

# Whitestown Parks and Recreation Master Plan

## IDNR Small Town Fill-in-the-Blank 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Final Submission  
April 15, 2013

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### Community Information

Town of Whitestown  
Boone County  
Whitestown Parks Department  
6320 S. Cozy Lane  
Whitestown, IN 46075

(317) 769-6557  
Wparks@whitestown.in.gov  
www.whitestown.in.gov

#### **Plan Author:**

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#### **Park Board:**

Members and officers serve 4-year terms according to IC 36-10-3. Term expiration dates are provided for each member.

President: Nathan Messer  
Term: Appointed through 2015  
Whitestown Parks Department  
6320 S. Cozy Lane  
Whitestown, IN 46075  
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Secretary: Grant Rummel  
Term expires 2013  
CRummel@Whitestown.in.gov

Member: Sam Grubbs  
Term expires 2015  
SGrubbs@Whitestown.in.gov

Member: Kathryn Klimaszewski  
Term expires 2017  
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Whitestown has no paid park employees. Paid staff is limited to services provided by the Whitestown Department of Public Works (DPW). The hours dedicated by the DPW to the Parks Department varies yearly based on the budget allocated for maintenance at the town's parks.

#### Liaison

Julie Whitman was voted by the Town Council to be the council's liaison to the Parks Board.

#### Definition of Planning Area

The town of Whitestown is located between Lebanon and Zionsville in Boone County about three miles north of State Road 334 (see Figure 1). The town is under the jurisdiction of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization, though its location in Boone County gives it a mostly rural character.

The planning area follows the 2011 Corporate Limits and extends out roughly 1 mile in order to cover the recreation needs of residents just beyond this boundary (see Addendum). The limits are loosely bounded by the county line to the south and into part of Worth Township to the north. The western boundary extends as far as County Road 300 East, and the eastern boundary extends to around County Road 700 East. The planning area includes the Town of Whitestown and portions of Eagle, Worth and Perry Townships which are beyond the 2011 Corporate Limits.

Whitestown currently possesses a tax base sufficient to maintain the park system in its current condition. It must be acknowledged, however, that many residents within the planning area use park resources outside of the planning area due to the lack of adequate local resources. Two methods of growth should be mentioned in this regard. First, this plan is being completed concurrently with an impact fee analysis and recommendation that will further support the park system as development continues in the Town. Second, the Town also acknowledges that the current tax rate may need to be raised, as the Whitestown rate is lower than surrounding areas. These potential avenues for revenue growth can help support the growth of the park system.



Figure 1: Boone County, Indiana

## Goal of the Plan

The Whitestown Parks Department recognizes that the town's current facilities are not adequate to serve the area's growing population and diverse communities. This understanding has led to the following goals for this plan:

- Gather local opinions regarding the park system and parks department that will help establish overall project goals
- Develop a realistic action plan for growth
- Develop plan to bring parks into ADA compliance
- Establish eligibility to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund grant money

## Features of Service Area

### **Natural Features and Landscape**

The natural and landscape features around Whitestown closely resemble those found throughout the county, albeit without the benefit of Sugar Creek in proximity to the town. The topography is flat and land use is dominated by agriculture. A number of small waterways lie within the planning area, though little of their length is accessible by the public for recreation. Woodland stands are typical of agricultural areas: small, isolated patches surrounded by fields. Predictably, the area experiences high winds and snow drifts due to the lack of tree breaks.

There are few, if any, compelling natural features for active recreation within the planning area. Eagle Creek Reservoir is about 10 miles to the south; Morse Reservoir is about 15 miles to the northeast. Sugar Creek lies about 14 miles north of town. Similarly, there are no significant hills, quarries, or other such features that typically attract park users. It is also difficult to imagine using the small waterways within the planning area for recreational uses, as water quality is likely impaired by surrounding uses (see resources at [www.uwrwa.org](http://www.uwrwa.org)).

The soils within the planning area are generally considered buildable with one notable exception. The former Wrecks junkyard, located on Indianapolis Road south of County Road E 650 South, contains approximately 30 acres of land contaminated by past uses. The land has been included in discussions regarding future park land, but in the absence of a thorough investigation it is difficult to estimate the cost to prepare the area for public use.

Flooding does not trouble the planning area, and new developments have integrated detention strategies to mitigate their impact.

### **Opportunities**

Perhaps the best opportunity for Whitestown to take advantage of its natural landscape is to begin stitching together the patchwork of woodland remnants. Creating wildlife corridors and bicycle and pedestrian pathways would increase green space in the community and provide new recreation activity opportunities. Moreover, protecting and improving existing natural features provides important wildlife viewing and interaction experiences, as well as educational opportunities.

It would probably be easier, at least in the short term, to create wooded wildlife corridors than complete trail facilities in these same areas. Still, new parks could be planned around the largest woodlots with the intention of closing the gaps to surrounding woodlots. This accomplishes a number of green space-related goals: wind and snow drift breaks, boosting the area's "green lung" (its surface area dedicated to stormwater infiltration and air filtration to reduce the airborne pollutant loads that will follow populations growth), beautification, habitat construction and increased passive recreation space. There is an opportunity here to ensure that future park spaces minimize the amount of snowdrift associated with agricultural fields.

Finally, while it may not be an element specific to park-related activity, the Town could use development ordinances to require native landscaping around detention ponds that are built as part of new developments. This would further beautification efforts, and it would cut down on nuisance wildlife.

### **Man-made, Historical and Cultural Features**

The planning area is served by a variety of state and local roadways. State Road 334 crosses through Perry and Eagle Township to the south of the center of town. This collector highway provides connectivity to the Town of Zionsville to the east and to Interstate 65 to the west. Within the planning area State Road 267 provides connections to Lebanon, the Boone County seat, as well as State Road 32. Through the center of town, County Road 650 East provides direct access to State Road 334, and, importantly, the development of Anson. Because Anson is a large development that includes residential, commercial and industrial uses, it plays an important part in the future of Whitestown parks. This is true in terms of park locations, level of service and program development.

The settlement of the Town at its current location was driven by the presence of the Big Four Railroad, which began service in 1832. Now abandoned and under various ownership, the line runs southeast to northwest through the center of the town. Its presence sponsored the growth of industries whose eventual departure left traces of their activities in and around the town. These remnants of the railroad's presence include buildings, land contaminated by previous uses, and a low skill work force built around industrial demand. Combined with the surrounding area's agricultural history, these forces are responsible for the shape of the town today.

### **Opportunities**

These same forces continue to influence the town's development. Planning is underway to convert portions of the old rail corridor to a multi-use path that will become part of the Farm Heritage Trail (a portion of this trail is currently in use on the west side of Lebanon). Also, the town's proximity to the interstate and a major metropolitan center, Indianapolis, played a role in attracting the multi-phase development, Anson. This development includes housing, commercial enterprises and light industry, which draws on an existing work force and attracts new residents. New residents are clustering in typical suburban residential developments within and just outside the corporate limits. These are potential new park users, and creating destinations and pedestrian paths by which to reach them will drive economic development within the town. Whitestown is in the process of completing a comprehensive planning document which maps existing, proposed and conceptual trails within and even beyond the current corporate boundary. In concept, the system would provide extensive access throughout town (see Appendix). As development

expands, finding pedestrian-oriented routes for crossing I-65 and moving between the extreme north and south ends of the town will become paramount.

Whitestown hosts several special events through the Parks Department. An annual Easter egg hunt is held at Walker Park and Trail in April and is seeing a rapid increase in attendance each year; in late September the Southern Indiana Racing Association Kart race, a concert and other town events are held at Panther Park; and in late September/early October the Parks Department holds a 5K walk/run that traverses Panther Park, Walker Park and other portions of the community. As the town continues to grow, events such as these will increase in size and number. The park facilities will need to expand accordingly.

## **Social and Economic Factors**

### Population

Whitestown, Indiana is a town of 2867 residents that reside in 1053 households. When broken down by race, Whitestown's residents form a homogenous group that is representative of Boone County but not surprisingly less diverse than the rest of Indiana. In Whitestown, 90.9% of residents are white, 2.8% black/African American, 0.1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2.9% Asian, and 3.5% Hispanic of any race. These percentages compare to 95.3%, 1.2%, 0.1%, 1.8%, and 2.4% in Boone County and 84.3%, 9.10%, 0.3%, 1.6%, and 6% in the rest of Indiana, respectively. The percentage of Whitestown's population over five years old that is disabled is unknown as no data was available, most likely due to a very small quantity.

The total population increased from 2000 to 2010 by 608%, a much higher rate than the state (6.2%) and the county (122.8%). The majority of this increase can be traced to the annexation of 6500 acres of property to the south and west of the historic town center. This new property includes three new neighborhoods (Walker Farms, Anson and Eagle's Nest), and accounts for 77% of the Town's total population. The population within the historic core has changed little.

### Age

Whitestown's age distribution indicates that it is a younger town when compared to Boone County and to a lesser extent the State of Indiana. Its median age, which has lowered from 35.2 in 2000, is a youthful 30, compares to a median age of 38.4 in the county and 37 in the state. At the same time, the population as a whole has grown from 471 in 2000 to its current level of 2867. This reflects the larger corporate limits and associated residential development in the 6500 acres annexed to the south and west of the historic town center.

A few trends stand out which illustrate the trend toward a younger Whitestown. From 2000 to today, the percentage of the total population today represented by children under five years of age has increased from 6.8% to 11.9%. And while the percentage of residents below age 19 has remained fairly consistent (25.9% in 2000 compared to 27.4 % in 2010), the percentage of adults over the age of 65 has decreased from 6.9% to 4.3%. In addition, the percentage of adults of typical child-raising age has increased from 39.9% in 2000 to 46.3% in 2010. Together these statistics indicate that Whitestown is becoming an increasingly popular place to raise a family.

Compared to the rest of the state, the percentage of the population today represented by children under five years of age is significantly higher in Whitestown, where 11.9% of the population of Whitestown is under five years old compared to 6.7% in the state. The numbers for children under the age of 19 are similar (27.9% in the state and 27.4% in Whitestown). The percentage of the population 65 and over in Whitestown, 4.3%, compares to 13% in Indiana and 11.7% in Boone County. As such, Whitestown is significantly younger than both Boone County and the State of Indiana, attesting to the potential demand for recreation opportunities (see Figure 2).

Whitestown's economic demographics in general indicate a stable and relatively affluent population. Educational attainment tends to be higher than the state and county average. For example, the percentage of the population 25 years and over with a high school diploma or higher in Whitestown is 95.7%, compared to 87.4% in the state and 93% in the county. Median household income (\$66,027) is also higher than the state (\$46,815) and county (\$64,071) averages. Likewise, the percentage of the community living at or below the poverty level is significantly lower in Whitestown (4.9%) than either the state (11%) or the county (7.2%).

### Opportunities

The data suggests a number of implications for the provision of parks and related services in Whitestown. First, it would appear that programming for the elderly and disabled population is a low priority. This conclusion isn't necessarily support by the community (see section on Public Participation for more information), and at any rate it is important not to exclude these populations. Facilities and services for young children, on the other hand, register as a priority. Given the age of Whitestown's existing facilities and the recent explosion in the area's population, it is reasonable to recommend a dramatic increase in both facilities and programming aimed at this population. At the same time, the demand is increasing for facilities and services to accommodate the needs of parents and young adults.

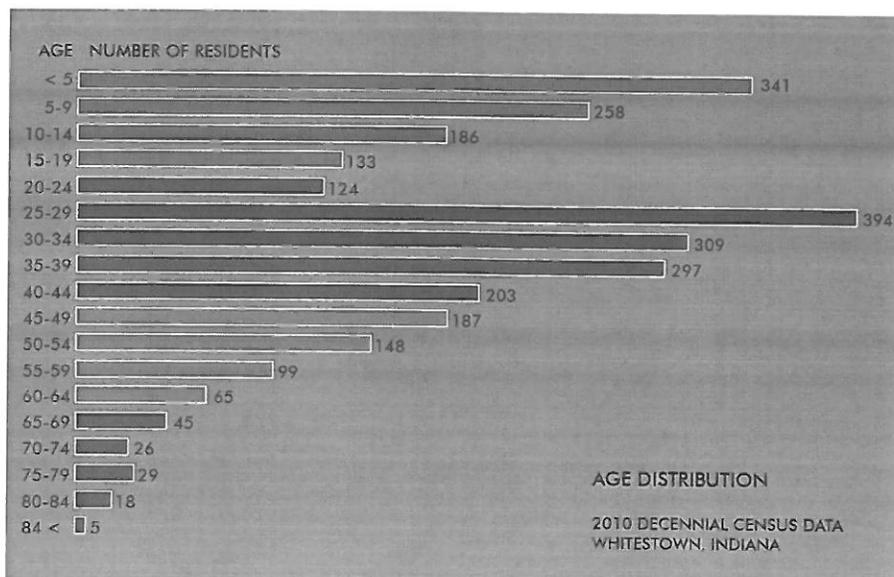


Figure 2: Age Distribution

## Employers + Trends

Whitestown's major employers are both within and just outside the corporate limits.  
Amazon: 300 Full Time and 250 Temporary Employees (excluding the holiday season)  
Express Scripts: 360 Full Time Employees  
Subaru: 51 Full Time and 45 Temporary Employees  
Pitney Bowes: 42 Full Time Employees  
Lacrosse Footwear: 40 Full Time Employees

There are no facilities for late shift employees who desire recreation during non-traditional periods. This reflects the absence of any sort of park-related programming that may include an evening schedule and the fact that Whitestown parks close at dusk.

## **Park Facility Inventory**

### 1. Panther Park

South Buck Street and Neese Street

This is an approximately 5.4 acre park that includes an asphalt loop path just short of a third of a mile long. The path links up with the Walker Farms neighborhood paths at the rear of the property. Amenities also include some small playground sets, a shelter and a basic basketball court. Much of the property is open space. A rudimentary baseball field and fenced backstop occupies one corner.

### 2. Walker Farms Park

West of County Road South 650 East on East 400 South

This newer park sits at the edge of the Walker Farms neighborhood and is operated by the town. It includes open green space, a short perimeter path that connects to the neighborhood pedestrian system, playground equipment and a shelter. Access to the park is limited to foot traffic, as no parking facilities are available.

### 3. Pocket Park

Main Street south of Pierce Street

This is a small, 1000 square foot pocket park nestled between buildings. The park contains benches and some landscaping. It is a small passive space and includes no amenities for active recreation.

### 4. Future Park

Anson development

A park space is planned on the Anson property south of County Road East 550 South. The plan includes paths that will connect to old town center, as well as typical park amenities. Though located on the Anson property, the park will be operated by the Whitestown Parks Department. At the time this report was compiled, no timeline had been established for the development of this park.

## **Parks Department Budget**

The Whitestown Parks Department budget for 2012 was \$37,500 and had remained at that level for several years. In 2013 the budget will increase to \$56,500. The budget is funded via an appropriation from the town each year.

The town is able to fulfill its current obligations on this budget, however it is increasingly difficult to provide the highest level of service as needs grow with the population. To that

end, the town has begun looking to grant resources to supplement the tax-based revenue that currently funds the department. The town is also currently working with Umbaugh Associates, an accounting firm, to establish impact fees for new development that will also supplement the department's budget. One anticipated outcome of these efforts is to fund a parks superintendent.

### **Other Facilities**

#### **1. Whitestown Lions Club Park**

County Road South 650 East and Park Drive

This park occupies 11.2 acres and includes 3 youth league ball diamonds and 1 adult softball diamond. Additional amenities include an enclosed shelter/meeting hall, restroom building, concession stand, small storage shed, open shelter house, sand volleyball area, basketball court, children's playground and horseshoe area. The park has been the home of the Perry-Worth youth league baseball/softball program since the early 1970's, and it hosts a number of town and local events. While it is operated by the Lions Club, this park remains open to public use.

#### **2. Golf Club of Indiana**

County Road South 525 East south of County Road East 650 South  
Full service golf facility with an 18 hole course.

#### **3. Stonegate**

West Oak Street just east of County Road South 650 East

This neighborhood and elementary school lies just outside the Whitestown Corporate boundary. The school supports a large playground; the rest of the neighborhood includes a number of passive recreation opportunities, mainly centered on several retention ponds, as well as work out and swimming facilities for neighborhood residents.

#### **4. Traders Point Church**

near intersection of Indianapolis Road and County Road East 650 South

Traders Point Church maintains a number of sports facilities, including indoor and outdoor basketball courts, baseball/softball fields, indoor and outdoor playgrounds, fitness equipment and programs, dance programs and more.

#### **5. Walker Park**

Indigo Blue Blvd.

The Walker Farm neighborhood maintains a neighborhood-center park that includes a pool, wading pool, two small playgrounds, picnic tables, soccer field and open space. There are two paths leading to the park and a loop around the pool.

### **Accessibility and Universal Design**

Whitestown has not completed an ADA self-evaluation or transition plan, though this plan is the beginning of that process. ADA accessibility remains a high priority for facility construction and renovation. That said, there is currently no plan to bring parks and facilities in to ADA compliance. Likewise, there is no standard for communicating with people with vision-, speaking-, and/or hearing-disabilities. The town also lacks adequate public communication regarding accessible facilities. Currently communication is limited

to email distribution and Facebook notifications. A municipal website is under construction that will eventually host ADA-related information. Persons with disabilities or their advocates who have grievances, concerns or questions can contact the Town and be connected with the Parks Board President. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504 Accessibility Compliance Form is included in the addenda.

#### **Recommendations:**

The action plan assembled as part of this plan will help the town move its facilities into compliance with federal ADA standards. Specifically, the town will pursue the following recommended measures:

1. Complete a self-assessment and transition plan
2. Designate an official ADA/Section 504 Coordinator and post contact information for this individual on the Town's Non-Discrimination Policy
3. Outline a clear grievance procedure
4. Ensure accommodations are made for those with disabilities who wish to attend Parks Board meetings

#### **Programs and Services**

There are currently no programs or services to be evaluated.

#### **Existing Facility Compliance**

##### **1. Panther Park**

Panther Park has a paved parking lot and ADA-compliant access to the asphalt loop path and shelter. There is currently no access to the basketball court, but the narrow grass band between the court and path can easily be paved to provide access. The playground equipment is located on a mulch bed and is not accessible by ADA standards. The equipment is likewise not considered accessible.

##### **2. Walker Farms**

There is no parking near this facility, though paved paths connect the playground and shelter to the road at distances of approximately .22 and .14 miles. The shelter is ADA accessible, but the playground has the same limitations as those found at Panther Park.

##### **3. Pocket Park**

This small space is inaccessible due to a gravel surface.

#### **Public Participation**

Two methods of public input gathering were pursued for this plan: 1) stakeholder interviews and survey and 2) a randomized survey.

#### **Stakeholder Interviews**

To begin, the town identified a group of stakeholders to participate in exercises designed to elicit comments regarding the Whitestown park system. These exercises were replicated on a survey that was distributed to additional stakeholders who were unable to attend the meeting (see Addendum). Three stakeholders, in addition to the Parks Board President and two representatives from the consulting firm, Green3, attended the meeting at the LA Café in Whitestown on November 28, 2012. An additional three stakeholder

surveys were returned at a later date. A total of 20 individuals were invited; 17 surveys were sent to the group after the meeting.

The exercises followed a simple prompt/response format that has been used successfully in previous planning efforts. The prompts are open ended, allowing for the generation of unsolicited ideas. Responses to the prompts are written on index cards, which are anonymously submitted to the meeting facilitator. The responses are then read aloud, followed by a comment and discussion period. The discussion is documented on a large white board, providing a range of points from which to extend the conversation.

The responses from the stakeholder process resulted in remarkably consistent feedback. The exercises created five response categories, and the results of each are summarized below.

## Stakeholder Interview Responses

### 1. What is the Top Issue or Problem for Whitestown Parks

- Lack of awareness of facilities
- Lack of amenities, diversity of facilities
- Parking limitations
- Communication limitations

### 2. What Group Has the Least Access to Whitestown Parks

The consensus regarding this question is that no group is adequately served by Whitestown parks. In particular, the lack of diversity in programming and equipment affects "tweens", teens and adults alike. Moreover, the group recognized the lack of ADA accessibility throughout the park system. Large gatherings are also limited by existing facilities.

### 3. What is the Best Thing about Whitestown Parks

- Proximity to old town center
- Safe and large
- Room to expand
- Provides a reason to get out and be active
- Well attended events

### 4. What is Your Top Priority or Ambition for Whitestown Parks

- Trail connections and linear parks
- Access for all, ADA compliance
- More opportunities for active recreation
- Community garden space
- Promotion of facilities

### 5. Describe Your Dream for Whitestown Parks

- Community wide connectedness, trails
- Large parks with diverse amenities: "micro" parks within one space
- Space for active recreation over passive recreation
- Good communication strategy
- Agricultural tourism
- Increased opportunities

### Community Survey

The stakeholder interview process was followed by a randomized survey distributed via the town's utility bill mailing list. Copies of the survey methodology and the survey are in the addenda of this report. The survey had a 43% response rate (132 sent; 57 returned). The results and methodology of the survey are summarized in the addenda.

### Final Presentation of the Plan

A public meeting was held on March 27, 6:30 p.m. at the Whitestown Fire Station #71. The meeting was advertised to the stakeholder group and the survey population directly. The stakeholder group was personally invited to the meeting by Nathan Messer; the survey population was invited with a letter sent to their home address. Additional advertisements were located on the Town bulletin board.

Members of public: 1  
Town officials: 1  
Consultants: 1

### List of issues/comments

Despite the low turnout at this event, the action plan presented by Green3 served as a good starting point for a conversation about the Town's park-related priorities. The result included a more aggressive schedule for trail design and construction, a greater focus on parking availability, and the addition of a pedestrian bridge over I-65.

### Needs Analysis

Because this plan is being assembled in combination with an impact fee study (by others), a more thorough level of service (LOS) analysis was performed than what is required by IDNR standards for a plan of this type. Using population projections provided by the town, the LOS analysis covers current and target recreation facility inventories for a typical range of facilities on a 5-year horizon. The target inventory standards were drawn from National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) data and adjusted to more closely reflect the needs of a community of Whitestown's size. The full LOS analysis is included in the addenda.

As the analysis shows, the town's largest deficits are among community parks, such as those that occupy anywhere from 10+ to over 100. Larger projects, such as a community center or splash park, did not receive defined targets, as they are currently not considered appropriate facilities for a small town with a population that may remain below 6,000 through the planning period. Other projects that registered as a deficit by NRPA standards were adjusted to reflect an even state in order to accurately illustrate the expectations for a community like Whitestown.

### Top 5 Needs and Desires Expressed by Public

- Provide more to do for more age groups
- More trails
- Do nothing
- Create more awareness
- Maintenance and beautification

Please see the survey results summary in the addenda for more information regarding the survey process.

#### **Parks Board Top 5 Needs and Desires**

- Restrooms at parks
- Parking at Walker Park & Trail
- Safe pedestrian crossing of I-65
- Additional trail connections to neighborhoods
- Splash pad

#### **Dream Amenity**

The Parks Board identified multiple dream projects, which is to say projects that will most likely be pursued beyond the 5-year planning horizon of this report. Chief among these dream projects is a desire to create a large park on the west side of I-65 where no facilities currently exist. An ideal location is noted on the attached map. The cost of land in the Whitestown area is currently high due to commercial demand. To acquire the land and subsequently design and build a larger park could be in the \$200,000 range. The action plan attached to this report includes an item to pursue grant funds that would allow this park to become a reality.

The following also remain dream projects for the Parks Board:

- Equestrian facilities
- Target shooting range
- Indoor sports facility
- Alternative sports park (disc golf, skate park, ga ga pits, etc.)
- Community pool/water park
- Performance pavilion
- Dog park

#### **Community Map**

The attached map indicated existing and future/potential parks properties. Other area resources are also shown. Whitestown has completed a trail/path scoping study; those facilities are not shown here.

#### **Action Plan**

The Whitestown Parks Action Plan (see attached) covers the years 2013-2018. Near term projects include completion of the Farm Heritage Trail, which is already in progress, and development of an ADA transition plan. Subsequent years see the budget grow with potential grant funding and the introduction of park impact fees, due in 2015, to the parks budget. These combined sources will help fund projects throughout the remainder of the planning period, including additional trail and path projects, system-wide facility improvements and park expansion.

## Addendum

1. Map of Whitestown Corporate Limits
2. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504 Accessibility Compliance Form
3. Stakeholder Survey
4. Public Survey Methodology
5. Public Survey
6. Survey Results Summary
7. Level of Service Analysis
8. Map of Current and Potential Community Park Resources
9. Action Plan