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# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023

PRESERVATION PARKS OF DELAWARE COUNTY

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## **Preservation Parks Board of Commissioners**

John W. Bader  
Glenn Marzluf  
Bruce Ruhl

## **Executive Director**

Tom Curtin

## **Deputy Director**

Mary Van Haaften

Thanks also to all staff members, volunteers, and members of the public who contributed to the Plan.

## **Consulting Support**

Barbara Heller and Danielle Wilson, *Heller and Heller Consulting LLC*

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# INTRODUCTION



The Preservation Parks of Delaware County (PPDC) Strategic Plan provides direction for the next five years, 2019 through 2023. The Strategic Plan's intent is to:

- Create a roadmap for the future direction of the District
- Confirm the mission and creation of vision and values
- Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the District
- Provide Park Commissioners and staff with the ability to focus on strategic direction
- Unify the organization around a common vision
- Create action toward accomplishment, including measurement of progress
- Align with the District's 10-year Plan to continue forward progress

The Board of Park Commissioners, community key leaders, system users, volunteers, and employees were engaged in the process. In addition, a statistically valid survey was distributed to Delaware County households in order to get broad input from all sectors of the County. The previously completed 10-Year Plan was reviewed to ensure information from that plan was used to inform the Strategic Plan. A comprehensive review of PPDC data including the program guide, website, budget information, organization charts, review of programs, financial information, Year in Review reports, and previous surveys was completed. All of this information served to provide good insight into the agency.



The Preservation Parks of Delaware County Strategic Plan includes major areas as follows:

- Executive Summary
- Review of Mission and development of Vision and Values
- Review of Demographics
- Community, Board, Volunteer, and Staff Engagement Summary
- Household Survey Summary
- Information about the Balanced Scorecard Strategic Framework
- Strategic Themes
- Strategic Objectives
- Strategy Map
- Key Performance Indicators
- Strategic Initiatives
- Guidelines for implementation
- Strategic Plan Definitions

The sequence of steps involved in the development of strategy included the following:



The rest of the Plan details each of these steps, including a summary of the focus groups, demographics and household survey analysis, the results of organizational performance and comparative information, mission review and vision/values development. Next, the Strategic Themes, Objectives, and Initiatives for the next five years are detailed. The last step of the process includes a listing of key performance indicators (KPIs) that relate to the Strategic Objectives. Additionally, included in the Plan is a set of guidelines and definitions that will assist the District in operationalizing the Strategic Plan, making it a living document for the next five years.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary provides a high level snapshot of the information included in the Plan. One of the first steps in the strategy process was the review and refinement of the Mission Statement, the development of a Vision Statement, and the creation of Organizational Values, as follows:

**MISSION STATEMENT** *To protect and conserve the natural and historic features of Delaware County and to inspire outdoor exploration and learning*

**VISION STATEMENT** *To inspire the care of nature and the community for a sustainable future*

### VALUES

**Integrity:** We are true to ourselves and others, we keep our promises, and we are consistent between what we say and what we do.

**Teamwork:** We value and respect each other in working together toward a common goal.

**Creativity:** We embrace the use of imagination in the development and delivery of our services.

**Stewardship:** We endeavor to exhibit responsible planning and management of resources.

### DEMOGRAPHICS SUMMARY:

Delaware County's population continues to grow, with a population of 174,214 in 2010 according to US Census information. The population is anticipated to grow to 221,376 in 2022. This represents a 27.1% increase. This significant population growth will affect Preservation Parks operations, with a need for additional park acreage, programs and services, staff support, and operational resources.

Overall, youth population is projected to increase significantly, at 17.5%, with high school age population growing by 33%. Every category of adult population is anticipated to increase as well. The largest increase will be in the senior population, or those over 75 years, with an increase of 80.2% (6,605 in 2010 to 11,904 in 2022). When coupled with the 64.3% increase in the active adult aged population (55 to 74 years), the number of all adults over the age of 55 is anticipated to increase by over 67%, or 24,428 people.

Nearly 90% of residents reported being White Alone in the 2010 Census. The remaining 10% was reported as primarily Asian Alone, Black Alone, and Two or More Races. Race composition is projected to decrease by 4.9% in White Alone with increases in all other race designations; most significant is Asian Alone growing to 7.8% of the population. The ethnicity of Hispanic origin (a designation independent of race designation) is expected to experience a 0.9% increase by 2022.

The median household income in Delaware County was \$98,635 in 2010, about 67% higher than the United States national median income of \$59,039 in 2017. An 8.5% increase is projected in Delaware County by the year 2022, to \$104,515.



### ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY:

The development of the Preservation Parks Strategic Plan included a significant community engagement process. Community leaders, Delaware County residents, Board and staff members, volunteers, and park users were included throughout the process to ensure the strategic vision was informed, in large part, by the residents of the County. Engagement included a variety of feedback mechanisms to ensure responses from all segments of the community. This included:

- Park Board focus group and four staff focus groups
- Four public focus groups
- Twelve key leader meetings
- Volunteer survey
- Park intercept survey
- Statistically Valid Community Survey

Approximately 70 people participated in the focus groups and key leader meetings, 72 volunteers responded to the survey, and 170 park users participated in the Park Intercept Surveys. The Statistically Valid Household Survey included responses from 450 household members.

A highlight of common themes throughout included the Park District's strengths, as follows:

- Preservation Parks' commitment to its mission
- Excellent brand and image
- Excellent condition of the parks
- Good stewards of tax dollars
- Great appreciation of Preservation Parks being good land stewards
- Excellent program quality

Areas of needed improvement included:

- Awareness of the parks and their program offerings and services
- Connecting with County residents
- Use of technology

Important issues and challenges in upcoming years:

- The need to continue growing to keep pace with population growth
- Diversification of revenue streams
- Increased use of volunteers
- The importance of continued land acquisition
- The importance of trail development and maintenance
- Growing the program base of users
- Adapting to continuous changes in County demographics



Photo by Fritz Guth

## SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY:

ETC Institute administered a Community Survey for Preservation Parks of Delaware County during the summer of 2018 as part of the Strategic Plan process. The survey was administered as part of efforts to plan the future for parks and recreation opportunities; 450 surveys were returned. The survey and its results will guide Preservation Parks of Delaware County in establishing improvements to the District's existing and future parks, trails, and programs to best serve the needs of its residents. The survey will also help to establish priorities for the future improvements.

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following six facilities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Multi-use trails
- Nature trails
- Canopy walkways
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Sledding hill
- Natural areas and wildlife habitats

Based on the Priority Investment Rating for Programs, the following eight program areas were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Health, fitness and wellness programs
- Summer concerts
- Canoe/kayaking programs
- Programs for adults
- Nature programs
- Outdoor adventure programs
- Self-guided nature programs
- Gardening programs

## STRATEGIC THEMES, OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES:

Five Strategic Themes were developed as the foundation for Preservation Parks' strategic direction. The Themes follow the Balanced Scorecard approach to strategy, and include:

- *Customer:* Community Engagement
- *Financial:* Financial Sustainability
- *Internal Business:* Organizational Excellence
- *Learning and Growth:* A Growth Mindset
- *Sustainability:* Environmental Sustainability

Following the development of the Themes, Objectives in support of the Themes were developed. The next step in the process included the development of Strategic Initiatives. The full list of Objectives and Initiatives are included in the body of the report, along with timeframes from 2019 through 2023.

The following is a listing of some of the most significant Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop a cross functional team of employees to use the statistically valid needs assessment survey to guide decision making.
- Develop a strategic marketing plan to continue to increase community awareness of parks and establish direction for overall marketing approaches.
- Identify and fulfill needs in the community by aligning with appropriate strategic partnerships and create greater awareness and promotion of existing partnerships.
- Develop a systematic approach to gaining customer satisfaction feedback through various methods, including focus groups, surveys, audits, mystery shopping, and program evaluations.
- Expand fitness and wellness opportunities, as this program area was listed as the most important household need in the community needs assessment survey.
- Grow alternative revenue such as additional grant sources, foundation and friends groups, review fee structure, evaluate potential county-wide mitigation fee program to acquire additional parkland, and research charitable giving opportunities.
- Position the agency for continued awareness and continued levy support.



- Identify the processes in most need of streamlining and assign accountability for improvement of processes to individual employees or a team of employees.
- Create a culture of visionary thinking that inspires District employees to be creative and imaginative in delivering services.
- Explore ways to adapt industry innovations to improve PPDC offerings and processes.
- Develop a short term Technology Plan.
- Develop mechanisms for training in order to expand technology skills of employees at all levels of the organization.
- Identify future skill competencies and areas of additional staff resources needed to support District operations throughout all departments.
- Develop innovation as part of the organizational culture through empowerment of employees, a cross functional innovation team, and the creation of an idea generation program.
- Develop a process for leadership succession for key leadership positions.
- Create ways to minimize PPDC environmental impact.
- Complete an environmental audit.
- Encourage vendors/contractors/partners to implement sustainable practices.
- Develop a list of sustainable practices/actions and definitions for the District.
- Provide educational opportunities within the District as well as the Delaware County community.
- Purchase land, restore habitat, and connect these lands and resources to protect the water, air, and soils needed to provide viable habitat and healthy places to live.



Photo by Teresa Staats

## DEMOGRAPHICS REVIEW

Demographic data used for the analysis were obtained from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data were acquired in May 2018, and reflect actual numbers as reported in the 2010 US Bureau of the Census and demographic projections for 2017 (current) and 2022 as estimated by ESRI.

### AGE

Of the 174,214 residents recorded in the 2010 US Census, the median age of Delaware County residents was 37.2 years. The chart below depicts the population of Delaware County based on age group. The Census 2010 column is actual data collected through the United States Census process. The 2017 and 2022 columns are current and estimated projections.

Population by Age	Census 2010		2017		2022	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
0-4 years	12,980	7.5%	13,443	6.7%	14,523	6.6%
5-9 years	15,656	9.0%	15,975	8.0%	16,385	7.4%
10-14 years	14,085	8.1%	16,781	8.4%	17,493	7.9%
15-19 years	11,593	6.7%	13,932	7.0%	15,439	7.0%
20-24 years	7,210	4.1%	10,032	5.0%	10,080	4.6%
25-34 years	19,042	10.9%	20,773	10.4%	24,003	10.8%
35-44 years	29,877	17.1%	29,509	14.7%	31,928	14.4%
45-54 years	27,392	15.7%	30,119	15.0%	30,718	13.9%
55-64 years	19,862	11.4%	25,319	12.6%	28,377	12.8%
65-74 years	9,912	5.7%	15,712	7.8%	20,526	9.3%
75-84 years	4,934	2.8%	6,371	3.2%	9,086	4.1%
85+ years	1,671	1.0%	2,305	1.2%	2,818	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>174,214</b>		<b>200,271</b>		<b>221,376</b>	



The population of Delaware County overall is projected to grow 27.1 percent between 2010 and 2022. The following charts will break down the population shifts between youth and adults according to the same age groupings in the prior chart.

### YOUTH POPULATION SHIFTS

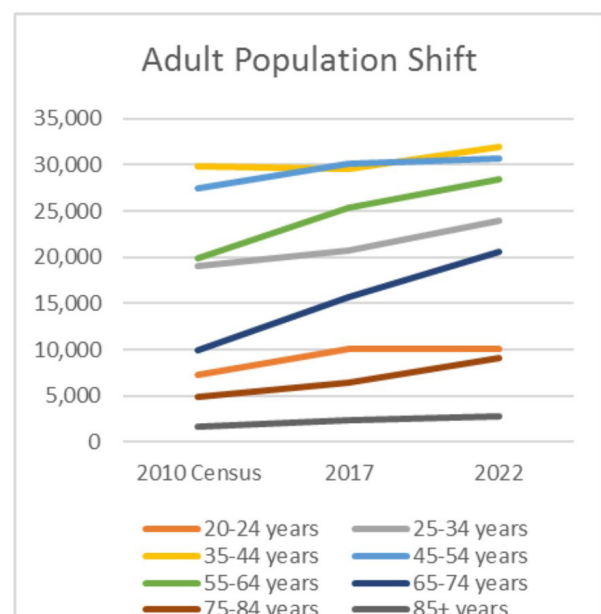
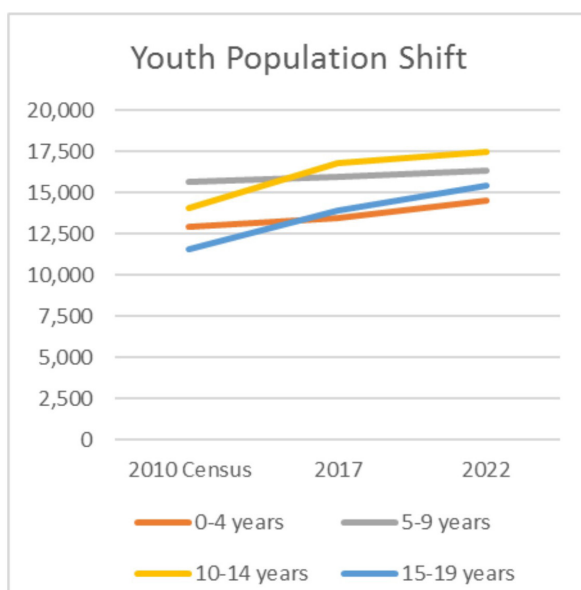
As a whole, the youth population is projected to increase by 17.5%. The largest anticipated shift within the youth category is an increase of high school age youth from 11,593 in 2010 to 15,439 in 2022, or a 33.3% increase. Middle school youth will likely increase 24.2%, from 14,085 to 17,493. Early childhood youth and Elementary School age youth are predicted to increase by 11.9% and 4.7% respectively. This data suggests that youth and family programming and services should prepare for an influx of users to serve.

### ADULT POPULATION SHIFTS

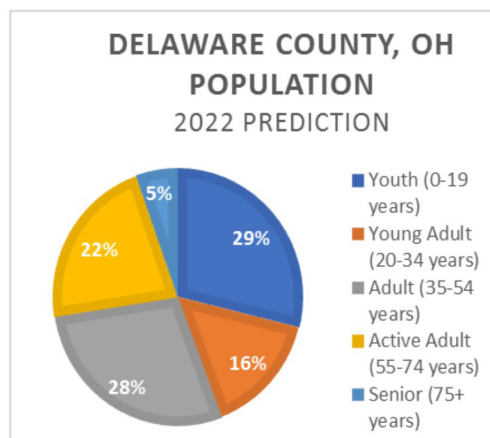
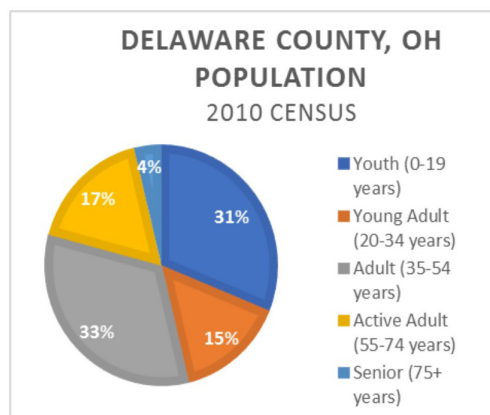
Every category of the adult population is anticipated to increase as well. The largest increase will be in the senior population, or those over 75 years, with an increase of 80.2% (6,605 in 2010 to 11,904 in 2022). When coupled with the 64.3% increase in the active adult population (55 to 74 years), the population of all adults over the age of 55 is anticipated to increase by over 67%, or 24,428 people. These are some very rare figures, when compared to national statistics. Young adults ages 20-34 years are also predicted to experience an increase of population, by 33.2%, followed by adults ages 35-54 years at 9.4%.

### OLDER ADULTS (55+)

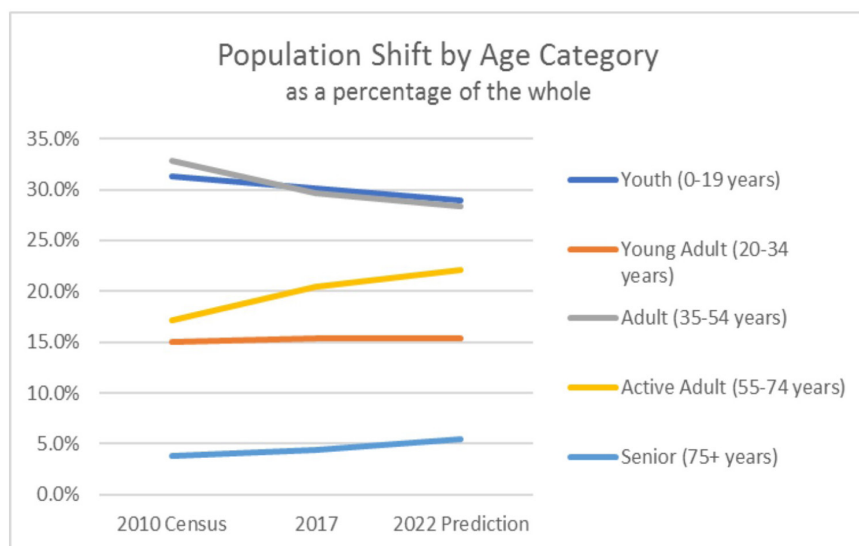
In addition to other growing age segments, future programming plans should also focus on the influx of people over the age of 55, who nation-wide have shown an increased demand for services that focus on their health and wellness as well as giving back to the community through volunteer efforts.



For ease of analysis and a more practical application, the data charted on the previous two pages were broken down into more generalized age categories. The percentage of Delaware County's population that fell into those categories in 2010 and the predicted breakdown of percentage by category in 2022 is depicted below:



The shift observed in these pie charts can also be visualized in the graph below:



The charts earlier in this report depicted the quantity of population increases by age groups; whereas, the graphs above represent the shift in age categories as a percentage of the whole population. Active adults are predicted to shift by four percentage points, from 17.1% in 2010 to 22.1% of the Delaware County population in 2022. When coupled with the shift in Seniors from 3.8% to 5.4% of the total population, Adults over the age of 55 are projected to account for over one quarter, or 27.5%, of the Delaware County population. Youth are expected to account for a slightly smaller percent range of the population from 31.3% to 28.9%. These shifts in percentage of the whole population show an anticipated aging trend.

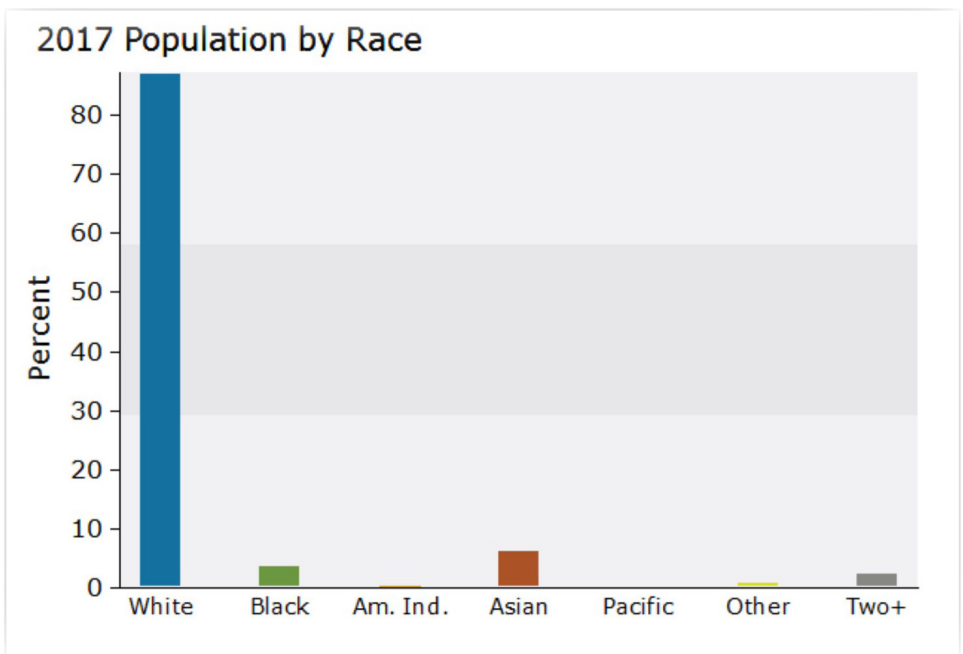


## RACE

Most of Delaware County's residents, nearly 90%, reported having a race of White Alone in the 2010 Census. The other ten percent was reported as a mix of primarily Asian Alone (4.3%), Black Alone (3.4%), and Two or More Races (1.8%). It is projected that Delaware County's race composition will shift by a 4.9 percentage point reduction in White Alone by 2022; subsequent increases are anticipated across all the other race designations with the highest being Asian Alone at 7.8%. The ethnicity of Hispanic origin (a designation independent of race designation) is expected to experience a 0.9% increase by 2022.

A look into population numbers instead of percentages, however, provides a more complete understanding into the predicted racial changes. Although the population is projected to grow in all race designations, Delaware County is anticipated to house nearly 10,000 more Asian residents, nearly 3,000 residents who identify as Two or More Races, and over 2,000 more Black residents. Those who identify as being of Hispanic Origin are also anticipated to increase by nearly 3,000 residents. The significance in these figures is that the needs of a greater variety and larger quantity of cultural user groups will accompany the shift in population. Preservation may be considered "universal" in concept, regardless of race; however, the use of the space and the amenities provided may need to be viewed through

Race and Ethnicity	2010 census		2017		2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Alone	156,328	89.7%	174,594	87.2%	187,674	84.8%
Black Alone	5,837	3.4%	6,922	3.5%	8,163	3.7%
American Indian Alone	252	0.1%	369	0.2%	452	0.2%
Asian Alone	7,436	4.3%	12,288	6.1%	17,186	7.8%
Pacific Islander Alone	51	0.0%	73	0.0%	91	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1,097	0.6%	1,485	0.7%	1,845	0.8%
Two or More Races	3,213	1.8%	4,540	2.3%	5,965	2.7%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	3,669	2.1%	5,220	2.6%	6,579	3.0%

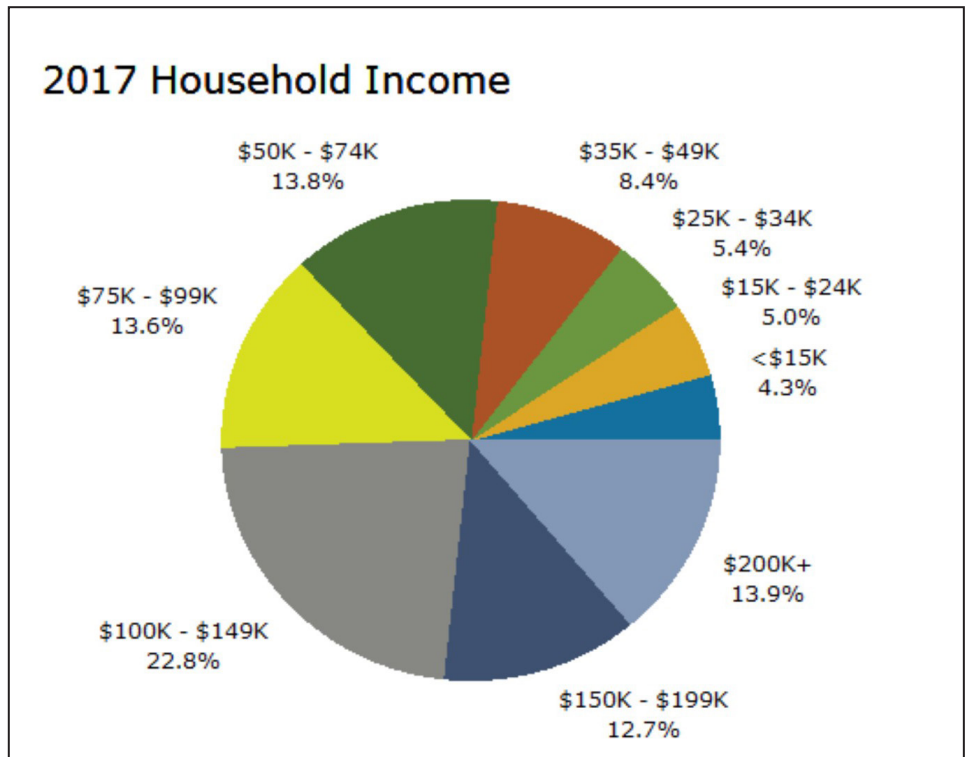


a more diverse lens. For example, traditionally the Hispanic culture is highly familial in its recreation endeavors. Subsequently, larger picnic shelters with higher seating capacity will likely be sought after by this group.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median household income in Delaware County was \$98,635 in 2010, about 67% higher than the United States national median income of \$59,039 in 2017. An 8.5% increase is projected in Delaware County by the year 2022, to \$104,515. This chart shows the breakdown by income level.

Generally speaking, Delaware County can be described as affluent. It is important to also remember that with the wealth is a reality that nearly one quarter (23.1%) of the County has an annual household income less than \$49,000. As a public entity, continued services and price points to meet the needs of all income levels will be a community necessity.



## ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The development of the Preservation Parks Strategic Plan included a robust community engagement process. Community, Board and staff members were included throughout the process to ensure the strategic vision was informed, in large part, by the residents of the County. Engagement included a variety of feedback mechanisms to ensure responses from all segments of the community. This included:

- One Park Board focus group
- Four staff focus groups
- Four public focus groups
- Twelve key leader meetings
- Volunteer survey
- Park intercept survey
- Statistically Valid Community Survey

Approximately 70 people participated in the focus groups and key leader meetings, 72 volunteers responded to the survey, and 170 park users participated in the Park Intercept Surveys. The Statistically Valid Household Survey included responses from 450 household members.

The following information details the summary of the engagement meetings, volunteer survey results, and park intercept survey. The statistically valid survey results follow this section.

### PRESERVATION PARKS STRENGTHS

The overall sentiment of Preservation Parks was highly positive; the majority of comments were complimentary and approving of the services delivered. Recent rebranding, outreach, and leadership efforts were frequently commended. Participants were never at a loss for words when asked to describe the strengths of the District. Themes were easily-identifiable as participants continued to express the same positive sentiment throughout the engagement sessions.

Diversity among the parks, all with their own unique experiences, was a common focus. There is a great appreciation for the geographic equity of the park locations; disbursement throughout the county was often highlighted. Awareness of the parks' role in habitat protection was high. The parks seem to be meeting the community's strong desire and appreciation for green space. Most participants gave positive sentiments regarding land acquisition; a few participants had a different opinion and mentioned that the District was interested in buying too much land.

The staff were often complimented for their friendliness and great programming; programs were often qualified as "excellent." The look and feel of the parks were consistently praised—they are new, modern, and well-maintained. Cleanliness and safety were frequently complimented.

As one participant noted, there is a, "comfortable feeling to (the parks), nothing overdone but all well maintained." Trails were described by another participant as, "accessible, natural, cleared, with identifying placards along the way." The family-friendly environment where pets can be included was highly valued. Some expressed that the District's role as an affordable community service provider was great and should continue.

The District's future-focus and growth mindset, as evidenced by the strategic planning efforts, was commended. Preservation Parks has a great reputation for delivering on its promises. The success of the recent levy was repeatedly cited as a testament to the community's approval and support of the parks.



## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS/WEAKNESSES**

The concept of identity was a common theme throughout the engagement process. Although improving, consistent confusion in distinguishing which park and/or land belongs to which jurisdiction was expressed as a common occurrence. Differentiating among all the local parks and green spaces and simultaneously collaborating with other green space providers to connect spaces, to not overlap services, and to get people into all the parks were expressed needs. Cooperative efforts to enhance park connectivity via trails was a recurring topic discussed in nearly all the groups.

The underlying question of when to stop acquiring land and shift to developing and maintaining the parks wove into several conversations. Most expressed the appropriateness of continued land acquisition, with several opinions that Preservation Parks should seek to increase the size of current parks and/or seek out larger spaces. Ease of maintenance and longer trails were cited as reasons for larger parks. The pursuit of endowments and/or land donations in lieu of future purchasing were suggested opportunities.

An assessment of appropriate staffing levels to coincide with continued growth was recommended. Currently, special initiatives and projects tend to pull staff from regular maintenance tasks such as mowing and trash pick-up. Field staff suggested more efficient meetings with less frequency would enhance their productivity. Public focus group comments also suggested that it would be nice for leadership staff and board members to have more of a presence at events.

Increased use of volunteers, with a better use of their time and improved communication with volunteers was suggested in several groups. The establishment of a friends group and foundation were also proposed as ways to further engage the community. The park district currently has a Friends of Preservation Parks, which is a committee created to raise funds for the levy. Two separate groups mentioned the idea of increasing the size of the board, due to the budget size and to add diversity of age/race/gender/experience. From a programmatic perspective, increased rental opportunities were suggested as a way to better-utilize existing facilities and increase revenue. Teens and millennials were the two age groups with the highest perceived need for enhanced programming and outreach. Expanded water access and embracing river trails as an expansion of preservation were also mentioned.

## **MOST IMPORTANT FUTURE ISSUES FOR THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS**

The primary issue expressed throughout the process surrounded the concept of land acquisition. Because the County continues to experience extensive growth, the availability of land, and the increased price for that land, was a commonly-identified hurdle. Many were of the opinion that Preservation Parks needs to acquire land now, while it is still available. Another participant wondered when people would feel that the Park District has “enough land.”

Expectations of use, specifically the balance between preservation and recreation, was an identified hot-topic. Competing interpretations of the words preservation and recreation will directly impact how decisions regarding future amenities, programs, and services will be made. Achieving a strategic vision between passive and more active activities will be a significant component to strategic direction. From an ecological perspective, controlling invasive species was the top-identified future issue. Insects such as ticks and the concern for the disease(s) they carry were also acknowledged.

Future funding, specifically the need to pass future levies, was described as a potential hurdle. Competition for tax dollars and maintaining consistent (or lower) tax rates were also mentioned as important fiscal considerations. Maintaining sufficient quantity and quality of staff, retaining good employees, and adjusting to the predicted growing pains that come with change were identified as potential issues the internal operation may face.

### **PRESERVATION PARKS MISSION**

Focus group participants were asked to describe the mission of Preservation Parks. Land acquisition and preservation were mentioned most frequently. Less frequently mentioned was the commitment to offering of passive recreation. Protecting biodiversity and aesthetics of the parks are important as is minimizing invasive species.

Preservation Parks is seen as improving the quality of life in the County. Other comments included providing recreational opportunities for children and offering recreation and education programs for everyone.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

The other municipal entities within Delaware County were identified as key partners: cities, townships, school districts, and libraries were mentioned most frequently. With finite tax dollars, collaboration was suggested as a way to be responsible fiscal stewards.

Ohio Wesleyan University was frequently mentioned as a potential partner, as were other nearby colleges and universities (or their extensions). Businesses in the private sector were noted as possible new partners, as were various clubs, groups, and associations. Wellness initiatives with health department and/or local health care providers were discussed as a viable tool to positively impact community health. School partnerships for youth at risk may be another possibility. Also mentioned were developing contacts and relationships with local conservation organizations such as stream restoration groups, Ohio Sierra Club, and Audubon Society chapters.

A focus on relationship-building was mentioned by staff and partners alike. It seems all parties would appreciate more time to collaborate. Ultimately, regardless of the entity specifically mentioned, the focus on working together on project initiatives for the betterment of the community was expected and encouraged.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS**

Many participant comments revolved around the concept of the District's communication improving recently. The recent Program Guide mailing (Summer, 2018) was fresh in the minds of many participants. Some had not recalled receiving a mailing in a while and were grateful to have received the newest information. Periodic county-wide mailings have contributed to awareness of the Park District.

Social media was quoted repeatedly as both a strength and a weakness. This disparity seemed to fall between those who use and follow the existing channels and those who do not. Often comments were made to the effect of if you know what to look/watch for in communication, you'll find a plethora of information. Social media was the go-to answer in nearly every session; of particular note were those who agreed but also commented that traditional methods must remain, to continue to reach non-users of social media.

The unified look of the new brand was appreciated and well-received. The updated Program Guide was described by one participant as, "colorful, informative, attractive, and induces people to pick them up." Its visual appeal was frequently commended. A concentrated, organized marketing plan was suggested, reaching out to both the obvious municipal

channels but also the local political subdivisions, homeowner associations, schools and school associations. The enhanced use of local media (e.g. television) was mentioned, as well as using existing groups' newsletters, websites, and social media sites to share upcoming information.

A couple of focus group participants also noted that the logo is fine; changing it requires a lot of money and doesn't seem worth it.

To summarize, "it's getting better" was a common quote. Specifically, more residents are now aware of the District as an agency and able to distinguish which parks are a part of Preservation Parks. Presence at events throughout the county was touted as a positive way the District was building awareness. Several participants suggested that the District electronically share news and/or updates on a regular basis with all partners and key leaders, so they can pass along news and stay in-the-know. Banners throughout the parks and communities were also suggested as a way to encourage awareness and participation. Having board meetings in the evenings when more people have an opportunity to attend was another suggestion.

## CHANGES IN THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

This question related to how programs, services, and facilities will be impacted by changes in park visitors' requirements, industry trends, and how Delaware County residents will want to allocate their time in the future. The competitive landscape relates not only to other providers of similar services, but also, how Preservation Parks will compete for people's time.

Many of the comments referred to the importance of creating memorable experiences. How can Preservation Parks differentiate itself to create those experiences? There were multiple comments about creating self-directed opportunities in the parks, such as self-guided programs, trail walks and virtual experiences. Education programs can also serve as a means to differentiate the customer experience.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) may help in identifying park user needs in the future. AI is defined as the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings. The term is frequently applied to developing systems that possess the intellectual processes characteristic of humans, such as the ability to reason, discover meaning, generalize, or learn from past experience.

It's also important to continuously pay attention to industry trends and county demographics to adapt services and programs to match the needs of visitors. The importance of establishing multiple touchpoints with residents is also important to continue creating awareness of parks. Providing fitness opportunities also was called out as an area to highlight. Creating indoor and outdoor rental facilities for weddings and events was mentioned as one way of expanding the customer base.



Photo by Donna Braig



## IDEAS FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE FOR PRESERVATION PARKS CONSIDERATION

The following is a listing of all the comments related to future programs and services.

Overall, comments included:

### Trails, Walks, Facilities

- We just want to go and have a nice walk
- Enlarging more parks
- Increased diversity in trail types
- More accessibility to parks (Char-Mar as an example)
- Nature centers are a nice draw
- Nice picnic areas are desired
- Nice bathroom facilities throughout the park
- Play areas for kids
- Nice, safe time with kids; enough to do to keep interest
- Hiking, biking, birdwatching
- Have food trucks
- Weddings hosted at parks
- Animals in each of the places
- Pilot a primitive camp program along the Ohio to Erie Trail
- Have a lot more recreational activities; like a zipline, other natural play structures
- The Farm seems uncharacteristic for Preservation Parks; are there other opportunities such as an outdoor amphitheater? [and programming opportunities that develop from those new/different facilities]

### Programs/Activities

- Programming is impressive
- Great job — just do more
- More naturalists to be able to offer more
- Owl Prowl
- Solar workshop
- Night walks
- Keep education going
- Geocaching
- Howl at the moon walks
- More arts in the park – visual, sensory
- No meteor shower observation

### Farm Programs

- Great Gallant Farm and history piece — that's neat
- We need another Stratford
- Stratford Ecological Center; farm-ish org, study old farming techniques; sustainability programs; animals; insects
- Working farm
- Sheep shearing day — connection to “real,” organic, authentic experiences
- Raised gardens/ beds
- Programs about how to grow food

### Age-specific/special programs

- More senior activities
- Activities for grandparents bringing grandchildren
- Things that appeal to customers' wants and needs
- Millennial families are growing; there is a draw to farm animals; youth programming
- Therapeutic/Special recreation programs
- Programs for high-school aged kids
- Enticing non-naturalists to come to the parks

### Camps

- Because the summer camp programs fill up so quickly, give preference to families that were not given an opportunity the previous year to register before returning children
- Day camps make sense in the summer
- More camps (sell out in 12 minutes), especially farm camps
- Keep doing camps; getting pricy though
- Farm camp — turning kids away
- Summer camps? Work on farm like the farm camp at another agency. Family farm chores

### Nature/ Conservation

- More organism-focused activities featuring local biological experts (local universities, conservation organizations)
- For example, if there are 100 acres of greenspace, dedicate half active, half passive acres
- Get some serious long-term monitoring efforts underway
- Very good job partnering preservation areas next to usable areas
- Bio blitz — quick assessment of what's on the property
- Education such as the importance of trail connections, reducing invasive species

### Partnerships

- A transportation system to provide methods for people to get to the parks is needed
- Work with Source Point on offering day trips
- Are staff connected in with larger/broad array of groups/boards?

- Co-program with Delaware Historical Society
- More partnerships and programs with schools such as nature walks, history, bird watching
- Ensure partnering is occurring; overall Preservation Parks is good at programming
- Partner – manage property they don't own, i.e. habitat restoration
- Sponsorships from large employers in county
- Do not pursue a partnership with the Ohio Wesleyan observatory (other comments suggest it's a good partnership opportunity)

### **IDEAS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

All the groups were asked for their thoughts about any tools or techniques they thought would assist with the plan's implementation. Many comments related to the importance of staff buy-in for the plan as well as the importance of monitoring and communicating the plan's progress. Staff need to know they have been heard. The plan should be communicated to residents via the web and other methods such as the program guide. Develop some posters and photographs for the plan and send those out to employees, Board members, and the community. Progress along the way should be celebrated.

Other recommendations included the need for the plan to be realistic and simple to understand and tied into the performance appraisal process.

The plan needs to be flexible enough that if a change in priorities arise, then the plan will shift accordingly. The plan should include goals, objectives, specific timeframes, assigned accountability, and ways to measure progress. There should be regular, ongoing updates for the Board and all staff members and volunteers.

The strategic plan will provide direction for future staffing requirements. As mentioned earlier, the development of a staffing strategy will be helpful. The plan will also need to be aligned with the budget process to ensure that any recommendation that requires an investment of dollars will be accounted for in the budget process.

Other comments included:

- Have someone in charge of the plan
- Involve volunteers in the plan's implementation
- Develop a diverse advisory group to assist in implementation
- SMART sheet to keep staff connected
- Performance indicators and narrative of the results
- Collaborate with local entities, including the Chamber of Commerce
- Use the plan as a way for Preservation Parks to better tell its story
- Notify other government partners when a significant goal is reached
- Involve the public in developing priorities

## THE AGENCY'S ABILITY TO CHANGE AND INNOVATE

This question was asked only of the staff. There were mostly positive comments about the District's ability to change and innovate. Employees have become more empowered to change and innovate. Though, this was not an opinion held universally among all of the employees as some employees mentioned their new ideas are not accepted by their supervisor.

There was some thought that there is not enough variety in offerings to attract all age groups. Teens and young adults, in particular, seem to be age segments that are not well represented in park usage. There is an interest in the District being more of a leader in adapting to trends, rather than finding out what other agencies are doing and reacting to trends. According to some staff, there is some level of risk aversion.

When asked about the agency's ability to innovate, employees feel innovation does not occur universally throughout the District. Some areas and some supervisors are more willing to embrace change than others. Employees may need some training to help them become more creative and innovative.

There are more cross functional approaches to work, which has been helpful. Internal Resource Teams (IRT) have been assembled with members of various departments to create and review park planning and initiatives. The budget process has become more open and employees are participants in the process. There is more openness and communication among staff, which has helped with changing the way business is accomplished.

## FUTURE STAFFING REQUIREMENT SUGGESTIONS

This question was asked only of the staff. However, a couple of the public focus groups mentioned the need for additional natural resource staff, particularly for management and restoration efforts.

The strategic plan process should help to provide some direction related to staffing. The compelling area for consideration is the impact continued growth in the County will have on Preservation Parks.

A staffing strategy would be good for Preservation Parks to develop as it will provide staff with an idea of needed future competencies. Additional office space will be needed to accommodate more staff. With the addition of a foundation, a position dedicated to development opportunities may be needed. Other considerations include GIS support and an outdoor recreation coordinator who could offer activities such as backpacking and fishing trips. Additional operations, marketing, nature resources, education, and visitor services staff also will be needed.



Photo by Amy Boye



## INTERNAL SUPPORT EFFECTIVENESS

This question was asked only of staff. Internal support refers to the areas of the organization that have internal customers such as marketing, operations, human resources, administration, and finance. This is usually an area of difficulty for organizations, but for Preservation Parks, most of the staff opinions were positive. Overall the consensus of the staff was that internal support is effective. Employees work well together and are responsive to one another.

However, there were some opposing views about difficulties of trying to go through the chain of command and getting bogged down. Work gets done more quickly when employees work on more of a peer level. The hierarchy brings a level of complexity to getting work done. There were opinions from a few respondents that when staff members have an idea, it goes nowhere.

## TECHNOLOGY USE

Again, this question was asked only of staff. This was the most significant area of needed improvement. However, staff did mention there is now support for improved technology, and it was noted that technology is improving.

Other individual comments included:

- We are not all on the same server
- Everyone has high speed internet
- Phone system really needs improvement
- We should use videoconferencing
- Staff want to advance technology
- We should go paperless, but there is fear associated with that
- We can better use what we have
- Information is not centralized, which makes access difficult
- We need a shared information platform
- We need to be able to access remotely
- We have done (software) training for staff
- From a programming standpoint, we face challenges for payment systems
- Budgeting software is needed
- GIS capability is needed
- The Education Department has been allowed to purchase an iPad, which has been great
- We contract out technology, but they are not always responsive
- Desktop computers could be faster

- Over-dependence on technology; too many emails get sent for requests that need to be done right away
- Law enforcement is good as they have tablets
- Could we have QR/Bar codes?
- Need a new consultant/IT contractor or better internal option
- Initial hurdles: cables/Wi-Fi; now, finally able to get service to parks
- Now we're budgeting for increasing computer technologies
- Now Operations can work out of two locations – creates more accessibility
- Different locations have different file storage areas
  - Sharepoint vs. Hogback = real divide
- Contracted service is a true challenge, no ownership in parks
- There was mention of having an app but others mentioned not wanting an app
- SEO partner helps
- How to use technology to better market ourselves? Possibilities are endless.

## DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Again, this was asked of staff only. Staff members were asked to provide words or phrases that best describe the organizational culture. Frequent words and descriptions included: positive, cooperative, open to change, welcoming, team oriented, diverse and talented staff.

## VOLUNTEER SURVEY RESULTS

An online volunteer survey through Survey Gizmo was sent to 72 volunteers who performed a minimum of 20 hours in the past two years. Thirty-two surveys were completed, which is a 44% return rate. Overall, the responses indicate a high level of satisfaction toward volunteering for Preservation Parks. A few of the highest rated responses (at least 85% of responses were in agreement with the statement) included:

- Having necessary resources
- Park staff are available and responsive
- Satisfaction toward orientation and training
- Feeling appreciated
- Feel like you are making an impact
- Recommending volunteering
- Mission fulfillment

Scores below 85% agreement included:

- Fully being utilized
- Sufficient feedback

A few of the questions and the responses are listed below:

### ***Do you feel like your skills are being fully utilized as a volunteer?***

75.9 feel their talents have been fully utilized and 24.2% feel they are not.

### ***Are there other volunteer opportunities or roles that you feel should be offered?***

69% of respondents said no and 31% said yes. Some of the responses included having an intense volunteer effort in April to remove invasive species, opportunities to lead and plan programs, assisting with marketing efforts, and providing education to park visitors in addition to nature centers.

### ***What is the greatest challenge you feel Preservation Parks faces today?***

The most frequently mentioned items included:

- Land acquisition
- Expanding current parks
- Developing existing parks
- Invasive species
- Making sure the public is aware of preservation parks
- Building the volunteer base
- Land preservation

## PARK INTERCEPT SURVEYS

A group of eight volunteers completed 170 Park Intercept Surveys at all of the parks, aside from River Run. The goal was to complete at least 20 surveys at each park, which was achieved. Almost all of the survey respondents live in Delaware County, as 160 respondents live in the County. Ten other respondents live in one of four counties, aside from Delaware.

The distribution of respondents included:

• Delaware	160
• Franklin	5
• Union	3
• Licking	1
• Champaign	1

Almost half of the responses came from individuals ages 35 to 50. Other age segments of 18-34, 51-64, and 65+ were all equally represented between 16 and 18%. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were female.

The surveys were conducted during the time period of June 21 through July 15. A series of questions were asked. Preservation Parks staff then recorded the results on SurveyMonkey. A complete listing of the survey results is included in the Appendix. The following outlines highlights from the survey. The results show a very high level of satisfaction toward Preservation Parks.

### ***What are your top three reasons for coming to the park?***

The top three responses included:

- Personal exercise/fitness such as walking/running  
67.65% | 115 responses
- Escape in nature  
57.06% | 97 responses
- Wildlife viewing  
42.94% | 73 responses

This is important to know in terms of marketing the parks and establishing priorities for park additions and improvements.

These results are consistent with the engagement sessions and the Community Survey results. Respondents feel parks and facilities are clean and well cared for as 100% agreed the parks are well maintained.

Additionally, every respondent feels safe in the parks. When asked what improvements could be made to the parks, 83% mentioned no improvements were needed. Requested new amenities included additional trails, playgrounds, picnic tables, shelters, dog amenities, and water fountains.

As for further investment Preservation Parks should pursue, results show support for land acquisition and trails, as noted below:

- Purchasing additional parkland  
55.42% | 92 responses
- Building more trails  
27.71% | 46 responses
- Education programs  
14.46% | 24 responses
- Facility improvements  
1.8% | 3 responses

There is strong belief that Preservation Parks is fulfilling its mission as 85% views the mission as a significant strength. In addition, 90% of respondents feel the agency is spending tax dollars wisely.



## COMMUNITY SURVEY INFORMATION

ETC Institute administered a Community Survey for Preservation Parks of Delaware County during the summer of 2018 as part of the Strategic Plan process. The survey was administered as part of efforts to plan the future for parks and recreation opportunities. The survey and its results will guide Preservation Parks of Delaware County in establishing improvements to the District's existing and future parks, trails, and programs to best serve the needs of its residents. The survey will also help them to establish priorities for the future improvements.

The final information is a summary of the survey results. The complete survey questionnaire, survey report, benchmarking information, and cross tabulations are included in a separate document.

### METHODOLOGY

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in the Preservation Parks District. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online at [www.ppdcsurvey.org](http://www.ppdcsurvey.org).

Ten days after the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute sent emails and placed phone calls to the households that received the survey to encourage participation. The emails contained a link to the online version of the survey to make it easy for residents to complete the survey. To prevent people who were not residents of Delaware County from participating, everyone who completed the survey online was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC Institute then matched the addresses that were entered online with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed online did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the online survey was not counted.

The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 400 residents. The goal was exceeded with a total of 450 residents completing the survey. The overall results for the sample of 450 households have a precision of at least  $\pm 4.6\%$  at the 95% level of confidence.

### Major findings are as follows.

#### OPINION AND IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVATION PARKS

Respondents have a positive opinion toward Preservation Parks of Delaware County; fifty-one percent (51%) indicated they have a "very positive" opinion and twenty-nine percent (29%), have a "somewhat positive" opinion. Based on the sum of "extremely important" and "very important" responses, seventy-seven (77%) of residents, who had an opinion, indicated it is "extremely important" or "very important" to them that they have a county-wide park system like Preservation Parks.

#### ORGANIZATIONS USED FOR PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS

From a list of nine different organizations, respondents were asked to choose one (or more) organizations they had used in the past year for their recreation and/or fitness activities. The top three rated organizations that were chosen, as the most frequently used, were: State parks and recreation (62%), City parks and recreation (61%), and Preservation Parks of Delaware County (58%).

## BARRIERS TO PARK, FACILITY, AND PROGRAM USAGE

Respondents were asked from a list of 17 potential reasons to identify what prevents them from using parks, facilities, and programs offered by Preservation Parks of Delaware County more often. The top three reasons selected were:

- not knowing what is being offered (46%)
- too busy (37%)
- not knowing the locations of facilities (22%)

## FACILITY USE AND RATING

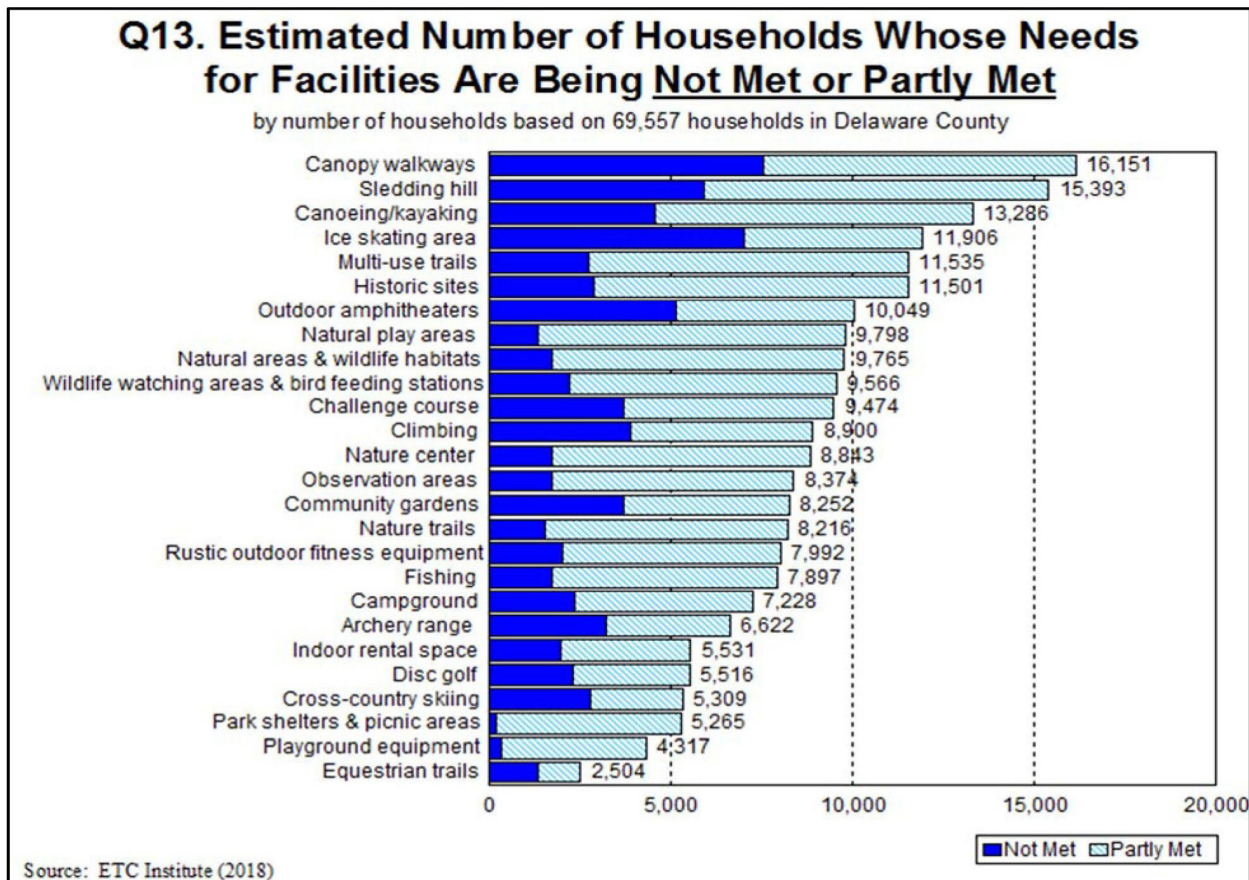
Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents specified they or members of their household visited a Preservation Park or facility/amenity during the past year. When respondents were asked to rate the overall physical condition of all Preservation Parks that they had visited, fifty-seven percent (57%) rated the Preservation Parks as “excellent” and thirty-nine percent (39%) gave a rating of “good.”

## FACILITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 26 recreation facilities and

amenities and rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had the greatest “unmet” need for various facilities.

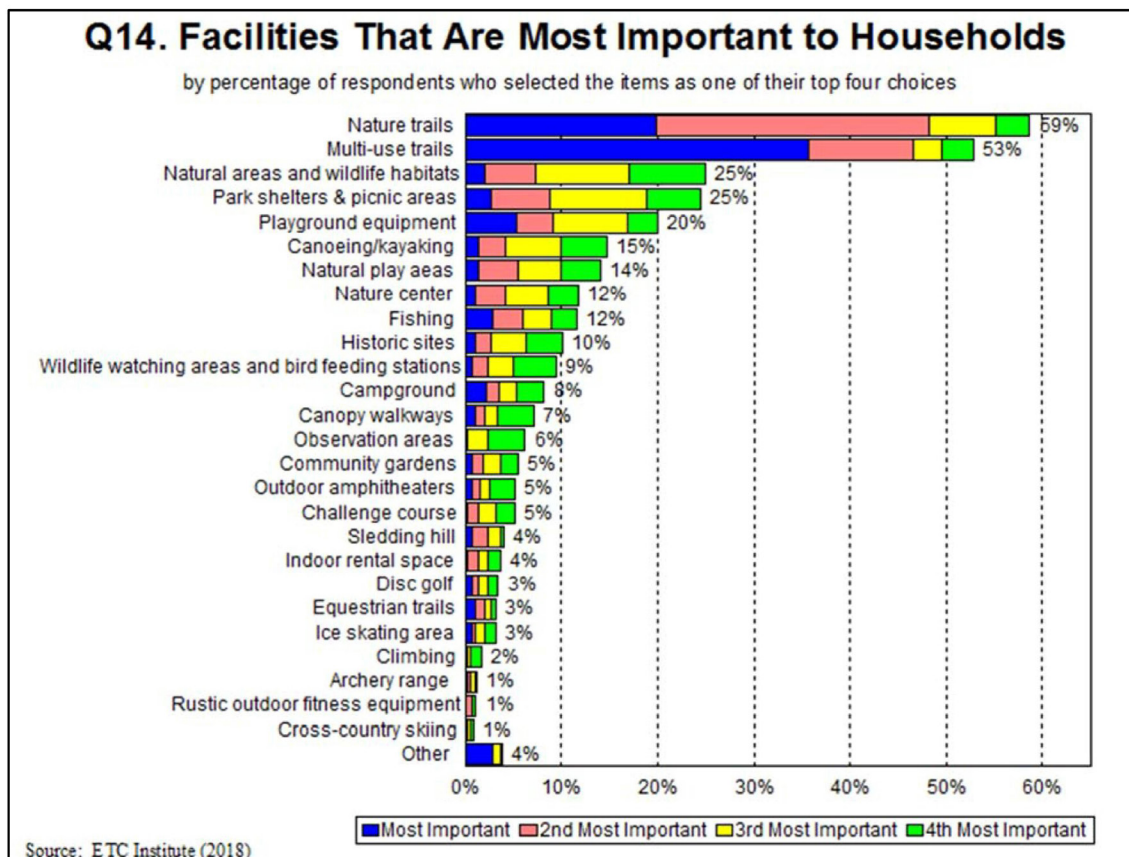
The four recreation amenities with the highest percentage of households that indicated a need for the facility were: nature trails (77%), multi-use trails (75%), natural areas and wildlife habitats (64%), and park shelters and picnic areas (60%). The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 26 facilities that were assessed is shown in the table below.



In addition to assessing the needs for each facility, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each facility. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, the four most important facilities to residents were:

1. nature trails (59%),
2. multi-use trails (53%),
3. natural areas and wildlife habitats (25%), and
4. park shelters and picnic areas (25%).

The percentage of residents who selected each facility as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart below.





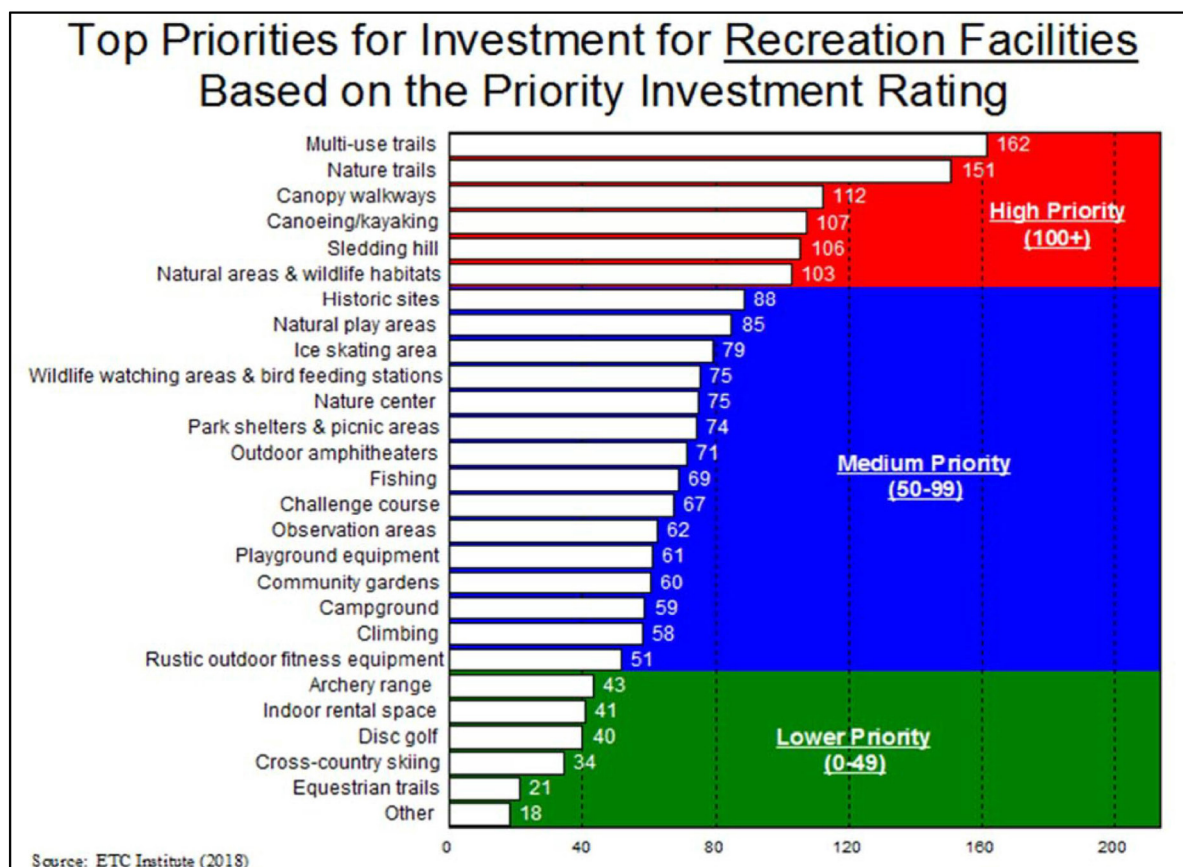
## Priorities for Facility Investments:

A Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weights (1) the importance that residents place on facilities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facility. [Details regarding the methodology for this analysis are provided in the separate report document, in Section 2.]

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the following six amenities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Multi-use trails (PIR=162)
- Nature trails (PIR=151)
- Canopy walkways (PIR=112)
- Canoeing/kayaking (PIR=107)
- Sledding hill (PIR=106)
- Natural areas and wildlife habitats (PIR=103)

The following chart shows the Priority Investment Rating for each of the 26 facilities/amenities that were assessed on the survey.



## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND RATING

Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents indicated they or members of their household had participated in programs, activities, and/or events, offered by Preservation Parks, during the past year. From the percentage of respondents who had participated in programs, activities, and/or events; fifty-eight percent (58%) rated the overall quality of the programs/activities/events as “excellent” and thirty-seven percent (37%) gave a rating of “good.”

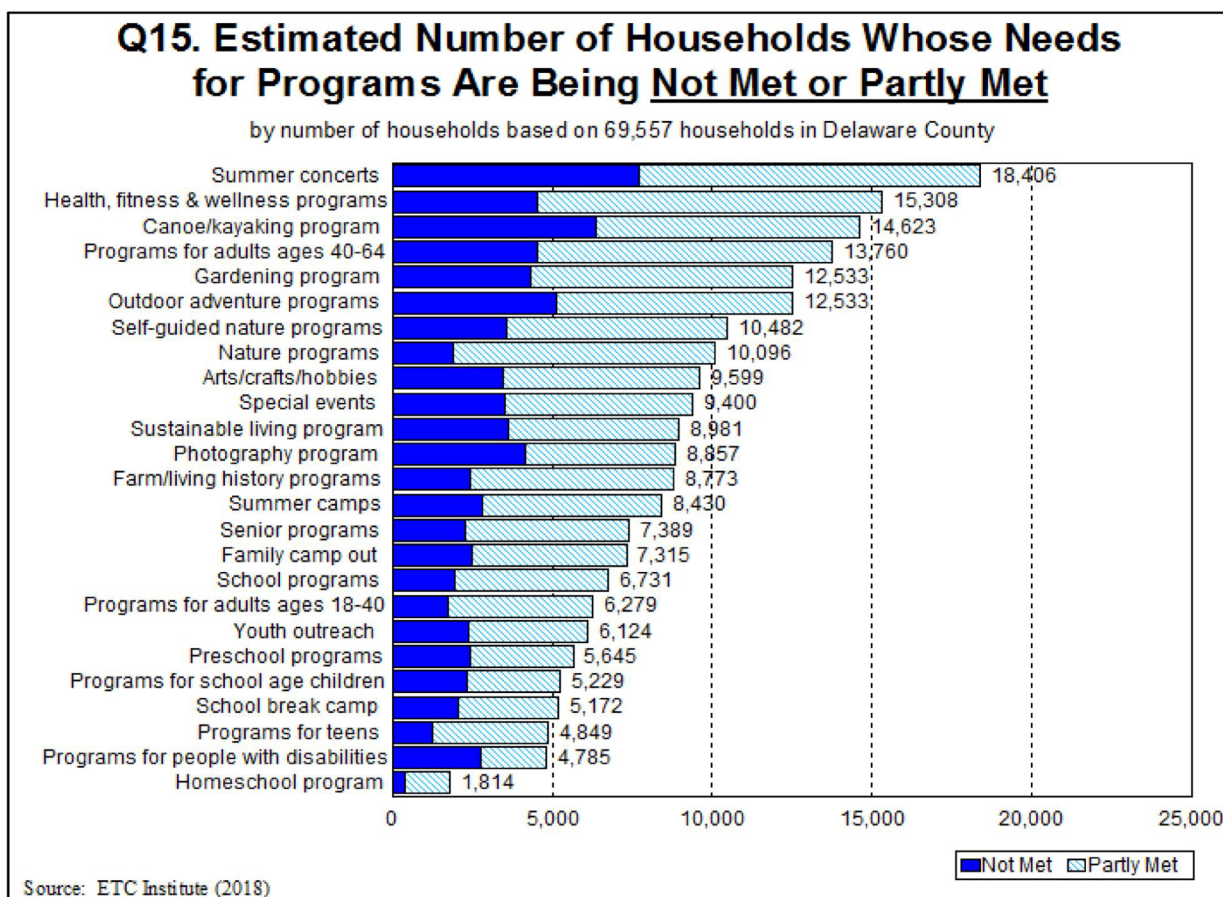
## PROGRAMMING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 25 recreational programs and rate how well their needs for each program were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had “unmet” needs for each program.

The four programs with the highest percentage of households that had needs, were:

- health, fitness, and wellness programs (51%)
- summer concerts (44%)
- nature programs (38%)
- self-guided nature programs (36%).

The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 26 programs that were assessed is shown in the chart below.



In addition to assessing the needs for each program, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each program. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, the four most important programs to residents were:

1. health, fitness, and wellness programs (34%),
2. summer concerts (23%),
3. nature programs (18%), and
4. self-guided nature programs (17%).

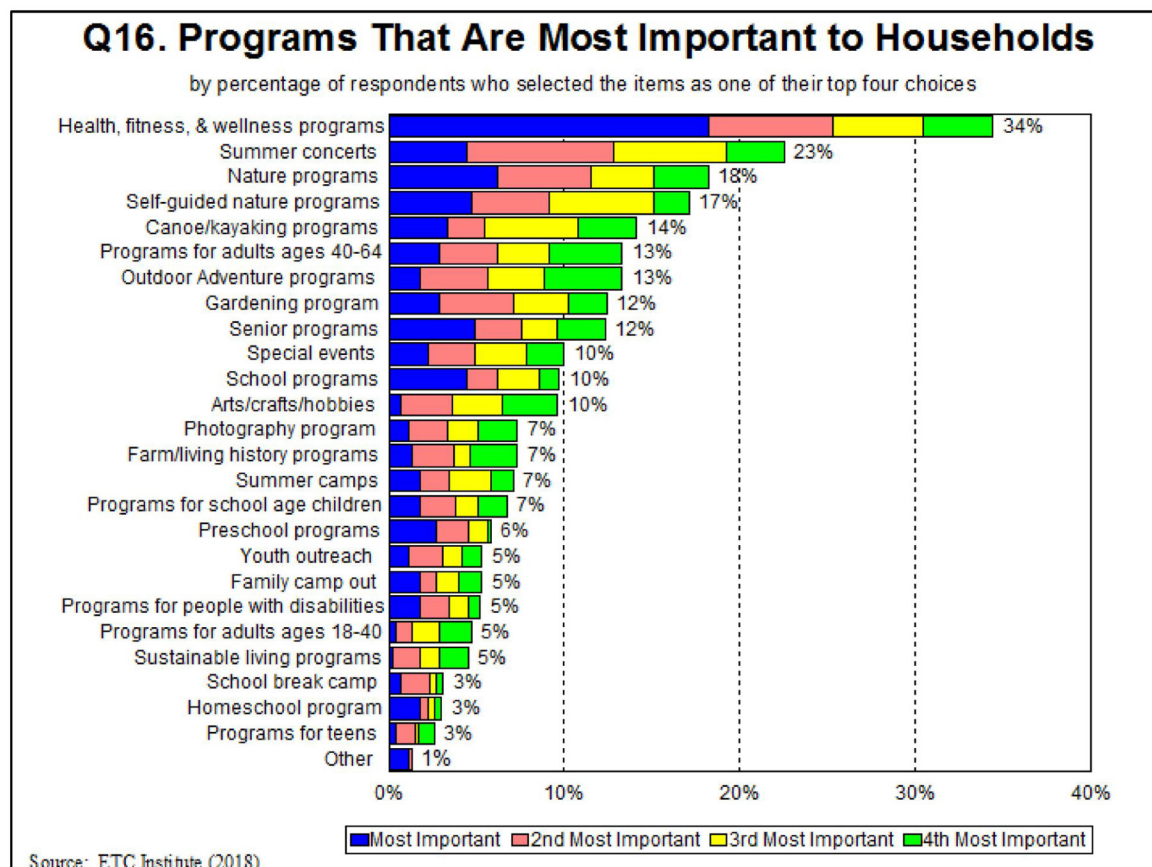
The percentage of residents who selected each program as one of their top four choices is shown in the table below.

**Priorities for Programming Investments.** Based on the priority investment rating (PIR), which was described briefly in this summary and is described in more detail in Section 2 of the full report, the following eight programs were rated as “high priorities” for investment:

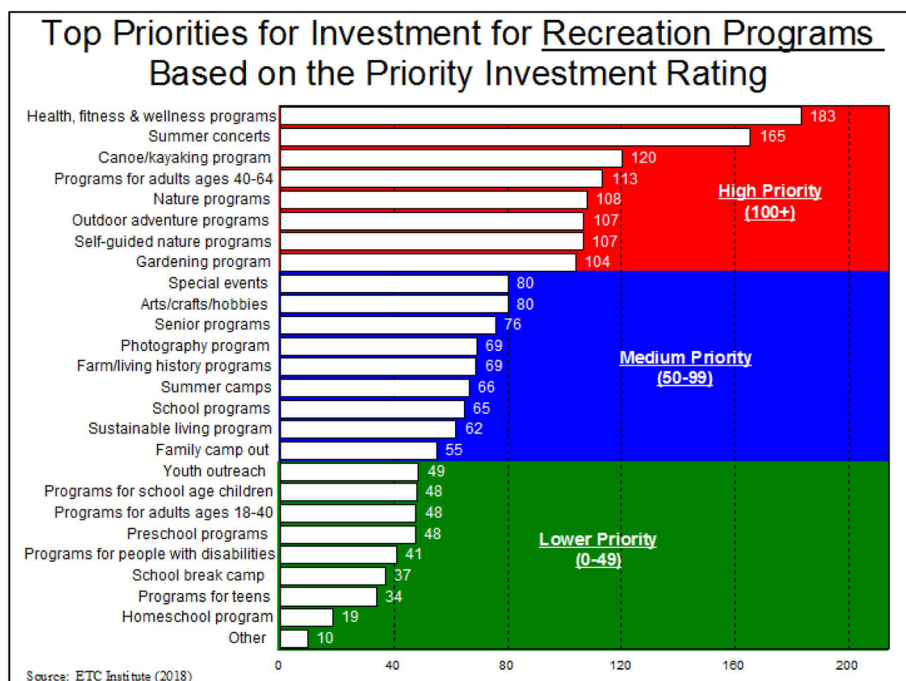
- Health, fitness and wellness programs (PIR=183)
- Summer concerts (PIR=165)
- Canoe/kayaking program (PIR=120)
- Programs for adults (PIR=113)
- Nature programs (PIR=108)

- Outdoor adventure programs (PIR=107)
- Self-guided nature programs (PIR=107)
- Gardening program (PIR=104)

The chart at the top of the following page shows the Priority Investment Rating (PIR) for each of the 25 programs that were rated.







## SUPPORT FOR ACTIONS THAT WOULD IMPROVE PARKS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Respondents were asked to rate their level of support, from a list of eight actions, that Preservation Parks could take to improve parks and conservation areas. Based on the sum of “very supportive” and “somewhat supportive” responses, the most supported actions were: purchase land for developing into nature parks for public enjoyment (92%), purchase floodplains along rivers/creeks (92%), and develop paved multi-use trails and connect existing trails (92%). The top three actions respondents indicated they would be most willing to fund with tax dollars, were: purchase land for developing into nature parks, develop paved multi-use trails and connect existing trails, and purchase floodplains along rivers/creeks.

## ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Most (75%) of respondents are either “extremely familiar”, “very familiar”, or “somewhat familiar” with Preservation Parks of Delaware County. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents indicated that the importance of the Preservation Park’s mission, of protecting and conserving the natural and historic features of Delaware County, as “extremely important” and “very important” to them.

The top three reasons given by respondents for why they participate in programs, activities, or use facilities/amenities offered by Preservation Parks, were: the enjoyment of the outdoors (71%), close to home/residence (63%), and clean parks (61%).

Respondents were asked to indicate how they learn about Preservation Parks programs and activities; thirty-nine percent (39%) specified that they learn from friends and neighbors, 38% from the website, and 34% from the printed program guide. The top four rated methods most preferred, to learn about Preservation Parks programs and activities, were: the website (42%), printed program guide (34%), friends and neighbors (26%), and flyers/posters at park facilities (24%).

Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents, based on the sum of “extremely important” and “very important” responses, indicated how important parks and trails are to the health and wellness of their household members.

Respondents were asked to choose what the best days of the week and times are to participate in programs and the top three days/times, were: Saturday morning (50%), Saturday afternoon (47%), and Sunday afternoon (47%).

Sixty-two percent (62%) of households are familiar with the Preservation Parks of Delaware County logo. Based on the sum of “very positive” and “somewhat positive” responses, seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents have a positive opinion of the Preservation Parks logo. Sixteen percent (16%) rate the logo as being able to communicate the Preservation Parks of Delaware County’s mission “extremely well” and 33% indicated the logo communicates the mission “very well.”



# MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

A good starting point for strategy is a review and development of mission and vision. This was achieved in successive Board and staff workshops. Mission statements define the business or purpose of the organization. Vision statements are more aspirational; what do we hope to become? The essence of strategic planning asks these three basic questions:

- *Where are we now?*
- *Where do we want to go?*
- *How will we get there?*

Staff and board met to review the mission statement, develop a vision statement, and review values. The consensus of the groups was to continue using the existing mission statement. A vision statement was created and the existing values were redefined.

## MISSION STATEMENT

*To protect and conserve the natural and historic features of Delaware County and to inspire outdoor exploration and learning*

## VISION STATEMENT

*To inspire the care of nature and community for a sustainable future.*

## VALUES

The values define the important tenets of the way employees work together. The values will be reinforced in hiring and promotional processes, staff orientation, ongoing operations, recognition systems, and the performance appraisal process.

The values and their intended meaning are as follows:

**Integrity:** We are true to ourselves and others, we keep our promises, and we are consistent between what we say and what we do.

**Teamwork:** We value and respect each other in working together toward a common goal.

**Creativity:** We embrace the use of imagination in the development and delivery of our services.

**Stewardship:** We endeavor to exhibit responsible planning and management of resources.

## BALANCED SCORECARD

The Preservation Parks Strategic Plan is based on the Balanced Scorecard, a strategy framework that emphasizes the cause and effect relationships among distinct yet interrelated perspectives: customer, financial performance, internal support processes, and organizational learning and growth needs. The Scorecard focuses on the key drivers of success that lead to the achievement of mission and vision.

The Balanced Scorecard framework includes four themes:

- **Customer:** To achieve our mission and vision, how should we seek to meet our customer needs?
- **Financial:** To succeed financially, how do we show evidence of our financial stewardship to our taxpayers?
- **Internal Business:** To satisfy our customers, which business practices must we do extremely well?
- **Learning and Growth:** To achieve our mission and vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve, and develop leaders among the staff and Board?

During the planning process, Preservation Parks staff requested that an additional perspective be added to the traditional four theme areas of the balanced scorecard.

- **Environmental Sustainability:** To protect our natural resources, how do we ensure our practices meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs?

Descriptions of the elements of the themes are outlined more specifically below.

### CUSTOMER

- Product/service attributes such as price, quality of programs, availability and accessibility of services
- Customer interactions and relationships
- Service qualities such as access mechanisms, service standards, customer requirements and encounters
- Partnerships
- Brand and image

### FINANCIAL

- Revenue growth
- Productivity
- Financial results
- Cost recovery
- Efficiency
- Tax versus non-tax revenue percentages

### INTERNAL BUSINESS

- Operations Management (maintenance practices, program development, park design)
- Customer management processes (support systems and technology)
- Innovation processes and systems
- Regulatory and social processes (safety and environmental)

### LEARNING AND GROWTH

- Human capital (workforce competencies)
- Information capital (organizational knowledge)
- Organization capital (culture, work environment, leadership)

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Responsible interaction with the environment
- Protecting natural resources from depletion or degradation
- Preserve and protect facilities, parks, and landscapes

## STRATEGIC PLAN HIERARCHY

The Plan includes a hierarchy of elements that starts with the most macro level of strategy and moves to a more micro level (moving from strategic to tactical). The starting point for any strategic planning process is the review of the mission, vision, and values. The existing mission statement was reconfirmed, a vision statement was developed, and the values were redefined. Subsequently, Strategic Themes and Objectives were developed. After the development of the themes and objectives, Strategic Initiatives were developed. Each successive element of strategy more specifically details the premise of the five themes.

The Balanced Scorecard hierarchy is presented by the pyramid shown in the following figure.



## STRATEGIC THEMES

In using the scorecard, the District has developed Strategic Themes that are broad-brushed organizational descriptions that provide direction, following the four Balanced Scorecard themes of: Customer, Financial, Internal Business Support, and Learning and Growth. As a result of the agency's commitment to sustainable practices, an additional Theme of Sustainability was added.

The Themes include:

**Customer:** Customer Connections

**Financial:** Financial Stewardship  
**Internal Business:** Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency

**Learning and Growth:** Team Development

**Sustainability:** Environmental Sustainability

Following the development of the Themes, Strategic Objectives were developed. The Objectives are aligned with the Themes and demonstrate how the District will work toward its strategic direction. Objectives are more specific elements of strategy the District must do well in support of the five Themes listed above.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The following section lists the Strategic Objectives in support of the Strategic Themes. These definitions were created to ensure common understanding of the intended meaning of each objective.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### Develop Customer

**Knowledge:** Knowing the customer and developing a customer focus will assist the District in delivering services according to customer need. In addition, the agency endeavors to connect with residents in many different ways in expanding awareness. Who are our customers, what customer groups are under-represented, what are the most important customer requirements, and who are our target markets? This knowledge will help us to align services with our residents' needs. This will also include an increased level of funding for marketing support staff in order to strengthen our ability to develop better customer knowledge.

#### Grow Partnerships:

Partnerships are an essential element in the way we operate. They expand our reach and augment our services. We desire to be collaborative in our approaches and will work on strategically building partnerships with mutual benefit.

#### Maintain High Quality

**Services:** We want to ensure that our park users and program participants have excellent experiences. We will measure customer satisfaction and use a variety of customer listening methods to determine how well we are achieving our quality goal. Additionally, we will develop specifications/standards based on our definition of quality services, followed by an audit process to ensure alignment with the specifications.

### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

#### Diversify Revenue Streams:

Currently, the majority of our resources comes from tax support; grants and donations have also significantly contributed to the ability to acquire parks and trails. Growing alternative revenue sources will provide us with the opportunity to grow our services without impacting taxpayers. These sources can include funding mechanisms such as grants, foundation and friends groups, corporate support, charitable giving, and revenue from park use and services.

#### Build Future Financial

**Support:** The District is committed to continuing its good stewardship of financial resources. These efforts will continue the success the District has had in creating ongoing tax support from residents.

**Operational Efficiency:** This objective includes identifying key internal and external processes that are most important to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively. This includes an analysis of key processes to ensure they are streamlined. This will also include the need to provide training on process management. Staff will be involved in continuously improving processes to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness.

### ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

**Innovate:** In order to continuously perform well in a competitive marketplace for customers' time and alternative choices for recreation, the District will ensure that innovation is embedded within the organizational culture. This will require being early adopters of new ways of doing business, streamlining processes, empowering employees, and identifying ways for staff to generate ideas for developing innovations throughout all levels of the District.



**Leverage Technology:** The District will rely on technology to improve the customer experience and the District's internal effectiveness. This will require staff's understanding and knowledge of current and future use of technology to improve service and to use data driven approaches to decision making. In addition, staff will identify the extent to which each software application is being used effectively.

**Strengthen a Borderless Organization:** The ability of the District to communicate effectively across departments in achievement of objectives results in efficient internal service as well as excellence in external service. Internal seamless communication, cooperation and execution are vitally important. Borderless communication builds teamwork, optimizes organizational systems, strengthens employee morale, and builds customer satisfaction.

## A GROWTH MINDSET

**Foster the Growth of Knowledge and Skills:** In order to achieve success in areas mentioned in previous theme areas, the District needs to ensure that employee skillsets grow along with the continued need and changing demands for knowledge. The District will place high importance on investing resources to enable staff to grow in their roles.

**Foster Creativity and Innovation:** Important tenets of creativity and innovation include creating an entrepreneurial spirit, idea creation from all levels and areas of the District, staff empowerment, and ensuring innovation is embedded within organizational culture. Systems such as recruitment, hiring, orientation processes, promotions, recognition systems, and performance feedback will be aligned with a creative work culture.

**Think Strategically:** Strategic direction, while a primary function of top leadership, is also created from all levels of the organization. District Board members and staff will follow the elements of the Strategic Plan and ensure that all decisions will be made for the greater good of the organization. Visionary leadership and commitment to the District's vision statement provides the framework for how leaders will manage their areas of responsibility and the employees reporting to them.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Develop Sustainable Design:** The District will operationalize sustainable practices through appropriate building material and site selection, water saving features in facilities, the use of permeable surfaces and energy efficient equipment and materials, among others. LEED certification concepts will be used in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of new facilities, as appropriate. The District will work toward improving the quality of Delaware County's soil, water, and air by protecting and restoring prairies, wetlands, and woodlands, which capture and filter stormwater, sequester carbon, and develop healthy soils.

**Foster an Environmentally Sustainable Mindset:** Sustainable practices will be used throughout all areas of the District. This includes a commitment to recycling, reduction in the use of paper, use of alternative fuels and hybrid vehicles, and requiring vendors and partners to abide by the District's commitment to sustainable practices. The mindset can begin with an overall sustainable practice audit to make sure sustainable practices exist in all areas of the organization.

### **Educate Community and Staff on Sustainable Practices:**

The District has an opportunity to be a leader in Delaware County through its commitment to sustainable practices. The District should provide information to the public about its commitment to green practices as well as providing educational opportunities for residents to learn more about how they can reduce their carbon footprint and foster an interest and appreciation of the need for green practices.

Additionally, it is important for the organization to develop a training program for staff and Board members in order to strengthen an understanding of environmental sustainability.

### **Sustainable Stewardship through Land Acquisition, Trail Development, and Natural Resource Management:**

Additional land purchases and trail development have a very high level of support and need from County residents. In addition, there is a desire to expand park acreage at existing parks. As a result, the District will work toward additional purchases of land, habitat restoration and connection of managed land.

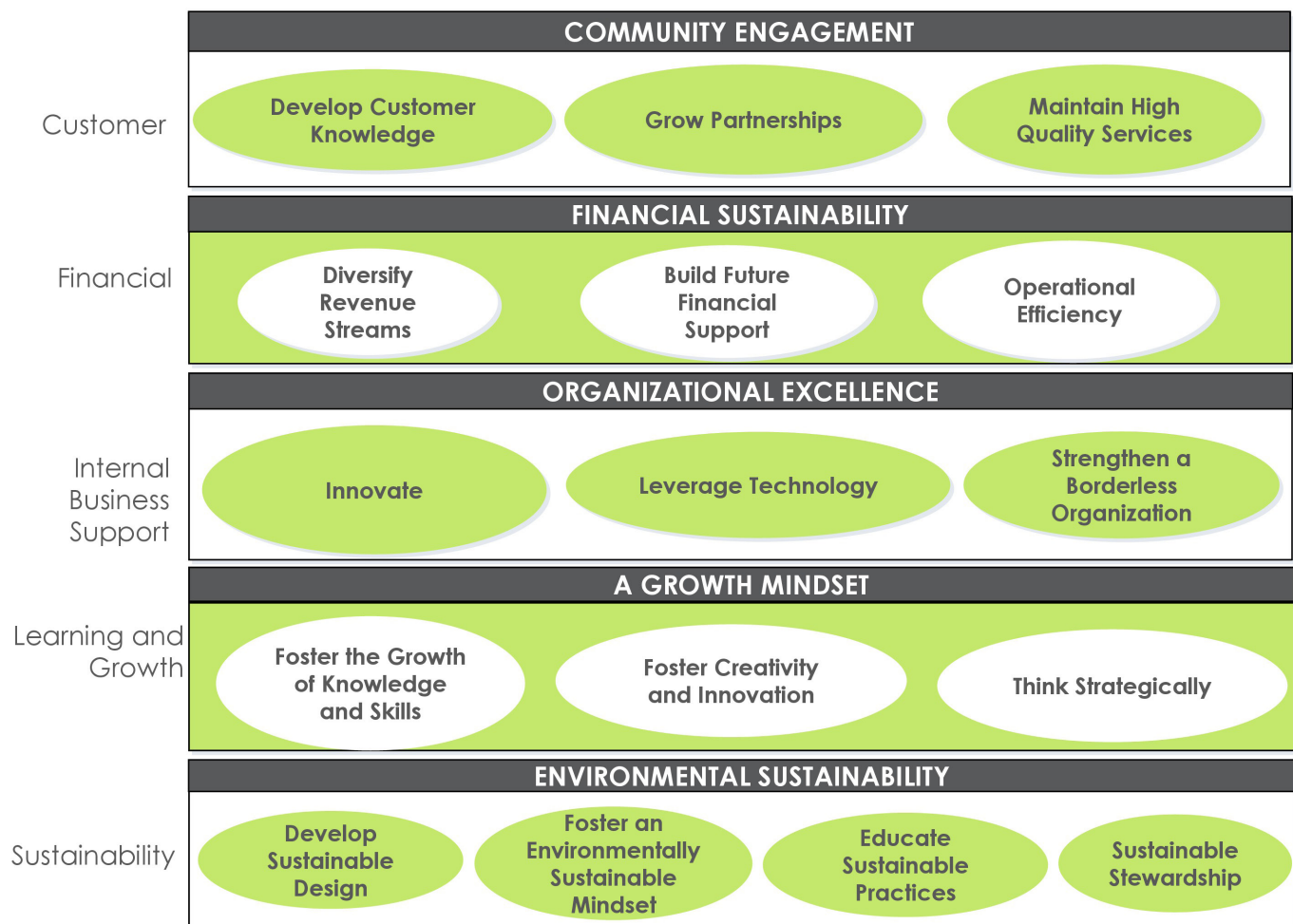


Photo by Darren Mathys

## STRATEGY MAP

The following diagram shows the information listed on pages 34-37, the Strategic Themes and Objectives, in a Strategy Map.

### Preservation Parks Strategy Map





## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Another important element of the Balanced Scorecard is the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These measures are aligned with the Strategic Objectives shown. A separate spreadsheet will be developed that will provide detail about each of the measures, including the definition of the measure, data source, the frequency of the measurement, the baseline result and a target for performance.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<b>Community Engagement</b>	
Develop Customer Knowledge	Tracking of Customer Metrics
Grow Partnerships	Partner Satisfaction & New Partner Identification
Maintain High Quality Services	Customer Satisfaction
<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	
Diversify Revenue Streams	Percentage Distribution of Revenues
Build Future Financial Support	Taxpayer Awareness & Satisfaction Toward PPDC's use of Funds
Operational Efficiency	Various Productivity Measures
<b>Organizational Excellence</b>	
Innovate	Quantified Process and Service Improvements
Leverage Technology	Technology Plan Progress
Strengthen a Borderless Organization	Employee Satisfaction
<b>A Growth Mindset</b>	
Foster the Growth of Knowledge and Skills	Employee Satisfaction of Training Opportunities
Foster Innovation and Creativity	Number of Strategic Creative Ideas Implemented
Think Strategically	Tracking Strategic Plan Implementation
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	
Develop Sustainable Design	Operations and Maintenance Cost/Benefit Analysis of Design
Foster an Environmentally Sustainable Mindset	Environmental Report Card Results
Educate Community and Staff on Sustainable Practices	Number of Training/Education Activities
Sustainable Stewardship through Land Acquisition, Trail Development, and Natural Resource Management	Additional Acres of Land Protected, Trails Constructed and Acres Restored and Managed



# STRATEGIC THEMES, OBJECTIVES, AND INITIATIVES

The following are the Themes, Objectives, and Initiatives for the next five years, 2019-2023, beginning in January, 2019 and ending December 2023. Initiatives are aligned with the Strategic Themes and Objectives and provide greater specificity of how they will be implemented. Before each year begins, the initiatives for the year will be reviewed and tactics supporting the initiative will be detailed by the staff involved in completing the initiative. The tactics are not included within the Strategic Plan. Tactics will be developed at the time each initiative begins. The timeframe for completion of the initiatives is categorized according to four categories:

- **Short Term Initiatives:** Initiated during 2019 and completed by December 2020
- **Mid Term Initiatives:** Initiated during 2021 and completed through December 2022
- **Long Term Initiatives:** Initiated January 2023 and completed in 2023 or longer
- **Ongoing Initiatives** are repeated continuously during the next five years

## CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

### Develop Customer Knowledge

1. Develop a cross functional team of employees to use the statistically valid needs assessment survey to guide decision making. *Short Term*
2. Determine how to provide “wow” experiences by identifying methods to exceed customer expectations for their experiences. *Mid Term*
3. Develop a strategic marketing plan to continue to increase community awareness of parks and establish direction for overall marketing approaches. *Mid Term*

### Grow Partnerships

1. Identify and fulfill needs in the community by aligning with appropriate strategic partnerships and create greater awareness and promotion of existing partnerships. *Mid Term*

### Maintain High Quality Services

1. Develop a systematic approach to gaining customer satisfaction feedback through various methods, including focus groups, surveys, audits, mystery shopping, and program evaluations. *Mid Term*
2. Expand fitness and wellness opportunities, as this program area was listed as the most important household need in the community needs assessment survey. *Continuous*

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### Diversify Revenue Streams

1. Grow alternative revenue such as additional grant sources, foundation and friends groups, review fee structure, evaluate potential county-wide mitigation fee program to acquire additional parkland, and research charitable giving opportunities. *Mid Term*

### Build Future Financial Support

1. Position the agency for continued awareness and continued levy support. *Continuous*

### Operational Efficiency

1. Provide training to staff on how to manage and improve processes. *Short Term*
2. Identify the processes in most need of streamlining and assign accountability for improvement of processes to individual employees or a team of employees. *Mid Term*
3. Quantify savings or service improvements as a result of improving processes and share results with the organization. *Long Term*

## ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

### Innovate

1. Explore ways to adapt industry innovations to improve PPDC offerings and processes. *Long Term.*
2. Ensure systems are in place to recognize innovation. This includes recruitment, hiring, orientation, promotion, recognition, and performance feedback. *Long Term*
3. Create a culture of visionary thinking that inspires District employees to be creative and imaginative in delivering services. *Continuous*

### Leverage Technology

1. Develop and implement a short term Technology Plan. *Short Term*
2. Develop mechanisms for training in order to expand technology skills of employees at all levels of the organization. *Mid Term*

### Strengthen a Borderless Organization

1. Develop a process to strengthen communication among the District's various functions. This can include cross training and cross educational opportunities among functions. *Short Term*

## A GROWTH MINDSET

### Foster the Growth of Knowledge and Skills

1. Identify future skill competencies and areas of additional staff resources needed to support District operations throughout all departments. *Long Term*
2. Operationalize the mission, vision, and values through visual management techniques, and use as part of the orientation process, recognition systems, and performance feedback. *Continuous*

### Foster Creativity and Innovation

1. Provide training on creativity and innovation. *Short Term*
2. Develop innovation as part of the organizational culture through empowerment of employees, a cross functional innovation team, and the creation of an idea generation program. *Mid Term*

### Think Strategically

1. Proactively track community trends and needs. *Short Term*
2. Identify key areas of operations and develop best practices for these areas. *Long Term*
3. Develop a process for leadership succession for key leadership positions. *Long Term*

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### Sustainable Design

1. Develop parks with minimized maintenance requirements. *Continuous*
2. Create ways to minimize our environmental impact. *Continuous*

### Environmental Sustainable Mindset

1. Complete an environmental audit. *Short Term*
2. Encourage vendors/contractors/partners to implement sustainable practices. *Mid Term*

### Educate Sustainable Practices

1. Develop and distribute definitions of sustainable practices. *Short Term*
2. Provide educational opportunities within our District as well as our community. *Continuous*

### Sustainable Stewardship through Land Acquisition and Trail Development

1. Purchase land, restore habitat, and connect these lands and resources to protect the water, air, and soils needed to provide viable habitat and healthy places to live. *Continuous*

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The following is a listing of suggestions for successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. It represents the commitment and discipline required to integrate the process into daily operations.

- The Plan becomes the guidepost for the District. When decisions or responses to the community are needed, the Plan becomes the reference point for decision-making and whether or not new issues or responses to the community are of higher importance than what's been established as existing direction.
- Strategic Plan information should be included as part of the new Board member and employee orientation program.
- Post a summary or shortened version of the Plan on the Website and track results on the site as well. This will assist in providing the community with information about the District's strategic direction and its commitment to results. It may also be helpful to print a short summary of the Plan's progress to distribute to interested partners and community members.
- A staff person or team should have responsibility of being the project manager or "champion" of the Plan's implementation to ensure success. This staff person is responsible for monitoring the Plan's progress and works with staff to effectively integrate the Plan with operations.
- A leader will be assigned to each strategic initiative. Each initiative generally requires a team of employees to work on completing the initiative through a cross functional team and is headed by someone who is responsible for the initiative's completion.
- Regular reporting of the Plan's progress should occur. Break the Plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan. Each initiative for the year should include a list of tactics that support its completion. The tactics are developed prior to each year for the upcoming list of initiatives and are developed by the staff members involved in completing the initiative. It is the project leader's responsibility to report on his/her initiative, in a quarterly report. A suggestion is to input each year's data on a spreadsheet or strategic planning software that lists the Themes, Objectives, and Initiatives start date and completion date, and the name of the staff person responsible for the Initiative's completion.
- At the end of the year, perform an annual review of the Strategic Plan and document any changes to initiatives to reflect any changes in priorities. This process can be included at an annual review meeting in which successive years' initiatives are discussed as part of the annual budget process. Initiatives should tie into the budget process.
- After each year of the Plan, the staff should review the Plan's process and re-tool any parts of the process that need improvement.
- The District's scorecard represents measures at the objective level, not the initiative level. To supplement the District's dashboard, the leader of each initiative should develop measures of success for the initiative he/she is responsible for.
- Track the measures on a quarterly basis. Provide an annual narrative about the results. Review the inventory of measures on an annual basis and make adjustments as necessary to ensure the measures continuously add value to decision making.
- Update major stakeholders on the Plan's implementation and results on an annual basis.

- Conduct staff meetings on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to review the Plan's progress and results, and report the Plan's progress on a quarterly basis.
- The staff and Director evaluation process and the Board self-evaluation process should reflect the completion of the Strategic Plan Initiatives as an evaluation criterion. Also, performance criteria should be aligned with values of the District.
- Post a chart of each year's initiatives with real-time updates on the District's intranet and on office walls in all staffed building locations, with a check-off column designating completion as part of a visual management program. Staff meetings should regularly include discussion of strategy. This will help to emphasize the Plan's importance and the District's commitment to execution.
- The Plan is an organizational approach to strategy. Following a year of experience with adapting strategy with the organizational culture, the strategic themes and objectives should then cascade to the department level. Each department would then have their own unique set of initiatives. These initiatives will be aligned with the organizational strategy.
- If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written "parking lot" and review them as part of the annual just-in-time review to determine if they supplant any existing initiatives.



## DEFINITIONS

The following list of key words describes the definition of the terminology used for the Strategic Plan. Key words are listed according to how they fall within the hierarchy of strategy, from the most macro to the most micro elements.

**MISSION**—describes the business of the organization. The mission also defines the core purpose of the organization and why it exists.

**VISION**—desired future of the organization. The vision should be a “stretch” for the organization.

**VALUES**—describe the way the District operates. These are meaningful expressions of how we work together.

**BALANCED SCORECARD PERSPECTIVES**—the four perspectives include Customer, Financial, Internal Business Process, and Learning and Growth. Preservation Parks has the additional perspective of Sustainability. The perspectives demonstrate cause and effect relationships in the completion of strategy. All of the Strategic Initiatives are aligned with these perspectives.

**STRATEGIC THEMES**—broad brushed, macro-oriented organizational sense of direction that relates to the five Balanced Scorecard perspectives of customer, financial, internal business, sustainability, and growth and development.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**—concise statements describing the specific elements an organization must do well in order to execute its strategy.

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**—the indicators are a measurement system that support the Strategic Objectives. The Measures are normally quantitative indicators and capture numbers, dollars, percentages, etc. Measures assist the staff with the ability to determine organizational performance.

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**—the specific programs, activities, projects, or actions an organization will undertake in an effort to meet performance targets. The strategic initiatives are specifically detailed with specific tactics.

**TACTICS**—Tactics are not included as part of the Plan. The development occurs after the Plan’s implementation. Tactics are subordinate to the initiatives and detail the steps necessary to complete an initiative. Staff members will identify the tactics for the initiatives before the start of each fiscal year.

# APPENDIX A - Preservation Parks Draft Technology Plan

## HARDWARE

1. Work with IT consultant to create central storage for District computer files and create remote access for all staff.
  - Evaluate district purchasing server hardware vs. cloud-based services
2. Formalize hardware replacement plan
  - Upgrade equipment (desktops, laptops, mobile devices) every four years
  - Replace printers and other peripherals as needed with hardware that best meets needs
3. Allow users to select hardware that allows them maximum efficiency
4. Use of best practices to inventory and maintain records updating as equipment is replaced
5. Create a mobile work environment
  - Evaluate needs of each department and determine how to best create a flexible and mobile working environment, including the use of Mifi's for mobile wireless access for staff devices
  - Working with staff to determine mobile devices needed to allow for maximum flexibility, mobility and efficiency

6. Evaluating facilities for technology upgrades
  - Wifi at shelters for public and staff use
  - Evaluate audio visual needs at specific buildings and assess for upgrades of existing technology or adding new technology

## SOFTWARE

1. Research software that can assist in reducing paper use
2. Seek out software that can assist with HR and finance efficiency
3. Encourage staff to seek out software and mobile apps that can assist with efficiency and mobility and upgraded public services
4. Increase GIS capabilities through software and staff training

## TECHNOLOGY TEAM

1. Work with staff to set technology goals & objectives
  - Work with departments to assess their priorities
  - Implement technology plan
2. Assist with inventory tracking
3. Serve as technology liaison between PPD and IT consultant
4. Create RFP's, review and recommend IT contracts



**PRESERVATION PARKS**  
DELAWARE COUNTY