



## **5-YEAR MASTER PLAN 2022-2026**

**A Comprehensive Master Plan created by the  
Bluffton Parks & Recreation Board and Department**

**Prepared by:**  
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Superintendent

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# BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT

## 5-Year Master Plan

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

The Bluffton Parks Department has prepared the following 5-Year Masterplan with input gathered from our community through public surveys, meetings, and discussions with the park board and staff to determine which recreational facilities and programs are needed. This planning format was designed to ensure that we have the input necessary to develop a technically sound plan rooted in the community's needs and implementable.

Our mission statement reads as follows, "The Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department, in partnership with the community, is committed to providing family-oriented facilities, parks, and programs that enhance the quality of life for our citizens." We recognize that our parks are vital to the quality of life in our community by offering opportunities to be physically active, providing play areas critical for child development, and maintaining green space. Our programs are designed with social connections in mind, and we play an essential role in our city's growing economic development.

This plan aims to provide a framework that will influence and guide the development of the existing and future parks/events within the City of Bluffton. The plan will assist in decision-making policymaking and evaluate the growth and status of the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department over the next five years. However, the recommendations in this plan should be viewed as a guideline and not as a specific course of action so that we can maintain flexibility as needs change.

The Bluffton Parks & Recreation Department oversees the park and recreation facilities within the city limits of Bluffton, consisting of Harrison and Lancaster Townships in Wells County. Bluffton is centrally located within Harrison and Lancaster Townships. The city currently comprises approximately one-fourth of the land area of these two townships.

The information was compiled from the community, park board members, park staff and was authored by Park Superintendent Brandy Fiechter. The vision for the future is to develop, operate, and maintain parks that enrich the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Brandy Fiechter, Superintendent  
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128 E Market St.  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
[parks@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:parks@blufftonindiana.gov)  
(260) 824-6069  
Date of Completed Plan: Sept 30, 2021

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### 1.1 BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Bluffton established a Park and Recreation Board initially in 1945 and then changed to a Department of Parks & Recreation in 1965. The board was established under the State Statute termed Indiana Park and Recreation Law (Indiana Code 36-10-3), initially passed in 1955 and amended several times. The primary purpose is to determine the policy and procedures for the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department. The board consists of four members, serving four-year terms. The Park Board meets on the first Thursday of every month at 6:30 pm in the Bluffton City Hall building on the first floor. The current park board members are:

John Gerber, President  
1028 Riverview Drive  
Bluffton, Indiana 46714  
[john.gerber@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:john.gerber@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Political Affiliation: Democrat  
Term: 2018-2021

Susan Campbell, Vice President  
1420 Deerbrook Ct  
Bluffton, Indiana 46714  
[susan.campbell@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:susan.campbell@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Political Affiliation: Republican  
Term: 2021- 2024

Christine Zadylak, Secretary  
129 Briarcrest Place  
Bluffton, Indiana 46714  
[christine.zadylak@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:christine.zadylak@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Political Affiliation: Democrat  
Term: 2019-2022

Rick McEvoy, Treasurer  
510 E. South Street  
Bluffton, Indiana 46714  
[rick.mcevoy@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:rick.mcevoy@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Political Affiliation: Republican  
Term: 2020- 2023

### 1.2 BLUFFTON PARKS AND RECREATION FULL TIME STAFF

Brandy Fiechter, Superintendent  
521 W South St.  
Bluffton, Indiana 46714  
[parks@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:parks@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Hired: February 2002  
Appointed Superintendent - 2020

Karla Fritts, Assistant Superintendent  
4157 E 800 N  
Ossian, Indiana 46777  
[events@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:events@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Hired: March 2021

Randy Peeper, Maintenance Supervisor  
1001 Elm Drive  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
[Randy.peeper@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:Randy.peeper@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Hired: May 2016

Alex Penrod, Assistant Maintenance Coordinator  
1015 Farmington Dr  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
[Alex.penrod@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:Alex.penrod@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Hired: October 2016

Jonah Baumgartner, Maintenance  
630 Elm Drive  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
[Jonah.baumgartner@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:Jonah.baumgartner@blufftonindiana.gov)  
Hired: June 2021

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In addition to these five full-time employees, the Bluffton Parks Department employs the following number of Part-time Year-round / Seasonal Employees.

**Part-time year-round employees**

1 Sports Coordinator  
1 Custodian  
2 Rock Steady Boxing Coaches

**Seasonal Employees**

5 Maintenance/Mowers  
16 Lifeguards/ Pool Manager/ Pool Maintenance  
14 Concessions/ Concession Manager  
1 Open Gym Supervisor  
2- 4 Tennis/ Sports Instructors

**1.3 BLUFFTON PARK DEPARTMENT OFFICE**

The Bluffton Parks Department office is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall, 128 E Market St, Bluffton, IN 46714.

Office hours are 8 am – 5 pm Monday- Friday.

Phone: 260 824-6069

E-Mail: [parks@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:parks@blufftonindiana.gov)

Website: [www.blufftonindiana.gov](http://www.blufftonindiana.gov)

Facebook: Bluffton Parks

Twitter: @ Bluffton Parks

Instagram: Bluffton Parks

**1.4 CITY OF BLUFFTON ELECTED OFFICIALS**

John Whicker, Mayor

510 Channing Way

Bluffton, IN 46714

260-820-2399

[John.whicker@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:John.whicker@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Roger Thornton, City Council District 1

1335 Hollendale Dr.

Bluffton, IN 46714

574-527-8498

[roger.thornton@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:roger.thornton@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Josh Hunt, City Council District 2

734 N. Main St.

Bluffton, IN 46714

260-417-1024

[Josh.hunt@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:Josh.hunt@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Janella Stronczek, City Council District 3

802 S. Main St.

Bluffton, IN 46714

260-273-1539

[janella.stronczek@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:janella.stronczek@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Scott Mentzer, City Council District 4

628 E. South St.

Bluffton, IN 46714

260-615-1566

[Scott.mentzer@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:Scott.mentzer@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Rick Elwell, City Council At-Large

704 W. Dustman Rd.

Bluffton, IN 46714

260-827-8216

[rick.elwell@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:rick.elwell@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Tami Runyon, Clerk Treasurer

127 E. Wiley Ave.

Bluffton, IN 46714

260 824-0612

[tami@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:tami@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

Robert Bate, City Judge

1622 N. Sutton Circle

Bluffton, IN 46714

260-824-1759 / 824-3392

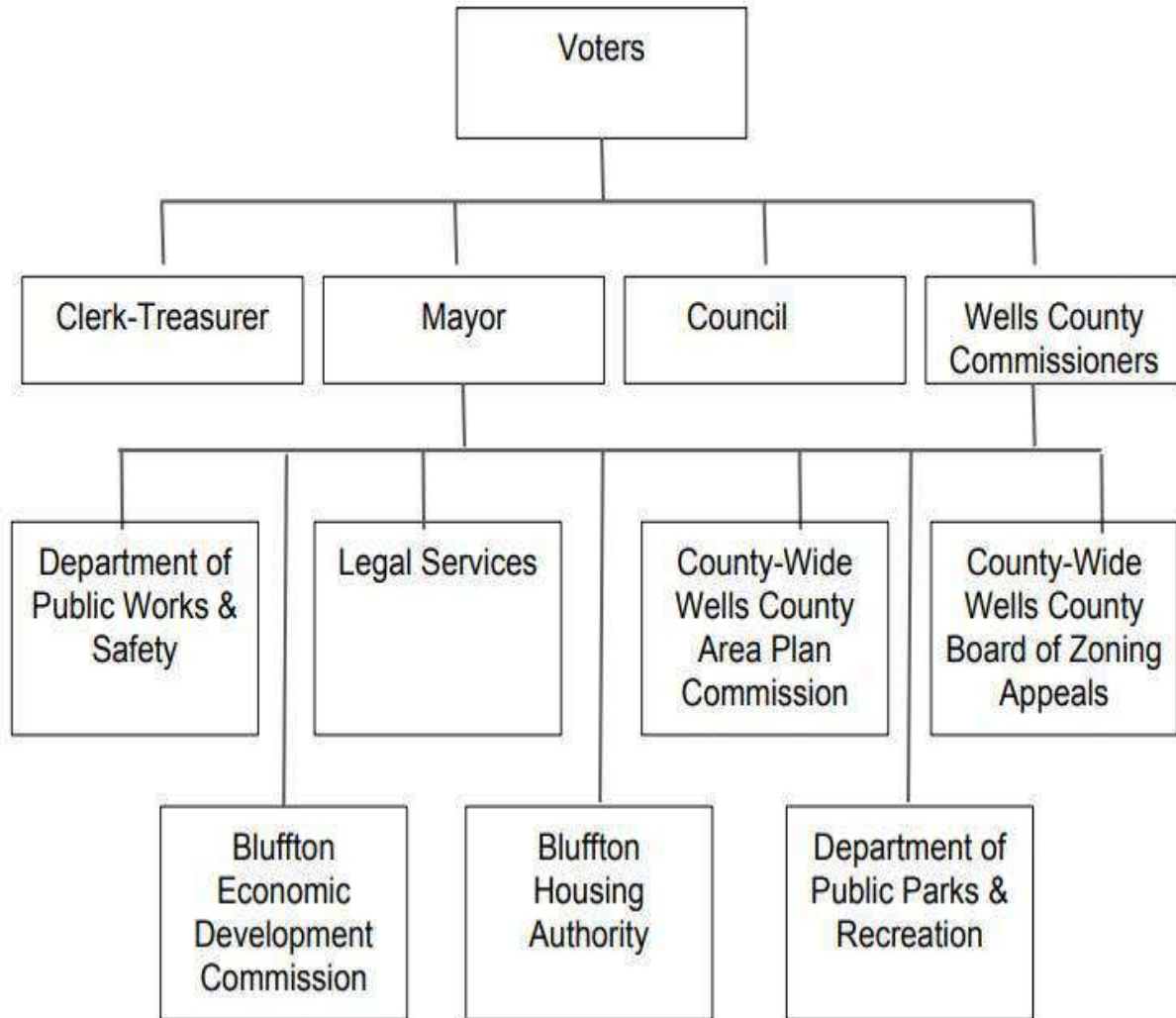
[court@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:court@blufftonindiana.gov)

Political Affiliation: Republican

Term: 2020-2023

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**1.5 CITY OF BLUFFTON ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



**1.6 GOVERNMENT CHARACTERISTICS**

Form and Organization for City of Bluffton - Mayor and 5 City Council (2023 will increase to 7 council)

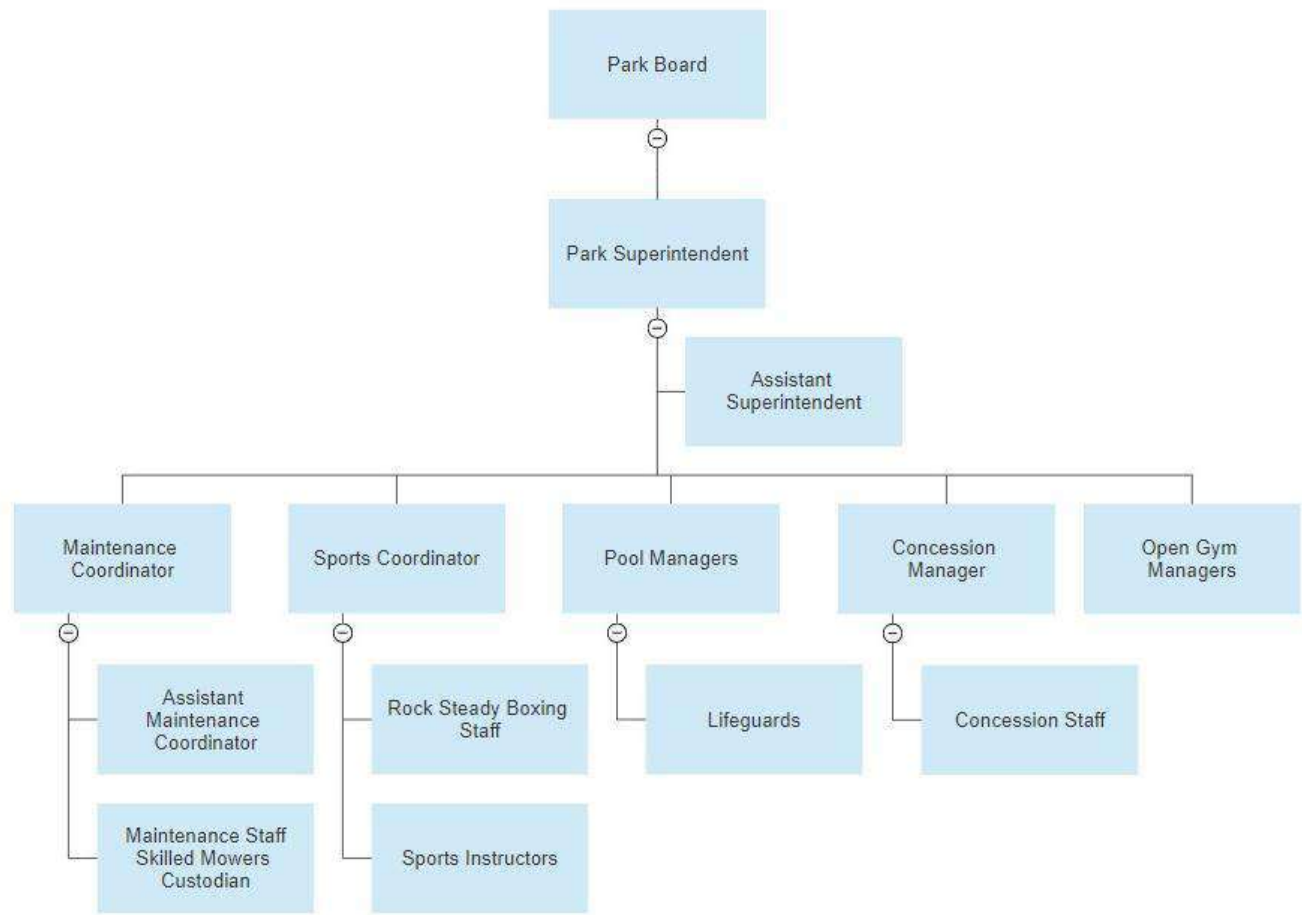
The area within the City of Bluffton is 6.6 square miles

The Primary Source of Revenue for the City of Bluffton is Property Taxes

(Community Analysis Bluffton, Indiana and 2011 Wells County Fact Book)

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**1.7 BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



**1.8 PARK AND RECREATION APPROPRIATION LEDGER 2021**

Salaries & Wages	\$423,416.00	Printing/Advertising	\$800.00
Insurance	\$57,700.00	Insurance	\$31,000.00
FICA/Medicare	\$32,391.00	Utilities	\$79,600.00
PERF	\$32,789.00	Repairs/Maintenance	\$26,000.00
Personal Services	\$2,100.00	Other Services/Charges	\$5,800.00
Office Supplies	\$1,600.00	Professional Meetings/ Training	\$1,800.00
Operating Supplies	\$40,000.00	Fireworks	\$13,000.00
Repair/Maintenance Supplies	\$7,000.00	Programs/Swim Lessons	\$5,000.00
Other Supplies	\$5,500.00	Land	\$1,500.00
Concessions	\$25,000.00	Repair Pavilion	\$2,500.00
Crafts	\$1,000.00	Trees/Paving/Diamonds/Fence	\$11,000.00
Professional Services	\$1,000.00	Equipment	\$26,000.00
Pool Lease	\$3,000.00	Non-Reverting Pool Fund	\$5,000.00
Communication	\$3,600.00	Non-Reverting Park Fund	\$5,000.00
Postage	\$500.00		
Travel	\$2,500.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$853,096.00</b>



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### 1.9 SOURCES OF REVENUE

The City Council's appropriations determine the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department budget through the general fund, derived from local tax revenue and park revenue. Local tax revenue includes auto excise tax, plus financial Institute tax. Park revenue consists of the sale of gym keys, pavilion rentals, K-9 Kommons memberships, Wells Community Pool rentals, and admission tickets. Most of the appropriations are used for minor operating and maintenance expenditures. More enormous expenditures are accounted for in the Capital Improvement Fund, supported through user fees charged at Wells Community Swimming Pool, baseball/softball leagues, basketball/volleyball leagues, pool rentals, pavilion rentals, and concession stand profits.

The Wells County Foundation is another funding source for the Parks and Recreation Department. The Foundation offers grant opportunities every quarter through the year. The Foundation is primarily used for significant expenditures involving the Wells Community Swimming Pool. We typically apply (and most generally are awarded our request). Monetary contributions from city and county government agencies go into the foundation to pay for major Wells Community Swimming Pool expenses. We have recently set up pass-through accounts to receive donations for Lancaster Park and one to support the Inter-urban trail's efforts.

We diligently apply for numerous other grants throughout the year from Walmart, Heartland REMC, Patronicity, READI, and Youth as Resources when a scout group wants to partner on a project. We also applied for LARE grants to complete an erosion control/bank stabilization plan for the Wabash River. We received a LWCF Grant in 2014 for \$188,755.00 for renovations to Roush Park, and we were recently notified that we might receive \$500,000 to develop Lancaster Park. We hope to pursue a Next Level Trails grant to finish the Inter-urban Park. Another excellent source of raising funds includes private philanthropy from individuals or families who want to give back to our community. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) uses the anticipated future improvements in an area's tax base to pay for current capital development.

#### **(Sources of Revenue as of September 2021)**

Financial Institute Tax	5,326.97
License Excise Tax	21,704.37
CVET tax	7,261.10
Property tax	493,565.32
Pool admissions	22,469.25
Roush #2 concessions	2,992.70
Roush #1 concessions	14,732.95
Pool concessions	13,955.95
Fireworks co. reimbursement	5,000.00
Reimburse/Restitution/Refund	1,858.00
Pavilion rentals	13,160.00
Misc. receipts	3,184.00
Diamond rentals	4,080.00
Kehoe stage rental	1,745.00
Key memberships	13,955.00
Swim lessons/ private lessons	3,179.00
Park sports programs	27,500.64
Memorials/ Donations	1,590.00
Park special programs	14,862.25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>672,122.50</b>

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**1.10 PARK AND RECREATION PROGRAMS OFFERED IN 2021**

Wells Wonderful Winter 100 Walking Challenge  
Rock Steady Boxing year-round three times a week – Washington Park  
Free Weekday Walking October – March 5 days a week – Bluffton City Gym  
Free Open Gym October – March 4-days a week – Bluffton City Gym  
Indoor Yoga Sept-May 2 days a week – Washington Park.  
Free Farm Wagon (free food) weekly year-round – Life Church  
Adult Leisure Volleyball weekly year-round – Bluffton City Gym  
Hue Can Paint six times a year – City Hall  
Chilly Chili Trail Run – Ouabache State Park  
Valentine’s Day Take-Home Kit – City Hall  
Spring Coloring Contest  
Larry Leprechaun Hunt – various parks  
Cardio Boxing 1 time a week – Washington Park  
Online Cupcake Wars - virtual  
Free Easter Egg Hunt – Roush Park  
Free Dog Bone Hunt – Roush Park  
Free Sensory-Friendly Easter Egg Hunt – Lion’s Park  
Free Bark in the Park Photo Contest - Virtual  
Free Theater Thursday year-round 1-time a month – Wells County Public Library  
Free Spring Senior Snippets 5-weeks 3-days a week – Washington Park & various locations  
Earth Day 5K Run/Walk – Bluffton City Gym  
Free Wookie Walk - Wabash River Park  
Free Murder in May Clue Parks Dept Edition – Interurban Trail, Pickett’s Run Park, Roush Park, Greenway  
Free Yarn Bombing – River Greenway  
Yoga Brunch & Bubbles – Washington Park  
Free Plant Swap – Roush Park  
Free Firefly Tour – Fort Wayne Ballet – Kehoe Park  
Group Swim Lessons – Wells Community Pool  
Group Pee Wee Swim Lessons – Wells Community Pool  
Pedal Wells Challenge – various locations  
Free Tennis Lessons 5 days a week 5-weeks – Lion’s Park  
Free Picnic in the Park – 5 days a week all summer – Roush Park  
Free Scientific Tuesday 1 day a week 7-weeks – Roush Park  
Free Adult Pickleball - Lion’s Park  
Yoga in the Park 2 days a week June – Aug - Kehoe Park  
Free Intro to Gaga Ball – Roush Park  
Free Crafting for a Cause 4 times a summer – Roush Park  
Free Craft Club 4 times a summer – Roush Park  
Free Bowling – Bluffton Bowling Alley  
Cardio Blast – Washington Park  
Free Tot Bubble Day – Roush Park  
Free Foam Party - Pickett’s Run Park  
Summer Striders 1 day a week for 8-weeks – Bluffton Harrison School.  
Free Tot Lego Day – Roush Park  
Free Lego Play Day – Roush Park  
Free Dog Obedience/Agility/Tricks Training – Perfect Pet  
Free Art in the Park 1 day a week for 5-weeks – Roush Park

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Free The Insiders (Tom Petty Tribute) Concert – Kehoe Park  
Free Community Worship Celebration – Kehoe Park  
Candle Making – Bijou Boutique  
Free Tot Scavenger Hunt – Roush Park  
Chicks Run 5K (Ladies Only) – Pickett’s Run Park & River Greenway  
Free Egg Drop Challenge – Bluffton City Gym  
Free Tot Chalk it up – Roush Park  
Free Shaving Cream Fight – Pickett’s Run Park  
Free Rock Painting – Roush Park  
Free Touch a Truck – Common’s Parking Lot  
Daddy Daughter Dance – Wells County 4H  
Free Matchbox Car Play Day – Roush Park  
Free Animal Explorers – Roush Park  
Free Fuse Bead Magnets – Washington Park  
Free Loom Hot Pad – Washington Park  
Free Dance Class – ABC Dance Studio  
Free Tot Puzzle Day – Roush Park  
Free 5 in 5k Series 1 time a week for 5-weeks -Variety of parks  
Free Stuff and Fluff – Roush Park  
Free Tot Messy Art – Roush Park  
Free Wabash River Paddle 2 times a summer – River Greenway  
Free Dinosaur Dig – Roush Park  
Free Tot Play Day – Roush Park  
Free Paper Skyscraper – Bluffton City Gym  
Free Independence Day Firework Show – Bluffton School  
Kids Bubble Dash – Roush Park  
Free Ronald McDonald Mobile Health Visit – Roush Park  
Free Jr. Veterinarian Day – Bluffton Animal Clinic  
Ax-Throwing – Busted Haft  
Mother Son Superhero Training Camp – Washington Park  
Bucket Drumming – Roush Park  
Free Completely Unchained (Van Halen Tribute) – Kehoe Park  
Free Frye Family Band – Kehoe Park  
Free Tumbling Class – ABC Dance Studio  
Fastest Kid in Town Race – Pickett’s Run Park  
Running Rogue City Challenge – All Parks & River Greenway  
Free Toga Concert – Kehoe Park  
Free Big Bang Baby Concert (STP Tribute) – Kehoe Park  
Free Classic Car Cruise – Kehoe Park  
Free Casual Friday Concert – Kehoe Park  
Princess Tea Party – Washington Park  
Nerf Gun Wars - 2 times – Bluffton City Gym  
Harvest Hustle 5K 9 am – Bluffton City Gym  
Wabash Ride & Seek Scavenger Hunt – River Greenway  
Free Flu Shot Clinic – Life Community Church  
Free Fort Wayne Youth Theater Charlotte’s Web Play – Kehoe Park  
Free Virtual Costume Contest - virtual  
Free Autumn Adventure Trick or Treat – Bluffton City Gym

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Free Tom the Tricky Turkey Hunt – various parks  
Holiday Yoga Brunch/ Sip and Scrub – Washington Park  
Hooked on Crochet – Washington Park  
WOOF Trail Run – Ouabache State Park  
Free Giant Stocking Coloring Contest – at home  
Free Santa’s Mailbox – City Hall  
Free Gingerbread Contest – City Hall  
Winter Wonderland – Bluffton City Gym  
Holiday Yoga Brunch – Washington Park  
Free Community Positivi-tree – Pickett’s Run Park  
Free Spot the Grinch Game – All parks  
Free Santa Drive through Neighborhood in Fire Truck

**1.11 ENTITIES WHO USE OUR FACILITIES**

Wells Community Swim Team – Wells Community Pool  
T-ball/ Coaches Pitch – Jefferson Park  
Baseball/ Softball – Roush Park  
Youth Boys’ Basketball grades 5th - 8th – Bluffton City Gym  
Men’s Basketball adults – Bluffton City Gym  
Elks Hoop Shoot -Bluffton City Gym  
Adult Volleyball League – Bluffton City Gym

**1.12 VOLUNTEERS GROUPS AND AGENCIES**

The Bluffton Parks Department fully realizes the advantage and the need to utilize the assistance of volunteers, service groups, schools, churches, and scouting troops to help support our programs. These groups are vital in reducing operating and staffing expenses while saving us time during large projects. Our small department relies heavily on local service clubs to help with large events and park cleanup projects. The local scout troops are very active in completing tasks such as building a little library, Gaga ball pit, pet waste bag dispensers, planting trees, hand removing rip rap from a blocked creek, and trimming acres of overgrown bike trails. The following is a list of service and community groups in the City of Bluffton/Wells County:

**SERVICE CLUBS**

American Legion Post 111  
Bluffton Lion’s Club  
Bluffton Rotary Club  
Kiwanis Club of Greater Bluffton  
Moose Lodge  
Optimist Club of Bluffton  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Elks Lodge 796  
Bluffton Lodge #145 Masons  
Parlor City Fraternal Order of Police

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**SCOUT TROOPS**

Cub Scouts  
Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana  
Boy Scouts of America  
Trail Life Adventures

**SORORITIES**

Psi Iota Xi  
Tri- Kappa  
Sigma Phi Gamma

**NON-FOR-PROFITS**

Wells County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development  
United Way of Wells County  
Creative Arts Council  
Wells County 4-H (Agriculture & Natural Resources & Economic Community Development, Extension  
Homemakers, and Health and Human Services)  
Wells County Boys & Girls Club  
Wells County YMCA  
Bi-County Services  
Community & Family Services  
Community Care of Wells County, Inc  
Family-Centered Services  
Food Bank  
Bluffton NOW!  
Wells County Public Library  
LiGht  
Upper Wabash Conservation & Science Center  
Wells County Genealogy Society  
Youth For Christ  
(Community Resources Booklet)

**FOUNDATIONS**

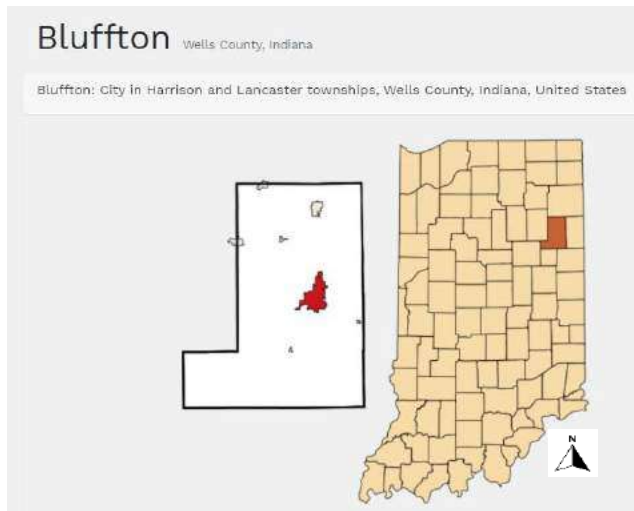
Wells County Foundation  
Caylor Nickel Foundation  
Youth As Resources

The Bluffton Parks Department has a legal agreement with the Wells County Foundation to lease the Lancaster Park Property for \$1 per year until the appropriate time we can receive the property to comply with the LWCF grant.

The Bluffton Parks Department is in a verbal agreement with Life Community Church to use their parking lot each week to hand out free food to residents in need every Tuesday year-round.

## BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT 5-Year Master Plan

### 1.13 DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA



Bluffton Parks & Recreation Department maintains, develops, and manages parks located within the corporation limits of the City of Bluffton. (Image 1 above) These facilities are located:

- \* In the northernmost city limit along the south side of Jackson Street,
- \* In the westernmost residential neighborhoods of the city,
- \* Along Spring Street, which is the southernmost street of the city proper, before State Rd 1 (Main St.), extends southerly with its commercial district,
- \* To and  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles beyond the eastern city limits as the River Greenway follows the Wabash River and curls into the east end of the city's 150-acre reforestation/wetlands project.

Residents who participate in our events usually come from the city and surrounding counties. (Image 2 above) Families will travel further distances to stay the night at Ouabache State Park, and many will come into town for our programs while in the area.

### 2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 2.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PARK BOARD

The goal of the Park Board is to create welcoming parks and recreation services for all. They are committed to improving the safety and inclusiveness of our facilities, parks, and programs. The Board helps prioritize the areas in our community that require additional services, improvements, maintenance, or additional amenities. The Board works closely with the Park Superintendent to stay within the limit of our budget to provide the best service possible. Members of the Park Board listen to feedback from the community, establish rules, set fees, hire staff, and make decisions on land acquisition, park development, programming, and park management.

#### 2.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The goal of the Parks and Recreation Department is to implement the decisions of the Park Board by creating parks and events that captivate residents and visitors alike. The Parks Department prides itself

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on being an award-winning department with 34 awards, including the 2014 & 2020 Agency of the Year. Our staff strives to deliver innovative programming, education, activities, and events that engage our residents and draw visitors to our community. The Parks Department coordinates with community leaders, social organizations, schools, and businesses to find volunteers, donations, and sponsors to help stretch the budget. We also continually seek funds through grant writing.

The Park Maintenance staff is responsible for 6-miles of trails, 12 City Parks, the Wells Community Olympic Size Swimming Pool, 2-Splash Pads, the City Gym & Weight Room, 8-Baseball / Softball Diamonds, 6-Tennis/Pickleball Courts, 7-Pavilions & Indoor Event Room, Rock Steady Boxing Facility, and all mowing & snow removal in the parks and on other city properties & downtown sidewalks. The goal of the maintenance staff is to provide beautiful parks that are well-maintained and safe. The maintenance supervisor works closely with the Park Superintendent to identify areas of concern and anticipate future maintenance needs that focus on sustainability, accessibility, flexibility, and beauty.

### 2.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER PLAN

The purpose of the Bluffton Parks Department 5-year Master plan is to gather input and community feedback from a diverse group of residents and accurately report the findings. The results of this study will be used to analyze the unmet needs within the community and prioritize park development, maintenance, and events to meet those needs. This master plan will create a shared vision of the future to engage the community, its leaders, and stakeholders in a focused direction to reflect Bluffton's commitment to providing high-quality recreational activities and facilities. This plan will be a road map to ensure the long-term success and financial sustainability of our trails, parks, and programs as our city grows. It will also allow us to qualify for LWCF grants.

### 2.4 PROGRESS EVALUATION OF LAST 5 YEARS

#### 2017 IMPROVEMENTS                      460,493.35

New TV in the weight room at City Gym  
Poured and installed a new splash pad at Roush Park  
Poured new ADA sidewalks near the splash pad at Roush Park  
New pool filter room for Wells Community Pool  
New windscreens for both tennis courts and backboards at Lion's & Washington Park  
New poles and led lights at the pool            **(partial goal of the 2017 Master Plan)**  
New speakers for Wells Community Pool  
New electrical at the Wells Community Pool **(partial goal of the 2017 Master Plan)**  
Install new gutters at the Wells Community Pool  
New walkways over filter pit at Wells Community Pool  
Pave trail at Roush Park  
Pave new parking lot at Roush Park  
Reflection Garden by boy Scout Nathan Beuter (YAR Grant)  
New boards on the pedestrian bridge at the Inter-urban trail **(goal of the 2017 Master Plan)**  
Blue Lyme Grass installed in Pickett's Run Park  
Funbrella installed at Roush Park  
Planted ten new trees along River Greenway  
Reseal City Gym floor  
Repair sinkhole at the pavilion on River Greenway  
New backrest on weight equipment  
Install new privacy fence behind the Roush Park maintenance garage

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Planted 5 trees at Roush Park  
Planted 4 Trees at Wabash River Park  
New roof on River Greenway covered bridge  
Installed 3 new benches from recycled caps  
New curling bench in the weight room at City Gym  
Replace wooden statue on greenway and Pickett's Run  
Added 2 ADA picnic tables at Roush Park  
New Roush Park Farm League diamond safety net  
Painted parking stripes at Roush Park  
New mirrors, sinks, faucets at Wells Community Pool restrooms **(partial goal of the 2017 Master Plan)**  
New freezer for concessions  
New maintenance shop water heater  
12 new picnic tables Roush Park (WCF Grant)  
New Sandy Koufax scoreboard at Lion's Park (WCF Grant)

**2018 IMPROVMENTS \$43,868.04**

Expanded weight room, new door, paint, & flooring at City Gym  
New LED lights in the Bluffton City Gym  
New weight room equipment stack & recumbent bike at City Gym  
Planted new trees on the River Greenway  
Replaced 3 C springs on broken toys  
Added playground mulch to Roush & Washington Park  
Added safety railing around Roush Park trail  
3 new water fountains (WCF grant)  
3 new expression swings (WCF Grant)  
New splash pad sensor (WCF Grant)  
New PA system for the Wells Community Pool  
1 Expression swing at Washington Park (donation)  
New Roush Park trail signs  
Concrete eagle statue at Veteran's Park  
Improvements to Wells Community Pool and Wilson diamond fences  
Downtown trees  
Ten new trees were planted near the pavilion on Greenway by Boy Scout Koby.

**2019 IMPROVEMENTS \$550,438.00**

Renovate Lion's Park restrooms  
Built oversized Adirondack chair at Wabash River Pavilion  
Installed water fountains from last year's grant  
Remove Washington Park concession, restroom, & pavilion for new building **(goal of 2017 Master Plan)**  
Begin New indoor/outdoor pavilion with restrooms at Washington Park **(goal of the 2017 Master Plan)**  
Begin New Rock Steady Boxing Facility  
Installed 13 new benches on River Greenway Trail (Donations)  
Bury power lines at Washington Park  
Repair tennis court fence from wind damage  
Repair the flood damage to the Inter-urban trail  
Planted new trees  
Replaced Senior Girls Diamond Backstop at Roush Park  
Painted inside the Roush Park pavilion



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Replaced fence at K-9 Kommons Dog Park  
Replaced Red Covered Bridge deck on River Greenway

**2020 IMPROVEMENTS \$535,117.00**

Complete new Washington Park pavilion and make the final payment (**goal of the 2017 Master Plan**)  
Installed a new digital sign on State Rd 1  
Three new batting cages (WCF Grant)  
Two new Horseshoe games at Washington  
Cement Cornhole game (WCF Grant)  
Seal basketball courts at Washington (WCF Grant) (**goal of the 2017 Master Plan**)  
Bike Repair Station (WCF Grant)  
Add mulch in all playgrounds  
New lights at Washington Park  
Replace basketball courts and the x walking path at Washington Park (**goal of the 2017 Master Plan**)  
New sink and counter at the women's restroom at Kehoe Park  
Remove girls press box and re-roof at Roush Park  
Vandalism Roush Restrooms Repairs  
New flooring in Men's Restroom at City Gym  
New trash can at Angel of Hope (WCF Grant)  
Reseal City Gym court and add pickleball lines  
Reseal Inter-urban pedestrian bridge  
Two new trucks for maintenance  
One new mower maintenance  
One new TTG John Deere Tractor  
Repaint Red Bridge on River Greenway (donated by Yaste)  
Add acoustical tiles in Washington Park  
Add window blinds in Washington Park  
Replace slide at Jefferson Park

**2021 IMPROVEMENTS (as of 9/17/21)                      \$192,305.00**

Add additional parking at both ends of Washington Park  
Lion's Park tennis court drainage  
Lion's Park basketball goal repair  
Lion's Park teeter-totter repair  
Repaint Gazebo and add gravel to the Iris Garden walkway on the River Greenway  
Added a new Little Library at Roush Park  
Install Tetherball and hopscotch at Roush Park (Walmart Grant)  
Install new Gaga ball at Roush Park  
Purchased a new gazebo  
Purchased a new mower  
Repaint Washington Park basketball courts (**goal of the 2017 Master Plan**)  
Lion's Park tennis courts resealed  
Washington Park tennis courts were resealed, and pickleball lines added  
Removed old cement bleachers at Jefferson Park  
Add three new bleachers to Jefferson Park  
Installed 12 new pet waste bag dispensers (Girl Scout Donation)  
Add diamond dirt to all baseball fields  
Install new fall mats under swings and slides

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Replaced a footrest for Lifeguard chair # 2 at Wells Community Pool  
Updated electrical for baseball at Roush Park  
New fascia for Pool House **(partial goal of 2017 Master Plan)**  
Update pool concessions with stainless-steel cabinets **(partial goal of 2017 Master Plan)**  
Five new recycled benches  
New water bottle fill/ drinking fountains in City Gym  
Planted nine new trees  
Installed new hand dryers in City Gym restrooms  
New Park signs at Wells Community Pool  
Installed a new driveway at Lion's Park old tennis court  
Poured a new cement floor and built a new team bench in the dugout at Lion's Park

### **3.0 SCOPING – FEATURES OF ENTIRE COMMUNITY**

#### **NATURAL AND LANDSCAPE**

##### **3.1.1 UNIQUE GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES**

Wells County is located in northeastern Indiana and was formed by glaciers. The City of Bluffton is located in the glacial plains of the Wabash Ground Moraine, the Wabash Recessional Moraine, and the Salamonie Ground Moraine along the Wabash River in Wells County (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 3). According to the Soil Survey, moraines are geologic features that include accumulations of earth, stones, and other debris deposited by glaciers (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 96).

Major soil categories in Bluffton include Blount-Del Rey-Glenwood Association, Sloan-Shoals-Rensselaer Association, and Blount-Del Rey-Pewamo Association. The Soil Survey classifies Blount-Del Rey-Glenwood Association as medium textured soils formed in glacial till and lacustrine sediments, which are materials deposited in water and exposed when the water level is lowered or the elevation of the land is raised (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: Soil Legend).

##### **3.1.2 SOIL TYPES**

Based on the USDA's Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana, soil types for Bluffton Parks Department lands (excluding the former farmland on the north side of the Wabash River) are reforested and converted back to wetlands preserve are as follows.

###### **Lion's Park**

Soil Type – Del-Rey, usually a silty clay loam; Unified Classification – CH, CL.

This soil type is a good mix of silt, sand, and clay, providing firm structural support for playground equipment. The area is surrounded by houses built on the soil type.

###### **Everywhere else**

Soil Type - Udorthents; Classification – none.

Human-altered soil dominates the vast majority of the City of Bluffton, including areas on the perimeter where extensive building has occurred. The long-standing success of buildings and other structures on this human-altered soil indicates that soil and subsoil can provide structural support for playground equipment. When necessary, testing soil below any topsoil of organic matter for appropriate capacity to hold said equipment should be done.

The Soil Survey defines loam as "soil material that is 7 to 27 percent clay particles, 28 to 50 percent silt particles, and less than 52 percent sand particles" (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 96).

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### **3.1.3 WATERSHED STATEMENT**

The City of Bluffton is part of the Upper Wabash River Watershed. The Wabash River flows through the center of Bluffton, Indiana, and the parks drain into it through named and unnamed tributaries of the Wabash River. Reviewing the most up-to-date information for known wetlands from the Hydrology Wetlands NWI layer, publicly available on the Indiana Map, shows that the Wabash River channel is the only wetland in or near any of the City of Bluffton Parks. Several of the parks have been created or set aside with the primary goal of providing additional natural floodplains for the Wabash River. This will help improve the water quality and functionality of the Upper Wabash River Watershed and associated sub-watersheds.

Flooding is a common issue along the River Greenway, and special care will need to be taken to maintain the stability of the river banks. The Parks Department plans to seek LARE grants to develop a maintenance plan to control the erosion.

### **3.1.4 WILDLIFE**

Typical animals found in the city parks include a variety of squirrels, rabbits, moles, bats, opossums, and feral cats. The animal shelter currently has a discount program to have cats spayed or neutered, and they provide live traps for a refundable deposit. Our department has an opportunity to help facilitate a connection between our service groups and the animal shelter to aid in this ongoing project. Raccoons, groundhogs, Canadian geese, and bald eagles are often spotted along the River Greenway. Raccoons have become a pest pulling leftover food from the trash cans at Rotary Park, and we will soon be investing in animal-resistant cans.

### **3.1.5 VEGETATION CHARACTERISTICS**

The native vegetation for Wells County was mainly deciduous forests. The Soil Survey of Wells County states that upland soils were covered with Red Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Ash, and Black Walnut trees (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 88). The Soil Survey also stated that Blount soils were covered with Maple and Beech trees (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 88). Furthermore, the wet soils supported mainly Yellow Poplar, Cottonwood, Sycamore, Willow, and American Basswood trees (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 88). Besides planting more than 40,000 native tree and shrub seedlings in the reforestation/wetlands project, the City of Bluffton has planted many trees throughout the city parks and streets, including Red Maple and Sycamore. As everywhere else in the state, honeysuckle and garlic mustard are pervasive in open, un-mowed green space along the rivers. Our department will consider partnering with the Master Gardener's and local scout troops to pull these plants.

We lost several trees throughout the city to Emerald Ash Borer; approximately 80 of those were along the River Greenway trail on the banks of the Wabash River. New trees are planted yearly, and we hope to create a brochure in the future to let residents know how to purchase a tree or a bench memorial for a loved one to increase community awareness of the need. Our department can also seek grant funds from the IDNR Community and Urban Forestry Grant or the National Wildlife Federation.

### **3.1.6 CLIMATE CHARACTERISTICS**

Wells County has a cool and humid climate with relatively uniform soils (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 88). The average yearly temperature for Wells County is 51.0°F with the average daily maximum temperature being 61.0°F (yearly) and the average daily minimum temperature being 40.9°F (annually) (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 102).

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The hottest month of the year is July, with an average temperature of 74.3°F and the coldest month is January, with an average temperature of 26.1°F (Community Analysis Bluffton, Indiana). Furthermore, Wells County has an average yearly total precipitation of 38.32 inches and an average yearly total snowfall of 24 inches (U.S. Climate Data). In recent years, there has been climate change, with the last decade being the warmest on record. The increased temperatures in the summer made the Splash Pad at Pickett's Run very popular, and in 2016 our department installed another Splash Pad at Roush Park to provide an additional location to cool off. This temperature shift has caused the winter months to be wet and has eight fewer inches of snow than five years ago, limiting winter recreation such as sledding. Even though the sledding season is short, our department still finds value in the hill by creating a giant slip and slide during the summer months, and the future design of Lancaster Park will include a disc golf tee at the top.

## **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION BOTH HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL**

### **3.2.1 PRESENCE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Most recreational areas have a safe route from the neighborhoods to the parks by sidewalks. The downtown sidewalks are in good condition, but many neighborhood sidewalks need attention. The City of Bluffton adopted an ADA transition plan back in 2013 and diligently updated the curbs with compliant ramps. The City of Bluffton intends to spend \$25,000 annually to repair, modify or reconstruct sidewalks and ramps to meet current ADA standards. The Bluffton school campus has an excellent path as part of the safe route to the school plan. There is also a nice trail from the school that leads to the River Greenway so that cross-country runners and others have easy access to the trail system.

The City of Bluffton is currently expanding the Inter-urban Trail to connect the last mile between Walmart to Lancaster Park to give pedestrians a safe path to the park. This trail segment will continue the Poka-bache trail that will connect Pokagon State Park in Angola to Ouabache State Park in Bluffton for 81 miles. This trail is a crucial part of the United Trails project in our region and will be a popular attraction when it is completed.

The City of Bluffton has identified a need for additional safe crossings on State Road 1 and is partnering with INDOT to provide flashing lights near the Willowbrook subdivision and at Arby's to give pedestrians access to the Inter-urban trail. The project should begin in the spring of 2022 with an estimated \$341,000, with INDOT covering around \$90,000.

### **3.2.2 MAN-MADE FEATURES**

The City of Bluffton has three major state highways which pass through the city limits. These highways are SR 116, SR 1, and SR 124. Bluffton is also 10 miles from Interstate 69 and 3 miles from U.S. Highway 224. According to the Soil Survey of Wells County in 1992, there are about 130 miles of highways across the county. There are also about 690 miles of country roads. All of these roads can be used year-round, and most are paved. There is a small airport 4 miles west of Bluffton, which has a runway of 2,260 feet of sod for private airplanes. The Norfolk Southern Railroad passes through the county in north-south and east-west directions. (Soil Survey of Wells County, Indiana: 2). (Community Analysis Bluffton, Indiana)

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### **3.2.3 HISTORICAL SITES, MARKERS, CELEBRATED HISTORIC EVENTS OR PEOPLE**

Bluffton, the county seat, was named for river bluffs near the original townsite and is nicknamed the "Parlor City" for its history of having the first paved streets while most roads were still dirt. The beautiful Romanesque-style courthouse was constructed in 1891 and had an impressive 140-foot-high clock tower with intricate sandstone carvings and gargoyles.

Bluffton is also known for its historic residences throughout downtown, especially north of Main Street. The Wells County History Museum is located at 420 W. Market St. which is only three and a half blocks from the city center. The museum has seasonal hours and is open in the spring, summer, and fall on Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 1 to 4 p.m. Members of the Historical Society host multiple ice cream socials, cemetery walks, historic home tours, and an annual Christmas in the Mansion event. The Parks Department partners with the museum to offer 5-week classes in the spring and fall on various historical topics.

Bluffton Free Street Fair is the oldest and largest street fair in Indiana, starting in 1898. The fair is held 15 days after Labor Day and lasts five days. The street fair will bring 15,000-20,000 visitors during the week averaging 4,000-5,000 per night. The Bluffton Parks Department is on the Street Fair Board and is involved in the Kid's Day activities. The fair utilizes Kehoe Park for an evening concert on Saturday night. Our gymnasium has been used for Art & Craft shows, flowers & agricultural judging, tournaments, and wrestling shows.

In recent years, Bluffton has had a few remarkable athletes, such as Adam Ballinger, a pro basketball player; Chandler Harnish, NFL; D Wayne Eskridge, NFL; E.J. Tackett, Professional Bowler. Bluffton is also the home of Charles Clemon Deam. Charles C Deam (August 30, 1865 - May 29, 1953) was the first forester in Indiana. He studied botany at an early age and discovered 25 new species. There are 48 plants named after him, and his herbarium has 78,000 specimens, still preserved at Indiana University. The flower beds along the River Greenway have some of the original hybridized Iris's that he and his neighbors E.B & Mary Williamson created.

### **3.2.4 CULTURAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF AREA**

Wells County was named for a nonnative son, Capt. William A. Wells who was captured by Native Americans as a young boy and adopted by Miami Chief Little Turtle. Wells eventually became a scout for General "Mad Anthony" Wayne. At the War of 1812, Wells was killed at the Fort Dearborn Massacre by Potawatomi allied with the British. To gain part of his courage, Potawatomi ate Captain Wells' heart.

Native Americans never established permanent settlements in the river basin area that dominates northeast Indiana but did have hunting encampments. According to written documentation from white settlement days, Bluffton had a significant Miami Indian encampment located just south of the covered pedestrian footbridge for the River Greenway. The considerable number of contemporary folks who scour freshly plowed nearby farm fields for arrowheads and similar artifacts is a testimony to the extent earlier folks gathered from the bounty of wildlife that infused the mature growth deciduous forests.

The Native American heritage of our area remains actively pursued by the curiosity of many residents, though there are yet any significant cultural events that acknowledge that heritage.

The contemporary Wells County is derived mainly from northern and central European heritage. As mentioned before, Bluffton Free Street Fair is the oldest and largest street fair in Indiana, dating back to 1898. The fair is five days long and always starts 15 days after Labor Day. The annual 4-H fair is another community favorite that occurs in July.

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This year marks the 31<sup>st</sup> year for free summer concerts at Kehoe Park. The Bluffton Parks Department leads the concert committee to select bands and seek donors for these performances. Other music opportunities occur on the newly built Parlor City Plaza beside the courthouse, with monthly entertainment provided by Bluffton NOW. The Bluffton NOW (New, Old, Wonderful) organization is a not-for-profit group committed to renovating and revitalizing the downtown creating a unique place to gather and increase interest in shopping local. The Park Superintendent is part of Bluffton NOW, which is also responsible for the Saturday Farmer's and Artisan's Market, which has grown to include entertainment in the last few years.

The Creative Arts Council of Wells County is a certified non-profit organization seeking to provide quality arts programming to Wells County and surrounding areas. Its mission is to encourage, present, and promote the arts for the benefit of the community. They are the only arts organization in the county. They offer a wide variety of arts programming through the Ballentine Gallery, Wells Community Theater, School of Ballet, and other special events and classes.

In 2019, the newly formed Parlor City Shakespeare Company performed their first Shakespeare in the Park at our Kehoe Stage. They have taken a break due to COVID, but we hope that this program will continue in the future.

### **3.2.5 PRESENCE OF PARTICULAR CONCENTRATIONS**

According to Best Places to Live website, Bluffton is 42% religious. Many Christian churches with large congregations offer programs and events throughout the year. The strong conservative beliefs of these churches shape our community, and they are often a resource for support groups such as autism support, alcohol abuse, grief recovery, and divorce care. Campus Life directors are in all of the area schools, and there are multiple fun activities for kids in Youth for Christ.

While Bluffton isn't directly the home of Amish families, they are in the countryside of neighboring communities, and it's common to see them skating on the River Greenway, enjoying the State Park, or working on home repairs.

### **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS (Population Analysis)**

**TABLE 1**

**WELLS COUNTY AGE DISTRIBUTION**

Preschool (0-4)	1,755
School Age (5-17)	5,204
College Age (18-24)	2,151
Young Adult (25-44)	6,600
Older Adult (45-64)	7,316
Seniors (65 and older)	5,270
Median Age	40.0

(Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Indiana Business Research Center)

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**TABLE 2**

**RACE DISTRIBUTION**

	<b>City of Bluffton</b>	<b>Wells County</b>
White alone	95.6%	96.9%
Black or African American alone	1.8%	0.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	0.0%	0.3%
Asian alone	0.4%	0.7%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%	0.0%
Two or more races	1.2%	1.2%
Hispanic or Latino	3.7%	3.3%

(Source: Indiana and US Census Bureau)

**TABLE 3**

**WELLS COUNTY EDUCATION**

School Enrollment (2019/2020 Total Reported)	5,035
Public	5,035
Adults (25+ in 2019 ACS)	18,973
With High School diploma or higher	92.2%
With B.A. or higher degree	18.2%

(Sources: Indiana Department of Education; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates.)

**CITY OF BLUFFTON EDUCATION 2019**

High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2015-2019	91.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2015-2019	14.4%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

**TABLE 4**

**CITY OF BLUFFTON DISABILITY RATE**

With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2015-2019	11.6%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	8.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**TABLE 5**

**CITY OF BLUFFTON GENDER DISTRIBUTION 2019**

Males: 4,909 (48.4%)

Females: 5,238 (51.6%)

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

**TABLE 6**

**PAST GROWTH**

<b>Year</b>	<b>City of Bluffton</b>	<b>Wells County</b>
1980	9,500	25,401
1990	9,020	25,948
2000	9,536	27,600
2010	9,897	27,636
2020	10,308	28,142

(Comm Analysis Bluffton, Stats America, Indiana & US Census Bureau, Indiana Business Research Center)

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**TABLE 7**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF WELLS COUNTY**

Bluffton	10,094
Markle	454
Ossian	3,370
Poneto	191
Uniondale	311
Vera Cruz	85
Zanesville	488

(Source U.S. Census Bureau annual population estimates in 2020)

**TABLE 8**  
**WELLS COUNTY PROJECTION OF FUTURE COMMUNITY GROWTH**

Yesterday (2010)	27,637
Today (2020)	28,142
Tomorrow (2030)	27,834
Percent Change 2010 – Today	1.8%

(\*Projection based on 2010 Census Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Indiana Business Research Center)

**ECONOMICS OF WELLS COUNTY**

**TABLE 9**  
**INCOME AND POVERTY RATE**

Per Capita Personal Income (annual) in 2019	\$42,857
Median Household Income in 2019	\$61,636
Poverty Rate in 2019	7.4%
Poverty Rate among Children under 18	10.3%
Welfare (TANF) Monthly Average Families in 2020	13
Food Stamp Recipients in 2020	1,414
Free and Reduced Fee Lunch Recipients in 2019/2020	1,891

(Sources: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau; Indiana Family Social Services Administration; Indiana Department of Education)

**TABLE 10**  
**WELLS COUNTY LABOR FORCE & UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS**

Total Resident Labor Force	14,006
Employed	13,211
Unemployed	795
Annual Unemployment Rate	5.7
June 2021 Unemployment Rate	3.3

(Source: STATS Indiana, using data from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development)



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**TABLE 11**  
**MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN WELLS COUNTY**

Almco Steel	Metalco	20/20 Custom Molded Plastics
American Axle	Northern Wells School	
AT Ferrell	Ormsby Trucking	
BCS Industries	Pena's	
Berne Apparel	Perma-Colum	
Bluffton Regional Med.	Peyton's Northern	
Bluffton Rubber	Pretzels	
Bluffton Schools	Rethceif Packaging	
Buskirk Engineering	River Terrace Estates	
Community Christian Care	Roembke Manufacturing	
Edge Manufacturing	Snider Fleet Solutions	
First Fleet	Southern Wells School	
General Manufacturing	TI Automotive	
Haven Manufacturing	UTZ Quality Foods	
Inteva Products	Walmart	
Linder Oil	Wayne Metals WEG	
Lowes	(Wells County Chamber & Community Analysis)	

**TABLE 12**  
**EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS BY INDUSTRY**

	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Avg. Earnings Per Job</u>
Total by place of work	14,674	\$45,677
Wage and Salary	11,417	\$41,240
Farm Proprietors	512	\$39,928
Nonfarm Proprietors	2,745	\$22,260
Farm	705	\$36,377
Nonfarm	13,969	\$46,147
Private	12,567	\$45,315
Accommodation/Food Service	632	\$17,025
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	105	\$2,771
Construction	782	\$49,101
Health Care/Social Services	1,595	\$41,939
Manufacturing	2,680	\$65,753
Retail Trade	1,381	\$27,021
Transportation/Warehousing	1,588	\$53,369
Other Private (not above)	1,946	\$34,034
Government	1,402	\$53,604
(US Bureau of Economic Analysis)		

The statistics above paint a picture of what Wells County represents and who we are as a community. Bluffton is the county seat of Wells County, and while the population has been slowly growing, we anticipate a growth spurt in the next few years with all of the new housing construction projects. The city's anticipated growth will put pressure on existing amenities and services, increasing the need for additional development especially in the Northern part of the city. Trail connections to the new

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housing developments and safe crossings on Highway 1 are essential for residents to access the Inter-urban trail.

The median age of our community is 40 years old, and while there are a lot of active adults, the younger adults tend to leave the area for school or careers. To create an inviting atmosphere for younger adults, the parks department must continue to grow additional recreational opportunities. In an effort to change with the times, our department has transformed the Kehoe Concert series from Sunday afternoon performances into Friday evening events with larger tribute bands, food trucks, and alcohol sales to capture an adult crowd. Likewise, because our community has more older adults, additional programs should be developed to meet their needs, and parks with passive recreation should be considered. If pickleball grows in popularity the parks department may need to consider dedicated outdoor courts.

There are currently 1,800+ children on free or reduced lunches with over 1,400 homes receiving food stamps and the parks department will continue to help meet the needs of families experiencing food insecurity by offering the weekly Farm Wagon and providing free snacks to children who attend Open Gym. The overall financial health of many of the residents and business owners has proven to be great sponsors and partners when funding improvements. A Recreation Impact Fee or a Municipal Bond may be good options in the future for renovations to the Wells Community Pool or future park development.

### 4.0 SUPPLY ANALYSIS PARK INVENTORY

#### 4.1 PARK NARRATIVE



**Angel of Hope Park-** is located at 225 E Wabash Street. This Park was built by donations under a committee consisting of Wells County citizens and businesses in memory of their lost loved ones. The idea for this park came from the book entitled “The Christmas Box.” This picturesque setting includes landscaping for shade and privacy, with the beautiful 4’3” Angel overseeing the park. The Park contains brick pathways engraved with the names of lost loved ones, benches, and decorative lampposts. This Park provides the soothing sound of water and a beautiful view of the nearby Wabash River. Every December, a candlelight vigil is held to honor loved ones lost from the current year. In October, the Domestic Violence organization has a candlelight vigil to bring awareness to its mission. (Park size is .5 acres)

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**Bluffton City Gym** is located at 128 E Market Street in the back section of City Hall. The facility includes a multiuse basketball/volleyball/badminton/pickleball court with bleachers, a scoreboard, a racquetball court, a fitness room, and restrooms with showers and saunas. This facility is utilized for many leagues, such as men's basketball, youth basketball, and co-ed adult volleyball. The gym hosts various special events, especially during the winter months. Yearly gym memberships are available at affordable rates, and the facility can be used for private rentals.



**Interurban Trail** - begins at the pedestrian bridge at Kehoe Park and extends two miles to the north. This new trail allows visitors from Ouabache State Park to access the restaurants, grocery stores, and other local businesses by foot or bike via a paved trail, as well as residents who choose to leave the car at home. This paved path is a segment of the Poka-bache trail that will connect Pokagon State Park in Angola to Ouabache (pronounced "Wabash") State Park in Bluffton for 81 miles. This trail is a crucial part of the United Trails project in our region and will be a popular attraction when it is completed. The next phase of this trail will be around 1 mile as we connect Walmart to Lancaster Park at the northern edge of Bluffton.



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**Jefferson Park** - is located in the southeast portion of Bluffton at the corner of Townley and Bennett Streets. Facilities include a playground and two T-ball diamonds, one of which is lighted. There is a newly replaced batting cage, a concession/restroom building, and storage shed. The diamonds are used for boys and girls ages 4-8 years and occasionally as a rainout location for other leagues. (2.1 acres)



**K-9 Kommons** – is located on 805 W Market Street and is a double-sized city lot on the west side of town at the intersection of S. Indiana and W. Market Streets. The Park is fenced-in and includes a dog obstacle course, benches, and a picnic table. Key memberships are sold by the year for \$15. The Park was built in 2014 by a local Girl Scout as her Gold Award Project. This Park netted her the Indiana Parks & Recreation Association Volunteer of the Year Award. (.5 acre)

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**Kehoe Park** - is located at 300 N Main in the northwest central portion of Bluffton along the Wabash River west of SR 1 and SR 124 juncture. Facilities include a pavilion with picnic tables, restrooms, and a lighted amphitheater with a permanent stage and a canvas roof. This facility is used for the very popular free summer concert series, weddings, and a variety of community events. The concert series has been a long-standing tradition for the last thirty-one years and has attendances of 400-800! (2 acres)



**Lancaster Park** - is located at 240 E Jackson St in the north portion of the City of Bluffton on Jackson Street near SR 1. This Park is an ample open space of undeveloped land that contains a small maintenance pole barn, parking lot, and snow hill. This Park has recently undergone a design plan, and a grant has been submitted to the LWCF to install a ½ mile trail with a trailhead that includes a bike repair station, solar charging station, picnic tables, fire pit, bike racks, and bench seating. Other amenities include a pavilion with restroom, bike racks, water fountain, a sand volleyball court, gaga ball court, life-size human foosball, corn hole games, a combination soccer/football field, and a 9-hole combination disc golf/foot golf course. Lancaster Park is in a critical location as part of the Poka-bache trail connection, and it is currently the only park on the north side of town to serve our growing housing development. (18 acres)



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**Lion's Park** - is located at 228 Midway in the west-central portion of Bluffton off Midway and W. Washington Streets. Facilities include a playground, a pavilion (maintained by the local Lion's Club), with picnic tables and grill, two lighted basketball courts, three lighted tennis/Pickleball courts, a restroom/concession facility, a maintenance building with restrooms, one small ball diamond, and a lighted softball/baseball diamond. The Sandy Koufax league uses the lighted diamond, also known as Wilson Field, for boys ages 13-15 years. The tennis courts were freshly repainted in 2021, and Pickleball continues to be a popular activity on the courts. The smaller diamond is rarely used after a private group built one on the south end of town. This diamond is only used as a practice field on a first-come, first-serve basis. (5.5 acres)

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**Pickett's Run** - is a park with two locations across the street from each other. The Wayne and Washington Streets section junction includes a looping path with picnic tables, benches, wood carvings, and a story walk added in 2016. The Wells County Public Library changes the story seasonally and maintains the 17 storyboards.

The name of this park comes from the stream that once ran through this area, and during flood events, the water follows this path. This location used to have seventeen homes damaged in the July 2003 flood and had to be destroyed. The city bought this property to prevent future home damage and give area residents a tranquil place to enjoy passive recreation.

The other section of the park has an asphalt path with outdoor fitness equipment and a 46-foot diameter splash pad. A giant Funbrella and a small gazebo provide shade in the park. The fitness equipment was made possible by grant funds from the Northeast Indiana In-Home Services, and the splash pad was a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gift from the Wells County Foundation. Both of these were done in 2007. (1.6 acres for the developed northeast segment and 1.4 acres for the park across the street)



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**Roush Park** - is located at 925 W Silver in the southwest part of Bluffton, at the triangular intersection of Indiana Street, Silver Street, and Clark Avenue. Facilities include a large playground, 2-lighted baseball diamonds, 2-lighted softball diamonds, picnic areas, 1-large pavilion with a grill, and 1-small pavilion, 2 sets of restrooms, 2-concession stands, a maintenance garage, a storage shed, 2-press boxes, 3-batting cages (newly installed in 2021), and 2-unlit basketball courts.

The restrooms at the boy's baseball diamonds were completely remodeled in 2017 to include a changing room for the 50' splash pad. The splash pad has a nearby large Funbrella to provide shade. The diamonds are used by the Farm League (8–10-year-old boys), Junior League (10–12-year-old boys), Junior Softball (8 years to 5<sup>th</sup>-grade girls), and Senior Softball (6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>-grade girls) all of the baseball and softball leagues are run independently paying a rental fee to the Parks Department who maintains the diamonds.

A half-mile asphalt trail was installed in 2017 and has become a very popular path to exercise on. In 2021, a local Boy Scout built a Gaga ball pit for his Eagle Scout project. This game was placed close to the girls' softball fields, along with a Tetherball game, cement hopscotch, and a little library to offer an opportunity for families of minor children to play while they watch the sibling's softball games. (8 acres)



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**Rotary Park** - is located along the Wabash River and is part of our River Greenway Trail. Facilities include a pavilion with picnic tables, an event bulletin board, a bike rack, and a paved parking lot. This pavilion is heavily used, particularly during the summer lunch hours. (2 acres)



**River Greenway Trail Corridor** - is a paved walking and biking trail along the Wabash River. The trail starts at the east end of Wabash Street in the heart of Bluffton and then runs southeast to the White Bridge, a distance of 2.5 miles. The Ouabache State Park has extended the trail eastward from the White Bridge into their park, thereby giving the citizens an extensive trail of nearly 5 miles. The newest feature on the trail is a cement Kayak ramp installed in 2021 at the east end of the trail. Kayaking and canoeing have become increasingly popular in our area with the formation of the Wells County Trails Group and the Bluffton Kayak and Hiking Club. The trail also includes a replica historic covered bridge beside a pull-off parking area and port-a-john. There are many benches along the path to sit down and rest and beautiful chainsaw carvings from a local artist used as mile markers. No horses or motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail. The City of Bluffton used TE grant funds to extend the Greenway trail north along SR 1 to Monroe Street and called that segment the Interurban Trail. Plans are to continue the trail north approximately another mile to Lancaster Park to help complete our section of the 81-mile Pokabache Trail.

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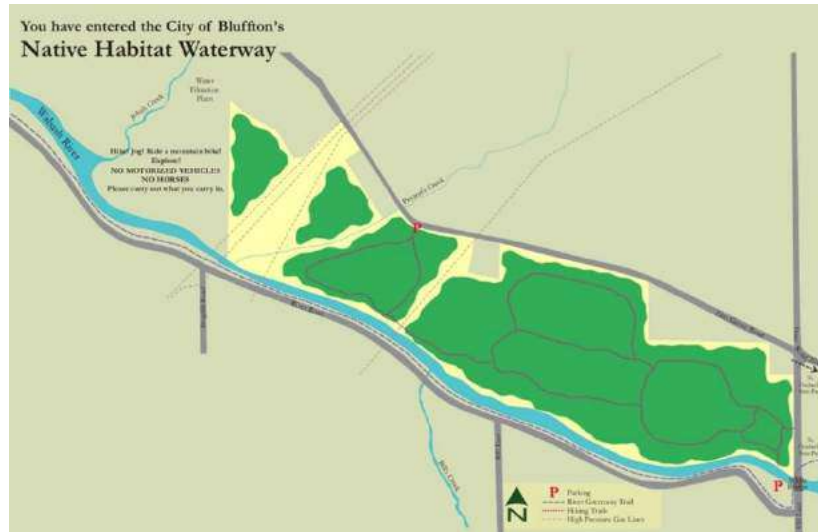
**Wabash River Park**- is located at the west end of the River Greenway Trail Corridor on River Road and offers a gazebo and benches. This site is designed circularly with paved pathways and used for several weddings. It is also the location of a beautiful iris garden with historical significance to our area. These irises are from the award-winning master hybridizers Paul Cook and Edward Williamson. Adjacent to this location is a property measuring 100' x 155' in size and is utilized as a nice green space. You will find many dog walkers enjoying playtime with their pets. This site formerly held a home purchased by the city to extend the Greenway Park area. There is a 16' x 32' pavilion that includes 3-picnic tables frequently utilized for picnics and rest breaks by those visiting the Greenway. Last year the maintenance staff built an oversized Adirondack chair that provides a great photo opportunity. (.57 acres/ adjacent green space & pavilion 2.30 acres)



**Veteran's Park** - is located at 725 S Main in the southeast portion of Bluffton off of Main and Arnold Streets. Attractions at this park include walkways, a memorial garden gazebo, an Eagle statue, park benches, and monuments for those soldiers who lost their lives defending our freedom. (0.15 acres)



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**Native Habitat Waterway** - From 2002 to 2009, Bluffton reforested 148 acres of former bottomland farmland with native grasses and over 50,000 native trees and bushes. This stretch of the Wabash River floodplain is set on the east side of Bluffton and upstream along the north side of the Wabash River. Besides providing floodwater storage and diminishing flood velocity, the reforested bottomland is laced with about 3-miles of dirt trails for foot and mountain bike use. (148 acres)



**Washington Park** - is located at 710 S Mulberry Street, about 2.6 acres, and is located in the southeast portion of Bluffton off Ohio, Mulberry, Arnold, and Bennett Streets. Facilities include playground equipment, one 8-foot goal basketball court (newly resurfaced in 2021), and a lighted 10-foot goal basketball court (freshly resurfaced in 2021). A brand-new facility was built with a climate-controlled indoor pavilion with a kitchen, an outdoor pavilion with picnic tables and electricity, indoor restrooms, and a fitness facility where we hold the popular Rock Steady Boxing Classes 3 times a week. Across the street are three newly resurfaced tennis courts lined with Pickleball. The paths and lighting in this park have been updated, and a cement corn hole game and two horseshoe pits were installed. This is our busiest park, so we added additional parking this summer on the North and South sides to accommodate the increase in rentals. (2.6 acres)

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**Wells Community Swimming Pool** is located at 310 W. Spring was built in 1971 on the city's south side. Facilities include a six-lane, 50-meter outside (gas heated) swimming pool with a 1-meter diving board. There is a 150' twisting waterslide and two small tube slides; concession stand area, restrooms w/ showers, sun deck, playground equipment, picnic areas, and a pavilion with picnic tables and a grill.

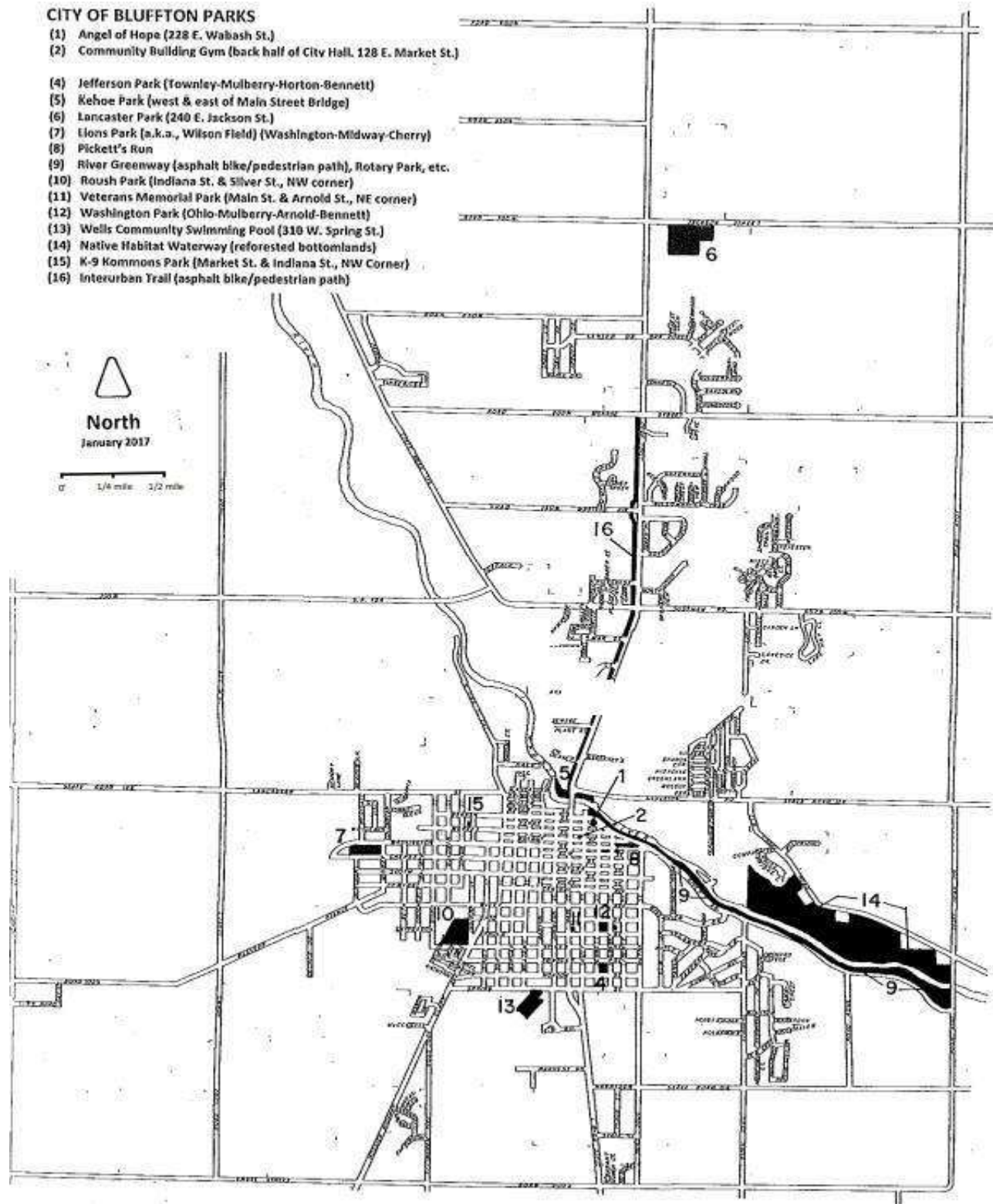
This facility is used by a community swim team for practices and meets. Summer recreation swim lessons are well attended as well as private swim lessons. Teens and adults have the opportunity to participate in lap swim on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday before the pool opens for the day. The pool is also available for private rentals and is usually booked every weekend.

The pool has received updated electrical wiring throughout the pool house, a new regenerative media filter system, new gutters, and deck lighting. The concession area was partially upgraded in 2021 with new stainless-steel cabinets and a fresh coat of paint. These upgrades totaled nearly \$250,000.00 and were much needed for this fifty-year-old facility.

The restrooms, guardrooms, and pool façade are showing their age and will need to be remodeled next. (3.1 acres)

# BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT 5-Year Master Plan

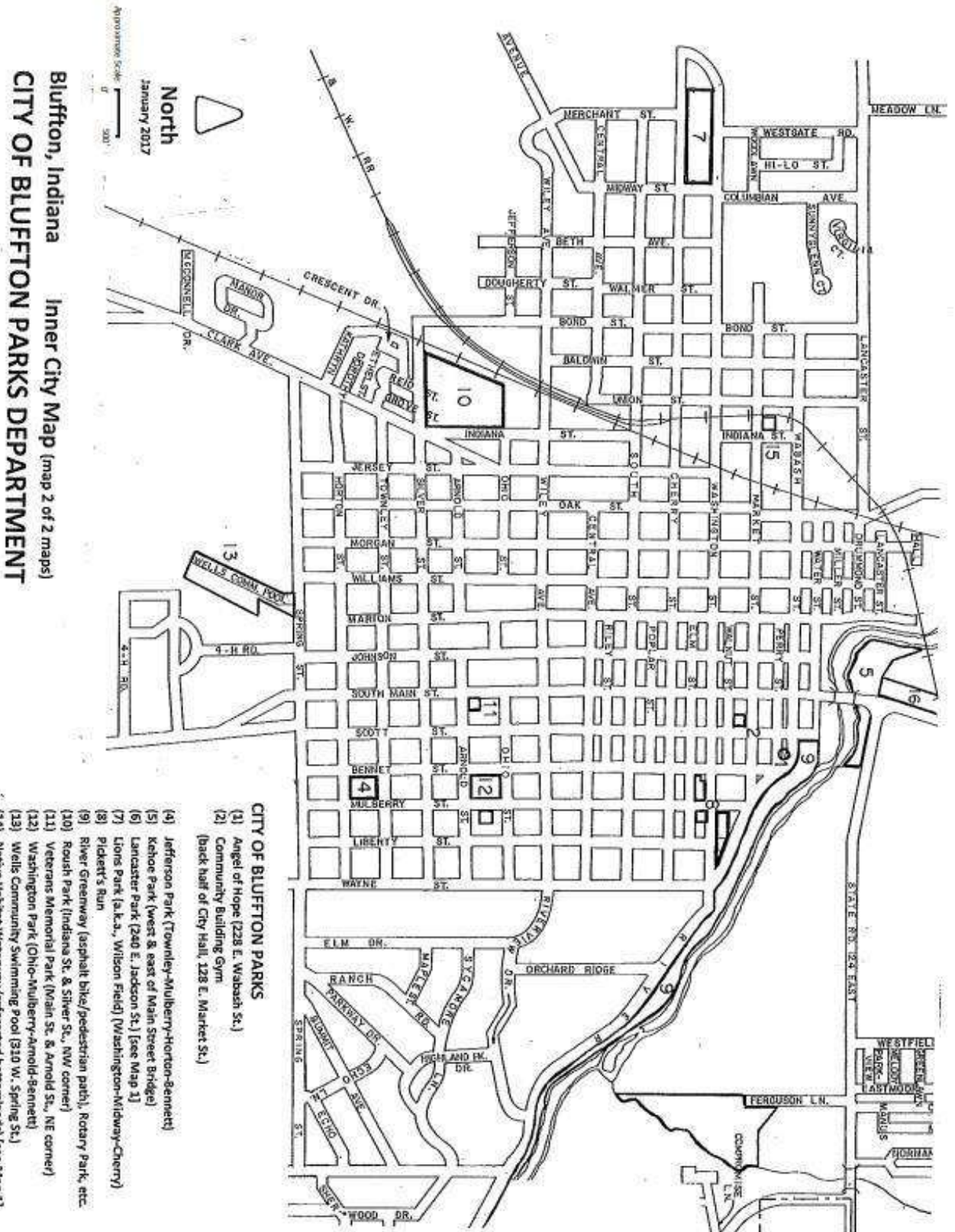
## 4.2 SYSTEM-WIDE MAP



Bluffton, Indiana Overall City Map (map 1 of 2 maps)  
**CITY OF BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT**



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#### 4.3 PRIVATE AND STATE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES



**Wells County 4-H Park** is located in the south-central portion of Bluffton off Spring Street and State Road 1. This Park contains 2-pavilions, fairgrounds facilities- including 3-animal barns and one livestock show arena, tractor-pull strip, 2-outdoor horseshow arenas, and horse barn with stalls, a Multipurpose Barn, Quonset building, open space area, newly constructed concession stand, picnic area with outside grills, camping sites with electric hook-ups, 2-basketball goals, 2-playground areas, a log cabin, and restrooms/showers. It is also the location of the Community Building, which houses the Wells County Extension Office & has meeting rooms & banquet room facilities. The banquet facilities are available for private rentals, and many wedding receptions and other large gatherings are hosted here. We partner with the 4-H for several events/programs. One of our most significant is our annual Daddy/Daughter Dance. (43.29 acres)



**Ouabache State Park** is a 1,104-acre state park property located approximately 2 miles southeast of Bluffton's city limits. The Park has a 124-site electric campground with modern restrooms and shower facilities. A primitive youth tent campground for approved youth groups under adult supervision is available. There is a large pavilion with kitchen facilities, hiking trails, 2-basketball goals, a tennis court, a wildlife exhibit, restroom facilities, and a playground. The newly renovated 100-foot fire tower is one of the few remaining in Indiana, and it overlooks the bison pin. The state park also has Kunkle Lake, a 25-acre lake for fishing, boat rentals, and a swimming beach. A paved bike trail extension connects the park with the city's River Greenway trail for a combined distance of almost 5 miles, and with the construction of the Interurban Trail will increase to 7 miles.



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**Wells County Boys & Girls Club** is located at SR 116 and Wayne Street. The Club is part of a national organization of local chapters which provide voluntary after-school and summer programs for young people. The facility offers a safe environment for youth ages 5 through 18, with structured activities that provide high-quality programs such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) along with life skills and mental and physical well-being. During the school year program, members receive help with their homework to improve their educational skills. Security measures such as door alarms, cameras, and a secured entrance door are in place to ensure the safety of our members. Conveniently located close to the Bluffton Harrison Schools at 1410 S. Wayne St., the facility is within walking distance. Our department partners with the Boys and Girls club to utilize their facility for our senior programs.



**Whicker Park** is located at 425 E Harrison Street on the Southside of Bluffton and is free and open to the public. The inclusive playground was opened in 2017 and covered 13,000 square feet. The play area includes slides, bridges, ladders, three-level platforms wheelchair accessible, and play areas under platforms. The Park features a well-drained artificial surface and has a pavilion with eight tables and attached benches. The Park is geared to younger children regardless of their ability. The Park also includes a t-ball field, restrooms, and a concession stand. Whicker Park was built with grants from the AWS Foundation, the Wells County Foundation, and private donations. (approx. 4 acres)



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**Green Valley Golf Course** Full-length golf course & driving range on the northeast side of Bluffton.



**Timber Ridge Golf Course** A beautiful 18-hole course with fast greens located on the northwest side of Bluffton. Timber Ridge offers a fabulous full-service clubhouse and "Club 250" Event Center. Club 250 is your place for live entertainment and other fun events and concerts.

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**Caylor Nickel YMCA** is located at 550 W. Dustman Road on the northwest side of Bluffton. This is a relatively new facility that opened in 2015. Amenities include a pool and zero-depth splash area, gymnasium, fitness center, athletic fields, chapel, game room, cycling room, and daycare. They offer a variety of fitness classes, summer camps, and occasional special programs.



**Bluffton / Fort Wayne South KOA** is located on the southwest side of Bluffton and has 113 campsites, most of which are full hook up, five rustic cabins, a lodge, a convenience store, and laundry facilities. Amenities also include an outdoor pool, dog park, playground, volleyball, basketball, and walking trail. Activities are scheduled every weekend.



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**Wells County Creative Arts** is situated on the west end of the River Greenway trail on the banks of the Wabash River. The facility includes dance and art studios, meeting rooms, a kitchen, and an art gallery. The Chamber of Commerce shares this building, and it is available for private rentals and hosts numerous weddings, receptions, and a host of other special occasions. The Chamber of Commerce has taken strides in providing our county with a tourism department. An employee has been hired to share their office with the hopes of finding future funding through a hotel lodging tax to support this much-needed service.

#### **PUBLIC SCHOOL RECREATION FACILITIES**

The City of Bluffton is divided into two separate townships and school districts. The two townships are Harrison and Lancaster. Harrison Township includes approximately two-thirds of the southern and central portion of the City of Bluffton. The school district found in Harrison Township is Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District.

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District is the only complete public school system within the city limits. Through a building utilization form that the school provides, we offer the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks and use the Cafetorium as a rain site for our summer concerts. Our only cost to use their facility is the hourly rate for the custodian.

The school does have 2-full-size gyms at the high school and one each at the middle school and elementary school. The elementary also has a multi-purpose (tiled floor) gym. The elementary school

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allows free indoor walking after school hours. The middle school has an indoor swimming pool that we rent a couple of times each year. We typically do an Underwater Egg Hunt in the spring and a Pumpkin Dunkin (swim with the pumpkins) event in the fall. As for the gym, we have never had to utilize them as we have our own, and they are typically very busy with school-related athletics.

The outdoor amenities offered at the school include playgrounds, a sledding hill, basketball goals, a pond, and tennis courts open to the public when the school isn't using them. They also have an updated football field with artificial turf and track that isn't open to the public but made available to us by request for past events, including Special Olympics and Punt, Pass, Kick competitions.

Lancaster Township includes approximately one-third of the City of Bluffton and is located from SR 124 north in the northern portion of the city. Norwell is the school district in Lancaster Township. The Lancaster Elementary School is at the most northern edge of the city limits and includes outdoor playgrounds and basketball courts. We will often utilize the school's additional parking when hosting large events at Lancaster Park.

Southern Wells School District is all of Liberty, Chester, Nottingham, and Jackson Townships and is located in the southern third portion of Wells County.

Other schools located within Wells County are:

Bethlehem Lutheran School – 6514 E.- 750 N., Ossian, Indiana

Kingdom Academy - 225 Ferguson Park Court, Bluffton, Indiana

New Life Christian School – 1621 S.- 350 E., Bluffton, Indiana

Wesleyan Heritage Academy - 410 W. Cherry Street Bluffton Indiana

**SCHOOL ENROLLMENT 2021-2022**

Bluffton High (9-12)	470
Middle (5-8)	558
Elementary (K-4)	707
Total	1,735

Norwell High School (9-12)	793
Middle (6-8)	582
Lancaster (PreK-5)	549
Ossian (PreK-5)	548
Total	2,472

Southern Wells (High & Middle 7-12)	399
Elementary (K-6)	554
Total	953

Bethlehem Lutheran (K-8)	36
Kingdom Academy (K-12)	79
New Life Christian (pre-K -K)	58
Wesleyan Heritage Academy	79

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## 5.0 ACCESSIBILITY

### 5.1 DESIGNATED ADA COORDINATOR

Pursuant to Resolution 2018-2 adopted on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of December 2012 by the Board of Public Works and Safety of the City of Bluffton, the position of ADA Coordinator for the City of Bluffton was created. The following individual was appointed to serve in such a capacity. Briana Lautzenheiser and/or Tim Simpson. Briana Lautzenheiser holds such a position concurrently with her appointment as Deputy Clerk-Treasurer/ HR of Bluffton. She is responsible for overseeing compliance with the ADA. Tim Simpson has such a position concurrently with his appointment as Street Commissioner and is also responsible for overseeing compliance with the ADA.

Briana Lautzenheiser  
Deputy Clerk & ADA Coordinator  
128 E Market. St  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
260 824-0612  
[bri@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:bri@blufftonindiana.gov)

### 5.2 SELF-EVALUATION ON ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

The Bluffton Park Board is committed to providing the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for the physically challenged members of our community. An accessible sidewalk was added to the entrance of the community pool in 2016. Pool entries include a pool ramp, a Portable Aquatic Lift, and easy access stairs. The City Gym basketball court and restrooms are accessible for wheelchairs with a proper access door. ADA picnic tables within the parks provide space for wheelchairs, and additional cement was poured at the benches on the Inter-urban trail to allow room for wheelchairs and mobility chairs to pull off the path. The large restroom facility at Roush Park was completely remodeled in 2015-16 to accommodate the physically challenged. Additional accessible parking spaces were added at both Roush and Washington park. The new facility at Washington Park has handicap-accessible brand-new restrooms and water fountains with the appropriate requirements. Programs are ADA compliant, and we have begun to adapt some events for sensory-sensitive youth. The Park Board will continue to improve the accessibility throughout our park facilities.

### 5.3. SELF-EVALUATION ON INACCESSIBLE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Funding sources for upgrades will be through grants, donations, and the park operating budget. The 81-page ADA Transition Plan for sidewalks and curbs can be found on the City's Website at <https://blufftonindiana.net/data/uploads/2016/01/Bluffton-Transtion-Plan.pdf>.

<u>Parks</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Barrier</u>	<u>Solution</u>
<u>Jefferson Park</u> <u>Wells Pool</u> <u>Lions Park</u> <u>Wilson Field</u>	Men's and women's restroom	No sign on door signifying international symbol of accessibility	Install international symbol of accessibility signs

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<u>Parks</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Barrier</u>	<u>Solution</u>
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wells Pool</u> <u>Lion's Park</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Braille sign not mounted in the correct position	Mount sign on the latch (handle) side of the door, have the sign at least 18x18in centered on tactile characters on the latch side of the door, have a baseline of character on the sign at least 48in above floor and baseline of highest character no more than 60in the above floor.
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>Lions Park</u> <u>Roush Park</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u> <u>Wells Comm Pool</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Pipes below the sink are not insulated/padded	Install padding for pipes
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>Roush Park</u>	Men's and women's Restroom	There are not 18" of maneuvering clearance beyond the latch side of the door.	Reconfigure walls (widen or angle wall connected to storage room by 18" (this will, in turn, shrink the size of the storage room a considerable amount) or install an automatic door opener
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Lacking 60" of clear depth beyond the latch side of the door	Reconfigure walls (remove second doorway frame)
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Roush Park</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	The door closer takes less than 5 seconds to close	Adjust door closer, so door takes at least 5 seconds to close

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<u>Parks</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Barrier</u>	<u>Solution</u>
<u>Jefferson</u>	*Women's restroom only*	There is not enough clear floor space for a person in a wheelchair to turn around at least 60" in diameter in the center of the restroom.	Remove the stall/partition so a person in a wheelchair can turn around in a 60-inch diameter. <u>This will then make this restroom a single-use restroom only.</u>
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>Wells Pool</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Mirror's bottom edge is too high above the floor	Lower mirror until bottom edge of it is no more than 40 inches above the floor.
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>Roush</u> <u>Kehoe</u>	Men's and women's restroom  Kehoe is on the women's side only.	The Paper towel dispenser is too high above the floor	Lower paper towel dispenser until operable part (twist knob) is no more than 48 inches above the floor
<u>Jefferson</u>  <u>Roush Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom  Only Men's restroom at Roush	Toilet height is 15.5" in the men's restroom and 16.25" in the women's restroom- must be no less than 17" and no greater than 19".	Replace and install new ADA toilet with correct measurements (toilet must be no less than 16" and no greater than 18" from the sidewall, toilet handle must be no higher than 48" above the floor, handle must be on the open side of the toilet operated by using one hand without twisting, pinching, or tight grasping)

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<u>Jefferson</u>  <u>Wilson Field</u>  <u>Lion's Park</u>  <u>Roush</u> <u>Softball side</u>	Men's and women's restroom	No grab bar at least 42" long along sidewall or grab bar is mounted incorrectly.	Install grab bar at least 42" long along a sidewall that adheres to all ADA requirements (no more than 12" from the rear wall, extends at least 54" from the back wall, mounted no less than 33in. and no greater than 36" above the floor to top of the gripping surface, make sure there is at least 1.5" clearance between the grab bar and projecting object below)
<u>Jefferson</u>  <u>Wilson Field</u>  <u>Wells Pool</u>  <u>Roush</u> <u>Softball side</u>  <u>Kehoe Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	No grab bar at least 36" long on the rear wall or grab bar is mounted incorrectly.	Install grab bar at least 36" long on the rear wall that adheres to all ADA requirements (must extend at least 12in from centerline of the toilet on one side to the wall, must extend 24" on other open side, must be mounted no less than 33in and no greater than 36" above the floor to the top of the gripping surface, must have at least 12in clearance between the grab bar and protruding objects above)
<u>Jefferson</u>  <u>Wilson Field</u>  <u>Roush</u> <u>Baseball side</u>  <u>Kehoe</u>  <u>City Gym</u>  <u>Wells Pool</u>  <u>Lion's Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom  Roush 1 <sup>st</sup> stall only      Lion's Park is Men's only.	The toilet paper dispenser is incorrectly mounted on the wall per ADA requirements or will be in the way of the wall grab bar.	Mount toilet paper dispenser that adheres to ADA requirements (must be mounted to where the outlet (opening) is located no less than 7" and no greater than 9" from the front of the toilet to the center of the dispenser, the outlet (opening) must be located no less than 15" and no greater than 48" above the floor)



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<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>City Gym</u> <u>Wells Pool</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	The door to accessible stalls is not self-closing	Add closer or replace door self-closing hinges (won't need any since stall doors will be removed since it will become a single-use restroom)
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u> <u>Lion's Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Door opening to the accessible stall is only 28" wide and must be 32" wide minimum.	Widen door width (install new partitions/stalls) or tear out due to single-use restroom
<u>Jefferson</u> <u>Wilson Field</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Both accessible stalls are too narrow. Men's is 37" wide by 55" long, and women's is 35.5" wide by 55" long. Both stalls must be at least 48" wide and 56" long (since the building was constructed before 3/15/2012)	<p>Since both stalls are not big enough for a wheelchair to enter or maneuver around, stalls will need to be widened and reconfigured.</p> <p>A simpler solution would be to remove stalls, so there is enough space for a wheelchair. This will <u>*then make both restrooms single-use only since no stalls or partitions will exist*</u></p>
<u>Wilson Field</u>	Men's and women's restroom	The pathway between bathrooms is gravel	Remove gravel and fill in with concrete
<u>Wilson Field</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Both restroom doors hardware (handles) is mounted too high above the floor, and both doors rub a considerable amount at the bottom of the threshold, causing the door to be opened with more than 5lbs of force.	Both restroom doors should be replaced to make all the corrections as easy as possible and so that both doors have better/more user-friendly hardware. When installing a new entry, the door must have a closer that follows ADA requirements.

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<u>Lions Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Each sink does not have a clear forward approach of at least 30" due to the position of the paper towel dispenser.	Move and reposition the paper towel dispenser at least 48in away from the sink.
<u>Lions Park</u>	**Women's restroom only**	The centerline of the toilet is 12.5" away from the wall. It should be between 16"-18" to be the correct distance from the sidewall grab bar.	Move or replace the toilet.  **A new water line would need to be installed in the floor (underneath) for the toilet, which could cost a significant amount of \$\$**
<u>Lions Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	the sink edge must be at least 18" away from the centerline of the toilet. It is currently only 16.5" away	Move sink away from the toilet a few inches and down to make way for the rear grab bar
<u>Lions Park</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Due to the nature of the women's restroom (re-do plumbing/pipework underneath toilet), the men's restroom may have to become a unisex restroom	*RECOMMENDATION: get rid of both restrooms and create a standalone building with restrooms in it only*  There is another restroom that will be ADA compliant in the same park at Wilson Field.
<u>Roush Park</u>	Men and women's Softball Restroom	Loose gravel is located directly in front of both restrooms, which causes a problematic/uneven/rough transition.	Create a concrete walkway in front of restrooms, so the entrance and entryway into bathrooms are smooth.
<u>Roush Park</u>	Men and women's Softball Restroom	Both restroom doors hardware (handles) is mounted too high above the floor.	Lower the handle or replace the inaccessible knob with lever, loop, or push hardware or add an automatic door opener

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<u>Roush Park</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u>	Men and women's Softball Restroom	Both doors require more than 5 pounds of maximum force to open	Adjust or replace door closures, install lighter doors, install power-assisted or automatic door openers
<u>Roush Park</u>	Men and women's Softball Restroom	There is less than 27" of clearance from the floor to the bottom of the sink.	Replace sink with ADA sink so that there is a minimum of 27in of clearance from the floor to the bottom of the sink
<u>Roush Park</u> <u>Wells Pool</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u>	Women's Restroom at Roush & Pool  Men's side at Kehoe Park	Toilet lever in accessible stall is not on the open side of the toilet	Move lever to the other side of the toilet tank or get ADA toilet
<u>Kehoe</u> <u>Wells Pool</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Doors are not equipped with operable hardware without twisting your wrist	Replace inaccessible knob with lever, loop, or push hardware  Currently, doors are always propped open when in use.
<u>Kehoe</u>	Men's and women's restroom	Accessible stalls are only 48" wide (which is acceptable due to the building being built before 3/15/2012)	Remove block privacy wall in both restrooms and replace with a partition wall that will widen the accessible stall to a minimum of 60".
<u>City Gym</u>	Men's and Women's Restroom	Hand Dryer is too high above the ground floor	Lower hand dryer, so it is no higher than 48" above the ground floor.
<u>Lion's Park</u> <u>Roush Girls Softball Side</u>	Parking lot	Gravel	Pave parking lot
<u>Lion's Park</u> <u>Washington</u> <u>Jefferson</u>	Pavilion and Playground areas	No accessible path	Create sidewalk from the parking lot to pavilion and playground areas

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<u>Lion's Park</u>	Playground areas	Safety surface not accessible	Replace pea gravel with ADA materials that meet ASTM F1951-99 and ASTM F1292-99 standards
<u>Lion's Park</u> <u>Washington</u> <u>Roush Park</u>	Swings	No accessible swing	Install accessible swing
<u>Lion's Park</u> <u>Jefferson</u>	Playground	Lack of accessible play equipment on the ground level	Add additional play features/lower activity panels
<u>Jefferson</u>	Sidewalk	Uneven/broken	Replace sidewalk near Mulberry and Horton St. intersection
<u>Jefferson</u>	Restrooms	No accessible path	Create a concrete walkway from the sidewalk to the restrooms
<u>Jefferson</u>	Playground	No accessible picnic table on a concrete pad	Install accessible picnic table on the concrete pad
<u>Roush Park</u> <u>Splash Pad @</u> <u>Pickett's Run</u> <u>Lion's Park</u>	Parking lot	No designated parking space	Designate a space with room for a lift
<u>Rotary Park</u> <u>Kehoe Park</u> <u>Wabash</u> <u>River Park</u> <u>Pickett's Run</u>	Pavilion	No accessible picnic table	Install accessible picnic table
<u>Splash Pad @</u> <u>Pickett's Run</u>	Splash Pad	No accessible picnic table on a concrete pad	Install accessible picnic table on the concrete pad
<u>Pickett's Run</u>	Trail	The trail is uneven, with large cracks where tree roots lift the trail.	Fix sections of trail

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#### **5.4 INFORMATION ABOUT PUBLIC NOTICE OF ADA REQUIREMENTS**

Accessibility notice per public meetings “Please notify the Clerk-Treasurer’s Office if you need auxiliary aids or other special accommodations before the meeting.” The ADA Transition Plan is posted on the City Website at <https://blufftonindiana.net/data/uploads/2016/01/Bluffton-Transtion-Plan.pdf>. Copies of the plan can be printed off in the Clerk Treasurer’s office at City Hall.

#### **5.5. INFORMATION ABOUT ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

The Grievance Procedure is established to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”). It may be used by anyone who wishes to file a complaint alleging discrimination based on disability in providing services, activities, programs, or benefits by the City of Bluffton. The City of Bluffton Personnel Policy governs employment-related complaints of disability discrimination.

The complaint should be in writing and contain information about the alleged discrimination such as name, address, phone number of complainant and location, date, and description of the problem. Alternative means of filing complaints, such as personal interviews or a tape recording of the complaint, will be available for persons with disabilities upon request.

The complaint should be submitted by the grievant and their designee as soon as possible but no later than 60 calendar days after the alleged violation to:

Briana Lautzenheiser  
Deputy Clerk & ADA Coordinator  
128 E Market St.  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
260-824-0612  
[bri@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:bri@blufftonindiana.gov)

Within 15 calendar days after receiving the complaint, a city representative will meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and the possible resolutions. Within 15 calendar days of the meeting, The City of Bluffton will respond in writing, and where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, such as large print, Braille, or audiotape. The response will explain the position of the City of Bluffton and offer options for substantive resolution of the complaint.

If the response of The City of Bluffton does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the complainant and their designee may appeal the decision within 15 calendar days after receipt of the response to the Board of Public Works or its designee.

Within 30 calendar days after receiving the appeal, the Board of Public Works or its designee will meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and possible resolutions. Within 30 calendar days after the meeting, the Board of Public Works or its designee will respond in writing and, where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, with a final resolution of the complaint.

All written complaints received by the City of Bluffton appeals to the Board of Public Works or its designee, and the City of Bluffton will retain responses from these two offices for at least three years.

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**ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE - CITY OF BLUFFTON**

<b>COMPLAINANT INFORMATION:</b>	
Name:	
Address:	
Daytime Phone:	
Email:	
<b>LOCATION INFORMATION</b>	
Address (If known):	
Location Description:	
<b>NATURE OF GRIEVANCE</b>	
Sidewalk, Ramp:	
Crosswalk, Pedestrian Signal:	
Building Access:	
Programming:	
Other:	
Describe the Grievance/Complaint/Problem:	
Date of Incident, If Applicable:	
<b>FOR LOCAL/ADA COORDINATORS, USE ONLY</b>	
City Representative Preparing the Form if not by Complainant and Date Complaint Received:	
Date Received by Department Head, If Appl.:	
Date Received by ADA Coordinator:	
Date of Initial Contact:	
Date of Meeting or Site Visit:	
Date Assigned to Department Head/Who:	
Date Returned from Department:	
Date ADA Coordinator's Decision Mailed:	
Date Appeal Received by Council:	
Date First on City Council Agenda:	
Date City Council Decision:	
Date Council Decision Mailed:	

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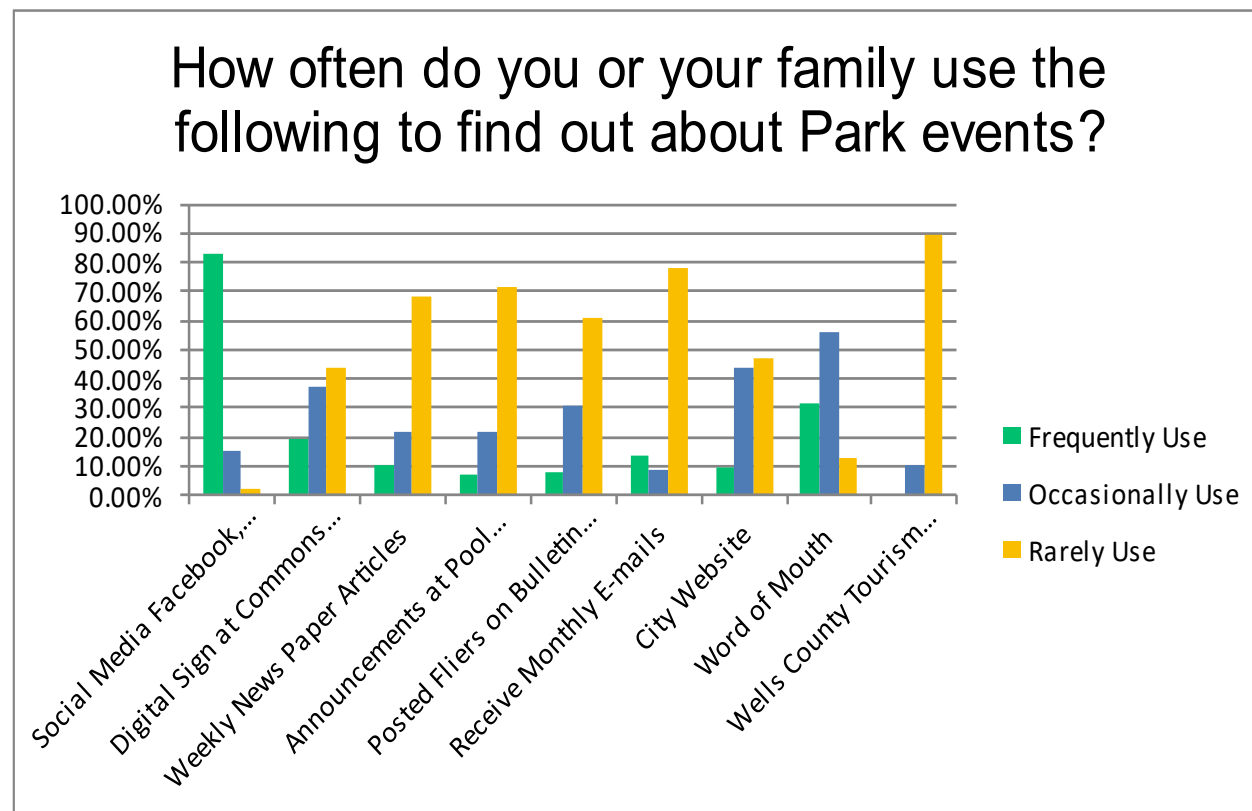
## 6.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### 6.1 BLUFFTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT SURVEY RESULTS

A survey was created on Survey Monkey and sent throughout the community July 9<sup>th</sup> – July 25<sup>th</sup> digitally; the option to pick up a paper copy was offered at City Hall. The survey link was posted to all of our social media sites and e-mailed to everyone on our e-mail list. The link was printed in the News-Banner and advertised on the digital sign on State Rd 1. We only received responses electronically, and the total number of surveys completed was 174, which is much better than five years ago when only 80 were returned. Results are as follows:

#### 1. How often do you or your family use the following to find out about Park events?

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
Social Media Facebook, Twitter Instagram	144	26	4
Digital Sign at Commons Parking Log	34	64	76
Weekly News Paper Articles	18	37	119
Announcements at pool and other events	12	37	125
Fliers on Bulletin Boards/ Handouts at School	14	54	106
Receive Monthly E-mails	24	15	135
City Website	16	76	82
Word of Mouth	55	97	22
Wells County Tourism Website	0	18	156

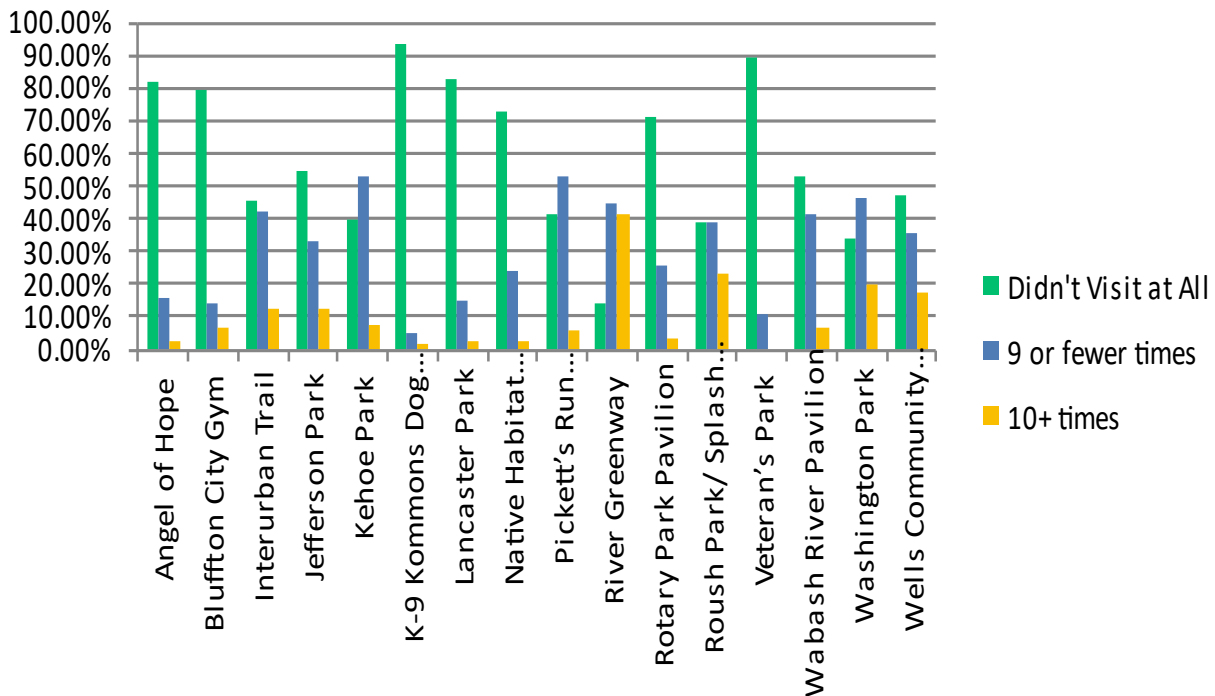


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**2. How many days did you visit these parks in the last 12 months?**

	Didn't Visit at All	9 or fewer times	10 or more
Angel of Hope	142	27	5
Bluffton City Gym	138	25	11
Interurban Trail	79	73	22
Jefferson Park	95	58	21
Kehoe Park	69	91	13
K-9 Kommons Dog Park	162	9	3
Lancaster Park	144	26	4
Native Habitat Water Way	127	42	5
Pickett's Run Park/Splash Pad	72	92	10
River Greenway	25	77	72
Rotary Park Pavilion	123	45	6
Roush Park/ Splash Pad	67	67	40
Veteran's Park	154	19	0
Wabash River Pavilion	91	71	11
Washington Park	59	80	35
Wells Community Pool	82	62	30

## How many days did you visit these parks in the last 12 months?





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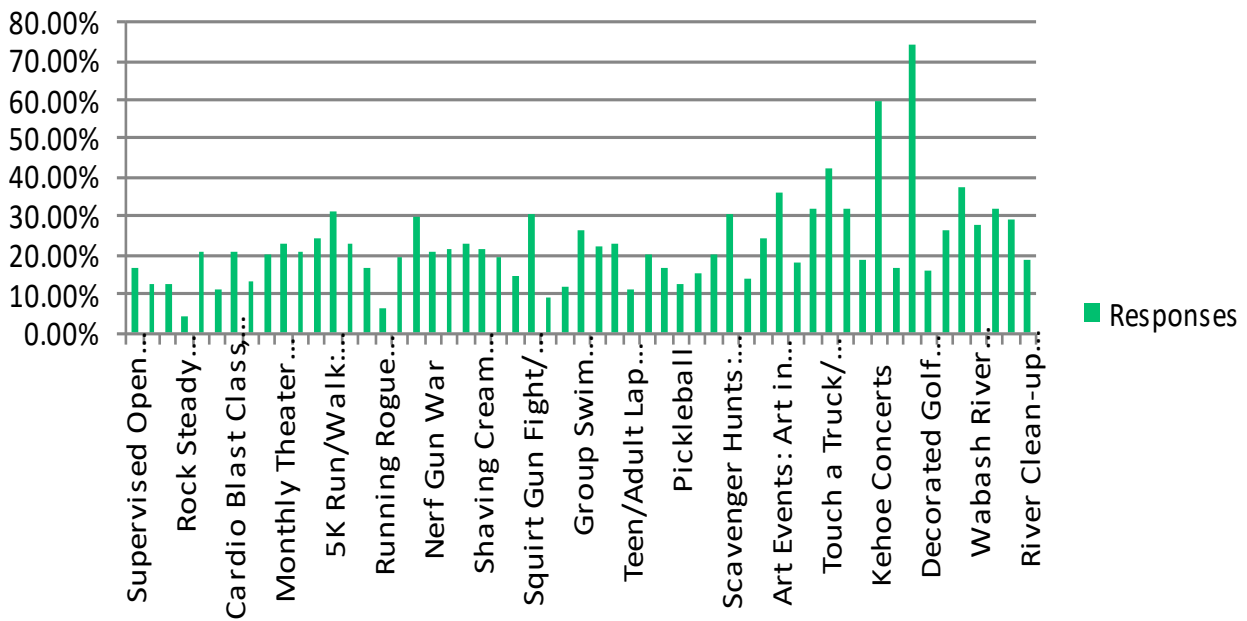
**3. Select all events that you and your family have participated in or would be interested in attending.**

Supervised Open Gym K-12 <sup>th</sup>	29
Indoor Weekday Walkers	21
Parent Supervised Tot Time	21
Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's	7
Wells Winter 100 Challenge	36
Race Around Wells Series	19
Cardio Blast Class, Kick Boxing, Toning Classes	36
Crochet Lessons, Yarn Bomb Participant	23
Indoor Yoga, Yoga in the Park, Yoga Brunch and Bubbles	35
Monthly Theater Thursday Movies	39
Winter Tot Events: Block Party, Special visits, Candy Hunts	36
Farm Wagon (weekly free food)	42
5k Run/Walk	54
Stuff & Fluff	39
Mother Son Superhero Training	29
Running Rogue City Challenge	11
Wookiee Walk	33
Coloring Contests	51
Nerf Gun War	36
Daddy Daughter Dances	37
Princess Tea Party	40
Shaving Cream Fight	37
Under Water Egg Hunt/ Egg Hunt	34
Sensory Friendly events/ adaptive events	25
Squirt Gun Fight/ Giant Slip and Slide	52
Senior Explorations/ Senior Snippets Classes	15
Health Classes, Flu Shot Clinics, Mobile Health Visits	20
Group Swim Lessons K-12 <sup>th</sup>	45
Private Swim Lessons	38
Pee Wee Swim Lessons 4- Pre-K	39
Teen Adult Lap Swim	19
Bike Events	35
Tennis Lessons	29
Pickleball	22
Gaga Ball	26
Summer Tot Events: Bubble Day, Lego Day, Clay Day	35
Scavenger Hunts	52
Animal Explorers, Dog Bone Hunts, Pet Classes	24
Science Events: Scientific Tuesdays, Egg Drop Challenge	42
Art Events: Craft Club, Painting Class, Art in the Park	62
Ballet Performance/ Youth Theater	31
Foam Party	55
Touch a Truck/ Classic Car Cruise	73
Santa Drive by Neighborhoods in Fire Truck	55
Kids Races: Soggy Jog, Bubble Dash, Fastest Kid in Town	32

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Kehoe Concerts	103
Virtual Challenges, Cupcake Wars, Silly Hair Contests	29
July 4 <sup>th</sup> Firework Show	127
Decorated Golf Cart Caravan	28
The Great Pumpkin Hunt	45
Autumn Adventure/ Drive Thru Boo	65
Wabash River Paddle Kayak Trip	48
Letters to Santa	55
Winter Wonderland Santa Visit/ Gingerbread Contest	50
River Clean-up Event	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

Select all events that you and your family  
have participated in or would be  
interested in attending in the future.



**List other events you would like to see**

The kid's triathlon to come back  
Triathlon I think happened this year??  
Health and wellness/cooking classes  
Please return the daddy-daughter dance to February.  
Bring back the glow-in-the-dark run! So much more family-friendly than a Zombie run.

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Hiking Events, Downtown Events, Plays and Theatre Performances, Craft Fairs  
Kids triathlon!

We're having our first baby this fall, and I'm excited to utilize our wonderful parks and events!  
Miss the Friday night movies (June would be nice), model building for kids, pottery, Lego battle-build something, Lego rush, making a board sign, board games, cookie decorating for Christmas, and I will think of other stuff later:)

We loved the angry birds slingshot event

More daddy-daughter events and mother-son events

Evening Adult Swimming at City Pool in the summer and Bluffton School pool in Winter months. For those working day time, hours do not work. I have been attending another Counties/City Evening adult swim events because they cater to the working adult. I'd much rather stay here in Bluffton.

More historical events and tours.

I just wish that events weren't always JUST in Bluffton. Why not take some of these and do them in Ossian, Poneto, Liberty Center, Keystone, Zanesville, etc. It would be good to reach out to all the people that drive in to do this stuff but also help promote your parks program.

more events for adults - preferably crafts or historical things

Gardening classes, succulent, small yard ideas

Monthly kayak trip or rent a kayak or canoe on the river every Saturday. Electric scooters like they have in Ft Wayne. I also think a walking bridge over the river would be a great draw, but not like the ugly bridge we have on Mainstreet now. Something like the river walks in Ft Wayne, but on a smaller scale obviously.

Adult chalk walk, more culinary workshops, outdoor cooking, herbs, river float.

Some on Saturdays or later in the day would be nice for working families

**4. Please answer the follow questions about our programs**

	YES	NO	No Opinion
Are you happy with the number of programs for toddlers?	72	6	96
Are you happy with the number of programs for school-age children?	104	12	58
Are you happy with the number of programs for adults?	119	24	31
Are you happy with the number of programs for seniors?	57	7	110
Did you participate in any park programs in the last 12 months?	139	28	7
Are you happy with the price of the programs you have participated in?	144	3	27
Was the program you attended well organized?	143	2	29
Were you happy with the quality of the program you attended?	138	3	33
Were the instructors, volunteers, and staff friendly?	141	2	31

**Please list any additional comments about programs here.**

Re: Group Swim Lessons- Program was not made clear to parents of first-timers. Students teaching the children were less than interested in the level 1 group. If the child wasn't excelling at the same rate as others, they became visibly annoyed. Things were not explained on the children's level. They did not make sure they had the group's attention before giving instruction. Could all use some lessons in how to teach. I cannot speak for the other levels. Only the level 1. Glad we only paid \$6.

A few of the events, I wasn't sure what to do/where to go next.

We went to one event, in particular, that wasn't well detailed on the social media post, so when we arrived, it was much different than what our kids anticipated, and we're not really greeted or made to feel welcome. I feel like many of the events need more details and info about duration, expectations,

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etc. Also, it would be good if you only shared the fb event when promoting your programs instead of a post where we have to search for it ourselves.

We come to free events, low-income family

Lisa Beck always gives 100plus in the Summer Striders

I would like to see more for age 10 and up. Not sure what it would be, but surely there has to be something

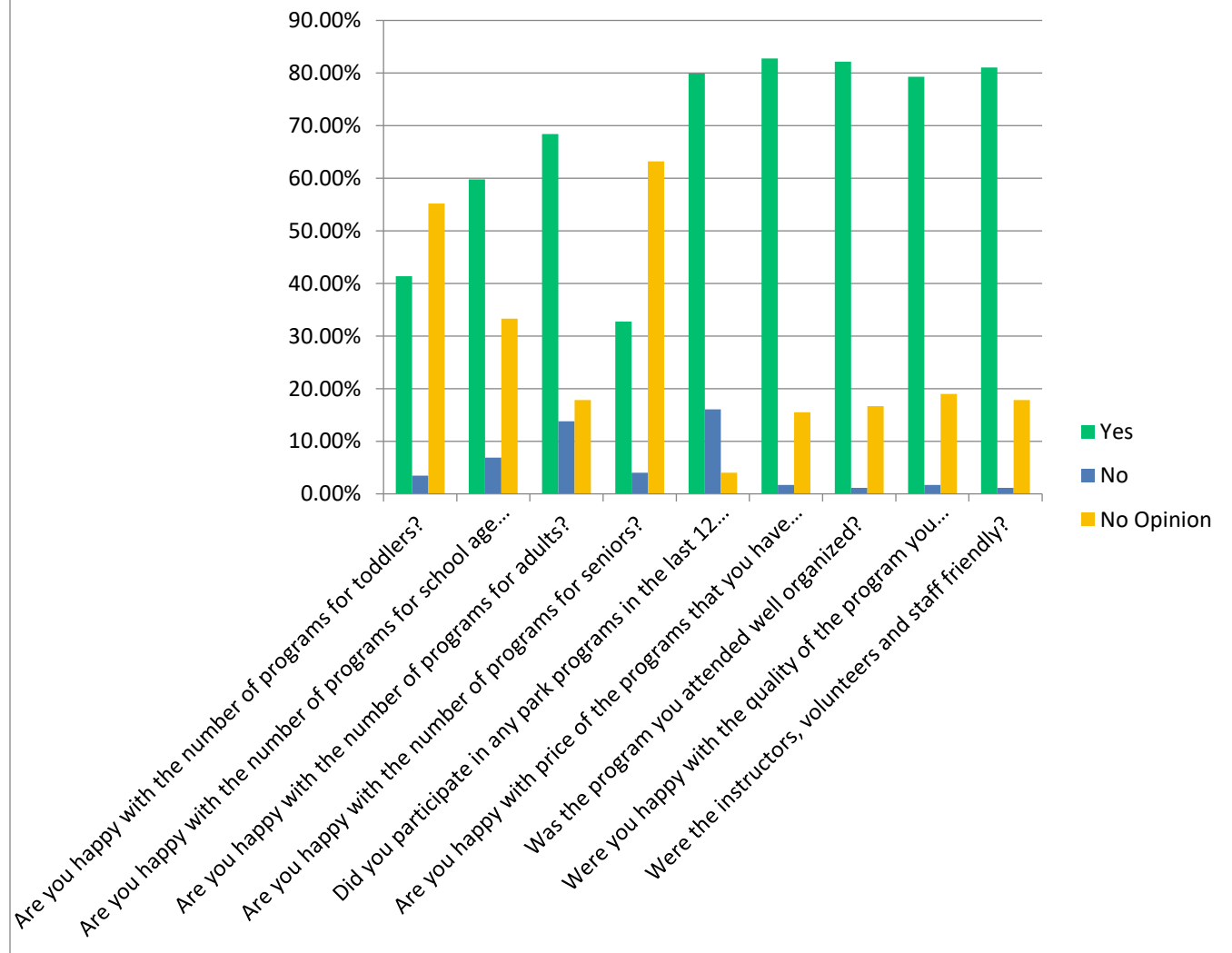
They are amazing!

We certainly missed going to many events when they were canceled with COVID this past year. And are hoping they will continue.

We wish there were more kids events offered during weeknights in addition to weekdays

Tuesday aerobics class & Thursday boxing classes are fantastic! Great instructors, great price & great location

Please answer the following questions about our programs.



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**5. How often do you or your family participate in the following recreational activities?**

	Monthly	A few times a year	Never	Want to start
Badminton	2	11	146	15
Baseball/Softball	31	43	85	15
Basketball	21	47	99	7
Boxing (non-contact)	3	4	143	24
Cornhole	19	66	75	14
Cycling	36	39	86	13
Disc Golf	2	14	132	26
Dodgeball	2	20	135	17
Fitness/Toning Classes	24	24	86	40
Fishing	27	63	64	20
Gaga ball	6	20	134	14
Hiking	43	67	47	17
Horseshoe	1	19	138	16
Kayak/Canoe	12	59	64	39
Kickball	5	28	127	14
Kickboxing	1	6	135	32
Log Rolling	0	1	162	11
Pickleball	2	11	139	22
Racquetball	1	9	147	17
Running	24	28	116	6
Shuffleboard	0	7	154	13
Skating	5	25	123	21
Skateboarding	8	9	152	5
Soccer	9	23	122	20
Swimming	45	88	31	10
Tennis	6	33	118	17
Volleyball	11	34	116	13
Walking Water Aerobic	7	13	123	31
Wiffleball	3	17	142	12
Yoga	14	20	105	35

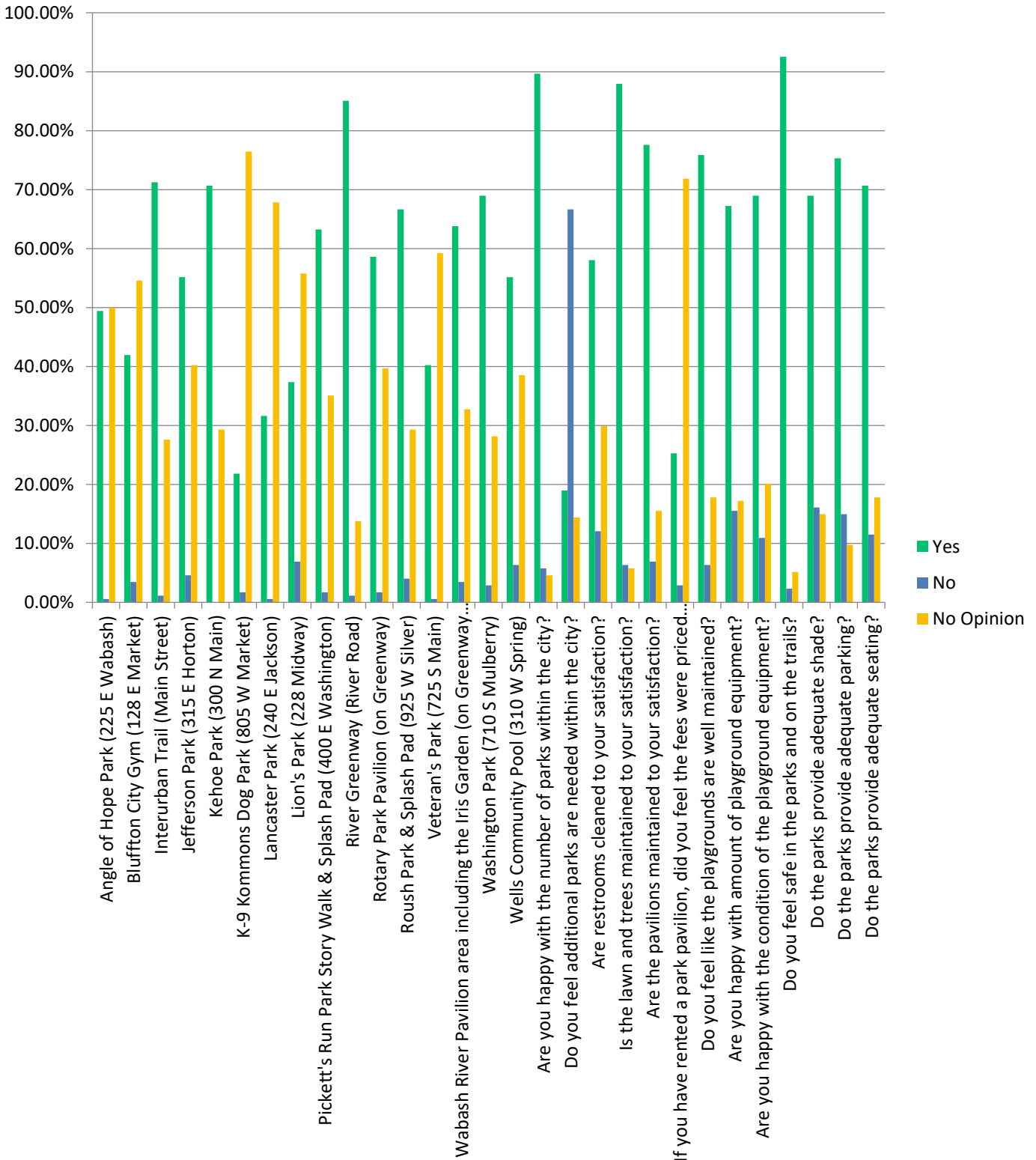
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**6. Are you happy with the maintenance and upkeep of the following parks?**

	Yes	No		No Opinion
Angel of Hope (225 E Wabash)	49.43%	86 .57%	1	50.00% 87
Bluffton City Gym (128 E Market)	41.95%	73 3.45%	6	54.60% 95
Interurban Trail (Main Street)	71.26%	124 1.15%	2	27.59% 48
Jefferson Park (315 E Horton)	55.17%	96 4.60%	8	40.23% 70
Kehoe Park (300 N Main)	70.69%	123 0.00%	0	29.31% 51
K-9 Kommons Dog Park (805 W Market)	21.84%	38 1.72%	3	76.44% 133
Lancaster Park (240 E Jackson)	31.61%	55 .57%	1	67.82% 118
Lion's Park (228 Midway)	37.36%	65 6.90%	12	55.75% 97
Pickett's Run Park (400 E Washington)	63.22%	110 1.72%	3	35.06% 61
River Greenway (River Road)	85.06%	148 1.15%	2	13.79% 24
Rotary Park Pavilion (on Greenway)	58.62%	102 1.72%	3	39.66% 69
Roush Park & Splash Pad (925 W Silver)	66.67%	116 4.02%	7	29.31% 51
Veteran's Park (725 S Main)	40.23%	70 .57%	1	59.20% 103
Wabash River Pavilion/Iris Garden	63.79%	111 3.45%	6	32.76% 57
Washington Park (710 S Mulberry)	68.97%	120 2.87%	5	28.16% 49
Wells Community Pool (310 W Spring)	55.17%	96 6.32%	11	38.51% 67
Are you happy with the number of parks?	89.66%	156 5.75%	10	4.60% 8
Are additional parks needed in the city?	18.97%	33 66.67%	116	14.37% 25
Are restrooms cleaned to your satisfaction?	58.05%	101 12.07%	21	29.89% 52
Are lawn/trees well maintained?	87.93%	153 6.32%	11	5.75% 10
Are pavilions well maintained?	77.59%	135 6.90%	12	15.52% 27
Are pavilion rentals priced right?	25.29%	44 2.87%	5	71.48% 125
Are playgrounds are well maintained?	75.86%	132 6.32%	11	17.82% 31
Is there enough playground equipment?	67.24%	117 15.52%	27	17.24% 30
Is playground equipment in good condition?	68.97%	120 10.92%	19	20.11% 35
Do you feel safe in the parks and trails?	92.53%	161 2.30%	4	5.17% 9
Do the parks provide adequate shade?	68.97%	120 16.09%	28	14.94% 26
Do the parks provide adequate parking?	75.29%	131 14.94%	26	9.77% 17
Do the parks provide adequate seating?	70.69%	123 11.49%	20	17.82% 31

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## Are you happy with the maintenance and upkeep of the following parks?





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**Please let us know if you have any specific maintenance concerns or suggestions.**

More playground equipment at Washington parks; lights on the river greenway at night specially from Stoddard eastward

The ice cream stand at Washington Park has foul language on it. I'm always impressed at how you try to keep up with stuff like that

Play equipment could be updated, add shade trees

Roush needs more benches, picnic tables, and playground equipment as does Lions. The south side of the river on the east side of town needs weed whacked more often. It is hard to see the river. Grass also needs to be cut short along the river and in the parks. It often looks shaggy even right after it has been mowed. I think Washington Park also needs more playground equipment. If there is ever a chance to take out those God-awful lamp posts in Washington Park, please do that as well. It is supposed to be a park and instead looks like downtown

Would like to see a playground or some sort of addition to Rotary Park (Along the river Greenway) the Washington park: the merry-go-round or whatever it's called seems to be having some issues.

Jefferson Park seems to have some outdated play equipment

Miss the concessions during games at Jefferson. Shortage of parking at Roush during game season.

The only thing that I think would be so great would be to have dog waste stations, where bags are available and then trash cans...also have seen some doggy water fountains

Would love a bathroom on the River Greenway

All the maintenance staff park/pool are amazing and do a terrific job!

Swimming pool bathrooms

The parking at the park question... Yes, there is normally enough parking except at Roush during baseball season.

Would like to see the kids pool be opened/repared or made into a splash pad for younger kids. Some equipment at parks is out of date. Some slides need to be lower to the ground at the bottom so you get kids can go down without needing a parent to catch them.

Washington shelter prices are too expensive, need more picnic benches with shade at parks and we need a place for toddlers to play that is safe and not over run by older kids

The river greenway and interurban trail needs additional lighting. I often feel unsafe and not seen by drivers when it gets dark October - April in the early evening hours. The frames and bases of fitness equipment in the City Gym gets dusty and could use more frequent wipe downs.

Roush Park equipment always has writing on it.

Large shade canopies would be nice at Roush especially

Some of the playground equipment needs repairing/replaced at Washington Park. I don't think there is enough playground equipment at Roush Park.

Pool bathrooms need to be updated so that they can be cleaned more thoroughly.

Angle of hope access from North side is scary. Parking not aware of any.

Roush Park the back diamonds when softball is playing is dangerous. Need more room or show where cars are not supposed to go

Better lighting for greenway

Some of the trees in the parks are not trimmed like they should be. Lower branches should always be trimmed in the first 5 years especially. If not, you have trees that develop dead branches and lots of knotty branches and trunk formations down low. Also, the parks maintenance crew need to set their mower decks lower. When they mow, they only take the tops off the grass, then it doesn't get mowed again for a while. Also, I feel like the weeds and tall grasses on the south side of the Greenway need to be weed whacked regularly. Right now, the weeds are so tall in most places that you cannot see the

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beauty of the river, and you certainly can't find many places to fish unless you want to sit in weeds that are three or four feet tall.

The parks Maintenance crews are amazing

The community pool could be fixed up with the kiddie pools. Get it going for the little ones especially babies

Parking at Jefferson Park, especially during baseball season, is difficult.

Possibly add more dog waste receptacles and even dog waste bag stations so if a person forgot to bring bags with them

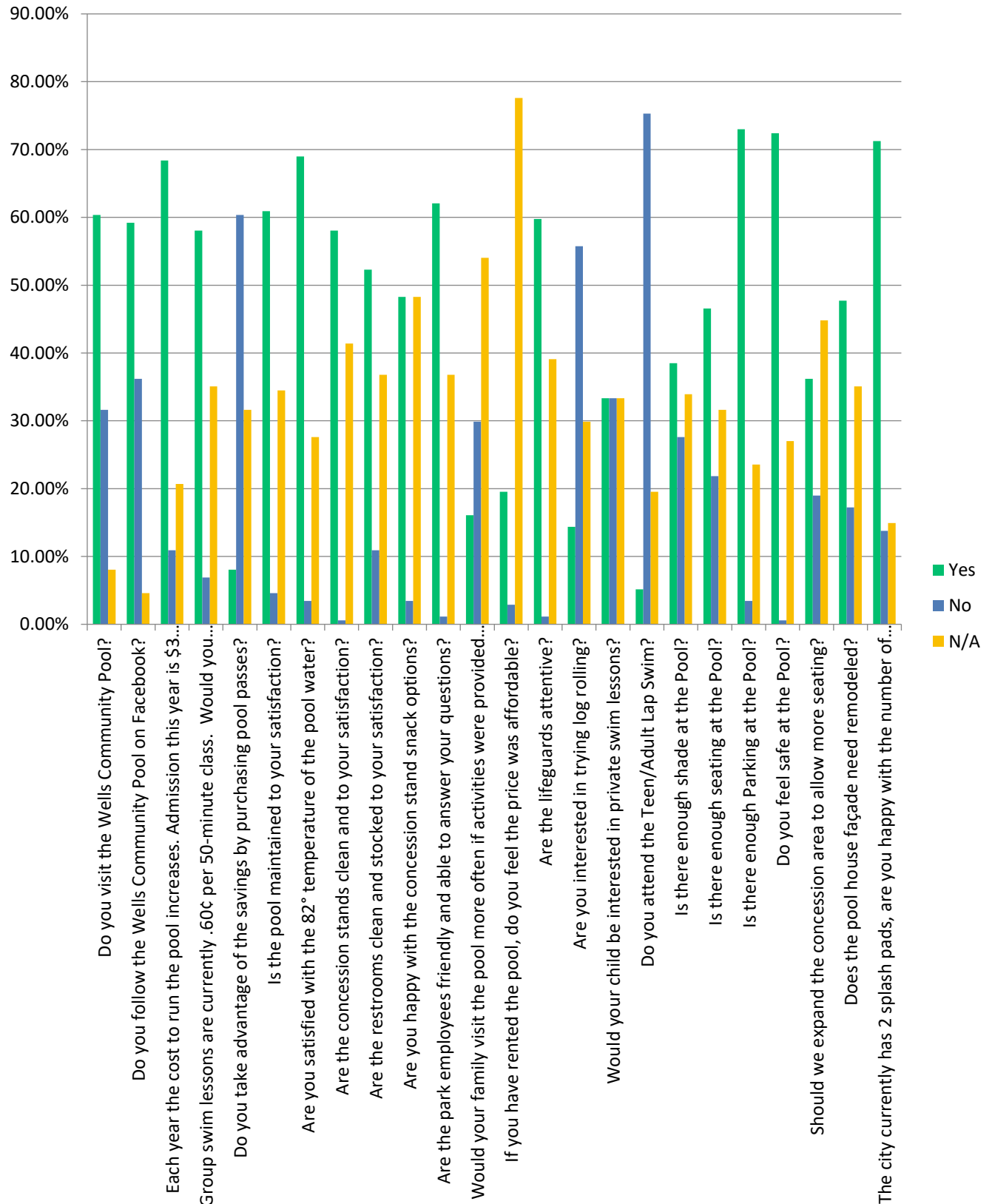
Would like something at Lancaster Park

**7. Please answer the following questions**

	Yes		No		N/A	
Do you visit the Wells Community Pool?	60.34%	105	31.61%	55	8.05%	14
Do you follow the Wells Community Pool on Facebook?	59.20%	103	36.21%	63	4.60%	8
Would you support a .25 increase in admission?	68.39%	119	10.92%	19	20.69%	36
Group swim lessons are .60 per 50-minute class.						
Would you support a \$2 per class fee? (2 weeks =\$20)	58.05%	101	6.90%	12	35.06%	61
Do you purchase pool passes?	8.05%	14	60.34%	105	31.61%	55
Is the pool maintained to your satisfaction?	60.92%	106	4.60%	8	34.48%	60
Are you satisfied with the 82° temp of the water?	68.97%	120	3.45%	6	27.59%	48
Are the concessions clean & stocked?	58.05%	101	0.57%	1	41.38%	72
Are the restrooms clean & stocked to your satisfaction?	52.30%	91	10.92%	19	36.78%	64
Are you happy with the concessions snack options?	48.28%	84	3.45%	6	48.28%	84
Are the park employees friendly and helpful?	62.07%	108	1.15%	2	37.78%	64
Would you visit the pool more often if activities were provided during the 2 o'clock break?	16.09%	28	29.89%	52	54.02%	94
Is the pool rental fee affordable?	19.54%	34	2.87%	5	77.59%	135
Are lifeguards attentive?	59.77%	104	1.15%	2	39.08%	68
Are you interested in trying log rolling?	14.37%	25	55.75%	97	29.89%	52
Would your child be interested in private lessons?	33.33%	58	33.33%	58	33.33%	58
Do you attend the Teen/Adult Lap Swim?	5.17%	9	75.29%	131	19.54%	34
Is there enough shade at the pool?	38.51%	67	27.59%	48	33.91%	59
Is there enough seating at the pool?	46.55%	81	21.84%	38	31.61%	55
Is there enough parking at the pool?	72.99%	127	3.45%	6	23.56%	41
Do you feel safe at the pool?	72.41%	126	0.57	1	27.01%	47
Should we expand the concession area for more seating?	36.21%	63	18.97%	33	44.83%	78
Does the pool house façade need remodeled?	47.70%	83	17.24%	30	35.06%	61
Are you happy with the number of splash pads in town?	71.26%	124	13.79%	24	14.94%	26

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## Please answer the following questions



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**Please list any comments, concerns, or programming ideas about the pool**

The restrooms need some major updating

Another splash pad would be neat. Shade by the park at the community pool would be nice

I would like to see the baby pool brought back.

We love the pool and the price, especially the 4-6pm discount. The bathrooms are pretty gross, and most of the showers don't work in the women's room. The lifeguards this year have been great.

If the pool doesn't make enough money, you should increase your fees, especially swim lessons, 60 cents is too cheap.

Would love a splash pad on the north side of town

I do think some areas need more trees. Washington Park needs more, so does Roush.

It would be nice to have a baby/toddler area like there was before

The chairs at the pool are the same as when I worked their 15+ years ago! I'm sure it's not cheap, but many of them are broken. This year there have been several days we were there that no lifeguards were in either chair near the shallow end. Another day we were there, the deck was covered in pebbles and just needed a little care to be swept before all the little bare feet were going to be on it!

Longer hours into the evening

Shower rooms are nasty. Looks like caked toilet paper on floors. Dark, just don't look clean.

Additional options for adult swim would be nice for those who work during the day

Pool house building needs updated. Looks outdated and old. Redo the entrance and concession areas.

It's crowded with the entrance and people online for concessions. Provide more seating at concessions.

The pool concession area needs more shade area

Fill in the little baby pool please! Staff are very kind! Pool is always warm and well maintained! Kudos to those workers!

I believe swim lessons need to be raised but not sure \$20. Maybe \$15. Yes, pool prices could go up to also help with cost.

Pool locker rooms need a makeover. Splash pad at the pool would be great!

Our pool needs to be bigger the whole thing needs expanded

Again, please consider adding an evening adult swim time for those working. I would much rather stay in my home town than drive to Decatur to attend their adult swim events which are held in the evening for working adults.

Close it.

Splash pad on/off switch doesn't work properly. Couldn't get it to turn on. Had to stop using and go home. Very disappointed!

A lot of the chairs are broken and not enough for the amount of people that come and use the pool. Has a season pass been offered before? Rather than a certain number of tickets.

Wonderful lifeguards in 2021! Definitely support an increase in the cost for group swim lessons, the lifeguards did an excellent job with all ages and it was undoubtedly worth more than \$6 for two weeks.

A splash pad in Poneto, Liberty Center or maybe Petroleum would sure be nice for the kids out here that can't get all the way into Bluffton.

More workers in the concession stand during breaks. It takes 20 minutes to buy popsicles because of all the food that is purchased. Or a line for just candy and popsicles (things that don't need made.) Last suggestion: a third person during breaks to help get the food that doesn't need made and those waiting on food can step to the side.

Water aerobics give one free a month with city gym membership

The pool staff is great, and the facility has the potential to be great. I suggest raising prices for admission by \$1.00 (not .25) if you need to generate revenue. I also suggest setting a firm standard for patron behavior and then sticking to that standard. Parents bringing their young children to the pool today is

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critical to the future of the pool. If young families won't attend because of theft, profanity, alcohol and drug use, and inappropriate behavior, you lose future patrons. Kids will be kids. They will occasionally make poor judgments, use profanity, etc. But generally speaking, kids will abide by clear expectations that are established and consistently applied. If unsupervised kids are permitted to behave poorly, parents will stop bringing younger kids to the pool, knowing that they will be exposed to unwanted behavior. Please remove kids who do not behave after being advised of the concerns. Inform their parents of the conduct. Word will get out that the pool management is serious about a family friendly atmosphere. Families will appreciate it. Kids will comply or find somewhere else to go. If drugs or alcohol are found, the police should be notified. Even if they ultimately cannot make an arrest, they can educate, issue a warning, etc. and again, the perception will be that the alcohol and drugs are not welcome and that the city and the management are firm on that and will do everything they can to protect the family friendly atmosphere. This form does not allow me to review what I have already typed. I hope my reply makes sense. This is not a complaint. The lifeguards are great. They are nice to the kids and families. They seem to enjoy their jobs. I just feel strongly that a pool has to be managed very well in order for it to remain a place that parents will bring young kids. I think we have too much profanity, theft, and drug use. That reputation is easy to get and very hard to shake. Thanks for the opportunity to share

I wish there was a way that we could bring in water to drink while we're swimming

It would be nice to have hours that were either earlier in the day or later in the evening. With toddlers that nap it's hard to make it before they close

Put money into getting the baby pool back up and running.

Would be wonderful to somehow bring back a kiddie pool, locker rooms at pool in need of updating

When the pool is busy sometimes there isn't enough seating.

The pool was really gross the first time we went this season, lots of bugs & leaves, but the next time was much better

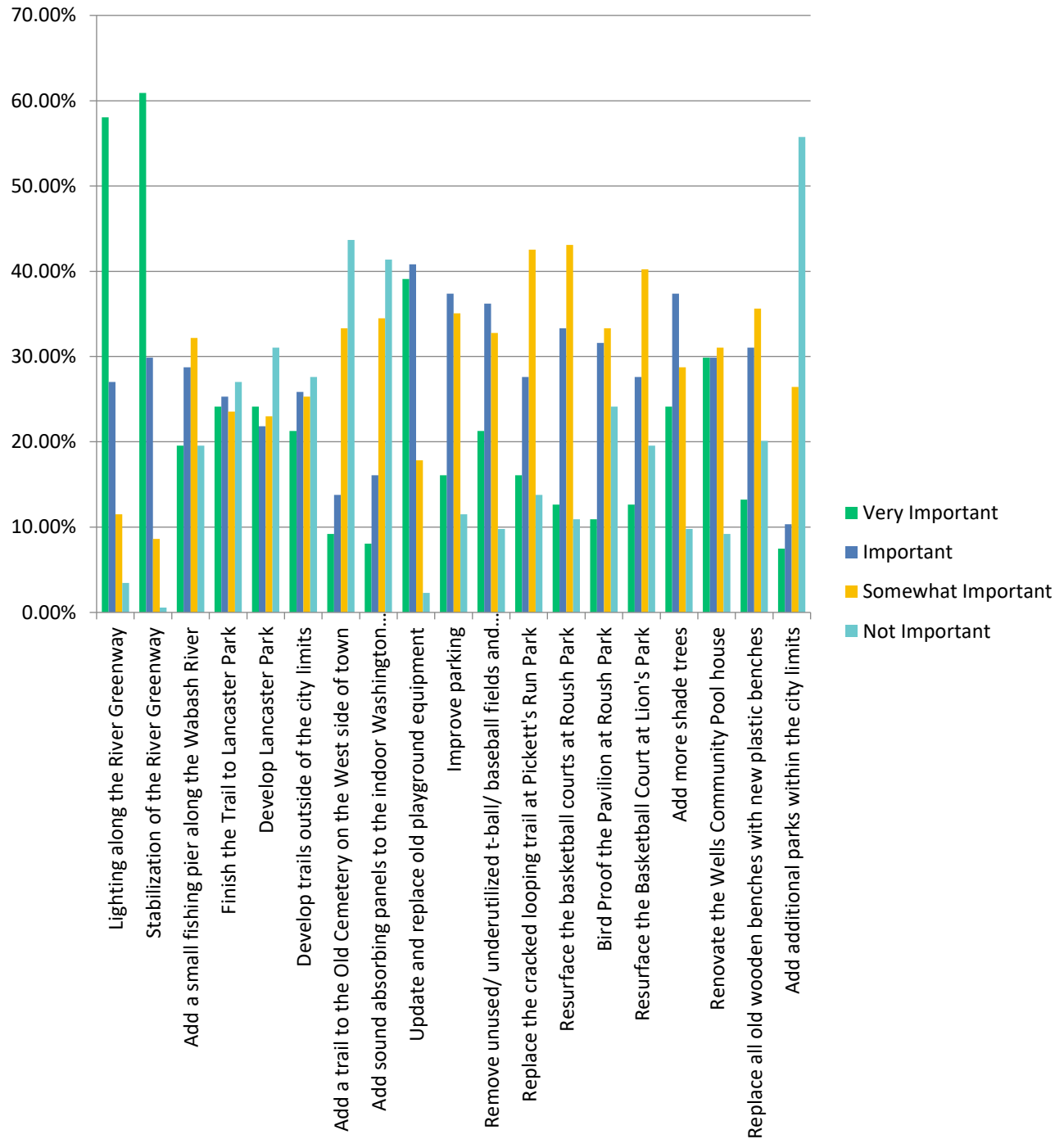
**8. Please rate the following park improvements**

	Very Important		Important		Somewhat		Not Important	
Lighting along the River Greenway	58.05%	101	27.01%	47	11.49%	20	3.45%	6
Stabilization of the River Greenway	60.92%	106	29.89%	52	8.62%	15	0.57%	1
Add fishing pier along the Wabash River	19.54%	34	28.74%	50	32.18%	56	19.54%	34
Finish the Trail to Lancaster Park	24.14%	42	25.29%	44	23.56%	41	27.01%	47
Develop Lancaster Park	24.14%	42	21.84%	38	22.99%	40	31.03%	54
Develop trails outside of the city limits	21.26%	37	25.86%	45	25.29%	44	27.59%	48
Add a trail to Old Cemetery west of town	9.20%	16	13.79%	24	33.33%	58	43.68%	76
Add sound panels to Washington Pavilion	8.05%	14	16.09%	28	34.48%	60	41.38%	72
Update/replace old playground equip	39.08%	68	40.80%	71	17.82%	31	2.30%	4
Improve parking	16.09%	28	37.36%	65	35.06%	61	11.49%	20
Remove unused/unfertilized								
t-ball/baseball fields and repurpose	21.26%	37	36.21%	63	32.76%	57	9.77%	17
Replace looping trail at Pickett's Run	16.09%	28	27.59%	48	42.53%	74	13.79%	24
Resurface basketball court at Roush Park	12.64%	22	33.33%	58	43.10%	75	10.92%	19
Bird Proof the pavilion at Roush Park	10.92%	19	31.61%	55	33.33%	58	24.14%	42
Resurface basketball court at Lion's Park	12.64%	22	27.59%	48	40.23%	70	19.54%	34
Add more shade trees	24.14%	42	37.36%	65	28.74%	50	9.77%	17
Renovate the Wells Comm Pool house	29.89%	52	29.89%	52	31.03%	54	9.20%	16
Replace old benches with new plastic ones	13.22%	23	31.03%	54	35.63%	62	20.11%	35
Add additional parks within the city limits	7.47%	13	10.34%	18	26.44%	46	55.75%	97



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Please rate the following park improvements.



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**Please list any improvements you feel are important**

Trails outside of city limits would be wonderful.

Drop lions park and invest in the parks we have and not an old school dump.

None of the playground equipment needs replaced...just add. If it is broken, then replace, but don't just replace things to replace them. Same with benches. If you want to start incorporating plastic benches...then do so as the wooden one rot, but don't just get rid of things and replace. I think resurfacing and maintaining the parks is a great reason why not to develop Lancaster Park. We don't even maintain, update, and or add to the ones we have. No to Lancaster Park and more trails! Waste of money!

Lighting alone the entirety of the Greenway would be a huge bonus for early morning walks in the fall-winter-spring!

More safe walking paths

We love on the west side of Bluffton and would love to see a park close to our house. Maybe instead of the dog park :)

Modern playground equipment like Quicker Park more water parks for kids

Add toddler area to Pool.

The end of the inter urban ends just short of the Walmart parking lot (by about 8 feet or less) but because of the curb I cannot use it. (I use a scooter to enjoy the ride to Walmart.) I am disabled.

The only place I would add parking is Roush Park.

Plastic benches get to hot in the summer. Our children get burned. We need more sports/ activities for kids in the afternoon!

I think it was a sad day when they took the trees out of downtown. I think we need to take care of the parks we have instead of adding more parks like Lancaster.

No more parks, please. Everyone has easy, comfortable access to parks. Let's make what we have great. I would love to see a large wood and rope play area with lots of climbing features like I have seen other places. Also, shade awnings over baseball stands would really be nice.

Add a splash pad in southern Wells County

Lancaster Park! A diamond in the rough. Very important to develop parks north of the center of town.

Everything that goes north gets used and enjoyed. Shops, restaurants, etc.

Please do not add more parks. Let's update what we have before adding others that need money and upkeep. Also, I don't think you need to get rid of Playground equipment, but I do feel you need to add to what is in existence. More attractions along the river would be spectacular! However, developing trails outside of the city or Lancaster Park? Most people I have spoken with think those things would be a waste of money!

If the pool house needs renovated, we should definitely renovate because that is one of our main attractions in Bluffton everybody loves a pool and a gigantic slide in the playground you just can't beat that add more baby park equipment

Re-do Roush Park ball diamonds, dugouts, concessions. Or give them a facelift.

**9. Demographics**

**What is your gender?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	15.61%	27
Female	84.39%	146
<b>Answered</b>		<b>173</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>1</b>

**Where do you live?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
I live in Bluffton city limits	64.37%	112
I live outside city limits	35.63%	62
<b>Answered</b>		<b>174</b>

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**Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Married	75.29%	131
Widowed	1.15%	2
Divorced	8.62%	15
Single, but cohabiting with another	5.75%	10
Single, never married	9.20%	16
<b>Answered</b>		<b>174</b>

**How many children are you parent or guardian for and live in your household (aged 17 or younger only)?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
None	35.06%	61
1	16.67%	29
2	22.41%	39
3	13.79%	24
4	8.05%	14
More than 4	4.02%	7
<b>Answered</b>		<b>174</b>

**What is your age group?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
20 and under	2.87%	5
21 - 30	16.09%	28
31 - 40	32.18%	56
41 - 50	24.14%	42
51 - 60	15.52%	27
61 - 69	6.32%	11
70+	2.87%	5
<b>Answered</b>		<b>174</b>

**What is your annual household income?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
\$30,000 and under	12.94%	22
\$31,000 - \$60,000	32.94%	56
\$61,000 - \$89,000	25.88%	44
\$90,000+	28.24%	48
<b>Answered</b>		<b>170</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>4</b>

**What is your ethnicity?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
White or Caucasian	98.84%	171
Black or African American	0.00%	0
Hispanic or Latino	0.58%	1
Asian or Asian American	0.00%	0
Other	0.58%	1
<b>Answered</b>		<b>173</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>1</b>

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**10. Please feel free to add any additional comments**

Thank you for updating our town

I really appreciate our Park Department! I'm so thankful to have such great programs for my kids!

No more ball parks!! Make a lazy river or something more people can use longer then on month.

Please return the daddy daughter dance to February, or at least another weekend besides Father's Day.

We have attended yearly but didn't this year because our son wouldn't have been able to be with his dad on Father's Day while he took our daughters to the dance. Dads want to spend the day with all of their children, not just their daughters.

Ft Wayne has some wonderful wooden playground sets in some of their parks. Kids love these, and they would be a great addition to Lions, Washington, and Roush.

Trail to old cemetery not necessary. Trails outside city limits should not be city's responsibility. County should pay more for pool upgrades & maintenance. No more ball diamonds are needed, particularly at Lancaster. Money should be put into pool before any new projects. Including Lancaster Park. More parking for Roush & Washington Parks. City should purchase some of the decaying homes surrounding those parks & turn them into usable/needed parking.

Maybe add a splash pad near whicker park?

We'd love to be able to know or have posted bathroom days/hours/seasons on the outside of all the parks bathrooms. It is good to know ahead of time if there aren't any options for bathrooms before deciding to take our family to the park.

No ball diamonds at Lancaster Park

Wish there was activities after 530PM and pool would be open at least 1 day a week until 8 so the working adults can enjoy the community with their children

Parks department does wonderful. Thanks for all you do!

We have recently moved to Bluffton and am thankful for what it has to offer in the way of parks...

Washington and whicker park are both amazing parks. We are especially partial to whicker because of the handicap friendly equipment. We would love to see a nice City Park on the northwest side. It seems that out of the four "quadrants" if you will, of the city, the northwest is really the only one that does not have a park if I am not mistaken. We really wish that the dog park was a human park. :)

The Parks Dept. does a great job in our community!

Very happy with the Park Departments efforts to make the city better. Thank you.

Lions Park needs updated.

Overall, our Parks Department is the best! Always working for improving and continuing wonderful programs.

Love the Bluffton parks dept.

You do a fabulous job! I love Bluffton Parks Department!

Thank you for all you do! We really do have one of the best parks departments in the area!

The parks department offers great programs and prices on the gym. We would be more involved if we lived closer to town. We would love to use the gym if we were able to get into town more often.

You guys do a great job!

We are so lucky to have such an amazing parks dept. I love that you guys so many events.

Appreciate all of the improvements to the parks. Still work to be done. I would like the communication on social media accounts to be better and soon when it comes to events of the week. The pool this year has been great and we have enjoyed all the activities we have done this summer.

We need more physical activities for 2-5-year-olds (soccer, t-ball something) and another park like wicker (the one by the boys and girls club) we need one on the west side of town towards uptown  
More seating at Jefferson Park since the stands are gone, better playground equipment at Jefferson, and a dedicated parking lot for Jefferson Park.

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Lions Park needs updated also better parking at Jefferson or put t-ball and coach pitch back at Lions Park I would like to see the Parks Department dial back expansion and zero in on what we have. Close down what isn't popular. Close the pool if it can't survive in the black. Bluffton has a YMCA with a pool so the option is there for families who really want it. Replace unused baseball and t-ball diamonds with a simple flag football/rugby/Frisbee pitch.

Adult activities in the evening some still work during the day like walking groups

The baby pool at the local swimming pool was such an amazing feature to have, please bring it back.

More concerts at Kehoe

I think parks does an amazing job overall and appreciate all they do for Bluffton!

It would be really nice to have the free food farm wagon come out to the little towns outside Bluffton on a rotation and serve our entire community, not just those that happen to live in town.

It would be nice to have some of the kids' events in the evening for parents that work.

I haven't seen any baseball or t-ball information. We're new to the area, so we didn't know when sign-ups were happening. If a paper was sent home through Southern Wells schools, then maybe I missed it. But if not, that would be helpful.

No new parks, don't add to the greenway/trail (adding lights for the greenway has always been a hope for this frequent user—maybe some sort of solar lighting??) just keep updating and maintaining the parks we already have in our wonderful city, and keep up the good work with providing so many community activities. We live 2 miles out of town but love our city and our parks department!

Develop some areas in the southern part of the county.

Keep up the great work

Reduced cost for families on fssa benefits low income.

The programs are the best!! They do such a great job!!

The 5K races are usually very well marked, organized, and reasonably priced. However, it seems rude to give out the medals before all participants have completed the race. It gives the appearance of excluding the slower participants. All participants should be able to enjoy the whole event, including the awards presentation.

I still think a river walk across the river somewhere would be a hit! Not like the ugly bridge, but something like the river walk in Ft Wayne. Also, kayak and canoe rental on weekends, trimming the trees and cutting grass shorter at all parks. Along with frequent weed wracking along the Wabash so people can fish. I also like the idea of a fishing pier.

I think the parks are great. I live in Ossian. And bring my kids to the parks often.

would like to see a kayak landing near Bluffton Main St bridge.

We have an amazing parks department and we should be very proud of them

We love the parks activities for kids! It was a lifesaver after lockdown in 2020, to have a place to go and do something even when the playgrounds were still off-limits. We are so thankful!!

We love coming to all of the activities offers by the Bluffton Parks department; along with the playgrounds and splash pads. It makes our summer break that much more fun!

Would love to see diversity in playground equipment. Not saying each park has to widely differ from one another, just adding an option or two that is different would allow for a varying experience.

We love the park programs in Bluffton and feel it is one of the biggest assets to this community

Our parks dept is amazing!! Thanks for all of the hard work & amazing things you guys do! You are one of the main reasons we stay in Bluffton

Alex Penrod is doing an amazing job



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**6.2 DOCUMENTED FOCUS GROUP, BOARD MEETING, EMPLOYEE MEETING, PUBLIC MEETING**

Several public and specific focus group meetings were held throughout the year. Meetings were advertised as open to the public in the local newspaper and on Bluffton Parks Department social media sites. The City of Bluffton employees, both permanent and seasonal, were given the opportunity for their input as well.

The Public meeting announcement was posted from August 4<sup>th</sup> – August 17<sup>th</sup> on the digital sign on State Road 1, on fliers hanging in our parks, and announcements were made at the Wells Community Pool and during the Kehoe Concerts. The event was posted on the City's website <https://blufftonindiana.net/data/uploads/2021/08/The-Bluffton-Parks-Department-will-be-holding-a-public-meeting-on-Tuesday.pdf>, and two mass e-mails were sent to everyone on our monthly e-mail list. An audio recording was made of the August 17<sup>th</sup> meeting for future review and stored electronically in the Park Board file.

**February 23, 2021 - Bluffton Optimist Club Meeting** - Attendance: 8

I was invited to present to our local Optimist Club from 7-8 am at the Corner Depot Restaurant. We discussed our upcoming programs and current improvements to our park facilities and the future Lancaster Park development plan. I asked for their input, and they suggested we look into seeing if our community would like a shuffleboard court. We made sure to ask if our community was interested in the game on our Masterplan survey. They also appreciate our trails and would like to see the Interurban finished to Lancaster Park. Other than those suggestions, they were very complimentary to our department for how the parks are maintained and the variety of programs offered.

**May 10, 2021 - Bluffton Park & Recreation Board Meeting** - Attendance: 6

The Bluffton Parks & Recreation Board met for their regularly scheduled meeting at City Hall from 6:30-8:24 pm. On the agenda was the need to look at our 5-Year Budget and identify large projects that need to be accomplished. The development of Lancaster Park, updating the Wells Community Pool, additional parking at Roush Park were some immediate needs. The board agreed to set aside \$180,000 out of the Capital Improvement Fund to be earmarked for the Lancaster Park Project. Brandy wrote a Grant to the Wells County Foundation for \$44,000 for the parking at Roush Park, and quotes will be sought to improve the Wells Community Pool. It was also decided to invite the pool staff to the next meeting to get their input on pool improvements for the next five years.

**June 1, 2021 - Bluffton Park & Recreation Board Meeting** - Attendance: 9

The Bluffton Parks & Recreation Board met for their regularly scheduled meeting at City Hall from 6:30-8:47 pm. This month, the Pool managers, Pool Maintenance, and Maintenance supervisors were in attendance to focus on the Wells Community Pool goals for the next five years. Suggestions were made to increase revenue since the pool usually sees a \$40,000-\$50,000 loss each year. Ideas included offering a lap lane during open swim instead of a dedicated lap swim hour, allowing minors into lap swim times instead of just adults, offering rentals during the day hours before the pool opens, charging bracelets to use the giant slide, adjusting the fees for pool rentals based on the number of people attending, increase costs for admissions and swim lessons, offer personal swim lessons, and move the basket room register to the concession area to cut down on needed staff.

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We were made aware of needing new footrest boards at Guard Chair 2, additional pool seating, lack of umbrellas at the concession tables, and running toilets in the women's restroom. Improvements included a new shed to store equipment, better flooring in the men's and women's restroom, pool house façade remodel (remove the shaker wood and replace with block – the angle of the design allows water to enter the building and is rotting the boards and privacy dividers), expand the concession area, and repurpose the old kiddie pool area with deck space. The Park Board decided to allow minors into the lap swim time, offer personal swim lessons, and consolidate the job of the concessions works with the basket room attendant. A new footrest was ordered for Chair 2, and questions were added to the 5-year Masterplan survey to get public input about the pool.

**July 30, 2021 – Focus Group Meeting with Bi-County Services** - Attendance: 7

Bi-County Services is a non-profit in our community that provides services for special needs individuals living in Adams and Wells County. I met at their facility on July 30<sup>th</sup> from 1-2 pm to discuss our parks and programs. The group consisted of 5 clients and two staff. They were very excited about the upcoming development of Lancaster Park and look forward to trying out disc golf and walking on the trail. We discussed ways their participants can continue to volunteer in park programs, for example, stuffing our Easter Eggs, handing out water at races, and picking up trash along our trails. They didn't have any additional suggestions, but they were very thankful for our partnership.

**August 17, 2021 – Public Meeting** - Attendance: 18

We held our 5-year Master Plan Public meeting last Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, at the Washington Park indoor pavilion from 6:00-7:00 pm. The group consisted of mostly seniors and adults over the age of 40 and all four park board members. A 14-slide PowerPoint presentation explained who we are and what we do and shared the public survey results. Afterward, a discussion was held to seek community input. A few program suggestions from the meeting include Pickleball tournaments, Broomball, disc golf clubs, make and take basket classes or painting parties, square dancing, bus trips, and geocaching. There was also interest in magic shows, woodworking classes, DIY classes, American Sign Language lessons, and more outdoor winter programming requests.

We asked if there were any park issues we should know about during the meeting. We heard about the Inter-urban Trail that currently ends at Walmart without handicap access to the parking lot, making it difficult for those who travel on mobility scooters to shop safely. Until an additional sidewalk is put in, they must use the busy road. Concerns about the raccoons pulling trash from the cans along the River Greenway were also raised. Our department will be looking into animal-resistant trash cans to replace what is there now.

We also spent some time discussing the Wells Community Pool. Each year the pool takes a loss of \$40,000-50,000 dollars, and this year was no exception. The attendance for the pool seems to be less and less each year. 2010 saw 16,000 people, 2011 had 15,555, by 2013, the pool had 12,000 visitors, and this year was our lowest entire season at 10,114. A suggestion was made only to operate the pool five days a week instead of 7 days a week, closing on the days the pool typically has low attendance. Sponsors could also be sought to purchase a free pool day for the community in exchange for advertising throughout the day or even hanging a banner on the fence during the pool season.

Comment sheets were handed out to everyone in attendance that asked the following questions. Are there any changes you would like to see in our existing programs? Answers included more evening

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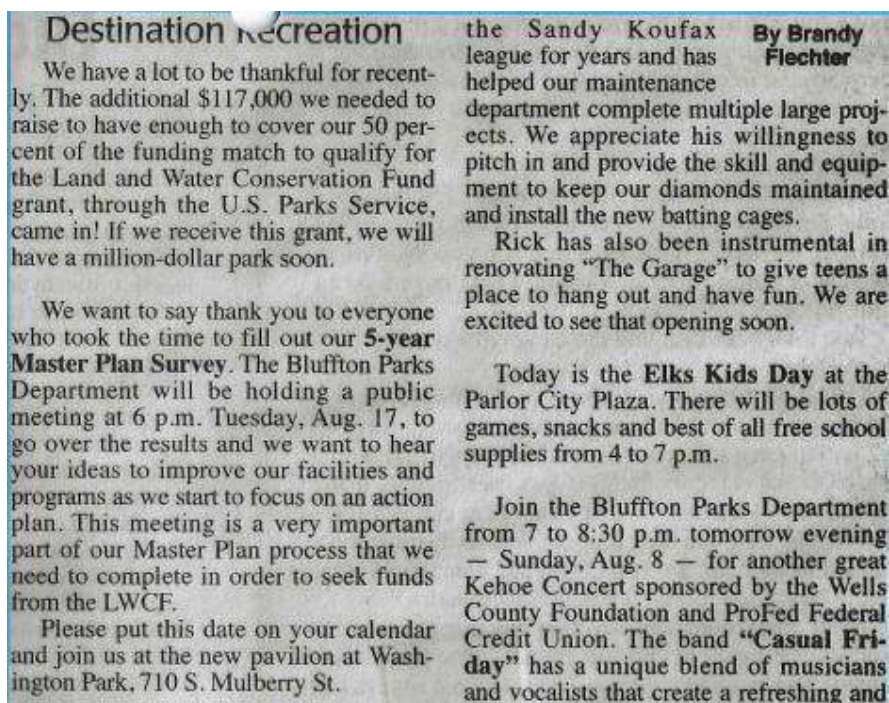
options for working families. Are there any new programs or services we should consider? Responses included couples date nights, offer self-defense classes again, Cornhole tournaments, wine tasting, rock wall climbing, and alcohol ink classes. Do you know of someone we should be partnering with? Lowes, Churches, schools, and American Heritage Bust Trips were mentioned. We asked if there are any park issues we should know about, and the answer came back that our most used parks have restroom vandalism and that there should be a sidewalk or path from the parking area to the pavilion at Lion's Park. We asked about suggestions to fund future projects, and a raffle/ purse bingo was mentioned, along with having seniors do yard work and memorials. The final question we wanted to know was if renovations are needed at our parks or facilities. New items mentioned were lights on the Greenway, separate weight stacks in the weight room, and updating our fitness equipment to replace machines on a regular schedule.

**August 25<sup>th</sup>, Maintenance Employee Meeting – Attendance: 6**

I sat down with the maintenance staff on Wednesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, from 7:30-8:30 am to discuss maintenance goals for the next five years. They mentioned that the splash pad at Pickett's Run Park needs more earth shaping to allow the benches a flat place around the pad. They would eventually like to have a different location for the maintenance shop away from the river because of the potential for flooding. They mentioned that maintaining all of the flowerbeds at the parks is becoming challenging, and they would like to turn some space back into grass for easier maintenance. They would be interested in having a sledding hill in the empty space at Lion's Park.

**6.3 NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**

Three public meeting notifications were published on Facebook for the August 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. On Aug 4<sup>th</sup>, the post reached 1,253 people, Aug 11<sup>th</sup> reached 503 people, and Aug 16<sup>th</sup> had 1,019 people. An event was published on Aug 4<sup>th</sup> with 392 people reached. The following Bluffton News-Banner articles were printed:



## BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT 5-Year Master Plan

*Mondays Aug 9, 2021*

**Lautzenheiser Jr. proposed a new launch location to Wells County Council member Chuck King at the river's White Bridge.**

The bridge has a concrete slab that faces against the river's flow and allows easy

A group of kayakers took advantage of Sunday's beautiful weather and the placid surface of the water to cruise the Wabash River. They're shown here pulling their crafts out of the water east of the Crosbie Bridge in downtown Bluffton. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

Updates on the kayak launch project will be posted on Wells County Trails Facebook page.

*conner@news-banner.com*

**Parks Department will hold public meeting Tuesday**

The Bluffton Parks Department will hold a public meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 17, to review the department's five-year master plan.

The results of the meeting will assist the department in seeking funds. The meeting will be held in the new pavilion at Washington Park, 710 S. Mulberry St.

**Input requested at Parks meeting**

A public meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 17, to discuss the five-year master plan for the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department.

The meeting, which will be held in the new pavilion at Washington Park, is a significant park of the process to obtain a federal grant that the Parks Department has applied for. Ideas are requested on facilities and programs going forward.

Washington Park is at 710 S. Mulberry St.





BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT  
5-Year Master Plan

Articles printed after the 5-year Masterplan meeting on August 17<sup>th</sup>.



Brandy Fiechter, right, seeks input from members of the public to formulate the department's five-year plan. The special public work session was held by the Bluffton Board of Parks and Recreation Tuesday evening at the Washington Park pavilion. (Photo by Glen Werling)

## Bluffton parks department considers future steps

By GLEN WERLING

What will, or should, the Bluffton Department of Parks and Recreation do in the next five years to meet the needs of the public it serves?

That was the question discussed at a special meeting of the board of the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department Tuesday evening.

If parks departments want to be eligible for grants, they have to compose a five-year plan. The plan charts a course for the park board and gives the board, and the department, goals to shoot for in the future.

Eighteen people were at the

Washington Park Pavilion to voice their opinions about what they would like to see done at the parks over the next five years.

The special public work session was piggybacking on a survey the department made to find out more about how happy the public is with the parks programs, what programs they participate in, whether they are pleased with the maintenance of the parks, what they like or don't like about the Wells Community Swimming Pool, and what they wanted to see done in the future with the pool and the parks.

The participants in the survey, and those present Tuesday eve-

ning, hands down picked stabilization of the Rivergreenway and lighting along the Rivergreenway as the top priority over the next five years.

The survey participants picked updating and replacing outdated playground equipment a distant third.

Also in the survey, renovating the pool house was fourth. Tied for fifth place were finishing the Interurban Trail to Lancaster Park, developing Lancaster Park and planting more shade trees.

On the survey, developing trails outside of the Bluffton City Limits and repurposing unused or under-

utilized ball fields were tied for sixth. Adding a small fishing pier along the Wabash River, replace the cracked trail at Pickett's Run, resurfacing the basketball courts at Roush and Lions parks and replacing all of the old wooden benches with plastic benches were also in the running along with several other recommendations.

From those in attendance Tuesday night were recommendations to add programs for kayaking, canoeing, kick boxing, ice skating, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, broom ball, and pickleball.

One person wanted to see a park for skateboarders. Also sug-

gested was a geo caching program, curling, one-day bus trips to various events and locations, hay rides, rock wall climbing, woodworking, magic shows and disc golf.

Disc golf is already in the planning, Fiechter said.

One person also suggested instructional courses on topics ranging from home improvement projects to American Sign Language.

Fiechter asked how the parks could be improved.

Park board member Rick McEvoy suggested finding some way to stem the tide of vandalism that

(Continued on Page 2)



# BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT 5-Year Master Plan



A preliminary drawing of what the developed Lancaster Park will look like was also unveiled at Tuesday night's park board meeting. The football/soccer field is the dominant feature in the middle. Plans are to retain the sledding hill. (Photo by Glen Werling)

## Bluffton parks department

(Continued from Page 1)

has been occurring at the parks on a seemingly regular basis.

Those in attendance suggested volunteers to monitor the facilities and closing the restrooms at the parks earlier, as the restrooms seem to be a particularly tempting target for the vandals.

One woman also wondered if it would be possible to keep the raccoons from getting into the trash cans along the trails. She observed they make an "awful mess."

One woman with mobility challenges wanted to see the trail extended into the Walmart Supercenter park-

ing lot, not just up to it. She also wanted to see a trail at Lions Park to the pavilion.

Another woman asked if doggy-doo stations could be posted on the trails. Fiechter said that the plans are to post those soon.

Fiechter asked the people for suggestions on how to make the Wells Community Pool so that it wasn't such a money loser for the department.

Attendance at the pool has been up and down over the past 11 years, but it has been steadily progressing on a downward trend. This year, the pool lost \$40,000.

Some items for consideration were limiting the

days the pool is open to five days a week. Days that are poorly attended — Mondays and Tuesdays in particular — would be the days to be closed. Fiechter also floated the idea of getting sponsorships for the pool.

Fiechter asked if there was any group the parks department should partner with. Churches, local clubs and sororities and schools were suggested.

Fiechter also laid out the proposed plans for Lancaster Park and had a drawing available Tuesday night for people to view.

Plans for the park include a gaga ball court, a sand volleyball court, cornhole

courts, a life-sized human football court, a disc golf course, a bike repair station, a solar charging station, picnic table seating, fire pits, bike racks, and a full-sized soccer/football field.

The trail in the park will be connected with the Interurban Trail.

The parks department is seeking a \$500,000 Indiana Land and Water Conservation grant is being sought to assist in funding the park's development.

Plans are in the future to also have a playground at the park, but that's not included in the grant request.

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## Bluffton Parks & Rec News & Notes



### Destination Recreation

Last Sunday's princess tea parties were so much fun. We sold 150 tickets between the two parties, and by the looks on the kids' faces, they had an amazing time.

We need your help picking out next year's princess. Email our office at [events@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:events@blufftonindiana.gov) and let us know who you would like to have come and visit Bluffton.

We held our **five-year Master Plan** public meeting last Tuesday and we really appreciated the suggestions and ideas. A few program suggestions that came from the meeting include pickleball tournaments, broomball, disc golf clubs, make and take basket classes or painting parties, square dancing, bus trips, and geocaching. There was also some interest in magic shows, woodworking classes, DIY classes, American Sign Language lessons, and more outdoor winter programming requests.

During the meeting, we asked if there were any park issues, we should know about. We heard about the Interurban Trail ending at Walmart without handicap access to the parking lot, which means those who travel by mobility scooter have to take the busy road instead. Concerns about the raccoons pulling trash from the cans along the Rivergreenway were also brought up. Our department will be looking into animal-resistant trash cans to replace what is there now.

We also spent some time discussing the Wells Community Pool. Each year the pool takes a loss of between \$40,000 and \$50,000 dollars and this year was no exception. The attendance for the pool seems to be less and less each year. 2010 saw 16,000 people, 2011 had 15,555, by 2013 the pool had 12,000 visitors and this year was our lowest full season at 10,114.

A suggestion was made to only operate the pool 5 days a week instead of 7 days a week closing on the days the pool typically has low attendance. Sponsors could also be sought to purchase a free pool day for the community in exchange for advertising throughout the day or even hanging

a banner on the fence during the pool season.

By Brandy  
Flechter

Mark your calendars for next Saturday, Aug. 28, for **Touch a Truck!** Let your child experience what big trucks are really like! The event is 9 a.m. to noon in the Washington Main Commons parking lot across from the post office.

Trucks may include a dump truck, police car, ambulance, fire truck, etc. This drop-in event is free and open to the public. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

In case of unfavorable weather, this event is canceled. This is also the day of the moon pie car show downtown, so there will be lots of cars, music and games in downtown Bluffton.

It won't be long and Street Fair will be here. We are currently accepting registrations for the **Harvest Hustle 5K** that is held the Saturday of the fair. Join us Saturday, Sept. 25, for a 5K Run/Walk at 9 a.m.. A T-shirt and pancakes are included with your registration. Sign up online at <https://raceroster.com/events/2021/49809/harvest-hustle>

**Speaking of Street Fair**, there will be a lot of fun things going on for your kids that Saturday morning. At 9 a.m. there will be a diaper derby for ages 1 and under, at 9:30 a tractor pull for ages 3 through 7, and from 10 to 11 a.m. there will be a Star Wars Meet and Greet with costume characters for all ages.

A Big wheel race for ages 6 through 8 will start at 10:30 a.m. and a Prince and Princess judging for ages 4 through 6 happens at 11 a.m. Registration for the prince and princess contest is due Sept. 1, so be sure to stop by the Street Fair office or print a form from their website to enter.

Finally, at 11:30 a.m. there is a talent show for students in Grade 3 through 12 who will compete in three different age divisions. Auditions will be held at 3 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 12, at Life Church.

All events are free and tons of fun!

## Bluffton Parks & Rec News & Notes



By Brandy  
Flechter

### Destination Recreation

The week we have all been waiting for is here! It's always exciting to see the Street Fair move into town, but this year just so happened to be the same week as our National Parks and Recreation Conference. I'm sad to miss so much of the fair, but I'm always excited to learn new ideas that I can bring back to our community.

This year is especially exciting for me because I was selected to present a pre-recorded session at this conference that professionals from across the country will be able to view.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our **5-year Master Plan** survey or attended a public meeting to share your input on park improvements. We have a lot of great projects in mind and look forward to getting them accomplished.

Our goals will be to develop Lancaster Park, continue the Interurban Trail to the city limits, renovate the Wells Community Pool, add additional parking at Roush Park, update Lions Park, repair the basketball courts at Roush and Lions Park, repurpose Jefferson Park, repair the trail at Pickett's Run, and conduct a study to stabilize and improve the Rivergreenway as well as address any immediate concern along the banks.

Progress has already begun for some of this list and multiple grants have been sent out.

**Free Kids Day events at the Street Fair** from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Sept 25:

9 a.m. — Diaper derby for ages 1 and under

9:30 a.m. — Tractor pull for ages 5-7

10 to 11 a.m. — Street Fair will be invaded by Star Wars characters including a Wookiee and a Jawa!

10 a.m. — Big Wheel Race for ages 6-8

11 a.m. — Prince and Princess judging

11:30 a.m. — Kids Talent Show for those in grades 3 through 12

**Calling all kayakers,** we have a new event for you! Registration is open for the Wabash River Ride and Seek.

<https://raceroster.com/events/2021/51435/wabash-river-ride-and-seek>

This October, add some competition and fun to your paddle on the Wabash River this fall with our Wabash Ride and Seek. Find clues and answer questions along the 2.5 mile stretch of the Wabash, along Bluffton's Rivergreenway trail. Participate on your own, or with a group of friends.

#### HOW IT WORKS

1. Sign up as an individual or, if you are in a 2-person kayak/canoe, as a 2-person team (the second person is 1/2 price).

2. Download the free Eventzee app onto your mobile device. (You don't even have to get an account or enter a bunch of personal info.)

3. Once you are registered, we will send you the Event Code to unlock the Wabash Ride and Seek event on your app, along with detailed maps and instructions.

4. Any time in October, launch your kayak from the Wabash River kayak launch at River Road and Ind. 201 in Bluffton. Open your Eventzee app and start following the directions.

5. You will be prompted to take photos, scan QR codes, and find clues to answer questions along the way.

#### YOU GET A DRY BAG

An event phone dry bag is provided to each individual or team to complete the event on your device.

You can pick up your dry bag at the Bluffton Parks and Recreation office or you can choose to have us mail it to you.

#### CUSTOM EVENT APP

Our customized app will automatically score your points along the route as you find correct clues, answer trivia questions, solve riddles, and share photos.

You will download the free Eventzee app onto your mobile device.

Once you are registered you will receive the Event Code to participate.

#### PRIZES

Prizes are awarded to the fastest teams/individuals and the ones with the most points.

Cool door prizes awarded for winning photos and videos.

**Enjoy the fair!**

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## **7.0 NEEDS ANALYSIS**

The Indiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2025 (SCORP) documents the supply of outdoor recreation acreage in Indiana, providing measurements to assess our county's outdoor recreation needs. According to the Level of Service (LOS) measurement, SCORP recommends 20 acres of park and recreation area per 1,000 people coming from municipalities, townships, counties, or private organizations that allow public access. The city of Bluffton has a population of 10,308, which totals 206.16 acres of parkland needed to serve its residents. The Parks Department, along with the City of Bluffton, oversees 198.25, and there are another 47.29 acres of public park access between the 4H park and Whicker Park, totaling 245.54 acres. Additional Park space may be sought in the future as our community continues to grow.

### **7.1 STATE-IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES**

Based on the data contained in this SCORP, these goals and objectives are recommended, in random order, to guide decision-making in parks and recreation and natural resources management for the next five years.

1. Develop more trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
  - a. Whenever possible, acquire rights-of-way, easements, and railroad corridors for future trail development from willing sellers, rail-banking, donors, or partners.
  - b. Emphasize trails and bike/pedestrian facilities as means to connect and improve existing and future outdoor recreation facilities, as well as tie into community infrastructure.
  - c. Integrate bike/pedestrian facilities of all types into long-term planning of community infrastructure design and construction whenever possible.
  - d. Encourage the development of trail facilities of all kinds for bike/pedestrian use: urban, rural, long-distance, connector, commuter, recreational, exercise/wellness, etc.
  - e. Require trail development using accessible, sustainable design and surfacing wherever possible.
2. Encourage and promote outdoor recreation participation.
  - a. Use outdoor recreation as a tool to fight the continuing obesity epidemic by offering locations to participate in as many kinds of healthy exercise as possible and facilitating lifestyle change that encourages lifelong healthy living.
  - b. Encourage continued development of new outdoor recreation facilities, especially in areas of expanding population growth, high user demand, or significant gaps in service provision.
  - c. Encourage the development of more neighborhood-level outdoor recreation facilities that meet local needs close to home, preferably within walking or biking distance of residential areas, libraries, schools, retail areas, medical facilities, etc.
  - d. Provide outdoor recreation opportunities for all user demographics, including all ages, abilities, and skill levels.
3. Continue emphasizing Indiana's aquatic resources, both natural and man-made.



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- a. Preserve and protect rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands, and riparian corridors when and wherever possible through acquisition, education, funding, restoration, and development of new areas.
- b. Encourage actions that improve the quality of Indiana's waters as well as user access to all types of aquatic recreation resources.
- c. Whenever possible, provide or enhance access to aquatic resources, such as splash pads, pools, water features, wetlands, ponds, lakes, access/launch sites, etc.
- 4. Protect and enhance Indiana's natural and outdoor recreation resources.
  - a. Use the 2021 SCORP Participation Study top five favorite outdoor recreation activities when considering parks and recreation user preferences: walking/hiking/jogging/ Introduction 10 running; camping; fishing; swimming; and canoeing/kayaking/paddle sports.
  - b. Protect Indiana's natural heritage by identifying and preserving significant natural areas, including wildlife/fish habitats for endangered, rare, threatened, or species of special concern.
  - c. Protect Indiana's outdoor recreation potential by identifying and preserving areas with existing or potential outdoor recreation opportunities or access.
  - d. Provide for the education of the citizens of Indiana in environmental stewardship and wise use of Indiana's natural resources.
  - e. Consider the improvements possible in the water and air quality, brownfield remediation, tourism and commerce, and economic development created by enhancing outdoor recreation.
  - f. Use "green" or sustainable designs, materials, and energy sources in facility development, such as recycled materials, alternative/renewable energy sources (solar active and passive, wind, hydroelectric), and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building certifications/very energy-efficient designs.
- 5. Provide funding for outdoor recreation development at the state and local levels.
  - a. Explore alternative funding methods such as public/private partnerships, recreation impact fees (RIF), cooperative agreements, cost-sharing, corporate sponsorships, etc.
  - b. Continue to administer state-level grant programs such as Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants, Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants, Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund grants, and Indiana Shooting Range grants.
  - c. Emphasize parks and recreation facilities that are cost-efficient and financially self-supporting while promoting financially affordable access to the greatest number of users possible.
  - d. Consider the benefits of parks and recreation toward community economic development, tourism, job growth, urban and rural revitalization, reduction of health care costs, and improving quality of life.
  - e. Use existing financial resources as efficiently and effectively as possible; consider strategies such as detailed cost-benefit analysis for choosing public provision or privatization of services, maintenance or construction, multi-agency bulk purchases, interagency work-sharing agreements, volunteers and "friends" groups, and other means to control the costs of operations and maintenance.

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## **7.2 ISSUES FROM PUBLIC INPUT**

In determining the needs of our community, we used the Issue Analysis collected from in-person meetings and public surveys to gather input about our parks and programs. Comments were numerous and broad, but some general themes our community finds important. The River Greenway and trails are the most used amenities and should be considered to maintain them properly. The community strongly supports lighting the River Greenway. Upon discussion with the mayor, the Street Department is considering adding lights within the city limits and has priced this portion at \$26,433. Stabilizing the river banks is also high on the priority list to protect the trail, and efforts to make immediate repairs have begun. A LARE Restoration Biologist has recently advised our department to fund a study to maintain the Wabash River banks properly. Animal-resistant trash cans along the river were also suggested to prevent the raccoons from pulling out the trash and keep the trail clean.

There was a consensus that our department should maintain and replace some aging equipment and facilities. According to the survey, the Wells Community Pool and Lion's Park both stand out as needing attention, and comments were made at the public meeting that the aging equipment in the weight room needs to be replaced.

We gathered some great suggestions for future programs and learned that there is an interest in more evening program options for working families.

## **7.3 ISSUES FROM PARK BOARD AND STAFF**

The Park Board agreed with the public comments and had some additional concerns. Jefferson Park is currently underutilized, and more can be done to increase the use of this park. One of the baseball diamonds is only used as a rain site and sits empty most of the summer. We also have an unused t-ball diamond at Lion's Park that could accommodate the t-ball league that uses Jefferson Park creating an opportunity to explore options to redesign Jefferson Park into something new.

The Park Board and pool staff expressed concern about the decline in pool attendance and the need to renovate the aging pool house. Conversations with our pool chemical and maintenance provider informed us that our kiddie pool and main pool had a shared filter system that is no longer allowed. He explained that most pools in our situation removed their kiddie pools because maintaining a safe water chemical balance for such a small area is very difficult. He also informed us that an entirely new filter system could be cost-prohibitive at \$150,000. We will look into returning that area into much-needed deck space.

Developing Lancaster Park is a priority for the Park Board, now that major renovations to Roush Park and Washington Park have been completed. The park's design includes activities that interest teens and elements for all ages to enjoy. Features include a looping walking trail, playground, pavilion with restrooms, sand volleyball, disc golf, soccer field, gaga ball pit, solar charging station, and cement Cornhole games.

The Park Board feels strongly that when a park is developed, there needs to be a safe way for youth to get there, so finishing the Inter-urban Trail is also a top priority. There is only one mile left between Walmart and Lancaster Park, and the goal would be to do both projects around the same time if possible. This trail segment has additional significance as it is a continuation of the Poka-bache trail that will connect Pokagon State Park in Angola to Ouabache State Park in Bluffton.



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The Park Board also wanted to carry over the projects that still need to be completed from the last 5-year master plan, so resurfacing Lion's and Roush Basketball courts are on the agenda for the near future.

Finally, the park staff and board have been concerned with the increase in vandalism lately at our parks. Much of the mess is made in the bathrooms, where security cameras cannot catch the vandals. There are ongoing discussions on how to curb this behavior; fortunately, locking the restrooms earlier in the evening has helped some.



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## 9.0 PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC ACTION SCHEDULE

The Bluffton Park Board has developed a priority list of projects to address in the next five years based upon data reported back from surveys, input from the public meetings, and the Bluffton Park Department Staff. The top priorities for the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department over the next five years include

1. Develop Lancaster Park
2. Continue the Interurban Trail to Lancaster Park
3. Renovate the Wells Community Swimming Pool House
4. Add Additional parking to Roush Park
5. Repair/Resurface Basketball Courts at Roush & Lion's Park
6. Conduct stabilization Study for River Greenway and Repair Trail
7. Renovate Lion's Park
8. Repair and Resurface the Trail in Pickett's Run Park
9. Repurpose Jefferson Park

## 9.1 NARRATIVE OF FUTURE PARK PROJECTS

### 1. Develop Lancaster Park

Bluffton has been undergoing considerable growth lately as developers race to keep up with the growing housing demand. The inventory of park locations indicates a gap in services for residents living north of the Wabash River. The community would like a city park targeting teens based on a recent survey. The Parks Department sat down with Engineering Resources Inc. to design a park with fun elements while still maintaining the flexibility of the park to be used as a large open space for community events.

The specific scope of development work includes the following:

- Construction of a picnic pavilion with picnic tables, benches, a drinking fountain, a water bottle fill station, and a bicycle rack,
- Construction of restroom facility, including water, sanitary sewer, and electric service,
- Construction of playground equipment
- Construction of a full-size, dual-purpose, grass surface football and soccer field with two field goal posts and two soccer goals,
- ½ mile long, 10' wide, asphalt surface trail,

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- Construction of a concrete trail head featuring a bike repair station, a solar-powered charging station, fire pit area, benches, picnic tables, and a bike rack,
- Site prep and material acquisition for a 9-hole disc and foot golf course,
- Construction of a sand volleyball court,
- Construction of a Gaga ball court,
- Construction of a Cornhole field with two concrete boards and weather resistant bags,
- Construction of a life-size, human Foosball course,
- Striping of the existing parking structure,
- Reconstruction of existing stormwater tiles, 150 linear feet of culvert pipe and two end sections,
- General site earthwork,
- Seeding and restoration work, and
- Planting 10 new trees.

Development of this park meets the State Identified Priorities by creating more trails that are bicycle/pedestrian-friendly and ADA accessible. The Park is next to a school, and the sports fields and play equipment encourage outdoor recreation participation, which is an important element in the fight against obesity. The design of the space uses “green” recycled materials in the park benches and tables and alternative/renewable energy with the solar charging station. The Bluffton Parks Department will be acquiring this property rather than leasing it, thereby solidifying its use as a park in perpetuity

## **2. Continue the Interurban Trail to Lancaster Park**

The Park Board feels strongly that when a park is developed, there needs to be a safe way for youth to get there, so finishing the Inter-urban Trail is a top priority. There is only one mile left between Walmart and Lancaster Park, and the goal would be to do both projects around the same time if funding is possible. This trail segment has additional significance as it is a continuation of the Poka-bache trail that will connect Pokagon State Park in Angola to Ouabache State Park in Bluffton.

Development of this trail meets the State Identified Priorities by creating more trails that are bicycle/pedestrian-friendly and ADA accessible. The trail will be acquiring right-of-way easements and will be a means to connect residents to outdoor recreation facilities. The trail is also in an area of expanding population growth, and we anticipate an increase in user demand shortly.

## **3. Renovate the Wells Community Swimming Pool House**

The Wells Community Swimming Pool House is the original building from when the pool was constructed 50 years ago. While simple upgrades have been done, such as paint and restroom stalls, showers, toilets, and roofing through the years, it is pretty outdated. Upgrades to the electricity and a new filter system were completed a few years ago, and this year, stainless-steel cabinets were added to the concession stand. More modern features are needed to improve the functionality and improve the aesthetics of the pool house. The old kiddie pool area needs to be turned back into deck space, and the concession area can be enlarged with additional seating and shade.

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Renovation of the Wells Community Pool meets State Identified Priorities by encouraging aquatic recreation to teach valuable lifesaving skills. Enhancing the overall condition of the pool house will encourage more people to swim and enjoy outdoor exercise improving their quality of life.

**4. Add Additional Parking to Roush Park**

Since the renovations at Roush Park a few years ago, this park can get very busy in the summer, especially when all four ball diamonds are used. The area surrounding the park does not allow much street parking, and when visitors run out of space, they create their own parking, which has started to get dangerous.

We have received complaints from families watching baseball that cars are driving on the trails around to the backside of the park to pull up behind the fence. Not only do they leave ruts in our yard and blind spectators and players with their lights, but they also pose a significant risk for children who walk the paths and play in the yard.

We reached out to two asphalt companies who could design an additional parking area in the only available space remaining in the park between our storage garage and established parking away from where children gather. The project will cost around \$44,070.00, and I have submitted a grant to our local Wells County Foundation to assist with this critical need.

**5. Repair/Resurface Basketball Courts at Roush & Lion's Park**

Fortunately, both Washington Basketball courts were redone in 2021, leaving only Lion's Park and Roush Park basketball courts to refinish. Lion's Park will need to be milled down, repaired, and resurfaced. If caught soon enough, Roush Park is in a little better position, and seal coating the courts may extend the life of the pavement.

**6. Conduct Stabilization Study for River Greenway and Repair Trail**

The River Greenway is in a flood plain and regularly has erosion issues to deal with. Trails are the most used amenities in our city. The River Greenway has a beautiful view of the Wabash River, so consideration should be given to maintaining this amenity properly. Stabilizing the river banks is high on the priority list to protect the trail, and efforts to make the immediate repairs have begun. A LARE Restoration Biologist has recently advised our department to fund a study to maintain the Wabash River banks properly. We believe this guidance will be instrumental in securing the river banks and establishing proper procedures to prevent erosion.

This project meets the State Identified Priorities by protecting and enhancing Indiana's natural and outdoor recreation resources. The 2021 SCORP Participation Study identified the top five favorite outdoor recreation activities and maintaining river bank benefits the following: walking/hiking/jogging/running; fishing; and canoeing/kayaking/paddle sports.

**7. Renovate Lion's Park**

Lion's Park is located on the west side of town, and it has been a very long time since that park has been updated. Our goal is to add new play equipment, bury the overhead powerline, improve the safety surfacing, and add an ADA-accessible sidewalk from the parking area to the pavilion. Momentum to improve the park has started this year with resurfacing the tennis courts, improving the baseball dugout,

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replacing the rusted basketball goal, repairing damaged play equipment, and fixing tennis court drainage.

This project meets the State Identified Priorities to encourage and promote outdoor recreation participation. It also promotes the development of more neighborhood-level outdoor recreation facilities that meet local needs close to home, preferably within walking or biking distance of residential areas.

**8. Repair and Resurface the Trail in Pickett's Run Park**

Pickett's Run Park is the home of the Story Walk Trail that is offered with the partnership of the Wells County Public Library. The trail is beginning to buckle and crack from the nearby tree roots. The trail wasn't placed on an adequate base at the installation time and will soon need to be repaired and resurfaced.

This Park also has a grassy decorative area to represent the old Pickett's Run that was filled in decades ago to build houses before anyone realized that the site would be susceptible during large floods. This grassy path has been a maintenance issue for years, being difficult to maintain the plants and prevent weeds. The Park Board will need to consider replacing the area with stone, asphalt or return the site back into lawn so that it isn't so labor-intensive for the maintenance department to maintain.

**9. Repurpose Jefferson Park**

Jefferson Park is currently underutilized, and more can be done to increase the use of this park. The larger baseball diamond is only used as a rain site and sits empty most of the summer. Diamond rentals can vary yearly, with travel teams utilizing different diamonds in surrounding communities. If we continue the trend in the next few years, we will need to explore options to redesign the park. We also have an unused t-ball diamond at Lion's Park to accommodate the t-ball league that currently uses the small diamond at Jefferson Park. If the community decides to repurpose Jefferson Park, both diamonds could be removed to allow new amenities.



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**9.2 ACTION PLAN AND SCHEDULE**

YEAR	SITE	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources
2022	Lancaster Park	Develop Park with looping walking trail, playground, pavilion, restrooms, and recreation fields	1,000,000.00	LWCF Grant Park & Rec Capital Improvement Fund, Caylor Nickel Foundation, Donations
2022	Continue Interurban Trail	Construct asphalt trail to Lancaster Park	\$950,000.00	Grants, Next Level Trails, Donations, Fundraisers
2023	Renovate the Community Pool House	Update fixtures, reseal concrete floors, remodel block building, expand concession area, fill in the baby pool	\$50,000.00	Grants, Foundation Account & Capital Improvement Fund
2022	Roush Park	Add an additional parking lot	\$44,000.00	Wells County Foundation Grant
2023	Roush & Lion's Park	Mill and repair Lion's Park basketball court. Sealcoat and repair basketball courts at Roush	\$35,000.00	Grants, Operating Budget
2023	River Greenway	Conduct study for stabilization of River Greenway and repair as needed, plant additional trees	\$50,000.00	LARE Grant and River Greenway Account, donations
2024	Renovate Lion's Park	Bury overhead powerline at the play area, add new playground features, ADA accessible sidewalk to the pavilion	\$20,000.00	Lion's Club, Grants, Fundraiser, Operating Budget
2025	Pickett's Run Park	Mill, repair, and resurface asphalt path. Repurpose symbolic grass path	\$50,000.00	Grants, Operating Budget
2025	Jefferson Park	Repurpose underused area with new play equipment	\$60,000.00	Grants, Park & Rec Capital Improvement Fund, Operating Budget

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### 9.3 FINAL PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN

On September 18<sup>th</sup>, the 5-year master plan goals were presented in the Bluffton News-Banner Destination Recreation article. The plan was also posted on the Park's Department website, and a link to the post was shared on the Bluffton Parks Facebook Page with information on how to submit final public input. Final comments were due October 14, 2021.

The final public meeting was held on Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, during the City Council meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall, at 7:00 pm. This was an excellent opportunity to inform our city leaders of the plan, receive their feedback, and hear from the community. There were 16 people in attendance, including seven from the City Council and one Park Board member. Bluffton resident, Brandon Harnish, commented that he sees many people walking in the yards of the businesses south of town and would like to see the Inter-urban trail extend in that direction. Other comments included the desire for disc golf, and the group was made aware that there are current plans to build a 9-hole course at Lancaster. Josh Hunt commented that he was glad to see Lion's Park on the list of improvements and that he was happy to hear of the many updates and repairs that were done to the park this year. Rick Elwell emphasized taking care of parks enhances the quality of life and how important it is to attract people to our community. No other comments were sent in by phone call or e-mail. The Park Board has taken the comments from the public meeting into consideration for the future.

**CITY OF BLUFFTON**  
COMMON COUNCIL

**Agenda**

**Date:** October 12, 2021  
**Time:** 7:00 P.M.  
**Place:** Council Chambers, City Hall

- I. Call meeting to order
  - A. Establish a quorum-Mayor Whicker
  - B. Invocation
- II. Approval of minutes of previous meeting as received
- III. Old Business
- IV. New Business
  - A. Update on SRF Wastewater Projects
  - B. 5 Year Master Plan - Brandy Fiechter
  - C. Adoption of Resolution approving expansion and creation of tif
  - D. Salary Ordinance
  - E. Brandon Harnish
- V. Public Comments
- VI. Council Comments
- VII. Announcements
- IX. Adjournment

Please notify the Clerk-Treasurer's Office if you need auxiliary aids or other special accommodations prior to the meeting.

### Bluffton Common Council will meet Tuesday evening

The Bluffton Common Council will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 12, in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

Topics on the agenda include:

- An update on the State Revolving Fund and the city's wastewater projects.
  - A report on the Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department's five-year master plan, presented by Brandy Fiechter, the department's superintendent.
  - Adoption of a resolution approving expansion and creation of a tax increment financing district.
  - Consideration of the salary ordinance.
- Also, Brandon Harnish has asked to address the council.

I'm happy to announce that we have sent in our **five-year master plan** draft to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources after eight months of working on it.

The public is invited to hear the details of this plan and share any comments, at the next meeting of the Bluffton Common Council at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 12. This meeting will be held in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

The full 85-page plan can be viewed at <https://blufftonindiana.net/data/uploads/2021/09/5-Year-Master-Plan-2022-compressed-1.pdf> and comments can be sent to our office by calling 260 824-6069 or e-mailing [parks@blufftonindiana.gov](mailto:parks@blufftonindiana.gov) by Thursday, Oct. 14.

## BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT 5-Year Master Plan



Lancaster Park is a vast open space that the Bluffton Department of Parks and Recreation has high hopes to improve. Those hopes are included in a to-do list included in the parks department's 5-year master plan. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

### It's a wrap

#### Bluffton Department of Parks and Recreation completes 5-year plan

By DAVE SCHULTZ

The Bluffton Parks and Recreation Department recently completed its five-year master plan, and it's an ambitious one.

In fact, if all of the nine points at the center of the plan were to be accomplished, the price tag would be nearly \$2.3 million.

Obviously, says Brandy Fiechter, that's not going to be accomplished by city funds alone. There are grants available and the department has been diligently seeking them.

The top two items on the list are the ones the department has high hopes for grants, and both involve Lancaster Park — one, for bringing facilities to it such as a soccer field and several other amenities, and second, for bringing the Interurban Trail north past its current terminus of Monroe Street to the park.

The grants come with some degree of strings, however.

### It's a wrap

(Continued from Page 1)

Park improvements and money from the state's Next Level Trails fund could require a 20 percent local match; some similar grants could require 50/50 matches.

"Obviously, we're going to have to do some fundraising," Fiechter says.

Other items in the master plan include:

- Renovation of the facilities at the Wells Community Pool. "It's 50 years old now," she told the members of the Bluffton Common Council at its most recent meeting. "It definitely is in need of an update."

- Adding parking at Roush Park.

- Improving the basketball goals at Roush and Lions parks.

- Repairing damaged parts of the Rivergreenway.



Renovating the Wells Community swimming pool is in the Bluffton Department of Parks and Recreation 5-year plan. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

It is hoped that a Lake and Rivers Enhancement grant can be obtained for that.

- A thorough renovation of Lions Park. "It has been neglected over time," Fiechter said. Playground equip-

ment and the ball diamond dugouts must be improved.

- Repairing the trail at Pickett's Run.

- Repurposing some areas at Jefferson Park. The large ball diamond, for instance, is

now used only as a rain site and often sits idle.

The entire report is on the city's website at <https://blufftonsc.gov/2X2rQ3>

[dave@news-hammer.com](mailto:dave@news-hammer.com)

## 9.4 PLAN EVALUATION

The Bluffton Park Board will review the 5-year master plan at the January Park Board meeting scheduled for each year's first Thursday of the month. Regularly discussing the goals of this plan will keep the community's most valued improvements in mind as we look at the budget for the year.

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ASSURANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE WITH:  
ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT of 1968 (As Amended);  
SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (As  
Amended); AND TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES  
ACT OF 1990 (As Amended)

The Bluffton Parks and Recreation Board has read the guidelines for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (As Amended); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (As Amended); and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (As Amended) and will comply with the applicable requirements of these Acts.

SIGNATURE John Gerber  
Park Board President

John Gerber  
President's PRINTED Name

SIGNATURE Christine Zadylak  
Park Board Secretary

Christine Zadylak  
Secretary's PRINTED Name

Date: February 1, 2022

BLUFFTON PARKS DEPARTMENT  
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**PARK BOARD PLAN ACCEPTANCE RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Bluffton Park and Recreation Board is aware of the parks and recreation needs of the residents of Bluffton, Indiana, and

WHEREAS, the Board realizes the importance of sound planning to meet the needs of its citizens,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE BLUFFTON PARK AND RECREATION BOARD, by unanimous declaration, does adopt the Bluffton Park and Recreation Master Plan as its official plan for the next five years (2022-2026) for the growth and development of parks and recreational opportunities in Bluffton, Indiana.

Passed and signed this day of February 1, 2022.

  
John Gerber  
Bluffton Park Board President

ATTEST:

  
Christine Zadyak  
Bluffton Park Board Secretary