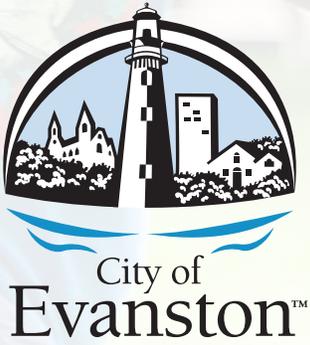




CITY OF EVANSTON



OPEN SPACE SCORE CARD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was developed with the input and advice from dozens of smart, thoughtful, and committed people. A special thanks to all those who contributed.

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Prepared By:

THE
LAKOTA ALLIES
GROUP. IN
PLACE

WITH:
Recreation Results
Goodman Williams Group

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Why an Open Space Scorecard?..... 1

Methodology 3

- Identification Of Community Priorities And Trends
- Inspection Of Open Space Sites
- Data Analysis

Community Trends and Priorities7

- Community Demographic Overview
- National Recreation Trends
- Stakeholder Feedback
- Community Survey Summary

Score Card Results 15

What's Next? 21

WHY AN OPEN SPACE SCORECARD?

City of Evanston park lands and public open spaces are beloved and visible assets of the community. There are over 100 public open spaces within the City of Evanston, all of which are used by community residents, school children, and sports teams year round. This Open Space Score Card is an effort to measure the quality of open space infrastructure and maintenance in order to ensure the highest level of service possible for open space users.

The score card will help the City and its open space management partners (Ridgeville Park District, Lighthouse Park District, Evanston / Skokie School District 65, and the Forest Preserves of Cook County) to:

- Understand the present state of Evanston's public open spaces, and in time, compare future conditions to past performance;
- Determine priorities for improvements and provide direction for allocation of funds, staff, and other resources;
- Communicate priorities internally among employees and externally to governing boards, citizen committees, and the public;
- Measure the impact of open space infrastructure investments and open space maintenance efforts; and finally,
- Help Evanston residents to understand how their local open space is performing in comparison to other open spaces in the city.

Ultimately, the Open Space Score Card is intended to help guide capital improvement plans, master plans, and maintenance standards, helping the City of Evanston and its open space management partners maintain and improve its beloved open space infrastructure.

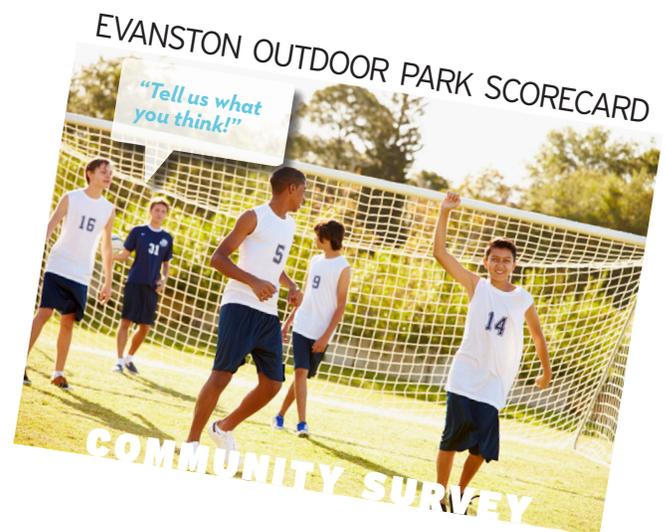
METHODOLOGY

To prepare this score card, the project team has undergone an extensive survey of community priorities for public open space, recreation and demographic trends, and a rigorous field inspection of Evanston's numerous public open space properties. Site inspections, surveys, and interviews were performed in September, October, and November of 2016.

IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND TRENDS

To help provide context for weighting the scoring of Evanston's public open spaces, the project team gathered information about community trends and priorities. Information related to trends and priorities was gathered from the following sources:

1. A review of community demographic projections;
2. A review of national recreation trends;
3. The administration and review of a community survey;
4. Interviews and focus groups conducted with key stakeholders, who were identified by City staff.



INSPECTION OF OPEN SPACE SITES

In all, the project team evaluated 112 public open spaces within the City of Evanston. Sites evaluated included:

1. City of Evanston parks and public open space sites
2. Evanston / Skokie School District 65 sites
3. Lighthouse Park District sites
4. Ridgeville Park District sites
5. Forest Preserves of Cook County site

Inspections did NOT include:

- Open spaces and / or features closed for capital improvements throughout the survey period;
- Indoor facilities on a open space site, except for public restrooms available to users;
- Open space properties that have not been developed for public use; and,
- Seasonal facilities not available for review during the inspection period (e.g. outdoor ice rinks).



Each open space was inspected based on eleven open space *feature* types. Feature types were chosen to represent different things commonly found in City of

Evanston public open spaces, including:

- Athletic Fields (soccer / football / lacrosse fields and baseball diamonds)
- Athletic Courts (including tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts)
- Playgrounds
- Trails and Paths
- Seating Areas
- Passive Green Spaces
- Natural Areas (including community gardens, school gardens, and the bird sanctuary)
- Beaches
- Restrooms
- Drinking Fountains
- Parking Lots

Each open space features in terms of:

- Availability to Public
- Equipment Functionality & Quality
- Amenities Quality
- Surface Quality
- Cleanliness & Safety

DATA ANALYSIS

Score Weighting

To ensure that open space scores reflect the viewpoint of an average Evanston citizen, weighting was applied to each feature score when producing individual open space scores based on:

- Community demographics and demographic projections;
- National recreation trends;
- Community survey results; and,
- Feedback from interviews and focus groups conducted with key stakeholders.

For example, Similarly, community demographics project growth in the 25-44 age segment (which often represents households with children) as well as growth of the 65+ age segment (households that do not typically have children). So features accommodating both of these age groups were giving a relative weight.

Additionally, community feedback indicated that restrooms were more important to a open space visit than a drinking fountain. Therefore, the average area score for restrooms in a open space will factor in more heavily to the overall open space score than that for the drinking fountains in the open space.

As a final example, national trends indicate that multi-use trails are important to the community. Therefore, this amenity received a high relative weighting.

Feature weighting was also implemented to help alleviate issues that arise with smaller open spaces that may only house a few features, so that a parking lot or a drinking fountain doesn't count as much as something that matters more to people during their actual visit, such as a beach or restroom. Conversely, scores are calculated to ensure that no individual feature area or open space is penalized because it lacked any given feature (such as an athletic court).

The data collection and subsequent analysis resulted in three tiers of scoring for Evanston open space:

1. *Feature Scores* All individual feature scores were averaged with other feature scores of the same type throughout the City of Evanston to arrive at an overall feature score. For example, inspection results from all basketball courts, tennis courts, and volleyball courts were combined to produce a city-wide Athletic court score. See Appendix A for details on Evanston Open Space feature scores.
2. *Individual Open Space Scores* Average area scores within individual open spaces are combined and weighted to produce an overall open space score. For example, if an open space has a soccer field and a baseball diamond, those scores would be averaged to create an Athletic Field score for the open space. This score was combined with the other average area scores for that open space to create an overall open space score. See Appendix B for details on Evanston Open Space feature scores.
3. *System Score* Individual open space scores were averaged together to create an overall system score.



COMMUNITY TRENDS & PRIORITIES

As mentioned previously, to help provide context for scoring Evanston's public open spaces, the project team gathered information about community trends and priorities. Information related to trends and priorities was gathered from the following sources:

1. A review of community demographic projections;
2. A review of national recreation trends;
3. The administration and review of a community survey; and,
4. Interviews and focus groups conducted with key stakeholders, who were identified by City staff.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The total population of the City of Evanston has recently experienced a slight increase from 74,486 in 2010 to 76,991 in 2016. The current estimated population is projected to continue its moderate growth, increasing to 78,495 individuals in 2021. According to U.S. Census reports, the total number of households has experienced a coinciding upward trend, increasing from 30,047 in 2010 to 31,236 in 2016. The city's total households are expected to continue to increase at this modest rate up to 31,953 households by 2021.

Age Characteristics and Trends

Based on the 2010 Census, the median age of the population of the area is lower (34.4 years) than the median age of the U.S. (38.0 years). Projections show growth in the 25-44 age segment, which often represents families with children. Additionally, similar to national trends, projections show that the area will undergo an aging trend through 2021, as the 65+ age segment (the baby-boomers) grows.

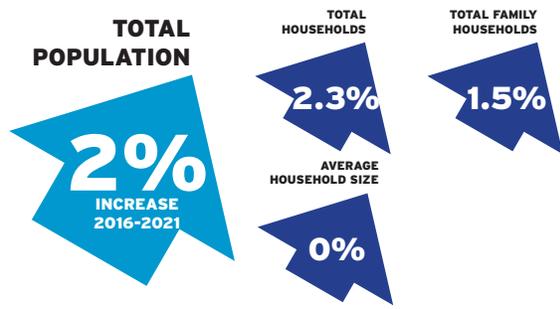
Race And Ethnicity Characteristics and Trends

The estimated 2016 population of the service area is diverse, with White Alone (65%), Black Alone (18%), and Asian Alone (8.6%) representing the largest racial and ethnic groups. Future projections show that by 2021 the overall composition of the population will become slightly more diverse. Forecasts for Evanston through 2021 expect a decrease in the White Alone (64%) population and a decrease in the Black Alone (15%) population; coinciding with slight increases in the population for all other race segments, particularly the Asian Alone (12%) population. Based on the 2010 Census, those of Hispanic/Latino origin represent about 9% of the City's total current population. This population is expected to increase to almost 12% by 2021.

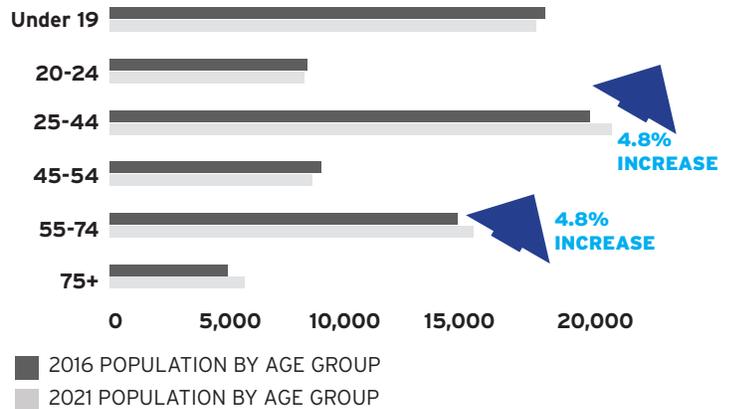
POPULATION PROJECTIONS

	2016	2021	% Change
Total Population	76,991	78,495	1.95%
Total Households	31,236	31,953	2.30%
Family Households	15,998	16,240	1.51%
Avg Household Size	2.24	2.24	0.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI Business Analyst



AGE DISTRIBUTION PROJECTIONS



	2016	2021	% Change
Under 19	18,721	18,387	-1.7%
20-24	8,494	8,384	-1.3%
25-44	20,663	21,598	4.5%
45-54	9,111	8,709	-4.4%
55-74	14,949	15,666	4.8%
75+	5,053	5,791	1.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI Business Analyst

NATIONAL RECREATION TRENDS

Information released by *Sports & Fitness Industry Association's* (SFIA) 2016 Study of Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report reveals that the most popular sport and recreational activities include:

- Fitness walking;
- Treadmill, running/jogging;
- Free weights; and
- Road bicycling.

Most of these activities appeal to both young and old alike, can be done in most environments, are enjoyed regardless of level of skill, and have minimal economic barriers to entry.

From a traditional team sport standpoint, basketball ranks highest among all sports, with approximately 23.4 million

people reportedly participating in 2015. In general, nearly every sport with available data experienced an increase in participation, which is a reversal from the five-year trend of declining participation in sports.

Sports that have experienced significant growth in participation are:

- Squash;
- Boxing;
- Lacrosse;
- Rugby;
- Roller hockey; and,
- Field hockey

All of these sports have experienced growth in excess of 30% over the last five years. More recently, roller hockey, racquetball, indoor soccer, boxing, and flag football were the activities with the most rapid growth during the last year.



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

A total of 20 stakeholders, plus the Greenways maintenance team were interviewed during the process in September and October 2016.

Who was Interviewed?

Organizations represented in stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions include:

- City of Evanston Parks and Recreation Board
- City of Evanston Greenways Staff
- District 65 Grounds and Maintenance
- Lighthouse Park District
- City of Evanston Parks and Maintenance
- Ridgeville Park District
- Evanston Community Tennis Association
- Evanston Lacrosse
- Team Evanston
- Evanston AYSO
- Evanston Baseball and Softball Association
- Evanston Junior Wildkits
- Evanston Cricket Club

Discussion Themes and Feedback

Generally, stakeholders are satisfied with the quality and maintenance of open space sites. However, stakeholders do have concerns about some issues.

Quality of Evanston Public Open Space and Recreation Amenities

- **Athletic Fields** Quality of the existing sports fields in Evanston is a top concern for many stakeholders with concerns cited regarding field grading, turf quality, flooding, and lack of lighting. This issue is exacerbated during a rain event, when poor drainage causes many fields to be unplayable.
- **Athletic Courts** Quality of existing tennis courts is also a concern for some stakeholders. Some stakeholders are seeking to convert 1-2 courts for pickle ball use.
- **Outdoor Ice** Many stakeholders are unsatisfied with the condition of City outdoor ice rinks, however, stakeholders think that Ridgeville Park District does a nice job with their outdoor ice rink. Staff indicate they do not have needed equipment to maintain these outdoor rinks. Ridgeville has recently adopted new methods of maintaining rinks with greater success.
- **Lakefront and Beaches** Some stakeholders feel the appearance of the lakefront is unattractive, specifically the use of snow fencing. The quality of concessions at the beach is a concern for many stakeholders. Many think food trucks could be a good solution, but City ordinances place restrictions on food trucks that make this option not viable. Some stakeholders feel that the restrooms at Greenwood Beach need improvement, and that Greenwood and Dempster Beach need to be “re-visioned” overall.
- **Signage** Stakeholders described signage at sites as inconsistent, making it hard to recognize some of the open spaces as public open space. Inconsistent sign types are also a challenge for maintenance staff.

Level of Service of Evanston Open Space and Recreation Amenities

- **Park Distribution** Geographic distribution is considered uneven by some stakeholders.
- **Athletic Field Capacity** Many stakeholders cited capacity issues with fields: Both City and School District 65 fields are filled to capacity every year. Stakeholders are particularly concerned with fields being over-used, and the impact this has on field quality. The lack of lighting at fields negatively affects capacity. This is a particular issue for fall youth sports leagues and for adult leagues that would potentially play later into the evening. Stakeholders also noted that some open spaces are heavily used by adjacent private schools, without shared maintenance. Schools cited include Chiarvalle, Roycemore, and the School for Little Children.
- **Underused Facilities** Stakeholders cited underused baseball field facilities at Tallmadge and the northeast corner at Foster Field.
- **Lakefront** Some stakeholders feel Dempster Street boat launch does not have the capacity to meet the needs of the community. Lighthouse Park District representative is concerned that their site is over-programmed, and would like to see more passive use of the site.

Open Space Operations and Maintenance

- **Safety / Security** Open spaces are generally considered safe by stakeholders. However, some stakeholders expressed a need for more security lighting. Staff is aware of locations within open spaces that have security issues. Enforcement of rules at open spaces (specifically the beaches) was cited as a concern by some stakeholders. Some think that park rangers or a stronger presence of community officers at parks and beaches would help this issue.

- **Department vs. District** Challenges of being a department rather than a district was cited by many stakeholders. Open spaces compete for resources with other municipal departments. Some stakeholders identified challenges associated with the two small independent park districts that exist within the City, mostly related to the lack of a centralized system for communications among open space managers and reserving or sharing resources.
- **Shared Facilities** Stakeholders are generally pleased with the cooperation occurring District 65 and affiliate organizations when it comes to sharing open space resources. Many have observed a great improvement with new school administration. Some stakeholders observe that although they serve the same constituents, the City, District 65, and District 202 do not work together efficiently. Some feel there may be a benefit to formalizing the operational relationship through a targeted intergovernmental agreement (IGA).
- **Maintenance Budget** Staff does a great job working with available resources, which are reported as minimal by stakeholders. Staff would be helped out by an annual budget for staff, tools, and equipment - this type of budget does not currently exist.

Capital Improvements for Open Space

- **Decision-Making for Capital Improvements** There is no formal protocol for open space improvements. Although staff presents a five-year capital plan to the Parks and Recreation Board each year, budget approval for improvements at city-owned open space properties is generally an alderman-led process. Budget approval at school district owned open spaces is generally a principal-led process.

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

Both English and Spanish language surveys were made available on-line, with paper copies distributed to Evanston park facilities and libraries. The survey was promoted through city communication channels, Districts 65 and 202, and athletic affiliate groups. Project team members underwent additional outreach at Kits, Cats and Kids Block Party and Bike the Ridge.

A total of 1,859 people responded to the community survey. Of that total, 1,349 were complete responses and 510 were partial responses. Seven respondents utilized the Spanish Language survey. All responses, both complete and partial, are included in the data compiled for this report.

It is important to note that the survey is not administered as a random sample, and the survey respondents should not be considered representative of Evanston as a whole.

Open Space Features Ranked Most Important

In general, the open space amenities rated as most important to respondents' enjoyment of open spaces include restroom facilities (32%), paths and walkways (31%), playgrounds (35%), and athletic fields (baseball, soccer, etc) (35%).

Open Space Features Ranked Highly Needed

Overall, respondents had the highest need for beaches (78%), as well as walking, running and biking paths (79%). Also highly ranked were natural areas and habitats (59%), playgrounds (59%), and athletic fields (53%). The need for a swimming pool(s) was also highly cited (46%).

Areas Where Community Needs are Best Met

Evanston's open space offerings are meeting survey respondents needs best in the following areas:

- Tennis Courts
- Playgrounds
- Beach Offerings

Areas Where Community Needs are NOT Being Met

Evanston's open space offerings are NOT meeting survey respondents needs the most in the following areas:

- Swimming pools
- Off-leash dog areas
- Outdoor ice rinks
- Soccer/multi-purpose fields

Open Space and Beach Improvements Needed

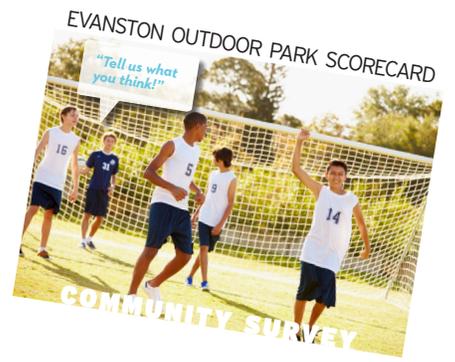
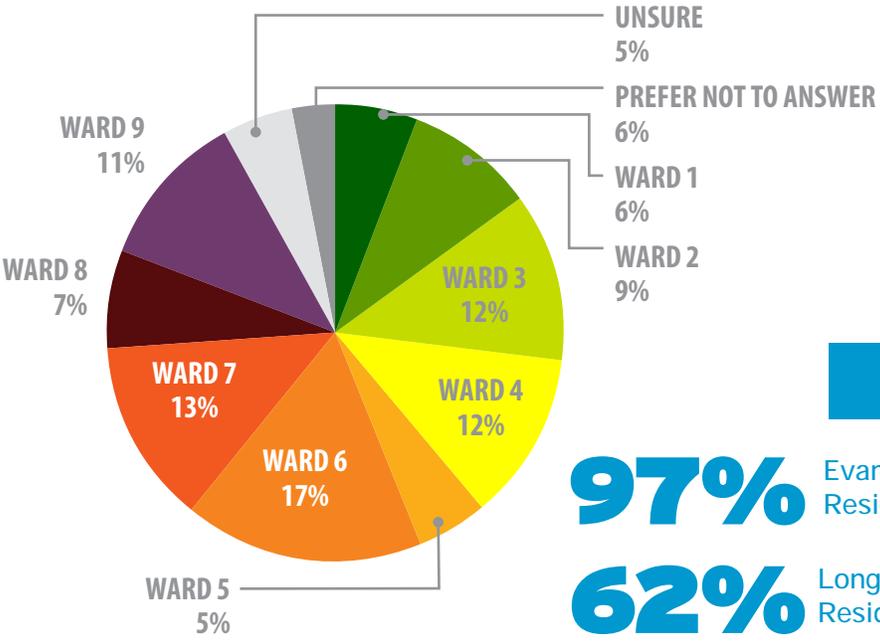
At parks:

- 57% of respondents cited a need for improved Restroom facilities
- 39% of respondents cited a need for improved Athletic fields
- Open Responses indicate a need for improvement of Athletic Fields and Courts;
- Cleanliness and Maintenance;
- Lighting; Landscaping;
- Drinking Fountains

At beaches:

- 61% of respondents cited a need for the improvement of Restroom facilities.
- 18% of respondents cited the need for the improvement of Swimming Areas.
- Open Responses indicate a need for improvements related to: Cost of Beach Access/Use of Tokens; Beach Policies/Rules and Staffing; Showers/Rinse Areas and Restrooms; Cleanliness and Maintenance; Size of Beach and Swimming Areas.

Survey Participation by Ward

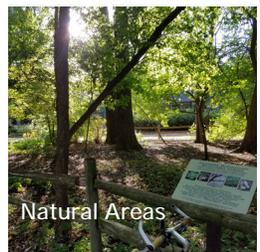
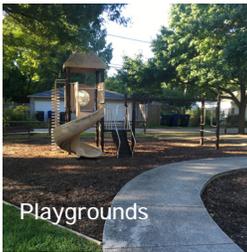
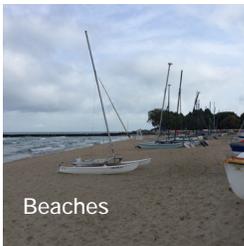


Participant Characteristics

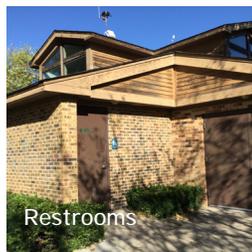
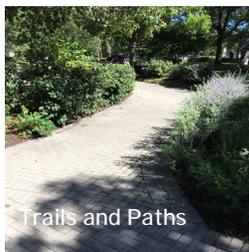
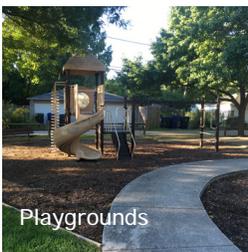
97% Evanston Residents
62% Long-term Residents

71% Age: 35-54
79% Visit an open space several times per week

Open Space Features Ranked Highly Needed



Open Space Features Ranked Most Important





SCORE CARD RESULTS

In all, the project team evaluated 112 public open spaces within the City of Evanston. Each open space was inspected based on eleven open space feature types. Feature types were chosen to represent different things commonly found in City of

Evanston public open spaces, including:

- Athletic Fields (soccer / football / lacrosse fields and baseball diamonds)
- Athletic Courts (including tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts)
- Beaches
- Drinking Fountains
- Passive Green Spaces
- Natural Areas (including community gardens, school gardens, and the bird sanctuary)
- Parking Lots
- Paths and Trails
- Playgrounds
- Restrooms
- Seating Areas

Each open space features in terms of:

- Availability to Public
- Equipment Functionality & Quality
- Amenities Quality
- Surface Quality
- Cleanliness & Safety

Feature Analysis

The majority of individual open space features scored only average overall. Only 3 out of 11 features received a B (Good) rating or higher, and no single feature class received an A (excellent) rating. The lowest score was for both athletic fields and restrooms, which scored a C-. Restrooms suffered mainly from deterioration. Athletic fields suffered from deficiencies in fencing, seating, and surfacing.

Individual Open Space Analysis

Geographically speaking, the quality of the parks is fairly distributed throughout the community. However, there exists a cluster of low-ranking parks at the northeast side of the City. Six out of nine wards contain an "A" level open space (Wards 1, 4, and 9 do not). See page 12 of this document for a map of parks coded by individual park score.

Open Space System Score

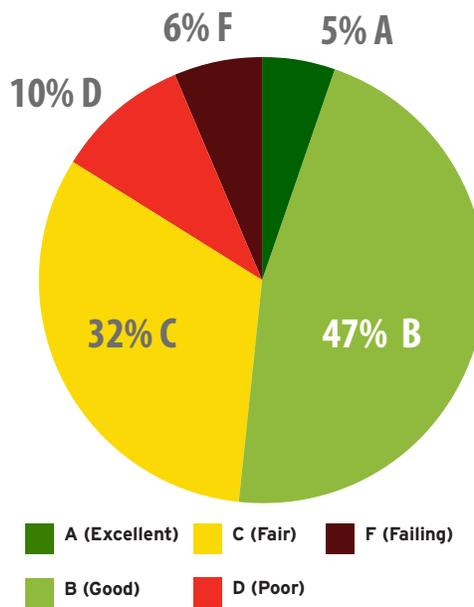
City of Evanston public open spaces fared reasonably well, with the majority of open spaces (52%) receiving a rating of "Good" or higher, and an overall system score of a C+ (Fair).

C+

OVERALL SYSTEM SCORE: 77

Open Space Score Distribution

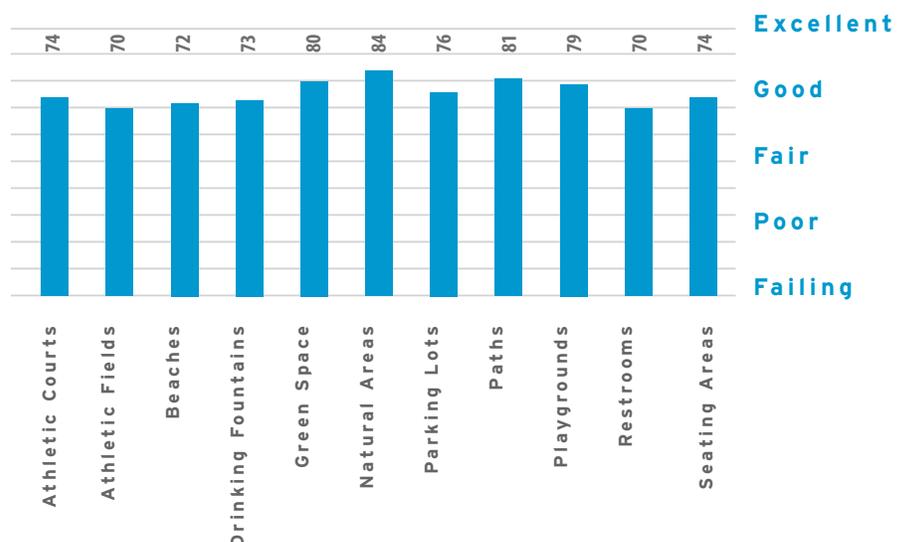
Scores	Grade	Condition
100-97	A+	Excellent
96-93	A	Excellent
92-90	A-	Excellent
89-87	B+	Good
86-83	B	Good
82-80	B-	Good
79-77	C+	Fair
76-73	C	Fair
72-70	C-	Fair
69-67	D+	Poor
66-63	D	Poor
62-60	D-	Poor
59 & below	F	Failing



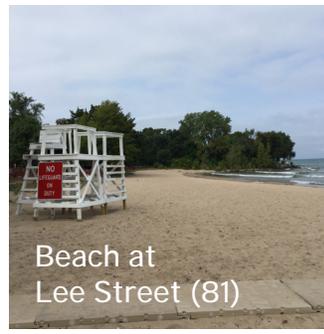
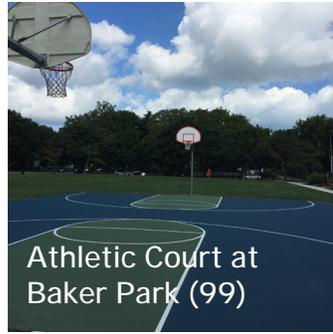
Generally, City of Evanston public open spaces fared only average. However, the majority of open spaces (52%) still received a rating of “Good” or higher. The average overall system score is a C+ (Fair).

Overall Open Space Feature Scores

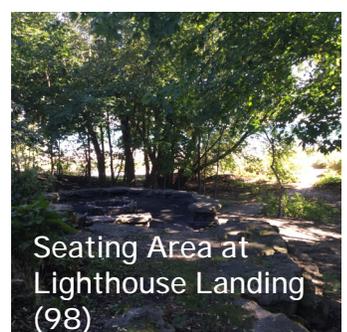
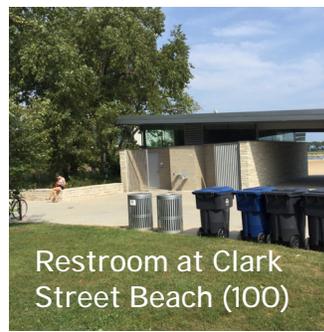
Only 3 out of 11 features received a B (Good) rating. The lowest score was for both athletic fields and restrooms, which scored a C-. Restrooms suffered mainly from deterioration. Athletic fields suffered from deficiencies in fencing, seating, and surfacing.



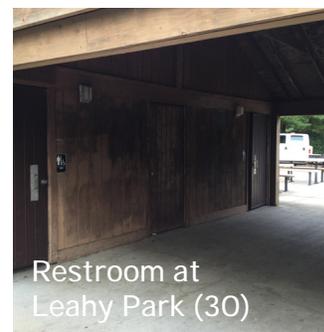
Highest Ranked Features System-wide



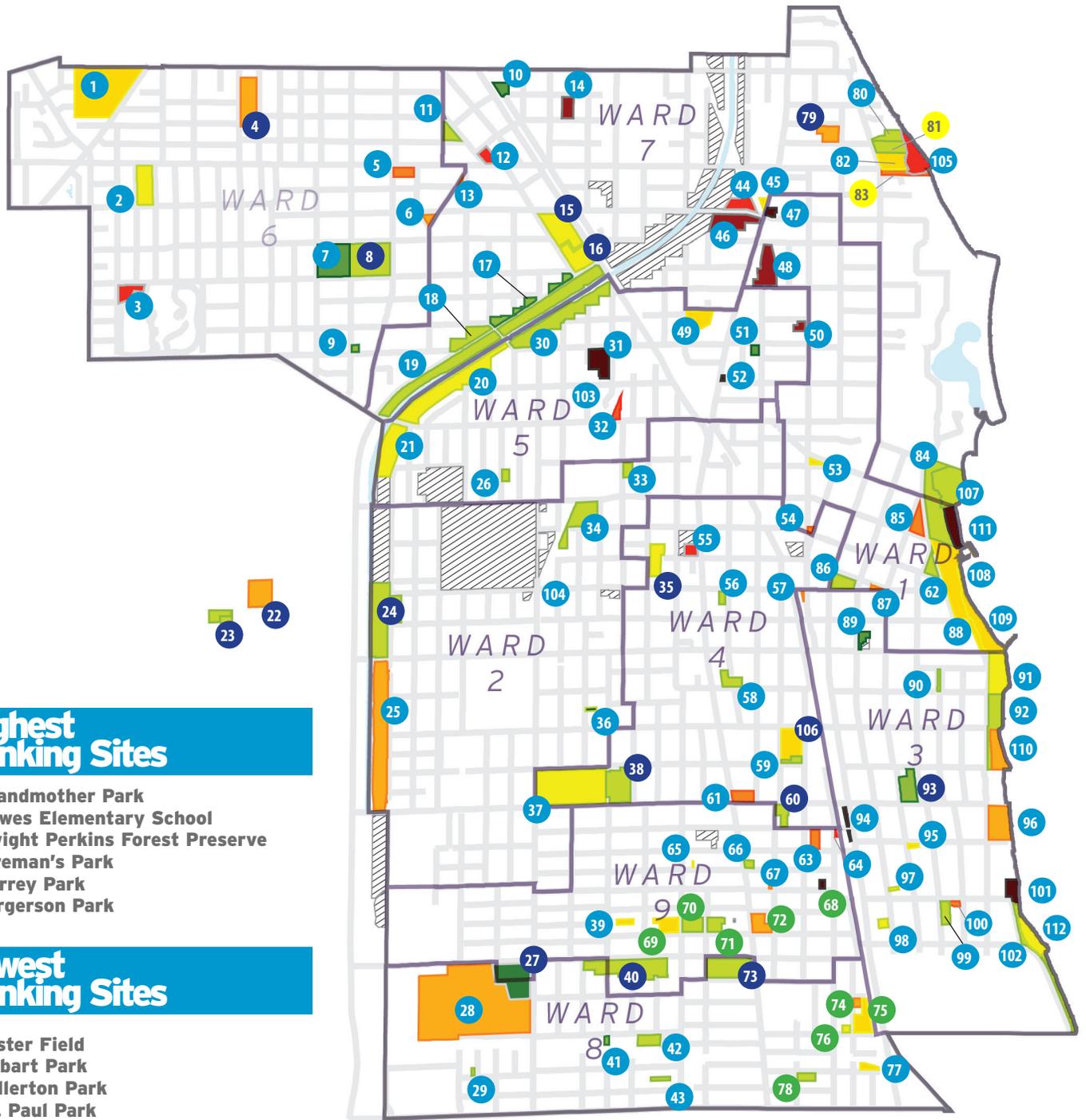
High-scoring examples of existing open space features.



Select Low-Rated Features System-wide



Low-scoring examples of open space features. These examples were chosen because they represent features ranked as highly important in the community survey.



Highest Ranking Sites

- Grandmother Park
- Dawes Elementary School
- Dwight Perkins Forest Preserve
- Fireman's Park
- Currey Park
- Torgerson Park

Lowest Ranking Sites

- Foster Field
- Hobart Park
- Fullerton Park
- St. Paul Park

■ A+ (97 - 100)	■ B+ (87 - 89)	■ C+ (77 - 79)	■ D+ (67 - 69)	■ F (60 and below)	● XX City of Evanston Park	● XX Lighthouse Park District Park
■ A (94 - 96)	■ B (84 - 86)	■ C (74 - 76)	■ D (64 - 66)		● XX District 65 Property	● XX Ridgville Park District Park
■ A- (90 - 93)	■ B- (80 - 83)	■ C- (70 - 73)	■ D- (60 - 63)			



Scores by Location

Ward 1	89 Currey Park 90	Ward 5	44 Chandler Park 63	43 Dobson-Brummel Park 84
87 Congregational Park 76	92 Elliott Park 86	21 Beck Park 80	107 Clark St Beach 86	75 Elks Park 77
88 Dawes Park 79	101 Garden Park 56	20 Butler Park 82	81 Deering Park 86	74 Elks Play Lot 74
109 Dempster Street Beach 78	57 Harper Garden 74	103 Emerson Square 84	18 Eggleston Park 86	28 James Park 76
111 Dog Beach 59	97 Hinman Avenue Park 80	51 Fireman's Park 91	13 Ellingwood Park 76	76 Kay Lee Tot Lot 81
54 Fountain Square 72	100 Kelly Park 73	31 Foster Field 49	83 Grosse Point Lighthouse 70	41 Levinson Tot Lot 88
47 Fullerton Park 51	110 Lee St Beach 75	32 Gilbert Park 67	15 Haven Middle School 80	42 Lomar Park 84
108 Greenwood Beach 71	93 Lincoln Elementary 88	52 Hobart Park 49	11 Howell Park 84	73 Oakton Elementary 83
85 Lunt Gardens 71	98 Megowen Park 80	49 Ingraham Park 77	12 Independence Park 65	Ward 9
53 Oldberg Park 78	95 Snyder Park 79	26 Perry Park 83	16 Kingsley Elementary 81	63 Eiden Park 70
62 Patriots Park 87	112 South Blvd Beach 81	50 Philbrick Park 61	19 Ladd Arboretum 84	71 Kamen East Park 83
86 Raymond Park 86	102 South Blvd Park 86	30 Twiggs Park 84	80 Lawson Park 87	70 Kamen West Park 84
48 Tallmadge Park 61	94 St Paul Park 52	Ward 6	46 Leahy Park 60	69 Leider Park 77
Ward 2	90 Stockham Place Park 83	5 Ackerman Park 72	105 Lighthouse Beach 63	65 Monroe Tot Lot 78
36 Grandmother Park 98	Ward 4	2 Bent Park 81	82 Lighthouse Landing 79	64 Morris Park 68
25 Harbert Park 76	55 Alexander Park 65	3 Cartwright Park 65	17 McCormick Park 88	68 Reba Park 56
24 King Arts School 87	35 Dewey Elementary 82	7 Dwight Perkins Forest Preserve 92	14 McCulloch Park 62	72 Ridgeville Park 75
104 Lake-Dodge Park 81	59 Fitzsimmons Park 83	8 Lincolnwood Elementary 85	79 Orrington Elementary 75	67 Sargent Park 74
34 Mason Park 87	61 Grey Park 72	1 Lovelace Park 77	10 Torgerson Park 90	39 Southwest Park 79
33 Smith Park 83	58 Larimer Park 83	9 Porter Park 88	Ward 8	66 Trahan Park 86
Ward 3	56 Merrick Rose Garden 87	6 Quinlan Park 74	78 Brummel Park 83	Village of Skokie
99 Baker Park 83	106 Nichols Elementary 79	4 Willard Elementary 76	29 Brummel-Richmond Tot Lot 84	23 Rhodes School 84
91 Burnham Shores 81	60 Park School 84	Ward 7	40 Chute Middle School 83	22 Walker Elementary 76
96 Clark Square 76	37 Robert Crown Park 81	45 Bates Park 79	77 Clyde-Brummel Tot Lot 79	
	38 Washington Elementary 85	84 Centennial Park 87	27 Dawes Elementary 96	



WHAT'S NEXT?

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Overall, the City of Evanston and its public open space management partners should be proud of their open space system, however, there is work to be done. The majority of spaces were rated as good, which demonstrates that while these spaces are being used and experiencing wear and tear, the capital improvements and open space maintenance the City and its partners invest result in an overall quality open space system.

In order to improve this score, the City and its partners should consider two approaches. First, review the information in this report to make improvements to the infrastructure and maintenance of open spaces receiving a "C" or lower.

Second, the City and its open space management partners should work to address system-wide issues. Based on inspection results, addressing the following areas will have the greatest impact on improving park quality system-wide.

- The park system may benefit from developing standards in terms of signage and ensuring that at a minimum, at least every park has an entrance sign to identify it as a city park. In many other communities, rules (and sometimes hours) signage is posted consistently at playgrounds and athletic fields and courts, although this was often not the case at the parks inspected in Evanston.
- Many drinking fountains suffered from deterioration issues and 38% had some sort of functionality issue.
- In most cases, restrooms were found open and fully stocked. However, because of their importance to park visitors, minor improvements of painting/patching ceilings, walls, and windows as well as installing diaper changing stations where space allows would result in improved scores.

- Playground equipment deterioration was typically a result of general wear and tear from use and exposure to weather/outdoors. As the majority of deterioration issues consisted of rust and chipped or peeling paint, touch-ups to address these issues would help the overall playground score.
- Seating issues were found in all areas, but especially at athletic fields. Repainting/refinishing wooden benches and replacing decaying wood planks system-wide is recommended as a first step to address seating issues.
- Beaches, one of the most valued features provided by the City of Evanston, would benefit from improved fencing and landscaping.
- Fencing was also found to be poor at athletic fields. In parks where these problems cannot be solved without replacement, there may be opportunities for cost savings by completing similar fencing improvements in multiple parks as one project.
- Athletic fields also suffered from surface issues including weeds in both infields and turf, as well as other turf issues and worn or bare spots from use.
- Evaluate future capital improvement plans for any parks receiving a score of C or below to ensure that the improvements address any issues covered in this report where possible.

It should be noted that maintaining all open spaces at the "A" level may require significant capital investments and on-going maintenance to bring them up and to keep them up to this standard. This may not be practical, particularly in a community where public open space facilities compete for resources with other important City initiatives.

Additionally, city and park administration should further evaluate the following improvements to park maintenance and operational practices:

- Consider budgeting for infrastructure improvements to increase field capacity such as drainage improvements, field lighting, and synthetic turf.
- Design and implement site furnishing and signage

standards. The park system may benefit from developing standards in terms of signage and ensuring that at a minimum, at least every park has an entrance sign to identify it as a city park. In many other communities, rules (and sometimes hours) signage is posted consistently at playgrounds and athletic fields and courts, although this was often not the case at the parks inspected in Evanston.

- Consider increasing the number staff dedicated to regular park maintenance. Litter was an issue across the parks and may partially be a result of the inconsistency of trash receptacle placement in the parks. Man-made trash was found in 31% of the areas inspected. The other noticeable cleanliness issue was the matter of migrated debris from one area of the parks to another, especially in path and playground areas. For example, sand from sand play areas was often found spread to other parts of the playground and dirt and/or wood chip from adjacent landscaping often spread to path surfaces. Vandalism was found in 18% of the areas inspected with the majority consisting of spray paint, markers, and scratches or etchings. It was found most commonly in seating areas and playgrounds. Although actual safety hazards were found infrequently, vandalism that is not addressed quickly can lead to perceived safety issues by park visitors and is commonly thought to breed more vandalism.
- Consider a formal shared-use agreement among open space managers, and implement system-wide scheduling tool for shared facilities
- Develop an athletic field maintenance program, including a schedule that allows existing natural turf fields to rest periodically without disrupting scheduled athletics.
- Update the public open space score card on a regular basis to track progress.

This is not meant to serve as a list of to-do items, as it is not practical nor cost-effective to address every issue immediately. Instead, these issues should remain top of mind as staff review park maintenance standards, equipment replacement schedules, and develop future park improvements and designs, resulting in a long-term and proactive approach.

For those issues mentioned above that can be addressed over the next several years, it's important that a balanced approach is taken that allows current operations to continue. Otherwise the City may see improvements in the areas listed below while allowing other areas to decline.