

Parks and Recreation Community Standards Report

Windham Parks and Recreation Department



National Recreation
and Park Association

The Power of Your Community's Parks

Your parks and recreation agency has the power to strengthen communities, transform lives, and protect the future. Fact is, parks and recreation is the most powerful aspect of every community.

This report shows you how your community's parks and recreation services compare to the Community Parks and Recreation Standards. The data in this report comes from your agency, and compares specific measures of parks and recreation efficiency and effectiveness against thousands of other parks and recreation agencies across the country. Use this report to make informed decisions about your parks and recreation agency. Capitalize on your strengths and address your weaknesses – and increase the positive impact of your parks and recreation offerings on those in the community you serve.

Parks drive economic activity. The presence of quality parks has been repeatedly shown to increase property values. A study in Philadelphia found that properties 2,500 feet from the park were worth \$1,000 per acre while those 40 feet from the park commanded \$11,500 per acre. In Colorado, a study found that residential property values decreased \$4.20 for every foot farther away they were from a greenbelt.

Parks save taxpayers money through valuable ecosystem services. According to a study by the Gund Institute for Ecological Economies at the University of Vermont, the return on investment from open spaces in terms of water filtration, climate change protection, and other aspects of conserving public open space is estimated to be 100 to 1. Parks are essential tools for conservation and environmental sustainability.

Parks make people healthy. Access to park and recreation facilities aids in the control of obesity, boosts the immune system, diminishes the risk of disease, and increases life expectancy. A U.S. study found that people who used local parks for recreation reported fewer visits to the doctor as well as better measured health indicators than did non-park users.

Parks address issues of social equity. Parks and recreation help build and strengthen community ties, bring diverse populations together and increase social capital. Research on low-income housing developments has found that park-like public spaces encourage residents to leave the isolation of their apartments, socialize with one another, and form lasting ties.

Put the data you find here into action – make your community better through your parks!

Definitions

Median (or 50th percentile):

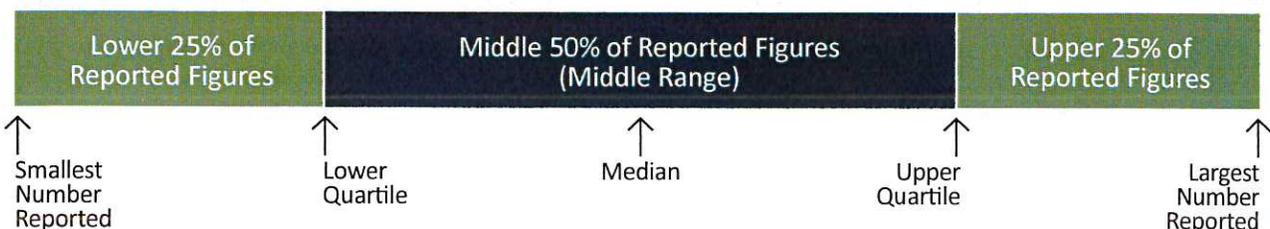
The center value of the total distribution of the data that was reported (e.g., it is the value at which 50% of the responses are above and 50% are below). This measure is less likely than an average to be distorted by a few outlying responses.

Lower Quartile (or 25th Percentile):

The observation point below which 25% of the responses lie (e.g., 25% of the respondents reported a figure less than this amount and 75% a figure higher than this amount).

Upper Quartile (or 75th Percentile):

The observation point below which 75% of the responses lie (e.g., 75% of the respondents reported a figure less than this amount and 25% a figure higher than this amount).

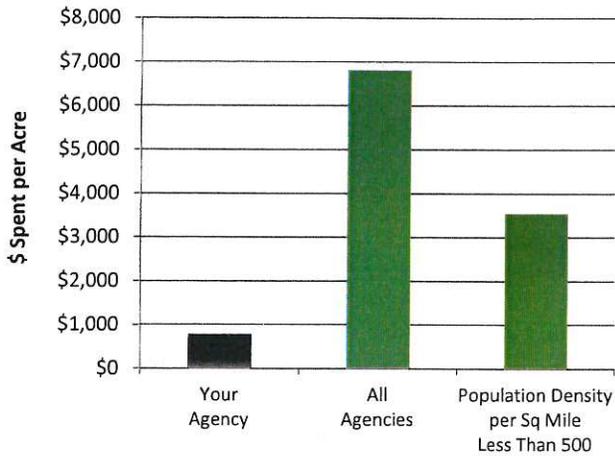


If you see "no data" in the table of data under a graph, you haven't answered the required PRORAGIS questions to generate this comparison.

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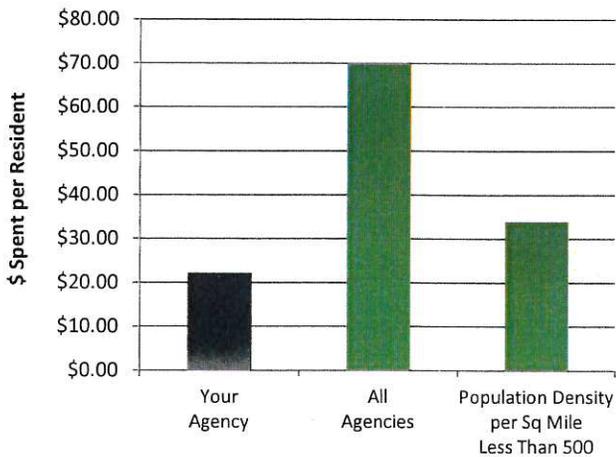
PRORAGIS

Operating Expenditures per Acre



	Your Agency	All Agencies	Population Density per Sq Mile Less Than 500
Lower Quartile		\$3,198	\$1,339
Median	\$785	\$6,807	\$3,546
Upper Quartile		\$17,540	\$6,879

Operating Expenditures Per Capita



	Your Agency	All Agencies	Population Density per Sq Mile Less Than 500
Lower Quartile		\$35.17	\$13.54
Median	\$22.16	\$69.79	\$33.98
Upper Quartile		\$119.27	\$84.27

Two metrics that can be used to gauge whether a community is adequately funded to manage, operate, and maintain its parks and recreation areas are “operating expenditures per acre managed” and “operating expenditures per capita.” The first metric, operating expenditures per acre, is calculated by dividing total operating expenditures by total parkland acres managed by the agency. The second metric, operating expenditures per capita, is calculated by dividing total operating expenditures by the population of the jurisdiction served by the agency.

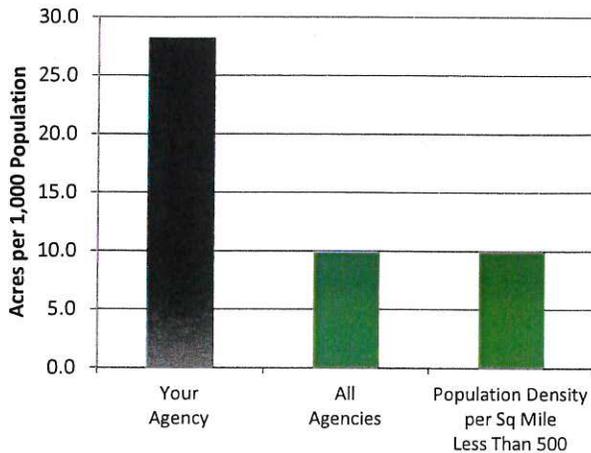
Operating expenditures include all of the costs to provide parks and recreation services to the community, including personnel salaries, benefits, utilities, equipment, and materials. Operating expenditures may also include debt service if it is paid out of the annual operating budget, as well as any expenditures incurred as part of a special or enterprise fund (such as a golf course) managed by the public agency.

It is important to note that operating costs can vary widely between communities due to differences in parks and recreation facility standards, types of equipment, repair and replacement schedules, types and topography of parkland, degree of maintenance required, levels of use, and other variables. Operating costs and efficiencies can also vary with the number of acres managed and/or the size of the population served. For example a community that manages extensive conservation lands will have a lower ratio of expenditures/acre than a community that primarily manages developed parkland.

Communities that benchmark operating expenditures should conduct follow-up research to analyze and document the specific reasons for differences in operating expenditures. For example it may be helpful to find a similar agency in PRORAGIS, then visit and photograph the facilities at benchmarked communities, and meet with agency staff to document key differences in facility quality or levels of maintenance. It may also be helpful to determine if a community is serving a larger population than its own residents. Elected officials, managers, and residents may be more supportive of increased operation budgets if they clearly understand the reasons for variations in funding between communities, and/or the implications of different funding levels.

Are you adequately funded?

Acres per 1,000 Population



	Your Agency	All Agencies	Population Density per Sq Mile Less Than 500
Lower Quartile		4.5	4.8
Median	28.2	9.9	9.9
Upper Quartile		17.5	17.3

Do you have enough parkland?

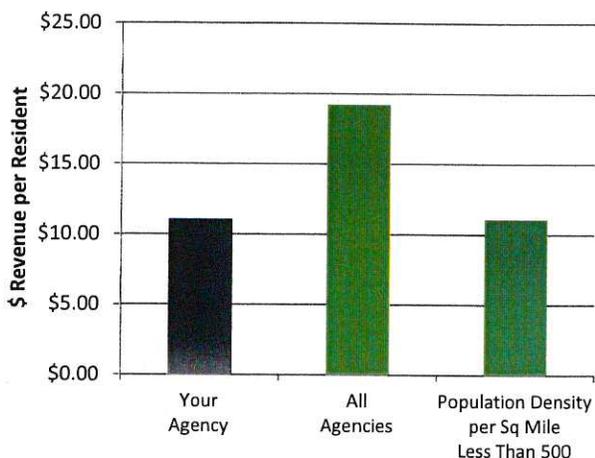
The “acres of parkland per 1,000 population” metric is the most common technique for determining whether a community has “enough” parkland. It is also known as a community’s “acreage level of service (LOS).” There is no standard acreage LOS in the United States, and LOS can vary widely due to a community’s history, culture, demographics, density, development patterns, and other factors. For example the acreage LOS of communities within the PRORAGIS database ranges from less than 2 acres per 1,000 citizens to over 100 acres per 1,000 citizens.

An often-asked question is “what should be counted in an acreage LOS?” Unfortunately there is no standard answer. Some communities include public golf courses and beaches, while others include publicly accessible lakes and wetlands. Some cities and counties also include public parkland owned by other agencies, such as state parks and national forests. Some communities also count private recreation areas, owned and managed by homeowners associations, because these areas help meet residents’ local recreation needs. Since the primary purpose of acreage LOS is to determine a community’s need for parkland, it is recommended that communities only count developable, publicly accessible parkland within their jurisdiction.

Open space lands that are undevelopable, such as privately owned open spaces, private golf courses, or private beaches; or open space lands that are permanently protected such as wetlands, water bodies, or protected conservation lands, cannot be used in calculations to determine how much open space is needed for future community needs for facilities such as parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, or community recreation centers. Privately owned parkland is not open to the public, and could be sold or redeveloped. Public parkland owned by another jurisdiction (such as state or county-owned land within a municipality) should be counted only for the population served by that jurisdiction.

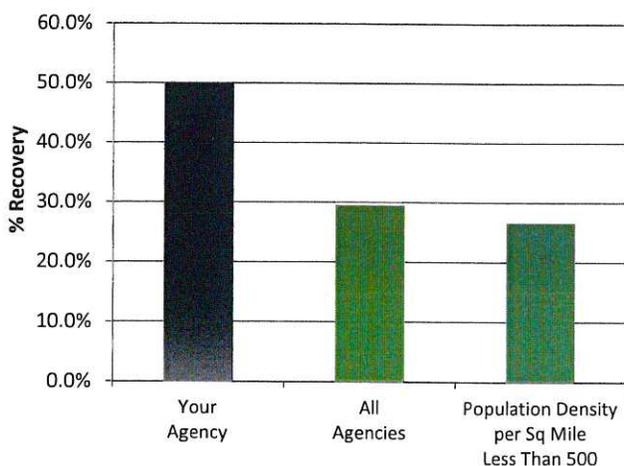
Acreage LOS should be used in conjunction with other needs assessment techniques to gauge a community’s need for additional parkland. For example a community may conclude that it is not necessary to acquire additional parkland after comparing its acreage LOS to other communities. However other needs assessment techniques such as surveys, focus group meetings, and population projections may indicate that residents’ needs are not being met, and additional parkland may be required.

Revenue per Capita



	Your Agency	All Agencies	Population Density per Sq Mile Less Than 500
Lower Quartile		\$6.05	\$2.71
Median	\$11.08	\$19.22	\$11.08
Upper Quartile		\$44.23	\$29.34

Revenue as a % of Operating Expenditures (Cost Recovery)



	Your Agency	All Agencies	Population Density per Sq Mile Less Than 500
Lower Quartile		15.5%	15.3%
Median	50.0%	29.6%	26.7%
Upper Quartile		48.9%	52.7%

Revenues (also known as “annual direct revenues”) include all of the monies generated directly from parks and recreation classes, programs, memberships, concessions, permits, rentals, and other non-tax sources. Revenues do not include funding from taxes, grants, foundations, bonds, assessments, or other indirect sources.

Two metrics that can be used to track revenues, and/or compare revenue generation to other agencies, are “revenue per capita” and “revenue as a percentage of total operating expenditures.” The first metric, revenue per capita, is calculated by dividing the total revenues generated by the agency by the population of the jurisdiction served by the agency. The second metric, revenue as a percentage of total operating expenditures (also known as “cost recovery”), is calculated by dividing the total revenues generated by the agency by the total operating expenditures of the agency.

In addition to using these metrics for revenue tracking and benchmarking, they can also be used to establish cost recovery policies and goals. There are no industry standards for cost recovery; for example, some communities have established different cost recovery policies for senior, adult, and youth programs, while others have established overall cost recovery goals as a percentage of operating expenses. PRORAGIS can help agencies to determine reasonable and realistic cost recovery goals based on data from other agencies.

How much are you making?

Median Jurisdiction Population per Facility

Facilities	Your Agency	All Agencies	Population Density per Sq Mile Less Than 500
Recreation/Community Center		24,804	21,939
Fitness Center		42,742	30,639
Playground	8,500	3,899	8,500
Tot Lots		14,000	21,548
Tennis court (indoor)		16,188	ISD
Tennis court (outdoor)		4,413	5,140
Basketball court (outdoor)	8,500	7,526	14,688
Swimming pools (indoor)			
All Swimming pools		43,872	29,380
Competition pools		60,645	27,102
Non-Competition pools		55,000	27,962
Swimming pools (outdoor)			
All Swimming pools		33,660	24,677
Competition pools		43,267	40,122
Non-Competition pools		38,404	31,500
Senior center		50,000	26,485
Ice skating rink (indoor)		31,564	17,480
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	17,000	14,445	11,200
Rectangular fields			
All Rectangular fields		3,929	4,162
Football		16,375	10,133
Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey (Regulation Size)		8,474	7,605
Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey (Small-Sided Fields)		8,553	10,544
Diamond Fields			
All Diamond Fields		3,333	4,040
Baseball with 90 ft base paths		21,483	19,203
Baseball with 50-65 ft base paths and mound		7,579	7,000
Softball (youth)		9,806	8,330
Softball (adult)		12,144	15,526
Indoor or outdoor stadium(s)/arena(s)		81,405	205,801
Campsites		10,512	6,336
RV sites		2,399	2,509
Campstores		75,961	138,019
Boat ramp(s)		44,510	70,516
Boat/canoe rentals		75,187	10,038
Slip rentals		1,361	ISD
Fuel station		154,305	ISD
Gym	17,000	26,958	20,531
Driving Range		64,846	118,000
Dog Park		53,915	77,178
Conference Center		57,929	77,178
Nature/Interpretive Center		120,133	153,920
Performing and/or Visual Arts/Community Center		70,000	95,133
Community gardens	17,000	27,000	27,000
Golf Courses (population per 9 holes)		26,288	36,326

How many people are your facilities serving?