

2024 NRPA AGENCY PERFORMANCE REVIEW



NATIONAL RECREATION
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



Cover image: A community concert takes place in Wichita, Kansas.

Photo courtesy of Wichita (Kansas) Park and Recreation Department

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A young girl handles a monarch butterfly in Plymouth, Minnesota.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT (MINNESOTA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks and recreation provides essential public services to communities all across the United States. Not only do park and recreation professionals and their agencies act as environmental stewards of the natural resources in their areas, but also by managing park and recreation facilities they increase economic value, promote socialization, and implement programming that improves the physical and mental well-being of individuals in their communities. From offering after-school programs to providing safe and inclusive spaces for community members to congregate, agencies directly impact the quality of life in their areas.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) gathers data annually from park and recreation agencies nationwide to assemble a clear overview of park and recreation agencies' performance. The purpose of this *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* is to allow agencies to compare their own performance metrics with those of other U.S. agencies to identify areas of excellence and areas for potential improvement.

As agencies preview the data presented in this report, it is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for maintaining and improving a park and recreation agency. The *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* does not provide "standards" which all agencies must strive to deliver, but rather serves as an informative evidence-based guideline. Factors such as jurisdiction population, the unique needs of each community and funding all play a major role in how an agency operates. In this report, we compare data grouped by agency size, funding, population served and other factors in order to provide agency professionals with more peer-based results.

To operate successfully, an agency must customize its offerings to the unique needs of its community members. Identifying characteristics of members in an agency's community based on age, economic means, interests and other backgrounds is vital for creating relevant programming and offerings. A successful agency

will know its community's characteristics and operate accordingly to better serve its residents.

We recommend that park and recreation agencies and professionals use the *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* in conjunction with other internal and external resources to gather a clearer understanding of needs and resources specific to their agency.

How to Use the 2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review and NRPA Park Metrics

To begin using the *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review*, first look at the available data. Throughout this report, tables, graphs and other data-based visuals are provided based on a "typical" agency within a given jurisdiction population or population. The "typical" agency represents the median of data collected for a metric. Information also includes upper and lower quartiles for further insight. To further benefit from the information provided in this report, examine the comprehensive cross-tabulations and interactive charts found at nrpa.org/APR.

Park and recreation agencies across the country used the NRPA Park Metrics survey tool to self-report all data that were used in this report. Visit the Park Metrics website (nrpa.org/ParkMetrics) to learn more about this suite of tools and create a Park Metrics account or log in to an existing account to build a more customized benchmark report based on agency type, size and geographic region. Use this tool to generate reports that will further assist in analyzing your agency's data needs, as well as identify peer agencies with similar characteristics to your own.

The *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* presents data from nearly 1,000 park and recreation agencies across the country from 2021 to 2023.

Note: Not all agencies answered every survey question.



Young adults participate in a work day in Durango, Colorado.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DURANGO (COLORADO) PARKS AND RECREATION

INFOGRAPHIC

2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review Key Findings

Residents per park:

2,386



Acres of parkland
per 1,000 residents:

10.6



Percent of agencies
offering summer camp:

83%



Full-time equivalent (FTE)
employees per 10,000 residents:

8.9



Percentage of full-time staff dedicated
to operations/maintenance:

46%



Operating expenditures
per capita:

\$99.47



Revenue to operating expenditures
(cost recovery):

25.2%



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PARK FACILITIES



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASHEVILLE (NORTH CAROLINA) PARKS AND RECREATION

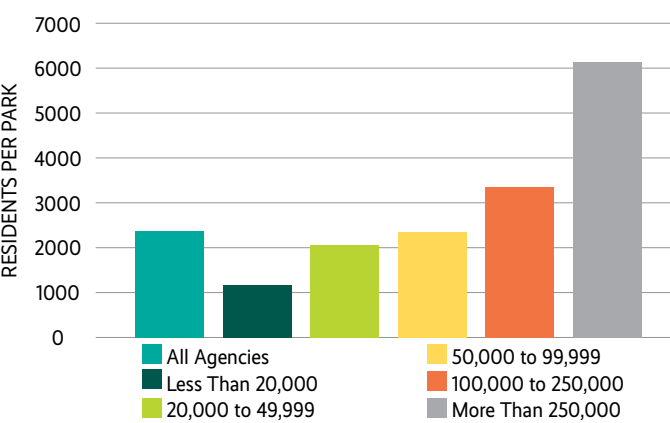
Children and families play outside during a community event in Asheville, North Carolina.

To support the various needs, interests and lifestyles of community members, park and recreation agencies must offer a wide range of outdoor and indoor facilities. These facilities provide for programming, activities and other recreational events and serve as vital hubs for health and wellness.

The typical park and recreation agency has one park for every 2,386 residents. In heavily populated jurisdictions, a single park may serve many thousands of residents. For jurisdictions with populations fewer than 20,000 people, 1,172 people are served per park. This number increases for populations of 50,000 to 99,000 people, with one park for every 2,346 people. For those jurisdictions with populations of more than 250,000 people, there are 6,120 people for every park.

The typical park and recreation agency manages 10.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents in its area. "Park-

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER PARK (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	2,386	1,172	2,062	2,346	3,344	6,120
Lower Quartile	1,333	659	1,233	1,489	2,173	3,274
Upper Quartile	5,000	1,944	3,000	4,048	7,039	18,586

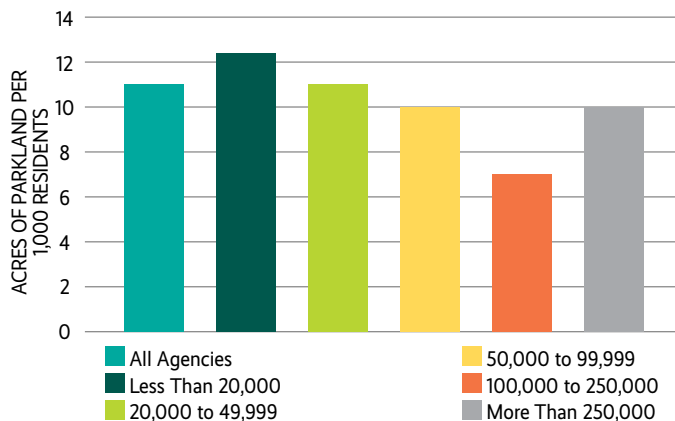
land” refers to both maintained parks and accessible open space areas such as green spaces and courtyards. This amount of parkland per 1,000 residents is largest for those agencies serving a population of fewer than 20,000 people: 12.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The number of acres per 1,000 residents decreases slightly for parks serving a population of 20,000 to 49,999 people: an average of 11.2 acres of managed parkland per 1,000 residents. For agencies serving between 50,000 and 99,000 people and more than 250,000 people, there are 10.2 acres per 1,000 residents. The smallest number of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents is found in jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 to 250,000 people with seven acres for every 1,000 residents.



A group of pickleball players touch paddles in Eugene, Oregon.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EUGENE (OREGON) RECREATION

FIGURE 2: ACRES OF PARKLAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	10.6	12.6	11.2	10.2	7.0	10.2
Lower Quartile	5.1	6.0	6.2	4.8	4.4	5.0
Upper Quartile	18.0	20.9	18.0	17.4	15.5	16.7

Outdoor park and recreation facilities allow community members to assemble, socialize and exercise in a safe and inclusive space. Ninety-three percent of agencies have playgrounds or play structures as their most common type of outdoor facility. Eighty-five percent of agencies have diamond fields (e.g., baseball, softball), 84 percent have standalone basketball courts and 83 percent have rectangular fields (e.g., soccer, field hockey, lacrosse). Other common facilities include tennis courts (72 percent) and dog parks (68 percent).

The breakdown of the most common types of outdoor facilities includes:

- One playground/play structure for every 3,750 residents
- One diamond field for every 4,063 residents
- One basketball court for every 8,000 residents
- One rectangular field for every 5,000 residents
- One tennis court for every 6,003 residents
- One dog park for every 46,917 residents

**FIGURE 3: OUTDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES
(BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY)**

Types of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility						
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Population of Jurisdiction				
			Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Playgrounds or play structures	93%	3,750	1,990	3,105	3,707	5,016	9,591
Diamond fields	85	4,063	1,833	3,007	3,675	6,821	11,129
Basketball courts, standalone	84	8,000	4,366	7,501	8,363	9,643	15,136
Rectangular fields	83	5,000	2,493	3,333	4,070	7,375	14,238
Tennis courts	72	6,003	3,074	5,461	5,865	8,731	10,524
Dog parks	68	46,917	10,327	27,508	55,135	74,504	128,906
Tot lots	53	12,434	5,323	12,744	12,443	20,180	33,913
Community gardens	52	34,105	8,800	27,262	56,150	55,326	125,935
Swimming pools	49	45,919	9,500	27,081	46,353	65,697	113,219
Skateboard parks	46	54,750	11,284	33,167	60,904	105,567	239,177
Multiuse courts – basketball, volleyball, etc.	42	19,571	5,248	15,531	24,955	47,676	71,750
Pickleball	42	12,597	3,390	7,737	10,500	20,244	42,495
Multiuse courts – tennis, pickleball	37	15,674	4,634	13,000	12,972	34,500	61,213
18-hole golf courses	29	96,391	9,626	32,812	68,208	112,641	251,483
Driving range stations	28	24,360	2,122	12,700	4,914	35,710	172,403
Synthetic rectangular fields	25	43,643	11,284	23,189	36,000	54,254	127,714
Volleyball courts, standalone	23	27,640	9,250	14,280	26,612	46,517	57,456
Splash pads, spray grounds or spray showers	23	54,010	12,756	30,629	54,100	67,685	199,437
Fitness zones/Exercise stations	22	39,188	8,233	27,262	35,000	43,611	111,111
Disc golf courses	20	76,780	11,079	29,445	58,603	118,723	278,884
Ice rinks	19	19,667	8,015	19,770	29,378	102,891	532,258
Walking loops/Running tracks	19	20,017	5,459	18,585	20,527	37,169	68,811
Nine-hole golf courses	14	121,825	17,750	38,333	61,757	126,621	428,359
Overlay fields	10	18,097	10,584	10,000	9,375	22,951	36,070
Racquetball/Handball/Squash courts	9	47,792	13,350	21,791	43,857	42,484	137,076
Waterparks	7	82,250	17,813	32,812	76,780	149,008	332,396

Indoor facilities are also critical to the programming and other offerings provided by park and recreation agencies. Twenty-two percent of agencies have indoor competitive swimming pools, 19 percent have indoor leisure pools (i.e., noncompetitive) and pickleball courts, 16 percent have multiuse courts, and 12 percent have standalone basketball courts and multiuse courts (e.g., tennis, pickleball).

The breakdown of the ratio of population per type of indoor facility includes:

- One indoor competitive swimming pool for every 66,88 people
- One indoor leisure pool for every 71,046 people
- One indoor pickleball court for every 17,033 people
- One indoor multiuse court for every 23,755 people

**FIGURE 4: INDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES
(BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY)**

Types of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility						
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Population of Jurisdiction				
			Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Competitive swimming pools	22%	66,880	8,224	31,000	64,150	110,270	260,000
Pools designated exclusively for leisure (i.e., noncompetitive)	19	71,046	12,203	32,812	63,688	111,385	281,151
Pickleball	19	17,033	4,929	10,463	17,240	29,470	79,795
Multiuse courts – basketball, volleyball, etc.	16	23,755	5,907	14,577	23,755	72,604	64,451
Basketball courts, standalone	12	26,937	5,907	19,173	26,612	77,099	66,002
Multiuse courts – tennis, pickleball	12	17,044	5,800	14,950	15,182	38,757	89,639
Therapeutic pools	11	94,456	10,814	33,306	63,001	121,465	521,114
Walking loops/Running tracks	10	59,630	9,875	32,619	63,336	111,508	301,916
Racquetball/Handball/Squash courts	9	39,744	7,036	16,825	38,326	58,942	118,342
Tennis courts	5	19,286	ISD	6,600	10,605	27,995	60,913

*ISD = Insufficient Data

Sixty-two percent of park and recreation agencies have recreation centers (including gyms), making it the most common type of indoor facility. Other common indoor facilities include community centers (59 percent), senior centers (40 percent) and performance amphitheaters (40 percent).

The ratios for population per each of the most common indoor facilities include:

- One recreation center (or gym) for every 32,786 residents
- One community center for every 31,569 residents
- One senior center for every 62,201 residents
- One performance amphitheater for every 69,604 residents



Young adults take a break from a game of basketball in St. Petersburg, Florida.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. PETERSBURG (FLORIDA) PARKS AND RECREATION

FIGURE 5: TYPES OF INDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND AMENITIES (BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY)

Types of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility						
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Population of Jurisdiction				
			Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Recreation centers (including gyms)	62%	32,786	9,685	24,486	39,886	57,750	67,213
Community centers	59	31,569	8,908	27,858	52,000	55,135	93,758
Senior centers	40	62,201	14,286	31,985	67,190	125,817	311,014
Performance amphitheaters	40	69,604	12,769	32,255	59,000	116,135	374,718
Nature centers	34	133,773	9,430	33,669	71,360	139,248	378,408
Aquatics centers	30	58,496	12,618	31,000	60,824	110,629	248,646
Permanent and semi-permanent restrooms	28	5,580	2,579	4,905	5,520	6,850	11,925
Stadiums	19	103,222	10,633	32,299	64,150	154,198	425,884
Teen centers	12	58,712	14,797	31,785	58,712	124,264	360,153
Indoor ice rinks	12	59,277	8,004	23,512	53,224	108,508	500,000
Arenas	9	95,696	7,057	24,838	68,104	118,500	716,862



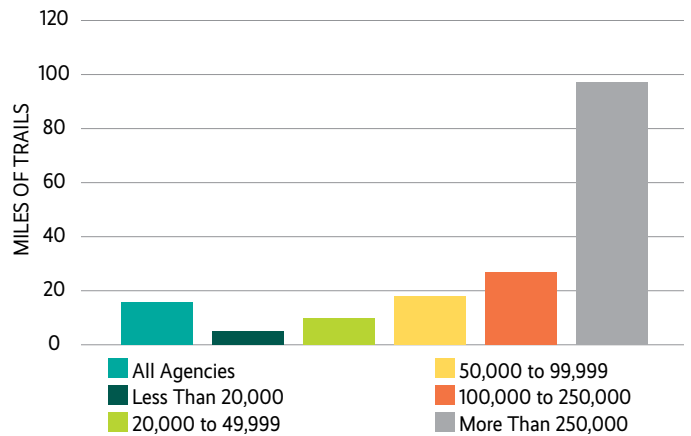
A group of young adults set up their tent in San Diego.

In addition to various outdoor and indoor facilities, many agencies provide trails, greenways and other outdoor walking areas for community members. The typical park and recreation agency is responsible for managing 16 miles of trails. This figure increases as the jurisdiction population an agency serves increases. Agencies serving populations of more than 250,000 people typically manage 97 miles of trails.



Adults participate in a guided river tour in Plymouth, Minnesota.

FIGURE 6: MILES OF TRAIL (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	16.0	4.5	10.0	18.1	27.0	97.0
Lower Quartile	6.0	2.0	5.0	8.0	18	40.8
Upper Quartile	46.0	9.2	19.6	37.0	52.0	180.3

PROGRAMMING



A new playground is installed in Lorain, Ohio.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF LORAIN (OHIO) PARKS AND RECREATION

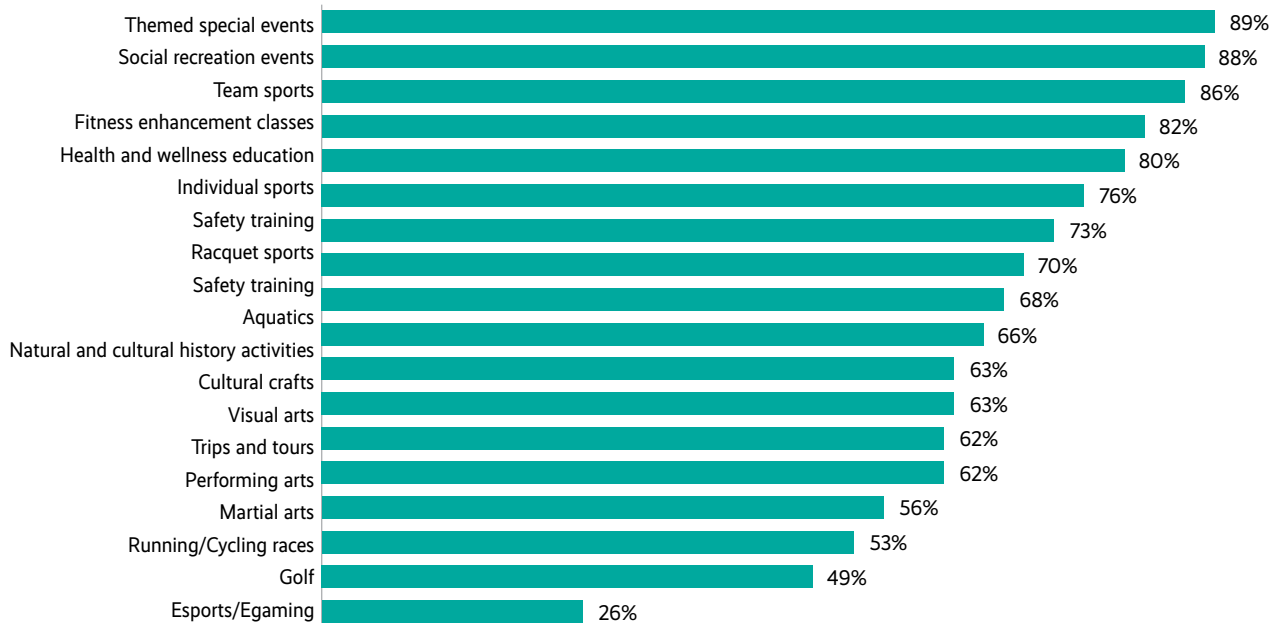
Park and recreation agencies offer a wide breadth of activities and programming to their community members. These offerings strive to promote better physical and emotional health and well-being. Much of this programming follows NRPA's Three Pillars: Health and Wellness, Equity and Conservation. While some programs are targeted to certain age groups (i.e., children or older adults), the goal of parks and recreation is to have inclusive and safe spaces for all community members. By providing affordable programming and safe spaces to gather, park and recreation agencies enable their community members to interact with others, encouraging socialization and connection.

To meet the diverse needs and desires of community members, park and recreation agencies must provide a wide array of accessible and affordable programming. Programming can be activities, events, clubs or other types of group activities.

Most agencies offer themed special events (89 percent), social recreation events (88 percent) and team sports (86 percent). More than three-quarters of agencies also offer other programming, such as fitness enhancement classes, health and wellness education and individual sports. Other key programming activities offered by at least half of agencies include:

- Racquet sports (73 percent of agencies)
- Safety training (70 percent)
- Aquatics (68 percent)
- Natural and cultural history activities (66 percent)
- Cultural crafts (63 percent)
- Visual arts (63 percent)
- Trips and tours (62 percent)
- Performing arts (62 percent)
- Martial arts (56 percent)
- Running/Cycling races (53 percent)

**FIGURE 7: PROGRAMMING OFFERED BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**



From children to older adults, programs are designed to accommodate the diverse groups of community members regardless of age, socioeconomic status, ability, race or background. Many agencies offer specific programming based on age and abilities to better support all community members.

Eighty-three percent of agencies offer summer camps and 78 percent offer programs specifically targeted to older adults. About two-thirds of agencies offer teen-focused programs and programs for people with disabilities, while at least half of agencies offer STEM

(science, technology, engineering and math) programs and after-school programs.

Agencies serving populations of more than 250,000 residents are more likely to offer programs for older adults, children and people with disabilities than are those agencies serving populations of fewer than 20,000 residents. However, the number of targeted programs offered varies for those agencies serving populations of 20,000 to 49,999 people, 50,000 to 99,999 people and 100,000 to 250,000 people.

**FIGURE 8: TARGETED PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**

	Percent of Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Summer camps	83%	65%	86%	92%	84%	92%
Specific senior programs	78	63	79	88	82	82
Specific teen programs	67	50	64	77	69	78
Programs for people with disabilities	66	37	62	78	75	86
STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs	57	41	49	66	59	74
After-school programs	52	44	41	51	58	71
Preschool	34	26	34	46	32	36
Before-school programs	19	17	17	23	15	22
Full-day care	7	7	2	8	6	12

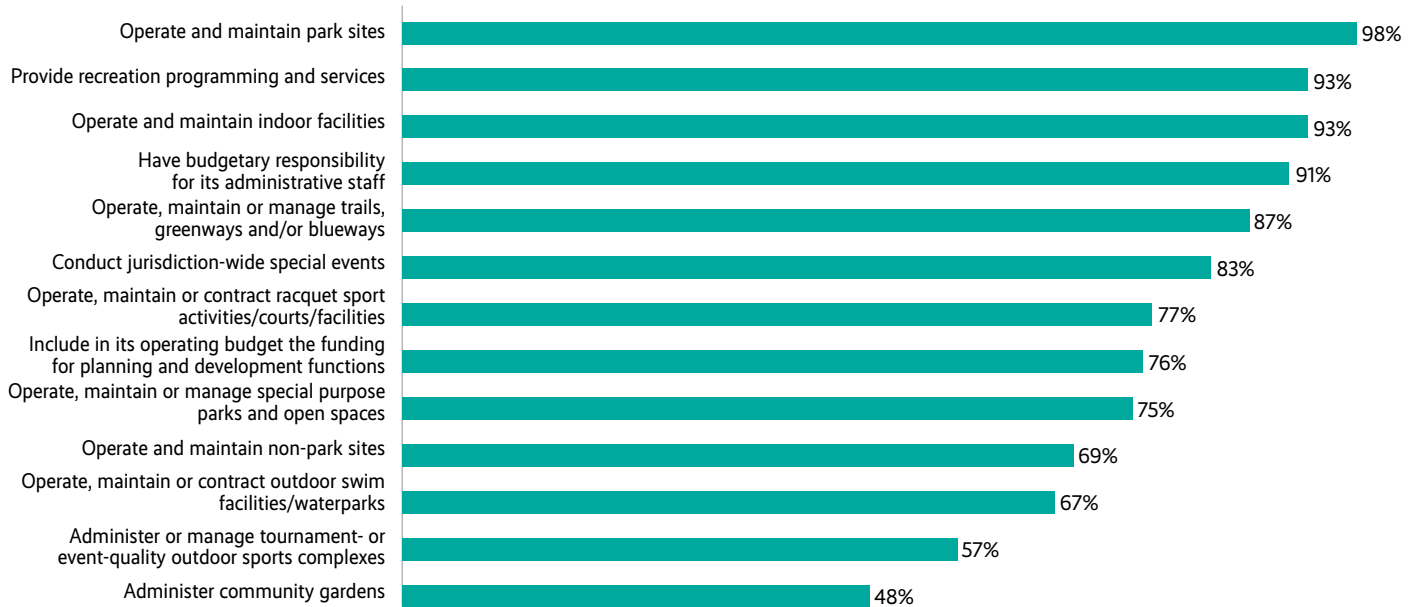
RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES



Park and recreation agencies are responsible for ensuring that their facilities, programming and offerings are at the highest level possible. Nearly all agencies operate and maintain park sites (98 percent), and the vast majority provide recreation and programming (93 percent), as well as operate and maintain indoor facilities (93 percent). Other key responsibilities that at least 70 percent of agencies mention include:

- Have budgetary responsibility for its administrative staff (91 percent of agencies)
- Operate, maintain or manage trails, greenways and/or blueways (87 percent)
- Conduct jurisdiction-wide special events (83 percent)
- Operate, maintain or contract racquet sport activities/courts/facilities (77 percent)
- Include in its operating budget the funding for planning and development functions (76 percent)
- Operate, maintain or manage special purpose parks and open spaces (75 percent)

FIGURE 9: KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)



Other responsibilities of many park and recreation agencies include operating, maintaining or contracting tourism attractions (40 percent); managing large

performance outdoor amphitheaters (36 percent); and operating, maintaining or contracting golf courses (36 percent).

FIGURE 10: OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)

Operate, maintain or contract tourism attractions	40%
Manage large performance outdoor amphitheaters	36
Operate, maintain or contract golf courses	36
Operate, maintain or contract indoor swim facilities/waterparks	31
Maintain or manage beaches (inclusive of all waterbody types)	26
Administer or manage farmers markets	22
Operate, maintain or contract campgrounds	20
Administer or manage tournament- or event-quality indoor sports complexes	20
Maintain, manage or lease indoor performing arts centers	19
Operate, maintain or contract marinas	13
Administer or manage professional or college-type stadiums/arenas/racetracks	9
Manage or maintain fairgrounds	7

STAFFING



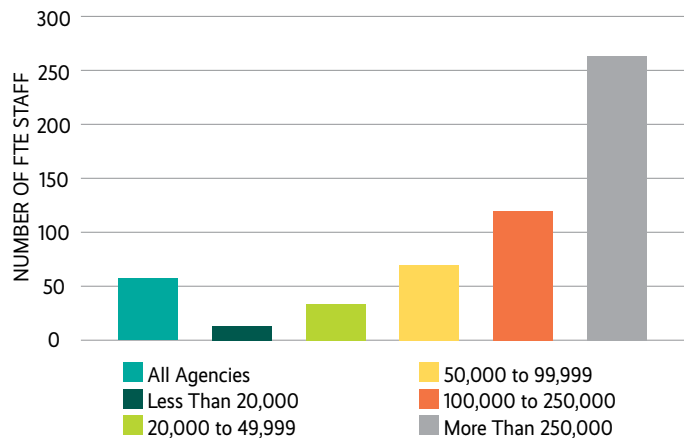
PHOTO COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK

Supporting programming, facilities and other offerings of park and recreation agencies requires adequate staffing. Park and recreation staff are essential to ensuring the success of each agency and creating safe, inclusive spaces for all community members.

Full-time employees are vital to the operations, management and overall success of a park and recreation agency. Understaffed agencies may result in fewer program and activity offerings, poor facility maintenance and decreased community involvement overall.

The typical agency employs 57.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. It is important to note that because the size of park and recreation agency jurisdictions varies, so too will the number of staff members. The larger the population served by an agency, the larger number of FTE staff required. Agencies that serve fewer than 20,000 people typically have 14 FTE employees, agencies in jurisdictions of 50,000 to 99,999 people have 70.3 FTE staff and larger agencies serving more than 250,000 people have a staff of 263 FTEs.

FIGURE 11: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY STAFFING: FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTEs) (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



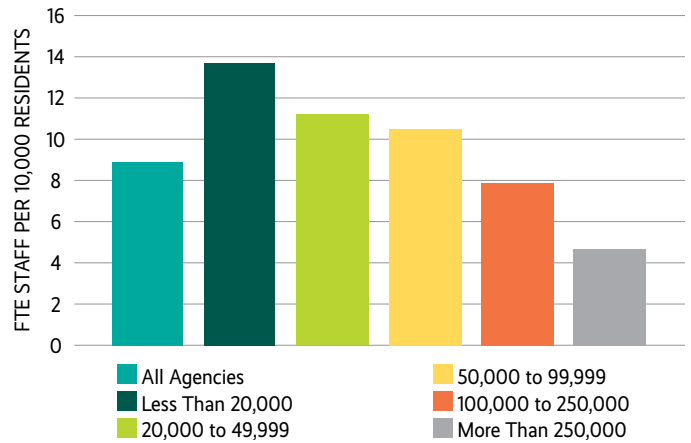
	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	57.6	14.0	34.2	70.3	120.0	263.0
Lower Quartile	20.4	6.1	19.9	46.5	61.3	123.0
Upper Quartile	143.7	30.0	66.9	121.0	181.2	471.5



Volunteers plant trees in Miami, Florida.

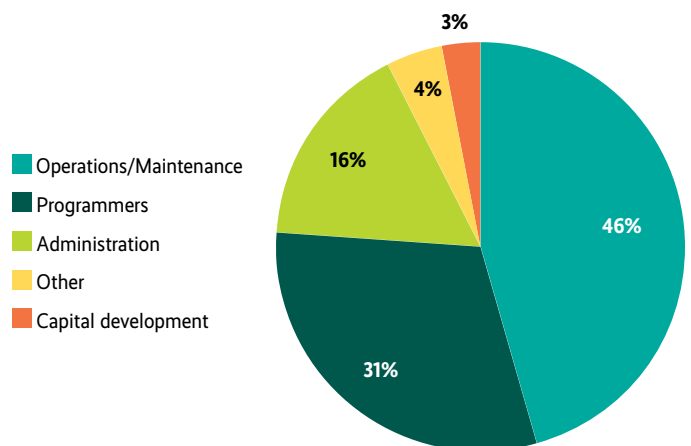
PHOTO COURTESY OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES

FIGURE 12: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY STAFFING: FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) EMPLOYEES PER 10,000 RESIDENTS (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	8.9	13.7	11.2	10.5	7.9	4.7
Lower Quartile	4.9	6.9	5.8	6.5	3.8	2.1
Upper Quartile	16.6	25.3	20.3	17.1	12.2	7.8

FIGURE 13: RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION STAFF (AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AGENCY FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) EMPLOYEES)



While the number of staff increases as population increases, the same is not true for the ratio of FTEs to residents. For agencies serving a population of fewer than 20,000 people, there are 13.7 FTEs for every 10,000 residents. This ratio decreases as population increases. At agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999 people, there are 10.5 FTEs for every 10,000 residents. At agencies in jurisdictions of more than 250,000 residents, the ratio declines to an average of 4.7 FTEs per 10,000 residents. Overall, the ratio of FTEs across jurisdiction populations is 8.9 FTEs per 10,000 residents.

Among the various responsibilities of park and recreation staff, almost half of FTEs are responsible for operations and maintenance. About 30 percent of FTEs are responsible for programming, and 16 percent are responsible for administration.

BUDGET

PHOTO COURTESY OF PEKIN (ILLINOIS) PARK DISTRICT



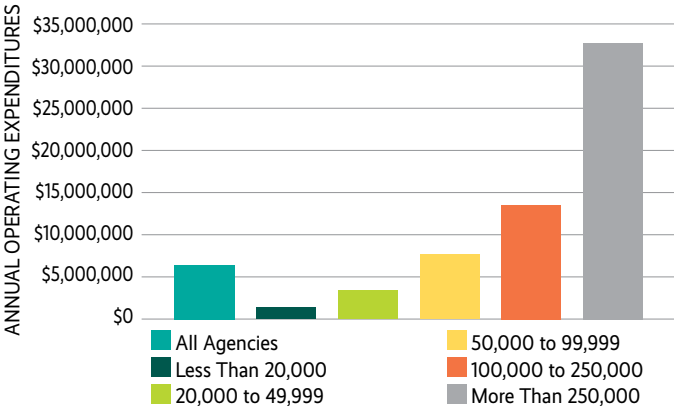
The typical goal of annual operating expenditures, such as personnel services, contracts, commodities and supplies, and capital outlay, is to balance the needs of the community with the fiscal capabilities of the governing body (i.e., city, county). Each park and recreation agency must be aware of its annual operating expenditures in order to continue to provide the vital programs and services expected of parks and recreation in its community.

To offer a better understanding of annual operating expenditures — and, in turn, a clearer view of budgeting and spending across agencies — the data are presented by jurisdiction population, as well as per capita, per acre of park and non-park sites, and per full-time equivalent (FTE) employee and by other operation expenditure distributions.

The median annual operating expenditure for park and recreation agencies is nearly \$6.5 million. That amount increases as population increases. Smaller agencies serving fewer than 20,000 people have median operating expenditures of about \$1.5 million, while agencies in jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people have annual operating expenditures of \$32.7 million. Agencies serving populations between these

two groups have operating expenditures that range from \$3.5 million annually (20,000 to 49,999 people) and \$7.7 million annually (50,000 to 99,999 people) to \$13.5 million annually (100,000 to 250,000 people).

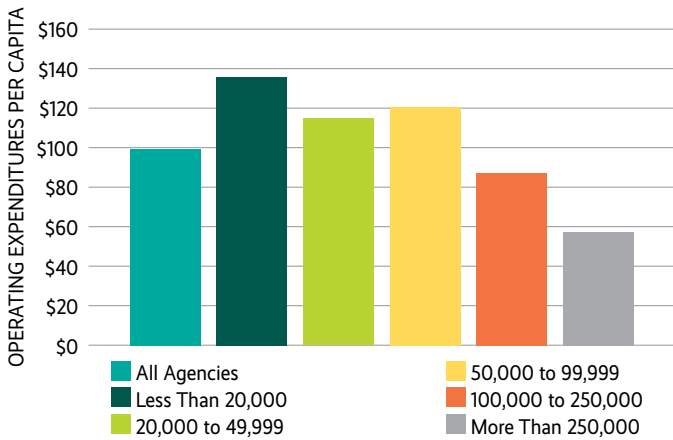
FIGURE 14: ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$6,453,357	\$1,451,763	\$3,462,654	\$7,710,075	\$13,552,112	\$32,700,000
Lower Quartile	\$2,295,873	\$707,145	\$2,003,128	\$5,348,266	\$6,800,000	\$15,091,825
Upper Quartile	\$16,247,943	\$3,004,473	\$7,853,006	\$13,394,323	\$23,399,020	\$59,286,392

The median operating expenditures decrease as population increases. The typical agency has operating expenditures of \$99.47 per capita. For agencies serving populations of fewer than 20,000 people, the median is \$135.53 per capita. This figure declines to \$120.72 per capita for agencies serving populations of 50,000 to 99,999 people, and declines further to \$57.61 per capita for those agencies serving more than 250,000 people.

FIGURE 15: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER CAPITA (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



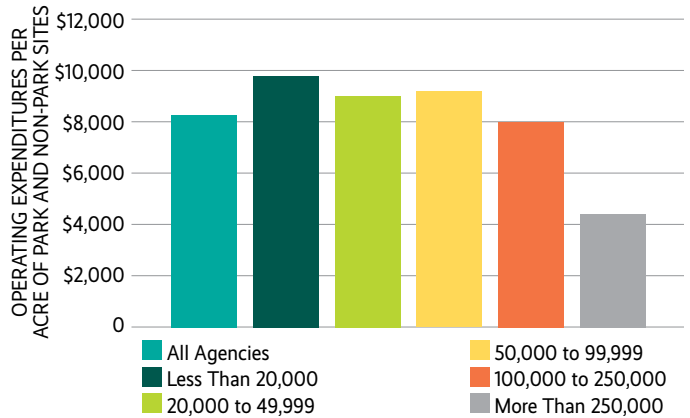
	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$99.47	\$135.53	\$114.81	\$120.72	\$87.10	\$57.61
Lower Quartile	\$53.44	\$74.22	\$62.32	\$74.14	\$39.69	\$24.47
Upper Quartile	\$183.96	\$263.21	\$226.13	\$196.53	\$160.76	\$97.91

To further quantify the annual operating expenditures of park and recreation agencies, one can examine operating expenditures per acre of park and non-park sites. It is important to note that non-park sites refer to public areas and facilities, such as city halls and lawns, that are not considered parks but are maintained by agencies using a percentage of their annual operating budget.

The typical park and recreation agency spends \$8,260 of its annual operating budget per acre of park and non-park sites. The larger the population served, the lower operating expenditures are per acre. Park and recreation agencies serving populations of fewer than

250,000 residents have similar per-acre operating expenditures ranging between \$8,000 to \$9,800 per acre of park and non-park sites. This figure declines to a median of \$4,421 per acre for those agencies in jurisdictions of more than a quarter of a million people.

FIGURE 16: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER ACRE OF PARK AND NON-PARK SITES (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$8,260	\$9,777	\$9,013	\$9,176	\$8,002	\$4,421
Lower Quartile	\$3,564	\$3,856	\$4,383	\$5,633	\$3,066	\$2,046
Upper Quartile	\$18,491	\$27,711	\$20,346	\$18,636	\$15,009	\$10,609

Full-time equivalent (FTE) employees are critical to daily park operations, and therefore must be factored into the annual operating budget of each agency. The median operating expenditure per FTE employee is \$110,912. At agencies serving fewer than 20,000 people, the operating budget per FTE employee is \$101,304. At agencies serving 20,000 to 49,999 people, this amount increases to \$112,366 per FTE employee. At agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999 people, the amount decreases to \$106,642 per FTE employee. For agencies serving larger populations of 100,000 to 250,000 people, the median operating expenditure per FTE employee is \$119,116, and for agencies serving more than 250,000 people in their jurisdiction, the median operating expenditure per FTE employee is \$116,836.

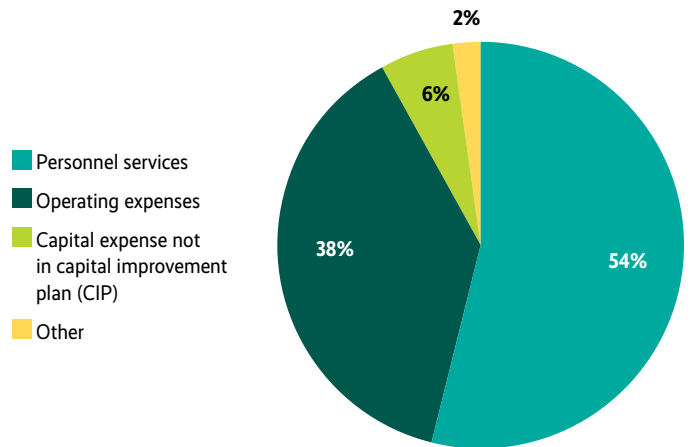


PHOTO COURTESY OF PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY (VIRGINIA) DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Two people flex their muscles after a game in Virginia.

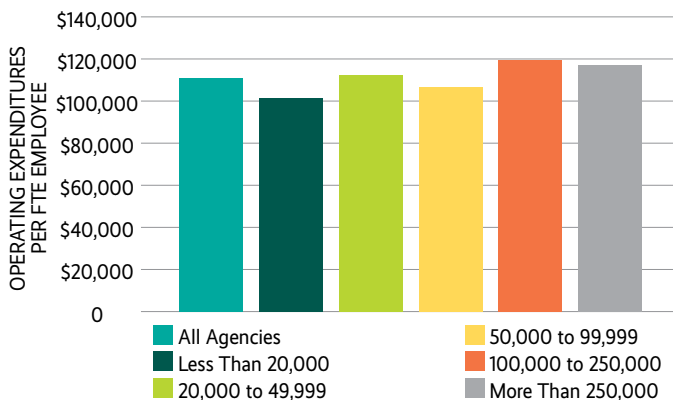
The distribution of operating expenditures varies. Agencies dedicate an average 54 percent of their annual budgets to personnel services. Operating expenses account for 38 percent of the typical agency's annual budget and capital expenses not in a capital improvement plan (CIP) account for 6 percent of an agency's annual budget. The remaining 2 percent is allocated to other expenses.

FIGURE 18: DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES)



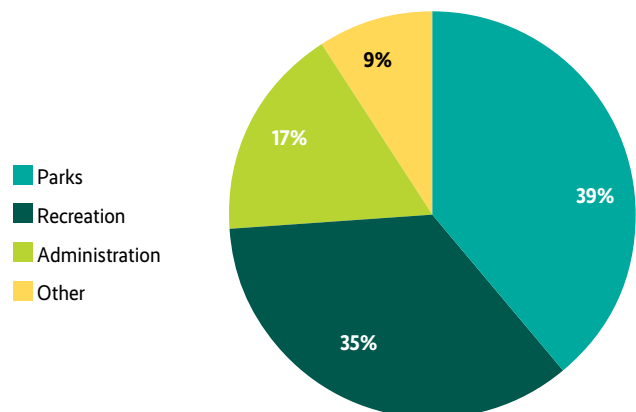
One also can measure park and recreation agencies' median operating expenditures dedicated to parks, recreation and staff serving in all/both capacities. Thirty-nine percent of operating expenditures at an agency are dedicated to parks, 35 percent to recreation, 17 percent to administration and the remaining 9 percent to other related endeavors.

FIGURE 17: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) EMPLOYEE
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$110,912	\$101,304	\$112,366	\$106,642	\$119,166	\$116,836
Lower Quartile	\$82,569	\$73,418	\$79,713	\$83,421	\$84,296	\$93,944
Upper Quartile	\$146,913	\$146,913	\$144,907	\$140,613	\$147,964	\$155,431

FIGURE 19: DEDICATED OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES)



AGENCY FUNDING



A group of swimmers participate in water aerobics.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK

The amount of funding varies by agency, and so do funding sources. However, general fund tax support is the most common source of available funding for agencies, accounting for 62 percent. Earned revenue is the second most common source of funding (21 percent), and special taxes/levies that are voter-approved account for 8 percent. Other less common sources of operating expenditures for agencies are operating grants from a public agency and sponsorships, in-kind donations or private operating grants/donations.

One way to look at revenue is by analyzing park and recreation revenue per capita. The typical park and recreation agency generates \$22.58 of revenue per jurisdiction resident. Park and recreation revenue per capita tends to decrease the larger the population. At

FIGURE 20: SOURCES OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES)

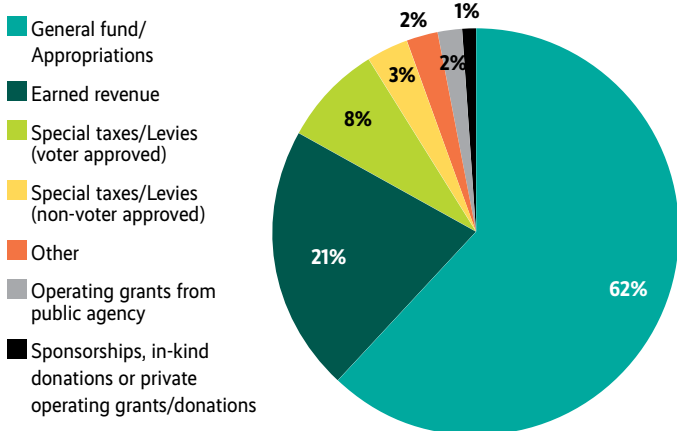
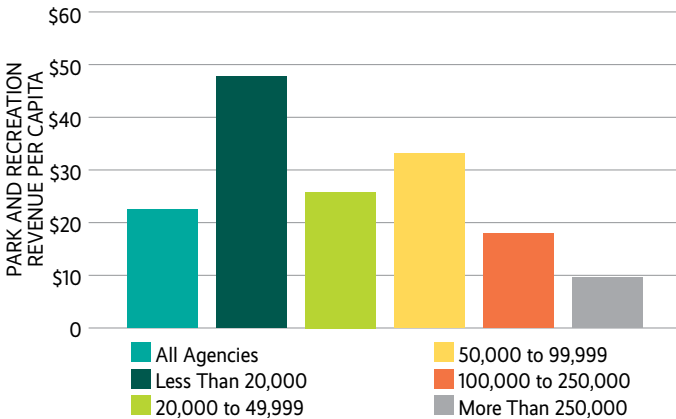
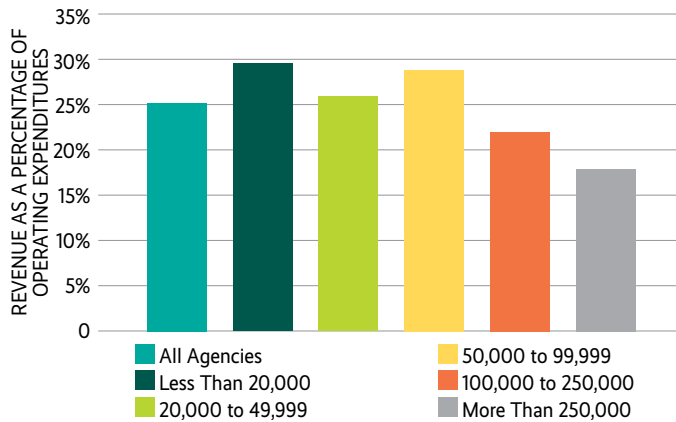


FIGURE 21: PARK AND RECREATION REVENUE PER CAPITA
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



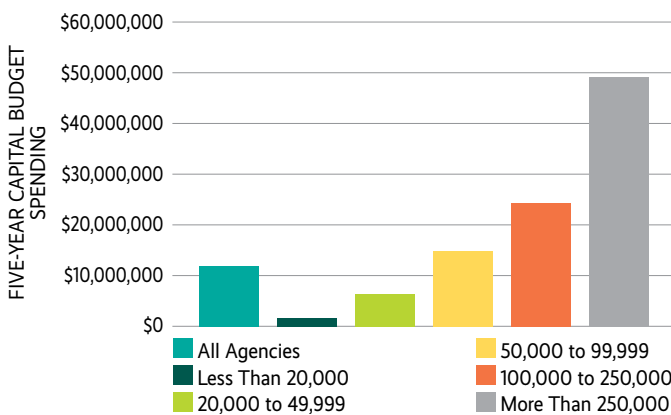
	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$22.58	\$47.71	\$25.84	\$33.17	\$18.01	\$9.70
Lower Quartile	\$7.57	\$13.22	\$11.72	\$12.34	\$6.67	\$2.75
Upper Quartile	\$63.07	\$109.72	\$85.29	\$80.43	\$47.19	\$23.09

FIGURE 22: REVENUE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES (COST RECOVERY)
(PERCENTAGE OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	25.2%	29.5%	25.9%	28.8%	22.0%	17.9%
Lower Quartile	12.8	13.5	15.4	13.7	12.2	9.7
Upper Quartile	47.0	56.0	51.8	53.4	38.1	36.2

FIGURE 23: FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET SPENDING
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$12,000,000	\$1,814,200	\$6,500,000	\$15,000,000	\$24,284,312	\$49,097,334
Lower Quartile	\$2,456,700	\$509,192	\$1,582,756	\$5,355,630	\$9,912,750	\$18,345,000
Upper Quartile	\$36,058,000	\$5,611,874	\$15,733,740	\$28,785,600	\$58,187,649	\$147,718,705

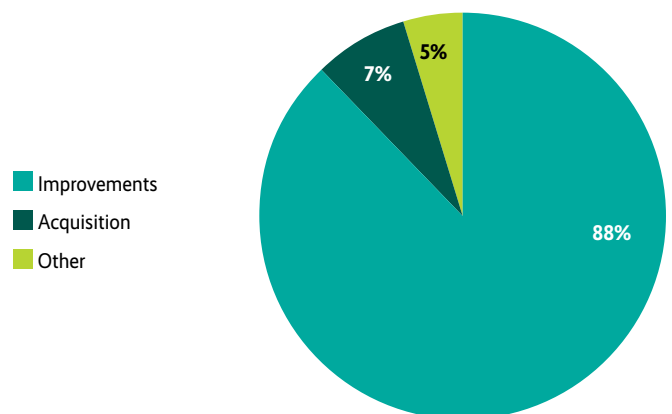
agencies serving a population of fewer than 20,000 people, park and recreation revenue per capita is \$47.71; at agencies serving 50,000 to 99,999 people it is \$33.17 per capita; and at agencies in jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people it is \$9.70 per capita.

Another way to examine revenue is through cost recovery — revenue as a percentage of operating expenditures. The typical agency recovers a quarter of its operating expenditures from non-tax revenue. Median cost recovery varies with population size; agencies serving a population of fewer than 20,000 people recover 29.5 percent of their operating expenditures, but this figure is lower for agencies serving populations of more than 250,000 people for which recovering 17.9 percent of operating expenditures is typical.

The median five-year capital budget spending across agencies of all sizes is \$12 million. But the median amount depends on population size: the larger the population, the larger the five-year capital spending budget. For agencies serving fewer than 20,000 people, the median five-year capital budget spending is \$1.81 million. This figure is 8 times higher for those agencies serving between 50,000 and 99,999 residents at a median of \$15 million, and then reaches a median of \$49 million for agencies serving more than 250,000 residents.

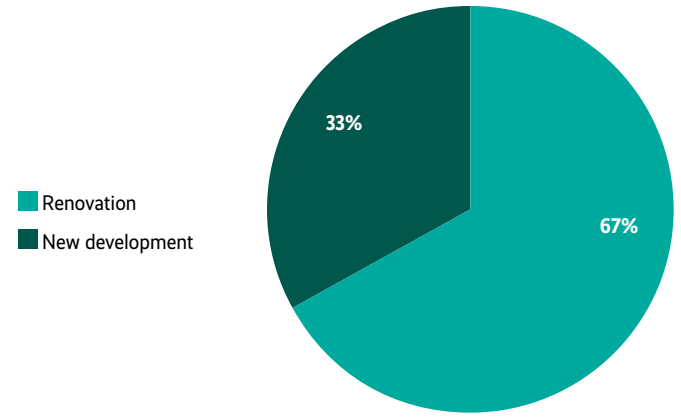
The goal of park and recreation agencies is not only to maintain their facilities, programming and other

FIGURE 24: TARGETS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES)



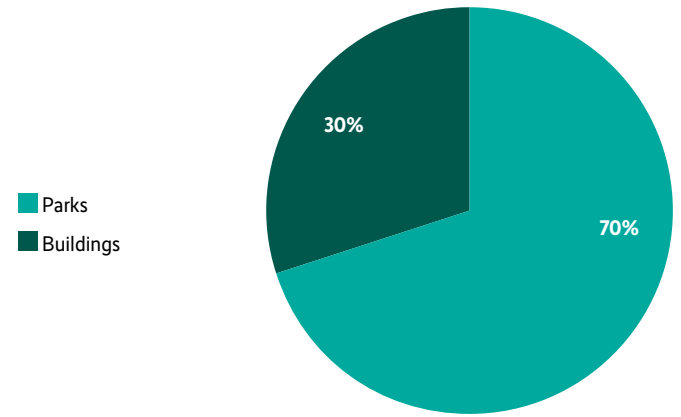
offerings, but also to continue growing and improving to better serve their communities. The typical agency designates 88 percent of its capital budget to improvements, 7 percent to acquisition and the remaining 5 percent to other endeavors.

FIGURE 25: IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS SPLIT BETWEEN RENOVATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS)



Capital expenditures designated to improvements typically fall under renovations and/or new development. Two-thirds of the improvement expenditures are designated to renovation (67 percent) while a third is new development (33 percent). Further, the average percentage of improvement dollars split between buildings and parks is 30 percent (buildings) and 70 percent (parks).

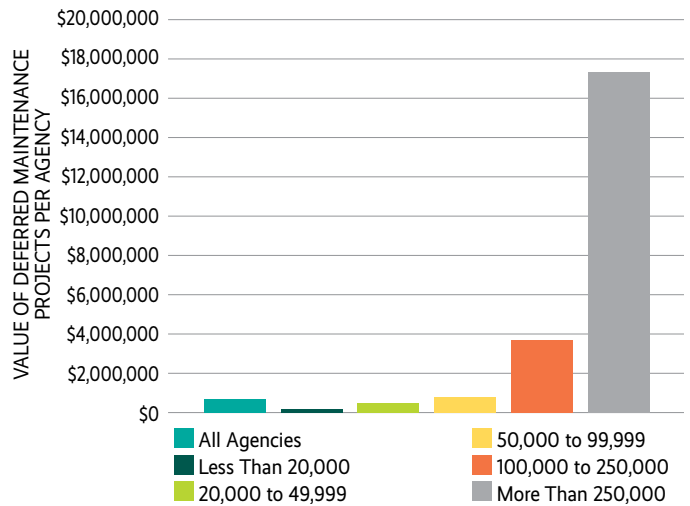
FIGURE 26: IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS SPLIT BETWEEN BUILDINGS AND PARKS
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS)



Jurisdiction population size influences the value of deferred maintenance projects per agency. The typical agency has nearly \$700,000 in deferred maintenance projects. This overall figure drops for smaller agencies serving fewer than 20,000 people and increases to a median more than \$17 million for agencies in jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people. Deferred maintenance balances rise at agencies that:

- Serve larger populations
- Have a higher operating budget
- Have more full-time equivalent employees
- Maintain more acres of parkland
- Have more parks

FIGURE 27: VALUE OF DEFERRED MAINTENANCE PROJECTS PER AGENCY
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	More Than 250,000
Median	\$698,000	\$80,000	\$500,000	\$813,561	\$3,688,462	\$17,337,000
Lower Quartile	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Upper Quartile	\$10,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$8,448,908	\$14,301,710	\$70,414,250

POLICIES



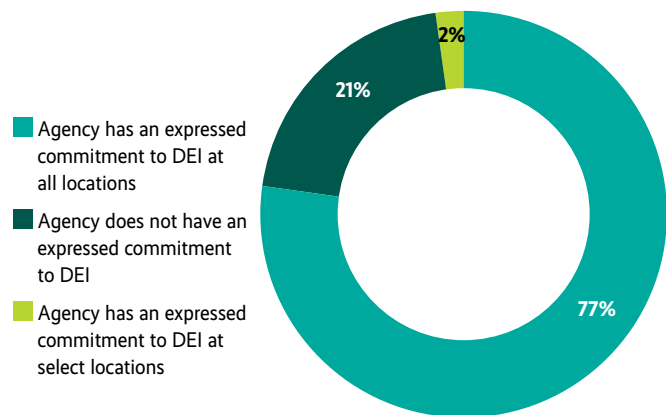
PHOTO COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK

It is the responsibility of park and recreation agencies to create safe and inclusive spaces for all community members. Collecting data about agencies' commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is critical to understanding the policies and efforts underway to make park and recreation spaces available for all and identifying areas that would benefit from further DEI implementation.

One of the primary policies that park and recreation agencies implement is including a written commitment to DEI in their foundational documents. More than three-quarters (77 percent) of agencies express commitment to DEI at all locations; 21 percent of

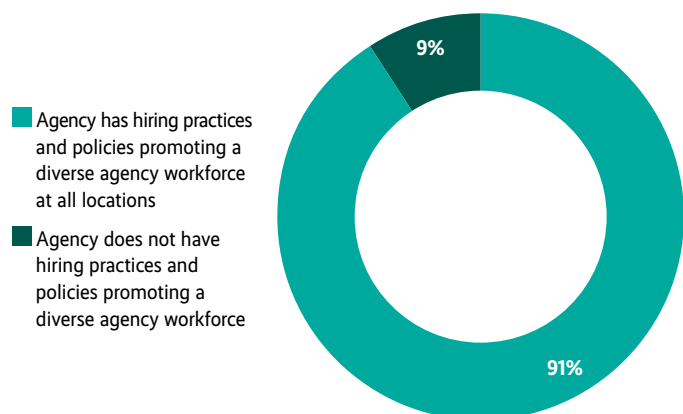
agencies do not have an expressed commitment to DEI; and two percent have an expressed commitment to DEI at least some of their locations.

FIGURE 28: PERCENT OF AGENCIES WITH AN EXPRESSED COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) IN THEIR FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS (PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION)



Parks and recreation continue to be leaders in diversity, equity and inclusion when it comes to hiring staff. Nine in 10 (91 percent) agencies have hiring practices in place that promote a diverse agency workforce at all locations.

FIGURE 29: PERCENT OF AGENCIES WITH HIRING PRACTICES AND POLICIES THAT PROMOTE A DIVERSE WORKFORCE (PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION)



CONCLUSIONS

Park and recreation agencies are integral to the quality of life in communities. To sustain and continuously improve this beneficial relationship between parks and recreation and the public it serves, NRPA encourages park and recreational professionals to remain up to date on how their agencies compare to peer agencies. The *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* provides the opportunity to analyze agency performance in relation to other agencies of similar size across the United States. The resources provided in this report give park and recreation professionals, stakeholders and others who are interested in the success of parks and recreation further insight into agency operations across the country by providing:

- 1. Up-to-date data to compare agency performance** – With relevant data and metrics, park and recreation professionals can see where their agencies stand regarding funding, programming, budgeting and other key areas compared to agencies with similar population sizes. These data allow agencies to make informed decisions about their future operations that influence overall performance.
- 2. Resource and operation guidance** – To encourage optimal operations across park and recreation agencies, the data and metrics offered give agency leaders a better understanding of how to successfully run their agencies and manage their operations.
- 3. Comprehensive data to better understand operations and responsibilities** – The comprehensive data and information provided in this report further demonstrate the importance of offering adequate programming, facilities and other resources in communities. The responsibilities of park and recreation professionals vary by agency, but the *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Report* provides an in-depth understanding of these responsibilities, highlighting the important role agencies play in communities across the United States.

NRPA encourages park and recreation professionals to use the *2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review* in conjunction with other internal and external tools and resources — including those found on the NRPA website (nrpa.org/APR and nrpa.org/ParkMetrics) — to better understand how their agencies can provide their communities with the best amenities and services possible, and make the case for increased personnel and funding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A HUGE thank you to the thousands of park and recreation professionals who participated in the annual NRPA Park Metrics campaign and completed their Agency Performance Survey. Thank you to Melissa May, Dianne Palladino, Danielle Doll, Lindsay Collins, Alexandra Reynolds, Vitisia Paynich, Kim Mabon and Kate Anderson for making this report possible.

ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations, including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation and conducts research with two goals. First, NRPA creates and analyzes data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA develops data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public. The NRPA Research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more at nrpa.org/Research.



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