%	93%

Importance of Making Improvements

Improvement	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
 <p>Trail Maintenance</p>	84%	15%	1%
 <p>Safety</p>	81%	14%	4%
 <p>Hike & Bike Trails</p>	75%	22%	3%
 <p>Facilities Maintenance</p>	67%	30%	3%
 <p>Signage</p>	61%	34%	5%

Survey Results

Improvement	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
 Trail Connectivity	60%	31%	9%
 Wildlife Rehabilitation Center	59%	32%	9%
 Flush Restrooms	52%	36%	12%
 Nature/Educational Programming	49%	38%	13%
 Disability Friendly Access	50%	40%	10%
 Natural Play Areas	47%	37%	16%

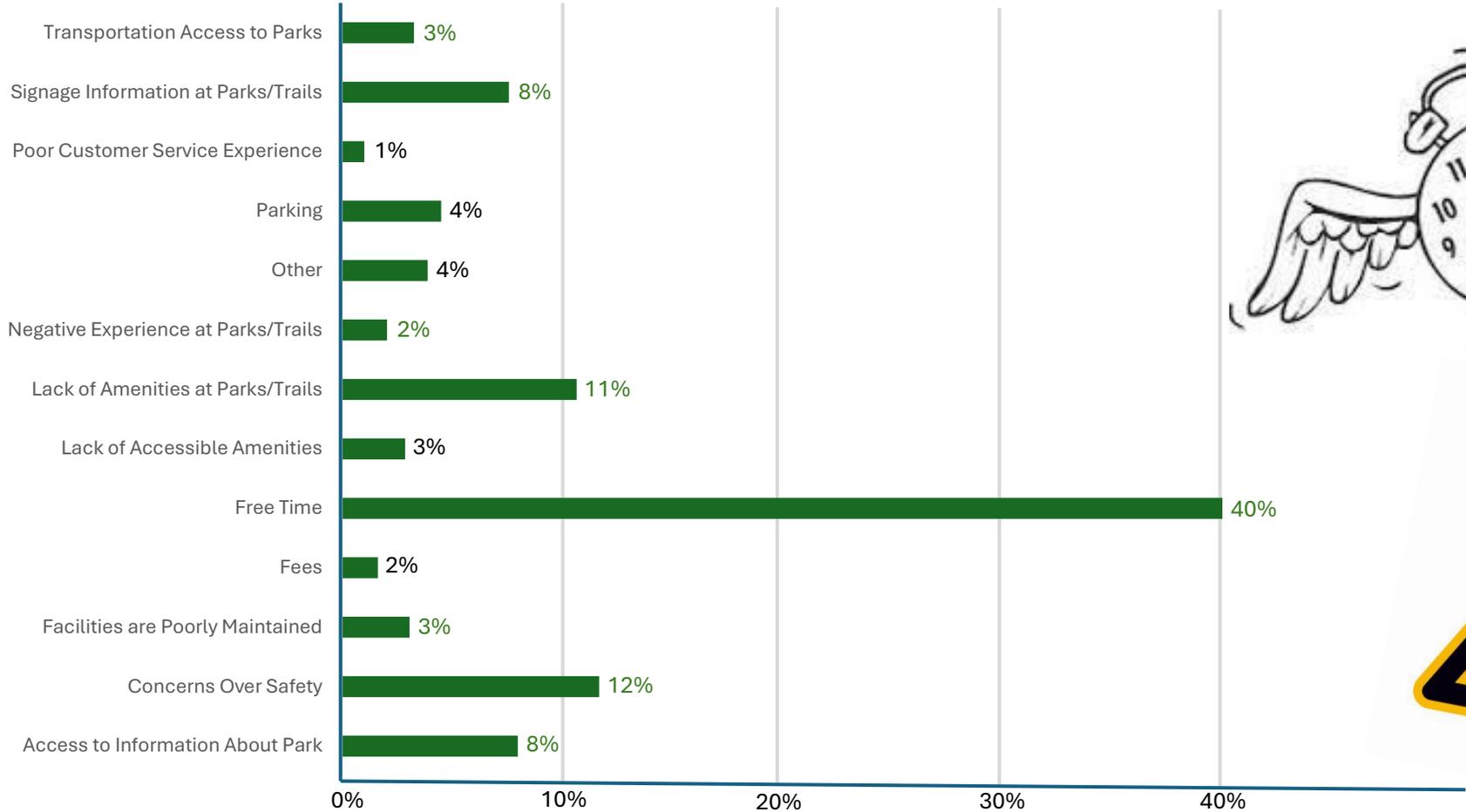
Survey Results

Improvement	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
 Fitness/Wellness Programs	40%	44%	16%
 Special Events	38%	47%	15%
 Picnic Shelters	37%	50%	13%
 Recreation Equipment for Rent or Borrow	36%	45%	19%
 Paddling Access	31%	47%	23%
 Launch Ramps/Boat Access	28%	45%	27%

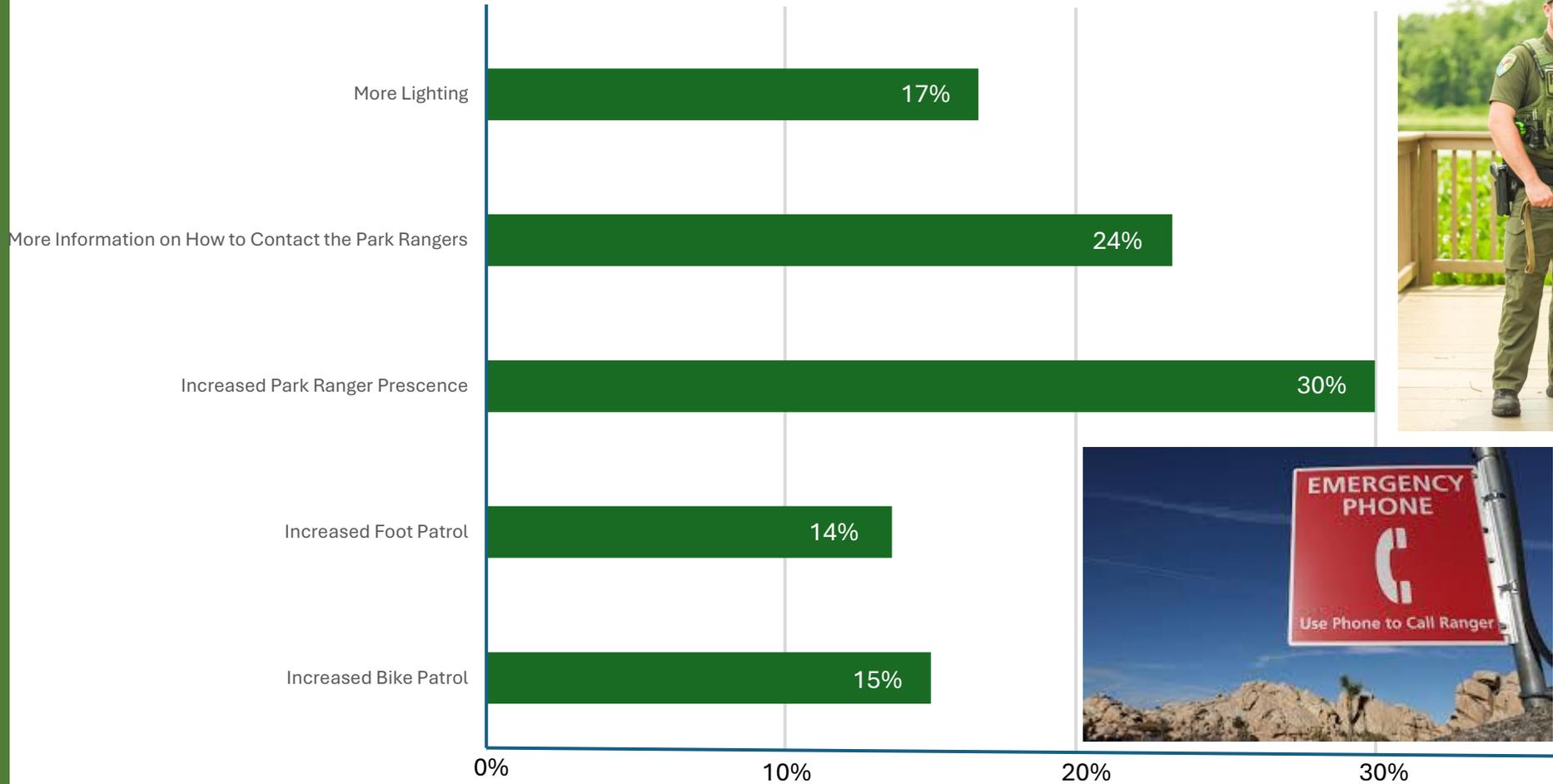
Survey Results

Improvement	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
 Rentals/ Reservations	27%	53%	20%
 Fishing Access	24%	46%	30%
 Mountain Bike Trails	16%	42%	42%
 Archery Ranges	18%	40%	42%
 Equestrian Trails	11%	37%	51%

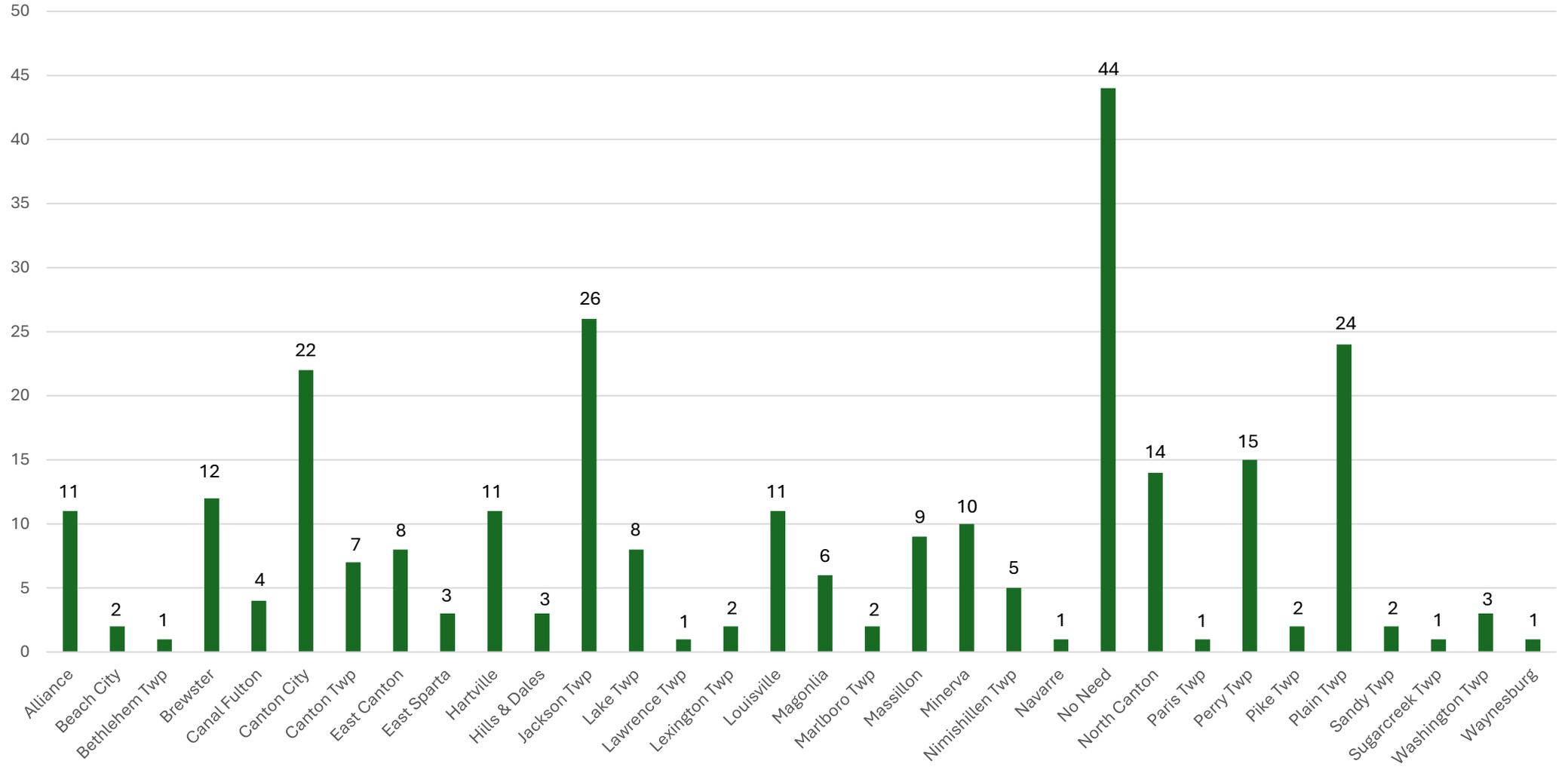
Barriers for Visiting Parks



Safety & Security Improvements Needed



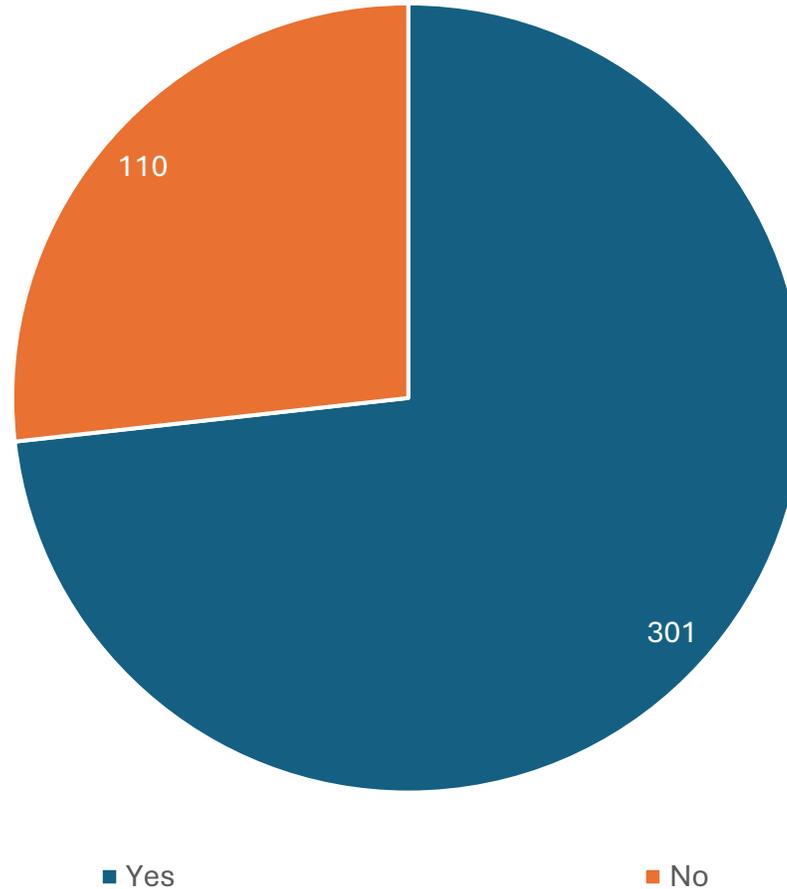
Location of Trail Connections Needed



Where to Focus Resources

Park	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Congressman Ralph Regula Towpath	60%	36%	3%
Cook's Lagoon	11%	56%	32%
Deer Creek Reservoir	38%	52%	11%
Devonshire Park	10%	58%	32%
Esmont Park	10%	55%	34%
Fichtner Park	14%	57%	29%
Fry Family Park	46%	42%	11%
Magnolia Flouring Mills	27%	51%	21%
Molly Stark Park	33%	40%	27%
Petros Park	49%	44%	7%
Pike Ridge Park	35%	49%	16%
Quail Hollow Park	70%	25%	5%
Sippo Lake Park	78%	19%	3%
Tam O'Shanter Park	67%	27%	6%
Walbourn Reservoir	60%	34%	6%

Are Additional Parkland/Conservation Areas/Greenspaces Needed?



Importance of Providing Accommodations

Individuals:	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Aging	78%	21%	0.9%
With Disabilities	75%	23%	2%
With Special Mental Needs	65%	31%	4%
Utilizing Different Modes of Communication	60%	35%	4%

Agreement With What Stark Parks Provides

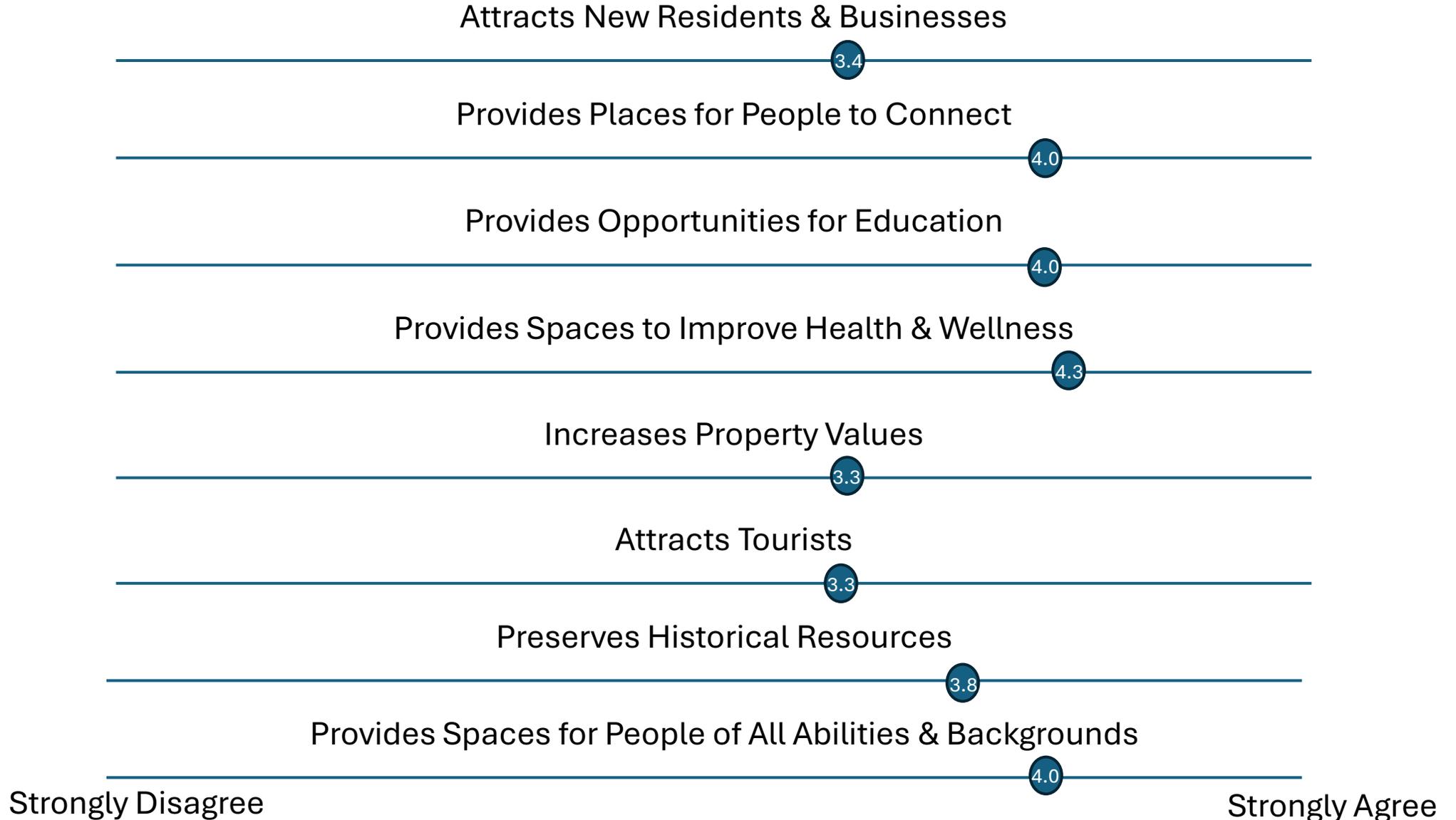
Statement:	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Attracts New Businesses	61%	33%	6%
Provides Opportunities for Education	79%	19%	2%
Provides Places to Connect	88%	10%	2%
Provides Space for Health & Wellness	88%	10%	2%
Increases Property Values	68%	27%	5%
Attracts Tourists	48%	44%	8%
Preserves Historical Resources	64%	31%	4%
Provides Space for People of All Abilities & Backgrounds	70%	27%	3%
Provides a Desirable Place to Live	82%	15%	2%

Parks Ranked by Order of Importance

1. Sippo Lake Park
2. Congressman Ralph Regula Towpath Trail Park
3. Quail Hollow Park
4. Tam O'Shanter Park
5. Walborn Reservoir Park
6. Petros Lake Park
7. Fry Family Park
8. Deer Creek Reservoir Park
9. Magnolia Flouring Mills
10. Molly Stark Park
11. Pike Ridge Park
12. Devonshire Park
13. Cook's Lagoon
14. Fichtner Park
15. Esmont Park



Agreement with What Stark Parks Provides



Park Functions Ranked by Order of Importance

1. Community Trail Connections
2. Wildlife Conservation & Rehabilitation
3. Recreation Opportunities
4. Conservation of Greenspace
5. Health & Wellness Opportunities
6. Historic Preservation
7. Educational Programming
8. Economic Development
9. Tourism
10. Cultural Appreciation
11. Agricultural Education



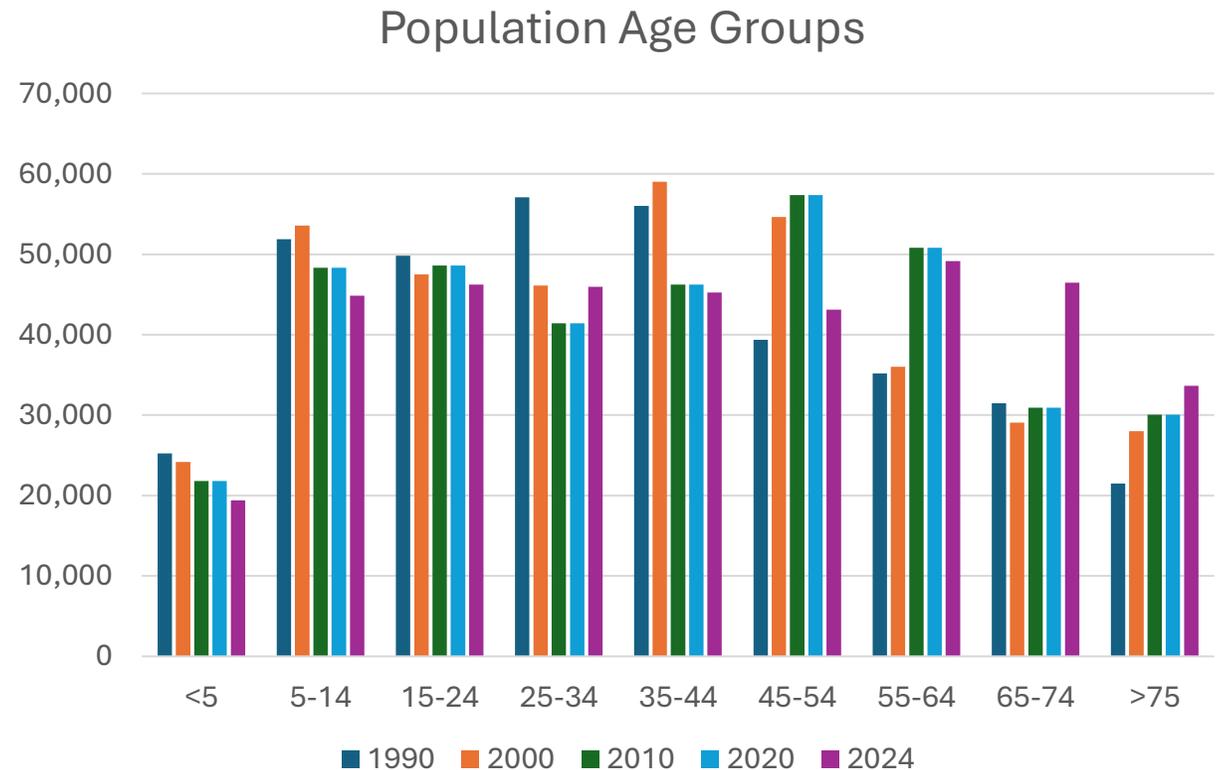
Components of the Plan

- Park District Profile, Current Recreation Trends, and Future Needs
- Operations and Resources
- Stark Parks' Mission Statement Update
- Ten Year Plan Recommendations

Demographics

Facts & Stats:

- The population is aging, with a median age of 42.2 and the over 65 cohort increased by 20.8%
- Population predominantly white at 85%, black 7.5%, with recent growth in Hispanic/Latino community which currently makes up about 2.6%
- Fertility rate declined to 1.7 less than the replacement rate of 2.1
- Average number of persons per household decreased to 2.35 persons
- Percent of households without a vehicle increased to 10,805
- Percentage of persons with high school diploma (91.2%) and bachelor degree (25.2%) increased



Recreation Trends

The 2024 SCORP study found a:

- Surge in outdoor activities including hunting and wildlife-watching
- Increased desire for improved access to water for paddling sports
- Increased participation in hiking, fishing and camping
- Demand for multi-use and accessible recreational facilities.
- Increased participation of seniors (+7.4%) and youth (+5.6%)



State of Ohio Priorities for Enhancing Outdoor Recreation Opportunities:

- Advance the trail network.
- Improve, enhance, and adapt recreational facilities.
- Emphasize recreational opportunities and access to Ohio's waters.
- Improve awareness and access to outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Protect and sustain the natural environment.

Overall Trail Recommendations

- Connectivity ranks high in importance
- Partner with community organizations for trail locations
- Focus on underserved areas
- Active Transportation planning via on-road routes



Recently replaced Bridge #11 along the Sippo Valley Trail

Campus Trail-KSU/Stark State

- 1.4-mile trail along campus drive connects campus to residential areas and The Strip
- Crushed limestone and concrete sidewalks, eastern end of the trail connects to Hoover Trail
- **Requests from public include providing a connection to Devonshire Park, additional connections through Jackson Township and considering community plans to make the strip and Belden more walkable**



Hoover Trail

- 5.3-mile crushed limestone trail connecting Washington Square, Walsh University's Hoover Park, Hoover High School, North Canton's baseball fields, and the Hoover District
- Recent updates include the construction of the Market Avenue tunnel, connecting the Hoover and Middle Branch Trails; new kiosks and trail signage. Marquardt to Market Ave. is planned for paving in 2028.
- Hoover Trail was the third most visited trail by respondents.
- **Accessible restroom facilities are a common request for this system. Additionally, connectivity requests were mentioned in the public survey proposing connections to West Branch Trail and Saratoga Hills**



Iron Horse Trail

- This 4.5 mi. limestone trail begins at the south side of the University of Mount Union. First Christian Church in Alliance serves as a trailhead along this route
- The final section through Alliance was recently completed, connecting to the Mahoning Valley Trail
- **Requests from the public survey and meetings indicated a significant desire for additional trail connections as well as additional parking and benches**



Mahoning Trail

- A 4.46-mile crushed limestone trail connecting the Deer Creek Reservoir to Early Hill Park on the north side of the City of Alliance. There is fishing access and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- Recently, a connection from the Mahoning Valley Trail was made to the Iron Horse Trail through the City of Alliance.
- **Comments from the public survey included addressing the curve/steep hill existing as well as working with the City to clean up trash from nearby dumping.**



Middle Branch Trail

- A 7.7-mile trail connecting Canton City to Plain Township, traveling through parks such as Schreiber, Reifsnyder, Martindale Park and Veteran's as well as Gervasi Vineyard, and GlenOak High School which has become Stark Parks' most popular trail
- Recently paved 2.8-mi section from 55th St to Colonial Blvd
- **Results from the public survey requested additional connections, specifically to Pioneer and West Branch trails, as well as making accessibility improvements**



Olde Muskingum Trail

- A 5.75-mile turf and crushed limestone trail that follows the Tuscarawas River from Canal Fulton to Jackson Township, parallelling the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath
- Equestrian riding is allowed on the berm of this trail
- **Suggestions include extending this trail to the north and south and improved signage**



Nickel Plate Trail

- A 1.08-mi trail consisting of limestone, on-road, and asphalt portions runs from Metzger Park in Louisville to Swallen Avenue. A southern 3-mi portion runs from Route 183 to Baird Ave in Minerva. Equestrian riding is allowed on the berm of this trail
- **Requests from the public survey and meetings indicated a significant desire for connections to be completed for this trail as well as benches**



Sandy Valley and Waynesburg Park Loop Trail

- The Waynesburg loop trail is a short, limestone trail around the Waynesburg Village Park. Portions of the route are complete, from West Street to Greer Waynesburg and from R. 183 east toward the county line
- **Recommendations include improvements to trail maintenance and finalizing the trail connections and partnering with the North Country Trail group which follows a parallel path and could be an important partner**



Sippo Valley Trail

- A 10.8-mile (7.9 miles in Stark County) trail running along the Sippo Creek and connecting Massillon and Dalton in Wayne County east to the Towpath Trail. Equestrian riding is allowed on the berm of this trail
- Stark Parks has made a significant effort in bridge maintenance along this trail and has recently replaced Bridge 4, 7 and 11 with four additional replacements funded over the next four years
- **According to the online survey, this trail was the fourth most visited trail and requests included paving, and adding a bicycle rack as well as continued bridge replacements**



West Branch Trail

- A 4.42-mi limestone trail connecting several amenities in Canton City, including West Park, Mother Goose Land, Waterworks Park, Monument Park, Stadium Park, and Covered Bridge Park as it follows the West Branch of the Nimishillen Creek
- **Requests received for this trail were to extend the trail, and connect to the Hoover Trail. Additional comments received mentioned safety along this trail as a concern, specifically between Fulton and 38th. The West Branch Trail was the fifth most visited trail according to the online survey**



Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail

- The 25-mi Stark County portion is part of the 110-mile Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area. The mostly limestone trail connects a number of small trailheads with temporary sanitary facilities and picnicking areas. Lock IV, the largest of these features a lock and is the southern terminus of the St. Helena III canal boat ride operated by the City of Canal Fulton
- **Comments received from noted a request for additional waterway activities, designated birding and wildlife viewing locations, improved signage, and targeted trail improvements and paving. The need for restrooms was also highlighted**



Overall Park Recommendations

- More amenities
- Upkeep of existing facilities
- Master plans for various parks
- Conservation practices to improve fishing



Newly installed restroom at Petros Lake Park

Deer Creek and Walborn Reservoir

Deer Creek Reservoir serves as the water source for the City of Alliance as well as the trailhead for the Mahoning Valley Trail. With the newer pedestrian bridge over the reservoir, the Park also serves as a trailhead for the Mahoning Valley Trail .

Features and Improvements: Fishing pier, boat ramp, ADA kayak and canoe launch, kiosk with trail map and updated directional signage.

Recommendations: Additional kayak and paddleboarding programs, concessions, permanent restrooms, shelter and boat rentals. The stocking of more fish was also requested in the public survey.



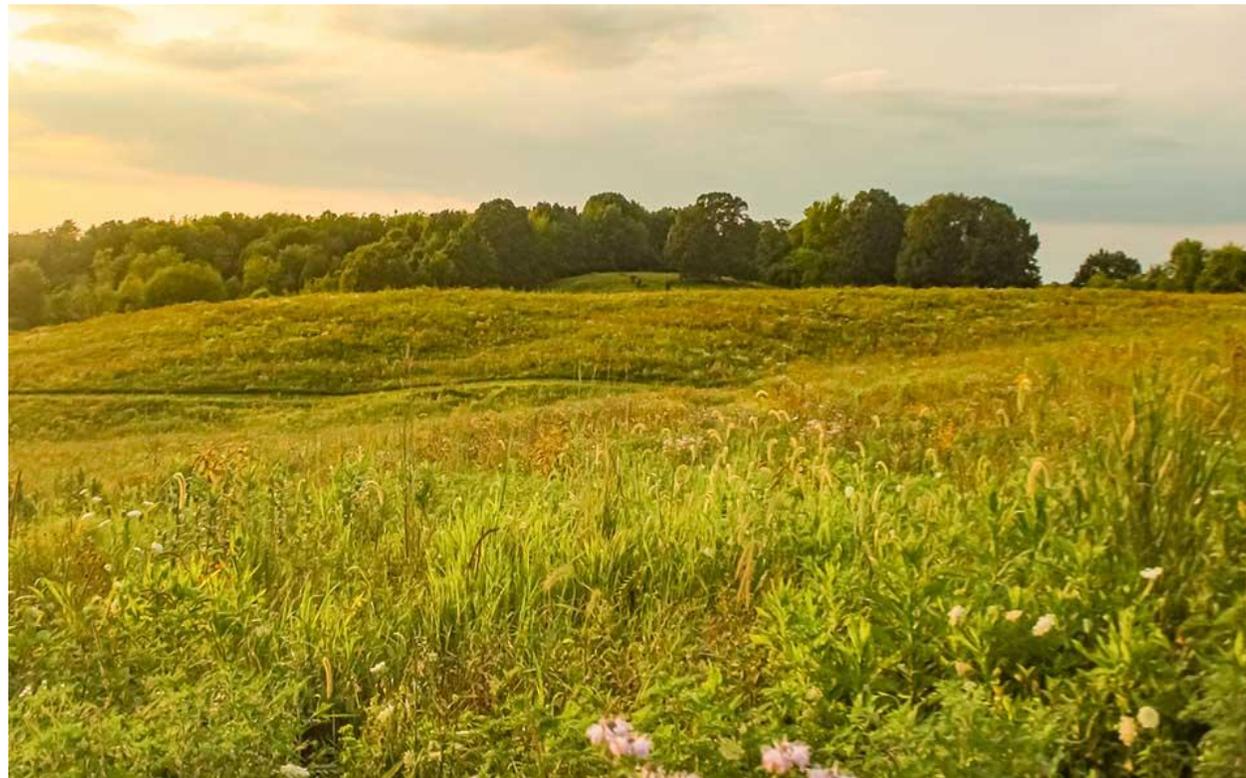
Fry Family Park

The 360-acre park, located in Pike Township, is a beautiful property consisting of rolling hills, hardwood forests, a pond, wetlands, and a riparian corridor

Features and Improvements: A 2011 master plan guided the development of the park renovations including a new entrance drive and parking renovation of the former residence to a Visitor Center, a new park shelter and trails

Recommendations:

Converting the barn to an event venue has been requested. Other requests from the public meetings and survey included improved ADA accessibility, trail extensions, installation of a fishing boardwalk, more programming and activities, play areas for children, and increased ranger presence



Magnolia Flouring Mills

This historic mill in Magnolia was purchased by Stark Parks in October 2005 and consists of approximately 13 acres along the Sandy & Beaver Canal

Features and Improvements: Since the last 5 Year Plan, Stark Parks completed a master plan for the property and implemented \$1 million in State Capital grant funds for upgrades including structural rehabilitation, new roof, windows and electrical upgrades, new paint and siding

Recommendations: Complete upgrades outlined in the plan, pond repairs, add interpretive signage, and improve accessibility to allow for walking tours, and self-guided activities. Allow for more community events, living history days, farmers' markets, movie nights, and fall festivals



Petros Lake Park

127 acre park with a 12-acre lake stocked for fishing, a 1.2-mile limestone surfaced trail along its shore and home to a one-mile Mindfulness Walk with ten mental health stations along the route.

Features and Improvements:

A new restroom facility was recently installed and a substantial conservation project was just completed to remove invasive pear trees.

Recommendations: Need for increased general maintenance at this site, a better stocked pond, and increased accessibility. There was also mention of concerns over the number of dog owners not practicing etiquette when using the trail and properly cleaning up after their pet.



Quail Hollow Park

The 701-acre park was operating as a state park since 1975 and has been managed by Stark Parks since 2016. Boasting an historic 40-room manor house and associated buildings, the site is used for numerous educational and community events, and can be rented for group functions. Other amenities offered at the park include a fishing dock, picnic areas, a playground, primitive camping sites, and over 15 miles of biking, equestrian, and hiking trails.

Features and Improvements: A Master Plan was completed for this park in 2017 and recent upgrades to the site have included driveway and lighting improvements, updated signage, removal of a dilapidated structure as well as repairs and upgrades to the exterior of the manor house.

Recommendations: improved ADA accessibility, trail maintenance, and restroom facilities. The site was also evaluated for additional mountain biking trails; however, it was determined that there was not adequate space/terrain for a quality addition. The Park District will continue focusing on improving existing trails and working with the Cleveland Area Mountain Biking Association (CAMBA) on trail maintenance. In the online survey, over 70% indicated it was very important to focus park resources on Quail Hollow.



Tam O'Shanter Park

Acquired by the Park District in 2019, the former golf course has been transforming to a natural state and park. Restoration has included planting of trees, wildflowers, warm season grasses, and wetland plugs.

Features and Improvements: Parking lots and driveway reconfigurations along with a restroom project and trail improvements have made the site more welcoming and accessible.

Recommendations: interpretive signage, additional shelters, and clubhouse renovations. Consideration could also be made for additional activities that could take place at the park, mountain biking and disc golf being common requests. Providing a connection to nearby Devonshire Park should also be taken into consideration.



Pike Ridge Park

Once a sewer treatment area, the City of Canton remediated and naturalized the property years ago. Stark Parks then worked with the City of Canton on a twenty five-year development and management agreement for the future park, which was opened to the public in 2025. The 520-acre property in Pike Township features rolling hills with elevated views of the surrounding area, several ponds, and over 5 miles of trails for hiking and horseback riding only

.

Features and Improvements: A

conceptual plan for the park has been developed and a temporary equestrian parking area has been installed

Recommendations: Implement components of the park plan including improved parking, trail expansion and other amenities including restrooms.



Sippo Lake Park

Sippo Lake Park contains approximately 300 acres with 107 acres of water. According to the online survey, Sippo Lake Park is the most visited park within the system. Placer.Ai data from 2025 revealed over 410,000 park visitations from over 130,000 individuals over a one-year period.

Features and Improvements: An accessible ramp to the marina and administrative offices as well as Kayak and Canoe launch in 2024 was a well-received addition.

Recommendations: Over 78% of respondents to the online survey indicated it was very important to focus resources at Sippo Lake. Marina and fishing access and upgrades were recommended as well as additional shelters, and exploring public transportation, especially to the Exploration Gateway.



Cooks, Devonshire, Esmont, Fichtner and Molly Stark Parks

The smallest of Stark Parks, these were properties that were donated or inherited over the years. No specific comments were made on these properties. With a focus on maintenance and improvement on our most used parks and trails, these smaller parks should be reviewed for the best use by the public.



The Pond at Devonshire Park

Overall Recommendations – Public Safety

- Improvements to safety concerns ranks high in importance
- More ranger presence throughout parks
- Increased lighting and security features
- Strategic ranger station locations



Overall Recommendations – Education and Programming

- Expand and enhance Park education and programming
- . Inclusive programming for people of all abilities, along with expanded offerings for seniors and specialized experiences such as night sky and astronomy programs
- Focus on a variety of engaging programs that serve residents at all stages of life and varying abilities



Overall Recommendations – Conservation and Preservation

- Identify areas for preservation (natural, cultural, and historical)
- Continue removal of invasive species and restoration of native species
- Consider improvements to wildlife management including areas for hunting and fish stocking programs



Overall Recommendations

- ADA upgrades throughout the park system
- Update trail plan to reflect current needs of community and utilize roads where necessary
- Strive for parks being a place for all ages, abilities, and backgrounds
- Streamline operations to improve maintenance and upkeep



Update to Mission Statement

Current Mission: To preserve, manage, and connect natural areas to serve the community through recreation, conservation and education

Proposed Mission: To enrich the quality of life in Stark County by conserving and connecting our natural and cultural resources, while providing meaningful recreation and education opportunities that bring value to everyone in our community.

Questions

