



# 4 A WEALTH OF RECREATION

## THEME 4 | GOALS

### **Goal 1: Access & Equity**

*Our parks and natural resources will be accessible, and serve residents citywide equitably, regardless of location, age, ability, or socioeconomics.*

### **Goal 2: Thriving Environment**

*Our protected parks and natural resources will be memorable, providing a sense of wonder and discovery supported by meaningful experiences with the natural environment.*

### **Goal 3: Active Community**

*Our parks and natural resources will be integral to our active hubs, bringing convenience and enjoyment, as well as tangible benefits to the overall quality of life.*

### **Goal 4: Expanding Capacity**

*Our parks and natural resources will benefit from operational and financial capacity building, achieving improved effectiveness and securing more financial resources.*

Hobart's 2040 Plan includes five community Themes. The following section describes Hobart's vision for Theme 4: A Wealth of Recreation. A summary of the existing conditions analysis along with community input received over the course of the process are shared in the next few pages. Following that is a list of Strategies and Actions for each of the goals listed above.

# A HEALTHY CITY IN THE MAKING

Parks, recreation, and the urban forest are vital infrastructure that support Hobart’s health. Ensuring a healthy and engaging lifestyle for Hobart residents is inherent in all that the City does. It is important to increase opportunities for physical activity, combating obesity and other chronic health conditions through fitness. In addition to physical health, parks also enhance the quality of life and improve mental health by providing access to and connections with nature, particularly coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of sustainability, scientific studies have made it clear that an environmental crisis is changing climate patterns around the world. This phenomenon could potentially limit access to the natural environment in Hobart. As we plan for the future, it is key to keep sustainability front and center and consider guiding principles and policies that minimize Hobart’s contribution to climate change.

## WHY PLAN NOW?

Hobart’s system of parks and open spaces is incredibly diverse and, in many ways, complementary. However, similar to other communities, the park system is facing challenges environmentally and economically, and is unable to serve the current and future needs of Hobart residents. The natural environment goes beyond parks and a comprehensive approach must be taken to ensure adequate distribution of open space and resources as well as the preservation of the natural environment in Hobart. Some of the issues that comparable communities are facing include drought and flooding, increased deferred maintenance, decaying urban forest and tree canopy, a continued rise in obesity, and limited access to nature.

This plan establishes the City’s short- and long-term goals for the years to come. The outcome is designed to be flexible and responsive to the inevitable changes that will occur over the years. Board members and staff should look to revisit the action plan on an annual basis to evaluate proposed initiatives and priorities, and develop context sensitive implementation strategies to effectively complete their goals.

## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources manages the resident wildlife resources of Indiana and administers state parks, state fish and wildlife areas, and state nature preserves. Guiding local communities to effectively plan for the future of parks, recreation, and natural area, as well as continue to serve current and future residents, Indiana DNR sets forth a set of guidelines for developing master plans. As identified by the organization, developing a master plan every five years, or ensuring current plans stay current could allow the Hobart Park and Recreation Department **“the Department”** to submit for grant programs administered by the Division of State Parks, Community Grants and Trails. The Hobart Park & Recreation Master Plan was developed as part of the City-wide comprehensive planning effort, and is meant to be encompassing of all critical planning components that define the Department’s 5-year plan.

## PLANNING FOR YOUR TOMORROW

Hobart’s population is changing over time. Projections below indicate that the Alpha Population (born 2017 or later) are projected to double by the year 2027. The majority of other cohorts are holding stable, with the exception of a drop in the Greatest Population (born 1945 or earlier). Overall, Hobart is also becoming more diverse. In 2022 the youngest population based on ethnicity is Hispanic with a median age of 30, followed by African American with 36.6, Asian with 40.6 and Caucasian/White with 45.6.

Planning for and accommodating the changes in population would position the Department to stay relevant and responsive to the projected makeup of Hobart residents.



Brickie Bowl Concert

**“ We should create more events that are truly ours ”**

- STAKEHOLDER COMMENT



Arbor Lane Park (Mini Park)



## TIMELINE HISTORY

Below is a timeline that outlines the various ordinances that led to the creation of the Hobart Park Board and Hobart Park Department, starting in 1923.

**1923**  
APR.

**#30**  
ORDINANCE

Creation of a Board of Trustees to control and manage the public parks of the City of Hobart,

Allows for the acquisition of real property for playgrounds and recreation centers. This ordinance also provided for a tax levy to be deposited in a recreation fund.

**#620**  
ORDINANCE

**1960**  
AUG.

**1963**  
APR.

**#687**  
ORDINANCE

Empowered the Mayor to appoint a four member park board to administer all funds in the recreation fund and created the Parks and Recreation Department.

Revised the laws under Indiana Code 36-10-3. Dictated that the Park Board be appointed by the Mayor. The Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Department was established.

**#704**  
ORDINANCE

**1963**  
AUG.

**1996**  
FEB.

**#687**  
ORDINANCE

Creation of a Board of Park Commissioners under Indiana Code 36-10-4 thereby creating a **Department of Public Parks.**

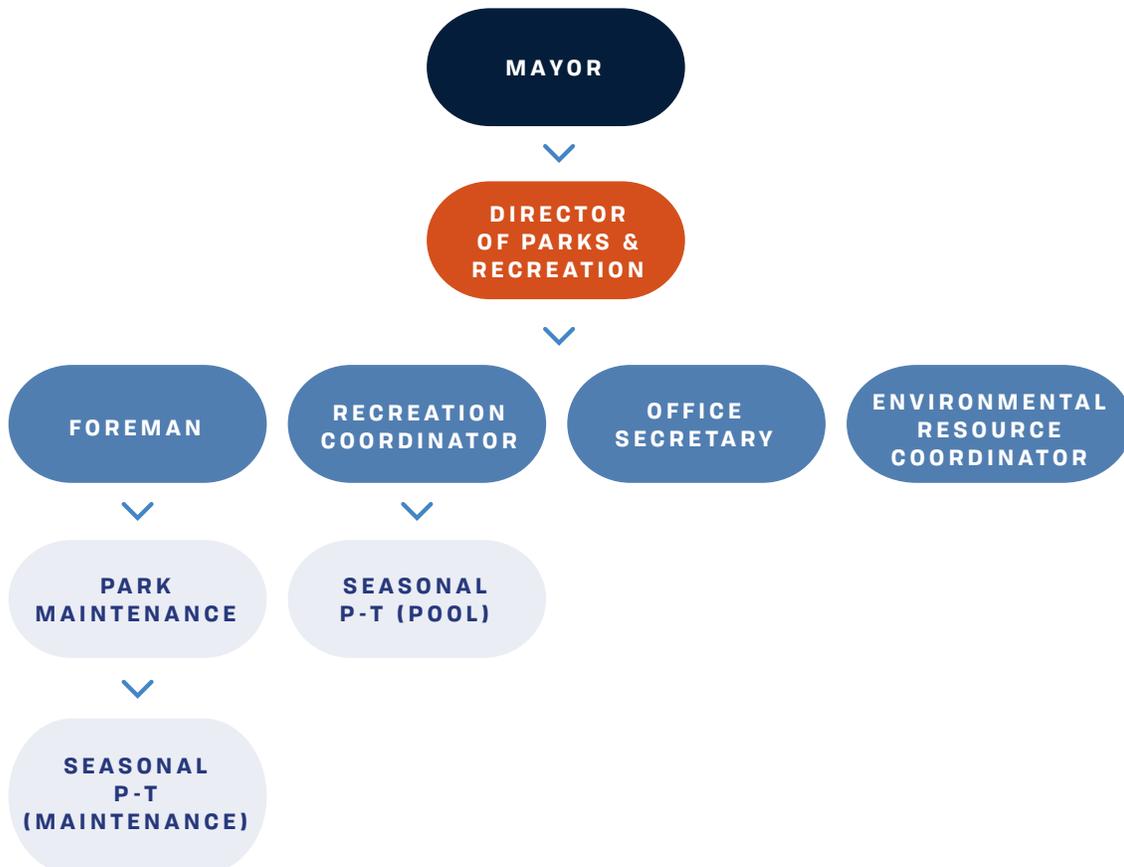
# HOBART PARK BOARD

The Hobart Park Board, consists of four commissioners and two officio members, is responsible for approving decisions regarding all park events including the Hobart Pool, rentals of park properties, and park programs. The list of Park Board members and City representatives includes:

- » **ANGELA GRABCZAK**, Commissioner
- » **MARK KARA**, Commissioner
- » **MARIA GALKA**, Commissioner
- » **JOSEPH SUCH**, Commissioner
- » **JOSH HUDDLESTUN**, Council Representative
- » **SANDY HILLAN**, School Board Representative

# DEPARTMENT STAFF

The Hobart Parks Department consists of five full time employees. The Department includes one Recreation Coordinator, one foreman, two maintenance staff members, and one secretary. The Department also employs part time seasonal summer staff. The chart below illustrates the Parks Department staffing structure.



# PARK SCORECARDS

Park scorecards is intended to help guide capital improvement plans, master plans, and maintenance standards. This chapter of the Park, Recreation, and natural assessment chapter can provide the City of Hobart a better understanding of how well each park site is performing and what improvements each amenity can benefit from.

In summary, the park scorecards will guide the City of Hobart to:

- » Understand the present state of Hobart’s public open spaces and facilities.
- » Determine priorities for improvements and provide direction for allocation of funds, staff, and other resources,
- » Communicate priorities internally among employees and externally to governing boards, citizen committees, and the public.
- » Measure the impact of open space infrastructure and facility investments, as well as open space and facility maintenance efforts.
- » Help Hobart residents understand how their local parks and facilities performing in comparison to other parks in the District.



are

GRADING LEGEND	
<b>A = 4.0</b>	<b>C = 2.0 - 2.29</b>
<b>A - = 3.8 - 3.99</b>	<b>C - = 1.8 - 1.99</b>
<b>B + = 3.3 - 3.79</b>	<b>D + = 1.3 - 1.79</b>
<b>B = 3.0 - 3.29</b>	<b>D = 1.0 - 1.29</b>
<b>B - = 2.8 - 2.99</b>	<b>D - &lt; 1.0</b>
<b>C + = 2.3 - 2.79</b>	



Lakefront Park

**SAMPLE PARK SCORECARD**

Park Details

**HILLMAN HEIGHTS PARK**

**Location:** 2500 N. Hansen Blvd.  
**Size:** 3.41 acres

**Features and Amenities**

Basketball Court  
 Picnic Shelter  
 Playground / Swings

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

Park Category

**B**

Score = 3/4

Score

Background & Description

**Site Description**

Located in the Hillman Heights subdivision, Hillman Heights Park offers recreational amenities including two play structures, a swing set, a basketball court, and a picnic shelter with picnic tables. The playground to the east is older and has been recently renovated with painted metal posts. The picnic shelter overall is in poor condition and requires maintenance. Adjacent, yet spatially separated from the old play structure, is a swing set that is showing wear and is rusting. The playground to the west is brand new and features new safety features such as wood chip surfacing and defined edging. A basketball court separates the two play structures and is in fair condition. Features of the park are not well connected and do not cohesively integrate within the context as a whole are not well connected and are positioned against one another in an uncoordinated manner. Overall, Hillman Heights Park has a welcoming feel with mature trees and could potentially promote additional active and passive recreational features and amenities.

**Hillman Heights park received a score of 3/4.**

Recommendations

**Recommendations**

- » Repair/replace dated and rusted play equipment, including the swing set
- » Consider multi-generational passive recreation features
- » Consider basketball court resurfacing and re-striping
- » Consider adding seating pockets, including benches
- » Consider better aligning future site amenities
- » Provide additional wayfinding and signage



**Picnic Shelter**  
Fair condition



**New Play Equipment**  
Excellent condition

Photos



Aerial

Scorecards for all parks can be found in the appendix.

## OVERALL PARK IMPROVEMENTS

**Increase the number of benches and provide additional shade in park sites and around playgrounds.**

**Reduce turf area and add complementary amenities, where feasible, to reduce overall amenity deficiency and increase the variety of recreational offerings in Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks.**

**Consider better integrating playgrounds within the parks, including locating equipment in better relationships, providing fewer barriers surrounding the play areas, using topography to create interest and play challenges.**

**Consider color and concept themes in Neighborhood Parks**

**Consider more comprehensive open space designs that integrate a variety of landscape planting, pathways and circulation, gateways, seating and gathering spaces, and buffers to adjacent uses.**

**Consider signage and wayfinding as guidance / educational information where feasible.**



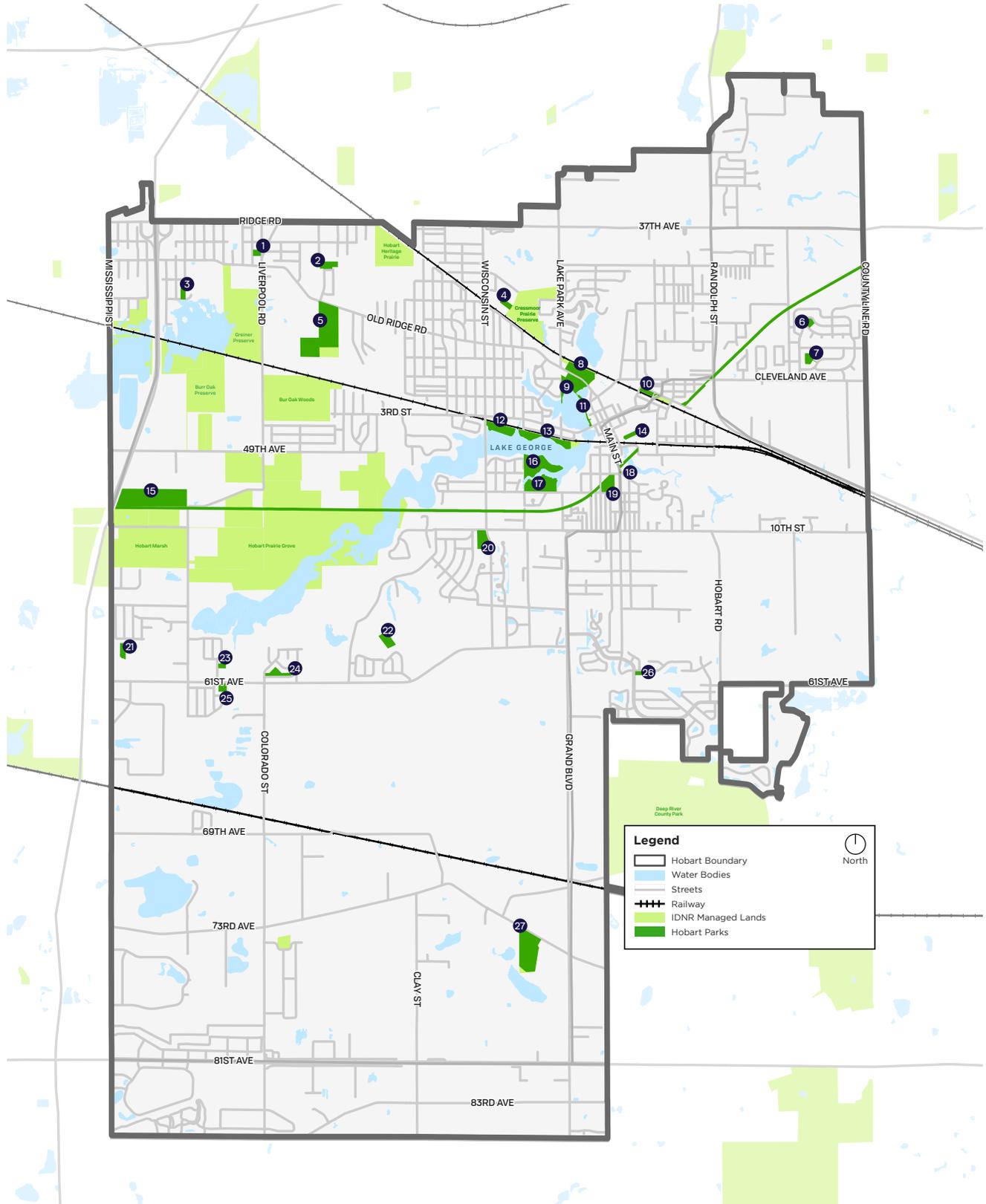
**Our natural resources are definitely what makes us stand out. We should absolutely focus on making those more accessible and think about experiential programming.**

- STAKEHOLDER COMMENT



# Theme 4 : Park & Recreation

Fig 20: Hobart Retail Clusters: Healthcare, Food Businesses, & Retail



# COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE

Public parks and open space are provided by several agencies in the City of Hobart, including the School City of Hobart. While all agencies provide open space and recreation opportunities, they do so in varying capacities. The City of Hobart has a total of 27 parks and open space sites that equal a total of 198 acres. Additional undeveloped natural areas can be found within the City limits equaling a total of 1,092 acres. The City of Hobart has limited control over the natural areas, however community residents have access to trails and other amenities within those sites. Natural Areas are the largest park category in the City at 86% of the total open space acreage. Excluding Natural Areas, out of the 198 acres of managed park and open spaces, 95% or 189 acres are considered “Active Recreation Areas” which includes Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks. A breakdown of park acreage by classification is provided in the appendix.

## HOBART’S PARK SYSTEM

1. Ted Hansen Park **(NP)**
2. Hillman Heights Park **(NP)**
3. Englehart Park **(MP)**
4. Emily Silich Park **(MP)**
5. Hillman Park **(CP)**
6. Arbor Lane Park **(MP)**
7. McAfee Park **(NP)**
8. Soccer Rugby Field **(NP)**
9. Festival Park **(CP)**
10. Pennsy Park **(NP)**
11. Lakefront Park **(NP)**
12. Pleak Park **(NP)**
13. Jerry Pavese Park **(NP)**
14. Brickie Bowl **(NP)**
15. Robinson Lake Park **(CP)**
16. Fred Rose Lakeshore **(CP)**
17. Fred Rose 8th St. Park **(CP)**
18. Doughboy Monument **(MP)**
19. Hobart City Ball Park **(NP)**
20. Hobart Community Pool **(NP)**
21. Glenwood Park **(NP)**
22. Deep River Parkway **(NP)**
23. Brookview Park **(NP)**
24. Amber Creek Park **(MP)**
25. Merrillville Heights Park **(NP)**
26. Barrington Ridge Park **(MP)**
27. Veteran’s Memorial Park **(CP)**

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**(MP) = Mini Park**

**(NP) = Neighborhood Park**

**(CP) = Community Park**



Table 10: Park Classification

Classification	General Description	Service Area	Size Criteria
<b>Mini Parks</b>	Mini Parks meet the need for a walkable, drop-in recreation experience. Appropriate elements in these parks include playgrounds, picnic areas, and seating. These parks usually do not include parking. Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than 0.25-mile radius distance.	0 to 1 acres in size is typical
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	Neighborhood Parks remain the basic unit of the park system and are generally designed for informal active and passive recreation and community gathering spaces. Elements in these parks often include playgrounds, picnic areas, sports fields, and trail systems. Neighborhood Parks serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.	0.5 to 1.0-mile radius distance.	1 to 5 acres in size is typical.
<b>Community Parks</b>	Community Parks focus on meeting regional and community-wide recreation needs. These parks preserve unique landscapes and often serve the community as gathering places. Community Parks also host athletic teams and affiliate programs. Elements in these parks include playgrounds, pavilions, trails and path systems, multiple sport courts, and fields.	Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 0.5 to 3-mile radius distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 10 acres.

Source: NRPA's Park, Recreation, Open Space & Greenway Guidelines

# LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

The Level of Service (LOS) analysis evaluates how well the City's parks and outdoor amenities compare to local, regional, and industry benchmarks and attempts to gauge how well the offerings serve the Hobart community.

Level of Service standards and recommendations provide City staff and officials with the information they need to respond to growing communities and their ever-changing needs. Its basic utility is evaluating whether community assets meet the legal and economic requirement of equity. Benchmarks for park and recreation agencies and departments were first developed in the 1980s by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) to measure the total acreage needs of communities. According to the NRPA, a Level of Service benchmark should be practical and achievable; equitable; and context-sensitive.

As much as this analysis is integral in estimating how well residents of the City are being served, it is only one of many tools that can help in determining future goals and needs.

## ACREAGE LEVEL OF SERVICE

**NRPA Recommended** - Acreage Level of Service analyses aim to measure the minimum acres of land required to provide recreational opportunities and the amenities required to support them. Acreage of park land per 1,000 residents remains the most common technique of expressing equal opportunity, even though conditions and needs vary greatly between areas. [2022 NRPA Agency Performance Review](#) recommends that the typical park and recreation agency (populations 20,000 to 49,999) offers 10.4 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents in the jurisdiction.

With a population of 29,219, the City of Hobart is recommended to have 303 acres of Active Recreation areas. With 197.78 acres of Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Community Parks combined, the City is deficient by 105.2 acres, when compared to the 10.4 acres / 1000 population benchmark.

While Natural Areas in Hobart exceed 1,000 acres and would position the City well beyond the NRPA benchmark, this amount of undeveloped land was not included in this analysis, given that these sites are not owned or managed by Hobart.

## MINI PARK ACREAGE

The City of Hobart is deficient in Mini Parks, offering less than half the recommended acreage at close to 1 acre / 1000 population. The City is deficient in almost 18 acres, and this deficiency contributes to almost 20% of the total shortage in active recreation open space.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK ACREAGE

The City of Hobart has a surplus in Neighborhood Parks, offering close to 10 acres more than the recommended acreage at 2 acres / 1000 population.

## COMMUNITY PARK ACREAGE

Hobart is most deficient in Community Parks, with a deficiency of over 95 acres according to the recommended acreage at 7.5 acres / 1000 population. This deficiency contributes to approximately 80% of the total shortage in active recreation open space.

Table 11: Acreage Level of Service Analysis NRPA

Classification	Hobart's Acreage	NRPA Recommended Acreage (Hobart population)	NRPA Recommended Acreage (acres/1000 population)	Acreage Deficiency or Surplus (acres)
Mini Parks	8.25	26	0.9	<b>-17.75</b>
Neighborhood Parks	68.82	58.4	2.0	<b>10.42</b>
Community Parks	120.71	219	7.5	<b>-98.29</b>
<b>Total Acreage</b>	<b>197.78</b>	<b>303.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>-105.62</b>

**SCORP Recommended** - While NRPA's recommended acreage level of service indicates the need for 10.4 acres per 1000 residents, the SCORP Indiana benchmark almost doubles that benchmark to 20 acres. According to the Indiana benchmark, Hobart is more than 350 acres deficient in overall park acreage.

Table 12: Acreage Level of Service Analysis SCORP

Classification	Hobart's Acreage	SCORP IN Recommended Acreage (Hobart population)	SCORP IN Recommended Acreage (acres/1000 population)	Acreage Deficiency or Surplus (acres)
<b>Total Acreage</b>	<b>197.78</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>-386.22</b>

McAfee Park Sign (Neighborhood Park)



Hobart City Ball Park (Neighborhood Park)



# HOBART PARKS

## Park Acreage

When asked about outdoor community spaces, residents indicated that there is a need for additional large community parks, natural areas, and boating and fishing areas, as well as a nature center. While some residents expressed a need for outdoor sports and recreation facilities, the majority were more interested in increased natural green spaces. Many residents want to build upon Hobart's natural assets, especially Lake George and Deep River, by adding boat launches, water sports rentals, and multi-use trails. Participants also mentioned a desire for spaces dedicated to family gatherings, such as pavilions, gazebos, picnic areas, and splash pads. Despite some reservations around the maintenance and safety of a dog park, many community members would like to see at least one built within Hobart. In order to improve Hobart's parks and open spaces, residents would like to see more public restrooms in parks, better-maintained play areas, pocket parks within neighborhoods, and more public amenities.

Some of the best ideas for the future of the parks in Hobart came from community members themselves. When Hobart residents were asked to share their big ideas for Hobart's parks, they mentioned:

**We have a need for a more livable city that has more parks and natural areas scattered all over Hobart.**

**We need large community parks like Valpo or Portage.**

Top three parks include:

Hobart City Ball Park



Lakefront Park



Festival Park



**LARGE  
COMMUNITY  
PARKS**

**60%**

**50%**

**Satisfaction  
WITH  
Parks**

## PARK DISTRIBUTION LEVEL OF SERVICE

Distribution Level of Service evaluates the equitability of offerings. Parks are categorized by NRPA classification standards which are based on size, function, and use of sites. The City of Hobart has Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, and Natural Areas. For this assessment, only Mini, Neighborhood, and Community Parks are used to evaluate distribution Level of Service, as natural areas are not owned or managed by the City of Hobart. The individual park classifications determine the service area for each park. Service areas for the park sites evaluated are as follows:

- » Mini Parks: 0.25 mile, or a 5-10-minute walk
- » Neighborhood Parks: 0.5 mile, or a 10-15-minute walk
- » Community Parks: 1.0 mile

The end result of this analysis will focus on how many people are served by certain Neighborhood or Community Parks. This may reveal that some of the planning areas are underserved or that the City is serving its residents and should shift its efforts towards maintaining and updating existing sites.

### Planning Areas

To accurately evaluate the Level of Service for the walk-to destinations, or Mini and Neighborhood Parks, the City is divided into planning areas, or smaller “neighborhood-like” clusters, that are distinguished by barriers such as roads, railroads, stream corridors, water bodies, or other features that obstruct walkability. Service areas for Mini and Neighborhood Parks are clipped to these planning area boundaries. Community Park service areas do not take planning area boundaries into account as they are drive-to destinations. The Level of Service for each park classification is identified by the total number or percentage of residents that fall within the service areas for each park classification.

In Hobart, major barriers include the railroad tracks, Lake George, Interstate 65, Highway 130, and 61st Avenue, among others. These planning barriers resulted in 13 Planning Areas in the City of Hobart, which are outlined on the map to the right. Planning Area (I) has the largest population at 6,588 residents while Planning Areas (E) and (J) have the smallest populations at 0 and 292 residents, respectively. In general, the Planning Areas on the north and east have the highest population densities. Demographics for each Planning Area can be found in the chart to the right.

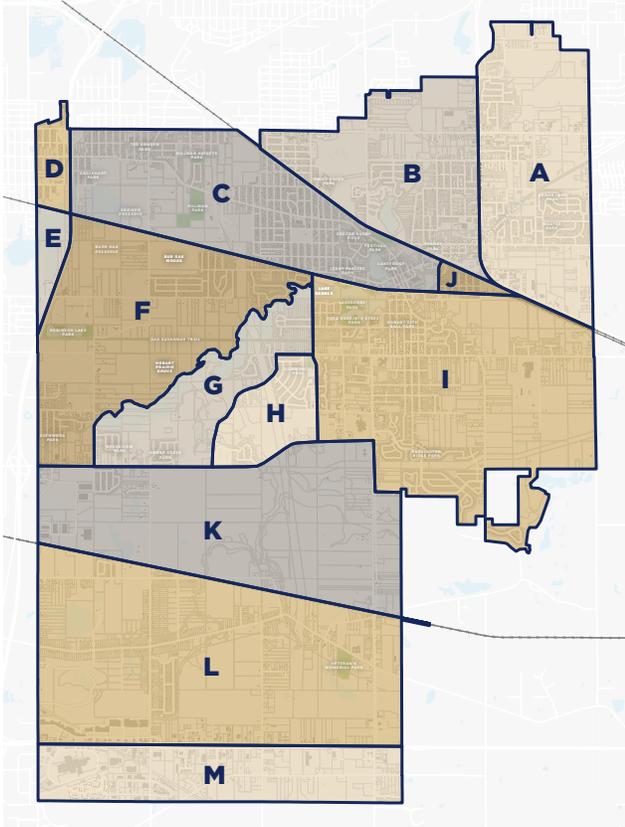
Table 13: Planning Area Populations

PLANNING AREA	POPULATION
Planning Area <b>A</b>	3,127
Planning Area <b>B</b>	4,568
Planning Area <b>C</b>	6,100
Planning Area <b>D</b>	525
Planning Area <b>E</b>	0
Planning Area <b>F</b>	2,594
Planning Area <b>G</b>	1,192
Planning Area <b>H</b>	1,107
Planning Area <b>I</b>	6,588
Planning Area <b>J</b>	292
Planning Area <b>K</b>	1,602
Planning Area <b>L</b>	1,332
Planning Area <b>M</b>	192
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>29,219</b>

### Service Areas

To analyze the geographic distribution of the parks and open spaces in the City, service areas were created in the form of discs. These areas are illustrated with a pink disc on the Level of Service maps. The size of the service area is dependent on the park classification and ranges from a quarter-mile to one mile. Based on the overall distribution analysis, the Planning Areas with the lowest level of service, or highest need, are Planning Areas (A), (D), (I), (K), (L), and (M). These areas, and particularly (A) and (I) have the largest number of residents without access to park assets.

Fig 21: Planning Areas in Hobart



## Park Distribution

Hobart residents expressed the need to increase access to park types of all categories to ensure both active and passive recreation opportunities are offered for as many residents as possible.

“ **Ted Hansen and Englehart Parks are in the poorest sections of Hobart and those need to be better maintained.** ”

“ **Increase access. Many parts of Hobart feel fragmented and there is a need to connect the parks and paths, especially to downtown.** ”

“ **More pocket parks and large scale parks.** ”

Penny Park Bike Trail



## MINI PARKS DISTRIBUTION LOS

The Mini Park service area map shows a 0.25-mile service area radius around the existing Mini Parks. Community Parks and Neighborhood Parks can serve the function of a Mini Park for residents living within a 0.25-mile radius. The 0.25-mile radius service areas generated by Community Parks and Neighborhood Parks are illustrated in light blue on the map in Fig 22. Based on NRPA standards, Mini Parks are walk-to destinations, and for that reason, their service areas are clipped to the major planning areas in which they are located.

The Mini Park Distribution Level of Service Analysis map is illustrated in Fig 22. Planning Area (H) has the largest number of residents served 562 (51% of the Planning Area population) by Mini Parks. Planning Areas (A), (G), (H), and (I) have at least 30% or more of residents served by Mini Parks. Planning Areas (B), (C), (D), (F), (J), (K), (L) and (M) have the least number of residents served, with Areas (D), (J), (L), and (M) completely unserved by Mini Parks. Overall, all Planning Areas are underserved with large gaps of more than 3,000 unserved residents in certain areas.

Overall, 23.7% of Hobart’s residents live within a 0.25-mile walking distance to a park. This percentage of the population is lower than the 34.2% average identified by the planning team.

Table 14: Population Served by Planning Area (Mini Park)

PLANNING AREA	POPULATION	POPULATION SERVED
Planning Area <b>A</b>	3,127	1,055 (34%)
Planning Area <b>B</b>	4,568	1,175 (26%)
Planning Area <b>C</b>	6,100	1,284 (21%)
Planning Area <b>D</b>	525	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>E</b>	0	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>F</b>	2,594	508 (20%)
Planning Area <b>G</b>	1,192	378 (32%)
Planning Area <b>H</b>	1,107	562 (51%)
Planning Area <b>I</b>	6,588	1,948 (30%)
Planning Area <b>J</b>	292	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>K</b>	1,602	26 (2%)
Planning Area <b>L</b>	1,332	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>M</b>	192	0 (0%)
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>29,219</b>	<b>6,936 (23.7%)</b>

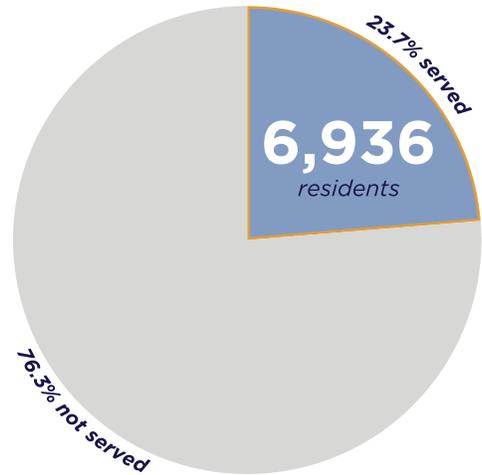
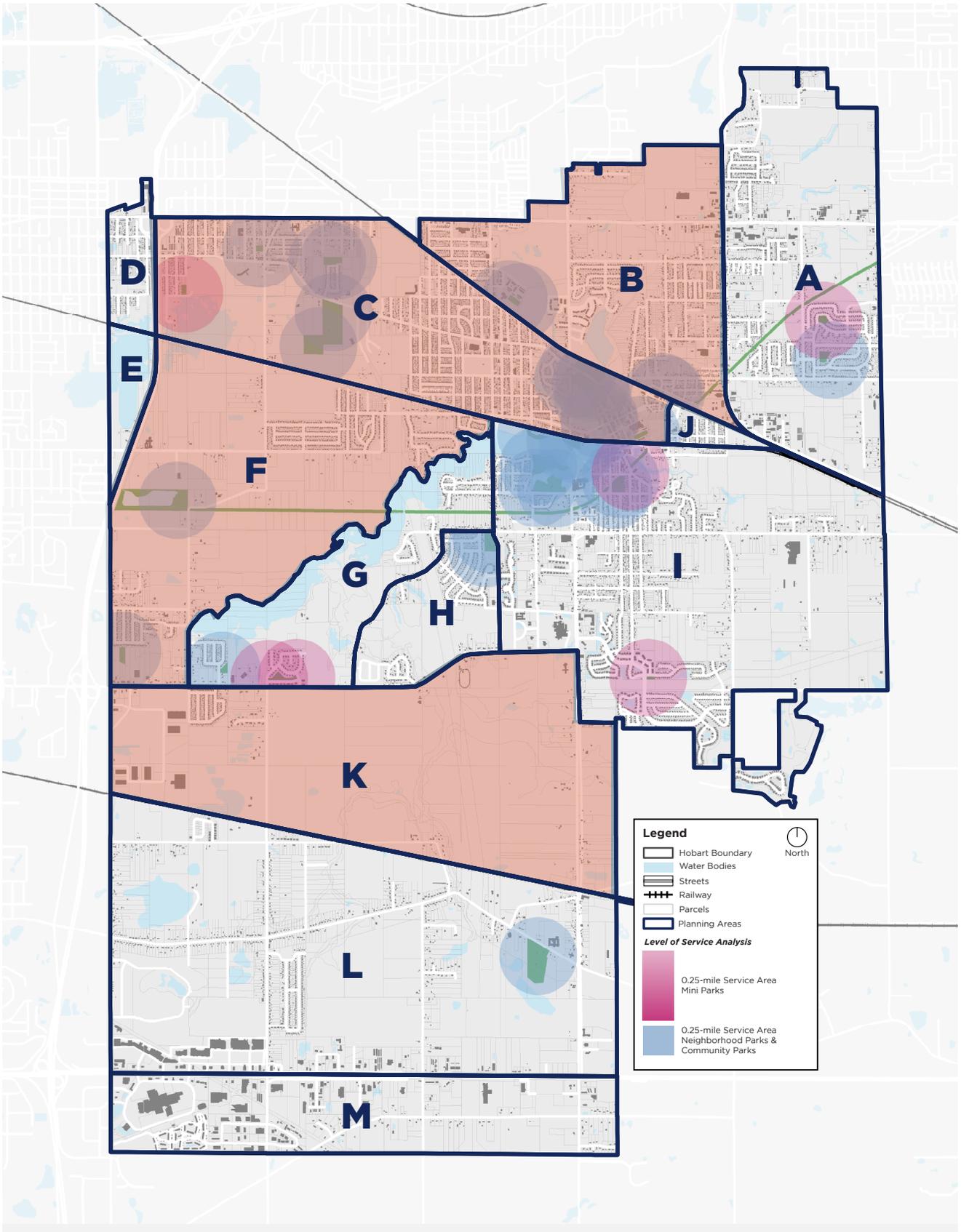


Fig 22: Mini Park Distribution Level of Service Map



## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS DISTRIBUTION LOS

The Neighborhood Park service area map shows a 0.5-mile service area radius around the existing Neighborhood Parks. Community Parks can serve the function of a Neighborhood Park for residents living within a 0.5-mile radius. The 0.5-mile radius service areas generated by Community Parks are illustrated in light blue on the map in Fig 23. Based on NRPA standards, Neighborhood Parks are walk-to destinations, and for that reason, their service areas are clipped to the major planning areas in which they are located.

The Neighborhood Park Distribution Level of Service Analysis map is illustrated in Fig 23. Planning Area (C) has the largest number of residents served at 3,248 (53% of the Planning Area population) by Neighborhood Parks. Planning Areas (A), (B), (C), (G), and (H) have at least 50% or more of residents served by Neighborhood Parks. Planning Areas (D), (F), (I), (K), (L), and (M) have the least number of residents served, with Areas (D), (J), (L), and (M) completely unserved by Neighborhood Parks. Overall, Planning Areas with larger percentages of population are fairly served by Neighborhood Parks, with the exception of Planning Area (I), which is the largest of all areas.

Overall, 43.3% of Hobart’s residents live within a 0.5-mile walking distance to a park. This percentage of the population is significantly lower than the 61.3% average identified by the planning team.

Table 15: Population Served by Planning Area (Neighborhood Park)

PLANNING AREA	POPULATION	POPULATION SERVED
Planning Area <b>A</b>	3,127	1,894(61%)
Planning Area <b>B</b>	4,568	2,637 (58%)
Planning Area <b>C</b>	6,100	3,248 (53%)
Planning Area <b>D</b>	525	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>E</b>	0	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>F</b>	2,594	705 (27%)
Planning Area <b>G</b>	1,192	608 (51%)
Planning Area <b>H</b>	1,107	784 (71%)
Planning Area <b>I</b>	6,588	2,478 (38%)
Planning Area <b>J</b>	292	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>K</b>	1,602	307 (18%)
Planning Area <b>L</b>	1,332	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>M</b>	192	0 (0%)
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>29,219</b>	<b>12,661 (43.3%)</b>

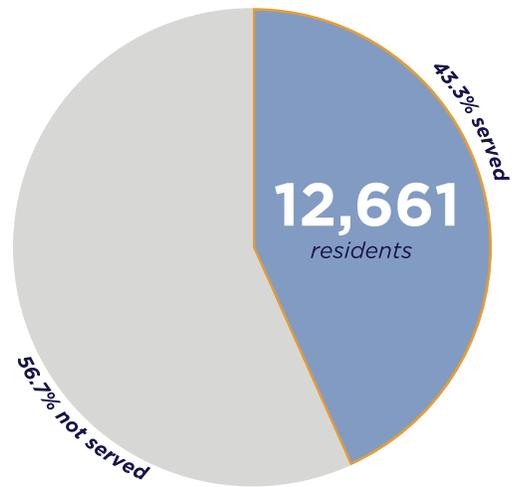
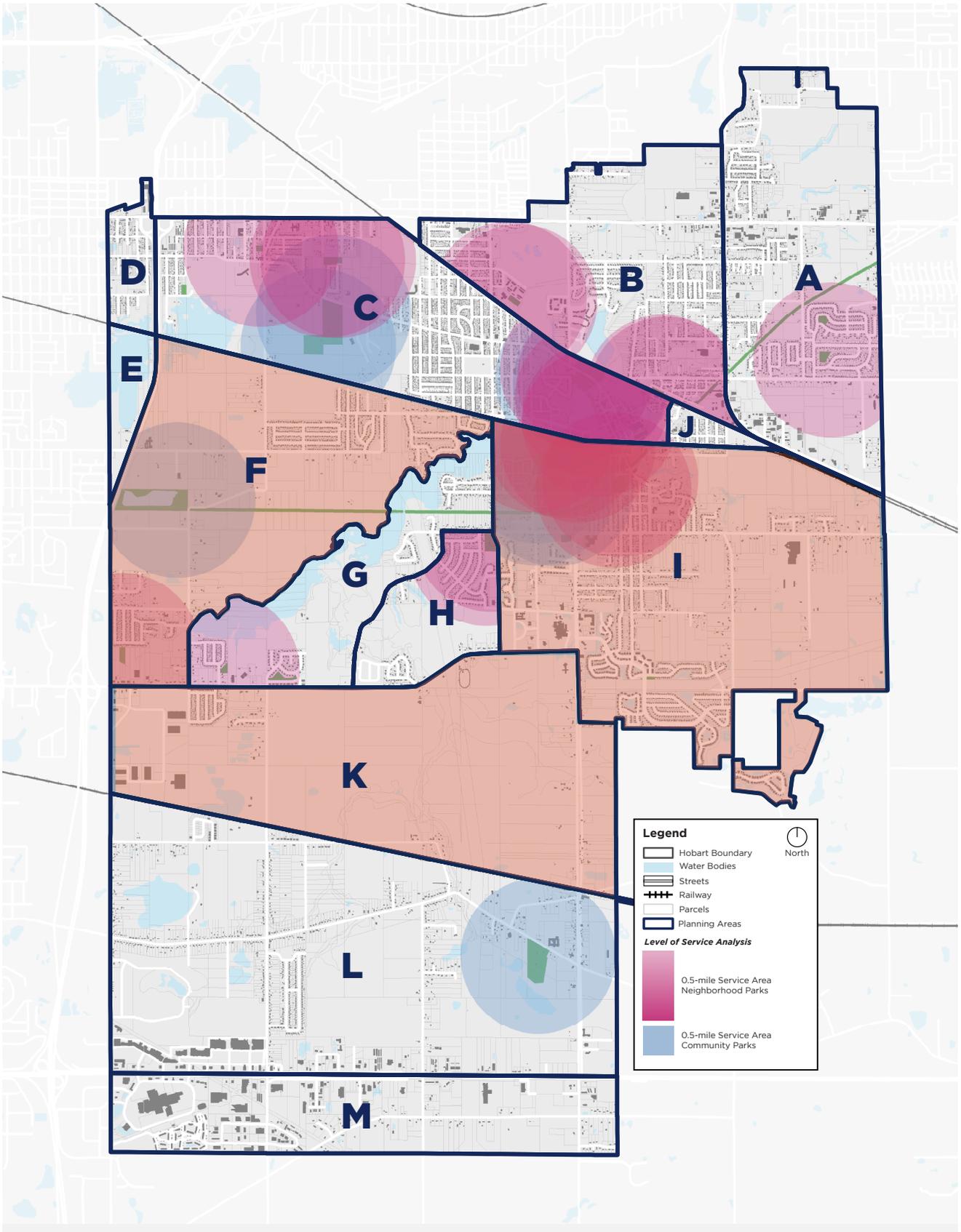


Fig 23: Neighborhood Park Distribution Level of Service Map



## COMMUNITY PARKS DISTRIBUTION LOS

The Community Park service area map shows a 1.0-mile service area radius around the existing Community Parks. Based on NRPA standards, Community Parks are typically drive-to destinations, and for that reason, their service areas are not clipped to the major planning areas in which they are located.

The Community Park Distribution Level of Service Analysis map is illustrated in Fig 24. Planning areas (C) has the largest number of residents served at 5,804 (94% and of the Planning Area population) by Community Parks. Aside from Planning Area (C), Planning Areas (B), (F), and (J) have the highest percentage (80% or more) of residents served by Community Parks in Hobart. Planning Areas (A), (D), (G), and (K) have the least number of residents served, with Areas (A) and (D) completely unserved by Community Parks. Overall, Planning Areas with larger percentages of population are fairly served by Neighborhood Parks, with the exception of Planning Area (A).

Overall, 62% of Hobart’s residents live within a 1.0-mile driving distance to a park. This percentage of the population is lower than the 75.5% average identified by the planning team.

Table 16: Population Served by Planning Area (Community Park)

PLANNING AREA	POPULATION	POPULATION SERVED
Planning Area <b>A</b>	3,127	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>B</b>	4,568	4,005 (88%)
Planning Area <b>C</b>	6,100	5,804 (95%)
Planning Area <b>D</b>	525	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>E</b>	0	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>F</b>	2,594	2,568 (99%)
Planning Area <b>G</b>	1,192	292 (24%)
Planning Area <b>H</b>	1,107	784 (71%)
Planning Area <b>I</b>	6,588	3,997 (61%)
Planning Area <b>J</b>	292	292 (100%)
Planning Area <b>K</b>	1,602	36 (2%)
Planning Area <b>L</b>	1,332	317 (24%)
Planning Area <b>M</b>	192	30 (16%)
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>29,219</b>	<b>18,125 (62%)</b>

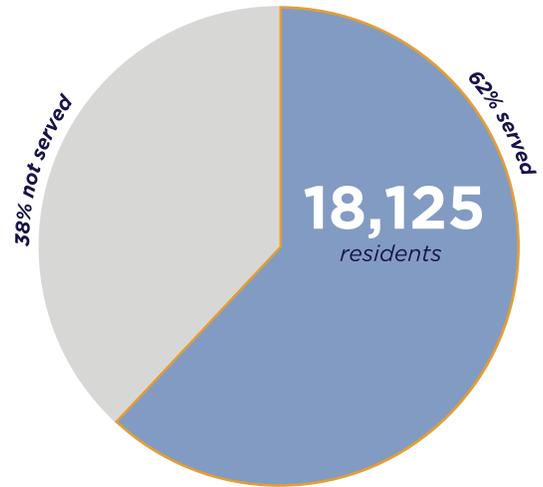
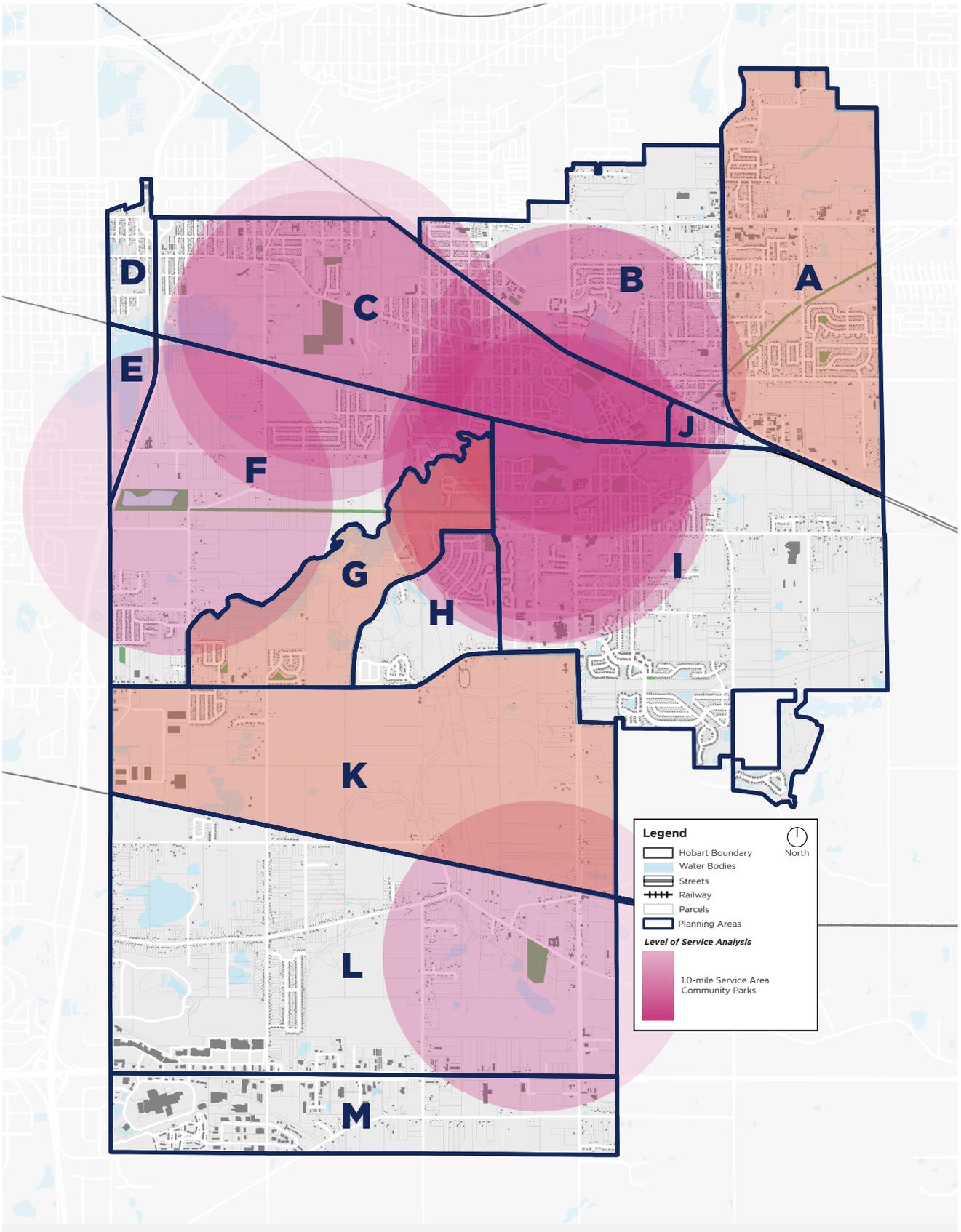


Fig 24: Community Park Distribution Level of Service Map



## OVERALL PARKS DISTRIBUTION LOS

The Overall Park service area map shows a 0.25-mile, 0.5-mile, and a 1.0-mile service area radius around the existing Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Community Parks, respectively. Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks service areas are clipped to the major planning areas, whereas Community Parks are not clipped.

The Overall Park Distribution Level of Service Analysis map is illustrated in Fig 25. Residents living in all Planning Areas, with the exception of areas (D), (K), (L), and (M), are at least 60% served. Planning Area (B) has the highest number of residents served (6,053) and the highest intensity of overlaying service areas (dark pink), followed by Planning Areas (I), (B), and (F). Planning Area (I) stands out in this analysis as it encompasses Downtown Hobart and only serves 66% of residents within that zone, with all park categories taken into consideration.

Overall, 73% of Hobart’s residents have access to a Mini, Neighborhood, or Community Park within zero to one mile of where they live. This percentage of the population is lower than the 84% average identified by the planning team.

Table 17: Population Served by Planning Area (Overall Park)

PLANNING AREA	POPULATION	POPULATION SERVED
Planning Area <b>A</b>	3,127	1,894 (61%)
Planning Area <b>B</b>	4,568	4,083 (89%)
Planning Area <b>C</b>	6,100	6,053 (100%)
Planning Area <b>D</b>	525	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>E</b>	0	0 (0%)
Planning Area <b>F</b>	2,594	2,594 (100%)
Planning Area <b>G</b>	1,192	900 (76%)
Planning Area <b>H</b>	1,107	784 (71%)
Planning Area <b>I</b>	6,588	4,351 (66%)
Planning Area <b>J</b>	292	292 (100%)
Planning Area <b>K</b>	1,602	36 (2%)
Planning Area <b>L</b>	1,332	317 (24%)
Planning Area <b>M</b>	192	30 (16%)
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>29,219</b>	<b>21,334 (73%)</b>

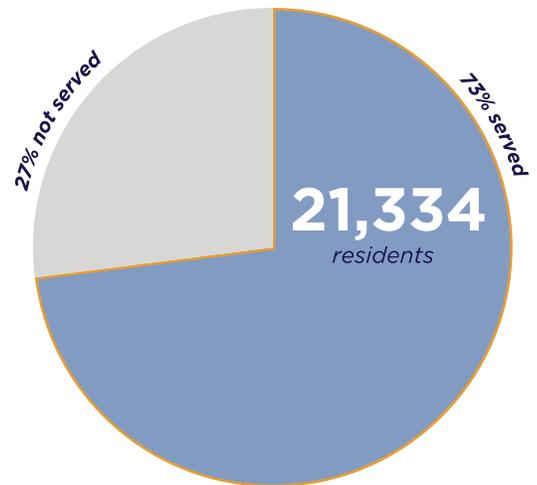
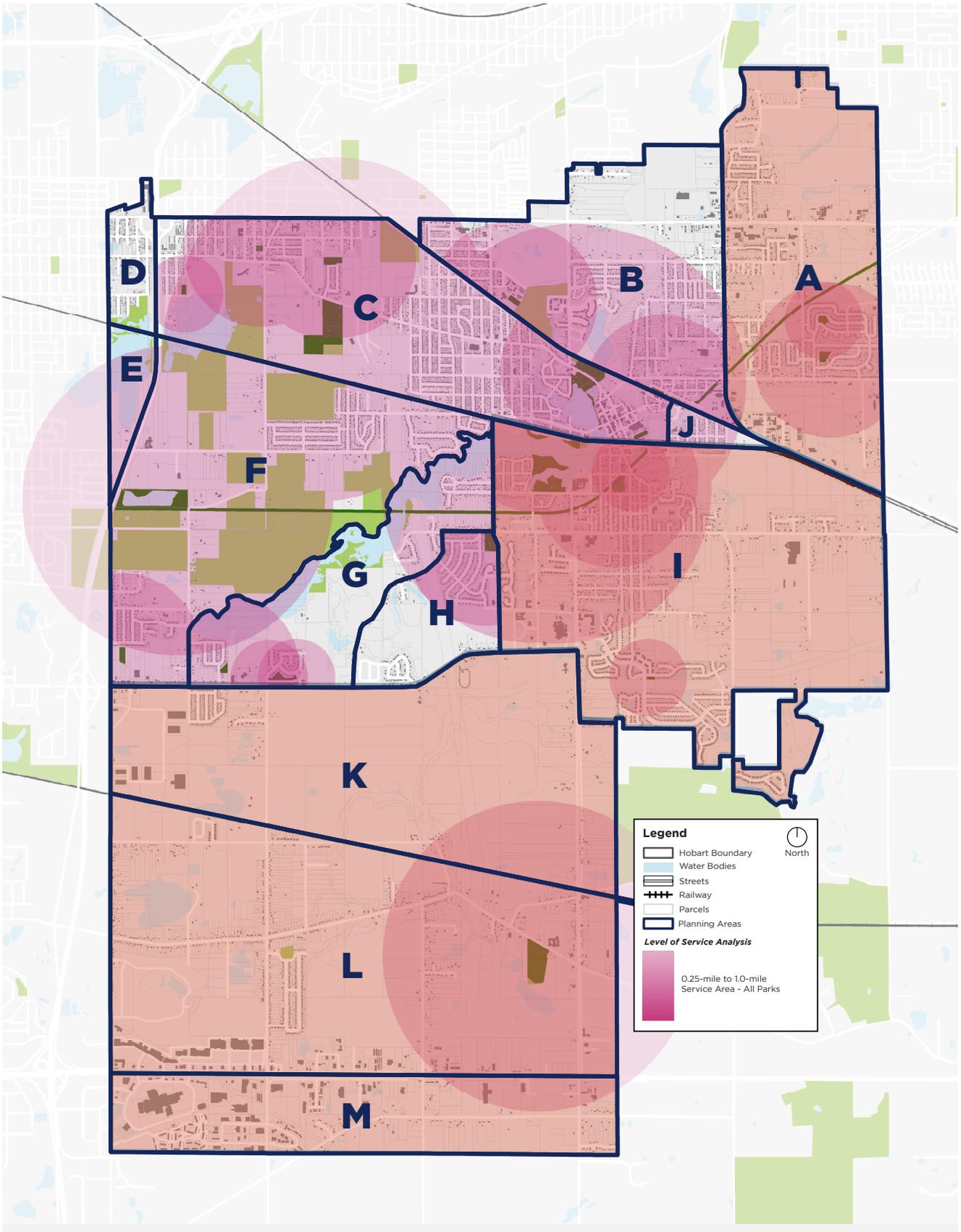


Fig 25: Overall Park Distribution Level of Service Map



# HOBART'S AMENITIES

The Department manages parks that feature a variety of amenities, including:



**Bandshell Pavilion**



**Baseball/Softball  
Diamond Fields**



**Basketball Court**



**Canoe Kayak Launch**



**Fishing Area**



**Futsal Court**



**Football Field**



**Pickleball / Tennis  
Court**



**Picnic Shelter**



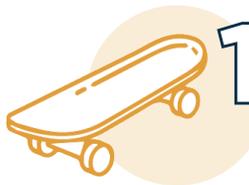
**Playground**



**Pool**



**Rugby Field**



**Skate Park**



**Soccer Field**



**Volleyball Court**

*In Addition to*

- Beach**
- Biking Trails**
- Boat Launches & Docks**
- Community Center**
- Open Play Areas**
- Track & Walking Trails**

## AMENITIES LEVEL OF SERVICE

Amenity Level of Service is measured by the quantity, quality, and distribution of individual recreational offerings. Quantity benchmarks for individual amenities are derived from NRPA's average recommended number of amenities. These benchmarks provide guidelines for the total number of amenities per population figures (e.g.; 1 court per 1000 population). The quality of amenities, which was identified via site visits and physical analysis, is summarized in the park scorecard assessments.

Based on the NRPA average, the City meets or exceeds the recommended number of amenities for eight out of the 14 amenities. Amenities that meet or exceed the recommended number are identified in green in the "Amenities Level of Service Analysis Table."

Amenities identified in red indicate deficiencies. While the City of Hobart is deficient in seven amenities, only five of those are well below average. Those amenities include:

- » Fishing Pier / Docks **-7.0**
- » Pickleball / Tennis Courts **-11.3**
- » Baseball / Softball Fields **-4.2**
- » Volleyball Courts **-3.9**
- » Fitness Station **-6.4**

The City is most deficient in pickleball / tennis courts. As fitness continues to be a trend nationwide, the City should consider adding outdoor fitness stations to fill that gap. Currently, Hobart offers three baseball diamond fields that support both baseball and softball activities. That is well below the recommended number of amenities for a population size of 29,219.

Additional deficiencies in amenity quantity include:

- » Boat / Canoe Launch **-0.5**
- » Dog Park **-0.29**



Programming on Lake George

## Theme 4 : Park & Recreation

Table 18: Amenity Level of Service Analysis

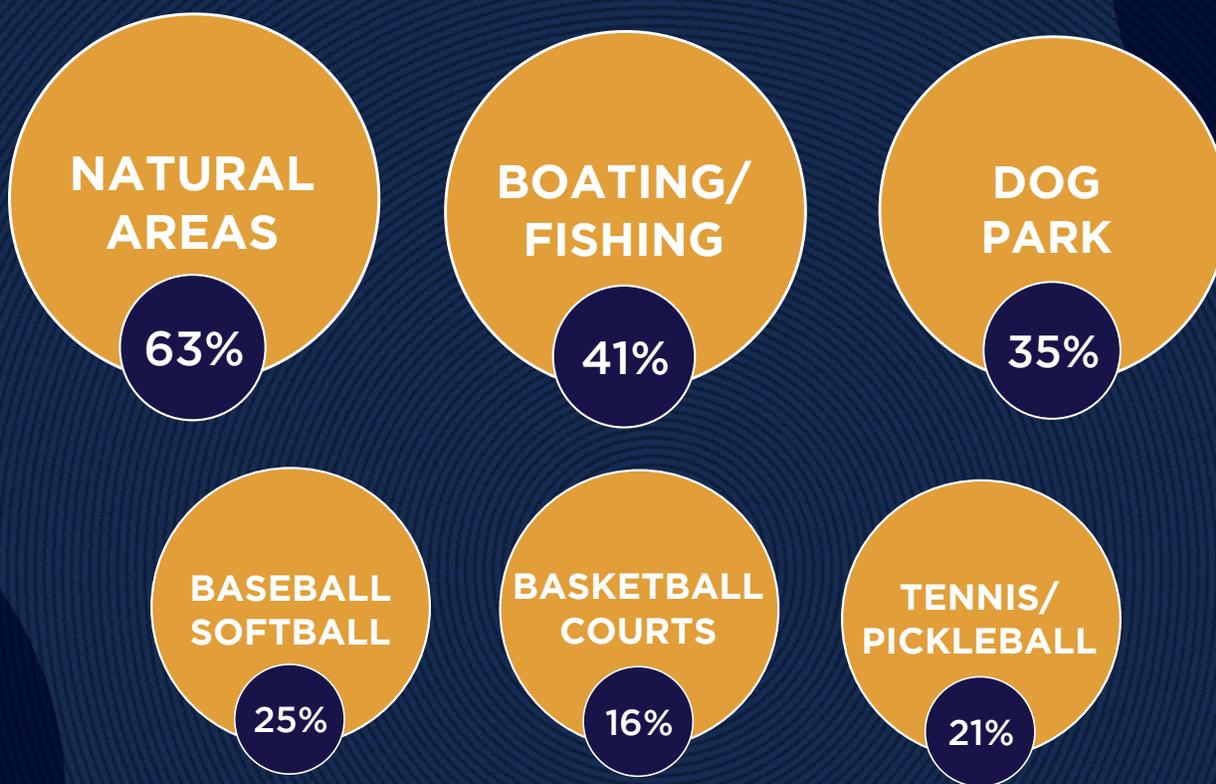
Amenity	Hobart Existing # of Amenities	NRPA Average Recommended # of Amenities <i>(Amenities / Hobart's pop.)</i>	NRPA Average Recommended # of Amenities <i>(Amenities / 1,000 pop.)</i>	Amenities Deficiency or Surplus <i>(Amenities)</i>
Fishing Pier/Docks	5.0	12.0	0.41	<b>-7.0</b>
Boat/Canoe/Kayak Launch	3.0	3.5	0.12	<b>-0.5</b>
Swimming Pools	2.0	0.87	0.03	<b>+1.13</b>
Fitness Stations	0.0	6.4	0.22	<b>-6.4</b>
Picnic Shelter	21.0	6.13	0.21	<b>+14.87</b>
Playgrounds	17.0	11.6	0.40	<b>+5.4</b>
Pickleball / Tennis Courts	3.0	14.3	0.49	<b>-11.3</b>
Basketball Courts	8.0	7.3	0.25	<b>+0.7</b>
Volleyball Courts	1.0	4.9	0.17	<b>-3.9</b>
Baseball / Softball Fields	3.0	7.6	0.26	<b>-4.2</b>
Football Fields	2.0	1.5	0.5	<b>+0.5</b>
Soccer Fields	6.0	5.3	0.18	<b>+0.7</b>
Dog Parks	0.0	0.29	0.01	<b>-0.29</b>
Skate Parks	1.0	0.6	0.02	<b>+0.4</b>



Events in Hobart

## Amenities

The community echoed the results of the level of service analysis which shows a need for outdoor amenities including pickleball courts, a dog park, and volleyball courts. The bubbles below show how much of a need survey participants have for different amenities.



“ More things for children and teens of Hobart to do in the downtown area. Perhaps a new splash pad and more sand volleyball courts.

“ There is a need for a dog park next to a large and exciting kid park area, similar to what Hammond, IN has with Dowling Park.

“ Can we have Pickleball courts with lights?

# SPORTS & ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

The *Demand Potential by Propensity to Participate* is based on the socio-economic characteristics of households in the market area and their tendencies to use various products and services. While this approach estimates sports and activity participation, it also estimates potential event (e.g., culture, concert) attendance. However, this demand potential covers adults only – age 18 and above. The following page highlights sports participation and leisure experiences that are above the national averages. Overall, sports and activities in Hobart are mostly close to or above the national averages. The complete chart showing MPIs for sports and leisure activities can be found in the appendix.

*MPI (Market Potential Index) measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in the specified trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the U.S. An MPI of 100 represents the U.S. average, and any number below 100 is considered below average, while any number above 100 is above the national average.*

## Hobart Park Department Events



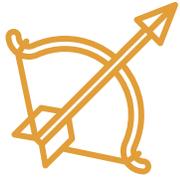
**“ We love how peaceful Hobart is and the fact that we can go canoeing, kayaking, and enjoy the water**

- STAKEHOLDER COMMENT



Annual Dam Duck Race

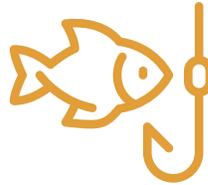
## SPORTS PARTICIPATION (HIGH MPI)



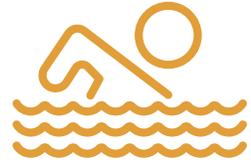
ARCHERY



CANOEING  
KAYAKING



FISHING



SWIMMING



WALKING FOR  
EXERCISE



VOLLEYBALL



**Exposing Youth to more nature-based programs that have learning opportunities and development goals.**

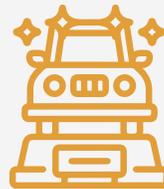
## LEISURE & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (HIGH MPI)



ATTENDED SPORT  
EVENTS



ATTENDED HIGH  
SCHOOL SPORTS



ATTENDED AUTO  
SHOW



BIRD WATCHING



DINED OUT



ATTENDED STATE /  
COUNTY FAIR



WENT TO MOVIES



WENT TO ZOO

## Key Observations



### Sports

Sports with the highest likelihood of participation compared to the national average are fishing, canoeing/kayaking, and archery. Sports with the highest number of participating households are walking for exercise, swimming, and fishing. The convenient access to parks and recreation areas within Hobart may hold the opportunity to attract more participants from outside of Hobart, generating activity-based businesses.



### Activities

Leisure activities with the highest likelihood of participation compared to the national average are birdwatching, attending high school sport events, and going to a country music concert. Leisure activities with the highest number of households participating are catching a movie, dining out, and attending a sport event.



Lakefront Festival



Tape and Cardboard Regatta



Lakefront Festival



## Hobart Programs

According to community feedback, only 25 percent of Hobart's residents are satisfied or very satisfied with programming and there are many opportunities to fill programming gaps with offerings for all ages. When asked to select the programs that they have the highest need for, Hobart residents distributed their answers fairly evenly. The highest-ranking needs included Theater, Aquatics/Splash Pad, Adult Programming, Special Events, and Youth Programming. This indicates that the community has a need for a range of program offerings, from recreational to instructional to cultural.

Some of the community's big ideas for programs include Makers Spaces, community gardening opportunities, arts programs, and clubs formed around shared interests. Overall, Hobart residents want to get more involved with their community and have the chance to learn and gather with like-minded neighbors.

**I think there is a need for more arts and STEM programs in Hobart.**

**Community vegetable gardens and gardening programs would be great here!**

**Hobart should have public gardens, summer camps, after school care, and more community volunteering opportunities.**

Top three program areas include:

Community Center Activities



Art in the Park



Summer Festivals



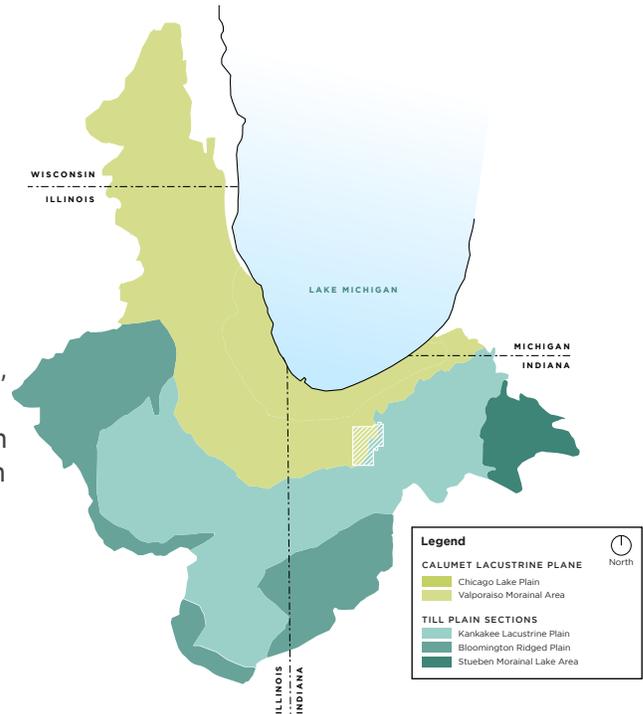
**25%**

Satisfaction  
WITH  
Programs

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

## HOBART'S GEOLOGY

Hobart's vicinity is contained, for the most part, within the Calumet Lacustrine Plain. This formation is a sandy region surrounding the southern end of Lake Michigan, marking the former site of Lake Chicago. The plain of this former lake is subdivided into distinct topographic steps by three ancient beach lines. Of the three terraces, Hobart is partially located on the last two. The middle terrace, known as Calumet Beach, forms a belt more than 2 miles wide. The average elevation along this formation is about 48 feet higher than Lake Michigan. Calumet Beach is traversed by Ridge Road. This terrace is the highest and oldest of the ancient beaches, and it marks the northern edge of the soils underlain by glacial till.



## SOIL CONSERVATION

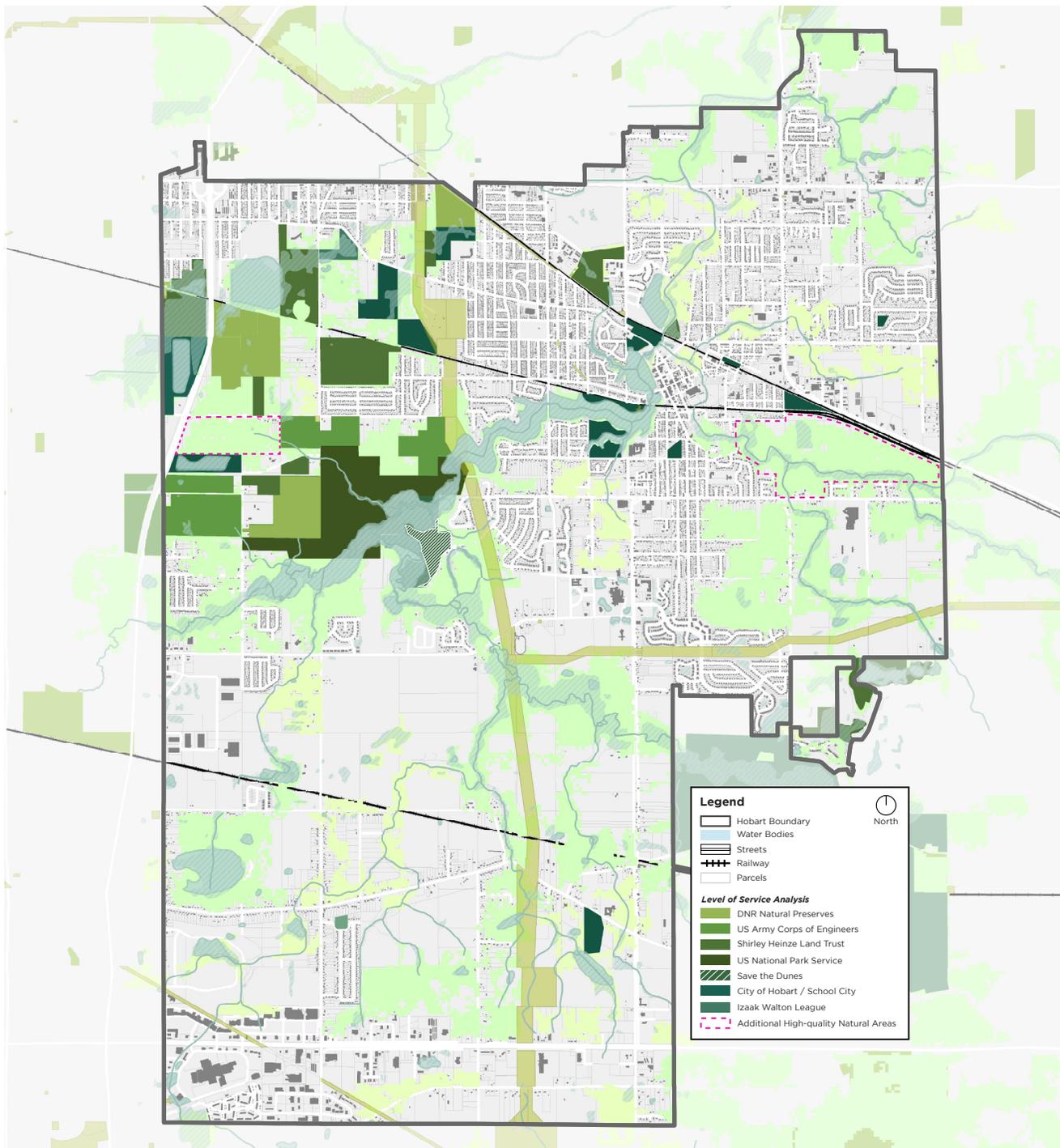
Hobart displays the occurrence of two major soil association types, according to the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The first soil type, Plainfield Watseka Association, is not considered to be a very suitable soil for typical construction. When considered as a prospective topsoil source, suitability is poor, although it would make for an adequate fill. For most types of recreational facilities, including campsites, playgrounds, and intensive play areas, the soil limitations range from moderate to severe.

The second and by far the most common soil type found in Hobart is known as the Alida-Del Ray. For the most part, the surroundings are generally nearly level and somewhat poorly drained. The texture varies from medium to moderately coarse on a base of stratified glacial outwash and lake sediments. This soil association is considered of good quality when used for intensive cropping and as a topsoil. However, because of the fine texture of the soil, water will percolate rather slowly through it, impairing drainage and making it vulnerable to periodic flooding depending on the height of the water table. Moderate limitations are found with respect to recreations sites. When planning for such areas, it would be advised that special provisions be made for adequate drainage from the site.

In Hobart, the Federal Insurance Administration has defined a special flood hazard area which covers the flood plain of the Deep River beginning at the north end of Lake George and extending north to the corporate limit of Hobart, The flood plain extends between 500 and 1,200 feet along either side of the river along this distance. During the flood of September 2008, (estimated by the Army Corps of Engineers as a 140-year storm event) significant damage occurred to several of the park facilities located adjacent to Lake George, Deep River, and other tributaries.

# NATURAL AREA ASSESSMENT

Fig 26: Environmental Areas & Managed Lands Map



## CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS IN HOBART

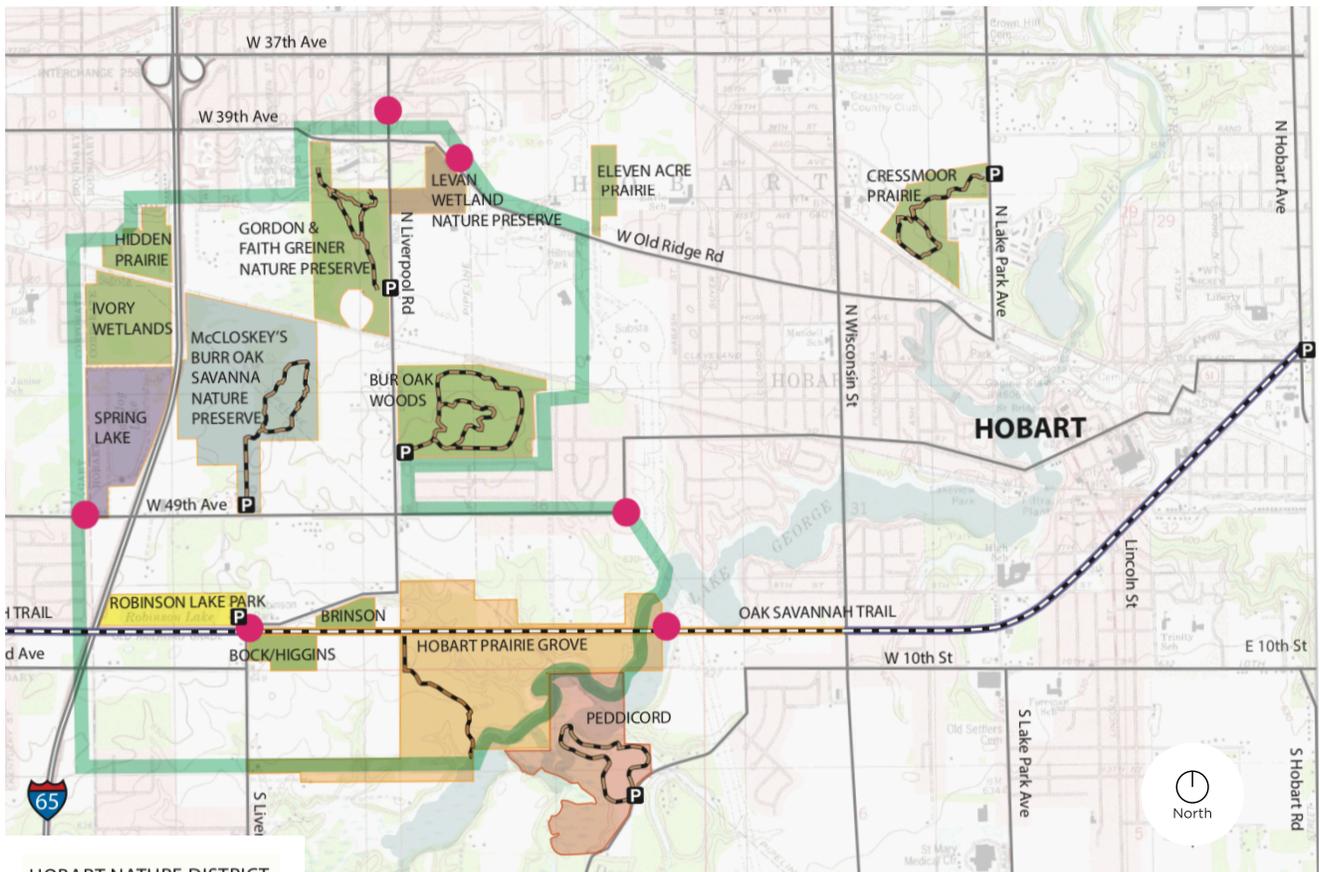
Hobart is home to over 1,000 acres of natural areas that are not owned or managed by the City. However, there are many organizations and entities working to preserve, protect, and restore Hobart's managed lands, as identified in the Natural Areas map. Hobart's natural areas include wetlands, waterbodies, natural habitats, nature preserves, forested land, among other natural and cultural resources. Below is a list of conservation organizations and a short description of their respective missions to advance natural areas in Hobart:

- » **NIPSCO** - Providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy to its more than 464,000 residential and business customers. NIPSCO regularly partners with municipalities and conservation groups to achieve conservation goals on utility right-of-ways.
- » **Indiana DNR** - To identify, protect and manage an array of nature preserves and natural areas in sufficient numbers and sufficient sizes to maintain viable examples of all of Indiana's natural communities. Nature Preserves will also manage and maintain viable populations of endangered, threatened, and rare species.
- » **US Army Corps of Engineers Mitigation** - To provide vital public engineering services in peace and war to strengthen our Nation's security, energize the economy, and reduce risks from disasters.
- » **Shirley Heinze Land Trust** - To protect habitats and ecosystems of northwestern Indiana through acquiring, restoring, and protecting environmentally significant landscapes for present and future generations, and to inspire and educate people of all ages about the value of land conservation to protect our natural world and enrich our lives.
- » **US National Park Service** - To preserve the unimpaired natural and cultural resources and the values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. Indiana Dunes National Park is planning to manage its land at Hobart Prairie Grove to promote biodiversity and allow access to the public.
- » **Save The Dunes** - To preserve, protect and restore the Indiana dunes and all natural resources in Northwest Indiana's Lake Michigan Watershed for an enhanced quality of life.
- » **City of Hobart / School City of Hobart** - To preserve, maintain, protect & improve our parkland to provide a safe environment and enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.
- » **Izaak Walton League** - To conserve, restore, and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife.
- » **Woodland Savannah Land Conservancy** - Dedicated to the long-term preservation of open land in Northwest Indiana. We accept donations of land or easements on Savanna Habitat, forested land, current or former wetland, farms for open space, historic Indian lands, and any land that can be restored to its natural state.
- » **Lake County Parks** - To create and responsibly manage a county-wide system of parks and open space resources, and to provide recreational, cultural, and educational programs based on these resources for the use and enjoyment of Lake County residents and visitors.

# HOBART NATURE DISTRICT

Over 1,000 acres of picturesque parks, wetlands, and floodplains, winding rivers, winding lakes, open prairies, oak savannas, old growth forests, and undulating ravines make up the Hobart Nature District in Northwest Indiana. All of these distinctive habitats offer refuge to local wildlife, including endangered and threatened species. The map below shows the various natural features and highlights the entities responsible for managing the different resources. The City of Hobart owns Robinson Lake Park, a 32-acre site with a 17-acre lake.

Fig 27: Hobart Nature District Map



## HOBART NATURE DISTRICT

- District Boundary
- Gateway
- Parking P
- Paved Trail
- Unpaved Trail
- Natural Area Owners:
- Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- National Park Service
- Indiana Dept of Natural Resources
- Izaak Walton League
- Woodland Savanna Land Conservancy
- City of Hobart
- Save the Dunes
- Lake County Parks



Robinson Lake Park



## WHY ARE NATURAL AREAS IMPORTANT?

Conservation is the practice of nurturing these resources to ensure that all living things can benefit from them, now and in the future. Hobart residents, similar to the rest of the world, rely on natural resources for sustenance. Engaging in conservation not only establishes a connection to the natural world, but it also encourages healthier lifestyles for current and future generations. Aside from offering potential recreational opportunities, preserving and managing the natural environment improves air quality and reduces toxins, and increases carbon sequestration, as well as reduces the impacts of natural disasters.

Hobart features high quality and potentially high quality natural areas at Fred Rose Park, Robinson Lake Park, Pavese and Pleak Parks, and the Duck Creek woods on 6 St. High quality natural areas are quite rare in the landscape, comprising less than 0.5% of the land in the Chicago Region according to the regional plant taxonomy tome "*Plants of the Chicago Region*". Hobart's quality natural areas have a very diverse population of native wildflowers, grasses, sedges, shrubs, vines, and trees. They are open, walkable and have enough sun that allow the more conservative native plants to thrive. To survive, the Northwest Indiana natural areas must be managed through controlled burns and managing invasive species. The complexity of natural areas makes them irreplaceable once destroyed.



**“ Natural Areas establish a connection to the natural world and encourages healthier lifestyles for current and future generations**



# PLANTS UNIQUE TO HOBART

Natural areas in Hobart have helped preserve rare plants and animals, a lot of which are unique to Hobart. Plant species with an asterisk are considered state threatened.

Smooth Viny Pea



Dry-mesic Upland Forest



Mesic Savanna



Mesic Prairie



Earleaf Foxglove



Prairie Violet



## GOAL 1: ACCESS & EQUITY

Our parks and natural resources will be accessible, and serve residents citywide equitably, regardless of location, age, ability, or socioeconomics.

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Hobart is a community that values the well-being of its people and understands the importance of parks and natural resources. To many residents, Hobart is well known for its open spaces and commitment to protecting the natural environment. Intentionally planning for an improved network that is well-distributed throughout the community would further emphasize the City's commitment to providing open spaces. Providing access to high-need areas is a fundamental approach to ensuring equitable services and meeting current and future needs of community residents. One of the most significant barriers to accessing parks and natural resources is proximity. People who live in areas without parks or green spaces may have to travel significant distances to reach them, which can be a challenge for individuals with limited mobility or transportation options.

The Level of Service analysis outlined underserved areas and highlighted the percentage of unmet needs by planning area population. Following the recommendations of this analysis, the City can address proximity issues prioritizing the development of new parks and green spaces in underserved areas and ensure that existing parks and natural resources are well-maintained and accessible to all. The importance of park access and equity is top of mind for community leaders, recognizing potential health disparities that may result from inadequate distribution of resources, especially in low-income communities and communities of color. Planning Areas B, D, J, and L, have been identified as high-need areas given their higher concentrations of communities of color.

Planning for improved accessibility for people with disabilities, physical and non-physical alike, can provide equal opportunities for recreation and wellness. By promoting equity in park access, Hobart can promote equity and create a more inclusive and connected network.

**STRATEGY 1:** Identify areas in the community that lack walkable park access and prioritize high-need neighborhoods for improvements.

 **Action 1.1:** Prioritize reducing deficiencies and gaps for community parks over mini parks, referring to the distribution level of service analysis.

 **Action 1.2:** Develop joint use agreements with the Hobart City Schools District to increase access to school open spaces, including the Stewart Mattix Prairie.

 **Action 1.3:** Quantify future needs based on potential growth within each planning area, focusing on areas with high levels of distribution deficiencies.

 **Action 1.4:** Address open space deficits through integrating planning processes with relevant ongoing plans, as feasible.

 **Action 1.5:** Develop an acquisition policy that establishes evaluation criteria and a process for identifying and prioritizing land acquisition for future parks and open spaces.

 **Action 1.6:** Identify land areas with significant natural value for future acquisition, such as heavily forested areas, environmentally sensitive areas, and lots with close proximity to water bodies, including wetlands, and more importantly Lake George.

**STRATEGY 2:** Aspire to develop green connections between parks and natural resources.

- **Action 2.1:** Leverage the Department’s resources toward the creation of more tree-lined streets and parkways.
- **Action 2.2:** Promote urban greening programs, such as planting trees, creating community gardens, and developing green corridors to create more open spaces throughout Hobart.
- **Action 2.3:** Develop and share a knowledgebase about the role and value of green streets, including improving air quality and providing shade in successful parks and recreation systems.

**STRATEGY 3:** Develop citywide proximity standards for specialized amenities, services, and conservation areas to better promote equity across the City.

- + ● **Action 3.1:** Quantify citywide demand per planning area and cross reference with the amenities level of service analysis.
- **Action 3.2:** Identify appropriate minimum number of amenity thresholds per amenity type.
- **Action 3.3:** Explore evolving trends and themes, such as climate change, healthy equity, and virtual programming, to identify specialized amenities, and develop knowledgebase about emerging recreational trends yearly.
- **Action 3.4:** Close amenity gaps in high-need communities and areas with underserved populations.



Educational Wayfinding

**STRATEGY 4:** Develop a wayfinding system to guide users to citywide open spaces and amenities, including the variety of natural resources in Hobart.

- **Action 4.1:** Develop a user-friendly system that can be applied consistently, ensuring flexibility of design elements and an elevated user experience.
- **Action 4.2:** Visually distinguish between the various types within parks and open spaces, including natural resources, trails, large community parks, greenways, and small pocket parks.
- **Action 4.3:** Develop new park gateways to gradually replace existing park signs.
- **Action 4.4:** Plan to integrate site improvements and landscape enhancements when installing new gateway signage.
- **Action 4.5:** Aspire to incorporate bilingual information to ensure cultural accessibility to the overall system.
- **Action 4.6:** Integrate the wayfinding system into Downtown Hobart and other pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods within the City.
- **Action 4.7:** Collaborate with other recreational entities, such as the Lake County Parks and Greenways to ensure consistent messaging and cohesive design elements.



+ Ongoing  
 ● 5 - 10 yr.  
 ● 3 - 5 yr.  
 ● 1 - 3 yr.  
 ● 0 - 1 yr.

**STRATEGY 5:** Aspire to increase ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) conformity in parks and open spaces, as well as programming opportunities citywide.

- + **Action 5.1:** Continue to conform to the accessibility and universal design guidelines, updating parks and open spaces, amenities, and other facilities as provisions further expand.
- **Action 5.2:** Conduct an ADA self-inspection annually and identify areas with extreme terrains that merit exceptions to compliance.
- **Action 5.3:** Explore opportunities to increase recreational access to individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as other non-mobility-related disabilities, such as visual and hearing loss.
- **Action 5.4:** Explore therapeutic recreation and inclusive programming, potentially designing programming exclusively for people with disabilities.

**STRATEGY 6:** Partner with local and regional organizations to promote health and wellness and reduce access barriers, closing the distribution gap citywide.

- **Action 6.1:** Identify transportation barriers or safety issues in high-need neighborhoods and prioritize improving multi-modal transportation networks and pathways linking these areas to recreational opportunities.
- **Action 6.2:** Coordinate with bike sharing programs in the northwest Indiana region to potentially integrate shared transportation services in community parks and near the Hobart Community Center.
- **Action 6.3:** Work with other City agencies to secure participation from new development to improve park and recreational opportunities for new residents.
- **Action 6.4:** Partner with local health organizations such as the St. Mary's Medical Center to continue advancing community wellness.

## Let's All Play Place

### SALEM, OREGON

In 2017, the City of Salem's Park and Recreation Department, in collaboration with Let's All Play Place Foundation, initiated a project to build an adaptive playground following universal design guidelines. This successful playground, featuring ramps, transfer stations, wheelchair accessible swings, and sensory-rich play areas, is a model for inclusive and accessible play. Input from children with disabilities and their families was at the core of this design process. Let's All Play Place intentionally serves children with physical or cognitive disabilities and has become a famous destination for school trips and community events. Funded through a combination of public and private funds, including grants, donations, and community fundraising efforts, this playground demonstrates the importance of collaboration between various entities in creating inclusive and accessible recreational spaces for all.

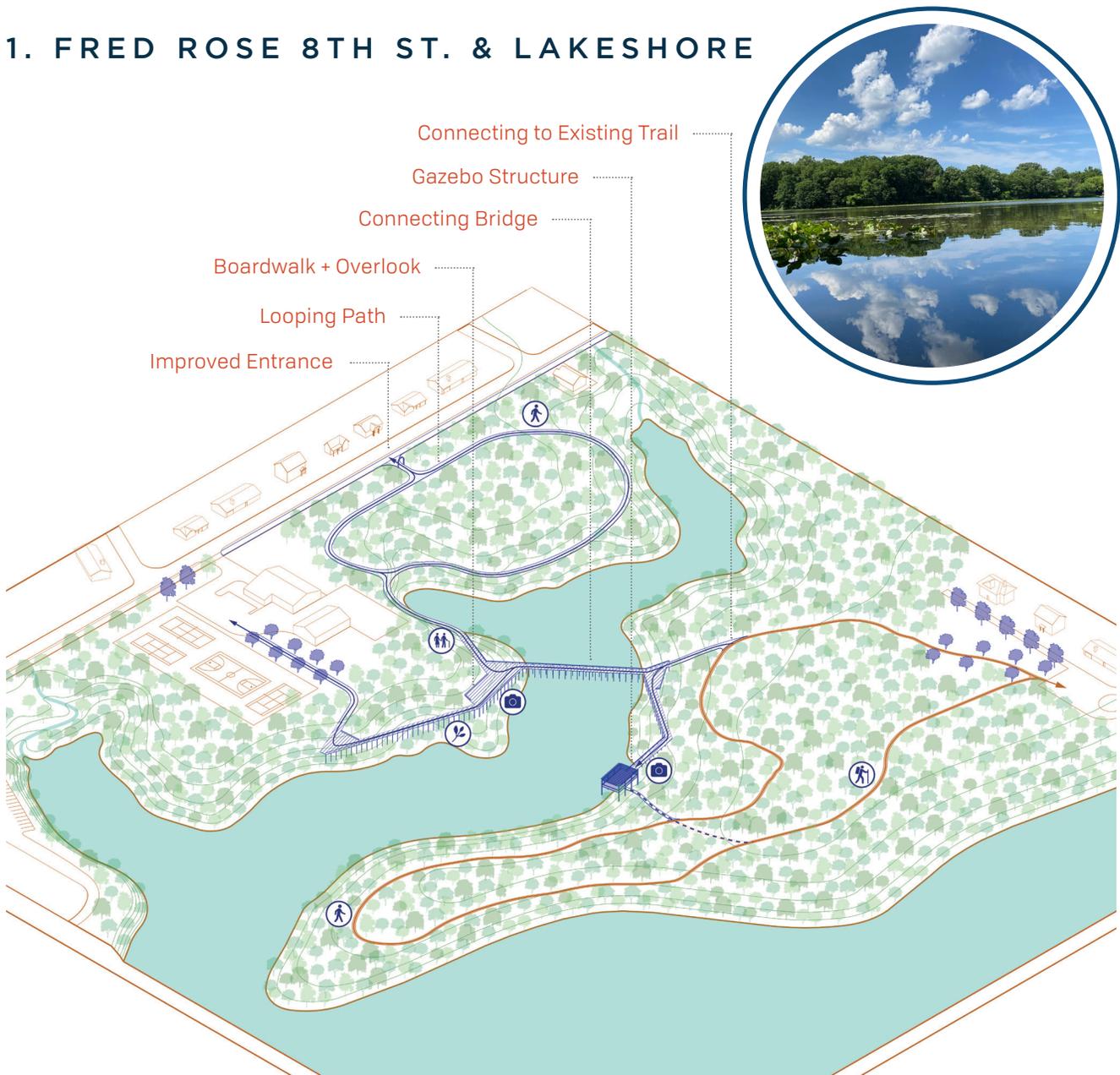


# PARK IMPROVEMENTS

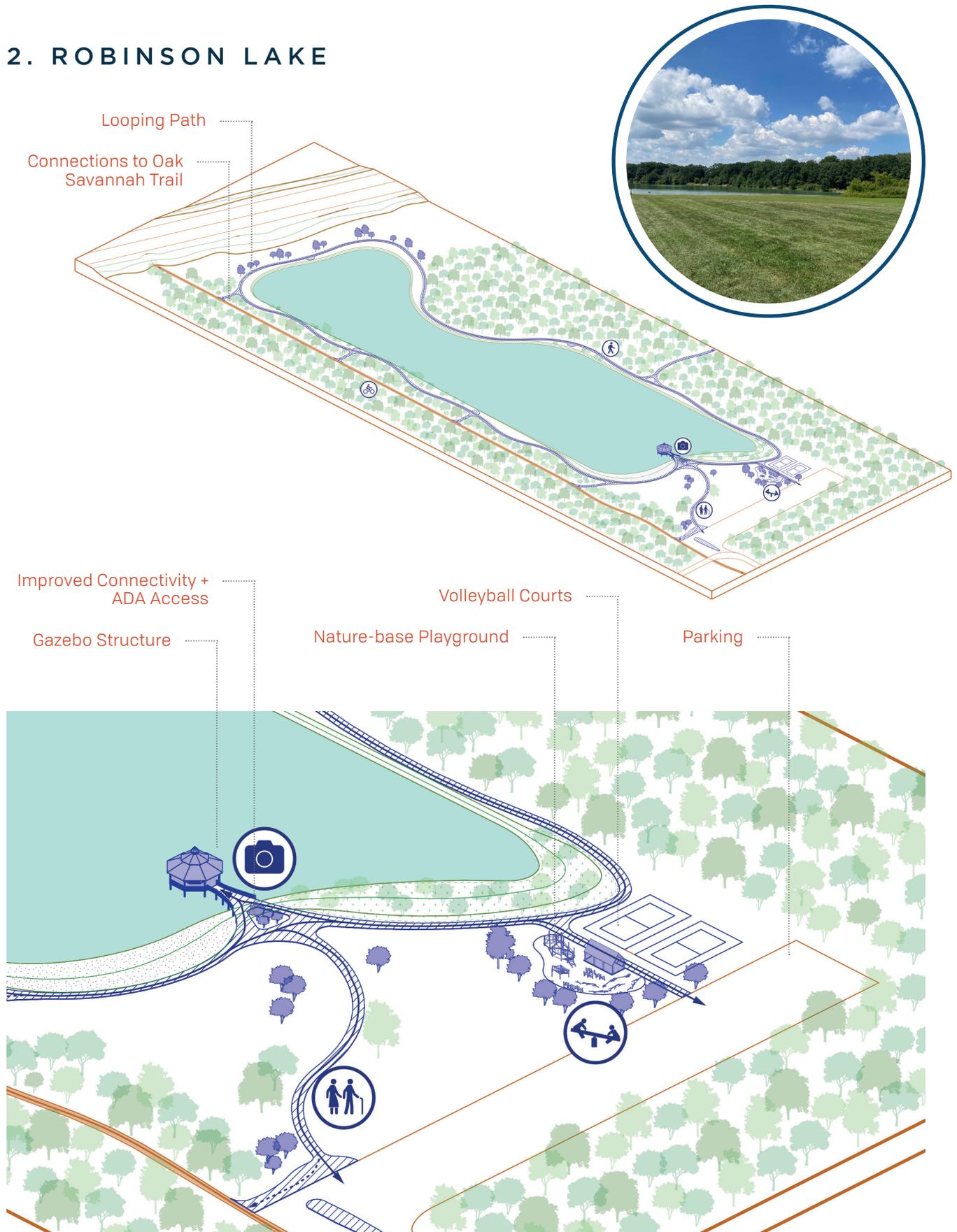
During the Hobart 2040 Plan process, the Park Department identified four park sites, including Fred Rose 8th St. & Fred Rose Lakeshore Parks, Festival Park, Robinson Lake, and Brickie Bowl to focus improvements on.

The designs help to illustrate potential improvements and lay the framework for future site planning and design efforts.

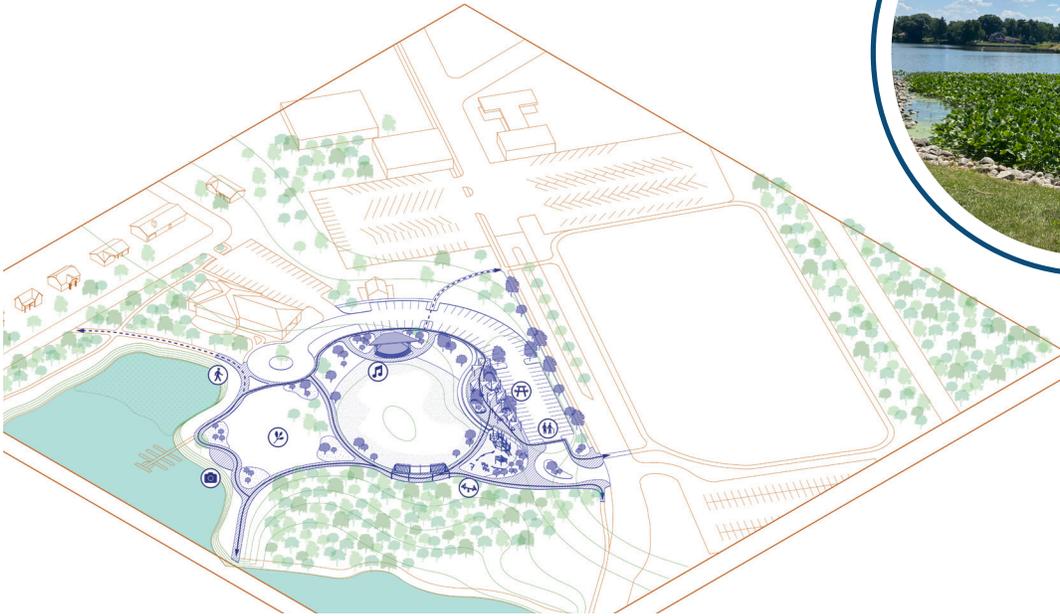
## 1. FRED ROSE 8TH ST. & LAKESHORE



## 2. ROBINSON LAKE

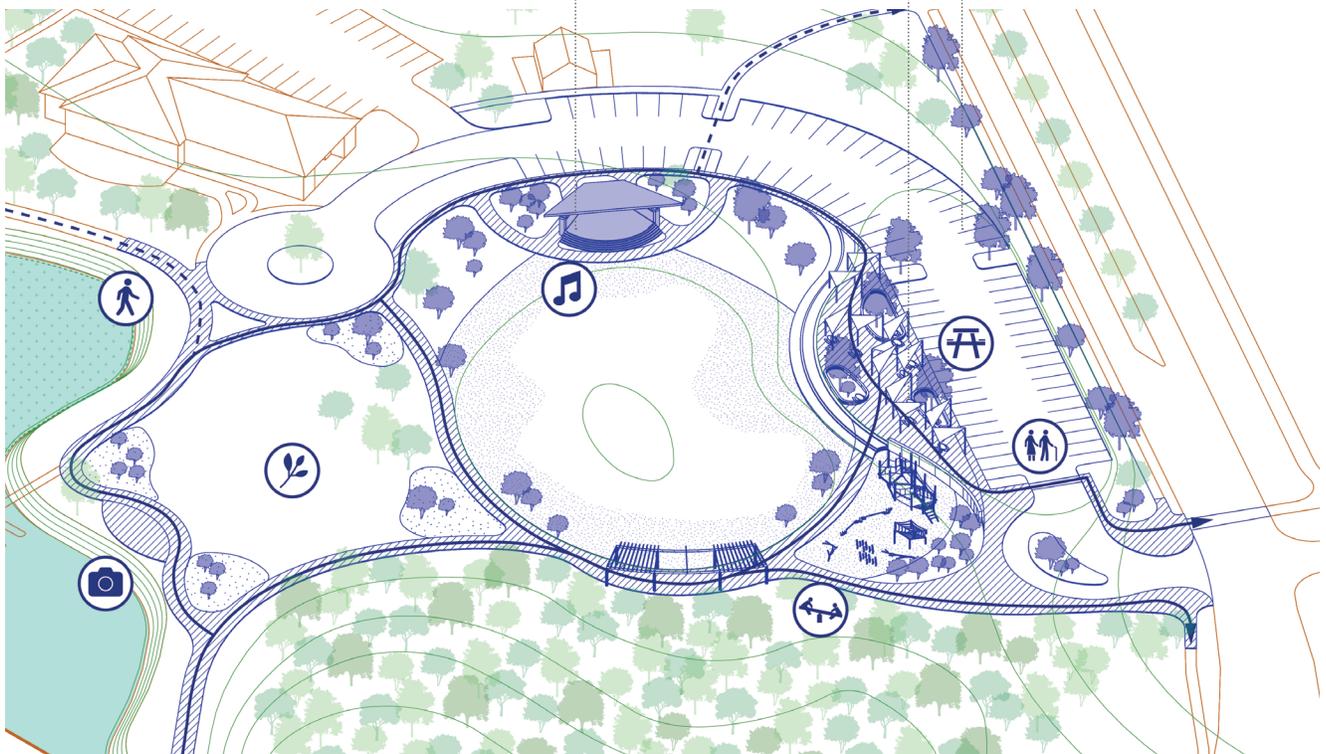


### 3. FESTIVAL PARK

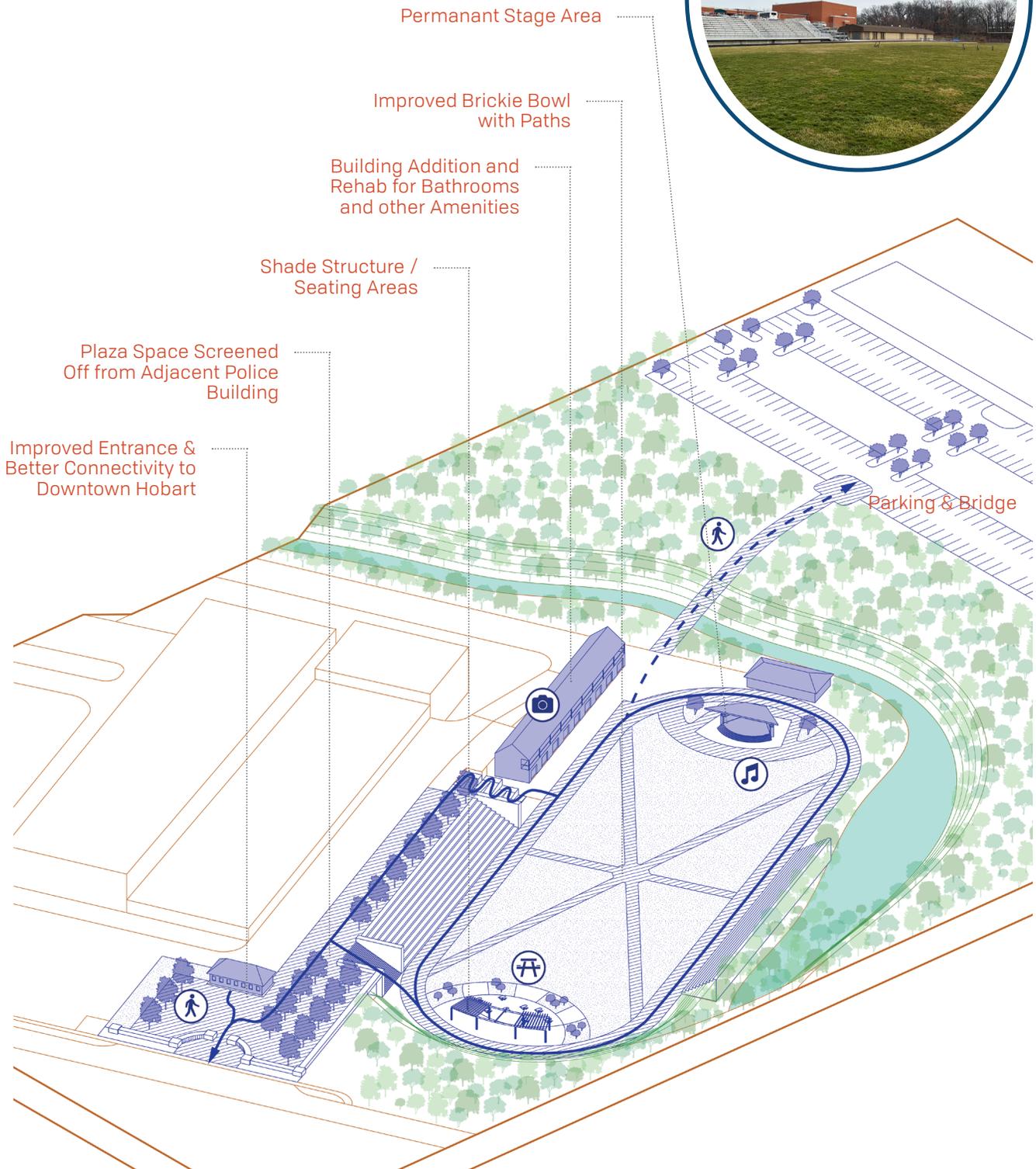


New Gazebo  
Structure & Location

Improved Parking  
Plaza Space



# 4. BRICKIE BOWL



Permanant Stage Area

Improved Brickie Bowl  
with Paths

Building Addition and  
Rehab for Bathrooms  
and other Amenities

Shade Structure /  
Seating Areas

Plaza Space Screened  
Off from Adjacent Police  
Building

Improved Entrance &  
Better Connectivity to  
Downtown Hobart

Parking & Bridge



## GOAL 2: THRIVING ENVIRONMENT

Our protected parks and natural resources will be memorable, providing a sense of wonder and discovery supported by meaningful experiences with the natural environment.

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Hobart is home to natural areas that are unique to the northwest Indiana region. One of the largest natural areas is Deep River County Park, which features wetlands, forests, and prairies, supporting a diverse array of plants and animal species. Hobart Marsh Wetlands, home to waterfowl and shorebird bird species, features 500 acres of wetlands and forests. Native Prairies and Savanna Habitats, protecting rare and endangered species in the region can be found in the Hobart Prairie Grove. While these natural areas are not owned by the City of Hobart's Park Department, they encompass over 15% of the community's land area. Hobart's continued collaborative efforts with sister conservation and recreation agencies can further preserve such natural resources and allow the City to take an active role in maintaining environmentally sensitive areas. This can result in numerous benefits for generations to come, addressing rising climate concerns and ensuring improved air and water quality, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity conservation. These areas also provide important ecosystem services that can benefit Hobart residents, reducing impacts of floods and regulating rising temperatures, among others.

Natural and conservation areas in Hobart can also offer residents and visitors a chance to connect with nature and learn about the local ecology and history of the region. Partnerships can lead to improved access to natural areas and potential programming, including nature-based experiences, promoting physical activity, and increased social interaction. Younger generations have a growing interest in connecting with nature through immersive experiences and educational opportunities. Hobart's unique natural resources has the potential to create programming of regional significance.

**STRATEGY 1:** Preserve natural areas in Hobart, promoting a culture of conservation, in collaboration with other recreational agencies.

- + Action 1.1:** Continue to implement the Hobart Conservation Zoning and Sub Area Plan (adopted in 2019) to create zoning districts that aim to enhance environmentally sensitive areas.
-  **Action 1.2:** Engage with allied agencies and private landowners to understand future plans for natural areas within City boundaries.
-  **Action 1.3:** Collaborate with conservation organizations to conduct an urban forestry plan that addresses climate concerns, preserves neighborhood character, and balances equity across neighborhoods.

-  **Action 1.4:** Encourage conservation easements to restrict the development of land and protect natural resources and consider providing tax incentives to willing private landowners.
-  **Action 1.5:** Assist in monitoring and evaluating natural areas to identify changes in the ecosystem, detect threats, and understand the health and condition of the environment.
-  **Action 1.6:** Collaborate with other agencies to develop visions and action plans for conservation areas to expand access while balancing sensitive environmental areas.
-  **Action 1.7:** Assist in developing regulations and guidelines that protect fragile natural environments and reduce disturbance to wildlife.

**STRATEGY 2:** Expand access to improve the experience of natural areas, encouraging more use by Hobart residents.

- **Action 2.1:** Assist in building accessible trails and infrastructure, such as boardwalks, modest bridges, and other structures, while preserving the integrity of the high-quality natural area.
- **Action 2.2:** Facilitate opportunities for shuttle buses and other mobility options to expand access to conservation areas.
- **Action 2.3:** Develop multiple access points to natural areas, and potentially offer drop-off areas to enhance access for users with disabilities.
- **Action 2.4:** Update the Hobart Marsh Master Plan (adopted in 2013), continuing to establish a consistent trail network that connects the City’s natural resources to Downtown Hobart, regional trails, and surrounding communities.
- + ● **Action 2.5:** Assess the feasibility of connecting existing parks and open spaces to natural areas, through expanded trails and pathways. Directional signage in the northwest area of Hobart can help guide visitors to the Nature District.



Hobart Prairie Grove

**STRATEGY 3:** In partnership with conservation organizations and entities, explore nature-based programming that aims to celebrate and further preserve Hobart’s unique ecosystem.

- **Action 3.1:** Explore ecotourism to highlight Hobart’s unique ecosystem, encouraging hiking, birdwatching, and wildlife photography, among other activities.
- **Action 3.2:** Explore the feasibility of high-quality educational wayfinding that describes the flora and fauna in various natural areas for passive recreation opportunities.
- **Action 3.3:** Develop a citizens science program, in collaboration with School City of Hobart and other educational entities, to promote research efforts such as collecting data on wildlife populations and tracking biodiversity patterns, among other initiatives.
- **Action 3.4:** Explore native plant restoration programming, including removal of invasive species, planting native species, and conducting ongoing clearings and maintenance efforts to ensure plants thrive.
- **Action 3.5:** Develop a volunteer-based trail program, encouraging stewardship of greenways and caring for pathways connecting the Nature District.



Nature Programming - Character Image

● Ongoing  
 ● 5 - 10 yr.  
 ● 3 - 5 yr.  
 ● 1 - 3 yr.  
 ● 0 - 1 yr.

**STRATEGY 4:** Promote natural areas in Hobart.

- **Action 4.1:** Invest in education and outreach, including workshops, public events, and other public education campaigns that highlight the importance of preserving natural areas and can help build support for conservation efforts.
- **Action 4.2:** Develop and implement a conservation areas media outreach campaign to improve outreach efforts and highlight the natural and recreational opportunities in the park system.
- **Action 4.3:** In collaboration with other managing agencies, explore the feasibility of a Nature District mobile app that serves as a guide to outdoor activities, such as birdwatching, and allows users to contribute to the information and report sightings of wildlife and plant species.
- **Action 4.4:** Grow a volunteer base that focuses on preserving and promoting the various natural resources in the City, engaging the growing Gen Z and Senior populations in Hobart.

## Friends of The Robinson Lake & Friends of Fred Rose | HOBART, INDIANA

These non-profit organizations are focused on education and outreach efforts to protect and promote a unique wetland ecosystem that supports rare and endangered plant and animal species. Some of their programs include organized guided hikes, nature clubs, and other organizations. They have also hosted public lectures and workshops on topics such as wetland ecology, bird identification, and invasive species management. Their success demonstrates the importance of engaging the public in conservation efforts and building broad-based support for environmental stewardship.



Shirley Heinze Land Trust Volunteers

## GOAL 3: ACTIVE COMMUNITY

Our parks and natural resources will be integral to our active hubs, bringing convenience and enjoyment, as well as tangible benefits to the overall quality of life.

The Hobart Park Department is committed to providing a diverse range of year-round programming and events that cater to the growing interests of the community. Hobart residents overwhelmingly show support for community events, including the Summer Concert Series which features a variety of musical genres, as well as Movies in the Park, showing family-friendly movies. Other special events that stakeholders emphasized include the annual Easter Egg Hunt and the Halloween Haunted Hayride.

Park and recreation trends, including programs and events, are constantly evolving, heavily influenced by changing demographics, shifting cultural values, and more recently new technologies. Such factors influence the way people engage with outdoor spaces and provide opportunities for creative programming and use of parks. This was made clear during the pandemic, where the majority of programming shifted to virtual, and the community found new ways to celebrate togetherness, often represented in simple gatherings.

Aside from planned events, the Park Department should continue to leverage existing facilities and natural resources for future programming opportunities. Lake George, one of Hobart's strongest assets, was a recurring topic in community conversations. Residents see immense value in accessing, and more importantly, activating this natural asset. Attracting visitors and new businesses to Downtown Hobart, Lake George can influence the growth of the City economically. Expanding on the existing infrastructure to allow more access to Lake George would also foster a sense of community in Hobart.

**STRATEGY 1:** Maximize the flexibility of the Hobart Community Center to encourage the use of the space as a community hub and a facility for pilot recreation offerings.

● **Action 1.1:** Reach out to local organizations, such as local churches, the School City of Hobart, non-profits, and community groups, to collaborate on events and activities that can be hosted at the Center.

● **Action 1.2:** Create a more welcoming atmosphere that builds flexibility and comfort for users, including a community bulletin board and display of artwork created by Hobart residents.

● **Action 1.3:** In collaboration with local health organizations and providers, provide wellness amenities and services, such as counseling services that can make the Center more valuable to Hobart residents.

● **Action 1.4:** Host additional regular low-key events such as potluck dinners, game nights, and other activities that bring residents together and foster a sense of community and ownership of the space.



Wedding at the Hobart Community House

● Ongoing  
 ● 5 - 10 yr.  
 ● 3 - 5 yr.  
 ● 1 - 3 yr.  
 ● 0 - 1 yr.

**STRATEGY 2:** Continue to build a knowledgebase of emerging trends and innovative park and recreation amenities to encourage active lifestyles and respond to growing community needs.

**+ Action 2.1:** Actively research, test, and implement new park facilities and programs to respond to emerging trends.

**○ Action 2.2:** Review opportunities to expand low- or no-cost programming in areas that may be lacking based on local community need, interest, grant opportunities, and funding availability.

**○ Action 2.3:** Explore an urban agriculture program that provides resources and support to Hobart residents interested in gardening, emphasizing the importance of local food systems and community gardening.

**○ Action 2.4:** Explore technology integration, providing virtual programming opportunities, including online fitness classes, arts and crafts, and other activities.

**+ Action 2.5:** Continue to explore pop-up programming, such as playstreets, green alleys, pop-up gardens, and temporary art installations, among other forms of tactical urbanism strategies that activate underutilized spaces.



Pickleball Character Image

**STRATEGY 3:** Ensure Lake George remains accessible by the Hobart community through a variety of safe and unique programming.

**○ Action 3.1:** Evaluate the feasibility of easements along Lake George, particularly the southern end, to increase access points and preserve and activate the lake shore.

**+ Action 3.2:** Continue hosting the cardboard regatta every year and explore ways to grow and improve this activity.

» *Incorporating a fun theme, such as pirates, superheroes, or a specific time period.*

» *Displaying the regattas designed by residents, ahead of the event.*

» *Incorporating obstacles or challenges into the racecourse, such as floating platforms or objects*

» *Offering workshops or classes in the weeks leading up to the event to teach participants how to build their own regattas. This can be led by community residents.*

**○ Action 3.3:** Support City-managed kayak rental stations at key locations around Lake George.

**○ Action 3.4:** Explore pilot programming to further activate Lake George, including floating movie night, nighttime paddle tour, yoga on the water, paddleboat racing, and more.

**“Summer Blast”  
Floating Movie Night  
GRAPEVINE, TX**

**“Paddleboard Bliss”  
Yoga on the Water  
SARASOTA, FL**

**“Mobile Art Gallery”  
Floating Art Show  
TORONTO, CANADA**

**STRATEGY 4:** Offer thoughtful and unique programming opportunities that appeal to the demographic makeup of Hobart and provide opportunities for socialization and engagement.

- + **Action 4.1:** Revitalize youth programming such as the youth summer camp program.
- **Action 4.2:** Encourage multi-cultural programming and attract underserved audiences, particularly Hobart's African American and Hispanic populations.
- **Action 4.3:** Explore storytelling and oral history projects as means to preserve Hobart's heritage through administered programs.
- **Action 4.4:** Encourage community service programs, such as planting a community garden, cleaning up a park, and other activities tailored to bringing people together towards a common goal.
- **Action 4.5:** Encourage multi-generational programming, including cross-generational mentorship programs, where older and younger generations share knowledge.

**STRATEGY 5:** Aspire to provide events and programming of regional significance.

- **Action 5.1:** Collaborate with private and non-profit partners, as well as neighboring park departments, to promote destination activities in Hobart and the Northwest Indiana region, such as outdoor adventure opportunities, nature-based programming, and access to water.
- **Action 5.2:** Leverage partnerships with local and regional organizations to offer targeted programming.
- + **Action 5.3:** Continually explore innovative programming that can generate buzz and attract regional visitors.



## GOAL 4: EXPANDING CAPACITY

Our parks and natural resources will benefit from operational and financial capacity building, achieving improved effectiveness and securing more financial resources.

- Ongoing
- 5 - 10 yr.
- 3 - 5 yr.
- 1 - 3 yr.
- 0 - 1 yr.

Operational and financial capacity building ensures effectively managing parks and natural resources. Hobart’s parks are managed by a dedicated team of City staff, and continuing to develop the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary will maximize the overall system’s potential. The park scorecard system identified a list of recommendations for each park or natural resource area which can be better addressed through a maintenance and management plan.

Financial capacity building also involves managing budgets, identifying funding sources, and prioritizing investments in the overall system. Financial capacity building can also involve developing new revenue streams, with a focus on achieving financial stability over the years. Hobart’s commitment to parks and recreation has not gone unnoticed. In 2021, the city was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to fund improvements to Festival Park. The city was also recognized in 2020 as a Tree City USA community for its commitment to urban forestry. Continuing to secure funding and gain recognition will open more doors for the Park Department and expand capacity.

**STRATEGY 1:** Aspire to foster a culture of continuous improvement citywide, and particularly for the Parks Department.

- Action 1.1:** Increase cultural competencies and diversity of Hobart’s staff.
- Action 1.2:** Recruit community residents to lead programs.
- Action 1.3:** Invest in succession planning for program staffing to ensure seamless transitions between older and newer staff.
- Action 1.4:** Convene Department leadership and staff to proactively evaluate strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, and results, at key open spaces and facilities.

**STRATEGY 2:** Advance maintenance practices and operate according to a formalized plan to continue providing high quality of life for residents and visitors.

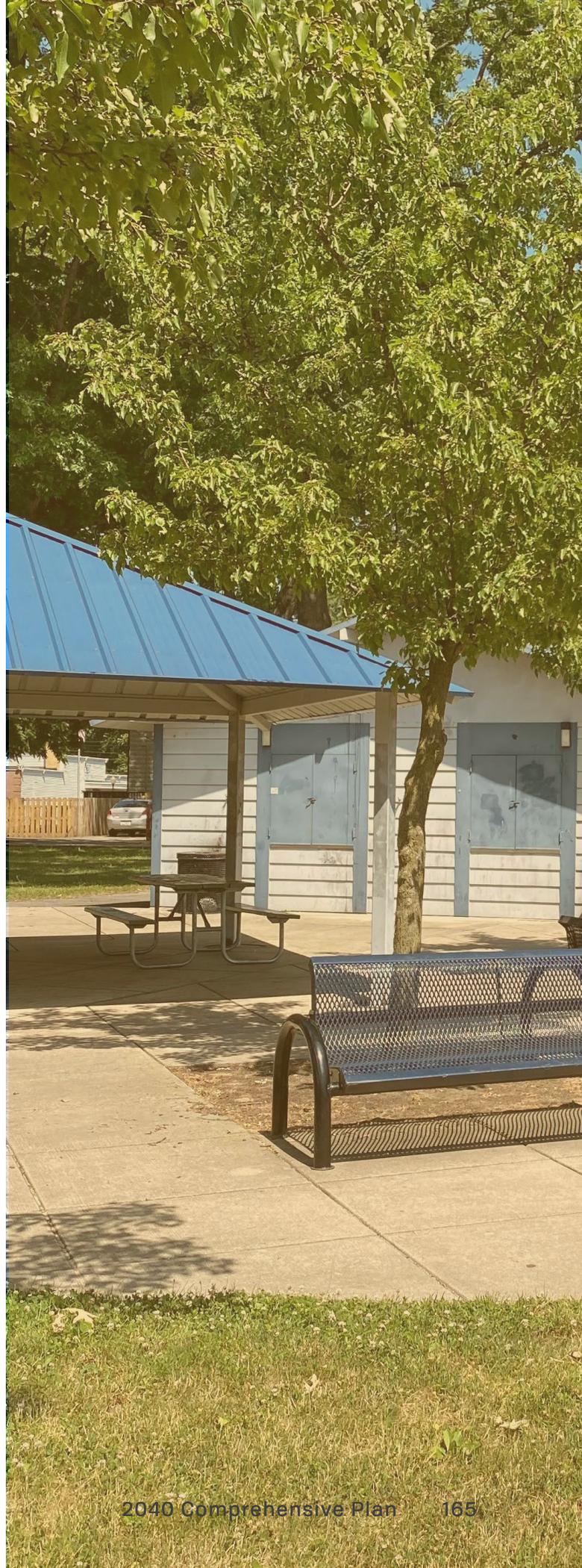
- Action 2.1:** Establish a Parks Maintenance Manual that clarifies standards, work schedules, field condition assessments, and renovation recommendations, among other improvements.
- Action 2.2:** Consider adopting the 2015 Fred Rose Park Management Plan to guide management of natural areas.
- Action 2.3:** Continue to address deferred maintenance across the system, working with the community to make improvements that enhance the overall quality of parks, facilities, and amenities.
- Action 2.4:** Incorporate each park’s ecological conditions into design and maintenance through water management, plant species, soil management, and erosion control.
- Action 2.5:** Implement an Adopt-A-Park program to facilitate citizen-based maintenance and care for parks.

**STRATEGY 3:** Continue engaging, informing, and soliciting valuable insights that can inform decision-making and help ensure that park facilities and programs are meeting the needs of residents.

- **Action 3.1:** Employ engagement strategies to deepen community and employee outreach and engagement to better understand perspectives and needs.
- **Action 3.2:** Develop a digital and hard copy recreation guide highlighting Park Department programs and planned events to community residents at a low cost.

**STRATEGY 4:** Aspire to increase financial sustainability and diversify funding sources.

- **Action 4.1:** Pass a percent-for-parks ordinance to secure additional funds dedicated to community open spaces.
- **Action 4.2:** Support the development of a comprehensive nonprofit, such as a Park Foundation, to help promote and fund park and recreation improvements and awareness.
- **Action 4.3:** Develop additional revenue-generating event spaces, overlooking natural areas and water features such as Robinson Lake.
- **Action 4.4:** Consider employing concession stands at community parks to improve visitor experience and increase revenue sales.
- **Action 4.5:** Offer rental of recreational equipment, including kayak rentals and other water-based programming equipment, increasing the potential of revenue generation.
- ✦ **Action 4.6:** Continue to explore alternative funding strategies, including grants, to address unmet needs and expand and enhance Department services.



THEME 4   STRATEGIES & PARTNERS	
<b>Goal 1: Access &amp; Equity</b>	
MEDIUM	<p><b>STRATEGY 1:</b> Identify areas in the community that lack walkable park access and prioritize high-need neighborhoods for improvements.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department</p>
HIGH	<p><b>STRATEGY 2:</b> Aspire to develop green connections between parks and natural resources.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, Northwest Indiana Greenways and Trails, Southshore Trails</p>
LOW	<p><b>STRATEGY 3:</b> Develop citywide proximity standards for specialized amenities, services, and conservation areas to better promote equity across the City.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department</p>
MEDIUM	<p><b>STRATEGY 4:</b> Develop a wayfinding system to guide users to citywide open spaces and amenities, including the variety of natural resources in Hobart.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart</p>
MEDIUM	<p><b>STRATEGY 5:</b> Aspire to increase ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) conformity in parks and open spaces, as well as programming opportunities citywide.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, Access Board, Northwest Indiana Special Recreation Association, Lake County Parks and Recreation Department</p>
HIGH	<p><b>STRATEGY 6:</b> Partner with local and regional organizations to promote health and wellness and reduce access barriers, closing the distribution gap citywide.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, School City of Hobart, Lake County Parks &amp; Recreation, IPRA, Indiana Department of Natural Resources</p>
<b>Goal 2: Thriving Environment</b>	
HIGH	<p><b>STRATEGY 1:</b> Preserve natural areas in Hobart, promoting a culture of conservation, in collaboration with other recreational agencies.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, IDNR, IPRA, Indiana Wildlife Federation, Shirley Heinze Land Trust</p>
MEDIUM	<p><b>STRATEGY 2:</b> Expand access to improve the experience of natural areas, encouraging more use by Hobart residents.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, IDNR, IPRA, Indiana Wildlife Federation, Shirley Heinze Land Trust</p>
LOW	<p><b>STRATEGY 3:</b> In partnership with conservation organizations and entities, explore nature-based programming that aims to celebrate and further preserve Hobart’s unique ecosystem.</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, IDNR, IPRA, Indiana Wildlife Federation, Shirley Heinze Land Trust, Northwest Indiana Audubon Trust</p>

	<b>STRATEGY 4:</b> Promote natural areas in Hobart.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, IDNR, Northwest Indiana Clean Air Council
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**Goal 3: Active Community**

<b>LOW</b>	<b>STRATEGY 1:</b> Maximize the flexibility of the Hobart Community Center to encourage the use of the space as a community hub and a facility for pilot recreation offerings.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, St. Mary’s Medical Center, Northwest Indiana Senior Services, Boys & Girls Club of Northwest Indiana, YMCA of Northwest Indiana
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<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2:</b> Continue to build a knowledgebase of emerging trends and innovative park and recreation amenities to encourage active lifestyles and respond to growing community needs.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, School City of Hobart, Lake County Parks & Recreation, IPRA, Southshore Arts
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<b>HIGH</b>	<b>STRATEGY 3:</b> Ensure Lake George remains accessible by the Hobart community through a variety of safe and unique programming.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, Lake County Park and Recreation, Northwest Indiana Paddling Association
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<b>HIGH</b>	<b>STRATEGY 4:</b> Offer thoughtful and unique programming opportunities that appeal to the demographic makeup of Hobart and provide opportunities for socialization and engagement.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, Hobart Human National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
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<b>LOW</b>	<b>STRATEGY 5:</b> Aspire to provide events and programming of regional significance.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart, Local Artists, Indiana Arts Commission
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**Goal 4: Expanding Capacity**

<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>STRATEGY 1:</b> Aspire to foster a culture of continuous improvement citywide, and particularly for the Parks Department.	<b>Partners:</b> Hobart Park Department, City of Hobart
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<b>HIGH</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2:</b> Advance maintenance practices and operate according to a formalized plan to continue providing high quality of life for residents and visitors.
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<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>STRATEGY 3:</b> Continue engaging, informing, and soliciting valuable insights that can inform decision-making and help ensure that park facilities and programs are meeting the needs of residents.
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<b>LOW</b>	<b>STRATEGY 4:</b> Aspire to increase financial sustainability and diversify funding sources.
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