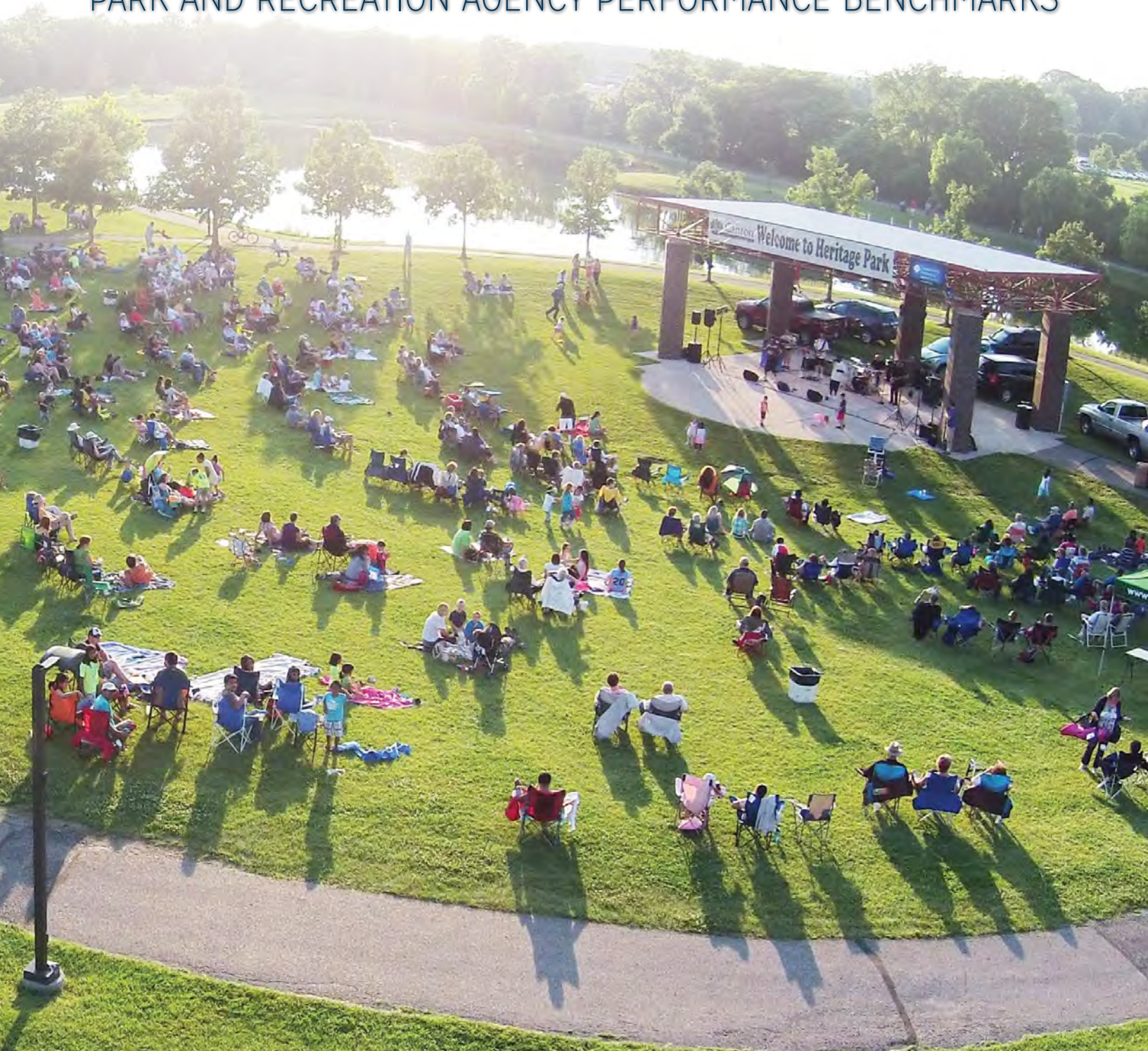


# 2019 NRPA AGENCY PERFORMANCE REVIEW

## PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS



**NRPA** National Recreation  
and Park Association  
*Because everyone deserves a great park*





**BECAUSE  
EVERYONE DESERVES  
A GREAT PARK**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is pleased to present you with a snapshot of local parks and recreation: the *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review*. This report summarizes the key findings from the National Recreation and Park Association's [NRPA Park Metrics](#), our benchmarking tool that assists park and recreation professionals in the effective management and planning of their operating resources and capital facilities. Taken together, the *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* and *NRPA Park Metrics* represent the most comprehensive collection of park- and recreation-related benchmarks and insights that inform professionals, key stakeholders and the public about the state of the park and recreation industry.

**Data is a powerful tool, but not the final answer for what is best for your agency.** The *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* and *NRPA Park Metrics* help inform conversations with internal colleagues, external consultants, partners and policymakers on the role of parks and recreation in your community. The combination of insights from this report with information about your community's specific needs and experiences will help identify the optimal mix of facilities and programming your agency should deliver.

**The *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* does not include "national standards," nor do the benchmarks represent any sort of standards against which every park and recreation agency should measure itself.** The reason for this is simple: there is not a single set of standards for parks and recreation because *different agencies serve different communities* that have unique needs, desires and challenges. Agencies also have diverse funding mechanisms.

For instance, if your agency has more workers per 10,000 residents relative to the "typical" agency, you should not necessarily shed staff to meet that benchmark. An agency with a larger staff may offer more hands-on programming because of the unique needs of the population it serves. Communities vary in population demographics; so too should their park and recreation agencies.

Successful agencies tailor their offerings to meet the needs and demands of *all* members of their communities. Knowing

the characteristics of the residents who use your agency's resources—as well as the characteristics of those who may use those resources in the future (including age, race and income trends)—is also a factor when shaping the optimal mix of facilities and services your agency offers. Park and recreation professionals should use the *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* in conjunction with other resources, including those that may be proprietary to a specific agency, those from NRPA and others from external sources. Additional NRPA resources to consider are listed at the end of this report.

## **How to Use the *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* and *NRPA Park Metrics***

The first step is to look at the available data. Most of the data in the *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* are presented with medians, along with data responses at the lower-quartile (lowest 25 percent) and upper-quartile (highest 25 percent). The data allow for insights into not only where your agency stands compared to "typical" agencies (i.e., those at the median values) but also compared to the full spectrum of agencies at both the high and low quartiles. Many metrics include the top-line figures as well as certain cross-tabulations of jurisdiction population or population density. More comprehensive as a set of cross-tabulations are available as a set of interactive tables at [www.NRPA.org/metrics](http://www.NRPA.org/metrics).

The next step is to build a customized benchmark report based on a peer group you define. Go into *NRPA Park Metrics* to filter the data by agency type, size and geographic region. You can enhance this experience even further by entering your agency's data into *NRPA Park Metrics*, after which you can generate reports that compare your agency's data with the key metrics of agencies throughout the United States.

The *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* contains data from 1,075 unique park and recreation agencies across the United States as reported between 2016 and 2018. **Note:** *Not all agencies answered every survey question.*



# 2019 NRPA AGENCY PERFORMANCE REVIEW KEY FINDINGS

**OPERATING  
EXPENDITURES  
PER CAPITA:  
\$78.69/YEAR**



**REVENUE-TO-OPERATING  
EXPENDITURES:  
27.3 PERCENT**



**ACRES OF PARK LAND PER  
1,000 RESIDENTS:**

**10.1**



**FULL-TIME  
EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES (FTES)  
PER 10,000 RESIDENTS: 8.3**



**RESIDENTS  
PER PARK: 2,181**



**AGENCIES WITH  
PLAYGROUNDS: 94.4%**

**AGENCIES  
OFFERING  
SUMMER  
CAMPS:**



**82.4%**



**AGENCIES THAT BAN THE USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS AT PARKS AND FACILITIES: 73.7%**

# INDEX OF FIGURES

The 2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review highlights characteristics of America's local public park agencies with graphics categorized into seven sections: park facilities, programming, responsibilities of park and recreation agencies, staffing, budget, agency funding and policies.

| FIGURES   | TOP-LINE FINDING   | PAGE NO. |
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| Figure 1: Residents per Park  | There is typically one park for every 2,181 residents.   | 8        |
| Figure 2: Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents  | The typical park and recreation agency has 10.1 acres of park land for every thousand residents in the jurisdiction.   | 8        |
| Figure 3: Outdoor Park and Recreation Facilities – Prevalence and Population per Facility | An overwhelming majority of park and recreation agencies has playgrounds (94.4 percent) and basketball courts (86.1 percent) in their portfolio of outdoor assets. | 9        |
| Figure 4: Indoor Park and Recreation Facilities – Prevalence and Population per Facility  | A majority of agencies offers community centers and recreation centers; two in five agencies offer senior centers.   | 10       |
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| Figure 11: Responsibilities of Park and Recreation Workers                                | Operations and maintenance, programming and administration are the main responsibilities of park and recreation workers.   | 17       |

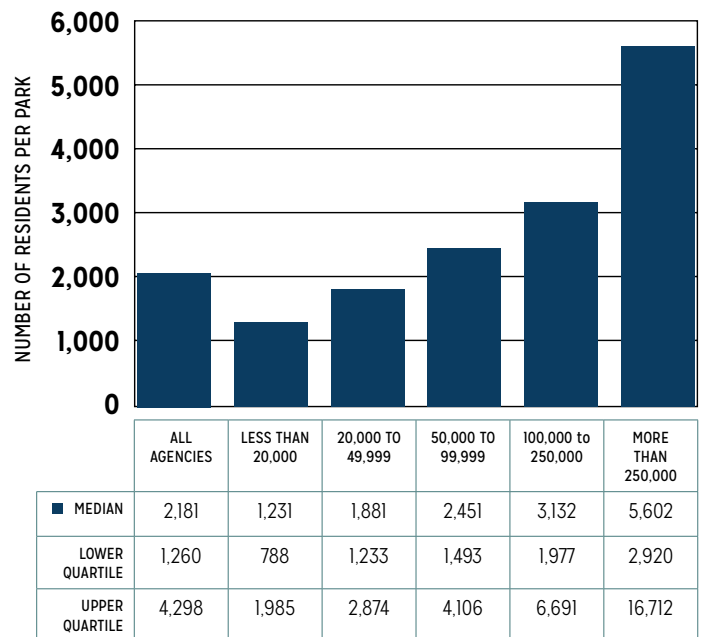
| <b>BUDGET</b>  |  |    |
|--|--|----|
| Figure 12: Annual Operating Expenditures                                     | The typical park agency has annual operating expenditures of \$3,834,500.  | 18 |
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# PARK FACILITIES

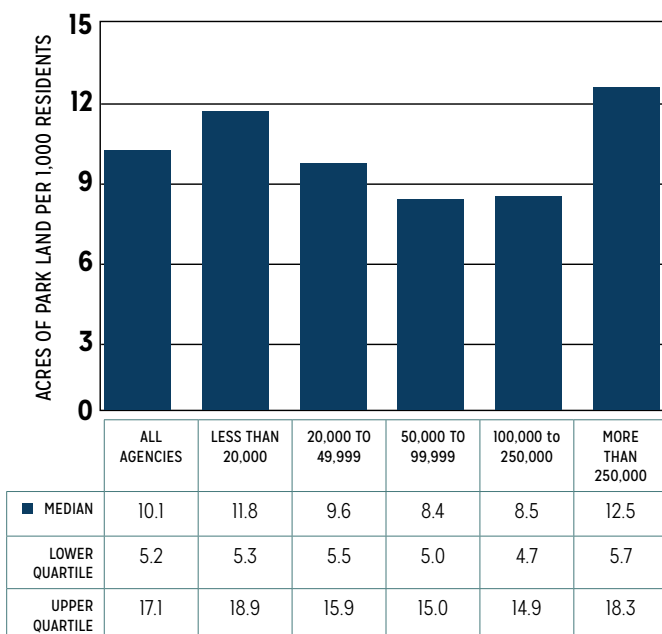
America's local and regional park and recreation agencies differ greatly in size and the types of facilities they offer. The typical agency participating in *NRPA Park Metrics* serves a jurisdiction—a town, city, county and/or region—of 39,183 people. Other agencies serve an area of just a few thousand people; still others are the primary recreation resource for millions of people.

Naturally, the offerings of these agencies are as varied as the markets they serve. **The typical park and recreation agency has jurisdiction over 19 parks comprising a total 432.5 acres.** After adding in non-park sites (such as city-hall lawns for which an agency may have responsibility), the median number of parks and non-park sites increases to 26 encompassing 532.5 acres.

**FIGURE 1: RESIDENTS PER PARK  
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**



**FIGURE 2: ACRES OF PARK LAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS  
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**



At the typical agency, there is one park for every 2,181 residents. The number of people per park rises as the population of the town, city, county or region served by an agency increases. For agencies with jurisdictions of fewer than 20,000 residents, there is one park for every 1,231 residents. The ratio increases to one park for every 2,451 residents in jurisdictions with populations between 50,000 and 99,999 and rises further to one park for every 5,602 people at agencies serving areas with a population greater than 250,000.

The typical park and recreation agency oversees 10.1 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents in its jurisdiction. The smallest agencies—those serving fewer than 20,000 residents—typically have 11.8 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. That ratio increases to 12.5 acres per 1,000 residents in jurisdictions where agencies serve a population greater than 250,000 people. Agencies serving jurisdictions with populations between 100,000 and 250,000 have 8.5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.



Park and recreation agencies offer a wide variety of facilities and features. **An overwhelming majority of park and recreation agencies has playgrounds (94 percent) and basketball courts (86 percent) in their portfolios of outdoor assets.** At least 50 percent of agencies have diamond fields for baseball and/or softball, tennis courts, multipurpose rectangular fields, dog parks and outdoor swimming pools.

For each amenity, the typical park and recreation agency has:

- One playground for every 3,706 residents
- One basketball court for every 7,375 residents
- One outdoor tennis court for every 4,803 residents
- One dog park for every 44,330 residents.

In addition, **the typical park and recreation agency that manages or maintains trails for walking, hiking, running and/or biking has 11.0 miles of trails** in its network. Agencies serving more than 250,000 residents have a median of 82.0 miles of trails under their purview.

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

|  |               |              | Median Number of Residents per Facility |              |                |                 |
|--|---------------|--------------|---|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
|  |               |              | Residents per Square Mile               |              |                |                 |
|  | % of Agencies | All Agencies | Less than 500                           | 500 to 1,500 | 1,501 to 2,500 | More than 2,500 |
| Playgrounds                              | 94.4%         | 3,706        | 7,334                                   | 3,397        | 3,163          | 3,586           |
| Basketball courts                        | 86.1          | 7,375        | 10,048                                  | 7,260        | 5,971          | 7,400           |
| Tennis courts (outdoor only)             | 79.7          | 4,803        | 5,462                                   | 5,217        | 4,296          | 4,858           |
| Diamond fields: baseball - youth         | 77.9          | 6,608        | 6,890                                   | 5,574        | 6,597          | 7,369           |
| Diamond fields: softball fields - adult  | 66.5          | 12,619       | 16,298                                  | 9,494        | 12,527         | 15,000          |
| Rectangular fields: multi-purpose        | 66.1          | 7,878        | 7,812                                   | 7,398        | 7,469          | 9,000           |
| Diamond fields: softball fields - youth  | 60.9          | 11,160       | 12,000                                  | 8,216        | 11,917         | 13,773          |
| Dog park                                 | 59.3          | 44,330       | 45,751                                  | 37,500       | 47,000         | 55,675          |
| Diamond fields: baseball - adult         | 54.7          | 20,412       | 16,184                                  | 16,360       | 20,033         | 25,834          |
| Swimming pools (outdoor only)            | 52.3          | 36,266       | 43,500                                  | 26,474       | 34,035         | 41,495          |
| Totlots                                  | 48.1          | 12,226       | 20,563                                  | 10,789       | 14,000         | 10,542          |
| Rectangular fields: soccer field - youth | 48.1          | 6,883        | 7,656                                   | 5,262        | 7,000          | 8,784           |
| Community gardens                        | 46.3          | 29,750       | 20,502                                  | 27,167       | 34,170         | 29,548          |
| Multiuse courts - basketball, volleyball | 42.0          | 17,667       | 27,482                                  | 17,536       | 17,167         | 16,250          |
| Rectangular fields: soccer field - adult | 40.9          | 13,031       | 12,767                                  | 9,930        | 13,173         | 15,000          |
| Rectangular fields: football field       | 38.0          | 26,783       | 19,235                                  | 20,398       | 25,320         | 35,572          |
| Skate park                               | 26.2          | 49,250       | 20,000                                  | 41,148       | 44,000         | 62,325          |
| Multipurpose synthetic field             | 19.1          | 43,149       | 27,375                                  | 33,441       | 41,938         | 49,862          |
| Ice rink (outdoor only)                  | 16.7          | 18,500       | 12,162                                  | 10,574       | 16,989         | 29,392          |
| Rectangular fields: lacrosse field       | 11.7          | 25,566       | 15,250                                  | 17,750       | 23,500         | 31,965          |
| Rectangular fields: cricket field        | 9.2           | 126,945      | 200,250                                 | 301,215      | 126,945        | 78,714          |
| Overlay field                            | 7.5           | 15,819       | 8,570                                   | 8,600        | 24,770         | 19,881          |
| Rectangular fields: field hockey field   | 4.0           | 33,112       | 20,893                                  | 40,797       | 13,334         | 44,310          |



Park and recreation agencies also offer a number of indoor facilities to their residents. **A majority of agencies offers community centers and recreation centers.** Also common are senior centers, performance amphitheaters and nature centers. The typical agency with community centers has a facility for

every 28,750 residents while those agencies with at least one recreation center has one such facility for every 30,470 residents. Two in five agencies offer senior centers, with one facility for every 58,092 residents in their jurisdiction.

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

|                          |               |              | Median Number of Residents per Facility |              |                |                 |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|---|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                          |               |              | Residents per Square Mile               |              |                |                 |
|                          | % of Agencies | All Agencies | Less than 500                           | 500 to 1,500 | 1,501 to 2,500 | More than 2,500 |
| Community centers        | 57.9%         | 28,750       | 20,000                                  | 23,713       | 28,987         | 33,071          |
| Recreation centers       | 56.9          | 30,470       | 26,380                                  | 27,776       | 31,539         | 34,000          |
| Senior centers           | 39.9          | 58,092       | 26,750                                  | 39,986       | 62,053         | 77,014          |
| Performance amphitheater | 32.9          | 54,111       | 45,735                                  | 45,339       | 46,000         | 85,071          |
| Nature centers           | 27.5          | 104,180      | 153,773                                 | 100,690      | 75,021         | 106,644         |
| Stadiums                 | 18.0          | 73,826       | 57,629                                  | 70,000       | 65,586         | 97,959          |
| Ice rink                 | 16.3          | 40,613       | 14,934                                  | 21,963       | 33,112         | 57,135          |
| Teen centers             | 13.3          | 56,115       | 12,044                                  | 58,000       | 47,670         | 75,000          |
| Arena                    | 8.7           | 48,000       | 27,375                                  | 43,627       | 58,048         | 54,778          |





# PROGRAMMING

Residents interact with their local park and recreation agency's amenities multiple times throughout a year, resulting in thousands, if not millions, of contacts annually. "Contacts" may include many different types of interactions with a park and recreation agency such as visits to a local park, running or biking on a local trail, visits to a local recreation center or other interaction with any of the agency's park and recreation facilities. Moreover, a person can have more than one contact. For example, someone who swims at his/her local agency's aquatic center 10 times a year and bikes along a local trail five times a year would have 15 contacts.

The **typical park and recreation agency registers approximately 225,000 contacts every year**. But the number of contacts varies dramatically from agency to agency. For example, the typical agency at the 75th percentile has 1,000,000 annual contacts. Interaction between large park and recreation agencies and visitors is even greater—the typical agency serving a population greater than 250,000 has 1.4 million contacts per year, with those at the 75th percentile serving nearly 4.8 million people annually.

Programming is a key method of engagement that drives the use of park and recreation facilities. When associated with registration fees, it is also the largest source of non-tax revenue for most agencies. **The typical agency offers 175 programs each year**; 110 of those programs are fee-based events. Agencies serving a population of less than 20,000 typically hold 35 fee-based programs per year, while large jurisdiction agencies serving more than 250,000 residents provide more than 550 fee-based programs annually.

Programming can span a variety of park and recreation activities, with many touching one or more of NRPA's Three Pillars: Conservation, Health & Wellness and Social Equity. Key programming activities offered by at least 60 percent of park and recreation agencies include:

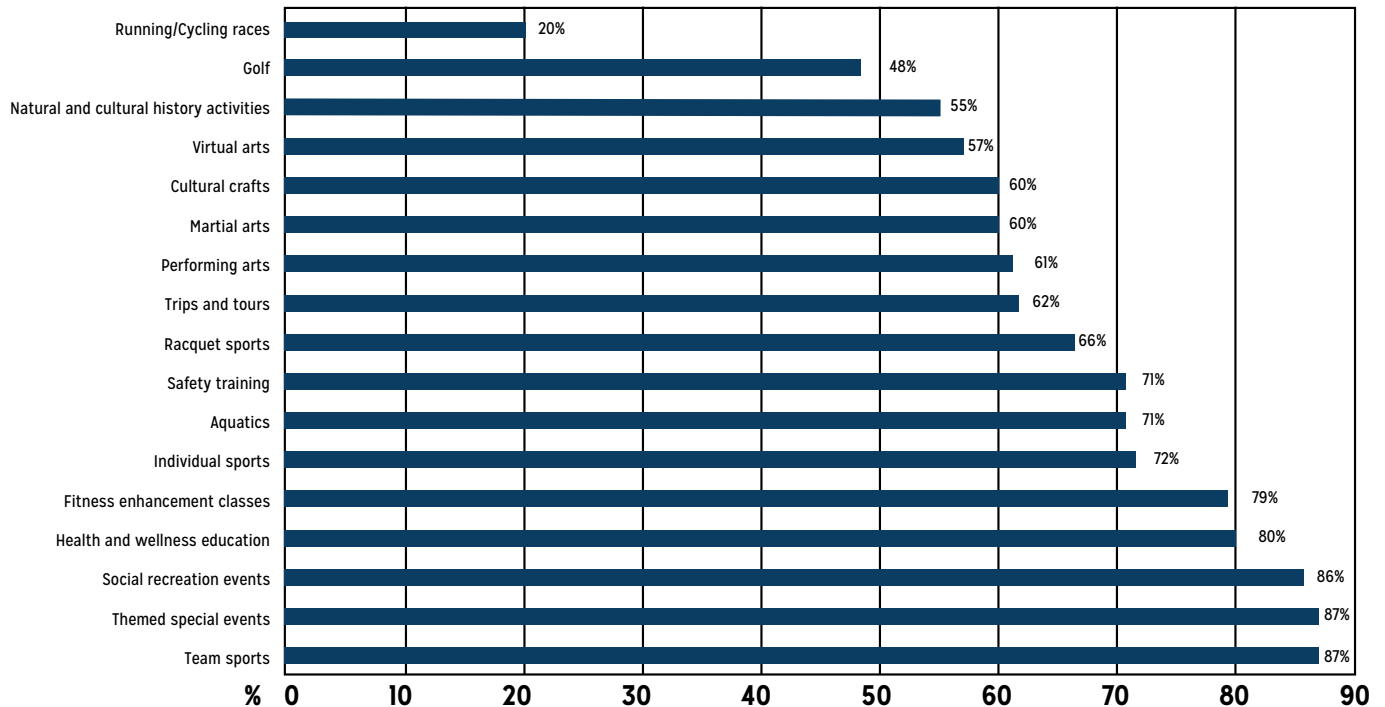
- Team sports (offered by 87 percent of agencies)
- Themed special events (87 percent)
- Social recreation events (86 percent)
- Health and wellness education (80 percent)
- Fitness enhancement classes (79 percent)
- Individual sports (72 percent)
- Safety training (71 percent)
- Aquatics (71 percent)
- Racquet sports (66 percent)
- Trips and tours (62 percent)
- Performing arts (61 percent)
- Martial arts (60 percent)
- Cultural crafts (60 percent)

Agencies serving larger populations are more likely than those serving smaller towns to present a number of programming offerings, including:

- Health and wellness education
- Aquatics
- Golf
- Cultural crafts
- Performing arts
- Natural and cultural history activities
- Themed special events
- Visual arts



**FIGURE 5: PROGRAMMING OFFERED BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES  
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**



Park and recreation agencies are committed to serving all members of their communities. That commitment includes being leaders in providing services and programming for children, seniors and people with disabilities. Eighty-two percent of park and recreation agencies offer summer camp programs for their communities' children and a majority delivers programs for teens and afterschool care as parts of their out-of-school-time (OST) offerings. Fewer agencies include before-school care or all-day child care as a part of their program offerings. Out-of-school-time programs are commonplace offerings by agencies of nearly all sizes, but most especially by those that serve populations of at least 20,000 residents.

In addition, most park and recreation agencies offer specific programming for other segments of their communities, including older adults (78 percent) and people with disabilities (62 percent). Again, these services are offered more often by agencies in jurisdictions with at least 20,000 residents. For example, 82 percent of park and recreation agencies in jurisdictions serving 100,000 to 250,000 residents offer programming designed for people with disabilities compared to 31 percent of agencies serving less than 20,000 residents that offer such programs.

**FIGURE 6: TARGETED PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**

|                                       | % of Agencies | Less than 20,000 | 20,000 to 49,999 | 50,000 to 99,999 | 100,000 to 250,000 | More than 250,000 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Summer camp                           | 82.4%         | 60.8%            | 89.5%            | 91.9%            | 88.7%              | 85.1%             |
| Specific senior programs              | 77.5          | 67.5             | 78.2             | 86.2             | 83.8               | 75.0              |
| Specific teen programs                | 65.6          | 50.3             | 65.8             | 76.0             | 72.2               | 71.7              |
| Programs for people with disabilities | 61.5          | 30.5             | 60.5             | 73.0             | 82.4               | 75.8              |
| After-school programs                 | 56.1          | 46.8             | 45.6             | 67.2             | 64.0               | 67.7              |
| Preschool                             | 36.5          | 27.2             | 39.2             | 48.4             | 35.0               | 33.7              |
| Before-school programs                | 21.1          | 14.7             | 21.0             | 29.4             | 19.6               | 23.9              |
| Full daycare                          | 8.5           | 3.4              | 10.5             | 10.8             | 6.0                | 13.5              |



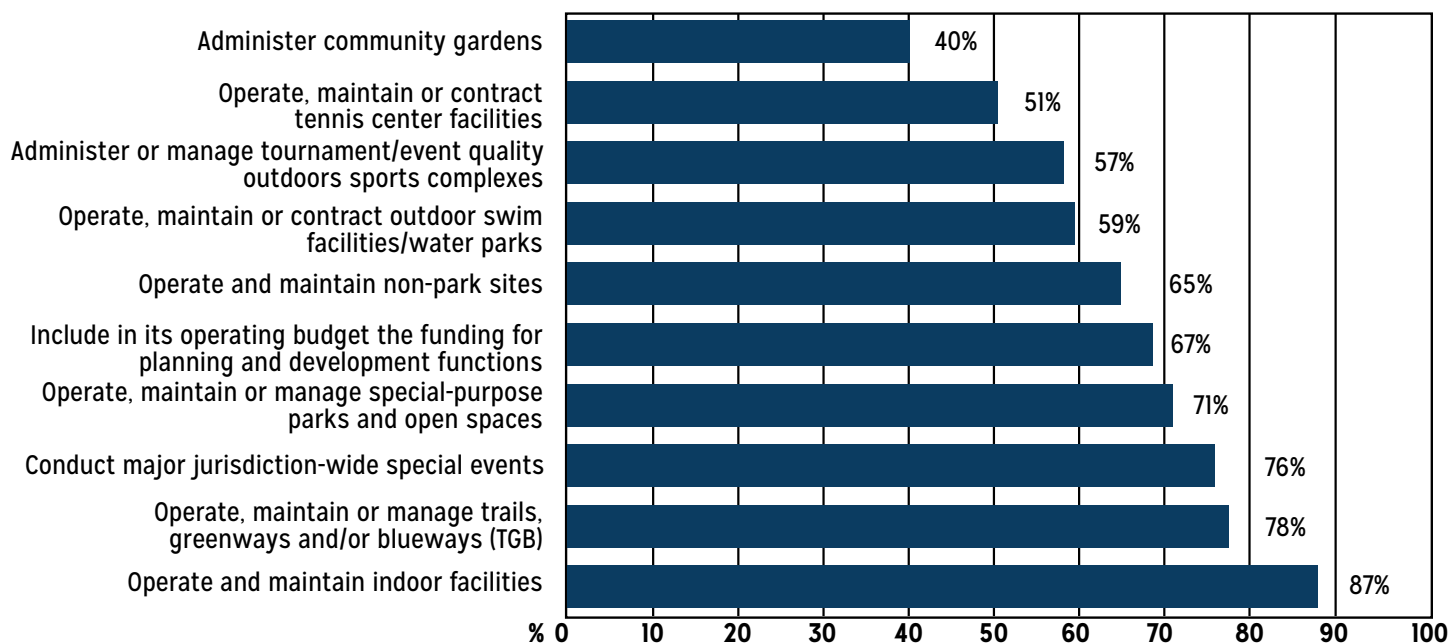


# RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

Park and recreation agencies take on many responsibilities for their communities, beyond their “traditional” roles of operating parks and related facilities (96 percent) and providing recreation programming and services (93 percent). In addition to those two core functions, the top responsibilities for park and recreation agencies are:

- Have budgetary responsibility for their administrative staff (87 percent of agencies)
- Operate and maintain indoor facilities (87 percent)
- Operate, maintain or manage trails, greenways and/or blueways (TGB) (78 percent)
- Conduct major jurisdiction-wide special events (76 percent)
- Operate, maintain or manage special purpose parks and open spaces (71 percent)
- Operate and maintain non-park sites (65 percent)
- Operate, maintain or contract outdoor swim facilities/ water parks (59 percent)
- Administer or manage tournament/event-quality outdoor sports complexes (57 percent)
- Operate, maintain or contract tennis center facilities (51 percent)
- Administer community gardens (40 percent).

**FIGURE 7: KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES  
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**



**FIGURE 8: OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES  
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Operate, maintain or contract golf courses                                | 34.3% |
| Operate, maintain or contract tourism attractions                         | 31.9% |
| Manage large performance outdoor amphitheaters                            | 29.2% |
| Operate, maintain or contract indoor swim facility                        | 28.2% |
| Administer or manage farmer's markets                                     | 18.1% |
| Administer or manage tournament/event quality indoor sports complexes     | 17.8% |
| Operate, maintain, or contract campgrounds                                | 17.6% |
| Maintain, manage or lease indoor performing arts center                   | 17.3% |
| Administer or manage professional or college-type stadium/arena/racetrack | 9.7%  |
| Manage or maintain fairgrounds  | 5.3%  |





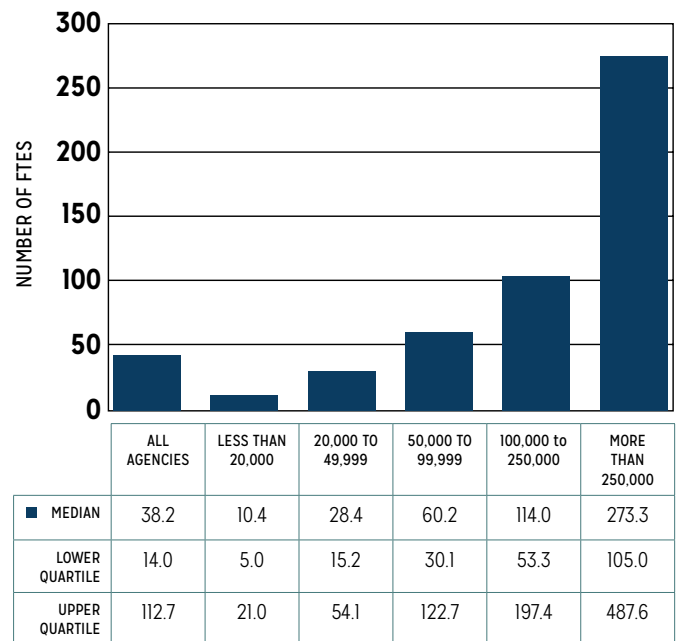
# STAFFING

Staffing at the typical park and recreation agency includes **38.2 full-time equivalents (FTEs)** with a mix of both full-time and part-time staff. The size of a staff, however, expands rapidly as the size of the jurisdiction served by an agency expands. Park and recreation agencies serving jurisdictions with a population of fewer than 20,000 have a median of 10.4 FTEs on staff. Agencies serving areas with 50,000 to 99,999 people have a median of 60.2 FTEs, while those serving areas with more than 250,000 residents have a median of 273.3 FTE staff.

Median counts of FTEs on staff also positively correlate with:

- Number of acres maintained: 250 or fewer acres—16.5 FTEs; more than 3,500 acres—286.1 FTEs
- Number of parks maintained: less than ten parks—13.1 FTEs; 50 or more parks—199.2 FTEs
- Operating expenditures: less than \$500,000—3.5 FTEs; more than \$10 million—185.8 FTEs.
- Population served by the agency: less than 500 people per square mile—16.8 FTEs; more than 2,500 people per square mile—63.0 FTEs.

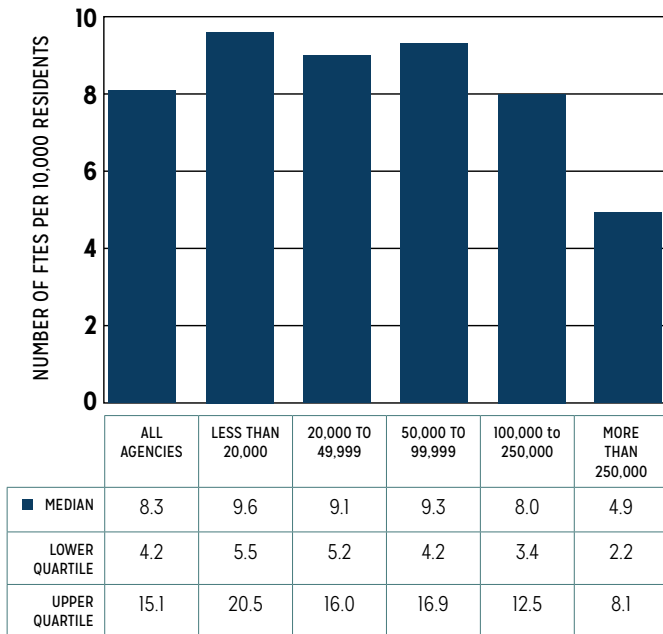
**FIGURE 9: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY STAFFING:  
FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS  
(BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**



One way to view agency staffing is to measure it relative to the population of the area that the agency serves. **The typical park and recreation agency has 8.3 FTEs on staff for every 10,000 residents in the jurisdiction served by that agency.** Agencies located in more populated areas tend to have fewer FTEs on staff per population. Agencies serving jurisdictions with less than 20,000 people have 9.6 FTEs for every 10,000 residents, with this measure falling to 4.9 FTEs for 10,000 residents in areas with more than 250,000 people.

Those agencies that serve areas with greater population density tend to have more FTEs per number of residents. Agencies operating in areas with less than 500 people per square mile have 4.1 FTEs per 10,000 people served compared to 10.5 FTEs per 10,000 residents in areas with more than 2,500 people per square mile.

**FIGURE 10: PARK AND RECREATION FTEs PER 10,000 RESIDENTS (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**



Operations and maintenance are the primary work responsibility for park and recreation professionals. But there are other areas where staff devote their energies. On average, an agency's full-time staff dedicate their time to the following general activities:

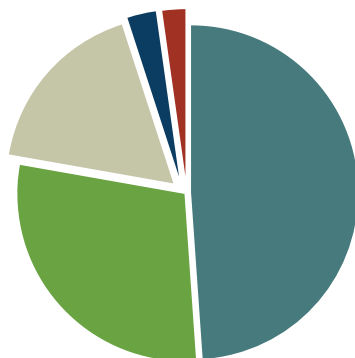
- Operations/Maintenance (49 percent)
- Programming (29 percent)
- Administration (17 percent)
- Capital development (three percent)
- Other (two percent)

**Thirty-six percent of park and recreation agency workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements.** Those workers covered by such agreements are more likely to be members of staff at agencies that:

- Have a larger staff: 20 percent of agencies with a staff of fewer than 10 FTEs compared to 52 percent of agencies with 100 or more FTEs.
- Serve larger populations: 15 percent of agencies in jurisdictions with less than 20,000 people compared to 56 percent of agencies in jurisdictions with more than 250,000 people.
- Have more parks: 18 percent of agencies with less than ten parks compared to 62 percent of agencies with at least 50 parks.
- Maintain more park land: 24 percent of agencies that maintain 250 acres or less of parkland compared to 60 percent of agencies that maintain more than 3,500 acres of parkland.

**FIGURE 11: RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION STAFF (AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AGENCY FTEs)**

|     |                        |
|-----|------------------------|
| 49% | OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE |
| 29% | PROGRAMMING            |
| 17% | ADMINISTRATION         |
| 3%  | CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT    |
| 2%  | OTHER                  |





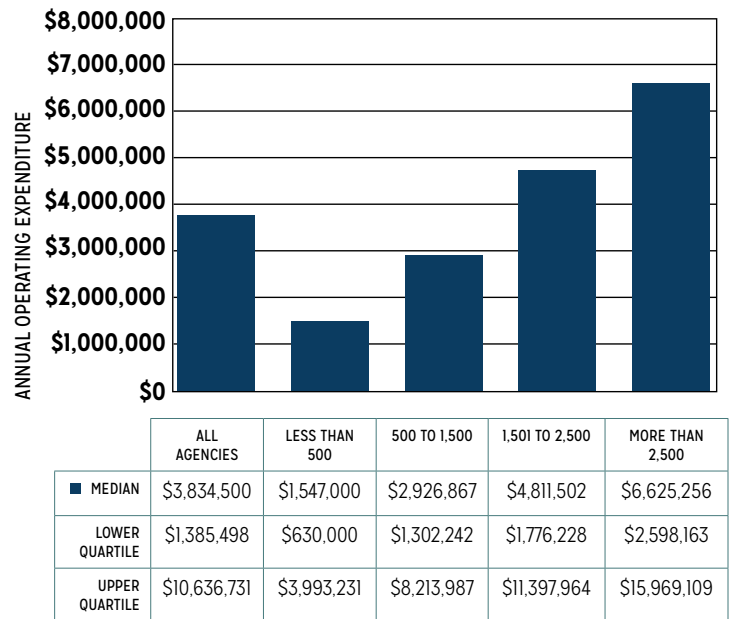
# BUDGET

How does the funding at your park and recreation agency compare with funding levels at other agencies? Does your agency have access to the same level of funding as its peers? The U.S. Census Bureau reports that local park and recreation agencies had operating expenditures that totaled \$36.4 billion in 2016. Per *NRPA Park Metrics* data, **the typical park agency has current annual operating expenditures of \$3,834,500.**

Normalizing operating expenditure data by population served by an agency is a much more accurate and meaningful way of articulating and comparing spending. By this measure, **the typical park and recreation agency has annual operating expenses of \$78.69 on a per capita basis.** This is less than \$7.00 per month for every resident living within an agency's jurisdiction. The denser the population served by the agency, the higher the per capita operating expenses: the typical agency serving a jurisdiction with less than 500 people per square mile has per capita operating expenses of \$42.05, while one serving an area with more than 2,500 people per square mile has a median of \$102.57 per resident.

At the same time, per capita operations spending is inversely related to the population of the area served: agencies serving jurisdictions with fewer than 20,000 people have a median operating expenditure of \$95.67. That figure declines to \$43.21

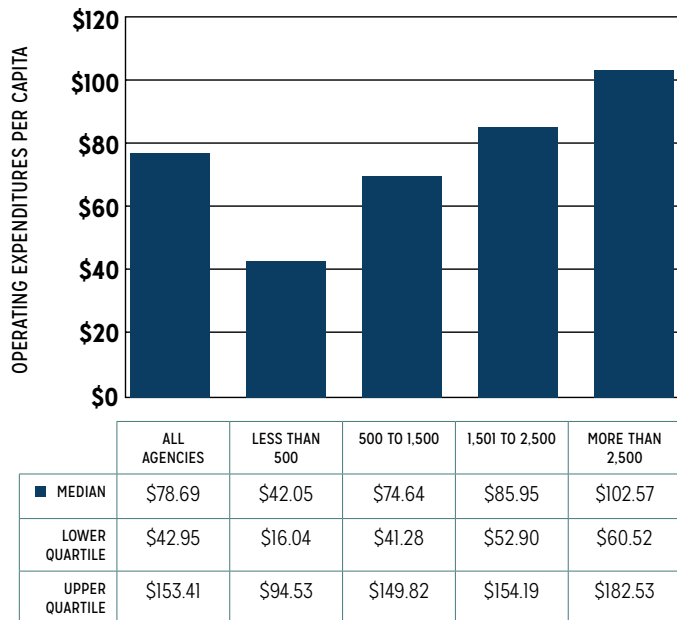
**FIGURE 12: ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES  
(BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**



per resident for agencies serving jurisdictions with more than 250,000 people, declining further to \$35.11 in jurisdictions with more than half a million residents.



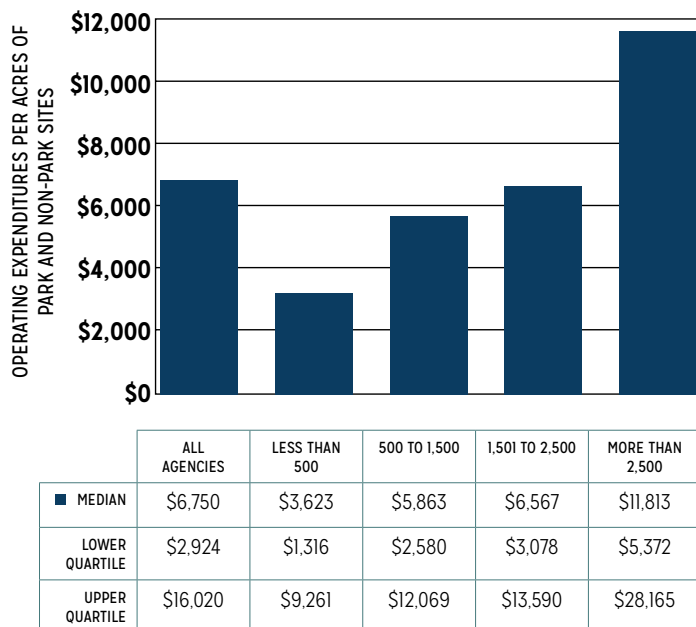
**FIGURE 13: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER CAPITA  
(BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**



The median operating expenditure is \$6,750 per acre of park and non-park sites managed by the typical agency. (Note: Non-park sites are public spaces—such as lawns at a city hall—not designated as parks but whose maintenance and/or operation costs are included in the park and recreation agency’s budget.) The typical operating expenditure per acre of park land rises with population density. The typical agency serving a jurisdiction with fewer than 500 people per square mile spends \$3,623 per acre of park and non-park sites. The median rises to \$11,813 per acre at agencies serving a jurisdiction with a population density greater than 2,500 per square mile.

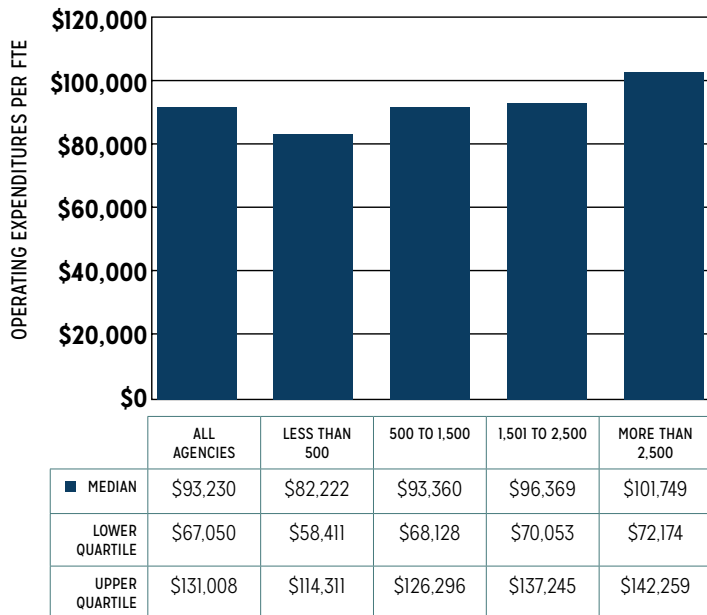
Park and recreation agencies serving larger populations tend to have lower operating expenditures than do agencies serving smaller and medium-sized jurisdictions. The typical park and recreation agency serving a jurisdiction with fewer than 20,000 people spends a median of \$7,196 per acre of park and non-park sites. The median increases to \$8,638 per acre for agencies serving jurisdictions with populations between 20,000 and 49,999, but then declines to \$3,369 per acre managed by agencies serving jurisdictions of more than 250,000 people.

**FIGURE 14: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER ACRE OF  
PARK AND NON-PARK SITES  
(BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**



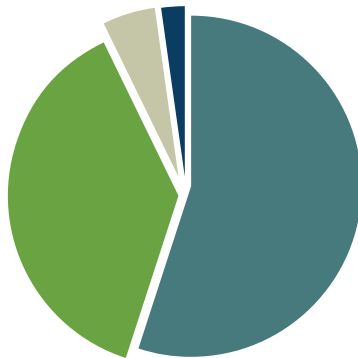


**FIGURE 15: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER FTE  
(BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**



**FIGURE 16: DISTRIBUTION OF  
OPERATING EXPENDITURES  
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION  
OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES)**

|     |                            |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 55% | PERSONNEL SERVICES         |
| 38% | OPERATING EXPENSES         |
| 5%  | CAPITAL EXPENSE NOT IN CIP |
| 2%  | OTHER                      |



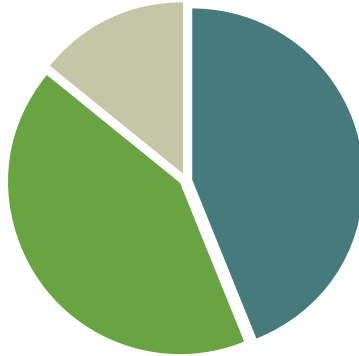
The typical park and recreation agency has \$93,230 in annual operating expenditures for each employee (as measured by full-time equivalents or FTEs). The denser the jurisdiction served by the agency, the higher the operations expenditures for each FTE. Agencies serving jurisdictions with less than 500 residents per square mile have median operating expenditures of \$82,222 for each FTE. The median rises to \$101,749 per FTE for agencies serving areas with more than 2,500 residents per square mile. Similarly, the measure rises from \$83,958 for agencies with less than ten parks to \$102,337 for agencies with 50 or more parks.

**At the typical park and recreation agency, personnel services account for 55 percent of the operations budget.**

- Personnel services (55 percent of the operating budget) include expenditures for all salaries, wages and benefits for both full-time and non-full-time personnel, along with contracted individuals.
- Operating expenditures (38 percent of the operating budget) fund the agency operations, including operational support for force-accounted employees.
- Capital funds repay the operating budget, all enterprise funds, interdepartmental transfers, and, in some cases, the capital debt service. This represents around five percent of the operating budget. A portion of the operations spending includes capital expenses that are not part of the agency's capital improvement plan (CIP) such as expenditures for capital equipment (e.g., computers, vehicles, large-area mowers, tractors, boats), some periodic cyclical maintenance (carpets, conference chairs, push mowers) and, perhaps, debt services paid from the agency's operating funds.

**FIGURE 17: OPERATING EXPENDITURES DEDICATED TO PARKS OR RECREATION**  
**(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES)**

|     |            |
|-----|------------|
| 44% | PARKS      |
| 42% | RECREATION |
| 14% | OTHER      |



The typical park and recreation agency dedicates 44 percent of its annual operating budget to the management and maintenance of parks and open space. Agencies spend a median of 42 percent of their annual operating expenditures to support recreation offerings, including programming (e.g., out-of-school time activities, sports leagues, health and wellness programs) and the facilities for such activities.





# AGENCY FUNDING

Funding sources for park and recreation operations vary greatly by agency, but support from the local jurisdiction general fund tax base is common. On average, **park and recreation agencies derive three-fifths of their operating expenditures from general fund tax support**, although the percentage of funding from general fund tax support tends to be lower at agencies with larger operating budgets. The second-largest source of revenue for most agencies is earned/generated revenues, accounting for an average of 25 percent of operating expenditures. Many agencies also depend on special, dedicated taxes for part of their budgets while others obtain much of their funding from tax levies dedicated to park and recreation purposes approved by citizen referenda.

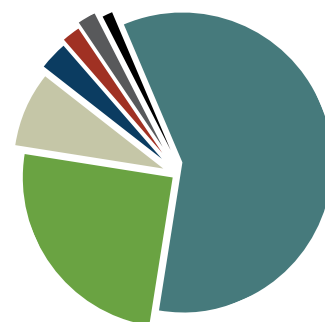
**The typical park and recreation agency generates \$974,451 in non-tax revenues on an annual basis**, although this amount can vary greatly based on agency size, services and facilities offered by the agency and the mandate from agency leadership and policymakers. Agencies with annual operating budgets under \$500,000 typically derive \$45,500 in non-tax revenues, while those with annual budgets greater than \$10 million generate a median of \$6 million from non-tax revenue sources.

**The typical park and recreation agency generates \$20.11 in revenue annually for each resident in the jurisdiction it serves.** Agencies operating in less densely populated areas generate less revenue than do those in areas with a greater population density. The typical agency—operating in a jurisdiction with fewer than 500 people per square mile—realizes \$8.21 in revenue on a per capita basis per year compared to a median of \$25.63 for agencies serving a jurisdiction with more than 2,500 people per square mile.

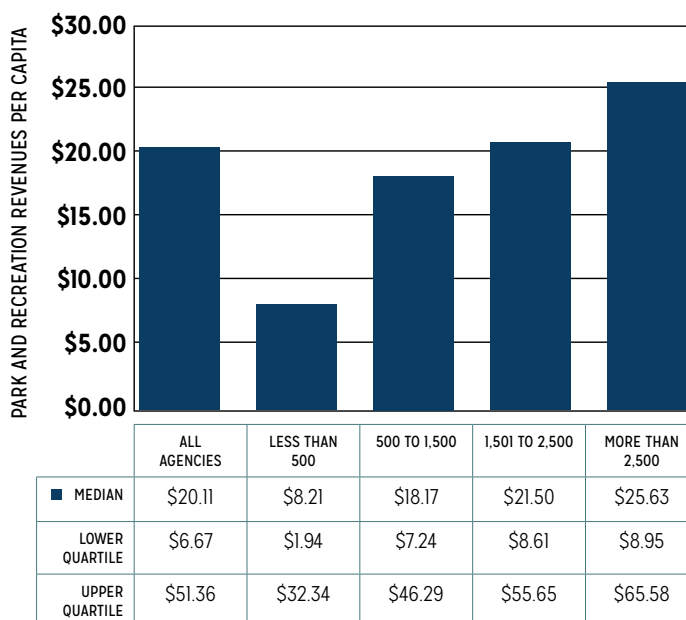
Small and medium-sized park and recreation agencies generate more revenue on a per capita basis than do large ones. Agencies serving jurisdictions with fewer than 20,000 people generate \$24.92 in per capita revenue per resident nearly matching that of agencies serving jurisdictions with populations between 50,000 and 99,999 with a median of \$25.62 in revenue per resident each year. In comparison, agencies serving populations greater than 250,000 generate \$7.24 per capita in revenue, with the amount declining to \$6.04 in jurisdictions of greater than a half million residents.

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

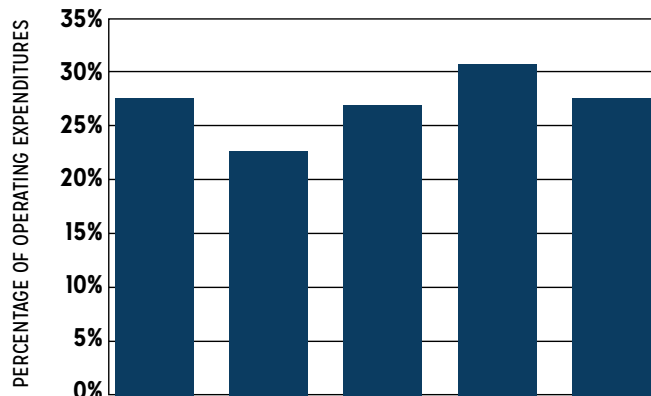
|     |                          |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 59% | GENERAL FUND TAX SUPPORT |
| 25% | EARNED/GENERATED REVENUE |
| 8%  | DEDICATED LEVIES         |
| 3%  | OTHER DEDICATED TAXES    |
| 2%  | OTHER                    |
| 2%  | GRANTS                   |
| 1%  | SPONSORSHIPS             |



**FIGURE 19: PARK AND RECREATION  
REVENUES PER CAPITA  
(BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**

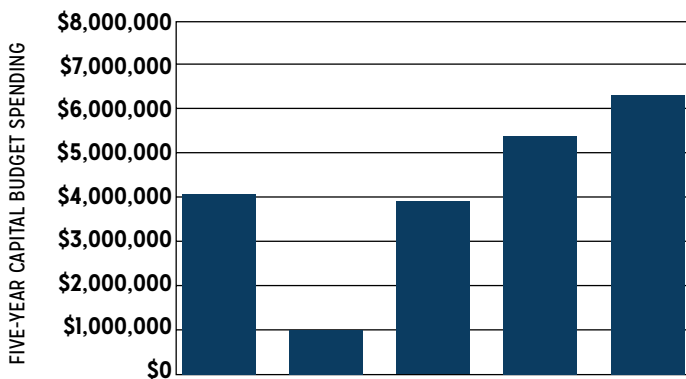


**FIGURE 20: REVENUE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES (COST RECOVERY)  
(PERCENTAGE OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES  
BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**



|                | ALL AGENCIES | LESS THAN 500 | 500 TO 1,500 | 1,501 TO 2,500 | MORE THAN 2,500 |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ■ MEDIAN       | 27.3%        | 23.5%         | 26.8%        | 30.8%          | 26.9%           |
| LOWER QUARTILE | 13.0%        | 9.9%          | 13.4%        | 15.4%          | 14.0%           |
| UPPER QUARTILE | 44.9%        | 48.1%         | 43.2%        | 42.3%          | 45.9%           |

**FIGURE 21: FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET SPENDING  
(BY POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE)**



|                | ALL AGENCIES | LESS THAN 500 | 500 TO 1,500 | 1,501 TO 2,500 | MORE THAN 2,500 |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ■ MEDIAN       | \$4,007,250  | \$1,000,000   | \$3,936,797  | \$5,371,748    | \$6,340,000     |
| LOWER QUARTILE | \$753,444    | \$250,000     | \$853,000    | \$1,000,000    | \$1,500,000     |
| UPPER QUARTILE | \$14,255,074 | \$4,843,350   | \$11,333,750 | \$20,000,000   | \$21,163,000    |

Another way to look at revenue generation is by examining cost recovery as a percentage of operating expenditures. **The typical agency recovers 27.3 percent of its operating expenditures from non-tax revenues.** The amount of cost recovery differs greatly from agency to agency based on an agency's portfolio of facilities and programming, the demographics of the populace served, agency mission and possible revenue mandates from the agency's governing jurisdictions.

At the same time, agencies serving denser population jurisdictions tend to have higher percentages of cost recovery. Agencies serving an area with less than 500 people per square mile have a median percentage cost recovery of 23.5 percent. Cost recovery rises to 30.8 percent of operating expenditures for agencies serving jurisdictions with between 1,000 and 2,500 people per square mile.

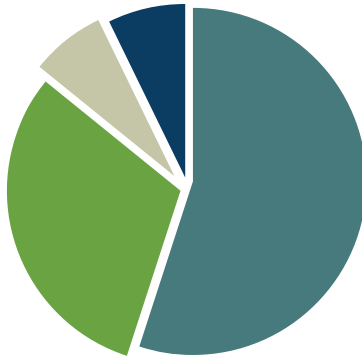
Beyond day-to-day operations, **park and recreation agencies have a median of \$4,007,250 in capital expenditures budgeted for the next five years.** Not surprisingly, the larger the agency, the larger its five-year capital budget. The typical park and recreation agency serving a population of fewer than 20,000 has a median five-year capital budget of \$638,125. This five-year capital budget increases to \$7.0 million at agencies serving jurisdictions with 50,000 to 99,999 people and to \$43.8 million at agencies in areas with more than 250,000 residents. The following are also positively related to the size of five-year capital budgets:

- The number of parks maintained: Less than ten parks—\$1.0 million; 50 or more parks—\$22.843 million
- Acreage of parks maintained: 250 or fewer acres—\$1.4 million; more than 3,500 acres—\$43.8 million
- Operating budgets: Annual operating budgets less than \$500,000—\$100,000; annual operating budgets greater than \$10 million—\$21.1 million
- Population density: Less than 500 people per square mile—\$1.0 million; more than 2,500 people per square mile—\$6.3 million



**FIGURE 22: TARGETS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES  
(AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION  
OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES)**

|     |                 |
|-----|-----------------|
| 55% | RENOVATION      |
| 31% | NEW DEVELOPMENT |
| 7%  | ACQUISITION     |
| 7%  | OTHER           |



Park and recreation agencies designate their capital expenditures to a variety of areas. **On average, 55 percent of the capital budget is designated for renovation while 31 percent is geared toward new development.** At larger park and recreation agencies, new development is the focus of a greater percentage of those agencies' capital budgets. At agencies serving jurisdictions with more than 250,000 residents, 32.6 percent of capital budgets are for new development compared to 49.9 percent for renovating current properties.



# POLICIES

Park and recreation agencies have various policies that address how residents are able to enjoy amenities in their communities. Many policies align with an agency's mission to increase a community's overall health and wellness such as bans on tobacco and alcohol consumption and providing healthy food options in parks and facilities. Other policies address collecting fees to assist agencies with park upkeep and staffing challenges.

**Three in four park and recreation agencies have policies that prohibit the use of tobacco products in their parks and at their facilities and grounds.** Nearly half of agencies bans the use of tobacco at all agency parks and facilities while another 27 percent make exceptions for certain facilities (e.g., a golf course).

Two-thirds of park and recreation agencies allow the consumption of alcohol by legal-age adults on at least some of their premises. Only 20 percent of agencies have a policy that allows the consumption of alcohol at all park and recreation agency locations

under their jurisdiction. Agencies are more likely to permit the consumption of alcohol at only a few select locations than at all facilities. Further, 46 percent of agencies allow the sale of alcohol on their premises, mainly at select locations and by either the agency itself or an authorized concessionaire.

Park and recreation agencies also promote health and wellness by offering healthy food options from its vending machines and concessions. This includes 67 percent of agencies with concession stands that offer healthy food options at those stands and 65 percent of agencies with vending machines that offer healthy choices in the machines.

One policy option utilized by relatively few agencies is charging an admission fee to enter their parks. Only 17 percent of agencies charge such fees, while just 14 percent of agencies charge parking fees. In both cases, the agencies that charge either admission or parking fees do so only at select facilities.

**FIGURE 23: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY POLICIES  
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**

|   | All and Some Locations<br>(Combined) | At All Locations | Only at Some Locations |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Has policy that bans the use of tobacco products in its parks and at its facilities and grounds | 73.7%                                | 46.9%            | 26.8%                  |
| Has policy that allows the consumption of alcohol by legal-aged adults on its premises          | 67.4                                 | 20.4             | 47.0                   |
| Agency provides healthy food options at its concession stands                                   | 66.9                                 | 17.7             | 49.2                   |
| Agency provides healthy food options in its vending machines                                    | 65.4                                 | 23.1             | 42.3                   |
| Agency sells alcoholic beverages to legal-aged adults on its premises                           | 45.5                                 | 5.5              | 40.0                   |
| Agency charges admission fees to enter its parks  | 16.6                                 | 1.2              | 15.4                   |
| Agency charges parking fees at its parks or facilities  | 13.9                                 | *                | 13.9                   |

\* = Less than one percent



# ISSUES AND TRENDS

Several new and continuing trends will have a significant impact on agency budgeting, spending and performance of park and recreation agencies in 2019 and beyond. These trends reflect advances in technology, macroeconomic factors, and social and environmental factors and will likely have a significant impact on agency performance.

Last year's *2018 NRPA Agency Performance Review* highlighted a number of long-term trends that continue to affect parks and recreation. They include the decline of general fund support for parks and recreation, the increasing demand for higher self-generated revenues to offset operating and maintenance costs, the impact of unfunded pension liabilities affecting both agency performance and employee security, and the rise of public/private partnerships to fund new parks and facilities. All of these factors are transforming parks and recreation, and may have an even greater influence on park agency performance as cumulative impacts become more pronounced.

For example, a December 2018 Moody's analysis of adjusted net pension liabilities for the 50 largest local governments in the U.S. found that adjusted net pension liabilities rose nine percent in 2017 (from 2016) to \$481 billion. The same study revealed that in some local jurisdictions the

combination of debt service, pension liabilities and retiree health benefits consume as much as 30 percent of local municipality revenues.

Many local governments currently meet only a "tread water" threshold for unfunded pension liabilities, indicating that a reckoning likely is coming sooner rather than later. Some cities such as Dallas and Houston have instituted much-needed pension reforms, but pension liabilities in other cities continue to fall further into unfunded territory. Favorable investment growth and increased revenue generation may help cities address unfunded liabilities, but the weight of these looming obligations may seriously—and negatively—affect park and recreation agency budgets and performance in coming years.

## **Investments in Park Infrastructure Will Rise in 2019-2020**

As a December 2018 *The Wall Street Journal* article noted, investments in state and local infrastructure began to increase after years of depressed spending following the Great Recession of 2008. This growing investment was thanks to increased revenues from local tax receipts that fund much of park and recreation capital infrastructure expenditures such as buildings and roads.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, state and local government construction spending increased nearly 10 percent during the 12-month period through October 2018, nearly matching a peak last reached in 2009. The Census Bureau data also show that spending on amusement and recreation facilities rose 31 percent over the same time period. While this reflects expenditures for private and public facilities, the percentage increase is robust for both public expenditures as well as for “for-profit” facilities.

Economic conditions are expected to remain favorable for new investments in park and recreation infrastructure if local and state tax collections continue to rise and interest rates remain relatively low. As a result, park and recreation agencies—regardless of size, location, population served or budget—will likely be able to plan for and construct more recreation facilities, expanding the proven social and economic benefits parks and recreation bring to every community.

In addition, the growth of new recreation facilities and capital improvements will result in positive impacts on local, regional and state economies. The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) reports that the outdoor recreation economy generates \$887 billion annually in consumer spending and creates 7.6 million jobs. NRPA reports that in 2015, local parks and recreation generated \$154 billion in economic impact and created 1.1 million jobs. Clearly, investment in parks and recreation infrastructure is a rising tide that lifts all boats.

## **Greater Impact of Technology on Agency Efficiency, Costs, and Performance**

Technology is having a greater impact on parks than ever before. Lower costs, technological simplification and mass production is making highly sophisticated technology more accessible and less expensive for park and recreation agencies.

Among the technology developments expected during 2019 and beyond are monitoring systems such as beacon counters and geofencing that can be used in parks and recreation facilities. Beacon counters are simple, relatively inexpensive blue-tooth enabled devices that can be mounted in a variety of locations, interior and exterior, that passively detect a person’s presence through his/her cell phone signal and relay that information to park administrators at a central location.

This could be an attractive and cost-effective option in parks that have no staff, and so no way of gauging how many people use a particular facility (or when). Active geofences can utilize RFID or GPS technology to locate people precisely within larger areas.

Biometric identification systems will likely become increasingly more prevalent in park and recreation facilities and community centers, replacing card IDs and other means of identification and authorizing access. Current-generation biometric ID systems are faster, cheaper, more accurate and less intrusive than earlier systems. With widespread adoption in the private and public sector, costs of equipment and implementation have been slashed and are likely to decline further. Questions of data security remain paramount, but there is no question that application of such technology will save funds and improve agency performance.

On a larger scale, parks and recreation agencies may soon embrace the use of autonomous vehicles, especially as people-movers along pre-determined routes within parks and along trails or at beaches or lakefronts gain acceptance and popularity. Testing of prototypes is already underway. In addition to utilization within existing parks, many urban planners believe that autonomous vehicles will create opportunities for large-scale linear urban parks along streetscapes that will then no longer require as much parking space or as many vehicle travel lanes for self-operated vehicles.

Recreational and commercial scale drones are becoming increasingly utilized in park settings. New FAA regulations may allow the expanded use of drones, particularly for monitoring and security, delivery of food and beverages within parks and public recreation. With advances in technology, lower prices due to mass production and greater public acceptance, the use of drones for recreation is increasing—not just for photographing scenic locations, but “follow-me” drones that accompany individuals and groups on recreational outings.

Forward-thinking agencies could realize many benefits and applications from drone use: assisting in public safety missions such as search and rescue and monitoring of wildfires; identifying and mapping rare-plant communities and wildlife habitats; even monitoring and mapping parks



and cultural history or archeological sites. Concerns of some park managers regarding privacy intrusions and safety violations have been proven untrue for the most part. But, as with any disruptive technology, the unforeseen negative impacts may require careful consideration before adoption of this promising, yet problematic, technology.

## **Consolidation of Public Services Offers Opportunity**

Park and recreation agencies are increasingly affected by efforts to consolidate public services—consolidation which, in theory, reduces costs and allows for greater efficiencies. Consolidations of government services have been occurring for nearly five decades and include combining park facilities with public schools or consolidating public works functions with park and recreation maintenance and operation. Recent park/school consolidation initiatives look to encourage even greater collaboration to promote access for youth to take advantage of sports fields and playing facilities.

This trend presents both threats and opportunities for parks and recreation, and agencies should be fully prepared to address—and perhaps even initiate—such proposals. While government agency and function consolidations might significantly diminish budget, staff and resources for an agency's mission, they may also benefit park and recreation departments. For instance, some local agencies/jurisdictions are making a greater effort to look at consolidating government services with park and recreation facilities in order to create multi-service centers or multi-function park and recreation centers. Such repurposed facilities can provide walkable/bikeable access, opportunities for intergenerational programs, health care for targeted populations, childcare and after-school care, new playgrounds and a variety of recreation programs for all ages. Examples include the Sanchez Multi-Service Center in New Orleans, the Kendall Community Center and Library in Houston and the Springfield-Greene County, Missouri's SPARC program—a cooperative use of park and school facilities.

## **Looking Forward**

In reviewing emerging trends that will affect agency performance in the coming years, it is clear that park and recreation agencies must become nimbler and more adaptable to changing conditions and public inputs. The public and their elected officials have greater expectations for sustained high-level performance from their park and recreation departments. Changing economic, environmental and social conditions demand that agencies be proactive in assessing emerging trends while continuing to be fully grounded in reliable data to justify their investments and expenditures to benefit the public good.

## **Declining General Fund Support and Increasing Demand for Self-Generated Revenue**

Local government spending on parks and recreation continues to recover from the Great Recession as agencies have been increasingly challenged to generate more of their operating and maintenance costs from fees and charges. The amount of general fund support from local and state governments for park and recreation systems across the country has declined, and there are no signs that this trend will be reversed. If anything, it will likely continue as municipal government budgets remain unable to keep up with inflationary pressures, tax-averse citizenry and long-term debt obligations.

As noted earlier, the median amount of cost-recovery from self-generated revenues is just over 27 percent. Surprisingly, a quarter of park and recreation agencies report 46 percent or more in cost recovery in 2017. The ability to generate revenue (and be less reliant on the whims of elected officials) bodes well for park and recreation agencies being able to weather economic downturns and further reductions in general funds. At the same time, the need for self-generated revenues could put pressure on agencies as they continue in their mission to serve all members of their communities, including those with little means to pay for park and recreation services. Balancing financial needs with the social equity mission will be one of the most challenging issues facing park and recreation professionals in the coming year and beyond.

# ABOUT NRPA RESEARCH

The *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* and *NRPA Park Metrics* represent the most comprehensive collection of park and recreation-related data, benchmarks and insights that inform park and recreation agency professionals, key stakeholders and the public on the state of the park and recreation industry. These resources provide all those who care about quality parks and recreation with a variety of tools.

1. *Guidance on the resources dedicated to and performance of parks and recreation.* How does your local park and recreation agency measure up in providing open space, recreation opportunities and programming relative to your peer agencies? Is your agency properly staffed or sufficiently funded compared to others?
2. *Data that allow informed decisions on the optimal set of service and facility offerings.* Park and recreation agencies do not make decisions based on a “one-size-fits-all” standard that does not reflect the unique circumstances and needs of individual communities. Rather, these metrics allow park and recreation professionals to compare their agencies with others they view as peers.
3. *Comprehensive data that demonstrate the broad offerings and programming that represent the full definition of parks and recreation.* The information in this report helps demonstrate to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public the full breadth of service offerings and responsibilities of park and recreation agencies throughout the United States.

## **Additional NRPA resources:**

Park and recreation professionals should use the *2019 NRPA Agency Performance Review* and *NRPA Park Metrics* in conjunction with other resources, including those that are proprietary to an individual agency, those from NRPA and outside sources. Some additional NRPA resources to consider include:

- [\*NRPA Facility Market Reports\*](#): These customized reports offer key census and marketing data and insights about the market served by your agency. Your agency will gain a greater understanding of the residents served by a park, aquatic center, recreation center or any other facility. There are four types of NRPA Facility Market Reports:
  - o Community Profile, which highlights detailed demographic data on the population living near the facility studied
  - o Health and Wellness, which focuses on the health characteristics of people living near the facility studied.
  - o Older Adults, which focuses on characteristics and needs of adults living near the facility studied over the age of 50
  - o Youth Profile, which focused on the characteristics and needs of nearby residents under the age of 18.
- [\*NRPA Connect\*](#): Your peers are the best knowledge base to answer your questions. NRPA Connect is an online professional networking tool that connects you with like-minded park and recreation professionals from across the country and is a valuable source of information about industry-related issues and insights into trends.
- [\*Economic Impact of Local Parks\*](#): Park and recreation agencies not only improve our communities through their activities dedicated to conservation, health and wellness and social equity. They are also engines of economic activity. The study finds that operations and capital spending at America’s local park and recreation agencies generated more than \$154 billion in annual economic activity and 1.1 million jobs in 2015. The report also includes estimates of the economic impact of operations and capital spending by local and regional park agencies for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- [\*Americans’ Engagement with Parks Survey\*](#): This annual NRPA research survey probes Americans’ use of parks, the



key reasons that drive their use and the greatest challenges preventing greater usage. Each year, the study examines the importance of public parks in Americans' lives, including how parks compare to other services and offerings of local governments. Recent findings show Americans typically visit local parks and recreation facilities more than twice a month, nine in ten Americans agree that parks and recreation are important local government services, and 85 percent of people consider high-quality park and recreation amenities as a principal factor when choosing a place to live.

- [Local Government Officials' Perceptions of Parks and Recreation](#): The study captures the views of elected and appointed local government officials and prioritizes park and recreation services. Public officials see parks and recreation as a critical solution to many of their top concerns. However,

they do not perceive agencies as an important contributor to their biggest day-to-day concern: economic development. Agencies that contribute more readily to the attraction and retention of businesses to the community are likely to benefit from greater and steadier funding from their local governments.

- [NRPA Park and Recreation Salary Survey](#): Having access to comprehensive compensation data informs park and recreation agency leaders about how to attract the best staff. This report features detailed base salary and bonus data for 10 positions at park and recreation agencies.
- [Parks & Recreation magazine](#): Each issue of NRPA's monthly flagship magazine features content on a number of topics, including conservation, health and wellness, social equity, advocacy, law review and operations.





# ABOUT **NRPA**

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing parks, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 60,000 recreation and park professionals and advocates, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space.

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

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







**NRPA** National Recreation  
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*Because everyone deserves a great park*

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