



TOWN OF LEICESTER

Open Space and Recreation Plan 2021

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH

LEICESTER TOWN HALL

AGENDA

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 6:00 – 6:15 | Welcome and Purpose |
| 6:15 – 6:30 | Presentation of Draft OSRP Highlights |
| 6:30 – 7:15 | Small Group Discussions |
| 7:15 – 7:25 | Small Groups Report Back |
| 7:25 – 7:30 | Closing Remarks/Next Steps |

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

DAWN MARTILLA, Conservation Commission

DIANNA PROVENCHER, Board of Selectmen

JAMES REINKE, Zoning Board of Appeals

SHARON NIST, Planning Board

SUE SEARS, Parks and Recreation Committee

VAUGHN HATHWAY, Alternate

MICHELLE BUCK, Town Planner
Town of Leicester

BROOKE HULTGREN,
Planning Department Assistant
Town of Leicester

MARY HANNAH SMITH,
Resilience and Environmental Planner
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning
Commission (CMRPC)

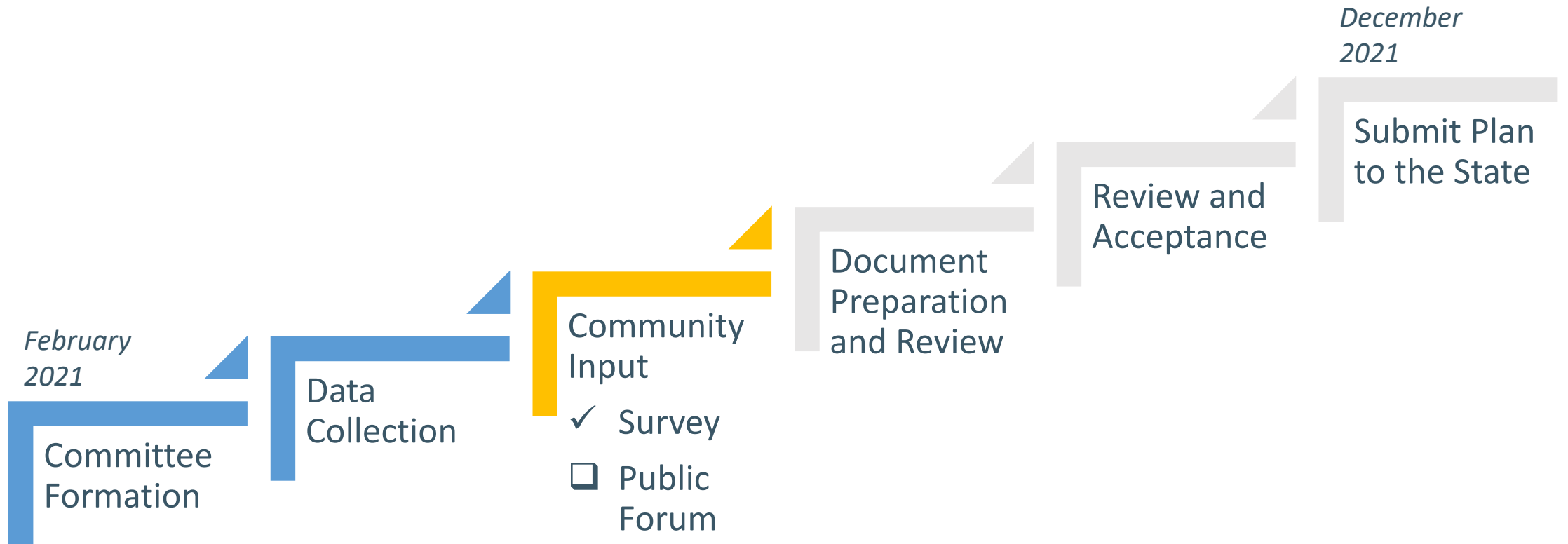
PURPOSE OF AN OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

- Document current status of parks and open spaces
- Assess public views on local open space and recreation opportunities
- Outline future project ideas aligned with community priorities

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH AN UPDATED PLAN?

- Apply for grants!
 - Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant
 - Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant
 - Other state grant programs
- Use the plan to inform future Town decisions

TIMELINE & PROCESS





PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY PROFILE

- 2020 Population = 11,306 people
 - Steady growth since the 1990s
- Slight increase in population over age 65 since 2010
 - 65+ population = 14.4% of overall population in 2020
- Leicester's median household income is 9% higher than for overall state
- Pace of development has slowed in recent years but new construction still occurs
- Water supply is a major infrastructure challenge for Leicester
- Becker College closure, unknown impacts for town

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- Water quality in surface waters – algal blooms, mercury
- Invasive exotic plant species & on-going cost of treatment
- Lack of permanent protection



Water Chestnut growth at Greenville Pond

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ASSETS

- Town Common
- Recreational Fields
- Lots of green space
- Recent grants – Russell Memorial Park, Towtaid Park, Town Common, Burncoat Park
- Inland Atlantic Cedar Swamps
- Active volunteers and land trusts



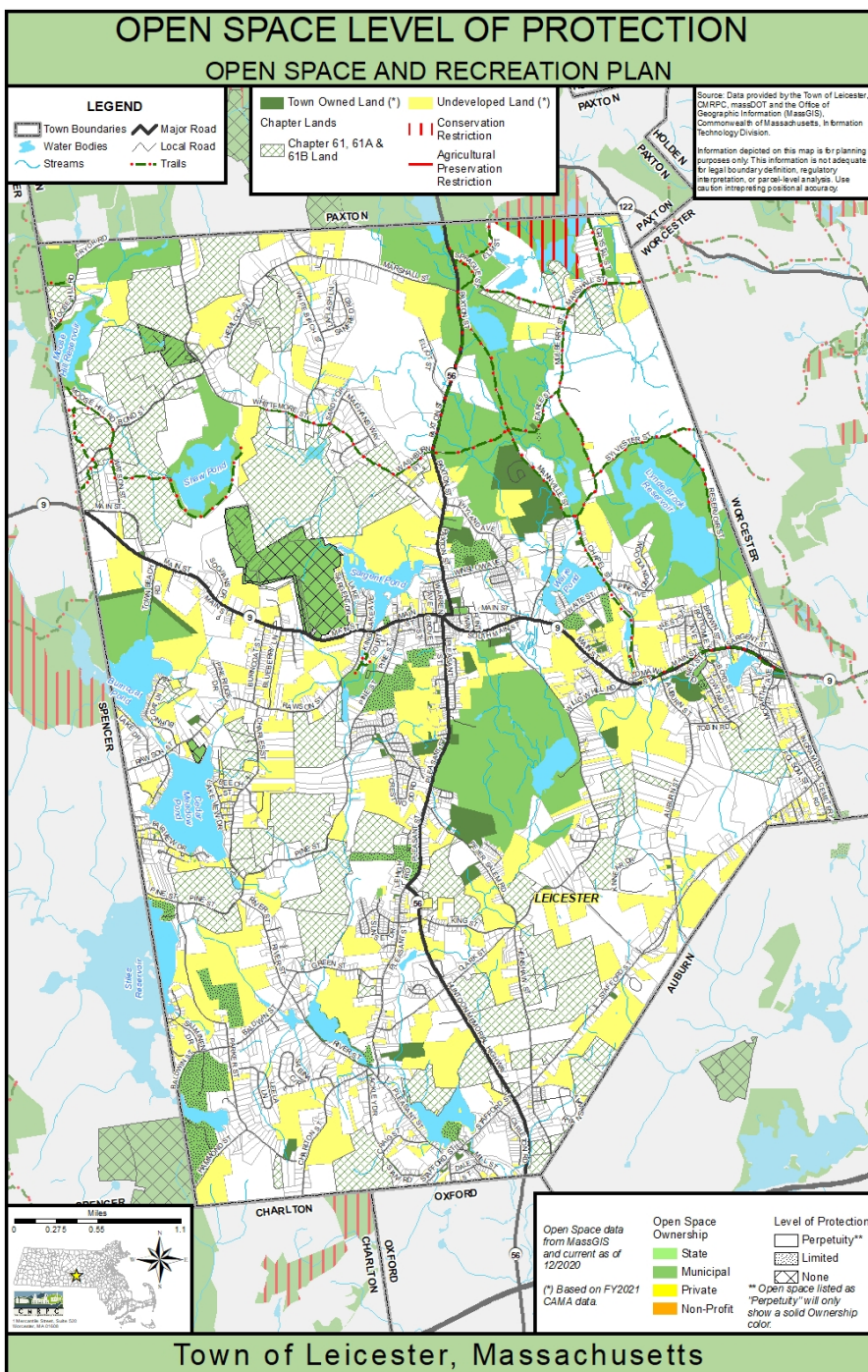
A new swing set at Towtaid Park is accessible for children with some disabilities

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION CHALLENGES

- No permanently protected agricultural land
- Water contamination
- Few trails
- Vandalism
- Reliance on volunteers could lead to burnout
- No dedicated staff, small budget, little maintenance, few improvements
- Becker College used to maintain some fields → now Town responsibility

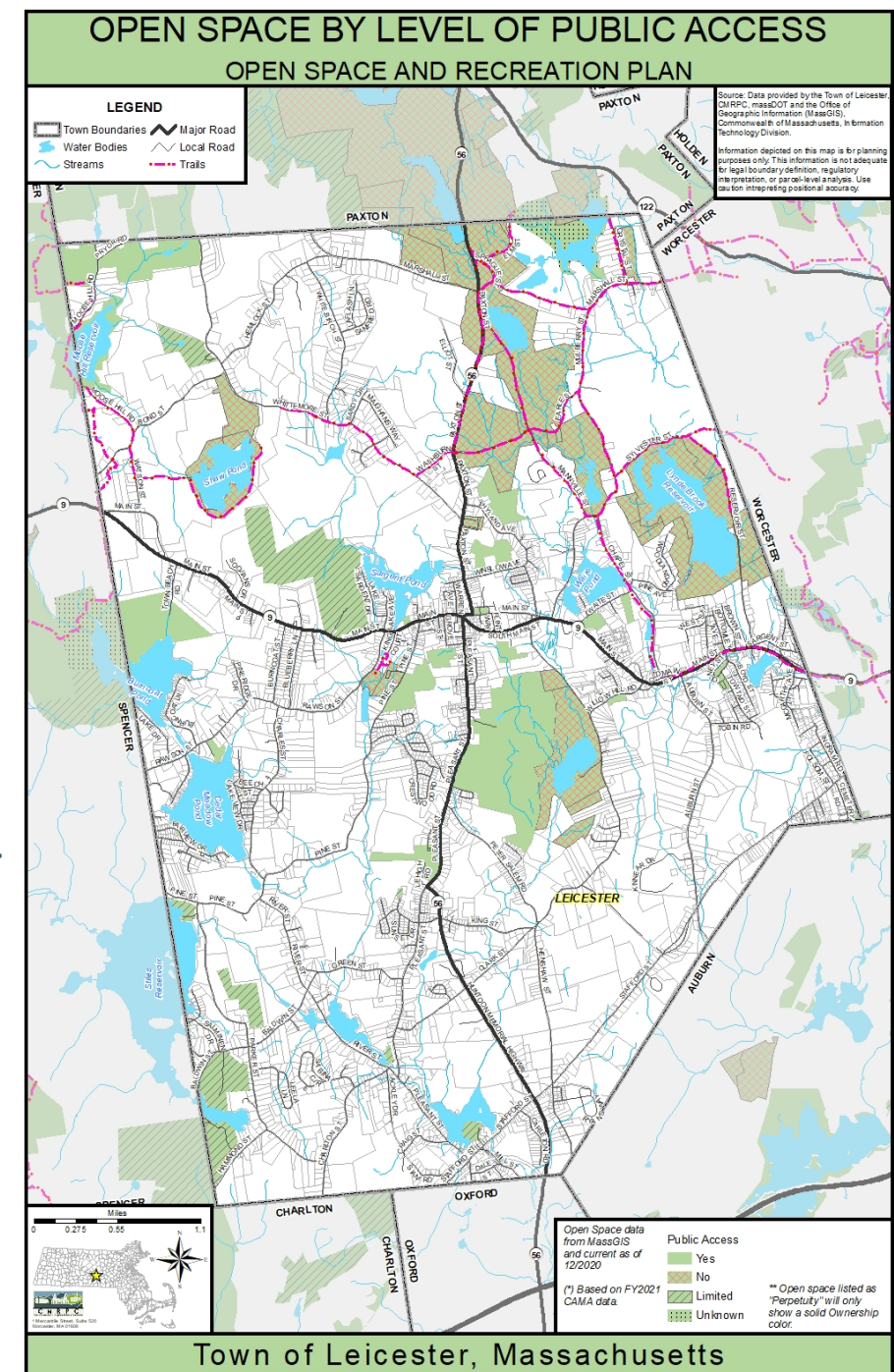


The overgrown volleyball court at Rochdale Park



Map on left:
Lots of open space in Leicester (everything green, yellow, and shaded)

Map on right:
Little, *public protected* open space



PLAN GOALS

LEICESTER OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN GOALS

1. Protect open space and natural resources, particularly water resources.
2. Provide and maintain recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.
3. Build a strong constituency of open space advocates through education and collaborative partnerships.
4. Increase public participation in open space and recreation planning.
5. Identify appropriate resources to support the above goals.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

- Survey was available to take online
 - Paper copies were available by request
 - Survey was open from April 7th– June 11th
- The survey was advertised online via the Town Website, Facebook, and was forwarded to local stakeholders for distribution
- Paper flyers were posted at locations around town
- **A total of 359 responses**, or approximately 3% of the total population

What is your favorite open space in Leicester?

1. Town Common

2. Rochdale Park

3. Community Field



4. Leicester High School

5. Becker College

What recreational or open space would you like to see developed in Leicester?

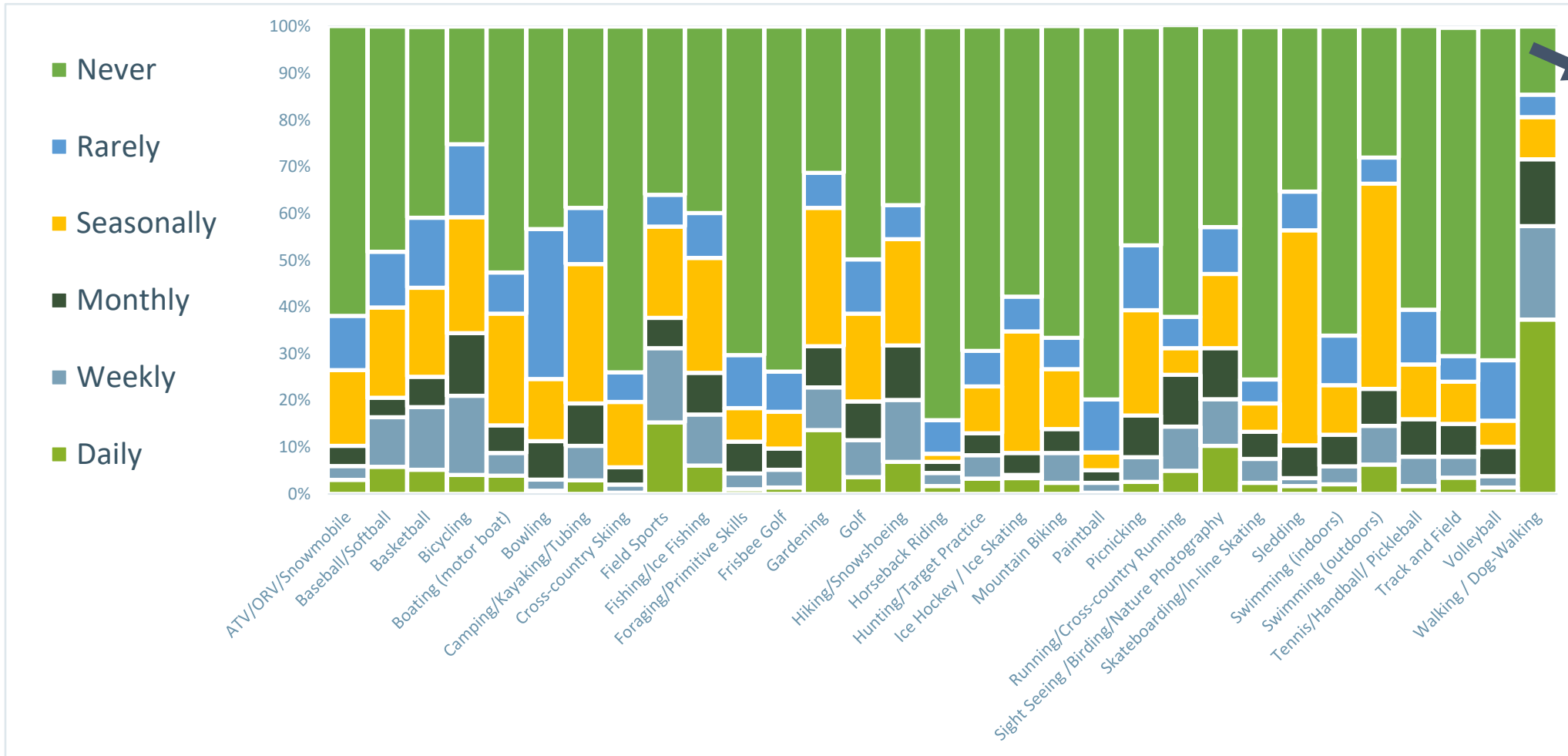
1. Shared use trail system (hiking, biking, horses - not ATVs)
2. Town beach and kayak launch (provide public water access)
3. New or improved multipurpose athletic fields, including fields at the high school

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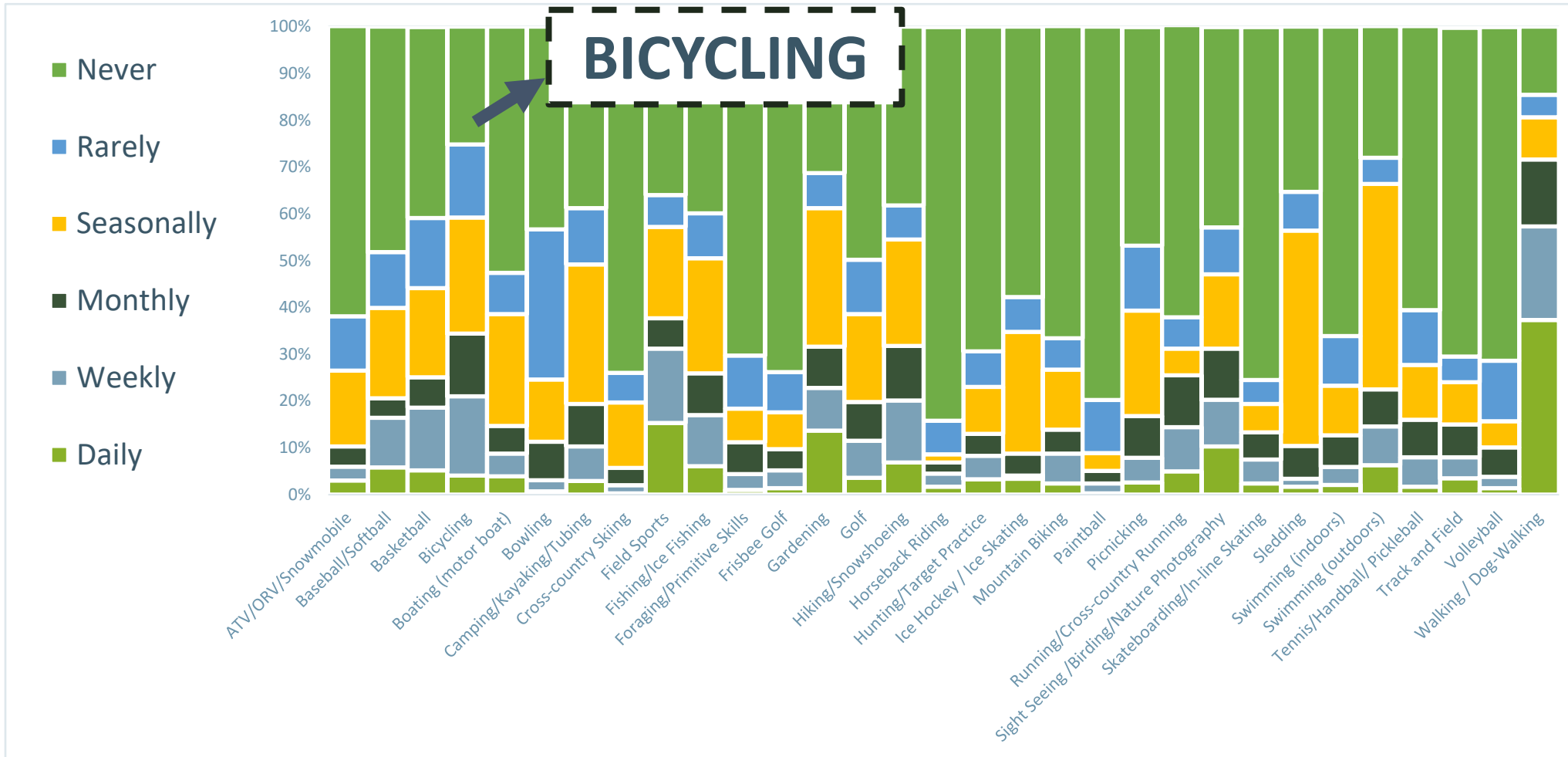
EXISTING
UPKEEP
WAS A
COMMON
CONCERN

What activities do you use open spaces for...

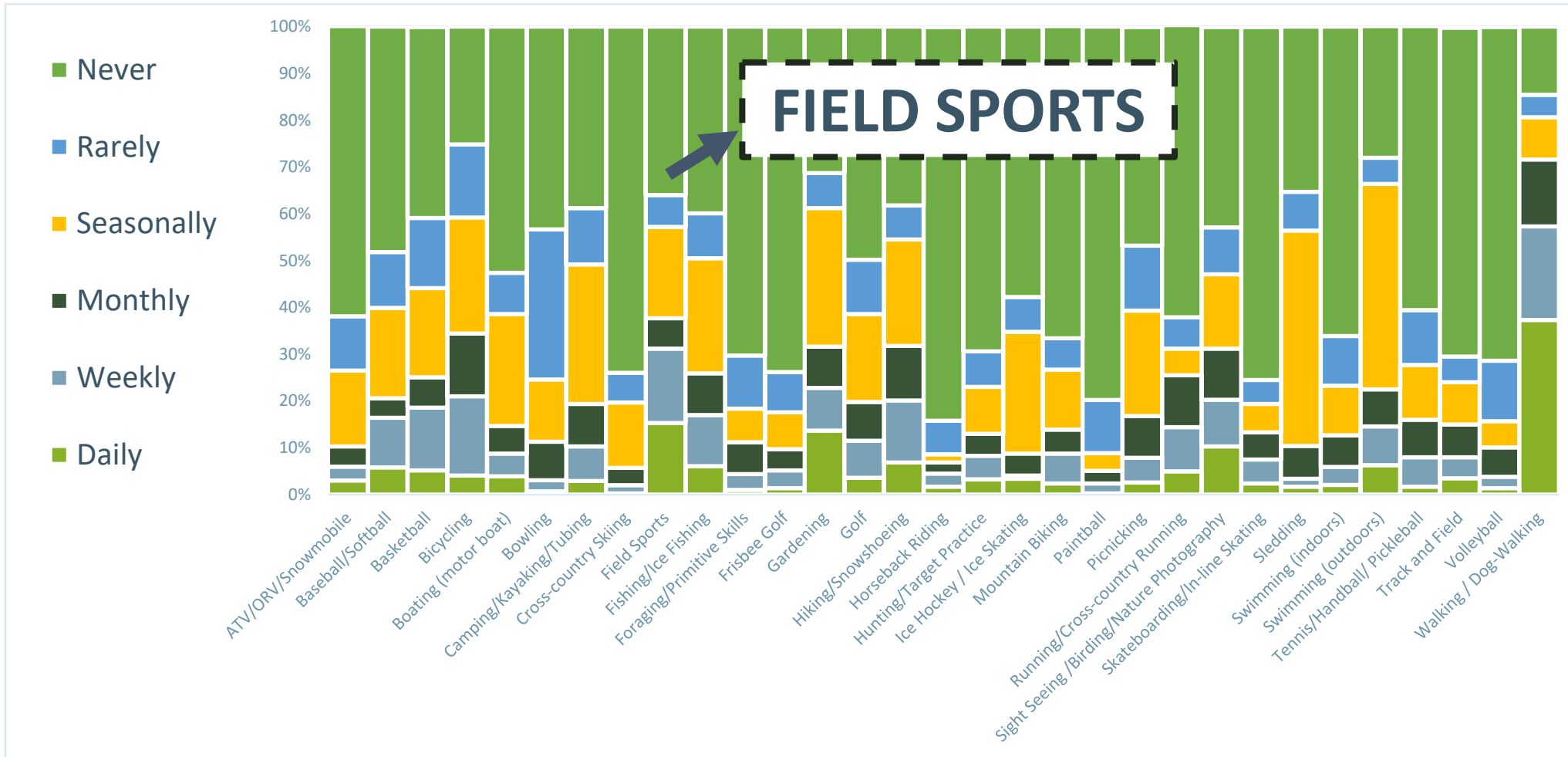


**WALKING
/DOG
WALKING**

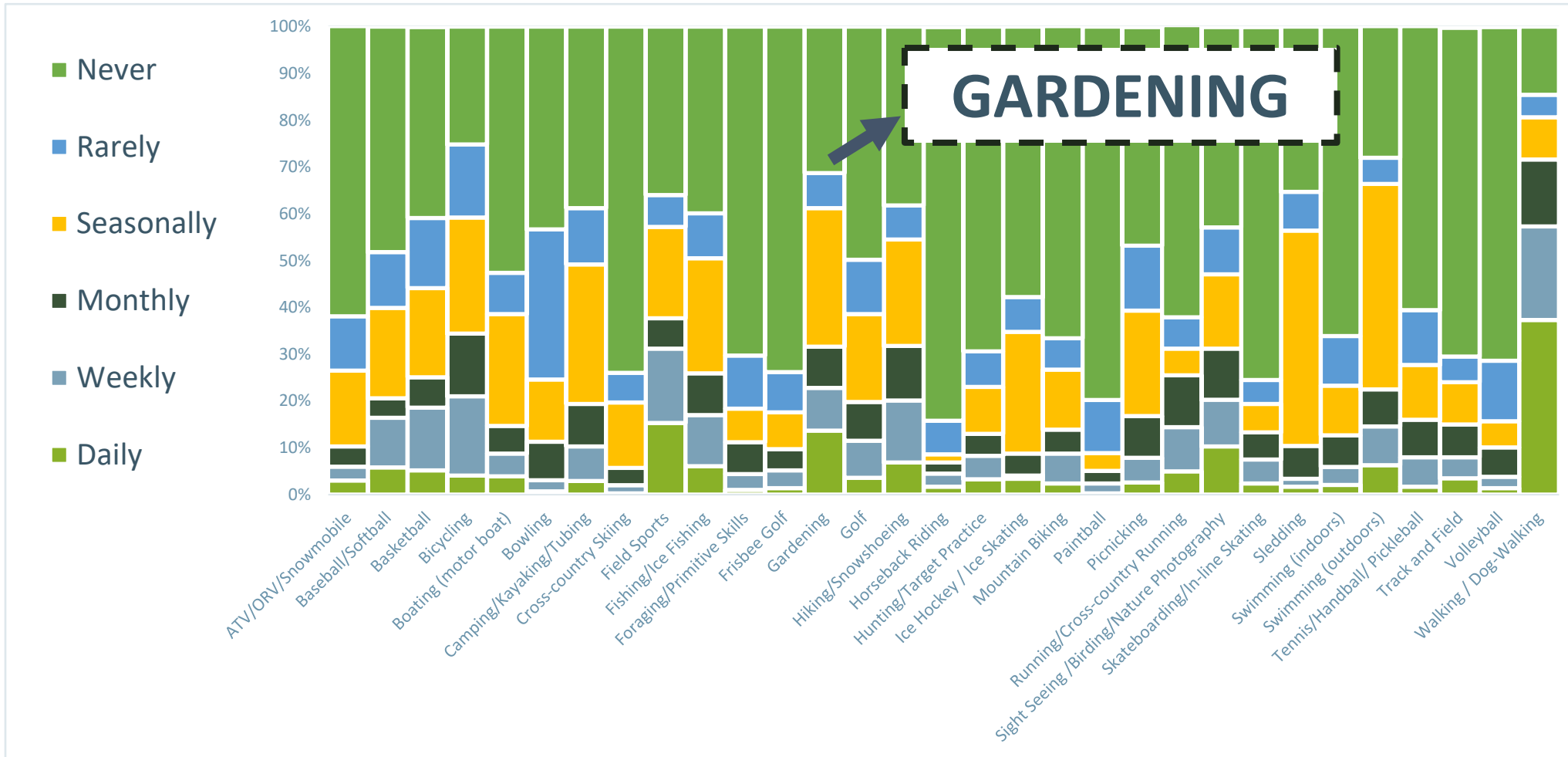
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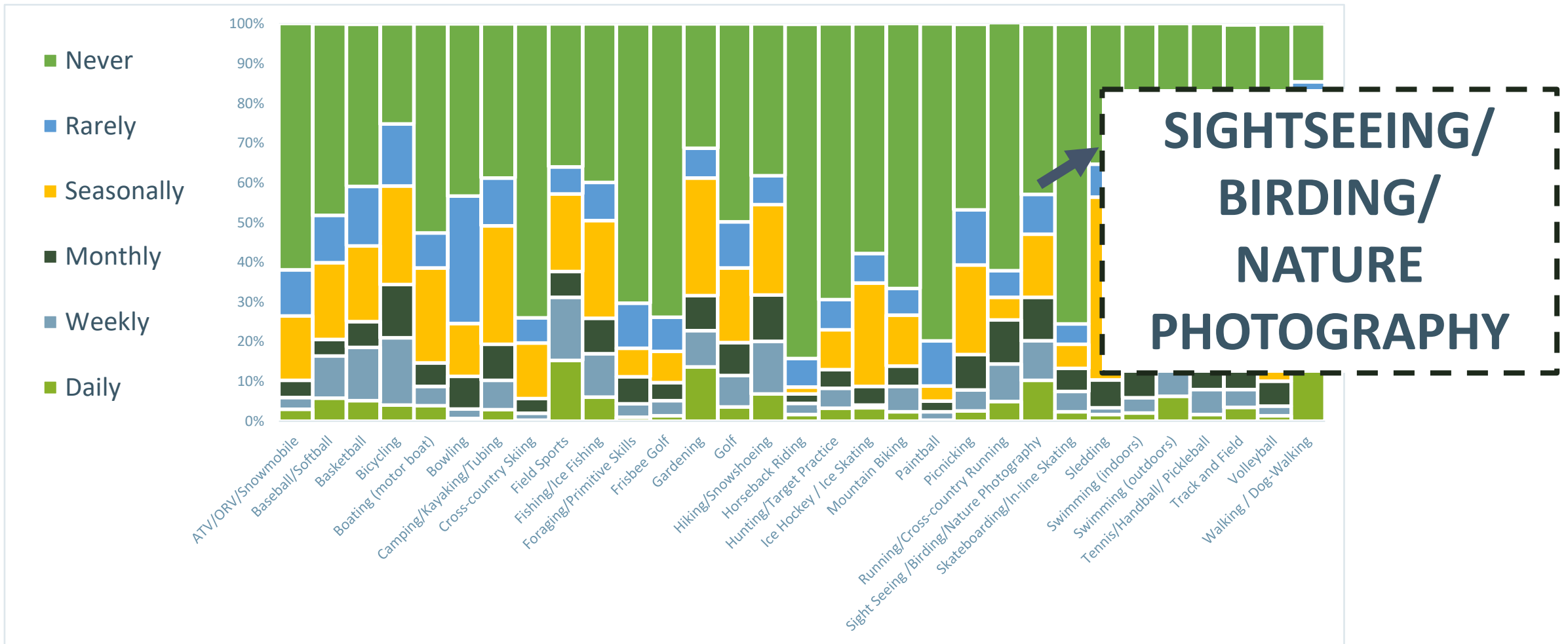
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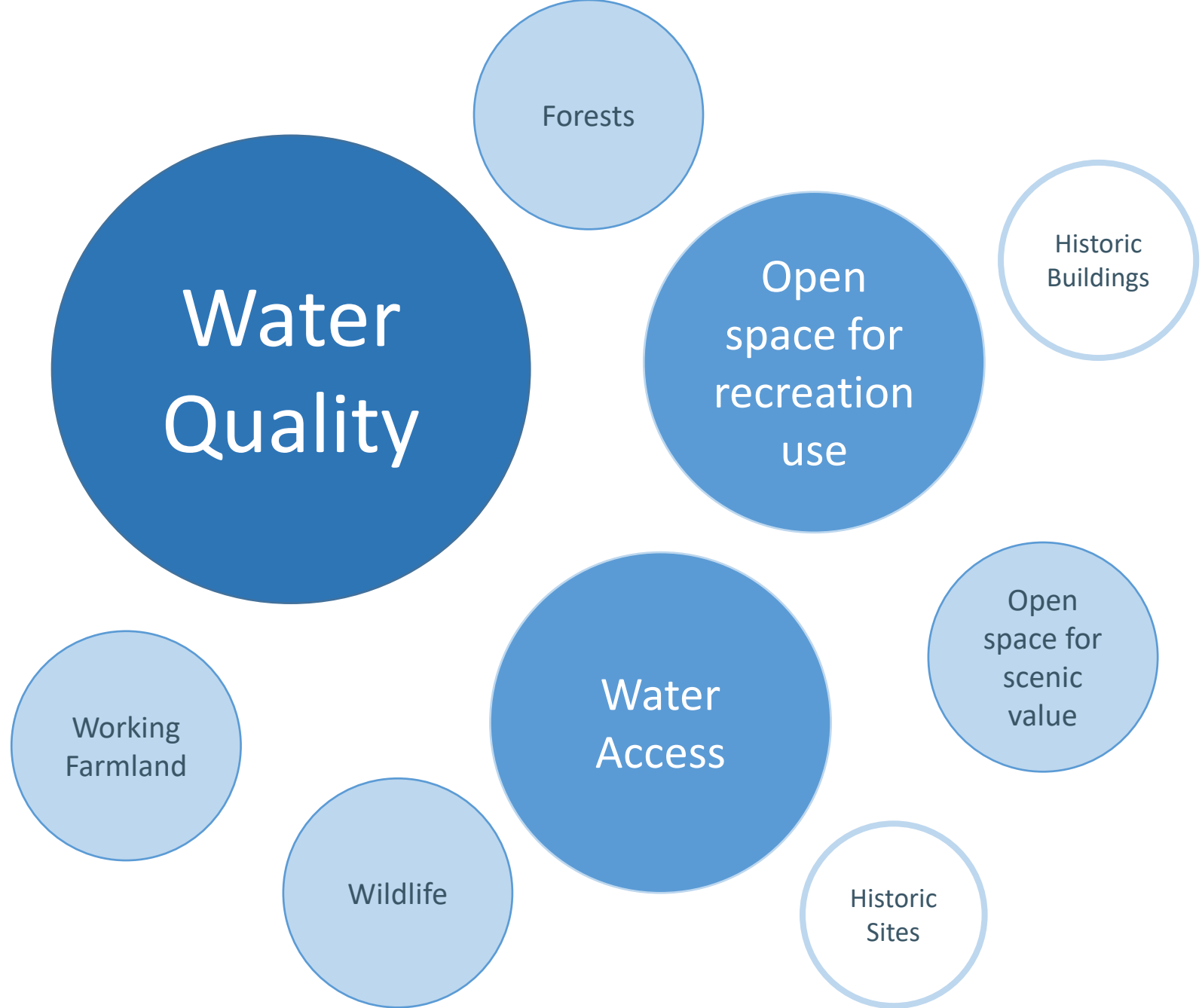
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What are the top reasons to protect open spaces in Leicester?



**EACH
“REASON”
WAS THE #1
PRIORITY OF
AT LEAST 3
PEOPLE**



**DIVERSE
PRIORITIES**

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

AREA 1 INCLUDES:

- Northwest Leicester
- Moose Hill WMA
- Shaw Pond Reservoir
- Mt. Pleasant CC

AREA 3 INCLUDES:

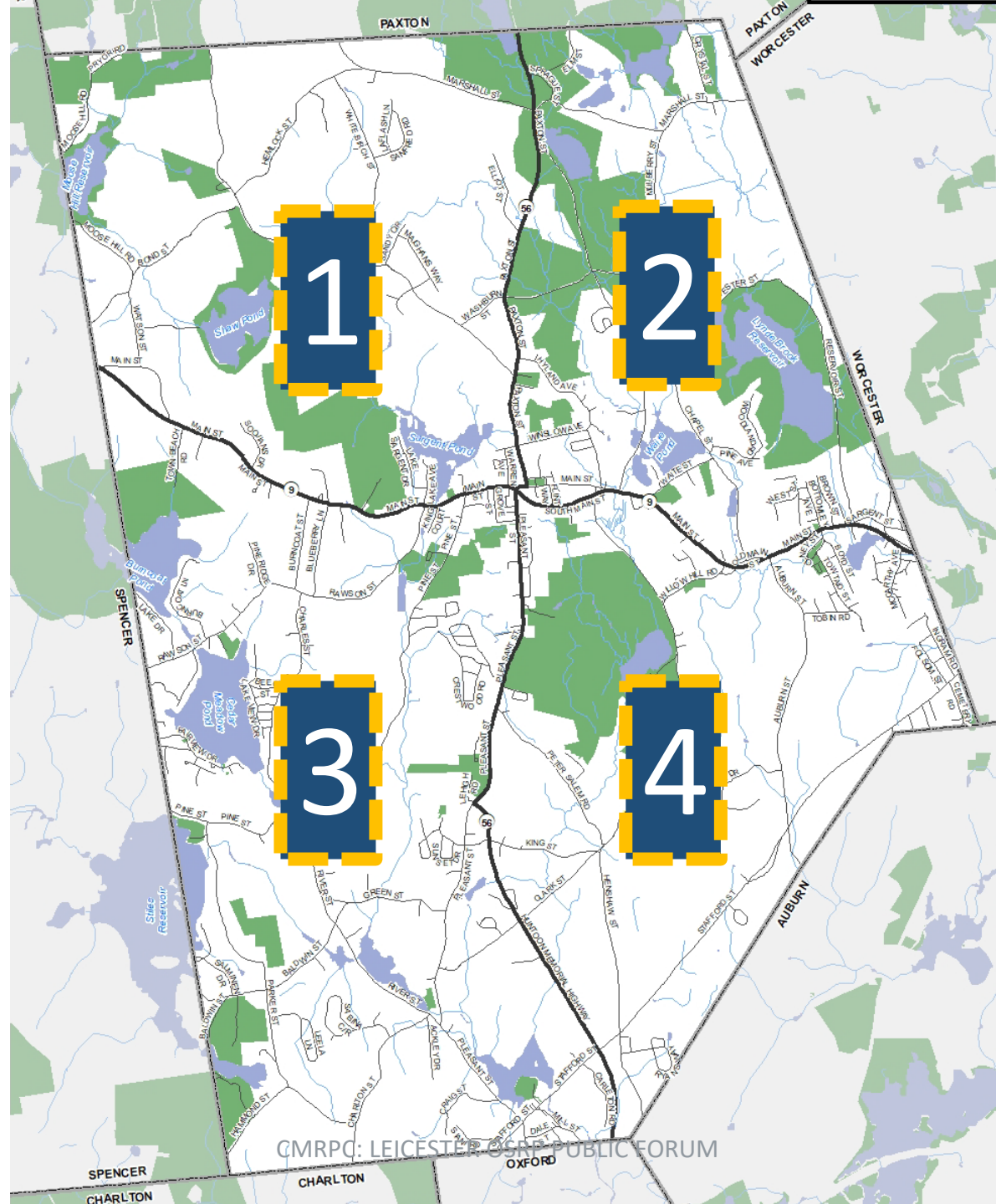
- Southwest Leicester
- Rochdale Park
- Burncoat Park
- Memorial School

AREA 2 INCLUDES:

- Northeast Leicester
- Worcester WMA
- Southwick Pond
- Cooke Forest
- School Fields
- Community Field/Tarentino Park
- Town Common
- Becker Fields

AREA 4 INCLUDES:

- Southeast Leicester
- Hillcrest CC
- Russell Memorial Field
- Towtaid Park
- Lion's Park



QUESTIONS?



Thank you!

Any questions or additional
comments for the OSRP Committee?
Please email me at
mhsmith@cmrpc.org