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**DRAFT FOR
PUBLIC
COMMENT**

Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan

Prepared by:

NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.™

Parks & Recreation



“Live in the sunshine, swim in the sea, drink the wild
air’s salubrity.”

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	PROPER NAME
ABA	Architectural Barriers Act of 1968
ACOE (Corps)	Army Corps of Engineers
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
AR	Augmented Reality (ex. Pokemon Go)
ATV/OHV	All-Terrain Vehicle / Off-Highway Vehicle
CAPRA	Commission for Accreditation of Park & Recreation Agencies
CC	Creative Commons
CIP(s)	Capital Improvement Project(s)
the Department	North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department
ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
FF&E	Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment
FSSP	Fort Stevenson State Park
FTE(s)	Full-Time Employee(s)
FWS	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
IPA	Importance-Performance Analysis
LWCF	Land & Water Conservation Fund
MCDA	Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis
MPI	Market Potential Index
MR	Mixed Reality
MSA	Micropolitan Statistical Area
ND	North Dakota
NDAC	North Dakota Administrative Code
NDCC	North Dakota Century Code
NDPRD	North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department
NDSU	North Dakota State University
NPO(s)	Non-Profit Organization(s)
NPS	National Park Service
NRPA	National Recreation & Parks Association
O&M	Operations & Maintenance
PIO	Public Information Officer
PPS	Project for Public Spaces (a non-profit organization)
PSQI	Public Space Quality Index
RFP	Request for Proposal
SCORP	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SOAR (S.O.A.R.)	Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations & Results
SPI	Spending Potential Index
SWOT (S.W.O.T.)	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats
U.S.	United States
VAC	Volunteer Advisory Committee
WiFi	Wireless Internet/Telecommunications

Parks & Recreation Department Approval

The State of North Dakota Century Code, Chapter 55-08-01 requires that the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department “shall plan and coordinate government programs encouraging the full development and preservation of existing and future parks, outdoor recreation areas and nature preserves.” The policy of the Parks & Recreation Department is to master plan each “destination” park property in order to set their long-term strategic vision and guide future developmental, financial, use and programmatic decisions.

As part of the master planning process, the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department worked in partnership with North Dakota citizens, stakeholders and an interdisciplinary volunteer advisory committee to develop the master plan for Fort Stevenson State Park. After extensive research, community surveys, public outreach and advisory committee meetings, the 2021 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan has been completed. Approval of this master plan accepts the plan in its entirety, including the process, goals, recommendations and the contents contained within it.

The intended lifespan of the 2021 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan is ten (10) years, at which point, a new master plan should be developed. Since future recreation and leisure needs and trends can rapidly change, adaptive modifications to this master plan may occur by incorporating new information as it is made known or available (e.g. new best management practices). Such changes may require additional public comment and Director approval prior to being incorporated into the master plan as addenda.

This master plan is hereby approved by:

Andrea Travnicek, Ph.D.

Date

Director

North Dakota Parks & Recreation

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Acknowledgements

This master plan would not have been possible without the assistance and participation of a great number of individuals. A special thanks to all the members of the public who participated in the public process for the Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan.



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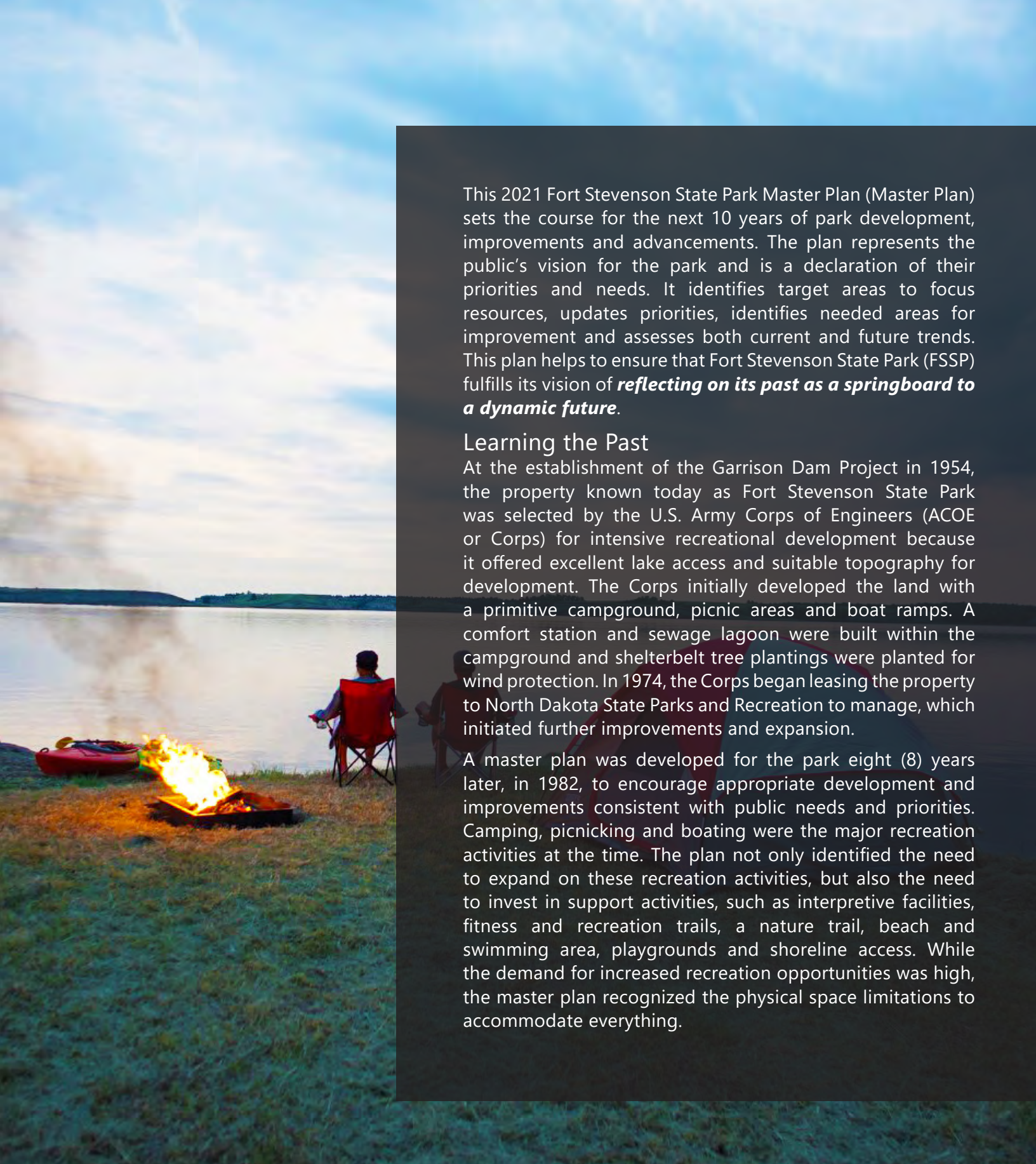


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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction



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This 2021 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan (Master Plan) sets the course for the next 10 years of park development, improvements and advancements. The plan represents the public's vision for the park and is a declaration of their priorities and needs. It identifies target areas to focus resources, updates priorities, identifies needed areas for improvement and assesses both current and future trends. This plan helps to ensure that Fort Stevenson State Park (FSSP) fulfills its vision of ***reflecting on its past as a springboard to a dynamic future.***

Learning the Past

At the establishment of the Garrison Dam Project in 1954, the property known today as Fort Stevenson State Park was selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE or Corps) for intensive recreational development because it offered excellent lake access and suitable topography for development. The Corps initially developed the land with a primitive campground, picnic areas and boat ramps. A comfort station and sewage lagoon were built within the campground and shelterbelt tree plantings were planted for wind protection. In 1974, the Corps began leasing the property to North Dakota State Parks and Recreation to manage, which initiated further improvements and expansion.

A master plan was developed for the park eight (8) years later, in 1982, to encourage appropriate development and improvements consistent with public needs and priorities. Camping, picnicking and boating were the major recreation activities at the time. The plan not only identified the need to expand on these recreation activities, but also the need to invest in support activities, such as interpretive facilities, fitness and recreation trails, a nature trail, beach and swimming area, playgrounds and shoreline access. While the demand for increased recreation opportunities was high, the master plan recognized the physical space limitations to accommodate everything.

Image: "Camping at Fort Stevenson State Park"

A conceptual site development plan was proposed with the master plan, which included addressing specific expansion and improvement topics. This initial vision involved addressing campground roadway circulation, park connectivity, creating a formal park entrance area, DeTrobriand marina development, a disc golf course and a significant increase to RV camping opportunities.

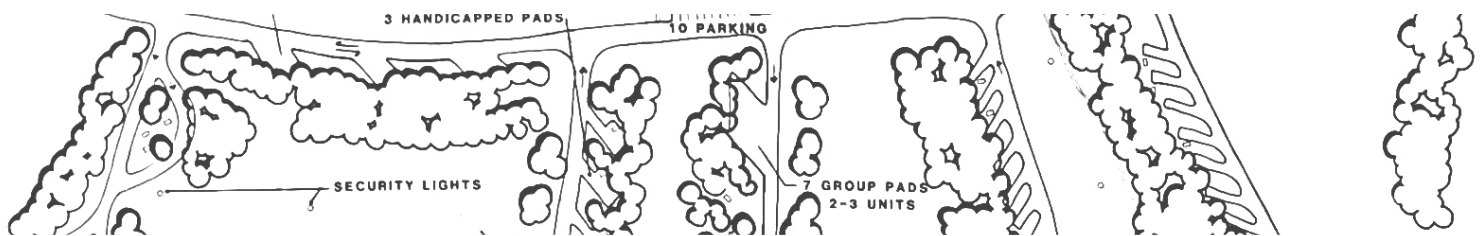
Since this 1982 master plan, the park has several successes to build on. Much of this initial vision has been fully implemented, such as campground expansion, development of the DeTrobriand marina and day use area improvements. The park even went beyond the initial vision by implementing additional services, such as the Garrison marina expansion and addition of cabins, to meet evolving visitor needs. Much of the site development plan has been implemented in one form or another; although, the exact locations of proposed improvements are not the same. The primary gaps, between what was proposed and implemented, are roadway geometry, park circulation and overall park connectivity (with trails).

2021 Master Plan: Plan for the Future

The recreation demands of the park remain somewhat unchanged today. The major differences are a much larger market footprint (or the distance visitors travel to get to the park) and substantial increases in visitation, occupancy, RV ownership, sizes of recreation equipment and a focus on visitor experience.

This 2021 Master Plan couples this context information with the public input, research and analysis to prioritize resource demands at the park. The primary needs identified through this process are focused on value-added facilities, services and amenities that enhance the overall park experience. As such, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department needs to find efficiencies by considering various avenues to leverage cost recovery for certain improvements and programs. This requires an approach to program delivery focusing on better communication, community outreach and partnerships.

Overall, this Master Plan provides the vision and strategic direction for the continued growth, innovation, efficiency and effectiveness of Fort Stevenson State Park. Moving forward with the goals in the plan will require further exploration of developmental, functional, organizational,



At the establishment of the Garrison Dam Project in 1954, the property known today as Fort Stevenson State Park was selected for intensive recreational development by the Army Corps of Engineers because it offered good lake access and flat terrain. The original 1982 master plan vision was to provide increased camping and recreation opportunities that focused on meeting visitor needs and demand.

Image: "Proposed Layout from 1982 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan"



operational and fiscal strategies, as well as a need to collaborate and cooperate with other agencies and partners – both public and private. These efforts will help the park continue building its capacity towards meeting public needs, priorities and effectively serve existing and future visitors.

Executive Summary

Master Plan Purpose

Fort Stevenson State Park is a unique state park located on the northern shore of Lake Sakakawea. It is integral to both the fabric of North Dakota and the spirit of the region. The park offers lake access, green space, respite and protected natural resources, as well as facilities, programs and services that support a high-quality park experience. The park is entering an era of innovation for parks and recreation planning and management. Driven by changes in community demographics and lifestyles, the nature of play and leisure is changing. The staff at North Dakota State Parks and Recreation (NDPRD) must reexamine the way it defines and meets desired service levels as visitation increases.

This 2021 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan (Master Plan) offers an exciting opportunity to respond to these changes and build on the park's current system. The plan is the declaration of public needs and priorities, and it integrates the public's vision and aspirations to guide future development, improvements, management, advancements, service offerings and programming to deliver a diverse and meaningful park experience. The Master Plan sets the course for the next ten (10) years and serves as a long-term roadmap for creating a high-quality park experience that is relevant, inclusive, iconic and sustainable.

Planning Process

The master plan process began in early 2021 with background research and review of the park's existing inventory and conditions, demographics, socioeconomics and industry trends to provide a foundation for subsequent discussion and analysis. A Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) was also convened early on for the purpose of providing strategic guidance and direction, as well

Relevant – Amenities, Services and Programs should meet the changing needs and preferences of citizens and visitors.

Inclusive – Every visitor should be able to enjoy the Park regardless of their ability, income, age, race, experience or location.

Iconic – The Park should reflect and enhance the unique quality of its regional setting.

Sustainable – Improvements, programs and management strategies should contribute to community enhancement, social well-being, a healthy environment and fiscal responsibility.

as to ensure the plan reflected public needs and priorities. Their role involved:

- Assessing current public needs and determining the ability for current park resources to meet those needs.
- Reviewing public values, anticipated trends, growth areas and future demands for services, programs and activities.
- Analyzing socioeconomic trends and changes in recreation and options.
- Recommending strategies and objectives that shift the current reality of the park towards meeting public needs and priorities.
- Subsequent phases of the process built upon this feedback and assessment to create goals, opportunities and an action plan.

The planning process provided citizens, visitors and staff a chance to re-imagine current and future opportunities at Fort Stevenson State Park. Their preferences, priorities and expectations underpin every goal in this Master Plan. The public engagement allowed for input and feedback through a variety of online and in-person activities that included hosting an online geo-tagged survey, one (1) online public survey, focus group interviews, a virtual open house and a live questions and answers session.

NDPRD conducted the public survey from March through April 2021 to gain insight on visitation and use patterns, customer satisfaction, civic engagement, public vision and values, public priorities, preferences and resource foci. The survey received over three hundred (300) responses from North Dakota citizens and park users. Four (4) focus group sessions were conducted with individuals representing diverse North Dakota constituencies, including: various park user groups, like outdoor recreationalists, partnering or volunteer organizations and local area teens. The data from the survey and the focus groups were used by the planning team to enhance understanding of critical topics of interest and begin developing goals.

Master Plan Snapshot

Vision & Goals

The vision and goals for the Master Plan, defined in Chapter 2, are derived from the results of the public engagement process and extensive background research that included: park infrastructure inventory review and assessment; park services, program and activities evaluation; and demographic, socioeconomic and industry trend analyses. Each goal provides an introduction to further help define meaning and provide context for both the goal and subsequent objectives.

The actions (objectives) the Department and Park will take to support the goals are listed with each goal. Implementation of the objectives are prioritized internally determined by the Department and park staff using a combination of prioritization metrics.

Evolving recreation trends, changing dynamics and aging assets will affect the park. Chapter 2 highlights key recommended capital improvement projects (CIPs) with the potential to transform the park, expand opportunities and partnerships, add new facilities and recreation elements, expand services and protect and enhance the natural resources.

Aspirations for the Future: Imagining the Ideal

Chapter 3 establishes the ideal vision for the park and its purpose by examining and assessing the results from public input. It seeks to define “what good looks like.” Strategic opportunities are identified and assessed by reviewing park trends, socioeconomic trends, assessing the peer parks, reviewing relevant planning and guiding documents and identifying the park’s carrying capacity.

The findings discussed in Chapter 3 provide awareness of the local and industry-wide trends that could require action from staff and the Department. The culmination of this information provides the foundation (or guiding principles) from which the goals are developed and further refined.

Existing Conditions: The Best of “What Is”

The philosophy for the master planning process, Appreciative Inquiry, focuses on identifying what is currently working well and using it as a springboard for success. Chapter 4 is a review and assessment of “what is best.” It examines park visitor demographics and opportunities, key topics of interest for natural resources, asset and infrastructure opportunities, business management strategies and visitor service evaluations.

Appendices A – E: Data and Details

The extensive process included substantial data gathering and analysis along the way. Master plan appendices consolidate the data, tools and information necessary to complete the plan. These include:

- **Appendix A:** 30-Day Public Comments
- **Appendix B:** Public Survey Results (March-April 2021)
- **Appendix C:** Focus Group Key Themes Report (April 2021)
- **Appendix D:** Full Asset/Facility PSQI Evaluation Results (completed by park staff)
- **Appendix E:** Recreation Activities Matrix Results (completed by park staff)

MASTER PLAN GOALS



GOAL 1: COMFORT & QUALITY Increase comfort-type accommodations, such as modern campsites, full-service cabins, yurts, pet-friendly options, etc., to enhance visitor comfort.



GOAL 2: DAY USE ENHANCEMENT Focus on enhancements in the day use area that provide increased amenities, options and access.



GOAL 3: WATER ACCESS IMPROVEMENT Improve water access and experiences.



GOAL 4: SUSTAINABILITY Focus on long-term park resource (e.g. financial, asset, etc.) sustainability through enhanced business, operations and maintenance practices.



GOAL 5: INFRASTRUCTURE Improve park infrastructure and assets to maximize their lifespans, improve condition and better meet visitors' needs, modern park offerings and industry best practices.



GOAL 6: PARTNERSHIPS Optimize partnerships to expand and diversify amenity, program, activity and event offerings.



GOAL 7: MARKETING Increase direct marketing to Bismarck and Minot residents with a focus on opening new, unique market segments.



GOAL 8: EXPERIENCE Enhance the visitor experience with customer-focused amenities, services and programs.



GOAL 9: INCLUSIVITY Promote inclusivity for all through optimizing barrier-free facilities, amenities, programs and activities.

Master Planning Framework

As part of its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD) aligned its planning strategy to that of the U.S. National Park Service (NPS). This planning strategy is called “Portfolio Planning” (Figure 1).

Park master plans, like this document, are the core foundation document that establishes the basis for all future planning efforts. Master plans identify the vision, values, needs, trends, strategic opportunities and goals for each park. They help answer critical questions such as: *what is the park’s purpose, what makes it significant and what are its fundamental values?*

The planning portfolio extends from the foundational master plan document to specific management plans that create a logical, trackable guide for park management actions. Through the portfolio planning concept, park planning needs are met by the totality of planning documents, which includes: the master plan and the park-specific business, cultural and natural resource, infrastructure, operations and maintenance and visitor service management plans.

Use of the portfolio structure for delivering planning products introduces greater flexibility for park managers. It supports formal planning efforts for some issues, while acknowledging that existing plans and guidances may be adequate for other issues. It allows for plans to be completed as resources become available. In the past, these management-level plans would be found in a single guiding document. The benefit of portfolio planning, however, is that each management plan, while referencing the other plans, can be updated as standalone documents without the need to revise the entire body of work.

Figure 1: NDPRD Master Planning Framework

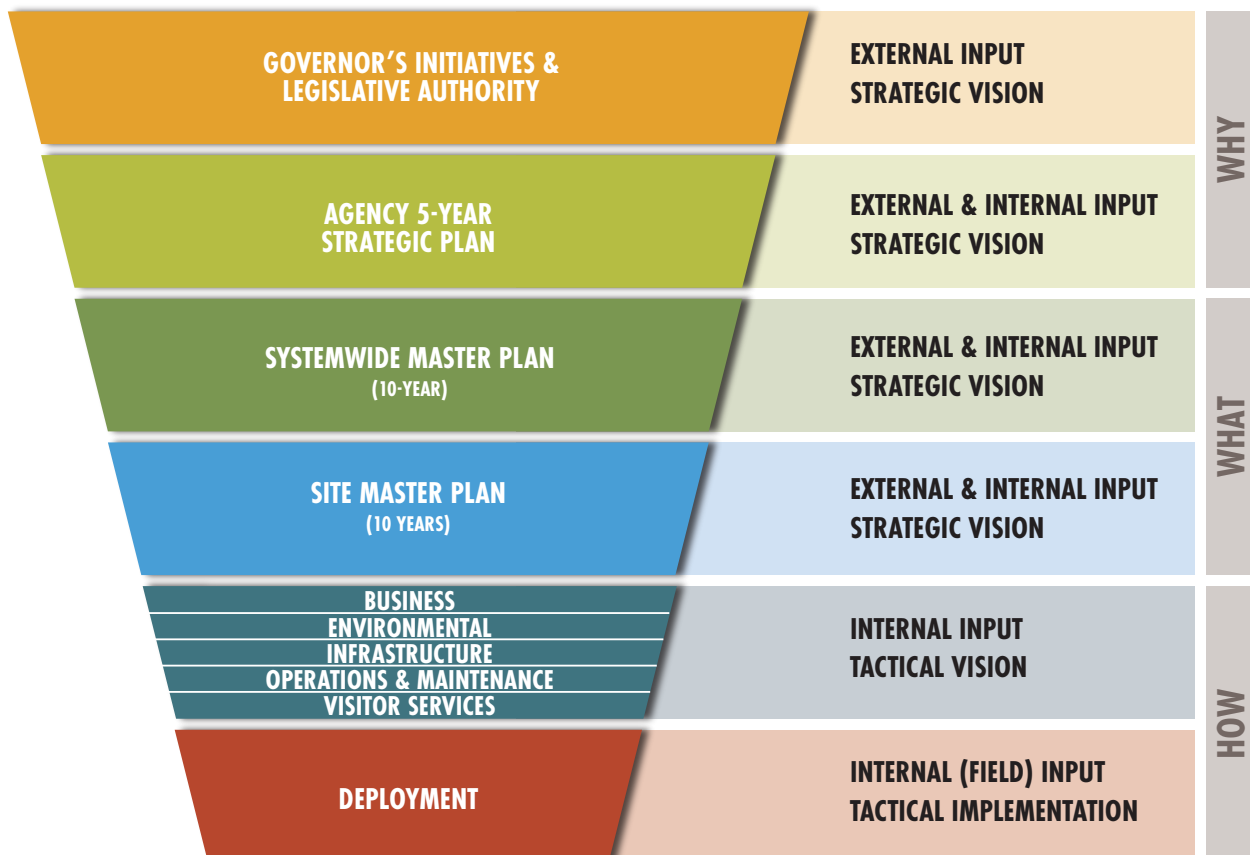
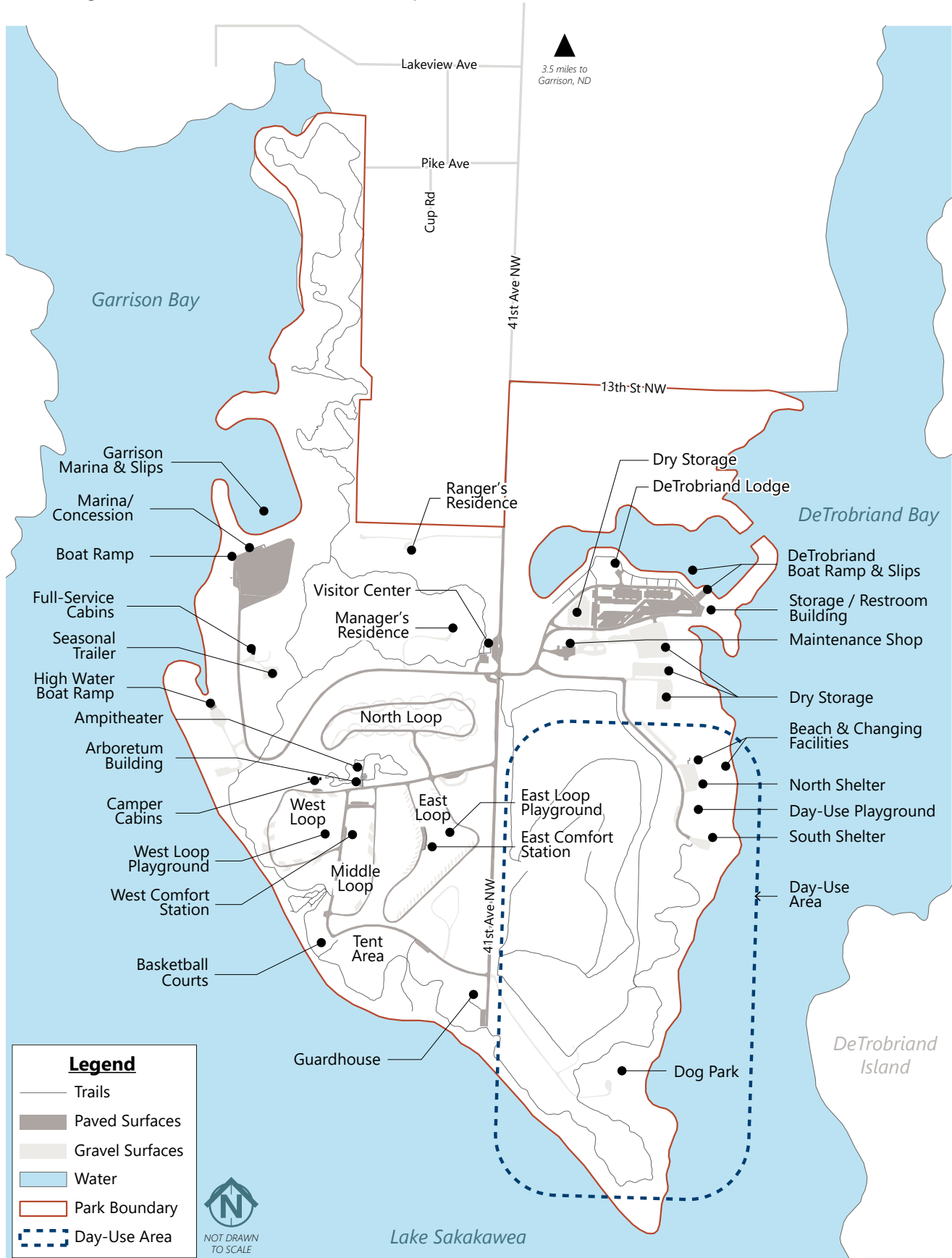


Figure 2: Fort Stevenson State Park Area Map



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CHAPTER TWO: Existing Conditions: The Best of "What Is"



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Demographics

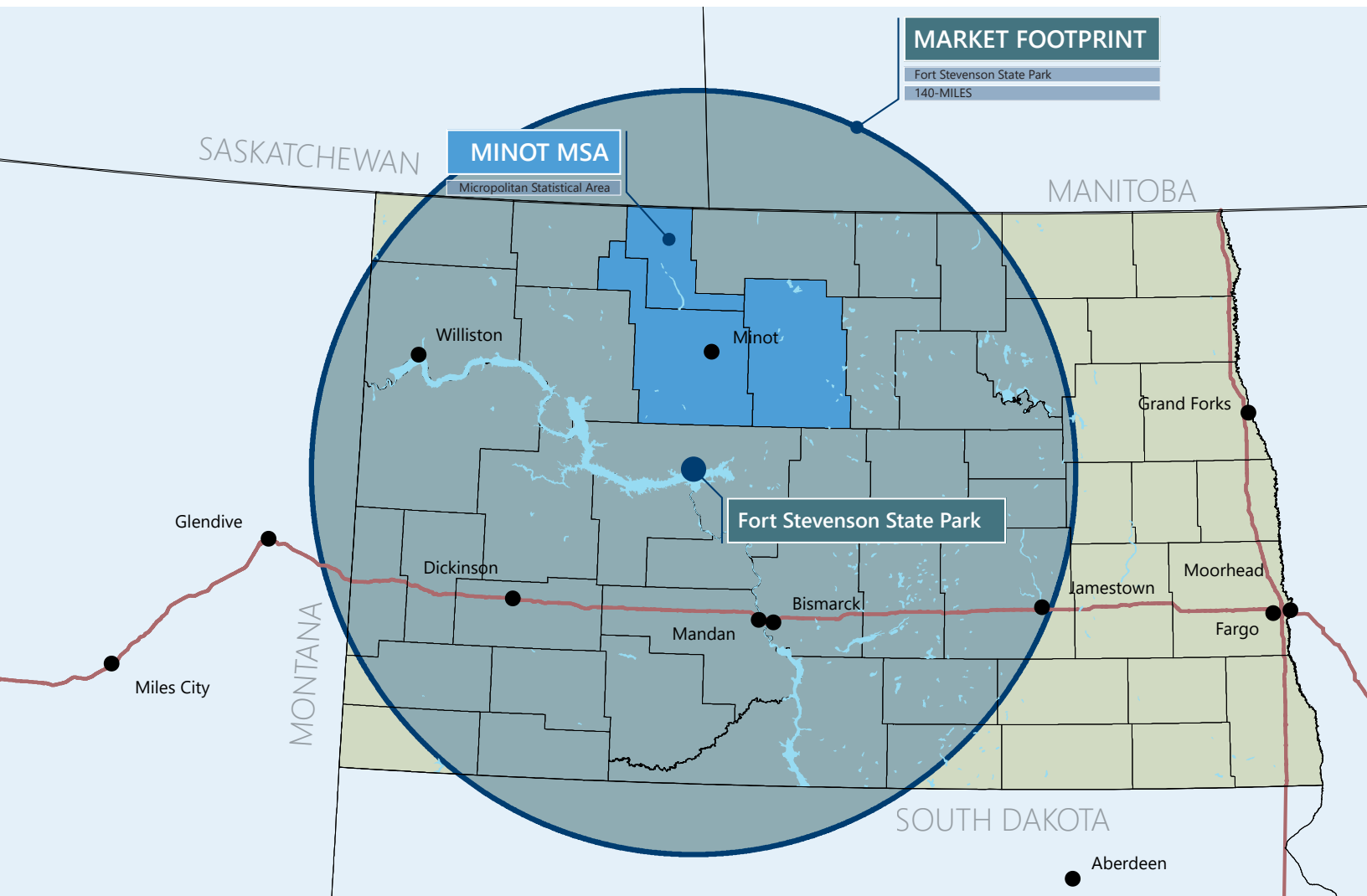
An in-depth analysis of a community's profile helps the North Dakota State Parks & Recreation Department (NDPRD) understand the composition of the population and identify current and future needs. Providing adequate recreation opportunities to the citizens of North Dakota, users of Fort Stevenson State Park and any future visitors requires a thorough understanding of the demographics. Comprehending and identifying demographic trends helps provide insight into the Department's ability to meet public need and project future demand based on anticipated population levels.

Based on the average distance traveled by visitors to the park, the park's market reach is determined to extend 140 miles from Fort Stevenson State Park. This radius is used to define the "market footprint" (market area) for further study (Figure 3). The Minot Micropolitan Statistical Area (Minot MSA) is the closest statistical area to Fort Stevenson State Park and is also studied to provide a more localized perspective for comparative purposes (Figure 3).

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 428,000 individuals (178,000 households) identify their primary residence within the park's market area (Figure 4). This area encompasses approximately two-thirds (2/3) of North Dakota. The footprint stretches as far west as Glendive, Montana, north to Estevan, Saskatchewan,

Figure 3: Study Area Footprints



and south to Mobridge, South Dakota. While the Minot MSA is the closest statistical area to the park, the population only accounts for approximately twenty percent (20%) of the market footprint. Both population and total households in the market area are expected to increase by approximately seven percent (7%) over the next ten (10) years, while the Minot MSA anticipates faster growth projected at approximately sixteen percent (16%) (Minot, 2017).

The key population trend to watch is the growth of the Minot area. A Minot Housing Supply and Demand Analysis (2017) suggests that the region will have a population of nearly 100,000 by 2030. **As population in the nearby regions increase, so does the need and demand for outdoor recreation.**

Age Segmentation

The largest age cohort across all geographic sales is the 35-54 age group (23%). This is consistent with the corresponding State and U.S. data (Figure 5). The other cohorts are somewhat equally distributed. The cohort with the largest projected gain is the "Active Seniors" cohort (ages 65+). Demographic projections suggest the overall population in the market footprint will become older, and more localized studies show a similar trend emphasized by an "outmigration of younger adults" (SRF, 2015).

The key trend of interest with regards to age segmentation is that older generations use parks, recreation and leisure amenities much more passively than younger cohorts. Aging individuals that recreate and use parks typically seek programs and activities geared toward assisting with healthy aging, movement and maintaining mental health (NRPA, 2018).

Ethnicity

Ethnic diversity impacts the ways in which visitors and residents use parks for recreational purposes. Past research has shown that ethnic groups, in general, differ in their park and recreation preferences, including needs, interests, use, participation, experience, patterns, attitudes and environmental perceptions (Chavez, 2000).

Figure 4: Population

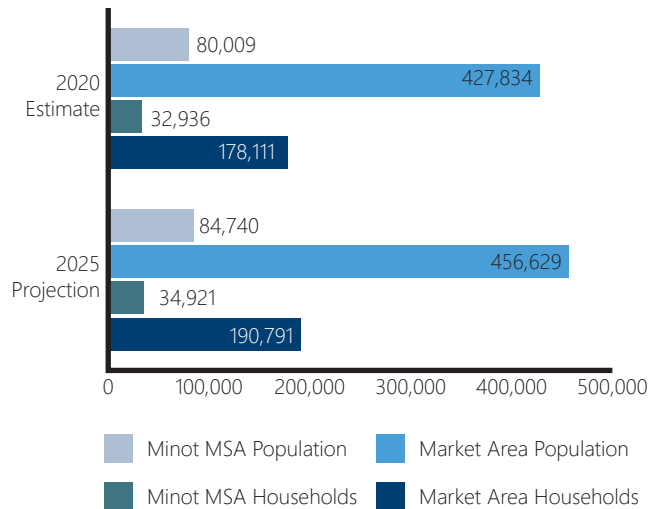


Figure 5: Population by Age Segmentation

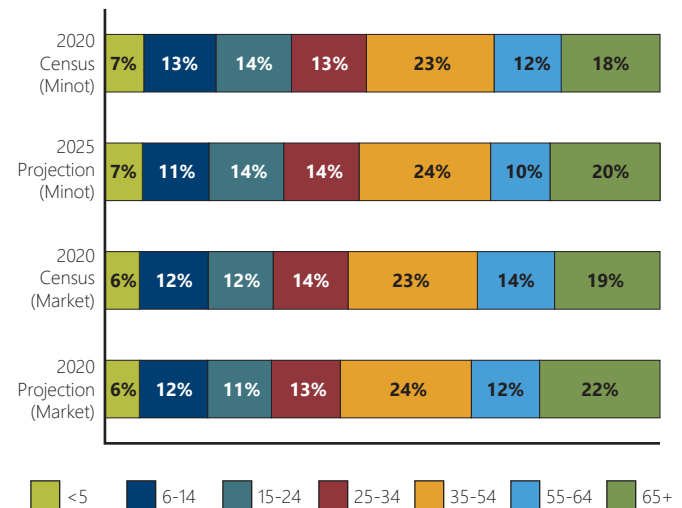
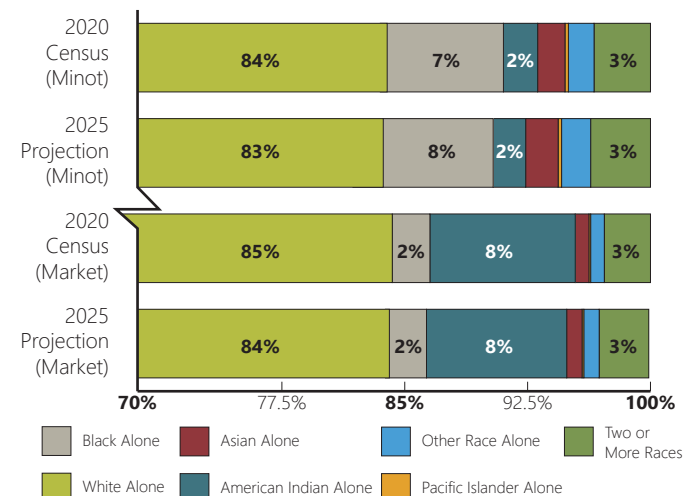


Figure 6: Ethnicity



The ethnicity of the study areas is primarily “white alone” (Figure 6). Although, both the market footprint and Minot MSA area are seeing substantial increases in ethnic populations. Between 2010 and 2025, the LatinX population is expected to increase by eleven percent (11%) in the larger market footprint. The market area’s ethnic populations, over the same period, are expected to increase by eighteen percent (18%) (USBC, 2010 & ESRI, 2020). The Diversity Index projects an increase of thirty percent (30%) in the market footprint, while more localized data shows growth at nearly twice the pace. The Diversity Index measures the likelihood that two (2) persons, chosen at random from the same area, will belong to different race or ethnic group. The index ranges from zero (0) (no diversity) to one hundred (100) (complete diversity).

The key trend for consideration is how non-European populations use parks, recreation and leisure amenities differently with regards to preferences, needs and interests. Research indicates that those differences include (Chavez, 2000; Saisidharan, 2004):

Increased group-oriented activities and events with social-oriented activities/events.

Increased comfort-type camping facilities as a “low risk” introduction to camping activities; and

Faster deterioration to gathering amenities and facilities due overuse as result of insufficient inventories and larger group sizes (Booker & Joppe, 2013).

Income

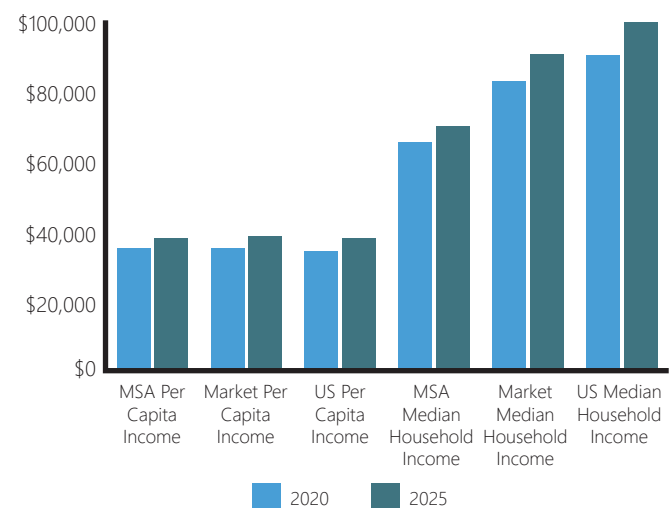
Studies show a statistical relationship between individual participation in programs and attendance based on level of income. The higher the income a person reported, with more disposable income, the more likely they are to participate in park, recreation and leisure activities (NRPA, 2016). The level of income may limit a person’s ability to participate in parks, recreation and leisure activities, and \$40,000 seems to be the threshold of income that influences participation and use (Mowen et al., 2016).

Income is measured by the U.S. Census Bureau using two variables: per capita income and median household income. In Figure 7, the Minot MSA estimated and projected data shows increasing

household income well over the \$40,000 threshold. The market footprint area estimates and projects a similar trend with a higher income levels upward of seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000).

One specific trend to consider as it relates to income is increasing participation levels in outdoor recreation. As the region and the larger market area becomes wealthier, with more disposable income, will the park see higher participation and visitation rates? Additionally, how must the park prepare? Inclusivity for income-restricted populations is also a topic of concern regarding access to the park and recreation opportunities.

Figure 7: Income



Focus: Key Demographic Trends

- Increasing regional growth results in increased recreation needs & evolving trends.
- Aging population requires new approaches to meet recreational needs/interests.
- Group-oriented facilities, activities and events fulfill large gathering needs.
- Comfort accommodations provide “low-risk” introduction to camping & outdoors.
- Both limited inventory & overuse of facilities yields faster deterioration.
- The park’s response to future participation trends associated with increasing income.
- Inclusivity as it relates to income & access to the park and its amenities.

Natural Resources

General Setting

Fort Stevenson State Park sits on the northern shore of Lake Sakakawea, which is part of the Coteau Slope of the Great Plains. The region is an open, stream dissected prairie with scenic views of the lake. This location is generally described as a rolling-to-hilly landscape with erosional and glacial landforms; although, the park itself is relatively flat with minor topographic variation in isolated areas.

Park

The park is a relatively level upland prairie that consists of a few small drainages, isolated pockets of native prairie and some native plant species. The present park site was cultivated for agricultural purposes, prior to the Garrison Dam Project, and only small remnants of native vegetation remains within the park's boundary (NDPRD, 1982). The long-term natural resource management of the park has resulted in enhancing existing and reestablishing native species (NDPRD, 2000b)

Hydrology

Lake Sakakawea is the primary water feature of Fort Stevenson State Park. It is also the source of most concern. One of the most discussed topics during public outreach was the erosion of the park's shoreline. There are major cut banks along the south and west boundaries, as the lake has severely eroded the park's shoreline. Shoreline erosion poses a danger to park visitors, impedes shoreline development and threatens existing assets.

Lake level fluctuations is the other primary concern identified during research and public engagement. From a management perspective, the lake is regulated into four (4) zones: Permanent Pool (elevations 1673-1775 feet), Multiple Use Zone (elevations 1775-1837.5 feet), Flood Control Zone (elevations 1837.5-1850 feet) and Exclusive Use Zone (elevations 1850-1854 feet). The final zone is exclusively used for extreme flooding (Figure 8).

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) manages the lake level to maintain capacity for flood season each year by releasing water until the 1837.5-foot elevation mark is met. This historical

lake average during the park's peak season (May through October) is 1837.5-feet. However, the water elevation can swing as much as twenty (20) feet higher or forty (40) feet lower. This poses concern for both flooding issues and significantly decreased water access. It is also a key topic of note that should be addressed by identifying other amenities and/or programs that can attract visitors to the park – especially in low water years.

Other Hydrologic Features

Both freshwater emergent and riverine wetland communities exist along the lake edge and within the drainages. The quality of these wetlands varies from year-to-year given the inconsistent presence of water. These wetland areas do provide good habitat for furbearers, amphibian, and avian species (FWS, 2020).

Vegetation

Due to the park's cultivated history, very little native vegetation remains within the park boundary. The vegetation consists of typical short-to-mid mixed prairie grass species and introduced grass species. The drainage features contains small woodland stands with mixed shrub understories. A variety of hardy and adaptable tree and woody shrub species were planted in the early days of the park's establishment (NDPRD, 1982). They provide wind protection (shelter belt), aesthetics and shade. The park also features an arboretum of native and non-native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses.

Focus: Key Natural Resource Topics

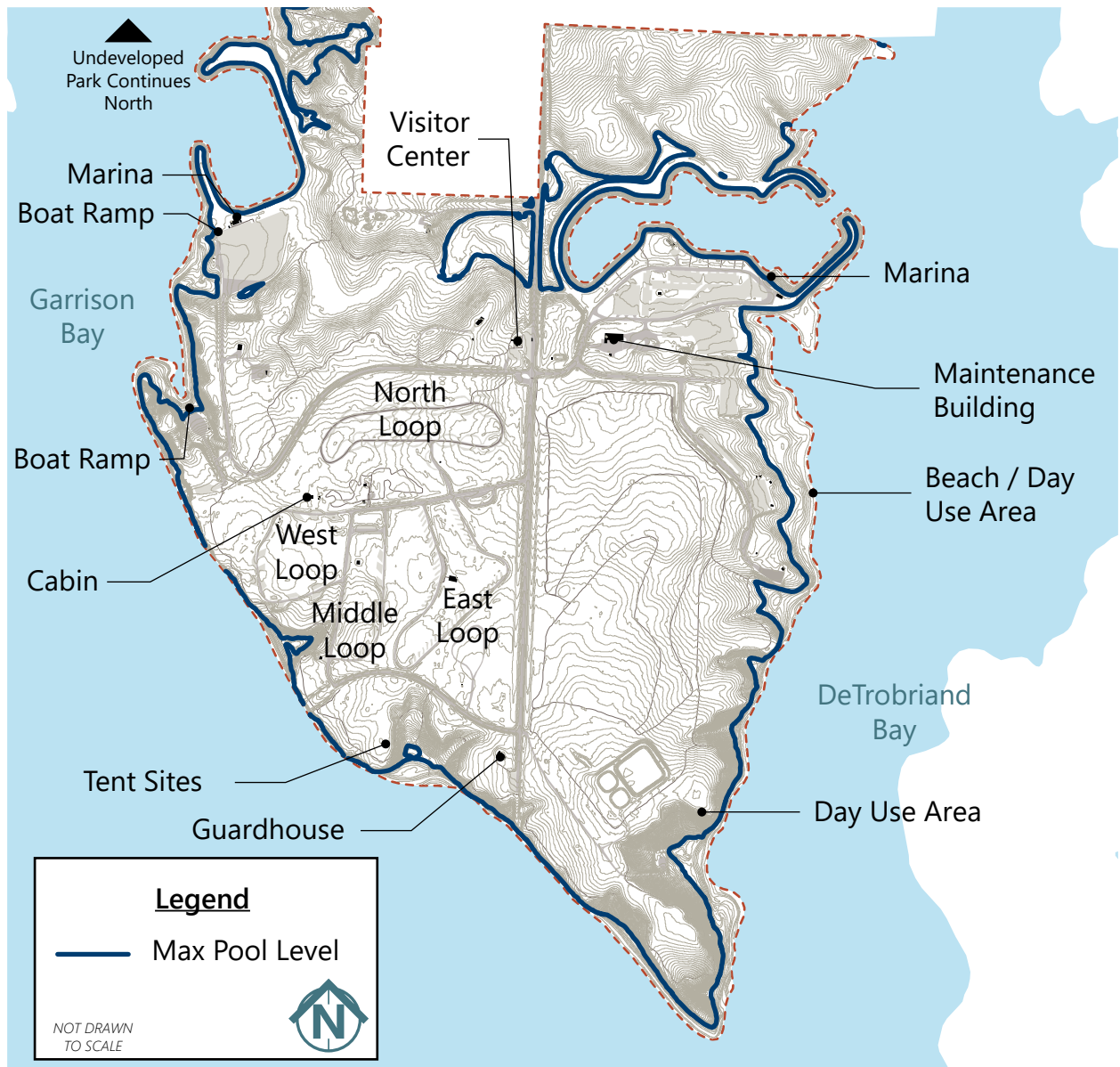
- Ensuring park planning & development efforts are balanced with conservation & preservation interests.
- Continue planning efforts and management for creating, enhancing and monitoring wildlife habitat, as well as vegetation health.
- Assess non-water recreation alternatives as attractions for varying water levels.
- Conduct a biological species survey to increase understanding of the existing conditions at the park and inform future management.

Canada thistle, leafy spurge and wormwood are the primary noxious weeds of concern. There are several non-native invasive species present and under management at the park, including Crested wheatgrass, Smooth brome grass, field bindweed ("Creeping Jenny"), Russian olive, honeysuckle, and several others. Great effort is directed towards improving and restoring native vegetation at the park by the NDPRD Natural Resources Division. This is accomplished through revegetating the park with native species, maintaining and enhancing native species, controlling noxious and invasive species and maintaining a health and diverse plant community (NDPRD, 2000b).

Wildlife

The notable wildlife species found at the park include white-tailed deer, a variety of small furbearers, waterfowl, upland birds and birds of prey. No formal animal survey has been conducted; however, two (2) rare species are known to exist within the park - the black-tailed prairie dog and piping plover. Several species of rare birds are also known to be present within the nearby region. The primary wildlife management goal is to maintain healthy populations of wildlife in the park to provide enjoyment and education (NDPRD, 2000b).

Figure 8: Lake Level Elevations



Assets & Infrastructure

System Overview

Fort Stevenson State Park operates and maintains a large and diverse inventory of assets and infrastructure. The quantity and complexity of assets and infrastructure has grown considerably since the park's initial 1982 master plan. The park now manages a system comprised of:

- 8.22 miles of total roadway, much of which is paved (average of 26 feet wide),
- 9.7 acres of paved surfaces, including parking areas and boat ramps,
- 7 acres of gravel surfaces, excluding RV/campsite pads,
- 4 acres of graveled RV/campsite pads,
- Hundreds of fixed assets (Refer to Table 1),
- 10.2 miles of natural surface and mowed trail (average width of 5-feet),
- 93 total camping options, including cabins, with a new camping loop being constructed in 2021,
- 33 buildings, support facilities and residences, totaling in over 68,500 square feet, and
- Extensive above ground and underground utilities.

Asset & Infrastructure Evaluation

Park staff reviewed and evaluated each major park asset and facility using a modified version of a tool called a Public Space Quality Index (PSQI) (PPS, 2000). This methodology was developed by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces and build stronger communities. Rather than listing the quantities, size and age of the park's assets and facilities, the PSQI evaluation helps the planning team answer basic questions with regards to condition, comfort and image. It also helps identify park-wide successes and opportunities related to asset and infrastructural investments. The PSQI Evaluation Criteria are:

Table 1: Park Asset & Facilities Inventory (March 2021)

Asset	Quantity	Unit
Dump Station	3	Lanes
Volleyball Courts	1	Each
Boat Ramp/Launch	4	Lanes
Docks/Slips	114	Slips
Bike Racks	3	Each
Amphitheater	1	Each
Playgrounds	3	Each
Playground Equipment	7	Each
Fall Protection Surfacing	7,800	Sq. Ft.
Horseshoe Courts	4	Each
Picnic Shelters	2	Each
Campsites	88	Each
Picnic Tables	148	Each
Fire Rings/Grills	118	Each
Water Spigots/Hydrants	81	Each
Beach	±15,000	Sq. Ft.
Signage	275	Each
Waste Receptacles	4	Each
Dumpsters	18	Each
Dogi-Pot Receptacles	5	Each
Fish Cleaning Station	1	Each
Sidewalk (concrete)	±23,000	Sq. Ft.
Benches	3	Each
Basketball Court	1	Each
Dog Park	1	Each
Cabins (all)	5	Each
Comfort Station	2	Each
Vault Toilets	8	Each
Staff Residences	2	Each
Seasonal Staff Housing	1	Each
Maintenance Buildings	1	Each
Storage Buildings	7	Each
Other Support Buildings	7	Each
Visitor Center	1	Each

Design & Construction

- Does the design and construction of this site/facility/amenity meet the needs of the users served?
- Is the site/facility/amenity readily accessible to the users being served?
- Have changing recreation or use trends made the site/facility/amenity ineffective to users?
- Is there clear indication that best practice design or construction standards were used?
- Is the site/facility/amenity inclusive for individuals of all abilities, including vision and/or mobility impaired individuals?

Effectiveness

- Are people using the site/facility/amenity, or is it empty?
- Is the site/facility/amenity used by people of different ages? Can it be?
- Are there other choices in type of site/facility/amenity?
- Does the site/facility/amenity appear to serve user and visitor needs?
- Is the site/facility/amenity being used for its intended purpose?

Condition

- How would you rate the site's/facility's/amenity's maintenance?
- Is it well maintained and in good condition?
- What level of satisfaction is evident from users and visitors?
- What level of pride is evident from park staff?
- Does the site/facility/amenity need improvement(s)?

Comfort & Image

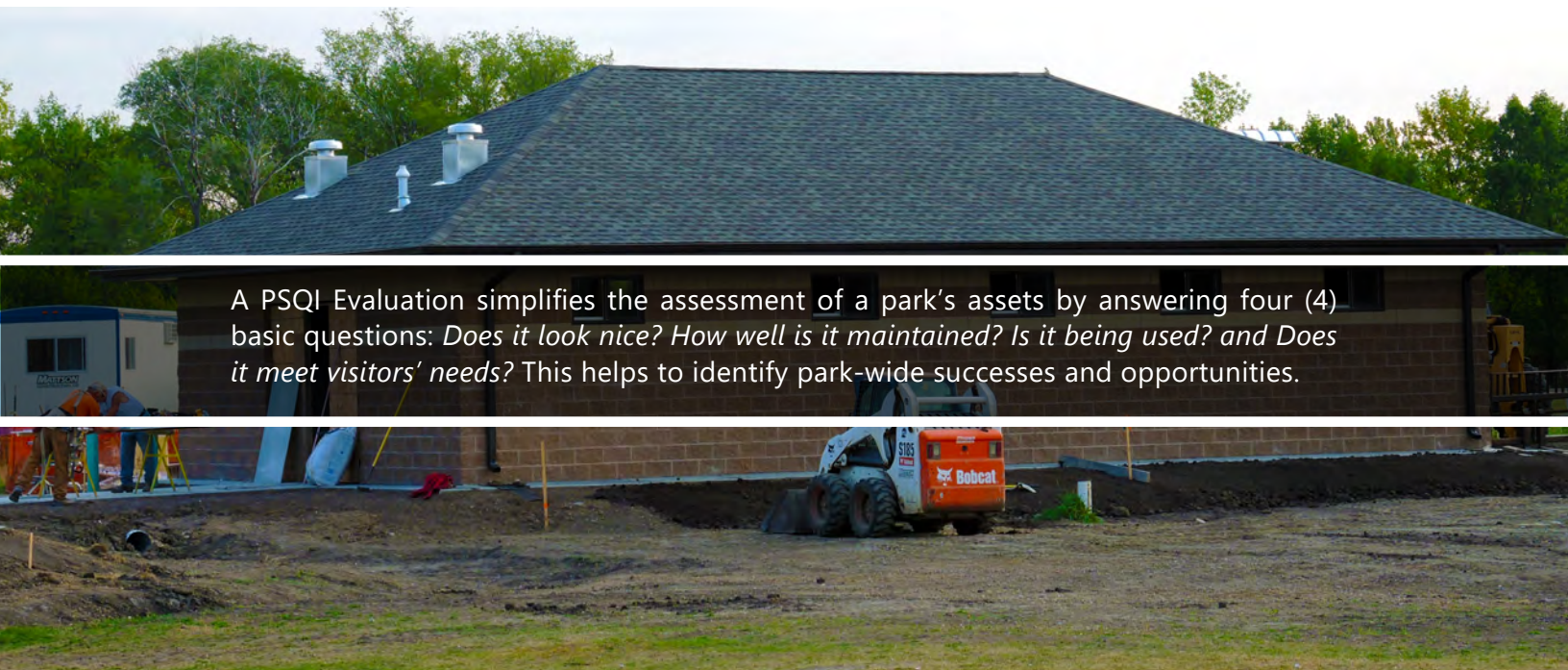
- Does the site/facility/amenity make a good first impression?
- Are there enough resting locations and are they convenient?
- Is the site/amenity/facility clean and free from litter, debris, graffiti, etc.?
- Does the site/facility/amenity feel safe?
- Is the site/facility/amenity comfortable?
- Does it meet the comfort needs of visitors?

Access & Linkages

- Are there clear and open sight lines into and out of the site/facility/amenity?
- Is there clear signage and useful wayfinding/signage within or to the site/facility/amenity?
- Do paths/sidewalks connect people to the site/facility/amenity from roads or parking areas?
- Is the site/facility/amenity easily accessible by walking, or does a visitor need to drive and park?

Social Responsibility

- Is the site/facility/amenity a good location for people to gather?
- Does the site/facility/amenity promote health and/or reduce daily stress?
- Is the site/facility/amenity inclusive for individuals of any ability?
- Do they meet best practice design standard or legal requirements?
- Are walking pathways/sidewalks constructed with stable materials? Is a transfer system or ramp present?



A PSQI Evaluation simplifies the assessment of a park's assets by answering four (4) basic questions: *Does it look nice? How well is it maintained? Is it being used? and Does it meet visitors' needs?* This helps to identify park-wide successes and opportunities.

The park's amenities and facilities were assigned a score for each question based on how well it met the criteria at the time of evaluation. Once scores were assigned, a matrix was developed to show individual asset ratings, category ratings and trends across the park's inventory (Figures 9 & 10). The criteria, listed in the previous section, guided the assessment of the item being reviewed. It is important to note that the criteria are not all encompassing for every amenity, facility or situation, and no score was given in such cases. Reviewing the individual and inventory-wide ratings allows the planning team to identify and assess successes, trends and improvement opportunities. The Advisory Committee reviewed the PSQI results and noted functional differences in the way certain amenities and facilities are used. Those items directly available to the public should generally "exceed visitor expectations," while those that are primarily used by staff and for maintenance functions should only "meet expectations."

Figure 9: Park Asset & Facilities PSQI Evaluation (March 2021)

Asset/Facility	Score	Asset/Facility	Score
East Loop Comfort Station	85	Walk-In Campsites (in general)	70
West Loop Playground	82	Dump Station	69
North Loop Campsites (in general)	81	DeTrobriand Docks	66
Amphitheater Building & Area	76	Duplex Cabin	65
Guardhouse	76	South Picnic Vault Toilet	65
Far West Cabin	76	Boat & RV Storage (in general)	65
Yellowstone Cabin	76	West Loop Vault Toilet	64
Rosebud Cabin	76	Maintenance Shop	64
Garrison Bay Boat Ramp	75	Western Fishing Pier	62
DeTrobriand Bay Boat Ramp	75	Manager's Residence	62
Fish Cleaning Station	75	Ranger's Residence	62
West Loop Campsites (in general)	75	Volleyball Court	62
East Loop Playground	74	Garrison Bay Vault Toilet	62
Garrison Bay Marina/Concessions	74	Dog Park	61
East Loop Campsite (in general)	74	South Loop Vault Toilet	59
Garrison Bay Docks	73	Beach Vault Toilets (both)	55
Day Use Playground	73	DeTrobriand Lodge	55
North Picnic Shelter	72	Basketball Court	53
Swim Beach	71	High Water Boat Ramp	53
West Comfort Station	71	Seasonal FEMA Trailer	52
South Picnic Shelter	71	Changing Rooms	50
Entry Booth	71	Arboretum Building (Old Office)	46
Park Office / Visitor Center	70	DeTrobriand Marina (Old Concession)	42

Successes

Many of the assets and facilities at Fort Stevenson State Park “meet expectations.” The major successes from this evaluation are that the facilities support a wide age range of visitors, are highly effective and being used for their intended purpose and maintain a high level of cleanliness and safety. This is supported by having above average maintenance practices, even with limited staffing at times.

Trends & Opportunities

The aggregate rating for each criteria category indicated that the park “meets expectations.” Lower scores were found within the social responsibility, design and construction and access and linkages categories. This appears to be a result of some facilities no longer meeting the needs of park visitors due to rapidly changing demographic, socioeconomic and industry trends. There is great opportunity and potential to improve and update the amenities and facilities to better meet the evolving needs of a diverse community.

Social responsibility with regards to access, linkages and overall park inclusivity was identified early in the planning process and confirmed at various times during public engagement. The scores for most of the individual assets and facilities (Figure 9) indicates opportunity for growth in overall inclusivity. This not only encompasses accessibility for mobility and/or vision impaired individuals, but also refers to universally inclusive, barrier-free access for all individuals regardless of age, ability, skill, comfort level and recreation needs.

There are several opportunities to improve the park’s overall inclusivity and social responsibility. The park should strive for and prioritize opportunities to make existing and new park facilities and amenities more universally inclusive, user friendly and accessible to populations with special needs, parents with young children and others who may benefit from similar improvements.

Infrastructural improvements can be made to further address park inclusivity; although, implementation comes at varying costs. Such solutions range from relatively inexpensive, such as designating barrier-free campsites with tent platforms, to more robust options like widening and resurfacing the trail system.

Priority should be placed on those partnerships, programs and improvements that directly increase public health, safety and welfare and yield the greatest visitor benefits.

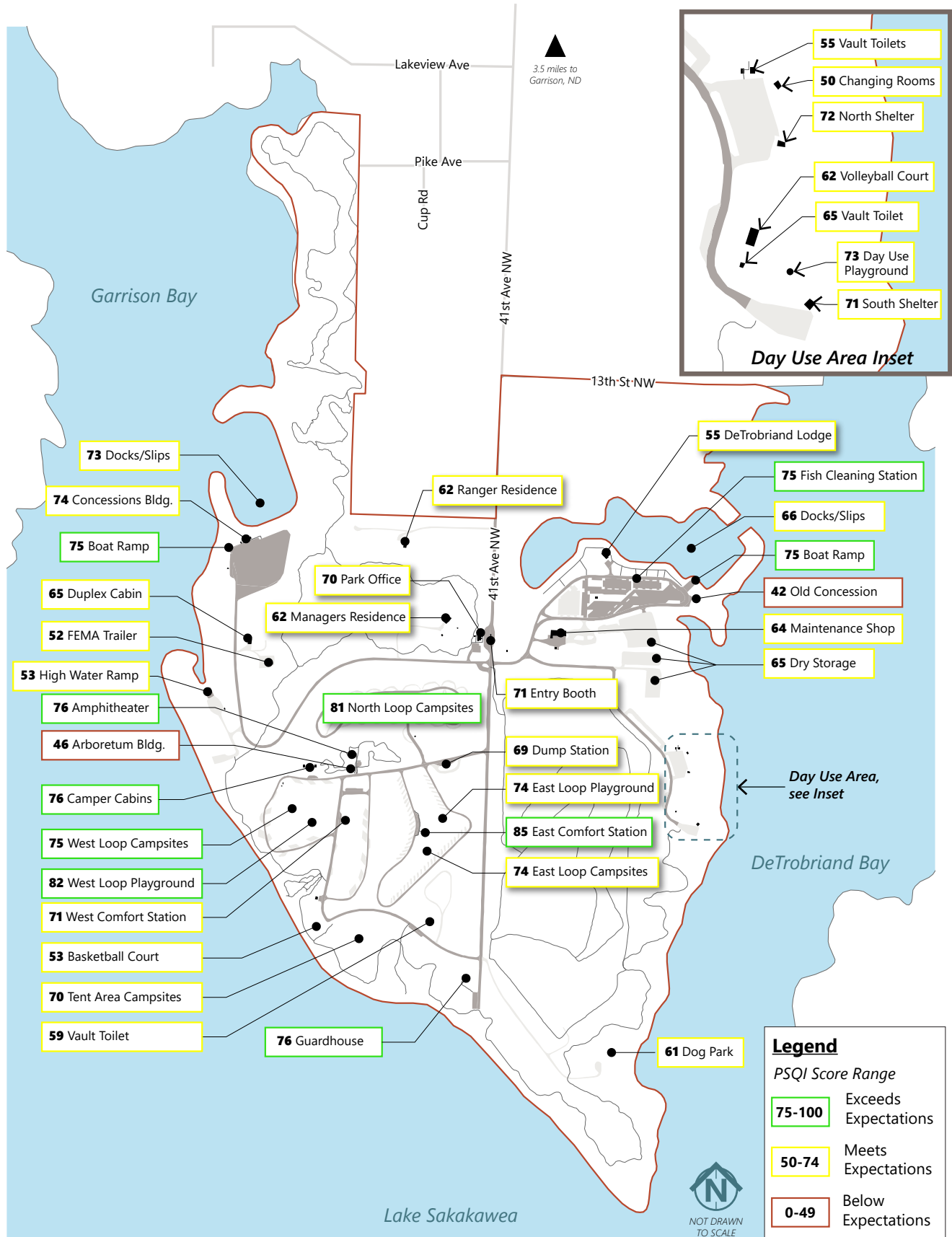
Focus: Key Asset & Infrastructure Trends & Opportunities

- Design recreation amenities and facilities for universal access and multi-generational uses to encourage participation, inclusive use by visitors of all abilities and ages and support rapid changes of use and need.
- Prioritize funding for opportunities that directly increase public health, safety and welfare.
- Reinvest in existing amenities and facilities to extend their useful lifespan, improve operating efficiencies and enhance the quality of service.
- Redevelop roadway and campsite geometry to industry best practices to address existing capacity deficiencies and increasing vehicle sizes.
- Prioritize funding for improved park signage and wayfinding.
- Design facilities to reduce maintenance and operational costs.
- Develop sustainable infrastructure, including green roofs, solar panels and living shorelines.

Figure 10: Park Asset & Facilities PSQI Criteria Scores

Effectiveness <i>Is the amenity being used? Is it being used for its intended purpose? Does it appear to meet visitors' needs?</i>	80
Condition <i>Is the amenity or facility well-maintained and in good condition? Does it need much improvement?</i>	72
Comfort & Image <i>Does the amenity or facility make a good first impression? Is it clean and safe?</i>	71
Design & Construction <i>Is the design and construction of the amenity or facility meeting the needs of the users served?</i>	65
Access & Linkages <i>Are the amenities and facilities connected by pathways? Is wayfinding present to direct visitors? Are there clear and open sight lines?</i>	63
Social Responsibility <i>Do the amenities or facilities promote general public health, safety and welfare? Are they inclusive to individuals of all abilities and ages?</i>	54

Figure 11: Evaluation Score Map



Business Management

This section provides an overview of the programmatic, business and administrative functions that occur at Fort Stevenson State Park. Business and administration includes expenses and revenues, service offerings and programs. These topics must be considered during the master planning process to fully understand the park's current operations and resources. By reviewing business and administration topics, the park can better predict the needed effort and resources required to achieve the preferred vision.

General Information

The North Dakota State Parks & Recreation Department (NDPRD) has three (3) primary sources of funds for parks, operations and programs. General Funds are used to fund permanent staff wages and benefits. "Special Park Funds" are derived from revenues from annual passes, campground revenue, mineral royalties and grants funds. This revenue source funds the day-to-day park administration and operations. The Concessions Fund is a revolving account that funds concessions-specific operations. The funds received are from concessions sales, and the funds expended are exclusively used to purchase concession goods and improve concession facilities (ND Century Code 55-08-07.1).

Fort Stevenson State Park operated on a nearly \$1.4 Million budget for the 2019-2021 biennium. Park revenues for 2019-2020, excluding concessions due to their restrictive use, were approximately \$600,000, while expenses were approximately \$700,000. This means that the park operates at an approximate \$100,000 deficit. Operating in deficit is typical for most years; although, the exact amount of deficit varies year-to-year. Within the park system, parks currently have full autonomy to select and determine pricing for merchandise and concessions goods. Pricing for permits, passes, rentals, dry storage and marina slops are set at the Departmental level.

Figure 12: Revenue Sources (2019-2020)

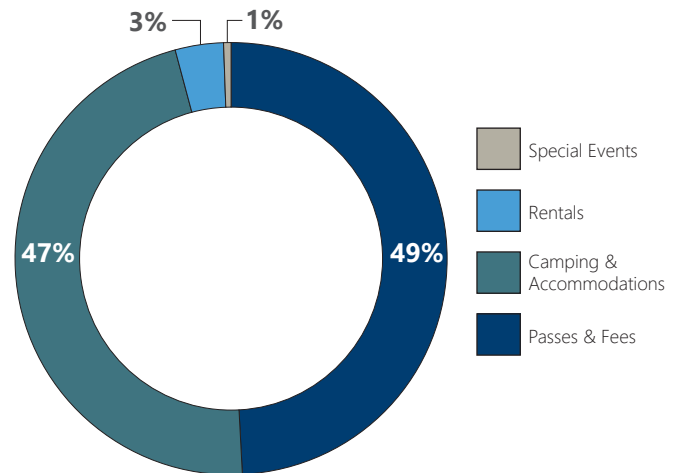


Figure 13: Budget Items (2019-2020)

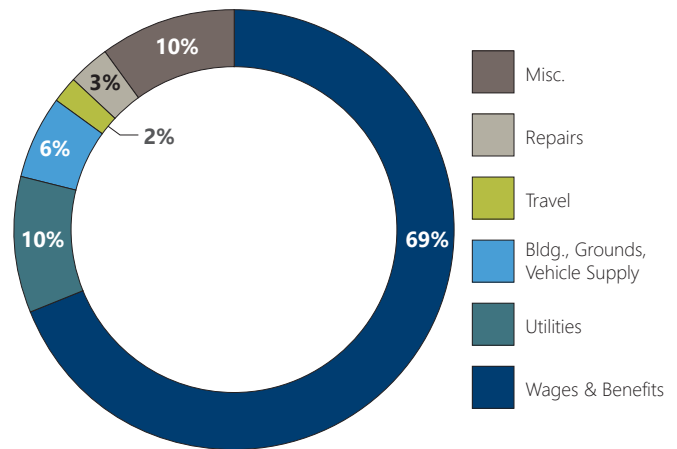


Figure 14: Average Staffing Levels (2021)

Staffing Levels	# of Staff
Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	4
Seasonal Staff	19-20 (average)

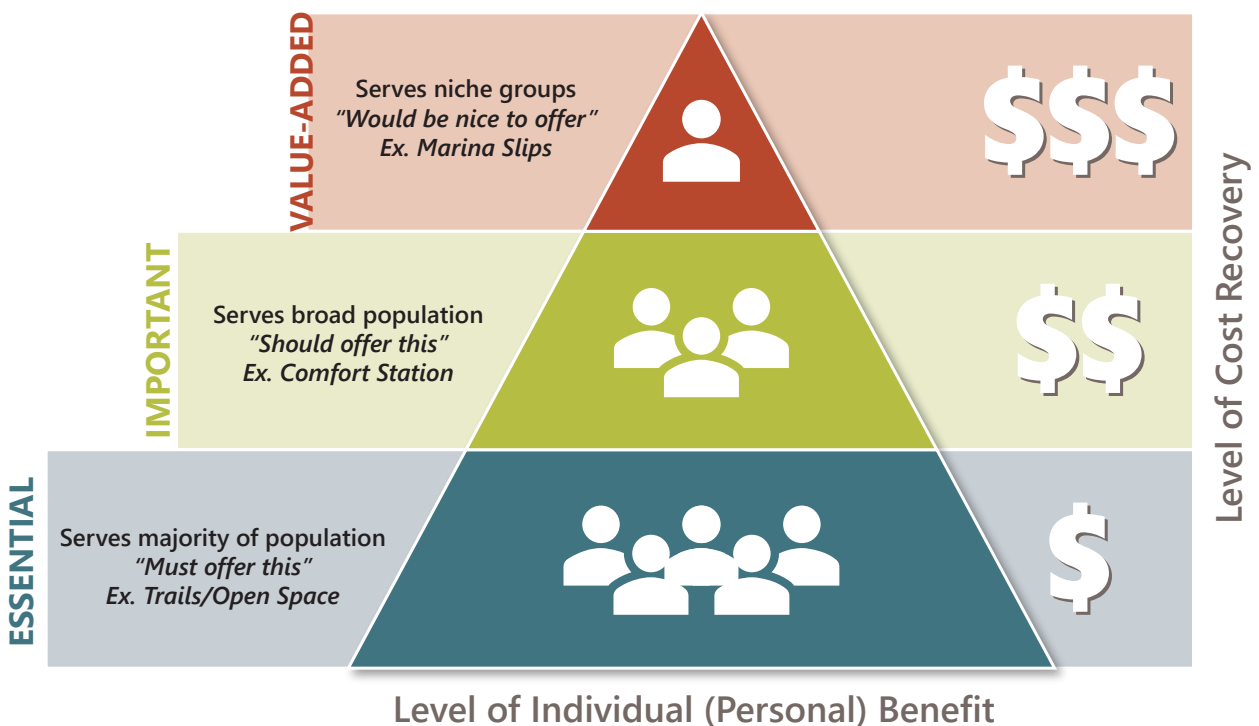
Services Lines & the Benefits Model (Continuum)

The Advisory Committee reviewed and discussed this topic through the lens of a business model, called the Benefits Model (or Benefits Continuum) that recognizes the need for both business sustainability and social benefits. Both approaches to business management are necessary to make decisions within the dynamic economic times. Doing so helps the park maintain the balanced outcomes desired in the park's overall performance. This model is used to identify service lines that can recover costs to sustain other services offered (Crompton, 2016).

The Benefits Model has three (3) tiers: Core Mission, Important and Value-Added Services (Figure 15). Core Mission services are those items and services that an agency must provide to meet its mission, statutory and/or regulatory obligations ("the things that must be offered"). Their purpose is to serve the largest and broadest population. These are largely, if not fully, supported by public funding and have little-to-no cost recovery value. Important Services are the services that an agency should provide, are important to have to effectively serve visitors and are broadly supported by all visitors. The services within this category still serve a broad segment of the population but are supported by a balance of public funding and earned revenue (Crompton, 2016).

Value-Added Services are the items that an agency may provide when they are fiscally sustainable through visitor support. Services and amenities are referred to as value-added in this level because they provide value to customers beyond what is required and expected. The services have become so individualized that they should be heavily, or fully, supported by earned revenue.

Figure 15: Benefits Model



The Advisory Committee participated in an activity to identify, analyze and sort the services and programs at Fort Stevenson State Park (Figure 16). Discussion of services and programs from the Benefits Model perspective, as part of the master plan process, helps the Department better position the agency to manage service delivery effectively and efficiently with a focus on resource responsibility.

Key Topics & Actions

A significant amount of staff time and operations and maintenance resources are required to offer high-quality services and recreational offerings. Being able to sort services and recreation offerings within the Benefits Model helps the park and the Department critically evaluate its mix of recreational offerings and services and where to focus its resources. This approach helps to provide target cost recovery amounts to guide fees. "If there is a gap between the desired and existing cost recovery ratios, then a strategy for reducing costs and/or raising prices can be developed" (Crompton, 2016). Alternative funding mechanisms or delivery methods, such as public-private partnerships (or public-public partnerships) are examples of strategies that may reduce costs to the park.

Focus: Key Business Management Actions

- Identify private-public (or public-public) opportunities as an alternate service delivery method.
- Assess cost recovery opportunities for "important" and "value-added" services through a review of existing fees and sponsorships, with a focus on how pricing affects visitation and/or use.
- Pursue alternative funding mechanisms to address operations and maintenance, such as endowments or grants.
- Identify the appropriate level of staffing and resources required for new and expanded facilities, amenities, recreation offerings and services.

Figure 16: VAC Activity - Lines of Service (2021)

Core Mission Services	Important Services	Value-Added Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Access • Paved Roads • Trails • Tourism & Hospitality • Historic Facilities • K-12 Education • Historic Programming • Organized Hikes • Scout & Youth Programs • Green Space / Views • Beach • Trash / Waste • Cleanliness • Volunteer Opportunities • Campfire Programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RV Camping • Law Enforcement/Boat Rescue • Maple Sugaring • SkyFest • Frontier Military Days • Boat Parade • Organized Hikes • Jr. Governor's Cup • Comfort Stations • Picnic Shelters • Fish Cleaning Stations • Geocaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach Party • Ski Show • Full-Service Campsites • Concessions • Dry Storage • Boat Slips • Rentals • Governor's Cup • EMS Kidstrong • On-Water Fuel

Visitor Services, Programs & Activities

Lifecycle & Evaluation

All organizations and their offerings change over time due to necessity and adaptation to a dynamic environment. This is fundamental to long-term sustainability. The value of the service lifecycle concept (Figure 17) is in the ability for the park and Department to plan the probable path of change. It is the awareness of this progression that facilitates the ability to predict what change might occur and to deliberately plan actions that either modify the course or enable optimal adaptation. Each lifecycle stage requires different methods, strategies and levels of management to sustain optimal performance and productivity.

Analyzing services, programs and activities within this concept allows staff to identify appropriate management responses to optimize overall sustainability, delivery and effectiveness of services (Crompton & Hensarling, 1978).

While it is important to continuously provide new and fresh services, programs and activities to align with customer needs and trends, it is equally as important to maintain a stable core of items in the “mature stage,” without dominating the overall recreation portfolio. Those services identified in “mature stage” should be tracked for signs of saturation or decline. This is an ongoing process of evaluation that ensures services, programs and activities continue to meet the community’s and customer’s needs.

When items never reach the last two stages, it is often an indication of “over-tweaking” by staff and results in items never reaching their maximum participation, efficiency or effectiveness. Continuous alteration to services is especially concerning when limited staff and/or resources being are directed towards underperforming services, programs and activities being sustained for too long or those that may no longer be aligned with visitor needs. The greater effect is that it takes away attention and resources from those services that have higher importance, value and return for park visitors.

Figure 17: Lifecycle Stages for Services, Programs & Events (Adapted from Crompton & Hensarling, 1978)

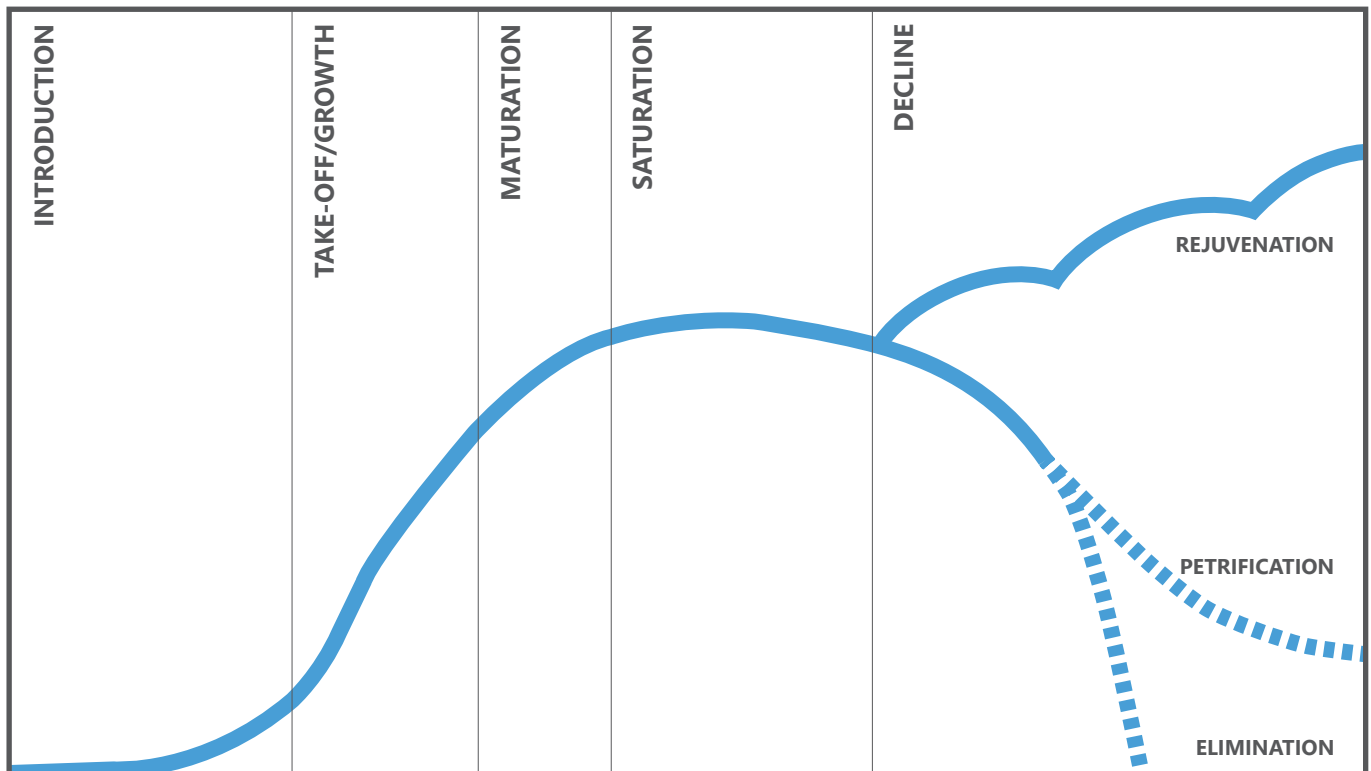


Figure 18: Lifecycle Analysis Matrix

Service, Program or Activity	Lifecycle Stages					Action/Response				
	Introduction	Take-Off/Growth	Maturation	Saturation	Decline	Add New/ Rejuvenate	Increase/Improve	Maintain	Reduce	Eliminate/ Off-load
Category Totals	4	3	7	7	1	1	12	8	1	0
History & Cultural Activities / Programs				●			★			
Signature ("Major") Special Events			●				★			
Geocaching Activities			●				★			
Summer Rentals		●						★		
Kids Games				●				★		
Guided/Led Hikes		●						★		
Interpretive Special Guest/Speakers			●				★			
Dakota Explorers					●			★		
Nature & Science Activities/Programs			●			★				
Outdoor Recreation Activities				●			★			
Guardhouse Activities				●				★		
Volunteering Events			●				★			
Winter Rentals	●							★		
Large Group Tours				●				★		
Non-Interpretive Special Guests/Speakers		●					★			
Activities/Programs for the Family			●				★			
Health & Fitness Activities/Challenges	●						★			
Adult Activities & Programs	●						★			
Youth Activities & Programs			●				★			
Workshops/Skills Classes	●						★			
Small Group Tours				●				★		
General Arts & Crafts				●					★	

The ability to offer high-quality services, programs and activities requires creating a sense of focus around those of greatest importance and value to current and future park visitors. One method used to help staff measure how well services, programs and activities meet staff and Departmental goals and objectives is a Recreation Activities Matrix (see Appendix E). The matrix is a tool to help staff review and measure how well services are meeting specific criteria and goals and helps inform service lifecycle and trends. It helps inform strategic decisions about the overall mix of services, programs and activities managed at the park to ensure the appropriate levels of attention and resource allocation.

For the purposes of the master plan, evaluation of services, programs and activities occurred at a high-level, broad perspective, rather than evaluating individual services, programs and activities. This informs program planning within the considerations of the larger groupings. The evaluation criteria, adapted from the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Program and Service Determinants (NRPA/CAPRA, 2019), includes:

- Average (or estimated) participation,
- Presence of supporting facilities (e.g. stage),
- Consistency with Department goals, vision and brand,
- Partnering capability,
- Level of demographic appeal,
- Presence of full-time staff,
- Program accreditation or certifications, and
- Market control, or how unique the item is within the area or region.

Additional categories to add to the matrix in the future should include levels of cost recovery and tertiary revenue generation to tie business and management objectives to the services, programs and activities.

Key Topics & Actions

Using the Recreation Activities Matrix as the starting point, the Advisory Committee assessed each high-level service, program and activity. The committee identified the item's lifecycle stage and an appropriate managerial action/response (Figure 18). The results indicate that Fort Stevenson State Park is consistent with industry best practices for

items in the "Mature Stage;" however, the park's recreation portfolio is heavy in the "Saturation" and "Decline" stages (Figure 19). This signifies a need to critically evaluate several service areas for signs of saturation and decline, while working to introduce new service areas that can better meet visitor needs and expectations.

Combining the results of the Recreation Activities Matrix and Lifecycle Analysis with public survey data, discussed next, provides staff with a great deal of insight about which things are most important and valuable to the public, and, ultimately, where to focus attention, determine the resource needs and identify the magnitude required.

Figure 19: Park Lifecycle Portfolio (2021)

Stage	Current Park Qty.	% of Total	Industry Best Practice Range
Introduction	7	32%	50 - 60%
Take-Off/ Growth			
Maturation	7	32%	40%
Saturation	8	36%	0 - 10%
Decline			

Focus: Visitor Services Action

- Focus on expansion of "Introduction" services, programs and activities (with supporting infrastructure)
- Implement consistent service, program & activity evaluations & assessments
- Monitor market segment opportunities and customer needs and values
- Partner with outside organizations that can provide programming and may reduce park funding requirements.
- Incorporate innovative and emerging technology to enhance recreational experiences.

Importance-Performance Analysis (from 2021 Public Survey)

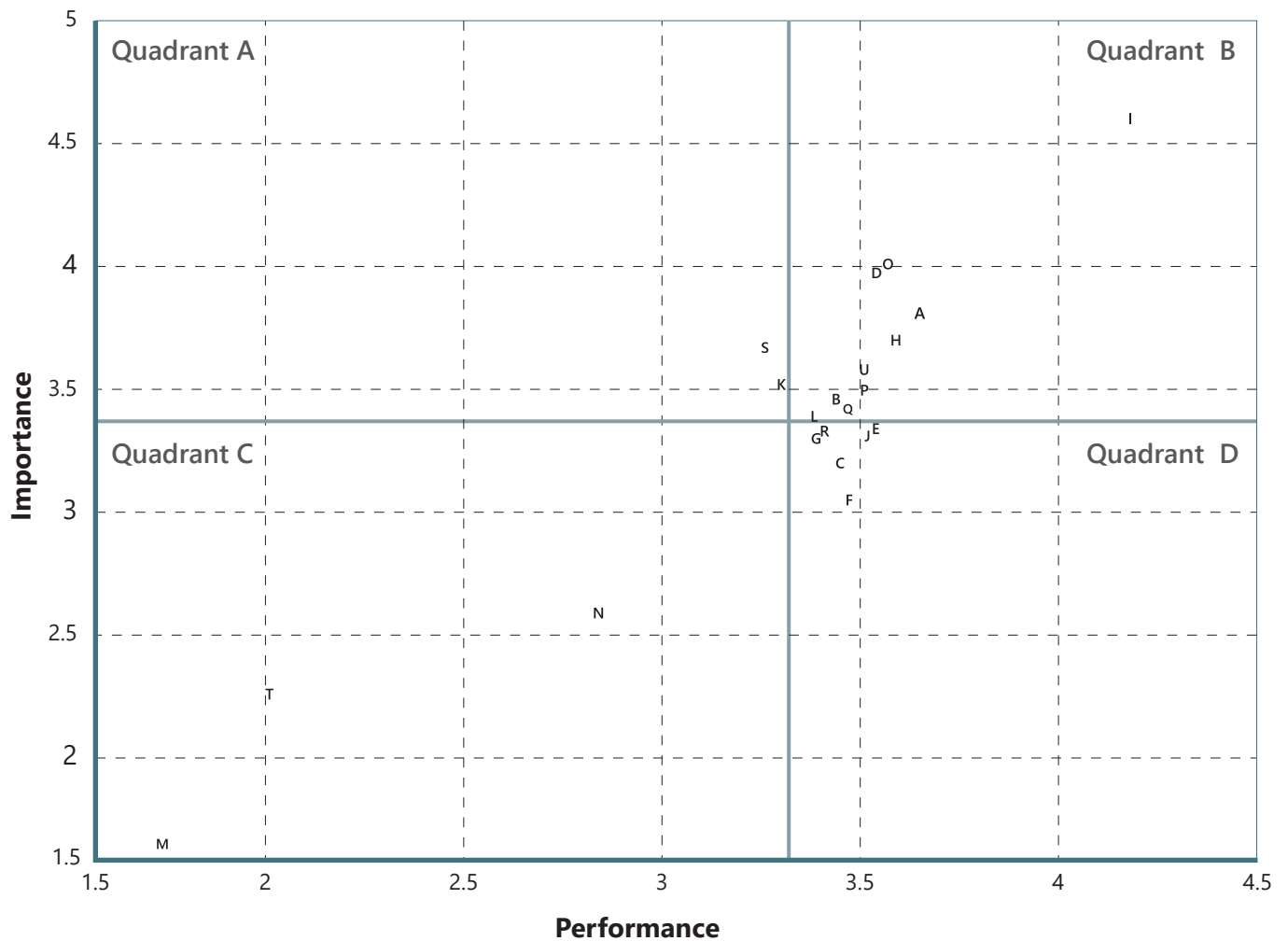
The high-level service, program and activity categories were included in the public survey to further identify the needs and values of visitors. The results of the responses are graphically represented by combining the two attributes – importance and satisfaction (performance). The results fall into one of four categories:

- Quadrant A is “Concentrate Here,” containing items rated with high importance but low satisfaction.
- Quadrant B is “Keep up the Good work,” which are items rated with both high importance and satisfaction.
- Quadrant C is “Low Priority,” containing low levels of importance and satisfaction, and
- Quadrant D, “Possible Overkill,” contains items of low importance but high satisfaction.

Quadrants A and B generally receive the most attention in terms of a management response. The items in Quadrant A are where the biggest gains can be achieved, and staff and management should target items falling within this quadrant as areas for improvement. In contrast, the items falling inside Quadrant B are things that most likely draw visitors and should be maintained at current levels. Items in Quadrants C and D should be monitored and critically evaluated to better determine their alignment with public needs and values.

The public results (Figure 20) indicates that many of the services, programs and activities are important to the overall experience at Fort Stevenson State Park, and the majority have high levels of customer importance and satisfaction. The park should continue doing what they are doing with respect to these items. There are two (2) items, volunteering events/opportunities and workshops/skills classes, that park staff can specifically target to see high benefits. These items are important to customers but fell slightly below other items in terms of satisfaction. Nine (9) programs, services and activities fell in Quadrants C and D. These items should be monitored for signs of declining participation, evaluated to determine if there are new public needs or values and critically assessed for the level of resource input.

Figure 20: Importance-Performance Analysis (2021)



Attribute Code	Attribute Description	Attribute Code	Attribute Description
A	History & Cultural Activities / Programs	L	Winter Rentals
B	Signature ("Major") Special Events	M	Large Group Tours (20+)
C	Geocaching Activities	N	Non-Interpretive Special Guests & Speakers
D	Summer Rentals	O	Activities / Programs for the Whole Family
E	Kids Games	P	Health & Fitness Activities or Challenges
F	Guided / Led Hikes	Q	Adult Activities & Programs
G	Interpretive Special Guests & Speakers	R	Youth Activities & Programs
H	Nature & Science Activities / Programs	S	Workshops / Skills Classes
I	General Outdoor Recreation	T	Small Group Tours (<20)
J	Guardhouse Activities	U	General Community Outreach
K	Volunteering Events		


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CHAPTER TWO: Needs & Priorities Assessment



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Comprehending and identifying demographic and socioeconomic trends helps provide insight into North Dakota State Park & Recreation's ability to meet public needs and project future demands.



Aspirations for the Future: Imagining the Ideal

Volunteer Advisory Committee

A volunteer advisory committee (VAC) was convened for the purpose of providing strategic guidance and direction for the master planning process through the volunteers' specific areas of expertise and understanding. The committee membership was comprised of park staff and volunteers from the nearby City of Garrison, North Dakota. The primary areas of expertise represented on the advisory committee were planning, operations and maintenance, partnerships, special events, telecommunications, tourism and business.

Through facilitated planning meetings, the committee convened to help develop the park vision, identify park and recreation issues and trends and formulate goals and recommendations that consider existing conditions, citizen input, industry best practices and standards, resource availability and needs. The committee participated in six (6) meetings during the planning process. Each meeting was focused on specific topics that included an introduction to the topic and group activities, or discussions, that helped drive the outcomes that created this plan.

- **Meeting #1:** Introduction to Master Planning, Project Logistics, SOAR Activity and Park Visioning.
- **Meeting #2:** Market Profile, Demographics, Visitation, Relevant Document Review, Existing Infrastructure and Assets, Infrastructure Condition and Quality Evaluation, and Park Needs Development.
- **Meeting #3:** Business Management, Business Models, Core Lines of Service, Policy & Partnerships and Total Cost of Ownership.
- **Meeting #4:** Visitor Services, Marketing, Services Evaluation, Service Lifecycle, and Operations & Maintenance.
- **Meeting #5:** Park Carrying Capacity, Peer Park Review, Public Input Results, and Goal Development.
- **Meeting #6:** Goal Refinement, Prioritization, Interference Diagramming, and Master Plan Roll-Out.

Appreciative Planning & SOAR

This planning process was facilitated using a proactive, strengths-based approach called “appreciative planning” (or “appreciative inquiry”). It is a planning approach that is less of a change in planning methods and processes but is a fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire planning process. Rather than focusing on things that foster pessimism, overreaction and negative inclinations, such as what is not working, what is wrong and what is missing, this strategy searches for the best in people, organizations and a strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world (Stavros et al., 2015, p.97).

The approach is about reframing the mindset and focusing on **“what can be” rather than “what is missing.”** Author Robin Sharma simply puts it as, “What you focus on grows, what you think about expands and what you dwell upon determines your destiny.” The focus for this process is on prioritizing solutions over problems and seeking common ground in decision making. This is why appreciative planning suits the master planning process particularly well, because good plans require a strong vision, partnerships, collaboration and a recognition of the current reality to move forward.

It is much easier to come up with what is not going well and become weighed down by a large list of deficiencies. The appreciative planning tool that reframes this mindset, and helps begin forming the long-term park vision, is a facilitated activity called “SOAR” (or Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results). The SOAR Analysis is like the more familiar SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, but it switches focus and attention to what is presently working well. These become the springboard for future success. The Advisory Committee produced several items for each SOAR category (Figure 21). Several of these items were echoed often throughout the feedback received during public outreach.

The Advisory Committee was challenged to switch their way of thinking. That is, switch it to drawing. Drawing compels individuals to change how they perceive what they see or think in a new way –

different than by discussing or writing about it. The VAC members were asked to reflect on the results of the SOAR Analysis and a preferred vision of the park. They then drew what that preferred vision that looked like (see below).

The Advisory Committee collectively came up with a unified preferred future vision for Fort Stevenson State Park, which is “through public-private partnership, Fort Stevenson State Park reflects on the foundation of its past as a springboard to a dynamic future.” This vision statement is used to guide decisions and recommendations within the master plan.

Focus Group Sessions

A focus group methodology is qualitative and exploratory in nature and is not intended to provide data generalizable to a larger population. They are designed to elicit reactions from participants about a particular topic and to generate ideas and

Image: VAC Vision Drawing



Image: VAC Vision Drawing



Figure 21: Advisory Committee SOAR Analysis Results (2021)

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (2) Marinas • Innovative & Unique Recreation Options • Staff and the Service & Hospitality • Year-round activities & rentals • Community Partnerships & Involvement • Trails • Natural resources • Special Events & Traditions • Size of park • Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award-winning staff • Expanded/Enhanced concessions • RV campsite expansion • Out-of-State visitation • Convenience services (e.g. automation) • Social media • Event Center • Shoreline protection • Day-Use improvement • Proximity to larger cities
Aspirations	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative partnerships • Expanded lodging/comfort options • Increased staffing • Shoreline protection • Improved day use area • Quality events and programs • Maximized marinas • Year-round destination • Clean & safe • Continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition for efforts • Strong public/private partnerships • Increased visitation (increased off-peak occupancy) • Stable funding sources secured • Customer feedback and satisfaction • Buy-In and support • Cost recovery on investments • Staff satisfaction • Inspirational park

concepts to increase understanding. Focus groups are groups of deliberately selected individuals representing a diverse constituency to explore their perceptions of the park and needs of users from their personal point of view. It should be noted that the results from focus groups should never be considered representative of any larger population or target segment. The non-random method of selection and group size do not allow for this generalization. This information is used to supplement, enrich, amplify, flesh out or more fully understand the more quantitative findings. The results are presented in terms of the “key themes” that emerged from questions asked regarding the current state of the park, desired state of the park and ideas for moving forward.

Four (4) focus groups were virtually conducted in April 2021. The Department selected a diverse group of individuals representing various park user groups, partnering agencies and organizations and local youth. Participants in the focus group were asked the same set of questions to identify the topics of convergence and consensus. The youth focus group questions, however, were slightly modified to be more tailored for their perception. The key themes are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Park Proximity

Participants most often cited proximity to the park as a primary reason for visiting. It provides opportunities for quick water access, as well as a venue for various community meetings and social events. The park’s proximity to the nearby city of Garrison also provides a degree of convenience for park visitors who may need to “run into town” because they had forgotten an item.

Day Use Visitation

The campgrounds, marina and water-recreation facilities were generally the topic of interest for many of the participants; however, several participants, particularly the youth, expressed their need for an improved, high-quality day use area. Fort Stevenson State Park's day use area appears to fulfill the local region's need for a "community park," which is a park classification recognized by the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA). This park classification provides both active and passive recreation opportunities for large sections of the community, while serving to enhance the community identity, preserve open space and elevate the quality of life of nearby residents. (Mertes & Hall, 1996).

Many of the suggestions about the day use area included amenities and facilities that would not only increase the park's attraction for the community, but also provide visitors with high-quality recreation experiences. Suggestions included, among other things, a trail between the park and Garrison, an inflatable waterpark, an adventure course, a mud pit, "GaGa Pits," mini golf course, more sand volleyball courts, sports courts, spikeball courts, "KanJam" area and a variety of floating aquatic recreation amenities.

Convenience

Participants expressed how convenience enhances their overall experience at Fort Stevenson State Park; although, the concept of convenience varied between individuals. Many noted how the park's central location in the state made it more convenient as a destination. Others described convenience as easy access to a variety of prepared meals, services and amenities at Fort Stevenson State Park. Convenience even encompassed the presence of certain amenities or facilities, such as paved roads, permanent ("seasonal") campsites and equipment storage areas.

Water Access

Facilities and amenities that provide water access were the most frequently cited items used when individuals visited Fort Stevenson State Park. Access meant having boat ramps, reservable and courtesy marina slips, fishing piers and a quality swimming beach. It is common for participants to provide insight on the amenities they use, but one must also consider the ancillary facilities that support water access.

Social Connectedness

Participants seek opportunities to socialize with their family and friends while visiting Fort Stevenson State Park. They also expressed an interest in meeting new people. Providing and enhancing the park's amenities, services and infrastructure are suggestions that would help the park fulfill this desire. A variety of flexible, multi-functional indoor and outdoor facilities that could hold larger group gatherings were specific ideas mentioned.



Focus groups are designed to elicit reactions from participants about a particular topic, generate ideas and concepts to increase understanding and explore their perceptions of the park and needs of users from their personal point of view.

Experiences

The need to focus on providing a park experience, grounded in diverse service offerings, activities and entertainment options, was emphasized. Park visitors already enjoy a diverse variety of recreation opportunities at the park, but many participants understand the requirement for improving and expanding to maintain (or increase) visitation, stay relevant and meet the needs of an everchanging population.

Carrying Capacity

Participants recognize the need for continuous improvement and expansion; however, they were also cognizant and cautious about how much would be too much. Their concerns regarded the Department's ability to financially sustain any new or improved assets; the possibility of overcrowding that might come with expansion; and the property's physical ability to contain all the "needs" and "wants."

Advice focused on maintaining and improving what exists prior to adding new things. One specific example is addressing shoreline stabilization to reduce the loss of land and, ultimately, assets. Participants were mindful of the park's spatial limitations and recommended that the Department begin scoping opportunities for land acquisition(s) that may provide space for expansion and alleviate pressures on the park.

Inclusivity

People recognize the need for the park and its facilities to be accommodating for people of all abilities and needs. Inclusive, universal design not only addresses requirements for people with physical impairments, but also serves a wide range of multi-generational needs. Inclusivity is viewed as much more than accommodating physical limitations. Participants recognize it also including the provision of equal experiences and access for everyone – those of varying income levels, cultural traditions and level of skill.

Public Survey

Identifying public and customer need is among the primary purposes of master planning, and it is the bridge between the dream, discovery and design phases of the planning process. This part of master planning helps the Department to answer: What are we aiming for, where are we now and what might we need to consider? It helps the

Department determine needs, values and emerging trends. This information sets the framework for the vision of the park, and it establishes the primary areas to focus resources for the best and highest potential success. The Department opened a public online survey in March 2021 and held it open for one (1) month. Over three hundred (300) unique responses to the survey were received during this period. Results from the survey are organized into several categories: Visitation & Use, Satisfaction, Civic Engagement, Vision, Priorities, Preferences and Investment Foci.

Key Topics of Interest

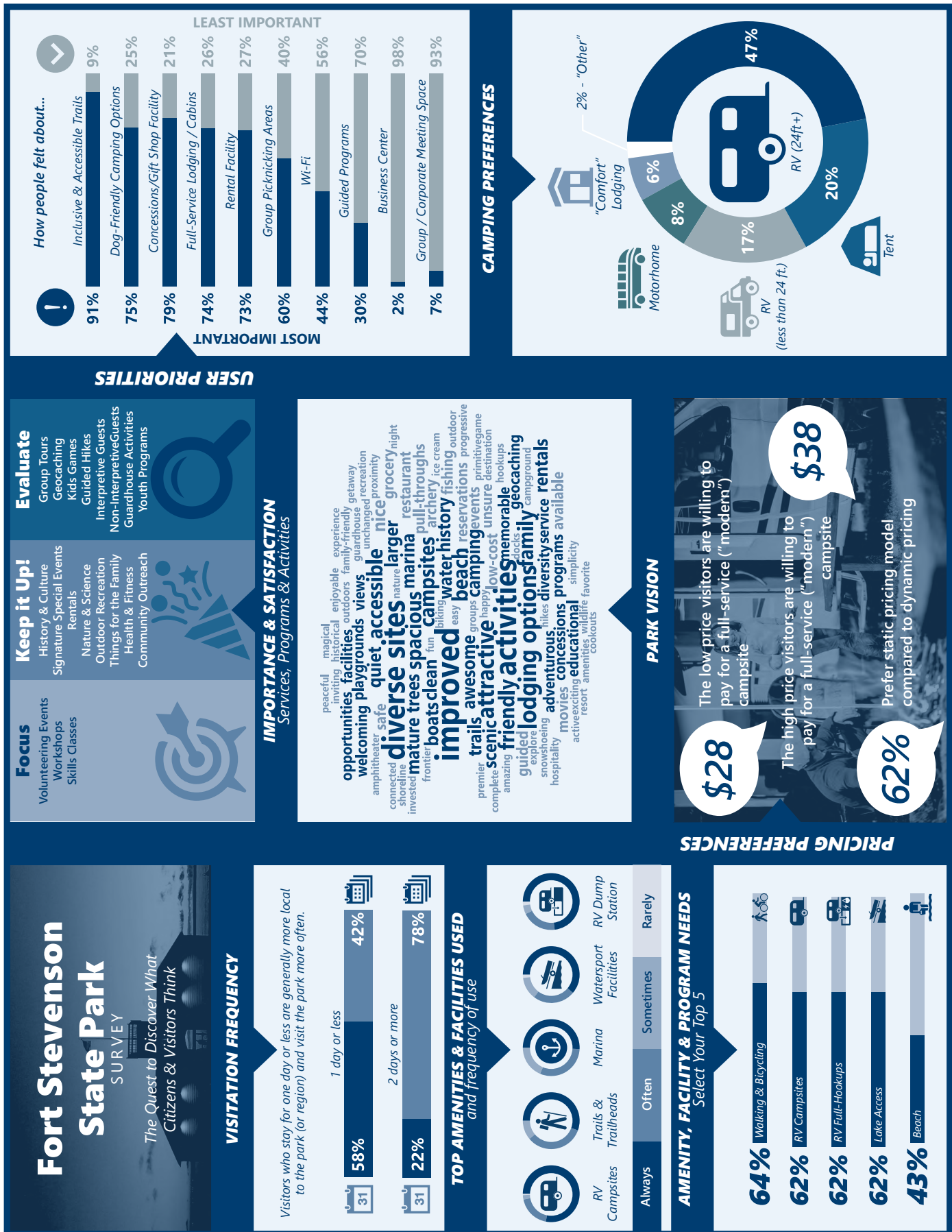
The values, topics and areas requiring the highest attention and resource allocation generally aligned with what was expected based on the socioeconomic research and industry trends (further discussed in next section). Much of what respondents envision for the park include not only improving existing infrastructure and amenities, but also expanding and diversifying the amenities and service offerings. Their priorities appear to be directly tied to the type of services and amenities that increase the entertainment opportunities at the park, as well as those that provide (or could enhance) the overall park experience.

Survey results indicate that over half of respondents said camping is their primary reason for visiting the park. Water-based recreation and general outdoor recreation are activities that they happened to do while visiting. Although, when broken down by duration of the visit, water and lake access was the primary reason for those who visit the park for eight (8) or less hours. This might suggest that those visiting for less than one (1) day are more local to the area and use the park primarily to put in or store their boats.

Top Public Needs & Values

- Providing **diverse experiences, entertainment options & convenience services** to customers
- Improving **water-based recreation** and access
- **Balance** the built environment with the natural resources, and **improve** the outdoor spaces that keep visitors returning
- Implement amenities and services that are **universally, inclusive and barrier-free**

Figure 22: Public Survey Infographic



Discovering the Strategic Opportunities

Park Trends

Understanding who visits the park and what they like to do is important to any master plan. This understanding helps the Department to begin identifying the various topics and areas that are important and of high value, and, ultimately, directs focus, attention and resources. It also helps the Department better predict future needs and demand at the park.

Park Visitation

A review of the basic visitation statistics of the park indicates a steady average growth of four percent (4%) annually over the past ten (10) years, which is always great to see and indicates continued interest in the park. Visitors come from all over the country and beyond, but most come from North Dakota. Many of the visitors come from the central North Dakota area with “hot spots” primarily occurring in the Bismarck and Minot areas.

The average distance traveled by visitors to the park extends 140 miles. This footprint encompasses much of central and western North Dakota, and it includes small population centers in parts of Montana, South Dakota, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. For the purposes of the master plan, this 140-mile radius is used to define the market footprint (“reach”) for further study

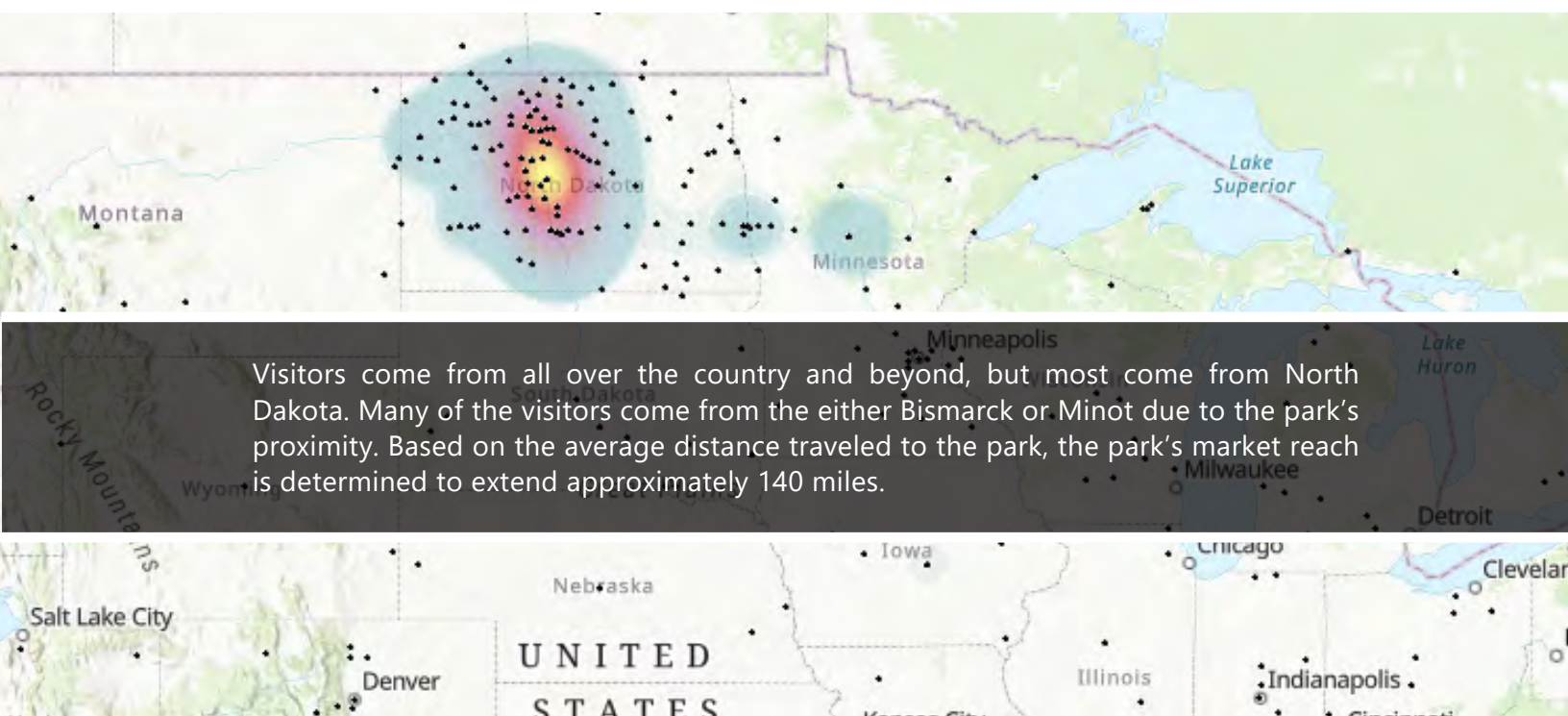
Campground Occupancy

Campground occupancy is an important metric for parks with campgrounds. Understanding the park’s average occupancy helps us better gauge where the park is at, identify priorities, identify where the gaps may be and develop a marketing and business strategy to meet goals.

Fort Stevenson State Park has many more campsites than cabins; however, when reviewing occupancy, the comfort accommodations (cabins) lead the park’s occupancy (Figure 23). This is consistent with industry

Call to Action

A growing, more diverse user base, with higher campground occupancy, means new, changing and expanded user needs and expectations. This demands **focusing attention and resource allocation**.



trends that exhibit an increasing interest in this mode of camping. Nonetheless, both campsite and cabin accommodations lie within the industry best practice, which is between seventy-five (75%) and eighty-five (85%) percent occupancy. Both accommodation types were highly occupied without being one hundred percent (100%) unavailable. Being one hundred percent (100%) occupied is undesirable because at full occupancy, there is nothing left to provide. One gap identified in review is that weekday occupancy rates are much lower than weekends, and a similar trend occurs for in-season versus off-season occupancy rates (Figure 24).

It is important to understand, however, that high occupancy does not always indicate a high need for more development. Low occupancy is not necessarily bad either - it comes with generally lower operating and maintenance costs. There are many factors that can contribute to occupancy, but one of the most controllable is pricing. Pricing that is too low usually equates to higher occupancy and vice versa.

As such, the public survey asked individuals about their attitude and preferences towards pricing. A slight majority of individuals preferred a fixed rate structure over a dynamic (variable) pricing structure. Several questions, using a "Price Sensitivity Meter" methodology, were asked to further enrich the public's attitude and preferences. This method helps to determine the psychologically acceptable range of prices for a single service. The results indicated that "range of acceptable prices" for one night at a full-service ("modern") campsite was between twenty-eight and thirty-eight dollars (\$28-\$38) (Figure 25).

Key Topics of Interest

Fort Stevenson State Park draws visitors from a large region, beyond North Dakota, and this trend is not likely to diminish as the park continues improving and expanding. The continuation of this trend will produce a much larger and more diverse user base, and it demands a managerial response to allocate resources towards identifying and meeting expanded user needs and expectations.

Figure 23: Campground Occupancy by Type (2019-2020)

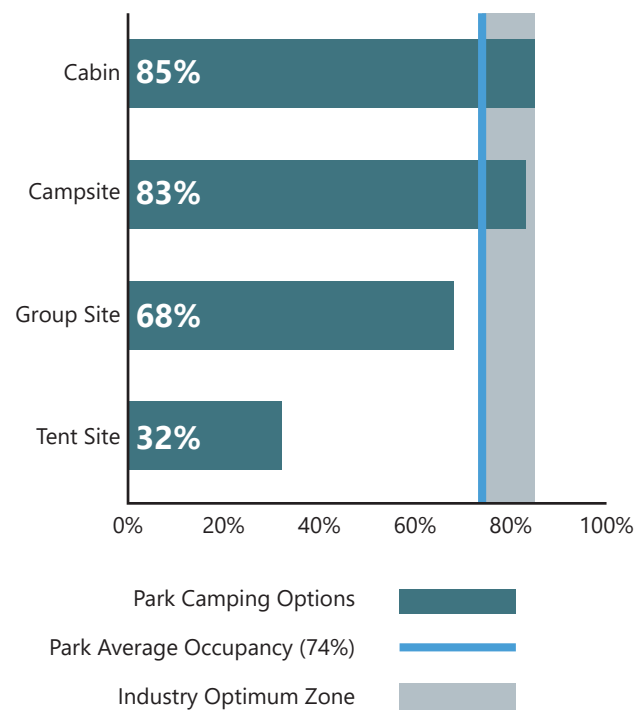
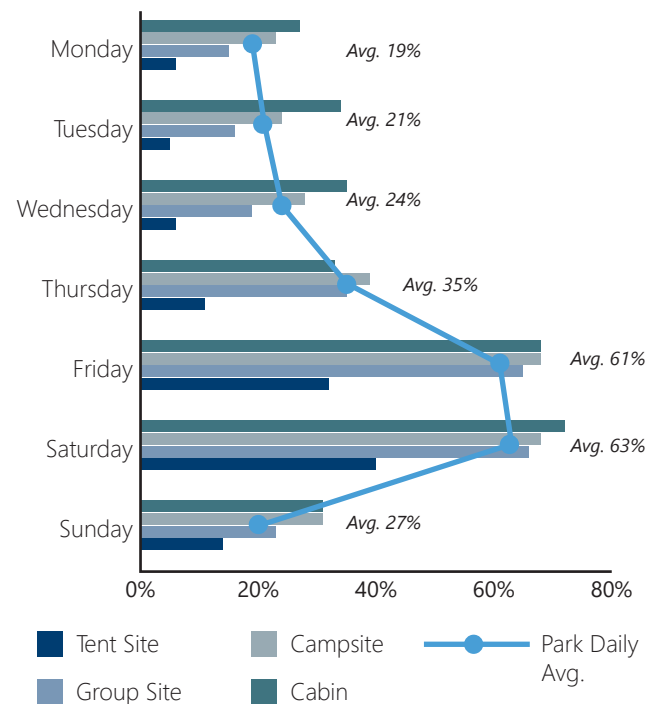


Figure 24: Campground Occupancy by Type & Day of Week (2019-2020)



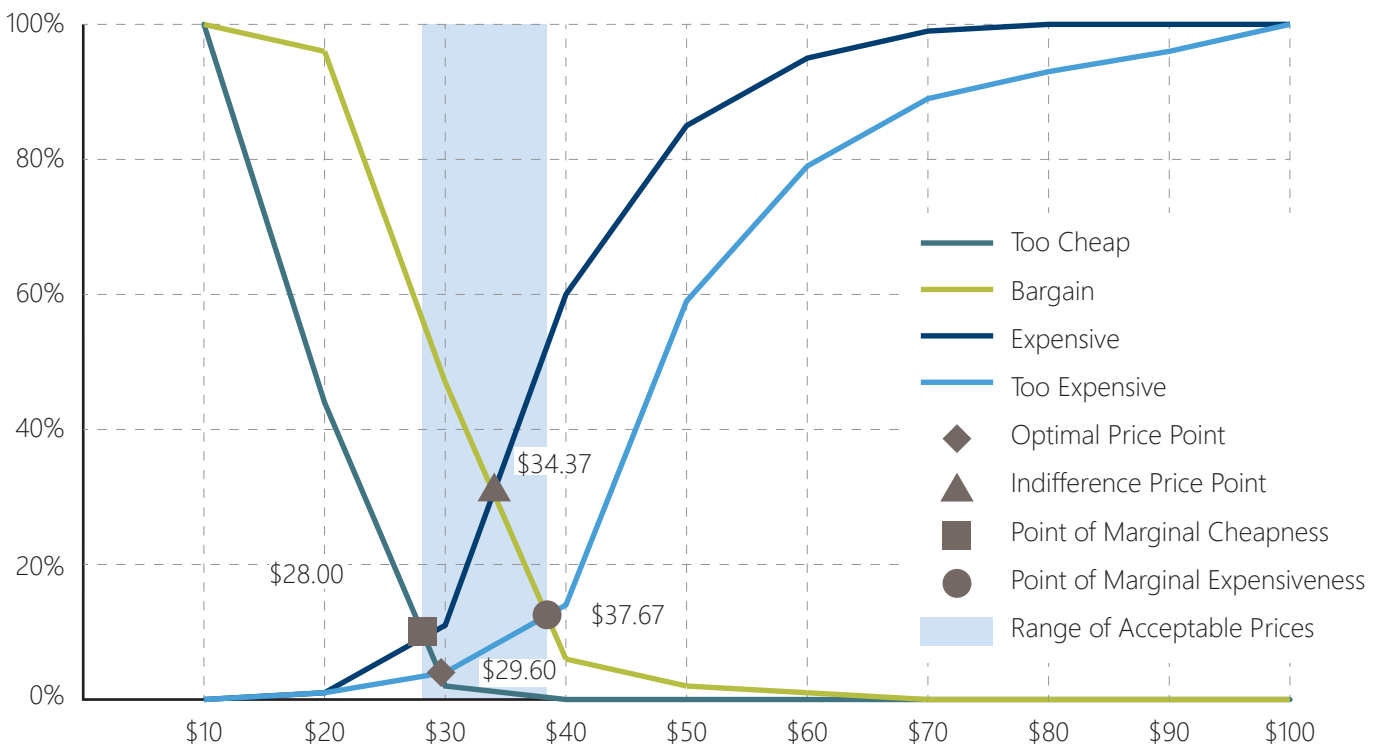
The park is highly occupied during peak season and weekends and much less so in off-peak season and weekdays. Both comfort accommodations and RV campsites lead the park's occupancy, and the Advisory Committee identified that the use of a dynamic pricing structure could help increase occupancy without needing to construct more campsites. This strategy proposes pricing campsites lower in the "off-peak" periods to not only provide affordable opportunities during these times, but also to potentially draw more entry-level recreationalists.

Socioeconomic Trends

Using the determined market footprint (140-mile radius) as the study area, three socioeconomic resources were reviewed to determine common trends and areas of interest for the population. These resources are the United States Census Bureau's Market Potential and Spending Potential Indices and a proprietary source developed by ESRI called Tapestry Segmentation. Information for the Minot Micropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was also reviewed for comparative purposes.

The socioeconomics of an area are important to know during the master planning process because it provides deep insight into the needs, values, habits and trends occurring within the study area populations. Organizations who understand their customer profile can target certain investments and improvements, as well as better align their resources, to realize the best potential outcome.

Figure 25: Public Survey Price Sensitivity Meter Results (2021)



Market & Spending Potential Index

Both the Market Potential Index (MPI) and the Spending Potential Index (SPI) are reviewed because they provide great insight into resource allocations to best meet populations' needs. The MPI measures the relative likelihood of individuals to participate in a particular activity compared to the national average. The SPI measures the spending per household for a product or service in a study area and compares them to the national averages for the same areas. Both indices compare to a national average that is represented as one hundred (100). Results higher than one hundred (100) indicates high potential compared to the national average and vice versa (Figures 26 & 27).

Tapestry Segmentation

Tapestry segmentation provides a detailed description of America's neighborhoods, which are divided into sixty-seven (67) distinctive segments based on socioeconomic and demographic composition. This tool is a resource that helps the Department develop a full customer profile by enriching basic U.S. Census information with values, habits and trends. Agencies that understand their customers' profiles can better target and meet customer needs, as well as better market to or reach out to these individuals.

The tapestry segmentation for the Minot Micropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was also reviewed for comparative purposes. The comparison between the larger study area and the Minot MSA show that they share their top five (5) tapestry segments, though, in a slightly different order. These segments are "Green Acres," "Prairie Living," "Bright Young Professionals," "In Style" and "Old and Newcomers" (Figures 28-32).

Review also shows that sixty percent (60%) of the total population within the market footprint falls into one of the top five (5) tapestry segments, and the most populated segment is "Prairie Living." This segment is one of the most rural segments, and it is populated by agriculture-based communities. The citizens in the "Prairie Living" segment favor outdoor activities (ESRI, 2020) when they have time to relax.

Figure 26: Market Potential Index (2021)

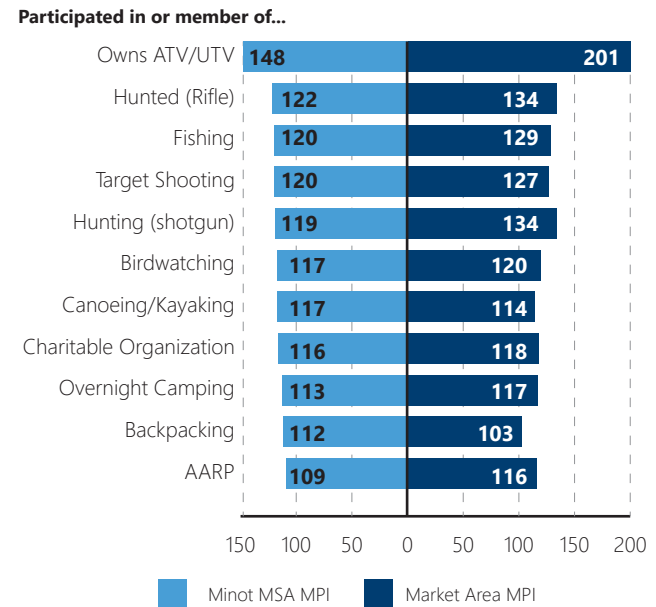


Figure 27: Spending Potential Index (2021)

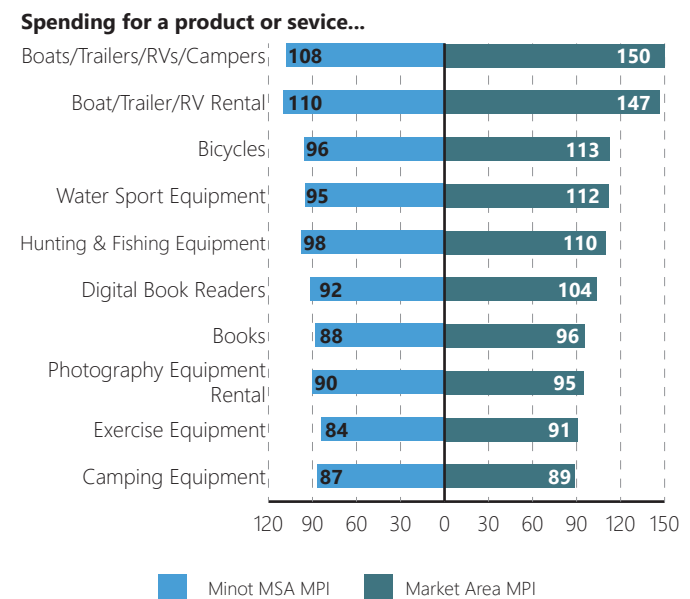


Figure 28: Green Acres (ESRI)



Key Topics & Trends

Using these three (3) socioeconomic research tools, the top interest and spending areas for the population within the market footprint include pet ownership, gardening, yoga and Pilates, boating, fishing, running, camping, ATV riding, hunting, backpacking, volunteering and an interest in (savviness with) technology. Amenities, services and facilities that directly target these interest areas should be considered by the Park and Department to achieve the highest cost recovery potential. Other areas may be pursued as well, but targeted marketing efforts and additional resources may be required to ensure success.

Focus: Socioeconomics Key Takeaways

With numerous "top" interest and spending areas within the market area, it can be difficult to decided which to focus on. Those that can be **implemented quickly with little to no additional resources should be prioritized**. This may include improvements such as pet-friendly accommodations, programs for health & wellness or providing increased volunteer opportunities

Figure 29: Prairie Living (ESRI)

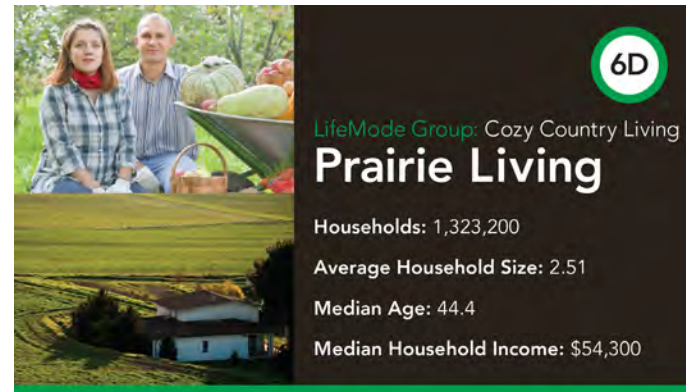


Figure 30: Bright Young Professionals (ESRI)



Figure 31: In Style (ESRI)



Figure 32: Old & Newcomers (ESRI)



Peer Park Analysis

A peer park analysis is a form of research used to compare and gauge Fort Stevenson State Park to peers or aspirations. This analysis provides NDPRD with valuable insight for unique opportunities and encourages continuous growth and improvement. It is recognized, however, that no one park, or situation, can be exactly compared with another even though they are similar in many respects (Barth, 2016).

These types of reviews traditionally rely on quantitative data such as management structures, funding, operations and maintenance. For the purposes of this master plan, the analysis's focus was less on quantitative data and more on the amenities and characteristics that improve the quality of life for visitors. It reviewed those intangible characteristics and overall visitor experiences that could help shift Fort Stevenson State Park towards fulfilling its vision. The VAC selected parks that were like Fort Stevenson State Park with respect to size, natural setting, function and proximity to urban areas, as well as parks that they aspired Fort Stevenson State Park to be like. The peer parks selected were:

- Lewis & Clark Recreation Area (Yankton, South Dakota)
- Lake Bronson State Park (Lake Bronson, Minnesota)
- Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (Ashland, Nebraska) and
- Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park (Strasbourg, Saskatchewan)

Table 2: Peer Parks (April 2021)

	Fort Stevenson State Park	Lewis & Clark Recreation Area	Lake Bronson State Park	Eugene T. Mahoney State Park	Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park
Location	Garrison, ND	Yankton, SD	Lake Bronson, MN	Ashland, NE	Strasbourg, SK
Agency Ownership	Army Corps of Engineers	SD Game, Fish & Parks	Minnesota DNR	Nebraska Game & Parks	Saskatchewan Provincial Parks
Management Model	State Operated	State-Operated	State-Operated	State-Operated	Province-Operated
Mgmt. Entity	NDPRD	SD GFP	MN DNR	NEGP	SPP
Staffing (FTEs)	4	Unknown	7	Unknown	3
Outfitter/ Concessionaire	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Population Served (1-hr Drive)	79,358	90,993	37,759	1,431,891	136,067
Avg. Annual Visitation	150,000	757,000	111,000	827,372	34,000
Trail (miles)	9.6	12.3	14	6	3.5
Group Facilities/ Shelters	2	8	2	9	2
Total Acreage	586	864	3,598	700	668
Total Campsites/ Cabins	93	426	157	205	331
Lodge Rooms	N/A	24	N/A	40	N/A

This analysis reflects data from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) as of April 2021. It is possible that updates to the data has changed or been updated; however, using data from the same period ensure consistency in the analysis.

General Peer Comparison

The ownership and management structures, staffing and visitation for each park is displayed in Table 2. All the peer parks are state-owned (province-owned) and managed. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park and Lewis & Clark Recreation Area both are far and above the most developed properties, serve the largest regional populations and provide the greatest number of campsites for visitors and see the highest average annual visitation. Neither, however, are the largest property – that is Lake Bronson State Park at 3,598 acres.

Compared to its peers, Fort Stevenson State Park is smallest property in terms of landmass but sees the third (3rd) most annual visits on average. In terms of level of development, Fort Stevenson State Park is relatively the least “developed,” with only eight-eight (88) campsites and five (5) cabins; although, another camping loop, with twenty-three (23) new full-service campsites, is currently being constructed. The next closest properties have nearly twice as many campsites and cabins. This seems to be a function of Fort Stevenson State Park being the smallest property in size. Additionally, development to reach the level of its peers, would likely come with increased impacts to both the visitor experience and surrounding natural resources.

Service Offering Comparison

Table 3 shows a comparison of the service offerings at Fort Stevenson State Park and the peer properties. The offerings compared are grouped into the following categories: Facilities & Amenities and Activities & Services. Fort Stevenson State Park is most comparable to Lake Bronson State Park and Rowan’s Ravine with respect to the services and amenities offered. The main differences found between the park and its peers are in the “value-added” type of offerings, including, among several other items: an indoor recreation center, conference/meeting spaces, sports fields, mini golf, an inflatable



While Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (NE) offers a wide variety of highly-developed, experiential offerings, such as an indoor activity center with a climbing wall, an unmanned bike rental station is among the simpler convenience offerings that make a big impact.

Photo Courtesy: Nebraska Game & Parks



waterpark, an adventure course, and driving range. Several of the value-added options found at peer parks are well-suited to and could be tailored for Fort Stevenson State Park to increase visitor experience and convenience.

Summary of Findings

Lake Bronson and Rowan's Ravine are the most similar with respect to ownership and management structure, staffing, fee structure, visitation and size. Neither are abundantly comparable with regards to campsite quantity or site type. Lake Bronson offers nearly twice as many RV campsites as Fort Stevenson State Park, while Rowan's Ravine offers nearly three (3) times as many campsites and twice as many cabins. Only Fort Stevenson State Park and Lake Bronson State Park have limits on length of stay. Lake Bronson does provide seasonal campsites, while the other properties require permission or permitting for long stays. Longer stays at Fort Stevenson State Park is possible with permission from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), but this decision would need to occur at the Departmental level.

Key Findings of Interest

While several of the properties are somewhat close to large population centers (e.g. Omaha metropolitan area), it appears that the most visited parks are the ones that provide a variety of entertainment options and unique experiences. Although it is on the high side of the development spectrum, Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is a good example that demonstrates how visitors seek experiences. They have invested in value-added amenities and facilities that define a strong sense of "place," make the visit memorable and keep people returning. These include amenities often found in a municipal park system, such as an aquatic center, restaurant, indoor activity center, arts and crafts center, a lodge and sports fields. Not all these services, facilities and amenities may be appropriate at Fort Stevenson State Park, but several (or modified versions) can be considered to increase visitor experience.

Foucs: Peer Park Key Takeaways

- **Visitors seek experiences over "stuff."** The most successful parks invest in providing experiences through the unique and convenient services, amenities and programs they provide, such as prepared food options or an indoor activities center.
- These unique entertainment options supports increased visitation and keeps visitation and occupancy high.
- There is a **balance between value-added services**, which increase visitor experience, **and overdevelopment** that negatively impacts experience.
- Many of the unique opportunities found at these peers can be easily implemented at Fort Stevenson State Park or tailored (or scaled) to be suitable at Fort Stevenson State Park, such as an inflatable water park, mini golf course or offering bike rental stations.

Sense of Place

A deep connection to a place can inspire and empower individuals to take action for protecting it, caring for it and passing it along to the next generation. Results from the public survey indicates that people derive their sense of place from the park's water access and water-based recreation activities and amenities. The City of Garrison's residents derive their sense of place differently - the park serves as their "community park."

Table 3: Peer Park Service Offerings Comparison (April 2021)

	Fort Stevenson State Park	Lewis & Clark Recreation Area	Lake Bronson State Park	Eugene T. Mahoney State Park	Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park
Facilities & Amenities					
Ampitheater/Stage/Theater	●	●		●	
Swim Beach (& Support Facilities)	●	●	●		●
Dog Park	●				●
Dry Storage	●				
Campsite Hookups	●	●		●	●
Fish Cleaning Station	●	●	●		●
Comfort Accommodations	●	●	●	●	●
Interpretive Facilities	●		●	●	●
Marina/Boating Facilities	●	●	●	●	●
Picnicking / Picnic Facilities	●	●	●	●	●
Playground(s)	●	●	●	●	●
Comfort Station/Showerhouse	●	●	●	●	●
Rectangular Sports Courts	●	●	●	●	
RV Camping (in general)	●	●	●	●	●
RV Dump	●	●	●	●	●
Tent Camping	●		●	●	●
Vault/Pit Restroom	●	●	●		●
Visitor Center/Park Office/Entry	●	●	●	●	
Concessions	●			●	●
Unique Experience Facilities		●	●	●	
Lodge (Resort)		●		●	
Sports Fields (e.g. softball, soccer)		●		●	●
Activities & Services					
Boating/Lake Access/Fishing	●	●	●	●	●
Children Activities	●	●	●	●	●
Prepared Meals/Restaurant	●	●		●	●
Day-Use	●			●	●
Grocery/Supplies	●			●	●
Hiking	●	●	●	●	●
Horseback Riding		●	●	●	
Mini Golf				●	●
Mt. Biking/Cycling		●	●	●	●
Reservation System	●	●	●	●	●
On-Site Laundry				●	●
Paddlesports	●	●	●	●	●
Swimming/Beach	●	●	●		●
Inflatable Waterpark					●
High-Ropes Adventure Course				●	
Bike Repair Stations		●	●	●	
Pet-Friendly			●	●	●
Disc Golf		●		●	
Driving Range		●		●	

Recreation Trend Analysis & Relevant Document Review

It is recognized that this 2021 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan is not a standalone effort. This master plan must also be sensitive to the industry, geographic and political contexts. Among them, how people camp and the amenities offered to them has rapidly changed over the past five-to-ten (5-10) years. From the national to the local levels, camping has evolved from “low-cost tourism to a mainstream, versatile recreation experience, valued at different levels by different [market] segments” (Booker & Joppe, 2013) with an emphasis on unique and homelike accommodations.

Several internal and external documents were reviewed as part of the planning process to help align Fort Stevenson State Park to state requirements, agency- and region-wide initiatives, industry trends and industry best practices. The review provides further insight that helps define recreation needs, interest, goals and outcomes. The documents reviewed were:

- 1982 Fort Stevenson State Park Master Plan
- 2001 NDRD System Plan Update
- 2007 Lake Sakakawea/Garrison Dam Master Plan
- 2015-30 Garrison Comprehensive Plan Update
- 2018-22 SCORP & Trail Needs Plan
- 2019 & 2020 North American Camping Report
- 2019 Outdoor Foundation Participation Report
- 2018-22 NDRD Strategic Plan
- Fort Stevenson State Park Leases (various years)
- ND Century & Administrative Codes
- McLean County Zoning (current version)
- McLean County Mutual Aid Agreement

Summary of Findings

Below is a summary of the findings that arose from review:

- A recognition of increasing deferred maintenance across the whole park system.
- Understanding that park land (in general) has a carrying capacity.
- Demand for outdoor recreation facilities and activities far exceeds the regional supply.
- Youth, women and ethnic populations make up the fastest-growing outdoor recreation participant groups in the United States.

Focus: Key Relevant Documents Trends & Topics

- Providing alternative services, programs and amenities to respond to varying lake levels.
- Fully understand and address deferred park maintenance to provide safe, high-quality experiences.
- Recognize the park has carrying capacity to balance development impacts with natural resources.
- Changing industry trends and increasing participation result in increased demand. The park must become more efficient and effective to respond to these rapidly changing needs. Among those to focus on and prioritize are:
 - Inclusive, barrier-free amenities, services and programs, such as accessible campsites.
 - Implementing comfort-camping (or luxury-type) accommodations, such as full service cabins.
 - Addressing the increasing demand for RV campsite through infrastructural improvements, and
 - Addressing supply and demand for recreational services and amenities through policies for management and operations.
- Biking, hiking, camping, running and fishing have the highest participation rates for non-organized outdoor sports.
- The interest in and demand for unique, “luxury” camping experiences (“comfort camping”) is outpacing all other forms.
- RV sales in 2020 skyrocketed. This is thought to likely stem from the effects from COVID-19. It is anticipated that the demand for RV sites will remain high and continue increasing.
- The number of new/beginner RVers has dramatically increased concurrently with the increased RV sales. Campsite and roadway geometry and park navigability must be considered for these individuals.
- Expanded offerings to increase inclusivity is desired industry wide, and
- A recognition that the fluctuating reservoir water level impacts water-based recreation and access.

Carrying Capacity Analysis

Considerable research illustrates the environmental effects resulting from activities around campgrounds, including vegetation loss, soil degradation and wildlife disturbance. Many of these can be avoided and mitigated by understanding the suitability of the land. A multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) evaluates certain criteria by dividing complex decisions into smaller, more understandable parts. Each part is analyzed individually using this method. The individual results are then all overlaid with each other to produce a meaningful solution in the form of a composite analysis.

ArcGIS is a software used to complete the MCDA on the datasets and develop the composite overlay. Based on research (Cuirong et al., 2016; Ebrahimi et al., 2019; Geneletti, 2019; Kiker et al., 2005) and metrics established in the 2000 NDPRD Strategic Plan, the individual (smaller) components analyzed were slope, solar orientation, soil development capacity, hydrology, wildlife proximity and proximity to existing development (Figure 33).

Key Findings

The results from the MCDA indicates that much of the “most suitable” locations for development at Fort Stevenson State Park have already been developed. There are locations that have some potential for increased levels of development in the southern day use area and eastern half of the peninsula. These locations show a moderate level of potential mostly due to their distance from existing development and infrastructure, as well as the probability of impacts to natural resources. The carrying capacity of the park property has not yet been reached, as there are locations sufficient in size for further development and expansion activities. These locations are north of the existing campgrounds, the north side of DeTrobriand Bay and locations nearby the existing day use area. The type and extent of development in these locations can vary based on park needs and the cost to implement.



The north side of the DeTrobriand Marina is a suitable location for additional park development. This could be an opportunity to expand full-service cabin offerings with “private” courtesy docks.



Figure 33: Carrying Capacity Composite Map

Very High - Minimal (if any) impacts/disturbances to nearby natural resources, existing park infrastructure can be used, and most favorable site conditions for development and future maintenance are present.

High - Low (if any) impacts/disturbances to nearby natural resources, park infrastructure can be used, and favorable site conditions for development and future maintenance are present (e.g. minimal slopes). Some conditions may be less favorable than others.

Medium - Likely impacts to nearby natural resources, new infrastructure may be required, and site alterations to meet preferred conditions for development and maintenance may be necessary.

Low - Likely impacts to natural resources, new infrastructure is required for development, and site alterations (e.g. retaining walls or engineered soils) may be required for implementation.

Very Low - Natural resource impacts are high, significant new infrastructure is required for development, and significant site alterations are necessary for development.



Refining the Vision

Design

This phase of the master planning process directs Department and staff attention and action towards answering three (3) main questions: what are the goals and objectives, who are the supporters and how are the goals and objectives implemented? The results generated from public outreach help define the visitor needs at Fort Stevenson State Park. The findings from research and analysis provide awareness of the local and industry-wide trends that could require action from park staff and/or the Department. The culmination of this information provides the foundation from which the goals are developed.

The Advisory Committee participated in a facilitated workshop to begin identifying and developing goals that help shift the park's current reality towards its preferred vision. The goals identified are based on the foundation set by the needs and trends identified through public outreach, and they are supported with the research and analysis results. The VAC identified as many unique goals as they could, and they sorted them into six (6) focal areas: Infrastructure, Business Management, Visitor Services, Operations & Maintenance, Programs and Marketing. The goals were assessed, and the following overarching themes emerged:

- Comfort & Quality of Accommodations
- Enhancement of the Day Use Area
- Water-Recreation and Access
- Sustainability
- Infrastructure
- Partnerships
- Marketing
- Experience
- Inclusivity

Refinement

Goal refinement is the phase in the process that links the strategic vision to planned actions. Without refining the goals and vision into purposeful actions, the plan is left as just a vision without clarity on how to specifically achieve it. The opposite is also true: a great tactical action plan is just thought without a path (TechTello, 2020).

The Advisory Committee began this refinement process by dissecting the previously identified goals to begin developing tactical objectives. These are the specific and actionable steps intended to direct attention, focus and resources towards the attainment of the goals. An activity called "Interference Diagramming" (Sproull, 2019) was employed to help foster the committee's discussions for two (2) of the nine (9) goals. The purpose of the activity was to:

- Define the "interferences" (or obstacles) that might hinder achievement.
- Determine what needs to happen to address, overcome and/or eliminate the obstacle(s); and
- Identify the actions that have the most positive effects towards overcoming an obstacle and achieving the goal.

The responses to this final part are what ultimately become the objectives.

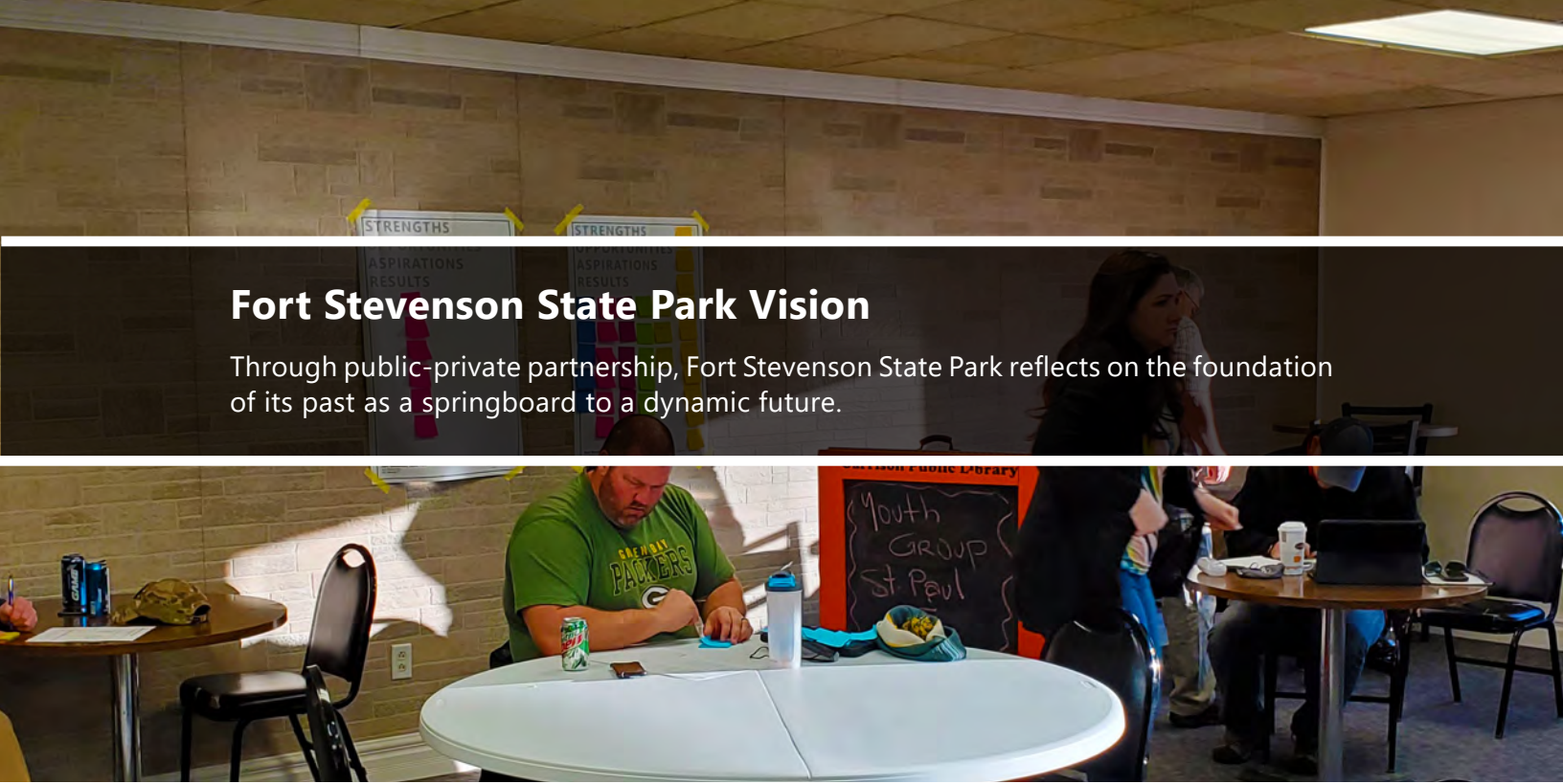
A "Tiger Team," consisting of Park and Department staff, was employed to further refine and dissect the work that the VAC had begun. As attention shifts towards refinement, responsibility moves from the advisory committee to park and Department staff. Their role, as the key implementors of the plan, is to further define what successful implementation looks like and determine the roles, responsibilities, resources and timing for each objective. The constructive feedback and input provided by staff yields buy-in and far more success in master plan implementation.

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A scenic view of a body of water, likely a lake or bay, with a yellow kayak in the foreground. The kayak is yellow with a white interior and black footrests. The water is a mix of blue and green, with ripples on the surface. On the right side, there is a high, rocky cliff face. In the distance, across the water, there is a small town or village with houses and trees. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

CHAPTER THREE: Vision & Goals

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Fort Stevenson State Park Vision

Through public-private partnership, Fort Stevenson State Park reflects on the foundation of its past as a springboard to a dynamic future.

There is strong support to not only increase and enhance the recreational opportunities and services at Fort Stevenson State Park, but also to be conscious of growth and improvement without significantly changing what makes the park special. The goals outlined in this section are the culmination of the findings from public outreach, research and analyses that identified trends and public satisfaction, vision, values, priorities, preferences and resource foci

These strategic goals are intended to help shift Fort Stevenson State Park towards the preferred vision by empowering the full capacity of the park's resources, capitalizing on the opportunities identified in the research and analysis process and setting the foundation for the development of a high quality visitor experience. This section identifies those goals, their guiding principles and action items.

Implementation Framework

Specific objectives to start implementing upon plan approval are identified within each goal in no specific order. It is important to recognize that implementation of all the objectives identified help advance the park's long-term, strategic vision, but implementation must be done within the context of available resources. The mix of improvements, programs, strategies, tools and partnerships outline a sustainable, context-sensitive strategy to expand and enhance Fort Stevenson State Park's recreational opportunities.

The objectives listed in this section are only a starting point. As implementation unfolds, park staff and the Department will monitor these proposed actions with an emphasis on adequate staffing, financing and equitable resource allocation. Modifications to these actions may be necessary as conditions change. Changes in park resources, population growth, visitor demographics, technology or other industry trends can result in new needs and priorities or require new (or different) actions and approaches. Flexibility in a master plan provides the Department the ability to adjust, refine and improve.

Implementation Priority Metrics

A context-sensitive approach recognizes that implementation must occur within the context of available park and Departmental resources. Success requires a number of critical decisions to be made by both the Department and park staff, ranging from additional planning efforts to feasibility studies.

This implementation approach allows goals and objectives to be carried out in increments, as resources become available or should circumstances change. Goals and objectives that are not critical to park operations or immediate use, but nonetheless desired, can be implemented later when resources are available, while focus and resources can be directed towards more essential actions and immediate needs.

The goals and objectives listed in this section are provided in no specific order, and prioritization is internally determined by the Department and park staff using a combination of the following prioritization metrics (listed in no particular order):

- **Funding:** The availability of funds to ensure that implementation of investments with the greatest need, such as public health, safety and welfare issues, are prioritized first. This includes a review of the possible “alternative” funding strategies/mechanisms, including grants, sponsorships and equity partnerships.
- **Operations & Maintenance (O&M):** The park’s capacity for long-term ongoing operations and maintenance must be considered; otherwise, actions will have high risk of failure. An assessment of both staffing requirements and long-term maintenance needs must be considered. This also includes reviewing all the possible “alternative” strategies to fund, offset or otherwise meet operational and maintenance needs.
- **Park Need:** There must be critical evaluation of which goals and objectives yield the most impact and address the greatest needs of the park in terms of health, safety, welfare, quantity, quality and user experience.
- **Consistency with regional planning:** Priorities must be sensitive to other industry, geographic and political contexts. Other planning documents, such as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) offer further insight into public demand and recreation offerings availability.
- **Asset & Infrastructure Condition:** Continue using the Public Space Quality Index (PSQI) tool (see Chapter 4) to evaluate and monitor the comfort, condition and effectiveness of existing assets and infrastructure.
- **Recreation Activities Evaluation:** Fundamental to long-term sustainability, the monitoring and evaluation of services and activities provides the ability to plan for change and determine the strategies and levels of management to sustain optimal performance and productivity.
- **Public Need:** Monitor public needs, industry trends and evaluate existing assets’, amenities’, services’ and activities’ ability to meet those needs.
- **Partnership:** This is a review of potential partners who can support, assist and streamline implementation of goals and objectives.
- **Feasibility:** Determine the feasibility and resources necessary to carry out certain goals and objectives, ensuring the appropriate use of public resources.

COMFORT & QUALITY

Goal 1: Increase comfort-type accommodations, such as modern campsites, full-service cabins, yurts, pet-friendly options, etc., to enhance visitor comfort.



Camping has transformed into a mainstream and vibrant recreation activity rooted in providing unique camping experiences (Booker & Joppe, 2013). How people camp and the amenities offered to them have rapidly changed over the past decade. The most recent comfort camping trends have begun to replace the negative perceptions of camping with homelike accommodations that make camping more accessible, relatively low risk for beginners (Booker & Joppe, 2013) and easier for an aging population. The context for this goal can be broken down into three (3) categories:

- **Public Need:** Various modes of comfort-camping options were identified as high needs through public outreach. These types of accommodations can provide visitors with a variety of ways to experience the outdoors, such as pet-friendly options or full-service cabins. They also directly cater to an increasingly more diverse visitor base, such as those without equipment and/or those with limited experience, visiting the park by providing entry-level, low risk options.
- **Experiences:** Comfort accommodations can provide visitors with unique ways to experience the outdoors, such as cabins with attached pet kennels, yurts, tree houses or bubble pods. These accommodation offerings expand beyond the traditional camping experience by providing new ways to enjoy the outdoors without compromising on comfort, quality or aesthetics.
- **Convenience:** The reality of the campground industry is that increasingly more visitors' essential items lists includes things such as a real mattress, running water or an actual toilet. Comfort accommodations allows for easy getaways with little effort and preparation, and they often help bridge the gap between camping and the comforts of home.



OBJECTIVES

- CQ1:** Plan, design and construct year-round, full-service cabins, including the necessary infrastructural support improvements, by hiring consultants to design “shovel ready” projects for when funds are available.
- CQ2:** Increase unique accommodation offerings and experiences. Examples may include, but are not limited to, pet-friendly lodging options, tree houses, yurts, bungalows, a light house lodge, fiberglass igloos and bubble pods.
- CQ3:** Assess the operational and maintenance requirements for additional full-service accommodations.
- CQ4:** Assess the feasibility of contracting a third-party cleaning service to reduce staff operational requirements of new facilities
- CQ5:** Investigate offering linen services in full-service accommodations and/or the potential for contracting laundering services.

A “shovel ready” project means that a construction project is ready to begin work. This seems simple, but there is a vast amount of work involved to ensure a project is ready for construction. ***Shovel ready refers to a project that has all the design, engineering and permitting completed and only requires funding for completion.***

DAY USE ENHANCEMENT

Goal 2: Focus on enhancements in the day use area that provide increased amenities, options and access.



Photo: "A GaGa Pit" by BCI Burke Company

While campgrounds, marinas, other water-based recreation facilities and trails were generally the topic of interest for many during the public outreach, local Garrison teens described their needs differently. The park's day use area fulfills the local community's need for a "community park"-sized property, which is a classification recognized by the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA). These types of parks are diverse and serve a broad range of activities and users. Their focus is to enhance the community identity, preserve open space and elevate the quality of life of nearby residents. (Mertes & Hall, 1996).

- **Recreation Access:** Improving access for the greater community to facilities through addition of new facilities (or amenities) and improving those that are existing
- **Recreation Diversity:** Providing high-quality recreational facilities that meet the needs of a diverse population.



OBJECTIVES

E1: Invest in new amenities and facilities that meet/support both local and visitor interests, such as various outdoor game equipment, expansion of sports courts, more (and larger) picnicking facilities and better beach access:

- Assess the viability of repurposing existing facilities and infrastructure for new recreation activities before constructing new facilities.
- Facilities described by the public included: sand volleyball and sports courts, a mini golf course, an adventure course and picnicking facilities.

E2: Collaborate with community partners to help fund improvements, implement and/or provide specialized equipment for day-use specific improvements, programs and/or events.

E3: Identify and apply for grant funding to offset the costs for improvements, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

E4: Invest in new improvements that provide high flexibility, can be used for a multitude of recreation activities and require lower levels of operations and maintenance.

E5: As appropriate, consider expanding the designated day use area further south to provide increased recreational space that can serve the nearby communities.

Photo Credit: Coverworx Recreation Architecture



Large prefabricated shelters are a somewhat low-cost approach to addressing both local community and evolving demographic needs for large gathering facilities

WATER ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

Goal 3: Improve water access and experiences.



Fort Stevenson State Park serves as one of the primary access points to Lake Sakakawea for residents and visitors. Water recreation is recognized as having a high participation rate by visitors for boating and fishing, and public outreach results show that participation significantly increases for those residing closer to the park.

- **Shoreline Stabilization & Protection:** Fort Stevenson State Park's shoreline is rapidly degrading and its health is important to both citizens of North Dakota and park visitors. Both residents and visitors come to the park to play, relax, work and enjoy a remarkable quality of life. Protection of the park's shoreline, and the water access it provides, sustains this high quality of life for residents and supports and provides tourism opportunities. The improvements aim to secure the long-term future of water access and recreation at the park.
- **Increased Water Access Opportunities:** This involves adding new infrastructure, such as shoreline fishing platforms, and expanding (or enhancing) existing infrastructure to provide additional capacity and access points to the lake for boating, fishing and other water-based recreation activities.
- **Diversity of Amenities & Experiences:** There is high interest in more, diverse and unique water-based experiences beyond fishing and boating, such as aqua pads or an inflatable water park. These experiences not only keep visitors coming back, but also attracts new visitors. Supporting this need is a recognition that a high-quality experience relies on positive interactions (hospitality) and facilities.

OBJECTIVES

IM1: Evaluate the average high, normal and low lake levels and construct recreation amenities that advantage of opportunities at each.

IM2: Improving the Garrison Marina boat ramp, access and parking area to address water access and vehicular circulation.

IM3: Constructing a "sandbox" to improve beach access, contain quality beach sand and mitigating the effects of flooding and lake level fluctuations.

IM4: Design and construction of new water access amenities, such as fishing platforms.

IM5: Redesign the marina layouts to maximize boat slip quantity and optimize the flow of boat traffic.

IM6: Assess the viability of "green" improvements for shoreline stabilization projects, such as vegetated geobag walls ("living shorelines"), that provide protection, stabilization, wildlife habitat and other natural resource benefits.

Living shorelines are a suite of shoreline erosion control techniques that combine natural habitats with natural or engineered means of breaking up erosional forces.



A beach "sandbox" (or retained beach) provides a high-quality beach, water access and elevates the beach higher than flood levels to mitigate impacts from fluctuating water levels.



"Redi-Rock Retaining Wall" by Redi-Rock International is licensed under CC BY 2.0

SUSTAINABILITY

Goal 4: Focus on long-term park resource (e.g. financial, asset, etc.) sustainability through enhanced business, operations and maintenance practices.



Fort Stevenson State Park, like most parks across the state and country, is entering an era of innovation for parks and recreation planning and management. Driven by changes in visitor demographics and lifestyles, the nature of outdoor recreation and leisure is rapidly changing, requiring a review of the way the park defines and meets desired service levels, as the region and userbase grows and changes. This guiding principal explores the necessary strategies for delivering a diverse and meaningful collection of facilities, amenities, services and programs, while focusing on various strategies, methods and funding options to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

- **Financial Sustainability:** Leveraging resources and diversifying funding sources that support capital development and ongoing operations.
- **Sustainable Construction Choices:** Implementing best practices in park design, construction and development to increase asset efficiencies and reduce long-term costs and maintenance.
- **Sound Management & Stewardship:** Provide, manage and maintain the park, facilities, programs and services using sound management, stewardship, sustainable choices and the wise use of resources.

Opportunities for the design and construction of amenities and facilities, with greater efficiency and durability and a focus on the long-term costs of operations and maintenance, must be embraced.



OBJECTIVES

S1: Continue to be fiscally and financially prudent in funding the park and recreation needs of the park, such as ensuring maintenance and operations funding is available before constructing new facilities.

S2: Leverage resources by collaborating with partners, stakeholders and volunteers. Explore formal public/public and public/private partnerships for facility development, operations, maintenance and programs.

S3: Develop a comprehensive business plan that identifies customer expectations and fiscal and business needs, priorities and direction.

- Consider a fee philosophy and cost recovery goals for camping, programs and rental facilities to reflect changing market conditions.
- Focus on park investments that optimize cost recovery.
- Identify the park's total cost of ownership by determining the sum of capital projects, asset lifecycle replacement and operations and maintenance.

S4: Diversify funding sources, considering sportships; government, private, conservation and foundation grants; and other alternatives, to fund future capital improvement projects, operations, maintenance and programmatic needs.

S5: Plan and develop "shovel ready" projects for when funding becomes available.

- Integrate sustainable infrastructure into new projects, such as use of recycled materials, green roofs, rainwater harvesting or solar panels.

S6: Project design should strive for flexible spaces that can accommodate a range of uses and can be adapted over time to serve evolving needs and remain effective throughout their lifespan.

S7: Evaluate additional long-term staffing options in order to effectively maintain and operate new and expanded facilities, amenities and programs, as well as sustain current levels of service.

S8: Avoid replacing failing amenities and facilities in-kind without reviewing and considering new trends and needs, as well as customer input.

S9: Improve the quality of habitat through best practices that support sensitive and critical plant, wildlife and habitats.

- Plant biodiverse and native habitat plantings.
- Incorporate signage to interpret native habitats and plantings.
- Conduct a biological species survey to gain a better understanding of the existing wildlife and plant species within the park.

S10: Expand and maintain a healthy tree canopy and include other shade features, such as shade sails, within the campground, day use and other larger gathering areas.

S11: Align and "right-size" proposed strategies to current and anticipated park resources (i.e. staff, fiscal, infrastructure, spatial, etc.).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 5: Improve park infrastructure and assets to maximize their lifespans, improve condition and better meet visitors' needs, modern park offerings and industry best practices.



Aging infrastructure, intensified by rapidly changing visitor needs and industry trends, provides a great opportunity for response through improvements to the park's infrastructure. The guiding principle of this goal seeks to balance resources and needs with the practicalities of implementation. They also acknowledge that a high-quality, safe visitor experience is directly tied to the visitors' perception of condition, comfort and effectiveness.

- **Investing in existing buildings and support facilities to extend their useful lifespan** addresses park infrastructure from a more temporary, cosmetic and relatively low-cost perspective to improve the more immediate condition, comfort and effectiveness needs.

- **Removing and replacing outdated buildings and infrastructure to support visitor needs, modern park offerings and industry best practices** recognizes that only so much "fixing" can be done until replacement is necessary. Removing and/or replacing buildings and infrastructure opens an opportunity to upgrade the park to better meet industry best practices, as well as critically assessing the function and flexibility of an asset or facility to respond to future needs.

OBJECTIVES

IF1: Identify and continuously monitor customer needs and expectations with regards to asset condition and modern park offerings.

IF2: Invest in low-maintenance construction and interchangeable construction materials for park improvements.

IF3: Assess the feasibility of:

- Constructing a new, flexible multiuse facility that can accommodate a range of uses, such as meetings or reunions, and be adapted over time to serve evolving needs.

- Constructing a third comfort station in the South Loop area to meet visitor needs and industry best practice for number of comfort stations provided per campsite.
- Construct staff residences that meet industry best practices, attracts and retains quality individuals.

IF4: Develop construction standards for common facilities and amenities, such as comfort stations and residences.

IF5: Conduct a park infrastructure conditions analysis and assessment to better understand infrastructural life expectancy, capacity and condition.



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PARTNERSHIPS

Goal 6: Optimize Public-Private Partnerships to expand and diversify amenity, program, activity and event offerings.



Strong partnerships can help create a unique and diverse parks and recreation experience. The public process revealed that citizens and visitors have high expectations for Fort Stevenson State Park, including needs that the State alone may not meet. To provide the diverse opportunities desired, many public outreach respondents recognized partnerships are needed to increase and fund service offerings. Many state systems have successfully relied on partners to assist with food, retail, lodging, recreation activities and other services.

Programmatic Partnerships acknowledge the transition away from the park being the principle provider of programs, activities, events and services. This partnership arrangement reduces a park's financial obligations, places service delivery in the hands of organizations who have expertise and capacity and gives communities an active role in enhancing their recreation and visitor experience.

Equity Partnerships: Many new facilities and services throughout the parks and recreation industry involve some form of partnership with other community groups or agencies. This partnership arrangement is one where the partner has a willingness to be part of the development and operation of a new facility (or service) and assists in its implementation, delivery, deployment, funding and operation.



OBJECTIVES

P1: Review and identify existing services and programs and services that partners, such as local subject matter experts, can support or take over through programmatic partnership arrangements and may reduce the park's staffing requirements.

P2: Consider providing opportunities for joint use of space to increase recreation offerings and services. For example, allow non-profit organizations (NPOs) to utilize park space to generate provided programming or services.

P3: Coordinate with the NDPRD Business Services Division to develop formal agreements for partnerships that clearly articulate expectations and roles to promote the effective use of resources.

P4: Plan for and identify resources required for volunteer and partnership coordination.

- Hire a summer seasonal employee for volunteer and partnership coordination.

P5: Identify and develop a list of volunteer opportunities and needs. Promote volunteer opportunities more efficiently using various communication channels.

P6: Identify and provide opportunities for citizens, partners and stakeholders to engage with park planning, conservation, maintenance and enhancement efforts.

P7: Identify and actively pursue "equity partnerships" for facility and amenity improvements, resource sharing and programs.

P8: Strengthen partnerships with social service providers and others agencies to develop strategies that address increased access to the park for at-risk populations.

MARKETING

Goal 7: Increase direct marketing to Bismarck and Minot residents with a focus on opening new, unique market segments.



This goal is driven by an increasingly more diverse and growing market footprint, amplified by an expectation for increased recreation opportunities and an awareness that outdoor recreation is a discretionary use of a visitor's time and money. These factors make it critical for a strong market presence to promote the park's facilities, amenities, services and programs. Increasing marketing and communication efforts are intended to enhance and expand the park's regional significance and awareness.

Changing Demographics: The demographic and socioeconomic markets are changing and becoming more diverse. Based on both demographic (USCB, 2019) and industry market studies (Cairn, 2019), ethnic groups, new residents, youth, seniors and womens populations are growing within the market footprint and should be specifically addressed.

Communication Channels: During public outreach, eighty percent (80%) of respondents indicate that they primarily rely on digital platforms, including email and social media, to get information about the park. It has been known for a while that social media has clearly overcome traditional marketing approaches, especially in terms of efficiency, cost effectiveness and population targeting. The newest trends involve simplifying messaging towards more visual-based content, as well as developing series-based content. Although, it is important to recognize that the traditional communication channels are not completely lost, especially within older populations.



Demographic and industry market studies indicates growth of ethnic groups, new residents, youth, senior and womens populations. These are also the fastest growing populations for outdoor recreation participation.

OBJECTIVES

M1: Biennially survey park visitors and implement a “check-out” survey to determine overall satisfaction levels, future needs and marketing expectations.

M2: Develop a comprehensive long-term marketing plan for the park to identify the marketing strategy and serve as a guide for specific marketing efforts.

- In the meantime, staff can develop a short-term (or annual) marketing plan and outreach goals during each offseason with assistance from the Department’s PIO.
- Utilize a combination of the 2021 NDPRD Visitor Satisfaction Survey and various public outreach methods to inform and direct short-term and long-term marketing strategies.

M3: Formally evaluate existing and new marketing efforts on a regular basis to determine their effectiveness.

M4: Coordinate with the Department’s Public Information Officer (PIO) to provide specific marketing training and/or techniques.

M5: Update master plan’s market and socioeconomic data with the 2020 U.S. Census data when it becomes available.

M6: Consider assigning a part-time summer seasonal employee to assist with marketing and social media needs during the “busy season.”

- Evaluate the allocation of park budget towards increased and targeted outreach and social media campaigns (e.g. sponsored Facebook posts or similar).

M7: Coordinate with existing park partners, and develop new partnerships, to help market the park within the region (e.g. speaking engagements for park staff).

EXPERIENCE

Goal 8: Enhance the visitor experience with customer-focused amenities, services and programs.



Over the past decade, the modern visitor prefers experiences over stuff (Ellis & Rossman, 2008). Creating a high-quality experience is about more than just ensuring visitors have access to a specific amenity or receive the services they desire in a timely and efficient manner. The park is the stage where visitors have high-quality experiences - they are for making memories. Enhancing experiences is about creating value in the moments that matter most and are welcoming, safe, responsive, comfortable and reflective of Fort Stevenson State Park's unique character. This goal focuses on enhancing the visitor experience through amenities, programs and services.

Amenities: Designing and implementing park features that incorporate the park's identity and facilitate the concept of "place" to foster the creation of a vital destination.

Programs & Services should be designed to provide the experiences desirable to meet the needs of the visitors in the community and identified target markets. This involves not only identifying and understanding the diversity of needs, but also applying recreation programming expertise and skills to design, implement and evaluate a variety of desirable experiences for visitors to meet those needs.



OBJECTIVES

EX1: Develop a process for collecting customer expectations and evaluating future opportunities to enhance the overall park experience, including whether there are partner resources for implementation.

EX2: Pursue partnerships with other state-owned properties, sponsors and/or partners to develop “pre-packaged” excursions (or experiences) that customers can purchase (e.g. astronomy camping excursion, camping with guided fishing, etc.).

EX3: Identify local subject matter experts to assist in developing new and diverse programs and events for implementation.

EX4: Consider incorporating features suggested by the public and park staff that provide the “stage” for memorable experiences, including, but not limited to:

- Covered/shaded picnicking facilities
- Outdoor games, such as chess tables, giant checkers, Jenga, bag toss, etc.
- More and different sport courts (e.g. bocce, pickleball, badminton, volleyball, GaGa Pit, Kan Jam, etc.)
- Improved outdoor fitness equipment
- Bike skills area or pump track
- Disc golf course
- Mini golf course

EX5: Incorporate innovative and emerging technology to enhance recreational experiences. This may include:

- The use of digital platforms, such as phone-based augmented reality (AR) or mobile applications, to provide self-directed recreation opportunities
- Automated park entry station

EX6: Develop and implement a wayfinding plan to ensure adequate and consistent signage and improve awareness of facilities, services and programs.

EX7: Implement trail improvements that increase safe access to and throughout the park.

EX8: Support “placemaking” efforts and improvements to strengthen the connection between people and the places they share.

EX9: Provide opportunities for joint use of the park with other community groups and partners, such as libraries, interpretive centers and local schools.

A concept developed in the mid-1960s by Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte, “placemaking” is a concept that facilitates creative patterns of use by paying particular attention to the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. It is the process of creating quality places and space that people want to visit, play and learn in by addressing sociability, access, activities and comfort/image.

INCLUSIVITY

Goal 9: Promote inclusivity for all through optimizing barrier-free facilities, amenities, programs and activities.



Parks are required to be compliant with the requirements of the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which address issues of accessibility. This goal represents a paradigm shift beyond accessibility towards inclusivity. There is much that can be done to foster inclusion, and the purpose of this goal is to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of Fort Stevenson State Park regardless of their age, ability, socioeconomic position, comfort level or experience level. It means removing both the physical and nonphysical barriers that may prevent individuals the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the park (NRPA, 2018).

Nonphysical Constraints refers to addressing (or removing) the nonphysical barriers that may prevent individuals from participating or visiting the park, such as offering alternative language programming/services, providing a “free day” at the park or providing “after work hours” programming.

Physical Constraints: Addressing physical barriers refers to both facility and infrastructural improvements or enhancements. Examples include providing level and stable walking surfaces to connect people to amenities throughout the park, installing resting points at frequent intervals along trails for older individuals or installing platforms at campsites for mobility-impaired individuals.



Universal, barrier-free design is important so that people of all abilities, ages, comfort levels or experience have the opportunity to enjoy the park and recreation opportunities. Once park managers and planners to understand what is needed, integrating solutions into thinking, planning, designing, construction and maintenance is part of every project.

OBJECTIVES

IN1: Strive for and prioritize opportunities to make existing and new park facilities and amenities more universally inclusive, user friendly and accessible to populations with special needs, parents with young children and others who may benefit from the following improvements:

- Multilingual informational and wayfinding kiosk(s) and other culturally-specific opportunities that meet the needs of an increasingly more diverse user base.
- Wider trails with stable walking surfaces
- Benches (or resting points) located frequently along trails
- Barrier-free campsites that include stable surfacing and/or tent platforms
- Buildings or shelters that provide space for large group gatherings
- A trail that connects the campground to the day use area to better accommodate bike and pedestrian uses, while minimizing motorize and non-motorized use conflict.

IN2: Expand recreation opportunities, services and programming that accommodate all ages, abilities and skills.

IN3: Partner with healthcare providers and organizations to deliver health and wellness programming and events.

IN4: Encourage and increase opportunities for at-risk populations to access Fort Stevenson State Park through partnerships, such as social service providers, sponsorships or other equity-type partners.

- One example is to have partners sponsor designated campsites (or cabins) to provide low-income populations the ability to participate in the park experiences and recreation opportunities.

IN5: Utilize Departmental guidance and research industry trends to identify the appropriate industry best practices for implementation.

- Partner with organizations to identify needs, as well as provide assistance or specialized equipment.
- Prioritize the improvements that directly improve public health, safety and welfare and yield the greatest customer benefits.

IN6: Seek grant funding specific to inclusive, universal design projects.

IN7: Collaborate with local partners and sponsors to develop a coalition for the development of a Fort Stevenson State Park-to-Garrison multiuse path.

Supporting Capital Improvements for Consideration

This section identifies several capital improvement projects (CIPs) for consideration at Fort Stevenson State Park that support the preferred vision. The projects were derived from feedback received during public engagements and outreach. While each proposed project may help the park meet its vision, not all the projects may come to fruition. The projects must be implemented within the context of available resources. They must consider the associated long-term operations and maintenance costs, overall feasibility and other financial considerations. In the future, as needs and trends can rapidly change, these projects may need to be reconsidered. These identified projects, as well as others that may be added in the future, will require further investigation through a formal Capital Improvement Plan to better assess each project and ensure the efficient use of public funds.

Project	Estimate Range	
	Low	High
Sewage Lagoon Expansion	\$3,340,000	\$5,010,000
Any new (or expanded) facility will require an expansion to the existing sewage lagoon to comply with health codes. This project assumes the addition of approximately 48 acre-feet of lagoon area to the park with an assumed five (5) foot thick clay liner.		
New Comfort Stations (2)	\$2,330,000	\$3,500,000
The existing comfort station is nearing the end of its useful lifespan with ever-increasing costs to maintain and operate. This project involves removing and replacing the existing comfort station in the West Campground Loop in its entirety. Additionally, industry best practice is to ensure that no campsite is more than five hundred (500) feet away from a comfort station (NPS, 2020). Constructing a new comfort station in the South Campground Loop will help to fulfill this best practice, provide visitors a facility that is nearby and relieve demands on the other two comfort stations at the park.		
NOTE: This project will likely require improvements (or expansion) of the existing sewage lagoon. This cost is not included.		
Day Use Area Improvements	\$2,150,000	\$3,230,000
This project involves the construction of two (2) large picnic shelters, an eighteen (18) hole "self-serve" minigolf course, replacing one (1) paved rectangular sports court (60-ft x 90-ft), rehabilitating the existing beach volleyball court, expanding the sand volleyball court by an additional court (4,000 square feet including 10-ft clearance buffer), investing in a variety of outdoor games equipment, including two (2) KanJam set , one (1) GaGa Pit, two (2) concrete bag toss sets, two (2) concrete ping pong tables and one (1) concrete foosball table, and installing a "Ninja Warrior" type fitness playground.		
Two (2) new, large prefabricated picnic shelters (80-ft x 40-ft) would be constructed to provide additional gathering space in the day use area. Six inch (6") thick concrete slabs for the shelters and thirty (30) total picnic tables are anticipated for this project. Additional equipment and site furnishings, such as sports nets, are included in the overall project estimation.		
NOTE: These can be completed as one large project or as individual projects at much lower individual costs.		

Supporting Capital Improvements for Consideration

Project	Estimate Range	
	Low	High
Park Signage & Wayfinding Improvements	\$500,000	\$750,000
Park signage and wayfinding was identified as an area of importance. This project involves implementing the Department-wide Wayfinding Plan, constructing a new park entrance sign (including design services) and costs for materials and installation of park-wide wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage.		
Park Trail Accessibility & Inclusivity	\$2,330,000	\$3,500,000
Inclusivity and accessibility were identified as high public priorities. This project involves the conversion of the park's trail system (appx. 11.8-miles) to a stable, gravel surface. The trail cross-section is a six (6) foot width, a compacted 4-inch lift of rock dust and crushed gravel fines (rolled smooth). To provide resting locations for elderly and mobility-impaired individuals, one (1) six (6) foot bench will be provided for every 1,400-linear feet of trail. Benches will be surface-mounted to a 4"/6" concrete slab (2.5-ft x 6.5-ft). The estimate range includes costs for design services, clearing/grubbing and re-seeding.		
Park Multiuse Center	\$3,440,000	\$5,160,000
This project involves the design and construction of a new multiuse center (±3,500 square feet) to allow the park to respond to public needs, industry best practices, accommodate a range of uses and be adapted over time to serve evolving needs. The design program is for a flexible event/gathering space for up to seventy-five (75) people with a small stage, covered outdoor gathering area, storage spaces, public restrooms, concession area with small preparation kitchen, and rental space. The main gathering space can be converted for indoor recreation activities.		
NOTE: This project may require improvements (or expansion) of the existing sewage lagoon. This cost is not included.		
Garrison Bay Parking Lot Improvement	\$1,730,000	\$2,600,000
The layout of the marina parking lot does not maximize the use of its space and the layout is not conducive for intuitive wayfinding or access. This project involves completing an asphalt overlay and restriping of the existing parking lot (±5 acres) to meet spatial requirements and industry best practices. This could provide over one hundred (100) trailer parking stalls with an additional twenty (20) standard parking stalls along the western edge.		
DeTrobriand Parking Lot Improvement	\$1,380,000	\$2,070,000
The layout of the marina parking lot does not maximize the use of its space and the layout is not conducive for intuitive wayfinding or access. This project involves completing an asphalt overlay and restriping of the existing parking lot (±4.3 acres) to meet spatial requirements and industry best practices. This could provide nearly one hundred (100) trailer parking stalls (10-ft by 40-ft) and approximately one hundred and fifty (150) standard parking stalls (10-ft by 20-ft).		

Project	Estimate Range	
	Low	High
DeTrobriand Bay Full-Service Cabins	\$3,450,000	\$5,180,000
<p>Five (5) new full-service cabins are to be constructed on the north side of DeTrobriand Bay. Each cabin will be provided with one (1) oversized parking stall (12-ft x 22-ft). This project anticipates 250 linear feet of six (6) foot wide concrete sidewalk to provide access from each parking stall to the cabins. One (1) courtesy dock will be available for each cabin on the north side of the marina. The estimation range includes the costs for the necessary infrastructure, utilities and fixtures, furnishings and equipment (FF&E). The conversion of an existing natural access road (appx. 0.5 miles) to a twenty-two (22) foot wide gravel road (8" thickness) and cable guardrails is included in the estimation. The project includes constructing an approximately one (1) mile long, six (6) foot wide trail from the new cabins to the main park location.</p> <p>NOTE: This project will likely require improvements (or expansion) of the existing sewage lagoon. This cost is not included.</p>		
Garrison Bay Full-Service Cabins	\$1,850,000	\$2,780,000
<p>This project involves the demolition of the existing North and South cabins and constructing five (5) new full-service cabins. Each cabin will be provided with one (1) oversized parking stall (12-ft x 22-ft). This project anticipates 250 linear feet of six (6) foot wide concrete sidewalk to provide access from each parking stall to the cabins. The estimation range includes the costs for improving the existing natural surface access to a graveled surface and the necessary infrastructure, utilities and fixtures, furnishings and equipment (FF&E).</p> <p>NOTE: This project will likely require improvements (or expansion) of the existing sewage lagoon. This cost is not included.</p>		
Seasonal Housing Improvements	\$2,170,000	\$3,260,000
<p>This project involves the construction of a new seasonal housing eight-plex building to house up to ten (10) individuals in the area nearby the existing maintenance shop. The design program of the building is to be two (2) floors with similar floorplans that includes: three (3) private single bedrooms, one (1) double room, private restroom and separate private shower, shared living room and shared kitchenette. This estimation range includes the costs for a gravel parking lot and the necessary infrastructure, utilities and fixtures, furnishing and equipment (FF&E).</p> <p>NOTE: This project will likely require improvements (or expansion) of the existing sewage lagoon. This cost is not included.</p>		
South Access Road Upgrade	\$822,000	\$1,230,000
<p>This project is to improve maintenance access and access to the dog park by upgrading the existing (\pm0.5 mile) southern access road from gravel surfacing to a 24-foot wide asphalt roadway. This project includes upgrading the existing dog park parking area to an asphalt lot.</p>		

Supporting Capital Improvements for Consideration

Project	Estimate Range	
	Low	High
Fitness Trail Equipment Upgrades	\$124,000	\$190,000
The existing fitness trail equipment is past its useful lifespan and is no longer effective. This project involves the removal of the existing fitness trail equipment. The old equipment will be replaced with modern fitness equipment with an appropriate fall protection surfacing.		
Fishing Platforms (3)	\$435,000	\$650,000
This project involves constructing three (3) static fishing platforms along the shoreline to improve fishing access on Lake Sakakawea.		
Beach Access Improvement	\$1,153,000	\$1,730,000
The construction of a beach "sandbox" (400-ft x 100-ft) allows the park to provide a quality beach area and experience, while mitigating the negative effects from lake fluctuations. The project includes the cost for clearing/grubbing, construction of a retaining wall (± 600 linear feet at 4-ft height), drain rock, geotextile separation fabric, beach sand, four (4) pre-fabricated shade structures, fall protection guardrail (± 600 linear feet) and various fixtures, furnishings and equipment (FF&E).		
Trail Extension & Improvements	\$104,000	\$160,000
The purpose of this project is to increase accessibility and inclusivity on the park's trail system. A new ± 0.5 miles long, gravel trail segment will be constructed that connects the campgrounds to the day use area. This eliminates the requirement of walking or bike on the roadways (or shoulders) to access the day use area and DeTrobriand Marina, and ultimately reduces the vehicular and bike/pedestrian conflicts. To provide resting locations for elderly, those with children and mobility-impaired individuals, one (1) six (6) foot bench is to be provided for every quarter-mile of trail. Benches will be surface-mounted to a 4-inch thick concrete slab (2.5-ft by 6.5-ft). The estimate includes costs for clearing/grubbing and revegetation.		
Bike Skills Park	\$251,000	\$380,000
This project increases the customer experience at the park. Mountain biking has led to a recent boom in the popularity of bike skills parks. These venues provide an opportunity for mountain bikers of all levels of experience to develop a range of skills including bike handling, balancing, jumping and turning. This project is for the installation of a bike skills park, including the required site work, infrastructure and utilities.		

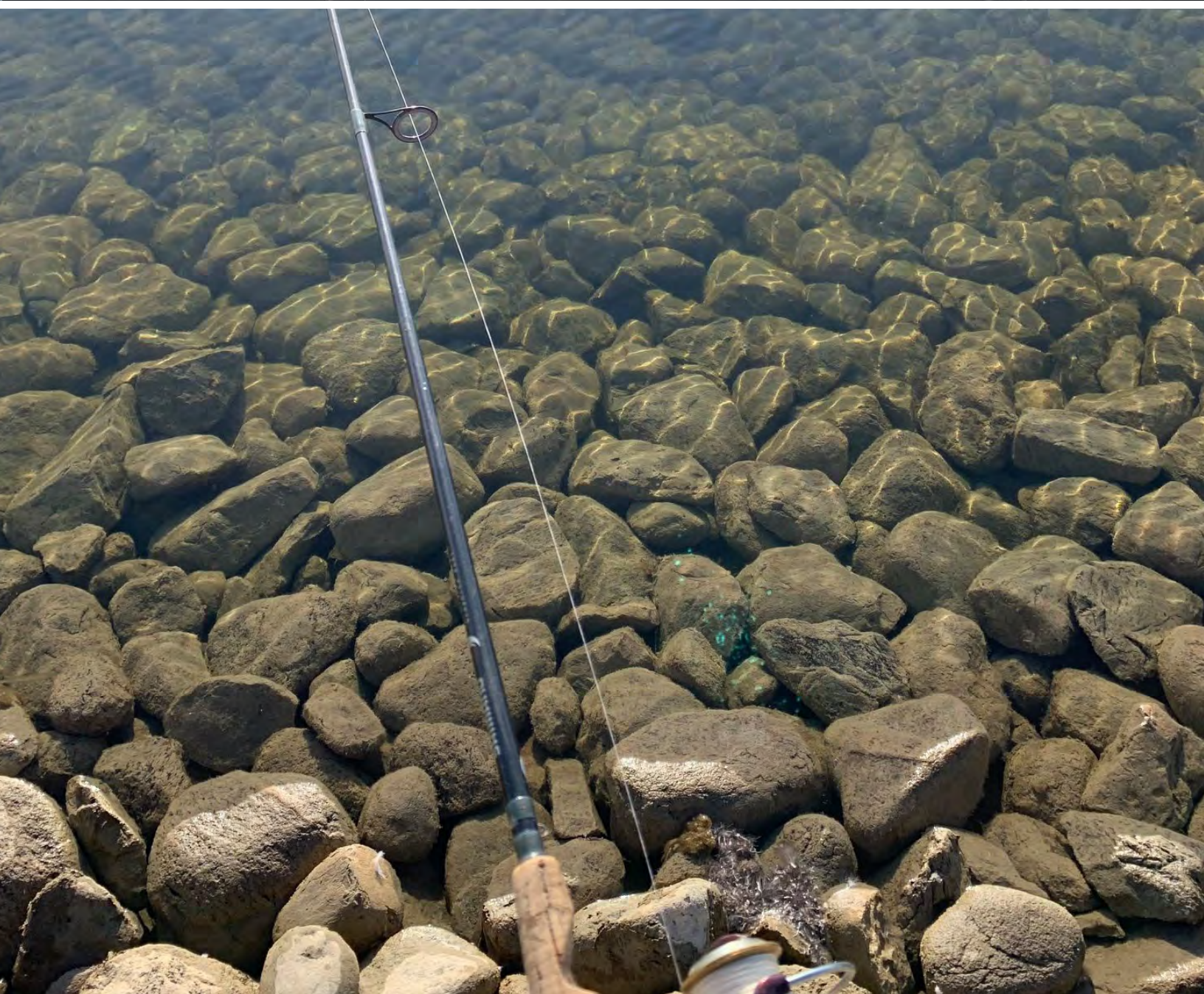
Project	Estimate Range	
	Low	High
Marina Layout Improvement	\$8,352,000	\$12,530,000
This project involves hiring a consultant to redesign both marina layouts to increase the quantity of boat slips and optimize water and boat access. The estimate range assumes the addition of sixty (60) new marina slips (split evenly between both marinas) and upgrades to the gangway system.		
FSSP-to-Garrison Multiuse Path	\$4,839,000	\$7,260,000
This project increases the park's accessibility to/from the nearby city of Garrison, North Dakota by providing a ±3.8-mile paved multiuse path for cyclists and pedestrians. The cross-section of the multiuse path is to be a ten (10) foot wide path with a minimum cross slope of two percent (2%), one (1) foot gravel shoulders on either side and sterilized and compacted subgrade. The trail bed consists of nine (9) inches of compacted road-standard crushed gravel and 2.5 inches of compacted asphalt. The trail is proposed to support a minimum of 12,500 pounds for maintenance purposes.		
NOTE: As this project is outside of the park's property, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department does not anticipate bearing the full cost of implementation. This project is expected to be implemented in partnership with local community, stakeholders and sponsors.		
This estimation range DOES NOT include costs for any potential land or trail easement acquisitions that may be required for implementation.		

Figure 34: Recommended Capital Project Map





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