

KEY STAKEHOLDER/FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As a fundamental component of the planning process, the project team conducted a series of focus group interviews over a two-day period in August 2019. stakeholder focus groups and interviews were developed for an understanding of recreational needs for residents in the Channahon Park District. Questions asked of interview participants were designed to better understand current strengths, opportunities and priorities for the District.

The feedback received from community stakeholders is critical to the discovery phase of the process. Invited stakeholders included:

- Board of Commissioners
- Village Departments
- Elected Officials
- Rotary Club
- Park District Staff
- Business Community
- Channahon School District
- Students
- Residents and user groups

1.2 STRENGTHS

Based on feedback from key stakeholder interviews, four common themes arose in many conversations. These themes included quality programs, superior staff, strong partnerships, and the variety of facility offerings.

The District is providing great value to residents through its recreation programs. Stakeholders agree that the variety and affordability of programming is a great strength of the District. The District's youth programs are highly praised with strong participation bases in sports, aquatics, afterschool care, and early childhood. The community also shows support and appreciation for various special events provided by the District, highlighted each year by the Three Rivers Fest.

Stakeholders also commended the District for the quality of staff. Employees of the District are perceived as highly knowledgeable, committed, and responsive to the needs of residents. Staff are also noted for being resourceful by continuing to provide quality service and offerings, even when presented with funding challenges. The District strives for innovation and leadership believes in a culture that allows ideas to be heard and explored. Staff also represent an important presence in the community that provide recreational outlets and help bring residents together in a safe environment.

Over the years, the District has proven very successful in developing and sustaining partnerships that benefit the community. The District has a great reputation as a team player in the Village and there is good communication and working relationships cross-departmentally. Youth programs have also been strengthened through partnerships created with the schools and library. More recently, stakeholders highlighted the collaboration with the Township to develop the first fully ADA accessible playground in Channahon, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the District's partnering abilities as a strength. Stakeholders agree that existing partnerships must continue to be nurtured and leveraged, while also seeking new opportunities for synergy.

Stakeholders also identified the quality and variety of parks and facilities that are provided by the District. Parks in the district are considered to be diverse, well-maintained, and safe. Considering the size of the community, the District provides a significant level of service to residents and unique facility

offerings that are typically available in larger municipalities. Residents appreciate the new developments, such as the recently opened Arroyo Trail and ADA playground, while having a long-standing sentiment for established facilities, like Skateland Recreation Center and the award-winning Heritage Bluffs Golf Course.

1.3 OPPORTUNITIES

Themes for opportunities for the District could be split into three categories; facilities and amenities, programs and services, and administration. Stakeholders have a variety of perspectives and ideas for the future of the District; however, all focus groups voiced concerns with the facilities and aging infrastructure of the system.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES

Stakeholders believe that facilities are aging, in need of repair, too small, and/or not accommodating the needs for the community. There is a general shortage of storage and office space throughout the system. Existing facilities identified as the most eminent need for updates include the Skateland Recreation Center, Heritage Bluffs Golf Course, and Tomahawk Aquatic Center. Stakeholders would like more indoor sports fields/courts, potential indoor aquatics, adventure amenities, banquet hall / meeting space, and parks / facilities that accommodate the growing population on the west side of the District.

As provided by stakeholders, the top recreation facility and amenity needs included:

1. Address current aging facilities, equipment, and infrastructure
2. Enhancing golf course club house (events, banquet hall, restaurant, meeting space)
3. Increase and add facilities for indoor sports fields/courts (especially to the West)
4. Upgrade Skateland (i.e. multi-use spaces, increased activity, increase rental space, office space)

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Programs were consistently identified as a strength of the District; though Stakeholders believe opportunities exists in the growth of unique and/or trending recreation programs. Many believe new ideas can focus on non-traditional opportunities for teens and senior population to better serve these segments. Youth programs are very popular and as the Village attracts more young families, an opportunity exists to expand youth offerings, especially before and afterschool care and preschool. It will be important to provide sufficient programs for the increasing population, especially as development to the West of the Village continues. The District must also develop additional offerings and provide adequate inclusive programs for the population with disabilities.

Key **Programs and Services** that need to be addressed:

1. Increase senior activities
2. Increase attractive teen and young adult activities (eSports)
3. Increase inclusive programs
4. Accommodate for increase in population especially preschool and school age children

ADMINISTRATION

The District is nearing its 50th year of existence, which coincides with a transition in leadership that has been consistent throughout the life of the system. Stakeholders indicated this planning effort is an exciting time for the District to build on its strong legacy and carve a strategic path that will sustain the system for the next 50 years. Limited funding is an issue that will continue to present a challenge for the District. Stakeholders agree that the ongoing financial sustainability is paramount and many are interested as to whether residents would support additional tax support dedicated to the District, which

could help offset the, infrastructure needs, further development of the system, operations of the Golf Course, and additional programming opportunities. Partnerships are a great strength for the District to further leverage to help alleviate funding concerns.

The most common administrative needs identified by stakeholder

1. Fiscally Sustainable
2. Survey community wants and needs, especially when its tied to a referendum
3. Developing a new staff culture to increase structure and new leadership
4. Develop or strengthen existing partnership to assist with current challenges

1.4 TOP PRIORITY

Although the Stakeholders have a variety of priorities for the District, some common themes were identified through interviews. First and foremost, the District must find the best path to fiscal sustainability, while addressing shortcomings related to aging infrastructure, future needs, and golf course operations. Many are hopeful this planning process clearly identifies the recreational needs of the community, provides a vision for the District, and gauges the support for additional taxes that could solidify the operational and/or capital needs of the community.

Top priorities for the District that were most frequently mentioned include:

1. Fiscal Sustainability across all areas of the Park District
2. Understand community wants and needs for facilities and programs
3. Improve existing facilities, infrastructure and equipment
4. Increase facility space

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

In order to generate additional feedback from the community, a public meeting was held as an opportunity for residents to learn about the planning process and share opinions regarding the District. After a brief presentation on the process and initial findings, participants provided feedback on the strengths, opportunities, and weaknesses of the District. Attendees were also engaged through a live polling exercise to gauge facility / amenity priorities and preferred methods of communication from the District.

1.5 STRENGTHS

Based on responses from public meeting attendees, the following were identified as strengths of the District.

- Recreation sports
- Variety of programs for all ages
- Adult fitness - Yoga, Pilates, Barre
- Variety of facilities
- Affordable, quality programs (e.g. rentals)
- Summer camp / After the Bell program
- Collaboration between Village departments
- Great value in offerings and experiences

1.6 OPPORTUNITIES

The following opportunities for the District were suggested by participants of the public meeting.

- Before school care
- Better communication of public input meetings (e.g. text notifications)
- Expand hours for Aquatic Exercise programs
- More variety of open gym opportunities
- More STEM programs like coding, robotics, camps, chemistry
- Extend pool season and increase hours of operation
- Trail connection across the river
- Safe trail access across Highway 6
- Collaboration with Joliet Special Recreation programs

1.7 TOP PRIORITY

Each attendee also provided their number one top priority for the District, as follows:

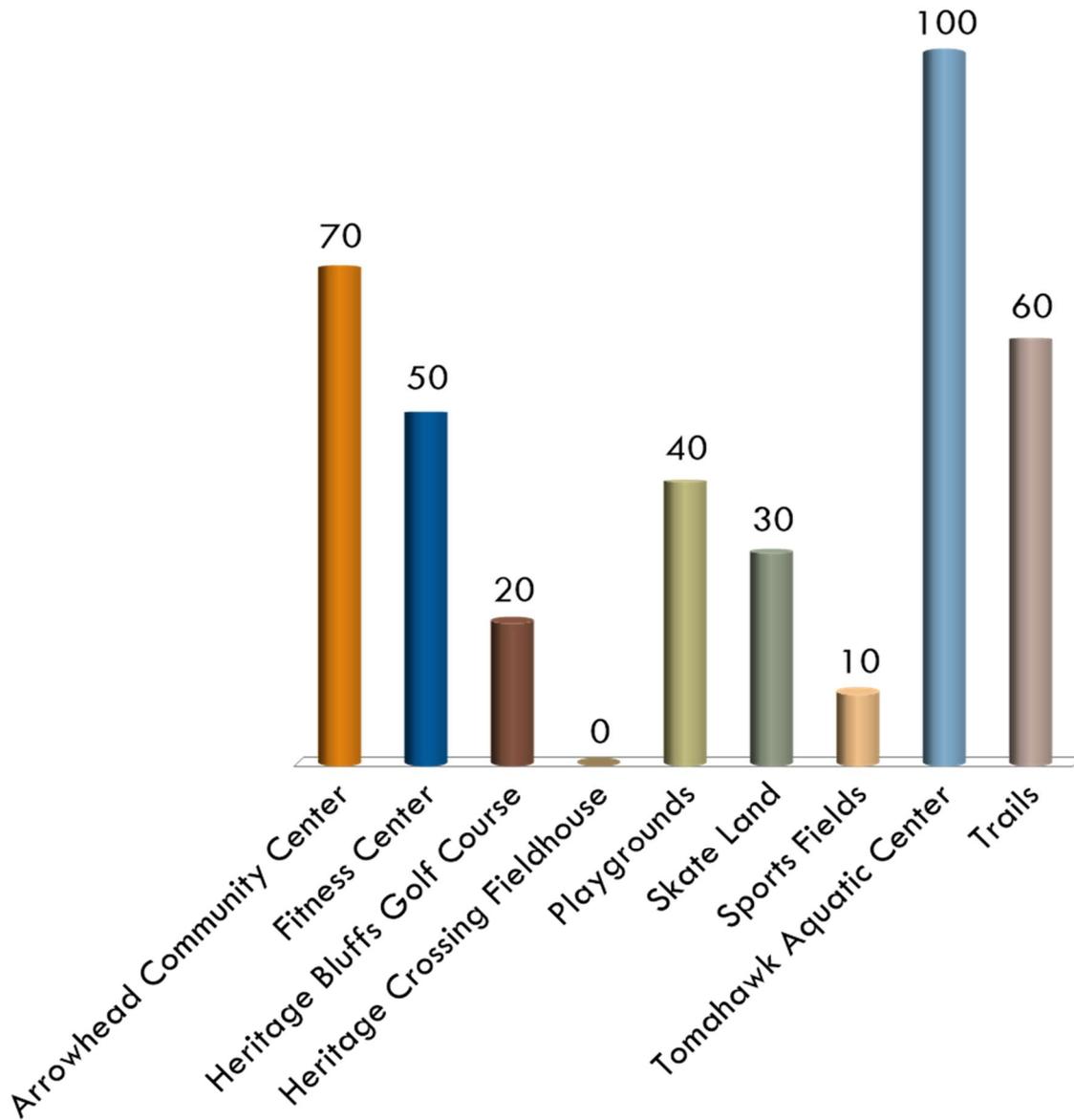
- Improve communication between the District and residents
- Update Skateland facility
- Develop before school program to complement After the Bell
- Multigenerational recreation center
- Program opportunities related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
- Biking and walking trail access across the river
- Indoor Pool
- Sledding Hill
- Implement tree replacement program

1.8 LIVE POLLING RESULTS

The consultant team worked with the District to develop three questions to poll meeting attendees in real time. The following sections describe the results for each question, which provide insight on facilities / amenities that should be renovated or expanded, new facility / amenity development, and the most preferred methods of communication.

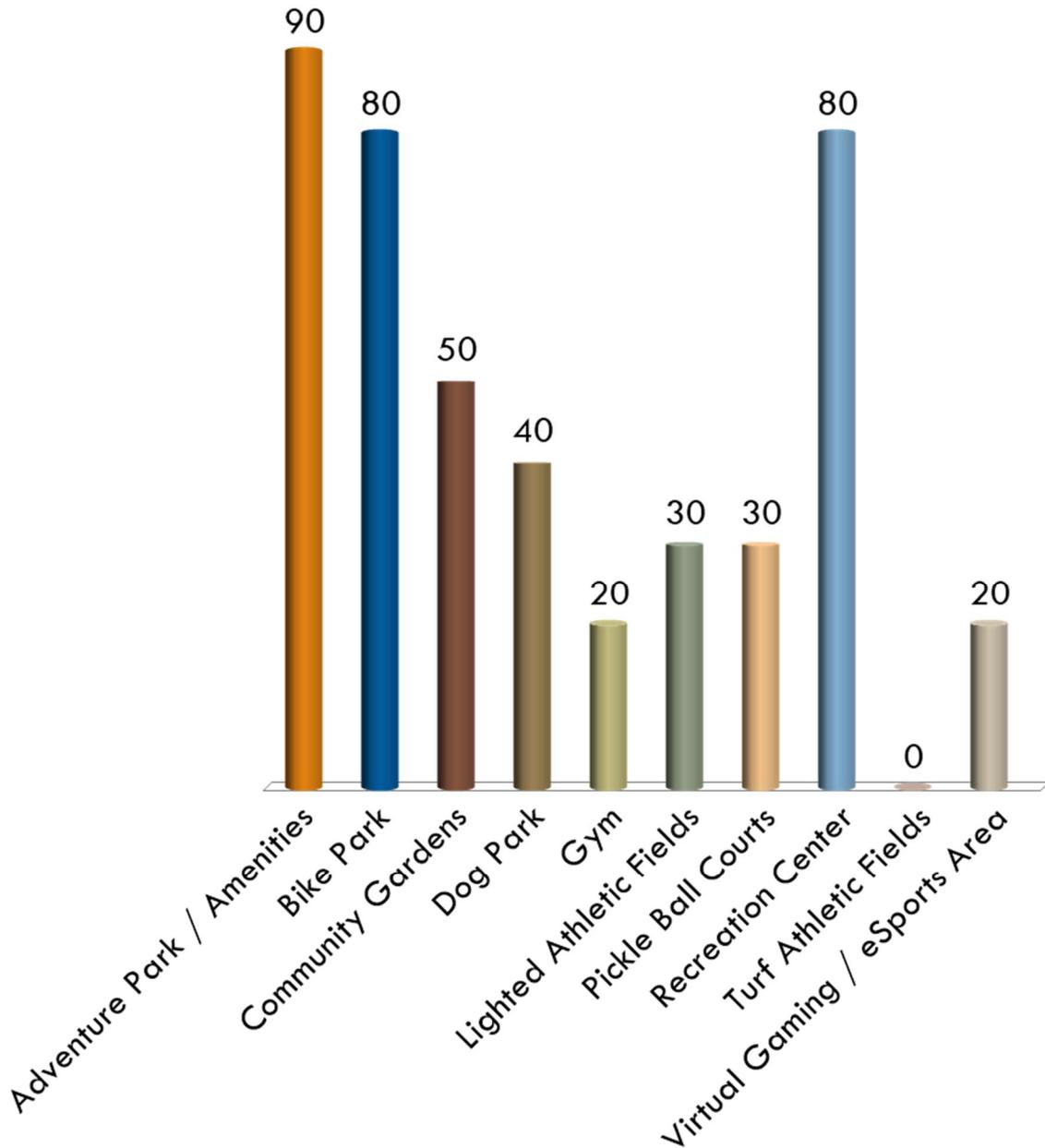
LIST THE TOP 3 RENOVATED OR EXPANDED FACILITIES / AMENITIES YOU WANT THE DISTRICT TO PROVIDE?

Respondents were able to select up to three facilities / amenities they would like renovated or expanded. As seen below, the top priority for renovation or expansion of existing facilities / amenities was the Tomahawk Aquatic Center, followed by the Arrowhead Community Center, Trails, Fitness Center, and Playgrounds. Facilities / amenities with the lowest priority for renovation / expansion were the Heritage Crossing Fieldhouse, Sports Fields, and Heritage Bluffs Golf Course.



LIST THE TOP 3 NEW FACILITIES / AMENITIES YOU WANT THE DISTRICT TO PROVIDE?

Meeting attendees were also asked to identify up to three new facilities / amenities they would like the District to provide. The most desired new offering among respondents was an Adventure Park, followed by Bike Park, Recreation Center, and Community Gardens. The audience polled indicated the least desired facilities / amenities to add to the District are Turf Athletic Fields, Gym, and Virtual Gaming / eSports Area.



CHOOSE YOUR TOP 3 PREFERRED MEANS OF COMMUNICATION FROM THE DISTRICT?

Finally, public meeting attendees identified their preferred means of communication by selecting up to three mediums for receiving information from the District. Among those surveyed, the Website is the most preferred method, followed by Signage in Parks, and a three-way tie for Social Media, Program Guide, and Email Newsletter. The least preferred methods were Banners / Flyers, Radio, and Printed Material.

