Trust for Public Land ParkScore Ranking 2021
Methodology, Results and Limitations

Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, NC
2021 ParkScore® ranking: **#91**

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Why evaluate park systems?

- Measure performance
- Assess community needs
- Uncover emerging trends
- Prioritize funding
- Make operational decisions
- Ensure compliance

There are a variety of studies used by Park and Recreation professionals to evaluate the effectiveness of their agencies.

Trust For Public Land ParkScore
NRPA Park Metrics
Annual Mecklenburg County Community Survey
Department Customer Satisfaction Surveys
CAPRA Accreditation
Meck Playbook Needs Assessment
Meck Playbook Park Inventory
Department Needs Assessments

The ParkScore analysis is based on five categories that may indicate the quality of a park system: acreage, investment, amenities, access and equity.

Within each of these five broad categories, points are assigned to agencies for 14 measures. Points are assigned on a relative basis, meaning they are assigned based on how a city compares to its peers.

Each year, the ParkScore is conducted for the 100 largest cities in the United States. Agencies submit data on a voluntary basis. For the 2021 ParkScore, 99 cities chose to submit data and participate in the study.

[WBTV Feature – June 1, 2021](#)

1 Washington, D.C.
2 St. Paul, MN
3 Minneapolis, MN
4 Arlington, VA
5 Chicago, IL
6 San Francisco, CA
7 Irvine, CA
8 Cincinnati, Ohio
9 Seattle, WA
10 Portland, OR
11 New York, NY
12 Boston, MA

The 14 measures used by Trust for Public Land to make their evaluation are listed below:

Acreage
- median park size
- percentage of city land dedicated to parks

Investment
- total spending* per resident (3-year average)

Amenities
- basketball hoops
- off-leash dog parks
- playgrounds
- recreation/senior centers
- restrooms
- spraygrounds

Access
- percentage of the population within a 10-minute walk to a public park

Equity
- proximity ratios (race, income)
- access (10-minute walk) by race, income

- Agencies receive a numeric score between 0-100 points for each of the five categories.
- These five scores are averaged to determine an agency's overall ParkScore.
- ParkScores are used to determine each city's overall ranking.
- The agency with the largest overall ParkScore gets a rank of 1, and the agency with the smallest overall ParkScore gets a rank of 100.
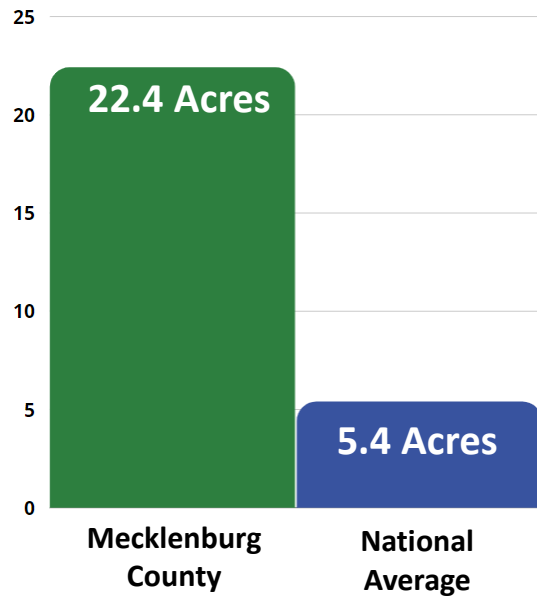

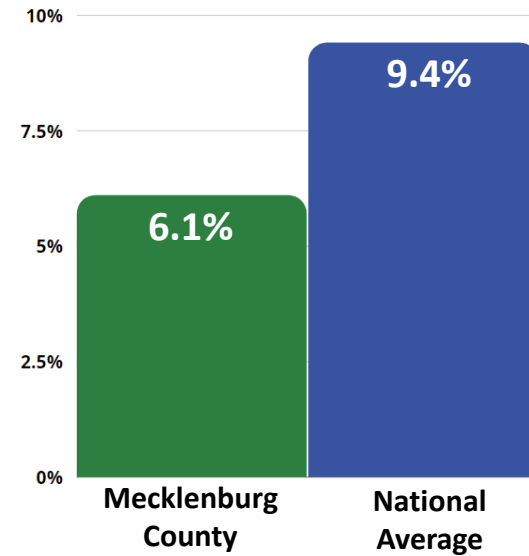*includes public spending, nonprofit groups and monetized volunteer hours

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation

Trust for Public Land ParkScore
Acreage

Mecklenburg County received a score of 63/100 for acreage in 2021.

Median Park Size

22.4 Acres — Mecklenburg County
5.4 Acres — National Average

Score = 100/100

Percent of Land Dedicated to Parks

6.1% — Mecklenburg County
9.4% — National Average

Score = 26/100

Mecklenburg County received a score of 34/100 for amenities in 2021.

Basketball Hoops* (59/100)

Mecklenburg County 4.22
National Median 3.29

Recreation/Senior Centers (26/100)

Mecklenburg County .45
National Median .78

Off-Leash Dog Parks (16/100)

Mecklenburg County .63
National Median 1.21

Restrooms (19/100)

Mecklenburg County .69
National Median 1.6

Playgrounds (53/100)

Mecklenburg County 3.45
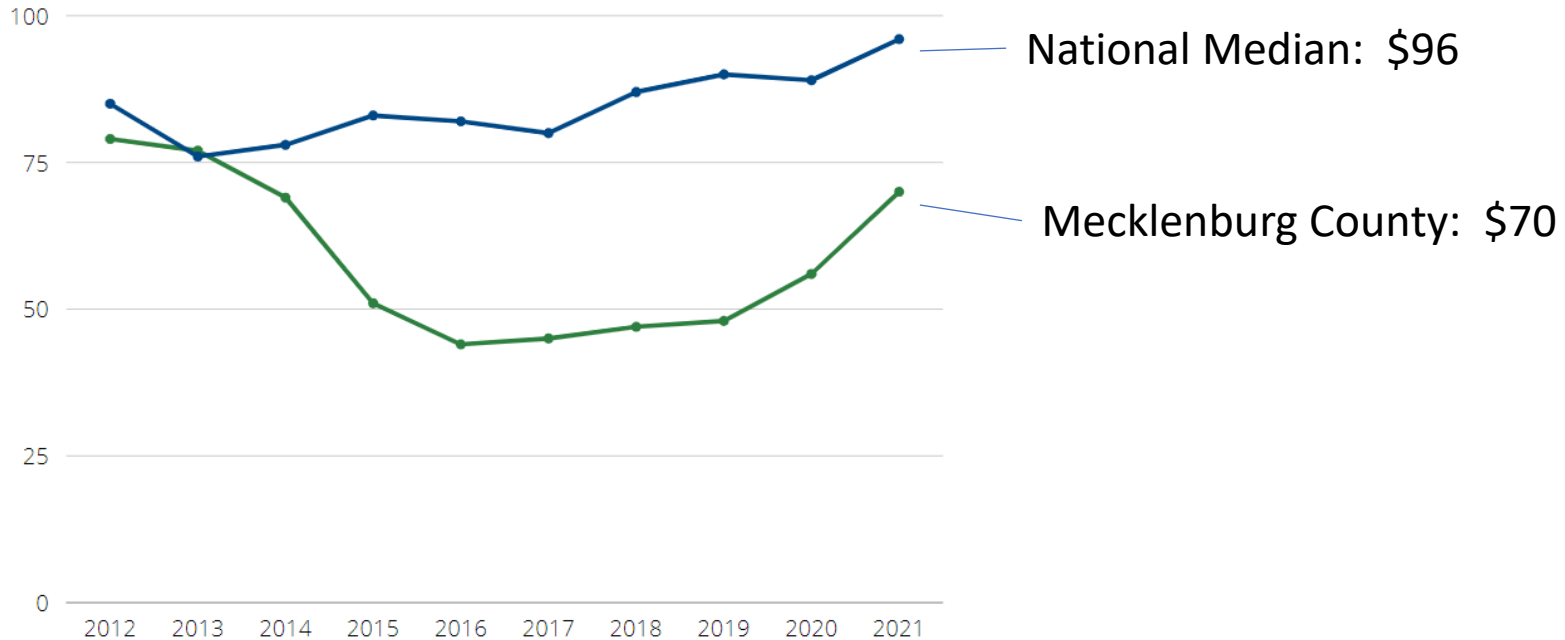National Median 2.84

Spraygrounds (28/100)

Mecklenburg County .81
National Median 1.27

* Amenities displayed are per 10,000 residents.

Mecklenburg County received a score of 31/100 for investment in 2021.

National Median: $96

Mecklenburg County: $70

The chart above shows per capita spending by year from 2012-2021.
Green = Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation
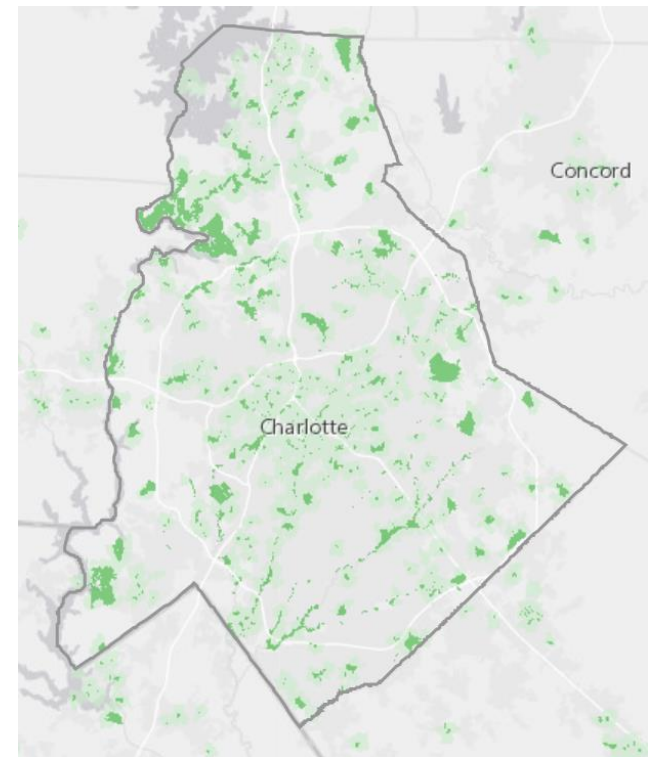**Blue = National Median**

Mecklenburg County received a score of 7/100 for access in 2021.

Points are awarded for each city based on the percentage of the population that lives within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of a park.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) corporation ESRI provides data that defines walkable service areas using road network data that identifies physical barriers such as highways, train tracks and rivers and selects routes without such barriers.

Percent of Residents Within a 10-Minute Walk to a Park

Mecklenburg County   **40%**
National Median   **72%**

Dark green areas represent existing parks.
Light green areas represent 10-minute walk service areas.

Mecklenburg County
Park and Recreation

Mecklenburg County received a score of 39/100 for equity in 2021.

The Trust for Public Land added a new score to assess equity in park systems.

Each city is awarded points based on the average of four equally-weighted measures that compare the availability of nearby park space between groups.

- The ratio of park space within a 10-minute walk of neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of people of color to those with the highest concentrations of white residents.
- The ratio of park space within a 10-minute walk of neighborhoods with the lowest average incomes to those with the highest average incomes.
- The percentage of people of color who live within a half-mile walk of a public park.
- The percentage of low-income households who live within a half-mile walk of a public park.

People of Color Within a 10-Minute Walk To a Park

Mecklenburg County   40%
National Median   74%

Low Income Households Within a 10-Minute Walk To a Park

Mecklenburg County   43%
National Median   74%

Proximity Ratio: Neighborhoods of Color

Mecklenburg County   .98
National Median   .70

Proximity Ratio: Low Income Neighborhoods

Mecklenburg County   1.23
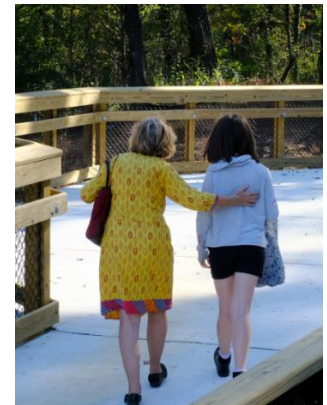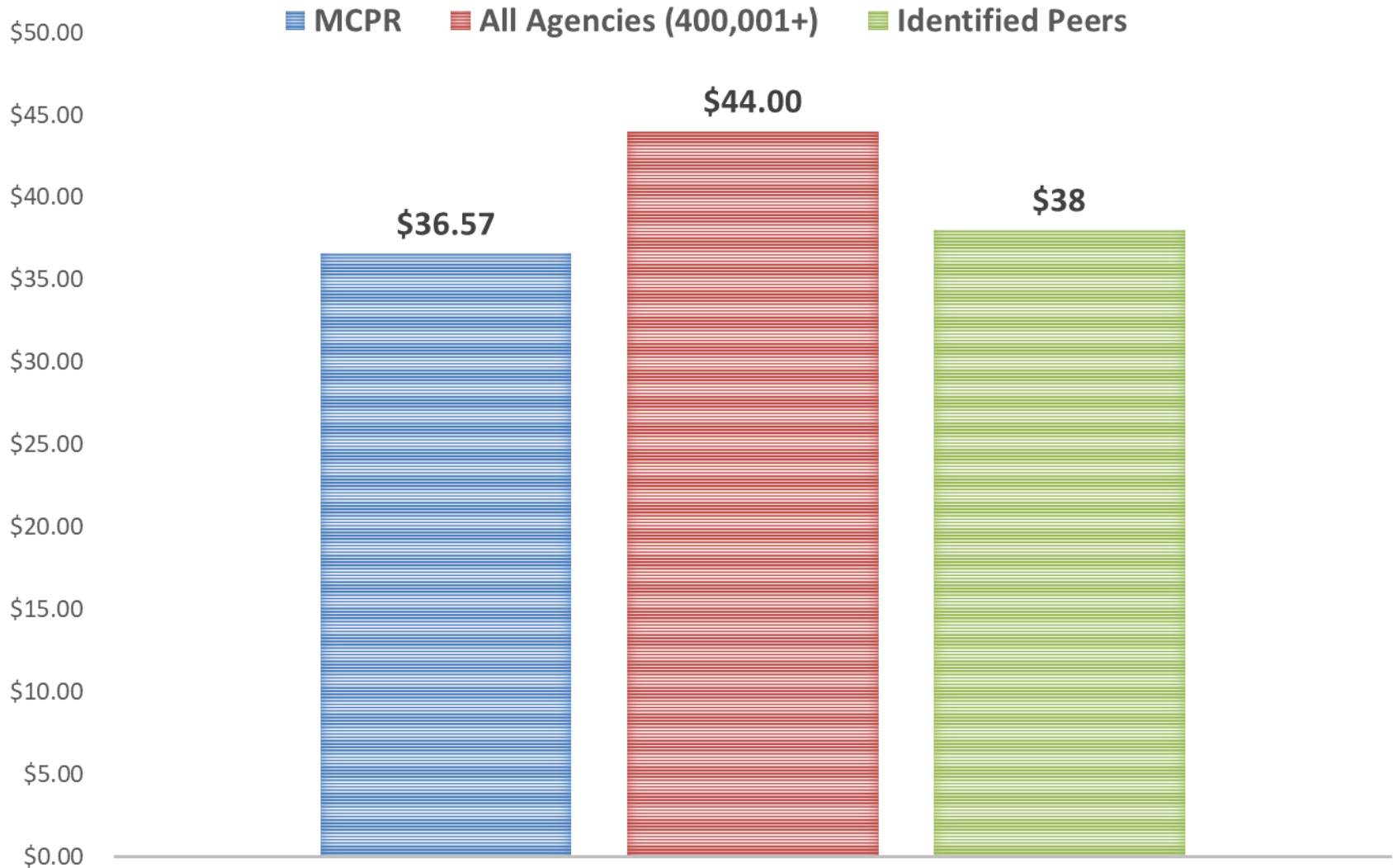National Median   .71

Limitations

- The TPL study does not account for park quality, maintenance or customer satisfaction.
- Only six amenities are included in the analysis.
- The study does not control for population density. Therefore, cities with lower population densities (such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg) are unduly penalized in both the Access and Equity metrics.
- Access to parks via the 10-minute walk metric is counted twice – both via the Access measure and under the new Equity measures.
    - Because Mecklenburg County's road network inhibits pedestrian access to parks, this unduly penalizes Mecklenburg County.
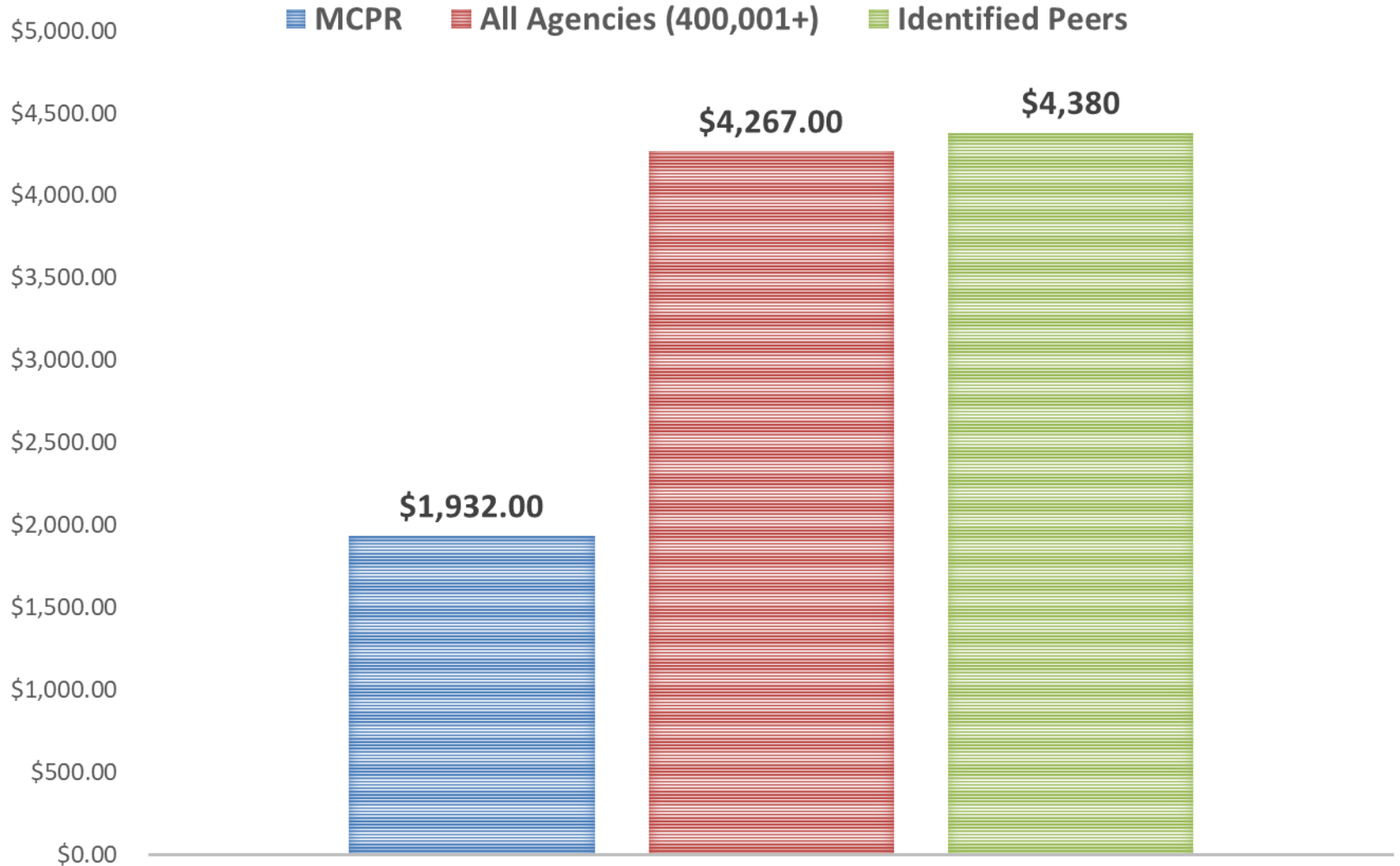
Recommendations

- Continue to use the Trust for Public Land study as one tool in a suite of available evaluations meant to improve park access for the public.
- Educate the public and stakeholders about contextual factors that impact the study's findings.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER CAPITA

Legend: ■ MCPR ■ All Agencies (400,001+) ■ Identified Peers

- MCPR: $36.57
- All Agencies (400,001+): $44.00
- Identified Peers: $38

OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER ACRE

■ MCPR   ■ All Agencies (400,001+)   ■ Identified Peers

	MCPR	All Agencies (400,001+)	Identified Peers
Operating Expenditures Per Acre	$1,932.00	$4,267.00	$4,380

FULL TIME EQUIVALENT/10,000 POPULATION