



Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan

Public Workshop #1
April 13 and 14, 2022

Prepared by
DESIGNWORKSHOP

Meet the Team

Jessica Peterson – Parks and Recreation Manager

Cliff Knettel - Senior Parks Planner

Katie Bennett – Project Coordinator

Alicia Watts – Assistant Park Manager

Anna Laybourn - Design Workshop

Callie New - Design Workshop

Jeff King - Ballard King



Agenda

Presentation & Questions – 40 Minutes

- Project Overview

- System Evaluation

- Public Input

- Draft Plan Themes

Map Activity – 40 Minutes

Wrap Up – 5 Minutes

What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

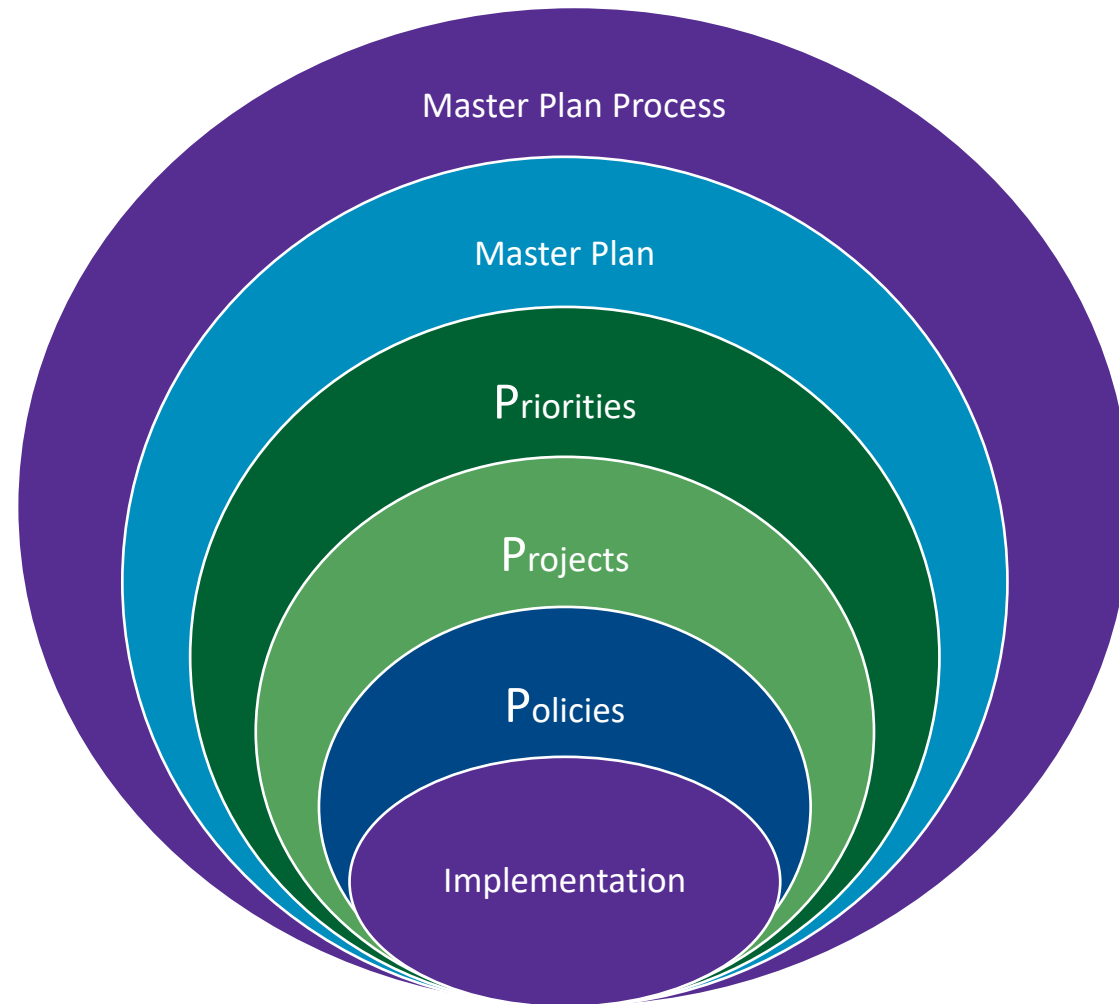
It is a ...

- **Long-range planning tool** to determine service gaps and identify opportunities for improvements.
- **Visionary document** that sets the values and goals for the department.
- An **opportunity for staff and the public** to weigh in on the future of parks and recreation.

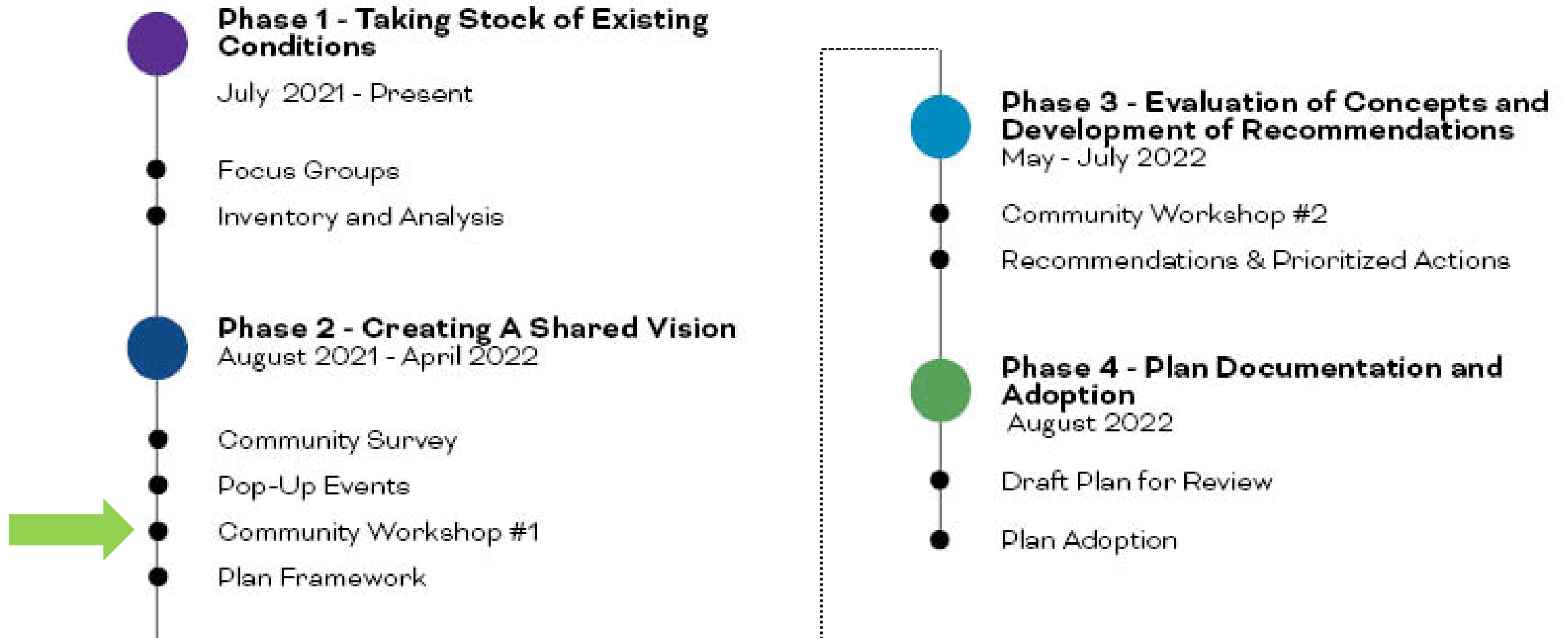
It is not a ...

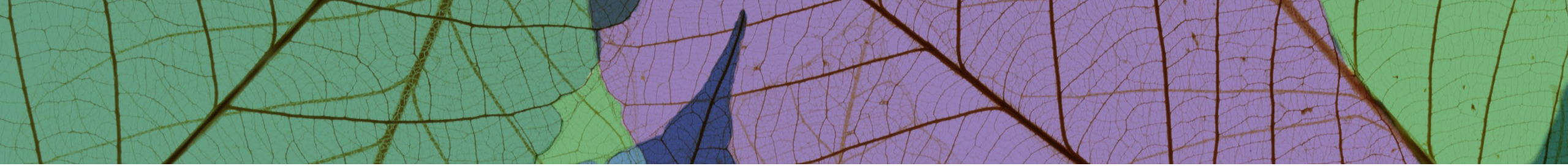
- **Operations model** or financial budget.
- Method to **approve capital expenditures** (informs CIP).
- **Detailed design proposal** for a specific neighborhood, park, or facility.

What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

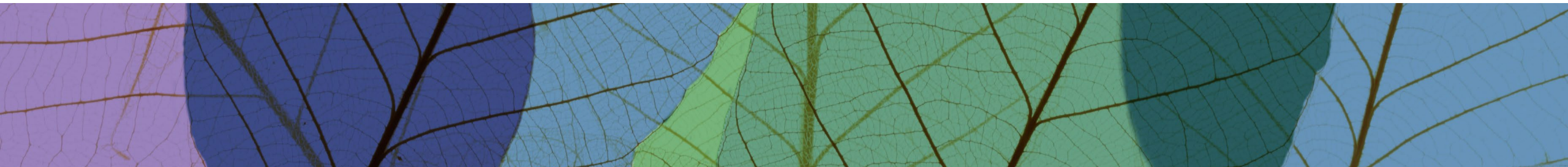


Project Process






What We Learned



Key Findings

- ✓ **Previous Plans Review**
- ✓ **Community Profile**
- ✓ **Inventory of Parks and Park Classifications/Standards**
- ✓ **Walkshed Analysis and Gaps**
- ✓ **Equity Mapping**
- ✓ **Comparable Community Benchmarking**
- ✓ **Recreation Trends**


Previous Plans



Imagine Duluth
2035



2010 Parks and
Recreation
Master Plan




2011 Trail and
Bikeway Plan



Cross Country Ski
Trails Master
Plan



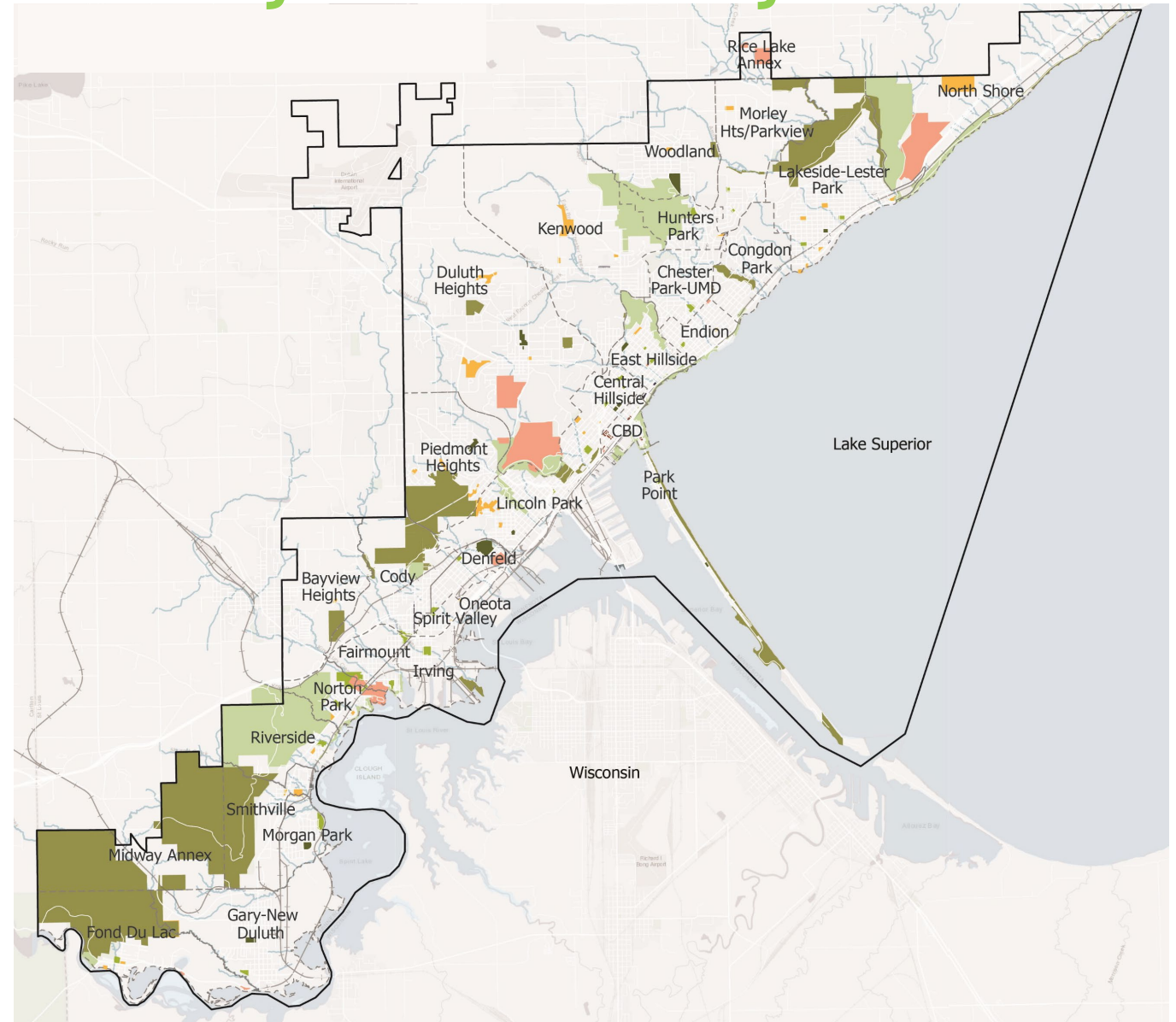
Climate Vulnerability
and Climate
Adaptation Strategy
Report



Natural Resource
Management
Program Plan

Duluth Parks and Recreation System Inventory

- **129 Parks**
- **6,834 acres of City parkland**
- **11,000 acres of green space**
- **10 miles of horseback trail**
- **30 miles paved accessible trails**
- **16 miles gravel accessible trails**
- **38 miles of cross-county ski trails**
- **95 miles of multi-use mountain bike trails**
- **150+ miles of natural surface hiking trails**
- **14 outdoor ice rinks**



Parks Classifications



NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS &
PLAZAS

34 PROPERTIES



COMMUNITY PARKS

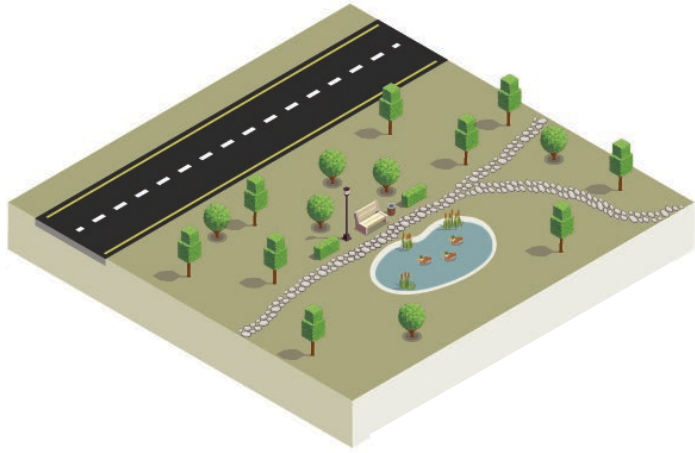
13 PROPERTIES



DESTINATION PARKS /
SPECIAL USE

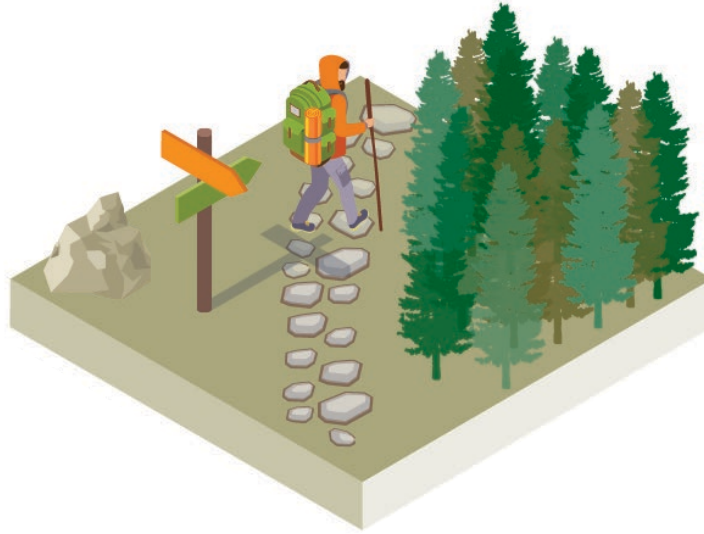
22 PROPERTIES

Parks Classifications



PARKWAYS

10 PROPERTIES



TRAILHEAD & WATER ACCESS

4 PROPERTIES












NATURAL/PASSIVE

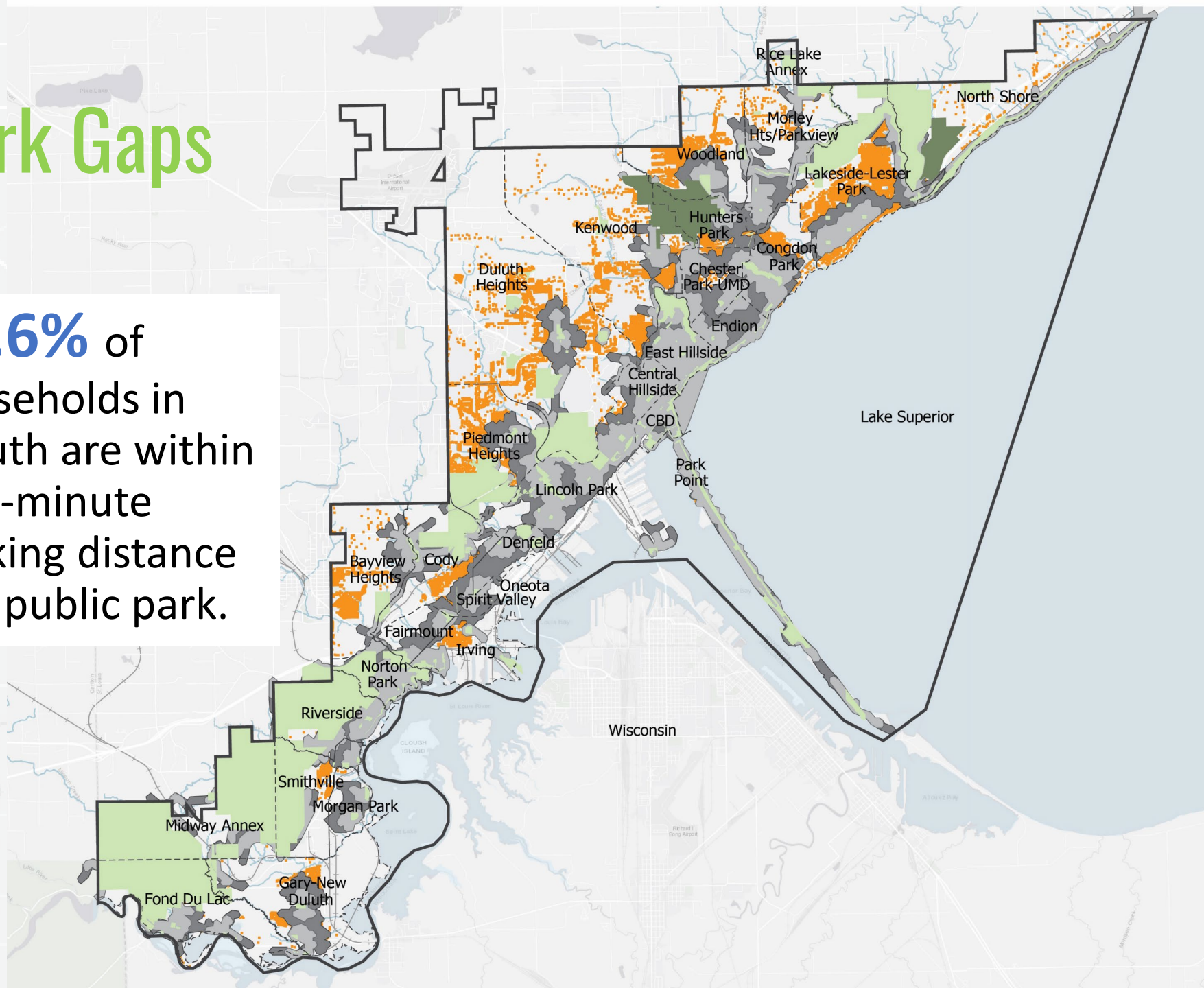
28 PROPERTIES

Park Gaps

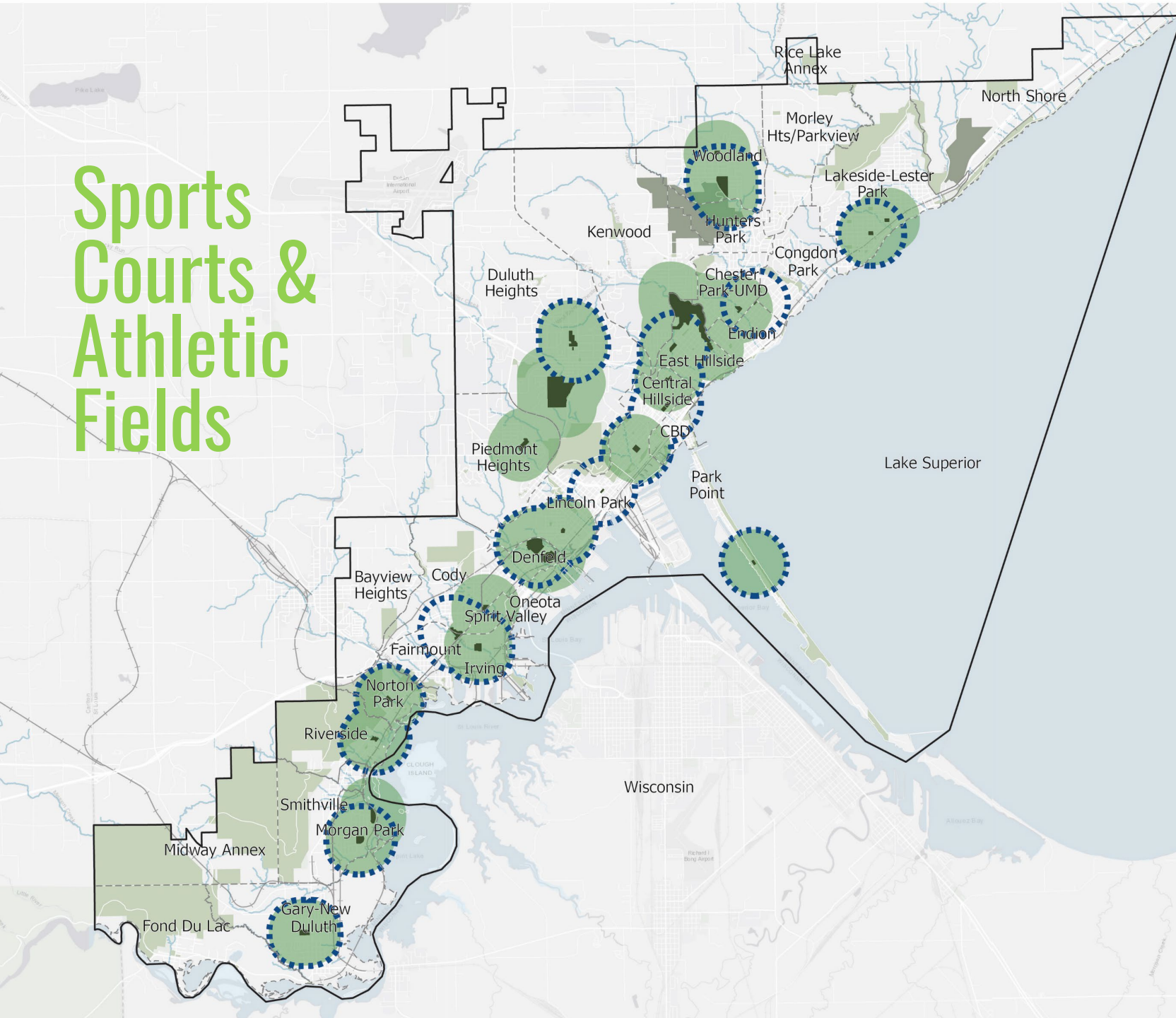
69.6% of households in Duluth are within a 10-minute walking distance to a public park.

LEGEND

-  Households outside 5-10 min park walk
-  Open Space
-  Golf Courses
-  5 min walk
-  10 min walk
-  Streams
-  Duluth City Boundary
-  Neighborhood Boundary
-  Railroads



Sports Courts & Athletic Fields

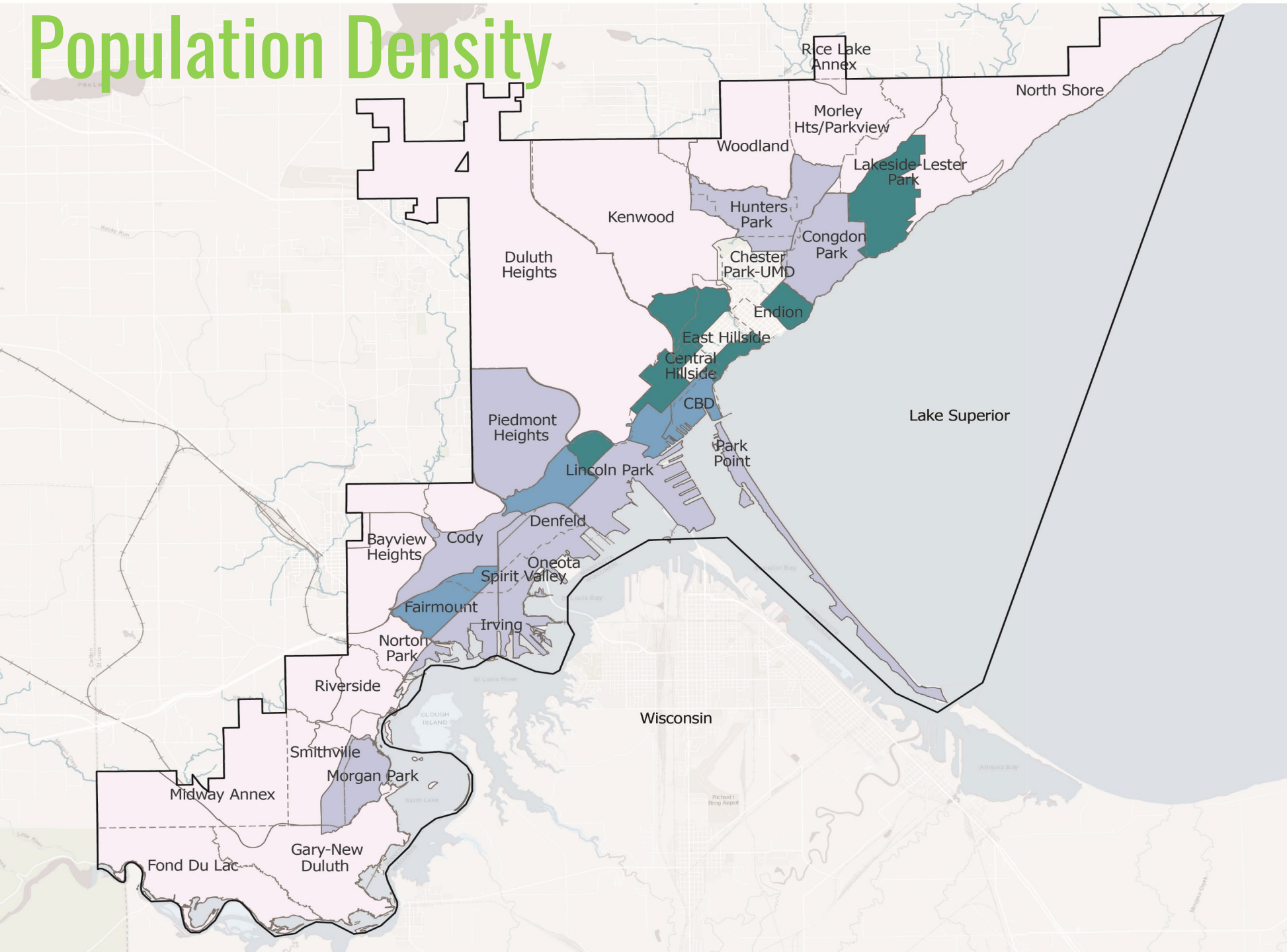


LEGEND

- Open Space
- 1/2 mi Buffer - Sport Field
- 1/2 mi Buffer - Sport Court
- Streams
- Duluth City Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Railroads

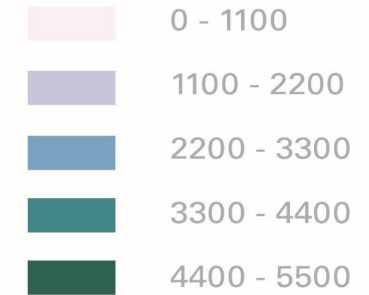
AMENITY	QUANTITY
Soccer Fields	8
Baseball/Softball Fields	15
Multiuse Fields	19
Basketball Courts	18
Tennis Courts	5
Pickleball Courts	2
Rinks	14

Population Density



LEGEND

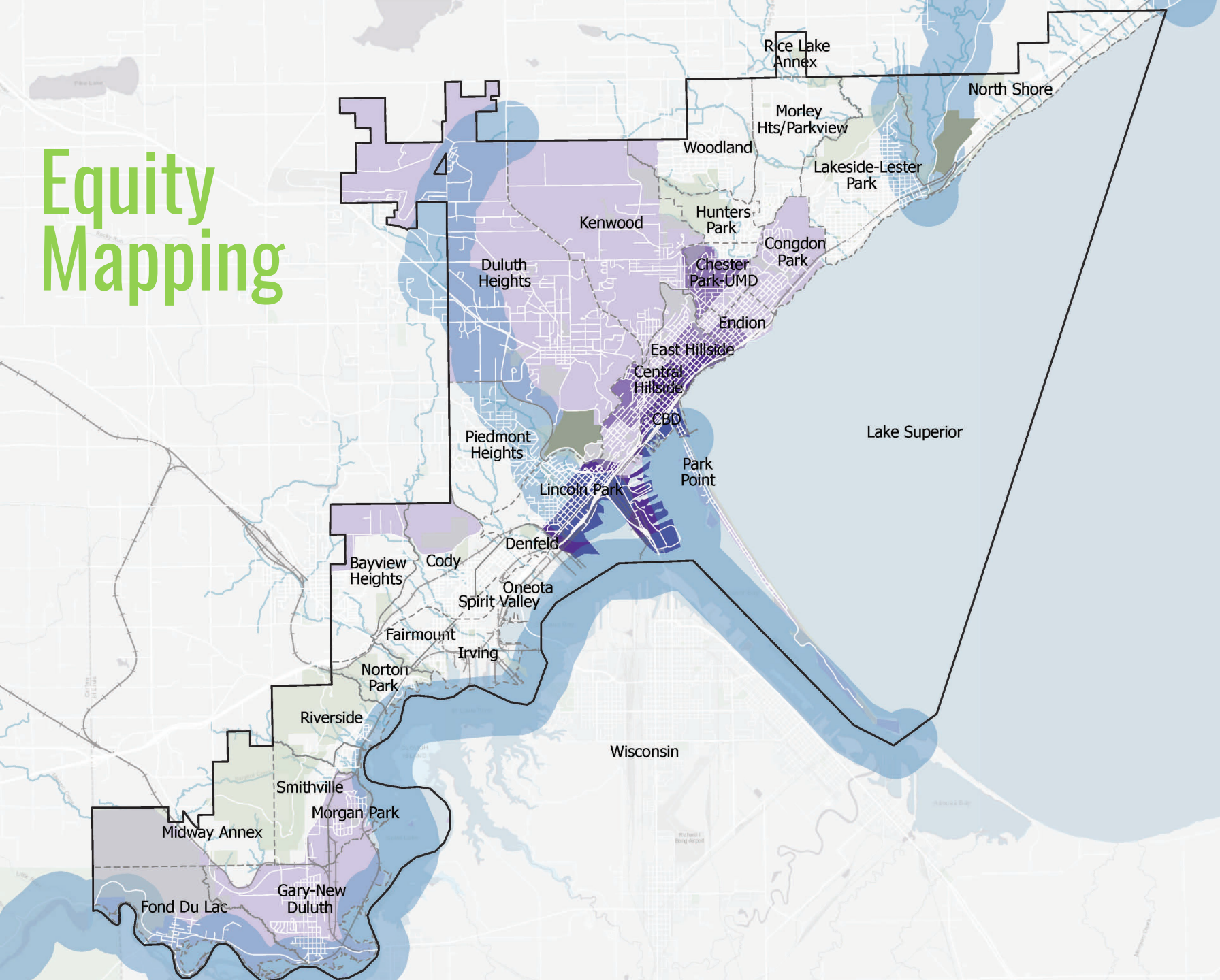
Population Per Sq. Mile



- Streams
- Duluth City Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Railroads



Equity Mapping



LEGEND

Equity Zones

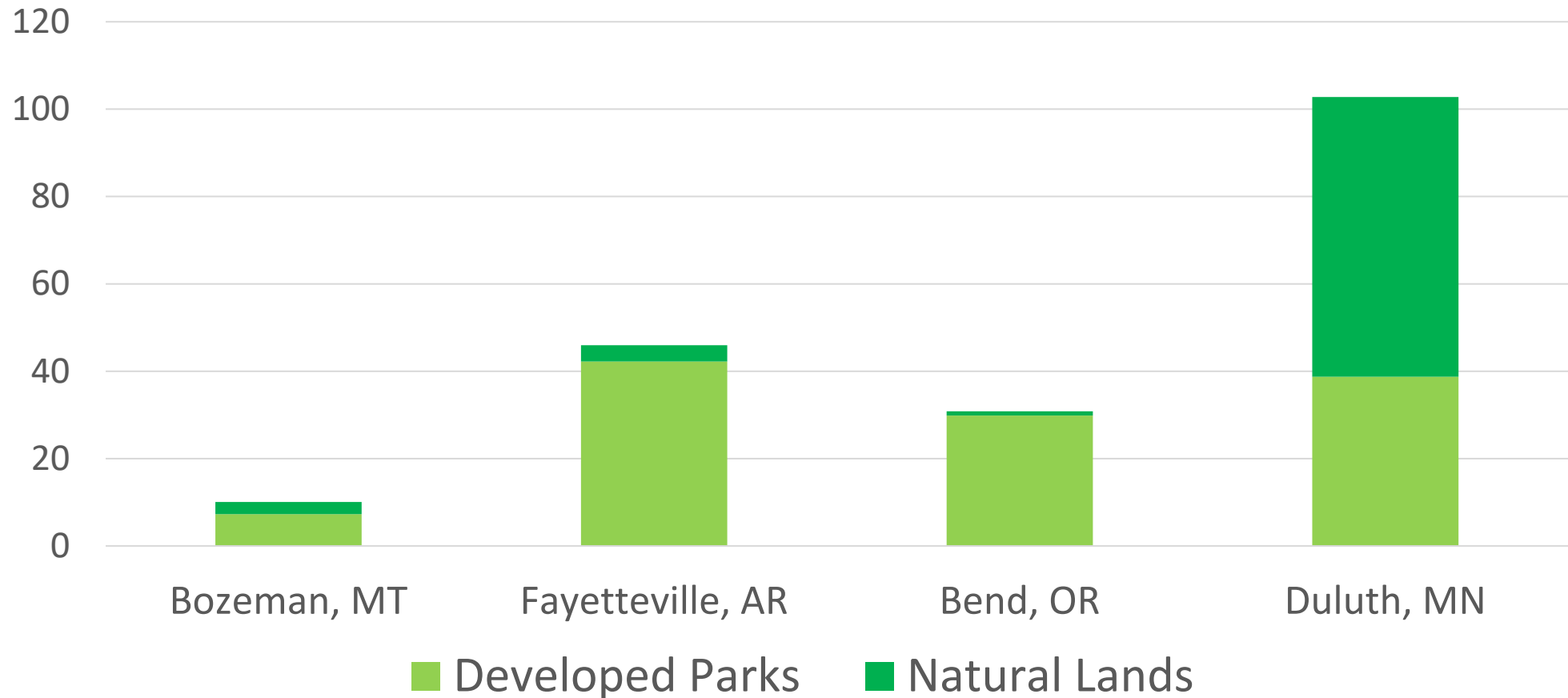
- High Equity Priority
- Medium Equity Priority
- Low Equity Priority
- Low Water Quality Zone

* factors informing these zones include low income, people of color, poor mental health, physical inactivity, pollution, populations with disability, people aged 65 and over and those aged 18 and under, population density and zero car household.

- Open Space
- Golf Courses
- Streams
- Duluth City Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Railroads

Benchmarking

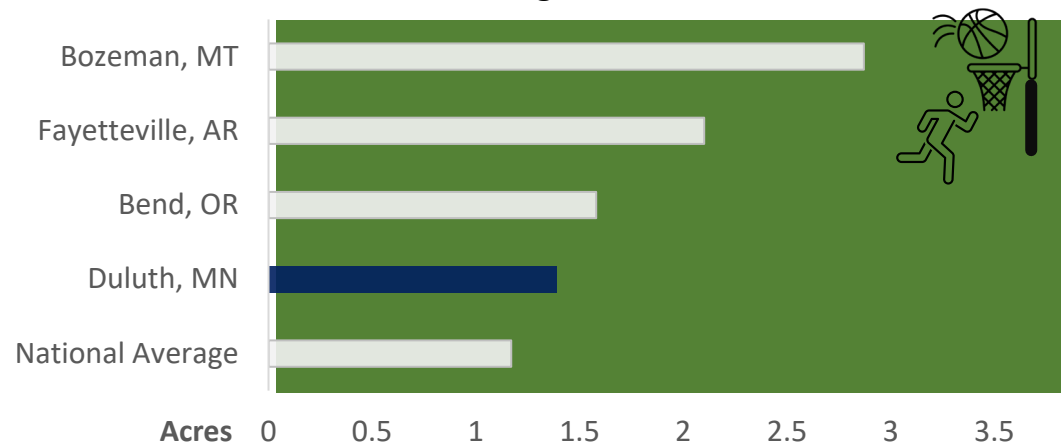
How many acres of park lands and natural areas are provided for every 1,000 people?



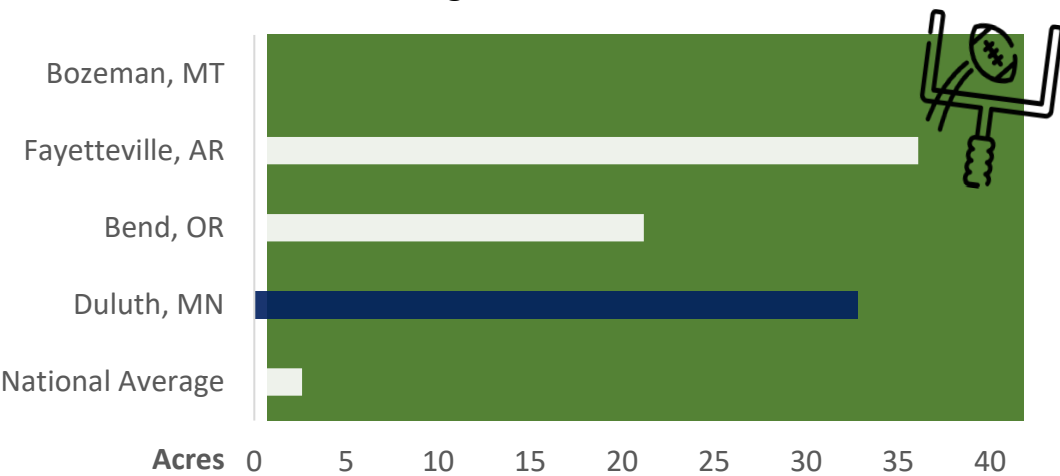
Benchmarking

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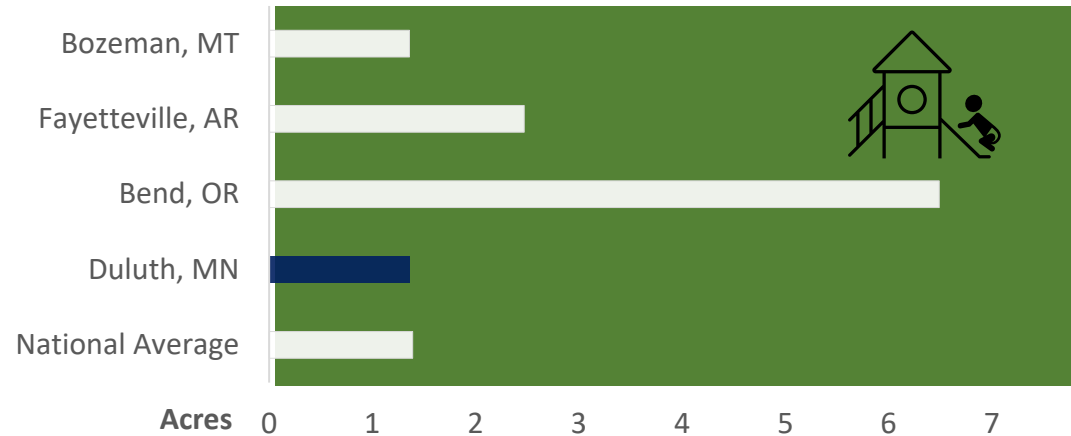
Nearhood Parks



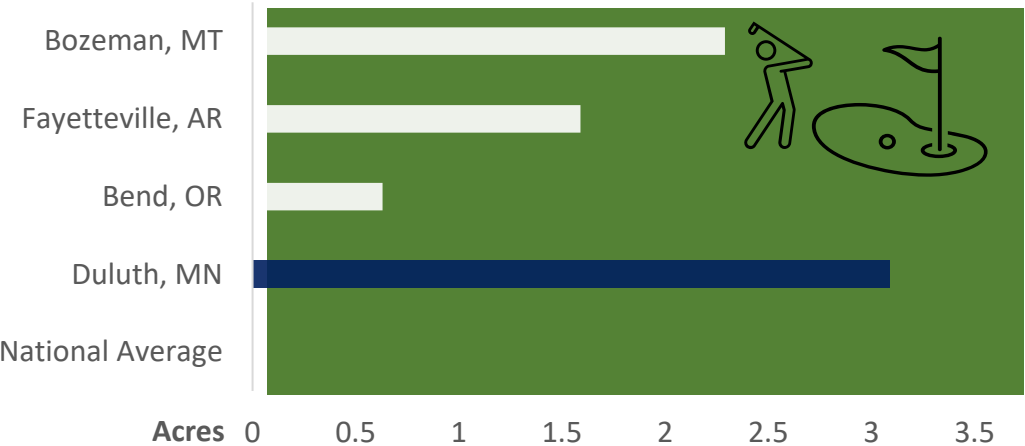
Regional/Destination Parks



Community Parks

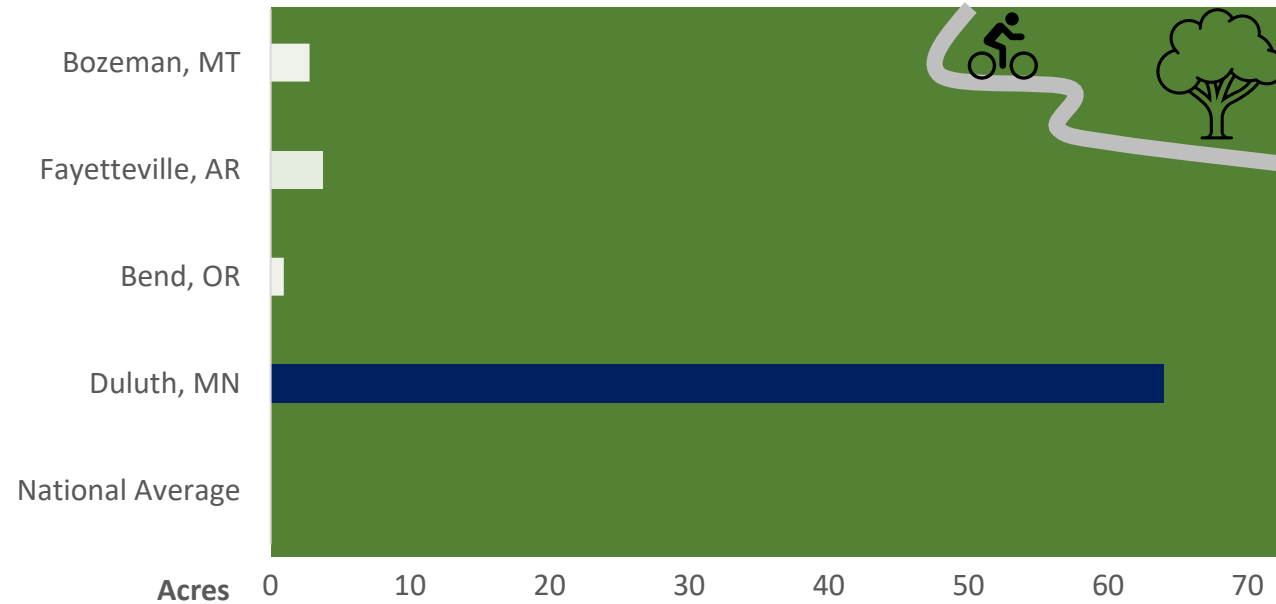


Special Use Parks

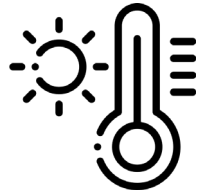


Benchmarking

How many acres of natural lands are provided for every 1,000 people?



National Recreation Trends



Climate Change

- National Climate Assessment's Midwest findings: Over 20 million people breathe air that fails to meet national ambient air quality standards, there is an increase of major heatwaves (3x as many from 1900-2010), and extreme rainfall and flooding events have increased during the last century.



Technology

- Micromobility and e-mobility devices are upending the ways that people access parks. Beacon counters, geofencing, and drones provide data that can help administrators understand usage patterns.



Pets

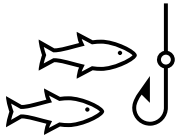
- Dog parks are one of the fastest growing types of parks in the country and can contribute significantly to agency revenues and tourism

State Recreation Trends



Outdoor recreation is increasingly important for Minnesotans.

- 70 percent of survey responders stated that outdoor activities are very important, a 16 percent increase from 2004.



Minnesotans enjoy sports that require less equipment and advanced skills.

- Favorite activities for adult recreation include mostly passive recreation - “relaxing in the outdoors,” “walking or hiking,” “relaxing by the water,” and “picnicking outdoors.” The top winter activities are sledding / snow tubing and ice fishing.



Seasonal outdoor activities add the most economic value to Minnesota’s GDP

- The activities that add the most economic value to Minnesota’s GDP is boating and fishing (\$627,496), motorcycling/ATVing (\$550,623) and hunting/shooting/trapping (\$381,444)

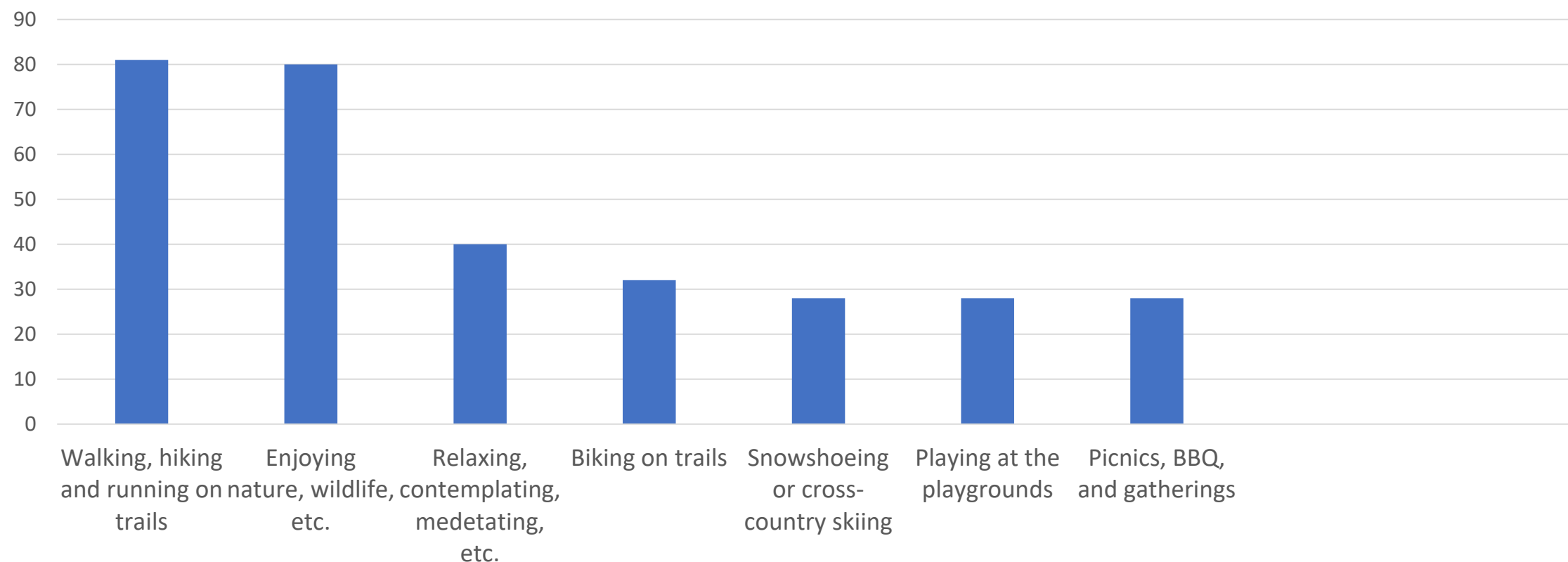


Minnesota’s trail conditions are declining

- Minnesota’s paved state trail system is in good condition, but conditions are declining without any action. Minnesota State of the Trails 2018-2019 Report measured 75% of trails (447 miles) as excellent or good, 20% (121 miles) fair, and 6% of trails (32 miles) were rated as poor or very poor. If current trends continue, only 50% of state trails are projected to be in good or excellent condition by 2030.

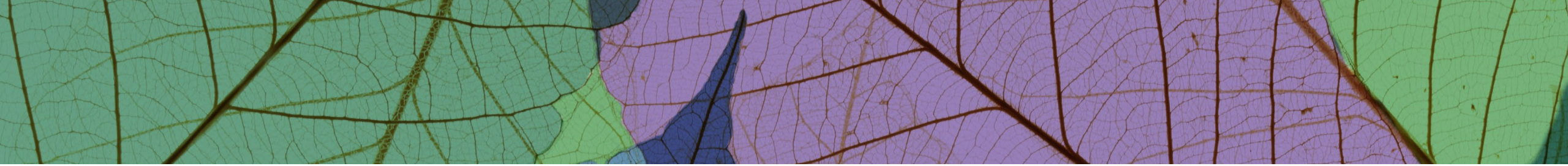
Local Recreation Trends

Most common ways residents use Duluth's park system (Top 2021 survey results)

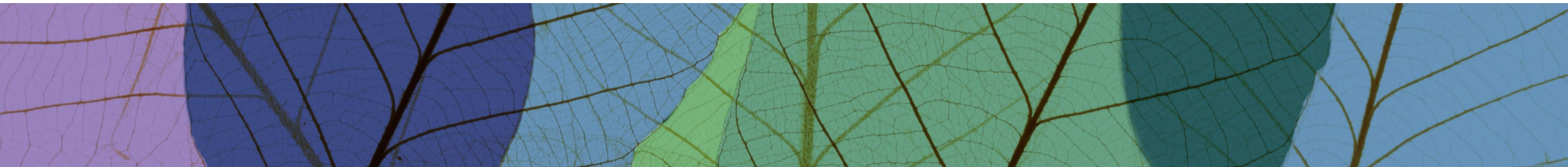


Resource Capacity (Funding and Staffing)

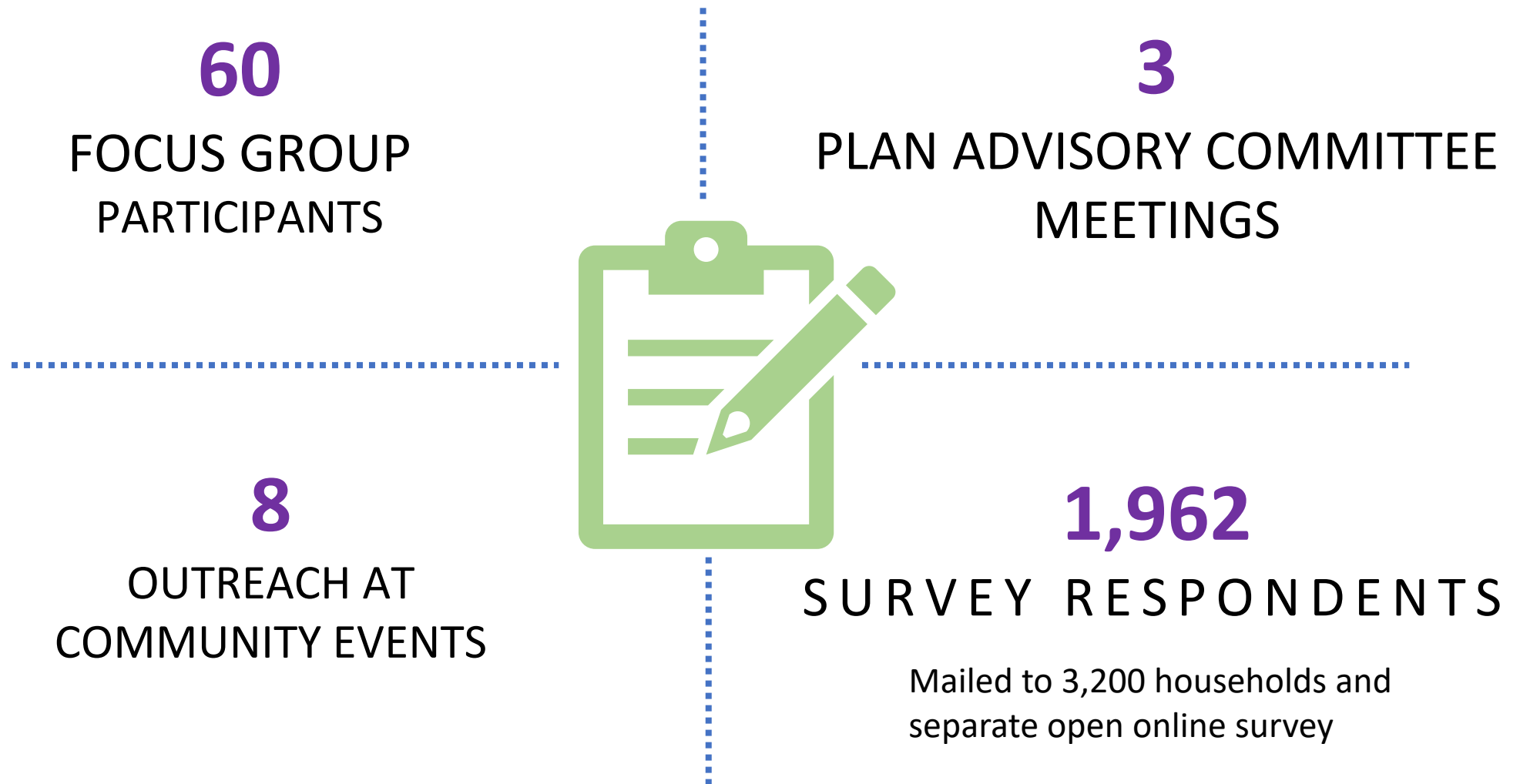




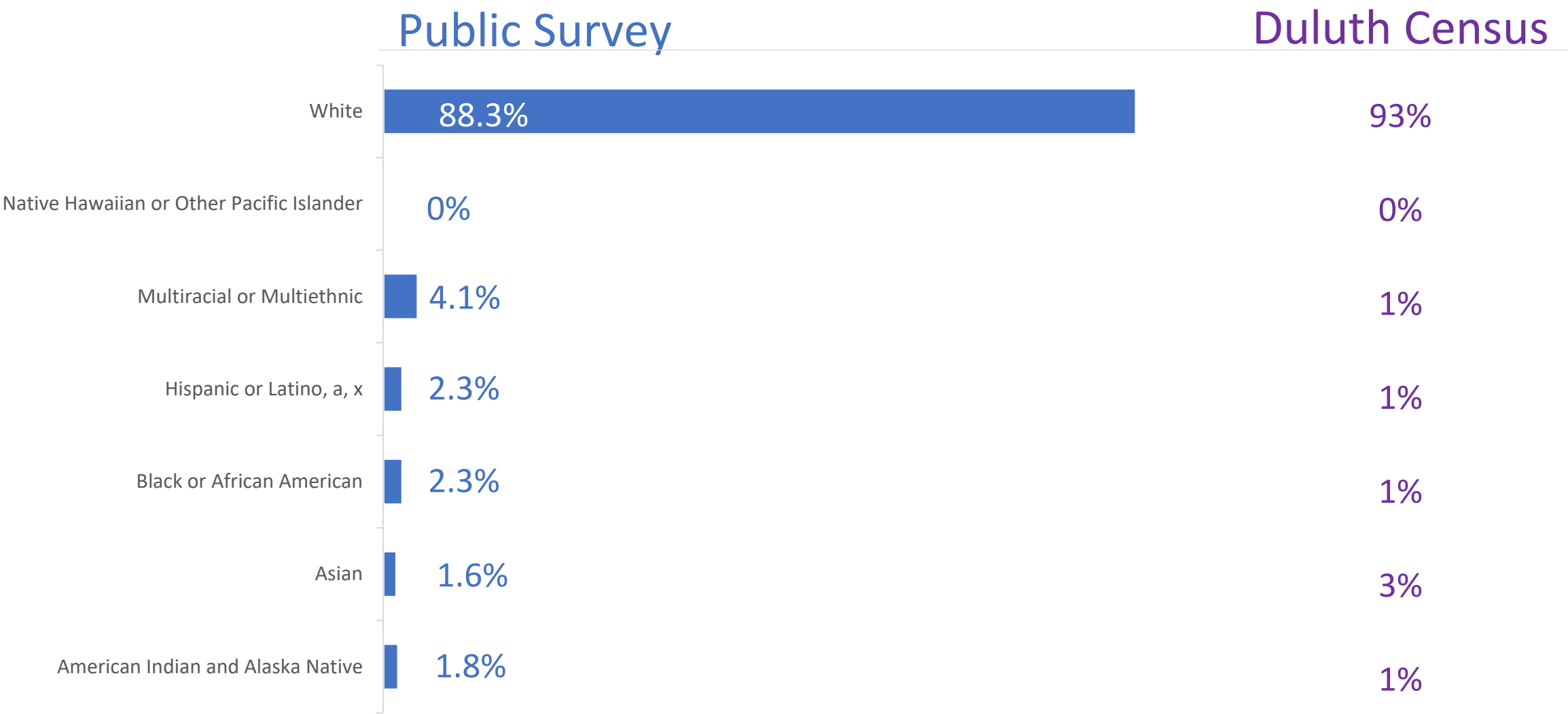
What We Heard – Public Survey Results



Public Engagement Overview



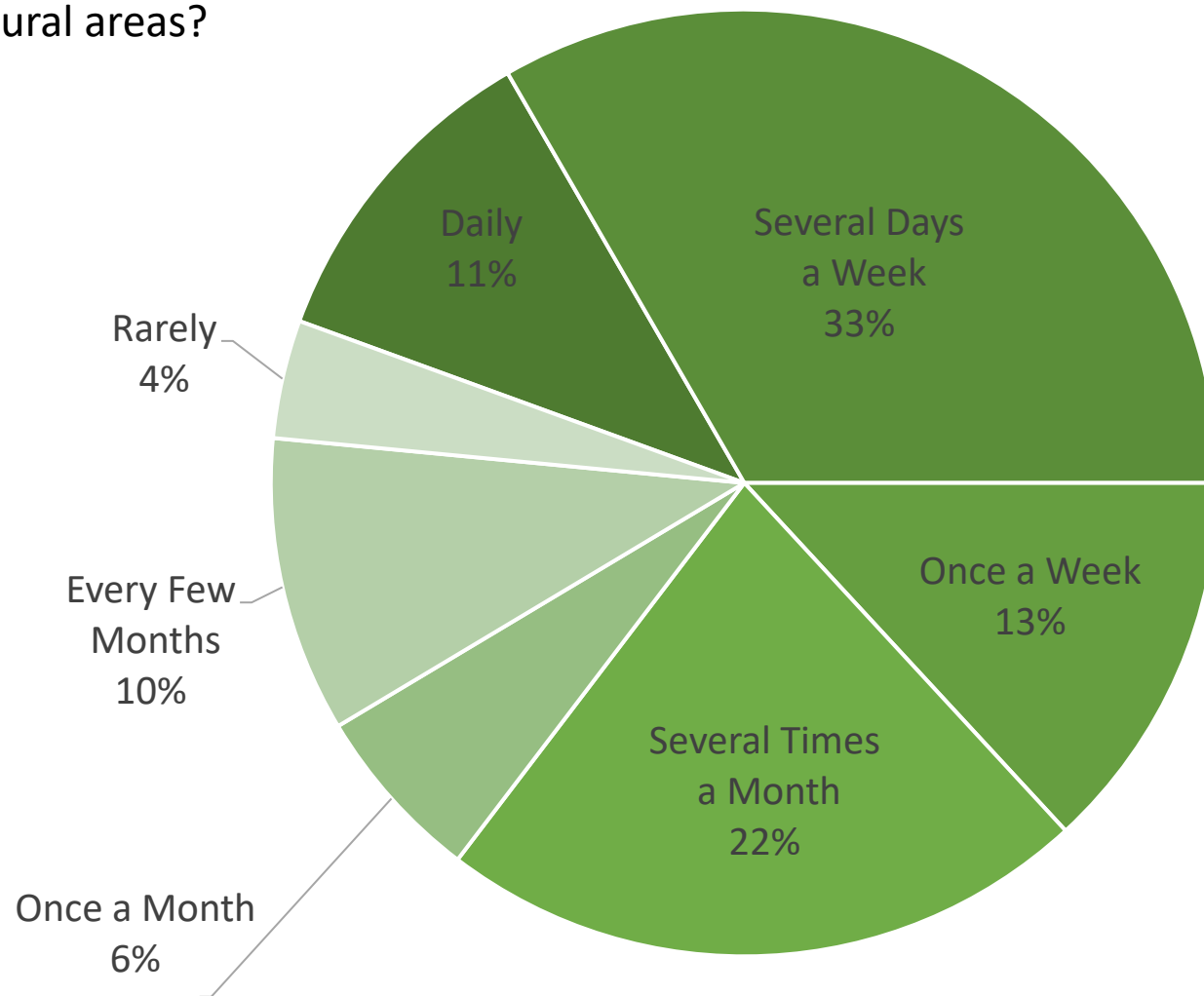
Representative Survey – Race/Ethnicity of Respondents



Source: US Census Bureau and City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021

Frequency of Usage

How often do you visit Duluth parks or natural areas?

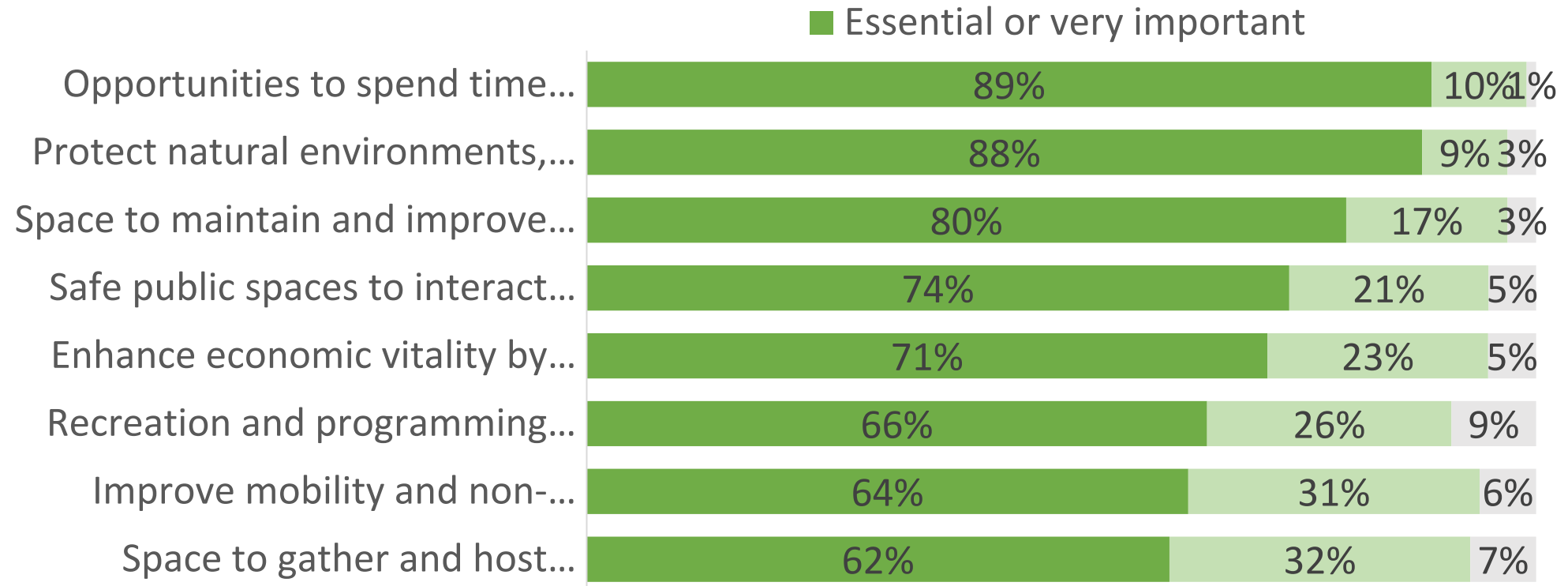


57% of residents use Duluth's parks and natural areas once a week or more.

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021

Importance of Parks

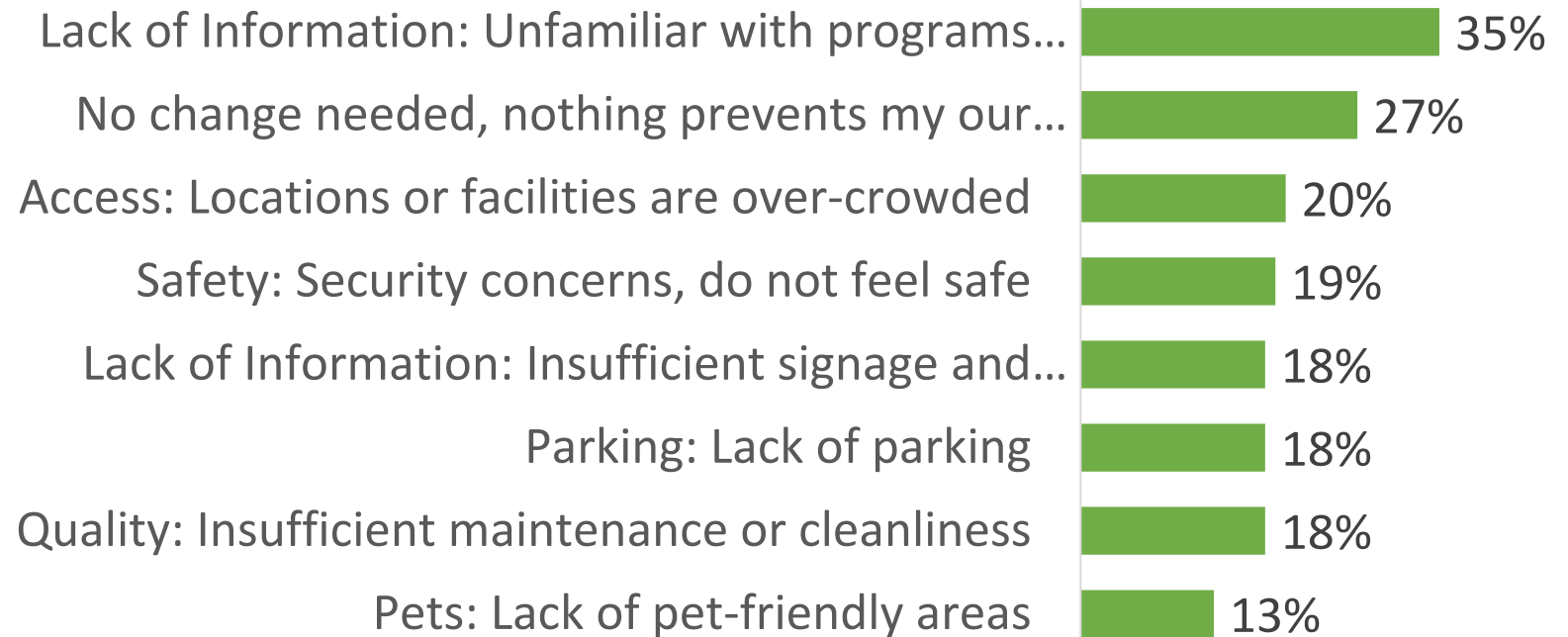
How important
are each of these
purposes of
Duluth's park
system to you?



** Note: these are the top 8 opportunities chosen as most important/essential out of the 13 provided*

Issues Preventing Usage

Do any of the following issues prevent your use of Duluth's recreation facilities, programs, parks, or natural lands, and therefore should be a priority to address? (Select up to 5)



** Note: these are the top 8 issues out of the 16 provided*

What We Have Been Learning: System Care



In the minds of residents, the most important purpose of Parks and Recreation facilities was maintaining open spaces and preserving the natural environment for resiliency and connection to nature.



Most residents prioritize maintaining the existing park system over adding new facilities.



Residents prefer a focus of maintenance on the parks and trails that are most popular and most in need, rather than spreading maintenance evenly or to underused parks and trails

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What We Have Been Learning: Amenities



Most residents feel there are enough playgrounds and unpaved trails.



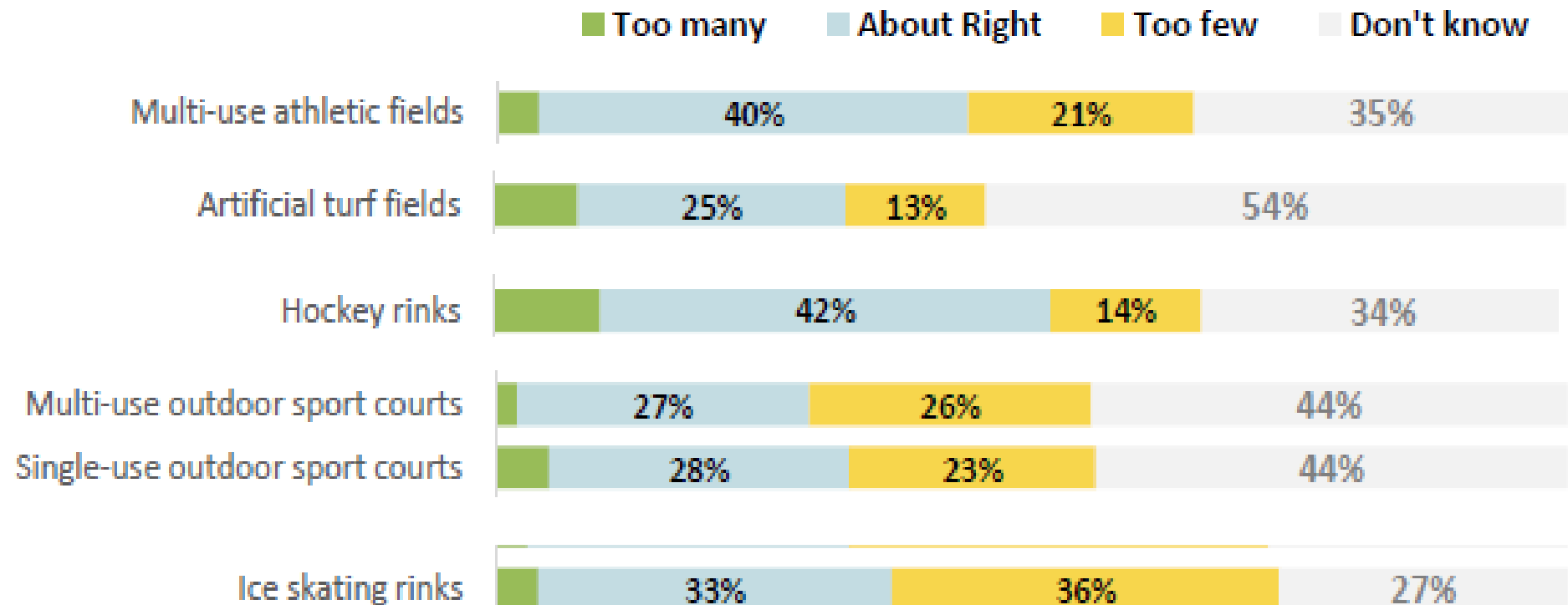
Mixed feedback on whether there are enough sports courts and fields.



Duluth residents feel there are too few restrooms, dog parks, community gardens, public access points for water and paddling, and splash pads.

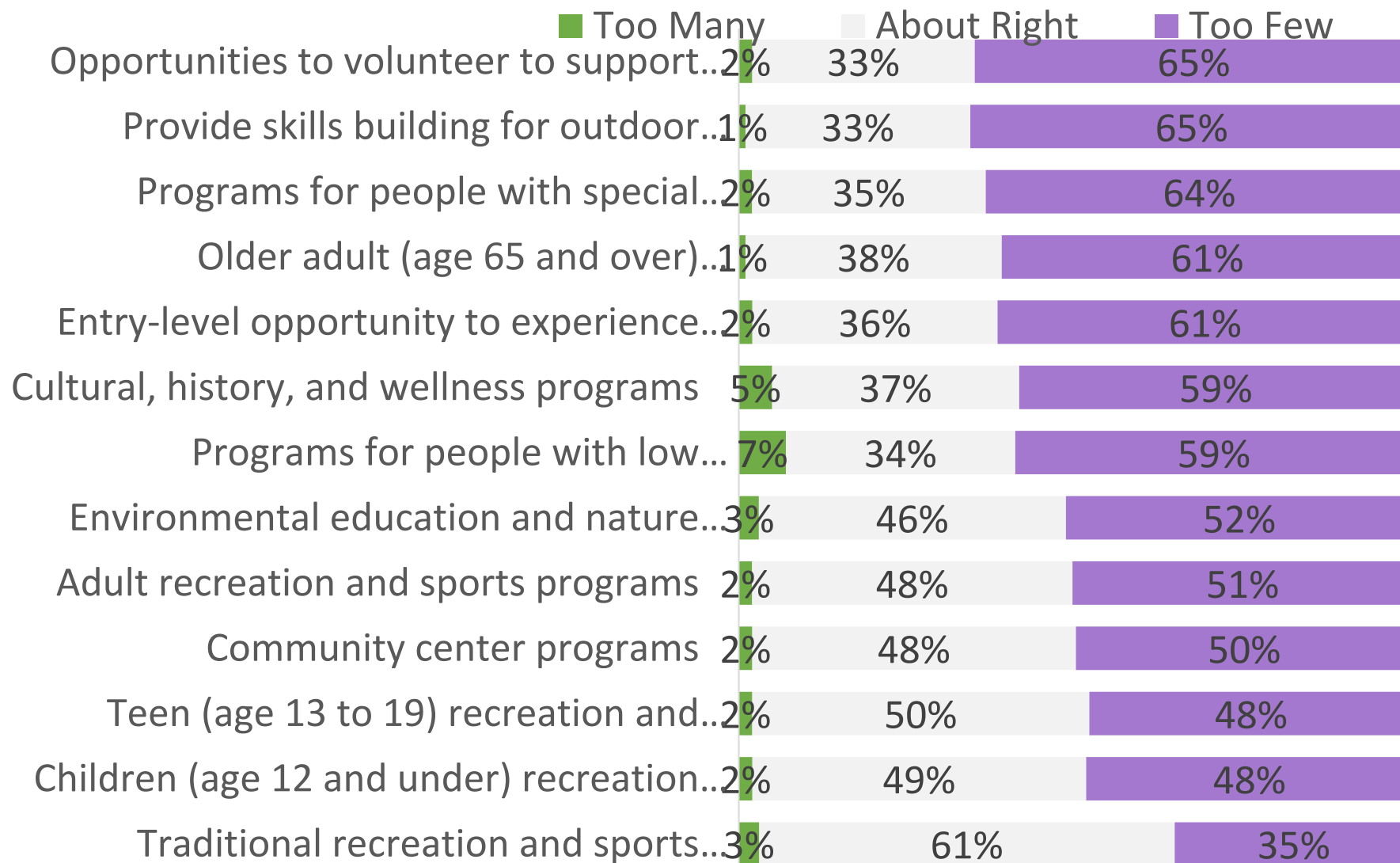
Satisfaction with Number of Amenities

Please indicate whether you think Parks & Recreation offers too much, too few, or the right amount of the following types of amenities:



Satisfaction with Current Programs

Please indicate whether you think Parks & Recreation offers too much, too few, or the right amount of the following types of programs:



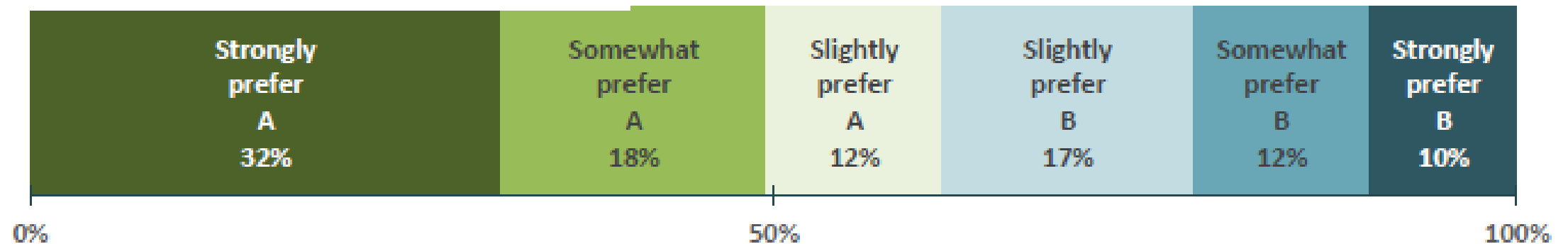
Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021

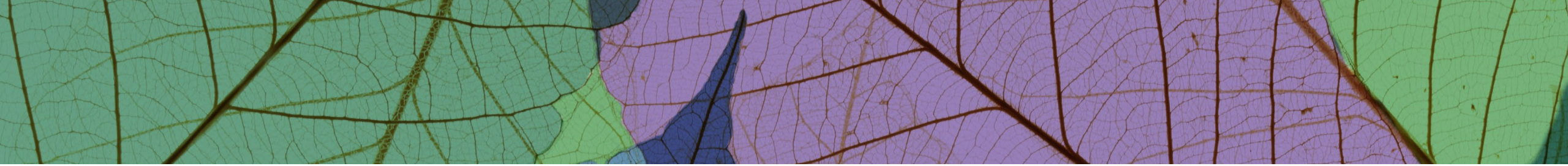
Spectrum of Priorities

Over the next few years, Parks & Recreation should prioritize

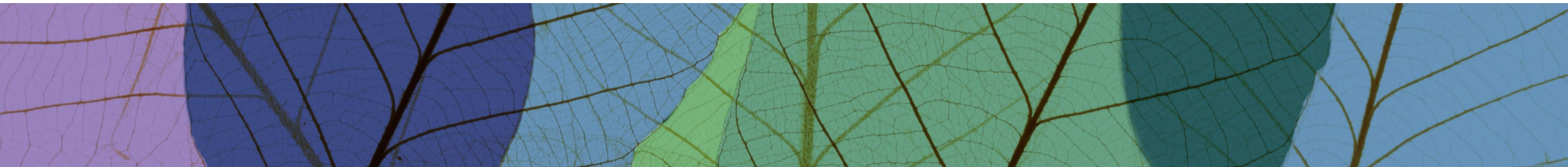
A) Maintaining: Taking better care of what we already have and improving the condition of the existing parks system, even if it means new parks, open spaces, trails, or facilities are not built or acquired.

(B) Expanding: Acquiring and preserving additional open space and park land, building new parks and recreation facilities, and being visionaries for the future, even if it means maintaining our existing system at a lower level today.





Looking Forward



Draft Project Themes



Invest in Duluth's Future



Nurture Connections to Northern Waters



Strengthen Programs and Partnerships



Park Spaces for Community Building



Sustain Natural Areas



Goals

1. Increase park funding and acknowledge parks as essential city infrastructure.
2. Invest strategically.
3. Prioritize the provision of resources to where they are needed most.

Rationale: A majority of respondents (62% SV / 59% OP) prefer the Department to take better care of what we already have rather than expanding the system.



Nurture Connections to Northern Waters



Source: Scenic Drive Cascade River to Duluth, MN | Superior Trails Travel Planner

Goals

1. Support water recreation through managed access.
2. Provide equitable, high-quality outdoor education and exploration programming.
3. Encourage connections with nature in park spaces.
4. Tailor improvements for community needs.
5. Honor the culture, storytelling, art and history of Indigenous Peoples.

Rationale: Too few water and paddling public access points (51% OP) (*48% said about right*), too few splash and spray water pads (71% OP), too few programs that provide skills building for outdoor recreation activities (65% SV), too few designated fishing areas (54% SV / xx OP), facilities that residents (with an opinion) felt there are not enough of included dog parks (54% SV / 64% OP), and there is a need/demand for an indoor facility, given the climate and excessively wet shoulder seasons.



Strengthen Programs and Partnerships



Goals

1. Bolster relationships with partners who provide sports and recreation programming.
2. Focus program offerings to fill gaps and reach critical populations.
3. Build awareness of and access to program offerings.
4. Provide programming that serves as a model of inclusion.

Rationale: The existing park system has adequate numbers of athletic fields, ice rinks and sports courts. Efforts should be put into maintaining these spaces to meet programming needs and ensuring equal access to them.



Park Spaces for Community Building



Goals

1. Ensure park spaces are inclusive and welcoming for all persons.
2. Activate park spaces to support social, cultural and economic advancement with events and community programming.

Rationale: Focus group feedback emphasized that homelessness encampments occur in hidden areas of parklands. There is a perception that the park is not safe. There is also a presence of trash. Homelessness is also an issue that faces many communities including Duluth, and often impacts park spaces.



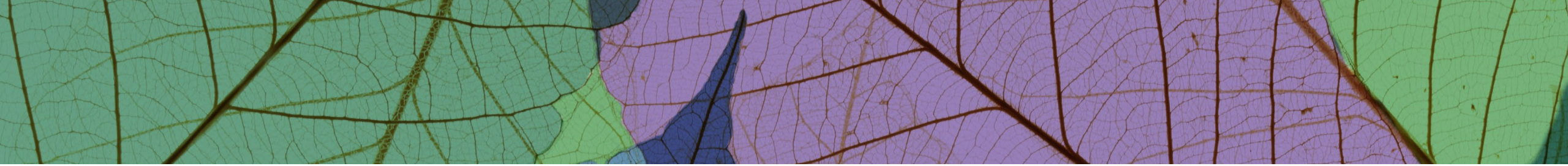
Sustain Natural Areas



Goals

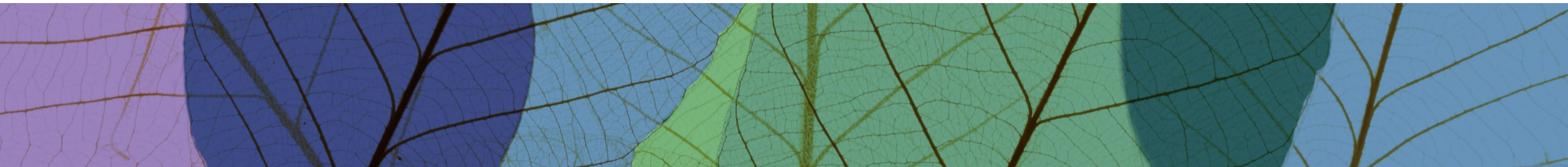
1. Advance local culture of stewardship and trail user experiences.
2. Enhance our parks containing open spaces with projects to restore ecologies and build resilience to natural disasters.
3. Enhance climate-adaptation with resilient parks.

Rationale: Trails are the most heavily used aspect of the parks system, and the number/miles of trails is currently meeting resident needs. Expansion of the unpaved trail system is not needed, but maintenance is. In response to a question about the top 5 ways households use the park system, the most common responses touched on activities that utilized trails such as walking, hiking and running on trails (81% SV / 85% OP); . Another question that respondents (with an opinion) answered spoke to having the right number of trails. Focus group feedback emphasized multi-use trail conflict and educating new users about trail stewardship.



Next Steps

- Draft plan – Summer 2022
- Final document and adoption - August



Outdoor Lifestyle



Active and Well

OTHER



Gathering and Placemaking



Quality, Sustainable Places and Care

Natural Systems

