



ELLENSBURG PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING PLAN

Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting

October 8, 2025



Presentation Overview

- Planning Process & Needs Assessment Overview
- Demographics
- Outreach Results
- Trends & Market Findings
- Parks, Facilities, and Trails
- Maintenance & Funding
- Key Needs
- Next Steps
- Q&A/Discussion

PROS PLANNING PROCESS & NEEDS ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Plan

Update the 2016 Plan to create a realistic and community-supported investment strategy for park improvements and operations.

This planning process will:

- Identify community priorities for the next 10 years
- Identify needs for parks, outdoor and indoor recreation facilities, and programs
- Create a prioritized capital improvement plan
- Identify a sustainable funding strategy to balance desired improvements, development, and ongoing operations
- Ensure RCO compliance for grant applications



Planning Process

WE ARE HERE!



Needs Assessment Overview



DEMOGRAPHICS

Community Profile



21,260

Population (2025 estimate)



25,631

2046 Population Estimate (20.6% increase)



9,242

Housing Units



24.9%

Non-White Population

More diverse than Kittitas County (20.2%)
and less diverse than the State (35.7%)



21%

Live Below Poverty Line

More living in poverty than Kittitas County (14.3%)
and the State (9.9%)



Community Profile

Age

15.1%

Ellensburg residents are **under 18**

10.9%

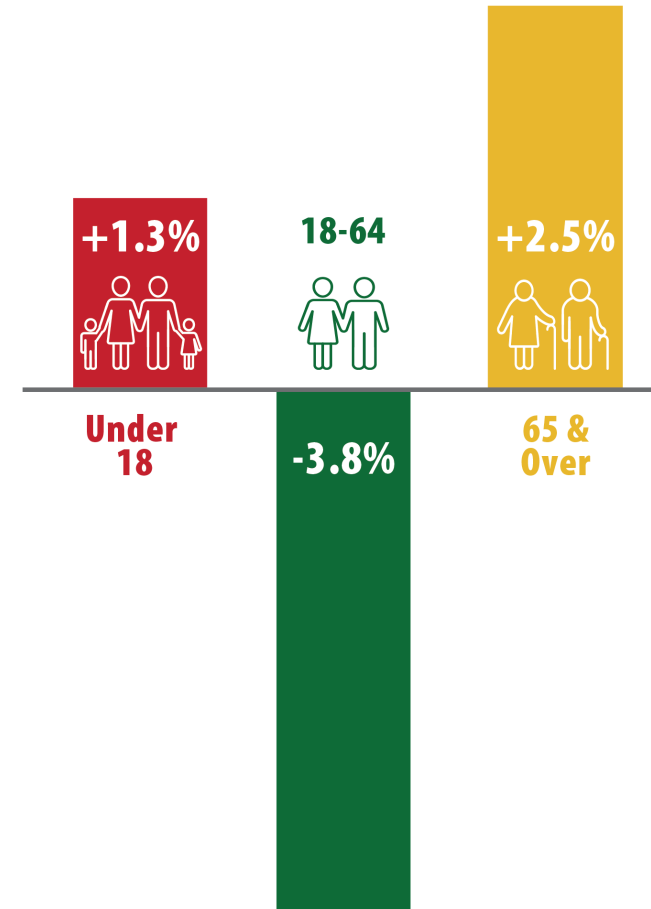
Ellensburg residents are **over 65**

26.7

Median Age

This median age is lower than Kittitas County (37.9) and the State (38.2); likely largely attributed to the presence of Central Washington University.

2010-2023 Age Range Change

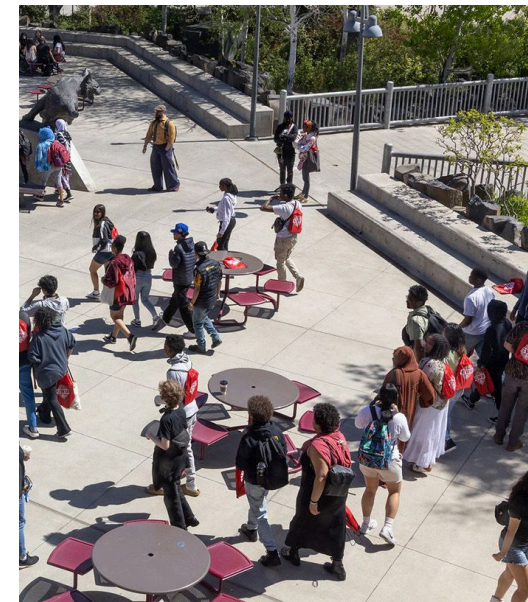


SOURCE: 2010 and 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Other Park Users

Central Washington University

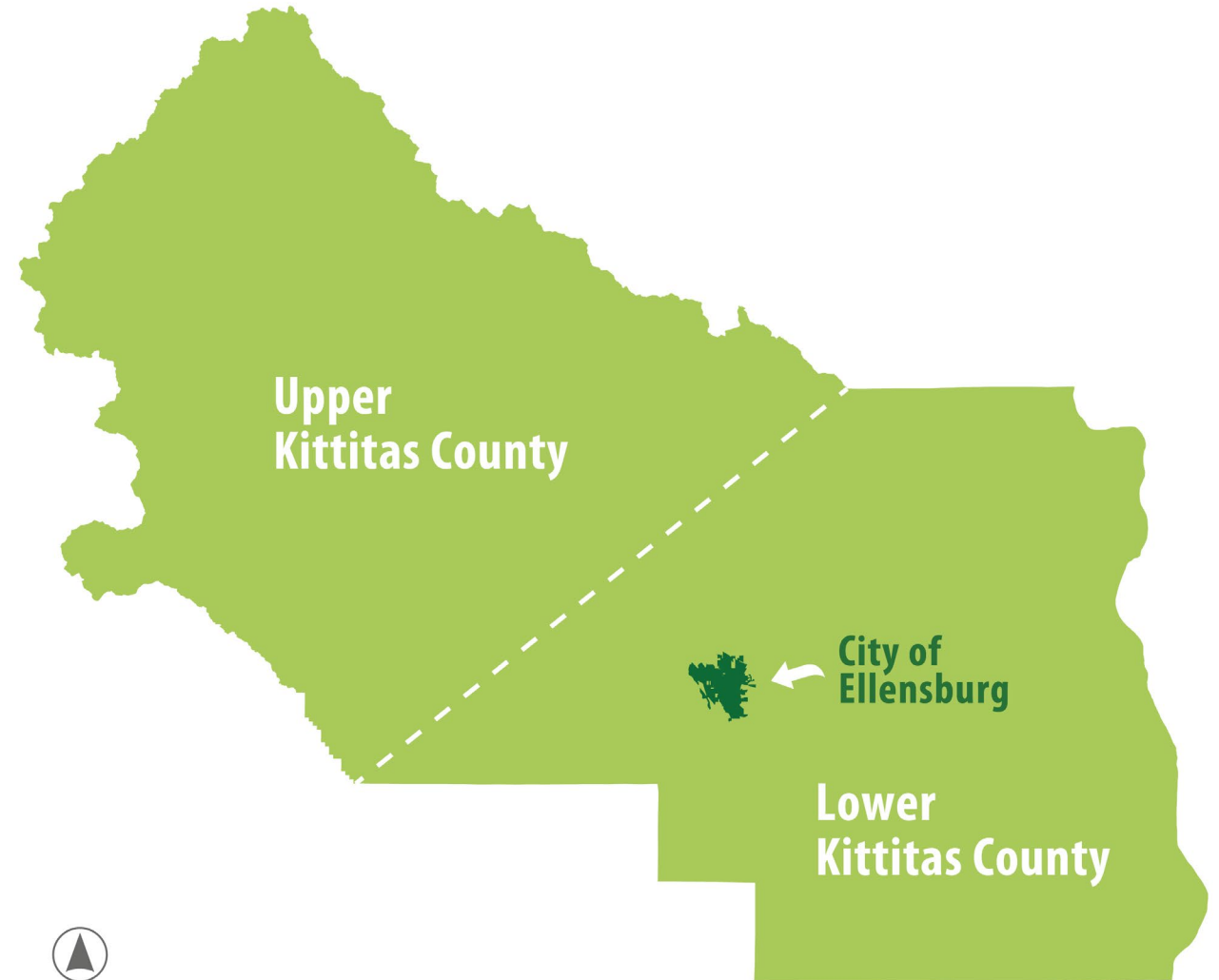
- 2024-25 Enrollment: **10,527**, 49.5% of Ellensburg's total 2025 population
- 380-acre campus including various indoor and outdoor recreation facilities
- Increases demand on City facilities during the academic year



Other Park Users

Kittitas County Residents

- Many of Ellensburg's park and recreation users are Lower Kittitas County residents

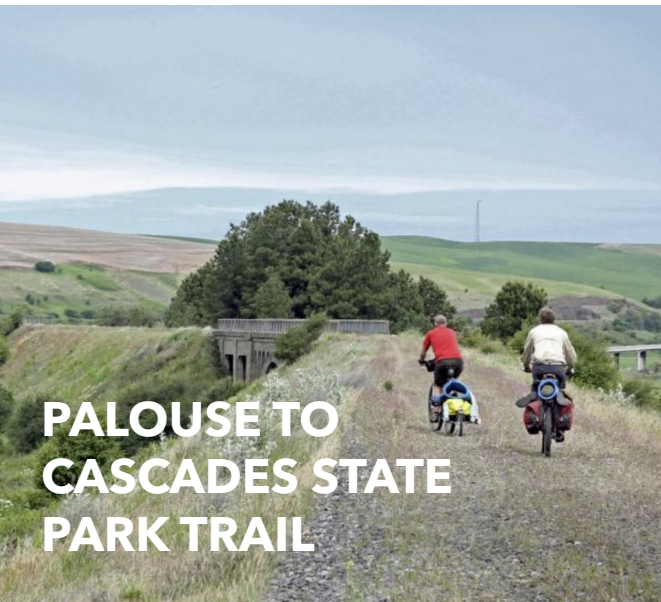


Other Park Users

Visitors



- Visitors spent **\$359.0 million** in Kittitas County and **\$187.1 million** in Ellensburg in 2024, with most visitors coming from the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue market
- Most visitors come to Ellensburg for **events** and **outdoor recreation**
- Tourism is strongest from **July-December**



OUTREACH RESULTS

Engagement to Date

- **Pop-ups**

- Farmer's Market
- Hal Holmes Center Open House
- Bite of the Burg

- **Online Community Survey**

- August 16 – September 28, 2025

**ELLENSBURG
PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE PLAN**

If the City had more money to invest in parks and recreation, which of the following should be our top priorities? (Rank your top 5 using the numbered stickers)

Improve park maintenance (e.g., trash removal, mowing, restoration, cleaning)	Repair or replace worn or older park features (e.g., playgrounds, sports courts, and picnic tables)	Replace or renovate the Memorial Pool and Fitness Center
Build a new fieldhouse	Acquire and develop new parks	Build more trails and pathways
Add a greater variety of recreation amenities to existing parks	Invest in sports, parks, and downtown activities that attract visitors	Offer more recreation programs, events, and activities for local residents
Other (write on sticky note)		

Sticky notes on the bottom row:

- Stash Park!
- Stash Park!
- Reduce some sports courts
- Expand state park

Community Online Questionnaire

Who responded?



**1,125 Total Respondents
in 6 weeks**

City Residents

80% of respondents live in Ellensburg

County Residents

19% of respondents live nearby in lower Kittitas County

Diverse Users

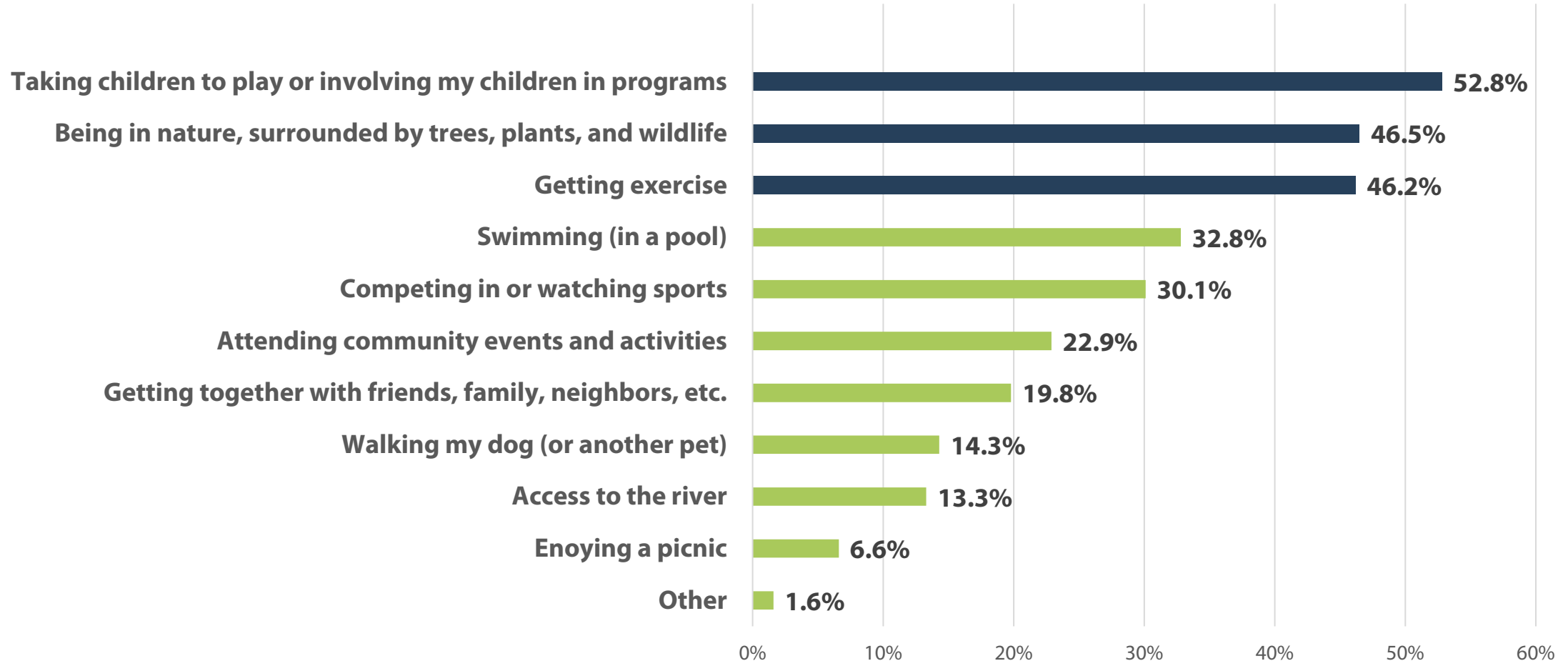
Respondents represent a wide spectrum of different types of park users

Frequent Users

70% of respondents use a City park or recreation facility weekly

Community Online Questionnaire

Top Reasons for Visiting Parks and Recreation Facilities



Community Online Questionnaire

Ranked Priorities for Top Features or Facilities to Be Improved or Added

Feature or Facility	Survey Ranking (Non-Residents)	Survey Ranking (Residents)	Pop-Up Rankings (All Responses)
Swimming pool	1	2	1
Splash pad	2	1	4
Additional indoor recreation space/sport courts	3	3	11
Neighborhood playgrounds	4	4	7
Picnic shelters, pavilions, or shade structures	5	6	10
Sports fields	6	8	16
Greenspace, trees, and natural habitat areas	7	7	2
Universal, all-inclusive playground	8	9	9
Multi-use trails	9	5	3
Nature trails	10	10	8
Pickleball Courts	11	11	13
Tennis Courts	12	13	14
Dog Parks	13	14	12
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	14	12	15
Community Gardens	15	15	6
Art, cultural, or interpretive elements	16	16	5

Top Results

Improvements to the swimming pool and a splashpad are top priorities.

Community Online Questionnaire

Ranked Top Priorities for Investment

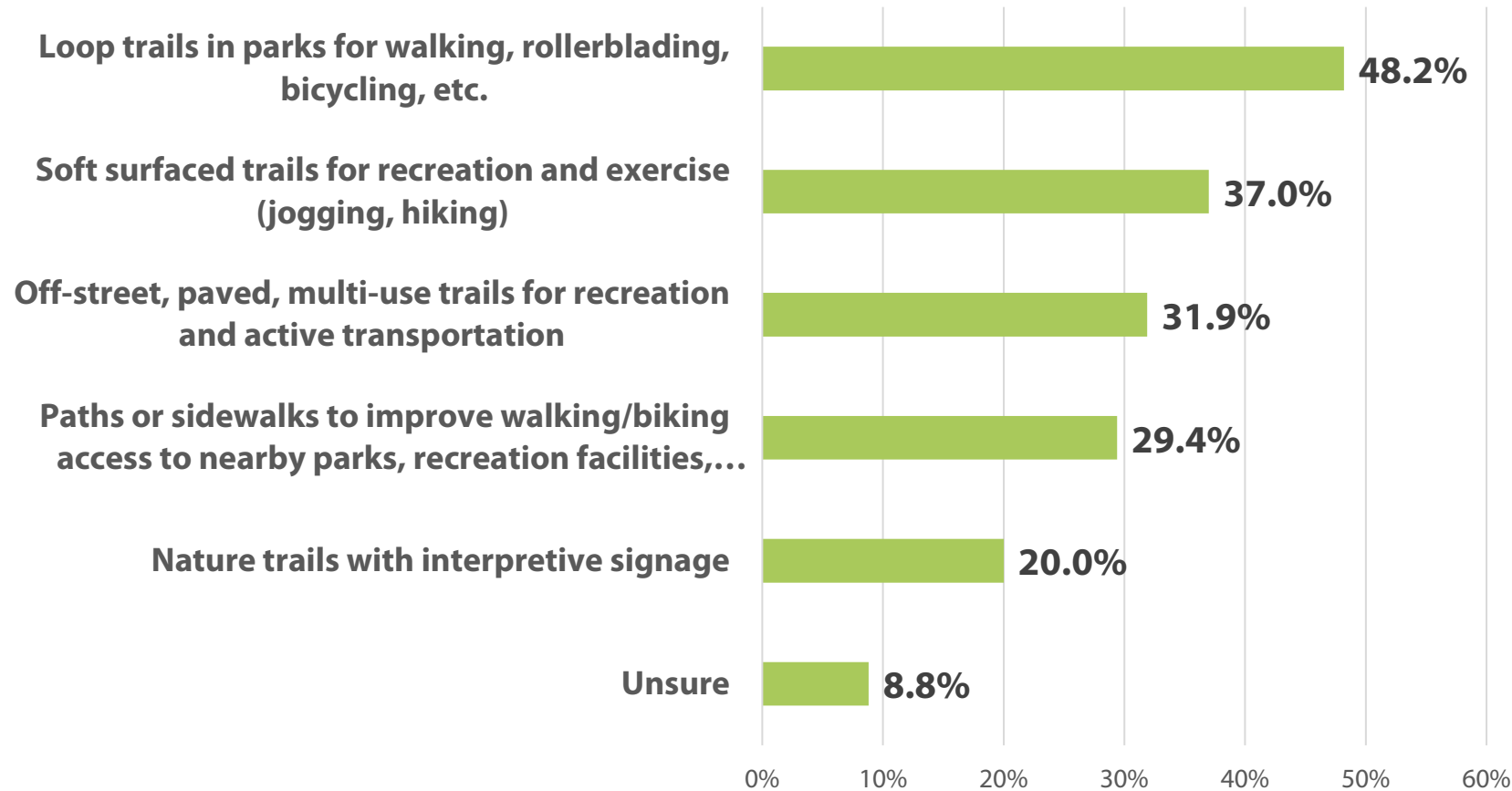
Feature or Facility	Survey Ranking (Non-Residents)	Survey Ranking (Residents)	Pop-Up Rankings (All Responses)
Replace/renovate Memorial Pool	1	1	1
Repair/replace older park features	2	2	2
Build a new fieldhouse	3	3	5
Add variety to existing parks	4	4	4
Offer more programs/events	5	5	6
Invest in sports/parks/downtown	6	8	9
Build more trails and pathways	7	7	3
Acquire and develop new parks	8	6	8
Replace/renovate Adult Activity Center	9	9	-
Improve park maintenance	10	10	7
Build a new Cultural Arts Center	11	11	-

Top Results

Memorial pool renovations and repairing/replacing older park features are the top two funding priorities.

Community Online Questionnaire

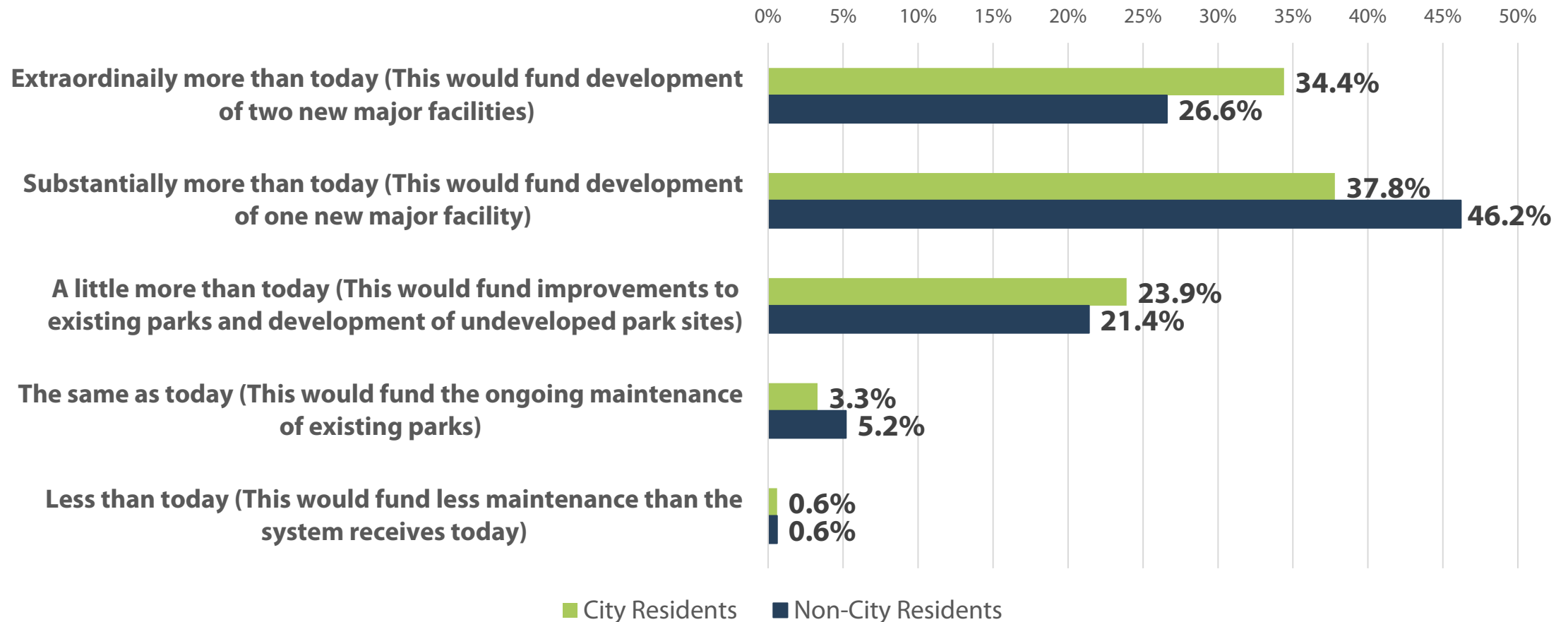
Ranked Priorities for Trail or Pathway Types



47% of residents think more trails and pathways are needed

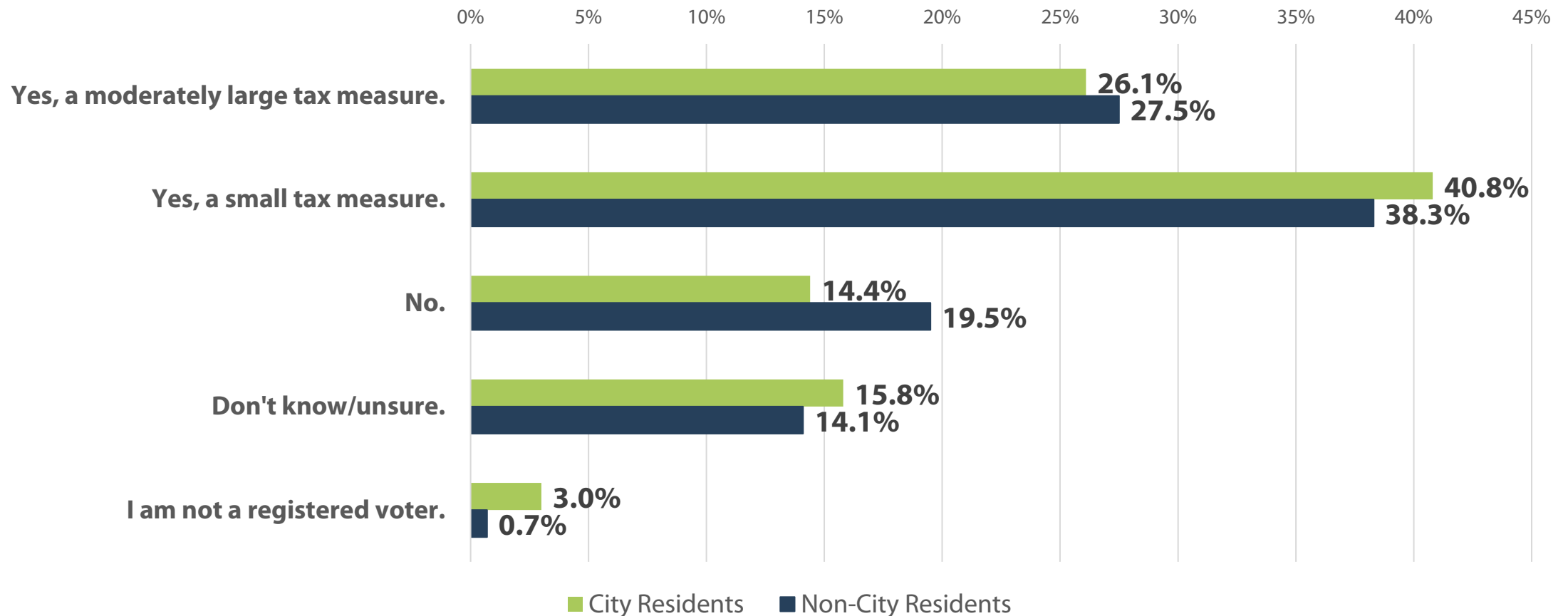
Community Online Questionnaire

How much should the City invest in the system?



Community Online Questionnaire

Depending on the tax rate and types of projects proposed, would you be willing to vote in favor of a tax measure to improve the park system?



TRENDS & MARKET FINDINGS

Statewide Trends

Washington Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Top Four Statewide Participation Trends (2017-2023)



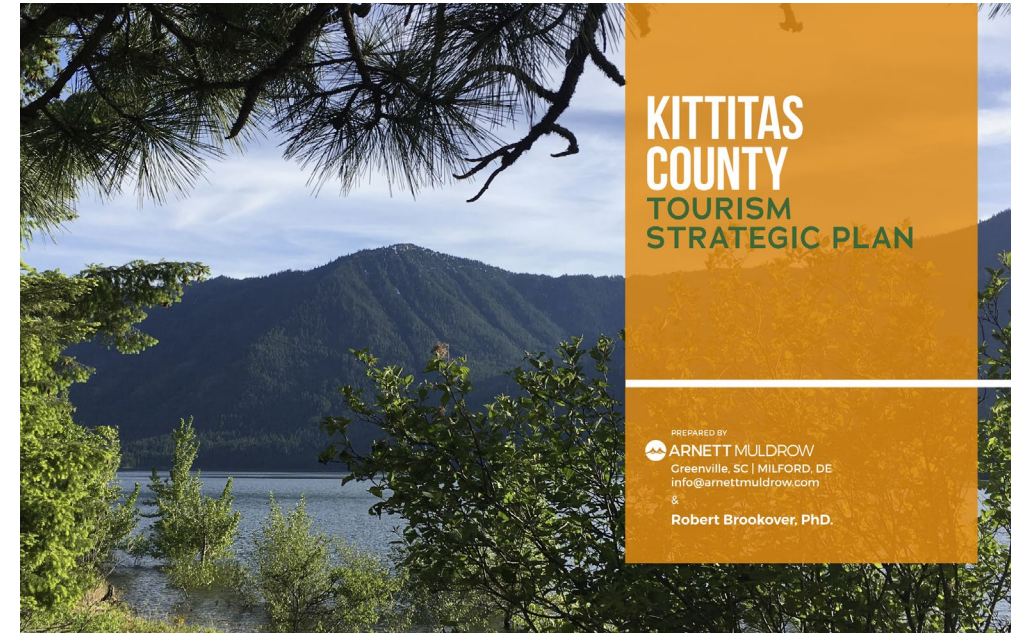
Top Four Activities in North Cascades Region (2017-2023)



Local Opportunities

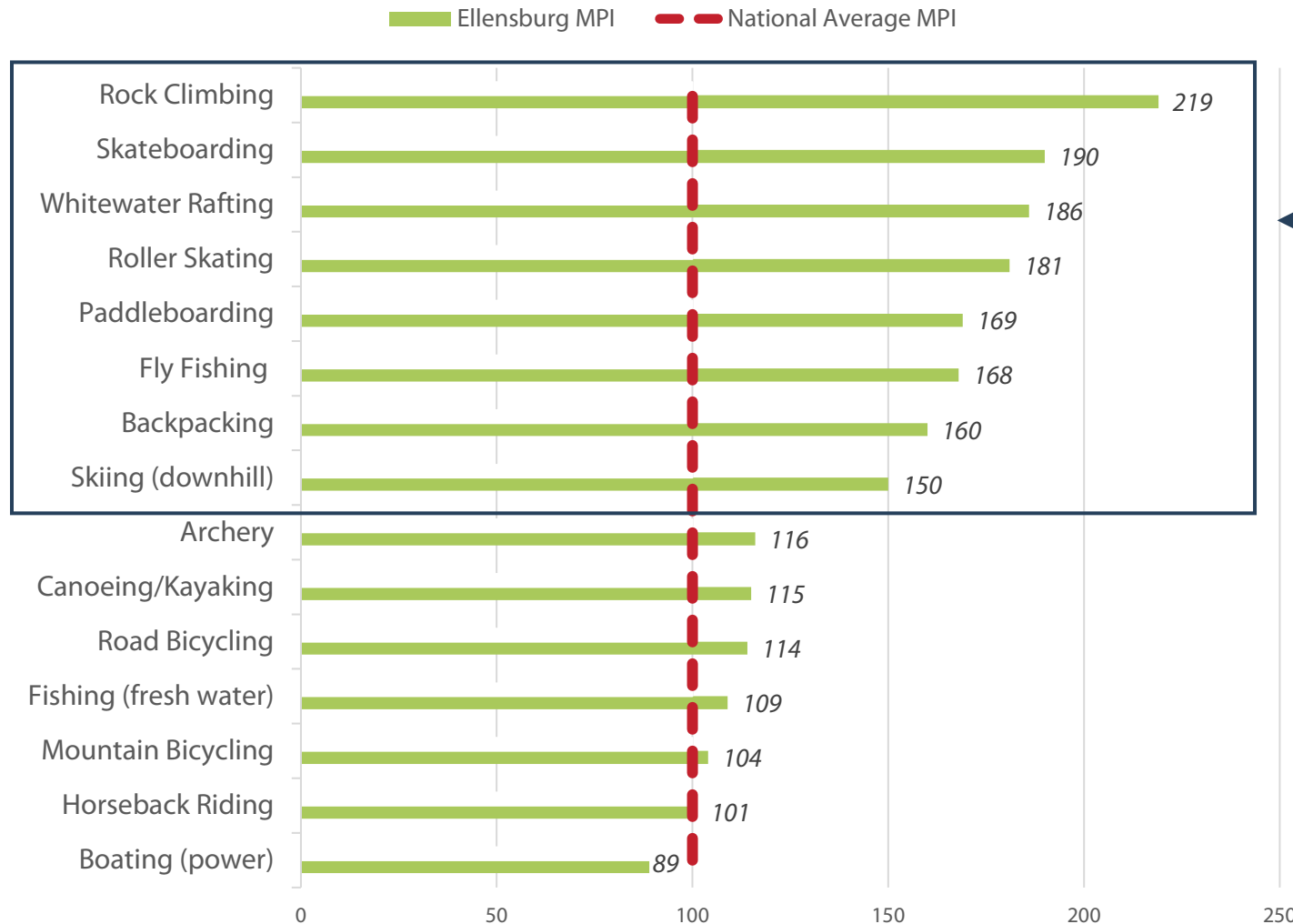
Kittitas County Tourism Strategic Plan 2025-2035

- **Enhancing trail connectivity & outdoor access**
- **Developing sport tourism infrastructure** (sports fields, recreation centers, multi-use event venues)
- **Strategic marketing and visitor education** to highlight year-round recreation opportunities
- **Reinvestment in community infrastructure** (trailheads, signage, public transit options, and downtown revitalization efforts)



Ellensburg Recreation Participation

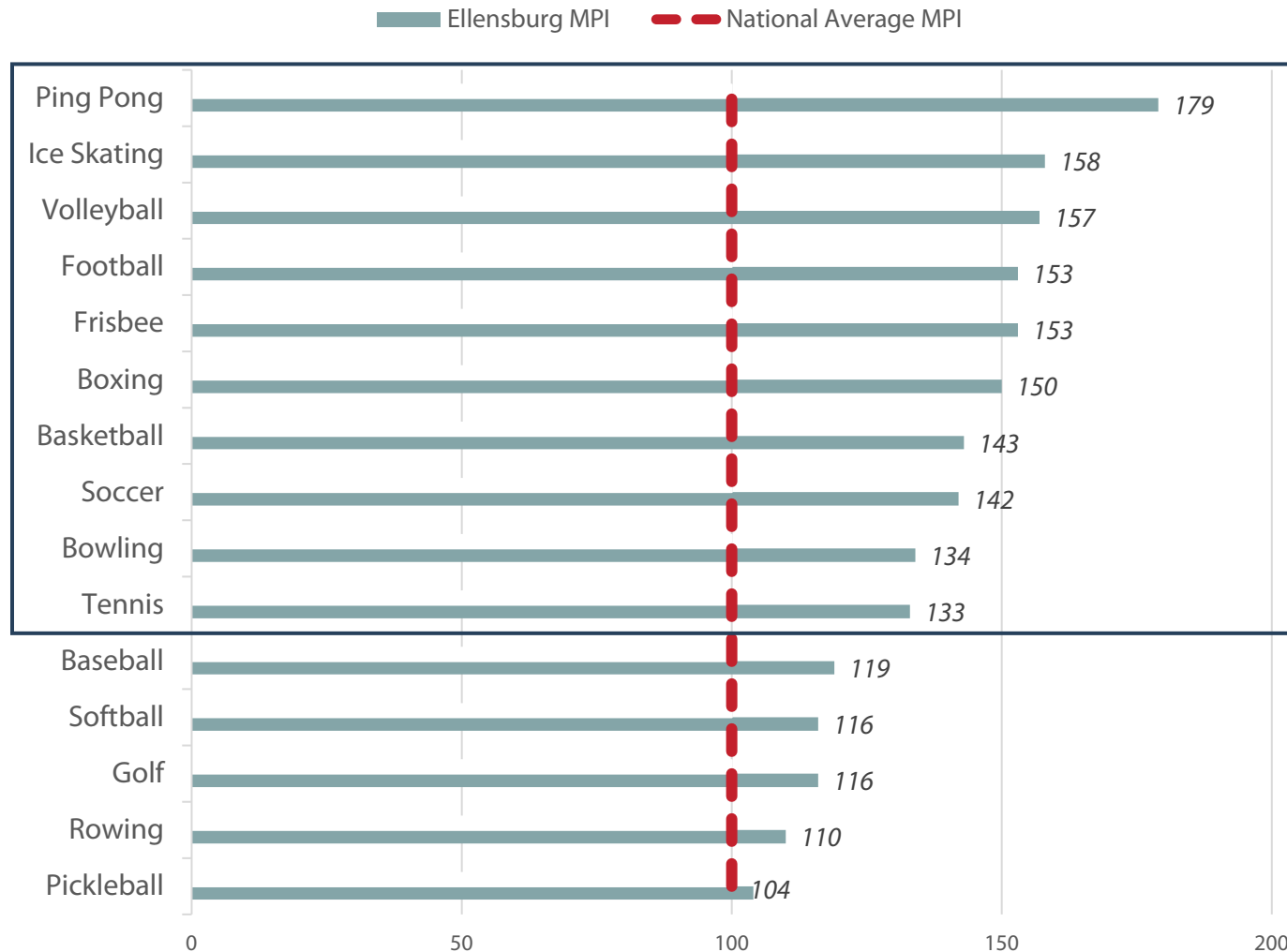
ESRI Sports & Leisure Market Potential Index (2025) - Outdoor Recreation



Ellensburg has a significantly higher market demand than the national average for these activities.

Ellensburg Recreation Participation

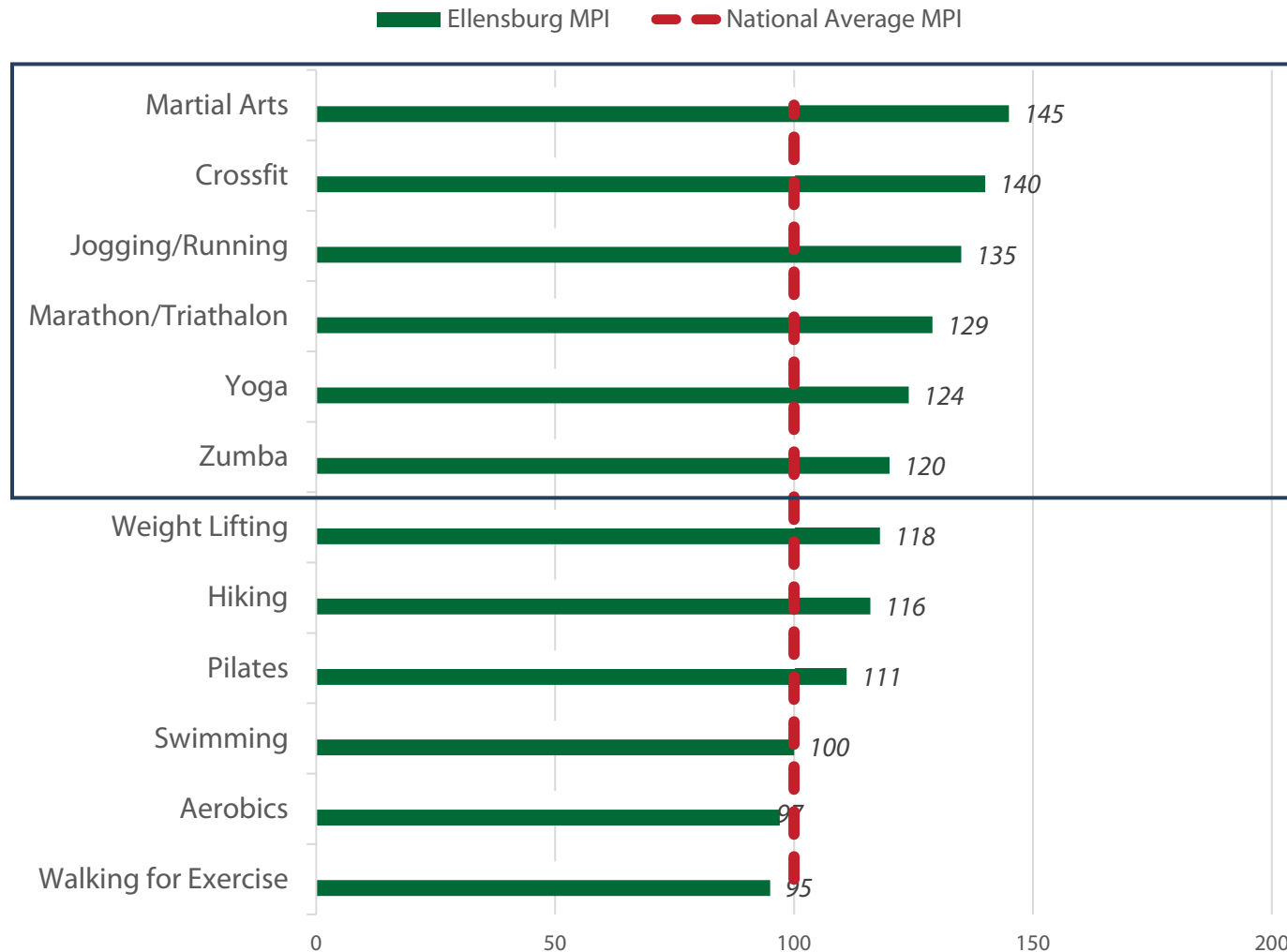
ESRI Sports & Leisure Market Potential Index (2025) - Sports



Ellensburg has a significantly higher market demand than the national average for these activities.

Ellensburg Recreation Participation

ESRI Sports & Leisure Market Potential Index (2025) - Fitness



Ellensburg has a significantly higher market demand than the national average for these activities.

**PARKS, FACILITIES, TRAILS,
MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS**

Parkland Level of Service

Is existing parkland enough?

Parkland Level of Service (LOS) Standards measure the amount of parkland available to a community relative to its population size.

- This is expressed as a ratio of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.
- A higher LOS means more parkland per resident.



2025 Park Acres:
350.6



2025 Population:
21,260

2025 Acres per
1,000 People: **16.5** LOS



2046 Projected Population:
25,631

2046 Acres per
1,000 People: **13.7** LOS
If no new parks
are added.

Parkland Level of Service

Ellensburg Parkland Overall LOS

NRPA Park Metric Category	Ellensburg (2025)	Ellensburg (2046)	National Agencies Population 20,000 to 49,999
Acres per 1,000 Residents (LOS)			
Lower Quartile	16.5	13.7	5.7
Median			10.9
Upper Quartile			17.5

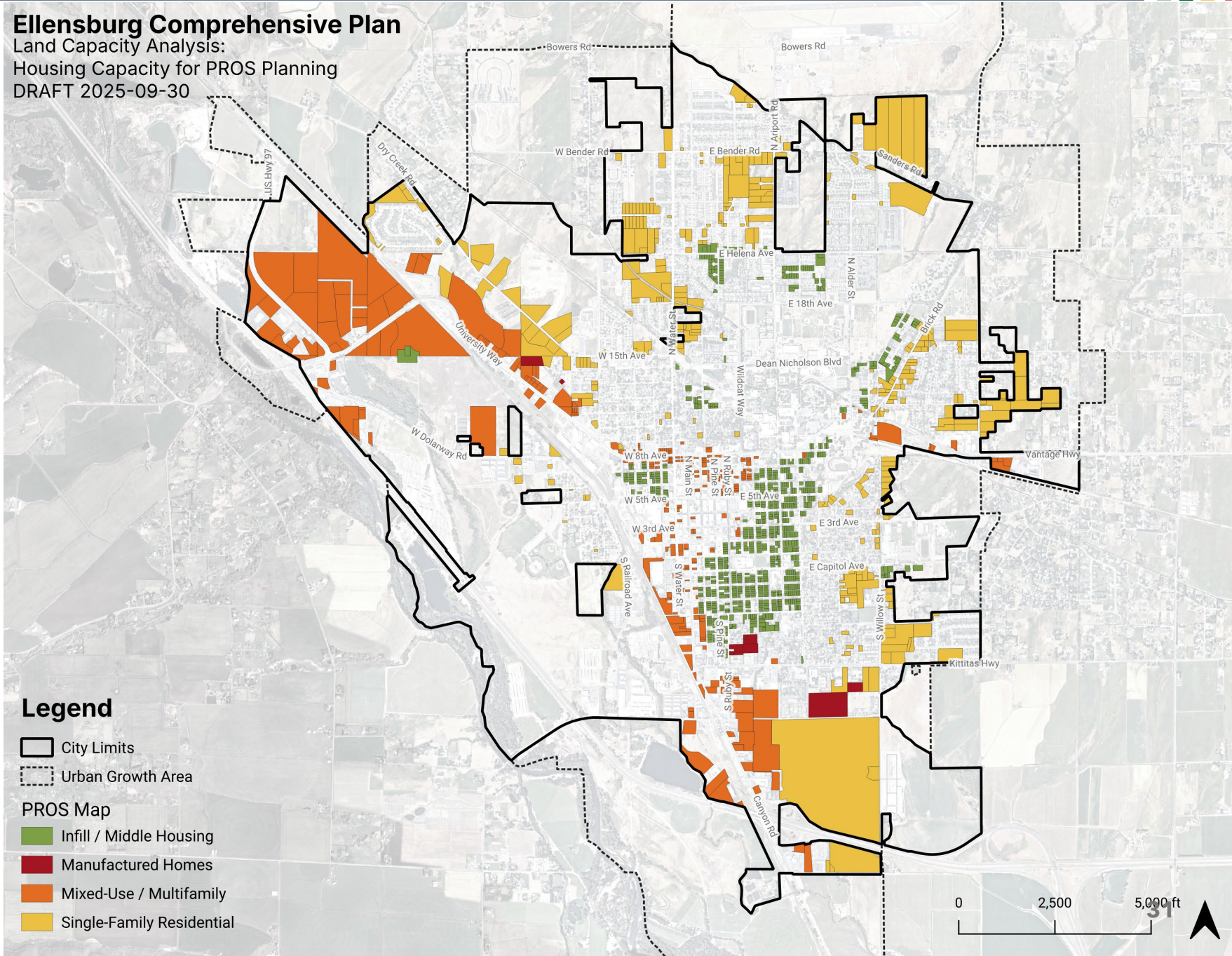
LOS Benchmarking

Ellensburg's existing and future parkland LOS is higher than the median of other similarly sized cities.

Future Residential Growth Areas

- Infill/middle housing areas may see modest density increases
- A large portion of the mixed-use / multifamily areas in NW are unlikely to be developed in near future
- Many single-family areas in the north are platted and/or in progress
- The large single-family lot in south (Canals of Ellensburg) is TBD

Ellensburg Comprehensive Plan Land Capacity Analysis: Housing Capacity for PROS Planning DRAFT 2025-09-30



Recreation Facility Level of Service

Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Recreation Facility	Comparison to Similar Sized National Agencies (20,000-49,999)
Playgrounds	-
Community Gardens	+
Basketball Courts	+
Volleyball Courts	+
Diamond fields	=
Skate Park	+
Dog Parks	+
Rectangular Fields	+
Splashpads	-
Swimming Pools	+
Pickleball Courts	+
Disc Golf Course	+

Recreation Facility Benchmarking

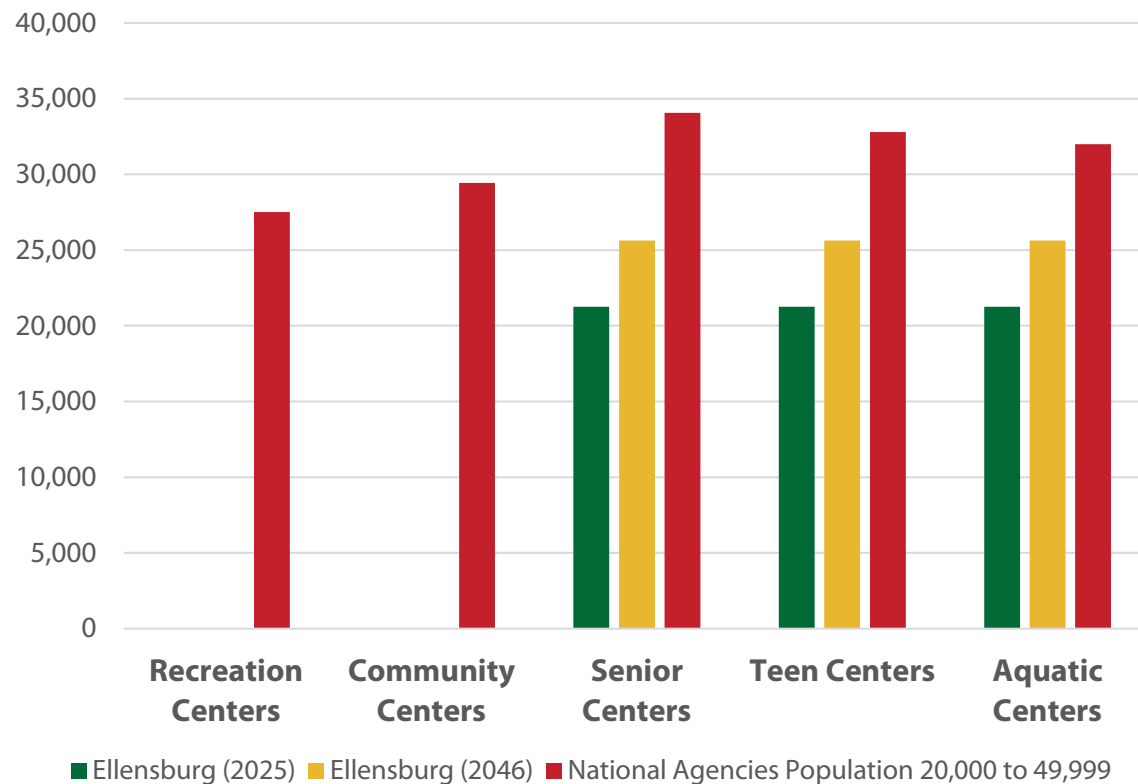
Compared to communities of similar size, Ellensburg:

- Generally, provides more facilities per resident than communities of a similar size
- Provides fewer playgrounds and splashpads

Recreation Facility Level of Service

Indoor Recreation Facilities

Number of Residents Per Major Recreation Facility



Major Facility Benchmarking

63% of agencies of Ellensburg's size provide a recreation center, and **60%** provide a community center.

Major Facility Needs

Preliminary Needs Assessment Findings

FIELDHOUSE

- Will support sports, programs, and social gatherings
- Would replace previous community center
- Will serve more people and varied interests
- Council approved RFP for development partnership strategy

MEMORIAL POOL & FITNESS

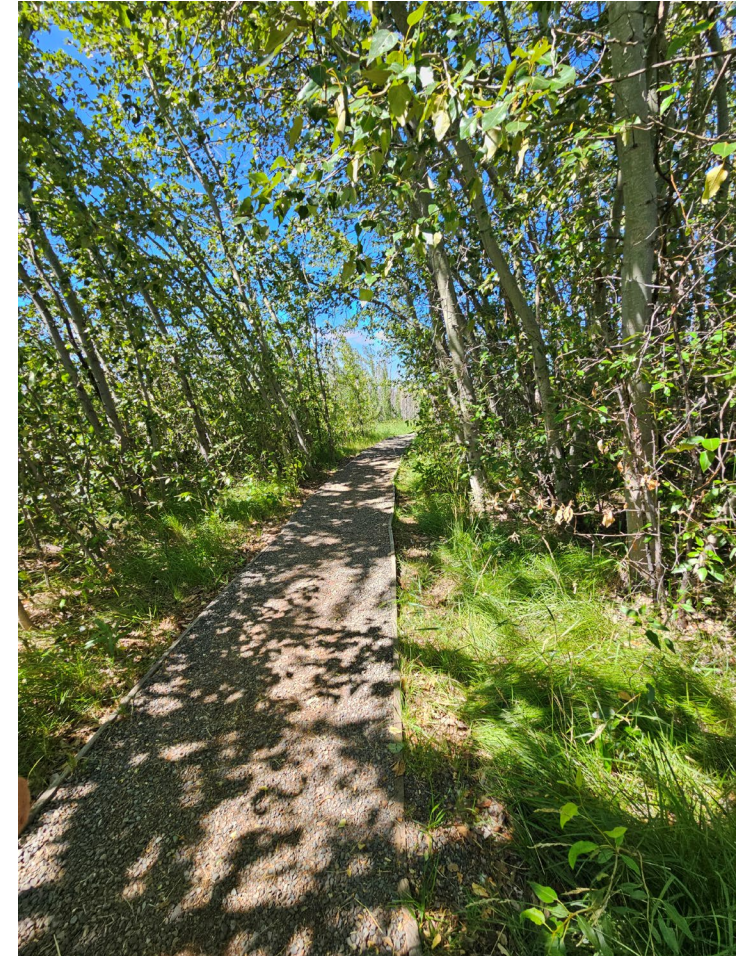
- Supports aquatics and limited fitness opportunities
- Needs repair and long-term replacement
- Serves specialized interests
- HVAC and flat roof repairs underway; slanted roof repairs are budgeted
- Full facility assessment is needed

ADULT/SENIOR AND YOUTH CENTERS

- Supports variety of passive activities and gatherings
- Will need reinvestment as facilities age
- Serves targeted age groups and limited uses
- No improvements in motion
- Needs should be revisited after fieldhouse is developed and as buildings age

Trails

- Trail connections are needed to connect the State **Palouse-Cascades Trail** around the city
- **Loop trails** can provide an active recreation opportunities within parks
- **Ellensburg's Comprehensive Plan** is currently being updated and will include a more in-depth trails analysis



Maintenance and Funding Needs

- **More staff** will be needed to support fieldhouse and pool operations and maintenance (when renovated or replaced).
- **Additional maintenance and operations funding** is needed.
 - 16% cost recovery rate (2024)
 - Revenues haven't kept pace with increasing operations and maintenance expenditures.
- **Additional capital funding** is needed.
 - Capital expenditures last 10 Years: \$1,816,548
 - Fieldhouse estimated cost: \$16 Million

KEY NEEDS

Key Needs

Preliminary Needs Assessment Findings

TOP NEEDS

- Sustainable Funding Sources
- Splash Pad
- Critical Pool Repairs
- Fieldhouse Development (*with additional staff*)
- Playground Replacements

SECONDARY NEEDS

- Repair/Replacement of Older Park Features
- Rotary Park Development (next phase)
- Riverfront Park Improvements (e.g., trails, picnic area, non-motorized boat launch)
- New Neighborhood Parks (with new growth)

LONG-TERM NEEDS

- Pool Renovation (New Facility)
- Reed Park Renovation
- Multiuse Trail Connections
- Greater Variety of Facilities

Q&A

Are you surprised by any of the findings from this analysis?

Do you agree with the key needs that were identified?

Any other questions or comments?

NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

- Vision, Goals, & Objectives
- Site Recommendations
- CIP & Maintenance Costs
- PRAC Meeting #3 (November or December)



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