

Introduction & Background

History

Madison’s park system originated from early civic efforts in the late 1800s and evolved through major planning milestones, including the formation of the Madison Park Commission in 1931 and the adoption of the first formal POSP in 1961. The plan has since guided the city’s park growth, focusing on natural preservation, equitable access, and adapting to urban expansion and community needs. The POSP is updated every 5-years, as required by the DNR and was last updated in 2018.

Vision Statement

Everyone shall have access to an ideal system of parks, natural resources, and recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Mission Statement:

- Provide an exeptional system of safe, accessible, well-planned and maintained parks, facilities, public cemetary, natural areas, and public shorelines.
- Provide affordable opportunities for recreational and educational experiences.
- Presereve and expand our urban forest resources through a well planned and systematic approach to tree maintenance, planting, and natural area management.
- Preserve and promote City of Madison Park’s historic legacy, as well as its future legacy.
- Provide opportunities for cultural interaction by facilitating community events and through the display of public art.

Accomplishments Since the Previous POSP

Madison Parks has accomplished many goals including; improved public lake access, ensure that existing levels of service are maintained and supported through the park system and are increased as new parks and facilities are developed, address parkland deficiencies and created equitable access and funding for parks, increase both cultural and physical accessibility of parks, improve parks capacity to withstand evironmental changes and more.



Accessible Beach Mats at Vilas and Bernies Beaches have increased accessibility at 2 public beaches in Madison.



245 acres of land were acquired to address parkland deficiencies and population increase.



The Parks Ecology Team was created to diversify parks natural areas, landscape beds and urban forest canopy.



Photo submitted by Beth Holden

The Burial Mound Policy was adopted in 2019 under guidance of the Ho-Chunk Nation to ehname and protect cultural resources.

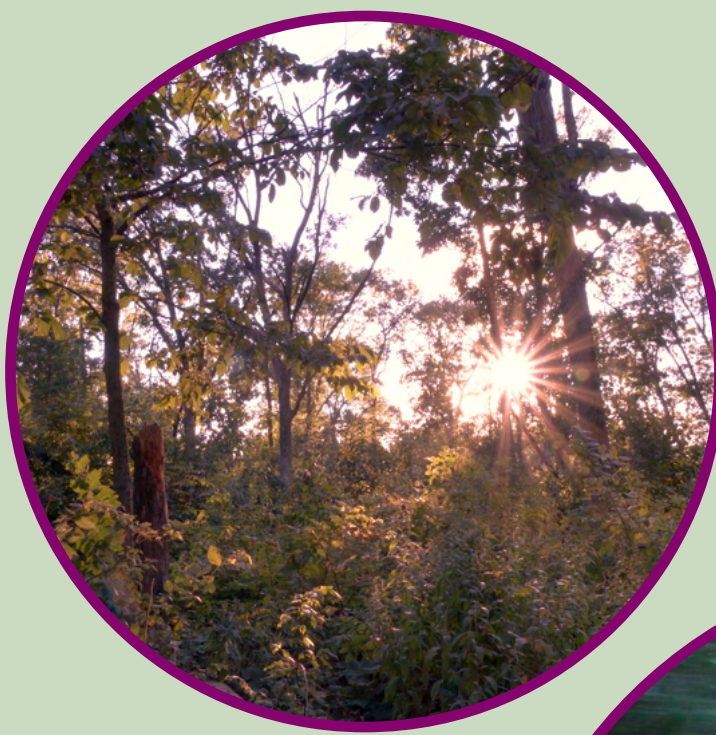


Installed 56 new playgrounds through the playground replacement program ensuring Madison Parks’ playgrounds are no more than 25 years old.



Sustained the growth of the Kids Need Opportunities at Warner (KNOW) Program in partnership with the Madison Parks Foundation.

Roles of Parks and Recreation



Environmental Health



Public Health Benefits



Equity and Inclusion



Community Well-being



Economic Vitality



Accessibility

Planning Process

Data Gathering and Public Engagement



Plan Development

Plan Review and Adoption



City of Madison Planning Considerations

Related Planning Efforts

City of Madison Comprehensive Plan



Task Force on Equity in Music & Entertainment Report



Madison in Motion: Sustainable Transportation Plan



Madison Cultural Plan



Area Plans

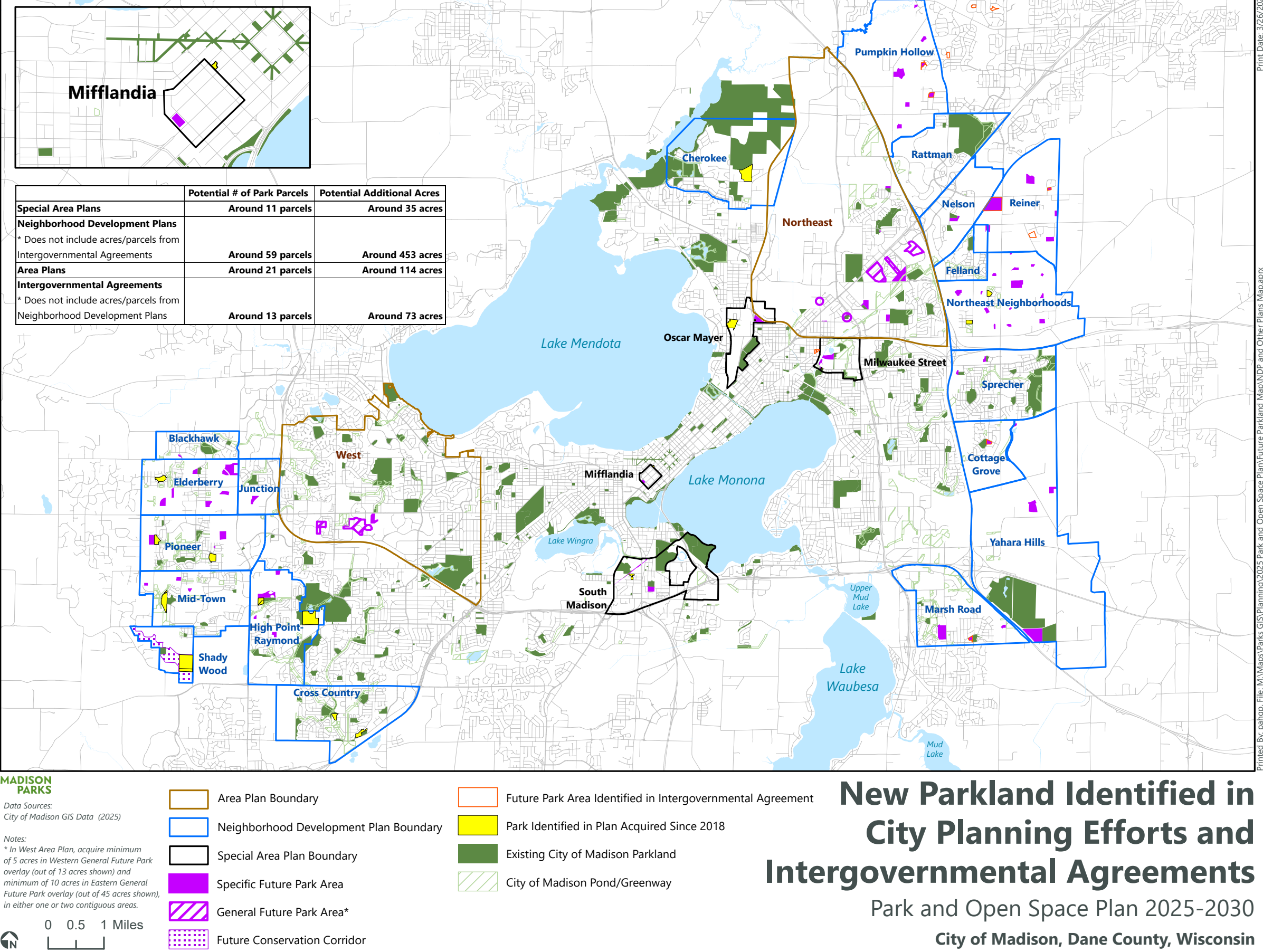


Madison Sustainability Plan



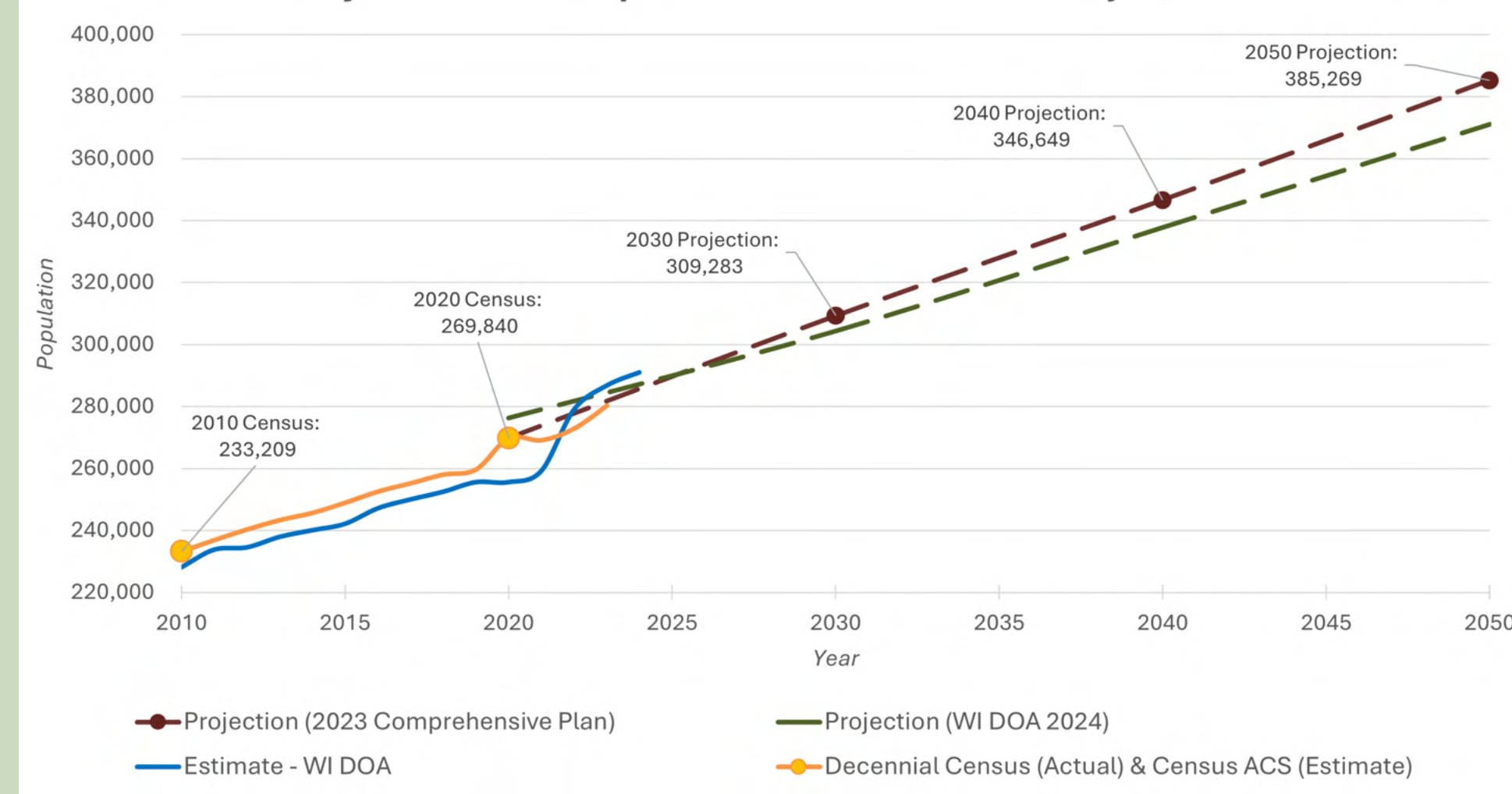
- Key Takeaways:
- Active plans and reports pertain to the park system.
 - Plans anticipate future growth and uses within the city.
 - Relevant plans and reports often set goals for community expectation in terms of programming and operation of park spaces.
 - Understanding these plans provides more cohesive and effective service delivery that aligns with community goals and expectations.

New Parkland Identified in City Planning Efforts and Intergovernmental Agreements



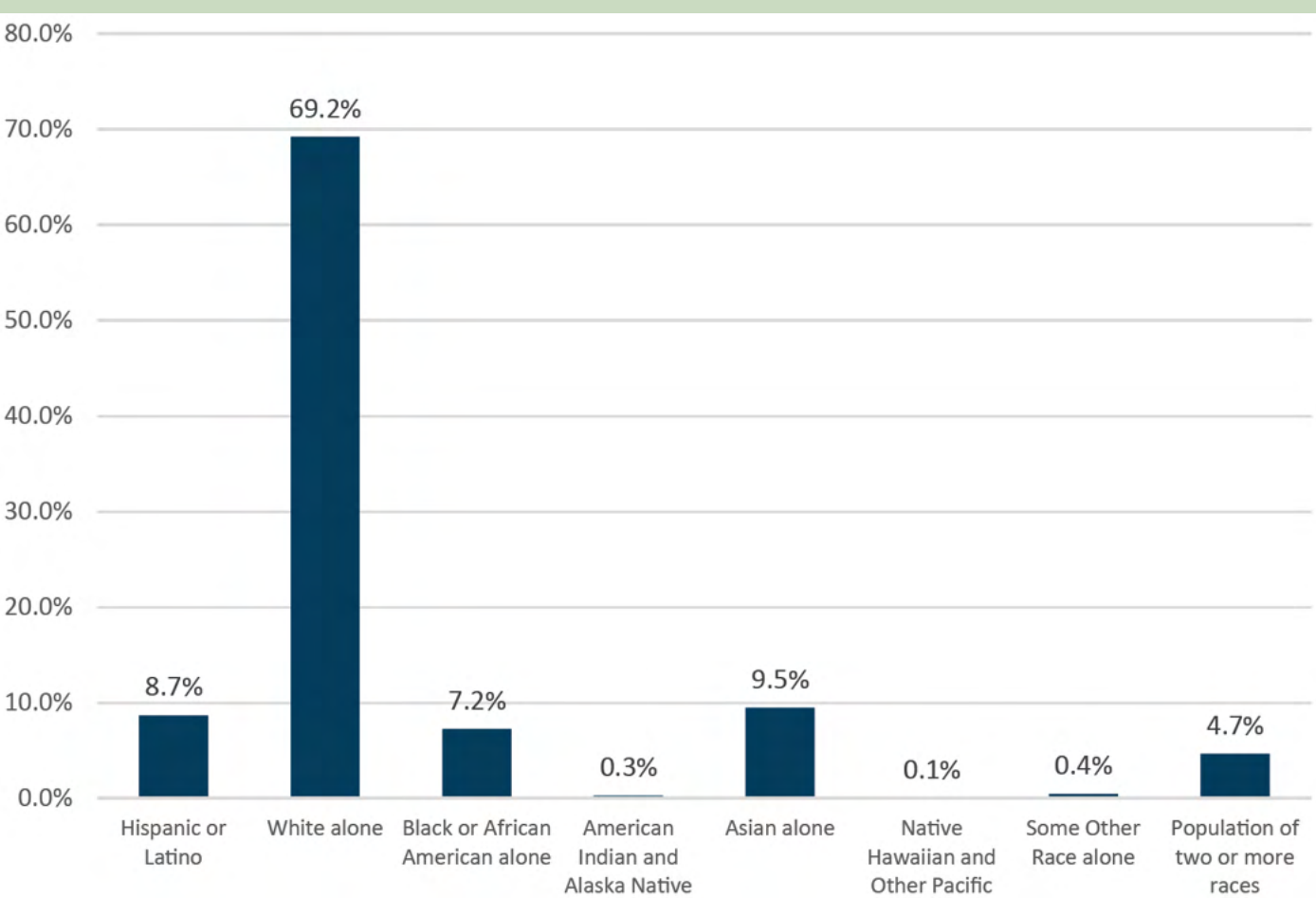
Demographics

City of Madison: Population Estimates and Projections



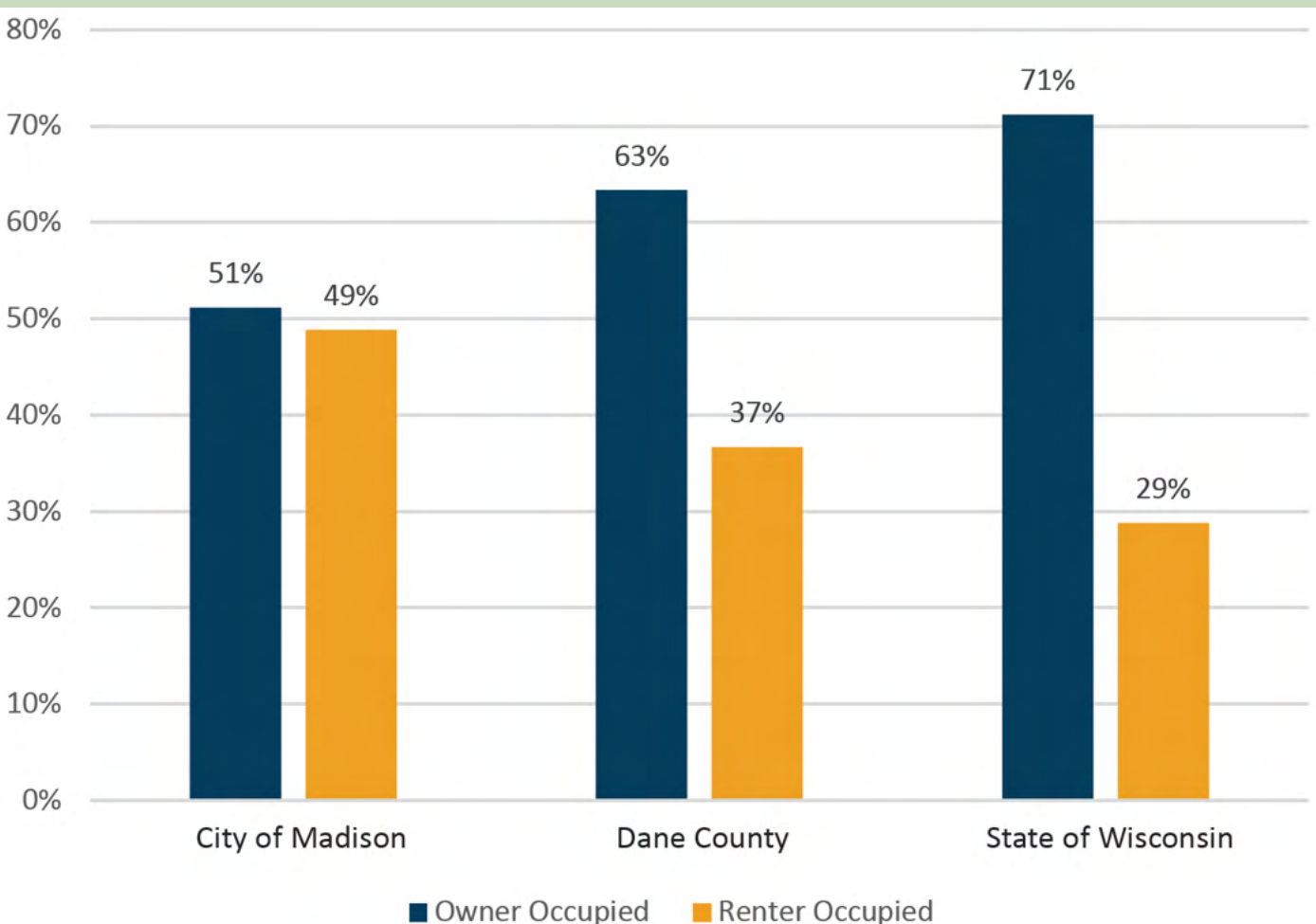
Source: City of Madison Department of Planning, Community & Economic Development

Population by Race and Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census, P9 Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino By Race

Owner vs. Renter Occupancy



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates B25008: Total Population in Occupied Housing Units By Tenure, City of Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin.

- Key Takeaways:
- Madison's overall affluence is unevenly distributed, especially across racial and ethnic lines.
 - Parks can help bridge equity gaps by offering inclusive spaces, services, and programs.
 - Understanding the needs of underrepresented communities is crucial for equitable park access.
 - Population growth and new housing will increase the demand for accessible parks.
 - Madison's aging and diversifying population requires culturally responsive and adaptable park planning.
 - **The population of residents ages 65-84 is expected to increase by 45% by 2040.**
 - A flexible parks system should evolve to meet the changing needs and values of its users.

Environmental Factors



Climate Change



Land Management



Urban Forest



Water Quality

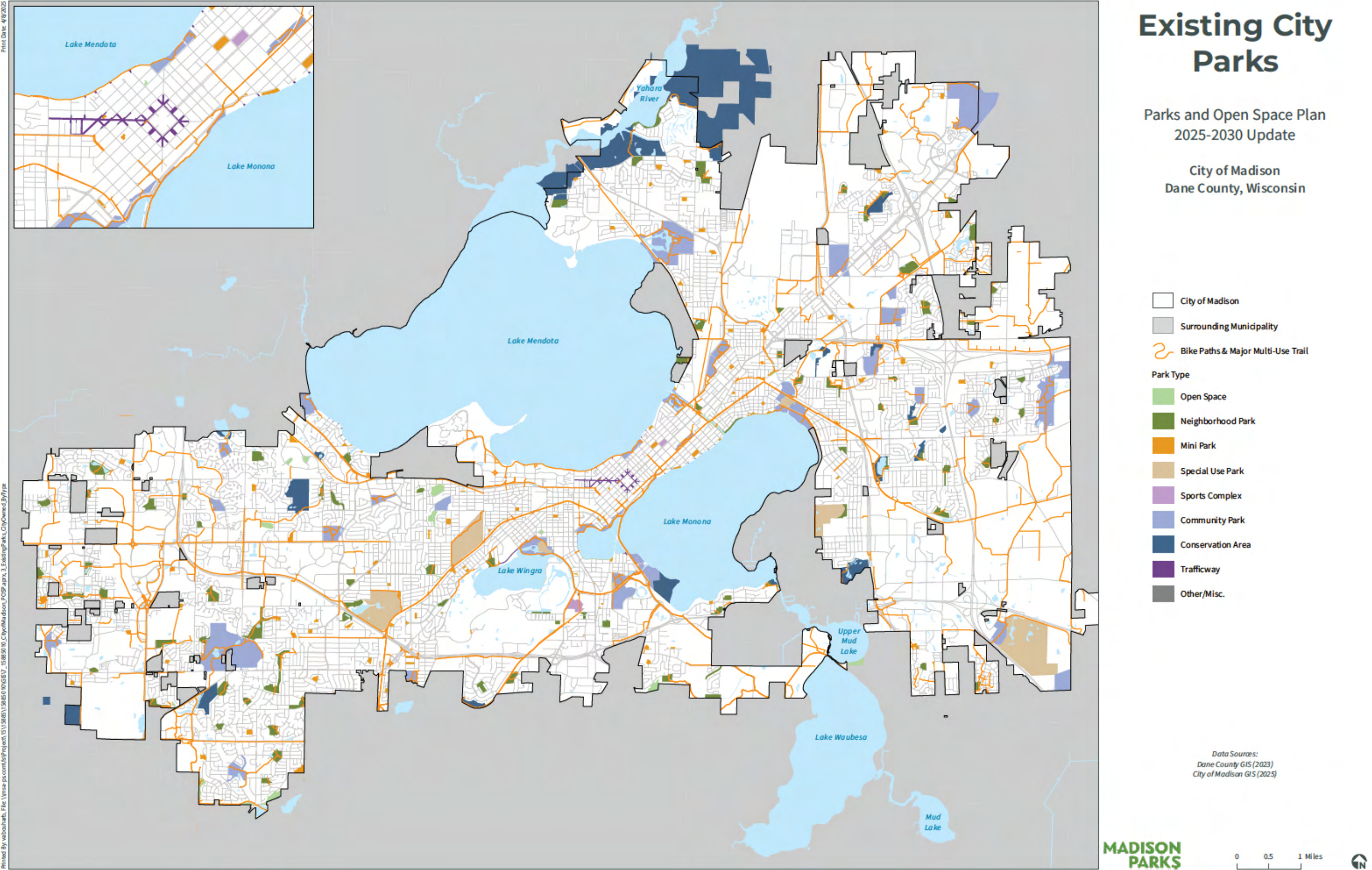
Parkland Inventory

Park Classifications

City of Madison Park Type Classification Descriptions

Classification	General Description
Mini Park	Fewer than 5 acres and used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.
Neighborhood Park	Five acres or greater, neighborhood parks remain the basic unit of the park system. These parks serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.
Community Park	Typically greater than 20 acres, these parks serve a broader purpose than a neighborhood park. They focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.
Conservation Parks	Lands set aside for preservation of sensitive and/or high-quality natural resources.
Greenways	Public land owned or administered by City Engineering for stormwater purposes. Greenway acreage within parks is counted as parkland for purposes of inventory.
Open Space	Typically land that is not suited to develop as a conservation or active use park with facilities.
Other	Non-park facilities such as the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District Pump Station 8 which is located on land owned by the Parks Division.
Special Use	Parkland that serves unique recreation opportunities (e.g., Olbrich Botanical Gardens, golf courses, Forest Hill Cemetery).
Sports Complex	Heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities whose primary purpose is programmed active recreation.
Trafficway	Public right-of-way used as parkland. Development of this land is limited. Trafficway acreage is counted as parkland for the purposes of inventorying acreage and number of parks.

Existing City Parks by Park Classification



City of Madison Park Facilities



Other Park and Open Space Facilities

University of Wisconsin



Dane County Parks



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



Other Parks/Convervancy Areas



National Park Service Resources



Private Recreational Facilities

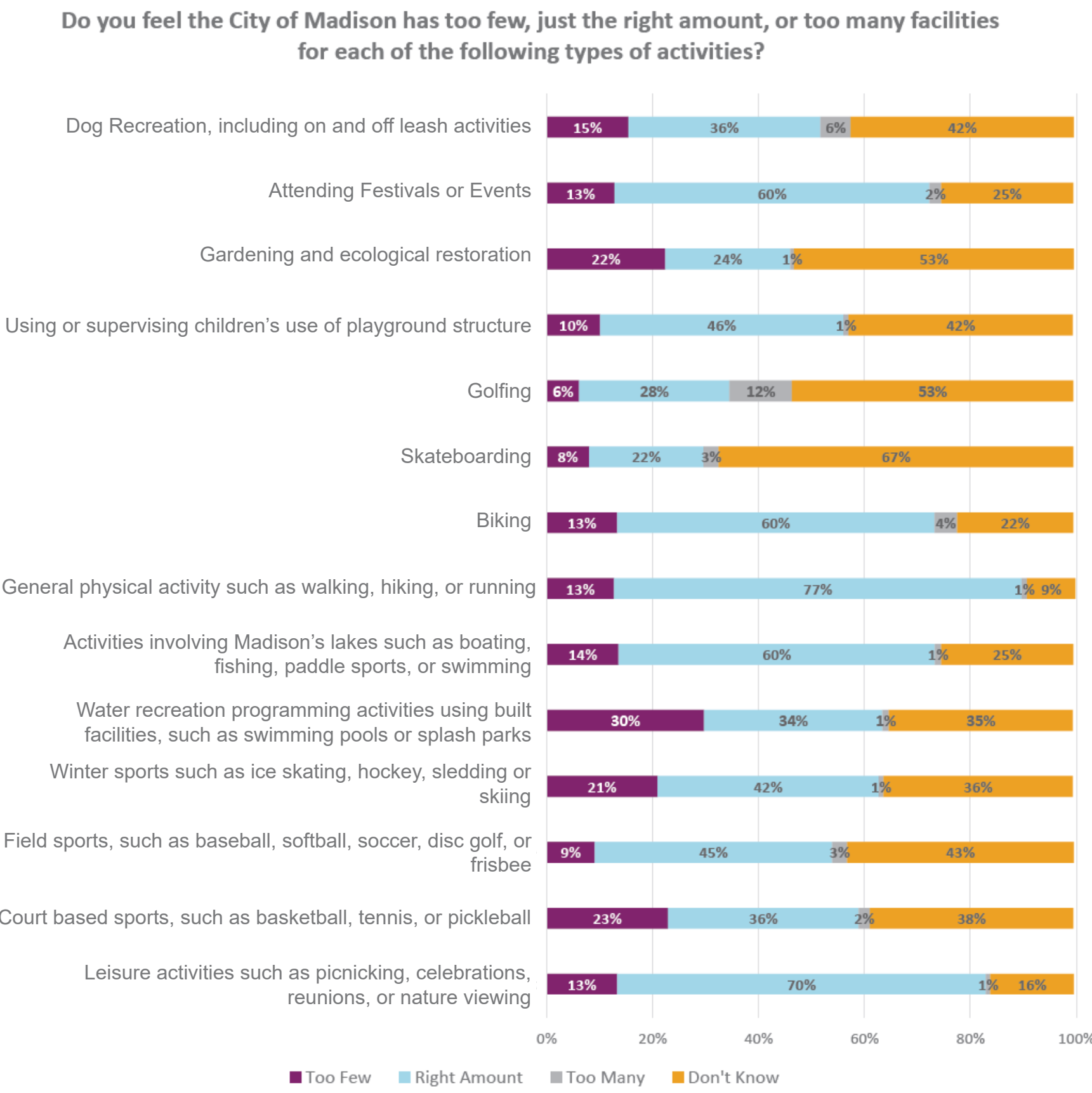


Engagement Strategies & Recreation Facility Demand

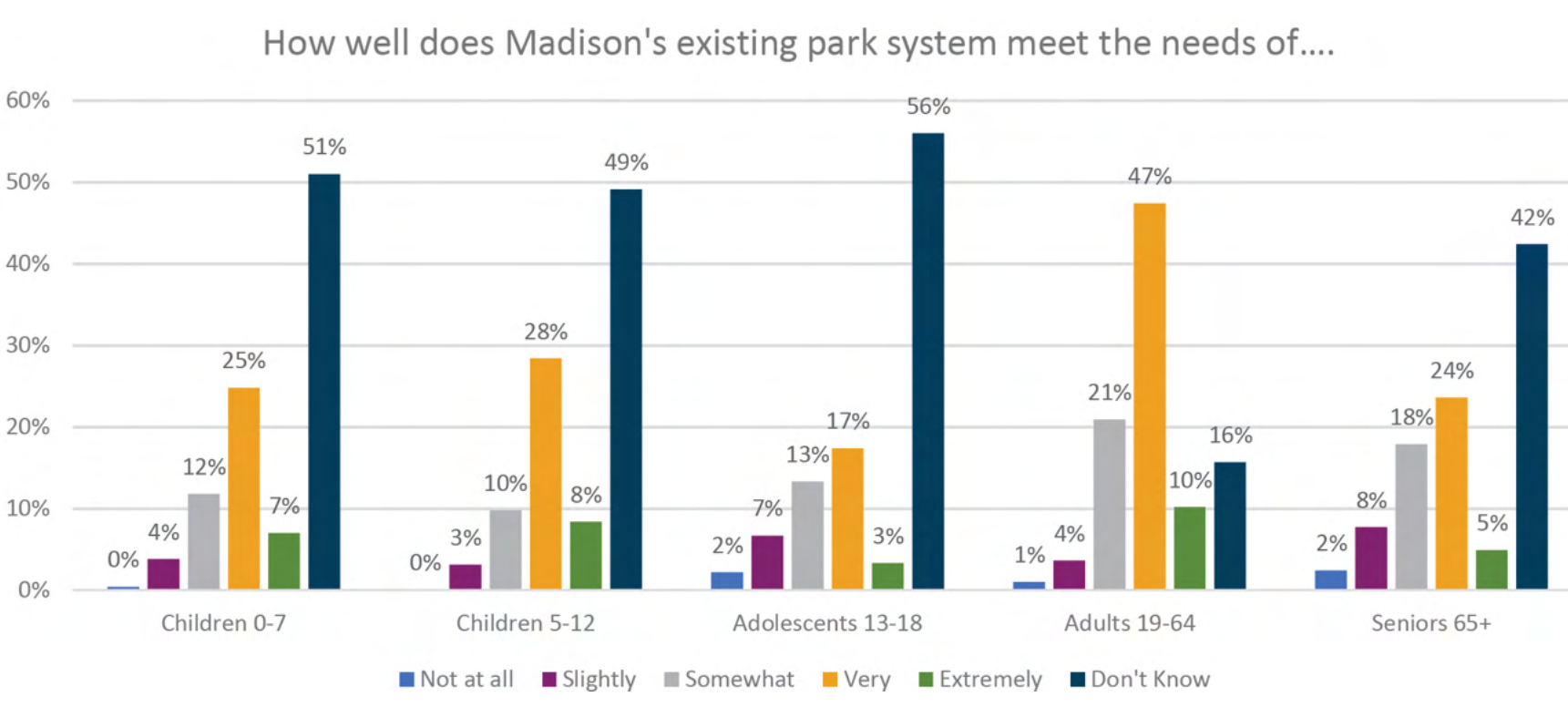
Community Enagement

City Wide Survey

Survey Results Regarding Amount of Recreational Offerings



Survey Results Regarding Meeting Needs Based on Age



Public Input Meetings

Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and Youth Focus Groups



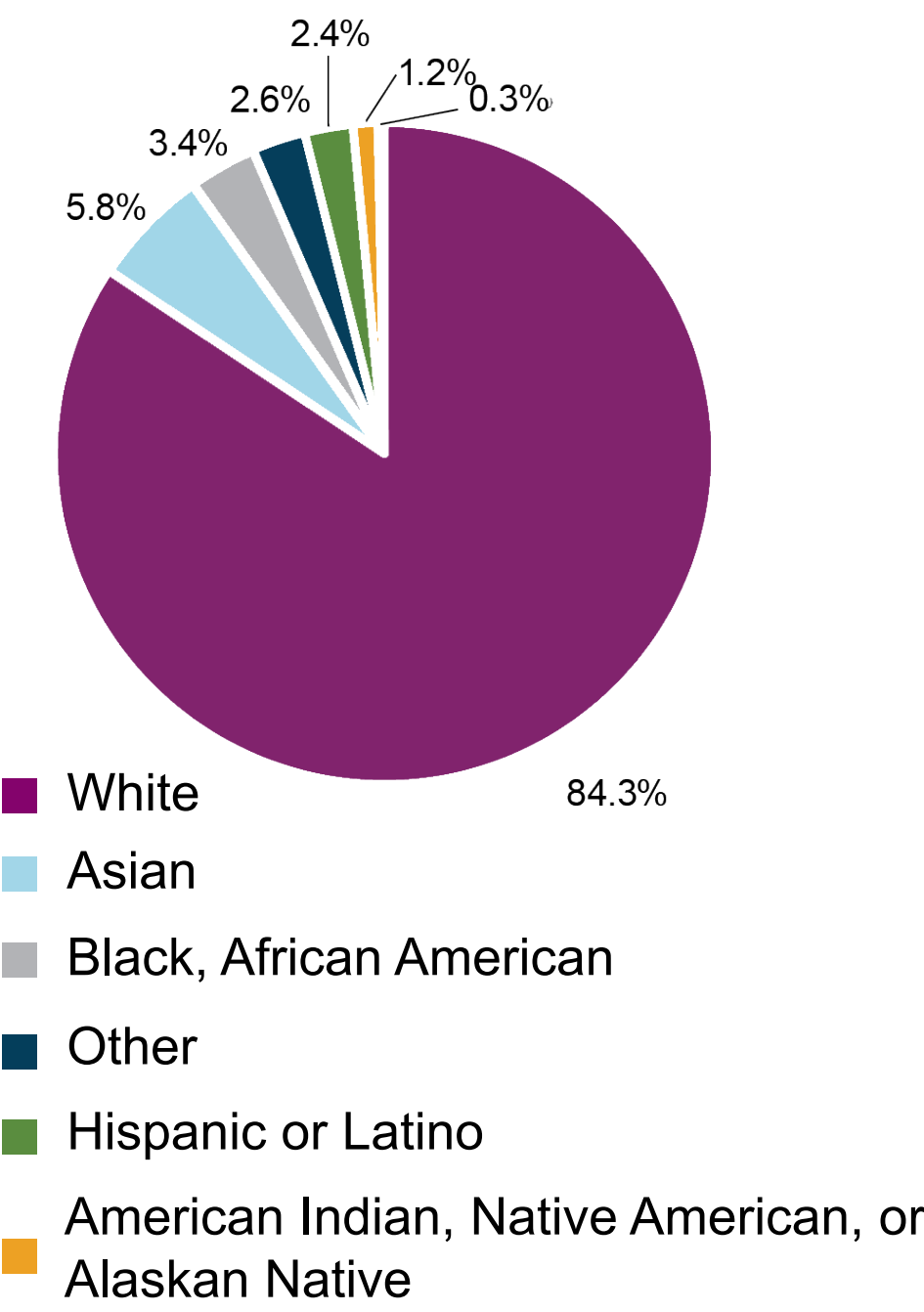
Youth and BIPOC-focused online survey promoted via wish boxes and pop-up events



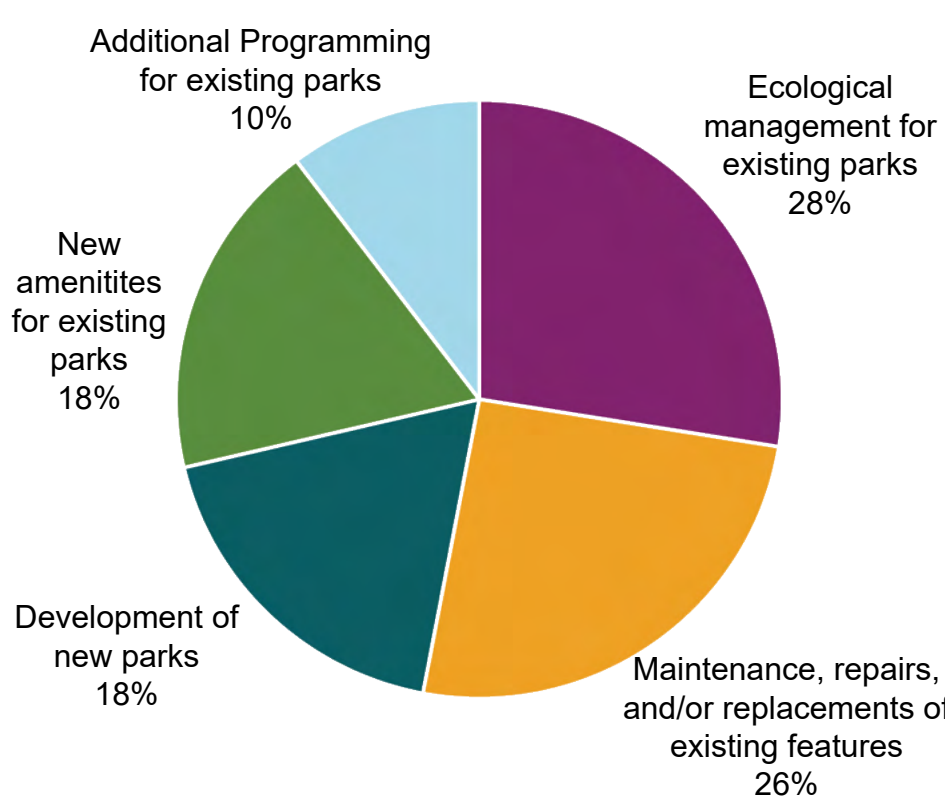
Wish Boxes distributed to libraries and community centers across Madison



Race/Ethnicity of Community Survey Respondants



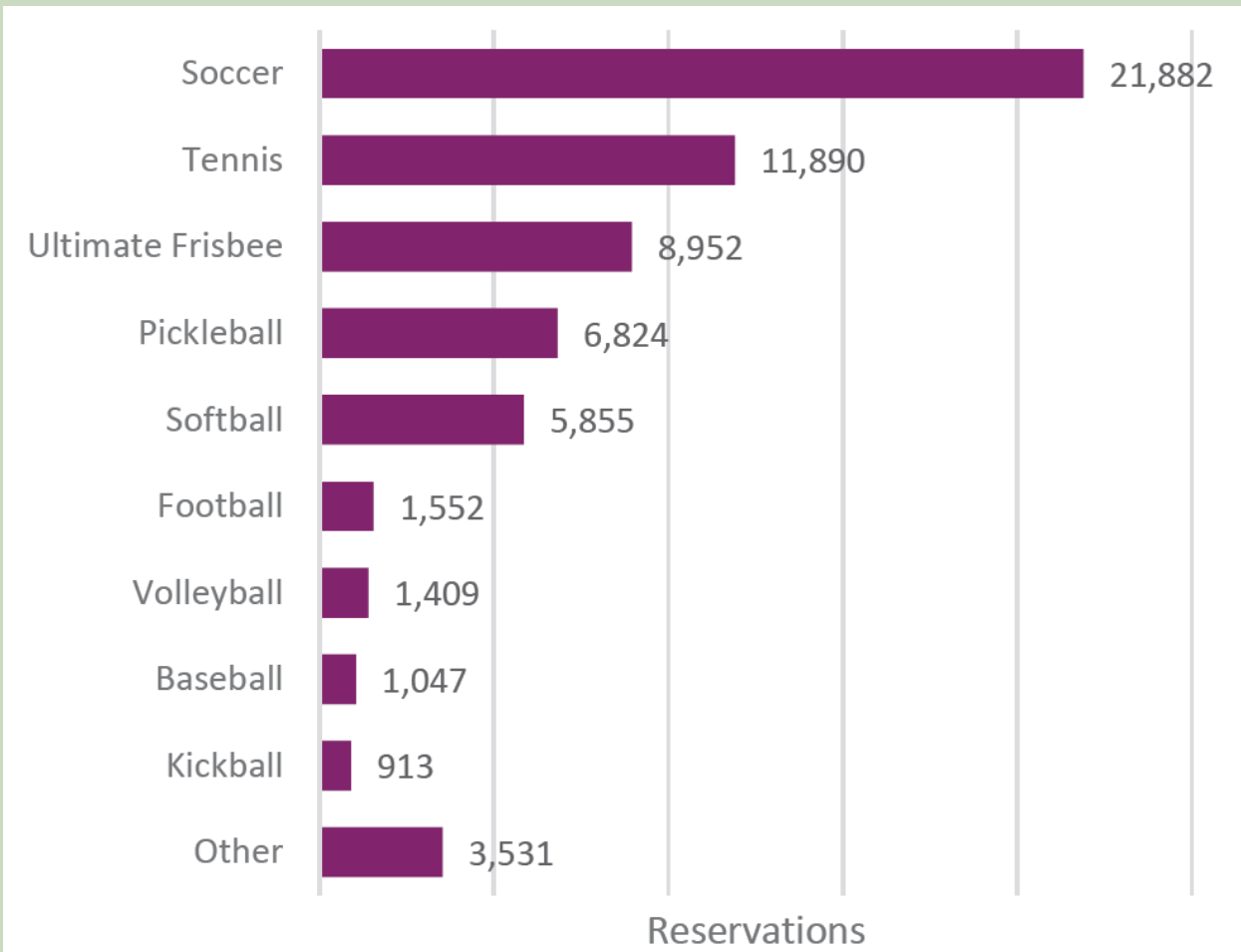
Balance the Budget Exercise Results



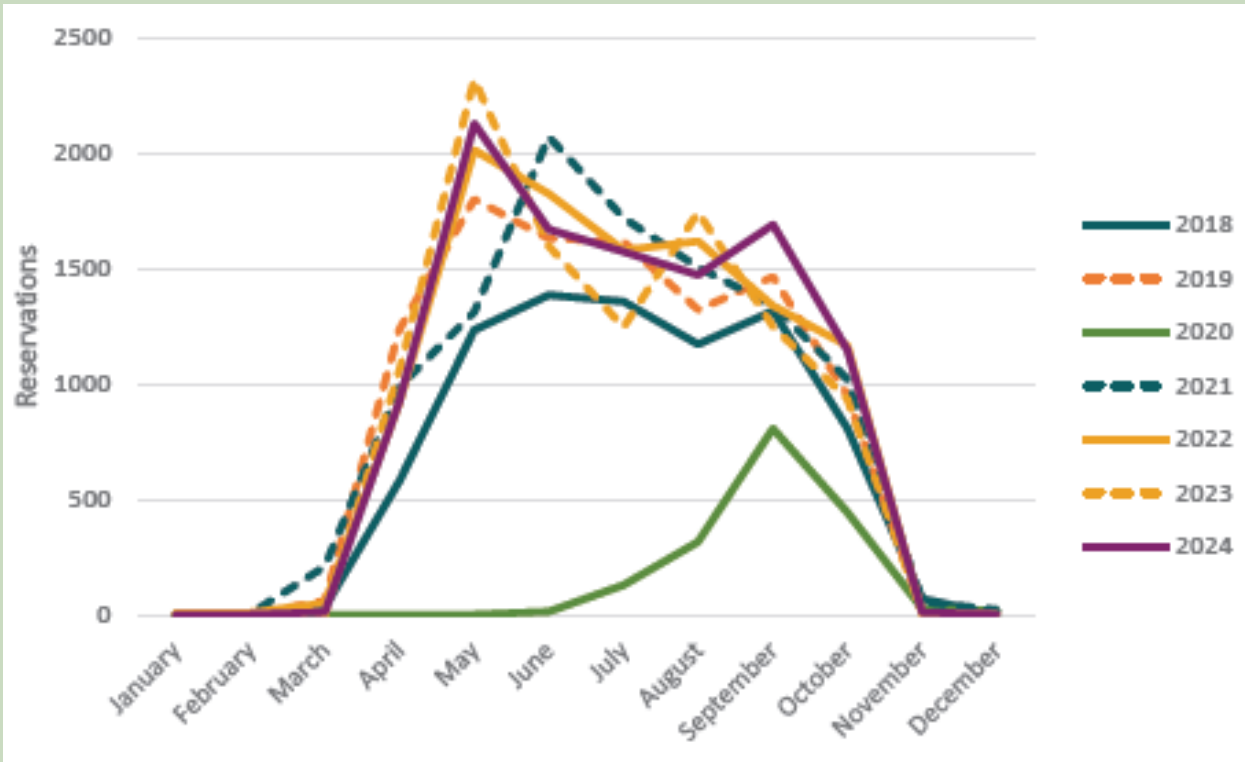
Recreation Facility Demand

Athletic Field/Facility Useage and Needs

Athletic Reservations (2018-2024)

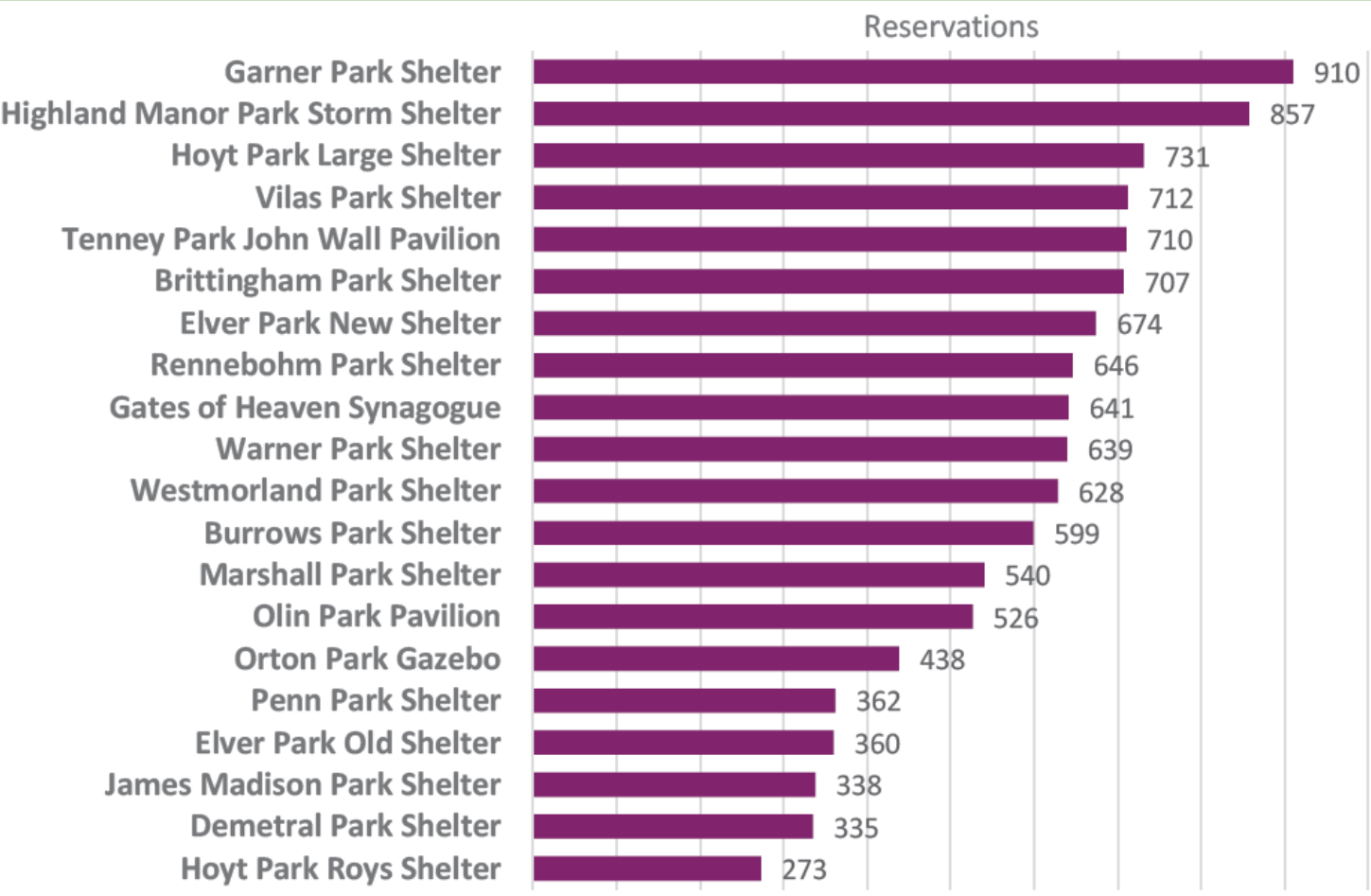


Athletic Reservations by Month (2018-2024)



Shelter Reservations

Top 20 Reserved Park Shelters (2018-2024)

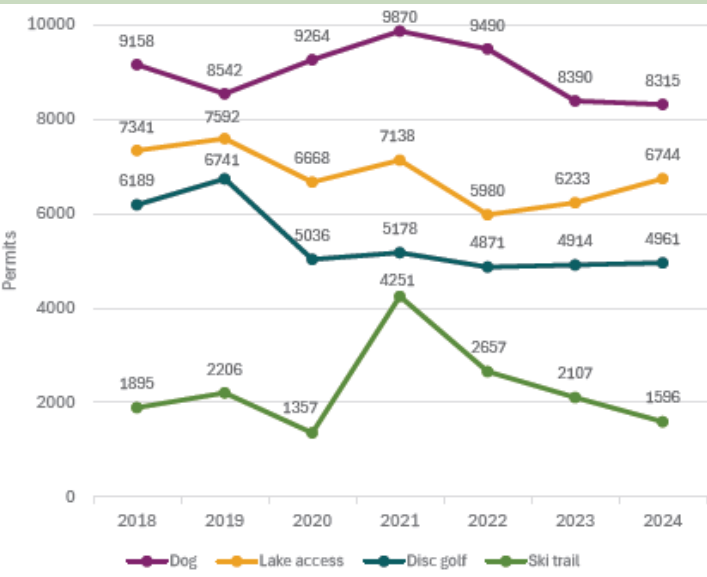


Park and Street Use Event Reservations and Park Permit Sales

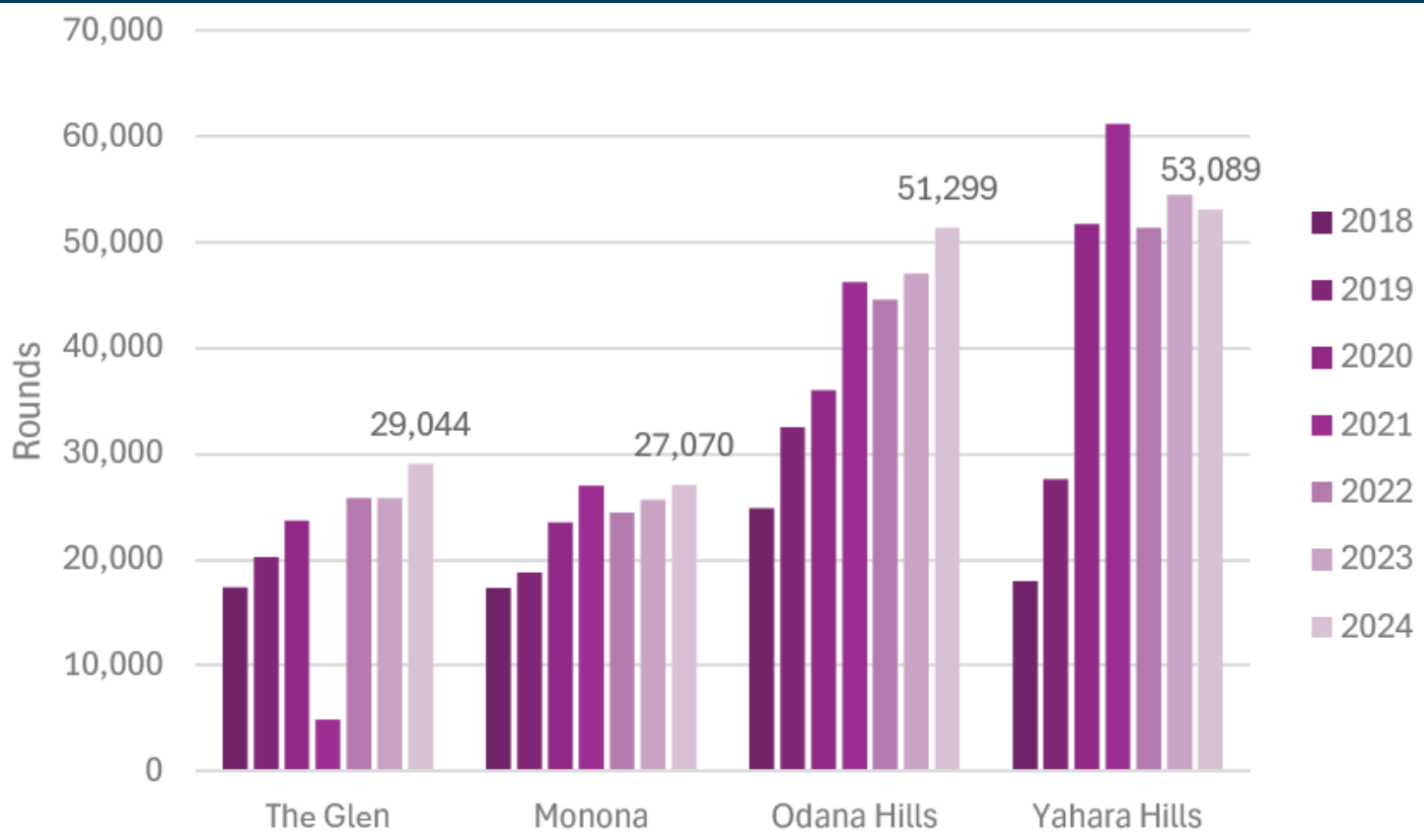
Permits for Community Events (2018-2024)



Total Permit Sales by Permit-Year (Annual & Daily) (2018-2024)



Rounds by Golf Course (2018-2024)



The Glen Golf Park



Odana Volunteers



Warner Park Community Recreation Center



Olbrich Botanical Gardens



Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment

Quantitative Analysis - Park Acreage and Parkland Per Capita

Parkland Acreage by Category

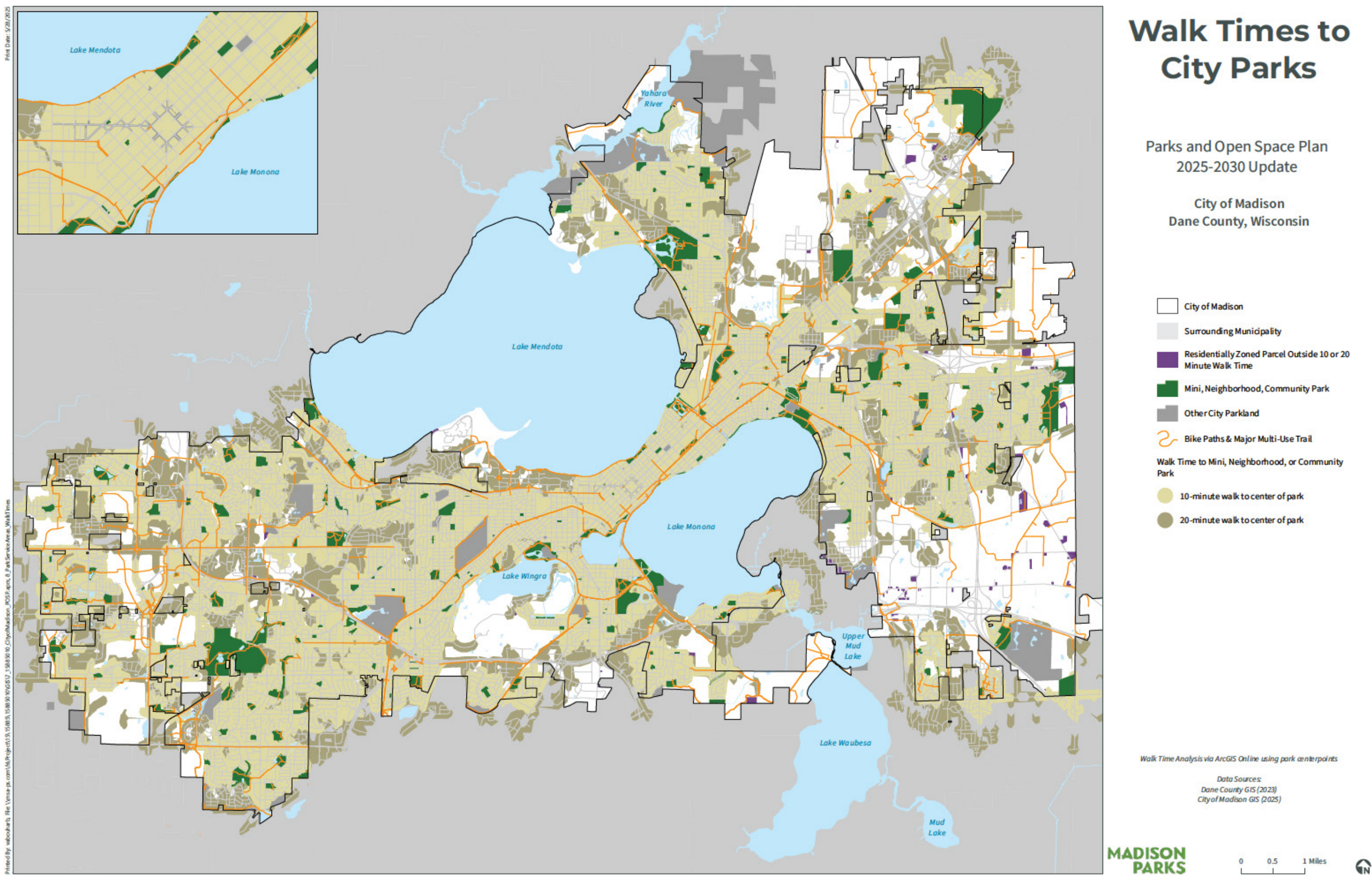
Park Type	Total # Parks	% Of Total Parks	Acres	% Total Park Acreage
Mini Park	103	35%	202.83	3.52%
Neighborhood Park	84	28%	834.28	14.50%
Community Park	31	10%	1,941.86	33.74%
Subtotal	218	74%	2,978.97	51.76%
Conservation	21	7%	1829.67	31.79%
Trafficway	22	7%	27.77	0.48%
Other	1	0%	0.62	0.01%
Open Space	21	7%	112.35	1.95%
Special	10	3%	777.82	13.52%
Sports Complex	2	1%	27.89	0.48%
Total	295.00		5,755.09	

Parks with the Highest Number of People Within a Half Mile

Park Name	Approximate Population Served
Madison Senior Center Courtyard	27,473
Brittingham Park	23,498
Peace (Elizabeth Link) Park	22,879
Law Park	22,497
Proudfit Park	18,474
Elver Park	13,152
James Madison Park	12,907
Reynolds Park	11,177
McPike Park	10,979
Demetral Park	10,895

Geographic Analysis - Population Density and Parkland Access

Walk Times to City Parks



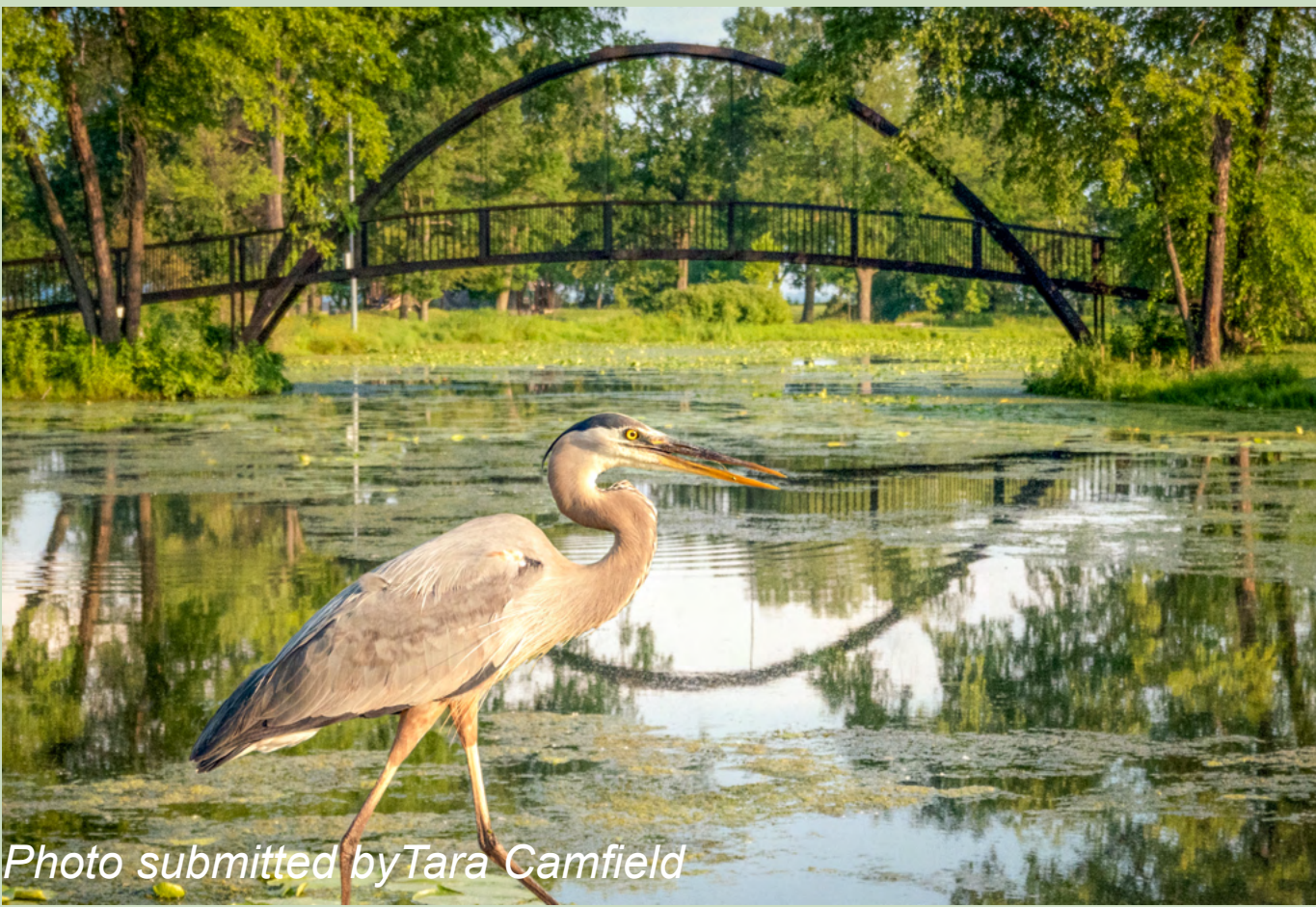
Regional and Statewide Planning Efforts

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2025-2030)

- Every 5 years states are required to develop a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that is guided by three overarching goals:
 - Ensure that all Wisconsinites have equitable opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation, regardless of where they live or their ethnicity, gender, income, abilities, or age.
 - Maintain and expand the sustainability of recreational opportunities in our state, ensuring that existing opportunities are well funded and have the support to grow and expand where needed.
 - Grow the collaborative partnership approach across federal, state, regional and local agencies, and private non-profit organizations and businesses to provide high-quality outdoor experiences for all Wisconsinites.

SCORP 2025-2030 Strategies

- Provide more opportunities for outdoor recreation close to home.
- Provide needed recreation facilities.
- Improve affordability of participation.
- Support, develop, and enhance mentoring programs.
- Create more welcoming outdoor spaces.
- Improve the distribution of information on recreation opportunities.
- Expand and diversify funding sources.
- Adapt to new environmental conditions both in terms of participation in outdoor activities as well as the management of recreation opportunities and facilities.
- Lead by example on climate change mitigation.
- Create an implementation plan that identifies desired outcomes as well as the partners to coordinate and advocate for outdoor recreation throughout Wisconsin.



Dane County POSP: Potential City County Partnership Opportunities (2025-2030)

Partner Organization	Activities
Blooming Grove Drumlins Natural Resource Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Planning with Madison Parks Division for new future recreation park on Northeast Quadrant of county.Partner with City & DNR to implement connection between Glacial Drumlin and Capital City Trails.Partner with Madison Parks Division to expand hiking and cross-country ski trails at Door Creek Park.
Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaborate with Madison Parks Division, DNR, and Friends of Cherokee Marsh to acquire lands within the Area.Continue vegetative management practices within Area to control invasive species.Consider future trail connections to Westport Drumlin Area.
Starkweather Creek Natural Resource Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Planning with City Planning for trail connection to Token Creek County Park.
McPike Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continued consideration for Conservation Fund Grant Program dependent on Master Plan.
Madison LakeWay	<ul style="list-style-type: none">County is funding \$2 million of Phase 1 improvements.Consider future partnership opportunities between County and City.
Rodefild Landfill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partner with Madison Parks and other surrounding communities on plans to convert landfill to recreational space, including planning for future recreational programming.
Ice Age Trail National Scenic Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue prioritizing County acquisition of lands for the Ice Age Trail, particularly where they overlap with other project boundaries, historic/cultural interpretative sites, and where partnership support is available.

Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan (2025-2030)

- Recommended actions within the County Parks and Open Space Plan include:
 - Work addressing winter recreation needs in the changing climate.
 - Effectively managing the increased use following the pandemic to protect and preserve park facilities and lands.
 - Improving outdoor education opportunities, implementing strategies to better serve under-privileged youth.
 - Developing career pathways in environmental stewardship.

Parks Funding

Parks Division Operating Budget: Park Operational Resources

What is Funded?

- 71% of Operating Budget funds salaries and benefits
- Day-to-day operations and maintenance of the park system
- Programming and permitting of the park spaces
- Fees for utilities serving park facilities

Types of Funding

- General Property Tax Levy
- Earned Revenue - generated through permits, fees and agreements
- Private and in-kind contributions

Concerns Regarding Funding

- Property tax limits create a gap between allowable levy and needed growth
- Dependent on park uses, external weather events, and facility conditions
- Dependent on ability to fundraise

Parks Division Capital Budget: Park Development Resources

What is Funded?

- Construction of new parks & facilities
- Replacement, maintenancem and improvements to existing facilities
- Acquisition of new parks

Types of Funding

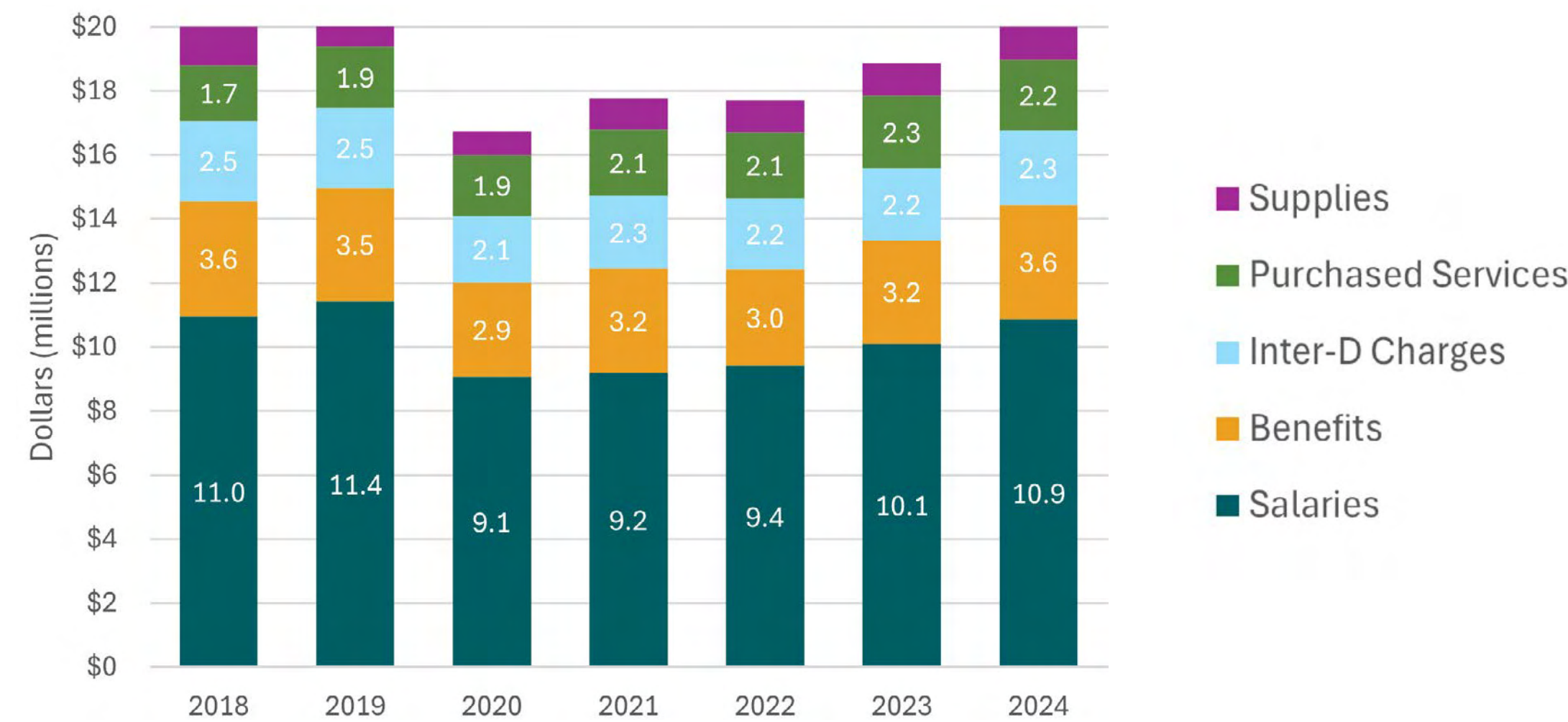
- General Obligation Borrowing
- Impact Fees (Development)
- County, State, and Federal Funding
- Tax Incremental Financing
- Private and In-kind contributions

Concerns Regarding Funding

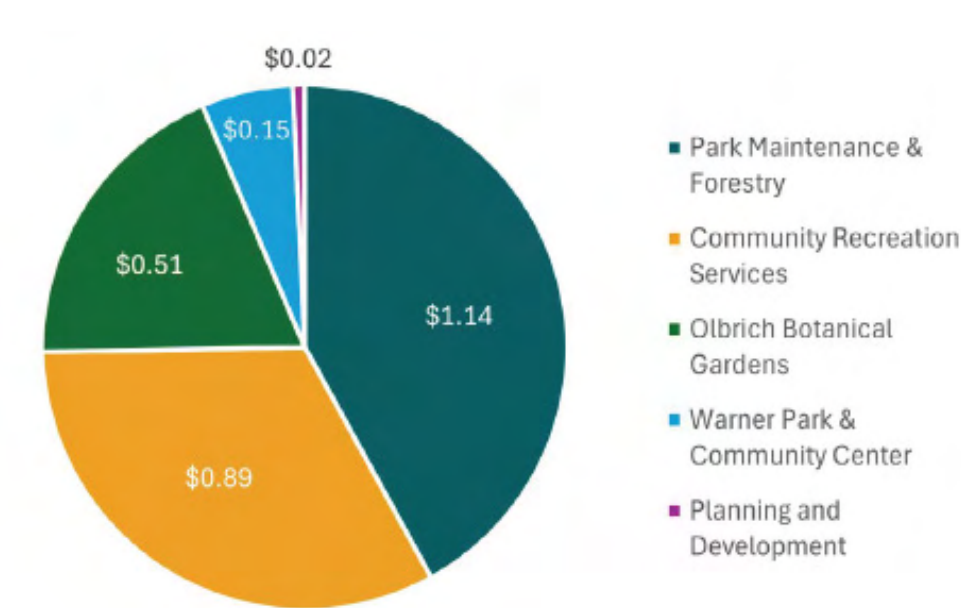
- Reliant on debt service, paid by property tax
- Directly dependent on residential development
- Dependent on specific projects and grantee programs available
- TIF District must be able to support thtte work financially and geographically
- Dependent on ability to fundraise

Park Operational Resources

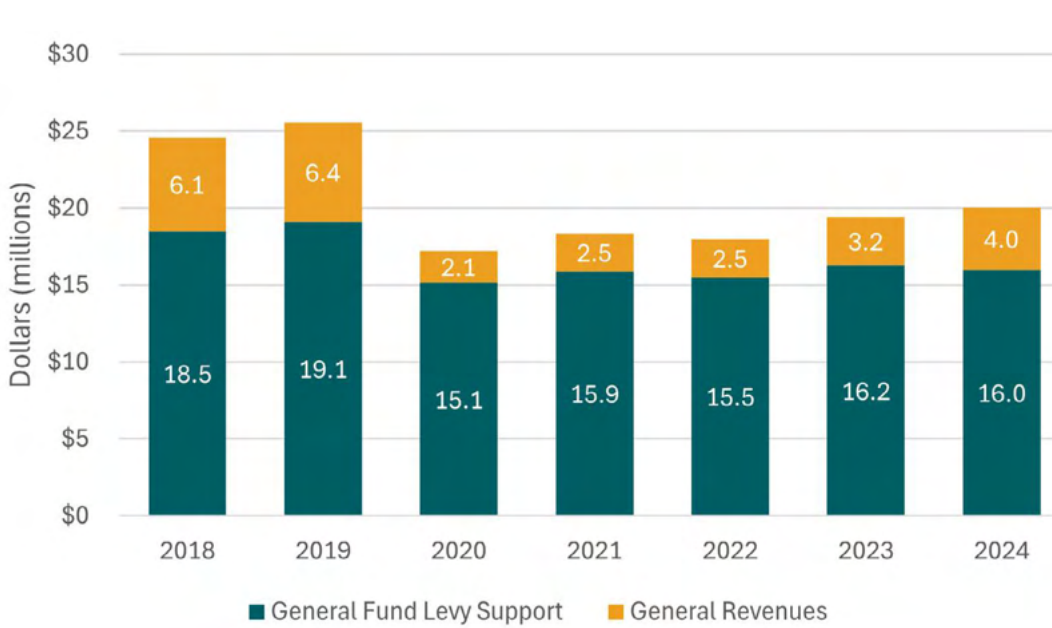
Parks Operating Expenses by Category (2018-2024)



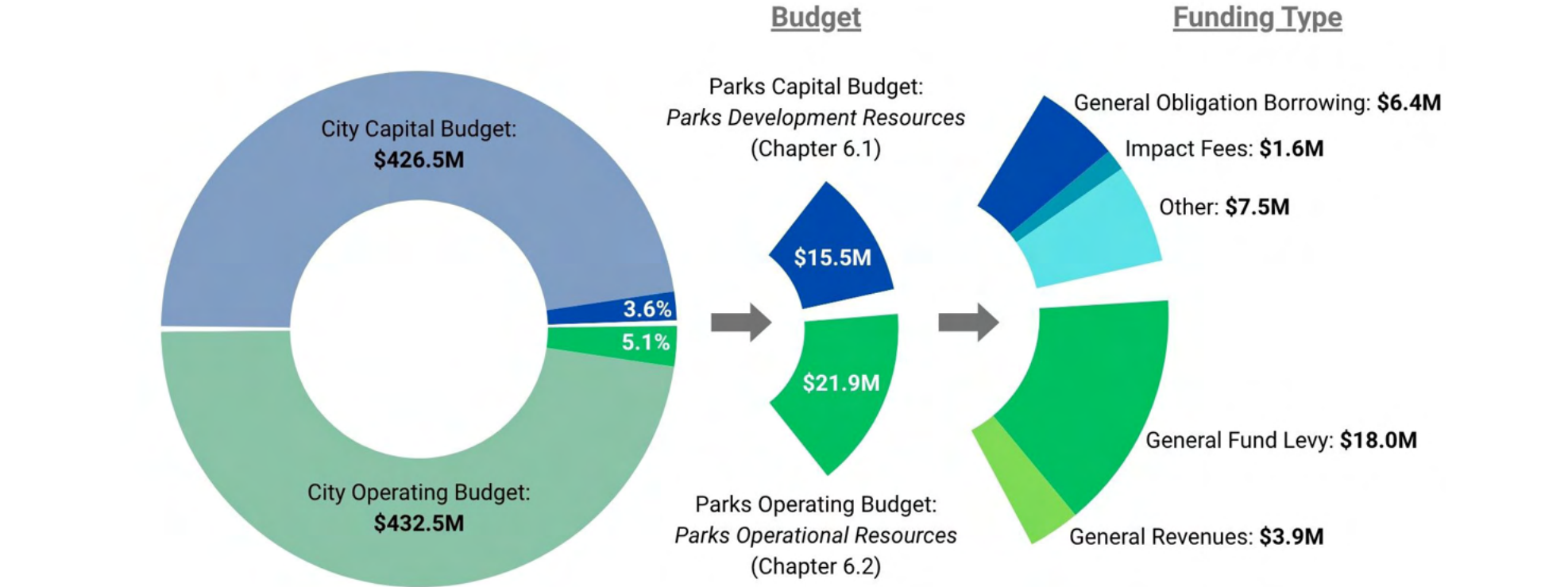
Average Annual Revenue by Service Area (in millions) (2021-2023)



Parks Division Operating Revenues by Finding Source (2018-2024)



Parks Division Budget Within City's Adopted 2025 Budget



Park Development Resources

Potential Park Development Costs Summary

Park Type	Representative Total:
Mini Park (<5 ac)	\$250,000-535,000
Neighborhood Park (>5 ac)	\$860,000-1.5 million
Community Park (Typically >20 ac)	\$7-17 million

Summary of Grant Funding Recieved (2018-2024)

Year	Amount	Source
2018	\$26,895	State of Wisconsin for Central Park Skate Park
2020	\$13,000	US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service for invasive species control and native seed-ing at Owen Conservation Park
2021	\$125,000	Dane County Parks' PARC and Ride Grant for the Aldo Leopold Park Paved Pump Track Project
2022	\$1,500	Dane County Land & Water Resources Department for prescribed burn crew tools and PPE
2024	\$62,500 \$25,000	Dane County Parks' PARC and Ride Grant for the Aldo Leopold Park Shred to School Project State of WI Vibrant Spaces Grant for Crowley Station

New positions added 2018-2024



The value of volunteer contributions in 2024 is approximately \$1.66 million.

Alternate Funding Sources

Donations/Contributions Collected from Parks Foundation (2018-2024)

Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Donations/Contributions	\$119,520	\$3,848,192	\$5,368	\$40,559	\$2,951,300	\$1,223,205	\$838,888

Olbrich Botanical Society

The Olbrich Botanical Society partners with Madison Parks to support Olbrich Gardens through fundraising, programming, and future planning.

Madison Lakeway Partners

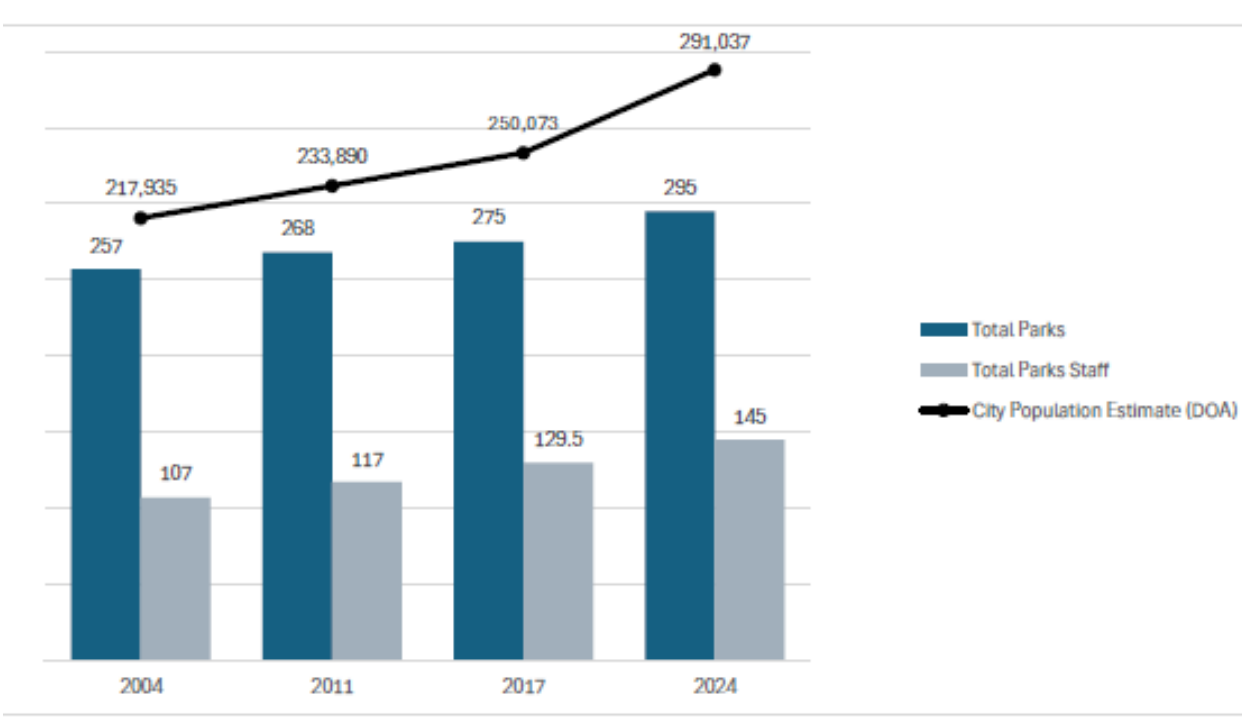
Madison LakeWay Partners is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting fundraising and implementation of the Madison LakeWay waterfront master plan.

Other Public Private Partnership

Public-private partnerships have enhanced park amenities and infrastructure, supporting popular destinations like Breese Stevens Field, Garver Feed Mill, and the Olbrich Biergarten while reducing City investment needs.

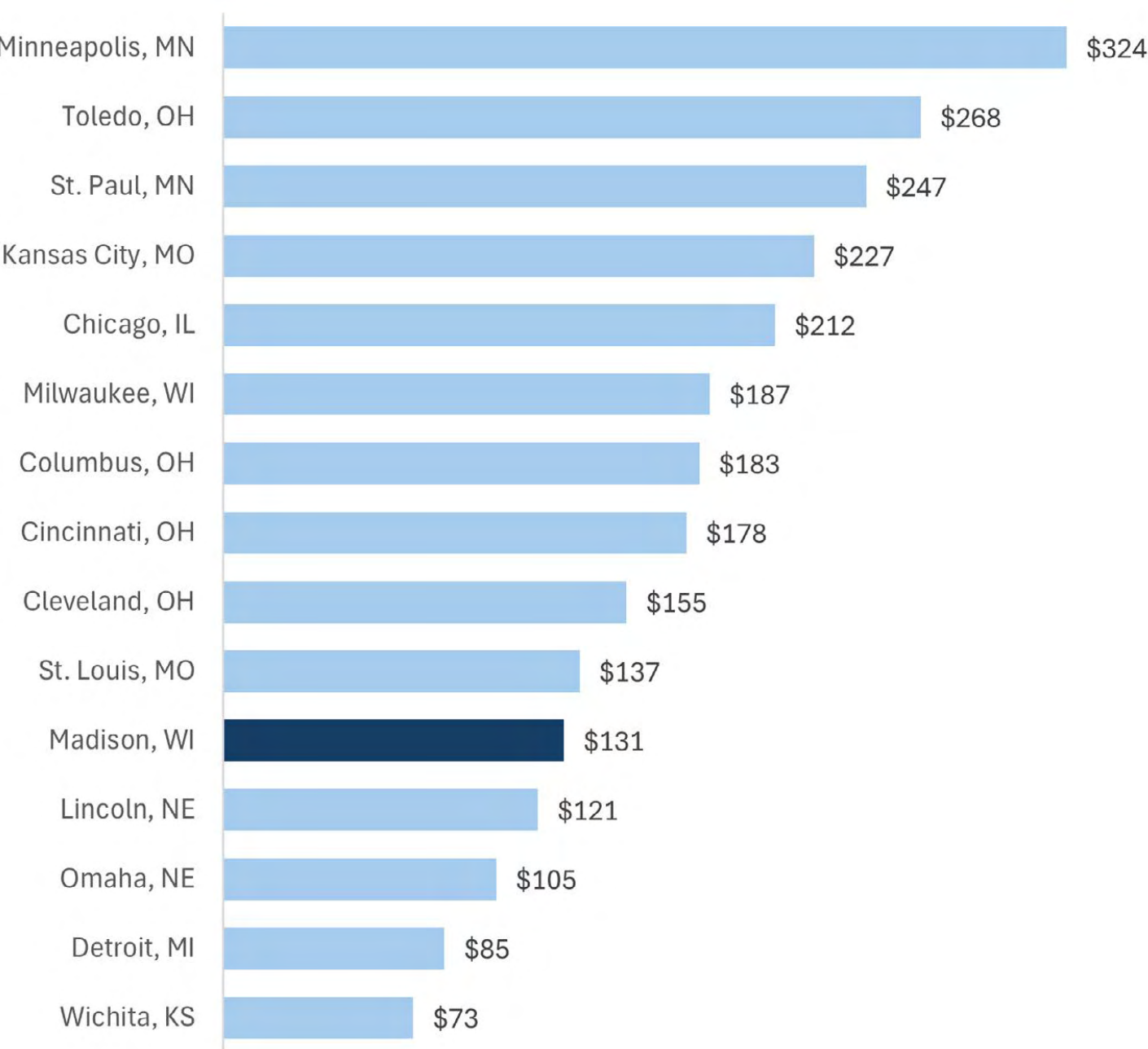
Park System Growth Considerations

Changes in Parks, Parks Staff, and City Population 2004-2024



- 38 new parks added since 2004.
- Numbers of Parks per 1,000 residents decreased from 1.2 to 1.0.

Total Per Capita Dollars Invested in Large Midwestern City Parks, FY 2023



Recommended Strategies

Land Use and Transportation

- Strategy: Increase connectivity between parks to enhance access.**
- Create a comprehensive system of greenspace connections by means of pedestrian, biking and water trails through parks.
 - Increase connectivity with and through parks to key neighborhood facilities and public transportation methods.

Neighborhoods and Housing

- Strategy: Reduce parkland deficiencies and respond to increasing residential density.**
- Make data-informed park planning decisions through evaluation of changing city residential population needs, market trends, and walkability standards.
 - Preserve, protect and advocate for sufficient undeveloped land for open space.
 - Acquire new parkland on existing developed properties where feasible in areas of high residential density.
 - Identify demand for additional parkland and sufficient improvement resources for Area Plans to address future residential density.
 - Pursue joint use agreements with owners of other public recreation spaces, such as school properties, to improve access in areas where there is no walkable access to mini, neighborhood, conservation, or community City-owned parkland.

Economy and Opportunity

- Strategy: Create welcoming and inclusive parks spaces and programming.**
- Develop parkland and amenities that are reflective of the diverse recreational needs of the community.
 - Reduce barriers to use of park spaces, participate in programming, and support local business.
 - Pursue alternative funding sources that support programming needs of the Division and provide opportunities to business owners.
 - Incorporate public engagement methods and partnerships during the park planning process to ensure projects are representative of the diverse community.
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan to educate and inform the public about options and services available within the park system.
 - Create and promote awareness around relationship between good parks and a strong economy.

- Strategy: Foster meaningful connections with groups and organizations that advance the vision of the Parks Division.**
- Nurture and create opportunities to strengthen the intrinsic value of parks within the community.
 - Develop a programming plan to grow and sustain relationships with existing partners, identify opportunities to address gaps in equitable distribution of services and programming across the city, and create frameworks to engage with future partners.
 - Encourage connection with parks and nature through Friends Groups and other volunteer groups while aligning efforts with identified land management strategies and master plans.
 - Support volunteers and recognize their contributions in planning, developing, programming, and maintaining park spaces and facilities.
 - Cultivate relationships and partnerships that boost the overall economy within the region by supporting placemaking and tourism.

Culture and Character

- Strategy: Improve public access to lakes and waterways.**
- Engage the community in the design process to increase water access on public lands.
 - Provide opportunities for year-round water recreation.
 - Support efforts of partners and stakeholders to improve water quality in Madison’s lakes and waterways.
 - Encourage creative placemaking opportunities to connect the community to water.
- Strategy: Protect and celebrate the communitiy’s cultural richness.**
- Respect and protect tribal sacred sites.
 - Continue to recognize, preserve, and enhance historic parks.
 - Pursue opportunities for cultural enrichment through community events and promotion of community building activities.
 - Evaluate operational resources for park and street use events to promote balance between park uses and support the needs of the system.

Recommended Strategies

Green and Resilient

Strategy: Protect and enhance natural resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve biodiversity by managing invasive species and promoting areas of native plant habitats and ecosystems.• Acquire conservation parkland to preserve unique habitats.• Preserve iconic and special landscape views.• Preserve, promote and expand the urban tree canopy.
Strategy: Improve the park system’s capacity to adapt to environmental challenges. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate of plant species that thrive and adapt to environmental changes with fewer resource inputs.• Integrate facilities, equipment and materials that reduce the carbon footprint of park operations.• Use best management practices for stormwater runoff and infiltration to address increased precipitation.• Support year-round outdoor recreation and extended season use through activities that are not impacted by climate change.• Develop an opportunistic approach to maintenance and programming that adapts to the unpredictable nature of climate change.• Create spaces and adapt programming to keep the community safe, healthy, and emotionally resilient in the face of stress and uncertainty.

Effective Government

Strategy: Develop new parks and amenities in a fiscally sustainable manner. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement comprehensive data-based decision making in strategic planning and investment.• Secure adequate funding for infrastructure improvements within existing and future parks.• Revise parkland dedication and park impact fees every ten years to maintain adequate levels of parkland and funding.• Require parkland dedication of parks five-acres or more for new residential developments where feasible.• Expand existing park land where appropriate and feasible in accordance with adopted plans• Seek out and utilize innovative sources to expand and develop existing parkland and amenities.• Fund and construct necessary infrastructure improvements in parks acquired through annexations and cooperative plans.
Strategy: Secure sufficient resources to sustain service levels accross the growing and changing park system. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preserve public funding to maintain current levels of service in the Parks Division’s Operating and Capital budgets.• Allocate funding equitably to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure and develop new facilities.• Pursue opportunities to diversify and increase revenue streams that support services.• Evaluate staffing and location of operational facilities to optimize resources for new City facilities.• Provide technical and administrative support to volunteers whose work supplements park maintenance, programming, and improvement• Implement Results Madison and develop an asset management system to aid in data-informed decisions related to resource allocation.• Encourage public interaction and participation with the Parks Division’s governing bodies.• Develop appropriate professional development and recruitment programs to attract and retain employees committed to advancing the vision of the Parks Division.• Pursue appropriate opportunities to repurpose and reallocate underutilized park assets in a manner that serves broader public purpose and is consistent with the Parks Division’s mission.

Strategy: Pursue regional solutions to regional issues. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance or develop regional recreation facilities, where possible, as identified by the Wisconsin SCORP for the Southern Gateways Region to address supply shortages.• Continue joint planning efforts with Dane County Parks to implement recommendations of the Dane County Park and Open Space Plan within the City of Madison.• Collaborate with park advocacy organizations and surrounding municipalities to meet park and recreation demands.• Pursue strategic partnerships to provide tournament-scale venues.

Health and Safety

Strategy: Promote the physical and social health of the diverse community. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate amenities that promote active recreation and social interaction for all skills and abilities, especially youth and seniors.• Provide flexible multipurpose spaces that can respond to changing recreational trends.• Provide sufficient fields, courts, and other facilities to accommodate larger competitions.
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