



CITY OF MIDDLETOWN

# PARKS MASTER PLAN 2020-2030



SEPTEMBER 2021



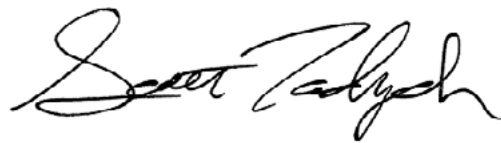
# WELCOME

This is a truly exciting time for Middletown. Recent efforts aimed at developing and updating several plans for the community's future are establishing a road map for improvements that will make residents proud of our community and make Middletown a place where job opportunities are robust and quality of life is high. These two critical community qualities, job opportunity and quality of life, are necessary to attract and retain the workforce we need to drive economic development in our city, and to make it a great place to live, work, and play.

Parks play an essential role in the quality of life in Middletown. To that end, we present the City's 2020-2030 Parks Master Plan. The effort that went into producing this document took a fresh look at our park system and our residents' desires for its improvement. It allowed us to explore recreational opportunities that we might not have discovered otherwise. And preparing this master plan now allowed us to coordinate it with the Middletown Comprehensive Plan so that the goals of each could be aligned for maximum community benefit.

We have a robust system of parks that are well distributed throughout our community. We're also fortunate to reside along the Great Miami River with the Great Miami River Trail and its associated recreational amenities. This allows our park system to connect to the larger, regional recreational system in western Ohio. With focused effort guided by this master plan, we can improve park facilities and safety, develop recreation programs you want, and realize new recreation opportunities and accessibility throughout our community. A healthy, active, and fun future awaits us all here in Middletown!

Sincerely,



Scott Tadych, Public Works Director



James (Jim) Palenick, City Manager

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# 1

# Introduction

THE MIDDLETOWN PARKS  
MASTER PLAN





# 1. INTRODUCTION

## THE MIDDLETOWN PARKS MASTER PLAN

### 1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks play a vital role in the social, economic, ecological, and physical health of our communities, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many of the important benefits that parks, greenways, and trails play in our daily lives. Parks are seeing some of their highest usage in modern times, as they provide an essential outlet for how we cope and recover from this crisis, and how we maintain both physical and mental health. Additionally, parks are increasingly viewed as necessary elements in creating quality of life that attract and retain population and jobs, bolstering economic development. Placing a high priority on a healthy and accessible network of connected parks and open spaces throughout the community will pay long-term dividends for everyone in the community.

Middletown continues to rebuild its economy in this post-industrial era by attracting new business and talent. Families are attracted to communities with high quality of life benefits; places where they can live, work, and play. Young professionals maintain active lifestyles and place high value on health/wellness, quality of life issues, and the environment. It is common for many businesses and corporations to shift their working environments to attract the best employees and locate to areas where the living environment can meet the needs and desires of their workforce. An up-to-date parks and recreation master plan can map Middletown's course for developing the recreational benefits families, young professionals, and new businesses desire. And that course can lead to economic development and long-term resiliency.



Middletown's location along the Great Miami River and the Great Miami River Trail is a tremendous asset that this park system master plan will celebrate. The riverfront image is changing throughout the country, especially in neighboring Ohio cities like Dayton and Cincinnati. In the past, the riverfront was the foundation and main mode of transportation for manufacturing facilities. As the post-industrial economy evolves and ecological understanding grows, rivers are being repurposed into community assets that celebrate a community's origins, provide recreational resources to bring generations together, and restore the local ecology.

Middletown also benefits from a robust network of existing parks and open spaces that are well-distributed throughout the community. By focusing on improving these existing assets and then making them more connected and accessible, the City will be investing strategically in one of its core strengths for the future. Sustained and incremental improvements will allow the City to improve safety, upgrade outdated features/amenities, improve accessibility (both internal to each park, as well as throughout the city), and integrate new features/amenities desired by the community, based upon public input during the master planning process.

This plan recommends focusing on the following improvements to enable the City of Middletown to provide a parks and recreation system that is desired by residents, employers/employees, and visitors alike.





## IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Focus on repairing elements throughout the park system that have deteriorated over time, such as cracked and settled pavement; rusted or unstable furnishings; structures that are leaky or otherwise problematic; and play equipment that does not meet current safety standards.

## BASIC IMPROVEMENTS

Focus on incremental investment in new and improved facilities throughout the park system that serve the needs and desires of the community. Some examples of these improvements include more/better lighting for safety; restrooms; upgraded playgrounds, nature play areas, and spraygrounds; ADA-compliant accessibility to all park amenities/features; walking loops; and new/improved recreational features (courts, fields, and support amenities). Parallel to these improvements the community can begin a neighborhood and mini park master planning process to identify improvements that meet the desires of the surrounding neighborhoods and reflect their unique characters.

## ASPIRATIONS

Build upon the existing network by incorporating some of the larger opportunities identified during the master planning process. Middletown can move its park system from good to great by focusing on three major opportunities as part of a longer-term effort – celebrating the community's connection to the river (particularly near downtown);, better connecting all the parks and open spaces throughout the city with trails, greenway, parkways and blueways;; and exploring the feasibility of an aquatic center.



## 1.2 HISTORY, COMMUNITY PROFILE + VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### NATIVE PEOPLES

Middletown is located on the Great Miami River in southwest Ohio and includes portions of Butler and Warren counties. The Miami Tribe was the first native population European settlers encountered in the area (Creighton, 2021). Other tribes living in the area included Shawnee, Wyandot, Ottawa, Chippewa, Delaware and Potawatomie. And still earlier, the pre-Columbian Adena culture was believed to inhabit the area as evidenced by the massive Great Mound located in Butler County.



### SETTLEMENT BY EUROPEANS

The exact date of Middletown's founding is not known, though a group of settlers were recorded in 1797 and a post office established in 1807. Middletown officially became a city in 1886 and was given its name by founder Stephen Vail. Questions remain as to the name's origin. Some historians believe it was named Middletown because Vail was from Middletown, New Jersey. Others indicate Vail believed the location to be midway point on the Great Miami River from its most northern points to its southern mouth (Leonard, 1996; The Journal News, 1923).

### UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Canal also played a part in the Underground Railroad history. The tow paths along the Canal, as well as the Great Miami River, were used by African-Americans escaping slavery in the South to free states in the North and into Canada. There is recorded history of safe houses located in Middletown (Ashworth, 2012), and a monument in Lakeside Park lists the names of people affiliated with the Underground Railroad in Middletown (Ahmad, 2019).

### STEEL MANUFACTURING

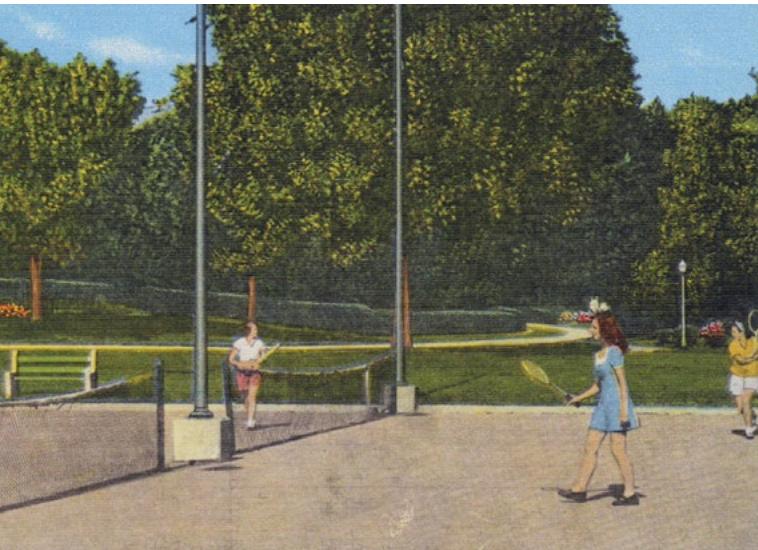
The American Rolling Mill Company (Armco) was founded in 1899 and established their headquarters on the south side of Middletown in 1900. The plant brought jobs to the area throughout the 20th Century, particularly attracting



a significant population from Appalachia after World War II. The company has been a partner in parks development throughout Middletown’s history including the original Armco Park location near the present-day Miami University Middletown campus. The American steel industry has struggled since a 1982 recession. Armco changed ownership throughout its existence, and became AK Steel in 1993. As steel production ebbed, so did the economy and population of Middletown. In 2007, AK Steel moved its headquarters to West Chester Township, but still produced steel at the plant in Middletown and recently developed a research center on the east side of Interstate 75. But continued lack of profitability led to AK Steel’s acquisition by Cleveland-Cliffs in 2020. Regardless of its struggles, the steel plant has had a significant impact on the community and on Dick’s Creek along its south boundary.

PARKS HISTORY

Middletown’s park system has interesting origins itself. Smith Park, Middletown’s largest park by acreage, was named for the Smith family who owned the property at one time. It also was the location of a brick manufacturer in the 1920s and the southeast corner of the park was the former site of a baseball diamond and stadium that was a destination for baseball leagues in the early 1900s. Douglass Park was deeded to the City in 1932 by Armco. It was named for Frederick Douglass, a well-known social reformer and abolitionist during and following the Civil War. And, Jacot Park previously had a soap box derby hill which was very popular in the 1950s. (Ashworth, 2020)



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Middletown’s population was 48,621, based on census data from 2019. The percent change in population from 2010-2019 was essentially flat. Fifty-four percent of Middletown’s population is between the ages of 18 and 65, with 30% below age 18, and 16% over age 65. There are slightly more females (52%) than males in the community.

Eighty-two percent of Middletown’s population is White, 11% is Black or African-American, four-percent is Hispanic or Latino, and less than one-percent is Asian or Pacific Islander.

Historically, employment in Middletown has been dominated by the steel industry, which has declined since 1982. However, because Middletown is on the I-75 interstate corridor, it has a strategic location in one of largest industrial, logistics and manufacturing areas in the U.S. supporting a strong supply chain across numerous industries. Its mid-point location between Cincinnati and Dayton is in a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) that is merging into one region with a population of three million.

Population Estimates July 1, 2019, (V2019)	48,807
Population estimates base, April 1, 2010 (V2019)	48,696
Population, percent change - April 2, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2019, (V2019)	0.2%
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	48,694
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	50,987
Age and Sex	
Persons under 5 years, percent	6.4%
Persons under 18 years, percent	23.6%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	15.9%
Female persons, percent	52.5%
Race and Hispanic Origin	
White alone, percent	81.9%
Black or African American alone, percent (a)	11.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	0.0%
Asian alone, percent (a)	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	0.0%
Two or More Races, percent	4.7%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	4.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	79.5%

▲ TABLE 1: POPULATION ESTIMATES AS TAKEN FROM CENSUS.GOV  
The vintage year (e.g., V2019) refers to the final year of the series (2010 thru 2019).  
(a) Includes persons reporting only one race  
(b) Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

MIDDLETOWN’S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

While Middletown’s existing demographics are rather homogeneous and growth is somewhat stagnant, the City is utilizing a variety of economic development tools to attract new business and industry to the region while capitalizing on its strategic geographic location. Portions of Middletown are designated a Federal Promise Zone, which can aid in the development of quality-of-life initiatives within the community.

The Community’s Vision as defined in its Comprehensive Plan, is that:

“MIDDLETOWN IS A PREMIER, 21ST CENTURY ALL-AMERICAN COMMUNITY WITH CIVIC PRIDE AND A WELCOMING DOORSTEP; DIVERSE AND CONNECTED NEIGHBORS; OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKERS AND BUSINESSES IN THE NEW ECONOMY; AND WITH ACCESS TO QUALITY ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION, HOUSING, HEALTHCARE, AND RECREATION.”

In order to achieve this aspirational vision, incremental and sustainable steps will need to be taken. A similar phased approach is identified for addressing needs in Middletown’s park system and outlined in the Action Plan in Chapter 5.0. Middletown acknowledges the important role parks play in the community, as a tool in community revitalization and placemaking, in attracting business and in economic development, by fostering community engagement and creating safe neighborhoods, by offering a framework for environmental and economic sustainability, by providing a physically and socially active lifestyle, by promoting arts and cultural programs, and by facilitating smart growth and tourism.



## 1.3 PURPOSE + PROCESS

Middletown has been hard at work planning for its future and looking specifically at strategic economic development, housing, and transportation as part of the Comprehensive Plan update that paralleled this Parks Master Plan. The parks planning process has been coordinated with those efforts and identified critical synergies such as a connected parks system, a connected community, an expanded trail network, connections to the river and enhancements to strategic planning areas that prioritize the public space for recreation, connectivity and stormwater, that can be incorporated for maximum benefit. An updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan will map Middletown's course for developing the recreational benefits that residents and business desire as part of their larger planning efforts for the future.

Specifically, the Project Team and the City of Middletown collaborated to update the Parks Master Plan and establish clear and realistic goals, objectives, and implementation strategies for the next ten years (2020 – 2030) to best meet the current and future park and recreation needs of the community.

### PROCESS

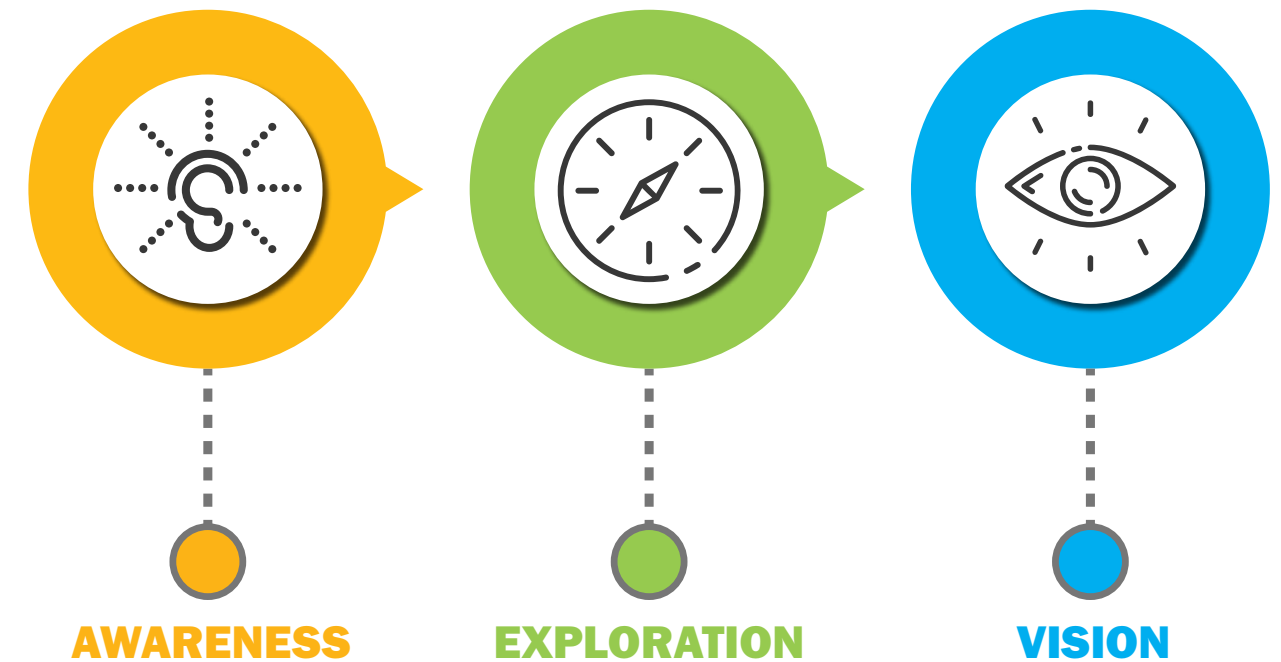
The Project Team and Middletown embarked on a collaborative master planning process of discovery and creation to identify unique, place-specific environments that can reconnect people to nature and to each other. These special places offer opportunities for the community and its institutions to express their values and aspirations through the built environment.

To accomplish this, the master plan began with a comprehensive inventory and analysis, during which the Project Team identified and assessed each site's unique cultural and natural resources. Master planning concepts originated and evolved from an understanding and awareness of these assets. Community engagement was a critical component of this phase and relied on stakeholder input to identify significant places that met the needs and aspirations of Middletown. This feedback from community leaders, youth, parents, donors, and other residents created a foundation from which a master plan could be developed that was exciting, place-specific, and reflective of the spirit of Middletown.

As part of the Awareness Phase, the Project Team studied both built (land use, connectivity, etc.) and natural systems (hydrology, geology, slopes, canopy, etc.) which informed the site and system-wide recommendations- i.e., greenway and blueway trail connectivity to the Great Miami River, the Great Miami River Trail, community assets (parks, schools, libraries, health centers, etc.), employment centers, and to the former canal and Dick's Creeks (which could spur water quality/stormwater improvements) which offer transportation, recreation, social, and wellness benefits. The goal of this approach was for Middletown's Parks Master Plan to relate to the community's specific place and history; to celebrate the ecological assets by identifying restoration efforts; to efficiently integrate green infrastructure and stormwater management strategies into parks and open spaces; and to identify art and gateway placement opportunities for community identity, interaction, and celebration through a process of public engagement and strategic phased implementation.

The Parks Master Plan included the following phases: Awareness, Exploration, and Vision. Through a collaborative process, an inspirational vision was developed to guide future park system improvements. These improvements can enhance the quality of life in Middletown and incentivize economic development.

▼ FIGURE 1: PROCESS INFOGRAPHIC



### AWARENESS PHASE

During the first phase of work, the Project Team collected as much information as possible from a variety of sources: City-provided GIS information of built, natural and cultural systems; historical information from online sources and the Middletown Historical Society; reports from the Middletown Police Department; current parkland dedication and open space requirements; staffing and funding information; and site visits to each of the 32 parks in Middletown's system, which is described further in Chapter 2.0 Awareness.

Existing park system assets were compared to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) planning standards and to neighbor, peer, and best-in-class communities to identify opportunities for recreation system improvements. This provided a deep understanding of community assets. A thoughtful public engagement process brought the community's voice to the effort. All of this input was combined to articulate the community's aspirations and ultimately form a vision for the future of Middletown's park system.

The Parks Master Plan was also informed by several associated planning efforts that took shape over the past few years or concurrently with the Parks Master Plan. One of the goals of Middletown's Parks Master Plan was to tie the efforts of these associated plans into the Parks Master Plan for a cohesive vision. To that end, the Comprehensive Plan team and the Project Team coordinated closely with each other since the timeline of these two plans overlapped.

The Project Team also spent time getting familiar with those who make up the Middletown community and understanding the missions and aspirations of the key stakeholders. The community's input in developing a place-specific approach is the key driver of the master plan process. The Team worked closely with the City to design a civic engagement process that was efficient and effective during a COVID-19 environment. Community and stakeholder input was gathered, previous planning studies were reviewed, data on natural and cultural resources was collected, key assets and resources of the community were mapped, and an understanding of Middletown's short-term and long-term goals and City staff structures were gathered. It was in this first phase that the spirit of Middletown, the



unique opportunities and challenges of the parks and recreation system, and the desired outcomes were identified and articulated.

A summary of associated planning efforts that were reviewed during the Awareness phase include:

#### **Gateway Plan West – Vision & Action Plan for 2030 in Warren County (2015)**

A 15-year plan for the western gateway into Warren County provided a vision for community growth expected throughout the region between Dayton and Cincinnati. Recommendations in community design, quality of life, transportation, utilities, and economic development guided the vision. Among the quality of life improvements, the Plan recommended implementing a complete park system by connecting destinations through an expansive trail network.

#### **Housing Study and Policy (2016)**

The Housing Study took an in-depth look at the existing housing stock in Middletown with the goal of developing 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions to long-standing challenges. Related to parks and recreation, the Housing Study recommended a dog park as a downtown residential project amenity as well as residential and mixed-use projects that supported trails. Various recreational amenities such as playgrounds, trails, and aquatics were recommended for housing developments, though it was noted that these amenities may not be available for public use.

#### **Downtown Middletown Strategic Plan (2017)**

The Downtown Middletown Strategic Plan analyzed the existing conditions of downtown, identified the market demand for various land uses, and incorporated the desires of the community into a vision for the future of downtown Middletown. Housing and commercial development characters were identified as well as Special Improvement Areas (SIAs) throughout the community that had development/re-development potential. The Parks Master Plan analyzed connections from parks to the SIAs as well as system-wide connections from SIAs to the river and trails system.

#### **Middletown Fire Department Strategic Plan (2017)**

This strategic plan reviewed the mission, vision and core values of the Middletown Fire Department and developed eight strategic goals related to data collection, staffing analysis to ensure the community's needs were being met, funding sources, employee safety and retention, recruitment strategy, and fire station location analysis.

#### **Middletown Transportation Plan (2020)**

The Transportation Plan identified capital projects the City had planned over the next cycle of improvements. The Project Team analyzed these proposed improvements against connectivity and trail recommendations and identified opportunities and challenges for implementing multi-modal connectivity throughout the community.

#### **SplashDown Middletown Aquatic Center Proposal (2019)**

In 2019, a group of residents submitted a proposal, considerations, funding options and timeline for developing an aquatic center in the community following the closure of the community's last public pool in 2010. The goal of the proposal was to initiate a campaign for attracting potential investment partners in the development of the aquatic center.

#### **Comprehensive Plan (in progress)**

The City of Middletown is currently working on an updated Comprehensive Plan that will serve as a guide for the community's vision for the next 10 years. The plan depicts a community future that incorporates and builds upon existing conditions and emerging trends in key areas such as land use, economic development, parks and open space, transportation and infrastructure management, and housing. The goal of the plan is to help Middletown improve its standing as a premier community by improving quality of life and economic opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors. To this end, it identifies five aspirational growth goals for Middletown - creating and fostering Resilient Neighborhoods, a Thriving Economy, Strong Infrastructure, Health and Safe Living, and Pride in Community. These umbrella themes resonate throughout the Comprehensive Plan and are supplemented by focused objectives and an Implementation Matrix. The Matrix provides a series of action items categorized by the five major goals, along with assigned priority levels, timeframes for completion, and potential resources for application. The Comprehensive Plan and Implementation Matrix will serve as policy framework documents that will help guide the city in prioritizing developmental growth and regulating policy changes to best achieve Middletown's vision for the future. The Parks Master Plan coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan development, explored synergies around Special Interest Areas, identified strategies to incorporate greenspace and connectivity to the river as a focal point for development and aligned goals for Middletown's vision.

### **EXPLORATION PHASE**

During the Exploration Phase, the Project Team used the foundations established during the Awareness Phase to test a spectrum of conceptual master plan alternatives and their associated physical and programmatic components. A range of concept alternatives was developed which explored a variety of landmark places and connectivity strategies, building and facility locations, habitat preservation and restoration strategies, educational demonstration opportunities, types and locations of recreational facilities, sustainable site and stormwater management strategies, and essential programmatic and systematic relationships. The Project Team worked closely with the City and key stakeholders during this phase to refine the alternatives and ensure that public input was incorporated and all of Middletown's goals, concerns, and aspirations were addressed.

### **VISION PHASE**

The final phase in the process was the Vision Phase, where the best ideas rose to the top and were woven together into a single cohesive plan. This was accomplished through two steps – a preliminary master plan and a final master plan.

The preliminary master plan was the first glimpse at how all the best ideas might work together. Final stakeholder input and guidance was solicited from the community through important questions such as: have we captured the community's vision for the park and recreation facilities? Are things working together well? Does the master plan embody the expectations related to the unique resource Middletown provides?

Based upon this feedback, the master plan was finalized along with key recommendations, a master plan-level cost estimate and an operational plan. The Project Team worked with the City to develop a prioritized and phased implementation strategy, and identified potential partnerships and funding strategies.

All of this was organized into this final master plan report that captures the essence of the process and creates a road map for future implementation of the park system vision.

The result of this vision phase was a collection of key recommendations that promote a forward vision for the City's parks system. This work can be used to engage City leaders, community and business leaders, foundation leaders and citizenry. It can also be used to facilitate grant applications.





2

# Awareness

COLLECTING DATA



# 2.AWARENESS

## COLLECTING DATA

### 2.1 AWARENESS SUMMARY

For this exercise, the Project Team evaluated 32 individual sites, totaling 342 acres, that are owned and operated by the City of Middletown Public Works. Park sites were evaluated in two days – Thursday, July 30 and Tuesday, August 4, 2020 – and a member of the City of Middletown Public Works accompanied the Project Team to many of the park sites and shared institutional and maintenance knowledge.

The Awareness chapter is organized by identifying System Trends & Observations, Site Trends & Observations, a detailed description of each park typology in the system, and individual park findings. Opportunities and challenges are further discussed in this chapter, but can be summarized into the following topics and questions:

#### CONNECTIVITY

- » Middletown parks are destinations within the community, but are they easy to get to without a car? What other types of destinations within the community are able to be accessed from parks?
- » Are there opportunities to link users to the Great Miami River Trail for greater regional connectivity? Are there opportunities to build a greenways and blueways system that builds off the Great Miami River Trail as a “spine”?
- » Can visitors walk or bike within the park? Can they easily and safely access the elements within the park?
- » Is the site universally accessible? Does the site generally comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws for accessibility? What are major barriers if not?

#### EQUITY

- » Are parks serving different populations of Middletown in an equitable way? Do they meet the needs of different park users and make all park users feel safe and comfortable when using Middletown parks?
- » Are parks equitably distributed within Middletown? Is there a correlation between resident income and park typology? Is there a correlation between resident income and the quality of these parks?
- » Do residents in lower income neighborhoods have access to safe and well-maintained sports courts, playgrounds, and other facilities?

#### A COMMON IMAGE

- » Is there signage that clearly identifies the name of the park? Are there rules signage at entrances and playgrounds so users understand what is expected of them? Is there consistency in the signage type and look?
- » Do site furnishings and amenities found in parks belong to a “family” so there is a common experience in Middletown parks? Would this make repairs and replacements easier and more economical for City staff?
- » Are playgrounds safe and accessible for users?
- » Do parks feel safe and clean? Are parks designed and maintained in a manner that promotes safety and security?
- » Are there a variety of places to sit comfortably in the park?

#### ACTIVITIES, SOCIABILITY & VARIETY

- » Is there a variety of activities within each park that is appropriate for the typology and that will attract a wide variety of users?
- » Are the existing elements within the park utilized, utilized as intended, or are there elements that should be removed, replaced or redesigned?
- » Is there are a variety of experiences and landscape types present in parks that provide different recreation experiences?

#### SUSTAINABILITY

- » Are parks deliberate in their management of stormwater and are green infrastructure practices utilized? Are there opportunities to enhance parks to provide unique landscape experiences or enhance stream corridors?
- » Are there sustainable maintenance practices in place that are appropriate for the scale of the park? What are the implications of the City’s invasive management, tree assessments and turf mowing practices?
- » Does the Middletown Parks System promote a healthy and active lifestyle through its facilities, programs, and brand/image?

The Project Team will be exploring these topics in further detail and working with City staff to address these questions. These topics will be supplemented further through the [Funding & Staffing Analysis](#) and [Comparative Analysis](#) as next steps following the Inventory & Conditions chapter. The [Comparative Analysis](#) is a benchmarking exercise that will measure Middletown against neighboring, peer and best in class communities based on quantitative data such as park acres per citizen and qualitative data such as parks within a 10-minute walk. This will allow the Project Team to have a conversation with City staff to understand which benchmarks and goals Middletown wants to establish for their system in the next ten years. The [Funding & Staffing Analysis](#) will review detailed information for maintenance and operations and funding allocated toward these items while analyzing data from the Inventory & Conditions chapter. The conclusions based on this analysis will provide recommendations for City staff in operations best practices, funding opportunities, and economies that can be achieved to move Middletown Parks forward over the next ten years.



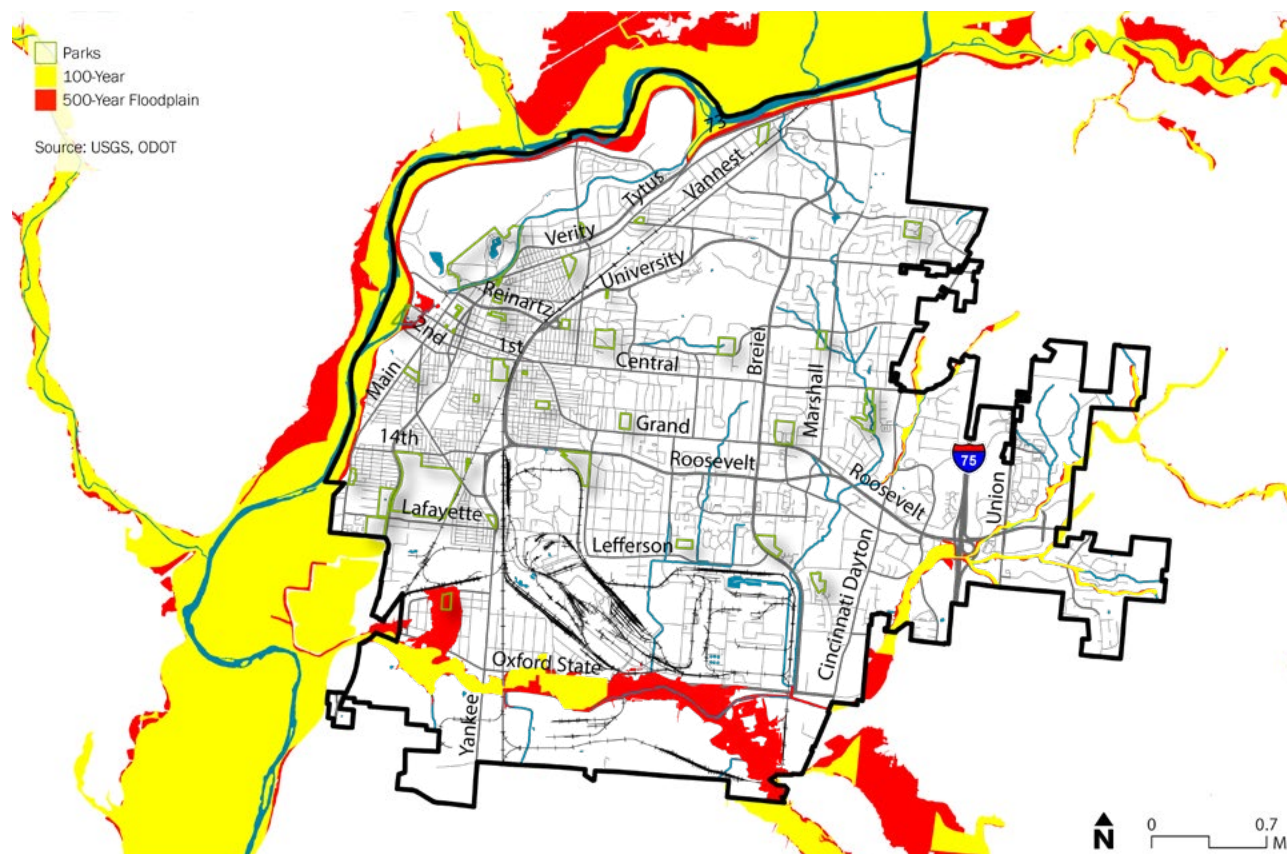
## 2.2 SYSTEM-WIDE TRENDS & OBSERVATIONS

The Project Team conducted a system-wide inventory of Middletown's natural, built, and planning systems using GIS data, existing reports, and interacting with city staff. Natural systems form the structure of the city's landscape and include various elements associated with hydrology, geology, and soils. Built systems are the products of urbanization and development and include components like transportation and tree canopy. Planning context refers to land use, parcel ownership, connectivity, and accessibility. Data for this inventory was obtained from local and national sources - the City of Middletown, Butler County, Warren County, OKI Regional Council of Governments, Tri-State Trails, Ohio Geological Survey (OGS), Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), United States Geological Survey (USGS), and United States Department of Agriculture National Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS).

### HYDROLOGY

There are approximately 40 miles of existing streams within the city's boundaries, most are tributaries of the Great Miami River (Dicks Creek, Shaker Creek, and Eberhart's Run), much of which lies just outside of Middletown city limits. FEMA floodplains show those areas that have the potential of flood impact during 100 and 500-year flood events. These lands, while not conducive for development, could offer opportunities to promote the ecological health of the riverfront (i.e., riparian buffers) while continuing to protect from flooding and provide additional recreational area for residents.

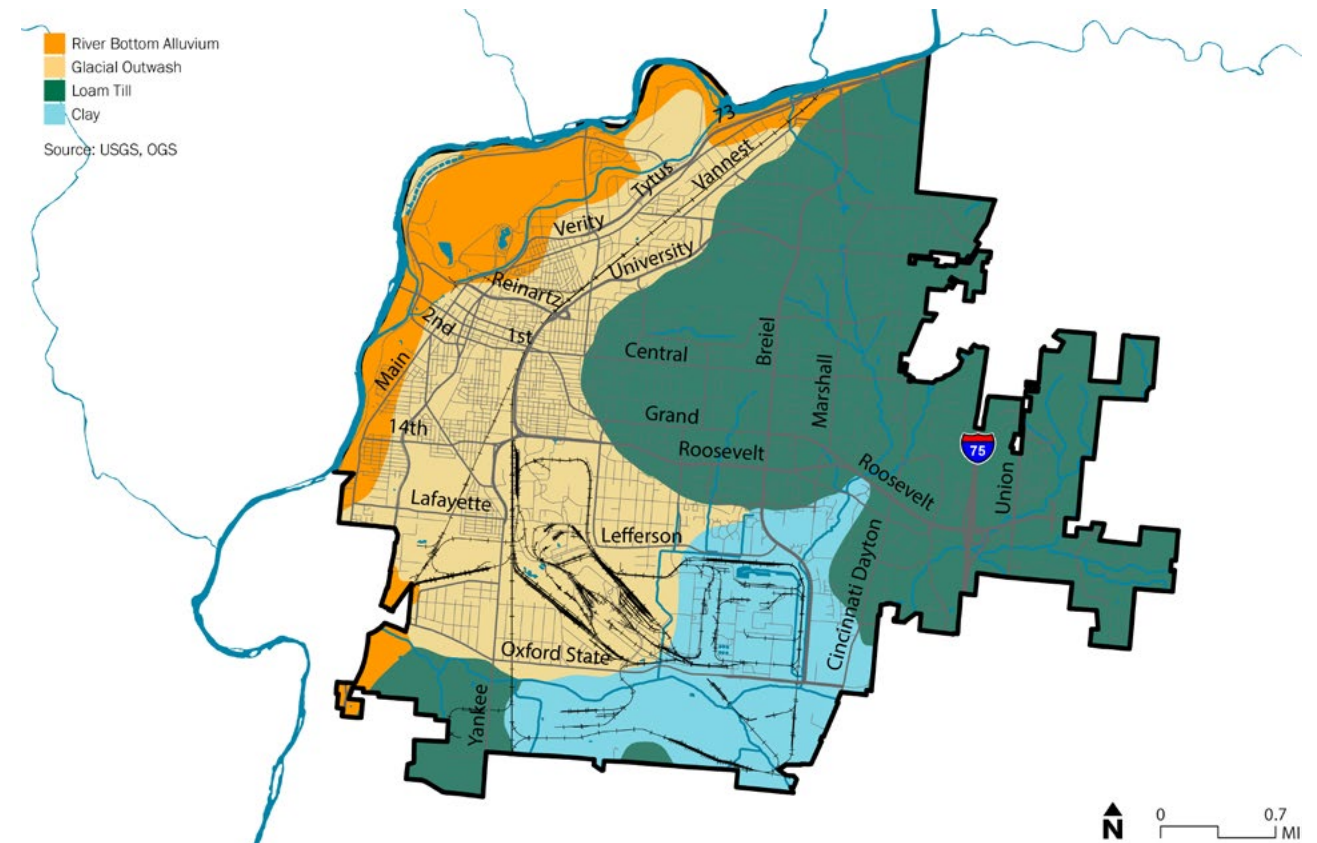
▼ FIGURE 2: FLOODPLAIN MAP



### GEOLOGY

The natural geologic formation helps to provide an understanding of the area's history and topography and identify opportunities for natural stormwater infiltration and sub-surface water conveyance. Middletown's geology consists of river bottom alluvium along the Great Miami River corridor, glacial outwash deposits of sand and gravel within the downtown basin, and loam till and clay within the upland areas.

▼ FIGURE 3: GEOLOGY MAP

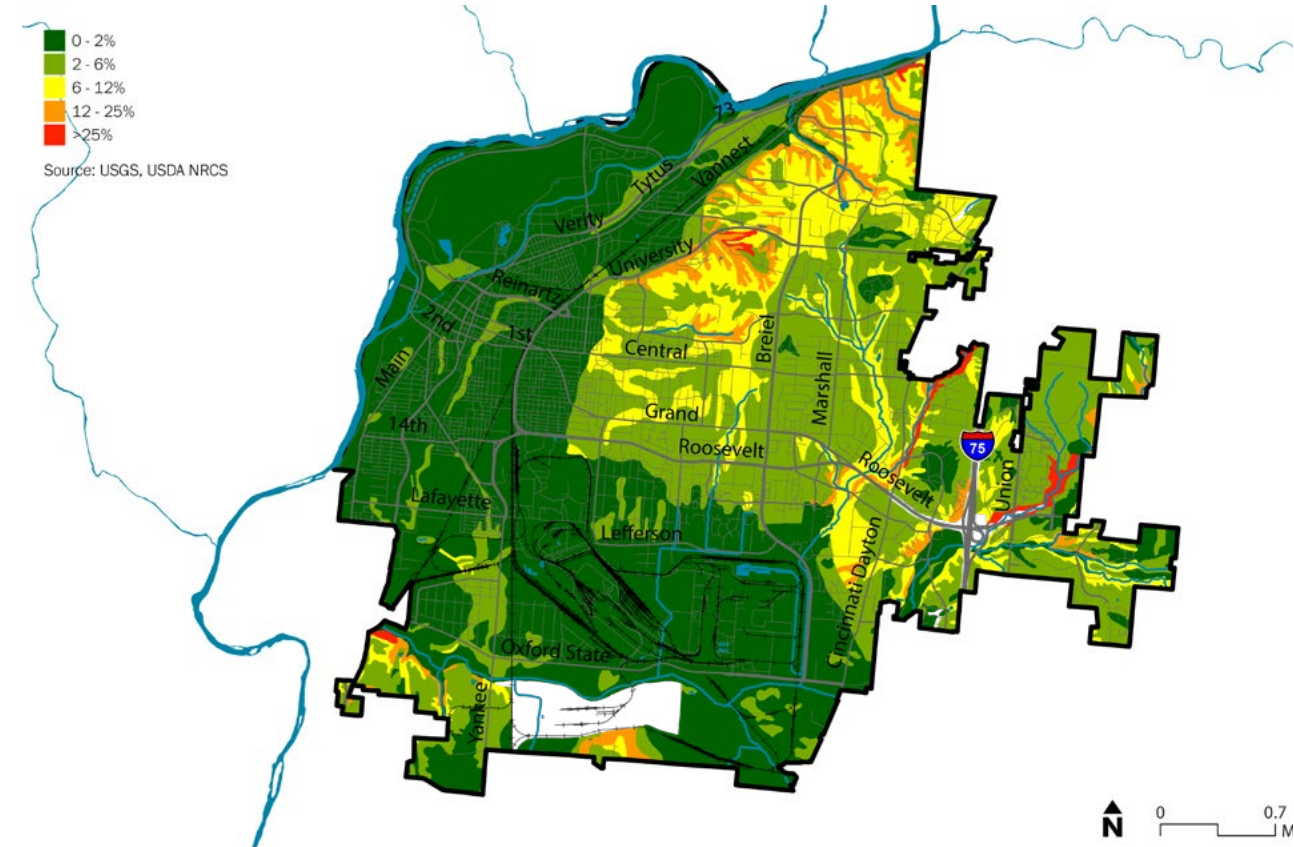




## SLOPE RANGES (based on soil classifications)

Soil data can be classified to show general slope trends from the flat river corridor and adjacent basin to hillside neighborhoods. Slopes above 5% are not accessible and trails/paths may be more challenging to maintain. Conversely, slopes less than 2% or that are adjacent to water courses are most susceptible to flooding/drainage issues.

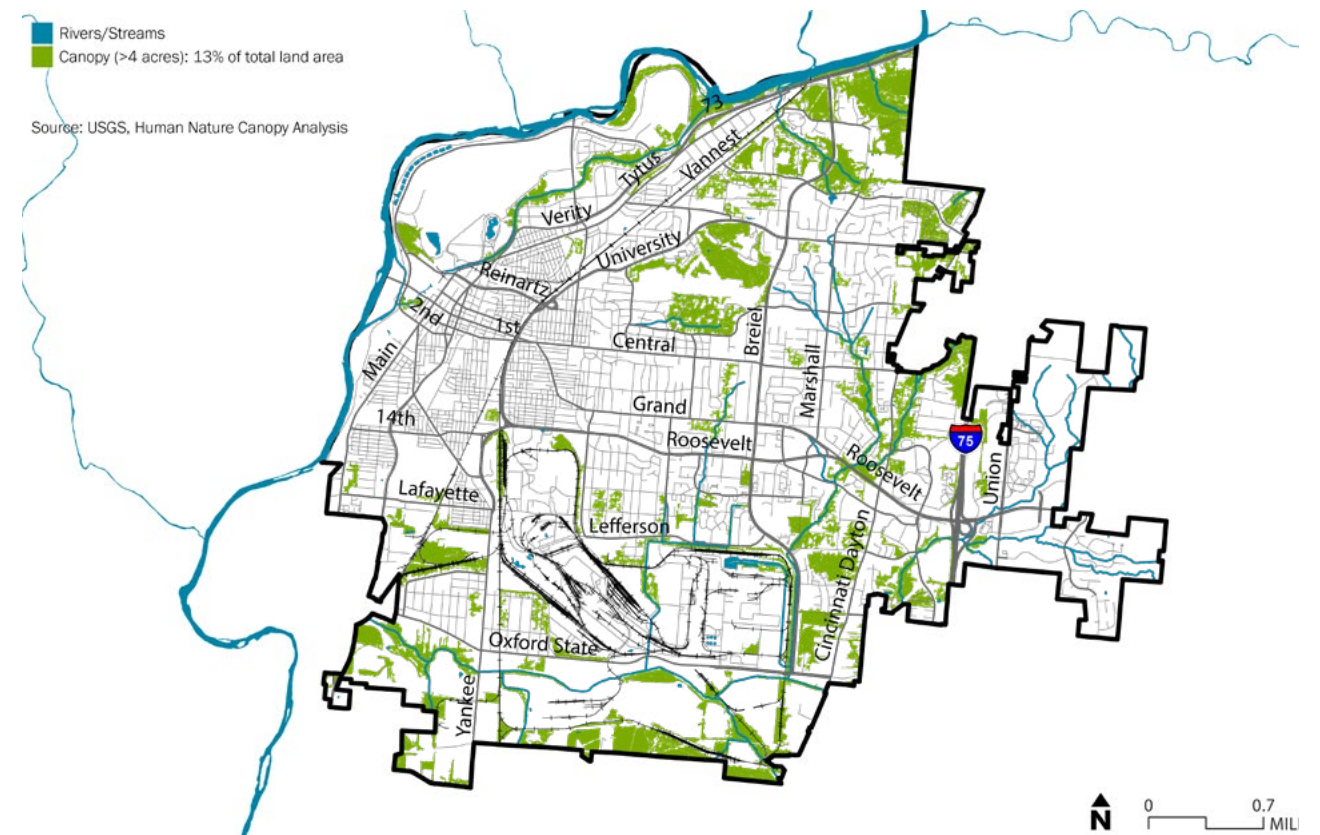
▼ FIGURE 4: SLOPE MAP



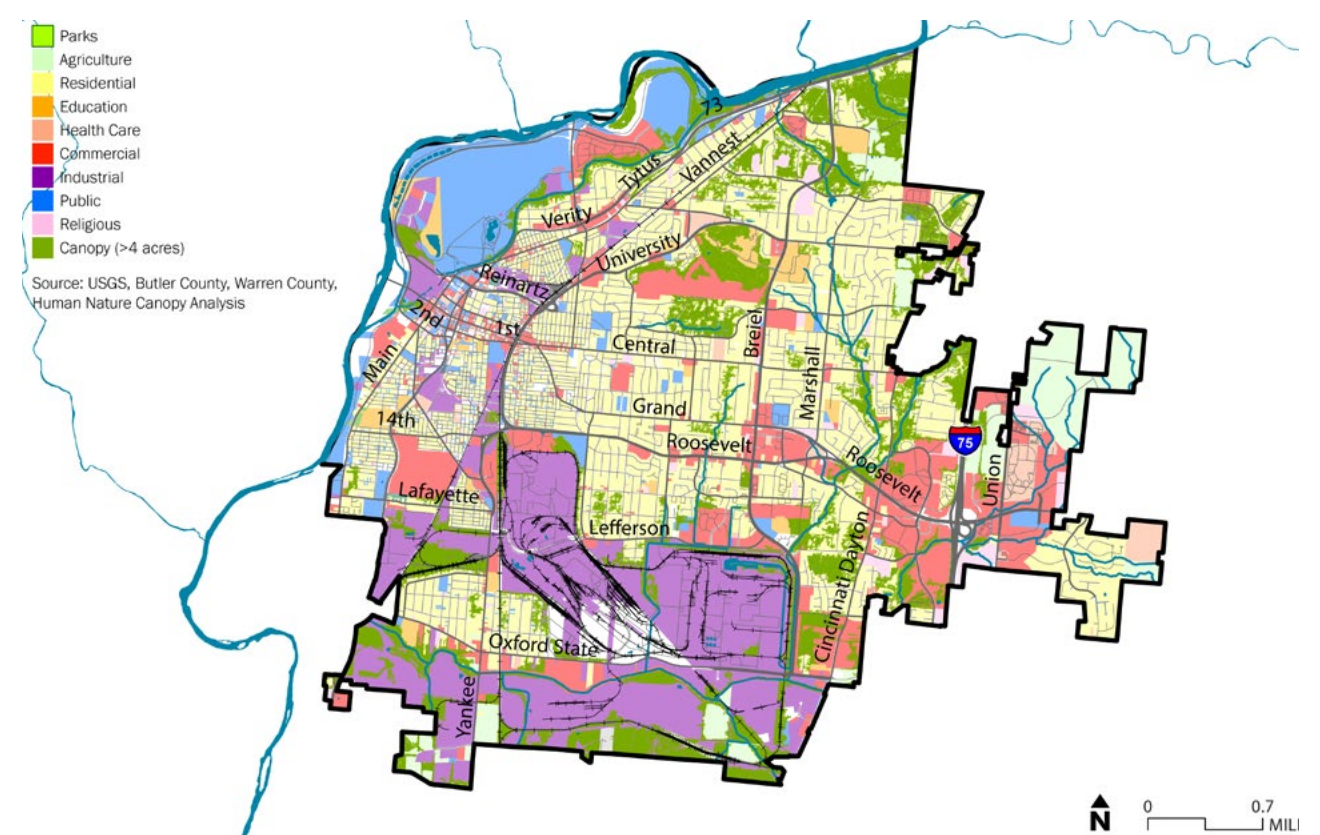
## CANOPY

Trees are valuable city infrastructure and are critical to vibrant communities because of the benefits they provide (i.e., stormwater management, air quality improvement, aesthetics). The City of Middletown recognizes the value of trees and has made the commitment to become a Tree City USA. The maps below show an initial canopy analysis conducted by Human Nature and focus on canopy clusters greater than 4 acres in size to highlight existing urban forest as they relate to existing land use. These clusters, and the lack of, could suggest where future reforestation efforts could be directed (i.e., along stream/riparian corridors). It should be noted that the Project Team recommends an official Urban Tree Canopy Study be conducted to refine this analysis and provide a more accurate picture of Middletown's land cover and urban tree canopy.

▼ FIGURE 5: TREE CANOPY MAP



▼ FIGURE 6: TREE CANOPY + LAND USE MAP



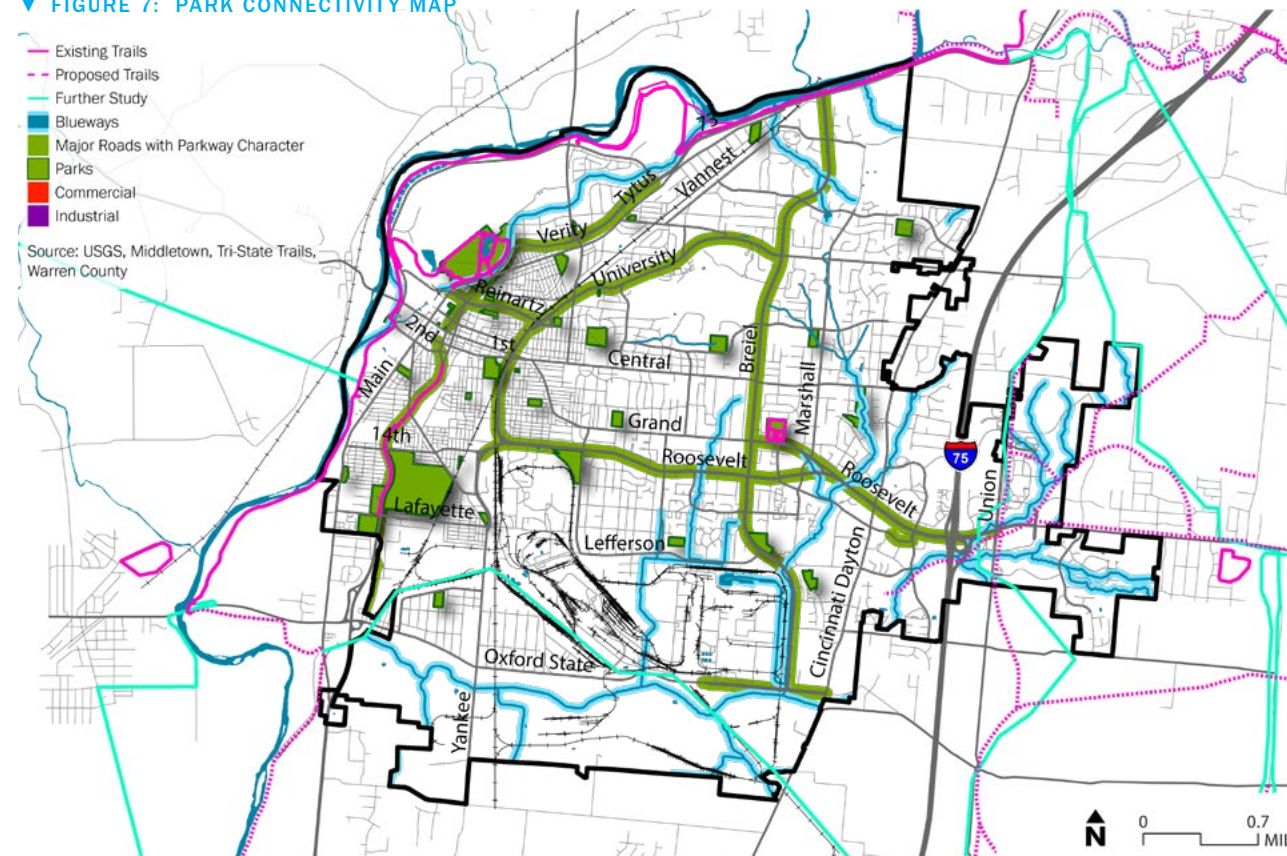


## CONNECTIVITY

This map shows how the current park system is currently connected to the community through vehicular/pedestrian (roads/sidewalks) and bicycle (trails) corridors. Bike infrastructure in Middletown is currently limited to the Great Miami River Trail, SR 4, Smith Park, and Jacot Park. Improving these connections could include enhancing roadways with parkway character (i.e., vegetated medians and wide right-of-ways) such as Verity Parkway, Grand Avenue, Roosevelt Boulevard, and Breiel Boulevard and surface streams as greenway/bike and blueway/water trail corridors. This system of corridors could provide community access through physical connection to many parks throughout the system.

Connectivity to other land uses, like commercial and industrial job centers provides an opportunity for residents to use land and water trails to commute to work and alleviate congestion along vehicular corridors. Linking to neighboring communities in Butler and Warren Counties also builds a strong regional connection.

▼ FIGURE 7: PARK CONNECTIVITY MAP



▼ FIGURE 8: BREIEL BOULEVARD



▼ FIGURE 9: ROOSEVELT BOULEVARD



▼ FIGURE 10: UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD



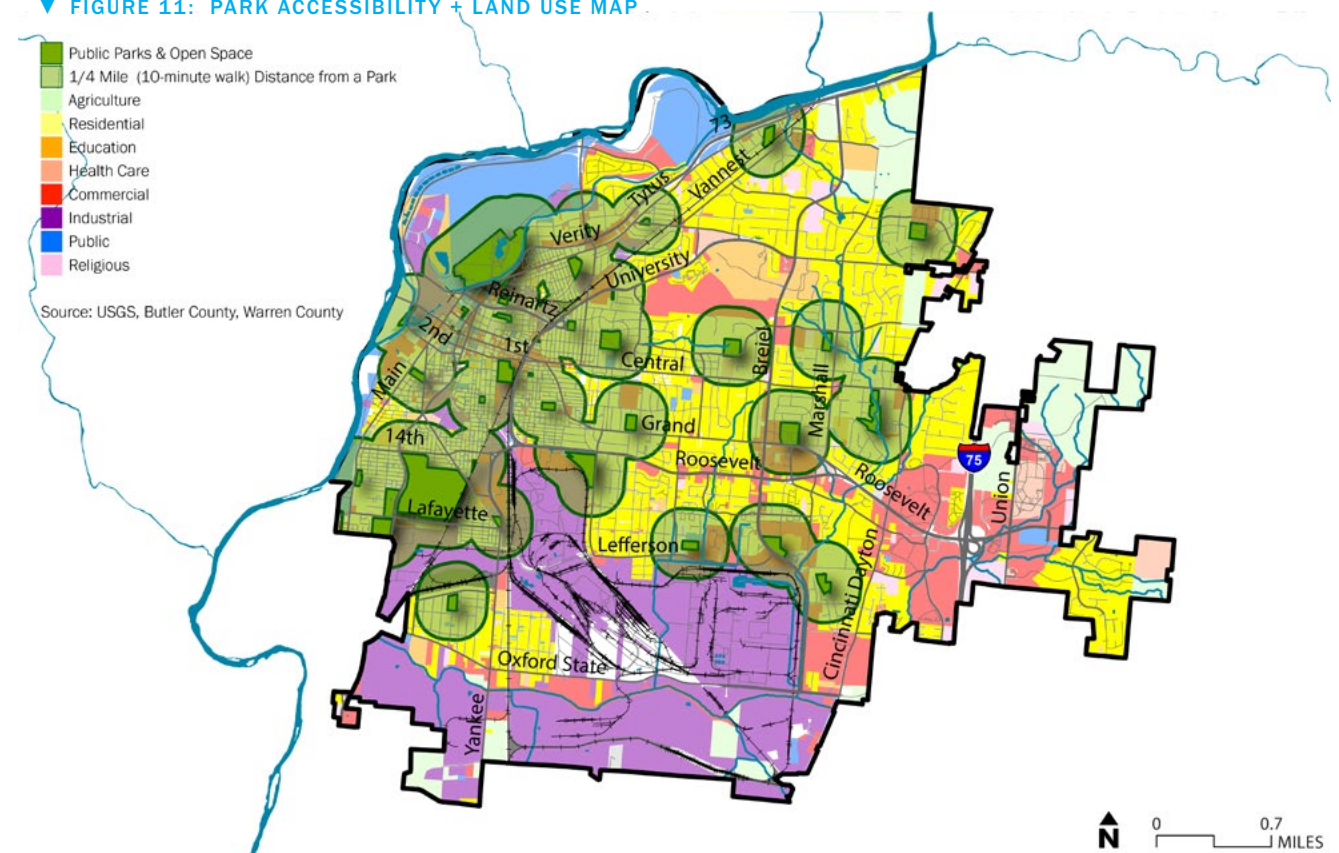
## PARK ACCESSIBILITY

Access to parks, whether driving or walking, is a key aspect of whether there are adequate park facilities available for residents. Individuals who live closer to parks will visit them more often. Those who are unable to walk to parks are less likely to visit them and are therefore deprived of the opportunity to experience the many benefits those parks can provide. It is therefore essential that parks be easily accessible to all citizens.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) believes that the key to ensuring accessibility to park is through creating safe routes to parks within our communities. There are several physical and social barriers that make walking to parks undesirable - proximity (route to a park should be no longer than a quarter of a mile, or a 10-minute walk), lack of infrastructure, crime and safety concerns. Removing these barriers and making parks accessible to everyone is a goal that is being addressed by park professional across the country. NRPA's Safe Routes to Parks program recommends five essential elements that compose a safe route to a park: comfort; convenience; safety; access and design; and the park itself.

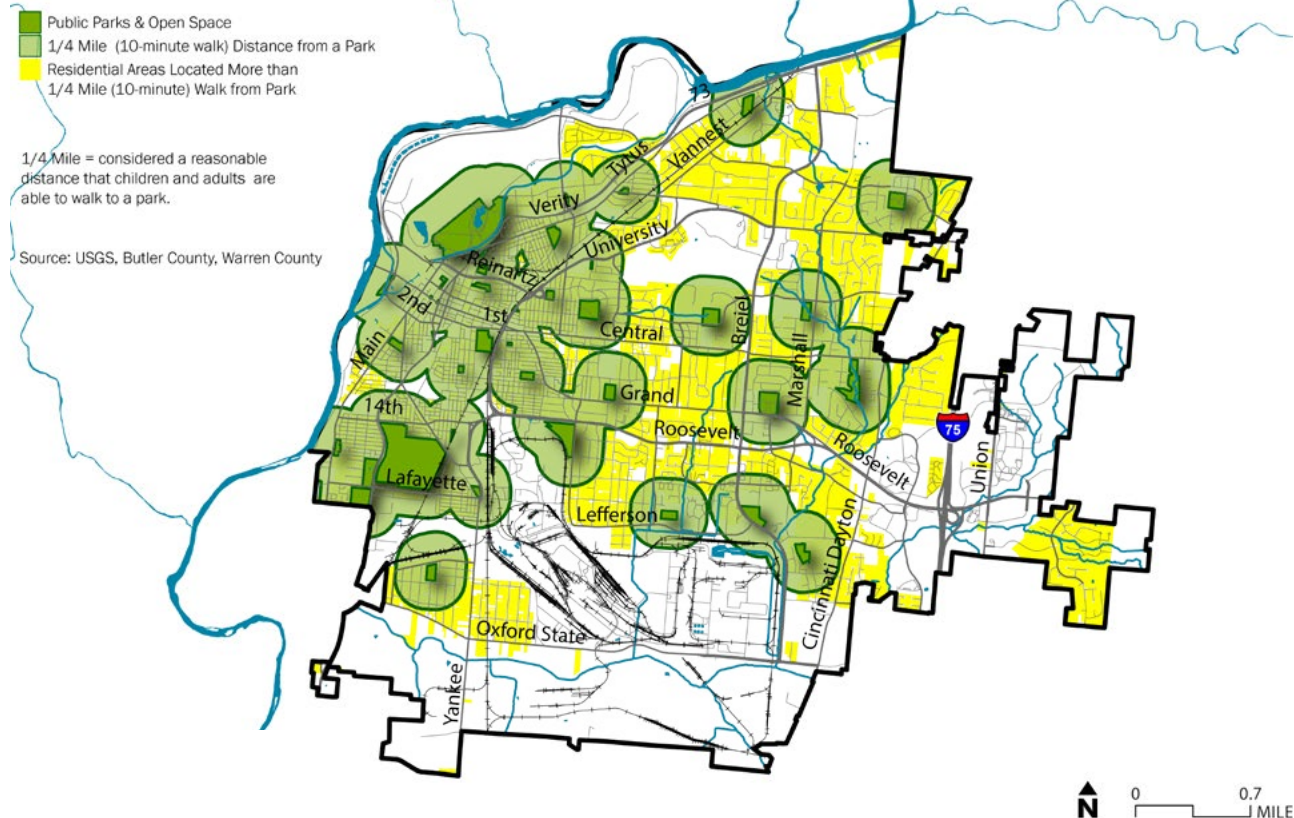
Parks within Middletown's system are well-distributed and the maps below show areas within Middletown that are within a quarter-mile (10 minute) walk from a park. Approximately 53% of Middletown's residential properties, shown in yellow, are farther than a quarter-mile from a park and these areas would benefit from future park additions to the system.

▼ FIGURE 11: PARK ACCESSIBILITY + LAND USE MAP





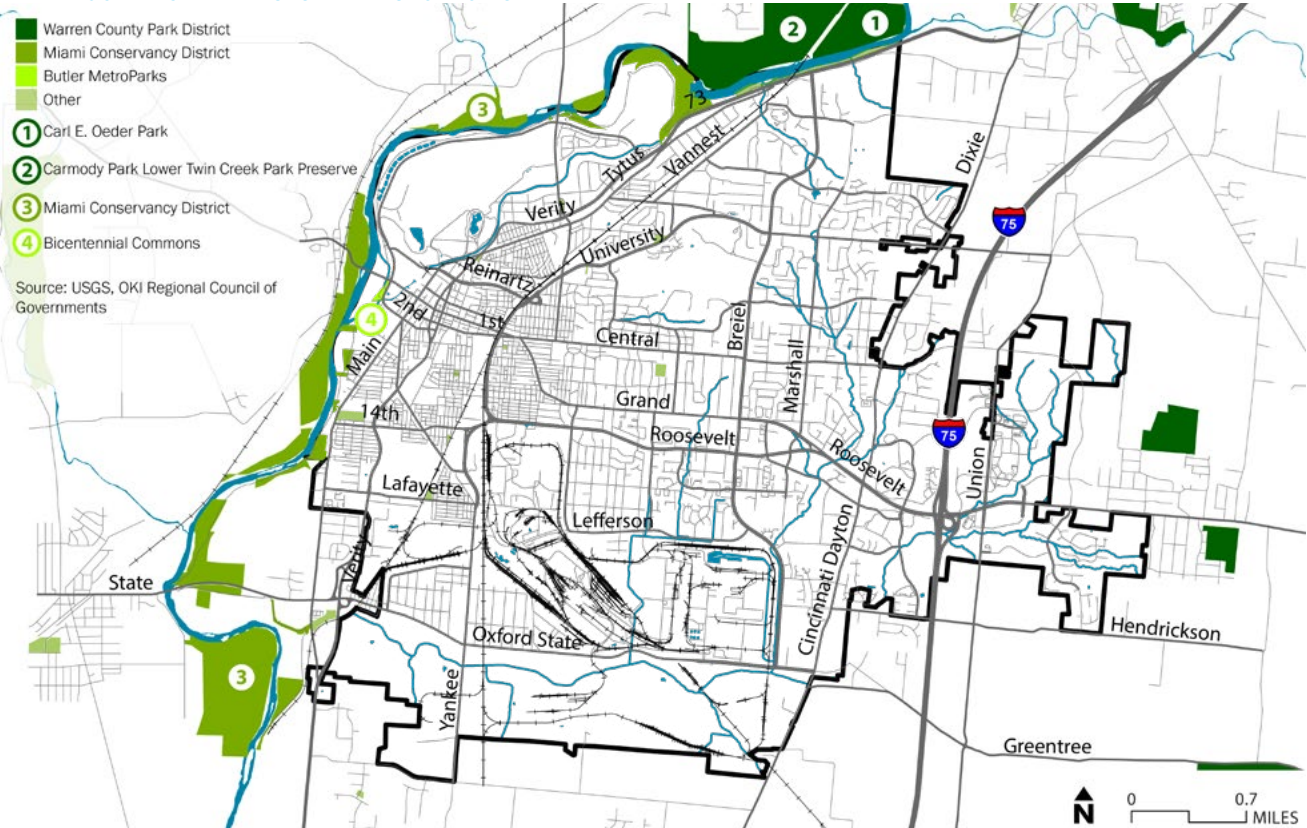
▼ FIGURE 12: PARK ACCESSIBILITY + RESIDENTIAL AREAS MAP



## PARK SYSTEM ADJACENCIES

The Great Miami River corridor is an asset that many communities benefit from. This map shows open space assets and partnership opportunities adjacent to the City of Middletown.

▼ FIGURE 13: PARK SYSTEM ADJACENCIES MAP



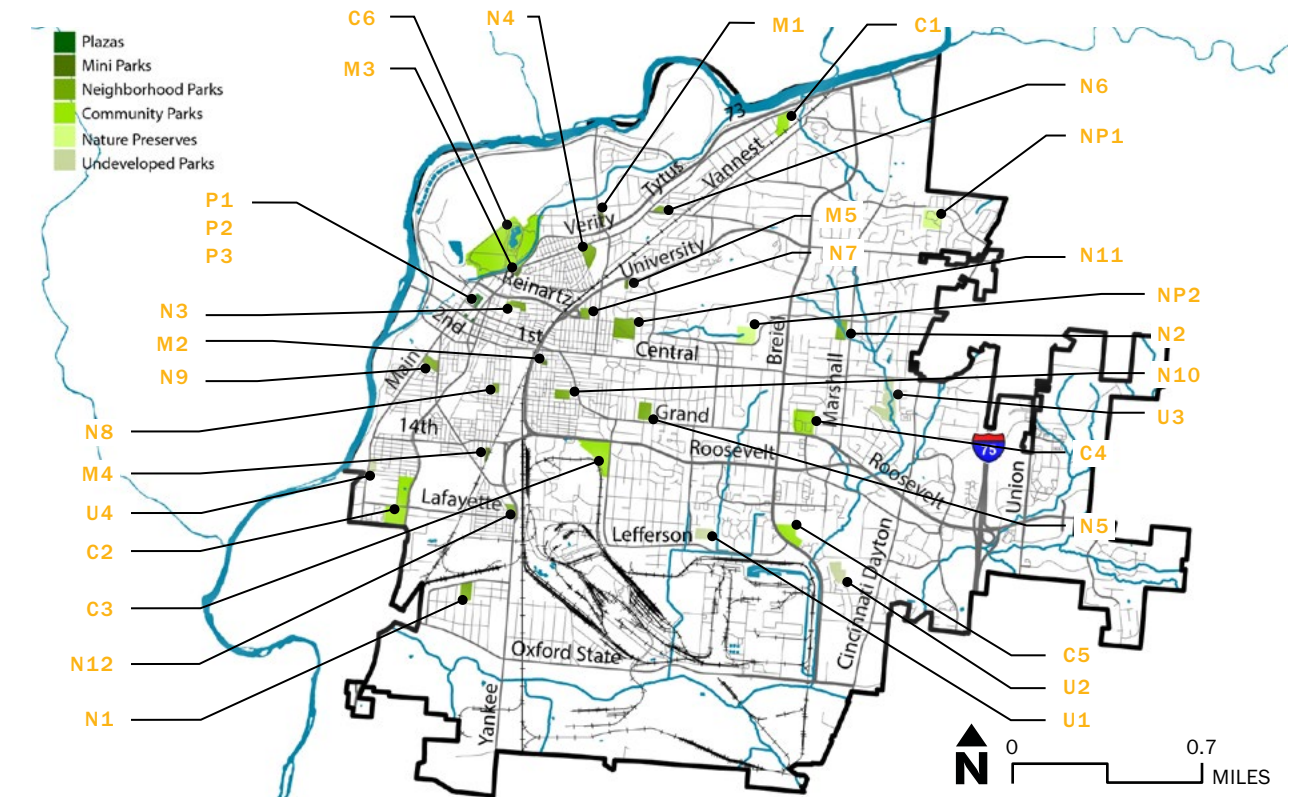
## 2.3 SITE TRENDS & OBSERVATIONS

### PARK TYPOLOGIES

The City's parks were classified into six (6) different park typologies for the purpose of organizing and analyzing the park sites. The City of Middletown does not currently have an established park classification system so the typologies listed below were developed based on standards published in the 1996 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines (Mertes, Hall). In addition, Plazas were added to the classifications to represent a unique asset that the Public Works Department operates. The following typologies were developed based on commonalities such as size, context and features found within the sites, but it is worth mentioning that there are differences among park sites found within the same typology as each site is unique. The typologies are defined within the Park Typologies section and include:

- » Plazas
- » Mini Parks
- » Neighborhood Parks
- » Community Parks
- » Nature Preserves
- » Undeveloped Parks

▼ FIGURE 14: PARK TYPOLOGIES + LOCATION MAP



### LEGEND

**PLAZAS**  
P1 Donham Plaza  
P2 Governor's Square  
P3 Port Middletown

**MINI PARKS**  
M1 Avalon Park  
M2 Crawford Park  
M3 Lakeside Park  
M4 Michigan Park  
M5 University Park

**NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**  
N1 Damon Park  
N2 Dowling Park  
N3 Flemming Park  
N4 Gardner Park  
N5 Gladell Park  
N6 Maple Park  
N7 Miami Park  
N8 Oakland Park  
N9 Old South Park  
N10 Sherman Park  
N11 Sunset Park  
N12 Yankee Park

**COMMUNITY PARKS**  
C1 Dixie Heights Park  
C2 Douglass Park  
C3 Goldman Park  
C4 Jacot Park  
C5 Lefferson Park  
C6 Smith Park

**NATURE PRESERVES**  
NP1 Armbruster Nature Preserve  
NP2 Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary & Arboretum

**UNDEVELOPED PARKS**  
U1 Jonathan Park  
U2 New England Heights  
U3 Three Fountains Park  
U4 Washington Park



## 2.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following features were evaluated in each park. Trends and observations are noted within the Park Typology section. Detailed site information is included on the individual Park Site Evaluation pages, located in section 2.6.

The evaluations were classified with an Excellent/Good/Fair/Poor ranking system and color coded in the Inventory Summary Matrix, included later in this chapter. These terms were defined as follows:

**EXCELLENT** – new/well-maintained condition; no improvements needed

**GOOD** – minor wear, minimal improvements needed

**FAIR** – significant wear/damage, needs repair

**POOR** – needs replacement

The condition of multiple components within some feature categories, such as Amenities, Connectivity and Overall Park Character, was represented as an average of those components in the Summary Matrix. Unless otherwise noted in each of the categories below, if elements were not present, they were not assigned a condition ranking and were indicated with “NA”.

### STRUCTURES

Structures found in Middletown parks include picnic shelters, concessions, and restroom buildings. Structures are found in 40% of Middletown parks and are most commonly found in Plazas, Community Parks and Nature Preserves. There are some structures located in Neighborhood Parks. Generally, shelters are in “Good” condition. The most common type of structure is picnic shelter and there is a wide variety of shelter styles represented throughout the park system.

▼ FIGURE 15: STRUCTURE IN GOLDMAN PARK



▼ FIGURE 16: STRUCTURE IN OLD SOUTH PARK



### CIRCULATION

Infrastructure elements designed to move people on foot, bike, or in a vehicle within the park sites were assessed during the field inventory. Accessibility for visitors with disabilities, as prescribed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), within each site was also assessed. Internal movement systems were assessed as vital elements to a developed park site, and if an element was not present, a “Poor” ranking was given. In general, Middletown parks are served well by perimeter sidewalks and roads along the sides of each site. Generally, sidewalks and vehicular infrastructure are in “Fair” condition. Overall, there is a lack of bicycle infrastructure such as separated multi-use trails systems, bike lanes, and bicycle racks in Middletown parks which presents great opportunity for future development. There is also a lack of internal site circulation beyond the perimeter sidewalks which presents a challenge to accessing park amenities for people with disabilities, and this is another good opportunity for future improvements.

▼ FIGURE 17: PERIMETER SIDEWALK IN MIAMI PARK



### ACTIVITY AREAS

Activity areas include playgrounds, sports courts, sports fields, fountains and picnic areas. Middletown provides playgrounds in all Neighborhood and Community Parks. While the average age of Middletown playground structures is 18.75 years, many playgrounds are in “Good” structural condition. However, playgrounds more than ten years old likely need updates or replacements to meet the latest safety standards. Playgrounds also lack regulatory and rules signage.

Sports courts are generally in “Fair” condition. There are some courts that are well loved and heavily utilized, such as the pickleball courts at Lefferson Park and the tennis courts at Sunset Park. There are others that show signs of wear such as cracking, vegetation growing through cracks, and paint wearing off and are in need of repair. As part of the Funding and Staffing Analysis, the Project Team will be looking to understand in greater detail which courts are well utilized and which are not to inform recommendations for each park site.

▼ FIGURE 18: PLAYGROUND IN GLADELL PARK





Sports fields generally consist of mown turf areas with backstops and it is not clear if these areas are utilized or not, though there were no signs of worn paths in these locations. Goldman Park is the site with the most baseball and softball fields including an accessible playing field. Jacot Park is the site where tournament soccer play occurs.

There are some decorative fountains in Middletown Parks and these occur in the Plazas. There is a historic fountain at Old Smith Park.

A majority of parks have picnic areas that include both covered and open picnic areas.

## AMENITIES

Amenities included site furnishings such as trash receptacles, park entry signage, site lighting, bike racks, drinking fountains, and lawn and landscaping. In general, amenities at most park sites are in “Good” condition. There is a wide variety of site furnishings found throughout the parks and there is not a uniform signage family throughout the park system. There is also a wide variety of picnic tables including mounted and movable furnishings. Recent updates at Sunset Park represent the standard that the City would like to implement for future replacement of furnishings in City parks. This will simplify procurement and maintenance, and enhance the park system’s identity. Amenities for pet waste such as “Mutt Mitt” stations were not commonly found. Some parks were strewn with litter, even when trash receptacles were present.

The turf grass lawns that make up a majority of the space in Middletown parks were observed to be well-cared for during the Project Team’s visits. As part of the Funding and Staffing Analysis, the Project Team will assess the implications of the amount of turf lawn the City maintains on an annual basis. Much of the landscape in parks consists of mature trees. These are generally in good condition, though the Project Team identified some dead or dying trees. There are a few parks, such as Lefferson, Jacot and Old South, that feature annual flower beds. These tend to be planted with the assistance of volunteers from the local business and philanthropic community.



▼ FIGURE 19: BASKETBALL COURT IN SHERMAN PARK



◀ FIGURE 20: PARK ENTRY SIGN IN CRAWFORD PARK

## CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity was a measure of whether park sites were connected to the community beyond. Inventory information collected included the presence of trails, trailheads, sidewalks that connected to the surrounding area, and nearby public transit lines and stops. A “Good” condition was defined if a park was located adjacent to a bus line or there was a stop located adjacent to a park. If a bus line or stop was located 1/10 to 1/4 mile from the site, it was given a “Fair” condition, and if there was no bus line or stop present or located farther than 1/4 mile, it was given a “Poor” condition.

In general, Middletown parks have good connectivity to their surroundings by sidewalks. There is a lack of bike trails and bike infrastructure in Middletown, with the exception of the Great Miami River Trail corridor located in the north western portion of the city. The Great Miami River Trail affords regional connectivity to nearby communities and the opportunity to provide a “spine” from which to build a Middletown Trails System. Roads serving parks are generally on the perimeter and are in “Good” condition. However, there are some parks with parking lots and drives, and when those are present, they are generally in need of repair and re-striping.



◀ FIGURE 21: PATHWAYS IN JACOT PARK

## OVERALL PARK CHARACTER

Overall, Middletown parks had a “Good” character, based on the overall park condition, if the park is being used as intended and a general sense of safety and security. The parks seemed to be a reflection of the unique character of the neighborhood areas they are located in. Parks that were in high use during the Project Team’s visit included Lefferson Park, particularly at the pickleball courts. The nature preserves, Armbruster Nature Preserve and Bull’s Run Nature Sanctuary & Arboretum, were also being well used despite the visits taking place in the middle of the week and in overcast and rainy conditions. Undeveloped parks lack an identity since there are no amenities or circulation within the site, but they also present the largest opportunities for development as parks that can reflect the varied landscapes found within the sites.



▲ FIGURE 22: PICKLEBALL COURTS IN LEFFERSON PARK



## 2.5 INVENTORY SUMMARY MATRIX

	PLAZAS			MINI PARKS				NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS						
	P1: Donham Plaza	P2: Governor Square	P3: Port Middletown	M1: Avalon Park	M2: Crawford Park	M3: Lakeside Park	M4: Michigan Park	M5: University Park	N1: Damon Park	N2: Dowling Park	N3: Flemming Park	N4: Gardner Park	N5: Gladell Park	N6: Maple Park
1. STRUCTURES			NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2. INTERNAL MOVEMENT SYSTEMS														
Pedestrian														
Bicycle														
Automobile														
ADA Accessibility														
3. ACTIVITY AREAS														
Playgrounds*	NA	NA	NA			NA								
Playground Age**	NA	NA	NA	21	16	NA	25	19	20	24	8	27	23	16
Sports Courts*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA							NA	
Sports Fields*	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA	NA	NA				NA		
Fountains				NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Picnic Areas*							NA			NA			NA	
4. AMENITIES*														
5. CONNECTIVITY*														
6. OVERALL PARK CHARACTER*														

	EXCELLENT: New/Well-Maintained Condition, No Improvements Needed		FAIR: Significant Wear/Damage, Needs Repair
	GOOD: Minor Wear, Minimal Improvements Needed		POOR: Needs Replacement

Neighborhood Parks						Community Parks						Nature Preserves		undeveloped Parks			
N7: Miami Park	N8: Oakland Park	N9: Old South Park	N10: Sherman Park	N11: Sunset Park	N12: Yankee Park	C1: Dixie Heights Park	C2: Douglass Park	C3: Goldman Park	C4: Jacot Park	C5: Lefferson Park	C6: Smith Park	NP1: Armbruster Nature Preserve	NP2: Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary & Arboretum	U1: Jonathan Park	U2: New England Heights Park	U3: Three Fountains Park	U4: Washington Park
NA	NA		NA		NA									NA	NA	NA	NA

NA Not Applicable

\* Average of multiple items; see individual park sheets for detail

\*\* Based on information provided by the City of Middletown; when multiple play structures are present, the ages are listed and separated by “/”



## 2.6 PARK TYPOLOGIES

### PLAZAS

Urban plazas are public areas within the city which serve as the focal point of a specific place or neighborhood. These spaces typically encourage formal and informal neighborhood events and include hardscape surfaces (i.e., brick or concrete pavers) with seasonal planters, benches, and public art.

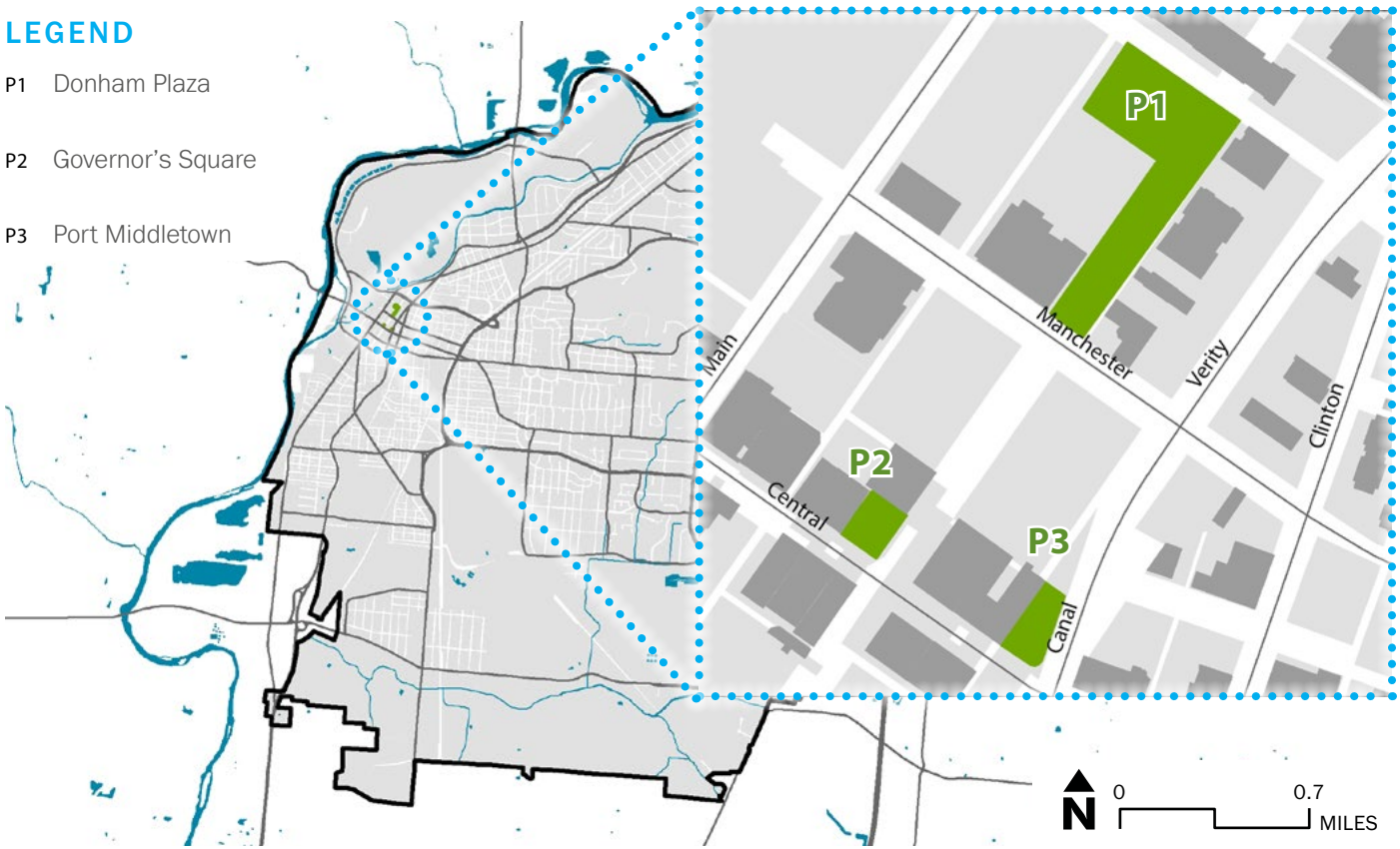
The Middletown Parks Department maintains three (3) plazas which represent two (2) acres clustered within a block of each other in the downtown business district that are well-maintained with a “good” overall park character based on the overall park condition, if the park is being used as intended and a general sense of safety and security.

Common strengths observed at the City’s plazas were: the presence of site amenities (lighting, public art, seating, picnic areas, and fountains); visibility; connectivity and accessibility (adjacent to a variety of uses and access to public transportation); and ability to encourage individuals to formally and informally gather, socialize, and hold community events (prior to the COVID-19 environment).

Common challenges observed were: limited connectivity to bike infrastructure.

#### LEGEND

- P1 Donham Plaza
- P2 Governor’s Square
- P3 Port Middletown



▲ FIGURE 23: PLAZAS LOCATION MAP

## DONHAM PLAZA

**LOCATION:** Manchester and S. Broad Street (Downtown)

**SIZE:** 1.59 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Plaza

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD - FAIR	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete & Pavers; aging, settling and cracking	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn, Trees, Planters	EXCELLENT
Safety	Surrounded by mixed-use (City Building, Historical Society, Arts Center, YMCA)	GOOD
Security	Site Lighting	GOOD

#### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Interactive Fountain; Bell Tower; Picnic Tables; Lighting; Benches; Trash Receptacles; Entry Sign; Site Lighting

#### KNOWN PROGRAMMING

Arts Festival

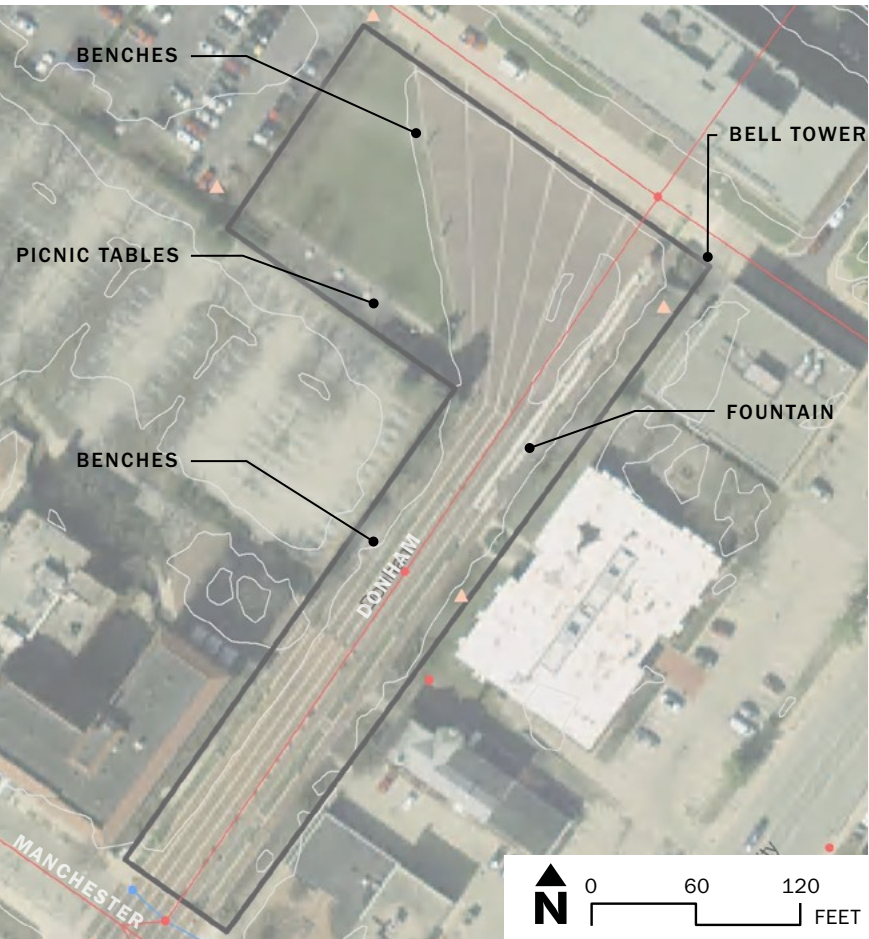
#### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Adjacent sidewalks link to the surrounding downtown district and public transportation is available near this site. Uneven pavers/concrete make most of plaza inaccessible; concrete walk (with minor cracking/settling) off parking lot does connect to accessible picnic tables.

▼ FIGURE 24: DONHAM PLAZA



▼ FIGURE 25: DONHAM PLAZA FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





## GOVERNOR'S SQUARE

**LOCATION:** NW corner of Central Ave. & Broad St.

**SIZE:** 0.19 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Plaza

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Pavement	Concrete and Pavers	GOOD
Landscape	Lawn, Trees, Plant Beds & Planters	GOOD
Safety	Flashing Pedestrian Crosswalks	EXCELLENT
Security	Site Lighting	GOOD

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Interactive Fountain; Picnic Tables; Lighting; Flagpole; Shade Structure; Performance Space; Mural

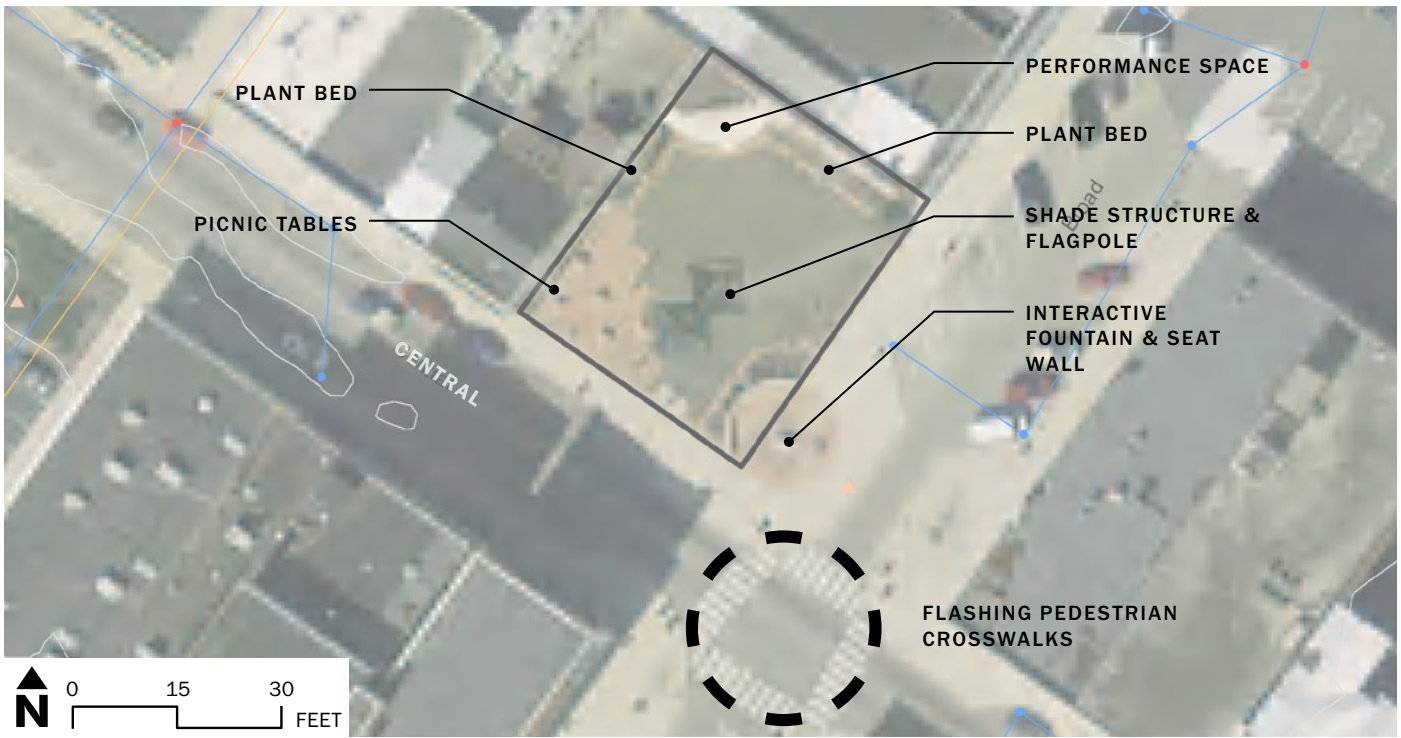
### KNOWN PROGRAMMING

Wednesday Night Concerts; Arts Festival

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Public Transportation is available near this site. The MTS Transit Station is a block south.

▼ FIGURE 27: GOVERNOR'S SQUARE FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 26: GOVERNOR'S SQUARE



## PORT MIDDLETOWN

**LOCATION:** NW corner of Central Ave and Verity Pkwy (Downtown)

**SIZE:** 0.23 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Plaza

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	GOOD	GOOD
Landscape	Trees, Wood Mulch Surface	GOOD
Safety	Good Lighting and Good Connectivity	GOOD
Security	Site Lighting	GOOD

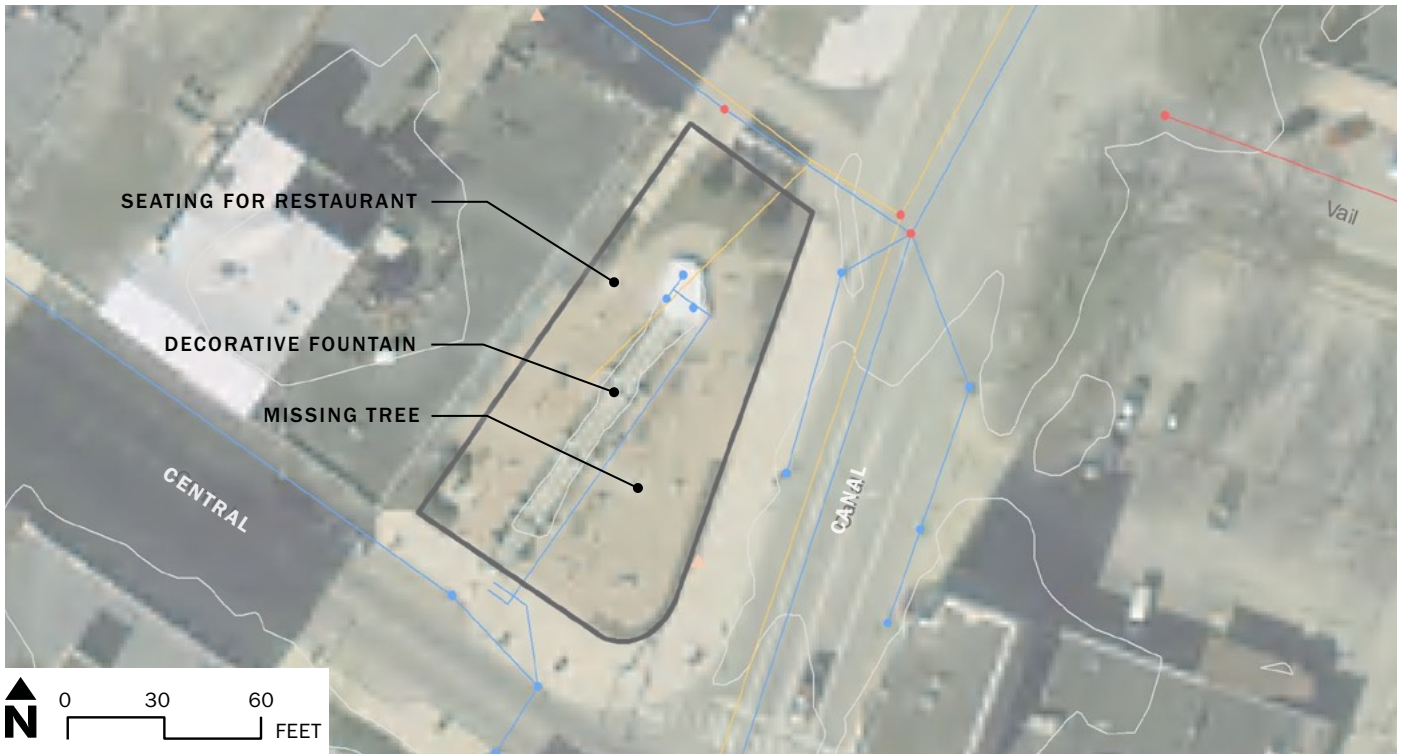
### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Bike Racks; Site Lighting; Trash Receptacles; Picnic Table

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sidewalks provide good connectivity to Downtown Business District and located adjacent to multiple Butler County transit routes and bus stop. Some loose gravel present could be an issue and changes in pavement types create potential trip hazards, but generally good.

▼ FIGURE 29: PORT MIDDLETOWN FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 28: PORT MIDDLETOWN





MINI PARKS

A Mini Park, also known as a Pocket Park, is a small park (less than 1 acre), typically located in densely populated areas where land availability is limited and within 1/4 mile (10-minute walk) of nearby residents. Facilities are usually limited and/or address a specific recreational need such as playgrounds, sport courts, and picnic areas.

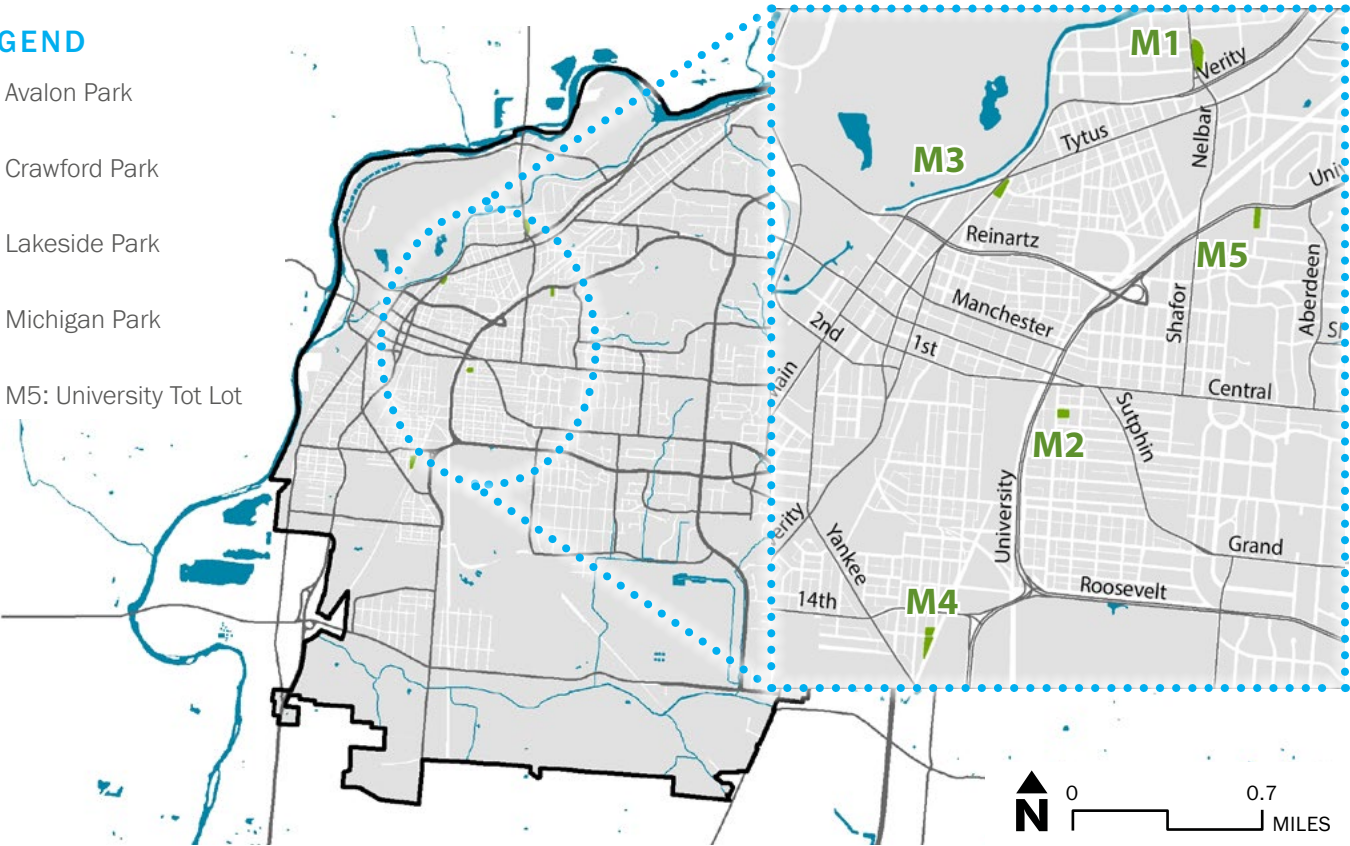
The Middletown Parks Department maintains five (5) mini parks, representing 4.2 acres that are well-maintained with a “fair/good” overall park character based on the overall park condition, if the park is being used as intended and a general sense of safety and security.

Common strengths observed at the City’s Mini Parks were: pedestrian connectivity beyond the site (public sidewalks and access to public transportation); a mix of active (sport courts and playgrounds) and passive recreation (picnic tables, benches) are at each site; and available open space.

Common challenges observed were: limited connectivity to bike infrastructure; limited internal mobility/connectivity; poor ADA accessibility; aging play structures; and absence of site lighting.

LEGEND

- M1 Avalon Park
- M2 Crawford Park
- M3 Lakeside Park
- M4 Michigan Park
- M5 M5: University Tot Lot



▲ FIGURE 30: MINI PARKS LOCATION MAP

AVALON PARK

**LOCATION:** NE of Verity Pkwy & Germantown Rd along Avalon Circle/ Drive

**SIZE:** 1.62 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Mini Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete public sidewalks	GOOD
Landscape	Lawn and mature trees	GOOD
Play Structures	21 years old	GOOD
	» Swings	FAIR
Safety	Sidewalk & partial fence along busy Germantown Rd.	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Swings; Picnic Tables; Benches; Drinking Fountain

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sidewalks on Germantown Road and across Avalon from the park. No sidewalks on the park side. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/amenities. No trails or access to public transportation.

▼ FIGURE 31: AVALON PARK



▼ FIGURE 32: DONHAM PLAZA FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





CRAWFORD PARK

LOCATION: SE corner of Crawford St & Linden Ave

SIZE: 0.52 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Mini Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	FAIR
Pavement	NA	NA
Landscape	Trees, Worn Grass	FAIR
Play Structures	Exists but worn-out	FAIR
Safety	Mostly residential, business across street, on a busier road	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Play Structure; Picnic Tables; Benches; Trash Receptacles; Swings; Park Entry Signage

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sidewalks link to residential neighborhood and commercial area and also bus stop located near the park. However, ADA Accessibility is missing internally and chain link fence surrounds most of park.

FIGURE 34: CRAWFORD PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP

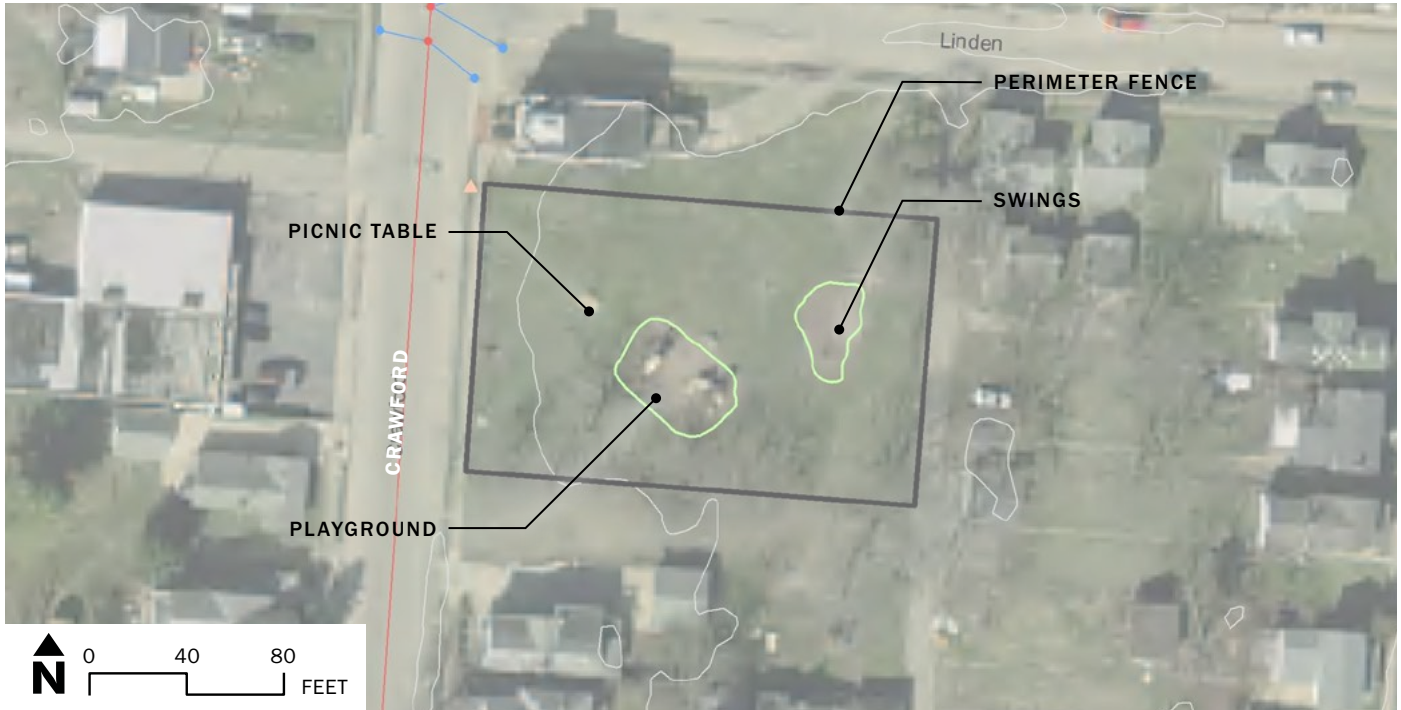


FIGURE 33: CRAWFORD PARK



LAKE SIDE PARK

LOCATION: Tytus and Verity Pkwy, 45042 (across from Smith Park)

SIZE: 0.64 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Mini Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalks have significant cracking and grass growth in cracks	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn, trees, and planter at intersection	GOOD
Safety	Fair visibility - adjacent to a busy road (Verity Parkway), rear of industry, and bar parking lot	GOOD
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Historical Markers; Picnic Tables; Bench; Trash Receptacle; Wayfinding Site Signage

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Lakeside Park is located across Tytus Avenue from Smith Park, the Canal Museum, and the Smith Park Multi-Use path trailhead. There are sidewalks adjacent to the park along N Verity Parkway and Clark St. There is no public parking onsite or on adjacent streets. There are walks that provide internal site connectivity. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

FIGURE 36: LAKE SIDE PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



FIGURE 35: LAKE SIDE PARK





MICHIGAN PARK

LOCATION: Dead end of Michigan Ave & Baltimore St, 45044

SIZE: 0.84 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Mini Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalks and plaza with significant cracking and heaving	POOR
Landscape	Lawn, trees	GOOD
Play Structures	25 years old; Wood Chip surface; Ramp to Play Structure	GOOD
Safety	Fair Visibility - located at the terminus of 2 dead-end streets, adjacent to the rear of residential single family	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Basketball Courts; Picnic Tables; Playground; Benches; Trash Receptacle; Swings; Wayfinding Site Signage

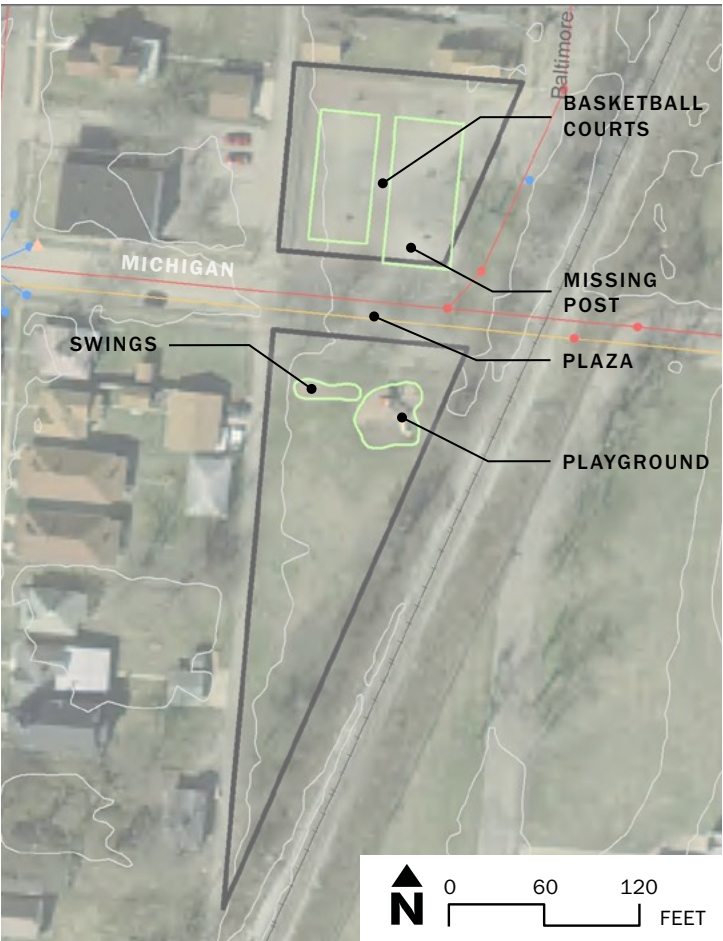
CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sidewalks along the park perimeter along Michigan Avenue and Baltimore Street that provide connectivity beyond the site to the surrounding neighborhood. There is public parking on the surrounding streets and access to public transportation along 14th Avenue with a bus stop within a block. Due to the poor condition of the concrete plaza, access to site features is limited.

▼ FIGURE 37: MICHIGAN PARK



▼ FIGURE 38: MICHIGAN PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



UNIVERSITY PARK

LOCATION: North University Blvd & Santa Barbara Dr, 45042

SIZE: 0.61 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Mini Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	GOOD
Pavement	Perimeter sidewalk in good condition, no internal sidewalks	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn	FAIR
Play Structures	19 years old - 1 Tot Lot and 2 Play Animals	FAIR
Safety	Fair - located near busy main road and no lighting	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Tot Lot Structures; Play Animals Structures; Basketball Court; Wooden Table; Benches; Trash Receptacle

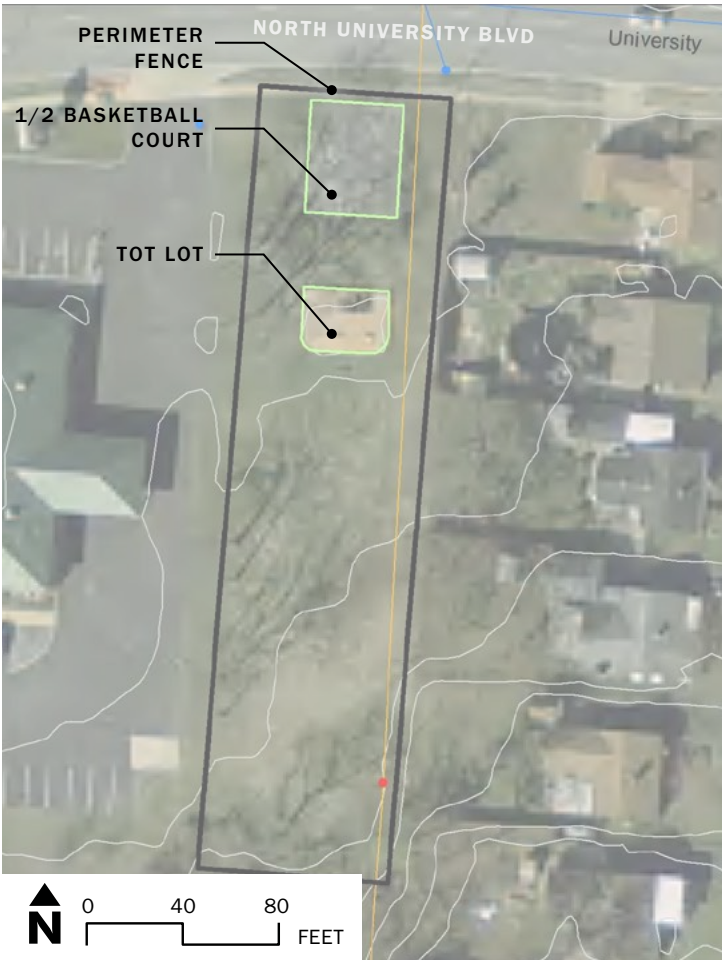
CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There is no accessible way to access the site. Sidewalks connects to auto-dominated commercial area and located along busy arterial road. Park located adjacent to a bank drive-thru and difficult to understand how to best access site (it lends itself to be accessed from the bank parking area). Accessibility for physically challenged people not considered. Transit line and stop located adjacent to the park.

▼ FIGURE 39: UNIVERSITY PARK



▼ FIGURE 40: UNIVERSITY PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood Parks are small (approximately 5 - 10 acres) but developed parks that meet the recreational and social needs of the adjacent community. They are typically located within a short 1/4 mile - 1/2 mile walk or bike ride (10 - 20 minutes) for nearby residents. Active and passive recreation facilities such as playgrounds, sport courts/fields, and picnic areas are often found within these parks.

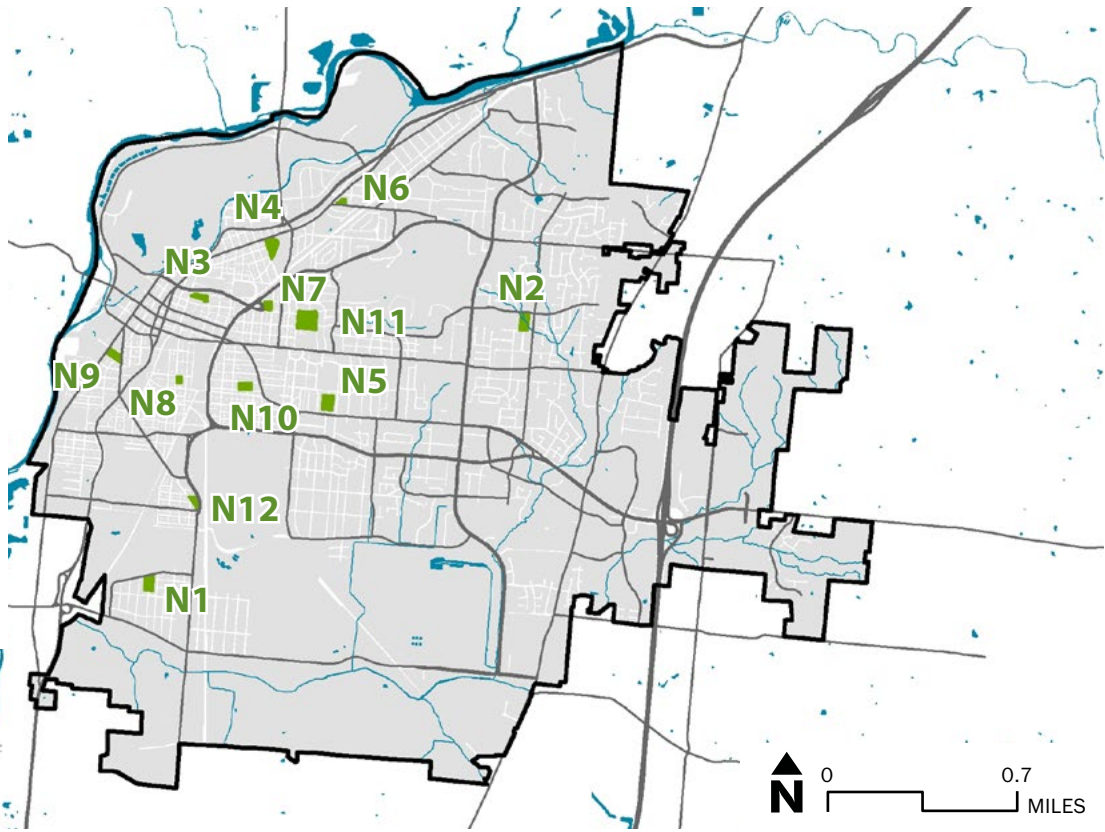
The Middletown Parks Department maintains 12 well-distributed neighborhood parks which represent 62 acres that are well-maintained with a “good” overall park character based on the overall park condition, if the park is being used as intended and a general sense of safety and security.

Common strengths observed in the City’s neighborhood parks were: pedestrian connectivity beyond the site (public sidewalks and access to public transportation for many neighborhood parks); and a variety of passive and active recreational offerings (sport courts, playgrounds, open fields).

Common challenges observed were: limited connectivity to bike infrastructure; limited internal mobility/connectivity; limited ADA accessibility; and aging play structures and sport courts.

### LEGEND

- N1 Damon Park
- N2 Dowling Park
- N3 Flemming Park
- N4 Gardner Park
- N5 Gladell Park
- N6 Maple Park
- N7 Miami Park
- N8 Oakland Park
- N9 Old South Park
- N10 Sherman Park
- N11 Sunset Park
- N12 Yankee Park



▲ FIGURE 41: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS LOCATION MAP

## DAMON PARK

**LOCATION:** Along Pershing Ave (N), between Rosyn Dr (W) & Morgan St (E)

**SIZE:** 5.91 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Asphalt parking lot for Salvation Army Building	NA
Landscape	Lawn and trees	GOOD
Play Structures + Sports Courts	1 Basketball Court with Lights, Mowed Turf with Backstop	GOOD
Safety	Located adjacent to a neighborhood	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Swings; Picnic Shelter/Tables; Bench; Basketball Court; Mowed Turf with Backstop; Trash Receptacle; Wayfinding Site Signage

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There are no sidewalks along the park perimeter along Pershing Avenue and no nearby public transportation. There is a parking lot that serves the adjacent Salvation Army Safe House/Recovery Center. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/amenities. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 42: DAMON PARK



▼ FIGURE 43: DAMON PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





## DOWLING PARK

**LOCATION:** W of Marshall Rd, between Rosedale Rd (N) & Sophie Ave (S)

**SIZE:** 6.31 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	NA	NA
Landscape	Lawn, shrubs and trees	GOOD
Play Structures + Sports	24 years old, good condition; 1 Basketball Court, Mowed	GOOD
Courts	Turf with Backstop	
Safety	Good visibility of the park however cars drive fast along Rosedale	GOOD
Security	Fair Lighting	FAIR

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Tot Lot; Trash Receptacle; Basketball Court

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There is no internal circulation provided and no ADA access provided within the site. Vehicular access and parking are located along perimeter roads. No Public Transportation or Bus Stop access noted nearby. Connectivity to sidewalks associated with residential neighborhood.

▼ FIGURE 44: DOWLING PARK



▼ FIGURE 45: DOWLING PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



## FLEMMING PARK

**LOCATION:** W corner of Flemming Road & N. Leabee Street, 45042

**SIZE:** 3.12 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalk along Flemming Road	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn and trees	GOOD
Play Structures + Sports	8 years old, Wood Chip Surface; Cracking concrete surfaces with grass growth	GOOD FAIR
Courts		
Safety	Fair, Located within a neighborhood	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Toddler Play Features; Swings; Basketball Court; Mowed Field with Backstop; Picnic Table; Trash Receptacle; Drinking Fountain

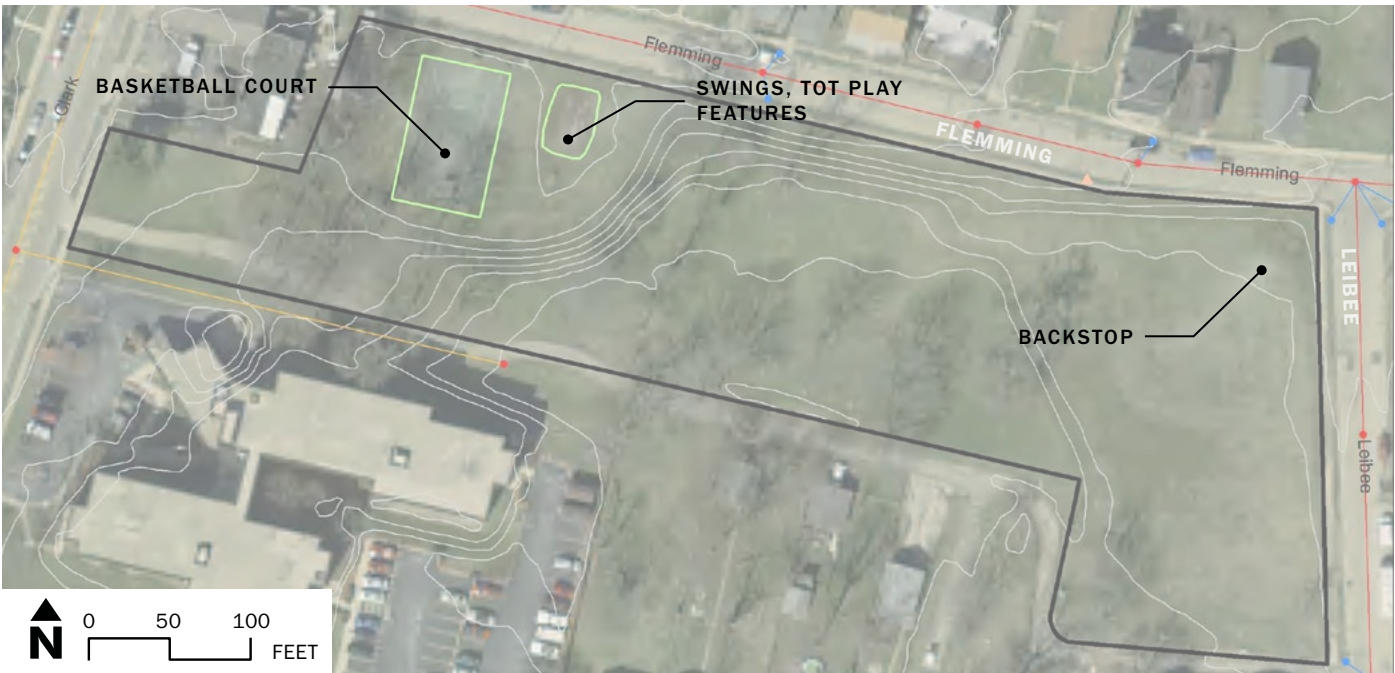
### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Flemming Park has good connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood with adjacent sidewalks along Flemming Road, N. Leabee Street, and Clark Street and a public transportation stop on Clark Street. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/amenities. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 46: FLEMMING PARK



▼ FIGURE 47: FLEMMING PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





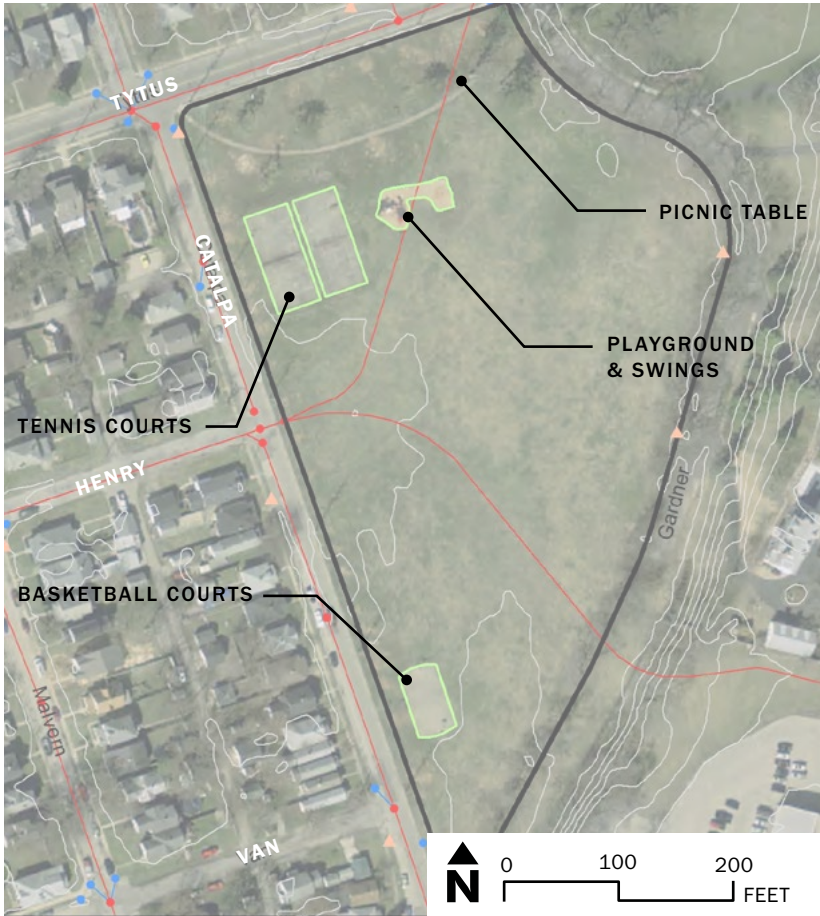
## GARDNER PARK

**LOCATION:** SE corner of Tytus Ave. & Catalpa Dr.

**SIZE:** 7.36 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalk along Tytus	GOOD
Landscape	Lawn (well-maintained) and trees	GOOD
Play Structures + Sports Courts	27 years old; Cracking concrete surfaces	FAIR
Safety	Located within a neighborhood	GOOD
Security	No Lighting	NA



▲ FIGURE 49: GARDNER PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP

▼ FIGURE 48: GARDNER PARK



### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Swings; Picnic Tables; Benches; Basketball Court; Tennis Courts

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Gardner park is adjacent to sidewalks along Tytus and Catalpa (across) and public transportation stops along Tytus. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/amenities other than the entry arch off Tytus.

## GLADELL PARK

**LOCATION:** At Park Dr along Sherman Ave (NO) & Grande Ave (S)

**SIZE:** 6.62 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

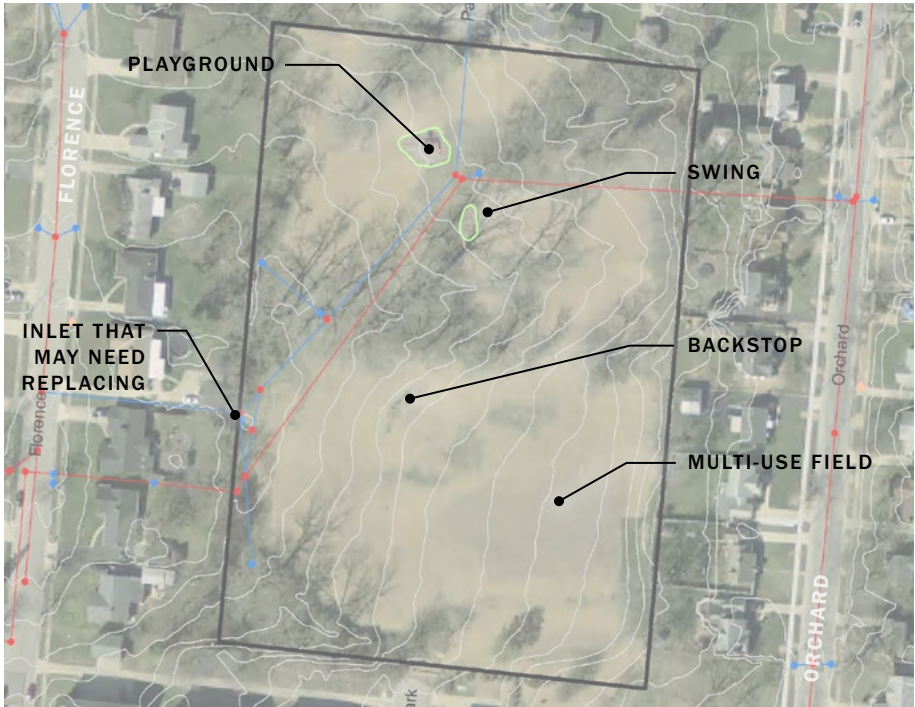
CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	FAIR
Pavement	Sidewalks along perimeter streets, no internal circulation	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn and trees; tends to stay saturated	GOOD
Play Structures + Sports Courts	Mulch surface, play structures probably needs replacing (older), mowed grass backstop	FAIR
Safety	Okay, backyards face the park	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

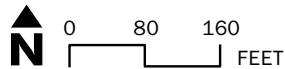
Toddler Play Features; Swings; Basketball Court; Mowed Field with Backstop; Picnic Table; Trash Receptacle; Drinking Fountain

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Gladell Park has fair connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood with adjacent sidewalks located along residential streets. The park is at the rear of most homes. There is a transit stop within 1/10 of a mile. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/amenities. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.



◀ FIGURE 51: GLADELL PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 50: GLADELL PARK



## MAPLE PARK

**LOCATION:** NE Tytus Avenue & Manchester Road

**SIZE:** 1.71 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalk along Manchester Road	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn	GOOD
Play Structures	16 years old - aging/fading/rusting;, Wood Chip Surface	FAIR
Safety	Limited visibility- surrounded by an alley/rear access to residential development	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

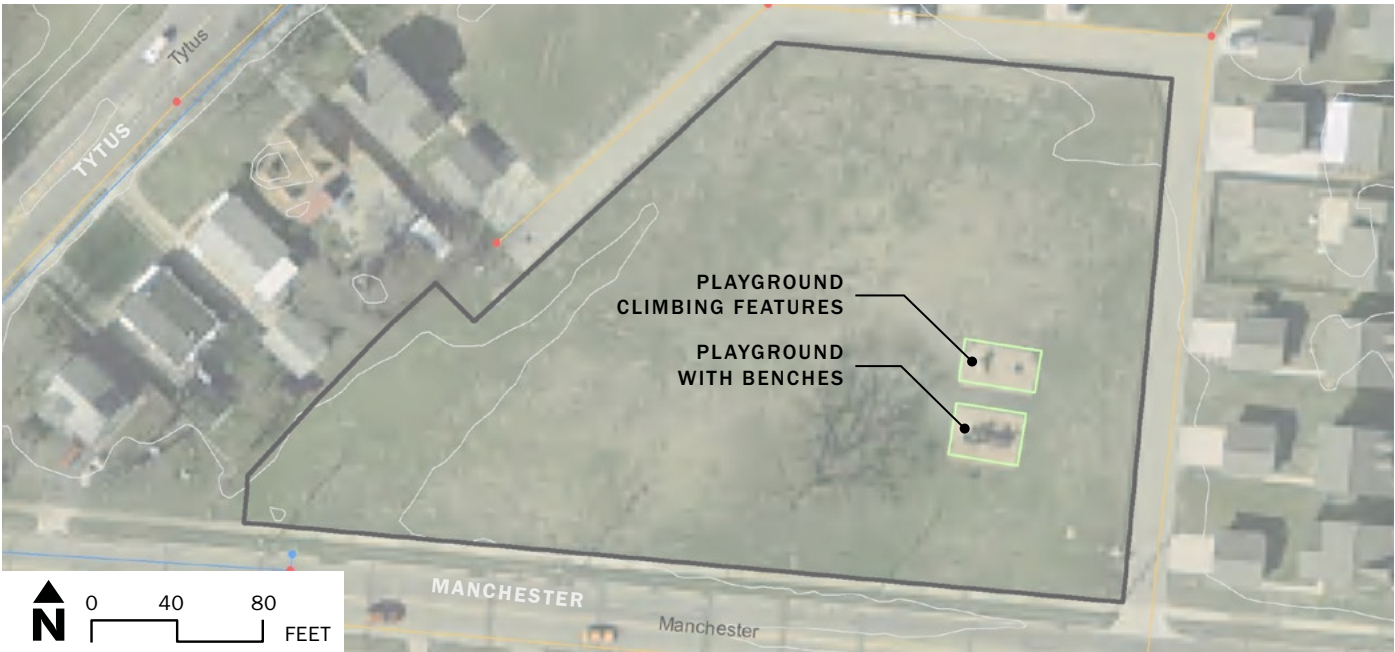
### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Picnic Table; Benches; Wayfinding Site Signage; Park Entry Signage; Trash Receptacles

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There is a perimeter sidewalk along Manchester Road that connects Maple Park to the adjacent neighborhood with access to public transportation on Tytus Avenue. There is no available parking or access to trails. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/amenities and there are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 53: MAPLE PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 52: MAPLE PARK



## MIAMI PARK

**LOCATION:** NE of interchange of Reinartz Blvd/Miami Ave & University Blvd

**SIZE:** 2.98 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TIPOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Some wear and erosion	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn	GOOD
Play Structures	25 years old – good condition	GOOD
Safety	Nice neighborhood with small houses nice character, however no lighting observed	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Tennis Court; Basketball Court; Playground; Play Swing; Tot Swing; Benches; Trash Receptacles; Movable Wood Picnic Table; Drinking fountain but not working

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

No internal circulation provided. Perimeter sidewalks have some wear/erosion along Flemming Road. No ADA access observed and no transit facility located nearby. Sidewalks connect to adjacent neighborhood, but missing sidewalk connection on southern portion of site.

▼ FIGURE 54: MIAMI PARK



▼ FIGURE 55: MIAMI PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





## OAKLAND PARK

**LOCATION:** SE corner Baltimore Street & Fairmount Avenue, 45044

**SIZE:** 1.41 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalks, Concrete plaza (heaving)	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn and trees	GOOD
Play Structures	25 years old - aging/fading/rusting; Wood Chip Surface	FAIR
Safety	Fair, surrounded by low density residential and vacant lots	FAIR
Security	No lighting	NA

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Basketball Courts; Miscellaneous Court; Playground; Picnic Tables; Benches; Trash Receptacle; Drinking Fountain

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There are perimeter sidewalks along Fairmount Avenue and Baltimore Street that connect Oakland Park to the adjacent neighborhood with access to public transportation (bus stop) on Baltimore St. There is available street parking but no access to trails. There is an informal pedestrian path/cut-through from the Baltimore/Fairmount intersection, through the basketball courts and field, to the adjacent alley connecting to Woodlawn Ave. Park facilities/amenities are connected by an internal path but its condition limits ADA accessibility. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 56: OAKLAND PARK



▼ FIGURE 57: OAKLAND PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



## OLD SOUTH PARK

**LOCATION:** 4th Avenue (N), Main Street (W), 5th Avenue (S) & Yankee Road (E)

**SIZE:** 4.54 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete sidewalks (grass growth in cracks); old asphalt path	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn, trees, plant beds at S. Main St. Entrance; young trees planted on East side of park	EXCELLENT
Play Structures + Sports Courts	9, 25 years old; Wood Chip Surface; Lit basketball (good condition), 2 lit tennis (poor condition with significant cracking and missing net)	GOOD FAIR
Safety	Surrounded residential	GOOD
Security	Lighting at tennis courts	FAIR

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Basketball Courts (with lights); Tennis Courts (with lights); Playground; Swings; Shelter; Picnic Tables; Benches; Trash Receptacle; Drinking Fountain; Historical/Decorative Fountain; Historic Marker; Plant Beds; Site Lighting

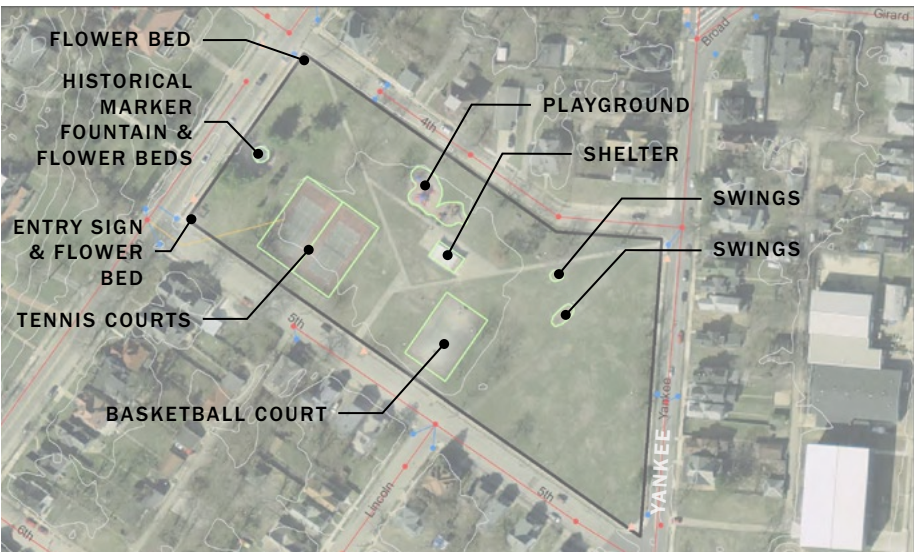
### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There are sidewalks along the perimeter (S. Main St., 5th Ave., and Yankee Rd.) and within the park, providing connectivity within and beyond the site to the surrounding neighborhood. There are remnants of an old asphalt path from 4th Ave./Yankee Rd. to 5th Ave./Lincoln St. that still seems to be used as a cut-through. There is access to public transportation on both S. Main St. and Yankee Rd. with stops located at the park entrances (S. Main St. & 5th Ave.; Yankee Rd. & 4th Ave.). Old South Park is also within ¼ mile of the SR4 bike trail. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 58: OLD SOUTH PARK



◀ FIGURE 59: OLD SOUTH PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





## SHERMAN PARK

**LOCATION:** Along Sherman (N) & Wayne (S) between Moore (W) & Sutphin (E)

**SIZE:** 4.01 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

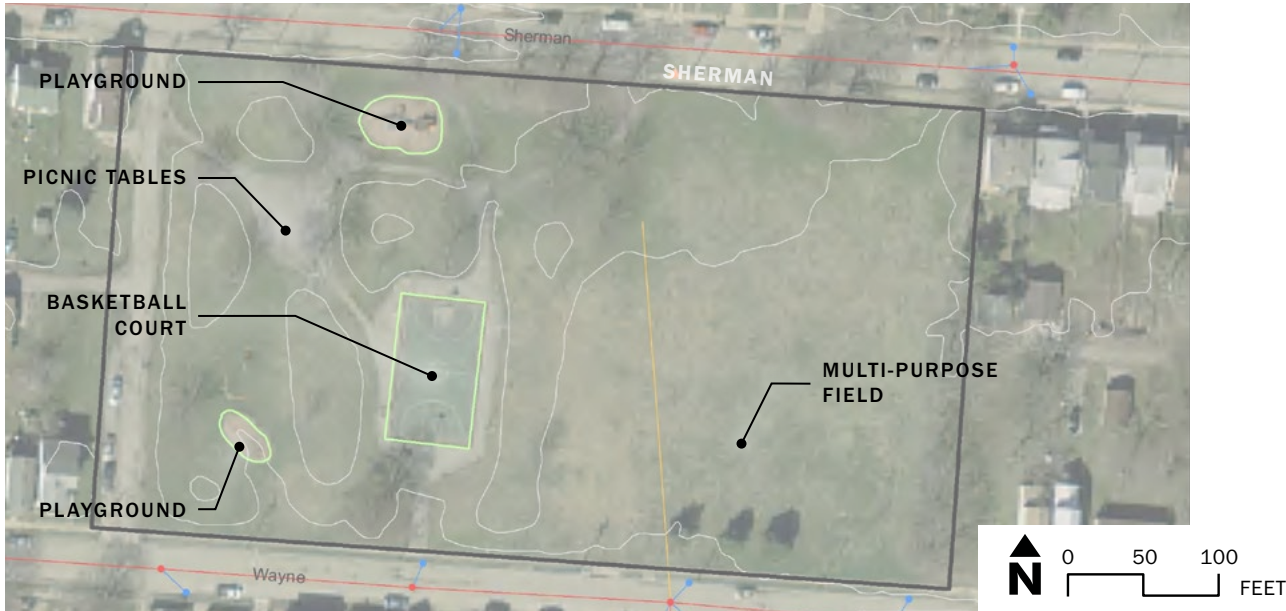
CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	FAIR
Pavement	FAIR	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn and trees	FAIR

Play Structures + Sports Courts	2, 30 years old; Playgrounds are separated, the playground on north side being used by children during site visit and appears newer than playground on south side, equipment seems worn; Basketball (Fair Condition)	FAIR
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Safety	Fair, doesn't feel as safe, there seems to be disinvestment in this area. Adjacent land use is Section 8 housing	FAIR
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Security	Good, Cameras and lighting present, but in need of some updates	GOOD
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▼ FIGURE 61: SHERMAN PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 60: SHERMAN PARK



FEATURES & AMENITIES

Mowed Turf Grass with Backstop; Basketball Court; Playground; Picnic Table; Trash Receptacles; Drinking Fountain

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Perimeter concrete sidewalks generally good, internal asphalt sidewalks have cracking and may not be compliant everywhere. Some of the internal paths into site look like maintenance drives, no barrier from preventing driving into park. Sidewalks connects to adjacent neighborhood. No transit facility observed nearby.

## YANKEE PARK

**LOCATION:** University Blvd & Yankee Road, 45044

**SIZE:** 2.75 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Neighborhood Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	FAIR
Pavement	Concrete sidewalks (grass growth in cracks)	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn, trees (mature and young)	FAIR
Play Structures + Sports Courts	None	NA
Courts	Basketball court - grass growing in cracks, missing net, rusting fence	FAIR
Safety	Fair, adjacent to busy road (University), industrial and some residential	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Basketball Courts; Picnic Tables; Benches; Trash Receptacle; Fence

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There are sidewalks along the perimeter (S. University Boulevard and Yankee Rd.) and within the park, providing connectivity within and beyond the site to the surrounding neighborhood. The path through the site is crumbling with significant grass growth and is disappearing in areas. There is access to public transportation with a stop 1-2 blocks south on Yankee Road. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 62: YANKEE PARK



◀ FIGURE 63: YANKEE PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



## COMMUNITY PARKS

Community Parks are larger parks (approximately 15-75 acres) that serve multiple neighborhoods and offer a wider variety of facilities and amenities. Community Parks should be conveniently located and easily accessible though typically require users to drive, take the bus, or use trail connections. Community Parks provide a variety of recreational facilities for a variety of users of different ages and abilities. Large-scale facilities such as athletic fields, sport courts, shelters, playgrounds, and walking/biking trails are typically provided.

Several of Middletown's community parks contain special-use facilities such as the Robert "Sonny" Hill Jr. Community Center, Canal Museum, and Baker Bowl Skate Park.

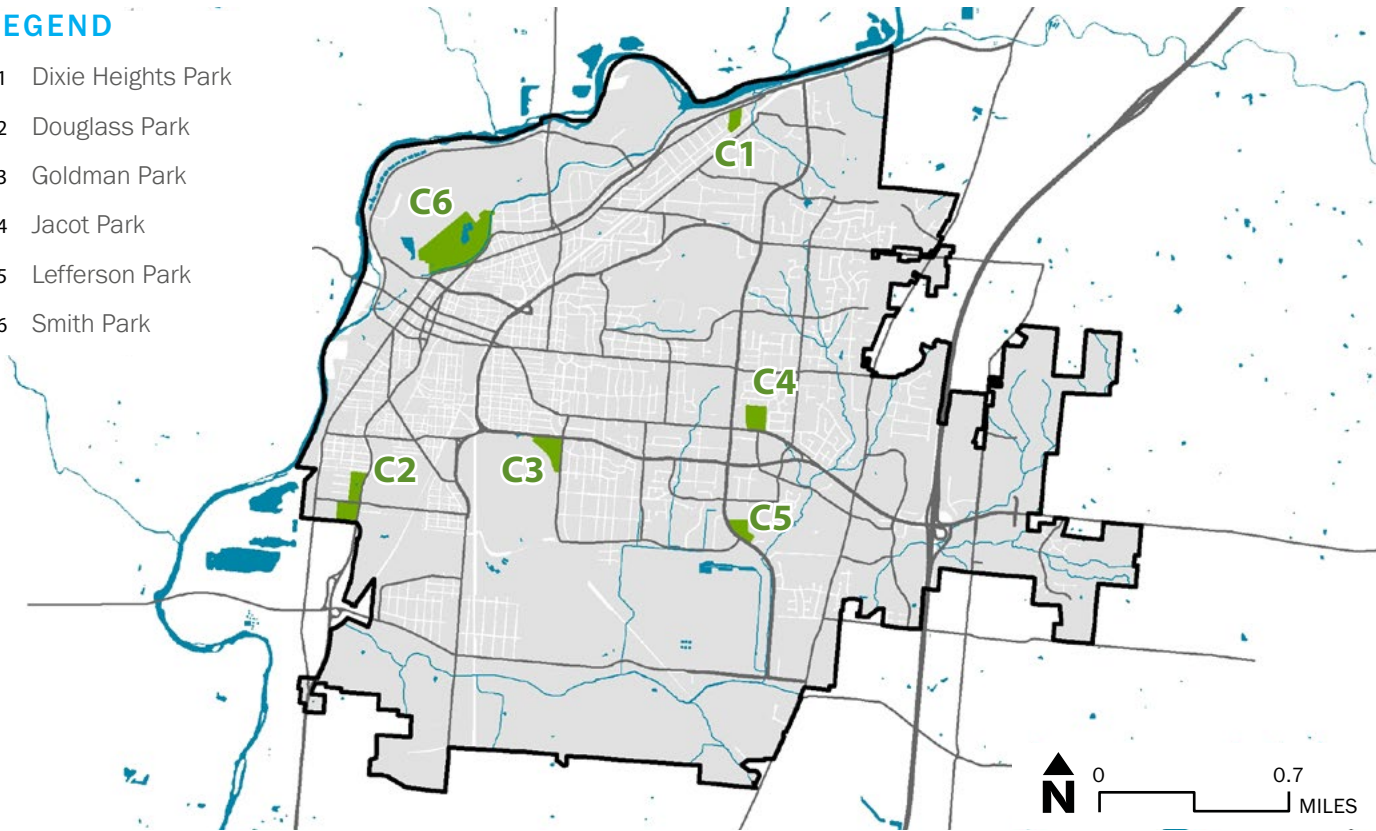
The Middletown Parks Department maintains six (6) community parks which represent 196 acres that generally have a "good" overall park character, based on the overall park condition, if the park is being used as intended and a general sense of safety and security.

Common strengths observed in community parks were: well-maintained picnic areas, amenities and court and field facilities since these features are the main focus of some of these parks. Goldman Park's baseball and softball fields did not appear to be well-maintained during the Project Team's visit, but this may have been somewhat reflective of the lack of play due to COVID-19.

Common challenges observed were : limited connectivity to bike infrastructure; limited ADA accessibility; and some aging play structures.

### LEGEND

- C1 Dixie Heights Park
- C2 Douglass Park
- C3 Goldman Park
- C4 Jacot Park
- C5 Lefferson Park
- C6 Smith Park



▲ FIGURE 64: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS LOCATION MAP

## DIXIE HEIGHTS PARK

**LOCATION:** SE corner of Tytus Ave & Shelley Street

**SIZE:** 7.43 acres

**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Community Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
Pavement	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
Landscape	Lawn and trees	<b>FAIR</b>
Play Structures + Sports Courts	25 years old, Wood Chip Surface; not a full-size basketball court	<b>FAIR</b>
Safety	Adjacent airport and Public Works	<b>FAIR</b>
Security	No Lighting	<b>NA</b>

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Storage/Concession Building;  
Baseball/ Softball Diamonds with  
Dugouts; Basketball Court; Playground;  
Picnic Tables

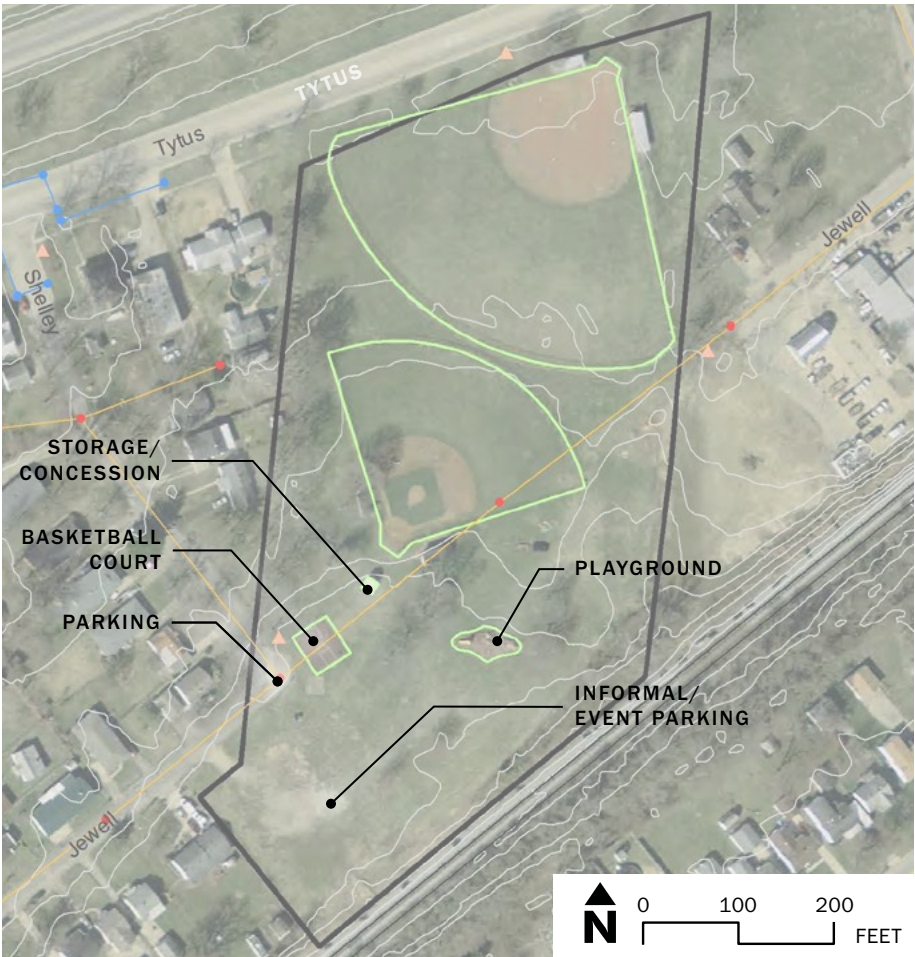
### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

There are no adjacent sidewalks to the park along Tytus Avenue, Shelley Street, or Jewell Avenue, making it difficult for pedestrians to safely access the park. There is a public transportation stop on Jewell Avenue. There are no internal walks connecting park facilities/ amenities. There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

▼ FIGURE 65: DIXIE HEIGHTS PARK



▼ FIGURE 66: DIXIE HEIGHTS PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP





DOUGLASS PARK

**FACILITY NAME:** Robert “Sonny” Hill Jr. Community Center  
**LOCATION:** N & S of Lafayette Avenue between Minnesota Street (W) & Verity Parkway (E)  
**SIZE:** 29.13 acres  
**CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY:** Community Park + Rec Center

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete walks, Asphalt multi-use trail and parking	GOOD
Landscape	Lawn and trees	GOOD
Structures	Some cracking concrete slabs/columns at shelters	FAIR
Play Structures	7, 25, and 30 years old; wood chip surface	GOOD
Sports Courts	Tennis court is not used; 1 lit and 1 unlit basketball court; volleyball; football	GOOD
Safety	Vandalism and drug activity near sprayground	FAIR - POOR
Security	Cameras and lighting at sprayground	GOOD - FAIR

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Community Center; Shelters (with grills and picnic tables); Multi-Use Trail & Trailhead; Football Fields; Basketball Courts; Tennis Courts; Sand Volleyball Courts; Playground & Sprayground; Picnic Tables; Trash Receptacles; Benches; Restrooms.

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Perimeter sidewalks adjacent to Douglass Park (Verity Parkway, Lafayette Avenue, and Minnesota Street), the SR4/Verity Parkway multi-use trail, and public transportation stops along Minnesota provide good pedestrian/bike connectivity beyond the site . There are few internal walks connecting parking areas to park facilities/amenities (i.e., playground, sprayground and shelter). There are no ADA accessible site amenities.

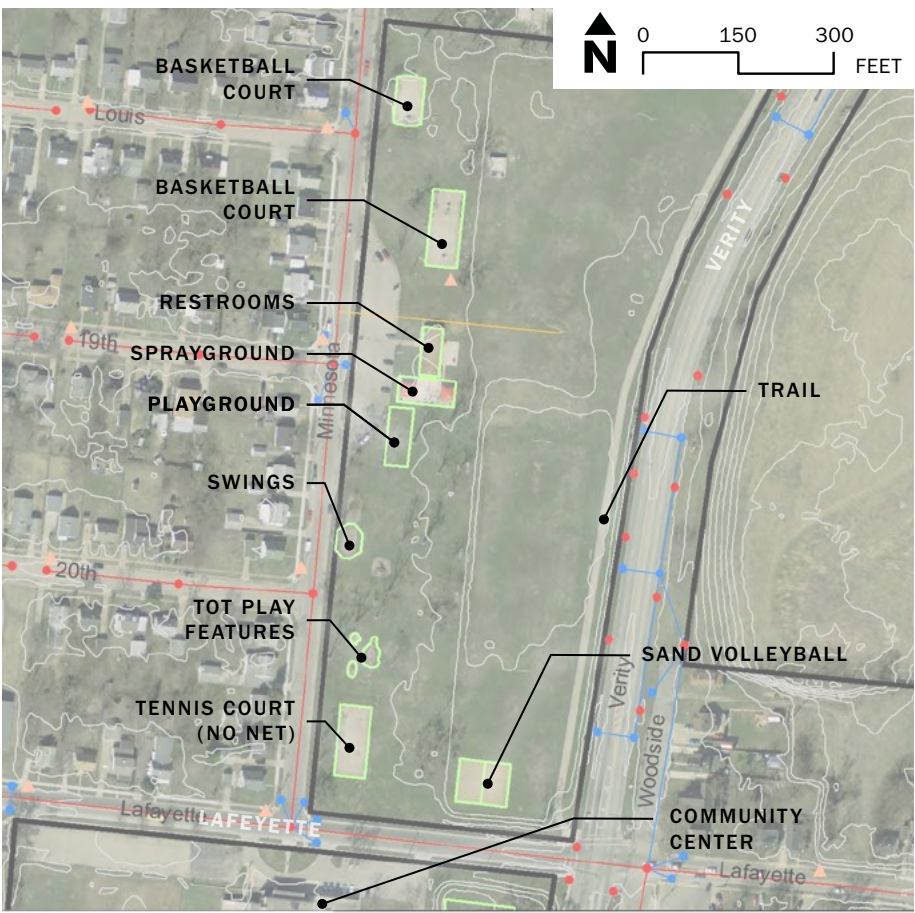
▼ FIGURE 67: DOUGLASS PARK



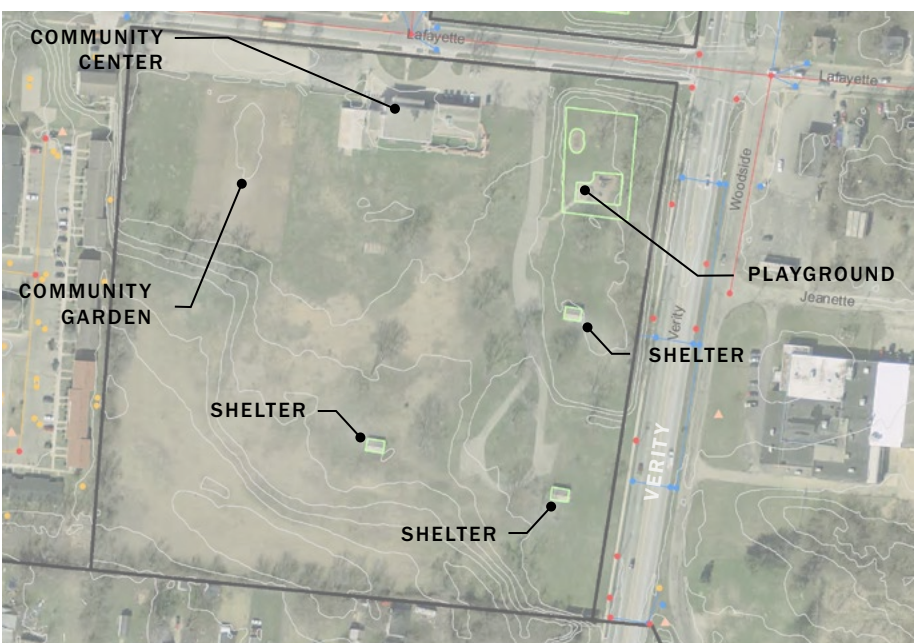
▼ FIGURE 69: DOUGLASS PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES



▼ FIGURE 68: DOUGLASS PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 70: DOUGLASS PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES





GOLDMAN PARK

LOCATION: SW corner of Roosevelt Blvd & Highland

SIZE: 20.83 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Community Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	POOR	FAIR - POOR
Pavement	FAIR	FAIR
Landscape	Lawn and trees	FAIR
Play Structures	26 years old; wood chip surface	FAIR
Sports Courts	1 lit basketball court but worn and cracking; baseball/softball fields but worn and infield needs replacing along with fence fixing	POOR
Safety	Fair, busy streets and AK Steel not most desirable park setting	FAIR
Security	Fair, good visibility, but don't believe the security cameras are in working condition	FAIR



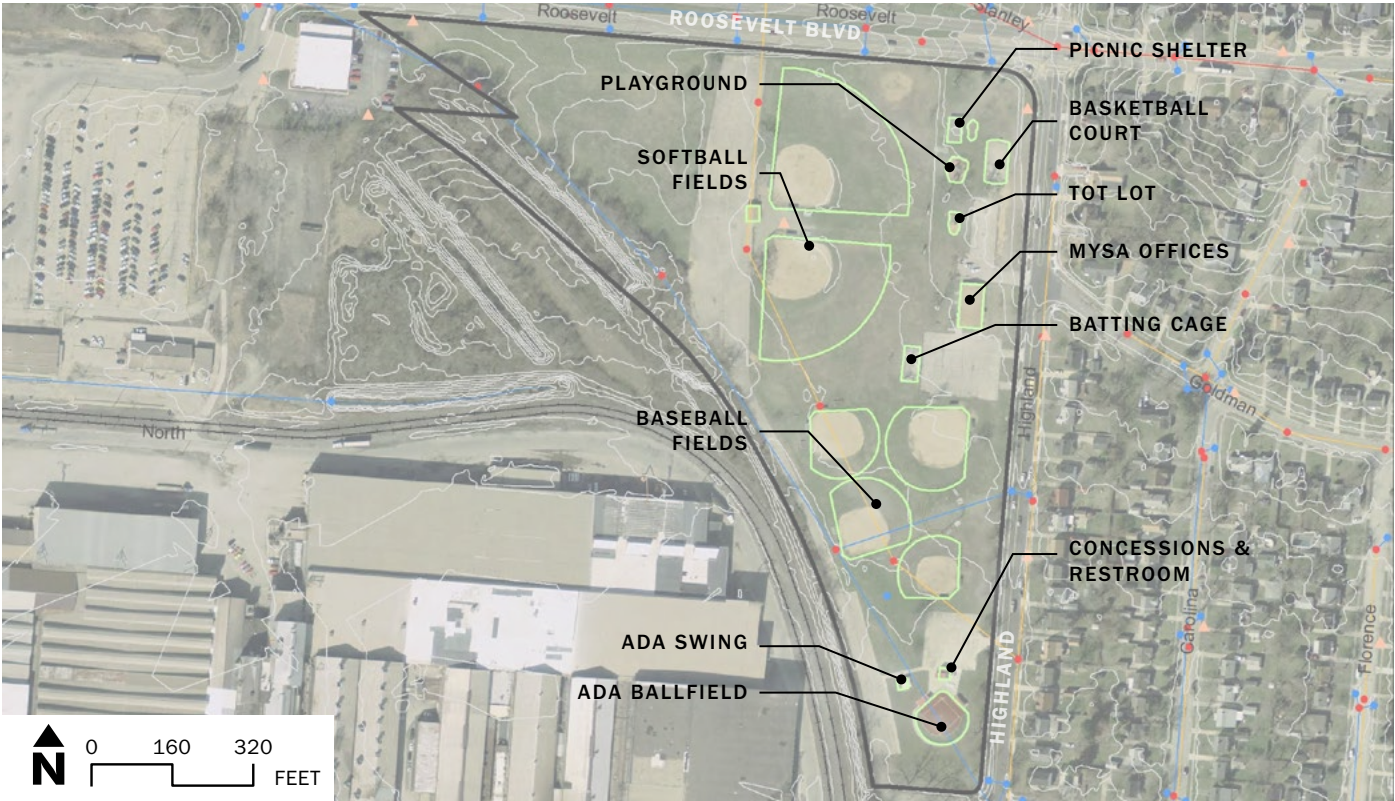
FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Basketball Court; Baseball/Softball Field; Benches; Trash Receptacles

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Perimeter sidewalks good condition and separate from busy roads. Internal park stairs in poor condition. A little ADA accessibility other than at the ADA field. No transit facility located nearby.

▼ FIGURE 72: GOLDMAN PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



JACOT PARK

LOCATION: 4501 Grand Ave, 45044

SIZE: 17.10 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Community Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete walks; Asphalt multi-use trails	GOOD
Landscape	Well-maintained Lawn and Landscaping	GOOD
Play Structures	Good, 18 years old	GOOD
Safety	Good	GOOD
Security	Lighting and cameras	EXCELLENT



FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Tot Playground; Spring Features; Basketball Court; Soccer Fields; Wood Tables at Shelters; Slab Surface at Shelters; Drinking Fountain; Site Lighting

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Internal site trails connect with sidewalks. Transit lines and stop located within 1/10 mile. Perimeter asphalt walking trail is good.

▼ FIGURE 74: JACOT PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 73: JACOT PARK



LEFFERSON PARK

LOCATION: T 2145 S. Breiel Blvd, 45044

SIZE: 11.57 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Community Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Concrete and Asphalt walks	FAIR
Landscape	Well-maintained Lawn and landscaping. Some berm landscaping and around ADA playground	GOOD
Play Structures	Fair Condition / 5 years old	FAIR
Safety	GOOD	GOOD
Security	Lighting and cameras in parking lot	EXCELLENT

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Playground; Basketball Court; Pickleball Court; Picnic Tables; Benches; Trash Receptacles; Park Entry Signage

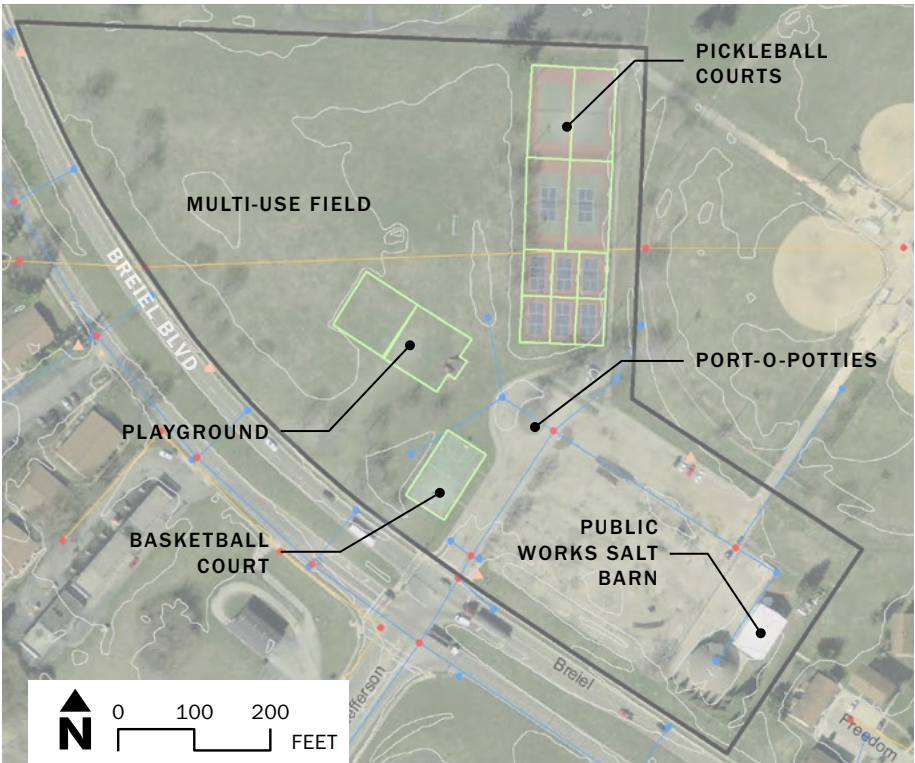
CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Park has a connection to an adjacent school and transit stop located adjacent to a park. The park has a playground with play features that are ADA accessible, but it looks older and there is not an accessible route to access the features. Sidewalk around the playground is concrete, others are asphalt and are crumbling and have drainage issues.

▼ FIGURE 75: LEFFERSON PARK



▼ FIGURE 76: LEFFERSON PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



SMITH PARK

LOCATION: Tytus (Main St.) & Verity Pkwy

SIZE: 109.43 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Community Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	EXCELLENT	GOOD
Pavement	Asphalt multi-use trails	GOOD
Landscape	Lawn (well-maintained) , flower bed at entry, and trees	GOOD
Play Structures	New / 1 year old	EXCELLENT
Safety	Adjacent airport and Public Works	EXCELLENT
Security	No Lighting	NA

FEATURES & AMENITIES

Canal Museum; Baker Bowl Skate Park; Multi-Use Trail & Trailhead; Pond / Dock; Soccer Fields; Baseball/Softball Diamond; Playground & Sprayground; Picnic Shelters / Picnic Tables

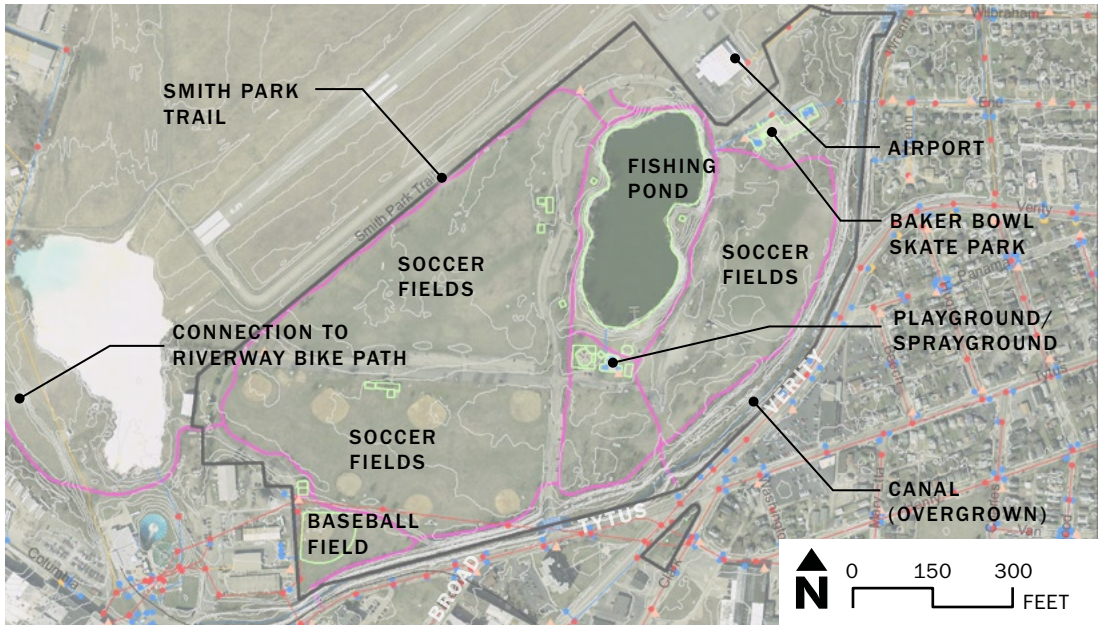
KNOWN PROGRAMMING

Light Up Middletown; Soccer Leagues; Baseball Leagues

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Good accessibility within the park and beyond the site from the park's multi-use trail which connects with the Great Miami River Trail.

▼ FIGURE 78: SMITH PARK FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 77: SMITH PARK





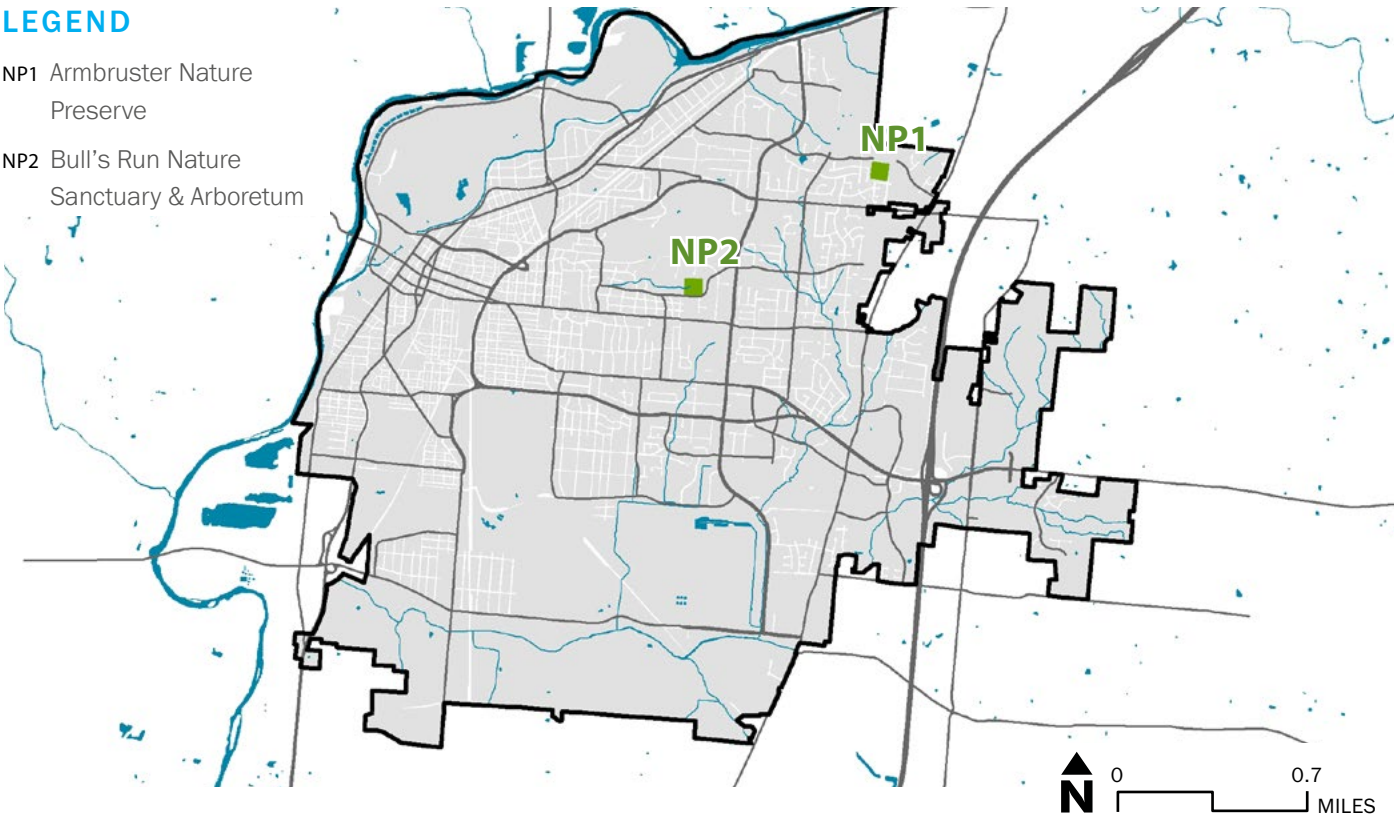
NATURE PRESERVES

Nature Preserves are areas of land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics/buffering. Facilities may include hiking trails and related amenities.

The Middletown Parks Department maintains two (2) nature preserves which represent 22 acres and that have a “good” overall park character based on the overall park condition, if the park is being used as intended and a general sense of safety and security.

Common strengths in the City’s nature preserves included: they provide a variety of landscapes within a site and offer something different from the City’s developed park sites; they appeared to be well visited even on a week day with overcast and rainy conditions; and they offered opportunities for interpretive signage that educate park users.

Common challenges observed were: limited ADA accessibility; lack of connectivity beyond the site, invasive maintenance needs.



▲ FIGURE 79: NATURE PRESERVES LOCATION MAP

## ARMBRUSTER NATURE PRESERVE

LOCATION: Autumn Drive

SIZE: 10.43 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Nature Preserve

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Gravel maintenance drive, mulch trails	FAIR
Landscape	Mostly forested area	GOOD
Play Structures	nature-play area	GOOD
Safety	within a neighborhood, somewhat secluded	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

### FEATURES & AMENITIES

Picnic Shelter; Nature Play & Interpretive Signage; Trails

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Located at the end of a dead-end street in residential neighborhood; sidewalks from neighborhood to park but otherwise lacks connectivity; limited to no accessibility due to the trail surface and terrain.

▼ FIGURE 81: ARMBRUSTER NATURE PRESERVE FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



▼ FIGURE 80: ARMBRUSTER NATURE PRESERVE





BULL’S RUN NATURE SANCTUARY  
AND ARBORETUM

LOCATION: 3909 Rosedale Rd, 45042  
SIZE: 11.44 acres  
CLASSIFICATION/TYPOLOGY: Nature Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	GOOD	GOOD
Pavement	Combination of stone, volcano rock, mulch and dirt trails	GOOD
Landscape	Good Landscaping, pollinator habitat, woods, some invasive. Fair Lawn with not much mowing and appears to be located just at entrance	GOOD
Play Structures	None	NA
Safety	Overall good, but may not feel safe for everyone, particularly if visiting alone.	GOOD
Security	No Lighting	NA

▼ FIGURE 82: BULL’S RUN NATURE SANCTUARY AND ARBORETUM



FEATURES & AMENITIES

Picnic Shelter with Tables; Park Entry Signage; Wayfinding/Site Signage; Donor Plaques; Benches; Trash Receptacles

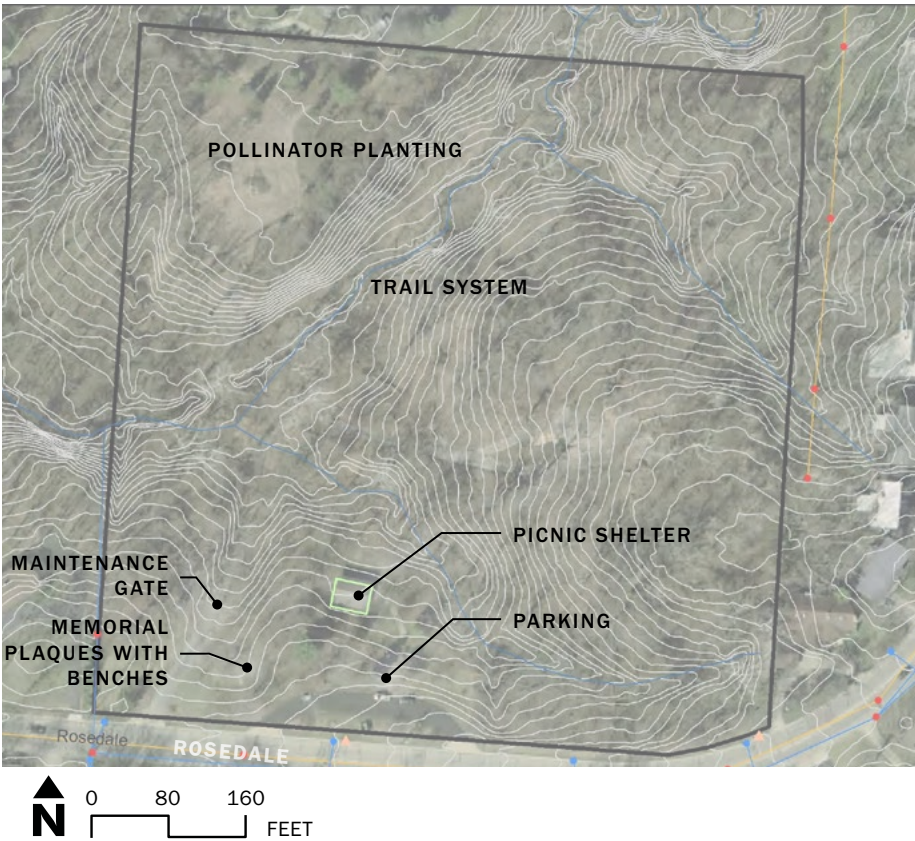
KNOWN PROGRAMMING

Various nature programs and events, park work days and guided hikes throughout the year.

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Park has a connection to adjacent school and transit stop located adjacent to park. Park has a ADA accessible playground, but looks older and no ADA access to it. Sidewalk around playground is concrete, others are asphalt and are crumbling and have drainage issues.

▼ FIGURE 83: BULL’S RUN NATURE SANCTUARY FEATURES & AMENITIES MAP



UNDEVELOPED PARKS

Undeveloped Parks include natural resource areas without any site infrastructure or amenities placed on the site and are partially or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other natural vegetation and may include riparian corridors and drainage areas.

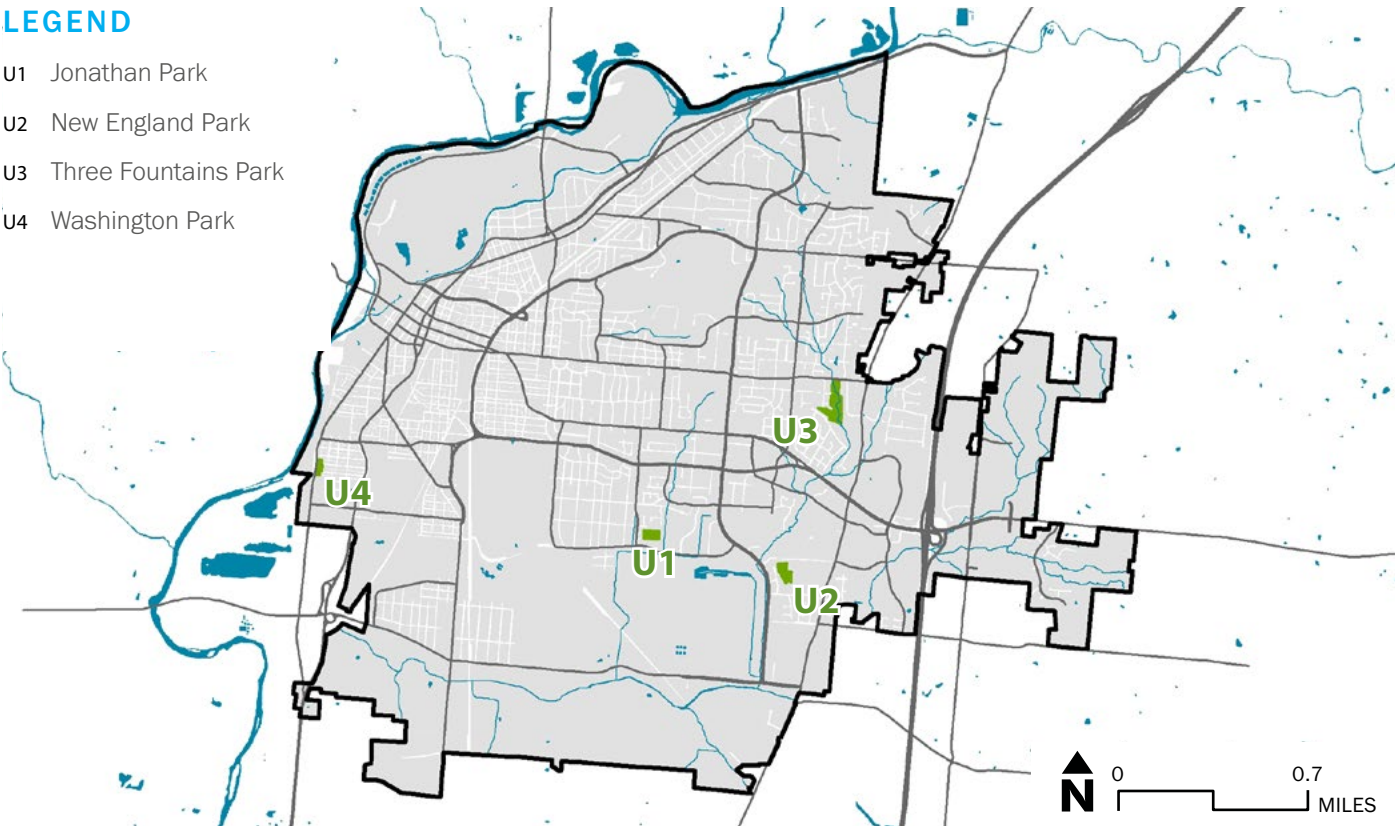
The Middletown Parks Department has four (4) undeveloped parks within its park system which represent 35 acres. Since these sites are “blank canvasses”, it is hard to identify the overall park character at these sites since it is difficult to determine whether or not they are used as intended. It is not clear whether these sites are intended to be utilized at this time or not. Some were not able to be accessed during the site visits.

Common strengths observed in the City’s undeveloped parks included: their unique natural settings and potential to provide a different experience from the many developed parks in the system; they present opportunities for stormwater management and learning laboratories for nature-based play and instruction and interpretive signage.

Common challenges observed were: no internal site access or ADA accessibility, lack of connectivity beyond the site; potential invasive plant maintenance needs.

LEGEND

- U1 Jonathan Park
- U2 New England Park
- U3 Three Fountains Park
- U4 Washington Park



▲ FIGURE 84: UNDEVELOPED PARKS LOCATION MAP



JONATHAN PARK

LOCATION: 3909 Rosedale Rd, 45042  
SIZE: 5.60 acres  
CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Undeveloped Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	FAIR	FAIR
Pavement	None	NA
Landscape	Combination of forested area and unmown grass	NA
Play Structures	None	NA
Safety	Located “behind” neighborhood and business	FAIR
Security	No Lighting	NA

▼ FIGURE 85: JONATHAN PARK



FEATURES & AMENITIES

None.

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

No internal site circulation. Sidewalks along Lefferson Road stop before getting to the site. Located behind a residential neighborhood and an industrial business. Appears to have drainage swale from neighborhood draining into woods.

▼ FIGURE 86: JONATHAN PARK MAP



NEW ENGLAND HEIGHTS PARK

Location: 2413 Buckingham Ct  
Size: 7.26 acres  
Classification/Typology: Undeveloped Park  
Overall Park Character: **NA** - no character to observe, was not able to access the site

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	NA - no character to observe, was not able to access the site	POOR
Pavement	None	NA
Landscape	Heavily forested area	NA
Play Structures	None	NA
Safety	Poor, secluded, behind single family and multi-family residential developments	POOR
Security	No Lighting	NA

▼ FIGURE 87: NEW ENGLAND HEIGHTS PARK



FEATURES & AMENITIES

None.

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sidewalks located in adjacent residential neighborhood but no direct connection to the site. No transit facility observed nearby. Hard to access without trespassing through single family residential properties, possible access through apartment complex to south.

▼ FIGURE 88: NEW ENGLAND HEIGHTS PARK MAP





THREE FOUNTAINS PARK

LOCATION: 4922 Central Ave

SIZE: 18.57 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Undeveloped Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	Natural ravine area w invasive plants and hard to access	FAIR - POOR
Pavement	None	NA
Landscape	NA	NA
Play Structures	None	NA
Safety	Poor, not as safe feeling because it is desolate / unused / could be lots of places to hide	POOR
Security	No Lighting	NA

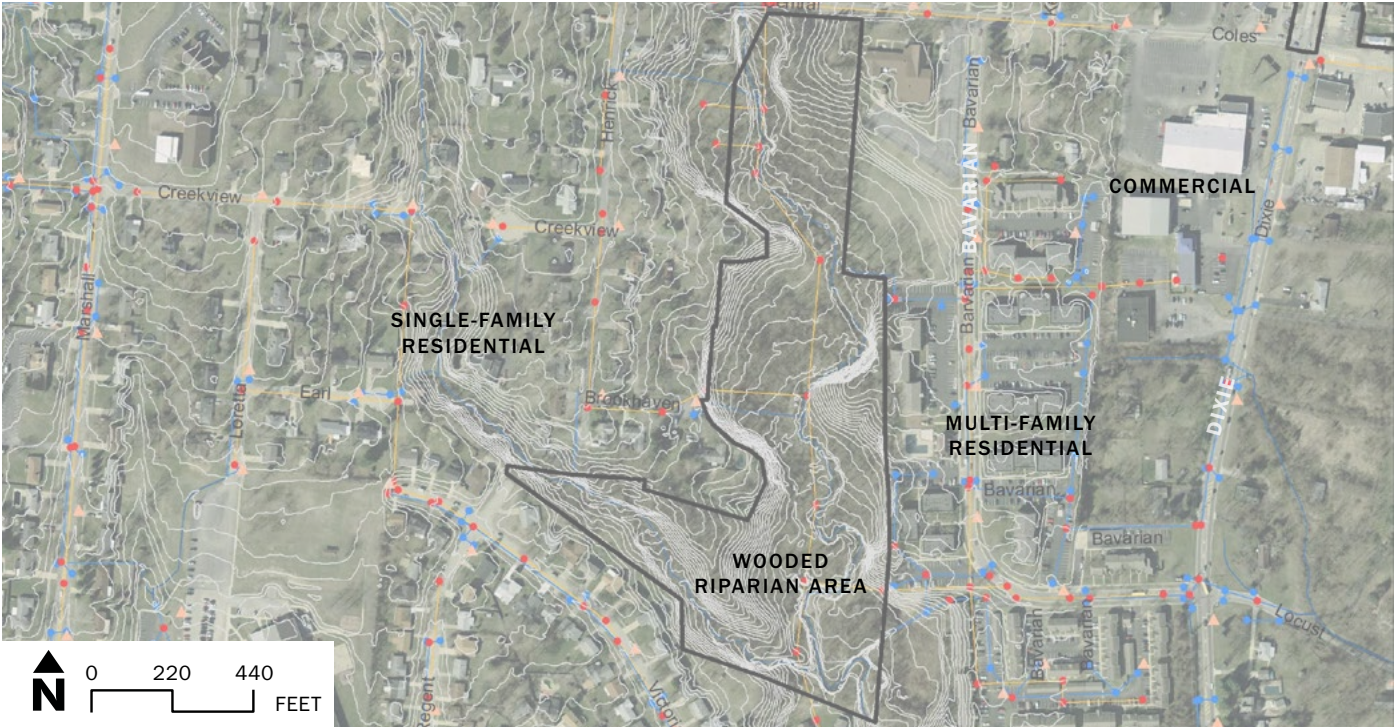
FEATURES & AMENITIES

None.

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sidewalks located in adjacent residential neighborhood but no direct connection to the site. There is transit line and station located adjacent to the site. Pedestrian access to the site from southeast corner by apartment complex, however, there was some clearing and a mulch area that appeared to be used by utilities.

▼ FIGURE 90: THREE FOUNTAINS PARK MAP



▼ FIGURE 89: THREE FOUNTAINS PARK



WASHINGTON PARK

LOCATION: 1701 S. Main Street, Between 17th Avenue & 18th Avenue

SIZE: 3.54 acres

CLASSIFICATION/TYOLOGY: Undeveloped Park

CRITERIA	CHARACTER	CONDITION
Overall	Open space lawn with mowed turf	FAIR
Pavement	Public streets/ sidewalk	GOOD
Landscape	Flat, mown grass , public streets and sidewalks	NA
Play Structures	None	NA
Safety	Located along S. Main Street	NA
Security	No Lighting	NA

▼ FIGURE 92: WASHINGTON PARK MAP



▼ FIGURE 91: WASHINGTON PARK





2.7 OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE ANALYSIS

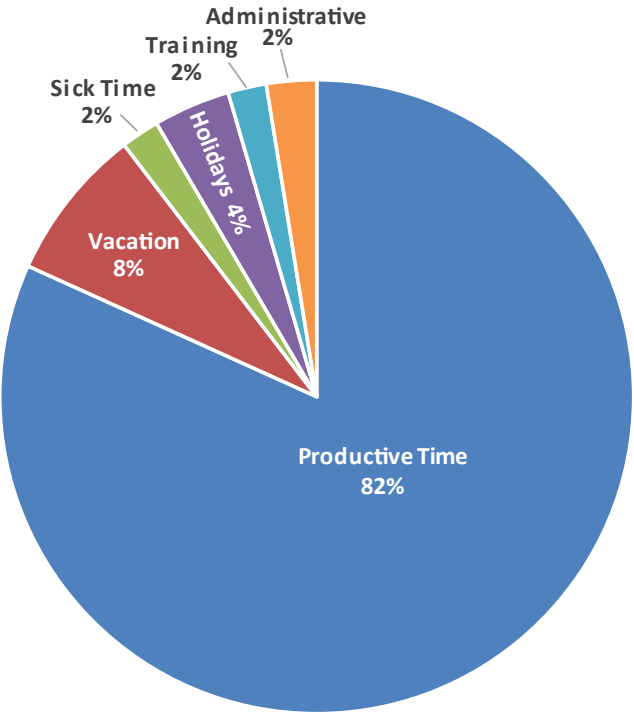
OVERVIEW + METHODOLOGY

The Project Team performed a preliminary analysis of Middletown’s parks maintenance needs utilizing 30-years of data assembled by parks maintenance professionals.

Key take-aways from this exercise included the following:

- » The City of Middletown has been very creative in providing the services necessary to maintain its parks within a limited budget.
- » Contracting park and right-of-way mowing has allowed the City to flatten its seasonal spike of resources needed. Mowing is an equipment intensive task and contracting this work has also lessened the needs for investment in and maintenance of equipment.
- » Parks staffing is based on flexibility. Flexible job descriptions for Park staff allows for a broader use of the position. Seasonal staff are shared on a “as needed basis” with other city departments. Full-time staff during Winter Operation, are used with the “all hands-on deck” philosophy which is needed to allow the entire City to function during snow or ice events. This flexibility is important to optimize resources.
- » Potential areas for exploration include continuously assess user needs; reduction in turf grass to reduce operations/ maintenance demand and environmental impact and provide low-maintenance land cover (i.e., meadow, forest) to increase habitat and access to nature; assessment of site amenities/feature to understand how much they are used.
- » Potential recommendation for data collection/tracking/measuring improvements.

MAINTENANCE ANALYSIS



The analysis found that about 21,000 hours of field work were needed to provide an adequate level of maintenance on 342-acres of park land. Field work was defined as “hands on” work and excluded administrative work, time off, training, vehicle and equipment maintenance, and supervision. These hours equated to about 13 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions that were either hired positions or contract-equivalent work. An FTE is assumed to provide about 1700 productive hours per year (out of 2080 total hours) when allowing time off (vacation, holiday, sick time) and nonproductive time (training, administrative).

FIGURE 93: STAFFING PRODUCTIVE VS UNPRODUCTIVE TIME

Within the six parks typologies, the maintenance effort was as follows:

TYPE	TOTAL ACRES	% ACRES	MAINTENANCE EFFORT**	% ME	WEIGHT*
Community	197.70	62%	\$12,194.53	62%	1.0
Mini	3.89	1%	\$403.69	2%	2.0*
Neighborhood	62.31	19%	\$5,837.95	29%	1.5*
Nature Preserves	17.20	5%	\$392.67	2%	0.4
Plaza	0.75	2%	\$137.09	1%	0.5
Undeveloped	39.26	12%	\$743.83	4%	0.3
Totals	321.11		\$19,709.75**		

TABLE 2: MAINTENANCE EFFORT BY PARK TYPOLOGY

\* A weight above 1 means that the category uses more maintenance resources than its relative acreage, below 1 means that the category uses less maintenance resources than its acreage.  
\*\* The total “Maintenance Effort” of 19,709.75 is short by 1,500 of the total 21,209.75 hours, due to some tasks not attributed specifically to a given park.

FIGURE 94: PARK AREA BY TYPOLOGY

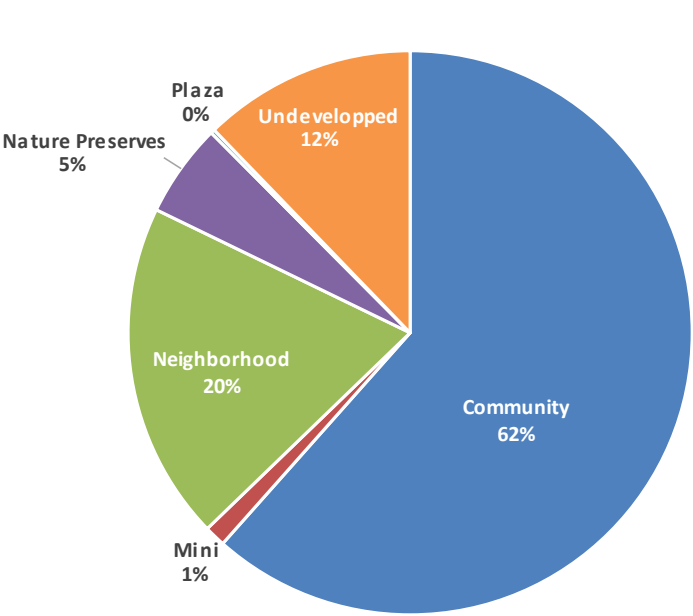
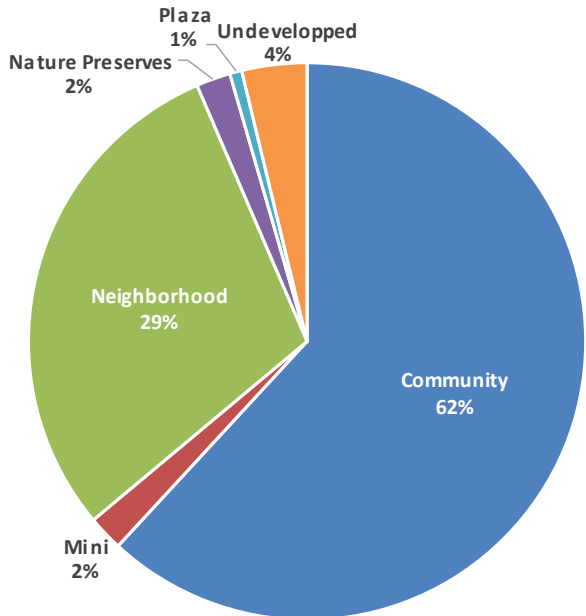


FIGURE 95: MAINTENANCE EFFORT BY PARK TYPOLOGY



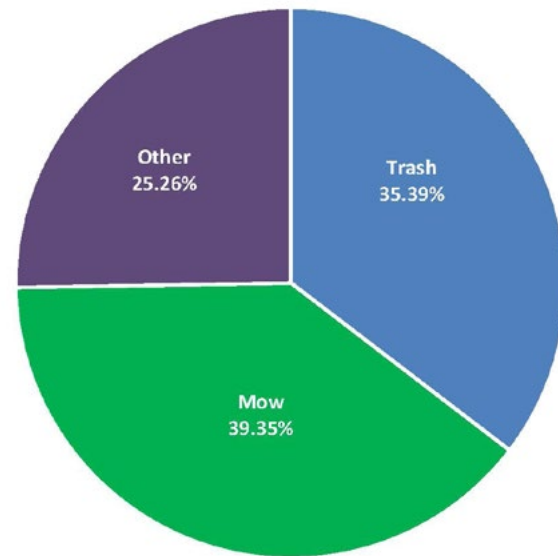
Comparison of Chart 2 and Chart 3 shows that, as expected, Neighborhood Parks use more maintenance resources for their relative size, while Nature Preserves use less.



## MAINTENANCE TASKS

The type of work to be performed as part of these 21,000 hours can be organized in three categories: mowing used about 40% of the maintenance resources, litter control used another 35% of the resources and “other” used 25% of the resources. “Other” maintenance tasks included items such as building maintenance, tree and invasive maintenance tasks, and snow removal. All of these tasks are noted in a table below.

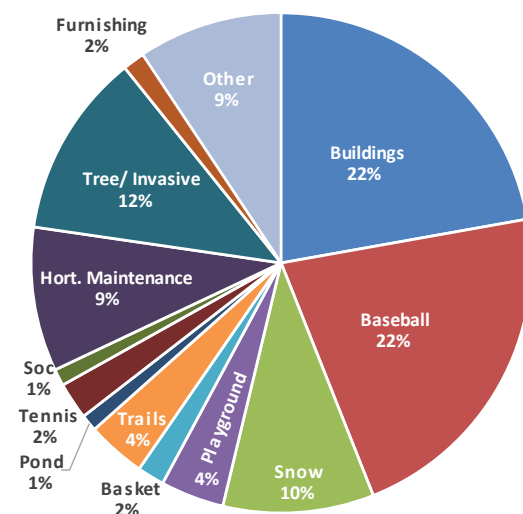
◀ FIGURE 96: HOW MAINTENANCE TIME IS SPENT



Another way to visualize these number is to consider that out of the 13 FTE needed for maintenance, 5 could be assigned to Mowing, 4.5 for litter control and 3.5 for all the rest of the tasks.

The 25% that comprise the “Other” tasks is made of a variety of work:

◀ FIGURE 97: HOW TIME IS SPENT OTHER MAINTENANCE TASKS (TRASH & MOW EXCLUDED)



## A SYSTEM BASED ON FLEXIBILITY

The City of Middletown has been very creative in providing the services necessary to maintain its parks within a limited budget. Mowing parks is a contracted service that is shared with other mowing needs of the City, including Right of Way. Contracting this service allows the City to flatten its seasonal spike of resources needed. Contracting mowing also lessens the need for investment in, and maintenance of, equipment. The City also reduces the challenges of replacing equipment, including the very expensive tree trucks, by including a depreciation value within its budget for equipment. This is a very prudent practice.

The job descriptions for the main positions are also much more flexible compared to job descriptions in other municipalities, allowing for a broader use of each position by management.

Middletown Parks’ entire staffing is based on flexibility, particularly with its seasonal staff that is shared on a “as needed basis” with other City departments and vice versa. But it is also the case for its full staff during winter operation, when an “all hands-on deck” philosophy is needed to allow the entire City to function during snow or ice events. This flexibility is important to optimize resources.

## AREAS TO EXPLORE

As the needs of the population change, it is important to continuously assess how parks and recreation agencies can respond to those needs and how maintenance practices will need to adapt. The creation of a skateboard area is a fine example of how the City of Middletown adapted to changing needs by providing a safe place for teenagers and young adults to practice a new form of recreation. Further explorations could include whether or not turf areas should be reduced. Turf maintenance is by far the costliest maintenance item with limited recreation value. And, underutilized turf has a negative environmental impact on the community. The City of Middletown can consider creating forested islands or meadows to replace some turf and provide better human connection with nature, reduce summer temperatures, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce (polluting) maintenance needs.

All amenities or features need to be assessed to understand how much they are used. As an example, Middletown has a large quantity of basketball courts. It is our understanding that these courts were added in the 1970’s as a result of the success of Butch Carter on the national basketball scene. Are these courts today as important as they were? Is there an opportunity to replace some with other recreation features?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The current use of Disk Operating System (DOS) technology for time tracking makes it very difficult to gather and analyze the management of Middletown’s parks. Another problem is the use of about 60 different codes that do not track labor by individual parks. It is difficult to manage what is not measured.

We recommend that a serious effort be made to arrive at actual costs of maintaining individual parks. This can better aid management decision making and efficient allocation of resources.

Common desktop software can be utilized to perform this task without a significant investment. The Project Team recommends the use of a customized Microsoft Access system that can evolve from a simple introductory format, enabling Middletown managers to get used to a new practice.

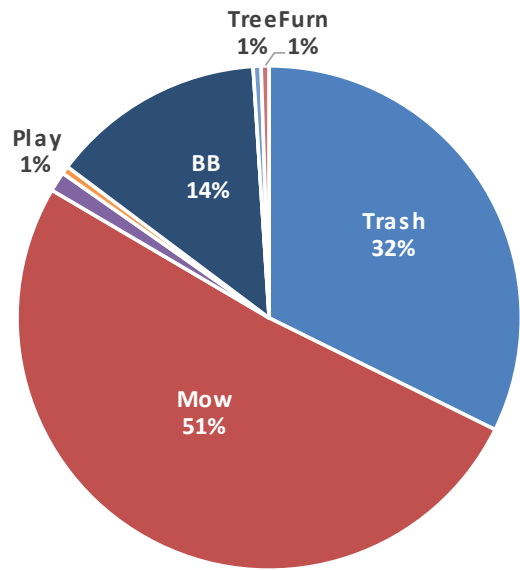


INTERESTING ADDITIONAL CHARTS

The following charts included below provide interesting comparisons for the City of Middletown Project Leads to consider. Comparison of the maintenance effort between a Community Park (Dixie Heights) and a Neighborhood Park (Dowling) is shown below.

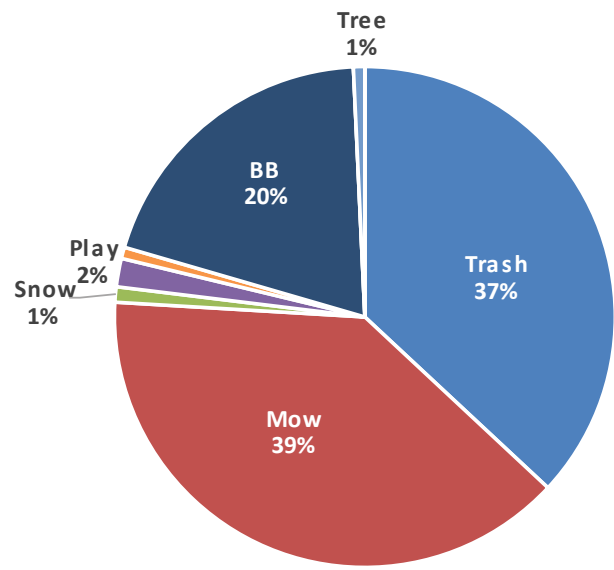
A lot of effort is spent on mowing in the Community Park.

▼ FIGURE 98: MAINTENANCE EFFORT IN DIXIE HEIGHTS PARK (COMMUNITY PARK)



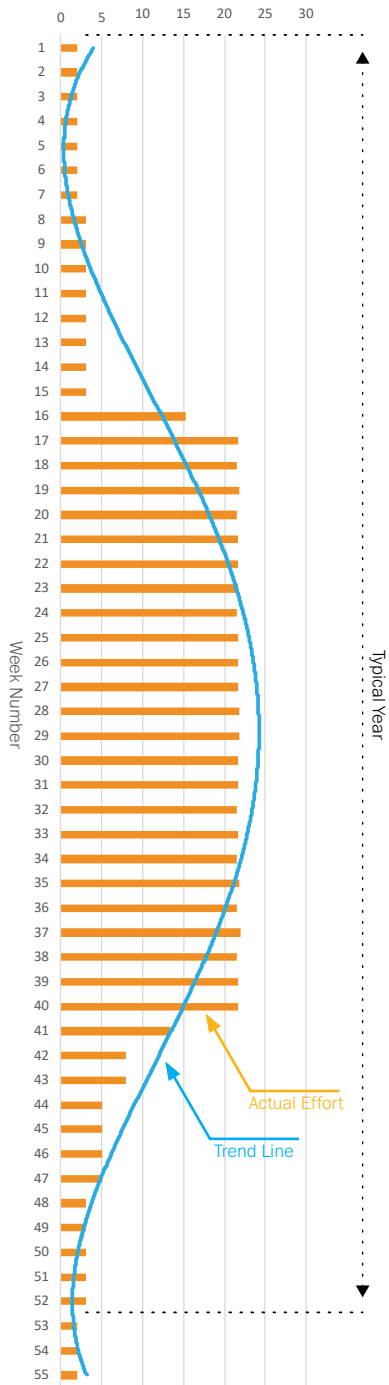
In a Neighborhood Park, there is more emphasis on litter control and maintenance of features.

▼ FIGURE 99: MAINTENANCE EFFORT IN DOWLING PARK (NEIGHBORHOOD PARK)



This chart below and its trendline (in red) demonstrates what we know. Maintenance of parks is heavily seasonal. This seasonality creates some challenges but also some opportunities.

▼ FIGURE 100: SEASONAL MAINTENANCE EFFORT



2.8 GAPS + NEEDS

OVERVIEW + METHODOLOGY

Methods vary for measuring level of service to identify potential gaps and needs from a parks and recreation perspective. This is because each community is unique and priorities are established by the people who call it home. There is not a “one size fits all” standard that can be applied universally. Therefore, the Project Team utilized several methods to collect and analyze data. These were reviewed with the City of Middletown Public Works Department to determine benchmarks that were appropriate for Middletown. The public survey and Advisory Group meetings also provided feedback and insight on what residents felt was needed or missing in Middletown’s parks. This way, the community could determine the role parks play in quality of life and the standard and level of care that was desired by the community.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

One method used to analyze Middletown’s parks was to look at other communities. The Project Team worked with City staff to develop a list of similar size communities. The list was organized into Neighbor, Peer, and Best in Class communities. Neighbor communities were those located in geographic proximity to Middletown and included Fairfield, Hamilton, and Mason, Ohio. Peer communities were those that Middletown felt were significant competitors for attracting residents and jobs. These included Springfield and Lebanon, Ohio and Covington, Kentucky. Best in Class communities were those considered to have set the highest standard for parks and recreation and included Kettering and Dublin, Ohio and Carmel, Indiana.

The information analyzed from these communities included factors such as population, park acreage, and land area to determine citizens per park acre and park area as a percent of total land. Budgets were also analyzed to identify how much a community spent on parks per resident and per acre of park land. Lastly, qualitative data was collected so that the Project Team could analyze access to park space within a 10-minute walk, access to parks from low income neighborhoods, and what the signature parks and programming were in each community.

These results are tabulated in the table below. In summary, Middletown is slightly above the national average population based on the 2019 Census. It has approximately 100 park acres less than the national average of 327 acres. Middletown provides an average of 7 acres per 1,000 residents; the national average is nearly 10 acres. Middletown devotes 2% of its total land area to park land, compared to the national average of 15% according to TPL. The average of percent park land among the ‘Neighbor’ communities is 3.59%; the average among the ‘Peer’ communities is 6.79%; and the average among ‘Best in Class’ communities is 4.7%. Middletown, on average, spends almost \$21 per resident on parks, compared to the nationwide average of \$57.72 for communities of similar size. Parks in Middletown are more accessible than the national average – according to TPL, 61% of parks (city and non-city) are within a 10-minute walk, and 68% of parks (city and non-city) are within a 10-minute walk to underserved or low-income communities. The national average is 55% of parks accessible within a 10-minute walk.



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

LOCATION		2019 POPULATION <sub>1</sub>	PARK ACRES <sub>4</sub>	RESIDENTS PER PARK ACRE	PARK ACRES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS	LAND AREA (ACRES) <sub>2</sub>	PARK AREA AS PERCENT OF LAND AREA
NEIGHBOR	Middletown, OH	48,807	342 <sub>3</sub>	143	7.01	16,912.64	2.02%
	Fairfield, OH	42,558	457	93	10.74	13,389.44	3.41%
	Hamilton, OH	62,082	765	81	12.32	14,011.52	5.46%
	Mason, OH	33,870	233	145	6.88	12,340.48	1.89%
PEER	Springfield, OH	58,877	961	61	16.32	16,583.68	5.79%
	Covington, KY	40,341	829	49	20.55	8,801.92	9.42%
	Lebanon, OH	20,659	424	49	20.52	8,208.64	5.17%
BEST IN CLASS	Kettering, OH	54,855	439	125	8.00	11,984.64	3.66%
	Dublin, OH	49,037	1,430	34	29.16	16,016.64	8.93%
	Carmel, IN	101,068	488	207	4.83	32,088.96	1.52%
National Average <sub>5</sub>		42,428	437		9.90		15% <sub>4</sub>
National Average for Communities 20,000-49,999 <sub>5</sub>					9.60		

1 US Census V2019  
https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219  
Enter the city in the search bar

2 US Census Gazetteer Files  
https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/time-series/geo/gazetteer-files.html  
Scroll down to "Places" and choose the state to "Download a Single State Places Gazetteer File"

3 City of Middletown, OH GIS

4 The Trust For Public Land

5 National Recreation and Park Association  
https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/

6 https://www.fairfield-city.org/244/Parks-Recreation

7 Hamilton Parks Conservancy 2018 Annual Report

8 https://www.imagemason.org/things-to-do/parks/

9 https://ntprd.org/

10 https://www.covingtonky.gov/visitors/recreation

11 https://www.lebanonohio.gov/departments/parks\_\_\_recreation/index.php

12 https://www.playkettering.org/

13 https://dublinohiousa.gov/parks-open-space/must-visit-parks/

14 https://www.carmelclayparks.com/

\$/ACRE OF PARK LAND	PARK FUNDING AMOUNT PER CITIZEN	ACCESS: PARKS WITHIN A 10 MINUTE WALK <sub>4</sub>	EQUITY: PARKS WITHIN A 10 MINUTE WALK TO UNDER- SERVED/ LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES <sub>4</sub>	SIGNATURE PARKS/FEATURES/PROGRAMMING/LOCATION
\$2,979.80	\$20.88	61%	68%	Smith Park - active recreation
\$11,710.90	\$125.75	41%	36%	CAPRA accredited; Aquatic Center; Community Arts Center; Classes (i.e., preschool learning, dance, art, science, fitness, CAPRA accredited nature programming) offered for Preschool, Youth/Teens, Adults/Seniors <sub>6</sub>
\$1,529.41	\$18.85	67%	68%	Hamilton Parks Conservancy manages park system; "Arts in the Parks" Program; Rivers Edge at Marcum Park named "One of 5 Great Spaces" in 2018 by APA; Colligan Lodge (revenue) <sub>7</sub>
\$11,236.05	\$77.30	20%	24%	Mason Parks & Recreation Foundation; Aquatic Center; Common Ground Park (new all-inclusive playground for all abilities) <sub>8</sub>
\$1,274.71	\$20.81	44%	48%	National Trail Parks and Recreation District - joint district between Springfield and Clark County. Programming for all ages/abilities - sports, recreation, cultural and environmental. Partners for the Parks - committee of local residents that support the mission of NTPRD. <sub>9</sub>
\$4,221.95	\$86.76	74%	84%	Devou Park (661 acres); Programming - Youth, Pool, Adult; Online Volunteer Survey/Sign-up; Online Facility Reservations (via Recreation Dept). <sub>10</sub>
\$2,357.63	\$48.39	53%	65%	Miller Eco Park - passive rec and educational opportunities for nearby schools/residents; Beautification Program; Memorial Tree Program, Memorial Bench Program; Community Sports; Online Shelter Reservations <sub>11</sub>
\$26,619.82	\$213.04	63%	64%	Programming/Classes for all ages/abilities (aquatic, art, family, camps); Environmental Center/ Education Programs; Citizen/ Organization Tree Planting Program (Cost-share); Shelter Reservations - online, no fee <sub>12</sub>
\$20,279.72	\$591.39	83%	78%	Community Recreation Center - rec, fitness, arts, crafts, educational, experiential programming; 60 parks; 100 miles of bike paths; recognized nationally as best places to live; online shelter reservation <sub>13</sub>
\$29,609.10	\$142.97	20%	31%	Monon Community Center; Waterpark; partnership with Carmel Clay Schools to establish Extended School Enrichment (a before/ after school program at all schools and 12 summer camps) <sub>14</sub>
	\$81.19	55%		
	\$57.72			

▲ TABLE 3: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS



GAP ANALYSIS

For park systems, level of service is commonly determined by measuring the amount of park acreage per 1,000 population to determine whether there is enough park space in a community. It is a relatively easy and straightforward analysis. Other times, a measure of facilities per 1,000 population is examined to determine if there are enough of each type of recreation facility to support the population now and in the future. But these methods do not provide a full picture with regard to equity, since they do not take into account the quality of the facilities in each park or at various geographic locations in the community.

The Project Team analyzed acreage, facilities, and distribution and equity to identify potential gaps in Middletown’s Park system. These were reviewed with City staff to provide input based on their intimate knowledge of Middletown. Input from the Advisory Groups and a public survey was analyzed to create a “uniquely Middletown” benchmark for level of service in the park system.

Acreage

Park acreage per 1,000 residents was measured and documented in the table below. Population totals for 2019, 2020, and projected population for 2030 were divided by the current acres of park land divided by 1,000. The City of Middletown currently provides 7 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. If no park acres are added to the system, in 2030 the average will be 6.65 acres per 1,000 residents. The nationwide average acreage that park and recreation agencies provide is 9.9 acres per 1,000 residents.

▼ TABLE 4: LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS - ACREAGE

Amenity	POPULATION SERVED PER FACILITY			
	Middletown (existing # of facilities)	Middletown (2020 population) <sub>1</sub>	Middletown (2030 population projected) <sub>2</sub>	All Park & Rec Agencies <sub>3</sub>
Playgrounds	21	2,324	2,448	3,750
Basketball Courts	15	3,253	3,427	7,400
Tennis Courts (outdoor only)	13	3,753	3,954	5,004

1 US Census V2019  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

2 World Population Review  
<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/middletown-oh-population>

3 Ohio Development Services Agency - Butler Co. population percent increase (5.34) applied to Middletown's 2020 population  
<https://development.ohio.gov/files/research/P6010.pdf>

4 National Recreation and Park Association  
<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/>

Facilities

Level of service was also measured based on the number of residents served per park facility. These were documented in the table below. Facilities that were present in the system, or that the Project Team was aware the City of Middletown had discussed adding to the system, were measured. On average, Middletown provides more facilities for their residents than the nationwide average of parks and recreation agencies for their residents, even compared with 2030 population projections. There are some areas where Middletown lacks facilities compared to the national average including dog parks, community gardens, youth soccer fields, and outdoor swimming pool. These may be facilities to consider adding in the future. Middletown also may consider adding a skate park by 2030 to meet average population per facility benchmarks. An additional area for Middletown to consider is an aging population’s recreation needs. By 2030, residents over the age of 65 will make up approximately 19% of Butler County’s population compared to 11.5% of the population in 2010 (2017 Community Health Assessment for Butler County, Ohio).

▼ TABLE 5: LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS - FACILITIES

Amenity	POPULATION SERVED PER FACILITY				
	Middletown (existing # of facilities)	Middletown (2020 population) <sub>1</sub>	Middletown (2030 population projected) <sub>2</sub>	All Park & Rec Agencies <sub>3</sub>	Communities of 20,000 to 49,999 population <sub>3</sub>
Playgrounds	21	2,324	2,448	3,750	3,157
Basketball Courts	15	3,253	3,427	7,400	7,067
Tennis Courts (outdoor only)	13	3,753	3,954	5,004	4,347
Diamond fields: baseball - youth	13	3,753	3,954	6,779	5,132
Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	11	4,436	4,673	8,150	7,297
Dog parks	0	0	0	45,899	28,132
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	0	0	0	35,837	25,107
Community gardens	1	48,795	51,403	29,273	22,562
Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth	5	9,759	10,281	7,325	4,833
Multiuse courts- basketball, volleyball	4	12,199	12,851	19,814	20,040
Skate parks	1	48,795	51,403	49,500	29,491

1 World Population Review  
<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/middletown-oh-population>

2 Ohio Development Services Agency - Butler Co. population percent increase (5.34) applied to Middletown's 2020 population  
<https://development.ohio.gov/files/research/P6010.pdf>

3 National Recreation and Park Association  
<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/>

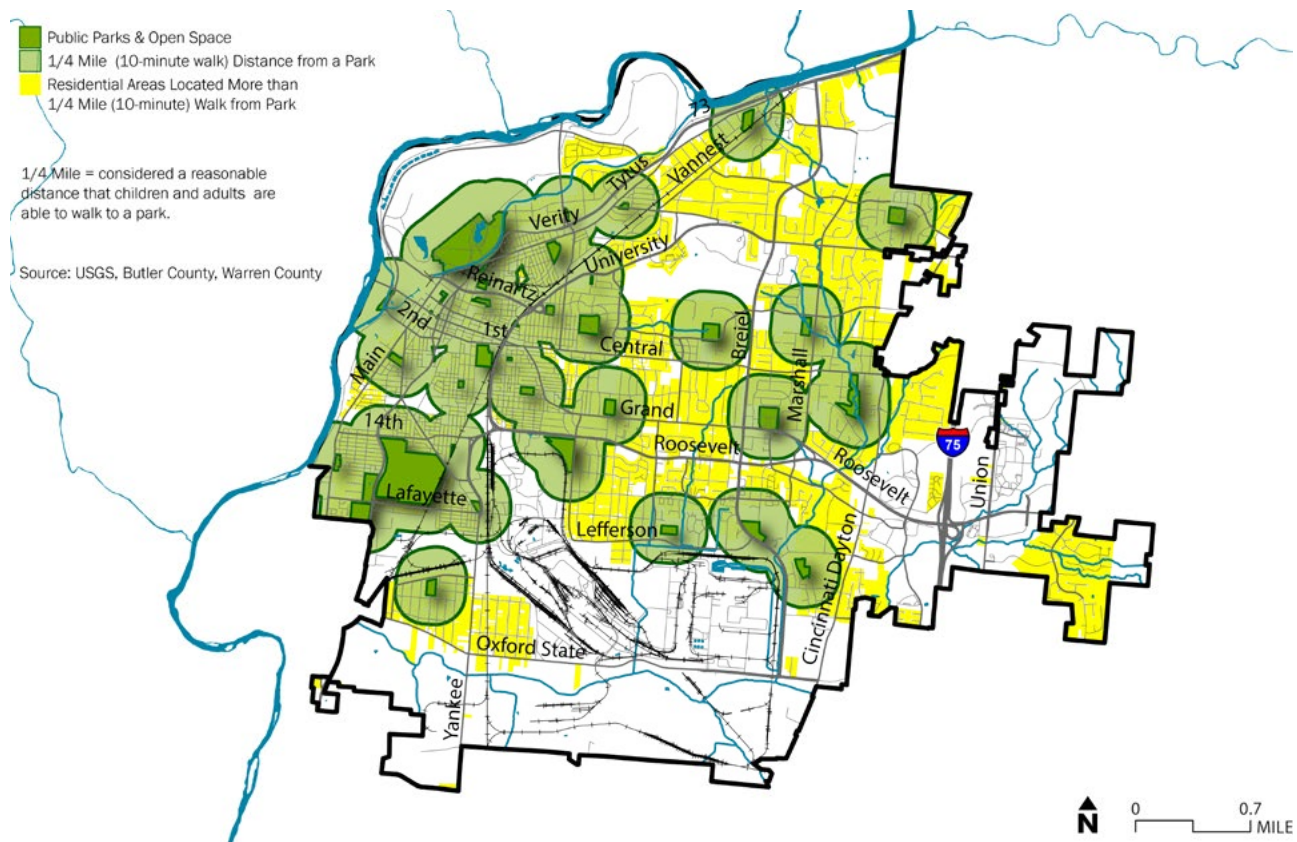


## DISTRIBUTION + ACCESSIBILITY

Access to parks, whether driving or walking, is a key aspect of whether there are adequate park facilities available for residents. Individuals who live closer to parks will visit them more often. Those who are unable to walk to parks are less likely to visit them and are therefore deprived of the opportunity to experience the many benefits those parks can provide. It is therefore essential that parks be easily accessible to all citizens. The recent pandemic has highlighted that in too many communities, access to parks and the outdoors is considered a privilege when it should be a right. Equitable access is becoming a driving factor in decision-making.

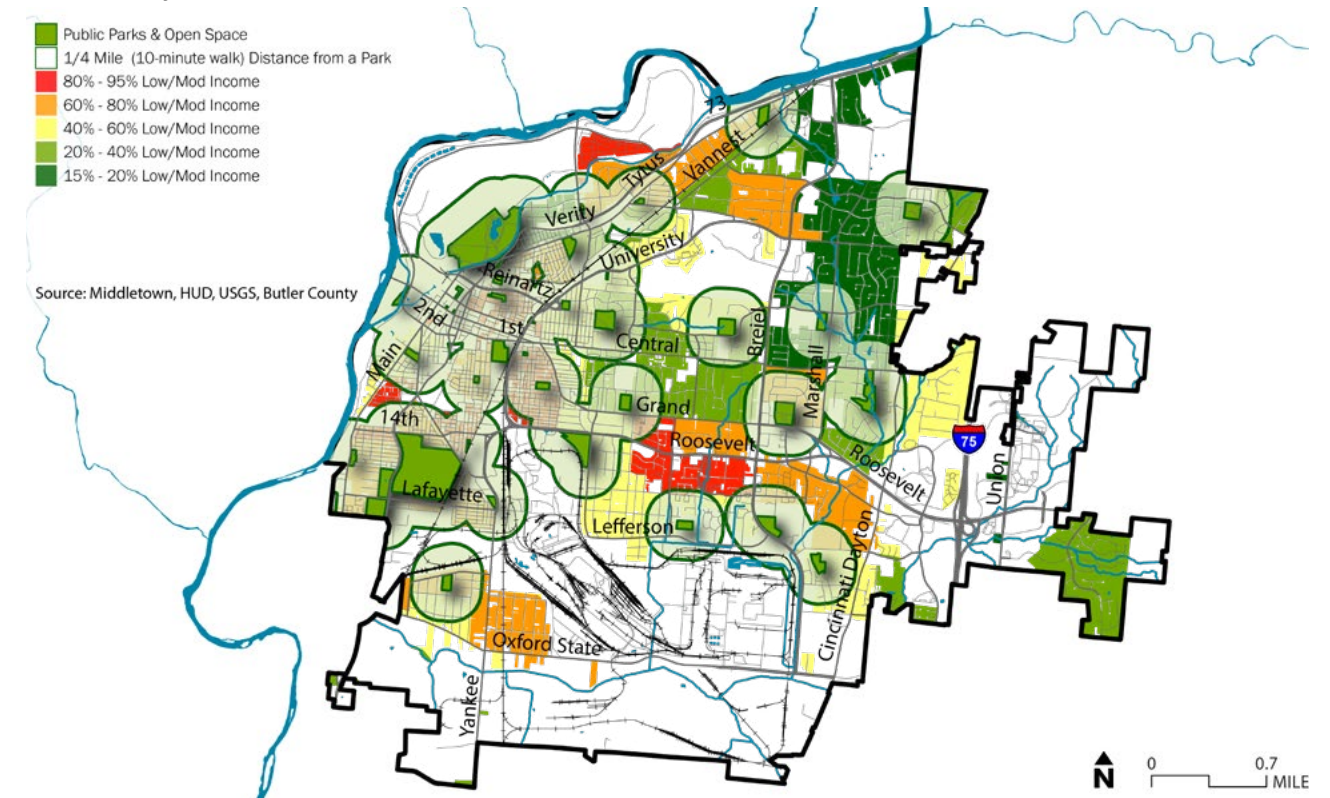
NRPA and TPL believe that the key to ensuring access to parks is through creating safe routes to parks within our communities. Routes to Neighborhood Parks should be no longer than a quarter of a mile, or a 10-minute walk and routes to Community Parks should be no longer than a two-mile or five-minute drive.

The map below shows areas within Middletown that are within a quarter-mile (10 minute) walk from a City Park. Approximately 53% of Middletown's residents, properties shown in yellow, are farther than a quarter-mile from a City park and these areas would benefit from future park additions to the system.



▲ FIGURE 101: PARK DISTRIBUTION & ACCESSIBILITY

While Middletown's parks are well distributed throughout the city, the map below shows how they are distributed in relation to residential areas with low to moderate income households. Several areas with 60%-95% of low to moderate income households are farther than a quarter-mile (10-minute) walk from a park and would benefit from a more equitable distribution with future park additions to the system.



▲ FIGURE 102: EQUITABLE PARK DISTRIBUTION & ACCESSIBILITY

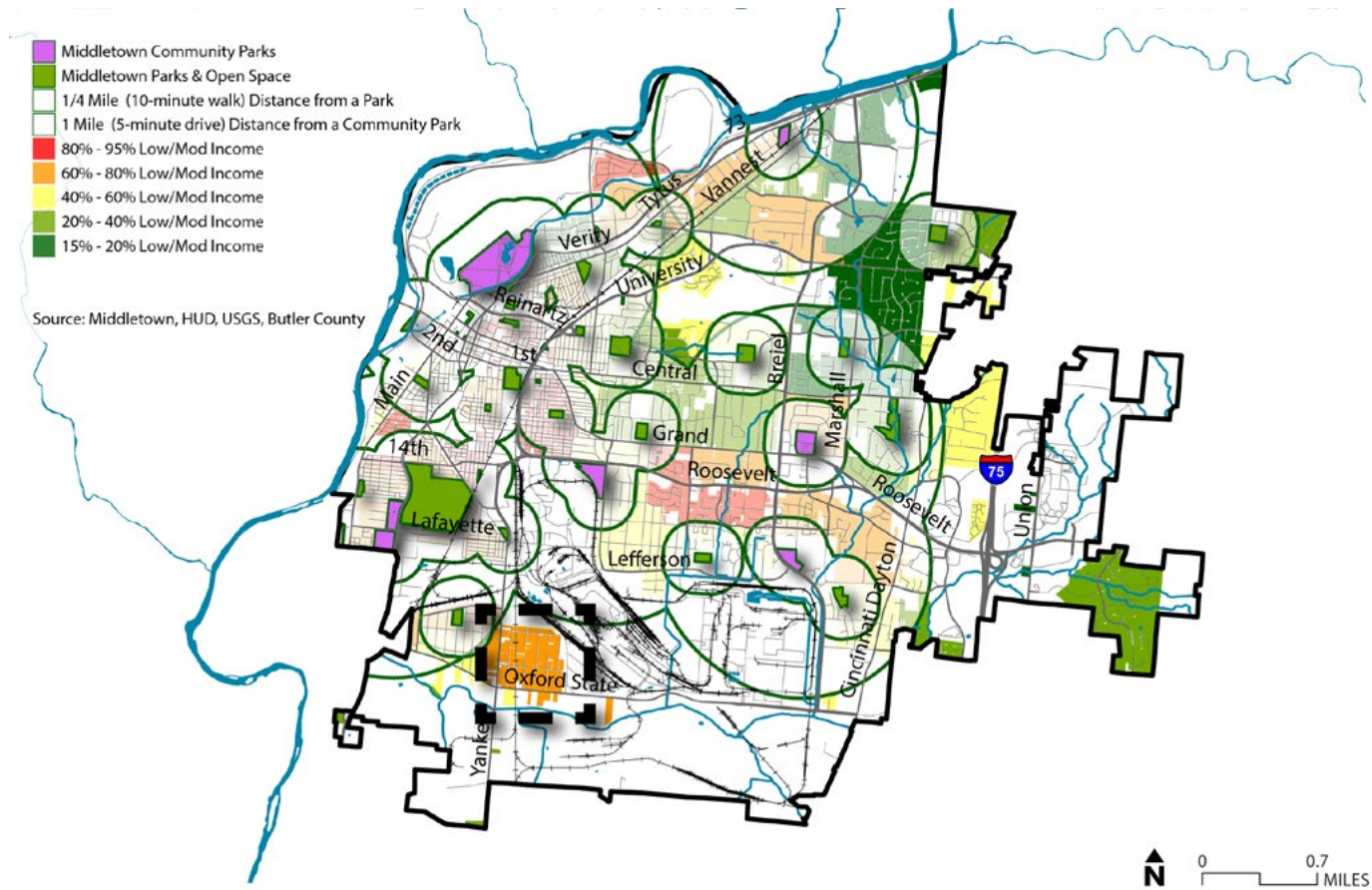
This map illustrates the lower-income areas of Middletown that also are outside of the 10-minute walk to a park space.



▲ FIGURE 103: CITY PARK NEEDS

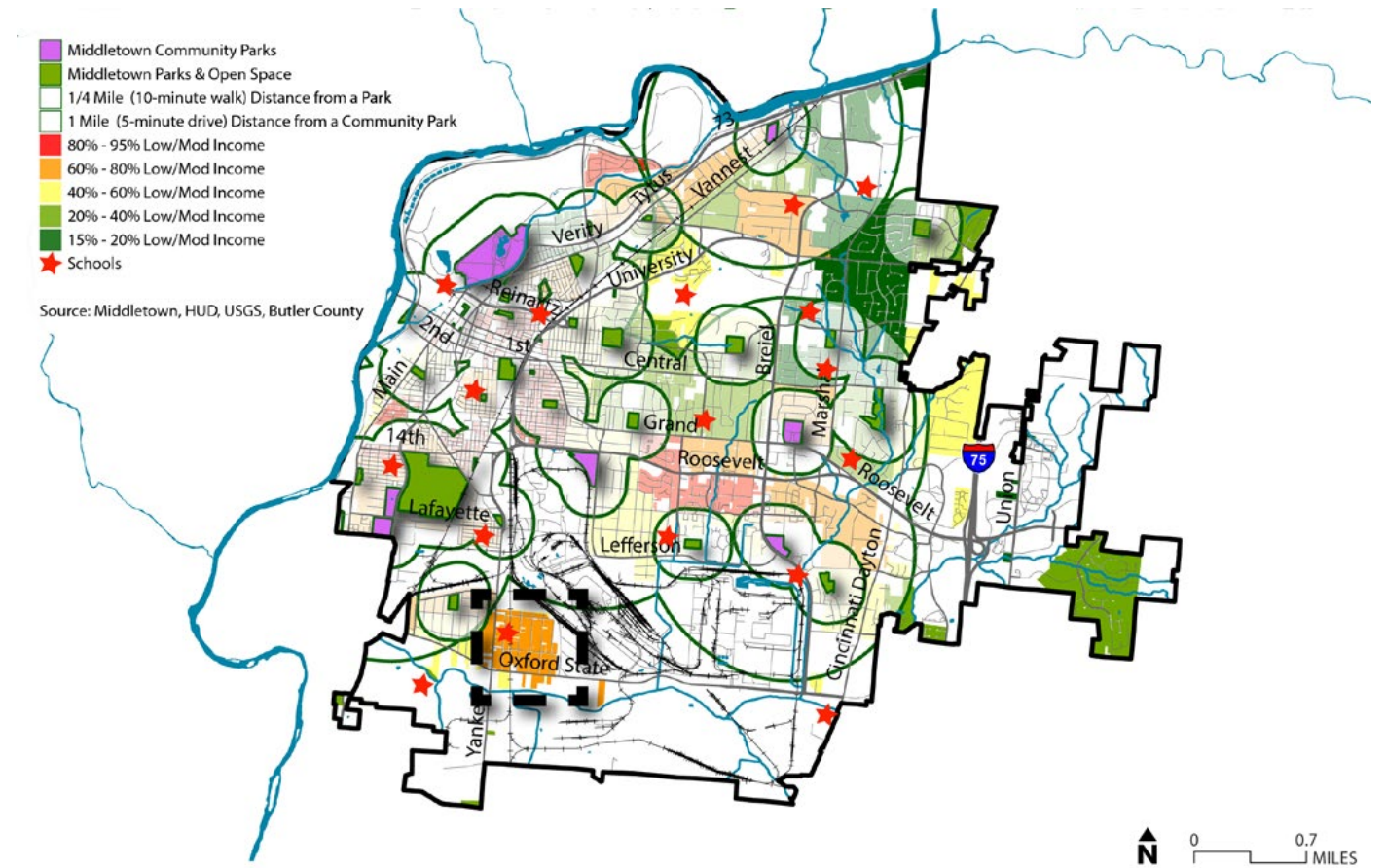


Recognizing that Community Parks may have a farther reach and attract park users from farther distances, the map below shows areas within Middletown that are one-mile walk (five-minute drive) from a Community Park



▲ FIGURE 104: CITY PARK NEEDS WITH COMMUNITY PARK ACCESSIBILITY

There is one residential area with 60-80% low to moderate income households that would benefit from future additions to the park system. As the Project Team and the City of Middletown explore options for improving accessibility, there could be an opportunity to partner with local schools to share outdoor recreation/park facilities in areas that have limited access to play structures, sport fields, and sport courts. The map below shows locations of schools where a partnership could be explored.



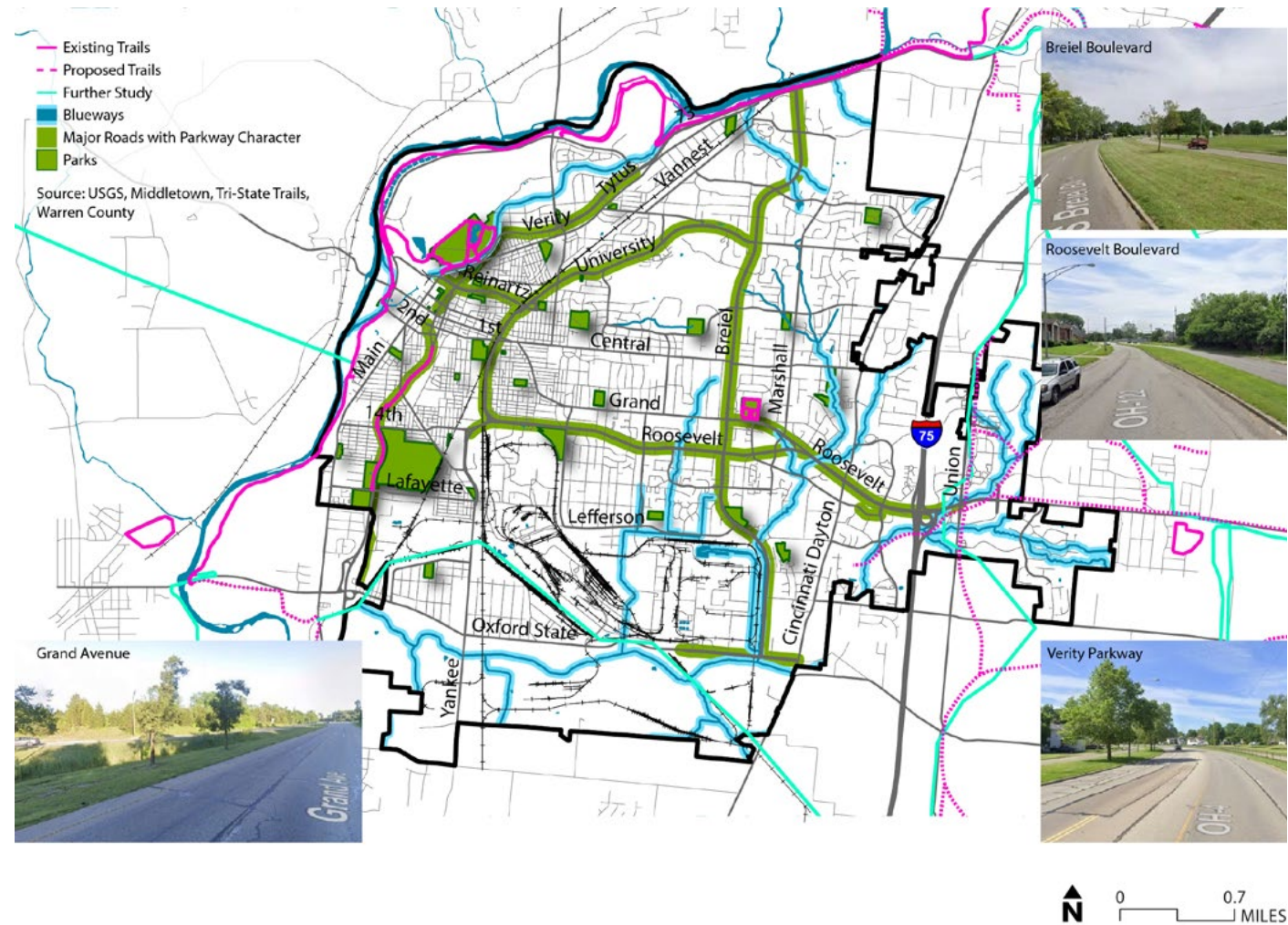
▲ FIGURE 105: CITY PARK ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS & PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



## GAPS/NEEDS: CONNECTIVITY & TRAILS

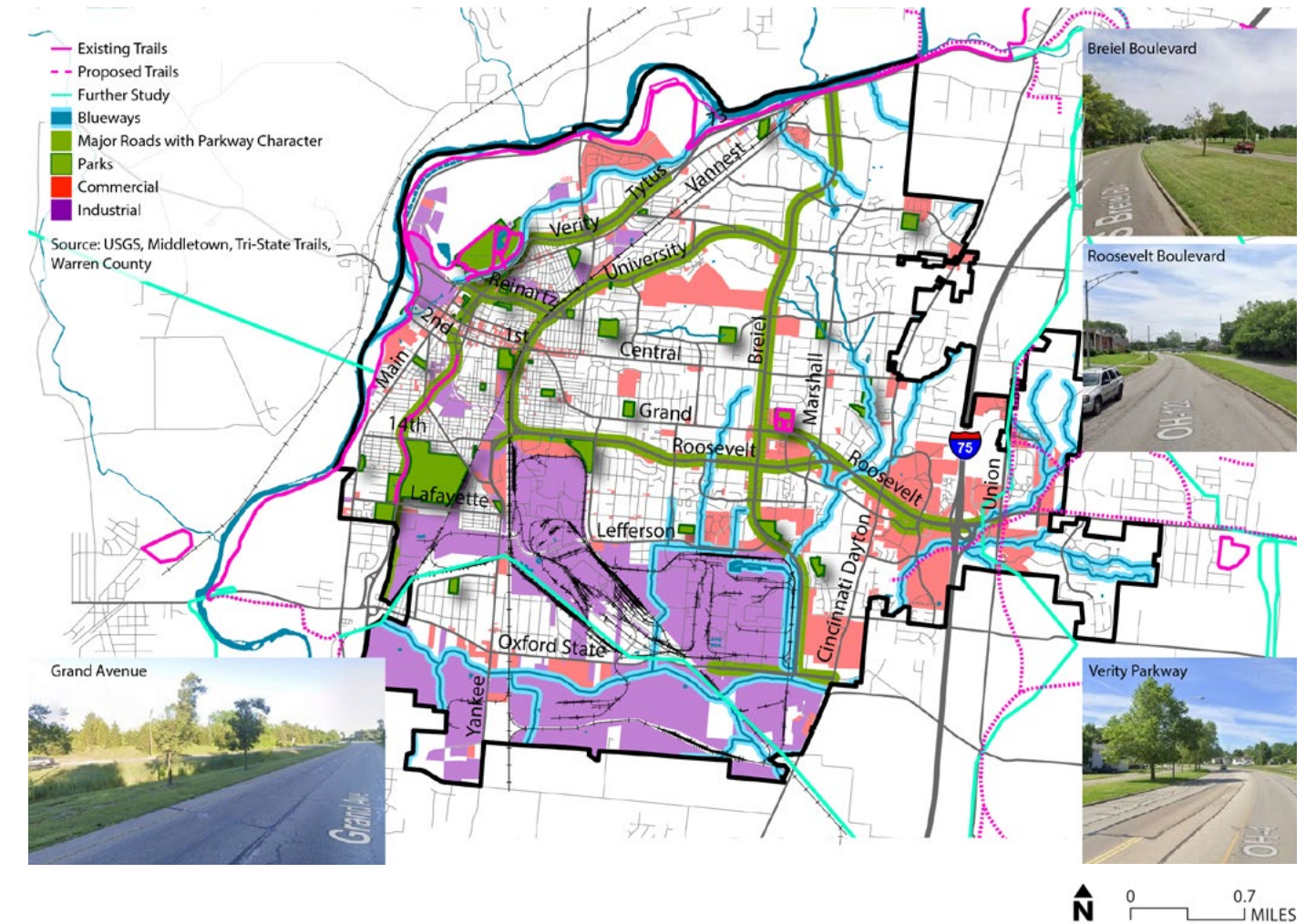
This map shows how the current park system is currently connected to the community through vehicular corridors and multi-use trails. Bike infrastructure in Middletown is currently limited to the Great Miami River Trail, SR 4, Smith Park, and Jacot Park. Improving these connections could include enhancing roadways with parkway character (i.e., vegetated medians and wide rights-of-way) such as Verity Parkway, Grand Avenue, Roosevelt Boulevard, and Breiel Boulevard. Surface streams offer potential as multi-use greenway trails and water trail corridors. This system of corridors could provide community access through physical connection to many parks throughout the system.

▼ FIGURE 106: CITY PARK CONNECTIVITY & TRAILS (EXISTING & FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES)



Connectivity to other land uses, like commercial and industrial job centers could allow residents to use land and water trails to commute to work, getting great exercise and alleviating congestion along vehicular corridors. Linking to neighboring communities in Butler and Warren Counties could also build strong regional connections.

▼ FIGURE 107: CITY PARK CONNECTIVITY TO JOB CENTERS





## 2.9 PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS + FEEDBACK SUMMARY

A community survey was developed for the Awareness Phase of the project, and conducted in December 2020. The survey was open for six weeks (November 18 – December 31) and 230 responses were collected. The survey was hosted online in both English and Spanish, and a hardcopy version was distributed at various locations in the community. The survey focused on current park use, recreation needs, and aspirations. The following actions were taken to distribute the survey and in communicating about the process.

### COMMUNICATION ACTIONS

- » Project website: <https://www.cityofmiddletown.org/541/Parks-Master-Plan>
- » 11/17/2020 City Council presentation
- » 11/18/2020 State of City address
- » 11/23/2020 Advisory Group Meetings: Technical, Community, Focus Group (45 members)
- » 12/7/2020 Middletown City Manager Updates: <https://youtu.be/ktNrKkSTkQw>
- » 12/9/2020 Email communication to Technical, Community, Focus Advisory Group members
- » Local Newspaper articles
  - <https://www.journal-news.com/news/middletown-seeking-public-input-into-parks-master-plan-how-you-can-help/ZSBTVCE46ZD6ZKK53BBYHBW7FE/>
  - <https://www.bizjournals.com/dayton/news/2020/12/04/middletown-parks-master-plan.html>
- » Social media postings weekly in December (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter)
- » Digital sign board
- » Yard signs including the bit.ly link posted at Light Up Middletown and parks throughout the community:
  - <https://bit.ly/MiddletownOHParksSurvey>
  - <https://bit.ly/MiddletownParksSurveySpanish>
- » Hardcopy survey locations:
  - Middletown City Building lobby
  - MidPointe Library
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Middletown Public Schools

### HOW WAS SURVEY CONTENT USED?

The feedback, in addition to other stakeholder input and conclusions from a rigorous site/context analysis, informed the next phase of the master planning process, where the Project Team tested a range of ideas and share with the community for the second round of input.

Responses to the public survey conducted in December 2020 were summarized in the infographics shown on pages 87-88 and sent to stakeholders, including the Technical, Community, and Focus Advisory Groups, and survey participants who provided their email information. The survey summary was also included in social media posts by the City and posted on the project website.

The response themes that emerged included strengths – Middletown has a large parks system which is well-distributed within the community; opportunities for improvement – safety and security, accessibility so that parks could be used by all people, and support facilities like restrooms were a basic need particularly in community parks; and aspirations – Middletown residents wanted trails connecting their parks including hiking, biking, and water trails; they desired special amenities like aquatics and nature play; and programming in parks was a strong desire.

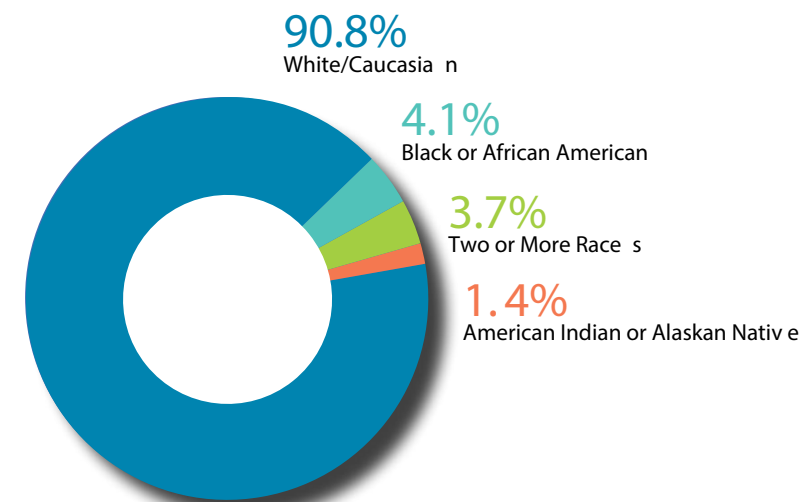
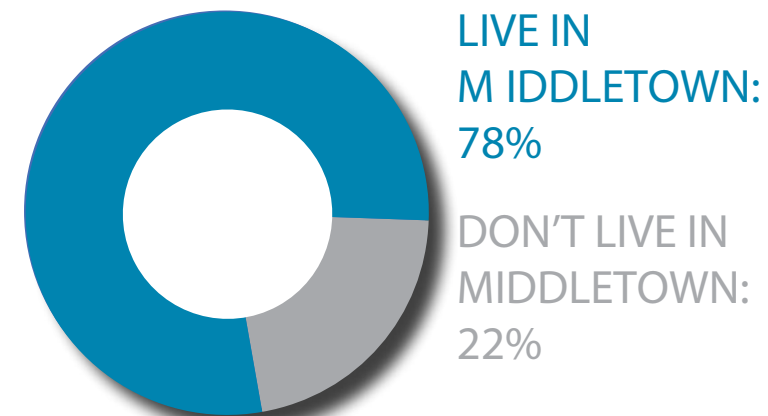
An abbreviated survey was distributed to Middletown High School students as well in an effort to hear from Middletown's future generation. The survey was distributed on April 7, 2021 and 259 students and teachers participated in the survey. Responses were summarized and reviewed with the Client Team. Like the public survey respondents, most high schoolers were visiting community parks due to the amount of recreation activities and programming that was available. Most respondents enjoyed walking and hiking trails, and using playgrounds, sports fields, and courts when visiting Middletown's parks. There was a strong desire for programming such as festivals, concerts, and movies. And, the top priorities of the high school survey respondents included playgrounds, a pool, athletic fields and courts, a dog park, and increased accessibility. The high school survey re-affirmed many of the responses expressed during the public survey conducted in December 2020.



## AWARENESS SURVEY OUTCOMES

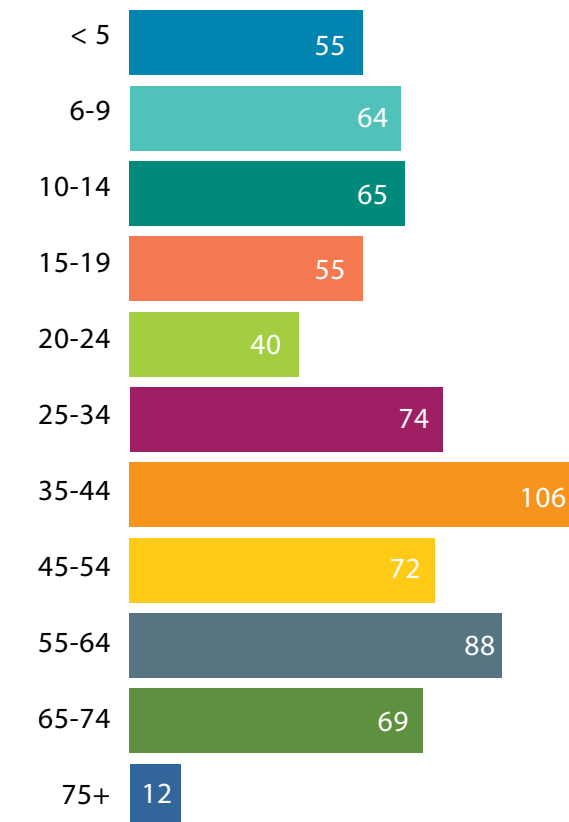
### Public Survey #1

## Who took the survey?



**230 participants** provided valuable input using online and hard copy surveys.

Age Groups Represented in Survey Responses



## STRENGTHS

- Middletown has a **large parks system**
- Well-distributed** in the community
- Range of activities** available
- Well-maintained park grounds (mowed landscape and parking areas).

## CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES

- Safety and security are a top priority
- Improved restroom maintenance is needed.
- Park facilities need to be upgraded so they are **safe, universally accessible, and exciting**.
- Facilities need to appeal to users of **all ages and abilities**.
- Examples: permanent restrooms; trails; updated and accessible playgrounds; shelters.

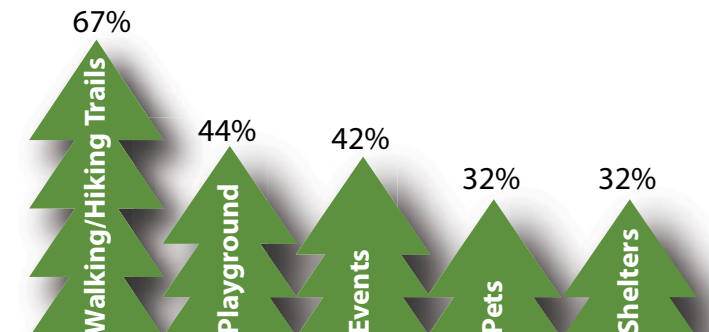
## ASPIRATIONS

- Natural** (hiking), paved **multi-use**, and blueway (water) **trails** are desired.
- System-wide connectivity** to community assets (schools, downtown, river)
- Enhanced **playgrounds** and **athletic courts/fields**
- Examples: **nature play, aquatics, dog park, and landscape diversity**.
- Desire for festivals/concerts, sport leagues, children's events, and outdoor skills classes.

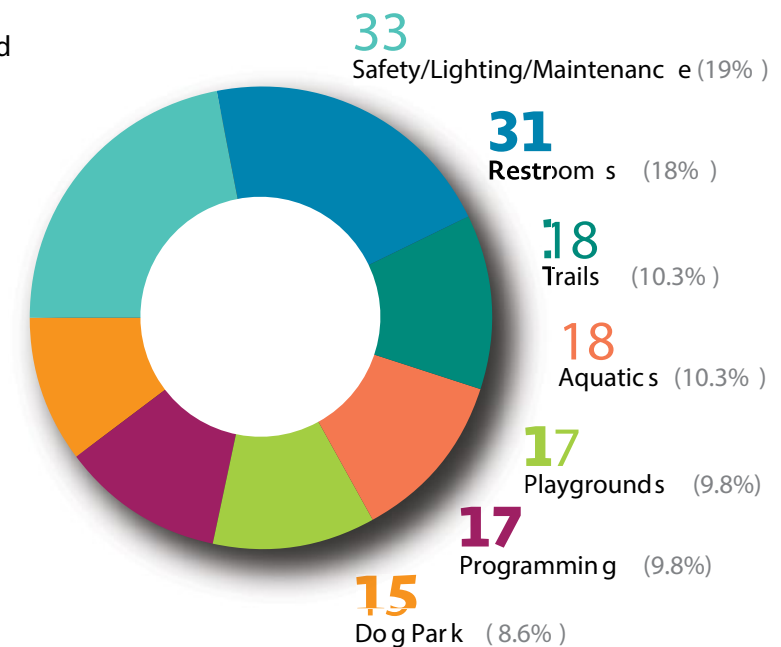
**What park enhancements would you rank as a HIGH priority? (The larger the word, the higher the ranking. Number of responses provided.)**



**What amenities draw you to Middletown parks? (top 5 shown)**



**What would you like to see in Middletown parks? What's missing? (top 7 shown, number of responses provided)**







# 3

## Exploration

ASSESSING NEEDS + PRIORITIES



# 3. EXPLORATION

## ASSESSING NEEDS + PRIORITIES

### 3.1 EXPLORATION SUMMARY

The needs, opportunities, and aspirations expressed in the Awareness Phase survey, along with the inventory and analysis of existing data, and direction from the Client Team were utilized to explore a number of implementation strategies at several Middletown park sites. The Awareness phase identified opportunities and challenges to be explored through these implementation strategies. These included connectivity within and between parks and other community destinations, identifying ways park improvements could be equitably distributed to meet the needs of all Middletown residents, addressing the park system's identity through signage, site furnishings and maintenance, providing diverse activities and experiences within parks to keep them exciting, and sustainability measures to promote the ecological health of Middletown.

Illustrative concepts focused on graphically communicating to stakeholders how physical improvements might address the challenges, opportunities, and aspirations identified system-wide including internal and system-wide connectivity, increased accessibility, playground, sport court and field updates, and opportunities to add special features that would move the needle in Middletown Parks. Within the scope of the master plan, concepts were developed for some park types such as community parks, while development of others seemed premature without targeted engagement to address elements specific to each site. Such was the case for neighborhood and mini parks.

Concepts were developed to explore system-wide connectivity through on and off-road trail facilities and blueways, where development of gateway opportunities might occur for improved community branding, and locations for river access and canoe launch facilities that could strengthen the community's connection to the river. This allowed the Project Team to gauge stakeholders' interest in a connected parks system throughout Middletown and what type of trail facilities were most desired and where.

Concepts were also developed for all of the community parks. Based on the feedback from both the Public Survey in December 2020 and the Middletown High School survey in April 2021, Middletown's community parks were among the most visited types in the system due to the diversity of activities and the programming that occurred at them. Conceptual plans of how improvements could be implemented at these specific sites allowed stakeholders to imagine how their park experience could be elevated in locations they were most familiar with.

As mentioned, concepts for neighborhood and mini parks were not created. During the Exploration phase, it became clear that Middletown's neighborhood and mini parks had the potential to serve as "living rooms" for the neighborhoods in which they were located, reflecting the unique context and needs of the areas they served. The community-based process outlined in Section 3.3.3 can follow this overall Parks Master Plan. The process can engage with neighborhoods to create neighborhood park improvements that reflect their unique needs, aspirations, and identities.

Another interest expressed by Middletown residents was the ability to connect with nature in more natural park settings than the traditional park spaces that dominated Middletown's system. Two natural areas in Middletown's

existing system, Armbruster Nature Preserve and Bull's Run Arboretum, can be the focus of future natural park development as the system grows to accommodate needs. A concept for one of the undeveloped park sites was developed to illustrate this approach and gather feedback.

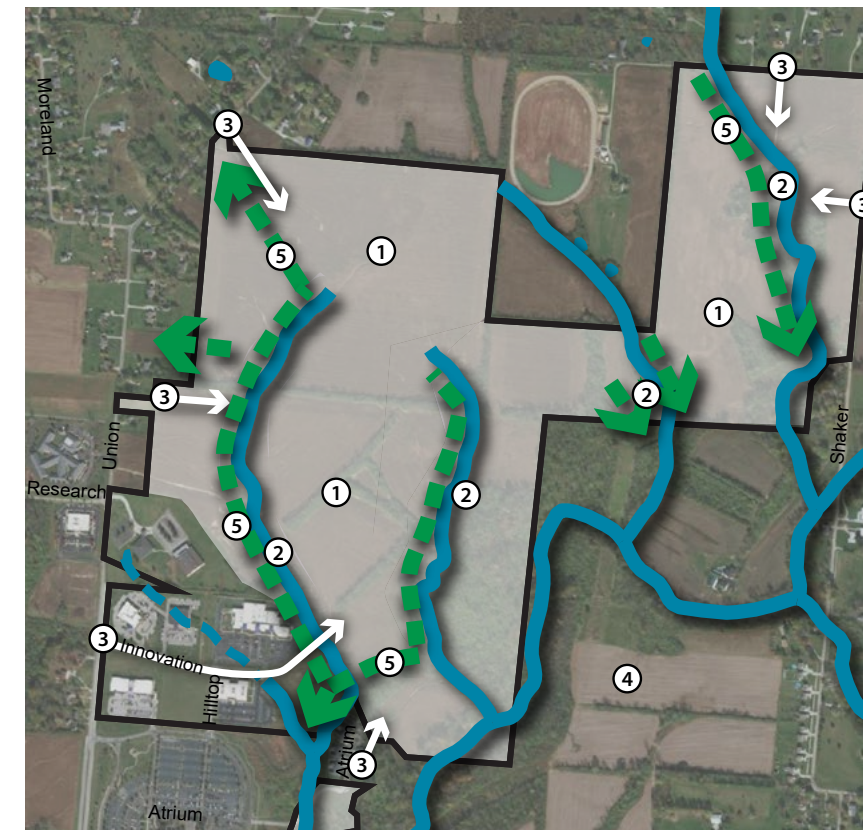
In general, the urban plaza parks and natural areas were in good condition and offered a variety of programming. Given the City's funding limitations, major improvements to these parks do not need to be prioritized given the other needs within the system.

In an effort to better coordinate the Parks Master Plan with the Comprehensive Plan, the Team identified a variety of strategies to connect the City's trails system to the Comprehensive Plan's Special Interest Areas (SIAs) and to Middletown's parks. This would give residents and visitors the ability to walk and bike to residential, employment, and commercial destinations within the community and elevate quality of life. Strategies for SIAs to "face the river" and incorporate stormwater best management practices (BMPs) were also explored.

▼ FIGURE 109: EAST END SPECIAL INTEREST AREA

#### INITIAL OBSERVATIONS / SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ① East End Special Interest Area - an emerging employment district with attractive office, high-tech industrial, and medical uses that also includes amenities for the employees of the district such as residential and commercial uses.
- ② Opportunity to maintain riparian corridors for stormwater management, mitigation implementation, and greenway development.
- ③ Assumed vehicular access points for the development.
- ④ Existing trail system (from Trails Master Plans).
- ⑤ New greenway and trail system.



TITLE  
EAST END SPECIAL INTEREST AREA

SCALE  
0 325 650 1,300 FEET  
N

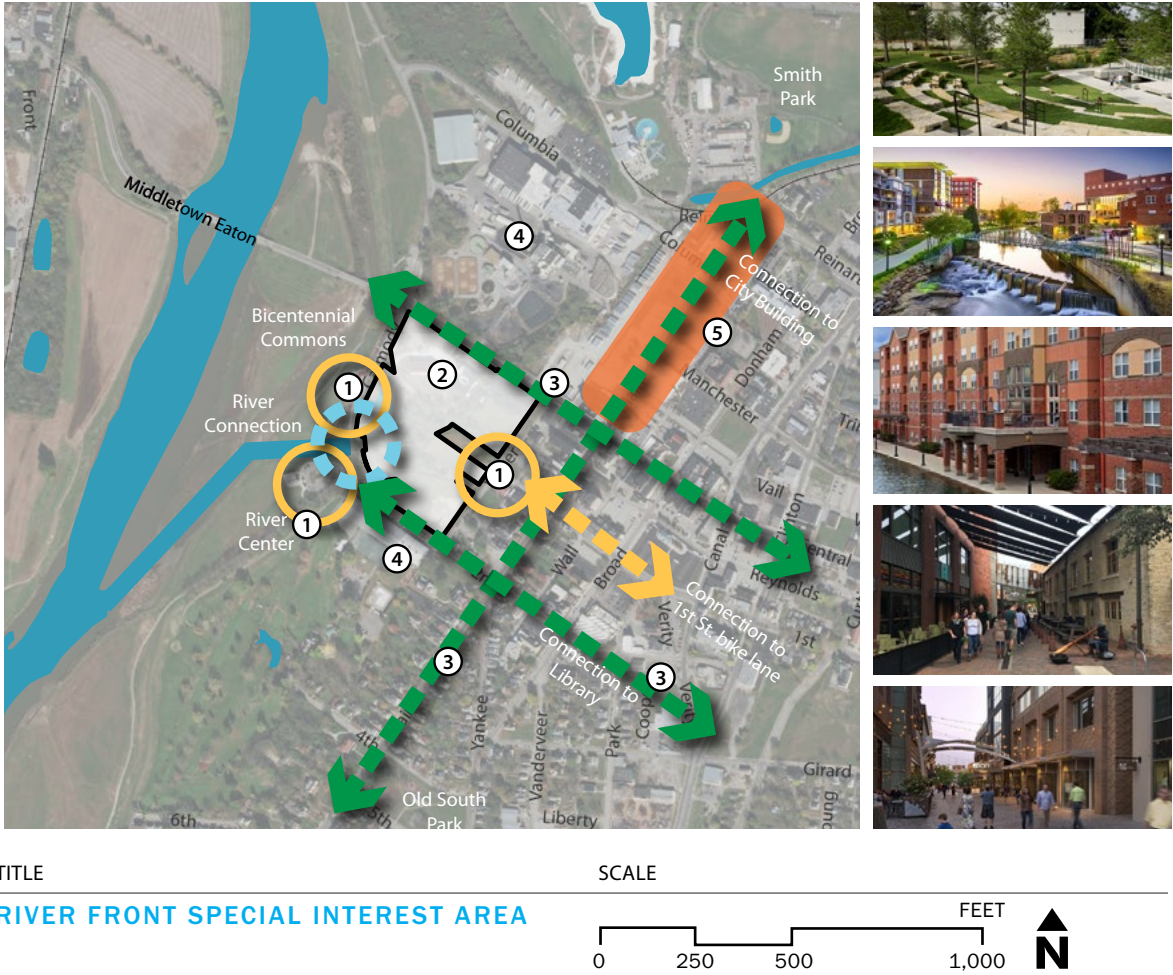




▼ FIGURE 110: RIVERFRONT SPECIAL INTEREST AREA

INITIAL  
OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR  
IMPROVEMENT

- 1 Connect downtown Middletown to the Great Miami River, bike trail, Bicentennial Commons, River Center, and proposed 1st Street bike lanes with linear arcade/public open/gathering space.
- 2 Riverfront Special Interest Area - Mixed-Use development incorporating adaptive reuse, hospitality and entertainment. Explore the possibilities of connecting to the canal and the river with building frontage, public open space, and outdoor seating/dining along the waterfront.
- 3 Opportunity for system-wide connectivity along Central, historic Main Street, connecting community assets like downtown, the existing Smith Park & Trails, and Old South Park.
- 4 Partner with neighboring land owners to execute vision for an inviting Riverfront District for residents and visitors.
- 5 Opportunity to spur investment / redevelopment along Main Street.



3.2 RECREATION TRENDS

OVERVIEW

Outdoor recreation continues to be a core part of the American and Ohio lifestyle. Ohio's natural resources provide a wealth of opportunities to enjoy a variety of outdoor activities from hiking a long-distance trail to fishing in Lake Erie to tent camping in a state park campground. Recreation opportunities can be found in federal, state and local parks, state nature preserves, federal and state forest lands, national and state wildlife lands, historic and heritage site, national trails, and state scenic rivers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parks and public lands are playing an increasing role in our social, mental, and physical health. Parks are seeing some of their highest usage in modern times, and local officials are reporting dramatic upticks in visitors. Parks are proving to be an essential part of how we cope and recover from this crisis. Parks are also widely recognized as benefiting health and wellness by reducing anxiety, stress, and depression, and improving physical health.

The Project Team analyzed recreation trends looking at both the individual park scale and system-wide scale nationally and within the state of Ohio. The team utilized the Ohio 2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and NRPA's publication of Top Recreation Trends for 2020 (Dolesh) which is based on input from park and recreation agencies across the country. The findings are summarized below and were discussed with the City of Middletown Public Works Department to see how they could inform the Middletown park system.

SUMMARY OF TRENDS

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) undertook a significant effort to develop Ohio's SCORP by engaging public and outdoor recreation providers, creating an Advisory Committee, leading several focus groups from across the state, and conducting a public survey completed by 5,059 households across 88 counties. This plan has assisted recreation providers and state funding offices to strategically work towards delivering recreational opportunities and facilities that Ohioans want and that create outdoor recreational experiences that provide personal, social, health, and economic benefits.

Overall, Ohioans want more trails and more public access to nature such as natural surface trails, paddling access and facilities, and primitive campgrounds. Technology, climate and societal issues and pet recreation are also elements that are playing a more prominent role in park planning and programming.

CONNECTIVITY & TRAILS

The SCORP found that interest in trail activities has grown such that they have the highest participation rates of any outdoor recreation activity. Ninety-eight percent of households utilized a variety of trails on Ohio's public lands for walking, hiking, biking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Walking and hiking on trails was highly popular with 90% walking or hiking on a natural surface trail, 80% on a paved trail, and 79% on a finely crushed stone trail. Bicycling was popular with 55% of households using paved trails a few times a year and 25% bicycling on a trail as a means of transportation at least a few times a year.





## ACCESS TO NATURE

The SCORP found that Ohioans, especially those living in urban areas, want more public access to nature.

### Water-Based Activities

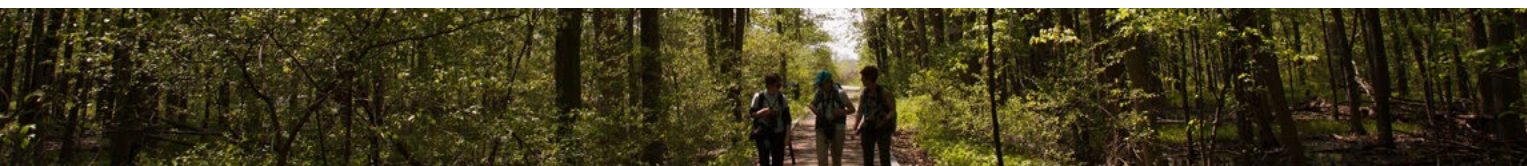
Boating and swimming activities are popular with Ohioans. Canoeing and kayaking continue to be a growing trend nationally and in Ohio. Canoeing and kayaking in a stream, river, lake, or pond was the most popular boating activity with approximately 44% of respondents participating a few times during the year and 17% participating monthly. Canoeing and kayaking also exhibited the highest level of interest without participation, indicating a desire but lack of time, skill, and/or equipment. Not surprisingly, canoes and kayaks were the most requested item to be rented for a nominal fee in response to a survey question regarding rental equipment. Over 30% of kayakers and canoeists responded they enjoy the sport to experience nature, quiet time, and serenity.

Swimming is popular with Ohioans using facilities such as an outdoor pool (48%), lake, pond, or river (51%), or outdoor pool complex with lazy river, wave pool or similar features (24%). Splash pads and spray pads grew in popularity from 16% to 19% since the 2013 SCORP survey.



### Wildlife Activities

The top three wildlife activities were wildlife viewing (70%), nature photography (49%), and bird watching (50%), with more than 47% enjoying wildlife activities to experience nature, quiet time and serenity. Shore fishing (37%) ranked higher than fishing from a pier/ADA accessible site (15%), or from a motorized (21%) or nonmotorized boat (16%). All methods of fishing showed high levels of interest without participation.

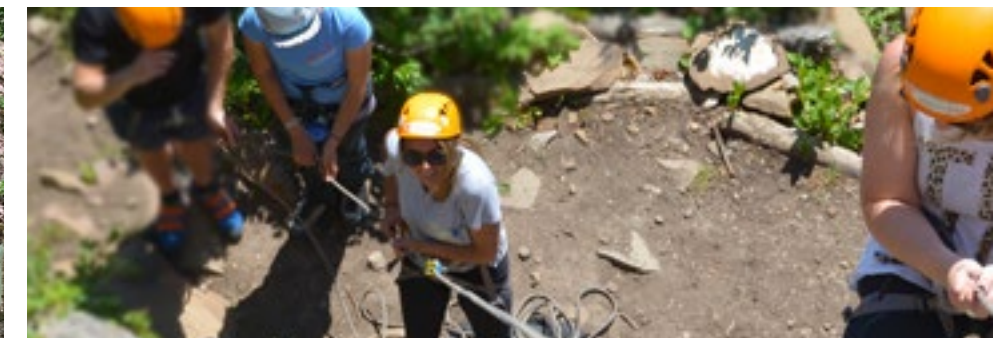


### Other Outdoor Activities

Non-team sports, including archery, target/skeet/shooting sports, climbing and rappelling, geocaching, and orienteering had higher responses for participation than traditional team-oriented sports such as football, volleyball, and baseball.

Interest in camping is growing both in Ohio and across the country as it allows individuals to spend more time with friends and family, to be more physically active, and improve overall emotional well-being and health. While camping is not something allowed in Middletown Parks, this speaks to opportunities for programming that might be explored such as outdoor survival skills and camping 101 classes which may be suited for the Nature Preserves and Undeveloped Parks within Middletown.

According to the SCORP survey, there is a high level of interest without participation in all the outdoor recreation activities discussed above: canoeing/kayaking; fishing; camping. Some reasoning behind this trend is the lack of equipment or lack of skill or knowledge and offering programming to introduce these activities to the general population could present a great opportunity for future program development.



## TECHNOLOGY & MARKETING

Other societal trends like technology can impact recreation. According to the SCORP, approximately 95% of Americans over 18 years old have a mobile phone and 77% have smartphones. The increased availability and use of technology can impact the way people receive information, how they plan outings, and what their expectations are with regards to wi-fi accessibility while engaged in recreation. Mobile applications (apps) on smart phones, watches, and tablets have



become increasingly popular and assist people as they plan and track outdoor activity, select and book campsites, and purchase fishing licenses. Many of the apps also create a social network for sharing photos and experiences with other outdoor enthusiasts.

A National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) study found that a lack of awareness and information regarding park locations, offerings, and programs led to less participation, placing greater importance on successful marketing of parks. NRPA also identified technology aspects that will continue to be trends in park and recreation development in 2020. Included in these predictions was video surveillance. The presence of video cameras in parks and along trails gives users a sense of security and assists public safety officials in their work. The technology has improved over the years and increased production has made cameras more affordable. Solar-powered options can be utilized for remote locations without electricity.

E-sports was another trend identified by NRPA, which is a form of sports competition using video games. E-sports is more than a half-billion dollar per-year form of entertainment that is growing so rapidly, many park and recreation agencies are starting to build e-sports gaming rooms and facilities within their sites.

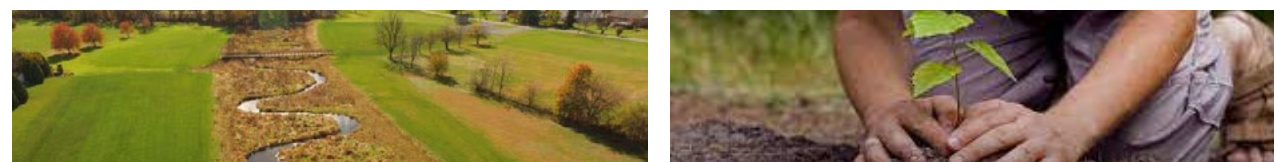
The last technology-based trend predicted in 2020 by NRPA included the use of drones in parks. Many park and recreation agencies have been reluctant to allow drone use in parks, though they see the benefits of drones for natural resource inventory, search and rescue operations, and inspection of remote areas. NRPA predicts that food-and-beer drone trucks will be delivering concessions to park users in the near future, pending just a few more FAA approvals.



## CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Trees and green infrastructure go beyond the benefits of amenities for recreation. Parks' ability to serve double-duty as spaces for stormwater management and heat-island reducers have benefits to City budgets and are a vital component of health and well-being in our changing environment. NRPA predicts that park and recreation agencies will re-evaluate their parkland inventory through these resiliency lenses – how they manage stormwater and reduce heat island effect through tree canopy and the creation of new parks and trails will be designed to cool communities. There are also cost-sharing opportunities from the City's water and sewer dollars that can be used for storm sewer and combined sewer separation projects which are generally good fits for park spaces.

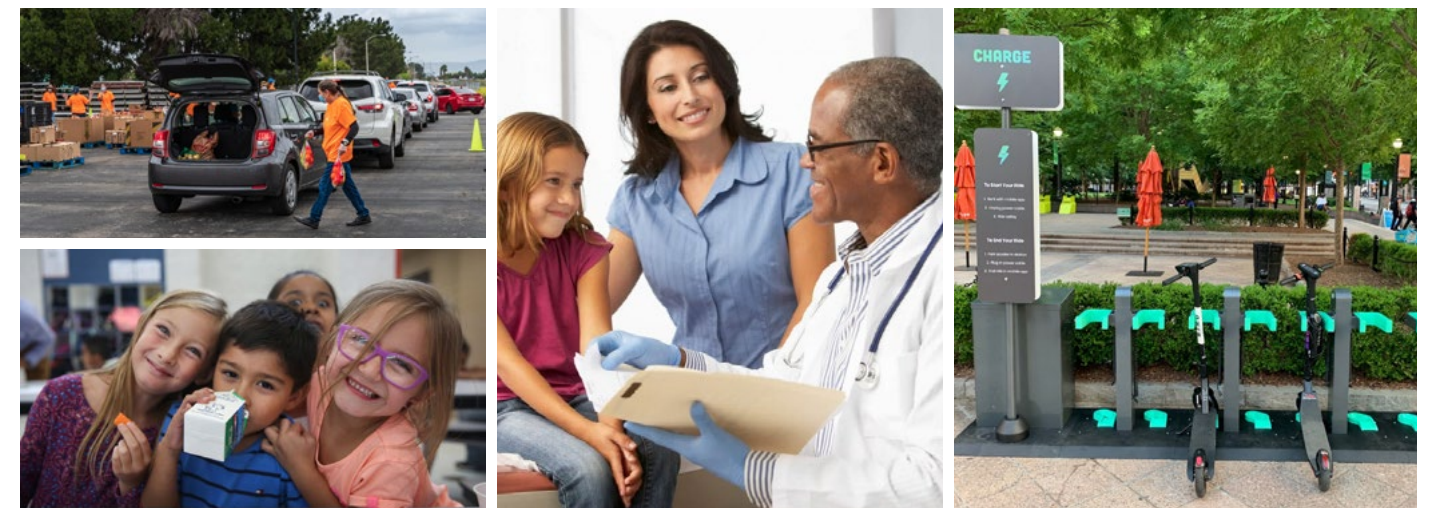
Invasive management treatment trends also fall under this category. Some agencies and cities have started to ban the use of glyphosates in recent years and NRPA indicated that more than 250 jurisdictions will ban their use in 2020 causing wholesale changes to traditional landscape management practices.



## COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Additional trends predicted in 2020 by NRPA centered around community wellness. Specifically, micromobility devices such as e-scooters and e-bikes are changing the way park planners think about how people access parks, especially when they don't own a car. The response to micromobility devices has varied between communities: some have banned their use on trails and geo-fenced parks from e-scooters; others have installed docking stations to encourage use of a park. NRPA predicts that the use of micromobility devices in parks will grow, though the effects of their use remain to be seen.

Another emerging trend in community wellness includes establishing recreation centers as community wellness hubs. Parks and recreation agencies are dealing with many more social issues than ever before including the impacts of the opioid crisis, providing after school care, addressing food insecurity issues, and the impacts of homelessness. One trend emerging to these socioeconomic issues is park and recreation agencies joining other public-service providers to develop a cohesive approach to social services, law enforcement, health, nutrition and community recreation for all ages and abilities. They are developing "Community Hub agreements" which allow for the sharing of public-sector funding and provide attractive models of best practices in soliciting funding from nonprofits and foundations.



## DOG PARKS

NRPA reports that 91% of Americans believe dog parks provide benefits to their communities. This is a popular belief across the spectrum of generations: 94% of millennials, 92% of Gen Xers, and 89% of baby boomers agree dog parks are beneficial to communities. And, dog parks are the fastest growing type of park development. While most agree of the benefits, there are also stories from communities experiencing a NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) reaction to the placement of dog parks in some residential areas with sentiments that the noise from dog parks is bothersome. This highlights that location is probably the most critical aspect of developing a dog park, if Middletown chooses to, and that a robust public engagement process would likely be beneficial.





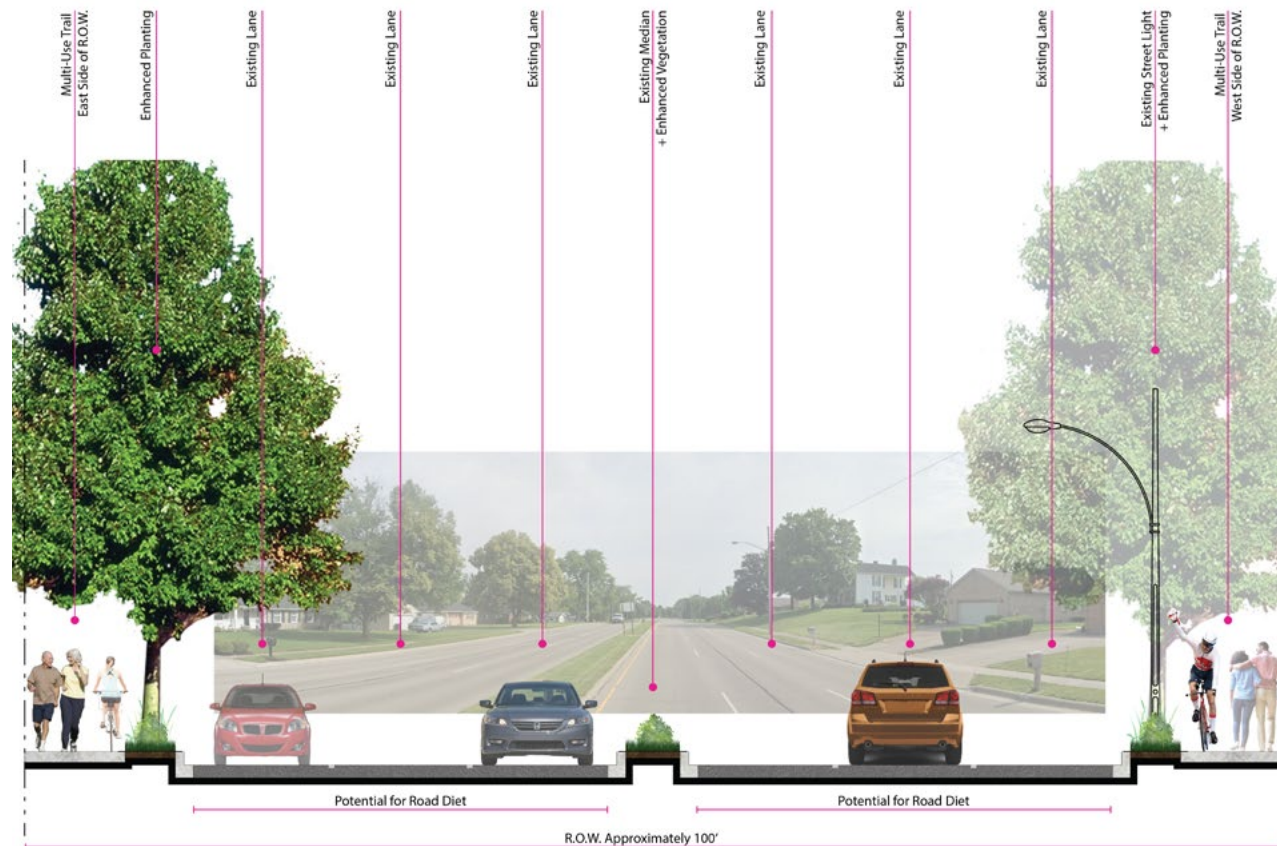
## 3.3 SYSTEM-WIDE EXPLORATION

### CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

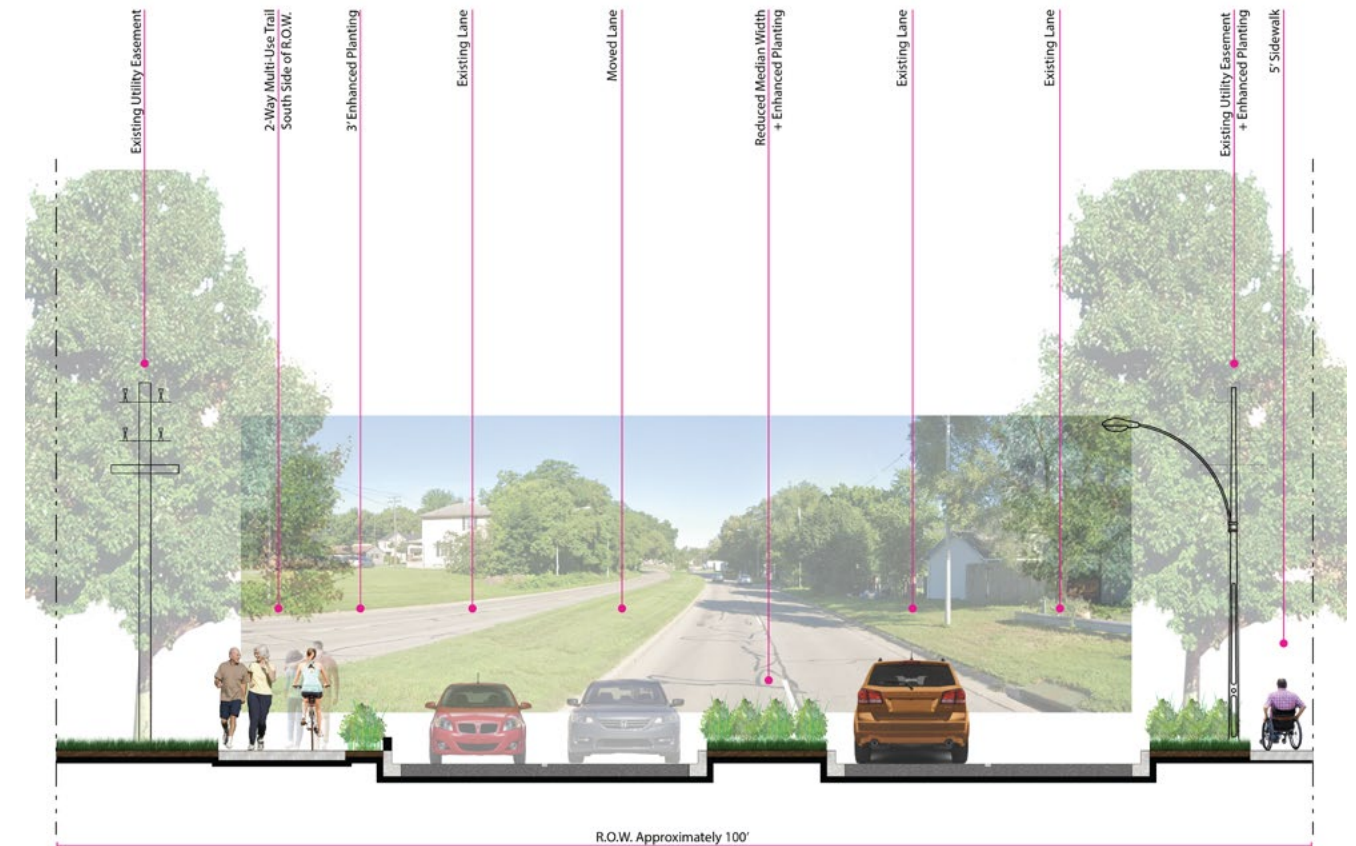
Middletown's parks are well distributed and during this phase, ways to build from the City's Transportation Plan to further connect the Middletown community and parks system through land and water trails were explored.

Community connections to local and regional assets like parks and recreation, existing trails, the Great Miami River, downtown, employment areas, and schools can be built through separate off-road ped/bike facilities along future parkways, through on-road facilities along bike boulevards, and through trail linkages. Implementation of these facilities was considered most likely through the City's transportation dollars and trails-focused grants. Some proposed routes were moved to better align with the City's transportation plan. Such was the case where the City suggested moving a bike facility from Roosevelt Avenue to Grand Avenue, a less-trafficked corridor. Other suggested routes, like Oxford State, did not seem feasible at all due to its high volume of truck traffic and limited right of way. The figures below demonstrate the cross-section exploration of parkway and boulevard facilities.

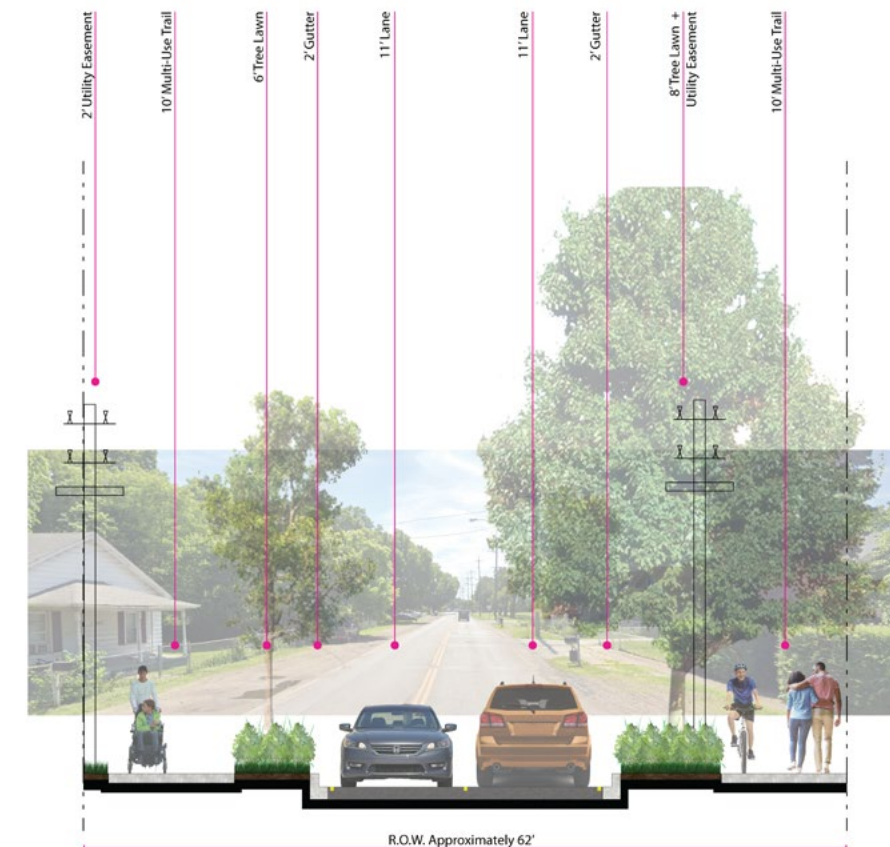
▼ FIGURE 111: BREIEL BOULEVARD NORTH OF UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD



▼ FIGURE 112: REINARTZ BOULEVARD WEST OF CHARLES STREET



▼ FIGURE 113: OXFORD STATE BOULEVARD BETWEEN HARRISON STREET AND JUDY STREET





▼ FIGURE 114: PARKWAYS



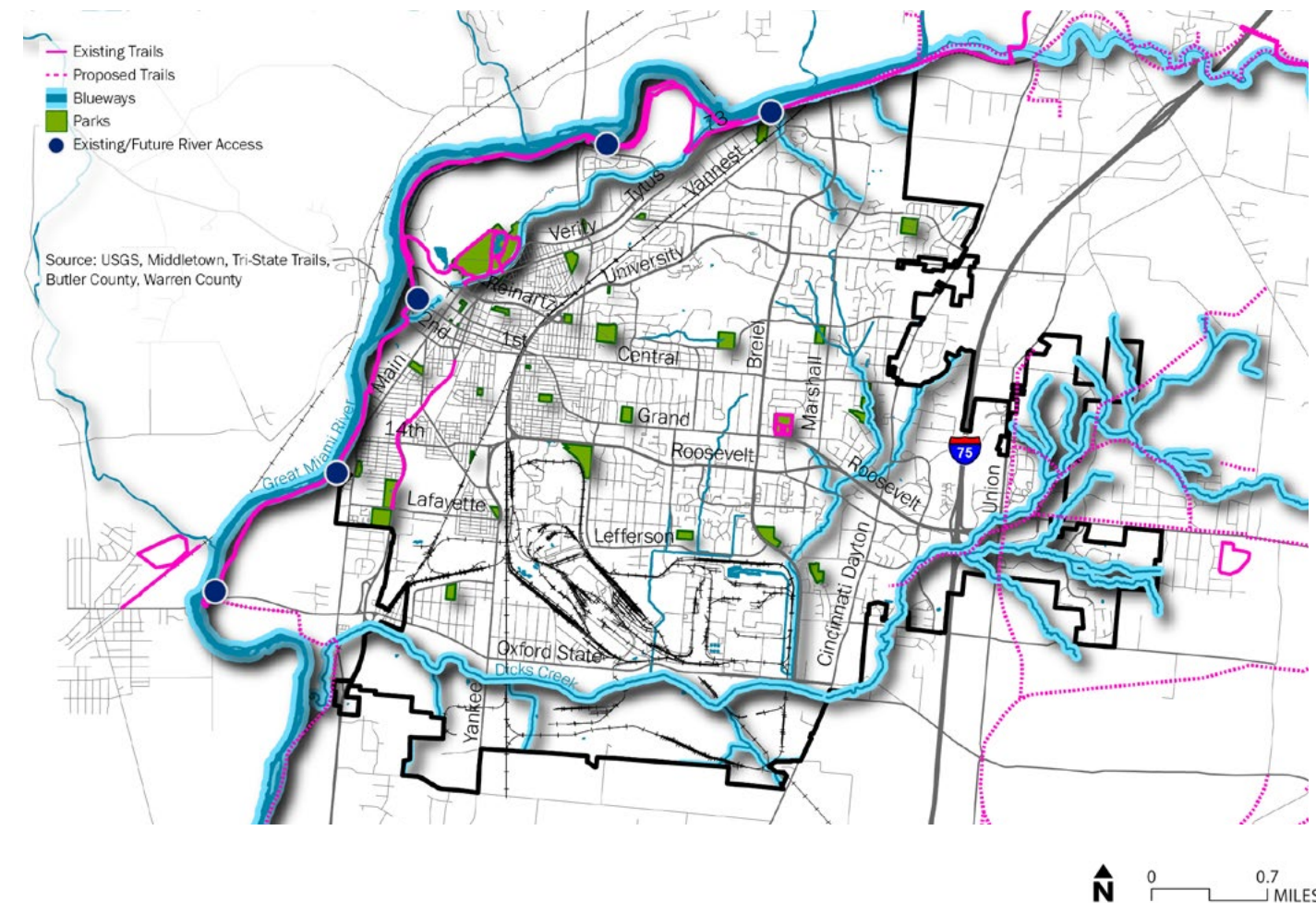
Waterways also provide a longer-term opportunity for water recreation and trail connectivity both in and alongside blueway corridors, such as the canal and Dick's Creek.

There is potential for Middletown to uncover and celebrate the canal and its influence in Middletown as a secondary blueway through stormwater collection and a land/water trail corridor. This could enhance the interpretive potential of the Canal Museum and enhance a cultural resource at Smith Park.

The restoration of Dick's Creek could enable its use as another blueway corridor that connects to the Great Miami River and would fill parks/open space gaps in the south. This is an aspiration that may likely live beyond the ten-year timeframe of this master plan since surrounding land uses and property owners could present a challenge to its restoration and use as an active blueway.

Designated river access points/trailheads along the Great Miami River, a National River Water Trail, can allow safe physical access to the river for water recreation and travel. This opportunity can be further supported through lowhead dam removal or portage, education and programming around water safety and outdoor recreation skills, and signage that promotes water recreation and tourism in the region.

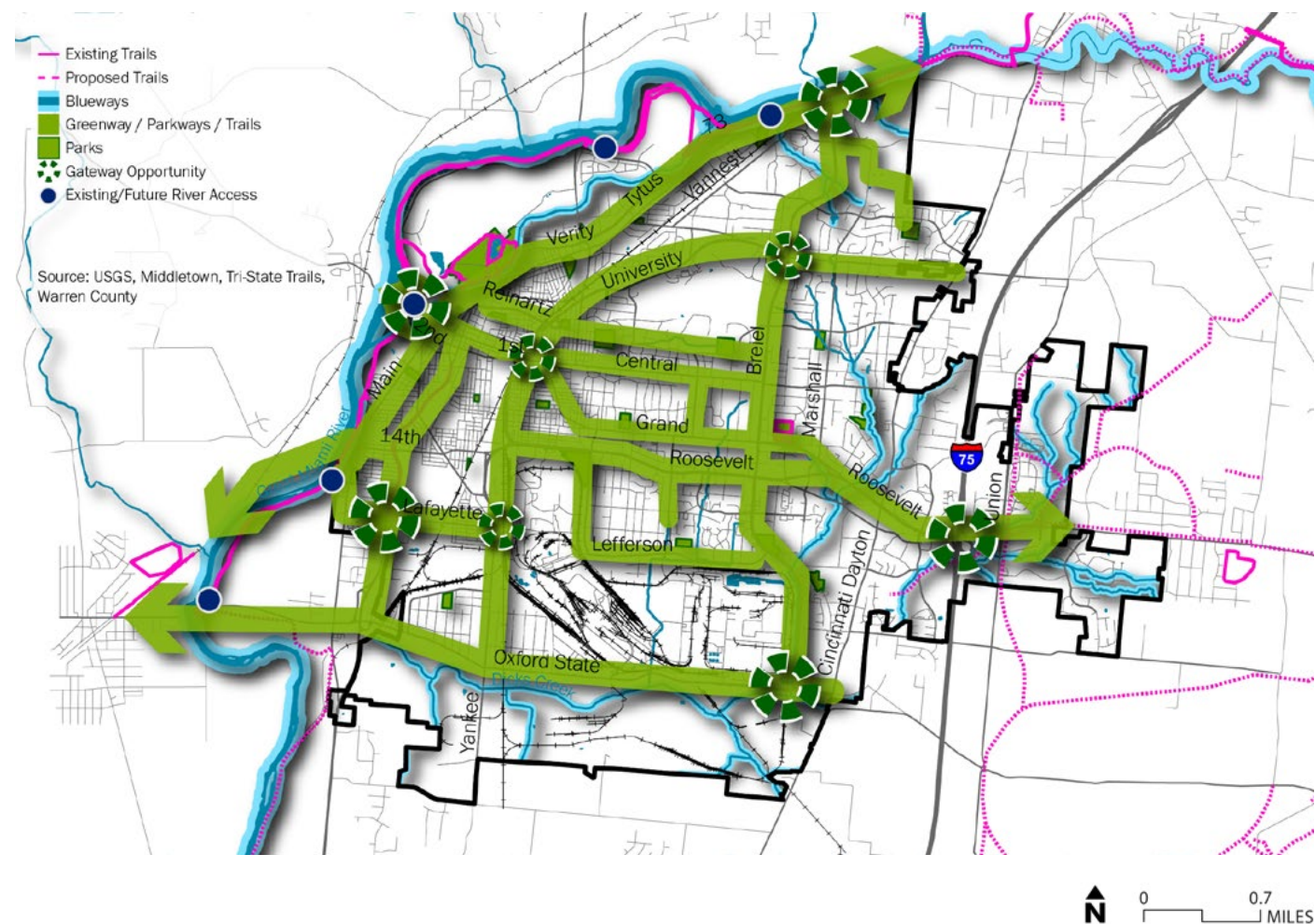
▼ FIGURE 115: BLUEWAYS



This system of land and water connections serve as both near and long-term opportunities to provide community access through physical connection to many community assets and destinations.



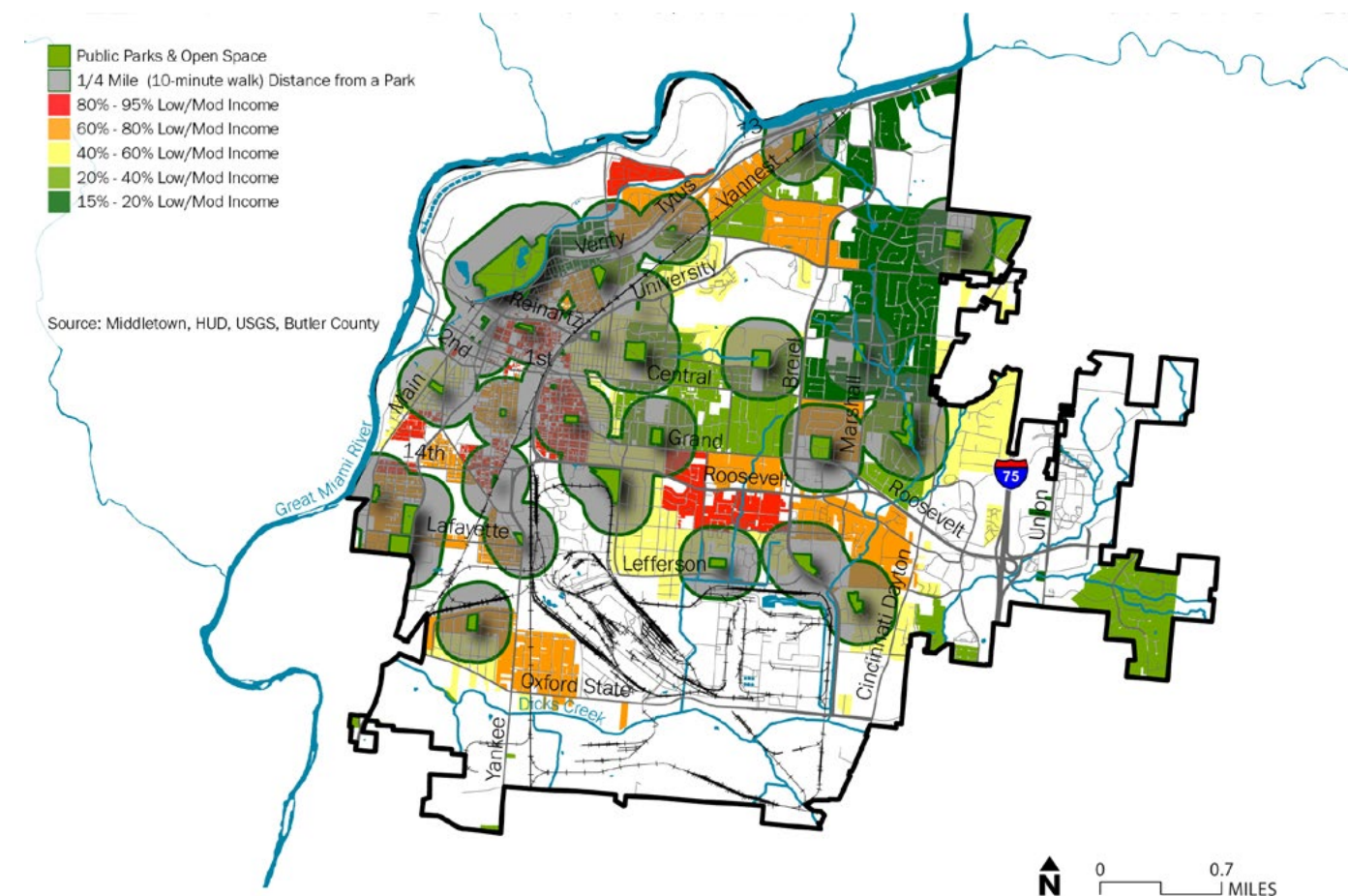
▼ FIGURE 116: GREENPRINT



Access to parks, whether by driving, transit, biking, or walking, is a key aspect of whether there are adequate park facilities available for residents. Individuals who live closer to parks will visit them more often. Those who are unable to walk to parks are less likely to visit and are therefore deprived of the opportunity to experience the many benefits those parks can provide. It is therefore essential that parks be easily accessible to all citizens. Ensuring that all residents live within a safe 1/4-mile (10-minute) walk is one way to make parks accessible and is a goal being addressed by park professionals across the country.

Parks within Middletown's system are well-distributed, and this map shows areas that are within a 1/4-mile (10 minute) walk from a park.

▼ FIGURE 117: SYSTEM EQUITY

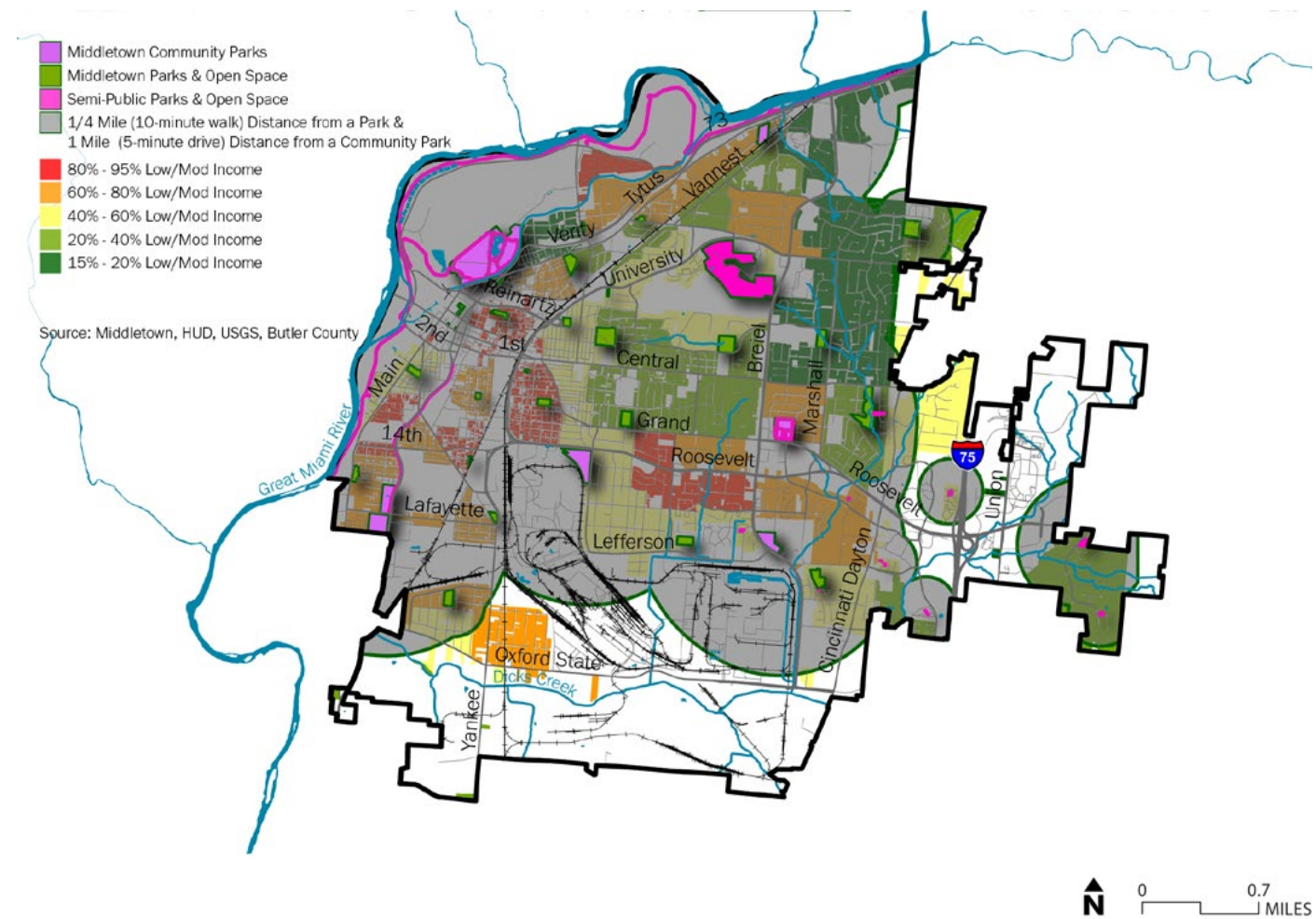


Semi-public parks and open spaces are considered a part of Middletown's park and open space network. They are accessible to the community but not owned/maintained by the City of Middletown and include spaces like the Great Miami River Trail (GMRT), Miami University Middletown's hiking trails, and newer zoning-required subdivision open spaces. Recognizing that parks and recreation areas with vehicular access and parking, such as Middletown's Community Parks and trailheads, are accessible to those driving from further distances, the white buffer/accessible residential areas were extended to 1-mile (5-minute drive) from those park assets. And when those areas are added, the system map shows the coverage and access to parks and open spaces throughout the community.

A few small gap areas are identified in the map which were explored. Each area presented unique opportunities and challenges. A gap area adjacent to Oxford State identified the need for access to recreation in this portion of the community, while concerns over attracting residential development next to a heavy industrial area might not be the best long-term solution since Middletown is implementing a buffer zone between the AK Steel site and residential areas. Another gap area was identified along the north branch of Dick's Creek just west of Interstate 75. Recreation improvements might include trail connections to the undeveloped Three Fountains Park along riparian corridors, however private property ownership is an element that will need to be addressed with any trail development there. And, lastly a gap in the most north eastern section of the community was identified. While currently agricultural, the City could benefit from identifying parcels for future ownership that would allow connections between Armbruster Nature Preserve to Verity Parkway and the broader system-wide connectivity to the Great Miami River Trail.



▼ FIGURE 118: SYSTEM EQUITY COMMUNITY HEALTH



### 3.4 PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

A second community survey was developed for the Exploration Phase of the project, and conducted during the month of April, 2021. The survey was open for four weeks and 360 responses were collected. It was hosted online only in English. The following actions were taken to distribute the survey and communicate about the process.

- » Promotional ribbon and survey link on the City's project website:
  - <https://www.cityofmiddletown.org/541/Parks-Master-Plan>
- » Presentation and promotion at the March 16, 2021 City Council meeting:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wj4p8b3kYEE>
- » Presented, discussed, and promoted during the March 23, 2021 Advisory Group Meetings: Technical and Community Groups
- » Promotion during the Middletown City Manager Updates
- » Daily promotion through email communications to Technical, Community, Focus Advisory Group members

- » Promoted through local Newspaper article:
  - <https://www.journal-news.com/news/city-hopes-middletown-residents-complete-parks-survey-to-provide-direction-on-improvements/4G5LX6DGERGGFO4UITN344QUQ4/>
- » Promoted through social media postings prior to and during the survey event (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter)
- » Promotion through the Middletown City School District via "District News"
- » Promotion through the Middletown City Economic Development social media network
- » Promotion on the City-owned digital sign board at State Route 122 and Towne Boulevard
- » 23 Yard signs to be distributed throughout the City promoting the bitly link to the survey. Locations included:
 

• Smith Park	• Bull's Run Arboretum	• Middletown High School
• Douglass Park	• The Central Avenue and University Boulevard	• The Broad Street and Central Avenue intersection
• Lefferson Park	• downtown gateway signs	• Bicentennial Commons/River Center
• Old South Park	• Michigan Park	• Oakland Park
• Jacot Park	• The State Route 4 and Carmody Blvd intersection	• Walmart on Towne Boulevard
• Sunset Park	• State Route 122 and Carmody Boulevard	• Damon Park
• Goldman Park		• Dixie Heights
• Broad Street Transit Station		
- » 7 Posters displayed the bitly link to the survey at the following locations:
 

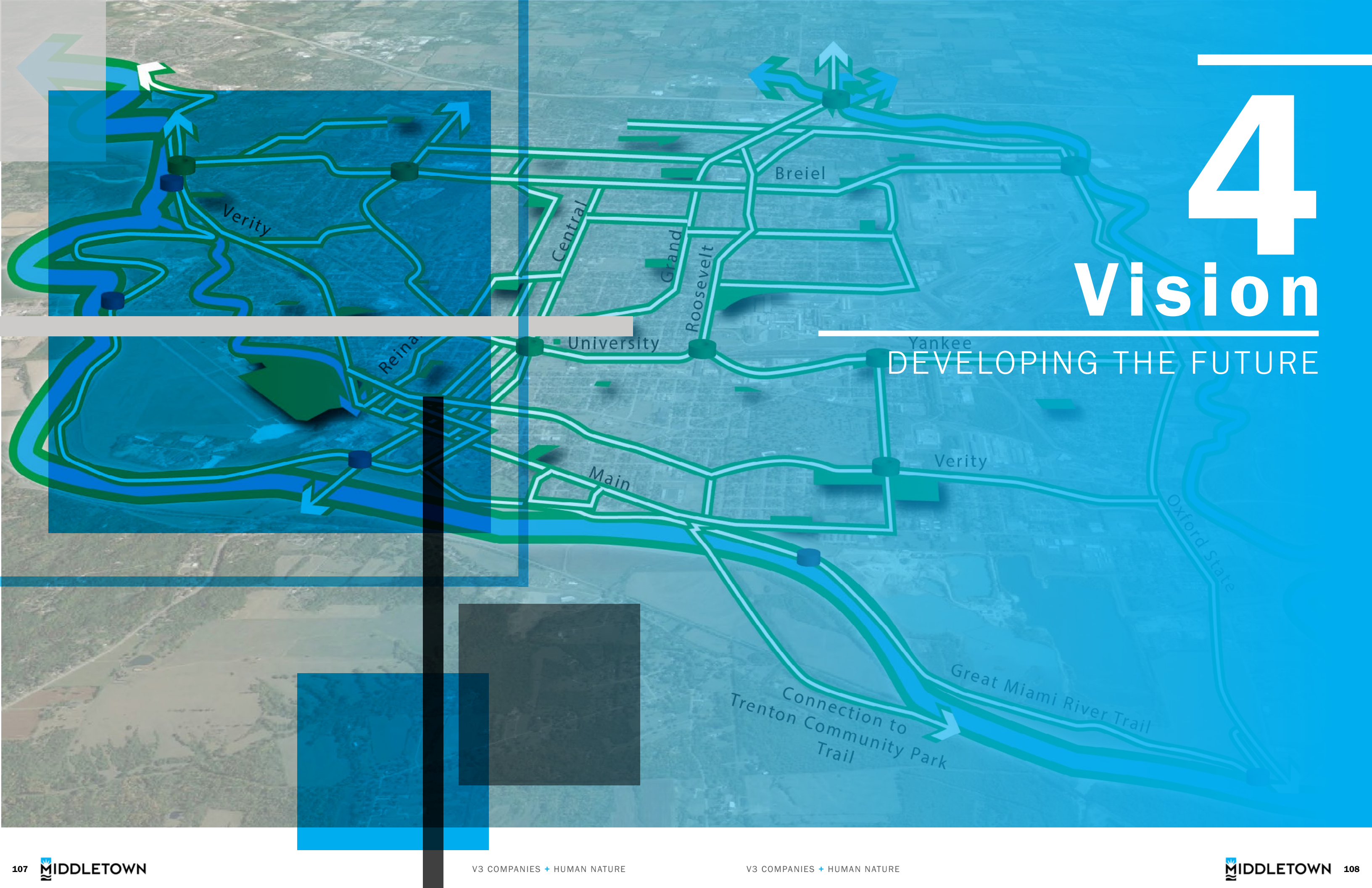
• MidPointe Library	• Kroger Towne Boulevard	• Atrium Hospital
• Middletown City Building	• Downtown	• Kettering Hospital
	• Needler's Fresh Market	

Survey responses were summarized and reviewed with the Client Team. The survey responses re-affirmed Middletonians' desire for a connected parks system through trails with opportunities to connect with the Great Miami River. Respondents preferred off-road trails (separated from vehicular traffic). In the first community survey, respondents also prioritized basic needs in parks including playground updates, safety and security enhancements, restrooms and shelters, updates to sport courts and fields, and an internal circulation system. These types of improvements were generally prioritized in each of the concepts, though there was some variability between each park site based on the proposed elements. Aspirations that will move the needle for Middletown parks also drew excitement. For example, a proposed dog park, shown as an example at Lefferson Park, was the most popular element in that concept. The opportunity to uncover and celebrate the canal with a focus on the museum, and an improved park entry and museum along with the creation of a park hub, were the top priorities at Smith Park.



# 4 Vision

DEVELOPING THE FUTURE





# 4. VISION DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

## 4.1 VISIONING SUMMARY

Middletown benefits from a robust network of existing parks and open spaces that is well-distributed throughout the community. By focusing on improving these existing assets and then making them more connected and accessible, the City will be investing strategically in one of its core strengths for the future. This plan seeks to establish an action-oriented vision based on public input received during the master planning process for sustained and incremental improvements that will allow the City to improve safety, upgrade outdated amenities, improve accessibility within each park and throughout the city, and integrate new amenities desired by the community.

Middletown's location along the Great Miami River is a tremendous asset that has influenced the city's past and present. This plan seeks to establish a vision for how the river will impact the future. Through increased physical connection to the river corridor, Middletown has the unique opportunity to celebrate its origins, restore the local ecology, increase land and water recreation opportunities, and create economic development incentives for the downtown central business district.

As identified in previous chapters, this plan recommends a strategy of addressing Immediate Needs, Basic Improvements, and Aspirations to enable the City of Middletown to provide a parks and recreation system that is desired by residents, businesses, employees, and visitors. The plan recognizes that due to limited funding, the City of Middletown will not be able to implement this Vision by itself. Creating new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships, identifying new mechanisms of income-generation, and identifying additional programming that the City can provide will be critical to accomplishing the physical improvements embodied in this Vision.

## 4.2 IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Focus on repairing and replacing elements throughout the park system that have deteriorated over time, such as cracked and settled pavements,; rusted or unstable furnishings,; structures that are leaky or otherwise problematic,; play equipment that does not meet current safety standards, removal of hazardous trees and/or invasive plants, and repairing deteriorated or malfunctioning utility infrastructure (storm sewer, electric, etc.). Concerns about these issues have been expressed by City staff, key stakeholders, and the general public throughout the process, and addressing them early will go a long way toward reducing concerns and building a positive image of Middletown's parks, and thereby creating momentum. As a first step in this process, a detailed inventory of howsurvey of sports courts and fields are being utilized in each parkuse is needed to understand if deteriorated facilities should be repaired, replaced, or removed. The inventory exercise in this master plan did not identify if these facilities were being used as intended since they were visited during the COVID-19 pandemic when many park facilities were not fully open.



## 4.3 BASIC IMPROVEMENTS

Another important step is to place a high priority on incremental investment in new and improved facilities throughout the park system that serve the basic needs of the community. Some examples of these improvements include improved lighting for safety; restrooms; upgraded play environments including traditional play equipment, nature play, and spraygrounds; improved ADA accessibility to all park amenities; walking loops; new and improved recreational courts, fields, and support amenities; converting unused areas of turf grass to pollinator plantings for increased biodiversity, reduced maintenance, and stormwater management; and incorporation of public art. As these elements are added, there is the opportunity to utilize a new set of coordinated standards for signage, lighting, furnishings, and structures throughout the park system. This can provide a cohesive brand and reduce maintenance complexity across the Middletown parks system.

A thoughtful and incremental focus on planning neighborhood and mini park improvements can parallel the physical improvements at other parks in the system. The community-building process outlined in the Neighborhood Parks section can be utilized to celebrate these vital open spaces as the “living rooms” of each neighborhood. These improvements can integrate new park system character standards and address the unique and specific needs and aspirations of each neighborhood so that neighborhood parks reflect neighborhood culture and priorities while promoting social interaction. In this way, each neighborhood park can be a little different, while still feeling like a part of the larger system.



The desire for a dog park in Middletown's system can be addressed through a master plan process. When a location was explored at Lefferson Park during concept development, survey respondents prioritized this possible improvement over all others demonstrating a strong desire for a dog park in Middletown. Further study can identify the community locations that best serve dog owners without adversely displacing existing recreational uses and how the needs of all might be balanced.



Part of upgrading existing sport courts should include an analysis of retrofitting or replacing single-use sport courts with multi-purpose courts. Multi-purpose courts offer a variety of sport options on one court surface opening up the attraction to the community even further than single-use courts. As part of the analysis, it should be determined whether existing courts are utilized and the frequency of use, as well as if courts are utilized in their intended manner. Through engagement with maintenance staff, user groups and surrounding neighborhoods, it can be determined if a specific location might be suitable for implementation of a multi-purpose court standard. There may be some sport courts that are viewed sacred by the community and an equitable engagement process can best determine whether or not a court should be changed to multi-purpose. Neighborhood parks may be good candidates to test a pilot multi-purpose court since there are courts in most neighborhood parks that are in need of repair. The engagement process to determine whether courts should be retrofitting would be done as part of the overall master plan development process recommended for neighborhood and mini parks. If a pilot implementation proves successful in one park, it could serve as a standard for implementation in other parks across the community.



As a Tree City USA community, Middletown recognizes the value of trees as important city infrastructure that are critical to vibrant communities because of the benefits they provide (i.e., stormwater management, air quality improvement, aesthetics, heat island reduction and overall comfort). The Tree City USA program recommends establishing a Community Forestry Program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita to invest in a city's urban canopy. Regardless of how much Middletown is able to budget for annual tree planting/care/maintenance, a professional urban forester or arborist should be consulted to ensure the best species are selected. In order to determine the most impactful locations to plant, American Forests offers a Tree Equity Score (TES) tool to help determine what areas are in most need of trees. Using this tool would enable Middletown to assess where they currently stand from a tree equity standpoint and plan for future plantings that will be most impactful so all residents can experience the health, economic, and climate benefits that trees provide. To raise the bar even further, an aspirational recommendation would include conducting an official Urban Tree Canopy Study with a professional arborist. This study would provide a more accurate picture of Middletown's existing urban tree canopy coverage and allow for efficient planning for future planting, care and removal.

### 4.3.1 System Character

The Project Team identified a compatible and coordinated family of site furnishings and structures using the City of Middletown's brand guidelines, existing signage, and the amenities recently installed as part of the Sunset Park update, and an inventory of existing features throughout Middletown. The Parks Master Plan selected images of decorative elements that fit this "traditional" aesthetic. These represent a basis of design catalog of features that express Middletown's desired aesthetic character and provide functionality and durability.

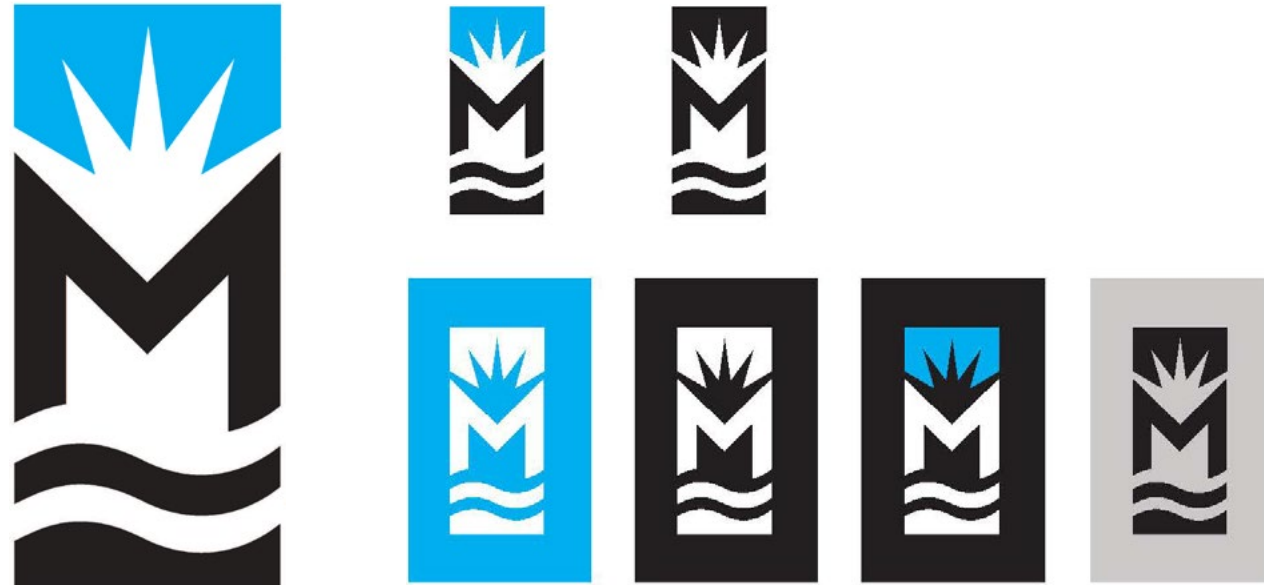
### WHY SYSTEM CHARACTER IS IMPORTANT

A comprehensive and coordinated system of park furnishings and fixtures can make the park system recognizable, facilitate access, and simplify maintenance. It can also establish an aesthetic that instills community pride in the parks system. And a consistent aesthetic treatment can make the parks system easy for visitors to recognize and use. This can be particularly important when the community uses its parks for large events that draw attendees from outside the city, or when potential residents are considering relocating to Middletown.

One way to achieve this coordinated system character is to select a family of elements relatively similar across a variety of vendors, identifying the key characteristics such as color, shape, detail, and quality. This approach has the advantage of allowing the City to procure elements through competitive bidding, potentially keeping costs lower than if they were sole sourced. Care must be taken to maintain product consistency within each park so that, for example, all benches or light fixtures match. One disadvantage of this approach is repair and replacement items will have to be procured from several different vendors. But this disadvantage can be managed by limiting the overall number of different vendor products utilized across the park system.



## MIDDLETOWN BRAND GUIDELINES



Logo



Wordmark

## SIGNAGE

Signage within Middletown has been updated incrementally and as a result, there are a variety of signs within Middletown and specifically within the park system. There is value in establishing a sign family to create a consistent park identify and sense of place, building upon the City's brand guidelines and existing city signage. Park identification signage exists in the current system, though there is inconsistency in the sign structure and branding. Developing standards for the sign structure can create recognizable signage throughout the park system that allows the sign content to change over time. The master plan shows an example signage family in the Character Study that coordinates with existing community gateways and could assist in the future design of park signage.

Shelter and wayfinding signage does not currently exist. Shelter signage for parks with more than one picnic shelter would help facilitate shelter rental. Wayfinding would allow park users to identify all of the facilities within Middletown's larger park sites and provide opportunities to display information about parks programming and educational information. A wayfinding signage kiosk example is included in the Character Study.

Playground safety signage is currently missing from play structures within Middletown parks. This signage can identify playground rules and intentions such as playground hours and the age groups structures are designed to accommodate. This signage can empower users to play safely and make enforcement of park rules easier.

One way to manage the cost of system signage improvements is to utilize a standard product offering from a sign manufacturer. This can be particularly effective for park entry and internal signage which can be quite expensive to build individually from custom specifications. Custom designed signage can be cost effective if purchased for the entire park system at one time, but this is rarely practical. Signage improvements are more likely to occur on an incremental basis. The cost of replacing damaged signs can also be significantly less expensive with a standardized product. A separate planning process can be undertaken to develop sign standards as one of Middletown's aspirational goals for system improvement.

## MIDDLETOWN EXISTING SIGN STANDARDS



Existing - Gateway



Existing - Gateway



MIDDLETOWN PARKS PROPOSED SIGN STANDARDS



Existing - Gateway



Existing - Gateway



Existing - Gateway  
Planning Costs: \$200,000 each



Community Parks  
Planning Costs: \$100,000 each



Existing - Gateway



Existing - Gateway



Neighborhood Parks  
Planning Costs: \$40,000 each



Mini Parks, Preserves, Undeveloped Parks & Plazas  
Planning Costs: \$10,000 each



Kiosk  
Frame/structure to coordinate with Park sign standard, roof to coordinate with shelters/restroom standard. Planning Costs: \$15,500 each.



Park Shelters/Rules/Safety Guidelines  
Sign frame/base to coordinate with black City/Park sign standard. Option to mount on structures, fencing (pictured), or single post (pictured). Planning Costs: \$725 each.



SITE FURNISHINGS

A majority of site furnishings recently installed as part of the Sunset Park update have been selected as a standard for Middletown to consider in other parks within their system. While the images below do not include every feature, Middletown can consider this furnishing standard as they replace sports court furnishings, fencing, educational signage, and other amenities so all of the pieces have a consistent character. This established standard will also make procurement and repairs more efficient and potentially more economical. The City may be able to procure these standard furnishing upgrades as donor sponsorship opportunities for local residents, organizations, businesses, and corporations.

The standard furnishing material pallet includes black metal structural elements, wooden slats on benches and picnic tables, and standing seam metal roofing. Coordinating roof color within each park and across the system can have a big impact on aesthetic character, recognizability, and branding.

The City of Middletown is interested in exploring sustainable smart tech furnishings and will continue to add to the standards identified in this plan as alternative products are selected. For example, the Bigbelly smart waste/recycling system uses solar power to increase capacity by compacting waste/recycling and sensors to notify crews of fullness status to prevent overflow. This type of system would be best implemented in high-use areas such as the City's urban plazas or community parks where trash is collected regularly; since trash is compacted in these receptacles they could have the potential to reduce frequency of trash collection, but this could create an odor issue and attract bugs if not emptied regularly.

SITE FURNISHINGS CHARACTER STANDARDS (EXISTING)



**Litter / Recycling Receptacle**  
Manufacturer: Victor Stanley (Ironsites Collection)  
Model: S-42 (250 lbs. each)  
Color: Black at 8-10 mils thick, regular lid / Green at 8-10 mils thick, recycling decal lid  
Cost: \$1,500 - \$1,900



**Bench**  
Manufacturer: Victor Stanley (Greensites Collection)  
Model: CM-324 (190 lbs); 6'-0" long, backed with armrests, surface mounted  
Color: Black powder coat 8-10 mils thick, horizontal recycled plastic slats in walnut  
Cost: \$2,832



**Bike Rack**  
Manufacturer: Victor Stanley (Cycle Sentry Collection)  
Product: Single loop bike rack with 2 3/8" diameter tubular steel (2 bike capacity)  
Model: BRWS-101 (36 lbs ea.), surface mounted  
Color: Black  
Cost: \$412



**Drinking Fountain**  
Manufacturer: Halsey Taylor  
Product: Endura II  
Model: 4420  
Operating Pressure: Supply water 20-105 psi maximum  
Color: Black  
Cost: \$5,000



**Pedestrian Bridge**  
Manufacturer: Contech  
Color/Material: Black  
Cost: \$159,813



**Cafe Table**  
Manufacturer: Victor Stanley (Homestead Collection)  
Product: 3 or 4 seat center-post table with seating attached and 4'-0" square table top & 2"x4" slats  
Model: IP-4 & IP-3;  
Color: Black powder coat 8-10 mils thick, horizontal recycled plastic slats in walnut; surface mount  
Cost: \$5,000 - 7,000 each



SITE FURNISHINGS CHARACTER STANDARDS (PROPOSED)



**Picnic Table**  
Manufacturer: Victor Stanley (Homestead Collection)  
Model: ST-5 6'-0" long table, wood (IPE) slats, surface mount tabs, tables anchored at shelters  
Steel Color: Black powder coat at 8-10 mils thick  
Cost: \$4,000



**Site Lighting (Pedestrian)**  
Manufacturer: King Luminaire  
Model: K134 York - LED  
Color/Material: Black



**Site Lighting (Parking)**  
Manufacturer: King Luminaire  
Model: K833 Solitaire-LED  
Color/Material: Black

SITE STRUCTURES

Site structures that are incorporated into future Middletown park updates can coordinate with Middletown's brand and site furnishings standards and consider materials and colors such as black steel with black, white, and blue coordinating colors. The architecture of the shelters, restrooms, and signage kiosks can be coordinated by utilizing the same 6:12 roof pitch as the Sunset Park shelter, black steel beams, and blue steel roof. The following images represent example structures that Middletown can consider as standards in park updates. This established standard will also make procurement and repairs more efficient and potentially more economical. The City can use these adopted standards to encourage donor/sponsorship opportunities with local organizations, businesses, and corporations (i.e. shelters).

Shelters

- » Black steel frame with a green structural seam roof with a pitch of 6:12 is recommended. A variety of shelter sizes are available from manufacturers like Poligon and Icon (shown below) and would allow the City to select the model/size that fits within the space available at a particular park while remaining in the established structure family of Middletown park.

Kiosks

- » A two-sided black steel frame with a green structural seam roof with a pitch of 6:12 is recommended.

SITE FURNISHINGS CHARACTER STANDARDS (EXISTING)



**Shelter (Sunset)**  
Manufacturer: Poligon  
Product: Square 20 Shelter  
Model: SQR-20  
Color: Frame - Slate Gray; Roof - Evergreen  
Design: 20'x20'; SS (structural seam roof)  
Roof Pitch: 6:12  
Cost: \$31.4k (includes installation)  
Capacity: 6 picnic tables



**Shelter (Alt. 1)**  
Manufacturer: Poligon  
Product: Hip Roof Rectangle  
Model: RAM 16x24  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Roof Pitch: 6:12  
Cost: \$28.3k (includes installation)  
Capacity: 6 picnic tables



**Shelter (Alt. 2)**  
Manufacturer: Icon  
Product: Standard Rectangular Gable Shelter  
Model: RG10x10M-P4-30-120  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Roof Pitch: 6:12  
Cost: \$16.2k (includes installation)  
Capacity: 2 picnic tables

KIOSK CHARACTER STANDARD



**Kiosk**  
Manufacturer: Icon  
Product: 2 Column Gable Shelter & Display Case, metal roof, steel posts  
Model: SG6x9TA-P6-50-150-150  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Cost: \$15.5k (includes installation)



RESTROOMS

Proposed park restrooms can coordinate with the preferred Middletown Park structure family, using black steel beams and metal roofing with a 6:12 pitch.

RESTROOM CHARACTER STANDARDS



**Restroom (Alt. 1)**  
Manufacturer: GreenFlush Restrooms  
Model: Durango  
Design: 2-single occupant, mechanical  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Size: 8'x18'  
Cost: \$95k - 105k (material) + \$6k (installation)



**Restroom (Alt. 2)**  
Manufacturer: Romtec  
Model: 2011 & 2016- Double Restroom  
Design: 2-single occupant, no mechanical access, covered porch optional  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Size: 8'8" x 16'8" (no porch), 15'2" x 16'8" (with porch)  
Cost: \$40k - 75k (design, material) + \$60k - 112.5k (install)



**Restroom (Alt. 3)**  
Manufacturer: Romtec  
Model: 2022 - Double Restroom  
Design: 2-single occupant, mechanical  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Size: 12'8" x 16'8" (no porch), 17'8" x 16'8" (with 5' concrete walk/porch)  
Cost: \$55k - 90k (design, material) + \$82.5k - 135k (install)



**Restroom (Alt. 4)**  
Manufacturer: Romtec  
Model: 2024 - Double Restroom  
Design: 2-single occupant, mech. & storage  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Size: 16'8" x 16'8" + 5' concrete walk  
Cost: \$60k - 100k (design, material) + \$90k - 150k (install)



**Restroom Upgrade (Attached Shelter)**  
Manufacturer: Romtec  
Model: 20' Picnic Shelter Addition  
Color/Material: Coordinate with preferred shelter and site furnishing standards.  
Size: 27'4" x 16'8"  
Cost: \$30k - 50k (design, material) + \$30k - 50k (install)

PLAYGROUND

Proposed updates and enhancements to playgrounds provide the opportunity to coordinate structures within a family while incorporating civic participation to choose play features that are unique to each park. But playgrounds are often so unique that they don't need to be coordinated with other park furnishings and fixtures. When selecting play structures, a variety of ages and abilities should be considered.



**Extisting (Sunset)**  
Manufacturers to Consider: Gametime, Penchura/  
Landscape Structures, Walnut Grove Playgrounds, and BYO Recreation  
Costs: \$150,000



### 4.3.2 Community Parks

During the Awareness phase surveys, respondents indicated that community parks were among the most visited of Middletown's parks. The diversity of activities and programming that occurred at these parks is what attracted visitors to these places. Concept plans were developed to explore how potential improvements could be implemented at these specific sites. This allowed stakeholders to imagine how their park experience could be elevated at locations they were most familiar with.

**Concepts explored immediate needs like**

- » playground updates to address safety concerns,
- » repairing or replacing courts with cracked and settled pavements
- » removal of invasive plants
- » addressing structures that are problematic

**Concepts explored addressing basic improvements like**

- » enhanced play environments like nature play and spraygrounds
- » a looping trail to connect park features and make them accessible
- » improved parking areas with lighting and security cameras
- » removal of invasive plants for improved visibility and safety
- » upgraded sport courts and fields
- » upgraded picnic shelters
- » addition of restrooms and the creation of park hubs that create centers of the parks with signage and site furnishings
- » creation of a dog park
- » areas of each park site where turf mowing could be replaced with native pollinator plantings

**Concepts also explored aspirations in each community park that would move the needle for the park system including**

- » connections to a larger Middletown trails system
- » opportunities to connect the park system to the Great Miami River

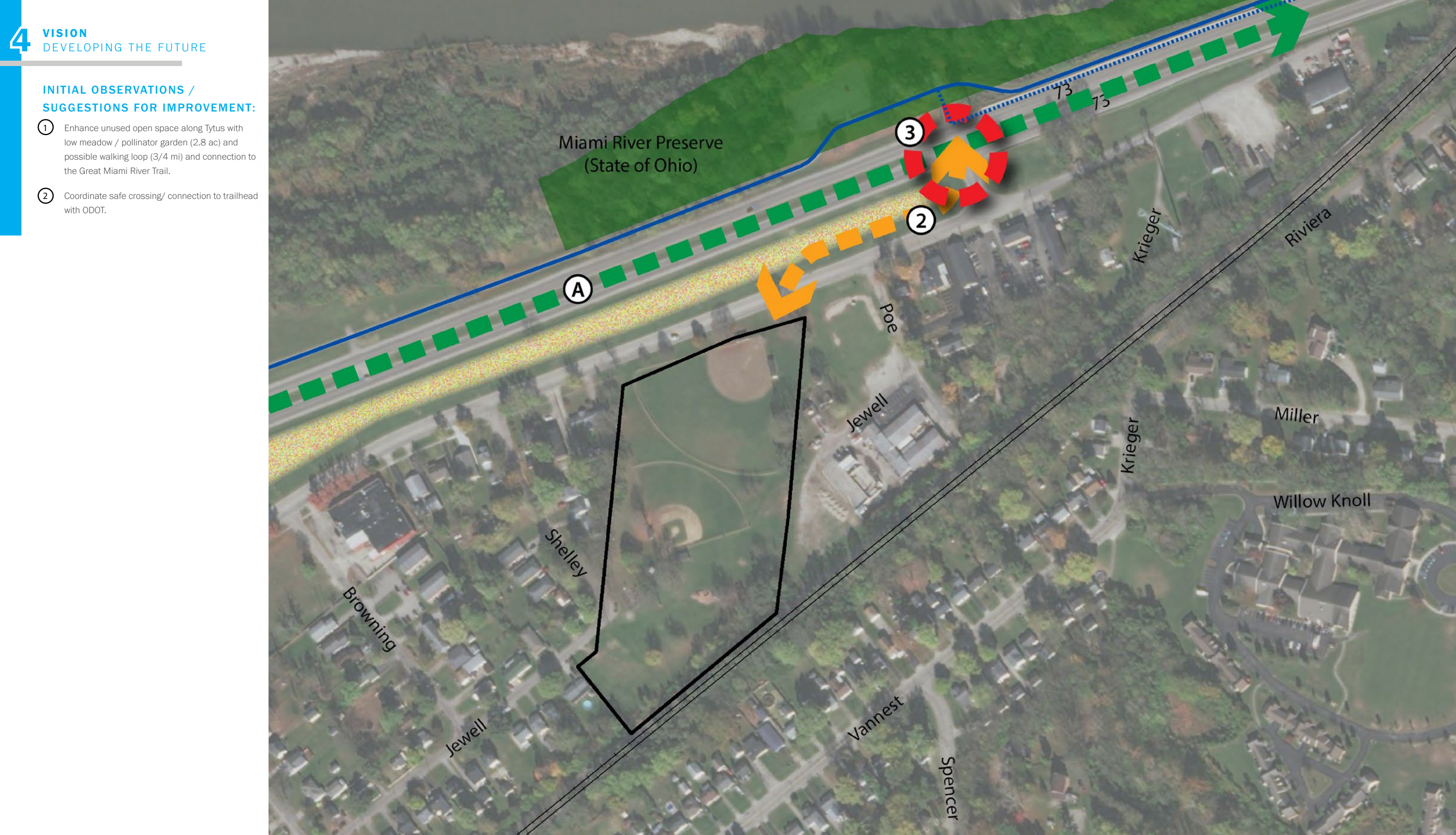
▼ FIGURE 119: SMITH PARK



▼ FIGURE 120: DOUGLASS PARK







INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- ① Enhance unused open space along Tytus with low meadow / pollinator garden (2.8 ac) and possible walking loop (3/4 mi) and connection to the Great Miami River Trail.
- ② Coordinate safe crossing/ connection to trailhead with ODOT.

TITLE  
DIXIE HEIGHTS PARK - CONTEXT  
7.43 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Verity Parkway Connectivity

SCALE  
0 100 200 400 FEET  
N



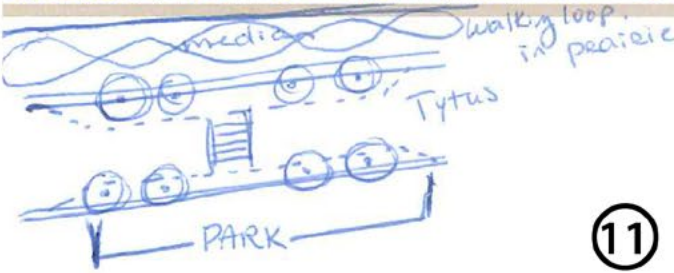
INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- 1 Install permanent parking and park entry along Tytus with signage, lighting and security cameras (6,400 square feet).
- 2 Install landscape buffer between park and adjacent land uses.
- 3 Enhance park entrance with signage, lighting, and security cameras and enhance landscape edge along Jewell.
- 4 Install permanent parking off Jewell with lighting and security cameras (33,000 square feet).
- 5 Install a landscape buffer and/or fence along R.R. tracks
- 6 Create a walking loop to connect site features and add recreational use to park. Plant shade trees and install benches and picnic tables along paths (system-wide) (1/2 mile).
- 7 Enhance park hub with a new shelter, restrooms, and play boxes in the Middletown Park style.
- 8 Update and enhance playground and accessibility - incorporate civic participation (system-wide).
- 9 Relocate, improve, and adopt a multi-purpose sport court standard. Possibility to utilize public art and storytelling to honor local sports history and involve residents and encourage ownership and pride of park (i.e., basketball court murals, walk of fame) (system-wide).
- 10 Upgrade dugouts (4).
- 11 Plant a low meadow/pollinator garden (2.8 ac) and construct a walking loop along Tytus with a connection to river (3/4 mile).



TITLE  
DIXIE HEIGHTS PARK - CONTEXT  
7.43 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Verity Parkway Connectivity



SCALE  
0 100 200 400 FEET  
N





INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- ① Connect to the Great Miami River Trail, Washington Park, and S. Main Street Special Interest Area.
- ② Explore long-term adaptive reuse options for quarry.
- ③ Coordinate with Comprehensive Plan to connect with S. Main Street Special Interest Area.
- ④ Partner with neighboring property owners and stakeholders- National Guard, churches, etc.
- ⑤ Partner with the cemetery to incorporate walking trails.

TITLE  
DOUGLASS PARK - CONTEXT  
29.13 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Verity Parkway Connectivity

SCALE  
0 150 300 600 FEET  
N



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- ① Enhance neighborhood connectivity to park and pedestrian safety with traffic calming at entrances, crosswalks, and along Minnesota and Lafayette.
- ② Improve parking lot safety/security/circulation with lighting, cameras, and parking lot layout.
- ③ Improve courts and adopt a sport court standard. Possibility to adopt/retrofit existing courts to a multi-purposed sport court standard and/or retrofit tennis court to futsal. Possibility to utilize public art and storytelling to honor local sports history and involve residents and encourage ownership and pride of park (i.e., basketball court murals, walk of fame) (system-wide).
- ④ Update and enhance playgrounds and accessibility - incorporate civic participation (system-wide). Consolidate tot play structures along walking loop and add nature play elements.
- ⑤ Update existing shelters (3) to improve visibility and accessibility in the Middletown Park style (system-wide).
- ⑥ Create a walking loop to connect site features and existing trail to add recreational use to park (3/4 mile). Plant shade trees and install benches and picnic tables along paths (system-wide).
- ⑦ Partner with Butler County MetroPark and expand on current community garden with orchard, and edible forest.
- ⑧ Enhance unused open space with landcover strategies (system-wide).
- ⑨ Program fields (i.e., youth football) to increase use.
- ⑩ Coordinate/partner with CBI to identify and install site upgrades.
- ⑪ Plant trees along park perimeter and buffer along Verity.



TITLE  
DOUGLASS PARK  
29.13 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Verity Parkway Connectivity  
B Lafayette Connectivity

SCALE  
0 125 250 500 FEET  
N



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 1 Enhance park entrance with park name sign and landscape buffer along park edges.
- 2 Create a walking loop to connect site features and add recreational use to the park. Add trees and site furnishings such as benches and picnic tables in the Middletown Parks style along path (system-wide) (4,408 linear feet).
- 3 Expand and enhance playground, and include accessible play features.
- 4 Create a park hub with concession and restroom building and site furnishings in the Middletown Parks style. Implement a linear plaza connecting all ballfields to parking areas.
- 5 Replace batting cages and relocate.
- 6 Enhance or create parking lots with lighting and security cameras (66,079 square feet).
- 7 Enhance pedestrian crossings along Highland for improved connectivity.
- 8 Upgrade park shelter in the Middletown Parks style.
- 9 Improve court and adopt a sport court standard. Possibility to adopt/retrofit existing courts to a multi-purposed sport court standard. Incorporate civic participation (system-wide). Possibility to utilize public art and storytelling to honor local sports history and involve residents and encourage ownership and pride of park (i.e. basketball court murals, walk of fame) (system-wide).



TITLE  
GOLDMAN PARK  
20.83 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Opportunity for system-wide connectivity along Roosevelt Boulevard



SCALE  
0 80 160 320 FEET  
N



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- 1 Connect existing Jacot Park trail to Creekview Elementary School and Messiah Lutheran Church along Holly.
- 2 Enhance park entrance and landscape edge to improve visibility.
- 3 Update and enhance playground and accessibility - incorporate civic participation (system-wide).
- 4 Connect existing walks (3/4 mile) with new walks (1/4 mile). Plant shade trees and install benches (16) and picnic tables (16) along paths (system-wide).
- 5 Improve courts and adopt sport court standard. Possibility to utilize public art and storytelling to honor local sports history and involve residents and encourage ownership and pride of park (i.e., basketball court murals, walk of fame) (system-wide).
- 6 Formalize street parking along Tarrimore.
- 7 Create a central park hub with enhanced planters, new shelter, permanent restroom building, and kiosk/signage in the Middletown Park style.
- 8 Plant rain gardens to capture existing stormwater runoff.
- 9 Plant landscape buffer between park and adjacent land uses.
- 10 Add security cameras to existing light poles in parking lot.



TITLE

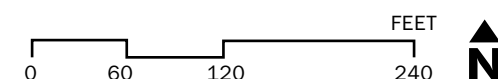
**JACOT PARK**  
17.10 ACRES

### LEGEND

- A** Grand Avenue Connectivity



SCALE







INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- ① Explore partnership opportunity with church's open space.
- ② Explore partnership opportunity with school baseball fields
- ③ Explore partnership opportunity (i.e., trails) with the church
- ④ Explore community connectivity through stream corridor

TITLE  
LEFFERSON PARK - CONTEXT  
11.57 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Breiel Boulevard Connectivity

SCALE  
0 200 400 800 FEET  
N



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ① Enhance park entrance and landscape edge along Breiel.
- ② Create dog park with large and small dog areas; include shelter in the Middletown Park style (2.14 acres).
- ③ Formalize multi-purpose field area; possibility of future pickleball expansion (29,830 square feet).
- ④ Enhance pickleball activity area with a shelter and permanent restroom building in the Middletown Park style.
- ⑤ Update and enhance playground and accessibility - incorporate civic participation (system-wide).
- ⑥ Create a walking loop to connect site features and add recreational use to park (3,715 linear feet).
- ⑦ Adopt a sport court standard. Possibility to utilize public art and storytelling to honor local sports history and involve residents and encourage ownership and pride of park (i.e., basketball court murals, walk of fame) (system-wide).
- ⑧ Implement buffer between pickleball courts and baseball fields.
- ⑨ Limit vehicular access from drive.
- ⑩ Art fence opportunity between park and salt storage facility.
- ⑪ Re-stripe parking lot and add parking lot lights with security cameras (72,286 square feet).



TITLE  
LEFFERSON PARK  
11.57 ACRES

LEGEND  
A Opportunity for system-wide connectivity along Breiel Boulevard

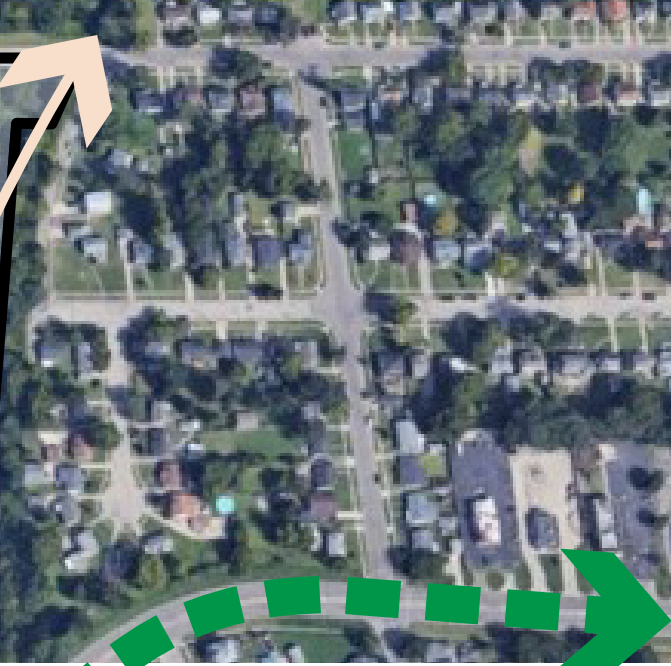


SCALE  
0 50 100 200 FEET  
N



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- 1 Add art treatment at fence.
- 2 Enhance habitat/vegetation around lake.
- 3 Uncover and celebrate the canal with a focus on the park entry and museum; Create a park “hub” plaza with information kiosk, site furnishings, shelter and restrooms in the Middletown Park Style; include parking area.
- 4 Buffer Public Works and airport properties.
- 5 Improve parking areas with lighting and security cameras.
- 6 Add picnic shelters throughout site in Middletown Park style (7).
- 7 Expand skate park and add restroom (71,475 square feet).
- 8 Enhance lake side shelters and spaces to improve revenue-generating potential (2).
- 9 Create hydraulic strategy to maintain pond level and potentially connect to the canal for stormwater management.
- 10 Add new parking area with lighting and security cameras (94,719 square feet).
- 11 Create outdoor teen play area with shelter (i.e. adventure play, climbing structures, self-guided zip line, etc.).
- 12 Clear brush and add lighting to make GMRT connection feel safer.
- 13 Add blueway trail along canal (4,246 linear feet).
- 14 Expand splash pad and add additional playground improvements (12,822 square feet).
- 15 Enhance park pedestrian entrance and connect to internal trail system (1,786 linear feet).
- 16 Add nature play area at stormwater management feature.
- 17 Add pedestrian crosswalk to connect Canal Museum to sidewalks.



TITLE  
SMITH PARK  
109.43 ACRES

LEGEND

A

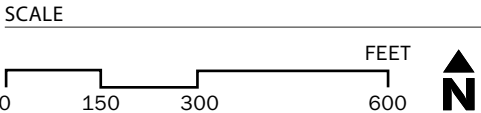
Verity Parkway Connectivity

i

Proposed Wayfinding Signage

B

Existing Event Bus Route





### 4.3.3 Neighborhood & Mini Parks

#### A COMMUNITY-BASED PLACE-MAKING TOOLKIT

During the exploration phase, it became clear that Middletown's neighborhood and mini parks have the potential to serve as the living room of each unique neighborhood where it is located. Rather than designing each park as part of this master plan process, the team is recommending a community-based process to engage the neighborhoods in creating a space that reflects the unique needs, aspirations, and characteristics of that particular neighborhood. A tool kit was created that can serve as a guide for the City and neighborhood park advocates to work together on this park visioning and implementation.

The toolkit includes steps needed to envision, plan, design, and build a neighborhood or mini park such as: creating a neighborhood working/steering committee; working with a professional park designer; completing the planning and design process outlined in the toolkit; and implementation of the desired improvements.

## 1 GETTING STARTED

Following the completion of the Middletown Parks Master Plan, the City will be encouraging each **neighborhood** to **organize and approach** the City to work together to improve their neighborhood and mini park(s). Once the neighborhoods reach out, the City and neighborhood will work **together** to follow the steps of this process.

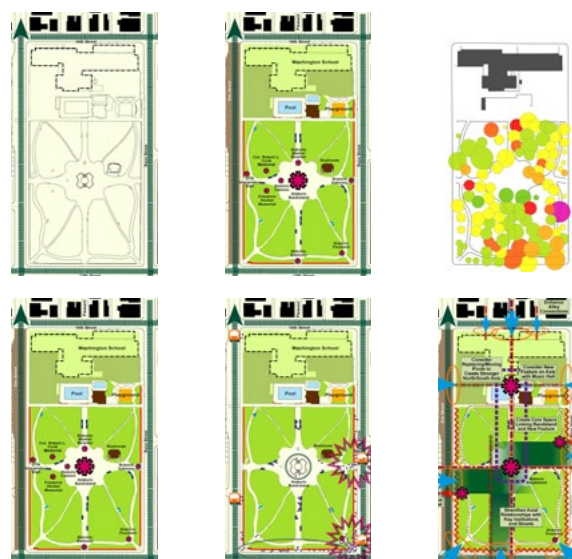
### CREATE A NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING / STEERING COMMITTEE

The **City** and **neighborhood park advocates** should work **together** to identify a representative group of neighborhood residents, business owners, schools, churches, and other stakeholders. From this exploration, a more formal group of 10-15 **neighborhood representatives** can be selected to oversee the planning and design process. This outline assumes that the City would hire a professional park designer/team to work with the City and each neighborhood on this process.

## 2 PARK PLANNING / DESIGN PROCESS

### a AWARENESS

- Create a draft **Vision Statement, Goals & Objectives**
- Site **Inventory and Analysis**  
Take site photos and create maps that document existing conditions.
- **Neighborhood Meeting #1**  
Share draft vision statement and inventory/analysis
- Summarize neighborhood input and agree on **ideas to explore**



### b EXPLORATION

- Develop **concept alternatives**
- Research **inspirational parks and features**
- **Neighborhood Meeting #2** – Identify Strengths/Weaknesses of each alternative
- Summarize neighborhood input and agree upon preferred ideas to **design**.



### c VISION

- Preliminary Master Plan
- **Neighborhood Meeting #3** – Review Preliminary Master Plan
- Summarize neighborhood input and agree on **refinements** for final plan
- **Final Master Plan**
- **Cost Estimate**
- **Implementation Strategy**



## 3 NEXT STEPS / IMPLEMENTATION

- Prioritize plan elements for implementation
- Identify funding source(s)
- Final design and engineering
- Bidding
- Construction

► **Celebration!**



#### 4.3.4 Undeveloped Parks

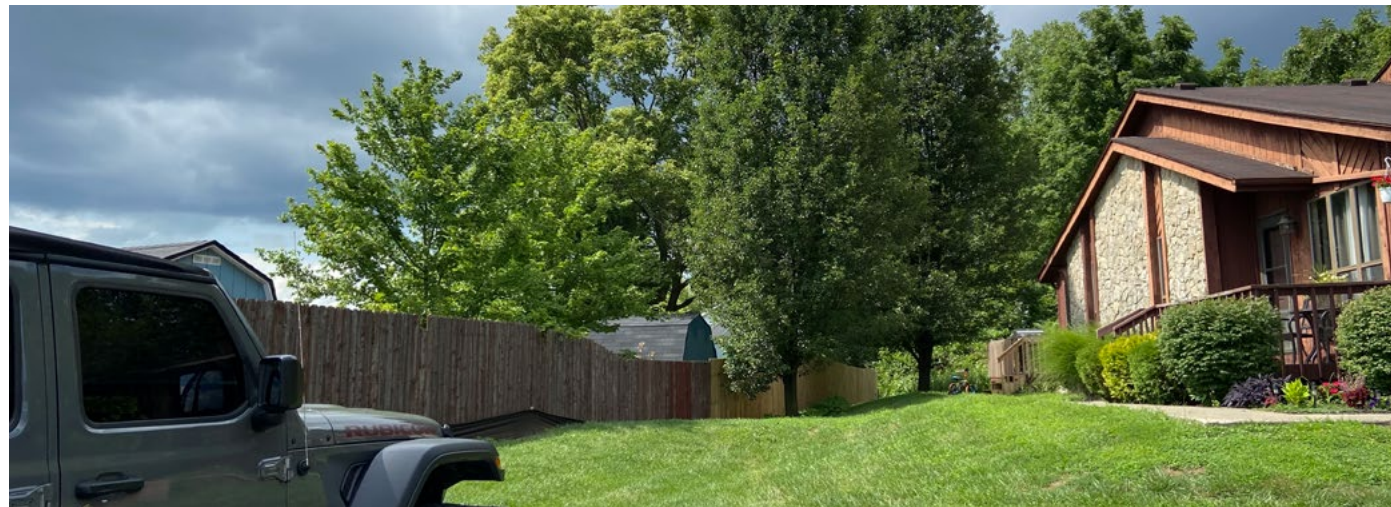
Middletown residents expressed interest in the ability to recreate in a more natural park setting than the traditional park spaces prevalent in Middletown's system. The undeveloped park sites under the care of the City could be aspirations for natural park development as the system grows to accommodate needs. A concept for Jonathan Park illustrates how a park could be developed incorporating the basic needs expressed in surveys while focusing on an experience where visitors are immersed in nature. A parking lot and connections to the vehicular and pedestrian network beyond the site provide access, a looping trail around the site allows visitors to access the park's features, educational signage and site amenities such as benches, picnic tables, waste receptacles, and a shelter can add to users' comfort, and a nature playground adds an exciting and new play experience.

Additionally, a disc golf course was identified as a "missing piece" of the parks system in both the Awareness and Exploration phase surveys. The undeveloped park sites provide the opportunity to develop a disc golf course since the design criteria includes needing a large space to create a minimum 9-hole course, and terrain is desired.

▼ FIGURE 121: JONATHAN PARK



▼ FIGURE 122: NEW ENGLAND HEIGHTS PARK



▼ FIGURE 123: THREE FOUNTAINS PARK



▼ FIGURE 124: WASHINGTON PARK





INITIAL OBSERVATIONS /  
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

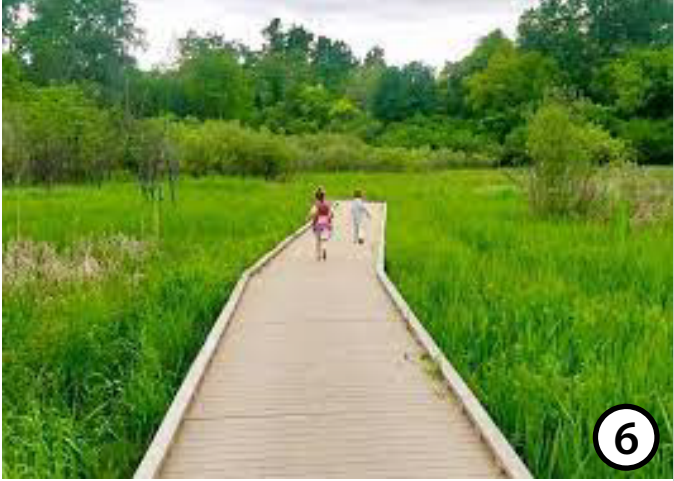
- 1 Extend Jonathan Way to connect with Monarch.
- 2 Preserve for possible future residential development.
- 3 Extend sidewalk connectivity.
- 4 Connect park parcel to road extension.
- 5 Create parking area with lighting and security cameras.
- 6 Create a walking loop to connect site features and add recreational use to park; may include areas of boardwalk.
- 7 Install landscape to manage stormwater from adjacent development; include educational signage along looping path to inform park users.
- 8 Install vegetated buffer plantings to screen adjacent uses.
- 9 Create opportunity for nature playscape.



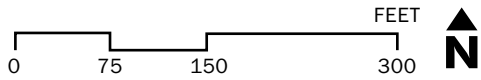
TITLE

JONATHAN PARK  
5.60 ACRES

LEGEND



SCALE





### 4.3.5 Aquatics

As demonstrated in the Awareness phase community survey, there was a desire for aquatics from some Middletown residents, with respondents naming it a top amenity that Middletown parks were missing. It was understandable that residents wanted the opportunity to recreate in or be near water. There is a strong connection between humans and water and community pools were a part of Middletown's park system history. Over the years, many communities, including those larger than Middletown, faced challenges of maintaining and keeping aquatic facilities safe and economical and the aquatics dilemma is common in communities across the country.

The community survey asked participants a variety of questions specifically about aquatics, including a pool element, splash pads, and an aquatic center which could include a pool, slides, and splash pad areas. A majority of participants felt this element was needed in Middletown, and they were not traveling outside of Middletown to find it. Feedback about daily use fees was also gathered and the majority of respondents were willing to pay between five and 10 dollars (62%) while others were not willing to pay a daily use fee (34%). Respondents were equally split about their willingness to pay a yearly membership. The biggest concern from respondents was the cost to maintain an aquatic center.

The SplashDown Middletown group is organized by local residents to spearhead an aquatic center proposal for the Middletown community. They identified a step-by-step process for organizing a board of advisors; conducting a feasibility study to identify needs, site analysis, costs, and operating income needed; funding; and construction. A preliminary proposal was presented to Park Board, City staff, and some council members. The City's desire was to identify a public-private partnership that could construct, operate, and maintain a future aquatics center if the need and public/resident desire was demonstrated and a self-sustaining funding model was established.

The City of Middletown is currently providing aquatic facilities through splash pads at Smith Park and Douglass Park. These areas see frequent use and the City sees value in providing these types of amenities for residents and visitors. Through the Parks Master Plan, the City would like to explore additional splash pad and spray ground opportunities at additional parks in the system. They are particularly interested in flexible facilities that could also be used as plazas for programming, another desire voiced in the community survey. Another way the City explored water recreation in the Parks Master Plan was through the identification of blueways, or water trails, and non-motorized watercraft launches along waterways so that Middletown residents could have more access to their natural water environments. Middletown is a member of the Great Miami Riverway Coalition and can utilize this organization as a way of promoting and connecting to water recreation.





## 4.4 ASPIRATIONS

Building upon the strong network of well-distributed parks, and incorporating some of the larger desires identified during the master planning process, Middletown has the opportunity to move its park system from good to great by focusing on two major opportunities as part of a longer-term system-wide effort – celebrating the community’s connection to the river, particularly near downtown, and better connecting all of the parks and open spaces throughout the city with trails, greenways, parkways, and blueways.

Both strategies will take time, large investments, and key partnerships to be accomplished, but they will help strengthen the central business district, improve access to all parks throughout the community, and provide healthy mobility options for Middletown residents.

### CONNECTION TO THE RIVER

Middletown’s location along the Great Miami River presents an opportunity to celebrate the waterway and Middletown’s frontage. In coordination with Middletown’s Comprehensive Plan update, several synergies to connect to the river and promote the downtown Middletown riverfront as a destination hub to live, work, and play have been identified. The Great Miami River Trail is a 75-mile long, multi-use National Water Trail that hugs the Great Miami Riverway for much of its route from Hamilton, Ohio to Piqua, Ohio. This regional asset provides urban and scenic views, recreation, and connectivity for the 12 communities immediately adjacent to the trail and those further connected by five connecting trails including the Wolf Creek Trail, Mad River Trail, Stillwater Trail, Ohio-to-Indiana Trail, and the Dayton-Kettering Connector. The Middletown River Center and Bicentennial Commons serve as existing recreation amenities and trailheads along the Great Miami River Trail that offer riverfront connectivity and access for pedestrians, bicycles, and non-motorized boats in downtown Middletown. Their proximity to historic Main Street and downtown provides a linkage to the business and entertainment districts. They provide excellent opportunities for additional activation and programming to invite residents, employees, and visitors to the river.

### CONNECTING PARKS & OPEN SPACES

Middletown can further build upon its well-distributed park system by better connecting all parks, open spaces, and community assets throughout the city beyond streets and sidewalks with on and off-road trails, greenways, parkways, trail linkages, gateways, and blueways.

Access to parks, whether driving or walking, is a key indicator that adequate park facilities are available for residents. Ensuring that all residents live within a safe 1/4-mile (10-minute) walk is a goal being addressed by park professionals across the country and trails can serve as linear parks/parkways that connect larger parks/open spaces and fill any connectivity/access gaps.

These aspirational connectivity opportunities would rely on the coordination with future transportation/roadway projects and require partnerships between the City and Middletown landowners, and with neighboring jurisdictions such as Tri-State Trails and MetroParks of Butler County.

Costs for greenway development can range from \$200 per linear foot for off-road asphalt multi-use trails to \$1,500 per linear foot for highly detailed urban shared use trails with specialty paving, fixtures, and furnishings that can be effective for placemaking in the central business district or other special areas in the community. A greenways master plan would help establish desired routes, what type of trail facility is desired and best suited in locations throughout the community, identify trailhead amenities and establish costs and funding strategies for implementation.

### Greenways - Off-Road Parkway & On-Road Boulevards

Major roads with parkway character such as wide rights-of-way and vegetated medians present opportunities for green vegetated corridors and bicycle and pedestrian trails that provide connectivity to community assets like parks, existing trails, the Great Miami River, downtown, employment areas, and schools. Roadways where land is not available for off-road trails provide an opportunity for on-road bicycle boulevards. While not the preferred trail alternative for most Middletown residents, on-road trails provide an option to connect to parks and off-road trails.



### Trail Linkages

In anticipation of Middletown’s continued development to the east, there is an opportunity to plan ahead and protect valuable ecological assets like forests and waterways with riparian buffers and trail corridors. The northeast part of the city would benefit from designated greenspace and trail connectivity and existing tributaries could allow a trail linkage that connects Armbruster Nature Preserve to the Great Miami River Trail. Partnerships with landowners could be established by offering conservation easements along these riparian corridors.

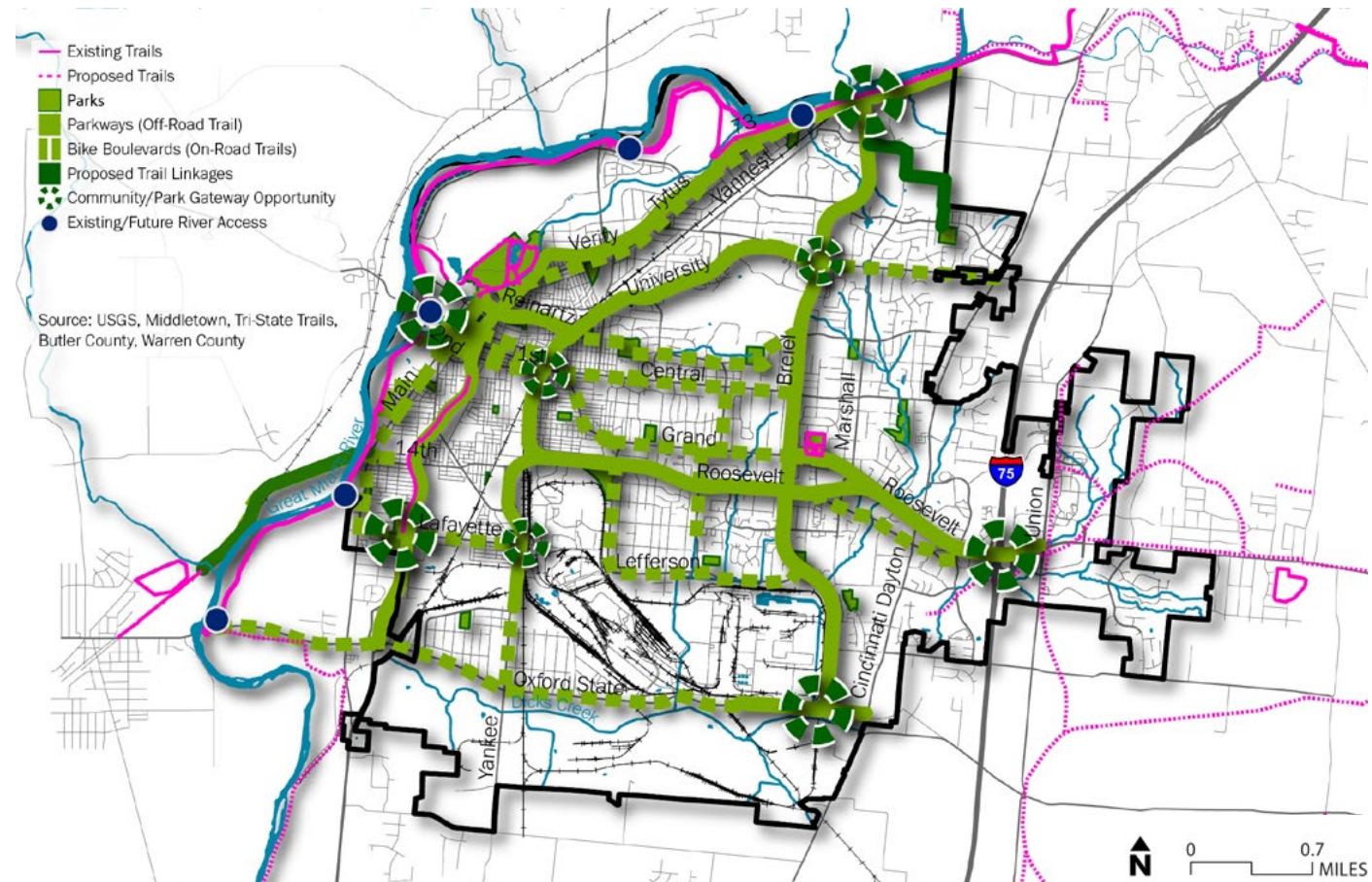




## Gateways

Designated park system gateways that include coordinated signage and landscape areas offer points throughout Middletown to highlight the parks and trails network. These gateways, secondary to the City's entry/community gateways, can enhance both community and parks system identity and be, especially for out-of-town visitors, an important introduction to the visual signage throughout the parks system. This can make the parks system very easy to recognize and use. The existing and proposed community and park gateways are shown in the map below and planning for these proposed improvements are including in the Action Plan.

▼ FIGURE 125: PARKWAYS



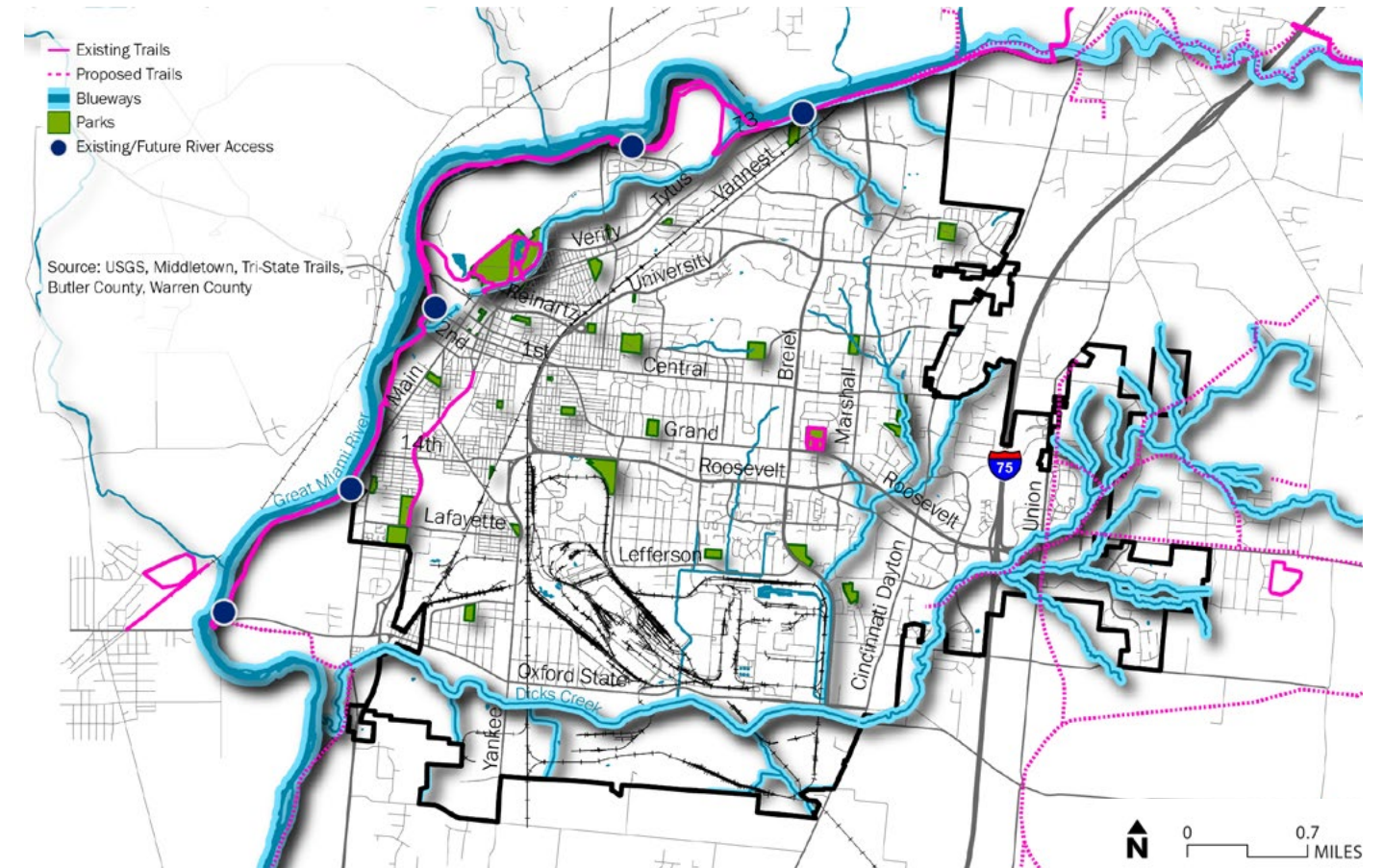
## Blueways

Waterways also provide a longer-term opportunity for water recreation and trail connectivity both in and along blueway corridors, such as the Great Miami River. The canal and Dick's Creek offer opportunities to increase the number of blueways in the community. Designated river access points and trailheads along the Great Miami River can allow safe physical access to the river for water recreation and travel. This opportunity can be further supported through education and programming around water safety and outdoor rec skills, and signage that promotes water recreation and tourism in the region. And the removal of lowhead dams or the provision of safe portage around them can enhance user safety along these valuable recreational corridors.

There is potential for Middletown to uncover and celebrate the canal and its influence in Middletown as a secondary blueway through stormwater collection and a land/water trail corridor. This can also enhance the Canal Museum and adjacent Smith Park.

The restoration of Dick's Creek could enable its use as another blueway corridor that connects to the Great Miami River and could fill park system gaps in the south. Recognizing that historic pollution, surrounding land uses, and adjacent property owners present a challenge to its restoration, the creation of a Dick's Creek Partnership Group could allow for focused attention and exploration of hydrologic improvements and ecological restoration; potential partnerships with organizations such as the Miami Conservancy, MetroParks, Tri-State Trails, municipalities, healthcare organizations, corporations, and private land owners; and the funding required to celebrate and utilize this hydrologic asset.

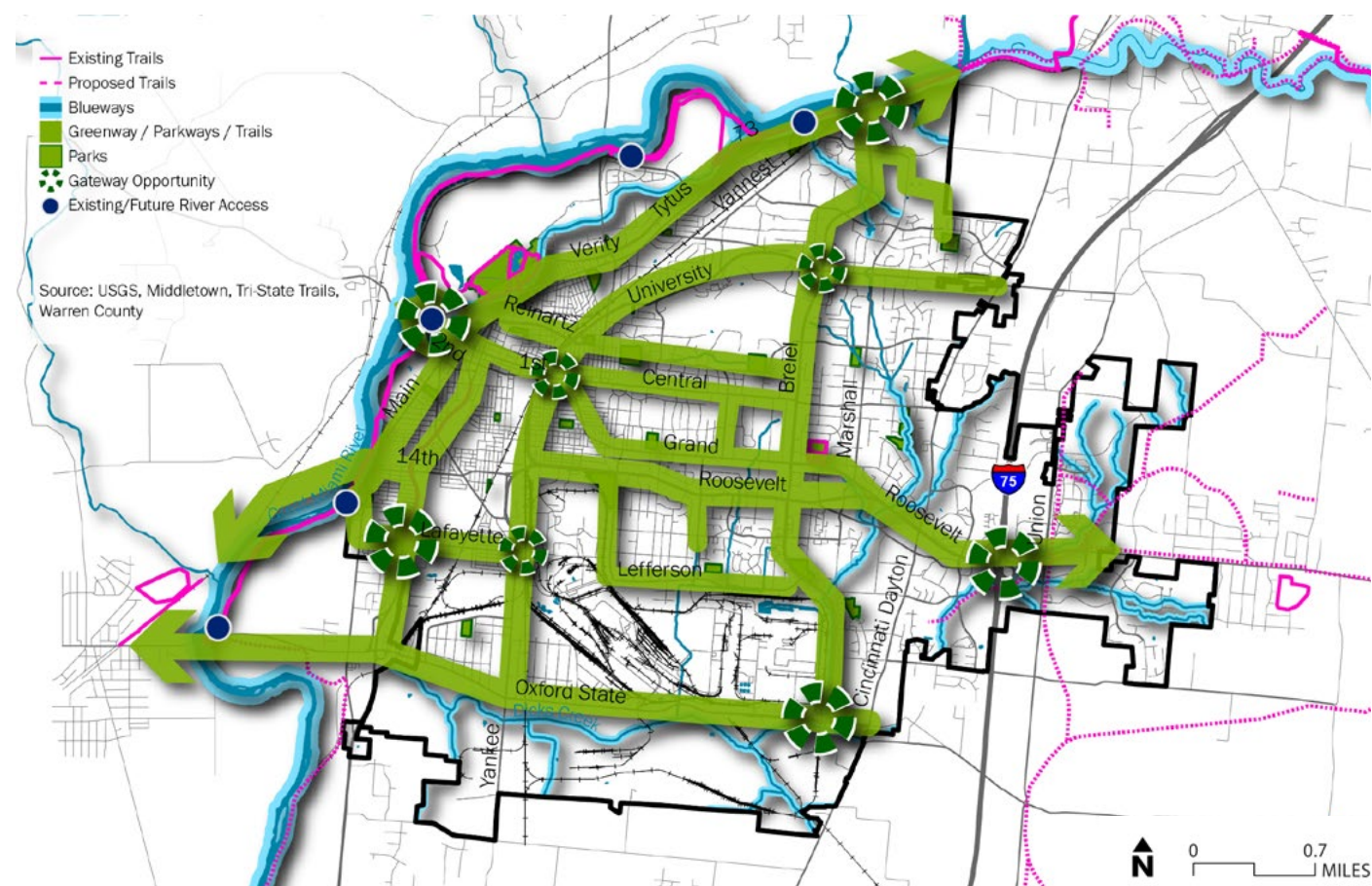
▼ FIGURE 126: BLUEWAYS





This system of land and water connections serve as both near and long-term opportunities to provide community access through physical connection to many community assets and destinations.

▼ FIGURE 127: GREENPRINT



## 4.5 PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

The City of Middletown offers a variety of programs and events at key parks, which is not an easy feat given their current staff capacity and roles within the Public Works department. Existing programming is done collaboratively through community and regional partners at select parks.

- » Douglass Park features the Robert "Sonny" Hill Jr. Community Center which is operated by the Community-Building Institute. The Community Center offers a community gardening program, open gym hours, evening programs focused on health, character building activities for youth in kindergarten through 12th grade, a free meals and snack program, community service hours for youth ages 13-17, adult education classes in partnership with the Hamilton City Schools branch of Ohio Aspire, and facility rental space for events and parties.
- » Goldman Park features several softball and baseball fields, including an inclusive baseball field known as the Field of Dreams, where The Dream Catchers league hosts games. The Middletown Youth Softball Association is housed at Goldman Park and is a partner with the department.

- » Jacot Park is known for the many soccer tournaments hosted on the tournament size and practice fields that dominate this park.
- » Lefferson Park has 18 pickleball courts and hosts many pickleball tournaments throughout the year, as Middletown is proudly known as the pickleball capital of Ohio. The Middletown Pickleball Association hosts events at Lefferson Park and all of their fundraising is aimed at maintenance and improvements of the park.
- » Smith Park hosts many of the community's larger events such as Light Up Middletown, Fourth of July fireworks, National Night Out, and the Ohio Challenge Hot Air Balloon Festival. Soccer groups also utilize Smith Park.
- » Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum is operated in partnership with Bull's Run Corporate, a group "dedicated to developing and maintaining the Sanctuary as an educational and visual establishment for the benefit of the community." This group offers a variety of nature-based education programs for students, guided nature hikes, and community work days throughout the year. This group also hosts nature walks at Armbruster Nature Preserve.
- » Middletown's plaza spaces host a variety of events throughout the year geared toward supporting downtown businesses including First Fridays, the Wine and Chocolate Walk, and other arts and cultural events.



Middletown also benefits from spaces within the community owned and operated by MetroParks of Butler County. The AK Steel Pavilion located along the Great Miami River in Middletown is one of those spaces.

The vision for Middletown programming and events over the next ten years is to expand the number and variety of offerings in the community. Shelter reservations are a low-hanging item that could be offered and could also generate revenue. The City could identify a process for reservations and fee collection as well as enforcement of shelter rentals. Signage at park shelters would help to facilitate these activities by alerting patrons when shelters are reserved. A project that will have a larger community impact is the expansion of the Robert "Sonny" Hill Community Center. A partnership between the City, the Middletown City School District, and Butler County Board of Commissioners will utilize \$12.1M in American Recovery Plan Act funding to bring much needed building expansion, facility upgrades and programming to the city's only community center. Future programming envisioned for the community center includes expansion of childcare programs, a Boys and Girls Club, additional indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, an event space with commercial kitchen and enhanced community garden.

Based on community surveys and stakeholder feedback, Middletown residents are most interested in festivals, concerts, movies, sports and recreation leagues, and outdoor skills classes being offered through Middletown Parks. The development of a dedicated Parks Department would allow the City to facilitate and organize programming partners, collect fees associated with rentals and class registration, and provide a dedicated funding stream for maintenance, operation, and the development of parks.



# Sunset Park Redesign 5 Action Plan

As part of the EPA mandated Long Term Control Plan (LTCP), the City will begin construction of the Bull's Run/Sunset Park Green Infrastructure Basin project in the summer of 2019. The City will utilize a natural and sustainable design method to mitigate storm water. This project includes the construction of a storm sewer to intercept a portion of the flow where it enters the combined sewer system near the intersection of Sheldon Road and Santa Fe Drive and will be redirected to an approximately one-acre regional green infrastructure basin located at Sunset Park, reducing storm water loading to the combined sewer system.

The design offers many new and improved amenities to the park, including new site furnishings, walking paths, picnic areas, an educational overlook plaza, and a new playground plaza, with minimal loss of recreation space. The project will include the installation of new playground equipment, a double chute hill slide, four bay swing set, an expression swing, and new spring riders. Along with these improvements, ADA accessibility has been increased throughout the site and the playground will also include



Playground Plaza Shelter



School-Age Playground





# 5. ACTION PLAN MOVING THE NEEDLE

## 5.1 METHODOLOGY

As an action-oriented document, the Parks Master Plan is organized to identify steps the City and its partners can take toward the incremental and sustainable enhancement of the parks system. Implementation tools; an action plan matrix organized by Immediate Needs, Basic Improvements, and Aspirations; a funding matrix identifying a variety of public and private funding mechanisms; staffing recommendations; and priorities are all part of the Action Plan for Middletown.

### IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

#### 1. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Middletown, like all communities, has been built through both private and public investments. The collective public infrastructure including roads, bridges, sidewalks, bikeways, utilities, and stormwater management are essential building blocks of the community’s framework, its neighborhoods, and its economy. Having modern, connected, and reliable infrastructure is a critical element of plan implementation. This underscores the need to not only maintain the City’s current infrastructure, but also to continue to make capital improvements by investing in upgrading, replacing and where needed, expanding infrastructure. Infrastructure improvements recommended by this Parks Master Plan include multi-purpose on and off-road trails, stormwater management, and streetscape enhancements that can coordinate with transportation (roadway) improvements projects.

#### 2. PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborative partnerships between the City, other municipalities and agencies, non-profits, and community groups are critical to plan implementation. While the City is responsible for a large share of the implementation strategies, there are several physical elements within the City that are owned or controlled by other public entities such as MetroParks of Butler County and the Miami Conservancy. Other partnerships are essential for addressing initiatives that extend beyond city limits, such as trail connectivity. In such cases, it is important to forge and maintain supportive partnerships with those who do have the control. In addition, with declining resources, it is becoming more important than ever to engage firms, institutions, and citizens in the work of government. The City already has a variety of partnerships that are critical for providing services to the residents. Partnering with the private sector is also an effective way to activate and program public spaces for the community.

## 5.2 ACTION PLAN MATRIX & COSTS

The Action Plan Matrix is organized to identify the Immediate Needs, Basic Improvements and Aspirations as defined in Chapter 4.0 for each park. These were informed by City staff observations, the Project Team’s Inventory & Conditions analysis, and the Client Team’s direction. Where concepts were developed, an order of magnitude opinion of probable costs was developed for each park in order to facilitate budgeting. These estimates were based on the Project Team’s experience and judgement as qualified professionals familiar with the industry. These costs were based in 2021 dollars and include general allowances for design services, contingency, and contractor mark-up and profit. Unless otherwise included, costs for permitting, mitigation, land acquisition, and utility infrastructure were not included.

Concepts were not developed for neighborhood and mini parks since this plan recommends they be addressed through a collaborative master planning process with the community. This recommendation does not lessen the desire of the City to address neighborhood park improvements. The City of Middletown recognized the neighborhood park needs expressed by the community through surveys conducted during the process and stakeholder meetings, particularly around the issue of equity and safety, and is committed to identifying and addressing improvements with neighborhood input.

In order to budget for improvements at neighborhood parks, a cost for master planning and public engagement was included, based on the Project Team’s experience. In order to budget physical improvements at these unplanned sites over the course of the 10-year master plan, a “rule of thumb” cost range was applied based on the Project Team’s best judgement. This allows for variable implementation based on the site, program, and stakeholder desires that can range from “do minimal” to address basic improvements to an aspirational approach similar to the recent Sunset Park upgrade. A consultant-led, public input-based neighborhood planning process should cost from \$30,000 - \$50,000 per park. Park improvement implementation costs are likely to range from \$8 per square foot (\$348,480 per acre) for greenspace heavy parks similar to the recently renovated Sunset Park to \$40 per square foot (\$1,742,000 per acre) for park sites that are highly urbanized and include mostly paving. Given the City’s funding limitations and the generally “good” condition of plazas in Middletown, the Project Team felt that major improvements to plazas did not need prioritization in the span of this parks master plan.

The cost estimates included are based on master plan-level concepts, and are exclusive of detailed site design and engineering. Further, unknown site conditions may exist that can impact the cost of improvements. The final design, scale, materials selection and delivery method variables will all impact final costs as well. But these master plan level costs can provide useful targets for budgeting and fundraising for park improvements.

Costs should be evaluated continuously throughout the design process for each project in consultation with a professional cost estimator. Costs should be re-evaluated on an annual basis to account for percentage increases in material costs in the construction industry. And, accomplishments in the Action Plan should be celebrated and shared with City and Department staff and communicated with Middletown residents to continue elevating the image and perception of the parks system.

The Action Plan matrix detail is included in the Appendix, while a summary of priorities is included in Section 5.5 Plan Priorities. The Action Plan matrix is also organized as an Excel spreadsheet, that was provided to the City separately as an editable document the City can easily revisit and update as needed.



### 5.3 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

While all of the above implementation tools are important, nothing can be accomplished without the necessary resources. There are a number of ways funding is provided, some of which are highlighted below and referred to in the Action Plan Matrix. The list below organizes public versus private funding opportunities at the Federal, State, and local levels and is anticipated to serve as a companion to the Action Plan Matrix. The matrix is intended to be a working tool, and it was built in Excel to be constantly refined and updated as new funding opportunities are identified, new partnerships are created, etc. It is also intended to help the City of Middletown be more strategic in planning their funding strategies and leveraging a variety of resources for parks. Where a particular funding source aligns with multiple park opportunities/needs in the matrix, it is a good indicator that further discussion should occur to see which one(s) best align at the moment. As these conversations unfold, the matrix can also be a good tool to track contact people, next steps, and success rates.

#### 1. GENERAL/CAPITAL FUNDS (LOCAL - PUBLIC)

The City budgets funds for Capital Improvements within the City. Increasing the amount of funding would be something that must be approved by City Council with the improvements competing against the many needs of the City. Some cities find that using capital funds is advantageous as it offers some freedom and control over how and when the funding is used. While state and federal funding partners can help share the financial responsibility, strict timelines and project restrictions can pose hurdles to the project implementation.

#### 2. CITY SEWER/STORMWATER FEE REVENUE (LOCAL - PUBLIC)

The City's Sewer and Stormwater Funds provide a funding stream that can be utilized for certain park improvements. The Sewer Fund can be utilized to implement green infrastructure projects that will provide benefits only to the combined system in Middletown. This sewer fund could be used to implement green infrastructure projects (i.e. tree planting, rain gardens, infiltration basins, stormwater conveyance) on park property that is tributary to a combined sewer and can provide a Combined Sewer Overflow reduction benefit. Green infrastructure features constructed within Sunset Park serve as example of utilizing sewer funding for improvements. The stormwater fund can be used to implement any green infrastructure project in park sites or on City property or right-of-way. These projects do not need to be located within the combined system area to qualify. Green infrastructure features constructed within Jonathan Park serve as an example of when stormwater funding was used.

#### 3. BONDING (LOCAL - PUBLIC)

Middletown has the ability to issue a municipal bond to finance public projects such as roads/trails, and other large-scale infrastructure projects. Municipal bonds can have lengthy repayment periods (e.g., 20 years) to fund expensive capital projects that cannot be paid for immediately with funds on hand.

#### 4. PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (LOCAL - PUBLIC, PRIVATE)

These are typically utilized when the public and private sectors cooperate toward a common goal and utilize public and private funds to meet this goal. For example, the City may have land on which it could allow a group to develop a facility such as a pool, splash park or other privately run facility or partner with groups such as the YMCA, athletic/wellness organizations, or others to offer programming. Or it could provide infrastructure improvements that encourage the development of privately owned recreation facilities that serve the community. An advantage of building collaborative partnerships between the City, other municipalities and agencies, non-profits, community groups, and residents is that they allow these entities to share resources (i.e., land, labor, funding, and expertise) to implement projects and achieve a common goal.

### 5. DONOR AND SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES (LOCAL -PRIVATE)

There are opportunities for local residents, businesses, and corporations to offer donations in the form of site furnishings and sponsorships (i.e. trees, benches, shelters). For example, a commemorative tree and bench program would allow groups and individuals to donate trees and benches to honor or commemorate friends or loved ones as well as commemorate special events. Similarly, corporations could partner with the City to sponsor shelters, restroom, and recreation facilities to recognize support for Middletown Parks and the value they provide to current and future employees. Additionally, private and community foundations who receive funds from individual, family or corporations, can direct those donations to special park projects. All of these donor and sponsorship opportunities allow individuals, businesses, and corporations to step in and support Middletown's parks and recreation by advocating for, supporting, and enhancing these public spaces.

### 6. TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) (LOCAL - PUBLIC)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool used by public agencies to target tax revenue for infrastructure improvements (e.g., streets, sewers, parking lots, etc.) in a given area. The TIF captures the increase in tax revenues associated with new investment and uses those revenues to pay for the infrastructure improvements that could include recreational resources.

### 7. SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICTS (LOCAL - PUBLIC)

A special taxing district is a mechanism to enable persons within a defined district to assess themselves with an additional tax (or levy) to fund projects within the district's boundaries. A common example is a Business Improvement District (BID) wherein businesses within the district agree to pay an additional assessment to provide services that they are not already receiving from the local jurisdiction. Local property owners and businesses create a BID to improve the sense of place in their district, which could give them a competitive advantage. Over 1,200 BIDs have been created in the US to pay for a variety of services such as cleaning sidewalks, adding streetlights, marketing the business district to shoppers and tourists, attracting businesses, improving public spaces, and rebuilding streetscapes. The City can foster the creation of one or more BIDs by working with local property and business owners to build support for the district.

### 8. INTERGOVERNMENTAL FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING PROGRAMS (STATE, FEDERAL - PUBLIC)

Intergovernmental revenue consists of funding obtained from other governments and can include grants, shared taxes, and contingent loans and advances. Funding can flow from the federal government to State and local governments, and from the State to local governments. Examples include the Clean Ohio Trail Fund and Land and Water Conservation Funds administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is leading the United States in developing a surface transportation system to move people and goods in a safe, accountable, flexible, efficient, and environmentally responsible manner. FHWA's programs like Transportation Alternatives Program, Recreational Trails Program, and Safe Routes to School Program, benefit the Nation's communities to improve quality of life, provide access for all, and preserve our heritage. FHWA's programs also benefit recreational interests. While state and federal funding partners can help share the financial responsibility of park enhancements, funding applications, strict timelines and project restrictions can pose hurdles to the project implementation.



Examples of Ohio Funding/Grant Programs include:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » State of Ohio Capital Funds   | Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)            |
| » Ohio Community Services Division  | » Clean Ohio Fund Green Space Conservation (ODNR) |
| » Ohio Community Development Program  | » Land and Water Conservation Funds (ODNR)        |
| » NatureWorks Grants  | » Paddling Enhancement Grant (ODNR)               |
| » Clean Ohio Trail Fund and Recreational Trails Fund, administered through the Ohio |   |

Examples of Federal Funding/Grant Programs include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| » City Parks Alliance Equitable Park Funding Hub (resource)   | National Scenic Byways Program (Trails)  |
| » Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (Park/Greenspace)   | » OKI Transportation Alternatives Program (Trails)                               |
| » Conservation Reserve Fund (Park/Greenspace)   | » Recreational Trails Program (Trails)   |
| » Community Forest and Open Space Program (Park/Greenspace)   | » Safe Routes to School Program (Trails)   |
| » USDA Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Grants (Park/Greenspace)                                 | » Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (Trails)             |
| » Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990/Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Park/Greenspace) | » Surface Transportation Program (Trails)  |
| » Army Corp of Engineers Grants (Park/Greenspace)   | » Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan program (Trails) |
| » Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)   | » Bikes Belong Grants (Trails)   |
|   | » People for Bikes Community Grant (Trails)                                      |
|   | » American Trails Grants (Trails)  |
|   | » American Hiking Society National Trails Fund (Trails)                          |

9. PRIVATE GRANT PROGRAMS (LOCAL, STATE, FEDERAL - PRIVATE)

Grant programs are special projects or certain types of applications that are funded by government agencies, non-profits, and private groups. Funds that are awarded for a grant program are dispersed for projects that meet certain criteria or scopes of interest. Grant programs can be very competitive and may change considerably from one year to the next, so they are typically used for one-time projects. The Middletown Community Foundation is an example of a local non-profit that could provide an opportunity to host a Middletown Parks Foundation to secure funding for future park improvements. Again, while local, state and federal funding partners can help share the financial responsibility of park improvements, grant applications, strict timelines and project restrictions can pose hurdles to the project implementation.

Examples of Local Private Grant Programs include:

- » Middletown Community Foundation

Examples of State/Federal Private Grant Programs include:

- |                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| » Lowes Community Partnership grants | » REI Co-Op |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|

10. REVENUE GENERATION (EVENTS, FEES, MEMBERSHIPS)

Many parks throughout the country have had to adopt creative revenue generating strategies such as special events, user/rental fees (i.e., shelters, recreation equipment and activities), and memberships (i.e., camps, classes) can help fund park maintenance and improvements. It is important to consider how these revenue generating strategies may impact local residents, especially those who are underserved, and develop a strategy that is beneficial and equitable for everyone. Impact / in-lieu fees from private sector development could also generate funding for park improvements. These fees are one-time charges assessed by a local government against a new residential or commercial/industrial development project to help pay for public park creation/improvements since new residents and employees can directly benefit from nearby parks and recreational facilities.

5.4 STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS

No municipal service is more prone to community engagement than parks. Community engagement creates a sense of ownership which in turn fosters volunteerism and financial contribution. To that end, we propose the immediate creation of an engagement program. This “We Love OUR Middletown Parks” program (working title) would include annual park cleanups during the spring and fall similar to Middletown’s current annual Earth/Arbor Day event that focuses on park/neighborhood cleanup and unique park projects with intense recruiting of volunteers, including corporate volunteers city officials like the Mayor, members of Council and civic leaders. Other events under this umbrella could include neighborhood picnics in the summer, allowing for the discovery of one park after another. In other parks systems, initiatives like the creation of Park Captains or Ambassadors - whose job is just to report issues in parks that they use anyway- or a Parks Advisory Council (i.e., Smith Park Advisory Council)– to guide the decision making of a given park- have been successful.

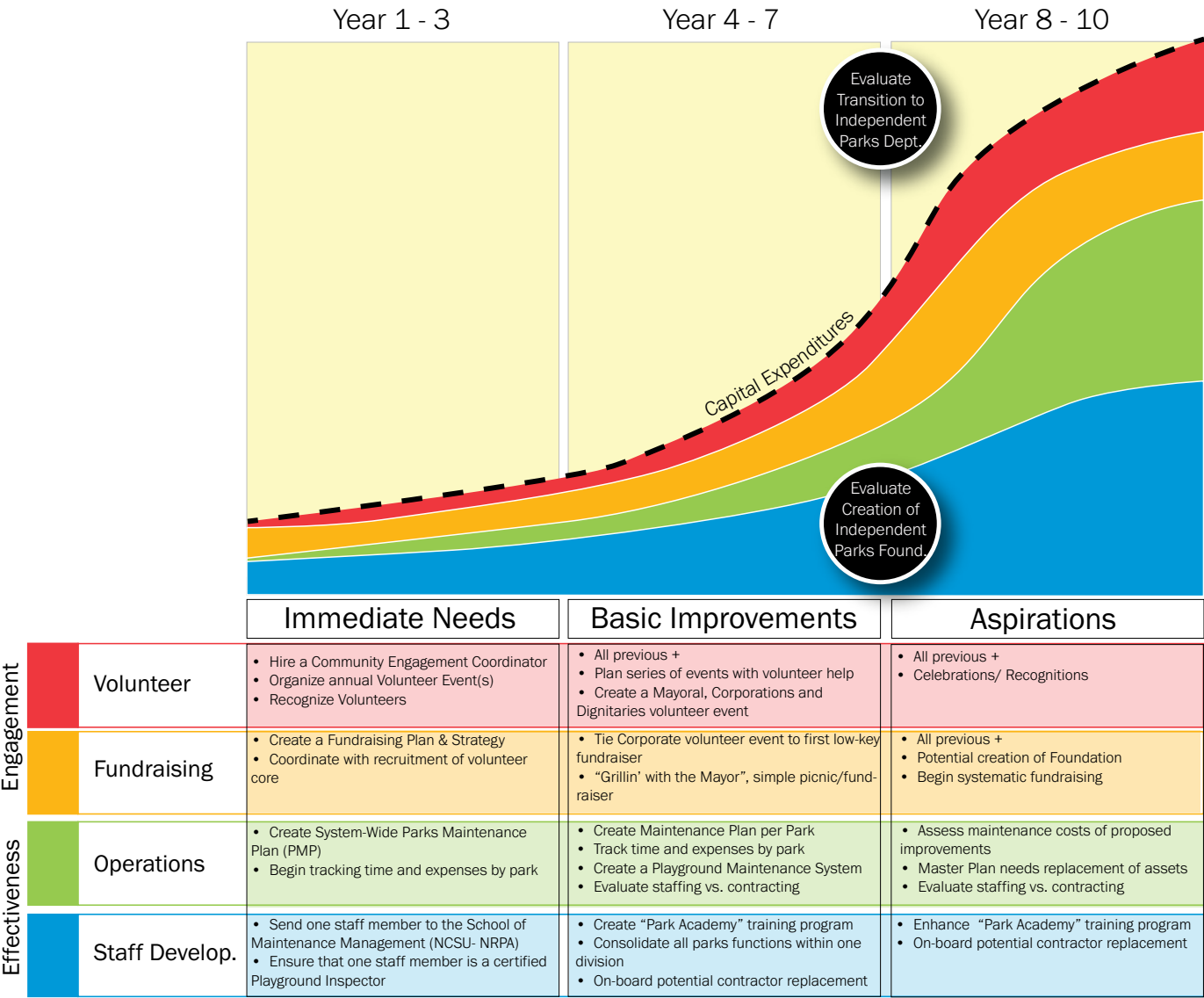
A renewed park system requires a new approach from its employees. Careful consideration should be given to presenting the findings of the master plan and engaging employees at all levels for its implementation. The engagement of employees should also be accompanied by a commitment to the employees. This commitment should include professional development and training that achieves recognized levels of expertise, employee recognition, feedback and celebration. Employees are ambassadors of the park system and the (often) only point of contact in the field for users and patrons.

Every proposed improvement, minor or major, would be better designed if employees were part of its development. It is important to accompany each proposed improvement with maintenance consideration led by employees that will identify concerns and quantify the additional resources (if any) needed and engage employees in creative maintenance solutions.

The operation capacity within the Public Works Department needs to keep pace with the capital investment to the parks system and be able to grow over time. The Project Team has provided recommendations for how this can happen incrementally as the City implements the Immediate Needs, Basic Improvements, and Aspirations outlined in this plan.



▼ FIGURE 128: RECOMMENDED IMMEDIATE NEEDS, BASIC IMPROVEMENTS AND ASPIRATIONS



CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY

Immediate Needs (Year 1-3)

A system-wide Parks Maintenance Plan (PMP) and its related tracking system need to be created immediately. Both will help quantify where and how staff spends time and highlight the areas that use the most resources, resulting in a priority list for repairing deteriorated or problematic features. This systematic tracking will serve as the foundational document to understand the implication of all future upgrades. The Project Team strongly suggests that the City of Middletown send a staff member to the school of Maintenance Management at the next two-year program in January 2022 to bolster their skills in parks management.

Community engagement should also be an immediate focus. It creates a sense of ownership for the users, provides additional “eyes” on the parks and is often the first step in establishing alternative funding schemes, as involved citizens understand needs and are often willing to donate their time and/or money. We suggest hiring a Community Engagement Coordinator or make that function a component of an existing staff position. This new function would initiate the engagement process by creating volunteer events. It is also recommended that part of a fundraising strategy include recruiting a volunteer corps for the parks with annual volunteer recognition events.

Basic Improvements (Year 4-7)

Middletown’s parks have been well maintained within the available resources. Good maintenance can prolong the life of park amenities, but they need to be upgraded and/or replaced periodically. Two current examples of creative maintenance include the use of flexible seasonal staff, and the use of contractual services to provide maintenance that cannot be accomplished with existing staff, or is less expensive to do through a contract with an outside vendor. However, there may be advantages to addressing basic improvements with appropriately trained City staff. This training can address maintenance needs as well as playground safety. A recognition program within a “Park Academy” type structure can provide the enthusiasm needed for a renewed training program. As an incremental step towards this training program, Recreation Today and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) offer a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) program that provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date training on playground safety and certification for playground safety inspectors for a total cost of \$650/person for the three-day course and exam. It is a goal of this plan to ensure Middletown maintains a CPSI certified staff member to assess playground conditions.

The Public Works Department should consider hiring park maintenance staff to take on previously contracted work and consolidate all park functions within one division. The City can continue to track maintenance/operations time and expenses at each park and create a Park Maintenance Plan (PMP) specific to each site. A playground maintenance system can also be created as part of this effort.

The City can continue to track maintenance and operations time and expenses at each park and create a Park Maintenance Plan (PMP) specific to each site in order to anticipate and plan for necessary ongoing maintenance activities and expenses. A playground maintenance system can also be created as part of this effort. This special focus on playgrounds is important because risk of injury is higher on these more actively used park amenities, and playground safety standards change over time. The proposed basic improvements will likely result in increased use. While regular maintenance of new park amenities is typically less than the maintenance of old ones, general maintenance like litter control may see an increase with increased park usage. The PMP will help quantify the expected increase in maintenance.

As investments are made to provide the basic improvements outlined in this plan, the Public Works Department should also consider hiring staff or contracting a professional to author grant applications and secure local, state, and federal grants.

Community engagement can be encouraged by fostering or creating volunteer events and celebrations. Start engaging corporate volunteers and elected officials through formal and informal events such as picnics and fundraisers. Many community volunteer groups are eager to spend time assisting with routine parks maintenance such as weeding, invasive plant removal, annual flower planting, and event trash pickup. Adopt-a-spot beautification programs can leverage volunteer maintenance in exchange for low key business recognition in the public right-of-way. Devoting City management time to organizing volunteer help can be well worth the effort. Additionally, some recreational groups such as disc golf associations, model airplane flying clubs, and mountain biking groups take ownership in their facilities and are more than happy to provide the maintenance needed to upkeep their facilities. All volunteer efforts can be celebrated on social media to recognize and thank volunteers, and to let the rest of the community know they can participate. An annual recognition event for volunteers is another way the City can endear participation.

Aspirations (Year 8-10)

Every new asset should be designed with its maintenance in mind and be accompanied by a supplemental maintenance plan. This supplemental plan added to the PMP should be developed during the design phase of the asset as a collaborative effort between the designer and the actual maintenance staff. The total cost of all new



features should include their maintenance and cannot be a way to divert resources from existing needs. The City can continue to refine and enhance the “Park Academy” training program and consider hiring park maintenance staff to take on previously contracted work.

Community Engagement efforts can increase to a fully formed and City-managed program with volunteer recognition, and celebration of achievements.

This phase should also trigger an assessment to evaluate whether or not an independent Parks Department and an independent Parks Foundation are necessary and feasible.

## 5.5 PLAN PRIORITIES

The City of Middletown will need to make some important choices to see the recommendations of the parks master plan realized. It will be a balancing act with other priorities, but a sustained commitment of incremental progress will show good results. So will being creative and looking for ways to leverage investments, build partnerships, and identify synergies. The plan is intended to be a 10-year guide, and the Action Plan Matrix organizes recommendations based on Immediate Needs (1-3 years), Basic Improvements (4-7 years), and Aspirations (8-10 years) so thinking about it in different levels of urgency and time horizons may be helpful in moving things forward. While these recommendations are focused in those timeframes, some elements will likely overlap. For example, it is anticipated the City will focus on addressing Basic Improvements throughout the life of the master plan. Additionally, there are some Aspirational elements like sign design standards that the City may want to start planning for in earlier years so that implementation can occur in the later years of the master plan after a process is established to accommodate shelter reservations. Along with review of the Action Plan on an annual basis, it is a good idea for the Plan Priorities to be re-evaluated yearly to see if community priorities have shifted or if other community initiatives have brought attention to other areas where the plan aligns.

The following summary is a place to start that conversation:

### Immediate Needs

Spend the first 1-3 years focusing upon repairing and replacing elements throughout the park system that have deteriorated over time, such as cracked and settled pavements; rusted or unstable furnishings; structures that are leaky or otherwise problematic; play equipment that does not meet current safety standards, removal of hazardous trees and/or invasive plants, and deteriorated or malfunctioning infrastructure (storm sewer, electric, etc.). Concerns about these issues have been expressed by City staff, key stakeholders, and the general public throughout the process, and addressing them early will go a long way toward reducing concerns and building positive momentum.

Safety, security and equity were immediate needs that bubbled to the top of the list based on stakeholder input in the community surveys and in advisory group meetings. There are some parks that should be addressed based on a safety perspective and the data presented in subsection 2.5 Inventory & Conditions Summary Matrix illustrates this. Goldman Park seems to be in greatest need of improvements based on the Project Team’s site visit and City staff’s reports. Since Goldman caters largely to baseball and softball uses, improvements at this park could be done in partnership with user groups and corporate donations while also providing an opportunity for greater fee generation by the Department. Additionally, a recent youth baseball initiative named the Middie Way Baseball League, aims to develop baseball skills for students in grades kindergarten through fifth as a feeder program for the local high school. Goldman Park can serve as an additional facility to serve the needs of this program.

There are also parks that should be addressed because they can advance equity efforts in Middletown while also addressing security concerns. Douglass Park, while perhaps not displaying the greatest need from a condition’s standpoint, is a park that stakeholders and City staff expressed a need for improvements. Douglass Park is especially important because it seems more utilized by the surrounding neighborhoods while Goldman Park caters to a specific use and user groups. Based on survey responses, staff observations, and crime data, there are safety and security concerns that need to be addressed here. Douglass Park is also adjacent to the South Main Street Special Interest Area identified in the Comprehensive Plan so addressing housing development and park improvements at the same time could be done in collaboration through investment on the private and public side. And, Douglass Park is located in an historically African American neighborhood and an area of the community that is lower-income. Investing in this park would be a step in addressing social injustice.

Addressing a few neighborhood park master plans in the first few years of implementation would also start to build positive momentum out of the gate while building a base of support for parks in the community. Damon, Sherman, and Yankee Parks would benefit from a comprehensive park master plan – these parks all demonstrate need from a condition’s lens and are located in lower income areas of the community. Additionally, Damon Park is the closest neighborhood park in proximity to a small gap area identified in the Awareness phase located near Oxford State.

### Basic Improvements

During years 4-7 of the master plan, place a high priority upon incremental investment in new and improved facilities throughout the park system that serves the basic needs and desires of the community. Some examples of these improvements include improved lighting for safety; restrooms; upgraded play environments, including traditional play equipment, nature play, and spraygrounds; improved ADA accessibility to all park amenities/features; walking loops; and new/improved recreational features (courts, fields, and support amenities). As these elements are added, there is the opportunity to utilize a new set of coordinated standards for signage, lighting, furnishings, and structures throughout the park system that provides for a cohesive brand and a more efficient operational model for Middletown Parks.

Parallel to these improvements should be a thoughtful and incremental focus upon the master planning of each of the neighborhood parks, utilizing a strong community-building process as outlined in the Neighborhood Parks section, to celebrate these vital open spaces as the “living rooms” of each neighborhood. While these projects should also integrate the new parks standards, they also should be unique and specific to the needs and aspirations of each neighborhood, reflecting their culture, their desires for social interaction, and their priorities. In this way, each neighborhood park can be a little different, while still feeling a part of the larger community system.

## 5.6 PLAN ADOPTION

The Parks Master Plan is intended to be both a vision and a guide. The vision for the park system can live on for many decades, but specifically, this plan was created to be the City’s guide for the next 10 years. In order for it to fulfill its intended use, it is important that the plan be formally adopted and followed by all departments of the City. The most successful master plans have a champion within the City’s leadership, and this person is constantly using the plan, reminding everyone of its importance, and following components of the plan through to fruition.