

# QUALITY OF PLACE

## Parks and Recreation



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# IMPORTANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION

## Community Parks and Recreation: An Introduction

### 11 Benefits of a Community Recreation Center

#### Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services

- **Health Benefits**

Parks and recreation programs tend to promote an active lifestyle. Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly have lower blood pressure, delayed onset diabetes, lower rates of heart disease, and overall increased longevity. Exercise also helps increase white blood cells and aids in strengthening your immune system. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), children who live close to recreation centers tend to be more physically active and are less likely to be obese than children that do not have access to recreation centers. People who participate in recreational activities also tend to be more resilient to stress and experience better mental health.

- **Community Development**

Parks and recreation programs provide opportunities for people to get involved in their community and build relationships with one another. This is done through afterschool programs, park cleanups, sporting leagues, and community events/festivals. For children, these programs can be extremely beneficial. According to the NRPA, adolescents who do not participate in afterschool programs are 27 percent more likely to be arrested. Amongst this same group, drug use is 49 percent more likely. In essence, parks and recreation programs promote livable communities that allow people the opportunity to belong to something greater than themselves.

- **Environmental Conservation**

There are also several environmental benefits. Parks help improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, produce habitat for wildlife, and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature.

- **Economic Development**

Parks improve the local tax base and increase property values. Property values increase for privately owned land that's located closer to parks. This increase in property value increases property tax revenues and improves local economies. Further, quality parks and recreation are cited as one of the top reasons that businesses decide to relocate, according to several studies.

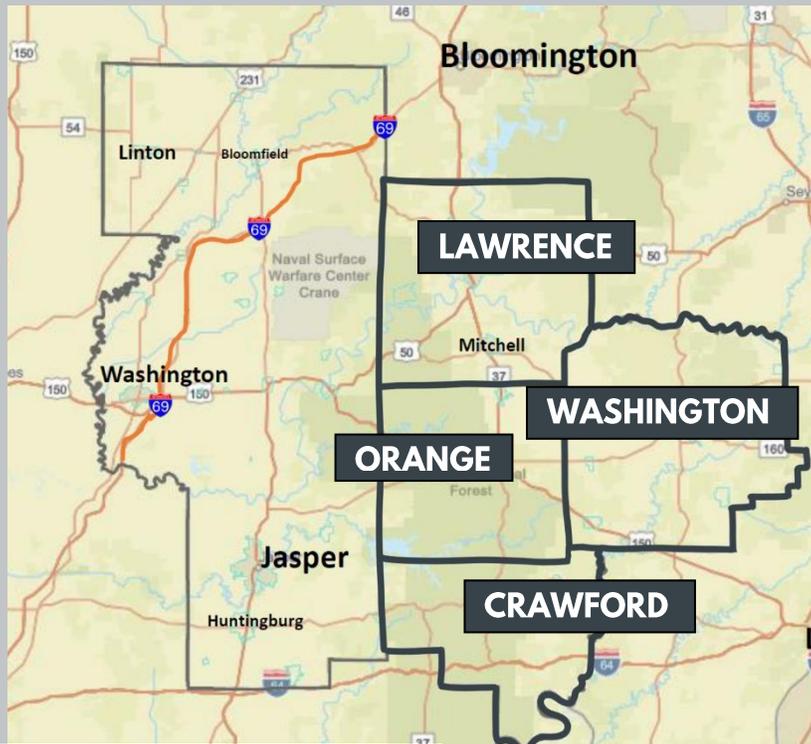
While parks and recreation programs can generate revenue from fees and charges, they also provide indirect revenues to local and regional economies from sports tournaments and special events. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses is of true and sustained value to local and regional economies.

# INVENTORY OF EXISTING RESOURCES

## Indiana Uplands Park, Recreation, and Protected Land Inventory and Opportunity Mapping

Recreation and tourism facilities (defined as a place, amenity, or piece of equipment provided for a particular recreation or visitor experience) were identified through IndianaMap and county GIS databases, internet research, and a GIS database shared by Radius Indiana.

# Inventory of Existing Trails Within the Radius Region | East Counties



## **Lawrence County | 423 recreation and tourism facilities**

The largest number of facilities were related to sports (25 percent), followed by outdoor recreation (22 percent)

This was followed by recreation and fitness facilities (16 percent) and gathering spaces (15 percent)

The least frequent type was cultural, educational, and historic attractions (2 percent)

Approximately 66 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 33 percent were privately owned (the ownership of about 1 percent of the facilities was unknown)

The majority of the facilities were publicly accessible (59 percent were free to access, while 40 percent had an associated fee)

## **Orange County | 364 recreation and tourism facilities**

The largest number of facilities were related to outdoor recreation (32 percent)

This was followed by gathering facilities (18 percent), sports facilities (17 percent), and hospitality facilities (12 percent)

The least frequent types included aquatic facilities and cultural, educational, and historic attractions (each at 3 percent)

Approximately 62 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 38 percent were privately owned

The majority of the facilities were public accessible (52 percent were free to access, while 48 percent has an associated fee)

## **Crawford County | 321 recreation and tourism facilities**

The largest number of facilities were related to outdoor recreation (45 percent)

This was followed by gathering facilities (20 percent), hospitality facilities (9 percent), sports facilities (9 percent), and recreation and fitness facilities (8 percent)

The least frequent types included aquatic facilities, cultural, educational, and historic attractions, and entertainment facilities (each at 3 percent)

Approximately 67 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 33 percent were privately owned

The majority of the facilities were publicly accessible (58 were free to access, while 41 percent had an associated fee)

## **Washington County | 304 recreation and tourism facilities**

The largest number of facilities were related to outdoor recreation (33 percent)

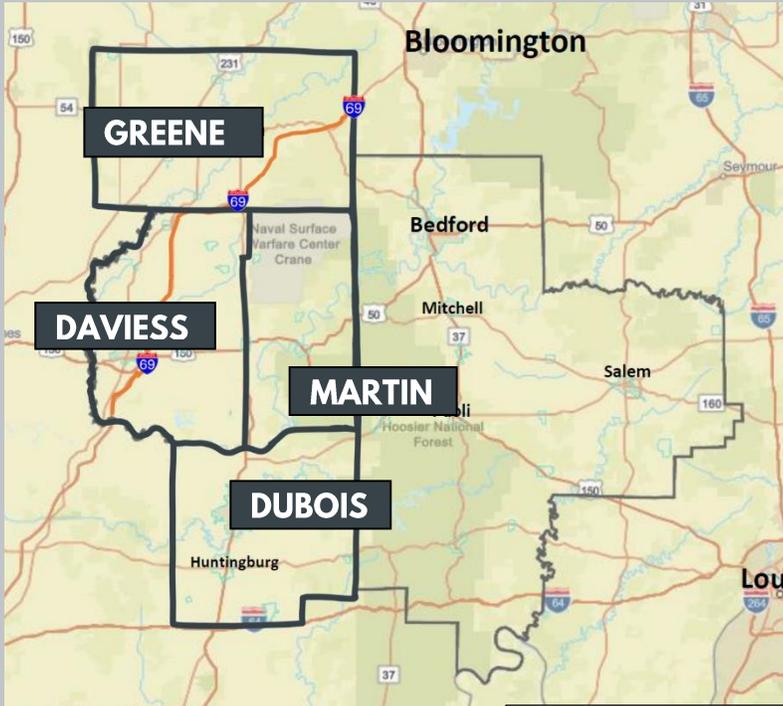
This was followed by gathering facilities (17 percent), sports facilities (16 percent), hospitality facilities (11 percent), and recreation and fitness facilities (10 percent)

The least frequent type was aquatic facilities (3 percent)

Approximately 73 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 27 percent were privately owned

The majority of the facilities were publicly accessible (59 percent were free to access, while 41 percent had an associated fee)

# Inventory of Existing Trails Within the Radius Region | West Counties



## Greene County | 358 recreation and tourism facilities

The largest number of facilities were related to sports (26 percent)

This was followed by outdoor recreation facilities (22 percent), gathering facilities (16 percent), and recreation and fitness facilities (11 percent)

The least frequent type was aquatic facilities (4 percent)

Approximately 78 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 22 percent were privately owned

All of the facilities were publicly accessible (70 percent were free to access, while 30 percent had an associated fee)

## Daviess County | 328 recreation and tourism facilities

The largest number of facilities were split between outdoor recreation (27 percent) and sports (26 percent)

This was followed by gathering facilities (15 percent), recreation and fitness facilities (12 percent), and hospitality facilities (10 percent)

The least frequent types were aquatic facilities (2 percent) and cultural, educational, and historic attractions (2 percent)

Approximately 70 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 30 percent were privately owned

The majority of the facilities were publicly accessible (68 percent were free to access, while 30 percent has an associated fee)

## Dubois County | 735 recreation and tourism facilities

The largest number of facilities were related to outdoor recreation (28 percent), followed by sports facilities (23 percent) and gathering facilities (20 percent)

Recreation and fitness facilities = 11 percent of total facilities

The least frequent type was aquatic facilities (2 percent)

Approximately 81 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 19 percent were privately owned

All of the facilities were publicly accessible (75 percent were free to access, while 25 percent had an associated fee)

## Martin County | 201 recreation and tourism facilities

The largest number of facilities were related to outdoor recreation (41 percent)

This was followed by sports facilities (15 percent) and gathering spaces (14 percent)

The least frequent type was aquatic facilities (2 percent)

Approximately 78 percent of the facilities were publicly owned, while 16 percent were privately owned (the ownership of about 6 percent of the facilities was unknown)

The majority of the facilities were publicly accessible (54 percent were free to access, while 40 percent has an associated fee)

# RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON EXISTING RESOURCES

- **Increase the number of local parks**

Most park land within the Radius region is federal or state land. While such public land is important for conservation, these sites can be more difficult to access (typically have entry fees and are farther from peoples homes). Local parks are more easily accessible and can be valuable to community health and quality of life. Research has found that individuals who spend at least 9 hours a week in public green spaces have a more positive outlook on their community. Funding and staffing will likely be challenges to developing new local parks. If developing new parks is not possible, consider non-traditional green spaces for recreation. For example, some cities are embracing cemeteries for public use by incorporating natural areas, walking trails, and arboretums into existing design and designating space for passive recreation as well as special event programming.

- **Increase the number of recreation and aquatic centers**

Communities that do not currently have a YMCA or a similar recreation facility should consider investing in one. Recreation centers support the physical, social, and mental health of communities by providing a central location that offers a variety of recreation actives and programs year-round. Developing pool facilities would also give communities the opportunity to improve social connections, physical health, and ultimately quality of life. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that there were 3,536 unintentional fatal drownings in the United States from 2005 to 2014, which averages to 10 deaths per day (emphasizes the need for water safety training opportunities).

- **Assess accessibility of existing resources**

Researchers studying disability have identified social integration as a key contributor to quality of life. For those with intellectual disabilities, recreation opportunities outside of the home are important to social integration. In order to address accessibility, a comprehensive assessment of the accessibility of park and recreation facilities in the region is recommended. A database with grants which communities can apply or to assist them in developing accessible facilities should be created.

# CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT | SUSTAINABLE PARK DEVELOPMENT

## Creating Sustainable Community Parks

Traditional park landscape typically consists of grass (with few trees), shrubs, and flowers intermixed throughout. This layout offers limited habitat for wildlife, may require considerable inputs of water to maintain, and can contribute to various forms of environmental degradation. Sustainable landscape focuses on creating an environment that is beneficial for both human use and natural resource conservation (in the short and long term). With sustainable landscaping, more attention is focused on selecting appropriate native plants, minimizing human impacts on the environment, and selecting methods that will preserve the community's natural resources and character.

### **12 Principles to Consider When Designing in a Sustainable Manner**

1. Retain as much pre-existing landscape as possible including soil, rocks, native vegetation, wetlands, and contours. This will minimize disturbances, which can open up an area to invasive species and further degradation. It can also keep costs down, as fewer plants, soil amendments, and habitat enhancements will be needed.
2. Maintain high-quality soils that will hold water and supply plants with proper nutrients. During construction, leave as much existing topsoil as possible. When new soil is brought in, ensure that it is weed free to prevent the spread of new invasive species. Using compost and other natural products for mulch and fertilizer will help enhance the soil and feed the native plants. Good quality soil will also reduce the need for fertilizers.
3. Connect new landscape components with the surrounding native vegetation to create larger contiguous areas of habitat. Many wildlife species need large ranges to find adequate food, mates and shelter. By reducing the number of roads, parking lots and turf areas (or by placing these together) habitat quality will be enhanced.

4. Create natural storm water management systems and other green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and swales with native grasses, which will slow and spread out the flow of rainwater into ditches and sewer lines. These systems take stress off stormwater utilities and help to minimize downstream flooding, while also leading to more recharging and filtering of the water that enters groundwater and aquifer systems.

5. Protect wetlands from disturbance. Avoid placing construction projects, active recreation areas, and roads/parking lots near wetlands. Natural wetlands provide many benefits to the environment that cannot easily be duplicated with man-made ones.

6. Use integrated pest management (IPM) strategies to minimize the use of chemical pesticides to control plant and insect pests. IPM is an ecologically-based approach to pest control that helps maintain strong and healthy plants. IPM can include the use of traps, sterile male pests and quarantines.

7. Minimize impermeable surface like roads, parking lots, and paved trails. Consider replacing asphalt and concrete with permeable pavement, mulch paths, gravel lots and native vegetation. Permeable surfaces help to recharge ground water, reduce erosion, lessen flooding events and filter out pollutants. When impermeable surfaces must be used, arrange them in an area where they will not fragment habitat, make them as small in area as possible, and keep them far away from water bodies.

**Permeable Surfaces (also known as porous or pervious surfaces) allow water to percolate in the soil to filter out pollutants and recharge water.**

**Impermeable (impervious) surfaces are solid surfaces that don't allow water to penetrate, forcing it to run off.**

8. Use green building practices. This may include renewable lighting and HVAC sources, low-flow toilets, motion-sensored lights, and recycled carpets, walls, and ceiling panels. Green buildings are not only economically smart, they can also be healthier for the people that live, work, and spend time inside.

\*Note: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is a green building certification program used worldwide.

9. Reduce grass to only those areas essential for recreational and other human-use activities. Grass offers little habitat benefit and is not as effective as many native plants in pollution filtration, flood prevention, and erosion control. In addition,

maintenance can have negative impacts on the surrounding environment and can require lots of mowing, watering, and fertilizing. Replace non-native grasses with native warm season grasses, which (once they are established) have lower maintenance needs.

10. If you must have some turf grass, follow these guidelines: mow early in the morning or late evening, mow high (3 inches), never remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time, leave the grass clippings on the lawn as a natural source of fertilizer and moisture-retention, and choose a native turf grass variety.

11. Use native plants (especially trees) around any stream, lake or wetland. This helps to filter pollutants before they reach water bodies and discourages geese from staying in the area. Roots also prevent erosion of soils into the water body and minimize flooding events. Shade from these buffers acts as a temperature control for the water body, which enhances habitat for aquatic organisms. The food and shelter values of these buffers also enhances habitat. By selecting the right kinds of plants, the scenic views of the water bodies can be enhanced.

12. Identify and remove invasive plant species whenever possible. Invasive plants have several detrimental effects on natural habitats. Most invasive plants grow densely and spread so rapidly that native vegetation is choked out.



*Example of a sustainable park design.*

## EDUCATION AND AWARENESS FOR SUSTAINABLE PARKS

Because sustainable parks differ from traditional landscape, the average park user, staff member, or municipal official may not initially appreciate or understand the changes. Before sustainable landscape is designed and constructed, information should be obtained about the community's concerns and wishes. Exchanging information and establishing a public relations campaign is essential in determining this.

The public should also be included in the design process early on. Increased participation in the early stages increases the chances that all stakeholders can have a real impact on the outcome and that they will agree with the final results.

- **Educational material**

Relate new information to what most people already know to help them understand it more fully and remember it better. Using visual information along with bulleted sentences or phrases helps get a message across much more effectively. When creating written educational material, the first step is to figure out what you hope to accomplish through the material. Who is the target audience and why do you expect them to be interested in your message? What subject matter will you cover?

Once you determine these elements, you must decide what type of educational materials you want to create (brochures, fact sheets, newsletters, interpretive displays)

**The Eppley Institute** offers several educational courses that can help you create your own lesson plan, or you might find an existing lesson plan that fits your needs.



*Example of a sustainable park design.*

## ▪ Volunteer Programs

Planting native species, removing invasive, stabilizing streambanks, and leading nature hikes are just a few of the projects that local volunteers can be involved in. But while volunteers can be a great help, it is not without its challenges. You will need a certain level of organization and leadership to be able to coordinate the volunteers and keep them motivated.

The use of volunteers falls into one of three categories:

- One-time events – using a large number of volunteers focused on one issue
- Regular volunteers – typically volunteer once a month
- Independent, well-trained volunteers – come in on a regular basis to work on one or more issues

Make sure to give volunteers enough to do so they don't feel like they are wasting their time. If the budget allows, giving out t-shirts or other small tokens of appreciation can do wonders on volunteer morale.



*Example of park volunteering.*

# CASE STUDIES

\*Making existing public spaces more sustainable

## **Triangle Park (Philadelphia, PA)**

Triangle Park is a neighborhood park with a playground, baseball field, and basketball court – the park has a history of flooding. Residents and a team of stormwater professionals (including a licensed engineer) looked at existing conditions in the park and the surrounding area to identify best management practices that could alleviate flooding and water quality problems. Essentially, the asphalt basketball court and grassy baseball field were impervious to stormwater, which meant that instead of rain soaking into the ground, it accumulated on the surface. Combined with runoff from nearby development, this contributed to the local flooding.

Once land and soil surveys were complete and best management practices were agreed upon and accepted by the community, the engineer prepared final designs and bid the project for construction (due to budget limitations, construction was bid in two phases):

- Phase 1 – The porous asphalt basketball court and subsurface infiltration system was successfully installed over a 5-week period (cost = \$75,000). Porous asphalt is a modified asphalt mix with large pore spaces that allows water to rapidly drain down into the underlying system. When used on parking lots, porous asphalt requires routine vacuum cleaning to prevent litter or other dirt from accumulating on the surface, which impedes drainage.
- Phase 2 – the final design and installation of rain gardens is phase 2. The location selected for two small rain gardens was a formerly under-used area near the playground subject to runoff and erosion. Another consideration influencing the location of the gardens was the community’s interest in creating a visual break between the playground and the basketball court.

## Pennsburg Nature Preserve (Harleysville, PA)

Members of the Shade Tree Committee decided that the area's one and only nature park (inherited from a local golf course) needed some serious work in order to meet its namesake: The Pennsburg Nature Preserve. Some concerns were that the stream in the park was badly eroded, there was too much grass to mow, the park wasn't natural, and it lacked decent vegetation and floodplain forest.

A concept plan was drawn up that included:

- 1.3 acres of land was converted from mowed lawn to native tallgrass meadows
- 490 feet of streambank stabilization
- 4 stream sills to elevate the channel back to its pre-disturbance level
- 2 acres of floodplain forest where golf course mowing had recently ceased
- 15 native shrub and tree patches in the existing mowed lawn to provide visual variety, include habitat for native birds and small animals, cluster examples of native shrubs, and reduce mowing requirements
- A walking trail around the meadow and along the stream

An ecological consultant provided direction, assistance, and oversight of the installation team (the volunteers). Volunteers included Pennsburg staff and elected officials, biology and science classes from local middle and high schools, individuals doing mandatory community service, and a group of graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania. The volunteers were involved in a variety of park improvement projects:

- **The streambanks** – a series of seven different formulae were used and worked as expected to stop the excessive rate of bank erosion
- **The stream sills** – the sills began to work immediately upon installation and have performed their intended function of re-accumulating gravel beds in the stream
- **The meadow** – a variety of native species were planted to create a tallgrass meadow
- Removals of exotic invasive plants

Transforming parts of a local park into natural areas takes tenacity (requires constant corrections and maintenance). However, one thing that became apparent was that many volunteers recognized for the first time that, because of the pressures of exotic invasive plants, the increasing surges of floodwaters related to new development, and the lack of large areas of wild native vegetation, people have to do things to keep nature from being overrun.

## Flourtown Country Club (Doylestown, PA)

The township determined that improvements to the Flourtown Country Club were needed and decided to create a new entrance with more defined circulation to enhance the safety of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The township engineer saw an opportunity to create a more sustainable site, while still meeting the needs of the township and addressing the immediate safety concerns.

Sustainable design elements include:

- Decreased pavement and non-porous surfaces
- Use of tiered gardens to slow the rate of runoff
- Use of native vegetation to filter sediments and pollutants from the stormwater
- Shade trees were planted along the perimeter of the parking and in islands to provide shade and cool the pavement, thereby improving the microclimate
- Use of native vegetation that is suited to the area and will require less maintenance than exotic species

Result: The township now has an attractive, functional, and more sustainable entrance and parking areas for the Flourtown Country Club. The primary needs of improving pedestrian and vehicular safety were met with an attractive design that also was able to include sustainable elements.



*Flourtown Country Club.*

## Local Example: Switchyard Park (Bloomington, IN)

The Switchyard Park Master Plan outlines several improvements to the park. These improvements are designed to meet a series of goals. One of these goals is a restored natural landscape.

Key design elements to achieve this goal:

- Comprehensive restoration of the Clear Creek Corridor to include stream bank erosion control, removal of invasive species, enhancement of wetland areas, restoration of habitat with native trees, shrubs, and understory plantings
- Environmental remediation to include the capping of soil to isolate existing soil pollutants
- Utilization of best stormwater management practices – including permeable pavement, daylighting of underground pipes, and bioswales – to reduce and cleanse stormwater runoff



*Switchyard Park Master Plan.*

# CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT | PUBLIC SPACE RECYCLING

## Development of Best Practices in Public Space Recycling

### The environmental need for public space recycling

One reason we waste resources by throwing them away instead of recycling them is because more and more items are consumed on the go to accommodate our busy lifestyles. It's easy to recycle at home with established programs but it can be difficult to find recycling containers in public spaces. Burning garbage in an incinerator or burying it in a landfill contributes to global warming and releases toxic substances into our air and water. Recycling is an effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

About 80 percent of what we make is thrown away within six months of production. Every product we use has embedded energy, which is the energy it took to extract, transport, and transform the materials needed to produce the product. Every single item we recycle results in significant energy savings because recycling takes advantage of this embedded energy.

### Recycling as the foundation

Public space recycling supports a culture of recycling and demonstrates the value of recyclable materials. Public space recycling increases people's exposure to sorting practices and it begins to transition the collection infrastructure to manage recycling.



*Example of public space recycling.*

## **The economic need for public space recycling**

Public spaces are perceived by the public as linked to the city infrastructure in which they are located. Public space recycling provides an important addition to the infrastructure as a public amenity that impacts the overall quality of life in a community.

## **Contamination**

The contamination of trash in recycling containers is often cited as the main reason to discontinue a program. Most public space recycling containers are unsupervised and look just like trash containers. It is often impossible to determine who has caused contamination because usage is communal and anonymous. This poses some significant challenges, including the need to clearly differentiate the recycling containers.

Contamination is usually best addressed with education at the point of discard (right on the container itself). In order to participate, the public needs to be aware of the recycling program and needs education on how to use it. Education must be appropriate for different ages, familiarity with recycling, and native languages. Providing text in multiple languages and making use of the recycling arrows and images of recyclable material can help eliminate contamination.

## **Measurement**

In order to advocate for the continuation or growth of recycling programs, the costs and benefits need to be carefully weighted. By carefully tracking time, money, and capital invested as well as the weight and composition of material collected, program managers can celebrate success and gain more support. Most haulers that pick-up recycling and trash do not track the volume they collect at each pickup unless they are contractually required to do so

Instead, it is standard practice to weigh loads at the end of the route, making it difficult to obtain information about a specific location unless additional tracking is implemented with collection staff or estimated at the point of collection by the hauler.

## **Implementing public space recycling**

Clearly define the budget and scope of the program and identify phases of implementation. Consider prioritizing visible and popular public spaces first. Build strong partnerships with stakeholders, including the community (select public spaces where there is a strong indication of partner involvement). Design the program around ensuring that materials really get recycled. Develop systems to track, measure, and communicate results.



*Public space recycling in Linton, Indiana.*

### **Collaborating with stakeholders**

Establishing new partnerships takes time but paying attention to this up front lays the foundation for success. A stakeholder working group should include people who are invested in the long-term success of the program. The members of a public space recycling working group can include a wide range of community representative but at the very least needs to include representatives from the governing body, the “host” of the recycling program, the implementer, and the designer of the program

The working group holds the power to:

- Make decisions about the direction and logistics of the program
- Envision the full design of the program
- Launch the program
- Make changes to the program
- Facilitate the broader community process and external communication

An additional resource to help build collaboration and keep working groups moving forward:  
**Working Together: A Toolkit for Cooperative Effort, Networks and Coalitions**

### **Involving the community**

In general, a community process can be anything from a series of meetings to an online survey, but the ultimate goals are to get to know who is using this space, what level of involvement or investment there is and from whom, so you can bring those invested community members along in the process and cater your program and communications to the right audience.

Things to keep in mind:

- Broadening your process to involve the community is going to take time
- Community input will allow you to design a recycling program that reflects the values of the community it's serving, which creates a culture of ownership and care around it
- The park's community stakeholders can also be a network for extended education – education beyond the label on the container
- Most everyone is motivated to recycle for similar reasons even though the community around each public space may value different things about that space

### **The value of public art**

Public art throughout the world has proven to stimulate environmental renewal and propose new ways to co-exist with our environment. Public art has a way of garnering ownership and excitement from the community, and when paired with recycling, it can inspire people to participate and take ownership of the program.

Questions to consider:

- What role can artists play in promoting behavioral change?
- Who says public space recycling can't be functional and beautiful?
- Can we create a public space recycling model that is consistent with the aesthetic of landscape design and the beauty of the natural environment?
- Can we elevate the act of recycling to clearly distinguish it from wasting?
- Can artists not only create a better more artful container but also foster the "ritual" of recycling too?

# CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT | ACCESSIBILITY

**\*Note that the Eppley Institute and the National Center on Accessibility provide consulting on this topic.**

American Society of Landscape Architects - Professional Practice | Universal Design

If we want everyone to participate in public life, we must design and build an inclusive public realm that is accessible to all.

While the legal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are typically met in public spaces, these requirements are a minimum standard for accessibility. Because of their focus on technical aspects of accessibility, ADA standards often result in spaces that are still very challenging for people with disabilities to access, leaving them physically and mentally disconnected from public life.



*Example of an accessible park.*

The following principles should guide the planning and design of all public spaces, regardless of the intended audience:

- **Accessible**

All public spaces should be physically accessible to everyone. Specific areas should not be designed for people with specific disabilities.

- **Comfortable**

A feeling of safety is the baseline for feeling comfortable, but an inclusive sense of belonging helps everyone feel comfortable in a space.

- **Participatory**

People with disabilities should be included in the design process. Abled designers won't know all of the difficulties that people with disabilities experience.

- **Ecological**

Exposure to green space is proven to provide mental, cognitive, and physical health benefits for people of all ages and abilities. Public space designs should provide these benefits throughout the built environment, while fostering ecological resilience and supporting biodiversity.

- **Legible**

Legible multi-sensory signage helps people of all ages and abilities understand how to move through spaces. Delineating places of movement and relaxation can help people understand how spaces are meant to function as well.

- **Multi-Sensory**

Incorporating design elements that can be accessed through different senses provides other systems of navigation. For example, the use of auditory and textural cues can aid in wayfinding and enrich the experience for all.

- **Predictable**

Maintaining the same clear and understandable design cues throughout a public space creates predictable environments for people of all ages and abilities, increasing comfort and safety.

- **Walkable**

Often, people with disabilities are limited in the distances they can travel. In too many public spaces, using a wheelchair is not an option because the environment was designed primarily for pedestrians.

## Playground Accessibility

An accessible playground allows kids with or without disabilities to access and use a variety of playground equipment. The accessibility guidelines in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require new playgrounds to comply with the standards they set forth. They also require existing playgrounds undergoing alternations to comply.

In addition to being accessible, playgrounds should be inclusive. An inclusive playground allows children of all abilities and developmental stages to play in the same space and creates a nurturing environment for all.

## Making Playgrounds Accessible and Inclusive

- Evaluate Your Playground

To make sure your playground is ADA compliant, consult the [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#).

- **Determine Needs**

Consider the unique needs of all kids. You might take the following into account:

- Adding sensory activities – Make sure to include a mix of both calmer areas and sensory rich activities that may involve music, lights, or spinning motions.
- Boosting accessibility – Think about how children will access play equipment. Consider activities that will engage all children physically and help them build strength and coordination. Also, consider how much effort a child will have to put into reaching equipment.
- Creating social space – Make sure to include activities and equipment all children can use at the same time, so they get the chance to interact and socialize

## EQUIPMENT TO INCLUDE

- **Ramps**

Ramps allow all children to reach elevated play components. They should provide a space to turn around in a wheelchair. Handrails on both sides of ramps allow kids to effortlessly pull themselves along.

- **Inclusive Slides**

An accessible and inclusive slide makes it easy for children of all abilities to reach the top of the slide. Slides should be accessible from the ground level and allow kids to pull themselves up by gripping the side rail.

- **Ground-Level Play Activities**

Ground level activities allow children to enter and exit equipment at the ground level. When equipment is in the same play area, children get to interact and play regardless of developmental or ability levels.

- **Sensory activities**

Sensory activities are enjoyable for all kids and often easy to add to any playground. For example, you might install a piece of musical equipment so kids can explore different sounds.

- **Inclusive swings**

Swinging helps autistic children process sensory information with soothing, repetitive motions. For all children, swinging helps improve motor skills and coordination.

- **Wheelchair-Accessible Equipment**

Some children can't transfer out of their wheelchairs, but they still want to play alongside their friends. Movement experiences are essential for them to develop coordination and balance. Choose equipment that a person in a wheelchair can easily roll onto, such as a wheelchair accessible merry-go-round.

## Playground Grant Resource Guide



*Example of an accessible park.*

# CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT | ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

The World Bank recognizes alternative service delivery as a creative and dynamic process of public sector restructuring that improves the delivery of services to clients by sharing governance functions with individuals, community groups, and other government entities. This also includes the private and nonprofit sectors.

## A Handful of Alternative Service Delivery for Local Government

### **Types of Alternative Service Delivery**

- **Outsourcing/Contracting Out**

Outsourcing involves taking internal organizational functions and paying an outside firm to handle them. Outsourcing is done to save money, improve quality, or obtain specialized services and expertise. Outsourcing was first done in the data processing industry and has since spread to the service, manufacturing, and public sectors.

Example: Hiring an outside company for landscaping needs.

- **Managed Competition**

Under managed competition, an internal department bids against external contractors and the service will be provided by the entity that submits the best bid – whether internal or external. This process clearly defines the steps to be taken by government employees in preparing their own approach to performing an activity.

- **Interlocal Agreements**

An interlocal agreement is a contract between governmental entities that enables them to share resources for their mutual benefit. An interlocal agreement can take many forms, ranging from an informal handshake to elaborate contracts structured according to statutory requirements. Agreements can exist between cities, counties, a city and a county, between cities and school districts, between school districts, and in many other combinations. Interlocal agreements often increase the effectiveness and efficiency of providing local government services.

Example: **A metro park district operating and maintaining certain park facilities owned by the city**

- **Service Consolidation**

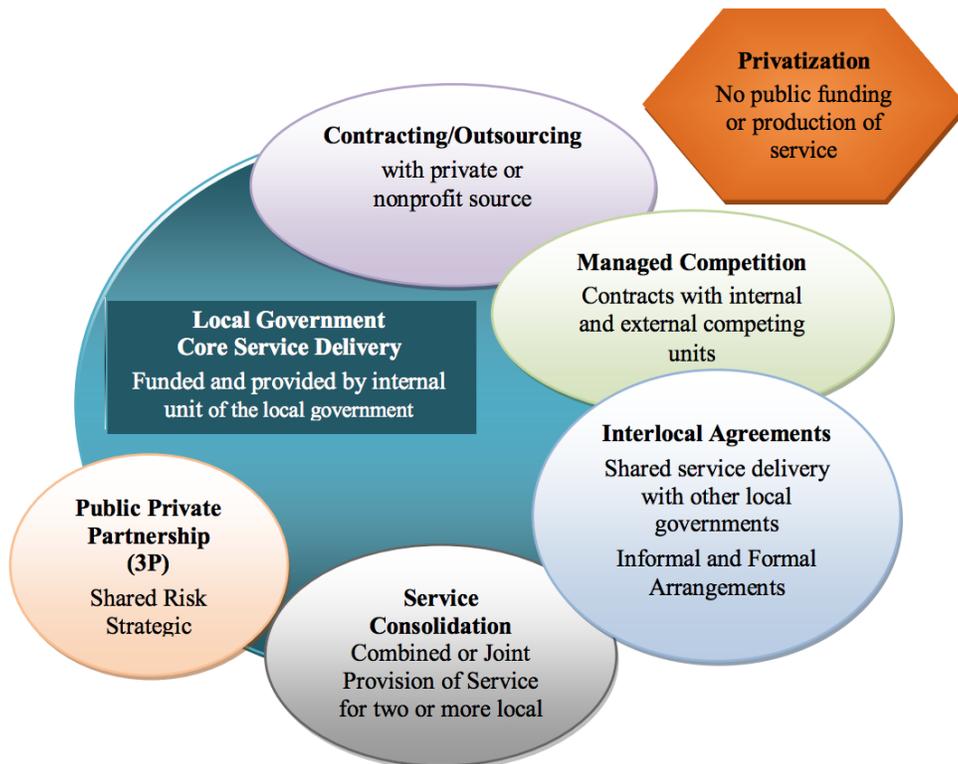
Service consolidation focuses on agreements between governments to merge existing departments into one unit which is overseen by representatives from both governments. This definition excludes arrangements in which one government contracts with another in order to receive a specific service. Under service consolidation, there is one department administrator who oversees the department and answers to both communities equally. Typically, an oversight board comprised of representatives from both governments is established to oversee the consolidated department.

Example: **The Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department and the Monroe County Health departments partnering to install disposal boxes for needles in three city parks.**

- **Public Private Partnerships**

A PPP venture is a long-term, strategic contractual agreement between a local government and a private sector entity, where the skills and assets of each sector are shared in delivering a service or facility for the use of the general public and where each party shares in the risks and rewards in the delivery of the service and/or facility.

Example: **The Central Park Conservancy maintaining Central Park in NYC**



# EMERGING TREND | PICKLEBALL

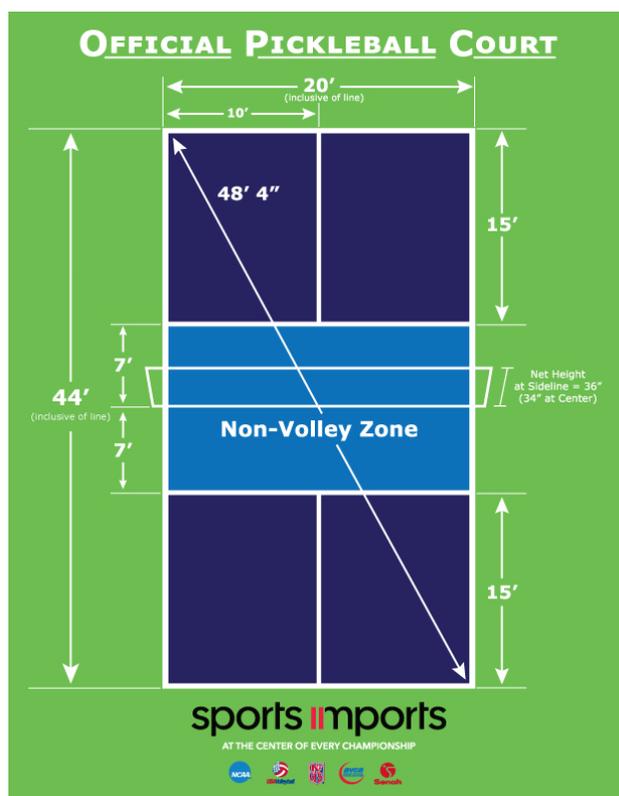
## Health Benefits of Pickleball for Aging Adults

Pickleball is a popular sport that first made its appearance in 1965 and has recently been making waves across the county. Pickleball is a cross between tennis, badminton, and ping pong.

Physical and Mental Benefits of Playing Pickleball:

- Strengthens muscles
- Boosts cardiovascular health
- Reduces stress
- Helps maintain weight goals
- Enhances brain function

## How to Build an Outdoor Pickleball Court



## Creating a Pickleball Court

### **Step 1 – Determine your space**

- Will you be converting a tennis or badminton court?
- Are you building a multi-court complex?
- Are you starting a new pickleball court from scratch?
- Whatever your situation, it's important to keep in mind the standard size of pickleball courts and adjust according to your unique program needs
  - For example, if you need to use a tennis court to play pickleball, it can easily be divided into four pickleball courts so multiple games can occur simultaneously
  - If you are building a multi-court pickleball system, the overall construction and dimensions would be the same as a single court. The only difference is that you will be building multiple courts on a larger scale, and will need fences with padding between each pickleball court.
- Pickleball Court Dimensions = 20 by 44 feet (for both singles and doubles)
- Pickleball Net Height = 36 inches at the sideline, 34 inches in the middle
- Pickleball Playing Area = 30 by 60 feet is the standard when converting a tennis court, but 34 by 64 feet is preferable for tournament play or a standalone pickleball court

### **Step 2 – Surface materials**

- If you are building your outdoor pickleball court from scratch or have an existing court that needs revamped, you will need to choose what type of court surface is best for you
- Common types of court surface material
  - Concrete – the best in terms of durability and value
  - Asphalt – a good option if you want to go the more affordable route, but it can require additional upkeep
  - Snap together plastic – can be applied over asphalt or concrete when you don't want to permanently alter the surface of a multi-use court
  - For a more sustainable alternative, porous asphalt – a modified asphalt mix with large pore space that allows water to rapidly drain down into the underlying system

### **Step 3 – Perimeter fencing**

- Fencing is crucial for multi-court pickleball as it contains the ball within the playing area and provides security for players and spectators
- There are several different types of fencing to choose from, but fences made from wire are the most common as they allow players and spectators to see into and out of the court (they also allow light to pass through easily)
- Whatever fencing you choose, be sure to cover it with rust-resistant material to keep players safe from injury
- Pickleball Fencing Dimensions – 10 feet high is preferred, but 4 feet can also work as long as the top of the fence is padded

### **Step 4 – Lighting**

- Lighting for pickleball courts follow a standard protocol
- All pickleball courts should include two 1,500-watt light poles
- You want to ensure that each pole is 18 to 20 feet high and mounted in the center, at least 24 inches from the court

### **Step 5 – Net Systems**

- Contacting an expert to help find the right net system is the next step
- There are many types of pickleball poles and systems to choose from
- Outdoor pickleball poles, however, are specifically designed to withstand the elements of being outdoors for long periods of time
- A complete outdoor pickleball net system includes
  - Two poles
  - One ratchet
  - One outdoor pickleball net
  - Sleeves (may or may not be included)

### **Step 6 – Set up your court**

- After the pickleball surface, fencing, lighting, and other materials are picked, it's time to set everything up
- Hiring a professional contractor can help ensure everything is built and set up to code
- Orient your court north-south
  - Outdoor pickleball courts are exposed to environmental elements that can obstruct players' vision (position of the sun, shadows cast onto the surface of court, etc.) so it's important to orient your pickleball court north-south
- Court lines should be white and two-inches wide

- Marker lines can be drawn using sidewalk chalk, green tape, orange masking tape, or acrylic paint
- The standard lines for a pickleball court should include
  - Baselines – these run parallel to the pickleball net on both ends of the court
  - Sidelines – these run perpendicular to the pickleball net on both sides of the court
  - Non-volley line – these lines should be 7 feet from the net and located on each side between the sidelines, running parallel to the net
  - Non-volley zones – these are areas of the pickleball court surrounded by two sidelines, the non-volley line, and the net
  - Centerlines – located on each side of the net running between the non-volley line and baseline
  - Service courts – run on either side of the centerline, surrounded by a non-volley line, sideline, and baseline

Be sure to follow pickleball court layout guidelines from the [USA Pickleball Association](#) to ensure that everything is set up according to regulation pickleball standards.



*Example of a pickleball.*

# EMERGING TREND | DISC GOLF

## A Guide to Disc Golf from the PDGA

### **What is disc golf?**

Disc golf is played much like golf but instead of balls and clubs, players use flying discs. The sport was formalized in the 1970s and shares with golf the object of completing each hole in the fewest strokes (or in this case, the fewest throws). The game begins with a disc being thrown from a tee area to a target (which is the hole). The hole can be one of a number of disc golf targets (the most common is an elevated metal basket). As the player progresses down the fairway, he or she must make each consecutive throw from the spot where the previous throw landed. The trees, shrubs, and terrain located in and around the fairways provide challenging obstacles for the golfer.

### **Who plays it?**

Disc golf is designed to be enjoyed by people of all ages, abilities, and economic status, making it a great lifetime fitness activity. Because disc golf is so easy to learn, no one is excluded (players can match their pace to their capabilities and proceed from there).

### **Where is it played?**

Many city parks house free disc golf courses, while converted golf courses and private venues continue to pop up. A nine-hole disc golf course can be established on as little as five acres of land, and a champion-caliber 18-hole course uses 30 to 40 acres. Disc golf courses can coexist with existing park facilities and activity areas, with the ideal location combining wooded and open terrains and a variety of topographical change. The need for more courses is constant as the sport continues to grow in popularity.

## Why should people play?

Disc golf provides upper and lower body conditioning, aerobic exercise, and mental stimulation. Concentration skills increase by mastering shots and negotiating obstacles. Scheduling is also flexible. A casual round takes one to two hours and may be played alone, eliminating the difficulty of scheduling tee times. The sport also has low barriers to entry – a professional quality disc costs roughly \$15 and it only takes one for basic play.

## SAMPLE COURSE PROPOSAL

[PDGA Sample Course Proposal](#)

[PDGA Course Development](#)



*Example of disc golf course.*

## **Disc Golf Course Design Goals**

Satisfying the design requirements of the people and organizations who approve use of the land and fund the equipment for the course. This includes meeting local, state, and federal construction and safety requirements.

Design the course to have sufficient visibility of players, pedestrians, and vehicles who may pass near or through it, without the use of mandatory objects. Design the course with the potential for multiple configurations to serve all skill levels and for possible tournaments

Design a well-balanced course with a range of hole lengths, pars, and a good mixture of holes. Utilize elevation changes and available foliage. Work to minimize potential damage to foliage and reduce chances for erosion.

Seeking experienced design help from qualified individuals is highly recommended. Experienced designers can be well worth their fees by guiding clients through the process, recommending cost effective processes and equipment alternatives, and perhaps most important, improving visibility and reducing interference related problems.

# EMERGING TREND | DOG PARK

## Dog Park Guide

A dog park is a public park (typically fenced) where people and their dogs can play together. Similarly, a dog run is a smaller fenced area created for the same use, that is often located within an existing park. As the names imply, these places offer dogs off-leash play areas where their owners can enjoy a park-like setting and the chance to socialize with other dogs and their owners. These types of parks are being established all over the country and offer a wealth of benefits to dogs, dog owners, and the community as a whole.



*Example of a dog park.*

## **Steps for Creating a Dog Park**

### **1. Start with a core group of committed dog park activists**

Talk with individuals who are concerned about the lack of off-leash spaces. These may be people you already know, or you may want to put a notice on your website or in the local paper. This group will be responsible for meeting with public officials, making presentations, maintaining the park, and defusing any problems that arise.

### **2. Hold a public meeting**

Once the core group is in place, a larger community meeting will help you get the word out to supporters and solicit input and suggestions. Contact other dog owners, dog-related clubs, veterinarians, and humane societies. Encourage people to write letters of support and make presentations to community groups whose backing would be valuable.

### **3. Educate dog owners on the need to be responsible**

The owner who neglects to pick up after his/her dog or who allows an aggressive or unsocialized dog to run loose can do a lot of damage to your cause and undermine chances of success.

### **4. Write a clear mission statement**

Detail the need and purpose of the park, stressing the benefits to dog owners, their canines, and the greater community. Example mission statement: "To establish a fenced-in, off-leash dog park where well-behaved canines can exercise in a clean, safe environment without endangering people, property, or wildlife. To develop a beautiful, well-maintained space open to all dog lovers and friends who are willing to uphold the park's rules and restrictions. To view this park as a community project designed to satisfy the needs of dog owners and non-dog owners alike."

### **5. Choose a site**

The ideal area will be a safe, accessible location that takes into account the needs of park users as well as the effect the park will have on neighbors and the environment.

## **6. Create a budget**

Determine how much it will cost to construct and maintain the park (account for grass, fences, garbage removal, lawn maintenance, drinking water, field drainage, lighting, benches, and dog waste stations)

How will revenue be generated?

- Financed completed by the town or city
- User fees – requiring all park users to pay an annual or daily fee
- Fundraisers
- Sponsorships (businesses find numerous benefits in having their ads displayed)

## **7. Solicit input and seek the approval of your community**

Meet with proposed park neighbors. As soon as someone brings up a concern, address it and try to come up with a solution.

## **Rules and Design**

The key to future and continued success of the dog park will be strictly enforced rules. For the most part, this means getting people to clean up after their dogs, quiet excessive barking and curtail any aggressive behavior.

Maintenance will be another important consideration. In some areas, park associations work in conjunction with local kennel clubs to organize volunteer “park clean-up” days. Kennel clubs and other dog organizations might also be willing to donate funds for supplies such as waste bags, dispensers, and cans.

### **The Ideal Dog Park Includes:**

- One acre or more of land surrounded by a four to six-foot-high chain-linked fence
  - The fence should be equipped with a double gated entry to keep dogs from escaping and to facilitate wheelchair access
- Cleaning supplies, including dog waste stations and dog waste bags

- These should be sufficient bag dispensers and trash cans throughout the park to encourage owners to pick up after their pet
- Shade and water for both dogs and owners, along with benches and table
- An accessible location with adequate drainage and a grassy area that is mowed routinely
- Signs that specify park hours and rules
- Parking close to the site

Great example = City of New Albany



*Example of a dog park.*

# INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

**\*Mentioned in several of the quality of place plans**

## **Designing a Multi-use Community Recreation Center**

### **Case Study from the Hardeeville Indoor Recreation Center in South Carolina**

Community recreation centers have evolved from a building comprised of a simple gym and sporting area into mixed use facilities for the entire community. Municipalities are envisioning these community rec centers as places for people of all ages to connect, exercise, unwind, educate, and learn – all in one place.

### **What are the biggest considerations when designing a community recreation center?**

- One of the most significant drivers is community feedback
- In the case of Hardeeville, the town decided to create a task force to gather input for their new indoor recreation center
- It's important to listen to what members are trying to accomplish with the new space (what they want to do with the space doesn't always match up with what they want to put in the space)
- One of the key requirements for Hardeeville was to have a recreation center that is large enough to host large basketball tournaments. To meet this need and stay on budget, a full size court that can easily be divided into two courts was created. While the space was pared down from the original vision, it still meets the town's goals and the needs of the community.

### **What are some of the design elements used for community recreation centers?**

- You want a design that will create energy and movement, because it's a place that will be full of activity.

- The lobby of the Hardeeville Recreation Center features tall ceilings with the structure at a 10-degree slant. This adds movement and flow on the inside.
- Because much of the interior space does not allow for windows, there is a risk of the outside appearing dull. They countered this issue by adding angles in the brick design and utilizing a combination of white stone and red brick. Materials found in other local buildings was also used.



*Hardeeville Indoor Recreation Center.*

### **What are communities looking to include in their recreation centers?**

- Many communities are requesting multi-purpose rooms to host different activities
- Ideally, you want people to have many reasons to visit the community center
- Some of these flexible spaces include basketball courts that convert to pickleball courts (satisfies multiple generations)
- Municipalities are also adding weight rooms in addition to traditional cardio centers to appeal to a younger population
- Nutritional offerings, such as smoothie bars or dietician services, are becoming increasingly popular to promote overall well-being
- Recreation centers are also being used by community groups looking to rent large spaces for meetings and events. Hardeeville provides this need by adding vertical partitions that fold up into the ceiling and give added flexibility when expanding or contracting to accommodate various sized groups.

## **Teen Turns Abandoned House into a Neighborhood Community Center (Kinston, North Carolina)**

In response to the growing violence and poverty rate, the then 14-year-old Chris Suggs established Kinston Teens, an organization whose mission is to empower young people through service and leadership. In 2017 right before his freshman year of college, Suggs decided to purchase a foreclosed home for \$1,000 and donate the property to Kinston Teens

His goal for purchasing was for young people to have a safe space to access technology, meet with local government representatives, to hang out after school. Most importantly, Suggs hoped that having this property would help to decrease crime, health disparities, and other problems that disproportionately affect young adults. Suggs noted that “we do have a few recreation centers in Kinston but having a space that is youth-led and completely focused on young people is really important”.



# PROGRAM IDEAS FOR ADULTS

\*Mentioned in several of the quality of place plans

## Teen and Adult Recreation Programs in Columbus, Indiana

- **Board Game Nights**
  - Quarterly event
  - \$10 gets you access to all the board games available
  - Takes places at Donner Center
- **Video Game Tournaments**
  - Quarterly event
  - All skill levels welcome
  - On the night of each event there is tournament and casual play, with a gallery of games set up to participate in as well
  - Each tournament game is announced leading up to the event
  - Takes place at Donner Center
- **Mixology Classes**
  - Learn how to create bar quality drinks from a trained bartender
  - Takes place at The Commons – Performance Hall
- **Adult Ceramics**
  - Learn from a local potter and create your own pottery piece
  - On the first evening, you will create your own unique piece from clay
  - The next week, you will take your fired pottery and glaze it
  - The glazed pieces will then be professionally fired and be available for pick-up at the Donner Center
- **Rummage Sales**
  - \$20 for a 12 by 12ft booth space
  - Admission to the sale is free to the public
  - Takes place at the Mill Race Park

- **Basket Making Classes**
  - Sample baskets will be displayed at the Donner Center
  - Registration for Autumn, Christmas, and Spring Baskets is available
  
- **Holiday Craft Show and Sale**
  - Proudly display your holiday handiwork
  - Fee includes booth space (you may buy more than one booth)
  - No flea-market or garage sale items
  - Admission to the show is free to the public
  - Takes place at the Donner Center
  
- **Barista Class**
  - Great for anyone interested in learning the art of making café quality coffee beverages in the comfort of their own home, looking to take their coffee expertise to the next level, or learning how to identify different tasting notes in their morning brew.
  - The class goes over several simple ways to make a delicious cup of coffee and allows participants to try an assortment of different, freshly roasted beans
  
- **Easter Keg Hunt**
  - In partnership with local breweries
  - Adults can do a “grown-up” Easter egg hunt
  - Tons of eggs will be hidden around Donner Park. Hidden inside the eggs are vouchers for beer samples and other adult prizes. These vouchers can be redeemed after the hunt.

### **Adult Recreation Programs for the Winter Months (New Albany, Indiana)**

- Zumba Classes
- Indoor Ultimate Frisbee
- Senior Softball League
- Adult Game Night
- Indoor Slow Pitch Softball League and Tournaments
- Indoor Adult Kickball
- Adult Basketball Open Gym
- Adult Pickleball Open Gym

# FUNDING AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES

**\*Note that the Eppley Institute is currently working on a strategic funding course that will become available in the next couple of months.**

Additional resources on how to write a grant proposal:

[How to Write a Grant Proposal](#)

[Writing a Successful Grant Proposal](#)

**The National Park Service** provides grants for projects which promote healthy parks or help improve connections to parks and greenways.

**Hydro Flask** is the leader in high-performance insulated products that help people enjoy the things they love to do in the places they love to be. Their charitable arm (Parks for All) supports the development, maintenance, restoration, and accessibility of public green spaces.

**The Waste Management Charitable Contributions** program offers charitable gifts to promote civic pride, economic development, and revitalization. Waste Management primarily supports environmental initiatives, including promoting parklands and green spaces for people to enjoy and play, and environmental education initiatives targeted at middle and high school students.

**The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation Grant Program** supports the planting of fruitful trees and plants to combat global warming, strengthen communities, and improve the surrounding environment. Trees can be planted in community gardens, city and state parks, low income neighborhoods, schools, and other locations where they will serve the greater community. The foundation provides high-quality trees and shrubs, equipment, on-site design expertise and oversight, and aftercare training.

**The Environmental Justice Small Grants Program** supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental issues. The program is designed to help communities understand and address exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks.

**Greening America's Communities** is an EPA program that helps cities and towns develop an implementable plan of an environmentally friendly community (incorporates innovative green infrastructure and other sustainable design strategies). EPA funds a team of designers to visit each community to produce designs intended to complement a larger planning process for the pilot community.

- Free E-Book | **Recycling Grants: What Are They and How to Get Them**

**The Indiana Community Recycling Grant Program** helps communities increase recycling and waste reduction. Projects should accomplish one or more of the following:

- Start or expand a recycling, source reduction, reuse, or composting program
- Offer a new service, collect a new material, or serve a new area through the establishment of a new permanent program
- Improve sustainability through increased volumes of materials collected and better processing of materials, cost savings, and resource conservation

**The Coca-Cola Foundation** aims to make a greater impact on the communities they serve by being responsive to the priorities of the communities in which we live and work. The foundation is interested in funding organizations in these areas: water stewardship, healthy active living, community recycling, and education.

- **List of grants paid in 2019**

**The "Meet Me at the Park Play Spaces" grant program** is a collaboration between the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and The Walt Disney Company. Disney funds grants that NRPA awards to parks and recreation agencies that submit the best ideas to help make outdoor play accessible to children and families in underserved communities.

**The American Academy of Dermatology Shade Structure** grant program awards up to \$8,000 to public schools and nonprofit organizations for installing permanent shade structures for outdoor locations that are not protected from the sun, such as playgrounds, pools, and recreation spaces. In addition to the grant, the AAD also provides a permanent sign for display near the shade structure.

**The United States Tennis Association (USTA) Facility Services Program** offers business development, advocacy, technical, and financial support to improve or construct tennis facilities across the country. In addition, each applicant will be appointed a project consultant from the USTA National Staff who will deliver personalized support and service.

**PetSafe** has given away over \$1.5 million in grants to build, maintain, and enhance dog parks across the country. Due to the global pandemic, the 2020 grant program has been canceled. Applications for the next grant program will open in May 2021.

**The Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program** provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial, or business undertakings.

**The National Park Foundation** recognizes that sometimes the smallest grants can make the largest differences. Impact Grants (up to \$25,000) are designed to help parks in need of a small amount of additional funding to transform innovative ideas into successful programs or partnerships to address critical needs. Past grantee projects have ranged from overhauling infrastructure at nine in-park community gardens in Washington, DC to conserving historic paintings in Iowa and developing bi-lingual programs in Florida.