

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023

DILLON NATURE CENTER



HUTCHrec

HEALTHY LIVING. COMMUNITY SPIRIT.

PHOTO CREDITS: HUTCHREC

Submitted By:

NEPPL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING, LLC AND DICK HORTON CONSULTING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
ADMINISTRATION & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	1
INTRODUCTION	2
HISTORY OF THE DNC	2
DNC PROGRAMS	3
DNC FACILITIES	3
DNC ATTENDANCE	3
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	4
MISSION & VISION	5
DNC NEEDS ASSESSMENT	6
INTRODUCTION	7
PREVIOUS REPORTS & SURVEYS	8
PROGRAM ASSESSMENT	11
STAFF ASSESSMENT	14
MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT	17
FACILITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT	19
DNC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	22
DNC CONCEPT DESIGNS	31
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES AND SUMMARY TABLE	42
APPENDICES	45

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Dillon Nature Center (DNC) is beloved by the Hutchinson community and beyond. This statement is supported by recent citizen survey data included in a 2019 community-wide parks and recreation master planning initiative. DNC leadership is mindful of its respect in the community and understands that respect is closely tied to the individual and community benefits provided by its nature-based programs and facilities.

As DNC moves further away from the most severe COVID-19 impact (s) and challenges from ongoing cultural, social, financial, sociographic, and geo-political realities, it was determined that this Strategic Plan should be created to provide clarity for future resource allocation with an outcome of sustaining the DNC well into the future.

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY

The strategic planning process relied on input from DNC and HutchRec key stakeholders, from data compiled in the 2019 Healthy Community Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan), the 2022 Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) Report, surveys of Hutchinson residents and business community members, the Strategic Planning consultants' (Consultants) on-site observations, and a needs assessment of existing DNC facilities and operations as part of this Strategic Plan process.

KEY STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Providing local and historical knowledge about the DNC were the DNC Foundation Board, HutchRec Staff, DNC Staff, business community survey respondents, and at-large citizen survey respondents. Input venues included individual interviews, a public meeting, and the previously mentioned surveys to the business community and citizens-at-large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Consultants' analysis of key findings that surfaced from the completion of the DNC Needs Assessment resulted in the need for recommendations in four categories: Program, Staff, Management, and Facilities. Below is a summary of those recommendations:

Program

- To identify core programs that align with the DNC mission and vision
- To expand and focus resources on core programming
- To collaborate with like-minded organizations
- To collaborate with other Hutch Rec Divisions

Staff

- To align staff capabilities with core program needs
- To encourage and manage volunteerism
- To assign staff as a liaison with the DNC Foundation fundraising committee

Management

- To identify the roles of the DNC Foundation and the Hutch Rec Board of Commissioners
- To establish meaningful partnerships with organizations in our community to further the DNC mission and vision

Facilities

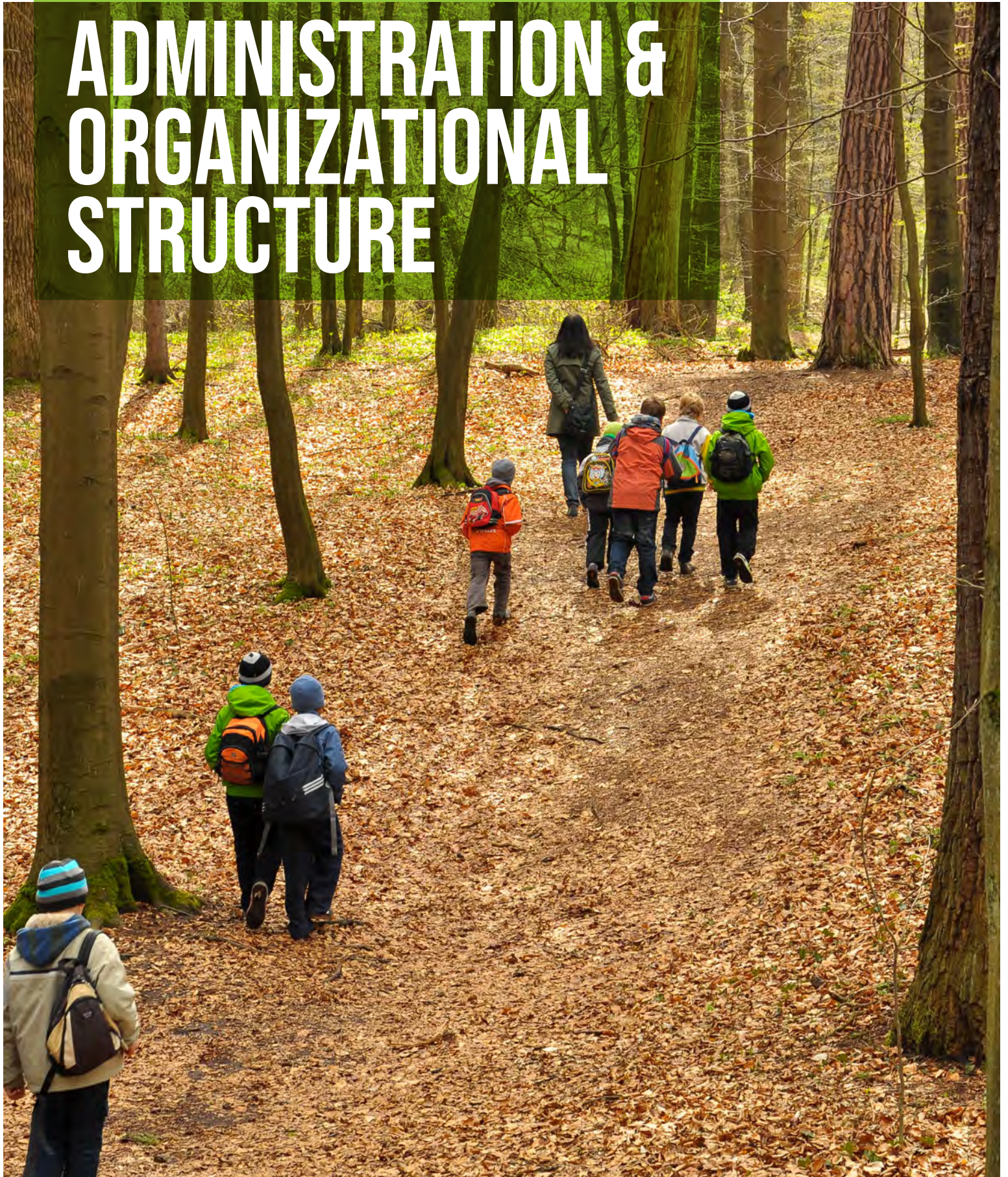
- Stewardship – To provide stewardship of current facilities, structures, and amenities through no-cost to low-cost improvements and maintenance. Examples of these include adding storage structures, implementing educational and interpretive signage, and removing existing invasive vegetation to create new spaces for outdoor program, among others.
- Enhancement – To enhance existing areas and amenities with moderate renovations and improvements. Examples of enhancements include replacing the Visitors Center wood deck, adding electric vehicle charging stations, trail enhancements, and others.
- Expansion – To expand DNC’s camp and outdoor programming through development of new program areas, structures, and facilities. The development of new facilities such as a new camp building and fishing piers, along with the renovation of the upper pond, allow for the expansion of DNC’s outdoor programming, camp, and pre-school programming.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this Strategic Plan will rely heavily on several key factors; namely,

- Placing an initial emphasis on completing lower cost projects
- Establishing new revenue-generating facilities and spaces at the DNC
- Utilizing realistic earned income opportunities
- Realigning staff to emphasize the importance of fundraising and partnership development

ADMINISTRATION & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



INTRODUCTION

To position the Dillon Nature Center (DNC) as an innovative nature education and outdoor recreation experience in the Hutchinson region, this Strategic Plan has been created. The driving force behind the development of this Plan is that the Hutchinson Recreation Commission/DNC wants to take a proactive role as a community leader to acknowledge the impact of climate change and other environmental pressures and how it can offer nature education and environmental stewardship programs, facilities, and collaborative partnerships that result in a sustainable future through conservation efforts.

HISTORY OF THE DNC

The Dillon Nature Center at one time was part of a larger parcel of land known as Rivers Banks Orchard. The construction of a railroad and the K-61 Highway eventually cut off a 23-acre section from the rest of the property. The ponds were dug at this time to divert water from under the railroad tracks. The property changed hands several times from 1873-1941 until Ray Dillon purchased the land that included the nature center. The Dillon Grocery Company (Dillons) developed the land into a private recreation area for store employees and their friends and families. It was a very popular recreation area with swimming, softball, fishing, etc. It was commonly called Dillon's Lake.

In 1970, Dillons gave the land to the city of Hutchinson for the Hutchinson Recreation Commission to use as a public recreation area. In the beginning the site was run very similarly to the way Dillons used it. There was an entry fee of 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children. There was a charge per pound for fish caught. People could camp and cook on the grills that were provided.

The Living Land Foundation (LLF) was founded in 1972 to raise and manage money for projects at the newly created Dillon Park. In 1974, the Recreation Commission brought in experts to give advice about how to turn the site into a nature study area. A director was hired, and some programming was started. The gates were basically closed to the public except for reserved programs. There was almost no money for anything so very little was accomplished. The name was then changed to Dillon Park Outdoor Recreation and Education Center, later shortened to the Dillon Outdoor Education Center. In 1978, the center started to offer more to the public. The gates were opened more often and fundraising for projects started. The name was changed to what is now known as Dillon Nature Center. Nature trails were developed, and some habitat improvements were started.

A 13,400 square foot visitor center was opened in 1994, with hands-on nature exhibits added in 2001 and 2014. An outdoor playscape was completed in 2012 and, in 2016, the Taylors' Shady Lane Cabin replaced an old shelter that served as the DNC office.

DNC PROGRAMS

DNC Programs include the following:

School Programs and Field Trips, Nature Programs, Outdoor Adventure Camp, Fitness Classes, Get Everyone Outdoor Month, Lesser-Known Lovelies Plant Sale, Summer Concert Series, Walmart/O.K. Kids Fishing Day, Foodie Fest on the Trail, Farm to Table Dinner, Spookwalk

DNC FACILITIES

DNC FACILITIES include the following:

Trails, Pond Habitat, Indoor Exhibit and Gift Shop, Playscape, Visitor's Center, Taylors' Shady Land Cabin & Mary Clark Community Courtyard, Outdoor Wedding Areas

DNC ATTENDANCE

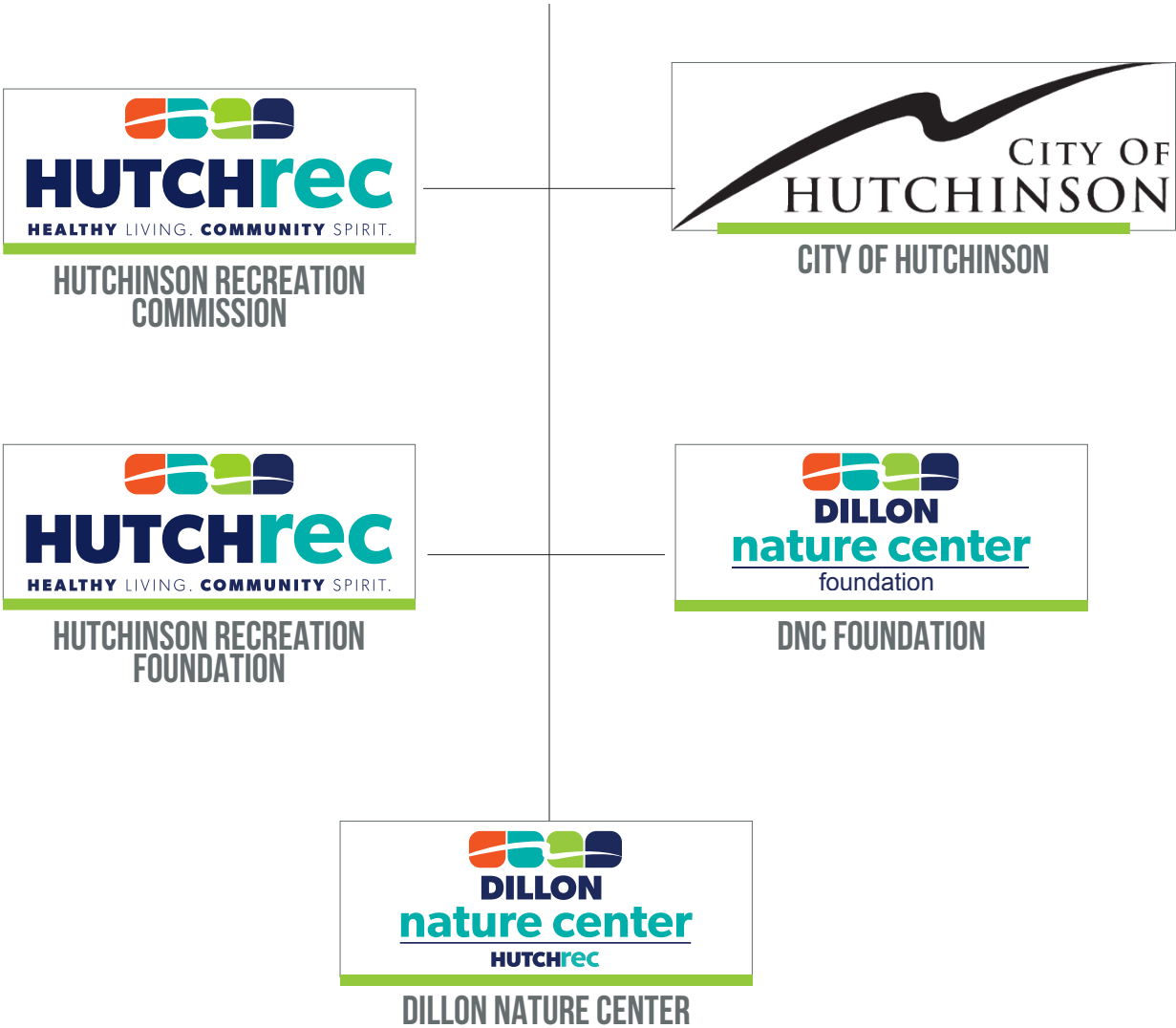
DNC Attendance from 2018-2021

Year	School Programs	Rentals	Public Programs	Casual Visitors	Total
2018	4909	6030	4011	39,083	55,100
2019	6030	6886	3985	43,320	60,221
2020	2238	3677	864	47,933	54,712
2021	3007	4576	2483	49,991	59,977

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The DNC is a programmed facility under the umbrella of the Hutchinson Recreation Commission.

CITIZENS OF HUTCHINSON



MISSION & VISION



HUTCHINSON RECREATION COMMISSION

Mission Statement:

To provide our community with lifelong wellness, cultural, natural, and recreational opportunities that promote healthy minds and bodies through innovative programs, state-of-the-art facilities, and protected open spaces.

Vision Statement:

To inspire all residents to actively enjoy a healthy life as they strengthen our community spirit.



THE DILLON NATURE CENTER (UNOFFICIAL)

Mission Statement:

To provide educational and recreational opportunities designed to foster a deeper appreciation, understanding, and respect for the natural resources of our state, nation, and planet.

Vision Statement:

To be known as the leader in Hutchinson and the region as the leader in providing nature education and environmental stewardship programs, facilities, and collaborative partnerships that result in a sustainable future through conservation efforts.

DNC NEEDS ASSESSMENT



DNC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of DNC's current needs is critical to the Strategic Planning process. The Consultants relied heavily on DNC and HutchRec Staff, interviews, and meetings with key stakeholders. Additionally, the Consultants reviewed the findings of the 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan, 2022 ANCA Report, and the findings of two surveys distributed to the HutchRec Listserv and the business community. Finally, the Consultants also utilized information gathered from onsite meetings and their observations of the DNC site and facilities. The Consultants' findings are outlined in this chapter.

Needs Assessment Data Sources include:

1. Program Assessment
2. Staff Assessment
3. Management Assessment
4. Facility Assessment

PREVIOUS REPORTS & SURVEYS

FINDINGS OF THE 2022 ANCA REPORT

The ANCA Peer Consult Team identified several key findings recognized by the Consultants in this Strategic Planning process. The ANCA Team identified that DNC is in an overall very strong position with several assets including an excellent staff, supportive Foundation, and enthusiastically supportive community. They also cite several challenges as well. Their findings are briefly summarized below.

NOTED STRENGTHS

- a. DNC is beloved and valued by the community
- b. The DNC Foundation
- c. Well-respected, knowledgeable, and dedicated staff
- d. Knowledgeable, skilled, and passionate volunteers

NOTED WEAKNESSES

- a. Signage disparities with styles, types, and wording on the grounds and trails
- b. Lack of a unified purpose, vision, and goals
- c. Burdensome limits on decision-making
- d. Not enough facilities/grounds staff
- e. There are no Parking Lot or Trail Counters
- f. Attendance numbers are tracked but accomplishments/benefits are not
- g. Fishing, especially angling, may cause a conflict with other uses at the Center

NOTED OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Preschool/daycare programming
- b. Bike and pedestrian trail connections to DNC
- c. Providing nature education experiences elsewhere in Hutchinson could expand their benefits to underserved populations
- d. Revitalize social media and marketing efforts
- e. Increase the funding potential of the Foundation Board
- f. Consider the acquisition of the Evergy Property
- g. Evaluate the availability of new partners

NOTED THREATS

- a. Unknown future of the Evergy Property
- b. Impact of invasive species
- c. Extreme drought conditions
- d. Population decline in Hutchinson and Reno County

FINDINGS OF THE 2019 PARKS AND REC MASTER PLAN

The following are selected comments taken from the 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan. Specific Master Plan goals are indicated in parentheses below:

ORGANIZATIONAL FINDINGS

1. Management Findings

Marketing and awareness are strong but can use additional focus. DNC is a critical piece to the proposed Activity Guide, City website, and comprehensive wayfinding plan and program for trails, parks, and facilities. (Organizational Goal 4.0)

Partners are crucial and numerous. There is a demonstrated need for HutchRec to partner with other departments, governmental agencies, non-profit and for-profit partners. (Organizational Goal 2.0)

Staffing is tight for both Parks and Facilities and Hutch Rec. As with other municipal facilities and sites, there is a demonstrated need at DNC for additional staff to address ongoing and deferred maintenance. (Organizational Goal 3.0)

2. Primary Parks and Facilities Findings

Additional information and marketing for parks and facilities is needed. (Organizational Goal 4.0 and Programs and Services Goal 8.0)

Need exists to address deferred maintenance, ADA needs, and restrooms. (Parks and Facilities Goals 5.0 and 6.0)

Need to address ADA Deficiencies and remove/repair some park play features and amenities. (Parks and Facilities Goals 5.0 and 6.0)

3. Primary Program and Service Delivery Findings

Opportunity exists for additional non-sport programs, arts, and culture. (Programs and Services Goal 8.0)

There is a strong desire for more special events and festivals. (Programs and Services Goals 8.0 and 9.0)

Greater inclusion of lower income populations needs to be addressed. (Finance Goal 10.0):

2022 DNC STRATEGIC PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

Four hundred five (405) citizens responded to an online survey that was distributed to the Recreation Commission's Listserv. Key findings from the survey responses:

1. 63.2% of survey respondents registered in the past year for programs/events offered by the Hutchinson Recreation Commission
2. 48.7% of survey respondents registered for programs/events offered by DNC in the past year
3. For those who HAVE NOT REGISTERED for programs/events offered by DNC in the past year, the primary reasons are:
 - a. 23.8% enjoy the DNC but not interested in organized program/events
 - b. 23.4% are not aware of programs being offered by DNC
 - c. 17.6% say that they or their family is too involved in other activities at other locations
 - d. The lowest percentage of 2.5% indicated that the location of the DNC is a factor
4. Most often mentioned reasons for not participating in organized recreation and educational programs at DNC:
 - a. Too busy
 - b. Don't know what is being offered
 - c. Involved with programs offered by others

5. Programs/event preferences most often mentioned by survey respondents:
 - a. Music Events
 - b. Bird banding, bird hikes, bird watching, bird calling
 - c. Nature walks, nature education, conservation education
 - d. The Lake - More fishing, canoe rental, youth fishing tournament, fishing instruction, family canoe times

2022 DNC STRATEGIC PLAN BUSINESS SURVEY

A business survey was distributed to members of the Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce with 21 responses. Key findings from the survey:

- 15 of the 21 responses have scheduled an annual retreat, a team building event, or an important meeting that requires an off-site location
- 18 of the 21 responses would consider an off-site location for an annual retreat, a team building event, or an important meeting
- The size required for a meeting/event at DNC ranged from 30 people to 300 people from 4 of the responses while the other 17 were unsure
- Just like question #3 above, the number of participants for a meeting/event at DNC ranged from small to large
- 10 of the responses indicated that their need to schedule a retreat, team building event, or important meeting at the Dillon Nature Center would be one time per year

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Consultant analyzed the number of existing programs by their life cycle, age group served, approach to the development of new programs, programs with the highest attendance by type of program, and programs with the highest revenue generation by type.

The Consultant's on-site observations, analysis of data provided in reports provided by staff, and key findings from staff interviews resulted in a lot of details that will be carried forward in this Strategic Plan for specific recommendations. Below are a number of those details:

- Preschool ages from age 3 to 6 are exploding with program activity.
- Adventure camp is highly regarded, have been doing it for 50 years so it is generational.
- Weekend participation by grade school kids at DNC is not doing as well, perhaps it is due to other popular activities such as sports.
- Elected officials are wanting childcare in multiple locations around town, especially at DNC.
- DNC's primary emphasis should be on nature education.
- The Recreation Commission has been asked to lead a community-wide pre-school program.
- DNC is interested in a Nature Preschool Program.
- We need to be effective marketers, but staff is ready to move on with offering a program (s) that have a high probability of success.
- We need to consider the DNC program and evaluate programming gaps between age groups, i.e., programs for very young but nothing for some age groups after the very young.
- Of components included in organizing and managing recreation programs, the Hutchinson programming staff completed a self-evaluation. From a range of 0 to 10, staff rated itself within a range of 3.5 to 7. The self-evaluation included the following topics:
 - Level of interaction with the public to determine program preferences
 - Mindfulness of the age group (s) to be served
 - Mindfulness of program types that are preferred
 - Mindfulness of program formats that are preferred
 - Mindfulness of the program life cycle of each of the existing, and/or, new programs to be considered
 - Are post program evaluations completed?
 - Do programs promote their benefits?
 - Mindfulness of the most effective marketing platform
- There is an expressed need for an expanded Summer Adventure Camp and Pre-School Adventure Camp. These programs contribute to the success of DNC and are cited as favorite activities by Hutchinson residents in recently completed public meetings and a citizen survey.

RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT – DNC

Table 1: Programs by Life Cycle Stage

Program Life Cycle	Number of Programs in Each Cycle
Introductory Stage	2
Growth Stage	4
Maturation Life Stage	13
Declining Stage	7
TOTAL PROGRAMS OFFERED	26

Table 2: Programs provided by Age Group

Age Group	Number of Programs Offered
Preschool	4
Elementary School	3
Middle School	3
High School	1
Young Adults	2
Adults	10
Middle-aged Adults	2
Senior Adults	0
Families	9

RECREATION COMMISSION AND DNC

Key DNC and Recreation Commission recreation program staff were asked to complete a self-evaluation of their approach to developing new programs. Self-evaluation topics included:

Table 3: Program Self-Evaluation

Program Self-Evaluation Topic	Average Score from 0 to 10
Level of interaction with the public to determine program preferences	5.5
Mindfulness of the age group (s) to be served	6.5
Mindfulness of program types that are preferred	6.5
Mindfulness of program formats that are preferred	7
Mindfulness of the program life cycle of each of the existing, and/or, new programs to be considered	5
Are post program evaluations completed?	3.5
Do programs promote their benefits?	6
Mindfulness of the most marketing platform	7

PROGRAMS WITH HIGHEST ATTENDANCE (HUTCHINSON RECREATION COMMISSION)

Table 4: Programs with the Highest Attendance (Hutchinson Recreation Commission)

Programs with the highest attendance	Age Group Served
Youth T-Ball/Baseball/Softball	3-12
Youth Basketball	3-12
Youth Volleyball/Soccer/Football	3-12
Swim Lessons	0-12
Stay to Play Summer Day Camp	5-12
Hutch Rec Race Series (5Ks, 10Ks, triathlon, obstacle course run)	5-70+
Summer Enrichment Classes	2-13
Daddy-Daughter Date Night	0-50
Adult Sports Leagues (VB/Kickball/Pickleball)	20-55

PROGRAMS WITH HIGHEST REVENUE GENERATION (HUTCHINSON RECREATION COMMISSION)

Table 5: Programs with the Highest Revenue Generation

Programs with the highest revenue generation	Age Group Served
1. Stay to Play Summer Day Camp	5-12
2. Youth Volleyball	3-12
3. Youth Basketball	3-12
4. Youth T-Ball/Baseball/Softball	3-12
5. Hutch Rec Race Series	5-70+

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Consultant's on-site observations, analysis of data provided in staff reports and staff interviews, resulted in an expressed need for day care and pre-school programming, adventure camp, and a more aggressive approach to program management, i.e. pre- and post-program evaluations.



STAFF ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Consultant analyzed current staffing level and possible need for additional staff by collecting data on the annual dollars allocated for staff by full-time, part-time, and seasonal; actual annual staff allocation by task and hours, educated assessment about the gap between current actual hours by task and the hours that would be needed to achieve a higher level of service, the level of service that DNC can provide with current staffing level, and an ideal organizational chart of DNC staff if fully funded.

Table 6: Staffing by Category as Currently Funded

Staffing Category	Full-Time	Part-Time	Seasonal	Number of Volunteers/Hours
Annual Budget	\$170,000	\$58,000	\$19,000	2018 - 151/1,568 2019 - 195/2,565 2020 - 48/882 2021 - 110/1,238

Table 7: Staff Allocation Hours (Actual and Current) AND Staff Allocation Hours (Fully Staffed)

Task	Actual Hours	Fully Staffed Hours	Gap (Hours)
School Programs	850	1,000	150
Youth Programs	400	800	400
Adult Programs	200	500	300
Summer Camp	1500	2,000	500
Events	700	1,000	300
Day to Day Customer Service	3,000	3,000	0
Volunteers Admin	130	200	70
Rentals	250	300	50
Gift Shop	100	200	100
Grounds Maintenance	1,250	1,500	250
Building Maintenance	100	200	100
Grounds Improvements	150	300	150
Building Improvements	100	200	100
Janitorial	1,000	1,200	200
Animal Care	200	250	50
Budget Management	80	100	20
Staff Management & Training	360	600	240
Strategic Planning	200	200	0
Fundraising	100	500	400
Grants	48	200	152
	Total - 10,718	Total - 14,250	Total - 3,532

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) SUPPORTED BY BUDGET

ADMINISTRATION

Director – Budget management. Manage Staff. Operations management, Deliver presentations to civic & professional organizations. Strategic planning. Develops and enforces division's policies, procedures, and standards. Marketing support. Manage fundraising efforts. Membership Support. Administers DNC Foundation business. Prepares reports on program, budget, staffing, etc. Grant writing.

Program Coordinator – Volunteer Administration, Newsletter writing. Rental Support. Customer service support.

Customer Service Manager – Customer service, Membership administration, Gift shop administration. Facility rental administration. Staff management & training. Program and gift shop payment processing. Donation processing. Cash reconciliation. Weekly Deposit preparation.

Front Desk Attendants – Customer service. Cashier. Gift Shop and rental support.

PROGRAMMING

- Program Coordinator – School program development, delivery, and evaluation. Youth program Development, delivery, and evaluation. Adult Program Development, delivery, and evaluation. Program staff training, scheduling, and evaluation. Summer camp development and support. Event development and delivery.
- Director – School Program contract administration. Youth & Adult program development and delivery. Summer Camp Administration, development, and support. Program staff training. Event development and delivery.
- Education Assistant – School, Youth, Adult program development and delivery. Event development and delivery.
- Natural Resource Manager – School & Youth Program delivery. Event development and delivery.
- Customer Service Manager – Program & event delivery and support.
- Front Desk Attendants – Program & Event Support.
- Seasonals – Summer camp development and delivery.
- Natural Resource Manager – Grounds Maintenance and improvement Projects. Building Maintenance & improvement projects. Animal care. Maintenance supply purchasing.
- Janitor – Facility cleaning and upkeep.
- Program Coordinator – Facility and grounds upkeep and improvement.
- Director – Facility and grounds upkeep and improvement.

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) PROVIDED IF FULLY STAFFED/BUDGETED

1. Complete all grounds and building maintenance projects needed
2. Look at completing more grounds and building improvement projects
3. Provide more school, youth, and adult programming, that have had more updates and evaluations
4. Provide more eco-tour type programming
5. Better train and on-board staff
6. Add an event or two
7. Expand animal collection
8. Expand gift shop
9. Expand rental hours
10. Expand volunteer opportunities

MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

To analyze the DNC Management Function, the Consultant subdivided it into three categories: Financial, Marketing, and Partnerships. Details follow below:

- Financial – Review of current funding level and the gap between it and the preferred return on investment.
- Marketing – Review of current marketing efforts and the gap between it and DNC’s preferred outcome.
- Partnerships – Review of current partnerships and suggestions for new partnership development.

DNC FINANCIAL DATA

For the fiscal years 2018-2021, the annual subsidy to DNC is \$190,660.75.

Percentages by Revenue and Expense for the fiscal years of 2019-2022 are shown in Table 8 below.

- Cost recovery expectations set by Administration are 50% of costs.
- Current earned income and other revenue sources such as fundraisers and donations have not mitigated the need for an annual subsidy.

Table 8: Annual Revenue and Expense Percentages

Fiscal Year	Highest Revenue Percentage	Highest Expense Percentage
2019	Contributions = 27%	Administration = 74%
2020	DNC Foundation = 29%	Administration = 81%
2021	Contributions = 27%	Administration = 75%
2022	Contributions = 36%	Administration = 75%

PARTNERSHIPS

DNC has several School District Contracts and other community partnerships:

- 2022/2023 School Year Contracts
 - Hutchinson Public Schools - \$6,000
 - Buhler Public Schools - \$6,000
 - South Hutchinson Elementary School - \$950
 - Holy Cross Catholic School - \$850
- Other Partnerships
 - Hutchinson Zoo – We collaborate on providing Frog Watch Training
 - Hutchinson’s Family Community Theater – We partner on our Spookwalk Event
 - K-State’s Reno County Extension Office – We partner on Master Naturalist Training
 - Hutchinson Public Library – they work with us to provide a StoryWalk here at the DNC
 - The Cosmosphere – We partnered on an members only event celebrating the opening of the opening of the Film

- Wings over Water at their dome theatre
- Everygy – we maintain trails through Everygy prairie property adjacent to DNC for public
- Horizon’s Mental Health Center – Partner on Nature Therapy Day
- Sunflower Yoga – Nature Therapy Day
- Reno County Health Department – Partner on Foodie Fest
- Kansas Forest Service, US. Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, KDWP, Cheney Lake Watershed – DNC Conservation Day

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

- Funding from all sources is needed to meet HutchRec and DNC goals.
- Marketing emphasis needs to be an extremely high priority for HutchRec and DNC to achieve goals.
- Like-minded partners can leverage HutchRec and DNC resources.
- DNC can make more informed decisions by expanding its data analysis capabilities.

FACILITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

DNC facilities are primarily located within the two parcels owned by the City of Hutchinson: a 21.5-acre triangular parcel (west parcel) where all of DNC's buildings and structures are found and a 3.6-acre parcel (east parcel) which is primarily used for the center's parking. Additionally, DNC has an agreement with Evergy Energy to use and maintain the prairie area and trails found to the east of DNC. As there is no significant development on the Evergy Energy parcel, this assessment will focus on the 25.1 acres where all of DNC facilities and infrastructure are located.

On the DNC property, buildings, structures, roads, and parking areas are concentrated on the southeastern edge of the west parcel and the southern end of the east parcel. The west parcel is primarily wooded, with approximately 20 acres characterized by a woodland land cover. The upper pond in the center of the property is a dominant landscape feature which defines DNC. Much of the development of DNC is organized around this pond, with the Visitors Center sited directly on the southeastern shore, the Gazebo positioned on the northeastern shoreline, and the Jim Smith Family Playscape aligning the eastern pond edge. While the garden doesn't have a physical connection or direct access to the pond, this alignment is clear. Further, DNC's walking paths meander around the upper pond providing access at several points along the western shoreline including a fishing dock, boat ramp, and multiple stepped access points from the path to water's edge.

The Visitors Center is the largest building on the property, at greater than 3,000 square feet. This building was constructed in 1997 and has served DNC well through the years, suggesting its design to have been forward-thinking for the time. The Visitors Center includes interactive exhibits and displays, a gift shop, staff offices, and spaces available to the public to rent, including a 1,400-square foot community room, and a 475-square foot science lab room that provides amenities for children's birthday parties, business meetings, and break-out spaces. Gardens and paths define the areas around the Visitors Center and provide a pleasant sense of arrival. A covered deck surrounds the western side of the Visitors Center providing a view of the upper pond.

Taylor's Shady Lane Cabin is the second largest building at DNC and is available for rental for meetings, reunions, parties, and receptions. The building includes a catering kitchen with a serving window, the main meeting room, restrooms, and storage spaces. At approximately 2,000 square feet, it's well suited for gatherings of up to 50 people. To the east, just outside the cabin's front door, is the Mary Clark Community Courtyard. This 8,000 square foot lawn provides an outdoor gathering space for weddings, gatherings, and other events.

VISITORS CENTER

- The Visitors Center is sited very well centrally in the property with favorable access to parking areas, amenities, and program areas.
- The gardens and paths surrounding the Visitors Center provide a very pleasant entry and arrival sequence to the building and the planting beds are well maintained. Some signage in the butterfly garden and Monarch waystation areas were overgrown somewhat indicating a potential opportunity either to relocate the signage or change the planting design to include lower growing plants around and in front of the signage.
- The building's HVAC system is aging and unreliable and therefore needs to be replaced.
- Structural and maintenance concerns were raised about the wood deck facing the upper pond and therefore the deck needs to be replaced. The existing deck appears to be of an appropriate size to allow for movement and seating areas. The current deck rail appears to provide a safe barrier but doesn't include signage or environmental education experiences. This is an opportunity for the new deck rail to be addressed.
- Other than the HVAC system and the wood deck, there were no other apparent maintenance concerns or observations of the rest of the building.

TAYLORS' SHADY LANE CABIN AND MARY CLARK COMMUNITY COURTYARD

- Taylors' Shady Lane Cabin (Cabin) is utilized for meetings and gatherings of up to 50 people and served as the location for the August 9th meeting with DNC staff and stakeholders. The space supported the needs of this meeting very well.
- Staff identified some concerns and limitations of the building as lacking ample storage space and having been built without a clear plan for its use, function, and aesthetic (its form, materials, and color scheme don't tie in architecturally with the rest of DNC).
- The Mary Clark Community Courtyard (Courtyard) appears to be a well-used and valued outdoor space at DNC.

JIM SMITH FAMILY PLAYScape

- The Jim Smith Family Playscape is clearly valued by Hutchinson residents and DNC staff and stakeholders. Several community survey responses cited the garden as a favorite destination at DNC, even noting a preference for it to be expanded. More responses cited the need for events and programs geared for children, including specific interest in activities for small children ages 1 through 8, pre-K and up, and for children and youth.
- It's believed the Jim Smith Family Playscape will continue to support both scheduled and programmed day camp activities as well as providing outdoor experiences for drop in visitors.
- Its location and proximity to the Welcome Center and the DNC entrance are favorable for past and current use and will continue to be favorable for future day camp and other outdoor programming.
- While the Playscape is a valued asset, there were concerns raised in the community survey about the maintenance of the gardens. The Consultants noted some areas in need of minor repair and maintenance, as well.

UPPER POND

- Fishing access was raised as a safety and overall use concern by several community members and the impact of fishing and other access is clearly visible in the condition of the shoreline. Most, if not all, of the western, southern, and northern shoreline is characterized by compacted soils.
- Railroad tie and other step structures have outlived their lifespan and are likewise eroded and unstable and should be removed.
- Staff noted the island in the upper pond is eroding and sedimentation is reducing the pond's depth, therefore, dredging the pond to remove sediments is needed to address these concerns.
- The dredging and restoration project is an opportunity to enhance the experience of the pond for all, including fishers, birdwatchers, and other visitors.

PARKING AND ROADWAYS

- A common comment at the kickoff meeting with staff and stakeholders was adding charging stations for electric vehicles. These could be added to the existing main parking lot with clear signage to denote the emphasis placed on sustainability and green technology.
- The main parking lot appears to serve day-to-day operations in terms of capacity and function. However, staff noted that for larger events, the demand for parking increases to 150 vehicles, requiring DNC staff to be heavily involved directing traffic due to the lack of available parking areas.
- While it's not identified as a priority by DNC staff or the Consultant, whenever the parking areas are due to be resurfaced, it's recommended adding an edge restraint with an appropriate material fitting the DNC aesthetic, such as limestone. The stone functions as a visual edging which reduces the likelihood of cars pulling too far forward. It also reduces the expansion and cracking of the asphalt caused by the weight of vehicles driving and parking on it.

PATHS AND TRAILS

- Existing paved walks and unpaved paths and trails appear to be in good condition and well maintained. Most of the recommendations provided later in this report intend to identify strategies to enhance the visitor's experience along these important circulation routes.

SUMMER ADVENTURE CAMP

- The Adventure Camp program is a major contributing factor to the success of DNC. Hutchinson residents cite it as a favorite activity and experience and staff note it as a traditional and generational asset to DNC and the community.
- Current challenges with the camp program include sharing spaces with other programs and activities, including the Visitors Center's natural sciences classrooms. This creates conflicts with other activities and visitor experiences in that building. It's clear there is a current demonstrated need for dedicated structures and program areas to support expanded camp programming.

DNC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



DNC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The following Strategic Plan Recommendations are supported by Basic Assumptions and Needs Assessment Data identified by the consultant during on-site observations and from conversations with DNC staff and stakeholders. The value of these conversations cannot be overstated!

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 Data collected from the previously completed ANCA report, included in the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the statistically valid survey data included in the Master Plan is reliable
- 2 There is a significant gap between programming success at the Recreation Commission versus the DNC, due in large part to the popularity of youth sports which is the core service provided by HutchRec
- 3 To achieve a higher Level of Service at DNC, additional staff is needed
- 4 HutchRec Administration's expected cost recovery for DNC programs and services is 50% which is hindered by the lack of revenue-generating amenities and facilities
- 5 Trails are among the highest rated attractions for DNC users; however, there is no realistic way to charge fees for trail use to contribute to cost recovery expectations nor is a trail use fee customary in municipalities in the United States
- 6 Addition of revenue-generating facilities, amenities, and new open spaces for flexible use have been identified by the consultant as realistic options for reducing subsidies to the DNC

IMPLEMENTING PREVIOUS REPORT AND MASTER PLAN FINDINGS

The previous 2022 ANCA report and 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan identify many recommendations and findings to improve the DNC experience, increase visitors, and address operational concerns. Those which the consultants believe are critical to DNC's future are identified with the specific program, staff, management, and facilities recommendations later in this chapter.

It is important to note that capital needs identified in those prior plans will require a funding source and prioritization, that new programs and services should be evaluated for appropriateness, and a key staff person should be identified to spearhead implementation of recommendations of the previous reports (and this Strategic Plan).

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Objectives

- To identify core programs that align with DNC mission and vision
- To expand and focus resources on core programming
- To collaborate with like-minded organizations
- To collaborate with other Hutch Rec divisions

Objective: To identify core programs that align with DNC mission and vision

- Tactic: Evaluate all current programming against DNC mission and vision
- Tactic: Provide analysis of program success, including participation and financial
- Tactic: To emphasize and allocate realistic resources to identified core programs

Objective: To expand and focus resources on core programming

- Tactic: Explore offering nature programs off site
- Tactic: Confirm the direct staff person is in place
- Tactic: Explore the potential program opportunities for homeschoolers and regional school districts

Objective: To collaborate with like-minded organizations

- Tactic: Identify local and regional organizations to partner with
- Tactic: Prepare collaboration proposals with local and regional organizations

Objective: To collaborate with other Hutch Rec Divisions

- Tactic: Explore alternative programming opportunities at the nature center that would attract new visitors

Implementation of these recommendations supports the findings of the 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan and the ANCA Report as follows:

Master Plan Goals addressed include:

Goal 8.0 - Align program equity and availability in all sub-areas to all demographics of residents

Goal 8.2 - Create opportunities for additional non-sports programs

Goal 9.0 - Increase city-wide and regional draw programs

Goal 9.1 - Add community-wide cultural and special events

ANCA Report Opportunities:

1. To provide for additional Special Events
2. Develop more indoor space for programming and nature experiences
3. Establish new outdoor facilities such as dog friendly spaces
4. Include a diversity of program offerings
5. Providing family activities and providing safe places/activities for children/youth during non-school hours
6. To provide spaces and places for family activities
7. To provide places to protect, see, hear, touch, and smell nature

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Objectives

- To align staff capabilities with core program needs
- To encourage and manage volunteerism
- To assign staff as a liaison with the DNC Foundation's fundraising committee

Objective: To align staff capabilities with core operation needs

- Tactic: Identify core operation needs; assess capabilities of staff; and develop work plan that identifies the direct staff person.

Objective: To encourage and manage volunteerism

- Tactic: Develop and implement a comprehensive volunteer program to support the operations; assign and measure performance of staff person responsible for volunteers.

Objective: To assign staff as a liaison with the DNC Foundation's fundraising committee

- Tactic: Coordinate with the DNC Foundation a regular schedule of meetings to establish fundraising goals and events.

Implementation of these recommendations supports the findings of previous studies, including the following 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan goals:

Goal 3.0 – Address Staffing and Resource Allocation Needs

Goal 3.2 – Add one full-time staff person for evaluation and analysis

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Objectives

- To identify the roles of the DNC Foundation and the Hutch Rec Board of Commissioners
- To establish meaningful partnerships with organizations in our community to further the DNC mission and vision

Objective: To identify the roles of the DNC Foundation and the Hutch Rec Board of Commissioners

- Tactic: Schedule a joint retreat and clearly identify and define the work of each entity
- Tactic: Review and modify Foundation By-Laws to reflect actual members' roles.

Objective: To establish meaningful partnerships with organizations in our community to further the DNC mission and vision

- Tactic: Create a formal partnership policy
- Tactic: Assess current partnerships and their contribution to the DNC mission and vision

Implementation of these recommendations supports the findings of the 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan and the ANCA Report as follows:

Master Plan Goals addressed include:

Goal 3.0 – Address Staffing and Resource Allocation Needs

Goal 3.2 – Add one full-time staff person for evaluation and analysis

Goal 10.0 – Recognize parks, recreation, sports, culture, and events as economic drivers and quality of life investments

Goal 10.2 – Address Cost Recovery at Category Level

Goal 10.3 – Aligned Cost Recovery plan and policies for City and Hutch Rec

ANCA Report Opportunities:

1. Revitalizing social media and marketing efforts could target new and/or larger audiences
2. Untapped Foundation Board potential could add funding and vitality to the nature center.
3. Overstretched staff jeopardizes current operations and limits ability to explore new opportunities

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Objectives

- To embrace Stewardship
- To Enhance what we have
- To Expand to meet new visions

Tactics

The consultant completed a thorough assessment of the DNC property as described in the DNC Facility Assessment Chapter of this report. Recommendations are provided as follows.

Visitors Center

- Enhance the Community Room to make it more of an inviting event space. This could include adding windows and glass doors (for an alternative entrance) to the exterior walls to create a greater indoor-to-outdoor connection. Also, rethink a better way to incorporate the entry alcove area to be a better part of the rental space. the existing HVAC system to improve energy efficiency and visitors' and staff's comfort.
- Redesign the current gift shop space into both a comfortable gathering space with coffee etc. and a smaller display area for only popular gift shop items.
- Establish a new vision and theme for the gift shop to focus on the graphic identity and branding of DNC, such as shirts, hats, magnets, and others.
- Convert Library from a public space to staff only meeting space. Move books to offices, and new gathering space in gift shop.
- In 3 to 5 years replace the existing wood deck that faces the upper pond.
 - Consider decking material options that provide appropriate and safe surfaces and wear resistance.
 - Likewise, consider a coordinated deck railing system or style, such as a cable rail, that provides maximum visibility of the adjacent pond and landscape.
 - Incorporate signage into the deck railing to provide outdoor and environmental education and interpretation experiences.
 - Integrate lighting into the railing for safety.

Taylors' Shady Lane Cabin and Mary Clark Community Courtyard

Recommendations for these areas are to address ongoing maintenance and stewardship of these spaces to maximize their longevity in support of indoor and outdoor programming and activities related to meetings and gatherings.

As mentioned further in this report, it's recommended that additional day camp structures and program areas be added to DNC in the wooded areas north of the Cabin. Siting these new, future amenities close to the Cabin and Courtyard allows for the potential of shared use of these structures and areas, as appropriate, and as scheduling will allow.

Jim Smith Family Playscape

The following recommendations focus on the maintenance and repair needs identified previously in this report.

- Consider hiring a summer horticulture intern or schedule regular volunteers to assist DNC staff with playscape grounds maintenance.
- Add storage areas or sheds to store tools, hose reels, and other equipment when not in use. This will reduce potential tripping hazards on the site and eliminate concerns with children encountering these.

Upper Pond

To address concerns with erosion and sedimentation at the island and the need for dredging in the upper pond, several recommendations are offered.

- Update DNC's fishing policy that deters subsistence fishing and promotes recreational fishing. Whether it be a catch and release program or the like, the goal is to initiate a fishing program that is both more in line with the DNC Mission of outdoor education and recreation, as well as being more environmentally friendly to the pond
- Limit fishing access to specific points along the western shoreline as shown in the Concept Designs
- Add fishing piers and a boardwalk for fishing access.
 - These provide stable footing and extend over the water, reducing issues with shoreline vegetation, string algae, etc. that create problems for fishers.
 - Space them to allow a casting distance of 25 to 30 yards.
 - Clearly mark them with signage for rules, regulations, and species stocked in the pond.
 - Integrate signage into the deck rails for convenience.
- Restore shoreline areas to native wetland and/or shoreline vegetation to reduce soil erosion and provide habitat. These should be clearly designated and marked for 'no foot traffic'.
- Grade the shoreline slope at one (1) foot of vertical drop for every three (3) feet of horizontal distance to minimize excessive growth of aquatic vegetation.
- Grade the pond bottom to have staggered depths and that half of the pond area should have a depth of at least eight (8) feet to prevent excessive growth of aquatic vegetation.
- As these are general recommendations, additional conditions may apply and consulting design and construction details specific to central Kansas may apply.
- Maintain the boat ramp in its current location. Remove existing shrubs on the sides of the ramp to improve visibility. Replant with appropriate native vegetative groundcover.
- Resurface the access lane.
- Remove all evergreen shrubs and trees on the berm surrounding the south, west, and northern sides of the pond and replant these areas with a variety of native shrubs, and herbaceous grasses and forbs to improve habitat, seasonal interest, and visual access to the pond.
- Implement a unified signage and wayfinding scheme for materiality, color, and typeface with a consistent aesthetic and design. Rules and regulations for access to the upper pond should be concisely and clearly stated.
- Name new piers, structures, and garden areas after donors and key DNC stakeholders. For example, the 'Jensen Family Fishing Pier' or the 'Leopold Boardwalk'.

Parking and Roadways

As described in the DNC Needs Assessment, there are several opportunities to increase parking availability, provide signage and wayfinding amenities, and to enhance circulation and mobility for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians at DNC. The following recommendations aim to address these opportunities.

- Determine size and configuration of parking lot renovation on parking needs that will be established based on the recommendations in this plan.
- Add electric vehicle charging stations to the existing main parking lot with clear signage to denote the emphasis placed on sustainability and green technology.
- As needed, create an additional open lawn parking area to the north of the north paved lot. This area would need to be cleared of invasive locust trees, which addresses ecological concerns as well. This could be used as an open space for large group activities during camp and other programming, when not used for parking.
- Upgrade and enhance bike parking area near the Visitors Center.
 - Provide dedicated storage racks, appropriate surfacing (pavement, crushed stone, etc.), and a bike service station as an amenity for visitors biking to DNC.

- Service stations typically include a manual air pump, a bike hanger, and tools for minor repairs, maintenance, and adjustments.
- Add edge restraints to asphalt parking areas. Select a material fitting the DNC aesthetic, such as limestone.

Paths and Trails

As described previously in this report, DNC's existing paths and trails are in an overall good condition and appear to be in favorable locations to provide access to the greater property. The following recommendations intend to identify strategies to enhance these.

- Build multiuse trail to connect 30th Avenue to Visitor's Center.
- Add AV charging stations and seating along DNC paths. These can be sited in areas that provide an interesting view or landscape feature.
- Add interpretive signage alongside paths to provide information about the native plants, ecological characteristics, gardens, and outdoor areas at DNC. Utilize a common, unified materiality and format for the signage for clarity.
- Include QR codes in the signs for visitors to link with DNC website(s) with additional content including Spanish language translations and audio recordings for those with visual impairments.
- The addition of audio recordings provides for new self-guided tours and other experiences, which is a preference for DNC users.
- Enhance the trail between the Taylors' Shady Lane Cabin and the north meadow to provide accessibility to persons with disabilities, those who use walkers for assistance, and parents and others with strollers. Given the sandy soil in this area, a roll out access mat might be a viable option as these are frequently used on beaches to provide access for people with a range of mobility.

New Camp Building

Short Term Goal: Raze the old care taker's house on the south side of the property. Construct a large open-air pavilion with restrooms to serve as a gathering spot for camps in that location.

Long Term Goal: Add a new building to support nature pre-school and day camp programming and experiences. In terms of use, the camp building would be available for year-round use to support Adventure Camp during the summer as well as hosting school field trips, pre-school classes, and other community groups during the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

The design program for this building will need to be generated after a more detailed conversation with DNC staff, it's generally recommended this building include:

- A common, flexible, open space for all-camp and all-pre-school activities (especially needed for 'rainy day' activities when severe weather prohibits outdoor activities).
- Separate and dedicated space for the pre-school to provide space for passive activities, resting, and naps.
- Ample restrooms for the number of campers and pre-school children on site. General recommendations suggest a ratio of one to two (1-2) lavatories and two (2) toilets per sixteen (16) preschool-aged children. The recommendation is for two (2) lavatories and two (2) toilets per ten to twenty (10-20) K-12-aged children and youth.
- A receiving kitchen with refrigerator, dishwasher, dry food and dish, utensil, and other storage, lavatory, and food prep and/or counter space.
- Spaces and rooms for wellness and healthcare with dedicated toilet(s), water for drinking and cleaning, beds at a ratio of one bed per fifty (1:50) campers and staff, and space for isolation and privacy, per American Camp Association standards.
- Ample storage for program equipment, supplies, games, and activities, including DNC's stream table.
- Office and/or support spaces for day camp staff, counselors, and other staff, reducing the need for the Visitors Center to provide this space.

- Ecologically speaking, the design of this building should integrate stormwater harvesting and management practices to increase the structure’s resiliency to current drought conditions. Stormwater harvesting would offset the building’s water use.
- Infiltration practices such as bioretention cells, rain gardens, and others could be integrated into the building site to address stormwater management concerns.
- The feasibility of implementing these practices into other existing buildings, roads, parking areas, and impervious surfaces should also be explored.

Other Outdoor Camp Amenities

In addition to the proposed new camp building, it’s recommended DNC add other amenities and experiences to support expanded youth camp experiences in the future. The consultants researched several precedent nature-based and outdoor pre-schools, including many which were recommended by DNC staff. The following is a summary of common activities and experiences provided by these centers:

- Promoting nature and the outdoors in as many activities as possible. This is something DNC is currently doing and can be continued in support of the expanded camp, day care, and pre-school experiences.
- Providing a variety and a progression of outdoor experiences. Adding new park pavilions and open spaces allows DNC to provide multiple and simultaneous use of different areas at the center.
 - Outdoor open spaces for storytelling, dramatic plays, the arts, and makerspaces.
 - These spaces can be as simple as a mown lawn in a woodland clearing, such as the Rabbit Glenn Program Area, Games Meadow, and/or other spaces created by clearing of invasive trees. Adding wooden or log benches to a woodland clearing transforms this space into an outdoor classroom for environmental education, storytelling, guest lectures, and other group activities.
 - Outdoor free play areas where campers can construct forts and other structures using found and natural materials.
- Walking and hiking trails that traverse different ecosystems. DNC’s current network of trails already provides access to many different landscapes. By adding gathering spaces along the trails, it provides opportunities for the group to stop for birdwatching or binocular play, investigate and observe the native vegetation, or to simply pause for a break.
- Raising butterflies is a common activity of these outdoor pre-schools and could be easily incorporated into the proposed camp building and associated landscape design.

Implementation of these recommendations supports the findings of the 2019 Parks and Rec Master Plan and the ANCA Report as follows:

Master Plan Goals addressed include:

Goal 5.0 – Improve Trails, Connectivity, and Alternative Transportation

Goal 6.0 – Improve Existing Parks and Facilities

ANCA Report Opportunities:

1. Improve bike connections to DNC
2. Add nature experiences elsewhere in the community (DNC fits into that network)
3. Provide preschool and daycare programming

DNC CONCEPT DESIGNS



DNC CONCEPT DESIGNS

INTRODUCTION

The consultant has created a series of concept designs to identify changes or additions to the DNC Footprint that will allow for the type of planned growth that is needed to implement this 2023 DNC Strategic Plan.



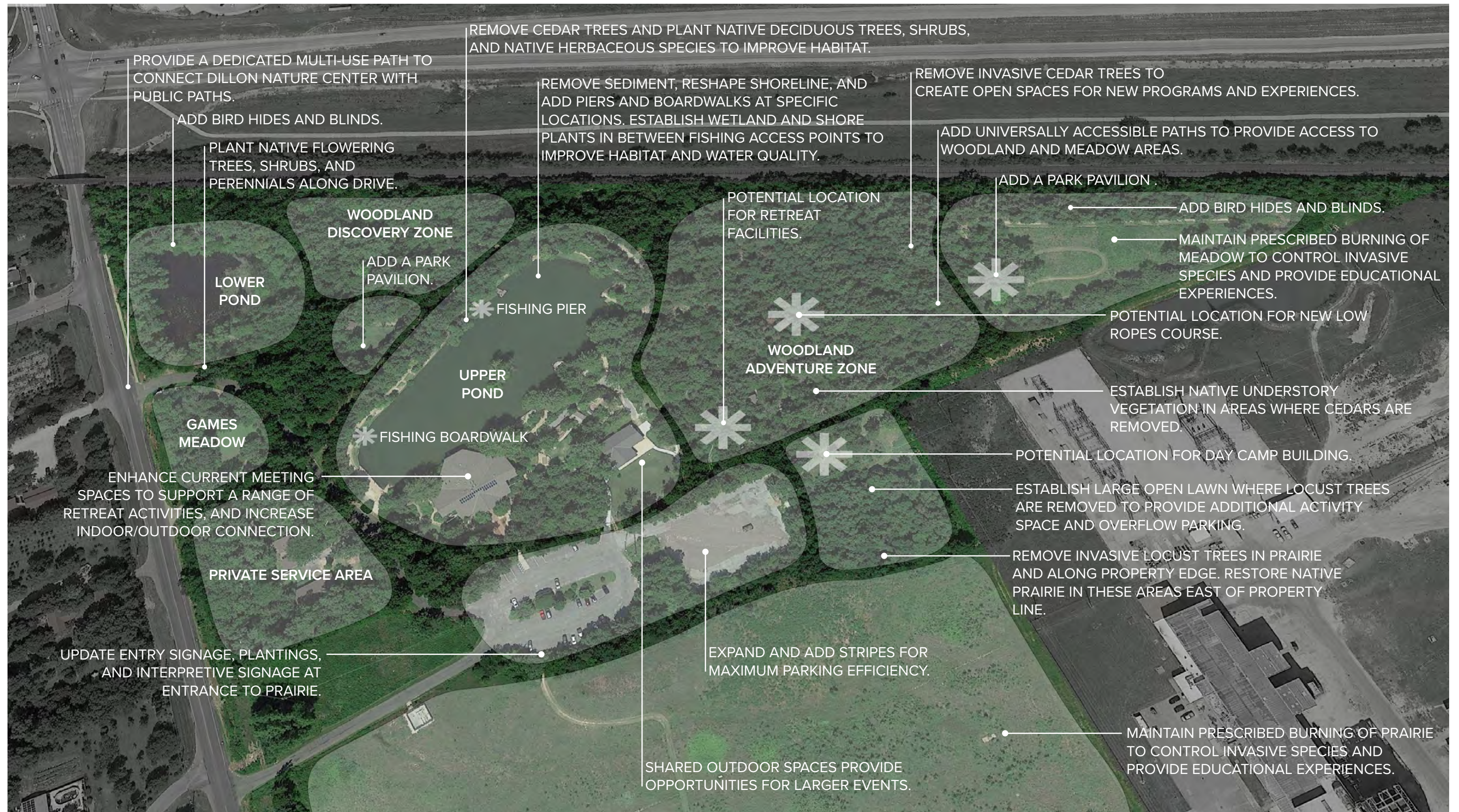


BASE MAP OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



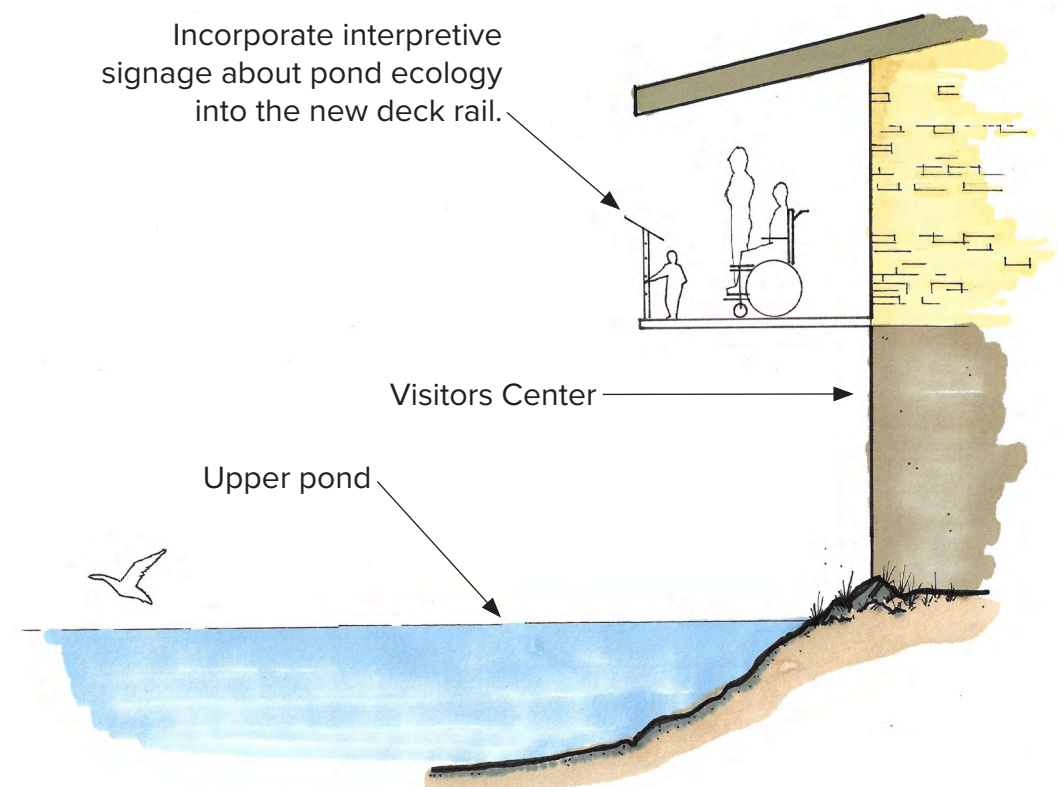
AERIAL VIEW OF DILLON NATURE CENTER



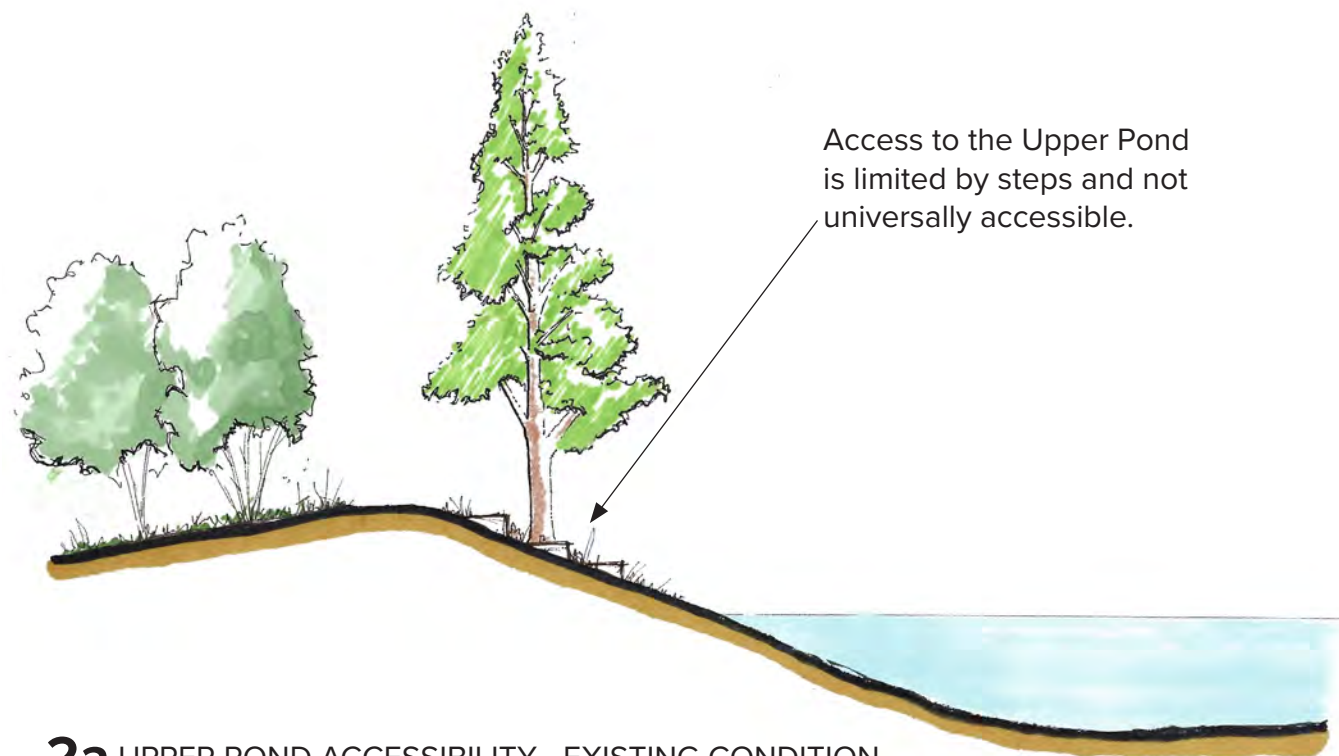


CONCEPT DESIGN | VIEW LOOKING TO THE WEST

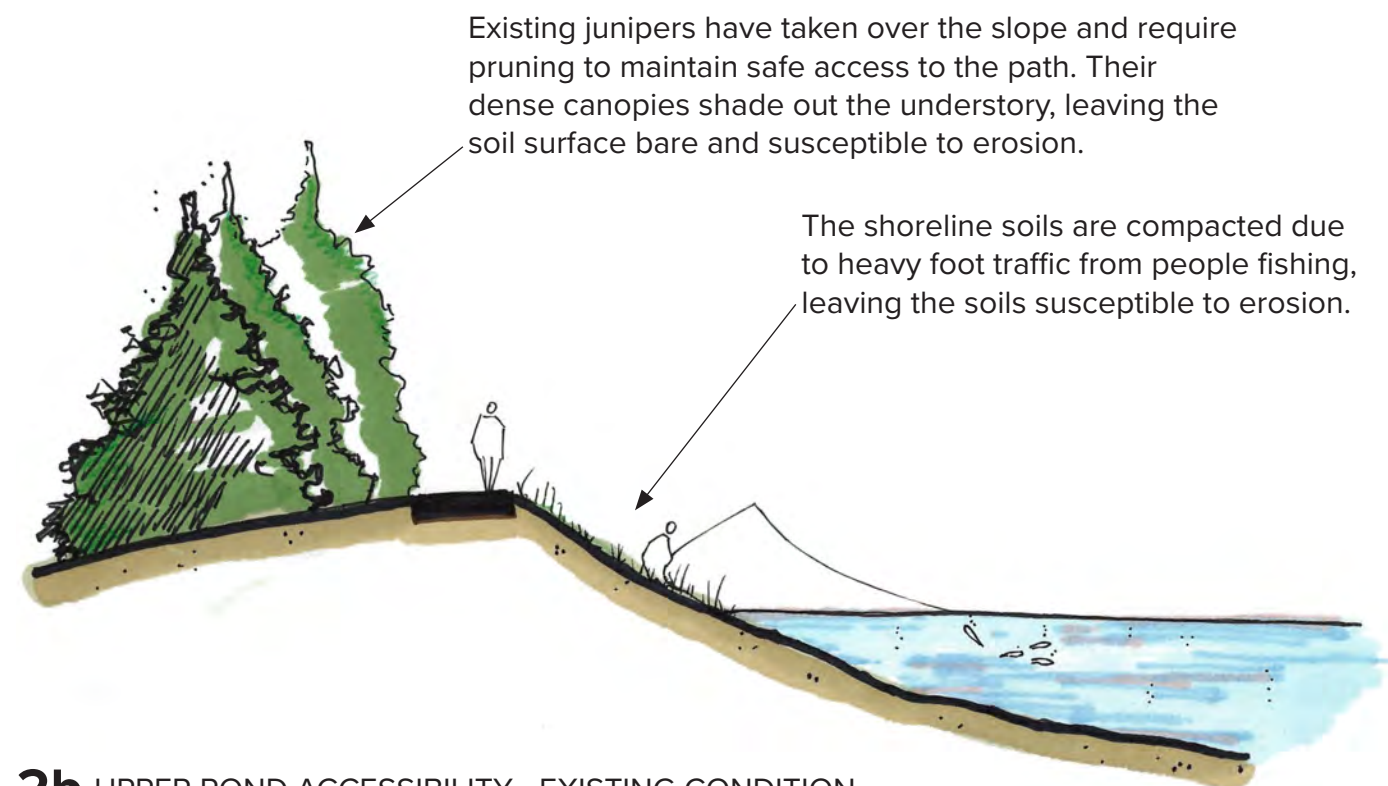




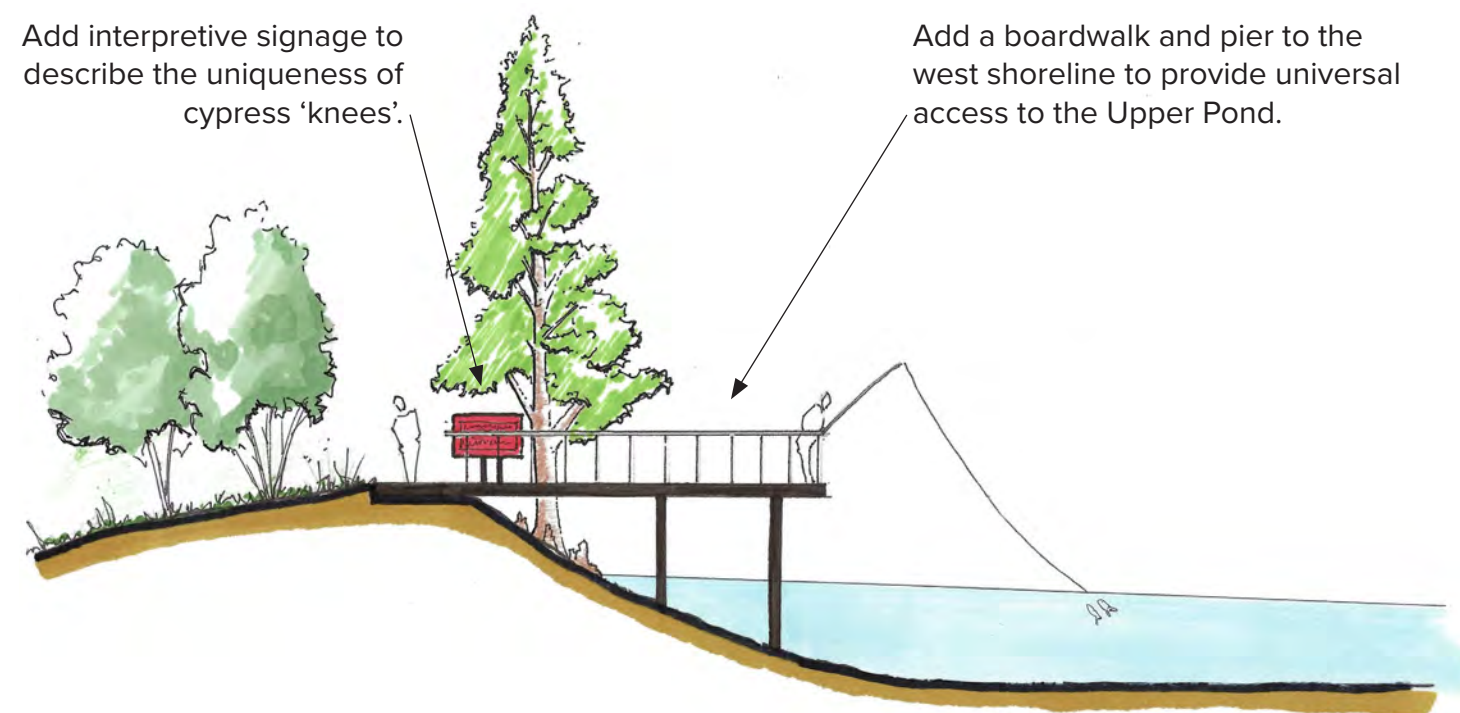
1 VISITORS CENTER - PROPOSED NEW DECK AND DECK RAIL



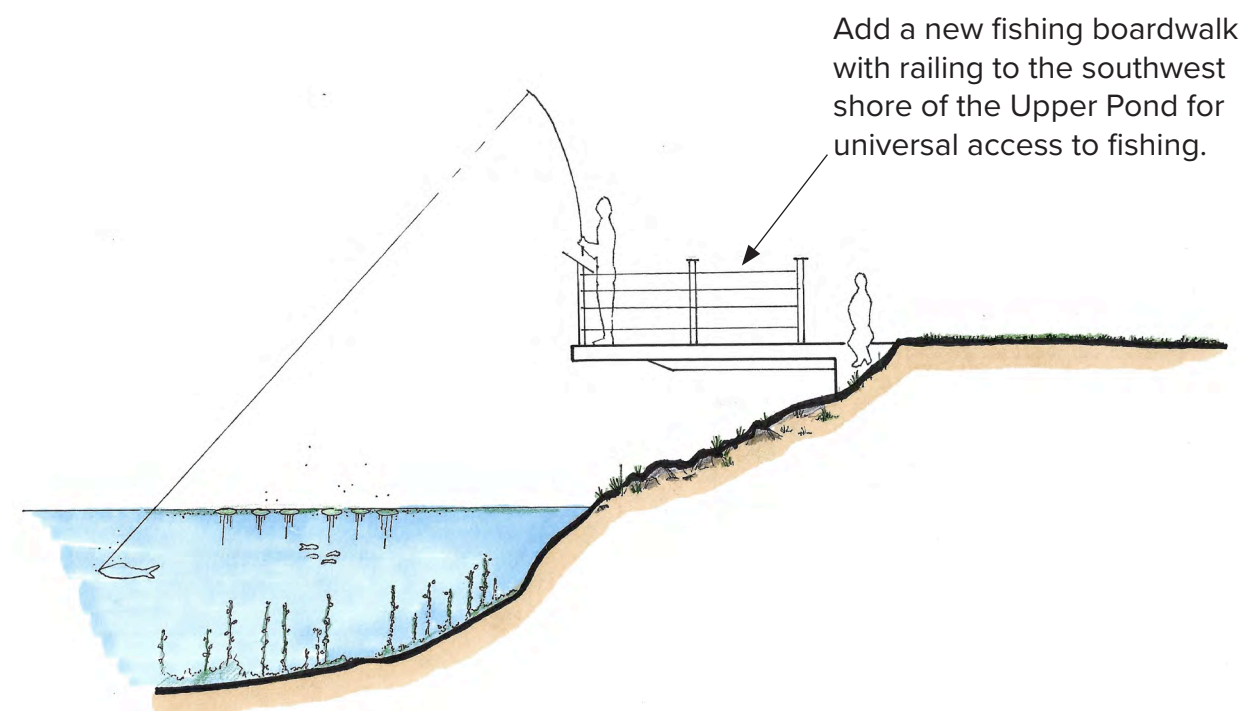
2a UPPER POND ACCESSIBILITY - EXISTING CONDITION



2b UPPER POND ACCESSIBILITY - EXISTING CONDITION



2c UPPER POND ACCESSIBILITY - PROPOSED NEW FISHING PIER



2d UPPER POND - PROPOSED NEW FISHING BOARDWALK

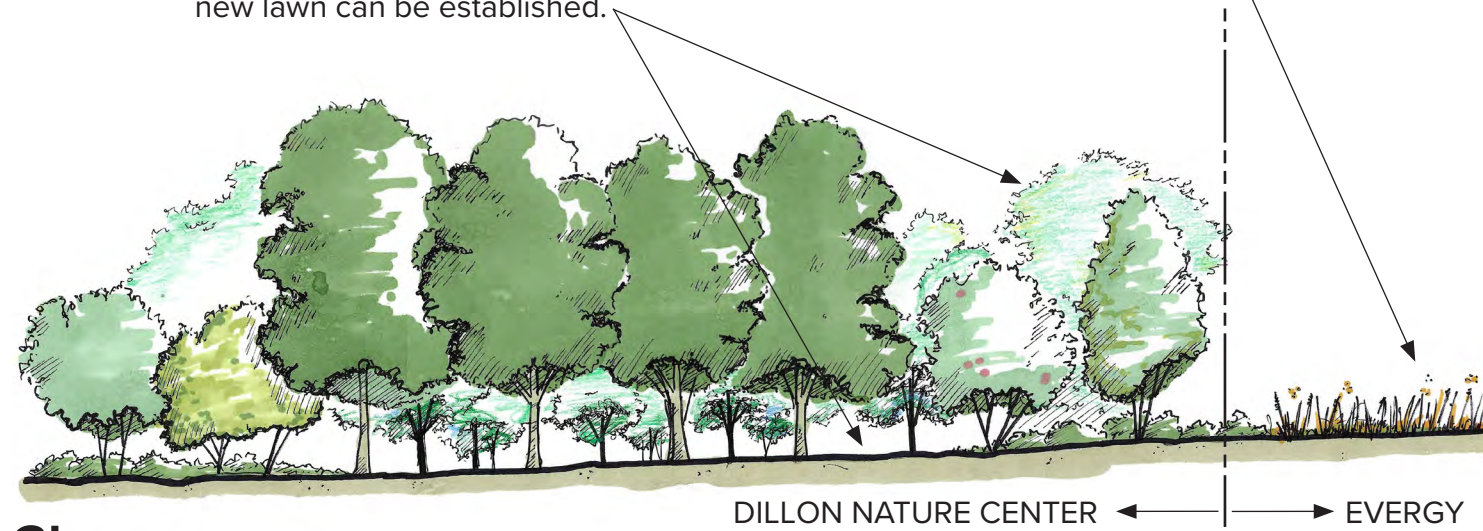
Black locust have encroached on the prairie and should be removed from this area.



3a PRAIRIE EDGE - EXISTING CONDITION

Where black locust are removed to the west of the parcel line, native trees and new lawn can be established.

With the black locust removed, this area can be reestablished with native prairie species.



3b PRAIRIE EDGE - PROPOSED TREATMENT

Eastern red cedar has become well established in several areas of the woodland.

The dense evergreen canopy shades out understory vegetation as well as the lower cedar branches.



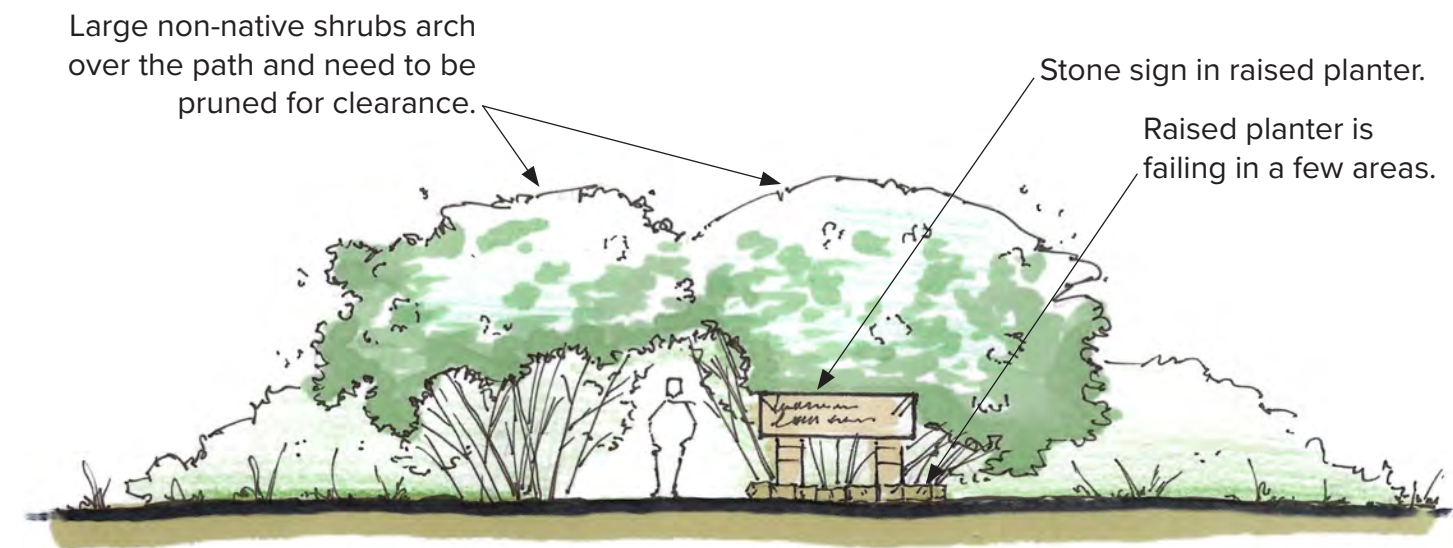
4a WOODLAND AREAS - CONCERNS WITH EASTERN RED CEDAR

By removing the cedars, new open spaces become available for outdoor classrooms, picnic areas, or other uses.

Consider adding a paved path, boardwalk, or a portable non-slip path mat to provide accessibility to persons with mobility concerns and those with strollers.



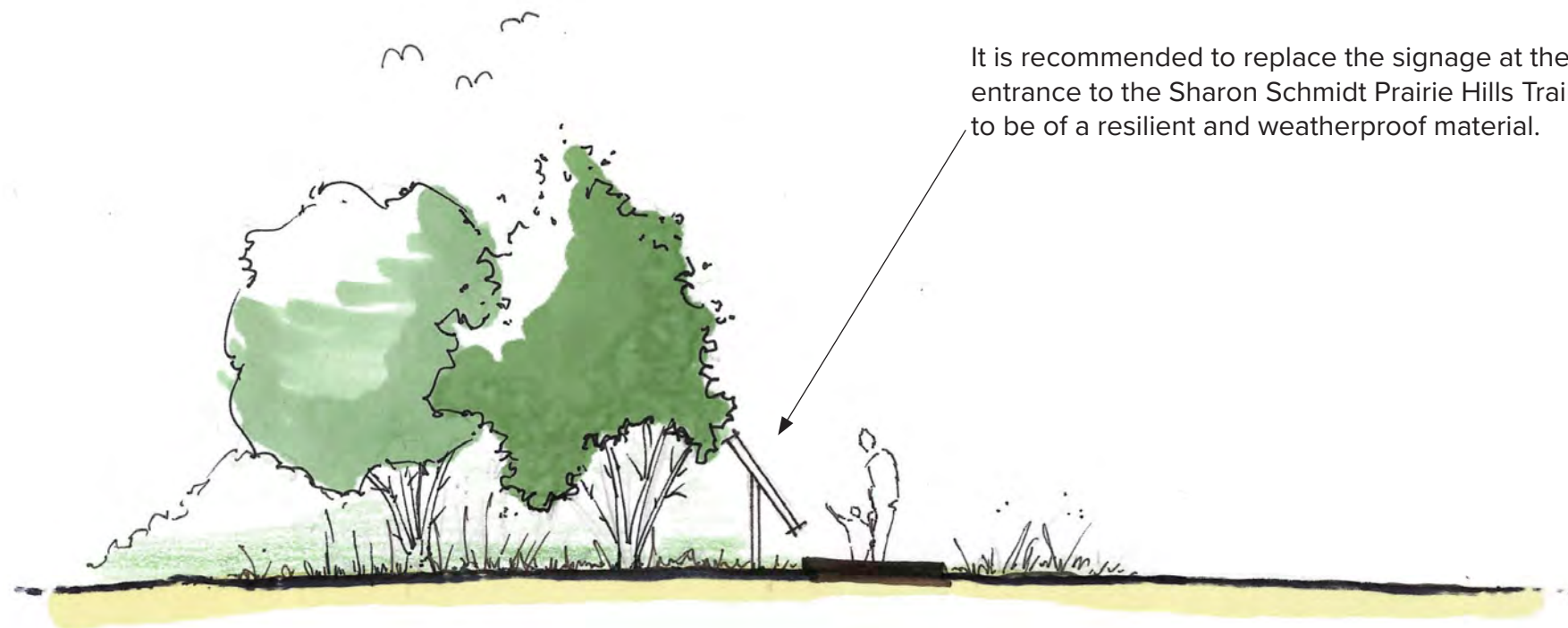
4b WOODLAND AREAS - PROPOSED SELECTIVE REMOVAL OF CEDARS TO CREATE NEW SPACES



5a THE SHARON SCHMIDT PRAIRIE HILLS TRAIL ENTRANCE - EXISTING CONDITION



5b THE SHARON SCHMIDT PRAIRIE HILLS TRAIL ENTRANCE - PROPOSED NEW PLANTING STRATEGY



It is recommended to replace the signage at the entrance to the Sharon Schmidt Prairie Hills Trail to be of a resilient and weatherproof material.

6 THE SHARON SCHMIDT PRAIRIE HILLS TRAIL - PROPOSED NEW SIGNAGE

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES AND SUMMARY TABLE

GUIDELINES

The following is a list of suggestions for successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. It represents the commitment and discipline required to integrate the process into daily operations.

1. The Plan becomes the guidepost for the DNC. When decisions or responses to the community are needed, the Plan becomes the reference point for decision-making.
2. Strategic Plan information should be included as part of the new employee or volunteer orientation program.
3. Post a summary or shortened version of the Plan on the Website and print a concise summary of the Plan for distribution to interested partners and community members.
4. A staff person should have responsibility of being the project manager or “champion” of the Plan’s implementation to ensure success. This staff person is responsible for monitoring the Plan’s progress and works with staff to effectively integrate the Plan with operations.
5. Regular reporting of the Plan’s progress should occur at Recreation Commission and DNC Foundation Meetings. Break the Plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan.
6. At the end of the year, perform an annual review and documentation of the strategies.
7. Conduct staff meetings on a semi-annual or annual basis to review the Plan’s progress. The performance appraisal process should reflect the completion of the Strategic Plan Initiatives as an evaluation criterion. Also, performance criteria should be aligned with values of the DNC such as environmental education, nature programming for children and families, and a sustainable future through conservation efforts.
8. If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written “parking lot” and review them as part of the annual review to determine if they replace any existing initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

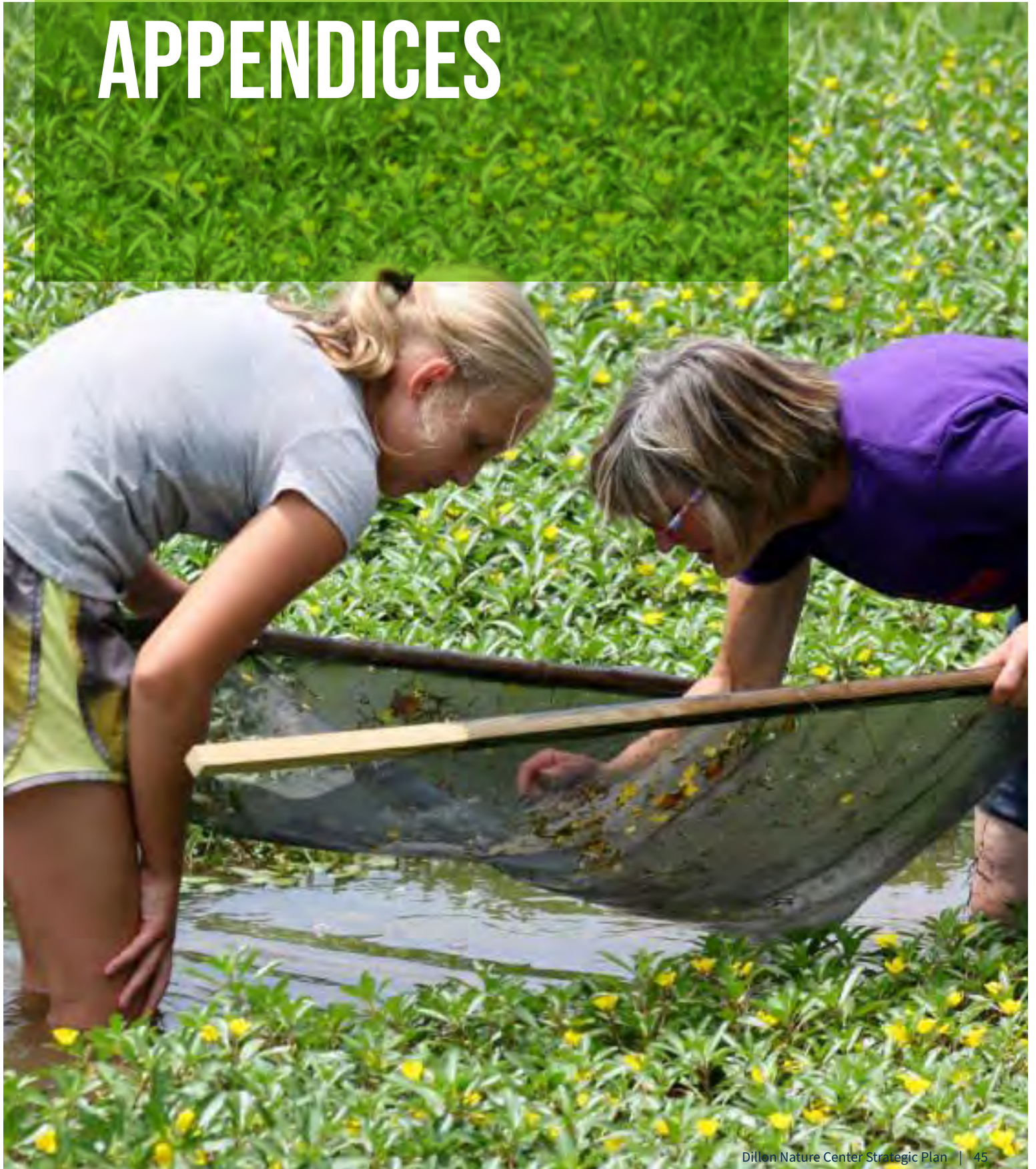
The following table includes a summary of the prioritization of projects and tactics, a generalized opinion of estimated expense, and recommendations as to whether the project or tactic can be completed by DNC Staff, HutchRec Administration, or contractor.

Table 9: Summary of Prioritized Tactics and Projects

Recommendations	Priority	Timing	Who?
Program			
Identify core programs that align with DNC mission and vision	High	Ongoing	Administration
Expand and focus resources on core programming	High	Ongoing	Administration
Collaborate with like-minded organizations	High	Ongoing	Administration
Collaborate with other Hutch Rec Divisions	High	Ongoing	Administration
Staff			
Align staff capabilities with core operation needs	High	Ongoing	Administration
Encourage and manage volunteerism	High	Ongoing	Administration

Assign staff as liaison with DNC Foundation fundraising committee	High	Ongoing	Administration
Management			
Identify the roles of DNC Foundation and Hutch Rec Board of Commissioners	High	Ongoing	Administration
Establish meaningful partnerships with organizations in our community to further DNC mission and vision	High	Short Term	Administration
Facilities			
Visitors Center			
Community Room Enhancement	High	Medium	Contractor
New Gift Shop theme	High	Short Term	DNC Staff
Gift Shop redesign	High	Short Term	DNC Staff
Wood deck replacement	Moderate	Medium	Contractor
Jim Smith Family Playscape, Taylors' Shady Lane Cabin, and Mary Clark Community Courtyard			
Add storage sheds	High	Short Term	DNC Staff
Hiring a horticulture intern	High	Ongoing	DNC Staff
Maintenance and stewardship of all facilities	High	Ongoing	DNC Staff
Upper Pond			
Update fishing policies	High	Short Term	DNC Staff
Grade shoreline and pond bottom	High	Short Term	Contractor
Adding fishing piers and boardwalk (to coincide regrading and reshaping)	Moderate	Medium	Contractor
Restoring shoreline vegetation and habitat	Moderate	Medium	Contractor
Parking and Roadways			
Determine size and configuration of parking lot renovation on parking needs that will be established based on the recommendations in this plan.	High	Short Term	DNC Staff
Add electric vehicle charging stations to existing main parking lot	Moderate	Medium	Contractor
Create new open lawn parking area to the north of the north paved lot	High	Short Term	Contractor
Add edge restraints to parking areas	Low	Ongoing	Contractor
Paths and Trails			
Build multiuse trail on 30th	High	Short Term	Contractor
Add AV charging stations	High	Short Term	Contractor
Add interpretive signage along paths	Moderate	Medium	Contractor
Enhance the trail to the north meadow with an access mat	Moderate	Medium	DNC Staff
Adventure Camp and Pre-School Adventure Camp			
New Camp Building	Moderate	Medium	Contractor
Managing vegetation to create new open spaces in existing woodland	High	Short Term	DNC Staff
Adding log benches, park pavilions to open spaces	High	Ongoing	DNC Staff and Contractors
Adding new outdoor experiences (raising butterflies, free play areas, etc.)	High	Ongoing	DNC Staff

APPENDICES



DILLON NATURE CENTER

Community Survey Results and Responses to Survey Question 5: *‘Please list any programs and events you would like to see offered at the Dillon Nature Center’*

BIRD-RELATED

Programs on Bird Banding

Bird hikes.

birding for adults

Introductory bird watching

Bird watching. Bird calling.

Also programs on Kansas geology/archeology/history/birds

I'd be interested in informational classes about birds/wildlife & native plants.

Make fishing at DNC, weekends only, to give birds more opportunities for feeding.

More nature or bird walks

bird tracking

Guided birdwatching events for senior citizens.

bird watching,

Bird watcher training.

"More Adult Birding at Center and other sights

More opportunities to visit Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira with DNC staff, who can help us learn to ID birds.

Informational talks on plants for pollinators, bees, or bat/bird/insect houses.

Keep doing the Nature Day, I was out of town and had to miss this year's. More nature or bird

i might like bird watching

ARCHAEOLOGY/HISTORY RELATED

More on archaeology

In past, have considered programs on fire mitigation and archaeology.

Kansas History Programs

Archeology related to Kansa

AGRICULTURE/FARM RELATED

I have enjoyed the Farm to Table dinner and hope it will continue. Also the day featuring yoga and meditation with other providers--what a great way to collaborate!

We were out of town for the farm to table dinner but would love more opportunities like that.

Beekeeping

Informational talks on plants for pollinators, bees, or bat/bird/insect houses.

More farm to table events, food/wine/snacks

I do participate in the wellness day with yoga and Val's berry bowls, I participate in the farm to table dinners, and I used to go to the band concerts held at DNC.

YOGA/ FITNESS RELATED

I have enjoyed the Farm to Table dinner and hope it will continue. Also the day featuring yoga and meditation with other providers--what a great way to collaborate!

I do participate in the wellness day with yoga and Val's berry bowls, I participate in the farm to table dinners, and I used to go to the band concerts held at DNC.

Yoga inside

Outdoor yoga

I like the idea of outdoor yoga/tai chi/meditation (distressing in nature) but not on a fair weekend.

Outdoor yoga class for those that are older/have arthritis/etc. Maybe Tai Chi classes?

Yoga, guided nature walks, DIY classes

Yoga on another night beside Monday

"How to use electronics to stay on track with hikes, bike rides, etc.

MTN bike trails if there is enough area at DNC"

If there is room I would like to see some singletrack mtn bike trails developed. There is no where in Hutch to ride mountain bikes.

FISHING RELATED

More fishing

Silent auctions, or raffles on local talent creations or donated items. This would be for fund raising for DNC. Make fishing at DNC, weekends only, to give birds more opportunities for feeding.

Fishing derby,

Publicized fish stocking days and fishing competitions

Stock lake with bass and have a youth tournament.

Fishing instruction/clinics, science for tweens/teens (pond studies, , species mating/birthing, etc.), archery on a regular basis, kayaking,

Fishing

Maybe a fishing class to teach moms how to help bait a line with her children.

more Star gazing events at night - tie it in with the Cosmosphere.

Regular fish stocking, fishing tournaments, wilderness survival competition

I don't know if would be a ""program"" or ""event"" but maybe a twice a year round up of clearing fishing line/bobbers from the lake. I'm sure it's a constant battle. Maybe there could be a canoe/kayak clean up the lake event.

More guided fishing activities

I would love to see some trainings on responsible/respectful fishing, wild foods foraging, and mushroom hunting or cultivation.

Trout fishing and fly fishing class

Fishing tournament

Canoeing, Nature hike identifying plants poisonous ones and herbal ones and uses, identify tree types, camps that actually open before 8 am since most people have to be at work at 8 am and pick up is 515. Or discounts for multiple children and or scale discounts, Hutch rec did away with those discounts. Teach fishing-- how too, best times of year tips and tricks, how to clean a fish, how to identify (could get a highschool fishing club to help out), snake identification for when out walking trails and prairie grass, identify birds for nature lovers, could you rent out paddle boats? Put fish food machine for a quarter around. Teach about the geese and how bread is not actually good for them (put .25 food in a machine around for that as well.

CAMP RELATED

Keep Adventure Camp. We loved it as kids and my children still enjoy it!

Something geared towards older teenagers would be great. My son loved the adventure camps but is too old to participate in anything now.

Girl Scout Campout

"More family camping days. More room in summer camp for kiddos. We weren't able to participate this year and were waitlisted.

more camps, educational sessions

Camp outs would be fun!

Kids camp where they sleep in a tent and have a fire with s'mores and go fishing and kayaking kind of thing

TRIP RELATED

Field trips to other nature attractions--Quivera, Maxwell, and Little Jerusalem.

"More bus trips with educational bent

More school class field trips.

Trips

EVENT RELATED

Maybe live music in the park area would be fun. The kids also love anything hosted by DNC

I'd like some of the art classes to come back.

Bluegrass music, jam sessions of all kinds of music. That is how we found the guitar player for our group last year!

I like your events like the outdoor pop concerts and foodie events

My family LOVES DNC...we would do more programs and activities there if our schedules would allow us to!! As it is, we participate in programs as much as possible!!

I think the DNC does a great job of incorporating a variety of activities for our community to take part in. More frequent nature walks, like guided tours of the grounds, would be fun and educational (those may already be offered and I am just unaware of them.)

More programs for families and children, more citizen science classes, nature trips

Silent auctions, or raffles on local talent creations or donated items. This would be for fund raising for DNC. Make fishing at DNC, weekends only, to give birds more opportunities for feeding.

I have a one year old and four year old and any programs you can put on for that age group would be so appreciated. It seems like many things in the community for this age group are at 10am on a week day (library story time/parents as teachers play group). It would be nice to have something in the afternoon or on the weekends.

More outdoor music experiences, maybe a program about what to plant at home to attract butterflies, or caterpillar to butterfly kits for kids.

As always, kid activities are welcome for a variety of youngster ages.

I don't know if Dillon Nature Center does Movie Days, but in your carpeted event space you could show movies on a projector and invite kids&parents to watch a movie with some popcorn for a small fee. or Free if you are just trying to get people into the Center.

Senior Citizen Day or Night - Partner up with the Rec Senior Center and have an event at DNC Maybe a Dance?

Love the music and drama events

Keep doing the Nature Day, I was out of town and had to miss this year's. More nature or bird

We love the spook walks and I wish there were more Grandparent/Grandchild events.

More adult classes/events

Husband and wife activities

All of your programs are developmentally appropriate and engaging - we just need notification of them. Can schools distribute the booklets?? Not the one-page flyers for soccer or volleyball, etc., but the magazine-type catalogs of all the programs offered for Fall/Winter and then Spring/Summer. THOSE were amazing and useful.

More outdoor event/basic camping classes/ and use of the lake for kayaks and paddle board classes

Enjoy the plant sale offered by the horticulture club and DNC in the spring

Guided trips to state parks for families, Christmas Lights Display, Tips for gardening (i.e. making your own compost, how to make a pollinator garden in Kansas, how to care for trees in your own yard...)

Christmas lights during the holiday season

Vendors booth. Farmers market. Multiple food trucks.

I would attend more adult events and classes if they were on nights other than Thursday. I have a firm commitment for that night and cannot attend.

Flower gardening; pest control

Informative events showcasing the different locations in Kansas ie. Tallgrass Prairie

I love the collaborative events, like SpookWalk and the concerts in the courtyard in the summer. More reasons to visit!

A holiday lights display during Christmas.

I do not need programs or events to go out and enjoy the space. It is a "gem" for Hutchinson, for all ages and I always refer people to go visit. Great place to enjoy the outdoors, do some walking, have a picnic, feed the ducks & turtles, or go fishing for the little ones. Now that I am retired I will entertain the idea of attending some events and programs.

Renting out the area for cross country events for jr high or high school would be good. Personally, I think we would benefit more from being able to hammock in the park.

More frequent canoeing opportunities.

7pm or later works better for me on weeknights for classes or programs. I still enjoy coming to walk the trails earlier though

"How to use electronics to stay on track with hikes, bike rides, etc.

MTN bike trails if there is enough area at DNC"

Programs for retired/seniors

Photography walks, SUP, 5K race, events for young professionals

Lectures on various topics by area experts, concerts performed by touring artists, visual art shows/ displays.

If I had to dig and come up with an answer, it would first have to come with a reminder that I am a parent and finding childcare is nearly impossible in Hutch if you don't have family. I think I would really enjoy going to some of the adult programs that are held in the evening, but even thinking about trying to coordinate childcare makes me not even want to bother. The Spook Walk is always such a hit, so maybe more family events in the early evening hours? "

MUSIC RELATED

More festivals and music of different kinds. I would like to see maybe blues, bluegrass, country and some rock.

Bluegrass music, jam sessions of all kinds of music. That is how we found the guitar player for our group last year!

Maybe live music in the park area would be fun. The kids also love anything hosted by DNC

Love the music and drama events

I loved when you had a music concert on the lawn. Once you had a cooking demonstration I enjoyed. We will make the effort!

I love the collaborative events, like SpookWalk and the concerts in the courtyard in the summer. More reasons to visit!

I love the evening music programs in spring. I wish they had some in fall as well.

I do participate in the wellness day with yoga and Val's berry bowls, I participate in the farm to table dinners, and I used to go to the band concerts held at DNC.

STARGAZING RELATED

Star Gazing

more Star gazing events at night - tie it in with the Cosmosphere.

Stargazing nights teach about astronomy...

meteor shower watching

Astronomy programs Kansas Sky

NATURE/OUTDOORS RELATED

Outdoor familiarity and identification for kids.

The ponds and some parts of the long path need some attention and at times the ponds smell. I know the pruning and clean up during multiple season changes can be very difficult. Appreciate the access to the paths and a nature center though. Will continue to attend regularly.

More toddler programs, night sky class, classes about local wildlife and plant life

Canoe rental weekends and archery practice or competition

I would like to learn about native or adapted plants (including shrubs and trees) that serve as larva host plants for butterflies--beyond milkweed for butterflies and dill (probably not native) for swallowtails. I would especially love to see a professionally-developed design for such a planting.

Wild flower hikes

"We recently found a turtle in our back yard and my 9-year old asked about learning more about turtles. We did not see any classes that might cover that. Seems that they are mostly about bird trees and rocks this season."

Silent auctions, or raffles on local talent creations or donated items. This would be for fund raising for DNC. Make fishing at DNC, weekends only, to give birds more opportunities for feeding.

Yoga inside, hiking for adults,. Also programs on Kansas geology/archeology/history/birds and information on areas in KS related that could be visited.

programming that is not age specific or is designed for the entire family. Also active or fitness based programs such as fitness hikes or organized group runs using the PHMS trails and the DNC trails.

"I think a parent/child day or night where parents bring kids for some planned wilderness fun (water balloon fight, arts, fishing nature hike etc etc) In the spring early summer time would be a fun event. This could be an opportunity to attract more people and then share some of the programs you have coming up to try and bolster the programs.

If there is room I would like to see some singlettrack mtn bike trails developed. There is no where in Hutch to ride mountain bikes.

Nature walks, educational discussions about KS or local flora and fauna

Water conservation, Tree care, , Natural gardening, Understanding ecosystems, Involvement in ecology

Enjoy the Speakers series, Farm to Table, Nature Therapy Day, Symphony, Hikes, Flowers, Story Book by Library in April, programs for students.

More Nature Therapy Days

Please get in contact with me if you would consider the above idea I am also concerned if you need to raise funds I would be really sad to lose DNC... I guess I was also curious about if DNC would ever consider campsites. But maybe that would be too much

More outdoor event/basic camping classes/ and use of the lake for kayaks and paddle board classes

Dredge the pond to make it useful for more canoeing.

Keep doing the Nature Day, I was out of town and had to miss this year's. More nature or bird walks

Anything that encourages children/youth to learn about nature

Birds trees flower lectures"

Kayaking or education sessions on plant or insect identification (like, out in the trails) would be really cool!

Plant education

More like the spider walk

more nature and environmental discussions and information

I do not need programs or events to go out and enjoy the space. It is a "gem" for Hutchinson, for all ages and I always refer people to go visit. Great place to enjoy the outdoors, do some walking, have a picnic, feed the ducks & turtles, or go fishing for the little ones. Now that I am retired I will entertain the idea of attending some events and programs.

Anything, our family loves the nature center. We go there to walk at least every other weekend.

My family enjoys the nature and the peaceful atmosphere without events. Please keep stocking ponds and focus on nature

Will the DNC be expanding the nature trails to the east of the Nature Center? I enjoy those trails but would enjoy seeing more than just the prairie. Perhaps add some benches, native trees and path signage telling more about the area. Self guided learning activities would be great additions too."

I would love to see some trainings on responsible/respectful fishing, wild foods foraging, and mushroom hunting or cultivation.

bushcraft, small adventure challenges, reading nature

Anything that encourages stewardship of nature and resources with fun attached.

Walking, nature studies for older citizens, continued programs for kids

Work on pond to make it deeper and holds water better

Nature programs

CHILDREN RELATED

things for children preK - and up

Outdoor familiarity and identification for kids.

More toddler programs, night sky class, classes about local wildlife and plant life

I think the DNC does a great job of incorporating a variety of activities for our community to take part in. More frequent nature walks, like guided tours of the grounds, would be fun and educational (those may already be offered and I am just unaware of them.)

More programs for families and children, more citizen science classes, nature trips

"We recently found a turtle in our back yard and my 9-year old asked about learning more about turtles. We did not see any classes that might cover that. Seems that they are mostly about bird trees and rocks this season."

I would like to see the outside children's area cleaned up & repaired. It used to be so nice & is now in terrible shape. So sad to see that.

I like the book --> outdoor learning activity --> craft format of the classes for younger kids. It would be nice to see more drop-off class opportunities for grade-school-age kids.

I have a one year old and four year old and any programs you can put on for that age group would be so appreciated. It seems like many things in the community for this age group are at 10am on a week day (library story time/parents as teachers play group). It would be nice to have something in the afternoon or on the weekends.

More outdoor music experiences, maybe a program about what to plant at home to attract butterflies, or caterpillar to butterfly kits for kids.

As always, kid activities are welcome for a variety of youngster ages.

The play area at DNC is so fun. Our family would like to see that expanded."

"I think a parent/child day or night where parents bring kids for some planned wilderness fun (water balloon fight, arts, fishing nature hike etc etc) In the spring early summer time would be a fun event. This could be an opportunity to attract more people and then share some of the programs you have coming up to try and bolster the programs.

More events geared toward small children 1-8.

More family canoe times, weekdays after school, and activities for 6-10 year olds.

I don't know if Dillon Nature Center does Movie Days, but in your carpeted event space you could show movies on a projector and invite kids&parents to watch a movie with some popcorn for a small fee. or Free if you are just trying to get people into the Center.

During the SWAT presentation I know they offered a Nature School for PreK or so, and that's not a bad idea.

Logistically it can be tough with a lot of hoops to jump through, but I have heard the zoo is exploring that as an option also; so it would be worth considering it and working through whether it can work or not.

Pair up with the local schools K-12 to host a nature awareness program.

Kids play area

Events for children

Anything for young kids and scheduled on the weekends--story times, nature walks, simple crafts.

Anything that encourages children/youth to learn about nature

We enjoy programs when there is no school in session. He enjoyed building windmills and solar panels last time.

Programs for younger kids

More events geared toward small children 1-8.

More family canoe times, weekdays after school, and activities for 6-10 year olds.

A elementary/youth archery program

I'm a mom of a 4 year old and 1.5 year old and there is not much for this age group to do in Hutchinson. There's a nature center in Wichita that offers weekly kids nature crafts. You stop in at their office and pick up a craft kit. I think this is such a fabulous idea! You would weekly get families to stop in, pick up a craft, and spend time at your facility. I know over the summer, the library has been doing craft kits and they seem very popular. It would appeal to families because it's something that they can do whenever they have free time, unlike a story time that is at a set time. I also loved when the library did its book walk at DNC. It was something fun and different. I encourage you to think of rotating displays/events/crafts, weekly or monthly, that encourage people to keep coming back because they know they'll see something new.

More hikes, educational classes with nature. Scavenger hunts? Is it possible to get children more involved with a walking program to count their steps or the number of times that they participate in walks? My granddaughter who is almost 4 is not interested in something unless it's fun! She's the one who really needs more exercise. It's funny because she never wants to be left out of anything. She thinks she can do anything her 8 yr old brother does.

More activities for young children-toddlers, preschoolers

Outdoor yoga

My children and grand children have participated in programs for any, many years.

Children nature education

Walking, nature studies for older citizens, continued programs for kids

Kid's programs

Canoeing, Nature hike identifying plants poisonous ones and herbal ones and uses, identify tree types, camps that actually open before 8 am since most people have to be at work at 8 am and pick up is 515. Or discounts for multiple children and or scale discounts, Hutch rec did away with those discounts. Teach fishing-- how too, best times of year tips and tricks, how to clean a fish, how to identify (could get a highschool fishing club to help out), snake identification for when out walking trails and prairie grass, identify birds for nature lovers, could you rent out paddle boats? Put fish food machine for a quarter around. Teach about the geese and how bread is not actually good for them (put .25 food in a machine around for that as well).

CLASS/EDUCATION RELATED

I like the book --> outdoor learning activity --> craft format of the classes for younger kids. It would be nice to see more drop-off class opportunities for grade-school-age kids.

Outdoor familiarity and identification for kids.

More toddler programs, night sky class, classes about local wildlife and plant life

I think the DNC does a great job of incorporating a variety of activities for our community to take part in. More frequent nature walks, like guided tours of the grounds, would be fun and educational (those may already be offered and I am just unaware of them.)

More programs for families and children, more citizen science classes, nature trips

"We recently found a turtle in our back yard and my 9-year old asked about learning more about turtles. We did not see any classes that might cover that. Seems that they are mostly about bird trees and rocks this season."

I would like to learn about native or adapted plants (including shrubs and trees) that serve as larva host plants for butterflies--beyond milkweed for butterflies and dill (probably not native) for swallowtails. I would especially love to see a professionally-developed design for such a planting.

More academic as how to take care of wildlife or gardening techniques

During the SWAT presentation I know they offered a Nature School for PreK or so, and that's not a bad idea.

Logistically it can be tough with a lot of hoops to jump through, but I have heard the zoo is exploring that as an option

also; so it would be worth considering it and working through whether it can work or not.

Pair up with the local schools K-12 to host a nature awareness program.

Nature walks, educational discussions about KS or local flora and fauna

Water conservation, Tree care, , Natural gardening, Understanding ecosystems, Involvement in ecology

I like the idea of outdoor yoga/tai chi/meditation (distressing in nature) but not on a fair weekend.

Yoga inside, hiking for adults,. Also programs on Kansas geology/archeology/history/birds and information on areas in KS related that could be visited.

programming that is not age specific or is designed for the entire family. Also active or fitness based programs such as fitness hikes or organized group runs using the PHMS trails and the DNC trails.

Enjoy the Speakers series, Farm to Table, Nature Therapy Day, Symphony, Hikes, Flowers, Story Book by Library in April, programs for students.

More Nature Therapy Days

Please get in contact with me if you would consider the above idea I am also concerned if you need to raise funds I would be really sad to lose DNC... I guess I was also curious about if DNC would ever consider campsites. But maybe that would be too much

Outdoor yoga class for those that are older/have arthritis/etc. Maybe Tai Chi classes?

Bug identifying. Geo caching. Macro photography for kids and adults. Tree and plant identification in the woods. Art in the park.

Love the music and drama events

Gardening classes, senior walking events, outdoor cooking (open fire or bbq)

Perhaps an after-work hours (5:30 or later start) walking club - maybe two parts ... walk quickly for exercise but during cool down (or warm up) more of a stroll when staff could teach about certain trees, birds, etc ... Nothing major ... just a taste of nature study and the motivation to move with a group.

Survival information. Foraging for edible plants, fungi, , making a shelter, ect.

More adult classes

Fishing instruction/clinics, science for tweens/teens (pond studies, , species mating/birthing, etc.), archery on a regular basis, kayaking,

More events such as farm to table.

We are looking forward to hopefully going to the Halloween event this year. We went before the pandemic and the boys loved it.

Publicized fish stocking days and fishing competitions

More music on the lawn! Maybe at Avenue A Park or at Dillon Nature Center

Anything for young kids and scheduled on the weekends--story times, nature walks, simple crafts.

More opportunities to visit Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira with DNC staff, who can help us learn to ID birds.

Anything that encourages children/youth to learn about nature

We enjoy programs when there is no school in session. He enjoyed building windmills and solar panels last time.

Birds trees flower lectures"

i think dillon nature center can be more in the future than its past programs, what i dont know.

Cooking, herbs, walking class, dying fabric , soapmaking, KS. Travel

c

Kayaking or education sessions on plant or insect identification (like, out in the trails) would be really cool!

Programs related to global warming.

Programs on alternative energy.

Although we do not participate, we appreciate all that the nature center offers for the community.

More events geared toward small children 1-8.

More family canoe times, weekdays after school, and activities for 6-10 year olds.

Plant education

More like the spider walk

A elementary/youth archery program

I loved when you had a music concert on the lawn. Once you had a cooking demonstration I enjoyed. We will make the effort!

Craft sessions

Guided walks, something for teens, more yoga options evenings or weekends

Identifying plants and birds of the region, going "green" in the community, kids activities (it always surprises me how many kids do not know this is in Hutchinson)

There are a variety of things that I would like to see. Things like archery lessons, Canoeing, Different classes or presentations about fishes and fishing. There are a wide variety of different insects that you could also study at the nature center. You could also have an activity regarding the different kinds of plants and trees that are at the Nature Center. You could teach the kids the importance of the trees and plants.

"I utilize the DNC primarily for walking the trails and taking in the beauty of the plants, trees, flowers and water features at the DNC. I'd be interested in seeing programs that talk about wildlife native to Kansas, creating sustainable eco systems, etc.

Yoga, guided nature walks, DIY classes

More next level outdoor events, outdoor first aid classes, identifying edible plants. Outdoor skills

Gardening practices, colorful fall - learning how to plant colorful plants and trees to bring fall colors in the yard, herb drying, butterfly house, learning about bees and hives that produce honey, plants for multi-season interest, planting bulbs - how to and basics, Rain gardening and rain scaping, composting basics and food waste, pollinator series - best plants for pollinators and all the basics, when my daughter was 1 - The American Girl Doll Lanie had a "nature theme" and DNC had the author of the book come and sign autographs and there were nature scavenger hunts and crafts and so on - this was wonderful and the girls really liked it something like that could bring some interest, outdoor sketchbook series for young artists (6th-12th grade); offering online classes too could be helpful for adults

Programs about flowers.

Yoga on another night beside Monday

local wildlife info., plant, shrub, tree identification

I am sure that there are nature classes that I have not researched or looked into. I love Dillons Nature Center and everything about it! Thank you for everything!!

Lectures about native Kansas flora and fauna.

lecture series

Outdoor yoga

Archery Classes

More programs on global warming and economics of alternative energy options.

Petroglyphs presentations

More science based classes with outside speakers preferably more hands on.

I enjoyed the painting class where we painted the disc. Would be interested in a photography class. I enjoy most craft classes.

Mushroom foraging education program

Environment care. Natural science related.

Canoeing, Nature hike identifying plants poisonous ones and herbal ones and uses, identify tree types, camps that actually open before 8 am since most people have to be at work at 8 am and pick up is 515. Or discounts for multiple children and or scale discounts, Hutch rec did away with those discounts. Teach fishing-- how too, best times of year tips and tricks, how to clean a fish, how to identify (could get a highschool fishing club to help out), snake identification for when out walking trails and prairie grass, identify birds for nature lovers, could you rent out paddle boats? Put fish food machine for a quarter around. Teach about the geese and how bread is not actually good for them (put .25 food in a machine around for that as well).

Continue with lecture series. A nature pre-school would be awesome! This community needs more quality early childhood ed and a nature preschool would be the perfect meeting of nature center offerings with community needs.

So many wonderful programs and events are already offered. My children are grown and gone but when they were growing up we participated. My grandchildren have access to a nature center close to their homes in KC. So it's just me.

NATURE PRESCHOOL PRECEDENT RESEARCH

Nature preschools operate with nature at the heart of their philosophy and environmental literacy as foundational to a child's development. The three main criteria that make up a natural preschool per the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) are:

1. Nature is the central organizing concept of the program. That is, nature is the integrating thread that intentionally ties together the preschool's philosophy, methodologies, class-room design, outdoor spaces, and public identity.
2. A nature preschool's program is based on high-quality practices of both early childhood education (developmentally appropriate practices) and environmental education (the North American Association for Environmental Education's "Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education" and principles of interpretation), requiring its teaching staff to have skills and experience in both early childhood education and environmental education.
3. A nature preschool program uses the natural world to support dual goals that address both child development and conservation values. These include the development of the world of the child (in all domains – cognitive, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual) and the development of an ecological identity or environmental ethic.

The NAAEE offers the first guidance resource handbook in the United States for nature preschools that outlines common practices and offers suggestions toward a successful nature preschool. The practices in the handbook are not one size fits all, and there are many other standards and considerations for opening and operating a preschool, nature based or not. Among nature preschools across America, common trends in *structures, outdoor spaces, activities and materiality* come across the precedent sites studied.

Since students tend to spend half of their time outdoors at Nature Preschools (Cincinnati Nature Center), and with some schools allowing parents to pick up their children if class will be fully indoors for a day (Chippewa Nature Center), structures that blend with the outdoors are paramount. Common interior spaces resemble typical preschools, with an emphasis on decks, patios, connections to outdoor spaces, lots of natural light, and environmentally friendly LEED certification in some instances (Chippewa Nature Center, ENC preschool). Allowance for activities to continue outside under shade structures with amenities such as sinks, seating, podiums, chalk boards, games and other interactables continue the emphasis for being outside within the natural environment. Nature can often be brought into the classroom, with the inclusion of terrariums, aquariums or displays to watch natural processes.

The outdoor spaces are as important or more important than the interior spaces.

The most common trend across outdoor spaces is the inclusion of natural biomes surrounding the school. Lakes, wetlands, grasslands, prairies, woodlands and more become the most essential piece of the learning experience. Outdoor learning spaces may be as simple as cut logs laid in a circular fashion (Cincinnati Nature Center), or feature their own covered structures. The spatial organization of the outdoor spaces can incorporate numerable ways to include the children within their natural environment. Some of these may include horticultural learning with raised garden boxes, pens with farm animals, or paved areas for sports or paths.

Activities of nature preschools are not without modern conventions of preschools such as STEM learning (Lake Nixon Outdoor Preschool). Activities may still commonly include art, toys, math, playground equipment, reading, cooperative games or musical instruments implemented into the outdoor spaces. The conventions of nature preschool activities almost always offer hiking, plant and animal interaction through collection, art, and inspection, natural found material games, etc. Animal interactions may be connected to on site enclosures or aviaries (New Canaan Nature Center) The activities of natural preschools are sometimes self fulfilling, as children may tirelessly play around a stream generating their own activities with no organized play.

The materiality that surrounds these activities and spaces tends to utilize natural materials and a simple palate when possible: stones, timber, concrete, glass, reused materials, etc. Built structures tend to be minimal, and prioritize functionality over flair. Natural light and exposure to the natural environment increases glass surfaces of structures. Outdoor spaces and playground materiality emphasizes cut timber, stone, water, sand, and even plants as play structures. Trails into the surrounding environment are very important, they may be as simple as brush mown, or include paved surfaces, bridges and railings.

ACTIVITIES IN NATURE PRESCHOOL PRECEDENTS

CHIPPEWA NATURE CENTER

- Free play
- Water Play
- Dramatic Play
- Fort construction
- Hiking
- Outdoor Storytime
- Animal Interaction
- Outdoor mud kitchen

CINCINNATI NATURE CENTER

- Art
- Music
- Animal interaction/ Butterfly raising
- Hiking/exploration
- Sledding
- Crafting/fort construction
- Open Exploration
- Maple tree tapping
- Puzzles
- Motor skill development
- Plant and Animal exploration

ENVIRONMENTAL NATURE SCHOOL

- Art
- Butterfly raising
- Hiking
- Animal Interaction
- Fort building
- Free play
- Flora fauna education
- Themed play areas
- Tricycle/vehicles
- Mud kitchen
- Parachute
- Music
- Guest lecturer/ animals brought in

LAKE NIXON OUTDOOR PRESCHOOL

- Hiking
- Outdoor Lunch
- Outdoor Reading/Storytime

- Outdoor Musical Instrument learning
- Wildlife interactions
- Fort Construction
- Outdoor art
- Binocular play
- Scavenger Hunt
- Tree climbing
- Rest time
- Pre-reading, pre-writing skills, number skills, kindergarten readiness skills
- Breathing exercises
- Free play

NEW CANAAN NATURE CENTER

- Free play
- Outdoor storytime
- Hiking
- Fort Construction
- Art
- STEM activities
- Guest lecturers/classes
- Wildlife interactions
- Greenhouse/ horticulture
- Farm animals, aviary, bee hives for interaction
- Dramatic Play

NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- Natural material play and construction
- All children's needs are accommodated
- Large outdoor areas
- Variety of uses in outdoor spaces
- Children explore a diversity of ecosystems and interact with the inhabitants
- Nature is promoted in every activity as much as possible

STOKES/LOGAN NATURE CENTER

- Free play
- Animal Interaction
- Art
- Sand play
- Hiking
- Sledding

COMMON ACTIVITIES ACROSS NATURE PRESCHOOL PRECEDENTS

- Free play in outdoor environments
- Hiking across different ecosystems

- Art outdoors using natural materials
- Fort construction using natural materials
- Interacting and identifying wild animals and plants
- Interacting with domesticated animals
- Growing plants/ Horticulture
- Raising butterflies, bees, farm animals
- Guest lecturers
- Dramatic Play
- “Mud Kitchen” - for children to create crafts in an outdoor kitchen
- Outdoor storytelling
- All seasons play

CITATIONS

CHIPPEWA NATURE CENTER

www.chippewanaturecenter.org/nature-preschool

CINCINNATI NATURE CENTER

www.cincynature.org/school-programs/our-nature-schools/about-nature-preschool

ENVIRONMENTAL NATURE SCHOOL

encenter.org/nature-preschool

IPA DESIGN STUDIOS : ENVIRONMENTAL NATURE SCHOOL

(LPADesignStudios.com/projects/environmental-nature-center-preschool)

LAKE NIXON OUTDOOR PRESCHOOL

www.lakenixonoutdoorpreschool.com

NEW CANAAN NATURE CENTER

newcanaannature.org/preschool/#buddies

NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

naturalstart.org/nature-preschool

STOKES NATURE CENTER

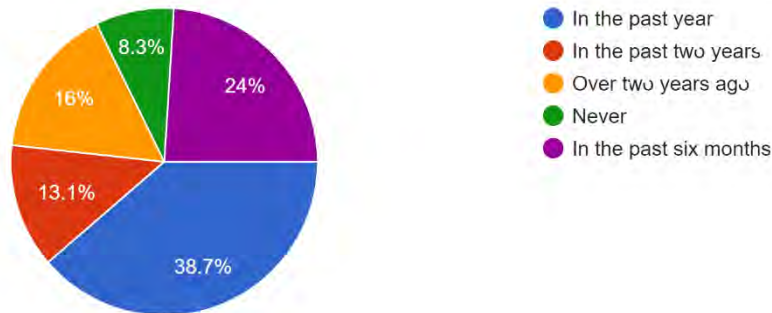
logannature.org/school

DNC COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY RESULTS

Late Fall 2022

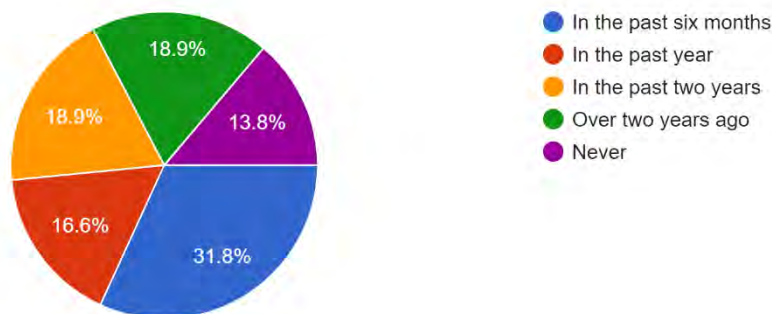
1. Have you or a family member registered for programs/events offered by the Hutchinson Recreation Commission? (Community Events, Senior Center, Youth/Adult Sports, Summer Camps, etc)

375 responses



2. Have you or a family member registered for programs/events offered at the Dillon Nature Center?

355 responses



3. If you have not registered for programs/events offered at the Dillon Nature Center in the past year, please select all of the reasons that apply from the list below

243 responses

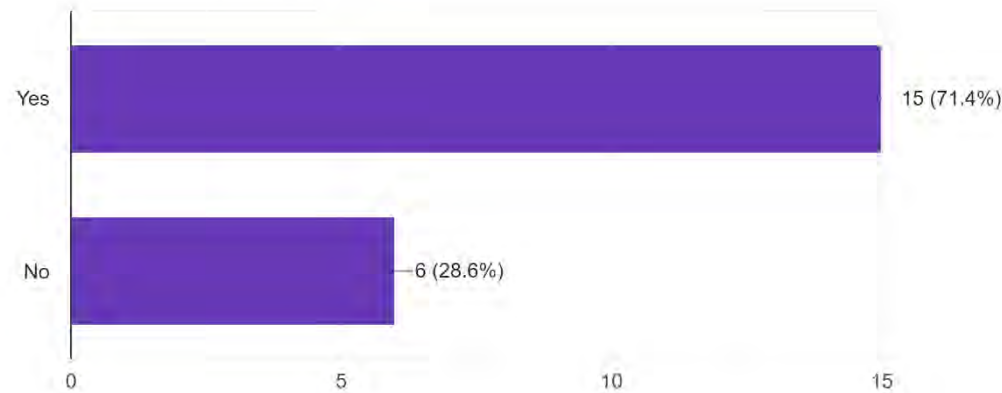


DNC BUSINESS COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Late Fall 2022

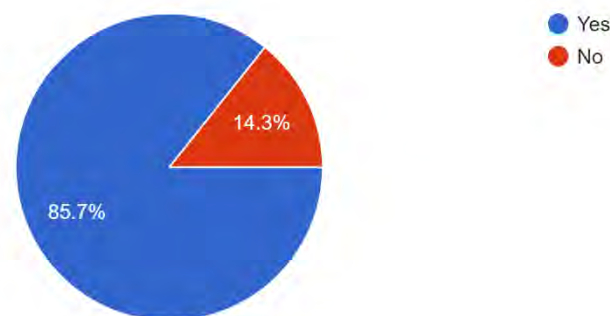
In the past five years, has your company scheduled an annual retreat, a team building event, or an important meeting that requires an off-site location?

21 responses



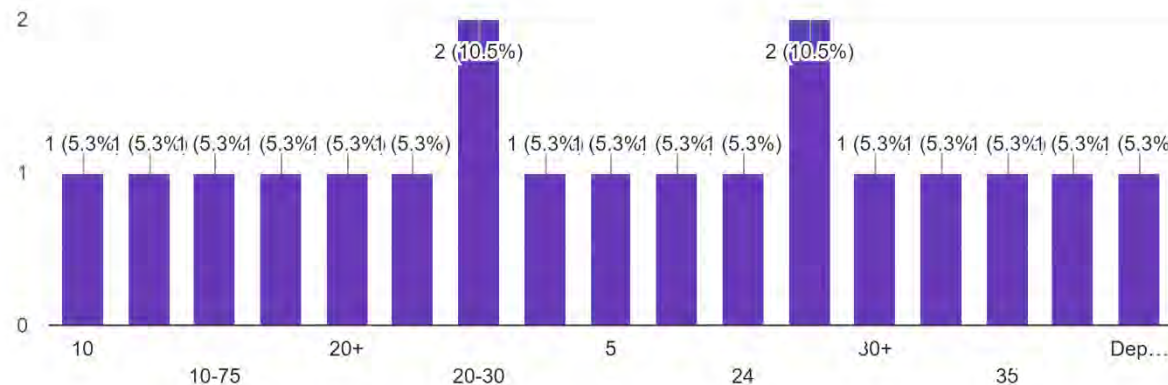
In the future, would your company consider an off-site location for an annual retreat, a team building event, or an important meeting?

21 responses



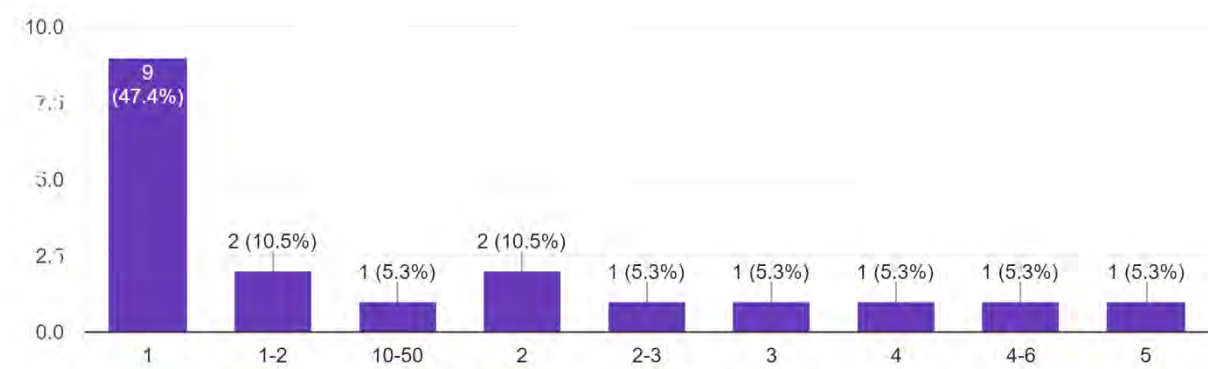
If your company were to schedule a retreat, team building event, or important meeting at the Dillon Nature Center, what is the approximate number of participants?

19 responses



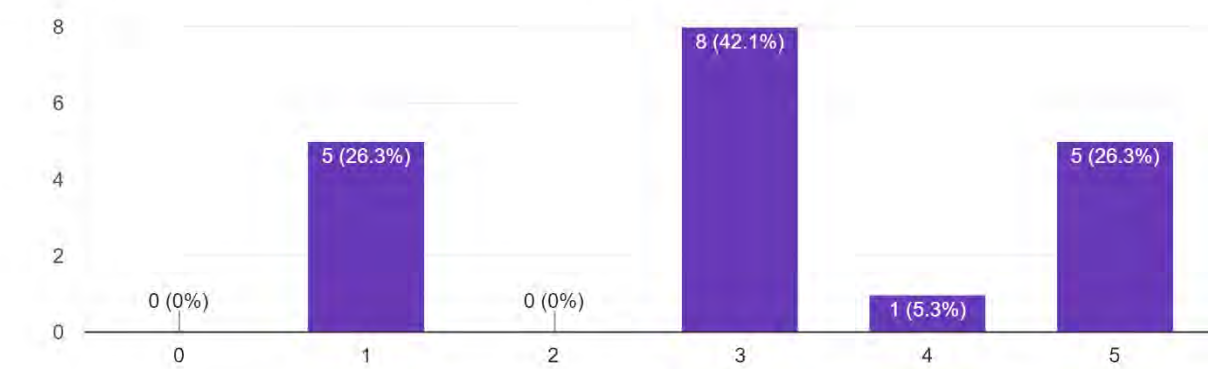
If your company were to schedule a retreat, team building event, or important meeting at the Dillon Nature Center, how many uses per year would you anticipate?

19 responses



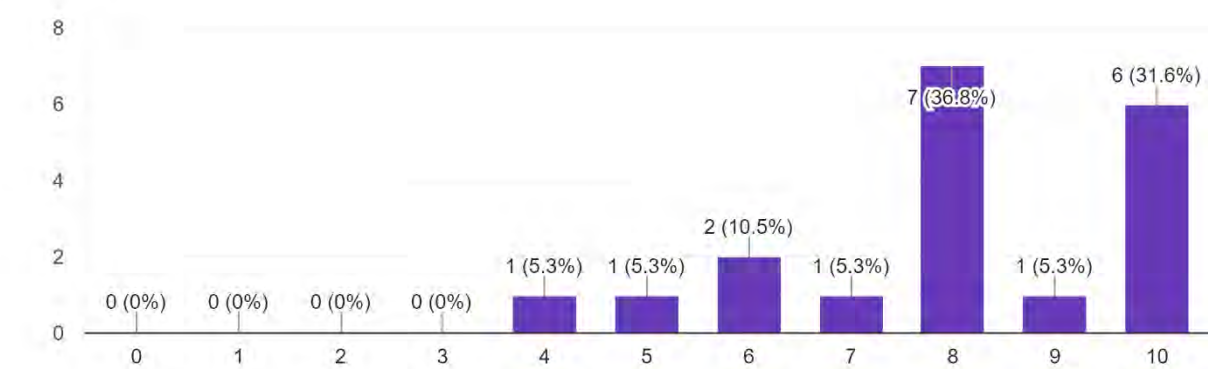
If your company were to schedule a retreat, team building event, or important meeting at the Dillon Nature Center, please rate your need for outdoor spaces/activities from 0 to 5

19 responses



Rate the value added to your meeting by hosting it in an environment provided by the Dillon Nature Center from 0 to 10

19 responses



If your company were to schedule a retreat, team building event, or important meeting at the Dillon Nature Center, please rate your need for technology from 0 to 10

19 responses

