

JACKSON COUNTY PARKS + REC

BLUE RIVER PARKWAY MASTER PLAN

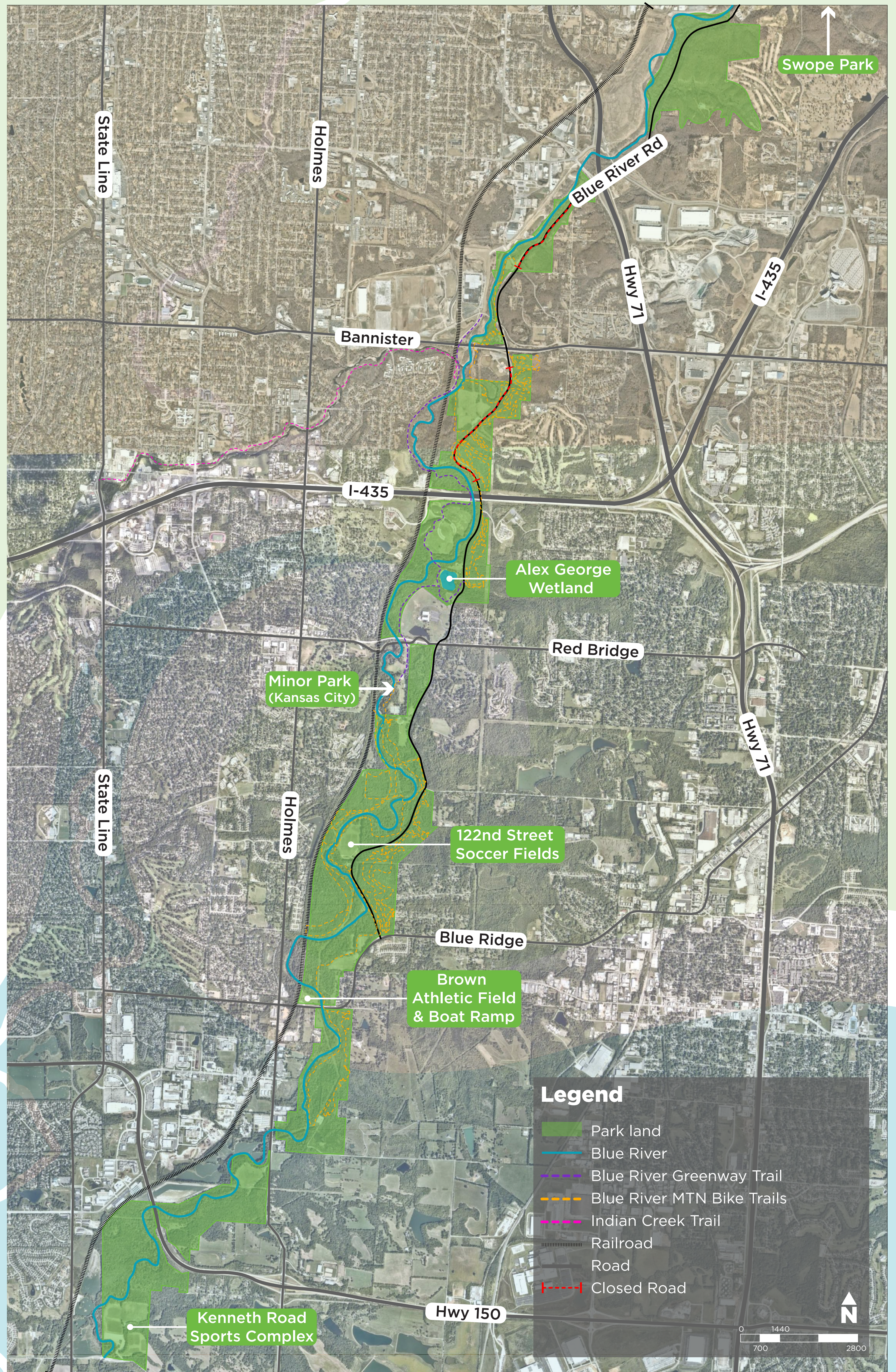


INTRODUCTION

DESCRIPTION:

The **Blue River Parkway**, approximately **2,200 acres**, is owned and maintained by Jackson County Parks + Rec. The Park runs along the Blue River as far north as **Swope Park**, and as far south as **Kenneth Road**. Featured amenities are walking and mountain biking trails, equestrian trails, picnic areas, multi-purpose athletic fields, a boat ramp, and many natural and scenic areas such as the **Alex George Wetland** and the **Blue River Glade**.

This citizen-driven master planning project will prioritize the highest community needs and focus future efforts to ensure that the Blue River Parkway remains a vital regional asset that will be protected in perpetuity.



ALEX GEORGE WETLAND



BLUE RIVER GREENWAY TRAIL MAP



MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS



BOAT RAMP



ATHLETIC FIELDS

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PUBLIC FEEDBACK SUMMARY & PROCESS:

1 In **October 2021**, Jackson County Parks + Rec hosted **7 stakeholder meetings** and met with:

- City Partners
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Partners
- Natural Resource Partners
- Neighborhood Partners
- Park Safety Partners
- Park Maintenance Experts
- Recreation Partners

Over **50 participants** attended these stakeholder meetings either in-person or virtually through Zoom.

2 In **April 2022**, a **public input survey** was released and **835 responses** were collected online and in-person. The survey asked a total of **20 questions**. Eight questions focused on specific information about the Blue River Parkway, six questions revolved around Jackson County's facilities in general, and six optional and confidential questions asked about the survey participant's household and demographics.

3 In **May 2022**, Jackson County Parks + Rec held **4 in-person "open house" format meetings** at three different Mid-Continent Public Libraries, and the Hillcrest Community Center to collect additional public feedback.

STAKEHOLDER & OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS: KEY FINDINGS

Strengths:

- Regional significance
- Sustainable approach opportunity
- Historical jewel
- Location
- Proximity to neighborhoods
- Natural areas
- Trail networks (biking, hiking, walking, and horseback riding)
- Abundance of multi-use recreational areas able to host a wide-variety of different programs

Challenges:

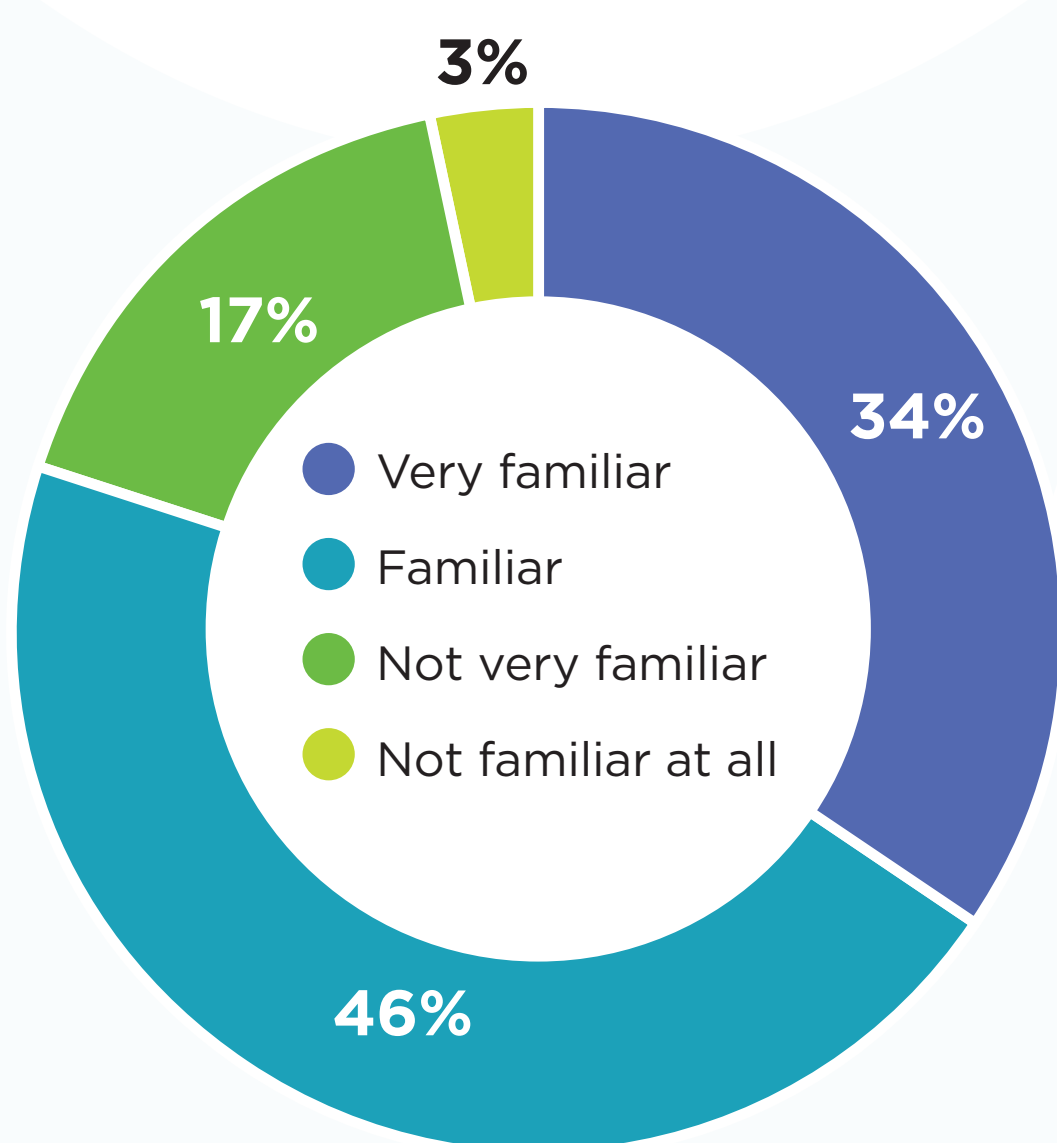
- Safety, security, and infrastructure
- Public awareness and appreciation
- Crime, illegal dumping, theft, and vandalism
- Ecological health - invasive species
- Access to some areas
- Lack of accessible parking
- Limited river access points; only one boat ramp

Priority Opportunities:

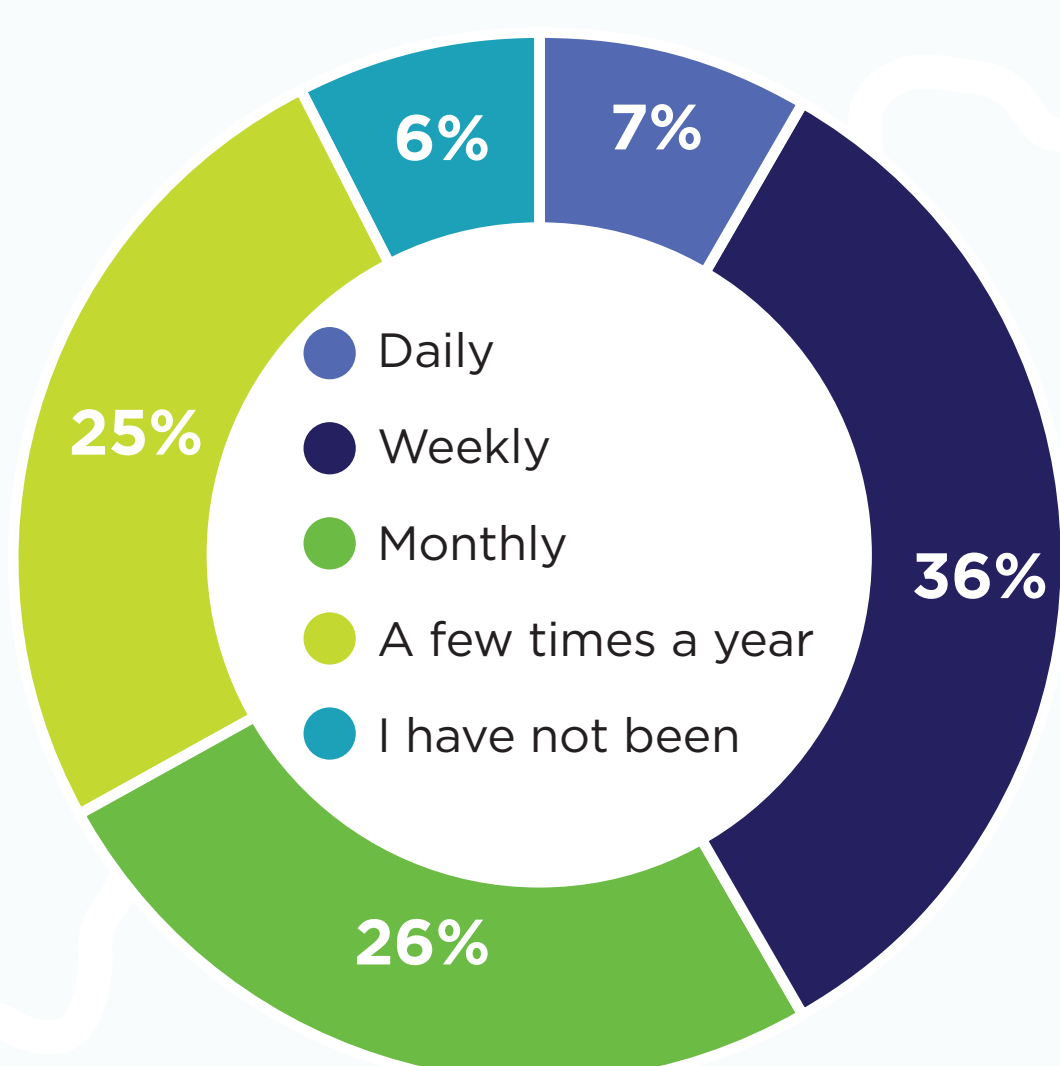
- Balanced approach - Recreation + Natural resources
- Extend trails
- Support existing and new programs
- Engagement & education
- Support UTC and other current non-profit partners
- Disc golf opportunities
- Community park development at Kenneth Road
- Better parking
- Lighting near parking lots

PUBLIC CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS:

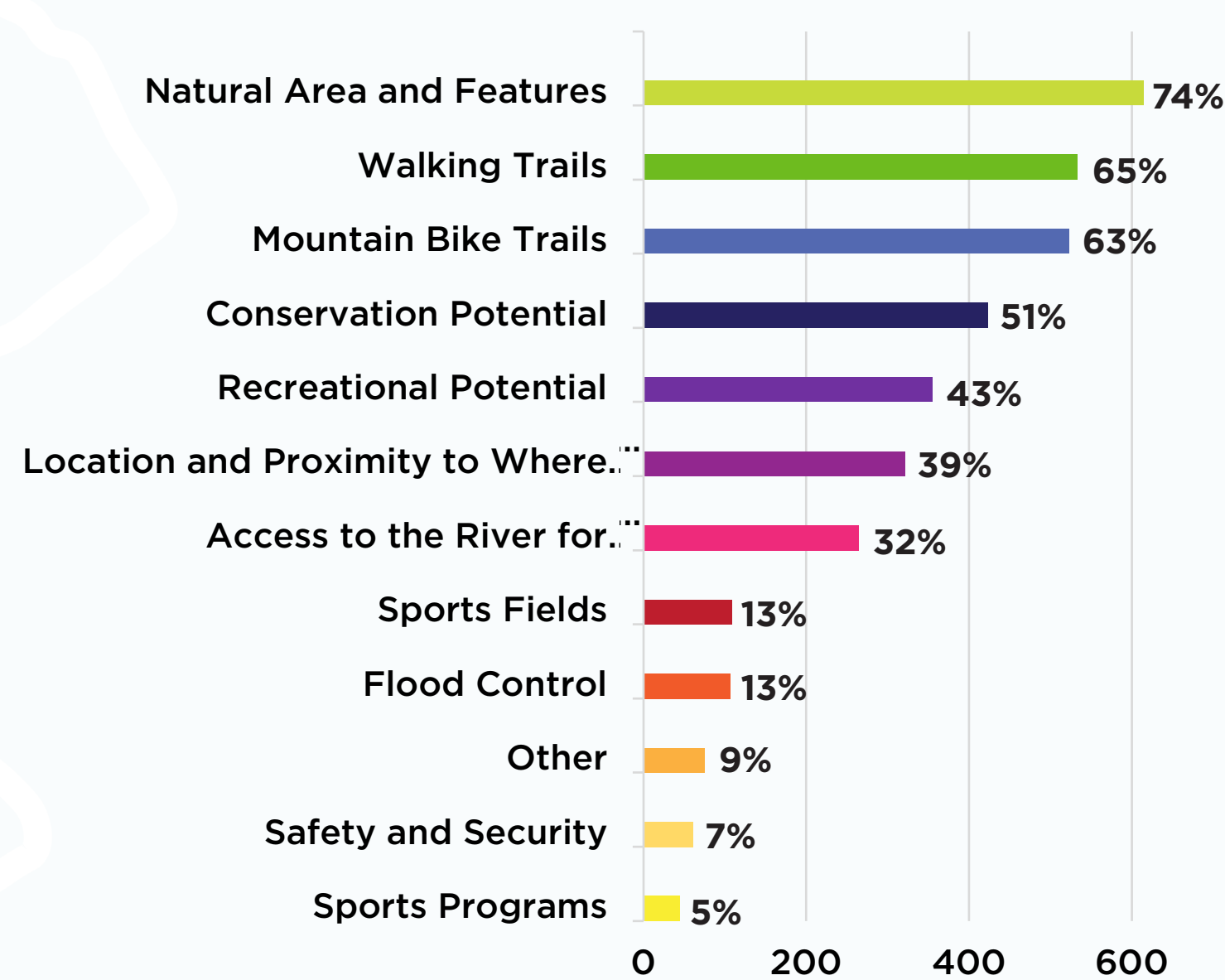
How **FAMILIAR** are you with the Blue River Parkway and the amenities and programs that are offered? (Select one)



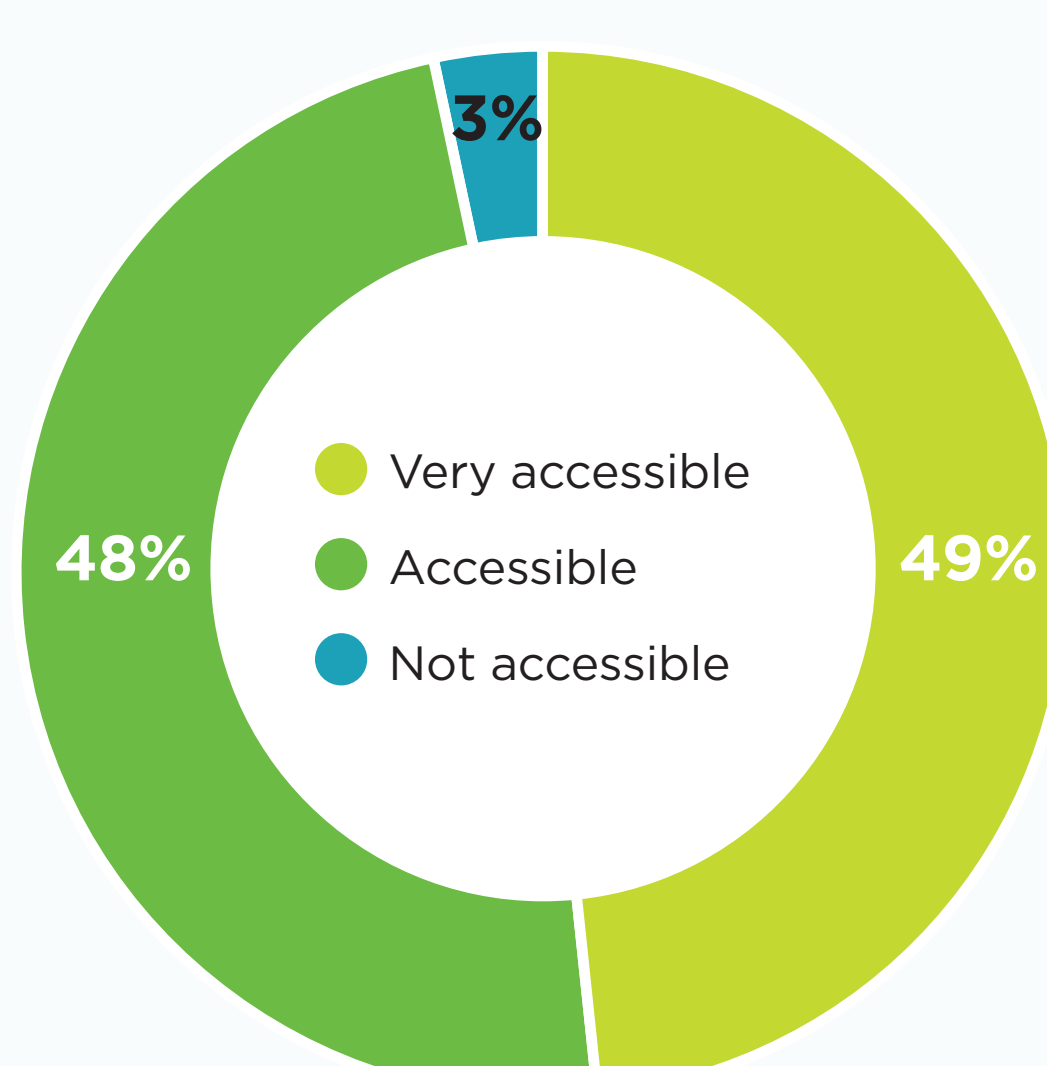
How **OFTEN** do you or your family visit the Blue River Parkway? (Select one)



What do you think are the **BEST ASPECTS** or **STRENGTHS** of the park? (Select all that apply)



How **ACCESSIBLE** is the park to you and your family? (Select one)



On a scale of 1-5 (5 being best), how would you rate the following? You may select n/a if you do not know, or if the question does not apply to you.



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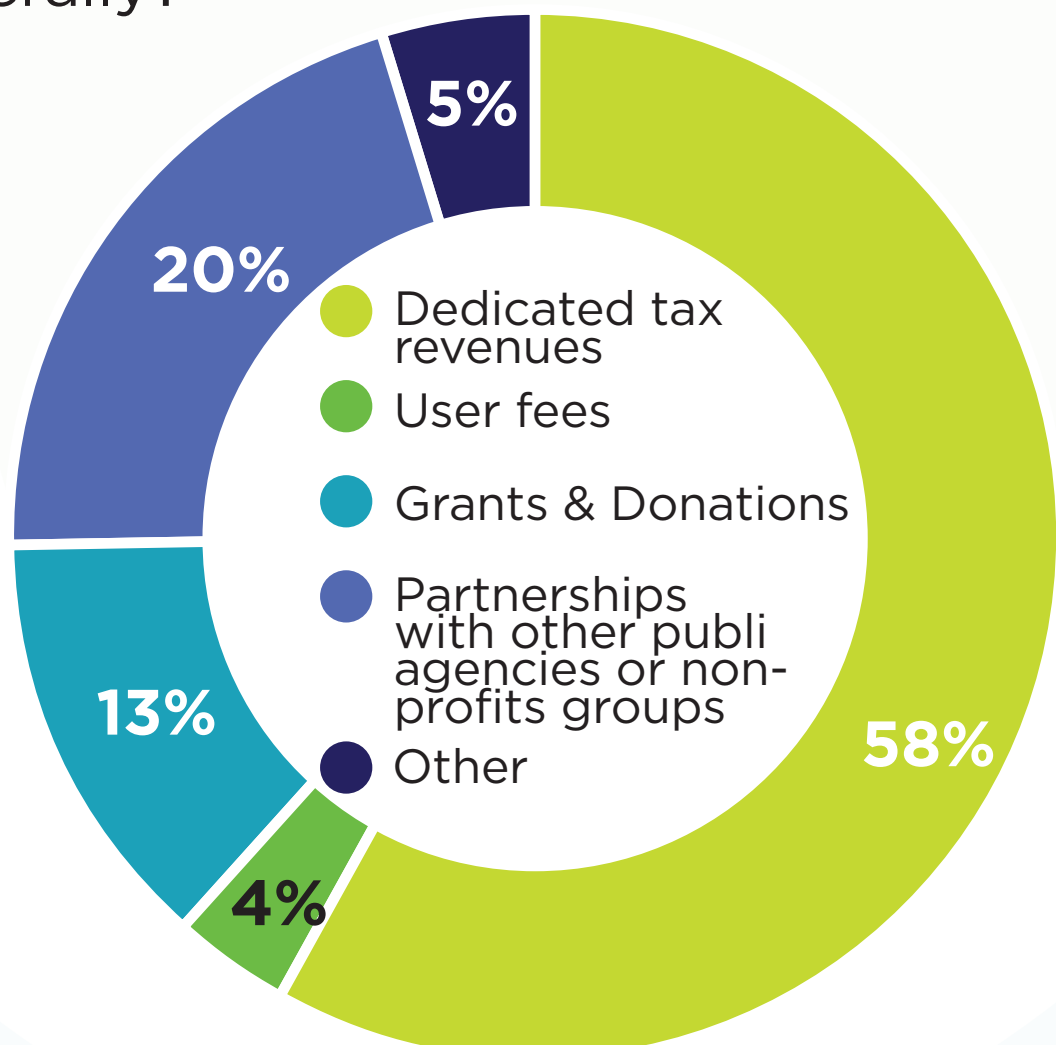
PUBLIC FEEDBACK

PUBLIC CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS:

What should be the focus for the future? Rank them 1-7 (1 being best).



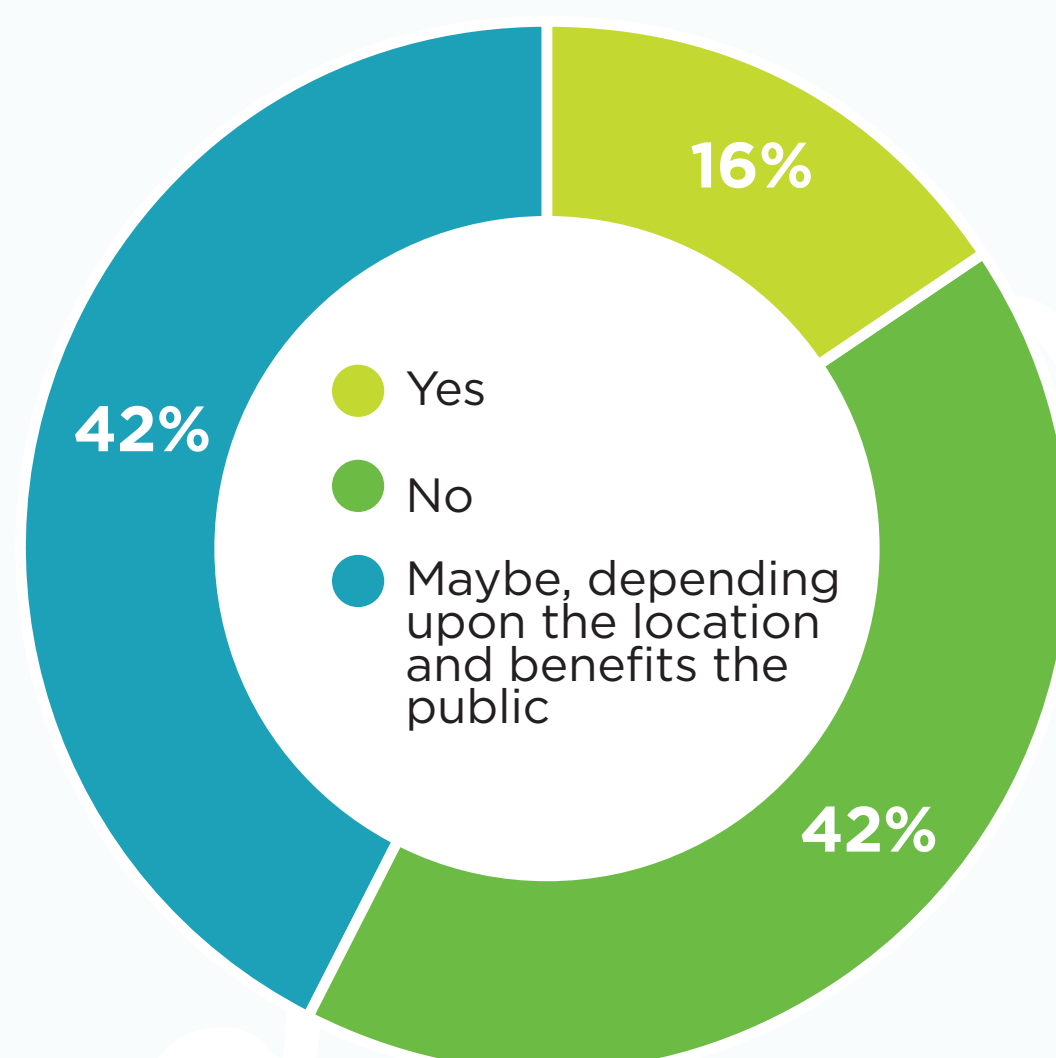
How should park improvements be FUNDED, generally?



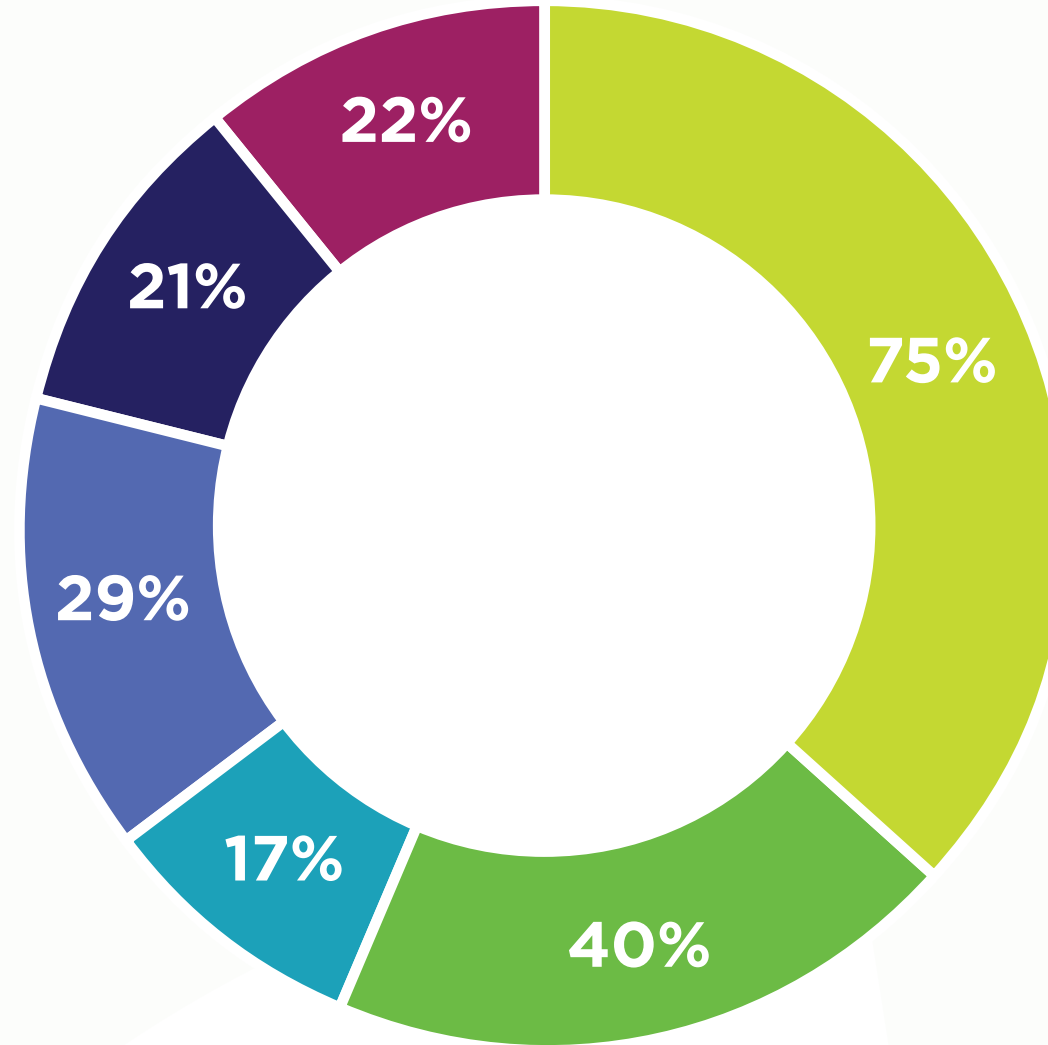
Other:

all of the above
 combination of some
 all but user fees
 taxes already paying
 not sure

Should Jackson County pursue PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS for park improvements, where a third party provides funding for park amenities, in exchange for specific development rights?



What would make you MORE INTERESTED in visiting parks or engaging in more outdoor activities? (Select all that apply)



- More amenities, such as:
- Elimination of barriers, such as:
- Recreation programs, such as soccer leagues or other sports programs
- Outreach programs, such as guided hikes or nature programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Other:

More amenities, such as:

disc golf
 more/safe parking
 restrooms/drinking fountains
 mountain biking trails
 connecting trails
 security/maintenance
 picnic areas
 playgrounds
 kayaking/water sports/rental
 equestrian trails

Elimination of barriers, such as:

limited parking
 maintenance/upkeep
 lack of pedestrian-friendly corridors
 lack of connections
 blue river road/closed roads
 lack of security/safety
 trash/dumping
 illegal activity & crime
 overgrown vegetation & invasives
 lack of accessibility
 limited/no signage
 erosion/wash out

Recreation programs, such as soccer leagues or other sports programs:

tennis
 bike clinics
 organized festivals & activities
 sports leagues
 youth programs & camps
 disc golf courses/tournaments
 pickleball
 mountain biking trails
 nothing new
 adult leagues
 soccer

Outreach programs, such as guided hikes or nature programs

guided hikes
 youth nature education & programs
 mountain biking clubs
 disc golf
 birding
 zipline
 activities for all ages
 summer camps

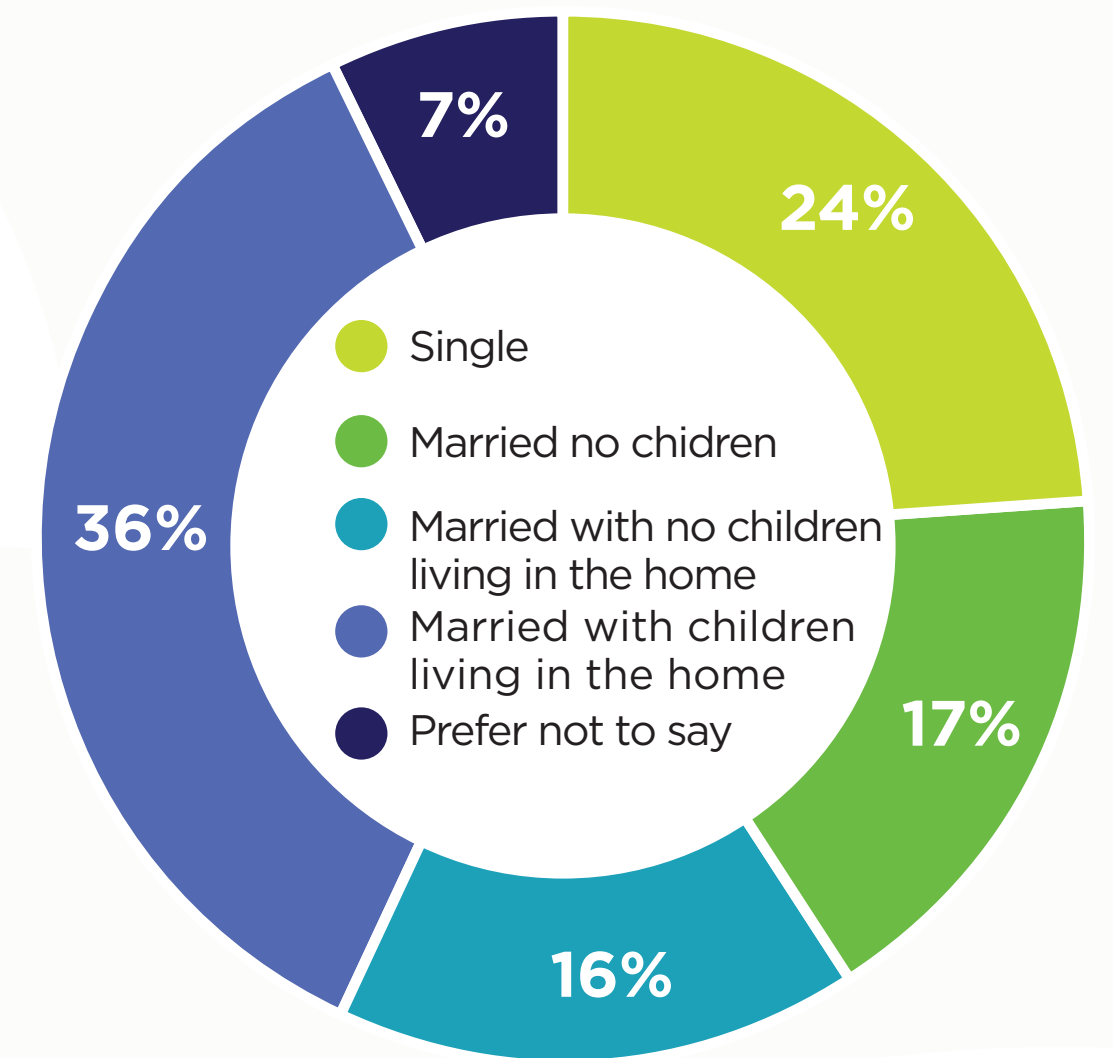
Volunteer opportunities:

river cleanup
 conservation enhancements
 trail building/maintenance
 trash cleanup
 honeysuckle removal
 disc golf tournaments/leagues
 student volunteer opportunities
 community cleanups

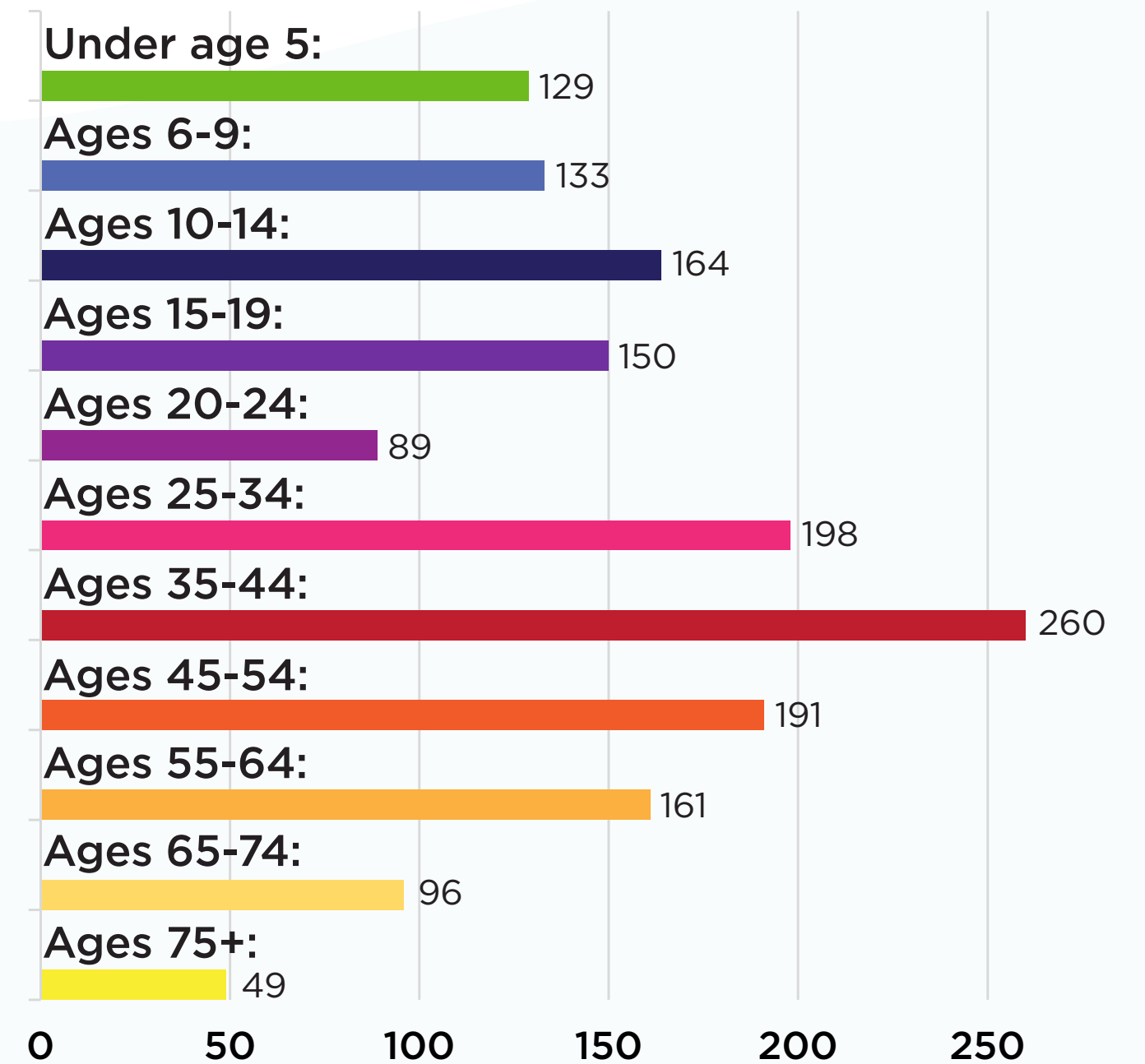
Other:

clear out overgrown vegetation
 more trail signage
 conserve nature and wildlife
 more safety/security
 improve cleanliness & stop dumping
 more trail connections
 re-open/re-use blue river road
 safer parking areas
 disc golf

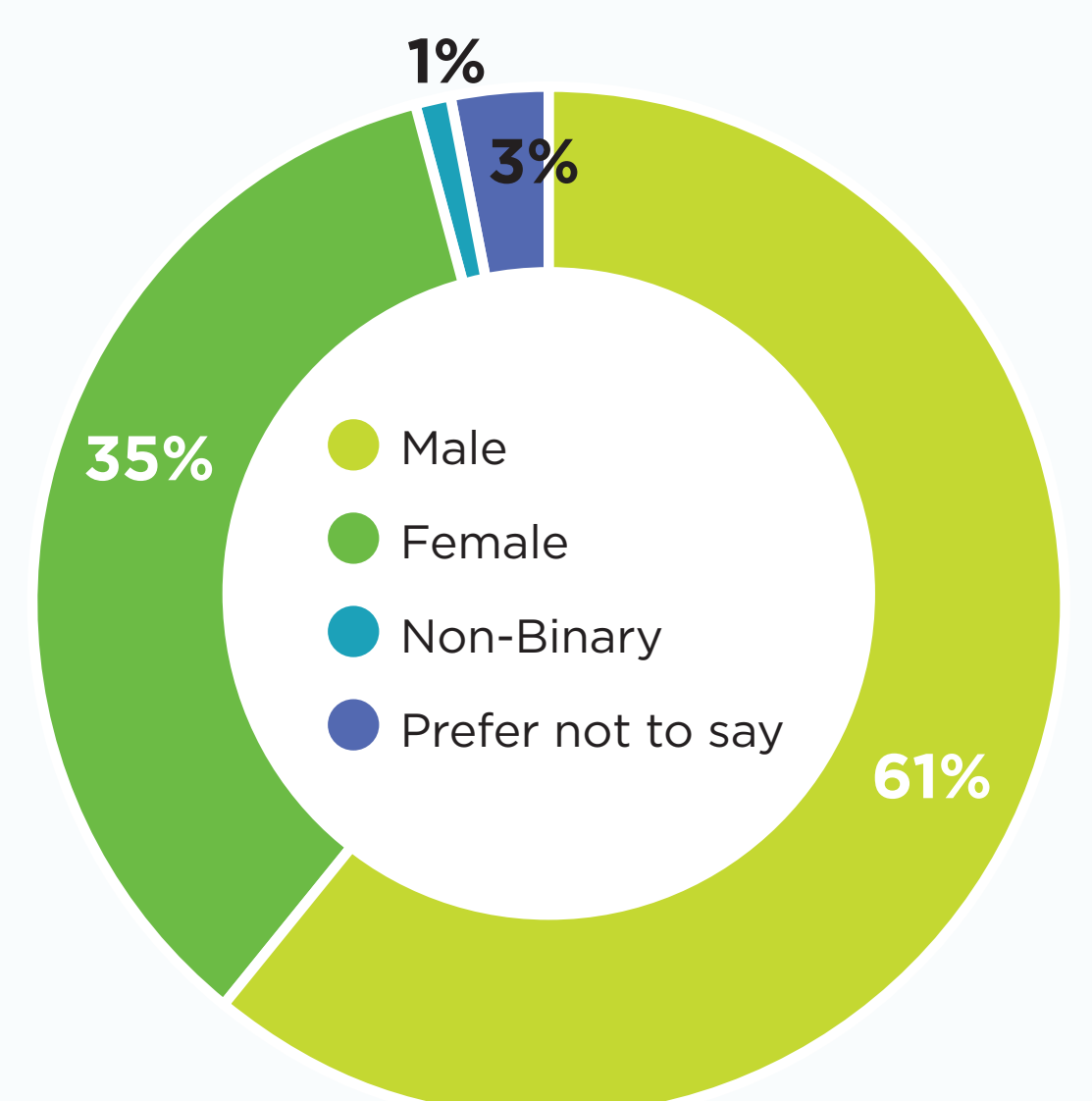
Please describe your household makeup.



Please identify which age categories and how many of each are represented in your household.



What is your gender?



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LAND MANAGEMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

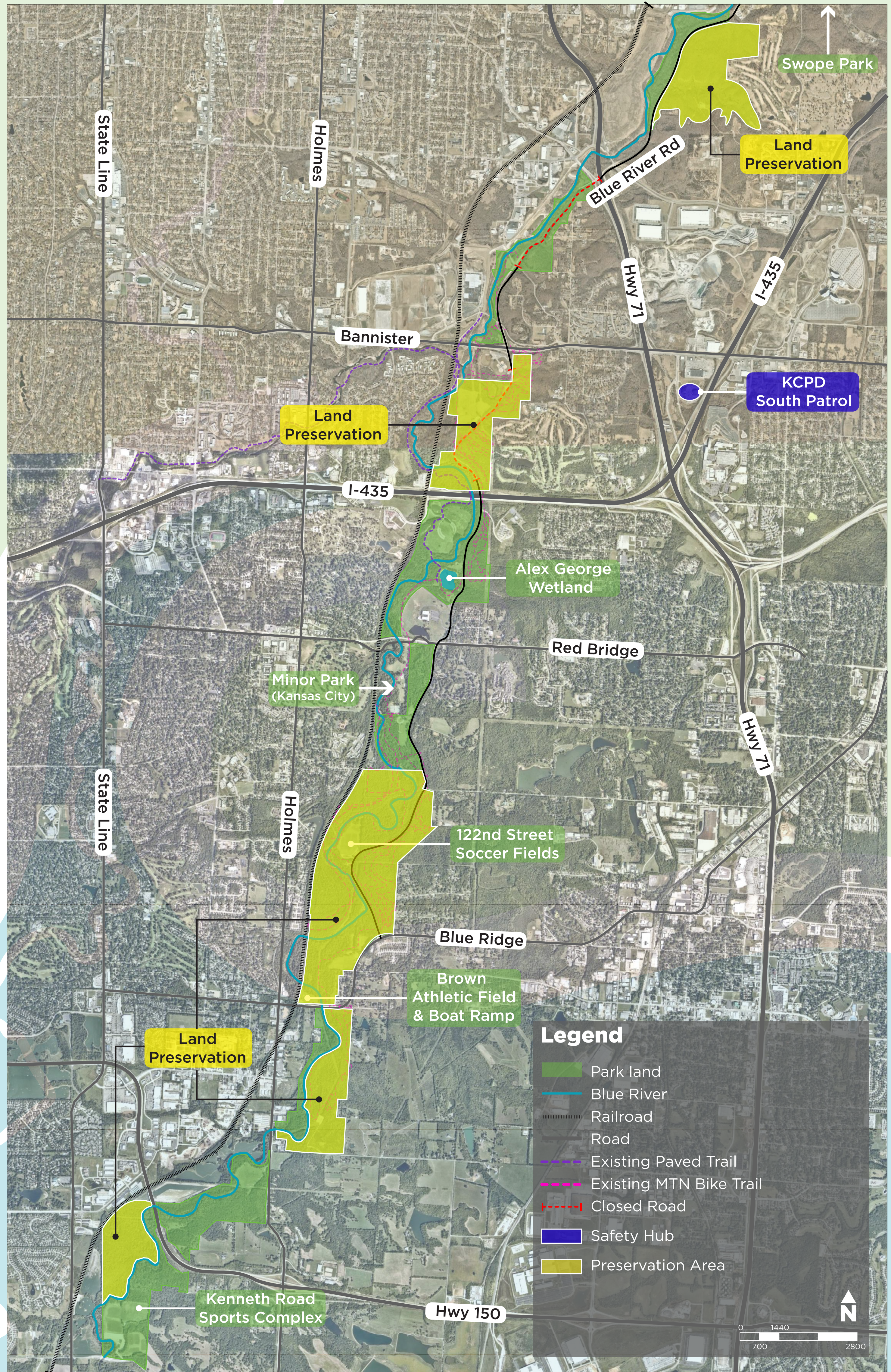


SUMMARY:

- 1 **Establish protections guaranteeing all park property will be reserved for greenspace and recreation in perpetuity.**
 - Explore parkland protections, through federal Land and Water Conservation Fund programs and conservation easements.
 - Partnership standards, including specific guidelines and requirements for new improvements or program opportunities at the park, that may involve one or more public or private entity partners.
 - Consider limited development and riparian habitat restoration projects in “Land Preservation” zones noted on the map.

- 2 **Prioritization of park safety and maintenance.**
 - Review all signage for accessibility and inclusion.
 - Safety study of activity centers (e.g. sports facilities, trailheads, etc.) using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) model.
 - Design standards for new improvements (i.e. concrete trails vs. gravel trails).
 - Seeking additional funding for safety and maintenance operations when possible.
 - The parkway is close to the KCPD South Patrol station and can be considered as a potential partner to help monitor and patrol, along with other jurisdictions.
 - Lighting at parking areas should be studied further.
 - Dumping will be closely monitored at each closed Blue River Road section.

- 3 **Best practice standards for entire Blue River Parkway.**
 - Maintenance and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - Other recognized standards for land management (i.e. Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) for natural habitat restoration)



LAND MANAGEMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES MAP



OPEN PLAY FIELDS



PAVED TRAILS & EVENTS



NATURAL AREA RESTORATION

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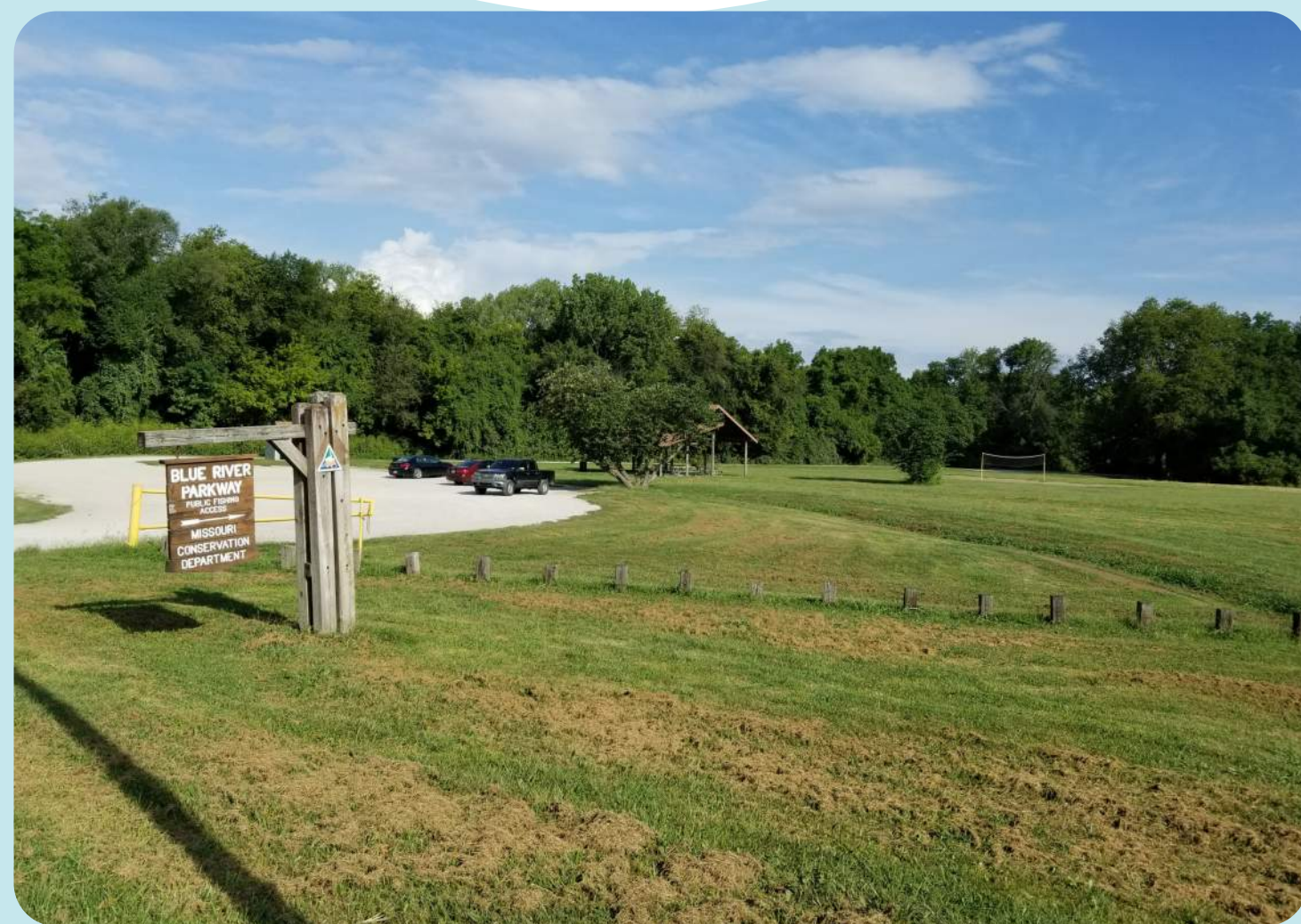
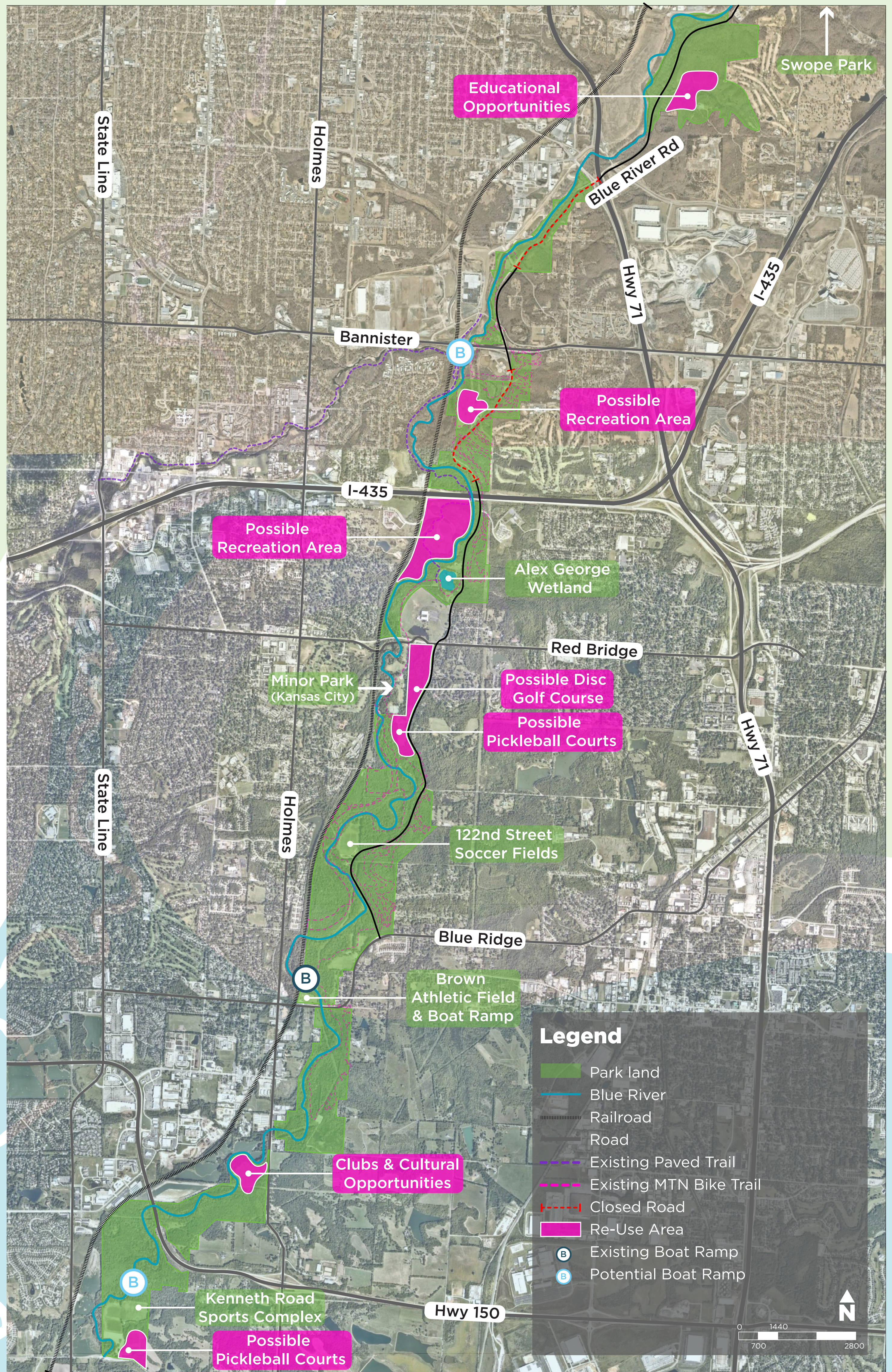


ENTERPRISE RECREATION & PROGRAMS



SUMMARY:

- 1 **Strengthen relationships with existing program providers (soccer, football, etc.).**
 - Create Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs); specifically addressing group use, showing the county's commitment to enter long-term usage of the park with strong partners.
 - Assist in the marketing of leagues and tournaments being played on multi-purpose fields to enhance participation.
- 2 **Explore new recreational program opportunities for further study and evaluation.**
 - Rugby (e.g. KC Blue Rugby Club)
 - Disc golf (e.g. KC Flying Disc Club)
 - Pickleball Leagues and Tournaments
 - Canoe & Kayak Clubs and interest groups
 - KC Disc Dogs and similar enthusiast organizations
 - Others
- 3 **Development of a "Park Ambassador" program with partners who share the County's purpose of increasing use and diversity in the park, and are willing to collaborate to offer new programs, such as:**
 - Educational sessions
 - Guided nature hikes
 - Guided float trips
 - Park clean-ups
 - Other volunteer opportunities
- 4 **Further explore partnerships with arts organizations (for performance and/or temporary or permanent installation opportunities).**



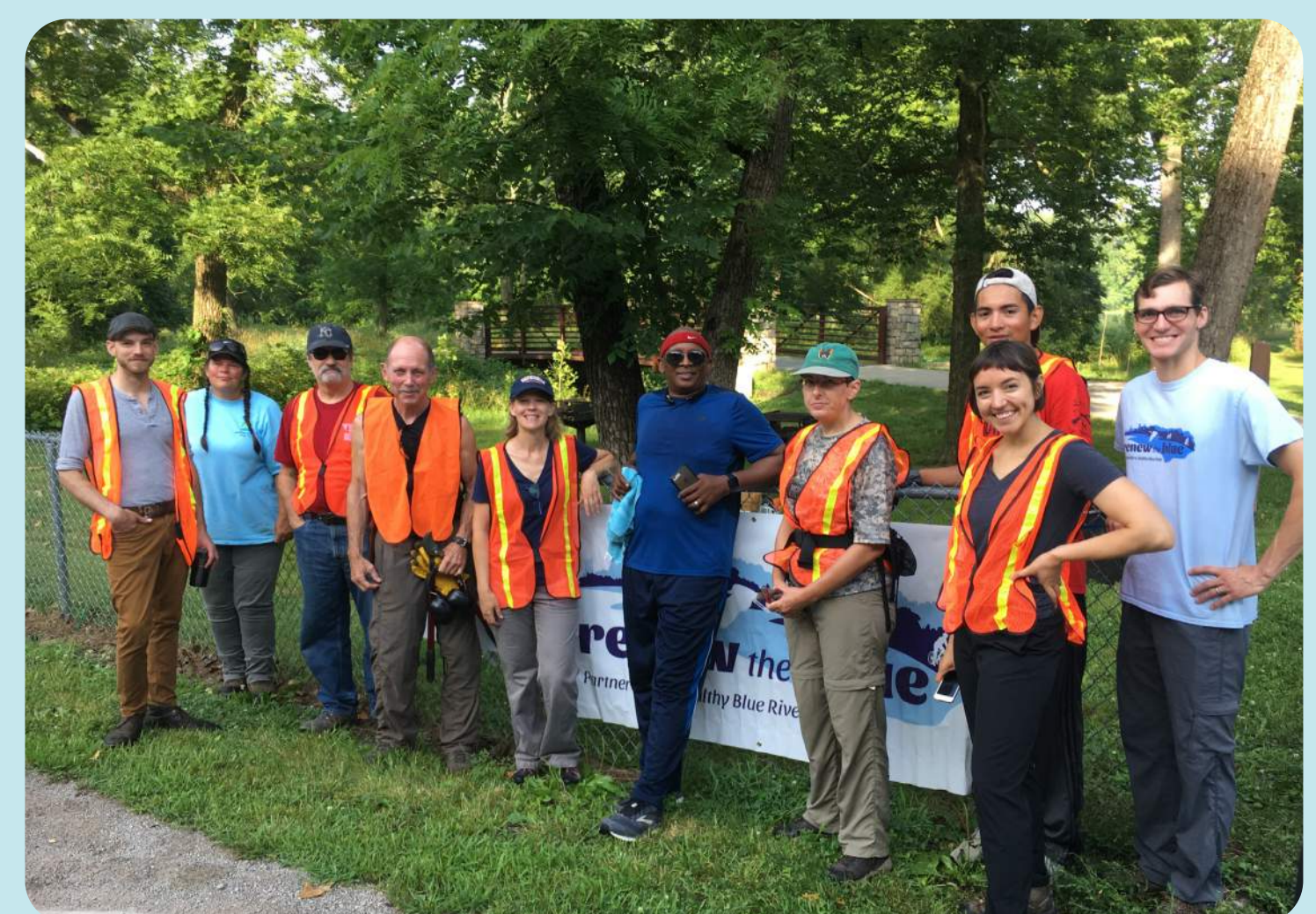
BROWN ATHLETIC FIELD



BRP & ATHLETIC FIELDS



122ND ST SOCCER FIELDS



"RENEW THE BLUE" GROUP

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PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVEMENTS



SUMMARY:

1 Improve existing recreational facilities.

- Kenneth Road Sports Complex; parking area improvements, new shelter, and flush restroom on “Polo” side of the complex, new park amenities on Kenneth side, creating a small new community park, with such possible features as a playground and walking trails; (possible partnership for funding with grants and/or Loch Lloyd).
- 122nd Sports Complex - install modern restrooms, improve parking, and add football goals.
- Alex George Wetland - amenities such as wetland boardwalk and nature-based playground; project should also include restoration of the spillway and stream channel to the confluence with the river.

2 Extend the Blue River Greenway Trail System, from Swope Park to Kenneth Road.

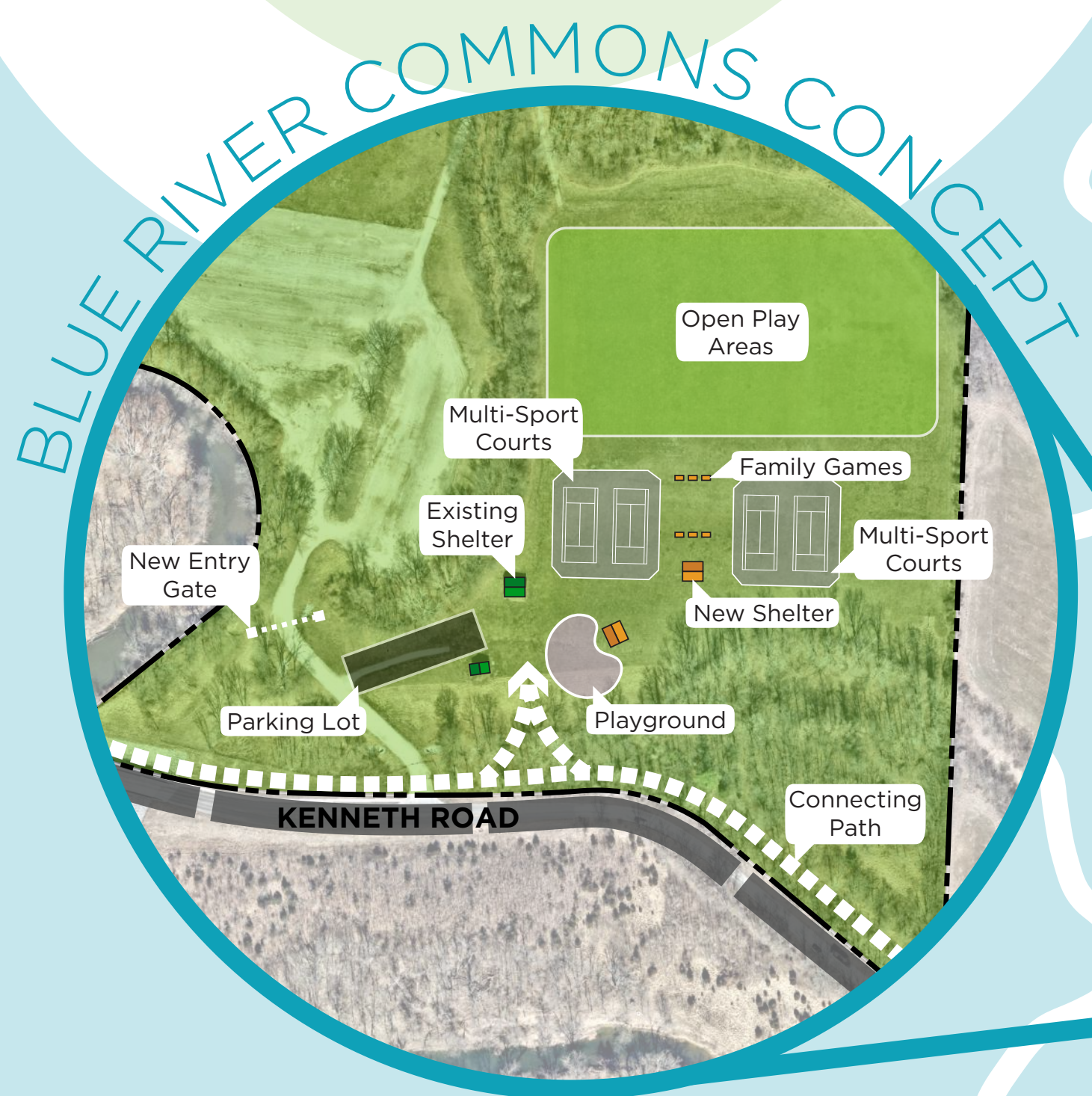
- Further explore partnerships with KCMO, including redevelopment of closed sections of Blue River Road.

3 Support UTC's efforts to extend and connect the mountain bike trail network.

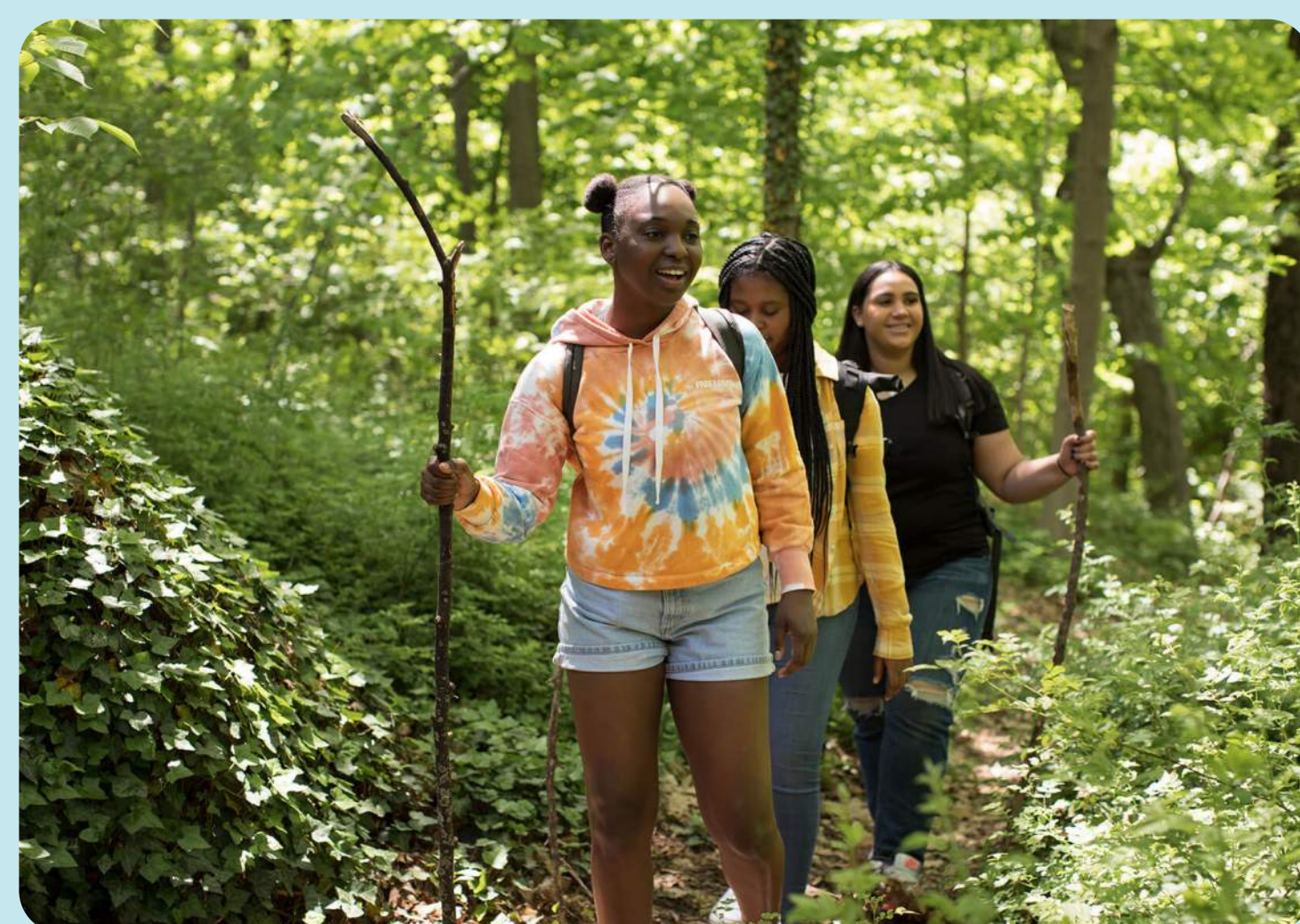
4 Increase access to the river for boating and fishing, including exploring grants for a new boat ramp, with partners such as MDC, and improvements to the existing ramp area and parking off Blue Ridge Boulevard.



PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVEMENTS MAP



ALEX GEORGE WETLAND



TRAILS EXTENSIONS



KENNETH ROAD SHELTER

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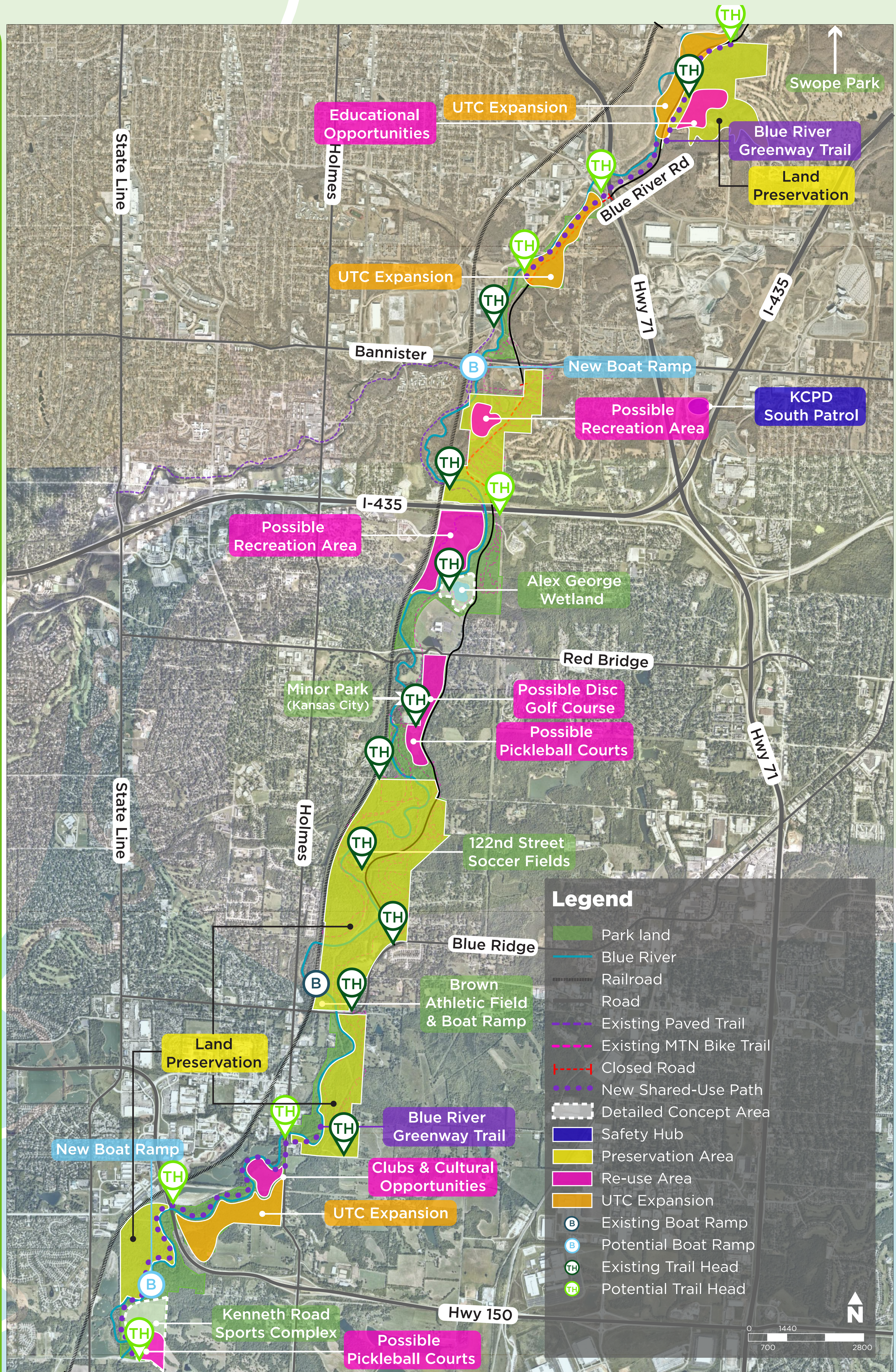
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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!



COMMENTS:



COMBINED MAP