

Public Engagement

Public engagement is essential for understanding the needs and desires of the community. The opportunities identified through this process help shape a clear vision for the future of the parks and recreation system. To better understand all aspects of the community, a robust public engagement strategy was employed that combined broad outreach with in-depth dialogue. This multi-layered approach generated diverse data across multiple points of contact. By providing a variety of opportunities to engage with the community, insights within this document reflect the needs and desires of a wide community base while balancing in-depth understanding of the current functions and challenges of parks and recreation by its most involved users.

Types of public engagement:

- Community Survey – Including both statistically-valid and open link online surveys reach out to the community at-large including both park users and non-users and provides insight into community opinions
- Public Workshops – Engaging with different communities to understand their specific needs through one-on-one conversations
- Focus Groups – Guided discussions with members of the community who are heavily involved within the parks and can provide insight on current needs and operation challenges

Timeline

Open Link Survey
July 4, 2025 - July 31, 2025
Online
Public Workshop #1
July 9, 2025, from 5:30pm - 7:00pm
George Mullen Activity Center
1602 Kramer Way, North Port, FL
Public Workshop #2
July 10, 2025, from 5:30pm - 7:00pm
Morgan Family Community Center
6207 West Price Boulevard, North Port, FL
Focus Group #1
July 15, 2025, 5:30pm – 7:00pm
North Port City Hall
4970 City Hall Boulevard, North Port, FL
Public Workshop #3
July 16, 2025, from 5:30pm - 7:00pm
George Mullen Activity Center
1602 Kramer Way, North Port, FL
Focus Group #2
July 17, 2025, from 12:00pm – 1:30pm
North Port City Hall
4970 City Hall Boulevard, North Port, FL
Focus Group #3
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
July 17, 2025, from 6:30pm – 8:00pm
North Port City Hall
4970 City Hall Boulevard, North Port, FL
Focus Group #4
July 21, 2025, from 5:30pm – 7:00pm
Virtual





Survey Methodology

Survey Response Overview

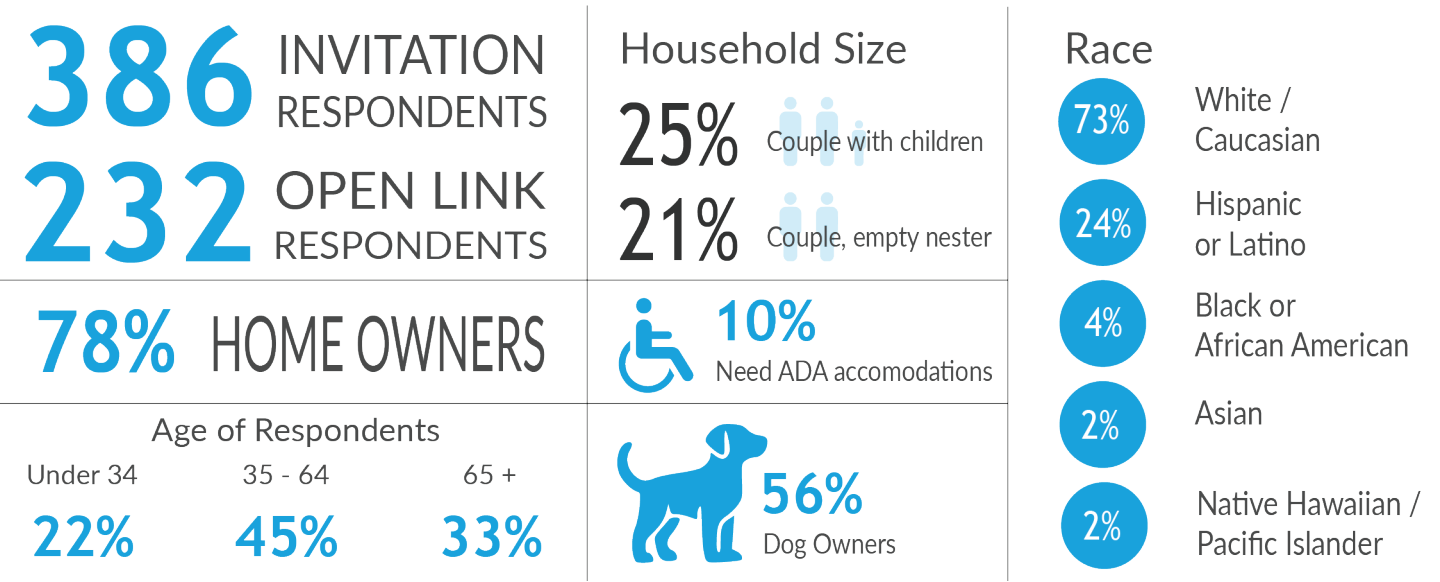
A public survey was conducted using two complementary methods: a statistically valid survey distributed to selected households in the City of North Port, and an open-link online survey accessible to the public.

In mid-June 2025, a total of 5,000 randomly selected households in North Port were mailed a paper survey along with a cover letter containing instructions and a unique password to access the online version of the statistically valid survey. This dual-format approach allowed participants to choose between completing the survey on paper or through a secure online portal. By late July 2025, the invitation-based survey yielded 386 completed responses, which constituted a statistically significant sample. To ensure the results accurately reflected the broader community, the data was weighted based on key demographics such as age and ethnicity, helping to mitigate potential response bias.

In addition, an open-link online survey was made available to all residents for a one-month period beginning in July 2025. This version received 232 responses. Together, both surveys provided valuable insights into the recreational needs and preferences of North Port residents, helping to shape and inform the development of this plan.

The respondents aged 65–74 made up the largest age group in the Invite survey (19%), with individuals aged 25–64 evenly distributed across the remaining responses (45%). Demographically, most Invite survey respondents were female (52%), homeowners (78%), and identified as White/Caucasian and not of Hispanic origin (73%).

Additionally, 40% of Invite survey respondents report living in a household with children. The Invite sample are made up of a mix of long-term and newer residents of North Port, with 43% of respondents, having lived in North Port for over 10 years. Most respondents do not live in gated communities.



Key Takeaways

Most Visited Parks and Amenities

The familiarity with North Port’s parks and recreation offerings is moderate, with an average rating of 3.1 out of 5 among Invite respondents and 3.8 among Open link respondents. Invite respondent usage is relatively focused on general access amenities, such as trails, natural areas, and the Aquatic Center, with paved and primitive walking/ biking trails and the aquatic center being used by the most survey respondents.

Open respondents heavily favored the Aquatic Center and playground equipment, indicating a higher concentration of families and frequent users among those who are self-selected to participate.

Current Conditions

Invite respondents rate the physical condition of North Port facilities and amenities positively, with 71% rating the quality as “good” and 16% as “excellent.” Open respondents were slightly more negative, with 20% rating the quality as “poor” (+9 percentage points more than the Invite), however, the majority (55%) still rate the condition as “good.”

Communication

Respondents from both samples express there is room for improvement in the City of North Port’s communication efforts on parks and recreation. Nearly half (47%) of the Invite sample rated North Port communications as not effective (1 or 2), averaging 2.8 on the 5-point scale. The Open sample was more neutral, with an average rating of 3.1 and 28% rating effectiveness a 1 or 2. Across both samples, residents prefer direct, digital communication, especially email and social media—over traditional or incidental channels.

Current Parks and Recreation System Needs

North Port residents are satisfied with how well the City is meeting the needs of the community. The Invite sample generally provided high ratings for all facilities and services in terms of meeting the needs of the community. All categories were given a rating of 4 or 5 by over 50% of respondents, with particularly high ratings in community parks and playgrounds (each averaging 4.0 out of 5). Open link respondents provided slightly lower average ratings across all categories than the Invite sample, a common result in self-selecting samples, which are generally made up of more engaged users and those with special interests.



87% rated Good or Excellent

2.8



COMMUNICATION RATING

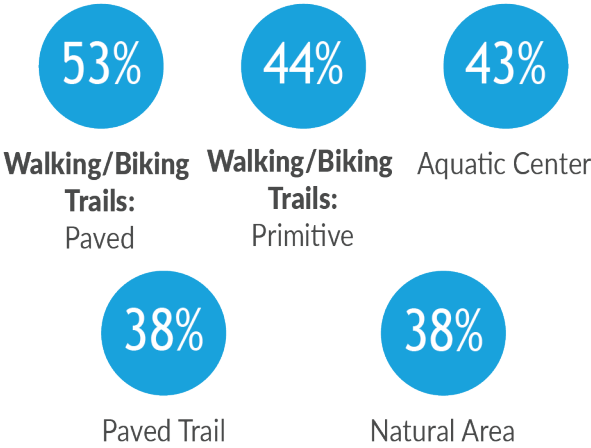
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FAMILIARITY WITH OFFERINGS

Currently via:	Preferred Method:
Word of Mouth City Website Social Media At rec program/facility	Email Social Media City Website Flyers/Posters at Businesses

Top Recreational Uses



Highly Valued Facilities and Services

North Port residents highly value outdoor, nature-centered facilities and services based on the invite respondent’s ratings of the importance of a variety of facilities and services. Similar highest-valued facilities and services were found in both the Invite and Open survey, nature/ bike/multi-use trails, community parks, nature-based experiences/programs, and activity/rec/community centers.

Similar trends were found in both the invite and open survey. Top performing essentials included nature/ bike multi-use trails. On the other hand, nature-based experiences and programs and active/rec/community centers are high priorities but very close to the average satisfaction overall, indicating some room for improvement. Playgrounds and both rectangle and diamond athletic fields, are delivering relatively well, with some room for improvement, but are not top priorities for the broader community. This reflects their more limited audience with some room for improvement. Dog parks and special events fall below average in both importance and performance, while athletic courts fall below average for importance, and are equal to the average for performance. These are amenities that may serve a more limited audience and are relatively low priority.

Priorities for Increasing Use

Additional shade would increase respondents’ use of North Port parks and recreation facilities, as cited by more than half of respondents in either sample. Other key areas to address include improved communication and additional or expanded facilities and amenities.

Access to Parks and Facilities

In both samples, the largest shares only need to drive 5-10 minutes (48% Invite, 37% Open), and nearly a third travel 10–14 minutes to their most visited park. Only a small minority (9% Invite, 13% Open) travel for more than 15 minutes. Most respondents drive vehicles to visit parks or facilities, but a substantial portion walk or run as well.

Most Important Facilities:	Most Satisfied With:
Nature/Bike.Multi-use Trails Community Parks Nature-based experiences/programs Activity/Rec/Community Centers	Community Parks Playgrounds Nature/Bike/Multi-Use Trails

TOP 3 PRIORITIES TO INCREASE USE

49%

More shade or facilities

38%

Improved Communication

35%

Additional/ Expanded facilities

Access to Parks

Drivetime		Mode	
15%	Less than 5 mins.	84%	Motor Vehicle
48%	5-10 mins.	22%	Walking/ Running
29%	10-15 mins.	18%	Bicycle
9%	15+ mins.	2%	Electric Vehicle

Future Needs

Invite respondents rated skate parks as the greatest perceived need, with 45% of respondents saying there are too few. Other high-demand facilities include basketball, outdoor volleyball, multi-sports, indoor volleyball, and pickleball courts. In the Open sample, the greatest needs are for multi-sport and pickleball courts, both notably higher than in the Invite sample, followed by youth softball fields, volleyball courts, and youth soccer fields also ranking high.

Among the Invite and Open sample, the highest priorities for indoor recreation are programs for all ages and new or improved facilities, followed closely by senior-focused activities and youth/teen spaces. Compared to the Invite sample, the Open respondents showed higher overall importance ratings for several categories but also more polarized views, especially for senior-focused programs.

Access to Nature

The Invite respondents expressed a strong interest in public access nature-based areas such as trails, paths, and viewing areas. Scheduled events and programs were also considered important investments.

Familiarity with Nature-Based Opportunities

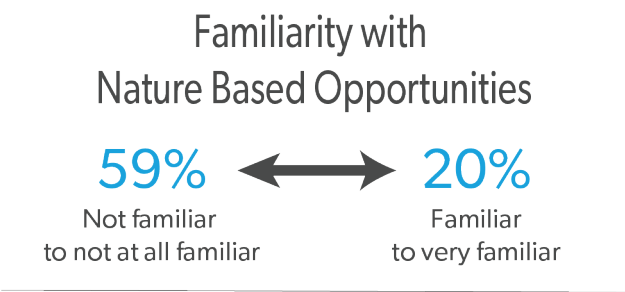
Most respondents from both samples are unfamiliar with nature-based opportunities in North Port, with 59% of the Invite sample responding 1 or 2 on the 5-point scale, where 1 is “not at all familiar.” This unfamiliarity indicates a need for the City to promote its existing offerings as eco-tourism activities, which were rated highly important to most of the sample (ex. 67% of the Invite rated nature-based experiences/programs as a 4, or 5 – Very important).

Youth Sports

In the Invite sample, 19% of respondents have children in their household that participate in City of North Port organized sports. The Open sample, however, represents far more households (approximately one-third) with participant children. Among households with children who participate in youth sports, soccer is most represented, as 59% of Invite sample households have children participating, and 41% among those in the Open sample. Basketball and football were also represented by a substantial portion of the respondents. Notably, Softball and Baseball were significantly more represented in the Open sample. Most children participating in organized sports leagues participate in recreational sports for both samples, followed by competitive sports and traveling sports leagues.

TOP FUTURE RECREATION NEEDS

Sports Fields	Indoor Recreation
Skate Parks	Programs for all ages
Basketball Courts	New/Improved Facilities
Volleyball Courts	Senior Activities and Programs
Multi-sports Courts	Youth and Teen Spaces
Pickleball Courts	Sports and Fitness Spaces



Additional Comments and Suggestions

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments. A total of 156 comments were collected from both samples. Common themes for the survey included:

- Aquatic Facilities and Water-Based Recreation
- Indoor and All-Weather Recreation Options
- Youth and Teen Engagement
- Nature Preservation and Trail Expansion
- Maintenance, Safety, and Accessibility

Public Workshops

The project team hosted three public workshops at the George Mullen Activity Center and Morgan Family Community Center, offering residents multiple opportunities to share input on the North Port parks and recreation system. These open-house style events featured a range of interactive activity stations designed to encourage feedback and spark conversations about parks and recreation in the City of North Port.

The workshops were held on weekday evenings to ensure broader accessibility for community members. Each session served a dual purpose: informing participants about the Master Plan process and empowering them to get involved by voicing their ideas and concerns. The workshops were advertised by the City through social media, on-site signage, as well as the City website to capture residents at various touchpoints. Additionally, a postcard was mailed to properties within in a mile radius of the undeveloped Italy Avenue Park to target residents most impacted by the development of this site. The input collected during these workshops helped shape the Master Plan to incorporate the specific needs, preferences, and desires of residents who will be the end user of the parks and recreation system.



Overview of Stations

Welcome Station

Upon arrival, workshop participants were welcomed at a table located at the entrance and provided with a brief overview of the workshop format. The participants were asked to sign in and were provided a flyer with a QR code for the open survey.

Live, Work, Play Station

For this activity, an online GIS map allowed participants to plot the places within the City where they live, work, and play using a tablet. A live heat map of the City highlighting “play” points was projected onto a wall at the workshop, which updated in real time to better display areas in the City that are visited more frequently than others. The station facilitator guided participants through the activity. Participants were also asked to discuss why they chose places to play and how these places could be improved. This activity gave participants a “bigger picture” of their park system and improved their awareness of the various opportunities to recreate in their community. The station also enabled the project team to better identify “hot spots”, specifically parks that are more frequently visited by residents and why users may feel drawn to these parks.

Write on Me Map Station

The station featured a large map of the City of North Port parks system. Participants were asked to write directly on the map to share their concerns relating directly to the parks and facilities illustrated on the map. Participants could share their thoughts on park improvements, desires for new amenities, parks and trails, and ways to better connect residents with parks.

This activity gathered community input on specific parks and geographic areas noting where amenities are desired, missing, and able to fulfill additional recreational purposes.

Priority Voting Station

At this station, participants could prioritize their needs and desires in this station using a board with various categories, i.e. nature-based experiences & programs, athletic courts and facilities closer to where I live or work. Participants were provided with a total of four dot stickers with which they could prioritize needs and desires for parks and recreation within the City. Participants could also write in any needs and desires not represented within the board.

Using participant dot votes, the station facilitator led a conversation with community members to understand their choices. Through these conversations the project team gained a stronger grasp of underlying community needs and desires, revealing how existing parks may be improved or better utilized.

Italy Avenue Voting Station

Although a similar activity to the priority voting station, this station specifically focused on the undeveloped park, Italy Avenue Park. Participants place dots on any amenity they would like to incorporate into the design of the new park, i.e. indoor gymnasium courts, nature trails, and senior-focused social activities. Participants were provided with unlimited dot stickers as part of the visioning exercise, allowing participants to share all of their future desires for the park. Participants could also write in any needs and desires not represented within the board.

The station facilitator engaged community members in meaningful dialogue about the new park location and the current conditions. These conversations shed light on what the community truly values and needs, guiding the project team in designing a park that responds to those gaps.

Draw Your Own Park Station

Participants were given blank coloring sheets and crayons and were invited to illustrate their ideal park. This activity provided adults and children with an engaging way to express their ideas by visually designing park features and amenities they would like to see. In addition to collecting dream parks during the workshops, the City of North Port also collected dream parks drawings as part of July National Parks and Recreation Month. These creative contributions were collected to help inform the development and implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which ensured even the young voices were included in shaping future park spaces.

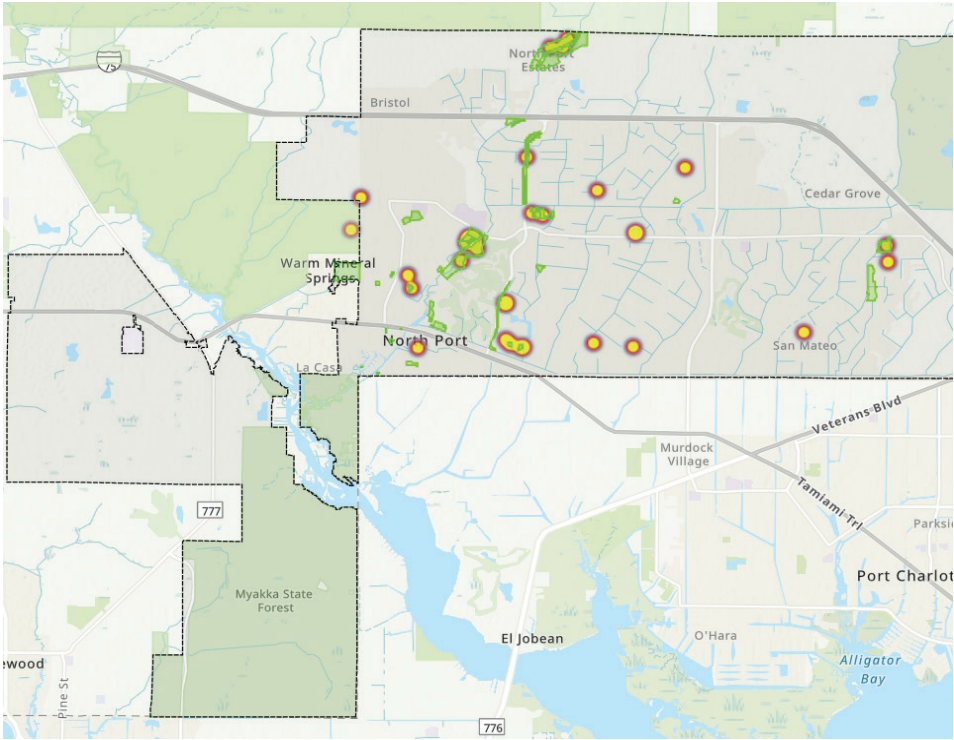
Survey Station

To enhance participation and improve access to the survey, a survey station provided participants with a laptop to complete the survey at the workshop. Additionally, survey flyers with a QR code were provided for participants to take the survey at their leisure. Participants were encouraged to take flyers home to pass them to friends and family who may be interested in the survey thereby leveraging word-of-mouth to increase public awareness of the survey.

Input Received

Live Work Play

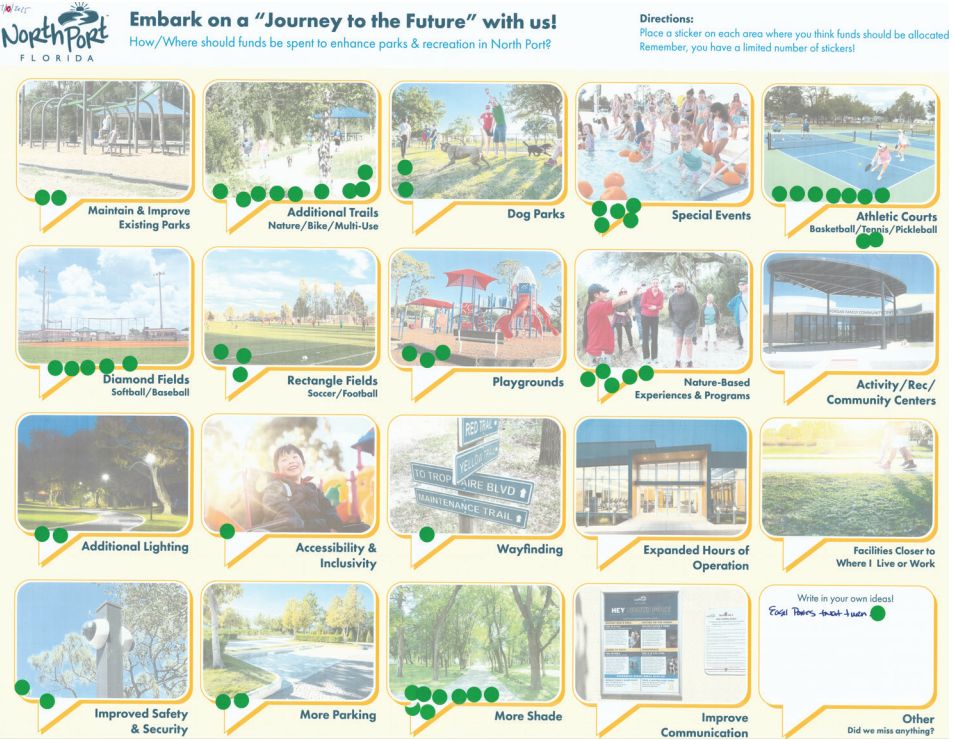
Most play locations were concentrated on the more established central portion of the City, which aligns with the distribution of parks in that area. Among the most popular sites are Myakkahatchee Creek Environmental Park and the broader Butler Park area, which includes the Aquatic Center and Morgan Family Community Center. Responses from residents in the more established quadrant indicated they typically live and work near a City park, enjoying convenient access to recreational spaces. In contrast, individuals in the eastern quadrant often noted they did not live close to play areas and frequently expressed a desire for more parks nearer to their homes.



Write on Me Map Station

Participants shared a strong interest in enhancing trail connectivity between existing parks, including the planned future trailhead at Warm Mineral Springs to the Legacy Trail. There were also requests for increased lighting at current sport courts, such as basketball and pickleball facilities, as well as the addition of more courts across existing park sites. Another consistent comment was to expand park access in underserved areas. The suggested amenities for these new locations included a splashpad, a pool with extended hours, a multigenerational park, and a recreational BMX/ATV track.

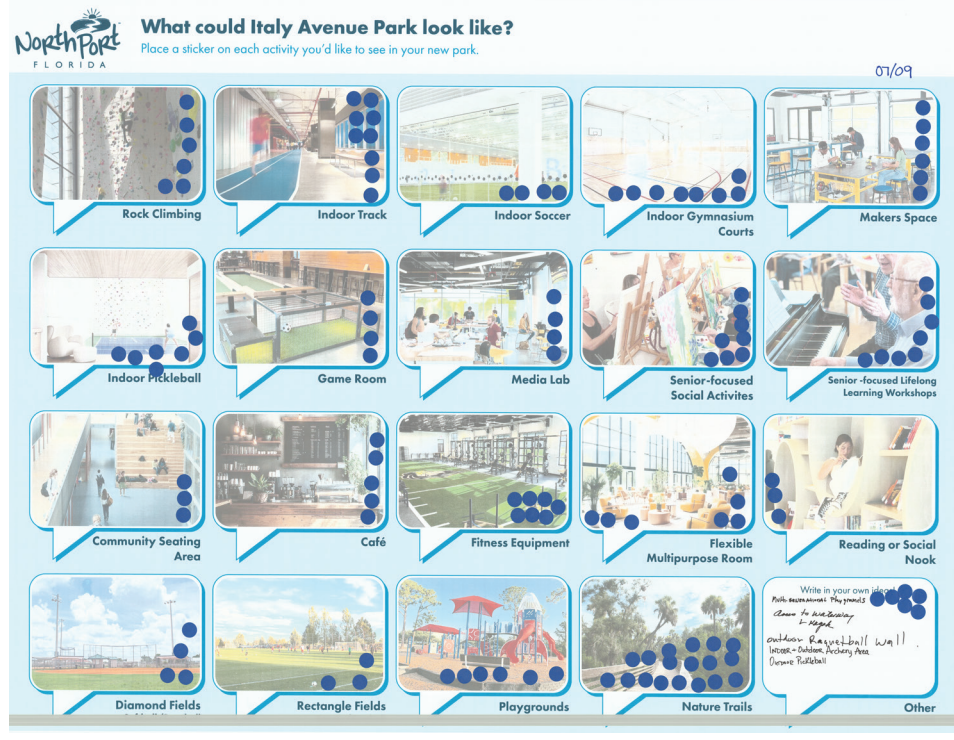
Participants also expressed a need for increased nature-based programming, such as birdwatching and demonstrations focused on Florida native plants, which could be led by external organizations. Additionally, there was support for expanding the network of community gardens across the park system with irrigation systems.



Priority Voting Station

The Priority Voting Station showed that the community's highest priorities were to add additional trails and more shade. Other top priorities included adding athletic courts, nature-based experience & programs, special events, diamond fields, and playgrounds. Priorities that were written included multi-generational playground, additional splashpads, a bandshell for events, cooling stations, youth programming, and permanent art easels in the parks for visitors.

Top 5 Priorities	Dots
Additional Trails	19
More Shade	19
Athletic Courts	15
Nature-Based Experiences & Programs	11
Special Events	9



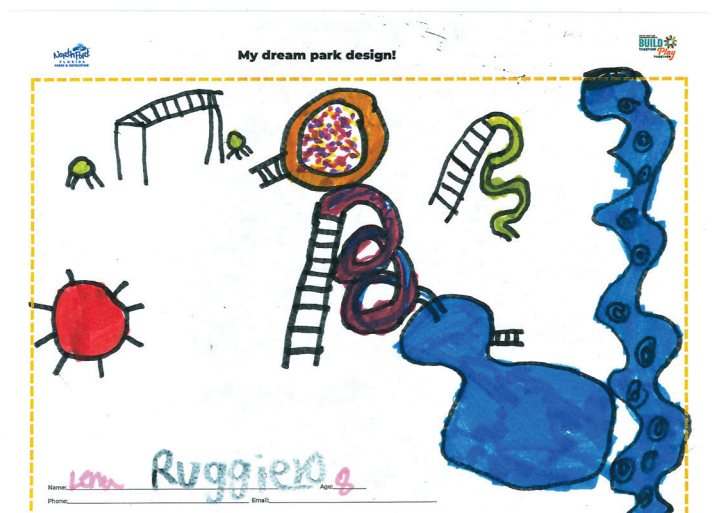
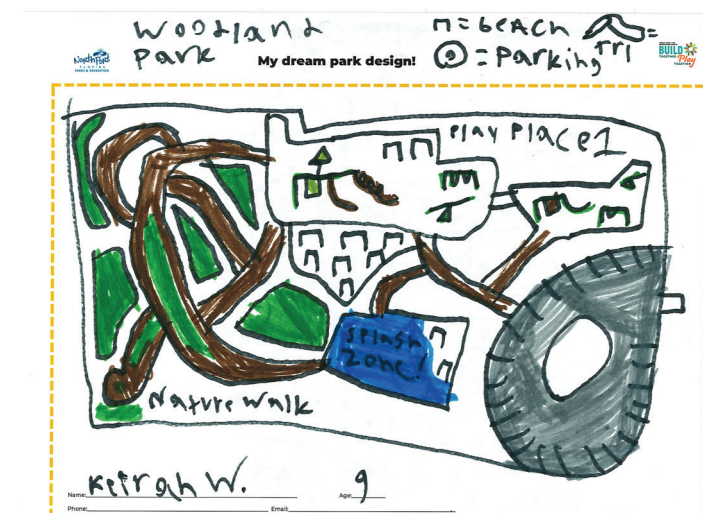
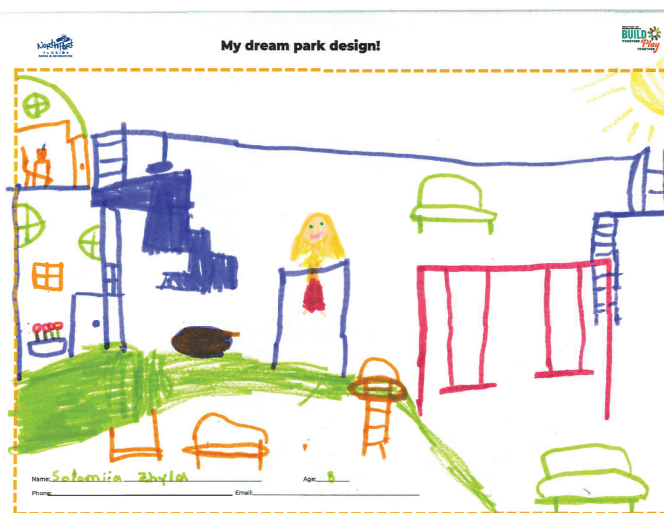
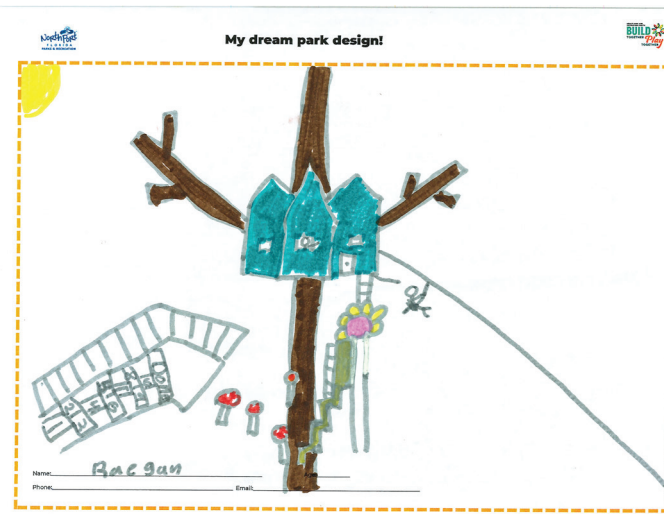
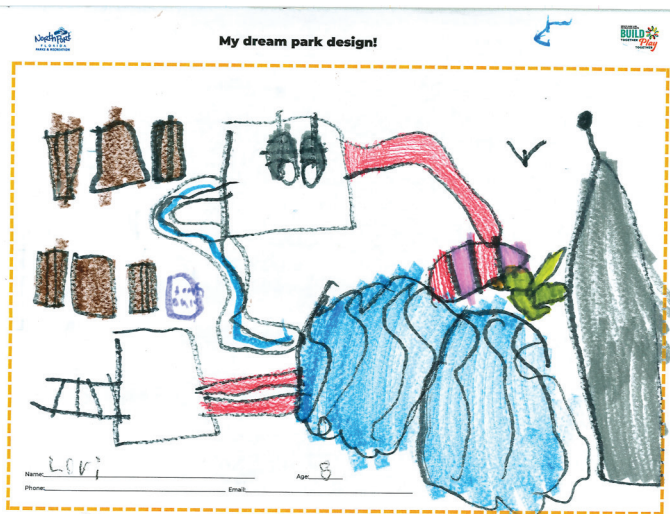
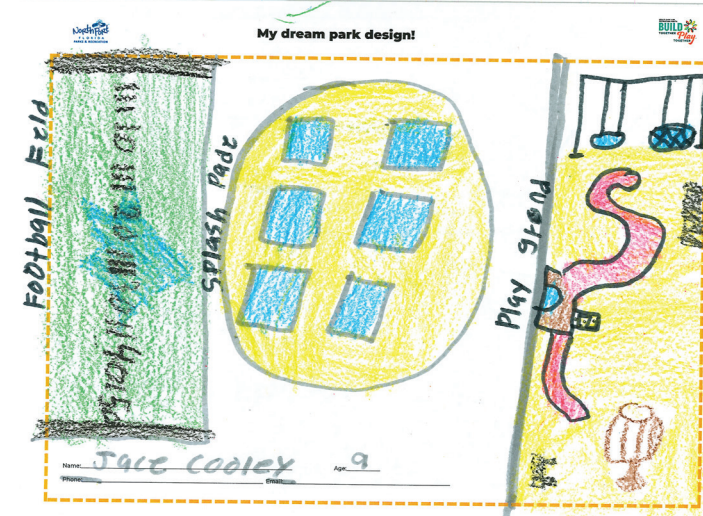
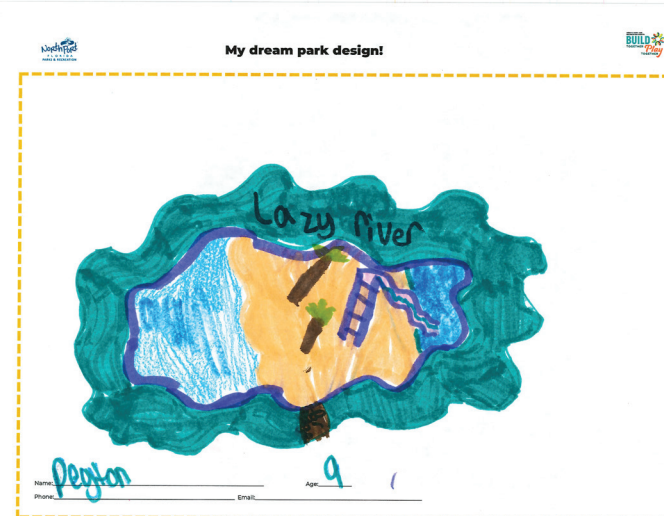
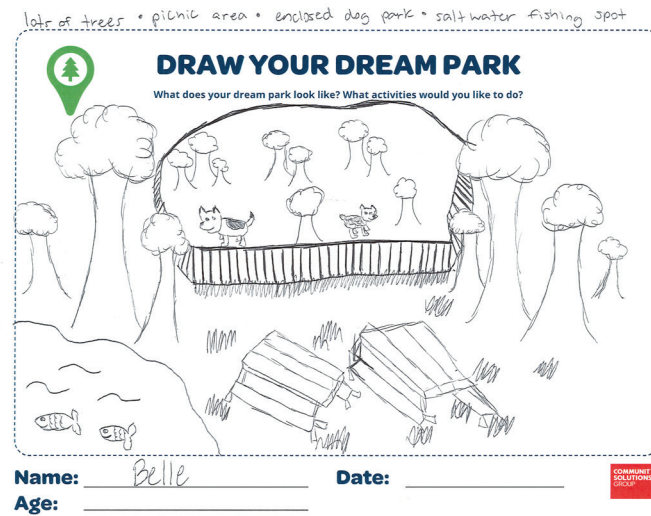
Italy Avenue Voting Station

Participants overwhelmingly voted to have nature trails at Italy Avenue Park. Other top amenities included an indoor track, indoor rock climbing, senior-focused social activities, and indoor gymnasium courts. Priorities that were written included multi-generational playgrounds, access to the waterway/kayak launch, outdoor racquetball wall, an indoor and outdoor archery area, outdoor pickleball court, tennis only courts, a community center, drive-in theater, pool, and splash pad(s).

Top 5 Amenities	Dots
Nature Trails	32
Indoor Track	19
Rock Climbing	13
Senior-Focused Social Activities	13
Indoor Gymnasium Courts	12

Draw Your Own Park Station

Drawings collected showed robust imagination and excitement to share input. Drawings emphasized the need for playgrounds. Drawings featured more active amenities like sport fields or courts, splash pads, and bike trails. Passive amenities such as shade trees and pavilions were also illustrated as desirable park features.



Focus Groups

Working with the City, the project team facilitated a total of four focus group meetings with community stakeholders, including one at the July Parks and Recreation Advisory Board regularly scheduled meeting. Stakeholders were identified by the City as park and recreation advocates and users. Conducting focus group meetings with these stakeholders allowed the project team to gain insight on the City parks and recreation system in a small setting allowing for deeper conversations. The 26 focus group attendees included those engaged with sports leagues, nonprofit organizations, Sarasota County staff, North Port Chamber of Commerce, environment groups, and other City of North Port City Departments.

Questions

1. How long have you been a resident of North Port?
2. How would you describe the existing North Port Park System? What are the strengths and weaknesses?
3. Do you or your family visit City parks? If so, which ones? Any County parks? Parks in next door counties or cities?
4. How do you receive information about programs and facilities?
5. Park System Priorities: What would you like to see, or feel should be priorities in the North Port Park system? (examples: youth sports/adult sports, inclusivity/ accessibility, nature-based spaces, wildlife viewing areas, fishing locations, wilderness experiences, trails, etc..)
6. Anything else? Here is your chance to tell us something we may be missing.

Participant Groups

- North Port Boys & Girls Club
- Sarasota County Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Department
- Sarasota County School Board District
- North Port Jr. Bobcats, Youth Football
- North Port Youth Soccer
- Coastal Area Soccer Association, Adult Soccer
- North Port Chamber of Commerce
- Friends of Warm Mineral Springs
- City of North Port Art Advisory Board
- Loveland Center, nonprofit serving children and adults with disabilities
- North Port Girl Scouts
- North Port Realtor
- People for Trees
- North Port Huskies, Youth Football
- City of North Port Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- North Port Senior Center
- North Port Boy Scouts
- Imagine Soccer, Youth Soccer
- Visit Sarasota
- City of North Port Economic Development Department



Response Overview

How long have you been a resident of North Port?

Focus group participants reported a broad spectrum of time living in North Port, reflecting both deep-rooted ties and newer connections. Several respondents have lived in the city for multiple decades, some over 30 and even 50 years, which brought in long-term perspectives. Many others described mid-range residency, typically between 8 and 15 years, having relocated from various regions. Several participants indicated living in the city for a shorter period, often 3 to 5 years, yet still demonstrated strong engagement with parks, programming, and community development. Overall, the varying durations illustrate a community enriched by long-standing and recent residency.

How would you describe the existing North Port Park System? What are the strengths and weaknesses?

Focus group participants described the North Port Parks and Recreation System as a valuable community asset with a wide range of recreational offerings and a strong sense of involvement. Many praised the variety of parks, trails, kayak launches, and environmental features that cater to users of all ages and abilities. The parks and recreation staff were repeatedly recognized for their dedication and friendliness. Participants consider the programming to be diverse and would like to add more programming focused on arts, music events, nature, and inclusive activities for children, families, and people with disabilities.

Participants also highlighted several key areas for improvement. A common concern was the uneven distribution of parks, especially the need for additional facilities on the eastern side of the city and in rapidly growing neighborhoods. They also noted the overuse of existing rectangular athletic fields, which has led to wear, limited availability, and scheduling conflicts for both youth and adult leagues. Focus group participants suggested that locking athletic fields when not rented could help minimize damage, noting that public use often results in more wear and tear than organized league activities. They also emphasized that the current shortage of playable rectangular fields and parking prevents the City of North Port from hosting tournaments, which they believe could generate economic benefits for the community if a sports complex was created.

Other issues included poor sidewalk and trail connectivity throughout the park system including limited accessibility to certain amenities within the parks for people with disabilities, limited parking at sport fields when games/ practices are occurring at the same time, and insufficient shade on walking pathways and within parks. Participants also emphasized the need for additional splash pads and extended pool hours, particularly opening the existing pool earlier in the day to avoid peak UV levels. They highlighted the importance of enhanced lighting at facilities, especially playgrounds, to allow for usage after dark, particularly during winter months with earlier sunsets. Participants suggested creating more visible walking loops to support individuals who prefer walking alone. Participants emphasized the importance of ongoing programming and diverse amenities.

Do you or your family visit City parks? If so, which ones? Any County parks? Parks in next door counties or cities?

Frequently used City parks included Butler, Atwater, Highland Ridge, McKibben, and Blue Ridge, with appreciation for amenities like trails, kayak launches, and nighttime lighting. Regional facilities such as Centennial Park, Oscar Scherer State Park, Twin Lakes Park, and Englewood Sports Complex were also mentioned as important recreational destinations. For water-based activities, Sarasota County’s Senator Bob Johnson’s Landing was favored for its accessible and easy to use kayak/canoe launches and wilderness setting, viewed as more appealing for kayaking than the smaller City canals.

How do you receive information about programs and facilities?

The focus group participants shared a range of experiences regarding how they receive information about parks and recreation programs and facilities, with many expressing a need for more effective and consistent communication. Several noted they feel uninformed about events, while others highlighted the City’s communication efforts, they receive information through email blasts, newsletters, and social media. Participants acknowledged that many residents may be suffering from information overload and may be too busy to sift through frequent emails.

Participants suggested diverse outreach strategies, some of which are already employed by the City, these included partnering with local organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, providing playbooks for new residents, developing engaging social media content using a short video format, and separating email lists by interest groups (e.g., youth, seniors) to ensure residents are receiving the most relevant information. They also recommended expanding outreach through the schools.

Participants also discussed re-informing residents about the amenities the City offers and the access to nature not just City run, but nature opportunities managed by other agencies. Some felt the City could improve its reach and consistency, especially among seniors and families with limited financial means. Overall, it was agreed that reaching everyone is not easy and communication in general is hard.

Park System Priorities: What would you like to see, or feel should be priorities in the North Port Park system?

Focus group participants expressed a wide range of priorities for the future of the North Port Parks and Recreation System, with recurring themes of equitable access, expanded programming, and improved infrastructure. A significant number emphasized the need for more parks, especially in underserved areas such as Wellen Park and the eastern side of the city. Participants also discussed improved walkability and safe routes connecting parks to neighborhoods and schools. Accessibility and inclusivity were also noted as high priorities including improved lighting for access in the evening when it not as hot outside for seniors and connection to amenities for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Nature-based recreation emerged as a strong interest, with requests for enhanced environmental programming, youth campsites, partnerships with nearby forest and conservation organizations, and better public awareness of nature-related opportunities. Some participants advocated for a dedicated nature center and interpretive programs to promote wildlife protection and ecological education.

Sports facilities were another focal point, especially the need for more rectangular athletic fields and turf conversion

to sustain heavy usage for youth/adult soccer and football. Both youth and adult leagues are facing scheduling and maintenance challenges due to limited field availability. Indoor recreational spaces for sports and therapeutic programming were viewed as essential for accommodating weather conditions and increasing participation.

Participants also suggested diversifying the amenities offered in parks, including more lighted basketball courts, splashpads, additional shade, a small dirt track, meditation areas, a community bandshell and fitness circuits around a trail. Usage of parks could be increased via additional programming by different groups such as a guitar group or environmental group. Together, these priorities reflect a vision for a park system that is more connected, inclusive, environmentally aware, and responsive to the needs of North Port’s growing community.

Anything else? Here is your chance to tell us something we may be missing.

Focus group participants offered additional suggestions for the improvement of parks. Participants suggested fostering public-private partnerships with the sport leagues to build and maintain recreational facilities. The lack of indoor recreational space was another notable concern. Participants pointed to the limited gym availability as a barrier for youth and adult programming. Comparisons to surrounding areas, such as Charlotte County and Paradise Park in Naples, illustrated the potential economic benefits of investing in sport tourism infrastructure, such as multi-field complexes capable of hosting weekend tournaments.

Lastly, participants emphasized the importance of ongoing workshops and informational sessions focused on park planning and development to better engage the community and support transparency. These responses reflect a desire for practical enhancements and strategic planning that align facilities, programming, and community needs.

Key Takeaways

- The Parks & Recreation System is seen as a valued community asset with diverse recreational offerings. Amenities like trails, kayak launches, environmental parks, and lighting were highly praised. Staff were consistently described as friendly, responsive, and committed to the community.
- The most discussed improvement throughout all focused groups was the uneven park distribution throughout the parks and recreation system, especially on the eastern side and in growing areas like Wellen Park.
- The need for 4-6 more rectangular sports fields, either natural turf or artificial turf, was expressed due to the fields’ current overuse leading to scheduling conflicts and limited availability for youth and adult leagues as fields need to be rotated out and rested resulting in less available fields. Both soccer and football leagues operate year-round.
- Participants felt the trail system could be improved with more shade, more connectivity between parks and neighborhoods, and better connectivity for people with disabilities in accessing the existing amenities. As well as a desire for well-lit, visible walking loops for safe solo use.
- Expansion of the number of splashpads in the parks and the hours of the aquatic center, especially during hot weather.
- Creation of partnerships with local groups to share information, conduct programming, and include information about the offerings of neighboring agencies’ nature-based resources.
- The participants expressed interest in expanding nature-focused programming, environmental education, youth campsites, and wildlife viewing areas. They also expressed a desire for a dedicated nature center to promote eco-awareness.
- Many participants felt that creating a sports complex would position the City to host regional tournaments, generating revenue through increased sports tourism.
- There is a need for diverse park features, including: more basketball courts with lights, fitness circuits on walking trails, small dirt track, bandshell, and meditation areas.