

epic Jax

90-Day Touchdown

**Building Safer Communities:
A Blueprint for Public Safety and Park
Activation in Jacksonville**

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Executive Summary

The EpicJax Sprint Team, a coalition of local leaders from nonprofits, businesses, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, and the City of Jacksonville, has set an ambitious goal: to make Jacksonville the safest city in the country.

Through the EpicJax 90-Day Sprint process, this team selected the Epic Idea, "Activating Parks by 25%", as a high-impact, low-effort solution to quickly improve safety and community engagement in public parks. An Epic Idea refers to a tangible idea that can be tactically implemented to make progress toward a specific target. This particular initiative begins with two pilot locations: Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center.

The strategy integrates infrastructure improvements, enhanced security measures, and community programming to transform these parks into safe, active hubs of connection and resilience. Each recommendation includes Quick Wins, ensuring immediate visible progress while larger, long-term projects are implemented. To support the efficient execution of these recommendations, we propose a coordinated 90-day sprint to streamline implementation, ensuring quick and lasting improvements that maximize impact.

Key Recommendations

- **Quick Safety Wins (Immediate, 1-2 weeks):**
Address high-impact, visible improvements like repairing benches, water fountains, and emptying dumpsters to enhance safety quickly
- **Upgrade Lighting and Install Surveillance Cameras (4-6 weeks):**
Improve visibility and install cameras for monitoring, ensuring a safer environment both day and night
- **Optimize Patrol Timing and Increase Security Presence (Ongoing):**
Use real-time crime data to enhance patrol efficiency, focusing security efforts during peak hours
- **Implement JSO "Community Connection Days" (Ongoing, monthly)**
Strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the community through non-enforcement events like cookouts and family activities
- **Create a Celebrated Entryway at Johnnie W. Walker Park (2-4 weeks):**
Design and construct a welcoming main entrance that fosters pride and organization
- **Add Recreational Amenities (2-4 weeks):**
Install game tables, updated concession stands, and additional courts to increase park usage and positive activity
- **Community Programming and Youth Engagement (Ongoing):**
Implement consistent youth-focused and community-wide programs, in partnership with local organizations, to foster a long-term sense of safety and engagement

- **Improve Infrastructure and Cleanliness (Ongoing):**
Regular park cleanups and minor repairs to maintain a safe and welcoming environment
- **Trimming Trees and Landscaping (Immediate, 1-2 weeks):**
Improve visibility by trimming trees and maintaining landscaping, reducing concealed areas
- **Integrate Technology Upgrades for Park Management (Ongoing):**
Use smart technology to track visitor data, improve resource management, and enhance overall park experience

Goals & Objectives

- **Perception of Safety:** Increase by 20% based on post-sprint surveys
- **Park Use:** Increase visitor numbers by 15%
- **Crime Reduction:** Decrease person/property crimes by 10% within a 1-mile radius
- **Community Engagement:** Foster stronger connections between law enforcement and residents through regular, non-enforcement engagement events
- **Youth Engagement:** Increase youth participation in park programs by 25%

Background

Who We Are

The Jacksonville Civic Council's Advance Committee is dedicated to advancing economic mobility, access, and resilience for all community members. This report is a result of the Advance Committee's EpicJax 90-Day Sprint Kick-Off on June 5th, 2024, where leaders across sectors gathered to identify actionable ways to improve public safety. Through the EpicJax 90-Day Sprint process, a cross-sector team of local community leaders from nonprofits, businesses, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO), and the City of Jacksonville came together to address the question: How can we ensure all Jacksonville residents feel safe and secure?

Through a series of ideation and prioritization exercises, participants brainstormed transformational solutions from the perspective of families and individuals. Each group worked to identify top themes and refine them into testable solutions. These solutions were ranked by their potential impact and effort, with an emphasis on ideas that were high impact, low effort. After a group vote, the top-voted idea became "Activating Parks by 25%"—a focused approach to enhancing public safety through activating public parks. This idea emerged as the most impactful way to enhance public safety and community well-being by focusing on public spaces that serve as vital gathering points for Jacksonville's residents.

By concentrating efforts on two pilot parks—Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center—the aim is to improve both the perception and reality of safety in these public spaces.

Strategic Selection of Focus Parks

Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park were chosen due to their role as central community hubs and specific crime challenges identified by JSO crime data analysis.

Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park

Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park is a vibrant hub for family gatherings, youth sports, and local events, playing a central role in the life of the community. However, the park faces significant challenges with person-related crimes, particularly on weekends. With its expansive grounds and proximity to the Bob Hayes Sports Complex and Legends Community Center, the park draws large crowds, making it an ideal candidate for safety improvements that will benefit a wide array of visitors.

Named after Detective Lonnie Miller, a beloved figure known for his 26 years of dedicated service to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and his work with the children of the community, enhancing safety at this park not only honors his legacy but also reinforces the park's commitment to being a space of unity, recreation, and security. Expanding programming and adding security measures will allow the park to continue serving as a vital community resource while addressing safety concerns that have affected the park's potential as a fully activated public space.

Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center

Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center is a well-used space for local markets and community events, but it is surrounded by higher incidents of property-related crime. Named for Johnnie Walker, a dedicated civil rights leader and community advocate, this park holds a rich legacy of service and civic engagement.

Managed by a community-based organization, the park benefits from strong local ties and active participation in community-driven programs. By elevating safety measures, we not only enhance the security of the space but also honor Johnnie Walker's life's work by ensuring the park continues to serve as a hub for civic engagement and connection. Strengthening its safety infrastructure supports the legacy of community involvement that the park represents.

By focusing on these two parks, we aim to create replicable solutions that can be scaled across Jacksonville, transforming public spaces into safe, vibrant community hubs.

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Key Findings

Blue Zones and Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index

Communities across the U.S., including here in Jacksonville, are significantly lowering healthcare costs, improving productivity, fostering economic development, and enjoying a higher quality of life through the Blue Zones Project. Blue Zone outcomes are measured by Gallup's National Health and Well-Being Index survey. The index includes factors like emotional health, physical health, healthy behaviors, work environment, and access to basic needs. Perception of safety is an integral part of this broader well-being assessment. Gallup has found that people's perception of safety — both in their communities and their day-to-day lives — plays a significant role in their overall well-being. This perception influences mental health, stress levels, and quality of life.

The National Health and Well-Being Index was first deployed across Duval County as "Wave 1" in 2022-2023. Benchmark data reveals just under 80% of residents feel safe in their community. EpicJax strives to increase that number to 90% by 2032.

Activating Lonnie Miller Park and Johnnie Walker Park is the first step to getting us closer to this overall target of feeling safe in our communities.

Well-Being Index Overall Score	US Total	East Jax	Northside	Westside	Rest of Jax	Jax Total
Feel Safe and Secure (% Disagree)	12.1	28.1	33.4	30.9	16.7	20.4

Crime Data Overview

In our analysis of Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center, we focused on crime data provided by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office within a 0.25-mile radius of both parks. This analysis revealed key patterns related to the type, timing, and frequency of incidents, which guided our recommendations for enhancing safety and community engagement.

Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park

Within a 0.25-mile radius of Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park, a total of 224 recorded incidents are categorized as follows:

- Person-Related Crimes: 59 incidents (26.3%)
- Property-Related Crimes: 97 incidents (43.3%)
- Society Crimes: 68 incidents (30.4%)

Key Findings:

- Person-related crimes peak at 12 AM and 1 PM, indicating a need for enhanced patrols during these times, particularly late at night when the park is more vulnerable.
- Property-related crimes are most frequent at 7 AM, 1 PM, 4 PM, and 6 PM, suggesting a need for surveillance and security measures in parking lots and playgrounds during both the morning and afternoon hours.
- Society crimes (e.g., public disturbances, drug-related offenses) peak between 11 PM and 3 AM, highlighting the need for late-night patrols and improved lighting in more secluded areas of the park.

The days with the highest crime rates are Sunday (42 incidents), followed by Tuesday (37 incidents) and Wednesday (38 incidents), indicating that weekends and early to mid-week periods should be prioritized for security presence.

Recommendation Summary:

The data supports recommendations for improved lighting, optimized patrol schedules, and enhanced surveillance to address both person- and property-related crimes. By focusing on high-crime times and areas, these strategies aim to enhance safety and reduce criminal activity. Additionally, community engagement initiatives like JSO "Community Connection Days" can foster trust and increase positive park activities, transforming Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park into a safer, more vibrant community hub.

Johnnie W. Walker Park

Within a 0.25-mile radius of Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center, there were 90 recorded incidents, broken down as follows:

- Person-Related Crimes: 36 incidents (40%)
- Property-Related Crimes: 31 incidents (34.4%)
- Society Crimes: 23 incidents (25.6%)

Key Findings:

- Person-related crimes peak at 2 PM and between 8 PM and 12 AM, suggesting a focus on patrols and surveillance during these hours.
- Property-related crimes occur most frequently at 10 AM, 3 PM, and between 10 PM - 12 AM, making morning and evening patrols essential for preventing theft and vandalism.
- Society crimes (e.g., public disturbances, drug-related activities) are concentrated between 2 PM - 4 PM and 8 PM - 10 PM, highlighting the need for increased visibility and community engagement during these times.

The days with the highest crime rates are Saturday (18 incidents), Thursday (16 incidents), and Sunday (14 incidents), indicating a need for increased security presence on weekends and mid-week.

Recommendation Summary:

The data highlights the need for optimized patrol schedules, lighting upgrades, and increased community programming to improve both the real and perceived safety of Johnnie W. Walker Park. Initiatives like the JSO "Community Connection Days" can help foster stronger community relations and reduce crime, creating a safer and more welcoming environment.

Common Trends Across Both Parks

- **Underutilized Areas:**

Crimes tend to concentrate in poorly lit or less populated areas. Addressing these "blind spots" through improved lighting and community events can encourage positive park usage and reduce criminal activity.

- **Evening Incidents:**

Both parks experience increased crime in the evening, from dusk to early night. Additional lighting and a visible security presence during these hours are crucial to improving safety.

- **Public Restroom Areas:**

Issues related to illicit activities near public restrooms were noted in both parks. Installing security cameras and improving sightlines will help reduce these activities.

Strategic Focus

The analysis of crime data supports the selection of Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park as pilot locations for the EpicJax 90-Day Sprint. These parks face specific challenges that can be mitigated through targeted interventions such as enhanced lighting, increased security, and community engagement initiatives. By focusing on these parks, we can create a scalable framework to improve safety and engagement across Jacksonville's public spaces.

These findings are further reinforced by community perceptions, gathered through extensive survey feedback.

Survey Overview

Leveraging the network of the EpicJax Sprint Team, two community surveys were distributed to key community gatekeepers and stakeholders who had direct connection to the communities surrounding Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center, ensuring the survey reached residents who frequently interact with these spaces.

We gathered insights on residents' perception of safety, usage patterns, and their ideas for park activation. Gathering this additional layer of community information not only confirmed previously collected crime data, it also expanded on what "safety" means to residents. The survey focused on identifying the most significant factors contributing to both the real and perceived safety concerns, as well as opportunities for community engagement.

A total of 21 respondents participated in the survey for Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park, and 15 respondents for Johnnie W. Walker Park, providing valuable insights into the community's perception of safety, usage patterns, and ideas for park activation. While the sample size is not large enough to be statistically generalizable or intended as a scientific conclusion, the survey data nonetheless provided critical qualitative insights.

These results, drawn from community members and stakeholders directly engaged with the parks, served as a foundational element in shaping the recommendations and strategies to make Jacksonville's parks safer, more vibrant, and inclusive for all.

Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park

- **53% of respondents rated the park's safety between 1 and 3 on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being Not Safe at All and 5 being Extremely Safe),** indicating significant safety concerns among over half of the respondents.
- **53% of respondents also rated the park's cleanliness between 1 and 3,** showing a similar level of concern regarding park maintenance.
- Respondents frequently mentioned **security, lighting, and landscaping as critical factors** for feeling safe in the park.
- **14 of the 21 respondents cited both poor lighting and security as a factor making them feel unsafe,** while 15 pointed to issues with cleanliness.

Johnnie W. Walker Park

- **67% of respondents rated the park's safety between 1 and 3 on a scale of 1 to 5,** demonstrating greater concern for safety compared to Lonnie C. Miller.
- **67% of respondents rated cleanliness between 1 and 3,** indicating dissatisfaction with the park's maintenance.
- Common safety concerns included **poor lighting, lack of security patrols, and park cleanliness.**
- **11 out of 15 respondents cited both poor lighting and lack of security** as factors contributing to their feelings of unsafety.

Common Trends Across Both Parks

- A notable portion of respondents expressed concerns about park safety after dark, with many attributing this to inadequate lighting and insufficient law enforcement presence. This perception of safety after park hours may impact resident's decision to walk or bicycle along sidewalks and/or roads adjacent to the parks either for recreation purposes or as a form of transportation.
- Cleanliness and maintenance were also common concerns, with many respondents stating that a cleaner park would contribute to a stronger sense of safety and community pride.
- Community programming emerged as a recurring theme, with several respondents suggesting that regular events and activities would activate the parks and increase overall usage, leading to more natural surveillance.

These insights helped shape the recommendations for improving infrastructure (e.g., lighting and surveillance), increasing security presence, and activating the parks with community-led programs, all aimed at fostering safer and more engaging public spaces.

Mobile Visitor Data and Insights

In addition to the crime data and community survey, we used mobile visitor data, which aggregates anonymous cell phone location data, to gain a deeper understanding of the demographics, timing, and origins of park visitors at Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center. This data plays a critical role in helping to optimize and prioritize our recommendations, ensuring they align with actual park usage patterns.

Visitor Demographics

- **Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park serves a primarily African American community**, with 49.6% of visitors identifying as African American and 35.8% identifying as White. The median household income of visitors is \$55,002. Educational backgrounds show 34% of visitors have a high school diploma, 31.4% of visitors have some college/2 years of education, 14.6% hold a bachelor's degree, and 7.3% have pursued a higher degree.
- **Johnnie W. Walker Park serves a similarly diverse population**, with 46.9% identifying as African American and 38.6% of visitors as White. The median household income is \$55,889. Educational backgrounds show 35.2% of visitors completed high school, 31.1% of visitors have some college/2 years of education, 15% hold a bachelor's degree, and 7.4% have pursued a higher degree.

Days and Times of Visitation

- Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park sees peak visitation on Saturdays (17.1%), Sundays (18.7%) and Mondays (17.8%), primarily between 5 PM and 9 PM, with 40% of visitors arriving during that time.
- Johnnie W. Walker Park experiences its peak on Saturdays (18.7%), Thursdays (16.6%), and Tuesdays (14.5%), with most visitors arriving between 3 PM and 9 PM, with 56% of visitors arriving during that time.

Visitor Origins

Both parks primarily attract visitors from the surrounding Jacksonville area, with most visitors traveling from nearby neighborhoods and returning within 30 minutes of their visit. Of the two parks, Johnnie W. Walker sources visitors from a broader area, likely due to the number of youth sports events taking place there during the week. The mobile visitor data

indicates that these parks serve a hyperlocal audience, with consistent visitation patterns tied to neighborhood events and family gatherings.

How Mobile Visitor Data Informs our Approach

This mobile visitor data is a crucial component of our comprehensive strategy, as it provides insights into who is using these parks, when they are most active, and where visitors are coming from. These insights help us:

- **Target Recommendations:** Demographic information ensures our safety and engagement strategies are tailored to the parks' primary users.
- **Optimize Patrol and Programming Timing:** The peak visitation times inform patrol schedules and help prioritize programming for maximum effectiveness.
- **Prioritize Equity:** Understanding the income and educational backgrounds of park visitors ensures that resource allocation addresses the needs of underserved communities.

Incorporation of Key Findings into Recommendations

The combination of crime data, survey results, and mobile visitor data provided a comprehensive understanding of the safety challenges and opportunities at Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center. These insights were critical in shaping the final recommendations, allowing us to address both the real and perceived safety concerns expressed by residents.

The mobile visitor data further enriched our understanding of the demographics, timing, and origins of park visitors, offering specific insights into when and how people use the parks. For example, we identified that both parks experience peak

usage on weekends between 4 PM and 9 PM, highlighting critical times for

increasing security presence and optimizing patrol schedules. Additionally, understanding the income levels and educational backgrounds of park visitors ensures that our resource allocation prioritizes the needs of underserved communities.

Addressing Disparities: A Path Forward

To ensure that all Jacksonville parks offer safe, welcoming, and well-maintained environments—regardless of neighborhood demographics—it is critical to address the disparities identified through both community feedback and data analysis. Parks in more affluent areas are perceived as better maintained, with greater security and more frequent programming, while parks in underserved neighborhoods face challenges around safety, cleanliness, and staffing.

According to La’Dora Taylor, Parks District Manager, the core challenges that affect park safety and engagement citywide are security, advertising, and staffing. Tackling these disparities requires a strategic, equitable approach to resource allocation, programming, and community engagement.

1. Equitable Resource Allocation

Understanding the income and educational backgrounds of park visitors from the mobile visitor data ensures that resource allocation prioritizes parks in less affluent areas. Parks in underserved areas often lack consistent maintenance and adequate safety measures, contributing to feelings of neglect among residents. By prioritizing these parks for immediate improvements, such as enhanced lighting, surveillance cameras, and infrastructure repairs, the city can close the gap between neighborhoods and address long-standing disparities.

Opportunity

While the city's Parks Master Plan and Capital Improvement Program already allocate resources for improvements, it's possible that parks in more affluent areas receive additional support in the form of donations and volunteer efforts from the surrounding community. This additional private investment may widen the gap beyond what city funding can account for. By overinvesting in parks located in less affluent areas, the City of Jacksonville can compensate for this disparity and ensure a more equitable park experience across all neighborhoods.

How to Address

- **Equity-Focused Budget:**

By adopting a budget framework that directs resources toward parks in less affluent areas first, the city can create a more equitable experience for all residents. Immediate resources should be allocated for safety measures, maintenance, and programming in these parks, ensuring they receive equal or greater attention than parks in wealthier areas.

- **Encouraging Community Engagement:**

Encouraging community involvement in parks, particularly in underserved areas, can help close the gap created by the additional private support that parks in affluent areas receive. Developing community volunteer programs, corporate partnerships, and local sponsorship opportunities can boost both financial and volunteer resources for parks that need them most.

- **Transparency and Community Involvement:**

It's essential that residents understand how these disparities are being addressed. Clear communication about planned upgrades, timelines, and maintenance schedules will build trust in the city's commitment to equity. Furthermore, actively engaging with the community during this process ensures that the improvements meet their most pressing needs and foster a sense of ownership and involvement.

How Mobile Visitor Data Strengthens Equity Efforts

By incorporating mobile visitor data, we gain a clearer picture of the demographics and patterns of use in these parks. This allows us to:

- Tailor improvements to the needs of the visitors who are most frequently using these spaces, ensuring that resources align with community demographics and visitor patterns.
- Ensure that upgrades, such as increased security presence and infrastructure improvements, are implemented at the times when the parks are most heavily used, maximizing the positive impact on the community.

2. Community-Led Programs and Partnerships

One of the most effective ways to address staffing and maintenance challenges is by leveraging community engagement. Programs that encourage residents to participate in park upkeep, safety initiatives, and community events not only supplement city resources but also foster a sense of local ownership and pride. These community-led programs can be supported by partnerships with local nonprofits, businesses, and volunteer groups, creating a system of shared responsibility for the upkeep and safety of the parks.

Opportunity

Existing initiatives, such as the Adopt-a-Park program, can be expanded to engage more community members, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. Encouraging residents to take part in maintenance, community events, and youth programming can help fill gaps in staffing while creating a stronger sense of connection to the parks.

How to Address

- **Partnership Development:**

Establish formal partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and schools to sponsor community events and provide volunteers for park

maintenance and programming. These partnerships can include sponsorship for community clean-up days, local sports leagues, or arts and cultural programs.

- **Supplement Staffing Needs:**

By involving the community in the day-to-day upkeep and management of the parks, these efforts can supplement city staffing shortages, while empowering residents to take pride in their public spaces. These partnerships also create opportunities for employment or internship programs to help maintain parks.

3. Security and Advertising Improvements

Addressing **both the real and perceived safety** of parks in underserved areas requires an integrated approach that combines security enhancements with effective community engagement. Concerns such as poor lighting, a lack of law enforcement presence, and the absence of organized community activities contribute to negative perceptions of safety. Enhancing security measures alongside promoting park events and activities can significantly shift the way residents experience their parks.

Opportunity

The city can partner with local businesses to sponsor advertising campaigns that raise awareness about park events and programming, boosting participation and creating a more active community presence. Engaged communities tend to produce

natural surveillance, which can deter crime by increasing positive foot traffic and visibility.

How to Address

- **Security Upgrades**

Optimize patrol timing by using real-time crime data to focus security efforts during peak hours. Installing surveillance cameras and improving park lighting can immediately address the most common concerns, particularly during evening and weekend hours when the parks are most active.

- **Advertising and Engagement**

Use targeted marketing strategies—such as social media campaigns, posters, and local advertising—to promote park events and programs, especially in underserved neighborhoods. Increased public engagement through events will enhance both the perception and reality of safety, as busy parks are typically seen as safer spaces.

A Collaborative Path Forward

By addressing these disparities with a focus on equity, collaboration, and community engagement, Jacksonville's parks can become vibrant, safe spaces for all residents. The key to success lies in ensuring that every park, regardless of location, receives the attention, resources, and programming needed to thrive. Working within existing city frameworks, such as the Parks Master Plan, alongside community-led initiatives, will provide the foundation for a more equitable and sustainable future for Jacksonville's parks.

Research-Backed Factors Enhancing Public Safety

In addition to addressing the challenges and opportunities identified, our recommendations are supported by research-backed factors that enhance safety in public spaces:

1. Visibility

- Well-lit and open spaces create a strong feeling of safety by reducing opportunities for crime. Studies show that improved lighting can reduce crime by up to 21-39% depending on the area, contributing to both deterrence and fostering community pride.
- Sources:
 - i. [Office of Justice Programs](#)
 - ii. [Crime Solutions](#)

2. Security Presence

- Visible security patrols, particularly in crime hot spots, have been shown to reduce crime significantly. Studies indicate that targeted patrols in high-crime areas are highly effective, particularly when combined with community engagement and problem-solving efforts. This approach is known to improve both public perceptions of safety and reduce crime rates.
- Sources:
 - i. [College of Policing Study](#)
 - ii. [Justice Inspectorates](#)

3. Surveillance:

- The presence of surveillance cameras in public spaces is effective in deterring crime, especially property crimes. However, surveillance efforts are most successful when integrated with other security measures like increased lighting and patrols, offering a well-rounded approach to crime prevention.

- Source: [Urban Institute Summary on Surveillance Cameras](#)

4. Cleanliness and Maintenance:

- According to a study from the University of Pennsylvania, cleaning up vacant lots and maintaining well-kept environments in urban neighborhoods reduced crime significantly, including a 29% reduction in gun violence and a 22% drop in burglaries([Penn Today](#)). Similarly, research from the University of Michigan shows that when local communities are engaged in maintaining their environments, these efforts lead to a greater reduction in violent crime, particularly in areas with higher poverty rates ([U-M School of Public Health](#)).
- Sources:
 - i. [Penn Today](#)
 - ii. [U-M School of Public Health](#)

5. Community Engagement:

- Hosting regular events and programs increases safety through natural surveillance, as engaged communities help police their own spaces. Community engagement reduces crime and builds social cohesion, leading to safer public spaces.
- Source: [COPS Office Resource Center](#)

6. Infrastructure Improvements:

- Well-maintained amenities and clear signage improve park navigation and help visitors feel safer. Upgraded infrastructure has been linked to improved satisfaction and perceptions of safety.
- Source: [National Recreation and Park Association \(NRPA\)](#)

Epic Solutions: Recommendations

The combination of crime data, survey results, and mobile visitor data provided a comprehensive understanding of the safety challenges and opportunities at Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park & Community Center. These insights were critical in shaping the final recommendations, allowing us to address both the real and perceived safety concerns expressed by residents.

Furthermore, these recommendations were informed by the Jacksonville Parks Master Plan and the Parks Department Wishlist, ensuring that our solutions align with long-term city goals and community needs. This holistic approach enables us to create impactful, scalable solutions that enhance park safety, infrastructure, and engagement for all Jacksonville residents.

The following recommendations are organized by impact and effort, prioritizing actions that provide the most immediate and lasting improvements to public safety in Jacksonville's parks. This strategic approach begins with quick wins that can be rapidly implemented to build momentum, followed by long-term recommendations that enhance park safety and community engagement.

1. Quick Safety Wins (Immediate, 1-2 weeks)

- **What:** Address small-scale safety issues such as fixing broken water fountains, repairing benches, and ensuring dumpsters are emptied regularly
- **Why:** Small but visible improvements help foster a sense of safety and care, showing that the park is being actively maintained
- **Impact:** Immediate improvement in the perception of safety, with minimal effort required

- **Effort:** Low; these are small repairs that can be done quickly
- **Extended Impact:** Maintaining these small-scale improvements prevents the park from falling into disrepair, encouraging higher usage
- **Intersectionality:** Complements broader infrastructure improvements and cleanliness efforts
- **Budget:** Minor repairs — \$5,000 - \$10,000 annually per park
- **Key Partners:**
 - City Parks Department
 - Volunteer Groups
- **Quick Win:** Simple repairs like replacing trash bags, painting over graffiti, and fixing benches can be done in days, providing immediate results.

2. Upgrade Lighting and Install Surveillance Cameras (4-6 weeks)

- **What:** Install LED lighting throughout high-traffic areas and key entry points. Implement surveillance cameras in strategic locations across both parks.
- **Why:** Improving visibility is crucial for both real and perceived safety. Surveillance cameras act as both a deterrent and a monitoring tool for law enforcement.
- **Impact:** Immediate enhancement of nighttime safety. Cameras provide law enforcement with real-time data and act as a visible deterrent to criminal behavior.

- **Effort:** Moderate; requires coordination with city contractors and technology vendors.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term reduction in park-related crimes and increased use of parks after dark.
- **Intersectionality:** Supports optimized patrols and increases public trust in security infrastructure.
- **Budget:**
 - LED lighting: \$25,000 - \$40,000 per park
 - Surveillance cameras: \$15,000 - \$20,000 per park
- **Key Partners:**
 - City Parks Department
 - Lighting and Technology Vendors
 - JSO
- **Quick Win:** Temporary lighting can be installed immediately to improve visibility while waiting for permanent upgrades. Surveillance cameras can be rented or deployed on mobile units for quick monitoring.

3. Optimize Patrol Timing and Increase Security Presence (Ongoing)

- **What:** Use real-time crime data to optimize patrol schedules, focusing on peak times like evenings and weekends.
- **Why:** Strategic patrols ensure that security is most present when park usage is highest or risks are greatest, creating an immediate sense of safety.

- **Impact:** Immediate deterrence of criminal activity, increased public trust, and better community-law enforcement relations.
- **Effort:** Moderate; requires crime data analysis and flexible patrol scheduling.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term reduction in crime and improved community-police relations through more visible and proactive patrolling.
- **Intersectionality:** Aligns with surveillance cameras and improved lighting for an integrated security system.
- **Budget:**
 - Patrol optimization technology: \$5,000
 - Additional patrol hours: \$10,000 - \$15,000 annually
- **Key Partners:**
 - JSO
 - Crime Data Analytics
- **Quick Win:** Patrol shifts can be immediately adjusted based on existing crime data, without waiting for technology upgrades. Based on the Mobile Visitor data, patrols should be increased on weekends, especially between 4 PM and 9 PM, as these are peak times based on the visitor data.

4. Implement JSO "Community Connection Days" (Ongoing, monthly events)

- **What:** Monthly community-building events where JSO engages with residents through activities like sports, cookouts, and family days.

- **Why:** Non-enforcement activities foster trust between law enforcement and the community, reducing tension and building rapport.
- **Impact:** Strengthened trust and communication between law enforcement and residents, making the park feel safer and more inviting.
- **Effort:** Low to moderate; requires regular planning and coordination with community leaders.
- **Extended Impact:** Over time, stronger relationships between the police and the community contribute to long-term reductions in crime and increased community engagement.
- **Intersectionality:** Reinforces patrol timing and enhances public safety through community involvement.
- **Budget:**
 - Event supplies and food: \$2,000 per event
 - Marketing: \$500 per event
- **Key Partners:**
 - JSO
 - Local Businesses and Community Organizations
- **Quick Win:** Informal meet-and-greet sessions between officers and park visitors can be launched immediately, even before fully organized events.

5. Create a Celebrated Entryway at Johnnie W. Walker Park (2-4 weeks)

- **What:** Create a prominent and well-marked main entrance to Johnnie W. Walker Park.
- **Why:** A designated, well-lit entryway establishes a clear, welcoming point for visitors and improves the perception of safety.
- **Impact:** Immediate improvement in the park's appearance and organization, which fosters a sense of pride and security.
- **Effort:** Low to moderate; quick construction and design effort.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term increase in park visitors, due to the improved first impression and sense of care for the space.
- **Intersectionality:** Complements lighting improvements and other infrastructure upgrades by signaling a cohesive, safe park environment.
- **Budget:**
 - Design and construction: \$12,500 - \$25,000
- **Key Partners:**
 - City Parks Department
 - Local Contractors
- **Quick Win:** Temporary signage and improved lighting at existing entry points can be implemented while awaiting the construction of the permanent entryway.

6. Add Recreational Amenities (2-4 weeks)

- **What:** Install game tables, updated concession stands, and new sports courts to encourage more activity in the parks.
- **Why:** Adding amenities promotes more frequent, positive use of the park, increasing foot traffic and making it feel safer and more active.
- **Impact:** Increased park engagement through new recreational opportunities for all age groups.
- **Effort:** Low to moderate; involves purchasing and installing equipment.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term increase in positive park activity, discouraging criminal behavior through consistent community presence.
- **Intersectionality:** Supports youth programming and community events by providing new spaces for recreation.
- **Budget:**
 - Game tables, courts, and stands: \$15,000 - \$30,000 per park
- **Key Partners:**
 - City Parks Department
 - Local Businesses for Sponsorships
- **Quick Win:** Temporary recreational elements such as portable game tables or pop-up sports activities can engage park visitors immediately.

7. Community Programming and Youth Engagement (Ongoing)

- **What:** Implement youth-focused and community-wide programming, including sports leagues, arts and cultural events, and leadership workshops. Leverage park facilities, such as playgrounds, sports courts, and the amphitheater, to activate these spaces with ongoing events and activities.
- **Why:** Programs that engage the youth and community help foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, making parks vibrant hubs of positive activity. Increased park usage, particularly by young people, can also deter crime by populating the space with positive behavior.
- **Impact:** Long-term improvements in community cohesion and a significant reduction in criminal activity. Youth-focused programming promotes development, empowerment, and connection to their local community.
- **Effort:** Moderate to high, requires partnerships with local schools, nonprofits, and community organizations to help deliver consistent programming.
- **Extended Impact:** Over time, continuous engagement and positive activities in the park can result in increased community pride and security, with ripple effects spreading to surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Intersectionality:** Supports and complements other safety measures by making the park an active and well-used space. Youth programs also enhance patrol effectiveness by reducing idle time and creating structured activities for young people.

- **Budget:**
 - Youth Program Setup: \$15,000 - \$25,000 annually
 - Event materials, staff, and program management.
- **Key Partners:**
 - Local schools, youth organizations, cultural groups, city departments.
- **Quick Win:** Early partnership agreements with community organizations can lead to immediate youth engagement through smaller, initial programming efforts while the larger structure is built.

8. Improve Infrastructure and Cleanliness (Ongoing)

- **What:** Perform regular park cleanups and address minor infrastructure repairs.
- **Why:** A clean, well-maintained park signals safety and care, discouraging vandalism and criminal behavior.
- **Impact:** Immediate improvement in park cleanliness, encouraging higher usage and making the park feel safer.
- **Effort:** Low, but requires ongoing commitment to maintenance.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term improvements in park usage and community pride through consistent cleanliness and infrastructure maintenance.
- **Intersectionality:** Supports other recommendations like youth programming and community events by creating a welcoming environment.

- **Budget:**
 - Cleanup and minor repairs: \$12,000 - \$20,000 annually
- **Key Partners:**
 - City Parks Department
 - Volunteer Organizations
- **Quick Win:** Immediate cleanups and repairs can be organized with volunteers, showing quick improvements to park conditions.

9. Trimming Trees and Landscaping (Immediate, 1-2 weeks)

- **What:** Trim trees and maintain landscaping to ensure clear sightlines and reduce hidden spaces.
- **Why:** Clear sightlines are crucial for safety, discouraging potential criminal activity by increasing visibility.
- **Impact:** Immediate improvement in visibility and reduction in concealed areas that could be used for illicit activities.
- **Effort:** Low; requires quick work from landscaping crews.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term improvement in safety perceptions and crime deterrence through consistent landscaping maintenance.
- **Intersectionality:** Supports lighting and surveillance recommendations by creating an open, visible environment.
- **Budget:**
 - Landscaping services: \$5,000 - \$10,000 per park

- **Key Partners:**
 - City Parks Department
 - Landscaping Contractors
- **Quick Win:** Initial tree trimming and basic landscaping work can be completed quickly, with noticeable improvements to visibility.

10. Integrate Technology Upgrades for Park Management (Ongoing)

- **What:** Implement smart technology solutions for park management, including visitor tracking, digital event reservations, and real-time park status updates for both park visitors and management teams.
- **Why:** Technology upgrades help manage park resources efficiently, improve the visitor experience, and provide valuable data on park usage patterns. This can also help with crowd control and security by identifying peak usage times.
- **Impact:** Real-time data on park usage helps optimize resources, event planning, and security. The digital reservation system can increase accessibility and provide a more organized use of park space.
- **Effort:** Moderate; initial setup requires coordination with technology vendors, but ongoing management is straightforward.
- **Extended Impact:** Long-term improvement in park management efficiency, data-driven decision-making, and enhanced visitor satisfaction.
- **Intersectionality:** Supports surveillance, patrol optimization, and community event planning by providing real-time data and resource

management.

- **Budget:**
 - Technology setup and software: \$15,000 - \$25,000 per park
 - Ongoing maintenance: \$5,000 annually

- **Key Partners:**
 - Technology Vendors
 - City Parks Department
 - Data Analytics Providers

- **Quick Win:** Implementing a simplified digital event registration system can be done quickly, helping organize events more efficiently.

Scalability Considerations

Each of these recommendations is designed to be scalable, allowing them to be replicated across other parks in Jacksonville. By starting with Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park, these initiatives will serve as a pilot framework that can be adapted to other parks based on their unique needs. Partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and city departments will be critical for ensuring long-term success and sustainability.

Proposing a 90-Day Sprint for Implementation

To ensure the successful and timely implementation of the recommendations, we propose continuing with a 90-day sprint structure.

This approach offers a clear, actionable timeline that organizes the necessary improvements into three strategic phases: quick wins, infrastructure upgrades, and long-term programming. By focusing on achievable and measurable milestones

over a 90-day period, this plan ensures that both immediate safety concerns are addressed and sustainable changes are implemented.

The 90-day sprint will not only provide rapid, visible progress but also build momentum for larger, long-term transformations.

This approach allows for the seamless coordination of multiple stakeholders, including the Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board, JSO, community organizations, local businesses, and residents. Regular progress check-ins and adjustments ensure that any unforeseen challenges can be managed effectively, and the community will see tangible improvements within the first 30 days, fostering trust and engagement.

By adopting this sprint structure, Jacksonville will set the stage for scalable improvements across all parks, making this an ideal model for future public safety initiatives.

Case for Leadership: Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board

The **Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board** is uniquely positioned to lead the implementation of the park safety initiative, based on their core mission of reducing crime, fostering community collaboration, and creating safer neighborhoods. This initiative—focused on activating parks and enhancing public safety—aligns directly with the Board’s mandate to address root causes of crime and promote crime prevention strategies through community engagement and oversight.

Alignment with Mission and Goals

The Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board is tasked with revitalizing one of the city’s most successful anti-crime efforts, the original **Jacksonville Journey**, which reduced the city’s violent crime rate by over 30% in its first iteration. As the Board’s goals include expanding youth programs, increasing law enforcement presence, and promoting community engagement, these objectives are in perfect synergy with the proposed park safety recommendations:

- **Crime Prevention:** The Board’s focus on reducing crime through community engagement, law enforcement collaboration, and youth programming aligns seamlessly with our recommendations to enhance security, create youth-focused events, and increase patrols at the parks.
- **Collaboration:** The Jacksonville Journey Forward Board was designed to foster collaboration between city agencies, law enforcement, and community organizations—exactly the type of multi-sector approach needed to activate parks and create safe, vibrant spaces.
- **Oversight and Accountability:** The Board’s responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of crime-reduction programs makes it the

ideal body to oversee the 90-day implementation plan, track progress, and ensure accountability in delivering outcomes.

Leveraging Existing Infrastructure

The Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board already has the infrastructure, relationships, and public trust to mobilize resources and stakeholders effectively. With a focus on **community-based crime prevention, neighborhood safety, and public-private partnerships**, the Board is well-positioned to lead the implementation of park safety improvements and community engagement efforts.

- **Youth Programming:** One of the Board's key focus areas is positive youth development, including expanded summer camps, after-school opportunities, and workforce training. This directly aligns with our recommendation to launch Youth Engagement and Safety Programs at the parks, creating a natural opportunity for the Board to spearhead these initiatives while ensuring consistency with broader crime prevention strategies.
- **Community Engagement and Policing:** The Board's mission to enhance community policing and support initiatives such as mental health clinician integration aligns perfectly with our efforts to improve law enforcement-community relations through the JSO Community Connection Days. By integrating these programs into a unified safety initiative, the Board can ensure cohesive implementation and long-term success across Jacksonville's public spaces.
- **Contributing Factors of Crime:** Additionally, the Board's expertise in addressing contributing factors of crime—such as education, mental health, and literacy—creates an ideal framework for expanding community-based programming in partnership with local nonprofits, schools, and health organizations.

Supporting Long-Term Sustainability

The Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board is also positioned to ensure the **long-term sustainability** of the park safety initiative. With access to public funding, partnerships, and oversight capabilities, the Board can lead not only the 90-day sprint but also manage ongoing efforts to maintain and expand park safety improvements. Additionally, the Board's commitment to transparency and results tracking ensures that progress will be measured and reported regularly, with opportunities to adapt the strategy based on data.

Why the Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board?

1. **Experience in Crime Reduction:** Proven success in reducing violent crime by focusing on systemic, community-based solutions.
2. **Multi-Sector Collaboration:** The Board's established partnerships with law enforcement, community leaders, and nonprofits make it an ideal entity to lead a collaborative park safety initiative.
3. **Long-Term Vision:** With a mandate to promote long-term safety and community engagement, the Board can oversee the sustainability of park safety measures well beyond the initial 90-day sprint.

Collaboration: Engaging the Community for Success

The success of this park safety initiative will rely heavily on strong partnerships across sectors. While the Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board will lead the effort, the initiative's long-term sustainability will depend on ongoing support from key stakeholders. Collaboration ensures that community members, businesses, nonprofits, and city agencies are all invested in the outcome and actively engaged in the solution.

Key Collaboration Partners

1. Local Businesses

- **Role:** Corporate sponsors can contribute to infrastructure improvements (e.g., lighting, cameras) and sponsor youth programming or community events such as the JSO Community Connection Days.
- **Why It's Important:** Engaging businesses allows for financial and in-kind support, such as providing volunteers or resources. Their involvement also helps solidify the park as a safe, vibrant community space that benefits local commerce.
- **Example Contributions:** Financial donations, event sponsorship, technology contributions (e.g., surveillance systems), advertising for events.

2. Nonprofit Organizations

- **Role:** Nonprofits focused on youth development, public safety, and community engagement will be essential in implementing programs such as youth sports leagues and mentorship initiatives.
- **Why It's Important:** Nonprofits often have established relationships with the communities they serve, enabling them to quickly mobilize resources, volunteers, and participants for park programs.
- **Example Contributions:** Staffing for youth programs, volunteer recruitment, providing mentors and coaches for youth events, facilitating clean-up days.

3. Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO)

- **Role:** JSO will optimize patrols, engage with the community through Community Connection Days, and play a central role in security enhancements.
- **Why It's Important:** Regular patrols and visible security measures are essential to improving the perception of safety in the parks. Additionally, informal engagements between law enforcement and community members will foster trust.
- **Example Contributions:** Community policing, event participation, patrol coordination, and monitoring surveillance systems.

4. Local Schools and Youth Organizations

- **Role:** Schools and youth organizations will be critical in mobilizing students for participation in park programs, such as youth sports leagues, arts initiatives, and leadership training.
- **Why It's Important:** These programs not only activate parks but also provide safe, productive activities for young people, contributing to long-term crime prevention efforts.
- **Example Contributions:** Enrolling students in after-school programs, providing space or staff for activities, promoting participation among students and families.

5. Community Members and Volunteers

- **Role:** Residents will play a vital role in maintaining and supporting park improvements through volunteer efforts and participation in community events.
- **Why It's Important:** Creating a sense of ownership among residents ensures the parks are cared for and remain vibrant, safe spaces. Active community participation will help sustain the initiative beyond the 90-day sprint.
- **Example Contributions:** Participating in volunteer cleanup days, attending community events, providing feedback on park improvements, and engaging in park safety initiatives.

Community Outreach

Effective outreach should be structured around clear communication, emphasizing the mutual benefits of collaboration while providing specific ways each entity can contribute. Here's how to engage different sectors:

1. **Businesses:** Focus on financial sponsorships, in-kind contributions (e.g., technology, event supplies), or volunteer support for park cleanups or community events.
 - **Key Message:** Emphasize the positive impact their involvement will have on the community and the visibility they will gain as a company invested in local safety and well-being.
2. **Nonprofits:** Reach out to organizations focused on youth, community engagement, and public safety. Their involvement in programming, staffing, or volunteer coordination will be essential.
 - **Key Message:** Highlight the opportunity for nonprofits to extend their mission and create visible, tangible change in a space that directly affects local residents.
3. **Law Enforcement (JSO):** While already involved, this outreach should focus on community-building initiatives like the Community Connection Days, ensuring JSO staff are consistently engaged in non-enforcement activities that build trust.
 - **Key Message:** Emphasize the role JSO will play in transforming the perception of law enforcement by actively participating in community events and providing ongoing security.
4. **Community Members and Volunteers:** Engaging residents in the process will be critical to sustaining the improvements made during the 90-day implementation. Volunteers can participate in cleanups, attend events, and offer feedback on ongoing safety initiatives.

- **Key Message:** Position community members as stakeholders in the park's future, where their involvement directly impacts the long-term safety and well-being of their neighborhood.

Collaboration in Action: A Path to Sustained Success

The Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board will act as the central hub, coordinating these partners and ensuring that everyone is working toward the shared goal of making Jacksonville's parks safer, more vibrant spaces. This collaboration will not only bring immediate safety improvements but also build lasting relationships between community members, businesses, and law enforcement, creating a model for future park activation across the city. By fostering these relationships, we ensure that Jacksonville's parks become spaces of security, belonging, and connection, reflective of the city's broader efforts to reduce crime and build stronger communities.

Conclusion

These recommendations, organized by their impact and feasibility, offer a comprehensive approach to improving park safety and community engagement. Each recommendation includes a Quick Win, ensuring immediate, visible progress while longer-term projects are underway. By integrating technology, security enhancements, and community-based solutions, this plan ensures that Jacksonville's parks become vibrant, safe spaces for all.

To ensure the efficient implementation of these recommendations, we propose a 90-day sprint structure. This sprint will provide clear milestones, accelerate the delivery of immediate improvements, and create a foundation for lasting change. With a coordinated effort led by the Jacksonville Journey Forward Oversight Board, the 90-day sprint offers a strategic, actionable approach that will turn these recommendations into tangible results, creating safer parks and stronger communities across Jacksonville.

Long-Term Vision

Jacksonville's parks are more than just recreational spaces—they are symbols of community pride, legacy, and connection. By improving safety and engagement in Lonnie C. Miller Sr. Regional Park and Johnnie W. Walker Park, we create a model for transforming public spaces across the city, building trust and fostering community resilience.

Safe, active, and welcoming public spaces contribute to the well-being of all residents, fostering economic mobility, public health, and social resilience. Through these focused efforts, we aim to transform our parks into hubs of safety and community, scaling this model to every park in Jacksonville.

This initiative requires ongoing commitment from the community, city leaders, and partners. By working together, we ensure that the progress we've made becomes a lasting legacy of safety and resilience. The success of this pilot program provides a scalable blueprint for park safety and community engagement that can be applied to public spaces across Jacksonville, ensuring that all residents can enjoy safe, thriving parks for generations to come.

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Exhibits

1. Appendix A: [90-Day Sprint Implementation Plan](#)
2. Appendix B: [Measuring Success](#)
3. Appendix C: [Gathering Real-Time Data](#)
4. Appendix D: [Sample Documentation Practices](#)
5. Appendix E: [Sample Reporting Templates](#)
6. Appendix F: [Budget and Funding](#)
7. Appendix G: [Outreach Guides](#)
8. Appendix H: [Quick Win Examples](#)
9. Appendix I: [Crime Data Analysis](#)
10. Appendix J: [Survey Qualitative Analysis](#)
11. Appendix K: [Best Practices](#)

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