

## CHAPTER ONE - KEY STAKEHOLDER & FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

As part of the Master Plan, key stakeholder interviews were conducted the week of February 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (with the, Town Council, Parks Foundation, Director of Public Works, Director of Development Services and Clerk Treasurer to provide a foundation for identifying community issues and key themes, as well as general information from the Town leadership on the Parks and Recreation Department. These interviews were completed by phone or virtually via Zoom and lasted approximately 30 minutes each.

Also, six focus groups with the general public and Town of Whitestown staff on March 9<sup>th</sup> (virtual via Zoom) and March 10<sup>th</sup> (in person) were conducted to learn more from residents in the community. The interviews provided valuable insight and will assist in the development of question topics that will be beneficial for creating the statistically-valid community survey, as well as theme development that will frame the vision for the Master Plan.

A facilitation guide was developed that included a series of questions that spurred conversation and follow up questions were asked when appropriate. Invited stakeholders were identified by the Town of Whitestown Parks and Recreation Department (Department) staff, elected officials, and approximately 40 members of the community divided into six focus groups from the following entities:

- Town Council Members
- Town Clerk Treasurer
- Town Director of Development Services
- Town Budget Director
- Town Director of Public Works
- Town Economic Development Director
- Parks and Recreation Staff Members
- Whitestown Parks Foundation
- Boone County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Town Planner
- Parks Maintenance Staff
- Lebanon Schools
- Whitestown Public Relations
- Pulte Homes
- Isiah 117 House.
- Deputy Clerk
- Director of Building Inspections
- Whitestown Event Staff

After speaking with the stakeholders and special interest groups, it was apparent the pride the community has in the Department, their enjoyment of many different types of special events, as well as the park experiences at Main Street Park, Anson Park, Gateway Park and Panther Park. The quality of the special events and maintenance of parks were key themes that resonated during the interviews. Also, ensuring parkland acquisition and recreation facilities/amenities keep up with the increase in development and population growth.

## 1.2 INTERVIEW SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

### 1.2.1 VISION FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

Residents in the Town of Whitestown love the parks and the quality-of-life attributes they provide to the community. Residents really enjoy the variety and type of special events including the Farmers Market, Viking Fest, and Summer Concert Series, which are all very well attended. As the Town continues to grow exponentially, it will be paramount that more parkland and trails are secured for new housing developments. Also, additional ADA accessibility is desired at existing and future parks to make parks available to all residents in the community. Everyone enjoys Main Street Park, Panther Park and Anson Park and the favorable type of new parkland should match these standards. All three parks provide different types of park experiences and residents envision future park developments to include more natural open space and green space. As the system expands, it will be important to find a balance of active and passive recreation.

Regarding connectivity, a better connected trail system linking to Lebanon and Zionsville through the Big Four Trail is a vision for the future along with spine trails to new housing developments.

A visionary project for residents is a large signature park to host special events and large gatherings. Additional pickleball courts, the addition of an aquatic park, indoor program space and sports fields provided to Town residents were also mentioned by stakeholders as future projects.

### 1.2.2 RESIDENTS VALUE THE MOST

Residents value the current events that bring the entire community together. Also, Main Street Park is highly regarded by residents. The playground, pickleball court, basketball courts are always fully occupied by players.

While residents want additional trails, the Big Four Trail is an amenity enjoyed by the community and they would like to see the linkages to Zionsville and Lebanon completed.

### 1.2.3 CHALLENGES FACING THE DEPARTMENT

Securing green space, trails and additional parkland needs to be a top priority as the Town continues to grow with new housing developments and more infrastructure.

Other challenges facing the Department include maintaining existing parks and amenities to ensure they are safe and reach their lifecycle use. Also, ensuring staffing levels are met while the Department grows was communicated from those interviewed.

### 1.2.4 KEY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES NOT OFFERED OR EXISTING PROGRAMS THAT NEED IMPROVEMENT

Programs residents would like to see added to the system include an introductory class on pickleball, as well as a pickleball league. Regarding programming for youth, residents would like to have a week-long camp during the spring, summer, and fall breaks. Also, STEM programs and nature programming were suggested as positive program additions. For teens, residents would like to see a skate park. New and innovative special events should be considered to broaden the appeal to all residents and options could include cultural and art events.

For communication by the park system to the community, consider new ways to let residents know what programs and events are being offered in ways outside of social media, such as an information board at Meijer or other retail outlets, as well as email communications.

#### 1.2.5 RECREATION FACILITIES AND PARK AMENITIES NEEDED

An indoor program space that would allow all four seasons of programs was a predominant suggestion by residents. Also, a signature park with an amphitheater would be heavily used by residents and would be a great place to host many special events the Department offers.

ADA accessibility at all of the parks is a must and should include accessible restrooms. For teens, residents would like to see a skate park or pump track, as well as various type of sports fields for practice, team play and competition. Also, while the Town already has a spray ground, the addition of an aquatic park and pool was mentioned interviewees.

Outdoor fitness amenities at Main Street and Panther Park were other types of amenities that was brought up by stakeholders and in focus groups. Other types of parks and amenities mentioned included; community gardens, sand volleyball courts, large shelters and the addition of a dog park in the system that would be heavily used by residents.

#### 1.2.6 AREAS OF THE SYSTEM THAT NEED MORE FOCUS

Areas that could use more focus include adding trails and connectivity to new housing developments, business and restaurants and the addition of more parks, tree planting, ADA Accessibility at existing parks, and adding more programs outside of the existing special events. Maintaining what the Town already owns was mentioned by many residents.

Also, a balance of active and passive park spaces is important since residents want to ensure that new parks are not “over developed” with amenities yet should include dedicated green space.

#### 1.2.7 TOP PRIORITIES

Each participant was asked what their top priority is for outcomes from the master plan. These priorities are listed below:

- **Expansion of the park and trail system.** Add more parkland and trails to keep up with town development, increase connectivity and accessibility.
- **Secure the right type of parkland, in the correct location** as development continues. **You can only acquire parkland one time.**
- **A signature park** to host large special events.
- **Complete the development of the Wrecks junkyard site** and ensure there are amenities for all members of the community.
- **A Park with a disc golf course.**
- **Ensure Whitestown still has a “small town vibe”** while growing and adding a community event space with an amphitheater to bring the community together for concerts and special events.
- **An outdoor pool.**
- **Enhanced programming** outside of special events.

- The addition of a dog park.
- A zoo that would be an attraction in the community.
- More trees and plantings in parks.
- Off-leash area for dogs.
- Community gardens, native Indiana plants and fruit trees.
- Exciting point of interest amenities in parks.
- A park along the Big Four Trail.
- Additional natural landscaping.
- An amenity that connects the community and brings residents together.
- More diversity in park types.
- Maintenance of all parks so they look great for many years.
- Additional pickleball courts and playgrounds.
- Energize downtown main street so it becomes the focal point for special events.
- Shelters that bring families and people together.