



Bright Walls Mural | 2019  
**Claire Foxton, Artist**  
*(David Buchanan, photo)*

**JACKSON**

**City of Jackson Recreation Plan  
2020-2024 Edition**

***Volume 1***

***Approved by the City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission on January 6, 2020  
Adopted by the Jackson City Council on January 14, 2020***

## **Parks and Recreation Commission**

### **Commissioners**

Danielle Dobies (Chairperson)  
Sarah Allison (Sharp Park Board Trustee)  
Kelly Crum (City Representative)  
Pamela Fitzgerald (Jackson Public Schools Representative)  
Stephanie Moser (Sharp Park Board Trustee)  
Councilperson Colleen Sullivan (Sharp Park Board Trustee)

### **Alternatives**

Russell Davis, III (Sharp Park Board Trustee)

### **Ex-Officio Members**

Jeffery Beal (Superintendent Jackson Public Schools)  
Patrick Burtch (City Manager)  
Sheila Troxel (Chairperson of the City Planning Commission)



### **City Council**

Arlene Robinson, Ward 1  
Freddie Dancy, Ward 2  
Jeromy Alexander, Ward 3  
Laura Schlecte, Ward 4  
Kelsey Heck, Ward 5  
Will Forgrave, Ward 6  
Derek Dobies, Mayor

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**Brian Whitfield, Artist**  
*(Owley, photo)*

## Chapter 1

# Community Description & Administrative Structure

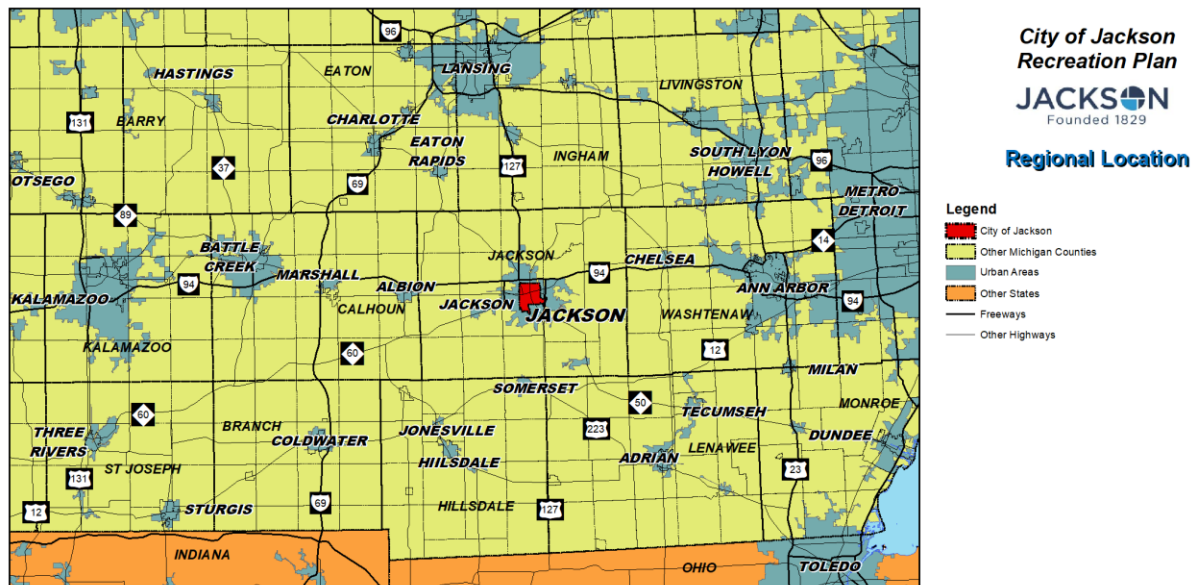
## Community Description

A priority of the City of Jackson is to develop and implement a recreation plan which responds to the recreational desires of its citizens and plans for enhancements to its parks and recreation programs. A sincere effort was spent in developing this plan which represents the projected needs for recreation facilities and services in the City of Jackson. For example, the plan provides a clear picture of the recreational opportunities available to residents regardless of who provides them. Nontraditional recreation opportunities such as historic districts/structures and shopping opportunities are catalogued as well as traditional parks and recreation facilities.

## Location

The City of Jackson is located in the center of Jackson County which is situated in south-central Lower Michigan, close to the border with Northwest Ohio and Northeast Indiana. Interstate Highway 94 (I-94) and United States Highway 127 (US-127) converge just north of the City, earning the area the nickname of 'Crossroads of Michigan'. Those roads connect Jackson directly to Ann Arbor and Detroit to the east, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo to the west, Lansing to the north, and Toledo to the southeast. The City of Jackson has a total land area of approximately 10.8 square miles.

### Regional Location



## A Brief History

First occupied by the Pottawatomie Indians, Jackson was the crossing place of two great trails, the St. Joseph and the Washtenaw. A Federal Act was passed in 1829 to survey Jackson County and Horace Blackman, the first white settler, arrived that year. He came from New York to investigate the region and found dense woods, a beautiful river in a little valley, and an Indian campground.

Jackson may be best known for hosting the first Republican Convention on July 6, 1854. It was selected as the site of the first Republican Convention due to its involvement in the Underground Railroad. Hundreds of influential Michigan citizens made the pilgrimage to Jackson.

The original state prison may have been responsible for Jackson's industrial boom in the mid-1800s. The prison provided a source of cheap labor for factories, making the City a very attractive place to do business. However, the practice of using prisoners for labor in private industry was prohibited by the Michigan legislature in 1909.

By the 1930s, Jackson had been transformed from an agricultural community to a bustling city of 55,000 with several tall buildings built of limestone and marble. Although the population of Jackson has declined since then, the City is still known for its many fine parks.

### A Brief Socioeconomic Summary

The demographic composition of Jackson has an effect upon its recreational needs. Pertinent demographic components are listed below along with a brief paragraph describing the local situation. The City is compared with its countywide and statewide counterparts. Each of the components is described in greater detail in Appendix A of this document.

- **Population History & Projections.** The 2010 population for the City was 33,354 people. The population is expected to decrease to 32,492 people by 2025. City of Jackson residents comprised 21% of the countywide population in 2010, down from 60% in 1930.
- **Age & Gender of the Population.** The estimated median age of a Jackson resident in 2017 was 32.1 years, compared to 41.0 years countywide and 39.6 years statewide. Millennials were the largest generation in the City in 2017, comprising an estimated 30% of the population, compared with 25% countywide and 26% statewide. Generation X and the iGeneration and younger were the next largest generations, each comprising an estimated 25% of the population, compared with 26% and 18% both countywide and statewide. Baby Boomers were the fourth largest generation, comprising an estimated 17% of the population, compared with 24% countywide and 23% statewide. The Silent Generation and older was the smallest generation, comprising and estimated 4% of the population, compared with 7% countywide and 7% statewide.
- **Racial & Ethnic Composition.** The population of Jackson was more diverse than Jackson County and Michigan. An estimated 71% of City residents were white in 2017, compared to 87% countywide and 79% statewide. Black residents comprised an estimated 22% of the population, compared with an estimated 8% countywide and 14% statewide. Other races comprised and estimated 2% of City residents, compared with 2% countywide and 5% statewide. Biracial and multi-racial people comprised 4% of Jackson residents, compared with 3% countywide and statewide. An estimated 6% of residents were Hispanic, compared with an estimated 3% countywide and 5% statewide.
- **Disabilities of Residents.** An estimated 19% of Jackson residents were disabled in some way in 2017, compared with 15% countywide and 14% statewide. An estimated 9% of City residents had an ambulatory disability, compared with 8% countywide and statewide. Older people were more apt to have a disability. For example, an estimated 51% of City residents 75 years old or older in 2017 had a disability, compared to 47% countywide and 49% statewide.

- **Household & Family Composition.** An estimated 58% of Jackson households were comprised of families in 2017, compared with 66% countywide and 65% statewide. Single people comprised an estimated 35% of all City households, compared to an estimated 29% countywide and statewide. Other non-family households comprised an estimated 7% of households, compared to 5% countywide and 6% statewide.
- **Group Quarters.** An estimated 2% of Jackson residents resided in group quarters in 2017, compared to 6% countywide and 2% statewide.
- **Income & Poverty.** The estimated median income was \$31,118 for Jackson households in 2017, compared to \$49,715 countywide and \$52,668 statewide. The estimated median income was \$37,051 for City families in 2017, compared with \$61,359 countywide and \$66,653 statewide. The estimated per capita income was for \$17,631 for Jackson residents, compared with \$25,952 countywide and \$28,938 statewide. An estimated 33% of City residents lived in poverty, compared with 15% countywide and 16% statewide.
- **Housing Types.** An estimated 70% of Jackson dwellings were single units in 2017, compared with 78% countywide and 72% statewide. An estimated 29% of dwellings were located in multi-unit buildings, compared with 16% countywide and 18% statewide. An estimated 1% of City dwellings were mobile homes in 2017, compared with 6% countywide and 5% statewide.

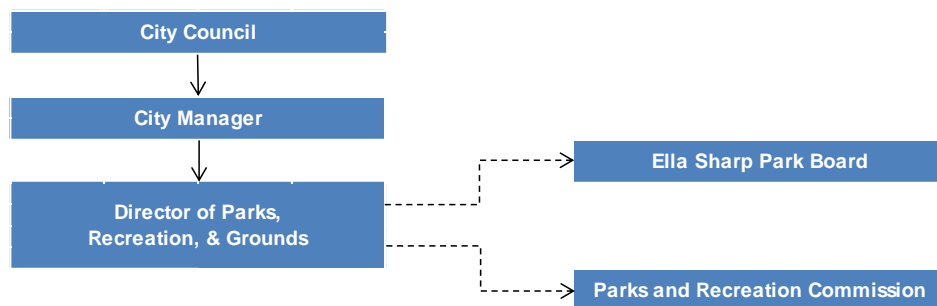
## Administrative Structure

The authority to provide public park systems and recreation programs is granted by the State of Michigan. The City of Jackson's park system is established under the authority of Public Act 156 of 1917, *Recreation and Playgrounds (MCL 125.51 et seq)*. The act allowed for the creation of the City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission and the Ella W. Sharp Park Board, both under the control of the Jackson City Council. The act also allows for the recreation millage through Jackson Public Schools.

## Organizational Structure

The Ella W. Sharp Park Board is responsible for planning, constructing, maintaining, programming, and administrating Ella W. Sharp Park and the City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission is responsible for all other city parks. The Board and the Commission are also charged with studying various recreation needs, advising the City Council on recreation issues, and making appropriate budget requests (see the organizational chart).

### Organizational Chart



The Ella W. Sharp Park Board of Trustees is comprised of the following members:<sup>1</sup>

- 1 member of the City Council appointed by the Council
- 4 city residents appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council

The following members comprise the Parks and Recreation Commission:

- 1 member of the City Council and 4 city residents appointed by Council
- 1 member of the Jackson Public Schools' Board of Education and 3 school district residents appointed by the Superintendent and approved by the Board
- 3 ex-officio members (e.g., the City Manager, the Chair of the City Planning Commission, and the Superintendent of Jackson Public Schools)

The City's park system is administered in conjunction with its cemetery program within the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Grounds. The Director reports to the City Manager and City Council as well as the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Ella W. Sharp Park Board. The Director is in charge of the 13 full-time employees and 350 seasonal employees who maintain parks and provide recreation programs. Approximately 200 adults volunteer to coach youth sports each year and service groups volunteer to help with park cleanup.

### **Parks and Recreation Budgeting**

The parks and recreation budget of the City of Jackson illustrates a substantial commitment to its park system and recreation programming. The park system's operating budget for 2019-2020 was \$3,308,353 and it is anticipated that the budget should remain fairly constant in future years. The capital budget for the park system was \$169,827. It is important to note that the capital budget for the park system fluctuates on an annual basis, based upon allocations from the City Council and any grants and/or donations secured for a specific project.

### **Sources of Funding**

The City of Jackson utilize a variety of funding sources for recreation:

- general tax fund dollars
- recreation program millage through Jackson Public Schools
- user fees for golfing, pool, and other facilities and recreation programs
- the Ella W. Sharp endowment fund
- grants and donations awarded for specific projects

General tax fund dollars are used by the City for the maintenance of their park systems, including the cost of producing this Plan. Revenues from an endowment fund contribute to the maintenance of the City's Ella W. Sharp Park. The user fees charged for various facilities (i.e., golfing, camping, skateboarding, pavilions, etc.) contribute to the maintenance of those and other facilities within the park system. Finally, a millage through Jackson Public Schools — and the user fees charged for recreation sessions and sports seasons — fund the recreation programming provided by the City.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that three of the four city residents appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission are also appointed to serve as members of the Ella W. Sharp Park Board.

Grants are sought from various state, federal, and philanthropic sources for the acquisition of parkland and the development of a specific park, facility (e.g., trails, playgrounds, picnic shelters, sports facilities, etc.) or program. Donations from the general public and various service organizations for a specific park, facility, or program are also accepted. A portion of the local match required of most grants may also come from the general fund or donations. Many grants for parks and recreational facilities are likely to come from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund<sup>2</sup>.

The Michigan Transportation Fund Act (Act 51) states that “a reasonable amount, but not less than 1% of” funds allocated to the state or a county, city, or village “shall be expended for construction or improvement of non-motorized transportation services and facilities.” That set-aside can be used to fund “an improvement in a road, street, or highway which facilitates non-motorized transportation . . . or improvement of a sidewalk in a city or village, or any other appropriate measure.” The Michigan Department of Transportation and the City of Jackson receive funding through Act 51. Coordination with those entities could result in the expenditure of Act 51 funds on nonmotorized projects proposed within this document.

## **Relationships with Other Recreation Providers**

The City of Jackson is not the only supplier of parks and recreational opportunities to its residents.

### **Schools**

Local school districts are significant suppliers of parks and recreational opportunities to their students and boosters as well as the general public. Jackson Public Schools—which maintains recreation facilities within the City and provides recreation programs to its students—are part of the Jackson County Intermediate School District (ISD). The ISD provides educational services to residents and local school districts, including some recreation facilities.

Jackson Public Schools has sponsored a millage to fund the vast array of recreation programs provided by the City of Jackson for many years, making them available to residents throughout the District rather than just the City. Voters approved the current version of the millage during the summer of 2014. Please refer to Chapter 2 for a detailed description of those programs.

### **Local, County, State, and Private Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Jackson County Parks also provide recreational opportunities for Jackson residents and Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and James J Keeley County Park (i.e., the county fairgrounds) are located in the City. Although none of its facilities are located in Jackson, City residents benefit from the state game, wildlife, and recreation areas; state historic parks; and state parks provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) throughout Jackson County and beyond. The townships surrounding Jackson also maintain parks and/or trails. A variety of private entrepreneurs and quasi-public agencies also provide recreation facilities and programs in and around the City.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a Federal program administered locally by the State of Michigan.

The City of Jackson participates with other local governments in the County in the planning for and provision of recreation facilities as evidenced by the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study 2002*. The intergovernmental cooperation that created the Study is still active. For example, Jackson and Jackson County are developing the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* which will also address the recreational use of nonmotorized facilities. The Region 2 Planning Commission, the City of Jackson, and Jackson County began the planning effort in 2019. The City also participated in the development of the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* (2017).

Please refer to Chapter 2 for a more detailed description of recreation facilities in the City of Jackson.

### Public-Private Cooperation

Cooperation with the public and private sectors is also active. The B2 Watchers neighborhood group, the Kiwanis Club of Jackson, the Jackson Community Foundation, the Friends of Loomis Park, Jackson County Parks, and Jackson Public Schools have partnered with the City of Jackson on various projects.

### Active Jackson

Active Jackson is a group of community leaders in the City of Jackson and throughout Jackson County. It also serves as the Active Living Health Action Team for the Health Information Organization (HIO) founded by Henry Ford Allegiance Health. Its mission is: “To create an environment where it’s easy to walk and bike for recreation, transportation, and health; and to educate and encourage citizens to be active”. As part of that effort, the HIO conducted a Collaborative Community Assessment Metric Report which published the results of a community health assessment survey conducted in 2017. The answers to various questions regarding general health, physical activity/overweight and obesity illustrate the need for additional recreation facilities throughout Jackson County, including the City of Jackson.

- When asked questions about weight and height, it was determined that 32.6% of respondents were overweight (i.e., had a body mass index of 25.0-29.9) and 39.9% were obese (i.e., had a body mass index of  $\geq 30.0$ ).
- When asked to rate the difficulty in finding a place to exercise, 10.9% of respondents reported it was ‘somewhat difficult’ and 6.2% reported it was ‘very difficult’.
- When asked if they feel if sidewalks and bike routes in their neighborhood are adequate, 77.9% and 80.2% responded ‘yes’, respectively.
- When asked if they use bicycle paths or bike trails in their community, 25.1% said ‘yes’, 44.0% said ‘no’, and 30.9% said the ‘community does not have any’ facilities.
- When respondents who reported having school age children that walk or bike to school were asked if there is a safe route to school for their kids, 68.4% responded ‘yes’ and 31.6% responded ‘no’. When asked how many days a week their kids walk or bike to school, 34.4% said ‘1 day’, 31.6% said ‘2 days’, and 34.0% said ‘5 days’.

Active Jackson will participate in the development of the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* by facilitating public engagement and providing stakeholder engagement for identifying possible non-motorized routes. Proposed routes will become part of the next edition of the *City of Jackson Recreation Plan*.





Bright Walls Mural | 2019

**Arlin Graff, Artist**

*(Luis Saenz, photo)*

Chapter 2

## **Recreation and Resource Inventories**

In order to plan for future parks and recreation facilities it is important to prepare a complete inventory of existing resources and facilities. The following inventory is comprised of all known parks and recreation facilities and programs available countywide, not just those owned and managed by City of Jackson. The parks, facilities, and programs were identified through local knowledge and review of current and historic documents and maps.

## Park Classifications and Standards

It is also important to be able classify parks and recreation facilities and to apply standards to them in order to identify the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities in the City of Jackson.

### Types of Parks

Park systems are comprised of several types of parks:<sup>1</sup>

- **Mini-Parks.** Small parks (less than an acre) which address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs
- **Neighborhood Parks.** Informal active and/or passive recreation parks which serve as the focus of the neighborhood; *this park type also serves as a mini-park for the area immediately adjacent to the facility*
- **Community Parks.** Parks which serve a broader focus than a neighborhood and may also preserve a unique landscape or open space; *this park type also serves as a neighborhood park for the area immediately adjacent to the facility*
- **Regional Parks.** Parks which serve the entire county as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces; *this park type also serves as a community park for the area surrounding the facility*
- **Connector Trails.** Linear parks which serve as non-motorized connectors among neighborhoods, business areas, parks, schools, and other destinations

### Service Area and Acreage Standards

The park acreage standard advocated by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) is 10 acres for every 1,000 residents.<sup>2</sup> The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) recommends the following service areas and minimum sizes for each type of park.<sup>3</sup>

- **Mini-Parks.** >¼-mile service area and less than an acre in size
- **Neighborhood Parks.** ¼- to ½-mile service area and a minimum size of 5 acres
- **Community Parks.** ½- to 3-mile service area and a size of 30-50 acres
- **Regional Parks.** Community-wide service area and a minimum size of 50-75 acres<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that a single standard cannot meet the needs of all park systems. Accordingly, some of the parks may not meet the minimum size criteria for the assigned park type.

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<sup>1</sup> Springate, Lee, "Defining Parks and Park Systems," From Recreation to Re-creation: New Directions in Parks and Open Space System Planning, Megan Lewis, editor (PAS Report Number 551)

<sup>2</sup> National Recreation and Park Association, Open Space Guidelines & Standards, C. Castleman, compiler

<sup>3</sup> Grants Management Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans IC1924 (Rev.01/27/2006)

<sup>4</sup> The standard the MDNR uses for large urban parks is also used for regional parks in this report

## Parks and Recreation in the City of Jackson

The City of Jackson provides a system of regional, community, neighborhood, and mini parks, various connector trails, and recreation programs. That system is supplemented by community parks and connector trails provided by Jackson County and the surrounding townships; and regional parks and recreation facilities and recreation programming provided by Jackson County, the State of Michigan, and other organizations.

### City of Jackson Parks

The City of Jackson system is comprised of 27 parks encompassing 641.6 acres and 3.4 miles of trails (please see the following table and maps in Appendix D). Over half of the city parks are very small, making them mini facilities. Almost a third of the parks serve neighborhoods. The presence of recreation centers, a pool, and a skateboard park make several parks community facilities. The existence of golf courses, a museum, a planetarium, and other unique destinations make one park a regional facility. Green space, playground equipment, walkways and benches, and various sporting facilities are also available in many city parks. Please see Appendix B of this document for a complete listing of the recreation facilities found in each park.

Given the estimated City of Jackson population of 32,253 people in 2020, the city park system provides 198.9% of the acreage recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association. The service areas for community parks cover the entire city (please see Map 3-3). The park system also provides 63.4% of the recommended acreage for Metropolitan

Jackson (i.e., the City and the Urban Townships) given an estimated population of 101,153 people in 2020. Although a neighborhood park is not located in the southwestern portion of the city, a regional park is located nearby providing adequate parkland. It is also important to note that most of the mini-parks are located in the vicinity of Downtown Jackson and the Inter-City Trail.

**City of Jackson Parks**

No.	Name	Type	Size	BFA
1.	Beech Tree	Mini	1.1 ac	2
2.	Best Field	Neighborhood	6.6 ac	1
3.	Horace Blackman	Community	1.2 ac	4
4.	Gov. Austin Blair Memorial	Mini	2 ac	4
5.	Bloomfield	Neighborhood	2.4 ac	4
6.	Betsy Butterfield	Mini	0.5 ac	4
7.	Norm Creger Memorial	Mini	0.7 ac	4
8.	Downtown Riverfront	Mini	1.1 ac	5
9.	Exchange	Neighborhood	3.5 ac	2
10.	Ganson Street	Mini	0.4 ac	5
11.	Grand River Memorial	Neighborhood	0.2 ac	3
12.	Bucky Harris	Mini	0.3 ac	5
13.	Martin Luther King Center	Community	10.0 ac	3
14.	Kiwanis	Neighborhood	1.3 ac	2
15.	Leekes	Mini	0.5 ac	3
16.	Lions	Neighborhood	9.7 ac	2
17.	Loomis	Community	14.1 ac	3
18.	Elnora Moorman Plaza	Mini	0.1 ac	5
19.	William Nixon Memorial	Community	17.1 ac	3
20.	New Leaf	Mini	0.2 ac	4
21.	Optimist	Neighborhood	4.2 ac	2
22.	Rotary	Neighborhood	1.7 ac	2
23.	Friendship	Mini	0.2 Ac	1
24.	Ella W. Sharp	Regional	563.0 ac	3
25.	Under the Oaks	Mini	0.1 ac	3
26.	Withington	Mini	2 ac	2

- **Barrier-Free Access.** It is important that the parks and recreation facilities operated by Jackson County and the City of Jackson be accessible to people with disabilities. After all, it is estimated that 14.6% of County residents had some type of disability between 2008 and 2012 according to the ACS and 7.9% had an ambulatory difficulty. Accordingly, all of the parks provided by the city and county were also rated according to their level of barrier free access.<sup>5</sup> The number listed under the BFA column in the tables listing those parks equate to the barrier-free rating listed below:

#### Barrier-Free Access (BFA) Analysis

Key	Description
1 =	none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2 =	some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3 =	most of the facilities/park area meet accessibility guidelines
4 =	the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5 =	the entire park was developed/renovated using the principal of universal design

- **Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has awarded 17 recreation grants to the City of Jackson for a total investment of \$2,088,250. Please see the recreation grant history table located in Appendix B for complete listings of those grants.
- **Recreational Trails.** The City's parks are supplemented by an emerging trail system (please see the Non-Motorized Trails and Trail Planning section in this chapter). Several trails in this system are already in use (see the Existing Trails map in Appendix D):
  - MLK Equality Trail
  - River Arts Walk
  - PAKA Trail
  - Brown Street
  - River Arts Walk
  - PAKA Trail
  - Brown Street
  - Michigan Avenue
  - Elmdale Drive
  - Kibby Road
- **Recreation Events and Programs.** The City of Jackson provides a wide variety of recreation programs. Many of the programs are offered at the Boos Center, the King Center,

#### Public Art

Public art is also an important component of Jackson's parks and recreation system.

"Bright Walls is a public art and mural festival founded and run by the Jackson Young Professionals. In [2018 and 2019], the festival has hosted artists from across the globe and brought 36 murals to [Downtown Jackson] — creating a new destination in [the] community". Please visit the [Bright Walls website](#) for more information.

#### BRIGHT WALLS

Sculptures and other public art installations also adorn Downtown Jackson (e.g., Louise Nevelson's 'Summer Night Tree' on Michigan Avenue, Glidden Parker's art glass mural depicting the story of electricity in Horace Blackman Park, etc.) the Ella Sharp Museum campus collection in Ella W. Sharp Park, and other city parks and cemeteries (e.g., Lorado Taft's 'In Defense of the Flag' in Withington Park and 'Memory' in Woodland Cemetery, etc.). New public art installations, such as sculptures located in roundabouts at entrances to Ella W. Sharp Park and Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) park are approved by City Council, as advised by its Public Arts Commission.

<sup>5</sup> The analysis of barrier free access was provided by the City of Jackson based upon its knowledge of the parks and understanding of barrier-free access. A professional analysis may produce different results.

and the Nixon Skate and Water Parks (please see Appendix B for a listing of those programs). However, it must be pointed out that many of the recreation providers listed above also provide recreational programs.

### **Jackson County Parks and Other Municipal Parks**

Jackson County Parks maintains a couple of regional parks in the City of Jackson. James J. Keeley County Park is located at the intersection of Ganson and Jackson Streets, just north of Downtown Jackson. The 39.7-acre park contains the Jackson County Fairgrounds and the American 1 Event Center. The Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park is located on Brown Street in Jackson and Summit Township. The 482.5-acre park contains the Cascades (an illuminated waterfall built on a 500-foot hill with six giant fountains, musical accompaniment, and museum), the 18-hole Cascades Championship Golf Course, the 9-hole Cascades Executive Golf Course and driving range, the Cascades Manor House, and Cascades Ice Cream Co., the Cascades Rotary Community Band Shell, and a disability-accessible fishing pier. The Vandercook Lake County Park is also located nearby in Summit Township. The Townships of Blackman and Leoni maintain some community parks. Summit Township provides several nonmotorized trails which supplement the trail systems maintained by the City and County.

### **Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

Although most of its facilities are located within Jackson or its surrounding townships, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is a significant provider of regional parks and recreation facilities in Jackson County.

- **State Parks.** No state parks are located in the City or its surrounding townships. However, the DNR maintains the following parks which extend partially into Jackson County: Meridian-Baseline State Park, Walter J Hayes State Park, and Watkins Lake State Park
- **State Recreation and Game Areas.** No state recreation or game areas are located in the City or its surrounding townships. However, the DNR maintains the following state game and recreation areas which extend into Jackson County: Waterloo Recreation Area, Grass Lake State Game Area, and Sharonville State Game Area
- **DNR Boat Launches.** Finally, most of the state boat launches in Jackson County are not located in the City or its surrounding townships. However, the DNR does maintain boat launches in Leoni Township: Center Lake, Gilletts Lake, and Leoni Township Park (Center Lake)

### **Local Schools**

Schools also provide a variety of recreational facilities. For example, elementary schools provide numerous playgrounds aimed at different age groups and sports fields. Middle and high schools provide football fields, ball diamonds and tennis courts. Elementary, middle, and high schools provide gymnasiums. Because of these facilities, schools generally function as community parks.

Jackson Public Schools covers almost all of Jackson and portions of Blackman, Liberty, Napoleon, and Summit Townships and maintains the following facilities (see the School Districts map in Appendix D):

- Bennett Elementary School
- Cascades and Frost Elementary Schools
- Dibble Elementary School
- Hunt Elementary School
- Northeast Elementary School
- JPS Montessori Center
- Sharp Park IB World School
- Middle School at Parkside and Fourth Street Learning Center
- Jackson High School and Jackson Pathways
- T. A. Wilson Academy
- South Central Michigan Virtual

East Jackson Community Schools covers a small part of southeastern Jackson and portions of Blackman, Leoni, Summit, and Waterloo Townships. Michigan Center Schools also covers a small part of southeastern edge of the City and a portion of Leoni Township. Northwest Community Schools abuts the City and covers portions of Blackman, Henrietta, Rives, Tompkins, and Sandstone Townships. Vandercook Lake Public Schools also abuts Jackson and covers a portion of Leoni Township.

### Private and Quasi-Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

A number of private and quasi-public institutions also provide recreation facilities in Jackson and the surrounding townships.

- **Golf Courses.** There are 5 private golf courses in addition to the public courses located in Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and Ella W. Sharp Park. Lakeland Hills Golf Club and Pine Hollow Golf Course are located in Leoni Township and the Country Club of Jackson, Grande Golf Club, and Hickory Hills Golf Course are located in Summit Township.
- **Campgrounds.** There are 2 private campgrounds. Greenwood Acres Campground and Oak Tree Travel Trailer Camp are both located in Leoni Township.
- **Nature Preserves.** There is 1 private nature preserve The Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Audubon Sanctuary is located in Leoni Township.
- **Recreation and Sport Centers.** The YMCA provides a variety of sports and recreational activities at its center in Downtown Jackson. The Optimist Ice Arena and the Allskate Fun Center are also located in the City (see the Other Facilities map in appendix D). Finally, there are 2 bowling alleys. JAX60 is located in Blackman Township and Suburban Lanes is located in Leoni Township.

### Other Public and Private Facilities with Recreational Benefits

Various other facilities in Jackson and the surrounding townships provided publicly and privately also have recreational benefits:

- **Local Colleges.** There are 3 college campuses. Baker College's local campus is located in Blackman Township, north of the Jackson County Airport. Jackson College's main campus is located in Summit Township and its W.J. Maher Campus is located in Blackman Township (see the Other Facilities map in appendix D). Many colleges provide access to collegiate sports and athletic facilities. County residents can also avail themselves of the other recreational facilities and programs hosted by those institutions, including Jackson College's George E. Potter Center.
- **Jackson District Library.** The Jackson District Library (JDL) provides access to books and other items of entertainment (e.g., audio books, CDs, DVDs, etc). The Carnegie Library is located in

Jackson, the Eastern Branch is located in Leoni Township, the Meijer Branch is located in Blackman Township, and the Summit Branch is located in Summit Township.

- **Airports.** Airports provide opportunities for recreational flying as well as transportation. Reynolds Field (Jackson County Airport) is located in Blackman Township.
- **Cemeteries.** Cemeteries provide important green space in urban areas that can be used as safe places to walk/exercise and contemplate nature. Mount Evergreen and Hebrew Cemeteries are located in Jackson. Hillcrest Memorial Park is located in Blackman Township. Woodlawn and St. John's Catholic Cemeteries are located in Summit Township (see the Other Facilities map in Appendix D). There are also various smaller township and private cemeteries.
- **Sidewalks.** Most of the City of Jackson's streets have sidewalks. Sidewalks also occur in other parts of the surrounding townships. Those sidewalks are used for exercise as well as transportation and may even connect with non-motorized trails.
- **Shopping and Dining.** Many people enjoy shopping and going out to eat. Consequently, Downtown Jackson is a recreation destination because of its restaurants and shops.
- **Historic Sites.** Jackson County contain many historic sites that have local, state, and/or national significance. The National Register of Historic Places contains 14 sites in Jackson. A total of 18 sites in the City were included on the List of Michigan State Historic Sites. The City of Jackson's Under the Oaks Neighborhood is a locally designated historic district and the City has also designated 42 other local historic districts.

### Nonmotorized Trails and Trail Planning

A nonmotorized trail network continues to develop throughout the City of Jackson and its surrounding townships. The City's Martin Luther King (MLK) Equality Trail and River Arts Walk (see the Existing Trails map in Appendix D), Jackson County's Falling Waters Trail, and the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park comprise the primary off-road nonmotorized trail corridor. That corridor also serves as the backbone for two statewide trails planned to traverse the area: Route #1 of the Great Lake-To-Lake Trails (see Appendix D) and the Hiking Trail of the Iron Belle Trail (see Appendix D). There have been a couple of coordinated local efforts to augment the corridor.

- **Other Recreational Trails.** Various other trails also supplement the main corridor. For example, the City of Jackson joined with Summit Township and Jackson County to develop trails that connect Ella W. Sharp Park and Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park to the corridor and each other as well as provide trail loops in Summit Township and the City of Jackson (see the Existing Trails map in Appendix D). The Horton Road Trail and the PAKA Trail link with each other, the Weatherwax Trail, and the MLK Equality Trail to provide a connection to Ella W. Sharp Park as well as a trail loop. The Sparks Park MLK Equality Trail Connector and the City's Kibby Road Trail provide a connection between the trails in Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and the MLK Equality Trail. Jackson also built trails in the rights-of-way of Brown Street and Michigan Avenue. Finally, a trail also exists along Elmdale Drive in Ella W. Sharp Park.

- **Combined Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan.** The Region 2 Planning Commission, the City of Jackson, and Jackson County are developing a non-motorized plan that covers all of Jackson County. The plan will address recreation as well as mobility concerns and provide an update to the Jackson County Regional Trailway Study completed in 2002. It is anticipated that potential trail projects throughout Jackson County which will augment the emerging trail network will be identified in this document.

## Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan

A water trail is a designated route on a navigable waterway such as a river, lake, bay or canal that is designed, implemented and managed to foster educational and recreational experiences for the user. Water trails are intended primarily for non-motorized uses such as kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding. The Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance created the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* which identifies potential locations for canoe and kayak access sites in the watershed. The Upper Grand River Water Trail flows through Jackson as well as its surrounding townships (see the Water Trail map in Appendix D). Each of the proposed access sites have been identified for one of several improvement schemes. Type “A” sites should stand out as the “signature access sites” for the water trail, provide as many amenities as possible to paddlers, be ideal for novice paddlers, should be well signed (wayfinding and informational kiosk), and featured prominently on maps. Type “B” sites should be clearly visible from the water, be signed (but probably do not require a kiosk), and provide a landing area in between the Type “A” sites (or in some cases, access for more experienced paddlers). Type “C” sites are generally adjacent to roads with high speed-limits and no formal parking. In some instances, these are sites where parking and unloading watercraft was determined to be undesirable, unsafe and harmful to the surrounding landscape. These sites have the potential to become developed (into a Type “B” site) at some time, but are currently not a priority.

## Resource Inventory

In addition to parks and recreation facilities, the City of Jackson is also home to a wide variety of cultural and natural resources.

### Topography

With a change in elevation of 192 feet, the City’s topography can be described as gently rolling and moderately hilly (see Appendix D for the Topography map). The high point of 1,096 feet above sea level is located in southwestern Jackson, south of Kibby Road and west of West Avenue. The low point of 904 feet is located along the Grand River at the northern city limit.

### Water Resources

The City of Jackson and its surrounding area is located in the Upper Grand River Watershed and drains into the Grand River. The watershed can be broken down into various subwatersheds, 3 of which cover the City. The majority of Jackson is located in the Grand River at Gage #04109000 subwatershed (see Appendix D for the Subwatersheds map). Most of southwestern Jackson is located in the Grand River at Booth Creek subwatershed. The area in the vicinity of Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park is located in the Sandstone Blackman Drain at Indian Brook subwatershed. The Grand River is the major

aquatic resource in Jackson, followed by the lagoons in Cascades Park. Floodplains and wetlands are located along the Grand River as it traverses the City, but are also located in other parts of Jackson (see Appendix D for the Flood Zones and Wetlands map).

### Transportation

The City of Jackson and its surrounding townships share a well-connected transportation system (see Appendix D for the Base Map). Interstate 94 (I-94), located north of the City, provides access to the major metropolitan areas of Chicago and Detroit. US Highway 127 (US-127), located east and north of Jackson, provides access to the Lansing area and other points north as well as Adrian and Toledo to the south. Michigan Highway 50 (M-50)—which traverses the City utilizing portions of Cooper Street, Louis Glick Highway/Michigan Avenue, and West Avenue—also serves as Business Loop 127 (BL-127). Michigan Highway 106 (M-106) provides an additional connection to I-94.

### Land Use

The Future Land Use Classification map contained in the *Jackson Community Master Plan* establishes a 'Core Mixed Use' area for Downtown Jackson as well as a variety of corridors (see Appendix D for the Future Land Use Classifications map). A 'Health and Office' area has been designated along Michigan Avenue, east of Downtown. A 'Mixed Use Arts and Cultural Corridor' is planned along the Grand River, north of Downtown. 'Gateway Corridors' are proposed along state highways at the borders of the City. The traditional mix of 'Residential', 'Residential and Office', 'Neighborhood Commercial', 'Regional Commercial', 'Industrial Commercial', and 'Industrial' areas are envisioned for most of Jackson.





Bright Walls Mural | 2018  
**Adele Renault, Artist**  
*(Clay McAndrews, photo)*

***City of Jackson Recreation Plan | 2020-2024 Edition***

Chapter 3

**Public Involvement**

## Description of the Planning Process

The steps utilized to develop the 2020-2024 edition of the *City of Jackson Recreation Plan* included:

1. The City of Jackson recognized the need to update the Recreation Plan.
2. City of Jackson Parks, Recreation, and Grounds Department contracted with Region 2 Planning Commission staff to facilitate the development of the 2020-2024 edition of the Plan in the spring of 2019.
3. Region 2 staff updated the *Community Description & Administrative Structure* and *Recreation and Resource Inventories* chapters of the Plan and their associated appendices (i.e., *Demographics*, *Recreation and Resource Inventories*, and *Mapping*) and provided them to the Parks and Recreation Commission in the summer of 2019.
4. The Parks and Recreation Commission conducted an online recreation survey targeted at the general public during the summer of 2019. Region 2 staff provided the survey results to the Parks and Recreation Commission in the fall of 2019.
5. The Parks and Recreation Commission utilized the input collected from the various public involvement efforts and the information produced by Region 2 staff to develop the goals and objectives and action program included in the Plan in the fall of 2019.
6. The Parks and Recreation Commission provided the plan for public review from December 5, 2019, through January 5, 2020, and held a public hearing on January 6, 2020. The Plan was approved by the Commission and recommended for adoption by the Jackson City Council after the public hearing was closed.
7. The Jackson City Council adopted the Plan on January 14, 2020.

## Description of the Public Input Process

A variety of methods were employed to incorporate public input into the development of this plan.

### Survey

An online survey was conducted during the summer and fall of 2019, via SurveyMonkey®, to collect the opinions of the general public regarding the provision of parks and recreation facilities in the City of Jackson. The survey was posted to [www.JacksonCountyParks.org](http://www.JacksonCountyParks.org), the Jackson County Parks website, on April 18, 2019. A total of 400 people took the survey and the last response was received on October 3, 2019. Survey responses are summarized by question.

#### 1. Where do you live?

Approximately 87% of respondents were Jackson Area residents. Approximately 58% lived in Jackson and an additional 29% lived in the surrounding urban townships of Blackman (8%), Leoni (3%), Summit (16%), and Spring Arbor (2%). Approximately 11% of respondents lived elsewhere in Jackson County (9%) or its surrounding counties (2%). [n=398]



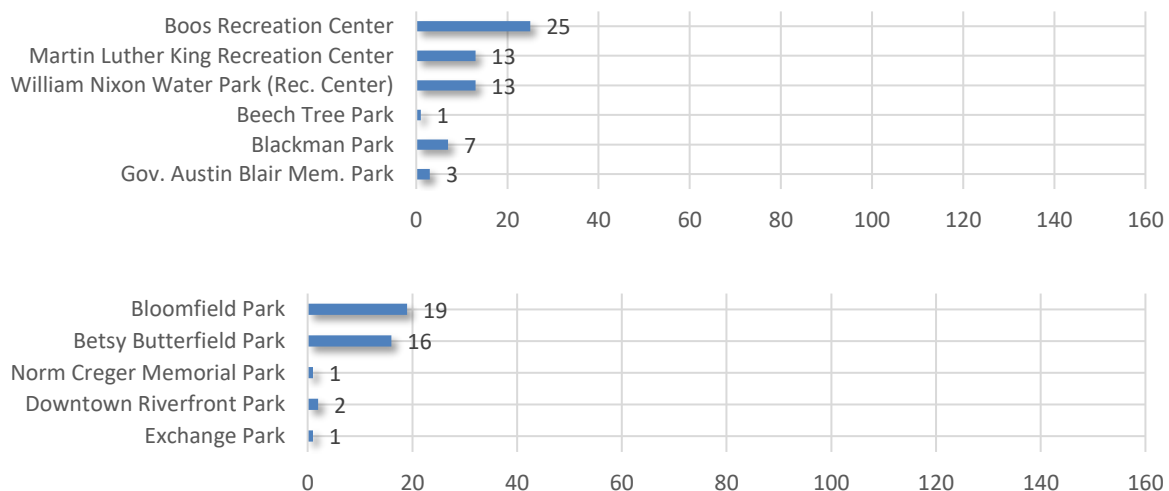
The distribution of respondents that were not Jackson residents are also represented by the following word cloud and listed in a table located in Appendix C.<sup>1</sup>



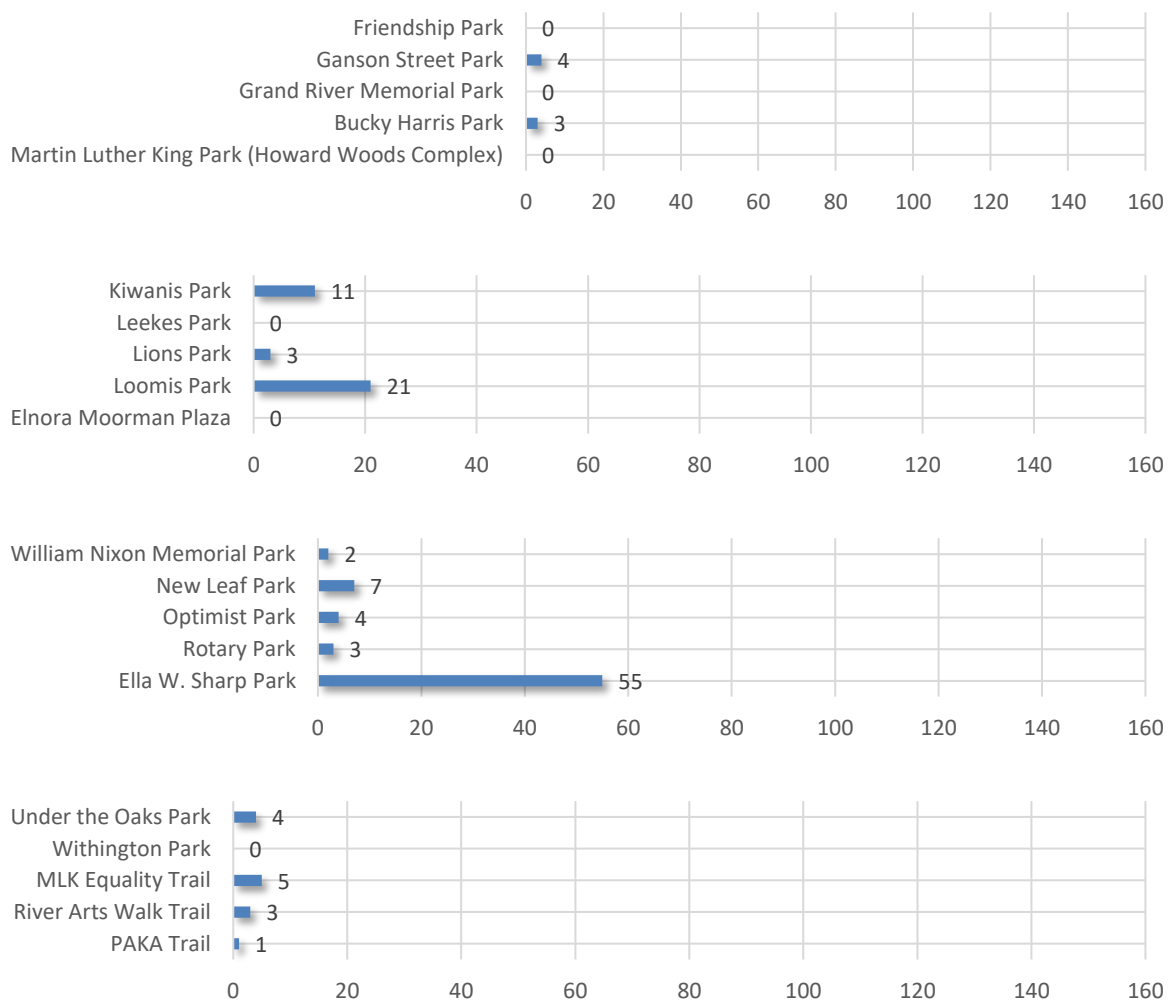
2. **Which of the City's recreation centers, parks, or trails is closest to where you live?**

*Please note that given that approximately 42% of respondents did not live in the City, the analysis of the responses to this question is limited to Jackson residents. The parks are also displayed in 6 groupings in order to make the figures easier to read. [n=227]*

Approximately 35% identified Ella W. Sharp Park (24%) and the Boos Recreation Center (11%) as their closest parks. Loomis (9%), Bloomfield (8%), and Betsy Butterfield (7%) parks were reported to be closest to approximately 25% of respondents, collectively. Approximately another 17% reported living closest to William Nixon Memorial (6%), Martin Luther King (Howard Woods Complex) (6%), and Kiwanis (5%) parks, as a group. Collectively, approximately 24% identified another City park as being closest to where they live.

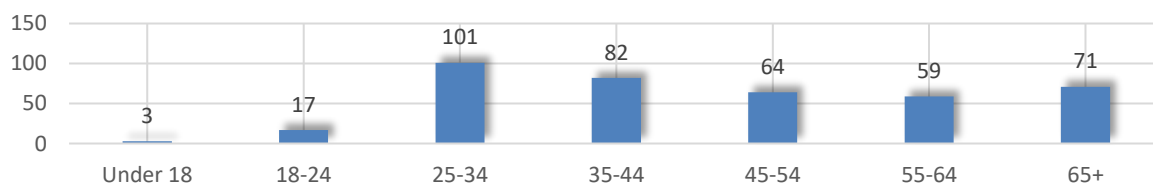


<sup>1</sup> A word cloud is a visual representation of common words contained in the various comments provided in response to the question. The more common the word, the larger it is represented in the word cloud.



### 3. What is your age?

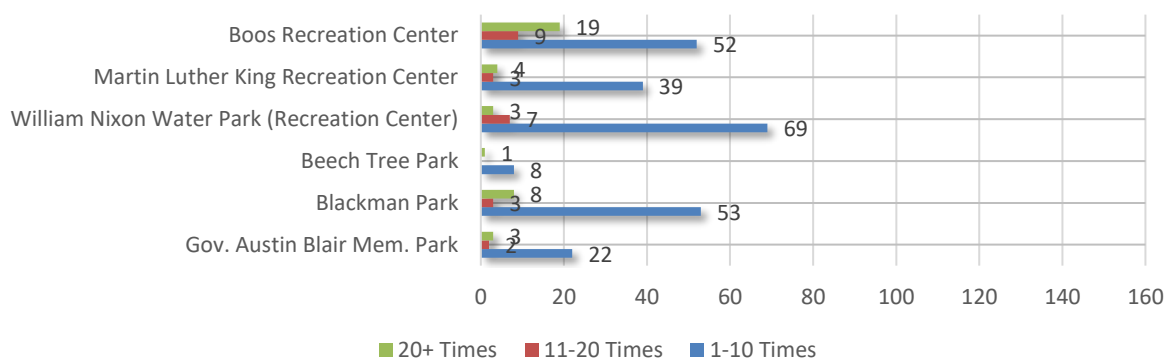
Approximately 25% of respondents were 25-34 years old and another 21% were 35-44 years old. Approximately 16% were 45-54 years old and another 15% were 55-64 years old. Approximately 18% of respondents were at least 65 years. Lastly, approximately 4% were 18-24 years old and another 1% were under 18 years old. [n=397]



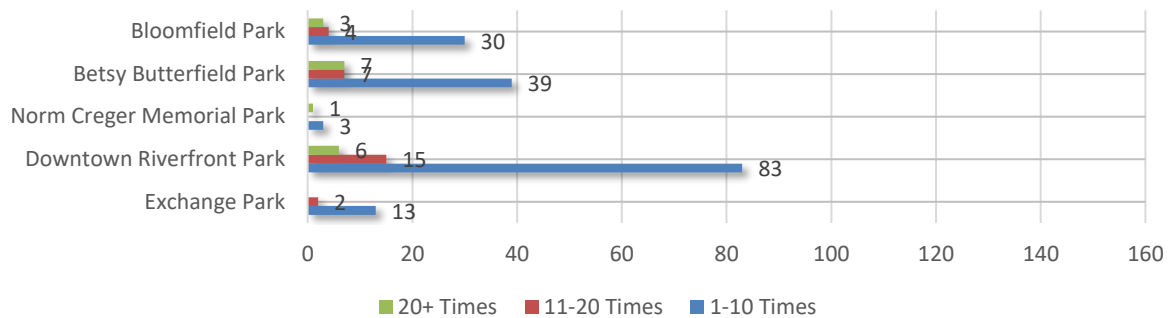
#### 4. How many times have you visited each City recreation center, park, and trail within the last year?

Given that approximately 42% of respondents did not live in the City, the analysis of the responses to this question is limited to Jackson residents. Please note that the parks are analyzed and displayed in 6 groupings in order to make the figures easier to read. [n=231]

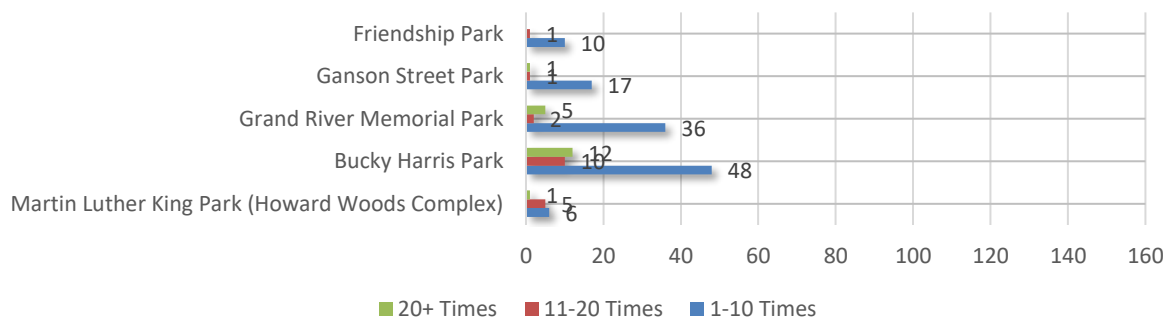
- **Boos Recreation Center.** Approximately 64% had not visited the Center. Of the patrons, 65% visited 1-10 times, 11% visited 11-20 times, and 24% visited at least 20 times.
- **Martin Luther King Recreation Center.** Approximately 78% had not visited the Center. Of the patrons, 85% visited 1-10 times, 7% visited 11-20 times, and 9% visited at least 20 times.
- **William Nixon Water Park (Rec. Ctr.).** Approximately 63% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 87% visited 1-10 times, 9% visited 11-20 times, and 4% visited at least 20 times.
- **Beech Tree Park.** Approximately 96% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 89% visited 1-10 times, none visited 11-20 times, and 11% visited at least 20 times.
- **Blackman Park.** Approximately 70% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 83% visited 1-10 times, 5% visited 11-20 times, and 13% visited at least 20 times.
- **Gov. Austin Blair Mem. Park.** Approximately 87% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 81% visited 1-10 times, 7% visited 11-20 times, and 11% visited at least 20 times.



- **Bloomfield Park.** Approximately 82% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 81% visited 1-10 times, 11% visited 11-20 times, and 8% visited at least 20 times.
- **Betsy Butterfield Park.** Approximately 74% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 74% visited 1-10 times, 13% visited 11-20 times, and 13% visited at least 20 times.
- **Norm Creger Memorial Park.** Approximately 98% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 75% visited 1-10 times, none visited 11-20 times, and 25% visited at least 20 times.
- **Downtown Riverfront Park.** Approximately 51% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 80% visited 1-10 times, 14% visited 11-20 times, and 6% visited at least 20 times.
- **Exchange Park.** Approximately 93% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 87% visited 1-10 times, 13% visited 11-20 times, and none visited at least 20 times.

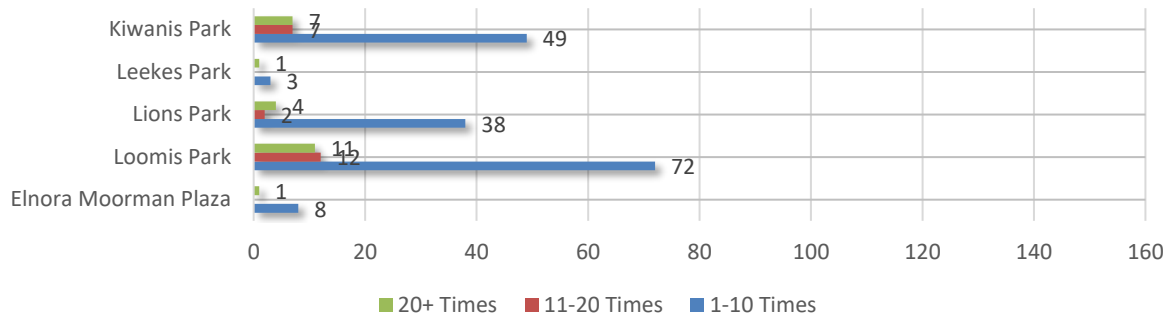


- **Friendship Park.** Approximately 95% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 91% visited 1-10 times, 9% visited 11-20 times, and none visited at least 20 times.
- **Ganson Street Park.** Approximately 91% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 89% visited 1-10 times, 5% visited 11-20 times, and 5% visited at least 20 times.
- **Grand River Memorial Park.** Approximately 79% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 84% visited 1-10 times, 5% visited 11-20 times, and 12% visited at least 20 times.
- **Bucky Harris Park.** Approximately 67% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 69% visited 1-10 times, 14% visited 11-20 times, and 17% visited at least 20 times.
- **Martin Luther King Park (Howard Woods Complex).** Approximately 94% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 50% visited 1-10 times, 42% visited 11-20 times, and 8% visited at least 20 times.

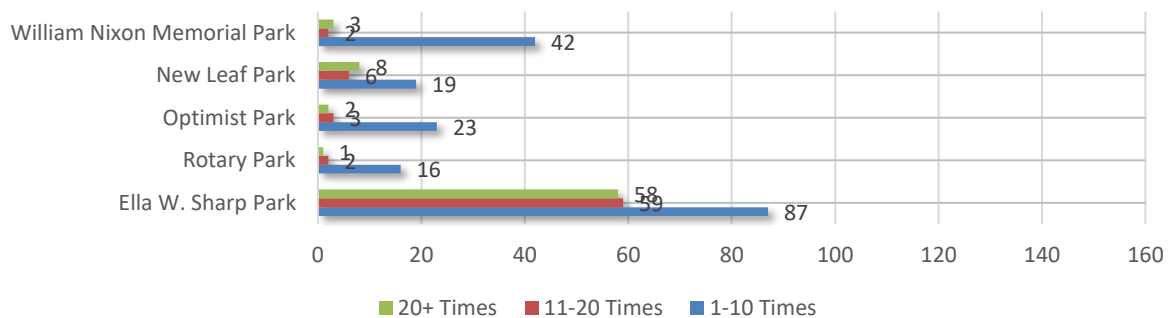


- **Kiwanis Park.** Approximately 69% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 78% visited 1-10 times, 11% visited 11-20 times, and 11% visited at least 20 times.
- **Leekes Park.** Approximately 98% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 75% visited 1-10 times, none visited 11-20 times, and 25% visited at least 20 times.
- **Lions Park.** Approximately 79% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 86% visited 1-10 times, 5% visited 11-20 times, and 9% visited at least 20 times.
- **Loomis Park.** Approximately 55% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 76% visited 1-10 times, 13% visited 11-20 times, and 12% visited at least 20 times.

- **Elnora Moorman Plaza.** Approximately 96% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 89% visited 1-10 times, none visited 11-20 times, and 11% visited at least 20 times.

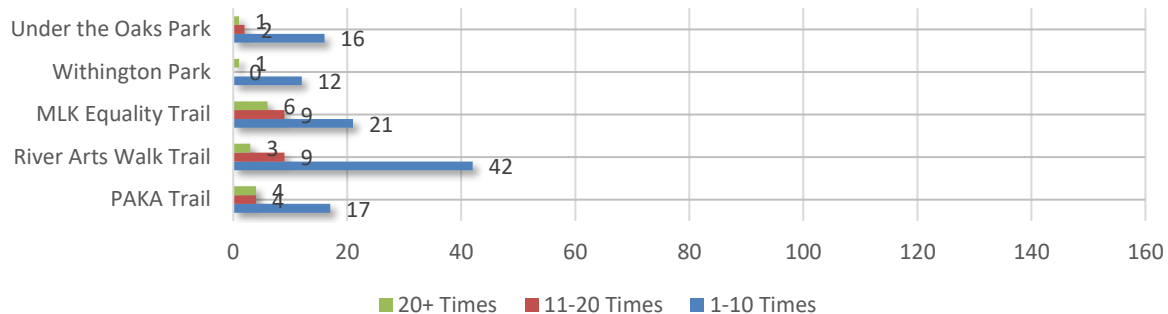


- **William Nixon Memorial Park.** Approximately 77% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 89% visited 1-10 times, 4% visited 11-20 times, and 6% visited at least 20 times.
- **New Leaf Park.** Approximately 84% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 58% visited 1-10 times, 18% visited 11-20 times, and 24% visited at least 20 times.
- **Optimist Park.** Approximately 86% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 82% visited 1-10 times, 11% visited 11-20 times, and 7% visited at least 20 times.
- **Rotary Park.** Approximately 91% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 84% visited 1-10 times, 11% visited 11-20 times, and 5% visited at least 20 times.
- **Ella W. Sharp Park.** Approximately 9% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 43% visited 1-10 times, 29% visited 11-20 times, and 28% visited at least 20 times.



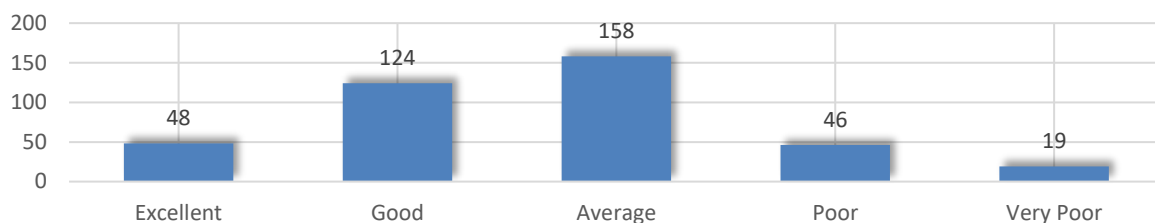
- **Under the Oaks Park.** Approximately 91% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 84% visited 1-10 times, 11% visited 11-20 times, and 5% visited at least 20 times.
- **Withington Park.** Approximately 94% had not visited the Park. Of the patrons, 92% visited 1-10 times, none visited 11-20 times, and 8% visited at least 20 times.
- **MLK Equality Trail.** Approximately 83% had not visited the Trail. Of the patrons, 58% visited 1-10 times, 27% visited 11-20 times, and 17% visited at least 20 times.
- **River Arts Walk Trail.** Approximately 74% had not visited the Trail. Of the patrons, 78% visited 1-10 times, 17% visited 11-20 times, and 6% visited at least 20 times.

- **PAKA Trail.** Approximately 88% had not visited the Trail. Of the patrons, 68% visited 1-10 times, 16% visited 11-20 times, and 16% visited at least 20 times.

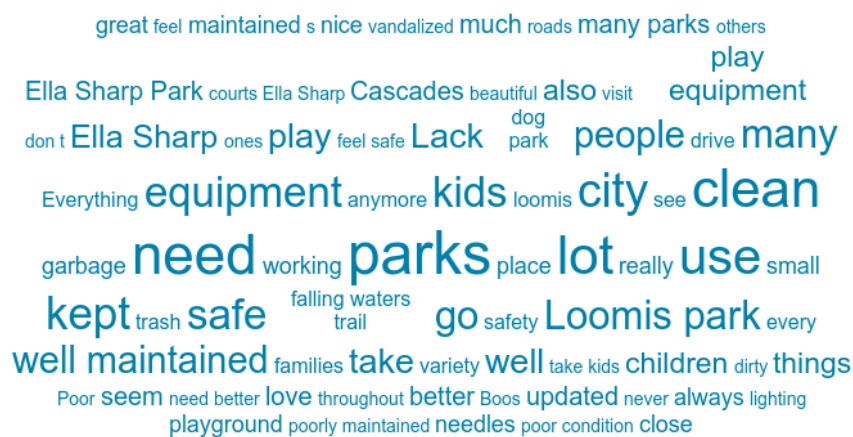


#### 5. How do you rate the city of Jackson Parks system?

Approximately 43% of respondents rated it excellent (12%) or good (31%), 40% rated it average, and 17% rated it poor (12%) or very poor (5%). [n= 395]



Specific comments provided by respondents to this question are represented by the following word cloud and listed in a table located in Appendix C.



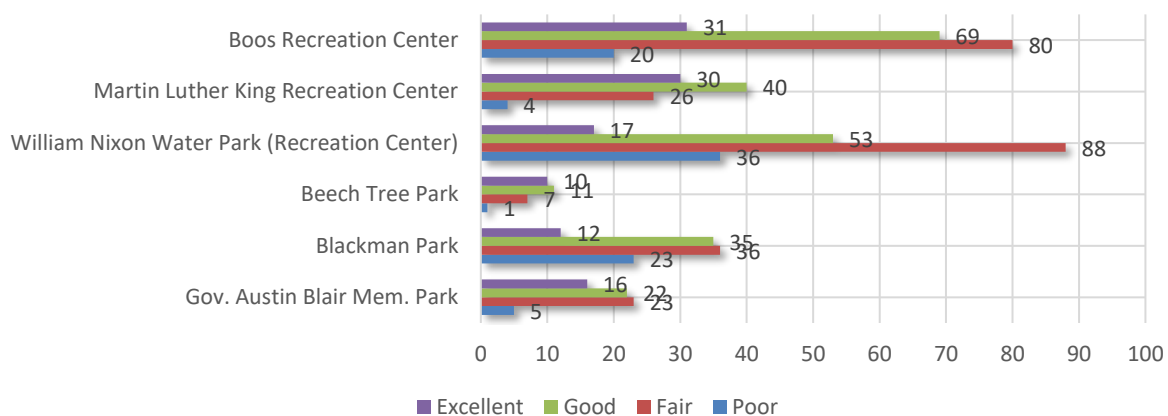
A majority of the comments addressed various needed improvements to the parks (e.g., playgrounds, roads, etc.), general upkeep/maintenance, and safety/security concerns (e.g., drugs and drug paraphernalia, vandalism, crime, etc.), especially regarding Loomis Park. Other comments called for various amenities (e.g., a dog park, restrooms, biking facilities, parking and signage, swimming pools, accessibility for disabled patrons, etc.). Some respondents were unaware that some of

the parks and recreation facilities they cited are owned/operated by Jackson County Parks and were mistaken that the county parks millage benefits city parks. However, many of the comments cited the variety of parks, especially Ella W. Sharp, and recreation activities, including senior programs, available to them and their easy access.

#### 6. How do you rate each City Recreation Center, Park, and Trail?

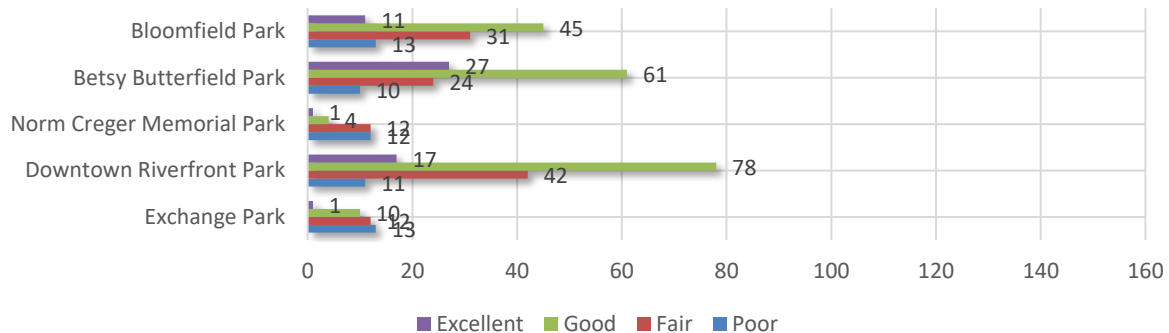
Please note that the parks are analyzed and displayed in 6 groupings in order to make the figures easier to read. [n=377]

- **Boos Recreation Center.** Approximately 45% did not rate the Center. Of those who did, 50% rated it excellent (10%) or good (40%) and 50% rated it fair (34%) or poor (16%).
- **Martin Luther King Recreation Center.** Approximately 70% did not rate the Center. Of those who did, 30% rated it excellent (4%) or good (26%) and 70% rated it fair (40%) or poor (30%).
- **William Nixon Water Park (Rec. Ctr.).** Approximately 42% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 64% rated it excellent (19%) or good (45%) and 36% rated it fair (27%) or poor (9%).
- **Beech Tree Park.** Approximately 91% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 28% rated it excellent (4%) or good (24%) and 72% rated it fair (38%) or poor (34%).
- **Blackman Park.** Approximately 67% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 56% rated it excellent (22%) or good (34%) and 44% rated it fair (33%) or poor (11%).
- **Gov. Austin Blair Mem. Park.** Approximately 80% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 43% rated it excellent (8%) or good (35%) and 57% rated it fair (33%) or poor (24%).

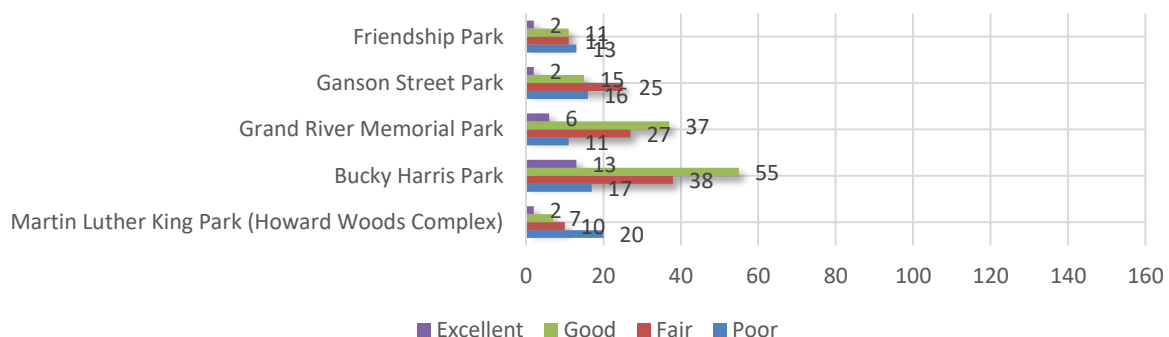


- **Bloomfield Park.** Approximately 69% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 56% rated it excellent (11%) or good (45%) and 44% rated it fair (31%) or poor (13%).
- **Betsy Butterfield Park.** Approximately 63% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 72% rated it excellent (22%) or good (50%) and 28% rated it fair (20%) or poor (8%).
- **Norm Creger Memorial Park.** Approximately 91% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 17% rated it excellent (3%) or good (14%) and 82% rated it fair (41%) or poor (41%).
- **Downtown Riverfront Park.** Approximately 55% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 64% rated it excellent (11%) or good (53%) and 35% rated it fair (28%) or poor (7%).

- **Exchange Park.** Approximately 89% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 31% rated it excellent (3%) or good (28%) and 69% rated it fair (33%) or poor (36%).

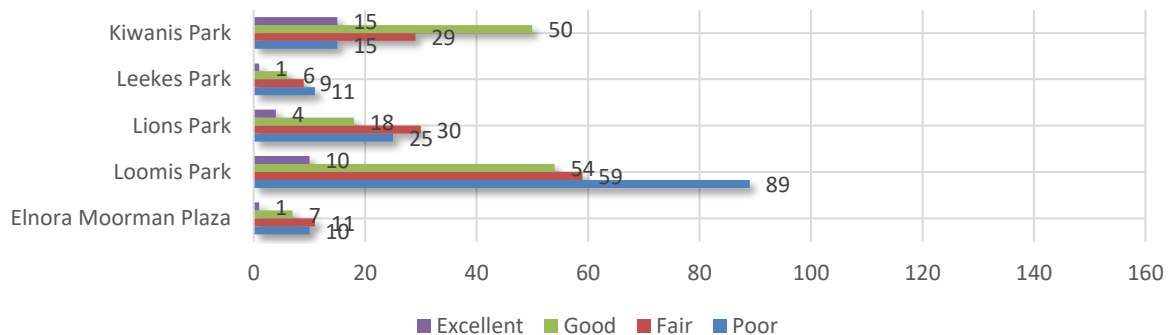


- **Friendship Park.** Approximately 89% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 35% rated it excellent (5%) or good (30%) and 65% rated it fair (30%) or poor (35%).
- **Ganson Street Park.** Approximately 82% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 29% rated it excellent (3%) or good (26%) and 71% rated it fair (43%) or poor (28%).
- **Grand River Memorial Park.** Approximately 75% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 53% rated it excellent (7%) or good (46%) and 47% rated it fair (33%) or poor (14%).
- **Bucky Harris Park.** Approximately 62% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 56% rated it excellent (11%) or good (45%) and 44% rated it fair (31%) or poor (13%).
- **Martin Luther King Park (Howard Woods Complex).** Approximately 88% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 23% rated it excellent (5%) or good (18%) and 77% rated it fair (26%) or poor (51%).

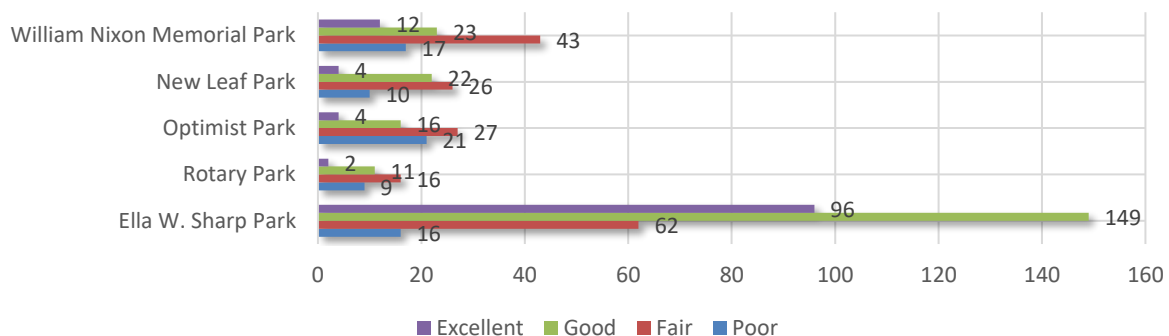


- **Kiwanis Park.** Approximately 67% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 60% rated it excellent (14%) or good (46%) and 41% rated it fair (27%) or poor (14%).
- **Leekes Park.** Approximately 92% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 26% rated it excellent (4%) or good (22%) and 74% rated it fair (33%) or poor (41%).
- **Lions Park.** Approximately 76% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 28% rated it excellent (5%) or good (23%) and 71% rated it fair (39%) or poor (32%).

- **Loomis Park.** Approximately 37% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 30% rated it excellent (5%) or good (25%) and 70% rated it fair (28%) or poor (42%).
- **Elnora Moorman Plaza.** Approximately 91% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 27% rated it excellent (3%) or good (24%) and 72% rated it fair (38%) or poor (34%).

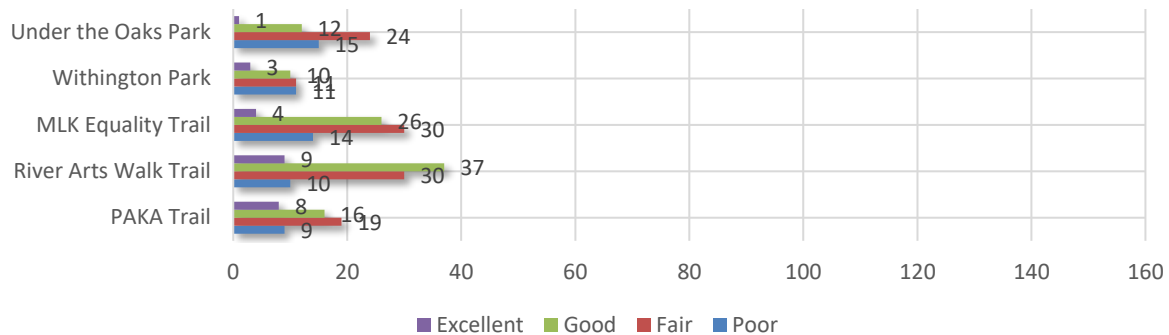


- **William Nixon Memorial Park.** Approximately 71% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 37% rated it excellent (13%) or good (24%) and 63% rated it fair (45%) or poor (18%).
- **New Leaf Park.** Approximately 81% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 41% rated it excellent (6%) or good (35%) and 58% rated it fair (42%) or poor (16%).
- **Optimist Park.** Approximately 79% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 30% rated it excellent (6%) or good (24%) and 71% rated it fair (40%) or poor (31%).
- **Rotary Park.** Approximately 88% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 34% rated it excellent (5%) or good (29%) and 66% rated it fair (42%) or poor (24%).
- **Ella W. Sharp Park.** Approximately 10% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 76% rated it excellent (30%) or good (46%) and 24% rated it fair (19%) or poor (14%).



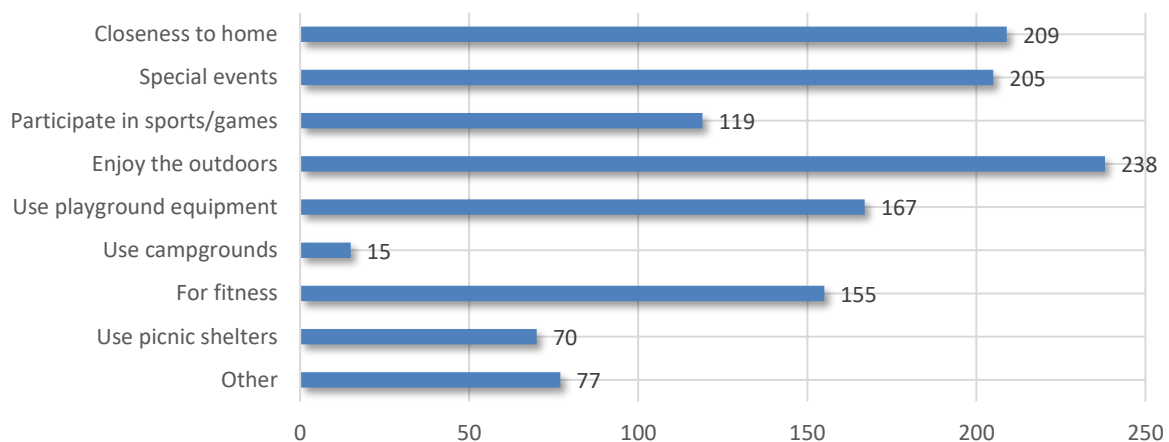
- **Under the Oaks Park.** Approximately 84% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 25% rated it excellent (2%) or good (23%) and 75% rated it fair (46%) or poor (29%).
- **Withington Park.** Approximately 89% did not rate the Park. Of those who did, 38% rated it excellent (9%) or good (28%) and 62% rated it fair (31%) or poor (31%).

- **MLK Equality Trail.** Approximately 77% did not rate the Trail. Of those who did, 40% rated it excellent (5%) or good (35%) and 60% rated it fair (41%) or poor (19%).
- **River Arts Walk Trail.** Approximately 73% did not rate the Trail. Of those who did, 53% rated it excellent (10%) or good (43%) and 47% rated it fair (35%) or poor (12%).
- **PAKA Trail.** Approximately 84% did not rate the Trail. Of those who did, 46% rated it excellent (15%) or good (31%) and 54% rated it fair (37%) or poor (17%).



#### 7. Why do you visit a park/recreation facility?

'Enjoy the outdoors' was the reason approximately 61% of respondents chose for visiting a park or recreation facility. Approximately 53% of respondents cited 'closeness to home' and another 52% identified 'special events'. 'Use playground equipment' was chosen by 43% of respondents and 40% selected 'for fitness'. 'Participate in sports/games' was selected by approximately 30% of respondents and 'use picnic shelters' and 'use campgrounds' were selected by 18% and 4% of respondents, respectively. [n=392]



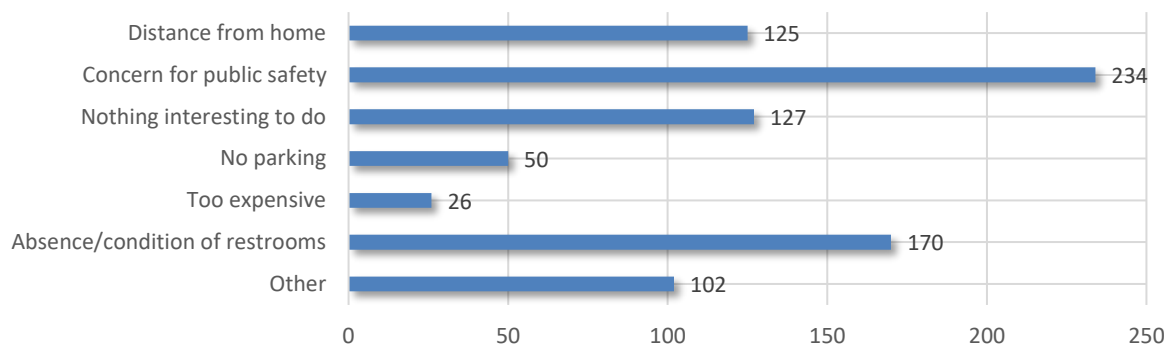
Approximately 20% of respondents also identified other reasons for visiting a park or recreation facility, as represented in the following word cloud and listed in a table located in Appendix C.

dog walking enjoy Cascades play visit walk dog courts Go kids  
parks grandkids Pickleball close golf Ella sharp park trails safe  
bike Ella Sharp Boos Center

Activities involving trails and pathways were the most numerous responses, followed by pickleball, senior citizen programming, and dog walking. Socialization and entertainment (i.e., special events), playgrounds, various sports, and games (e.g. Pokémon Go) were also identified. Ella W. Sharp Park was cited numerous times. Finally, safety was identified as a concern.

#### 8. What discourages you from visiting a park/recreation facility?

A 'concern for public safety' was identified by 63% of respondents as a factor discouraging visits to parks and recreation facilities. The 'absence/condition of restrooms' was chosen by approximately 45% of respondents. 'Nothing interesting to do' and 'distance from home' were selected by approximately 34% and 33% of respondents. 'No parking' and 'too expensive' were identified by 13% and 7% of respondents, respectively. [n=374]



Approximately 27% of respondents also identified other factors discouraging the use of parks and recreation facilities, as represented in the following word cloud and listed in a table located in Appendix C.

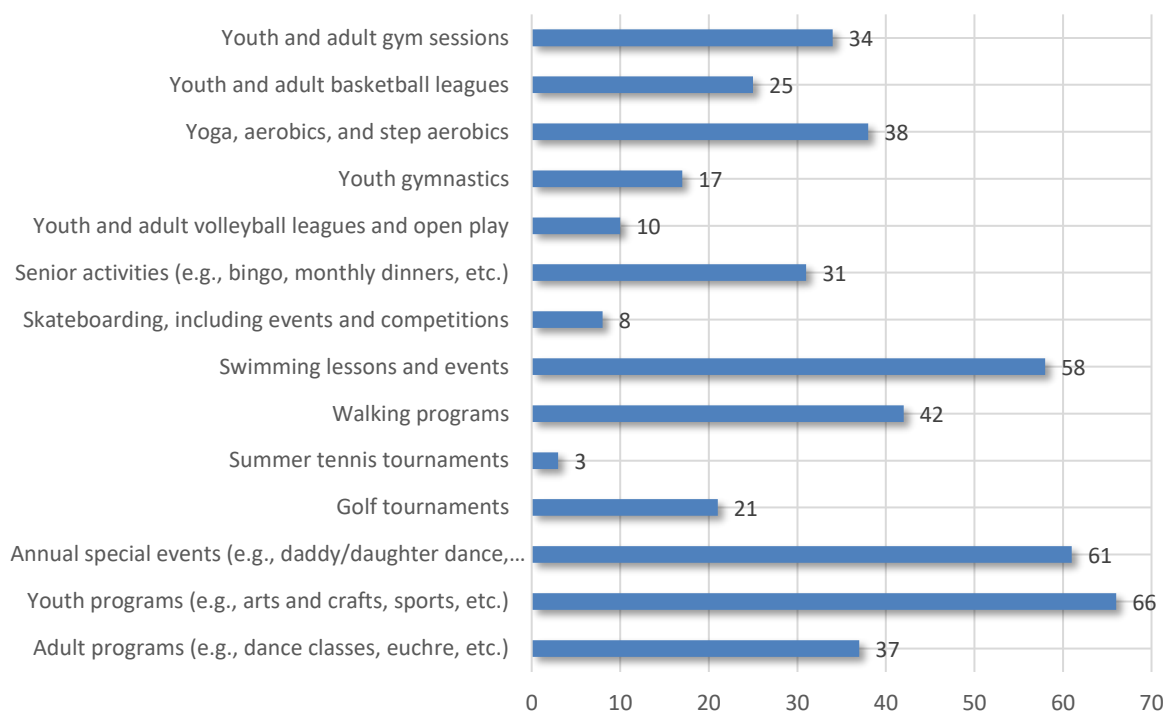
playground Jackson playground equipment Condition roads dog places  
close lot Ella Sharp better courts time Nothing go needles needs  
dog park parks many lack play areas use equipment children  
want area trash people Broken equipment play Dirty needles trails safe  
Ella Sharp Park

A variety of safety concerns and a lack of maintenance/cleanliness were the most common factors discouraging park use identified by respondents. Poor knowledge of the park system and a variety of

accessibility issues (e.g., mobility, disabilities, time, etc.) were also cited. The need for more recreation facilities and programs aimed at youth was identified along with a desire for more restrooms and dog parks. Finally, some respondents were unaware that some of the parks and recreation facilities they cited are owned/operated by Jackson County Parks and were mistaken that the county parks millage benefits city parks.

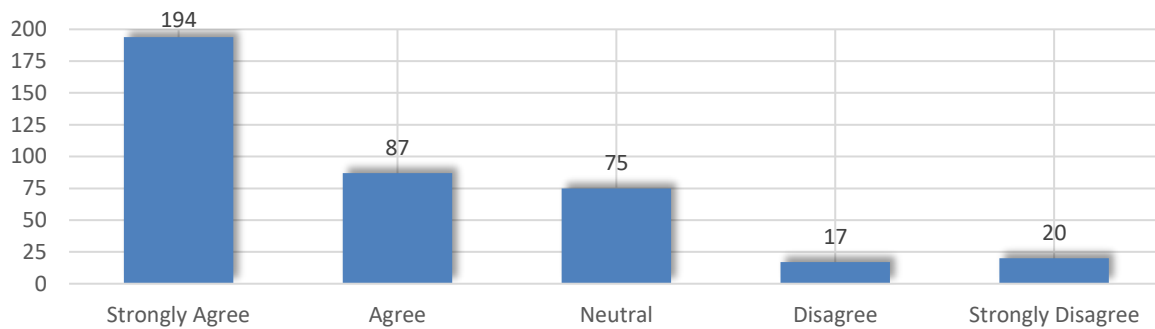
**9. In what City recreation programs do you participate?**

Approximately 49% of respondents answered 'N/A' to this question. Approximately 17% participated in youth programs, 16% in annual special events, and 15% in swimming lessons and events. Walking programs, yoga and aerobics (including step aerobics), and adult programs were identified by 11%, 10%, and 10% of respondents, respectively. Approximately 9% participated in youth and adult gym sessions, 8% in senior activities, 6% in youth and adult basketball leagues, and 5% in golf tournaments. Youth and adult volleyball leagues and open play, youth gymnastics, skateboarding, and summer tennis tournaments were identified by 4%, 3%, 2%, and 1% of respondents, respectively. [n=385]

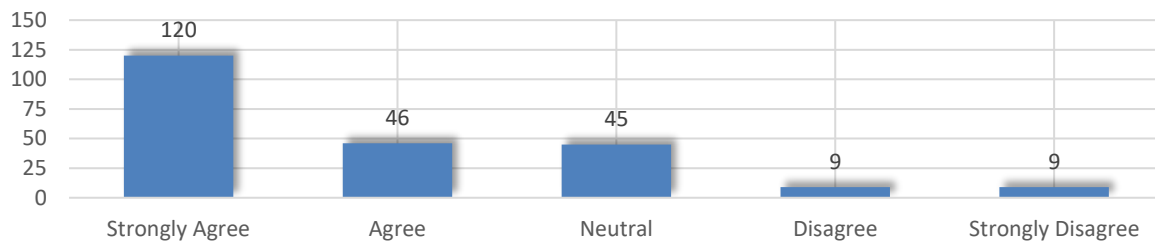


**10. A trail system should continue to be developed in the City of Jackson and the surrounding area.**

Approximately 72% of all respondents strongly agreed (49%) or agreed (22%) that a trail system should continue to be developed in the City of Jackson and the surrounding area. Approximately 19% were neutral. Approximately 9% of respondents disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (5%) with the proposal. [n=393]

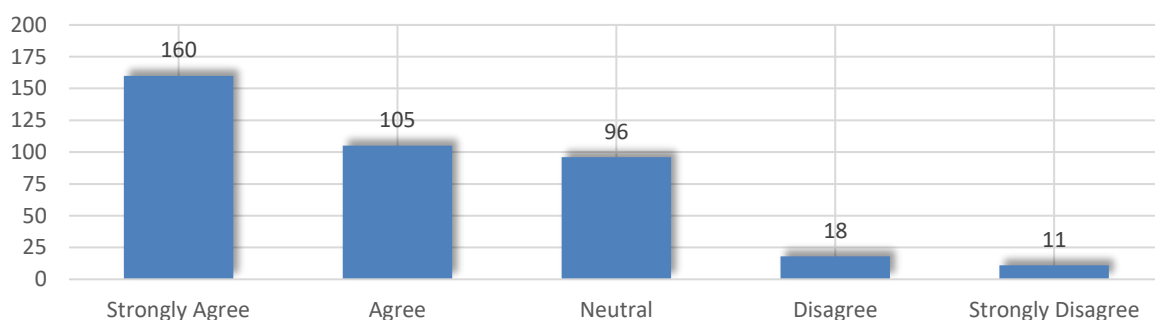


Given that approximately 42% of respondents did not live in the City, the responses of only Jackson residents are also provided. Approximately 72% of City respondents strongly agreed (52%) or agreed (20%) that a trail system should continue to be developed. Approximately 20% were neutral. Approximately 8% of respondents disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (4%) with the proposal. [n=229]

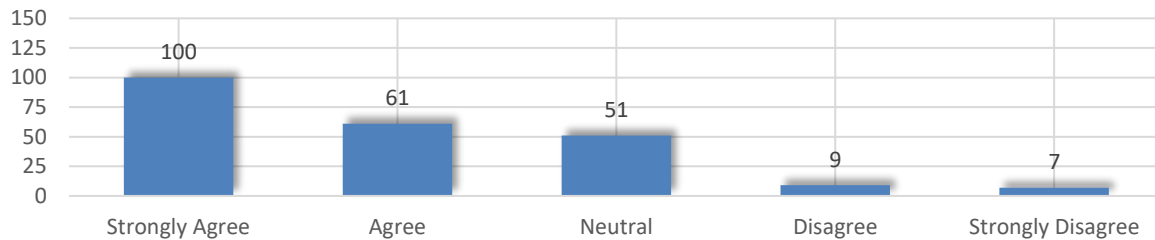


#### 11. Canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River.

Approximately 68% of all respondents strongly agreed (41%) or agreed (27%) that canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River. Approximately 25% were neutral. Approximately 8% of respondents disagreed (5%) or strongly disagreed (3%) with the proposal. [n=390]

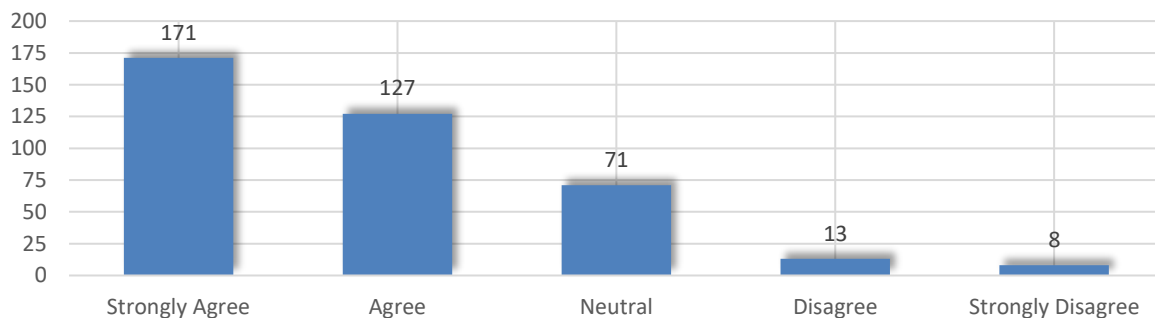


Given that approximately 42% of respondents did not live in the City, the responses of only Jackson residents are also provided. Approximately 71% of City respondents strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (27%) that canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River. Approximately 22% were neutral. Approximately 7% of respondents disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (3%) with the proposal. [n=228]

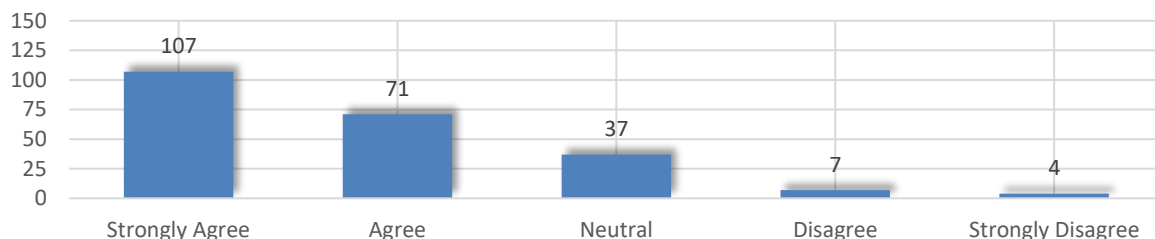


**12. Restrooms should be provided at the canoe/kayak launch sites.**

Approximately 76% of all respondents strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (33%) that restrooms should be provided at canoe/kayak launch sites. Approximately 18% were neutral. Approximately 5% of respondents disagreed (3%) or strongly disagreed (2%) with the proposal. [n=390]



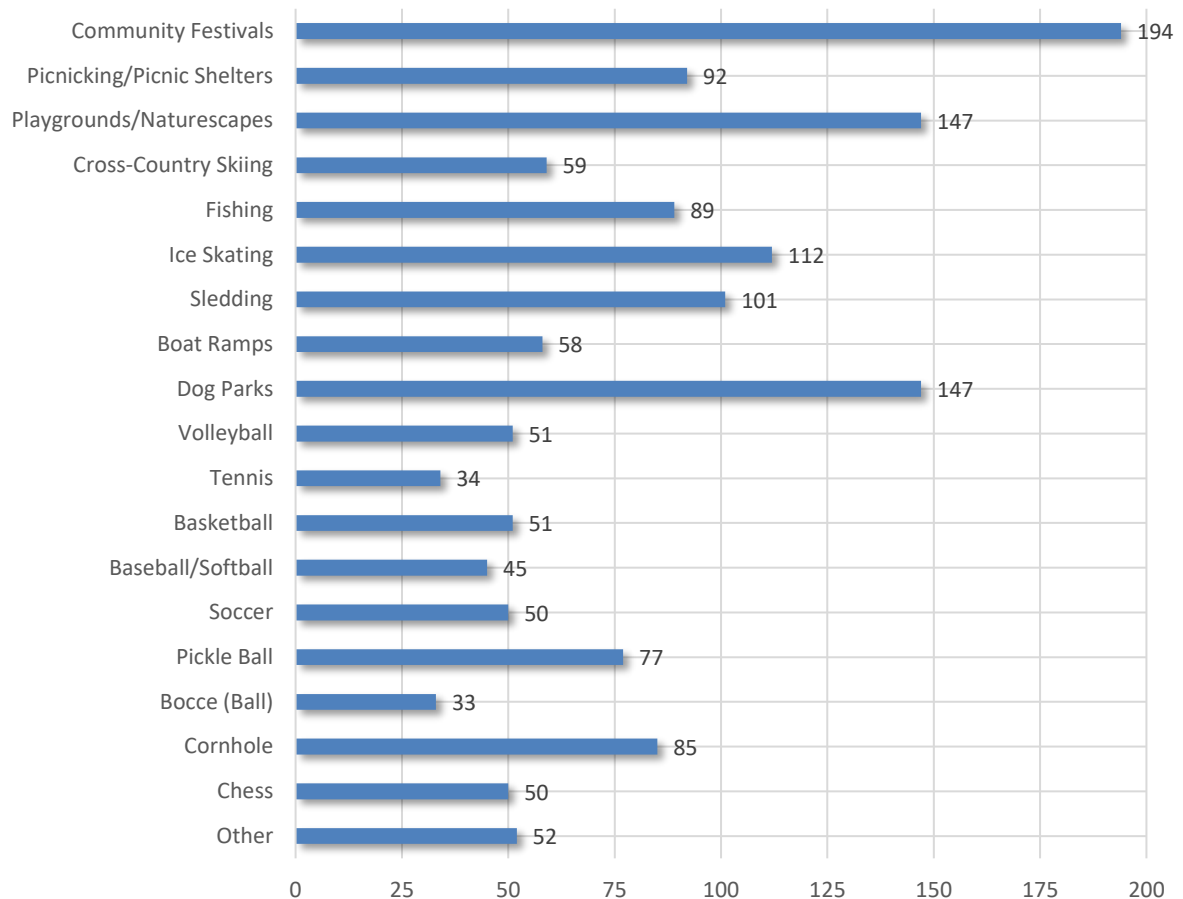
Given that approximately 42% of respondents did not live in the City, the responses of only Jackson residents are also provided. Approximately 79% of City respondents strongly agreed (47%) or agreed (31%) that restrooms should be provided at canoe/kayak launch sites. Approximately 16% were neutral. Approximately 5% of respondents disagreed (3%) or strongly disagreed (2%) with the proposal. [n=226]



**13. Is there an activity that you would like to see more of in City of Jackson Parks?**

Approximately 6% of respondents answered 'N/A' to this question. Approximately 51% identified community festivals, 39% chose playgrounds/naturescapes, 39% picked dog parks, and 30% desired ice skating. Sledding, picnicking/picnic shelters, fishing, and cornhole were selected by approximately 27%, 24%, 22%, and 20% of respondents, respectively. Approximately 20% chose pickleball,

16% wanted cross-country skiing, and 15% identified boat ramps. Volleyball, basketball, soccer, and chess were each selected by approximately 13% of respondents. Baseball/softball; tennis; and bocce ball were chosen by 12%, 9%, and 9% of respondents, respectively. [n=379]



Approximately 14% of respondents also identified other activities they would like to see more of, as represented in the following word cloud and listed in a table located in Appendix C.



A need for more aquatic facilities and programs (e.g., pools, canoe/kayaking/boating, water parks, fishing, etc.) was the largest grouping of activities identified by respondents. Pickleball was mentioned multiple times along with calls for other types of sports facilities/programs (e.g., shuffleboard, badminton, ice skating, etc.). Programming and facilities targeting youth, young professionals, and the disabled were also promoted. Biking/skateboarding/trail facilities and dog parks were

the next largest groupings. There were also calls for various entertainment venues (e.g., music, food, farmers market, etc.). Community gardening and the need for more staff presence in the parks were also identified.

14. **What have you seen at parks and recreation facilities in other communities/areas that you would like to see in City of Jackson Parks?**

There were 234 comments regarding what respondents had seen at parks and recreation facilities in other communities/areas that they would like to see in Jackson, as represented in the following word cloud and listed in a table located in Appendix C.



Concerns regarding, safety/security (including lighting), updating/maintaining equipment, and cleanliness comprised the largest grouping of improvements requested by respondents. Additional and more diverse types of playgrounds (e.g., all ages, natural, musical, double swings, etc.), and their upkeep, was the next largest grouping. Well-maintained pickleball and dog park facilities were also very popular requests (and there were numerous suggestions for other sports facilities as well). Facilities for swimming and splash pads/water parks were very popular. Trails, watercraft launch sites/liveries, and outdoor exercise equipment was another large grouping.

Requests for well-maintained restrooms with flush toilets, sinks, and drinking fountains were numerous. Calls for a variety of other support facilities/amenities (e.g., parking, food, other vendors, bus service, etc.) were popular as well. Finally, the need for facilities to be accessible to disabled residents was also pointed out.

### **JACKSON: ready for what's NEXT**

*JACKSON: ready for what's NEXT* is the community master plan adopted by the Jackson City Planning Commission in 2016. It contains the following recreation-related recommendations:

- The top recommendations for the City of Jackson and its downtown included the following:  
*Enhance and diversify the mix of placemaking and quality of life amenities for employees and residents, such as bike paths, parks, social open space, etc.*
- The following economic initiative from the 2020 *Jackson County Strategic Plan* was highlighted:

*Maintain or improve public services that support economic development including: Airport, Community Development, Land Assembly, Recreation and Parks, Corridor Improvement, Road Infrastructure, Brownfield Properties, Work Force Development, and Zoning/Permitting.*

The following was excerpted from the Assets and Amenities section of the Citywide chapter of the community master plan:

### ***Open Space and Recreation***

*When asked to name one word that described the City of Jackson, participants in nearly every group at every workshop mentioned the community's parks. The enviable collection of recreation resources is crowned by two jewels, the Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and Ella W. Sharp Park, Museum, and Golf Course, both results of Jackson's past wealth and bestowed to the community by its citizens. These parks together provide approximately a thousand acres of recreation in the southwest corner of the community that serve the entire region and host attractions such as the Cascades that have the potential to draw from further.*

*Jackson County and the City of Jackson are preparing [the 2015-2019 edition of the Jackson County and City of Jackson Joint Recreation Plan] concurrently with the writing of this master plan, and it is the intent of this plan to support the vision, goals, and action items identified therein. From the more comprehensive perspective, recreation assets are one area in which Jackson is already well-positioned within the new economy, and its unique, diverse, and strong set of offerings should be cohesively branded and marketed widely.*

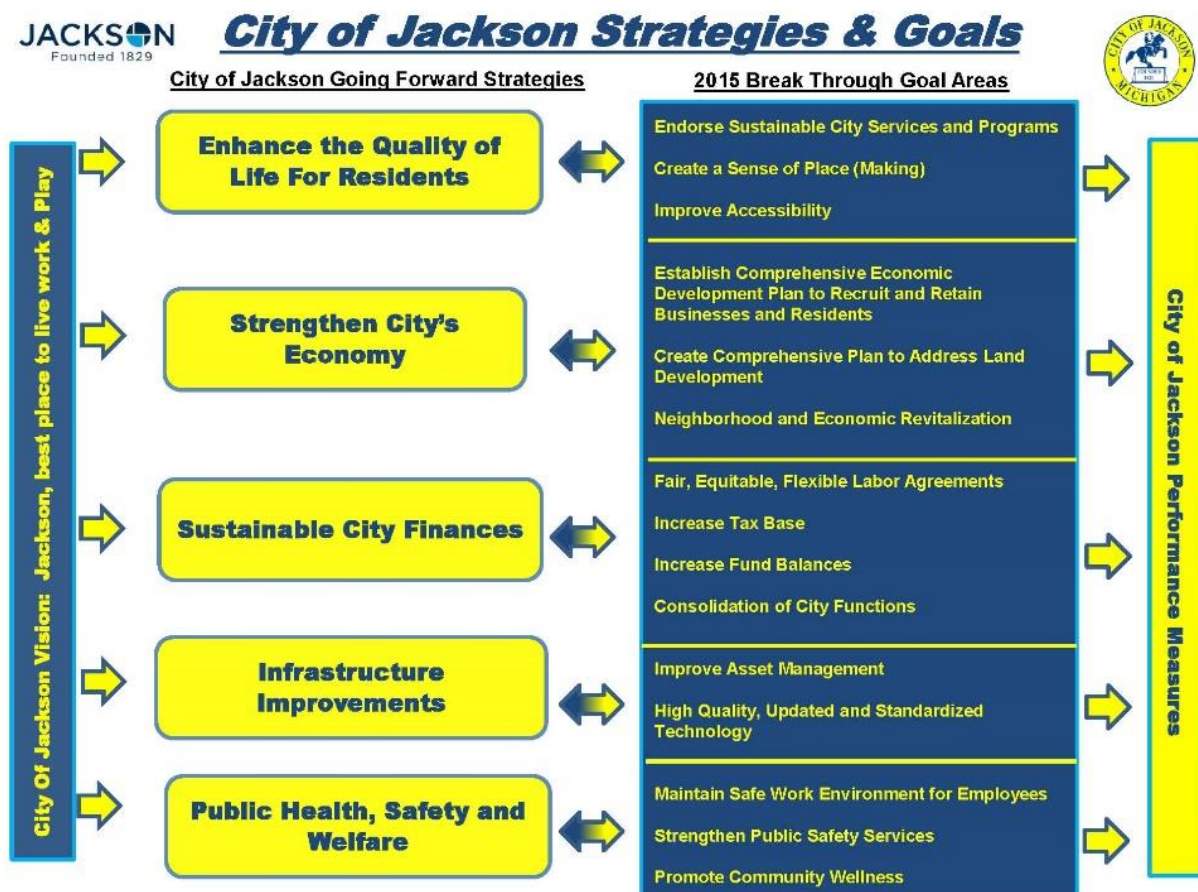
*One circumstance which may help cultivate this opportunity is the continued expansion of interest in a nonmotorized network throughout the City and with connections throughout the region. The development of a nonmotorized trail network is one of the five goals identified in [the 2015-2019 edition of the Jackson County and City of Jackson Joint Recreation Plan], as first outlined in the 2002 Jackson County Regional Trailway Study. The County's "Falling Waters Trail," the first study item to be implemented, recently received some unexpected confirmation of its utility: when data from the online fitness application "Map My Run" was aggregated geographically, the trail was clearly delineated. Linking existing parks to the nonmotorized network offers ready-made destinations throughout the network, provides an opportunity to increase exposure to parks by using them as reference points, increases activity within parks by directing circulation through them, and contributes significant land area which is already free of vehicular traffic to the nonmotorized network. Through careful management of this momentum toward trail use, Jackson can seek a multiplier effect throughout its recreation and even overall economic systems.*

*Careful management and maximized benefit are already the cornerstones of the community's recreation planning. Understanding that users largely make their recreation choices on a regional scale, the collaboration between the City and the County should be a fundamental strategy to pool resources and decrease service duplication. The [2015-2019 edition of the Jackson County and City of Jackson Joint Recreation Plan] acknowledges the success of this strategy by seeking to replicate it: the first goal is to "develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation with other local communities and recreation providers." The plan also prioritizes renovations to existing parks and recreation facilities over the acquisition of new ones, citing support from the 2013 Citizen Opinion Survey and economic conditions, but continues to provide for the possibility of new park development for under-served areas, natural resources protection, and in the case of unique opportunities.*

## City of Jackson Strategies and Goals

The City of Jackson developed the following Strategies and Goals, which were included in the 2015-2019 edition of the *Jackson County and City of Jackson Joint Recreation Plan*. The following 'City of Jackson Going Forward Strategies' and '2015 Break Through Goal Areas' impact parks and recreation:

- '[Creating] a Sense of Place (Making)' and '[Improving] Accessibility' are 'Goal Areas' under 'Enhance the Quality of Life For Residents', the first 'Going Forward [Strategy]'.
- 'Neighborhood and Economic Revitalization' is a goal under 'Strengthen [the] City's Economy', the second 'Going Forward [Strategy]'.
- 'Improve Asset Management' is a goal under 'Infrastructure Improvements', the fourth 'Going Forward [Strategy]'.
- 'Promote Community Wellness' is a goal under 'Public Health, Safety and Welfare', the final 'Going Forward [Strategy]'.



## Other Planning Efforts Impacting City of Jackson Parks

The City of Jackson also participates in various regional nonmotorized trail planning and water trail planning efforts and facilitates master planning activities for individual county parks.

**Nonmotorized Trails.** A regional nonmotorized trail is emerging in Jackson County. The Hiking Trail of the State of Michigan's *Iron Belle Trail* and *Route #1* of the *Great Lake-to-Lake Trails* are proposed to traverse the County from Munith in its northeast corner to Concord in its southwest corner, utilizing the same corridor (see *Route #1* of the *Great Lake-to-Lake Trails* and *Iron Belle Trail* maps in Appendix D). Major portions of the corridor are already completed, including the Martin Luther King Junior Equality Trail, which traverses the City of Jackson, and Jackson County Parks' *Falling Waters Trail*, which traverses the Townships of Summit, Spring Arbor, and Concord and the Village of Concord (see the *Existing Trails* map in Appendix D). The Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park extension, which will traverse the Townships of Waterloo, Henrietta, Leoni, and Blackman, is currently under development. Other trails also traverse portions of Jackson County. Please see the *Transportation Facilities and Utilities* section of this chapter for more detail on nonmotorized trail planning.

- Hiking Trail of the Iron Belle Trail.** "The Iron Belle Trail is Michigan's showcase trail that touches hundreds of municipalities and crosses through 48 different Michigan counties. Using existing trails, networks and some new connections, the trail extends more than 2,000 miles from the far western tip of the Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle in Detroit on a biking trail and hiking trail. The biking route utilizes many of the state's existing bike paths, bike lanes, and signed, designated biking routes as it travels up the east side of the state, while the hiking route utilizes sidewalks, trails, and the 1,000-mile plus North Country National Scenic Trail traveling up the west side of the lower peninsula" (see [Iron Belle Trail – Two Routes, One great Trail](#)). The hiking trail utilizes the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor, which is suitable for biking as well as hiking. 'Click' on [Iron Belle Trail](#) for a map of the trail and [Falling Waters Trail – Jackson- Lakeland Trail](#) for a detailed map of the trail in the Jackson Area.

### Accommodations and Signage

*The developing regional nonmotorized and water trail systems will attract tourists to the City of Jackson. Signage along the trail systems is needed that directs them to existing lodging, restaurants, and other attractions. Opportunities for additional trailheads throughout the systems should also be explored.*

- Route #1 of the Great Lake-To-Lake Trails.** "The last three decades in Michigan's trail movement have been about securing individual trails of all types: abandoned rail, utility corridors, road rights of way, and more. Today, Michigan can extend these trails east and west to reach from one Great Lake to another, weaving in many communities and tourism attractions along the way. [The] Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance has identified 5 Great Lake to Lake Trail routes across the state" (see [About the Great Lake to Lake Trails](#)). Route #1 of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails will connect South Haven (Lake Michigan) with Port Huron (Lake Huron), utilizing the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor. 'Click' on [GLTL Route #1: South Haven to Port Huron](#) for a map of the trail.

- Recent Efforts to Augment the Corridor.** There have been several local efforts to augment the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor. The City of Jackson joined with Summit Township and Jackson County to submit complementary Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) applications to construct trails that connect Ella W. Sharp Park and Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park to the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor and each other and to provide trail loops in Summit Township and the City of Jackson. The local governments received Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) grants in 2015 for the Horton Road Trail Development Project (TF 15-0069), the Fourth Street Connector Development Project (TF-15-0097), and the Sparks Park Inter-City Trail Connector Development Project (TF 15-0092) and all 3 trails are now open to the public. The Horton Road Trail and the Fourth Street Connector link with each other, the Weatherwax Trail, and the MLK Equality Trail to provide a connection to Ella W. Sharp Park as well as a trail loop. The Sparks Park Inter-City Trail Connector provides a connection between the trails in Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park, the MLK Equality Trail, and City of Jackson sidewalks and bike lanes to provide another trail loop.
- Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan.** The Region 2 Planning Commission, the City of Jackson, and Jackson County began developing a nonmotorized plan that covers all of Jackson County beginning in 2019. It will provide an update to the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study* completed in 2002. It is anticipated that potential on-road and off-road nonmotorized projects throughout Jackson County will be identified in this document. The plan will be available at [www.region2planning.com](http://www.region2planning.com). **The Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan is adopted by reference as part of this plan.**
- On-Road Nonmotorized Transportation.** With the exception of freeways, the City of Jackson's streets are available for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. **Consequently, this Recreation Plan states that the City of Jackson supports the goal of complete streets**, which "means roadways, planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot, or bicycle," as defined by Public Act 51 of 1951 (State Trunk Line Highway System), as amended. Accordingly, City of Jackson Parks officials will advise the City and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) on future street projects within Jackson regarding the inclusion of appropriate nonmotorized facilities (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, paved shoulders, trails, etc.).

**Water Trails.** Water trails are comprised of canoe/kayak launch sites connecting together signed stretches of river (and lakes) maintained for paddling. The [Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan](#), adopted by the Upper Grand River Watershed Council in 2017, proposes a water trail through the City of Jackson. The Upper Grand River Water Trail will flow from the Liberty Mill Pond (Liberty Township) to Eaton Rapids (Eaton County), as well as on the North Branch of the river from the unincorporated village of Michigan Center (Leoni Township) to the confluence with the main channel (City of Jackson). That trail was recognized as a state-designated water trail by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in 2018. Please see the water trail development plan for a complete listing of the proposed canoe/kayak launch sites. **The Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan is adopted by reference as part of this plan.**

## Public Comments

The Parks and Recreation Commission received various comments regarding this edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan:

**November 20, 2019, Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting.** Members of the general public attending the November 20, 2019, meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission provided the following comments on the first draft of this edition of the recreation plan:

- The survey respondents were not representative of City residents and lacked input from Jackson's 5<sup>th</sup> Ward.
- A lack of snow removal makes walking on sidewalks difficult during the winter and the poor condition of the streets makes biking challenging.
- There is a need for more pocket (i.e., mini-) parks.
- Public safety is a concern (with one resident specifying parks on the City's south side).
- Convert tennis courts to pickleball courts, a better use.
- Make the YMCA free (or at least more affordable).
- More public art.
- Natural area programming is needed (and Bowling Green's program can be used as a template).
- Bright Walls is awesome (but artists should be using safety harnesses on boom lifts).
- Partner with Jackson County to create a skating rink on the pond in Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park.
- The park system is amazing, the trails are used, and the disc golf course in Ella Sharp Park is appreciated.
- Concerns regarding the use of chemicals (e.g., Roundup) as the 1<sup>st</sup> option.

**Written Comments.** The Parks and Recreation Commission received the following written comments on the recreation plan during the public comment period:

- The methodology of the survey monkey survey was severely flawed:
  1. Not all residents have access to the internet.
  2. Only 240 people that live in the City took the survey, out of 32,000 residents.

Clearly this lack of input from the public should stop the master plan from being developed any further or submitted to the state of Michigan.

City of Jackson should be held accountable for including feedback from the majority of it's citizens. Not just a tiny group of 240 "friends".

Susan Murdie

*[address withheld for privacy]*

- Would you consider putting in shuffle board area for folks? I always loved playing shuffle board growing up and when we travel we see them in cities and towns people playing. You could have tournaments to bring in tourists, involve the community to participate.

Thank you  
Melissa Hess

## **Public Involvement and Plan Adoption**

Public involvement was also an integral part of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan approval process.

### **Commission Meetings**

All meetings of City of Jackson's Parks and Recreation Commission are open to the public.

### **One Month Review Period**

The recreation plan was submitted for a one-month public comment period which began on December 5, 2019, and ended on January 5, 2020. The plan was available for review in the offices of Jackson County Parks and the County Administrator as well as online at [www.cityofjackson.org](http://www.cityofjackson.org). [Place/refer to the comments regarding the recreation plan received here].

### **Letters of Transmittal**

Letters of transmittal were sent to the County of Jackson and the Region 2 Planning Commission (R2PC) alerting those bodies of the recreation planning effort.

### **Public Hearing and Plan Approval**

A public hearing on the recreation plan was held on January 6, 2020, at Ella Sharp Park Golf Course, during a regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission. A Resolution of Approval was then passed by the Commission. The Jackson City Council passed a Resolution of Adoption on January 14, 2020, in the Council Chambers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall, during a regular meeting.



Bright Walls Mural | 2019  
**Justing Suarez & Sarah Rutherford, Artists**  
*(Owley, photo)*

#### Chapter 4

## **Vision, Goals & Objectives, & Action Program**

## Vision

The vision provided by this recreation plan can be summarized in the following statement:

***Provide all persons with a variety of well-maintained and programmed parks and recreation facilities at the neighborhood, community, and regional levels.***

## Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives will help the City of Jackson to fulfill the vision summarized above:

1. **Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation with other local communities and recreation providers.**

The City will investigate and implement various ways of communicating, collaborating, and co-operating with the other local providers of recreation in order to:

- Provide adequate parks and recreation facilities and programs throughout the City of Jackson and the surrounding area.
- Avoid the duplication of facilities and services.

2. **Develop trail networks**

The City will continue its collaborative efforts with other local governments and organizations in the development of the trail networks traversing Jackson:

- **Nonmotorized trails.** The *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* (under development at the time this plan was approved) is adopted by reference as part of this plan. The City of Jackson will implement pertinent portions of the plan as opportunities arise and resources become available.
- **Water trails.** The *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* is adopted by reference as part of this plan. The City of Jackson will implement pertinent portions of the plan as opportunities arise and resources become available.

3. **Renovate existing parks and recreation facilities**

Concentrate efforts on improving existing parks maintained by the City of Jackson:

- Upgrade existing parks and recreation facilities as needed.
- Improve existing parks and recreation facilities to meet (and exceed where possible) the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provide new/improved recreation facilities as opportunities arise (e.g., aquatic facilities, pickleball, playgrounds, etc.)
- Improve the safety of parks and recreation facility patrons and increase the positive impact of parks on their surrounding areas:

- Continue to install vandal resistant facilities.
- Continue to improve a consistent and systematic park maintenance program.
- Improve traffic control within parks.
- Implement the master plan created for Ella W. Sharp Park

#### 4. **Provide recreation programs and events**

Provide a variety of recreation programs which the community enjoys, and attempt to involve everyone as a participant, coach, or spectator.

- Continue to provide the various recreation programs provided by the City of Jackson and identify ways of expanding that programming whenever appropriate.
- Continue to allow special events such as the Civil War Muster, Hot Air Jubilee, and Juneteenth celebrations in city parks.
- Provide educational and conservation programs regarding the natural resources found throughout city parks.

#### 5. **Develop new parks as opportunities arise**

Opportunities for the acquisition and development of new parks should not be ignored even though the City of Jackson will concentrate on the redevelopment of existing parks and recreation facilities.

- Provide new mini, neighborhood, community, or regional parks (as applicable) in underserved areas.
- Protect natural resources (i.e. forests, wildlife habitat, and wetlands) and to create and/or preserve needed open space.
- Provide a venue for a new recreation facility which cannot be accommodated in any existing park.

### **Background Information**

Input into developing the goals and objectives listed above included:

- Existing recreation facilities and programs available to City residents, regardless of the provider.
- The health and disabilities of City residents.
- Opportunities for acquiring land and facilities.
- Survey responses and other opportunities for public comment.

**Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support the need to develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation among recreation providers. Other factors identify where those lines already exist:

- **Recreation and resource inventories.** A variety of public, quasi-public, and private entities provide parks and recreation facilities and programs. People rarely restrict their activities—including recreation—to a single jurisdiction. Accordingly, Chapter 2 (Recreation and Resource Inventories) already provides an overview of the parks and recreation facilities and services available to local residents, regardless of the provider.
- **Regional plans.** The City of Jackson partnered with Jackson County and the Region 2 Planning Commission to fund the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan*. The City also participated in the development of the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance's *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan*. Both of those documents rely upon the jurisdictions the proposed trails traverse to develop the facilities in a cooperative manner. They were also subject to public scrutiny (see Chapter 3).
- **Recreation Programming.** The City's recreation programs are funded through a millage levied on residents within the area served by Jackson Public Schools, which extends beyond the City limits into the majority of Summit Township and smaller portions of the Townships of Blackman, Napoleon, and Liberty. Consequently, participants in recreation sessions and sports seasons living within the district are charged a smaller user fee than participants living within another school district (see Chapter 1).

**Develop trail networks.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support the development of a non-motorized trail network:

- **Survey responses.** Approximately 72% of all respondents strongly agreed (49%) or agreed (22%) that a trail system should continue to be developed in the City of Jackson and the surrounding area. Approximately 68% of all respondents strongly agreed (41%) or agreed (27%) that canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River (see Chapter 3).  
  
Given that approximately 42% of survey respondents did not live in the City, the responses of only Jackson residents are also analyzed. Approximately 72% of City respondents strongly agreed (52%) or agreed (20%) that a trail system should continue to be developed. Approximately 71% of City respondents strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (27%) that canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River (see Chapter 3).
- **Regional plans.** The *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* and the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* provide blueprints for nonmotorized and water trails that will traverse Jackson and the surrounding area as they are developed. They were also subject to public scrutiny (see Chapter 3).
- **The health of residents.** A 2017 community health assessment survey conducted by Active Jackson (i.e., the Active Living Health Action Team for the Health Information Organization (HIO) founded by Henry Ford Allegiance Health) revealed that approximately 73% were overweight (33%) or obese (40%) and approximately 17% found it very difficult (6%) or somewhat difficult (11%) to find a place to exercise (see Chapter 1).

**Renovate Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support a focus on the renovation of existing parks and recreation facilities over the development of new parks:

- **Survey responses.** When asked “How do you rate the City of Jackson Parks system?”, a majority of the comments addressed various needed improvements to the parks (e.g., playgrounds, roads, etc.), general upkeep/maintenance, and safety/security concerns (e.g., drugs and drug paraphernalia, vandalism, crime, etc.), especially regarding Loomis Park. When asked “What discourages you from visiting a park/recreation facility?”, a variety of safety concerns and a lack of maintenance/cleanliness were the most common factors discouraging park use identified by respondents (see Chapter 3).
- **Disabilities of residents.** The 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated that approximately 19% of Jackson residents were disabled in some way and 9% had an ambulatory disability (see Chapter 3).
- **Ella W. Sharp Park Master Plan.** A master plan was developed for Ella W. Sharp Park, reflecting its status as the ‘jewel’ of the park system. The various elements of the plan were subject to public scrutiny. Implementing them will ensure that the park remains an important component of what people remember about the City of Jackson.

**Provide Recreation Programs and Events.** A variety of factors identified in the recreation plan support recreation programs and events:

- **Survey responses.** When asked “In what City recreation programs do you participate?”, approximately 51% indicated that they participated in at least 1 program. When asked “Is there an activity that you would like to see more of in City of Jackson Parks?”, approximately 51% indicated community facilities (see Chapter 3).
- **City of Jackson Recreation Millage.** The City’s recreation programs are funded through a millage levied on residents within the Jackson Public Schools district. That millage was renewed and expanded from 0.2 mills to 0.5 mills in the summer of 2014. The fact that this millage increase passed indicates strong support for recreation programming and events.
- **The health of Jackson County residents.** A 2017 community health assessment survey conducted by Active Jackson (i.e., the Active Living Health Action Team for the Health Information Organization (HIO) founded by Henry Ford Allegiance Health) revealed that approximately 73% were overweight (33%) or obese (40%) and approximately 17% found it very difficult (6%) or somewhat difficult (11%) to find a place to exercise (see Chapter 1).

**Develop New Parks as Opportunities Arise.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support the development of new parks under certain circumstances:

- **Taking advantage of opportunities.** The City may wish to take advantage of opportunities for new parks when they arise even though it is focusing on the renovation of existing parks.

- **Trail networks.** The development of the nonmotorized and water trail networks as proposed in the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* and the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* cannot be accommodated solely in existing parks. The health benefits attributed to the use of non-motorized trails are also a factor in favor of new trails.

## Action Program

Please see the Action Program map for the location of the various projects, *listed in alphabetical order and not all inclusive* (see the Action Program map in Appendix D).

### Park Development

- A. **All parks.** New signs and new recycling trash cans and system.
- B. **Betsy Butterfield Park.** New gazebo/picnic shelter.
- C. **Exchange Park.** New playground.
- D. **Lions Park.** New softball field bleachers and fencing and parking lot resurfacing.
- E. **Loomis Park.** New bocce ball courts, new playground, new trail, and parking lot resurfacing.
- F. **Martin Luther King Center.** New basketball courts.
- G. **New Leaf Park.** New gazebo/picnic shelter and parking lot resurfacing.
- H. **William Nixon Memorial Park.** Parking lot resurfacing.
- I. **Optimist Park.** New playground.
- J. **Ella W. Sharp Park.** New softball complex (e.g., 4 fields, bleachers, parking, lighting, etc.), new pickleball courts, new off-road trails, and parking lot resurfacing.
- K. **Under the Oaks Park.** New layout and landscaping.

### Trail Development

- L. **All trails.** New wayfinding signage.
- M. **MLK Equality Trail.** Resurface and new lighting between Weatherwax Drive and Prospect Street.
- N. **New Trails:**
  - 1. Art 634/Armory Arts to Downtown along Mechanic Street and Downtown Riverfront Park/Consumers Energy Campus.
  - 2. Loomis Park to Downtown along E. Michigan Avenue.
  - 3. New Leaf Park to Downtown along 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Greenwood Avenue.

## Background Information

The Plan's goals and objectives are the basis for the action program listed above.

**Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation.** The proposed trails and trail improvements/enhancements will further the development of the nonmotorized trail network proposed in the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan*—a multijurisdictional, collaborative, and cooperative document—for the City of Jackson and its surroundings.

**Develop trail networks.** The proposed trails and trail improvements/enhancements will further the development of a nonmotorized trail network in Jackson and the surrounding area, a goal of this plan and supported by the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan*, a document adopted by reference as part of this recreation plan.

**Renovate Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Most of the projects included in the Action Program will improve existing parks and the recreation facilities located in them, a goal of this plan and supported by many responses to the survey conducted for this recreation plan.

