



## Senior Citizen Center

**Type of Park:** Recreation Center

**Address:** 329 South Peters Ave.

**Sector:** Southeast

**Size of Park:** 0.6 developed acres

**Existing Facilities in the Park:**

- ▶ Kitchen/Cafeteria
- ▶ Arts and Crafts Room
- ▶ Activity Room
- ▶ Dance Area
- ▶ Tax Preparation Room

**Assessment of this center (outdoor areas only):** The Senior Center is adjacent to June Benson Park, which is described on Page 3-23.

**Key Needs:** Maintain outdoor landscaping and walks around Senior Center.

**Indoor Components:** See Chapter 7.



## Whittier Rec Center

**Type of Park:** Recreation Center

**Address:** 2000 W. Brooks st.

**Sector:** Southwest

**Size of Park:** 1.5 developed acres

**Existing Facilities in the Park:**

- ▶ Gymnasium
- ▶ After School Rooms
- ▶ 4 Tennis Courts
- ▶ 2 Basketball Courts

**Assessment of this recreation center (park areas only):** The Whittier Center includes four outdoor tennis/multipurpose courts. These courts are behind the recreation center building.

**Key Needs:** Add sign directing residents to available courts (during non-school hours). Renovate courts with Norman Public Schools when feasible.

**Indoor Components:** See Chapter 7.







# Andrews Park

**Type of Park:** Community Park  
**Address:** 201 W. Daws St.  
**Sector:** Northwest  
**Size of Park:** 17.5 developed acres

has been given to lowering a portion of the park to create a storm water detention basin. The area under consideration is the northwest corner of the park, and would be lowered by four to six inches, but could still be used as practice fields. No decision has been made as to the use of the park for this purpose yet.

**Key Needs:** Add to the park by removing a portion of North Webster Avenue just north of West Daws Street. This would allow a one acre triangle of land that is currently surrounded by roads to be physically incorporated into the park. Continue to add trees to the park to increase the availability of shade. Add additional outdoor sculptural displays in the park to reinforce the park's identity as the cultural center of Norman. Add stone features throughout the park that continue the character established by the WPA components.

### Existing Facilities in the Park:

- ▶ 1.24 Mile Walking/Jogging Trail
- ▶ 3 Backstops
- ▶ 2 and 1/2 Basketball Courts (2 are lighted)
- ▶ 3 Playgrounds
- ▶ 1 Skate Park
- ▶ 1 Splash Pad Area
- ▶ 1 Amphitheater
- ▶ 1 Pavilion
- ▶ 1 Gazebo
- ▶ 40 Benches
- ▶ 17 Picnic Tables
- ▶ 3 BBQ Grills
- ▶ 1 Bike Rack
- ▶ 3 Drinking Fountains
- ▶ 7 Bridges
- ▶ 1 Historical Structure
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Restrooms Building
- ▶ WPA Stone Channel

**Assessment of this park:** Andrews Park is the best known park in Norman. It is heavily used for walking, enjoying the popular splash pad, for baseball and soccer practice, for skateboarding, and for major events. While under 18 acres in size, the park's prominent downtown location makes it easily accessible from all parts of the City. The historic WPA channel and the stone amphitheater are unique features that set the park apart from others in the system. The park also has many mature trees that provide shade. Consideration







## Little Axe Park and Community Center

**Type of Park:** Community Park/Special Purpose

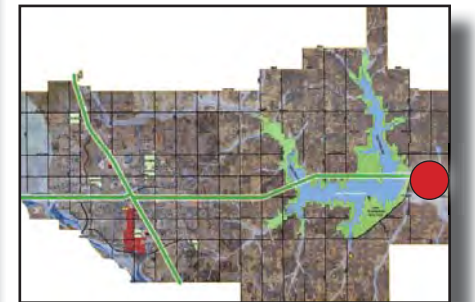
**Address:** 1000 168th Ave. NE

**Sector:** Southeast

**Size of Park:** 14.2 developed acres

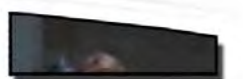
**Existing Facilities in the Park:**

- ▶ Playground
- ▶ Swings
- ▶ Community Center Building
- ▶ 3 Baseball Fields
- ▶ 2.5 Basketball Courts (2 on parking lot)
- ▶ Disc Golf Course
- ▶ 1 Bike Rack
- ▶ 1 Bench
- ▶ 4 Picnic Tables
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ 1 Restroom Building/Concession



**Assessment of this park:** This park is located in the very far east portion of the City by Lake Thunderbird. This park and community building serves all the residents who live in the rural eastern part of City. The park is located on 168th Avenue East and has good access off Highway 9. Park amenities are in good condition. Additional shade trees and picnic areas around the baseball fields should be considered.

**Key Needs:** Improve concession building serving the athletic fields, and improve the sidewalk accessibility throughout the park.







# Griffin Park

**Type of Park:** Community Park  
**Address:** 1001 E. Robinson  
**Sector:** Northeast  
**Size of Park:** 160.0 developed acres

### Existing Facilities in the Park:

- ▶ 1.16 Mile Walking/Jogging Trail
- ▶ 1 Playground
- ▶ 16 Soccer Fields
- ▶ 9 Baseball Fields
- ▶ 5 Softball Fields
- ▶ 4 Football Fields
- ▶ 1 Dog Park
- ▶ 3 Pavilions
- ▶ 15 Picnic Tables
- ▶ 1 BBQ Grills
- ▶ 1 Bike Rack
- ▶ Water Feature/Irrigation Lake
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ 4 Restrooms Buildings
- ▶ Disc Golf Course

**Assessment of this park:** Griffin Park is by far the most actively used park in the Norman parks system. When combined with the adjacent Sutton Wilderness area, Griffin provides more than 300 acres of active and passive parkland in the very center of the City. The park also includes four football fields that are used for Norman’s growing youth football leagues. While the park is well used, it needs to be enhanced to truly stand out as one of Norman’s premier parks. The baseball fields and surrounding fencing are generally in good condition, and the soccer fields are well maintained. Lighting has been recently added and is in good condition.

**Key Needs:** The park has no additional room for expansion of its two primary uses, soccer and baseball/softball. Soccer is an extremely popular sport in the City, and the soccer complex in the park hosts many local and regional soccer tournaments that have been very successful. Use of the park for higher level, premier tournaments

is precluded by the number of fields, and consideration should be given to identifying where nearby growth might occur.

### Other key needs include:

- ▶ Replace decades old pipe railing around the park and internal parking areas. Suggested treatments may include using simulated wood concrete fencing or landscaped berms around the park perimeter.
- ▶ Replace aging signs at the park entries and at key facility entrances within the park. Signs should adapt the vernacular of the stone pavilions already existing in the park.
- ▶ New wayfinding and feature identification signs are needed within the park. This park is large enough to have a unique set of internal signs that guide visitors to the park.
- ▶ Shade is needed over bleachers in the park, at both the soccer complex and at the baseball/softball fields. One to two fields per every quad should be covered.
- ▶ Resurface or replace the 1+ mile trail around the park. The asphalt trail surface is deteriorating and cracking in some areas.
- ▶ The park needs at least two additional playgrounds. One is needed near the soccer area pavillion, while the second is needed at the northeastern corner of the park along 12th Avenue.
- ▶ The dog park needs new fence posts and area amenities. These might include fake fire hydrants and dog slides, as well as potential additional shade for pet owners.
- ▶ The play area near the softball fields needs to be expanded/enhanced.
- ▶ The pavilion near the existing play area is dated, and should be replaced with a pavillion that matches the stone vernacular used in the more attractive pavilions on the site.
- ▶ Internal landscaping and additional tree planting needs to be added along main promenades and trail corridors between fields.
- ▶ A basketball complex has been proposed in the northeastern quadrant of the City. The park currently has no basketball courts.
- ▶ Add shade and additional paved seating areas adjacent to the concession buildings in the park. Shade could be provided by using pergolas or large covered pavilions.







## John H. Saxon Park

**Type of Park:** Community Park  
**Address:** Highway 9 at 36th Ave.  
**Sector:** Southeast  
**Size of Park:** 67.3 undeveloped acres

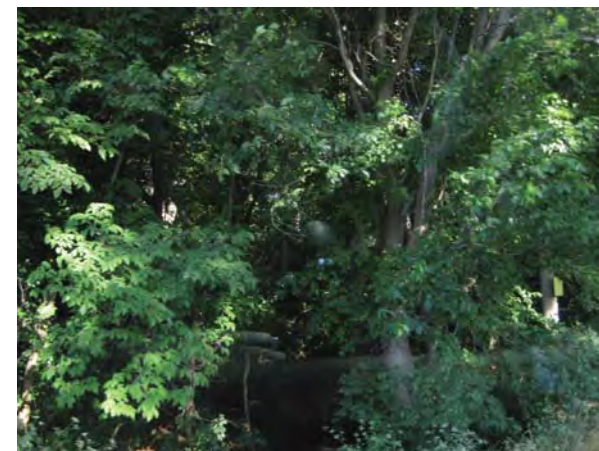
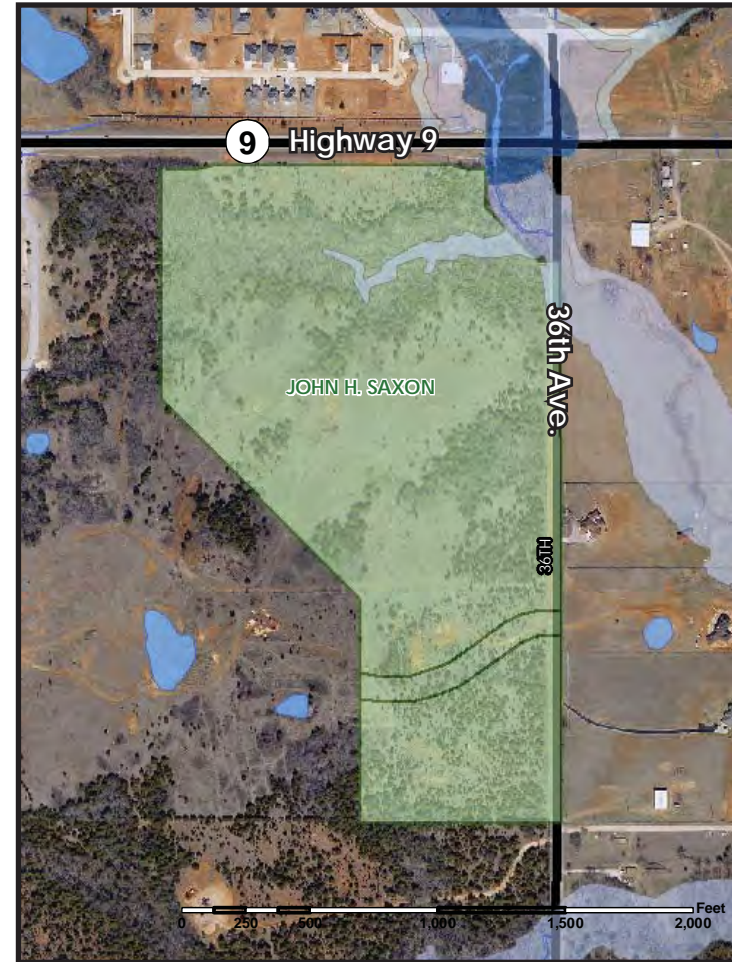
**Existing Facilities in the Park:**  
 ► Undeveloped

**Assessment of this park:** Saxon Park is currently undeveloped. It is located in the southeast sector of the City along Highway 9 and SE 36th Avenue.

The park site is a mixture of mature woodlands and open fields.

**Key Needs:** Develop a master plan for the park site. As the key community park for the fast growing southeast sector of the City, careful consideration should be given to balancing both passive and active recreation facilities. Consideration should also be given to allow indoor recreation and aquatic buildings to be located in this park.

The City currently plans to add walking/jogging trails which will accommodate cross country competitions. Some clearing for these trails has been initiated.







# Reaves Park

**Type of Park:** Community Park

**Address:** 2501 Jenkins Ave.

**Sector:** Southeast

**Size of Park:** 79.8 acres developed

losses in this park. The City's Veteran's Memorial Plaza is a recent addition to the park. Kids Place, a Robert Eather's designed wooden complex that was built in 1999, is the City's largest playground and a central feature of the park. A 10' wide asphalt trail that is in good condition circles the park.

A large picnic complex located in the park is somewhat dated, with older pavilions, picnic tables and restroom facilities.

**Key Needs:** Consider creating a new master plan for the park. Rebuild the picnic complex, with new tables, pavilions and restroom building. Use the pavilion vernacular found in Griffin and Andrews Park to create a character that links Reaves back to those other parks. Add multiple new park signs to identify the park as a City of Norman facility. Install cultural components such as additional outdoor art, commemoration markers or statues, and a place for large gatherings. Create new park entrances that celebrate the park. Continue to upgrade athletic field lighting in the park, and ensure that concession/restroom facilities at the softball and baseball fields are tournament quality.

### Existing Facilities in the Park:

- ▶ 0.86 Mile Walking/Jogging Trail
- ▶ 1 Backstop
- ▶ 3 Playgrounds
- ▶ 6 Baseball Fields
- ▶ 6 Softball Fields
- ▶ 4 Volleyball Courts
- ▶ 4 Pavilions
- ▶ 3 Benches
- ▶ 71 Picnic Tables
- ▶ 10 BBQ Grills
- ▶ 1 Bike Rack
- ▶ 3 Drinking Fountains
- ▶ 1 Historical Structure (Veterans Memorial)
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Restrooms Building
- ▶ 1 Basketball Court
- ▶ 1 Recreation/Dance Center

**Assessment of this park:** Reaves is home to both softball and baseball facilities operated by the Reaves Park Softball Association and by the Optimist Club. It is 80 acres in size and is the City's third most popular park. However, the park is surrounded by the University of Oklahoma campus, and as such, is easily confused as being part of OU. The park has many mature trees, but recent ice storms have resulted in severe tree







## Ruby Grant Park

**Type of Park:** Community Park  
**Address:** Franklin Rd. at I-35  
**Sector:** Northwest  
**Size of Park:** 148.8 undeveloped acres

**Existing Facilities in the Park:**

- ▶ Undeveloped

**Assessment of this park:** This park is currently undeveloped. There is a master plan for this park which includes practice fields, a cross country track facility, a splash pad, playgrounds, disc golf course, trails, picnic areas, sculpture garden, skate park, dog park, and a pond.

**Key needs:** Establish a strategy to acquire the funding necessary for construction of the first phase (as per the established master plan for the site).







# George M. Sutton Wilderness

Type of Park: Special Purpose Park (Open Space)

Address: 1920 12th Ave. NE

Sector: Northeast

Size of Park: 160.0 undeveloped acres

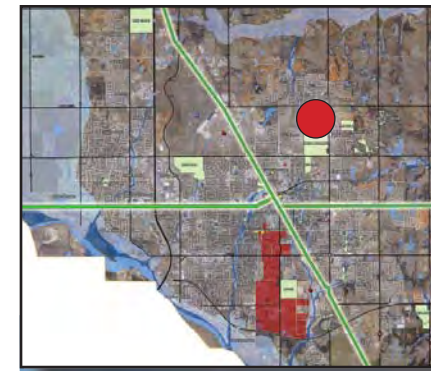
### Existing Facilities in the Park:

- ▶ Access Parking Area Adjacent to 12th Avenue
- ▶ Small Pavilion at Entry Area
- ▶ Park Information Kiosk
- ▶ 2 Ponds/Water Features
- ▶ 3+ Miles of Nature Trails
- ▶ Extensive Forested Areas

**Assessment of this park:** The Sutton Wilderness is the largest natural preserve in Norman, beyond lands around Lakes Thunderbird. It occupies a central and easily accessible location in the City. One parking area focuses entry at a single point, allowing some control over access to the preserve.

The preserve itself is very scenic, with winding forested trails leading to two lakes in the center of the preserve. A recent 50+ acre addition along the western edge of the preserve was acquired, and integrated wetlands and forested areas into the preserve.

**Key Needs:** Trails within the park are all rustic and natural, and are not wheelchair accessible. Also, emergency access to the center area of the preserve is limited. Develop at least one more accessible route to the larger lake. The lakes have no fishing piers or wildlife observation blinds. Finally the park edge should include some signage or features that identify the site as a natural preserve, especially at Rock Creek Road and 12 Avenue.







## Westwood Park

**Type of Park:** Special Purpose Park  
**Address:** 2400 Westport Dr.  
**Sector:** Northwest  
**Size of Park:** 129.9 developed acres

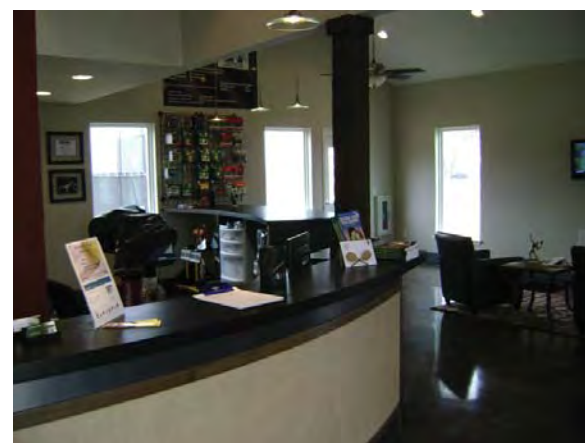
**Existing Facilities in the Park:**

- ▶ Walking/Jogging Trail
- ▶ 12 Tennis Courts
- ▶ Tennis Pro Shop
- ▶ 18 Hole Golf Course
- ▶ Driving Range
- ▶ Golf Pro Shop
- ▶ Swimming Pool/Aquatic Complex
- ▶ Paved Parking Lot
- ▶ Restroom Building
- ▶ 1 Playground

**Assessment of this park:** This park is largely a destination park. The golf course and tennis complex are in good condition. The restrooms, concessions, and golf pro shop need renovation. The swimming pool is very dated and in need of replacement (recommendations regarding the pool are discussed in Chapter 6). There is one playground in the park which is in good condition; however it is not often used and has limited visibility.

**Key Needs:** Replace or renovate the Westwood Pool. As part of that effort, develop a master plan for the remaining facilities in the park, including the Tennis Center and the Golf Course Clubhouse. Consider consolidating tennis center and golf course building in one building to create space for a two to four covered tennis court building. Consider also re-configuring parking for greater efficiency and to create usable space.

Create a new entrance to the park from Robinson Street. Add features such as pavilions and a connection to the existing Robinson Street trail that also allow this park to serve as a neighborhood park for nearby residents. Add prominent public art pieces in this highly used park.







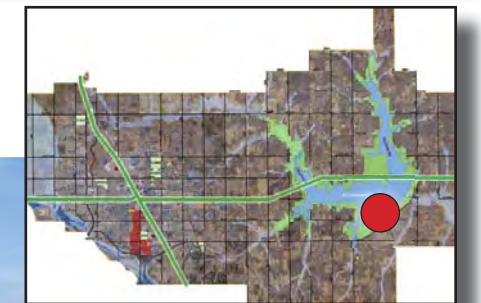
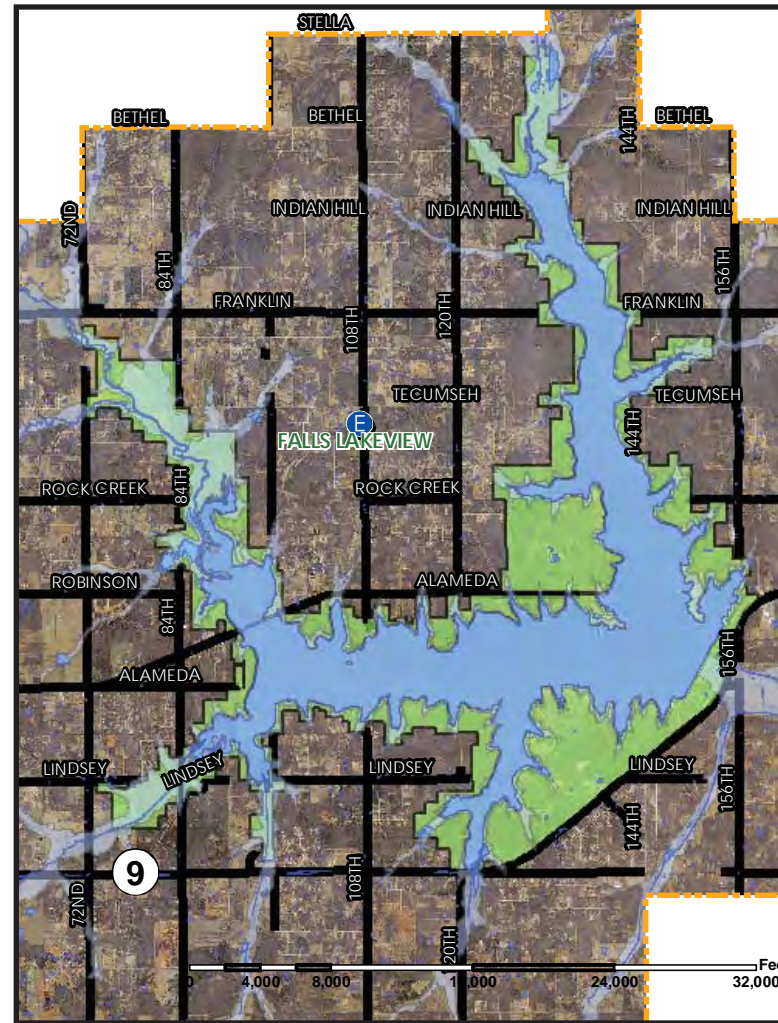
# Lake Thunderbird State Park (State of Oklahoma)

Type of Park: Regional Park

Ownership: State of Oklahoma  
Address: 13001 Alameda Dr.  
Sector: East  
Size of Park: 1,874 developed acres of parkland plus 5,497 acres of water (lake surface area) and 5,244 acres of additional open space surrounding the lake.

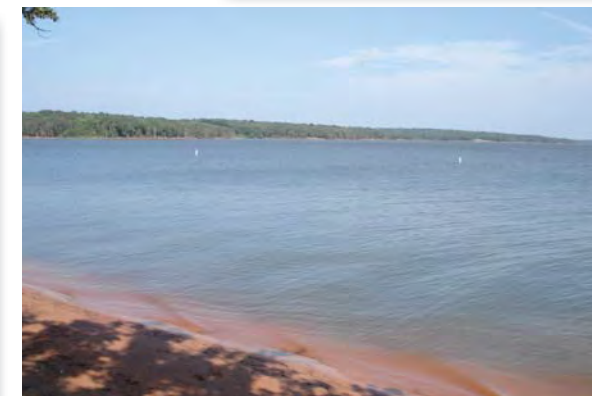
### Existing Facilities in the Park:

- ▶ Marina with Rentals and Gift Shop
- ▶ Swimming Beach
- ▶ Paddle Boat and Canoe Rentals
- ▶ 447 Campsites
- ▶ 8 Lake Huts
- ▶ Hike and Bike Nature Trails
- ▶ Horse Stables
- ▶ Restrooms Building/Showers
- ▶ Picnic Areas
- ▶ Group Shelters
- ▶ Nature Center
- ▶ Restaurant
- ▶ Hunting Areas
- ▶ Archery Range
- ▶ Playgrounds
- ▶ Miniature Golf

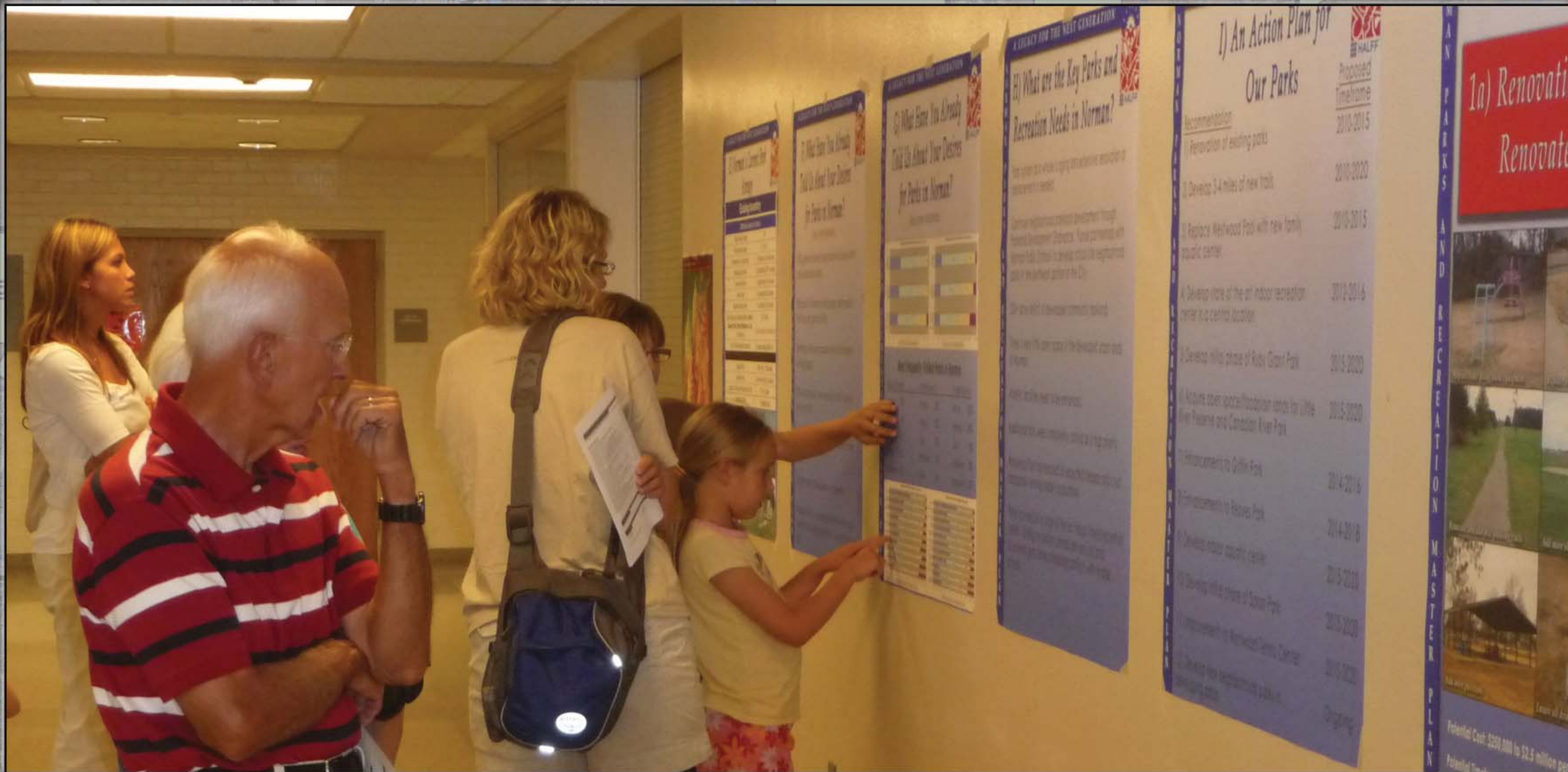


**Assessment of this park:** This regional park is owned and operated as a State Park and Lake Thunderbird is Norman's primary water source. The park serves not only the City of Norman but the surrounding communities. Long term, the City should develop trails along the Little River corridor and Highway 9 to connect residents to the lake through an alternative form of transportation.

**Key Needs:** Suggest improvements and potential partnerships where appropriate to enhance park facilities.







# Chapter 4

## Public Input





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## Public Input

### Introduction

Public input is a critical part of any planning process. Public entities work for their citizens by managing and providing the types of facilities that the residents, as taxpayers, want. In essence, our citizens are our "customers" and it is the City's responsibility to provide what our customers seek. In the parks planning process, citizen input helps identify what types of existing facilities are being used, where key deficiencies may occur, and where the citizens of Norman would like to see their funding targeted. This input also can be compared to input received from other cities in nearby regions of the country, so that long term trends can be identified. In essence, the residents of a community determine what they want to have in their city through their current use of those facilities, and through their comments and input.

This master plan incorporates an extensive amount of public input, utilizing several alternative methods. By using these methods of public input, feedback from many varying parts of the community were received, leading to a broader consensus on the direction that the master plan should take. The multiple methods that were used to generate citizen input during the planning process, as well as the number of responses generated with each method, include:

- ▶ A citywide mail-out survey (500+ responses)
- ▶ An online survey (1,000+ responses)
- ▶ Surveys distributed to the young residents of Norman in the Norman Public Schools (2,050+ responses)
- ▶ Interviews with key stakeholders, staff and elected officials of the City (15+ interviews)
- ▶ Periodic reviews and feedback from the Master Plan Steering Committee
- ▶ Citywide open house/public meeting and displays (44 completed questionnaires)

### Citizen Mail-out Survey

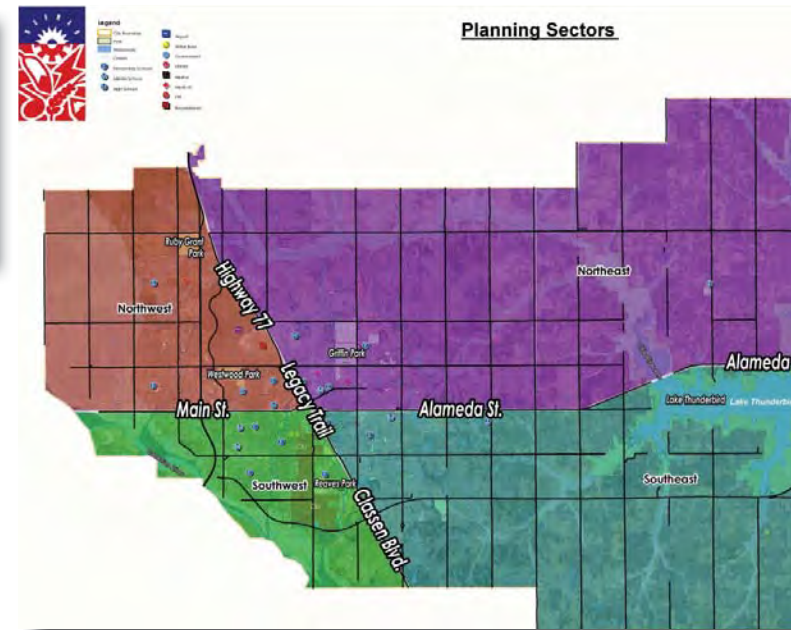
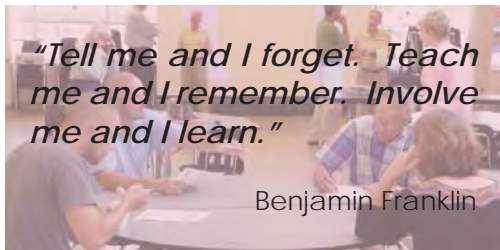
**Why use a mail-out survey** - A citywide mail-out survey was conducted as part of the parks and recreation planning process. The survey was designed to examine residents' current participation in recreational activities, and it also helped to assess recreational needs in Norman. The survey allows elected officials and City staff to better understand the recreational needs and desires of its citizenry. The survey was conducted by a professional public input firm with extensive experience in recreation attitude surveys.

**Survey methodology** - 5,000 mail-out surveys were sent to randomly selected homes in Norman and equally distributed throughout each sector of the City. Approximately 10% or 500+ completed surveys were returned. For the mail-out survey, which is used as a measuring stick for comparison with the other methods, the results yield a 95% level of confidence with a precision of +/- 5%. Respondents were asked to indicate which sector of the city they live in, so that responses could be tied to a particular area of the City.

### Online Survey

All citizens in Norman were given the opportunity to log onto the City's website and take a survey pertaining to parks and recreation. The survey was modeled after the mail-out survey with similar questions to allow for comparison. The reason for an online survey was to give all residents a broad based opportunity to voice their opinions.

Over the next several pages, the results of the mail-out survey and the online survey are shown and compared. Cumulative results of all surveys can be found in the appendix of this Master Plan. Some questions were also compared to the results of a broader citizen satisfaction survey conducted by the City of Norman in July 2009. Where relevant, those results are referenced.







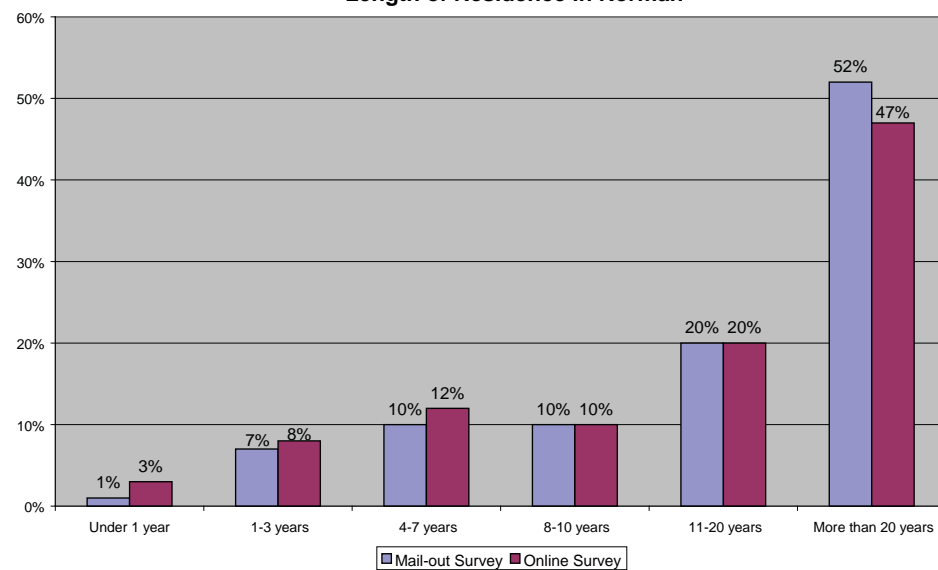
## Demographics of Survey Respondents

When survey respondents were asked how long they had **lived in Norman**, 52% of the mail-out survey respondents and 47% of the online survey participants indicated that they have lived in Norman for more than 20 years. Additionally, nearly three-fourths of mail-out survey respondents have lived in Norman for more than 10 years (72%), as had 67% of the online respondents. These results are mirrored by responses to the City's broader survey. Norman has a significant and large core population of long time residents.

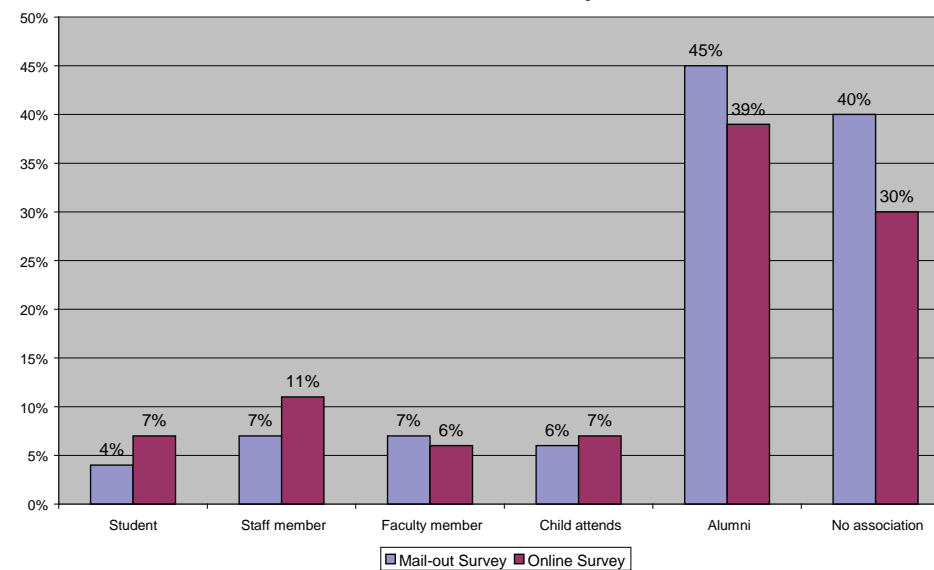
Not surprisingly, when asked about their **association with the University of Oklahoma**, 60% of the mail-out survey respondents and 70% of the online survey participants had some type of association. On this question the respondents were asked to choose all that apply to them. Most respondents who were associated with the University were alumni. The results are shown in the bar graph below.

**Age of Respondents' Children** - Given that a large portion of the survey respondents have lived in Norman for over 20 years, it is not surprising that a large portion also indicated that they no longer have dependent children living at home. The responses are shown below of those who have children under the age of 18 living at home. The online survey was open to all residents and clearly attracted more respondents with a greater interest in parks and recreation needs targeting younger children.

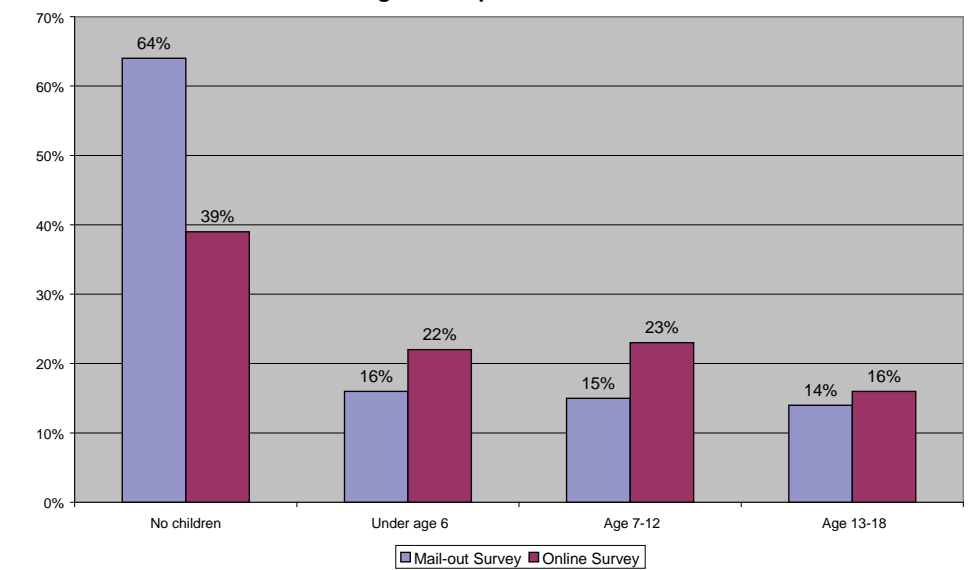
Length of Residence in Norman



Association with the University of Oklahoma



Age of Respondents Children







## Most Frequently Visited Park

Residents were asked what park in Norman they most frequently visit. Only a few of the 65 parks in the City received any mention. The responses are listed below.

Mail-out Survey		Online Survey	
Andrews Park	57%	Andrews Park	26%
Reaves Park	47%	Reaves Park	23%
Lions Park	21%	Lions Park	13%
Griffin Park	8%	Westwood Park	7%
Brookhaven Park	7%	Griffin Park	6%
Westwood Park	3%	Brookhaven Park	3%

## What Do You Generally Do When Visiting a Park

The survey respondents were given a list of various park activities. They were then asked to choose all the activities they generally do when they go to a city park. The responses are shown below.

Mail-out Survey		Online Survey	
Enjoy the outdoors	70%	Enjoy the outdoors	16%
Walk/hike	60%	Take kids to play	15%
Take kids to play	51%	Walk/hike	14%
Picnic	37%	Special events	11%
Walk pets	31%	Picnic	10%
Bike	19%	Walk pets	8%
Take kids to org. sports	18%	Take kids to org. sports	6%
Swim	16%	Swim	6%
Non-organized sports	11%	Bike	5%
Organized sports	6%	Non-organized sports	3%
Don't go to parks	5%	Organized sports	2%

## Reasons for Visiting Those Parks

Next, the residents were asked the open-ended question of what they feel is their biggest reason for visiting those parks. Their responses are shown below.

Mail-out Survey		Online Survey	
Events/concerts/festivals	23%	Locations/close/proximity	21%
Take kids to play	18%	Events/concerts/festivals	18%
Location/close/proximity	16%	Take kids to play	15%
Walk/jog/run/walk dogs	14%	Golf/disc golf	8%
Atmosphere/beauty/clean	5%	Splash pad/water park	6%





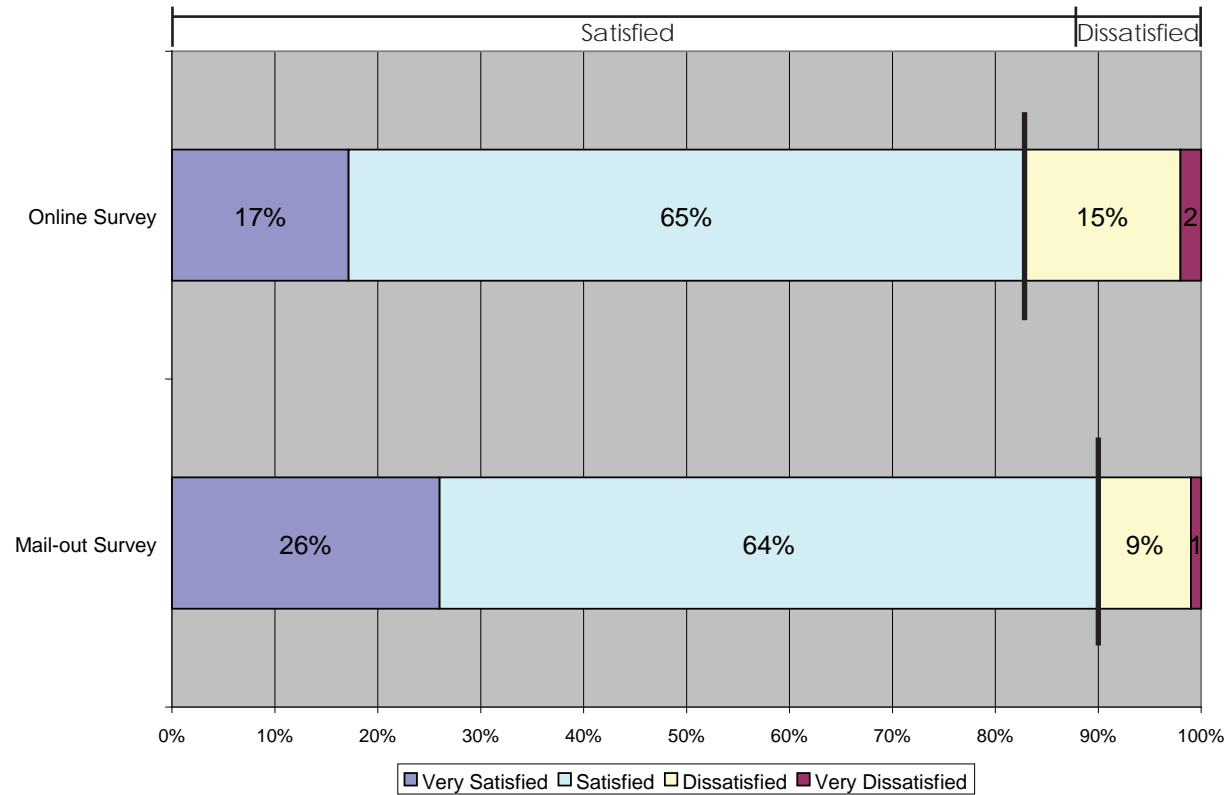


## Quality of Parks and Recreation in Norman

A key question in the survey asks residents how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the overall quality of parks and recreation. This establishes a baseline of citizen perceptions. The same question can be asked on future surveys to determine whether the City's park system has increased or decreased in quality according to the residents.

**Norman has a very high level of citizen satisfaction with the overall parks system.** 90% of those who responded to the mail-out survey and 82% of those who participated in the online survey indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of parks and recreation in Norman.

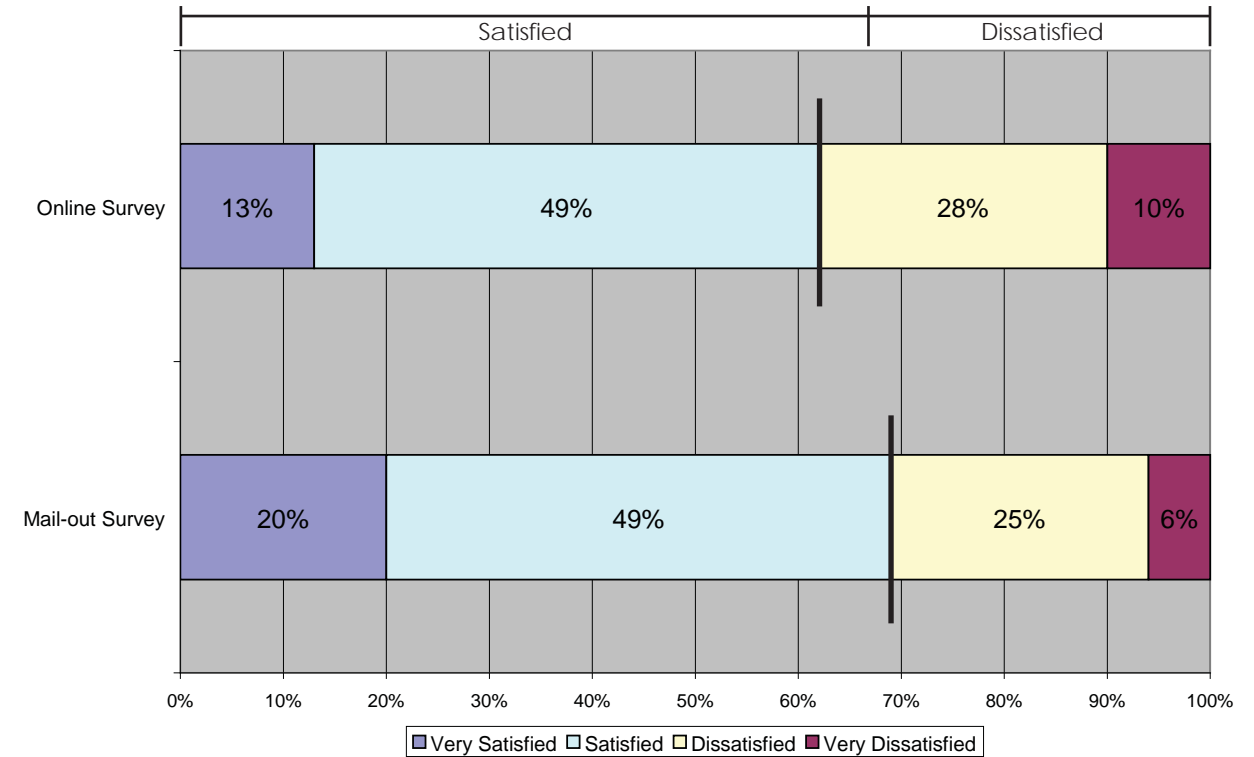
Satisfaction with the Quality of Parks and Recreation in Norman



## Quality of Parks and Recreation in Your Neighborhood

Residents were then asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the overall quality of parks and recreation in their specific neighborhood. The percentage of people satisfied was much lower when compared to the City as a whole. Only 69% of the mail-out survey respondents and 62% of the online survey respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the parks and recreation in their neighborhood. This indicates that while people feel that the overall quality of all parks in Norman is high, residents feel that their smaller, neighborhood parks are not as high a quality.

Satisfaction with Quality of Parks and Recreation in Your Neighborhood



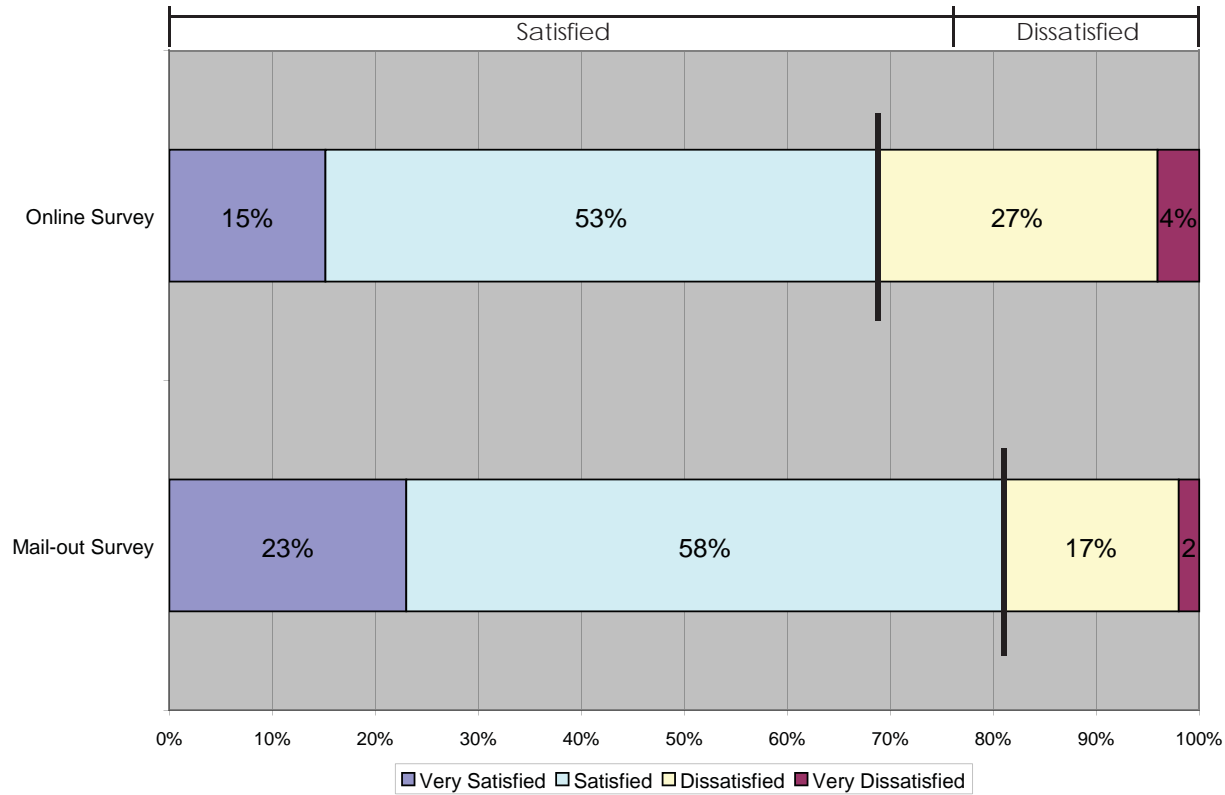




## Amount of Recreational Opportunities

Residents were also asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the amount of recreational opportunities provided by the City of Norman. 81% of mail-out survey respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied. However only 68% of the online survey participants indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied.

Satisfaction with Amount of Recreational Opportunities



## Favorite RECREATIONAL Activity

In an open-ended question, residents were asked what their favorite recreational activity was, as well as the favorite activity of their spouse and their children. In both the mail-out survey and the online survey, the highest rated response was walking/hiking for both themselves and their spouses. This matches the expressed desire later in the surveys for additional trails throughout the entire City for recreation and exercise. Swimming, golf and biking also ranked as favorite activities. The responses in both surveys are shown below.

### Mail-out Survey

#### Yourself

1) Walking/hiking	36%
2) Biking	8%
3) Swimming	8%
4) Golf	7%
5) Jogging/running	7%
6) Spectator events	7%
7) Aerobics/weight lifting	6%
8) Team sports	5%
9) Fishing/hunting	5%

#### Your Spouse

1) Walking/hiking	33%
2) Golf	10%
3) Biking	8%
4) Fishing/hunting	7%
5) Jogging/running	7%
6) Aerobics/weight lifting	6%
7) Team sports	6%
8) Arts & crafts/gardening	5%

#### Your Children

1) Playgrounds	29%
2) Swimming	17%
3) Sports	9%
4) Softball/baseball	8%
5) Soccer	7%
6) Walking/hiking	5%
7) Basketball	5%

### Online Survey

#### Yourself

1) Walking/hiking	29%
2) Swimming	15%
3) Golf	11%
4) Biking	7%
5) Jogging/running	7%
6) Aerobics/weight lifting	7%
7) Team sports	5%

#### Your Spouse

1) Walking/hiking	26%
2) Golf	10%
3) Swimming	9%
4) Team sports	9%
5) Biking	9%
6) Jogging/running	8%
7) Aerobics/weight lifting	8%

#### Your Children

1) Walking/hiking	26%
2) Golf	10%
3) Swimming	9%
4) Team sports	9%
5) Biking	9%
6) Jogging/running	8%
7) Aerobics/weight lifting	8%







## Organizations Utilized to Participate in Activities

After listing their favorite recreational activities, residents were asked to check which organization they utilize when participating in those activities. The responses are shown below. The number one response for both surveys was City of Norman indicating that residents use City facilities for a large portion of their recreational activities.

### Mail-out Survey

1) City of Norman	61%
2) State Park/Lake Thunderbird	41%
3) University of Oklahoma	32%
4) Churches	31%
5) Norman Public Schools	24%
6) YMCA	24%
7) Private Clubs	19%
8) Other	14%
9) Non-profit Youth	9%

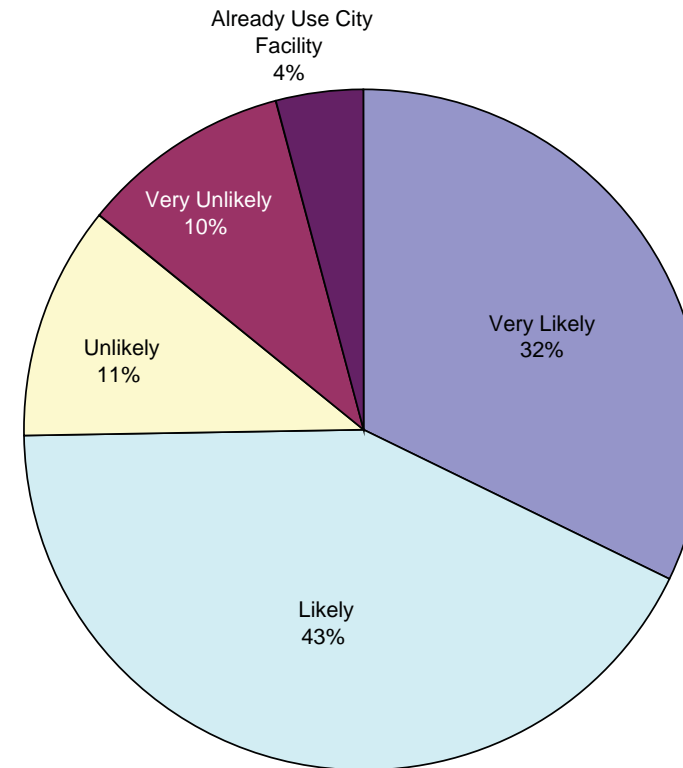
### Online Survey

1) City of Norman	24%
2) State Park/Lake Thunderbird	13%
3) University of Oklahoma	13%
4) Norman Public Schools	12%
5) YMCA	11%
6) Churches	10%
7) Private Clubs	8%
8) Other	5%
9) Non-profit Youth	4%

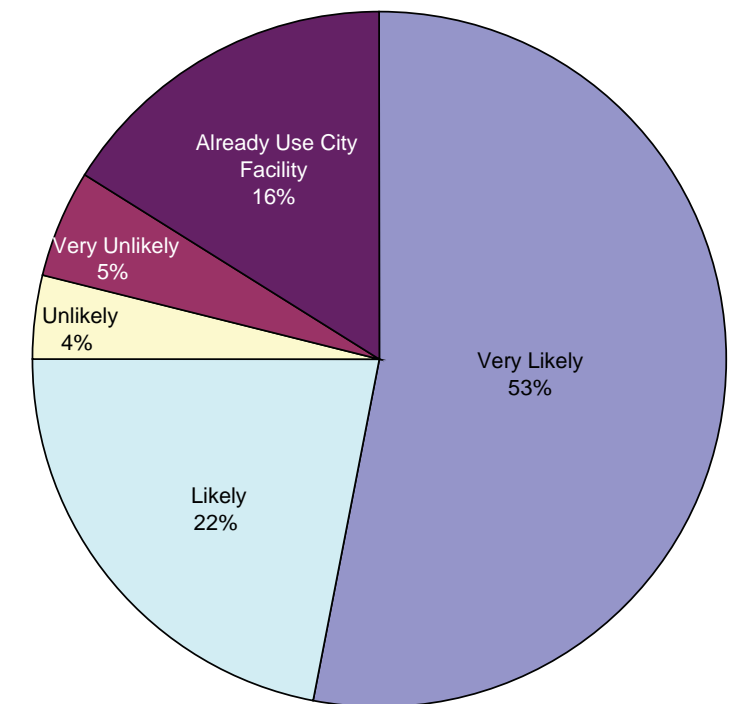
## Likelihood of Using a City Facility

The residents of Norman were then asked how likely or unlikely they would be to participate in their favorite recreational activities in a city facility if the City provided such a state of the art facility. 75% of both the mail-out survey and online survey respondents indicated they would be likely or very likely to use the City facility. Such a high level of likelihood is to be expected when compared to the previous question which showed that City facilities are the most likely utilized facilities when participating in a recreational activity. Citizens indicated a tendency to support and utilize City facilities.

Likely to Use City Facility (Mail-out Survey)



Likely to Use City Facility (Online Survey)







## Favorite ATHLETIC Activity

Residents were given a list of popular athletic activities. They were then asked to choose their favorite activity. The responses are shown below. The top four favorite athletic activities are the same for both the mail-out and online surveys. The top four athletic activities are walking/hiking on trails, swimming, bicycling, and exercising/working out.

### Mail-out Survey

1) Walk/hike on trails	60%
2) Swim	39%
3) Bicycling	37%
4) Exercise/work out	30%
5) Running/jogging	18%
6) Golf	17%
7) Basketball	13%
8) Soccer	13%
9) Baseball/softball	13%
10) Tennis	9%
11) Other	9%
12) Skating/hockey	3%
13) Football	3%
14) Volleyball	3%
15) Skateboarding	2%

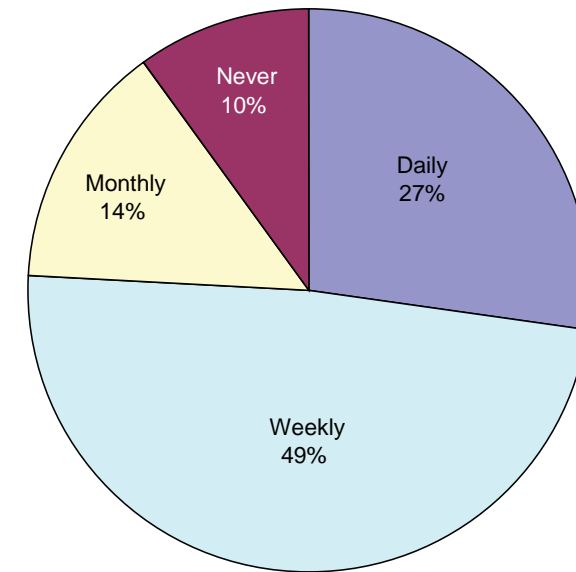
### Online Survey

1) Walk/hike on trails	20%
2) Swim	19%
3) Bicycling	11%
4) Exercise/work out	11%
5) Golf	8%
6) Running/jogging	7%
7) Baseball/softball	7%
8) Soccer	4%
9) Basketball	3%
10) Other	3%
11) Tennis	2%
12) Football	2%
13) Skating/hockey	1%
14) Volleyball	1%
15) Skateboarding	0%

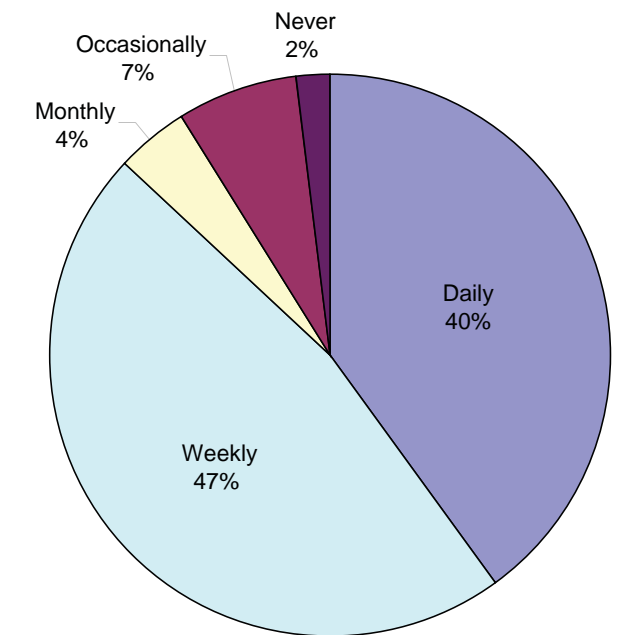
## Frequency of Participation

Knowing how frequently residents participate in their favorite activities gives the City staff an idea of how much use and demand there is for the facilities. 76% of mail-out survey respondents and 87% of online survey participants responded that they participated in their athletic activity either daily or weekly. This indicates that the city facilities are receiving a heavy amount of use.

Frequency of Participating in Athletic Activities (mail-out survey)



Frequency of Participating in Athletic Activities (online survey)







## Organizations Utilized to Participate in Activities

Again, residents were asked which organization they utilize when participating in their favorite athletic activity. For both surveys, the number one response was that residents utilize City of Norman facilities. All responses are shown below.

### Mail-out Survey

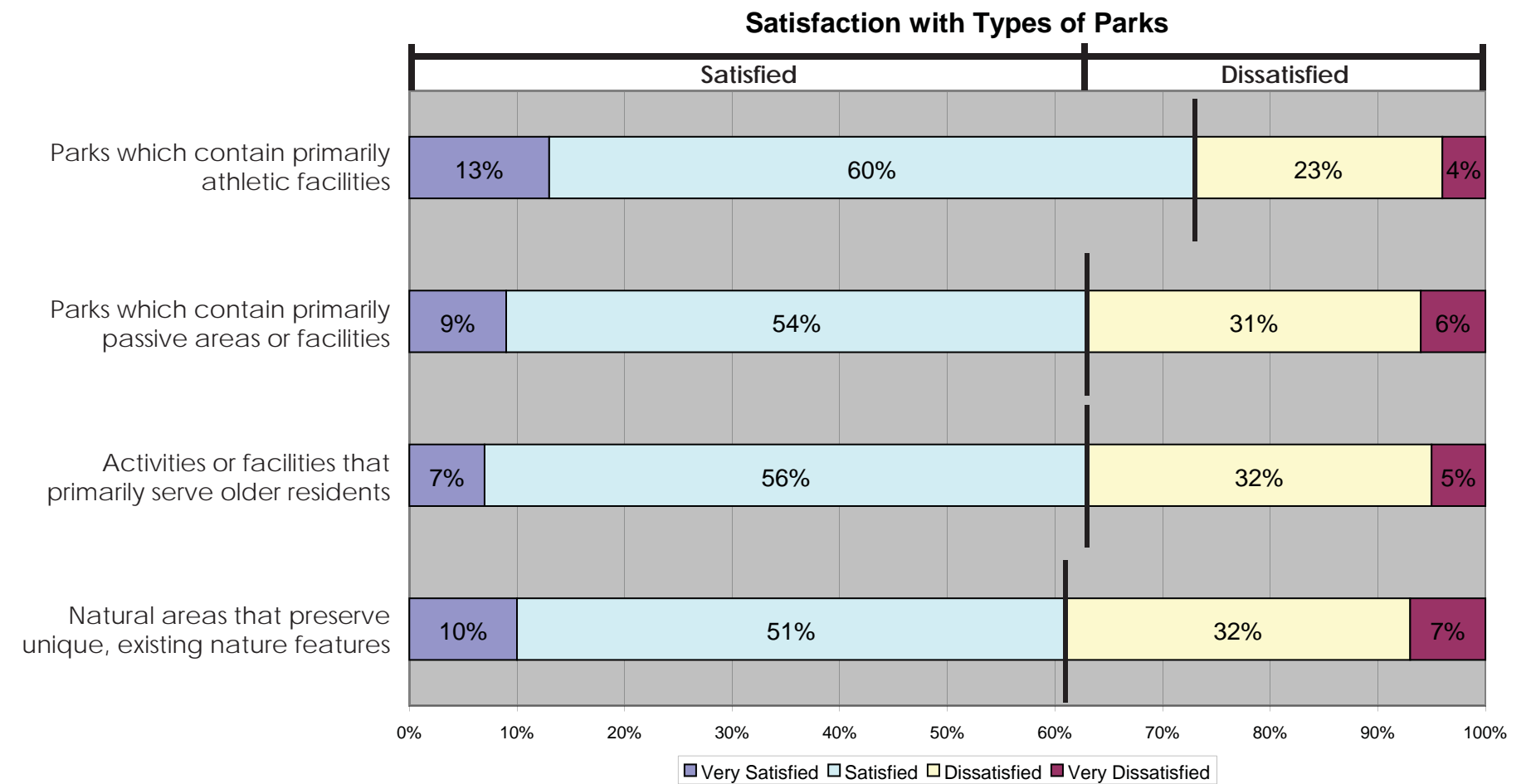
1) City of Norman	60%
2) State Park/Lake Thunderbird	31%
3) University of Oklahoma	26%
4) YMCA	23%
5) Other	22%
6) Churches	21%
7) Private Clubs	19%
8) Norman Public Schools	17%
9) Non-profit Youth	6%

### Online Survey

1) City of Norman	27%
2) University of Oklahoma	15%
3) YMCA	11%
4) State Park/Lake Thunderbird	10%
5) Other	10%
6) Norman Public Schools	9%
7) Private Clubs	9%
8) Churches	6%
9) Non-profit Youth	3%

## Satisfaction with Different Types of Parks

As an added component, a question on the online survey asked residents how satisfied they were with different categories of parks in Norman. The residents were given four different types of parks and asked to rate their satisfaction for each. 73% of residents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with parks that contain primarily athletic facilities. Only 63% of residents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with parks that contain primarily passive areas or facilities such as picnic sites, trails and nature viewing areas. The levels of dissatisfaction with the number of passive parks, nature preserves and senior facilities are significant enough to indicate a need to increase these types of parks. The responses are shown in the graph below.





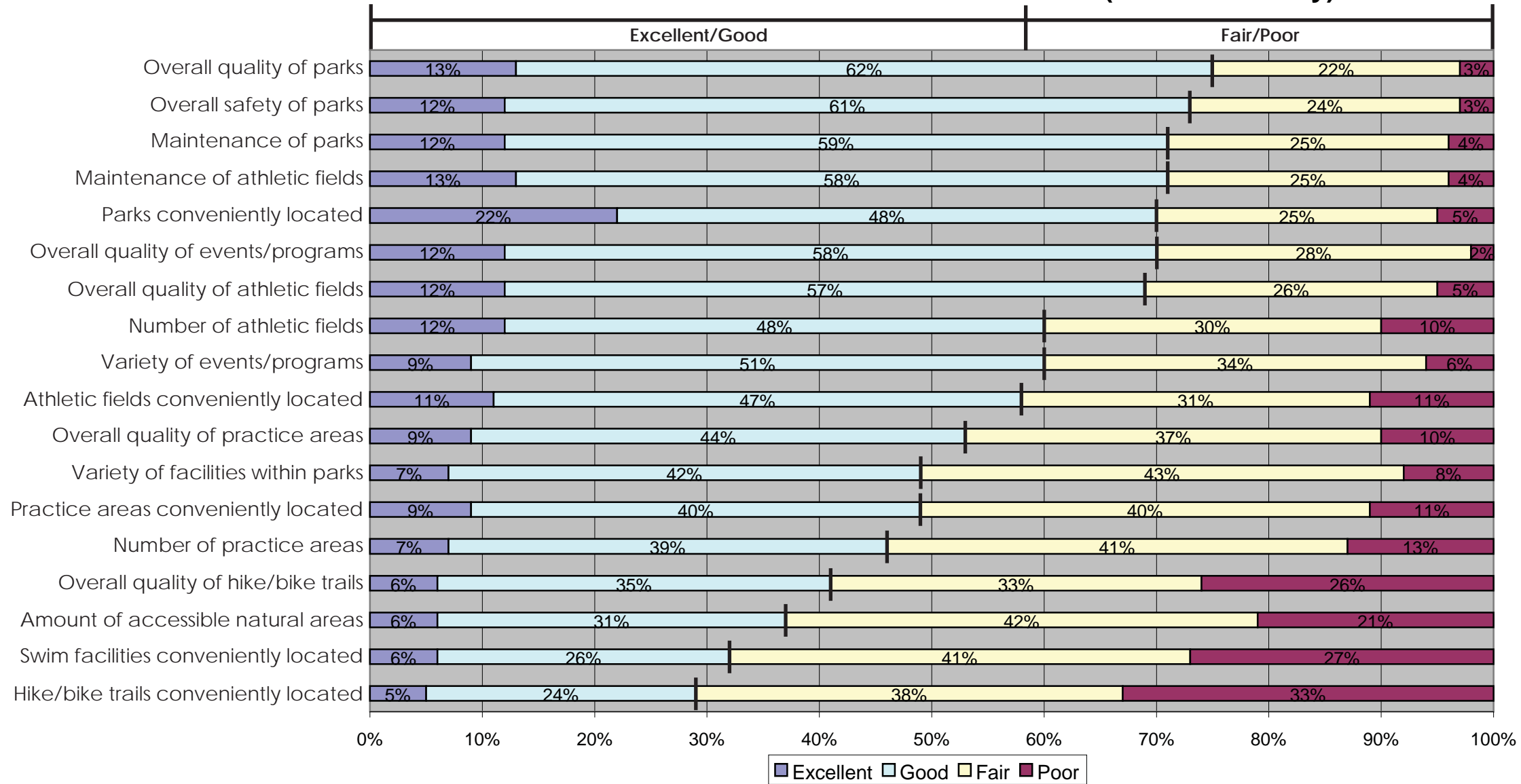


### Perceptions of Facility Conditions

Residents were given a list of different conditional characteristics of the parks in Norman. They were then asked to rate each characteristic as excellent, good, fair or poor. The results from the mail-out survey are shown on this page and the online survey results are shown on the opposite page.

The majority of residents feel that the overall quality, safety and maintenance of parks in Norman is either excellent or good. One surprising finding from this question is that having hike and bike trails conveniently located was the lowest rated item. This again shows the strong desire by residents to have a connected, citywide hike and bike trails system. Other key areas that did not rate as well are the number of practice areas, the amount of natural areas, and having swim facilities conveniently located to all residents.

#### Condition of Recreational Characteristics (Mail-out Survey)





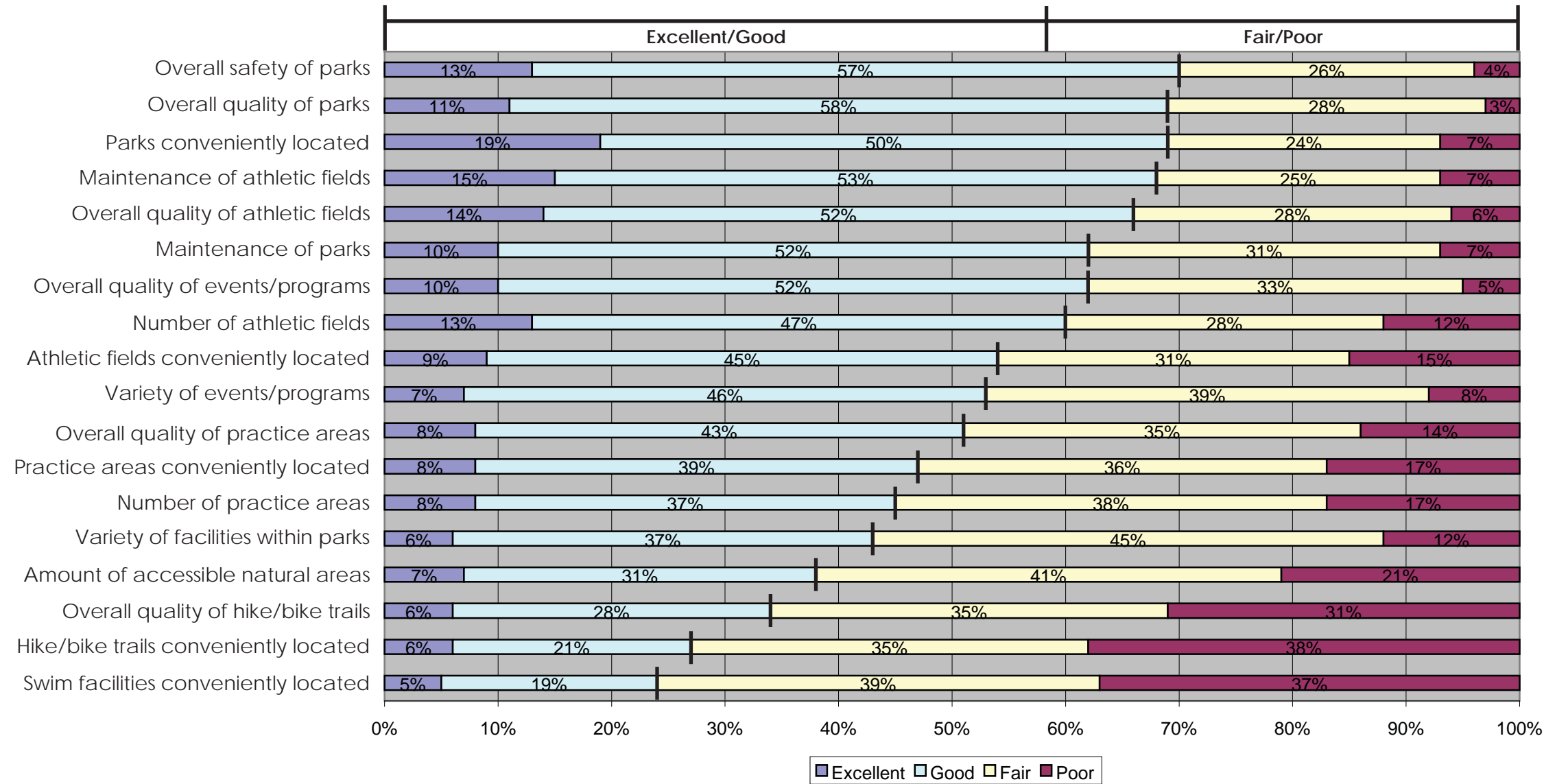


## Condition of Recreational Characteristics

The online survey results closely mirror those of the mail-out survey. Again, the overall quality of hike and bike trails, as well as having hike and bike trails conveniently located, were both rated very low. Only 34% of residents feel that the overall quality of hike and bike trails is either excellent or good, and 27% of residents

feel that the location of hike and bike trails is either excellent or good. Again this demonstrates a strong desire for more hike and bike trails throughout the City.

Condition of Recreational Characteristics (Online Survey)







## Student Survey Results

**Why use a student survey** - Students and the youth in a community are often times the primary users of parks. Since this segment of the population frequently utilizes parks and recreation facilities, they often have valuable suggestions on ways to improve them. Children and teens are likely to have a keen insight about what needs to be improved, what amenities are lacking, and what facilities are the most enjoyable to them as compared to their adult counterparts. Since they are the portion of the population that spends much of their leisure time in parks, their opinions and suggestions are extremely relevant and important.

**Survey Methodology** - A two page survey was distributed to the 4th, 7th and 10th grade students of Norman Public Schools. Individual classroom teachers distributed the survey to the students who were asked to answer each question honestly. A total of 2,056 surveys were returned.

**Location of students** - Surveys were received from many schools in the Norman Public Schools system. The percentage of respondents from each school is shown below.

Norman High	17%	Adams Elementary	3%
Norman North High	11%	Madison Elementary	3%
Whittier Middle	10%	Roosevelt Elementary	3%
Longfellow Middle	8%	Kennedy Elementary	3%
Irving Middle	8%	Jefferson Elementary	3%
Alcott Middle	5%	McKinley Elementary	3%
Truman Elementary	5%	Monroe Elementary	2%
Washington Elementary	4%	Lincoln Elementary	2%
Eisenhower Elementary	4%	Lakeview Elementary	1%
Cleveland Elementary	4%	Wilson Elementary	1%
		Jackson Elementary	1%

**Reasons for Satisfaction with parks in Norman** - Students were asked what they most like about parks in Norman. This was an open-ended question where students could write any answer they wanted. Some of the more popular answers include: swings/slides/equipment with an 18% response rate; fun/active/running/exercise (12%); toys/playgrounds (10%); clean/well maintained/safe/quiet (9%); nature/trees/wildlife/beauty (7%); open space/fields/no fencing (6%); and events/activities (5%).

**Reasons for Dissatisfaction with parks in Norman** - Students were also asked the open-ended question regarding what they do not like about parks in Norman. Some of the most common responses include: trash/dog droppings/no recycling bins with an 18% response rate; broken equipment (12%); crowded/noisy/too small (8%); and bad behavior/gangs/unsafe (7%). With minor upgrades and renovations to the parks, such as upgrading playground equipment and providing more trash bins/recycling bins, two of the primary reasons for dissatisfaction can be addressed.

**Favorite Park in Norman** - Students were asked what their favorite park in Norman was. The six most popular parks with the percentage of students who chose that park are shown below.

Reaves Park	33%
Andrews Park	28%
Lions Park	8%
Westwood Park	7%
Brookhaven	5%
Griffin Park	3%

**What do you do in parks** - The students were given a list of various activities that are offered or provided in the parks in Norman. They were then asked to choose all the activities they normally participate in when they visit a park. Playgrounds, active sports, using trails and swimming were the top four activities. Their responses are shown below.

Meet with friends	66%
Play on a playground	65%
Play baseball, soccer or football	48%
Enjoy nature	43%
Walk/run on trails	42%
Go swimming	36%
Family activity such as picnic	33%
Play basketball or volleyball	32%
Other	19%
Skateboard	17%

**What do you like to do at Lake Thunderbird** - Students were asked if they have ever visited Lake Thunderbird State Park (those results are shown on the opposite page). Of those who said yes, they were then asked what activities they like to do while visiting Lake Thunderbird. The answers and the percentage of students who chose that activity are shown below.

Swimming	57%
Boating	54%
Fishing	50%
Other	40%
Picnicking	35%



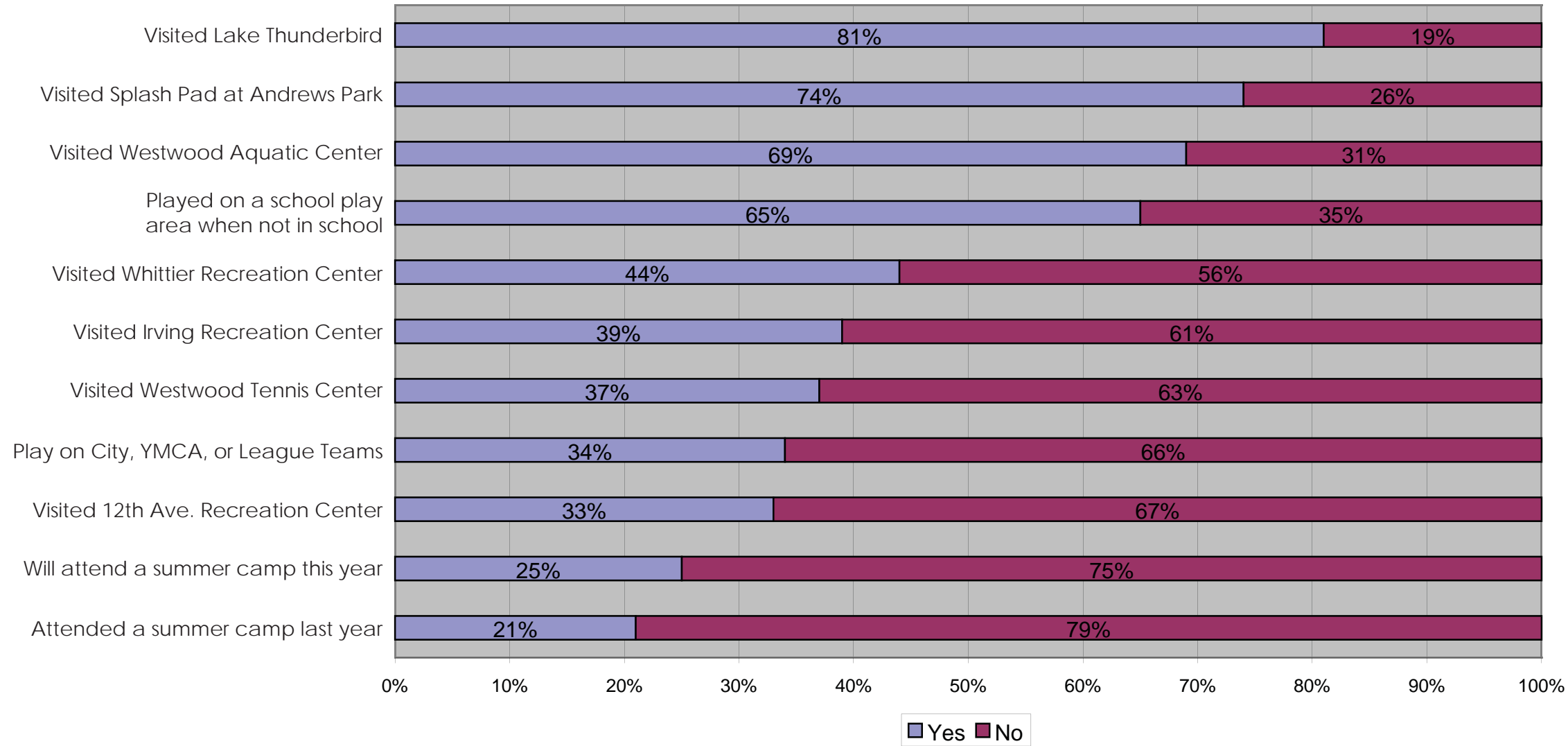




## Participation or Utilization of Specific Facilities

Students were given a list of various facilities throughout the City and asked if they have visited or utilized those facilities in the past 12 months. The most heavily utilized facility was Lake Thunderbird State Park with 81% of students indicating they have been to the lake in the past year. The second most utilized facility was the splash pad at Andrews Park with 74% indicating they have utilized it. This was followed by the Westwood Aquatic Center as the third most utilized facility with 69% indicating they have visited the center in the past 12 months. A large amount had also visited the Whittier and Irving Recreation Centers.

**Participation or Utilization of Facilities**



**Sports teams** - For the students who answered that they have played on a sports team in the past 12 months, they were then asked which sports they played. Their responses are shown below along with the percentage of students who chose that sport.

Soccer	37%
Basketball	36%
Other	35%
Baseball	22%
Swimming	19%
Softball	18%
Tennis	13%

**School Play Areas** - If the student chose yes when asked if they had played on a school play area after school or on the weekends, they were then asked which school. Their responses are shown below.

Truman	16%
Cleveland	9%
Eisenhower	8%
Irving	6%
McKinley	6%
Monroe	6%
Jackson	5%
Kennedy	5%







## Interest in Various Recreational Activities

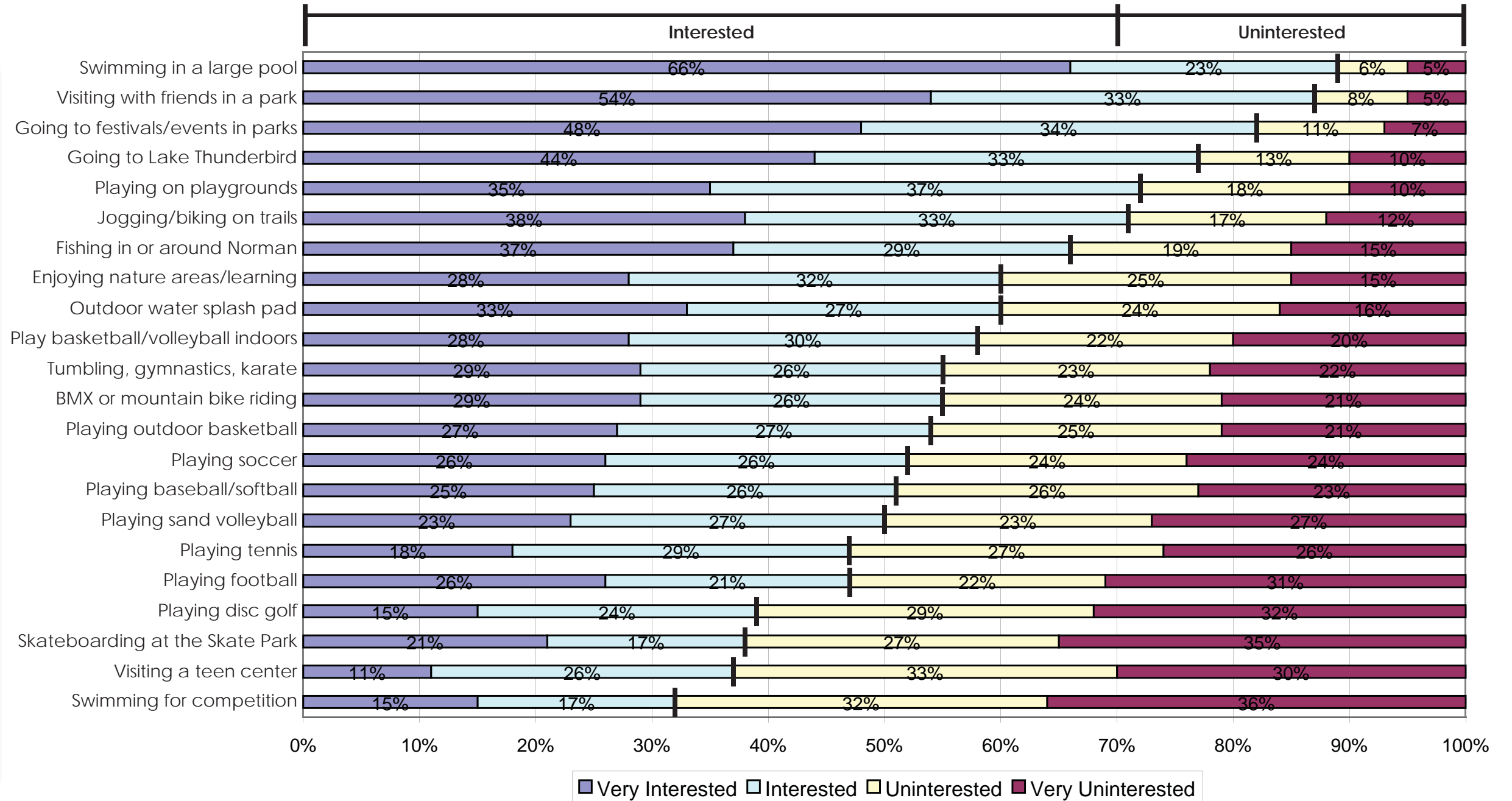
The students were given a list of various recreational activities that could be offered by the Norman Parks and Recreation Department. They were then asked to indicate their level of interest in each activity. Their responses are shown in the bar graph to the right.

The number one activity was swimming in a large pool with lots of fun things to do. 89% of all students were either interested or very interested in this activity. This activity also received the highest amount of students indicating they were very interested. A very high 66% said they were very interested.

The second highest rated activity was visiting with friends in a park. This response is common among students who often view parks as social gathering places.

The third highest activity that students are interested in was going to festivals or events in parks. Again, the students view parks as places to gather and be social, so providing activities for them to do while there is important.

## Interest in Recreational Activities







**Single Most Favorite Recreational Activity** - The students were then asked to write the one activity that they would consider being their favorite from the previous list. Their responses vary somewhat from the previous question. Swimming in a large pool with lots of fun things to do was still the highest rated activity with 18% of students listing this as their favorite.

The next three highest rated activities are sports: soccer (9%); baseball or softball (8%); and football (8%). Even though these were rated 14th, 15th, and 18th respectively on the previous question dealing with level of interest, students still listed them as their favorite activity.

The top six responses are shown below.

Swimming in a large pool	18%
Playing soccer	9%
Playing baseball/softball	8%
Playing football	8%
Going to Lake Thunderbird	6%
Visiting with friends at a park	6%

**Reasons for Not Participating in Activities** - The final question on the student survey asked students what are the main reasons why they do not participate in their favorite recreation activities. They were asked to choose all applicable reasons from a list given and to write in any additional reasons they might have. Their responses are shown below. Lack of access and cost related issues were the most common responses.

No place for that sport or activity near where I live	36%
Hard to get a ride to that activity or sport	30%
That sport or activity is too expensive	26%
I don't have the right equipment for that activity	22%
I prefer to do indoor activities like video games/watch TV	18%
I prefer to play at my house instead of at a park	16%



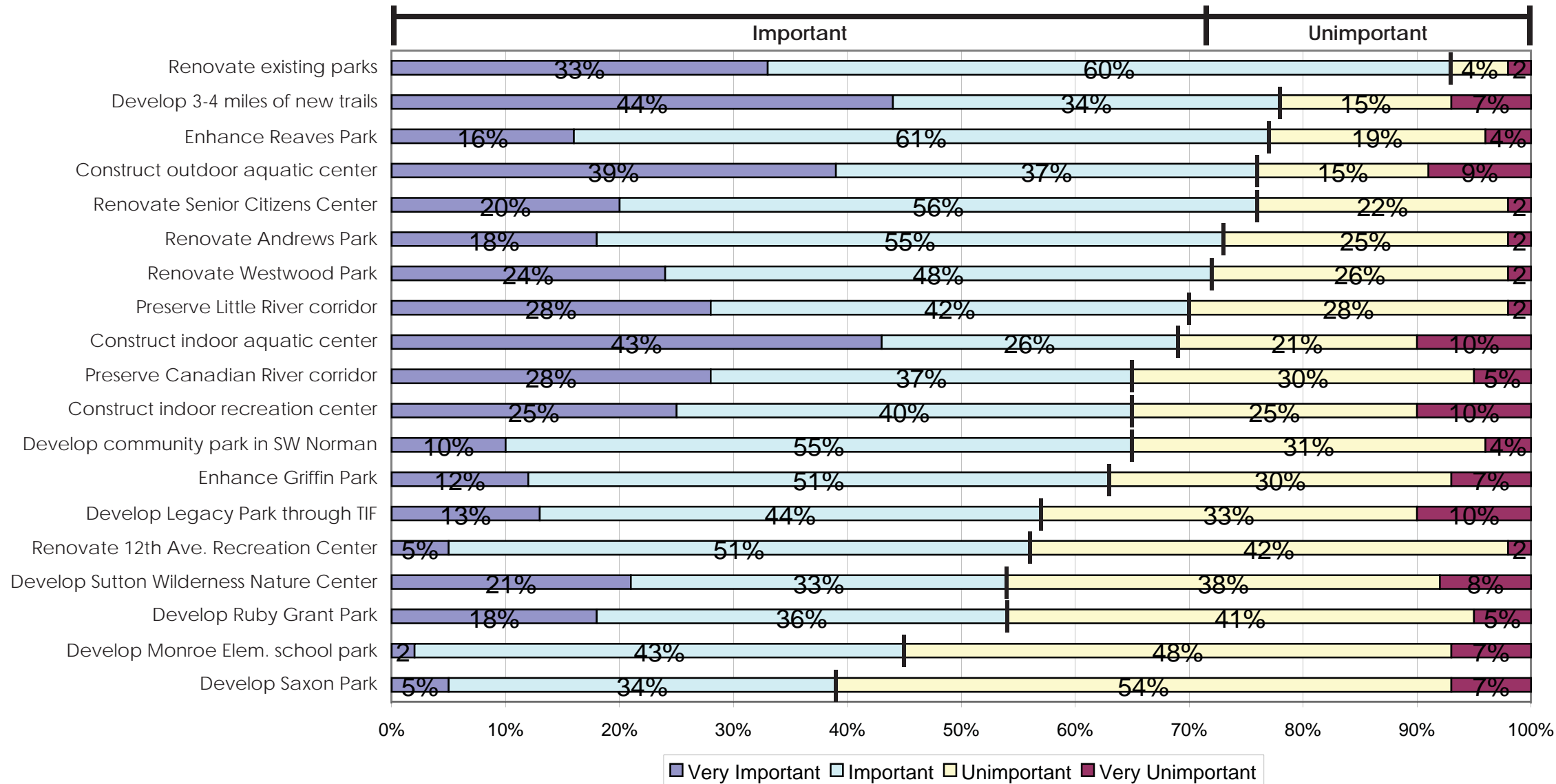




## Open House Questionnaire Results

Potential recommendations of this master plan were presented at an open house in August, 2009. Along with the presentation, the residents were asked to answer a questionnaire which asked how important or unimportant they thought each recommendation was. The results are shown below. Renovation of existing parks received the highest level of importance with 93% of residents indicating it was either important or very important.

### Importance of Master Plan Recommendations



### Most Important Actions

The residents were then asked to write which three of the previous recommendations were the most important to them. The results of this question were different than the previous one. Approximately 70 people attended the open house/public meeting; and the construction of an indoor aquatic center received the highest level of importance with 43% of the meeting attendees listing this recommendation as the most important to them. However on the previous question, the construction of an indoor aquatic center was ranked nine out of nineteen recommendations in terms of importance.

The top ten recommendations that meeting attendees wrote as important to them are listed below.

- |                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 1) Construct indoor aquatic center  | 43% |
| 2) Construct outdoor aquatic center | 32% |
| 3) Construct 3-4 miles of trails    | 23% |
| 4) Develop Ruby Grant Park          | 18% |
| 5) Renovate Westwood Park           | 18% |
| 6) Preserve Little River corridor   | 18% |
| 7) Preserve Canadian River corridor | 18% |
| 8) Construct indoor rec center      | 11% |
| 9) Renovate existing parks          | 11% |
| 10) Develop Sutton Wilderness       | 11% |





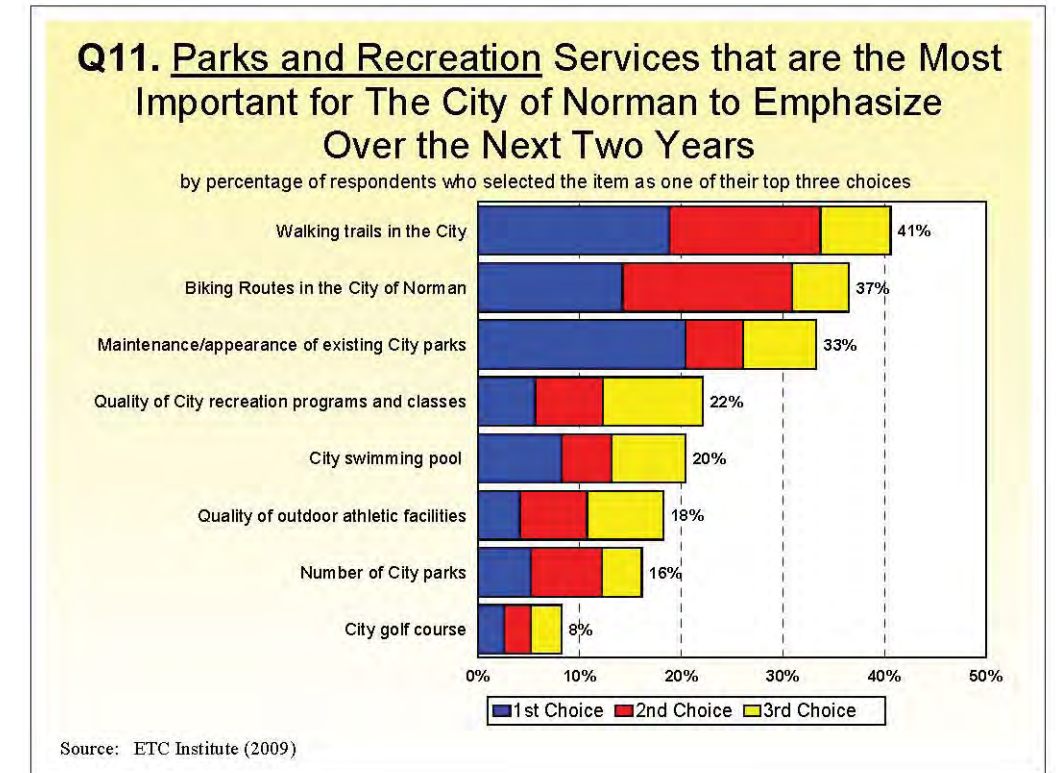
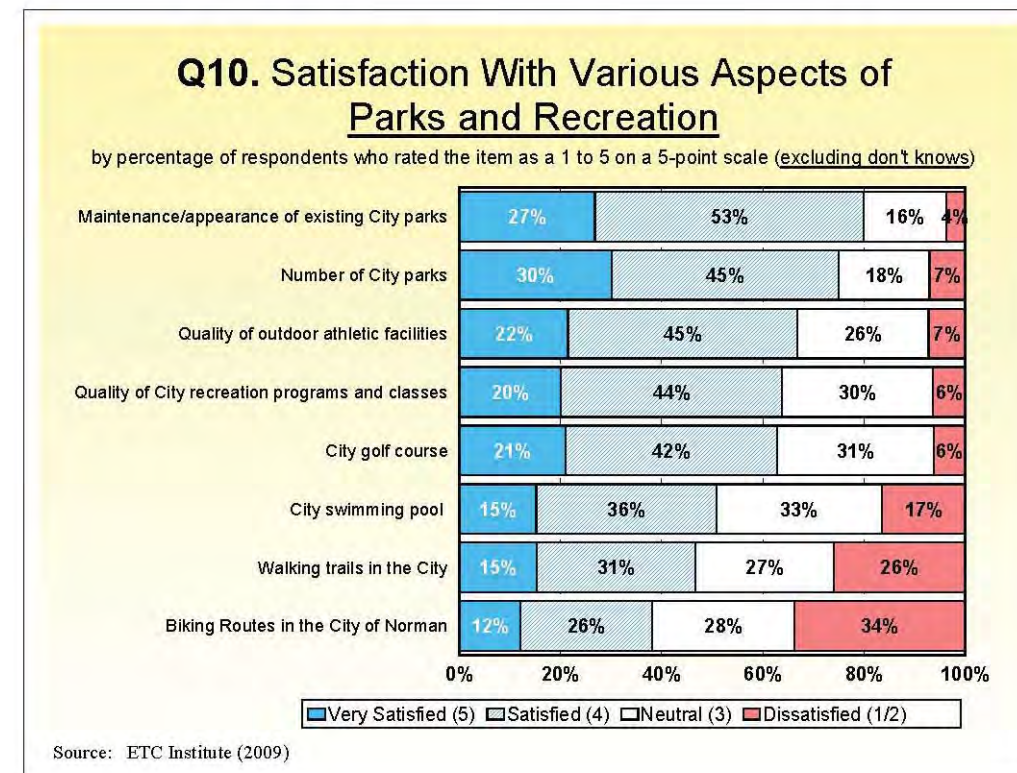


## 2009 Norman Community Survey

The following graphs and survey results are from the final report of the 2009 Community Survey that was conducted in July 2009. The seven page mail-out survey asked residents a series of questions regarding their satisfaction with services that the City provides. One of those services is parks and recreation programs and facilities. To the right and on the following pages are results from the 2009 Community Survey regarding only parks and recreation questions.

Residents were given a list of different aspects of parks and recreation in Norman, and asked how satisfied they were with each aspect. The maintenance and appearance of existing parks received the highest level of satisfaction, with 80% of residents indicating they were either very satisfied or satisfied. The results are shown below for the level of satisfaction for various recreation considerations in Norman.

Residents of Norman were also asked what parks and recreation services they feel were the most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years. The aspect that received the highest level of importance was walking trails in the City with 41% of residents indicating this as one of their top three choices. The second highest aspect was biking routes with 37% of residents indicating this was also one of their top three choices. Both of these suggest that residents of Norman want to be able to have places to ride or walk for pleasure or for commuting throughout the City.







## Importance - Satisfaction Rating

The 2009 Community Survey included a ranking of the most important parks and recreation issues. The survey derived these rankings by evaluating both level of importance (how important that particular item was to the respondent) and the respondents' lack of satisfaction with that item. The survey ratings largely concur and reinforce the public input findings of this Master Plan.

### Importance-Satisfaction Rating Norman, OK Parks and Recreation

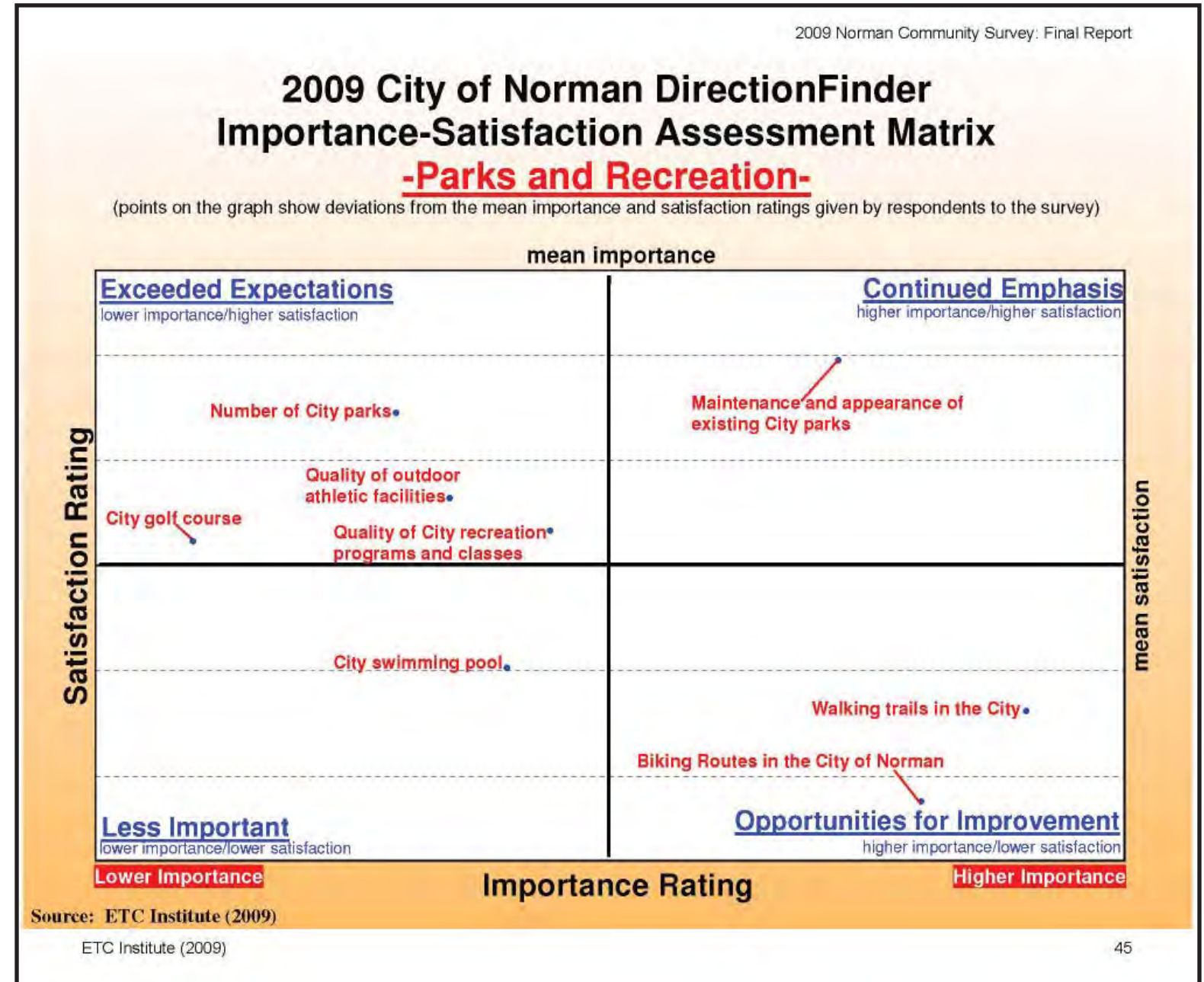
Category of Service	Most Important %	Most Important Rank	Satisfaction %	Satisfaction Rank	Importance-Satisfaction Rating	I-S Rating Rank
<b>Very High Priority (IS &gt;.20)</b>						
Biking Routes in the City of Norman	37%	2	38%	8	0.2259	<b>1</b>
Walking trails in the City	41%	1	47%	7	0.2164	<b>2</b>
<b>High Priority (IS .10-.20)</b>						
City swimming pool	20%	5	51%	6	0.1004	<b>3</b>
<b>Medium Priority (IS &lt;.10)</b>						
Quality of City recreation programs and classes	22%	4	64%	4	0.0800	<b>4</b>
Maintenance/appearance of existing City parks	33%	3	80%	1	0.0666	<b>5</b>
Quality of outdoor athletic facilities	18%	6	67%	3	0.0602	<b>6</b>
Number of City parks	16%	7	75%	2	0.0403	<b>7</b>
City golf course	8%	8	63%	5	0.0305	<b>8</b>

Note: The I-S Rating is calculated by multiplying the "Most Important" % by (1-'Satisfaction' %)

**Most Important %:** The "Most Important" percentage represents the sum of the first, second and third most important responses for each item. Respondents were asked to identify the items they thought were the most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years.

**Satisfaction %:** The "Satisfaction" percentage represents the sum of the ratings "4" and "5" excluding 'don't knows.' Respondents ranked their level of satisfaction with the each of the items on a scale of 1 to 5 with "5" being very satisfied and "1" being very dissatisfied.

This matrix provides a visual graphing of the Importance - Satisfaction Rating that was just discussed. The importance level is used as the x-axis and the satisfaction level is used as the y-axis. Each park and recreation aspect is then plotted on the graph.







## Chapter 5

# Assessment of Norman's Park Needs





# Chapter 5

## Assessment of Norman's Park Needs

### Assessment of Norman's Needs

Norman is evolving and changing daily as is the world around us. Our interests evolve, new technologies and activities are created, and major events shape our futures. All of these changes have long term impacts on parks and recreation needs in Norman. The Needs Assessment compares the state of the city today with the parks and recreation facilities that will be needed in the future. The assessment of what deficiencies exist in the parks and recreation system today is vital so that actions can be developed to address immediate deficiencies. It is also important to project potential future needs and develop a plan of actions to address these needs. The Needs Assessment is effectively the most critical component of the parks and recreation master planning effort.

Three techniques are used in evaluating the City of Norman's current and future park needs. These three methods are:

- ▶ Level of Service-based assessment, using locally developed level of service for facilities;
- ▶ Demand-based assessment, using actual and/or anticipated growth data;
- ▶ Resource-based assessment, using assessments of unique physical features in Norman.

All three techniques are important in their own way, but individually do not represent the entire story. This assessment, and the recommendations resulting from it, uses findings from all three techniques in a combined manner to determine what types of parks and recreation facilities are needed in Norman. Ultimately, these needs are vetted by the citizens of Norman and are determined to best represent the key parks and recreational needs of the City.

#### Level of Service-Based Assessment

Uses target level of service established by the local jurisdiction, in this case the City of Norman, to determine the quantity of park facilities required to meet the City's needs. These target levels of service usually are expressed as the quantity of park facilities needed to adequately serve every 1,000 citizens of Norman, or at a given ratio of each facility to a certain number of residents.

These targets are established to provide the level of service that the particular jurisdiction believes is most responsive to the amount of use and the interest of its citizens. This plan establishes individual City specific levels of service for Norman.



#### Demand-Based Assessment

Uses participation rates, league usage, and citizen input to determine how much the population uses and desires different types of recreation facilities.



#### Resource-Based Assessment

The third method is based on the usefulness of available physical resources to provide recreation opportunities. Examples of resources include the Canadian River, Little River and Lake Thunderbird.

*"The right of children to play, to sing and to dance; the right of youth to sport for sports sake; the right of men and women to use leisure in the pursuit of happiness in their own way, are basic to our American heritage."*  
Harry S. Truman







## Standards Based Assessment (LOS)

Many recreation needs assessments use national guidelines and standards to determine what their facility needs should be. It is important to recognize that national standards are simply guidelines or benchmarks that are intended to serve as a starting point for park planning. Each city has its own unique geographic, demographic, and socio-economic composition, and as such the arbitrary application of national standards would not necessarily meet the need of that particular community. These standards are typically no longer used to project facility needs since they are based on a "one size fits all" type of evaluation.

Rather, this Master Plan methodology utilizes the existing level of service in the City as a starting point and determines whether that level of service is adequate, or whether it needs to be increased or decreased. Extensive public input is used to determine how to adjust the current level of service, as well as the anticipated growth of the City, and what parts of Norman are well served and which parts are not. Local needs and desires are used to mold these guidelines to meet the expectations of the citizens of Norman in a realistic manner.

Three types of level of service determinations are made as shown below.

**Spatial Level of Service** - Defines the acres of parkland needed, and are usually expressed as a ratio of park acreage to population.

**Facility Level of Service** - Defines the number of facilities recommended serving each particular recreation need. Facility standards are usually expressed as a ratio of units of a particular facility per population size. For example, a facility standard for a recreation center might be one square foot for every resident of the city.

**Development Guideline Standards** - Defines the exact spatial and dimensional requirements for a specific recreation area or facility. A neighborhood park, for example, might be required to have a playground, a basketball court, and a picnic pavilion. These are described in both Chapter 3 and this Chapter.

## Target Park Acreage Levels of Service

The purpose of spatial levels of service for parks and recreational areas is to ensure that sufficient area is allocated for all the outdoor recreation needs of a community. They allow a city to plan ahead so that parkland can be targeted and acquired before it is developed. These spatial standards are expressed as the number of acres of parkland per 1,000 inhabitants. Typical spatial levels of service for the southwest United States region in general are shown below.

### Home Based Parks

- ▶ **Neighborhood Parks** - Varies from 1/2 acre for every 1,000 residents to over 4 acres per 1,000 residents in cities that focus extensively on their small park network.
- ▶ **Community Parks** - Varies from less than 2 acres per 1,000 residents to over 8 acres per 1,000 residents. Typical range is between 3 and 4 acres for every 1,000 residents.
- ▶ **Close to Home Parks** - Varies from less than 3 acres for every 1,000 residents to over 12 acres per 1,000 residents in a few cities. The typical range is approximately 4 to 5 acres.

### Other Parks/Open Space

- ▶ **Metropolitan/Regional Parks** - Varies from 5 to over 30 acres per 1,000 residents. In some cities, large greenbelts or open space areas may distort this number.
- ▶ **Special Purpose Parks** - These vary greatly depending on the characteristics of each city, and typically have no general target level of service.
- ▶ **Linear Parks/Linkage Parks** - Varies considerably from less than 1 acre to over 20 acres per 1,000 residents.
- ▶ **Open Space Preserves** - Varies considerably from less than 1 acre to over 50 acres per 1,000 residents depending on how open space is classified. For example, the surface area of a lake, while not accessible to anyone without a boat, could alter the ratio of open space in a city.







## Neighborhood Parks in Norman

Neighborhood parks are typically centrally located in a neighborhood or central to the several smaller neighborhoods it serves. Ideally a neighborhood park would be 2 to 10 acres in size, and serve no more than 2,000 to 4,000 residents. They should be integrated into the community in a prominent manner and not layered in as an afterthought.

A pocket park is a type of neighborhood park that serves a smaller number of residents and is therefore smaller in size. They are typically less than one acre in size and provide public gathering places for residents. For the purpose of this section, pocket parks are included with neighborhood parks.

Prominence of neighborhood parks reflects the importance of having them as centerpieces of a neighborhood. The recommended target level of service goal is 2.5 acres of neighborhood parks for 1,000 residents.

Norman currently has 282.7 acres of City-owned neighborhood parks, yielding an existing level of service of 2.52 acres of neighborhood parkland for every 1,000 residents, or 1 acre for every 397 residents of the City. Future needs of neighborhood parks to meet the target level of service are summarized below.



Brookhaven Park and Lions Park are two examples of neighborhood parks in Norman.



Location of neighborhood parks in Norman.

### Existing Neighborhood Park Level of Service

Recommended Level of Service - 2.5 acres per every 1,000 residents

#### Neighborhood Parks in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 282.7 acres
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 2.52 acres per 1,000 residents
- ▶ % of Recommended Level of Service - 100.4%

### Neighborhood Parks (Surplus or Deficit)

Recommended Level of Service - 2.5 acres per every 1,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need with 112,345 population - Target of 281 acres, a surplus 0.9 acres.
- ▶ Year 2015 need with 120,152 population - Target of 300 acres, a deficit of 18 acres.
- ▶ Year 2020 need with 128,404 population - Target of 321 acres, a deficit of 39 acres (because of Norman's Parkland Dedication Ordinance, this deficit will be met with new development).

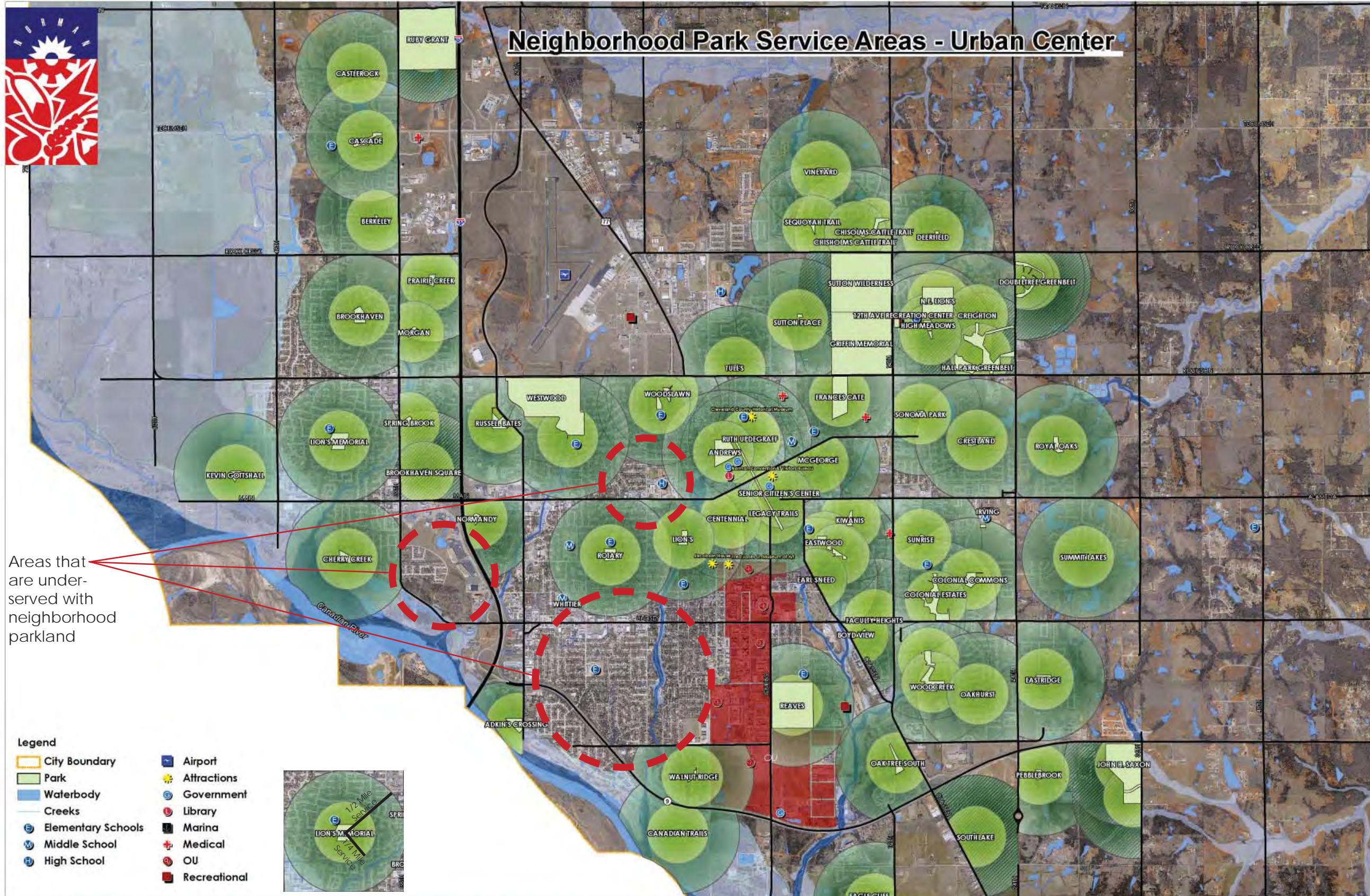
### Neighborhood Park Distribution

Since neighborhood parks serve as a central gathering place for neighborhood residents, accessibility is a critical component of these parks more so than any other type of park. As discussed earlier, the maximum service area for a neighborhood park is 1/2 mile, excluding areas opposite a major collector or arterial road. The ultimate preferred service area is 1/4 mile, this goal will result in smaller neighborhood parks that are more accessible throughout Norman. Note that for the purpose of access, every park in Norman is considered as the "neighborhood" park for the areas close to the park.

The maps on this page and the following page illustrate the distribution and service areas for neighborhood parks in Norman.







Location of neighborhood parks in Norman (note that community parks may also provide benefits to nearby residential areas).

The much lower density of residential areas in the rural sectors of Norman does not require neighborhood parks at this time. Area park facilities should be provided at all schools and at larger community parks.

**Priority Needs** for additional neighborhood parks:

- ▶ In new neighborhoods - very high (continue to add as development occurs).
- ▶ In existing developed areas - low except for underserved areas shown on the map.

Areas that are underserved with neighborhood parkland







## Community Parks in Norman

Community parks are large parks that serve several neighborhoods or a portion of a city. They serve as locations for larger community events, sports and activities; therefore they contain many popular recreation and support facilities. Because of the larger service area and additional programs, community parks are more heavily used, increasing the potential for facility deterioration.

The additional facilities associated with a community park increase the spatial requirements necessary for a community park. The recommended standard for community parks is 6 acres per 1,000 residents.

Norman currently has 512.1 acres of community parkland, yielding an existing level of service of 4.6 acres per 1,000 residents, or one acre for every 219 residents of the City. Based on the recommended standard, the City is meeting two-thirds of the recommended standard for community parkland.



Andrews Park, Griffin Memorial Park and Little Axe Park are examples of community parks in Norman.

### Existing Community Park Level of Service

Recommended Level of Service - 6 acres per every 1,000 residents

Community Parks in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 512.1 acres
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 4.6 acres per 1,000 residents (for all community parks including the undeveloped community parks)
- ▶ % of Recommended Level of Service - 76.6%

### Community Parks (Surplus or Deficit)

Recommended Level of Service - 6 acres per every 1,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need with 112,345 population - Target of 674 acres, a deficit of 162 acres.
- ▶ Year 2015 need with 120,152 population - Target of 721 acres, a deficit of 209 acres.
- ▶ Year 2020 need with 128,404 population - Target of 770 acres, a deficit of 258 acres (deficit assumes that no new community parkland will be acquired).

### Community Park Distribution

As mentioned, community parks serve a larger portion of the community. Since they are typically accessed by car, a service area for a community park is 2 miles.

The map on the following page illustrates the distribution and service areas for community parks in Norman.







### Community Park Service Areas







## Other Types of Parks

Other types of parks that respond to specific physical conditions in the city or to specific needs are also part of the Norman park system. These include special purpose parks such as golf courses or aquatic centers; linear or linkage parks; regional parks; and open space or natural preserves.

## Special Purpose Parks in Norman

Special purpose parks are areas designated for a special purpose such as golf courses, sports complexes, aquatic centers, plazas, or downtown courtyards. Westwood Park and Sutton Wilderness are designated as special purpose parks in Norman, totaling 289.9 acres in size.

Because special purpose parks vary by size, type and from city to city, there is no specific standard or recommended level of service.

### Existing Special Purpose Park LOS

Recommended Level of Service - varies by city/park

Special Purpose Parks in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 289.9 acres
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 2.58 acres per 1,000 residents

Westwood Park is an example of a special purpose park in Norman.



## Linear Parks in Norman

Norman currently has three areas that are designated as linear parks or greenbelts. **The most recognizable linear park corridor in Norman is the Legacy Trail corridor. The other two include Doubletree Greenbelt and Hall Park Greenbelt.** Norman will benefit from linear parks if they are associated with creeks and can fulfill the purpose of flood protection and open space/habitat preservation, as well as provide opportunities for trails. Opportunities for linear parks exist along creeks, drainage corridors, utility corridors and right-of-ways that traverse the City. Linear parks can connect parks and key areas of the City such as schools, and are relatively inexpensive to develop. The recommended beginning level of service for linear parks is 2 acres for every 1,000 residents.

### Existing Linear Park Level of Service

Recommended Level of Service - 2 acres per every 1,000 residents

Linear Parks in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 56.0 acres
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 0.50 acres per 1,000 residents
- ▶ % of Recommended Level of Service - 25%

### Linear Parks (Surplus or Deficit)

Recommended Level of Service - 2 acres per every 1,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need with 112,345 population - Target of 225 acres, a deficit of 169 acres.
- ▶ Year 2015 need with 120,152 population - Target of 240 acres, a deficit of 184 acres.
- ▶ Year 2020 need with 128,404 population - Target of 257 acres, a deficit of 201 acres.







## Regional Parks in Norman

Regional parks are larger parks within a 30 minute to 1 hour driving distance that serve the entire region and surrounding communities. Like community parks, they serve as locations for larger community events, sports, and activities. There is only one regional park in Norman which is owned by the State of Oklahoma, the Lake Thunderbird State Park. The total land area surrounding the lake that is designated as parkland/open space is 7,117.58 acres. The water surface area of Lake Thunderbird is 5,496.50 acres.

Because regional parks are usually accessed by car, the regional park in Norman serves the entire City and all residents. Greenbelt corridors along the Little River corridor and the Canadian River corridor could serve as future regional parks for Norman.

	<b>Legend</b>	City Boundary	Airport
	Park	Attractions	Government
	Waterbody	Library	Marina
	Creeks	Medical	OU
	Elementary Schools	Recreational	
	Middle School		
	High School		

## Regional Park



**Priority Level:** low for new regional parks in urban core area.

### Existing Regional Park Level of Service

Recommended Level of Service - 20 acres per every 1,000 residents

Regional Parks in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 7,117.58 acres (land only)
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 63.35 acres per 1,000 residents
- ▶ % of Recommended Level of Service - 317%

### Regional Parks (Surplus or Deficit)

Recommended Level of Service - 20 acres per every 1,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need with 112,345 population - Target of 2,247 acres, a surplus of 4,870 acres.
- ▶ Year 2015 need with 120,152 population - Target of 2,403 acres, a surplus of 4,715 acres.
- ▶ Year 2020 need with 128,404 population - Target of 2,568 acres, a surplus of 4,550 acres.

**HALFF**  
Draft For Discussion

**City of Norman Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Graphic Scale  
4,000 2,000 0 4,000 8,000 12,000 Feet







## Open Space in Norman

Existing open space in Norman includes the Sutton Wilderness, all undeveloped parkland such as Ruby Grant Park and John H. Saxon Park, and the land area surrounding Lake Thunderbird. Because the open space acreage surrounding Lake Thunderbird is so large, the level of service for open space may appear to be misleading. Therefore the level of service is shown when including Lake Thunderbird and when excluding Lake Thunderbird. The acreage when Lake Thunderbird is excluded gives a more realistic assessment of the accessible and "urban" open space that is actually located within the populated areas of Norman.



The preservation of some portions of the John H. Saxon Park and Ruby Grant Park sites, even after they are developed, can provide significant additional open space preserves for Norman.

### Existing Open Space Level of Service

Including Lake Thunderbird

Recommended Level of Service - 20 acres per every 1,000 residents

Open Space in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 7,570.1 acres
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 67.38 acres per 1,000 residents
- ▶ % of Recommended Level of Service - 337%

### Existing Open Space Level of Service

Excluding Lake Thunderbird

Recommended Level of Service - 20 acres per every 1,000 residents

Open Space in Norman

- ▶ Current acres - 210 acres
- ▶ Current Level of Service - 1.87 acres per 1,000 residents
- ▶ % of Recommended Level of Service - 9.35%

### Open Space (Surplus or Deficit)

Including Lake Thunderbird

Recommended Level of Service - 20 acres per every 1,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need with 112,345 population - Target of 2,247 acres, a surplus of 5,353 acres.
- ▶ Year 2015 need with 120,152 population - Target of 2,403 acres, a surplus of 5,167 acres.
- ▶ Year 2020 need with 128,404 population - Target of 2,568 acres, a surplus of 5,002 acres.

### Open Space (Surplus or Deficit)

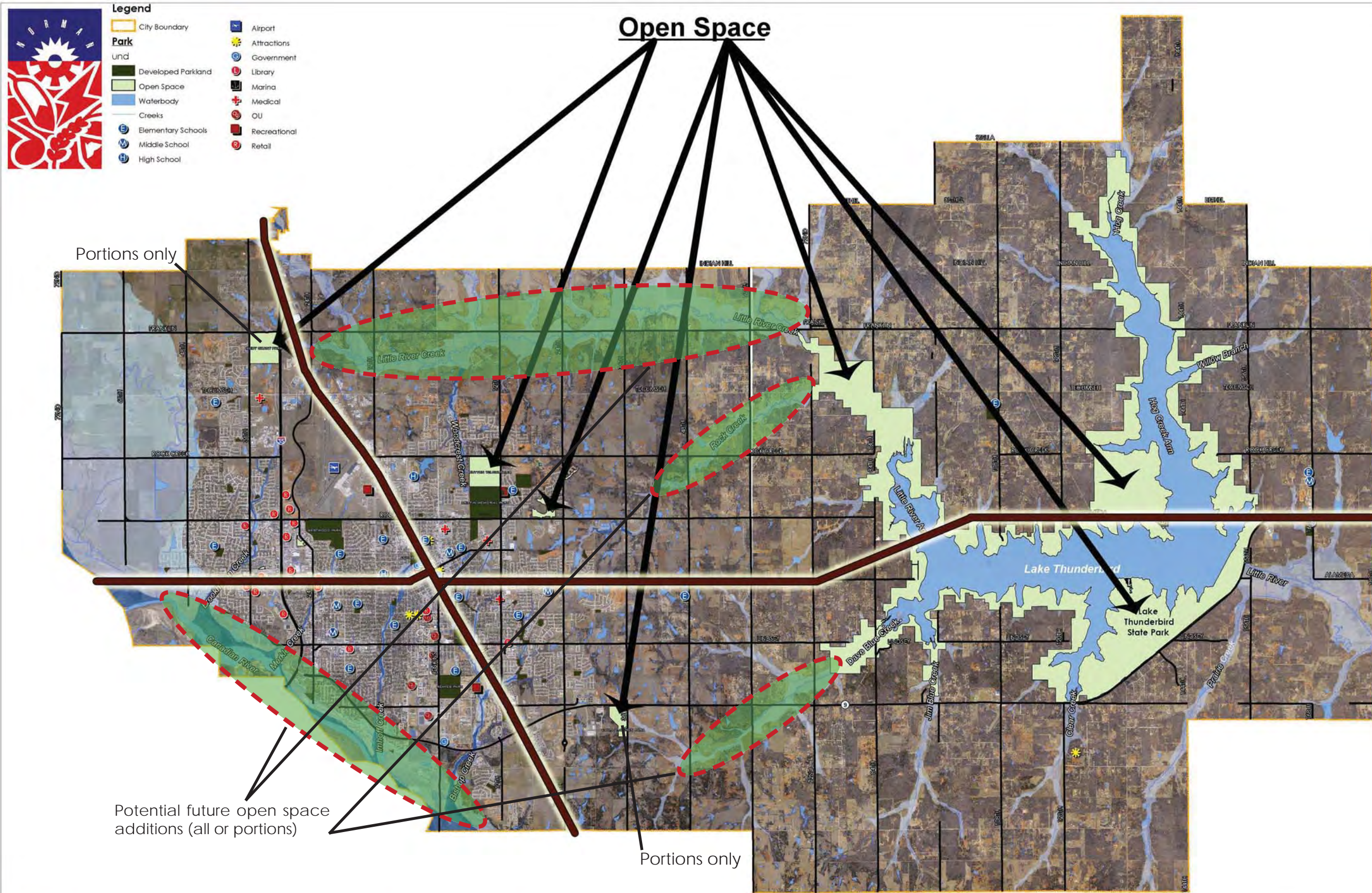
Excluding Lake Thunderbird

Recommended Level of Service - 20 acres per every 1,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need with 112,345 population - Target of 2,247 acres, a deficit of 2,037 acres.
- ▶ Year 2015 need with 120,152 population - Target of 2,403 acres, a deficit of 2,193 acres.
- ▶ Year 2020 need with 128,404 population - Target of 2,568 acres, a deficit of 2,358 acres.

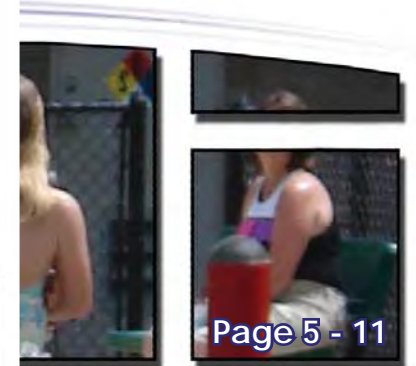






Location of existing and potential open space in Norman.

Priority Level: very high for ongoing permanent preservation as feasible.







## Planning for Future Parkland Needs in Norman

Land banking needs to be considered crucial, and ensure that the acquisition of parkland is in a consistent and goal oriented manner. Based upon park acreage standards developed from this master plan, the target level of service for total parkland is 30.5 acres per 1,000 residents. However, this includes the recommended target for regional parkland, and the acreage amount would be skewed if Lake Thunderbird State Park was included. Therefore the target level of service for close in parkland, not including regional parkland, is 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents. The steps needed to ensure that the adequate amount of parkland is acquired are as follows:

- ▶ Currently there is an overall deficit of 20 acres of parkland.
- ▶ By the year 2015, an additional 102 acres of combined neighborhood and community parkland will need to be acquired to continue to meet the target level of service.
- ▶ By the year 2020, an additional 188 acres of combined neighborhood and community parkland will need to be acquired to meet the target level of service.

Although large areas of Norman are still undeveloped, development is happening and a rigorous effort should be made to continue to acquire sufficient land for future park needs. Various options are available to acquire land including existing vacant land, land subject to flooding along the creeks and drainage channels, and land dedicated to parks as a requirement of developers to fulfill the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance. The City should also invest in a Floodplain Preservation Ordinance which will preserve all 100 year floodplains as permanent open space, wildlife habitat, or water protection. Not all available land will be suitable for a park; therefore, the proposed criteria for suitable land for parks includes size, location, and potential connectivity to schools, other parks, places of employment, and retail.

## Summary of Park Spatial Needs

Table 5 - 1 summarizes the key spatial needs for the next five to ten years in Norman. Key findings of the spatial analysis are shown in the table which forms a key part of the park master plan recommendations in Chapter 8.

Table 5 - 1

### Summary of Key Parkland Needs from 2009 to 2020

#### Neighborhood Parks

- ▶ Current acreage is 100.4% of the target standard.
- ▶ Neighborhood parks are a key enhancement feature of older neighborhoods, and should be factored into redevelopment plans for each neighborhood.
- ▶ New neighborhoods should be encouraged to integrate small homeowner maintained parks as a permanent feature to help maintain neighborhood vitality.
- ▶ There is a partnership opportunity with Norman Public Schools so that school play areas can become neighborhood parks and practice facilities for the residents near each school.
- ▶ Neighborhood park service deficiencies need to be addressed in two areas of the City, as shown on Page 5 - 5.

#### Community Parks

- ▶ Current acreage is 76.6% of the target standard.
- ▶ To meet the target standard for community parks by the year 2020, there is a need to acquire 354 acres.
- ▶ The development of Ruby Grant Park and John H. Saxon Park will be key to meeting future needs.
- ▶ There is a need in Norman for both active and passive community parks.
- ▶ Additional lands for future community parks are needed in the southwest and northeast areas of the City.

#### Regional Parks

- ▶ The current acreage far surpasses the recommended target standard.
- ▶ However, regional passive preserves could be established along the Little River and Canadian River corridors.

#### Linear Parks

- ▶ Current acreage is 25% of the target standard.
- ▶ The Legacy Trail, Doubletree Greenbelt and Hall Park Greenbelt are the three existing linear parks in Norman.
- ▶ In town, creek corridors and floodplain corridors such as the Little River Creek corridor can be preserved as linear parks and greenbelts.

#### Citywide Acreage Needs

- ▶ The sum of all combined target level of service goals recommends 30.5 acres per 1,000 residents. However, including the regional park standard distorts the recommendation because the existing regional park acreage far exceeds the target standard.
- ▶ Therefore, the recommended overall target level of service is 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents.
- ▶ The total City owned park acreage is 98% of the target standard.
- ▶ To meet the 2020 target level of service, an additional 188 acres will be needed of both neighborhood and community parks.







## Park Facility Needs Assessment

Facility levels of service define the number of facilities recommended to serve each particular type of recreation. They are expressed as the usage capacity served by each recreational unit. The target levels of service shown on the following pages are based on the actual number of facilities in Norman and the amount of use each facility receives.

## Facility Target Level of Service

The following pages have a description of the 2009 target level of service for each recreational facility. A specific review of each major type of outdoor facility, key needs and key issues associated with each type of facility follows. Facility needs are based both on ratios related to existing population, as well as the amount of demand for each type of facility based on user information where available.

### Soccer Fields

**Current number of fields:** 16 fields (city-owned)  
**Current level of service:** 1 field per 7,022 residents

**Target level of service:** 1 field for 7,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 16 fields, no deficit
- ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 17 fields, deficit of 1 field
- ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 18 fields, deficit of 2 fields

**Key issues:** A key issue is the distribution of the fields. All soccer fields are currently located in Griffin Park. As the City grows, fields will be needed in all sectors of Norman. In particular fields should be provided west of I-35, potentially at Ruby Grant Park. The fields in Griffin Park are programmed and maintained by the Norman Youth Soccer Association. Currently this arrangement is working well.

Additional fields may be needed at the Griffin Park Soccer Complex to create a stronger regional tournament level facility. Expansion to state owned lands south of Robinson should be considered if this land or area parkland can be used.

**Level of need:** Low in terms of additional fields, high need in terms of distribution of fields.

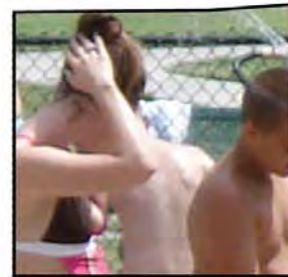
**Location of existing fields:**

- ▶ 16 fields at Griffin Park
- ▶ 4 small fields at YMCA complex (private)

Soccer fields at Griffin Park



Soccer fields at Griffin Park







## Baseball Fields

Current number of fields: 21 fields  
Current level of service: 1 field per 5,350 residents

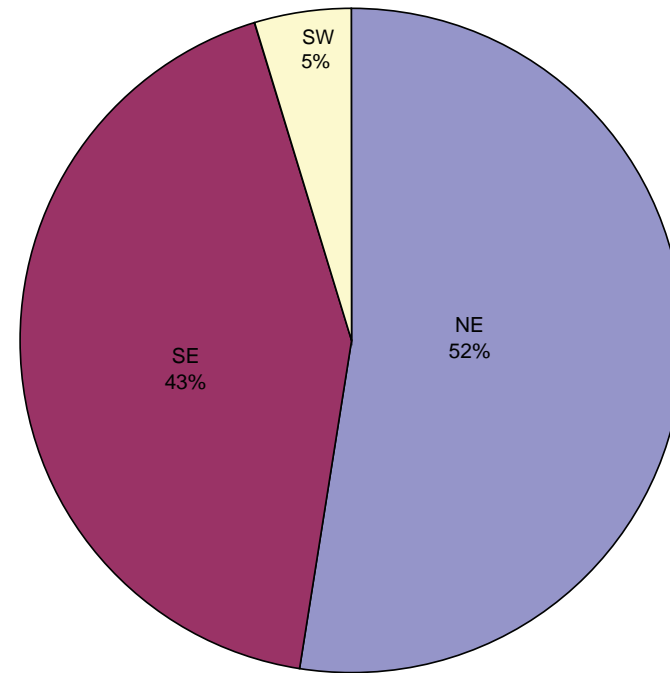
- Target level of service: 1 field for 5,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 22 fields, deficit of 1 field
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 24 fields, deficit of 3 fields
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 26 fields, deficit of 5 fields

**Key issues:** There currently are no baseball fields located west of I-35. There is a large portion of residents living on the western side of the City, and they are currently underserved. Future population is expected to grow towards the southeast, so continued distribution of baseball facilities will be important.

**Level of need:** Medium need in terms of additional fields, high need in terms of distribution of fields in faster growing sectors of the City.

- Location of existing fields:
- ▶ 1 field at Falls Lakeview Park
  - ▶ 3 fields at Little Axe Park
  - ▶ 1 field at Rotary Park
  - ▶ 10 fields at Griffin Park
  - ▶ 6 fields at Reaves Park

Location of Baseball Fields



Baseball fields at Griffin Park



Baseball fields at Reaves Park



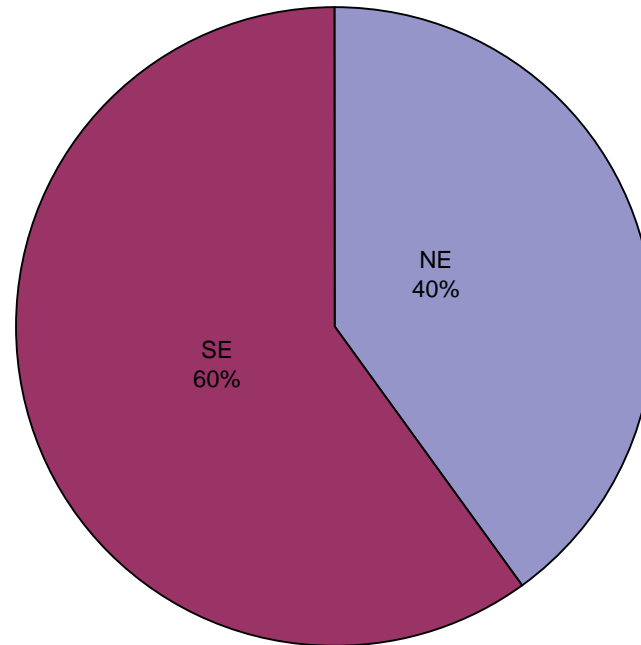




Softball fields at Reaves Park



Location of Softball Fields



### Softball Fields

**Current number of fields:** 10 fields  
**Current level of service:** 1 field per 11,235 residents

- Target level of service:** 1 field for 9,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 12 fields, deficit of 2 fields
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 13 fields, deficit of 3 fields
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 14 fields, deficit of 4 fields

**Key issues:** The City needs to provide softball fields of various sizes, both for adults and youth softball teams. The current softball fields are located in convenient locations in the center of the City. However, as Norman grows, softball fields will need to be located in the western and eastern portions of the City.

**Level of need:** Medium

**Location of existing fields:**

- ▶ 4 fields at Griffin Park
- ▶ 6 fields at Reaves Park

Softball fields at Reaves Park



Softball fields at Griffin Park







## Tennis Courts

Current number of courts: 22 courts  
Current level of service: 1 court per 5,107 residents

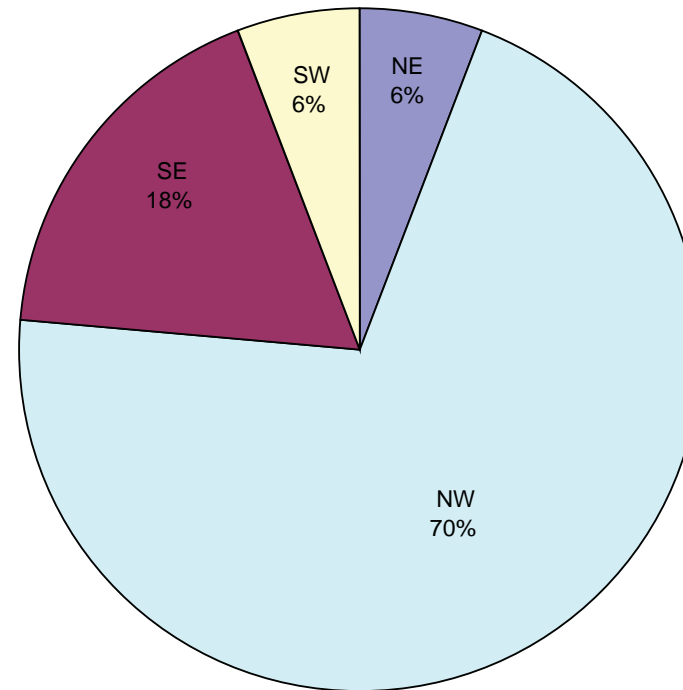
Target level of service: 1 court for 7,000 residents  
▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 16 courts, no deficit  
▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 17 courts, no deficit  
▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 18 courts, no deficit

**Key issues:** The majority of tennis courts are located in Westwood Park. These courts are in good condition. The remaining courts are in adequate condition. The fence surrounding the court in Lions Park and Normandy Park need renovation.

Level of need: Low

Location of existing courts:  
▶ 2 courts at Lions Park  
▶ 1 court at Normandy Park  
▶ 1 court at Rotary Park  
▶ 12 courts at Westwood Park  
▶ 4 courts at 12th Ave. Recreation Center  
▶ 2 courts at Whittier Recreation Center

Location of Tennis Courts



Tennis court at Lions Park



Tennis court at Westwood Park



Tennis court at Normandy Park

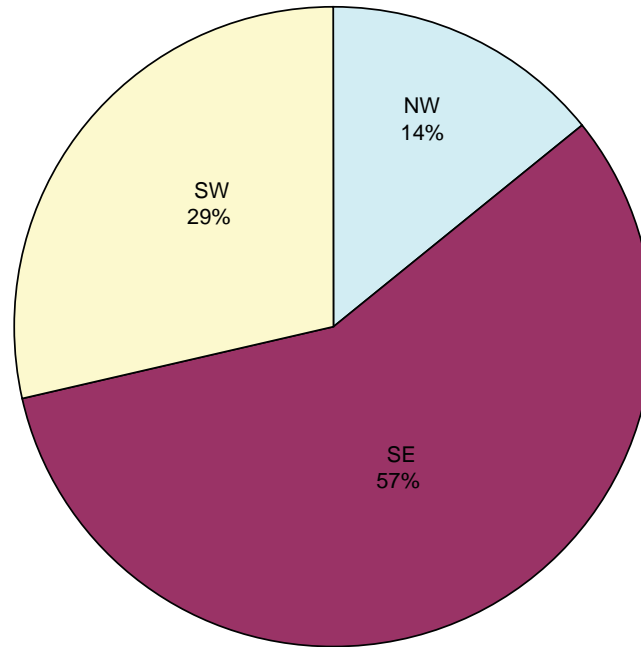






Volleyball court at Rotary Park

Location of Volleyball Courts (outdoor)



### Volleyball Courts (outdoor)

**Current number of courts:** 9 courts  
**Current level of service:** 1 court per 12,483 residents

- Target level of service:** 1 court for 11,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 10 courts, deficit of 1 court
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 11 courts, deficit of 2 courts
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 12 courts, deficit of 3 courts

**Key issues:** There currently are no outdoor volleyball courts in the northeast sector of the City. The volleyball courts at Normandy Park, Prairie Creek Park, and Rotary Park are in poor condition. There is no designated court layout or adequate fall surface. These three courts need to be renovated to true sand volleyball courts. Players are also required to bring their own nets. Nets are not provided by the City because of vandalism and theft.

**Level of need:** Medium need for additional courts, renovation of existing courts, and distribution of future courts.

- Location of existing courts:**
- ▶ 1 court at Andrews Park
  - ▶ 1 court at Normandy Park
  - ▶ 1 court at Prairie Creek Park
  - ▶ 1 court at Rotary Park
  - ▶ 4 courts at Reaves Park
  - ▶ 1 court at Sunrise Park



Volleyball court at Reaves Park



Volleyball court at Prairie Creek Park







### Basketball Courts (outdoor)

Current number of courts: 25.5 courts  
Current level of service: 1 court per 4,406 residents

- Target level of service: 1 court for 6,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 18.5 courts, no deficit
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 20 courts, no deficit
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 21.5 courts, no deficit

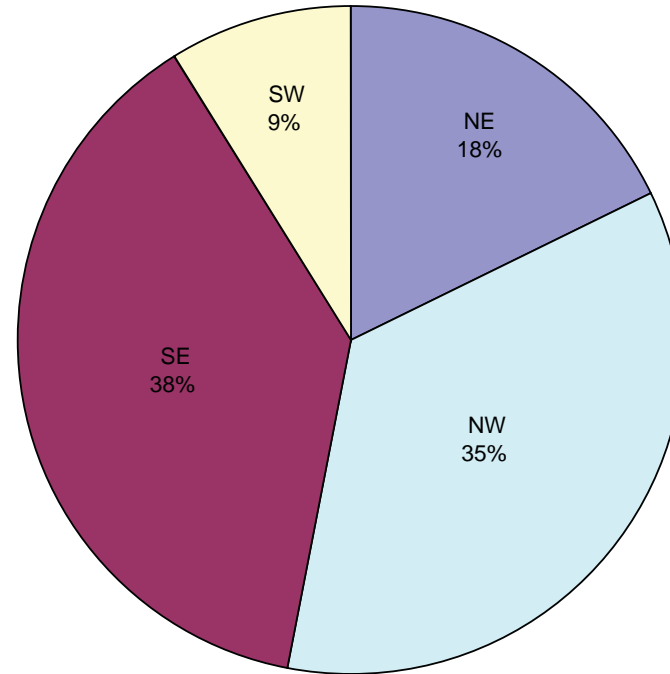
**Key issues:** 1/2 basketball courts are located in most neighborhood parks throughout the city. The distribution of the courts is good and condition of the courts is good. The rims and backboards of the courts will need to be monitored and replaced when necessary.

Level of need: Medium

Location of existing courts:

- ▶ 1 court at Berkley Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Brookhaven Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Castlerock Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Cherry Creek Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Colonial Commons Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Doubletree Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Eagle Cliff Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Eastridge Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Falls Lakeview Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Frances Cate Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Kevin Gottshall Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Kiwanis Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Lions Memorial Park
- ▶ 2 1/2 courts at Little Axe Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at McGeorge Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at W. Morgan Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Normandy Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Oakhurst Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Prairie Creek Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Deerfield Park
- ▶ 1 court at Reeves Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Rotary Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Royal Oaks Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Sequoyah Trail Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Sonoma Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Summit Lakes Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Sunrise Park
- ▶ 1/2 court at Vineyard Park
- ▶ 2 1/2 courts at Andrews Park
- ▶ 4 courts at Irving Rec Center
- ▶ 2 courts at Whittier Rec Center

Location of Basketball Courts (outdoor)



Basketball court in Royal Oaks Park



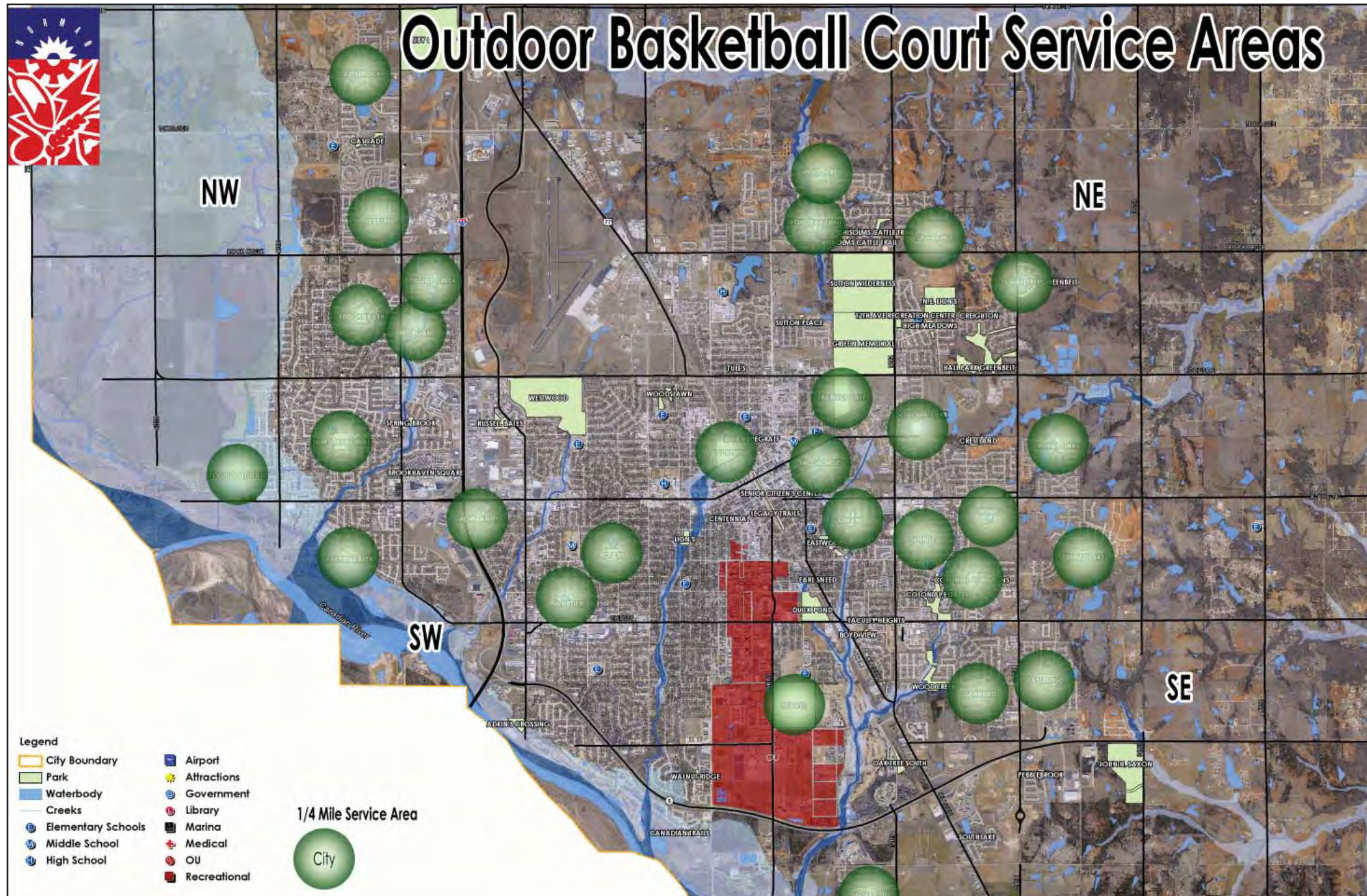
Basketball court at Frances Cate Park



Basketball court at Morgan Park











### Practice Fields (baseball/softball)

Current number of backstops: 34 backstops  
Current level of service: 1 backstop per 3,304 residents

- Target level of service: 1 backstop for 4,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 28 backstops, no deficit
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 30 backstops, no deficit
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 32 backstops, no deficit

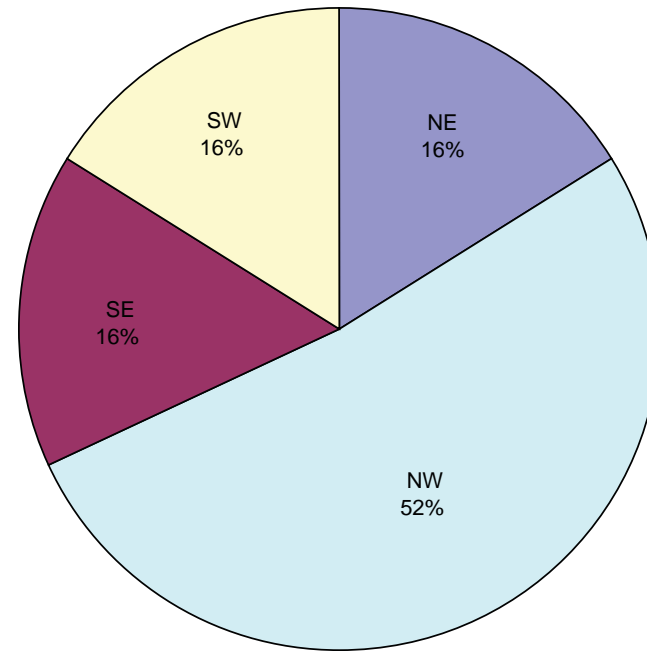
**Key issues:** Practice fields are a significant part to any park system. They allow teams areas to practice that are not on game fields thus extending the life of game and tournament fields.

Level of need: Medium

#### Location of existing backstops:

- ▶ 1 at Berkeley Park
- ▶ 2 at Brookhaven Park
- ▶ 1 at Cascade Park
- ▶ 1 at Castlerock Park
- ▶ 2 at Colonial Commons Park
- ▶ 1 at Eagle Cliff Park
- ▶ 2 at Eastridge Park
- ▶ 1 at Falls Lakeview Park
- ▶ 2 at Frances Cate Park
- ▶ 1 at Kevin Gottshall Park
- ▶ 1 at Lions Park
- ▶ 3 at Lions Memorial Park
- ▶ 1 at Normandy Park
- ▶ 1 at Prairie Creek Park
- ▶ 2 at Rotary Park
- ▶ 1 at Royal Oaks Park
- ▶ 1 at Russell Bates Park
- ▶ 1 at Sonoma Park
- ▶ 1 at Sunrise Park
- ▶ 1 at Tulls Park
- ▶ 1 at Woodcreek Park
- ▶ 2 at Woodslawn Park
- ▶ 3 at Andrews park
- ▶ 1 at Reaves Park

Location of Backstops



Backstop at Brookhaven Park



Backstop at Lions Memorial Park



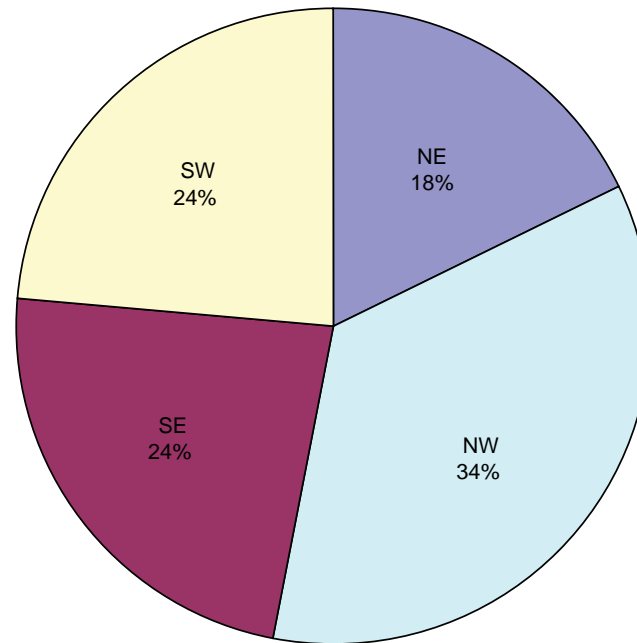
Backstop at Kevin Gottshall Park







Location of Soccer Practice Fields



### Practice Fields (soccer/football)

**Current number of soccer practice:** 19 fields  
**Current level of service:** 1 field per 5,913 residents

- Target level of service:** 1 field for 4,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 28 fields, deficit of 9 fields
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 30 fields, deficit of 11 fields
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 32 fields, deficit of 13 fields

**Key issues:** Similar to backstops, practice soccer fields are important so that teams do not have to use game fields for practice thus extending the life of game and tournament fields. The soccer practice fields are evenly distributed throughout the city. This trend needs to continue as growth occurs.

**Level of need:** High

Location of existing soccer practice fields:

- ▶ 1 at Adkin's Crossing Park
- ▶ 1 at Berkeley Park
- ▶ 1 at Brookhaven Park
- ▶ 1 at Castlerock Park
- ▶ 1 at Cherry Creek Park
- ▶ 1 at Colonial Commons Park
- ▶ 1 at Deerfield Park
- ▶ 1 at Eagle Cliff Park
- ▶ 1 at Eastridge Park
- ▶ 2 at Frances Cate Park
- ▶ 1 at High Meadows Park
- ▶ 1 at Kevin Gottshall Park
- ▶ 1 at Lions Memorial Park
- ▶ 1 at Prairie Creek Park
- ▶ 1 at Royal Oaks Park
- ▶ 1 at Russell Bates Park
- ▶ 1 at Woodcreek Park
- ▶ 1 at Woodslawn Park







### Disc Golf Course

Current number of courses: 4.5 courses  
Current level of service: 1 course per 24,966 residents

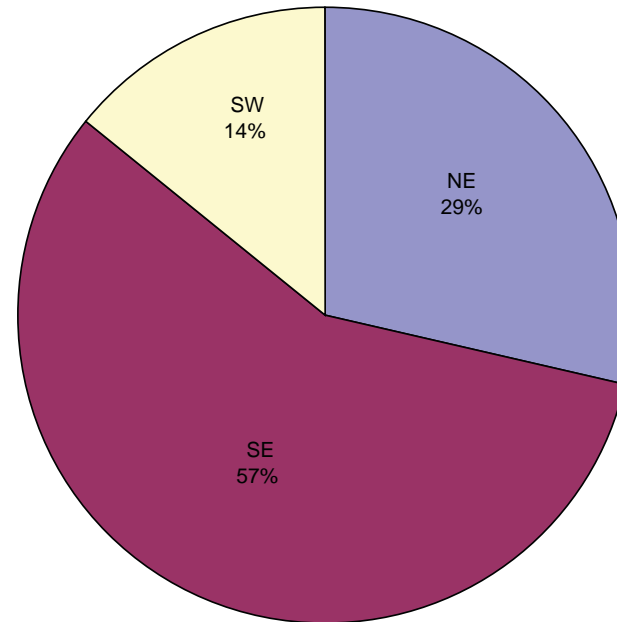
- Target level of service: 1 course for 30,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 3.5 courses, no deficit
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 4 courses, no deficit
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 4 courses, no deficit

**Key issues:** There are no disc golf courses in the Northwest sector of the city. As the population grows in this area, at least 1/2 of a disc golf course should be added to serve those residents.

Level of need: Medium

- Location of existing courses:
- ▶ 1 course at Colonial Estates Park
  - ▶ 1 course at Griffin Park
  - ▶ 1 course at Little Axe Park
  - ▶ 1 course at Northeast Lion's Park
  - ▶ 1/2 course at Oak Tree South Park

Location of Disc Golf Courses







## Splash Pads

**Current number of spraygrounds:** 2 splash pads  
**Current level of service:** 1 splash pad per 56,173 residents

- Target level of service:** 1 splash pad for 25,000 residents
- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 4 splash pads, deficit of 2 splash pads
  - ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 5 splash pads, deficit of 3 splash pads
  - ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 5 splash pads, deficit of 3 splash pads

**Key issues:** Very popular facility with relatively low operating cost.

**Level of need:** High

- Location of existing splash pads:**
- ▶ 1 splash pad at Andrews Park
  - ▶ 1 splash pad at Colonial Estates Park







## Swimming Pools

Current number of pools: 1 aquatic center  
Current level of service: 1 aquatic center per 112,345 residents

Target level of service: 1 aquatic center for 60,000 residents  
► Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 1 aquatic center  
► Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 2 aquatic centers  
► Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 2 aquatic centers

Key issues: See Aquatics Chapter 6

Level of need: High

Location of existing swimming pool:  
► 1 aquatic center at Westwood Park

Private facilities are offered at OU, the YMCA and several HOA neighborhood pools

Pool at Westwood Park



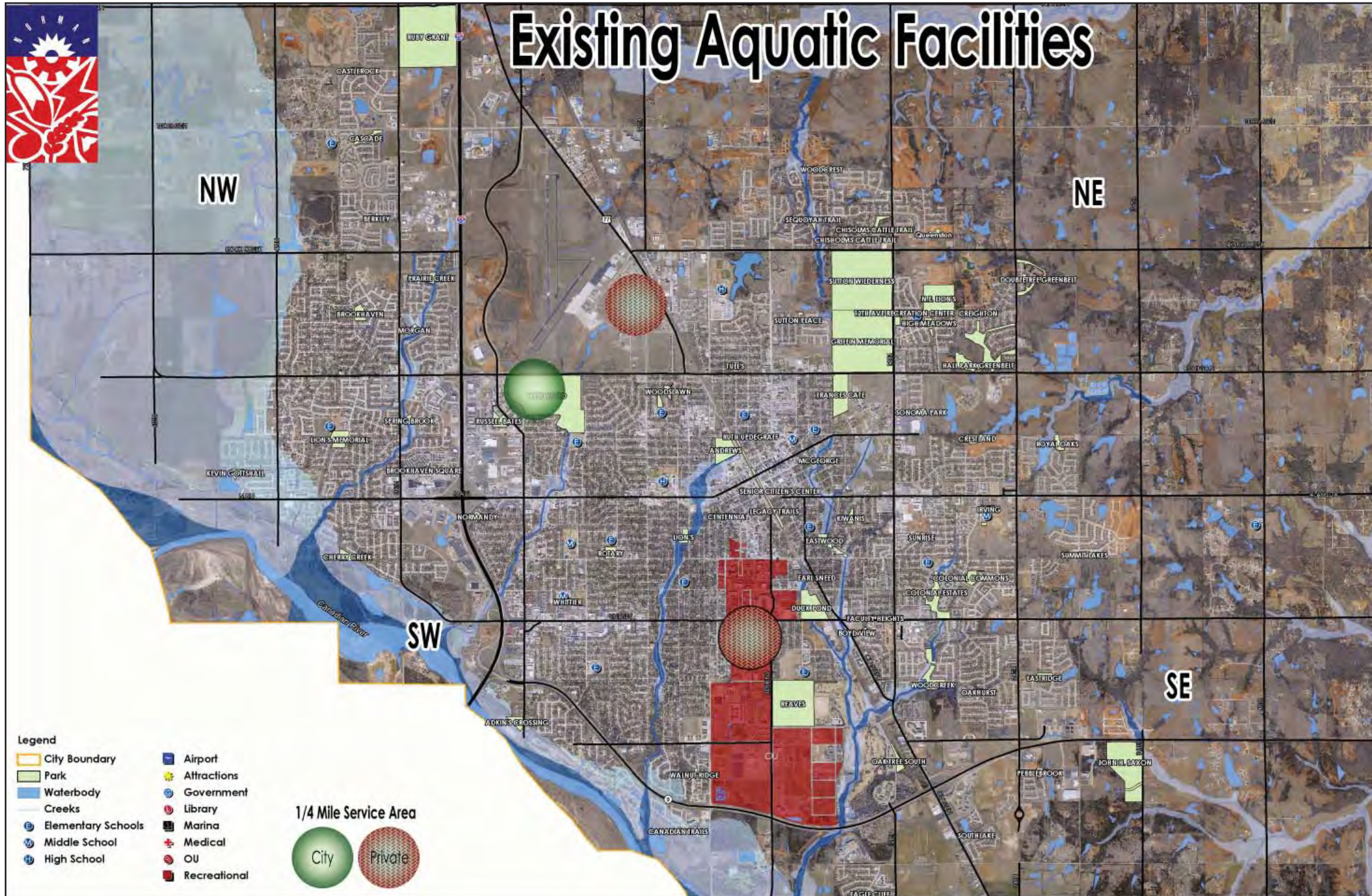
Pool at Westwood Park



Pool at Westwood Park











## Playgrounds

**Current number of playgrounds:** 65 playgrounds

**Current level of service:** 1 playground per 1,755 residents

**Target level of service:** 1 playground for 1,750 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 64 playgrounds, no deficit
- ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 69 playgrounds, deficit of 4 playgrounds
- ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 73 playgrounds, deficit of 8 playgrounds

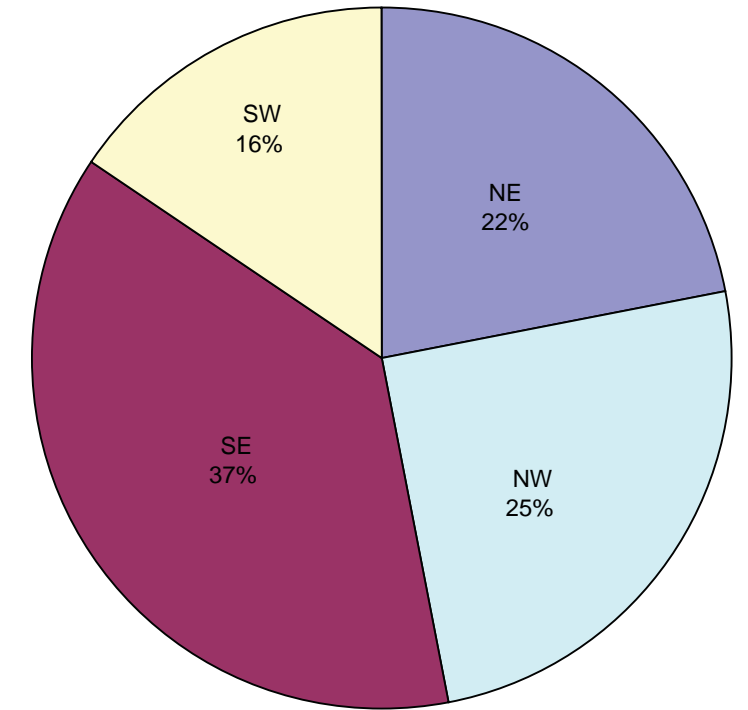
**Key issues:** The playground equipment in some parks is older and needs replacing. All new playgrounds should be adequately covered by shade so use is possible during the hot summer months. Recent styles of playground structures encourage exercise as well as play.

**Level of need:** High

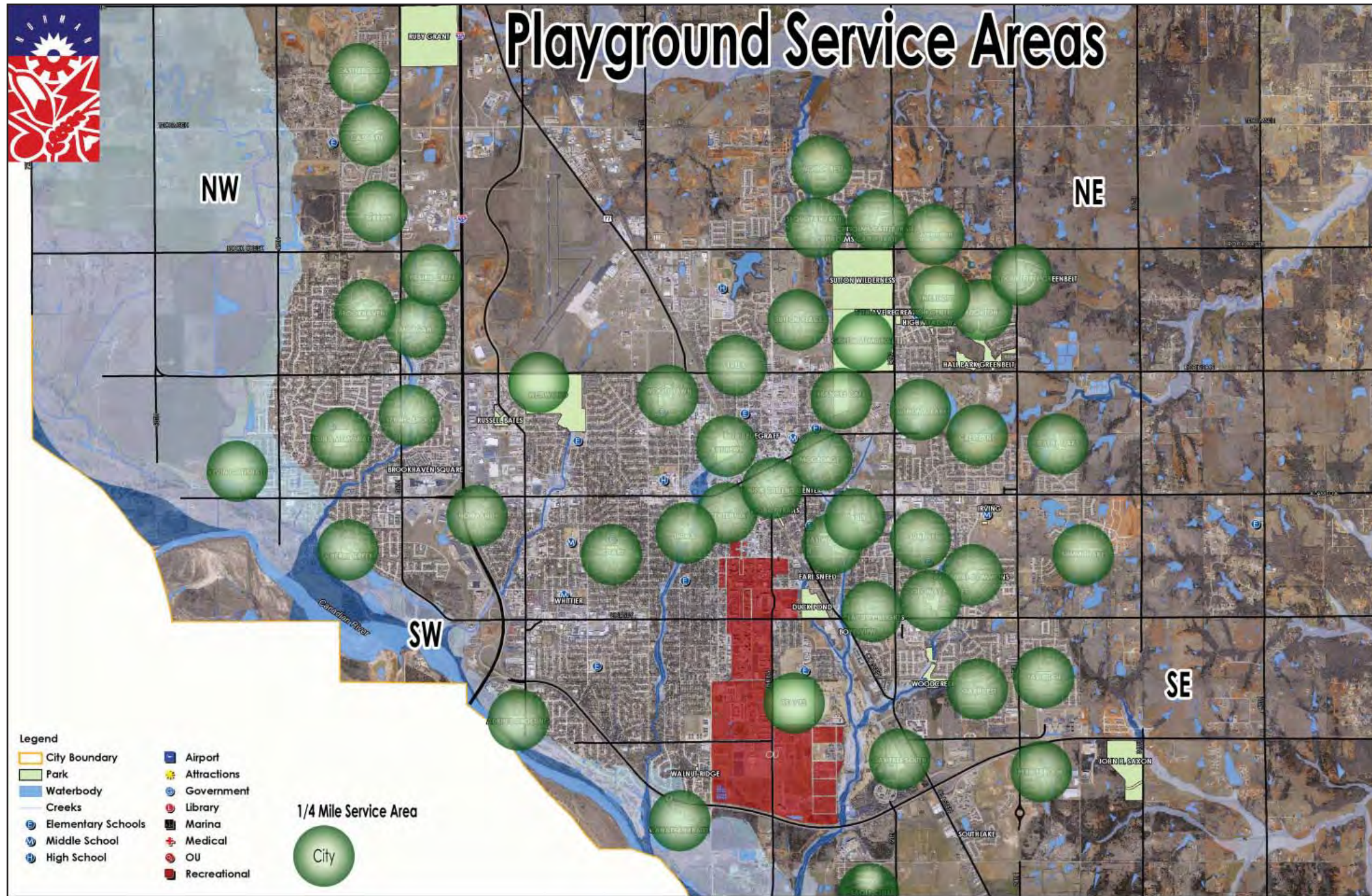
### Location of existing playgrounds:

- ▶ 1 at Adkin's Crossing Park
- ▶ 2 at Berkeley Park
- ▶ 1 at Brookhaven Park
- ▶ 1 at Canadian Trails Park
- ▶ 1 at Cascade Park
- ▶ 1 at Castlerock Park
- ▶ 1 at Centennial Park
- ▶ 1 at Cherry Creek Park
- ▶ 1 at Chisholm's Trail Park
- ▶ 1 at Colonial Commons Park
- ▶ 1 at Colonial Estates Park
- ▶ 1 at Creighton Park
- ▶ 1 at Crestland Park
- ▶ 2 at Doubletree Park
- ▶ 2 at Eagle Cliff Park
- ▶ 2 at Eastridge Park
- ▶ 4 at Eastwood Park
- ▶ 1 at Faculty Heights Park
- ▶ 1 at Falls Lakeview Park
- ▶ 1 at Frances Cate Park
- ▶ 1 at June Benson Park
- ▶ 1 at Kevin Gottshall Park
- ▶ 1 at Kiwanis Park
- ▶ 2 at Lions Park
- ▶ 2 at Lions Memorial Park
- ▶ 1 at Little Axe Park
- ▶ 1 at McGeorge Park
- ▶ 1 at William Morgan Park
- ▶ 1 at Northeast Lions Park
- ▶ 1 at Normandy Park
- ▶ 1 at Oaktree South
- ▶ 1 at Oakhurst Park
- ▶ 1 at Pebblebrook Park
- ▶ 2 at Prairie Creek Park
- ▶ 1 at Deerfield Park
- ▶ 1 at Rotary Park
- ▶ 1 at Royal Oaks Park
- ▶ 1 at Sequoyah Trail Park
- ▶ 1 at Sonoma Park
- ▶ 1 at Springbrook Park
- ▶ 1 at Summit Lakes Park
- ▶ 1 at Sunrise Park
- ▶ 1 at Sutton Place Park
- ▶ 1 at Tulls Park
- ▶ 1 at Vineyard Park
- ▶ 1 at Woodcreek Park
- ▶ 1 at Woodslawn Park
- ▶ 3 at Andrews Park
- ▶ 1 at Griffin Park
- ▶ 3 at Reaves Park
- ▶ 1 at Westwood Park

Location of Playgrounds











## Large Pavilions

Current number of pavilions: 21 pavilions  
Current level of service: 1 pavilion per 5,350 residents

Target level of service: 1 pavilion for 6,500 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 17 pavilions, no deficit
- ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 18 pavilions, no deficit
- ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 20 pavilions, no deficit

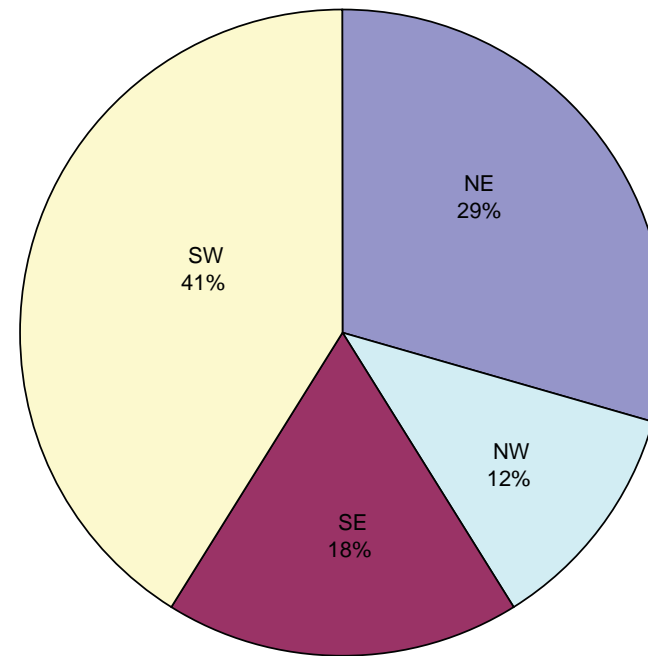
**Key issues:** Pavilions provide necessary shade for park users. They are popular features and can be used for a variety of activities. All community parks and large neighborhood parks should have several pavilions throughout them. Norman should invest in developing a signature pavilion style to enhance the beauty of all parks in the City.

**Level of need:** Medium

Location of existing pavilions:

- ▶ 1 at Canadian Trails Park
- ▶ 1 at Colonial Estates Park
- ▶ 1 at Crestland Park
- ▶ 1 at Frances Cate Park
- ▶ 1 at Lion's Park
- ▶ 1 at Little Axe Park
- ▶ 1 at William Morgan Park
- ▶ 1 at Northeast Lions Park
- ▶ 1 at Rotary Park
- ▶ 1 at Royal Oaks
- ▶ 1 at Summit Lakes Park
- ▶ 1 at Tulls Park
- ▶ 1 at Woodslawn Park
- ▶ 2 at Andrews Park
- ▶ 2 at Griffin Park
- ▶ 4 at Reeves Park

Location of Pavilions



Pavilion at Lions Park



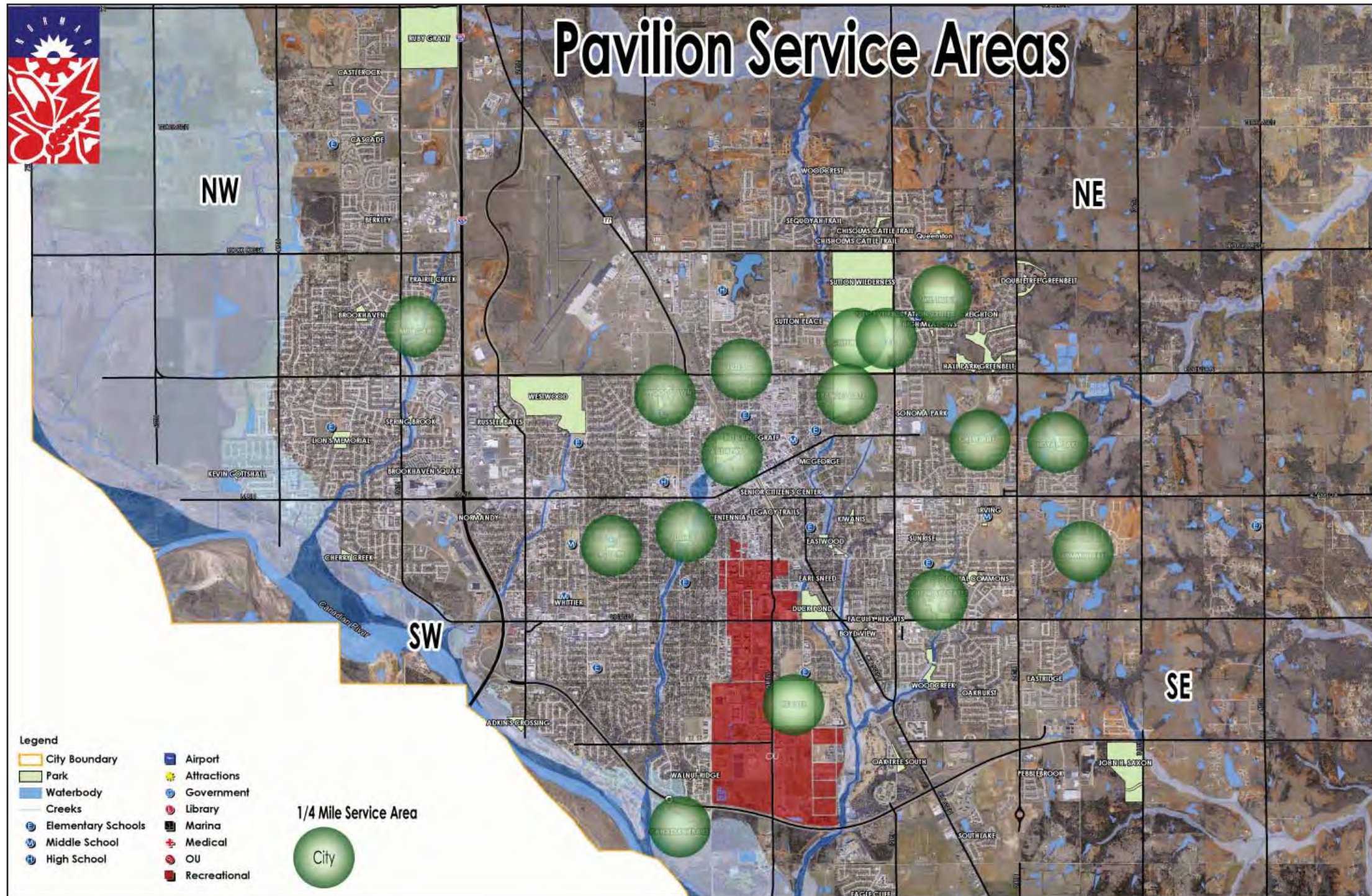
Pavilion at NE Lions Park



Pavilion at William Morgan Park











## Picnicking Facilities

**Current number of picnicking facilities:** 199 picnic tables, 141 benches, 39 BBQ grills, and 7 gazebos.

**Assumptions:** Picnic facilities should be in all parks.

**Target level of service:** Plan for picnicking facilities including tables, shade and outdoor grills at all parks.

**Key issues:** The existing picnic facilities are unevenly distributed among the sectors. The southeast sector contains a significant majority of picnic tables and BBQ grills. All new parks should include picnic facilities, especially parks in the western portion of the city so that distribution becomes even.

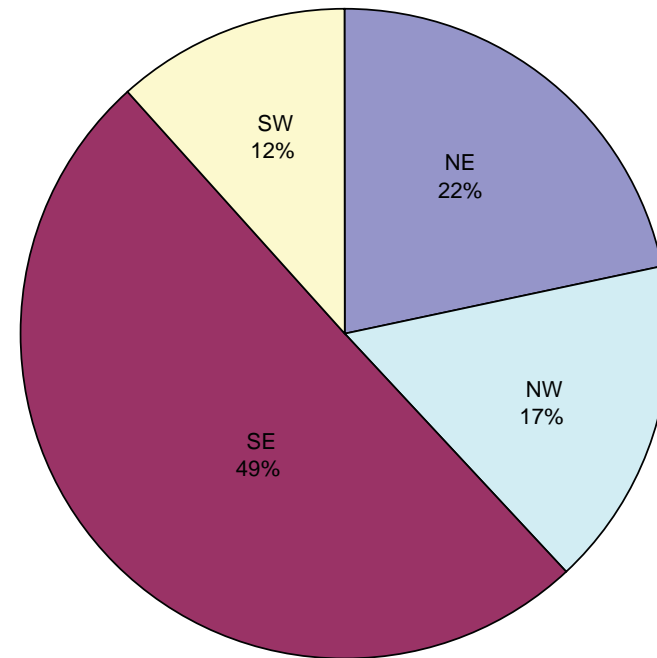
Many picnic tables are older, in poor condition and need replacing. The park staff needs to monitor the condition of the remaining picnic facilities and replace when necessary.

**Level of need:** High

Location of existing picnicking facilities:

- ▶ Picnic tables are located in 42 parks
- ▶ Benches are located in 41 parks
- ▶ BBQ grills are located in 19 parks
- ▶ Gazebos are located in 7 parks

Location of Picnic Tables



Picnic facilities at Brookhaven Park



Picnic facilities at Ruth Updegraff Park



Picnic facilities at Doubletree Park



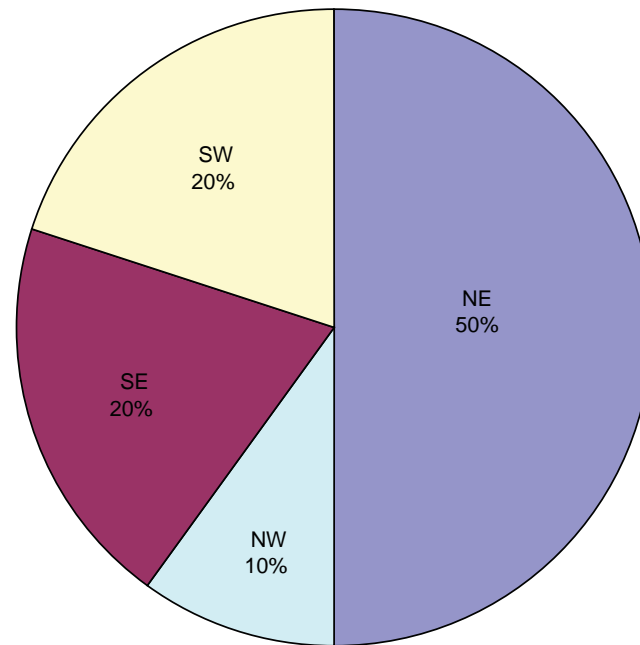




*Restrooms at Reaves Park*



Location of Restroom Buildings



## Park Support Facilities

**Park Support Facilities include:** Parking, restrooms, drinking fountains, and bicycle racks.

**Current number of park support facilities:** 26 bike racks, 22 drinking fountains, 16 parking lots, 10 restrooms.

**Target level of service:** Plan for park support facilities to be in all parks where feasible.

**Key issues:** Park support facilities should be placed in all parks where feasible. Larger community parks should have all park support facilities. Because neighborhood parks are ideally within walking distance of a user's home, restrooms and parking are not recommended for a smaller neighborhood park.

**Level of need:** High

Location of existing park support facilities:

- ▶ Drinking fountains are located in 18 parks
- ▶ Bike racks are located in 26 parks
- ▶ Parking lots are located in 12 parks
- ▶ Restrooms are located in 7 parks

RESTROOM

*Restrooms at Rotary Park*



*Restrooms at NE Lions Park*







## Indoor Recreation Centers

Current number of centers: 6 centers  
 Total square footage of centers: 56,844 square feet  
 Current level of service: 1 square foot per 0.51 residents, 6 centers per 112,345 residents

Target level of service: 1 state-of-the-art center per 75,000 residents

- ▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 1 center
- ▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 1 center
- ▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 1 - 2 centers

Key issues: See Indoor Recreation Chapter 7

Level of need: High

Location of existing centers:

- ▶ 12th Ave. Recreation Center
- ▶ Irving Recreation Center
- ▶ Whittier Recreation Center
- ▶ Senior Center
- ▶ Little Axe Community Center
- ▶ Reaves Dance Center
- ▶ The City of Norman also owns the girls' gym at Norman High School; however it is heavily used by the school. The only city program currently offered there is Tae Kwon Do.

12th Avenue Recreation Center



12th Avenue Recreation Center



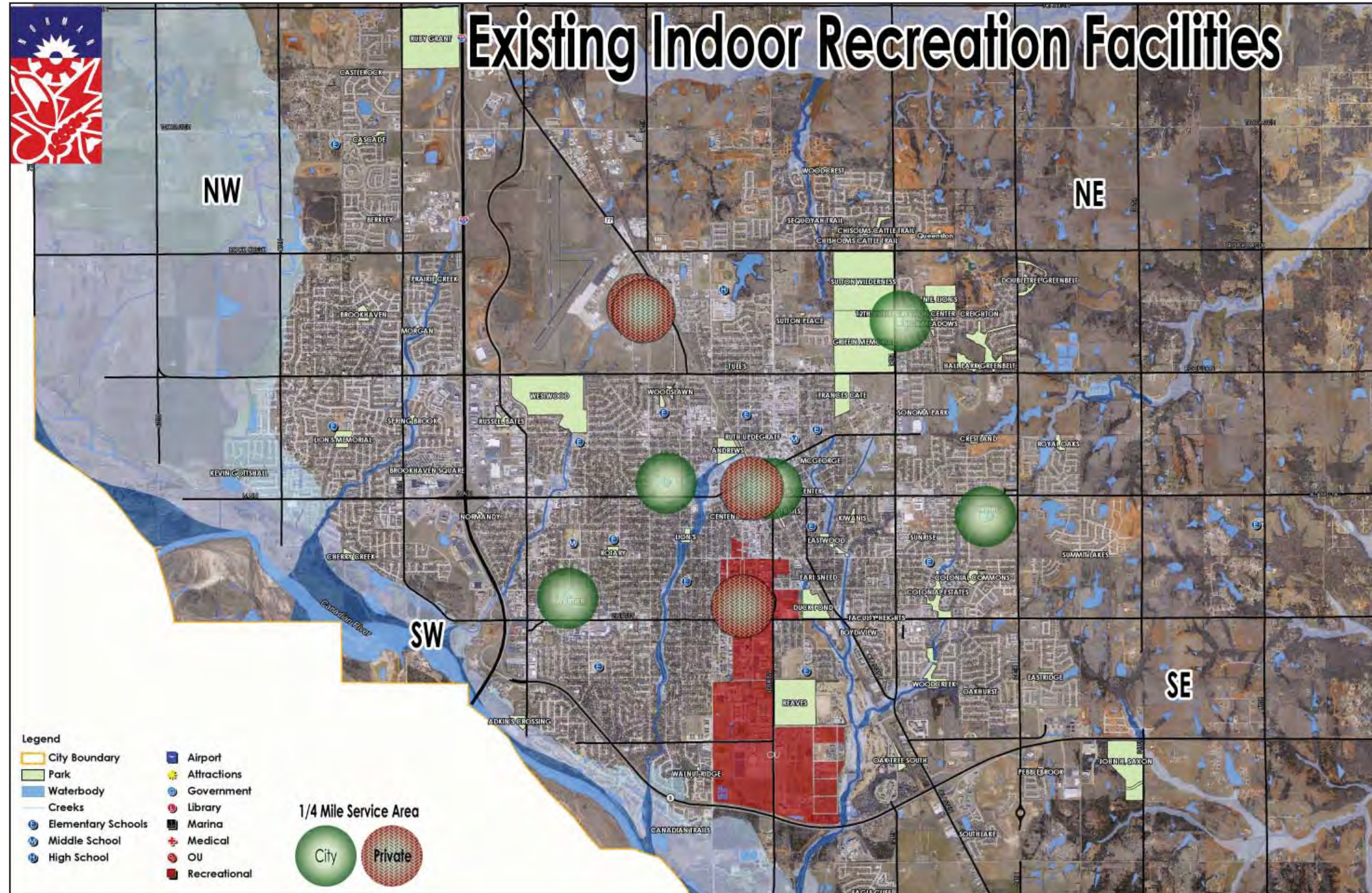
Irving Recreation Center



Little Axe Community Center











### Trails

**Current miles of trails:** 25.74 miles  
**Current level of service:** 0.23 miles of trail per every 1,000 residents or 1 mile per every 4,365 residents.

**Target level of service:** 1 to 2 miles for every 5,000 residents  
▶ Current 2009 need for 112,345 population: 22.5 miles to 44.9 miles  
▶ Year 2015 need for 120,152 population: 24.0 miles to 48.1 miles  
▶ Year 2020 need for 128,404 population: 25.7 miles to 51.4 miles

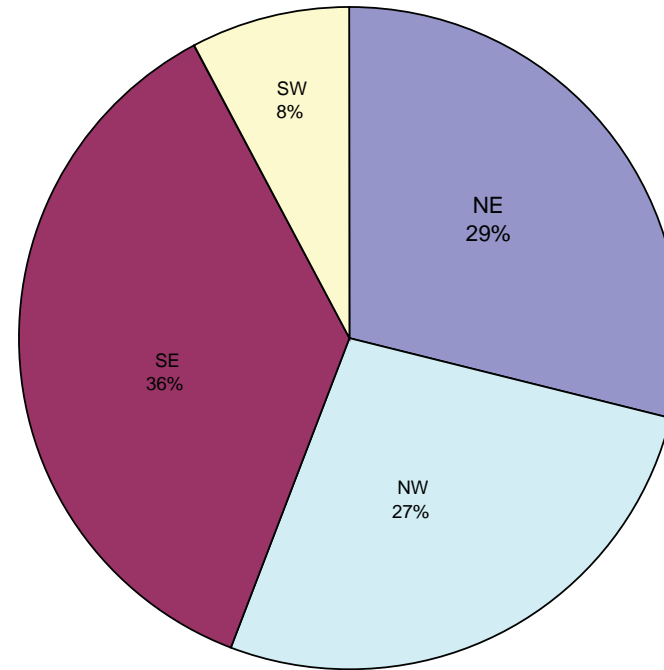
**Key issues:** Trails have consistently been ranked during the public input process as a high priority and something that the citizens want. Trails should be constructed for walking, jogging and bicycling. Trails throughout the country are becoming an alternative mode of transportation, and are not just used recreationally. Building an interconnected citywide trails system will allow all residents of Norman to either bike or walk from one part of the City to another.

**Level of need:** High

Location of existing trails in parks:

- ▶ Berkeley Park
- ▶ Brookhaven Park
- ▶ Canadian Trails Park
- ▶ Castlerock Park
- ▶ Colonial Estates Park
- ▶ Crestland Park
- ▶ Eagle Cliff Park
- ▶ Frances Cate Park
- ▶ High Meadows Park
- ▶ Kevin Gottshall Park
- ▶ William Morgan Park
- ▶ Oak Tree South Park
- ▶ Pebblebrook Park
- ▶ Eastridge Park
- ▶ Vineyard Park
- ▶ Russell Bates Park
- ▶ Royal Oaks Park
- ▶ Sequoyah Trail Park
- ▶ Woodcreek Park
- ▶ Andrews Park
- ▶ Griffin Park
- ▶ Reaves Park
- ▶ Sutton Wilderness
- ▶ Westwood Park
- ▶ Doubletree Greenbelt
- ▶ Hall Park Greenbelt
- ▶ Legacy Trail
- ▶ Kiwanis Park
- ▶ Lions Park
- ▶ Lions Memorial Park
- ▶ Deerfield Park

Location of Trails



Legacy Trail



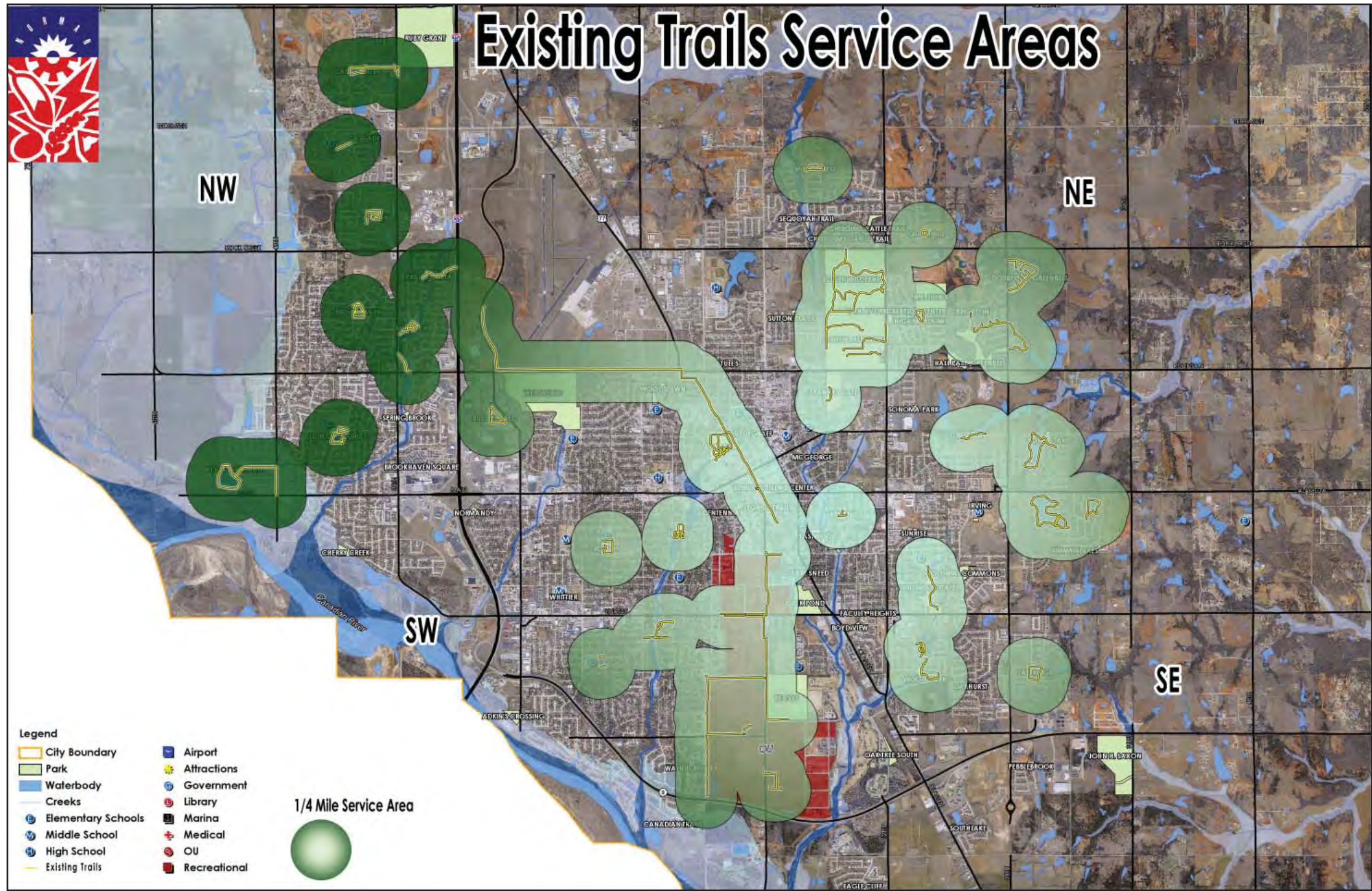
Trail at Griffin Park



Trail at Hall Park Greenbelt











## Summary of Facility Needs

Table 5 - 2 summarizes the key facility needs to meet the target level of service set for the year 2020. Picnicking facilities, support facilities and practice fields should be added to all future parks where feasible. The trail system in Norman should continue to expand and become interconnected. Athletic fields will need to keep pace with the future growth of the City. Indoor recreation facilities and aquatic facilities need to expand and be renovated to meet the population's needs.

Facility	Current LOS Pop. Served	Current Amount	2020 Need	Level of Need
Baseball Fields	5,350	21	26	Medium
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	4,406	25.5	21.5	Medium
Disc Golf Course	24,966	4.5	4	Medium
Indoor Recreation Center	0.51 sf/ person	6 older centers	state-of-the-art center	High
Pavilions	5,350	21	20	Medium
Picnicking Facilities	Varies	Varies	Varies	High
Playgrounds	1,755	64	73	High
Practice Fields (baseball/softball)	3,304	34	32	Medium
Practice Fields (soccer/football)	5,913	19	32	High
Softball Fields	11,235	10	14	Medium
Soccer Fields	7,022	16	18	Low
Splash Pads	56,173	2	5	High
Swimming Pools	112,345	1 older complex	state-of-the-art pool	High
Support Facilities	Varies	Varies	Varies	High
Tennis Courts	5,107	22	18	Low
Trails	4,365	25.74 miles	25.7 to 51.4 miles	High
Volleyball Courts (outdoor)	12,483	9	12	Medium

## Benchmarking

Benchmarks are used as a reference point on which one particular city ranks when compared to other cities with similar characteristics. A list of similar benchmark cities was compiled for Norman by the steering committee, staff and consulting team. The cities that were chosen are similar to Norman in that most have a major university within or near their city limits, they are within close proximity to a large metropolitan area such as Norman is close to Oklahoma City, the populations are similar in size (between 80,000 and 120,000 residents), and most are the county seat of the county in which they reside. For the purpose of this planning process, the benchmark cities are identified as:

- ▶ Boulder, Colorado
- ▶ College Station, Texas
- ▶ Columbia, Missouri
- ▶ Denton, Texas
- ▶ Edmond, Oklahoma
- ▶ Lawrence, Kansas
- ▶ Topeka, Kansas
- ▶ Tulsa, Oklahoma
- ▶ Waco, Texas

Once the benchmark cities were chosen, they were then compared to Norman in terms of developed parkland acreage, miles of trails, square footage of indoor recreation space, type and size of aquatic facilities, budget dollars per capita, and the number of employees in the Parks and Recreation Department. A total summary of the benchmark cities and how Norman compares is shown in the table to the right.

- Significant findings from the benchmarking study include:
- ▶ Norman is ranked third in terms of number of parks; however, Norman is ranked last in terms of developed parkland acreage per 1,000 residents. While Norman has a significant number of parks, large tracks of parkland are undeveloped and unused such as Ruby Grant Park and John H. Saxon Park.
  - ▶ While the square footage of indoor recreation space in Norman is similar to that of the other benchmark cities, the indoor recreation centers are in need of renovation and there is no City operated state-of-the-art fitness facility.
  - ▶ When compared to the benchmark cities, Norman has the start of a good trail system; however, the trails in Norman need to be more interconnected.
  - ▶ Norman has the fewest number of aquatic facilities when compared to the benchmark cities. Having only one swimming pool in a city of this size does not adequately serve the population. All of the benchmark cities, except Edmond, have at least two outdoor swimming pools, and 5 of the 10 cities have at least one indoor swimming pool.
  - ▶ Norman is ranked 8 out of 10 in terms of Parks and Recreation Department staff. Norman has 63 staff members where as the highest ranked city, Boulder, has 146.99 staff members for parks and recreation.
  - ▶ Norman has the second lowest amount of approved budget dollars per capita for parks and recreation. Only \$55.30 per capita was allocated to parks and recreation in Norman. The highest ranked city was again Boulder with \$246.62 per capita allocated to parks and recreation.







Norman Comparison of Benchmark Cities																					
City	Current Estimated Population	County Seat? Y/N	Of what county?	University?	Student Population of University	Total Number of Parks	Total Park Acreage	Developed Park Acreage	Developed Acreage Per 1,000 Population	Number of PARD Staff	Developed Park Acreage Per Staff	Number of Indoor Centers	Total Square Footage of Indoor Recreation / Senior / Teen Centers	Square Footage per Resident	Total Miles of Trails	Miles of Trails per 1,000 Population	# of Pools (Indoor / Outdoor)	Size of Pools	Type of Pools	2009 Approved Budget for PARD	PARD Budget Dollars per Person
1) Norman	112,345	Yes	Cleveland	University of Oklahoma	30,000	65	1,159.90	688.30	6.13	63	10.93	6	56,844	0.506	25.74	0.23	0 / 1	One 50 meter pool	1 large pool, slides	\$6,212,691	\$55.30
2) Boulder, CO	103,114	Yes	Boulder	University of Colorado at Boulder and Naropa University	29,000 for UCB	60	1,000.00	800.00	7.76	146.99	5.44	3	140,521	1.363	130.00	1.26	3 / 2	4 pools are 25 yards, 1 pool is 50 meters	2 indoor pools have zero depth entry, play structures, slides, lazy river, hot tub	\$25,430,180	\$246.62
3) College Station, TX	90,897	No		Texas A&M University	43,000	50	1,289.45	1,149.04	12.64	133	8.64	3	38,171	0.420	11.95	0.13	1 / 3	50 meter, 25 meter, 25 yard, 25 meter natatorium	50 meter pool is a water park, 25 yard pool has zero depth entry and slides	\$9,187,624	\$101.08
4) Columbia, MO	96,093	Yes	Boone	University of Missouri	30,000	65	2,853.00	2,101.00	21.86	43.5	48.30	1	73,000	0.760	42.08	0.44	1 / 4	Indoor pool is 12,988 square feet. One outdoor pool is 50 meters	2 outdoor aquatic centers with slides, play structures, diving boards, climbing wall. Indoor pool has slides, lazy river, play structure, zero depth entry, handicap lift	\$12,679,649	\$131.95
5) Denton, TX	120,126	Yes	Denton	University of North Texas and Texas Women's University	34,000 for UNT	29	1,400.00	1,209.86	10.07	124.31	9.73	7	unknown	unknown	21.00	0.17	1 / 2	unknown	One outdoor water park, one natatorium	\$10,436,223	\$86.88
6) Edmond, OK	83,259	No		University of Central Oklahoma	16,000	23	4,821.00	550.55	6.61	40	13.76	2	unknown	unknown	13.46	0.16	0 / 1	25 yard	Large, outdoor family aquatic center with slides, lazy river, climbing wall	\$4,929,536	\$59.21
7) Lawrence, KS	90,866	Yes	Douglas	University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University	30,000 for KU	52	2,965.40	1,309.40	14.41	71.78	18.24	4	43,000	0.473	14.00	0.15	2 / 2	Two 50 meter pools, One 25 yard pool	Two separate indoor and outdoor aquatic centers with zero depth entry, slides, play features, diving well. One natatorium. One wading pool	\$6,991,479	\$76.94
8) Topeka, KS	122,113	Yes	Shawnee	No	N/A	102	1,600.00	1,330.00	10.89	95.75	13.89	6	145,000	1.187	11.25	0.09	0 / 5	50 meter; 5,000 square feet; 170 feet long; traditional L-shape	One outdoor aquatic center with zero depth entry, slides, spray features.	\$9,862,463	\$80.77
9) Tulsa, OK	388,000	Yes	Tulsa	Oral Roberts University and University of Tulsa	3,790 for ORU; 4,165 for TU	125	6,000.00	5,636.65	14.53	166.6	33.83	17	unknown	unknown	47.30	0.12	0 / 22	unknown	unknown	\$18,179,000	\$46.85
10) Waco, TX	113,726	Yes	McLennan	Baylor University	15,000	58	1,400.00	892.95	7.85	142.7	6.26	3	unknown	unknown	26.80	0.24	0 / 2	unknown	Water park with slides, spray features	\$9,111,574	\$80.12

Data Source for Population and Budget Information

- 1) population derived from 2009 city budget. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 2) population derived from 2008 estimate from the Planning and Development Services Department. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 3) population derived from 2008 estimate from the Planning and Development Services Department. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 4) population derived from 2008 estimate from the Planning and Development Services Department. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 5) population derived from 2008 estimate from the 2008-2009 budget. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 6) population derived from 2008 estimate from the Edmond Economic Development Authority. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 7) population derived from 2008 estimate from the Planning Department. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 8) population derived from 2006 U.S. Census estimate. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 9) population derived from 2007 budget estimate. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.
- 10) population derived from 2000 U.S. Census. Budget dollars per person is total budgeted expenditures for parks and recreation Fiscal Year 2009 divided by population.







## Demand Based Needs Assessment

Demand was also used to determine what additional facilities are needed in Norman. Demand is based on both actual participation in organized activities and in use of the parks, as well as by the level of use and preferences expressed by citizens through stakeholder interviews, citywide mail-out survey, online survey, and public meetings.

Public input is a critical part of any planning process. Public entities work for their citizens by managing and providing the types of facilities that the residents and taxpayers of the community want to have. In essence, our citizens are our "customers" and it is the City's responsibility to provide what our customers seek with approved funding. In the parks planning process, public input helps identify what types of existing facilities are being used, where key deficiencies may occur, and where the citizens of Norman would like to see their funding targeted. In essence, the residents of a community determine what they want to have in their city through their current use of facilities and through their comments and input.

### What Facility Is Lacking (mail-out survey)

Asking residents what one facility they feel is lacking in their part of the city is crucial to understanding what residents want. The highest response on the mail-out survey was trails with 43% of residents indicating they feel trails are lacking in their part of Norman. This demonstrates a desire to have trails throughout their neighborhood and throughout their sector of the City. The next highest response was swimming pools with 13%, followed by a neighborhood park with 11%. The top five responses to this open ended question are shown below.

Trails	43%
Pool	13%
Neighborhood Park	11%
Recreation Center/Gym	7%
Natorium/Aquatics/Splash Pad	5%

### What Facility Is Lacking (online survey)

The online survey responses revealed the same top five facilities that residents feel are lacking in their part of the City. Again the number one response was trails with 23% of all residents indicating this was a high need. For the online survey, a natatorium/splash pad was the second highest item with 19% of the residents indicating this was lacking. This was followed by a pool as the third highest ranked facility with 11%. The top five results from the online survey are shown below.

Trails	23%
Natorium/Aquatics/Splash Pad	19%
Pool	11%
Neighborhood Park	9%
Recreation Center/Gym	6%



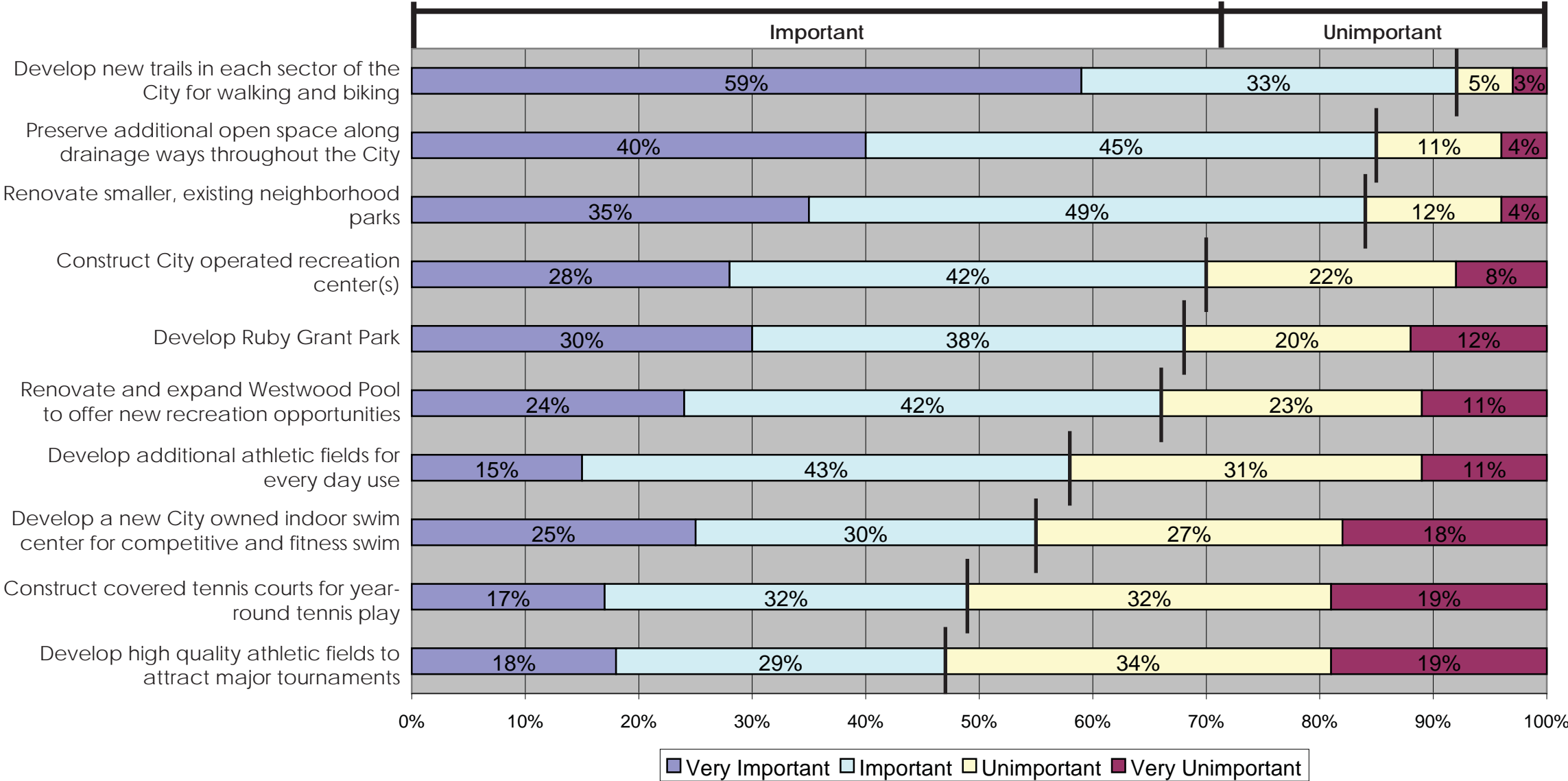




**Future Strategies (mail-out survey results)**

As the City creates a Parks Master Plan, it will be faced with decisions about the future direction of parks and recreation. Residents were given a list of various strategies and were asked to rate how important or unimportant they felt each strategy was. The highest rated strategy was to develop new trails in each sector of the City for walking and biking with 93% of residents indicating this was important or very important. Again, this demonstrates the high need for additional trails throughout all of Norman. The second highest rated item was preserving additional open space along the drainage ways throughout the City with 87% of residents indicating this was important or very important. The responses are shown in the bar graph below.

**Importance of Future Strategies (mail-out survey)**



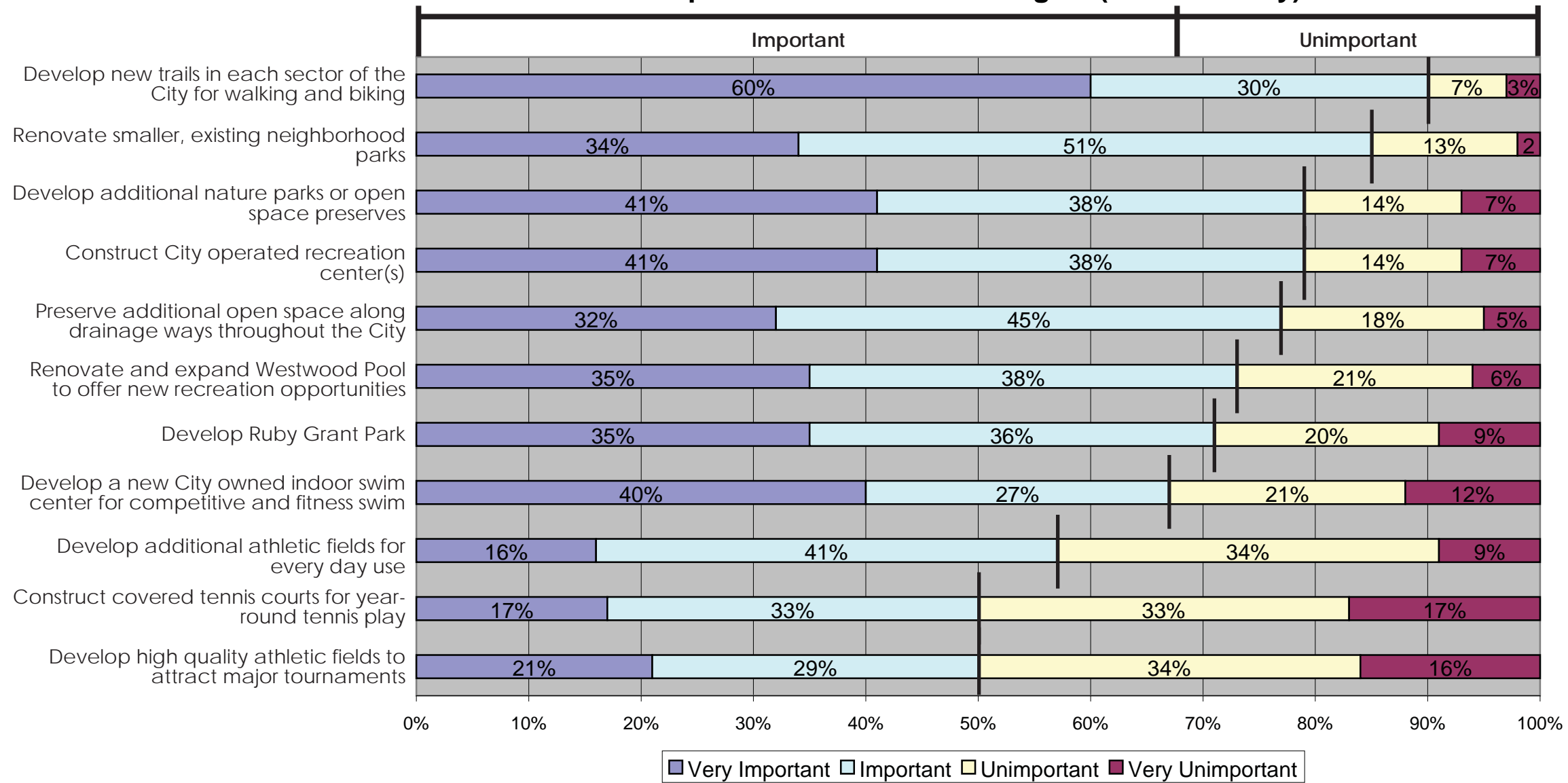




### Future Strategies (online survey results)

The results from the online survey were similar to the mail-out survey in terms of what strategies the residents of Norman feel are important for the City. Developing new trails in all sectors of the City was again ranked as the highest strategy with 90% of residents indicating this was important or very important. The second strategy was renovating smaller, existing neighborhood parks with 85% of residents feeling this was an important or very important need. The results from the online survey are shown below.

#### Importance of Future Strategies (online survey)







### Most Important Future Strategy

Using the listed items from the previous question, residents were asked to choose what three strategies they felt were the most important for the City to pursue. The five highest rated choices are listed below for both the mail-out and online surveys, and closely mirror the results from the previous question. Again, developing new trails was rated number one, followed by renovation/enhancement of smaller parks.

#### Most Important Strategy the City Should Pursue (mail-out)

Develop new trails in each sector	66%
Renovate/enhance smaller parks	48%
Preserve additional open space	35%
Construct recreation center	28%
Develop Ruby Grant Park	26%

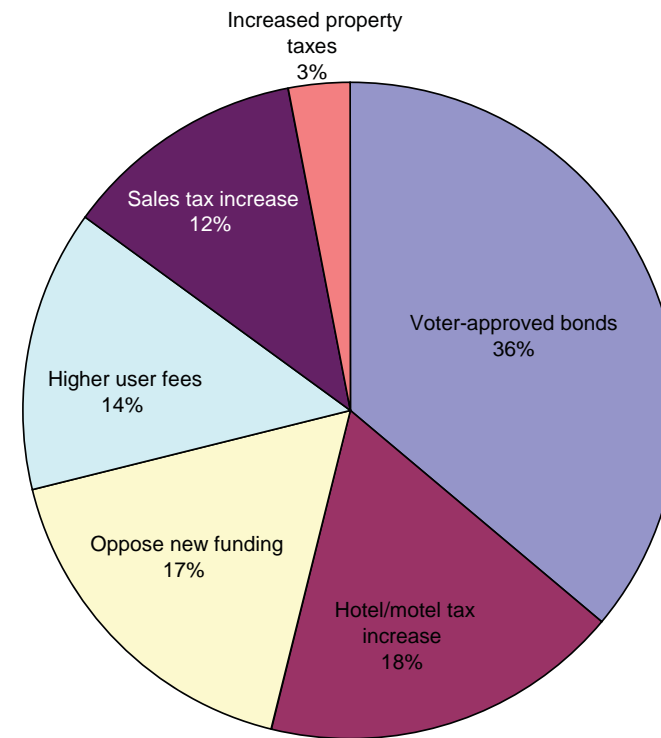
#### Most Important Strategy the City Should Pursue (online)

Develop new trails in each sector	19%
Renovate/enhance smaller parks	13%
Preserve additional open space	11%
Construct recreation center	11%
Develop indoor swim center	11%

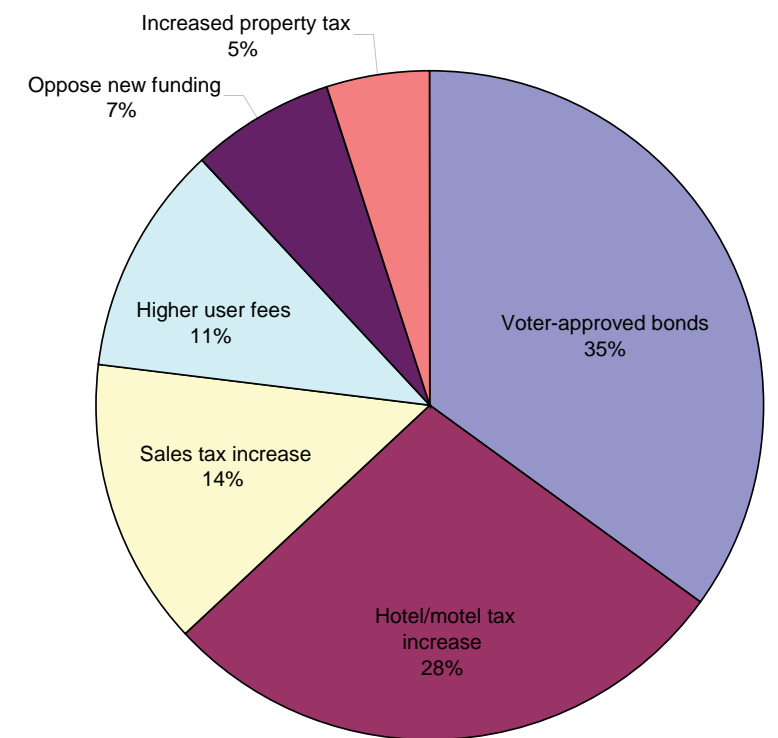
### Methods of Additional Funding

In order to accomplish the various future strategies for parks and recreation, additional funding will be needed. Residents were given a list of various options and asked which method they preferred. The method receiving the highest level of preference was voter-approved bonds with 36% of the mail-out survey respondents and 37% of the online survey respondents choosing this method. The next highest rated response for both surveys was a hotel/motel tax increase. The responses are shown in the pie charts below.

Preferred Method of Additional Funding (mail-out survey)



Preferred Method of Additional Funding (online survey)







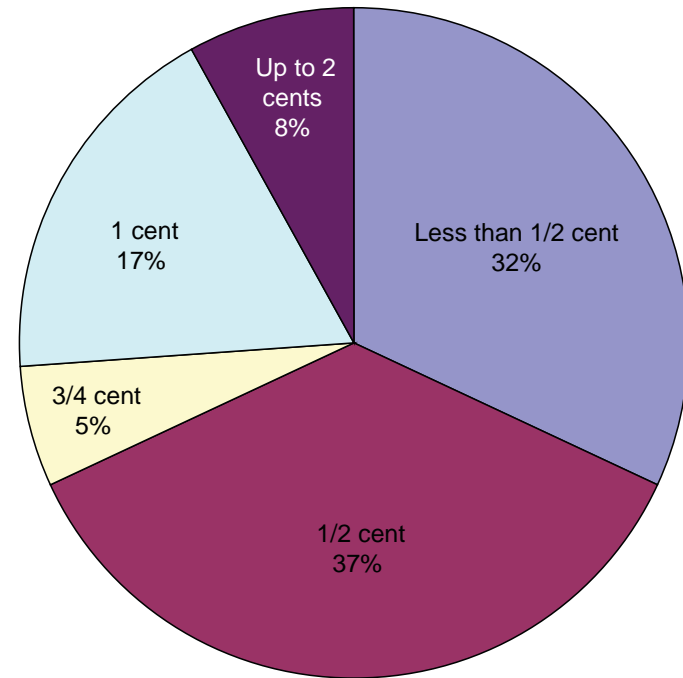
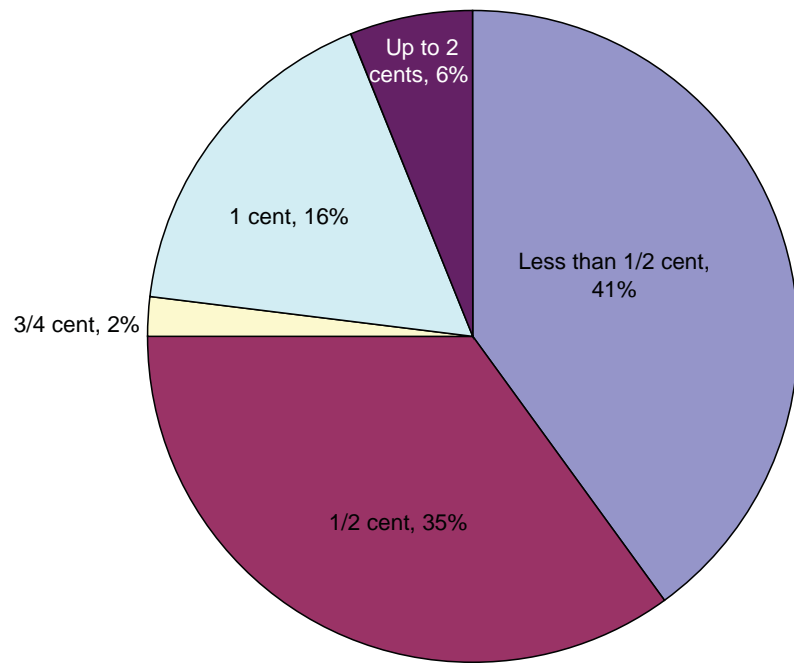
### Support for Sales Tax Increase

An increase in sales tax specifically for parks and recreation improvements is the most likely method of funding after a voter-approved bond. If this method was implemented, residents were asked what was the highest amount they would support. On the mail-out, less than 1/2 cent sales tax increase received the highest level of support with 41% of residents indicating they would support this increase. The online survey results differed in that the 1/2 cent sales tax increase received the highest level of support with 37% of residents indicating they would support this increase. The results are shown in the charts below.

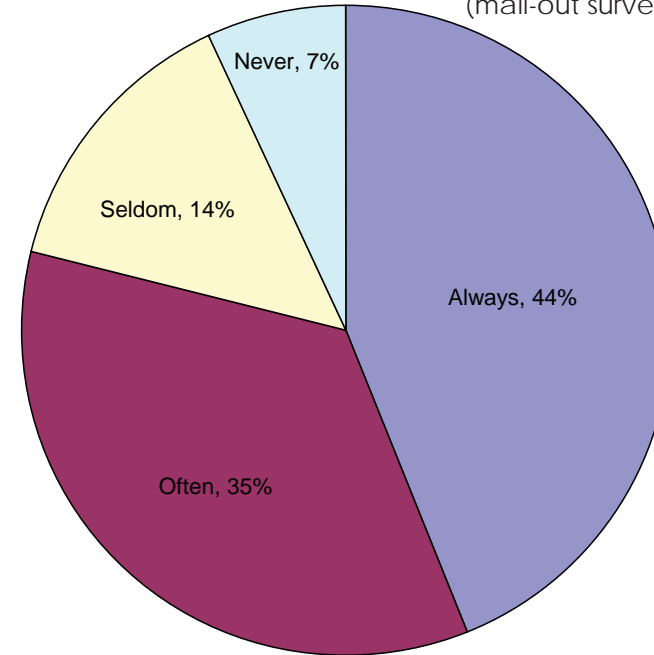
### Voting in a Bond Election

Residents were asked how often they vote in a bond election. Most residents, 79% on the mail-out survey and 83% on the online survey, indicate they vote in a bond election either always or often. The results are shown in the pie chart below.

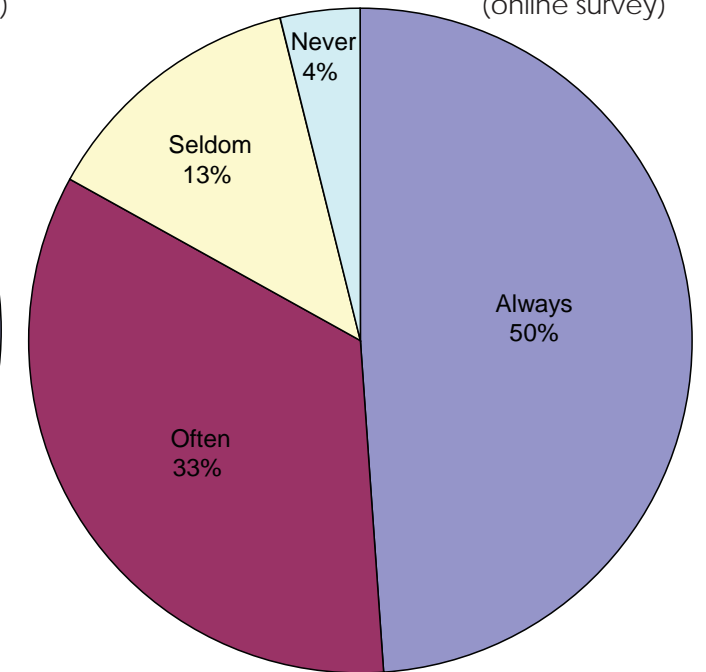
Most Likely Supported Sales Tax Increase (mail-out survey)    Most Likely Supported Sales Tax Increase (online survey)



How Often Do You Vote in a Bond Election (mail-out survey)



How Often Do You Vote in a Bond Election (online survey)







**Direction for Future Parkland in**

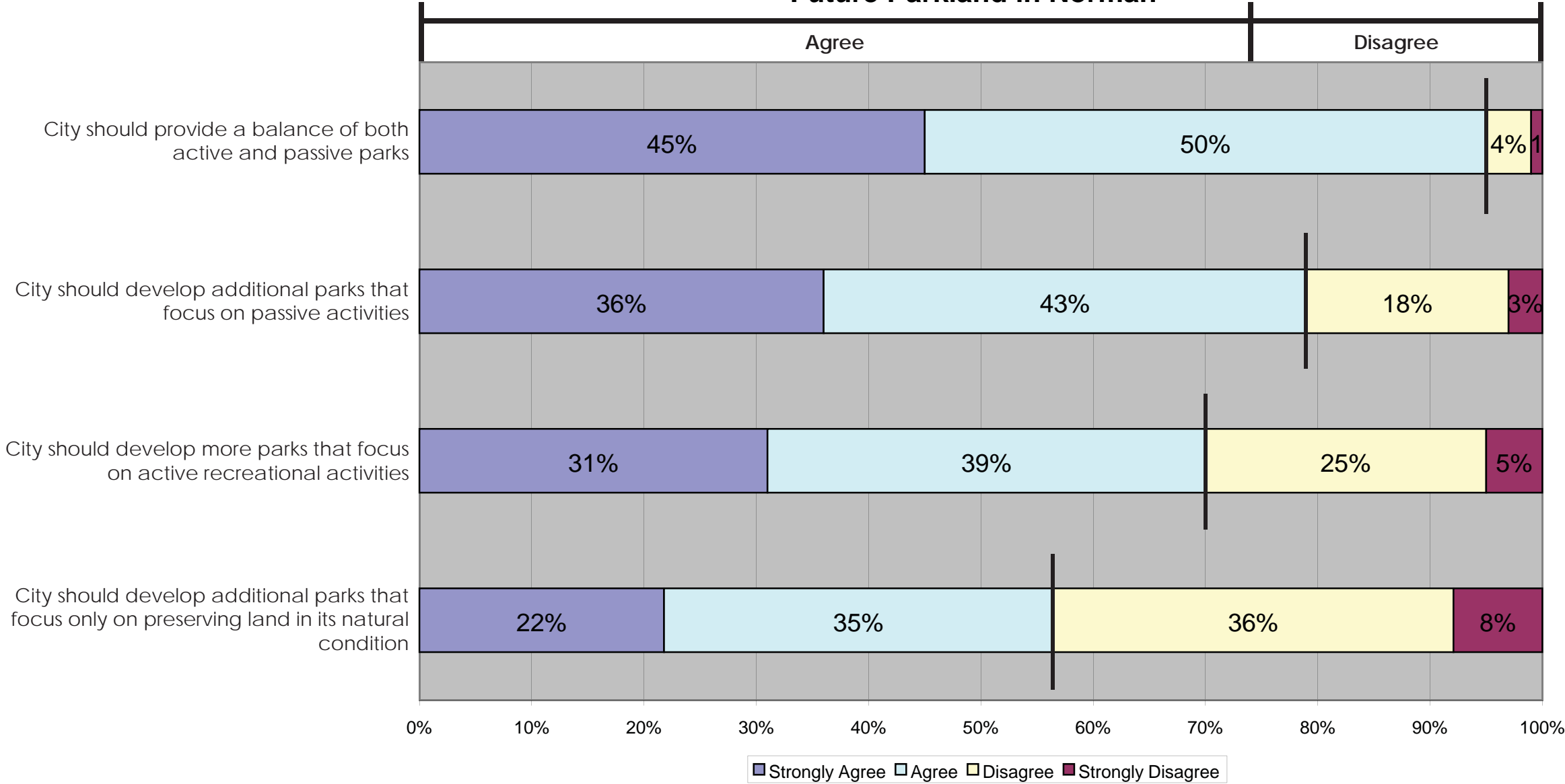
**Norman**

Again, the online survey allows for more questions to be asked because a greater amount of space is offered. One question on the online survey asked residents whether or not they agreed with different directions the City could take regarding future parkland in Norman. A significant amount of the population, 95%, agreed or strongly agreed that Norman should provide a balance of both active and passive parks.

79% of residents agreed or strongly agreed that the City should develop additional parks that focus on passive activities such as trails, picnic areas, nature viewing areas and other non-athletic activities. Likewise, 70% of residents agreed or strongly agreed that the City should develop more parks that focused on active recreational activities such as athletic fields, play areas, basketball courts, tennis courts, and other active activities.

When asked if the City should develop additional parks that focus only on preserving the land in its natural condition, only 57% of residents either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. This shows that while there is a desire to provide more natural parks, the residents of Norman still wish to be able to use those parks for passive activities. All results are shown in the graph to the right.

**Future Parkland in Norman**







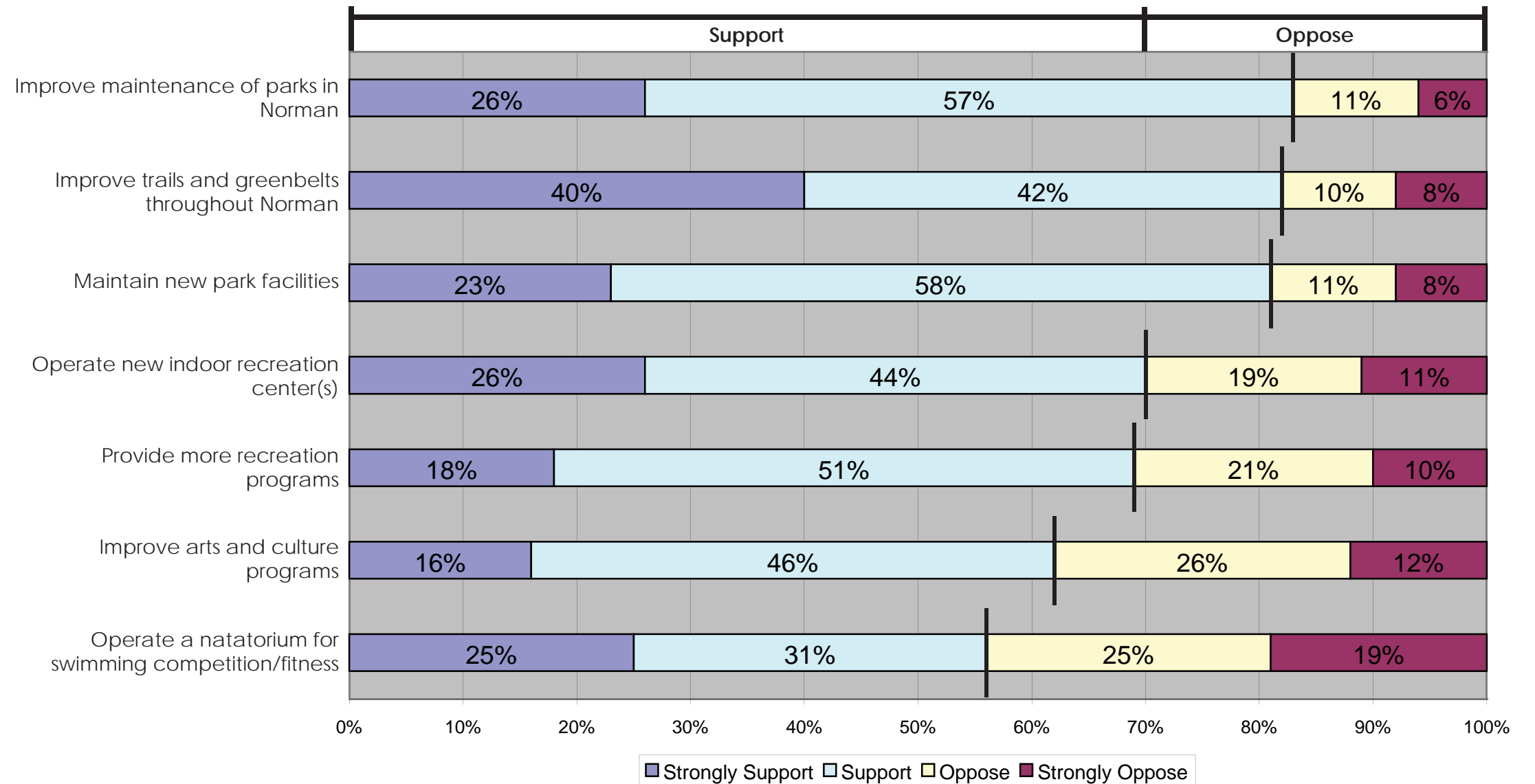
### Support For Paying Additional Taxes for Specific Facilities

Also on the online survey, residents were asked how strongly they would support or oppose paying additional taxes for the construction or development of specific parks and recreation facilities. The action receiving the highest level of support was improving the maintenance of existing parks. 83% of residents would either strongly support or support paying additional taxes for this action.

The second highest rated action was improving trails and greenbelts throughout Norman. 82% of residents indicated they would strongly support or support this action by paying additional taxes. The third highest supported action was maintaining new park facilities with 81% of residents indicating they would support or strongly support paying additional taxes for this action.

All responses are shown in the bar graph to the right.

Support Paying Additional Taxes for Specific Facilities







**Stakeholder Needs**

During this planning process, 14 stakeholder groups were interviewed to discuss the needs and desires for their specific organization. A list of the stakeholder groups and their top priority needs regarding parks and recreation are summarized in the table below.

Table 5 - 3 Demand Based Needs Assessment by Stakeholder Groups	
Stakeholder Group	Key Needs
Aging Services	Serves many residents in the City. Meals prepared at Senior Center which is adequate for their needs. Concern over ability to continue to provide services and recreation opportunities for seniors.
Chamber of Commerce	Strong perception among business community that recreation is an important part of Norman's attractions and creates potential for economic growth. Support improvements to Norman's aging park system.
Norman Police Department	Minor problems with vandalism and graffiti, but generally crime in parks is not a serious issue in Norman.
Convention and Visitors Bureau	Similar to Chamber of Commerce comments.
Economic Development Coalition	Similar to Chamber of Commerce comments.
Football Academy	Uses fields at Griffin Park that are controlled by the Norman Youth Soccer Assoc. For a portion of the season, only one field is available. Need at least two fields for play and to allow for league growth. Griffin Park location is excellent, potential exists to expand to Frances Cate Park, south of Griffin.
Little Axe Youth Sports	Facilities at Little Axe Park need improvements (concession buildings, sidewalks, ramps). Community building is also small and needs expansion.
Norman Public Library	Potential to promote healthy lifestyle in concert with Parks and Recreation Department. New library site, if approved by voters, may be designed to incorporate community rooms, coffee shop, and outdoor areas linked to Legacy Trail.
Norman Public Schools	Concern over cost of aquatic facility, but willing to consider partnership ideas. Very open to other facility sharing ideas with Norman Parks and Recreation.
Norman Youth Soccer Association	Largest sports association in Norman. Has continued to grow steadily over the past three years. Would like to expand within Griffin Park or south of Robinson to create a regional tournament quality facility.
Optimist Club	WWII era hanger has been converted into a 5 court gym. The facility needs roofing repair, restroom and concession upgrades, improved lighting, and an HVAC system. Location is excellent but gym building is dated.
Pisces	Concern over lack of indoor facility for swimming practice and competition. Very concerned over potential near-term closing of OU indoor pool and lack of access to new pool for general citizens and non-high school competitive swimmers.
Reaves Park Softball Association	Association is in good financial health. Recent improvements to facilities at Reaves Park have helped, but some additional improvements are needed to park.
YMCA	Strong membership and excellent, easily accessible location. Would like to provide satellite facility that serves southeastern areas of Norman and nearby smaller communities. Open to partnership ideas with City if feasible. Indoor pool is very popular, well used and has limited available unprogrammed time.







## Demand Based on League Participation Rates

The major sports leagues and associations in Norman present their annual budget and participation rates to the Board of Parks Commissioners every year. Participation rates for the Reaves Park Softball Association, Optimist Club, Norman Youth Soccer Association, the Norman Football Academy, and the City of Norman Youth Baseball and Softball are shown in Table 5 - 4 for the years 2005 to 2008. Some organizations report the number of teams they register while others report the number of players.

**Conclusions:** The Reaves Park Softball Association had steady growth since the year 2005. However the 2008 season had lower numbers than the 2007 season, both the number of teams and the number of players.

The Optimist Club offers tackle football, flag football, basketball, baseball and cheerleading. All sports have grown in participation. The participation rates shown are the combined total of all sports.

The Norman Youth Soccer Association has an increase in the number of players but fewer teams when comparing the 2008 season to the 2007 season.

The Norman Football Academy has had significant growth. This program is for adult flag football and is very popular. However, their contract only allows them use of one field at Griffin Park for their games. The league is capped out at 25 teams because of the limited number of fields. In order for this league to continue growing, it must have access to additional fields for games.

The City of Norman Parks and Recreation Department Youth Baseball and Softball League has experienced a decline in the number of participants over the past few years. This is most likely because of the growth in the Optimist Club which offers a competitive league for the same age groups. The City league is only considered recreational.

Table 5 - 4 League Participation Growth					
League	2005	2006	2007	2008	Overall Percent Growth
<b>Reaves Park Softball Association</b> (teams)	184	198	219	214	16% since 2005
(number of players)	2,488	2,668	2,850	2,700	8.5% since 2005
<b>Optimist Club</b> (number of players)	no data	no data	1,500	1,670	11% since 2007
<b>Norman Youth Soccer Association</b> (teams)	no data	no data	167	163	-2% since 2007
(number of players)	1,680	no data	1,593	1,755	4.5% since 2005
<b>Norman Football Academy</b> (teams)	18	20	25	25	39% since 2005
<b>City of Norman Youth Baseball and Softball</b> (number of players)	2,041	2,042	1,928	1,759	-14% since 2005







## Resource Based Needs Assessment

The resource based assessment addresses key physical features of the City that may be incorporated as potential recreational opportunities. Both man-made and natural features can be considered. The City of Norman has a number of landscape features that should be preserved and/or adapted for recreational use and open space preservation where feasible. These are the creek system, Lake Thunderbird, rural landscapes, historic/cultural landscapes, utility right-of-ways, and railroad right-of-way.

### Creek/River System

Norman has a very extensive creek and river system flowing through the City. Recommendations regarding the preservation of greenbelts throughout Norman are made in the recent Storm Water Master Plan and Greenbelt Plan. The citizen comment findings included in this planning process strongly mirror and endorse the findings of those master plans.

The City should make serious efforts to secure functional corridors along drainage ways in the City. The key criteria should be:

- Preserve the larger of the 100 year floodplain or a 300 foot wide corridor along undeveloped or underdeveloped river areas. Ensure flood control and recreation opportunities by preventing unrestricted encroachment and destruction of the forested areas along all rivers, creeks and their tributaries.



*Bishop Creek, one of the many creeks with potential to become a linear park*

- Acquire and preserve, where feasible, drainage streams that

can create linkage to adjacent neighborhoods. Preserve more than just the bare minimum for drainage purposes.

- Work with landowners and homeowners to create linear vehicular and pedestrian parkways along the edges of the floodplain, rather than backing lots up to wooded areas. Such single loaded parkways open the river and creek areas up to the benefit of informal enjoyment of all residents. Where feasible this concept should be retrofitted to existing conditions.
- Create linear trail segments in phases. Identify key trail linkages to develop first. With proper City support, funding and marketing, these trails will become the impetus for the development of similar trail connections.
- Acquire land that is regularly subjected to flooding, remove all improvements and restore the flood area to a healthy and functional ecosystem. This means returning the floodplain to the river and creeks with the benefit of flood control and recreation access.

Developing rivers, creeks and drainage corridors will assist in answering the need for linear parks in the City. This will also provide the opportunity for the development of hike and bike trails which rated consistently as one of the most important recreation facilities to provide in the City.

Two major corridors that are recommended for preservation include the Little River and the Canadian River corridors. The Little River corridor flows along the northern portion of Norman, connecting Ruby Grant Park to Lake Thunderbird. The preservation of this greenbelt is important for flood control but also provides a significant opportunity for a linear park and major trail.



*Little River corridor*

The Canadian River is the southern bounty of Norman's city limits. Preservation of this river corridor provides the opportunity for a river park that is unique to Norman and also trails. Many neighborhood parks in

Norman are already adjacent to the Canadian River floodplain. These parks can later serve as trailheads and access points to the Canadian River park and trail.

### Lake Thunderbird

In addition to well water, Lake Thunderbird is the primary water supply for Norman. The lake and the property surrounding it are owned and controlled by the State of Oklahoma and operated as a State Park. To ensure the quality of water and the preservation of the lake, little development has been done surrounding the lake. Lake Thunderbird State Park currently offers camping, RV camping, picnicking, a marina, a nature center, few cabins and boat ramps.







### Rural Landscapes

Rural landscapes may be described as areas of natural vegetation, wind row trees established along fence lines, agricultural lands with limited cultivation and domestic animals, as well as farmsteads. Visual rural landscapes are defined by long and open vistas, typical of the Oklahoma landscape. Such landscapes may be experienced in various ways, including the use of hike and bike trails and driving along rural roads. To be effective, it requires expansive lands seen over a distance uncluttered by development, signs, and utilities. This may be achieved with winding roads, well defined views and strong controls over signs and building structure placement.

A manner in which the rural experience can be maintained without compromising development opportunities is through the protection of floodplains along creeks and rivers, and the preservation of open space by applying principles of Conservation Planning and Design. These principles cluster homes closer together, even in 10 acre sites, leaving the remaining lands in a natural state. Key corridors include Highway 9 to Little Axe, Franklin Road, Rock Creek Road, and Alameda near Lake Thunderbird. One of the most basic principles is to demand single loaded roads whereby roads serve as access to developed areas yet at the same time provide rural experiences through views on the surrounding landscapes.

### Historical/Cultural Landscapes

The Cultural Landscape Foundation defines a cultural landscape as "a geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with an historic event, activity, person, or group of people. Cultural landscapes

can range from thousands of acres of rural land to homesteads with small front yards. They can be man-made expressions of visual and spatial relationships that include grand estates, farmlands, public gardens and parks, college campuses, cemeteries, scenic highways, and industrial sites. Cultural landscapes are works of art, texts and narratives of cultures, and expressions of regional identity. They also exist in relationship to their ecological contexts." <sup>(1)</sup>

There are several places throughout Norman that have tremendous cultural value such as Andrews Park with the WPA made amphitheater and drainage channels, and the Norman & Cleveland County Historic Museum. Other city owned cultural facilities include the Sooner Theatre, Firehouse Art Center, and Santa Fe Depot. However, the recognition and preservation of individual sites and structures are not enough. It is important to ensure the protection of the landscape as a whole, which is essential to evoke the quality and essence of the history of the area. Once a site or feature is disconnected from its context, a tremendously important part of the cultural experience is lost.

Much of the surrounding area around Norman is rich in history and culture. Key features include various historic homesteads, older barn structures, agricultural and ranch lands, outbuildings, older river and creek crossing locations, and a variety of historical sites.



Older creek crossing on the Imhoff Creek

### Right-of-Ways

Utility right-of-ways are linear in nature which makes them ideal for hike and bike trails. Developing trails along utility right-of-ways and other easements should continue to be a top priority over the next ten years.

Railroad right-of-ways have two characteristics that also make them ideal for trails: its linear nature and its gentle topography change. An added aesthetic value of railroad right-of-ways is that trees along its length often provide special character and natural interest.

The City of Norman currently has a portion of the Legacy Trail project started which runs parallel to the railroad through the middle of the community. Expanding this project so that the trail continues along much of the entire length of Norman alongside the railroad is a continued priority over the next ten years.



Legacy Trail



Historical structures in Norman

<sup>(1)</sup> The Cultural Landscape Foundation. (2009). *Cultural landscapes defined*. Retrieved August 27, 2009, from Web site: <http://www.tclf.org/whatis.htm>







## Chapter 6

# Aquatics Facilities Recommendations





# Chapter 6

## Aquatics Facilities Recommendations

*"You can't put a limit on anything. The more you dream, the farther you get."*

Michael Phelps



### Introduction

Aquatic recreation is an integral part of establishing and sustaining a higher quality of life in Norman while highlighting an image and character that is unique to the City. To meet this goal, aquatic services will benefit the community as follows:

- ▶ Providing social benefits by connecting people within the community regardless of background, ability or income
- ▶ Providing economic benefits by improving the quality of life in the community and helping to attract residents and businesses to the City
- ▶ Providing benefits to individuals and the community by promoting physical fitness and teaching citizens how to swim
- ▶ Providing safe and healthy recreation by developing outdoor and indoor aquatic opportunities

Successful planning for public aquatic facilities relies on a process that includes community comment, demographic projections and appropriate goal setting. This parks and recreation master plan incorporates each of those items. This section provides survey results, focus group comments and aquatic goals identified during the report preparation.

This section also outlines options or alternatives, based on community preferences, demographics, identified goals and aquatic options that are appropriate for Norman to consider.

This comprehensive system wide master plan indicates the need to update the City's aquatic facilities. However, an additional detailed study is required to determine the precise level of improvements to be developed, the cost of those improvements, and the funding mechanisms to be used by the City.

### Existing Condition of Aquatic Facilities in Norman Today

Norman currently has one City operated outdoor swimming pool at Westwood Park and two splash pad features at Andrews Park and Colonial Estates Park. The Westwood Pool is 17,000 square feet and its existing features include:

- ▶ 50 meter pool
- ▶ Diving pool
- ▶ Plunge pool
- ▶ Wading pool
- ▶ Junior pool
- ▶ 2 water slides
- ▶ 4 diving boards
- ▶ Shade structures
- ▶ Bathhouse
- ▶ Filter building
- ▶ Deck

The existing Westwood Pool in Norman offers a typical public aquatic program. Lessons start in the morning, with the pool open to the public around mid-day. Swim team practice also occurs, but no swim meets are held at Westwood Pool.

A typical season attendance is approximately 30,000. A peak day may be 750 patrons, with an average day of 300 +/- . This is equivalent to a participation rate of a quarter of one percent. Several surrounding communities also use the pool. Citizen comments do indicate that the pool is packed or very busy on occasion.

For a community of 110,000 plus several surrounding communities, and at a more typical average participation rate of 2%, the expected potential pool attendance would be closer to 2,500 participants per day. Either the market area offers several other aquatic choices, such as small HOA operated pools, or the current pool does not offer







what the Norman residents want. Swimming is an untapped resource in Norman, and a new or renovated outdoor pool appears to have a significant potential market. An indoor pool should also be a future goal for swimming in Norman.

The Westwood site does not allow for expansion of the pool. During the summer season, Westwood Pool reaches capacity many days; however because of the size of the pool less than 1% of the population is served on an average day. For a pool to be operationally successful, the average daily use rate should be at least 3% of the population. In Table 6 - 1, the average daily use rate for Norman and other cities is compared. Norman has the lowest average daily use rate.

City	Population	Season Attendance	Avg. Daily Use Rate
Clive, IA	12,855	68,346	6.25%
Derby, KS	17,807	132,295	8.25%
Fort Dodge, IA	35,000	119,000	4.00%
Cedar Falls, IA	36,145	117,689	3.83%
Ankeny, IA	36,161	74,062	2.41%
West Des Moines, IA	46,403	136,198	3.45%
<b>Norman, OK</b>	<b>103,000</b>	<b>28,484</b>	<b>0.31%</b>

2008 season. 85 day IA pool season, 90 day season for others

The splash pads in Andrews Park and Colonial Estates Park are in excellent condition. However, as shown in the previous chapter, there is a need for two to three more splash pads in Norman. These could be stand alone features similar to the one in Andrews Park, or they could be built as a component of an aquatic center.

## Westwood Pool Evaluation

The existing Westwood Pool is nearing the end of its expected life cycle. Even with renovation of features, the pool equipment and structure needs will increase as the pool ages further. Features at Westwood Pool are as follows:

- ▶ Recirculation systems - **poor**
- ▶ Pool structure configuration - **poor**
- ▶ Pool gutters - **poor**
- ▶ Water treatment - **poor**
- ▶ Water depths - limited
- ▶ Pool features - limited
- ▶ Shade - limited
- ▶ Support buildings - fair
- ▶ Parking - fair

If the pool were rebuilt on its existing location at Westwood Park then it would be limited in the features it could offer. If a family aquatic center was constructed in another location in Norman, it could offer more features and require less operating subsidy from the City. These options will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Before considering a renovation option, the existing Westwood Pool condition needs to be evaluated. Both the physical condition and the ability of the current pool to fulfill the aquatic program needs of the community will be considered.

The initial Westwood facility was built in 1966 and included a 50 meter lap pool, a diving area, a junior pool and a wading pool. Support facilities included a bathhouse and a filter building. Two water slides and a plunge pool were added in 1993.

The pool shells are reinforced concrete with joints constructed with keyways and PVC water stop. The overall pool structures are in fairly good condition. A hammer test was conducted on the basin structures and found few areas of deterioration. Several areas of lane marker tile sounded delaminated in the deeper areas of the lap pool.

The lap pool is 164 feet-4 inches long and 75 feet-2 inches wide. The

water depths range from 3 feet at each end and along the north side to 5 feet at the middle of the south wall. These lengths and depths do not allow competitive swimming. The lanes are too long and the end wall depths are too shallow. Training and instruction can certainly take place in the current pool, with the exception of starting platform practice. Racing dives should not be allowed from any place in the lap pool.

Total pool sizes are as follows:

- ▶ Lap pool 12,352 sq ft
- ▶ Diving pool 2,454 sq ft
- ▶ Wading pool 784 sq ft
- ▶ Junior pool 1,000 sq ft
- ▶ Plunge pool 1,032 sq ft
- ▶ **Total water surface area 17,622 sq ft**

The diving area is connected to the lap pool by a concrete wall with several holes, which serve to aid overall pool water recirculation. Two one-meter and two three-meter diving boards are in use. A range of diving clearance standards exist. FINA, NCAA, US Diving and NFSHSAA are typically used for competition diving. Most state health departments recommend using these standards for public pools. A key diving board manufacturer labels their boards for use on pools with these standards. These "competitive" standards are appropriate for public pools. Consider that a competitive diver is executing an athletic maneuver, is being coached, and is familiar with the board and pool. Athletes in general have not used alcohol and are not trying to "show boat" when they dive. That same cannot be said of the typical diver who is injured. If anything, a public pool diving area should be deeper than a competitive pool.

For this evaluation, the Westwood diving clearances were compared with the above mentioned standards. In addition, the Westwood pool was compared with Oklahoma regulations. Board separation is adequate, exceeding minimum standards. Water depth at the plummet (end of the diving board) is approximately 10 feet 5 inches, but should be 11 feet-six inches minimum. The three-meter boards are even further out of compliance.

There is another pool design reference, ANSI/NSPI. This voluntary design







guide lists a shallower diving area than the competitive standards mentioned earlier. It is not recommended to use those clearances for a public pool.

It is recommended that the three-meter boards be removed. Instead the one-meter boards and diving stands should be replaced with low boards, and a shorter, stiffer board. This recommendation can be difficult to accept, particularly if no serious diving injuries have occurred, but should be implemented.

The pool gutter is concrete with periodic drains. Several of the drains appear partially plugged, thus restricting the top water recirculation. The pool paint coating is in fair condition. When repainting is scheduled, it is recommended that sandblasting be done to remove all the existing coating, followed by repairing deteriorated areas prior to repainting. The tile lane markers are in fairly good condition, except near the deeper area along the diving wall separation. Tapping the tiles gave a hollow sound, indicating separation of the tile from the concrete.

Additional safety markings are needed around the pools, as required by State regulations.

The wading pool is located in a separate fenced area and provides shallow water for toddlers. At the center of the pool is a circular concrete piece that contains play features. Fixed shade structures are in place at both ends of the lap pool. Additional shade is suggested for the comfort of the patrons.

Two water slides are in use and riders end in the separate plunge pool. Adjacent to the slide area is the water treatment and pump equipment for the slides and plunge pool. Separate water treatment facilities are provided for the water slides and the plunge pool. The filters are vertical pressure sand and the pumps are end suction centrifugal. The chemicals are calcium hypochlorite and carbon dioxide.

The main water treatment system combines water from the lap, diving, junior and wading pools. A four cell gravity sand filter system (also referred to as a rapid sand filter) treats the original facility water. The filters appear to be well maintained, with no visible signs of mud balls or short circuiting. The wash water troughs are in good condition. The tight quarters in the filter room make access for operation and maintenance

very difficult. The large gate valves require ongoing maintenance and can be challenging to operate. They are the appropriate valve type; however, they cannot be opened or closed too quickly which could upset the sand layers in the filter. Calcium hypochlorite and carbon dioxide are the key chemicals used for disinfection and pH control, respectively. A boiler exists in the filter room, but is not functional so heated pool water is not available.

Pool piping includes copper, cast iron and Transite (cement asbestos). Transite is also used as the headers in the main pool filters. Pool volume, not including the slide plunge pool, is approximately 518,000 gallons. The filter capacity at 3 gpm/sq ft is 1,222 gpm. If an 8 hour turnover is used for the lap and diving pools and a 2 hour turnover is used for the wading and junior pools, the combined recirculation rate would be 1,196 gpm.

### Aquatics Goals for Norman

Many pool related comments and suggestions were generated during the master planning process which will be discussed later in this Chapter. Significant findings include:

- ▶ Day care providers are an important pool user during the summer season. Provide features that allow their continued access to an outdoor pool.
- ▶ An indoor pool has potential partners.
- ▶ Competition features should be included with a new pool.
- ▶ Plan space with a new community center adequate for an indoor pool.
- ▶ Pool amenities for the elderly are very important.
- ▶ Features for therapy and exercise are also very important.

The goals are reasonable and feasible as part of a responsible aquatic master plan for Norman. The key focus for these goals is on serving the entire community and improving aquatic programs and opportunities in the community. The stated goals are appropriate for public pool planning.

Based on the public comments, the following list of aquatic goals for this master plan was developed.

#### Aquatics Goals

- ▶ Provide for the aquatic needs for the Norman community
- ▶ Develop aquatic facilities that enhance the quality of life in Norman
- ▶ Provide aquatic facilities that serve all age groups within the community
- ▶ Consider a renovation plan, not just repairs, for the existing pool
- ▶ Consider a second outdoor pool
- ▶ Consider an indoor pool plan as part of a future recreation center phase
- ▶ Create a new pool sized to serve the needs of the community as well as allowing use by neighboring communities
- ▶ Enhance the aquatic opportunities for elderly patrons – consider lap areas, shade features, warm water therapy and separate adult areas in the pool or on the deck
- ▶ Develop an operation plan for reduced subsidy operation
- ▶ Provide competition features in the new outdoor pool
- ▶ Do not promote an oversized “regional” pool



*Kids enjoying an aquatic center with spraygrounds and play features*







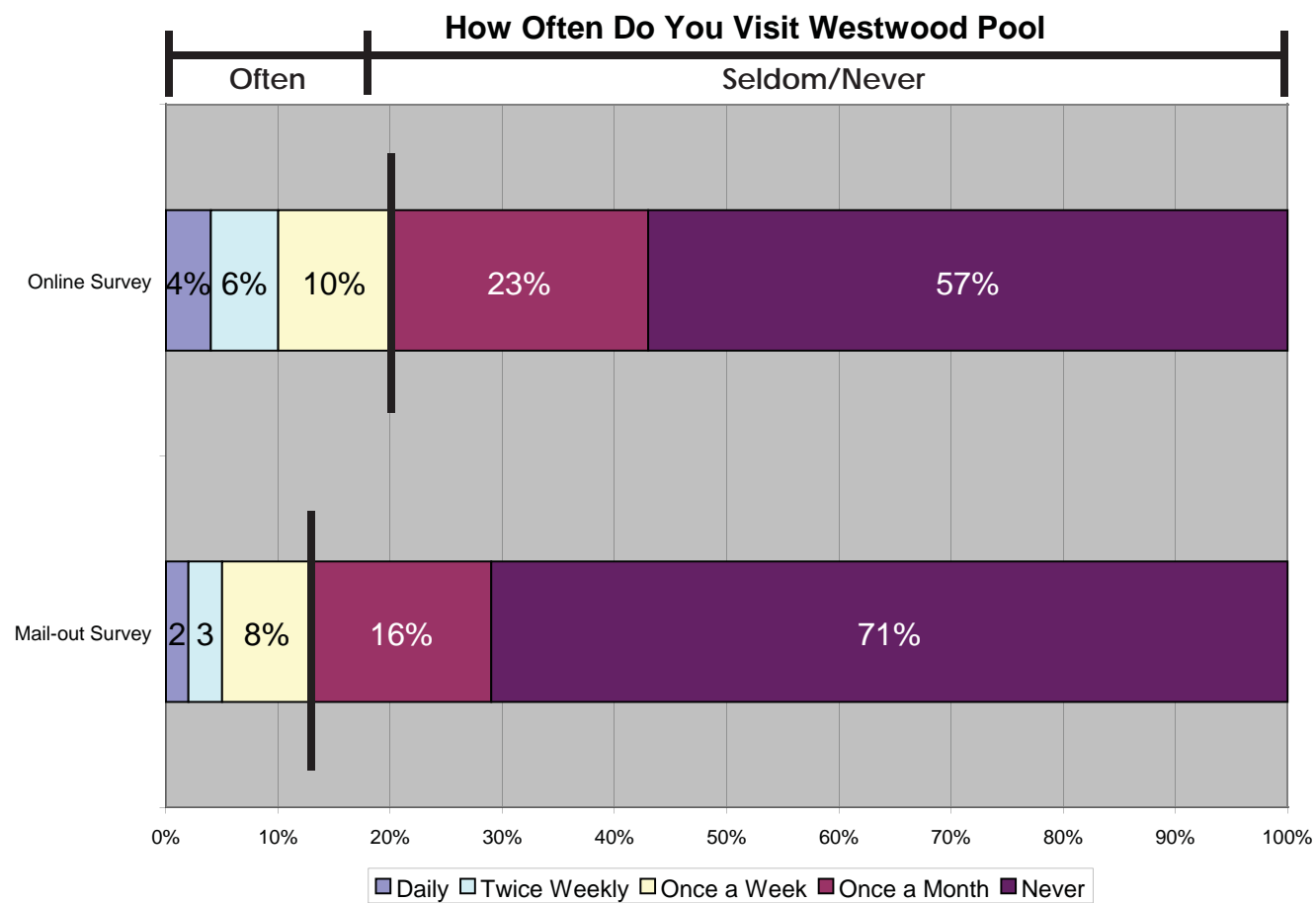
## Public Input Regarding Aquatics

During the public input process and on both surveys, several questions were about aquatics and swimming. Because the only City owned swimming pool in Norman has reached the end of its expected life cycle, aquatics in Norman is at a crucial turning point. Decisions need to be made now that will guide aquatics and swimming improvements. Public input regarding aquatics and swimming was included in this process so that City staff and elected officials know which direction to take regarding aquatics and swimming.

Key findings from the public input process regarding aquatics include:

- ▶ 53% of residents would use a new pool
- ▶ 13% of residents indicate a pool is missing in their area of Norman
- ▶ 27% of mail-out survey respondents and 34% of online survey respondents indicate they use Westwood Pool
- ▶ Swimming was listed as the number one activity by 20% of the online survey respondents and the number two activity by 40% of the mail-out survey respondents.

When the residents were asked whether or not they had visited the Westwood Pool within the past 12 months, only 25% of the mail-out survey respondents and 37% of the online survey respondents answered yes. This was later confirmed in the survey when the residents were asked how frequently they utilize the Westwood Pool during the summer season. The results to this question for both the mail-out and online surveys are shown to the right. Only 13% of the mail-out survey respondents and 20% of the online survey respondents indicated that they visit Westwood Pool once a week or more. 71% of the mail-out survey respondents and 57% of the online survey respondents indicated they never utilize the Westwood Pool during the summer season.



Existing Westwood Pool



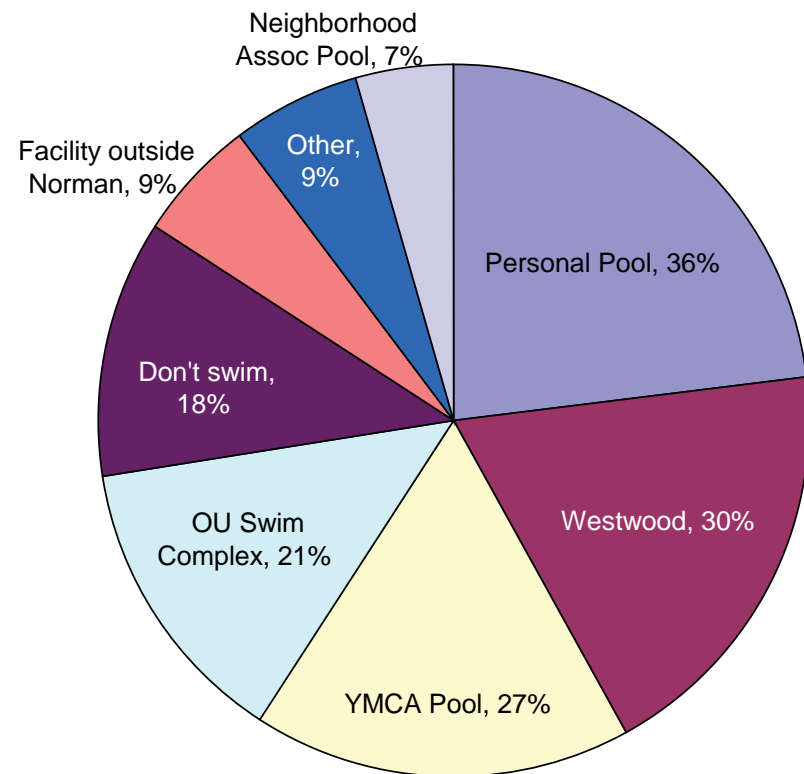




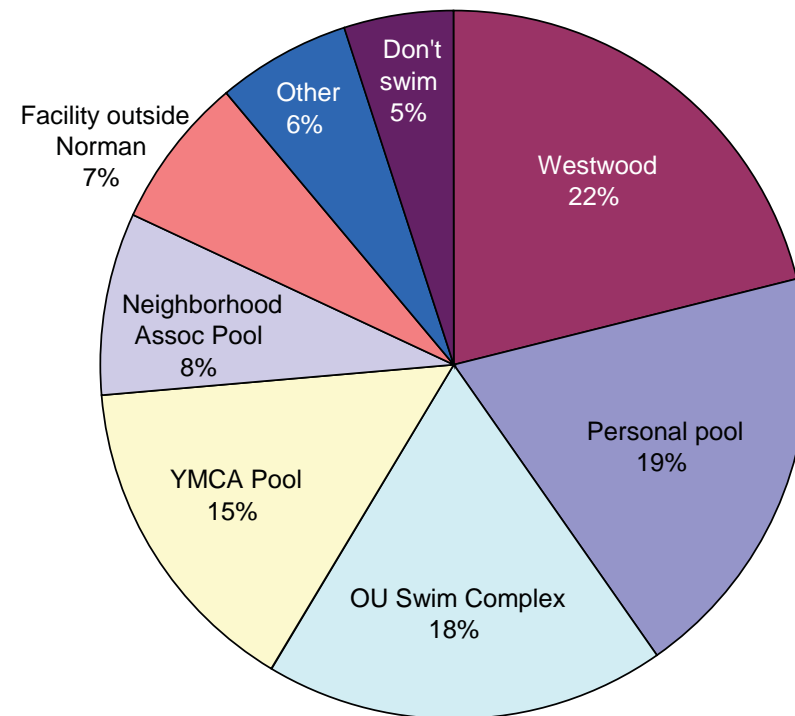
## Where Do Residents Swim

Residents were given a list of different swimming facilities in and around Norman. They were then asked to check all the facilities they utilize when they or their family want to swim or participate in aquatic activities. For the mail-out survey, the most commonly utilized facility was a personal swimming pool with a 36% response rate. The second most commonly utilized facility was Westwood Pool with a 30% response rate. These two top responses were opposite for the online survey. The number one response on the online survey was Westwood Pool with a 22% response rate. The second highest rated facility was a personal swimming pool with a 19% response rate. The OU swim complex and the YMCA indoor pool were the next two most frequently used facilities. Less than 10% of the respondents in both surveys indicated that they used facilities outside of Norman. The results are shown in the charts below.

What Facility Do You Utilize to Swim (mail-out survey)



What Facility Do You Utilize to Swim (online survey)



## Participation in Activities

### When Using a Pool

Residents were also asked what activities they usually participate in when visiting a pool. Knowing this allows the City to begin to program for future pools with all the features and amenities needed to participate in those activities.

The responses to both the mail-out and online surveys were somewhat similar. The number one activity on the mail-out survey was relaxing/sunbathing with 63% of residents indicating they normally do this activity when at a pool. This was followed by recreation for adults with a 45% response rate and then recreation for youth with a 35% response rate.

The online survey listed recreation for adults as the number one activity with a 21% response rate. This was then followed by relaxing/sunbathing with a 20% response rate; and the third highest activity was recreation for youth with a 17% response rate. The results of both surveys are shown to the right.

Swimming for fitness was a popular choice in both surveys. Competition swimming was chosen by a small number of respondents at 3% in the mail-out survey and 4% in the online survey.

### Mail-out Survey

Relax/sunbathe	63%
Recreation (adult)	45%
Recreation (youth)	35%
Fitness/lap swimming	31%
Learn to swim (youth)	22%
Water aerobics	20%
Therapeutic recreation	18%
Other	6%
Water safety/Red Cross cert.	3%
Swim team/compete	3%
Learn to swim (adult)	1%

### Online Survey

Recreation (adult)	21%
Relax/sunbathe	20%
Recreation (youth)	17%
Fitness/lap swimming	14%
Learn to swim (youth)	9%
Therapeutic recreation	6%
Water aerobics	5%
Swim team/compete	4%
Water safety/Red Cross cert.	2%
Learn to swim (adult)	1%
Other	1%

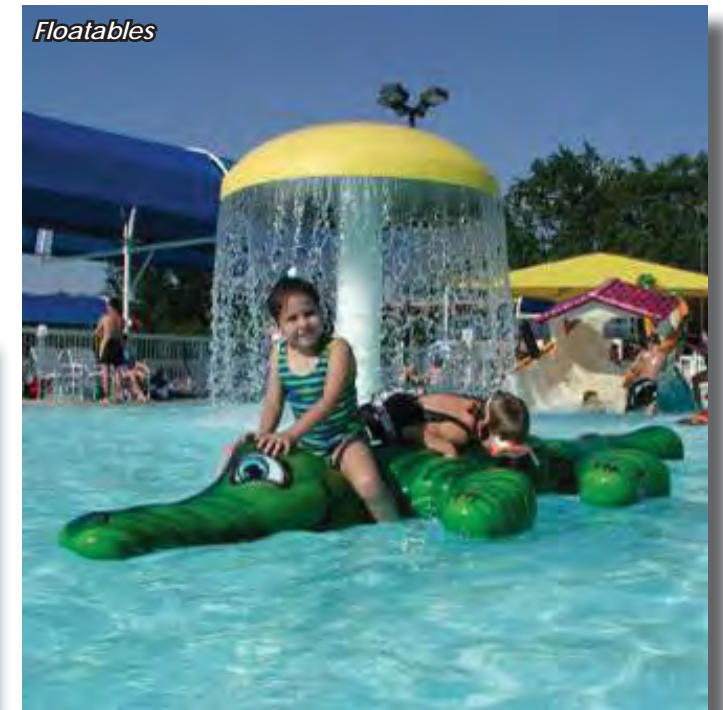
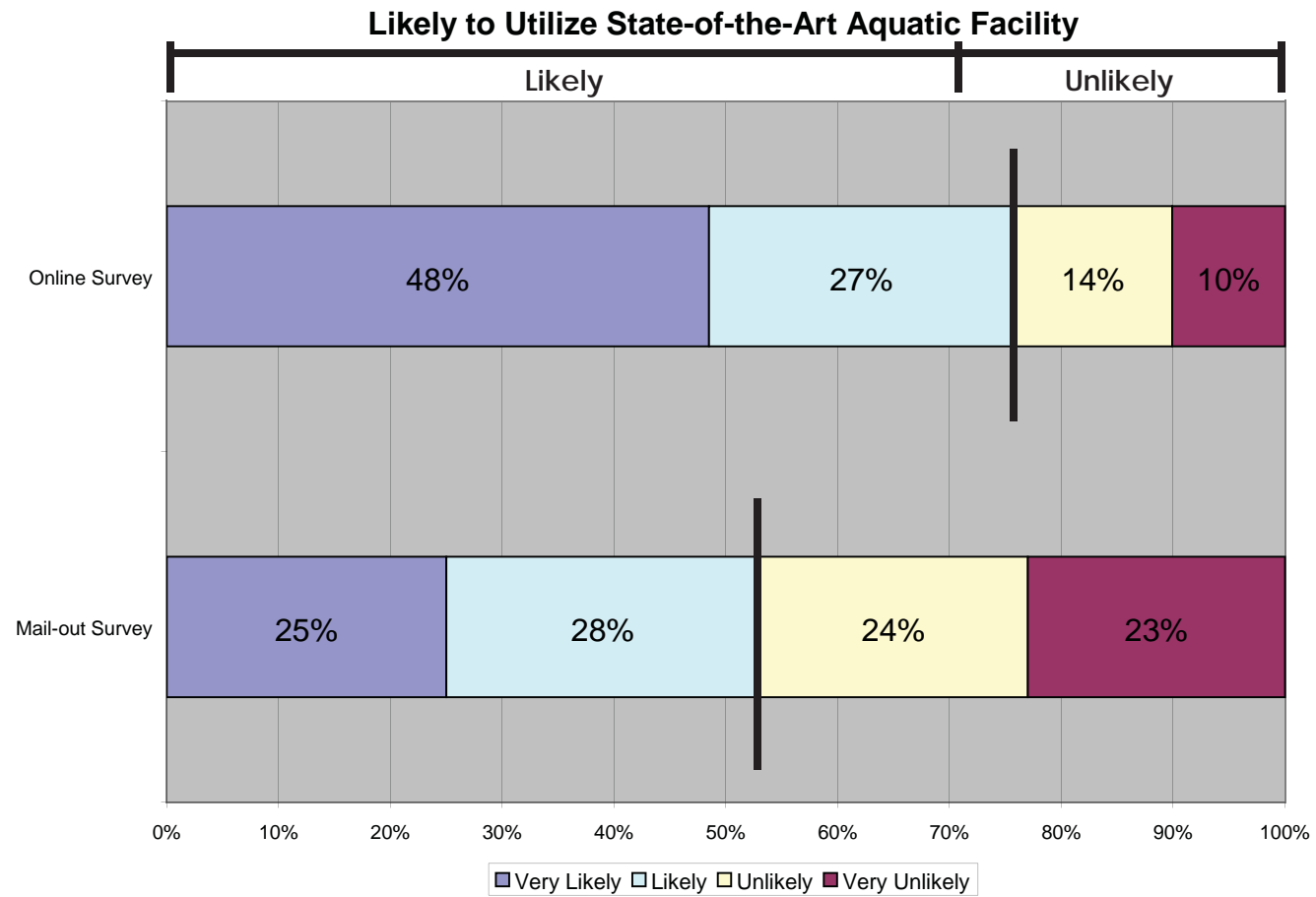






## Likely to Utilize a State-of-the-Art Aquatic Facility

Survey participants were asked how likely or unlikely they would be to use a new state-of-the-art aquatic facility if the City were to construct one. A large portion of the population for both the mail-out and online surveys indicated they would likely use the new facility. 53% of the mail-out survey respondents and 75% of the online survey respondents indicated they would be likely or very likely to utilize the new facility. This is important because it shows that there is a potentially large segment of Norman's population that is interested in aquatics that the City is not currently reaching.



*Different features that could be offered at a state-of-the-art outdoor aquatic center.*



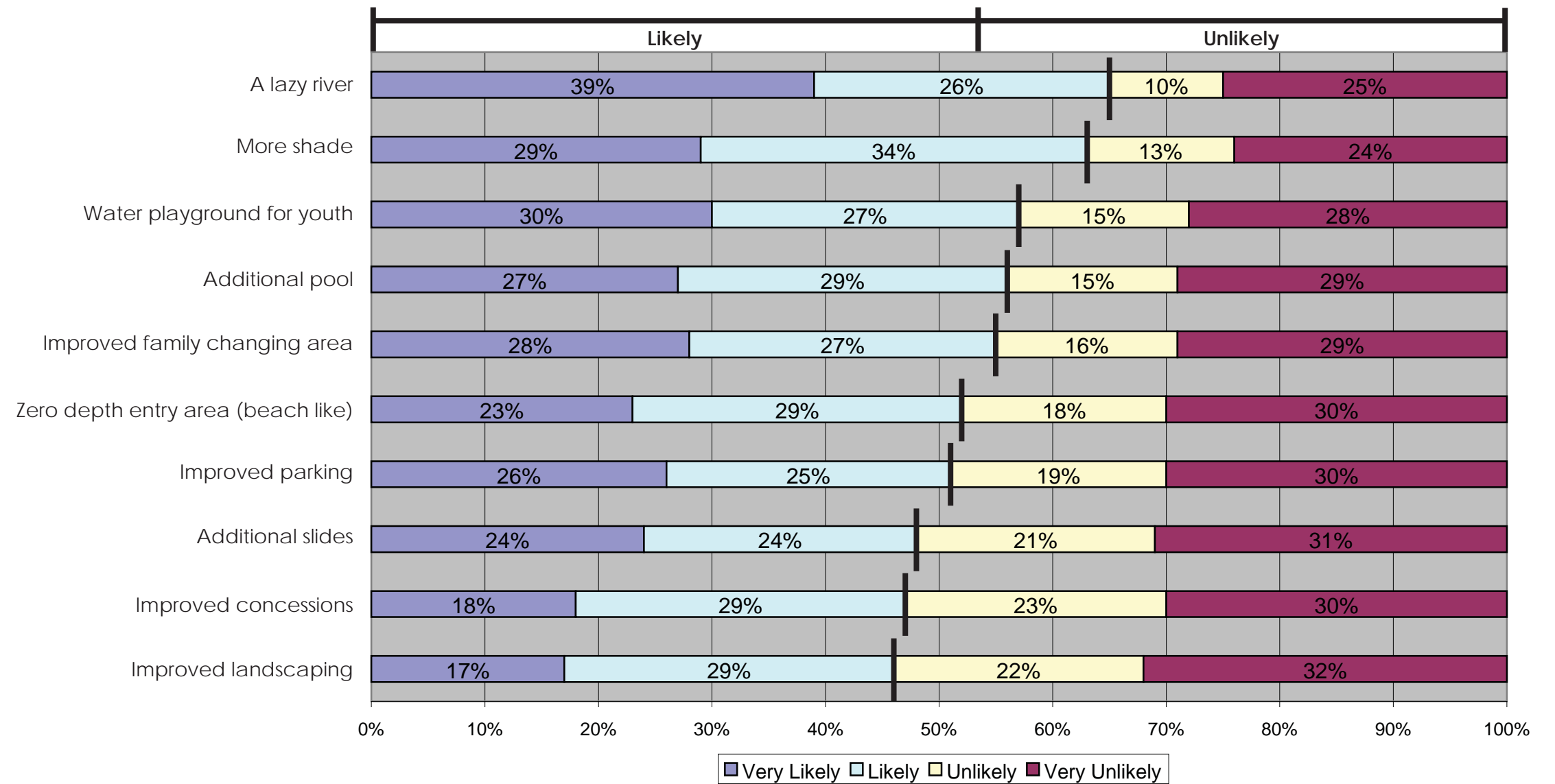




### Potential Pool Features

A state-of-the-art aquatic complex can include many different options. The residents were given a list of different potential features that could be constructed into a future aquatic center. They were then asked to check how likely or unlikely they would use the swimming pool if each of those features was added. The number one feature on the mail-out survey that would most likely increase utilization was adding a lazy river. 65% of the residents indicated they would be likely to utilize a new City swimming pool if this feature was included. The results of the mail-out survey are shown in the graph to the right.

#### Likely to Use Pool with Specific Improvements (mail-out survey)



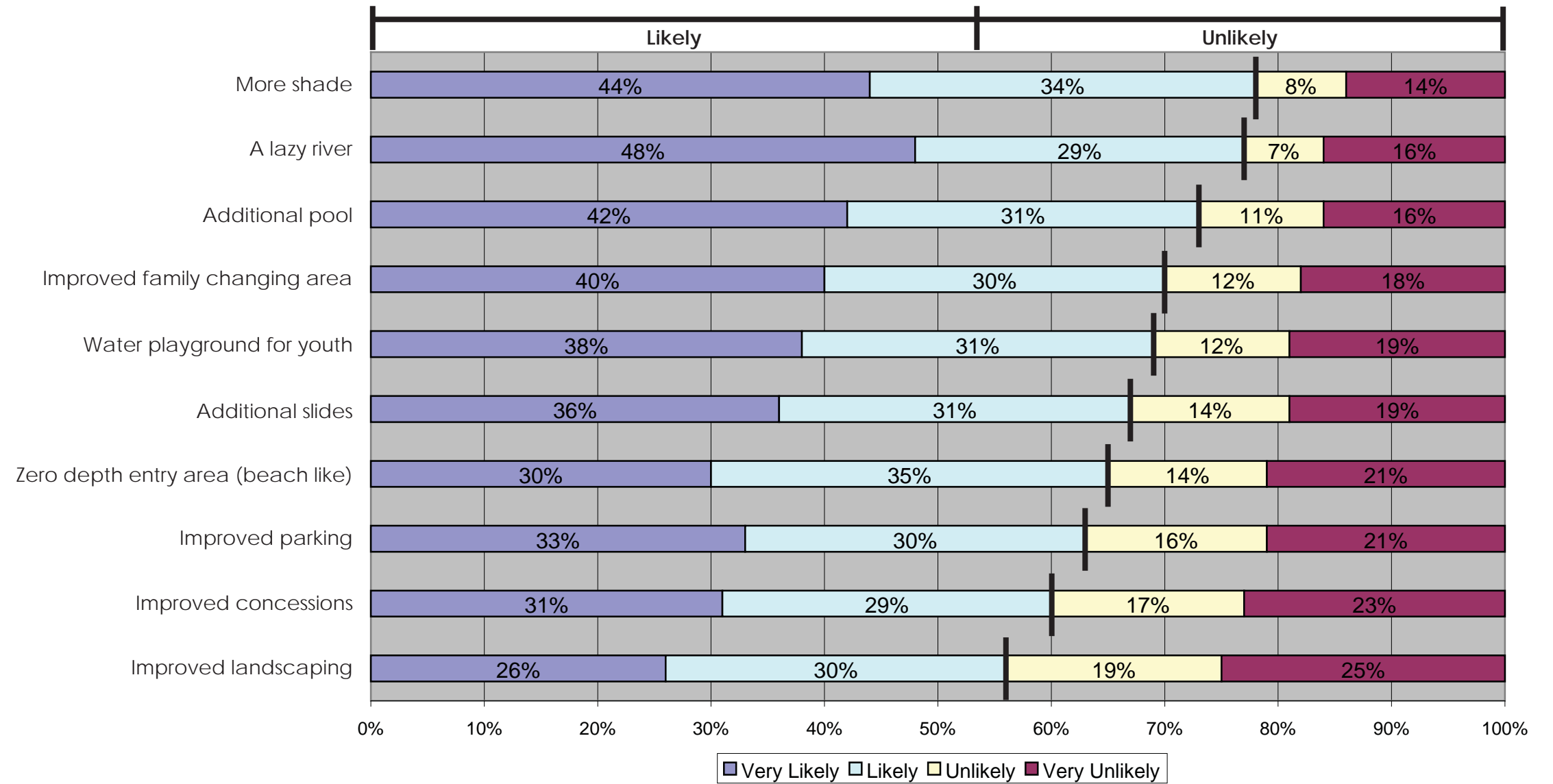




## Potential Pool Features

The same question was asked on the online survey with the same features offered. The highest rated feature on the online survey was more shade. 78% of the online survey respondents indicated they would be more likely to utilize a City owned pool if there was more shade. The second highest response was a lazy river. 77% of the online survey respondents indicated they would more likely use the pool if a lazy river was added. The results from the online survey are shown in the graph to the right.

Likely to Use Pool with Specific Improvements (online survey)



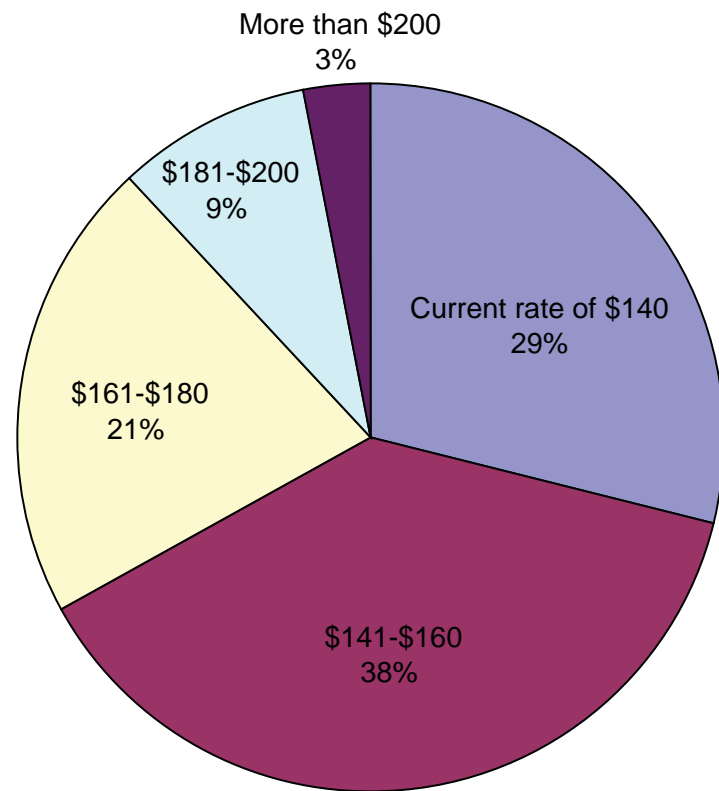




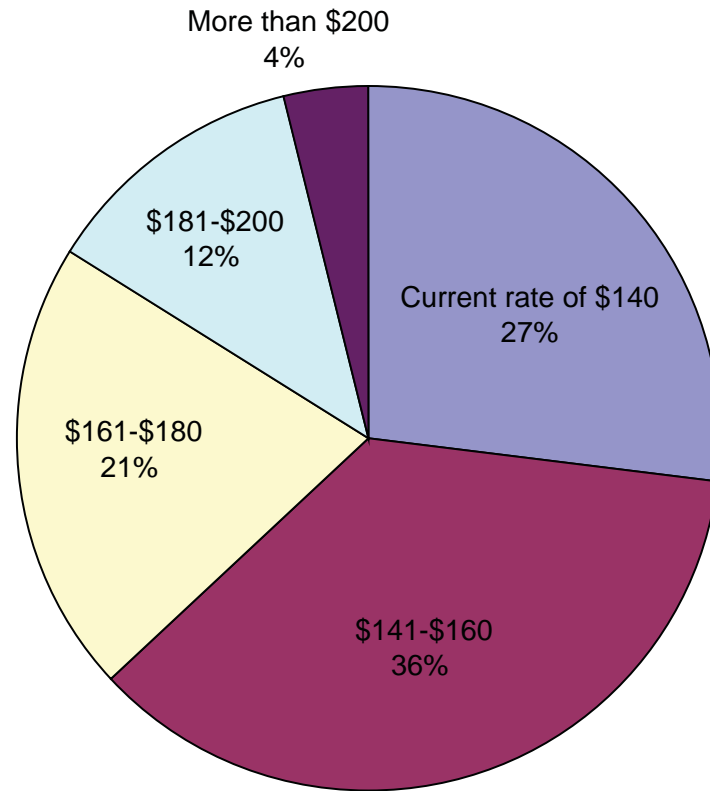
### Expected Amount to Pay for Improved State-of-the-Art Aquatic Facility

Because a new facility will be significantly higher in quality and have more features, the charge for admission may have to be higher. Survey respondents were asked what they think is a reasonable amount to pay for admission to a new aquatic complex. The current rate of a family season pass to Westwood Pool is \$140. On both the mail-out survey and the online the price range receiving the highest amount of responses was \$141 to \$160. This shows that a large portion of the population expects to pay a little more for a newer and better facility; however, the fee should not increase substantially. The results for each of the price range options and the percentage of residents expecting to pay that range are shown in the charts below.

Highest Amount You Would Expect to Pay (mail-out survey)



Highest Amount You Would Expect to Pay (online survey)



Different features that could be offered at a state-of-the-art outdoor aquatic center.



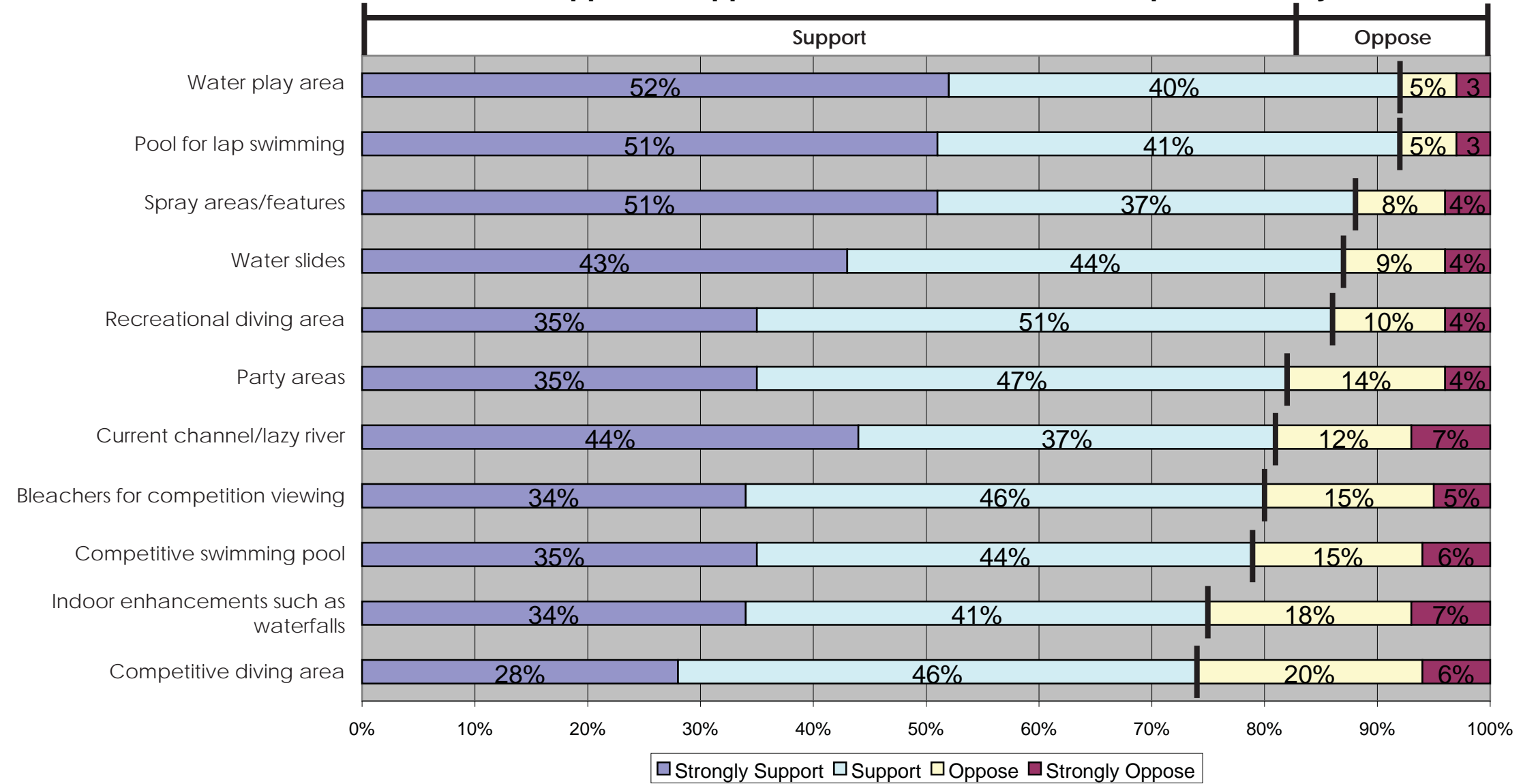




## Indoor Aquatic Facility

Residents who took the online survey were asked how strongly they would support or oppose different features being constructed as part of an indoor aquatic center. The two features that received the highest level of support were a water play area and a pool for lap swimming. For both features, 92% of the survey respondents indicated they would support or strongly support these features. A competitive swimming pool was ranked nine out of eleven features and a competitive diving area was ranked last in terms of level of support. Nonetheless, nearly two-thirds of the respondents said they would support those features. The results from this question are shown in the graph to the right.

**Support or Oppose Features for an Indoor Aquatic Facility**







## Potential Types of Aquatic Facilities in Norman

The hot summer climate in Norman makes swimming a very popular activity and an important part of the recreation picture in the City. Three ingredients should be considered as components of aquatics. These are an outdoor family aquatic center, water spray play areas, and an indoor natatorium/aquatic center.

**The outdoor family aquatic center** - Interest in pools has evolved from the traditional pool with a diving board and a shallow area for active play. To remain popular, pools today must offer features that are interesting and appealing. The aquatic center typically combines a series of spray features, large water slides, a zero depth "beach" area, and lap lanes for fitness and swim lessons. Aquatic facilities also include both outdoor and indoor rental facilities for parties and special events. High quality concession areas and changing facilities round out the typical facility.

*Outdoor aquatic center in Round Rock, TX*



*Outdoor aquatic center in Cedar Falls, IA*



*Outdoor aquatic center in Edmond, OK*



*Outdoor aquatic center in Pella, IA*



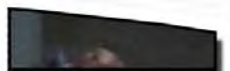
*Outdoor aquatic center in Ardmore, OK*







Different features that could be offered at a state-of-the-art aquatic center.







**Water spraygrounds or play features** - Spraygrounds typically have no water depth, and involve spray play features on a self draining surface. Since there is no water depth, lifeguards and other safety staff are typically not needed. The water play features are self starting and can be timed to operate on a 5 to 10 minute cycle. The features can be combined so that water requirements can vary from as little as 10 gallons of water per minute to over 100 gallons per minute with very large bucket dumpers. Because no staff is posted at these facilities, most cities typically do not charge admission for such centers, choosing instead to absorb the water and electrical costs. Spraygrounds are often themed to respond to local cultural themes. In some cases, water spraygrounds are also included with swimming pools as an added attraction. Spray areas typically operate on city water, or recycle water through a filtration system, which adds to the operational cost of the facility but reduces water usage. Spraygrounds vary in cost from \$350,000 to almost \$1,000,000 for sophisticated facilities with complex and decorative features.



Andrews Park splash pad



Examples of spraygrounds







Examples of indoor aquatic centers and natatoriums



**Indoor natatorium/aquatic center** - Indoor facilities are typically sold as having longer operating seasons. In colder climates, where indoor pool use is more customary, seasonal use does occur. However, many cities have also experienced the phenomenon of reduced usage during colder months, even in indoor heated facilities. Swimming for fitness continues, but recreational swimming drops off significantly. Since indoor facilities are usually more costly to build and operate, many cities in the Southwest are reconsidering the development of indoor recreation pools. However, interest is growing for an indoor aquatic complex among the residents of Norman.







## Outdoor versus Indoor Aquatic Centers

When aquatic facilities are discussed, it is common that communities turn to the possibility of an indoor facility. The indoor pool, with its allure of 'year-long' swimming and consistent temperature does have notable benefits. At the same time, a 'year-long' swim season also means a 'year-long' operation expense and this can often mean sizable subsidies.

With the benefits of all-season swimming, and the drawbacks of high operation costs, it is important that any community considering the possibility of an indoor pool take all factors into consideration. Generally, the pros and cons of indoor and outdoor facilities are listed in Table 6-2.

## Desired Pool Site Characteristics

Successful pool planning should carefully consider the character and quality of each proposed pool site. Preferred site characteristics that are considered in this report are summarized as follows:

- ▶ What is the site size (10 to 15 acres for an aquatic center)
- ▶ Is the location easy to find (for both residents and non-residents)
- ▶ What is the land cost (if necessary to be included in budget planning)
- ▶ Is the land available (planned for other development)
- ▶ How is the site configured (does shape limit project plan)
- ▶ Will expansion be possible (future aquatic feature additions)
- ▶ Are utilities available (water, sewer, 3-phase electrical, gas)
- ▶ Is access reasonable and safe (for both vehicles and pedestrians)
- ▶ Does site topography allow reasonable construction (will extensive earthwork or retaining walls be needed – another cost factor)
- ▶ Will the soils support the type of construction (historical use of site, hazardous area, and improper fill materials must be considered)
- ▶ Is drainage a limiting factor (flood plain, high groundwater, surface drainage)
- ▶ What is surrounding land use (compatible with park-like pool setting)
- ▶ Will the neighbors welcome or resist the project (traffic, light, noise concerns)
- ▶ What is the public perception regarding pool site (safe for kids, convenient access, good setting for pool, fair location to all in community)

## Options for Norman's Aquatics

There are several options for aquatic development within Norman. This portion of the report identifies and discusses a wide range of possible aquatic options. Starting with the existing pool, improvements are considered that meet the community goals. But the goals for Norman go beyond what the existing pool can provide, so several new pool alternatives are also included for consideration.

The suggested options encompass the comments from the public, along with considerations made regarding local demographics and available facilities. In a master planning document such as this, it is appropriate to look beyond traditional public pool facilities and consider improving the quality of life in the community as a whole.

The basic options developed in this report include replacing the Westwood Pool, planning a second outdoor pool, and planning a new indoor pool. Public pool projects ultimately develop as a result of public momentum and the options in this report reflect the current community expectations.

The recommendations are based on professional experience with successful public pool projects, as well as awareness of current public opinion and preference. As the Norman community continues to grow and develop, the public demand for aquatic facilities may shift slightly to emphasize more outdoor or more indoor aquatic facilities. This report provides planning information that allows future aquatic option development beyond what is specifically recommended in this report.

Several aquatic options are considered with this report. Renovation is considered. Old pools can offer surprising potential for renovation if their basin structure is in good condition. The evaluation discusses this potential in a following section of the report. Replacement will also be considered and compared with renovation. Various combinations of indoor and outdoor pools are considered in combination with community centers and in stand-alone situations. Partners are also considered, particularly for indoor pool development.

Within each of these options, there will be choices for specific features, such as number and length of swim lanes, recreation play features vs. open water,

	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Indoor Pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 12 month season</li> <li>▶ Not limited by weather</li> <li>▶ Supports a variety of programs from competition to therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Requires proactive marketing</li> <li>▶ Usually requires significant subsidy</li> <li>▶ Expenses difficult to recover as fees demand multi-use design</li> </ul>
Outdoor Pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Requires reduced subsidy compared to indoor pool</li> <li>▶ Exciting summer activity</li> <li>▶ Encourages family participation</li> <li>▶ Requires less marketing than indoor pools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Three month season</li> <li>▶ Limited by staff availability</li> <li>▶ Dependent on weather</li> </ul>







a current channel, water slides, etc. There will also be choices about the programs to offer, such as instruction, exercise, swim team, therapy or all the above. This report discusses the advantages, disadvantages and opportunities with each option and with each of the many feature and program choices.

## Aquatic Facility Options for Norman

### Option 1 – Renovate the Westwood Pool

The existing outdoor Westwood pool continues to serve the Norman community during summer months. The need to improve the aquatic features at the existing pool was identified from the public group discussions, survey responses and from an onsite pool evaluation. Overall pool use was described as strong at times, but the current pool design is focused on deep water. Enhancing the existing pool to repair deteriorated areas and to provide family features is the focus of this option.

A possible solution is to add amenities or additional features in large pool areas. These goals can be accomplished by the following actions:

- ▶ Install play and spray features
- ▶ Develop the shallow water pool with improved features
- ▶ Replace the wading pool with more appealing fun features
- ▶ Improve the bathhouse dressing rooms, concessions and ventilation
- ▶ Provide additional shade
- ▶ Provide new water treatment facilities
- ▶ Replace the gutter system
- ▶ Remove the 3 meter boards and provide drop slides
- ▶ Provide ADA access throughout the facilities
- ▶ Sandblast and recoat the pool basins
- ▶ Repair the tile lane markings

Details for accomplishing the above goals would be developed as part of work subsequent to this master plan, typically part of a concept planning phase. Construction cost to accomplish a basic repair of the Westwood pool would cost approximately \$500,000, while an enhanced renovation would cost between \$2.5 and \$3 million.

### Option 2 – Replace the Westwood Pool

Replacement of the current pool is physically possible on the site,

depending on the planned features. The site has limited available space due to existing parking, the adjacent golf course and adjacent residential area. Replicating the current pool features is certainly possible, but expanding the features and pool size will be somewhat limited because of the site.

The pool site location within Norman is reasonable and appropriate. The citizens are familiar with the pool location. Abandoning a pool site without strong reasons is typically not received well by a community. Reasoning seems to be that the residents feel that they have a pool in their area and they do not want it taken away.

Maintaining an outdoor pool at the Westwood location is recommended. The bathhouse, wading pool, junior pool, and the lap and diving pool could be replaced. The water slides and plunge pool are relatively new and should be retained. New pool facilities can be planned around the slide complex.

Concerns with expanding the Westwood Pool include its impact on the surrounding residential neighbors and the somewhat hidden location relative to the entire community. Basically, one entry from the west is the only access point. If an entry from the north could be provided, that would improve overall access. If the pool remains configured as a community pool, the site location is adequate. If the pool is replaced as a regional facility with several exciting attractions, a second entrance and more parking should be planned.

The current 50-meter pool is not suitable for swim team competition and is limited for training. One consideration is to build a new 50-meter competition pool. When the OU pool becomes unavailable to the swim team, this would give them a pool for summer use. The 50-meter pool should be configured to support lessons, exercise, open play and diving. Another consideration is to include the diving area within the 50-meter area. This would eliminate the separate diving pool and free up space on site, perhaps for a lazy river that surrounds the slide complex.

If the new pool option is chosen, its size and features should satisfy the community goals identified by the surveys and by public meetings. An overall aquatic plan should be determined first. If a second outdoor pool is planned, then a smaller Westwood pool may be appropriate.

If the Westwood pool will be the only outdoor pool, it is recommended that the new pool size should have 20,000 to 25,000 square feet of water surface area. It should be a full featured public aquatic center, with features and programs for all ages and abilities. If a 50-meter pool is desired, then the larger water area may be needed. A short course pool would allow the smaller targeted pool size.

A budget range of \$10 to \$12 million should be considered. Operating cost recovery potential is 75% to 95%, depending on the summer weather and the features provided. A regional pool concept would offer greater operating cost recovery than a community pool with smaller, less exciting features. If a second outdoor pool, in addition to the Westwood pool is developed, then the Westwood pool could be reduced in size to 15,000 to 18,000 square feet. A budget of \$7.5 to \$10 million should be considered.

### Option 3 – Build a Second Outdoor Pool

Developing a second outdoor pool in Norman is an appropriate option to consider. A community the size of Norman would typically have multiple outdoor pools and at least one indoor pool. The YMCA may be fulfilling a good part of the indoor aquatic demand, but the single outdoor pool is under serving the community.

A new outdoor pool should provide an aquatic center that would encompass many of the features mentioned in public group discussions. This second outdoor pool would not only serve the citizen's of Norman, but would most likely appeal to neighboring communities as well. The aquatic features should be selected to ensure patrons of all ages have something to do at the pool. Beyond the zero-depth entry and lap lanes that are expected in most aquatic centers, this facility should also consider a lazy river and a water slide complex.

Site selection of a second pool in Norman will be judged very important by the citizens. The location should be central and easily accessible to all residents of Norman. A specific site location is beyond this Master Plan, but the recommended site characteristics include City owned property, 8 to 10 acres in size, safe, reasonable access, moderate topography, non-flood plain, and well placed to serve all areas of Norman.

A second pool size of 15,000 to 18,000 square feet of water with a full







and balanced set of aquatic features is recommended. A budget planning range of \$7.5 to \$10 million should be considered. Operating cost recovery potential is 75% to 95%, depending on the summer weather and the features provided.

**Option 4 – Expand the YMCA Pool**

The Cleveland County YMCA includes a 10 lane indoor pool that appears to be in good condition. It is well used by the community. The potential for partnering with the YMCA should be pursued to see if indoor community aquatics center could developed further. Addition of a shallow water pool and perhaps a therapy pool are recommended considerations. It is not recommended to build another YMCA based on conversations with the current YMCA director and with a citizens study group.

Discussion with the YMCA is the first step. An operating agreement with the City would be needed. The YMCA could offer aquatic passes and program fees specific to the pool facilities. Perhaps an outpatient therapy program with the Hospital could also be arranged. As a minimum, warm water therapy facilities could be provided allowing ongoing therapy exercise.

Construction of the new pool facilities could take place with minimal disruption of the current pool use. Separate water treatment equipment for the existing pool and for any new pools will allow maintaining different water temperatures, perfect for a community indoor aquatic center.

For planning purposes, consider adding 4,000 square feet of shallow water in a building enclosure of 10,000 square feet. A project cost of \$3 million should be planned.

**Option 5 – Add Indoor Pool to Existing 12th Avenue Recreation Center**

Indoor pools can work well alongside a community center. Adding a pool to an existing community center can be beneficial. The community center must be well-located and must have adequate space for expansion. The community center should have a variety of programs that are popular with patrons, only missing the aquatic portion. A small, poorly configured community center can benefit from a pool addition. The pool will marginally benefit from a weak community center.

Indoor pools are notorious for losing money. Without the benefit of a full program community center, the pool will recover even fewer operating costs. This is not a viable option for Norman at this time.

**Option 6 – Stand-Alone Indoor Pool**

A stand-alone indoor pool would have the worst cost recovery potential of all the possible options for Norman. The common belief is that an indoor pool has the potential to operate at a profit compared with an outdoor pool. The opposite is actually true. Although an outdoor pool only operates for a three month season, it has no expenses for the remaining nine months. An indoor pool operates 12 months per year, but nearly all struggle to cover their expenses.

The best operation plan is to combine an indoor pool with a new recreation center and use memberships and program fees for income sources. Several partners will further help the overall operation. It is not recommended that Norman pursue a stand-alone indoor pool now or in the future. The discussion for this option is comparable to that for Option 5. An indoor pool without the benefit of a strong community center will not be viable from an operation point of view.

**Option 7 – Indoor Pool with a New Community Center**

Planning information for this option is offered as information for the City's consideration. Including partners to help build or to help operate an indoor pool is strongly recommended. An 80,000 square foot combined recreation facility and indoor pool would cost over \$16 million. Although the cost to build such a facility is significant, the operating cost over 25 years may actually exceed the capital cost.

**Option 8 – An Indoor Pool and Outdoor Pool at the Same Site**

An indoor pool with an adjacent small outdoor pool is an option that communities may consider, particularly if they already have an outdoor pool at another site. The primary identified community need is for more outdoor water. An indoor pool is recommended for consideration as a future phase as part of a recreation center. A 30,000 square foot indoor pool facility could cost over \$9 million. Thoughtful planning would be needed along with strategic funding efforts. Adding an outdoor pool to an indoor pool will not enhance the indoor portion enough to avoid the need for significant operating subsidy.

A small indoor pool in combination with a large outdoor pool would be more feasible relative to minimizing the operating subsidy. A small therapy pool is a consideration that some communities pursue. While this option would be more operationally cost effective, it would not satisfy the community goals, particularly for a competition pool.

An indoor pool and a new outdoor pool at the Westwood pool site is not feasible due to limited space. The ideal plan for efficient operation would be to build a new community center with an indoor aquatic center and an adjacent outdoor pool. This could require a 15 to 20 acre site and cost \$20 million or more.

**Option 9 – Additional Spray Grounds**

The following information is offered as background for future consideration. Norman has two spraygrounds or splash pads. The first need in Norman is for an updated outdoor aquatic facility. A second outdoor pool or an indoor pool/community center may be the next priority.

As Norman continues to grow, travel time to an outdoor pool increases for the citizens. An option used successfully in other communities is to build several smaller spraygrounds or splash pads within the community. This would provide free access for anyone in the city and easier access for those without the means to travel to the main pools. It would also allow convenient access to young families with small children.

Future spraygrounds are best planned for major parks since large amount of parking is required. Each spray ground should have several water spray features, a filtration and chemical treatment system, shade structures and nearby restrooms. A planning budget amount for a sprayground is \$300,000 to \$600,000. Considered sites should be distributed throughout the City to reasonably complement the existing outdoor pool and any proposed second pool.

**Option 10 – 50 Meter Pool Competition Pool**

The ultimate indoor competition pool is a 50-meter pool. A 75-foot wide pool with a moveable bulkhead would be the most flexible, providing 10 long course lanes and allowing short course practice and competition. Diving can be overlapped with the swim lanes or provided as a separate area.







Seating is a critical design consideration for swim meets. The meet size must be considered to adequately plan seating. For a high school league meet, 300 to 400 seats is typical. For a high school state meet, 1,500 to 2,000 seats may be needed. USA Swimming meets can also vary greatly in number of participants, requiring 500 to 2,000 seats depending on the specific meet and the planned participation. Support space for judges, coaches, media, timing equipment, video equipment, and teams should not be overlooked. Appropriate space is mandatory for being selected for a large swim meet. Competition to host a meet is usually spirited and often is based on available seating and support space.

A 50-meter pool facility could demand a building size of more than 40,000 square feet, including pool, seating, filter room, pool deck, and space for dressing rooms, storage, entry area and other support spaces. At current cost conditions, the construction cost for this facility could easily approach \$10 to \$12 million. Operating costs for a 50-meter pool and for the building enclosure could range from \$50 to \$75 per square foot of pool per year. For a 13,000 square foot pool, this is equivalent to \$650,000 to nearly \$1 million per year.

Indoor pool operating costs vary widely based on programs, staffing levels, wages, utilities, etc. Facilities that operate with minimal staff and limited programs will have operating costs less than stated. Indoor 50-meter pools with a full range of programs, extended hours of operation and high staff costs, may experience expenses equal to or greater than stated.

The challenge with any indoor pool, but especially a competition pool is to offer programs that appeal to the full community. More importantly, programs must be offered that the community is willing to pay for and can afford. A warm water, shallow recreation pool is easier to program and market than a cool water, deep competition pool. This is not to say that a large competition pool would not be used well by the community, but more subsidies and more potential partners will be required.

Competitive swim teams are passionate advocates for competition pools. They invest significant time and money to train, travel and compete. An indoor pool, especially a 50-meter pool, would certainly benefit their teams. Currently, access to indoor swimming is limited and in great demand. The coaches, swimmers and parents in Norman

expend time and money with limited facility access and continue to be successful. Teams hope to encourage support for an indoor pool by listing all the training time they will use and by describing all the out of town people who will attend the swim meets. They imply that this means income for the facility, which it does. The challenge is with the hourly fee a team is willing to pay for training and the event fee the team is willing to pay to the City for a swim meet. Based on actual hourly operating costs, the pool use fee could be as much as \$10 to \$15 per hour per lane. An event rental fee could range from \$1,500 to over \$2,000. Pool facilities vary in their approach to determining actual fees for swim teams.

Those who attend a swim meet may purchase food and fuel. They may use a hotel or even shop in the area. Income to the community will be increased for each swim meet, but direct income to the City through sales tax is much less significant. Swim meets are a major funding source for swim teams. They also benefit the community, but are not a significant income source for the facility owner, in this case, the City.

The harsh reality is that competitive indoor pools must be justified in each community by rationale other than economics. There are many desirable community programs that a 50-meter pool can provide. The large pool facility can be a key component of identity and the quality of life for a community. Operating subsidy will be a reality. Before choosing to build a 50-meter indoor pool, your community must be aware of the economic challenges as well as the overall benefits.

At this time, it is not recommended that the City should plan for an indoor 50-meter pool in Norman. The expressed preferences by the community point to an improved outdoor pool as the first priority. Planning for an indoor pool facility in Norman is appropriate as a second phase goal, particularly if partners, such as a school, YMCA, or hospital would participate.

**Option 11 – Continue to Use OU Pools**

The University of Oklahoma (OU) maintains an indoor pool and an outdoor pool. The Norman swim teams use the OU indoor pool for training and for swim meets. The indoor pool is scheduled for replacement, potentially leaving the Norman teams with reduced access to water. They could use the YMCA pool occasionally or they could travel farther to another indoor pool. Other area swim teams will also be affected by an OU

pool closure, so the competition for indoor pool time will increase. This means more cost and more travel time for reduced water time. Long term reliance on the OU pool facilities by the Norman swim teams is not feasible. A new indoor pool in conjunction with a new community center is the recommended planning approach.

**Option 12 – Partner with the Schools**

It is recommended that the City partner with as many entities as possible to help reduce operating subsidies for any indoor option that is planned. A potential partner that should be considered is the school system, particularly for swimming instruction and for competition swimming or diving. Norman Public Schools has expressed an interest in partnering with other entities to help build this type of facility, but would not want to operate it. Another partnering option is for the school district to pay an annual operation or use fee to the City, allowing their staff and students to use the pool at specific times for certain programs. This arrangement works in other communities and benefits the City and their partners.

Building an indoor pool is a significant project; but maintaining the building and pool is also a challenge. Paying for the operating shortfall is the key consideration. Over a 20 year period, the pool operating costs typically exceed the construction cost, so there is a value in partnerships.

**Option 13 – Partner with the Hospital**

As with the school district, partnering with the local hospital is another potential opportunity for the City to consider. The local hospital has a therapy program and a small therapy pool. It is recommended to approach the hospital when indoor planning for the City becomes more imminent. The hospital may currently be comfortable with the therapy programs and support equipment. As the population ages, an expanded therapy capacity may be needed.

With any community indoor pool, interest in a therapy pool is becoming more common. Whether the therapy pool would be suitable for large exercise classes or aimed at single patients, it would be a valued community service. It would also be another income source that could help the operating bottom line.







## Recommendations for Aquatics in Norman

### #1 - Replace/Renovate Westwood Pool

The following pages describe the recommendations for aquatic facilities in Norman. Options 1, 2, 3, 7 and 9 as shown on the previous pages are recommended as the key aquatic priorities of the City.

The number one aquatic need in Norman is to replace Westwood Pool with a new family aquatic center. The existing Westwood Pool is dated and because of the size and lack of amenities it cannot serve as a larger regional draw. The planning, design, and construction of the replacement aquatic center will require two to three years. As previously shown in this chapter, features that need to be part of the new facility include a lazy river, plenty of shade, zero depth "beach" entry, slides, spray features, lap lanes, and a pool for fitness and swim lessons. It is not uncommon for an aquatic center such as the one described here to be built in phases.

The estimated cost for the construction of a new aquatic center is \$6 million to \$12 million. This can be funded by a combination of sales tax revenue, certificates of obligation, revenue bonds, naming rights, sponsorships, or potential grant funds. The potential timeframe is recommended from 2010 to 2014. There are three distinct scenarios the City of Norman should consider when locating the new aquatic center. These are discussed below.

#### Scenario A - Develop at Westwood Park

This scenario means that the new aquatic center will be on the same location as the current Westwood Pool. The new center will literally be replacing the existing pool.

Benefits of this scenario:

- ▶ Known location, residents are familiar with driving to Westwood Park to go swimming.
- ▶ Close proximity to freeway for regional access, which can bring in more people than just Norman residents.
- ▶ Central location in the City, all residents can equally access the location.

Disadvantages of this scenario:

- ▶ Limited space for major aquatic center without displacing other facilities. The current site of Westwood Pool is not large enough to allow for a major aquatic center. Without shifting the golf course or parking lot, which both are unlikely, a smaller aquatic center is the only facility that can be placed there. This will greatly reduce the number of features that can be constructed.
- ▶ Limited room for expansion. Again the current site of Westwood Pool is not large enough to expand the new aquatic center so no additional phases can be built. Again, only a smaller aquatic center can fit on this site.

#### Scenario B - Develop at Ruby Grant Park

In this scenario, the new aquatic center will be built at the currently undeveloped Ruby Grant Park. The existing Westwood Pool will then be decommissioned and closed.

Benefits of this scenario:

- ▶ Adequate space for facility and expansion. Because Ruby Grant Park is currently undeveloped, adequate space can be given to constructing an aquatic center with plans to expand that facility in the future.
- ▶ The current Master Plan for Ruby Grant Park provides for an aquatic facility but it would require adjustment to incorporate this size of facility.
- ▶ Freeway access and visibility could make the facility a regional draw. Because it will be located immediately off I-35, it will be easily accessible and draw people from the surrounding cities.

Disadvantages of this scenario:

- ▶ Distant from the east and south sectors of Norman. Although I-35 is accessible to all residents of Norman, this scenario will mean that the aquatic center is further from Norman residents who live in the south or east when compared to a central location such as Westwood.

#### Scenario C - Acquire Land in a Central Location

This scenario recommends that the City purchase land in a central location specifically for the development of a large aquatic center. In order to construct the large facility a minimum of 10 to 12 acres are needed.

Benefits of this scenario:

- ▶ Because the City can choose the land to purchase, the location is more likely to be central and easily accessible to all residents of Norman.
- ▶ A site can be purchased large enough to allow for future expansion or possibly for an indoor facility addition as a future component.
- ▶ If built near the existing YMCA, the large aquatic center could potentially be developed as a joint partnership.

Disadvantages of this scenario:

- ▶ Purchasing 10 to 20 acres of land in a central location will be a substantial additional cost.







## #2 - Plan for and Develop an Indoor Aquatic Facility

Although an indoor aquatic facility was not ranked high on the public input surveys, there is a need for an indoor facility. Norman has two high school swim teams and one private, competitive swimming organization that currently use the University of Oklahoma indoor swimming complex for meets and practice. The University has plans to build a new swimming complex and the new facility will then only be available to OU students, OU faculty, Norman swim teams, and OU staff. When that time comes, the private swim teams may not have a readily available practice facility. An indoor aquatic center will also provide significant fitness and therapeutic opportunities for all residents of Norman.

The construction of an indoor aquatic center will approximately cost \$5 million to \$10 million. It can be funded with a combination of sales tax revenue, certificates of obligation, revenue bonds, naming rights, sponsorships, or grant opportunities. The potential timeframe for this facility is 2013 to 2016. As with the outdoor aquatic center, there are different scenarios the City should consider.



### Scenario A - Develop Next to New Indoor Recreation Center

A free standing natatorium is inefficient and loses draw after a short time. For an indoor aquatic center to be successful, it needs to be adjacent to another recreation facility. In this scenario it is proposed that the indoor aquatic center be constructed as a component of the recommended new indoor recreation/fitness center.

Benefits of this scenario:

- ▶ Allows for more efficient operations. The two facilities can share changing/locker room facilities and parking. Also, City staff can be consolidated into one facility.

Disadvantages of this scenario:

- ▶ Possibility of land having to be purchased to allow for the development of an indoor recreation center and aquatic center.

### Scenario B - Develop as Expansion of Existing YMCA Aquatics or as Part of New Satellite YMCA Facility

Scenario B recommends entering into a partnership with the YMCA to either expand their current indoor pool or construct an indoor pool at a second satellite facility. If a partnership was agreed upon, all residents of Norman would be allowed to use the indoor pool for a fee regardless of whether or not they had a YMCA membership. The indoor pool would have a separate fee structure that would allow access to only the pool and not the remainder of the facility.

Benefits of this scenario:

- ▶ Allows for sharing of operational costs and more efficient programming. YMCA staff has the capability and knowledge to efficiently operate and program an indoor aquatic center.

Disadvantages of this scenario:

- ▶ May result in higher user fees by the YMCA so they can recoup operational costs. Because the YMCA is not subsidized and needs to recover their operational costs, they might charge a higher fee to use the indoor aquatic center than if the City owned and operated it.

