ParkScore® Index for the City of South Bend, Indiana
Prepared by The Trust for Public Land
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As the leading U.S. organization that works to analyze and determine the value of urban parks, The Trust for Public Land has created a methodology to give a general rating of every major U.S. city's park system through its proprietary program called ParkScore®.

Overview
Cities can earn a maximum ParkScore of 100. For easy comparison and at-a-glance assessment, each city is also given a rating of one to five park benches. One bench means the park system needs major improvement, while five benches means the park system is outstanding. In evaluating park systems, we consider land owned by regional, state, and federal agencies within the 100 most populous U.S. cities—including schoolyards formally open to the public and greenways that function as parks.

The analysis is based on three important characteristics of an effective park system: acreage, facilities and investment, and access.

Acreage
ParkScore awards each city points for acreage based on two equally weighted measures: **median park size** and **parkland as a percentage of city area**. Factoring park acreage into each city's ParkScore helps account for the importance of larger "destination parks" that serve many users who live farther than ten minutes' walking distance.

Investment and Amenities
ParkScore awards each city points for investment and amenities based on two equally weighted measures: total spending per resident and an average of per-capita provision of four key park amenities - basketball hoops, dog parks, playgrounds, and recreation and senior centers.
- **Spending per resident** is calculated from a three-year average (FY 2013/2014, FY 2014/2015, and FY 2015/2016, depending on a city's fiscal calendar) to minimize the effect of annual fluctuations. Spending figures include capital and operational spending by all agencies that own parkland within the city limits, including federal, state, and county agencies.
- **Amenities** were chosen because of the breadth of users served, the ubiquity of these amenity types, and the ease of accurate counting of these measures.

Access
ParkScore awards each city points for access based on the percentage of the population living within a ten-minute (half-mile) walk of a public park. The half-mile is defined as entirely within the public road network and uninterrupted by physical barriers such as highways, train tracks, and rivers.

Scoring
The scoring system recognizes the accomplishments of cities that have made significant investments in their parks without holding dissimilar cities to an unrealistic standard. It enables detailed analysis and allows cities to increase their ParkScore through incremental improvements to different aspects of their park systems.

To determine a city's ParkScore, we assigned points in three categories: **acreage, investment and amenities,** and **access.**

- Acreage: 20 points for median park size, and 20 points for park acres as a percentage of city area
- Investment and Amenities: 20 points for spending per resident and 20 points for the average of the four key amenity scores (basketball hoops, dog parks, playgrounds, and recreation and senior centers).
- Access: 40 points for percentage of the population living within a walkable half-mile, ten-minute walk of a public park

Points for each statistic are assigned by breaking the data range established by our national sample into 20 brackets, with the lowest bracket receiving the least points and the highest bracket receiving the most points. Each city's total points—out of a maximum of 120—are then normalized to a ParkScore of up to 100.

Outliers

To prevent outliers from skewing the results, the top bracket for each measure includes all values equal to more than double the median of the data range. For example, spending per resident in our 100-city national sample ranges from $15 to $287, with a median of $82. To control distortion from local anomalies, all cities that spend more than double the median value (i.e., $163 per resident) are assigned to the highest bracket and receive 20 points.

With the top bracket thus defined, the parameters for the remaining brackets are established so that each bracket comprises an equal portion of the remaining data range.

This protocol applies to all categories except access, which has no outliers.

Mapping

To map access to parks and open space, ParkScore first identifies gaps in park availability, and then determines which gaps represent the most urgent need for parkland.

Access gaps are based on a service area representing a ten-minute walk. To map park need, we combined three differently weighted demographic profiles:

- Population density – weighted at 50%
- Density of children age 19 and younger – weighted at 25%
- Density of individuals in households with income less than 75% of city median income – weighted at 25%

Each city's park need is mapped from data collected in the 2016 Forecast Census block groups provided by Esri. The total population of South Bend according to this data source is 97,161.

Analysis of the ParkScore for the City of South Bend

South Bend has identified seven cities for benchmarking comparison, which provides an instructive way to consider the scores against peer and aspirational cities. These cities are: Lexington, Wichita, Madison, Toledo, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati. All of these cities are currently included in the ParkScore Index because they rank among the 100 most populous US cities. While South Bend is much smaller than all of these cities, there are similarities that make them useful comparisons when considering how the park system of South Bend serves its citizens.

The cities were selected based on the following criteria: similar geographic region and proximity to South Bend, cities with a positive growth rate, cities with similar industry and labor mix, and cities that are home to the main campus of a research university (i.e., a university that grants doctoral degrees) to simulate the impact of Notre Dame, IUSB and the other many higher education institutions on South Bend. It is worth noting that the South Bend Department of Venues, Parks, and Arts is the only agency that owns and manages parkland within the city limits of South Bend (excluding the joint-use school facilities). This is also the case for Wichita and Fort

Wayne, but all other comparison cities have other agencies operating parkland within their city, such as White River State Park in Indianapolis and Metroparks in Toledo.

South Bend scores above the national median of 51.5 overall, with a total score of 64 out of 100 possible points. They score above the median in park size, with fairly large parks at a median of 8.7 acres. These parks are also reasonably well distributed, serving 73% of the population (the national median is 67.7% population served within a city). South Bend's parkland only makes up 5% of the city, however, which is fairly low compared to the national median of 9%.

In comparison to the benchmarking cities, Cincinnati and Madison both score above South Bend with total overall scores of 72.5 (these two cities tie). Most significantly, these cities outpace South Bend in terms of Parkland as Percent of City Area. While South Bend has large parks, the city would benefit from adding more parkland overall. In this way South Bend is comparable to Lexington, Wichita, and Indianapolis, all of which have large parks but score fairly low in the Parkland as Percent of City Area component.

South Bend spends $116 per resident on parkland. While this is above the national median of $82, there are many cities that score higher including comparison cities Cincinnati (at $181) and Madison (at $122), with the national maximum being $282. Coming in at 14 out of 20 possible points, the Spending per Resident metric offers another category in which South Bend could improve.

South Bend scores fairly well in amenities, with the lowest score being in recreation and senior centers. They fall right at the median in this category, with 0.8 centers per 20,000 residents. The next lowest portion of the amenities is off-leash dog parks (there is only one dog park, though with a relatively small population this gives the city 11 points out of 20). Comparison cities Cincinnati, Madison, and Lexington all offer more off-leash dog areas to residents (even on a per capita basis) than South Bend does. This indicates a possible area of improvement, especially if the desire for dog parks is present. Recreation centers and dog parks are just two pieces of the amenity section, however, and recreational wants and needs can vary widely by city. The city's residents are very well-served in playgrounds and in basketball hoops. South Bend has 20 schools with joint-use agreements that allow these facilities to be open to the public outside of school hours, and this partially accounts for the high scores in these two amenities as well as in the Access category.