

# STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK SUMMARY

*September 2016*

**Summit**   
**Metro Parks**

*Your Back Yard for 95 Years*

[summitmetroparks.org](http://summitmetroparks.org)

**1. What do you believe to be the most important services Summit Metro Parks provides the community and visitors? Why are they important?**

- Open spaces in an urban setting
- Well maintained parks
- Protection and conservation of natural resources
- Unique landscapes and features
- Programs provided; diversity of services
- Acquisition and preservation of natural areas
- Respite
- Trail connectivity
- Free services
- Land presentation and acquisition; for passive use
- Passive use of the system
- Green space and preservation
- Education and introduction to nature to those who do not have it readily available
- The value the outdoors provides the community that leaves a legacy
- Connection with nature
- Conserving green space/parks spaces; improves our lives
- Opportunities available to the community
- Introducing children to nature through programs
- Access to green space and nature; in an urban environment it is increasingly rare
- Conservation for land
- Opportunity for exercise
- Unique programming that you do not find in other areas
- Archery, and other unique activities
- Nature education for youth
- Having the parks and taking care of them
- Giving people the option of having parks and opportunities
- Wildlife protection
- Taking care of the trees
- Making sure the parks are available to everyone
- Protecting green space helping biodiversity for people to enjoy through natural areas
- Health benefits from being out in nature—recharge, relaxation, stress release, hiking, physical activities
- Staff provides educational capabilities
- Nature center connects kids to nature at young age, reduce ADHD symptoms (like a prescription)
- Recreational opportunities important for all people - mountain bikes and wheel chairs
- Free of charge programs for adults, kids, preschoolers
- Fall hiking spree for families; introduces to eight parks each year
- Free programs, but many people don't know about them or about the parks
- App for parks is really great

- Fostering appreciation so people value outdoor opportunity, viability of park system
- Preserving areas for future generation
- Parks attract people to live here
- Programs are always looking for new ideas (archery classes)
- Provide green space for people to hike and bike; avenue for break from “work, eat, repeat”
- Provide recreation opportunities-biking, hiking
- Protect the outdoors; lands that are set aside for nature
- Preschool and elementary school participate with Ranger programs in outdoor living environment
- Stewardship, maintaining utilization, awareness and realizing the green space is going to change
- Outside is Inside today; program outreach for kids to get away from video games
- Designated areas for programs is successful
- Achieve balance between natural resource management and active recreation
- Best managed; leader in state park districts in Ohio
- Trend to buy land, need plan to open up land to other uses and maintain conservation and preservation
- Safety is good, Rangers available until 11:00 pm
- Well maintained parks
- Rangers friendly
- Parks are clean
- Metro Parks does an amazing job with limited funding
- Good leadership and fiscal controls
- Provide safe Green space all over the town
- Accessible
- Variety of resources
- Diverse parks; each park offers something different
- Community gathering places
- Get people away from technology
- Provide facilities to rent
- Permitting system for programs
- Reasonable fees for rental
- Hiking spree; 8 hikes to get medal; families get involved; get hiking stick
- People use the parks close to them and take ownership
- Free services for all
- Provides place for wellness programs; points for hiking spree
- Provides spaces for girl scout and boy scout hiking
- Free ballet in the parks
- Involvement with Akron Marathon, getting back to Towpath Trail
- Runners, hikers, walkers enjoy the parks
- Vast majority of programs are free
- Access to network of open space and parks
- Trails are continuing to evolve
- Trails provide aspect of health and wellness; hard, medium, easy
- Variety of services is important; another one of community treasures
- Good metropolitan areas have a good core of parks; crucial for healthy community
- Passive recreation opportunities, picnicking
- Room rentals are affordable and available

- Parks are supposed to have conservation aspect to them; many lands don't have development
- Amount and variety of trails is remarkable
- Preservation
- Recreation
- Education
- Access to nature
- Provide safe environment; don't feel threatened to be out on trails
- Use volunteers for patrolling on parks
- Preserving green space
- Gives the community a better value; have the best parks in the state
- Provide volunteer opportunities
- People come back for spree shields
- People in Akron know they are lucky with parks
- Branding; when wearing jacket in public, not just parks, people talk positive about Metro Parks
- Provides a place where agencies can send children; education
- Support for parks from community
- Ice skating
- Provide green space
- STOMP bike ride
- Towpath
- Bike and hike trails
- Programs for kids (fishing derby)
- Provide space for school activities; cross country teams
- Sledding at various parks
- Pavilions are important; clean, accessible and reasonably priced
- Restored buildings in downtown Akron
- Balance for Passive and active recreation
- Programs at various locations
- Dedicated green space with passable trails
- Buildings are nice for events
- Attention to detail and up to date information
- Social media posts and apps
- Connect with users
- Signage better than other counties and agencies
- Naturalists are well liked
- Variety of programming
- Appreciate facilities available to community
- Well maintained parks and facilities
- Programming to help public interact with environment
- Variety of trails for hiking, running
- Soccer fields are popular
- Buildings in parks so you can use both
- Hiking and trails
- Wide open spaces with hills
- Open space has restrooms and water and very well maintained
- Opportunities for fishing
- Supportive of guiding uses of land

- Parks are right in neighborhoods

[Q1 Response Themes: protection of open space/land; accessible programming; facilities for public use and community gathering space; well maintained and safe spaces and places; health benefits]

2. *What do you believe will be the most critical key issues Summit Metro Parks will face in the next 3-5 years?*

- A significant amount of acquisition; us staff growing at the same rate
- Are we trying to squeeze more out of less
- A balance between development and protection
- Significant demand or active recreation
- Educating the public about use, expectations; the why's behind decisions
- Metro Parks is so good at what they do, people will expect them to be all thigs to all people; could dilute the system
- Pay homage to the past and remember that passive recreation is key
- Suppression of the idle class
- Continued development of land; environmental sensitivities
- Maintaining system infrastructure; recognizing the costs associated with this demand
- Tremendous expansion; have they over developed the land that they have?
- Will the dollars match the demands necessary to maintaining the land that has been acquired?
- Will not continue to be as easy it has been to pass a levy
- Cuyahoga River – water quality issues as it relates to the river
- Public and special interest demands that will test collective resources
- Working to maintain a commitment to the mission statement
- Possible loss of tax base; funding concerns
- Communicating the value of nature and the outdoors to future generations
- Recognizing there are finite financial resources; we have to find a way to fund the system without a dependence on tax resources
- A fair number of people are moving out of the area; what impacts will that have on Metro Parks?
- Seems the system has grown quickly; are they positioned to manage the amount of land that has been acquired?
- Continued funding; heavy dependence on levy
- Climate change; effects on stormwater, erosions, etc.
- Keeping youth interested in being outside
- The need to work with schools and possibly even families in a direct service way (transportation is a challenge for schools as is funding for field trips); bring the parks to the people
- Air quality
- Too much urbanization; how will that affect the parks?
- Animals in the community; overpopulation
- Akron's sewer system; hope that things will be better, parks will be affected
- Water quality could be affected, need to maintain safe waterways from pollution and use
- Dam on Metro Parks property needs to be cleaned out and may provide space for white water kayaking
- Development, more property will be less accessible to public
- Overuse, will budget be able to keep up
- Increase in active recreation could affect the condition of the parks

- People stay in more, less visitors, more detached from nature—will public support parks in future
- Impermeable surfaces need work, flooding renovation could affect budget
- Parks are in streambeds
- Eroded parks from floods
- Climate change—challenging to preserve resource
- Continue to protect properties
- Invasive species are like a cancer to existing ecological areas
- Budget to maintain the integrity of the system
- Deer; ecological and social issue (managing the reputation when controlling the population)
- Responsible stewardship for future (animals get in the way)
- Funding even though the tax levy renewal passed
- Maintenance issues with additional spaces opening without additional resources
- Determine what to do with the land the Metro Parks currently owns and operates
- More demand for additional uses on current land
- Engaging younger generations, maintaining relevancy
- Balancing conservation and active recreation
- Change in staffing and commissioners, need to maintain high quality as the Metro Parks grows
- Costco is going to impact access to parks
- People don't know programs exist (Girl and Boy scouts; populations who don't get out)
- Construction in and around town and in parks
- Environmental concerns
- Financial issues
- Engage the community; trying to figure out how to get more people to parks
- Encroachment of wildlife concerning
- Safety; narrow paths are concerning when dogs approach
- Many paths aren't built for large volume of visitors at once
- Having to rely on voters to pass levy for funding
- Safety; don't walk trails alone
- Sewer project; how to keep parks safe and keep people out there during construction
- Attract talent to Akron
- Demographic change
- Competition for millennials
- Resources and funding; has to pass a levy every 6 years; competition for levy's
- Entities are trying to connect with Rails to Trails; pressure from other entities trying to pass new levy's
- Political entities pressuring for Metro Parks to acquire parks from entities that have existing uses
- Preparing for next levy; never had a problem passing levy, but can't take it for granted
- Need to be proactive with all age groups
- Address younger people who are always on their phones
- Older folks appreciate things that younger generation doesn't know about
- Younger people aren't using parks (except Nature Realm) like they should
- Programs need to encompass parents and kids; make it more exciting and involve whole family (birdhouses with families)
- Volunteer groups are getting older, younger kids not volunteering
- Integrate technology with parks, draw young age group; Geocaching would get teens to parks
- Biking spree involves whole family

- Land acquisition
- Drug use in parks is increasing
- Funding
- Keep parks operating to keep development away
- Levy renewal
- Acquire more parks in places where there isn't access
- (Hardy Road Landfill)
- Maintaining what they have
- You can tell difference when you leave county on Towpath or National Park
- Develop acquired land, bring up to speed
- Safety; staff spread thin with acquisitions
- Maintenance with erosion
- Sustainability with new acreage; waterways, finances
- Keeping true to the mission
- Combined sewer project; effects of closure and how to get people back there once completed
- Interacting with densely populated spaces; older generation doesn't want funding spent on sewer project
- Integrating new trends; mountain biking
- Accessibility for all people to discover parks
- Safety; crime in parks increasing
- Financial sustainability
- Broaden reach of the communities using the parks
- Inclusiveness, more culturally relevant (Spanish speaking naturalist, sensitive to deaf culture)
- Outreach to communities who don't speak English

[Q2 Response Themes: financial sustainability; outreach; safety; land acquisition; maintaining existing parks; technology; balancing conservation with active recreation; aging infrastructure; pressures and expectations that come with levy renewal]

**3. *Where should Summit Metro Parks focus their energies and resources in order to have the greatest impact on the common good and benefit the Summit County community as a whole?***

- Creating connection with surrounding communities and neighborhoods
- Creating connections with neighboring urban areas
- Acquire more land within easy access for underserved areas
- Become a leader within watershed groups
- Building and strengthening the work of others that aligns with the District's mission
- Become the magnet for like-minded agencies to address issues such as "nature deficit disorder" and others
- Capitalize on the environmental movement that began in our region
- Establish partnerships that are mutually beneficial and enhance critical issues such as health and wellness
- Focus on Cuyahoga River and the impacts associated with the River
- Preservation of natural resources
- Be a leader in efforts to develop a county wide trail system
- Balancing land acquisition with the ability to manage what is acquired
- Creating greater connectivity within the County

- Actively develop programs that create opportunities for people to actively engage in the mission of the District
- Consider providing opportunities for children in urban areas to access park experiences
- Introducing people to the parks who do not already have a familiarity with Metro Parks by marketing and encouraging more visitors (out of town and state) to the parks
- Contacting those that don't hear it
- Protecting the land
- Continue to provide quality so additional levy's pass
- Outreach to inner-city folks who don't have vehicles to get to the parks and those with cultural barriers
- Bring the park to the people (urban park idea) benefits of parks can be attained by bringing parks to people (woods, wetland)
- Have Ranger presence so people feel safe
- Maintain trails and spaces based on who uses the parks (not cookie cutter maintenance), some don't want it manicured, wide open spaces and light
- Reach out to kids for growing plants and growing food—urban gardens
- Connectivity issues within cities and counties so you don't have to drive—make them walkable, ridable from neighborhoods
- Partnerships--Satellite parks near school or on school grounds, community garden—need support from teachers or they won't survive—summer need parks staff to help (land lab development) use people around community to help (volunteers and interns)
- Parks don't have to be traditional (mini garden in Columbus)
- Add programs for ages past 8 years old
- Engage high school—need to get out of books and technology. Hard to attract the kids and school administration doesn't buy in.
- Tap into kids wanting to make a difference
- Survey to find out what kids want
- Collaborations with the assets (Valley loop, Metro Parks properties); improve safety for cyclists
- Policing, need more for safety (cities and parks work together to see what's happening in the area) to make it safer greater community
- Close one of the roads in the valley each weekend to motorists
- Engage diverse population
- Community wellness programs build community and ownership
- Engage youth and Baby Boomers
- Outreach at parks to learn who is using and why
- Continuous outreach for youth; geocaching or scavenger hunts
- Provide opportunities for active seniors (70's)
- Increased Ranger presence
- Indoor programs during winter to keep people engaged
- Connectivity of systems of trails for walking, biking, running
- Group fitness and wellness; hiking spree, running spree, etc. exposes the parks and gather community in a welcoming way
- Large activities; dog friendly activities
- Clean up efforts; continued access to Cuyahoga River
- Opportunity to explore more connection to Cuyahoga River
- Getting people to the water; dam planning
- Designated public camping spaces in Metro Parks



- Outreach; educational campaign (like Soap Box Derby) in all communities
- Expose youth to parks through spree and other avenues or take parks to the people
- Resources should go into land that becomes available and makes sense; make it available to community
- Maintaining the existing parks
- Keep work in-house instead of contracting
- Focus on people that don't come to parks because there is nothing to suit them (new park, allows hunting and fishing; still need to allow camping; disc golf course)
- What is good in a park rather than competing with others that are already doing them
- Programs and parks that will provide for many
- Maintaining the facilities; new acquisitions
- Biking trails need to be maintained
- Completion of trail projects
- Connectivity
- Make sure everyone has access and are invited to parks and events; include events in areas where people live
- Conservation; only organization doing widespread conservation; impact other areas for non-users
- Collaboration with other agencies for access to parks
- Continue what they do today
- Outreach
- Accessibility (getting there and once you are there, need to be accessible)
- Relational connection; put efforts into grass roots, smaller communities (not big advertising)
- Tension will come with engaging all different cultures who might have different understanding

[Q3 Response Themes: financial sustainability; community outreach; safety; land acquisition; maintaining existing parks and infrastructure; technology; balancing conservation with recreation (passive versus active recreation conflicts)]

#### 4. *What are the strengths of Summit Metro Parks? What do they do well?*

- Communication; appreciate the markings of trails; education
- Marketing
- Advantage of beautiful terrain
- Thoughtful about land acquisition
- Administration is competent
- Respected advocates for wildlife
- Maintenance of facilities
- Great balance between conservation and creating visitor experiences
- Great programs
- Security
- Great things behind the scenes (e.g., bat studies)
- The Nature Realm – unique facility
- The ability and interest in evolving
- Basic maintenance is done exceptionally well
- The number of parks and the breadth of services
- Fantastic job of marketing the District and services
- Nature of programming

- Volunteer services
- Good, strong staff
- The system is managed well
- They seem to spend money wisely
- A good brand and image
- The Fall Hiking Spree is great!
- Seems the number of programs has grown significantly in the last few years
- They are classy
- Top notch service
- The levy itself is a strength
- The District brings incredible value to the area
- Staff and their commitment
- Quantity of land available
- Staff manages and monitors the resource very well
- Variety of trails; bike and hike, rugged hike, paved, unpaved
- Naturalist staff is admired for expertise—innovative and diverse
- Leveraged relationship with City for conservation easements
- Creative with City of Akron in trading and leasing land
- Towpath Trail managed by so many different entities
- Programs for people with disabilities
- Partner with many other agencies; don't have to worry about who is managing
- Loved by many, people will protect
- Great reputation
- Educational programs very diverse
- Messages are consistent
- Work well with many entities
- Leverage resources well
- Promote well-being
- Website, app and signage are user-friendly
- Outreach to try new trails through hiking program
- Media relations and press coverage
- Communicate well about programs
- Technology is up-to-date for positive messaging
- Safety
- Mountain biking, realizing that recreation is viable use of public land
- More collaboration with outside agencies
- Spree for All program—walk ¼ mile
- Read with the Ranger
- Ice skating and other winter sports
- Well maintained and clean
- Safe
- Perception that it's Summit Metro Parks is positive
- Taxpayers support levy because of positive experiences and loyalty
- Wonderful signage
- Strong programming
- Amazing staff members
- Great employee base that care about the parks and love their jobs

- Adequate parking
- Growth; provide a lot of acreage with vast variety (ecosystems, urban trails)
- Promote great features (Ledge, watershed)
- Clean and safe
- Partnerships; covering an entire county and are successful with partners
- “Metro Parks are locally owned and operated”; motivated to listen to community
- Something for everybody (age, lifestyle)
- Taken over land around the landfill
- Excellent job maintaining facilities
- Staff are the nicest people
- Thank you signs to public for passing levy
- Good staff doing all the workshops; naturalists
- Outreach with programs
- Trails are maintained well
- On Towpath Trail, when you leave Summit County, you can tell the difference
- Protect endangered species
- Use and treat volunteers well
- Good job with marketing (tables at event, mailings, visible)
- Provide music in parks (31 members in Ensemble)
- Offer many programs and surveys
- Transparent; can see where money is going
- Understand public’s concerns, don’t sweep under the carpet
- Programs for very young kids are popular
- Keep facilities clean
- Grounds are well maintained
- Signage is decent
- Hiking spree involves all ages
- Reach out to kids with fishing derbies and Nature Realm
- Guided tours to scout groups
- Parks spread throughout the county
- Nice website
- Staff in parks are so nice, helpful and knowledgeable
- Money is spent wisely
- Advertise hiking sprees really well
- Safety
- Programming variety
- Cleanliness and well maintained
- Quick response for activity set up and take down
- Nature Realm
- Attention to detail; care so much for the users (plow Sand Run in the winter)
- Interaction on social media
- Friendly/stellar staff
- Great job with the sprees, accessible (easy, medium, difficulty)
- Wayfinding at parks great
- Generational pull (95 years of parks)
- Use user photos and give credit encourages others to use
- Variety and locations of trails

- Desire to work with other groups (international); visit with community to educate
- Being invited to group shows community involvement
- Well used parks
- Well maintained parks
- Nice grass mowing
- Safe and secure; Rangers are present
- Staff go above and beyond

[Q4 Response Themes: variety and location of trails; clean, safe and well maintained parks; dedicated staff; quality programs; great reputation; fiscally responsible; land acquisition; good community partners; popularity in the region]

**5. What are the weaknesses of Summit Metro Parks? What can be improved upon?**

- People knowing that they are in a Metro Parks facility
- Identification of plants; as a teaching tool
- More outreach efforts to urban areas and communities
- Could be an old school attitude that remains; does it lend to “no” rather than “maybe”?
- Extremely heavy in the management areas of the District; significant resources has lent itself to significant human resources
- A focus on youth and family with less emphasis on older adult programming
- At times the communication may not be as clear as it should be; clarifying the “why’s” behind decisions
- The double edged word of success; the system cannot manage the demand at times
- Competing with NPS and others for the same users; agencies with the same mission duplicating efforts does not lend itself to the best use of limited resources; seems to go unexamined
- Connectivity between parks in the immediate area as well as the region (instigating more trail networks)
- Marketing and educating the community about the trail system could be improved
- Improve signage for wayfinding (or footsteps or colors on the trails)
- Presence of Rangers could be better (spray painting, dogs off leash)
- Not sampling best practices in all parks (this is how we do things here -QR codes)
- Yoga classes outside, you can’t sign up until certain date, and then it’s full. Add more classes or increase maximums; because classes are free, people register but don’t always go
- People are always getting lost on trails
- Can’t be everything to everybody
- No place to climb
- Hires too many outside consultants and spends too much money that could be used in maintenance; use local expertise and resources
- Tough to distinguish Metro Parks from National Park
- Some trails that have washout aren’t maintained well
- Older parks are steep
- Don’t see Rangers often; would feel safer if they were around more
- Don’t see volunteers monitoring trails
- Not much education
- Limited winter programming
- Trail network isn’t connected
- Lack of outreach and education for vacant population

- Many people in community don't know about the assets and jewels
- Levy is hanging over Metro Parks head
- Limited to 2 mils for levy and community might not even support 2 mils
- Competing with selves; hard to get to all programs
- Popular programs busy; offer more opportunities
- Be careful of wildlife coming back in
- Not enough citations for dogs off leash
- Rangers are too lenient and spread too thin
- No diversity
- Golf cart tours are missed
- A lot of people don't know what's available
- People go to park thinking that there is going to be "something" formal
- People not educated on what's here
- Not sure if there are parks in southeast
- Difficult to reserve facilities
- Rangers late to unlock facilities
- Pdf's are hard to see detail
- Trailheads aren't marked well at Sand Run
- Cultural understanding
- People leave trash
- Do a better job in inner city (sand run is closest and is far)
- Reservation system for park (soccer) doesn't work; other people are there, no monitoring or posting who has space reserved; should have some time that's not reserveable
- Not enough picnic tables in some parks, more shelters
- Unleashed dogs are problems for crowds and other cultures and deaf community
- muddy tracks are hard to walk in, make them in just one area
- Brochures aren't in braille and maybe not in audio
- Some trails have really long grass and tough to run on when wet and/or dew

[Q5 Response Themes: understanding cultural differences; connecting with at risk populations; people's suggestion that they do not know what is available; lack of programs of interest; Rangers spread too thin; trail connectivity; technological best practices]

**6. *What opportunities exist for Summit Metro Parks moving forward? What is it that Summit Metro Parks can capitalize on?***

- Conservation efforts provided as programs that engage the community (e.g., bat studies)
- Connecting with urban-centered schools; possibly consider strategies to engage the parents and families as well
- Camping in the parks (Lake County allows backpacking and camping)
- Diversity of recreation activities (e.g., mt. biking)
- Does the mission need to be examined?
- Work with local land banks; creation of inner city parks
- Constructed land labs for educational opportunities (not staffed); creating places where a teacher can go to teach a class
- With all of the new community leaders at the helm it is an exciting time for change
- Clean up the Cuyahoga River
- Restructure the District to avoid

- Trail development in cooperation with neighboring counties
- Valley View golf course may be a good opportunity; naturalize and use for stormwater retention
- Pooling resources amongst local agencies, NPS, etc.
- Identify the District's role and identity in the scope of park and recreation service provision
- Capitalize on the major outdoor retailers (e.g., REI, Cabela's, etc.) coming to town and the potential opportunity to develop a major community wide-event that focuses on the importance of nature
- Bring more arts into the parks
- Utilize social media and technology more effectively to enhance community engagement – it is a graphic world; let's get things to go viral
- Potential for white water usage; clean up Gorge Metro Park so that it becomes a high quality kayaking venue
- Birding is a fast growing activity; is there a way to generate more opportunities within the system to grow interest locally
  - Using technology to reach users in creative ways – create a virtual experience (e.g., Metro Parks Birding Groups, Metro Parks Mountain Biking Groups, a Metro Parks You Tube Channel)
- Dynamic input mechanism for community/visitor/customer feedback and interests other than passive surveys
- Approach the James Family Foundation for assistance and contribution
- Camping opportunities in the Metro Parks system would be great
- Provide transportation options for children in local schools, urban areas, etc. “that will bring the parks to the people”
- Capitalize on the Nature Realm; potential for more programming
- Could the District provide “out of the box” programming and provide opportunities to local folks who have limited access via grant opportunities
- Provide field trips for youth in schools
- Teen socials at Park facilities
- Market/announce activities focused on youth through the schools via fliers and announcements
- Create opportunities through the arts to connect to nature (e.g., create theater productions)
- Program ideas like Camp opportunities for teens (something like Survivor), Color Runs, bonfires for families, camping cooking challenges, and outdoor movies
- Duplicate mailings could be consolidated into one
- Outreach to schools; develop a list serve on programs that could be sent on to others (teachers could sign up)
- Groomed cross country ski trails
- Add programming based on popular programs (yoga, kayak)
- Consider charging for some of the classes (if it's free, might not be worth anything)
- Opportunity for yoga and TaiChi
- Educate people to better use trails and/or better signage
- Off-trail orienteering
- Schools and parks could work together to promote more information to high school youth
- Pilot programs at schools with close parks
- Educate youth so they know what the parks are and their importance
- Akron Gorge, could be used for climbing, remove dam, create whitewater, natural ice flows, could have ice climbing park (Closest is 8 hours away)
- Education of parks in area
- Climbing opportunities like Kendal Cliffs, Metro Parks could partner with others

- Partner with user groups to help with maintenance
- Water recreation--Cuyahoga Falls, Summit Lake, etc.
- Urban initiatives, not just Akron
- Raise public awareness about what a free-flowing Cuyahoga River would look like
- Connect trails like Towpath Trail (gain awareness and support)
- Paddle sports, grants available for equipment, instruction (need education to preserve the resource including clean up)
- More commuting options
- Connectivity
- Get youth involved to continue to support levy
- Outreach to let community know about programs
- Make a distinction of Metro Parks and National Park
- Offer more programming at parks; build community, yoga, TaiChi,
- Create program for youth volunteers for credits
- Offer more seasonal education
- Collaborate with YMCA, schools and other organizations who offer camps to use parks and learn about parks and share resources
- Determine if the goal is to get people to more parks or get more people to “a” park; market accordingly
- Wellness challenge; 5k at one and other activities at other parks; spread around to various parks
- Hold a “color” run for teens
- Involve cross country coaches in planning events to get team members involved
- Encourage fundraising events in the parks
- Enhance winter programming
- Develop trail network
- Outreach outside of parks to actively recruit people
- Education in schools and community groups
- Translate for populations about facilities and services
- Advertise better
- Track people through apps in park when people check in; get points for rewards; may attract young people
- Outreach for apps that already exist
- Biogenic utility; provide value for storm water that is taken for granted
- Use mountain biking sites as a draw for people from outside community
- Mountain biking spree or contest; mountain bikers will do maintenance for free
- Eco vacations; camping and water trekking could be national draws to community (Millennials)
- Disc golf
- Increase Ranger staff to help with safety and enforcement
- Do whatever you’re going to do and do it well
- Have other programs like Hiking Spree in other parks
- School Group Guides; need to get Akron schools to participate
- Grant opportunities to bus kids from schools to Nature Realm or other parks
- Inside Out Program for inner city
- Partner with agencies within city to integrate programs
- Reach out to users of Towpath to educate about Metro Parks
- Golf cart tours are a great way for people to get to parks that normally couldn’t; educational and stress release

- Hikes for seniors that can hike
- Provide various opportunities for seniors who could come visit parks—hikes for those who can hike, programs for others
- Provide programs for seniors at senior centers who can't get out
- Market Spree for All to senior centers
- Highlight one park for a month, then another the next month
- Advertise and communicate activities
- Outreach for all parks
- Reintroduce golf cart program
- Create signage about landmarks and history of area
- Information at kiosks explaining the area and history
- Potential for areas near Summit Lake
- Additional group fitness in spaces (indoors and outdoors); Zumba, yoga
- New kinds of sprees to attract new users (yoga sprees, sledding sprees, skiing sprees)
- Geocaching
- Electronic system to lock and unlock facilities
- Update customer service and reservation system
- Enhance winter programming
- Fill in space in generation gap; come together in parks for common theme, all generations are appreciating same things; engage 2 populations in contests
- Outreach to different populations; hardest part is getting youth to parks, once they are there they are aware and will be repeat users
- Accessible in other ways besides driving
- Seek and find challenges through social media and other generation friendly forms
- Real-time video for watching wildlife; night vision
- Lighting in parks that are open after dark; eco friendly
- Provide recycling containers to learn environmental behaviors
- Composting at some of the parks to teach kids
- Diversity in leadership will bring more people into work force
- Education on how to use facilities
- Enforce leash laws
- Provide brush for shoes in parking lot for muddy shoes
- Provide space for family reunions and market for that
- Vacation Bible School; connect with parks, bring staff to them, or bring bible school to parks
- Provide curriculum to bring to churches
- Use building for diversity week; bring all together and involve them in the planning
- Concerts in the park, having more culturally sensitive in parks with themes (Gospel concert, Hispanic event)
- Provide opportunities for integration into the community; many populations are served, bring them together; cross cultural
- Marketing should be diverse (videos of diverse populations using parks)
- Targeted outreach
- Natural events around specific communities (April is Hispanic month)
- Place for Parks to carve out their piece in current issues facing country and community (infant mortality) get access to parks



[Q6 Response Themes: education and outreach; technological advances; enhance and revitalize programming; improve communication efforts, seek out new partnerships; focus on connectivity]

7. *What barriers, challenges, and/or threats exist that must be addressed or overcome in order for Summit Metro Parks to continue to provide quality services to the community and visitors moving towards the future?*

- A focus on accessibility
- Trying to be all things to all people; spreading resources this
- Capacity; what types of visitors experience is created when capacity is reached?
- Economic challenges
- Environmental challenges; watershed, climate change, etc.
- Drilling encroachment
- Funding – state, federal, etc. Recognizing there will be less and less reliance
- Millage restrictions
- Thinking long term –
- Invasive plants
- Over population of certain wildlife species
- Maintain necessary levels of funding; will the levels that the District receives always be there?
- People’s perceptions about the amount they invest in the system, what they receive, and how the investment in Metro Parks might affect the overall investment in the entire community/County
- Will the system grow to the point where it oversaturates the area with parks, trails, etc.?
- Overdevelopment
- Emerald Ash Borer
- Silos in the region; duplication of efforts
- Identifying who is the District’s target audience?
- Identifying what is the District’s role today?
- Getting people to parks
- People who do not know the value of parks
- Not taking the levy for granted
- Special needs barriers; programs for younger children, parents of special needs should be included in planning
- Lack of education for resource protection in natural surface trails
- Lack of vision for 5-10 years
- Stick to the mission (don’t need to be in the coffee business)
- Balance active recreation and conservation (education on use for mountain biking)
- Legal, people suing re: liability issues (rock climbing and flying model airplanes)
- Special interest groups need to monitor their own user groups or one person ruins privilege for everyone
- Rangers can’t monitor everything
- Thinking too small; don’t think just as Summit County; people from outside will come here
- Transportation barriers
- Partner with schools to get kids to parks
- Safety; unknown is fearful
- Sitting is the new smoking; staying inside
- People don’t know how to follow maps; used to GPS
- Access problems

- Language
- Not centralized
- People don't know about parks
- Metro bus from communities to parks
- Eco tourism; don't know who is responsible; collaborate for more funding sources
- Keeping up with the trends; does organization have resources to research millennials
- Development; problems increase with more development (Sand Run erosion from development)
- A lot of people don't know we have Summit Metro Parks
- Lack of funding for Akron schools and other schools to bus kids into parks
- Cancellations at last minute for programs
- Drug usage is a threat
- Funding
- Pressure for programs/services that aren't in line with mission
- Deteriorating neighborhoods; people might not want to come to parks near not too good neighborhoods
- Accessibility; tough getting to locations in some areas
- Competition from other parks in the area; want repeat visitors here
- Confusion between Metro Parks and National Park
- Advocacy for parks
- Technology
- Transportation
- Language
- Financial restraints for how to afford
- Location (inner city)
- Science and church don't mesh, work on making that relationship; need someone to make culturally sensitive

[Q7 Response Themes: ongoing concerns re: funding and stability of sources; transportation, language and cultural barriers for specific populations; accessibility of parks and trails; those who don't know about the District; community education; competition for people's time and money; technological advances]

**8. *Are there any potential partnerships or collaborations that you believe would be beneficial for Summit Metro Parks to pursue moving forward? If so, what are they and what would be the reciprocal benefits of such a relationship?***

- Partner with scouts – junior ranger program
- 4H groups; children's groups
- Started a program with the OH Horse Council
- Portage County – Twinsburg/Liberty Park area – regional trail partnerships
- Healthy community program; tangible planning, programming and implementation; prevention services (Cleveland Clinic)
- Partnerships that encourage walkable communities; trail enhancement and development
- Initiate a think tank that creates a platform and link for all environmental education agencies with like missions – this could become a launching pad for education and ultimately future employment for young people
- Partnering with colleges and universities; programming, volunteer opportunities

- Watershed groups that work within each park that has a watershed
- Have a regional discussion with key players about which agencies should be providing what services so there is less overlap, duplication, etc.
- Work with universities to more aggressively recruit students to assist with technological advances (social media and outreach), volunteer hours, innovative programming that is currently not offered, analyzing the system from a quantitative perspective, etc.
- Local school systems; engage students in a personal way; outreach
- Regionalization – work together with others in the same businesses; have one message
- Partner with cities; a different type of partner that is the primary provider in communities
- Partner with mass transit or local schools
- Partner with University of Akron Field Station to provide nature-based programming
- Akron Public schools
- Akron Housing Association
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Libraries
- NPS
- Connectivity efforts (trails) with local jurisdictions
- International Institute; proving services for immigrant populations
- Work with Peacemakers to connect to more youth(events, volunteer opportunities)
- Work with local schools – problem based learning opportunities for school credit or volunteer opportunities for credit
- Weathervane; do live action theater
- Visual Performing Arts in Firestone; study in the Parks to connect the students with nature
- Host Science Fairs in the parks
- State Support Team for people with disabilities, provide free programs
- Great Lakes
- Art museum
- Zoo
- International Institute of Akron (for refugees)
- Community centers
- YMCA—bring kids to parks
- Boys and girls club
- Rotary clubs for building structures or trails
- Boy scouts
- Coordinating CVMP for outdoor events—more regional
- Policing, need more for safety (cities and parks work together to see what’s happening in the area) to make it safer greater community
- Don’t duplicate efforts, but partner for climbing opportunities
- Water Recreation; Cuyahoga Falls, Summit Lake, etc.
- Look at greater picture of NE Ohio
- American Alpine Club
- Access Fund/ Ohio Climbers Coalition
- REI Grants
- Patagonia grants
- Rock gyms (Rock Mill)
- Sierra club
- Appalachia Fighters

- Friends of the Crooked River
- American Alpine Club
- Cabela's, LLBean, Bass Pro Shops
- Non-profits
- Ohio Erie Canal organization
- Community development, be proactive
- Buckeye Trail Association
- University of Akron
- CAMBA
- Churches, community centers, especially in inner-city to get members active in Metro Parks
- YMCA, Schools, Girl and Boy scouts
- Partner with schools to get information to more students
- Schools are challenged with drug awareness; sexual predator, media; solution for administrators to help students use parks
- Summit County businesses; incorporate into wellness programs
- Nursery and Garden centers; edibles, teach people how to garden
- Content experts (physicians, nutritionists, stress management)
- Hospitals
- Wellness partnerships; monitor progress (meditation, hike, paddleboard yoga, like a sanctuary etc.)
- Metro Parks cooperates with National Park and should continue to share resources
- Partner for sprees
- Ohio Erie Canal Commission
- All governmental entities
- Torch Bearers
- Athletic organizations; Rubber Ducks, Zips, Kent State; promote activity
- Promote passive recreation to organized active groups (Little League, youth soccer, Pee Wee); kids don't stay in these groups very long, but parks is lifetime experience and not programmed
- Outdoor yoga, TaiChi groups
- Art museum
- Other agencies with kids
- Work with directors of activities at Senior Centers for programs (volunteers on buses)
- International community on North Hill area (Refugees)
- Churches and schools
- Churches specific to African American, Refugees, etc.
- Church groups for programs
- Boy and girl scouts
- Public service projects; get more people into the park
- Schools; get kids involved in earth science projects
- Small towns along the Towpath Trail for signage and maintenance standards—prompts for what to look for
- YMCA for summer camps; exposure to youth who will bring other family members back
- Downtown Akron partnership
- Involved in community conversations and new city government
- Bus routes to parks
- Farmers markets; offer space near populations who are involved (Summit Lake)
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters; expose to parks

- Local active groups; running and cycling
- Agencies involved with Towpath
- International Institute
- Schools; teach about parks
- Churches and organizations; camps
- Grass roots groups
- Boys and girls club
- YMCA
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters
- Community advisory communities to advice on different communities
- Invite groups to come; many classes are full, provide classes for specific groups who can't get into set programs

[Q8 Response Themes: local schools; universities; special interest groups; other public entities and agencies; non for profit organizations; local and regional businesses; hospitals]

9. *Do you believe there are **populations who have no or limited access (e.g., physical, financial, transportation, language barriers) to Summit Metro Parks? If yes, who are they and what are the barriers?***

- Students who are in systems that have field trip restrictions
- People with disabilities may have limited access dependent upon location or weather (rain)
- Transportation challenges for those who have no vehicular transport (e.g., older adults, children)
- Asian population who are monolingual
- Those with transportation barriers; those who cannot get to the parks
- Individuals in urban areas who do not have transportation
- International groups who do not speak or understand English (local Sian populations)
- Some physical accessibility issues for some?
- Those who are not comfortable with the idea of playing in the outdoors due to their lack of exposure; the outdoors can be intimidating to some
- Children in the urban areas of Akron who lack transportation
- Elderly who lack transportation
- Immigrant population that has been moving to Akron (language barriers)
- Those who have no transportation; teens who cannot drive themselves or those who are dependent on their parents
- Those who have a lot to do
- Language barriers exist
- People with disabilities
- Transportation for inner city youth and families
- Refugees on North Hill area; no walking access, signs translated language (Cascade Valley and Gorge)
- Refugee families from Nepal
- Transportation is a barrier unless you live next to a park
- Not much diversity
- Hmong population, starting to use the park close by
- Time; working multiple jobs; make easy access for them, they need it most
- Other school districts that aren't being included now

- Access to urban population
- People with disabilities
- Refugees with language and cultural barriers and don't use our parks the way they intended
- Serving underserved community; people might know parks are there, but can't get to parks
- exposure to woods is health benefit, all should have access
- Geographic
- Seniors who can't walk or bike or drive
- Rock climbers
- Access is what you make it; need to know it's there
- People with disabilities
- Nepalese immigrants; language barriers
- Bus lines don't go to all the parks
- Many parks are accessible to people in wheelchairs
- Outreach campaign to let people know about accessible parks
- People who don't drive can't get to parks from many areas
- Refugees either don't know or don't know how to use and how to get there
- Inner-city
- Seniors
- Youth
- Programming not accessible to deaf
- Programs aren't diverse
- African American community are left out
- Targeted outreach (churches)
- Have a contact in each of the diversity groups liaison; need right person to speak for each community

[Q9 Response Themes: inner-city youth, families and older adults; the elderly; youth with no transportation; refugees and cultural barriers; those with limited or no transportation; people with disabilities; school children who attend schools that have trimmed field trip budgets]

**10. Is there anything else you would like to share?**

- Concerns regarding the number of children who associate their park experiences with Metro Parks.
- Zoo survey results suggest that Zoo visitors are also Metro Park's visitors.
- Is the Nature Realm potentially underutilized?
- I believe the mission needs to remain the same - nature over people.
- Create clarity around what a partnership is and what it means.
- Every employee I have ever met is helpful, friendly and kind. Couldn't be happier with the employees.
- You can use the system from cradle to grave – really a great thing for a system to provide a community.
- How can the District clearly communicate which agency to contact in specific instances when it relates to safety issues? Generate ideas to help people understand who/what agency to contact when there is a problem.
- Summit Metro Parks is a good system. It is important to figure out how to sustain the system for the long term.
- Expressed interest in a café in the parks.

- Water trails can be significant in the future.
- Opening and cleaning up the Gorge waterway.
- The District could create a Metro Parks teen's group (Instagram or Snapchat using Discovery, Vinyl You Tube).
- Seems to be an interest in a Youth Advisory Board (Council).
- Employment opportunities that would be interesting for teens include outreach options (e.g., social media), work with animals, etc.
- More volunteer opportunities for high school students.
- Like this inclusive process.
- No campground in area.
- Offer programs at various times of day to include more visitors.
- Consider community gardens.
- People just don't know what's here.
- Summit Metro Parks treats volunteers very well.
- Instructions to people on how to use the trails (bikes vs hikes).
- Commissioners don't come to community events.
- Reflect the community through art in parks and employees in marketing and social media.

1. *What do you believe to be the most important services Summit Metro Parks provides the community and visitors? Why are they important?*

- Public service
- Providing for the greater good
- Protecting green spaces
- Access to nature
- Variety of recreational opportunities
- Free services
- Educational opportunities
- Free natural resource and programs
- Conservation and education
- Well maintained green spaces
- Outdoor recreation
- Access to nature
- A getaway
- Convenience of the parks Provide parks and manage public spaces
- Clean facilities
- Safe parks
- Hiking and jogging trails
- Low costs activities; alternative activities
- Knowledge of nature
- Reserveable shelters
- Save open space; keep it from being developed
- We're your backyard
- Free access to nature
- Operations to maintain the system,
- Stormwater management
- Clean, safe green space
- Open access to the Parks; equal opportunity to enjoy what we have
- Green spaces
- Stress reliever; an escape
- A fully functioning ranger department; the public likes to see us on the field
- Safe spaces
- Experiences in nature
- Space to recreate
- Coming for experience for healthier environment-running, hiking
- Education is important to further connect with green space and escape
- Opportunity to get out into nature needs help to remain natural
- Clean restrooms
- Natural areas with services; passive recreation (not ballfields, playgrounds and golf courses)
- Park operations staff do a lot of work behind the scenes
- Customer service; no matter what department, give excellent customer service
- High retention level of full-time staff
- Mission is why I'm here
- Provide outdoor green space for decompressing and destressing
- Provide safety to green space, not much crime



- Neighbors appreciate park to limit urban sprawl
- Cleanliness of facilities and trails
- Nature opportunities at Nature Realm
- Smiles, take pride
- Real purpose for coming to work
- See people enjoy what we work for
- Cradle to grave
- 95-year anniversary, plan for 100-year celebration
- People come to parks for free services
- Let people know where their money is going (projects)
- Safe place to go to enjoy the outdoors
- Programs in place
- Clean Metro Park system
- You can tell when you hit the county lines that there is a difference in the maintenance standards
- Critical eye for maintenance
- Staff is proud to meet and exceed standards
- Budget is healthy
- Emergency response; pull together resources
- Place for exercise
- Provide green space
- Access to nature
- Space, service
- Great reputation
- Programs and educational opportunities
- Appreciate Rangers on trails
- Helpful staff out in parks
- Recreational opportunities
- Clean and safe
- Connections with nature
- Family oriented
- Good gathering place for community at free and low costs
- Programs and events
- Land acquisition keeps developers off property
- Natural resources
- Protect endangered species
- Clean facilities
- Events like hiking spree, fun runs
- Overall health and wellbeing of community
- Provide recycling opportunities
- Educational events and programs
- Customer service; in-house and public and facilities
- Programs
- Land
- Diversity of uses
- Talented staff
- Safety that rangers provide

- Operation
- Clean parks
- Safe and free place to go with families
- Visitors center
- No parking fees
- Take ownership of park; repeat visitors
- Naturalists provide knowledge
- Place to connect with nature
- Connection place for families and/or individuals to reconnect with other people
- Public programs connect people
- People can participate safely in a program
- Community support and awareness of Metro Parks
- Clean parks
- Maintain parks
- Hiking spree
- Naturalists make connections with educational programming in local schools
- Special events

[Q1 Response Themes: connection to nature; free and accessible programs; clean, safe and well maintained parks; good customer service; recreational opportunities; nature education; dedicated staff]

**2. *What do you believe will be the most critical key issues Summit Metro Parks will face in the next 3-5 years?***

- Funding; there does not seem to be too much concern for the future; there is an assumption that we are a rich District
- Internal perspective that we are flush with cash; leading to a bit of apathy
- Our uncertainties about what we will need moving forward given our current infrastructure; 5 or 10 years from now where are we?
- Today's reality versus tomorrow's reality
- Concerns re: Board turnover and ever changing direction from a transient governance
- Managing growth and resources
- Proper staffing; since we have acquired a lot of land we need to be staffed appropriately to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience
- Staff retention
- Properly train staff
- Adhering to state requirements when it comes to firearms training
- Lack of funding (there are Federal funds available for Ranger training, equipment, staffing, etc.)
- Understaffing – we neglect certain areas due to limited staffing; more property that we can take care of
- Lack of equipment
- Adapt to new technologies
- Overuse creates challenges in terms of taking care of facilities and parks
- Funding and - incomes and property values dropping
- Turnover of staff; retirements; critical importance of staff training to compensate and position us for success
- Top heavy – too many Chiefs; there is little emphasis on maintenance

- Ongoing change; getting people to see the bigger picture and overall impacts
- Succession planning due to turnover and attrition
- Aging infrastructure; on the cusp; we seem to be a microcosm of the state highway system
- Healthcare; costs and human impacts
- Managing the “us versus them” and heading towards a “we’re all in it together” culture
- Continuing to address the need that staff have to be informed based upon their perception that they wish to be “in the know”
- Consider ways/mechanisms to educate Commissioners in order to ensure that they understand their oversight role (as opposed to encouraging their operational interests)
- Growth matching staffing
- New facilities; we have outgrown what we have and building are aging
- A new Park levy
- The potential loss of property tax dollars
- Maintaining a positive status in the County
- Increased dependence on technology
- Hiring talented people to replace retirees (we already have difficulty hiring good people for seasonal positions); it is becoming more competitive for good staff; we tend to promote from within (almost exclusively in Operations)
- Balancing major maintenance with development
- The levy; property taxes are unstable and what it all could mean moving forward
- Loss of a lot of veteran workers in the next few years; loss of institutional knowledge
- Cover the work we have now; will we have enough people to do the work?
- Transition with new Director, new Chief, expansion, etc.

[Q2 Response Themes: financial sustainability; land acquisition; active vs passive debate; on-going community support; staff recruitment and training; internal trust; quality and quantity of staff; infrastructure concerns; internal communication; being proactive rather than reactive; scarred staff; community outreach]

**3. *Where should Summit Metro Parks focus their energies and resources in order to have the greatest impact on the common good and benefit the Summit County community as a whole?***

- Becoming a team; working as a team
- Continue to incorporate more transparency
- Good hires
- Enhance and increase partnership opportunities
- Reach new people
- Good, actionable planning
- Provide more bang for the buck
- Make the changes necessary that will keep and recruit young people and professional in Summit County (might they want something that is different than our current services – active recreation?)
- More outreach into local schools in order to make children more aware of parks and park related activity
- Greenways are a good use of dollars; creates more activity and connectivity
- Provide camping opportunities; enhancing opportunities for urban kids and families
- Maintain what we have rather than focusing on growth

- Strictly adhere to our mission or adapt our mission to what people want; we are currently dabbling in areas that are outside of the mission (e.g., athletic fields, archery ranges, mountain bike trails) Hire more maintenance staff
- We used to have a standard that has disappeared; training, communication; and hold us accountable
- Enhanced communication; we often hear “get it done”; however, we do not know what that means and if we make a poor decision we are concerned about the consequence
- We need to put safety above image concerns
- Focus on Akron Lock 3 and make it more accessible and create a Summit Metro Parks presence
- Changing our efforts to be more relevant to today’s interests
- Invest in personnel including volunteers
- Catching up with growth spurt
- Collaboration; Summit Metro is leader to help smaller communities and townships whose budgets have been cut.
- Share resources for grants and trails; include smaller townships in process for grant projects to connect communities
- Wellness and trails are accessible and working together can increase connectivity
- Increase in acreage, internal and external collaboration; make sure all departments are all still connected and aware of what’s happening in Metro Parks and focused on same goal
- Know what goals are in other areas
- Hadn’t had voice in board meetings and communication wasn’t strong. Information needs to filter up and down
- Capitalize on positive momentum
- Community engagement; get people to parks; especially those who don’t have a voice
- Get young kids to parks with Naturalist
- Transportation; some parks you can only drive to
- Keeping facilities clean; turf, toilets, trash
- Train new staff coming in to take over for retirees
- Continue Park improvement for people coming to parks
- Add activities to draw families out (don’t worry so much about risk)
- Review new properties and activities to offer what the public wants
- Hire enough staff to take care of new properties; already spread thin
- For every 1.5-2 maintenance staff there is 1 manager
- New activities; mountain bike trail
- Find things to involve really young kids; get outside
- ATV trails in parks
- Dog park
- One park doesn’t allow dogs, not consistent
- Organizational development for specialties to help impact community
- No place for promotional growth; horizontal organization
- Decentralized organization, but no communication on how to be connected
- Won’t see supervisors for months; don’t have one immediate supervisor (nobody wants to take responsibility) stirred up chain of command
- Lacking accountability
- Business cards are generic
- Community can’t contact Rangers directly
- Marketing department could help

- Learn what employees do on a daily basis
- Not recognized as law enforcement even though deputy sheriff's; chief saying we're not law enforcement
- Maintaining what we have
- Not maintaining, only building, building, putting band aids on existing parks
- Trails aren't what they used to be; when trails slip, fix it instead of shutting it down
- Involve community, develop partnerships within community; makes organization stronger and community stronger
- Use internal resources on communication and organization to create positive culture
- Focus on disorganization on supervisor level
- Reorganization; too top heavy
  - 1:2 ratios for maintenance
  - Retribution for saying wrong things at "top of the ladder"
  - Should be in maintenance for 3-5 years before manager; conflicting director
- Value education over experience
- Plan for projects; especially when dealing with equipment
- Increase internal training for operations staff
- Provide programs; hard to keep up with demand
- Want to be able to take time to explain to public, not enough staff to spend necessary time
- Not enough Naturalists for demand
- Outreach to younger youth; schools are stretched for cash and can't get there
- Outgrown offices; not enough room for managers
- Outreach; go into community and show what we have, then they will come to Parks
- Health and Wellness; Parks should be associated with health and wellness to show mental and physical health benefits
- Partnering with doctors and hospitals to bring awareness to the health benefits
- Environmental stewardship; focus on being leader with water issues, pollenating

[Q3 Response Themes: community outreach and partnerships; the ability to continue to provide quality programs; maintain existing parks, internal communication; creating healthy organization; planning; professional development; communication; appropriate staffing; capture positive momentum/strategic plan]

**4. What are the strengths of Summit Metro Parks? What do you do well?**

- Skilled staff
- Providing value; ;levy success tells us we are doing well
- Passionate employees
- Reputation
- Teamwork
- Provide positive experiences
- We manage land well
- We do things in a cost effective manner
- We provide well rounded menu of services
- We do well with what we have (we should have 6 rangers on a shift and work with 2-3 at a time)
- Fleet is excellent (cars, equipment we do have is well maintained)
- We are very positive when it comes to customer service
- Teamwork in the trenches; helping each other out

- Manage the insanity
- I love my job
- Keep a safe, clean environment
- We can fix anything; we can deal with just about anything
- We have survived in self-preservation mode
- Best maintained park systems around
- Clean restrooms
- We are able to maintain the system at a high level given limited staff resource
- Doing our job
- Providing quality facilities and parks
- Challenging each other
- We have a good staff, passionate and competent
- Well maintained parks and facilities
- We have a good reputation
- We have a strong natural resource area that is committed to conservation and preservation
- Not competing with other agencies, all in it together for the community
- Nothing like Summit Metro Parks quality other places
- Opportunities to go on trails and education centers
- Good brand, people in community understand who we are
- High standard in parks
- Graphic designers helpful with branding
- Interpretive department high quality, repeat visits because of good experiences, inspiring
- Talented staff across the board, staff are so knowledgeable
- Staff retention because we are treated well, like what we do
- Chiefs and Director have vision to be in all of the communities—strategic in what lands are acquired as part of planning process
- Almost all programs are free, unlike other communities
- Departments rely on each other's departments for success; collaborate on projects internally
- Willing to accept change
- Outreach
- Work well together internally
- Great teamwork, even before staffing change
- New manager's positive
- Clean, safe parks
- Quality of work; people care
- Listen and respond to visitors
- Help people enjoy Metro Parks
- Provide spaces throughout the county
- Enthusiastic
- Crew is dedicated
- Clean system
- Small crew communicates well together
- When allowed to work as a team, do well together
- Patrons appreciate work
- Don't need managers in order for staff to get work done; staff are proud of work
- Serve our patrons well
- Cater to public

- Provide customer service
- Capabilities in staff; talented
- Operations department keep parks clean
- Communicate with operations well
- Educational and Naturalist's programs popular
- Transition at top is positive
- Parks are valuable pieces of property
- Preserving many areas of Summit County from development
- Bought property during recession
- Strong reputation, aside from a few park and a few staff
- Public support for parks
- Safety (human safety) property crimes happen
- Our jobs and wanting to do more than required
- Talented staff
- People care about their jobs and take pride in their work
- "if it's good enough for your family, it's good for public"
- Support of the community
- Provide safe environment for employees; few accidents
- Programs
- Two fall family outings
- 75% voter approval—patrons support
- Return users
- Clean and safe parks
- Users are satisfied with services
- Great leadership
- Variety of programs
- Community support; faith in community, reservations at building that burned down; community cared and concerned; avenue for people to share memories
- Free programs are appreciated; archery
- Most staff happy to be here; due to mission and ownership
- Clean
- Well maintained park land and facilities
- Fiscally responsible
- Programs are quality and free

[Q4 Response Themes: clean, safe and well maintained parks, trails and buildings; the District's educational programs; community support; dedicated and talented staff]

**5. What are the weaknesses of Summit Metro Parks? What can be improved upon?**

- Diversity; staff, programs, etc.
- We underwrite everything; we should look at things from a business perspective
- We do not understand what it costs us to do business
- Creating opportunities to challenge employees' inadequate training opportunities
- Overall communication in the system; especially top down
- A feeling of being left out of decisions making; and not knowing when important decisions that affect us are made

- We would like to more involved in District wide projects; operations needs to be at the table when it impacts our work
- Limited promotional opportunities exist
- Planning projects taking place during the worst times of year (e.g., thawing property for a project in February that did not need to be done that time of year)
- Inconsistency in directions/directives
- We need a supervisor on every shift
- Inexperienced front line supervision; we need experienced front line leadership in the Rangers area (when you impede someone's liberties you cannot have inexperience)
- The District does not seem to recognize the liability associated with mis-management of the Ranger area
- We need more emphasis on law enforcement training; would be a good idea to have some District managers attend law enforcement trainings to better understand what the Ranger area's needs are
- Communication; across the system; vertically and horizontally
- There is a gross misunderstanding about what Ranger related incidences are and the potential severity can be (e.g., dog violations versus narcotics related incidents)
- The District seems to want passive law enforcement versus necessary law enforcement; because of this I have been put in more dangerous situations here than I ever have as a police officer
- We rely too much on others
- Narrow minded upper management
- Technology; we are not current
- Communication between departments and top to bottom; who is saying what, explain the why's, what's happening, etc.
- Marketing does not promote our programming as well as they could; they limit what is promoted; large events might be treated as just another program; too much process; training and guidelines would help everyone understand expectations, requirements, etc.
- It is challenging to get a product out of Marketing in a timely manner; they seem less connected to the customer on a daily basis
- Park Maps are terrible; they are missing sense of place are no accurate and difficult to read
- We seem to be lacking in the area of technology; we seem to be more reactive than proactive when it comes to setting ourselves up to be current
- We have Commissioners who are not out at programs so it can be difficult for them to provide relevant guidance; it would help if they were visible in order for us to confidence in their direction
- Communication
- Transparency; if you don't know an answer, be honest about not knowing
- Collaboration
- Need to get word out about parks, activities, and celebrations
- Communication; hear about things in paper before being told
- Don't get agendas before board meeting
- Technology is antiquated and slow; waste of time
- Register for Naturalist programs on phone, apply for jobs in person/paper
- Website isn't user friendly
- Power point on server takes too long
- Policies lead to unproductivity; no cell phones/smart phones (could show picture of issues/concerns)



- All staff punished for issues with one or few employees
- Trust issues; upper and middle management don't trust employees; tough on managers; "not allowed" to use sick time
- Weekend hours don't shift; volume of weekends
- Administration wouldn't give Rangers computers for their jobs, but would give guns
- So old fashioned in approach to individuals, handcuffed field of potential employees (tattoos, piercings, etc.)
- Field staff have to do field work contacting schools
- Communication from administration down
- Nature Realm doesn't get information; managers aren't getting information out to staff
- Staff isn't involved in planning events or projects within their parks
- Management isn't consistent from work group to work group; some managers aren't transparent
- Put trail in, don't inform maintenance staff; everything was secret, didn't involve staff in changes
- Roof not adequate Nature Center
- Decision making on contracts; pay premium dollars for projects and staff end up fixing contractor's mistakes
- Paying too much for contractors and not getting value
- Lack of diversity, outreach, staffing, (some was old regime; new regime acknowledging issue); programming, management
- Ranger Department doesn't stop known illegal activity; don't want to upset public for levy issues
- Rangers can only wear uniform and slap hands; coverage is limited
- Asian refugees come take edibles by bags, killing chickens
- If you aren't happy with your job, it's your problem (go to EAP)
- Management and HR contradict each other
- Redirection to someone else, not my problem, it's their problem
- HR department doesn't get their job done effectively and correctly—not helpful
- Low salaries
- Inconsistencies on how to enforce; everything is case by case basis
- Entry level pay is low
- Mixed messages from multiple supervisors
- No good way that's allowed to share information
- Need to utilize strengths
- Safety at Summit Lakes
- Each individual is treated differently; mistakes are not forgiven
- Still running Parks from institutional 40 years
- There's the Right Way the Wrong Way and the Metro Parks Way
- Don't evaluate that things need to be better; status quo
- Maintenance gets uniforms, Rangers have to purchase 50% of vests
- Staff feels like they do a good job, but manager doesn't
- No standards for same jobs
- Communication; internal and external
- Technology; use radios (4 radios for 20 people)
- Cellphone policy (looks to be changing)
- Infrastructure weaknesses catching up on
- Service center is too small, can't get trucks in to service; keep growing but nowhere to store

- Managers aren't managing; have to ask others permission; no accountability
- Gap between what new techs make vs old techs make
- Not consistent with pay levels from union to management (techs vs management)
- Little money increase not worth the promotion and headache
- Staff input; ask crews for input on projects in their parks; managers do what they want without input
- Don't spend time planning
- Used to be quality vs quantity; finish one job before starting another
- Renting equipment daily, pay extra for equipment instead of finishing a project after hours
- Independent thinking discouraged
- Breakfast was once a year to get chastised
- HR staff doesn't know policies, laws to help staff
- No Wi-Fi at many buildings
- Hours dropping for part-time staff; transfer a few part-time staff into one fulltime
- Leadership skills; lack of training for managers; added park managers without core training
- Lack of communication between upper management and front-line staff
- Don't know what other staff do
- Technology
- Retention of Rangers; training takes away from field work
- Lack of consistency and clarity (Nature Realm 4 different work groups in 6 years); hard to know expectations
- Geography separates staff; communication issues, might not see manager for 6 months
- Mindful spending; question expenses
- Tightening policies
- Headquarter-centric; management not getting out and making decisions without knowing implications
- Communication
- Transparency
- Teamwork; part of being a team is administrators knowing what's going on in field
- Not reaching everyone
- Trying to be everything to everyone; that dilutes the quality of services

[Q5 Response Themes: communication; transparency; being everything to everyone; weak leadership skills of managers; staff retention; inconsistent management and standards; lack of effective planning; lack of staff involvement when it comes to decision making; technology; people suggesting they don't know about the District; trust issues]

**6. What opportunities exist for Summit Metro Parks moving forward? What is it that Summit Metro Parks can capitalize on?**

- Regionalization; water quality enhancement as an example
- Community outreach to further our partnership agenda
- Awakening the Metro Parks Foundation; could be underwriting some of what we are doing or wish to do/accomplish
- Tying our work to economic development; accentuates our work's contributions to the local economy
- Review rules and regulations that can be prohibitive as it relates allowing vendors to provide service on park property

- Identifying what keep organizational issues are and tie them to performance reviews
- Given our decentralized operation we need to equip our managers to be able to “lead” in this type of environment
- A centralized grant writer
- Cross training opportunities could help us understand the entire system a bit better and benefit our interaction and communication (possibly think about these options as Boot Camps)
- Where cross training was not an option, provide regular staff meetings by area (and Departmentally) that would provide for updates and conversation in order to create greater connection
- This process is a great opportunity
- A new director with an open mind that trusts us; she listens
- Stormwater management and partnerships
- Collaborations with other park districts and communities around us to create connectivity and linkage
- We have an opportunity to reach people that we typically have not reached in the past
- Mentoring opportunities for young and new staff
- Certain areas (e.g., Chuckery, Goodyear, Sand Run) require two person units to ensure safety
- The LEAD system that is standard (the cars we currently have are equipped for LEAD) – it is a Law Enforcement Automated data system providing a pool of critical info that is generated by the DMV; without this we have to call out a late at a minimum of four times at any traffic stop to find out who it is we might be dealing with (could let us know that we are dealing with someone who has a felony warrant, etc.)
- We should be the Go To for regional training opportunities (we should be the go to as the training center for things like search and rescue, water rescue, etc.); they currently do not call us
- Appears we are headed towards having a more open-minded system
- Getting maintenance staff’s opinions by including maintenance staff reps in decision making meetings regarding major event management, planning decisions, etc.
- Interdepartmental communication
- Pay and benefits need to be reviewed; seems like we are not
- Sustainable practices could improve; recycling, fuel
- Enhance our recreational offerings
- Balancing passive and active use well and making sure people know what it is we do
- Keep up with the times
- Have more of the operations crew attend OPRA trainings
- Reach more people and let them know what we offer
- Collaboration—Summit Metro Parks is leader to help smaller communities and townships whose budgets have been cut; have resources for grants and trails
- Include smaller townships in process for grant projects to connect communities
- Figure out what we’re offering and settle into something
- Summit Metro Parks staff meet with other communities’ staff and/or trustees to share goals and vision with ideas of how to help each other (Eagle Scout projects)
- Land acquisition for conservation and making available to public, don’t need to develop immediately
- Stay with mission when making decisions about new opportunities
- Use technology as we take on more responsibilities
- Provide outreach to people who can’t get to parks
- Manager on Duty instead of everyone on duty always

- Change some policies to make more progressive, not regressive
- Move away from “That’s the way it’s always been done”
- Ideas have been senior staff and above, tap into resource
- Field trips quarterly to facilities; increase morale
- Test the waters
- Get away from “Mistakes never forgot about”
- Challenges/celebrations, staff appreciation on during work hours
- Develop technology in the right way, bring up to times (not so many restrictions on iPad, etc.)
- Plan before doing; involve people who need to be involved
- Operations and community engagement should meet regularly
- Communication from marketing and other departments improved with other work groups
- Embrace and use technology to get people out exploring parks.
- Training in technology
- Be more organized in technology; too many versions of newest technology
- Standardize some organization methods; filing and data base
- Use local schools (college and high schools) to recruit work force and retention; teach classes to build up work force
- Have HR market to schools so field staff doesn’t have to; work together for a common goal so it’s not so fragmented
- Operations and Rangers have opportunity for in-house training; don’t just spend money on leadership training; winter there is time
- Close the knowledge gap with training; seek out employees with skills and knowledge to share
- Cultural and educational opportunities
- Stay competitive with other park districts (alcohol)
- Knowledge of veteran staff; management staff think they know what’s going on, but need to learn
- More trainings for field staff
- Consistencies from office to office and park to park
- Director and staff should take information from focus groups and embrace strategic planning process
- No retribution for giving opinions
- Park could engage in more youth programs; educational opportunities
- Reaching out to inner city communities before other communities
- Improve advertising and marketing
- Create and follow standards for expectations
- Allow avenues for people to excel; let people use their skills, not just for supervisors
- Opportunity for growth
- Need training for new responsibilities (supervisors get trained, but rangers get assignments)
- Update, upgrade equipment so staff doesn’t have to use personal equipment
- Community is telling what they want in parks, but Rangers have been forgotten
- Outreach to community and schools, helps identity
- Use grant money for vests instead of personal or operating budget
- Opportunities exist for donations in AED’s
- Outreach
- Catching up on maintenance
- Be more progressive; too archaic, stuck in the past
- Cultivate innovation department, encourage thinking outside the box

- Local sponsorships, community involvement
- Develop Good Neighbor policy
- Partner neighboring agencies hold events Metro Parks doesn't know about it and/or don't help out
- Don't know names of people in parks or administration
- Include all staff in staff celebrations
- Standardize benefits of all work groups
- 360 reviews
- Provide training together for customer service staff and field staff to share experiences and how staff is affected by changes to parks
- If full-time, could shadow other areas to learn more
- Managers should work the jobs to know what staff go through (Undercover Boss)
- Awareness of programs
- Tighten up purchasing policies
- Education for managers to learn what's going on before making decisions
- Recognition for job well done for field and front line staff
- Outreach for more Park awareness
- Let community know what's provided, what's important and why decisions

[Q6: community outreach; professional development and training for all levels of staff; communication; becoming a proactive agency; partnerships; staff involvement; strategic plan implementation; update technology; identify our niche']

**7. *What barriers, challenges, and/or threats exist that must be addressed or overcome in order for Summit Metro Parks to continue to provide quality services to the community and visitors moving towards the future?***

- Aging infrastructure
- Changing laws and requirements (e.g., ADA)
- Technology and its influences (e.g., organizational impacts, keeping kids at home)
- Balancing between conservation and recreation
- Getting staff to participate in the system and feel valued
- Creating an environment that retains the talented staff we have
- Finding a balance between staying competitive with our values
- We get confused with other local park and rec systems; image confusion
- Taking care of what we have; honoring the promises we have made regarding maintenance and development
- Maintaining "quality" services; if it has our sign and logo it needs to be good
- Trying to be everything to everyone is a threat; figuring out what we do well and continuing to do those things should be our focus
- Establishing new standards that work for us today in order to maintain quality
- Adapting to trends; re-purposing our current facilities when and where we can stay relevant (while not alienating users/visitors)
- We have a segregated system; the green shirts, the khaki shirts, etc.; however, with the recent changes it seems that we are headed towards a more family-like atmosphere
- Encroaching by the utility companies
- We are spread too thin; quality can suffer due to workload

- Limited interests in having operations/maintenance staff at the decision making table; decisions in order to make things better or improve customer service
- Poor communication and mis-understanding between operations staff and management (“them”); adversarial relationship
- People want to have programs and development of new land, more pressure to program everywhere
- Pressure from special interest groups, want their way for support
- Strategic planning; afraid mission might change
- Could dilute great services; can’t be everything to everyone
- Do what we do now, well
- Let other park systems offer new things that don’t fit with Metro Parks mission
- If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it
- Getting people in places where they can help with changes—settle into what things are going to look like; address staffing issues before moving forward and show value to staff
- How much more change can we absorb before adding more change
- Cultural barriers (refugees net fishing)
- Rangers don’t have a way to report warnings; have educated, warned, need to ticket to change behavior
- Safety of new areas; need to enforce rules instead of only warning
- Need more technology to use for tracking warnings
- Previous management encouraged staff to ignore problems so it doesn’t become public
- Staff are own barriers
- Discouraged from doing law enforcement (Rangers)
- Get people back in parks; some went downhill (don’t want to swim in lakes anymore)
- Reach out to public more; find out what public wants
- Communication barriers; some couldn’t talk to public
- Worry about paying overtime, even when necessary
- Not allowed to respond to emergencies; if something is serious—call Akron PD
- Management and supervision issues need to be addressed
- New sergeants haven’t been trained; and if trained, don’t implement
- Communication; internal; on “need to know” basis
- Communication with refugees; don’t speak English, have different cultures
- Fear of people in uniforms
- Time not allowed for training and professional development
- Don’t utilize grant money in Rangers division
- Current radio system purchased, but didn’t look forward to newest technology
- Budgets not allowing for schools to come to parks
- Communication within Parks
- Strategic plan for 2012; employee morale horrible because of communication; only a few changes were made
- Challenge when your manager doesn’t know what he’s doing, but tells you what to do
- Managers not allowed to make decision before asking Chief
- Clean up of chaos created
- New administration dealing with problems created by old administration
- Language barrier when trying to register
- Growth; expectation to cover more area
- Lack of knowledge and training for customer service staff to explain to public

- Accessibility issues; important for staff to explain to community how to get around
- Safety threat; Ranger only one day a month at Liberty
- Rangers don't have cell phones
- Headquarter-centric; management not getting out and making decisions without knowing implications
- Succession planning; retirements and staff vacancies without back up
- Aging infrastructure threat
- Invasive species threat
- Active recreation that might damage the natural resources (rock climbing)
- People don't know who we are and how to get here
- Gain trust from staff
- Taking care of existing land while taking on new land and facilities that needs development, extra maintenance and new management in all areas—Rangers, Ops, Purchasing, Naturalists, etc.

[Q7 Response Themes: succession planning; aging infrastructure; trust issues; language barriers on behalf of some community members; outdated technology; internal communication; past leadership and remaining scars; cultural barriers in the community; Rangers' perspectives around not feeling values or empowered, and feeling vulnerable in the field; special interest group demands]

**8. *Are there any specific organizational challenges that exist (that may not have been mentioned in response to question #7)? If so, what are they and what can be done to improve conditions?***

- Decentralization; an effort to centralize us more
- Training; focused on organizational deficiencies (e.g., communication, leadership)
- Communication; perception that there is poor or no communication
- Creating trust in the system
- We have some employees who are not meeting their potential and are dead weight; I would like to see a merit system that rewards those doing well and exposes those who are not; consider a performance review system that provides coaching and a more objective system
- Communication is a challenge – identifying ways to ensure that staff get what they need and at the same time, expect that they listen; also explain the “why’s” behind decision
- Create a realistic vision of how we will allocate our resources
- High turnover rate
- We need to emphasize safety over District image; if we do not there will be a significant price to pay given the types of activity that does currently happen in our parks; there are demining things happening in our parks
- Incompetent people are not hired; and if they are I he system that they are trained and meet expectation
- We need time to conduct and attend trainings
- Having maintenance staff at the planning table
- Limited staff for the resource demands that we have
- Limited communication between management and front line employees
- Knowing our deferred maintenance totals
- Is communication the issue or is the fundamental issue the quality of relationships?
- Hard to know because such a new change
- Bargaining agreements, people with experience can't make it on low pay
- Model is seasonal, part time, fulltime, management; always training

- Two parts of Metro Park (Union and administration) are pitted against each other; communication barriers
- Need more flexibility for supervisors who know their areas and staff better than administration; staying within union agreements
- Upper management hasn't separated themselves from park managers, they were hands on before promotions; meddling
- Purchasing regulations don't allow for trusting staff
- Interdepartmental communication needs to improve
- Set up system for search and rescue
- Truck radios aren't being used; portable radios are breakable; phones aren't allowed; doesn't help for safety issues
- Supervisor didn't respond to emergency 4 times, no response; not using radios appropriately
- Decision makers are decision makers, don't want input from staff
- Safety protocols aren't instituted in some parks; lack of training
- Inconsistent managers for overtime policy
- Utilize resources for training
- Organizational development to enhance quality of service
- Leadership adjustment in Ranger department would be welcomed
- Revamp management
- Too top heavy
- Lack of accountability from top down; all levels; decisions made on daily basis are wrong
- Acknowledge mistakes and move on
- Disorganization and chaos just under the surface waiting to blow up
- Smaller parks don't get what they need to get jobs done
- Cross training and property awareness
- Getting Rangers up to full staff and having enough vehicles
- Address lack of trust for administration

[Q8 Response Themes: limited and adequate staffing for work requirements and demands; personal accountability; equity and fairness; lack and relevance of professional development opportunities; "us" vs. "them" attitudes and perspectives]

**9. *Are there any potential partnerships or collaborations that you believe would be beneficial for Summit Metro Parks to pursue moving forward? If so, what are they and what would be the reciprocal benefits of such a relationship?***

- City of Akron to reach more people
- Stormwater management partnerships
- NPS and local agencies with law enforcement needs; mutual trainings
- Local fire departments on white water rescue (ropes and repelling)
- University of Akron – Greek life who need community service hours
- Possible opportunities to work with Farmers Markets in our parks
- Collaborations with other park districts and communities around us to create connectivity and linkage
- Work with local schools
- Downtown Akron and Keep Akron Beautiful
- Local entities that can assist the Department in efforts to recruit a more diverse workforce (e.g., Urban League)



- Collaborative training opportunities with a local parks and recreation system or with NPS on relevant maintenance issues and practices
- Getting to small towns to provide interpretive services
- Starting to work on partnerships with new vision of external relationships
- Schools and community groups
- Other municipalities
- Partner to get people to parks
- Businesses for wellness points/requirements
- Autism groups, sight impaired groups, people with disabilities; education for staff to know best way to program
- Wellness partnerships
- Naturalists work together with other parks (national and state) so there aren't duplicated programs
- Small businesses (wineries, running stores) work together on events
- Collaborated with other park districts; share resources
- Have field staff collaborate with other districts; see how others get people to parks
- Only some parks have opportunities with other agencies—involve operations in collaborations
- Collaboration and training field staff--When managers go to Cleveland, it's chest beating not information sharing.
- Involve park staff in decisions for new equipment
- Partnership in other law enforcement agencies
- Cross train with other law enforcement agencies
- Outreach to community groups and law enforcement
- Agencies come to Metro Parks to cross train, but not with Metro Park
- Boy and Girl scouts
- National parks and other agencies
- Biologists
- Area schools; elementary through colleges; be strategic about getting them to parks, summer help, keep them at parks so when they become voters, there's support
- Increase larger events at additional parks to pull people who live closer
- Open houses at parks
- Mutual benefitting partnerships; we don't need more to maintain
- Civic clubs in area to do volunteer work (clean up after event)
- Clean up day once a month in rotating parks
- Local breweries name a beer after a trail and sponsor and proceeds go to fund
- Training partnerships; Kent State one day trainings; reciprocal benefits
- Businesses; health benefits and wellness programs
- Grants to pay for buses for schools to come to parks
- Mini parks in cities that have let parks go, have Naturalist come to them
- Urban hiking spree at parks that cities have abandoned, take over with limited maintenance
- Reach diverse populations through collaborations
- After school programs
- Schools
- Park and recreation agencies
- Needs to be true partnership

[Q9 Response Themes: local schools; local businesses; law enforcement agencies; other public sector organizations including local and regional parks and recreation agencies; youth organizations]

**10. Do you believe there are populations who have no or limited access (e.g., physical, financial, transportation, language barriers) to Summit Metro Parks? If yes, who are they and what are the barriers?**

- Urban poor; no parks in the areas in which they live and they have limited or no transportation options
- Currently only one park on the bus line
- Transportation barriers exist for many in the County who have no car or public transport
- Both of our Nature Centers are not on a bus line
- Those who do not know we exits or do not know what services we provide
- Those who live in urban areas; don't have transportation
- There are language barriers; Asian pops who are participating in activity that is not allowed (e.g., killing chickens and cooking); cultural rituals and behaviors that can be intimidating
- People who have disabilities do have some access but there are areas that are challenging to maneuver
- Transportation challenges for those with no vehicles
- Those with physical disabilities; we are not completely complaint
- Language barriers e.g., Spanish, Asian)
- People without cars
- People in apartments without access to trails
- People from North Hill, figuring out a way to use parks
- People who don't use technology (web, smart phones)
- People learn from just walking in or from mail to everyone in county
- Prisons and jails; have inmates help raise amphibians
- Low income
- Youth, teens
- Refugees; could have same programs for refugees and low incomes
- Not prepared for Baby Boomer population
- Work with senior centers to get people to parks
- Lack of transportation and bus routes
- Low income
- Diversity
- Kayakers are limited to a few places
- Airplane flyers
- Many don't know there's a park district; no advertisement during slow times
- Repeat visitors, not new visitors
- Liability is keeping new users out
- No bus route to visitor center (Nature Realm)
- Schools –need to hook kids
- Take park to school (mobile information center)
- Hire staff to get to schools
- Bus seniors to parks
- Disabled veterans (don't have resources, but also don't have training to deal with visitors)
- Bus lines run through some parks, but suburban parks have no bus access
- People with disabilities limited-; updating for ADA where not compliant
- 15-21 year olds
- Schools; financial burden to get to parks

- People who don't drive
- Urban areas not on bus line
- Diverse populations
- People don't know Liberty Park exists; need marketing and awareness
- People who don't know about Metro Parks
- Transportation; people who can't get there (inner city can't get to water park)
- Diverse population
- Refugees
- People with disabilities; autism, sight impaired

[Q10 Response Themes: people with limited or no transportation options; people with disabilities; youth; the elderly; low income families; refugees – cultural barriers]

#### *11. Is there anything else you would like to share?*

- We are all looking forward to being in a better place
- Trust is in progress yet remains missing; we are hopeful
- There are opportunities for a variety of operations/maintenance training options based upon where staff work, their roles, their interests (carpentry, heavy equipment, chain saw use, trail maintenance, communication, etc.). Would be good to create a menu of training opportunities.
- Have we ever reached out to the LeBron James Foundation for support?
- We are in an area with a lot of philanthropic wealth.
- It would be great to get the Foundation moving again.
- I believe things are pretty great.
- We need a greater Ranger presence; they are spread thin and understaffed.
- I hope that something comes of this process; we did not see anything materialize last time we did the last strategic plan.
- I would like to see us impact our future.
- Connecting those folks we meet via our outreach efforts and bringing them back into the system is important.
- Managers asked to wear a lot of hats; HR issues could be looming with people doing other jobs; expected to be lead person without HR training.
- Everyone believes in mission and goals but feel stifled.
- Defensive/ retribution; mistakes are never forgotten; discipline doesn't end when it should.
- Pay increase (all administrators proud of staff, compare to others, have education) had PRS, increase and low or no annual increase, insurance increases all at once; managers are getting larger raises, gap between managers and staff is growing.
- Board should spend time with maintenance crew to see how staff operates and why asking for things.
- House cleaning needed.
- Part-time staff can't plan programs, but Naturalists are too busy.
- Things are good. I'm on board with whatever direction we are headed.
- Hopeful.
- Rushed process; focus groups seemed random and not thought through.

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