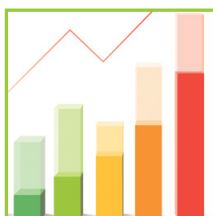
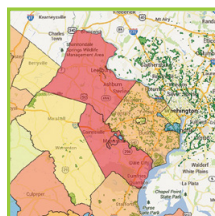
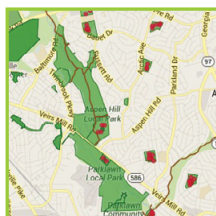
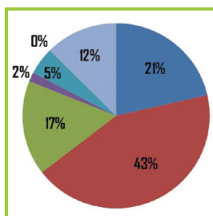
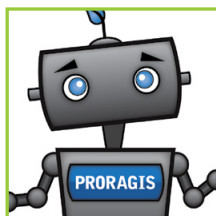


PARKS AND RECREATION

NATIONAL DATABASE REPORT



2014



National Recreation
and Park Association

POWERED BY

PRORAGIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the country, park and recreation agencies provide people with the resources they need to build sustainable, healthy communities with opportunities for all. Offering a broad range of programs and services to support the natural environment, encourage nourishing lifestyles and level the playing field for all members of the community, park and recreation agencies often do much more than their local officials may realize. In their work, professionals in this field as well as citizen advocates help establish a strong foundation for the nation as a whole.

To help communicate this message of impact, NRPA developed the three pillars — Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity — which together showcase the ways in which park and recreation agencies help build and strengthen their communities.

But while the broader benefits of parks and recreation are generally easy to convey, it's often much more difficult to quantify this information in ways that translate to more funding and support. PRORAGIS™, the Park and Recreation Operating Ratio and Geographic Information System developed by NRPA, is a resource to help you do just that.

Now in its fifth year, the PRORAGIS database tool has become the most comprehensive and largest collection of detailed data on municipal, county and state park systems in the U.S. With thousands of data points and more than 500 completed profiles, PRORAGIS contains reliable, detailed data on a wide range of park agency metrics, allowing agencies to compare their operations and offerings to other agencies of similar size and population as they self-evaluate. NRPA encourages park systems to update their information every year to keep data as current as possible. Each year, as participating agencies update their profiles and new agencies register, PRORAGIS becomes an ever-stronger tool that agencies can use to learn and apply insight into trends and realities of park systems across the country.

By comparing and evaluating your program offerings, operation cost per resident or direct revenue per capita, you can develop sound, fact-based arguments when asking for budget

increases and other support from local or state governments. By employing the Eco-Benefit Calculator and Custom Reports functions of PRORAGIS, you can demonstrate specific, positive impacts on the environmental, public health and social equity benefits that your agency's programs, parks and facilities bring to a community — strengthening your case.

Impacting Communities

As more agencies add their information to the PRORAGIS database, patterns begin to emerge that show trends in the ways that park and recreation agencies impact their communities. Often, these trends directly align with the pillars, clearly illustrating these key areas of influence delivered by parks and recreation and allowing agencies to measure how their programs compare to others in relation to the pillars. For example, in 2012 and 2013, health and wellness, fitness and team sports programs topped the charts as programs offered by agencies. In 2013, more agencies offered community gardens, where families were able to grow healthy foods and lessen their environmental impact. Also in 2013, more departments offered feeding programs for before-school programs than ever before.

Reading This Report

We divided responses into median (middle 50 percent), lower quartile (lowest 25 percent) and upper quartile (highest 25 percent) divisions to help you determine where your agency stands in the spectrum of responses. Although hundreds of agencies have logged data into the PRORAGIS system, each park system may not answer every question; this accounts for the fluctuating number of responses in each data set.

Figure 1: Jurisdiction Operating Budget

Improvement in these budgets from 2012 to 2013, continuing the trend seen in 2011 to 2012. Lower-quartile, median and upper-quartile groups all increased from 2012 to 2013. Continues the encouraging trend from previous years of increasing budgets.

Figure 2: Jurisdiction Capital Budget

Similarly, these budgets have also continued to increase from 2012 to 2013, as was seen in 2011 to 2012. Increased for lower quartile, median and upper quartiles.

Figure 1

Jurisdiction Operating Budget

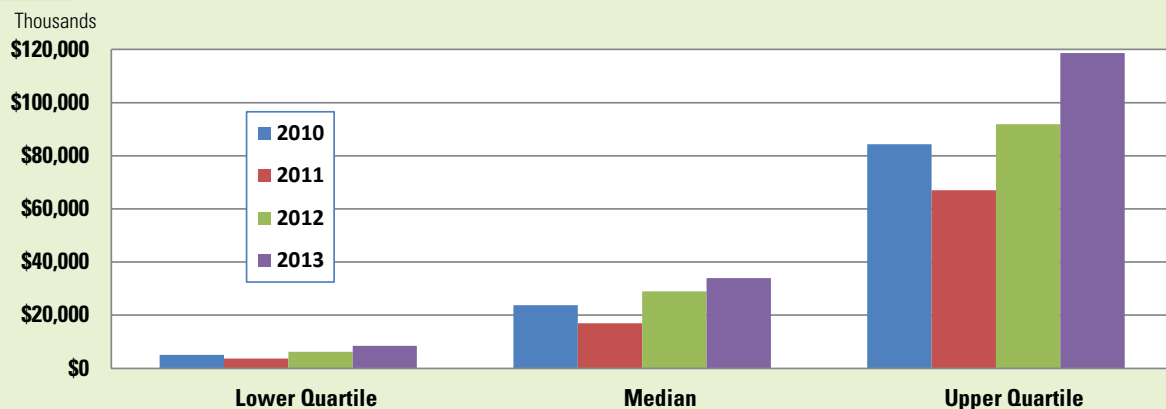
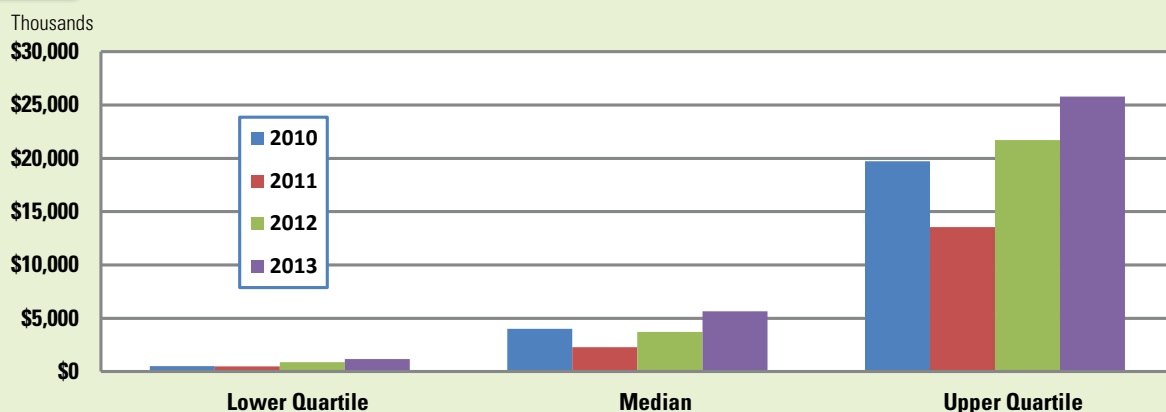


Figure 2

Jurisdiction Capital Budget



PRORAGIS

WHAT'S NEW?

To see what PRORAGIS can do for you, visit:
www.nrpa.org/PRORAGIS.

Better Navigation: A completely redesigned, user-friendly interface with more intuitive organization makes for smoother navigation and easier data entry. In addition, more reliable and secure access allows agencies to control who can enter and edit data.

Updated GIS: The new layout includes two new tools (Identify and Query) to help users navigate maps and get information more quickly. The Identify feature allows users to click on a map feature to see key attributes. With the Query tool activated, users can complete in-depth searches keyed to particular conditions (e.g., "view all parks smaller than 25 acres"). Users can also measure areas and distances, search for locations, and examine topographic and street maps.

Eco-Benefit Calculator: This ever-expanding calculator helps park professionals understand the complex and intangible — yet valuable — assets that parks, land, programs and facilities offer to a community. Using mathematical algorithms, the Eco-Benefit Calculator estimates the dollar value of your park or facility in terms of health, ecology, local business revenue, tax revenue and other factors. Using this tool, park professionals can gain a clearer picture of a park or facility's true worth to a community or region. Additional enhancements will soon include values for stormwater mitigation, aquatic environments, health and wellness, and crime reduction for teens.

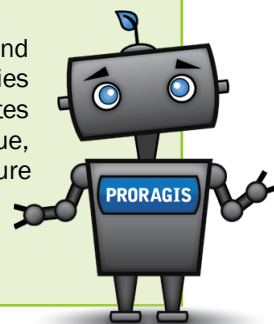


TABLE OF CONTENTS

5

Responsibilities

Many park systems oversee more than just parkland and recreational programs.

6

Staffing and Volunteers

Park personnel and volunteers work hard to keep community residents active and make park systems a regional asset.

8

Budget

Budgets have shrunk, but park professionals are making the most of fewer dollars.

10

Programming and Attendance

Although park programming and attendance have dropped over the last several years, departments still offer a wide variety of programs that keep people healthy and engaged.

12

Operations, Maintenance and Benchmarking

Gauge your agency's spending by examining the maintenance costs, facilities and budgets of other agencies across the U.S.

14

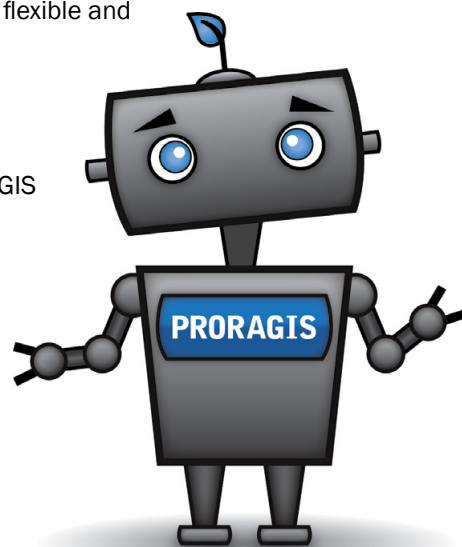
GIS and Mapping

New mapping tools make the GIS mapping system more flexible and user-friendly than ever.

16

Trends in Regional Park Systems

Information from the PRORAGIS database allows PRORAGIS administrators to spot the trends that help you justify spending, make decisions and plan for the future.



This special report and the PRORAGIS database are produced by:

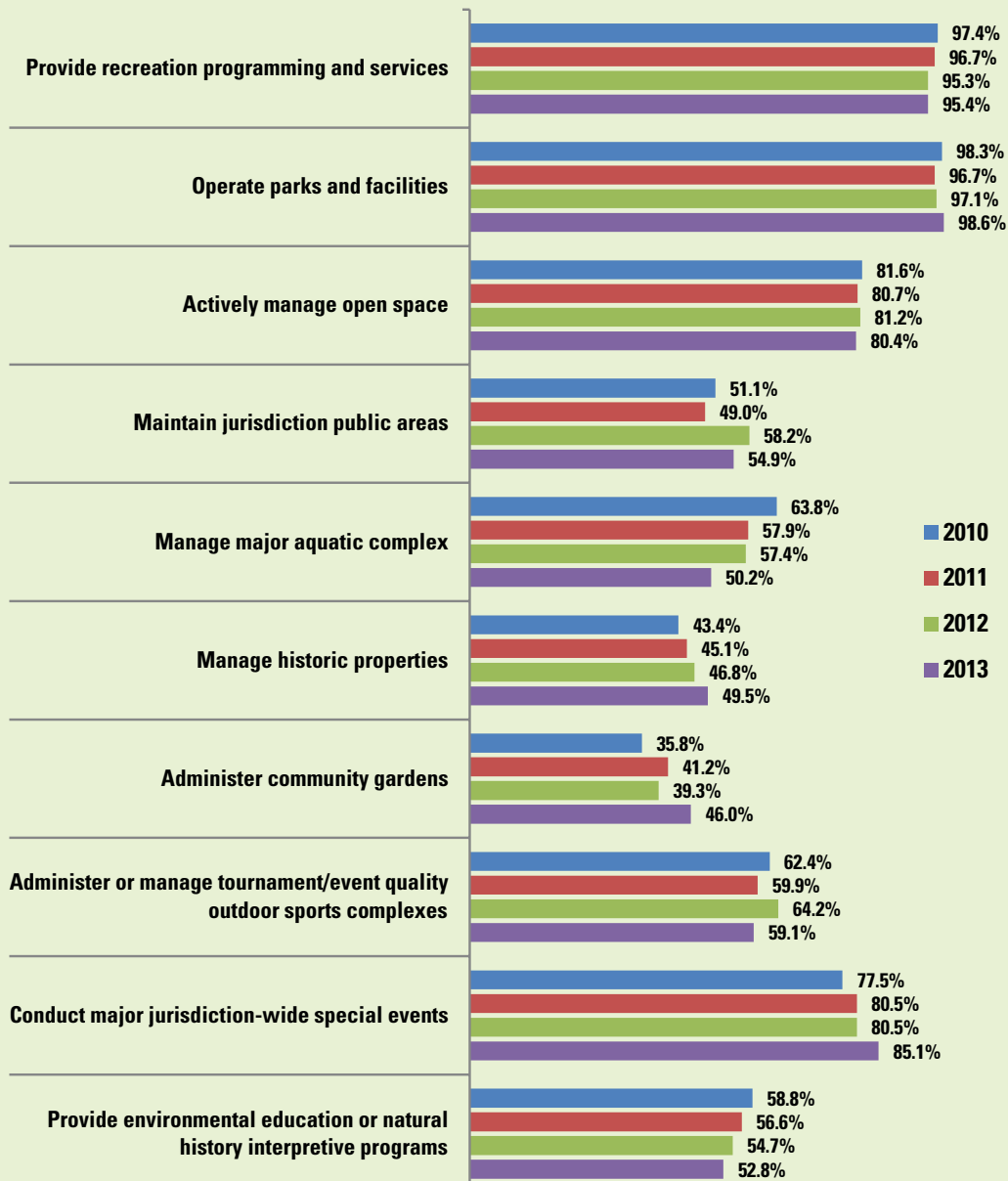
National Recreation and Park Association
22377 Belmont Ridge Rd.
Ashburn, VA 20148
703.858.0784
www.nrpa.org

RESPONSIBILITIES

Today's park and recreation departments have more on their plates than just park maintenance and recreational programming. Park systems have diverse responsibilities that range from overseeing special events (85 percent) — such as themed 5K runs and summer concerts — to managing open space (80 percent), maintaining jurisdiction public areas (55 percent), overseeing outdoor sports event complexes (59 percent), operating aquatic centers (50 percent), supervising historic properties (50 percent) and running community gardens (46 percent). Use this chart to see how your park agency's responsibilities stack up against those of other agencies across the country.

Figure 3

Responding Agencies That...



STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS

Staff and volunteers form the backbone of any park and recreation agency, so the PRORAGIS survey asks for detailed responses on all aspects of agency personnel — from the number of full-time staff members to the number of volunteer hours worked and information on salaries and wages.

In 2013, staff filled more full-time positions (Figure 4) across all quartiles than in 2010 to 2012. In addition, the number of part-time employees (Figure 5) also rose since 2011 for the lower quartile — and increased dramatically in the case of the upper quartile, where an average of 300 non-full-time positions rebounded back to 2010 levels after dipping over the previous two years. Taken together, both data sets indicate that departments are hiring, but they are hiring part-timers more frequently than full-timers.

Figure 4

Full-Time Positions Authorized

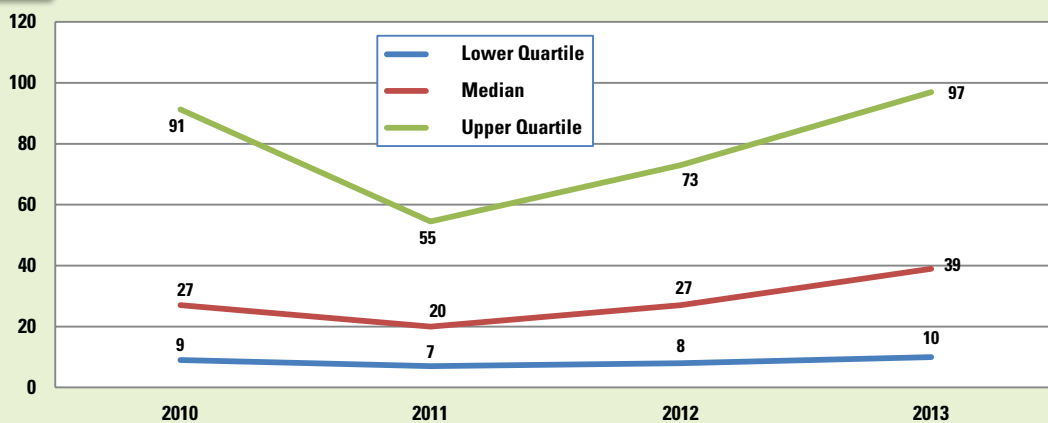


Figure 5

Non-Full Time Positions Authorized

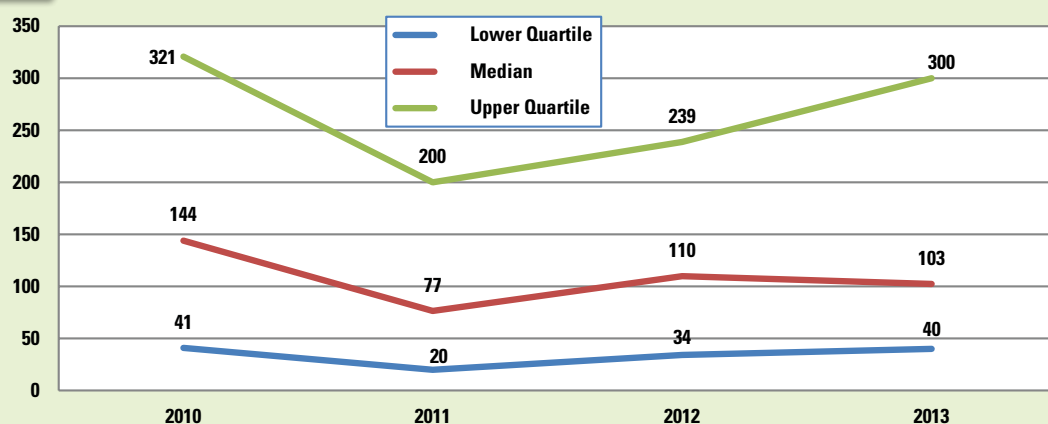
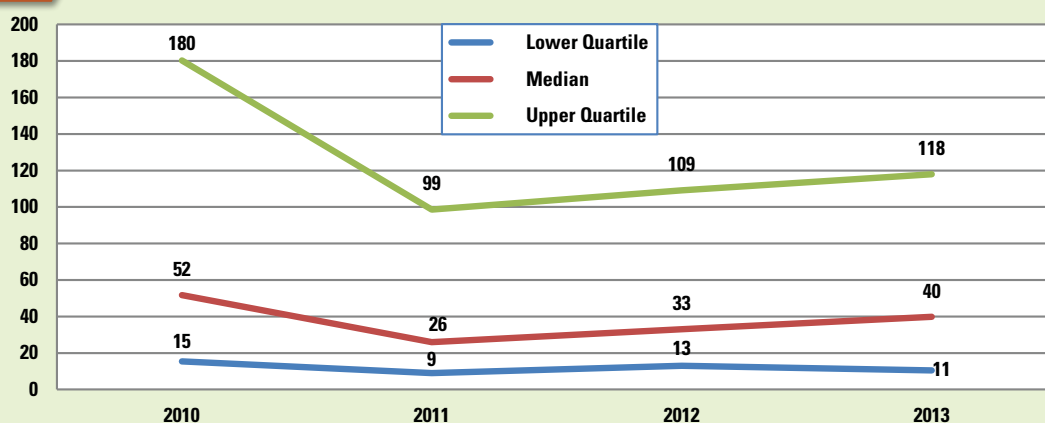


Figure 6

Total Full-Time Equivalents Available



Volunteering (Figure 7) has remained somewhat steady in the past two years, with slight volunteer increases in the median quartile and a small drop in volunteers in the upper quartile (where volunteer numbers dropped dramatically between 2010 and 2011). As for volunteer hours, the number of annual hours jumped in all three quartiles compared to the last two years.

Figure 7

Recreation Department Volunteers

7A Number of Volunteers	2010	2011	2012	2013
Lower Quartile	50	25	35	35
Median	225	150	175	200
Upper Quartile	1,333	575	788	733
7B Number of Hours Worked by Volunteers	2010	2011	2012	2013
Lower Quartile	1,000	253	463	850
Median	6,000	3,981	4,383	4,663
Upper Quartile	40,031	18,000	22,645	26,125
7C Number of Hours Worked per Volunteer	2010	2011	2012	2013
Lower Quartile	12	8	7	10
Median	22	20	19	22
Upper Quartile	40	60	43	48

TAILOR YOUR COMPARISON

For the most complete comparison of your agency's workers against staff and volunteers in other similar agencies, use the Custom Report feature on your PRORAGIS profile, which will help account for variations in seasonal employment, geographic location, agency responsibilities and other factors.

BUDGET

Budgets across most local jurisdictions have tightened in the past six years, making it difficult for park and recreation departments to secure the funds they need. To help justify your budget proposal and keep valuable programs and operations running smoothly, compare your spending and revenue to that of similar agencies.

Total operating expenditures (Figure 8) have dipped but remain fairly constant with past years. While 2011 reveals a drop that most departments experienced as tax resources dried up, 2012 shows a slow return of funding; we don't yet know if that trend will continue. Because more small agencies have joined in contributing to PRORAGIS in the past couple of years, we see more fluctuation in the distributions.

Figure 8

Total Operating Expenditures (in 000s)

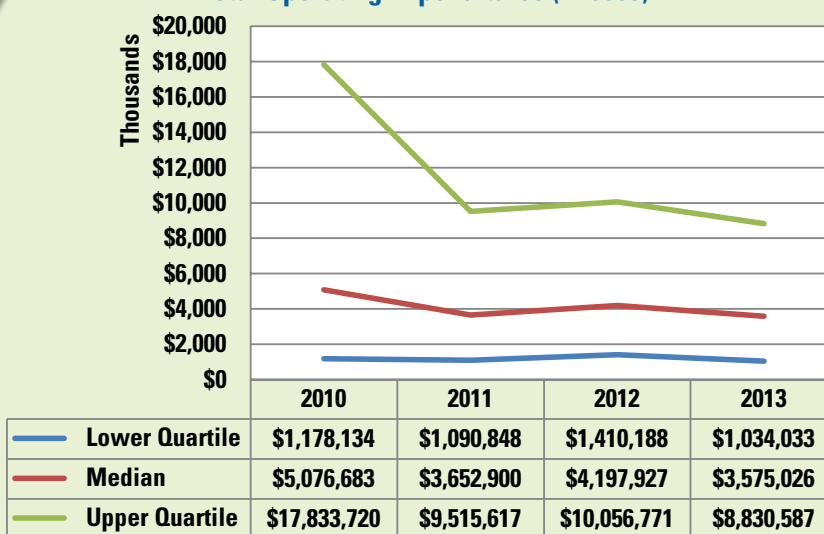
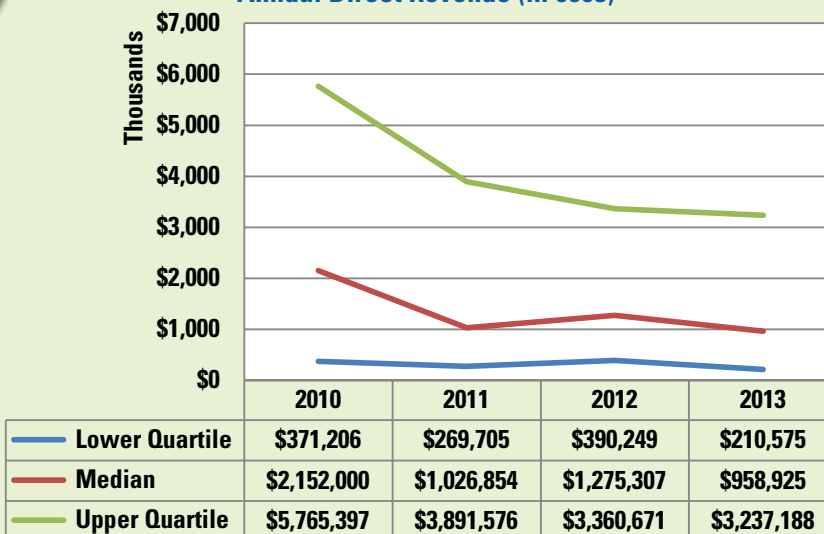


Figure 9

Annual Direct Revenue (in 000s)



Through the last four years, annual direct revenue — revenue from classes, programs, memberships, concessions, permits, rentals and other nontax sources — shows a downward trend that may reflect how families across the country have cut back on leisure spending. Attendance figures have also dropped, indicating a strong correlation between fewer users and less revenue. Data also experienced fluctuations due to more small agencies reporting to PRORAGIS in the past two years than in the years before.

In 2013, about every slice of the direct revenue pie (Figure 10) has remained steady over the past three years, even as agency fees and charges are down overall. That may be in part because more agencies are outsourcing their revenue-generating programs (for instance, hiring contractors to run fitness programs). The graph showing departments' total capital budgets (Figure 11A) also reflects more small-agency reporting and mirrors the fluctuations in operating budgets.

Amount of renovation needs (Figure 11B) is closely tied to new capital needs (Figure 11C). Many agencies had to delay renovations and repairs as a result of the recession, and since 2010, departments (particularly large ones) saw major cuts in available funds. Agencies seem to be shifting from renovation requests to having older facilities that need total replacement. In addition, there was a significant increase in bonds and levies for park and recreation departments in 2013, and more than 80 percent were successful.

Figure 10

Sources of Direct Revenue

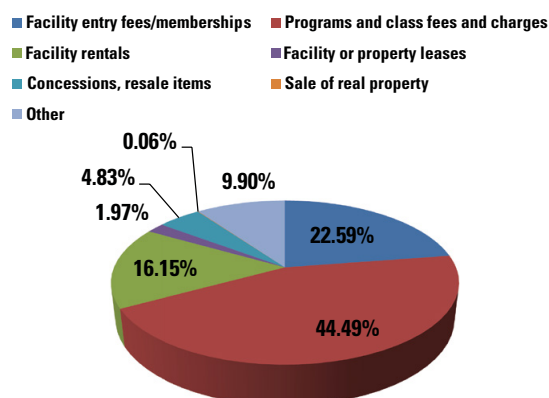


Figure 11A

Total Capital Budget

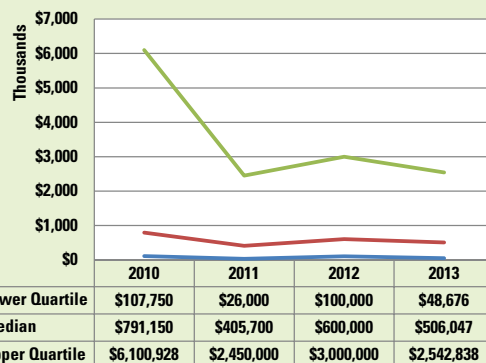


Figure 11B

Amount of Renovation Need

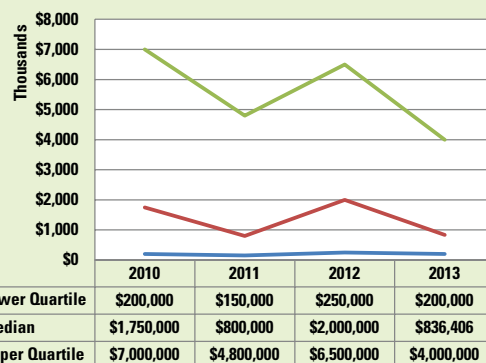
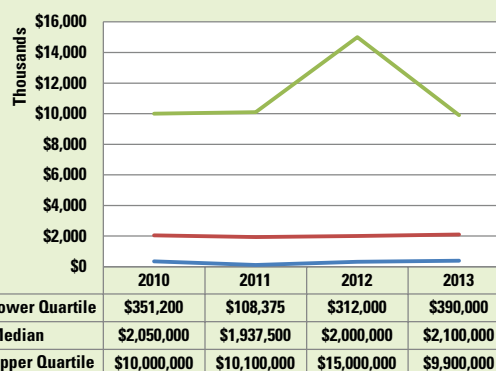


Figure 11C

New Capital Need



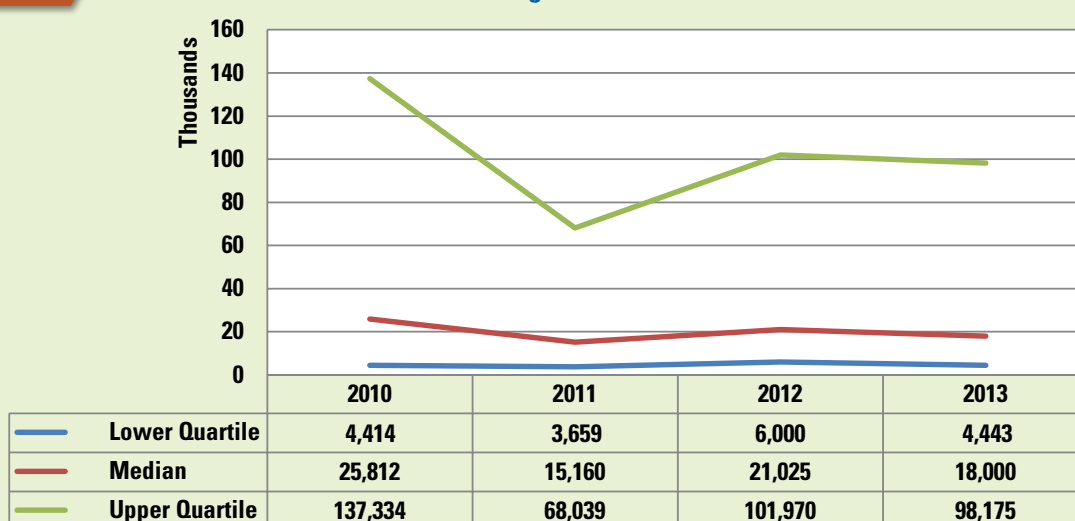
PROGRAMMING AND ATTENDANCE

It's through programs, classes, organized teams and social services that park and recreation departments connect with and teach local residents. Park and recreation professionals can use the graphs on these pages to find out how their agency's programming, program spending and attendance stack up against other agencies' offerings across the country. For tailored comparisons to agencies with similar racial, age or socioeconomic populations, log on to your PRORAGIS profile to run a comparison.

Soon, park and recreation departments across the country will be able to use our GIS program to examine distributions of race, age or socioeconomic populations within their district.

Figure 12

Total Annual Attendance, Programs, Classes, and Small Events



In 2013, the total annual number of participants attending programs, classes and small events (Figure 12) dropped, likely a reflection of smaller departments entering their data. Use PRORAGIS to find much more accurate data by accessing the online Custom Reports or by looking at the Miscellaneous Ratios in the Aggregate Custom Analysis Reports. Total park attendance (Figure 13) is also down, possibly because of the increased smaller department participation in the PRORAGIS survey.

Figure 13

Total Park Attendance

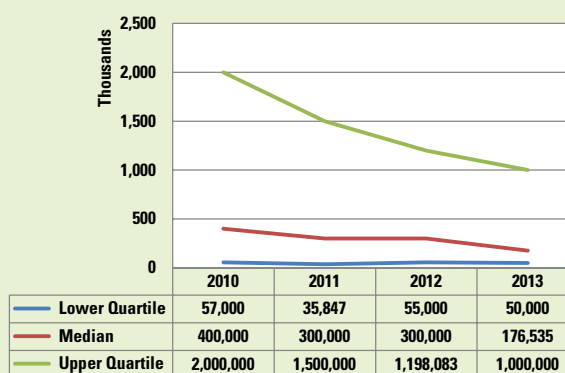
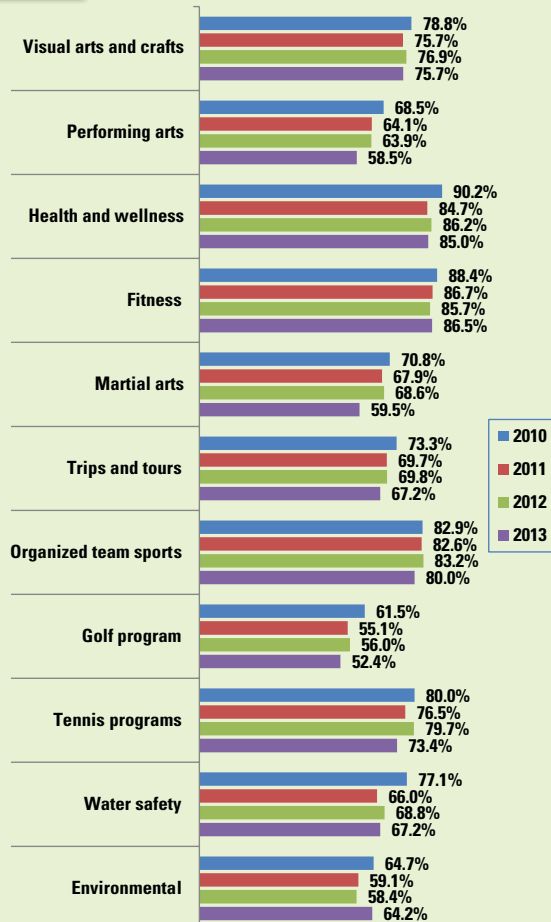


Figure 14

Programs Offered by Agencies



PARK PROGRAMMING AND ATTENDANCE TRENDS

What are some of the overall trends we're seeing?

Fewer agencies are offering programs such as performing arts programs, martial arts, trips, tours, organized sports, golf and water safety (Figures 14 and 15). The number of agencies offering organized team sports, fitness, health and wellness, and environmental programs, however, remains strong, indicating the importance of these values to communities and their park and recreation departments for keeping area residents healthy and teaching about local environmental health.

Fewer agencies are also offering summer camps — only 73 percent in 2013, down from 77 percent in 2012 and more than 80 percent in 2010 — although those that do offer summer camps saw average camper attendance per week rise from 98 participants in 2012 to 125 in 2013.

Program fees and charges per participant dropped significantly (from a median of \$25 to \$30 in the last three years to a median of less than \$9 in 2013), likely due to an attempt by agencies to increase participation as well as fewer overall programs offered.

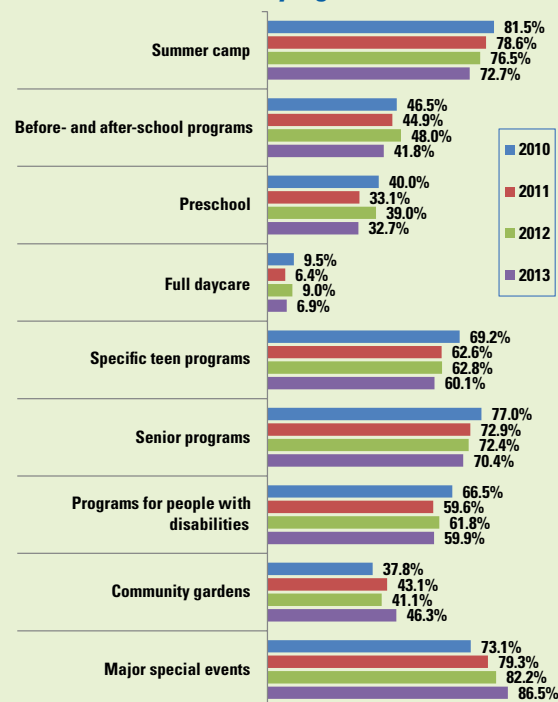
What does this mean for my agency? Increases in social services show that these services are needed and used. Park professionals can use these figures — found in more detail in their online PRORAGIS Custom Report comparisons — to show how such programs meet community needs and ensure social equity. By examining social service offerings within PRORAGIS, park professionals can determine if their facilities, staff and resources are adequate to meet the social equity needs within their community. This can assist in developing the total cost of service, allowing the department to determine the level of subsidization needed.

Likewise, an agency's figures for health and fitness programs and environmental offerings can show park planners where additional programs, events or classes would benefit both individuals and the larger community.

How can I know if our agency's programming is worthwhile? Check out the cost-versus-revenue benchmarks on page 13 and compare median revenue per visitor, program fees and charges per program participant, and operative expenditures per visitor with your own figures. For instance, the median operating expenditures per capita was \$77. Use these benchmarks to begin examining your own spending.

Figure 15

Recreation Opportunities Offered By Agencies



OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE AND BENCHMARKING

This section features just some of the facts and figures describing the size, type, acreage and population served that NRPA has collected through the PRORAGIS database. By comparing your agency's facility sizes (Figure 16) and type (Figure 17) to the facilities at other similar agencies, you could make the case for adding certain types of facilities or for increasing budgets for certain expenses. For an apples-to-apples comparison that's tailored to your agency, use the Custom Reports tool to find agencies in your area with comparable budgets and populations.

Figure 16

Square Feet Per Facility, Fiscal Year 2013

Facility Type	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Recreation/Community center	10,169	24,978	50,129
Fitness center	1,600	4,000	9,000
Senior center	4,963	10,000	12,500

Figure 17

Facility Types, Fiscal Year 2013

	Departments Offering	Median Jurisdiction Population Per Facility
Playground	96.1%	3,840
Diamond fields (e.g., baseball/softball)	92.0%	3,403
Rectangular fields (e.g., football/soccer)	89.1%	4,242
Tennis court (outdoor)	85.3%	4,283
Basketball court (outdoor)	84.6%	6,644
Recreation/community center	74.3%	24,645
Swimming pool (outdoor)	59.7%	30,376
Community gardens	47.1%	32,529
Dog park	47.1%	50,852
Golf course (9 holes)	34.7%	29,631
Swimming pool (indoor)	32.8%	61,322
Tennis court (indoor)	9.8%	22,852

Figure 18

Acres of Park Maintained

Number of Acres	2013 Operating Expenditures per Acre of Land Managed or Maintained			2013 Acres of Parkland Maintained Per FTE		
	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
250 or less	6,454	16,523	34,000	2.7	5	9.8
251 to 1,000	3,487	8,974	18,747	6	8.7	19.6
1,001 to 3,500	1,855	4,808	6,904	9	21.6	54.7
More than 3,500	1,213	3,001	3,846	18.4	32.8	66.3

Use the data from [Figure 18](#) to estimate where your agency stands in its spending per acre and in a staff-to-acres ratio. Keep in mind that factors include equipment used, percentage of parkland that's developed, degree of maintenance required and topography. Acres of parkland maintained per full-time equivalent dropped lower than in recent years, perhaps reflecting an upward turn in hiring.

Benchmarking

Our benchmarking ratios table ([Figure 19](#)) can be used to compare your own direct revenue per capita or acreage of parkland per 1,000 people. Because these figures are given as ratios, these benchmarks can be used to compare unit costs for small park and recreation departments as well as for large urban departments.

Figure 19

Miscellaneous Benchmarking Ratios

	2010 Median	2011 Median	2012 Median	2013 Median
Operating expenditures per capita	\$82	\$74	\$85	\$77
Operating expenditures per FTE	\$94,797	\$95,851	\$95,237	\$84,859
Operating expenditures per acre of land managed or maintained	\$6,397	\$6,539	\$6,538	\$7,357
Acreage of parkland per 1,000 population	14.9	10.5	11.1	9.1
Acres of parkland maintained per FTE	15.6	15.2	13.5	9.1
Revenue per capita	\$27.56	\$19.22	\$24.92	\$17.04
Revenue as a percent of total operating expense	32.0%	28.2%	30.1%	26.9%
Revenue per visitor	\$4.52	\$3.76	\$4.60	\$5.11
Total operating expenditures per visitor	\$14.47	\$12.27	\$14.17	\$16.25
Total capital plus total operating expenditures per capita	\$101.14	\$85.58	\$105.27	\$90.46
Tax cost per capita	\$47.66	\$29.55	\$48.30	\$54.95
Program attendance per program staffing (FTE)	2,576.7	2,376.9	2,202.8	2,717.0
Program fees and charges per program participant	\$25.74	\$31.33	\$24.67	\$8.84

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM AND MAPPING

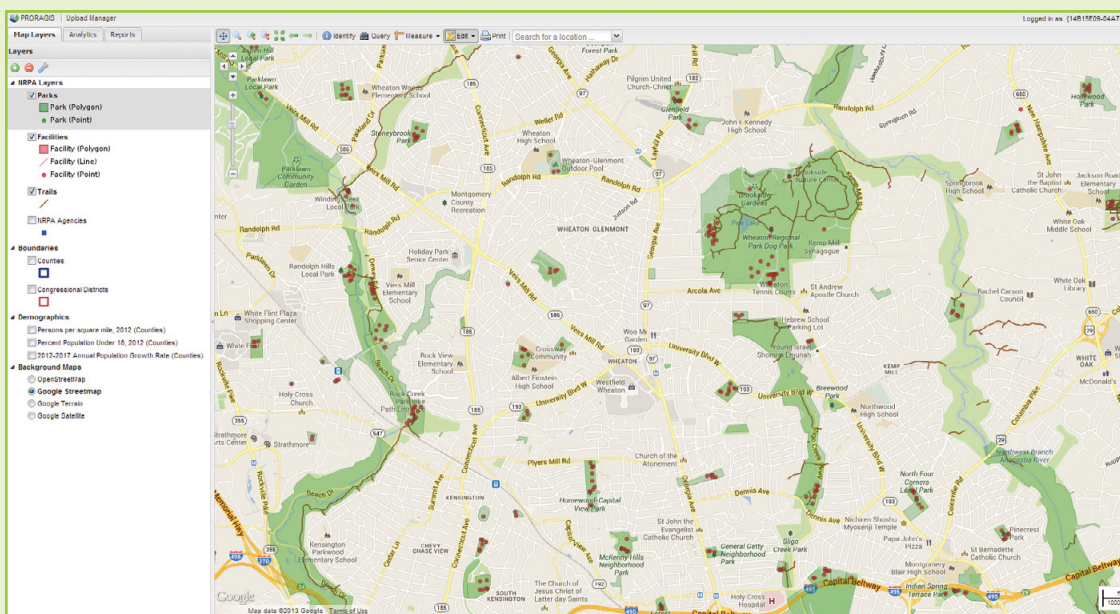
Tools embedded within our GIS mapping program can help park professionals plan for programs and facilities that boost Health and Wellness, Conservation and Social Equity for their communities. For instance, GIS views reveal proximity of facilities to population centers where underserved people are in need of places to walk or bike. Other reports may reveal the types of facilities and diversity of trails offered to residents, and perhaps indicate a need for certain types of new trails or facilities for fitness and exercise.

Other mapping functions can assist with operations and maintenance issues. Measuring tools may help in planning for maintenance needs, such as mowing, landscaping and construction requirements. The Identify tool (Figure 21) allows users to quickly view information about parks and facilities directly from the map interface. The new Query tool (Figure 22) can help planners quickly locate outdated facilities that need renovation or replacement.

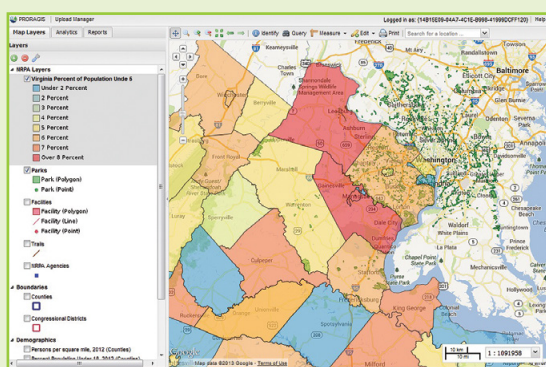
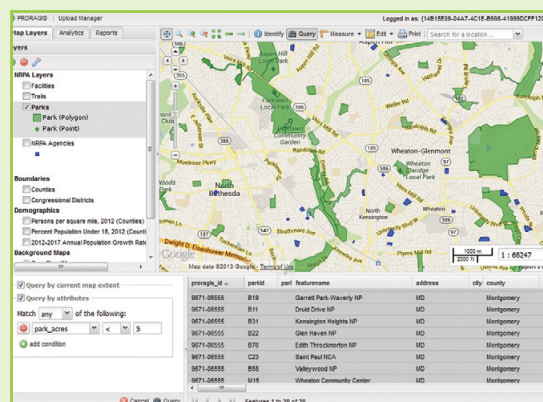
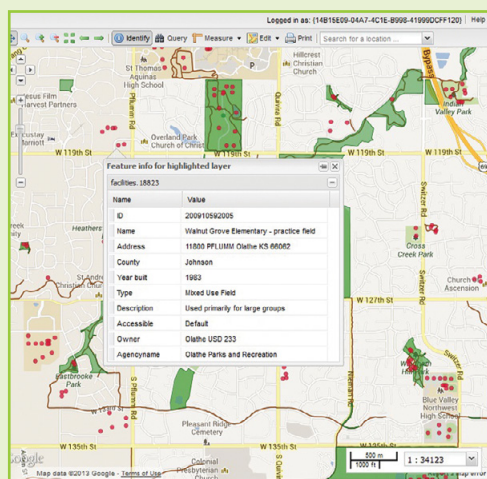
Just introduced and under continuous improvement, the Population Layers tool (Figure 23) will help park and recreation departments analyze their community demographics to make better planning decisions. A population layer showing age distributions could reveal where programs for kids or seniors are needed most — areas with high percentages of children may need more playgrounds or summer camps, while areas with more seniors might consider installing warm-water therapy pools for individuals with arthritis or other conditions associated with aging. Soon, GIS users will be able to view obesity rates layered onto their map, helping park planners better distribute fitness trails, gym facilities and health classes, and a crime-rate layer may help with planning and staffing skateparks or other youth facilities. Information about parks and facilities is exportable to Microsoft Excel using the new Reports feature (Figure 24).

Figure 20

User-Friendly Mapping Interface



As an open-source platform, the new mapping interface functions similarly to desktop-GIS software and has the ability to connect to external data sources. Here, in this area within Montgomery County, Maryland, parks are shaded dark green, trails are marked and facility locations are indicated by red dots.



LOOKING FORWARD

As PRORAGIS continues to mature, trends tied to the three pillars will continue to highlight significant work that agencies are doing in each of these areas. User agencies will find that their benchmarked data will gain more statistical significance as more departments input and update their data for comparison, and all participating agencies will find themselves equipped with more hard facts and figures quantifying their impact that they can share with local officials and community members.

NRPA's research team constantly studies the PRORAGIS database to find shifts and changes in operations, services and development — trends that can help you in planning for the future. We use our extensive resources to determine the causes and meanings behind these trends and what they might mean for your agency and region. For instance, in recent years, climate changes — including more frequent and intense natural storms — have affected the planning, design and materials used to build parks and facilities. In addition, these powerful storms have sometimes resulted in higher costs of development and maintenance for park facilities, while possibly reducing discretionary funds. Because of these reductions, we may see more public-private agreements to support programming, cultural events and upper-skill-level activities begin to emerge in the coming years.

Below are more current trends that may affect how the park and recreation field does business. Here, we define “Opportunity” as a trend that creates a win for both progressive departments and users. “Challenges” may present difficult decisions surrounding current operations, but with proper planning, can create benefits for everyone. “Conflicts” indicate that a trend runs counter to best practices, so options need to be carefully considered:

PAST AND CURRENT PRACTICES	FUTURE DIRECTION	PRESENTS...
Programming and Offerings		
Focus on service to users who seek their programs in their facilities.	Due to increasing isolation of people of all ages, ethnicities and locations, outreach programming to traditional nonparticipating groups may have significant health and social benefits for communities.	Opportunity
Increasing awareness of immediate health value from activity participation.	Growing awareness of long-term physical and mental health value from an active lifestyle.	Opportunity
Programming focus on organized team sports and activities.	Individualized sports, e.g., walking, running, swimming and biking, represent the top 10 activities participated in by active Americans.	Opportunity
Programming focus on organized team sports and activities.	Safety issues (concussions) may impact activities such as youth tackle football, resulting in options such as flag football leagues.	Challenge
Department roles: facility upkeep and recreational activities.	Community roles: public health, social transition for youth, conservation initiatives in addition to current roles.	Challenge
Capital Development and Maintenance		
Facilities and parks are viewed as costs to the budget.	Facilities and parks are viewed as long-term benefits to jurisdictions.	Opportunity
Reasonably stable national weather patterns in recent decades have dictated facility designs and types of materials.	The unstable weather patterns in recent years and the increased frequency of violent storm events may affect planning and design of parks and facilities as they increase costs.	Opportunity
Both large and small municipalities have been accruing maintenance deficits in all types of infrastructure (e.g., parks, recreation facilities, transportation, water and sewer systems, and similar).	Large amounts of infrastructure development were last funded 45 years ago; infrastructure renovation will make new development funds scarce.	Conflict
Environment		
Open space and natural areas of developed parks are considered valuable additions to the community.	The pervious surface of open space and undeveloped parkland has increasing value for mitigating stormwater runoff and flooding in communities.	Opportunity