

Marshall County

2021-2025

PARKS MASTER PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Marshall County 2021-2025 Parks Master Plan would not have been possible without the guidance, direction, and input from Marshall County residents, the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department (Park Board), and the Steering Committee.

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INTRODUCTION

Marshall County is more than a geographic boundary with six communities, it is a place filled with leaders and residents connecting, collaborating, and creating high-quality hometowns. Hometowns that are unique on their own – with distinguishing arts and cultural scenes and amenities – but connected together in leadership and marketing with one vision to create healthy, livable, resilient, and vibrant communities that provide residents and even visitors of all backgrounds the highest quality of life. Marshall County is more than just a great place to visit, it offers but great places to call home. Together these communities and the county create one great hometown.

Marshall County has several unique arts and cultural events available with free admission to enjoy throughout the year with the six communities having their own unique cultural scene filled with events giving residents and visitors something to do. Marshall County offers picturesque sceneries and natural landscapes, recreational amenities, with the six communities offering a network of walking and biking trails and parks. Marshall County also has a growing economy with several large manufacturing industries headquartered in the county and strong support for entrepreneurs to get up off the ground to grow and thrive. These assets and features will continue to play a vital role in attracting and retaining residents and businesses.

More people are valuing to live in communities that have the quality of life amenities and services that appeals to them rather than choosing to live in a community based on the availability of jobs. Although Marshall County does have quality assets and features to appeal to prospective residents and businesses, it is imperative that the County continues to value and invest in providing these important quality of life amenities such as parks, trails, and recreation facilities to attract and retain Marshall County's populations.

PURPOSE

Marshall County established a Parks and Recreation Department and a Park Board in 2020 following the success of the Regional Stellar Communities initiative to oversee the management of the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department. Currently, Marshall County does not have an established park system and is in the formative stages without dedicated staff to manage the operations or maintenance of park facilities or a budget. This master plan is the County's first five-year park master plan with the purpose to provide direction for the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department and develop a Marshall County parks and recreation system. While there are several properties that could serve as a future park sites, the Park Board has first devoted its efforts to introduce mountain biking trails to the Mill Pond property, caring for Memorial Forest, and explore ways to restore the original County Trustees' Log Cabin to be a functional facility again. These properties are owned by Marshall County with maintenance responsibilities now held by the Marshall County Park Board.

As a newly appointed governing body, the Marshall County Park Board recognized the need to create a parks master plan to guide their efforts and formalize the county park system. The Marshall County Park Board reached out to the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) to guide and facilitate the planning process to create its first five-year parks master plan.

This Plan seeks to establish the mission of the Park Board and the vision for the county parks system. The Parks Master Plan should be used to guide the Park Board to plan and program for high-quality parks and recreational services. This plan analyzes the County's existing conditions that include socioeconomic data, natural and cultural features, historical assets, and man-made features that affect the usage and need for parks in Marshall County. Public engagement was a vital component to identify the needs and creation of the action program. Chapter 5 outlines the community engagement efforts used for the development of this plan.

DEFINITION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The planning area mirrors the service area of the Park Board, which includes all of Marshall County. It will also take into consideration regional connections via trail systems to support a cohesive and connected Marshall County with its six communities. Marshall County's communities includes the City of Plymouth, the Towns of Argos, Bourbon, Bremen, Culver, and LaPaz, and the unincorporated areas of the county.



VISION STATEMENT

The Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department will create a vibrant place to live through the creation and promotion of its quality parks, recreational spaces, and educational programs.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department is to preserve, protect, and steward the County's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.



PARK BOARD

The Marshall County Park Board was created on March 16, 2020, to manage the County's properties-Mill Pond and Memorial Forest, continue the momentum generated from previous planning initiatives of the Regional Stellar Communities, the Quality of Life Plan, and Trails Master Plan, and enhance the County's quality of life through the creation of a county parks system. The Park Board is the acting Marshall County Park and Recreation Department responsible for the operations and maintenance of Mill Pond, Memorial Forest, and any future park sites. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Department does not have full-time staff to devote their time to maintain park facilities nor an established budget and has made improvements to the mentioned properties by donations and volunteer assistance. It is a long-term goal of the Park Board's to have dedicated staff and an operating budget as the county's parks system grows and enhance the recreational opportunities for its residents.

The Park Board typically meets the first Thursday after the first Monday of every month at 6 PM in the County Commissioners Room. The Park Board consists of five members, appointed by the County Commissioners and County Council. Members serve for four years with members rotating out once a year.



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SUPPORTING PLANS & ORGANIZATIONS

- **Marshall County Crossroads Regional Development Plan** – The Marshall County Crossroads Regional Stellar Initiative began several years prior to OCRA's Stellar Communities Program. Regional planning and collaboration were started by the Marshall County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) quarterly County Development for the Future meetings that brought together local elected officials, county leaders, community stakeholders, school corporations, and state and regional partners. The Marshall County Crossroads Regional Development Plan seeks to create high-quality hometowns that are healthy, livable, thriving, and sustainable and give all residents the highest quality of life. The County plans to accomplish this with projects that build quality places to live, work, and play; accessible multi-use trails; diverse and affordable housing options; quality education to prepare the workforce; burgeoning arts and cultural events to celebrate the uniqueness of the communities; and, expand the leadership, diversity, and inclusion capacities.

- Marshall County Quality of Life Plan** – The 2020 Marshall County Quality of Life Plan outlines the County’s vision and establishes goals for the six communities of Argos, Bourbon, Bremen, Culver, LaPaz, and Plymouth, and action strategies. This Plan was a result of years of collaboration started by MCEDC, then through the 2018 and 2019 Regional Stellar Communities Program through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). The purpose of the plan was to create a unified vision – “Great Hometown: One Vision” – and define a set of goals and strategies to empower the six communities and the County to create quality spaces, quality economies, and quality capacities (education, diversity and inclusion, and leadership). Following the success of the 2019 Regional Stellar Communities designation, Marshall County emphasized the need to create a Quality of Life Plan to sustain the momentum of the short-range planning efforts with a longer-term vision and a framework to implement the Stellar Communities Regional Development Plan.
- Marshall County Trails Master Plan** – The Marshall County Trails Master Plan was the result of the Regional Stellar initiative of the Transportation and Trails Committee, a subcommittee of the Marshall County Crossroads stellar team. The intent of this plan is to provide safe and accessible routes for all non-vehicular users regardless of socioeconomic status throughout Marshall County and the region. Goals and strategies from this Plan provide a framework for the County to plan and design trail systems that improve the following aspects: the experience and safety of users; improve the community’s health and quality of life with a provision of trails; benefit local businesses by encouraging trail users to “shop local” – eat and shop in Marshall County’s communities; increase property values near trails; improve the overall attractiveness of the County; reduce commuter costs and fuel consumption; preserve the natural landscapes and air quality; and lastly, connect Marshall County communities to showcase the region’s unique assets, features, and landmarks.
- MACOG Active Transportation Plan** – MACOG prepared a regional active transportation plan in 2016 that identified community needs and strategies to improve the walking and bicycling experience in Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties. This plan serves as part of the Michiana on the Move: 2045 Transportation Plan and builds on the support of its local municipalities.





- **Comprehensive Plans** – Marshall County and its six communities have adopted comprehensive plans that provide a framework that acts as a road map to guide investments and development decisions for the next 10 to 20 years. These plans provide a vision and action program unique to each community. These plans empower the local communities to collaborate and strategically think through creative ways to address community challenges, enhance the strengths and opportunities related to housing, water and sewer systems, transportation, downtown, community facilities, and quality of life amenities like parks, trails, and entertainment. These plans support the County’s vision of “Great Hometowns: One Vision,” creating quality places, quality economies, and quality capacities.
- **Municipal Park Departments** – Support for the direction of this plan comes from the leaders of a community’s park department. The following Marshall County communities have a parks department to manage the operations and maintenance of the parks system, local trails, and recreational facilities – City of Plymouth and the towns of Argos, Bourbon, Bremen, and Culver.
- **Marshall County Tourism “Visit Marshall County”** – Visit Marshall County is the institution tasked with marketing Marshall County’s various festivals and events and enhancing the county’s arts and cultural amenities. This pursuit benefits the economic and social impacts of Marshall County’s tourism industry. Marketing initiatives include developing new programs and attractions, promoting existing events and attractions, and connecting residents and visitors with resources in the county. Marshall County tourism supports small businesses, improves the quality of life for the community, and enhances the local economies. The economic impacts reported in Marshall County in 2017 contributed nearly \$155 million spent in Marshall County. The small agency is staffed by two full-time individuals and is funded through a five percent innkeeper’s tax paid by visitors staying in Marshall County lodging facilities.
- **Marshall County Community Foundation** – The Marshall County Community Foundation (MCCF) supports new and existing programs of nonprofit organizations through grant distributions and provides numerous scholarship opportunities for those seeking to pursue educational opportunities. MCCF seeks to support the ideas and interests of donors who want to see the betterment of Marshall County communities through philanthropy. MCCF has started endowment funds that support the advancing of arts and cultural facilities like the restoration of the Rees Theater in downtown Plymouth; education funds for autism program, music education; faith-based institutions; health and human services; and many scholarship funds. As Marshall County and the Park Board seek to create a parks system, partnerships could be made with MCCF to help fund park improvements.

- **Marshall County Council on Aging** – The Marshall County Council on Aging provides many public programs and services to help those in need. Services include public transportation, Meals on Wheels, and others. Their mission is to provide older adults living in Marshall County the opportunity to experience personal fulfillment and dignity through quality services to continue their independence and mobility. The Council on Aging manages the Life Enrichment Center in downtown Plymouth that serves as a place for older adults and young people to interact and participate in social activities to build lasting relationships. The Council on Aging in partnership with the St. Joseph Regional Hospital offers an exercise program for older adults. The Council on Aging also has a “Unity Garden” located at the Life Enrichment Center that encourages diversity in participation to grow a garden and share the food grown with the Marshall County community. It is an opportunity to provide access to healthy food options to improve the community’s health.
- **Marshall County Historical Society, Museum, and Crossroads Center** – The Marshall County Historical Society, Museum, and Crossroads Center is the local history museum and education center for all content related to the county’s history. Its mission is “Looking Back... Moving Forward” and it works to educate, collect stories, preserve and create experiences about Marshall County’s history. The center is located in downtown Plymouth in three buildings with two floors for exhibits, extensive research and genealogy library, and a community room for holding events and programs. They also have a genealogy research library along with over 10,000 artifacts related to Marshall County and roughly the same number of photographs. Beyond its education mission, it also runs a landmark program that has awarded over 140 businesses, homes, historic sites, and buildings with an honorary landmark award.



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EXISTING CONDITIONS

Marshall County thrives at the heart of northern Indiana. With five incorporated towns and one city among rolling prairie and woodlands, Marshall County is a prime place of recreation and leisure in north central Indiana. Among the counties in the MACOG planning region, Marshall County is the most rural and least populated. Marshall County's pulse is created by its location at the intersection of U.S. 30 and U.S. 31 with other important thoroughfares of U.S. 6 in the north and Indiana State Road 10 in the south.

NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE

SOILS – Marshall County comprises 449 square miles or 287,360 acres. The elevation of the county ranges from 705 feet to 895 feet above sea level. According to the USDA Soil Survey of Marshall County, a majority of the soil classification in Marshall County is the Oshtemo-Owosso-Fox (15% coverage), Plainfield-Chelsea-Tyner (11%), Rensselaer-Whitaker (12%), Crosier-Brookston (16%), and Riddles-Metea-Wawasee (36%). The best soil types for recreation potential are the Oshtemo-Owosso-Fox, Plainfield-Chelsea-Tyner, Riddles-Metea-Wawasee, and Martinsville-Riddles soils. The Rensselaer-Whitaker and Crosier-Brookston soils have the best farmland potential and lack suitability for non-farm uses. A majority of the soils in the county have good to fair potential for woodlands and woodland activities with trees growing most rapidly on the well-drained Riddles-Metea-Wawasee soil.

WATER FEATURES – Marshall County has several key water features that play a large role in parks and recreation potential. The Yellow River, a tributary of the Kankakee River, is the main river flowing through the county from the northeast corner near Bremen, southwest through Plymouth, and then into Starke County to the west. A large portion of the county is in the Kankakee River Basin with only the southeast and extreme southwest corners being in the Wabash River Basin via the Tippecanoe River.



There are a total of 19 lakes in the county ranging in size from 1,868 acres (Lake Maxinkuckee) to 6 acres (Thomas Lake). Lake Maxinkuckee is Indiana's second-largest natural lake and the town of Culver sits on the lake's northwest shore. There is also a significant chain of seven lakes halfway between Plymouth and Culver on Indiana State Road 17. Other significant bodies of water include the Lake of the Woods (between Bremen and Plymouth), Pretty Lake, and a portion of Koontz Lake in the northwest corner.

CLIMATE – The climate of Marshall County, like other communities in northern Indiana, can drastically change within a season. The wettest month is June with an average of 4.48 inches of rain. The average high temperature in the summer is 86 degrees Fahrenheit with July typically being the hottest month. The average low temperature in the winter is 16 degrees Fahrenheit with January being the coldest month. The first freeze typically occurs in the middle of October and the last freeze typically occurs at the beginning of May.

INVASIVE SPECIES – Overall, Marshall County has not seen major issues with invasive species and is monitored by the Marshall County Soil and Water Conservation District. However, prior to the formation of the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department, local efforts were done to control invasive species spotted at Mill Pond and Memorial Forest and will continue to eradicate present invasive species.

MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL & CULTURAL FEATURES

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Marshall County's story begins with the indigenous Potawatomi nation who were the first caretakers of the land. The Potawatomi tribe called themselves the Neshnabek or the "original people." Their origin tells how they moved from modern-day Canada into the region near Mitchigami (meaning the Great Lake), known today as Lake Michigan. Their traditional homeland includes southern Michigan, northern Indiana, northern Illinois, and eastern Wisconsin. The state of Indiana formed Marshall County in 1835 from the traditional homeland of the Potawatomi and named it for Chief Justice John Marshall. The first European settlers arrived in 1836 after the county was officially organized. As more settlers arrived, the native Potawatomi tribe were forcibly removed from their land in 1838 to Kansas, now referred to as the Trail of Death. A statue of the Potawatomi Chief Menominee marks the Trail of Death today just south of Plymouth and is owned by the state of Indiana and maintained by Marshall County. For much of the next century, Marshall County became known for its rich agricultural heritage while Culver's Lake Maxinkuckee emerged as a premier vacation destination. By the 1970s Marshall County had become a burgeoning rural center of agriculture and manufacturing including Hoosier Tire and other large industries.



HISTORIC SITES

Marshall County has five historic districts located in central business districts and neighborhoods. These designated districts highlight the history and special nature of the jurisdictions and help provide guidance on appropriate development in the area. These historic districts include:

- **Plymouth Downtown Historic District**
- **Argos Downtown Historic District**
- **Bourbon Commercial and Residential Historic District**
- **Bremen Commercial and Residential Historic District**
- **Plymouth Northside and Southside Historic District**
- **Culver Commercial Historic District**



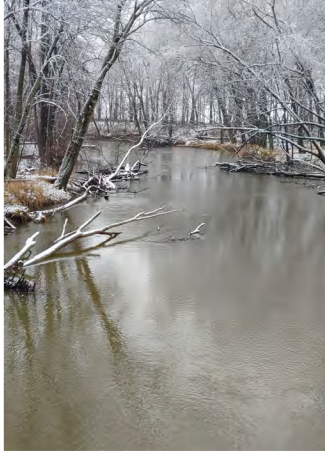
- **Chief Menominee Memorial Site** is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is located near 12644 Peach Rd, Plymouth, Indiana. This site and statue memorialize Chief Menominee and the Potawatomi people who were forcibly removed from their land in 1838 on the Trail of Death.
- **Jacoby Church and Cemetery** is a historic church and cemetery located near 8525 King Rd, Plymouth, Indiana in Center Township. The building was built in 1860 and is a one-story, Greek revival building. The cemetery was established in 1850 and has approximately 166 burials. The church and cemetery are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Summit Chapel School (Tippecanoe Twp. District No. Schoolhouse)** is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as of 2008. It is located near Tippecanoe, an unincorporated location in the southeastern corner of Marshall County. The site includes a school building built in 1860, a cemetery established in 1844, and a Works Progress Administration outhouse built in the 1930s.
- **Heminger Travel Lodge** is a historic hotel located at 800 Lincoln Highway East in Plymouth, Indiana. It was completed in 1937 as a two-story, Colonial Revival style brown brick building. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

Other historic sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places within Marshall County include:

- **Argos Izaak Walton League Historic District**
- **Boggs, Lewis and Sarah, House**
- **Arnold, Isaac and Ruth, House**
- **Bourbon Community Building--Gymnasium**
- **Erwin House**
- **Gaskill--Erwin Farm**
- **Bremen Water Tower**
- **Dietrich-Bowen House**
- **East Shore Historic District**
- **Forest Place Historic District**
- **Norris Farm--Maxinkuckee Orchard**
- **Chief Menominee Memorial Site**
- **East Laporte Street Footbridge**
- **Hoham--Klinghammer--Weckerle House and Brewery Site**
- **Marshall County Court House**
- **Marshall County Infirmary**
- **Plymouth Fire Station**
- **Ramsay--Fox Round Barn and Farm**
- **Sults-Quivey-Hartman Polygonal Barn and Farm**
- **Polk Township District No. 2 School**

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- **Libraries:** Marshall County has a total of five public libraries in five of the six incorporated communities. The libraries serve residents living in their specific jurisdictions. Libraries are often the main sources for public meeting spaces and access to free information to residents in the community. Marshall County libraries include:
 - **Argos Public Library**
 - **Bourbon Public Library**
 - **Bremen Public Library**
 - **Culver-Union Township Public Library**
 - **Plymouth Public Library**



- **Museums:** With a rich history to exhibit, Marshall County has four prominent museums to educate residents and visitors on the past ages of Marshall County life. These museums include:
 - **Marshall County Historical Society Museum and Crossroads Center**
 - **Bremen History Center**
 - **Bremen Historic Train Depot**
 - **Culver Academies Museum**
- **Arts and Culture:** The arts and culture sector of Marshall County is alive and well with theaters and performing arts centers. The county is also filled with art studios and galleries. These special groups and venues enrich the lives of the residents and visitors of Marshall County. These arts and culture assets include:
 - **The Rees Theatre (Plymouth)**
 - **Steinbrenner Performing Arts Center (Culver)**
 - **Heartland Artist Gallery (Plymouth)**
 - **MoonTree Studios (Plymouth)**
 - **Main Street Studio (Culver)**
 - **Crisp Visual Arts Center (Culver)**
 - **Wild Rose Moon (Plymouth)**

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

- **Marshall County Blueberry Blue Ribbon Festival** is a Labor Day festival celebrated in Centennial Park in Plymouth, Indiana. 2021 will be the 54th Annual event that offers free admission each year. The annual festival attracts upwards of 400,000 visitors to Marshall County. Other festivals and events include:



- **Marshall County 4-H Fair**
- **Bremen Firemen's Festival**
- **Bremen Oktoberfest**
- **Bremen Holy Walk**
- **Yellow River Festival**
- **Culver Lake Fest**

OTHER RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

- **The Marshall County Barn Quilt Trail** is a self-guided tour around the barn quilts of Marshall County. There are four loops of the trail (Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest) that help residents and visitors celebrate the heritage of agriculture and the time-honored tradition of quilting.
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources owns and maintains the **Menominee Wetland Conservation Area** south of Plymouth. These lands are dedicated to the state of Indiana under Indiana Code 14-31-1.
- **Potawatomi Wildlife Park** in Tippecanoe, Indiana is approximately 317-acres and owned and maintained by a not-for-profit private foundation. Its mission is to be a place where the natural, historical, and cultural features of the area are conserved, protected, and restored for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

POPULATION

Determining a community's population trend can present the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department with a direction of necessary services and real estate demand based on a growing or declining population.

Table A.1: Population Trend

Community	Decennial Census			Annual Estimates								
	1990	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Marshall County	42,182	45,128	47,051	47,016	47,045	47,057	47,032	46,962	46,833	46,752	46,595	46,461
Plymouth (city)	8,303	9,840	10,033	10,047	10,045	10,040	10,048	10,031	10,012	10,011	9,996	10,054
Argos (town)	1,642	1,613	1,691	1,638	1,570	1,598	1,783	1,944	1,914	1,859	1,795	1,802
Bremen (town)	4,725	4,486	4,588	4,589	4,591	4,603	4,581	4,588	4,577	4,548	4,519	4,505
Bourbon (town)	1,672	1,691	1,810	1,848	1,803	1,758	1,687	1,697	1,808	1,840	1,843	2,023
Culver (town)	1,404	1,539	1,353	1,524	1,463	1,367	1,513	1,444	1,275	1,261	1,211	1,130

In addition to the Decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, the U.S. Census provides annual population estimates through their Population Estimates Program (PEP) that better reflects past trends and leads to a more accurate estimate than the ACS 5-year population estimate. Therefore, the PEP estimate was only used to provide a better snapshot of Marshall County's trend in population, and the 2019 ACS 5-year estimate was used for all other analyses in the existing condition elements. Between 1990 and 2000, Marshall County had a seven percent increase in population. Between 2000 and 2010, Marshall County experienced a 4.3 percent growth in the total population of the county. Between 2010 and 2019, Marshall County's population decreased slightly by 1.3 percent. Between 2010

and 2019, Plymouth along with Argos and Bourbon grew in population by .2 percent, 6.6 percent, and 11.8 percent respectively. In the same time period, Bremen and Culver experienced population decline by 1.8 percent and 16.5 percent respectively.

Population Projection – Analyzing the county’s population trend over the last 9 years, as shown in Table A.1, shows a slow decline at a rate of about 65 people annually. If the county continues at this rate of decline, by 2025 the population will decrease by 393 people (46,067 total population), and by 2030 the population will decrease by 721 people (45,740 total population). A turn around in the projected population trend is possible, but the expected population growth will most likely occur within Plymouth and other incorporated towns.

The county’s proximity to the growing South Bend-Mishawaka metropolitan area among other community assets and strengths could contribute to future population growth. The town of Bremen and the city of Plymouth have the potential to grow as bedroom communities to the larger communities in St. Joseph County for residents who want to live in a charming small town yet close to large municipalities. The projected decline provides an important opportunity for Marshall County to plan for whatever the future holds and ensure it can attract future residents through high-quality parks and recreation system and facilities.

Age and Sex – The success of parks can be based on several factors including the amount of users attracted each year, the quality of places, and how inclusive park facilities are. It is imperative for Marshall County to embark on this county park system journey by considering the age and sex of residents. The median age in Marshall County has increased since 2000 (35.5 years) to 2019 (40 years) by 12.7 percent. Like the county as a whole, each incorporated area (city and towns) has seen an increased median age ranging from 26.3 percent in Culver to just .6 percent in Bourbon. Culver has the oldest median age at 54.8 years with Argos having the youngest median age at 32.7 years.

The trends seen in the U.S. Census data show that Marshall County’s population is getting old, which could be a sign of its tight-knit community - people want to stay in the area as they age. Unfortunately, it could also signal that younger residents are moving away after high school and choosing to settle elsewhere. Looking at different age cohorts, the most significant increase was a 77 percent increase in 60 to 64-year-olds from 2000 to 2017. Both the 55 to 59-year-olds and the 65 to 74 years-olds age groups increased by around 44 percent in the same time period. The most significant trend based on age cohorts is that every age group under 35 to 44 year-olds except the 20 to 24 year-olds have declined. In some cases, they declined greatly including 35 to 44 year-olds with a decrease of 22.9 percent and 25 to 34 year-olds with a decrease of 11.2 percent. An aim of the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department could be how to attract a younger generation back to the county through parks and recreation opportunities.

**THE MEDIAN
AGE IN
MARSHALL
COUNTY HAS
INCREASED
12.7%
SINCE 2000
(35.5 YEARS)
TO 2019
(40 YEARS)**

**THE HISPANIC
POPULATION
REPRESENTS
APPROX.
10.1% OF THE
COMMUNITY
RESIDENTS
WITH A 76%
INCREASE
BETWEEN
2000 & 2019**

Race & Ethnicity – Marshall County and each of its incorporated areas has been classified as predominantly White (93.7% in 2019) over the last two decades. Plymouth is the most diverse community in the county and saw a small increase in Black or African-American populations from 2000 to 2019. There have been less than 1 percent of county residents within the last two decades that identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander, or American Indian and Alaska Native. Those listed as Some Other Race or Two or More Races are the largest racial categories after White in the county, 2.9 percent, and 2.2 percent respectively.

The Hispanic population in Marshall County represents approximately 10.1 percent of the community residents and experienced a 76 percent increase between 2000 and 2019. Plymouth experienced substantial growth in the Hispanic population with a 67 percent increase between 2000 and 2019. This means that in 2019 nearly 1 in 4 Plymouth residents and nearly 1 in 10 Marshall County residents identify as Hispanic.

Disability – Marshall County has 25.5 percent of its population classified as disabled and of those disabled, 11.1 percent are 65 years or older.

Poverty – Marshall County's poverty rate (based on the population for whom poverty status is determined) increased slightly from 12.4 percent in 2000 to 13 percent in 2019. Of the 13 percent, children under the age of 18 had the highest percentage of poverty by age group at 16.2 percent. Plymouth's poverty rate is nearly double that of the county at 24.7 percent, the highest of any incorporated areas in the county, with Bourbon's rate at 11.2 percent being the lowest in the county. While the county's poverty rate has increased by 5 percent since 2000, it is Bremen that stands out with the highest rise in poverty: 115 percent increase in that same period.

Looking at the poverty rate by race shows that whites in Marshall County have nearly the same rate as the county as a whole (12.9 percent). There is a drastic difference in that 47.6 percent of Black or African-American individuals live below the poverty line and 24.5 percent of Hispanics are in the same position. This inequity at the county level presents a challenge for the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department to ensure equal access to public parks and recreational facilities for all residents.

Educational Attainment – The Educational Attainment Rate in a community can help Marshall County identify the need for workforce development programs and guide industry opportunities. Additionally, the educational attainment rate can give an idea of the characteristics of the county's workforce and should be examined with the types of industries and jobs the county is trying to attract and retain.

From 2000 to 2019, the percent of residents in Marshall County with less than a 9th-grade education dropped a resounding 26 percent. In the same time period, there was a 27 percent increase in those who hold a Bachelor's Degree within the county. This means that in 2019, 84.9 percent of Marshall County residents held a high school diploma or higher and 19.7 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher. These numbers are just slightly below the national and state averages.

HOUSING

As Marshall County experiences changes in demographics and growth, in both population and jobs, ensuring Marshall County has an adequate supply of housing for all types of residents will be crucial in maintaining its quality of life. Marshall County will have to consider where new housing should locate while maintaining a proper balance with current development, and how to preserve and maintain the existing housing stock. Housing is linked to other elements like population (identifying changes in households and establishing their needs), land use (evaluate its fiscal impacts to develop on undeveloped lands or infill on underutilized lands), and community facilities (does the neighborhood have access to appropriate utility systems and assets).

Housing Types – According to the 2019 ACS 5-year estimates, the majority of housing units (79.1 percent) are single-family detached. Less than two (2) percent of housing is single-family attached, the majority of these homes likely reflecting condominiums. Eight (8) percent of Marshall County’s housing stock is multi-family with between 2 to 9 units. The county’s housing is also approximately 4 percent multi-family with 10 units or more and 7.3 percent mobile homes or other types of housing.

Occupancy Rates & Tenure – The percentage of occupied housing units in Marshall County decreased from 91.3 percent in 2000 to 87.7 percent in 2010 and then again decreased to 85.4 in 2019. This same trend is reflected in the city of Plymouth with a percent of occupied housing units at 93.6 percent in 2000 dropping to 85.5 percent by 2019.

The vacancy rate in Marshall County increased 67 percent from 2000 (8.7 percent) to 2019 (14.6 percent). An even more drastic increase in vacancy rates occurred in the city of Plymouth with a 131 percent increase between 2000 (6.4 percent) to 2019 (14.8 percent).



The percentage of owner-owned occupied housing units decreased from 76.8 percent in 2000 to 74.7 percent in 2019. Alternatively, the percentage of renter-occupied housing increased from 23.2 percent to 25.3 percent in 2019. The city of Plymouth saw a similar trend in that its percentage of owner-occupied housing decreased from 56.7 percent in 2000 to 52.9 percent in 2019 while its percentages of renter-occupied housing increased from 2000 (43.3 percent) to 2019 (47.1 percent). Homeowner vacancy rates in Marshall County decreased from 1.4 percent in 2010 to 1.2 percent in 2019. The rental vacancy rate decreased rather substantially from 2010 (9.3 percent) to 2019 (5 percent).

Average Household Size & Households by Type – The average household size in Marshall County has declined only slightly since 2000. The County’s average household size was 2.69 in 2000 and declined to 2.64 in 2019. This is higher than the national average (2.6) as well as the state average (2.52). According to the 2019 ACS 5-year estimates, approximately 60.2 percent of occupied housing units are occupied by one (1) or two (2) people (1-person is 32.1 percent and a 2-person household is 27.3 percent). The number of non-family households grew from 26.2 percent in 2000 to 30.9 percent in 2019. The percentage of families with children decreased from 35.8 percent in 2000 to 32.1 percent in 2019. The percentage of families with children, however, increased from 64.2 percent in 2000 to 67.9 percent in 2019.

Household Income – Household Income is an indicator of economic health in an area or population. It is the total income of all persons living in a household over the age of 15. Marshall County had 47.4 percent of households making less than \$50,000 in 2019, but this has decreased from 60.2 percent in 2000. The largest household income cohort growth was in the \$100,000 - \$199,999 income range that grew from 5.7 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2019. The middle-income cohort (\$50,000 - \$99,999) saw a holding trend with 33 percent in 2000 and 32.1 percent in 2019. This same trend exists in Marshall County’s county seat, Plymouth, where those households earning less than \$50,000 dropped from 73.4 percent in 2000 to 68.7 percent in 2019. This may indicate that there isn’t much discrepancy between the economic fortunes of the rural parts of the county and the more urban centers.

Median Household Income is a factor that helps in determining an area’s quality of life and shows the stability of a real estate market. Marshall County’s median household income grew 24 percent from 2000 (\$42,581) to 2019 (\$52,658). Within Plymouth, the median household income only grew by 9 percent from \$34,505 in 2000 to \$37,610 in 2019. While these growth rates are encouraging from a local perspective, it should be noted that the Marshall County median income was 101 percent of the federal median income in 2000, but was only 84 percent of that same metric in 2019. This indicates the uneven distribution of economic growth in the country and something for the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department to consider when planning and providing services.

It should also be noted that while increases in income are positive economic notes, Marshall County’s poverty rate increased by 5 percent from 2000 to 2019. This includes an 89 percent increase in the poverty rate in Plymouth in the same time frame.

Housing Costs – The cost of housing in Marshall County is rising. The median home value for owner-occupied housing units in Marshall County was an estimated \$138,700, up 12.4 percent since 2010. The median home value in Plymouth in 2019 was significantly less at \$93,600 with an increase of only 0.4 percent from 2010. This would indicate that a majority of the housing market’s growth has occurred outside of Plymouth. The median home value in Marshall County is lower than both Indiana’s (\$141,700) and the nation’s (\$217,500).

**MARSHALL
COUNTY'S
M E D I A N
HOUSEHOLD
INCOME GREW
24 % FROM
2000 (\$42,581)
TO
2019 (\$52,658)**

Housing Affordability – In order to determine housing affordability in Marshall County, we need to consider the percentage breakdown of household income. If costs exceed 30 percent of income, households are considered housing cost-burdened. In 2019, approximately 20.6 percent of households in Marshall County are considered housing cost-burdened. In Plymouth, 22.7 percent of households are considered housing cost-burdened. This could be considered a barrier to the county with a lack of affordable housing options such as starter homes.

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Major Industries – According to the US Census Bureau, the top three industry sectors over the last ten years have consistently been manufacturing, retail trade, and healthcare and social assistance. In 2019, 27.9 percent of total jobs in the county were in manufacturing with 10.4 percent in retail trade and 8.1 percent in health care and social services. These major industries are also the three largest industries within the state of Indiana as a whole. The county's arts, entertainment, and recreation sector only account for 1.4 percent of the county's employment.

Largest Employers

- **Southwire Co. (Bremen)**
- **Nishikawa Copper LLC (Bremen)**
- **Walmart Supercenter (Plymouth)**
- **Aker Plastics (Plymouth)**
- **Ancilla Domini Sisters Inc. (Plymouth)**
- **Universal Bearings (Bremen)**
- **Valmont Site Pro 1 (Plymouth)**
- **Swan Lake Resort Golf Shop (Plymouth)**
- **St. Joseph Health System (Plymouth)**
- **Bremen Castings (Bremen)**

Labor Force and Unemployment – Labor force refers to the number of persons actively employed and those unemployed who are looking for employment. Within Marshall County in 2019, approximately 23,239 residents make up the labor force. This makes up a little less than 1 percent of the total labor force in the state of Indiana. The annual unemployment rate held at 3.1 percent, slightly below the state's average. In November of 2020, given the COVID-19 pandemic, the county's unemployment rate rose to 4.2 percent.

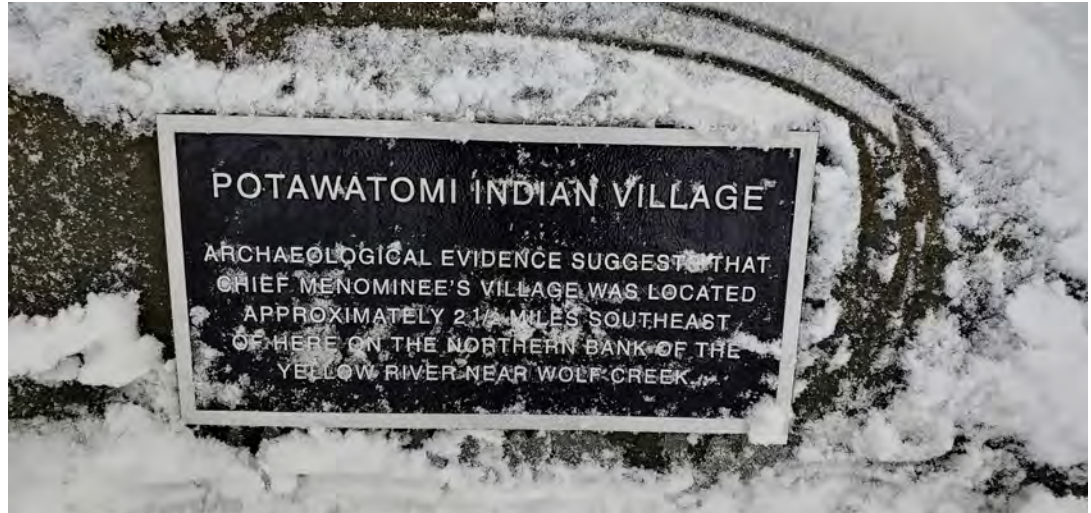
Net Assessed Value – Examining Marshall County’s net assessed value can give an indication of the construction activity in the county, which correlates to the county’s budget for capital expenditures and demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. The county’s assessed value has increased by 4.61 percent from \$2.43 billion in 2014 to \$2.54 billion in 2019. Plymouth saw a 2.26 percent increase in assessed value going from \$388 million to \$397 million in the same time period.

Per Capita Income – Marshall County’s per capita income level can measure the access to high-quality living-wage jobs for the resident ability to have a higher disposable income after paying bills. This also gauges the health of the local economy to support local businesses and enjoy parks and recreation activities. Marshall County’s per capita income is \$42,196, 86.7 percent of the state per capita income.

Jobs to Household Ratio – The jobs to household ratio gauges the distribution of employment opportunities and workforce (those actively employed) population across a geographic area. A ratio of 1.0 to 1.5 indicates a community has approximately an equal balance of jobs and housing. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates a community has more housing than jobs; whereas, a ratio greater than 1.5 indicates a community has more jobs than housing. Based on the numbers provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, Marshall County has a Jobs to Household Ratio of 1.2.



3



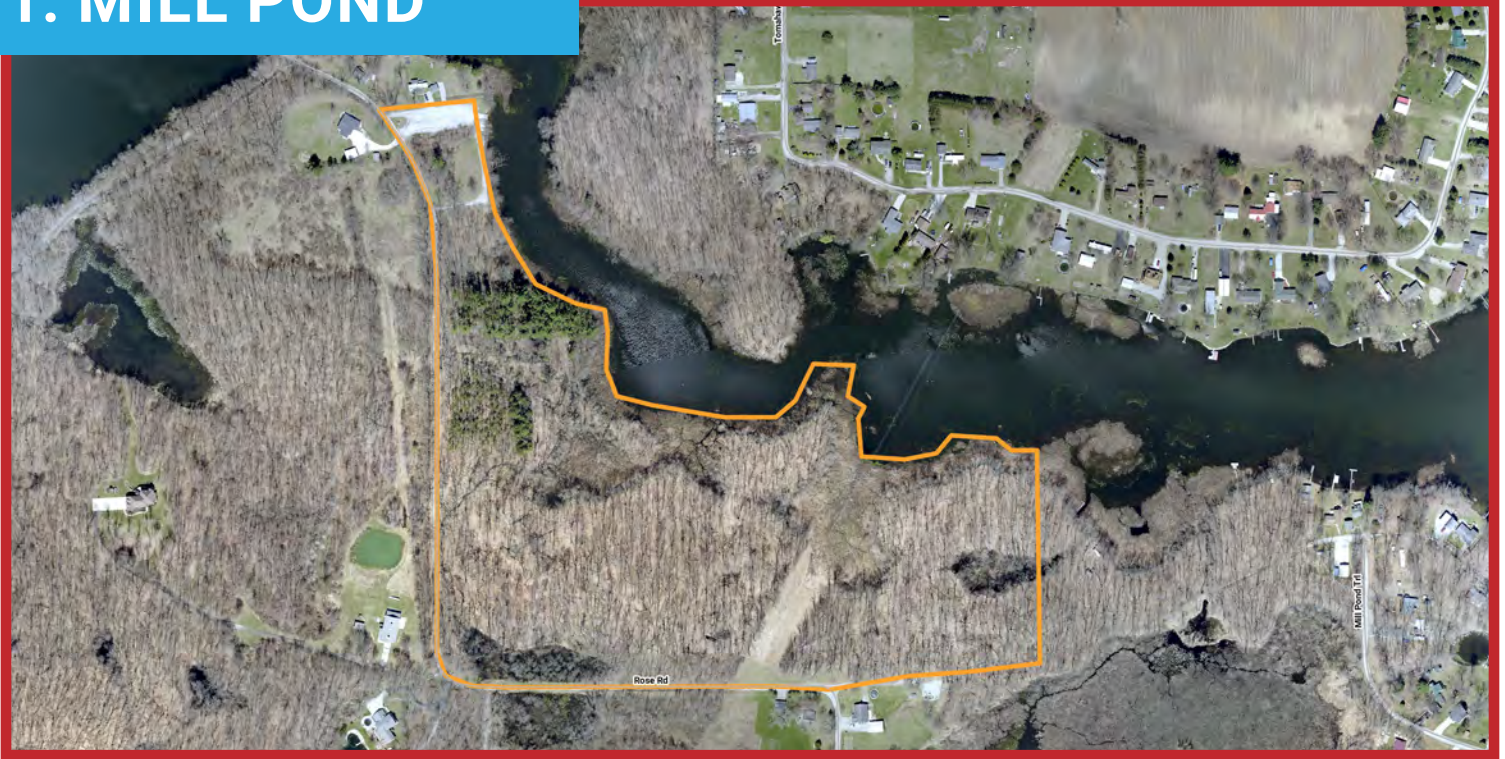
PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

COUNTY PARK FACILITIES

Mill Pond – The history of the Mill Pond in Marshall County as a conservation and recreation center begins in 1988. In that year the Arrow Head Country RC&D Forestry Committee entered into an agreement with the Commissioners of Marshall County to help manage the Mill Pond woodlands. The management objectives were to maximize timber production, to maintain an aesthetically pleasing woodland, to promote wildlife habitat, to avoid erosion and pollution, to maintain walking access trails, and to use 15 acres of the woodland to educate the public on good forest management. In 1989, a walking trail was established on the Mill Pond property. Full timber inventories were conducted every 5 years. Timber auctions were held in 2000 and 2016. A 2010 analysis showed that the demonstration plot posted annual economic yields of \$190/acre, surpassing farmland cash rent rates in the area. Located on 34.9 acres off Rose Road, this county-owned property is an undeveloped woodland that is in the process of being the future home to the County's first mountain biking course. Volunteers from a local mountain bike group are currently developing a course that will likely cater to basic to intermediate skill levels.



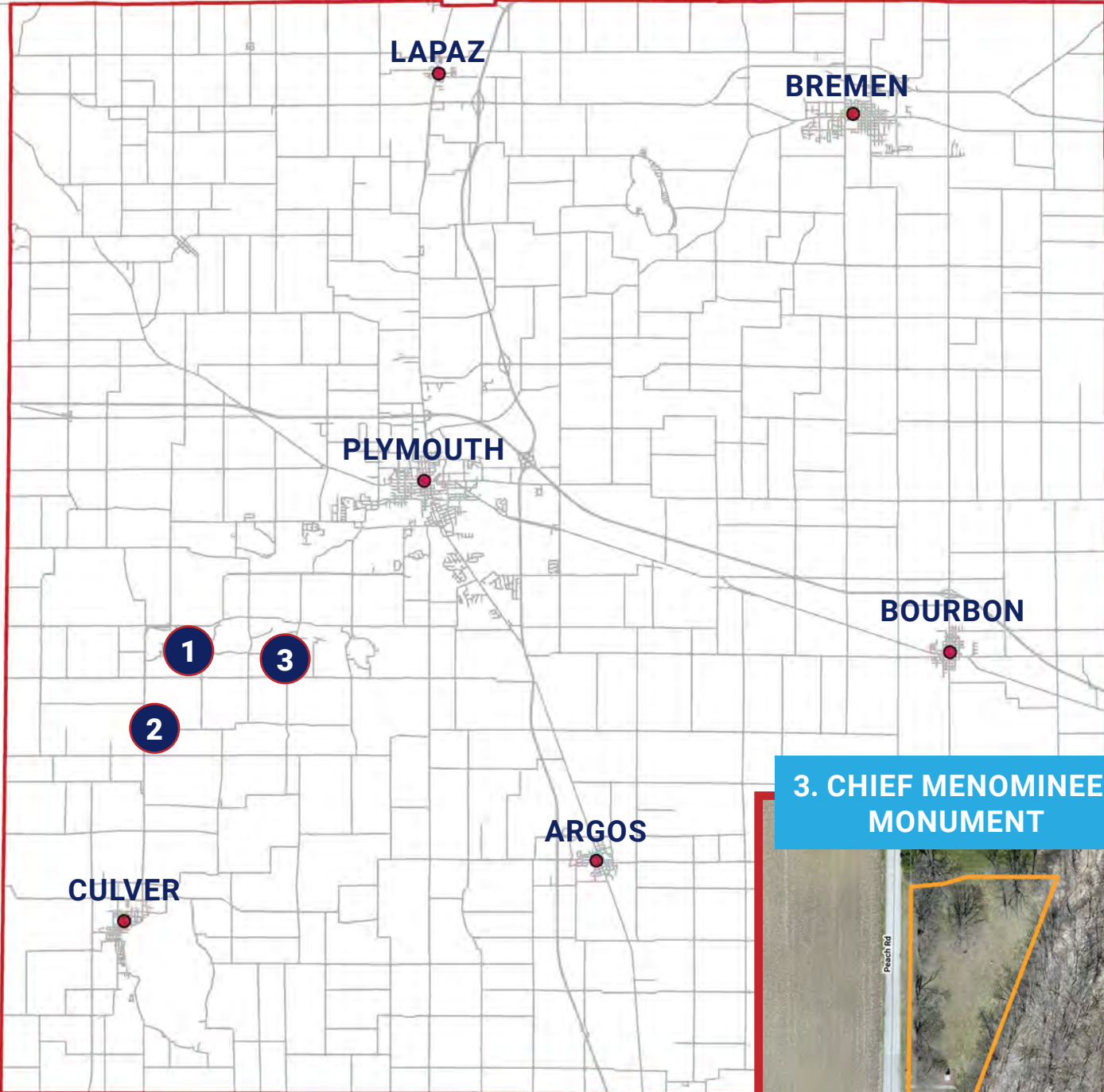
1. MILL POND



2. MEMORIAL FOREST



MARSHALL COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES LOCATION MAP



3. CHIEF MENOMINEE MONUMENT



Memorial Forest – The history of Memorial Forest begins in 1943 when the state of Indiana passed a new law permitting counties to hold wooded tracts of land for conservation efforts and be used for recreation and memorial purposes. Marshall County was the first county to take advantage of this opportunity and remained the only county with a “Memorial Forest” for 50 years. The project began initially to protect a beaver dam that was stumbled upon by hunters who thought it worth preserving. Using the 1943 law and the partnership of 18 active county conservation clubs, up to 22,000 trees were planted in an effort to reforest the property. Initial plans for a memorial shrine to the veterans of World War I along with a natural amphitheater were drawn but never completed. Located on 76 acres at the conjunction of SR 17 and 14th Road, this county-owned property is undeveloped woodland. The Arrow Head Country RC&D Forestry Committee also managed the high quality portion of the forest, with the last timber sale occurring in 2005. In March of 2020, the Marshall County Park Board was given the responsibility to manage the property. The Park Board would like to explore opportunities during the planning process for additional recreational uses.

COMMUNITY PARKS

Argos – The Town of Argos features four parks varying in size and amenities.

- **Argos Community Park** – The largest community park at 50.8 acres with two soccer ball fields, outdoor exercise equipment, approximately 1.5-mile walking trail, wildlife observatory, splash pad, five pavilions, one kitchen, and sandpit volleyball.
- **Argos Pond Park** – This park is 11 acres with a 2-acre pond, providing a picnic area and public fishing.
- **Yearick Neighborhood Park** – This park is 3.38 acres and utilized as a green space and softball field by the youth softball league and Argos High School.
- **Argos Memorial Park** – Formerly a cemetery, but is now a small neighborhood park with 1.5 acres and playground equipment.

Joint-use Recreation Facilities

- Tennis Courts
- Argos Community Schools’ playgrounds

Bourbon – The Town of Bourbon features three parks.

- **Bourbon Community Park** – Located off Sunset Drive, the Bourbon Community Park is the largest park at 10 acres and has multiple ball fields and courts, a pavilion, and a horseshoe pit, splash pad, and playground equipment.
- **Westwood Park** – This park is a 5-acre neighborhood-scale park, located off Liberty Avenue and Beechwood Avenue. This park features playground equipment and a basketball court. The Town does plan to incorporate a Dog Park in the summer of 2017.
- **First State Bank Park** – This is a public plaza (0.15 acres) located at the northwest corner of Center Street and Main Street.

Bremen – The Town of Bremen features four parks, a community pool, sledding hill, skate park, tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, and youth baseball, football, and soccer fields.



- **Sunnyside Park** – Sunnyside Park is the largest park in Bremen and dates back to 1910. This park began as a location for a local baseball team and now serves as the home for several Bremen High School sports teams. This park is also the site of the Bremen Firemen’s Festival and the Fourth of July Fireworks. The park also features a wetland conservation area for residents to enjoy.
- **Jane’s Park** – This park is a playground within Sunnyside Park erected in 2000 as a memorial to Dr. Jane Sieg-Stillson. The playground is meant to be for all children and was built entirely through volunteers and donations.
- **Shumaker Westside Park** – This park was established in the 1970s through collaboration with local Bremen residents. It is the hosting site for the Bremen Holy Walk, monthly Park Board meetings, and other smaller events. The park has open grassy areas which make it a great destination for quiet walks and family gatherings.
- **Shadyside Park** – This park occupies a shady spot on the side of the middle fork of the Yellow River that runs through Bremen. The park was established sometime around 1914. Today the park offers two sledding hills as well as a playground, basketball court, an enclosed rental facility, and restrooms.

Culver – The Town of Culver features:

- **Culver Park and Beach** – This park is at the heart of the Culver community right on the shores of Lake Maxinkuckee. This park offers programs related to swimming and water sports for all ages along with boat docking access. The park also holds an amphitheater, two pavilions, a gazebo, and a beach lodge. The Culver’s Farmers Market also called this park home.

Plymouth – The City of Plymouth features two community-scale parks and one neighborhood-scale park.

- **Centennial Park** – This park is the largest in the Plymouth park system and is home to an outdoor pool, baseball and softball fields, basketball and tennis courts, shuffleboard, skate park, horseshoes, and public recreational shelters. Centennial Park also features a state-of-the-art baseball diamond called Bill Nixon Field available for Plymouth High School competition. Centennial Park is also the home of the Marshall County Blueberry Festival with nearly 400,000 visitors passing through each year.

- **River Park Square** – River Park Square is located in downtown Plymouth with canoe access on the Yellow River. This park offers plenty of green space with a performance theater, a splash pad, a rock fountain, and a concession building with public restrooms. River Park Square also is home to the Plymouth Farmers Market held on Saturday mornings.
- **Magnetic Park** – This 17-acre park is located on the Yellow River, mid-way between Centennial Park and Downtown Plymouth. Magnetic Park contains the Conservation Clubhouse, a historic structure offered by the Park Department for year-round programs and rental. The park also contains a play area, picnic sites, and a small fishing pond. The absence of shelters, paved game courts, adequate circulation, and lighting precludes maximum use of this important community-neighborhood recreation facility. A historical spring house in the form of a wooden /stone gazebo provides an interesting focal point within the park.
- **Price’s Memorial Park** – This 13-acre park is a heavily wooded area closer to the U.S. 30 corridor and sits on a significant pond (3 acres worth). The wooded areas and shelter houses provide a respite for residents to escape the bustling highway noise. This is the City’s newest park. Price’s Memorial Park is located on the north side of Plymouth off of Plymouth Goshen Trail. Park features include two shelters, a gazebo, a playground on the property as well as a house that was used as an office and caretaker residence.
- **Hand Park** – This 3.5-acre park is a vital neighborhood park, located on the southeast side of Plymouth. This Park features a playfield, playground, restrooms, basketball, and a baseball diamond.
- **Gill Park** – This 4.8-acre park is on the east side of Plymouth and includes one softball diamond and access to the Yellow River.
- **Packard’s Woods Park** – This 12.5-acre park is located on the west side of Plymouth and offers a handicap-accessible playground, the first in northern Indiana, known as Freedom Park. Other features include pavilions, two softball diamonds, and basketball courts. There is plenty of wooded space for shade and grassy areas for relaxing.
- **Founder’s Park** – This is located off of Jefferson Street. This small park has stationary exercise equipment for public use.
- **Poplar Street Park** – This 0.25-acre park is located in a small residential neighborhood on the southwest side of Plymouth.
- **Dixon Lake Park** – The City owns approximately 400 feet of frontage on Dixon Lake located approximately 1.5 miles southwest of Plymouth. Originally, a beach house, swimming, boating, and fishing were available. Dixon Lake has been leased to IDNR for 20 years and features a boat launch area.

LaPaz – The Town of LaPaz features a community ball field for the LaVille School District. This ball field features two full basketball courts, three baseball diamonds, and a playground.

TRAIL NETWORK

During the Stellar Community Designation process, Marshall County created a Trails Master Plan to help guide the county in planning and implementation of a trail system throughout the county and connecting it to large regional trail networks. Based on the six incorporated communities in Marshall County, the county has a 47 out of 100 for a walkability score. This means that most of the communities are somewhat walkable in nature. Removing Plymouth from that score, the county's score drops to 40 out of 100. In a similar scoring index, Marshall County has a 46 out of 100. Increasing both of these scores will require an effort focused on creating pedestrian-friendly roads and trails rather than vehicular traffic.

- **Incorporated Town Walk/Bike Scores (all out of 100):**
 - **Argos: 34 Walk/35 Bike (Car-Dependent)**
 - **Bourbon: 38 Walk/35 Bike (Car-Dependent)**
 - **Bremen: 63 Walk/53 Bike (Somewhat Walkable)**
 - **Culver: 50 Walk/56 Bike (Somewhat Walkable)**
 - **La Paz: 14 Walk/28 Bike (Car-Dependent)**
 - **Plymouth: 80 Walk/63 Bike (Very Walkable)**

Fortunately, Marshall County's location in the heart of north central Indiana puts it in an ideal location to connect each of these communities and rural parts of Marshall County. The 2020 Marshall County Trails Master Plans has specific strategies to connect each of these communities to a larger county system. The Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department will use this to guide the location of new trails in the unincorporated areas of Marshall County in this five-year parks master plan.



Although there are no trails currently in Marshall County’s unincorporated areas, four of Marshall County’s communities feature multi-use trail networks drawing many local and regional users annually.

- **Argos** – The Town of Argos features approximately 1.45 miles of paved trails in the Argos Community Park and Pond Park.
- **Bremen** – The Town of Bremen has a strong existing sidewalk system that connects different parts of the community. Future developments include transforming those existing sidewalks into multi-use trails that connect the major green spaces in the city as well as connecting to a potential county-wide trail system. The Town of Bremen has nearly 3 miles of paved trails, primarily in Sunnyside Park, and a half-mile natural trail in Sunnyside Wetlands behind Sunnyside Park.
- **Culver** – The Town of Culver has 0.5 miles of paved trails through Culver Park to Culver Academies. There are four phases for future development that were planned during both Culver’s and Marshall County’s Stellar Designation processes.
- **Plymouth** – The Plymouth Parks and Recreation Department offers the Plymouth Greenway Trail that stretches from Jefferson Street, passing through Founder’s Park, crosses over the Yellow River and into Magnetic Park, continuing along the Yellow River to the Randolph Street trail, and further to Centennial Park. The Plymouth Greenway Trail is a total of 2.7 miles long and 10 feet wide. This trail is used for 12 months out of the year. During winter, the City Park Staff clears the snow from one-half of the 10-foot wide trail and leaves the other side with snow so cross country skiers can enjoy the beautiful scenery during the winter months.

BIKE TRAILS

Marshall County does have existing, established Bike Routes with varying lengths. All four routes start at Webster Elementary School (1101 South Michigan St., Plymouth, Indiana). These routes include:

1. **A 16-mile trail to Chief Menominee and back to Plymouth**
2. **A 31-mile trail to Culver, up to Chief Menominee, and back to Plymouth**
3. **A 41-mile Trail to Culver, around Lake Maxinkuckee, up to Chief Menominee, and back to Plymouth**
4. **A 63-mile trail to Culver, around Lake Maxinkuckee to Ancilla College, down to Chief Menominee**

4



ADA COMPLIANCE & ACCESSIBILITY

OVERVIEW

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 25.5 percent of Marshall County residents report some level of disability. The report defines a person as having a disability if they have difficulty performing a specific task such as seeing, hearing, bathing, or doing light housework, or if they have a specific condition, such as Alzheimer's disease. The U.S. Census found in the 2019 ACS 5-year Estimate the following regarding age groups and disability in Marshall County:

- **Under 18 Years: 1.5 percent**
- **18 to 64 Years: 13 percent**
- **65 years or Older: 11.1 percent**

STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY

Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department will provide reasonable conditions and accommodations for all people with disabilities to all of the future facilities, programs, activities, and services. This includes utilizing universal design and inclusion principles that provide access and inclusion for people with disabilities, either physical or mental.

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that local governments, including park boards, remove any barriers to access and inclusion in facilities, programs, activities, and services. Marshall County will provide these accessibility modifications that meet ADA guidelines for any significant alterations of an existing facility, program, activity, and service. Beyond physical alterations and improvements, inclusion and universal design will be utilized for the development of programs, services, activities, communication, signage, policies, and procedures

Marshall County has an ADA Transition Plan (2012) in place along with a county ADA Coordinator, Doug Masterson. Doug is also the Maintenance Supervisor for the county. Formal complaints noting of a program, service, or activity in Marshall County that is not ADA accessible should contact Doug Masterson at 574-935-8720 or:

Marshall County Auditor's Office:
574-935-8555 | julief@co.marshall.in.us
112 W Jefferson St, Plymouth, Indiana 46563

ACCESSIBILITY REVIEW AND PROPOSED ACCESSIBILITY

Since the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department currently does not own, operate, or maintain any physical facilities or any services or programs, there is no current accessibility information available. This plan will work to include provisions for an accessibility review as the Marshall County Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department adds more facilities and programs to its park system.

5



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement throughout the process is key to understand the needs and aspirations of Marshall County residents. This builds trust, accountability, a sense of community pride, and establishes a lasting relationship between the county and its community residents. Plan implementation is successful when a project or initiative is well supported by the community. The Marshall County Park Board and additional community members guided the Parks Master Plan on the Steering Committee. The development of the county's park master plan was built on the foundation laid from the extensive community engagement efforts conducted from prior planning efforts and expanded for this plan in multiple facets. These facets included interviewing local stakeholders and community organizations, Park Board members, local Park Superintendents, issuing an online survey, and monthly steering committee meetings. This aided the Steering Committee to develop an understanding of the major challenges, deficiencies, and gaps, as well as the aspirations from the county residents to set priorities for the Marshall County park and recreation system.

PRIOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Marshall County has gone through multiple comprehensive planning efforts in the past three years including the Marshall County Quality of Life Plan, the Marshall County Trails Master Plan, and the Marshall County Crossroads Stellar Application. These various approaches to public engagement in the county and their results were used to inform the direction of the Steering Committee and this Parks Master Plan. This includes multiple surveys conducted by the Marshall County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC).

- **April 2017:** MCEDC conducted a video survey that asked community leaders and members to tell stories about their experience as residents in the county. These responses were compiled to create a video to attract new residents to Marshall County.
- **August 2017:** MCEDC hosted a leadership retreat with stakeholders from each of the incorporated communities and in the county to help gauge the current conditions of the county, identify what needed extra attention, and work together to improve Marshall County. This has allowed the county to plan for the future as a collective region
- **2014 - 2018:** MCEDC conducted Business Expansion and Retention (“BEAR”) surveys with the major employers across the county to collect data that has set planning and priorities in motion.
- **2018:** Marshall County Crossroads Team surveyed the public to ready the county to apply for a Stellar Community designation. Over 700 people responded and can be informative for years to come.

SURVEY RESULTS:

- **Residents were asked to select all that applied to why they live in Marshall County. The top three answers were:**
 1. I feel safe.
 2. It’s a great place to raise a family
 3. I like rural living
- **Residents were asked what three of the following areas should the investments focus on. The following were in the top 8 choices:**
 1. Trails and sidewalks
 2. Parks and recreation
 3. When participants were asked to rank their priority of the following goal statements, they ranked “Enhance Parks and Recreation Areas” as their #1 priority.
- July 2019: Marshall County Crossroads Trails Committee engaged members of the public on specific items related to trails, bike and pedestrian safety, and other active transportation issues.

SURVEY RESULTS:

- **When surveyed, participants were asked to rank a list of goal statements. The following parks and recreation aspects were ranked as follows:**
 1. Multi-use trails within each community
 2. Sidewalk improvements and sidewalk installations in the communities
 3. Regional trails and connections
- **A Marshall County Youth Focus Group offered the following ideas for trails in Marshall County:**
 - Connect the communities via a regional trail system
 - Integrate arts (visual, performance, music, etc.), culture, and history into the trails.

- **Develop a public transit system that connects people to key locations in the communities: schools, hospitals, food, and other critical resources.**
- **Follow Complete Streets guidelines when developing roads and trails**
- **Work with the County and local departments to incorporate more bike signage and paths for pedestrian and bike trails when paving or improving roads.**
- **When asked the question of what they would like to see come from this trails master planning project, residents of Marshall County responded accordingly:**
 - **28 percent: Explore the Outdoors**
 - **14 percent: Biking & Variety of Recreational Options**
 - **23 percent: Health and Wellness**
 - **19 percent: safety**
 - **16 percent: In general, like the idea**
- Each of the communities (Plymouth, Culver, Argos, Bourbon, and Bremen) has conducted public engagement surveys to help create and guide their comprehensive plans and subsequent decisions.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

MACOG held monthly Steering Committee meetings to guide the committee through a five-step planning process, detailed below, and report on the progress of the Plan development. Community engagement and past public participation was a vital component in the planning process that gave valuable feedback and guidance to the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department on their grand vision for their Marshall County parks and recreational amenities.

- 1. Establish a Vision and Goals for the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department**
- 2. Analyze Existing Conditions, Community Needs, and Conduct a Gap Analysis**
- 3. Develop Action Strategies**
- 4. Prepare Plan Document and Review**
- 5. Adopt the Final Plan**



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

MACOG met with the Marshall County Park Board in December 2020 to determine a project scope of work, deliverables and outlined a community engagement strategy. The committee identified the need to conduct interviews with the key technical stakeholders such as Park Board members, local municipal park staff, the local community foundation, and supporting organizations to collect existing conditions information on park facilities, their vision for Marshall County, and their thoughts on the needs and challenges hindering the establishment of a county park and recreation system. Stakeholder interviews were conducted by phone through December 2020 and January 2021 and included:

- **Greg Hildebrand, Park Board President**
- **Adam Thada, Park Board Vice-President**
- **Brain Main, Park Board Member**
- **Corine Humes, Marshall County Tourism Executive Director**
- **Janis Holiday, Marshall County Council on Aging Executive Director**
- **Linda Rippy, Marshall County Museum Executive Director**
- **Angela Rupchock-Schafer, Marshall County Community Foundation Director of Development and Communications**

PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

The Marshall County Parks Board, assisted by MACOG, decided to create a public input survey to engage the community on what they desired for the Marshall County park and recreation system, amenities they would like to see developed, and how the Marshall County should focus its priorities over the next five years. The survey was available online starting March 10 to March 25.

There were 342 online surveys completed, representing a sizable portion of active Marshall County residents and is on the same level of public input as past planning processes. Utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook and capitalizing on the extensive local network from the steering committee and the regional Stellar committees generated the highest response rate with over 200 responses submitted in the first week. An additional promotional effort included a press release in the local Pilot News.



Below are the highlights of the public's response to the survey. A full summary of the survey results is in the Appendix.

- 99 percent of respondents had visited a park or recreational facility within the incorporated communities in Marshall County.
- 38 percent of respondents indicated they visit a park within Marshall County at least once a week with 31 percent indicating they visited a park in Marshall County at least once a month. Only 14.8 percent visited a park within Marshall County daily.
- When asked to select all the programs or services respondents would like to see in the Marshall County Parks and Recreation System, 69 percent responded with "Nature Walks/Hiking" and 61 percent chose "Community Events/festivals." The next highest selected categories were "Bicycle and pedestrian safety" and "Plant, wildlife, and insect identification" both at 41 percent.
- 49 percent of respondents indicated that they had traveled outside of Marshall County to visit other parks and recreation amenities.
- Finally, 81 percent of respondents listed that they receive information on community events and activities from social media.

PUBLIC COMMENT OF DRAFT PLAN

Marshall County residents were given another opportunity to provide their input on the draft park master plan during the month of April 2021. A 9-day public comment period began on April 1, 2021, to April 9, 2021, to allow residents the opportunity to review the narrative and comment on the draft priorities to guide the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department's implementation efforts for the next five years. The Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department solicited public input utilizing Facebook and issued a Legal Ad and Press Release in the Pilot News. MACOG created an online form for residents to submit their comments and set up a voicemail box for residents to call and leave their comments for a Steering Committee to get back with them. Facebook posts were advertised on the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department's page and shared by the Steering Committee to expand the exposure of the post. We received two comments submitted through the online comment form. The summary of the public comments are provided in the Appendix following the results of the public input survey.

6



NEEDS & GAP ANALYSIS

MACOG, the Marshall County Park Board, and Steering Committee used several quantitative and qualitative methods to identify the county's major challenges with establishing a county park and recreation system. Quantitative methods included results from the public input survey, analysis of Census demographic and socioeconomic data, and evaluating the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Acreage and Park Level of Service (LOS) Metrics. Qualitative methods included exercises from the Steering Committee meetings such as a vision wall and brainstorm sessions on the major opportunities and challenges, stakeholder interviews, summaries of the open-ended questions on the survey, and a spatial gap analysis of parks and recreational amenities in Marshall County.

ACREAGE & PARKLANDS LEVEL OF SERVICE METRICS

Several quantitative methods included examining Marshall County's current acreage of recreational use LOS and a park LOS using the NRPA's Acreage and Park LOS Metrics. This will provide a general insight into what comparable park and recreation boards or agencies operate and maintain to help give a general sense of direction for the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department as they continue in establishing a county park and recreation system.

The acreage and park LOS evaluates the total amount of recreational lands Marshall County has to offer to its current and projected populations measured in acres per 1,000 residents and parks per 2,281 residents. This level of analysis is regarded as the most utilized standard given the ease of measurement and can be one vitality indicator of the community's quality of life with having a high LOS.

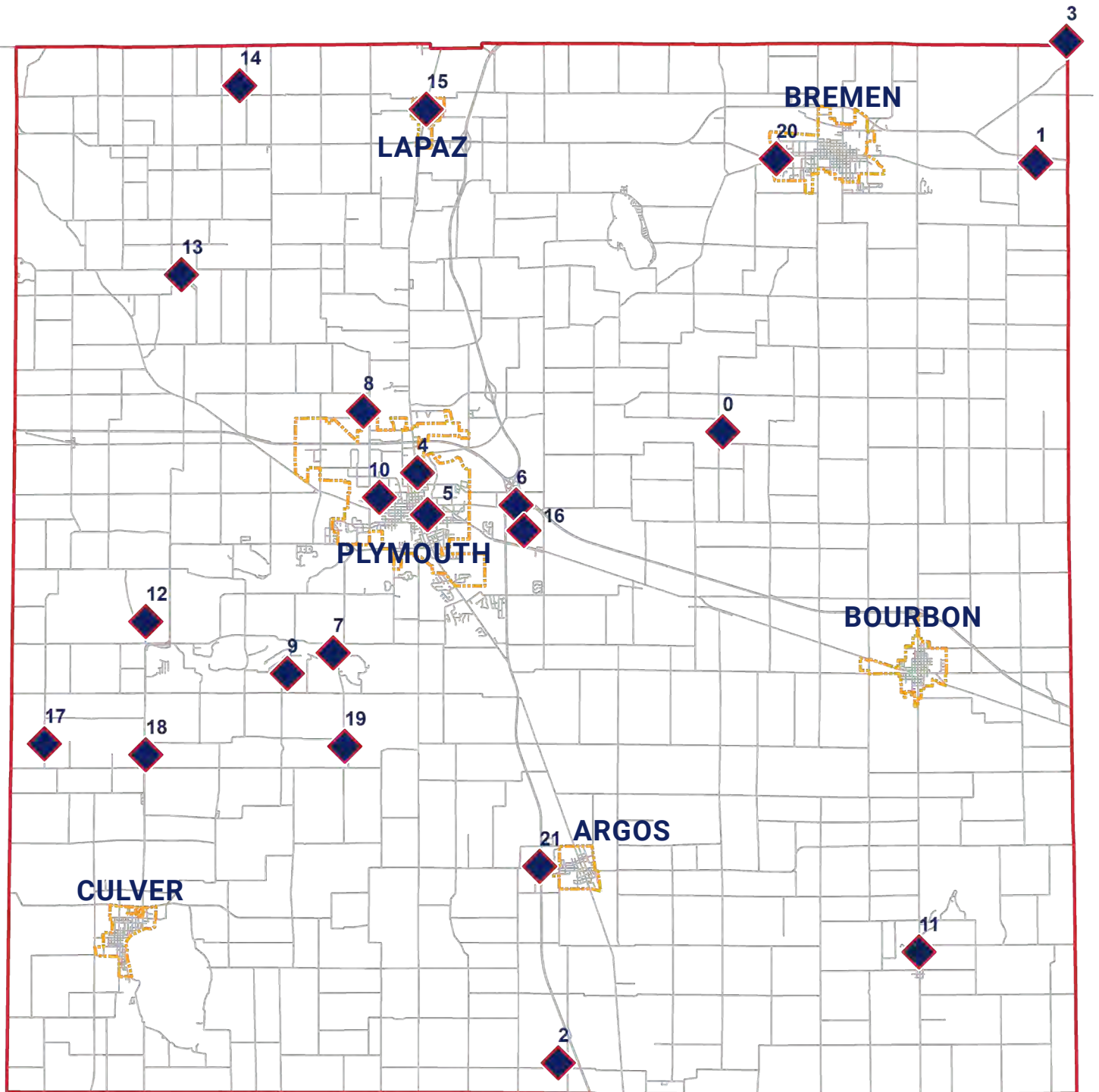
According to the 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review, a typical (an established) park and recreation board or agency have approximately 10 acres of land for outdoor recreation use per 1,000 residents in the service area and one park for every 2,281 residents served. Marshall County's population in 2019 was 46,461 residents (2019 Census Annual Population Estimate). Analyzing the trend in population between 2000 and 2019, it is projected that the County's population could grow to approximately 47,000 residents by 2030. The County has two properties designated as parklands (Mill Pond and Memorial Forest) that totals approximately 111 acres. Based on NRPA's Agency Performance Review and factoring the estimated population projections for 2030, the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department would need to designate approximately 470 acres of land for outdoor recreation use and 21 parks in the service area. Although Marshall County does not yet have the suggested amount of acres or parklands to adequately serve the county residents; however, there is an additional 425 acres of parklands provided from the incorporated communities in Marshall County that balances the provision of parks and recreation use for county residents, totaling 536 acres of parklands.

Additional metrics provided in the 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review is the average park and recreation agency has an annual operating expenditure per capita of \$81.19, manages 11 miles of walking, hiking, and biking trails, a revenue-to-operating expenditure of 26 percent, and has eight full-time employees per 10,000 residents in the service area.

In light of this analysis, it should be noted that NRPA states the diversity of communities and their park systems does not necessarily lend itself to compare different systems against each other. While it is vital to evaluate Marshall County's LOS to help understand the deficiencies from a quantitative perspective, this is only one tool. Other analysis methods were conducted and outlined below are a gap analysis to map access and connectivity to parks and recreational amenities, and a benchmark comparison with other communities or agencies of similar-scale and capacity of amenities offered.



MARSHALL COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION GAPS ANALYSIS MAP



MARSHALL COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION GAPS ANALYSIS MAP KEY

Map ID	Description of Need
0	Better connection with canoe/kayak launches on the river between Bremen and Plymouth
1	Connection to the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail from Bremen to Nappanee
2	Connection to the Nickle Plate Trail from Argos to Rochester
3	Lack of regional draw to the County for parks and recreation
4	Offer more seasonal attractions to the county throughout the year
5	Develop an ice skating rink for seasonal draw
6	Limited funding
7	Better access to the County's water resources
8	Ensure community support
9	Incorporate Indigenous cultures into a county trail system and parks as a whole to honor their legacy
10	Create accessible parks for all users and needs
11	Create a new community center or park
12	Create a Cultural Map for people to explore the county
13	Create a new community center or park
14	Create a new community center or park
15	Create a new community center or park
16	Future opportunity as a county-owned property
17	Create a new canoe/kayak launch
18	Create a new canoe/kayak launch
19	Create a new canoe/kayak launch
20	Create a new canoe/kayak launch
21	Coordinate with INDOT to enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety to cross US 31

GAP ANALYSIS

While the Acreage and Park LOS Metrics provides a quantitative measure of the number of acres and parks available to the population in the service area to determine the major challenges and deficiencies, in Marshall County's situation of being a newly established Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department with a limited supply of "county-level" parks, qualitative analyses were used to provide a more realistic picture of the major challenges and deficiencies. These analyses included responses from the public input survey on what they perceived are the major challenges and amenities missing in the county, stakeholder interviews to know of their needs, and thematic mapping and SWOT exercises from Steering Committee meetings. A summary of the community engagement efforts is in the previous chapter with a detailed summary of the responses to the input survey is provided in the Appendix.

The kickoff meeting engaged the Steering Committee to identify their aspirations for a Marshall County park and recreation system, identify their strengths, and deficiencies preventing their aspirations from being a reality. The discussions from this meeting were mapped into common themes for a vision, opportunities, and challenges. Using the common themes of challenges from the kickoff meeting as inspiration, the second committee meeting led to a brainstorm session to identify the specific items or areas that need to be addressed to achieve the vision of the Marshall County park and recreation system. Following this exercise, a gap analysis was conducted to map the availability of existing parks and recreational amenities and measure the distance residents living in the unincorporated areas have to travel to a local community to access these parks and recreational amenities. See the Gap Analysis Map on the previous page. This exercise also led the Committee to map potential areas for new county parks and recreational amenities. The following are the major challenges or priorities that need to be addressed to achieve the vision of the Marshall County park and recreation system.

MAJOR NEEDS

- Expand the access to the Yellow River to enhance the recreational opportunities.
- Develop a county park and recreation system that is accessible to all residents and attractive at a local and regional scale.
- Develop a safe and accessible county trail network that connects to Marshall County's and resources, wetlands, and plant and wildlife identification and habitats.
- Create a branding and marketing strategy to regularly promote and advertise Marshall County's communities' parks and trail systems and regional communities.
- Establish an environmental learning program to teach about being good stewards of the land parks and recreation facilities.
- Build a volunteer network of active residents to enhance the park system through maintenance and fundraising activities.
- Develop a maintenance schedule and asset management plan to proactively take care of the Marshall County park and recreation system.

COMMUNITY BENCHMARKING

INTRODUCTION

The Benchmarking Analysis provides a comparative look at Marshall County with other similarly situated counties in Indiana. This process is focused on comparing the county's parks and recreation infrastructure with other counties in order to determine where Marshall County should aim when planning for the coming years. This specific analysis begins by looking at population and proximity to larger urban areas that mimic Marshall County's setting. After identifying Starke, Noble, and Dubois counties (all in Indiana), the analysis looks at the number of parks/facilities, board makeup, staffing capabilities, and facility types. This analysis could look at a vast number of different aspects. However, these points of comparison will serve Marshall County's Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department in its infancy. The benchmark counties were chosen based on their proximity to larger urban areas, population, and rural characteristics.

BENCHMARK COUNTIES

Starke County

Starke County sits just down the Yellow River from Marshall County and is another newly established county-wide Park Board. Starke County has a smaller population with only 22,995 residents compared to Marshall County's population of 46,258. It also has a smaller physical footprint with only 309 square miles of land. However, Starke County's Park Board was formed in 2014 making it one of the newest county-wide parks departments in the state prior to Marshall County. Their efforts could serve as a blueprint for the Marshall County Park Board as they continue to develop their own properties. Starke County began its life as a Parks Board with two properties deeded to them from state and local parties including the Starke County Forest and the Bass Lake Beach and Campground. In their 2017 Parks Master Plan, they were still identifying ways to best manage, staff, and utilize the parks for county residents. Their physical infrastructure was fairly developed with a host of existing facilities, trails, and water access. However, they struggled with how to best set themselves apart from local municipalities.

Noble County

Noble County is a predominantly rural community in northeastern Indiana approximately 30 minutes northwest of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Its rural character and proximity to the larger regional city of Fort Wayne make it a near perfect comparison with Marshall County and its own proximity to South Bend. In addition, both counties boast a population between 46,000 and 47,000 residents. At the time of their most recent Parks Master Plan in 2019, the Noble County Park Board didn't own or operate any of their own parks. This effort to begin building from the ground up is very similar to Marshall County's current efforts. However, Noble County created an in-depth list of priority action items in 2019 that identify six key actions including trail expansion, provide greater connection to water resources, publicize recreation assets, and develop

programs for children’s enrichment and education. Based on these priorities, Marshall County is at a very similar, if not more advanced, point in their development of a county-wide parks system.

Dubois County

Another rural community that can help guide Marshall County’s vision is Dubois County in southern Indiana. This rural community of 41,886 residents is roughly the same size in both population and square miles as Marshall County. Dubois County currently owns and operates one county park, Dubois County Park, which is a total of 140 acres. The Dubois County Park is leased by the County Commissioners to the Park Board and is responsible for the management of park operations and maintenance of the park grounds. While Dubois County only has one county-level park, there is an abundance of national, state, and municipal parklands to supplement the county park giving residents additional opportunities to access other parks and outdoor recreational amenities. The Park Board has been able to extensively develop the land through the use of trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, and outdoor sports facilities. This is all made possible through fees for entry and use of campsites. Their use of their one county park and their continued innovation on that land can serve as a guide for Marshall County as its Board plans for the future.

BENCHMARKING MATRIX

The matrix below compares each county (Marshall, Starke, Noble, and Dubois counties in Indiana)

	Marshall County	Starke County	Noble County	Dubois County
Year of Establishment	2020	2014	2010	1974
Population	46,258	22,995	47,538	42,736
Parks at Time of Board Creation	2	2	0	1
Proximity to Large Urban Center	30 min.	40 min.	30 min.	1 hr.
Number of Parks	2	2	0	1
Board	Y	Y	Y	Y
Staff	N	N	N	Y
FACILITY TYPES				
Forests	Y	Y	N	Y
Water Access	Y	Y	N	Y
Playground Equipment	N	Y	N	Y
Sports Facilities	N	N	N	N

BENCHMARKING CONCLUSION

This benchmarking study was intended to look at comparable counties to Marshall County as a guide for the coming years. These counties were selected because of their rural character, similar scale in population size, and proximity to larger urban areas. In analyzing these communities, Marshall County seems to be on track to be a successful rural county-wide parks system. When looking at the physical footprint through park amenities and lands, Marshall County has access to the most acreage to develop and utilize for the benefit of county residents.

When looking at programmatic features, Marshall County is on par with the other northern Indiana counties. Neither comparison county has established park staff for maintenance nor do they have any existing programmatic initiatives that serve to attract visitors. As a Board instituted only in 2020, Marshall County is well-positioned to capitalize on the current momentum to move toward the model set by Dubois County in southern Indiana.

Dubois County is an example which Marshall County can strive to model as it grows and implements the five-year parks master plan. With only one established park, Dubois County is able to offer a variety of programs and has expanded its trail network extensively in the past 30 years. In the past decade alone, the Dubois County Park Board had the vision to acquire an additional 40-acre piece of land and add a variety of sports complexes to their park amenities. Dubois County also worked strategically with the surrounding existing municipalities to maximize their impact and avoid duplicating efforts. The benchmarking analysis shows the advantages that Marshall County has compared to other similar counties in the region. It also gives Marshall County a standard to strive for.



7



PRIORITY ACTION PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Marshall County Park & Recreation Department is to preserve, protect, and steward the County's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

This chapter provides the framework for realizing Marshall County's vision of an established parks and recreation system with an actionable plan that addresses the major challenges and deficiencies. The priority action program was identified from the series of quantitative and qualitative analyses mentioned in the previous Needs and Gap Analysis Chapter. The priority action program was first shared with the Steering Committee for them to prioritize into a priority action program. The priority action program was then shared with the public in the input survey for residents to indicate three priorities they would like to first see implemented in the next five years. Final collaboration with the Park Board and the Steering Committee was done to review the priority action program and identify cost estimates, timeframe for implementation, responsible entities, and potential funding sources. This is shown in the Priority Action Schedule.

PRIORITY ACTION SCHEDULE

The following is the Priority Action Schedule that lists the priority action strategies from the list of recommendations that the Marshall County Parks Board will first focus on implementing to begin achieving their vision for the Marshall County parks and recreation system. Below the top list of recommendations, which had substantial committee and public support, are additional priorities identified internally by MACOG staff that can help guide the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department in the coming years.

Marshall County Parks and Recreation Priority Action Schedule				
Action Strategy	Estimated Cost	Timeframe	Responsible Entity	Potential Funding Sources
Develop a county trail network that connects to Marshall County's communities' parks and trail systems and regional communities	\$5 M - 15 M	2025 - 2026	Crossroads Trail Committee, Marshall Co. Park Board, County Highway	Stellar Funds, OCRA, IDNR, MCCF, & Donors
Enhance the recreational opportunities of the Yellow River by removing overgrown and invasive vegetation along the riverbanks to offer aesthetic lookout spots and additional canoe/kayak launches, where feasible	TBD	2023	Kankakee River Basin Commission, Yellow River Basin Development Commission, Volunteers	Grants, County Funds, Drainage Board, IDNR, Soil and Water Conservation District
Explore the feasibility to increase the access to the Yellow River to create new canoe/kayak launches between Bremen and Plymouth and in the southwest areas of the County	TBD	2021 - 2022	Crossroads Trail Committee, Marshall Co. Park Board, County Highway, County Soil and Water	Grants, County Funds, Drainage Board, IDNR, Soil and Water
Foster collaborative partnerships with Marshall County's communities park departments, park boards, and other applicable groups to leverage resources and amenities and enhance communication and promotion of Marshall County's parks and recreation facilities	N/A	2021 - Ongoing	Marshall County Park Board, Volunteers	N/A
Apply for and receive a grant from IDNR to establish or improve Marshall County's first park	TBD	2021-2022	Marshall County Park Board	County Funds, Donations, In-Kind

Marshall County Parks and Recreation Priority Action Schedule (cont.)

Action Strategy	Estimated Cost	Timeframe	Responsible Entity	Potential Funding Sources
Establish a partnership with IDNR and the Park Board to enhance state-owned properties to be valuable and attractive uses for parks and recreation opportunities	\$500	2021	Marshall County Park Board	County Funds and Donations
Continue to support the construction of the mountain bike trails in Memorial Forest and Mill Pond	\$1,500-\$2,000	2021	Marshall County Park Board, Volunteers	Donations/ Sponsorships
Create a nonprofit volunteer group that is authorized and encouraged to support the park system through coordinating and hosting targeted volunteer days, fundraisers, and programming	TBD	2021 -2022	Marshall County Park Board, Volunteers	N/A
Develop a rubric for consistently determining appropriateness of future proposed projects	N/A	2021	Marshall County Park Board	N/A
Create a branding and marketing strategy to regularly promote and advertise Marshall County's parks and recreation facilities	\$5,000	2021 - Ongoing	Marshall County Park Board	Budgeted Dollars through County, Donors, In-Kind, Marshall County Tourism

MARSHALL COUNTY PARKS PROGRAMS & SERVICES

GOAL

Establish an environmental learning program to teach about being good stewards with the land and resources, wetlands, and plant and wildlife identification and habitats

- Host or conduct 3 educational events per year, starting 2022

GOAL

Create a branding and marketing strategy to regularly promote and advertise Marshall County's parks and recreation facilities

- Advertise and market the new county park system both independently and through existing and planned community partnerships
- Foster a collaborative partnership with the Potawatomi Park, Inc. to enhance the promotion and use of the Potawatomi Wildlife Park
- Foster a collaborative partnership with Visit Marshall County to help market Marshall County's parks and recreation facilities to increase the exposure and regional draw of visitors
- Celebrate achievements by hosting open houses or ribbon cutting ceremonies at new facilities and programs

GOAL

Encourage community participation and volunteerism

- Create a Friends of the Park organization to leverage the members' time to work on improvements to park and recreation facilities and seek donations and grant resources
- Establish a volunteer database to streamline recruiting volunteers to help with setup and running events

GOAL

Develop a maintenance schedule and asset management plan

- Explore the feasibility to create a County Park Staff position to help manage and maintain the County's parks and recreational facilities
- Establish an annual operating Park Board budget to adequately maintain the parks and recreation facilities
- Explore the feasibility to establish a "local membership" contribution from Marshall County's communities and townships to help fund new facilities, amenities, improvements, and maintenance
- Establish a user fee for the County's parks and recreational facilities
- Explore the feasibility to utilize maintenance bonds to fund facility improvements
- Explore the feasibility to seek corporate sponsorships
- Join the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association and attend the annual conference in November
- Determine "who we are" as a park system and then ensure that our efforts, projects, and parks, all clearly relate to and promote that mission

MARSHALL COUNTY PARKS PARK & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES & AMENITIES

GOAL

Develop a park system with facilities and programs that are attractive at both the local and regional scale

- Enhance the promotion and use of Memorial Forest and Mill Pond
- Develop & execute a monitoring and maintenance plan for select invasive species at Mill Pond and Memorial Forest
- Conduct a feasibility study on the relocation of the Trustee's log cabin and the restoration of the cabin to be a functional facility
- Target facilities and programs that engage populations who currently have few or no opportunities to engage with Marshall County recreation
- Explore the opportunity to create new parks or community centers on the west side of the County to provide access to parklands from the underserved unincorporated towns
- Incorporate public amenities with the development of new parks and recreation centers to include public restroom facilities, drinking fountains, lighting, benches, parking facilities, and public art where feasible
- Incorporate ADA accessible playground equipment and recreation facilities for all ages and needs
- Create seasonal attractions and events to enjoy the Marshall County's parks and recreation facilities year-round



IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING

Non-Reverting Capital Funds

Non-reverting capital funds can be created by the County to assist with property acquisition or for specific capital improvements. These funds are provided by the sale of properties, equipment, or special user fees established by the Park Board as a county park and recreation system becomes more established.

Non-Reverting Operational Funds

Non-reverting operational funds can be used for appropriations done by the Park Board for operational expenditures. These funds are provided from program and event fees, sale of merchandise, or special user fees established by the Park Board as a county park and recreation system becomes more established.

Parks Donation Account

A donation account can be created by the Park Board to accept public donations specifically to fund park improvements.

GRANT PROGRAMS

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (IDNR)

Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The LWCF is a state match grant that provides 50 percent of the costs for land acquisition to expand park property, and/or development of parks and recreational facilities upon project approval.

IDNR Recreational Trails Program

The RTP is an 80 percent state funds/20 percent local match grant used for the development of multi-use trails up to \$200,000.

IDNR Lakes and Rivers Enhancement Program (LARE)

This is a grant opportunity used to protect and enhance aquatic habitats for fish and wildlife while allowing publicly accessible waterways to be used for recreational and other use.

IDNR Division of Forestry

The Indiana Division of Forestry provides grants for community and urban forestry programs. This can be used to inventory the County's forests, develop management plans, and tree plantings. Grants range from \$2,000 to \$20,000 and require either a cash match or in-kind contributions.

INDIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY AND RURAL AFFAIRS (OCRA)

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

OCRA oversees the allocation of federal CDBG funds for community development projects including the planning and construction of public facilities and Main Street revitalization. Under the Public Facilities Program, a community can apply for up to a grant award of \$500,000 and requires a local match of 10 percent of the total project cost.

Quick Impact Placebased (QuIP) Grant

QuIP is designed to fund small-scale projects that make a quick community enhancement and transformation of underutilized spaces to spark community conversation and creativity. This grant encourages the establishment and strengthening of the partnership between the County, residents, community groups and organizations, and businesses. Grant requests must be between \$2,500 and \$5,000 and have a local match of either cash, in-kind contributions, or a combination of both.

INDIANA HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (IHCD)

Patronicity CreatINg Places Grant

The CreatINg Places grant is a crowd-source funding mechanism that communities can apply and submit a project campaign that seeks public donations. IHCD will match the dollars raised for successful campaigns up to \$50,000.

INDIANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (INPS)

INPS offers grants to communities that promote the appreciation, preservation, conversation, utilization, and studies of Indiana's native flora. Additional considerations go to communities that educate their residents on the values and environmental importance of indigenous vegetation.

MARSHALL COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Marshall County Community Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports new and existing programs of nonprofit organizations through grant distributions to financially support quality of life, public art, and other community development projects for Marshall County communities. The Marshall County Park Board can look into building partnerships with the foundation and applying for grants.

LILLY ENDOWMENT

The Lilly Foundation is a nonprofit organization that financially supports community facilities and programs that advances a county's economic development and quality of life opportunities.

A



APPENDIX - PUBLIC INPUT

Community engagement was a foundational element to understand the needs and aspirations from Marshall County residents and stakeholders with having a county parks and recreation system. The planning team conducted several stakeholder interviews with community organizations, municipal park staff, and the Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department to develop an understanding of their operations, how their services or organizations would contribute to support a county parks and recreation system, and the needs or challenges they thought are hindering establishing a county parks and recreation system. The planning team held monthly steering committee meetings that had broad representation up to 25 members.

An online public input survey was issued from March 10, 2021, to March 25, 2021 with 340 residents responded, which over 200 responses were submitted within the first two days being available! County residents provided valuable feedback on their vision for the Marshall County parks and recreation system, amenities they think should be added, and identified the top three priorities they would support and like to see implemented in the next five years. The following series of pages shares the results of the survey questions.

Additional engagement was done through a public comment period from April 1, 2021, to April 9, 2021, using social media and the local news media. This gave another opportunity for county residents to review the draft plan narrative and comment on the priority action schedule. The Marshall County Parks and Recreation Department solicited public input utilizing the local Pilot News and social media. Residents were notified of the public comment period through a legal ad and press release circulated in the Pilot News, and on the Park Board's Facebook page.

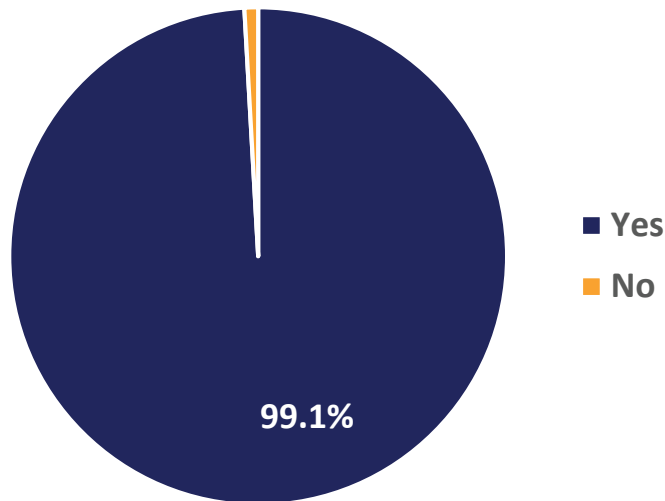
Residents were able to submit their comments using multiple facets such as an online comment form, the Marshall County Park Board's Facebook page, or left a voicemail for a steering committee member to get back with them. We received two comments and the summary of those comments are provided following the results of the public input survey.

Marshall County

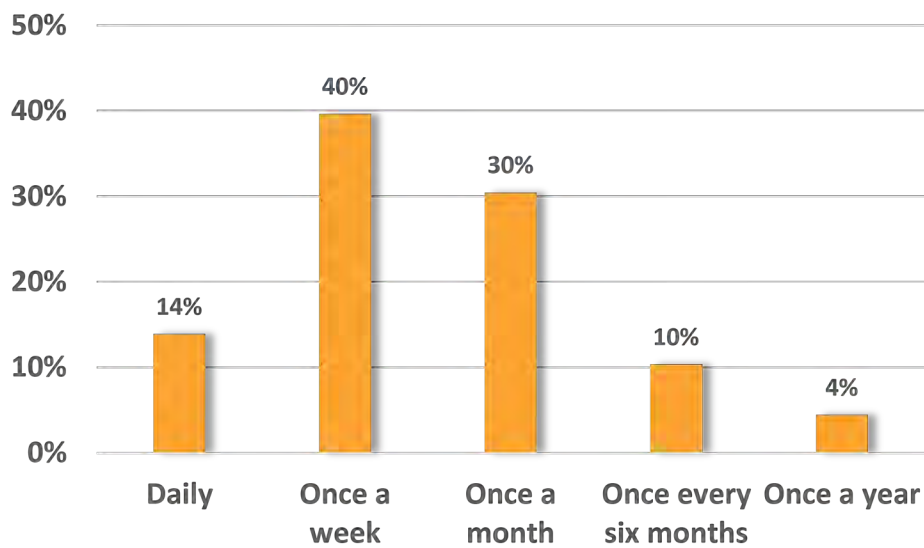
Public Input Survey Summary

Visiting Parks and Recreation in Marshall County

1. Have you visited any existing Parks or Recreation Facilities within the incorporated communities in Marshall County?

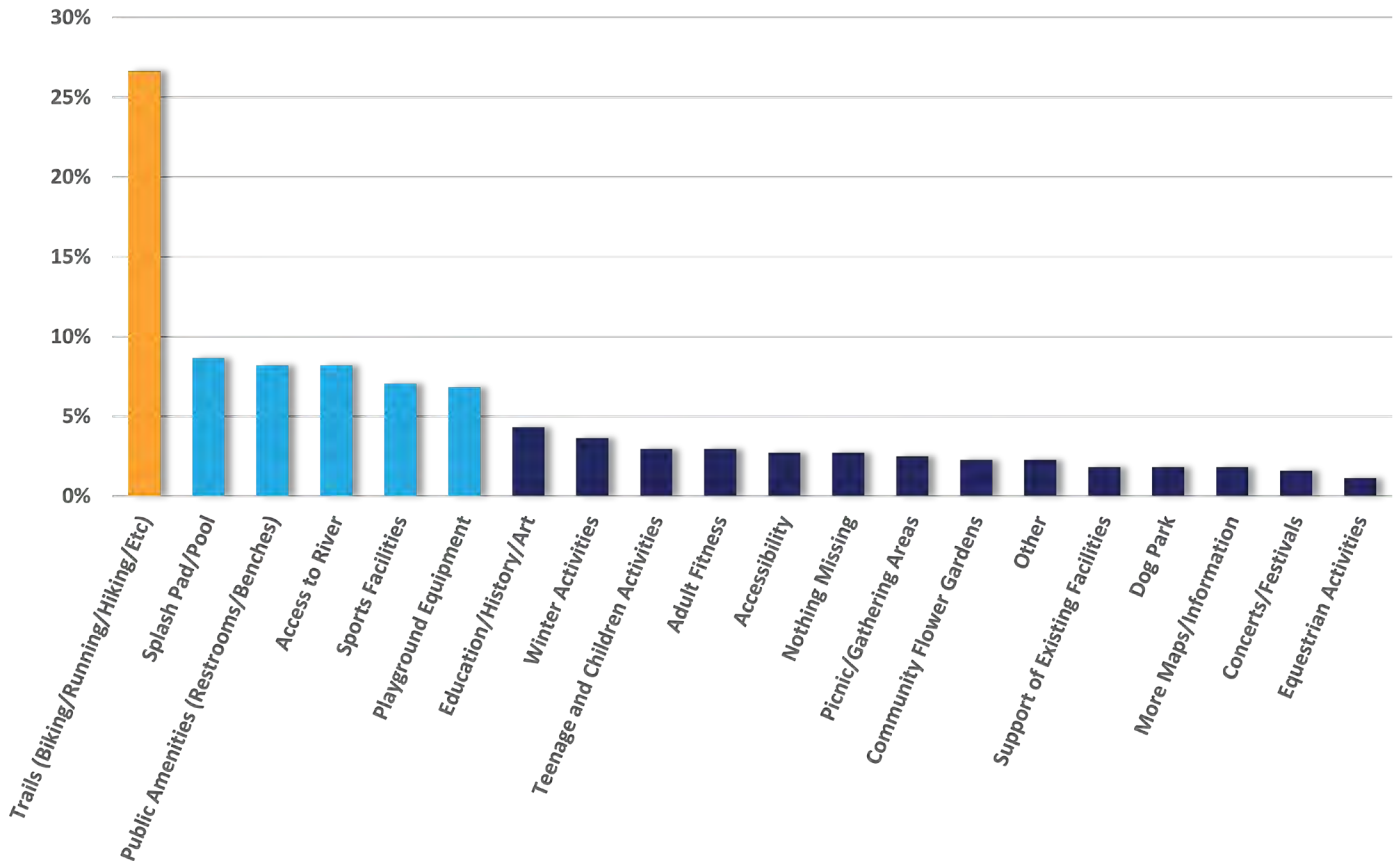


2. How often do you visit a park within Marshall County?

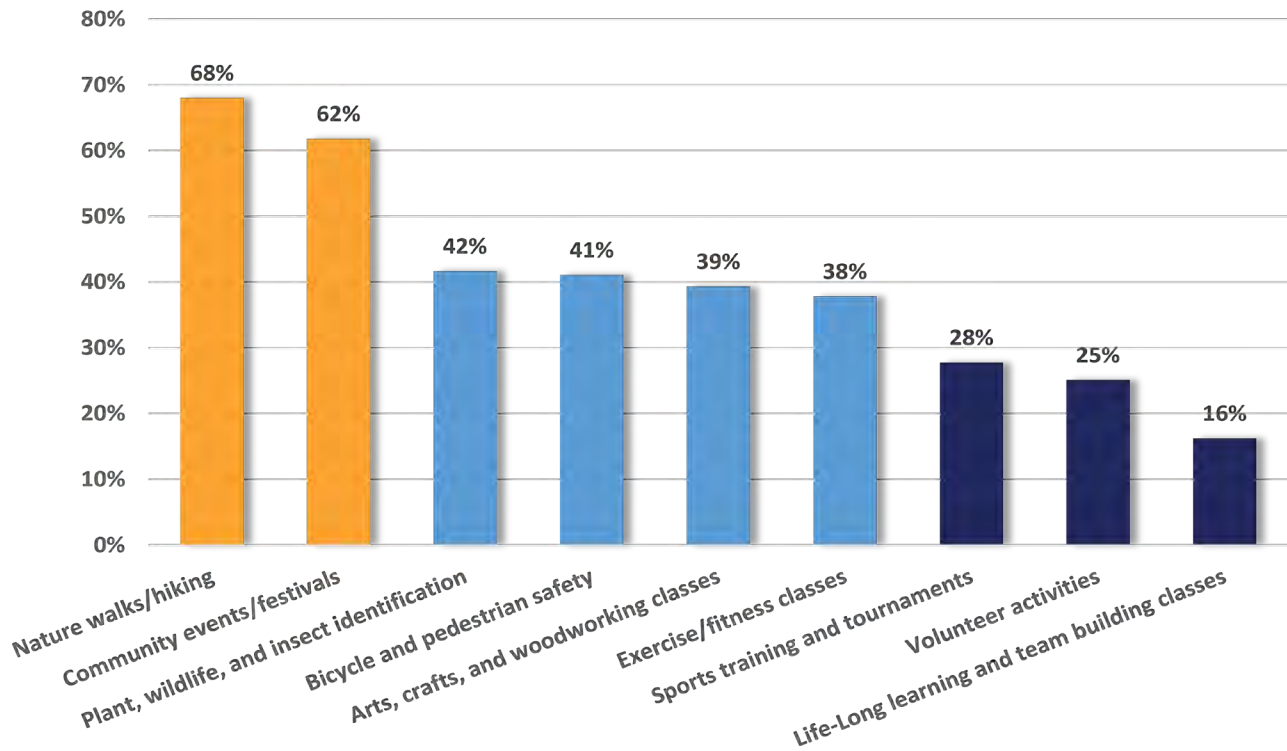


Visiting Parks and Recreation in Marshall County

3. What amenities do you think are missing and would you like to see added in Marshall County?

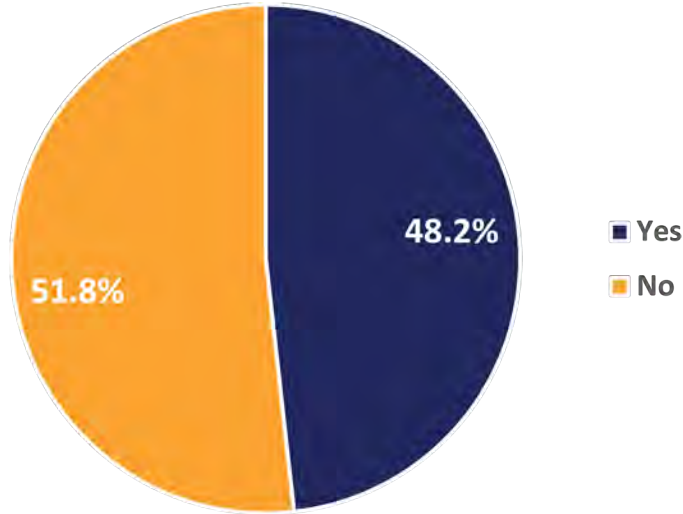


4. What programs or services would you like to see offered through the Marshall County Parks and Recreation system? (Select all that apply)

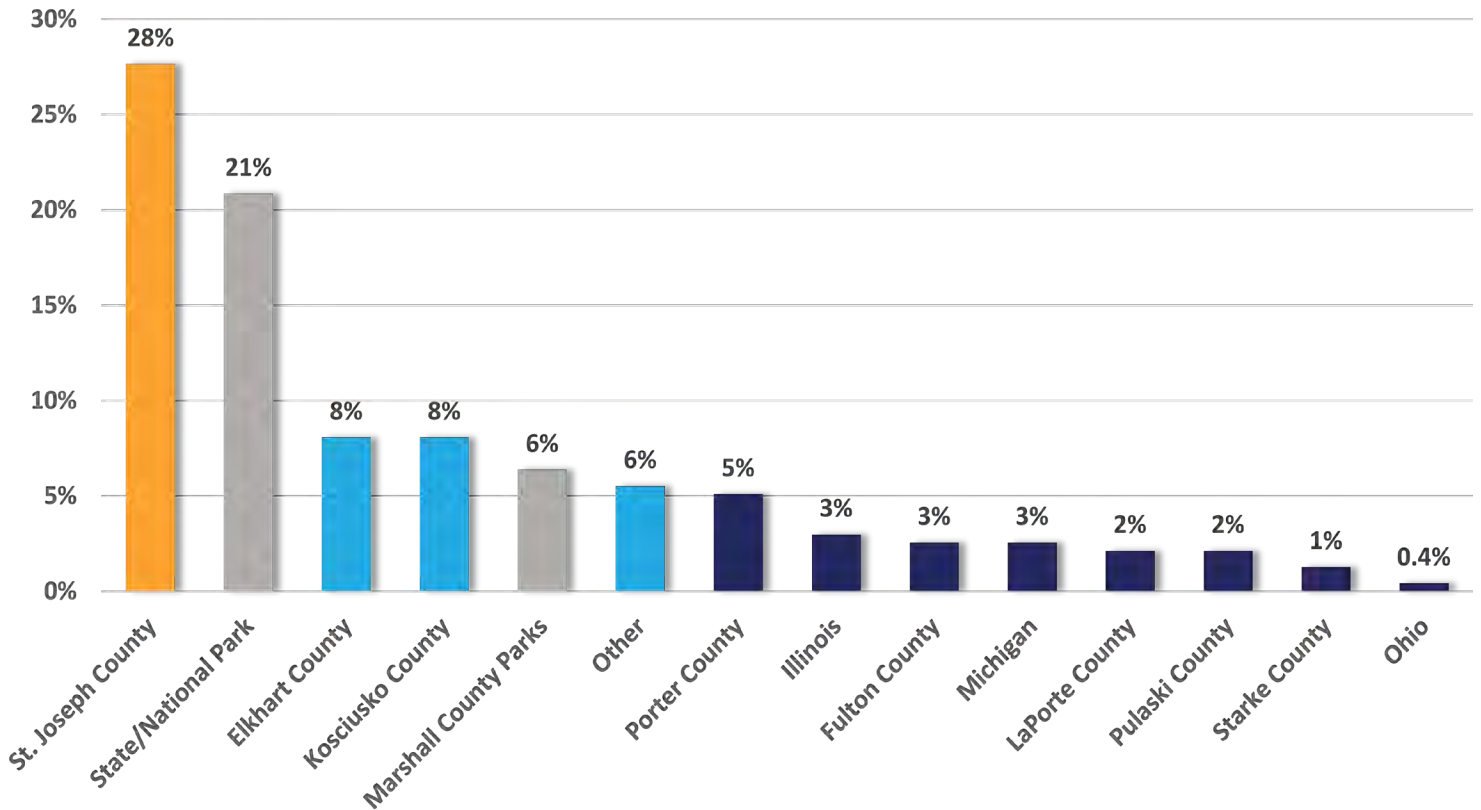


Visiting Parks and Recreation Outside of Marshall County

5. Do you ever travel outside of Marshall County for the express purpose of visiting another city/town/county-level park? (Do NOT include travel to a state or national park)

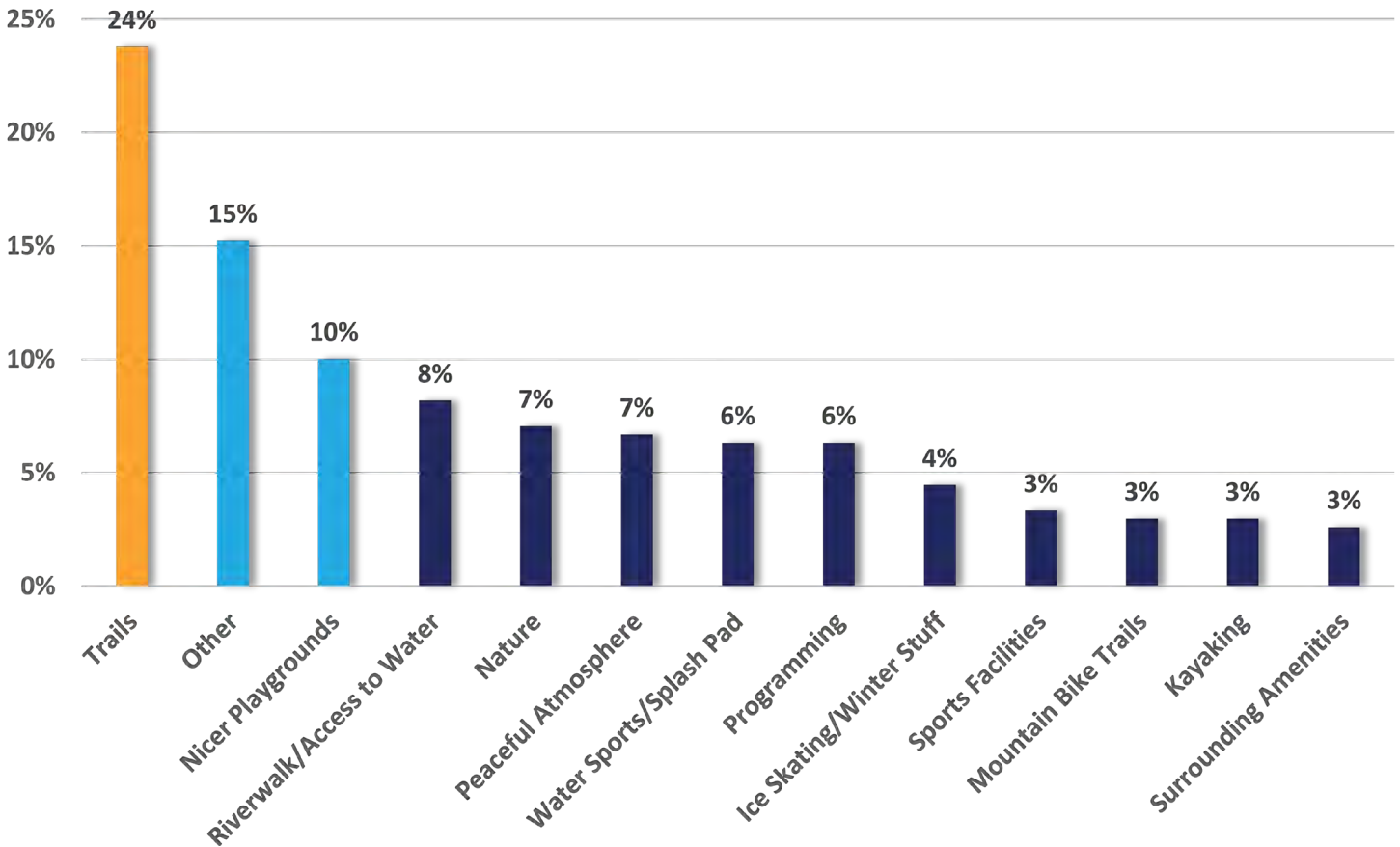


6. What is the name of the park and where is it located? (Include the city and state of the park)



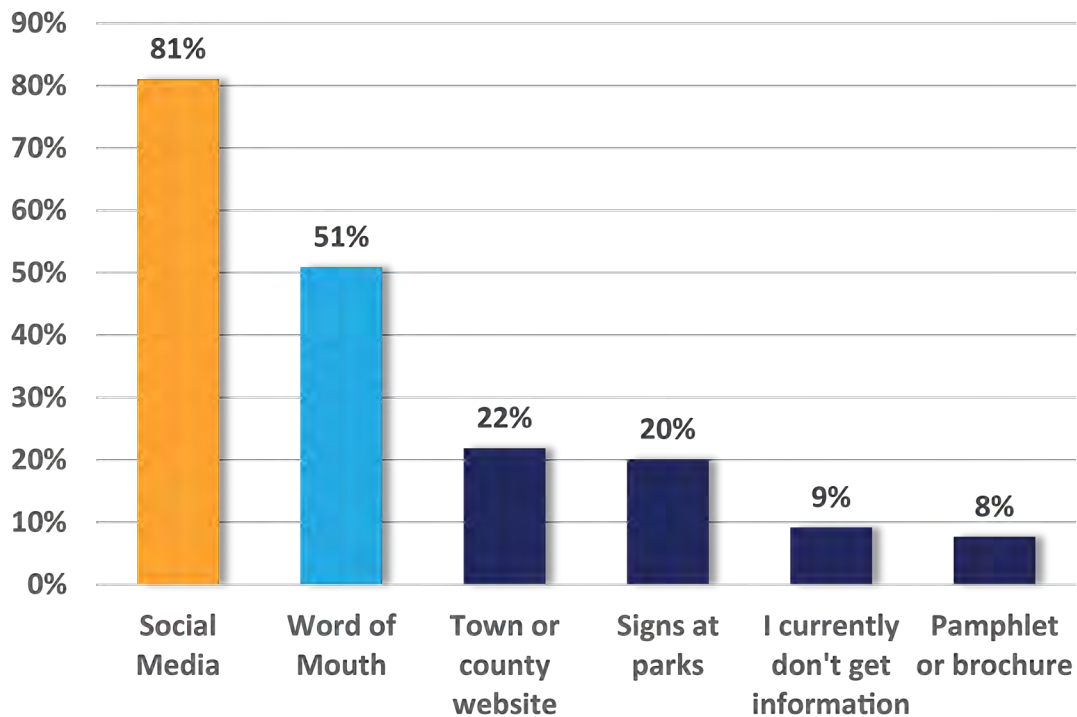
Visiting Parks and Recreation Outside of Marshall County

7. What amenities draw you out of Marshall County to visit this park(s)?



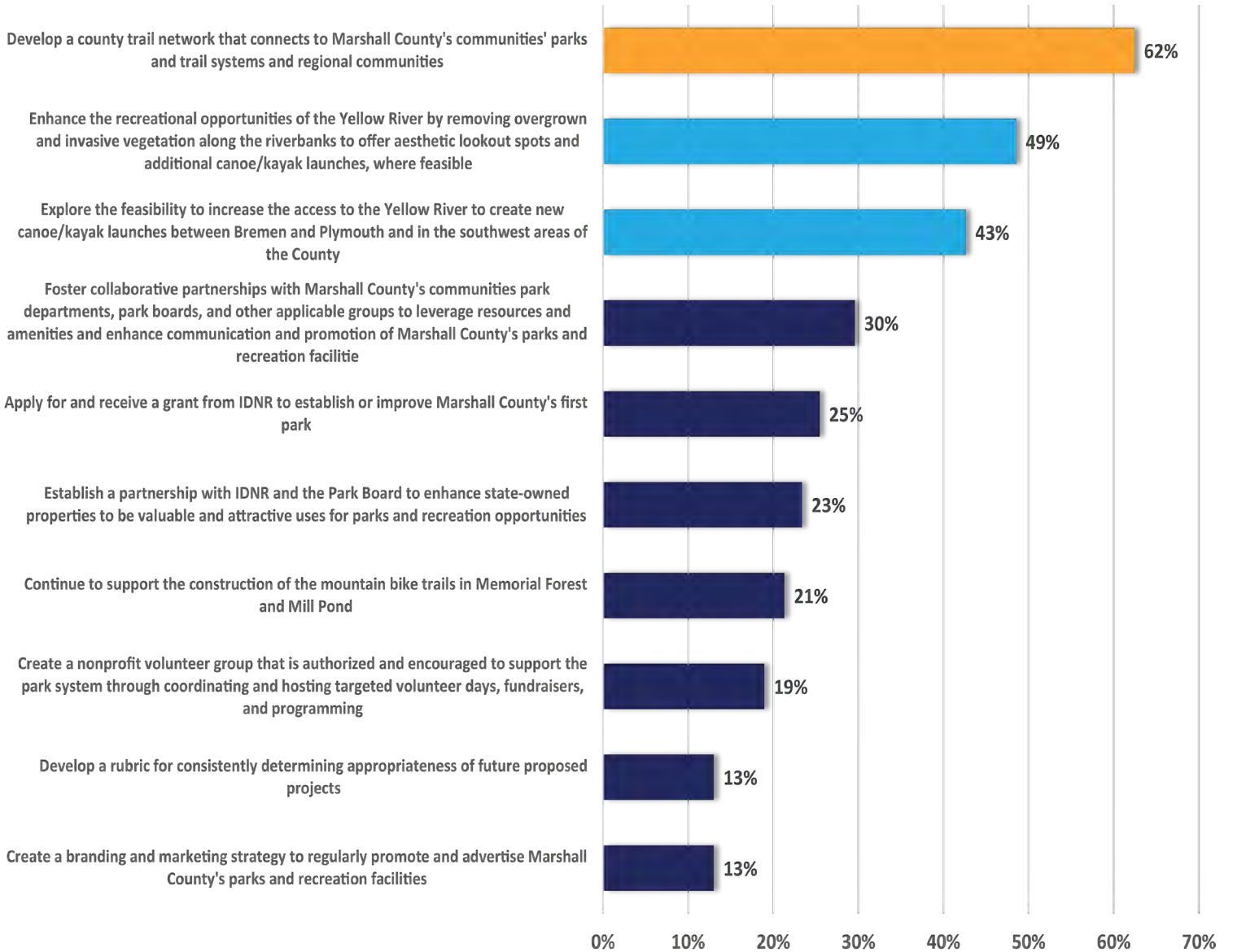
Community Event Notifications - Communication

8. How do you get notified of community events and activities? (Select all that apply)



5-Year Priorities

9. Please select your top three (3) priorities that you think the Marshall County Park Board should first focus on implementing in the next five (5) years.



Marshall County

Public Comments Summary

2021-2025 Marshall County Parks Master Plan Public Comments

Date	Submitted by	Public Comments	Response
4/5/2021	Anonymous resident, Submitted on the online comment form	I wonder if these plans were in your neighborhood if you would still want to go through with them?	Submittal requested that no response was needed.
4/5/2021	Anonymous resident, Submitted on the online comment form	If you want to mountain bike, go to the mountains!	Submittal requested that no response was needed.

PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY PRESS RELEASE



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release, March 10, 2021

PARTICIPATE IN MARSHALL COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN SURVEY

MARSHALL COUNTY, Indiana – The Marshall County Parks Board has been working on developing its first 5-year park master plan to help establish a vision and priorities to guide the establishment of the Marshall County parks and recreation system. This plan seeks to address the needs of Marshall County residents and enhance the county’s quality of life by providing access to quality parks and recreational amenities.

This Plan will not be successful or meaningful unless it reflects the goals and aspirations of the users of Marshall County’s parks and recreational amenities! The Marshall County Parks Board wants to hear your ideas of what recreational amenities you think are missing and would like to see added in Marshall County as well as setting priorities to guide the Park Board over the next five years. One of the ways you can participate is to fill out this brief Marshall County Parks Master Plan Survey at tiny.cc/MarshallCoParksPlan by **March 25th**. Your input will help lay the foundation for the Marshall County parks and recreation system.

"Marshall County has a great opportunity to imagine a park and recreation program from scratch. We are blessed to have two sizable natural areas, which are already owned by the County, and they are filled with possibilities, states Adam Thada, Vice-President of the Marshall County Parks Board." "We currently have a volunteer board and no staff, so we will be relying on members of the public and civic organizations for their ideas and support. Our parks belong to the people of Marshall County. Taking a few minutes to fill out this survey will help us design a system that will benefit everyone."

We encourage you to follow the Marshall County Parks Board on Facebook [@MarshallCountyPR](https://www.facebook.com/MarshallCountyPR) to stay informed of future parks and recreation events in Marshall County and be notified (notifications) to review the draft Marshall County Park Master Plan that will be available later this month! If you would like more information or have comments, please contact Donny Ritsema with MACOG at dritsema@macog.com or 574-287-1829, ext. 503.

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For additional information, contact MACOG at (574) 287-1829.

227 W. Jefferson Boulevard, 11th Floor County-City Building, South Bend, IN 46601

Phone: 574.287.1829 or 574.674.8894 • Fax: 574.239.4072 • www.macog.com

LEGAL AD FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Input on Draft Marshall County 5-Year Park Master Plan

The Marshall County Park Board is seeking public input on the draft 5-year park master plan, the Board's first park master plan. The draft Plan will provide a framework to guide the Park Board over the next five years to establish and enhance the Marshall County park and recreation system.

The public comment period will run from April 1, 2021, to April 9, 2021. The draft Plan will be available for electronic review on the Marshall County website or a hard copy can be reviewed at the Plymouth Public Library. You may submit your comments on the Plan no later than April 9, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. using the form found here: <http://tiny.cc/MarshallCountyParks>. Additionally, you may leave comments on the Park Board's Facebook Page @MarshallCountyPR, email them to Donny Ritsema at dritsema@macog.com, or leave a voicemail at 574-287-1829, ext. 888.

April 2, 2021 PN322939 hspaxlp

PRESS RELEASE FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release, April 1, 2021

MARSHALL COUNTY SEEKS INPUT ON THE PARKS MASTER PLAN

MARSHALL COUNTY, Indiana – The Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board has been working on developing its first 5-year park master plan to help establish a vision and priorities to guide the establishment of the Marshall County parks and recreation system. This plan seeks to address the needs of Marshall County residents and enhance the county’s quality of life by providing access to quality parks and recreational amenities.

The Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board kicked off the planning process in January 2021 and was built upon community engagement efforts to guide the establishment of a vision and mission for the Board, the major challenges and gaps, and priorities to guide implementation efforts over the next five years. Engagement efforts included holding monthly Steering Committee meetings, conducting stakeholder interviews, and issuing a public input survey.

The public input survey was available as an online and paper survey from March 10, 2021, to March 25, 2021, and received great responses from 339 county residents! The feedback received helped identify the major challenges and gaps with establishing the County’s first parks and recreation system, amenities they would like to see developed, and the top three priorities they would like to see implemented in the next five years. These community engagement efforts helped the Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board and Steering Committee to identify the priority action strategies. The draft Marshall County Parks Master Plan is now ready for public review!

"After a lot of hard work by the steering committee - and with the generous guidance provided by MACOG - we are happy to release the draft of our five-year plan. Starting from complete scratch last year, the Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board needs to hear from as many of Marshall County’s residents as possible, states Adam Thada, Vice-President of the Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board." "In order to build a high-quality and long-lasting parks system; we need a plan built with the input and assistance of individuals, civic organizations, businesses, and local governments."

This Plan will not be successful or meaningful unless it reflects the goals and aspirations of the users of Marshall County’s parks and recreational amenities! The Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board needs to hear your comments and support with establishing the Marshall County parks and recreation system!

Visit the homepage of the Marshall County website at <https://www.co.marshall.in.us/> to review the draft Plan or hard copies are available at the Plymouth Public Library. You may submit your comments until April 9, 2021, at 4:00 PM using one of the following ways; use this online form, <http://tiny.cc/MarshallCountyParks>, on the Marshall County Parks & Recreation Board’s Facebook page [@MarshallCountyPR](#), or leave a voice message at 574-287-1829, ext. 888 for a committee member to respond to you.

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For additional information, contact MACOG at (574) 287-1829.

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Marshall County

2021-2025

PARKS MASTER PLAN